

A LANDSCAPE OF CHOICE



Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth

FOREWORD

The Central Valley of California is considered by many to be the most productive agricultural region in the world. It is also believed to be one of the areas of the country that will experience the most explosive population growth over the next four decades.

The conflict between population growth and agricultural preservation could easily lead to an acrimonious pro-growth/no-growth battle over the future of the Valley. Fortunately, however, some of the most important stakeholders (and potential combatants) in this issue have come together in Fresno County to identify areas of common ground and develop a strategy to protect agriculture while accommodating urban growth.

Discussions over the course of a year have led to positive discoveries. Homebuilders have come to realize the importance of agriculture to the future of the Valley's economy. Channeling urban growth away from prime agricultural land and protecting the rural water supply are in the long-term interests of homebuilders. Farmers have come to realize that one of the best ways to curb urban sprawl is to revitalize central cities and increase the density of development. Transit, redevelopment, recycling and master-planned communities may not look like ag preservation programs, but in a real sense they are and warrant the active support of the farm community.

The key to a healthy future for our cities and farms, not so surprisingly, is good planning—and the inclusion of agricultural preservation as a conscious, important value in the local planning process. The tough part comes when a community moves from abstract planning discussions to the real life specific decision: approving apartments over the angry shouts of the single family neighborhood next door; denying a subdivision request of a prominent builder or farm family because the land in a desirable fringe area is “prime ag;” raising water rates to install water meters or do groundwater recharge. This is where the stakeholders involved in the Growth Alternatives Alliance must defend the principles they have agreed upon in this report.

Ultimately what will be required is for cities and counties up and down the Valley to buy into a unified growth strategy that balances agricultural preservation, environmental protection, economic vitality and livable cities. The Growth Alternatives Alliance effort in Fresno County is an excellent start, both in terms of content and the collaborative tone that has been set.



Daniel K. Whitehurst
Chairman, Great Valley Center

A LANDSCAPE OF CHOICE:

Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth

Presented by:

The Growth Alternatives Alliance

April 1998

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The Fresno Business Council



American Farmland Trust

FRESNO
COUNTY
FARM
BUREAU
Since 1917



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the first time anywhere in the country, leaders of the agricultural, development, conservation and business communities have collaborated on a course of action to accommodate our growing population and protect important agricultural resources. The Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Building Association of the San Joaquin Valley, American Farmland Trust and Fresno Business Council have joined to form the Growth Alternatives Alliance. Together, we have developed a common vision for the future that provides a wide range of affordable housing products; protects vital natural resources and improves the quality of life for residents of Fresno County and its cities. The Alliance is firmly committed to creating a constituency for change that recognizes the benefits of building better communities and is prepared to take appropriate action to accomplish this goal.

In the coming year, representatives of the Alliance will present our vision to all of the local governments in Fresno County and at public workshops. It is our hope that local elected officials, planning commissioners, city and county personnel, and the public at large will review these planning principles and adopt them as their own. The Alliance has also formed a technical advisory committee that will participate in the development of the specific standards and guidelines necessary to build a healthy, diverse, and vibrant community and economy.

The San Joaquin Valley is one of the most rapidly urbanizing regions in California and the nation. While the state's population is expected to double over the next 45 years, the Valley's population is expected to triple. This growing population must be provided with basic needs such as food, jobs and housing to maintain the economic health of the community which, in turn, creates pressure for the conversion of farmland to subdivisions, shopping centers and industrial parks. Innovative planning and community-wide collaboration will be necessary to balance economic expansion and population growth with resource protection.

"A community is an economy: the two are one and the same... a web of practical interrelationships between neighbors who understand their mutual dependency and honor it by competently caring for their work, their town, their offspring, and each other."

*James Howard Kunstler,
The Geography of Nowhere*

Over the years, it has become apparent that growth patterns actually play a more important role in causing urban sprawl than population growth itself. Replacing urban sprawl with more compact and efficient patterns of growth on the urban edge and directing growth inward through infill development and

neighborhood revitalization can accommodate the same number of people on much less land. Controlling or changing population growth trends is nearly impossible; but it may be possible to change patterns of growth, especially if a grass roots consensus for better land use planning can be developed among local stakeholders and decision-makers.

In July 1996, The Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Fresno Chamber of Commerce and American Farmland Trust jointly issued a letter to the City of Fresno encouraging local leaders to adopt policies that would encourage and facilitate compact growth and urban infill to accommodate anticipated population increases. These organizations agreed that moderate increases in urban density and infill development were likely to have a number of positive benefits for the local citizenry and economy including:

- reduced consumption and conversion of agricultural and natural land to urban uses;
- lower housing costs as a result of greater efficiency in the utilization of infrastructure;
- Improved feasibility of regional transit systems such as light rail;
- stronger sense of community and neighborhood;
- revitalization of urban centers and retention of infrastructure investments in the urban core;
- improved delivery of public services and emergency response; and
- greater ability to attract new businesses due to improved quality of life.

In January 1997, the groups that signed the letter to the City of Fresno along with the Fresno Business Council formed the Growth Alternatives Alliance. The primary objective of the group was to develop a common vision for

the future of Fresno County and its cities - one that would guide urban development while protecting our most important agricultural resources over the next 25-30 years.

Three main themes emerged from the discussion for which there was broad agreement. These themes became the guiding principles around which specific policies and implementation measures were developed. All of the policy recommendations agreed upon by the discussion group fall under one or more of these guiding principles.

- 1. Utilize urban land as efficiently as possible.**
- 2. Develop livable communities that emphasize pedestrian or transit-oriented design.**
- 3. Recognize the importance of agriculture and the need to protect productive farmland.**

The implementation strategies developed by the Growth Alternatives Alliance focus on a number of actions that should be undertaken by the entire community in order to enact the guiding principles. These strategies encourage further collaborative efforts and public participation to define the specific standards appropriate for each community rather than dictating one-size-fits-all solutions. We call upon our local leaders to provide appropriate forums for collaboration and conflict resolution. Together we can build stronger communities that demonstrate our common interests and mutual dependency.

Key Policy Recommendations of the Growth Alternatives Alliance

- Revise zoning ordinances to facilitate moderate increases in density and allow diversity of housing types in the same zone district.
- Evaluate standards for parking requirements to economize the amount of land devoted to parking and encourage shared use of parking facilities.
- Develop transit and pedestrian-oriented design guidelines and incorporate them into community plans.
- Revise local street standards to make streets narrower and more pedestrian-friendly.
- Prepare neighborhood revitalization plans for suitable areas and encourage permit streamlining, public participation and public/private partnerships to implement these plans.
- Create mixed-use zone districts that encourage residential, commercial and office use on the same site.
- Promote downtown or village centers as neighborhood and community centers that offer a full range of urban services.
- Work with school districts to incorporate school sites into larger activity centers that serve multiple purposes (e.g. childcare, health, and recreation).
- Undertake a process that leads to adoption of reasonable urban growth boundaries.
- Create a forum in which multi-jurisdictional land use planning between cities and counties can be achieved.

The Growth Alternatives Alliance

Fresno County Farm Bureau	237-0263
Fresno Chamber of Commerce	495-4800
The Fresno Business Council	449-6398
American Farmland Trust	627-3708
Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley	276-6800

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INTRODUCTION

If the Midwest is the breadbasket of the world, then California's San Joaquin Valley is its salad bowl. More than 250 crops are produced in the Valley generating over \$13 billion annually in agricultural sales. The Valley's productivity can be attributed to a unique combination of factors that create an ideal setting for agriculture: a Mediterranean climate, deep alluvial soils, an adequate supply of irrigation water, an intricate marketing and transportation infrastructure for moving crops to market and some of the best-trained and technically advanced farmers in the world. This setting cannot be duplicated anywhere in the nation or, probably, the world. San Joaquin Valley agriculture is truly a national treasure.

Fresno County lies at the heart of the San Joaquin Valley and dominates all of its neighboring counties in agricultural production. Irrigated agriculture began in Fresno in the 1870's and continued to grow steadily as water was diverted from local rivers and streams and as technology developed for extracting groundwater from wells. In 1950, Fresno County overtook Los Angeles County as the top producing county in the nation in gross agricultural sales. Today, Fresno County generates \$3.3 billion in gross agricultural revenues on approximately 1.2 million acres of irrigated farmland.

As a basic industry, agriculture builds wealth in the community since most of the operating expenses, as well as profits, remain in the local economy. Agriculture and agricultural related businesses contribute over \$8 billion annually to Fresno County's gross domestic product. In fact, each acre of irrigated agricultural land should be considered a factory that produces between \$6,000 to \$15,000 per year for the local economy depending on the type of crop that is grown. The loss of even 1,000 acres of agricultural land can remove as much as \$15 million annually from our local domestic product.

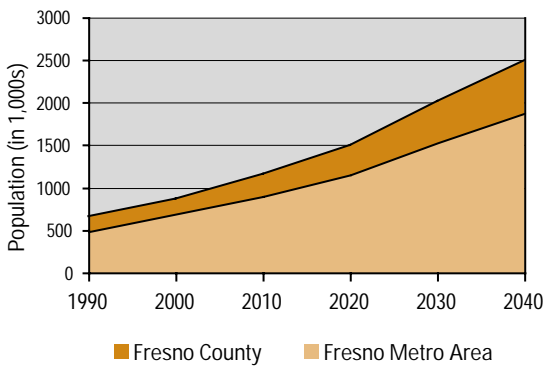
The San Joaquin Valley is also one of the most rapidly urbanizing regions in California and the nation. While the state's population is expected to double over the next 42 years, the Valley's population is expected to triple. According to the California Department of Finance, Fresno County is expected to grow from its present population of 776,000 to 2,498,000 by the year 2040. Unlike the cities in the northern and southern parts of the Valley, most of the growth in Fresno County is internal rather than from migration from other areas. This growing population must be provided with basic needs such as food, jobs and housing to maintain the economic health of the community.

"As a basic industry, agriculture builds wealth in the community since most of the operating expenses, as well as profits, remain in the local economy. Agriculture and agricultural related businesses contribute over \$8 billion annually to Fresno County's gross domestic product."

Scott Ainger



Eighty five percent of the raisins grown in the United States come from within a 30-mile radius of Fresno County.



Source: California Department of Finance

Fresno County's population is expected to triple over the next 42 years to 2.5 million people.

Population increases in Fresno County create growing pressures to develop more land. Treatment of land required for new housing tracts, school sites, commercial centers and business parks depends on our growth pattern. A 1995 study by American Farmland Trust found that if we accommodate Fresno County's expected population increase of 1.8 million new residents at historic land use densities, approximately 234,000 acres of land will be

converted from agriculture to urban uses. By the year 2040, Fresno County would lose approximately 18.9 percent of its irrigated farmland and experience annual losses of \$698 million (22.6 percent) of the \$3.1 billion of farm revenue earned in 1994.

Due to a combination of dramatically increased costs of production and stagnant wages in recent years, housing has become increasingly unaffordable for many Fresno County citizens.

Although home prices in Fresno County are among the lowest in California, housing costs in the City of Fresno are considered among the least affordable in the nation when indexed against median income. The current rate of residential construction falls far short of internal population growth rates, probably because the

fastest growing segment of the population is also the most economically disadvantaged. Many families now "double-up" and share single family homes or apartments. Fresno County and its cities must be prepared to accommodate increased demands for housing stock with as little impact on existing natural resources as possible.

Effective land use planning by local governments is essential to meet the growing demands of competing land uses. The future landscape of Fresno County is dependent on the land use decisions we make today. Can we create more compact and efficient development patterns that maintain or improve our quality-of-life? Can we provide jobs and housing in a manner that protects the natural resources that are vital to our agriculture-based economy?

The Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Fresno Chamber of Commerce and American Farmland Trust feel that achieving a more compact pattern of urban growth is a laudable objective. In July 1996, these organizations jointly issued a letter to the City of Fresno encouraging our local leaders to adopt policies that would

encourage and facilitate compact growth and urban infill to accommodate anticipated population increases. We agreed that moderate increases in urban density are likely to have a number of positive benefits for local citizens and economies. These benefits include:

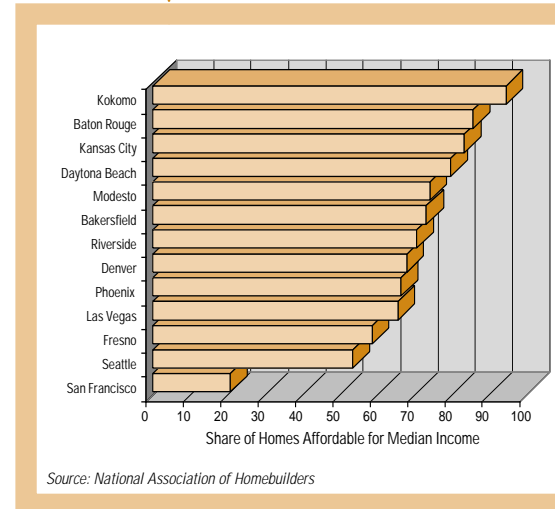
"By the year 2040, Fresno County would lose approximately 18.9 percent of its irrigated farmland and experience annual losses of \$698 million (22.6 percent) of the \$3.1 billion of farm revenue earned in 1994."

- reduced consumption and conversion of agricultural and natural land to urban uses;
- lower housing costs as a result of greater efficiency in the utilization of infrastructure;
- feasibility of regional transit systems such as light rail;
- stronger sense of community and neighborhood;
- revitalization of urban centers and retention of infrastructure investments in the urban core;
- improved delivery of public services and emergency response; and
- greater ability to attract new businesses due to improved quality of life.

Over the last year these organizations, along with the Fresno Business Council, have been meeting to reach consensus on specific policies and implementation strategies for achieving compact growth and infill development. The primary objective of the Growth Alternatives Alliance is to develop a common vision for the

future of Fresno County and its cities that will guide urban development and protect our most important agricultural resources over the next 25-30 years. This report reflects the results of those discussions and lays out a course of action to accommodate new growth in Fresno County in a manner that provides a wide range of affordable housing products, protects vital natural resources, and improves the quality of life for residents.

The consensus-building process and subsequent actions are also intended to increase the understanding of the importance and needs of agriculture, building trades, and business to the community-at-large. The principles and policy recommendations presented in this report attempt to address important issues such as urban renewal and revitalization; the need for capital improvements, transportation, and infrastructure such as water and sewer; the economic feasibility of new growth; and the need for a wide range of choices in the Fresno County housing market.



Housing costs in the Fresno metropolitan area are among the least affordable in the country when the median home price is indexed against median income.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the discussion proceeded, three main themes emerged for which there was broad agreement.

These themes or guiding principles should be included in the primary goals of any general plan adopted in Fresno County along with a specific set of policies and implementation measures for achieving these goals. All of the policy recommendations agreed upon by the Growth Alternatives Alliance fall under one or more of these guiding principles.



Greg Kirkpatrick

The Millpond tract within the Dominion Planned Community in Fresno offers detached, single family homes at a density of 7.1 units per acre.

1. The primary goal of the Land Use Element of a General Plan should be to utilize urban land as efficiently as possible while providing an adequate supply of a broad range of housing types and densities to meet market demand. Measures to facilitate and encourage compact growth should be applied to all urban land uses including commercial, industrial and institutional uses.

Achieving compact growth will require moderate increases in the density of urban growth and increased emphasis on infill development. Studies have shown that average densities of 6-8 housing units per gross acre in residential development and 5-6 units per acre throughout a community can significantly reduce the impacts of urban sprawl without sacrificing the market desire for detached single family homes. Several projects of this type have been successfully completed within the City of

Fresno and there is growing market demand for housing that falls within these density criteria; however, gaining approval for these projects has been hampered by restrictive zoning ordinances and opposition from neighborhood residents. When considering future urban development we must be mindful of the impacts of inefficient land use (3 homes per gross acre or less) and provide reasonable means and political will for creating desirable patterns of growth.

Consumption of land by urban growth can also be greatly reduced by greater efficiency in the utilization of commercial, industrial, and institutional land. These uses often occupy between 25 to 45 percent of developed land within a city; however, they create some of the greatest abuses of efficient land use: acres of parking lots that are only fully utilized two or three days per year; thousands of square feet of vacant commercial and industrial space that no longer functions economically; and areas that are only occupied by people for a portion of the day. Achieving compact growth in commercial, industrial, and institutional uses will allow greater flexibility in housing patterns while meeting the objective of increased density.

2. Encourage pedestrian or transit-oriented projects at densities that make transit feasible; and create a framework for the future that is transit-based rather than automobile oriented.

Since the 1950's new development throughout the United States has primarily been designed for automobile access and storage. Public investment built an infrastructure to support the

automobile including interstate highways and networks of local streets designed to transport people over long distances as rapidly as possible. Public policies were written to encourage or require automobile access and abundant parking for all new development. These policies have contributed to traffic congestion, air quality problems and urban sprawl.

As the 21st century approaches, we must begin to plan for a future in which the privately owned automobile is not the dominant feature in the urban landscape. This will require bringing residential, commercial and employment centers closer together so that a pedestrian or transit user can obtain goods and services as easily as someone driving a car. New development should be reoriented to maximize pedestrian access to neighborhood commercial and community centers, schools, and transit stops; and streets should be designed in a manner that increases safety for pedestrians and bicycle riders. Where possible, existing neighborhoods should be revitalized by creating or renovating places that can be reached on foot by a majority of the residents.

3. Recognize the importance of agriculture and the need to protect productive farmland in a way that achieves meaningful policy and elevates the status of planning for agriculture to the same level as residential and other urban uses.

Most urban planning exercises begin with a projection of how much growth is expected to occur over the course of the planning period. Next, enough land is designated for conversion

to residential, commercial, and industrial uses to accommodate the anticipated growth, often with little regard for existing non-urban land uses. In fact, agricultural land is often considered as vacant land by urban planners.

We must recognize the characteristics that make agricultural land productive (soil quality, water availability, microclimate, and proximity to markets) and seek to protect these resources from urban encroachment. Policies should be established to direct growth away from our most productive agricultural resources while providing reasonable quantities of land to meet anticipated growth



Dan Burden



Dan Burden

Designing communities for pedestrians rather than automobiles makes them much more attractive places to live and work.

projections. Surface and groundwater resources and infrastructure improvements such as sewer mains and roads must be utilized to the maximum extent practicable in order to reduce the consumption of productive agricultural land. Wastewater and solid waste should be minimized and recycled as much as possible to reduce the need for new treatment and disposal facilities that also impact farmland resources.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPACT GROWTH

Barriers to Compact Growth

A number of factors contribute to low density development patterns of three homes per acre, or less, that are often described as urban sprawl. Some of these factors, such as low prices for rural land, market preferences for large lots, and regional economic health are difficult, if not impossible, to influence. However, several other factors create institutional barriers to compact growth that make even slight increases in density difficult even if developers feel that there is a market for compact development patterns.

Land use designations in general plans and minimum lot size requirements in zoning ordinances create a floor on density that prevents the construction of many innovative types of housing. For example, the maximum density that can be achieved with a strict application of the development standards within the R-1-6 zone district (single-family residential - 6,000 square foot minimum lot area) in the City of Fresno is 5.0 homes per acre and the typical density of subdivisions built within this district varies between 3.0 and 4.5 homes per acre.

Examples of higher density single family home development in Fresno County are the exception rather than the rule and often have required a complicated approval process and a number of

variances from the zoning ordinance. Most developers would rather follow the ordinance in order to win quick approval for their projects than utilize the expensive and unreliable variance and general plan amendment process. Nevertheless, several projects have been completed within the City of Fresno that provide high quality single family detached homes at densities of 6.0 to 7.5 units per acre.

“All neighborhoods should contain a mix of single and multiple family housing as well as neighborhood commercial centers, offices, school sites and other urban services.”

One of the strongest barriers to compact growth has been the natural resistance to change from neighboring residents and lack of political will by local elected officials. Citizens often react to projects that propose higher density with fear that is driven by the myth that

density creates crime, congestion, and will reduce their property values. When these projects come up for approval local leaders are faced with an angry mob who may not understand the key role that these projects play in building livable and economically viable communities. A common vision for community growth must be agreed upon before these projects come up for approval and local leaders must review and approve projects based upon that vision.

Strategies for Achieving Compact Growth

Changing the pattern of growth in our communities cannot be achieved by merely

stating the desire for compact growth in general goals and principles. A number of specific actions must be taken in order to achieve compact growth. The Growth Alternatives Alliance has agreed on the following implementation strategies for achieving compact growth and recommends that these strategies be incorporated into the general plans and planning procedures within each of the communities in Fresno County. General and specific plans should no longer contain provisions that limit compact growth options.

Residential Neighborhoods

The emphasis of planning should focus on the residential neighborhood on a scale that supports a community of 10,000 to 15,000 people. Under this planning framework, small cities may be considered a single neighborhood while larger cities would plan to integrate a number of neighborhood units into a cohesive urban center. Within residential neighborhoods, the objective should be to create a variety of housing types, lot sizes and lot configurations. All neighborhoods should contain a mix of single and multiple family housing as well as neighborhood commercial centers, offices, school sites and other urban services.

1. The land use element of a general plan should only identify the mix of land uses and a broad range of allowable densities for future development. When development of an area is imminent, specific plans or community plans should be prepared to specify the pattern, location, and density of land uses.

Assigning specific land use designations in the

land use elements of general plans creates a rigid framework upon which development projects are built that prevent the creation of cohesive communities or the ability to change land use patterns in the future. Rather than designating specific parcels of land for commercial development or assigning arbitrary land use densities, the land use element should only outline broad goals regarding the amount of land to be developed to various use categories and the overall density of people to be accommodated.

As development of a particular area becomes imminent a community plan should be developed that represents current trends and preferences while meeting the overall density and land use objectives. In larger cities, an appropriate scale for a community planning effort might encompass an area of 500-700 acres that will accommodate a population of 10,000 -15,000 people. In smaller cities, a planning scale of 160 acres may be more appropriate.

2. Modify design review procedures to create a process that meets planning goals and complements the community vision rather than focusing strictly on rigid numerical standards.

While design standards and criteria are important, they should not be applied so rigorously that they drive the planning process. Instead, the planning and public works staff should be provided with incentives and political



Planned communities such as the Dominion in Fresno provide a variety of housing choices and centralized urban services.

support to be creative and amenable to a process that will result in marketable increases in urban density. The objective of design review should be to create projects that meet broad guidelines for public safety, health and welfare without constraining the means of achieving these goals.

The design review process for development projects should be modified so that it becomes

an exercise of integrating specific projects into a broader community vision and provides developers an opportunity to explore innovative residential and community designs. The procedures should provide incentives for developers to enter design review early in the project planning process. An environment of cooperation should be created

that will encourage developers to think “outside the box” of rigid development standards and prescriptive design criteria when preparing project plans.

3. Thoroughly review and revise zoning ordinances to facilitate moderate increases in density and to allow a diversity of housing types within the same zone district or neighborhood.

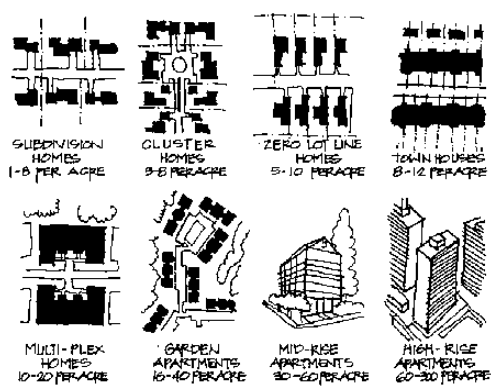
Without a zoning ordinance that provides a legal framework for flexibility, developers must often obtain variances to create lot configurations that do not meet specific development standards. It is also virtually impossible to create a mixture of uses such as

building a duplex in a single family residential zone district. The objective of zoning ordinance revisions should be to create an ordinance that establishes ranges (max. and min.) for setbacks, streets widths, lot dimensions, and building heights to create more variety in the streetscape. They should also permit innovative lot configurations such as zipper lots, zero lot-lines, and row houses without an additional variance or amendment process.

4. Provide incentives and support projects that are designed to encourage compact growth and higher densities while providing amenities such as bike paths, neighborhood parks, etc. as densities increase.

Performance zoning is another alternative to standard prescriptive zoning laws. This type of zoning allows for a variety of uses and design approaches as long as the plan meets specified performance criteria. Increases in density are permissible if the project exceeds the minimum performance criteria. However, since this type of approach may require a number of judgment calls by planning staff, they must be empowered to make decisions that will facilitate rather than hinder the planning process.

The amenities required in exchange for increased densities must be balanced against the benefits that accrue to the project proponent. In many cases, developers do not pursue density bonus opportunities because the cost of the amenities exceed the economic benefits of increased density or there are too many bureaucratic hurdles to make the bonuses worthwhile.



Providing a variety of housing types at a scale that is appropriate to the neighborhood can increase consumer choice and land use efficiency.

Commercial, Industrial and Institutional Uses

Greater efficiency in land use within commercial, industrial and institutional zones can be achieved by increasing the amount of usable building area to the amount of land utilized. This is often referred to as the floor/area ratio (FAR). The primary objectives for achieving compact growth in non-residential land uses should be to increase floor/area ratios by facilitating multi-story development and decreasing the land area utilized for parking. The number of people working or shopping within a given area also needs to be considered and maximized.

“The primary objectives for achieving compact growth in non-residential land uses should be to increase floor/area ratios by facilitating multi-story development and decreasing the land area utilized for parking.”

Many cities in the Valley also commit more land to non-residential uses than is needed to serve their local population. In some cities, non-residential uses occupy as much as 65 percent of the developed land within the city limits. Creating an appropriate balance of land uses within a neighborhood is another important consideration for achieving compact development.

1. Develop policies and standards that facilitate an increase in floor/area ratios for commercial and industrial development by encouraging construction of multi-story office buildings.

The objective of development within commercial and industrial zones should be to

maximize the number of people employed per unit area. Allowing a mix of retail commercial and offices or even residential uses in commercial centers will help encourage multi-story development and bring more people together to create economic activity. Zoning standards that limit building height and

coverage area should be reviewed and modified to allow the construction of multiple-story buildings in areas where this type of development is desirable. Access to major transportation corridors and public investment should be provided to create activity in

commercial and business centers that makes multi-story development economically feasible.

2. Create a task force to evaluate standards for parking requirements and recommend measures to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking.

Parking requirements for non-residential uses should be based on parking utilization studies that determine how much parking is actually needed on a regular basis. Parking utilization studies can provide an important analysis of how parking space is utilized over time. These studies can be used to determine the total amount of parking necessary for a particular area and develop other strategies for improving parking availability such as time-enforced parking and separate employee parking areas.

Current parking standards within Fresno generally require one space per 200 square feet



Dann Burdick

Excessive parking requirements can create vast areas of wasted space in our urban centers.

of retail commercial space. This has resulted in acres of parking lots that are only fully utilized during the holiday shopping season. A number of other communities around the country have found that one parking space per 300-350 square feet of floor area is an adequate amount of parking for many commercial uses. On-street parking should also be incorporated into the calculation of total parking requirements.

3. Encourage shared use of parking facilities and promote planning for uses that

can utilize the same parking area at different times.

The Urban Land Institute has performed a number of parking utilization studies for a variety of commercial uses and found that there are a number of opportunities for reducing total parking requirements through cooperative parking agreements or creating mixed-uses on the same site. For example, peak use of parking for offices is at mid-day while peak use for restaurant and entertainment is in the evenings. By combining these uses on the

same site, the total parking requirement can be reduced. Other opportunities for conjunctive use of parking facilities exist between churches and schools or hospitals; and between various types of commercial uses such as offices, hotels, restaurants, retail stores, and commercial services.

4. Encourage parking structures for certain commercial/industrial projects and establish parking fees that make these structures profitable.

Parking structures should be encouraged in commercial and business centers where pedestrian activity and a diversity of goods and services are desired. Concentrating automobiles in structures reduces the distance between individual business and buildings concentrating activity into a smaller area. Parking structures are particularly suited to multi-story development and retail commercial centers. In

“The planning and public works staff should be provided with incentives and political support to be creative and supportive of a process that will result in marketable increases in urban density.”

order to make parking structures attractive to developers, parking fees and demand for spaces must be structured to create a profitable enterprise. Fees for public parking structures and on-street parking should be commensurate with the fees that private facilities must

charge to make a reasonable profit.

CREATING LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS AND ACHIEVING URBAN INFILL

Quality-of-life issues are an integral part of livable communities. Not only is it incumbent upon a local jurisdiction to plan for the projected growth in its population, its planning efforts should consider strategies that will nurture a sense of community among its residents. Community spirit comes from a sense of belonging - of being part of an integrated environment. The built environment can play an enormous role in contributing to a community's spirit. Based on this notion, we envision a community comprised of well-planned and designed neighborhoods where housing, schools and parks are within easy walking distance of transit facilities which, in turn, link residents to job opportunities and community services.

There is a growing movement across the country to create livable communities that are designed for people rather than automobiles. This movement is often described as “neo-traditional planning” or “new urbanism” and its tenets are best described in a document entitled “The Ahwahnee Principles.” We agree with many of the planning principles offered by this movement and specifically recommend the following policies to encourage compact growth, urban infill, downtown redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization.

New Residential Development

Livable communities can be created both in new residential development and in existing neighborhoods. On the urban edge, they can replace traditional low-density development,

which perpetuates segregation of land uses, discourages the use of alternative transportation modes such as walking, bicycling and transit and increases the need for automobile travel.

Infrastructure costs and environmental impacts are far less per housing unit when compact development in livable communities is encouraged.

1. Encourage nodes of higher housing densities (village centers) in areas served by the full range of urban services—neighborhood commercial uses and community centers, public services, and transit stops.

Livable neighborhoods focus on the human scale and promote a healthier community structure. The fundamental structure of the livable neighborhood is nodal. It consists of a core commercial area, with civic and community facilities, transit, and a flexible mixture of housing, jobs and public space surrounding it. A mixture of uses in the village center creates diversity that naturally make it a vibrant center of activity where neighbors come together in a pedestrian-friendly environment. Concentrating stores, services, and housing in the center of the neighborhood encourages people to get out of their cars by allowing them to walk to a variety of destinations.



Dan Burden

Neo-traditional communities such as the Kentlands in Maryland incorporate many of the Ahwahnee Principles.

2. Develop transit- and pedestrian-oriented design guidelines and incorporate these design guidelines into specific plans.

By encouraging the village concept, nodes of higher housing densities will develop around village centers that can feasibly support a public transportation network. Creating patterns of growth that will support public transportation systems is essential for these options to remain open to us in the future. Land use planning that incorporates existing and future transportation and transit networks will provide the foundation upon which a viable transit-oriented city can be built. We must develop transit- and pedestrian-friendly design guidelines that link village centers together and make them attractive places to visit and walk through.

Transit- and pedestrian-oriented design guidelines would provide a consistent model for creating the network of livable neighborhoods that build a community. These guidelines would ensure that nodes of higher density development would be of high quality and compatible with more traditional subdivisions surrounding them.

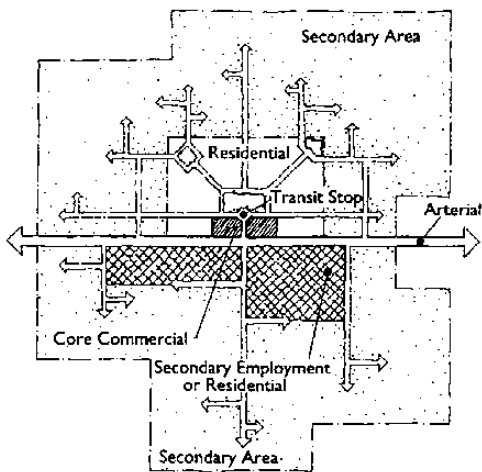
3. Adopt a Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance that can serve as an alternative to the standard zoning ordinance and overlay this district over all single family, multiple family and neighborhood commercial zone districts.

A number of alternatives to rigid zoning ordinances have been developed around the state and the country to make compact growth and mixed use more feasible. These ordinances also create a better process for approving projects that incorporate the Ahwahnee Principles. Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinances have been developed in a number of communities around the country to facilitate neo-traditional designs that incorporate smaller lot configurations, reduced setback requirements, and narrower streets. These ordinances have sometimes been developed as an alternative to existing zoning ordinances. The developer then has the option of utilizing the design criteria in either ordinance for planning his project within designated areas where the alternative standards may be applied.

4. Revise local street development standards to reduce the overall width of the street right-of-way to a maximum width of 50 feet and reduce the corresponding turn-around width of cul-de-sacs.

Street design for developing neighborhoods should consider scaling down current design standards in favor of narrower, more pedestrian-friendly streets. Wide streets encourage speeding and are difficult and dangerous to cross on foot. Too often we see local streets being retrofitted with speed bumps to discourage speeding. Street construction and maintenance costs can be lowered significantly by designing neighborhood streets which promote “traffic calming” rather than high speeds.

The Institute of Transportation Engineers recently published *Traditional Neighborhood*



Peter Calthorpe Associates

Village centers create nodes of commercial services and higher density that can be linked together to form a transit network.

Development Street Design Guidelines (June 1997). These guidelines were developed to address the role of streets in livable communities. These guidelines make a strong case for reducing the width of local streets in appropriate settings: where traffic volumes are low and use by large vehicles is intermittent. Two-way traffic and on-street parking can be accommodated on a street that has a pavement width of as little as 26 feet. These narrow streets have the effect of reducing traffic speeds significantly and bring houses closer together to create more social interaction between neighbors.

Existing Neighborhoods

Livable communities can also be created in existing neighborhoods and can become the cornerstone for neighborhood revitalization. Identifying neighborhoods and orienting their focus toward existing centers can give residents a greater sense of belonging to a community. Improving the structure of existing neighborhoods is an essential ingredient in encouraging investment for infill development on vacant or underutilized parcels of land. Infill development can accommodate a significant amount of Fresno County's population growth; however, a number of barriers must be overcome before this can occur.

"Improving the structure of existing neighborhoods is an essential ingredient in encouraging investment for infill development on vacant or underutilized parcels of land."

There are many reasons why developers prefer to build on raw land. Often, the cost to develop on raw land is considerably less than infill

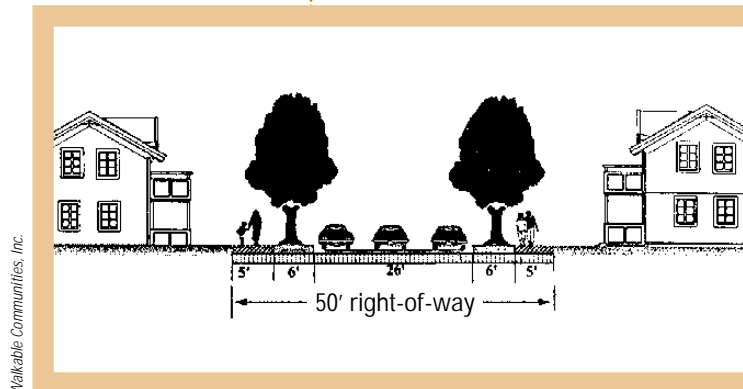
development. Some of the added expense of infill development is related to the fact that infill projects are usually smaller in scale but have the same amount of overhead costs and permitting fees. Other costs relate to potential toxic contamination; bringing older buildings into compliance with modern building codes; and the expense of buying land for parking in developed areas.

In addition, infill projects often meet with vocal neighborhood opposition and can have reduced marketability due to inner-city locations.

Infill projects are often considered "risky" by lenders, and are sometimes served with inadequate or outdated infrastructure.

While these impediments to infill development are serious, they are not insurmountable if a

concerted effort to overcome them is made by local government, developers, and financial institutions. If we are to accommodate any significant percentage of Fresno County's population growth within existing urban areas, local governments must provide strong leadership for developing policies and programs that create incentives for infill development and redevelopment. We recommend the following policies to encourage infill development and revitalization of existing neighborhoods.



Designing narrower local streets can slow traffic speeds dramatically eliminating the need for speed bumps.

1. Retrofit existing neighborhoods to create activity centers or nodes that give the neighborhood an identity.

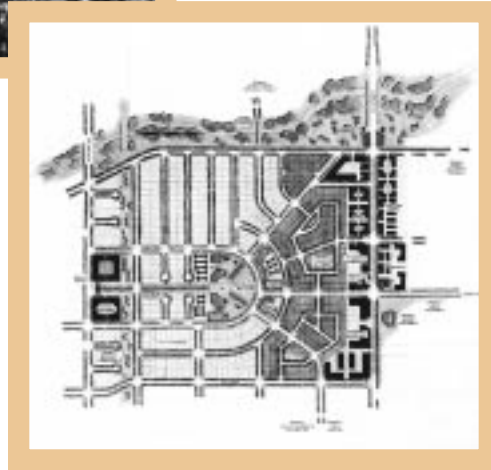
Urban areas should represent a fabric of identifiable neighborhoods woven together to build a city that is stronger than the sum of its parts. Unfortunately, land use patterns over the last 40 years have promoted communities that are homogenous tracts of homes linked

together by commercial strips that have taken away all sense of place associated with neighborhoods. Neighborhood revitalization efforts should seek to promote a sense of belonging among the residents and instill community identity.



Del Paso Nuevo Mutual Assistance Network

The residents of Del Paso Heights in Sacramento formed a Mutual Assistance Network to develop plans to revitalize their neighborhood.



Community improvement and redevelopment efforts should attempt to identify natural neighborhoods at an appropriate scale for bringing local residents together. Where possible, existing focal points in the built

environment should be identified and improved to become full-service neighborhood centers. These focal points may include local school sites, existing service centers such as police and fire stations, public parks, pre-existing community centers. Neighborhood shopping centers with acres of underutilized parking areas are often good candidates for retrofit and redevelopment.

2. Preserve and enhance existing pedestrian- and transit-oriented neighborhoods by pursuing redevelopment that retains pedestrian orientation and promotes transit use.

When developing in older areas, it is important to maintain or create pedestrian connections. These connections can be in the form of sidewalks or independent paths, but they should be as direct as possible, joining new development with surrounding areas. These linkages will allow residents to walk to nearby stores, parks, schools, transit stops, community centers, friends and neighbors and other services they need in their daily lives. Directness of route is critical to encouraging non-motorized travel. If walls and fences create barriers, designs should be promoted to allow pedestrian access through those barriers. Gates in fences and breaks in walls often provide the incentive needed to walk or bicycle rather than drive a car.

3. Prepare neighborhood revitalization plans for areas suited for infill development and insist on public participation throughout the planning process. Further streamline the permitting

process and encourage public/private ventures to carry out these plans.

Retrofitting existing neighborhoods can only be accomplished by creating a constituency for change among existing residents and local government officials. This requires developing revitalization plans that have the support of the entire community as well as interested stakeholders. Individual infill projects should be incorporated into these plans, thereby reducing public opposition and giving developers and financiers the assurance that these projects are consistent with community goals and objectives. Once these plans are developed, all possible effort should be made on the part of local government to see that they are implemented. Incentives such as permit streamlining and fee reductions should be provided to attract private investment to the projects identified in the plans and public/private ventures should be created to implement the plans with as little bureaucratic interference and overhead cost as possible.

4. Re-designate vacant land for higher density uses or mixed use and provide incentives for assemblage of smaller parcels to create feasible infill projects that meet community goals and objectives.

Vacant and underutilized land should be identified and evaluated for its potential to provide additional housing and job

opportunities within each neighborhood. Development of these parcels at higher densities should be encouraged when this will not disrupt the fabric of existing neighborhoods. These parcels should be incorporated into neighborhood revitalization plans and marketed to potential infill developers.

Attracting developer interest often requires that parcels are large enough to generate an economic return. Therefore, it may be necessary to assemble several smaller parcels together to form a viable unit. Redevelopment

agency personnel and other interested parties should be encouraged to undertake creative strategies to assemble smaller parcels of land without having to resort to the use of eminent domain.

**Downtown
Redevelopment and
Commercial Centers**

The tradition of isolating different land uses evolved as a result of earlier practices which allowed heavy industry in close proximity to workers' housing. In response, zoning was established in an effort to protect the health, safety and welfare of those affected. Advances in transportation then led to suburban development and the continued separation of land uses. These events resulted in an auto-oriented society in which people commute great distances between their workplace, commercial centers and their homes. Job centers are often vacated at 5:00 PM and remain lifeless until 8:00 AM the next day.

“Retrofitting existing neighborhoods can only be accomplished by creating a constituency for change among existing residents and local government officials. This requires developing revitalization plans that have the support of the entire community as well as interested stakeholders.”

Current conditions such as highway congestion and air pollution have led us to reconsider some of our more traditional land use practices. Policies should be established which will protect existing downtowns and village

centers by bringing people back into these areas and creating activity that will make them desirable places to be. These policies would provide incentives for business to locate in established centers and for transit to provide access to those areas.

their long-term economic viability. This can only be accomplished if mixed-use development is permitted and encouraged. Developers should be allowed to apply mixed use zoning within existing multiple family, neighborhood commercial, and office zone districts. Mixed use should also be encouraged in village centers and transit nodes in developing areas.

2. Promote the downtown or village centers as the primary commercial and financial centers and provide social, institutional, and financial incentives to builders and businesses who are willing to locate in these centers.

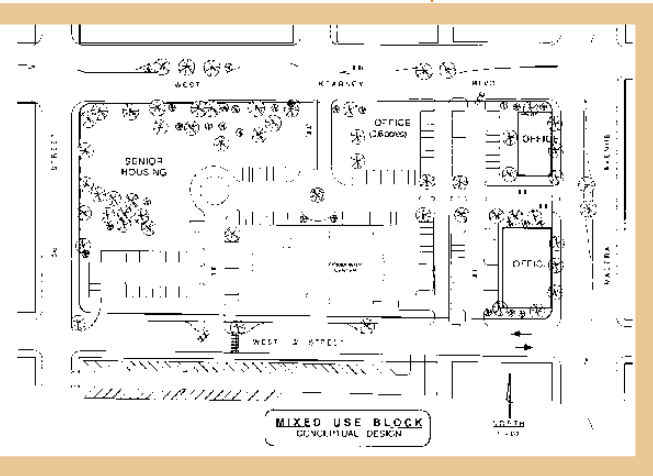
Downtowns and neighborhood commercial centers are a community's calling card. Vibrant and active downtowns indicate a healthy economy and quality-of-life that many employers seek when making decisions on where to locate. Boarded up storefronts, graffiti, and panhandlers create a number of negative images. Once downtown and neighborhood commercial centers have been identified and plans for their future have been developed, local government officials should make promoting and implementing these plans one of their highest priorities. City and county personnel should be encouraged to work closely with existing businesses, residents, infill developers and financial institutions to provide a full-range of commercial, business, and financial services that promote downtowns and village nodes as important employment and entertainment centers.

1. Create a mixed-use zone district that encourages the combination of residential, commercial, and office uses on the same site.

Mixing uses within an area can create the diversity and population density required to support an urban center. As development projects are planned, thought should be given to other services people using those developments might need. For example, a new office building can usually support a small restaurant or a convenience store. If an apartment building is located next door, the restaurant may be able to remain open for dinner. Diversity can be planned into a single building, among several buildings within a project site, or among several projects within a small area.

Providing a variety of housing choices within, or immediately adjacent to, existing downtowns and commercial centers is critical to maintaining

Incentives should be provided to make these centers cost-competitive with development of raw land on the urban edge and long-term



Kerman Planning Department

The City of Kerman adopted a mixed-use development ordinance to facilitate the development of offices, a community center, and housing for senior citizens in the same site.

commitment to these centers should be demonstrated to give investors confidence that their projects will be successful.

3. Improve transportation and public transit access to the downtown from all areas of the city.

In order for downtowns to be successful, people have to be able to get there easily, safely, and efficiently at all hours of the day. Downtown and neighborhood commercial centers must be major focal points of local and regional transportation plans and transit networks. Many observers feel that one of the main reasons that Fresno's Fulton Mall lost most of its major retailers was the failure to construct the planned freeway system in a timely manner and to provide housing opportunities nearby. Shopping centers closer to residential neighborhoods became more accessible to shoppers who had to travel on the existing network of surface streets. Improving access to downtowns and making them a desirable destination is essential for their long-term economic viability.

4. Maintain Fresno's downtown as the government center for the region by encouraging all local, state, and federal governmental offices to locate there.

With recent improvements to the transportation system, downtown Fresno is accessible to a majority of Fresno County residents. Current freeway construction will make downtown

Fresno more accessible to residents of northeast Fresno and Clovis and many of the other cities in the county can easily access it from the Highway 99 corridor. Fresno's designation as the county seat makes downtown Fresno a logical hub for a civic center that provides a full range of public and civic services to the entire region. All local, state, and federal government agencies should make a commitment to locate their offices in downtown Fresno. City officials should meet regularly with agency directors to ensure that their needs for suitable office space can be accommodated in the downtown area.

"Providing a variety of housing choices within, or immediately adjacent to, existing downtowns and commercial centers is critical to maintaining their long-term economic viability."

Institutional Uses

Institutional and public land uses such as hospitals, parks, school sites and even stormwater drainage basins are important components in the fabric of livable communities. These

facilities can be important focal points for neighborhoods and communities; but, are often developed as isolated, single-purpose projects. The increasing cost of land, construction and delivery of urban services make it imperative to develop creative strategies for providing a variety of community services on a single site. Collaborative efforts will become more common



Clovis Redevelopment Agency

The City of Clovis has revitalized its downtown through cooperative efforts of the City and downtown merchants.

as steps are taken to achieve compact and efficient land use patterns. We recommend the following strategies to initiate these collaborative efforts between cities and other public institutions.

1. Work with school districts to incorporate school sites into larger neighborhood activity centers that serve multiple purposes.

Because school sites are a community focal point, they may be able to provide a natural co-location for such related activities as child care, neighborhood parks and other community services. We recommend approaching the Fresno Compact, a roundtable of educators and employers, to request their assistance in examining the potential for more extensive utilization of school sites.

“The increasing cost of land, construction and delivery of urban services makes it imperative to develop creative strategies for providing a variety of community services on a single site.”

2. Incorporate institutional and public land uses into downtown redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization plans.

Sites for proposed institutional facilities and expansion of existing facilities should be integrated into the fabric of livable neighborhoods. To the extent possible, these sites should serve multiple functions vital to needs of the community. For example, a proposed community recreation center might also be able to house a medical clinic, a police substation, day care and a variety of other public services that are accessible to the entire neighborhood. Delivery of these services could be provided either by government agencies or by private enterprise. Regional facilities, such as hospitals, should also be located in village nodes that access the broader transportation network while remaining accessible to local residents.

STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING AND DIRECTING GROWTH AWAY FROM IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL LANDS

The ability to protect prime farmland and the natural resources necessary for agricultural production is intricately linked to our pattern of urban growth. Compact growth patterns and infill development will slow the pace of farmland conversion on the urban edge; but cannot, in and of themselves, stop the loss of productive farmland. A conscious planning effort to direct growth away from our best farmland and to protect water supplies and other natural resources essential for agriculture must be undertaken in order to minimize the impact of future development. Specifying agricultural areas to be protected and areas available for future growth will provide consistency for both farmers and developers in accommodating anticipated population increases and economic development.

We recommend the following specific actions to protect productive farmland from conversion to urban uses:

1. All of the Cities in Fresno County should adopt an agricultural element in their general plan.

“The process of establishing urban limit lines must also ensure that there is enough land available to provide housing to meet projected population demand . . . this can be done by providing an avenue for growth away from important farmland resources or by creating a boundary that is administratively expandable once a certain level of population growth occurs.”

An agricultural element is an optional general plan element that a number of jurisdictions have adopted to comprehensively address agricultural resources and policies for farmland protection within their jurisdiction. This has the effect of giving policies for farmland protection as much weight as other policies and objectives in the plan. Within areas designated for agricultural use by the general plan and within agricultural zone districts the policies of the agricultural element should prevail over other general plan goals and objectives. Land designated for agricultural use should not be converted to other uses unless there is a compelling need.

Specific policies that should be incorporated into an agricultural element include, but are not limited to:

- adoption of strong right-to-farm ordinances that protect a farmer’s ability to produce crops adjacent to urban land uses;
- protection of farmland from encroachment by incompatible land uses;
- maintenance of parcel sizes that are economically viable for commercial agriculture;
- protection of agricultural water supplies; and
- the creation of large, contiguous areas of agricultural lands that are capable of supporting the long-term economic viability of agriculture in Fresno County.

2. Do not rezone any more land for rural residential development until the current inventory of designated land is exhausted.

Extensive areas of rural residential development exist throughout Fresno County. This style of “ranchette” development divides land into

parcels that are too small for commercial agricultural production or for further subdivision into urban residential development. There are presently more than 7,400 vacant parcels ranging from 1.5 to 10 acres in size in Fresno County. These parcels occupy approximately 36,000 acres of land.

Another 11,800 acres of land has been designated for rural residential development but has yet to be divided into ranchette-sized parcels.

Much of the land designated for rural residential development is not well suited for irrigated agriculture. However, this is often the same land on which urban growth should be directed in order to protect productive farmland. We can no longer afford to waste more land on rural residential development, especially when there is a significant inventory of land and lots available.

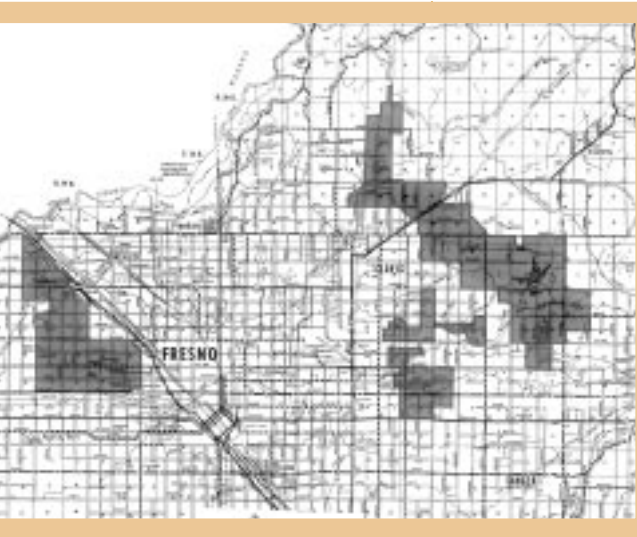
3. Within city spheres of influence, encourage an orderly outward expansion of new urban development while providing for new towns and community planning that creates new patterns of compact growth.

Growth in existing urban areas should be directed to areas that can be most efficiently served with new infrastructure and that causes the fewest impacts to important agricultural land and the natural resources essential to agriculture. Development of land that is not contiguous with existing development should be discouraged by land use policies in the general plan and by developing a fee structure that increases as development moves away from the urban edge. Nevertheless, policies directing growth toward existing urban areas should not preclude the county or cities from considering proposals for planned communities that direct growth away from prime farmland and that meet other objectives for compact growth discussed in this paper.

Analysis of new development proposals should also evaluate the impacts on agriculture resulting from local changes in water demand and increased need for disposal of sewage and solid waste. For example, will the project require a city to expand its wastewater treatment facility, thereby resulting in conversion of prime farmland?

4. Undertake a process that leads to the adoption of a reasonable urban limit line/urban growth boundary that provides an adequate supply of land to meet projected demand and is administratively expandable.

We encourage the cities and the county to initiate a process for establishing where future urban growth will be allowed to occur and areas or districts in which productive farmland will be protected. Urban limit lines should be established to prevent urban encroachment into



Large areas of land around the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area designated for rural residential development should be fully utilized before additional land is approved for such uses.

designated farmland areas for an identified time interval (i.e. 20 years). All stakeholders and the community-at-large should be included in the discussion; and, there must be broad agreement on the location of urban limit lines and designated agricultural protection areas. The process must also ensure that there is enough land available to provide housing to meet projected population demand, but should not be such a large area that it encourages premature farmland conversion. This can be done by providing an avenue for growth away from important farmland resources or by creating a boundary that is administratively expandable once a certain level of population growth occurs.

5. Create a forum in which multi-jurisdictional land use planning between Fresno County and its cities can be achieved.

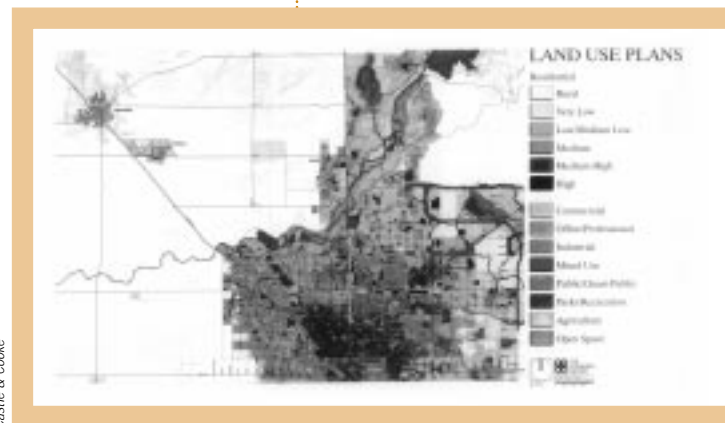
It is critical that decisions regarding land use and farmland protection be coordinated among all of the jurisdictions in the county. If a city designates an urban limit line or decides to direct growth in a particular direction to protect valuable agricultural resources, the county and other cities in the area must implement complimentary land use policies for these designations to be effective. Local land use planning decisions must also compliment the creation of regional transportation networks that link smaller communities together and

provide access to the Fresno metropolitan area and the Interstate 5 and Highway 99 corridors.

Regional cooperation on land use issues can only occur when all of the jurisdictions in Fresno County participate in an open dialogue that does not threaten any entity's ability to make independent decisions. The Council of Fresno County Governments could provide an appropriate forum for exchange of land use planning policies between jurisdictions without creating a new layer of regional decision-making authority.

We urge the CFCC member agencies to convene discussions among their planning staffs and industry stakeholders.

We also recommend that planning commissions and elected officials create a unified land use plan that has the support of all of the city and county governments in the region. Since a significant amount of the growth within the Fresno Metropolitan Area may actually occur north of the San Joaquin River, the City of Madera and Madera County should also be invited to participate in any discussions of regional land use issues.



Castle & Cooke

Recent development proposals north and east of Fresno and Clovis make the need for multi-jurisdictional planning obvious.

CONCLUSION

Until 1950, Los Angeles County was the top-producing agricultural county in the United States; however, urban sprawl and an exploding population decimated their agricultural economy as orchards and vineyards were bulldozed to make room for tract homes and strip malls

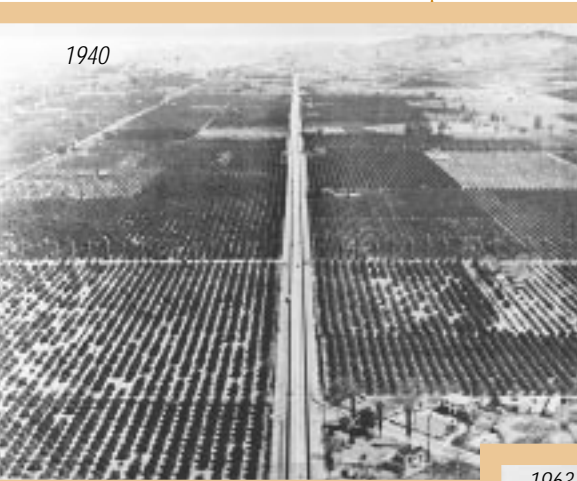
along eight lane boulevards designed to accommodate automobiles rather than people. Many have remarked that they don't want Fresno to become another Los Angeles with its poor air quality, inner-city crime, racial tension and lack of community spirit. Yet, we have taken few positive steps to prevent this from happening.

believe that the community will benefit greatly from such change. In order to accomplish these objectives, we must create a constituency for change that recognizes the benefits of the planning principles contained in this report and that is committed to taking appropriate action.

Planning policies and development standards must give developers the opportunity to build innovative new housing products. Incentives must be provided to encourage infill development. Local governments must provide political and financial support for implementing these policies and the public must be engaged in the process of planning for a stronger community.

The Fresno Growth Alternatives Alliance has spent a year reviewing land use policies in Fresno County and has developed a common vision for future growth. The policies and recommendations presented in this paper reflect our consensus and are a blueprint for creating the changes necessary to evoke the vision. As participants, the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley, American Farmland Trust and Fresno Business Council are firmly committed to the adoption and implementation of these planning principles.

We encourage local elected officials, planning commissioners, city and county personnel, and the public at-large to review these planning principles and adopt them as their own. In the



1940

West Covina was transformed from a rural farming community to a urban city in less than 20 years.



1963

Changing land use patterns to create compact and efficient growth; building stronger pedestrian-based neighborhoods and directing growth away from productive agricultural resources may seem like a daunting task. Nevertheless, the Fresno Growth Alternatives Alliance and its member organizations strongly

coming year, representatives of the Growth Alternatives Alliance will present our vision to all of the local governments in Fresno County and in public workshops. It is our hope that these discussions will lead to positive action toward building a healthy, diverse, and vibrant community and economy.

The pattern of growth we choose now will certainly affect the economic health and quality-of-life of the Valley for many years to come. It is imperative that local leaders plan adequately to accommodate anticipated population growth, utilizing state-of-the-art planning processes to protect the region's

valuable agricultural resources, while still providing affordable housing and employment opportunities to fully meet the demands of the expanding population base.



Khaled AlKorab

“A community is an economy: the two are one and the same... a web of practical interrelationships between neighbors who understand their mutual dependency and honor it by competently caring for their work, their town, their offspring, and each other.”

James Howard Kunstler

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1980 National
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March 26, 1998

The Fresno County Farm Bureau believes that *A Landscape of Choice* should be very influential in long term land use planning in Fresno County. Some of the themes guiding the report involve the reduced conversion of agricultural land to urban uses, increased urban densities, increased efficiencies in urban and rural infrastructures, a stronger sense of community and the revitalization of decaying urban core areas. Some of the recommendations will directly impact rural residents, others will indirectly affect farmers through the quality of life that will be present in the community as a whole.

Throughout the preparation of this document, the importance of individual landowner's private property rights and responsibilities have been considered. The Fresno Chamber of Commerce, The Business Council, the Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley, the American Farmland Trust, and the Fresno County Farm Bureau have formed a unique coalition in support of common goals for the community. All of these organizations have their own independent experiences that approach land use decisions from many varied perspectives. The strength of the Growth Alternative Alliance lies in the unique coalition of divergent philosophies.

The County of Fresno and many of the cities are in the process of developing general plans. The Fresno County Farm Bureau strongly supports the concepts presented in *A Landscape of Choice* and encourages all of our local leaders to join in the development of a thriving and livable community.

Sincerely,


Phil Larson
President



FRESNO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

March 10, 1998

At the February 18, 1998 Board of Directors' meeting of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, the Board adopted a document identifying future strategies for the growth of the Fresno metropolitan area. The recommendations developed out of a year of meetings with representatives from the Fresno County Farm Bureau, the Building Industry Association, the Fresno Business Council, the American Farmland Trust, and the Fresno Chamber of Commerce.

There was considerable support for the recommendation, and after much discussion, the Board unanimously agreed to add the following four principles:

1. That the City of Fresno and other urban centers continue to be the primary center of commerce and residential development in the Central Valley;
2. That the primary solution to low median income, high unemployment, and a population heavily dependent upon government is a vibrant economy with growth in employment;
3. That a healthy downtown and livable neighborhoods depend upon a well-conceived and consistently implemented, planned process, which provides a variety of residential and commercial options people desire;
4. That appropriate government agencies cooperate to ensure that productive farmland is not prematurely converted into non-agricultural uses, while recognizing that non-farm growth is inevitable and desirable.

The Fresno Chamber of Commerce subscribes to many of the very basic principles described in this report, such as:

- Our farmland needs to be preserved;
- We need to increase the density of our city;
- We need to do a better job providing for mass transportation and developing our neighborhoods.

Following these initiatives will lead to more successful redevelopment in our cities and will insure that Fresno County remains the number one agricultural producing county in the nation.

The Board of Directors commends the efforts of the Growth Alternative Alliance in their efforts to improve the quality of life in Fresno County and pledges our support to promote the implementation of these strategies whenever and wherever possible.


Anne Speake
President



Building Industry Association
of the San Joaquin Valley

The Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley (BIA) has been pleased to participate in the Fresno County Growth Alternatives Alliance and heartily encourages the adoption of its land use recommendations by Fresno County governmental agencies. The final report, *A Landscape of Choice: Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth*, identifies many specific state-of-the-art land use policy recommendations that will help to insure an improving quality of life for Fresno County residents for many years to come. BIA is committed to several guiding principles that are consistent with the report's recommendations:

- government has a primary responsibility to assist private enterprise in the creation of adequate affordable shelter to meet the needs of every Fresno County resident, requiring the annual creation of a very diverse mix of housing product;
- anticipated local population growth should be accommodated through innovative and cost-effective community planning activities;
- the San Joaquin Valley suffers from unacceptably high rates of unemployment and low median family incomes, which must be remedied through economic diversification and job creation; and
- private property rights and natural market forces must always be respected and considered by governmental agencies when planning for future community needs.

While considering the recommendations of the report, it is equally important to note what the report does *not* say. It is in no way a document that promotes elitist concepts of no-growth or limited-growth. Instead, the report firmly advocates proper community planning to fully accommodate projected Fresno County population increases and desired economic expansion.

Today, more than ever, Fresno County residents are willing to make great sacrifices to own a home. Further, local consumers choose what to buy and where to live, based upon factors such as safe neighborhoods, good schools and proximity to jobs. Government sponsored schemes to "free" local residents to live in certain areas by limiting other choices won't work. Instead, consumers must be *enabled* to choose options that are beneficial to the entire community. This report does just that by documenting a series of land use recommendations that will add to the local quality of life, improve local housing affordability, and facilitate a robust local economic expansion.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Morris
Chief Executive Officer

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The Fresno Business Council

March 3, 1998

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Upon review of the Fresno County Growth Alternatives Alliance consensus report entitled *A Landscape of Choice: Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth*, the Board of the Fresno Business Council endorses the principles contained in the document and commends the participants of this collaborative endeavor. We feel privileged to have been a part of that collaborative and believe that through such efforts, the various sectors within our community will be successful in developing solutions to the many challenges we currently face. Population growth, and how our community accommodates that growth, is certainly one of those challenges. The three main themes within the report first promote the efficient use of land, developing livable communities, and protecting important agricultural land all provide a sound basis for the recommendations. These principles also lend themselves to maintaining our traditional economic base while building communities that place a high value on neighborhoods and all of the positive attributes that term implies. The encouraging regional cooperation in planning the report recognizes the importance of collaboration in addressing the issues that exist across political boundaries.

We encourage the report's proposed approach of soliciting the support of all the governing bodies throughout the county and applaud the attention to participate in workshops aimed at educating the general public. Well-informed constituencies will be better prepared to participate in the process that will lead to healthier communities.

Sincerely,

Richard Johnson
President

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