

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW YOUR PAST, LOOK INTO YOUR PRESENT CONDITIONS. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW YOUR FUTURE, LOOK INTO YOUR PRESENT ACTIONS.

Buddhist Saying

Stanislaus' elected officials settle for their current General Plan goals — essentially setting the status quo as a goal.

*OPINIONS – The Modesto Bee
November 14, 2008*

Here's what we wrote in this space two years ago this month:

"The local councils of governments in the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley have begun an ambitious, yet promising, effort to map a better future for valley residents. The goal is to draw up a San Joaquin Valley Blueprint that would be adopted – and followed – by all of the valley's counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern."

Ah, we were so naïve. We thought elected officials — we hesitate in this instance, to call them leaders — in Stanislaus County would want to think regionally and wisely on where to put the 3 million additional people the valley is expected to have over the next 40 years.

But when it comes to land-use planning, Stanislaus officials don't like being told what to do, especially by the state. They say they want to protect farmland and reduce traffic congestion, and they frequently blame their predecessors for poor planning.

But when decision time came, county supervisors and representatives from each of the nine cities — who comprise the Stanislaus Council of Governments policy board — would not agree on a goal for more housing units per acre, even a moderate goal of having 27 percent of new housing be multifamily.

Instead, they unanimously agreed Wednesday that their "preferred conceptual growth scenario" for the county is what is contained in their existing General Plans. That's what they'll submit to a valleywide summit in late January.

The Blueprint Process offered an opportunity to move beyond provincial thinking. The plan was for widespread community input in identifying the values and the visions shared by valley residents. In some counties that happened, but not in Stanislaus County, largely because most elected officials have no passion for it.

Stanislaus officials spent — or, as one might conclude, wasted — nearly \$300,000 of the state's money on this exercise. They also wasted the time of residents who attended workshops and meetings believing that their input might lead to change.

Ironically, immediately after approving a growth concept that calls for the status quo, the same officials voted to participate in the fourth year of the Blueprint Process, meaning they're signing on to the application for more money. You don't need money for changes you don't intend to make.

Stanislaus' conclusion will be disappointing to the valley counties that have taken the Blueprint Process seriously and have set aggressive goals for increasing housing densities. And, Stanislaus' status quo goal may not be acceptable to the state, which has in the past two years passed laws requiring better planning to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

Under the guise of maintaining local control, Stanislaus officials brushed aside the opportunity to exhibit vision, instead opting for narrow and short-term thinking. Not only was it disappointing, it also is a huge disservice to our county and the entire valley.



WE ARE WATCHING...

Merced County

www.co.merced.ca.us

The County completed 15 public meetings at 15 different locations for their general plan update process. The next step is staff review of public input and Council review. The Alternatives Report can be downloaded for the General Plan Update at: www.co.merced.ca.us/gpu/document.html

City of Merced

www.cityofmerced.org

High Speed Rail (HSR) is expected to contribute considerably to jobs and smart growth with the planning and construction of a new downtown station. The Merced HSR station is expected to cause economic revitalization to the downtown. Better use of existing infrastructure leads to less sprawl.

City of Livingston

www.livingstoncity.com

The City Council in October approved an exponential growth pattern when they approved an EIR and General Plan that is clearly not intended to promote smart growth.

Stanislaus County

www.co.stanislaus.ca.us

The lawsuit by the Building Industry Association of Central California, against the County's farmland mitigation ordinance, continues through the court process with an expected ruling in January or February 2009.

City of Modesto

www.modestogov.com

Citizen input from two workshops regarding farmland mitigation policies is under staff review and rec-

ommendations are expected for the City Council by year's end.

City of Riverbank

www.riverbank.org

The City Council held a public hearing on November 24, 2008 regarding farmland mitigation policy for their General Plan update. Considering the Council comments we can expect the update not to have language that will specifically cause farmland to be protected. To protect farmland will require project by project oversight to insure full mitigation for impacts on farmland.

Grading Smart Growth in the Valley

To see how your community was rated visit the Modesto Bee at: www.modbee.com/smartgrowth See the summary below for city growth in Stanislaus County.

Stanislaus LAFCO ANNUAL CITY ANNEXATION SUMMARY 2001-2010

CITY	Total Acres w/in City Limits 2000	NUMBER OF ACRES ANNEXED BY YEAR										TOTAL (YTD)
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
Ceres	4,466.03	426.14	--	--	87.33	--	1.00	23.48				5,003.98
Hughson	875.39	114.51	--	--	--	62.15	26.57	127.48				1,206.10
Modesto	23,166.72	--	24.40	18.33	95.56	20.00	--	--				23,325.01
Newman	1,238.74	157.83	--	--	--	--	--	--				1,396.57
Oakdale	3,205.81	--	--	--	--	--	--	688.58				3,894.39
Patterson	1,835.29	--	--	337.66	--	943.45	--	703.57				3,819.97
Riverbank	2,462.47	--	--	--	1.07	48.46	150.60	--				2,662.60
Turlock	8,607.12	1.84	380.58	--	282.15	--	116.89	1,312.66				10,701.24
Waterford	1,085.51	--	--	--	--	--	--	--				1,085.51
TOTAL	46,943.08	700.32	404.98	355.99	466.11	1,074.06	295.06	2,855.77				53,095.37



San Joaquin Valley BLUEPRINT

SAVE THE DATE
SUMMIT
 JANUARY 26, 2009

San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Summit **January 26, 2009 * 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. * Fresno Convention Center**

REGISTER ONLINE www.valleyblueprint.org

The San Joaquin Valley Blueprint brings together people from all eight San Joaquin Valley Counties - people like you who can make a difference. Be a part of history in the making and attend the upcoming San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Summit. This summit will be an opportunity for everyone concerned with the future of our region to come together to decide the public's recommendation for the regional Blueprint scenario.

Mark your calendar now and make sure you have the chance to voice your vision during this unprecedented regional planning process.

What is Smart Growth?

Communities across the country are facing tremendous challenges. Many of our towns and cities are growing faster than we can manage while others are looking for ways to jumpstart or restart stalled growth. Shortsighted planning often sacrifices the long-term fiscal health of our communities -- starving our established downtown businesses, overlooking existing investments in our older communities, eating up our farms and open spaces and damaging our environment while driving up the cost of housing and transportation and creating health and safety issues for seniors and for children.

Smart growth brings the benefits of more jobs, a broader tax base, reasonably priced housing and a healthy economy with fewer of the costs of poorly planned development. We can rebuild our existing communities and design new ones so that our children can grow up in healthy environments where

they can safely walk to school or to the corner store to get a Popsicle.

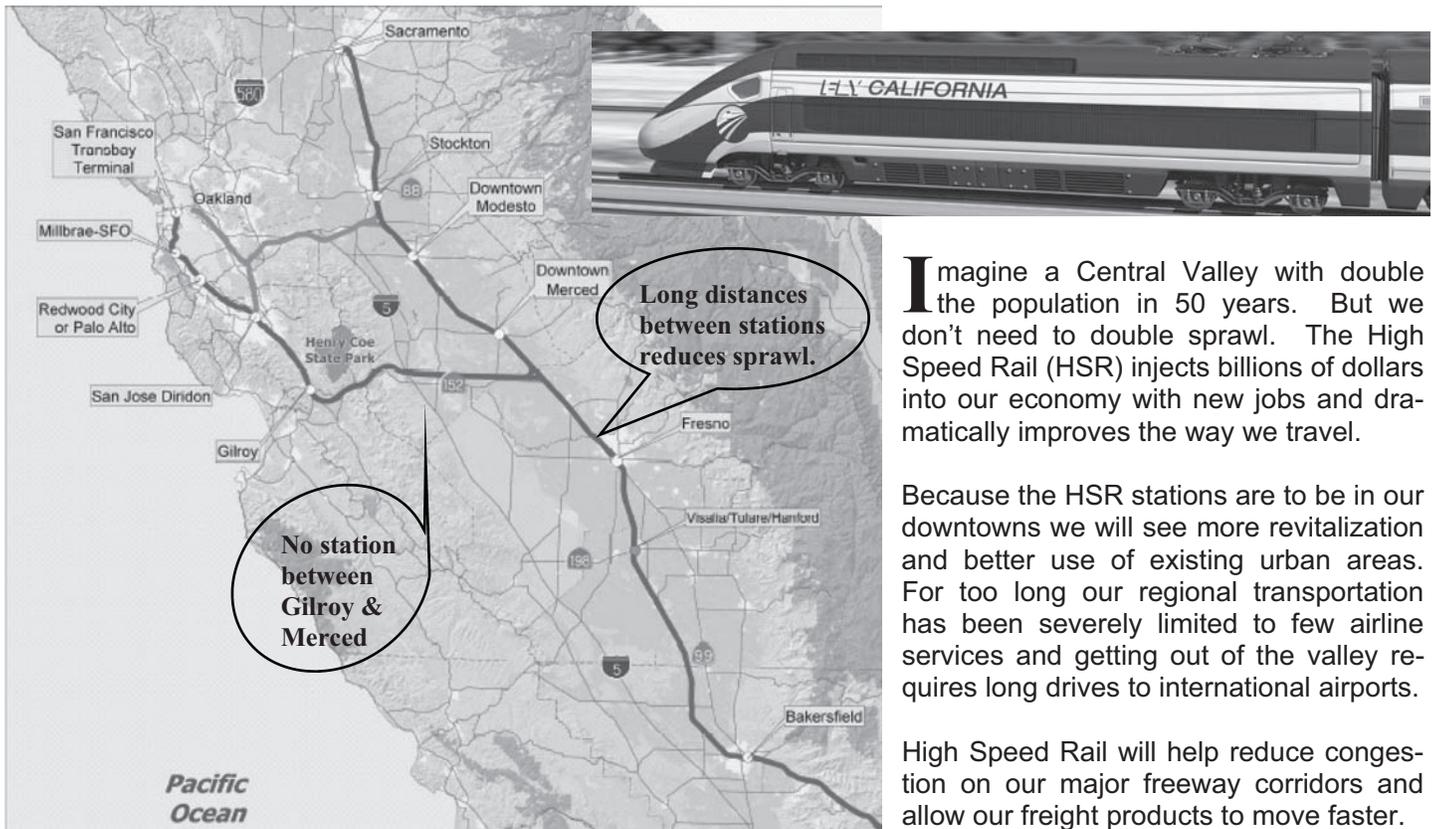
Getting there from where we are today can look like an overwhelming task. The good news is that a lot of the job can be done simply by allowing walkable, mixed-use development to happen. Removing regulatory obstacles is the first step in leveling the playing field so that development that meets our community's goals has an easier time than less well-planned growth. But many community leaders are overwhelmed by the tasks of changing the existing development patterns, overhauling outdated plans and rewriting laws and regulations.

As you begin the work of reviewing and revising your policies, standards, codes and zoning, remember that your role is NOT to be the keepers of the rulebooks but to be a steward of your community's future.

Smart growth seeks to achieve these seven goals :

Healthier, Safer Communities * Protecting the Environment * Better Access, Less Traffic
 Thriving Cities, Suburbs And Towns * Shared Benefits * Lower Costs, Lower Taxes
 Keeping Open Space Open

California High Speed Rail Preferred Northern Route



Questions & Answers

- **What is happening next?**
In February 2009 there will be Public Scoping meetings in Merced and Madera for input regarding placement of the downtown Merced HSR station and concerns such as the route corridor on/near Union Pacific right-of-way.
- **Where will we be able to travel from Merced by HSR when Phase I is completed?**
The downtown Merced Station will allow passengers to travel the entire length of the first route to/from downtown San Francisco and to/from downtown Los Angeles.
- **Are there other projects involved with HSR in our area?**
Yes. One of the preferred sites for a HSR Maintenance Yard is the former Castle Air Force Base near Atwater. This would bring many good paying jobs to the area.
- **How quick will HSR be?**
The Central Valley trains are projected to run at speeds in excess of 200 mph.
Examples of travel times:
Merced to San Francisco 1 hr 14 min
Merced to Bakersfield 52 min
Bakersfield to Los Angeles 54 min





President's Message

The Blueprint Process is an unprecedented effort to bring together public and private leaders and resources to make a difference for the San Joaquin Valley and the future of California. The Partnership Board includes 26 members appointed by the Governor, local boards made up of County Councils of Government (COGs),

Professional Planners and Blueprint Regional Advisory Committee (BRAC) members representing the eight counties. I serve on Stanislaus County's five-member BRAC. Over the past three years we met 6 times throughout the valley.

From mounds of written information, power point presentations and countless speakers, the 64 members of the BRAC have developed preferred scenarios and specific goals. Much work has been accomplished by this diverse group. I am encouraged by the many counties that established growth scenarios that leave behind status quo planning and create long-range plans for a viable and vibrant future. There are many planning issues that must be addressed: preservation of agriculture, impact on air quality, need for water storage, land use and mobility issues, patterns of growth and alternative energy sources.

As this is a bottoms-up process, the local community forums involve local citizens. Each county has scheduled Blueprint Community Workshops that draw citizens from every area of the county. What I have learned from the bottoms-up Blueprint Process is that growth must be addressed now. Long-range plans must not be circumvented by short-term and short-sighted local political choices. We still have time to choose our future.

About the Blueprint

The eight counties of the Central Valley – San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern – have embarked on a program to enhance regional and local-decision making through the involvement of all segments of the population as well as critical stakeholders in the valley communities. That's government speak for "Let's get together and talk about what we need to make our little piece of the world a better place."

Supported by a \$2 million grant from the State of California and a \$500,000 matching grant from the San Joaquin Valley Pollution Control District, each of the eight counties will receive approximately \$325,000 to conduct their piece of the program.

When the pieces are assembled into a valley-wide view, the "blueprint" that should emerge is one that will suggest how to foster more efficient land use patterns, which support improved mobility and reduce dependency on single-occupant vehicle trips; accommodate an adequate supply of housing for all incomes; reduce impacts on valuable habitat, productive farmland and air quality; increases resource efficiency and results in safe and vibrant neighborhoods.

Merced County Association of Governments is the lead agency for the eight-county effort and will collaborate with the other counties and the Great Valley Center in Modesto as the program moves forward.

What is the Goal of the Blueprint Process?

Many valley residents, agricultural interests, and community leaders feel there is a need to develop a vision for the valley that is long term and geographically broad. The goal of the SJV Blueprint is to develop a 2050 vision for the valley that is created and shared by its residents. The vision should be realistic and include the policy and program tools that will be incentives to local governments, business, and agriculture to implement the vision, not leave it on a shelf.



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December

IS MEMBERSHIP MONTH



When you renew or become a member
you receive a gift membership at no cost!

Our wishes for 2009 Our wishes for 2009 Our wishes for 2009

FARMLAND MITIGATION POLICIES FOR EVERY CITY • BUFFERS BETWEEN EVERY CITY • SMART GROWTH IN EVERY CITY • STANISLAUS ELECTED OFFICIALS RESPECTING CITIZEN INPUT • MERCED ELECTED OFFICIALS RESPECTING CITIZEN INPUT • MORE EFFICIENT LAND USE WITHIN OUR CITIES • MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING • WALKABLE COMMUNITIES • CLEAN AIR • MORE AND REAL REGIONAL PLANNING • CLEAN WATER • REAL FARMLAND PROTECTION • FARMLAND FOREVER IN OUR FUTURE • RESPECT OUR HERITAGE • FARMLAND MITIGATION POLICIES FOR EVERY CITY • BUFFERS BETWEEN EVERY CITY • SMART GROWTH IN EVERY CITY • STANISLAUS ELECTED OFFICIALS RESPECTING CITIZEN INPUT • MERCED ELECTED OFFICIALS RESPECTING CITIZEN INPUT • MORE EFFICIENT LAND USE WITHIN OUR CITIES • MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING • WALKABLE COMMUNITIES • CLEAN AIR • MORE AND REAL REGIONAL PLANNING • CLEAN WATER • REAL

Our wishes for 2009 Our wishes for 2009 Our wishes for 2009