



Fall 2004

STRIVING TO PROTECT FOOD, FAMILIES AND FARMLAND

## The Vision for Stanislaus County – Are We on Course?

Excerpts from *Visioning Process Moves to Action* by Dr. Tom Van Gronigan, Farmland Working Group Newsletter, Winter 2000

**W**ith an existing county population of over four hundred thousand and predictions of another ten million people expected to arrive in the Central Valley from all over the world within the next thirty years, how will we in Stanislaus County cope with the scale, complexity and pace of the changes?

The county wide visioning process was to create a vision for the future of the county based on collaboration and cooperation among local government. The visioning team developed statements that were distributed for public comment. With the public response from surveys and forums, the team revised the original statements.

The four-year process resulted in each of seven broad policy areas: land use, environment, economy, transportation, education, community and government. Each strategic vision is followed by a series of action statements. Reference to the importance of agriculture is woven throughout the vision document. The land use vision includes the following:

- Large expanses of agricultural land and other open space will secure buffers between urban areas and preserve the beauty of views and vistas throughout the County. Action statements include the following:
- Establish urban limit lines, providing for areas of open space, agriculture, very low density, rural development, or green belts in which urban development cannot occur.
- Conversion of rural areas into large urban residential communities will be avoided.

- The cities and County of Stanislaus will develop policies to maintain a strong agricultural economy including preservation of farming, food processing and agricultural business services. Ongoing research and analysis of the agricultural industry will be conducted in order to sustain it as a major economic engine and source of employment.
- Stanislaus County will serve as a hub for large-scale business and financial services such as agribusiness and other regional-serving facilities in the northern San Joaquin Valley.
- Expansion of other major economic sectors which are compatible with agriculture will be encouraged.
- Development of the abandoned military airfield at Crows Landing, including air cargo facilities to expand the market for Stanislaus County agricultural products will be achieved.
- Agreement on a county wide framework for implementation of the land use and transportation visions will be achieved.

Our Mission: To preserve the agricultural foundation of our region and promote smart growth in our urban communities through education, outreach and action.

# ***What's the Future for our Community?*** **Stanislaus County and its Nine Cities**

- |  |               |              |
|--|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Is the farmland in Stanislaus County important to protect?  | Yes <u>25</u> | No <u>0</u>  |
| 2. Does local government have a role in protecting farmland?   | Yes <u>25</u> | No <u>0</u>  |
| 3. Should voters have a “say” about urban growth?  | Yes <u>25</u> | No <u>0</u>  |
| 4. Does your local government require mitigation for loss of farmland?   | Yes <u>4</u>  | No <u>15</u> |
| Yes - Adams, Reed, Skavdahl, Hatcher   |               |              |
| No Response - Andre, Crifasi, Hillerman, Mastons, Noz, Paredes-Walsborn  |               |              |
| 5. Should urbanization on Valley floor farmland be limited?  | Yes <u>22</u> | No <u>2</u>  |
| No - DeMartini, Mastons  |               |              |
| No Response - White  |               |              |
| 6. Do you favor the use of urban limit lines?  | Yes <u>23</u> | No <u>2</u>  |
| No - Crifasi, DeMartini  |               |              |
| 7. Should cities establish urban limit lines to create agricultural buffers between communities to protect the most productive farmland? | Yes <u>23</u> | No <u>2</u>  |
| No - Crifasi, DeMartini  |               |              |
| 8. Do you favor state legislation to protect the most productive farmlands?  | Yes <u>17</u> | No <u>8</u>  |
| No - Adams, Crifasi, DeMartini, Dunlop, Hardie, Meyer, Reed, White   |               |              |
| 9. Is food security an important national security issue?  | Yes <u>25</u> | No <u>0</u>  |

## **These Elected Officials and Candidates Responded to our Survey:**

Greg Adams, Curt Andre, Sandra Benitez, Chris Crifasi, Thomas E. Crowder, Jim DeMartini, Tom Dunlop, Judy Ensley, Rob Hardie, Beverly Hatcher, Michele Hillerman, Ted Howze, Denny Jackman, John Lazar, Tom Mastons, Marc Meyer, Diane Noz, David Reed, Stephen Qualls, Britta Skavdahl, Charles Turner, Nelly Paredes-Walsborn, Billy Wallen, Dave White, Martin Yerby

## OVERWHELMING Support for *Vision*

**Based on this survey**, local candidates and elected officials are unanimous that our valley farmland is important to national security and needs protection by local governments. However, locally there is little dollar value charged for converting farmland to urban uses. In many California counties a fee is charged to convert production farmland to urban uses, these are known as mitigation fees. The monies acquired from these fees are used to purchase farmland that will be protected from urbanization.

Overwhelming agreement among our responders matched the Vision Statement that identified support for urban limit lines, agricultural buffers and state legislation to protect the most productive farmlands. These results are not surprising to us. Voter surveys for over 30 years have echoed similar calls to protect our most valuable farmlands.

With such a significant number of elected officials and candidates talking the talk, it seems reasonable that the public will begin to see local actions to protect our best farmlands. Stanislaus County and its nine cities should use every tool available to promote long range planning that protects prime farmland and grows smart communities.

Farmland Working Group encourages our elected officials to implement all the tools that are available for smart growth including: urban limit lines, farmland mitigation, regional planning and agricultural conservation easements. Turlock is the only city in Stanislaus County with an established urban limit line. Interestingly, Turlock's mayor and all four council members responded to our survey, the only city to do so. Mayor Curt Andre commented, "Ultimate success will depend on a statewide, cohesive and visionary plan for the best farmland and housing growth."

Farmland Working Group encourages our voting community to know each candidate's platform – if we are going to have "Smart Growth" we must vote "smart."

### **FWG Executive Board**

President - *Jeani Ferrari*  
Vice President - *Rudy Platzeke*  
Treasurer - *Audie Dahlgren*  
Secretary - *JoAnn DiGiovanni*  
Director - *Denny Jackman*

Farmland Working Group is a broad range of individuals committed to preserving the agricultural foundation of our region and promoting Smart Growth in our urban communities through education, outreach & action.

Scott Chance Carrico, Editor

*Many thanks to our sponsors for underwriting the cost of FWG's newsletter.*

**Dave Wilson Nursery  
Bank of America  
E & J Gallo Winery**

IN MEMORY OF

**Jim Reed**

*given by*

Joann DiGiovanni and  
Audie Dahlgren

### **These Elected Officials and Candidates Did Not Respond:**

Kathaleen Anaya, Ramon Bawanan, Ron Bishop, Steve Bradley, William Broderick-Villa, Nancy Brown, Michael Burns, Becky Campo, Anthony Canella, Zena Gilbert Chin, Roger Cogswell, Bart Conner, Andy Constantino, Mike Crinklaw, Bob Deklinski, Richard Dodds, Jane Drysdon, Bob Dunbar, John Fantazia, Barbara Gray, Jeff Grover, Paul Gutierrez, Carl Hagens, Brad Hawn, Kathryn Holloway, L. Farrell Jackson, Janice Keating, David Keller, Kenneth Krause, Pat Kuhn, Gerald Lederman, Curtis Lineberger, Charles Marquez, Gerrad Marsh, Robert Martina, Tom Mayfield, Richard McGinnis, Delinda Moore, Ken Moore, Lisa Mantarro Moore, Katherine Morgan, Denice Noel, Bill O'Brien, William O'Brien, William O'Bryant, Timothy Parker, Rob Phipps, Dennis Prouty, Kevin Ricks, Jim Ridenour, Phil Rockey, David Rodriguez, Jr., Betty Jo Rorabaugh, Ray Simon, Annette Smith, Barbara Swier, Laurie Taylor, Allen Trawick, Lee Ulloa, Kurt Vander Weide, Kathy Wright

FARMLAND WORKING GROUP  
P.O. Box 2646 ▪ Turlock, CA 95381



“In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”

-From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy



### President's Message — *Looking Back at our Future*

The Farmland Working Group published our first newsletter in Winter 2000. One of the articles was on the visioning process in Stanislaus County – *Visioning Process Moves To Action*, by Tom Van Gronigan. The process took four years to complete. “The implementation process will include inviting representatives from stakeholder groups and interested organizations to serve on committees to review each action statement and make recommendations on how they can or should be implemented... simultaneously performance indicators are being developed to measure progress over time.”

FWG recently sent a survey to all mayors, council members, supervisors and candidates in Stanislaus County. Five of the nine questions pertained to the action statements from the land use vision. Has the countywide vision been forgotten, or is it a roadmap to the future?

The survey results may give you an indication of how our elected officials and candidates view the visioning process. Will Stanislaus County become another Los Angeles County? How can we protect our best-irrigated farmland and grow a population projected to triple in the next forty years?

The Farmland Working Group believes that Stanislaus County needs a vision and elected officials who work to achieve its goals. ***Are we on course?***