

FARMLAND WORKING GROUP

Summer 2008

STRIVING TO PROTECT FOOD, FAMILIES AND FARMLAND

Growing Smart

A master planned affordable housing project is poised to relieve some of the conflicts between residential and industrial development in Modesto.

Archway Commons will replace a light industrial area that for many years was McClelland Lumber on property south of a heavy populated residential area between N. 9th St. and Carver Road.

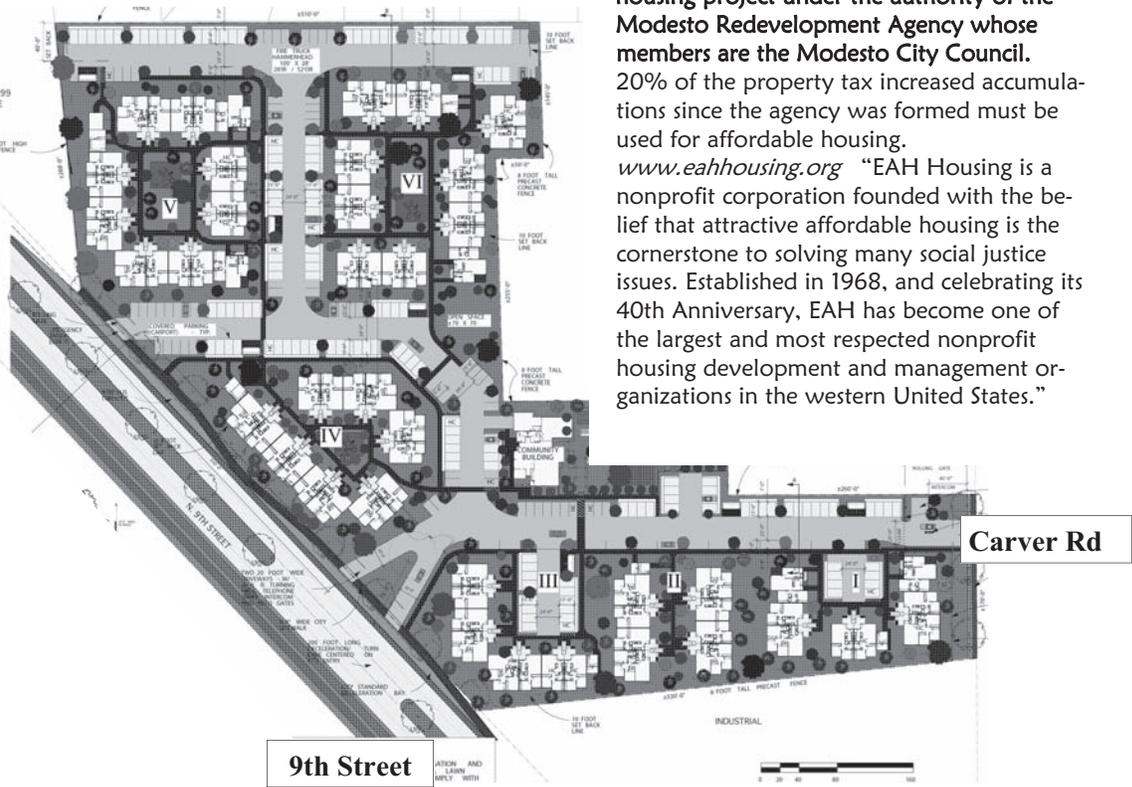
Modesto City Planner Josh Bridegroom says, *“The site plan is a 150-unit affordable housing development, comprised of two-story buildings. The buildings have been designed in clusters around open space courtyards that include tot lots to provide for a higher level of security for those using the common open space areas and to shield the open space areas from noise from SR 99 and 9th Street.”*

The design includes a clubhouse and swimming pool, as well as a larger open space area with BBQ’s and picnic benches for community gatherings.

The development is within a relatively short walking distance of the neighborhood shopping center on Carver anchored by Sam’s Food City. While the surrounding land uses are currently pre-zoned C-3 and M-1, the redevelopment master plan (and General Plan Update, by reference) call for the area to be developed with residential and neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

The project is currently on track to go before the Council in December of this year.”

Archway Commons is an EAH affordable housing project under the authority of the Modesto Redevelopment Agency whose members are the Modesto City Council. 20% of the property tax increased accumulations since the agency was formed must be used for affordable housing. www.eahhousing.org “EAH Housing is a nonprofit corporation founded with the belief that attractive affordable housing is the cornerstone to solving many social justice issues. Established in 1968, and celebrating its 40th Anniversary, EAH has become one of the largest and most respected nonprofit housing development and management organizations in the western United States.”



(Continued on page 4)

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



WE ARE WATCHING...

Merced County

At the August 13, 2008 Planning Commission meeting was a request to divide 240 acres into six 40 acre parcels and at the July meeting an 86.6 parcel was considered for a split as **the move toward more ranchettes continues.**

The Board of Supervisors has reversed course and abandoned its agreement with Riverside Motorsports Park (RMP) (June 2008)

For the RMP view visit:
rmpracing.com/fast_track_0708.pdf

For the Merced Farm Bureau view visit:
mercedfarmbureau.com/pdf/RMPRelease.pdf

Stanislaus County

Nearly 360 acres of farmland are on the August 21, 2008 Planning Commission agenda asking for eight 40 acre parcel splits. At the preceding Commission meeting another near 40 acres of prime farmland was approved for four 10 acre splits. It appears that the onslaught of ranchettes continues despite the negative effects on agricultural production as routinely voiced by Supervisor DeMartini

City of Modesto

The first workshop regarding the establishment of a city policy for farmland mitigation took place July 31 with about 35 people. A wide array of views were presented from "no mitigation" to "an acre/acre or greater" policy. Some participants claimed

an increase in farmable acreage while others lamented the loss of the best prime farmlands is of paramount concern.

More maps and a review of to-date inputs will be available at the next farmland mitigation workshop likely to be in November 2008.

Regardless of the outcome of local policies, the California Environmental Quality Act review and findings project-by-project establish the baseline for legal challenge.

California produces over half of the country's fruit, nuts and vegetables and a quarter of all food-stuffs consumed.

California Department of Conservation

2004-2006 Farmland Conversion in Stanislaus County: Irrigated Farmland to Urban Land—70 changes

Modesto/Salida- The largest total acreage change occurred in Modesto and Salida primarily for new homes, apartments, and schools additions. Housing additions included ~ 80 acre Rancho Encantato Estate development, as well as the ~ 30 acre Centex Homes and Brooks Landing Apartments. Conversions for schools and school playing fields were delineated in-

cluding ~20 acre. each for Big Valley Christian High School and Paradise School, ~ 40 acres for James Enoch High School, ~15 acre Brethren Heritage School and sports field and ~10 acres for Blaker-Kinzer Jr. High School playing fields. The addition of Kaiser Hospital and an adjacent retail nursery accounted for ~60 acres of change in Modesto.

Oakdale/Riverbank- Large additions of development include ~50 acres total for The Vineyard and The Reserve homes in Oakdale and ~50 acres for the Crossroads Shopping Center in Riverbank. Other additions delineated included ~25 acres for Sterling Ridge and Elwood Estate Homes and ~10 acres for Sequoia Gate Homes.

Turlock/Denair- Noteworthy conversions to urban land in these areas were ~140 acres for Ventana and Summerfield Homes and ~ 40 acres for Costco and Valero Gas off of Highway 99.

Patterson/Newman- In Patterson ~100 acres of change occurred with the addition of Kohl's and Longs Drug Distribution Centers, while Patterson Garden and Morrison Magnolia Homes accounted for another ~140 acres. Newman had ~30 acre addition of urban for Silver Oaks, Sherman Ranch, and Classic Park Village Heritage homes.

Ceres- ~ 60 acres were delineated for The Enclave, Meritage, and Kimball Hill Homes, as well as, ~40 acres For Ceres River Bluff Regional Park and ~20 acres for Whitmore Charter School.

Waterford- ~60 acres for Riverpointe Homes.



FWG 2008 High School Scholarship Winner Victoria Kennedy of Modesto High School

“Why is it important to conserve and/or mitigate farmland in California’s Central Valley?”



The United States is home to some of the world’s greatest natural resources from important minerals and natural gas to rich and varied environments. However, of all its resources, that which may be the most important can be found in California. The California Central Valley’s farmland is one of the most valuable and irreplaceable resources the United States possess.

Unfortunately, it is also one of the most endangered. Every year, hundreds of acres of valuable farmland are built over; robbing California of one of her most valuable possessions. In face of the threat which confronts farmland in the Central Valley, it is important that steps be taken in order to conserve and protect the valley’s irreplaceable natural treasure.

California is the largest producer of agricultural products in the United States generating over half of the country’s fruit, nuts, and vegetables and a quarter of all foodstuffs consumed. The Central Valley is the major producer with the richest soil in the world and ideal conditions for agricultural cultivation. As such, the loss of such a treasure could be highly detrimental to both the valley and the United States as a whole.

Unfortunately, the farmland is also seen as prime for housing and construction developments due to its affordability and accessibility. However, as purchases for housing developments increase, the price of farmland goes up as well, driving it beyond the means of farmers who could cultivate the land. This decreases production of important crops. While the impact of such may not be felt immediately, it is significant in the long term. It is projected that the country’s population will grow by 42% in the first half of this century, greatly increasing the need for food production. Without farmland the country will be unable to produce the food its people need. Building over farmland now threatens future production and food supplies, putting the country at risk. Complete reliance on foreign nations for food stocks would be parallel to the current dependence on the Middle East for fuel supplies; strained relations or questionable production methods could create a massive increase in prices and put the entire economy and population at risk.

Farmland also plays an important role economically. Agricultural products contributed more than 13% of the United States gross domestic product and employs 17% of the labor force. As other countries become more developed, the mar-

ket for American exports grows. Agricultural productivity has the potential of once again propelling the American economy and currency into global pre-eminence. Following each of the World Wars, the United States dominated the global economy largely due to its agricultural production. The United States fed Europe. As a country’s exports increase, its currency and economic power also increase; production and exportation produces economic strength. By conserving the farmland and emphasizing agricultural production the country’s future could be safeguarded.

Farmland also plays an important role environmentally. Agricultural land helps control flooding, absorb and filter water, help air quality, and recharge groundwater levels. There is also an increasing demand for crops which may be used to create renewable sources of fuel. Preservation of farmland also helps the protection of wetlands and their ecosystems. As development occurs, these lands are built over, destroying the habitat and the organisms which reside in it.

Irreplaceable wetlands such as the valley’s vernal pools which could coexist with ranch and grazing lands are destroyed by building developments.

Preserving farmland in California’s Central Valley becomes particularly important as the population continues to grow. While local farmland is often seen as ideal for construction due to its proximity to urban centers, this is not the most effective use of the land. By building over irreplaceable farmland now, developers are creating problems for the future. Rather than using farmlands, the valley should use non-arable land for construction. While this may seem inconvenient now, it will go far towards ensuring future security of food production in the years to come.

The Central Valley’s farmland is an invaluable resource which must be protected for future generations.

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Growing Smart

(Continued from page 1)

Long before the cost of a gallon of gasoline reached \$4 plus “Smart Growth” projects were taking shape. “Smart” usually means growing up and in before growing out. Just before the escalation in energy costs, runaway speculation drove land values and housing costs through the proverbial roof. Regardless of the driving force, residential, commercial, and industrial developers are creating ways to optimize their development dollars.

Infill: The Brownfield that once was a barium plant has the potential to be a “Technology Park.” The Kansas/Woodland Avenue Business Park is a centrally located Modesto site adjacent to Freeway 99 and the proposed Hwy 132 expansion. But it’s the information highway that makes this infill location so smart. “

Specifically, within 50 feet of the property, there are several fiber optic providers, leaving all four sides of the park surrounded by high density, competitive fiber optics. Within the park itself on its northern end is a Modesto Irrigation District (MID) 49.4 MW power generating facility. The significance of this cannot be overstated, as these address specific key elements required for a true technology park: Redundancy of fiber optics, redundancy of carriers/competitive choice, disparity of access, and sufficiency/quality of power.”

—City of Modesto.

Another infill project in downtown Modesto is expected to complete California Environmental Review by December 2008. Perhaps citizens will get a Christmas present with the announcement of a new high rise multi-purpose structure planned for 10th Street stretching from H to G Streets. The adornments within this structure may include retail and office space of 30,000 square feet each. Parking spaces will be shared; 295 between public parking (199) and residents. Yes, residents !

The building is to be one of the first major projects in downtown to include 65 condominiums. The retail area may have the feel of the Ferry Building on the San Francisco Wharf. Included will be shops to serve not only the public but the needs of its new homeowners. With the Gallo Center for the Arts right across the intersection this project is

sure to be a big hit with “Smart Growth” fans.

More Infill

From Steve Madison, Exec. Dir. of the Building Industry Association of Central California — “Hope Village is a 21 unit subdivision being constructed by Habitat for Humanity in West Modesto. The project is densely situated, making full use of the land to include minimum-width streets in order to accommodate the density; smaller yards but some shared green spaces at the subdivision entrance. We had the architect do the landscape design with native species plants and smaller yards to reduce water consumption per lot.



The homes will feature improved insulation and energy efficient appliances to reduce energy use. Each home will have a Photovoltaic cell to generate solar power for use in the home. Finally, the use of stucco is minimized in favor of siding using both a sustainable product but also to deflect heat; again, to have the homes be more energy efficient. The project is 21 single family units, none of the homes is larger than 1,400 square feet, the smallest home is about 990 square feet — all situated on 1.8 acres. It is an infill project. I think you will agree this is truly smart growth.”

(Continued on page 5)



President's Message

State legislators are attempting to connect the dots between energy use and planning: making the argument that where we build and how we build will impact everything from air pollution to dependence on foreign oil.

The language of smart growth is on the airwaves and in print daily. Locally, many cities are updating general plans. It will be the actions, and wisdom, of our city councils that will decide if we grow smart. There are signs of smart growth proponents. And there are signs that the proponents of smart growth are local leaders, elected officials, concerned citizens and many in the development community. Together we can grow smart.

(Continued from page 4)

The City of Turlock has embraced smart growth principles since the adoption of its current General Plan in 1993. The General Plan encourages a mix of uses and an urban design strategy that locates trip generators and trip attractors close to one another to reduce driving and encourage walking and bicycling.

Turlock's General Plan includes policies to preserve agricultural land and only annex land when needed for urban development. The growth management policy of the City reinforces this policy by requiring the development of master plans areas and encourages development of new master plans only when an existing master plan area has been substantially developed.

The City Design Element of the General Plan encourages compact development, the creation of urban-agricultural buffers, the preservation and restoration of the historic downtown area, and the neighborhood center concept. On page 7-15 of the General Plan the City has outlined its plans to reduce auto dependence by encouraging the location shopping and residential uses.



Sierra Oaks Apartments is a 211 unit apartment complex under construction on Christofferson Parkway in Turlock. The City Council supported this higher density project as it is consistent with the North Turlock Master Plan.



Infill- Crane Terrace is a 44 unit Senior Housing project that replaced the original Emanuel Hospital that burned. The new complex is among one of Turlock's oldest single family residential neighborhoods.

**Growing
Smart on
the land
that
feeds us.**

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Proposed High Speed Rail Station Downtown Fresno



California High Speed Rail
System length: 800 miles ° Maximum Speed:
220 mph ° Right of Way: 50 feet wide

Growing Smart *Going Smart*

By 2030 California is projected to hold 50 million people.
High Speed Rail (HSR) will reduce dependency on the automobile and promote compact development with stations in the downtowns of our existing valley cities.



"Electric high-speed trains traveling up to 220 miles per hour, offer a 21st century solution embraced by the rest of the world. Now, California is set to lead America again."

- Judge *Quentin Kopp*, High Speed Rail Chairman