
LAND USE ALTERNATIVES BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS SUMMARY

February 5, 2009

The Sutter County General Plan Advisory Committee met on October 23rd, November 20th, and December 3rd of 2008 to develop/refine land use alternatives for further analysis as part of the General Plan Update process. The following provides a general overview of the background information considered by the GPAC as part of that effort.

1. GROWTH PATTERNS: Where & How We Might Grow

The pattern of potential future growth in Sutter County should be reflective of the General Plan Guiding Principles adopted by the County, as well as environmental, infrastructure, and other constraints.

Sutter County is currently processing a Specific Plan, EIR, and related entitlements for the 7,500 acre Sutter Pointe project in the southern portion of the County. This project is being processed in accordance with the provisions of advisory Measure M approved by the voters in November 2004. Measure M requires that Sutter Pointe provide for no less than 3,600 acres of industrial and commercial uses; no more than 2,900 acres of residential uses; no less than 1,000 acres of school, park, public, and open space uses; and adequate infrastructure, services, and funding necessary to fully support that development. The Sutter Pointe Specific Plan is being processed separately from and in advance of the General Plan Update, and is tentatively scheduled for County consideration in spring of this year.

Outside of Sutter Pointe, the Guiding Principles and environmental constraints point towards the consideration of potential future growth areas in proximity to the County's incorporated City's, Yuba City and Live Oak, as well as potentially in or near the Community of Sutter.

Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles provide significant direction on the form of future growth and conservation in Sutter County. Some of the key principles that directly address the development of the land use plan include:

- Focus new urban growth to the County's cities and other clearly defined and comprehensively planned development areas.
- Promote efficient development patterns that promote orderly growth and discourage sprawl.
- Ensure new development is compatible with agricultural operations and open space preservation.

In addition to the above, other relevant guiding principles support the preservation of the County's agricultural economy and rural character, the attraction of new industries and jobs, the enhancement of local shopping and services, and the protection of environmental resources including the Sutter Buttes, river corridors, and habitat areas.

A full copy of the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles is attached.

Key Constraints

Future development in Sutter County is largely constrained by potential flooding hazards and infrastructure limitations. In general, much of the area south of Yuba City to the Sacramento County boundary, as well as between the Sacramento River and the Sutter Bypass, are located within a 100-year floodplain according to FEMA maps and other available floodplain data. The areas in and around Yuba City, Live Oak, and the community of Sutter are currently outside of the 100-year floodplain. However, a study to define the floodplain along the upper portions of the Feather River is currently underway, and the findings of the study may result in modification to the floodplain boundaries within northern Sutter County.

Yuba City, Live Oak, and the communities of Sutter and Robbins are currently served by municipal and community potable water systems, while the remainder of the county is served by privately-owned groundwater wells. It is difficult for areas that lack municipal water system service to accommodate significant new urban growth.

Wastewater collection systems and treatment facilities are available in Yuba City, Live Oak, and the Community of Robbins. Currently, the Robbins wastewater treatment plant is operating at capacity and is unable to accept additional connections. The wastewater treatment facility operated by the City of Live Oak has been issued a cease-and-desist order due to high contaminant levels in the effluent. The rest of the county is served by privately owned septic systems, where it is difficult to support large amounts of additional growth. There

have been discussions on extending wastewater infrastructure from the Community of Sutter to connect to Yuba City's system.

Urban growth is most efficiently served where urban infrastructure and public services currently exist or can be easily extended. With existing water and wastewater services, as well as public services such as police and fire protection in Yuba City and Live Oak, additional urban growth can be most efficiently accommodated in and around these cities. In addition, the Community of Sutter has water system service and could potentially tie into Yuba City's wastewater system.

For a more detailed discussion on the infrastructure constraints, please see the previously provided Infrastructure Issue Discussion Paper and the Technical Background Report.

2. GROWTH PROJECTIONS: How Much We Might Grow

Beyond where potential new growth may be considered, the amount and type of that new growth needs to be generally defined. Typically land use alternatives are identified that "book end" the range of potential growth (i.e. a low level growth alternative and a high level growth alternative). This approach allows the potential impacts of the full range of potential growth to be analyzed in the alternatives analysis, ensuring that the preferred land use plan ultimately selected falls within the findings of that analysis.

Growth projections are a useful tool in defining the potential level of development to be accommodated by the General Plan. While it is not required that the County's land use plan match regional growth projections, the County can allocate more or less land use than identified by the projections; the projections provide a good reality check. If the County plans for considerably more growth than projected, it can result in some land uses sitting undeveloped over the long-term as well as the identification of excessive infrastructure needs and costs. If the County plans for considerably less growth than projected, it can result in missed opportunities and potential uses locating elsewhere in the region.

Growth Projections

Growth projections provide a general estimate of the potential level of growth a defined geographic area may capture based upon market demand and competitiveness, land use inventory, infrastructure availability and costs, environmental constraints, and other considerations. These projections tend to vary over time and by source and, therefore, should only be used as a general measure of what could occur based upon current information and conditions.

Recognized sources for growth projections in the region include the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), the California Department of Finance (DOF), the California Employment Development Department (EDD), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). These sources have different

methodologies for deriving growth projections which tend to produce different results. Thus, growth projections are often expressed as ranges.

Future growth in Sutter County is significantly influenced by the proposed Sutter Pointe project. As previously noted, the County is processing Sutter Pointe separately from and in advance of the General Plan Update. This project proposes a significant amount of residential, commercial, and industrial land use supporting a build out population of approximately 47,000 residents and jobs for approximately 67,000 employees.

Table 1 below provides an estimate of potential population and household growth in Sutter County. This information was derived from a combination DOF and SACOG data. As can be seen in Table 1, approximately 13,520 new households are projected in Sutter County (including the incorporated cities) between 2007 and 2035. If a relatively low average residential density of 3 to 5 dwelling units per acre is assumed, this could result in the development of between 4,500 and 2,704 acres of additional residential land by 2035.

Table 1: Sutter County Population and Household Growth Projections, 2007-2035

Year/Area ¹	Population	Households		Total
		Single-family	Multi-family ²	
2007				
Live Oak	8,132	1,945	387	2,332
Yuba City	62,083	15,763	6,367	22,130
Rest of County	23,710	7,773	834	8,607
Total	93,919	25,481	7,588	33,069
2035				
Live Oak	10,867	2,742	544	3,286
Yuba City	83,023	22,225	8,946	31,171
Rest of County	31,707	10,960	1,172	12,131
Total	125,597	35,927	10,662	46,589
Change 2007-2035				
Live Oak	2,741	797	157	954
Yuba City	20,940	6,462	2,579	9,041
Rest of County	7,997	3,187	338	3,524
Total	31,678	10,446	3,074	13,520

1. Areas are defined by SACOG using Regional Analysis Districts.
2. Include mobile homes.

Source: Willdan Financial (State Department of Finance Tables P-3 and E-5, and SACOG 2035 Projections for Population by Sector).

Based on the inventory of undeveloped residential land in Sutter County and its cities, as well as Sutter Pointe (or another project consistent with Measure M in southern Sutter County), there is an adequate amount of residential land to accommodate this additional growth. Sutter Pointe proposes over 17,500 units on 3,064 acres of residential/mixed use lands which alone more than meets the projected demand of 13,520 units. Beyond Sutter Pointe, projected demand does not suggest the need to allocate a significant amount of new residential land use within the unincorporated County.

A consolidated market demand analysis has been compiled, which does not create new growth models or projections, but rather reports demands from existing sources and brackets the range of demand identified. The analysis estimates future demand for industrial and commercial uses including food processing, an assessment of the FPARC District, and the potential for the future growth of ranchette or larger-lot type residential development in Sutter County. A copy of this analysis is attached.

Table 2 below provides an estimate of potential industrial and commercial growth in Sutter County. Projected industrial/commercial demand is based on two key assumptions: (1) the rate of growth, and (2) the share of regional growth that Sutter County captures. The projected rate of growth varies between available data sources ranging from conservative to aggressive. For the share of growth, Sutter County has historically captured approximately 3 percent of the region's total industrial and commercial jobs. The potential exists that, should Sutter County provide competitive industrial and commercial lands that have full services, the County's share of the region's growth could increase. The analysis looked at what would happen if the County's share of the regional growth increased to 5% and 10%.

Table 2: Sutter County Industrial and Commercial Projections, 2007-2030

	Industrial	Commercial
Sutter County Employment Growth 1997-2007		
1997 Employees	3,917	10,330
2007 Employees	5,026	14,637
Increase in Employees	1,109	4,307
Sutter County Projected Employment Growth 2007-2030		
Conservative Estimate	5,272	18,584
Aggressive Estimate	10,952	28,427
Increase in Employees	246 to 5,926	3,947 to 13,790
Sutter County Projected Acreage Demand 2007-2030		
3% of Regional Growth	188 ac. To 563 ac.	118 ac. To 413 ac.
5% of Regional Growth	345 ac. To 953 ac.	158 ac. To 489 ac.
10% of Regional Growth	502 ac. To 1,307 ac.	198 ac. To 566 ac.

Source: ADE (Sacramento Area Council of Governments, the California Department of Finance, the California Employment Development Department, and the California Department of Transportation).

Sutter County does have an existing supply of “vacant” industrial lands (approximately 600 acres). There is a concern that the existing industrial land supply may not be adequately situated or served by transportation and utility systems to support accelerated industrial growth and that the industrial parcels are adequately sized to be able to retain and or attract growing industries. Without Sutter Pointe, the County may want to make allowances for additional industrial land.

Sutter Pointe proposes approximately 3,600 additional acres of industrial and commercial lands providing for approximately 67,000 jobs, which alone more than meets the projected demand under even the most aggressive rates of growth and highest capture rates. While this does not mean that Sutter Pointe will capture all potential future industrial and commercial growth in the County and that there will not be opportunities elsewhere, it does suggest that there is not a pressing need to allocate a significant amount of new industrial and commercial land use elsewhere within the unincorporated County.

Other findings from the Market Demand Analysis include:

- Several trends in the food industry may lead to increased market opportunities for food processing in Sutter County. These trends include greater product specialization resulting in smaller scale facilities and localized distribution channels. Food processing is heavily dependent upon the availability of water, wastewater, energy, transportation access, skilled workers, and access to suppliers.
- If wastewater treatment becomes available to the FPARC area, a portion of this area (potentially up to 200 acres) could become viable for industrial use.
- Ranchette development has been a significant issue in Sutter County and a concern of the agricultural community. Projections indicate that there will be a continued demand for larger-lot residential (potentially 552 to 1,343 acres between 2007 & 2030). There has been much discussion about eliminating future ranchettes with an alternative being to designate specific areas of the County for large lot residential (estates residential).

Regional Housing Need Allocation

Housing element law requires each jurisdiction to provide for its existing and projected housing needs. These needs are defined for a seven year housing element planning period through the regional housing need allocation (RHNA) process. The California Department of Housing and Community Development determines statewide projected housing needs and allocates new housing unit target numbers to regional council of governments. In Sutter County's case, this would be the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). SACOG then assigns a share of the defined housing construction needs to each city and county in its region. These needs are allocated by four income categories, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate.

The RHNA allocation for unincorporated Sutter County for the period from 2006 to 2013 is reflected in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Unincorporated Sutter County RHNA (2006-2013)

Income Category	Dwelling Units	Percent of Total
Very Low	85	27%
Low	58	19%
Moderate	73	23%
Above Moderate	97	31%
Total	313	100%

Source: SACOG 2006-2013 Regional Housing Needs Plan, February 21, 2008.

While Sutter County is not required to actually build the RHNA units or fund their construction, it is required to document how it can accommodate the units. This generally means providing adequate lands appropriately zoned for residential development. Particular emphasis is placed upon low and very low income categories for which state law requires jurisdictions to zone enough high density housing (defined as 20 dwelling units per acre and up) to meet the RHNA allocation.

Sutter County and Yuba City have a record of working cooperatively to address the County's RHNA allocation through appropriately zoned lands within the City. It is anticipated that this partnership will continue to be pursued in the future. The land use alternatives should, however, take into account the County's RHNA allocation.

3. COMMUNITY INPUT: What We Have Heard

Input received at the community workshops, through specific landowner requests, and through the Agricultural Focus Group plays a significant role in the formulation of the countywide land use alternatives.

Community Workshops

Three community workshops were held at the end of September to solicit input from the public on potential land use changes. The first workshop focused on the communities of Sutter and Meridian and was held at the Sutter Union High School on September 23, 2008. The second workshop focused on Yuba City and Live Oak and was held at the Veteran's Hall in Yuba City on September 25, 2008. The last workshop was held at East Nicolaus High School on September 30, 2008 and focused on the South County (Nicolaus, East Nicolaus, Rio Oso, and Robbins communities). A total of 74 participants attended the three workshops. General trends that were revealed at the workshops are summarized below.

Sutter/Meridian Workshop Trends

- Of the participants that attended the Sutter/Meridian workshop, a majority (16 of 25 respondents) favored a land use concept which proposed the most intensive amount of development in/adjacent to the Community of Sutter and replaced the FPARC area with housing, employment, and commercial uses. In general, participants wanted to see more of the following land uses within and adjacent to the Community of Sutter: ranchettes; estates residential; low density residential; high density residential; commercial; mixed-use; employment/industrial; and park uses.
- A majority of participants (9 of 13 respondents) supported extending development in the Community of Sutter south to Highway 20.
- Two-thirds of participants (8 of 12 respondents) favored more extensive growth along Highway 20 that ultimately connects Sutter with Yuba City. Commercial, residential, and industrial uses were suggested as appropriate uses along Highway 20.
- A majority of participants (8 of 12 respondents) did not favor growth between the communities of Sutter and Meridian.
- Workshop participants were split between favoring implementation of the Adopted General Plan or no change at all from current levels of development in the Community of Meridian. Participants wanted to see more agricultural land, less ranchettes, and no additional residential and mixed-use developments in Meridian.

Yuba City/Live Oak Workshop Trends

- Approximately half of the participants (14 of 27 respondents) favored continued implementation of the Adopted General Plan for Yuba City's Sphere of Influence (SOI). In general, participants wanted to see more of the following uses: agriculture; ranchettes; estates residential; medium-density residential; commercial; mixed-use; and employment/industrial.
- A majority of participants were in favor of expanding Yuba City's SOI to the north (19 of 29 respondents) and west (16 of 24 respondents). Fifteen of 26 respondents did not support expanding the City's SOI to the south.
- Most participants supported additional development along Highway 99 to the north (17 of 22 respondents) and south (13 of 21 respondents) of Yuba City's SOI. Participants were split in their support for development along Highway 99 to ultimately connect Yuba City and Live Oak. Fifteen of 28 respondents that did support this connection wanted to see commercial, industrial, education/technology, and schools along the highway.
- Most participants (24 of 28 respondents) found it acceptable to convert agricultural land in Yuba City's SOI for industrial/employment uses to create more jobs.
- Participants were split on their preferences for a particular land use concept in Live Oak's SOI; three respondents wanted to see no change,

while five respondents preferred the Adopted General plan, and four respondents selected a land use concept that proposed additional employment, housing, and mixed-use. Participants also wanted to see more of the following land uses in Live Oak's SOI: low density residential; medium density residential; commercial; mixed-use; and employment/industrial.

Nicolaus/East Nicolaus/Rio Oso/Robbins Workshop Trends

- Most workshop participants wanted to see no change to the Nicolaus, East Nicolaus, and Rio Oso communities (10 of 14 respondents). Participants generally wanted more open space, and no additional residential, commercial, mixed-use, or employment/industrial uses. There were some limited suggestions for commercial and industrial development along Highway 70.
- A majority of workshop participants (10 of 14 respondents) did not want to see any changes to the existing conditions in the Community of Robbins.

Specific Landowner Requests

As part of the land use alternatives process, individual requests for land use changes have been submitted by property owners. At the July 24, 2008 joint Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors General Plan Study Session, a deadline for the submittal of such requests was set for August 1st. A total of 40 individual requests were submitted. An evaluation of the appropriateness of these requests was made by the GPAC based upon their consistency with the Guiding Principles, environmental and infrastructure constraints, growth projections, general direction on land use alternatives, and desires of the County.

All of the landowner requests have been mapped and catalogued in tabular form. These requests, along with the recommended disposition of each, are included for discussion as part of Attachment 6, Study Session Worksheet F, Individual Landowner Requests.

Food and Agricultural Focus Group

A 10-member Food and Agricultural Focus Group was formed in October 2008 by the Board of Supervisors and is composed of key representatives of the food and agricultural community. The purpose of this Focus Group is to provide its input and expertise on agricultural issues such as the appropriate lands in the County to be preserved for agricultural use and industries, and associated use regulations, policies and strategies to support agriculture.

To date, the Focus Group has met on four occasions, October 20th, November 12th, and December 11th of 2008, and January 22nd of 2009. As part of its effort, the Focus Group has made some recommendations that could impact the land use plan. These include:

- Revise the current AG-20/AG-80 line to more closely follow existing parcel boundaries, roads, and other features rather than only soil types.
- Increase the minimum agricultural parcel size from 20-acres (AG-20) to 40-acres (AG-40) to address concerns about the impact of smaller parcels on the preservation/conversion of agricultural lands. This includes concerns about the economic feasibility of supporting agricultural operations on 20-acre parcels and the potential use of such parcels for estate/ranchette type development. Adjust the boundaries between the existing AG-80 and the new AG-40 land uses to “clean up” the edges.

The above recommendations were forwarded after the GPAC completed its recommendations, and therefore have not yet been incorporated into the land use alternatives. These recommendations are included for discussion as part of Attachment 6, Study Session Worksheet G, Food and Agricultural Group recommendations.

The Focus Group is scheduled to meet in February and March to finalize specific policy recommendations for the General Plan Agricultural Element.

Attachments:

- a. Vision Statement and Guiding Principles
- b. Demand for Commercial, Industrial, and Residential Land in Sutter County, 2007-2030

Attachment 1

Attachment a.

Attachment 1

Attachment b.