

May 26, 2010

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Mr. David Bryant
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Re: Tulare County Draft General Plan and Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report
Comments from the City of Woodlake

The City of Woodlake has reviewed the Tulare County General Plan, Goals and Policies Report. Specifically, the city has focused on the goals and policies contained in Section 2.4 Cities.

Upon Woodlake's review of the county's general plan and the goals and policies detailed in Section 2.4, two significant deficiencies surfaced: (1) the land use designations and zoning for lands outside the city limits and inside Woodlake's UAB and UDB are not illustrated on any maps, and (2) the use of the word "may", which is permissive rather than mandatory, laces many of the county's policies.

The city does not know which land use designations the county will be applying to lands between the city limits and the UAB. Will they be the city of Woodlake's general plan designations or will they be county general plan designations?

Many of the county's policies contain the word "may" - the cities' concern may be given consideration . . . (PF-4.1), the county may consider modification of CACUABs . . . (PF-4.3), the county may maintain General Plan land use designations . . . (PF-4.8), the county may require the project to substantiate sufficient water supply . . . (PF-4.10), the county may ensure proposed development within CACUABs is compatible . . . (PF-4.12), and the county may use the policies set forth under this goal . . . (PF-4.17). In other words, the use of the term "may" gives the county the "wobble room" to make any decision they wish as it refers to land use decisions within Woodlake's UDB.

The policies are difficult to understand, they are wordy, and fraught with phrases such as "to the extent allowed by law", "as an exception", "in accordance with other policies in the general plan", or "emphasis shall be placed upon reasonable expectations". Even a seasoned planner, has difficulty understanding how the county's goals and policies will be applied to cities like Woodlake. The best example of a policy that is difficult to understand reads as follows:

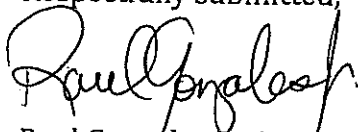
PF-4.20 Application of the RVLP Checklist to Control Development in a CACUDB

"As an exception to the County policies that the Rural Valley Lands Plan does not apply within CACUDBs, the County may work with an individual city to provide that the requirements of the RVLP or similar checklist will apply to applications for special use permits (including special use permits for the expansion of a non-conforming use), variances considered under Government Code Section 65906, or to the extent allowed by law, divisions of land within a CACUDB except in those areas that overlap with a County unincorporated UDB, and HDB, or Corridor Plan area."

Finally, the land use designations applied to land south and west of the Woodlake city limits continue to promote the division of agricultural land into non-viable agricultural parcels. This "land division" trend continues today thereby making it difficult for existing farms to operate effectively because they may have to curtail certain cultural practices, like spraying, cultivation, harvesting, etc. Also, as the City of Woodlake grows in these directions, it makes it very difficult to integrate these lands into Woodlake's city limits because they are irregularly shaped, they contain substandard access roads, they are dotted with private wells and septic tank/leach line systems, and encompass numerous outbuildings, like sheds, barns, stables, greenhouses, etc. In the case of land parcelization that has occurred southwest of Woodlake, this land development action has placed more homes off the end of Woodlake's airport runway. This could pose potential risks should a plane overrun the runway or land short of the runway.

In conclusion, the City of Woodlake recommends that the County of Tulare provide a readable land use designation map for all land between Woodlake's city limits and its Urban Area Boundary (UAB) boundary line and that it rewrite its land use goals and policies so that the general public can understand the county's long-term land use vision for environs around the City of Woodlake.

Respectfully submitted,



Raul Gonzales Jr., Mayor
City of Woodlake