
INTRODUCTION

Tulare County, like many agricultural areas of the San Joaquin Valley, finds itself facing the second half of the twentieth century as a time of extreme challenge in coping with growth and new opportunities. While this may be said of nearly all of California, the challenge in Tulare County is compounded by the problems of adjustment to an economy in transition. Although its historically agricultural character will remain predominant, this dominance will become proportionately lessened, giving way to greater industrial diversification and urban form with a doubling of population during the next 20 years.

Unlike many areas, Tulare County and its cities are preparing to face the challenge with a constructive response. Recognizing the necessity for a comprehensive and cooperative city-county approach to the problems and opportunities of the future, the planning and legislative bodies of the county and seven of the cities have embarked on an area wide planning program. The 15 members Tulare County Area Planning Commission with representation from each of the seven cities and the county, serving as the coordinating and advisory body, has completed an intensive two year program of guiding preparation of the Tulare County Area General Plan. The Commission has identified future needs and, by this Plan, recommends policies to the local governments of which it is a part and which it serves. Its key role has been to formulate long range development policies of mutual concern to the county and its cities. For, while conditions may vary throughout the county, they vary more in degree than in kind. Each of the cities must look to the county for assistance in shaping future patterns of growth and development in its fringe -- the area which eventually will be inherited by the city; and, conversely, the cities must provide the county with an intelligent, overall basis for planning worthy of joint agreement and continuous and progressive action.

Past efforts for achieving mutual understanding and agreement on the part of the county and its cities have been snagged for lack of a comprehensive approach. No city within the county is an "island", isolated and apart from the scene of the county as a whole. The county as well functions as part of an economic region. This program does not (because it cannot) offer all of the answers, solve all of the problems, and chart an absolutely clear and precise course for the future. It does, however, provide the matrix -- the framework for well-reasoned and thoughtful judgment and expression -- as a guide for joint city-county decisions.

It recognizes that the county is the sum of all of its parts; that planning decisions of the county, even those, which are not directly related to any one community, nevertheless are of interest to and affect both urban and rural populations. It recognizes that the city is at once an integral part of the county -- that many of its decisions have a direct or indirect influence on patterns of growth outside of its municipal boundaries; and it also recognizes that there exist internal questions and matters of policy, which are of concern and influence exclusive to a particular city.

The Area Commission's role of coordination and leadership represents a sizeable contribution to future well-being of the county, the full value and meaning of which will only be measured and recognized during the second and more critical phase -- the continuing process of carrying out the plan in striving to achieve the basic goals of the program.

This document is a compilation of all of the County's policies regarding development and conservation. Limited editing of the actual text of policies has been done to preserve the actual working. However, some editorial changes have been made and are indicated in *italics*. It should also be remembered that these policies are derived from planning documents ranging from 1964 to 1998.