



## Board of Supervisors & Planning Commission Study Session

### MEETING MINUTES

March 23, 2004

Conference Rooms A & B, Board of Supervisors Chamber  
County Civic Center, 2800 W. Burrel, Visalia, CA

## Introduction

On March 23, 2004, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission conducted a joint study session to review and discuss the General Plan Preliminary Issues Report. The agenda included a review of the issues and assets identified in previous community workshops and a discussion about important policy considerations for the General Plan Update.

## Discussion Summary of Key Issues

The discussion was organized to match the main discussion topics presented in the Preliminary Issues Report: resource protection, growth and development patterns, economic development, and social issues. The following summary lists the items discussed in each category. There were three areas of particular interest of the Commission and Board. These included the need to better understand water resources, how the economy can be diversified, and the ways rural communities in the county could be improved.

### Resource Protection

The study session discussion on resources focused on how to best establish baseline information about water supply and use in the county. The group understood that the challenge for capturing a picture of such a dynamic topic. The context of State and federal policies, demand created by urban and agricultural uses, and ownership and control of sources is complex. It was suggested that a task force be established to inform the General Plan process.

With a more accurate understanding of the baseline water needs and supply, the group felt an order of magnitude comparison could be added to policy alternatives. Variables could include urban water use, opportunities for agriculture to use gray water, County role for conservation, physical design of distribution, and acquisition policies of the State and Federal governments.

- We need basic information about water availability now and in the future, including during drought.
- Water is a dynamic picture but many ownership and water rights are fixed.
- How can graywater reduce the demand for urban water and support agriculture?
- How can lost floodwaters be captured?
- Can we model water in policy alternatives?
- We need a water task force to assist informing the General Plan process.

- What is the County's role in water conservation?
- Check the soil maps for location of best farming areas.
- Poor soils can be mitigated and are not as an important of a constraint as it use to be.

## **Growth and Development Patterns**

A number of issues were discussed that will influence the location and pattern of development in the County. This includes the protection of agricultural resources and the ability to provide and conserve water resources.

- How much farmland has been converted to urban uses in Tulare County?
- Look at the annexation policies and formulas in the cities.
- The economic outlook in next five years will affect the character of our growth.
- There is discussion about legislation for large subdivisions that requires use of graywater.
- Do we have policies for new water sources?
- What are the water acquisition policies of the State and federal governments?

## **Economic Development**

The discussion about diversifying the economy included the future of agriculture, technology, and leadership. One of the most important aspects is to make sure the General Plan can accommodate a variety of economic scenarios and opportunities. They felt that the General Plan needs to be flexible.

- We need leadership in expanding the use of technology in the county—special events.
- How can new technology support local needs?
- Should the County be more forceful advocates for agriculture?
- How do we get more value out of agriculture?
- The General Plan needs to be flexible and assume alternative economic futures.
- Can we develop a new airport to create new economic opportunities?
- Some big box developments and industrial locations are needed in the unincorporated communities.

## **Social**

When discussing the social issues, the group focused on how to make things better in Tulare County's rural communities. There was an interest of defining a "new view of the future" where infrastructure, civic participation and strategic investments would act as catalysts that make the communities better places for residents.

- How can we make unincorporated communities better places to live?
- Is there a new view of the future?
- How can we increase the amount of civic participation?
- There are trade-offs between our economic base and social issues of a transient population.
- There are generational changes in communities we need to anticipate.
- How can we get more out our schools? (joint-use, childcare)

- How do we site and locate schools with other institutional uses?
- How do our housing policies impact housing affordability?

## **Infrastructure**

In relation to infrastructure, the key issues were the improvement and development of infrastructure.

- We need State and Federal financial support for infrastructure.
- How can new infrastructure improve places?
- How can infrastructure be a catalyst for new investment in rural communities?
- What is the physical design of water distribution?