



Tulare County Board of Supervisors & Planning Commission

Tulare County General Plan Update

WORKSHOP MINUTES

March 8, 2005
Visalia Convention Center
303 East Acequia Avenue, Visalia, CA 93292

On March 8, 2005, the Tulare County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors held a study session to discuss the community outreach process, alternative policy scenarios and related policy implications and choices.



The following summary includes the Commission's and Board's comments regarding the three policy scenarios developed to facilitate community dialog about desirable polices.

Scenario 1: City Center Development

The first scenario would direct much of the population growth towards existing incorporated cities. The Commission and Board made the following comments regarding this approach.

- There needs to be revenue sharing with the county if the tax base is directed to the cities
- Preservation of agricultural land is a benefit
- Transportation needs to be realistic—has to support smaller communities, still will rely on private transit (cars), would primarily benefit larger cities where car-free areas are connected
- County and city cooperation is challenging
- The Rural Valley Lands Plan already directs growth—rural lots are curbed by the Valley Lands Plan
- It is OK to grow predominately in cities but not at the expense of rural communities

- Need more economic growth in rural communities to support investment in infrastructure—enterprise and redevelopment areas need to grow in value to be able to bond finance for improvements
- Would reduce the demand, and value of land, in rural communities
- This scenario acknowledges the value of agriculture to the county and cities

Scenario 2: Rural Community Development

The second scenario would provide for more growth in rural communities and highway frontages. The Commission and Board had these comments regarding the second scenario.

- Like this approach but how do we pay for it? We would need development fees.
- Water access and distribution may be an issue.
- What happens to mountains and foothills? Do we allow growth there too?
- Shares wealth—a growing county can benefit communities that have been long ignored
- The cities will still grow
- Developing an economic strategy for Highway 99 can draw economic benefit from the region
- The CDC's would have a bigger leadership role in rural communities
- The county would need to provide urban design direction for investment—the county would be in the “city building” role
- Open space should be kept between communities along Highway 99
- Rail transit on existing tracks could run between communities

Scenario 3: Proportional Growth

The third scenario distributes growth proportionally between the cities and county. The Commission and Board had the following comments regarding the third scenario.

- This approach would bring the cities and county “to the table”
- Would require city and county collaboration for a sustainable economic and environmental future
- Cities would be in competition with the county in Scenario 2—Scenario 3 balances the checkbook for county communities
- Assumes industry would be in cities but some should be in smaller communities—it is the traditional function in many small towns in the Highway 99 corridor and other locations
- There has to be enough population in small communities to support infrastructure improvements
- With retail sales left to the cities, improvements need to be made that jointly benefit the cities and county
- We need to make room for unanticipated opportunities—the planning needs to allow for future opportunities
- Large footprint industrial uses impact water use and require a lot of land—this impacts the future of agriculture
- There is a building boom and the county has not benefited as much as cities—the four major cities will continue to grow
- There is a market-driven dimension to the future—the cost of land will dictate what uses will happen
- Growth is going to happen where people wish to live—Visalia has the greatest number of annexations. In Porterville desirable neighborhoods have seen large pricing increases—

- We have to direct growth and control leapfrog development.
- LAFCO and TCAG are venues to work together to solve Special District and water needs
- We have to be concerned about what can STOP growth too
- The dye has been cast—the cities will continue to expand to capture valued uses and have the infrastructure and plans to grow
- The capacity of infrastructure and Special Districts can inform how we grow—direct growth towards areas that can accommodate it
- We CAN direct growth—plan for the opportunities



Bonus Question: What else should we be considering?

In addition to discussing the pros and cons of the scenarios, the Commission and Board provided insights regarding other important policy considerations. A summary of topics discussed follows:

- What elements will the General Plan have? (the legally required ones plus economic development, scenic resources, energy and mineral resources, air quality and water)
- How do we handle highway commercial? How much and where?
- Extension of Highway 65 is still on the State's drawing board and will impact the eastern county
- Narrow the focus of the General Plan
- How do we deal with nonconforming uses, such as former agricultural processing facilities? How can we recycle these buildings and put them back into economic use?
- What about the Yokhol Valley project?
- What is the impact of new residents NOT involved with the agricultural economy?
- How do we engage the cities in the process? There should be city managers in the room.