

Tulare County General Plan Update



Alternative Futures

December 2004

Tulare County is in the process of updating its General Plan. The General Plan provides a “blueprint” for public and private investment. It provides goals and policies for land use, economic development, infrastructure and other subjects. The update process has included extensive outreach and public participation. Over 300 people have participated in workshops located throughout the county. Workshops have been held in Visalia, Lindsay, Goshen, Pixley, Orsi, and Springville.

In addition to the public workshops, the County has also been working with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors parallel with the community process. The TAC includes staff representatives from county, city, national parks, and special districts. Including cities and special districts in the plan update process is important because the implications of not collaborating can have a detrimental impact on the shared economic base, the cost of infrastructure, access to urban services, air and water quality, and scenic landscapes valued by all residents.

Alternative Futures

This newsletter includes three potential policy futures for Tulare County. They are intended to illustrate land use concepts and help facilitate discussion regarding the types of choices we have. Each scenario includes a brief description and list of potential policy implications.

The County has a sophisticated planning framework that addresses the unique needs of the valley floor, foothills and Sierra Nevada environments. To date, County and city policies have protected agricultural land and scenic landscapes.

The county population is to grow from 396,000 today to 630,000 by 2025. Existing plans for incorporated cities will accommodate approximately 36% of this anticipated growth. Where will the 150,000 people live not provided for in existing city general plans?

The scenarios illustrate three ways this population can be housed. The first scenario “centers” the population, jobs and shopping within existing incorporated areas. The second scenario does not increase the amount of population going to cities but urbanizes rural communities with housing, jobs, and shopping. The third approach grows rural areas and cities in a proportional way sharing the benefits and impacts.



Have questions?

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Visit the project website:
<http://www.co.tulare.ca.us/>

City-Centered Development Scenario

1

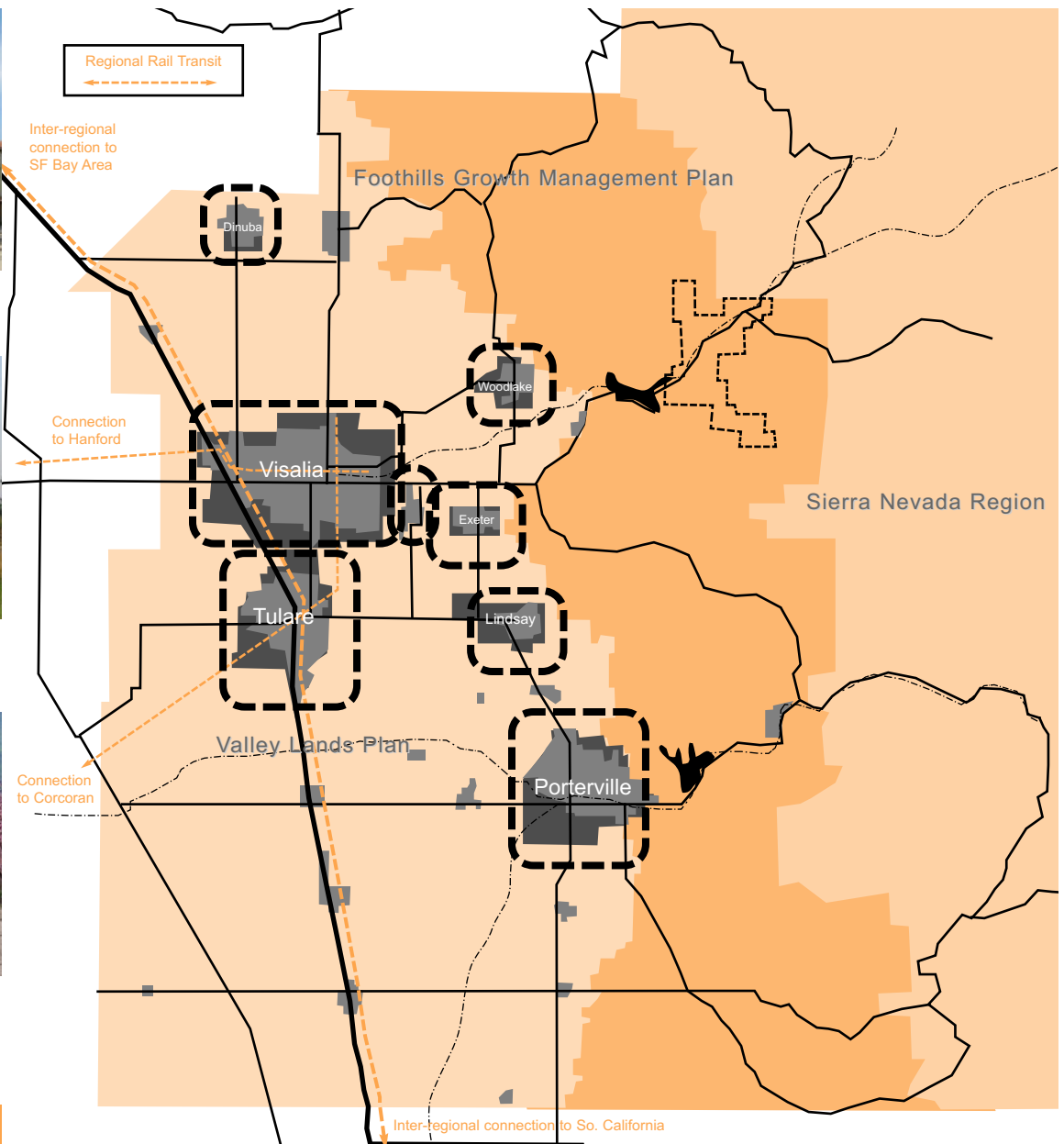
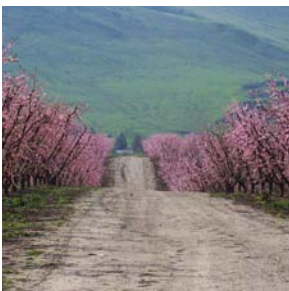
The City-Centered Scenario assumes that cities will accept additional population by increasing the density and developing contiguous land. The cities also continue to provide sites for urban commercial services and industry. This approach would not ignore the needs of unincorporated communities. Better housing, services, and infrastructure would be developed for rural communities.

Key advantages for this scenario include protection of agricultural land and maintaining the rural character of the county. It also can be more readily supported by a regional transit system.

Policy Implications

There are several policy implications for pursuing this scenario. It assumes:

- The cities agree to add population and density to their general plans;
- Tulare County agrees not to urbanize the 99 corridor allowing commercial services and employment to support population centers;
- The pattern of development would be compact and supported by transit;
- The County would have to continue to work through the Redevelopment Agency to improve infrastructure and housing in rural communities; and
- There would be an emphasis on maintaining the rural travel experience in the county to benefit residents and support tourism.



In this scenario, the cities could build less housing, thereby shifting population to the County. The rural communities would expand adding housing, commercial, and industrial development. It would also promote development of new communities and expansion of existing communities in the foothills. This approach would require major infrastructure program for urbanizing rural communities in a way that could support adding approximately 150,000 people and related commercial services and jobs by 2025.

This scenario trades greater impacts on agricultural land and the rural character in Highway 99, SR63, SR65, SR190 and SR198 corridors with nonagricultural economic development.

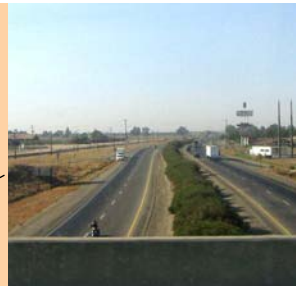
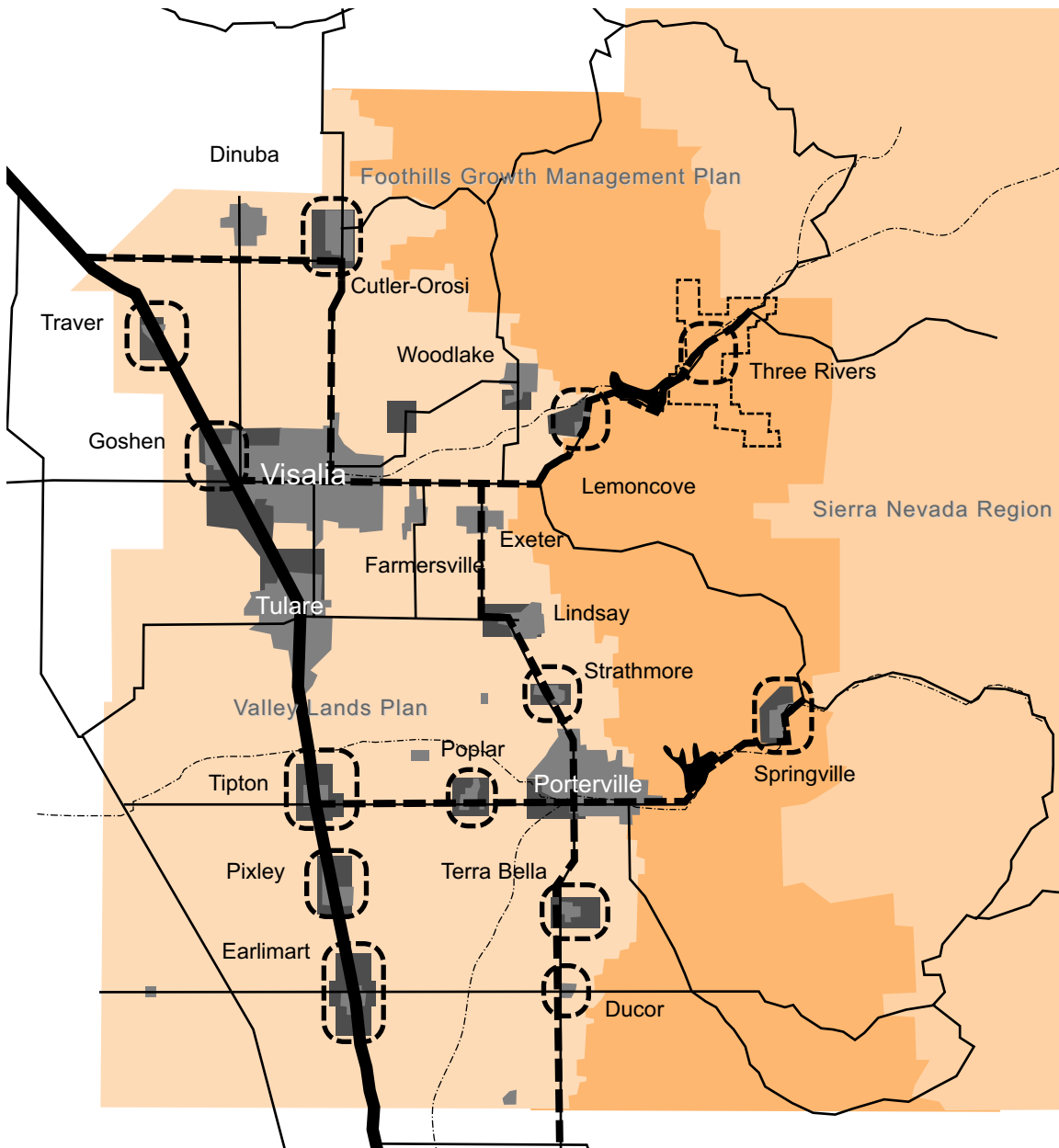
Policy Implications

The Rural Community Development Scenario has its own unique policy implications. It assumes:

- Growth is targeted for unincorporated and future newly incorporated communities;
- Tulare County prepares an economic development strategy for the Highway 99 corridor to attract jobs and tax base to support the growing population in unincorporated communities;
- There would be a major redevelopment effort by the County to create infrastructure for growth;
- The County would have to place an emphasis on urban design and city-building to maintain a high standard for public and private investment; and
- The Valley Lands and Foothills plans would need to be updated to reflect added growth.

Rural Community Development Scenario

2



Proportional Growth Scenario

3

This scenario promotes policies where the growth in cities and rural unincorporated communities is proportional to their existing population. Major commercial and industrial development would stay in cities where infrastructure and transit can support them. Residential development in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas would be developed compactly protecting Tulare County's agricultural economy. There would be with just enough commercial and institutional services in unincorporated communities to serve the local population.

Because this scenario, as the others, is based on the need for cities and the County to collaborate to accomplish a more economically and environmentally sustainable future, it assumes that revenues from sales tax are shared resources.

Policy Implications

There are several policies that would need to be enacted for this scenario to succeed. These include:

- Cities and the County agreeing to share benefits and impacts of growth (revenue sharing—not a method for cities to shed housing responsibility);
- Broader distribution of housing and jobs (but keeping major commercial development in cities); and
- Emphasizing community design and compact development to limit impact on agricultural land.

