



## Focus Group Meeting #2 Summary

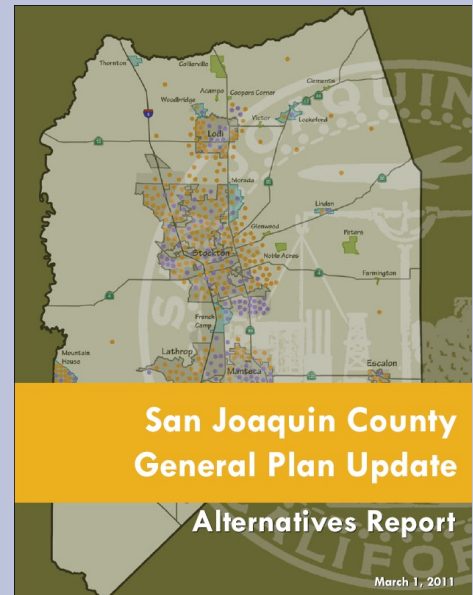


On March 29 and March 31, 2011, San Joaquin County held the second set of Focus Group meetings for the General Plan Update. Each of the five Focus Groups consists of 12-20 members who provide technical and policy input to County staff and the Consultants. The groups are formed around the following topics: Agriculture; Natural Resources and the Delta; Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development; Transportation and Circulation; and Services, Utilities, and Safety. The Focus Groups provide input on key General Plan Update documents, including: the Background Report; Issues and Opportunities Report; Alternatives Report; and Draft General Plan.

The second set of Focus Group meetings was focused on the Alternatives Report. To prepare for the meetings, focus group members were provided hard copies of the Alternatives Report in advance of the meeting along with a questionnaire. The questionnaire asked the following about the Alternatives Report:

- Were impacts characterized correctly?
- Were any critical topics left out?
- What are the benefits of each Alternative?
- What are the drawbacks of each Alternative?
- Which Alternative do you prefer?
- Is there anything you would change?

Each meeting began with a greeting from County staff, followed by a short overview presentation by Mintier Harnish, the General Plan Update consultant. Focus Group members then discussed the Alternatives Report, providing feedback on the benefits and drawbacks of the alternatives as they relate to their specific areas of expertise. The meetings were open for public observation and several community members also provided comments.





## Focus Group Members

The following agency, organization, and community members volunteered for the Focus Groups.

### **Agriculture**

Brad Lange, Farmer  
 Joe Petersen, Farmer  
 Mike Darnell, American Farmland Trust  
 Mark Chandler, Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission  
 Jack Hamm, Farm Bureau  
 Katie Patterson, Farm Bureau  
 Scott Hudson, Ag Commissioner  
 Paul Precissi, Flying Services  
 Mike Serpa, Delicato Vineyards/Attorney  
 Mel Lytle, San Joaquin County Public Works/Water Resources  
 Brandon Nakagawa, San Joaquin County Public Works/Water Resources  
 Gary Barton, Farmer  
 Rudy Mussi, Farmer  
 Richard Wagner, Dairy Farmer  
 Paul Verdegaal, UC Cooperative Extension  
 Chris Locke, Farmer

### **Natural Resource/Delta**

Craig Ogata, San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation  
 Rick Mielbrecht, Sierra Club  
 Mel Lytle, San Joaquin County Public Works/Water Resources  
 Brandon Nakagawa, San Joaquin County Public Works/Water Resources  
 Dan Gifford, Cal Dept. of Fish & Game  
 Josh Emery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Srv.  
 Steve Mayo, San Joaquin COG  
 Dante Nomellini, Jr., Reclamation District Representative/Attorney  
 Mike Brown, Brown Sand  
 Lillie Noble, Teichert  
 Kelly Foote, Citizen  
 Stacy Luthy, UOP  
 Mary Hildebrand, Farm Bureau  
 David Weisenberger, Banta-Carbona Irrigation District  
 Michael Machado, Delta Protection Commission  
 Chris Neudeck, Kjeldsen, Sinnock, & Neudeck

### **Land Use/Housing/Economic Development**

John Beckman, BIA  
 Shelley Burcham, San Joaquin Partnership  
 Randy Hatch, Campaign for Common Ground  
 Mike Souza, Realtor/Developer  
 Douglas Wilhoit, Greater Stockton Chamber  
 Mark Plovnick, UOP  
 Howard Seligman, Attorney  
 Bill Cook, Banker  
 Pete Mitracos, Former Tracy Planning Commissioner  
 Bob Hurst, Citizen  
 Don Moyer, Consultant  
 Xochitl Paderes, Citizen  
 Bob Lauchland, Farm Bureau  
 Mel Lytle, San Joaquin County Public Works/Water Resources  
 Brandon Nakagawa, San Joaquin County Public Works/Water Resources  
 Daniel Barber, SJVAPCD  
 Patia Siong, SJVAPCD  
 Joe Sublett, Lockeford MAC  
 Gary Gordon, Lockeford Historical Society  
 Pat Gotelli, Morada MAC  
 William Van Fields, Morada MAC  
 Mike Swearingen, San Joaquin COG  
 Kim Anderson, San Joaquin COG  
 Kirsten Holtberg, Citizen

### **Transportation/Circulation**

Firoz Vorha, San Joaquin County Public Works/Transportation  
 Mike Swearingen, San Joaquin COG  
 Stacey Mortensen, San Joaquin Rail Commission

Kathy Selsor, Caltrans  
 Tom Dumas, Caltrans  
 Nathaniel Atherstone, Regional Transit District  
 Susan Palmeri, Stockton Metro Airport  
 Steve Escobar, Port of Stockton  
 James Barbour, Citizen  
 Bob Hurst, Citizen  
 John Beckman, BIA  
 Richard Rodriguez, Farm Bureau  
 Daniel Barber, SJVAPCD  
 Patia Siong, SJVAPCD  
 Joe Sublett, Lockeford MAC  
 Gary Gordon, Lockeford Historical Society

### **Services/Utilities/Safety**

Alex Chetley, San Joaquin Public Works/Public Services  
 John Maguire, San Joaquin Public Works/Flood Management  
 Mel Lytle, San Joaquin Public Works/Water Resources  
 Brandon Nakagawa, San Joaquin Public Works/Water Resources  
 Donna Heran, San Joaquin County Environmental Health  
 Ron Baldwin, San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services  
 Lt. John Williams, San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office  
 Darwin Davis, Fire  
 Karen Soliz, Woodbridge MAC  
 Alex Garcia, Citizen  
 Donald Dunn, Retired Military/Logistics  
 Andrew Estrada, Citizen  
 Ted Leland, UOP  
 Ross Moilan, Cal Water  
 Kevin Kauffman, Stockton East Water District  
 Jeanette Thomas, Stockton East Water District  
 John Green, Stockton East Water District  
 Chris Neudeck, Kjeldsen, Sinnock, & Neudeck  
 William Van Fields, Morada MAC  
 Vic Solari, Linden-Peters Fire District

## Agriculture Focus Group Summary

Overall, most members of the Agriculture Focus Group preferred Alternative B; however, many members of the group felt that, while Alternative B looked good on paper, it would be difficult to get the cities to comply with the compact growth concept. There was also a lot of support for increased job opportunities in the unincorporated County as reflected in Alternative C. Many members felt that most new growth should be focused in the cities, but the County should look selectively at good job centers. There was some support in the group for Alternative A because it increases opportunities for people to live in small towns. A few members noted that there is a difficult balance to strike between increased densities, which protect agricultural land, and the types of housing for which there is actual market demand.

Regardless of the Alternative, there was a sentiment in the group that the east side of the County should be preserved because the climate and soil in this area allow for high value crops. There was also a lot of discussion about the impact of development fees in the County. Some felt that fees could be structured to encourage higher-density and discourage lower-density development. Others felt that fees are already high and shouldn't be increased. Some members mentioned that agricultural easements could create "boundaries" or "buffers" around the cities, focusing growth in already developed areas and protecting farmland.

When asked about topics that were left out of the alternatives analysis, members of the focus group said the report should look more closely at the Williamson Act and what impacts could occur in the County if the Williamson Act were to go away.

## Natural Resource/The Delta Focus Group Summary

The Natural Resources and Delta Focus Group mostly supported Alternatives B and C. They thought the compact development and small development footprint reflected in Alternative B was the most favorable, but they also liked the employment growth at key freeway interchanges shown in Alternative C. Recognizing that Alternative B would require buy-in from the cities, one member mentioned that the County's preferred alternative could focus on directing growth to the cities that accept the San Joaquin Council of Governments Blueprint principles. Some members thought there were benefits to building along I-5 and SR-99 in Alternative C where there is existing infrastructure. Others thought Alternative C could result in sprawl along the freeways.

One member of the group was concerned about the potential impacts on the critical habitat in the eastern part of the County, particularly surrounding Farmington, if development were focused in that area as shown in Alternative A. There was a comment regarding flooding concerns that the County could focus on building on higher ground first before developing behind levees. There was also a concern about protecting the aggregate resources in the County.

There was a lot of discussion about how the peripheral canal will be a "game-changer" for the County, regardless of the alternative.

When asked about topics that were left out of the alternatives analysis, several members of the group thought it would be beneficial to discuss how cities in the County feel about the growth patterns shown in Alternative B and how the County could coordinate with the cities to achieve this alternative. One member wanted to see a policy option for low impact development for the treatment of storm water and another wanted to see a policy for water monitoring. Another member wanted to see more analysis of the demographics of the 2010 U.S. Census and the market demand. There was also a comment that an analysis of the flood risk in the western part of the city of Lathrop would be beneficial.





## Transportation Focus Group Summary

Overall, the Transportation Focus Group was supportive of Alternative B because the compact growth pattern and higher densities would encourage transit ridership and require less investments in roads. However, one member noted that Alternative B would have a greater level of service (LOS) impact in cities. There was also a lot of support for some aspects of Alternative C. Group members felt it made sense to concentrate industrial and employment uses near highway interchanges.

A member representing the Regional Transit District (RTD), discussed the difficulties of providing countywide bus services and noted that it would be difficult to serve demand in rural areas under the Base Case and Alternatives A and C. He was more supportive of Alternative B, which would allow for shorter trips, reduce maintenance and service expansion costs. A member representing the Stockton Airport, who is concerned with incompatible uses, was supportive of Alternative B as well because it would have the least impact on the airport.

When asked if there were any critical topics left out of the alternatives analysis, one member of the group wanted to see a discussion of VMT (vehicle miles traveled) versus commuter VMT.

## Utilities, Services, and Safety Focus Group Summary

The Utilities, Services, and Safety Focus Group members focused on the implications of each alternative for public services and infrastructure. The group discussed the difficulties of serving new growth in rural areas in the Base Case. The proliferation of individual wells under the Base Case would have implications for groundwater supply. The group agreed that Alternative A would be the least favorable alternative in terms of infrastructure capacity. They noted that while some urban communities such as Linden, Lockeford, and Clements might have the capacity to serve new development, most communities lack the necessary infrastructure. There was support for Alternative B because it would be easier to serve new development that was centrally -located in cities, but there was a comment that existing infrastructure in cities might not be adequate to serve the amount of development shown in Alternative B. An issue with Alternative C would be the new community service areas (CSAs) that would be needed to serve the non-residential development in the County.

When asked if there were any critical topics left out of the alternatives analysis, there was a comment that the Alternative Report should take existing economic conditions into account. Some members of the group commented that the analysis was light on fire, police, and health issues. Another member wanted to see more of a discussion of flood protection deficiencies.

The Sheriff's Department representative discussed his concern with the way the projected County population distribution is described in the Report. For the purpose of projecting law enforcement service needs, the method used to describe the County's distribution of population underestimates the actual need for service in the unincorporated areas. On the topic of population, there was another comment that the existing (2010) population numbers for some of the unincorporated communities should be double-checked for accuracy. Some of the estimates seemed to be too low.



## Land Use, Economic Development, and Housing Focus Group Summary

The Land Use, Economic Development, and Housing Focus Group members were skeptical that cities would follow the compact, infill growth pattern shown in Alternative B. They discussed the lack of control of the County to support the development patterns reflected in Alternative B and the potential lack of market support for the densities shown in the alternative. However, group members noted that the County should aim for Alternative B and that this alternative would create places where people would want to live.

The group also discussed the need for the General Plan to provide flexibility and to allow for a variety of housing types, including higher-density, lower-density, and large lot rural housing. There was a comment that, while the County has done well preserving farmland, it has lost out fiscally to the cities and needs to change its policy which has given all growth to the cities. However, there were other comments that the General Plan should concentrate on preserving agriculture in the rural areas.

There was a lot of discussion about the need for more jobs that attract skilled and higher-educated workers. Many group members thought Alternative C gives the County the most opportunities to create a larger tax base. There was a comment about the capacity to accommodate new industrial and employment growth around the city of Tracy. The group discussed potential sources of economic development or new industries in the County, including: medical manufacturing, technical education courses at Delta College, the airport industrial area, air freight, corporate offices, biofuels, and alternative energy sources.

While a few group members felt all of the alternatives missed the mark, most attendees were satisfied that the four alternatives provided a full range of possibilities for their consideration. There was also some discussion about the need to address water issues in the County. Without water, the County will not be able to serve new employment uses in the unincorporated areas. Group members discussed the need for the County to work collectively with the cities to find solutions for providing infrastructure and services in the unincorporated County.

