

Work Group: Land Use, Agriculture and Housing (LUAH)
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Quarter: 2nd 2008
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Description of Activity by Goal and Objective

Goal 1: Foster regional consensus to support development and implementation of the Regional Blueprint Plan.

Objective A: Assist development of regional consensus on values, goals, strategies, and guidelines for the Regional Blueprint Plan to achieve the desired outcomes and identify appropriate locations for growth and economic development that accommodates projected population increases while contributing to the conservation of important agricultural land and natural resources.

Activity (Q2) – In May, Merced, Fresno and Tulare counties identified local scenario to be used in developing the Valleywide scenarios. Blueprint Regional Advisory Committee (BRAC) meeting took place on June 27.

Objective B: Develop a high-value parks and open space strategy to be used in the development of the Regional Blueprint Plan with a goal of encouraging the designation and long-term management and restoration (as feasible) of a permanent open space system that will include public and private lands, state, regional and local parks, and conservancies and conservation easement areas.

Activity (Q2) – Continued work and discussion of this objective through the creation of the Housing Trust and discussion of Ag land conservation in the work group subcommittee.

Goal 2: Promulgate and promote adoption of community design guidelines that will ensure strong neighborhoods, improve mobility and health by promoting walking and biking, improve air quality by reducing trip generation and parking requirements, increase energy efficiency by modifying building standards, and increase infrastructure cost effectiveness through efficient land use.

Objective A: Increase the overall density of new development.

Activity (Q2) – Began a study by Elizabeth Deakin, UC Berkeley Transportation Center, on the shape and location of new development in the San Joaquin Valley. The study will aim to identify the ideal minimum size for new cities in the Valley and how to interconnect and integrate existing towns and areas.

Objective B: Reduce urban run-off by decreasing the land covered by commercial and industrial parking.

Activity (Q2) – Developing model ordinances and guidelines for parking planning in Valley cities that can reduce the size and amount of land used and urban run-off.

Objective C: Promote the adoption and implementation of zoning ordinances that are form-based and more flexible to encourage desired outcomes.

Activity (Q2) – Discussions have taken place regarding creating a “tool kit” for planners with model ordinances and design guidelines.

Objective D: Study and adopt a strategic concept for accommodating new growth by encouraging communities with the necessary elements and constraints to be cost-effective and self-sufficient in achieving the overall goals and objectives.

Activity (Q2) – June 27 BRAC meeting and beginning of study by Elizabeth Deakin, UC Berkeley Transportation Center (see Objective A).

Goal 3; Determine requisite regional infrastructure and funding strategies to support implementation of the Regional Blueprint Plan.

Objective A: Develop and implement a plan for the provision of regional infrastructure.

Activity (Q2) – No action taken. Activity will follow the regional plan.

Objective B: Develop and implement a process for monitoring the performance and adequacy of regional infrastructure and determining future needs.

Activity (Q2) – Discussions in work group meetings about what constitutes a regional or local issue.

Goal 4: Improve the planning and development process to be consistent with the Regional Blueprint Plan and to provide incentives for smart growth.

Objective A: Improve the sharing, access, and use of planning and environmental resource data among state, COGs, local governments, business organizations, environmental groups, other stakeholders, and the public for more informed decision-making.

Activity (Q2) – Working with UC Davis; regional data being coordinated through Information Center for the Environment.

Goal 5: Develop a long-range strategy for agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley that ensures its viability and sustainability.

Objective A: Develop a long-range plan to maintain the viability of agriculture in the region, as a leading strategy for economic development and as a key component of the Regional Blueprint Plan.

Activity (Q2) – Ed Thompson, American Farmland Trust, suggested that LUAH consider endorsing some of his proposals, including declaring a percentage of high-quality farmland off-limits for a period of time; cutting land consumption for commercial, public and residential uses; and restricting use of ranchettes.

Objective B: Minimize the proliferation of ranchette development on important farmland.

Activity (Q2) – See Goal 5, Objective A, Activity.

Objective C: Reduce the loss of farmland attributable to General Plan amendments.

Activity (Q2) – See Goal 5, Objective A, Activity.

Goal 6: Ensure safe and healthy communities that provide a variety of housing types affordable to all residents with increased opportunities for home ownership.

Objective A: Increase the number and availability of housing units for people of all income levels, especially working families.

Activity (Q2) – Tracking language in AB 1129 by Assemblymember Juan Arambula.

Objective B: Provide incentives for affordable housing that meet the needs of all income levels in the region.

Activity (Q2) – Continued development of San Joaquin Valley Housing Trust.

Goal 7: Identify legislative and regulatory changes necessary to facilitate the implementation of adopted goals and strategies.

Objective A: Use the San Joaquin Valley as a pilot for testing new permitting and environmental review incentives that will facilitate infill and refill developments.

Activity (Q2) – Discussions have taken place in work group regarding possible permitting and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining incentives for development projects in the Valley that adhere to smart growth, infill and refill standards and guidelines.

Objective B: Develop an innovative approach to establishing a voluntary high-value open space conservation system. No action taken.

Objective C: Increase the coordination among local General Plans regionwide to facilitate better land use, transportation, air quality, and energy outcomes.

Activity (Q2) – For the energy aspect, the Energy Work Group and Great Valley Center are working on model ordinances for energy conservation in the Valley.

Objective D: Analyze options for assessing impact fees that will promote above goals and objectives.

Activity (Q2) – Discussions are continuing but premature because database is not complete.

Planned Activities by Goal and Objective (for next 3-6 months)

All eight counties are expected to have their scenarios completed by August (Goal 1, Objective A).

Meeting of a subcommittee group to discuss the shape and location of new development in late July (Goal 2, Objective A).

Coordination with attorneys to draft sample language for ordinances and guidelines for parking planning (Goal 2, Objective B).

Continue preliminary discussions on creating a regional data center (Goal 4, Objective A).

Developing county outreach and education teams for work with local jurisdictions on how to access funds and plan housing with Blueprint principle. Housing development toolbox being developed for Blueprint and local jurisdictions (Goal 6, Objective A).

Create model ordinances on energy and share with Blueprint (Goal 7, Objective C).

Challenges/Problems/Bottlenecks/Feedback

Major challenge has been getting counties to finish their local scenarios in a timely fashion. Political difficulties always arise in discussion of local land-use issues. Flexible, form-based zoning is controversial in some circles, so information may be offered as an option, not a recommendation.