

AGRICULTURE POLICY WORKING GROUP

***REVISED* SUMMARIES OF FOUR AGRICULTURAL-RELATED SCENARIOS**

(12/19/97)

Scenario Planning -- An Introduction

Each of the following scenarios describes what Ventura County may be in the Year 2030. Each provides its own answers to such questions as: How many people will live here? Where will they live? What will happen to agriculture and to our cities? What actions will bring about the results described?

The scenarios are plausible but necessarily incomplete descriptions of what we want Ventura County to look like and be in 2030 and what choices we must make to bring about the desired results.

Scenario A *SAAR* (Year 2030)

DESCRIPTION

- General plans population holding capacity (2030) – 924,000
- Assumed population increase (from 1997) – 207,000
- Ag/open space lands to hold population/jobs increase – 22,000 acres¹
 1. Irrigated agriculture: 8,500 acres
 2. Open Space Land: 13,500 acres
- Urban/agriculture lands (2030):
 1. Urban density: 9.43 persons/gross acre – average about 3.1 housing units/gross acre (assume 3.04 persons per housing unit)²
 2. Irrigated agriculture: 104,500 acres³

reverse only

ASSUMPTIONS

- Scenario is based on “freezing” the existing ten city and county general plan designations.
- 1997 city boundary lines are also frozen – no additional annexations would be permitted after build-out is achieved.
- Assume that 2030 housing, commercial and industrial build-out is limited to the maximum density and intensity permitted by 1997 general plans.
- Assume that urban growth over the next 30+ years will follow existing urban form trends during the initial period (i.e., residential projects are developed at the low end of the density range) – during the latter portion of the period, residential projects will be developed (re-developed) at the high end of the density range as the supply of vacant land diminishes.
- Urban form characterized by a mixture of compact and low-density, single-purpose communities – e.g., residential neighborhoods separated from retail, civic buildings and employment centers.

STRATEGIES

- Voter approved “freeze” of 1997 general plan designations and 1997 city boundaries
- Adopt urban growth boundaries (UGB) for each city in the county
- Make sphere of influence (SOI) boundaries permanent
- “Codify” greenbelt agreements through initiative or ordinance
- Voters adopt an initiative that prohibits institutional uses on irrigated farmland
- Tighten the Guidelines for Orderly Development and greenbelt agreements to provide more protection to irrigated farmland

IMPACTS

- Land use designation freeze may cause hardship for many landowners and businesses.
- Housing prices and rents likely to increase due to a shortage of buildable land.
- New technology may revolutionize the traditional workplace and retain functions – industry/business land use needs may change significantly and cities will not be able to respond to these changes.
- Irrigated farmland largely intact from 1997 baseline levels – speculative value of farmland negligible.
- Inability to expand city boundaries and urbanize land within spheres of influence is not consistent with *Guidelines for Orderly Development*.
- Uneven economic growth in County – limited expansion opportunities for Santa Paula, Fillmore, Moorpark & Port Hueneme may hinder their tax base which may result in stagnant economies.
- Irrigated farmland is comprised of large, contiguous holdings.
- Most communities will consist of single-purpose neighborhoods – i.e., housing separated from retail, employment centers and public facilities.
- Significant reinvestment in historic and underdeveloped neighborhoods.
- Minimal conflicts between agriculture and urban uses.

¹ Approximate amount of vacant land (ag and open space) needed to accommodate residential and commercial uses to the year 2030 - the acreage figure is based on the density of anticipated development noted in #2 below.

² Density of development is based on scenario planning figures developed for the 1996 “*Value of Agriculture to Ventura County*” Study -- the assumed density of 9.43 persons/gross acre is an approximation.

³ Acreage figure represents the approximate amount of irrigated farmland remaining in 2030 beginning with a baseline figure of 113,000 acres in 1997 -- the acreage figure includes 40+ acre and less than 40 acre agriculture parcels

Scenario B *current trends* (Year 2030)

DESCRIPTION

- Countywide population projection (2030) -- 1.07 million
- Projected population increase (from 1997) -- 353,000
- Ag/Open Space lands to hold population/jobs increase -- 27,000 acres¹
 1. Irrigated agriculture: 11,000 acres
 2. Open space land: 16,000 acres
- Urban/agriculture lands (2030):
 1. Urban density: 12.9 persons/gross acre -- average about 4.24 housing units/gross acre (assume 3.04 persons per housing unit)²
 2. Irrigated agriculture: 102,000 acres³

ASSUMPTIONS

- Strengthened growth management policies limit lateral urban expansion & support agriculture.
- Population growth continues at current (trendline) rate
- Agricultural land is viewed as an irreplaceable resource -- agriculture and its support industry are a permanent and growing part of the County's economy with the addition of many "value added" agriculture-related businesses.
- Land absorption rates for urban expansion will be less than historic trendline rates due to higher density/intensity development in existing communities.
- Cities pursue a different growth expansion philosophy by staying within existing sphere lines.
- Cities are less automobile-dependent due to more compact growth, mixed-use projects, public transit improvements and pedestrian/transit oriented development

STRATEGIES

- Cities allow increased housing density and more infill in areas already developed
- Cities change hillside development policies to facilitate urban uses in open space areas.
- "Agriculture-related" cities adopt right-to-farm ordinances -- include buyer disclosure language.
- Improved transportation systems are developed that reduce automobile dependency.
- Urban growth boundaries (UGB) are legislated for each city.
- The *California Land Preservation Act of 1998* limits the ability of cities and LAFCO to annex farmland for urban development.
- Greenbelt agreements are codified with the force of law or voter initiative -- the greenbelt system between the cities is completed.
- A bond, sales tax and other revenue sources are approved by voters to fund farmland protection.
- An agriculture and open space district is created.
- A city/county charter option is approved by voters that implements a tax sharing measure.

IMPACTS

- More compact communities are predicated on a market for higher density housing and an aversion to traditional, automobile-oriented retail malls and employment centers.
- Attracting new and expanding existing businesses and industry will be partly based on more efficient use of limited land resources -- higher intensity projects instead of sprawling "campus type" settings.
- Irrigated farmland largely intact from 1997 levels -- speculative value of farmland negligible.
- Sphere expansion negligible -- cities concentrate more development within existing growth areas.
- Growth in agriculture industry's products and services very strong -- ag sales, processing, research and development and value-added products at record levels.
- Irrigated farmland is comprised of large, contiguous holdings.
- Significant reinvestment in historic/underdeveloped neighborhoods -- central business districts are more viable with employment, services entertainment, retail and housing opportunities
- Minimal conflicts between agriculture and urban uses.

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² Density of development is based on scenario planning figures developed for the 1996 "Value of Agriculture to Ventura County" Study -- the projected density of 12.9 persons/gross acre is an approximation.

³ Acreage figure represents the approximate amount of irrigated farmland remaining in 2030 beginning with a baseline figure of 113,000 acres in 1997 -- the acreage figure includes 40+ acre and less than 40 acre agricultural parcels.

Scenario D (Year 2030)

DESCRIPTION

- Countywide population projection (2030) – 1.25 million
- Projected population increase (from 1997) – 533,000
- Ag/open space lands needed to hold population/jobs increase – 71,500 acres¹
 1. Irrigated agriculture: 43,500 acres
 2. Open space lands: 28,000 acres
- Urban/agricultural lands (2030):
 1. Urban density: 7.48 persons/gross acre – average about 2.46 housing units/gross acre (assume 3.04 persons per housing unit)²
 2. Irrigated agriculture: 69,500 acres³

ASSUMPTIONS

- Current land use management measures, policies and agreements have proven ineffective due to significant growth pressures that have strained the County's housing and infrastructure.
- Population growth exceeds current trendline rate.
- Concept of a rural/suburban county with distinct cities, separated by agriculture and open space, has been compromised.
- The County's economy is growing and has become much more diversified with a larger service employment sector that includes finance, tourism, aerospace and education.
- Several "new towns" have emerged in previously unincorporated areas in the East Santa Clara Valley, the Las Posas Valley and near the Pt. Mugu Regional Airport.
- Future land absorption rates will be equal to or higher than historic trendline rates – more low density single-family detached housing and ranchette development in unincorporated areas.

STRATEGIES

- LAFCO approves expansion of cities' sphere of influence boundaries in the Oxnard Plain and the Santa Clara and Las Posas Valleys to allow additional urban growth.
- Cities amend general plans to urbanize adjoining unincorporated areas.
- County amends general plan to allow greater urbanization in unincorporated areas.
- The County's "Agriculture" designation is amended to permit less than 40 acre parcels.
- Cities & county amend zoning ordinances to permit more non-farming uses in agriculture zones.
- The number of LCA contracts is significantly reduced from 1997 levels – non-renewal acreage exceeds active contract acreage by a 2 to 1 margin
- Jurisdictions fail to enact multi-party agreements concerning appropriate uses in greenbelts
- State laws that govern the distribution of sales and property taxes are unchanged from 1997.

IMPACTS

- Low density housing and strip malls consume large tracts of land – will these land use patterns be relevant in 2030?
- Concept of distinct cities, separated by farmland and open space, has been compromised.
- Adequate housing is available and generally affordable to the County's population.
- Traffic congestion/air quality impacts have reduced economic growth in some County regions.
- Loss of farmland has reduced the importance of the ag industry – speculative value of farmland is significant.
- Major lateral expansion of existing cities and the growth of new towns have expanded spheres of influence and city boundaries into previously unincorporated areas.
- Continued loss of irrigated farmland has severely impacted the agriculture support industry.
- New towns have developed in the coastal valleys and the Oxnard Plain – ranchettes prevalent.
- County's economy is growing and has become much more diversified with agriculture contributing only a small share of County's employment, wages and production.
- Greenbelt system consists of small "islands" of commercially viable farmland.
- Major conflicts between agriculture and urban uses.

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² Density of development is based on scenario planning figures developed for the 1996 *Value of Agriculture to Ventura County Study* -- the projected density of 7.48 persons/gross acre is an approximation.

³ Acreage figures represents the approximate amount of irrigated farmland remaining in 2030 beginning with a baseline figure of 113,000 acres in 1997 -- the acreage figure includes 40+ acre and less than 40 acre agricultural parcels.

Scenario C (Year 2030)

DESCRIPTION

- Countywide population projection (2030) – 1.07 million
- Projected population increase (from 1997) – 353,000
- Ag/open space lands needed to hold population/jobs increase – 47,300 acres¹
 1. Irrigated agriculture: 30,000 acres
 2. Open space lands: 17,300 acres
- Urban/agricultural lands (2030):
 1. Urban density: 7.48 persons/gross acre – average about 2.46 housing units/gross acre (assume 3.04 persons per housing unit)²
 2. Irrigated agriculture: 83,000 acres³

ASSUMPTIONS

- Continue current land use policies, agreements, plans and guidelines.
- Population growth continues at current (trendline) rate.
- Land absorption rates for urban expansion will be equivalent to trendline rates – urban form characterized by low-density communities.
- Loss of irrigated farmland has created problems for the agricultural support industry – some businesses have failed or left the County.
- The County's economy is more diversified – less dependent on the agriculture industry.
- The low density, dispersed population is primarily automobile dependent with limited public transportation options.
- Some of the urban growth will take place in a "new town" located in the east Santa Clara Valley – some ranchette development will occur in unincorporated areas.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to implement the *Guidelines for Orderly Development* and greenbelt policies.
- "Agriculture-related" cities adopt right-to-farm ordinances – include buyer disclosure language.
- Continue to support the Land Conservation Act (LCA) Program.
- Continue, support and expand the agricultural land trust program.
- Maintain and support the existing water conservation programs.
- Encourage the location of agriculture-related businesses and facilities in the County.
- Identify the true health risk of agricultural operations adjacent to urban uses and take corrective action where needed.

IMPACTS

- Low density housing and strip malls consume large tracts of land – is this development relevant to the State's economic and social needs in 2030?
- Adequate housing is available and generally affordable to the County's population.
- Although the County's economy is growing, some growth has been curtailed because of traffic congestion and air quality problems.
- Continued loss of irrigated farmland contributes to erosion of agriculture-support industry – speculative value of farmland is significant.
- Continued lateral expansion of cities – continued extension of public facilities and services.
- Agriculture industry is declining in importance.
- New town being developed in East Santa Clara Valley – ranchettes replacing commercial farms.
- Acreage of greenbelt system has been reduced by expansion of spheres of influence.
- County's economy is growing and has become more diversified with a larger service employment sector.
- Increasing conflicts between agriculture and urban uses.

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