

Summary of Issues Presented at the
March 12 Planning Commission/Board of Supervisors Study Session on the
Update to the County General Plan

In order to create a framework for further discussion, the comments of the members of the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and the public at the March 12 Study Session have been summarized and grouped together under the following issue areas:

Visioning/Public Forum Issues

Several speakers suggested that the County engage in a visioning and/or public forum process as a prelude to updating the County general plan. Several speakers believe that there needs to be a regional consensus on the amount and form of urban growth in the county and the cities.

Visioning, as typically conducted by cities and counties, entails a process whereby the residents of the jurisdiction are asked to communicate their thoughts regarding what they like and dislike about their existing community and share what they would like their future community to be like. Visioning typically is employed in jurisdictions where the elected body perceives that there is a need for better understanding the residents' opinions regarding land use issues, and/or where a jurisdiction does not have a strong, commonly held sense of community or a stable, clear plan for the future.

There are many different approaches to visioning and public forums, ranging from bottom-up approaches (public surveys/community forums) to large advisory committees composed of representatives of local governments, school districts, service providers, special interest groups and the public at large. The product of a visioning or public forum process is typically a report to the governing body of the city or county, which is then used as a guide to making goal, policy and program changes to the local general plan and/or ordinances.

The following is a summary of the specific points raised on this issue at the joint study session:

- Need a countywide visioning process with participation of cities, school districts, water and sewer districts, transportation planning agencies, and public.
- SCAG has a growth visioning process that could be used.
- Need a vision based on sustainability.
- Need to re-examine growth patterns – need walkable communities.
- Need better jobs/housing balance.
- Shouldn't use straight-line growth projections.
- Manage growth based on environmental limits.

- Resurrect the Beyond the Year 2000 Committee process.
- Should incorporate city-visioning efforts.
- Scoping/visioning meetings throughout the county.
- Moratorium until vision is completed.

Process Issues

Several of the speakers felt that the public was not given the opportunity at the beginning of this general plan update process to influence the scope of the project. There is also a concern that once the environmental review process begins, the project description cannot or would not be changed in light of public comment.

The following is a summary of the specific points raised on this issue at the joint study session:

- Need public participation in the scope of the update, which was not done in 1999 or 2000 when the Board considered the project.
- Need to include school districts, cities, transportation planning agencies, water districts, and sanitation districts.
- Public should review the GPU amendments before CEQA process starts.

Expand Scope of Update to Address Other Issues

Several speakers believe that there is a need to prepare a more comprehensive update to the County General Plan involving amendments to the Resources and Hazards Appendices and other Public Facilities and Services chapters, and reevaluating all goals, policies and programs.

Specific comments are summarized below:

- Need a comprehensive update of the general plan.
- Need to update education chapter - school districts vs. cities/county.
- Revise goals, policies and programs to eliminate bad practices.
- Biological Resources chapter needs updating.
- The time horizon of the general plan should be reevaluated to address a post-SOAR Ventura County (beyond 2020).

Transportation/Circulation Issues

Many speakers believe that widening State Highways and County Roads will not relieve congestion because this will simply lead to more growth and development. In addition, several speakers believe that there is too much

emphasis on road capacity and not enough on traffic safety and preserving community character. Also, some speakers believe that transportation systems in Ventura County are too auto-dependent, and more emphasis should be placed on transit services and bicycle facilities.

The following is a summary of the specific points raised on this issue at the joint study session:

- Need to re-examine traffic model assumptions - use local traffic statistics, not national.
- Need policies to prevent growth inducement of road widening, e.g., greenbelts.
- Cities need to manage their traffic – multi-modal, mass transit, higher densities.
- Need to re-examine mass transit options.
- Need to consider a mass transit fee.
- Need to reconsider sales tax option for transit.
- VCTC has unmet transit needs, but redirects unspent funds to non-transit projects.
- Lobby State and Feds for money to widen freeways.
- State highways should be widened before County roads, e.g., Hwy 118 before Santa Rosa Road.
- Road improvements for safety should occur before road widening for capacity.
- Board should approve all road widening based on demonstrated need after all other measures are implemented.
- Need to re-examine the Traffic Impact Mitigation Fee program and funding priorities.
- Emphasize car pools, off-peak work hours, telecommuting.
- Regional Trails Plan needs to be considered.
- Santa Rosa Road should remain 2 lanes and should be improved for safety and for better horse, bike and pedestrian access.
- Hwy 33 bypass should be two lanes, not four.
- Need to widen Hwy 101 along the north coast.
- There is an inequity for Santa Rosa Valley permit applicants that are affected by the current restrictive traffic policies.

Agriculture/Open Space Development Standards

Many speakers believe that the County should do more to support the agricultural industry by removing regulatory impediments and allowing property owners more flexibility. One speaker suggested larger parcel sizes in Open Space designated areas.

The following is a summary of the specific points raised on this issue at the joint study session:

- Remove restrictions on agriculture thereby facilitating economic viability.
- Agriculture needs support infrastructure – support service industries and farm labor housing.
- Post SOAR paradigm shift for agricultural land.
- Believes that no SOAR vote is needed for changes to Agricultural and Open Space lot coverage standards.
- Open Space should have 20-acre minimum.

Housing

Several speakers emphasized the need for affordable, decent housing for the current and future workforce and families. Specific reference to farmworker housing and second dwelling units was made.

Building/Zoning Codes

A couple of speakers believe that some provisions of the Building and Zoning Codes need to be amended to address current problems related to construction activities and parking of large vehicles in residential areas.