Merced County General Plan Update

Alternatives Report Policy Options

Board of Supervisors/Planning Commission and Focus Group Comment Summary

July 1, 2008
(Updated December 8, 2008)

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AGRICULTURE

Policy Options

AG-1: Preservation of Agricultural Land

Key Question(s):

What additional policy strategies can be employed to reduce the conversion of agricultural land to residential and other uses?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
5	2	0	AG-1.a	Establish and implement an agricultural mitigation program, with consistent standards for county and city governments, that matches acres converted with farmland acres preserved at 1:1 or higher ratios.
4	2	1	AG-1.b	Formalize county-city agreements concentrating new development in cities that include agricultural mitigation and avoidance of prime agricultural land conversion policies.
6	1	1	AG-1.c	Adopt the Farmland Security Act version of the Williamson Act, with larger property tax benefits for farmland owners in return for longer (20-year renewable) contracts.
4	3	1	AG-1.d	Monitor current Williamson Act contracts to remove (nonrenew) small parcels not devoted to commercial agriculture.
4	3	0	AG-1.e	Require larger parcel size minimums and evidence of commercial agricultural use for enrolling new Williamson Act contracts.
6	2	0	AG-1.f	Coordinate county and city planning with the easement acquisitions of the Central Valley Farmland Trust and other conservation agencies.
4	1	0	AG-1.g	Add other agriculture-related factors to the criteria for reviewing expansion of urban boundaries into rural areas.
2	2	3	AG-1.h	Designate a new Rural Residential zoning classification for locations currently zoned agriculture where there are clusters of small residential parcels.
4	1	2	AG-1.i	Remove land not under Williamson Act contract from the county's single Agriculture Preserve. Sub-options for accomplishing this goal include: (1) approving through a separate zone classification a different set of compatible use and parcel size requirements for non-contracted parcels; (2) Redrawing the current boundary of the Agricultural Preserve to create a larger number of smaller preserves more aligned with contracted land; and (3) Encouraging owners of non-contacted parcels to file for removal from the Preserve. (4) Ten-acre minimum parcel size within the gricultural Preserve to be consistent with State Subdivision Map Act and Williamson act rules.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

AG-1.a Establish and implement an agricultural mitigation program in cooperation with the six Merced County cities, with consistent standards for county and city governments, that matches acres converted with

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farmland acres preserved at 1:1~~ or higher ratios~~. *[Comment: Needs to be jointly approved by all cities.]*

AG-1.b Formalize county-city agreements emphasizing concentration~~ng~~ of new development in cities that include agricultural mitigation and avoidance of prime agricultural land conversion~~ policies~~.

AG-1.c Adopt the Farmland Security Act version of the Williamson Act, with larger property tax benefits for farmland owners in return for longer (20-year renewable) contracts. *[Comment: Only with continued state funding and elimination of current agricultural preserve.]*

AG-1.d Monitor current Williamson Act contracts to remove (nonrenew) small parcels not devoted to commercial agriculture.

AG-1.e Encourage ~~Require~~ larger parcel size minimums and/or evidence of commercial agricultural use for enrolling new Williamson Act contracts.

AG-1.f Coordinate county and city planning with the easement acquisitions of ~~the Central Valley Farmland Trust and other~~ conservation agencies.

AG-1.g Add other agriculture-related factors to the criteria for reviewing expansion of urban boundaries into rural areas. *[Comment: Need to add specifics.]*

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

AG-1.a Establish and implement an agricultural mitigation program, with consistent standards for county and city governments, that matches acres converted with farmland acres preserved at ~~1:1~~ 4:1 or higher ratios. *[Comment: The LESA model or a sliding scale based on soil capability should be used. For example: high density development on Class III soil would be mitigated 1:1, but low density developments on Class I soil would be mitigated at 4:1.]* (AG Focus Group)

AG-1.b (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-1.c (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-1.d (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-1.e Require larger parcel size minimums and evidence of commercial agricultural use for enrolling new Williamson Act contracts. *[Comment: State rules already prescribe a minimum size for contracts. The two Williamson Act programs should not be weakened in any way.]* (AG Focus Group)

AG-1.f (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-1.g (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-1.i (DELETE, AG Focus Group) *[Comment: The Williamson Act programs must continue to be readily available to all property owners who qualify.]*

Other Focus Group Member Comments

AG-1.a Establish and implement an agricultural mitigation program, with consistent standards for county and city governments, that matches acres converted with farmland acres preserved at ~~1:1~~ 4:1 or higher ratios. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

AG-1.h (DELETE, AG Focus Group, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

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AG-2: Parcelization of the Agricultural Land

Key Question(s):

What steps can be taken to minimize the negative impacts on commercial agriculture of the sitting of scattered, large lot rural residences on agricultural land?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
5	1	2	AG-2.a	Increase minimum parcel size requirements in agricultural zones (including implementing A-1-40 parcel size requirements) to discourage land divisions for rural residential purposes and maintain parcels large enough for efficient agriculture production.
3	2	2	AG-2.b	Adjust parcel size requirements in agricultural zones according to regions of the county suitable for growing different commodities, recognizing that some commodities (e.g., cattle, certain field crops) require larger landscapes for efficient production than other commodities.
1	5	1	AG-2.c	Place an annual cap on the number of land divisions allowed in agricultural zones for rural residential purposes, and develop additional criteria for the evaluation of parcel divisions in the zones.
4	1	2	AG-2.d	Site homesites in agriculturally-zoned areas to minimize interference with farm operations, including their location at road frontages on parcel fringes.
4	1	1	AG-2.e	Limit the portion of agricultural parcels devoted to new rural homesites.
4	1	1	AG-2.f	Require applicants seeking to divide agriculturally-zoned parcels to demonstrate via expert information the continued viability of the smaller lots for commercial agriculture, using specific standards (i.e., access to agricultural water, joint farm management, access for aerial spraying, size viability for specific commodities) and farm management plans.
4	3	0	AG-2.g	In the case of more than one homesite on an agricultural parcel, require their clustering on parcel edges to minimize interference with agricultural operations.
5	0	2	AG-2.h	Rename the "Agricultural Residential (AR)" zone to "Rural Residential" to remove the implication that agriculture is the primary and desired use.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

AG-2.b Adjust parcel size requirements in agricultural zones according to regions of the county suitable for growing different commodities, recognizing that some commodities (e.g., cattle, certain field crops) require larger landscapes for efficient production than other commodities. *[Comment: We already have A-1 and A-2. Maybe adjust boundaries of each.]*

AG-2.c ~~Place an annual cap on the number of land divisions allowed in agricultural zones for rural residential purposes, and~~ D~~d~~evelop additional criteria for the evaluation of parcel divisions in the zones.

AG-2.d Encourage ~~Site~~ homesites in agriculturally-zoned areas to minimize interference with farm operations, including their location at road frontages on parcel fringes. *[Comment: Identify exceptions.]*

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AG-2.e Limit the portion of agricultural parcels devoted to new rural homesites. *[Comment:Need to clarify.]*

AG-2.f Require applicants seeking to divide agriculturally-zoned parcels to demonstrate ~~via expert information~~ the continued viability of the smaller lots (less than 40 acres) for commercial agriculture, using specific standards (i.e., access to agricultural water, joint farm management, access for aerial spraying, size viability for specific commodities) and farm management plans.

AG-2.g In the case of more than one homesite on an agricultural parcel, require their clustering ~~on parcel edges~~ to minimize interference with agricultural operations. *[Comment: Identify exceptions.]*

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

AG-2.b (DELETE, AG Focus Group)

AG-2.c (DELETE, AG Focus Group) *[Comment: Rural residential uses should be discouraged all together because of their low efficiency and threat to ground water.]*

AG-2.d (DELETE, AG Focus Group)

AG-2.e (DELETE, AG Focus Group) *[Comment: Rural home sites create conflicts with neighboring farm operations.]*

AG-2.f Require applicants seeking to divide agriculturally-zoned parcels to demonstrate via expert information the continued viability of the smaller lots for commercial agriculture, using specific standards (i.e., access to agricultural water, joint farm management, access for aerial spraying, size viability for specific commodities) and farm management plans. *[Comment: Establish an advisory committee that would make a determination if newly split parcels are economically viable and will continue to contribute to the local economy. Revive the TAC-ALC to serve this purpose.]* (AG Focus Group)

AG-2.g (DELETE, AG Focus Group)

AG-2.h (ADD, AG Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

AG-2.c (DELETE, MARG letter, 9/15/08) *[Comment: Place a moratorium on new land divisions for rural residential purposes in ag zones until existing undeveloped Rural Residential or AR land is inventoried including current "clusters" of smaller acreages that are predominantly residential, though usually housing farm owners and their immediate families or agricultural workers from the vicinity, then prohibit new land divisions for rural residential purposes until the existing inventory is developed. Consider a policy to allow permanent trade of permits-to-divide for parcels with such permits that have not yet been developed. Develop additional criteria for the evaluation of parcel divisions in the zones.]*

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AG-3: Agricultural-Residential Conflicts

Key Question(s):

How can "edge" problems, created when residential and other non-farm land uses are located next to serious agricultural operations, be prevented or minimized?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
4	2	1	AG-3.a	Establish buffer standards for residential parcels located adjacent to agricultural land that are consistent for the county and cities, including buffers for single rural residences in agricultural areas.
7	0	0	AG-3.b	Create buffer design (e.g., landscaping, etc.) guidelines for developers and homeowners.
5	1	0	AG-3.c	Apply the term "buffer" more selectively to just setbacks required on urban parcels next to farmland, while using another term (such as "separator") to refer to transitional areas between agricultural and urban land uses.
4	1	2	AG-3.d	Reconsider the merits of using small-scale agricultural parcels to separate large agricultural properties from residential areas.
7	0	0	AG-3.e	Discourage the location by other public agencies of facilities (especially schools) in agricultural areas.
6	0	1	AG-3.f	Revise the county's Right-to-Farm Ordinance to include stronger disclosure requirements, such as notification during real estate transactions and through property tax bills.
2	1	2	AG-3.g	Establish a grievance procedure for hearing and resolving residential neighbor complaints about agricultural practices.
4	1	0	AG-3.h	Provide more public information about the local contributions and practices of agriculture through brochures, the county government website, and other media targeted to urban audiences.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

AG-3.a Establish buffer standards for residential parcels located adjacent to agricultural land that are consistent for the county and cities~~, including buffers for single rural residences in agricultural areas~~. *[Comment: Only after cities adopt similar standards.]*

AG-3.e Discourage the location by other public agencies of facilities (especially schools) in agricultural areas. *[Comment: What is the "hammer"?]*

AG-3.h Coordinate with the Farm Bureau and CWA to p~~P~~rovide~~e~~ more public information about the local contributions and practices of agriculture through brochures, the county government website, and other media targeted to urban audiences.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

AG-3.a Establish buffer standards for residential parcels located adjacent to Agricultural land that are consistent for the county and cities, including buffers for single rural residences in agricultural areas. *[Comment: Rural residential zones and parks make poor buffers. Effective buffers include: natural barriers such as canals and streams; industrial/commercial*

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zones; wide streets; and highways or railroads. Refer to the Buffer Planning Workbook by Sonya Hammond, UC Cooperative Extension and other resources mentioned above. See new Hilmar Community Plan] (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

AG-3.b Create buffer design (e.g., landscaping, etc.) guidelines for developers and homeowners. *[Comment: (see 3a)]* (AG Focus Group)

AG-3.c Apply the term "buffer" more selectively to just setbacks required on urban parcels next to farmland, while using another term (such as "separator") to refer to transitional areas between agricultural and urban land uses. *[Comment: Needs further study]* (AG Focus Group)

AG-3.d Reconsider the merits of using small-scale agricultural parcels to separate large agricultural properties from residential areas. *[Comment: Rural residential lots would be unacceptable for this use. Needs further study. Transition zones are a big topic.]* (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

AG-3.e Discourage the location by other public agencies of facilities (especially schools) in agricultural areas. *[Comment: Do not allow sensitive urban uses such as schools in ag zones.]* (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-3.f Revise the county's Right-to-Farm Ordinance to include stronger disclosure requirements, such as notification during real estate transactions and through property tax bills. *[Comment: See prior sections.]* (AG Focus Group)

AG-3.g (DELETE, AG Focus Group)

AG-3.h (ADD, Ag Focus Group)

ADD Work with law enforcement to strengthen efforts against illegal dumping, vandalism, trespassing, and other rural crime. (DELETE, AG Focus Group)

ADD Establish guidelines that will minimize the impact of new development and rural homes on food safety standards that are being required by food packers and processors. (AG Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

None.

AG-4: Added Economic Value to Local Agriculture

Key Question(s):

What new or revised policies and programs should be considered to assist Merced County farmers and ranchers to increase their income from the use of agricultural land?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
6	2	0	AG-4.a	Liberalize current standards and procedures for reviewing and approving county permits for produce stands and other farm-related businesses (including agri-tourism) on agriculturally zoned parcels.
6	0	2	AG-4.b	Identify locations in Merced County where on-farm produce sales have good economic potential, such as roadside sites on major traffic arteries.

5	2	1	AG-4.c	Redesignate small SUDPs without public water and sewer systems as Agricultural Services Centers and amend the Zoning Ordinance accordingly to emphasize their rural character.
8	0	0	AG-4.d	Establish as part of the county's economic development strategy programs that promote local agriculture.
7	1	0	AG-4.e	Encourage landowner participation in compensatory programs that preserve farmland, including the Williamson Act, conservation easements, and USDA-funded conservation practices.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

AG-4.a ~~Liberalize~~ Create flexibility for current standards and procedures for reviewing and approving county permits for produce stands and other farm-related businesses (including agri-tourism) on agriculturally zoned parcels.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

AG-4.a (ADD, AG Focus Group)

AG-4.b (DELETE, AG Focus Group) *[Comment: This is a market driven process]*

AG-4.c Redesignate small SUDPs without public water and sewer systems as Agricultural Services Centers and amend the Zoning Ordinance accordingly to emphasize their rural character. *[Comment: This should be studied and guided by TACALC to assure that the rural character is preserved.]* (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

AG-4.d Establish as part of the county's economic development strategy programs that promote and maintain local agriculture. ~~–~~(MODIFY, AG Focus Group) *[Comment: Support promotion of local agriculture as part of economic development strategy.]* (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)

AG-4.e (ADD, AG Focus Group)

ADD Promote the local connection between farmers and consumers, including food and ag literacy. Enhance access by local farmers to local markets, including restaurants and institutions like schools. *[Comment: This may help the county comply with AB32]* (AG Focus Group)

ADD Adopt economic development policies that strengthen the economic viability of farmers of all sizes in the county. Support the production of emerging crops and animal products that can lead to new markets for local products.* (AG Focus Group)

ADD Adopt policies that will increase access of local consumers to locally produced food.* (AG Focus Group)

**For the above please reference: American Planning Association – Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning – www.planning.org* (AG Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

None.

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AG-5: Water for Agriculture

Key Question(s):

How can Merced County government assist its farmers to continue to receive the high quality water necessary for growing crops and animals?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
7	0	0	AG-5.a	In cooperation with local water agencies, conduct a detailed study of countywide water use and needs for agriculture with periodic updates and with information that can be widely shared and publicized.
6	2	0	AG-5.b	Retain the General Plan's current provisions relating to water quality and supply and to farm water conservation.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

None.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

AG-5.a In cooperation with local water agencies, conduct a detailed study of countywide water use and needs for agriculture with periodic updates and with information that can be widely shared and publicized for the purpose of developing sustainable techniques and strategies for long-term water availability for agriculture. *[Comment: Periodic updates should be performed every three years]* (MODIFY, Ag Focus Group)

AG-5.b Retain the General Plan's current provisions relating to water quality and supply and to farm water conservation. *[Comment: Maintain water resource quality and quantity for the irrigation of productive farmland. Prevent the loss of productive farmland due to competition for water from urban uses from both within and outside the county. (taken from Solano County General Plan)]* (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

AG-5.a In cooperation with local water agencies, conduct a detailed study of countywide water use and needs for agriculture with periodic updates and with information that can be widely shared and publicized for the purpose of developing sustainable techniques and strategies for long-term water availability for agriculture. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

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AG-6: Agriculture-Related Expertise and Information in County Government

Key Question(s):

How can county government enhance its ability to wisely review and decide land use matters affecting local agriculture?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
6	1	0	AG-6.a	Expand county government's GIS mapping and related data capabilities to include information on the spatial distribution and value of different agricultural commodities, land values, conservation easement locations, agricultural production processing links, natural resource attributes, urban-agricultural edge patterns, residential fragmentation of farmland, and other policy-related items.
5	3	0	AG-6.b	Designate one or more "agricultural specialist" or "agricultural planner" positions in one or more relevant county departments to provide added expertise on agriculture-related land use and economic issues, including permitting and the effects on agricultural operations of lot divisions in farm areas.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

AG-6.b Designate one or more "agricultural specialist" or "agricultural planner" positions in one or more relevant county departments to provide added expertise on agriculture-related land use and economic issues.~~, including permitting and the effects on agricultural operations of lot divisions in farm areas~~. *[Comment: What is the job description? What are the qualifications?]*

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

AG-6.a Expand county government's GIS mapping and related data capabilities to include information on the spatial distribution and value of different agricultural commodities, land values, conservation easement locations, agricultural production processing links, natural resource attributes, urban-agricultural edge patterns, residential fragmentation of farmland, and other policy-related items. *[Comment: Incorporate this information into the LESA model to determine level of mitigation.]* (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

AG-6.b (ADD, AG Focus Group)

ADD Re-establish TACALC. (AG Focus Group)

ADD Expand consultation with ag organizations and agencies (AG Focus Group)

ADD Increase expertise within the planning staff about agriculture and food systems. (AG Focus Group)

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy Options

ED-1: Impact of Existing Agricultural Industry

Key Question(s)

How can the County capitalize on the strength of agriculture in diversifying the county's economy?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
4	3	0	ED-1.a	Strive to maintain agriculture's dominate role in the economy.
7	1	0	ED-1.b	Diversify the County's agricultural base by: i. Encouraging strong relationships between traditional agricultural industries and emerging agricultural industries, particularly with UC Merced. ii. Emphasizing the expansion of value-added agricultural products. iii. Pursuing/developing tourism opportunities within the agricultural industry, including educational tourism opportunities.
5	1	1	ED-1.c	Establish business incubators for the development of small agricultural businesses and food processing enterprises.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

ED-1.a ~~Strive to~~ M~~m~~aintain agriculture's dominate role in the economy while striving to diversify with other industries.

ED-1.b Diversify the County's agricultural base by:

i. Encouraging strong relationships between traditional agricultural industries and emerging agricultural industries;~~, particularly with UC Merced.~~

iv. Emphasizing the expansion of value-added agricultural products; and~~.~~

v. Pursuing/developing tourism opportunities within the agricultural industry, including educational tourism opportunities.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

ED-1.a ~~Strive to~~ M~~m~~aintain and diversify agriculture's ~~dominate~~ significant role in the economy. (MODIFY, AG Focus Group) *[Comment: Maintain and diversify. Target industries?]* (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008) (MODIFY, Merced County Economic Development Department)

ED-1.b Diversify the County's agricultural base by:

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i. Encouraging strong relationships between traditional agricultural industries and emerging agricultural industries, particularly with UC Merced and Castle Airport/Commerce Center. (MODIFY, Economic Development Focus Group)

vi. Emphasizing the expansion of value-added agricultural products.

vii. Pursuing/developing tourism opportunities within the agricultural industry, including educational tourism opportunities.

[Comment: Hilmar Cheese and the Grasslands Education Center, Buchanan Hollow Nut store, The Fruit Barn, Double T Ranch, are examples of existing ag tourism efforts.] (Economic Development Focus Group)

ED-1.c Establish business incubators for the development of small agricultural businesses and food processing enterprises. *[Comment: Add policy and add "adopt policies that nurture and expand existing businesses, ag or otherwise."]* (Economic Development Focus Group)

ADD Support developing enterprises that direct market ag products which have the potential to create new companies and jobs while reducing energy use in the distribution system. (Economic Development Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

ED-1.b [Comment:
(i): Diversify ag by adding more ag? Diverisfy ag base.
(ii): expand value added ag products (existing business jobs; low income)
(iii): Ag tourism/education. Constraints of Homeland Security? Access to fields/facilities?]
(Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)

ED-2: Diversification

Key Question(s)

What can the County do to diversify its economy?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete
5	3	0

ED-2.a Promote and expand existing small business development programs.

i. Expand existing small business development programs through a range of public/private partnerships, technical assistance, and economic and financial incentives.

viii. Identify partnerships between industry and educational organizations, particularly UC Merced, and identify potential mentoring, job training, networking, and professional development opportunities between these organizations.

ix. Support and promote efforts to the Small Business Administration to provide technical assistance to small business

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owners and employees through classes and assistance in the areas of business management, marketing, and legal assistance.

x. Provide low interest loans for small business development and expansion.

xi. Strengthen business reinvestment through partnerships and outreach.

4	4	0	ED-2.b	Develop targeted industry strategies to support expansion and diversification. i. Market and develop industries based on existing and future workforce demographics (i.e., education level, skills, commute) xii. Encourage development of environmentally sustainable businesses which capitalize on industry sector strengths, particularly new green technologies. xiii. Target industry sectors based on the County's growing agricultural economic base, particularly food manufacturing and potential office-based services such as information and professional services. xiv. Encourage and facilitate the development of agri-tourism and natural resource attractions. xv. Establish and encourage relationships between existing agricultural-related companies, UC Merced, and potential venture capital organizations. xvi. Attract research and development companies and information/knowledge-based companies by providing financial incentives, facilitating relationships between local companies, and (re)location assistance. xvii. Support office development adjacent to key residential growth areas to provide a balance of employment and housing. xviii. Pursue transportation-oriented industries (i.e., distribution and advanced logistics centers) to the extent that they support the local economy and contain significant employment and assessed value within the county. xix. Identify and create opportunities for industrial uses, such as designating sufficient land where adequate services and infrastructure can be provided.
8	0	0	ED-2.c	Direct infrastructure investments to areas with the greatest potential for economic growth in an effort to obtain the greatest pay-off in terms of economic development, and take advantage of existing infrastructure (including Interstate-5, Highway 99, UC Merced and Castle Air Park.
7	1	0	ED-2.d	Facilitate the expansion of broadband/high speed internet service available throughout the County.
6	1	1	ED-2.e	Require new or expanded SUDP's to include sufficient employment-based land uses to maintain a 1:1 jobs/housing balance.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

ED-2.a Promote and expand existing small business development programs.

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i. Expand existing small business development programs through a range of public/private partnerships, technical assistance, and economic and financial incentives.

xx. Identify partnerships between industry and educational organizations~~, particularly UC Merced,~~ and identify potential mentoring, job training, networking, and professional development opportunities between these organizations.

xxi. Support and promote efforts to the Small Business Administration to provide technical assistance to small business owners and employees through classes and assistance in the areas of business management, marketing, and legal assistance.

xxii. Provide low interest loans for small business development and expansion.

xxiii. Strengthen business reinvestment through partnerships and outreach.

ED-2.b Develop targeted industry strategies to support expansion and diversification.

i. Market and develop industries based on existing and future workforce demographics (i.e., education level, skills, commute)

xxiv. Encourage development of environmentally sustainable businesses which capitalize on industry sector strengths, particularly new green technologies (e.g., solar)

xxv. Target industry sectors based on the County's growing agricultural economic base, particularly food manufacturing and potential office-based services such as information and professional services.

xxvi. Encourage and facilitate the development of agri-tourism and natural resource attractions.

xxvii. Establish and encourage relationships between existing agricultural-related companies, UC Merced, Merced College, high school agricultural programs, and potential venture capital organizations.

xxviii. Attract research and development companies and information/knowledge-based companies by providing financial incentives, facilitating relationships between local companies, and (re)location assistance.

xxix. Support office development adjacent to key residential growth areas to provide a balance of employment and housing.

~~xxx. Pursue transportation-oriented industries (i.e., distribution and advanced logistics centers) to the extent that they support the local economy and contain significant employment and assessed value within the county.~~

~~xxxi. Identify and create opportunities for industrial uses, such as designating sufficient land where adequate services and infrastructure can be provided.~~

ED-2.c Direct infrastructure investments to areas with the greatest potential for economic growth in an effort to obtain the greatest pay-off in terms of economic development, and take advantage of existing infrastructure

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(including Interstate-5, Highway 99, UC Merced and Castle Commercial Center ~~Air Park~~.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

ED-2.a (ADD, Economic Focus Group, Ag Focus Group)

ED-2.b (ADD, Economic Development Focus Group)

ED-2.c Direct infrastructure investments to areas with the greatest potential for economic growth in an effort to obtain the greatest pay-off in terms of economic development, and take advantage of existing infrastructure (including Interstate-5, Highway 99, UC Merced and Castle Air Park. *[Comment: Add and include: "emphasize in-fill development to exploit existing infrastructure".]* (Economic Development Focus Group)

ED-2.d (ADD, Economic Development Focus Group)

ED-2.e Require new or expanded SUDP's to include sufficient employment-based land uses to maintain a 1:1 jobs/housing balance. *[Comment: Having jobs for residents in each community must be a high priority.]* (ADD, Economic Development Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

ED-2.b Develop targeted industry strategies to support expansion and diversification.

i. Market and develop industries based on existing and future workforce demographics (i.e., education level, skills, commute)

ii. Encourage development of environmentally sustainable businesses which capitalize on industry sector strengths, particularly new green technologies.

iii. Target industry sectors based on the County's growing agricultural economic base, particularly food manufacturing and potential office-based services such as information and professional services.

iv. Encourage and facilitate the development of agri-tourism and natural resource attractions.

v. Establish and encourage relationships between existing agricultural-related companies, UC Merced, and potential venture capital organizations.

vi. Attract research and development companies and information/knowledge-based companies by providing financial incentives, facilitating relationships between local companies, and (re)location assistance.

vii. Support office development adjacent to key residential growth areas to provide a balance of employment and housing.

viii. Identify and create opportunities for industrial uses, such as designating sufficient land where adequate services and infrastructure can be provided.

xxx. More programs, services, facilities. Innovation Place Network; RLF's; SBE; SBE services – location of amenities? (urban focused)

(xi) Industry/Education Partnerships. Commercialize Innovation; Innovation Technology Centers (ITC's); IPN.

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(xii) More than SBA. UC Merced/SBDC; IPN, Cities, Chambers, SCORE, etc.

~~(xi)~~(xiii) More RLF funding. Less restrictive (One Voice, CDBG)

(Business Subcommittee Meeting-August 12, 2008)

[Comment: The development of transportation infrastructure must consider impact on air quality so that it does not make it more difficult to attract new businesses or cause additional regulations on existing businesses and agriculture.]

ED-2.b ix. (DELETE, MARG letter, 9/15/08) *[Comment: : This policy would be in direct conflict with air quality and climate change goals and imperatives.]*

ED-2.c Direct infrastructure investments to areas with the greatest potential for economic growth in an effort to obtain the greatest pay-off in terms of economic development, and take advantage of existing infrastructure (including Interstate-5, Highway 99, UC Merced and Castle ~~Air Park~~ Commerce Center/ Castle Airport) balancing this effort with the need to minimize VMT (vehicle miles traveled), especially of diesel trucks. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08) *[Comment: Direct infrastructure investment to Castle, UC Merced, I-5 and #99. Where?]* (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)

ED-3: Expansion and Recruitment Efforts

Key Question(s)

What can Merced County do to attract new industry?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
8	0	0	ED-3.a	Develop a comprehensive economic development strategy to identify industry-specific goals and action items.
6	2	0	ED-3.b	Develop and identify financial incentives to attract new investment. i. Continue to pursue funding for entrepreneurial entities, including private and venture funding. ii. Encourage and support investment within the Enterprise Zone.
7	1	0	ED-3.c	Identify workforce training opportunities and needs. i. Expand vocational job training programs and encourage private vocational training opportunities. ii. Work with UC Extension and Merced College to identify agricultural technologies, skills, and training needed to support emerging technologies, including value-added food processing, logistics.
7	1	0	ED-3.d	Develop physical and social infrastructure. i. Focus on strengthening quality of life features (e.g., education, improved urban amenities, adequate public safety)

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ii. Provide a diversity of housing choices, ranging from workforce to executive housing.
iii. Work with providers to expand telecommunication services (i.e., fiber optics, DSL, Cable, wireless service).

6	1	1

ED-3.e Ensure adequate provision is made for child care/day care facilities to support working parents
i. Provide incentives or requirements for child care facilities to be incorporated into new employment centers.
ii. Ensure adequate land is available and zoning regulations encourage child care centers in residential neighborhoods.
iii. Establish relationships with private businesses, schools, and other public and private entities to create more child care facilities.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

ED-3.b Develop and identify financial incentives to attract new investment and maintain existing businesses.
i. Continue to pursue funding for entrepreneurial entities, including private and venture funding.
ii. Encourage and support investment within the Enterprise Zone.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

ED-3.a Develop a comprehensive economic development strategy to identify industry-specific goals and action items. *[Comment: When developing strategies, look for ways to exploit and build upon our ag base and existing industries.]* (Economic Development Focus Group).

ED-3.b (ADD, Economic Development Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

ED-3.b Develop and identify financial incentives to attract new investment and support existing local businesses, particularly small locally owned businesses. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08) *[Comment: Develop Financial Incentives. #975; Fees, Perception of Business.]* (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)

ED-3.c *[Comment: : Each community should have a balance of jobs, commerce and housing choices. Work with UC Extension and Merced College to identify solar, and other technologies, skills, and training needed to support emerging technologies, including ag value-added food processing, logistics.]*— (Merced County Economic Development Department)

ED-3.d Develop physical and social infrastructure.
i. Focus on strengthening quality of life features (e.g., education, improved urban amenities, adequate public safety, public health, good air quality, walkable/bikable communities, accessible local government). (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)
ii. Provide a diversity of housing choices, ranging from workforce to executive housing.
iii. Work with providers to expand telecommunication services (i.e., fiber optics, DSL, Cable, wireless service).

~~iii.~~iv. Develop effective transportation corridors (Merced County Economic Development Department)

ED-4: Partnerships with Catalyst Projects

Key Question(s)

What can Merced County do to enhance Castle Air Park and UC Merced's role as economic catalysts?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
0	7	1	ED-4.a	Identify and facilitate the construction of key infrastructure needs for the County's economic viability by: i. Working with the High Speed Rail Authority to encourage the high speed rail alignment to connect to Castle Air Park and UC Merced. ii. Building a Highway 99 bypass road/toll road from Merced to Atwater to alleviate traffic congestion.
6	2	0	ED-4.b	Capitalize on partnerships between UC Merced, the County, and the private sector by: i. Continuing to strengthen relationships between the UC Extension programs in Merced, County organizations and programs, and the local business community to encourage ongoing professional development opportunities for local businesses. ii. Partnering with UC Merced and Castle Air Park to develop flexible R&D and incubator space, including opportunities for technology transfer.
7	1	0	ED-4.c	Continue to work with Castle Air Park to take advantage of its opportunities related to industrial development. i. Protect Castle Air Park from encroachment by limiting development near both ends of the runway or imposing stricter regulations on the amount of residential growth ii. Enhance Castle Air Park's role as a regional transportation hub iii. Continue to encourage related industries to locate and take advantage of Castle's adjacencies.
6	2	0	ED-4.d	Identify and foster other unique economic benefits generated from catalyst projects. i. Create programs to retain UC Merced graduates within the Central Valley community, not only related to employment opportunities, but also related to community amenities such as civic and cultural opportunities, K-12 education, and affordable housing. ii. Encourage economic, civic, cultural linkages between the University and Castle Air Park

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BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

What can Merced County do to enhance Castle Commercial Center ~~Air Park~~ and UC Merced's role as economic catalysts?

ED-4.a Identify and facilitate the construction of key infrastructure needs for the County's economic viability. ~~by:~~

~~iii. Working with the High Speed Rail Authority to encourage the high speed rail alignment to connect to Castle Air Park and UC Merced.~~

~~iv. Building a Highway 99 bypass road/toll road from Merced to Atwater to alleviate traffic congestion.~~

ED-4.b Capitalize on partnerships between UC Merced, Merced College, the County, and the private sector by:

iii. Continuing to strengthen relationships between the UC Extension programs in Merced, County organizations and programs, and the local business community to encourage ongoing professional development opportunities for local businesses.

iv. Partnering with UC Merced and Castle Commercial Center ~~Air Park~~ to develop flexible R&D and incubator space, including opportunities for technology transfer.

ED-4.c Continue to work with Castle Commercial Center ~~Air Park~~ to take advantage of its opportunities related to industrial development.

iv. Protect Castle Commercial Center ~~Air Park~~ from encroachment by limiting development near both ends of the runway or imposing stricter regulations on the amount of residential growth

v. Enhance Castle Commercial Center~~Air Park~~'s role as a regional transportation hub

vi. Continue to encourage related industries to locate and take advantage of Castle's adjacencies.

ED-4.d Identify and foster other unique economic benefits generated from catalyst projects.

iii. Create programs to retain UC Merced graduates within the Central Valley community, not only related to employment opportunities, but also related to community amenities such as civic and cultural opportunities, K-12 education, and affordable housing.

iv. Encourage economic, civic, cultural linkages between the University and Castle Commercial Center ~~Air Park~~

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

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Other Focus Group Member Comments

ED-4.a Identify and facilitate the construction of key infrastructure needs for the County's economic viability by:

i. Working with the High Speed Rail Authority to encourage the high speed rail alignment to connect to ~~Castle Air Park~~ Castle Commerce Center/Castle Airport and UC Merced. (Merced County Economic Development Department)

ii. Building a Highway 99 bypass road/toll road from Merced to Atwater to alleviate traffic congestion.

ED-4.b Capitalize on partnerships between UC Merced, the County, and the private sector by:

i. Continuing to strengthen relationships between the UC Extension programs in Merced, County organizations and programs, and the local business community to encourage ongoing professional development opportunities for local businesses.

ii. Partnering with UC Merced and ~~Castle Air Park~~ Castle Commerce Center/Castle Airport to develop flexible R&D and incubator space, including opportunities for technology transfer. (MODIFY, Merced County Economic Development)

ED-4.c Continue to work with ~~Castle Air Park~~ Castle Commerce Center/Castle Airport to take advantage of its opportunities related to industrial development.

i. Protect ~~Castle Air Park~~ Castle Commerce Center/Castle Airport from encroachment by limiting development near both ends of the runway or imposing stricter regulations on the amount of residential growth

ii. Enhance ~~Castle Air Park's~~ Castle Commerce Center/Castle Airport's role as a regional transportation hub without increasing truck traffic: focus on rail. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

iii. Continue to encourage related industries to locate and take advantage of Castle's adjacencies.

ED-4.d Identify and foster other unique economic benefits generated from catalyst projects.

i. Create programs to retain UC Merced graduates within the Central Valley community, not only related to employment opportunities, but also related to community amenities such as civic and cultural opportunities, ~~K-12~~ P-16 education, and affordable housing.

~~ii.~~ Encourage economic, civic, cultural linkages between the University and ~~Castle Air Park~~ Castle Commerce Center/Castle Airport. [Comment: Tag on education development (P-16) as a catalyst for economic growth]. (Merced County Economic Development Department)

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NATURAL RESOURCE/ENVIRONMENTAL

NR-1: Biological Resources

Key Question(s):

How can the County address the encroachment of urban, mineral resource, and agricultural development on natural habitat areas?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
6	2	0	NR-1.a	Protect wetlands and riparian habitat from degradation, encroachment, or loss.
6	2	0	NR-1.b	Coordinate with private, local, State and Federal agencies for the protection of biological resources, and prevent degradation, encroachment, or loss of resources managed by these agencies.
6	2	0	NR-1.c	Comprehensively consider biological resources in the planning and development review process by identifying and protecting such resources.
6	2	0	NR-1.d	Manage development and other activities to minimize adverse effects to biological resources.
5	1	2	NR-1.e	Provide educational and incentive programs for the private sector to manage and protect biological resources.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

NR-1.a Identify ~~Protect~~ wetlands and riparian habitat areas and develop a narrow buffer zone around each area to protect them from degradation, encroachment, or loss.

NR-1.b Coordinate with private, local, State and Federal agencies for the protection of biological resources, and prevent degradation, encroachment, or loss of resources managed by these agencies. *[Comment: Needs more detail.]*

NR-1.c Comprehensively consider biological resources in the planning and development review process by identifying and protecting such resources. *[Comment: See comment above.]*

NR-1.d Manage development and other activities to minimize adverse effects to biological resources. *[Comment: See comment above.]*

NR-1.e ~~Provide~~ Encourage ~~educational and incentive programs for~~ the private sector to manage and protect biological resources.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

NR-1.a Protect wetlands and riparian habitat from degradation, encroachment, or loss. *[Comment: Protect wetlands, waterways, (or other wording to represent river and streams) and riparian habitat from degradation, encroachment, or loss, (and encourage their reestablishment).]* (MODIFY, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-1.b (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-1.c (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

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NR-1.d Manage ~~development~~ agricultural practices and other activities to minimize adverse effects to important or sensitive biological resources. (MODIFY, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-1.e Provide educational and incentive programs for the private sector to manage and protect biological resources. *[Comment: (Under implementation, be sure to mention RCDs and NRCS as Ed. Resources. Rivers and streams are not covered under EPA's definition of wetlands. Though other definitions include them, I'd like this to be doubly clear.)]* (Open Space Focus Group)

ADD Protect natural forests (particularly oak woodlands and sycamore forests)- rest to mirror wording of NR 1-a above. (Open Space Focus Group)

ADD A permit will be required for all activities which would affect the contour of the land or impact sensitive habitat. (Open Space Focus Group)

ADD Increase the acreage of protected natural lands and special habitats, including but not limited to wetlands and vernal pools. (Open Space Focus Group)

ADD Preserve and create natural corridors and roadway under/overpasses connecting natural habitats to facilitate wildlife species diversity and survival. (Open Space Focus Group)

ADD Encourage the use of native species in landscaping. Where the County has discretion, require the use of native species for landscaping. (Open Space Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

None.

NR-2: Water Resources

Key Question(s):

What can Merced County do to better manage its water resources, including efforts to preserve and protect the supply and quality of water within the county such as the protection of critical watersheds, recharge areas, riparian zones, and aquifers?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
5	1	2	NR-2.a	Establish development regulations, such as a Grading Ordinance and Best Management Practices, to prevent adverse effects on water resources from construction and development activities.
6	1	0	NR-2.b	Protect watersheds, aquifer recharge areas, and areas susceptible to ground and surface water contamination by identifying such areas; implementing zoning and development regulations to protect water resources, including encouraging community drainage systems and contaminant control measures; and coordinating with other agencies and entities with responsibilities for water quality and watershed protection.
7	1	0	NR-2.c	Ensure that continued supplies of surface and groundwater are available to serve existing and future uses by supporting water districts and agencies in groundwater management and water supply planning;

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				requiring that new development have sufficient demonstrated water supply; and assisting both urban and agricultural water districts in efforts to use water efficiently.
7	1	0	NR-2.d	Encourage water conservation by implementing efficiency standards for new development, by ensuring that public facilities (including parks) minimize water use through project design and efficient appliances, and coordinating with water purveyors to develop and implement retrofitting programs to replace inefficient uses of water.
7	0	0	NR-2.e	Promote the use of natural channels for drainage and flood control to benefit water quality and other natural resource values.
6	2	0	NR-2.f	Promote protection of water resources in agricultural areas by encouraging programs that assist producers to use water efficiently in agricultural operations and to protect water resources. Provide assistance to and incentives for, producers to comply with the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board with respect to irrigated lands and confined animal facilities, and by encouraging agricultural practices that minimize erosion and the generation of contaminated runoff to ground or surface waters.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

NR-2.a Establish development regulations, such as a Grading Ordinance and Best Management Practices, to prevent adverse effects on water resources from construction and development activities. *[Comment: This is a slippery slope that needs more details. This is an anti-development measure masquerading as water quality protection.]*

NR-2.b ~~Protect~~ Encourage the protection of watersheds, aquifer recharge areas, and areas susceptible to ground and surface water contamination by identifying such areas; consider implementing zoning and development regulations to protect water resources, ~~including~~ encouraging community drainage systems and contaminant control measures; and coordinating with other agencies and entities with responsibilities for water quality and watershed protection.

NR-2.c Ensure that continued supplies of surface and groundwater are available to serve existing and future uses by supporting water districts and agencies in groundwater management and water supply planning; requiring that new development have sufficiently demonstrated water supply; and assisting both urban and agricultural water districts in efforts to use water efficiently.

NR-2.f Seek cooperation with the Farm Bureau to p~~P~~romote protection of water resources in agricultural areas by encouraging programs that assist producers to use water efficiently in agricultural operations and to protect water resources. Provide assistance to and incentives for, producers to comply with the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board with respect to irrigated lands and confined animal facilities, and by encouraging agricultural practices that minimize erosion and the generation of contaminated runoff to ground or surface waters.

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Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

NR-2.a Establish ~~development~~ regulations, such as a Grading Ordinance and Best Management Practices, to prevent adverse effects on water resources from construction and development activities~~.~~ and from agricultural practices. (Open Space Focus Group) *[Comment: Delete words "such as" replace with "require" See: El Dorado County Grading Ordinance.]* (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

NR-2.b Protect watersheds, aquifer recharge areas, and areas susceptible to ground and surface water contamination by identifying such areas; implementing zoning and development regulations to protect water resources, including ~~encouraging~~ community drainage systems and contaminant control measures; and coordinating with other agencies and entities with responsibilities for water quality and watershed protection. (MODIFY, AG Focus Group) (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-2.c (ADD, AG Focus Group) (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-2.d ~~Encourage~~ Require water conservation by implementing efficiency standards for new development, by ensuring that public facilities (including parks) minimize water use through project design and efficient appliances, and coordinating with water purveyors to develop and implement retrofitting programs to replace inefficient uses of water. (ADD, Open Space Focus Group) (MODIFY, AG Focus Group)

NR-2.e (ADD, Open Space Focus Group) (NO COMMENT, Ag Focus Group)

NR-2.f *Comment: Flood irrigation should be recognized for its benefit for ground water recharge in some areas.]* (AG Focus Group)

ADD Water is critical to the future of Merced County. The Merced Water Plan shall be updated and expanded to include the entire county and take into consideration activities in neighboring counties and regional water planning. It shall also consider reductions in federal and state water deliveries on the West Side. It shall consider anticipated reductions in water supplies due to climate change. (AG Focus Group)

ADD The County shall work towards the establishment of a county-wide flood control authority to coordinate efforts and develop opportunities for expanded federal funding. (AG Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

NR-2.a Establish development regulations, ~~such as~~ including a Grading Ordinance and Best Management Practices, to prevent adverse effects on water resources from construction and development activities~~.~~ and changes in agricultural use, to comply with Clean Water Act requirements. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

NR-2.c Ensure that continued supplies of surface and groundwater are available to serve existing and future uses by supporting water districts and agencies in groundwater management and water supply planning; requiring that new development have sufficient demonstrated water supply before receiving any approvals; and assisting both urban and agricultural water districts in efforts to use water efficiently including avoiding discontinuities in surface water supply such as those created by encroachment of development on Merced Irrigation District canals and facilities. (MODIFY, MARG letter 9/15/08) *[Comment: add wording "and water supply studies and planning.."]*

NR-2.f *[Comment: Priority given to small-scale farmers]* (ADD, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega; Open Space Focus Group)

ADD The County shall be the lead agency in coordinating and undertaking a comprehensive countywide water supply study (quality and quantity). (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Avoid allowing retirement of farmland for the purpose of transmitting its water rights to development. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Prohibit removal of vegetation and encourage re-vegitation on river and stream banks. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

NR-3: Energy Resources

Key Question(s):

How can the County arrange and regulate land uses to reduce travel, energy consumption, and thereby air pollutant emissions?

Policy Options

NR-3.a Focus growth and development in existing urban centers, or cluster development with increased density to minimize energy expended for transportation and provision of services.

NR-3.b Work with public agencies and private energy providers to ensure that energy projects avoid or minimize impacts to open space and natural resources.

NR-3.c Promote the development and use of renewable energy resources.

NR-3.d Maximize use of passive and active solar and/or wind energy resources, and require incorporation of green building design and technology into new development.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

NR-3.a (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
NR-3.b (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
NR-3.c (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
NR-3.d (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

NR-3.a *[Comment: Add, really important, good.]* (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

NR-3.b (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ADD Require that new electricity providers are clean alternative energy sources, i.e., solar thermal, wind. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

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NR-4: Mineral Resources

Key Question(s):

How will the County identify and use mineral resources and manage mining activities to optimize resource development into the future while preserving environmental resources and beneficial uses?

Policy Options

NR-4.a Establish resource depletion surcharge fees to fund restoration efforts to ensure protection of public safety.

NR-4.b Use the State Division of Mines and Geology Classification Report to identify mineral resource areas in the county for future extraction while considering conservation of other natural resources and minimizing land use incompatibility.

NR-4.c Where a surface mining operator involves the disturbance of productive agricultural land, the County will encourage the operator to reclaim the property to productive agricultural land rather than an alternative non-agricultural land use.

NR-4.d Require mining projects to obtain agricultural conservation easements at a minimum of 1:1 for each acre of productive agricultural land converted as a result of mining.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

NR-4.a (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-4.b Use the State Division of Mines and Geology Classification Report to identify mineral resource areas in the county for future extraction while considering conservation of other natural resources and minimizing land use incompatibility. *[Comment: I find this ambiguous-maybe implementation programs will clarify.]* (MODIFY, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-4.c (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

NR-4.d (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

NR-4.c Where a surface mining operator involves the disturbance of productive agricultural land, the County will ~~encourage~~ require the operator to reclaim the property to productive agricultural land. ~~rather than an alternative non-agricultural land use.~~ (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

NR-4.d Require mining projects to obtain agricultural conservation easements at a minimum of ~~1~~4:1 ~~1:1~~ for each acre of productive agricultural land converted as a result of mining. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD The County shall require bonds be posted by mining operators to guarantee the restoration of the land to productive agricultural land or natural habitat. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

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NR-5: Air Quality

Key Question(s):

What measures should the County take to reduce air pollutant emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions, to bring the air basin into compliance with Federal, State, and regional air quality rules and regulations?

Policy Options

NR-5.a Plan land uses (e.g., mixed-use and infill development) to decrease vehicle miles traveled.

NR-5.b Establish incentives and programs to encourage use of public transit and decrease vehicle miles traveled.

NR-5.c Require development projects be designed and constructed to minimize energy and water use.

NR-5.d Coordinate with the SJVAPCD and neighboring jurisdictions in the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin to ensure regional cooperation for reduction of air emissions.

NR-5.e Establish minimum buffers between residential land uses and non-residential land uses that generate poor air emissions such as highways, trucking centers, gasoline dispensing facilities, and dry cleaners.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

NR-5.a Plan land uses (e.g., mixed-use and infill development) to decrease vehicle miles traveled. *[Comment: Mixed-use and higher density.]* (Open Space Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

NR-5.a Plan land uses (e.g., mixed-use and infill development) to decrease vehicle miles traveled. *[Comment: Plan land uses (e.g., mixed-use and infill development) to decrease vehicle miles traveled.]* (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

NR-5.b (ADD, Open Space Focus Group; MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

NR-5.c (ADD, Open Space Focus Group; MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

NR-5.d (ADD, Open Space Focus Group; MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

NR-5.e Establish minimum buffers of 5000 feet between residential land uses and non-residential land uses that generate poor air emissions such as highways, trucking centers, gasoline dispensing facilities, and dry cleaners. *[Comment: Also include Awhahnee Principles and implement Transit-oriented development.]* (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega) (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

ADD Identify and fairly mitigate all potentially significant air quality impacts from development. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Require that mitigation not only be feasible but also that it address the full range of health concerns, including hospitalization, absenteeism from work and school, etc. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Provide public facilities and operations that can serve as an example or model for the private sector in implementing air quality programs. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

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ADD Identify and reduce the impacts of projects that by themselves are not significant but are cumulatively significant in combination with other development. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Integrate land use, transportation, and air quality planning for the most efficient use of resources and a healthier environment (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Educate the public regarding the impact of individual transportation, lifestyle, and land use decisions on air quality. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Identify and develop non-motorized transportation corridors within and between communities. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Update the Air Quality components of the General Plan every three years to keep up with ongoing scientific and regulatory developments. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CIRCULATION

CIR-1: Congestion

Key Question(s):

How can the County reduce congestion on its roadway network?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
6	0	2	CIR-1.a	Adopt new level of service (LOS) standards that define acceptable levels of traffic congestion.
6	0	1	CIR-1.b	Define communities, locations, and circumstances where thru traffic bypasses and diversions would be appropriate.
2	3	1	CIR-1.c	Adopt recommendations from the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint process to address regional transportation issues.
5	2	1	CIR-1.d	Expand public transportation services to all areas of the county.
5	2	1	CIR-1.e	Expand public transportation services in areas that are currently deficient within rural Merced County.
7	1	0	CIR-1.f	Pursue intermodal transportation options.
6	0	2	CIR-1.g	Pursue rail-to-trail policies that encourage non-motorized transportation.
6	1	0	CIR-1.h	Promote compact urban development that supports pedestrian activity and transit ridership within the existing cities.
5	2	0	CIR-1.i	Encourage telecommuting through employer incentives.
7	0	1	CIR-1.j	Promote jobs/housing balance by encouraging residential development near employment centers when drafting new or updating community plans.

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7	0	0	CIR-1.k	Identify locations of needed future right-of-ways where additional roadways will better connect new development and alleviate congestion.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

CIR-1.a If funding is available, a~~A~~dopt new level of service (LOS) standards that define acceptable levels of traffic congestion.

CIR-1.b If funding is available, d~~D~~efine communities, locations, and circumstances where thru traffic bypasses and diversions would be appropriate.

CIR-1.c ~~Adopt~~ Consider the adoption of recommendations from the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint process to address regional transportation issues.

CIR-1.d Expand public transportation services to all areas of the county when economically feasible.

CIR-1.e Expand public transportation services in areas that are ~~currently~~ deficient within rural Merced County if there is demand and it is economically feasible.

CIR-1.f Pursue ~~inter~~multi-modal transportation opportunities~~ptions~~.

CIR-1.h Promote compact ~~urban~~ development in urban unincorporated communities that supports pedestrian activity and transit ridership ~~within the existing cities~~.

CIR-1.i Encourage telecommuting through employer incentives. [Comment: Need to identifies who pays,]

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

Other Focus Group Member Comments (August 2008)

CIR-1.b Define communities, locations, and circumstances where thru traffic bypasses and diversions would be appropriate~~.~~ and avoid potential growth- and sprawl-inducing impacts by restricting or prohibiting development along such bypasses. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CIR-1.h ~~Promote~~ Require compact urban development that supports pedestrian activity and transit ridership within the existing cities. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CIR-1.j ~~Promote~~ Require jobs/housing balance by encouraging residential development near employment centers when drafting new or updating community plans. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Develop safe bicycle routes within and between communities. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Prohibit congestion-inducing development (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Require that retail centers be pedestrian-based (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

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ADD Adopt a comprehensive parking policy that discourages private vehicle use and encourages walking, biking, and public transportation use. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Discourage development that causes significant increases in truck traffic. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

PIS-1: Financing Infrastructure

Key Questions:

How should new/upgraded infrastructure be financed?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
8	0	0	PIS-1.a	Ensure that required infrastructure facilities are fully funded and that development contributes its proportionate share of costs by: i. Increasing public private partnership opportunities for capital improvements as well as ongoing operations and service delivery costs. ii. Requiring developers to fully fund their proportionate share of public infrastructure through a combination of impact fees, public financing, or through private funding sources. iii. Identifying and utilizing existing financing mechanisms to fund capital facility expansion and ongoing maintenance costs. iv. Identifying opportunities for impact fees for services to support new development. v. Implementing development impact fees which require new development (residential/commercial/industrial) to finance their proportionate share of public infrastructure, including fire and sheriff facilities, roadway improvements, and Quimby Act fees to fund new parks. vi. Continuing to pursue State and Federal financing for public facilities and road improvements. vii. Support local special district efforts to obtain State and Federal financing for sewer, water, and school facilities.
7	1	0	PIS-1.b	Encourage coordination and collaboration on a regional and local level by: i. Coordinating with regional organizations and local jurisdictions to identify infrastructure issues and potential funding mechanisms; ii. Exploring the economic benefits of regional planning, such as increased access to grant funding; and/or iii. Partnering with surrounding incorporated areas to coordinate design, construction, and operation of shared infrastructure.
7	1	0	PIS-1.c	Provide improved service levels in select areas of the unincorporated county and adjacent city development where feasible by:

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i. Identifying potential areas where "urban" services are necessary within the county; and
ii. Evaluating the feasibility of providing "urban" service levels within identified county development areas.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

None.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

Other Focus Group Member Comments (August 2008)

PIS-1.a Ensure that required infrastructure facilities are fully funded and that development contributes its proportionate share of costs by:

i. Increasing public private partnership opportunities for capital improvements as well as ongoing operations and service delivery costs.
ii. Requiring developers to fully fund their proportionate share of public infrastructure through a combination of impact fees, public financing, or through private funding sources.
iii. Identifying and utilizing existing financing mechanisms to fund capital facility expansion and ongoing maintenance costs.
iv. Identifying opportunities for impact fees for services to support new development.
v. Implementing development impact fees which require new development (residential/commercial/industrial) to finance their proportionate share of public infrastructure, including fire and sheriff facilities, roadway improvements, and Quimby Act fees to fund new parks. *[Comment: Please describe the types of parks in this statement. Areas could be designated "community gardens", or "play areas" that are learning zones. Also, please add a statement that requires all parks be constructed using 80% recycled materials and have mixed uses (such as Oso de Oro Park in Fresno). See http://www.fresnofloodcontrol.org/parks/Oso%20de%20Oro%20Park/oso_oro_park.html]* (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
vi. Continuing to pursue State and Federal financing for public facilities and road improvements. (ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
vii. Support local special district efforts to obtain State and Federal financing for sewer, water, and school facilities. *[Comment: We must take a "Developers need to pay their way" approach. No permits will be issued unless projects are 100% bonded and phases are completed as scheduled with proper GREEN buildings / plans in place.]* (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ADD Identifying opportunities for impact fees for services to maintain and reinvest in existing development. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-1.c Provide improved service levels in select areas of the unincorporated county and adjacent city development where feasible by:

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i. Identifying potential areas where "urban" services are necessary within the county; and
ii. Evaluating the feasibility of providing "urban" service levels within identified county development areas. *[Comment: I need some more time to think about these policies]* (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ADD Create a Local and Regional Collaborative Oversight Water group the will create a water conservation goal for Merced County. This water conservation group will create a plan that will reduce water use by 25% by the year 2020. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-2: Financing and Efficiencies in Services

Key Questions:

How can the County be more efficient in providing public services?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
6	1	0	PIS-2.a	Continue to review proposed development for consistency and efficiencies in public service delivery. i. Determine jurisdiction(s) best suited to providing public services. ii. Review pending development and coordinate with existing and pending facility master plans to ensure consistency, identify efficiencies between facilities and operations, as well as identify the appropriate funding mechanisms to support these master plans.
6	2	0	PIS-2.b	Require regular updates of County Facility Master Plans that: i. Ensure that future public facilities are designed to meet projected long-term capacity needed to avoid the need for future replacement to achieve upsizing; ii. Support and pioneer infrastructure master plans and facilities which support sustainable practices, including the following: 1. Pursue water reuse (greywater). 2. Encourage joint drainage and park facilities. 3. Change drainage standards to allow for joint use; iii. Coordinate with local service districts to ensure that sufficient water/wastewater treatment is available for unincorporated communities prior to directing additional growth to them; iv. Evaluate levels of service on roadway maintenance. v. Consider establishment of a County water and wastewater system to serve unincorporated community development projects.
7	1	0	PIS-2.c	Develop additional funding mechanisms for future maintenance and operations including sheriff and fire facilities and storm drainage systems. These funding mechanisms could include the following:

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i. Possible sales tax increases for construction and facility replacement (provide project specific benefit to gain voter support);
ii. Homeowner's associations;
iii. Services Community Facilities Districts (CFDs);
iv. Landscape and lighting districts through the Community Service Areas (CSAs); and/or
v. Other assessment districts.

5	3	0	PIS-2.d	Coordinate between regional and local agencies in an effort to: i. Encourage consolidation of services, annexation to other jurisdictions, or incorporation; ii. Create efficiencies between regional and local infrastructure and service districts; iii. Identify the potential for consolidation of service districts; iv. Promote regional coordination on infrastructure issues; v. Promote joint use facilities; vi. Encourage co-location of parks next to schools; vii. Prohibit leapfrog development; and viii. Partner with surrounding incorporated areas to build off their infrastructure backbone.
2	5	0	PIS-2.e	Prioritize infrastructure investments based on the General Plan goals, which could include prioritizing investments based on the following characteristics: i. Communities with the greatest need (based on future growth, deficiencies in existing services, etc.); and/or ii. Communities with the greatest economic potential (economic development incentives).

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

PIS-2.b Require regular updates of County Facility Master Plans that:
i. Ensure that future public facilities are designed to meet projected long-term capacity needed to avoid the need for future replacement to achieve upsizing;
ii. Support and pioneer infrastructure master plans and facilities which support sustainable practices, including the following:
1. Pursue water reuse (greywater).
2. Encourage joint drainage and park facilities.
3. Change drainage standards to allow for joint use;
iii. Coordinate with local service districts to ensure that sufficient water/wastewater treatment is available for unincorporated communities prior to directing additional growth to them;
iv. Evaluate levels of service on roadway maintenance.
v. Consider establishment of a County water and wastewater system to serve unincorporated community development projects.
~~v.~~vi. Encourage joint use facilities between different entities

PIS-2.c Develop additional funding mechanisms for future maintenance and operations including sheriff and fire facilities and storm drainage systems. These funding mechanisms could include the following:

i. Possible sales tax increases for construction and facility replacement (provide project specific benefit to gain voter support);
ii. Homeowner's associations with enforceable CC&Rs;
iii. Services Community Facilities Districts (CFDs);
iv. Landscape and lighting districts through the Community Service Areas (CSAs); and/or
v. Other assessment districts.

PIS-2.d Coordinate between regional and local agencies in an effort to:

i. Encourage consolidation of services, annexation to other jurisdictions, or incorporation;
ii. Create efficiencies between regional and local infrastructure and service districts;
iii. Identify the potential for consolidation of service districts;
iv. Promote regional coordination on infrastructure issues;
v. Promote joint use facilities;
vi. Encourage co-location of parks next to schools;
vii. Discourage ~~Prohibit~~ leapfrog development; and
viii. Partner with surrounding incorporated areas to build off their infrastructure backbone

PIS-2.e Prioritize infrastructure investments based on the General Plan goals, which could include prioritizing investments based on the following characteristics:

i. Communities with the greatest need (based on future growth, deficiencies in existing services, etc.); and/or
~~iii.~~ Communities with the greatest economic potential (economic development incentives). *[Comment: Same goal as in diversified economy. Could be overwhelming and inconsistent with ag goals.] [Comment: This could leave some county areas as "backwaters" for years to come. How do we set priorities?]*

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

Other Focus Group Member Comments

PIS-2.a Continue to review proposed development for consistency and efficiencies in public service delivery.

i. Determine jurisdiction(s) best suited to providing public services.
ii. Review pending development and coordinate with existing and pending facility master plans to ensure consistency, identify efficiencies between facilities and operations, as well as identify the appropriate funding mechanisms to support these master plans. *[Comment: Add list *Question on PIS – 2.a.i. Determine*

*jurisdiction(s) best suited to providing public services. *Do we have a list of potential jurisdictions?]* (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-2.b Require regular updates of County Facility Master Plans that:

i. Ensure that future public facilities are designed to meet projected long-term capacity needed to avoid the need for future replacement to achieve upsizing;

ii. ~~Support and p~~Pioneer infrastructure master plans and facilities which support sustainable practices, including the following:

1. Pursue water reuse (greywater).
2. Encourage joint drainage and park facilities.
3. Change drainage standards to allow for joint use;
4. Explore the use of composting/dry toilets (MODIFY, MARG letter 9/15/08)

iii. Coordinate with local service districts to ensure that sufficient water/wastewater treatment is available for unincorporated communities prior to directing additional growth to them;

iv. Evaluate levels of service on roadway maintenance.

v. Consider establishment of a County water and wastewater system to serve unincorporated ~~community development projects.~~ communities. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

~~v.~~vi. Meter all residential, industrial, and commercial, etc. water users. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

a. **REQUIRE renewable energy / Green Building Standards /** Green Building Principles in all existing and planned county buildings. The following was taken from http://www.smartcommunities.ncat.org/buildings/gbprinc.shtml. (Please include in the MCGPU)

b. **Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Resources** Commercially available, cost-effective energy technologies could reduce overall energy consumption in the United States by as much as one-third--worth some $343 billion. This link provides information on strategies such as proper siting and airtight construction, as well as installing energy-efficient equipment and appliances and renewable energy systems. Such technologies can reduce the amount of energy your building needs to operate and to keep its occupants comfortable.

c. **Environmental Impact** The built environment has had a tremendous impact on the environment. However, your building can interact more positively with the environment if you pay special attention to preserving the site's integrity and natural characteristics, landscaping appropriately, and selecting materials that have lower embodied energy and those that are produced locally.

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d. **Resource Conservation**

Conserving resources is a cornerstone of green building techniques. There are many ways to conserve resources during the building process. For example, selecting materials that have at least some recycled content can conserve natural resources and virgin materials. Minimizing construction waste can ease the impact on landfills and resources. Installing water- and energy-efficient products can conserve resources while reducing operating costs. Choosing a green (plant-covered) roof can reduce energy use, cool urban heat islands, and prevent stormwater runoff, as well as contributing to wildlife habitat and air quality.

e. **Indoor Air Quality**

Energy-efficient buildings are more airtight and therefore hold greater potential for indoor air quality problems, especially if not properly ventilated. Building products can contribute to poor air quality, but these potential problems can be reduced by selecting materials lower in chemicals and toxins, and installing mechanical ventilation systems to ensure an adequate fresh air supply.

~~a.~~f. **Community Issues**

Placing green building projects within easy access of public transportation, medical facilities, shopping areas, and recreational facilities decreases the need for automobiles and encourages bicycling and walking. In addition, successful green buildings blend into the community, preserving natural and historical characteristics, and will utilize existing infrastructure in order to reduce sprawl. Cohousing represents one approach to creating a community of green buildings. (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-2.c Develop additional funding mechanisms for future maintenance and operations including sheriff and fire facilities and storm drainage systems. These funding mechanisms could include the following:

i. Possible sales tax increases for construction and facility replacement (provide project specific benefit to gain voter support); *[Comment: As long as the money goes toward stated program (**s**heriff and fire facilities and storm drainage systems)! The sales tax increase CANNOT go to toward NEW DEVELOPMENT (sales tax)]* (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ii. Homeowner's associations;

iii. Services Community Facilities Districts (CFDs);

iv. Landscape and lighting districts through the Community Service Areas (CSAs); and/or

v. Other assessment districts.

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PIS-2.d (ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-2.e Prioritize infrastructure investments based on the General Plan goals, which could include prioritizing investments based on the following characteristics:

i. Communities with the greatest need (based on future growth, deficiencies in existing services, etc.); and/or

ii. Communities with the greatest economic, environmental, and equitable potential (economic development incentives)~~.~~ as long as the proposed potential economic area requires specific environmental standards above and beyond what is normally required from CEQA review, etc. *[Comment: For example – Economic areas that are zoned "GREEN": Sustainable jobs, greywater systems]* (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3: Water Supply and Delivery

Key Question(s):

What can Merced County do to ensure there is adequate financing of water supply systems? What role should Merced County play in safe guarding local groundwater supplies? How can existing water supplies be more sustainable?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
7	0	0	PIS-3.a	Develop countywide guidelines regarding the location and construction of new wells.
7	1	0	PIS-3.b	Permit new development and associated water wells only following the approval of detailed source water sufficiency studies and urban water management plans per Title 22 and SB610.
6	1	0	PIS-3.c	Support increased utilization of surface water and groundwater conjunctive use programs to reduce the potential for groundwater overdraft.
6	1	1	PIS-3.d	Consolidate single user wells into local water districts (with management plans) where feasible.
6	1	0	PIS-3.e	Promote technology for efficient water use in agriculture.
7	1	0	PIS-3.f	Work with various agricultural and urban water districts to develop water supply master plans to guide future groundwater basin water supplies through regional solutions.
7	1	0	PIS-3.g	Require efficient water conveyance systems in new construction.

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8	0	0	PIS-3.h	Encourage water reuse programs to conserve raw or potable water supplies (such as the capture of rainwater) consistent with State Department of Public Health guidelines.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

PIS-3.a Coordinate with the cities in d~~D~~eveloping countywide guidelines regarding the location and construction of new wells.

PIS-3.b Permit new development and associated water wells only following the approval of detailed source water sufficiency studies and urban water management plans per Title 22 and SB610. *[Comment: with private sector input to the process,]*

PIS-3.d ~~Consolidate~~ Encourage consolidation of single user wells into local water districts (with management plans) where feasible.

PIS-3.e Work with the Farm Bureau and other agricultural groups to ~~P~~promote technology for efficient water use in agriculture.

PIS-3.f ~~Work with~~ Offer assistance to various agricultural and urban water districts to develop water supply master plans to guide future groundwater basin water supplies through regional solutions.

PIS-3.g Promote~~Require~~ efficient water conveyance systems in new construction, including recycling of greywater.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

Other Focus Group Member Comments

PIS-3.a Develop countywide guidelines regarding the location and construction of new wells. *[Comment: "Require a County-wide water study which will be used to" develop countywide guidelines regarding the location and construction of new wells.]* (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3.b Permit new development and associated water wells only following the approval of detailed source water sufficiency studies including studying the effect of new development and wells on the wells/water supply of existing users, with public input, and urban water management plans per Title 22 and SB610. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08) *[Comment: and only after determining that the new development will not have an adverse impact on existing wells.]* (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3.c (ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3.d (ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3.e Promote technology for efficient water use in agriculture~~.~~ and residential, commercial, and industrial uses (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3.f (ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

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PIS-3.g Require efficient water conveyance systems in new construction~~.~~ including greywater. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08) ~~–~~(ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-3.h (ADD, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-4: Wastewater Collection/Disposal

Key Question(s):

How can Merced County encourage the implementation of sustainable wastewater treatment and disposal systems and ensure that wastewater management practices adequately protect groundwater resources?

Policy Options

PIS-4.a Where appropriate, encourage upgrades to existing centralized or regional wastewater treatment plants to produce reclaimed water suitable for unrestricted reuse.

PIS-4.b Ensure that sufficient wastewater treatment and disposal capacity is available for unincorporated communities prior to considering additional growth.

PIS-4.c Revise County standards for onsite wastewater systems consistent with guidelines proposed by the State Water Resources Control Board under AB885.

PIS-4.d Promote/facilitate using reclaimed wastewater for agricultural irrigation, in accordance with Title 22 and guidelines published by the State Department of Public Health.

PIS-4.e Promote water reuse/recycling through the treatment and distribution of tertiary treated wastewater.

PIS-4.f Encourage the use of domestic gray water for landscape irrigation purposes.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

Other Focus Group Member Comments

PIS-4.b Ensure that ~~sufficient~~ wastewater treatment and disposal capacity is more than sufficient in its availability ~~available~~ for unincorporated communities prior to considering additional growth. (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-4.d ~~Promote~~/~~f~~Facilitate using reclaimed wastewater for agricultural irrigation, in accordance with Title 22 and guidelines published by the State Department of Public Health. (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-4.e ~~Promote~~ Facilitate water reuse/recycling through the treatment and distribution of tertiary treated wastewater. (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

PIS-4.f ~~Encourage~~ Require the use of domestic gray water for landscape irrigation purposes. Require Require plumbing for greywater options in new development. (MODIFY, MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

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[*Comment: This amounts to appropriate piping and a switching valve at water sources in a home, such as the washing machine, that can direct waste water into plumbing that takes it out to pipes to irrigate landscaping or directs it into the normal wastewater system.]* (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ADD Explore the use of composting toilets in new construction as a means of greatly reducing wastewater requirements. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ADD Explore the development of municipal composting toilet waste collection and sanitation as a means of greatly reducing wastewater requirements. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

ADD Explore the feasibility of reducing wastewater through the use of dry/composting toilets. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Explore the development of municipal composting toilet waste collection and processing. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

PIS-5: Schools

Key Question(s):

How can the County address problems with school siting, overcrowding, and funding?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
5	3	0	PIS-5.a	Collaborate with the school districts related to school facility planning issues by: i. Identifying trends in school enrollment and development to identify future changes in enrollment and ensure that school locations and attendance boundaries enhance communities~~.~~; ii. Requiring new development within the county, during the community plan and development agreement process, to coordinate with school districts to ensure adequate school facilities to serve its population; iii. Encouraging policies to promote logical school district (or attendance) boundaries within a community and require an agreement between the school districts to change the boundaries before approving the project; iv. Working with school districts during subsequent planning processes and review of development proposals to reserve and fund needed school facilities; and v. Coordinating with local school districts in appropriately siting new schools to serve unincorporated communities and avoid conflicts with agricultural operations.
7	0	1	PIS-5.b	Encourage multi-use school facilities, including opportunities for civic and cultural uses, to efficiently provide for education, recreation, and community meeting space.
5	2	1	PIS-5.c	Explore optional funding mechanisms to assist in funding local schools.

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BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

PIS-5.a Collaborate with the school districts related to school facility planning issues by:

i. Identifying trends in school enrollment and development to identify future changes in enrollment and ensure that school locations and attendance boundaries enhance communities~~.~~;

~~ii. Requiring new development within the county, during the community plan and development agreement process, to coordinate with school districts to ensure adequate school facilities to serve its population;~~

~~iii.~~ii. Encouraging policies to promote logical school district (or attendance) boundaries within a community ~~and require an agreement between the school districts to change the boundaries before approving the project~~;

~~iv.~~iii. Working with school districts during subsequent planning processes and review of development proposals in regards to alternative funding ~~to reserve and fund~~ needed for school facilities; ~~and~~

iv. Coordinating with local school districts in appropriately siting new schools to serve unincorporated communities and avoid conflicts with agricultural operations; and~~.~~

v. Pursue legislation requiring schools to coordinate with local planning efforts.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (September 2008)

ADD The County of Merced shall assist, support, collaborate, and cooperate with the school districts having jurisdiction in planning for and providing of educational services and school facilities to meet the needs of current and projected future students and employees. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County of Merced shall ensure that public facilities and services impacts of new development do not become an unreasonable and inequitable burden on the residents and property owners of the County of Merced. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD Require the orderly, well planned and balanced growth of the unincorporated communities of the County of Merced consistent with the limits imposed by the local community facilities district/water district's infrastructure, services and facilities and the unincorporated community's ability to assimilate growth. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD New development shall be encouraged to provide adequate financing, as necessary, to meet all identified costs associated with new development including but not limited to public facilities and services where nexus can be shown. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD General plan amendments, specific plan approvals, and zone changes shall ensure that infrastructure development and public facilities and services are consistent with overall local public agency plans, and that the local public agencies can reasonably provide and /or extend services

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within the proposed development time frame of implementation. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County of Merced shall support and cooperate with the school district in planning for and providing child care and educational services and school facilities with sufficient capacity to meet the needs of current and projected future student enrollments and employees. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County of Merced shall collaborate with school districts related to school facility planning issues by applying the enrollment projections, school site and facility standards, and cost estimates in the school district five year capital facility plan during the community development plan and entitlement process. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County of Merced shall collaborate with school districts by coordinating with local school districts in appropriately siting new schools to serve unincorporated communities and avoid conflicts with agricultural operations. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County of Merced shall coordinate planning efforts between public entities and school districts which identify and structure agreements for joint-use development opportunities resulting in mutual benefits to public. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County and school districts shall work together to ensure that circulation and transportation systems in unincorporated communities provide for the movement of students from homes to schools including considerations for pedestrian, bicycle, and overall safe routes to school. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

ADD The County and school districts shall collaborate in order to provide for and reduce the effects of incompatible land uses and noise adjacent to or within close proximity of school facilities and other noise sensitive land uses. (PI Focus Group comment letter—September 9, 2008)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

None.

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LAND USE

LU-1: New Towns

Key Question(s):

How should the County address new town proposals?

Policy Options

Add	Modify	Delete		
4	3	1	LU-1.a	Require that new communities can only be proposed where they avoid the conversion of productive agricultural land: no more than 50 percent of the land area can be classified as "productive farmland" as defined in the General Plan where a historic water supply has existed in at least 3 of the last 10 years; and no more than 10 percent of the land area shall be classified as "Prime" farmland on the Statewide Important Farmland map.
7	1	0	LU-1.b	Strengthen the following existing specific development standards for SUPDs: i. Revise existing policy criteria #6 to mandate that the plan includes a balance of land uses for jobs, sales tax, and housing. ii. Revise existing policy criteria #7 so that it encourages wildlife agencies to accept that the County is striving to balance its local desire to protect its agricultural resources and economy, and that some well designed new communities (new towns) that provide adequate mitigation for wildlife and wetland resources should be accepted as a fair trade off to satisfy the long-range growth needs of the county. iii. Revise existing policy criteria #8 so that it states that new community cannot be located within two miles of an existing SUDP of a city or unincorporated community in order to avoid sprawl and leap-frog development.
7	1	0	LU-1.c	Define areas for new town growth based on land characteristics (identify marginal resource land areas).
6	1	0	LU-1.d	Identify the specific parameters (i.e., criteria, measurements, etc.) of new town growth, such as location, land use mix, growth rate.

BOS/PC Comments and Suggested Changes (June 2008)

LU-1.a	Require that new communities can only be proposed where they avoid the conversion of productive agricultural land: no more than 50 percent of the land area can be classified as "productive farmland" as defined in the General Plan where a historic water supply has existed in at least 3 of the last 10 years; and no more than 10 percent of the land area shall be classified as "Prime" farmland on the Statewide Important Farmland map. *[Comment: Change 10% to 20% prime.]*

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Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

None.

Other Focus Group Member Comments

LU-1.a Require that new communities can only be proposed where they avoid the conversion of productive agricultural land: no more than ~~50~~ 10 percent of the land area can be classified as "productive farmland" as defined in the General Plan where a historic water supply has existed in at least 3 of the last 10 years; and no more than ~~10~~ 1 percent of the land area shall be classified as "Prime" farmland on the Statewide Important Farmland map. None of the land shall be wetland or sensitive habitat, nor shall it be affected by any other constraining factor including but not limited to water supply and infrastructure. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

LU-1.b Strengthen the following existing specific development standards for SUPDs:

~~i.~~ Revise existing policy criteria #6 to mandate that the plan includes a balance of land uses for jobs, sales tax, and housing~~.~~ and avoids the creation of commuter or "bedroom" communities. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

~~ii.~~ i. Revise existing policy criteria #8 so that it states that new community cannot be located within two miles of an existing SUDP of a city or unincorporated community in order to avoid sprawl and leap-frog development. *[Comment: Revise existing policy criteria #8 so that it states that new community cannot be located within two miles protection of Airport (5 mile zone)of an existing SUDP of a city or unincorporated community or 5 miles from airport in order to avoid sprawl and leap-frog development.]* (Merced County Economic Development Department)

LU-1.b ii. (DELETE, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

LU-1.d Identify the specific parameters (i.e., criteria, measurements, etc.) of new town growth, such as location, land use mix, growth rate. Determine maximum levels of housing that may be developed in a project before jobs are secured. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Do not allow towns to locate distant from transportation arteries, in order to avoid unnecessary increases in vehicle miles traveled. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Prevent development of commuter or "bedroom" towns. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Require water and infrastructure needs are studied and guaranteed before approvals. (MARG letter 9/15/08)

ADD Do not allow new communities to be built if they will negatively impact the water supply of existing users. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD Prohibit Leapfrog development. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

LU-1.b ii. Revise existing policy criteria #8 so that it states that new community cannot be located within two miles of an existing SUDP of a city or unincorporated community in order to avoid sprawl and leap-frog development. *[Comment: The General Plan cannot require that agencies be encouraged not to do their jobs to the fullest extent, which is exactly*

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what, for example, the USFWS would be doing if they "accept as a fair trade-off" the loss of habitat necessary for the success of species recovery programs. The General Plan should be requiring the highest standards of development to protect what is irreplaceable in the County, not urging concessions in order to facilitate development that has the option of being done in other places and in other ways.](MARG letter, 9/15/08)

LU-2: Community Character and Design

Key Question(s):

What can the county do to retain and enhance the county's community character?

Policy Options

LU-2.a Continue to develop urban design guidelines and uniform policies in new or updated community plans that emphasize the individual character of each community.

LU-2.b Develop urban design guidelines and create uniform design policies that apply to all areas of the county that do not have community design guidelines as a part of the community plans.

LU-2.c Develop illustrated design guidelines for:

i. Single family residential development.
ii. Multi-family development.
iii. Commercial development.
iv. Industrial development.
v. Mixed-use development.
vi. All development occurring along major corridors and important intersections.
vii. Streetscapes.

LU-2.d Develop hillside development standards and illustrated design guidelines addressing viewshed protection for all development occurring in scenic areas.

LU-2.e Establish a design review board or other body responsible for reviewing the design of major projects.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

LU-2.a (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
LU-2.b (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

None.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

CC-1: Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Key Question(s):

What policy strategies can be employed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Policy Options

County Tools

CC-1.a Maintain a "Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan" or "Climate Action Plan" to monitor greenhouse gas emissions, establish greenhouse gas reduction targets, and include actions and programs to reduce the production of greenhouse gasses.

CC-1.b Establish a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target in the General Plan.

CC-1.c Require all new County buildings be constructed to a green building standard and existing County buildings be retrofitted with energy efficient technologies.

CC-1.d Transition the County vehicle fleet to energy efficient vehicles.

Growth and Development

CC-1.e Support and encourage growth and development that promote environmental quality, economic vitality, and social benefit through the location, design, and construction of the built environment.

CC-1.f Provide for a diverse mix of uses in all communities to meet future needs of residents and businesses.

CC-1.g Direct new development toward existing cities and communities along transit (i.e., bus or rail) corridors.

CC-1.h Promote transit-oriented development that facilitates the use of public transit systems.

CC-1.i Preserve existing communities and encourage the infill and intensification of existing established cities and communities.

CC-1.j Promote development of communities that mix homes with businesses and provide for childcare centers, restaurants, banks, and other similar services.

CC-1.k Provide for affordable housing that meets the needs of community residents.

Development Construction

CC-1.l Promote sustainable building practices that go beyond the requirements of Title 24 of the California Administrative Code.

CC-1.m Ensure buildings are oriented and landscaped to enhance natural lighting and sun exposure.

CC-1.n Require development to include street trees and landscaping.

CC-1.o Require green building practices, programs, and standards in new development that use energy and water efficiently, reduce waste, and increase recycling.

CC-1.p Promote the retrofitting of existing buildings with energy and water efficiency technologies.

CC-1.q Maintain and expand urban forests in existing communities.

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Business

CC-1.r Promote the development of green technology businesses.
CC-1.s Encourage businesses to use energy efficient and clean technologies.
CC-1.t Support jobs/housing balance within each community.
CC-1.u Promote telecommuting.

Transportation

CC-1.v Require development patterns that connect community and cities to each other and the region and include a high level of connectivity for all modes including walking, biking, transit, and automobile.
CC-1.w Work with adjacent jurisdictions to provide a complete transit and circulation system.
CC-1.x Support initiatives to provide better public transit.
CC-1.y Dedicate lanes for carpooling and bus services.
CC-1.z Promote walking and biking as an alternative to single-use automobile travel.
CC-1.aa Provide development incentives for alternative-fuel vehicle use and carpooling.

Energy

CC-1.bb Encourage and maximize energy conservation and identification of alternative energy sources (e.g., wind or solar).
CC-1.cc Educate the public about energy efficiency, water conservation, and other greenhouse gas reduction measures.
CC-1.dd Encourage the use of clean fuel (e.g., hydrogen and electric) vehicles.
CC-1.ee Encourage the use of energy-efficiency design features such as site orientation, light colored building materials, and tree canopies.

Resources

CC-1.ff Protect open space and agricultural lands and natural forests.
CC-1.gg Protect existing natural habitats and ecosystems.
CC-1.hh Emphasize the importance of water conservation and maximizing the use of native, low-water-use landscaping.
CC-1.ii Encourage the production, distribution, and use of recycled and reclaimed water.
CC-1.jj Improve air quality throughout the county by supporting programs that reduce air quality emissions related to vehicular travel and agricultural practices.
CC-1.kk Encourage recycling, composting, source reduction, and education efforts throughout the county for residents, businesses, industries, institutions, and construction.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

County Tools

CC-1.a (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.b (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.c (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.d (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

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Growth and Development

CC-1.e (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.f (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.g (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.h Promote transit-oriented development that facilitates the use of public transit systems. (ADD, Open Space Focus Group) *[Comment: Need to spell out transit oriented development in implementation)]* (Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.i (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.j (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.k (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Development Construction

CC-1.l (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.m (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.n (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.o (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.p (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.q (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Business

CC-1.r (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.s (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.t (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.u (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Transportation

CC-1.v (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.w (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.x (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.y (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.z (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.aa (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Energy

CC-1.bb (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.cc (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.dd (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.ee (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

Resources

CC-1.ff (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.gg (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.hh (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.ii (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.jj (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-1.kk (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

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Other Focus Group Member Comments

CC-1.b Establish a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target in the General Plan. [Comment: Update the Climate Action Plan regularly and use the updates as General Plan amendments.] (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CC-1.bb ~~Encourage~~ Require and maximize energy conservation and identification of alternative energy sources (e.g., wind or solar). (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CC-1.ee ~~Encourage~~ Require the use of energy-efficiency design features such as site orientation, light colored building materials, and tree canopies. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CC-1.ii ~~Encourage~~ Require the production, distribution, and use of recycled and reclaimed water. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CC-1.jj Improve air quality throughout the county by supporting and implementing programs that reduce air quality emissions related to vehicular travel and agricultural practices. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CC-1.kk ~~Encourage~~ Require recycling, composting, source reduction, and education efforts throughout the county for residents, businesses, industries, institutions, and construction. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD "County Tools": Require the County to adopt environmentally responsible purchasing practices. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD "Development Construction": Target grant and other development funds for energy efficiency assistance for affordable housing developments. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD "Transportation": Adopt a comprehensive parking policy that discourages private vehicle use and encourages public transportation use, etc. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD "Energy": Prioritize the development and construction of clean alternative sources of municipal electricity generation, eg. solar thermal, photovoltaic, and wind. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD "Resources": Adopt a water conservation strategy that includes measures such as a tiered pricing structure, a water efficient landscaping ordinance, and water audits for large landscape accounts. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

ADD "Resources": Expand recycling services (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

CC-2: Climate Change Adaption

Key Question(s):

What policy strategies can be employed to prepare the county for potential impacts of climate change?

Policy Options

CC-2.a Maintain a "Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan" or "Climate Action Plan" that monitors changes in conditions and includes actions and programs to prepare the county for probable impacts.

CC-2.b Maintain and promote open spaces, agriculture, and forests that reduce the impact and susceptibility of climatic and non-climatic stressors (e.g., severe fire, invasive or epidemic insects, and drought).

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CC-2.c Expand and diversify water supplies, sources, and conveyance methods for urban and agricultural uses.

CC-2.d Increase drought protection through water conservation measures and water use restrictions.

CC-2.e Restrict development in high flood risk and fire risk areas and require flood and fire resistant structures and landscapes.

CC-2.f Increase the capacity of stormwater and flood protection infrastructure to accommodate changes in precipitation and extreme weather events.

CC-2.g Identify new agricultural crop choices/varieties that accommodate a longer growing season and are resistant to heat, insects, and disease.

CC-2.h Identify and adjust agricultural production methods such as planting dates and irrigation methods.

CC-2.i Reduce the "heat island effect" (i.e., increased temperatures due to heat radiation off paved surfaces and rooftops) through increased tree canopy and reflective surface materials.

CC-2.j Reduce erosion and impacts on natural ecosystems due to increased storm and flood events, forest/range fires, reduced air quality, and extreme weather events.

CC-2.k Reduce property damage due to increased storm and flood events, forest/range fires, reduced air quality, and extreme weather events.

CC-2.l Expand the availability of public health facilities and programs to address increases in extreme weather events (i.e., heat waves) and reduced air quality.

CC-2.m Increase emergency planning for disease outbreaks and extreme weather events.

CC-2.n Maintain an early warning system for disease outbreaks and extreme heat events.

CC-2.o Enhance public awareness of water conservation measures, agricultural changes, storm and flood preparedness, forest/range fire protection, air quality issues, extreme weather events, and disease prevention.

Focus Group Suggested Changes (August 2008)

CC-2.a (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.b (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.c Expand and diversify water supplies, sources, and conveyance methods for urban and agricultural uses~~.~~ in such a way that environmental water needs are not negatively impacted. (MODIFY, MARG letter, 9/15/08) (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.d (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.e (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.f (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.g (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.h (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.i (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.j (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.k Reduce property damage due to increased storm and flood events, forest/range fires, reduced air quality, and extreme weather events. (ADD, Open Space Focus Group) *[Comment: How?]* (Open Space Focus Group)

CC-2.l (ADD, Open Space Focus Group)

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CC-2.m (NO COMMENT, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-2.n (NO COMMENT, Open Space Focus Group)
CC-2.o (NO COMMENT, Open Space Focus Group)

Other Focus Group Member Comments

ADD Require new buildings to incorporate passive cooling design elements to reduce the risk of death in heat waves, especially during power outages. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)

GENERAL COMMENTS

Other Focus Group Member General Agricultural Comments

- The existing General Plan has strong policies regarding water but not followed by County. Suggestions that stronger standards for water availability for new development should be added to GP. More explicit language emphasizing that water for new development should not be taken from agriculture. (AG Focus Group meeting comment--August 28, 2008)
- Need fees on development to direct development to less valuable farmland. (AG Focus Group meeting comment--August 28, 2008)
- The Business Subcommittee suggests no mitigation required for target industrial/job generating uses on agricultural land. (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)
- Add an option to permit wealth generating industrial uses that may not be suitable for location within urban areas due to size, buffer zone, potential externalities, etc., if the cost /benefit of the project is deemed positive. (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Permit waiver of mitigation requirements for agricultural processing or wealth generating uses located in rural areas (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Stronger statements/more analysis to confirm that industrial/processing land uses support agriculture, and have not contributed to loss of farmland but rather have helped protect farming as an option in the county. (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Assess and evaluate the 'food' aspect (type/necessity) related to agricultural land conservation. What types of crops are grown/harvested? Is protecting vineyards crucial? (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Need more than financing (IDB's) (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)
- Unaware of marketing activities by former Office of Economic and Strategic Development (now CAED?) beyond Castle. County support of MCEDCO is addressing other options, but if this is it, should be mentioned. (Business Subcommittee meeting-August 12, 2008)
- Unaware of County Chamber efforts to promote Merced County as profitable location. MCEDCO has received referrals, but unaware of other activities. (Business Subcommittee meeting -August 12, 2008)

Other Focus Group Member General Economic Development Comments

- Agricultural Land Conversion - This issue arises frequently and is the apparent foundation for many comments impacting the GPU. Unfortunately, statistics related to conversion of agricultural land for urban development are often inaccurate or taken out of context. A recent article in the Merced Sun-Star proclaimed that Merced County had lost 23,010 acres of farmland to

urbanization between 2004 and 2006, and cited that in the past six years 10% (100,000 acres) of the more than 1 million acres of land used for farming was converted to homes and development. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)

- Records of the California Department of Conservation report that the total area of urban and built up land in Merced County in 2006 was 36,767 acres. Evidently there is a discrepancy in the manner in which the State's records are viewed. The consultants should ensure that the agricultural or land use elements of the general plan accurately describe agricultural land and conversion. Our evaluation suggests that a much smaller area of farmland has been converted to urban uses in recent years. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)
- The Business sub-committee supports designation and protection of agricultural land and farming. The committee has previously stressed that the economic development element of the GPU need to recognize farming and agricultural production as the driving force of our local economy. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)
- The Business sub-committee respectfully requests that the consultants work with the Merced County Farm Bureau and similar organizations and identify how much agricultural land is needed and for what purposes. The business subcommittee believes that the GPU should preserve all the agricultural land that is needed, but that the GPU should verify and state the determined area, what will be grown, and what are the inputs needed to grow targeted crops based on soils, water, and required acreage. This request builds on a suggestion raised at the March 11th study session to formulate a "food element" to the General Plan presumably as a component of the economic development element. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)
- The Business sub-committee endorses discussion of a food element as it would assist in targeting and defining industrial and food processing uses that would result in new capital investment and job generation. If Merced County is to be a leader in agricultural preservation and farming, potentially limiting other wealth generating uses, then we must strive to process farm products locally generating new wealth and adding value through the creation of new business and higher paying jobs. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)
- The Business sub-committee would like to see a definition for "food' or "agriculture" that reflects the difference between food and specialty crops. For example, there should be discussion on issues such as the cost/benefit of preserving agricultural land used for wine-grape production. Are jobs for our residents more vital than alcohol? (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)
- The Business sub-committee endorses the concept that agricultural business is as vital a contributor to the local economy as any other business. As such, since farming is a business, the subcommittee questions the imposition of mitigation fees on new wealth generating uses in agricultural areas. Industrial uses that establish and expand in non-urban areas should not be penalized for helping raise prosperity in our county. Mitigation is a disincentive to creating new, well paying agricultural related employment. Reportedly, Stanislaus and Fresno Counties have evaluated this concept. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)
- Previously the County Chamber of Commerce has requested that the consultants determine and or designated appropriate sites for industrial/business expansion. The economic development element should identify the current vacant acreage of industrial/commercial properties (within and outside of urban areas) and calculate if the land area is sufficient to accommodate job generation based on population projections. Other groups (Merced County Chamber of Commerce) have advocated such designation for several years, and the shortage of sites was first noted in 2003 in the county-wide economic development strategy "People, Places and Prosperity". If the consultants have determined that there is sufficient land area designated within

the cities or adjacent to urban areas it should be identified and our efforts can focus on ensuring that the lands are shovel ready. (Business Subcommittee comment letter, August 12, 2008)

- Basic issue: are the GPU policies intended to be a broad vision integrated with and carried out by the cities, or should it be geared to specific County land use and other policy initiatives? The group seemed to favor a broad, integrated approach. There is currently a good spirit of cooperation in the County (with the possible exception being revenue sharing negotiations which appear to have stalled). (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Many if not all stakeholders support the further development of local agricultural operations and related value-added development. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- There may be some confusion or disagreement about the physical manifestation of pro-ag policies. Can/should the County focus on certain end-markets, and can these market areas be further characterized? Should there be overt policies reinforcing the practice of local processing of goods as opposed to exporting to outside areas? (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Similarly, there is some concern/confusion over the concept of ag-tourism. Food processing operations are more protected now due to public safety (bio-terrorism) concerns. Does ag tourism relate to wineries, other commodities inclined toward local sales (olive oil, nuts, etc.), roadside stands, etc., or something more? The City of Merced has (or recently completed) a study of ag tourism that we need to obtain. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- The County is currently preparing a short-term (5-year) economic development strategy. There was a question of whether this should be folded into the GPU process, with most agreeing that it should. Sectors being explored include ag tech, aviation, logistics (airport and other), and solar. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Consider eco-industrial uses in the unincorporated County, provided that such uses will not generate externalities affecting air and water quality. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- It was stated that the workforce is expanding and improving, with school test scores showing increases (nobody was able to articulate the reasons for this; I posit the emergence of Merced's role as a bedroom community to major employment centers such as the South Bay plays a role). Workforce training was singled out as an area requiring further investment. In particular, it is critical for all citizens to have basic skills, implying more support and investment needed for education at all levels ("P-16"). It was indicated that there are high quality vocational training programs up and down the Valley. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Child care was singled out as a critical element of economic development. Child care should be encouraged, but not mandated, and ultimately become a more fundamental element of the County's economic development infrastructure. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- It was mentioned that the Small Business Administration (SBA) has few if any resources at the present time. The County (Galbraith) has a list of alternatives to SBA loans providing small businesses the means to help themselves. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Some in the group seemed to indicate that there was a potential conflict between preserving ag and stimulating economic development. It was generally recognized that there are three major competitive assets in the County: ag inputs (soil, sun, and water), UC Merced, and Castle Airpark. It is important to identify the specific competitive position relative to these attributes and to support business proposals to capitalize on them. The group felt that the County should

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strengthen and diversify its core assets, with a strong emphasis on pushing value-added processes (sugar-coat the almonds locally, stop sending machine work to neighboring counties, etc.). Other sectors mentioned included boat building (?), labeling technologies, as well as generating downstream economic activity related to Foster Farms and cheese production (note one in group emphasized that cheese is NOT an agricultural activity but a heavy industry). (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)

- UC Merced is not being touted as an ag center. The UC system is maintaining its focus on UC Davis in this regard, with Fresno State and Stanislaus State providing more ag-tech leadership in this part of the Valley. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Warehouse/distribution (w/d) uses should be generally discouraged except in areas where there are few if any trade-offs regarding consumption of ag soils (e.g., Santa Nella and other I-5 sites). Specifically, there is a need for cold storage near the Airpark (currently Stockton's Farmington Fresh at Stockton Metro Airport is the closest major facility). Also w/d uses that otherwise support local ag and other existing industry clusters and end markets (retail) may be positive contributions to the local economy. The recently developed Wal-Mart warehouse was a huge controversy. The group expressed the need for a flexible approach to locating these facilities. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- To the extent that cold storage and other logistics facilities are needed in the vicinity of the Airpark, there is a major need for a new arterial and related infrastructure to provide access and other services. Current circulation and other infrastructure are inadequate. Some in the group felt there needed to be a better understanding of the competitive position of the airpark relative to competition such as the proposed development at Crows Landing (aka "Inland Port") in neighboring Stanislaus County. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- There was a strong sentiment that the County should NOT entertain notions of subsidizing major companies to locate in the area. There is no need to "attract" industry per se, rather industry clusters should be grown organically. Economic development should pay its own way, and existing users should not pick up the tab for new development. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Regarding land use alternatives, there was a clear preference for directing growth toward urban centers. Revenue sharing was raised as a very important component of this strategy. There was general recognition that the Blueprint effort moving forward in the Valley also supports the City-centered approach, and that emerging air quality legislation (AB32, SB375) will provide the "teeth" to reinforce more efficient patterns of land use. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Some in the room felt that the existing SOI's around the cities had enough capacity to accommodate foreseeable growth, and that aggressively calls for SOI expansion by certain jurisdictions are unnecessary. (Business Subcommittee comment, August 28, 2008)
- Target Industry – adopt California Partnership strategy; (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Retain Ag – but what, where? (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Diversification – need to diversify overall economic base, not just the ag sector (see below). The focus of UC Merced extends beyond agricultural – alternative energy, lifesciences, entrepreneurship, management, (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Business incubators for food processing - questionable due to scale of food processors, unique requirements, (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)

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- Two primary catalysts exist that could provide a solid foundation for economic diversification and vitality are UC Merced and Castle Airport/Commerce Center. (Merced County Economic Development Department)
- UC Merced already has begun its role as an economic development catalyst by partnerships with established organizations, such as AT&T, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, and UC San Francisco. (Merced County Economic Development Department)
- Redevelopment of Castle Airport/Commerce Center could also provide a significant industrial (Merced County Economic Development Department)
- UC Merced – Stimulus for growth. What resources are needed to assist (facilities, services, infrastructure). Land area required to accommodate UC Merced induced activity seems low (220 acres total) unless this is only the area required outside the incorporated communities. (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)
- Castle – Stimulus for growth. What portion of the 1,900 acres will be used for non-aviation uses, and where is that land? What is the viability of linking UC Merced induced activity to Castle and what is the competition? Other communities will vie for the technology/research induced activity. (Business Subcommittee meeting-May 7, 2008)

Other Focus Group Member General Natural Resource Comments

- It is anticipated that state or regional authorities will eventually regulate groundwater in the future. The County, cities, and irrigation districts shall develop a strategic plan for maintaining a healthy underground aquifer system. (AG Focus Group)
- Merced County or MCAG needs to designate a staff member to develop expertise in regional and state water policies. This person would attend meetings, analyze policy proposal and provide analysis for local governments and agencies. (AG Focus Group)
- For all existing Mineral Resource policies that are retained, replace the word “should” with the word “shall”. None of the policies stating what the County “should” do contain enough mandate to be effective. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)
- Delete Existing policies, replace with new policies. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)
- Require additional mitigation fees for new development! Any development should be sited 5000 feet away from sensitive areas. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
- Natural resources: like water, so vital to our region, are conserved by denser housing, a smaller footprint (less residential landscaping), development in more confined urban areas where the best water conservation and utilization planning can be focused. Areas of natural value like riparian corridors, wetlands, oak woodlands, and vernal pools can be set aside because suburban sprawl and building in unincorporated and rural areas is minimized. Alternative C points land growth away from these most sensitive lands of our county. (Circulation Focus Group)
- Air Quality, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Centralized business and commercial centers with higher density housing nearby cut down on travel distances both for work and private family needs. Coupled with the potential for increased public transportation this seems our greatest hope of addressing the crisis we now face in poor air quality. The health problems and accompanying financial costs of dirty air make this perhaps our most alarming and formidable challenges. Alternative C takes a positive direction in working toward improvement. Climate change is the long range threat that is a corollary to our immediate air quality problems. One word invokes a wide range of impacts and concerns- WATER. (Circulation Focus Group)

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- Add, as a Goal: Less than 5% of the Central Valley's original wetlands remain today, and Merced County contains over 20 percent of all the wetlands remaining in California. Wetlands in Merced County are considered the most important wintering area for waterfowl in the entire nation. Internationally, significant numbers of migrating shorebirds winter over or travel through protected wetlands reserves in the county. In addition wetlands perform the important function of carbon sequestering which is critical to achieving climate change goals. (MARG letter, 9/15/08)
- Recognizing the seriousness of its stewardship role Merced County shall:
    - Continue to protect its preserved wetlands
    - Restore and preserve unprotected wetlands
    - Prohibit development on wetlands
- For all existing Natural Resource policies that are retained, replace the word "should" with the word "shall." None of the policies stating what the County "should" do contain enough mandate to be effective.
- For all existing Natural Resource policies that are retained, replace the wording "threatened species" and "rare and endangered species" with "sensitive species." (MARG letter, 9/15/08)
- Most topics needed to be addressed are present in the document [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Since policies are scattered through document, it's hard to get a full understanding of all topics address, policies should be cross referenced. [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Policies lack teeth, and need to be tightened up [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should protect current habitats and special species. [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should also look into developing mitigation measures for wetland habitat [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should not develop greenfield sites, it should focus development on existing urban areas. [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Grasslands plan should be included in the General Plan [NRE Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Climate change and Air Quality goals are good [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Need a section on general health. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Difficult to discuss water policies without county being a water purveyor. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Water supply must be available prior to entitlement [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Revise existing policy to be stronger. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should create a water conservation plan [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]

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- County should investigate possible water sources or conservation policies including: water meters, greywater, and secondary water [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- The county should not try and reduce overall water use for agricultural purposes. County should focus instead on reducing urban water useage. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Agriculture should have no regulation on how much water it uses. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Existing General Plan is not internally consistent on water policies [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- General Plan should better define resource protection [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Groundwater is needed to recharge aquifers. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should not be a purveyor [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should develop a new water model to make better decisions and policies [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- County should enter into Joint Power Agreement (JPA) with water providers. [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]
- Surface water storage in occurs in Merced and Mariposa counties. County and irrigation districts should explore potential storage sources [WR Focus Group meeting comment—August 28, 2008]

Other Focus Group Member General Circulation Comments

- Encourage use of Castle for Pax & Log. (Merced County Economic Development Department)
- Narrative does not discuss health issues to any great extent… better case to make regarding heath effects related to transportation/circulation [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Underlying issue: people don't live close to where they work [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Need incentives & green building policies [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Add more specific bike way/paths policies into city bike paths [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Make some policies stronger (require rather than encourage) [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Refer to the MCAG regional bike plan. [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Need expressway policy [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Expand intro to address discussion we just had:
    - Gas prices
    - Congestion
    - MCAG
    - Financing issues
    - Intra city service [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]

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- Need policy requiring pedestrian–based commercial development. [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Need better parking policy regarding requiring paid parking [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Need more specific policy language [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Need policy re: overriding considerations? [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Policy Option 1.f. address Castle regarding intermodel transportation. [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]
- Atwater/Merced expressway: consider as a toll road [CIR Forcus Group comment—August 27, 2008]

Other Focus Group Member General Public Infrastructure Comments

- You state on page 4-63, "The County has experienced problems with water supply. Groundwater overdraft, conditions where extraction by pumping exceeds recharge, has been a long-term, recurring problem in specific areas in the county." Due to this problem, it is evident that Merced County must take a "no new towns" approach within this General Plan Update. I understand many entities believe new towns would make it easier to incorporate a "livable communities" focus in the community, but it is more likely that without vision, creativity, and proper training, these new towns will be built as cities have been built for decades. Taking a new towns approach will inevitably deplete our resources. [PI Focus Group comment letter—September 2008]
- It is time to reinvest in existing towns. We must take a no new towns approach to the San Joaquin Valley. Instead, a "reinvestment" approach will allow existing cities to flourish, offer training opportunities and economic diversity while keeping our areas designated for agriculture, natural habitat, or open space as they should be. [PI Focus Group comment letter—September 2008]
- The need for a County-wide, collaborative water study is also evident and needs to be included in the General Plan update as a "required" policy/program. [PI Focus Group comment letter—September 2008]
- Due to the "increased energy costs of pumping" that you noted on the bottom of page 4.63, it is also evident that renewable energy practices MUST be implemented, such as "Pursue solar energy for pumping facilities / machinery". Please include that in the General Plan Update. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
- Infrastructure: Whether it's roadways, sewer systems, or public transportation in fill and higher population density makes it easier to provide these things. Public transportation in particular requires high densities to be justified and financially viable. Admittedly some of the most promising new options like high speed rail and the ACE train system extending into the west side communities will not be within our immediate control but they are most likely to come if we have the market to support them, and that means concentrated population centers. In fact, as an example, the high speed rail initiative is specifically written to discourage sprawl and growth along its rail corridor. (Circulation Focus Group comment letter)
- Health and Safety Services: These services are more easily provided by the closer design plan of the communities that would develop if the Alternative C plan for growth were followed. There is likely to be an economy of scale as well as the potential for overlapping and shared services in some cases. (Circulation Focus Group comment letter)

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- Also see: http://www.builditgreen.org/greenpoint-rated/guidelines for more green building standards/checklists to follow. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
- Merced County's General Plan Update should REQUIRE developers to Install 80% of buildings with greywater systems and green / renewable energy systems. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
- Retrofitting building's water systems or installing solar / geothermal systems on buildings would also diversify Merced's economy. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)

Other Focus Group Member General Land Use Comments

- Child Care? (Merced County Economic Development Department)

Other Focus Group Member General Climate Change Comments

- Include a separate Climate Change Section that is action-oriented and immediately begins to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
- Implement the California Air Resources Board strategies. (MARG, Melissa J. Kelly Ortega)
- Air Quality, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Centralized business and commercial centers with higher density housing nearby cut down on travel distances both for work and private family needs. Coupled with the potential for increased public transportation this seems our greatest hope of addressing the crisis we now face in poor air quality. The health problems and accompanying financial costs of dirty air make this perhaps our most alarming and formidable challenges. Alternative C takes a positive direction in working toward improvement. Climate change is the long range threat that is a corollary to our immediate air quality problems. One word invokes a wide range of impacts and concerns- WATER. (Circulation Focus Group)

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