



Merced County General Plan Update

LIST OF KEY ALTERNATIVES PHASE DOCUMENTS

January 16, 2009

The Alternatives Phase (Phase 4) is a critical part of the General Plan Update because the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission must make important choices that will provide policy direction for the new General Plan. Based upon the information contained in The Alternatives Report, previous work done in the General Plan Update program, and comments from residents, and public agencies and organizations, the Board of Supervisors must select the philosophy and course of action for guiding the physical development within the county and the policies it believes will provide the greatest benefits to county residents. The Alternatives Report identifies policy options and growth alternatives and enables the decision makers and the community to weigh the pros and cons of each alternative.

During 2008, most of the work on the General Plan Update focused on Phase 4. County staff and the consultants met with the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission three times (March, May, July 2008) in Joint Study Sessions to get direction on the Alternatives Report. County staff and the consultants also met with the six Focus Groups in August 2008 and the general public during 15 community workshops to get their feedback. The following documents represent the materials produced in preparation for and as a result of the aforementioned meetings and workshops.

KEY PHASE 4 DOCUMENTS

- 1. Alternatives Report:** The Alternatives Report, which was released in August 2008, is a 170-page technical report that presents different approaches that can be used to address significant issues identified during the General Plan Update process. The Alternatives Report presents three sets of growth alternatives and several policy options that will ultimately lead to the selection of a preferred alternative for Merced County's future. The Report consists of four key chapters: 1) an overview of the alternatives process and contents of the report, 2) a setting that describes relevant conditions and trends, 3) a summary and comparative analysis of the four growth alternatives, and 4) a listing of key existing General Plan policies and new policy options.
- 2. Alternatives Newsletter:** The Alternatives newsletter is a 16-page, abridged version of the Alternatives Report. The purpose of the newsletter was to provide a synthesis of the key concepts for each alternative. The newsletter was designed to be the main reference materials for those people attending both the focus group meetings and community workshops.
- 3. Policy Options Summary:** Due to the importance, complexity and detailed nature of Chapter 4, Policy Options, of the Alternatives Report, the County held meetings to focus specifically on the Policy Options. County staff and the Consultants met with

the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in May and July 2008 and the six Focus Groups in August 2008 to discuss the policy options and get feedback. This summary document, which was compiled in September 2008, shows how the Board and Commission voted collectively on each policy option and their suggested revisions to the policy language. This document also includes a summary of the Focus Group's suggested revisions to the policies in their respective topic.

- 4. Community Workshop Summary:** In November 2008, Merced County held the third and final set of 15 General Plan workshops in the following communities: Hilmar/Stevinson, McSwain, Delhi, Snelling, Le Grand, Santa Nella, Franklin/Beachwood, Winton, Planada, Dos Palos "Y", South Dos Palos/Midway, Los Banos, UC Merced, South Merced, and Ballico/Cressy. The purpose of the workshops was to gain feedback from the community on the growth alternatives. The workshop participants were asked to rank the four growth alternatives in order of preference and list three reasons for selecting the top ranked alternative. The participants were then asked to list any concerns they had regarding the preferred alternative and list the top three changes they would make to it. This document summarizes the results of the two interactive exercises.
- 5. Community Workshop Powerpoint Presentation:** During the first part of each community workshop, the General Plan Update Consultants made a short presentation that included a summary on the progress of the Update and an overview of the contents of the Alternatives Report, including a detailed summary of the four growth alternatives.