

## Article No. 5

September 28, 2021

### No Regional Planning for the Friant/Millerton Area

*The current 2000-2020 plan requires the preparation of a Friant-Millerton Region Plan prior to permitting further development of that area. The proposed 2020-2040 plan deletes that planning requirement, which is confounding given that in 2018 the Building Industry Association of Fresno/Madera Counties requested that Fresno County environmentally assess as part of the proposed update of the General Plan 3,650 additional acres for residential development in that area.*

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Prior to the adoption of the current 2000-2020 General Plan, the public had an opportunity to submit “special project requests” for inclusion into the plan. For the Friant/Millerton area, the County received thirteen land use requests which included proposals to redesignate a total of 4,000 acres to residential development.

Preparatory to the preparation of the 2000-2020 General Plan, the County conducted a population and growth analysis which indicated that the projected 20-year population growth increment for unincorporated Fresno County could be accommodated in areas already designated for development. Since there was no need to designate additional land for housing, none of the requests for residential development were included in the draft plan.

In March and April of 2020, the County sent the solicitants letters explaining that in light of projected land use needs and in view of the unique character of the Friant/Millerton area, the County had determined that a Regional Plan should be prepared for the area. The regional plan which would focus primarily on expanding and enhancing the area’s recreational activities and resources for the near-to-mid-term. The County noted that the Friant/Millerton area may be suitable for urban development in the long-term — beyond the timeframe of the 2000-2020 General Plan.

In the fall of 2000, the County updated the General Plan. The 2000-2020 update included an implementation program that directed preparation of a 35,000-acre

Friant/ Millerton Regional Plan. The regional plan had an anticipated completion date of fiscal year 2002/2003. Implementation Program LU-H.A stated:

#### **Program LU-H.A**

*The County shall prepare and adopt a regional plan for the Friant-Millerton area consistent with the directives of Policy LU-H.8.*

Policy LU-H.8 provided the details. The policy directed that the regional plan address the availability of potable water, any limitations on the disposal of wastewater, the development of affordable housing (particularly for workers at recreational and related tourist facilities in the area), the provision of an adequate transportation system (including mass transit), and the suitability of the area for future long term urbanization, including options for how this might occur (e.g., County specific plan, city annexation, or city incorporation).

The County never prepared a Friant/Millerton Regional Plan, and with the adoption of the proposed 2020-2040 plan, the County proposes to delete the program and policy that require preparation of the regional plan. Also proposed for deletion is companion Policy ED-B.13, which reads...

#### **Policy ED-B.13**

*The County shall promote the development of the Friant-Millerton area as a major recreational corridor that includes camping, water sports, hiking, golf, conference/hotel facilities, and historic attractions. Facilities should include moderately-priced multifamily employee housing. (See Policy LU-H.8, Friant-Millerton Regional Plan).*

Pressure to develop the Friant/Millerton area remains high. In 2016, stakeholders privately funded a “Friant Corridor Land Use Feasibility Study,” and in 2018, the Building Industry Association of Fresno/Madera Counties asked that 3,600 acres in the Friant/Millerton area be studied as part of the process to update the General Plan. Indications are that the Friant/Millerton area may be urbanized without the benefit of regional planning.