

Less Intra-Jurisdictional Cooperation

Population growth is a principal force behind land use planning practices. The population of Fresno County is forecast to increase by 25% over the next twenty years. Because communities are increasing interconnected, it is vital that jurisdictions work cooperatively to shape future growth and development. It is disconcerting, therefore, to see that the proposed 2020-2040 General Plan retreats from intra-jurisdictional land use planning.

The current 2000-2020 General Plan contains dozens of policies and implementation programs directing the County to work with the county's fifteen cities and eight neighboring counties to address issues of mutual interest. These issues include adequate transportation planning as well as public safety considerations (e.g., fire and flood protection and the assurance of clean air and sufficient water).



This article reviews changes proposed for the twenty policies and three implementation programs in the current 2000-2020 General Plan that direct the County to work with the cities and neighboring counties to address long-range planning issues related to growth.

The County proposes to remove from the General Plan three of these twenty policies, including Policy ED-A.5, which reads, *“The County shall work with the cities and regional agencies to develop a resource allocation program that efficiently and equitably distributes the cost and benefits of economic development to local government jurisdictions in the county.”*

With respect to the other seventeen policies, several should be reevaluated for effectiveness. As currently written, they require the County to “encourage” cities to consult with the County when they propose to extend their boundaries or make policy changes that could impact growth or the provision of urban services. They also require the County to “encourage” cities to adopt policies consistent with the County’s General Plan in order to minimize conflicts with agriculturally-related industrial operations and existing rural-residential areas.

The County intends to keep Implementation Program LU-F.A, which requires the County to work with the cities to adopt incentives and disincentives that will lead to compact urban development and infill of vacant and underutilized land; however, past General Plan annual progress reports do not show that implementation of this program has succeeded in managing growth.

There are two occasions where the County proposes to retain a policy but delete the program that supports it. The County intends to keep Policy ED-A.7, which requires the County to work with the cities when locating value-added agricultural processing facilities near urban areas. However, Program ED-A.D, which provides a foundation for that policy, is proposed for deletion. The same holds true for Policy LU-H.9, which requires the County to coordinate with the cities and adjacent counties to address regional planning and growth issues. The County proposes to keep the policy but delete the program that supports it. This indispensable program is printed below.

Program LU-H.B: *“County Staff shall meet regularly with cities and adjacent counties to address planning and growth issues of common interest and concern. Staff shall report annually on cooperative planning efforts of the previous year and the planned schedule of meetings with local jurisdictions to address regional planning issues in the upcoming year.”*

Importantly, past General Plan annual progress reports indicate that staff does not prepare yearly reports on cooperative planning among local jurisdictions.