

Planners, ag leaders talk city growth

Developers stress Visalia should 'build inward'

By Tracey La Monica, Staff Writer

Visalia Times-Delta, March 7, 2006

Developers and concerned agriculturists began talks Monday to help conserve valuable agricultural land in a time of extreme growth in Tulare County.

Finding ways to make existing buildings more efficient, by remodeling or building up, rather than branching out and building new, were among the ways discussed Monday to preserve ag land.

"We're going to have to make our cities better," said Bruce Race, an architect and planning consultant with RaceStudio in Berkeley, who spoke about the east downtown Visalia redevelopment plan and the need for "smart growth." "Building in ... it saves cities."

Race was among a variety of speakers who Monday stressed the need to plan for growth during the Tulare County Land Use Public Forum hosted by the Tulare County Farm Bureau at the Holiday Inn in Visalia.

"The focus was to bring together the different groups, agriculture, developers and educators to discuss the growth in Tulare County," said Brad Caudill, executive director of the Tulare County Farm Bureau. "We hope the dialogue will continue."

Race pointed out that "building in" is better for the economy, the environment and has less of an effect on [air quality](#). It also keeps the agricultural land safe from development.

"We have to build in ... we don't have an option," Race said.

Bruce George, general manager with the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, said the forum provided an opportunity to air out various points of view on the impact of development with agriculture. George also stipulated that an adequate water supply was vital to a profitable agricultural economy.

Supervisor Steve Worthley addressed the county's general plan and the need for everyone to work together.

"It's important ...to have a more meaningful dialogue," Worthley said. "My hope is that people ... get the whole story and take it home and reconsider the possibilities."

Governor, Chamber at Odds Over Emissions

By Marc Lifsher, Times Staff Writer

Los Angeles Times, March 7, 2006

SACRAMENTO — The California Chamber of Commerce, perhaps Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's closest political ally, may split with the governor over his commitment to drastically cut greenhouse-gas emissions.

In an executive order signed last year, Schwarzenegger set firm targets for reducing carbon dioxide pollution beginning in 2010. At the same time, he asked the California Environmental Protection Agency to work with other government departments to develop strategies for meeting the goals.

On Monday, the chamber denounced a draft report produced by the agency's "climate action team" as "not convincing" and a potential burden on the state's economy — especially proposals to levy a new tax on gasoline and diesel fuel sales and to cap carbon dioxide emissions, which are believed to cause global warming.

"We don't know what it's really going to cost," said chamber President Allan Zaremborg.

The draft report says fulfilling Schwarzenegger's pledge to cut carbon dioxide pollution 80% by 2050 actually would create jobs as companies developed new energy-saving technologies — a

view endorsed Monday by a group of executives from mainly high-tech firms. Over the next 15 years, the report estimates, 83,000 jobs could be created.

But Zaremberg challenged the state agency to "immediately release all documents and data" used in reaching that conclusion.

A public feud between Schwarzenegger and the state's leading business lobby would be a blow for a governor who recruited a number of his top current and former aides from the chamber's ranks. Schwarzenegger also allied himself with the business group in a series of battles, including the legislative overhaul of workers' compensation insurance laws in 2004 and an unsuccessful effort to pass four initiatives in 2005.

The governor is caught between business interests and members of his staff who are trying to meet his environmental goals, said Dan Schnur, a Republican strategist and UC Berkeley professor.

Schwarzenegger's push for strong state action to curb greenhouse gases also puts him at odds with President Bush. The president favors only voluntary industry action to curb carbon dioxide emissions. He refused to sign the landmark Kyoto Protocol, a treaty designed to reduce global greenhouse gas pollution.

"I say the debate is over," Schwarzenegger said at a conference in June. "We know the science. We see the threat. And we know the time for action is now."

But Schwarzenegger's call to action, apparently, has its limits. Though he's yet to receive the final agency report, the governor has publicly opposed an early recommendation to slap a tax of 2.57 cents a gallon on the wholesale price of gasoline and diesel, money that would be used to finance research into alternative energy sources.

How the governor will react to another controversial recommendation — capping the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by industries such as cement manufacturers and electrical power plants — is less clear.

The chamber, which is leading a coalition that includes heavy industry and farming groups, fears that such caps could hurt profits and drive businesses to other states with less restrictive environmental laws.

The caps may be dropped from the climate team's final report in favor of requiring major industries to report their greenhouse-gas emissions to the state, said state EPA spokesman Mike Wintemute. "You have to establish what is a lid. Otherwise, you can never determine whether you are making substantial reductions."

The chamber's objections to putting caps on greenhouse-gas pollution are not shared by all California businesses. Environmental Entrepreneurs, an organization of 500 executives from mostly high-tech companies, said that capping greenhouse gas emissions and even a new wholesale tax on motor vehicle fuels could stimulate California industry and make the state a global leader in developing anti-pollution technology.

Faced with a divided business community, Schwarzenegger needs to stay true to his original convictions of reducing global warming, said V. John White, executive director of the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technology in Sacramento.

"We understand that there is furious lobbying to keep the governor from following through on the recommendations of his own climate action team," White said. "It suggests that the chamber would rather have California do nothing and not fill the vacuum caused by the stalemate and inaction at the federal level."

In Brief: Builder's group to hear air rule at luncheon

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, March 7, 2006

The Building Industry Association of Tulare-Kings Counties Inc. will hold its monthly general membership luncheon from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday at the Lamp Lite Inn, 3300 W. Mineral King Ave. in Visalia.

Guest speaker will be Tom Jordan, special projects administrator at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, who will discuss the new indirect source review rule.

Cost is \$20 a person and reservations should be made by today.

Information: 625-5447.

OPEN FORUM

Borrowing to Rebuild California

Build for the future

By Steven Weber and Michael Zielenziger
S.F. Chronicle, March 7, 2006

Investing taxpayers' funds in infrastructure programs represents nothing less than a giant wager on our collective future. What our legislators agree to buy now will have to serve our state's needs in 2025.

Viewed this way, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed infrastructure bill seems like the wrong bet. In seeking to cope with current needs, it fails to anticipate those we are likely to face in two decades.

California today hardly resembles the "Golden State" Democratic Gov. Pat Brown presided over 40 years ago. It's not just the birth of two entirely new economic sectors -- information and biotechnology -- that makes the difference. We have 20 million MORE residents, our public schools and universities suffer from a lack of funding, and millions of our poorest citizens go without affordable health care. Today's challenge is no longer to build new freeways in order to crisscross the state, but to reduce the congestion on the highways we use each day just to cross town. While air and water pollution are creating major health problems for thousands of those living in big cities and the Central Valley, we have lost millions of acres of open space and farmland to suburban sprawl.

So when Schwarzenegger invokes Brown's legacy in his \$222 billion infrastructure-spending program, we applaud his belated recognition that the state sometimes does need to invest big money, not just cut budgets, to secure our future. Yet, strangely, his plan assumes that the character of California's society and economy in 2025 will be very much like it is today, just larger -- an assumption we doubt will prove true.

Adding new freeway lanes is not going to improve our staggering congestion -- and roads today cost far more to build than they did in Brown's era. A more sustainable approach would use zoning standards and tax incentives to develop urban neighborhoods, where efficient mass-transit systems, such as high-speed rail, can get people out of their automobiles. Such a comprehensive strategy would encourage higher density housing, protect open spaces, keep farmers on their productive agricultural lands and make home prices more affordable. It's also a collective lifestyle choice: Residents in "urban clusters" can create sustainable, collaborative communities rather than escape into the isolation of disconnected exurban sprawl. Do we really believe that in 2025 Californians will, or should, drive 100 miles a day to their jobs?

In the 1960s, education meant college campuses with buildings, book-filled libraries and dormitories. Will we wish we had more of those in 2025? Of course, falling-down classrooms need repair. Yet in Silicon Valley today, only 74 percent of high-school students graduate, and less than half meet the requirements to enter the state university or community-college systems. Instead of building more campuses, we need adequate funding for the public schools and universities we already have, and imaginative programs that utilize broadband access and computers for effective distance learning. The state's public-education system, once the envy of

the nation, no longer delivers the well-educated workforce a global economy demands. Can we build a prosperous, competitive future without a top-tier workforce?

The 1960s economy needed to divert water from the rain-soaked north to the dry south. But California's 2025 economy can't expect to run on even more water than we use today. Environmental challenges require cleaning up groundwater and using more efficiently what we harvest from the skies, just as we are learning to rein in our demand for electricity. Building new dams is no more of an answer than is racing to construct more power plants.

Similarly, no amount of new hospital construction will reduce the costs or improve the quality of health care in 2025. Rather, California should take the lead in medical informatics and in digitizing patient information, so that health-care providers -- and insurance companies -- can spend their resources dealing with health instead of drowning in paperwork.

For a state that prides itself on leaning directly into the future, the governor's Strategic Growth Plan is surprisingly backward looking. Of course, a vibrant California in 2025 will need to move people, goods and ideas from place to place. But won't ubiquitous broadband, renewable sources of energy, clustered neighborhoods, efficient mass transit, electronic libraries and remote classrooms prove worthy substitutes for much of what we built 40 years ago?

This debate is not just about the future of our economy. California needs to invest not in projects that "lock in" an older approach to governance, community building and social infrastructure, but rather in those that embrace a more collaborative future, and discourage every village, town and county from going its own way. Infrastructure ultimately shapes the social architecture around which we create economic value, build and share cultures and deliver social services.

Steven Weber is director of the Institute of International Studies and professor of political science at UC Berkeley. Michael Zielenziger is a visiting scholar at the institute.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, March 7, 2006:](#)
Proposed courthouse site elicits many judgments

Keep courts downtown I live near the area proposed for a new federal courthouse. To find out that they are going to build a courthouse with jail cells is very disturbing.

I think people in this neighborhood should get a say in this. It will bring more unnecessary traffic, which will congest an already congested area and make the [air quality](#) worse. There are enough business in this area, they don't need to bring anymore.

Downtown is where they need more business. Keep all the courts there.

-- ENA LEE, Bakersfield