

Farmland Working Group

Striving to protect food, families & farmland. Since 1999.

MODESTO'S DENNY JACKMAN KEEPS PLUGGING AWAY FOR FARMS



After Denny Jackman lost his Modesto City Council seat in 2005, he didn't evaporate from public view like so many former electeds do. He returned to the same cause that had absorbed so much of his time before he was elected — protecting farmland.

This week, Jackman scored a big win by getting the current council's agreement to put on the June ballot a residential urban limit plan. It would, in a nutshell, direct future home-building toward the land with the poorest soil and away from prime farmland. That has been the goal of Jackman and many others for years.

The critical word in Jackman's plan is "residential." The proposal wouldn't restrict business and industrial development in the same way, and that narrow focus is what helped turn some likely opponents into supporters.

From the start, Jackman had an ally in Mayor Garrad Marsh, also a longtime proponent of

farmland protection, but none of the other votes were a sure thing. So it's a remarkable feat that the proposal is going to the ballot on a 6-1 vote, especially when the council's mantra these days is "jobs, jobs, jobs."

How did Jackman make his argument? It wasn't through yelling or pouting after the plan failed to make this fall's ballot, which was the original target. He talked with and educated the council members, one by one, and with the folks likely to oppose it. He won them over with reasonable arguments and goodnumbers. While a few want to label Jackman a "no-growther," the more apt description is of a farmland preservationist. Jackman attends discussions about water, groundwater and all sorts of issues related to agriculture. In other words, he has credibility through knowledge, longevity and being willing to listen and compromise. Oh, yeah, and he treats people respectfully.

Jackman spent four years on the council, from 2001 to 2005, and has been arguing for farmland protection for almost four decades. I think the latter is his greater service to our community...

By Judy Sly

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Reprint from The Modesto Bee

Tertiary is Great but Storage is the Answer



A group of Ag representatives from Stanislaus County, along with myself, had an opportunity in 2007 to visit Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency to look at the world's largest water recycling facility, designed to irrigate

raw food crops. We were amazed at what we saw. The primary source of water for that region is from its aquifers, hundreds of feet below the ground. Due to ever increasing pressure from farms, businesses and residential for available water, a huge depletion of groundwater reserves was created. In turn, it also created saltwater intrusion from the Pacific Ocean that would jeopardize the entire agricultural industry and economy in the region.

To help solve that problem, a group of community leaders in the mid 70's started discussing the idea of recycling wastewater. In the 1980's an extensive 5-year study proved that recycled wastewater could be safe for irrigation of crops. Today, blended, recycled and pump water, is used to irrigate over 12,000

acres in the Salinas Valley. A great partnership with saltwater intrusion problem solved.

Modesto has partnered with water thirsty Del Puerto Water district on the Westside to help use recycled water to irrigate 17,000 to 20,000 acres of farmland. Another great partnership with some problem solving results. This is another tool that California can use in their conservation toolbox along with all the other technology that has come our way.

I think most people in the water world can agree that California cannot conserve our way out of the water shortages that we see today especially on the Westside of our valley with only 20 percent irrigation allocation this year. Trying to come up with solutions by not looking at the most obvious and that is increased water storage in California.

We should continue to look to new technology to find the best practices to help with our natural resources and our growing population but we can't ignore the fact that we have more fish in the fish bowl but we just need a bigger bowl with more water.

Wayne Zipser
Executive Manager
Stanislaus County Farm Bureau

The Latest Special Interest License Plate *California Agriculture*

The latest Special Interest License Plate is California Agriculture (CalAg), issued April 1, 2013. Proceeds support agricultural leadership development, career awareness and training activities. These activities primarily target secondary students enrolled in adopted Agricultural Education programs throughout California. For further information go to: www.dmv.ca.gov



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WE ARE WATCHING...

County of Stanislaus

www.stancounty.com

Although the North County Corridor route and the Modesto City Council residential urban limit have been designated along the Kiernan Road alignment, more is needed to protect aglands to the north. Agreements between Stanislaus County and the cities of Modesto and Riverbank need to be crafted to provide any certainty to land-use in this area. Area land owners and residents have been living within a shell game for years. Yet hope remains that Modesto and/or Riverbank won't sprawl over this incredible permeable water recharge area, nor will the County piece-meal land-uses for industrial and/or commercial that, by default, render ineffective production-agriculture on this highest-soil-quality-land.

City of Riverbank

www.riverbank.org

Once perceived as leading the sprawl cities, Riverbank may consider rolling back their huge general plan area. Now that Modesto appears to be taking action to curb its housing along Kiernan Avenue, Riverbank, the "City of Action" has a more legitimate argument to rollback their western general plan from McHenry Avenue to Coffee or Oakdale roads.

One could argue that more housing in small cities, which cannot absorb the cost impacts of housing, would be better off absorbing the sales taxes generated by big city customers at regional shopping centers, such as Riverbanks' Crossroad Center adjacent to Modesto.

We hope that the City of Riverbank will live up to its website claim: *Blending the new with the old, Riverbank maintains a sense of harmony with its surrounding rural and agricultural heritage.*

City of Oakdale

<http://www.ci.oakdale.ca.us/>

In August, the City rolled out its newly adopted General Plan. www.ci.oakdale.ca.us/gp. For years Oakdale has adjusted to Stanislaus County approvals of housing developments to its east. Planning a city can be tough without adjacent land-use restraints by the County. Oakdale has continued with the bulk of its housing plan as single-family low density. The City has pulled back its plans for housing north of the Stanislaus River, yet retains this productive agricultural area in its long term urbanization plan documents. More certainty should be a result of a final adoption of a North County Corridor connection for a new alignment of Highway 108, from Riverbank, and were it merges with Highway 120.

City of Modesto

www.modestogov.com

The Modesto City Council voted 6-1 to place a residential urban limit on the June 2014 ballot. Voters will be asked to restrict housing developments from areas beyond specific boundaries. The boundaries direct housing toward infill areas and the poorer soils east. This is one of the most significant land-use tools ever adopted by a City Council and made certain by a public vote. Application of this new planning tool may be significant for other cities throughout the Central Valley.





Message from the Chair

Lessons on Preservation of Park and Farm Lands

Travel is a rich opportunity to learn. This summer my family and I toured Alaska including several day drives

through Denali National Park. Bus loads of visitors enjoy Ranger organized activities in this six million acre National Park surrounding majestic McKinley, the two peaked highest mountain in America. Denali demonstrates what can be achieved by a few motivated conservationists determined to preserve, protect and support millions of acres of unique land which provides habitats for the survival of moose, bears, Dali sheep, wolves and other wildlife. Every American should be proud to visit, share and support Denali and our many other world famous national parks.

During our return trip home from Alaska, we spent a day in Vancouver, British Columbia. While driving us to the airport from downtown Vancouver, the Canadian bus driver proudly recited to us the history, success and popular support of farmland preservation in the Vancouver area. As in our own central California valley, early settlers in British Columbia established urban centers in valleys on or near prime soils. An estimated 4,000 to 6,000 hectares of arable soil in British Columbia were lost yearly to non-agricultural purposes prior to 1972. Action was needed. So in that same year, all three competing government political parties in British Columbia campaigned to protect farmland.

The Land Commission Act to stop rezoning farmland for non-farming purposes was passed in 1973 despite fierce

opposition from some land owners. A prime objective of this legislation was to create a Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) beyond the regulatory powers of local governments. A five person body was appointed to designate Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) sites to preserve arable land within defined boundaries. Greenbelts and parks were also envisioned. This Land Commission submitted maps to regional districts and collected feedback. The resulting preservation plans were then submitted to government ministries and cabinet for final approval. Farmland preservation boundaries were largely completed by 1975. Some land was rented to farmers on a career-long basis. By 1978, eighty percent of 800 British Columbian land holders who were interviewed saw the ALR system favorably. A comparative study in the early 1980s showed that British Columbia had lost 1,200 hectares of farmland while nearby Ontario province with no ALR lost 17,000 hectares of farmland to urban development. Loss of farmland in California during this same period was about 20,000 hectares of farmland per year!

Nevertheless, in 1988, opposing interests in Canada took away the Commission's ability to stop the building of golf courses in farmland preservation areas (ARLs). This change soon led to 181 proposals for golf courses followed by attempts to then subdivide a golf course and build houses. Developers argued this conversion of farmland would produce jobs. Action was again needed.

So in 1991, a newly elected government in Canada reviewed the 181 pending golf course applications and ruled out 60 while allowing only 80 to proceed.

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Modesto Residential Urban Limit (RUL) Proposal

A long-term planning tool to enhance the effectiveness of urban planning while avoiding superior agricultural soils and water recharge areas adjacent to the urban area.

What it Does:

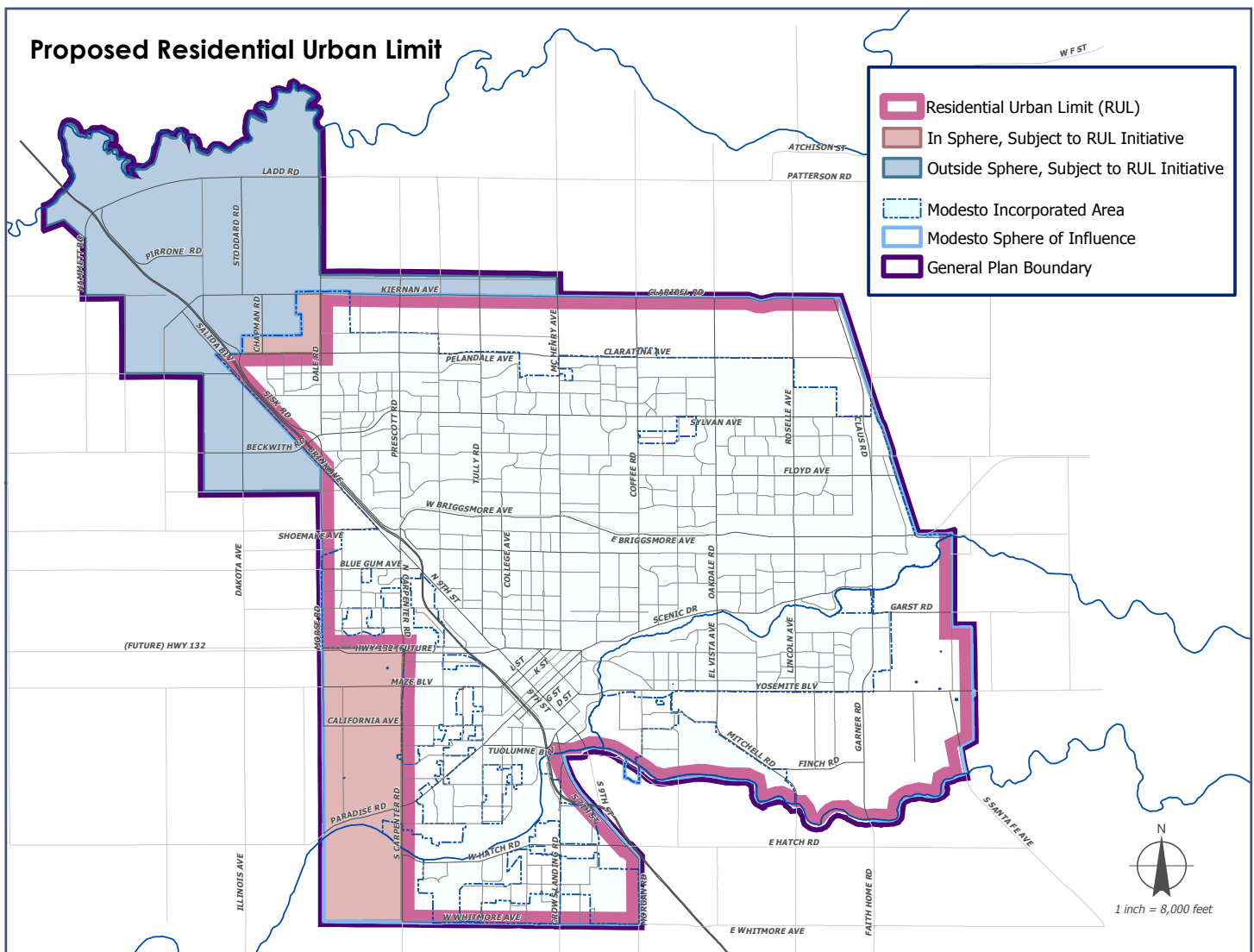
- Helps representatives establish some long-term planning goals that are assured by a public vote.
- Establishes a line that restricts residential uses below a density of 10 dwelling units per acre.
- Provides for more certainty of long-term planning for industrial or commercial development due to a more difficult conversion to residential zoning (perceived as bait and switch).
- Enhances long-term planning for industrial or


commercial that may require more substantial infrastructure trunk line capacities, ie. Sewer, water, transportation.

- Allows long-term planners to “cherry pick” high quality access locations such as along major transportation corridors. ie. Freeway 99 or between Kiernan Avenue and Pelandale Expressway.

What it Does Not:

- Restrict continuing ag uses.
- Restrict commercial or industrial (business park) zoning uses.
- Restrict residential uses meeting/exceeding 10 per/acre.





Farmland Working Group

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www.farmlandworkinggroup.org

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“Some of us stand at the
edge of the city, look inward, and say,
“How can we be better?”

Others stand at the edge
of the city and say,
“How can we be bigger?”

– Denny Jackman