

Salida How?

County taxpayers: Who's to pay ongoing costs of Salida Now?

For decades the enclave of Salida was a productive farming community known for its small town character and the agricultural abundance of the surrounding farmland. In the past decade piece meal housing developments sprawled east and west over some of the best farmland in Stanislaus County. Salida is now home to over 12,000 residents with limited urban services. Water for the existing Salida urban area is provided by the City of Modesto. Police protection of residents and property is provided by the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department.

Because of a 3-2 vote by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, voters/taxpayers will no longer have the opportunity to answer through their vote whether or not Salida Now?

Many questions must be answered about this major growth issue. Budget reports to the Board of Supervisors have shown deficits for maintaining urban services to Salida to be in the red \$2.5 to \$4 million annually. The bulk of the shortfall is for providing Sheriff Department protection in the urban area. With over 5,000 houses in the Salida Plan, it is difficult to trust developers who promise that sales taxes and jobs will relieve the existing tax burden on all county taxpayers.

Since the City of Modesto cannot assure its own future growth will have adequate supplies of healthy water, it cannot supply water to any new Salida development. Where will the proposed portions of Salida get water? Setting up new stand-alone water treatment systems fed by unreliable wells is incredibly expensive. Existing Salida residents will not likely choose to leave the security of the Modesto water system to support a new and expensive water treatment facility. What will happen to the water levels in underground wells when the concrete cover of urban areas no longer recharges the ground water as farmland does?

Stanislaus County is drafting farmland mitigation that proposes saving an acre of farmland for every acre of farming converted to urban use. The Salida plan says that it will protect farmland but only that taken for housing. What about the thousands of acres of prime farmland lost to commercial, industrial, and business park development? Surely the negative impacts upon the agricultural industry due to prime farmland lost need to be mitigated regardless of the type of urban conversion.

Taxpayers need to seriously question the end result of Salida Now. **Ask Salida How?**



WE ARE WATCHING...

Stanislaus County

County of Stanislaus

Talks continue on the language details for farmland mitigation and other parts of the Stanislaus County Ag Element. Though supported unanimously by the Planning Commission, the update was sent back to staff for clarification and other modifications by a 3-2 vote of the Board of Supervisors.

Here's the current draft on the county website:

<http://www.co.stanislaus.ca.us/planning/ProjPDFS/AgElement/env.draft.pdf>

To ask questions or comment go to:
<http://user.govoutreach.com/stanislaus/>

City of Riverbank

Despite developer withdrawal of funds to support westward expansion of Riverbank, the City Manager appears to be determined to convert that area which previously was planned to be the County's first agriculture conservation easement. Considering the major downturn in housing development, it is difficult to understand the need for Riverbank to consume prime farmland to their west when lands south and southeast are of poor soils. Perhaps Riverbank and Modesto need to talk. The General Plan Update is to be presented to the Planning Commission on August 21, 2007. The Draft Environmental Impact Report follows with final approval by the City Council.

www.riverbank.org

GET INVOLVED

*General Plan Update meeting
City of Riverbank Public Hearing,
Tuesday, August 28, 2007- 7 pm,
3600 Santa Fe St., Riverbank, CA*

City of Modesto

Housing starts in Modesto grew by less than one percent in 2006. The only significant current plan in process is called Tivoli in northeast Modesto. It

urbanizes nearly 450 acres as the City grows east toward lesser soils.

www.modestogov.com

City of Patterson

The City continues to object to the merits of the Crows Landing Business Park proposed by developer Gerry Kamilos. Despite a written pledge to the City Council that no homes will be built in the project some Council members are skeptical.

For meetings and information:

West Park :

www.jobsforstanislaus.com/page/content/findyourmeetingrsvp/
Westside Patterson Alliance for Community and Environment: www.ws-pace.org

San Joaquin County

City of Lodi

The City is considering joining the County and Stockton and adopt similar farmland mitigation.

City of Stockton

Developers and the Building Industry Association of the Delta sued the City in June claiming that their farmland mitigation policy is arbitrary and discriminatory against developers. City policy requires those who pave over farmland to preserve an equal amount of land elsewhere in San Joaquin County. The Stockton Record reported that the Developers intend to "put the lawsuit on the back shelf" and negotiate with the city.

Merced County

The Merced County Farm Bureau sent a letter of objection to the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors regarding a Turlock Golf Club proposal.

2007 Farm Bill

www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdafarmbill?

Letters

**Modesto Bee,
August 12, 2007**

Scandalous display of contempt

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors' stunning unilateral decision to adopt the Salida Now initiative before it could go to public vote, and thereby stifle the voices of their own constituents, is nothing short of scandalous! Supervisor Jeff Grover's comment that this "keeps the county and Board of Supervisors in complete control; it doesn't leave it up to the ballot box," is one of the most contemptuous statements I've ever heard from an elected official. And this from the owner of Solecon Industrial Contractors, a business heavily dependent on new commercial construction!

When will we finally elect public officials who can see beyond the interest of developers and who will have the wisdom to plan for "inevitable growth" without mindlessly paving over still more priceless farmland?

**Loren Bauman
Modesto**

FWG High School Scholarship Winner!

Essay by

Garland Castañeda *Beyer High School - 2007*

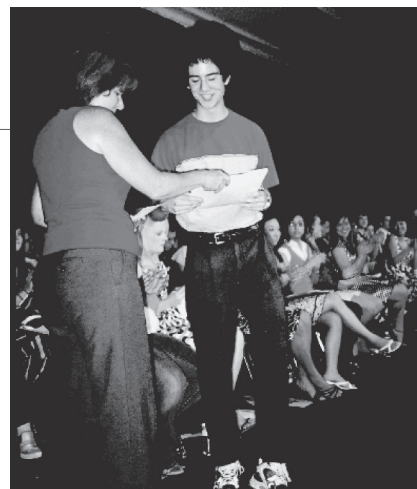
California's Central Valley is renowned throughout the world for its incredible agricultural bounty. This four hundred mile stretch of earthen fertility supplies over a quarter of food consumed in the United States, not to mention what growers export to the rest of the world. Such bounty must be protected in order to preserve the valley's great resources and its residents' way of life.

Land development constantly threatens to ensnare the rich soil of the Central Valley with housing and pavement. Doing so runs the risk of depriving this great region of the open farmland that has provided the means of vitality for generations of Californians. Millions of people throughout the world depend

on the foods grown and gathered in this valley, and it is our responsibility to insure that we continue to sustain them with our bountiful harvests. This is the breadbasket of the world, and we must never lose sight of that.

Paving over some of the richest soil in the world makes no sense. If this state as a whole is to continue to meet demand for California produce, it must insure that we do not expand housing and urban industry at the cost of agriculture. The valley's great canal systems were not built to supply water for lawns of plush housing complexes but to nourish crops of the valley. The fruits of the earth made this state what it is today; we must continue to carry on the proud tradition of working with the land to feed the people of the world.

Some of my earliest memories involve me walking with my parents through



my grandparents' almond orchard. To this day I maintain that there are precious few things in life better than walking through an orchard on a peaceful afternoon and picking fresh almonds from the branches. My grandparents have been tending orchards for over fifty years and have instilled in me the value of California agriculture. The ability to experience the simple pleasures of farming is precious and must be preserved for future generations.

"I think most policymakers and elected officials are really aware of the concerns of the public, of not wanting to change the character of the region and not wanting to wipe out the base of our local economy."

Carol Whiteside
Great Valley Center,
President

Grassroots group forms in Merced County



Valley Land Alliance

Our Mission is to Educate and Build Alliances to protect our uniquely productive California Central Valley farmland.

In January, 2006, Valley Land Alliance incorporated as a 501(c)(3). Board members and volunteers raised funds and conducted a poll of Merced County residents on key development and land-use issues.

Valley Land Alliance supports and advances policies that:

- Ensure a safe, domestic food supply
- Ensure that farming and ranching remain economically viable and attract jobs that complement a dynamic agricultural economy
- Advocate that future development incorporates and pays for infrastructure, such as roads, sewage systems, reliable water, police, fire, and schools
- Protect our natural watersheds
- Support growth that is compact and maximizes density within existing city boundaries

Valley Land Alliance, P.O. Box 102, Cressey, CA 95312
(209) 386-3572 www.ValleyLandAlliance.org

June 19, 2007

John Pedrozo
Chairman
Merced County Board of Supervisors
2222 M Street
Merced, CA 95340

Turlock Golf Club proposal generates strong letter of objection from the Merced County Farm Bureau

Dear Supervisor Pedrozo:

On Behalf of the Merced County Farm Bureau Board of Directors I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed guidance package for the Turlock Golf Club Development Project General Plan Amendment and EIR.

- The Merced County Farm Bureau Board of Directors on August 22, 2006 voted to not support any development that includes Williamson Act Contracted land within their project boundaries. We cannot support this application because of the Williamson Act contracts that are in place.
- All the land currently in this proposed project qualifies as productive farmland and is in the Williamson Act Preserve.
- The Board of Supervisors should not be establishing any new SUDP's while the update of the General Plan is proceeding. The County needs to study the impacts of the general plan amendments already approved in the last 17 years on our resources, including and most importantly impacts on agriculture.
- This particular request for a SUDP while Hilmar is in the midst of updating their community plan is ill-advised and counter productive to their attempt to establish boundaries and policies for future growth. This proposed SUDP would have a tremendous impact on the community of Hilmar—traffic, schools, roads, water, drainage, and sewer facilities.
- The Merced County Public Works department has asked for you not to approve this project until the PSR Study for the Highway 165 Bypass is completed and a preferred alignment is determined.
- This project is premature and untimely given the current abundance of vacant housing and the steep rise in foreclosures and property tax defaults Merced and Stanislaus Counties are currently experiencing.
- Before any new housing or development is approved for study through the CEQA process the County needs to join with the cities and irrigation districts to fund a water study for the different water basins in Merced County. SB610 and SB221 require a water plan that consists of past and current water conditions with a plan to provide water into the future. The Merced Water Supply Plan does not meet the specifications laid out in the legislation. We strongly urge that a comprehensive water supply plan be a part of the update of the General Plan.
- Storm water drainage and daily urban run-off is a water quality issue today for the irrigation districts and the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition in this region. Urban drainage impacts on our agricultural irrigation systems and the impacts from previously approved development needs to be assessed before new approvals are considered.
- Merced County needs to establish a flood control district(s) for our county before any new urban development is considered.

The Merced County Farm Bureau asks that you deny the Guidance Package for the Turlock Golf Club Development Project General Plan Amendment and EIR. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Louie Bandoni
President



From the President

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors has voted to push through the Salida Plan, making it an ordinance rather than allowing the voters to decide on its merits. The supervisors now need to give the details of their plan, including a time frame. Will this be another Village 1? The public needs answers.

Salida is short-sighted, piecemeal development. And, to correct years of mishandled planning, Supervisor Jeff Grover concludes that the Salida Now Plan had to be pushed through to keep the supervisors in charge of Salida's future. Grover's comments aren't reassuring or accurate. The supervisors' action gives the project to the developers, with no right to say "no" to the project as a whole, no matter what the environmental impact report and financial feasibility studies show.

Growth must be addressed. Stanislaus County's number one industry is agriculture. What are the supervisors doing to protect that industry, and more importantly, the farmland that is essential for that industry? If we need to accommodate growth, let's talk about the need to protect the farmland that supports the county's number one industry. Let's talk about balanced growth.

Along with the constant mantra about the inevitability of growth, there is the steady assurance by the Board of Supervisors that the county's agricultural foundation will be protected. The supervisors need to work diligently to establish an ordinance to mitigate for the loss of farmland. Farmland that is urbanized will be urbanized forever.

Starting today, if we protected an acre of farmland for every acre that is developed, the county would be saving only half of our existing farmland.

If we are to learn from history, Los Angeles County would be a good lesson. In 1955, when Los Angeles was the number one agricultural county in the nation, their Board of Supervisors wrote...

"Conversion of agricultural land to urban uses will not stop in Southern California unless the increase in population stops or is appreciably reduced. Renewed interest in the use of zoning for protection of agricultural lands may result in some protection against premature subdivision.

A number of problems must be solved to make such zoning an effective and equitable tool, but efforts along this line may result in a way of preserving temporarily or even more permanently some of the richest lands available to farmers in the world. Areas where urbanization is only beginning may wish to give agricultural zoning careful consideration for more orderly and logical development."

Excerpt from Crop Acreage Trends for Los Angeles County and Southern California, published by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

Los Angeles County never developed such policy. When it seemed that it was too late to stop sprawling development in the region, a citizens' initiative passed in Ventura County. Several citizen initiatives have passed since to protect open space and farmland in California. If Los Angeles County is a history lesson, I will support local ballot box initiatives that direct growth and protect our farmland base. I will vote yes on Measure E, Stamp Out Sprawl (SOS). I can live with ballot box initiatives. I don't want Stanislaus County to become another Los Angeles County.

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Farmland Working Group
P.O. Box 948 Turlock, CA 95381
(209) 247-2503



Farmland Working Group
2007 Heartland Festival-June 2
Riverdance Farms, Livingston, CA

Members are our greatest resource.
Join us!

Stockton Record

Lodi out to ensure farmers' future... Daniel Thigpen

In a town already known for its tight growth controls and aversion to urban sprawl, Lodi officials have indicated they may join Stockton, San Joaquin County and other Valley communities by requiring developers who tear out farmland to preserve it elsewhere. Lodi does not have a so-called agricultural mitigation ordinance on the books, but the city's chief planner, Randy Hatch, says he may propose one in the coming months...

The requirement that developers purchase easements on farmland to protect it from future development is a policy gaining traction throughout Northern California and the Valley. Policymakers from Yolo County to Merced are discussing some form of acre-for-acre farmland preservation.