

## SUPPORT TURLOCK'S SMART GROWTH TRADITION IN GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

by Denny Jackman

On August 23, a joint meeting of the Turlock City Council and Planning Commission was held. Citizen input compiled from several General Plan Update Community Meetings as well as data relevant to the city's land use, history and projected growth was used by city staff and the consultant to present three plans for consideration by the council and commission. At the end of the discussion, the council would vote on a chosen growth scenario. From that scenario, the consultant and staff would move to the environmental impact review.

One Master Plan Area included infill and growth to the southeast, utilizing Turlock's current general plan. Another Master Plan area included the Southeast Master Plan as well as a Northwest Master Plan that would put residential development west of Hwy 99. The third option was a large growth area, including southeast and northwest growth; it appeared to be included to make the first two Growth Scenarios appear legitimate.

Several citizens spoke of the logic of developing the southeast, utilizing infill and compact growth and keeping residential development east of Hwy 99 (Turlock's general plan shows no residential development west of the freeway). As the evening wore on and it appeared that Councilmen Ted Howze, Kurt Spycher and Councilwoman Amy Bublak were not in agreement with the audience, Mayor Lazar asked each planning commissioner for their preference.

Every commissioner supported the Southeast Master Plan and rejected the Northwest Master Plan addition. The reasons varied but each commissioner said growth should remain confined to the southeast. Seven commissioners and one alternate flatly rejected residential growth west of the freeway. Lazar and Council-

woman Jackson also rejected the scenario to move residential growth west of the freeway.

Turlock's general plan is considered by many professional planners the model of smart growth in the valley. Past councils have used the freeway and railroad as a boundary to residential growth. Thanks to a commitment to smart growth, it is still possible to drive across the town in a matter of minutes, shop at one of the busiest shopping centers in the area or buy fresh local produce at the farmers market downtown.

Turlock's current general plan is committed to growing compactly so the town remains surrounded by productive farmland. The plan has an urban boundary at Taylor Road, protecting farmland and an important water re-

### WHAT'S NEXT?

**At its Aug. 23 meeting, the Turlock City Council voted 3-2 to study two major growth areas as part of the city's general plan update. This vote will kick off a major environmental review before the final council vote, expected in late 2011.**

- **Growth Area 1** (Southeast Plans 1 through 3) – 1,206 total acres, 771 residential acres, with the construction of approximately 6,730 housing units.
- **Growth Area 2** (Southeast Plans 4 and 5, and Northwest Plan 1) – 1,271 total acres, 861 residential acres, with about 8,010 residential units.

Both options assumed 3,000 new housing units in infill areas. The Planning Commission and two of the council members supported including Growth Area 1 only.

*(Continued on page 4)*

Our Mission: To preserve the agricultural foundation of our region and promote smart growth in our urban communities through education, outreach and action.



# 2010 High School Scholarship Recipient

Essay by Johanna Muller

Johanna Muller, Turlock Christian School senior, receives scholarship from board member Timothy Parker

Saving farmland in California's Central Valley is important on many levels. The Central Valley possesses some of the richest soil in the world. This, along with an extensive growing season, enables us to produce large amounts of high value produce that is essential to our community and our country.

Environmentally, well-managed farmland supplies scenic open spaces, filters impurities from our air and water and shelters wildlife. Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated 1.6 million acres as critical habitat for the red-legged frog. With this ruling was identified the benefit many ranchers provide for the frog with their stock ponds.

Economically, California is the number one state in

the nation in farm gate value production. Within California, seven of the top ten counties are in the Central Valley. This employees many people, not just on the farms but within many ancillary industries which support or are supported by agriculture. Processors, transportation, schools, electricians, manufacturing and many others depend on agriculture to supply the basis for their economy.

In addition, producing our own food gives us independence from other countries that do not have regulations which are as strict. California leads the world in protecting the environment and ensuring food safety for its consumer. It also allows us to focus more on supplying the world food as opposed to demanding.

On a personal level, my family has been farming in Denair for three generations. Agriculture has provided not only a means of support but a lifestyle of hard work and wonderful blessings.

## Rethinking the Paradigm

The San Joaquin, or Great Central Valley, is the "Breadbasket" of California. Yet here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the accommodation of population growth, the need for economic development, and the typical subdivision conventions are combining to altar the natural and built landscape. The accommodation of population growth and the need for economic development seemingly combine inexorably to drive suburban encroachment onto prime agricultural lands.

The Fresno County Local Agency Formation Commission, which decides on future city borders, has in recent times joined with other communities in advancing ideas of agricultural buffers to separate cities in ways to concentrate development in existing settlements to save farmland.

The American Farmland Trust speaks to economic, cultural, aesthetic and societal benefits of maintaining agriculture while allowing growth within established neighborhoods, arguing for the targeting of infill and for the greater consideration of increasing densities to keep more farmland in production and maintain the agricultural base.

Whiteside of the Great Valley Center puts it more pointedly, echoing the growing sentiment in her adaptation of a perspective offered originally by Albert Einstein:

*Albert Einstein's definition of insanity was doing the same thing over and over and expecting the same result each time. If we want to build a livable, healthy and humane future for all Californians, we have to do some things differently."*

excerpts from *The Great Central Valley and The Coastal Shelf: Toward Responsible Environmental Stewardship in California, 2008*



## WE ARE WATCHING...

### City of Modesto

[www.modestogov.com](http://www.modestogov.com)

An urban growth boundary general plan amendment sponsored by FWG will be heard at the Modesto City Council Economic Development Committee meeting on Monday September 13, 2010 in room 2005 at 1010 10<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto. The amendment calls upon the Council to establish urban growth boundaries and submit them to a public vote for affirmation. Once established and approved by voters, the boundaries can only be amended by a majority public vote. It is the recommendation of FWG that this amendment be placed on the November 2011 ballot.

Modesto citizens have been voting on issues of growth since Measure A passed in 1979. In November 2009, voters rejected all five urban expansion proposals on the ballot. Modesto voters supported the February 2008 Stanislaus County Measure E (Stamp Out Sprawl) by 69%.

### City of Patterson

[www.ci.patterson.ca.us](http://www.ci.patterson.ca.us)

Huge is the best word to describe the result of the latest General Plan Update recommendation by an August 10, 2010 Planning Commission meeting. Patterson would balloon to three times its population of 21,229 to 66,270 in 20 years. A comparison of population chart prepared by the City consultants show other less exuberant projections. The land-use

plan for urban development would expand Patterson over 20 years to a size about half that of Modesto today.

For more information:

[www.ci.patterson.ca.us/](http://www.ci.patterson.ca.us/)

[Default.aspx?pi=71&ni=92](http://Default.aspx?pi=71&ni=92)

If you would like to obtain a printed copy of the document or a copy on CD please call (209) 895-8020 or visit the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall at 1 Plaza, Patterson, CA 95363

### City of Turlock

[www.ci.turlock.ca.us](http://www.ci.turlock.ca.us)

The Planning Commission has been asked to reexamine the city's anti-big box ordinance by Council. Planning Commissioners universally questioned whether the community truly supported allowing big box stores in the city. The Commission has asked for a public meeting in mid-October to address the issue.

### Stanislaus County

[www.co.stanislaus.ca.us](http://www.co.stanislaus.ca.us)

The North County Corridor Joint Powers Authority (NCC JPA) has started over with CalTrans as lead agency for a proposed transportation corridor from Freeway 99 to Highway 120 east of Oakdale. A lawsuit filed by Protect our Agricultural Legacy (PAL) to throw out the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) used by CalTrans and the NCC JPA has resulted in an out-of-court settlement which basically starts the process over

and requires a renewed EIR. New scoping meetings were held on September 8 and 13, 2010.

For more information:

[www.dot.ca.gov/dist10](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist10)

or to comment on the project email [Gail\\_Miller@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Gail_Miller@dot.ca.gov)

### Merced County

[www.co.merced.ca.us](http://www.co.merced.ca.us)

A citizen's Save Farmland Initiative has been placed on the November 2010 ballot in Merced County as Measure C. The initiative is similar to Stanislaus County's Measure E that directs housing development into cities. And as in Stanislaus County, the Board of Supervisors in Merced County have placed a competing measure on the ballot, Measure D. The BOS measure exempts about 2,500 acres of urban development from voter oversight. The measure with the most votes exceeding 50% wins. For more information:

[www.mercedsunstar.com/2010/07/28/1509641/merced-](http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2010/07/28/1509641/merced-county-starts-its-own-ballot.html)

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[ballot.html](http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2010/07/28/1509641/merced-county-starts-its-own-ballot.html)

[www.savefarmland.org](http://www.savefarmland.org)

### California High Speed Rail

[www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)

A Revised Final Program EIR for the Bay Area to Central Valley region is available by request

[www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)

or you may review a copy at the main library in Merced or Modesto.





# No Farms No Food

(Continued from page 1)

charge area and keeping Keyes and Turlock as distinct communities. Developing to the southeast directs growth onto poorer soils that are less productive. Additionally, the southeast area is underutilized, needs repurposing and in-fill. Growing to the southeast will use existing infrastructure and city services. This is the smartest kind of growth.

Turlock's current general plan has the capacity to accommodate growth for 20 years. Turlock should continue the vision of past City Councils to grow compactly, protect world class farmland and keep city services and public

safety efficient and affordable. The general plan update must utilize realistic population projections as well as hard facts on the economic condition of the state, county and city.

The Farmland Working Group encourages the voters to consider smart growth and farmland protection in the upcoming election, when two council seats are to be filled. Take time to learn the candidates' platforms on land use. Three votes on the City Council can undo decades of smart growth and farmland protection overnight.

*The Modesto Bee—September 3, 2010*



## Message from the Chair

### The Need for New Discipline to Recalibrate Growth

#### A Closer Look at the Fundamental Premises of Smart Growth

**The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents and boundaries**

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.

2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.

3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.

4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.

*Excerpts from Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) 1997–2007*

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## Support your local Certified Farmers Market

**Ceres** — Whitmore Park, 3rd & North Streets

**Wednesday — 10am-2pm thru November**

**Modesto** — 16th St. between H & I Streets

**Thursday & Saturday — 7am-noon thru November**

**Modesto** — 10th St. between H & I Streets.

**Saturday — 7am-noon thru November**

**Turlock** — Broadway between Olive Ave. & Main Street

**Friday — 8am-1pm thru November**

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[www.farmlandworkinggroup.org](http://www.farmlandworkinggroup.org)

*The world we have created today  
as a result of our thinking thus far  
has problems which cannot be solved  
by thinking the way we thought  
when we created them*

- Albert Einstein

...*T*here is one important thing to remember as California contemplates its future and how to grow: We have choices. Nothing is inevitable, and the shape of California in 2050 will be the result of hundreds — maybe thousands — of individual decisions that will be made by every city and county in the state.

— Carol Whiteside