

MANAGING GROWTH



PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE



MEETING HOUSING NEEDS



IMPROVING REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION



Phase One: A Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County

COMPASS BLUEPRINT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
FEBRUARY 2008



This is a project of the Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) and the Ventura County Civic Alliance (VCCA) with funding provided by the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project Program. Compass Blueprint assists Southern California cities and other organizations in evaluating planning options and stimulating development consistent with the region's goals. Compass Blueprint tools support visioning efforts, infill analyses, economic and policy analyses, and marketing and communication programs.

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The contents of this report reflect the views of the author who is responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of SCAG or DOT. This report does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation.



**Ventura County
Civic Alliance**
*Engaging the Community
for Our Future*



**VENTURA COUNCIL
OF GOVERNMENTS**



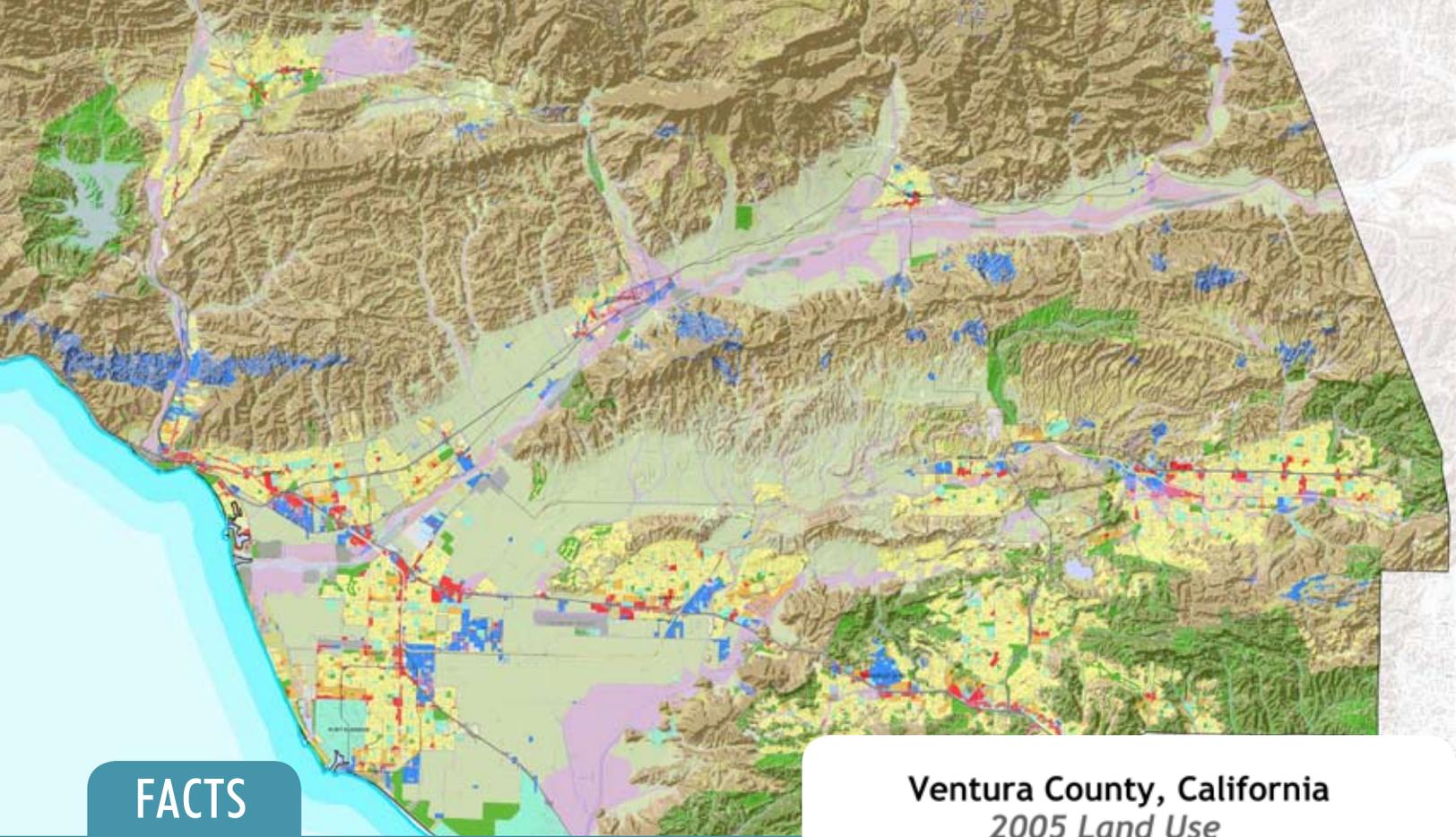
**COMPASS
BLUEPRINT**
new directions for growth





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FACTS

Ventura County

2035 FORECAST

The SCAG 2035 growth forecast for the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan, referred to throughout this document, represents the most likely growth distribution in the absence of any explicit regional policies. In addition to historical demographic trends and future projections, this forecast incorporates current general plans and local policies including the 2035 total population, household, and employment growth projections at census tract and city levels provided by VCOG.

Ventura County, California 2005 Land Use



POPULATION

2003	797,000
2035 SCAG Forecast	1,014,000

HOUSEHOLDS

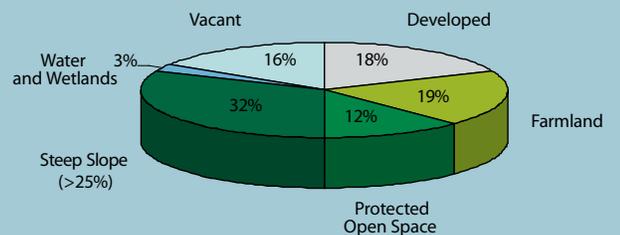
2003	254,000
2035 SCAG Forecast	330,000

JOBS

2003	335,000
2035 SCAG Forecast	463,000

2006 LAND USE

Land Use	Countywide	Inside UGBs	Outside UGBs
Developed	101,850	86,722	15,128
Undeveloped	455,213	55,329	399,884
Farmland	107,156	8,023	99,133
Protected Open Space	69,242	18,282	50,960
Steep Slope (>25%)	177,018	12,171	164,847
Water and Wetlands	14,221	1,801	12,420
Vacant	87,576	15,052	72,524
Totals	557,063	142,051	415,012





Executive Summary

Ventura County has an enviable history, unique in California, of protecting its greenbelts and agricultural lands. It has managed to preserve the distinctive sense of place and quality of life, even though it is also located on the edge of a rapidly growing metropolitan area.

But Ventura County and its cities together face a number of challenges in the coming decades, from preserving a strong environmental and agricultural heritage to providing jobs and housing for people from all walks of life and managing demand on a heavily used transportation network. The Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County is intended to help citizens, local governments, and stakeholders identify collaborative solutions to these common challenges. Through this effort the region has begun a process of public engagement to develop a common vision for land use, environmental conservation, jobs, housing and transportation. The ultimate goal of this project is to create a region-wide voluntary Compact, or agreement, on principles and actions to address these challenges collaboratively and build a sustainable future for this generation and the next.

Part 1 of this report describes the genesis of this project and the public input process that was the core of Phase One. **Part 2** details the results of the Phase One public workshop scenario planning exercise. **Part 3** presents four key topics of concern that emerged from the public input and a series of policy options that can serve as the basis for further Ventura County region-wide discussion in Phase Two of the Compact project.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

PART 1 describes the genesis of this project.

PART 2 details the results of the public workshop scenario planning exercise.

PART 3 presents a series of policy options for four key topics of concern as a launching pad for future regional discussion and debate.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In early 2007 the Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County Steering Committee crafted a set of guiding principles that have served as a touchstone throughout the public outreach and visioning process. These guiding principles address six key ideas:

- 1 building an effective multi-modal transportation system
- 2 maintaining a sustainable and healthy agricultural industry
- 3 keeping housing affordable for all residents
- 4 protecting open space and conserving energy
- 5 developing a diversified economy
- 6 continuing education about sustainability and challenges to the region



BACKGROUND

In early 2007 the Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County Steering Committee crafted a set of guiding principles that have served as a touchstone throughout the public outreach and visioning process. These guiding principles address six key goals: building an effective multi-modal transportation system; promoting sustainability of agriculture for generations to come; keeping housing affordable for residents at all income levels; protecting open space and conserving natural resources and energy; developing a diversified economy; and continuing education and civic engagement on sustainability and challenges to the region.

PHASE ONE: PUBLIC INPUT AND SCENARIO PLANNING

Phase One of the Compact project focused on a hands-on public workshop in which participants created maps showing how and where they wanted housing and job growth to occur—and not occur—over the next 20 years. The results indicated very strong support for continued protection of the region's open space and agricultural lands, combined with new housing and job growth focused in existing urban areas. This scenario building exercise was followed by two open houses and a public survey which helped refine issues of concern identified by the workshop.

The survey, open houses, and workshop identified four key topics concerning the region's future: 1) managing future growth, 2) protection of its environmental and agricultural heritage, 3) preservation of housing affordability and choice, and 4) maintaining an efficient and equitable transportation system.

This report provides a discussion of the various issues of regional importance as identified through the public input process and presents a short list of possible policy directions the county could pursue through a regional agreement. The policy options presented within this report are not intended as specific recommendations but instead provide a platform for discussion and debate to be further explored in Phase Two of this project. Growth management policy options include extending the urban growth boundaries which begin expiring in 2020; adjusting land use zoning within the boundaries to achieve a better balance of housing and job creation; and developing policies, regulations and incentives to increase investment in well-designed and resource-efficient infill and redevelopment. Conservation policy options range from forming a region-wide open space district to manage valuable environmental lands and permanently protect prime agricultural lands to strengthening greenbelt agreements and using conservation incentives like transfers of development rights to focus development in urbanized areas.

Housing affordability could be addressed by providing density bonuses and expedited permitting for mixed-use and affordable housing near transit, and the formation of an affordable housing trust fund. To address the need for better transportation efficiency, local and state and federal matching funds for multi-modal transportation improvements could be raised by enacting a voter-approved transportation sales tax measure, and the Ventura County Transportation

Commission could take a leading role in promulgating pedestrian- and bike-friendly street design standards countywide.

PHASE TWO: VENTURA COUNTY REGIONAL COLLABORATION

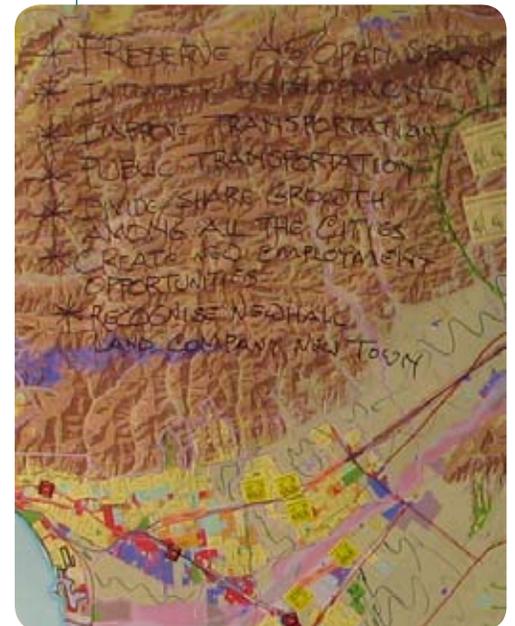
It is not a coincidence that these issues are both a high priority and need attention at a regional level. All of Ventura County's residents face these issues on a daily basis, and it will take a broad-based approach to resolve them. In Phase Two of the project, citizens and policymakers will be asked to evaluate policy options for these and other issues of regional concern. The ultimate goal of this process is to craft a Ventura County regional agreement which will be embraced and internalized by all jurisdictions. Local governmental sovereignty is an important fixture in California's political landscape, which has led to some difficulty in addressing problems that cross political boundaries. As a negotiated document, a Compact can help balance and preserve the independence of cities and counties as important issues like conservation and transportation are brought forward for regional consideration.

Such a Compact is a voluntary accord in which local governments agree on a long-term vision, guiding principles, and specific implementation programs to address problems common to all of them, or join collaboratively to pursue goals that would be difficult to attain individually. The participating agencies determine to what degree and extent the Compact is binding. A Compact can take the form of a uniform resolution adopted by each individual jurisdiction or even form the basis for an intergovernmental agency, such as a joint powers authority, to implement specific programs. A common approach is to incorporate Compact language into local general plans, thus integrating regional goals and local planning efforts. Finally, a good Compact usually includes benchmarks by which localities can measure progress. Measurable standards are also important for evaluation and continued planning efforts.

We hope this report on Phase One of the Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County will help citizens and decision makers find ways to collaborate on solving the Ventura County region's myriad planning, growth and transportation challenges.



A Compact can help balance and preserve the independence of cities and counties as important issues like conservation and transportation are brought forward for regional consideration.



Comments received on workshop maps reiterated participants' desire for open space and agricultural protection, public transportation investment, and dividing and sharing growth throughout Ventura County.



PART I

A Compact for Ventura County

Compass Blueprint
Demonstration Projects
promote creative,
forward-thinking,
and sustainable
development solutions
that fit local needs
and support shared
regional benefits.

The Ventura County Civic Alliance (VCCA), an initiative of the Ventura County Community Foundation, has been working to promote a more sustainable future for the Ventura County region since its inception as a regional civic collaborative in 2001. The Compact project is the outgrowth of a substantial body of work by VCCA members to engage the “three E’s”, social equity, economic and environmental communities, in a process of identifying key regional challenges and developing solutions for our common future.

Under VCCA’s leadership, the first phase of the Compact was launched in early 2007 in partnership with the Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), which provided funding and consultant support for the first phase of work.

A COMPASS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Through its Compass Blueprint Planning program, The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) provides cities, counties and sub regions with free planning assistance. The goal of the program is to promote creative, forward-thinking, and sustainable development solutions that fit local needs and support shared regional values. Known as Demonstration Projects, these efforts are expected to result in progressive future development that provides local and regional benefits. SCAG provided the Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) and the Ventura County Civic Alliance (VCCA) with consultant resources for the first phase of a project to develop a countywide Compact.

HISTORY OF THE COMPACT FOR A SUSTAINABLE VENTURA COUNTY

Phase One of the Compact project was carried out under the guidance of a 20-member Steering Committee comprised of VCCA Compact Working Group members and VCOG leaders.

The Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County project grew out of the 2004-2005 VCCA “Connect the Dots” project aimed at developing strategies to address issues of growth and sustainability in Ventura County. The project identified key trends which, in the absence of any concerted course-correction, will inevitably lead Ventura County residents and future generations toward a future of diminishing quality of life; growing population, increasing traffic, decreasing home affordability, a mismatch of housing stock with changing demographics, and an imbalance of land for housing and jobs. Out of two major countywide forums and extensive research and community engagement, three key strategies for addressing these trends emerged: building an educated workforce, promoting livable communities, and building a widely supported vision and blueprint for the region’s future. To address the latter, VCCA formed a working group which has been meeting since 2004 on the creation of a “Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County.”

The “Connect the Dots” findings, combined with emerging concerns about global climate change and energy and food security, suggest that the time is ripe for a coordinated effort to engage a critical mass of Ventura County stakeholders and leaders in charting a new course for our region’s future.

Successful negotiation and implementation of a regional Compact will require the active involvement of elected and public officials as well as business and community leaders. In early 2007, VCCA partnered with the Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) to conduct the first phase of the Compact project with funding from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). VCOG, SCAG, and VCCA are currently developing plans for Phase Two, and welcome and encourage the involvement and support of communities, businesses, schools, and non-profit organizations throughout the county as the project moves forward.

WHAT IS A COMPACT?

In the context of this project, a Compact is a statement of goals, policies, and standards, collaboratively negotiated and voluntarily adopted by an area’s jurisdictions. It is not a mandatory exercise but instead serves as a vehicle to attain greater benefits than could be achieved without cooperation across political boundaries. A Compact usually includes statements of common goals and specific measurable standards that help signatories monitor progress and evaluate outcomes. Areas that have successfully adopted Compacts often find the best success with a limited number of specific focus areas.

The implementation of a Compact can be achieved by a variety of means. A specific task stipulated in the Compact could prompt the negotiation of

HOW WE GOT HERE

- 1 The Faulkner House Group separately developed a set of guiding principles for the future, prior to Phase One of this project
- 2 VCOG and VCCA worked with SCAG to initiate Phase One of the project described in this report
- 3 Government representatives worked together with SCAG to develop a long-range population forecast to 2035
- 4 VCOG and VCCA held a workshop for residents to show how they would accommodate this forecasted growth
- 5 The project team built scenarios from the workshop and evaluated them based on guiding principles
- 6 Open houses were held for review of scenarios and their outcomes
- 7 A public survey was administered at open houses and on the Internet
- 8 Phase One Report



A COMPACT FOR VENTURA COUNTY

DID YOU KNOW?

Ventura County is expected to grow by an additional 76,000 households and 128,000 jobs over the next few decades. A significant amount of undeveloped land is needed to accommodate this anticipated growth. In addition, some developed land can be “recycled” through infill redevelopment. In general, key questions to residents throughout the county are: Where should new housing and commercial development occur? If existing land uses within urban growth boundaries cannot provide all the land needed for household development, should these boundaries be expanded? Or, should vacant employment lands within the boundaries be rezoned to allow for new housing?



agreements regarding urban growth boundary management and the coordination of transportation and infrastructure investment. A local collaborative arrangement already in place in Ventura County involves seven greenbelt agreements adopted by the County and affected cities where the cities agree not to annex territory and the County pledges to permit only open space or agricultural uses. Another vehicle is the eventual creation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), an inter-jurisdictional legal entity charged with a specific task, such as open space preservation. For example, Solano County, northeast of San Francisco, and area cities formed a JPA to protect a large area of ranch land and open space from sprawling development. In this case, Solano County and the other member cities also incorporated these open space protection policies into their individual General Plans.

CASE STUDY



The Denver region’s Mile High Compact is the first city and county led agreement of its kind in the nation. Representing over 80% of the region’s population and 45% of Colorado’s population, communities that sign the Compact agree to work together to guide growth in the Denver metro region.

HOW IT WORKS

Through the Compact, cities and counties commit to establishing urban growth

boundaries that adhere to Denver’s Metro Vision 2020, the region’s long-term plan for growth. Communities must explicitly link their comprehensive plans or master plans to Metro Vision 2020, which provides a common set of guiding principles for the region. By linking their plans to growth management tools such as zoning regulations, urban growth boundaries and development codes, communities ensure the implementation of a coherent growth plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Compact Steering Committee adopted a series of Guiding Principles early in the spring of 2007 to set the path for the Compact and define success for those involved. The six goal areas with 39 value statements draw on several years of work by the Faulkner House Group, an informal monthly gathering of business leaders, environmentalists, public officials, and others interested in land use issues. The Guiding Principles are also at the core of the planning process since they provide the framework in which to analyze policy options for compliance with the goals and desires of Ventura County residents.

The following principles will serve as the basis for future discussions about the Compact and its eventual implementation. The principles may be expanded or modified as the project moves forward.

A Compact serves as a vehicle to achieve greater benefits than could be achieved without inter-jurisdictional coordination.

1 Promote sustainability of agricultural enterprises for generations to come.



2 Ensure an adequate long-term housing stock in Ventura County that provides housing affordable to people at all income levels.



3 Build an effective multi-modal transportation system that provides for efficient movements of people and goods.



4 Protect and sustain natural resources and open space, and conserve energy and other nonrenewable resources.



5 Encourage a diversified and competitive economy that will continue to prosper while achieving a sustainable jobs/housing balance.



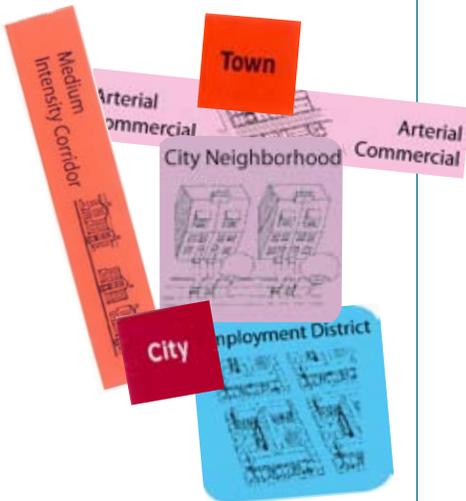
6 Stimulate public awareness, understanding and action on regional sustainability issues through public forums and multi-stakeholder dialog and collaboration.





PART 2

Public Involvement Process



Over 120 workshop participants created over twenty maps representing their visions for future growth in Ventura County. They constructed the maps using “chips” that represented common development types appropriate for the region.



PUBLIC WORKSHOP

On June 7th, 2007, over 120 residents, business owners, and civic leaders gathered at a public workshop to share their collective aspirations for the future of the Ventura County region. Working in small groups, they arranged themselves around detailed maps of Ventura County. The maps served as a “game board” on which participants placed graphic icons depicting future growth. The icons (also known as “chips”) represented combinations of different buildings that illustrate development patterns such as main streets, downtowns and residential neighborhoods.

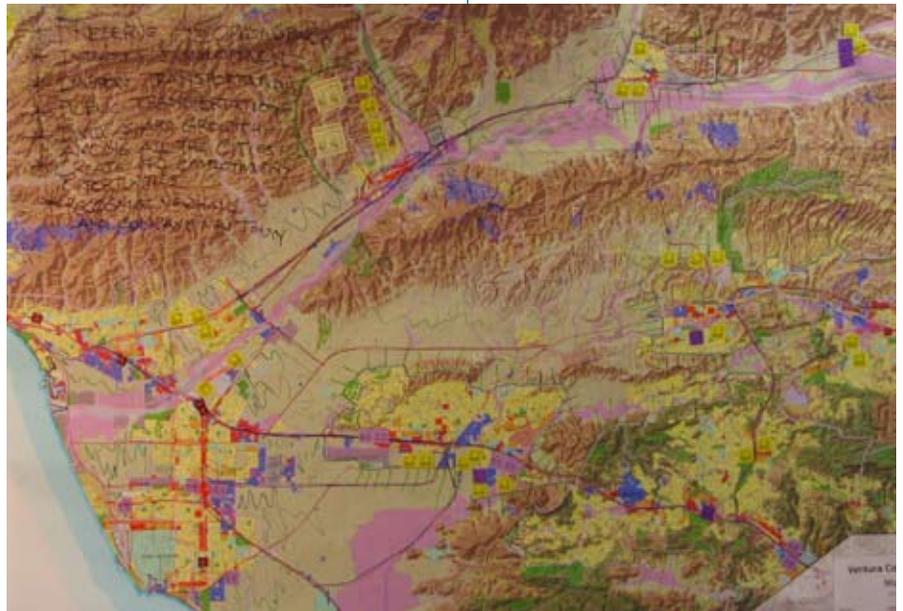
Each group chose from one of three pre-made chipsets, each representing a future growth scenario. Chipset three was a representation of recent trends in which two-thirds of all new housing developments consisted of single family homes. These conditions would require about 20,000 acres of land over the next few decades to make room for new residents, which exceeds the capacity of vacant land existing with current urban growth boundaries. On the other end of the spectrum, Chipset one presented a dramatically different development future. Less than one-third of new housing would be single family homes, and the majority of new construction would consist of mixed-use and higher density condos, apartments and townhouses. This higher-density pattern would allow cities to grow without using lands currently protected by the Save Open-space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) urban growth boundaries. In the middle, participants also had the option to choose Chipset two, which provided for half of new development in the form of single family homes and other half as higher density condos, townhouses, and apartments. This chipset would require some stretching or expanding of the current urban growth boundaries to accommodate the new growth. These three chipsets enabled participants to choose their preferred styles of development over the next three decades.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS

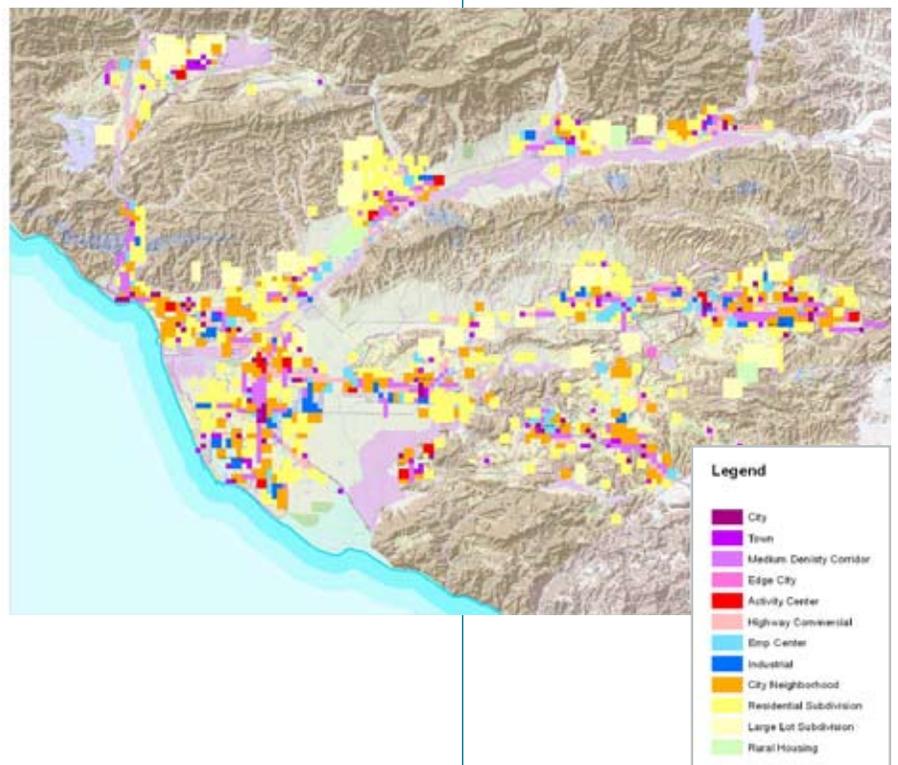
All of the workshop maps were converted into a digital database and studied by the consultant team in detail. Overall, the workshops confirmed that Ventura County residents are, as a whole, more knowledgeable about planning than the rest of the Southern California, and the nation for that matter. People were acutely aware of the many issues related to planning for growth, especially managing growth through urban growth boundaries. Preserving the voter-approved UGBs was a top priority.

The consultant team compared the mathematical average of all the maps with the original three chipsets. A strong emphasis was placed on existing city and town centers. All but one group chose the chipset with the highest densities and smallest amount of land needed to accommodate growth; many groups stated they did so specifically to prevent expansion of the boundaries. Most of the housing chips were placed within the existing UGBs on nearly every map.

While the maps represented a general preference for compact growth, there were a couple of noteworthy variations. Several tables depicted the larger cities such as Oxnard, Ventura and Thousand Oaks as home to the majority of growth. The other noteworthy pattern had future growth distributed equally among all of the area's cities. These maps depicted a pattern where smaller cities attracted more housing and jobs. Under these scenarios smaller cities would become more "complete" communities with services, jobs and housing located near one another, which could help reduce cross-county travel and ease traffic congestion.



The top image shows an example of a map created by workshop participants. The bottom image shows a digital composite map illustrating the sum total of where workshop participants placed chips or allocated growth. The legend shows the type of development allocated.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS



Online survey

WHAT WE HEARD

“Without affordable housing, our young people will not be able to establish family life for themselves in this county. All builders seem to want to create are what I call monoliths. People do not need huge homes.”

“I think the energy component is weak. We need to be fossil fuel free and establish alternative fuel sources in addition to promoting conservation and efficiency”

“Cities and the County need to reduce zoning, fees and conditions for child care facilities/services near centers of employment.”

“I believe that these studies should start out with the correct (not glossy) reality of long term availability of water to sustain the population, agricultural land, and industry of this county.”

“Promote health and education for all socioeconomic levels; a well-informed, healthy population will encourage ‘sustainability.’”

OPEN HOUSE EVENTS

As a follow-up to the workshops and to get feedback on the scenario results, the VCCA hosted two open houses in Ventura and Simi Valley in October, 2007. A presentation by the consultant team explained the workshop results and was followed by a question and answer session. Participants came and went as they pleased, viewed the scenario maps and talked with the project team. A survey was provided that asked residents to rate proposed options for five issue areas: Housing, Future Growth, Jobs, Environmental Quality, and Transportation. This survey was also posted on the internet. A total of 107 people completed the survey, and their valuable feedback is detailed throughout this report. Although the results of the survey are not necessarily statistically significant, event attendees and survey respondents represented a community of knowledgeable and engaged citizens interested in civic affairs. Their ideas and feedback helped identify and narrow down a list of regional concerns for future public discourse.

Scenario planning often results in a few options that are quite different from each other. However, workshop results and open house feedback indicated substantial public support for a unified approach to Ventura County’s problems. What emerged was not a desire for grand visions of sweeping change, but rather a focus on individual policy options that will address issues already in line with the VCCA’s Guiding Principles.

COMMUNITY

HOUSING MIX

Workshop participants in the June 2007 scenario workshop both had an interest in which roughly three-quarters of new housing development would occur in dense multi-family and mixed-use developments. For perspective, currently only 27% of new housing is developed in multi-family. For Ventura County, a large percentage of multi-family homes would have several floors or more stories.

- Housing would become available in more people own multi-family units are more affordable to rent and buy, in a SC Santa Barbara study, 67% of respondents said the lack of affordable housing for families is a “big problem.”
- Land use would be focused on the priority of jobs, which would better support our active lives, the jobs they provide, and the agricultural products they generate.
- Neighborhood character could change, especially in areas with extensive walk.
- Localized cooperation may increase. Full-fledged mass-transit systems were not available.

Land Use

With workshop participants overwhelmingly supporting multi-family and mixed-use development, they also showed some desire for large lot single-family subdivisions. Ventura County currently has 76,000 undeveloped acres of land within its urban boundaries in unincorporated future growth. While new multi-family developments and land projects could slow land consumption, large lot subdivisions on the order of 2+ acres per acre may dramatically increase the amount of land used for residential development. In addition:

- People living on the margins of cities drive more each day than those living closer to jobs and shopping.
- A more expensive urban area results in increased infrastructure costs including roads, water, and electricity.

LOT SIZE

What kind of housing choices should we prioritize?

How do we balance creating housing choices while preserving our landscape?

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Workshop participants in the June 2007 scenario workshop had a strong interest in environmental protection. They were particularly interested in the protection of agricultural lands, open space, and scenic views. They also expressed concern about the impacts of development on water resources and air quality.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION STRATEGIES:

- REGULATORY:** Review and update the County’s Environmental Quality Guidelines to reflect current and emerging environmental issues and standards.
- MARKET-BASED INCENTIVES:** Explore the use of market-based incentives to encourage environmentally sound development.
- ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION:** Explore the use of land acquisition and conservation programs to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- VOLUNTARY EFFORTS:** Encourage and support voluntary environmental protection efforts by landowners and developers.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS

Ventura County is expected to gain roughly 1 million people in the coming decades. This additional growth threatens the extensive areas of existing undeveloped open space currently preserved in rural and urban areas. The county’s growth patterns based on existing urban growth boundaries can cut its impact by 50%.

In November 1998, Ventura County voters approved Advisory Measure A which established an open space district. This initiative was intended to preserve open space and agricultural lands. This legislation requires voters to approve the formation of an Open Space District (OSD) with adequate funding. The next attempt to establish an OSD failed in 2001. Should a new OSD initiative be proposed?

At Open Space District voters approved a package of strategies including land purchase, land banking, and other strategies to preserve open space through a protection program.

The Ridgecrest Regional Open Space District was approved by San Francisco voters in 1972 after housing and commercial development began to threaten the natural beauty of the area and beyond natural resources. Today the regional parkland covers nearly 20,000 acres of land. In 2005, voters gave prominent support to public enjoyment, conservation, and wildlife habitat.

What environmental protection strategies are best for Ventura County?

Should the region permanently protect open space through a protection program? If so, how would you pay for it? What should it prioritize?

Informational boards provided open house participants with information and background on potential Compact themes.



PART 3

Topics of Regional Concern

From the workshops and open house four major topics have risen to the top: managing future growth, protecting the environment and agriculture, meeting housing needs, and improving regional transportation. The following section should be read as a starting point for a broader discussion between citizens, stakeholders, and decision makers throughout Ventura County about the possible components of a regional Compact.



MANAGING GROWTH



PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE



MEETING HOUSING NEEDS



IMPROVING REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

It is clear that Ventura County residents value their agricultural heritage not only for the beautiful scenery it provides but also for the jobs and money it brings to the county. In the future, Ventura County must plan for jobs in a way that accommodates new growth while preserving areas that are valuable as farmland. A future Ventura County Compact would address the values set forth in the Guiding Principles, namely promoting the sustainability of agricultural enterprises and encouraging a diversified and competitive economy.

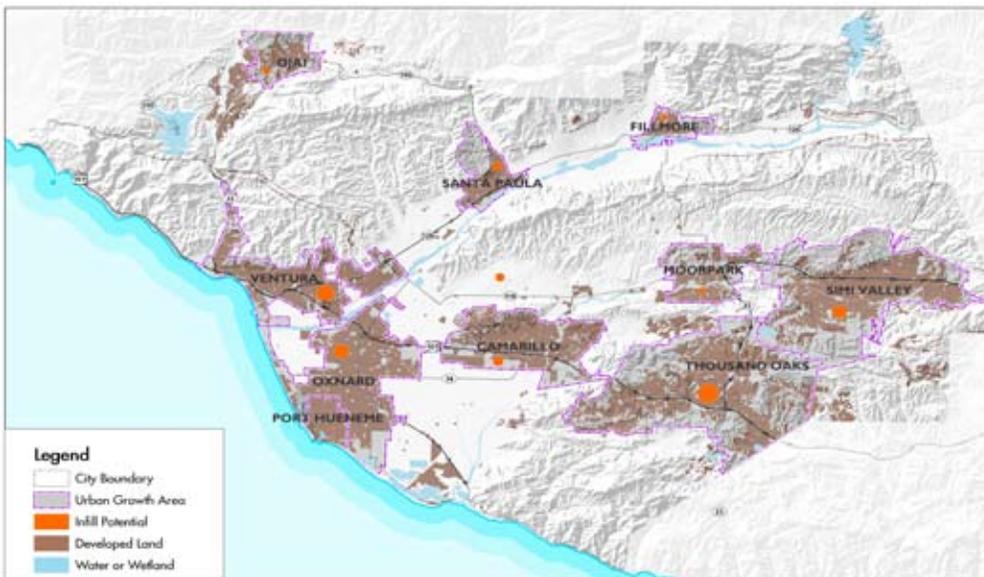
Managing Growth

Ventura County has a long history of managing growth starting with the adoption of the famous “Guidelines for Orderly Development” in 1969. This policy, renewed again in 1996, directs urban development into incorporated cities and clarifies the relationships between local agencies, the County, and the Local Agency Formation Commission in regards to urban development projects. Specifically, since the late 1990s, Ventura County has benefited from one of the more successful farm and open space planning policies in California. The “Save Our open space and Agricultural Resources” boundaries, enacted by voters in Ventura County and cities, require voter approval before development can occur on open space and agricultural lands. The cities within Ventura County have varied policies, and indeed different names for these boundaries that aim to control urban sprawl. For the purposes of this report they will be called urban growth boundaries (UGB) for consistency.

Many of the UGBs will sunset between 2020 and 2030, and currently more than 600,000 acres of open space and agricultural land are not covered by these protections. Between now and 2020, a coordinated effort between the County and cities is needed if the conservation goals embedded in these UGB measures remain. As a growth management tool, UGBs require coordination between jurisdictions. The Compact can serve as a basis for this coordination by establishing an agreed-upon vision for growth and conservation throughout the county.

POPULATION AND JOB GROWTH

Like the rest of Southern California, Ventura County has experienced significant population growth in the past several decades. While density has increased in the case of some cities, most development has occurred on the periphery of cities, replacing agricultural uses and fire-prone open hillsides with housing and jobs. Between 1984 and 2004, the amount of urban and built-up land grew by 31% in Ventura County. In the next few decades, the county is projected to grow by an additional 76,000 households and 128,000 jobs. This projection is based on the 2035 SCAG forecast developed with sub regional input in the fall of 2006. A significant amount of undeveloped land and infill development will be required to accommodate this forecasted growth.



SURVEY RESULTS

A questionnaire administered at the two open houses challenged respondents to state their preference on where they would want new homes and jobs to locate.

76% supported a focus on infill development, creating more residences and more jobs in areas which are already mostly developed, at higher densities.

64% supported converting some or all commercial land within the boundaries to housing.

24% wanted to preserve those lands for employment purposes and instead concentrate residential growth with infill projects or a partial expansion of the UGBs.

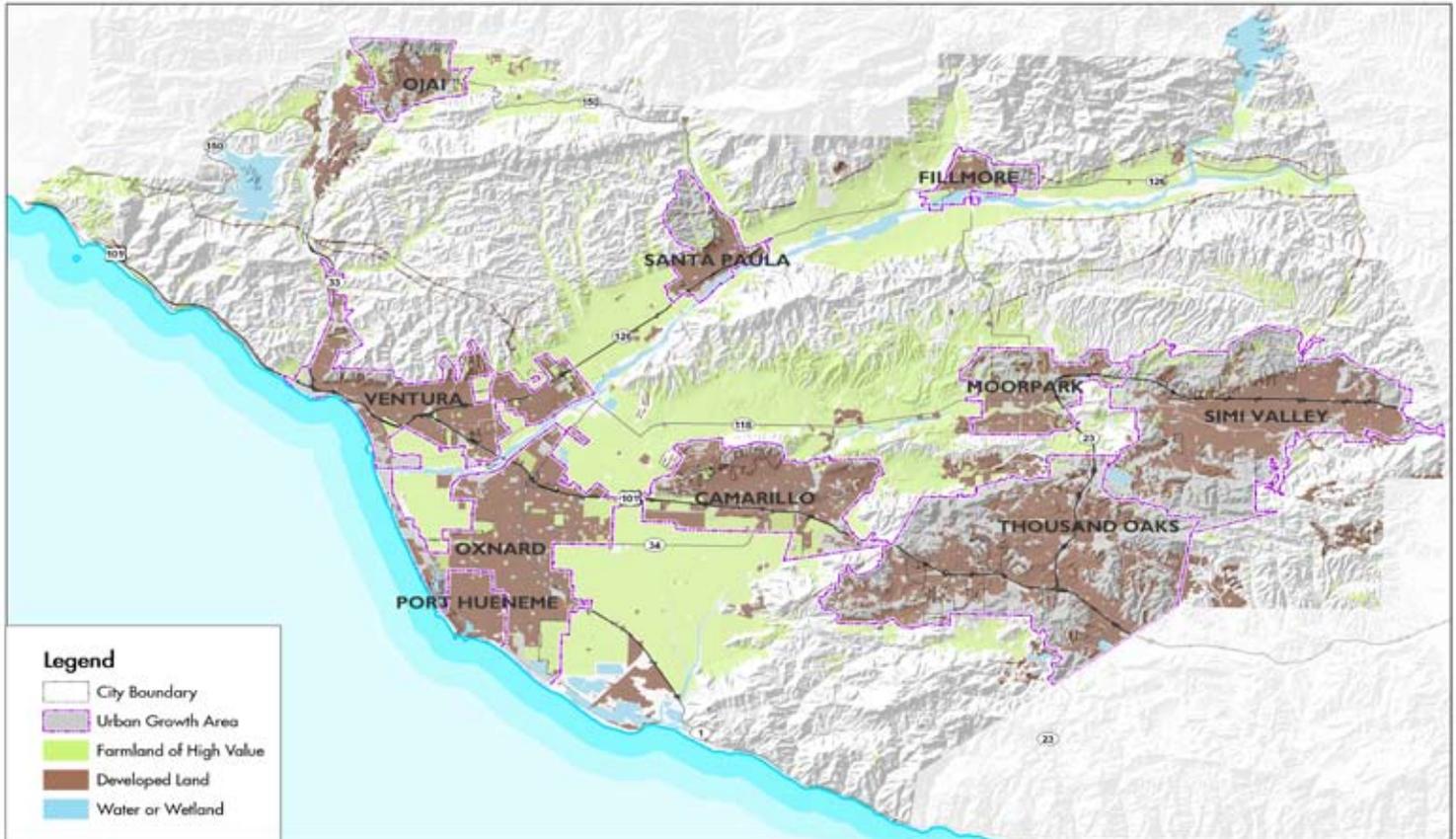
The map to the left shows infill potential in Ventura County. Infill development refers to new housing or commercial development in existing communities, making maximum use and benefit of existing infrastructure as opposed to building on previously undeveloped or vacant land. Infill development brings new investment and activity into an area, often acting as a catalyst for revitalization.

CASE STUDY

A 1996 economic study conducted by the County of Ventura Planning Division, still relevant today, found that low density urban expansion usually contributes to fiscal losses and city deficits. For example, Ventura County agriculture requires about \$0.65 in services for every \$1.00 it generates in revenues. Low density urban development requires about \$1.25 in services for every \$1.00 it generates in

revenues. Annual revenue statistics indicate that low density urban development produces a negative cash flow of \$5.2 million for the farmland adjacent to six Ventura County cities (Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Oxnard, Santa Paula and Ventura). A compact growth scenario would result in a positive cash flow of \$4.9 million—a difference of \$10.1 million annually.





The map above shows high value farmland (based on soil quality) throughout Ventura County both within and outside of existing urban growth boundaries. Countywide farmland has decreased by 4,000 acres or 4% over the past six years from 111,000 acres to 107,000 acres. Of that loss, 73% of farmland was converted within urban growth boundaries. With projected household and employment growth exceeding the amount of vacant land available within the current UGBs, what should the County and local governments do to accommodate new growth?

EXISTING UGBS AND LAND SUPPLY

Currently, Ventura County cities maintain a stock of job lands within their cities in order to accommodate anticipated future economic growth. According to the **Land Use and Development Patterns in Ventura County** study conducted by Solimar Research Group in 2007, 55% of developed land in Ventura County cities is devoted to residences while the remaining 45% is allocated to other uses, primarily job centers and open space. Of the remaining undeveloped land inside the urban growth boundaries:

- 20% is designated in General Plans for residential use (5,000 acres)
- 13% is designated for jobs (3,200 acres)
- 23% is designated farmland (5,600 acres)
- 44% is designated for open space (mostly very steep slopes) and other miscellaneous uses (more than 10,000 acres).

As shown in the map above, approximately 87,000 acres of undeveloped and unconstrained land remain in the county: however, only 15,000 acres of this is located within the urban growth boundaries. Of the undeveloped land inside the boundaries, only 20% is designated for residential use in current General Plans. Vacant and undeveloped lands within existing urban growth boundaries are not expansive enough to accommodate the expected household and employment growth over time.

POTENTIAL BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Input from workshop and open house participants have shown that it is important that growth within UGBs make efficient use of land, infrastructure and transportation investments. The following includes a short list of various tools for UGB management. These techniques can be used separately or in concert.

Management by Voter Approval

This approach would in essence be a continuation of current practices. Requiring each boundary expansion to be thoroughly examined by the voting public should result in the development community putting forth high quality projects for consideration. Places that have voter control of urban expansion often see a slower rate of land development than other similarly situated places. Development that does happen occurs as smaller projects designated for only one type of housing or employment. Depending on one's perspective this can be a positive or negative result.

General Plan Density Adjustments

The more permanent a UGB is the more important it will be to examine planning practices within developed areas. One technique has been to re-evaluate density patterns within existing cities, especially in downtowns or along significant transportation corridors. Planning for increases in density in the right places help to minimize the pressure on the boundary while simultaneously providing a means for community revitalization. This approach has been shown to decrease the distance that people drive. Infill development would likely result in the type of housing provided to future residents as the focus of development would shift away from single family homes to more townhouses, apartments and condominiums.

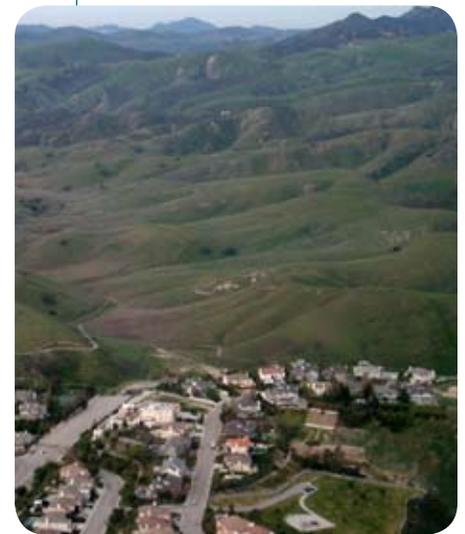
Concurrency Requirements

Some communities with UGBs use them to control the rate of urban expansion so that growth does not get ahead of local governments ability to build infrastructure (i.e. roads, schools, pipes). With a concurrency based system boundaries can be expanded whenever desired so long as plans and funding are in place to handle the needs of the people that will live and work in the expansion areas. Local or regional officials usually act as decision makers to ensure that projects are evaluated based on their ability to provide services rather than on other aspects of the project such as aesthetics or future land uses.

Land Capacity Monitoring

One potential boundary management strategy is to monitor growth trends and land capacity to ensure that there is enough land available for housing and job growth over time while also keeping infill and other urban development commonplace. A capacity threshold could be created, such as a certain percentage of growth or an allocation for a number of years of development. Ensuring a certain amount of vacant land at any given time can

Vacant and undeveloped lands within existing urban growth boundaries are not expansive enough to accommodate the expected household and employment growth over time.



Sale prices of agricultural land in Ventura County are often higher than they should be if viewed through the land’s ability to generate income from farming. This suggests that some are buying land outside of cities and the UGBs with the hope and intention of eventual development.



help to avoid causing a spike in land values that can reduce affordability or choke off development.

Using past growth rates and current land use designations it is relatively straightforward to calculate the amount of housing and job capacity within a given UGB area. Combining the capacity information with a forecast of future growth enables a city to estimate the number of years of capacity remaining within a UGB. A capacity based management program would include a periodic evaluation of capacity, ideally in coordination with neighboring jurisdictions.

Expanding UGBs

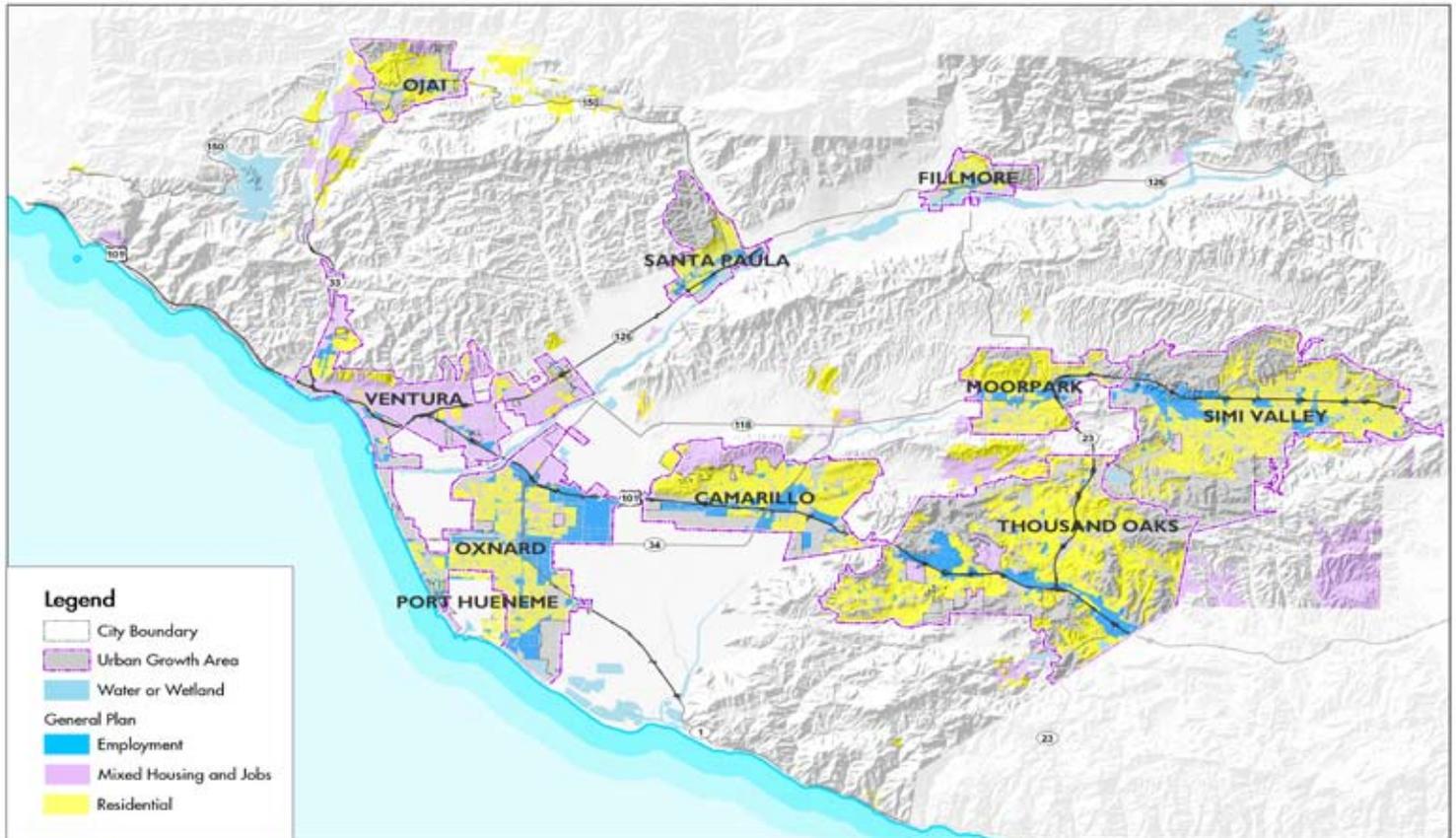
One of the key functions of a UGB is to establish a greater degree of certainty about the possible uses of land, and thus its value. Overly speculative real estate investment cannot be eliminated by a UGB, but it can serve to moderate the practice. Sale prices of agricultural land in Ventura County are often higher than they should be if viewed through the land’s ability to generate income from farming. This suggests that some are buying land outside of cities and the UGBs with the hope and intention of eventual development. One option is for government to identify, long in advance, the location of future UGB expansions. If, for example, all of the land that will be added to the UGBs during the next 30 years were mapped and readily available, speculation on the lands outside of the identified growth areas would likely cease. The added benefit is that the responsible agencies can do their infrastructure and land use planning far in advance of development. Having this time to do the planning will help to ensure that the land is used efficiently. Perhaps more importantly, small incremental UGB expansions often provide just one type of development, such as subdivisions or office parks. Successful communities need a full range of housing and job options. Identifying future expansion areas and planning them based on the communities needs can help build better, more successful places.

FUTURE COMPACT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Urban growth boundaries as a concept received much support from participants in Phase One workshops. Accordingly, they will likely play an important role in any Compact or collaborative effort. As stated above, there are many different ways to utilize UGBs. The Compact should provide a setting for a countywide conversation about them.

Urban growth boundaries help signal that growth is expected within existing cities, where amenities such as parks, schools, and utilities already exist. As a result, more public and private investment is focused into our cities and towns for infill development. This investment has helped improve and build on our downtowns and main streets. These urban places offer unique opportunities. For some residents, the townhouses and condos mean more options for buying a home. Other residents move to these areas to be closer to urban amenities.

Urban places are able to provide more options for people’s daily lives, be they housing, transportation or even access to cultural amenities and the arts. The cities and regions that will flourish are those that attract workers and their



families. The greatest success in providing jobs/housing balance will come in places that can offer quality urban places where housing and amenity options abound. Development in these areas often also allows residents to drive less and walk more, leading to cleaner air and healthier lives.

The map above shows land use designations for Ventura County broken down into employment land allocated specifically for jobs; mixed housing and jobs land that include both commercial and residential land uses; and lands dedicated primarily for residential use. Between 2000 and 2006, urbanized land in the county increased from 97,000 acres to 102,000 acres. Of that total developed land 87,000 acres or 85% is located within urban growth boundaries.





GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A key guiding principle of a Compact for Ventura County should include protecting and sustaining natural resources through an open space acquisition program. Over three-quarters of survey respondents agree Ventura County should develop an Open Space District to purchase and protect sensitive lands, including prime agricultural lands. Survey responses also indicate a preference for the protection of water quality and wildlife habitat and corridors. This can best be achieved through connecting and preserving upland habitats that are home to larger, migrating animals, and establishing programs to allow the rehabilitation and protection of watershed ecosystems such as wetlands and riparian corridors.

Protecting the Environment and Agriculture

Ventura County is rich in natural resources with residents enjoying a scenic backdrop of oak savannas, coastal sage scrub, distant Channel Islands National Park, sand dunes, beaches, and green upland habitats. Natural areas including the Los Padres National Forest, Santa Clara River watershed, and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, all support critical habitat for large mammals like the bobcat, mountain lion, and gray fox as well as provide riparian homes for endangered fish, songbirds, and amphibians. Ventura County's environment supports a diversity of species but also helps clean the air and water while also offering healthy outdoor recreational opportunities.

The region also has rich agricultural soils that enable farmers to grow strawberries, mandarin oranges, avocados, celery, and lemons, to name just a few crops. Ribbons of green farmland surround Ventura County's urban areas providing a break from urbanization. These agricultural lands extend outside of the region's urban growth boundaries. Agriculture, the predominant land use within has helped shape the culture, history, and economy of the Ventura County region. Farmers capitalize on the area's temperate climate, ample water supply, and access to local markets. But today's farmers face market pressures, high production costs, and the expectation that their lands provide both habitat and scenery.

As continued growth pressure in Southern California results in the conversion of farmland and open space into urban areas, and rural development further fragments wildlife habitat, Ventura County residents need to consider strategies to best protect their environmental and agricultural heritage.

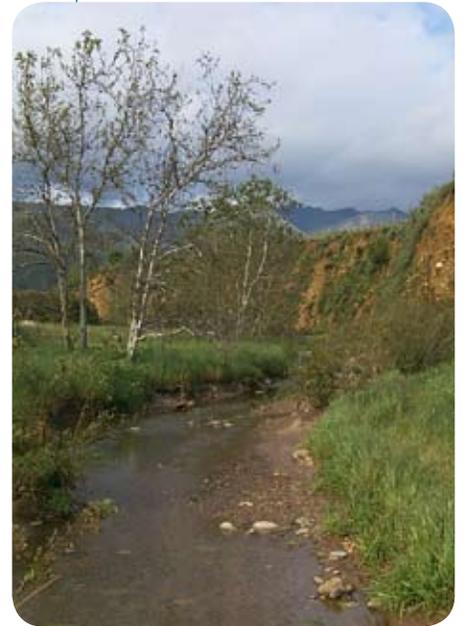
SANTA CLARA RIVER WATERSHED

Extending 87 miles from the edge of the Mojave Desert to the California coastline, and with a watershed of 1600 square miles, the Santa Clara River remains the longest free-flowing river in Southern California. From the San Gabriel Mountains to its outlet near Ventura, the river's riparian corridor provides vital habitat for birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Less than 5% of the original range of these riparian ecosystems remains in Southern California. This dynamic river is the only large, mostly natural, river left in the region.

Unfortunately, all of the rivers and tributaries within the county's major watersheds are identified as "impaired" based on state and federal clean water regulations. Contaminants such as selenium, coliform bacteria, nitrates, ammonia, PCBs, and DDT pollute the watersheds from both historical and current practices of irrigation, agriculture, and development. Impaired watersheds indicate a failure to meet state and federal health and safety standards for irrigation, recreation and wildlife habitat use. The pollution of surface waters such as rivers and creeks affects aquifers, aquatic organisms, wildlife, and recreational opportunities.

THREATS TO OPEN SPACE AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Urban and rural development in Ventura County is encroaching upon habitats and threatening the long-term survival of species that depend on them. As habitats fragment, species become isolated and must navigate developed areas to access food and habitat. Currently, roughly 12% of the county or 69,000 acres is protected as open space. Open space protections based on existing urban growth boundaries are set to sunset varying by each city between 2020 and 2030.



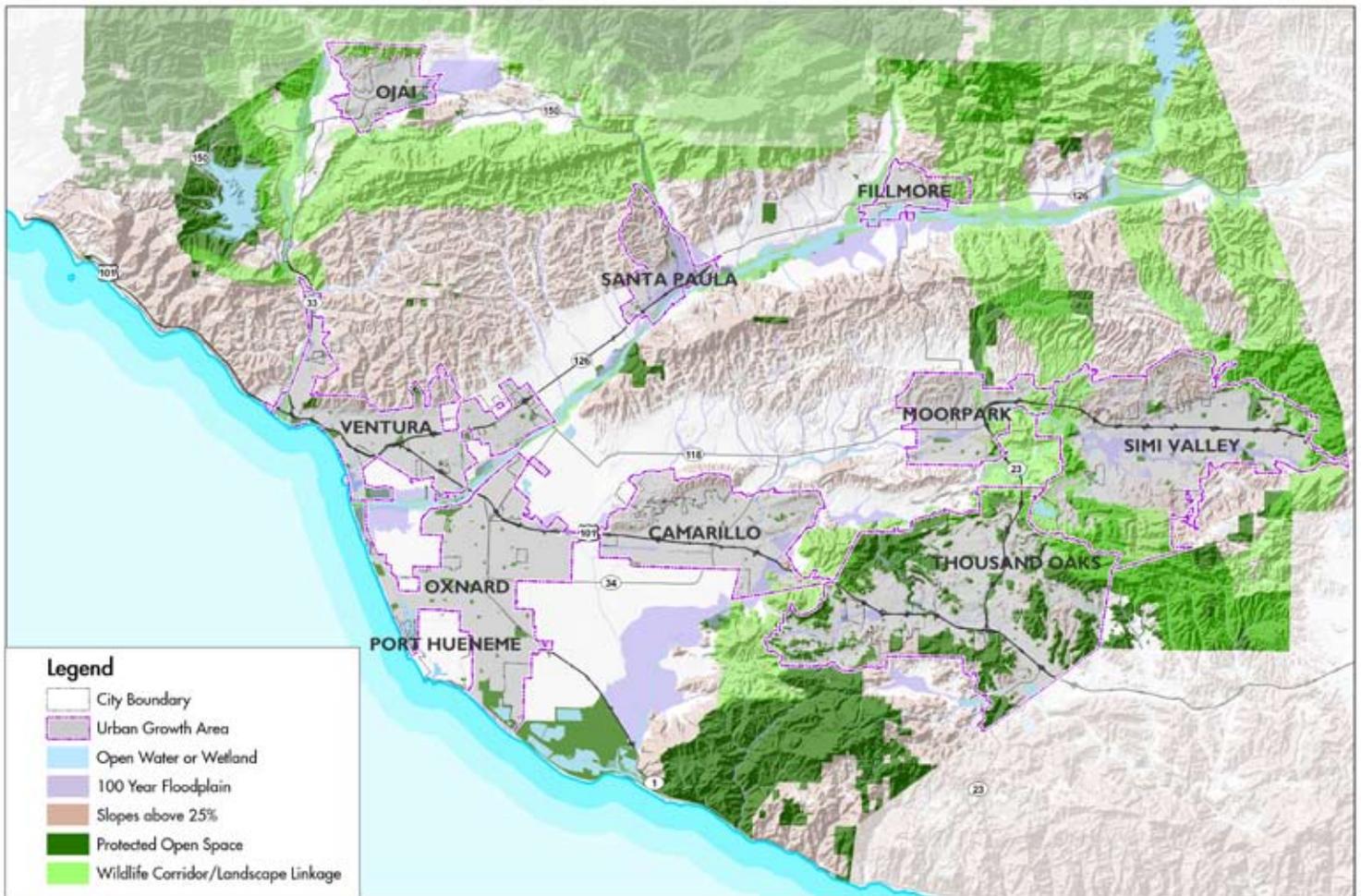
78% of survey respondents agreed Ventura County should develop an Open Space District to purchase and protect sensitive lands.

SURVEY RESULTS



When asked if the County should develop an Open Space District charged with the purchase and protection of sensitive lands 78% of respondents answered yes. When asked how an Open Space District program should be funded 60% agreed public funds, such as a bond measure, would be the best option. Only 12% favored market-based incentives, and another 28% indicated interest in additional land use regulations. Of all environmental protection issues proposed in the survey, water quality received the highest priority ranking, with wildlife corridors and wildlife habitat coming in a close second. Protection of farmland received third ranking and riparian areas fourth. Respondents placed the least amount of priority on improving recreational opportunities like parks and sports fields.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked if Ventura County should adopt additional protections for greenbelts, farmland, and/or open space. Almost one-third, or 29% preferred to place stricter limits on housing in rural areas and 36% preferred to make the urban growth boundaries permanent and strengthen existing protections. Another third of respondents, or 35%, believed that the laws currently in place provide sufficient protection. When asked what environmental protection strategies in general are best for Ventura County, respondents prioritized "land use regulations" above market-based incentives and well above voluntary efforts.



OPEN SPACE PROTECTION FACTS

Between 2000 and 2006, Ventura County increased open space protection by 20% adding 11,000 acres. Currently there are 18,000 acres of protected open space within urban growth boundaries. Several public and nonprofit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Coastal Conservancy, and the National Park Service actively work to acquire or purchase land for conservation. However, a large portion of open space including hillsides, riverfront property and wetlands remain privately owned and essentially unprotected.

Uncontrolled growth could convert currently unprotected and undeveloped natural areas inside and outside of urban growth boundaries into housing and commercial development.

Without the establishment of additional protections or permanent open space designation, prime agricultural areas could be paved over. Between 1984 and 2006, total agricultural land conversion to urban uses in the county was 21,204 acres, roughly the size of the City of Ventura. Of that, 965 acres of farmland located outside the UGBs were lost to urbanization between 2000 and 2006, a significant improvement from the 9,108 acres converted to urban uses from 1996-2000. The slowing rate of farmland conversion has been largely due to existing UGBs. With approximately half of the county land in urban uses and the other half in agriculture, growth over coming decades could convert more agricultural and undeveloped natural areas into urbanized land. The county could in time contain more developed land than farmland for the first time in its history.

In particular, “ranchette” development (one house on several acres) poses a threat to the integrity of Ventura County’s open space and the Santa Clara River watershed. It has spread rapidly and represents a large percentage of recent growth. While this form of development affords residents a quiet, rural life, it also

costs local taxpayers through road upgrades, sewer line extensions, and presents the possibility for groundwater contamination. New roads open up landscapes to additional development, which further erodes area ecosystems.

There are efforts underway to identify and prioritize landscape linkages. The South Coast Missing Linkages Project aims to establish a wildlife corridor between Los Padres National Forest and Santa Monica mountains. This project is dependent upon the acquisition and preservation of expensive land. A more comprehensive approach, the establishment of an Open Space District, has been proposed for Ventura County.

OPEN SPACE DISTRICT BALLOT MEASURE HISTORY

An Open Space District (OSD) permanently protects land using a combination of strategies including direct purchase of land, purchasing private development rights through conservation easements, and acquiring natural areas through partnerships. In November 1998, Ventura County voters approved Advisory Measure A recommending the formation of a countywide OSD. In 2002, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors established an OSD Advisory Committee, which authored the Recommendations for Forming, Funding, and Governing a Ventura County Regional OSD in 2003. The committee report recommended preserving irrigated farmland, undeveloped open space existing in a relatively natural state, and parkland with scenic, natural, or ecological values for both present and future generations. The committee report also recommended acquisitions involve only willing sellers through both fee purchase transactions and the purchase of conservation easements. Funding was recommended through a ten-year revenue measure such as a one-eighth cent sales tax or the formation of a benefit assessment district. However, a ballot measure to establish and fund this OSD via a one-quarter cent sales tax failed in 2004.

OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Although enabling legislation has been passed for Ventura County, an OSD has yet to be formed. However, if Ventura County established an Open Space District the OSD could function as a pass-through agency whereby it would not own or manage land but instead would select acquisitions, collect revenue, and distribute the funding to appropriate agencies and organizations. Lands selected for acquisition could include lands that otherwise would be likely to develop, and if developed, result in the loss of significant open space, ecological, scenic, or agricultural value. Regardless of its purview, an OSD awaits formation through the vote of Ventura County's citizenry.



CASE STUDY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District was approved by San Francisco voters in 1972 after housing and commercial development began to dominate the treasured valley's foothill and bay land natural resources. Today the regional greenbelt system protects 55,000 acres of land in 25 open space preserves ensuring public enjoyment, scenic vistas, and wildlife habitat.

Approved by voters in 1990, Sonoma County established an open space sales tax resulting in the protection of over 70,000 acres of wetlands and open space. Funding approved recently now provides additional funds for program maintenance as well as acquisition. This program has resulted in the preservation of prized viewsheds, the creation of new regional parks, and the establishment of farmland easements.



DID YOU KNOW?

Population growth throughout Ventura County continues to place pressure on agricultural lands by driving up property values causing many farmers to switch from low-value crops such as sugar beets to high-value specialty crops such as strawberries. The Economic Forecast Project of the University of California-Santa Barbara estimates that land with high quality soils capable of growing berries sells for \$50,000 an acre, compared to \$10,000 an acre in Monterey, another agricultural region facing urban growth pressures. According to the Farm Bureau of Ventura County, in 2005 the top five crops by value were strawberries (\$329 million), nursery stocks (\$214 million), lemons (\$179 million), celery (\$115 million), and tomatoes (\$75 million).

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Local jurisdictions could adopt a system for the transfer of development rights (TDR) whereby the right to develop the land could be transferred from one property to another. TDRs allow protection or essentially a conservation easement on one property by enabling an increased building capacity where development or infrastructure is more suitable. Planners designate conservation areas as “sending” and urban and targeted growth areas as “receiving” development rights. This system makes it possible to preserve environmental or agricultural lands through market functions, rather than government purchasing of land or conservation easements. An alternative system, whereby a government agency serves as an intermediary has been used in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay watershed. The government acts as a “bank” from which developers buy development rights, and the proceeds are then used to pay rural land owners. This more pro-active system allows the watershed management agency to more actively preserve lands than would occur under a property-by-property TDR system.

CLUSTERED ZONING

Another form of regulation that can serve to protect open space is clustered zoning, whereby the location of new housing is concentrated in specific areas in order to preserve surrounding natural features and high-quality agricultural soils. Often taking the form of a planned unit development, or PUD, clustered zoning allows new housing development within a rural setting but focuses it in a specified area to achieve more efficient allocation of public investments like roads and utilities. This also preserves existing environmental features such as streams, trees, or habitats that would otherwise be severed through the division of standard lot property lines.

CASE STUDY

EMERYVILLE STORM WATER MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Urban storm water runoff is a major contributor of pollutants in watersheds. The City of Emeryville, located just north of Oakland, has recently adopted a set of design guidelines that will help remove pollutants from storm water before it enters the city’s sewer system, and ultimately, the San Francisco Bay. The guidelines require new developments that create or

replace 10,000 square feet or more of impervious surface (e.g. rooftops, parking lots) to include vegetative storm water treatment measures like bioswales, rain gardens, or green roofs. These measures are integrated into the project at the design stage, which incorporates their cost into the project as a whole.





WATERSHED PROTECTIONS

In addition to regulations that protect open space, additional restrictions on development around wetlands, on constrained lands such as steep slopes, and in or adjacent to sensitive ecosystems such as riparian areas can improve regional water quality. These restrictions could take the form of buffer zones between farmland to absorb and filter pesticide and irrigation runoff, habitat restoration requirements, and storm water management requirements within urbanized areas.

CONSERVATION THROUGH DIRECT PURCHASE

Acquisition and conservation of open space could occur through the establishment and funding of an Open Space District (as mentioned previously), the purchase of conservation easements, and/or the direct purchase of private lands through the open market. The County or local governments could establish funding through parks or green spaces programs for conservation easements where a landowner sells their development rights and in turn receives tax credits or rebates.

Conservation easements are voluntary, legally binding agreements that keep land in private hands but produce environmental benefit by limiting the type of use or development of a property. A public agency or private organization such as a land trust purchases the rights and essentially retires them, enforcing the landowner's promise to not exercise those rights.

The County and other public agencies and nonprofit agencies could also engage in partnerships to acquire lands or purchase development rights such as the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA). The COSCA represents an example of a JPA of the City of Thousand Oaks and the Conejo Recreation and Park District to preserve, protect, and manage open space resources. Through this partnership both organizations exercise their "jurisdictional framework for the conservation of natural open space lands, assure coordination of local land use and resource management decisions and establish an entity to focus community resources toward achievement of adopted General Plan goals." However, conservation programs such as the acquisition of lands or the purchase of easements require consistent and adequate funding, advanced planning, and willing sellers.

Survey respondents ranked water quality protection their number one environmental priority. The protection of wildlife corridors and wildlife habitat registered a close second.



The pollution of surface waters such as rivers and creeks effects aquifers, aquatic organisms, wildlife, and recreational opportunities. How can Ventura County clean up its watersheds?



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Affordable housing was ranked one of the most important goals by open house survey respondents. The surveys registered strong support for compact, affordable housing near amenities and transit. These responses are aligned with the Compact's affordable housing goal to ensure the local housing market both provides a range of housing choices and preserves Ventura County's quality of life. The Guiding Principles include providing an array of housing choices using both the market and regulatory tools, with new growth focused in areas seeking it. Jobs-housing balance issues can be addressed by encouraging close collaboration between transit providers, housing builders, and employers.

Meeting Housing Needs

Like many places in California, Ventura County faces the significant challenge of providing the right mix of housing types at the right price for current and future residents. Focusing on the county as a whole is an important step, because like environmental conservation and transportation, housing markets do not exist in isolation. It is very difficult to solve a housing supply and affordability problem at the local level.

Over the next twenty years, changes in regional demographics and household composition will necessitate a wider variety of housing options. The traditional single family home on a medium to large-sized lot, which has represented the bulk of new housing in Ventura County (and California), may not meet these needs. For example, townhouses, cottage-style homes, condos and multifamily housing are well suited for older residents and households with fewer people. Compact development is also less land-hungry, and can help magnify the benefits of mixed-use development. Finally, the cost of housing is a crucial issue for many Ventura residents. The steep increase in existing home values has made homeownership impossible for some residents and extremely costly for many.

Regional collaboration is a crucial part of getting housing policy and construction to match current and future needs. The dispersed job market illustrates how housing needs, and in turn, policy, manifest themselves across jurisdictions. For example, in 2005, the county "exported" approximately 110,000 workers, mostly to Los Angeles County, or about 13% of its population.

Ventura County and its cities recently demonstrated their willingness to work together during the latest SCAG Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process. Their collective effort to establish and commit to their share of the region's five year housing allocation was a step in the right direction, and sets the stage for the housing component of a regional Compact.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

One of the most important demographic factors for housing policy is the age distribution of a population. Ventura County's median age increased from 34 years in 2000 to 35 years in 2006. Over the same period there was a dramatic reduction in the proportion and number of those 25-44. Between 2000 and 2006 this age group declined as a percentage of the population by 2% (those 35-44 marked the steepest decrease, of -2%).

While subtle, these changes may indicate that Ventura County's housing stock is unsuited or too costly for young couples or families, thus prompting them to move. Residents 45 years and over, particularly those 55-59, have increased in both share and number in the county. People in these age brackets are less likely to have young children, and over the next 20 years may wish to downsize from single family detached homes to smaller units that require less upkeep. Preparing for this transition will require careful planning and coordination countywide to ensure that the housing stock meets these needs

MARKET FORCES

New housing production rates in Ventura County have been moderate since the 1990s. Between 2000 and 2006 there was a 6% increase in housing units, somewhat lower than the statewide average of 8% for the same period. Demand for housing was and remains strong, as reflected in consistently low vacancy rates compared with the rest of the state (4% vs. 8% in 2006). Since 1990 the majority of housing production has been of single family homes (74% between 2000 and 2005). This trend closely resembles that of California and the SCAG region as a whole, where new construction since the mid-1980s has included relatively little multifamily housing.

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey respondents were generally supportive of housing policies that increase the diversity and density of housing types and support mixed-use communities.

61% of respondents said they would support new housing that is up to one-half multifamily or mixed-use.

72% support townhouse or cottage-style developments on small lots with minimal yards.

36% prefer that new housing growth concentrate in existing towns and city centers.

"Without affordable housing, our young people will not be able to establish family life for themselves in this county."

~ Survey respondent





“More affordable housing for people of all income levels and increased diverse public transportation and preserving open space are most important in my mind.”

~ Survey respondent

HOUSING CHOICE

Single family detached homes make up over 65% of the housing stock in Ventura County (compared with 58% statewide), meaning county residents have a smaller pool of attached and multifamily housing options to choose from than the average Californian. Providing a broad range of housing types, such as townhouses, cottage-style housing with small shared yards, and multifamily apartment and condominiums is becoming increasingly important. These housing types can deliver high-quality homes at lower land and construction cost per unit, which helps address Ventura County’s housing affordability challenges. There are many groups at various stages in life that can benefit from a more diverse housing stock. Those in one-to two- person households sometimes prefer to live in smaller units, and young families may not need or be able to afford single family homes on large lots. Finally, aging Baby Boomers may want to trade in their suburban homes for smaller units closer to transit and amenities, but still want to remain in Ventura County.

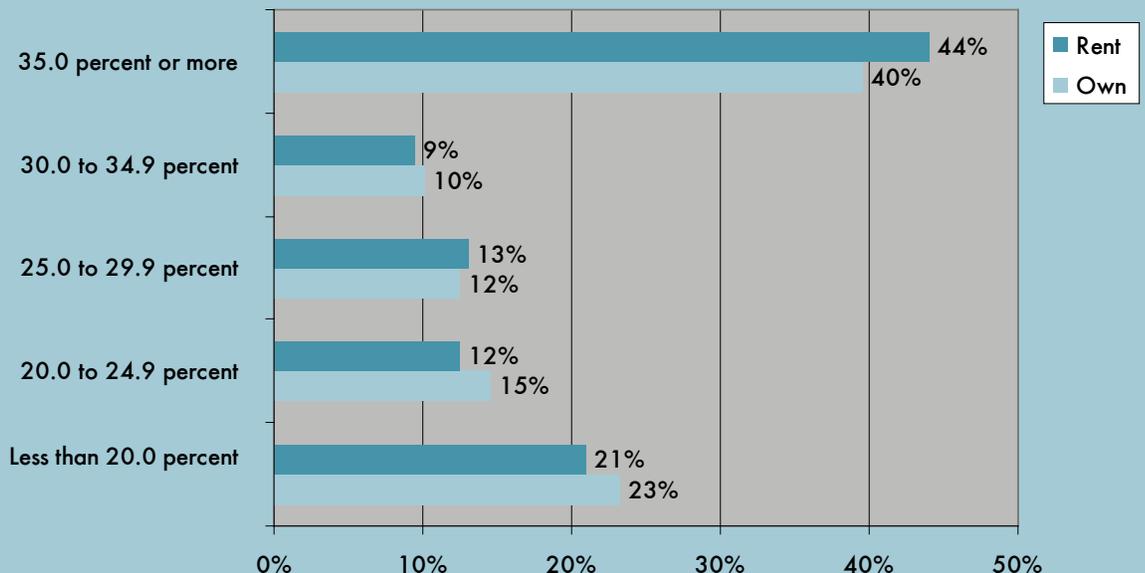
MIDDLE CLASS PINCH

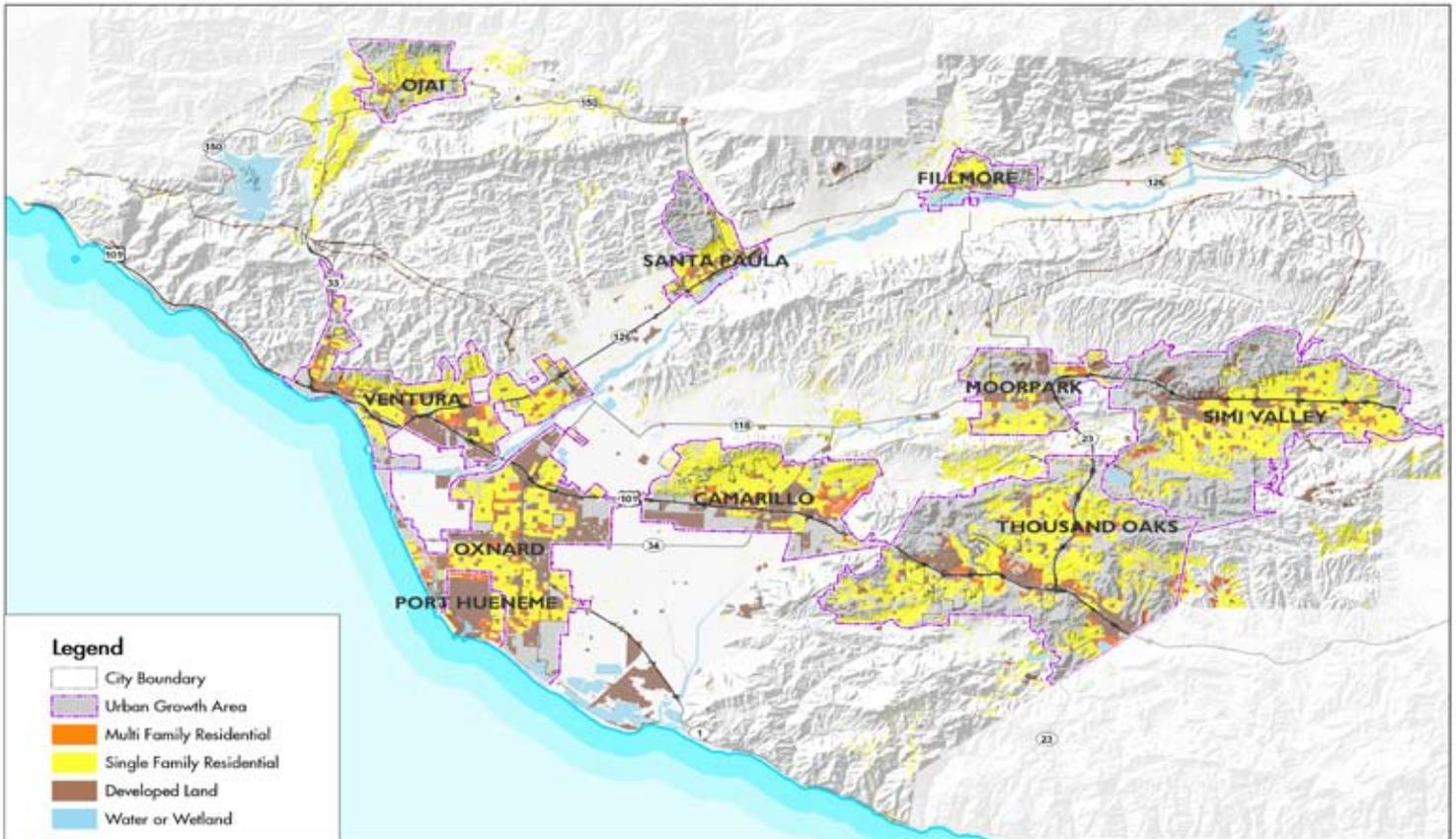
One important indicator of how well an area is managing to provide housing is the Affordability Index, expressed as a percentage of current residents who can afford the median priced home (the median is the midpoint of all home values, half of homes are priced below it, half of homes are priced above it). According to the VCCA’s 2007 State of the Region Report, in 2005 only 13% of county residents could afford to buy the median priced home (down from 47% on 2001). The estimated 2006

In December 2007, the Ventura County Star reported that Ventura County’s median home value fell to \$521,250, a significant decrease from the data reported in this chart and report. While the housing market may be cooling, housing in Ventura County remains among the highest in the state and the Affordability Index among the lowest.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

% of income spent on house payments in Ventura County





The map above shows the residential mix of housing in Ventura County. Single family detached homes dominate the housing market.

median home price was \$648,000. Renters in Ventura County also face high costs; the same report found that over 53% paid more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. Between 2000 and 2006 households earning less than \$75,000 a year declined in both number and percent share, while households earning more than \$75,000 increased.

The dramatic escalation in the housing prices and the disproportionately high amount of household income consumed by housing in Ventura County should be an issue of great concern. Homeownership is both a principle means of asset-building and an important source of community stability in the United States. The high barriers to homeownership in Ventura County, especially for people in their early working years that have modest incomes, may ultimately harm the region's vitality.

Preservation of existing neighborhood character was an important theme for infill development. Close to one-half or 46% of respondents agreed that building new housing in three- to five-story buildings was acceptable as long as they were not located near existing single family homes. Similarly, 65% stated that infill development was not suitable in existing residential areas, unless it took the form of townhouses.





Inclusionary housing zoning ordinances require a certain percentage of new units are reserved for moderate- and low-income buyers.

REGULATIONS

A variety of regulatory options are available to increase the supply and diversity of housing options in Ventura County. **Inclusionary housing zoning ordinances** require that a certain percentage of new units are reserved for moderate- and low-income buyers, and are used in many communities throughout California. Ventura County jurisdictions have taken a wide variety of approaches to inclusionary housing, from administering voluntary programs, to negotiating on a case-by-case basis, to adopting mandatory set aside ordinances with in-lieu fees. Some jurisdictions have established minimum unit thresholds, included density bonuses and offered financing incentives to help offset the cost to developers.

A second regulatory tool is a **jobs/housing linkage fee**, which finances housing production to meet the needs of employment growth. The program is based on the assumption that employers will benefit from workforce housing that is then developed in the community. Sonoma County and its cities each adopted such a program that imposes a fee for new commercial development.

A third regulatory option is to **adjust existing city and county zoning regulations** to allow mixed-use housing. Currently there is an over-supply of single-use employment uses zoned within the area’s urban growth boundaries.

Finally, townhouse and cottage-style housing scored well as desirable development types based on workshop, open house, and survey feedback. If carefully managed with appropriate Floor Area Ratio, height limits, and design review these medium-density housing types could also provide low-impact infill development in existing neighborhoods. **Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**, also known as granny flats, are another low-impact affordable housing option. The City of Santa Cruz has incrementally expanded its neighborhood housing supply by simplifying regulations and streamlining the ADU permitting process.

CASE STUDY



SONOMA COUNTY JOBS-HOUSING LINKAGE FEE

Sonoma County used the 2001 RHNA process to study workforce housing needs in the area. The Sonoma County Workforce Housing Linkage Study determined that 10% of the cost for new workforce housing should be contributed by employment growth. With the support of chambers of commerce, the cities and County developed a non-residential

development fee ordinance. Each employment type (e.g. retail, office, or industrial) is rated for the number of employees per square foot, and the fee is assessed accordingly. Following a comprehensive public outreach effort and adoption, they are now allocating the revenues to help alleviate the area’s severe housing shortage.



MARKET INCENTIVES

As mentioned above, **density bonuses** are often used to incentivize desired housing types in California. But the benefits of density are truly realized when combined with a diversity of land uses (particularly service and retail in residential areas) and access to transit. Ventura County’s jurisdictions may find it useful to study intra-county corridors where uniform density bonuses could help generate housing production and support transit.

Similarly, **expedited entitlement and permitting programs for affordable and workforce housing projects** can also spur housing production. The City of San Diego’s Expedite program is a fast-track system for qualified projects that has dramatically decreased the waiting period (and cost) for affordable housing developers. A per unit fee offsets the cost to the planning department to run the program.

FUTURE COMPACT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Like many communities in California, a number of housing challenges face Ventura County jurisdictions; but regional collaboration can help identify solutions. The first step may be to build on the area’s approach to the latest RHNA process. Ventura County jurisdictions might undertake more detailed housing needs assessment, followed by a planning process aimed at exceeding the RHNA goals. Secondly, the survey results registered strong support for more multifamily housing in Ventura County. This multi-jurisdictional process could identify ways to incentivize multifamily housing with additional financing programs, like a countywide jobs/housing linkage fee. Finally, the process could include finding ways to leverage countywide transit infrastructure with higher density housing.

Ventura County’s many assets, including its natural resources, beaches, and climate will be complemented by an enhanced urban environment. This “place-making” strategy, whereby housing and amenities are brought together, could have a beneficial impact on the jobs-housing balance as well.

Locating higher-density housing in proximity to services such as access to public transportation, shops, and employment opportunities allows residents to make many trips by bike, foot, and stroller.



An example of affordable housing located in Oxnard.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Ventura County Compact's transportation goal could be to build an effective multi-modal transportation system that efficiently moves people and goods. Cities and towns should be inviting places to walk and bicycle and their destinations should be accessible without the use of an automobile. Strategies should be pursued to create transportation infrastructure that consists of an attractive and convenient network connecting complementary land uses. Various travel modes, including air and sea, should remain viable for county residents and businesses.

Improving Regional Transportation

To say transportation is a hot topic in Southern California is almost a cliché. With some of the longest commutes and heaviest congestion in the nation, the region experiences high social and environmental costs. Ventura County drivers have experienced a dramatic increase in the amount of time spent on the road, some of it attributed to congestion. According to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report, the Ventura-Oxnard urban area experiences 39 hours of annual delay per traveler, up from 35 hours in 2004 and 21 hours in 1995. Of all daily travel on Ventura-Oxnard roads, 48% experience congested conditions. This congestion results in an estimated 8.35 million additional gallons of gasoline wasted on travel delays.

These statistics are just a summary of a problem Ventura County residents already know and experience on their daily drive to and from work. But new research is finding that it isn't just the drive from home to work that's clogging the streets, but many trips in between. Americans are now more likely to drive to a series of destinations between work and home. To borrow a phrase, this intermediate travel is "intertwined" with what we typically think of as a direct home-work-home commute. Clearly, land use policy and transportation investment can have a sizeable impact on the amount of time spent in traffic. For example, this process of "trip-chaining" does not necessarily have to be done by automobile. When complementary uses such as employment, child care, personal services, and gyms are combined, it can reduce the need to travel to each one by car. Transit investments that link such uses with grocery stores, other shopping and, ultimately, home expand transportation options and can help relieve congestion.

The long-term results of auto-oriented development are not easy to remedy and, like housing or open space protection, cannot be achieved by individual jurisdictions. Ventura County's diverse and disparate communities will require careful coordination of these policies and investments to maximize their impact.

ACCESSIBILITY VS. MOBILITY

Two subtle but important transportation concepts, mobility and accessibility, will be important factors for Ventura County's future. When we talk about mobility, it usually refers to one's ability to travel a certain distance at a certain speed; when a freeway is congested, mobility is reduced because it takes longer to get from point A to point B. In contrast, accessibility refers to the opportunity to reach one or more destinations, like work or shopping from a certain point, like home. Accessibility measures usually don't take just travel speed into account. They also consider the proximity of destinations (i.e. homes and employment) and the level of connectivity between them (i.e. streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, or transit lines). Improved accessibility does not always mean a reduction in congestion, though. For example, an investment that improves bicycle, pedestrian, and transit options may come at the cost of widening roads for automobiles. But expanding those transportation choices can have greater overall benefits if it encourages people to bike instead of drive. Furthermore, it may make mixed-use housing development more viable, thus enhancing the existing neighborhood's housing and service options.



SURVEY RESULTS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

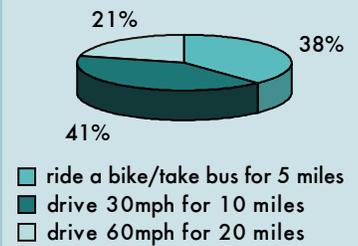
69% preferred a transportation system that brought people to the places they need to go by all modes and supports downtowns, even if it meant commuters continue to face congestion.

40% agreed that they would prefer to live closer to work and shopping, even if it meant having a smaller yard.

For every dollar of **transportation investments**, respondents, on average, would allocate accordingly:



Survey respondents were given a range of **commute options**. The following are their preferences:





Unlike many California counties, the area does not have a local sales tax to fund transportation programs or investments.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY OPTIONS

Improving accessibility across Ventura County will not be possible without **coordination and cooperation between its jurisdictions**. Traffic flows and infrastructure needs cross boundaries, while the ability and willingness to pay for them may not. Many California jurisdictions have sought to pool their resources to solve these problems. One example is Western Riverside County, which has recently created a Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee on new development and a collaborative system for administering it. Cities and the County have been grouped into five planning and administrative zones, and must collaboratively decide how to make investments. A similar system could eventually be used in Ventura County, whereby transportation challenges common to several cities receive investments that best meet everyone’s needs.



The Compact could also consider creating a **“Livable Streets” program**, similar to that in the Portland-Metro area in Oregon. The “Livable Streets” model established design guidelines so that transportation investments are seamlessly integrated with the land uses they serve. For example, neighborhood streets should include sidewalks and shade trees, retail districts should include street parking and crosswalk bulb-outs for safe pedestrian movement. By standardizing transportation design to mesh with land use designations, the benefits of mixed-uses and higher density can be maximized.

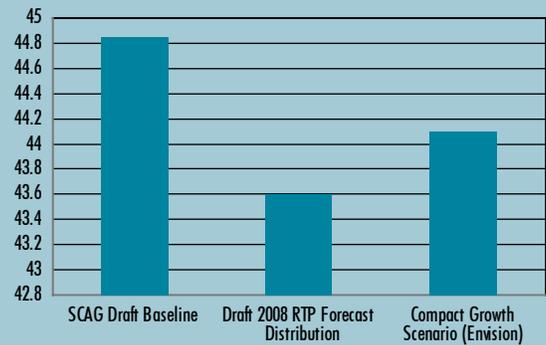


Finally, the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC), which oversees the allocation of funds for highway, Metrolink, ride-share, and other transportation programs, may be the appropriate venue for regional transportation collaboration. As a coordinating agency governed by elected representatives from Ventura County and cities, the VCTC will be an important part of implementing any transportation outcomes of the Compact. Unlike many California counties, the area does not have a local sales tax to fund transportation programs or investments. The Compact could include an effort to establish a **Transportation Options Fund**, financed with a voter-approved local sales or property tax that would prioritize transit, bicycle, and pedestrian investments countywide. This would present some challenges and opportunities. Such a tax would require voter approval, but would serve to leverage federal and state monies that often require a local match. Sales tax revenues are also more flexible than impact fees, which can only be used to mitigate specific impacts, as per state law.

RTP SCENARIO ANALYSIS

In the past several years, Ventura County cities and the Southern California Association of Governments have taken on the task of assessing how land use patterns affect transportation behavior in the county. In their work, they found that the difference between the two more compact scenarios is basically accessibility versus mobility. In the RTP Forecast Scenario, the average Ventura County resident would drive longer distances but they would spend less time in congestion. In the Compact Growth Scenario, the average citizen would drive fewer miles but at slower speeds and possibly experience increased congestion.

Time Spent Driving Per Day (in minutes)



SCAG REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP) DRAFT BASELINE SCENARIO	THE 2008 RTP DRAFT POLICY GROWTH FORECAST SCENARIO	THE ENVISION SCENARIO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on current trends New housing is mostly single family Some infill development Continued improvement of roads and highways Urban boundaries would expand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to June 2007 public workshop results Less than half of new housing is single family Growth mainly in existing and planned centers and transit areas More mixed-use development would encourage shorter trips and alternative modes of transportation Urban boundaries would only expand slightly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizes utilization of the existing and planned transportation system Less than one-quarter of new housing would be single family Most new housing is multifamily Considerable infill development Emphasizes accessibility via transit, bicycle, and foot. Minimal expansion of urban boundaries

FUTURE COMPACT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The transportation challenges facing Ventura's current and future residents are manifold, but not insurmountable. Policymakers should keep in mind that transportation demand is a derived good, meaning it is something we use in order to get somewhere we want to be. Land use planning is the process of combining complementary uses, while transportation planning finds ways to make them accessible to one another. From this perspective, Ventura County has many desirable places to be, but does not necessarily have the most accessible transportation system.

While crafting the Ventura County Compact, stakeholders may find it useful to establish measures of accessibility countywide and then seek to improve upon them. Such measures could include walkability indices (usually related to miles of sidewalk or grid connectivity), jobs-housing balance, and the number of households within a quarter-mile radius of a transit stop, to name just a few. The process of identifying appropriate indicators can also help define solutions both at the local and regional level.





Conclusion

The overall goal of this process and continuing in Phase Two is to help residents reach a collaborative agreement on how to accommodate change while preserving those attributes that make Ventura County a great place to work, recreate, and live.



PHASE ONE: REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Phase One of this project focused on developing a broad understanding of the Ventura County region's challenges in accommodating future growth and development. This report detailed the formation of long-term guiding principles by stakeholders through a public outreach and visioning process. Four key issues were identified: managing growth, protecting the environment and agriculture, meeting housing needs, and improving regional transportation. This report then described the local context of these four issues and suggested some basic policy options for further discussion.

In Phase Two of the Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County, stakeholders and the public will engage in a more in-depth discussion of these four topics. The policy options laid out in this document are intended to serve as a starting point, and it may become clear over time that some remain applicable while others are not. A crucial next step is to develop a more exhaustive and comprehensive list of policy options for consideration throughout the Ventura County region. The various opportunities and constraints of possible policy directions deserve in-depth exploration, analysis, and regional conversation. The overall goal of this process and continuing in Phase One is to help residents reach a collaborative agreement on how to accommodate change while preserving those attributes that make Ventura County a great place to work, recreate, and live.

We hope this report on Phase One of the Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County will help citizens and decision makers find ways to collaborate in the future to solve the Ventura County region's myriad planning, growth and transportation challenges.



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new directions for growth