



SACOG Board of Directors

February 9, 2006

SACOG Contribution to Valley Vision Regional Open Space Discussion

Issue: Valley Vision is undertaking an outreach project to discuss and formulate a vision for open space planning on a regional scale. A contribution of \$5,000 is being sought to assist in this project.

Recommendation: During the meeting, there was no quorum; only the Chair and Vice Chair were present. Immediately after adjournment, Director Flory arrived and indicated to the Executive Director that he was in favor of all agenda items. As such, a quorum of the Administration Committee recommends that SACOG Board of Directors authorize a \$5,000 contribution to Valley Vision's Regional Open Space Discussion from the NEPA Streamlining project included in the Regional Blueprint Planning Program.

Committee Action/Discussion: Valley Vision, a non-profit organization that coordinates civic engagement on regional growth issues, has assigned Kristine Mazzei (biography attached) as project manager to undertake a survey of stakeholders across the region on how to identify, prioritize, and maintain open space resources in the SACOG region (a summary of the project objectives is attached). The project intends to establish a regional vision for open space, which will help form a basis for technical work to build such a plan. The timing of this project could not be better; SACOG is initiating an effort to streamline NEPA review of transportation projects, a major component of which is the identification of open space resources in the region and potential strategies to maintain those resources. Valley Vision's project is, in essence, the first part of the work SACOG needs to conduct for its NEPA streamlining effort.

Valley Vision's project is within the objectives of the NEPA Streamlining project identified in the Regional Blueprint Planning Program (Caltrans Partnership Regional Blueprint Planning Grant) which was added to the Overall Work Program Amendment #4 and approved by the Board in January.

Other contributing partners include: Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails, The Nature Conservancy, Sacramento Valley Conservancy, Sacramento Metro Chamber, and the Building Industry Association.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

MM:DS:gg
Attachment

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A REGIONAL APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE

Valley Vision Scoping Proposal (Rev. 4)

The Blueprint Project has redefined how the region considers its urban footprint as it grows, with much attention given to types of housing, density of development, and amount of zoning for various uses such as commercial and industrial. The vision laid out by Blueprint is theoretical; land use authority remains with each local jurisdiction, but the project demonstrates how the region can get dramatically better regional scale results in issues, such as transportation and air quality, by changing land use patterns in ways consistent with Blueprint principles. The theoretical nature of Blueprint has created an opportunity for more detailed discussions both within jurisdictions and at the regional scale. Both are happening – many general plans and specific development projects are underway within jurisdictions, and both transportation and the economy are being discussed at a regional scale, all using the Blueprint vision as a framework for action.

The urban footprint defined in the Blueprint map of the preferred scenario opened the door for an obvious next step – how, specifically, should the region define, prioritize, and support the maintenance of the “green” sections of the map? The following more detailed issues are imbedded in this discussion:

- How do we establish a boundary for urban development that helps contain growth and provides more predictability for future development patterns?
- How do we both create and maintain large regional parks and open spaces within and beyond the urban areas?
- How do we protect habitats that are unique regional assets?
- How should lands dedicated to flood management be factored into open space considerations?
- How do we sustain agriculture in our region as a way of meeting the above objectives?
- How do we coordinate ongoing mitigation programs for maximum benefit?

A region-wide discussion to bring about a coordinated vision for open space that includes gaining insight into public attitudes, political will for regional cooperation, sources for sustained funding, etc. In an ideal world, unlimited resources would be deployed to tackle all of the issues identified here; however, this is not the case, and much work in determining the regional “appetite” for each focus area needs to be a first step.

Valley Vision is prepared to undertake a scoping process that would lead to a clear frame for a subsequent regional scale project. The deliverables in this scoping phase would be:

- Assessments of political will, private sector interest, and community support
- A defined scope for the project – noting which of the major topics would be included
- Sources of funding for the project phase
- A clear process for the project]
- A defined list of stakeholders and roles for each in the process
- A detailed report on all existing efforts within the region

The scoping phase would begin in December 2005 and be complete by the end of April 2006.

Biography for Kristine Mazzei, Valley Vision Project Manager

Kristine Mazzei has led multiple projects that aim to preserve agriculture and open space in Northern California. She facilitated a strategic planning process involving farmers, ranchers, business representatives and the environmental community to develop the Tri-Valley Agriculture and Open Space Plan as part of the Vision 2010 project in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. She also worked with a team of stakeholders to explore financing alternatives and sponsor public-opinion polling to determine the best time and approach to implement the plan. In 2002-03, Ms. Mazzei was a member of a four-person consulting team hired by the Packard Foundation to evaluate the Conserving California Landscapes Initiative, a \$250 million investment in open space planning, restoration, and protection. Ms. Mazzei also served as a contract researcher and analyst for the Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation as it launched its Nature Fund. She researched the use of public funds for other land and water conservation programs in community foundations; studied relationship-building and fiscal partnership opportunities with local, state, and federal agencies; and explored a suggested public funding strategy for the foundation's own initiative. More recently, Ms. Mazzei served as the Project Manager for Valley Vision's Valuing Agriculture Initiative in 2004, which involved meeting with representatives of the agricultural community to identify new strategies for protecting farmland and supporting agricultural viability in the greater Sacramento region.