

San Joaquin Valley Regional Dinner Forums

Co-hosted by Caltrans, Tulare County Association of Governments, the Great Valley Center, and the Local Government Commission

The Depot Restaurant: 207 E. Oak Ave, Visalia, CA 93291

Thursday September 18th

- 6:00 p.m. **Networking**
- 6:30 p.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
- Mayor Jesus Gamboa, City of Visalia
- 6:45 p.m. **Economist Perspective**
- Janet Smith-Heimer, BAE
- 7:15 p.m. **Question and Answer**
- 7:45 p.m. **Developer Perspective**
- Harvey May, Paloma Development
- 7:50 p.m. **State Perspective**
- John Barna, Executive Director, California Transportation Commission
- 7:55 p.m. **Discussion**
- 8:55 p.m. **Closing Remarks**

Visalia: SJV Dinner Workshop with Local Elected Officials Notes; Regional Blueprint; September 18th, 2008

Participants

Approximately 25 local elected officials (names to be filled-in by LGC...)

Jesus Gamboa, Mayor of Visalia (host)

Janet Smith-Heimer, President BAE (economic perspective)

Harvey May, Founder, Paloma Development (developer perspective)

John Barna, Executive Director, CA Transportation Commission (state perspective)

Gregg Albright, Deputy Director, Caltrans (state perspective)

Themes

- Density
 - How do we grow while maintaining our quality of life?
 - Exploration of the possibility of higher-density living, due to
 - Aging demographics
 - Gas prices
 - Public interest
 - “Transportation is a quality of life issue.”
 - Developers won’t provide density on their own until people guarantee a market for it
 - Developers know people dislike density; there is a high risk associated with doing something unpopular
 - If density will happen, it will be in attractive, downtown, expensive areas
- We are concerned about the three E’s of sustainability
 - Economic vitality
 - Need for economic development and an educated workforce
 - Environmental quality
 - Equal opportunity
 - Affordable and workforce housing
 - What’s important to...
 - Residents?
 - Businesses?
 - Local governments?
- There is a significant amount of distrust of the state
 - An acknowledged fear that the state will pull transportation funding
 - “Blueprint project feels like there are evil state people holding a gun to my head unless we approve a 25% increase in density...”

Lessons Learned

- A panel of the right speakers sparks an honest discussion; i.e. Bay Area economist versus local developer
- John Barna was very effective in relaying the state’s perspective and urging consideration of blueprint goals and interregional cooperation.

Participant	Discussion
Mayor Jesus Gamboa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proteus, 40 years, regionalism, Davis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional perspective has been part of the Visalia world view for many years.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming communities required to share resources to survive. The workforce in the region crosses city and county boundaries and has taught local elected officials to coordinate.
Janet Smith-Heimer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAE, Bay Area Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ohio regional economic development specialist ○ BAE, Berkeley, 1986 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development • Redevelopment • Retail/mixed use/infill • Affordable and <i>workforce</i> housing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturers inclined to stay in California, but need an educated workforce close to their facilities and they need rail transportation to ship goods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tesla Motors (hiring 1000 auto builders in Silicon Valley) ○ Redwood City Bay Dredging Project (to bring ships closer to facilities and avoid transportation costs)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing choices and the possibility of living in a higher density community is being explored nationally – driven by aging demographics, gas prices, and public interest in living in a way.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development = jobs and tax revenue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Planning = land use, transportation, housing, and environmental and resource management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of life for: residents, businesses, local government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What’s important to these groups? ○ How do we grow while maintaining/improving our quality of life? ○ How can we plan for growth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have a strategy ▪ Regional level
Ricardo Nojuera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable agriculture • Agricultural sector has adapted, growing more specialized crops in the Valley – competing internationally on specialty products like almonds and dates, not on commodity products like grain and corn.
Harvey May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palomar Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developer in Visalia for 25 years ○ People buy around park last – no social fabric
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The only thing people don’t like more than sprawl is density.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tulare minimum zone size for lots in 7000 square feet. • People want single family homes and for the price (average home price as of June, 2008 was \$220,000).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If density is going to happen, it will happen in the attractive downtown area of Visalia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ But, planning commissions spend more time on apartment projects and specific requirements of child safety, parking, and developer fees. ○ All projects are “pay as you go” (Proposition 13) in California and there is no public funding to pay for infrastructure in existing downtown areas. • The cost of development in downtown areas is much higher than one mile away in Greenfields. There is a premium cost for building downtown.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Roads in new developments are built for fire trucks and garbage trucks, not for bikes and pedestrians.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Developers are lemmings. We don’t like risk.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government is not looking at manufacturing sector and the infrastructure improvements required for bringing new jobs; rather, retail that generates sales tax.
John Barna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation is a quality of life issue, not an infrastructure issue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobility is about people, not asphalt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bakersfield just passed a 1% utility fee to pay for roads! Locals need resources to keep up with demand. ○ Business wants logistics, goods movement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge growth in goods movement in recent years – tension in port locations. Inter-modal facilities in Shafter and other SJV locations are going to be key in upcoming years. ○ Jerry Brown, AG, will sue you, Stockton cut a deal with AG, making a commitment to transit that they can’t afford ○ Valley must work together to deal with it, SJV Partnership and Blueprint Planning are the strongest defenses short-term and the greatest allies in the long term.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility is a utility – as space decreases, it will be perceived and valued as a utility more and more.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB 375 is conformity all over again. The Valley coalition needs to stay strong.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blueprint density – fear that state will pull transportation funding ○ SJV Collaborate needs to stay together; work together at corridor level ○ TCAG demand management creates incentives for Harvey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTC, Kirk Lindsey is an ally for Valley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agricultural goods movement in Valley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bonner, GMAP #1 focus on ports and trade ▪ GMAP #2 cd. focus on agriculture, but Valley

	needs to get AG Kawamura on budget to advocate for it for truck and rail both
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer impact fees on transportation can be a problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Find other ways to finance ○ Transportation revenues need to be realigned with uses ○ Some counties are using developers for everything <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ i.e. Bakersfield's utility tax ○ Proposition 1C TOX very biased toward L.A. and the Bay Area; predicated on existing transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John, talk to Lynn Jacobs, second round for SJV
Local Elected Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney General will sue local governments unless they are able to cut a deal and reduce GHG emissions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Blueprint project feels like there are evil state people holding a gun to my head unless we approve a 25% increase in density or twice as many people per 2 acre lot."
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move Highway 63 out of downtown Visalia.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve a short-line rail line.
Gregg Albright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CT, developer, partnerships, not your father's Caltrans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Right now show 3 E's outcomes and we'll fund it; it's cheaper to build what we don't want to build
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caltrans is still operating in the old way – must change. Need to scale transportation projects to human scale.