



## The SACOG Blueprint Process

Presentation to the Elk Grove City Council  
March 17, 2004

## The Purpose of SACOG

- "SACOG's primary charge is to provide regional transportation planning and funding, as well as a forum for the study and resolution of regional issues"  
--SACOG web site

## Purpose of SACOG

- "In this role, SACOG prepares the region's long-range transportation plan; approves distribution of affordable housing around the region; keeps a regionwide database for its own and local agency use; helps counties and cities use federal transportation funds in a timely way; assist in planning for transit, bicycle networks, clean air and airport land uses; and is undertaking a new program to link transportation and land development more closely."  
--SACOG web site

## What's Right About the Blueprint Process

- Regional examination of growth is needed
- The Blueprint process has generated a great deal of information

## Reasons for Concern

- Growth projections have been unchallenged
- "Smart" Growth/"Dumb" Growth
- Lack of involvement by decision-makers
- Implementation
- Questions about the process and potentially improper use of SACOG's authority

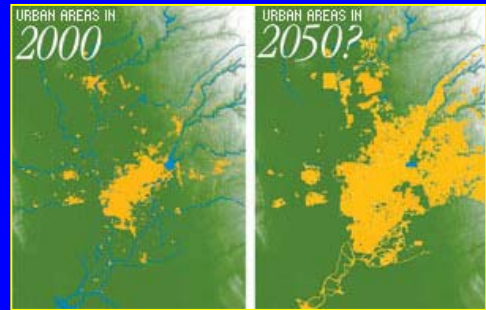
## Growth Projection

- Economist Steven Levy has projected substantial new growth in the region:
  - 1.7-million new residents by 2050
  - 1-million new jobs
- This assumption has not been challenged, and no planning has been done to result in less growth
- No investigation of "carrying capacity" has been done to date

## If You're Not "Smart," You're Dumb

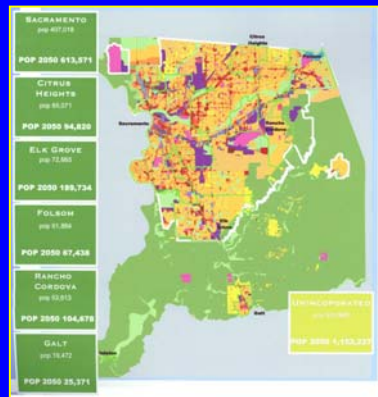
- The planning process has focused on so-called "smart" growth, and has attracted participants interested in smart growth.
- Development philosophy: Denser is better, and densest is best
- The "base case" (continuing development patterns) is essentially a "straw man," unrealistically severe in its impacts

## "Base Case"



## Density

- Four growth scenarios are moving forward—one will become the "Blueprint"



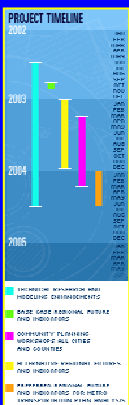
## Density

- Most of the scenarios—and all of the "smart" scenarios—feature very high proportions of high density residential development



## Bottom-Up Process

- Process has focused on community workshops
- Other than presentations, no check-in with City Councils—Cities will not see the Blueprint until this Summer, after an April regional workshop has selected a land use plan
- No formal approval by Cities is built into SACOG's schedule



## Implementation and Impacts

Thus far, implementation of the scenarios has been almost entirely ignored. Planning has focused on meeting growth projections, and on potential positive impacts of "smart" growth patterns. Important implementation issues have not been examined, including:

## Implementation

### Infrastructure/Carrying Capacity

- Can infrastructure be expanded to accommodate new growth, especially in "densified" areas?  
Example: 1,000,000 new Sacto County residents = 5,000 acres of new parkland (1/6 of the entire city of Elk Grove)  
Example: Is enough water available to server all the new residents and jobs?

## Implementation

- What are the traffic impacts and costs? Can the region afford the new roadway/freeway/light rail construction and operation required to support the Blueprint's new residents?
- Can Sacramento County afford to accommodate substantial new urban development?

## Implementation

### Regional Cooperation

- Implementing the Blueprint will require an unprecedented amount of regional cooperation among dozens of agencies
- The Blueprint will say that certain types of both desirable and undesirable development belong in certain areas—cities and counties will be asked to make their land use decisions match the Blueprint

## Implementation

### Costs

- The Blueprint process has included "Return on Investment" estimates, but these do not include off-site costs, land assembly, business buy-outs, etc.
- Capital costs to local government have not been examined yet—for example, construction of new roadways and parks, operation of transit, etc.
- Fiscal impacts on local government have not been examined—who wins and who loses through the allocation of jobs and housing?

## Implementation

### Environmental Review

- SACOG will not perform any formal environmental review of the Blueprint, since it is not a "project" as defined by state law
- Limited traffic review of the Blueprint conducted by SACOG staff has shown substantial traffic impacts even for the "smart" alternatives, even with a number of questionable assumptions about reductions in vehicle trips.

## How Will the Blueprint Be Used?

- "The next update of the region's transportation plan, that creates the menu of projects though the year 2028, will be based on the new alternative land use pattern suggested by the Blueprint public process."  
--Blueprint web site

## How Will the Blueprint Be Used?

- In November 2003, the SACOG Board adopted a policy statement emphasizing that the Blueprint will not be used to develop the updated of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan or as the basis for allocating transportation funding

## How Will the Blueprint Be Used?

- In February 2004, speaking to a meeting of planning directors, SACOG's Blueprint project manager was asked if compliance with the Blueprint would be used by the SACOG Board when decisions about allocating transportation funds were made.
- He responded, "They would be crazy not to."

## How Will the Blueprint Be Used?

- "The 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan recently created a new fund called the Community Design Program. This \$500 million set aside is specifically designed to subsidize projects that emerge from Blueprint and other planning processes if they have good *community outcomes*, but are not able to be fully supported by the market. ... the first \$12 million being released in late 2003."  
--Blueprint web site

## Questions About the Process

- Why no "carrying capacity" analysis?
- Why no input from decision-makers?
- Why have implementation issues been put off?
- Why no "feedback loop" to address implementation issues?

## Questions About the Process

- Why no feedback loop to address comments from decision-makers?
- Why not base the Blueprint and transportation plans on the adopted General Plans of the cities and counties in the region?
- Who decides what "Smart Growth" is?
- Is SACOG in the land use planning business?