Jackson Highway & Grant Line East Visioning Projects Stakeholder Interview Report February 29, 2008

The County of Sacramento has undertaken a visioning process to guide planning efforts for the Jackson Highway and Grant Line East corridors. As a part of that process, the County solicited input from key stakeholders through one-on-one and small group interviews. More than 26 interviews involving approximately 55 stakeholders were conducted by Lucy & Company, a Sacramento-based public outreach agency, over a two-month period beginning in December 2007. Each interview session generally lasted one to two hours in duration.

This report provides a summary of the participants' responses and is organized by stakeholder group.

Municipalities

Staff representatives for the cities of Sacramento, Elk Grove and Rancho Cordova were interviewed to determine levels of understanding about the Jackson Highway and Grant Line East visioning projects and their desired levels of involvement. Elk Grove representatives declined to answer some questions regarding the visioning projects because, at the time of the interview, their City Council had not yet directed them to study the areas; without Council direction, the staff could not comment on the City's desired outcomes.

Both the cities of Sacramento and Rancho Cordova expressed a strong desire to partner in planning activities at a much higher level than could be accomplished through the stakeholder interview process, and requested inclusion as partners as opposed to "external stakeholders." Both cities expressed concern that future development in the project areas would be held to lesser standards than would be required if they were managing or partnering in that development. Several examples were cited, including: lack of paved streets and sidewalks; leapfrog development; inadequate parks and limited open spaces that provided environmental advantages and recreation opportunities for residents.

- We would like to have control over what is developed along the edges of the City.
- We're not exactly sure what the County's goal is for these areas; it would make it much easier for us to plan if we knew what they want.
- The County uses market-driven planning, but that is an old way of thinking and not what we want or plan to do with our potential growth areas.
- The County solves transportation issues by creating super arterials, which inevitably causes more traffic congestion.
- When the County develops and approves a new structure near our city, we must assume responsibility for the outcomes because it will always affect our residents.
- Financially, it is a drain for the County to continue providing services; services should be provided by cities.
- Parks are not developed or maintained to the same standard that surrounding cities require.
- Land use standards must be compatible with the surrounding cities.



- Cities cannot succeed in implementing the SACOG Blueprint alone, there needs to be a coordinated effort to share the infrastructure costs and implementation.
- There needs to be an assessment of the true costs of infrastructure, not just building, but also maintaining.
- We do not understand why the County is considering development in the Grant Line East area it is so far removed from County services and staff. It will end up as an island.
- We want to become part of the planning for these projects areas and not inherit someone else's thinking and planning processes.
- We have worked with the County on many projects; we enjoy working with them, we think they have a good planning staff, but we're still not sure why we haven't been included to a higher degree for this project.

Key Issues:

- According to those interviewed, the key issues for this project include:
 - o Efficient use of the land
 - o Transit infrastructure
 - o Economic development
 - o Employment opportunities
 - Lower density housing ex: 1/2 acre lots for executive housing
 - Open space system that are not isolated areas, but useful to the public
 - Adherence to SACOG Blueprint principles
 - o Environmental constraints (wetlands)

Comments Specific to Jackson Highway:

- The Jackson Highway area is a much easier place to develop and it could be less controversial.
- We have designated an area of expansion within the Jackson Highway project area, but it does not reach as far as the County's visioning project does. We feel that it is a better and more logical area to begin development.

Comments Specific to Grant Line East:

• The Grant Line East area is suited for long-range planning and will most likely be annexed by one of the surrounding cities.

Community Planning Advisory Committees (CPAC)

The Vineyard, Cordova and Cosumnes CPACs were represented by their chairs in a single small-group interview. All three representatives expressed a need for upgraded roads in the area, along with increased retail and restaurant outlets. It was their consensus that by bringing such opportunities to the area, residents could stay close to home and decrease the amount of driving. In their opinions, people have moved to the area without the benefit of upgraded roads, leading to more congestion and increased travel times.



The group discussed the concept of open space and agreed that the County had not defined exactly what it intended the term to mean. There was agreement that if County money was used to purchase open space land, then the land should be able to be used for parks instead of conservation land that could be enjoyed by only a small handful of individuals.

In regards to the Jackson Highway and Grant Line East visioning projects, the CPAC representatives shared some of the following comments.

General Comments:

- The roads in the area need to be improved; it is already a problem.
- Infill development will happen in less desirable areas, leading to more rental homes and a decrease in property values for the surrounding areas.
- The size of the homes should be relative to the size of the property. Some of the homes are so close together you can't even walk between them.
- Development in the area would increase the existing residents' property value.
- The area must include employment opportunities that would fit in the area. (Example: welding)
- We understand that things change, but they must be well planned.
- All new development should include home owner associations (HOA) to ensure a high level of quality.
- I don't want these visioning projects to move forward without an evaluation of what the surrounding areas are doing and determining what they need.

Development Interests

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with the following companies: Lennar Homes, Stonebridge Properties/Teichert Construction, Granite Construction, Cordova Hills/University of Sacramento and Tsakopoulos Investments. Each of these interests currently own property within either the Jackson Highway or Grant Line East visioning project areas and have plans to develop the land into mixed-use residential communities.

Lennar Homes owns 140 acres in the "elbow" near Florin Road and is currently positioned to move forward with development in the Jackson Highway area. Lennar would like to be granted the ability to move forward with development of its land within the visioning area because of its proximity to infrastructure to the west. The company expressed interest in working with County staff to develop the area.

Stonebridge/Teichert and Granite Construction own land that is currently being mined for aggregate materials. Once the resources are depleted, both companies plan to convert the land into part of re-fill (or in-fill) developments with mixed use, high-density residential housing. Rosemont High School is an example of property that was once home to mining activities, but later converted to useable space. Stonebridge/Teichert is interested in developing specific plans by 2010, with construction commencing in 2012. The company estimates build-out would occur within 15-20 years after the start of construction. Granite Construction owns approximately 770 acres in the visioning areas.



The proposed Cordova Hills/University of Sacramento development is located within the Grant Line East visioning area. This development is to incorporate low and high density housing, a private university and retail opportunities. Cordova Hills has communicated their plans to the surrounding landowners and believes that its plans have been well received, as many of those landowners have reported interest in development. The Cordova Hills developer, SBM Site Services, LLC, has submitted a formal application for General Plan Amendment for the 3,200 acre mixed use development which, per adopted County policy, has been rejected. The applicant has appealed this determination to the Board of Supervisors and an appeal hearing is pending.

Tsakopoulos Investments has owned more than 870 acres in the Jackson Visioning area for approximately 40 years. Tsakopoulos believes that the location would be ideal for the development of a node, including residential and commercial uses. The plans have previously been shared with the Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento County and some of the surrounding cities. Tsakopoulos Investments, like many other development interests interviewed, would like to begin the application process soon to ensure it is ready for development once the housing market has recovered.

- Some of the vernal pools in the area were created by grazing or ranching and should not determine growth; there are, however, several important environmental issues that need to be preserved.
- We need to know what public agency is taking the lead on these areas; we need to know who we are working with.
- The County could form a working group to determine infrastructure needs and a comprehensive plan; establishing a Mello Roos district could be a good option. The sooner everyone begins talking, the better.
- Morrison Creek is a great asset to the area, but it must be cared for properly.
- Open space and vernal pool preservation is important; it also provides for a more desirable residential area.
- Would the County actively pursue the land if Rancho Cordova were to benefit from the development?
- These projects should not be up against one another for first development. It should be more strategic than that
- It would be helpful to know what the County would like to be when it grows up. It is difficult to plan ahead without knowing.
- County should determine what a node looks like if that is the type of building they desire.
- Maybe Jackson Highway should be relocated and expanded to a location that works better.
- Sacramento County should improve its development standards.
- Because some developers are ready to begin planning and eventually building, they may say they will build higher-density communities but they may just be saying that to get the ball rolling. The County must make sure developers do not sway from their original plans so it is fair for everyone.
- The County can measure its success by evaluating how it developed transit, impacted air quality, established good housing requirements and most importantly, if it stuck with its original concepts.
- Surrounding cities and the County may become territorial of the land.
- Developers respond to the market and housing should not be used to change opinions (referring to low vs. high density building).
- Light rail would be a great option for this area, but we don't think there will be the investment needed to fund it.



Sacramento County may want high density, but it hasn't done a good job of it yet. Also, safety
issues need to be considered so police and fire can safely navigate tight areas.

Key Issues:

- According to those interviewed, the key issues for this project include:
 - o Financing plan for infrastructure
 - Water rights and availability
 - o Noise related to Mather Field
 - Determinations on appropriate density
 - o SACOG Blueprint standards
 - Traffic and transportation
 - o Facilities and utility supplies
 - o Air quality
 - o How to finance open space

Comments Specific to Jackson Highway:

- Jackson Highway has retail needs people living in the area do not have enough convenient places to shop. There needs to be a good balance.
- Development in the Jackson Highway area is more likely because it meets the County's growth needs without too many obstacles
- Jackson Highway visioning area has the same potential for the County that the Railyards development project has for the City of Sacramento.
- It could be difficult to develop this land because of a 'hodge-podge' of uses.
- It would make the most sense to begin development in the Jackson Highway area and then move east as additional growth becomes necessary.
- There are no benefits of not developing this area; growth is happening and it is just a question of where and when. Jackson Highway seems to be the next reasonable place for growth.
- The Jackson Highway area is very close to already established development and could be seen as one large infill site.
- Development in this area should be phased and started where it makes the most sense, which would be near current infrastructure.
- It has taken a long time to develop this area because of all the different uses it is already mixed-use, but not the kind that supports growth.
- Opportunities in the Jackson Highway area:
 - o Infill development
 - Several developers own large pieces of land
 - Open space
- Challenges in the Jackson Highway area:
 - o Mather Field
 - Mining operations
 - o High tension power lines
 - Transportation nodes won't work in this area unless people's attitudes change. Need to determine how to get people out of their cars. Urban traffic standards should be developed for this area because the current model is out of date.



Comments Specific to Grant Line East:

- There are quite a few vernal pools in the Grant Line East area. These can be mitigated and there is enough land for that.
- A university would be a great legacy for the County. It would be a disservice to the community to lose it to another area (i.e. Placer County).
- Mining operations near the Grant Line East area will slow development, but it will eventually provide ideal infill opportunities for future development.
- The County needs to decide if it wants a university or not. If it does want a university, then it should have a Plan B in case of opposition from environmental groups.
- Grant Line Road needs to be updated and expanded.
- The proposed university gives the County a signature piece and increased tax revenue.
- Opportunities in the Grant Line East area:
 - There are very few land owners and several have expressed interested in development
 - o Located within the Urban Service Boundary
 - View shed of the Sierras is an asset and important to many people
 - o SACOG Blueprint-friendly
 - Opportunities for alternative energy sources in partnership with Kiefer Landfill
- Challenges in the Grant Line East area:
 - O Several environmental challenges, including air quality and vernal pools
 - o Further from services and infrastructure
 - o May be challenged by environmental interests
 - o There are very few trees in the area
 - Mather flight paths and noise constraints
 - O Some believe tailings north of project area should be preserved for historical purposes

Environmental Interests

Representatives from the Environmental Council of Sacramento, Sacramento Valley Conservancy and the Institute for Ecological Health were interviewed individually. All three organizations stressed the need to focus on infill or refill development as opposed to "leapfrog" or sprawling development. All groups felt the Grant Line East land should only be developed after the Jackson Highway visioning area is built out, making Grant Line East a future option for growth. The groups were also consistent in their beliefs that *if* development is needed it should start in the furthest west locations within the visioning area and move east, infill and refill opportunities must be maximized and the Urban Service Boundary should not be moved.

- If the Grant Line East area was approved for development, we would explore options of challenging it; we do not believe that the Board of Supervisors understands the long-term implications of expanding into the Grant Line East area.
- Where development occurs, on-site mitigation must occur.
- The County should be focusing on established areas and bringing back deteriorated areas instead of expanding.
- Grant Line East has so much undisturbed land, so large pieces of conservation areas will be needed.
- It will be a very short-sighted if the County decides to develop the land for sales tax revenues. The land could always be annexed.



- By approving these projects, they are telling us that they would rather start over than take care of what they already have; this would be fiscally irresponsible for the County.
- Arden Arcade and Carmichael are examples of 'super blocks' designed by the County this cannot happen again.
- The SACOG Blueprint must be followed.
- The County can't develop its way out of fiscal problems.
- The best neighbors for environmental areas are other preserved lands, parks and roads on the edge of the environmental areas.
- The County will be successful in this process if they obtain broad support from people across the County, not just in the project areas.
- Historically, the County has made land use decisions based on speculative land purchases this will not work for the future.
- Vernal pools are important because they help groundwater recharge and preserve endangered species.

Key Issues:

- Transportation
 - We are against the proposed connector between Elk Grove and Rancho Cordova.
 - A transportation grid must be established because it is the only network that will work for all density uses.
 - If Jackson Highway is upgraded, it will increase development.
- Urban Service Boundary (USB)
 - O It should take a vote of more than four Board of Supervisors to move the USB.
 - Moving the USB should require a ballot vote by the public.
 - There will never be a reason to expand the USB.
 - Maintaining the current USB is absolutely essential.

Ranching & Farming Interests

Both ranching/farming families and organizations were interviewed to obtain a cross-section of opinions and information. The Sacramento Farm Bureau, Tracy Family Trust and the Waegell, Van Vleck, Garms and Carney/Poe families were interviewed independently of one another.

Each of the farming/ranching families expressed some interest in developing a portion of their property within the visioning area; one family intends to keep ownership of their land and offer long-term leases for enterprises while another plans to continue farming the majority of their land. The Sacramento Farm Bureau "champions for private property owners' rights" and encourages open communication between current landowners and the County.

All five families expressed interest in expanding roads throughout the visioning areas, including Jackson Highway and/or Grant Line Road. These roads, according to stakeholders, are becoming increasingly busy and pose safety concerns when moving agricultural equipment through the area. Several comments were made in regard to planning for the future traffic and the area's needs as opposed to planning for current needs. One participant suggested that Jackson Highway could be enhanced so that the beauty of the area could be seen; it is currently blocked in several locations by berms and fences.



Several property owners suggested that reaching consensus on planning in the Grant Line East area could be more immediate because of the small number of land owners and a general understanding that the land would be better used for development. Most felt that the Jackson Highway area would be more difficult to develop than the Grant Line East area because of the greater number of property owners and the vast array of current interests including, but not limited to: a rendering company, light industrial, mining operations and commercial nurseries.

General Comments:

- The County has more control over what will happen with the land than we do [property owners].
- Just because we own land doesn't mean we should become the County's mitigation areas. If someone wants to use our land for mitigation, they should pay us market value instead of a targeted amount determined by the County.
- We support infill before sprawl and feel that the project areas provide great opportunities for infill.
- The SACOG Blueprint should be followed.
- The County planning department has too much authority; they do not live in or understand the area, but they want to set limitations on our land. (Examples of limitations included: use of private property for mitigation and lower property values because of environmental constraints.)
- The County should adopt rural road standards.
- As gas prices go up and it becomes more expensive to travel, people will have to stay closer to home. We have an opportunity to create a place for people to visit ag-enterprises. (Examples include: camping, wineries, ranches and large parks.)
- The Sacramento Rendering Company is an important asset to the community; it allows for proper disposal and should not be pushed out against their will.
- If the County allows development, they will increase their tax base. If they don't allow development, they lose that tax base and set limitations for the land.
- Landowners seem to miss out on proper compensation if there are vernal pools on their land. They should be fairly compensated for the land they have taken care of and paid taxes on.
- The proposed university would be a great asset to the area.
- It would be beneficial to create a landowner board so we could have a say it what happens around us. It would also force the County to tell us what is going on and we could work together.
- Monterey's 17 Mile Drive could be as used as an example for Scott Road.
- The County makes the rules on whether or not the land should be developed; in this case, the land owners want to develop but we don't know if the County does. A decision has to be made.
- Water will be an issue in these visioning areas; I'm sure the County can get it, but I haven't heard how they are planning to do so.

Key Issues:

- Stakeholders identified some of the following key concerns:
 - The loss of agricultural land to industrial (if unwanted by property owners)
 - O Consensus among neighbors on best use of land
 - Maintenance of recreational facilities (i.e. trails)
 - Impacts of road development and expansion (i.e. expansion of Eagle's Nest Road would divide one stakeholder's land in half, reduce the viability of their agricultural sustainability)



• Urban Service Boundary (USB)

- We are ready to sell our land within the USB so we can use the profits to enhance our operation outside the USB. We are unable to obtain more land inside the USB due to costs, so it makes more sense to sell and purchase land around our other operations. It will be much more efficient.
- There's no reason the USB shouldn't be moved.
- If the County allows growth it will enable us to enhance our agricultural opportunities outside the USB. We will need to sell our unprofitable agricultural land inside the USB and devote more resources to our agricultural land.
- The USB should not be moved because it will force agriculture out of Sacramento County. The County must maintain the integrity of agricultural interests.
- The USB will continue to move as development grows and time goes by. It's exactly what happened in southern California.
- I have no problem with expansion within the USB. But, there should be parameters put on building that states that the landowner should be able to control what happens on their land, not the neighboring homeowners. This is our land not their view shed.
- In the Grant Line East area, the USB splits some of the properties; it should be moved so it can maximize the owners' land.
- Why does the County need mitigation within the USB? Can't that be outside the USB?

Environmental

- What makes vernal pools so important to preserve if there are so many of them? Don't they lose their significance?
- O So many vernal pools were formed by the landowners caring for the livestock. Eventually, depressions are made in the land when there is a high concentration of cattle. That doesn't make it a special environmental issue; it's just the result of using the land.
- Laguna Creek is an important natural resources, it should not be relocated.

Infrastructure

• There is a lack of water and the wells will not be able to support growth.

Grant Line East:

- Opportunities in the Grant Line East visioning area:
 - O This land is much more conducive to building than Natomas.
 - If development is done thoughtfully, conservation and agriculture can coexist.
 - Transportation can be evaluated to ensure the best options. It will allow people to travel to and from the foothills without diminishing agricultural opportunities.
 - There are only a few landowners in our area and I think we are all ready to develop.

Sacramento Rendering Company

The Sacramento Rendering Company (SRC), a family owned operation, is located on approximately 810 acres in the Jackson Highway Visioning area. According to representatives, SRC is mindful of an exit strategy; while the business proclaims to run a cutting edge operation, it recognizes that it may eventually run into compatibility issues. In order to be proactive, the company is looking for relocation opportunities and evaluating the possibility of infill development on its current land.



SRC representatives believe that the Jackson Highway visioning area is conflicted with both opportunities and constraints. For example, the location of the raceway and the presence of SRC could become constraints for other development. Additionally, the group expressed the need for corridors to be biologically based, not based on who owns the land. Another environmental consideration is the recognition that the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (SSHCP) outlines an independent vision. Thus, there is a need to determine how the SSHCP vision will align or connect with the Jackson Highway visioning project.

While SRC representatives understood the need to look at the corridor as a whole, they would like the County to look at the sub-areas to identify best possible uses as opposed to identifying uses based on interests of the land owner (i.e. current view is that land will be developed into high-density housing because its owned by a developer, rather than considering the property independent of the owner to determine best uses and compatibility with surrounding lands). Three key issues were identified: biological resources, transportation and water.

General Comments:

- The County needs to take an honest look at the areas and determine what would be best.
- It's reality that there are a lack of homes in this area, so the County should move forward with plans.
- Major roadways exist in this area, but it is obvious that roads need to be built to sustain growth.

Transportation Interests

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD) and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) were interviewed in separate sessions. SMAQMD provided comments on the project (see Attachment #1), which is also summarized in this document.

Both groups agreed that planning for the two areas must be consistent with the SACOG Blueprint, that growth should begin in the western portion of the Jackson Highway visioning area and move east as needed and that open space needs to be preserved. One representative stated that the Grant Line East area should be held for development opportunities after 2025.

- Schools must be integrated into the community so students can bike or walk to school; additionally, they should be multi-storied to create a smaller footprint. (Example: Davis, California schools)
- There are areas within the Jackson Highway visioning area that has already been targeted for open space; why would the County consider this land for future development?
- The County should not be in development most counties are not developers.
- Mitigation land has often been labeled as an air quality benefit, when it is really a neutral.
- It is smart to build on previously mined land.
- It will be important to keep all connectivity options on the table projects should all be able to connect to transit and have connectivity which will promote a sense of community.
- Phased development is a realistic choice.
- The County's standards are not as high as surrounding cities.
- The County should use development agreements for these projects.



• The minimum level of success for these project areas would be to maintain consistency with the Blueprint.

Key Issues:

- Water Supply
- Multiple land owners
- Site Sensitivity (Example: Sacramento Rendering Company and Mather Airport)
- Transportation planning

Off-Road Vehicle Park

California State Parks owns the 11,000 acre Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area in the north-east corner of the Grant Line East visioning project area. The off-road vehicle park is immediately adjacent to the study area and operates seven days per week. The park also serves as the site of several large-scale events throughout the year, bringing in millions of dollars to the surrounding communities. The park is one of only six of its kind in California and offers recreational opportunities that are not available otherwise.

An interview was conducted with a park representative to obtain information in regards to the Grant Line East visioning project. The representative expressed several concerns with proposed development near the park, including encroachment of residential development, the perceived negative impact on the park and the lack of adequate roads to and from the park. The representative suggested industrial development, warehouses or small business would be ideal neighbors for the park because they would not be impacted, as would a housing development, by noise.

The park, which works with environmental groups, reportedly provides numerous environmental opportunities, including the protection of vernal pools and Blue Oak woodlands.

General Comments:

- Updating the General Plan gives the County an opportunity to address many issues in the area, including the large amount of open space.
- Open space should be thoughtfully approached. Many communities lack open space, which ultimately puts pressure on the areas of open space.
- Parks provide many recreational opportunities for people living in dense cities.
- It will be important to maintain a visual buffer around the park.

Carson Creek Boys Ranch

The Sacramento Sherriff's Department operates the Carson Creek Boys Ranch which houses approximately 125 delinquent minors. The property is located east of the Grant Line East visioning area. The Sheriff's Department does not view proposed development as a threat to current ranch operations because a large buffer surrounds the Ranch. Due to the large amount of land it currently owns, the Sheriff's Department is evaluating the possibility of expanding its Boys' Ranch operations. Even with the possible expansion, development is not an anticipated conflict or threat.



General Comments:

- Industrial businesses would be a suitable neighbor for the Ranch, as opposed to residential.
- Some residents may be bothered by the idea that there is a boys' ranch near their home.
- Water issues, a lack of services and flooding down Scott Road could be obstacles to developing the Grant Line East area.

Kiefer Landfill

Kiefer Landfill is located in the southeast corner of the Grant Line East visioning area, with approximately 1,000 acres of that facility residing within the study area. The landfill sees itself not only as a service provider, but as a landowner within the visioning area boundaries; the landfill can react to development in the area because of long-range planning for adequate infrastructure and capacity.

A portion of the landfill is within Rancho Cordova city limits and the remainder is within Sacramento County's jurisdiction. While it recognizes it may not be the most desirable neighbor, Kiefer believes it provides a very important service to the area. According to its representatives, Kiefer has approximately 50 years of activity through current uses, but its life expectancy will increase as possibilities for alternative waste measures become more readily available.

The buffer land surrounding the landfill is currently being evaluated to identify potential uses; the landfill owns more buffer land that what is prescribed. Some proposed uses could include: open space and conservation land, ag-tourism opportunities (including trails or paths would which make use of the area's rolling topography) or alternative energy sources. The landfill representative cited noise, odor and dust as possible impacts associated with living near the landfill, which many would consider undesirable. Therefore, the landfill does not recognize development as a supportive landfill neighbor.

One of the major issues cited regarding development in the visioning areas included contaminated water and the lack of a clean water supply. Additionally, the American River basin water is finite due to the protected species and its role in managing the water supply in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

- Work on the buffer lands and the protection of the Kiefer landfill facility is very important.
- We aren't looking to build homes in our buffer lands, but we are looking to help General Plan initiatives.
- We recognize that some of the land east of our facility is likely to be developed.
- Not only are we a landfill, but we represent waste entities and we will continue to point out that we are an important part of the community.

