

Strategic Planning and Buildout of New Growth Areas *Expanded Discussion on Four Potential Scenarios*

While all four potential scenarios are possible, some may be more feasible and/or desirable than others. Strategy #1, the market-driven approach, is a “laissez faire” approach that would allow the market to function with as little County involvement as possible. Under this scenario, applications would be accepted without regard to the merits of the project itself, its proximity to existing urban development, ability to provide infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective fashion, etc. While this option provides the market with flexibility, there are potential drawbacks. For example, accepting applications for leapfrog developments far from existing infrastructure can lead to inefficient extension of infrastructure and consequently higher development impact fees and/or ratepayer fees. Additionally, should the County accept and process plans for development that far exceeds foreseeable demand, it may be many years before market demand would support development. Should a master planned community be approved but sit undeveloped for years due to an oversupply of available land, there may be pressure to significantly amend the plan to respond to market trends and/or reduce price points, thereby diluting the overall plan and compromising the quality of the future community.

Strategy #4 offers the opposite approach: rather than allowing the market to dictate when and where to build, the County would identify only enough land for new growth to satisfy foreseeable demand through 2030. This approach more tightly controls land available for urbanization, thereby limiting the market’s ability to freely respond to demand or other market forces. At a prior workshop on the General Plan Update project, the majority of the Board expressed concern regarding this land-constrained approach due to the uncertainty of long-term growth projections. For example, Board members expressed uncertainty that the commercial corridors could accommodate as many units as predicted and wanted to incorporate flexibility into the General Plan so as to not tie the County’s hands regarding future land use decisions. Although the Board did not fully subscribe to the land-constrained approach, the Board expressed a strong desire for the County to be more proactive in shaping how these areas may be planned and built out. The Visioning Studies were a direct result of this direction, as is Planning staff’s recommendation to address strategic planning and development of new growth areas.

While Strategies #1 and #4 represent the bookends of how the County may approach planning and buildout of new growth areas, Strategies #2 and #3 are more pragmatic approaches that attempt to balance flexibility for the market with County participation and guidance. Strategy #2, the project merit approach, entails evaluating potential applications as they are submitted, with the County accepting applications that meet certain performance standards and criteria (see Attachment D). This would allow the County to evaluate and make informed decisions regarding each application, although such decisions would not be guided by an overarching strategy and/or prioritization for when and where to develop in the near term vs. mid to long term. The County would simply react to applications as they are submitted.

The proactive approach is similar to the project merit approach in that it involves evaluating applications based on County-devised criteria (see Attachment D), but it differs in that the County would create an overarching strategy to guide planning and buildout of these new growth areas. While the reactive approach would entail evaluating applications on a case-by-case basis, the proactive approach would make clear to landowners the County's intention for how it intends to guide planning and development activity in these areas. The strategy created to implement the proactive approach could be developed a number of different ways, ranging from loose guidance to a rigid phasing strategy.