

INTRODUCTION

to the

KINGS COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Adopted: December 28, 1993

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I. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Kings County General Plan is to guide the physical growth of the unincorporated portion of Kings County and the conservation of its resources through the year 2005 in a manner consistent with the goals of the people of Kings County.

B. Authority

The State of California requires Kings County to adopt a longterm, comprehensive General Plan to guide future physical development in areas within the County's jurisdiction. The General Plan is required to address a number of subjects, although the County may choose the level of detail that is appropriate for its circumstances.

The General Plan is implemented by many actions and documents which affect private land development, including specific plans, area plans, and zoning and subdivision ordinances. State law requires that these documents be consistent with the General Plan. The same consistency requirement applies to public agency projects and capital improvement programs.

C. Scope

The policies of this General Plan apply to the unincorporated territory of Kings County. They do not apply to the territory within the boundaries of the incorporated cities of Avenal, Corcoran, Hanford, and Lemoore; or within the boundaries of the Lemoore Naval Air Station and the Santa Rosa Rancheria.

II. PLAN PREPARATION

The Kings County General Plan has been extensively revised and updated since it was first adopted in 1958 as the North Kings County Area General Plan.

Later, several components of the Kings County General Plan were updated and adopted independently, resulting in a General Plan contained in twenty-seven separate elements, components, and amendments (see Appendix 1, Table 1 for a listing of these documents).

This single unified General Plan rescinds and replaces all past Kings County General Plan elements, components, and amendments, EXCEPT the Kings County Hazardous Waste Management Plan, adopted September 25, 1990, by Kings County Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 90-117; and the 1992 Housing

Element, adopted July 28, 1992, by Kings County Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 92-101.

During the preparation of this document every policy from every previous element, component, and amendment of the General Plan was reviewed and retained, modified, or eliminated where necessary. The seven mandatory elements of the General Plan are included; their policies are cross-referenced to ensure their internal consistency and compatibility.

The principal purpose of this update is to consolidate and organize the changes that have occurred since previous elements, components, and amendments were adopted; include new policies to address issues not previously covered in the General Plan; and to simplify the

application of General Plan policies to individual development decisions. To the extent possible, the text is expressed in lay terms so that the public may easily understand this plan, its impact on future development, and its effect on the quality of life in Kings County.

A. Intergovernmental Planning Coordination

The Kings County General Plan is designed to be compatible with plans and policies established by other governmental agencies, including the four incorporated cities, adjacent counties, and regional agencies including, but not limited to, the Kings County Regional Planning Agency, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Water Resources Agency, the California Integrated Waste Management Board, and the California Department of Fish

and Game. The text of the various elements notes those situations where these agencies may have particular or overriding responsibilities that affect the physical development of the county.

B. Citizen Participation

Because the County desires a high degree of public awareness of planning and development issues, it encouraged participation by interested citizens in the General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee. The Committee, whose members are identified in the acknowledgments at the beginning of the plan, reviewed and made suggestions on all of the various elements and components of this plan.

Through public meeting notices, public hearings, and topical newspaper articles, the County encouraged all of the public to express their views about General Plan issues and policies.

III. ORGANIZATION AND OVERVIEW

A. Format

The seven mandatory General Plan elements are Land Use, Resource Conservation, Open Space, Circulation, Housing, Safety, and Noise.

The Kings County General Plan includes the seven mandatory elements plus this introduction, as follows:

- Glossary
- Introduction
- Land Use Element
- Resource Conservation Element
- Open Space Element
- Circulation Element
- Housing Element
- Safety Element

- Noise Element
- Environmental Impact Report
- Appendices

Each element includes policies which are related to the physical development of the county to the year 2005. The Housing Element, however, is required by state law to be updated again in 1997.

The Glossary defines many of the terms used in the General Plan Update. The Appendices contain more detailed information about General Plan issues, policies, and implementation measures. Various diagrams graphically illustrate the land areas to which policies apply.

B. Plan Elements

The Land Use Element describes the general distribution, location, and extent of various land uses. It contains a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity, types of permissible uses, and special development and permit review requirements.

The Resource Conservation Element expresses policies for the conservation of various resources including soils, water, plant and wildlife habitat, minerals, and air quality.

The Open Space Element describes open space classifications, limitations on types and intensities of permissible uses, and special development and permit review requirements. The expansion and improvement of existing recreational areas is promoted.

The Circulation Element expresses policies for the movement of people and goods. It consists of the general location and extent of transportation facilities and public utilities, all correlated with the Land Use Element. It emphasizes the adequacy of current facilities, but provides for proposed future facilities. It recognizes the increasingly important role of public transit and of measures which allocate roadway capacity more efficiently during peak travel periods and reduce the adverse air quality effects of transportation.

The 1992 Housing Element evaluates housing production needed to accommodate projected population growth throughout the county, including all the cities. Its policies encourage the development of housing for all economic segments of the community, and the production of diverse types and densities of housing for special shelter needs. The 1992 Housing Element was prepared separately by the Kings County Regional Planning Agency on behalf of the County and three of its four incorporated cities. It was adopted in July 1992. This General Plan contains an abridged version of the County portion of the 1992 Housing Element.

The Safety Element addresses seismic and other geologic hazards, flooding, hazardous materials, and susceptibility to wildfires. Its policies describe procedures for the review of development projects in areas subject to hazards caused by natural or human activity.

The Noise Element evaluates noise conditions caused by highways, railroads, airports, industry, and other sources. Noise contours are used as a guide for establishing a pattern for land uses in the Land Use Element. It expresses policies intended to assure that intrusive noise is not a problem in future land development.

The policies of the various elements are consistent. For example, the Land Use Element designates sufficient residential areas to accommodate the housing development need projected by the Housing Element.

IV. REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

A. Regional Setting

Kings County is located in the southern half of California's Central Valley (see Figures 1 and 2, pages x and xi). The county ranks 34th in

population and 35th in geographic size among the state's 58 counties. The county is roughly triangular in shape and is approximately 918,800 acres (1,435 square miles) in size. About 808,000 acres (1,265 square miles) were devoted to agriculture and grazing in 1991.

Kings County lies generally south of the Kings River. It is bounded on the southwest by the Coast Ranges and on the north, east, and south by the nation's number one, two, and three agricultural counties--Fresno, Tulare, and Kern Counties. Kings County also shares a boundary with Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties.

Winters are relatively mild, with rainfall averaging 7.6 inches per year. The growing season, characterized by very high midsummer temperatures, lasts over 255 days per year.

B. County Setting

Kings County is composed of mainly level farmland crossed by the California Aqueduct and a number of other irrigation waterways. Agriculture and related industries dominate the County's economy, as they have since the County's formation in 1893. Approximately 95 percent of the land is privately owned, and about 88 percent of the acreage is devoted to agricultural uses. Kings County consistently ranks among the top counties in the nation in the production of cotton, barley, and alfalfa seed. Kings County also produces 39 crops or products each grossing over one million dollars per year including milk, cattle, and turkeys.

Kings County has a number of major nonfarm employers, including the Lemoore Naval Air Station, two state prisons, a processing plant for cottonseed and safflower oils, a hazardous waste treatment and disposal facility, tomato products canning factories, and an automobile tire manufacturer.

Kings County is served by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, and the San Joaquin Valley Railroad (using a former branch line of the Southern Pacific Railroad). Interstate Highway 5 and Highway 198 are major routes crossing the county. They connect to State Routes 41 and 43 and a network of other state highways and county roads.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the County's four incorporated cities--Hanford, Lemoore, Corcoran, and Avenal--contain a combined population of 67,653 persons (including 9,305 state prison inmates), or 67% of the total county population of 101,469.

C. Growth Projections

One of the primary issues to be resolved in planning for future physical growth is the amount of new development that can be accommodated. The quality of life can suffer when the capacity of public services is exceeded, or the environment is degraded.

The General Plan attempts to accommodate the need of Kings County's growing population for jobs, housing, and services while preserving such natural resources as agricultural land, air, water, and natural habitat. The projected growth in population and employment, its rate and timing, and its geographic distribution are directed to this end.

General Plan policies concentrate urban development in areas where urban services are available, and emphasize compact patterns of non-agricultural development.

D. Sources of Population Data

General Plan policies are based on demographic projections by the Kings County Planning

Department, which in turn are based on United States Census data and California Department of Finance (DOF) population estimates. Plan policies seek to ensure that appropriate and adequate public services and public infrastructure are available to serve the projected population. California State Prison inmate population is not included in growth formulas concerning provision of services (see Appendix 1, Tables 2, 3, and 4, for more detailed information on population).

Actual population figures for the unincorporated areas may differ from the projections used in this plan due to several unforeseeable factors, including rate of annexation by the cities, rate of

new construction in the rural communities, and average household size.

E. Labor Force and Employment

Kings County has enough population and business activity to support retail and service industries typical of a smaller regional center. However, agricultural activities will continue to be the major factor in the local economy for the foreseeable future.

The local economic base will likely continue its slow shift from primarily agriculture to increasing retail trade and service jobs. Job opportunities must be developed in these sectors to meet the needs of a growing local population.

V. ASSUMPTIONS

The General Plan is based on the following assumptions:

1. Growth in the rural communities (Armona, Kettleman City, and Stratford) will be limited by sewer and water system capacities and the agricultural preserve lands which surround them.
2. Population growth in rural agricultural areas will be limited to farm-related housing.
3. Lemoore Naval Air Station (LNAS) will remain open, but its growth will be affected by the future role of the U.S. Navy. Other military base closures may cause an increase in the LNAS mission. LNAS will continue to function as an employment base for the county and as a residential community for Navy personnel and their families.

4. Hanford will retain its traditional position as the principal city and county seat. Lemoore will continue to function primarily as a residential community, but will experience some industrial growth. Corcoran will continue as the agricultural service center for the southeast county and provide services for the Corcoran State Prison. Avenal will continue as the residential center for the southwest county and provide services for the Avenal State Prison.

In Armona more attention will be given to protecting urban and agricultural lands from unnecessary encroachment, and the town will continue to grow as a residential community with possible future incorporation. Kettleman City will continue as an agricultural employee housing community for the western county and as a highway service center at State Highway 41 and Interstate 5. Stratford will continue as an agricultural

service and agricultural employee housing community.

5. Rural agricultural areas of the region will decline in population as agriculture becomes increasingly mechanized and more people reside in the cities and rural communities.
6. Agriculture will remain the basic economic mainstay of the region, but the Lemoore Naval Air Station, two state prisons, and industrial and commercial activities will grow in economic importance.
7. New regionally significant roadways will not be necessary before the year 2005. Minor improvements to local roadways, such as dedication of future right of way or construction of bus stops, may be necessary to mitigate the effects of site-specific development projects.
8. The private auto will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for this area. The KART public transit system will continue to supplement the private auto for those who are unable to provide for their own transit needs.