

Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG)

The Blueprint Vision

The SACOG Board of Directors adopted the Preferred Blueprint Scenario in December 2004, a bold vision for growth that promotes compact, mixed-use development and more transit choices as an alternative to low density development.

The Preferred Blueprint Scenario depicts a way for the region to grow through the year 2050 in a manner generally consistent with the [Blueprint growth principles](#). A special report, available in PDF, provides an overview of the [Preferred Scenario](#) approved unanimously by the SACOG Board in December 2004.

The Preferred Blueprint Scenario is part of SACOG's [Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy for 2035](#), the long-range transportation plan for the six-county region. It also serves as a framework to guide local government in growth and transportation planning through 2050.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035 links land use and transportation planning, with \$42 billion in transportation investments in the six-county Sacramento region over the next 28 years. With strategic investments in our current transportation system, we can curb the growth in traffic congestion each household experiences. We can create opportunities for residents of the region to spend less time in their cars, and protect our air quality while improving the quality of life.


Preferred Scenario Map



The scenario is a result of numerous public workshops and meetings with local government staff and elected officials. It should be interpreted and used as a concept-level illustration of the growth principles. It was developed with parcel-level data and analysis to help ensure that the growth concepts were being applied in a realistic manner; however, it is not intended to be applied or implemented in a literal, parcel-level manner.

The map assumes certain levels and locations of both "reinvestment" (i.e., additional development on already-built parcels) and greenfield development (i.e., large-scale development on vacant land). The purpose of this mapping is to illustrate, generally, the amount and locations for these types of growth. It is not intended to indicate that a specific parcel should or should not be developed in a particular manner. That level of planning is the responsibility of local governments, and is beyond the specificity appropriate for regional-scale, long-term scenario planning.

Transportation projects were added to the region's road and transit systems in the development and evaluation of each of the scenarios in the Blueprint Project. The objective in each scenario was to match the transportation system with the land use parameters. While a list of projects was developed and is available for the Preferred Scenario, the purpose of the project list is to provide a generalized priority of transportation investments that fit with the location and amount of development and fit with the smart growth planning concepts.

The list of transportation projects in the Preferred Blueprint Scenario is not a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the region. The MTP is a much more detailed process currently being undertaken. In other words, the  [transportation system](#) which underlies the Blueprint Map is for educational purposes, and does not reflect a policy recommendation or decision by the Board.

The Need for the Blueprint

The Sacramento Region is a wonderful place to live. It has comfortable and inviting neighborhoods. A robust economy. Exciting nightlife. A variety of beautiful scenery and wild places.

These qualities also mean the region will grow. Between 2000 and 2050, our region will add more than 1.7 million people and 1 million new jobs.

But with growth comes challenges. How should we grow? Where should we grow? How should we travel around the region? How will growth affect our environment and quality of life?

In 2002, the Sacramento region faced a prospective future of worsening congestion - a projected increase of over 50 percent by the year 2025 - and increasingly worse air pollution based on current land-use patterns, transportation funding levels, and transportation investment priorities. To attempt to solve these challenges, the SACOG Board of Directors initiated the Sacramento Region Blueprint Project, an extensive study of the linkages between transportation land use and air quality.

The philosophy behind the regional visioning process was that planning and design choices made by a community have many impacts on regional development patterns, modal choices, infrastructure costs, redevelopment potential, natural resources, and other aspects of livability. By being aware of the consequences of their community's development choices, citizens can improve their economies, environments, and quality of life. If communities work together at this process, then these positive affects can be seen regionally.

As its core goal, the Blueprint Project aimed to support local governments with high quality data and modeling tools so that decisions regarding future growth and its affects on quality of life issues such as traffic congestion and air pollution could be made with the best information available. In addition to developing detailed land-use and travel data, an extensive community outreach effort was conducted to develop and assess guiding principles for the region's long-term growth.

The learnings from the regional visioning process would also be used by the Board of Directors of the [Sacramento Area Council of Governments](#) (SACOG), the region's transportation planning and funding agency, to make choices about what transportation projects will best serve the region as it changes.

Through its public outreach and education component, a wealth of technical data for local decision makers, and funding for "smart growth" development, the Blueprint provides a tangible opportunity to help make Sacramento as attractive tomorrow as it is today.

Implementing the Blueprint

The [Blueprint Preferred Scenario](#) means nothing if it remains just a plan on paper. Since the Blueprint was adopted in December 2004, SACOG and its members have focused on implementing the principles that came out of the Blueprint Preferred Scenario:

- Housing options
- Transportation choices
- Mixing land uses
- Compact development
- Conserving natural resources
- Utilizing existing assets
- Quality design

One of SACOG's mottos is "providing better information for more informed decision making." As such, SACOG's implementation activities may be categorized into the following groups:

- [Technical support](#)
- [Educational activities and resources](#)
- [Financial assistance](#)

Technical Support

SACOG provides professional services directly to its member jurisdictions and their public interest stakeholders. The technical services include providing modeling and analysis of different development scenarios. Such analysis could show the impacts of different land use alternatives to population, jobs, energy consumption and transportation. Additionally, staff from member jurisdictions can take training sessions on how to use the I-PLACE³S scenario planning software that was used to model land use and travel impacts for the Blueprint project and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035. Likewise, SACOG staff is available to assist member agencies with professional services such as meeting facilitation, small group leadership, mapping, demographic projections, transportation modeling or analysis, and other services as needed.

Educational Activities and Resources

SACOG provides a variety of [planning seminars](#) and public and professional educational services that help provide information about the Blueprint principles. Several times a year, SACOG puts on workshops for the planning community on various topics (e.g., parking management, innovative development, land use and travel modeling, etc.) Likewise, workshops are held for elected officials, planning commissioners and the general public on broader planning issues. SACOG also produced two videos on infill development that are available for public educational uses. Additionally, a 1,500-image database of photos of smart growth built projects is available for download. SACOG also commissioned 10 photo simulations of real-life built environments in the Sacramento region. The simulations show what these sites look like today, and how a series of small incremental changes can dramatically alter the sense of community. These photo simulations are downloadable for public educational uses.

Upon request, SACOG will make Blueprint presentations to member jurisdictions and their stakeholders.

On an ad hoc basis, SACOG provides instructional information in new planning topic areas. Most recently, SACOG produced the Form-Based Codes Handbook, which provides step-by-step information on how a jurisdiction can create a development coding system that is more visually based and physically-oriented than conventional zoning codes.

- [Past SACOG Planning Seminars](#)
- [SACOG Infill Videos](#)
- [SACOG Database of Images](#)
- [SACOG Form-Based Codes Handbook](#)
- [SACOG photo simulations](#)

Financial Assistance

SACOG provides direct financial support for projects or activities that implement the Blueprint principles. The support comes in the way of competitive financial assistance. There are four programs that award grants on a two-year cycle:

1. The [Air Quality Funding Program](#) funds transportation-related projects that help the region reach air-quality attainment status.
2. The [Bicycle/Pedestrian Funding Program](#) helps fund capital and non-capital bicycle and pedestrian projects in large, medium, or small cities and towns in the Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties.
3. The [Transportation Demand Management Funding Program](#) provides funds to activities that focus on moving people through the region more efficiently through carpooling, vanpooling, using transit, walking and telecommuting.
4. The [Community Design Funding Program](#) provides financial assistance to public and private projects that implement the Blueprint Principles

SACOG occasionally receives funds for specific subject areas such as [civic engagement](#) or [form-based codes](#); those funds are then awarded to cities and counties in the form of grants.

For More Information

If you represent one of [SACOG's member jurisdictions](#) (one of the 22 cities or six counties in the SACOG region) and would like to discuss the SACOG services and resources described above, please contact one of the following SACOG planning staff members:

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Technology of the Blueprint

Workshop Participants Can See Future Today with I-PLACE³S Software

It looks like a computer game, but the stakes are much higher. Blueprint workshops give residents the chance to become planners through a thought-provoking software program called I-PLACE³S. The software speeds up the calendar by 50 years to show almost immediately how decisions made today will affect the region tomorrow.

Any planning decision can have good or bad ramifications. Transportation affects housing, for example, and one city's decision to expand or limit development can have a significant impact on surrounding communities. I-PLACE³S immediately shows the effects of those choices so participants at the workshops better understand that what they do locally will affect the entire region.

I-PLACE³S enables users to apply a variety of land use designations to potential development areas. Each designation carries with it characteristics such as the number of dwellings per acre, how many employees commercial areas can handle, and even the number of parking spaces the land will support.

As land use designations expand or change, I-PLACE³S shows the effects. Will traffic congestion increase or will new work centers reduce the stress on roads? Will agricultural land or open space be lost, or can it be preserved while meeting housing needs? Will replacing commercial areas with new "mixed-use" development in which commercial and residential share space lead to a more vibrant and efficient community, or will it have negative economic impacts on other areas?

I-PLACE³S enables users to create and evaluate multiple development scenarios against a set of base case conditions. It demonstrates how planning and design choices, made by a community, have impacts on development patterns, modal choices, redevelopment potential, and livability to name a few. By being aware of the consequences of different development choices, citizens can improve their economies, environments, and quality of life. Members of the public who attend the public workshops helped decide whether the community they are building is what they would like to see the region become — not just for themselves, but for their children, grandchildren and the hundreds of thousands of newcomers to the region.

DISCUSSION DRAFT BLUEPRINT PREFERRED SCENARIO FOR 2050 MAP AND GROWTH PRINCIPLES

BLUEPRINT CONCEPT MAP

The Blueprint map depicts a way for the region to grow through the year 2050 in a manner generally consistent with the growth principles summarized below. The map is a result of numerous public workshops and meetings with local staff and elected officials. The map is intended to be interpreted and used as a concept level illustration of the growth principles. It was developed with parcel-level data and analysis to help ensure that the growth concepts were being applied in a realistic manner; however, it is not intended to be applied or implemented in a literal, parcel-level manner.

For example, the map assumes certain levels and locations of both “reinvestment” (i.e. additional development on already built parcels) and greenfield development (i.e. large-scale development on vacant land). The purpose of this mapping is to illustrate, generally, the amounts and locations for these types of growth. It is not intended to indicate that a specific parcel should or should not be developed in a particular manner. That level of planning is the responsibility of local governments, and is beyond the specificity appropriate for regional-scale, long-term scenario planning.

GROWTH PRINCIPLES

1. Transportation Choices: Developments should be designed to encourage people to sometimes walk, ride bicycles, ride the bus, ride light rail, take the train or carpool. Use of Blueprint growth concepts for land use and right-of-way design will encourage use of these modes of travel and the remaining auto trips will be, on average, shorter.
2. Mixed-Use Developments: Buildings homes and shops, entertainment, office and even light industrial uses near each other can create active, vital neighborhoods. This mixture of uses can be either in a vertical arrangement (mixed in one building) or horizontal (with a combination of uses in close proximity). These types of projects function as local activity centers, contributing to a sense of community, where people tend to walk or bike to destinations and interact more with each other. Separated land uses, on the other hand, lead to the need to travel more by auto because of the distance between uses. Mixed land uses can occur at many scales. Examples include: a housing project located near an employment center, a small shopping center located within a residential neighborhood, and a building with ground floor retail and apartments or condominiums on the upper floor(s).
3. Compact Development: Creating environments that are more compactly built and use space in an efficient but aesthetic manner can encourage more walking, biking, and public transit use, and shorten auto trips.
4. Housing Choice and Diversity: Providing a variety of places where people can live – apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and single-family detached homes on varying

lot sizes – creates opportunities for the variety of people who need them: families, singles, seniors, and people with special needs. This issue is of special concern for the people with very low-, low-, and moderate-income, often our teachers, other public employees and professionals, as well as retail employees, service workers and other people for whom finding housing close to work is challenging. By providing a diversity of housing options, more people have a choice.

5. Use of Existing Assets: In urbanized areas, development on infill or vacant lands, intensification of the use of underutilized parcels (for example, more development on the site of a low-density retail strip shopping center), or redevelopment can make better use of existing public infrastructure. This can also include rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings, denser clustering of buildings in suburban office parks, and joint use of existing public facilities such as schools and parking garages.
6. Quality Design: The design details of any land use development - such as the relationship to the street, setbacks, placement of garages, sidewalks, landscaping, the aesthetics of building design, and the design of the public right-of-way (the sidewalks, connected streets and paths, bike lanes, the width of streets) - are all factors that can influence the attractiveness of living in a compact development and facilitate the ease of walking and biking to work or neighborhood services. Good site and architectural design is an important factor in creating a sense of community and a sense of place.
7. Natural Resources Conservation: This principle encourages the incorporation of public use open space (such as parks, town squares, trails, and greenbelts) within development projects, over and above state requirements; along with wildlife and plant habitat preservation, agricultural preservation and promotion of environment-friendly practices such as energy efficient design, water conservation and stormwater management, and shade trees to reduce the ground temperatures in the summer. In addition to conserving resources and protecting species, this principle improves overall quality of life by providing places for everyone to enjoy the outdoors with family outings and by creating a sense of open space.

A NOTE ON TRANSPORTATION

A transportation system has been created to go with the Discussion Draft Preferred Blueprint Scenario for 2050 (i.e. the land use map) for purposes of identifying the basic connections between the land use pattern and transportation system performance. However, any decisions to make changes to the transportation investment priorities reflected in the currently adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) will only be made by the SACOG Board of Directors through subsequent updates to the MTP. In other words, the transportation system which underlies the Blueprint Map is for educational purposes, and does not reflect a policy recommendation or decision by the Board.