

growing pains

san francisco bay area . third scenario . projections to 2035

On February 9, 2009, local government representatives and other interested parties were asked to discuss a series of growth-related policy issues, as they relate to the San Francisco Bay Area. Session Four focused on Growing Pains. Below are the questions posed by Ken Kirkey, ABAG Planning Director, and the responses from participants.

What are your community's growth constraints?

- o Lack of vacant land, Other limits on Greenfield Development
- o Insufficient population to support new transit
- o Community opposition 'Change is bad'; anti-density, poor past developments
- o Commercial developers not interested in building housing; density not penciling out
- o School Quality, perception that best schools are in low density areas
- o Water, School districts are not in conformity with *Projections 2009*
- o Jobs/housing affordability match
- o Voter Initiative on the hills; misunderstanding of statutory funding for schools that means they won't be burdened by development
- o Voter Initiative; lack of Employment Centers; Unincorporated Areas have wells, no sewers. Drought.
- o Infrastructure: drainage, water; lack of parks
- o Desire to remain a bedroom community
- o Timing the delivery of infrastructure to meet needs of new residents; lack of planning capacity to handle multiple projects
- o Developers are only proposing to do the commercial side of mixed use; city is approving b/c needs money
- o Growth Cap; schools don't require developer gifts from Affordable Housing developments. To pay for increased enrollment
- o Growth Cap
- o Schools have been redeveloped into housing, but are now needed again
- o "Fiscalization", just completed fiscal study
- o Clean up costs on industrial land
- o Competing land uses
- o Private property rights: transit-adjacent property owners get non-conforming project approval when politically connected.
- o Traffic
- o Auto-centric lifestyle
- o Lack of public appreciation for good development

What are the benefits of growth?

- Supports local merchants and small businesses
- Growth is inevitable and must be directed
- Can increase walkability, such as Octavia Boulevard
- Address climate change, esp. w/ green building
- Increased comfort with growth, less NIMBY (not in my backyard)
- Homes support commercial retail
- Downtown redevelopment; Residential/commercial synergy
- Community Integrity: growth allows service providers like teachers, police, and firefighters to live in county. It also eases low-income HH crowding, can bring back adult children priced out of the county and increase family time.

What do you see as the major impacts from growth?

- Cultural elements: who are the new residents?
- Transit-oriented development is mostly 1-bedrooms, but incoming households are large families
- Perception that families will crowd into medium-density homes
- Preference for monster town-homes and condos that can accommodate kids, relatives, two bathrooms.
- BART Parking. Reduced parking rates for transit-oriented Development worsens already constrained parking in station area
- Water prices are rising at the same time that people are conserving more.
- Shifting demographics: have a large Adult Living Community at odds with younger population
- Shifting demographics: older voters tend to be more active and more conservative
- Affluent, educated communities understand relationship between climate change and growth, but are not organized
- Shifting demographics: largest Latino population; language barrier

How can we capitalize on the benefits, while minimizing the impacts of growth?

- Help cities understand the benefits of directing growth; understand where to locate growth for maximum benefit
- Connect the benefits of growth to smaller communities
- Add jobs to residential areas
- Recognize the health benefits of infill, including by using Healthy Development Measurement Tool (HDMT.)
- Projects need to have tangible, visible benefits--most regional benefits are invisible
- More education on the link between density and climate change
- More education needed on Single Family vs. Multi-Family water use.
- Get better at providing neighborhood commercial services. Rural areas with lots of open space care less about climate change and more about what amenities growth can bring.

- Outreach to seniors uncovered a desire to downsize into downtown units with access to parks and street life. Samtrans buses for seniors cannot get to homes in the hills. Helping seniors to move would free up homes for new families.
- Help public understand that more than a slight increase in growth is necessary to achieve substantial neighborhood improvements (walkability, streetscape, retail); connect local congestion impacts to PRICING
- Need ordinances to minimize noise and air quality impacts from placing new dev. next to freeways.

Other Thoughts

- There should be more sub-regional solutions worked out between adjacent cities
- Councils want to be green but this doesn't follow through to project approval
- Will defining sustainability in the SCS lead to greater project support?
- Climate change conversation can be manipulated by opponents to growth