

Attachment 1: Community Open House – Public Comments / Questions and Staff Response

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Comment / Question	Staff Response
<p>The County already adopted Strategic Growth principles and policies. Why are we evaluating economic impacts now, after the fact?</p>	<p>These principles and policies shape the County’s vision of future growth. That vision will be achieved over time through various implementing strategies. The Land Use Economic Study is narrowly focused on one of these strategies: placing limitations on rural growth. The limitations could be enacted through amendments to the GMO; however, there is currently no proposal to do so. Before considering and preparing any proposals involving growth limitations in rural areas, it would be prudent to gain a better understanding about their potential land use and economic effects. Any amendment to the GMO would involve substantial public participation during environmental review and hearings at the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The Land Use and Economics study would provide essential information to be used during this public discussion.</p>
<p>There is no need to limit rural growth because state and county growth trends are already declining.</p>	<p>SLOCOG’s adopted Population, Housing, and Employment Forecast (AECOM; 2011) projects that the county will grow by 64,740 people between 2010 and 2040 (30,420 people in the seven cities and 34,320 people in the unincorporated area) at an average annual growth rate of 0.8%. The unincorporated growth is projected to be distributed as follows: 8,354 units (63 percent) in urban and village areas and 5,030 units (37 percent) in rural areas. The growth caps evaluated in the Land Use and Economics Study would shift more of this development to urban and village areas, consistent with the goals of SLOCOG’s <i>2010 Regional Transportation Plan-Preliminary Sustainable Communities Strategy</i>.</p>
<p>How will the growth restrictions affect housing affordability? Will they affect the County’s ability to meet State Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) targets for affordable housing production?</p>	<p>The economic study found that the potential growth caps will result in modest price increases for rural and urban housing. This could have an effect on housing affordability. Reduced rural housing supplies will not affect the County’s ability to meet State RHNA targets because the sites identified in the Housing Element to meet these targets are located within the County’s unincorporated urban areas (not in rural areas</p>

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	where the growth limitations would apply).
More farmland could be converted if land values rise due to rural growth limitations.	This statement presumes that, by limiting residential development on non-agricultural parcels in rural areas of the county, the potential growth caps would increase land values on agricultural parcels (where on the larger parcels, the caps would not apply) and therefore accelerate the conversion of farmland. The Land Use Economics Study predicts that the potential growth caps would increase residential development on agricultural parcels but does not estimate related impacts on farmland.
Local politics in the County’s urban areas will resist any shift in housing development away from rural areas.	The County’s adopted Strategic Growth principles and policies and related State mandates (AB 32 and SB 375) encourage community-focused growth. While political opposition can impede the implementation of strategic growth, these factors are difficult to quantify and are unpredictable over the long-term (30 year) timeframe that is analyzed in the land use economics study. However, the study does acknowledge that there will be a smaller shift (46%) from rural to urban growth if the county’s urban areas maintain their current growth policies, compared to the larger (66%) shift that could occur if the county’s urban areas adopt strong incentives to encourage development.
The County’s urban areas lack the resources and infrastructure necessary for growth.	The County’s efforts to implement Strategic Growth include initiatives to plan for and support infrastructure and development in the County’s urban areas.