

Vacaville at a Crossroads

The path to smart growth or a highway to sprawl?

S O L A N O
Orderly Growth
C O M M I T T E E



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Executive Summary

Vacaville is at a crossroads, facing two very different choices for how it will grow in the future. One option, promoted by Vacaville's Planning Commission, would have Vacaville annex and develop over 4,000 acres beyond the current city limits. This is above and beyond the planned development of approximately 2,500 acres currently undeveloped within the present city limits. Together, these proposed developments could cover over 6,500 acres, including the high quality farmlands and scenic valleys that make Vacaville unique. Lands at risk include:

- Upper Lagoon and Vaca Valleys (collectively known as Pleasants Valley)
- Lower Lagoon Valley
- Lands east of Leisure Town Road
- Lands northeast of Vacaville

In addition, a massive loop road system around the entire city would pave the way for further development and destruction of farmland and open space.

This outdated model of sprawl development comes at a high price:

- Sprawl results in a lack of transportation choices and increased traffic congestion, and a lack of housing choices and affordable housing.
- The way sprawl development is designed and the environmental degradation it causes have serious negative impacts on human health. A 2001 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention documents connections between sprawl and chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and depression.
- As farmland is lost to sprawl, remaining farmers face great uncertainty and intense pressure to develop their land.
- Taxpayers must pay the costs of increasing and maintaining highways and other major infrastructure, as well as the costs of addressing social, environmental, and public health problems associated with sprawl.
- Businesses face the costs of new infrastructure, environmental mitigation, loss in worker productivity, and reductions in business competitiveness and long-term profitability.
- Residents of new sprawl developments pay the high price of auto dependency – commuting to and from work and nearly every other destination – as well as the cost of new sprawl infrastructure and services.
- Residents of older neighborhoods may face a loss of business and government investment, as well as income segregation and a loss of social stability.

Fortunately, there is a better option. Instead of sprawling outward, Vacaville should focus growth inward using a smart growth model. Smart growth seeks to build sustainable communities that meet housing and job needs without sacrificing a community's sense of identity and quality of life for current and future residents. Vacaville has great potential to become a model of smart growth by placing homes, stores, and jobs near each other, expanding

attractive and affordable housing choices, improving public transit, promoting safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists, and preserving surrounding open space and agricultural lands.

Focusing development within the city while protecting nearby farmland and open space would protect and preserve Vacaville's quality of life for the long-term. By promoting attractive and affordable infill housing, we can ensure homes for our teachers, firefighters, military personnel, hospital workers, childcare providers, and others essential to our community. By encouraging business investment in central areas of the city, we can secure more and higher paying jobs within our existing city so that people who currently live in our community have more opportunities to work in our community. By increasing the walkability of town and adding a greater mix of residential, office, and commercial uses in central areas, our community health and safety could actually increase.

Areas within the city that have development or redevelopment potential include:

- Central Vacaville
- Major streets throughout town
- The Factory Outlets and other commercial centers
- Rehabilitation and second unit additions in existing neighborhoods
- The Nut Tree Core Area
- The I-80/I-505 business park
- North Village
- The Rice-McMurtry area

Vacaville has a choice of how to grow. Rather than paving over agriculture and open space, the city should enact policies and laws that promote smart growth within the city, on vacant or redevelopable sites, thereby enhancing the community and preserving the farmlands and scenic valleys that give Vacaville its unique character.

VACAVILLE AT A CROSSROADS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
A BRIEF HISTORY	3
VACAVILLE'S GROWTH	5
VACAVILLE'S FUTURE: LIVABLE COMMUNITY PATH OR SPRAWL HIGHWAY?	7
LANDS WEST OF VACAVILLE	7
LANDS EAST OF VACAVILLE	8
LANDS NORTHEAST OF VACAVILLE	10
LOWER LAGOON VALLEY	11
A LOOP ROAD SYSTEM AROUND THE CITY	12
THE COSTS OF SPRAWL	15
THE COST OF SPRAWL ON TRANSPORTATION CHOICES AND TRAFFIC	15
THE COST OF SPRAWL ON HOUSING CHOICES AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY	16
THE COST OF SPRAWL ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH	17
THE COST OF SPRAWL TO FARMERS	19
THE COST OF SPRAWL TO TAXPAYERS	20
THE COST OF SPRAWL TO BUSINESSES	21
THE COST OF SPRAWL TO RESIDENTS OF NEW SPRAWL DEVELOPMENTS	22
THE COST OF SPRAWL TO RESIDENTS OF OLDER NEIGHBORHOODS	22
CHOOSING SMARTER GROWTH	24
A SMART GROWTH VISION FOR VACAVILLE	26
CENTRAL VACAVILLE	28
MAJOR STREETS THROUGHOUT TOWN	29
THE FACTORY OUTLETS AND OTHER COMMERCIAL CENTERS	31
EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS	31
THE NUT TREE CORE AREA	32
THE I-80/I-505 BUSINESS PARK	33
NORTH VILLAGE	34
RICE-MC MURTRY AREA	35
CHALLENGES TO INFILL AND STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM	36
CONCLUSION	37

INTRODUCTION

Vacaville is at a crossroads. The city has a choice between two very different approaches to land use planning for the next 25 years. Over 4,000 acres beyond the current city limits are proposed for annexation and development in Vacaville's draft development plans.^{1,2} These annexations are above and beyond the planned development of approximately 2,500 acres currently undeveloped within the present city limits.^{3,4} Together, these proposed developments could cover over 6,500 acres, including the high quality agricultural lands and scenic valleys that make Vacaville unique.

More growth will come to Vacaville, just as it has to the rest of the region. The question is not *will* Vacaville grow, but *how* can we accommodate growth in a sensible manner that promotes our economic, environmental and community well-being?

Vacaville can adopt a smart growth approach to its future rather than choosing the sprawl development pattern described above. Smart growth is development that serves the economic, environmental, and social needs of a community. Smart growth includes reinvesting within existing communities; designing developments to be compact and efficient; locating homes, businesses and services within walking distance of one another; increasing the safety and convenience of walking, bicycling, and taking public transit; offering a range of housing options for people of different incomes; and preserving farmland and open space.⁵

Vacaville can set ground rules so that developers apply these smart growth principles to Vacaville's central areas, on vacant or redevelopable sites, thereby enhancing our community. Without such ground rules, sprawl development patterns will continue. Through smart growth we can promote investment within our existing city. We can design attractive, compact development within Vacaville instead of sprawling outward. We can secure more and higher paying jobs within our existing city so that people who currently live in our community will have more opportunities to work in our community. At the same time, we can provide housing that is attractive and affordable for our teachers, firefighters, military personnel, hospital workers, childcare providers, and others essential to our community. We can benefit from pedestrian and bicycle-friendly designs and transit-oriented designs in our existing and new neighborhoods. We can revitalize our downtown and our underutilized areas with attractive mixes of housing, stores, and jobs close to one another.

These solutions use land efficiently, and avoid the high costs of sprawl. They do not create the traffic nightmares that increased sprawl would cause. By reducing commute times, they would increase the time families have to spend together. They would assist residents in need of higher paying jobs and encourage more affordable housing for those who live or work in Vacaville. They would help us accommodate our growth in a way that revitalizes our existing

¹ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002.

² The Vacaville City Council reviewed *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025* at a public meeting in February 2002 and postponed the decision of whether or not to adopt it, citing the need for additional public input.

³ Macaulay, Bob. City Planner. Personal Communication. February 2002.

⁴ City of Vacaville Staff Commission Report. November 20, 2001.

⁵ The National Neighborhood Coalition. <http://www.neighborhoodcoalition.org/smart%20growth.htm>

communities. They would preserve our farmland and open space. They would make our community an even better place to live.

These solutions are not unrealistic. Other communities are beginning to move in this direction as they see what a difference it can make. Vacaville is at a crossroads, and it too can take a livable community path instead of a sprawl highway. Greenbelt Alliance and the Solano Orderly Growth Committee are dedicated to helping the City of Vacaville and its residents take this livable path that empowers our community to invest in the Vacaville of today and plan wisely for our future.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Vacaville has a rich agricultural history, dating back to 1842 when Manuel Vaca and Felipe Peña first settled in the area to graze cattle. Following the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, Vacaville became nationally recognized for its fruit harvest, which was shipped to major cities of the East Coast.⁶

Since the 1950s, Vacaville has transformed from a rural farm town to a suburban bedroom community, spurred by the growth of neighboring Bay Area counties and the development of Interstate 80 as a major highway connecting the Bay Area to the Sacramento-Northern Sierra area. High job growth and a lack of affordable housing in neighboring Bay Area counties have driven people to relocate to less expensive Solano County and commute to job-rich neighboring counties.

Today, local farmers on Vacaville's outskirts and throughout the county face serious economic challenges, land scarcity due to encroaching development, and problems with the urban-agriculture interface. Several major agricultural businesses have left Vacaville over the years, including Basic Foods and International Home Foods in 1986 and 1998, respectively.^{7,8} Fortunately Vacaville is now headquarters to the Mariani Packing Company, the largest dried fruit processor in the United States.⁹

Major employers in Vacaville include the Albertson's Distribution Center (600 employees), Alza Pharmaceuticals (550), Hines Nursery (380), Travis Credit Union (370), Kaiser Permanente (320), and Genentech (300).¹⁰ The three largest government employers within the city are the California State Prison-Solano, the Vacaville Unified School District, and the City of Vacaville. Travis Air Force Base, located between Vacaville and Fairfield, employs an estimated 1,500 Vacaville residents as Active Duty personnel.¹¹

Agriculture remains an important sector of Solano's economy. Agriculture takes place on 64% of county land and generates nearly \$1.5 billion in revenues each year.¹² Solano produces 20.4% of the state's sheep and lambs and 10.6% of the state's corn and grain.¹³ Farmland near Vacaville is an important supplier of walnuts, prunes, pears, pasture (e.g., alfalfa), grains, and corn.¹⁴

Solano County's Orderly Growth Initiative, also known as Proposition A, preserves county farmland by preventing the Board of Supervisors from rezoning those lands for other purposes.¹⁵ It was enacted in 1984 by popular vote, renewed in 1995, and secured until 2010. While the Orderly Growth Initiative protects county agricultural land, it does not prevent cities

⁶ Limbaugh, Ronald H. and Walter A. Payne. *Vacaville: Heritage of a California Community*. Vacaville City Council, 1978. p.104.

⁷ Fitch, Mike. *Solano Losing Last Basic Facility*. The Reporter. December 16, 1998.

⁸ Fitch, Mike. *Cannery Will Close*. The Reporter. September 25, 1998.

⁹ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*. March 7, 2002. p.17.

¹⁰ City of Vacaville Planning Commission Report, *Vacaville 2025: A Vision for Our Community*. April 17, 2001.

¹¹ City of Vacaville Planning Commission Report, *Vacaville 2025: A Vision for Our Community*. April 17, 2001.

¹² 2001 *Solano County Crop & Livestock Report*. p.3.

¹³ 2001 *Solano County Crop & Livestock Report*. p.5.

¹⁴ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*. March 7, 2002. pp.30, 36.

¹⁵ *Orderly Growth Initiative Title and Summary Document*, January, 14, 1994.

from annexing county farmland into their city limits for development. Over 99,000 acres of agricultural land and other open space in Solano County are at risk of being developed in the next 30 years. 42,724 of these acres are at risk in the next 10 years.¹⁶ Therefore in addition to the county's Orderly Growth Initiative, Solano County cities must take leadership in adopting land use policies that protect nearby farmland and open space.

¹⁶ Greenbelt Alliance. *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*. 2000. p.23.

VACAVILLE'S GROWTH

Vacaville's land area grew by 24% in the 1990s with the annexations of North Village and Lower Lagoon Valley, reaching a land area of 17,158 acres (26.8 square miles) by the year 2000.¹⁷ The City's draft *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025* proposes annexation of over 4,000 additional acres into the city limits.¹⁸ If these planned annexations occur, Vacaville's land area will increase by 23% or more.

The city has doubled in household population over the past 20 years – from 41,334 residents in 1980 to 82,470 residents in 2000 (91,461 if the state prison population is included).^{19,20} Over the next 20 years, Vacaville must construct approximately 12,400 additional housing units to meet its fair share of the Regional Housing Need Determination, decided by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the State Department of Housing and Community Development.²¹

The pace of job growth has fallen far behind this population and housing boom. Vacaville, and Solano County as a whole, faces a severe jobs-housing imbalance. In the year 2000, Vacaville had 28,105 households with over 40,600 employed residents, but only 26,470 jobs available in the city.^{22,23} This jobs-housing ratio of .93 is far below the city's recommended ratio of 1.5.²⁴ The lack of jobs and the discrepancy between wages and housing prices make it very difficult for Vacaville residents to work in the community. Over 60% of working Vacaville residents commute to jobs outside the city.²⁵

Vacaville has made great strides in expanding its affordable housing. In the last four years, the City has changed the zoning of six commercial properties to allow construction of multi-family housing. 884 apartment units have been constructed, and a building permit is pending for another 312 units.²⁶

Still, Vacaville faces a lack of affordable housing for its residents and workers. In 2000, median household income was \$51,735, and the median home price was \$192,792.^{27,28} Only 25% of the city's population seeking to buy a home in 2000 was expected to qualify

¹⁷ Vacaville Community Development Department. *Vacaville 2025 A Vision for our Community: Community Profile and Trends Report*. May 2001, p.88.

¹⁸ Macaulay, Bob. City Planner. Personal Communication. February 2001

¹⁹ 1980 US Census information from City of Vacaville Community Development Department, *Historic Population Growth* handout, 5/12/00.

²⁰ 2000 US Census information from City of Vacaville Community Development Department, *Historic Population Growth* handout, 5/12/00.

²¹ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Community Development Director. Personal communication. 10/2/02.

²² 2000 US Census information from City of Vacaville Community Development Department, *Historic Population Growth* handout, 5/12/00.

²³ Association of Bay Area Governments, *Projections 2000*. As cited in *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*, December 11, 2001, p.7

²⁴ City of Vacaville Planning Staff Report, June 19, 2001.

²⁵ Vacaville Community Development Department. *Vacaville 2025 A Vision for our Community: Community Profile and Trends Report*. May, 2001, p.6.

²⁶ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Community Development Director. Personal communication. October, 2, 2002.

²⁷ *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.11.

²⁸ Vacaville Community Development Department. *Vacaville 2025 A Vision for our Community: Community Profile and Trends Report*. May 2001, p.6.

financially.²⁹ Since 2000, there has been a further dramatic increase in the median home cost. It is clear that many young people entering the workforce, along with young families, seniors, and others with modest incomes will need housing choices other than single-family homes. Yet, despite the need for more affordable housing choices such as duplexes, townhouses, condos, and apartments, the city maintains a General Plan Housing Mix policy specifying that 60% of the city's housing be single-family detached homes, thereby allowing only 40% of housing to be multifamily or mixed-use. In fact, the city reports that over 70% of Vacaville housing is in the form of detached single-family homes in standard tract subdivisions.³⁰

²⁹ Vacaville Community Development Department. *Vacaville 2025 A Vision for our Community: Community Profile and Trends Report*. May, 2001, p.6.

³⁰ Vacaville Community Development Department. *Vacaville 2025 A Vision for our Community: Community Profile and Trends Report*. May, 2001, p.6.

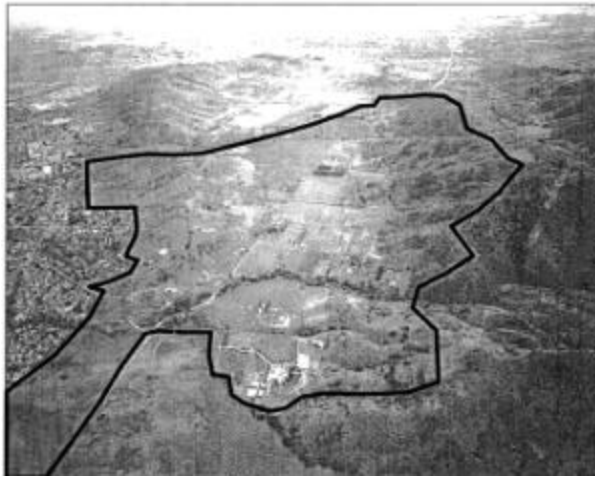
VACAVILLE’S FUTURE: LIVABLE COMMUNITY PATH OR SPRAWL HIGHWAY?

Vacaville has a choice of how to grow. The City’s draft *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025* chooses massive sprawl. While the Planning Commission approved this plan, the City Council reviewed the draft vision statement and postponed the decision of whether or not to adopt it, citing the need for additional public input.³¹ If this plan is adopted, Vacaville will develop all the “greenfield” farmland and open space described below.

Lands West of Vacaville

Table 1: Lands West of Vacaville^{32,33}

At Risk: Upper Lagoon & Vaca Valleys (Pleasants Valley) ³⁴	
Acres at risk of annexation & development	1,440
Greenfield development proposed	1,300 luxury housing units Golf course Corporate office & Regional commercial development



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Upper Lagoon and Vaca Valleys (referred to collectively as Pleasants Valley) have been at risk of annexation and development by the City of Vacaville for over a decade. The city’s 2002 draft vision report plans for corporate office and regional commercial development in the Cherry Glen area adjacent to the freeway, and upscale housing for the length of Pleasants Valley Road between Cherry Glen Road and Vaca Valley Road, and the length of Vaca Valley Road.

In conjunction with these developments, Pleasants Valley Road, California Drive, Vaca Valley Road, Cherry Glen Road, and the Cherry Glen and Pena Adobe interchange would be widened. California Drive and Vaca Valley Road would be widened and extended, involving

cutting major roadways through hillsides currently designated as city open space.^{35,36}

³¹ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Community Development Director. Personal communication. October, 2, 2002.

³² Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Community Visioning: Opportunities and Constraints Analysis of Study Areas*. August 20, 2001. pp.26, 29.

³³ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, pp.38-39.

³⁴ Land along Pleasants Valley Road, Cherry Glen Road, Rogers Lane and Vaca Valley Road.

The loss of these valleys and hillsides to development would be a great loss for Vacaville, and for Solano County as a whole. The Solano Land Trust (SLT) performed a thorough analysis of farmland throughout Solano and identified Lagoon and Vaca Valleys as high preservation priority areas for the county.³⁷ This classification means that this area has very high quality soils (Class 1 soils), a reliable source of agricultural water, few limitations for agricultural production, and that the area is highly threatened.³⁸

SLT identifies several threats to agriculture in these valleys, including (1) the allowance of small parcel sizes that make farming more difficult, (2) neighboring residential areas, and (3) the expectation that the city will annex the valleys. The speculative value of this land for annexation and development by the city clearly indicates the intensity of development pressure. While SLT places land values in the area at an estimated \$3,000 to \$6,000 per acre, some owners of farmland at the border of the city are asking for up to \$50,000 per acre.



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Homeowners in Pleasants Valley have formed the Pleasants Valley Neighborhood Association to protect the valley’s unique farmland.

Lands East of Vacaville

Table 2: Lands East of Vacaville^{39,40}

At Risk: Eastern Edge	
Acres at risk of annexation	1,400
Greenfield development proposed	4,900-7,300 housing units Golf course

³⁵ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, pp.38-39.

³⁶ *Vacaville General Plan, Volume One: Plan Policies*. August 1990, Chapter 6, pp.5-6.

³⁷ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*, March 2002. p.24.

³⁸ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*, March 2002. pp.24, 30.

³⁹ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Community Visioning: Opportunities and Constraints Analysis of Study Areas*. August 20, 2001. p. 20.

⁴⁰ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Vacaville 2025: A Vision for Our Community: Alternatives Analysis*. November 20, 2001.



Vacaville’s draft Vision also plans for annexation of the “Eastern Edge” – lands east of Leisure Town Road, outside the current city limits. While the plans for this area include compact development and pedestrian and bicycle-oriented streets with a mix of townhouses, apartments, and single-family housing of varied house and lot sizes, these smart growth principles are proposed for urban expansion that will pave over 1,400 acres of farmland.

SLT identifies prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance in this area.⁴¹ Urban expansion east of Leisure Town Road is emphasized by SLT as a serious threat to the agriculture in that region.⁴²

The City acknowledges that development in this region would direct urban growth into an area of prime agricultural land and adjacent to active agriculture.⁴³ The City proposes the development of a golf course on current farmland to serve as a buffer between new housing and farmland further east. In addition to this development of farmland, the expansion of Leisure Town Road from two lanes to four lanes and the expansion and extension of two more roads yet further east would add pressure for the city to continue this trend of sprawling outward.

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Rather than trying to apply smart growth principles while paving over farmland, the city should set ground rules so that developers apply smart growth principles to Vacaville’s central areas, on vacant or redevelopable sites, thereby enhancing the city and preserving surrounding farmland.



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⁴¹ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*, March 2002. p.36.

⁴² Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*, March 2002. p.36.

⁴³ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Community Visioning: Opportunities and Constraints Analysis of Study Areas*. August 20, 2001. p.21.

Lands Northeast of Vacaville

Table 3: Lands Northeast of Vacaville^{44,45,46}

At Risk: Northeast of Vacaville	
Acres at risk of annexation	1,200-3,100
Greenfield development proposed	Housing units Corporate office, Regional commercial, & Industrial development

The city’s draft vision report plans for a new urban village in the area northeast of Vacaville. Industrial, commercial, office, residential, mixed-use, and public facility developments are planned with corporate office, research and development, and regional commercial uses anticipated.⁴⁷

As in the case of the Eastern Edge area, principles of mixed-use and pedestrian and bicycle-friendliness are proposed, but they are proposed in the context of annexing and developing 1,200 acres outside the existing city. Across the freeway lie the I-80/I-505 business parks, with several hundred acres of largely undeveloped land already served by roads and utilities.⁴⁸ Vacaville can instead apply these principles in developing these business parks as well as revitalizing central streets, existing neighborhoods, and the downtown.



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⁴⁴ Rowland, Ron and Bob Macaulay. City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Community Visioning: Opportunities and Constraints Analysis of Study Areas*. August, 20, 2001, pp.14, 17.

⁴⁵ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Vacaville 2025: A Vision for Our Community: Alternatives Analysis*. November 20, 2001.

⁴⁷ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p. 50.

⁴⁸ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p. 35.

Lower Lagoon Valley

Table 4: Lower Lagoon Valley^{49,50}

At Risk: Lower Lagoon Valley	
Acres at risk	~825 acres annexed and zoned for development
Greenfield development proposed	730-1200 housing units ⁵¹ 4 million sq. ft. office 1 million sq. ft. commercial Golf course

Lower Lagoon Valley was annexed into the city of Vacaville at the time of the 1990 General Plan. In 1991, the city approved a Specific Plan and entered into a development agreement for corporate office and executive housing developments south and west of Lagoon Valley Park. Development plans have been dormant for over ten years due to the high cost of infrastructure for this leapfrog development and unfavorable economic conditions. A recent proposal by Triad Development has renewed debate over the fate of the valley.



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The debate over whether or not to develop Lower Lagoon Valley is significantly more complex than the debate over Upper Lagoon Valley and Vaca Valley. This is because Lower Lagoon Valley is already annexed into the city and zoned for business park, commercial, and upscale residential development. Thus, those who want the valley to remain as open space are fighting an uphill battle against sky-high property values, the existing General Plan, zoning, and Specific Plan designations, and a legally binding development agreement between the city, property owners, and developers.

Lower Lagoon Valley is an extremely poor choice for development for numerous reasons. The valley is widely recognized as open space of regional significance. Its value as a community buffer is extremely high as it is the last remaining undeveloped valley south of the freeway between the cities of Fairfield and Vacaville. In addition to its beauty and tranquility, the valley’s open space holds high natural habitat value, watershed value, and recreational value.

⁴⁹ Macaulay, Bob. City Planner. Personal communication. February, 2002.

⁵⁰ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p. 35.

⁵¹ A Policy Plan adopted in 1990 allows a maximum of 730 dwelling units, but proposals have been higher (Source: City Council Agenda Item No. 9a, April 9, 2002).

Moreover, the valley is geographically separated from the existing city. Development would require costly infrastructure and city services, and residents and workers would need to use the freeway to access the rest of the city.

A growing citizens group called Friends of Lagoon Valley has formed to attempt to preserve Lower Lagoon Valley as open space and agricultural land. They are taking on the tremendous challenge of raising an estimated \$55 million to purchase the valley at fair market value from property owners.⁵² If this \$55 million fundraising goal is not achievable, owners of property in the valley could at least be reimbursed for the assessment fees they have paid since the early 1990s when the land was zoned for commercial, business park, and residential development. Though it would be complex and controversial, the city could then seek legal termination of the development agreement entered in the early 1990s, on the basis that numerous agreed upon deadlines have not been met by developers. The General Plan and Specific Plan could then be amended to re-zone the valley as open space and agricultural land, or the city could redraw the city limits to remove Lower Lagoon Valley from the city.

If however, development of the valley becomes inevitable, it should be designed using smart growth principles of mixed-use, including various affordable housing choices such as townhomes, condos, small lot single-family homes and apartments. It should be pedestrian, bicycle and public transit oriented rather than leaving people with no practical choice but to drive. Furthermore, development should focus heavily on bringing jobs to Vacaville to help improve the city's job-housing imbalance, rather than being another huge residential sprawl development. With these design characteristics, residents of the valley will at least have housing and transportation choices, and Vacaville will at least improve its employment opportunities.

A Loop Road System around the City

Along with all of these annexation and development plans, Vacaville's Vision report proposes a massive loop road system around the city. This loop road system would not only service the over 4,000 acres of development planned outside of the current city, it would also supply the necessary infrastructure for yet more sprawl. These loop roads and the surrounding sprawl developments would increase noise, air, and water pollution and increase traffic congestion.

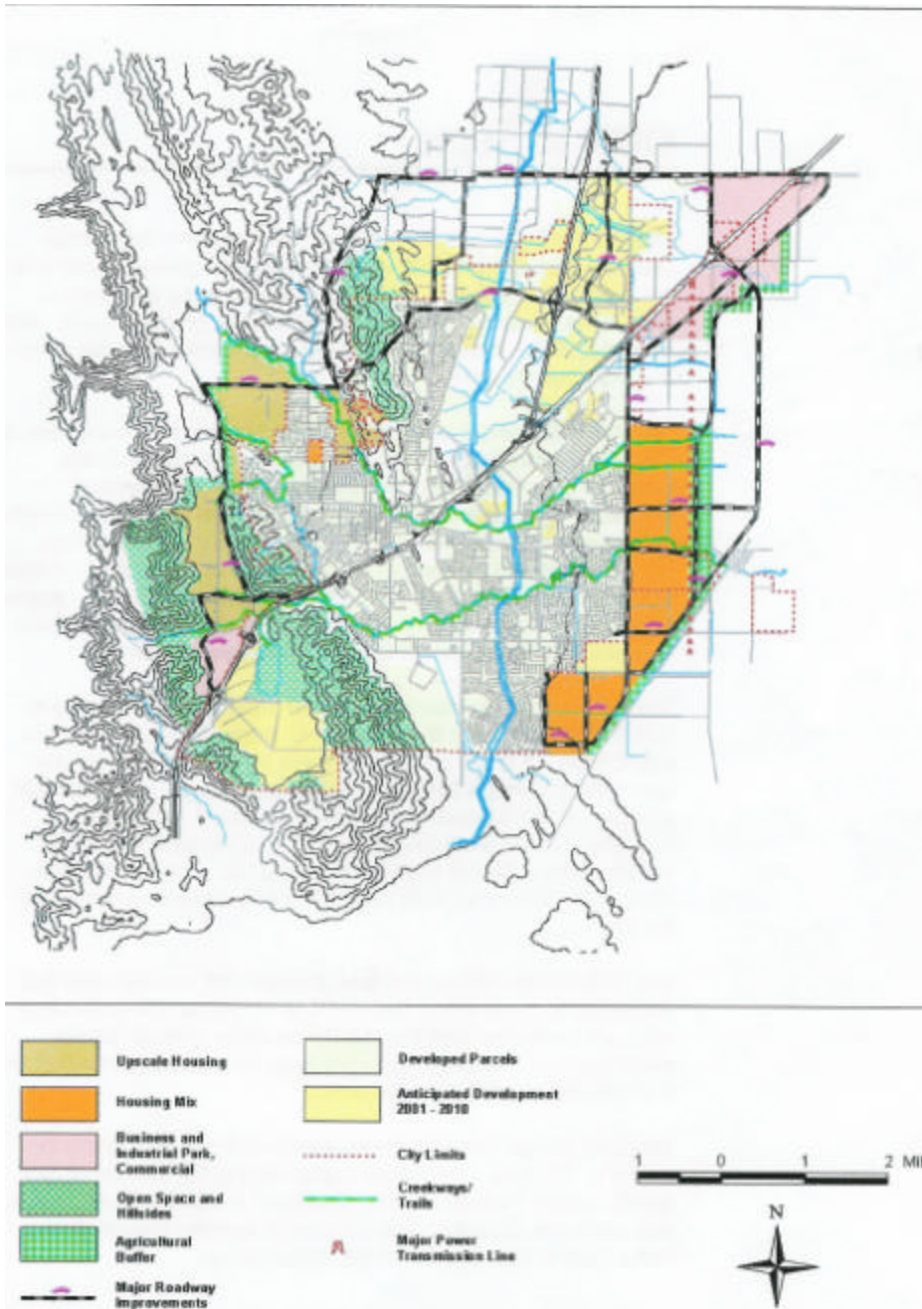


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Vaca Valley Parkway is planned for expansion that would cut through the hills north of Old Rocky, an area currently designated as city open space. The expansion of Cantelow Road and several roads connecting Vaca Valley Parkway and Cantelow Road would put heavy

⁵² Mannes, Tanya. *Rally for the Valley*. The Reporter. July 23, 2002.

annexation and development pressure on surrounding areas. The conversion of two-lane Leisure Town Road to four-lane Jepson Parkway and the expansion of two additional roads east of Leisure Town Road would add further pressure for farmland to be paved over. While not outlined in the city's draft vision report, the city's General Plan also calls for cutting through more hills designated as city open space to connect California Drive from Peabody to Cherry Glen Road. The City's plan for a massive loop road system is depicted below.



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Numerous studies at the national and regional level find that expanded roadways don't solve congestion problems and often encourage more driving. At the same time, these roadway expansions lay the foundation for further sprawl development, which adds yet more drivers to the roads. A 2001 study by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) based on data from the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) found that *metropolitan regions that focused heavily on road building were in fact no less congested than regions that added relatively few roads*. Examining growth in road capacity (measured as the number of lane miles of major roadway per person), the STPP found that despite major differences in road-building, the high road-building group and low-road building group came out nearly the same on rush-hour congestion levels.⁵³

Table 5: Congestion Gets Worse in Areas That Build More Roads ⁵⁴

	Change (1990 to 1999)	
	Lane Miles per Capita, Major Roads	Annual Hours of Delay per Capita
High Road-Building Group	+17%	+70%
Low Road-Building Group	-14%	+62%

⁵³ STPP, *Easing the Burden: A Companion Analysis of the Texas Transportation Institute's Data on Metropolitan Congestion*, May 2001. As cited in Hobson, Jeff. *Balanced Transportation: Achieving Congestion Relief and Meeting Transportation Needs in Solano County*. Solano Orderly Growth Committee, Greenbelt Alliance, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and Surface Transportation Policy Project. p.4.

⁵⁴ STPP, 2001, based on TTI data for 1990 to 1999. As cited in Hobson, Jeff. *Balanced Transportation: Achieving Congestion Relief and Meeting Transportation Needs in Solano County*. Solano Orderly Growth Committee, Greenbelt Alliance, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and Surface Transportation Policy Project. p.4.

THE COSTS OF SPRAWL

Sprawl describes the pattern of urban and suburban development whereby relatively low density, auto-dependent single-family housing tracts and strip-mall style commercial developments move deeper and deeper into farmland and open space, and farther and farther away from town and city centers. Sprawl has characterized growth since World War II, and the cost of sprawl to economic vitality and quality of life is becoming increasingly apparent throughout the nation.⁵⁵

While sprawl development promises the American Dream of a big single family home with a private yard in a safe suburb, this dream awakens to a costly reality. Sprawl wastes land. It costs more than compact development; it limits choices in housing and transportation; and it can eat away at a community's vitality. Everyone loses due to sprawl: from downtown merchants to city core residents to suburban home buyers.

The Cost of Sprawl on Transportation choices and Traffic

- *Sprawl development limits transportation choices.* Sprawling development patterns segregate homes, businesses, schools, and commercial areas farther and farther apart from one another and from town and city centers, so that people are left with little choice but to drive to and from work, as well as to and from every errand and activity. In Solano, only 6% of homes and 12% of jobs are located 1/3 mile from a rail station or 1/4 mile from a bus stop with frequent bus service, and lack of crosswalks and bike lanes make it difficult and in some cases dangerous for people to walk or bicycle to destinations.⁵⁶

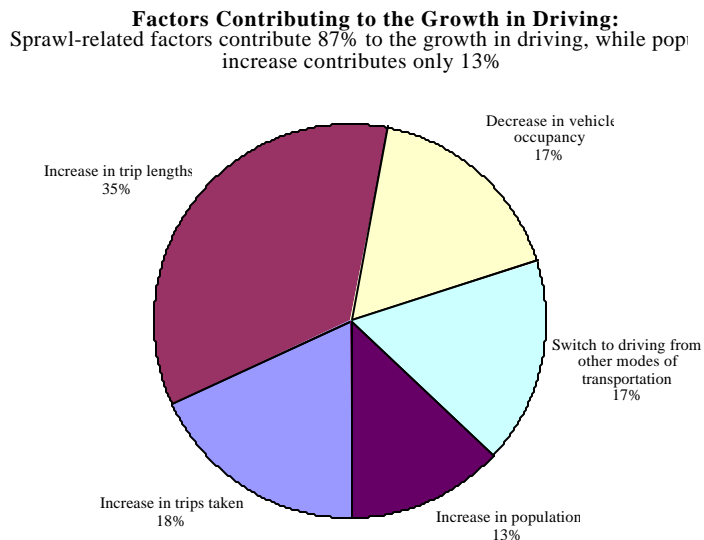


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⁵⁵ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California*. p.1.

⁵⁶ Hobson, Jeff. *Balanced Transportation: Achieving Congestion Relief and Meeting Transportation Needs in Solano County*. Solano Orderly Growth Committee, Greenbelt Alliance, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and Surface Transportation Policy Project. p.2.

- Sprawl is the leading cause of traffic congestion.* Contrary to popular belief, numerous studies show that sprawl is the primary cause of traffic congestion, not population growth. According to the United States Department of Transportation, 87% of growth in driving between 1983 and 1990 was caused by sprawl-related factors.⁵⁷ While Solano is expected to have a 45% increase in population by 2025, miles traveled by residents is expected to increase by 60% and hours on the road is expected to increase by 150%. Sprawling land-use patterns cause an increase in trip lengths, an increase in trips taken, a decrease in vehicle occupancy, and a shift from using other forms of transportation to driving.⁵⁸



The Cost of Sprawl on Housing Choices and Housing Affordability

- Sprawl development limits housing choices and housing affordability.* While suburban sprawl creates tracts of single-family detached homes with few or no other housing choices, a large proportion of households throughout the Bay Area cannot afford or do not have a need for these single-family detached homes. A wider variety of housing choices is needed, including well-designed studios, duplexes, townhouses, condos, and garden apartments.⁵⁹ As another housing choice, many communities are introducing cottage-style homes on small lots, with shared open space areas for residents to enjoy.

⁵⁷ *Travel Behavior Issues in the 90's.* U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Washington, DC, July 1992. p.14.

⁵⁸ Hobson, Jeff. *Balanced Transportation: Achieving Congestion Relief and Meeting Transportation Needs in Solano County.* Solano Orderly Growth Committee, Greenbelt Alliance, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and Surface Transportation Policy Project. p.2.

⁵⁹ Wheeler, Stephen. *Smart Infill: Creating more livable communities in the Bay Area.* Greenbelt Alliance, 2002. p.11.

The Cost of Sprawl on the Environment and Public Health



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- *Sprawl paves over the greenbelt of farmlands and open space and causes air and water pollution.* In the Bay Area alone over the next 30 years, 490,525 acres of farmland and open space are at risk of sprawl development or of being taken out of greenbelt-related uses such as agriculture.⁶⁰ The loss of the greenbelt and the increased traffic due to sprawl worsen the quality of the land, air and water we and other organisms depend on to sustain life.

- *The impact of sprawl on the natural and built environment in turn impacts human health.* The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

released a landmark report in 2001 entitled *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*.^{61,62} The report emphasizes that land use and urban design directly influence public health, and that sprawl development is poor land use and urban design with a heavy cost to society. The report documents sprawl's association with chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and depression.⁶³



- *Sprawl and chronic respiratory diseases.* Asthma and other respiratory diseases are on the rise in the United States, and air pollution worsens the severity of these diseases.⁶⁴ Solano County has the highest rate of asthma in California with 14.1% of

⁶⁰ Greenbelt Alliance. *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*. 2000. p.4.

⁶¹ DeZern, Pat. *Centers for Disease Control Says Suburban Sprawl Endangers Public Health. New Report Connects Obesity, Asthma and other Illnesses to Sprawl*. Sierra Club and Sprawl Watch News Release. November 2, 2001. www.vapreservation.org/cdc-news.html

⁶² "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recognized as the lead federal agency for protecting the health and safety of people - at home and abroad, providing credible information to enhance health decisions, and promoting health through strong partnerships. CDC serves as the national focus for developing and applying disease prevention and control, environmental health, and health promotion and education activities designed to improve the health of the people of the United States." www.cdc.gov/aboutcdc.htm

⁶³ Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. Preface. www.sprawlwatch.org

⁶⁴ Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. Preface. www.sprawlwatch.org

Solano residents suffering from the illness – 15.9% of children and 13.3% of adults.⁶⁵

Sprawl is a major contributor to air pollution because it gives people little or no choice but to depend on their personal automobiles to get from home to work and other destinations. This forced auto-dependency increases the number of cars and trucks on the road and the number of miles people drive. The carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxide (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and particulate matter (PM) emitted by cars and trucks are associated with worsened respiratory problems, hospitalization for heart or lung diseases, and even premature death.⁶⁶ Children, the elderly, and asthmatics are most susceptible to air pollution, and more children in America are falling victim to asthma each year.⁶⁷ It is clear that sprawling development and the auto-dependency it creates is putting our health – and especially our children’s health – at risk.

- *There is a connection between sprawl and the fact that we are an overweight, heart disease-ridden society.*⁶⁸ Urban and suburban sprawl is designed for the mobility of drivers at the expense of people walking, bicycling, or using other forms of transportation. Sprawl developments tend to have few crosswalks or bike lanes, sometimes sidewalks are not even provided, and commercial centers are surrounded by seas of parking lots with few if any walkways. The cul-de-sac design of suburban neighborhoods also discourages walking, bicycling, and public transit.⁶⁹ The separation that sprawl puts between work, home, school, and shopping, and the auto-orientation of buildings and streets make it inconvenient, dangerous, and sometimes impossible to walk or bicycle.⁷⁰ Thus sprawl discourages walking and bicycling both as means of transportation and as forms of exercise.

As lifestyles have become more sedentary, the percentage of Americans who are overweight or obese has increased dramatically. In 1976, 47% of US adults were overweight or obese. By 1994 the percentage had risen to 56%, and by 1999 it was a record 61%.⁷¹ The number of overweight children and adolescents has also increased – nearly doubling over this same time period. The CDC report conservatively estimates an overall health care burden of over \$100 billion in the United States each year due to obesity and low levels of physical activity.⁷²

⁶⁵ Brown, E.R.; Y.Y. Meng; S.H. Babey; and E. Malcolm. *Asthma in California in 2001: High Rates Affect Most Population Groups*, California Health Interview Survey, 2001.

⁶⁶ www.epa.gov/air/urbanair/6poll.html

⁶⁷ Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. p.7. www.sprawlwatch.org

⁶⁸ Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. Preface. www.sprawlwatch.org

⁶⁹ Gregg, Valerie. *Taming Urban Sprawl*. Emory University, 2001. p.2.

⁷⁰ Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. p.9. www.sprawlwatch.org

⁷¹ Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. p.9. www.sprawlwatch.org

⁷² Jackson, Richard and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series, Washington DC, 2001. Preface and p.9. www.sprawlwatch.org

- *Sprawl may negatively impact mental health.* While physical activity helps to treat anxiety and depression, sprawl makes this exercise more difficult to incorporate into people's daily lives. In addition, long commutes in heavy traffic consume time people could otherwise spend engaging in activities they enjoy. The social isolation and sense of wasted time associated with long commutes can lead to stress, anger and frustration.⁷³

The Cost of Sprawl to Farmers

America loses two acres of farmland to development every single minute of every day, and it is wasteful land use, not growth itself, that is the problem.⁷⁴ While agriculture remains one of California's most important industries, sprawl is destroying farmland and farming productivity at an alarming rate.⁷⁵



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- *A permanent loss of agricultural land.* 497,000 acres of California's farmland was converted to urban uses between 1988 and 1998.⁷⁶ Solano County alone has lost approximately 26,000 acres of agricultural land from 1984 to 1998 – an average of about 1,850 acres per year.⁷⁷ If current land use trends in Solano continue, an additional 16,000 acres of agricultural land will be converted to urban uses by 2020.⁷⁸ These lands at risk of conversion include Upper Lagoon and Vaca Valleys, despite their unique microclimates and soil compositions that make them irreplaceable farmlands.

- *Loss in productivity due to pollution.* Crop yields can be reduced by 30% due to sprawl-induced ozone pollution. The Agricultural Issues Center at UC Davis cites a more than \$200 million loss in agricultural productivity each year due to pollution.⁷⁹
- *The loss of farming communities.* Sprawl has a devastating effect on the stability of farming communities. This is evidenced near Fairfield and Vacaville in Solano County and near Brentwood and Antioch in eastern Contra Costa County, where family farms have repeatedly been lost to bedroom suburbs.

⁷³ Gregg, Valerie. *Taming Urban Sprawl*. Emory University, 2001.

⁷⁴ www.farmland.org/farmingontheedge/major_findings.htm

⁷⁵ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California*. p.7.

⁷⁶ Gomes, W.R. *Agricultural easements: A farmland preservation tool*. California Agriculture. January-February 2002. Volume 56, Number 1, p.2.

⁷⁷ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*, March 2002. pp.19-20.

⁷⁸ Solano Land Trust. *Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan*, March 2002. p. 21.

⁷⁹ Agricultural Issues Center. UC Davis. Cited in Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California*. p.7

- *Uncertainty.* Sprawl creates intense pressure and uncertainty for farmers. Farming is a very difficult profession and those who dedicate their lives to it tend to be land rich and cash poor. City policies that encourage sprawl create a disincentive to invest in agriculture. Poor city policies and the huge amounts of money farmers can gain by selling their land to developers reduce the incentive for farmers to make long-term capital investments on their land. The added uncertainty of what neighboring farmers will decide to do makes the situation more complex. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for farmers to borrow money against the speculative value of their farmland for development, making sprawl a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁸⁰

The Cost of Sprawl to Taxpayers

A study of sprawl developments in California and Florida found the extra costs of providing infrastructure and municipal services to be roughly \$20,000 per residential unit.⁸¹ A New Jersey study comparing a sprawl development with a compact infill development found the sprawl development to cost approximately \$25,000 more per residence.⁸²

- *The cost of increasing and maintaining highways and other major infrastructure such as fire, police, roads, water and sewage.* Surveys across the nation estimate that sprawl raises the cost of infrastructure from 10% to 20%. In contrast, well-planned compact developments consume 45% less land and cost 25% less for roads, 20% less for utilities, and 5% less for schools.⁸³ In Vacaville's case, accommodating more sprawl will require widening and extending several existing roads, building new roads, and expanding several highway overcrossings. To accommodate future wastewater needs based on the 1990 General Plan, the city is undergoing a \$64 million project to increase sewage capacity from 10 million gallons to 15 million gallons at the Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant.⁸⁴ Even with this expansion, treatment plant capacities cannot meet Vacaville's 1990 General Plan buildout population figures.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California.* p.7.

⁸¹ Snyder, Ken, and Lori Bird. *Paying the Costs of Sprawl: Using Fair-Share Costing to Control Sprawl.* December 1998, p.10. This was a briefing paper for the U.S. Department of Energy's Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development website (www.sustainable.doe.gov).

⁸² Snyder, Ken, and Lori Bird. *Paying the Costs of Sprawl: Using Fair-Share Costing to Control Sprawl.* December 1998, p.10. This was a briefing paper for the U.S. Department of Energy's Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development website (www.sustainable.doe.gov).

⁸³ Flight or Fight: Metropolitan Philadelphia and Its Future. September 2001. Available at: www.metropolicy.org/FlightorFight.html

⁸⁴ City of Vacaville, *2000-2015 Comprehensive Annexation Plan* p.31

⁸⁵ Tompkins, Davis. Vacaville Public Works official. Personal Communication, September 11, 2002

- *The cost of addressing social problems in older neighborhoods that are neglected or abandoned.* In Vacaville, for example, millions of dollars have gone toward addressing the social problems of the Rocky Hill and Trower neighborhoods – areas of town that were neglected for years and became burdened with gangs and crime. These areas are now being rehabilitated very successfully, but at huge costs.
- *The cost of addressing environmental problems and associated health problems.* High environmental costs and public health costs are associated with air and water pollution, loss of farmland and open space, and other environmental degradation.

The Cost of Sprawl to Businesses

While sprawl has serious negative impacts on business competitiveness and long-term profitability, most businesses are not aware of these costs.⁸⁶

- *Negative impacts on quality of life and economic prosperity.* Traffic, loss of open space, high housing prices, and lack of community identity all reduce quality of life, a critical component of economic prosperity.⁸⁷ This makes sprawling areas less desirable places for businesses and potential employees to locate. As a result, businesses may have more difficulty in finding, recruiting, and maintaining a qualified workforce.⁸⁸ As sprawl throughout Solano worsens traffic, reduces open space, and increases housing prices, it will be increasingly difficult for the county to retain businesses and recruit more businesses.
- *Higher direct business costs and taxes.* When businesses develop on land that was previously agriculture or open space, infrastructure costs may be very high. In addition, businesses must often pay for mitigation of environmental problems the development caused.
- *Job-housing imbalance leading to higher labor costs and a loss in worker productivity.* Many workers commute long distances to their jobs. As Solano County cities have sprawled outward, traffic congestion has intensified and Solano County residents now have the longest commute in the Bay Area.⁸⁹ Employees facing long and frustrating commutes may experience a decrease in their quality of life and a reduction in their productivity on the job.
- *Businesses in older areas become economically uncompetitive because of sprawl.* Downtown businesses often struggle from the competition of sprawl commercial developments. Likewise, huge investments in older suburban shopping centers can be threatened by competition from newer sprawl developments. Vacaville’s Alamo Plaza, for example, is just starting to recover from the City’s “big box” retail explosion of the early 1990s.

⁸⁶ www.nalgep.org/smartgrowth.htm

⁸⁷ www.nalgep.org/smartgrowth.htm

⁸⁸ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California*. p.6.

⁸⁹ RIDES, *Commuter Profile 2001*. As cited in Hobson, Jeff. *Balanced Transportation: Achieving Congestion Relief and Meeting Transportation Needs in Solano County*. Solano Orderly Growth Committee, Greenbelt Alliance, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and Surface Transportation Policy Project. p.2.

The Cost of Sprawl to Residents of New Sprawl Developments

Residents of new sprawl developments are primary beneficiaries of sprawl, but they too pay a high price.⁹⁰

- *The cost of automobiles.* Many residents of sprawl developments have no choice but to use their cars for daily activities, from work to grocery shopping. One of every five dollars spent by the average Californian goes towards buying and maintaining their cars.⁹¹
- *The cost of commuting to and from work and other destinations.* For the average American driver, 443 hours is spent each year behind the wheel.⁹² In addition to loss of valuable time, families living in highly sprawling areas throughout the nation pay, on average, roughly \$1,300 more per year in transportation expenses.⁹³
- *The cost of new sprawl infrastructure and services.* Most new sprawl residents in California must pay special taxes (often Mello-Roos taxes) to cover the cost of new roads, schools, water and sewer pipelines, and other infrastructure required for these sprawl developments. These added taxes could add hundreds of dollars per year to a new homeowner's property tax bill. Fairfield residents living in the private, gated community of Rancho Solano, for example, pay over \$500 per year in special assessment fees.⁹⁴

The Cost of Sprawl to Residents of Older Neighborhoods

Residents of older neighborhoods often have the most to lose from sprawl.

- *Income segregation, loss of business and government investments, and loss of social stability.* As new sprawl developments are built there is a trend for middle and upper classes of all races to move to these new developments, leaving older neighborhoods behind. Business investments tend to follow this outward migration of wealth. Older neighborhoods find themselves with less political voice, fewer government services, and a loss of social stability.⁹⁵
- *Loss of jobs and access to jobs.* Residents of older and more central neighborhoods often find themselves increasingly far away from jobs, due to sprawl development patterns that encourage job growth on the edges of communities. This trend can be devastating to poor and working-class citizens without cars, who must reach jobs in areas not serviced or infrequently serviced by public transportation. Public transportation in Vacaville, for example, is limited to a Monday to Saturday schedule with bus services ending before 7 p.m.

⁹⁰ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California*. p.6.

⁹¹ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to Fit the New California*.p.6

⁹² Pope, Carl. *Solving Sprawl* 1999 Sierra Club Report. <http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/report99/transportation.asp>
As cited in Jackson, Richard J. and Chris Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*. p.6

⁹³ McCann, Barbara. *Driven to Spend: Sprawl and Household Transportation Expenses*. Surface Transportation Policy Project. January 2001. <http://www.transact.org/progress/jan01/driven.asp>

⁹⁴ Cortright, Gene. Fairfield City Engineer. Personal communication. September 21, 2002.

⁹⁵ Bank of America, California Resources Agency, Greenbelt Alliance, and The Low Income Housing Fund. 1995. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to fit the New California*. p.7.

during weekdays and 5 p.m. on Saturdays.⁹⁶ With limited public transit services and sprawling development, it becomes increasingly difficult for low-income families to meet basic needs. A recent Solano County Welfare to Work Transportation Study identified numerous problems with Solano's public transit system. These problems include a lack of evening, night, and weekend service, and inadequate service frequencies. Many entry-level jobs in the county, such as warehousing and retail employment, have non-traditional shifts; the lack of evening, night, and weekend service and the 30 to 60 minute intervals between buses make it very difficult for low-income people to maintain these jobs.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ San Francisco Bay Area Transit Information, Vacaville City Coach Schedule.
<http://www.transitinfo.org/Vacaville>

⁹⁷ *Solano County Welfare to Work Transportation Plan: Final Report*, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates, April 2002, pp. ES2–ES4.

CHOOSING SMARTER GROWTH

Smart growth is development that revitalizes city and town centers, places homes, stores, and jobs near one another, expands affordable housing choices, improves public transit, promotes walking and bicycling, and preserves open space and agricultural lands.⁹⁸ Although these basic principles describe all smarter growth, there isn't a one-size-fits-all model. Smarter and more sensible growth in Vacaville should be tailored to fit in with and enhance the unique character of this community.

Vacaville has made significant advances in providing infill housing, with 884 apartments built in the last four years on land that was previously zoned for commercial properties.⁹⁹ But a great need for affordable housing choices remains. Moreover, the city has great untapped potential for mixed-use combinations of homes, retail businesses, and offices.

Davis and Suisun City provide local examples of successful mixed-use infill development. The City of Davis built Aggie Village in the mid-1990s. This mixed-use development on a four-acre parcel at the edge of downtown includes 10 to 12 homes per acre, a thriving retail center, narrow streets, front porches, pedestrian walkways, community gardens, and secondary units (also called granny flats or in-law units).¹⁰⁰

In Suisun City, major redevelopment projects since the 1990s have renovated the downtown, beautified the waterfront and marina, created a Town Plaza focusing on the Suisun Channel as its central feature, and invested in the design and construction of attractive, compact neighborhoods and mixed-use developments.¹⁰¹ Sites of interest that are all within walking distance of one another in downtown Suisun include the compact and pedestrian-oriented Victorian Harbor neighborhood, City Hall, the Waterfront and Town Plaza, the Rail Station Plaza, the live-work Promenade at Delta Cove community, and the businesses along Main Street.



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Likewise, Vacaville can accommodate future growth by investing in the downtown, central areas of the city, and in existing neighborhoods. By accommodating growth through attractive infill, the city can revitalize the community and increase housing, jobs, and amenities while preserving surrounding farmland and open space.

⁹⁸ *Smart Growth Strategy Regional Livability Footprint Project: Shaping the Future of the Nine-County Bay Area: Briefing book for public workshop participants and other Bay Area residents.* August 2001. p.3.

⁹⁹ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Community Development Director. Personal communication. 10/2/02.

¹⁰⁰ *Great Valley News.* Vol.4, Issue 2. August 2001.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.terrain.org/unsprawl/>

Vacaville planning staff presented just such a possibility for Vacaville's future in a November 2001 Planning Commission report analyzing growth alternatives for the city.¹⁰² Under this "conservation and redevelopment" growth scenario, most development over the next 25 years would occur within the existing city limits. This growth scenario proposed redevelopment of the city's older commercial and residential areas, and development of hundreds of acres of vacant land within city limits, including:¹⁰³

- North Village (882 acres)¹⁰⁴
- The Nut Tree Core Area (80 acres for residential, commercial, and office)
- The I-80/I-505/Vaca Valley Road business and industrial parks (several hundred acres)

Vacaville's growing population can be accommodated through smarter infill development that locates complimentary uses close together, such as housing, shopping, offices, restaurants, and movie theatres –any destinations people travel to on a regular basis – along with accompanying advances in the city's public transit system. Through inclusionary zoning and low-income subsidies, city leadership can avoid a growing disparity in incomes and ensure that new residential developments include homes that are affordable. By preserving the unique open space and farmland surrounding the city, Vacaville can strengthen its community identity. By increasing the walkability of town and adding a greater mix of residential, office, and commercial uses in central areas, our community health and safety could actually increase.

¹⁰² Rowland, Ron. 2001. *Vacaville 2025: A vision for our community: Alternatives Analysis*. City of Vacaville Planning Commission, November 20, 2001.

¹⁰³ Rowland, Ron. 2001. *Vacaville 2025: A vision for our community: Alternatives Analysis*. City of Vacaville Planning Commission, November 20, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vacaville Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025, Draft Report for Consideration by the Vacaville Planning Commission*. January, 2002, p. 33.

A SMART GROWTH VISION FOR VACAVILLE



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Infill can occur through development of vacant land, and through redevelopment of underused land. Vacant lots, empty storefronts, underutilized space above existing businesses, one story buildings, surface parking lots, and old commercial or industrial sites are all potential areas for infill. Older commercial areas with wasteful strip development can be revitalized into pedestrian, bicycle and transit friendly boulevards.¹⁰⁵ Attractive and affordable mixed-use developments with community gardens and other amenities can stand where vacant lots, underutilized buildings, or surface parking lots once did.

Recent studies have confirmed that places with a mix of land uses and retail services located within walking distance of residences have higher levels of pedestrian travel and fewer vehicle trips compared with solely residential neighborhoods.¹⁰⁶ If Vacaville promotes a greater mix of housing with daily activities, this will improve quality of life, enhance the local economy, and protect the environment.

In 2001, Vacaville published an inventory of vacant residential lands within the city and identified 1,448 acres available within city limits for residential development (including two sites that were pre-zoned and pending annexation).¹⁰⁷ Assuming an *average* of nine homes per acre, this land could accommodate 13,032 new homes and approximately 36,880 people.¹⁰⁸ This nine-homes-per-acre average would satisfy the city's Regional Housing Need Determination requiring that the city supply 12,400 new housing units over the next 20 years. (Note that these are *average* numbers of homes per acre. In actuality, some areas would have more homes per acre while others would have less, some would have other uses such as schools and parks, and some could be designed as mixed-use so that they accommodate retail and/or office uses in addition to homes). If development is clustered, instead of the usual spread-out subdivisions, this would allow more open green areas for the community to enjoy. Clustered development can also facilitate a variety of housing choices, not just single-family homes.

¹⁰⁵ Wheeler, Stephen. *Smart Infill: Creating more livable communities in the Bay Area*. Greenbelt Alliance, 2002. p.22.

¹⁰⁶ Environmental Protection Agency. *Our Built and Natural Environments: A Technical Review of the Interactions between Land Use, Transportation, and Environmental Quality*. January 2001, p.61

¹⁰⁷ *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.50.

¹⁰⁸ Based on a calculation of 2.83 people per household, the average household size in Vacaville in 2000. Source: *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.8.

However, the city’s choice of zoning only allows for 7,267 units and therefore only approximately 20,566 people.¹⁰⁹ This is an average of 5 homes per acre, characteristic of sprawl development. The City has already granted entitlements for development and entered into development agreements for much of this land. Once entitlements to develop have been granted and during the terms of development agreements, the City does not have the legal authority to change zoning. North Village, for example, contains 30% of the vacant residential land within the city limits and is subject to a development agreement until 2025. This development agreement legally binds the City to the zoning they agreed upon at the time the development agreement was made. Several other properties have already been subdivided and are being developed.¹¹⁰

Table 6 breaks down these acres based on the city’s zoning designations. Only 10% of the 1,448 acres are designated for townhouses, duplexes, small lot single-family homes, and apartments.

Table 6: Vacant land identified by the City of Vacaville for residential development, and the city’s choice of zoning for this land¹¹¹

Housing Type allowed by city’s choice of zoning	Vacant Acres zoned for this housing type ¹¹²	Potential number of homes based on city zoning
Single family detached homes, .1-.4 units/acre	28 (2%)	7 (<1%)
Single family detached homes, .5-3 units/acre	509 (35%)	891 (12%)
Single family detached homes, 3.1-5 units/acre	615 (42%)	2,494 (34%)
Single family detached homes, 5.1-8 units/acre	157 (11%)	1,030 (14%)
Single family detached homes, townhomes, duplexes, 8.1-14 units/acre	67 (5%)	767 (11%)
Townhomes, condos, apartments, 14.1-24 units/acre	72 (5%)	1,378 ¹¹³ (19%)
Townhomes, condos, apartments, 24-36 units/acre	0 (0%)	700 ¹¹⁴ (10%)
Total	1,448	7,267

¹⁰⁹ Based on a calculation of 2.84 people per household, the average household size in Vacaville in 2000. Source: *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.8.

¹¹⁰ Rowland, Ron. City of Vacaville Community Development Director. Personal communication. 10/2/02.

¹¹¹ *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.50.

¹¹² These numbers include two sites outside the city limits that area rezoned and pending annexation in 2002. Source: *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.50.

¹¹³ The inventory of RH lands includes 8 sites between 8 and 15 acres in size. All of the RH zoned sites have flat topography. Source: *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.50.

¹¹⁴ The RUHD District is a mixed-use district for the Downtown area. The Land Use Element of the General Plan proposes 700 homes in the Downtown. This figure was used in the table, rather than the November 2001 Vacaville General Plan Public Hearing Draft Housing Element’s figure of 105 homes within the next five years. The December 2001 Housing Element included zero RUHD units in the inventory because as of December 2001 there were no sites with a RUHD zoning designation.

The City has a choice of how to grow, including the extent to which attractive and affordable housing choices are offered, the extent to which safe and convenient transportation choices are made available, and the extent to which farmland and open space around the city is preserved or paved over. It is unfortunate that the City has made legally binding choices that limit these housing and transportation choices and heighten the pressure to develop surrounding farmland and open space. More information is needed about the specific sites in Table 6 and the City’s granted entitlements and development agreements to determine what average number of homes could be accommodated on these sites, but it is certainly more than the 5 homes per acre characteristic of sprawl development. In April of 2001, Vacaville planning staff posed the question: “Should the city seek to have a slower rate of physical expansion, by looking for more infill opportunities and allowing more density?” Staff concluded that “whatever choices are ultimately made, they will profoundly impact the nature of Vacaville in 2025.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, Vacaville’s future depends on these decisions. There are many more potential sites for development and redevelopment within the City, in addition to those identified by the City in Table 7. Many of these areas could include attractive and affordable mixed-use residential development. The following are examples of Vacaville’s infill potential:

Central Vacaville

Table 7: Infill potential: Central Vacaville

Land available	An estimate of acres of land available was not found, but Davis Street, Hume Way, Peabody Road, East Monte Vista Avenue, and Merchant Street are all identified by the city for Central Vacaville Revitalization ¹¹⁶
Infill potential	700+ homes ¹¹⁷ Mixed-uses Community amenities



Recent investments in Vacaville’s downtown have made it a highly attractive destination point for the community, with thriving local businesses such as Café Baci and the Old Post Office Seafood Restaurant, and extremely popular community events such as the Creekwalk Concert series at Andrew’s Park. The location of Andrew’s Park in the heart of downtown, the pleasant walkway with explanations of

Vacaville’s history along Ulatis Creek, and the playground,

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¹¹⁵ City of Vacaville Planning Commission Staff Report. *Vacaville 2025: A Vision for our Community: City Size and Boundaries*, April 25, 2001.

¹¹⁶ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February, 2002, p. 37.

¹¹⁷ *Vacaville General Plan Public Hearing Draft Housing Element*. November 2001, p.51.

sports center and art gallery all side by side make the area a very attractive place for people to visit.

The downtown area will become even more alive with residents living in attractive and compact homes (such as townhomes, condos and apartments) both above and alongside office and retail businesses. The Land Use Element of the 1990 General Plan proposes just such a plan – with 700 homes in a mixed-use district in the downtown area.¹¹⁸ However, a decade later, this downtown mixed-use district has still not been implemented.

A new town center development, including retail, restaurant, and office uses and a second city library, will be located in the heart of downtown, on lands that have been vacant or underused for years. Unfortunately the town center plan does not include any mixed-use *residential* development, a missed opportunity. Nevertheless, it will add significantly to the vitality of the area.

Vacaville does have mixed-use residential, commercial, and office developments planned for the downtown’s future, in accordance with the General Plan. Vacaville’s first such proposal for the downtown is a mixed-use building on East Main Street with the local Vasquez family deli on the first floor and two to three homes on the floors above.¹¹⁹ A second mixed-use redevelopment project in the downtown area will involve the cleanup of a former chrome shop and redevelopment of the site into a mixed-use housing and office complex between Mason and East Main Streets.

These mixed-use projects are a highly commendable start, and serve as an example for the city to meet its goal of 700 homes in the Downtown area. However, it is essential that townhouses, condos, and apartments not be left out of the mix of housing in downtown.



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Major Streets throughout Town

Table 8: Infill potential: Major streets

Land available	Miles of street frontage throughout the city
Infill potential	Mixed-uses Community amenities

¹¹⁸ Vacaville General Plan Public Hearing Draft Housing Element. November 2001, p.51.

¹¹⁹ Richardson, Darryle. *Master Design Plan for Gateways OK'd*. The Reporter. August 14,2002.

While Vacaville is doing much to focus on the downtown proper, there is tremendous potential for infill along major streets throughout town. These streets include Davis Street, Merchant Street, Peabody Road, Monte Vista Avenue, Alamo Drive, and Elmira Road. The Alamo Plaza commercial center on Alamo Drive and the abandoned Safeway commercial center on Peabody Road are two prime candidates for infill development.



Alamo Plaza, located at the corner of Merchant Street and Alamo Drive, is approximately 9 acres and has the potential to be redeveloped into a vibrant mixed-use complex. An example of a successful redevelopment on a similar land parcel is the 15-acre Cherry Orchard Community near downtown Sunnyvale, completed in 2001, and featuring 300 beautiful townhome-style apartments and a retail center with restaurants, cafes, a produce store and a bookstore. Similarly, the Dublin City Council just approved a General Plan Amendment study for a 10-acre site

which has been the location of several unsuccessful big-box stores. The City would like to see something closer to the mixed-use proposal submitted for the site, which would create a village-like neighborhood combining various housing options such as condos, townhomes, and apartments along with retail, restaurants, and inviting green spaces. Both of these examples include below-market-rate units, as required by Dublin’s city policy, which help provide homes for families of varying incomes.

A Palo Alto redevelopment project called Alma Plaza is planned for a 4.3-acre site and involves the re-use of an aging, outdated neighborhood shopping plaza. Because part of the site is an old gas station, it also involves re-development of a formerly contaminated property. The plan entails tearing down the current structures (an old grocery store and other strip commercial buildings). These will be replaced with a new, 29,000 square-foot Albertson's grocery store, 11,000 sq. ft. of neighborhood tenant shop space (including existing tenants), 5 affordable housing units (studio loft apartments), and 5 single family, for-sale detached homes at market rate. This plan is a good example of excellent compact design for a relatively small site.

The Downtown River Apartments in Petaluma are planned for a 2.3- acre site. This compact project will enhance the high quality of downtown living in Petaluma, allowing pedestrian access to transit, downtown, and the Petaluma River. It will combine 81 apartment units along with 5,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space that will be used for neighborhood-serving retail or office space. Parking will be located underneath the building, allowing better utilization of the site. 100% of the housing will be affordable apartment units – serving a portion of the workforce such as teachers, retail clerks, city workers, and service sector

employees – who lack affordable housing options. The units will be targeted specifically to those who live or work in Petaluma.

Just as these other communities have done, Vacaville could redevelop the older buildings and vacant areas along Davis Street, Merchant Street, Peabody Road, Monte Vista Avenue, Alamo Drive, and Elmira Road as mixed-use developments. These streets can be made more inviting to walk on by bringing storefronts up to the sidewalk and placing parking behind, underneath, or on the sides of buildings. These redevelopments could be designed to avoid displacement of existing businesses, and to add to the area’s consumer population.

Business owners within the city have much to gain through infill development. The value of their land for infill development could be dramatically higher than its current value. Infill can be specifically tailored to benefit their business and other businesses in the area. Thriving businesses could choose to stay in their current buildings or benefit from a revitalized structure. And through mixed-use developments and the placement of homes near retail, a business can have more customers on its doorstep.

The Factory Outlets and other commercial centers

Vacaville’s factory outlets are a very important source of sales tax revenue for the city, and a shopping destination of regional significance. The outlets could be redeveloped from one story buildings to mixed-use developments with existing businesses on the first floor, stores or offices on the second floor, and homes above. Currently the sea of parking lots in the outlet mall makes it difficult, unpleasant, and potentially unsafe to walk or bike from one side of the outlets to another. Replacing these surface lots with underground parking or a parking structure would make room for a community garden, park, or other public open space. At the very least, pedestrian walkways and bike paths to navigate the surface parking lots would make the area safer and more inviting.

Existing neighborhoods

Table 9: Infill potential: Existing neighborhoods

Land available	Residential properties
Infill potential	Rehabilitation Second units Mixed-uses Community amenities

Both for-profit and non-profit developers can create attractive infill. Vacaville Community Housing (VCH) is a private non-profit organization that has made significant contributions to the city by building and rehabilitating affordable housing in neglected neighborhoods around town. VCH’s affordable housing rehabilitation has made redeveloped neighborhoods safer and more cohesive communities. Since 1989, older apartment complexes in

the Trower and Acacia neighborhoods have been purchased and renovated by VCH and Fresno-based Bay Development, and rented out as homes for low-income residents.¹²⁰

VCH and Bay Development’s *Lincoln Corner* redevelopment project on East Monte Vista Avenue is highly praised by numerous community groups. Lincoln Corner, once a dilapidated site, will soon be developed into 134 homes for low-income residents, and the redevelopment is designed to highlight the area’s historical significance as a site along old Highway 40.¹²¹ Infill and rehabilitation projects such as these are highly valuable contributions to the city.

Another largely untapped potential for infill is the addition of second units to residential properties. These one or two story second units, also called in-law or granny units, are typically built in the backyard of a single family home.¹²² They can also be built above the garage or as a garage conversion. They can provide a home for older family members, as their nickname implies, or to young adults in the family, or they can be rented to singles or couples.

The Nut Tree Core Area

Table 10: Infill potential: Nut Tree Core Area

Land available	80 acres available for residential, commercial and office use
Infill potential	Mixed-uses Community amenities



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For decades the Nut Tree was a family destination for Vacaville residents and those passing through the city on I-80. After the closure of the Nut Tree, the area has been largely unused for years. It is now one of Vacaville’s major redevelopment areas, with 80 acres available for residential, commercial, and business development.

In addition to a luxury hotel and conference center, the City’s plans for redevelopment of the 80-acre area include several mixed-use residential, office and commercial centers, restaurants, public plazas and community gardens. The proposed design is inviting for people to walk and bicycle.

¹²⁰ Swanson, Perry. *Resurrecting the Pride*. The Reporter . April 14, 2001.

¹²¹ Swanson, Perry. *Resurrecting the Pride*. The Reporter. April 14, 2001.

¹²² *Smart Growth Strategy Regional Livability Footprint Project: Shaping the Future of the Nine-County Bay Area: Briefing book for public workshop participants and other Bay Area residents*. August, 2001. p. 7.

The City can optimize the Nut Tree redevelopment by requiring that:

- 20% or more of the homes be attractive townhomes, condos, or apartments, affordable to people of lower incomes. Through this inclusionary zoning, the City assures a mix of incomes in the area and provides needed affordable housing for the community.
- Parking be built beneath buildings or in attractively designed parking structures, rather than on surface lots that waste valuable land.
- Frequent public transit be provided to and from the area.

The I-80/I-505 Business Park

Table 11: Infill potential: I-80/I-505 Business Park

Land available	Several hundreds of acres
Infill potential	Depends on compatibility of land uses

Vacaville’s I-80/I-505 Business Park is home to Genentech, Alza Pharmaceuticals, Kaiser Permanente, Albertson’s Distribution Center, and the Mariani Packing Company. At this point, these biotech, healthcare, and food companies are spread out over vast expanses of land and hundreds of acres of land in the business park lie vacant.¹²³



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The city has the opportunity to provide frequent and convenient public transit services in this area, thereby connecting workers to the rest of the city and providing transportation choices. Depending on the compatibility of various land uses, the city may also have the opportunity to develop this area into a vibrant and cohesive community with high tech jobs near cafes, bookstores, restaurants and other shops, and with housing within convenient walking or biking distance.

¹²³ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p.35.

North Village

Table 12: Infill potential: North Village

Land available	882 acres ¹²⁴
Infill potential	Variety of housing choices Mixed-uses Community amenities



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North Village, annexed into the city in the 1990s, is an 882-acre site located north of Vaca Valley Parkway, between I-80 and I-505. A Specific Plan and Development Agreement for North Village bind the development standards agreed upon by the city and the developer.¹²⁵ 439 acres in North Village are designated for residential development, with 2,499 homes planned (a total *average* density of 5.7 units per acre). Of these 2,499 homes, 66% are designated as low (3.4 to 4.8 units per acre) and low/medium densities (5.7 units per acre), 17% as medium density (8 units per acre), and 17% as high density (17 to 22 units per acre).¹²⁶

North Village is in many ways a lost opportunity. The city anticipates that much of its residential development over the next decade will occur in North Village, but the city's choice of residential densities limits the number of homes that this area can provide, and the affordability of these homes.¹²⁷ At an *average* of 9 units per acre, the 439 acres designated for residential development could have accommodated 3,951 homes – over 1,400 more homes than are allowed under the development standards. With this more efficient use of land, homes would tend to be more affordable.

While the city's choice of density standards is a lost opportunity, the residences will be near the I-80/I-505 business park and Vacaville's extension of Solano Community College. If North Village is developed with a genuinely walkable and bikeable street network rather than being designed to favor automobiles, and an investment is made in public transit infrastructure and frequent and convenient transit services, then the area will provide residents and workers with more transportation choices.

¹²⁴ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p.33.

¹²⁵ *Vacaville General Plan Housing Element*. December 11, 2001, p.47.

¹²⁶ *North Village A Master Planned Community Specific Plan*. January 24, 1995. pp. 5,8.

¹²⁷ City of Vacaville, Community Development Department. *Vision Statement: Vacaville 2025*. February 2002, p.33.

The Rice-McMurtry area

Table 13: Infill potential: Browns Valley Road / Rice-McMurtry¹²⁸

Land available	327 acres
Infill potential	163 homes

Vacaville’s current City Council and Planning Commission are convinced that they need to build several hundred luxury (also called executive) homes in the city in order to attract more high paying employers. The farmland along Pleasants Valley Road is viewed by the city as the ideal location for building these luxury homes. If the current City Council and Planning Commission are forced to look within city limits, Lower Lagoon Valley is their preferred site.

At least one other possibility exists, however, for this luxury housing. City planning staff identify the recently annexed 500-acre Rice-McMurtry site as an alternative location. This area lies along Browns Valley Road, west of Rice Lane, and east of Gibson Canyon Road. The western hills within the area would be preserved as agriculture and open space. The remaining 327 acres are planned for residential development.¹²⁹ This area is a vastly superior choice to the leap frog development proposed in Lower Lagoon Valley or the annexation and destruction of Pleasants Valley farmland. It is also located conveniently near to the executive jobs at the I-80/I-505 Business Park.



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¹²⁸ City of Vacaville. Community Development Department. *Comprehensive Annexation Plan 2001-2015*. September 18, 2001, pp.13, 16.

¹²⁹ City of Vacaville. Community Development Department. *Comprehensive Annexation Plan 2001-2015*. September 18, 2001, pp.13, 16.

CHALLENGES TO INFILL AND STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM

There are many challenges involved in developing infill, including high land costs, difficulties in assembling small parcels, financial disincentives, and opposition from nearby residents. Because of these obstacles, it is essential that local governments actively promote infill so that developers will follow their lead. If local governments fail to take this leadership role, developers will tend to continue the trend of sprawling outward.

A detailed description of challenges to infill and strategies to overcome them is included in Greenbelt Alliance's recently published guidebook for local decision-makers.¹³⁰ This guidebook, *Smart Infill: Creating more livable communities in the Bay Area*, is available at www.greenbelt.org. The strategies described include:

- Ensuring land availability
- Reducing fiscal disincentives
- Rethinking parking standards
- Improving financing options
- Preparing specific plans
- Revising zoning codes
- Establishing urban design guidelines
- Streamlining permitting processes
- Working constructively with neighbors
- Cleaning up brownfields
- Improving consistency and completeness of local plans, codes, and processes regarding infill
- Revitalizing communities and adding amenities
- Developing a market for infill development
- Avoiding construction defect litigation
- Reducing production costs
- Facing political resistance

¹³⁰ Wheeler, Stephen. *Smart Infill: Creating more livable communities in the Bay Area*. Greenbelt Alliance, 2002. p.22-47.

CONCLUSION

Vacaville can promote investment within our existing city. We can choose attractive, compact development within Vacaville instead of sprawling outward. We can secure more and higher paying jobs within our existing city so that people who currently live in our community will have more opportunities to work in our community. At the same time, we can supply housing that is attractive and affordable for our teachers, firefighters, military personnel, hospital workers, childcare providers, and others essential to our community. We can ensure pedestrian and bicycle-friendly designs and transit-oriented designs in our existing and new neighborhoods. We can revitalize our downtown and underutilized areas with attractive mixes of housing, stores, and jobs close to one another.

These solutions enhance our community vitality, use land efficiently, and avoid the high costs of sprawl. They avoid the traffic nightmares that more sprawl would cause. By reducing commute times, they increase the time families have to spend together. They would assist our population in need of higher paying jobs as well as our population in need of housing that is affordable. They would help us accommodate our growth in a way that revitalizes our existing town. They would enable us to support the capacity and quality of our schools. They would preserve the agricultural lands and open space that make our community unique. They would make Vacaville an even better place to live.

Vacaville is at a crossroads and it can choose a livable community path instead of a sprawling highway. Greenbelt Alliance and the Solano Orderly Growth Committee are dedicated to working with the City of Vacaville and its residents to help them take this livable path that will create a uniquely safe and livable community of which we, our children, and our grandchildren will be proud.