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Opportunity for All:
*Growth, Equity and Land Use Planning
for California's Future*

Mary Gail Snyder

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University of California
Institute of Urban and Regional Development

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Opportunity for All: Growth, Equity and Land Use Planning for California's Future

Mary Gail Snyder

Introduction

Growth in California has thus far largely meant sprawl: low density development that is rapidly extending the boundaries of our metropolitan regions. Public concern with growth and sprawl has also been spreading, with complaints about more congestion, longer commutes, more pollution, disappearing wilderness, open space and farmland, visual blight, a loss of a sense of community and a lowered quality of life.

California's population, 34 million in 1999, is projected to reach 45.4 million by 2020 and 58.7 million by 2040. This represents an increase of almost 75% over the next 40 years.¹ So long as current land use patterns continue, these new Californians will find themselves continuing to sprawl. As Californians debate how to accommodate this growth, they will make choices that will affect the shape of our cities, towns, and regions and their environmental economic health. These choices will also determine if we continue to let sprawl exact its heavy social cost in inequality and lost opportunity. But there is as yet no consensus on what to do about sprawl, what policies to adopt, or what changes to make.

Alternative visions to the current pattern are being more widely discussed, and citizens and governments are increasingly calling for "smart growth" and sustainable development.² This approach is often summarized as the "Three Es"—Economy, Environment and Equity. The goal is to balance, and whenever possible to reconcile, the competing demands of these three areas: job growth and a healthy economic sector; environmental quality and protection of wilderness and open space; and economic opportunity, social justice and reduced inequality.³ But just as most of the public and media attention to the problems of growth and sprawl largely neglects the social costs of sprawl, so do most of the state and local efforts to plan for growth. The primary focus of smart growth is on only two of the three Es: economy and environment. Yet successfully planning for California's future will require that we consider the equity impacts of our land use choices.

Equity, Growth and Sprawl

Growth itself is neither good nor bad. It can improve communities as well as burden or damage them. But uneven growth and the polarization between privileged and distressed areas can worsen the negative aspects of growth and restrict the numbers of people and places that enjoy its benefits. This is what is happening in California today.

Our current patterns of land use are worsening the gap between California's haves and have-nots. This is seen most dramatically in the patterns of urban sprawl, where the pull of the good life on the metropolitan fringe is matched by the push away from the problems of center cities and older suburbs. Yet sprawl creates the conditions for more sprawl, as the edge moves ever outward and the center weakens. The crazy-quilt of county and city governments overlaid with special districts means it is difficult to address issues that have causes and effects that cross jurisdictional boundaries and limited fiscal motivation for doing so.

At its most basic, equity simply means fairness or justice. It is concerned with "Who gets what?" and "Who pays?" But what constitutes a fair distribution of resources, benefits, and costs is a difficult and value-laden question on which to develop consensus. To the degree California develops a consensus on this question, equity will be created over time as the state wrestles with individual issues. As we consider the question, it is helpful to distinguish the different ways to think about equity. We may look at equity in terms of:

- **Process.** Equity in process means ensuring access to decision-making and leveling the policy playing field. This would mean actively and fully involving all groups with an interest in the issue. For instance, equity in process would require outreach to groups who may not often vote, contact their representatives, write letters to the editor, or otherwise participate in formal policy debates. It would also mean that all areas affected by development should have input into it, even if they are located in a different jurisdiction.
- **Impacts.** Equity in impacts means ensuring balance in the costs and benefits imposed on various groups or places by our land use choices. In a narrow sense, impact equity means that all who benefit from new infrastructure or preserving open space, for instance, should pay for associated costs in proportion to their benefit. In a broader sense, it might mean such approaches as sharing tax revenues from commercial

growth across jurisdictional boundaries or locating affordable housing outside of low-income areas.

- **Outcomes.** Equity in outcomes means seeking equal results for different groups and places, or at a minimum seeking to create as little inequality in outcomes as is feasible. This would mean, for instance, that we work to increase opportunities for the disadvantaged and more evenly distribute both desirable and unwanted land uses. It would also mean that wherever land use policies are leading to increased inequality steps be taken to reverse and repair that damage.

If our goal is to increase opportunity for all Californians, each of these forms of equity must come into play. Complete equity of outcomes is unrealistic, but a goal of more equal outcomes is possible. Attention to equity of impacts will help more evenly distribute the costs and benefits associated with growth. And attention to equity in the planning process will help ensure that all have a voice in the choices made.

This paper attempts to lay out a range of current land use issues and related policy options arising from concerns over growth and sprawl from the perspective of increasing equity and opportunity. It considers uneven metropolitan development in the form of city–suburb polarization and distressed neighborhoods and towns; the location of employment opportunities and employment access; the need for affordable housing and housing types to fit our changing households; and the siting of facilities and other land uses that are necessary to accommodate growth but are unwanted by their neighbors.

Managing California’s growth in a way that increases equity and opportunity will require public debate. What are our goals? What steps are we willing to take to direct the benefits of new growth, to redistribute benefits, or to redress past and present inequities? What steps can we afford to take? The ways in which we plan for growth today will determine to what degree all of California’s people, and all its towns and neighborhoods, will share in the opportunities that growth will bring.

Equity Issues in Land Use

Uneven Development

Economically and culturally vibrant cities are necessary for the economic health of a region and the state. Today, the metropolitan region is the basic economic unit: the city or county economy is not contained by jurisdictional boundaries, but is inextricably linked to the region. A large firm, a growing industry, an airport, or a research university in any one city

is part of the economic engine that supports other cities in the regions. Poverty, crime, or slipping property values in one neighborhood or town has direct effects on others near it and represents direct costs and lost opportunity for the regional economy as a whole.

Center cities have a valuable place in this regional economy. They provide social and economic functions indispensable to suburbs, regions, and the state. They supply jobs for predominantly residential suburbs, of course, but their large size, diversity, and dense population and land use mean that they are especially valuable for other reasons. They represent a dense node that facilitates contact and collaboration, creating rich opportunities for cultural, social, and business activity and innovation. It is this that makes cities a locus for creative interactions in business, government, and the arts; for specialized business services, retail, and immigrant enclaves; for regional infrastructure links; and for educational and cultural institutions.⁴

There is a growing body of research demonstrating that the economic fortunes of cities and suburbs are linked. Housing markets in cities and suburbs tend to rise and fall together, according to a study of four California metropolitan areas.⁵ Regions with lower income disparity between city and suburb tend to have faster economic growth.⁶ And even as back offices and headquarters shift to the suburbs, large suburban firms still rely overwhelmingly on central city firms for business and professional services.⁷

In the regional economy, when center cities and inner-ring suburbs decline, the entire metropolitan area suffers. And it is clear that not all cities and towns are benefiting equally from growth. There are varying strengths and weaknesses in their underlying economies; different starting points; and a variety of strategies used, some more successful than others, in their planning and policy. In the midst of this variation, both in California and nationally, a broad pattern does emerge: the outer suburbs are experiencing stronger growth, healthier economies, and fewer socioeconomic problems than are center cities and older inner-ring suburbs.⁸

Sprawl and Regional Polarization

A central cause of the uneven development between center cities and suburbs is sprawl. Distressed center city neighborhoods, declining blue-collar suburbs, aging infrastructure, failing city schools—these urban problems do not just fuel growth on the suburban fringe, but are worsened by it. As older, disadvantaged areas lose middle class households and

revenue-generating development to the sprawling suburbs, their own ability to provide services and halt decline is worsened.

Fiscal considerations guide much of local land use policy, encouraging exclusionary zoning and sprawl. Proposition 13 may have reduced the traditional reliance on property taxes, but it did not eliminate the influence of fiscal effects in land use decision making. In fact, the reduction in locally controlled revenue sources as a result of Proposition 13 has made the fiscalization of land use even more prominent. Retail development, with its attendant sales tax revenue and low service costs, has taken on an overwhelming importance for localities. A recent survey of California city administrators found that they ranked retail the most desirable land use, and most likely to provide developer incentives for it. Sales tax revenue outranked all other considerations, even city council support, as the most important consideration in attracting new development. The views of nearby cities ranked last.⁹

And newer, growing suburbs are better positioned to compete for the most desired development. Development on new land, or “greenfields,” in the suburbs is often cheaper than infill development or redevelopment of city “brownfield” sites. In addition, suburbs often offer lower taxes, a lower regulatory burden, more modern infrastructure, and desirable amenities such as open space and better public schools.

With some suburbs better able to compete for high-revenue, low-service cost development, development driven by fiscal considerations increases regional disparities. As growing better-off suburbs attract new economic activity, higher tax revenues and infrastructure investments, the older cities and suburbs contend with the fiscal burdens of the lower-income populations and aging infrastructure left behind. The resulting regional polarization hampers the ability of older cities to provide services and a high quality of life.

Distressed Neighborhoods and Towns

One result of the polarization in regional development is the concentration of lower income and minority populations in the center cities and older suburbs. California, where economic growth was robust during the 80s and since the recession of the early 90s, has been less plagued by weakening center cities than other areas of the country such as the Northeast. The San Francisco Bay Area in particular has performed much better than most large metropolitan areas.¹⁰ Nonetheless, problems remain that affect both the public and private sector.

Poverty rates are higher in most center city counties than in suburban counties. In 1993, Los Angeles had a poverty rate of 15.1% while Orange County had a rate of 8.5%, and Ventura County 7.3%. Even in San Francisco Bay Area, poverty is disproportionately concentrated in the center cities and older inner-ring suburbs, with large disparities in many socioeconomic indicators between the center and the affluent suburbs. San Francisco's poverty rate was 12.7% in 1993; poverty rates in its suburbs were substantially lower, with Contra Costa at 7.3%, San Mateo at 6.3%, and Marin at 5.2%.¹¹ These countywide figures mask equally large disparities between suburbs, with older industrial towns having much higher poverty rates than the newer and more distant areas. For example, 42% of schoolchildren in the inner-ring industrial suburb of Redwood City were eligible for free or reduced cost meals; just 0.1% were eligible in the affluent towns of Moraga and Lafayette across the bay.¹²

Sprawl is in part fed by white and middle-class flight, leaving behind the poor, new immigrants, Latinos and African-Americans.¹³ One study found that the number of 10–14 year old children in San Francisco and Oakland in 1990 was about 25% lower than the number of 0–4 year olds in 1980—an indirect indicator of white, school-related flight. And while 36.7% of all Bay Area elementary school students in 1995 were Black or Hispanic, the comparable figures were 73.4% in Oakland, and 57.1% in San Jose.¹⁴ Not all of the residential clustering by income and ethnicity is negative—for some groups, such as new immigrants, clustering can suit housing preferences and provide valuable economic and social benefits. To the degree that residential clustering is caused by discrimination¹⁵ and barriers to housing choice, however, it is problematic from an equity perspective. Further, when clustering results in large concentrations of poverty, economic and social benefits for the neighborhood and the greater society disappear. The resulting concentration of the poor and minorities creates isolation and diminished opportunity and can set off spirals of decline.¹⁶

Notably, regions that make efforts toward reducing center city–suburb inequities have greater increases in regional income. A recent study of the linkages between regional income growth and efforts to reduce center city poverty¹⁷ found that regional economic growth helped reduce poverty by increasing labor demand, but also that efforts to reduce poverty themselves helped to increase regional income. In sum, “doing good and doing well went hand in hand for regions.” The study ranked 74 metropolitan regions on these factors and found the San Jose metro area among the best performers, with the San Francisco/Oakland metro area doing slightly less well. Los Angeles fell just below the median for the 74 regions. The authors conducted case studies of the more successful

regions, including San Jose. They concluded that the area did so well, in large part, because of its booming technology industries and highly educated population, but also because of region-wide collaborative efforts, such as Joint Venture, a Silicon Valley consortium of business and government leaders. This pattern of active and dense links between regional businesses and between the public and private sectors was a hallmark of all the better-performing regions. Los Angeles, one of the less successful regions, has exhibited the opposite pattern, with a lack of coordination with and outreach to minority and low-income communities. As we plan for the future, working to reduce existing center city–suburb disparities will result in economic rewards across regions and the state.

Policy Options

Regulation for Compact Development

- urban growth boundaries
- zoning for higher densities, especially around transit hubs
- facilitating and encouraging infill development
- state requirements for increased density and development in existing areas

Urban growth boundaries (UGBs), which establish an area inside which all new non-agricultural development must occur, are becoming a popular tool to help control growth. They usually restrict development to within the UGB area for a period of 20 years or more. UGBs are required by state law in Oregon, and Portland’s have become a national model. Similar but less restrictive measures, such as urban limit lines or greenbelts, are mandated by New Jersey, Maine, and Washington. During the 1990s, several California communities passed ballot measures establishing UGBs, including San Jose, Pleasanton, Santa Rosa, and Novato. In Southern California, Ventura County and most of its cities have approved UGBs around urban areas since 1995. Many others are considering the tactic.

In practice, UGBs have had mixed success. Spillover growth outside of the UGB still occurs.¹⁸ Exemptions may be granted to developers, and areas such as Sonoma County have seen an increase in residential low density growth in the form of “hobby farms” and “ranchettes.” When UGBs are not combined with requirements towards higher densities, such as with transit-oriented development, the growth that occurs inside the boundaries is often less dense than compact-growth advocates would hope. Nevertheless, UGBs have been successful in

protecting agricultural and environmentally sensitive land and in redirecting some development to existing areas.

Other strategies to increase densities through compact development offer a range of flexible options to channel growth. They can be used to help direct new growth toward the center, like UGBs. They can also be used to increase densities in “development nodes” around transit hubs and existing population centers, while still allowing a less centralized, less concentrated development pattern.

Local governments can zone for higher densities, especially around transit hubs, and can require or establish incentives for infill development. States can require growth management planning by localities. Some states also require that local plans meet state goals or state requirements, such as for density levels or direction of new growth to existing areas. This approach, called the Oregon model, is used by Florida, Rhode Island, Maine, Washington, and Maryland. In some states—like Florida, New Jersey, and Maryland—the state can enforce local compliance by withholding plan approval or even state funding.¹⁹

Professor John Landis at UC Berkeley has tested the effects of a compact growth model against a “Business as Usual” option using a simulation called the California Urban Futures Model.²⁰ The Business as Usual option is guided by the marketplace and existing government policies. Compared to this, the Compact Growth option would result in significantly lower levels of land consumption by new development. Relatively little new development would be shifted back to already built-out areas, but densities would rise in closer-in suburbs. The model predicted a reduction in land consumption of over 50% in Contra Costa, Santa Cruz, and Napa counties, and by at least a third in Marin, Alameda, and Solano. Lower reductions of up to 20% were predicted for San Joaquin, Sacramento, and Yolo counties. Interestingly, an Environmental Protection model restricting development in sensitive areas had varying results, increasing land consumption in some counties and decreasing it in others. For instance, in Sacramento, Yolo, and Marin counties, the Environmental Protection model predicts greater land consumption because it would shift development farther out, away from environmentally land that is contiguous to existing development and would have been developed at higher densities.

Transportation Policies

- linking new development to transit

- adequate mass transit in suburbs and between center cities and suburbs

Transportation policies can also help curb sprawl and direct new development to existing areas. Linking transportation planning and new development to efficient mass transit and existing transit hubs can improve quality of life and economic strength by easing congestion and reducing automobile dependence. Adequate mass transit in suburbs and between cities and suburbs has a similar effect, making development in existing areas more attractive. The link between transportation policies and other land use policies is a tight one: compact development is a requirement for efficient mass transit, at the same time it makes it more possible.

Infrastructure Policy

- limiting new sewer and water lines
- maintenance of existing infrastructure
- spending priorities on existing, rather than new, development
- marginal cost pricing of new infrastructure

Reducing sprawl and increasing compact growth is also a matter of tying growth management goals to infrastructure policies. Infrastructure can be used to direct the location of growth—for example, localities can put a moratorium on new sewer and water lines in an area where growth is unwanted. Spending priorities can be shifted from accommodating new growth to sustaining existing areas. Maintenance of existing infrastructure in older areas, including roads, water, sewer, and communications helps encourage development in center cities and the inner suburbs. Most importantly, state agencies should facilitate marginal cost pricing of new infrastructure.²¹ Currently, the cost of new infrastructure is spread among all users, both old and new, effectively subsidizing and encouraging new growth at the urban fringe at the expense of existing areas and residents.

Regional Coordination and Governance

- regional planning through Councils of Governments (COGs)
- regional agencies with enforcement and funding powers

Regional coordination and governance could become one of the most effective means to reduce sprawl and manage uneven development. Regional coordination is the current strategy of California metropolitan areas, as it is in most states. Localities band together in voluntary councils of governments (COGs), such as the Association of Bay Area

Governments (ABAG), and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and the San Diego Association of Governments (SDAG). These COGs provide an institutional base for regional coordination and can plan on a regional level for infrastructure, housing, and employment needs, but they lack governmental powers. They cannot pass legislation or establish or enforce their policy recommendations, and this lack of control over land use policy means that they also lack significant influence.

A more powerful form of regionalism is the creation of metropolitan governments through annexation. This has been advocated by David Rusk, who has shown that metropolitan regions with “elastic” cities, those that have more freedom to annex, do better than regions with inelastic centers in economic growth and levels of socioeconomic inequality.²² In California and elsewhere, annexation is a common route by which suburbs grow, primarily by involving contiguous unincorporated county land. For California’s center cities, already surrounded by incorporated suburbs, this is next to impossible. While the state could establish policies that could permit central cities to expand by annexing neighboring jurisdictions, such an approach is not likely to be politically acceptable at the regional level.

Instead, regional governments can be established to plan, tax, and provide services across jurisdictional boundaries. Full regional government would be a threat to both center city politicians and suburban officials and residents and is probably not politically feasible. But regional institutions with some governing power do now exist in other states, with varying levels of authority. Atlanta has recently established a regional transportation agency with powers to plan, develop, tax, and control land use. Portland, Oregon, has the Metro Portland governing body, with an elected Metropolitan council and strong land use planning powers. Minneapolis/St. Paul has the state-appointed Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities (MCTC), which has control over all regional land use, sewer, and transit planning. It is worth noting, however, that simply having a regional planning or governance structure is far from a guarantee that equity considerations will play any significant role in its actions. Scholars of one study of regional planning and equity, for instance, charge that SCAG’s Regional Comprehensive Plan devotes scant space and minimal policy attention to achieving equity.²³ Changing regional opportunity structures will also require changing regional power dynamics. Myron Orfield, a Twin Cities legislator and proponent of regional solutions to regional disparities, emphasizes that when center cities and disadvantaged suburbs work together, they can shift the regional power base, especially with the authority of a regional governing agency available.²⁴

Tax Policies

- local incentives for compact development
- regional revenue sharing

Tax incentives can be used by localities to direct the location of development and to encourage more compact land use. Regional approaches to tax policies could encourage revenue-neutral land use planning that prioritizes housing needs, economic growth, compact development, and environmental preservation. The most promising mechanism is regional revenue sharing, in which some portion of local taxes is placed in a regional pool for redistribution. In the Minnesota-St. Paul region, each city contributes 40% of the growth in its commercial industrial tax base to a regional pool. When the funds are distributed back to the cities, those with the lowest commercial industrial tax base receive the most money. This reduces the fiscal disparities arising from sprawl, aids disadvantaged areas, and more equitably spreads the benefits of regional growth. However, it has not had a substantial impact on the patterns of growth or on overall regional inequalities. A stronger alternative would be an expanded system that involves a larger proportion of the commercial industrial tax base and also some of the high-value residential tax base, in order to reduce the competition for tax base and fiscal zoning enough to begin to significantly change land use patterns.²⁵

Reducing Barriers to Residential Choice

- inclusionary housing
- fair share programs
- lifting restrictions on multifamily housing
- increasing densities

Expanding residential choice can help reduce concentrations of poverty and can increase economic opportunity for vulnerable poor and minority populations.²⁶ Effective anti-discrimination laws, with adequate monitoring and enforcement are one approach. Specific land-use policies, discussed in more detail in the section on affordable housing, could remove regulatory barriers to and provide subsidies and incentives for the development of affordable housing and denser forms of housing such as multifamily buildings. Examples include inclusionary housing programs, fair share programs, and ending exclusionary large-lot zoning.²⁷ Increasing the variety of suburban housing, in terms of price and type, results in more housing opportunities over a greater regional area for lower income households, especially in suburbs rich in entry-level jobs. Suburbs with

land use policies that restrict all but low density single-family home development provide an indirect subsidy to the households that live there; the cost is born by those who would have chosen to live there, and could have afforded to, had other housing forms been allowed.²⁸

Revitalizing Distressed Communities

- job creation and retention
- attracting new development
- quality of life improvements: urban design, crime and pollution reduction, city services
- strengthening neighborhood institutions
- state and local funding for revitalization
- encouraging private sector investment

In addition to providing more equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of growth, addressing uneven development will require reducing existing disparities in order to help distressed communities take advantage of growth opportunities.²⁹ In both low income center city neighborhoods and troubled inner-ring suburbs, a range of development approaches can be applied. Community development is complex and must be comprehensive to be successful. Strategies include job retention and creation; affordable housing development; development of neighborhood planning institutions and powers; attracting retail development; physical design and redevelopment to improve both image and quality of life; crime and pollution abatement; infill on vacant and abandoned sites; and improvement of city services like schools, parks, libraries, and street maintenance.³⁰ All require the commitment of funds not just locally, but from the state and federal governments. In this era of limited government resources and a retreat from national level urban agenda, the most promising are public-private sector partnerships and collaborations to direct new investment to these communities.³¹

Job Dispersal and Employment Access

Even with a strong economy and low overall unemployment, many center city neighborhoods remain isolated, suffering from high levels of joblessness. In part, this is because as population and much economic growth have shifted to the urban periphery, so have job opportunities. The result is what scholars have termed a spatial mismatch.³² Most new job growth, especially in entry-level and less-skilled jobs, is now in the suburbs,

while large numbers of low-skilled and unemployed workers who could fill these jobs live in the center cities and older suburbs.

In the Los Angeles region, unemployment is highest in the urban county: 6.9% in July 1998, compared to 3.1% in Orange County. Job growth also increased faster in Orange County: from July 1997 to July 1998, Orange County employment increased 3.7%, compared to Los Angeles County's 2.6%. Similar patterns occur in metropolitan regions throughout the state: San Francisco's unemployment rate was 4% and Oakland's was 6.9%, while the Marin County rate was 2.3%, San Mateo's

³³ Short term projections predict that suburban counties will continue to outperform urban counties in employment growth.³⁴

Access to these suburban jobs is limited for many low-income Californians who do not have consistent access to reliable cars. Nationally, almost 60% of African-Americans living in extreme poverty in cities do not have a car of their own.³⁵ Because transit linkages in and to the suburbs are weak, suburban jobs are often inaccessible without an automobile. A study of 10 American cities found that for low-skilled commuters, dependence on public transit was the most important factor in reducing employment access, even more so than residential location.³⁶

However, transportation access is far from the entire answer.³⁷ Discrimination in hiring remains a problem.³⁸ A study of the roots of African-American unemployment in the Bay Area found that transportation access, whether due to lack of a car or to distance from appropriate jobs, accounts for only 9% of that unemployment. Thirty-three percent was attributed to lower average levels of education, pointing to the need for better education. The largest factor, at 58%, was attributed to race, showing that employment discrimination is a central cause.³⁹ Addressing urban unemployment, especially in distressed and minority neighborhoods, will require not just transportation policy but a range of policies aimed at the local, regional, and state economies.

Job dispersal and the difficulties of job access for lower-income and less-skilled urban residents can be addressed from a number of fronts: transportation policies to move workers to jobs; housing policies to increase affordable housing options near employment; development policies to improve job opportunities in the communities where unemployment is high.

Policy Options

Improving Transportation Linkages

- expanding reverse-commute service
- employer subsidies
- flexible transportation programs such as vanpools
- encouraging transit-oriented development

Improving transportation linkages through transit expansion can help move workers to jobs. Traditional public transportation is not cost-effective in the low-density suburban environment, however, and prospects for expansion are few. More flexible transit forms⁴⁰ are called for to supplement existing resources: expanded “reverse-commute” service; employer subsidies; specialized vanpool programs, 24-hour transit for night and swing shifts. San Diego, New Jersey, and Orlando have all created special programs to help welfare-to-work clients to and from bus stops or employment centers, while Seattle is working to expand suburban transit without creating a “transportation welfare” program.⁴¹ Other options include encouraging transit-oriented commercial and industrial development in suburban areas⁴² and improving child care facilities and work schedule flexibility to lessen commute burdens.

Improving Employment Opportunity

- job development and employer connections
- job creation and retention in disadvantaged communities
- brownfields and infill development
- promoting employment matched to worker skill levels
- anti-discrimination policies and enforcement
- supportive services

Increasing workers’ physical access to suburban jobs is only part of the equation; job development and efforts to connect workers with employers is the other.⁴³ But not all employment opportunities must be outside of distressed communities. Another strategy is improve employment opportunities within areas where the unemployed live. Economic development programs, including public–private partnerships to increase investment in disadvantaged communities should be pursued. In terms of land use policies, promoting commercial and industrial infill development on urban brownfields would increase job opportunities and have beneficial effects for local economies generally. This can be done

through policies to promote compact growth and through subsidies and incentives to make brownfield development more attractive. In all cases, effective policy must concentrate on promoting employment development that is matched to the skill and education levels of the unemployed.

We must not expect that land use policies will totally redress access issues in employment opportunity.⁴⁴ Workers in disadvantaged communities will also need a range of services in order to fully avail themselves of job opportunities, even when transportation access is taken care of. Such services include training and education, job readiness programs, child care, and social service supports. Perhaps most important will be enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. Localities can make headway in this area by committing to outreach, support, loan programs, and contracting preferences for minority-owned small businesses.⁴⁵

Regional Planning and Governance

- increase equitable distribution of transportation resources

Regional decision-making on transportation and land use could be a powerful tool in reducing destructive interjurisdictional competition for high-revenue commercial and industrial development. To date, most regional planning is done by advisory bodies such as COGs, which have no power to directly influence development, but many regions are taking more powerful steps, especially in transportation planning. Regional planning for transportation already exists in the form of metropolitan transportation and transit districts in California. These agencies can work to improve the equitable distribution of transportation resources and transit linkages. Most, like the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the Bay Area, guide regional transportation through controlling the flow of federal and state money to new highway and transit projects. A step beyond, with much greater powers to attack sprawl and address inequities, is the new “superagency” recently established by the state of Georgia for the 13-county Atlanta region. The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority has powers to plan and build rail, bus, and auto systems and force localities to pay for them. It controls permits for connections to the existing road system, and can restrict development by refusing to issue those permits.

Affordable Housing and Changing Households

A shortage of housing affordable to lower and moderate income households has been a pressing policy issue in most metropolitan areas in California and the rest of the nation. This is an issue not just of the amount of affordable housing available, but where it is located. Housing in a mix

of price ranges in all parts of a region supports economic growth and job accessibility and lessens segregation. Yet production has been lagging behind population growth statewide throughout the 1990s. From 1990–1995, 20% of California’s population growth occurred in Los Angeles County, but only 12% of new housing starts did. Multifamily housing in particular has dropped off in the 1990s, falling even farther behind the need.⁴⁶ A greater supply of affordable housing is needed most in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles region, where costs are highest and where most of the state’s new employment growth is projected to occur.

Changing Households and Housing Options

Affordability is further weakened by a lack of diverse housing options. In California as in the rest of the country, households are changing. There are more small one- and two-person households, more elderly households, and more households containing multiple generations.

Divorce, marrying later, and lower fertility means that average household size is dropping. One- and two-person households now make up 60% of all American households, double the proportion in 1970. At the same time, in areas with large proportions of immigrants or minorities, larger households and extended families are more common:⁴⁷ Seventeen percent of all Los Angeles households have 5 or more members, while only 10% of households nationally do. And while only 1.2% of US households have more than 6 persons, the proportion is double that in San Francisco.⁴⁸

Household structure is also changing. The Ozzie and Harriet image of a married couple with children, with the father employed outside the home and the mother a homemaker now describes not quite 7% of American households; the proportion fitting this description was 11% as recently as 1986.

Multiple-generation households are more common. Twelve percent of all 25–34 year olds now live with their parents, compared to 8% in 1970. There are 3.5 million subfamilies, or families living in another family’s home, in the US today; nearly half of these are women and their children living with relatives.⁴⁹ These demographic trends point to the need for more small units and more diverse housing types, such as in-law units, to accommodate our changing households. Yet most new development is single-family, designed for a traditional nuclear family.

Housing Affordability

The lack of affordable housing options affects all of us. The Association of Bay Area Governments identifies high housing prices and lack of production of affordable units as the most serious constraints on the region's economy.⁵⁰ High housing prices force homebuyers farther out within metropolitan areas, increasing commutes and exacerbating sprawl, with all its negative economic effects. In addition, the business community recognizes that housing availability and cost play a major role in employee satisfaction and productivity. Long commutes and high housing prices increase salary and wage pressures and make the attraction and retention of workers more difficult.⁵¹

From 1970 to 1990, median home values in California rose by 746%, and rents by 392%. During the same period, household income increased just 285%.⁵² In 1996, 39% of California households could afford the median-priced home, compared to 53% nationwide. Affordability is lowest currently in the San Francisco Bay Area and the central coast region, while the Los Angeles region hovers around the state level.⁵³ Homeownership affordability varies dramatically, largely due to interest rate changes—in 1989, just 14% of California households could afford the median-priced home. Over time, however, California experiences levels of homeownership affordability which are consistently lower than the national average.

Rental housing in California has an even more acute affordability crisis. In a 1995 nationwide ranking of 45 metropolitan areas in terms of rental housing affordability and availability, California performed worse than any other state. Seven of the bottom eight metropolitan areas were in California: Riverside/San Bernadino, Los Angeles, San Jose, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco/Oakland, and Anaheim/Santa Ana. Anaheim/Santa Ana rated 45th out of 45 in four categories: ratio of low-income households to low cost units, overcrowding, percentage of renters paying more than 30% of income, and percentage paying more than 50%.⁵⁴

Causes of the Housing Crisis

Shortfalls in housing supply are a major factor leading to increased housing prices and restricted housing options, and California has been experiencing a shortage of supply relative to demand for nearly 20 years. Although housing construction permits issued in 1989 show an increase over recent years,⁵⁵ new housing production during the 1990s was the lowest since World War II.⁵⁶ In San Mateo County, there was only one new housing start per 7 to 8 new residents in the first half of the decade,

while Los Angeles County had only one new start per 6 to 7 new residents.⁵⁷

Multifamily housing production has dropped off dramatically, and construction permits over the last few years show no signs of recovery. The number of multifamily construction permits issued in 1997 was barely 15% of the 1986 peak.⁵⁸ The decline in multifamily housing worsens the statewide affordability crisis. Some of this is due to lagging impacts of the national recession of the early 1990s and may at least partially correct if the state housing market continues recent growth trends. However, there are other factors that indicate that housing affordability overall and multifamily housing in particular will remain serious problems for the state.

First, litigation over construction defects in attached housing has become problematic for the building industry. The Coalition for Quality Affordable Housing, an industry policy group, estimates that multifamily construction is down as much as 90% in some areas of the state due to builder fear of lawsuits.⁵⁹

Resistance to subsidized, multifamily and nontraditional housing also works to limit new development. Suburban zoning ordinances commonly restrict or ban multifamily development, accessory units, and manufactured housing. Neighborhood opposition is also widespread. The public associates affordable housing and multifamily development with unattractive and inappropriate design, increased traffic burden, declining property values and crime and safety issues. Bias is common against lower-income households, minorities, and renters. The result is the view that affordable housing is a threat to property values, community character, and quality of life. However, the threat is not a real one. Nearly all studies have found no significant negative impacts from locating subsidized, multifamily, or manufactured housing near market-rate development.⁶⁰

A final factor in housing affordability is growth management policies. Many of the most popular tools for growth management can increase land prices and put up barriers to building affordable units. They can also result in gentrification of previously affordable areas and the displacement of lower and moderate income households. Many forms of growth management, especially UGBs are opposed by many real estate industry organizations as inflexible and resulting in increased housing costs. Certainly Portland has seen a dramatic rise in housing costs in the 20 years its UGB has been in effect; in 1997 it was rated the second least affordable housing market in the country by the National Association of Homebuilders, and housing prices have doubled in the last 10 years. Affordable housing advocates in the region argue that most of this increase cannot be attributed to a reduction in the availability of developable land.

They note that large price increases occurred during periods when large amounts of undeveloped land remained inside the boundary, that home size increases account for much of the rise, and that lender and community resistance to higher density or multifamily housing has limited lower-priced options in new development.⁶¹

It is clear that high housing prices have many causes, and the effect of growth management measures on housing prices is still debated. One study of seven California cities' experiences with growth control during the 1980s found minimal impact on housing prices, but concluded that this was largely due to less restricted opportunities for growth in nearby communities.⁶² But not all growth control measures increase housing costs—for instance, regulations promoting higher densities reduce housing prices by limiting land costs.

Growth management as it is most often practiced, however, works less to increase density than it does to lower it. Many suburban communities, especially affluent outer-ring towns, control growth by limiting the land available for residential development and requiring large lot sizes. The immediate effect is to limit the town's population and increase housing prices there. The larger impact of this localized growth control is to increase the inequities of sprawl by disregarding regional housing needs and limiting housing options for many Californians, especially in areas of greatest growth. These restricted options increase the need for development on the periphery, accelerating sprawl. They are also a factor in the concentration of lower-income, immigrant and minority families in center cities and older suburbs, where multifamily and lower cost housing is available.

Policy Options

Fair Share Housing

- allocate housing need regionally to increase and disperse affordable housing
- improve enforcement of fair share programs
- expand fair share to include different housing types

Expanded and enforceable “fair share” policies could be a powerful tool to increase the amount and broaden the distribution of affordable housing. Fair share policies encourage or require localities to provide housing opportunities based on regional housing needs. Goals or quotas for housing provision are calculated in various ways; the most common factors include population growth, income distribution, employment

growth, developable land, and public infrastructure and service levels. By promoting a more dispersed pattern for low-income housing, fair share programs increase residential mobility.

California requires localities to plan for providing housing opportunities for all income groups in a community, and include regional needs targets in their plan.⁶³ Regional needs targets, for which the state recommends allocation procedures, are calculated by councils of governments (COGs) such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). These regional needs targets are fair share goals, but their role is essentially advisory; while localities are required to include them in plans, there is no enforcement mechanism, short of a developer lawsuit, to ensure goals are met. The California Department of Housing and Community Development has estimated noncompliance at 80%.⁶⁴ A similar dilemma plagues fair share programs in other states such as New Jersey and Oregon.⁶⁵ Adding penalties for failure to comply with housing needs allocations is one policy option. Fair share policies could also be expanded to include targets for different housing types, including multifamily housing, which would increase housing options for the growing number of small households.

Reducing Regulatory Barriers

- reduce restrictions on multifamily housing
- lessen low density, large-lot zoning
- relax excessive building codes and subdivision regulations
- permit in-law units

Since the 1980s, California has been in the forefront of states in reforming some of the regulatory barriers to affordable housing. For instance, state laws now prohibit localities from banning manufactured housing or holding it to higher review standards. The state also requires localities to grant incentives such as density bonuses to developers providing affordable housing, and set standards for in-law apartments. As part of the housing element required in comprehensive plans, localities must identify and address regulatory barriers that constrain housing production. Despite these actions, localities have often circumvented state measures and other barriers remain, especially in suburban locations. Restrictions on lot size, multifamily housing, and in-law units reduce the range of options for non-nuclear family households.⁶⁶ Exclusionary zoning measures such as large-lot zoning and restrictions on multifamily housing, burdensome permit procedures, “gold plated” subdivision regulations, and

excessive building codes all work to raise housing prices, reduce location options for affordable housing.⁶⁷

Regulation to Promote and Preserve Affordability

- inclusionary zoning
- replacement ordinances
- preservation and conversion ordinances

Regulation can also be used to promote affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning, which requires a certain percentage of housing units in new development to be affordable to moderate or low income households is a central mechanism. Inclusionary zoning programs have spread in California since the state began requiring local comprehensive plans to include a housing element aimed at meeting fair-share needs. Most offer flexibility to developers in terms of in-lieu fees or off-site units. Moderate income homebuyers have been the primary beneficiaries.⁶⁸

Other policy options include replacement ordinances, which require the replacement of affordable units lost through demolition or conversion, and preservation ordinances to protect the existing affordable housing stock.⁶⁹ Preservation ordinances can include limits on the conversion to rental housing to condominiums, and limits on the conversion of SRO housing to tourist hotels or other uses. For example, San Francisco adopted both condominium and SRO conversion limits over 15 years ago.

Public Sector Incentives and Subsidies

- subsidies for permanently affordable housing development
- streamlining procedures for affordable and multifamily development
- first-time homebuyer programs linked to infill and existing development
- permanent state funding source for housing

Localities can also choose to encourage developers to build affordable, multifamily and nontraditional housing types through incentives or subsidies. Density bonuses and similar incentives can be offered in exchange for provision of affordable units, and streamlined approval processes can be implemented for affordable or multifamily projects. Subsidies can be provided to non-profit builders⁷⁰ or to homebuyers or renters. Subsidies can be funded through linkage programs, as in San Francisco, where approval of downtown commercial development is tied to

an agreement to provide affordable housing or contribute to an affordable housing fund. Real estate transfer taxes and tax increment financing are other common methods. For rental housing, local subsidies can be used to leverage state and federal funds for new construction. In terms of ownership housing, local programs to aid first-time homebuyers are becoming popular in large cities around the country. Typically, a revolving loan fund provides low interest secondary mortgages to first-time, low to moderate income homebuyers. Regionalizing these programs would expand their scope, and linking the subsidy to the purchase of infill housing, housing at minimum densities, or to existing housing in already developed areas would help reverse the incentives to sprawl. Given local government revenue limitations, however, substantial funding support must come from the state, preferably in the form of a permanent funding source such as a housing trust fund.

Locally Unwanted Land Uses

Protectionist zoning can keep out not just affordable housing, but other types of locally unwanted land uses (LULUs)—the myriad activities that inevitably increase with growth, and in fact are necessary to support it, but which give rise to NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) resistance. They include social services such as homeless shelters, group homes, and public clinics; public utilities and facilities such as landfills, waste treatment facilities, incinerators, transit systems, and power plants; and private sector industries that involve toxic, polluting, or unpleasant processes.

Many of these LULUs are necessary to support development and economic health for a locality or a region. Many provide services for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, who must suffer delayed or inadequate services when exclusionary zoning and NIMBYism make siting difficult or impossible. In certain cities or neighborhoods, a particular location may also be necessary. Social service needs, for instance, are not randomly distributed in a region, and it may be more efficient to provide services near to clients' homes. At the same time, overconcentration of LULUs in certain areas can damage local economies and unduly burden vulnerable populations. For instance, the accumulation of polluting and toxic industries, utilities, and public facilities in low income and minority neighborhoods has caused health problems and made revitalization efforts that much more difficult.⁷¹ The siting of LULUs goes to the heart of the equity debate in land use planning. When some group of individuals must bear a cost for the public good, which group should be chosen? And who should do the choosing?

As with affordable housing, neighbors fear lower property values and undesirable changes to community character and quality of life. NIMBY resistance can entirely block the development of LULUs. More often, though, it means they are sited in the communities least able to mount an effective political resistance. As a result, unwanted uses are concentrated in the most disadvantaged communities and neighborhoods and a growing “environmental justice” movement is calling for a more equitable distribution of LULUs.⁷²

Policy Options

Reducing NIMBYism

- early public notification, outreach, and participation
- mediation programs
- public education
- post-entry programs
- city liaisons to facilitate outreach and process
- development policies and overlay zones to promote appropriate design and siting

The most common approaches to siting LULUs involve improving public acceptance. Localities can focus on the process: early community notification; outreach and full public participation in the decision-making process; mediation programs to avoid litigation; education to allay ungrounded fears and emphasize benefits; and post-entry programs to maintain good community relations and avert potential problems.⁷³ City staff can be assigned as liaisons to facilitate outreach and review procedures. All of these tactics work to reduce antagonism and adversarial stances, build trust and cooperation, and ensure that legitimate community concerns are addressed.

Other approaches involve reducing the undesirable impacts of the LULUs themselves, through careful, appropriate design and siting. Careful choice of site and sensible, responsible design are crucial to successfully and equitably site LULUs. Development policies or overlay zones can be used to provide guidance to make affordable housing, social services, and other LULUs community-appropriate. Not all NIMBY objections are short-sighted or illegitimate. Concerns may center over the over-concentration of social services in already distressed areas, for instance, or over the loss of or damage to environmentally-sensitive lands, or historically or culturally important places. While it is rarely possible to make an unwanted use completely acceptable to potential neighbors,

Careful design and planning can not only mitigate concerns but also increase trust and minimize contention in the siting process.

Regulation for Equitable Siting

- fair share programs for housing and other land uses
- state regulation to reduce exclusionary zoning

Fair share programs are not just for housing, although affordable housing, especially for special-needs groups, is often a lightning rod for NIMBY sentiments. Fair share approaches for other land uses, on a city-wide or region-wide basis, are worthy of attention. To date, only New York city has adopted a fair share siting program for land uses other than housing. In 1989, the city adopted criteria for city facility siting to include balancing program and service needs, cost-effectiveness, and a goal of broad geographical distribution. The award-winning program has had mixed success: while dozens of facilities have been sited, some with positive community response to normally rejected facilities,⁷⁴ the city was also forced to withdraw a 24-shelter homeless housing plan due to intense public protest.⁷⁵ The program has been operating for 7 years, and its experience suggests that the approach, carefully applied, does have the potential to reduce geographic inequities in siting LULUs. Regional versions of the program would be necessary to address some types of facilities and have been proposed by many advocates of regional planning.⁷⁶

Beyond fair share programs, there are a number of steps that the state and localities can take to improve the ability to site LULUs. They can work to reduce the exclusion of necessary services and facilities from privileged areas, and promote better design and acceptability in all communities. Land use regulations that discriminate against affordable housing and nontraditional types of housing such as group homes can be amended. State-level regulation can require such changes, increasing the likelihood that wealthier communities will not be able to exclude LULUs. California already prohibits localities from excluding licensed group homes of less than 6 persons in residential areas.⁷⁷

Need Reduction

- reduce requirements for unwanted uses where possible

Proactive approaches can be used to reduce the need for many types of LULUs, especially waste management and utilities. By promoting recycling and conservation, the need for landfills and waste treatment facilities can be minimized. Building a strong regional economy that provides good jobs and affordable housing and minimizes the concentration

of poverty will reduce the need for social services and homeless shelters. Not all LULUs are amenable to this approach; health care centers, industrial and commercial development, and housing for the disabled, for instance, must be accommodated somewhere in the region.

Land Use, Equity and the Future of California

Americans prefer suburbs and the good schools, safety, secure property values, nearness to nature and better quality of life they believe should be part of suburban living. But as sprawl breeds congestion and loss of open space, as older suburbs decline, there is growing concern that the suburban dream is threatened, that it is moving out of reach, that it may even be illusionary. The current flight to gated communities and to exurbs is part of the response, but will not keep these problems at bay.

We need to address sprawl, and that means also addressing regional inequality. Because inequality fuels sprawl, and sprawl feeds inequality, policies to attack either of these problems in reality address both. Revitalizing distressed center city neighborhoods helps the poor who live in them, but is also of benefit to the suburban middle class. More compact development on the urban periphery helps ease growing suburban congestion problems, and also indirectly helps maintain the economic health of the center.

Smart growth and sustainability call for growth planning that addresses environment, economy, and equity, although most plans focus just on the environment and the economy. We need to place more emphasis on the equity leg of this triad, not just for its own sake, but to better achieve our other goals. All Californians will benefit if we work to ensure that growth does not leave some behind.

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