

SUMMARY

THE INTERREGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), with the support of the County of Santa Barbara and County of Ventura, applied for and received a California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) grant to create an “inter-regional partnership” (IRP), among local governments and other agencies in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. The purposes of this program are to:

1. Address issues relating to the balance of jobs, housing, and mobility in this two-county region in a collaborative framework;
2. Develop new tools to analyze the problem, and
3. Develop strategies for promoting an appropriate balance in the future.

WHAT IS JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE?

Jobs-housing balance is a planning tool that local governments can use to achieve a roughly equal number of jobs and housing units or households in all or part of their jurisdiction. The jobs available in a community need to match the skills of the workforce and housing should be available at prices, sizes, and locations for workers who wish to live in the area. Hence, there is a qualitative as well as quantitative component to achieving job-housing balance. Job-housing balance is more of a planning technique than a regulatory tool.

What distinguishes the Jobs Housing Project from other endeavors is its focus on both Western Ventura County and Santa Barbara County. This project is founded on the assumptions that:

1. Regional problems require regional solutions;
2. Meaningful change will require the development of interregional partnerships and alliances which heretofore have not been nurtured;
3. Noticeable and positive changes at the local level will require political influence at the state level that can only be accomplished through strategic cooperation at the regional level; and,
4. All local jurisdictions are related and do not work in isolation of each other.

The full Taking Action Regionally report identifies strategies and an implementation framework to improve jobs and housing imbalances in the two-county study area. As such, the report serves as a roadmap for future public and private leadership, collaboration and action.

SO WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?

Within Western Ventura County and Santa Barbara County there is a spatial and economic mismatch between the location and type of housing and the availability of jobs within communities in the region. This imbalance is reaching crisis proportions and displays a variety of symptoms including:

- ❖ **Long-Distance Commutes**
- ❖ **Loss of Critical Service Workers**
- ❖ **Degradation of Business and Job Climate**
- ❖ **Change in Demographic Composition**
- ❖ **High Density/Low Density Households**
- ❖ **Impacts on Quality of Life and Community Participation**

Housing prices are increasing at upwards of 55-65% throughout the two-county region; traffic congestion increases the time people spend in stop and go traffic well beyond the traditional 4-6 pm rush hour; job growth occurs primarily in the lower paying jobs; and people double up to spread the cost of housing.

FINDINGS

- The Santa Barbara/Ventura County line functions as a kind of dividing line when it comes to communication and collaboration. There is little or no apparent ability for common approaches to permeate between the cities and counties that lie on either side of that jurisdictional watershed point – geographically, jurisdictionally, and culturally.
- The region is running out of room by using low-density land use patterns to construct significant amounts of housing to respond to demand

- Much of the housing that is produced is bought by people who work elsewhere and, therefore commute from the community within which it is constructed.
- Higher density housing projects designed to address specific community needs meet with delays and high processing costs due to multiple levels of review, unclear and subjective review requirements
- Chronic daily congestion and unacceptable levels of service are the norm during rush hour and on weekends throughout the Santa Barbara south coast. Even when alternatives to driving alone exist, they are not attractive to the great majority of the driving public. Linkages between modes of travel are limited and do not respond to user preferences or habits. Congestion relief is decades away.
- Local municipalities, counties and the communities they represent have limited influence when they seek to address regional issues such as housing affordability, job creation and mobility on a strictly local basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

“Taking Action Regionally” recommends a regional, county and local government adopt a series of policy recommendations aimed at changing the dynamics that contribute to the jobs-housing imbalance and the traffic congestion that it creates. These recommendations fall into seven general issue clusters. Some of the more important recommendations are:

Inter-Regional Communication and Collaboration

- Initiate efforts that engage local governments, civic organizations, and businesses in an ongoing regional discussion of next steps.
- Convene meetings with regional councils of chamber of commerce representatives to initiate a dialogue about narrowing the separation between job-creation and housing provision.
- Sponsor issue-specific forums and community summits directed at exploring specific approaches and housing initiatives and congestion management.
- Institute semi-annual joint planning commission meetings between adjacent jurisdictions to discuss proposed large development projects and impending changes to General Plans.

Advancing Housing Policy that Matches New Construction with Local Needs

- Encourage local agencies, housing developers, larger employers, not-for-profit foundations and others to jointly establish local waiting lists to place local employees with less than 200% average median income in local housing to the greatest extent allowed by fair housing law.
- Provide 40-year mortgages, cost and equity-sharing with equity partners, and longer-term affordability provisions to allow for easier entry into market and below-market housing.
- Revise land use and design standards that result in more compact development and that specify a higher range of minimum density standards in urban areas.
- Pursue a mutual agreement between the local agencies within region that each jurisdiction will pursue a level of housing production that equates to their own housing demands.

Job Creation and Economic Development

- Require local preference to the greatest extent allowed by law that new housing opportunities be directed at local residents and to those already working in local communities.
- Develop and implement incentives to move businesses to where workers live; explore remote site employment centers (moving part of the business to where workers live).

Streamline Local Permit Processing

- Utilize the CEQA Infill Exemption for affordable housing projects where appropriate.
- Utilize Specific Plans and other planning and land use tools to simultaneously establish pre-entitlements and implement a programmatic level of environmental review that pre-mitigates significant impacts.

Congestion Relief

- Initiate discussions between Ventura Council of Governments and Santa Barbara County Association of Governments to facilitate inter-county travel during peak and off-peak periods by jointly pursue state and federal funding of inter-county transit and passenger rail enhancements, and other near-term transportation improvements.
- Increase capital investment for additional equipment to provide mass transit opportunities (bus and rail) between Ventura, Lompoc, and the Santa Barbara South Coast.
- Establish an incentive program for housing and mixed use development near transit corridors and employment centers.
- Initiate the development, funding and use of videoconferencing centers as satellite

work/conferencing stations by business, business parks, industry and government.

Public Education

- Establish a clearinghouse within SBCAG and within VCOG for housing initiatives in order to facilitate collaboration, and play to the unique strengths of organizations and agencies addressing local and regional housing challenges.
- Implement a comprehensive package of public education and community outreach activities to raise the level of understanding of existing housing and jobs-balancing efforts and initiatives. Utilize the print and television media to highlight success stories and accomplishments and correct misconceptions and myths regarding affordable housing smart growth and transit-oriented development.

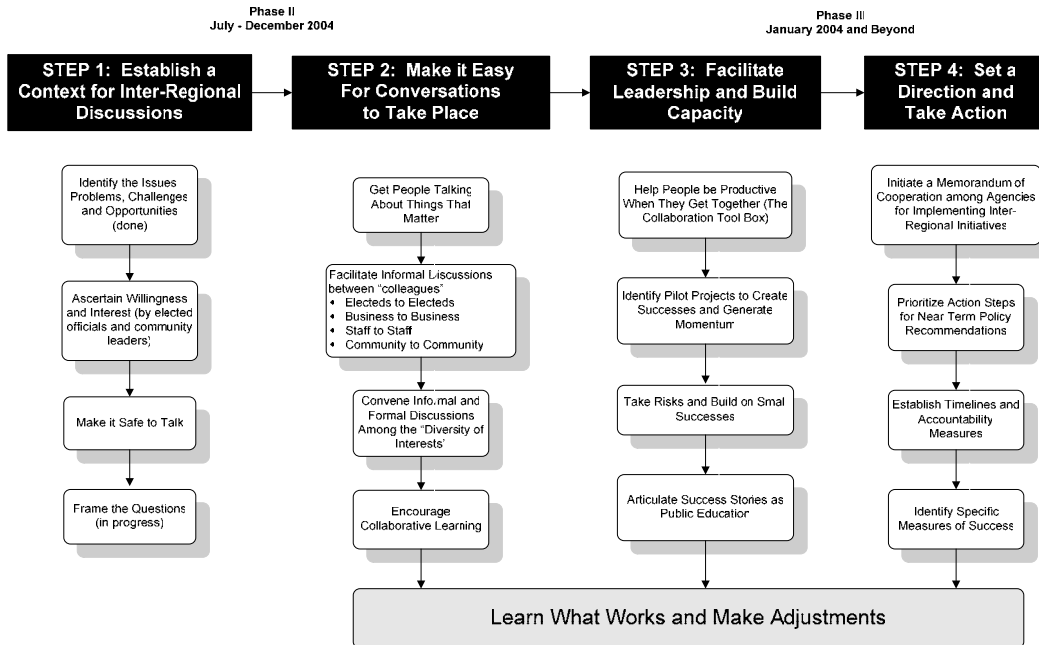
Legislative Advocacy

- Prioritize a regional approach to legislative advocacy as a near term strategy to guide regional cooperation. Facilitate joint meetings among existing public and private-sector advocacy organizations in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties to identify opportunities for strategic alliances and influence on emerging state legislation.
- Establish new alliances between government, business and non-profit institutions and organizations (environmental interest groups, chambers of commerce, and not-for-profit networks) to articulate regional benefits and complimentary local solutions to issues related to open space preservation, environmental management, water quality issues and transportation/mobility issues.

Next Steps¹

The report recommends a series of four steps to implement the recommendations contained within the Taking Action Regionally document. These implementation steps along with effective leadership at the public, private and community levels are critical to initiating a coordinated and integrated effort to respond to critical housing, jobs and transportation issues facing Western Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

**Framework for Action
Charting a Course for Results**



¹ For additional information regarding this report and the process itself, please contact Michael G. Powers, SBCAG Deputy Director at (805) 961-8910, or John Jostes, principal author of the report at (805) 568-1440.