
MEMORANDUM

TO: TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FRESNO PTIS PHASE II
FROM: GLEN BOLEN, FREGONESE ASSOCIATES
SUBJECT: PTIS PHASE 2, LAND USE PLANNING STATUS UPDATE
DATE: 7/1/2009
CC:

This memorandum provides an interim status report for ongoing activities related to the land use planning element of the Fresno PTIS Phase 2 project. It is segregated into three sections, an overview of a proposed special TAC meeting in preparation for public meetings, the methodology we are using to evaluate current trends, and early results of our analysis.

A Special Meeting of the TAC

Due to the full agenda of the meeting on July 8th, Fregonese Associates (FAI) will be holding an additional meeting with the TAC to review the results of our analysis, and to provide guidance for the planning a analysis of potential future conditions. The economic assessment from Strategic Economics will provide helpful background for our special meeting. During the special meeting FAI will present the analysis results, call out some of the potential challenges or conflicts, and lead the TAC through a Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercise.

SWOT Exercise

This activity will allow the TAC to provide the team direction, and an honest assessment of the County's Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, and Threats. The results will help the team develop the scenario building workshop exercise (to be held during the fall), enhance guiding principles, and develop evaluation benchmarks for scenario comparison.

Our aim is to hold a countywide workshop in the fall, plus a series of corridor planning workshops to examine the potential for growth and transit oriented development that can best support a successful countywide transit system.

Trend Analysis Methodology

Land Capacity Analysis

FAI has been performing an audit of local zoning codes and general plan data to develop a geographically specific estimate of potential growth capacity within the county and its cities.

Growth capacity estimation is developed, at the basic level, through building a regionalized zoning or general plan layer for the entire county and applying the potential job and housing densities to the county's remaining non-constrained vacant land (underutilized still under investigation). The capacity analysis will be necessary as the team and committee develop plans that account for the amount of growth that is expected. A key to this capacity analysis is using the region's many GIS layers in a coordinated fashion. Assessor's parcel data, land use data, environmental constraints, and local plan and zoning data are the primary data sets employed.

Developing a "Virtual Present"

Building a good base for analysis also requires a digital representation of where we are today. This is known as the base-year conditions, or the virtual present. It represents the conditions of today, in a format that will be compatible with the upcoming scenario modeling. FAI uses the countywide land use data, coupled with the TAZ or census based accounting of jobs and households to assign jobs and houses or population to existing developed lands. This GIS layer data will allow us to put both capacity, and future growth in context to current conditions. It will also prove useful in calculating performance indicators during scenario analysis.

Baseline Land Use Scenario (Virtual Future)

The COG recently developed a TAZ based, baseline forecast for growth. In scoping the project FAI had anticipated building the baseline land use scenario by combining the vacant land analysis with recent trend and county or city level forecast data. In light of the newly adopted baseline forecast FAI is going further with a level of analysis that will enable the team to see how the baseline forecast fits the landscape. Using the regionalized zone / plan data generated during the audit and capacity analysis FAI is employing its Envision Tomorrow scenario building tools to develop the land use baseline. We are working at a level of precision that varies by location. In and near the urbanized areas we are developing our land use layers and scenarios using a grid with a resolution of 480 feet on a side, or a total of 5.29 acres (roughly 2.5 city blocks). In rural areas, where minimal change is anticipated we are using a minimum cell size of 960 feet per side, or just over 21 acres per cell. This dual scale is necessary to keep computer performance reasonable while working with such a large and varied land mass. We assign mixes of virtual buildings to the landscape in accord with general plan densities, or the adopted forecast, whichever is greater in most cases. Based on our examination of past forecasting, and the TAZ data provided of the current forecast, it is assumed that much of the projected growth is being assumed to occur on vacant land. In some cases, the disparity in forecasting from actual activity and capacity will become evident. This 'virtual future' baseline land use will allow us to bring to the TAC a new vantage point from which to assess the county's future and how its planning directs change and investments.

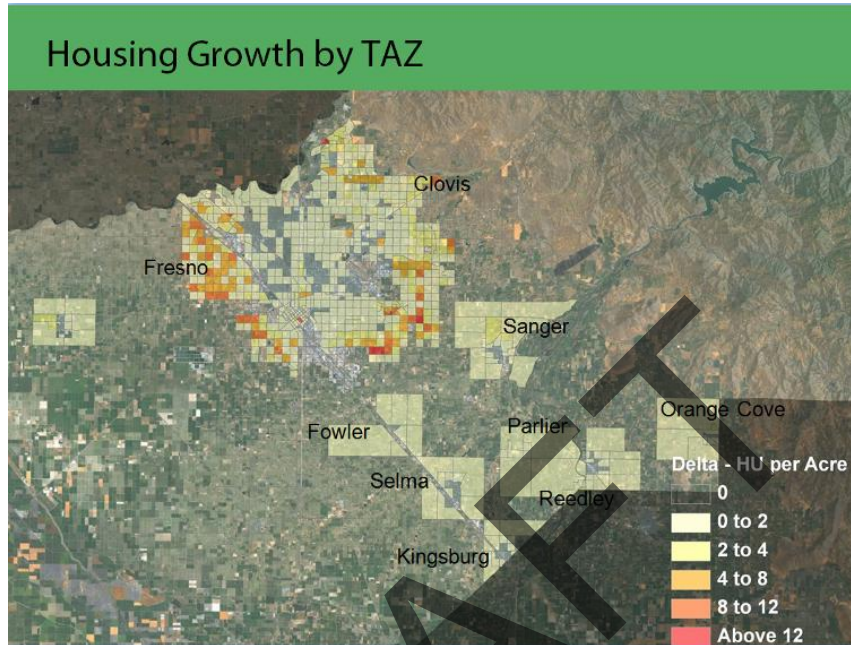
Early Findings

Location of growth

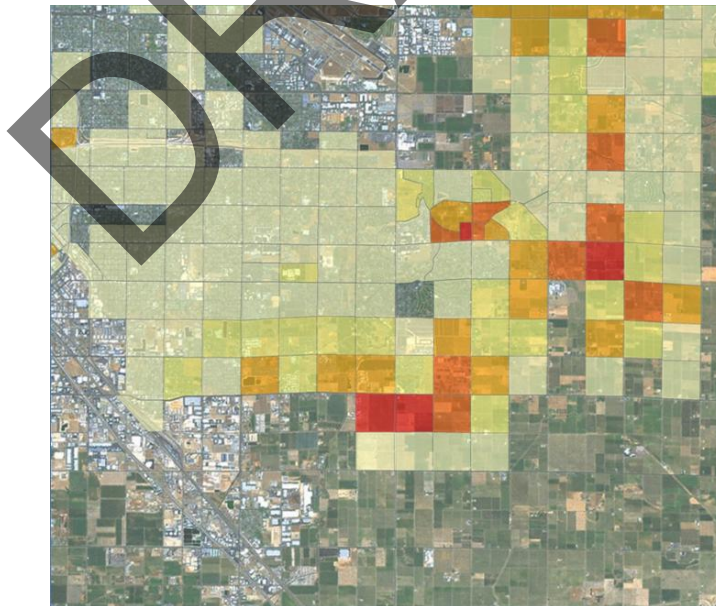
Following is a glimpse at a couple of the early results that the team is finding. At a future TAC meeting, Fregonese Associates will present these results, in addition to more detailed analysis. For now, we've included these two related components - of the more interesting results - for consideration. Hopefully these will add some perspective to the presentation by Strategic Economics on the region's economic picture.

The first noteworthy item from the forecast is the expected distribution.

TAZ's are the geographic boundaries that are used by the transportation model to estimate everything from congestion, the distance people might travel, and how many folks are likely to ride the bus. The map shows that, but for a few exceptions, the majority of the County's growth is expected to be at the edges of the cities, predominately on vacant land.

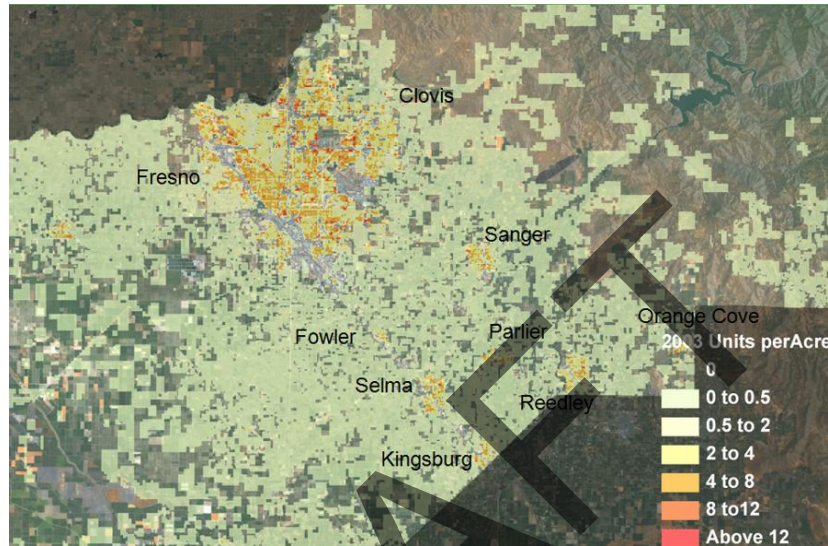


A simplified map that shows part of the County, overlaid with TAZs that are shown to contain housing growth. The closer to red, the more growth predicted.

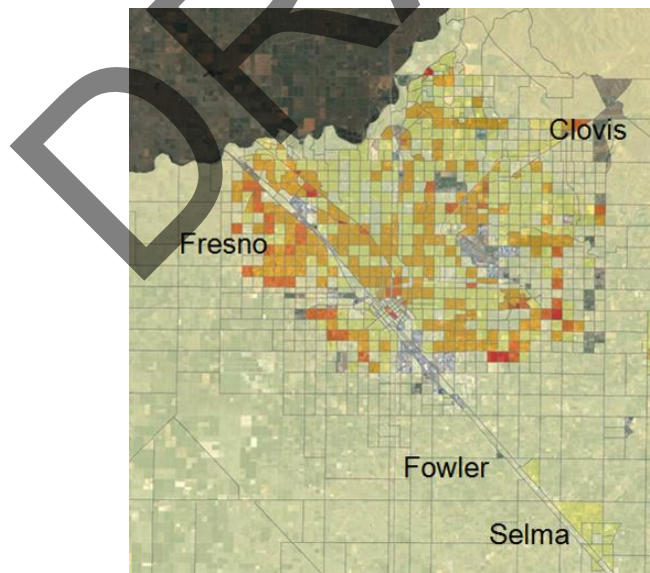


This close-up shows that much of the forecasted growth is located on vacant land, at or near the edges of the urban areas.

These results are not unexpected; in fact they are quite normal for growing regions. However, cities and regions with successful transit often have strategies in place to attract a larger portion of growth into already urbanized areas. Urban areas, with more inhabitants and a greater variety of uses (houses, jobs, shopping, etc.) are more effectively served by transit investment. Likewise, the transit infrastructure is able to serve more people in these settings. Several growing areas in the West have been able to successfully grow with a mix of new development, and a compliment of infill and redevelopment that enlivens core areas and better justifies, and supports transit infrastructure.

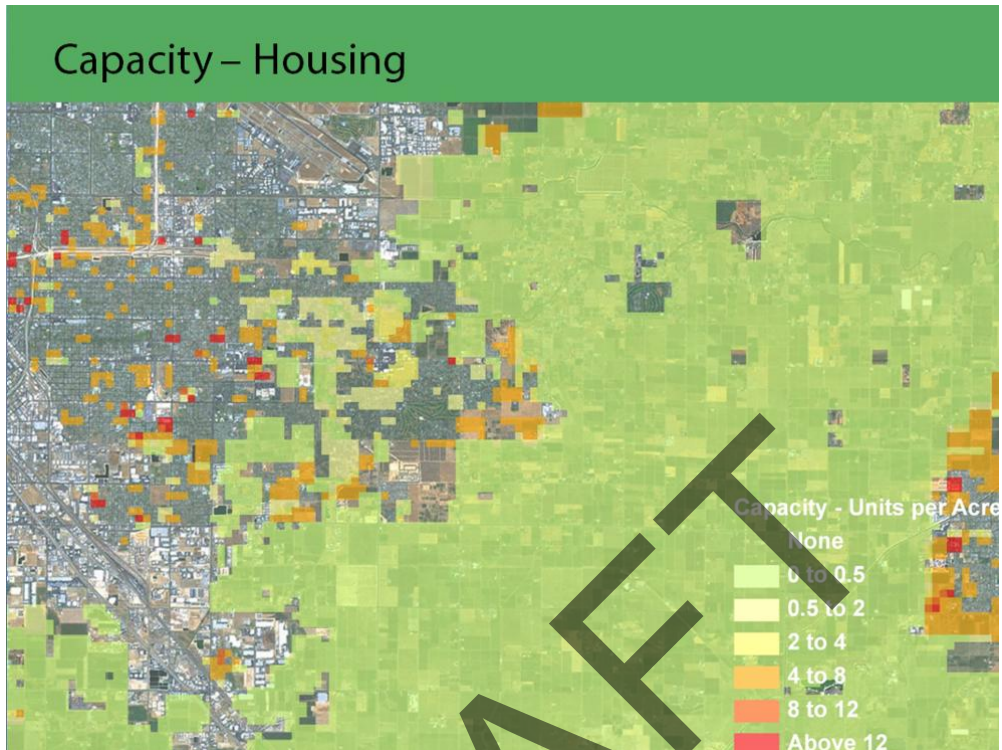


Virtual Present – The above map shows the current location of housing. The 2030 forecast map shows growth moving outward in the future.



The image above shows total housing in 2030 according to the draft forecast. The zoom-in shows that current trends and plans combined may result in some areas developing in ways that are difficult to serve efficiently with public transit. Further, as the central city of the region, Fresno has a relatively small percentage of the region's housing.

Capacity



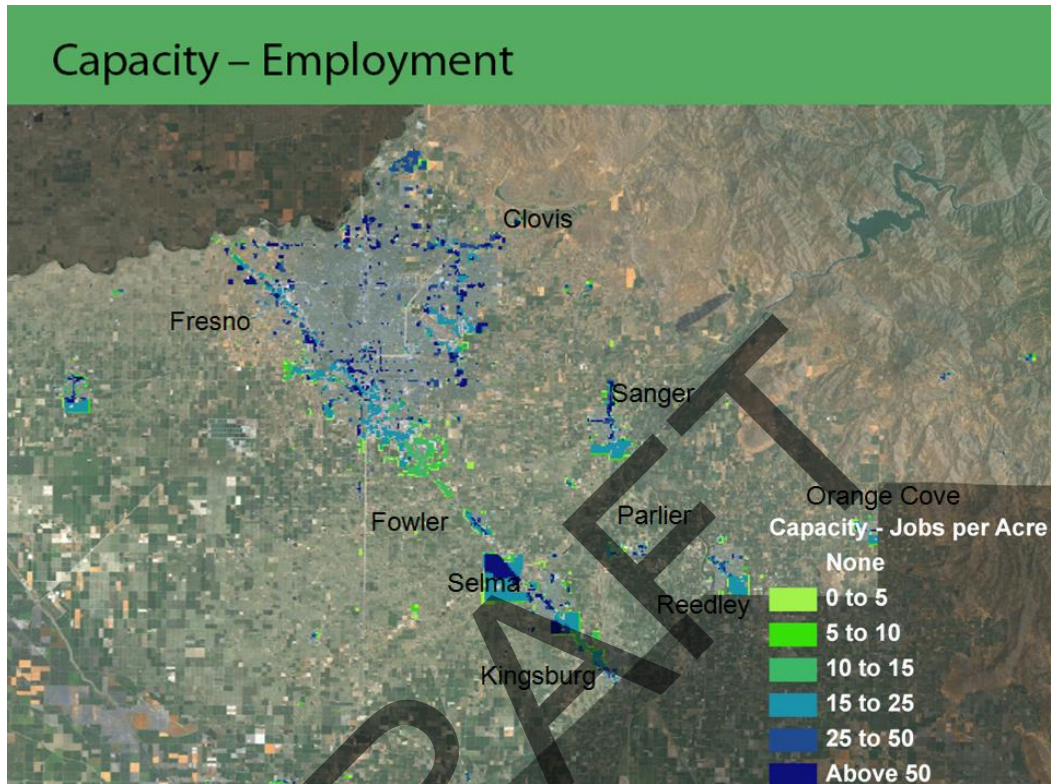
The image above illustrates that while much of the vacant land is located at the edges of cities, the land within the urban areas has zoning which allows much greater densities. The TAZ based forecast (compare this image to that of the previous page) shows that there is little expectation of this land capturing growth.

A second noteworthy finding – the analysis, methodology described in brief above, estimates that the county does not have sufficient zoned vacant land capacity to accommodate the anticipated growth. As of June 30, 2009 (Forecast is currently being revised) approximately 200,000 new households are expected to call Fresno County home by the year 2035. Using only lands that are not encumbered by environmental constraints and are either zoned for urban use, or considered likewise by the local general plan, the region appears to have capacity for only an approximately 120,000 new households on urban zoned land. There is additional capacity on agriculturally designated land (up to 46,000 units theoretically) but traditionally, rural residential densities only make up a small percentage of a region. As such, it is unlikely that significant numbers of housing would locate in these areas. However, while not significant from a transit perspective, in cases, even small amounts of growth can jeopardize farm activities.

Keep in mind, these are indeed preliminary results. FAI staff will work with the COG and City staff members during the week of July 8th to further investigate some of the variables involved in the analysis and to perform some fieldwork to verify or rectify some key assumptions. Additionally, there is some indication that the City of Fresno may have more capacity than our analysis shows (another 10,000 to 15,000), due to the regionalization of our process. This too, will be investigated during our meeting with city staff.

The notion that there may be insufficient capacity means that jurisdictions will need to take strategic steps to accommodate growth. These of course include a range of techniques, most likely including

both expansions of cities and land rezoning, plus planning for infill development within already developed areas. The later will be key in developing land uses that are supportive of transit investment.



Similar to housing, much of the region's zoned capacity is located near the edges of cities. However, there does appear to be significant growth capacity along the region's many corridors – areas that lend themselves to efficient transit service.

As stated above, these maps have been included to provide a quick look at some of the early findings that are coming from our analysis. At our special TAC meeting we will delve into more detail. We will also talk about the potential mix of housing types that are implied by both the forecast and the regulatory capacity.