

Notable Plan for Rural Preservation

Farmersville General Plan Farmersville, California

A small community in California's San Joaquin Valley, Farmersville is considered by the American Farmland Trust as the most threatened agricultural region in the country. Against a backdrop of high unemployment, low incomes, and distrust between various segments of the community, the Farmersville City Council undertook its General Plan update through the year 2025.

Growth and Open Space

The new plan addresses growth and open space conservation. Development controls aim to improve design and produce livable, walkable communities. Multifamily housing (once opposed by residents and members of the city council) is now set close to the street with front porches for individual units and parking at the back. Narrower streets, from 36 to 32 feet wide, are a priority in single-family neighborhoods. New developments also sport street trees, paved crossing lanes, and bulbed out sidewalks at intersections.¹

John Miller [the San Joaquin Valley field representative of the American Farmland Trust] and the Farmland Trust hope that Farmersville will become an example for other communities in the valley. "Nationally, we are hoping that others will look at it and say, 'Hey, this town did it, we can too,'" says Miller.²

APA 2004
Outstanding
Planning Award
for a Small Town
or Rural
Community

Agricultural Preservation

The San Joaquin Valley grows more than 250 commodities and stores water from the Sierra Nevadas. In order to maintain parcels large enough for profitable farming, the new plan opposes dividing agricultural land into less than 20 acres. A development impact fee is designed to help preserve farmland.

Website

<http://www.planning.org/awards/2004winners.htm>

<http://www.allbusiness.com/professional-scientific/architectural-engineering/142055-1.html>

The general plan update uses innovative features and smart growth planning techniques, including an industrial area specific plan that addresses the community's high unemployment rate. The plan also calls for establishing a farmland impact fee that will be assessed against new development. Funds will be used to purchase agricultural easements on prime farmland outside the city's borders.³

¹ Sherrie Voss Mathews, "The general plan for Farmersville, California: Farmersville, California, adopted a progressive planning document that emphasizes..." *Planning*, 1 April 2004, <<http://www.allbusiness.com/professional-scientific/architectural-engineering/142055-1.html>> (1 August 2007).

² Ibid.

³ American Planning Association, <<http://www.planning.org/awards/2004winners.htm>> (1 August 2007).