



Farming Ranching Rural Character Great Jobs Affordable Housing Efficient Living
Infrastructure Funding Energy Efficiency Transportation Choices Complete Communities

Strategic Growth

Our communities and rural areas have grown in a manner that, if not changed, could diminish our future quality of life or economic health. How our county grows can affect each of us in many ways, for example:

- Health
- Safety
- Infrastructure
- Traffic & air quality
- Housing affordability
- Rural character
- Jobs
- Energy use

Rising costs of infrastructure, housing, energy and transportation are warnings that our past ways of development may need to change. It is time to address growth strategically with cost-effective, realistic outcomes that will benefit the environment, the economy, and communities. This brochure outlines some of the issues facing us and presents an overview of the new strategies that will address them.



Multi-family living

What is strategic growth?

Strategic Growth combines well-known “smart growth” concepts with results-oriented, strategic planning that reaches goals effectively:

- Using land, energy, transportation, infrastructure and water resources efficiently
- Building more compact, walkable communities with adequate infrastructure and resources
- Planning neighborhoods near schools, recreation, jobs and shopping

Strategic Growth Policies Adopted

On April 28, 2009, the Board of Supervisors adopted [Strategic Growth](#) principles, policies and strategies as part of the General Plan. These landmark changes will now guide planning in the inland areas of the county to sustain resources, avoid sprawl and environmental impacts, and provide more housing and transportation choices. Within the Coastal Zone, the changes will not go into effect until they are certified by the California Coastal Commission.

- The amendments and other information are available at the Department of Planning and Building, 976 Osos St. Rm. 200, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408 and online at www.sloplanning.org.

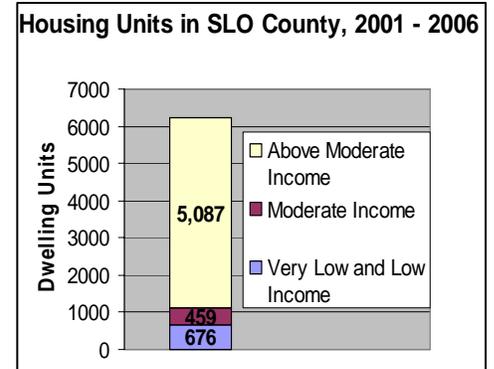
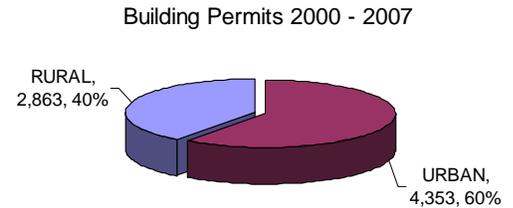




Strategic Growth in the San Luis Obispo County General Plan

Weaknesses - Areas for Improvement:

- Four out of every 10 dwelling units built in the unincorporated area between 2001 and 2007 were in the rural area beyond communities and their infrastructure and services.
- Only one in every 10 households can afford the average (median) price of a home.
- Water supplies are at a critical level in 4 of the 6 major groundwater basins.
- Vehicle miles traveled and energy use in the region continue to increase.
- Traffic congestion is increasing on Highway 101, as well as some county roads.
- Three of every 10 children are considered obese, and related diseases are a significant problem for children and adults.



82 percent of homes (5,027) built in unincorporated areas since 2001 were priced for incomes above moderate, low or very low levels.

Strengths - In the Right Direction:

- Six of every 10 unincorporated-area building permits between 2001 and 2007 were in urban or village areas.
- Transit ridership is increasing, and regional transit is adding services for commuting by bus.
- The Nacimiento Water Project and other local water projects will supplement declining groundwater supplies.
- Compact and mixed-use development projects are now more popular in the real estate market, and more are being built.
- Urban neighborhoods cost less to build and serve than suburban development.

Guiding Principles of Strategic Growth

The County Board of Supervisors adopted the following Principles of Strategic Growth, together with policies and implementing strategies:

1. Preserve open space, scenic natural beauty and sensitive environmental areas. Conserve energy resources. Conserve agricultural resources and protect agricultural land.
2. Strengthen and direct development towards existing and strategically planned communities.
3. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
4. Create walkable neighborhoods and towns.
5. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
6. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
7. Encourage mixed land uses.
8. Take advantage of compact building design.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective.
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
11. Strengthen regional cooperation.



Implementing Strategic Growth

Planning for strategic growth ranges from a regional scale to sub-regions, communities, neighborhoods and project sites. Following are examples of key strategies for implementation at these scales:

The Region:

- Promote cooperation between the County and all jurisdictions to form and carry out strategic growth policies based on shared values, develop mutual agreements and implement programs.
- Keep the amount, location and rate of growth allowed by the Land Use Element within the sustainable capacity of resources, public services and facilities.
- Develop a regional and sub-regional economic and land use strategy to stimulate creation of head-of-household jobs, improve the jobs-housing imbalance and strengthen the economy within each community.
- Create opportunities for quality housing for people of all income levels, in proximity to employment and daily needs.

Sub-Regions:

- Work with agriculture and conservation communities to link land conservation with agricultural economic development.
- Develop effective techniques for land conservation, and pursue funding for open space acquisition and preservation.

Communities:

- Work with communities to create and maintain distinct urban boundaries next to rural areas, while allowing for compact community expansion.
- Work with cities and towns to identify suitable development areas for compact, affordable development, where supported by sustainable resource capacities.

- Give high priority to funding needed infrastructure and services in a timely manner within existing and strategically planned urban and village areas.
- Coordinate with the cities to accept a greater share of growth with corresponding reductions in unincorporated area growth, with offsetting assistance from the County.
- Give high priority to funding facilities for biking, walking and transit within transportation planning programs.

Neighborhoods:

- Revise ordinances to encourage neighborhoods with small-scale commercial areas, parks, recreation, family and cultural facilities within convenient walking distances.
- Refine community plans and ordinances to integrate higher density development within existing neighborhoods (infill development that fits the surrounding neighborhood).

Projects:

- Revise plans and ordinances to encourage mixed-use development with affordable housing.
- Revise plans and ordinances to encourage more livable, compact building and subdivision designs that fit within existing neighborhoods.
- Modify ordinances to encourage a diversity of housing within subdivisions and neighborhoods.
- Reduce uncertainty in development review by preparing an illustrated “form-based” design code.
- Identify locations where qualifying strategic growth projects can be eligible for expedited review.



Strategic Growth in the San Luis Obispo County General Plan

What Will Strategic Growth Do?

- Sustain our most precious resources.
- Protect agriculture as an industry from rural sprawl.
- Encourage most future growth to be within existing and expanded cities, urban areas and village areas in a more compact pattern.
- Give high priority to infrastructure improvements in a timely manner.
- Create conditions for more economic and civic vitality within communities.
- Locate new employment areas near customers, residential areas and transportation.



Vegetable row crops



Avenida de Amigos – workforce housing

What Will It Not Do?

- Trample property rights
- Shut down rural development.
- Force all development into urban areas.
- Ignore resource limitations.
- Ignore the economy.
- Plan without community participation.

How Will Strategic Growth Be Used?

- **Proposed discretionary projects, such as land divisions, special use permits and general plan amendments** will need to be consistent with the Strategic Growth principles and policies.
- **Implementing strategies** will guide the efforts of County departments to solve resource, facilities and services problems.
- **Plans and ordinances** will be amended to carry forward the principles and policies.
- **Collaboration** will be critical between the County, cities, communities, special districts, and agencies in order to plan for growth, resources, services, and facilities.
- **Public discussion** will be better informed about sustainable growth, more affordable, high-quality living, and more housing and transportation choices.
- ✓ **Learn more** about strategic growth online, at:
 - www.sloplanning.org
 - www.smartgrowth.org
 - www.lgc.org

Department of Planning and Building
 County of San Luis Obispo
 976 Osos St., Rm. 300
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93408