Making a Lot with a Little: Long-Term Sustainability Strategies for Rural Communities

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Decades of Low Density Development

- ↑ trip distances
- ↑ vehicle trips
- ↓ walking

↓ Air & water quality
↓ Health
↓ Farmland
↓ Countryside
↓ Community character
Decades of Large-scale Agriculture

- ↑ Jobs
- ↑ Regional Wealth

↓ Water supply
↓ Soil and water quality
↑ Vulnerable, low paid work force
Addressing the Challenges: Community Visioning

Design Charrettes

- Workshops, meetings and design sessions
- Residents and professionals
- Concentrated period of time

Funded in California by State Department of Transportation
Focus Group Meetings
Opening Event: Food and Heritage
Values
Priorities

- Public Realms
  - Places
- Trash Receptacles
- Rejuvenate Gateway Points
  - Foothill Transit Stops
- Pedestrian Engaging Land Uses - Mixed Use - Outdoor Cafes

5. Trees (Not Palms)

2. Bike Lanes

7. Pedestrian Island Appropriate Width Sidewalks

4. Building Placement Mix of Uses
Walking Audits
Design Tables
After the Workshops: Design Production

- Translate input into concepts and recommendations.
- Present for community feedback.
- Prepare community-based plan.
Rural Community Origins

- Post Gold Rush ranching and farming
- Small settlements establish at transportation hubs or start off as farm-based colonies
- Many incorporate around the turn of the century
- Groundwater pumping technology and year-round growing seasons spur agricultural growth
- Massive state and federal water projects spur further expansion
Established 1854
Sheep shearing station and ferry crossing
River a major thoroughfare prior to railroad
Incorporated 1914
Circa 1914

Circa 1929

Firebaugh Early Years

- Compact, small block grid
- Gradual expansion to the north and south
- Remained a service center to surrounding agricultural industries
Circa 2006

- Growth to the north and south
- Suburban development
- Proposed new subdivisions: cheaper alternatives to built-out and high-priced coastal regions
Firebaugh Today

- Population: 6,900
- 2,300 Foreign Born
- 88% Hispanic
- High Unemployment
- 22.5% below poverty line

Historic Water Tower
Issues

- Highway (12,500 vehicles per day)
- San Joaquin River
- Isolation
- Retail leakage ($1.6 million annually)
- Dilapidated roads and streetscapes
- Agricultural land retirement
  - soil quality, water shortages
Firebaugh Vision

- Improve Transportation Arteries
- Improve River Awareness and Access
- Maintain a Compact Town Center
- Improve North-South Mobility for Pedestrians and Bicyclists
Long Term

- Lane reduction
- Intersection improvements
- Frontage improvements
- Truck parking
Long Term: Highway 33

- One-Way Service Lane w/ Parallel Parking
- Central Median

Dimensions:
- 14' 8' 12' 8' 18' 12' 18' 14' 30'
- 105'
Improve River Visibility and Access
• Visual terminus on east-west streets
• River access features
11th Street: Looking east toward river
Q Street: Parallel to River
In this vision reworking of landscaping includes carefully spaced plantings maximizing the view of the water and open space. One 20 foot travel lane and parking on the housing side completes the quality aesthetics of place. The river side of the roadway has a 2 foot wide concrete ribbon to stabilize the road bed, then a gentle swale to capture and percolate any remaining water runoff. Multi-Use trails provide a commanding view of the water and open space. Over time, homes along this corridor will feature townhouses and court style housing.
A Compact Town Center
Town Plaza and Mixed Use Center
Town Plaza

- Looking east from Hwy 33/N Street
- City Hall in background
Sonoma Town Square, CA

Sonoma Historic City Hall

Lindsay, CA

Oaxaca, Mexico
Highway 33/N Street

Proposed

Plaza w/ Fountain

New Mixed-Use Buildings

12’ 7’ 11’ 12’ 11’ 7’ 40’

100’
Infill Housing

- **Building Envelope**
  - 50’ x 150’ lot
  - 2 dwelling units

- **Building Envelope**
  - 50’ x 150’ lot
  - Mixed-use

- **Building Envelope**
  - 150’ x 150’ lot
  - Courtyard Housing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Funding Details</th>
<th>Completion Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caltrans Hwy 33 Beautification Fund</td>
<td>Up to $2 million for improvements.</td>
<td>Summer 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firebaugh &quot;Green Trees for the Golden State&quot; Grant (Urban and Community Forestry Department)</td>
<td>$25,000 to plant trees around the city to reduce harmful emissions and pollutants and improve the beauty of the community and provide shade (500 trees). Along new bicycle trail from Dunkle Park south and west to the high school. Along the westside of the high school from Morris Kyle Road south to the new subdivision.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bicycle Infrastructure Incentive Component Remove II Program (San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District)</td>
<td>$100,000 to construct 4,000 feet of eight foot wide bicycle trail. Along the Eastern border of the San Joaquin River within the City of Firebaugh.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Trails and Beautification Project (Transportation Enhancement Program)</td>
<td>$400,000 transportation master bicycle plan for bikes and pedestrian pathways to connect schools, parks, recreational facilities and other services.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reberti-Z'berg-Harris Grant (Department of Parks and Recreation)</td>
<td>$1.5 million to rehab and improve the park by incorporating new baseball fields, skate park, volleyball courts, basketball courts, track, etc. Maldonado Park.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe Routes to School</td>
<td>$460,000 to Install in-Pavement crosswalk lights; Construct curb ramps; enhance crosswalks and striping. Morris Kyle Drive, Intersections of Siapan and Q Street, 14th and P Street and 12th.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserve America</td>
<td>Special designation as a Preserve America Community, which recognizes communities that: protect and celebrate their heritage; use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization; and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. City Limits.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P Street Improvements</td>
<td>The city council has decided to replace sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Specific Charrette standards were incorporated. Between 7th and 10th Street on P Street.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Sign USDA Grant</td>
<td>In an effort to communicate more with the community an LED sign will be installed on the eastern entrance of the city. On 13th Street next to the rodeo grounds.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kingsburg

- Established late 1870s with railroad
- Incorporated 1908
- By 1920s, 94% Swedish
Streets parallel & perpendicular to the railway

Compact, small blocks

Main Street and institutions within a ¼ mile distance

“Swedish Village” identity

Circa 1913

Washington School

Kingsburg High School

Roosevelt School

Streets parallel & perpendicular to the railway

Compact, small blocks

Main Street and institutions within a ¼ mile distance

“Swedish Village” identity
Central Valley Agriculture: Land & Sustainability
Kingsburg Today

- Population: 11,500
- 35% Hispanic
- 60% White Non-Hispanic
- 11.5% below poverty line
- 8.8% unemployment rate
- Relatively high per capita income
Issues - Kingsburg

- Decline of the central core
  - Aging buildings, vacancies
  - Loss of retail to the highway
- Public infrastructure
  - Very wide, un-shaded streets
  - Failing pavement
  - Inadequate sidewalks
- Lack of housing diversity
- Development on the periphery
1. Establish well-designed entries to historic core.
2. Support and maintain a compact town center.
3. Provide and maintain a safe, complete and coherent network for bicyclists and pedestrians.
90 degrees
Implementation

- Revise Development Regulations using Form-based Coding (FBC) Strategies
  - FBC’s use the desired outcome (visual, built result) instead of allowable uses as the organizing principle for development regulations

- Create Redevelopment Area to Generate Tax Increment Financing
  - As assessed values increase, can collect the increment and target funds to the downtown area
Form-Based Code: Regulating Plan

T2-Rural Zone

T-3-Neighborhood General Zones

T-4-General Urban Zone

T-5-Town Center Zone

- Cultivated Lands
- Single-Family Home
- Locally-Serving Commercial
- Mixed-Use

- Cultivated Lands
- Compatible Multi-Family
- Locally-Serving Commercial
- Street-Oriented Retail
Form-Based Codes

- Regulating Plan: zoning districts
- Building form: lot, height, placement, parking standards and uses
- Public spaces: whole street and civic spaces
- Building types and frontages
- Blocks and subdivision design
- Administration: predictable approval process
Fairmead
• Founded 1912 as agricultural colony
Highway moved to west side of railroad in the 1930s.
Access from Hwy 99 removed
Primary Challenges

- Decaying/Inadequate Infrastructure
- Streets & Roads
- Water
- Sewer & Septic
- Stormwater and Drainage
- Streetlights
- Lack of Connectivity
Guiding Strategies for Revitalization

- Focus on Low Impact, Low Cost, Incremental, Strategies
  - Build Quality Community Focal Points Through a Concentrated Mix of Small Scale, Coordinated Physical Improvements:
    - Targeted Code Enforcement & Cleanup
    - Pedestrian Amenities
    - Improved Drainage and Infiltration
    - Opportunities for Community Development
    - Opportunities for Incremental Infill Development
Option 2

Moore Ave

Soccer Field

Community Center

Parking

Yates Ave

Maple Street
Engage residents and stakeholders to:
  - Document place.
  - Identify areas appropriate for change or new growth.
  - Develop designs for walkability and focused density.

Focus public investment to support the vision:
  - Seek funding from multiple sources.
  - Concentrate targeted improvements for noticeable impact.

Update the development code and polices to reduce barriers and uncertainty, and streamline approvals.
Thank You!

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