



# 10th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference

Charlotte, North Carolina  
February 2011

**City of San Joaquin - The Little City that Could!  
from swamp land to metropolis to..... ?**

Cruz W Ramos, City Manager

# CITY OF SAN JOAQUIN PROFILE

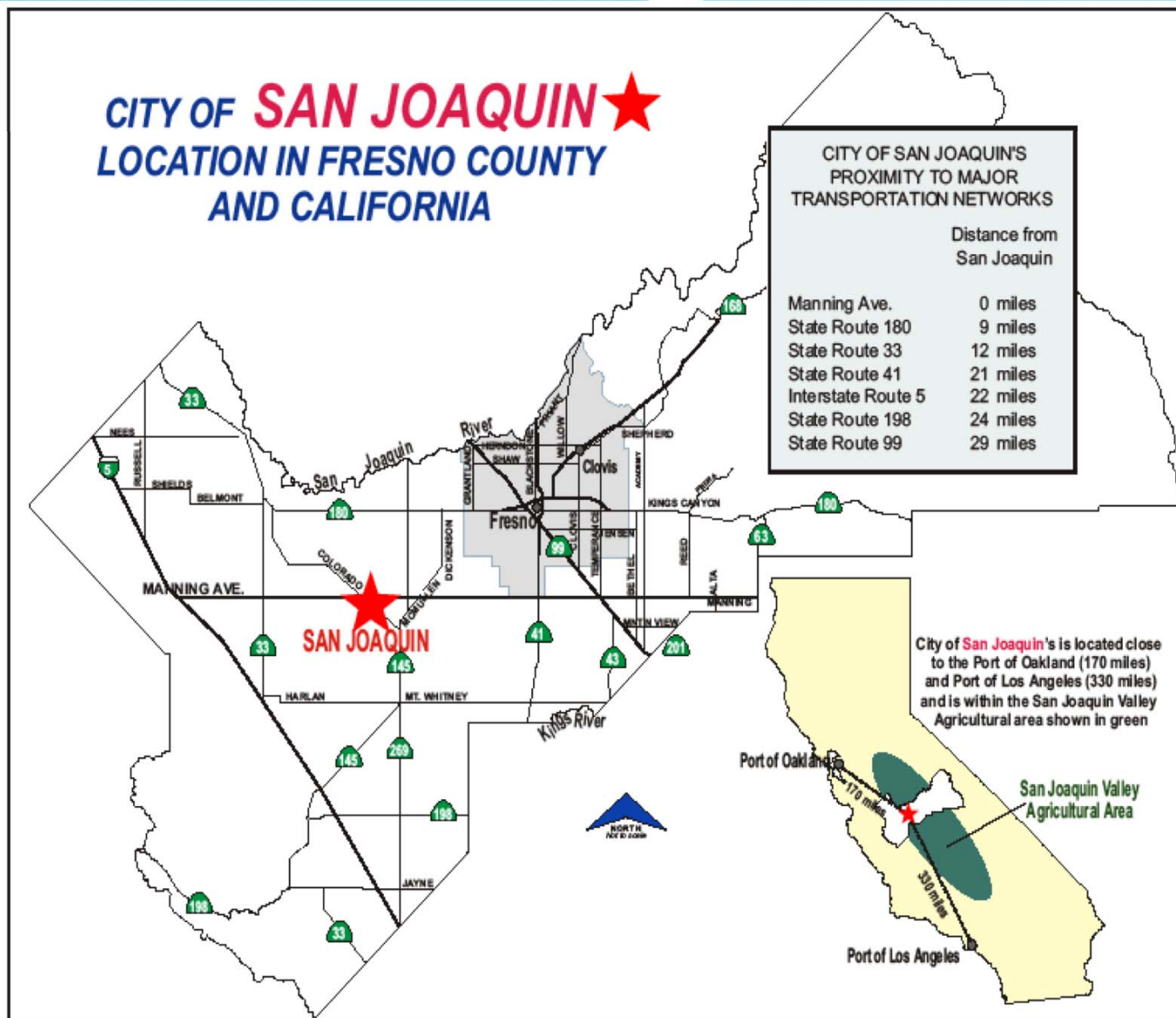
- Located along Manning Ave on the west side of Fresno County
  - It is almost equal distance to both I-5, and to SR 99 (about 22 miles each way) while crossing State Routes 33, 180, 145, 41.
  - Largest urban neighbor, City of Fresno is 30 miles away.
- Incorporated in 1920, its first GP was adopted in 1973
  - Cal Poly are currently updating the City's GP.
- Small, family-oriented community of 4065 residents
  - 96% Hispanic: families/91% of households, 60%/ married couples, 45% of the population is under 19.
  - 38.6% unemployment rate (has been as high as 49%)
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  of population meet/exceed the Fed poverty guidelines
- Lowest crime rate in Fresno County
  - 70 hours of law enforcement provided by contract

# CITY OF **SAN JOAQUIN** ★ LOCATION IN FRESNO COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA

## CITY OF SAN JOAQUIN'S PROXIMITY TO MAJOR TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

Distance from  
San Joaquin

Manning Ave.	0 miles
State Route 180	9 miles
State Route 33	12 miles
State Route 41	21 miles
Interstate Route 5	22 miles
State Route 198	24 miles
State Route 99	29 miles



City of **San Joaquin**'s is located close  
to the Port of Oakland (170 miles)  
and Port of Los Angeles (330 miles)  
and is within the San Joaquin Valley  
Agricultural area shown in green

San Joaquin Valley  
Agricultural Area

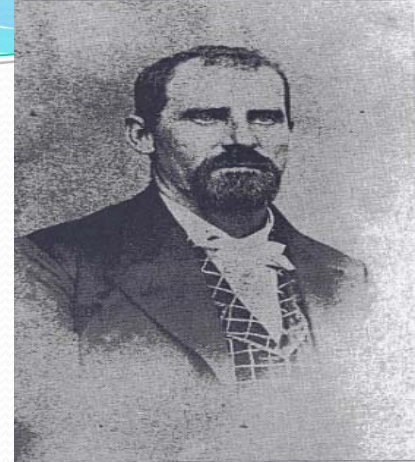
Port of Los Angeles

Port of Oakland

Port of Los Angeles



# Early History



- Early land barons: Jefferson Gilbert James
- The James Ranch – consisted of 72,000 acres –contained 30,000 acres of overflow “when once reclaimed, would make one of the finest bodies of agricultural land in the state.”
- Jefferson James bought swamp land at \$1.25/acre and was it was reported that he was subsequently reimbursed at the same rate when land was reclaimed.
- He was also noted as a cattleman: invested in cattle twice



## Land, the Swamp Act of 1856, Lawsuits and Water...

- Land acquisition was not possible until after the U.S. Land Commissioners decided what was private and public land.
- **1861** - James' first purchase– Home Ranch in San Joaquin
- **1864, 1867, 1871 & 1865 – 1873**
  - James property consisted of 57,000 acres he acquired by taking a partner and purchasing other land.
  - James' neighbors did not survive the dry years and had to sell
- **1890**
  - James controlled more than 150,000 acres of fenced land that he rented to farmers including Esaboro Wada, a Japanese, who raised the first rice crop on the James Ranch.

## Birth of the City – Gravesboro to Graham to San Joaquin



- **1908 -1912**
  - James sold part of the Ranch and appointed his son-in-law, general manager of the J.G. James Land Company.
  - After the death of Mr. James, his heirs, decided to sell more land and promoted land sales for Gravesboro
  - After the Railroad Line was built across the James River, the remaining land was sold for \$3 M.
  - Gravesboro was renamed to Graham and land was set aside for parks, roads, and public buildings.
  - A new syndicate discarded the name Graham and renamed the town San Joaquin, to capitalize on the San Joaquin River full of water.



# Read What These Experienced Ranchers Say About The James Ranch



July 31, 1919

I don't think there is better land in the U. S. Best country for pure milk to start in on I ever saw. A man with a few thousand dollars can do better here than any place I know. We are in an arroyo but our water is assured. I expect to see the country one day for fruit and fruit orchard. My Thompson Ranchmen are as good as anybody's. Pines, pears, apples, peaches and apricots can't be beat. I defy any country to beat this for wheat, potatoes. Turkeys and chickens do well. Alfalfa and corn will pay for a man's land in a few years. My wife is taking in \$5.40 a day from six cows.

J. C. Strohman

The James Ranch is destined to be one of the leading dairy and alfalfa sections of California. I have been engaged in the dairy business here for the past five years. For the past three years my dairy has paid me 75¢ net on a valuation of \$50000 per acre. It is my opinion that improved land will be selling from \$500 to \$600 an acre.

J. C. Strohman



August 16, 1919

I came from China where I own ten acres. I expect to sell my China land this fall for not less than \$500 an acre. I came over to the James Ranch of my own accord. I had heard they were going to open it up. When I saw the land I made up my mind that I wanted some and picked out 50 acres, which I agreed to buy provided my boys would join me who were then in the army. When they were discharged they came and looked the country over and we closed the deal. I believe this country will grow into a fruit country although it will start with alfalfa. There is no doubt about alfalfa in the country. I have 60 acres of alfalfa and expect to get the whole 50 acres to alfalfa in the fall.

Edward French

Seven years ago I bought 150 acres of the James Ranch. At present I am feeding 150 cows. An milking 100. Cows bring from \$1200 to \$1500 a month. With the alfalfa with I feed 35 bags. I planted a family orchard of all kinds of fruit and have had splendid results. Last year, from 400 vines six years old, I gathered three tons of grapes.

I came from Los Banos. The New water system on the James Ranch is fine. I consider my land worth \$50000 an acre.

Joe French



When I sold my dairy in the Imperial Valley last fall I made a trip through the San Joaquin Valley to find a new place to live. I saw a good place at Tracy of 70 acres in alfalfa and the price was \$9,500.00. That made \$75.43 an acre. They asked \$250.00 for bare land.

I went to Duransey to see my brother-in-law, Mike Paul, who used to live with me in the Imperial Valley. He told me that he had been up to see the James Ranch and said it was the best land he had seen in the state, but wanted me to see it before he bought. I came up here and rode over twenty-four thousand acres of this land. It was a heavy black soil without any alkali, and the Company was getting it ready to sell. I bought 40 acres and paid all cash. In a few days Mike Paul and Pete Bernadelli came up and bought 50 acres.

I wrote to my brother-in-law, Angelo Pollman, who lived in Guadalupe, to come over. He came and bought 40 acres. Then I went back to the Imperial Valley and in a week came back here with Louie Fayer and my brother, Pete Niboli. They bought 40 acres apiece. Angelo Pollman and I have our houses nearly finished and the others will build this fall. A house to open about \$7500 on my house, barn and fences.

This is a fine dairy country and the climate is fine. The days are not so hot as in the Imperial Valley and every night we sleep hard all night. I got a good domestic well at 60 feet. It cost me \$70.00. The land can't be beat. It will grow up thing.

E. Niboli



I am the oldest resident in San Joaquin. I came here four years ago and bought sixty acres. I had about \$6000.00 then. I put my land in alfalfa and bought two strings of cows. I made money from the beginning. Last January I bought 60 acres more and rented the 100 acres to some Swiss boys at \$20.00 an acre with the understanding that they put the 50 acres into alfalfa.

The Company built a model dairy close to the town on 60 acres. I ran it on shares for a few months, but last month I bought it. I have made good and I consider I am worth about \$25,000.00, and have made it all here except for my capital \$4000.00. The two Swiss boys and Italian dairy-men have bought here because they have seen what I have done.

This is just as good land as they have in Los Banos and it costs \$175.00 an acre instead of \$400 or \$500. Any man who will work can pay for this land with the long terms, and the interest is only 6%. We have water the year round instead of just the early summer. When the water system is finished it will be the best in the state and the land owners will own it. The irrigation and Reclamation bonds run over 30 years and it makes it easy for farmers. There is not much of this heavy black bottom land in the State and the man who owns some of it is in luck.

I have always taken the advice of my banker in Los Banos, Mr. Townsend, and he always helped me. He is going to be the Vice-President of our new bank here, and I am glad.

D. Rusconi



July 31, 1919

This is the best country I have seen. The land is A-1. It's the best alfalfa country I have seen. It is just as good as Newman and Quilley. I cut six times last year with two irrigations. My cuttings are a ton to acre.

I bought from the James family about nine years ago 40 acres. I had \$1000 when I came here. I sold all my hay.

I think this is a fine fruit country. I canned 150 quarts and sold 500 pounds from five Cal trees. The Cal trees were as fine as I ever saw. Pines and grapes do awfully well. My grapes do fine. I am going to spend the rest of my days right here.

J. P. Jorgensen

I bought eight years ago. I have 200 acres. It's the best land I have ever farmed. My soil is all black, heavy loam, and is all in alfalfa except the headquarters and two acres in orchard \$500 a month. I get six cuttings of hay. I consider my land worth \$1000 an acre. For huge the country is a steady. I keep about 300. This is a fine fruit and grape country.

J. H. Mullins



I lived in Los Banos eight years. I came to the James Ranch about a month ago. Good land in alfalfa in Los Banos is \$500.00. Land like the James Ranch is not less than \$200 to \$400 in Los Banos. I bought 30 acres. I am going to put it all in alfalfa. I paid \$2000 an acre and I made a fine hay. This country is going to build up. I like this place very much and I want my friends to come here.

R. A. Miller

I believe the James Ranch to be one of the best places for hay raising in the state. I have 18 acres in alfalfa. I will sell two thousand dollars worth of hay and twelve hundred dollars worth of hay off of this place this year.

R. A. Miller

Call On Any Of These Men Ask Them



July 31, 1919

I came here with \$500. Paid \$400 on the land and went to work for wages to get money enough to buy a team. I have 20 acres. I don't own a cow on my land. This land has paid all the bills. I consider my land is cheap at \$2000.00 an acre. My alfalfa averages seven tons to acre with two irrigations. I only have one pump river water and get my last irrigation the latter part of July. My soil is a heavy black alkali. I will soon be milking ten cows. This is a fine apricot and orange country.

A man came to see the other day and asked me if I thought he could make a go of forty acres with a capital of \$2500.00. I said if he will work hard and with any kind of good fortune, he will make a go.

I bought in 1910 with six years to pay for my land. I was all paid up in 1917.

Oliver L. Hanson

**THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK**  
OF LOS BANOS

Los Banos, Cal. Sept. 5th, 1919.

The James Ranch Company,  
San Joaquin, Calif.  
Gentlemen:-

I am glad to go on record as saying that the properties which you are now placing before the buying public is destined to be one of the garden spots of California.

Having grown up in the San Joaquin country and seen the wonderful development, I feel that I am qualified to give the future of this country.

I consider that I have been exceedingly fortunate in becoming identified with The First National Bank of San Joaquin. I expect the new bank to repeat the experience of The First National Bank of Los Banos, which of course will evidence a prosperous country.

Yours very truly  
J. L. Swanson  
Cashier.



August 2, 1919

I was in the Imperial Valley for three years dairying on shares with K. Niboli. When Mr. Niboli came back from the San Joaquin Valley and told me what he had bought, I made up my mind that I would go up and look. I came up. The country looked fine. I bought 20 acres in May. I came back in June and bought 20 acres more. I have been here ever since. You can't estimate this climate. Sleep fine every night.

I think dairymen will do better here than in Imperial Valley. Good water for stock means lots. Can get more money for several cows and you can make cheese. Water in my domestic well is like lake water. Tell my friends to come up here and come and talk to me.

Louis Hansen

What Others Have Done You Can Do — Act Now





# Wheeling & Dealing – Water

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1914 - 1937

- The syndicate advertised the abundant water supply and included an irrigation district into their plan.
- Ditches/levees were built, & Reclamation District #1606 consisting of 16,000 acres was bonded for \$600,000.
- This bond or blanket mortgage had a "fine print" item in the purchase contract of the San Joaquin investor.
  - It said ALL the purchasers had to pay their mortgage IN FULL before any one of them could receive a deed for their land.
- The post WWI ear was a period of financial manipulation that saw all but about 160 acres of land in the San Joaquin district sold for taxes owed and resold to private owners.



# The End of a Dynasty

- The James Ranch was divided into two prosperous communities, Tranquillity and San Joaquin, and many large ranches.
- Residents have civic pride and a fine cooperative spirit reminiscent of the pioneer days when country folks gathered for a house-raising or a barn-raising.
  - Veterans of Foreign Wars decided to build a hall and held a cotton pickaree.
  - Local rancher, Frank Hall, furnished the 160 acre crop and on a prescheduled Saturday morning, thirty six machines and operators pitched in to the picking project job.
  - \$400,000 of machinery participated and by 4p.m., the picker armada had picked 184 bales of white fiber. The new hall was financed with the picking check for more than \$5,000.

# German Prisoner of War Camp





# The Pickeree – VFW Hall





# More changes...



- Small dairies and poultry farms became less and less profitable.
- Machinery became more efficient; less man power was needed to operate larger farms.
- There was a small but steady exodus of young people leaving the farms to work in cities.
- When some of the older farmers retired, they sold or leased their land to neighboring younger farmers who had the machinery and the ability to farm more acreage.

# Challenges

- \*Early land schemes
- \*\*Water challenges
- Industrialization
- \*RDA & AD schemes
- Exodus
  - Housing
  - Education
- Aging infrastructure
- \*\*Water Challenges
- Job Creation
- Long Term Sustainability

# Lessons Learned

- Question & Vet All
  - Techno India Group
  - Visotec
  - Mega Floral Trees
- Negotiate/Barter or Plead and/or Badger
  - Staff – all purchases (min 2 bids)
  - Vendors – best & final rates
  - Contractors – change/ swap for service
- Hold All Accountable
  - Contract personnel decisions may cost city fines

# The City Today - Community Enhancement Projects

- Downtown Beautification
- Rehab City Hall
- Safe routes to school
- Community Computer Lab
- Installed security cameras
- City owned childcare center
- SJ Veteran's Memorial Hall
- RBEG grant to improve storefronts
- Created Wi-Fi system; model used in other cities
- New sports park (completed Phase 1 of 3)
- Renovated old firehouse to house American Ambulance  
. Model: CPUC EE approved for low income community
- Collaborations with WHCC for local training/education
- Funding for expansion of PW Yard, purchase equipment
- First Five funded Tot Lot & Shade Covers
- Funding to reroof the VFW Hall & install fence
- WWF Expansion, Lift Station/Lab/Dog Pound





# Downtown Façade Program





# Making Employees Whole & Bold

- 11 FT Employees down from 25
  - Everyone wears rotating hats
  - Rotating PW duties on a quarterly basis
    - Cross training & identifying interests
- Compensation Study
  - Salary Increases & additional Holidays
    - Work outside box for Salary Step Inc.
    - Day to day duties are covered in wages/benefits
- Tools, training & education
  - City pays & allows time off
    - Need to institute policy
  - Staff meetings/Close the Loop

# Resources

- Partner with those who share the same constituents
  - Schools, clinics, law, etc.
  - Economy of scale: building projects & purchases/services
- Cities, Counties, & Businesses
  - Copies of grants & studies
  - Equipment
  - Manpower
- Universities/Colleges
  - West Hills Community College, Cal Poly
    - GP Plan Update
- Joint Training Grant/WHCC
- Sheriff's Parking Lot
- Local Government Commission
- CSUF – Vetting Projects, Lending Expertise
- California Rural Housing & Federal Reserve
  - Small Communities Network
- PGE – LGP w/Energy Coalition
- Feeding Kitchen
  - Foundation and Salvation Army
- Proteus' Los Promotores

# Resources, Grants, Training and Opportunity?





# Land Retirement, Drought & Water Allocations: Jobs Lost = Hunger & Poverty





# **WHY SAN JOAQUIN?**

## **Ideal Location for Business**

- Financial incentives
- City staff = Gofers & Elected officials are Cooperative

## **Superb Transportation**

- Center of CA – easy access to major thoroughfares
- “Team Track Spur” is available – Short Haul Rail Line

## **Leading Agricultural Area**

- One in every three jobs in the County relates to agriculture
- County boasts 7,500 farmers,
  - harvesting 250 crops on 1 million irrigated acres.
  - grows cotton, tomatoes, lettuce, grapes, citrus, and much,
  - a total annual gross crop revenue topping \$4 billion.

## Interstate & Highways

Interstate I-5 – 25 miles	State Route 33 – 15 miles	State Route 180 – 7 miles (on James Road)
State Route 145 – 7 miles	State Route – 23 miles	State Route – 27 miles

## Industrial and Commercial Land

Industrial Land Developed – 26.8 Acres	Industrial Land Undeveloped – 138 Acres (within Sphere)
Commercial Developed – 13.5 Acres	Commercial Undeveloped – 52.0 Acres

## Rail

“Team Track Spur” available on San Joaquin Valley Railroad (short-line rail)

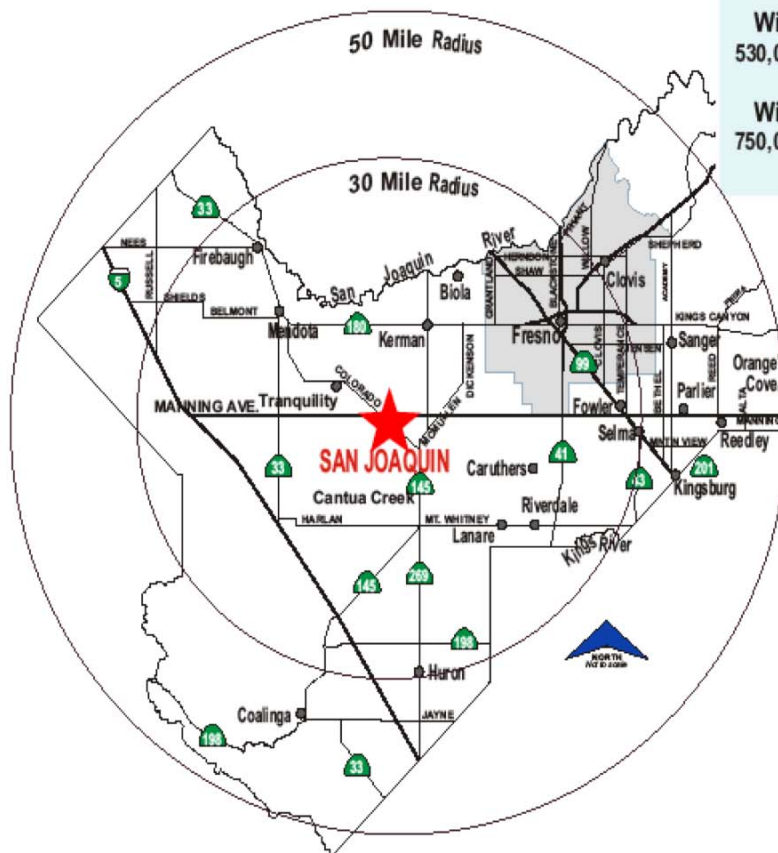
## Water and Sewer

Water	Sewer
Three wells have capacity to pump 3,500 gpm, or 5.0 mgd. Two of the wells have Emergency generation capability. Water quality & production capacity are excellent.	Current capacity is 0.252 mgd. A \$8.1 million expansion is in process. Federal and State loans and grants will provide funding.
The SJRDA staff with the full support of the City Council has internal and external resources to assist in economic development with job creation	

# CITY OF **SAN JOAQUIN**★ POPULATION AND LABOR FORCE POOL NEARBY

Within 30 driving miles of San Joaquin  
530,000 population and 240,000 labor force pool

Within 50 driving miles of San Joaquin  
750,000 population and 330,000 labor force pool



City of Community	Driving Distance from San Joaquin	Population	Labor Force	Unemployment Rate
San Joaquin	0 miles	3,870	1,400	20%
Tranquility	5 miles	813	400	9%
Cantua Creek	14 miles	655	300	8%
Kerman	17 miles	13,591	4,000	10%
Mendota	21 miles	9,426	3,800	23%
Caruthers	22 miles	2,100	1,200	6%
Biola	24 miles	1,037	600	9%
Lanare	24 miles	540	200	17%
Riverdale	28 miles	2,416	1,000	11%
Firebaugh	29 miles	6,692	2,600	15%
Fowler	29 miles	5,293	2,000	9%
Fresno	30 miles	481,035	218,900	8%
Huron	31 miles	7,493	3,000	21%
Selma	33 miles	23,194	10,000	10%
Parlier	36 miles	13,080	5,200	19%
Coalinga	40 miles	18,061	5,800	9%
Reedley	41 miles	24,909	10,500	16%
Clovis	46 miles	92,269	41,900	4%
Sanger	46 miles	23,289	9,500	13%
Kingsburg	50 miles	11,234	5,200	6%
Orange Cove	50 miles	10,544	3,400	18%



# Rebirth of the City?

## Water

- California has adopted laws on the use and control of its waters . These policies and court rulings were thought to ensure adequate water, but do they still?

## Diligence & Perseverance

- Leave no stone unturned
- Join and sit at the table with the “big boys.”
- Lead the pack...remember, Thomas the Train (the Little City ...)

## Stake Your Claim to Fame

- No rivers, no mountains – run through us –just flat land
- Onion Capital of California – arts, crafts, green, rural village – Asheville watch out!



# Conclusion

- The land is fertile but water remains an issue...
- City produces people with:
  - ambition,
  - foresight,
  - self-assurance
  - and talent –
- that is its most important product—
  - the spirit lives on
- and so will San Joaquin –
- **The Onion Capital Of California**





# Thank you!

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Disclaimer – the validity of the information contained and comments expressed in this document are solely attributable to those of the management that slept through most of the project.