



Welcome to HighBeam. Already a Member? [Log in](#)
[Become a Member](#) | [Membership Benefits](#) | [Take a Tour](#) | [Help](#)

[Library](#) | [Web](#) | [Reference](#) < 3 ways to research

FREE Article

RESEARCH

► [Advanced Search](#)

[Go to the most relevant part](#) | [All Results](#) | [Refine Search](#)

Administration Focuses on Valley: Partnership Tackles San Joaquin Valley Issues; Blueprint Project Funded.

FREE

Tools:

[E-mail](#) | [Print](#)

[Save Article](#)
[Export to Microsoft Office](#)

Font size: [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#)

NEW [Blog this Article](#)



California Planning & Development Report; 2/1/2006

In an unprecedented effort at regionalism in California, a task force appointed by Gov. Schwarzenegger is attempting to address the many problems troubling the San Joaquin Valley.

The governor has assigned no fewer than eight cabinet members to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, of which Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak is the chair. On the partnership's agenda for the eight-county region are economic development, transportation, land use--especially housing and agriculture, air quality, water, education and workforce development, social services and telecommunications. The group is scheduled to start conducting public forums around the region in March.

As a spin-off of the partnership project, the eight councils of government in the San Joaquin Valley have agreed to work together on a land use blueprint. Caltrans announced in late January that it would provide a \$2 million grant for the blueprint project. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has offered a \$500,000 match. Also, local economic development officials

have gone together as a group seeking a \$15 million federal grant to address employment issues.

"The San Joaquin Valley has some of the biggest challenges in the state," McPeak said. "We've got a region at risk that we need to address."

Nick Bollman, president of the California Center for Regional Leadership, called the effort "very much an experiment in action." The partnership is both a policy and a program group, and it is unique in state history, said Bollman, who helped put together the governor's executive order.

But whether the partnership forces changes in urban development patterns and the regional economy is uncertain. The basis for the entire project is that "business as usual" is no longer acceptable.

In recent years, the San Joaquin Valley has become known as the "Appalachia of the West." In fact, a report released in December by the Congressional Research Service found that per-capita income in the San Joaquin Valley is lower than in Central Appalachia--while federal spending per capita is greater in Appalachia. Residents in the valley's eight counties (San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern) are less educated than other Californians. And the valley's deteriorating air quality is the second worst in the nation.

Those problems are compounded by the San Joaquin Valley's rapid growth. The population is projected to double by 2040.

Schwarzenegger created the partnership last summer when he signed an executive order creating the 26-member organization and appointed eight cabinet members, nine local government officials and nine representatives of the private sector. Tulare County Supervisor Connie Conway and Stockton-based developer Fritz Grupe serve as deputy chairs. Since then, the group has met twice, and a number of committee meetings have been conducted.

"The basis of the partnership really is economic development," Conway said. "We've been given an opportunity that we have wanted for a long time, so we better make the best of it."

Although the partnership is new, a great deal of background work has already happened. The Modesto-based Great Valley Center has continually pushed public officials, academics and the public to think of the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys as a regional entity. The Public Policy Institute of California has examined the valley as a region. A federal task force originated by the Clinton Administration continues to address economic development and workforce issues. Four years ago, the Speaker's Commission on Regionalism recommended formation of a state entity that would focus on the San Joaquin Valley's needs. The region's first public research university--UC Merced--opened last fall and has begun a working relationship with the Great Valley Center.

"This is a region that has not had resources, that people have not looked at, and that is starting to get a sense of itself," said Carol Whiteside, the Great Valley Center's president and founder. "There is a lot of background work going into this [partnership] and a lot of people working on it."

The partnership's first two meetings have attracted scores of public officials and members of the public.

McPeak said she expects the partnership to produce a very specific action plan. Among the highest priorities, she said, is improving the Highway 99 corridor to meet the needs of the shipping and tourism industries, improve safety and create a high-tech corridor. Additionally, McPeak said the group will probably recommend a set of actions to reduce air pollution and pick a preferred scenario for land use. The action plan should lay out programs for the next five to ten years and contain metrics so that progress may be measured, she said.

McPeak endorsed as complementary the regional blueprint project that the councils of government (COGs) have proposed. Air quality, transportation and economic development are regional issues, she said.

"I think that it's remarkable that the San Joaquin Valley as a region has joined forces. There are eight councils of government and they came

together and submitted to the state for a grant for a regional blueprint," McPeak said. "The magnitude of the challenges for economic prosperity in the future transcends jurisdictional boundaries."

Whiteside said she would like the blueprint project to address the questions of whether urban development should move into the foothills, whether development within existing boundaries should become denser, and whether low-density development should continue to swallow farmland.

The blueprint project could be similar to recent regional planning projects in Sacramento, the Bay Area, Los Angeles and San Diego. However, at 275 miles in length, the San Joaquin Valley is larger, while the \$2.5 million budget is smaller. Moreover, even those involved concede there are huge differences to consider. In the south, Kern County remains dependant on oil, agriculture and mining while at the same time it forges more ties with Los Angeles. In the north, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties may almost be considered part of the Bay Area.

Already, the eight COGs have worked together to implement a valley-wide geographic information system, they have talked about air quality issues, and have addressed both Highway 99 improvements and a proposed high-speed rail line. "We've been talking to each other, but we haven't had this type of comprehensive planning," said Marjorie Kim, deputy executive director of the Merced County Association of Governments.

The COG leaders are still working on the process. Each COG will receive a portion of the money to fund its own visioning process. Darrel Hildebrand, Kern Council of Governments assistant director, said his agency plans to conduct workshops in nine sub-areas to gather as much public input as possible. After going through their own processes, the COGs will come together and, ideally, endorse a single blueprint for growth, Hildebrand said. Then, it will be up to cities and counties to use the blueprint in making land use decisions.

"This will simply act as a vision. The cities and counties will be able to have confidence that it was developed at the grass roots level," Hildebrand said.

Whiteside, a former Modesto mayor and Wilson administration official whose organization provides staff support for partnership committees, said that she actually cares little about the outcome of the partnership effort. What matters most is that people are having the conversation, she said.

The partnership "will be successful if in five or ten years the valley is a more livable place and we are approaching parity with the rest of the state," she said. Otherwise, the valley's air pollution, congestion, poverty and low educational attainment will continue to be a drain on the state, she said.

"Ultimately," added Bollman, "whether this works depends on changing attitudes in the valley itself."

McPeak said that everyone should be watching. "I think the rest of the state would want to build on this experience in the San Joaquin Valley and have the sort of cooperative relationship with the state that the valley is having," she said.

Contacts:

Sunne Wright McPeak, Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing, (916) 323-5400.

Carol Whiteside, Great Valley Center, (209) 522-5103.

Marjorie Kim, Merced County Association of Governments, (209) 733-3153.

Darrel Hildebrand, Kern Council of Governments, (661) 861-2191.

Nick Bollman, California Center for Regional Leadership, (415) 445-8975.

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley website: <http://www.bth.ca.gov/capartnersho/sanjoaquinvalley.asp>.

Apartment and Roommate Rentals Nationwide

A Marketplace of Apartment and Room Rentals Nationwide. Contact owner Direct! No Brokers Fee! Landlords Post Apartment and Rooms Free! Browse Listings online Free. Both Short and Long Term Rentals Available. Find Your Rental Online Today!

<http://www.sublet.com>

Find the Best Sites For Housing With Starware

Starware search is an excellent resource for quality sites on Housing and much more! Starware also provides related listings for Housing.

<http://search.starware.com>

HighBeam™ Research, Inc. © Copyright 2006. All rights reserved.

[About Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Customer Support](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)