



Search site for: **GO**

HOME

NEWS
 News Archive
 City/County
 Nation/World
 Crime & Courts
 Police Calls

SPORTS

LIFESTYLES

OBITUARIES

BUSINESS

OPINION

CLASSIFIEDS
 Jobs
 Homes
 Autos

Workshop will focus on Valley blueprint

Public input sought to identify growth centers, plan long-term land use and set goals for transportation infrastructure

By Corey Pride
CPRIDE@LOSBANOSENTERPRISE.COM
Last Updated: February 20, 2007, 05:35:23 PM PST

The Merced County Association of Governments is hoping Los Baños residents attend a workshop Thursday night to give their input on what they believe the future of their city should look like.

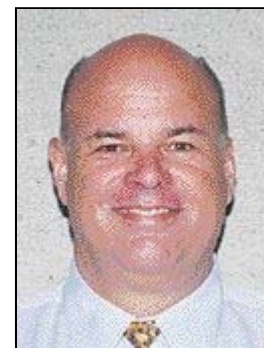
The workshop will focus on crafting a vision for the future of the Los Baños/Santa Nella area. That vision will eventually be included in the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint plan.

The workshop starts at 6 p.m. at the Los Baños Fairgrounds' O'Banion building, near Fourth and F streets.

The San Joaquin Valley Blueprint, will establish goals in the area of economic development, land use patterns, transportation infrastructure and environmental planning. But the key for Los Baños may be accommodating population growth.

"The thought is the plan would identify growth centers so you don't have sprawl like the Bay Area," City Manager Steve Rath said. "I think it is critical. We need to be at what I call the head of the parade."

Rath said if the plan identifies Los Baños as a growth center it may put the city into position to receive state funds to help the city accommodate growth. He said it is no secret that the South Bay looks upon Los Baños as a place where its workforce can find housing.



Rath

Rath also said while nothing has been determined, he's heard MCAG is considering identifying Tracy, Bakersfield, Fresno and Los Baños as growth centers.

At the workshop residents will be asked to identify the most pressing growth-related needs facing the community and possible solutions for them.

Merced County Supervisor Jerry O'Banion said there are several important issues facing western Merced County, including transportation and agriculture.

"I agree with the concept of the blueprint. We need to find out what we can do regionally that can't be done locally," he said.

However, O'Banion stressed that he believes land use issues should be left in the control of local governments.

Some progress in attracting government funding has been made by the San Joaquin Valley in recent months. In January Caltrans gave eight valley counties a \$2 million grant to form a vision of future transportation and land use decisions. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control district chipped in \$500,000 for the project as well.

O'Banion said the workshop is a good way for MCAG to go out in the community and start a dialogue.

"It's better to be on the inside than on the outside," he said of the future blueprint plan.

Copyright © 2007 The Los Banos Enterprise.



About The Los Banos Enterprise
Webstaff E-mail