

1 Introduction

CONTEXT

Suisun Valley (Valley) is one of 10 agricultural regions in western Solano County identified in the County's General Plan. Suisun Valley is bordered on the south and east by the City of Fairfield, to the north by Napa County, and to the east by Green Valley (See Figure 1-1). The two main entries to the Valley are Suisun Valley Road and Abernathy Road; both are exits off of Interstate 80 (I-80). Secondary entrances are off of Rockville Road to the east and west and Mankas Corner Road to the north. The Valley has excellent soil and climatic conditions that have kept this area in viable agriculture for over 100 years. It is surrounded by urban development on three sides and has been lauded as a rural retreat for city residents and visitors to the county.

The Suisun Valley Agricultural Region identified in the General Plan is slightly larger and shaped differently than the area covered by the Strategic Plan (Figure 1-2). The area of the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan encompasses approximately 9,000 acres, with the majority of land in agricultural use (92 percent) and the rest remainder of the land in public, industrial, commercial, or residential use.

Much of the agricultural land within the Valley is under Williamson Act contract. Under the Williamson Act, landowners enter into contract with Solano County to keep their land within agricultural and open space uses in return for a lower property tax assessment. This agreement automatically renews each year and extends for 10 years. Some of the actions recommended in this plan could affect landowners with parcels under Williamson Act contract (See Chapter 2, Land Use).

VISION AND PLAN PRIORITIES

In 2007, a report "Agricultural Vision and Economic Innovation for Suisun Valley" was prepared. It contained a

vision statement for the Valley. It was subsequently adopted by the Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee in February of the same year. It is now supported by the Suisun Valley Fruit Growers Association, Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association (formerly Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association), Solano Irrigation District, City of Fairfield, Solano County Farm Bureau, City of Suisun City, Solano Land Trust, and Solano County Agriculture Advisory Committee. This vision states:

Suisun Valley is a unique farming region that supports profitable family farms and quality of life for all its residents. It is a destination for tourists seeking world class wine, identifiable Suisun Valley farm products and a beautiful agricultural landscape with no fallow land. The Suisun Valley appellation is so famous that it creates new markets and increases demand for Suisun Valley wine and other farm products outside of the region.

Solano County supports this vision as well. In order to bring this vision to fruition, certain actions need to take place. These actions are based on priorities that were introduced during the General Plan updated process. During the General Plan update, the County asked stakeholders on what the Strategic Plan should focus. When the strategic planning process began, the County asked the community to confirm the priorities from the General Plan. The priorities were ordered by level of importance to stakeholders, as follows:

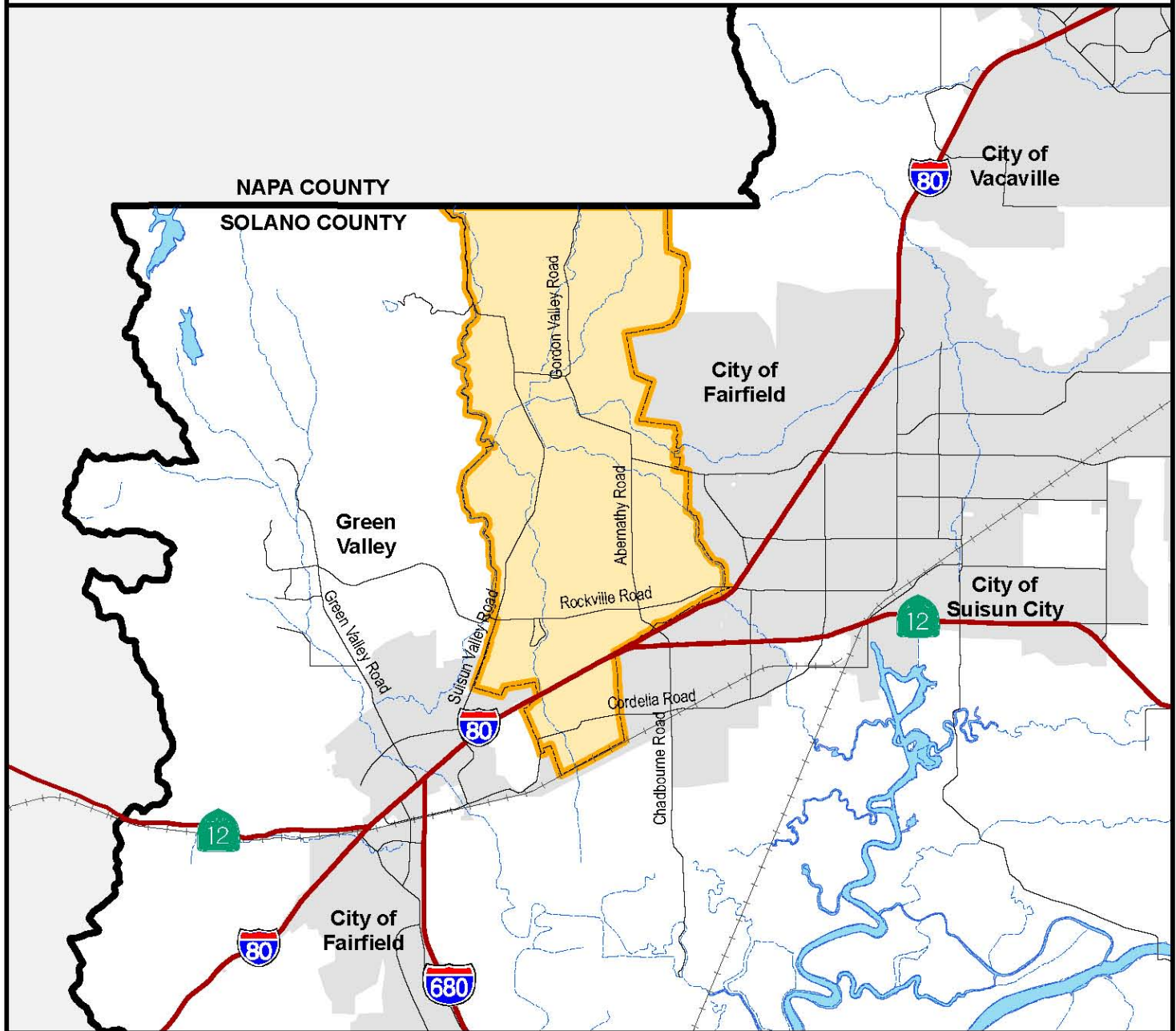
- Maintain agricultural character;
- Improve farm production and income;
- Create agri-tourism serving centers;



Suisun Valley Strategic Plan

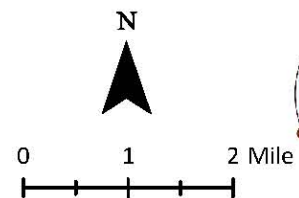
Figure 1-1

Regional Context



Legend

- Highways
- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams and Creeks
- Major Water Features
- Suisun Valley Strategic Plan Area
- City Boundaries



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NAPA COUNTY

Suisun Valley Strategic Plan

Figure 1-2

Suisun Valley Area

Legend

-  Suisun Valley Strategic Plan Area
-  Suisun Valley Agricultural Region
-  Suisun Valley American Viticultural Area
-  City Boundaries

City of
Fairfield

Mankas Corner Road

Abernathy Road

Oliver Road

Travis Blvd.

Pennsylvania Avenue

Rockville Road

Suisun Valley Road

Beck Avenue

Chadbourne Road

Cordelia Road

80

12

680

N

0 0.5 1 Miles



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- Provide infrastructure to support expanded use of Suisun Valley;
- Enable value-added agriculture;
- Maintain flexibility for future enterprises;
- Make unfarmable properties available for other uses; and
- Get better exposure from I-80.

This strategic plan has striven to highlight various opportunities to help these priorities become realities. For example, agricultural character is promoted through the Design Guidelines (Chapter 4), farm income is addressed through more flexible zoning (Chapter 5), and options for infrastructure are laid out in Chapter 2. The plan lays out details, which can help stakeholders achieve their vision for Suisun Valley as a viable agricultural area, which is attractive to tourists.

PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan is a document that provides guidance to the County and stakeholders on the actions appropriate to accomplish the vision. The details presented in this plan provide stakeholders an understanding of the options; costs, physical requirements, and methods available to achieve the vision. The purpose of the plan is to guide, inform, and provide information on how to enable change in the Valley. It is not a precise infrastructure plan, nor is it meant to direct specific development. The strategic plan should be used to inform stakeholders of their options and to support funding for needed road and infrastructure improvements.

The strategic plan is separated into six chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the structure of the plan, its purpose, and some initial steps that can be taken by the County or stakeholders to accomplish the community's vision for the Valley.

Chapter 2: Land Use, Circulation, and Infrastructure

This chapter contains the central information in this plan describing changes in land use, circulation, and infrastructure needed to transform the Suisun Valley into a regional tourist destination while also supporting long-term viable agriculture. The land use section describes the land use changes directed by the General Plan and contains descriptions of each of the eight Agricultural Tourist Centers (ATCs)—including their current and expected future uses, challenges to expansion, and distance to public infrastructure.

The circulation section describes the current roadway conditions on the main roads in the Valley and how to address some of the concerns raised by the current conditions. These concerns include commuter traffic and excessive speeds, flooding, and visitor attraction. The roadway improvements in this chapter are phased to address those concerns in order of priority, with an emphasis on attracting visitors to the ATCs.

The final section of this chapter addresses infrastructure improvements to serve the ATCs, describing the current infrastructure available, and how water or wastewater services could be provided to new projects. Costs and site considerations are included within the descriptions. Depending on the type of services required, the chapter describes possible phasing methods.

Chapter 3: Agricultural Economics and Marketing

This chapter discusses current economic conditions in the Suisun Valley and the many efforts currently underway to improve those conditions. It describes the components of the agricultural economy and summarizes the recent (2008) marketing plan published by the Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee. This section also discusses how the County could contribute to the marketing efforts outlined in the marketing plan.

Chapter 4: Design Guidelines

The design guidelines illustrate actions that project proponents could take to enhance and sustain the rural character of the Valley. This chapter addresses three aspects of project design; site design, site details, and



landscape design. This chapter will be used during the review and approval stages for future projects to assess how a project contributes to the Valley's character and what could be improved to better fit the scale and vision of the Valley.

Chapter 5: Zoning Regulations Update

This chapter includes the zoning amendments necessary to establish new zone districts—Agricultural Tourist Center (ATC-1 and ATC-2) and Agriculture-Suisun Valley (AG-SV-20)—and the increased flexibility for agricultural uses outlined by the General Plan. New use types are allowed in the agricultural zone and the range of existing permitted uses is expanded.

Chapter 6: Funding Options

The purpose of this final chapter is to provide information regarding funding options to pay for the improvements recommended in Chapter 2. This chapter describes the various grant and loan options available to stakeholders and the County. It also illustrates how the County could create impact fees to pay for transportation- or water-related infrastructure improvements. These examples are provided for informational purposes. If the community chooses to move forward with a shared cost method, the impact fee would need further study to assess the appropriate nexus between the cost of these projects and the benefit to stakeholders.

ACTION STEPS

As outlined above, each chapter presents information that can be used to promote the Valley's vision. Some of the chapters present information related to costly improvements that could be made. Because these costs can be overwhelming, this section presents possible initial steps toward making these improvements that would yield benefits for the Valley. These initial steps could be thought of as the very first part of the first phase of improvements.

Zoning and Design Guidelines

The zoning regulation updates found in Chapter 5 of this strategic plan should be adopted by ordinance in tandem with Board of Supervisors action on the strategic plan. When these updates are adopted, the areas shown on the zoning map (Figure 5-1) will be rezoned. At that point,

applicants with projects that comply with the requirements of the zoning regulations are encouraged to present their applications for development. Applicants are encouraged to review the Suisun Valley Design Guidelines (Chapter 4) when planning new projects. The zoning changes and design guidelines are also critical steps in controlling the appearance and scale of new development at the North Connector ATC, which may experience substantial development pressure upon completion of the new roadway parallel to I-80.

Circulation

The circulation section of Chapter 2 presents a range of solutions for improving roadway circulation and enhancing the visitor experience. The first steps of this plan should address both parking and visitor improvements at Mankas Corner. This would incorporate the following steps:

1. Create a parking district that allows businesses to share off-street parking. Off-street parking could be combined into one location and the costs of providing this would be distributed among the various businesses.
2. Enable on-street parking at the Mankas Corner ATC by widening the existing shoulders to eight feet: four feet paved and four feet unpaved.
3. Provide a minimum four-foot decomposed granite pedestrian pathway along the on-street parking areas.
4. Establish marked pedestrian crosswalks at the Mankas Corner Road/Clayton Road intersection.

Infrastructure

Water infrastructure represents the largest potential obstacle to successful development of ATCs in the Suisun Valley. The two water service choices available are public water line extensions and individual wells. Unless a majority of owners within the Valley are willing to share in the cost for a public water line extension, the choice will be limited to individual wells. It is the County's intent to encourage businesses that would benefit from existing and future wells, while also pursuing a public system that further enhances the Valley's ability to promote agricultural tourism activities. Thus, the initial steps for providing water service include the following:



1. Provide information regarding the capacity of existing wells.
2. Document procedures for establishing new wells near the Mankas Corner, Rockville Corner, Morrison Lane, and Gomer School ATCs.
3. Lead collaborative efforts among the City of Fairfield, City of Vallejo, and Solano Irrigation District (SID) to modify existing agreements to allow public water service to Suisun Valley.

Wastewater infrastructure is not sequence-dependent. Either septic or packaged wastewater systems may be used to support new projects. These can be developed at any time by the property owner/occupant.

Funding

Several funding opportunities are available to help pay for the roadway and infrastructure improvements described in the strategic plan. These options include local, state, and federal resources, as well as funds generated within the Valley itself. The County will need to draw upon a combination of these funding strategies, beginning with the following:

1. Apply for funding of pedestrian and bicycle facilities on Mankas Corner Road through the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Business Enterprise Grants Program.
2. Apply for funding of Phase I roadway improvements benefitting the Mankas Corner ATC through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Transportation for Livable Communities Program.
3. Establish a Property-Based Business Improvement District to generate funds needed for Phase I roadway improvements, parking, and wastewater treatment, fire flow water storage, and other improvements benefitting the Mankas Corner ATC.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

An essential part of the strategic planning process was to involve those who live and work within the Valley in future plans. Three community meetings, three stakeholder

working sessions were held, along with public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Community Meetings

Three community meetings were held between January and October 2009. The first meeting consisted of presentations on the plan's background and confirmation of the plan priorities. Attendees were asked to rank the plan priorities as groups and individuals.

The second meeting was a review of the work from all the stakeholder meetings. Attendees were asked to confirm the direction of the plan topics and provide additional comment on the contents of the strategic plan.

The purpose of the third community meeting was to review the preliminary draft strategic plan and provide input.

Stakeholder Working Sessions

The County held three stakeholder working sessions during March and April 2009. The following organizations were invited and had at least one member on the stakeholder panel.

- Harvest Trails Association
- City of Fairfield
- Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association
- Suisun Valley Fruit Growers Association
- Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee

All sessions were open to the public. Between 30 and 60 members of the public attended each working session.

Various topics covered in the plan were presented at each meeting and comments were received on the direction of the plan. The topics discussed at the first stakeholder workshop included alternatives for the distribution of acres among Neighborhood Agricultural Tourist Centers (ATCs) and uses allowed in ATCs.

The second stakeholder workshop presented and discussed changes to the zoning regulations and topics to be covered in the design guidelines. Additionally, there was some



preliminary discussion on the priorities for infrastructure and roadway improvements.

The third stakeholder workshop addressed preliminary roadway prototypes, infrastructure options and costs, and financing options. All of these were discussed with both stakeholders and community members. In addition, a short summary of the Suisun Valley Marketing Plan was presented. Comments from these stakeholder workshops were used to create this strategic plan.

Planning Commission/Board of Supervisors Public Hearings

Staff presented the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan to the Planning Commission on March 18, 2010. During this meeting, the Planning Commission accepted the Suisun Strategic Plan and gave a preliminary approval of the zoning code text.

On October 7, 2010, the Planning Commission approved the Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact for the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan, recommended approval of the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan, along with preliminary approval of the implementing zone text amendment and area rezoning consistent with the Strategic Plan.

After the October 7 meeting, staff met with Farm Bureau representatives and the Agriculture Commissioner regarding comprehensive changes to the Exclusive Agricultural District. Staff made formatting changes to the text, and included additional definitions and other clarifying information into the text.

The Planning Commission reviewed the revised Suisun Valley zoning text amendments and rezoning at a public hearing on January 6, 2011 and unanimously recommended approval to the Board of Supervisors.

Staff presented Suisun Valley materials to the Board of Supervisors on February 1, 2011. During this meeting, the Board adopted a resolution approving the Negative Declaration for the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan and related zone ordinance text amendment and zone district changes; adopted a resolution adopting the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan; and adopted an ordinance approving the Suisun Valley Zone Text Amendment (ZT-10-03) and Rezoning (Z-10-01) implementing the Suisun Valley Strategic Plan.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The strategic plan is the implementing tool for policies and programs written within the general plan regarding Suisun Valley. This plan is the direct outcome of General Plan Program AG.I-17, which directs the County to develop strategic marketing and economic plans for each of the 10 agricultural regions.

KEY AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND STAKEHOLDERS

Besides Solano County, several major organizations have a stake in what happens in the Suisun Valley. The organizations include grower associations, neighboring cities, infrastructure providers, and the Suisun Valley Fund. These groups have been invited to all public meetings, workshops, and hearings. The enduring partnerships between and among these organizations are critical to achieving the Valley's vision.

Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association

In August 2009, the Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association (SVGGA) renamed itself the Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Association (SVVGA). The association consists of grape growers within the Suisun Valley American Viticultural Area (AVA). There are about 40 grower members and almost 30 associate members. The association has been integral in informing the County on the needs of grape growers and wineries.

The Marketing Committee is the marketing arm of the SVVGA. With the evolution of the association, the Vintners Committee became the Marketing Committee and took on greater marketing responsibilities for all types of goods produced within the Valley. With the agreement of the board of directors of the Suisun Valley Harvest Trails Association, Suisun Valley Fund, and Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association, the Vintners Association is combining their existing efforts with those of the now dissolved Suisun Valley Harvest Trails Association. These marketing efforts will be directed by the Suisun Valley Direct Marketing Committee. There are five members of this committee, consisting of three representatives of the Vintners Association, one produce or fruit grower representative, and one business owner in the Valley.



Suisun Valley Fruit Growers Association

The association consists of fruit growers within Suisun Valley and Solano County. Members of the association have attended and participated in all public meetings, including stakeholder workshops. They informed the County of the needs of this group and helped to shape the requirements for roadside stands.

City of Fairfield

The City of Fairfield shares a boundary with Suisun Valley on the Valley's east and south sides. Its water and sewer infrastructure is located very closely to the Valley boundaries and the city could be a viable partner in helping to serve the Valley with infrastructure. With over 100,000 residents, it is also a source for visitors and customers for Valley businesses. The City and the Solano Irrigation District (SID) are currently in agreement to not extend urban services to the Valley. This agreement expires at the end of 2010.

City of Vallejo

The City of Vallejo owns and operates a pipeline running underneath Suisun Valley Road from the community college to the northern end of the Valley. It extends to Lake Curry and originally was designed to bring raw water from the lake to the City of Vallejo. It is this right-of-way that is discussed for potential reuse for an extension of a potable water pipeline. Vallejo is an important partner because of its close proximity to the Valley and because of this potential pipeline extension.

City of Suisun City

The City of Suisun City and SID operate a pipeline that runs through the Valley. This pipeline is administered by the Suisun Solano Water Authority (SSWA), a joint powers authority. Although there is no room on this line for new connections, it is currently in use by several landowners in the Valley to supply potable water for home and commercial use. It will continue to be an important component of the Valley's infrastructure and should be maintained as an essential part of Suisun Valley's success.

Solano Irrigation District

Solano Irrigation District (SID) is special district, delivering water to customers throughout the agricultural areas of the County. It primarily serves only nonpotable water, except in special cases like the Suisun Solano Water Authority, as described previously. SID is the only water provider within the unincorporated County not associated with a city. They are a valued partner for farmers and landowners to provide the water needed for cropland irrigation as well as raw water for treatment.

Suisun Valley Fund

In 2002, the City of Fairfield and SID extended through December 31, 2010 an earlier agreement to not provide potable water service to Suisun Valley. They also agreed to create a "Suisun Valley Fund," with each entity contributing \$100,000 a year between 2003 and 2010. The fund is governed by the Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee made up of two members from the Fairfield City Council, two members from SID and three Suisun Valley landowners who are actively engaged in Valley agriculture. The money is to be spent on programs to preserve and enhance agriculture in Suisun Valley. The fund is expected to sunset in 2010.

