

Defining ‘City-Centered Growth’

The following are examples of General Plan policies that have been adopted by other Counties. These policies make a clear differentiation between the roles and responsibilities of the Counties and their cities, and create a clear distinction between what is urban and what is rural. Note that some of the Counties below have been known in the past for poorly-planned and excessive unincorporated growth. These Counties have effectively learned the hard way, and have since taken strong steps to avoid making the same mistakes over again.

The chart below shows the range of options a County may take in determining the level of involvement it wishes to have in development issues. All of the Counties below would fall in the “Low” range.

Range of County Involvement in Development		
Low Involvement	Medium Involvement	High Involvement
City-Centered Growth	Combined City/County	Widespread Rural Growth
Subdivision limited to areas currently served by sewer and water. Discourage development of rural areas by limiting it to existing legal lots of record only.	Urban areas left to cities. County development in rural areas that do not conflict with cities’ development goals.	Significant County urban, suburban, and rural development with related conversion of open space.

Solano County

“Current County policy states “what is urban should be municipal.” This is implemented by city-county growth boundaries and a number of key policies:

It is the intent of this Plan to confine new development requiring public sewer service to areas which are located within incorporated cities.

Residential, commercial and industrial development shall be designed and located in such a manner as to maximize the use of existing facilities and services and to minimize the need for additional county services.

Development within the unincorporated County shall be primary self-sufficient requiring only minimal public facilities and services essential for health, safety and welfare.

Development requiring urban services shall be confined within city urban growth lines in areas where services can be provided most efficiently.

All areas included within the cities urban growth lines shall be service by central water and sewerage systems. The extension of water and sewer service should [be] accomplished by a phased program including the annexation of areas to be served and provisions for managing the costs of such services.”

Santa Clara County

“The policies of the County make a clear differentiation between the roles and responsibilities of the County and its fifteen cities. Specifically, the policies make the cities responsible for planning and providing services to urban development.”

Orange County

“Public services to urban and urbanizing areas are best provided by cities.”

Santa Cruz County

“A basic land use policy of the County is to separate urban and rural areas. A distinct boundary between urban and rural areas serves to encourage new development to locate in urban areas and protect agricultural land and natural resources in the rural areas.”

“In some rural areas, there are existing enclaves which are developed at urban densities. Generally, these enclaves have some urban-level services, and County policy allows the provision of full urban services, including public sanitation facilities, to serve these communities. Infill development within Rural Service Line boundaries is allowed at urban densities when community sewage disposal systems become available; ***but expansion of the Rural Service line into rural areas is prohibited.***”

Ventura County

“Promote the establishment of reasonable city boundaries and Spheres of Influence and prevent step-out urban development.”

“Greenbelt Agreements: In order to maintain the integrity of separate, distinct cities and to prevent inappropriately placed development between city boundaries, some cities and the County have entered into joint greenbelt agreements.

Goals:

Urban

- (1) Recognize areas within the County planned for urban development which are currently incorporated or which are candidates for future incorporation.
- (2) Direct urban development to existing cities and unincorporated urban centers within their own Area of Interest, and maintain open space between urban areas.
- (3) Discourage outward expansion of urban development when suitable developable areas existing within cities and unincorporated urban centers [note that Ventura County is subject to an initiative which freezes agricultural and open space designations; thereby preventing sprawl].

Existing Community:

Recognize and confine existing urban enclaves which are outside Urban designated areas, even though the enclaves may include uses, densities, and zoning designations normally limited to urban designated areas.”

Napa County

“The general plans of all jurisdictions in Napa County indicate that urban development belongs in urban areas and there is sufficient space in existing Cities and currently designated urban areas to accommodate the bulk of the County residents.” Land Use Element 2-25

“Urban Expansion Limits – The County will work with the Cities, special districts, and Local Agency Formation Commission to define and establish the limits of current and future urban expansion and development. Unincorporated land included within the Rural Urban Limit Line of the 1983 Napa City’s General Plan will not be further urbanized without annexation to the City...”

“Urban Services Facilities – “The County will oppose the creation of special districts planned to accommodate residential projects outside existing urban areas...”