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Quantum Leap

General Plan Stems Sprawl and (Surprise!) Satisfies Landowners

By: John Caulfield

The Middle Green Valley of Solano County, California is surrounded on three sides by suburban development, and the homeowners wish the undeveloped valley to remain as is. At odds with landowners who struggle financially to sustain their farms, the county hired Hart Howerton to create a Specific Plan and Development Code for the valley's 1,905 acres, in order to avoid subdivision of the valley, while at the same time ensuring that development does occur and complements the rest of the landscape. Amie MacPhee, Principal at Hart Howerton, created a plan in which "agriculture would be the amenity," envisioning small, ecologically based neighborhoods that adhere to the environmental and cultural setting of the Middle Green Valley. The plan proposes a mix of land uses including 400 residential units clustered into 4 parcels amongst 415 acres within more than 1,490 acres of agriculture and open spaces. The design code specifies seven building types, different lot sizes and includes details regarding color palettes, paving surfaces, landscaping and signage.

Currently, thirteen of the valley's fifteen owners are participating in this plan. MacPhee believes that the Specific Plan and Development Code could serve as a model of how to preserve agriculture and maintain development simultaneously.

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