

# SACRAMENTO REGION **BLUEPRINT**

How creating **complete communities**  
can improve our quality of life



## WHAT IS SACOG?

How do cities like Davis, Folsom, Marysville, Galt and Auburn contribute to the greater region? The answer is SACOG.

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments is an association of local governments in six counties and 22 cities that provides a forum for regional dialog about issues such as transportation, land use, air quality and housing.

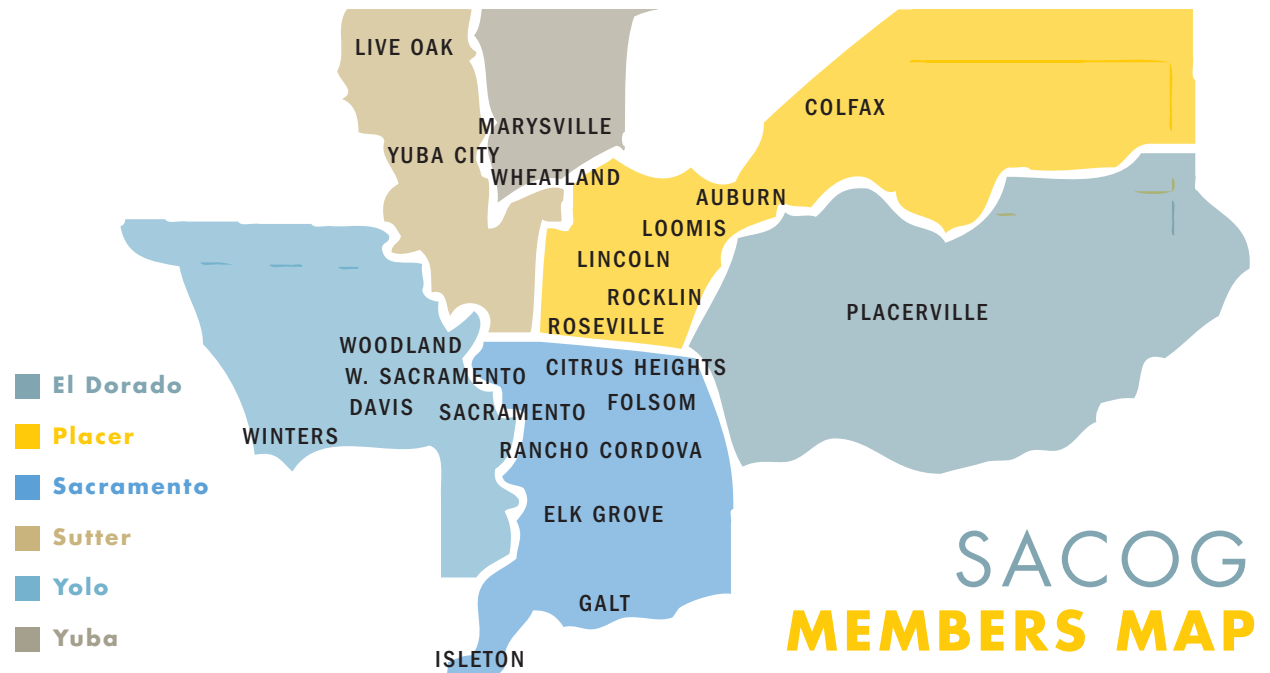
In its role as a Council of Governments, Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Transportation Planning Agency, SACOG has the following responsibilities:

- Plans regional transportation projects
- Awards federal and state transportation dollars
- Develops strategies to improve air quality
- Coordinates with public and private organizations
- Operates the Sacramento Region 511 traveler information line services
- Coordinates the May is Bike Month campaign
- Establishes the number of housing units jurisdictions must plan for in an eight-year period
- Advocates for the Sacramento region on the state and federal level
- Provides valuable data, maps, tools and analysis to local jurisdictions

SACOG's directors are appointed by and from the elected boards of its member governments.

**MEMBER COUNTIES:** El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba

**MEMBER CITIES:** Auburn, Citrus Heights, Colfax, Davis, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt, Isleton, Lincoln, Live Oak, Loomis, Marysville, Placerville, Rancho Cordova, Rocklin, Roseville, Sacramento, West Sacramento, Wheatland, Winters, Woodland and Yuba City



## THE BIGGER PICTURE

BY JOHN FLYNN

Working together and thinking regionally helps solve issues

**M**any people in the Sacramento region work in one city, sleep in another, and play in a third. But to cultivate the value of each area, each part of the region needs to work together to ensure that we build in the right places. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) emphasizes a broader approach to planning because it recognizes the connections people have to all parts of an area.

"[Regionalism] is about looking at the kind of places we want to live in and we want our children to live in, and how do we want to make those kinds of places," says UC professor Chris Benner. "We rise and fall as a region."

For instance, Benner points out that Sacramento-area residents enjoy outdoor activities, such as mountain biking around Folsom Lake or the American River Bike Trail. Being able to enjoy nature is contingent upon preserving that land through more compact housing and business development in other areas. There are other examples, too.

"Whether the downtown Railyards get developed and the scale and pace it gets developed is going to be largely determined by how much growth goes on in Roseville – and Folsom, and Rocklin and Davis," Benner says.

The interconnectedness in the region applies to various other spheres of life. Land use impacts jobs, housing, health, education and the environment. Communities not only need to have enough jobs for their residents, but also jobs with incomes that match the price of housing.

Transportation is what ties all of these land use concerns together. Because we've become a mobile society, jobs and housing are quite often not located near one another. The ability to get goods to market, people to jobs, and parents to soccer games takes a broader perspective, says Will Kempton, executive director of the California Transportation Commission.

"We rise and fall as a region."

CHRIS BENNER  
UC professor

Our land use and transportation choices take on greater weight when you consider their environmental impacts. Transportation alone contributes to 40 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions.

"Traffic doesn't stop at the city limits. Air quality issues don't stop at a county line, so the ability to look at these issues

from a regional perspective makes tremendous good sense," Kempton says.

Kempton credits SACOG's Sacramento Region Blueprint (see page 3) with providing a framework to guide cities and counties as they begin to collaborate on addressing these problems.

"The Blueprint effort initiated a process in this region ... to really take a look at this issue of how to develop to better meet our mobility goals and more effectively figure out how we're going to grow in the future," he says.

Keep reading to find out how Blueprint is helping us build a better, more livable region for everyone.

# WHAT IS THE BLUEPRINT?

BY SUSAN WINLOW

**The unique tool helps improve quality of life in our region**



Residents in cities including Rocklin, Sacramento and Elk Grove participated in planning workshops, where they shared their preferences for how they wanted their cities to look. That information was incorporated into the Blueprint, a tool to help the region grow.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SACOG

**W**hen asked why Sacramento area residents should care about a document called the Sacramento Region Blueprint, Judy Corbett can think of more than one reason.

"For a thousand reasons," answers Corbett, the former executive director of the Local Government Commission.

Corbett is an enthusiastic proponent of the Blueprint, a smart-growth regional transportation and land use plan that was adopted by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments in 2004. Its aim is to improve the quality of life for Sacramento-area residents by curbing urban sprawl and cutting down on vehicle emissions and congestion. It accomplishes this by encouraging a variety of housing options closer to employment, shopping and entertainment hubs, which allows people to walk, bike or take public transportation to work and play.

"This is the way we stay economically healthy," she says. "It's meeting the needs of the market so that people who don't want to drive have a place to live."

**"This is the way we stay economically healthy."**

**JUDY CORBETT**  
*Former executive director of the Local Government Commission*

The creation of the Blueprint didn't start with local government and city planners — it started with regular residents who were given the chance to influence how our region looks. Corbett was involved during that grassroots creation of the Blueprint from 2002 to 2004, when more than 5,000 area residents participated in interactive planning workshops held in their communities.

Armed with detailed maps of land parcels and stickers with 25 or so different building types, participants were able to manipulate variables and see how different land use patterns affect people's travel and air pollution levels.

Out of the meetings came a "base case scenario" of continuing growth patterns of the prior decades and a "preferred scenario" of diverse and balanced land use, transportation and natural resource use.

Today, Blueprint is a tool for SACOG member cities and counties, which have voluntarily adopted its principles in land use planning. By the year 2050, the hope is that following the Blueprint guides our region to the preferred scenario.

## SACRAMENTO REGION BLUEPRINT GROWTH PRINCIPLES

### 1. TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

Developments should encourage people to walk, bicycle, use public transit or carpool to their destinations. The idea is to give people the option to live without cars if they choose.

### 2. COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

Creating environments that are more compactly built and use space in an efficient but aesthetic manner can encourage more walking, biking and public transit use, and shorten auto trips.

### 3. MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

Keeping homes, shops, entertainment, schools and employment close together can create active, vital neighborhoods. Mixed use can be vertical (such as a single building with a ground-floor business and residential on upper floors) or horizontal (a combination of uses within walking or bicycling distance, or a short car ride). The goals are to build healthy community by encouraging interaction and reduce

dependency on cars to get to these amenities.

### 4. HOUSING CHOICES AND DIVERSITY

Numerous housing options — apartments, condominiums, townhouses and single-family homes on several lot sizes — give families, singles, seniors and those with special needs more choices.

### 5. USE OF EXISTING ASSETS

Developing in communities with vacant land or intensifying development on underutilized land can make better use of public infrastructure, including roads. This can include, for example, refurbishing historic buildings or clustering buildings more compactly in suburban communities.

### 6. QUALITY DESIGN

How projects are oriented in relationship to the street, how their façades are designed, and sidewalk placement all contribute to a community's attractiveness. These elements also influence how much people like to walk or bicycle, and contribute to community pride and sense of ownership.

### 7. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Our quality of life is better when we have clean air to breathe and water to drink, and when we can experience the outdoors — in parks and greenbelts or in natural places. Having more compact urban and suburban development helps preserve and maintain our open spaces, natural places and farmland.

## BLUEPRINT FORECAST FOR PRESERVING RURAL LAND

  
**230,000  
acres**

of rural land will be preserved under Blueprint projections through **2050** due to more compact future development.

### TERMS TO KNOW: LAND USE

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** The physical structure and facilities that support communities and neighborhoods such as roads, water and sewer pipes.

**REINVESTMENT:** New development that is constructed through redevelopment or reuse of existing buildings or developed sites.

**GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT:** New specific or master plan development located on land that is currently undeveloped and not surrounded by urban development.

**INFILL:** New housing or employment that is built on vacant land surrounded by existing development.

**RURAL:** Areas used for natural-resource-based industries such as agriculture. Rural-residential living is outside of urbanized areas with limited public infrastructure.

**URBAN:** Developed areas that typically include a large number of homes, jobs and services in proximity to one another.

**SUBURBAN:** Developed areas that are typically lower density than urban, and often have more housing than jobs. These areas can have a mix of uses and sometimes allow for a variety of transportation choices.

Scott Syphax, CEO of Nehemiah Corporation of America, says Blueprint principles are at work at Township Nine, an award-winning infill project in Sacramento.  
*PHOTO BY LOUISE MITCHELL*



## DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

BY SUSAN WINLOW

### Smart-growth, mixed-use aid in boosting quality of life

**S**acramento touts itself as the farm-to-fork capital of the world, says local developer Scott Syphax. But the urban sprawl that is gobbling up surrounding farmland seems contradictory to that claim.

"Before you get to the fork you have to have the farm," Syphax says. "You have to have farmland."

Syphax is the CEO of Nehemiah Corporation of America, a for-profit/non-profit hybrid that creates economic empowerment through community revitalization. He's also a proponent of the Sacramento Region Blueprint and had a chance to put its principles into action with the Township Nine development.

In 2000, Nehemiah bought a 65-acre abandoned tomato cannery in the River District of downtown Sacramento with plans to turn it into a mixed-use, sustainable community.

"The intended purpose was to create a smart-growth community – one that improved the economic and social characteristics of the neighborhood while providing a more urban-type, walkable neighborhood than we have had in Sacramento historically," Syphax says.

Still in progress, Township Nine will eventually have 2,500 housing units, 840,000 square feet of office space, and 145,000 square feet of urban retail. Served by the light rail Green Line, the award-winning infill project

embodies Blueprint principles by combining a variety of residential and non-residential uses to create a live-work-and-transit-oriented community.

Developing with Blueprint in mind involves a unique, more thoughtful planning process, such as figuring out how the project interfaces with available transportation or how it impacts air and water quality, Syphax says.

Other considerations include construction materials, lighting and carbon-footprint reduction. They take into account how the existing resources will be used, such as land for parks and common areas. Even ordinary infrastructure elements such as curbs and sidewalks contribute to a pedestrian-friendly community.

"I think that every single one of us has the duty to leave our community better than we found it," Syphax says.

He adds that following Blueprint is important to undo decades of poor planning decisions.

"The Blueprint is a down payment on fixing the mess that we inherited from decades past," he says.

"I think that every single one of us has the duty to leave our community better than we found it."

**SCOTT SYPHAX**  
CEO Nehemiah Corporation of America

## BLUEPRINT FORECAST FOR REDUCING TRAFFIC



**1%** **RESULTS IN** **5%**  
**INCREASE** **DECREASE**  
in commute trips taken by transit in heavy traffic congestion

### TERMS TO KNOW: TRANSPORTATION

**REGIONAL ACCESSIBILITY:** A way to measure how connected an area is to current development. It is a measure of how many activities are within a reasonable drive from someone's home.

**STREET PATTERN AND URBAN DESIGN:** Street patterns greatly affect how people will travel within an area, whether they walk, bike, take transit or drive. A street pattern with more intersections that make blocks smaller, combined with a welcoming urban design, is more inviting for pedestrians. Street pattern is an important factor in the safety of streets for all types of travel – pedestrian, bicycling, driving and transit.

**MIXED USE:** An area that has all sorts of activities, such as jobs, shopping, recreation and schools. When there is a mix of use in a community it leads to less driving.

**PROXIMITY TO TRANSIT:** How close a resident's home is to the nearest transit station or stop. If it is closer to a home/destination, then walking and transit use will increase.

# GETTING OUT OF THE CAR

BY SUSAN WINLOW

## Blueprint encourages transportation options

**S**haron Grewal kicks back on Sacramento's light rail, listening to tunes and catching up on social media before disembarking and walking directly into work.

The 30-something arrives at her downtown job stress-free.

"It's such a convenience," Grewal says. "I really enjoy riding light rail. I can do other things and not deal with traffic."

When Grewal moved to Sacramento from Fresno 10 years ago, one of her criteria was to find a home close to public transportation. In the ensuing years, her travel routine changed several times based on living locations or social activities. Each time, she found a way to stay out of her car as much as possible and use public transit to avoid a 45-minute-plus commute, save on downtown parking fees, and do her part for the environment.

"It can get bad," she says of the clogged highways. "I think [using light rail] just creates a less stressful commute. Work is stressful enough. The last thing needed is traffic stress."

Grewal's eye toward her quality of life, living sustainably and being conscious of the environment aligns with the Sacramento Region Blueprint, a planned vision through 2050 to contain urban sprawl and reduce emissions by linking transportation and land use. The plan encourages a variety of transportation options — walking, biking, public transit or even a shorter vehicle commute — by creating infill and mixed-use development that keeps transportation, employment, home and entertainment in closer proximity to one another.

Improving travel with more options and varying price points gives locals a higher quality environment in which to live, work and play, says Ron Milam, the director of technical development for Fehr & Peers, a transportation consultation company.

"Not everyone wants to own and drive a car," he says. "We love our choices. We love our freedom. You'd like people to be able to choose ... as opposed to literally the only option they have is to drive a car."

Grewal likes the choices, she says. Those choices allow her to hop on light rail and head to R Street during her lunch break or take a Saturday bike ride to Folsom and catch light rail for the return trip home.

"It's really nice to have options to utilize [public transportation] not just for commuting but also to enjoy other leisure things," she says. "I've encouraged a lot of people to [use light rail]. They didn't realize how convenient it was."

"Work is stressful enough. The last thing needed is traffic stress."

**SHARON GREWAL**  
Light rail rider



Sharon Grewal says having public transportation options was important to her when finding a place to live. Sacramento Region Blueprint encourages locating housing, business and public transportation together, so commuters spend less time in their cars.

PHOTO BY LOUISE MITCHELL

## BLUEPRINT FORECAST FOR USING LESS LAND

**Past**  
**333**  
**acres**  
**consumed**  
per 1,000  
new people

**Future**  
**42**  
**acres**  
**consumed**  
per 1,000  
new people

### TERMS TO KNOW: NATURAL RESOURCES

**OPEN SPACE:** A strict definition of “open space” is land that has no built structures and is publicly accessible for recreation or other public purposes, including providing ecosystem services. Some think of open space as public and private undeveloped land.

**ECOSYSTEM SERVICES:** Functions of the landscape that provide benefits to humans and other animal and plant life. Examples include habitat, groundwater recharge, flood control, carbon sequestration and oxygen production.

**WORKING LANDSCAPES:** The use of the land for both economic and environmental purposes where land management practices balance food and fiber production with methods for also enhancing ecosystem services.

**AIR QUALITY:** The state of the air around us. Air quality can be directly affected by the type and density of land use change and population growth in urban and rural areas. Air quality conditions in a given area are characterized by the concentrations of various pollutants in that area.

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:** Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the land surface. The addition of surfaces like roads, driveways and parking lots prevents water from soaking into the ground and increases the volume of runoff water during storms. Stormwater flowing over paved surfaces can result in degrading water quality when water absorbs oil and other man-made materials.



“We are just stewards of this land. It’s in our best interests to help our communities reconnect to the land and the food system that nourishes and supports them.”

**CRAIG MCNAMARA**  
*President and owner of Sierra Orchards*

# CONSERVING THE WORLD’S BEST LAND

Walnut grower and sustainable agriculture advocate Craig McNamara knows preserving farmland benefits the entire region by improving soil quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and conserving groundwater.  
PHOTO BY LOUISE MITCHELL

BY JOHN FLYNN

## Blueprint-compatible development preserves the region’s most unique asset: farmland

**F**ive places on the planet boast the Mediterranean climate: the Mediterranean (obviously), South Africa, Chile, Australia and California. Combining temperate weather, adequate rainfall and fertile soil, these regions offer the ideal conditions for agriculture.

“That’s what mother nature gave us, and it is such an incredible resource,” says Craig McNamara, president and owner of Sierra Orchards, a farm in Winters that produces mostly walnuts. “I don’t think Sacramentans over the last 50 years have really recognized how important those natural resources are, how magical they are, in terms of providing our lifeblood.”

While creating the Sacramento Region Blueprint in 2002-2004, SACOG wanted to concentrate development in existing communities to not only allow people to have more housing and transportation options but to also preserve pristine rural lands. In comparison to the region’s 2004 development trajectory, the plan saved 230,000 acres of farmland, 30 percent more water, and \$25,000 per housing unit. If Blueprint development occurs, past patterns of farmland conversion would change dramatically. From 1988-2005, 333 acres of farmland were urbanized for every 1,000 new residents to the region. Under a Blueprint style of development, that number would drop to 42 acres urbanized per 1,000 new residents. Conserved farmlands use 50 times less greenhouse gases than urban areas.

“When you build on land, you no longer get its ecosystem services like providing [wildlife] habitat, conserving groundwater,

sequestering carbon and supporting better soil,” McNamara says. “These are all services we get out of the landscape when we keep it open and properly manage it.”

McNamara has fought short-sighted development for decades. Ever since he bought and preserved 325 picturesque acres of land, he has faced immense pressure to split and develop it into seven lucrative housing parcels. Shortly after, he and his wife established the Center for Land-Based Learning to instill sustainable principles in young farmers.

“We are just stewards of this land,” McNamara says. “It’s in our best interests to help our communities reconnect to the land and the food system that nourishes and supports them. We want this next generation of decision-makers to be well-informed about the environment that we all share so they can make wise decisions.”

The Blueprint encourages diverse, mixed-use developments that offer living, recreation and employment opportunities for all people. After watching Solano County concentrate its development in existing communities, McNamara believes the Blueprint is a model for the region to follow.

“We didn’t lose our productivity in the way that the Silicon Valley did,” he says. “We were able to redirect growth into our cities. That should be an opportunity, not a challenge. It really creates vitality. That’s what we all want. We want an exciting neighborhood, of mixed uses, of mixed backgrounds of people. That’s the essence of the Blueprint.”

# MORE TRAVEL CHOICES IN THE FUTURE

BY JOHN FLYNN

## Updated plans call for jobs closer to housing with better transportation options

**T**he Sacramento region is growing, but to maximize the desirability of communities, that growth should be well planned. As part of the Sacramento Region Blueprint, SACOG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) addresses land use, air quality, housing and transportation.

"They go hand in glove," says Mike McKeever, CEO of SACOG.

"When you concentrate cultural amenities, shopping, more housing and more jobs in the downtowns of many of our communities, you must provide people with many ways to move around. Walking, bicycling, bus, and rail transit must be convenient, safe and affordable choices for people."

Whereas the Blueprint is a 50-year projection of desired growth, the MTP/SCS is regulated by state and federal requirements, and so must be updated every four years. It is designed to implement Blueprint-compatible growth by facilitating travel options that cut down on long commutes.

"You have to be able to  
provide convenient, safe and  
affordable travel options."

**MIKE MCKEEVER**  
CEO of SACOG

The MTP is a \$35 billion, 20-year infrastructure plan for mobility in our region. Those investments in roads, transit, sidewalks and bike paths will make real differences in people's lives, McKeever says.

"Survey after survey shows that people want choices, they don't want to have to get in their car for every trip," he says. "And many surveys show that the thing in many people's daily life that makes them the grumpiest is sitting in traffic on a congested freeway."

The plan has other wide-ranging impacts. It improves health by encouraging people to walk or bike. The corresponding improvement in air quality decreases diseases like asthma, cancer and emphysema. And with a variety of transportation modes — transit, walking and bicycling in addition to automobiles — cities in the region can grow more lively neighborhoods.

"All of our 22 cities and six counties have made changes to their general plan and zoning codes to provide more options for the way people live, more housing choices and more mixed-use neighborhoods," McKeever says.

These plans include the Cannery in Davis. "California's first farm-to-table community" will put residences and parks next to an urban farm, retail stores and offices. These thoughtful growth changes are also evident in the hub of the region, downtown Sacramento.

"The City of Sacramento did a thorough update of its general plan and it's entirely consistent with the Blueprint," he says. "They completely overhauled their zoning codes to make it much easier to build infill projects. They updated their parking code because for a long time, [Sacramento] had suburban level parking requirements, which makes it [expensive] for developers to invest their money. Those are all important reasons why you're seeing a big rush for development in and around downtown Sacramento now."



Backed by Blueprint's long-term vision, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan aims to facilitate growth by providing sustainable travel options.

PHOTO BY LOUISE MITCHELL

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The Sacramento Region Blueprint has been honored with several awards and news articles from national, state and local government agencies, organizations and businesses.

### **Sacramento Business Journal**

Top 25 Stories of 25 Years

### **Wall Street Journal**

"With Gas Over \$4, Cities Explore Whether It's  
Smart to Be Dense"

### **Sacramento Mutual Housing Association**

Community Development Award

### **American Lung Association Sacramento Emigrant Trails**

Regional Clean Air Award

### **Sacramento Business Journal**

Real Estate Deal of the Year

### **Environmental Protection Agency**

National Award for Smart Growth Achievement

### **American Institute of Architects**

Presidential Citation

### **Environmental Council of Sacramento**

Environmentalist of the Year

### **Federal Highway Administration/ Federal Transit Administration**

Transportation Planning Excellence Award

### **American Leadership Forum Mountain Valley Chapter**

Thanks to You Award

### **Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

National Award for Outstanding Achievement

### **Innovations in American Government**

Top 50 Programs

### **Governor's Environmental Economic Leadership Award**

### **Harvard University Kennedy School of Government**

Top 50 Innovations in American Government



# IT'S YOUR FUTURE ...

## What do you want the Sacramento region to look like?

In the year 2050, the Sacramento region could have less air pollution, fewer cars on its freeways and more housing options. SACOG's Blueprint is a roadmap to get there. With smart planning principles that preserve our natural resources while providing a variety of housing and transportation choices, we can all live a better life. We can get there, but we need your help.

**ELECTED LEADERS:** Blueprint needs the next generation of local leaders to get involved. Be a champion for regional change by serving as your city's or county's representative to SACOG.

**CITY PLANNERS:** SACOG's Civic Engagement Program provides support to cities, counties, transit agencies and air districts in the Sacramento region to elevate the public education and involvement in infill and smart growth community development.

**EVERYONE:** SACOG actively seeks opportunities to ensure and encourage robust public involvement in all program areas, from the earliest planning stages to implementation of specific solutions. Get involved locally with your city or county.

## BE A PART OF BLUEPRINT

LEARN MORE AT  
[SACOG.ORG](http://SACOG.ORG)

## BLUEPRINT IN ACTION

The following Blueprint projects have been praised for improving quality of life:

### **East Bidwell Street Complete Streets Corridor Plan**

APA Award of Excellence in Transportation Planning

### **Southeast Policy Area Strategic Plan**

APA Best Practices Award

### **Township Nine**

Transit Oriented Development of the Year TransAction Award

### **7th and H Apartments**

APA Urban Design Award; Transit Oriented Development of the Year TransAction Award

### **La Valentina**

EPA National Award for Smart Growth Achievement for a Built Project; Transit Oriented Development of the Year TransAction Award

### **City of Auburn**

Clean Air Award for Sustainability

### **Historic Folsom Station**

Transit Oriented Development of the Year TransAction Award

### **City of Sacramento Planning and Development Code**

APA Best Practices Award

### **Freedom Park Drive Sustainable Street**

APA Planning Project Award

### **Yuba County 2030 General Plan**

APA Comprehensive Planning Award

### **County of Sacramento General Plan**

APA Comprehensive Planning

### **Yolo County 2030 General Plan**

APA Comprehensive Planning

### **City of Live Oak 2030 General Plan**

APA Comprehensive Planning Award

### **City of Sacramento Urban Design Guidelines**

APA Best Practices Award

### **Alexan Midtown**

Local Vision Award; Transit Oriented Development of the Year TransAction Award