

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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Concord asks: 'Where's the money?' in regional planning for local development

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CONCORD -- A regional planning agency's blueprint for the Bay Area's development through 2035 paints a pretty picture, Concord officials say. But they have one question: Where is the money to make it happen?

Concord is to be a center of growth, adding 19,328 homes and 29,366 jobs by 2035 -- more new jobs than any other city in Contra Costa County. Richmond is the only city in the county projected to have more housing built.

That makes sense, Concord leaders say. The Concord Naval Weapons Station is labeled as priority development area, Concord's downtown is set as an area where growth is appropriate and the commercial area north of Highway 4 is labeled as an employment center.

But to build the environmentally friendly developments the plan promotes, the city will need more money for infrastructure and transportation improvements, according to a comment letter it is submitting.

"It doesn't work unless there is the ongoing money to maintain infrastructure," Mayor Laura Hoffmeister said.

In March the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments released the plan, called the Initial Vision Scenario for 2035. It projects 902,600 new housing units and 1.2 million new jobs across the Bay Area in the next 24 years.

The plans stem from California's landmark legislation to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

The idea is that by planning housing, job centers and transportation infrastructure with an

eye toward reducing the need to drive, the region's greenhouse gas emissions will drop.

A community workshop on the plan will be held Saturday morning at the Concord Senior Center. One meeting is being held in each of the Bay Area's nine counties, but registration is already full for the Alameda County workshop.

The regional plan also raises a question about the division between local and regional authority.

Even though the regional plan will have the force of state law behind it, Concord's City Council will still make final planning decisions.

"We have to kind of fit into this vision," said Concord planner Phillip Woods. "But we still have land use authority."

But Concord hopes to grow, and planning and transportation grants could be tied to the plan, said Assistant City Manager Valerie Barone.

"It is increasing the power of regional planning against local control," Barone said. "There are many different ways this will end up affecting the City of Concord's land use planning."

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Initial Vision Scenario 2035
Saturday May 7, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Concord Senior Center
2727 Parkside Circle, Concord
To register, visit www.onebayarea.org