

**Issue Paper on
Infill and Annexation**

City of Lompoc General Plan Update

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BACKGROUND

City Setting

The City of Lompoc is currently home to approximately 41,915 residents. Over the last thirty years 2,500 new homes have been built in the Lompoc Valley. This influx has created many jobs and increased the City's tax base, although most of these new jobs are in the relatively low-paying service sector. Major employers in the City of Lompoc currently include Vandenberg Air Force Base, the Lompoc Federal Correctional Complex (FCC), the nearby diatomaceous earth mine, and local agriculture. 44% of residents are employed in the City of Santa Barbara, or other cities outside of the Lompoc Valley, and commute from Lompoc to take advantage of its comparatively lower housing costs.

The City is located in the Lompoc Valley, at approximately 80-100 feet above mean sea level (msl), and is surrounded by rolling hills to the north, east, and south. The Lompoc Valley is the final passage of the Santa Ynez River before it meets the Pacific Ocean south of Vandenberg Air Force Base. The river does not have surface flow for most of the year, but the riverbed still provides a natural border to the north and east of the City. Major developments north of the River include the La Purisima Highlands neighborhood, and approved Burton Ranch Specific Plan area (which would contain 476 residential units) within the City, the unincorporated area of Mission Hills to the northeast (pop. 3,142), and the unincorporated area of Vandenberg Village to the north (pop. 5,802). In addition, much of the undeveloped area to the north is dominated by the 5,200 acre Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, which straddles either side of Vandenberg Village.

The southern edge of the City extends to the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The only existing southward path through these mountains is San Miguelito Road. The region west of the City is dominated by some of the county's best prime agricultural land. As the City of Lompoc grows, this and other land around the City is becoming increasingly desirable for urban expansion.

Annexation and Infill Basics

The City has the primary responsibility for planning and regulating land use within its boundaries. The General Plan must cover all incorporated territory within the City. However, State guidelines encourage General Plans to go beyond the existing City Limits to include any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning. Accordingly, the General Plan Update may logically include adjacent lands as part of the long-term (i.e. 20-year) growth strategy and vision.

Annexation. Annexation is the process of incorporating land under county jurisdiction into a city, expanding the limits of the city. The annexation process is established by State law, and requires negotiation between a city and county, overseen by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). There is a LAFCO for each county, which reviews proposals for boundary changes and establishes the ground rules for how a city must process annexations.



A “Sphere of Influence” (SOI) is a plan for the probable future boundaries and service area of a city. It is the primary area outside current city boundaries within which urban development may be encouraged. The SOI is intended to combat urban sprawl, provide orderly growth patterns, and give appropriate consideration to prime agricultural lands and open space. The SOI must be adopted before an annexation to the City can be considered. Lompoc’s SOI exceeds the current City limits in the following locations:

- Open space areas east of City Limits, including River Bend Park
- A portion of the landfill property
- One very low density residential area south of West Willow Avenue
- The Wineman property west of V Street
- The Drive-in Property east of H Street

Infill. Infill development is the creative use or reuse of vacant or under-utilized properties within a city or town to improve or revitalize the community. Infill is a key component of “smart growth.” The 10 guiding principals of “smart growth” have been described as follows:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environment areas;
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities;
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices;
9. Make development predictable, fair, and cost effective; and
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Infill development embodies many of these principles, including compact building design, walkable neighborhoods, and the preservation of open space and farmland. Infill development is also often characterized by the inclusion of mixed uses. Mixed-use development allows more than one type of use in a building or set of buildings. This can mean some combination of residential, commercial, industrial, office, institutional, or other land uses.

The potential benefits of utilizing infill development to accommodate growth in Lompoc include:

- Adaptation and reuse of vacant parcels and empty buildings
- Location of housing near job centers, transit, shopping, and community facilities
- Development of affordable housing
- Enhancement and revitalization of downtown Lompoc
- Increase in the base on property tax
- Capitalization on community resources, such as infrastructure, services, and parks
- Promotion of smart growth rather than sprawl and greenfield development
- Provision of alternatives to single-occupant vehicles
- Creation of a sense of being “downtown.”



The challenges of infill development include the following:

- Neighborhood opposition (NIMBYism)
- Perception of increased demands on infrastructure and services
- Lack of open space for kids & pets (best suited for people who prefer public amenities to private space)
- Land redevelopment
- Bank funding and financing
- Construction costs
- Consumer preference for “big box” retailers vs. shopping several smaller stores.

Cities that utilize infill are characterized by compact neighborhoods, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly communities, mixed land uses, and a variety of housing options. The goal of smart growth is to create vibrant, sustainable communities with a strong sense of place in a manner that enhances public health and the local environment. Infill and mixed-use development revitalize previously developed communities in the urban center at higher densities, and put services closer to residents, thereby reducing traffic, encouraging walking and bicycling, and conserving energy.

Compact, mixed-use neighborhoods enhance social capacity by offering residents places to socialize, shop, and work that are close to where they live and easily accessible without cars. Historic buildings and natural and man-made landmarks are used to define communities within the City, creating a unique sense of community. By identifying the City closely with its architectural and natural elements, Lompoc can foster the development of cohesive neighborhoods while promoting the unique culture and values that have always drawn visitors, increasing tourism and economic vitality.

Existing Urban Form Goals and Policies

The current General Plan calls for the City to “maintain a compact urban form and growth pattern which provides adequate space to meet housing, employment, business, and public service needs” (Land Use Goal #1). Associated policies include encouraging the development of underdeveloped and vacant land within the city, limiting development of agricultural land surrounding the City, protecting of prime agricultural land outside of the Urban Limit Line, and encouraging mixed-use development in certain areas. In addition, the General Plan Circulation Element contains a goal to “reduce automobile use and the associated emissions by maintaining a compact and well-designed urban form which encourages alternative transportation modes.”

Community Input

At the first General Plan Update workshop on January 12, 2008, 80% of commentors said that they would support mixed-use development on H Street outside of the downtown area, and 74% said that it is “very important” to provide for infill and land use intensification along the H Street corridor. In addition, 48% said that what they like the best about Lompoc is the fact that it is a small town, and 52% said it is “very important” to place a higher priority on protecting the environment and open space than on expanding land area for development. In addition to



these survey questions, residents at the workshop, along with key stakeholders and people in neighborhood meetings have expressed the following views about growth and infill development:

- Limited growth in the City – about 1% per year for the next five years.
- New growth should be based on measures such as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment and countywide projections.
- New development should pay for itself.
- Infrastructure should precede development.
- Infill should be supported on existing underutilized and vacant lots before expanding the City boundaries.
- Mixed-use development should be encouraged in infill areas.
- A vacant lot inventory should be conducted.
- Intelligent growth for Lompoc would be up, rather than out.

CONCEPTUAL INFILL AREAS

Infill development may be appropriate on vacant or underutilized parcels that contain or are located to City infrastructure and services. Mixed use development may be appropriate in existing vacant or underutilized commercial or residential areas, and can often serve as a “transitional” land use between more intense commercial areas and residential areas. Conceptual infill areas are shown as Area 1 on Figure 1. These infill areas are located along the H Street and Ocean Avenue corridors and may be appropriate locations for a mixed use zoning district. Infill development in these areas would efficiently utilize currently vacant and underutilized lands, reduce incremental demands on City utilities and services, reduce average vehicle trip lengths, and promote additional commercial demand.



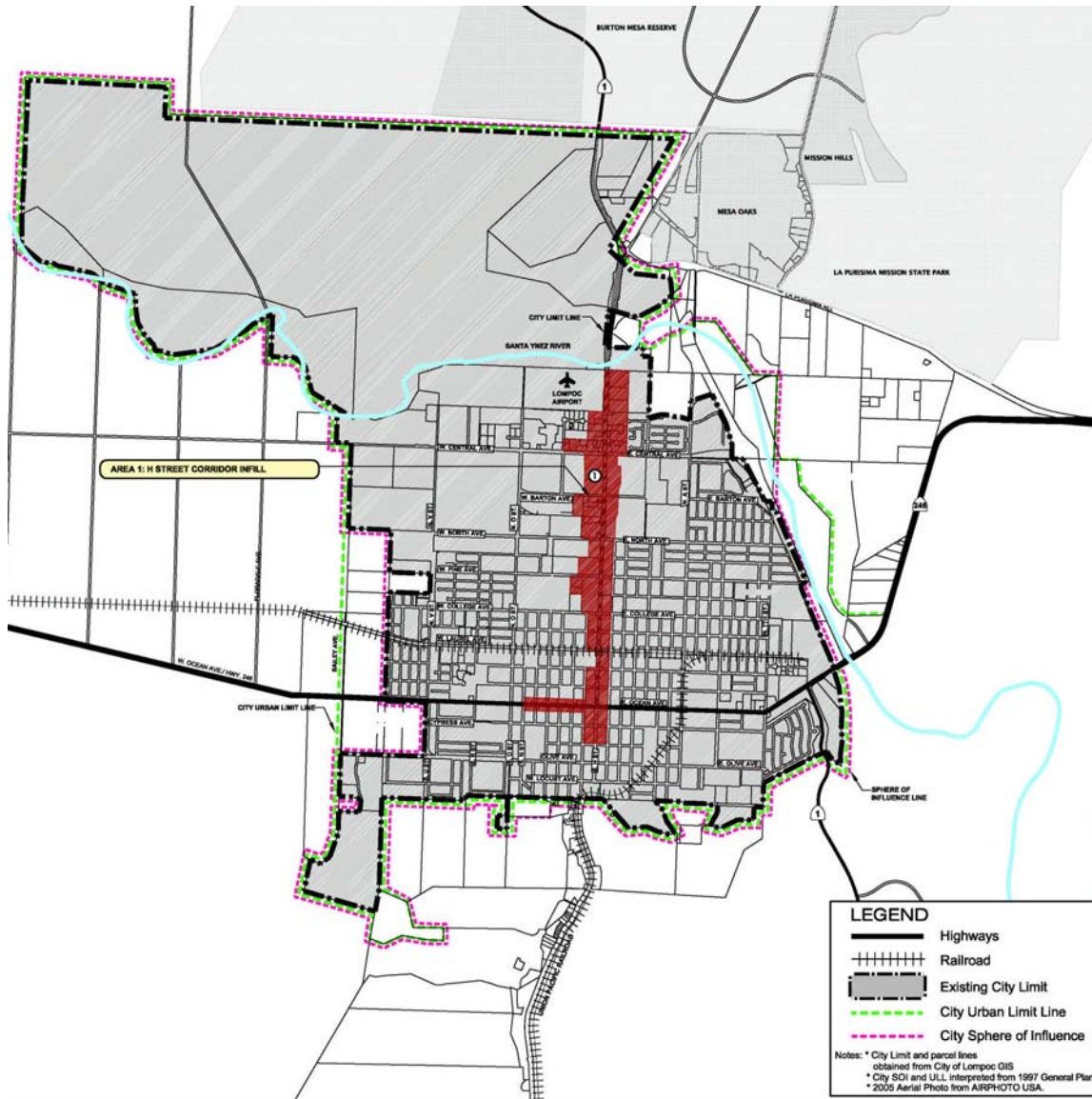


Figure 1: Conceptual Infill Locations – the incorporated portions of the City of Lompoc are shaded in grey. Potential areas for infill are colored red. Source: RRM Design Group, 2008.

CONCEPTUAL ANNEXATION AREAS

Lompoc has recently received several annexation inquiries for sites within and around the current City Sphere of Influence. In addition, City decision-makers have indicated preliminary support for considering annexation of areas within and around the Santa Ynez River and River Park. Conceptual annexation areas are shown on Figure 2. Each of these potential annexation areas is discussed below. Constraints and opportunities related to each area are preliminary identified.



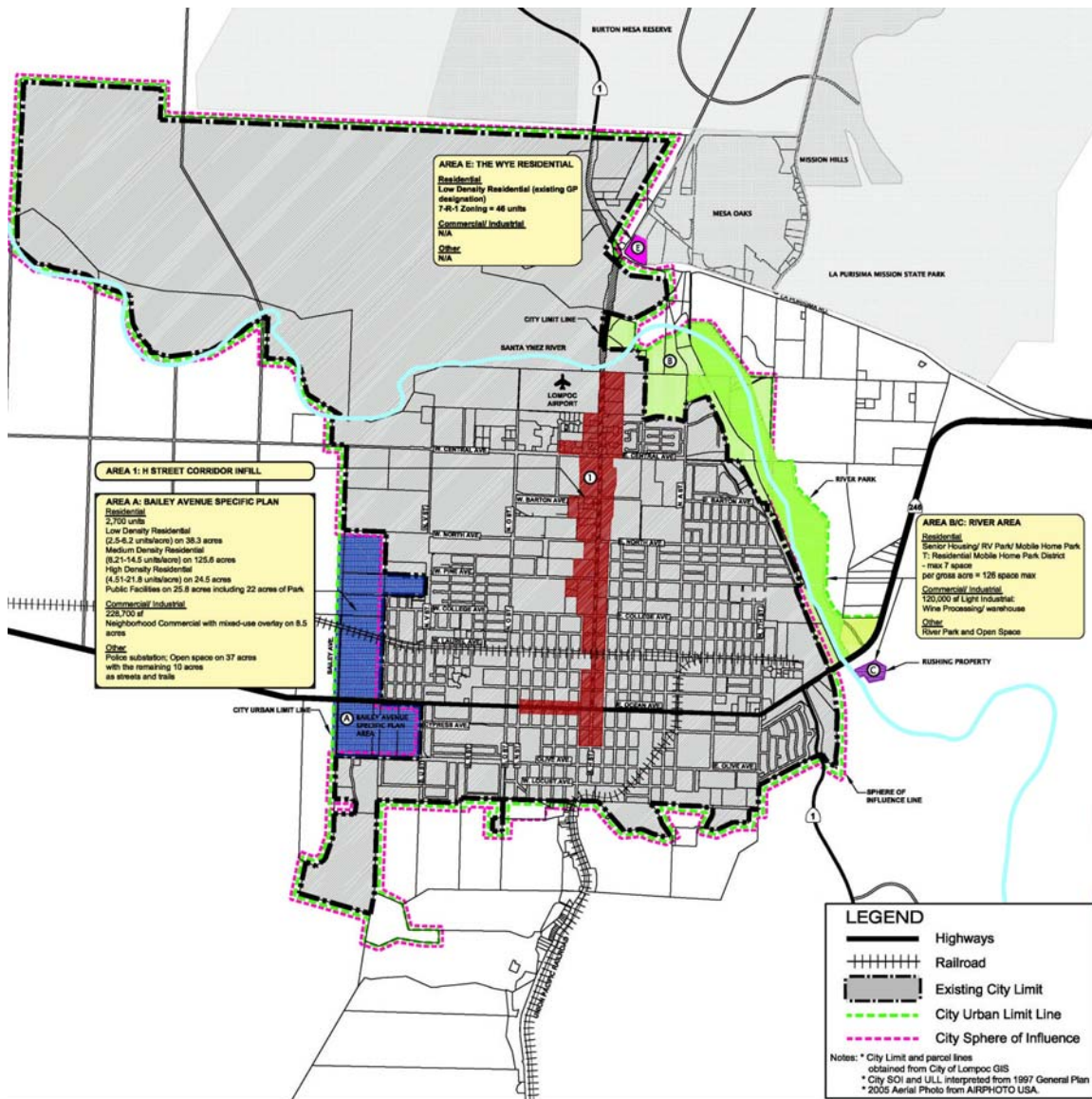


Figure 2: Conceptual Annexation Locations – the incorporated portions of the City of Lompoc are shaded in grey. Potential areas for annexation are colored. Source: RRM Design Group, 2008.

It should be noted that although an annexation inquiry was filed for the Plains Exploration and Production Company (PXP) site, located three miles north of the City, southwest of Harris Grade Road, this project is no longer active due to a negotiated agreement between the applicant and environmental groups to preserve the site as public open space. The agreement is currently undergoing consideration by the County. At this time, the reasonably foreseeable condition on the site is public open space.

Bailey Avenue Corridor Specific Plan Area

This is a 270-acre area located east of Bailey Avenue, north and south of Ocean Avenue, and contiguous to the existing City boundary. The site is predominantly vacant. It is currently in agricultural use, and is zoned for agricultural use by the County, but is designated by the City for



low density residential use. An application has been filed for a Specific Plan that would allow up to 2,719 residences, and 228,700 square feet of commercial uses, parks, and public uses. This project would require a General Plan amendment, a change to the SOI line, annexation, a zone change, and a Specific Plan.

Constraints associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Conversion of prime agricultural lands
- Potential contamination of soils from historic agricultural use
- Traffic impacts on currently constrained intersections
- Development would block scenic views to west and change aesthetic character of site
- Located at urban/rural interface
- Site bisected by railroad

Opportunities associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Logical growth pattern
- Agricultural buffer would provide hard urban edge and limit future conversion of agricultural lands to west
- Could help build critical mass of demand for old town and Ocean Avenue commercial services
- Large parcel of land facilitates large-scale planning effort
- Facilitates housing production in accordance with State mandates
- Prevents sub-optimal outcome of development within County

Miguelito Canyon

The Miguelito Canyon area is located immediately south of the City boundary, and features hilly, varied topography. There are no pending inquiries for annexation of this area.

Constraints associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Development may be visible from town
- Traffic through town would need to cross south side neighborhood
- Possible precedent setting/growth inducement effects
- Potential land use conflicts with the existing mining operation
- Exposure to fire hazards

Opportunities associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Logical growth pattern
- Could help build critical mass of demand for Old Town and Ocean Avenue commercial services
- Facilitates housing production in accordance with State mandates
- Prevents sub-optimal outcome of development within the County

East of Santa Ynez River

This area is located immediately east of the City boundary and contains the Santa Ynez River and River Park. Most of this land is either floodplain or park area. Annexation inquiries have



been filed for two parcels (a total of 18 acres) that flank the entrance to River Park and one parcel (10 acres) on Sweeney Road, south of State Route 246. Land uses preliminarily identified for these potential annexation areas include mobile home park, recreational vehicle park, or senior housing uses on the parcels flanking the entrance to River Park, and a wine processing warehouse on the Sweeney Road parcel.

Constraints associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Difficult/costly to extend infrastructure and provide services across the river.
- Conversion of prime agricultural lands
- Traffic impacts on currently constrained SR 246 intersections
- Proximity to sensitive biological resources associated with the Santa Ynez River
- Previous annexation requests denied by LAFCO due to presence of a natural barrier (the river) and precedent-setting effect

Opportunities associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Logical growth pattern
- Capture River Park within the City boundary
- Could help build critical mass of demand for Old Town and Ocean Avenue commercial services
- Facilitates housing production in accordance with State mandates

Wye Parcel

This is a 10-acre parcel located immediately north of the City boundary at the northeast corner of Harris Grade Road and Purisima Road. The land is currently vacant and designated by the City and the County for low density residential use. There is an annexation inquiry for 120,000 square feet of commercial use, although the prospective applicant has stated a willingness to consider development of a low density residential use on the site.

Constraints associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Traffic impacts on currently constrained intersections
- Access issues
- Development would alter aesthetic character of the site
- May divert commercial demand from Old Town district and other existing commercial areas

Opportunities associated with this potential annexation area include the following:

- Logical growth pattern
- Generation of tax revenues
- Prevents sub-optimal outcome of development within the County



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The following issues will be addressed in the Land Use Element of the 2030 General Plan.

- **Appropriate Areas for Infill Development**

Considerations for determining appropriate areas for infill development include the following: what areas are most appropriate to take advantage of compact building design, create walkable communities, and foster a strong sense of place; what areas are most appropriate for retention at lower development intensities or for preservation of open space, farmland, and environmental resources.

Areas appropriate for mixed use development will be determined. Appropriate areas may include vacant or underutilized commercial parcels within the City's core, where additional commercial and residential development is most likely to enhance and revitalize existing commercial districts, increase the base on City property taxes, and capitalize on existing community resources, such as infrastructure, services, and parks. However, these objectives must be balanced against potential land use conflicts with surrounding properties.

The City could consider prioritizing or otherwise encouraging certain types of development deemed to meet the City goals. This could include offering incentives for infill and/or mixed use development or prioritizing such development over annexations that affect prime farmland or other resources.

- **Appropriate Areas for Annexation**

Considerations for adjusting the Sphere of Influence and/or annexing land include the following: the current and planned uses for the area, such as agriculture and open space, the likelihood of substantial growth in the area, the City's ability to provide public services to the site, the presence of natural physical boundaries, the efficiency of future growth patterns, the effects of annexation on the tax base, City center, community identity, and neighborhood communities, and whether more suitable vacant space is available within the current SOI.

Annexation of additional land into the City would control development patterns on lands currently outside of the City boundaries, generate tax revenues, and establish forward-looking mechanisms to pay for necessary facility and service improvements for the City. However, annexations require the City to extend services to additional lands. In addition, development further from the City's center will increase vehicle trip lengths, with associated traffic congestion, air contaminant emissions and noise generation. It can also be a challenge to integrate annexation areas into the physical design "fabric" of the existing City. Additionally, annexation of rural areas may result in conversion of existing agricultural lands to urban use, and may create land use conflicts with adjacent agricultural and/or urban land uses.



The City could consider policies requiring certain characteristics of projects that would be suitable for annexation, such as: compatibility with adjacent City land uses, fiscal neutrality or benefit to the City, provision of open space, provision of affordable housing in accordance with State mandates, and/or other amenities.



REFERENCES

Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, Land Management Plan; Department of Fish and Game website: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/mgmtplans/bmer/>

Lompoc, History of; City of Lompoc website:
<http://www.cityoflompoc.com/government/history.htm>

Lompoc Planning Documents and Maps; City of Lompoc website:
http://www.cityoflompoc.com/departments/comdev/plan_docs_maps.htm

Santa Barbara County 2030: The Open Lands; County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development Department, Office of Long Range Planning website:
<http://www.countyofsb.org/plandev/comp/programs/Newsletters/openlands/default.asp>

Smart Growth in Ventura County; Local Government Commission website:
http://www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/presentations/index.html

Smart Growth, About; Smart Growth Online: <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/default.asp>

