BLUEPRINT

Regional Workshop

June 16, 2023 — Folsom Community Center

The 2025 Blueprint is the Sacramento region's strategy to guide cities and counties in building a connected region over a 20- to 30-year time horizon. This includes transportation options for residents, affordable housing for the region's growing population, and equitable investments that provide all community members access to a safe and healthy region. Originally envisioned in a regional planning effort in 2004, the Blueprint is updated every four years to be responsive to evolving demographic and economic conditions. The plan, currently in development, is expected to be adopted in 2025.

In creating the Blueprint, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) engages community members across its six county and 22 city jurisdictions in a variety of forums to gather input and feedback. As part of this process, SACOG held an in-person interactive regional workshop in June 2023 to bring together a wide spectrum of partners and community members, share information, and hear from attendees. The input received informs the plan and aids the SACOG Board of Directors in shaping the final 2025 Blueprint strategy.

The following report is an overview of the Blueprint Workshop and an analysis of attendee input.

SACOG

Blueprint Workshop Overview

SACOG hosted the Blueprint Workshop in Folsom, California, on June 16, 2023. Nearly 300 people attended, including many elected officials, public agency staff, and community members from across the six-county Sacramento region. The goals of the workshop included deepening participant understanding of how land use, housing, and transportation policies affect economic, environmental, and equitable outcomes in the region; highlighting the role of jurisdiction-level decisions in making big impacts for the region; and having participants meaningfully participate and contribute to the 2025 Blueprint.

To ensure a diversity of perspectives, each table had at least one elected official from the region, along with a mix of local jurisdiction or agency staff, representatives of community-based organizations, and members of the public. Several high school and college students currently involved in, or alumni of, SACOG's Youth Leadership Academy also attended the workshop.

The workshop opened with welcoming remarks from Folsom Mayor Rosario Rodriguez and Sacramento County Supervisor and SACOG Board Chair Patrick Kennedy. James Corless, executive director at SACOG, delivered an opening presentation on the state of the region, followed by Evan Schmidt, chief executive officer of Valley Vision, sharing results from a regional poll on the built environment.

The workshop included two interactive activities guided by a table facilitator. First, participants shared their future visions for the region. As part of the interactive portion, Kacey Lizon, SACOG's deputy executive director of planning and programs, provided more information on the 2025 Blueprint and projected demographic and economic changes in the region by 2050, and the land use and transportation planning strategies SACOG considers when developing the long-range regional plan. In the second activity, participants explored strategies for achieving their visions based on the key policy and planning levers. In discussing and identifying the strategies and actions participants were willing to take to get to a desired future, participants grappled with difficult questions around trade-offs and competing priorities. The workshop concluded with a review of next steps in the 2025 Blueprint process and the opportunity for participants to share their key takeaways from the Blueprint Workshop activities.

State of the Sacramento Region

To open the workshop, Folsom Mayor Rosario Rodriguez and Sacramento County Supervisor and SACOG Board Chair Patrick Kennedy greeted the attendees. After they kicked off the workshop, James Corless, executive director at SACOG, provided an overview of the current state of the Sacramento region and context for the workshop. Corless shared the history of SACOG's role in regional planning efforts over the past 20 years, and the progress the region has made on

implementing the goals that were developed two decades ago in the original Blueprint process. The honest answer: not all bad, but not all good. While the region has been growing, the evolution of our communities has not equally benefited everyone, and the questions we asked in 2004 are still relevant: What kind of future do we want? How can we become a region of choice?

Results from the 2023 Built Environment Poll

As part of developing the 2025 Blueprint, SACOG partnered with Valley Vision, a Sacramento-based nonprofit, to conduct a regional poll on residents' opinions on the built environment.

Evan Schmidt, chief executive officer of Valley Vision, shared results from the Built Environment Poll and what those results mean for planning if the goal is to be a region of choice. The Built Environment Poll is a comprehensive view of the public's priorities with respect to their built environment, particularly transportation, housing, telework, perceptions of safety, and public health. It is demographically representative of the region, encompassing Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties. Schmidt outlined what many poll respondents love and find unique about the region, including the open spaces, walkability, and outdoor activities. Schmidt also highlighted respondents' concerns about the region's climate future, economic and racial inequities, reliance on vehicles, and housing affordability and what that means for

future access, prosperity, and quality of life. In closing, she emphasized that decisions made in the next five years will shape our communities for the next 50.

Workshop Activity: Crafting Headlines of the Future

After participants had a chance to think about the past and present state of the region, Corless asked the audience to share what they envision for the future of the region. He instructed participants to generate news headlines that they would like to see regarding the region in the year 2050, particularly pertaining to the built environment and quality of life. Participants discussed their desired headlines at their tables and as a group selected an overall favorite to work on in the next activity. Participants were invited to submit their headlines through a live polling app, Mentimeter. Results of this activity are detailed in the Key Takeaways section.

Building a Path to 2050

To help participants begin thinking about how their envisioned future headlines could be achieved, Lizon provided background on the 2025 Blueprint and its role in shaping policies and strategies for land use and transportation patterns in the built environment over the next 25 years.

The 2025 Blueprint outlines recommendations for

land use and transportation policies and funding strategies to meet the projected changes and needs of the region in 2050. Lizon reviewed the foundational assumptions for the region in 2050—what is expected to change, and the community members being planned for. She shared anticipated demographic changes in the region, including estimates for how many new people will live here in 2050 and changes to the average household composition. Along with projected population growth, Lizon shared the number of additional homes needed to meet the projected growth, and how many new jobs are expected.

Lizon acknowledged there are many strategies to accommodate growth. And in any planning scenario, land use drives transportation demand—where people live and want to go influences the transportation modes. She reviewed the five strategies that have the biggest impact on the built environment and quality of life:

- Housing growth—where housing development will occur (i.e., in existing built communities, in new growth areas, some mix of both)
- Housing choices—what type of housing will be built (e.g., townhomes, apartments, single-family homes, condos, etc.)
- Road and highway investment—where to focus transportation funding (e.g., on new roads/road widening, on existing road maintenance, potholes)
- Transit investment—what kind of transit service to prioritize (e.g., larger service areas, smaller service areas, higher or lower frequency of service)
- Active transportation investment—where to prioritize safe walking and biking infrastructure (i.e., in existing built communities, in new growth areas, some mix of both)

For each of these strategies, there are trade-offs and quality-of-life considerations. For example, the kind of housing product types available in the region impacts housing affordability. Smaller single-family homes, and attached housing products (for example, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, condos, apartments), typically have lower price points. The locations of housing growth impacts where people need to travel to and from on a daily basis, as well as the available transportation mode choices. For example, if we prioritize developing in new growth areas, it minimizes changes to existing neighborhoods. It also increases the cost of maintaining the highway system and the new roads that will have to be built. If we prioritize developing housing in existing communities, it increases the amount of new housing located near jobs and services. It also requires upfront costs from the local government to rehabilitate the roads, sewers, and water systems to accommodate that new housing.

Lizon emphasized that all parts of the built environment combined affect people's ability to access opportunities (i.e., jobs, services, transportation options), and the importance of considering all those elements in the Blueprint to ensure we are creating a future that works for everyone in the region.

Workshop Activity: Strategies for 2050

After providing an overview of the five key strategies in land use and transportation planning, Lizon invited participants to engage with these strategies and choose which ones would help achieve their chosen headline for the future.

Each table received a set of six cards—one for

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each strategy Lizon highlighted plus an option for participants to design their own strategy. Participants were asked to choose the strategies they saw as the best choices to get to their chosen headline. Each card had an "A" side and a "B" side; each side featured an extreme of each strategy as detailed in Figure 4. For example, for transit investment, one side offered "Transit Focused on a Larger Service Area" while the other side had "Transit Focused on Daily Activities." To help inform participants' decisions, each side included details on the quality-of-life impacts of choosing that approach. Each table group was asked to pick four strategies to get to their headline, including providing any new ideas on the Innovation Card. Table groups had time to discuss the options, and they recorded their answers at their tables.

The categories were simplified, and Lizon acknowledged that there are many more choices; but by focusing on the extremes of each category, participants were able to concentrate on what was the most important to them.

In a second round of the activity, participants were asked to plan while centering the perspective and needs of fictional community members. Participants were given five community members to choose from; community members included those living in the urban core, those living in rural areas, those involved in agriculture, retirees, and suburban families. The purpose was to ask participants to consider how planning choices might impact the needs of others in the community.

Participants were tasked with reviewing the strategies they originally selected and discussing any changes they would make to reach their headline based on the needs of the community members they were planning for.

Next Steps for the 2025 Blueprint Process

To wrap up the workshop, Placerville Mayor and SACOG Board Vice Chair Michael Saragosa took the stage to share the insights he gained from the workshop. In addition, Corless took the stage to identify the next steps for Blueprint development, as there are still two years before the plan is finalized. During that time, he explained that SACOG will develop a report from this workshop to be shared with the SACOG Board of Directors, continue outreach opportunities throughout the region, and work closely with local staff to analyze the input gathered. Attendees also shared their biggest takeaways from the workshop on Mentimeter.

The following provides additional detail on feedback shared and SACOG's takeaways from each workshop activity.

The Region We Love

In sharing what they love about the region, attendees had a variety of answers, from the natural environment, to food, community, and entertainment. See Figure 1 for a word cloud of what participants shared in Mentimeter. Responses highlight how the Sacramento region remains special and unique in the wide range of what makes it a desirable place to live. Preserving and enriching these desirable elements now and into the future is a key consideration in the 2025 Blueprint.
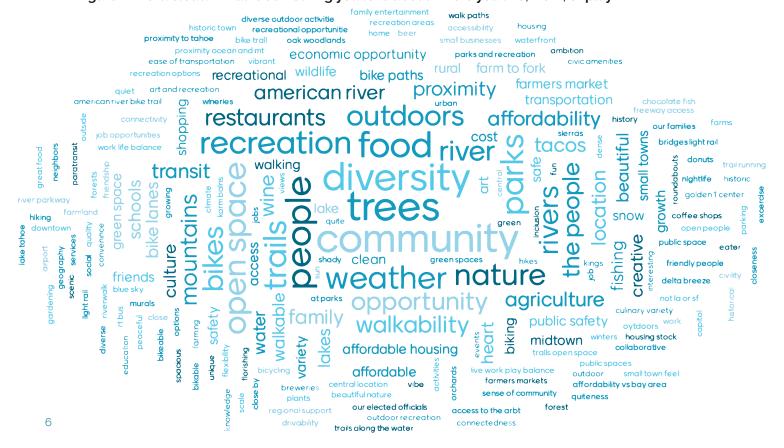
Visions for the Future

The headlines activity was an opportunity to warm up attendees, to get them thinking about the future, and to gain an understanding of the types of things attendees want to see as outcomes and what is important to them when thinking about the future of the region. These headlines give SACOG a glimpse into the values that attendees hold for the future of the region. Identified themes across the headlines included:

- Housing: Inclusivity, affordability, and availability
- Livability and Quality of Life: Desirability, recreation, and community
- Active Transportation: Mode options, trail systems, and walkability
- Transit: Frequency, quality, and availability
- Economy: Opportunity, sustainability, and jobs
- Environment: Agriculture, climate mitigation, and conservation
- Congestion/Maintenance: Traffic relief and road conditions
- Homelessness: Solutions and reduction
- Equity: Reduced economic disparities and equitable system access

A few examples of headlines crafted by attendees included:

- "Sacramento region tops state in homeownership."
- "Sacramento region closes the gap on

Figure 1. Word cloud: What is something you love about where you live, work, or play?

economic racial disparities on housing and inclusive workforce."
- "Sacramento is a model for infill development and preservation of open space and agriculture."
- "Sacramento celebrated as leading region for quality of life and economic opportunity."
- "The most connected region in the U.S."
- "Sacramento is a place for you, your family, and community to grow and flourish!"
- "Sacramento region achieves clean air for all."
- "Homeownership thrives as homelessness hits an all-time low."
- "Sacramento reduces traffic and congestion across the region!"
- "Sacramento has the best mixed use walkable community."
- "60% of residents use transit on a regular basis."
- "Job market continues to thrive and unemployment hits new record low."

Of the Mentimeter headline topics, 25 percent of headlines related to quality of life and livability for future residents. Here is a closer look at some examples of this headline theme:

- "Best region to live, work, and play."
- "Sacramento region nation's model for farm to fork and community health."
- "The Sacramento region ranks highest in the state for resident satisfaction and livability."
- "Sacramento celebrated as a leading region for quality of life."

In addition to livability, other top headline topics included housing (17 percent) and active transportation (15 percent). Here are some examples of headlines in these two themes.

Housing related headlines:

- "Sacramento region achieves safe and quality housing for all."
- "Sacramento region sets model for inclusive and affordable housing initiatives."
- "Sacramento is a model for infill development and preservation of open space and agriculture."
- "The Sac region provides housing choices for everyone with community services and amenities."

Active transportation related headlines:

- "Cars are no longer needed since bikes, walking, and transit have now become the norm."
- "Sacramento region has the best mixed use walkable community."
- "El Dorado Trail celebrates 20th anniversary with connection to Lake Tahoe."
- "Traffic no more! Sacramento region leads the nation in mode shift by creating accessible, safe, and equitable active transportation that supports vibrant neighborhoods and economic growth."

Other themes included transit, environment, and equity. The topics with the fewest submissions included congestion/maintenance (3 percent), economy (4 percent), and homelessness (5 percent). There were also a number of headlines that did not fall into a theme and were added to the miscellaneous category. Some of these include:

- "A region where cultural education is around the corner."
- "Sacramento Kings win 15th Championship since 2024."
- "Sacramento region chosen as top Study Mission destination."
- "Philanthropy and volunteerism is best in California."

A complete comparison of headline themes is shown in Figures 2 and 3 below.

Table groups were also asked to create a headline coupled with a vision of the future they could agree on that would come into play later in the workshop agenda. The topics of the headlines that table groups chose to work on differed slightly as compared to what was submitted by individuals.

Of note, transit replaces active transportation as the third most chosen theme, and while the quality of life/livability theme remains the first choice and housing the second choice, both became even more popular for the table headlines. None of the table groups' headlines mentioned congestion or maintenance. All headlines shared by the table groups fit into these themes, removing the need for a miscellaneous category.

Preferred Strategies to Get to 2050

Following Lizon's presentation of the five different planning strategies that have the biggest impact on the built environment and quality of life, participants twere asked to become planners. The purpose of this activity was to help participants understand that when making policy decisions for a community, each choice has both implications

and benefits, and there are generally many considerations planners must account for when making strategic decisions.

Participants worked together at their tables to choose strategies they would implement to reach their agreed-on future headline. Figure 4 outlines the five high-level strategies and options participants were given to choose from in the workshop activity.

Each table group had a large activity sheet to record their answers and headlines, five cards that had each planning strategy listed, plus an innovation card that participants could fill in with their own strategy as needed. As shown in Figure 4, each card included impacts of each strategy. Participants could choose only four cards to reach their headline, which required them to make some challenging choices for the best way to achieve their chosen headline.

In reality, land use and transportation policies include many strategies and considerations. The strategies SACOG staff chose for the activity represent the primary policy levers that can create different future outcomes. The choices were intentionally constrained, to encourage discussion of trade-offs and to simulate the challenging choices that policymakers must make. Providing an "A" side and a "B" side to choose from, as shown in Figure 4, made participants focus in on top priorities. Gaining a better understanding of participants' top priorities helps to shape the high-level strategies for the 2025 Blueprint while keeping in mind the need for context-specific and tailored approaches in different parts of the region.

Figure 2. A comparison of headline themes submitted by individual participants into Mentimeter.

Quality of Life/Livability	Housing	Active Transportation	Misc.	Transit	Environment	Equity	Homelessness	Economy	Congestion/ Maintenance	Total
58	39	34	26	20	16	12	11	10	7	233
25%	17%	15%	11%	9%	7%	5%	5%	4%	3%	

Figure 3: A comparison of headline themes that table groups chose to work on together.

Quality of Life/Livability	Housing	Transit	Active Transportation	Equity	Economy	Homelessness	Environment	Congestion/ Maintenance	Total
18	12	8	6	5	2	2	1	0	54
33%	22%	15%	11%	9%	4%	4%	2%	0%	

Visions for the Future: Round One

Figure 4. An overview of the cards with strategy choices presented to participants.

Card 1: Housing Growth	1A: Prioritize Development in New Growth Areas 1B: Prioritize Housing Growth in the Existing Footprint
Card 2: Housing Choices	2A: Single-Family Homes on Larger Lots 2B: Attached and Single-Family Homes on Smaller Lots
Card 3: Road and Highway Investment	3A: New Roads and Widened Roadways 3B: Maintenance First and Limited Roadway Expansion
Card 4: Transit Investment	4A: Transit Focused on a Larger Service Area 4B: Transit Focused on Daily Activities
Card 5: Active Transportation Investment	5A: Active Transportation to Serve Growing Communities 5B: Reinvest in Active Transportation Networks in Existing Communities
Card 6: Innovation Card	6A/6B: Create your own.

In the first round, table groups were focused on the strategies that they would implement in order to get to their chosen headline. The top strategies chosen in this round were active transportation investment, housing choices, and housing growth across the board.

Figure 5 shows the comparison of the strategies chosen by table groups for each headline category. The headline themes are on the left, and the strategy categories are on the top. The "A and B" table below represents the number of "A" side or "B" side cards chosen.

Figure 5. A comparison of the strategies selected by table groups that they agreed would help them reached their chosen headline.

Green to orange scale is only intended to illustrate higher and lower concentrations of responses

Round One Headline Themes	1 Housing Growth	2 Housing Choices	3 Roads	4 Transit	5 Active Transp.	6 Innovation	Totals	
Congestion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Active Transp.	5	6	3	4	6	1	25	13%
Transit	7	8	4	5	7	2	33	17%
Economy	0	2	2	1	2	1	8	4%
Environment	1	0	0	1	1	1	4	2%
Equity	4	4	3	2	5	3	21	11%
Housing	7	8	6	5	9	4	39	20%
Quality of Life	12	11	8	9	11	7	58	30%
Homelessness	2	1	2	2	1	0	8	4%
Totals	38	40	28	29	42	19	196	
	19%	20%	14%	15%	21%	10%		
Card Side A	3	1	4	5	4	13	30	20%
Card Side B	26	27	15	17	24	13	122	80%

Visions for the Future: Round Two

In round two, participants were asked to consider the perspective and needs of fictional community members in their strategy planning. Participants were given five community members to choose from; community members included those living in the urban core, those living in rural areas, those involved in agriculture, retirees, and suburban families. The purpose was to consider how planning choices might impact the needs of others in the community. Not all tables reported back on strategies they chose for round two, so there is a decrease in the total number of selections reported.

Of the strategies that were reported, there was a slight increase in the number of "A" strategy cards that were chosen, and a change in the top strategies, which were: housing growth, transit investment, and housing choices.

Figure 6. A comparison of the strategies selected by table groups that they agreed would help different community members in reaching the chosen headline.

Green to orange scale is only intended to illustrate higher and lower concentrations of responses

Round Two Headline Themes	1 Housing Growth	2 Housing Choices	3 Roads	4 Transit	5 Active Transp.	6 Innovation	Totals	
Congestion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Active Transportation	6	4	3	6	1	1	21	12%
Transit	8	5	4	7	2	2	28	16%
Economy	0	2	2	1	2	1	8	5%
Environment	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	2%
Equity	4	4	0	4	4	3	19	11%
Housing	10	7	5	9	2	1	34	20%
Quality of Life	12	8	9	10	5	8	52	30%
Homelessness	2	2	1	0	1	1	7	4%
Totals	43	32	25	38	17	18	173	
	25%	18%	14%	22%	10%	10%		
Card Side A	6	2	7	5	6	11	37	25%
Card Side B	21	29	14	14	20	11	109	75%

Conversations at the Tables—Facilitators' Perspective

As part of the data collection process, SACOG met with table facilitators after the workshop to gain a better understanding of tabletop conversations and participant experience and gather information that was not captured in Mentimeter or easily recorded on the activity sheets. Overall, facilitators felt that attendees walked away with a better understanding of the challenges that come with regional planning and how different growth strategies can influence quality of life for community members. A synthesis of facilitator observations and comments is provided below.

• Being together in person was energizing and exciting for participants. The workshop was a good forum for jurisdictions to learn about each other, and to share barriers and opportunities to connect into the Blueprint development process.

• For many participants, the Built Environment Poll was new information and highlighted the stark differences in the region, especially around housing burden and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

• Many of the participants were familiar with the issues and topics, especially the local agency planning staff, but not everyone. Facilitators observed that the activities successfully demonstrated how difficult it can be to make planning decisions, but not everyone had the same familiarity with the technical aspects of planning. This may have impacted people's

comfort to fully engage and feel like their lived experience was also valid and valued in the discussion.

- There was a lot of learning and sharing between participants—for example, at one table, planning staff and social services staff had a good discussion on why there is not more affordable housing. Another table group focused on supporting a community member to better understand the planning process.
- A few participants wanted more discussion and information on economic development in the region. Additionally, a few participants did not like the activity at all.
- Other discussion topics included the importance of being future focused and thinking about multiple generations. For some, there was a desire to revitalize existing communities (rather than build out), but also concerns about gentrification.
- Facilitators shared there seemed to be some disconnect at some tables between the chosen strategies and what people envision for the region—for example, at one table there was a desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also the opinion that for the community to be successful, we need to expand highways.
- Some facilitators shared that at their tables, participants were quick to come to consensus on their approach to policies and agreed on the policies that would get them there. While other tables had differing views on how to get to the vision for 2050. Almost all facilitators noted robust discussion of trade-offs and the unique considerations needed to inform what future implementation of any strategy would look like across different community types. A key area of focus was on how the different policies intersect and affect each other.
- There was honest discussion about aspects of the strategies that people are worried about and have concerns with, and the challenges at the community level to implement approaches that people may be unfamiliar with or concerned about.

Attendee Takeaways

Feedback from attendees in Mentimeter reflected on the challenges of making trade-offs in planning, the need for collaboration, and recognition that planning is hard work and there are many competing needs for the region to accommodate choices for everyone. Overall, takeaways were optimistic about being able to meet the needs of our diverse community if we work together.

- "Compromise, compromise, compromise! There are certain realities that need to be addressed when achieving many of the goals that we would like to meet."
- "Even with the diverse communities, we share many of the same challenges."
- "While there are many different perspectives in this large region, we can all work together to achieve common goals."
- "This blueprint needs to provide for radical change to meet the housing needs of the region."
- "Have to take a comprehensive look at our region. It's easy to be focused on just the place you live but that doesn't address all the various needs for our communities. Lots of tough decisions! Good luck."

IV. Overall Themes

Over the last 20 years there has been a mix of good and bad trends. There is a lot to love about the Sacramento region, but it is still not working for everyone. The region's quality of life is celebrated by the people who live here, and participants see strategies in housing growth, transit investment, active transportation, and housing choices as primary tactics to reach their desired futures.

Participant feedback indicated an overall desire for sustainable growth, including a mix of housing options, improved transportation, and preservation of natural resources. There was an understanding among participants who emphasized the region is diverse, with many different needs for communities within a single region, and that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the current and future unmet needs. In wrapping up the workshop, participants shared the many trade-offs and tough decisions needed to make meaningful changes and raised up the importance of collaboration and inclusion for successful regional planning.