



P.O. BOX 102
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VALLEY LAND ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

Our mission is to educate and build alliances to protect our uniquely productive California Central Valley Farmland

WWW.VALLEYLANDALLIANCE.ORG

SPRING/SUMMER 2025



SNEAK PEEK OF WHAT'S INSIDE:

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

VLA IS WATCHING

CHANGE THE ZONING

INTERVIEW WITH SALLY MAGNESON

MERCED STATION (HSR/ACE/SAN JOAQUINS)

President's message

"SPRING IS A TIME OF PLANS AND PROJECTS"
- LEO TOLSTOY

Planting new seeds and watching them grow is what VLA is up to. We hope you will be inspired to help us plant these seeds and walk the path with us. By joining us and Strongtowns strongtowns.org you will have the opportunity to make this a better world for not only others but yourself.

I see a lot of anger around me but know anger fuels us but doesn't serve us. May this spring and summer bring you peace and happiness. Perhaps you will find ways to get involved. For me volunteering allows me to find myself by losing myself in the service of others. Below are some groups and ways we are partnering and reaching out.

- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability on Regional Housing Needs Assessments
- Merced Multi-Issue Coalition on specific neighborhood needs
- Merced City Planning Commission, City Councils, and committees such as Merced City Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) addresses safety, building cities for people, not cars in mind
- League of Women Voters supporting the need to protect Library solvency
- UC Merced to update the CA140 Audio Tour content by exploring ways students and staff may help us educate Merced as a destination
- Strong Towns building our Strongtown Merced local conversation group drawing from their wealth of resources, reaching out to the public and leaders in our Central Valley communities to build support

Our most recent effort to achieve our goals is partnering with Strong Towns. Please consider joining by going to strongtowns.org. The goal is to replace America's post-WWII pattern of zoning for sprawl and return to the way cities were developed earlier, designed to be sustainable communities with diverse, mixed-use, that are financially strong and resilient, making the cities communities that encourage people to mingle, visit each other in parks and cafes and at museums, walk, ride bikes. if we go back to zoning as we used to, cities would not have so much cost to maintain the infrastructure including utilities, roads, safety needs, police, and fire protection.

President's message cont...

VLA has continued to promote our valuable agriculture-based community richness, encouraging people to find Merced County as a destination through our website, involvement with other groups and our policymakers, and providing free maps with information of events and an audio tour. In the past, we have distributed FREE to the public at least 40,000 colorful fun maps showing Merced County's wealth in Ag, Art, and Nature. Our audio tour we are now updating. Visit our website for more information.

Valley Land Alliance is an equal opportunity collaborator.

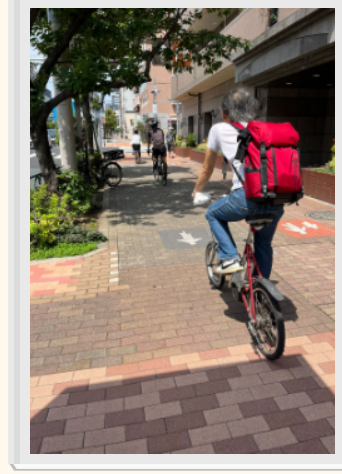
VLA is watching

Livingston City is in the process of updating their 1999 General Plan. We were instrumental in stopping a general plan update in 2012. At that time the anticipated population was to increase from 14,000 to 104,000 by 2025. Now in 2025 Livingston city population is below 15,000. And where is the water? Seems to be only on "paper." We have made comments for the present drafting of a general plan update. Some of the best farmland surrounds Livingston. We all need water which is a finite resource.

Merced County is beginning the updating of their 2030 General Plan adopted in 2013. VLA will be at the table.

VLA continues to participate in the stakeholders group for Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGMA), a state-mandated management of our Merced Subbasin. We continue to educate and participate in discussions on how to manage our overdrawn groundwater which has caused the sinking of the ground (subsidence) and the need to fallow ground and conserve our precious finite resource, water.

The Delta Tunnel controversy: Goodwin Simon Strategic Research firm research by John Whaley and Yule Kim survey shows support for the Delta Tunnel Erodes Significantly In the poll's Final Vote—after hearing messaging on both sides—58 percent of voters oppose the Tunnel.



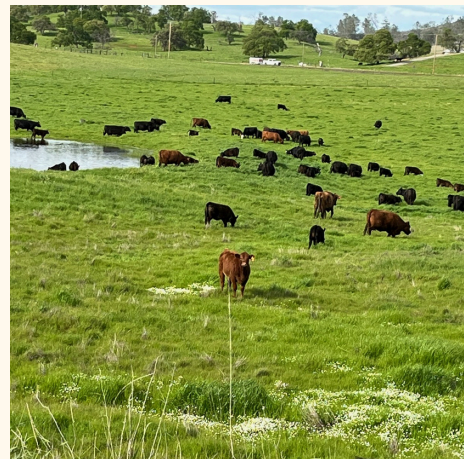
"Change the Zoning"

"Jonathan Whitaker wrote an article in the Jan. 3, 2025 Merced County Times highlighting Merced City Townhall meetings. He shared a comment by Curtis, a south Merced resident concerned about the way the city is growing.

"Urban sprawl is the enemy of this city, and is the enemy of almost every single one of the city's goals..The city has a goal to remain solvent, but as we sprawl out and have lower revenues per acre (and these are acres the city has to provide services for, rebuilding roads, maintaining infrastructure, hiring policemen and firemen) that goal is threatened.."

Curtis is reported as saying that the most affordable and actionable way to address by changing the zoning code. This change allows people to live, work and play without owning a car. We agree.

Plan for people, build communities



Regenerative Farm Burroughs Family Farm hosted their annual Regenerative Tree Nut Field Day we helped sponsor.



Interview with Sally Magneson

Interview of VLA long time member and widow of charter member, Charlie Magneson

Sally Magneson, devoted wife and mother of seven, recalling her activism, moving to the farm on the Merced River in Merced County after marrying Charlie.

What makes you happy?

Answer: Being in the fresh air and nature makes me feel good. Looking out my window of our land which goes down to the river, remembering all the trees I planted, some now 70 years old! I like to keep track of my kids, grandkids and great grandkids. I also like to support efforts to protect land and water. I helped form the League of Women Voters, volunteered in leading scout troops and the local parent teacher organization.

What have you done on the farm to protect land and water?

Answer: Put an agriculture easement on the farm to stop sprawl. This fertile soil will never be paved over.

Also with the help of Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS, we planted a hedgerow for the wildlife of many trees, plants that are native and drought tolerant. For more than 10 years with the help of our son, Scott and his wife, Pam and volunteers, we annually educated about 100 Palo Alto HighSchool students and many Livingston High School students.

What would you like people to remember you by?

Answer: I just firmly believe all people should have equal chance for success in life. Preserving the beauty of nature and respecting diversity of all kinds is how I want to be remembered.



Picture obtained from <http://www.arivercalledhome.com>

Sally would like to share a recent book her daughter and daughter in law published: <https://www.arivercalledhome.com/>

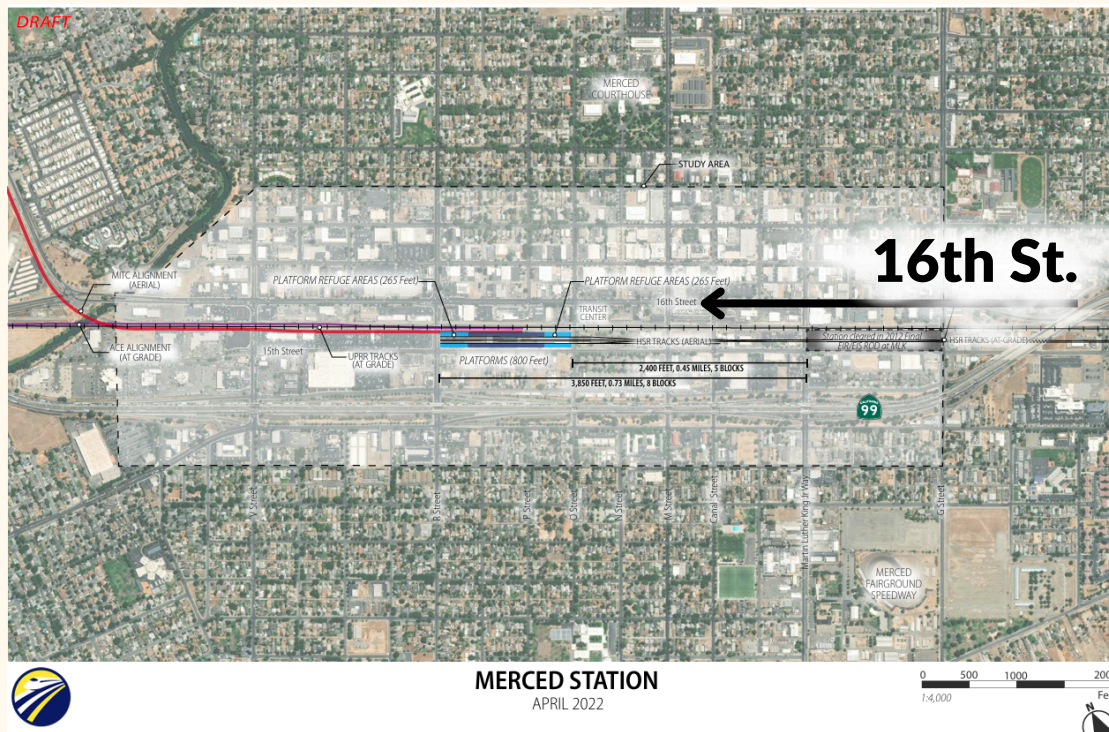
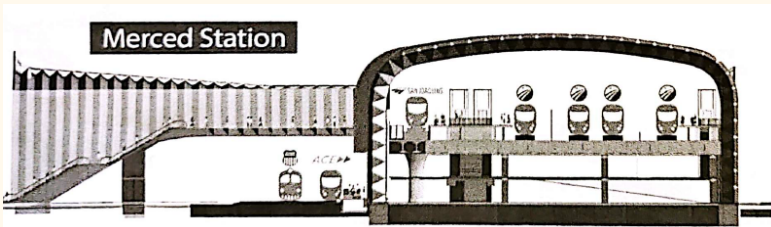
Merced Station (HSR/ACE/San Joaquins)

Tracking Passenger Rail Projects & Plans in the Merced Area
Report by Peggy HSU, Boys & Girls Club Merced County
April 10, 2025 revised



The Merced High-Speed Rail station will serve as a key intermodal hub, connecting California's high-speed rail system with ACE and San Joaquins services to improve regional and statewide rail connectivity.

- Location: The station is planned to be situated between 15th and 16th Streets, bordered by O and R Streets in downtown Merced.
- A two-level structure:
 - Ground Level: Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Rail and Union Pacific Railroad.
 - Elevated Platform: Serves High-Speed Rail and San Joaquins



Located adjacent to State Route (SR) 99 and the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line on SR 59 – (Martin Luther King Jr. Way) – and the SR 99 interchange. The California High-Speed Rail Authority is studying an alternative station location between O and R Streets in downtown Merced along 16th Street.

For more information, visit
<https://hsr.ca.gov/high-speed-rail-in-california/station-communities/merced/>

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for your support!

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VLA is grateful for the support from the John & Nancy Cassidy Family Foundation, an advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and others.