

County of Solano
675 Texas Street
Fairfield, CA 94533
Attn: Board of Supervisors
Bill Emlen, County Administrator
James Bezek, Director of Resource Management

October 23, 2024

Re: July 2024 agreement to work together, and moving East Solano Plan forward

Dear Board of Supervisors, Mr. Emlen, Mr. Bezek,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us over the past three months to discuss the best way to process the East Solano Plan, whether on a separate track or as part of a larger general plan amendment.

Solano County and California are dealing with several urgent challenges: creating jobs here rather than sending them to Texas, producing affordable clean energy, and building new homes. If we want to ensure that future generations have the same opportunities as those who grew up during the optimistic decades when California still built things, we must solve these issues **now**. As outlined in our October 21st letter, the East Solano Plan can address these challenges and help Solano County close its structural \$50 million deficit.

But to do that, we all need to work together to show that Solano County can build—and not decades in the future, but right now. Every year we delay, we increase the county’s budget deficit and drive jobs, tax revenue, friends and family to other states.

When we [reached the agreement](#) to pause the ballot measure and go through the county’s standard planning process, we were encouraged to see Chair Mashburn agree with this sentiment: *“I want to acknowledge that many Solano residents are excited about ... a California that builds again ... [California Forever] is also right that we cannot solve our jobs, housing, and energy challenges if every project takes a decade or more to break ground.”*

In his statement, Chair Mashburn asked us to use the Environmental Impact Report to prove how we’ll strengthen Travis AFB, provide water, solve transportation challenges, and pay for it all.

We recognize that last year, we made mistakes when introducing the project. But since reaching the agreement to work together this July, we have collaborated with you in good faith, and we have honored our commitments.

Unfortunately, the county’s actions have not shown the same motivation and good faith.

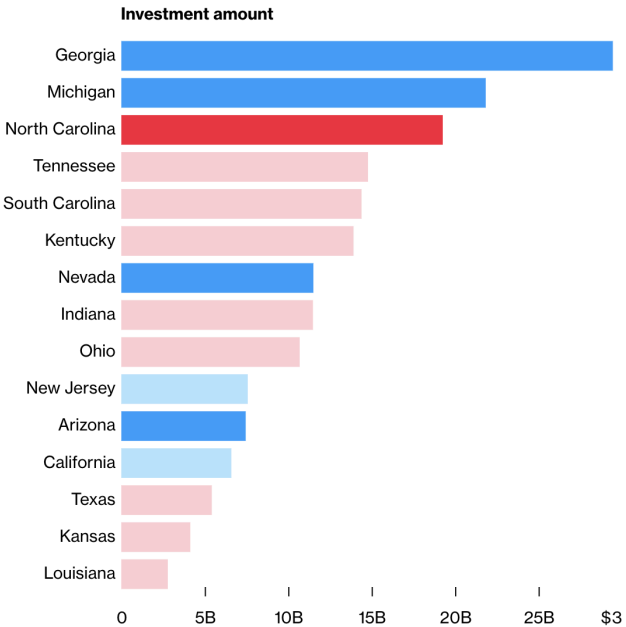
First, in early September, Gabriel Metcalf, our Head of Planning, submitted a proposed timeline to county staff, outlining how we could collaborate to complete the entitlements in time to put the plan on the November 2026 ballot. We began planning, environmental, engineering, and community outreach work in 2023. By starting early and significantly accelerating efforts since July 2024, our extended team of dozens of designers, planners, and engineers is on track to shortly complete all the technical studies required for the Environmental Impact Report. We are doing our part of the work, and honoring our commitments. Yet to date, we have not received any specific feedback on this timeline, other than that it is “ambitious.”

Second, on August 8, 2024, in its first action after July’s agreement, the county’s Airport Land Use Commission rushed through an amendment to the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The amendment was done in secret, without any due process or evidence that it was necessary, and despite a statement by Travis AFB, whose representative directly told the Airport Land Use Commission: *“Bottom line, Travis AFB effectively executes our mission within the current airspace configuration and does not require any alterations to this [East Solano] plan.”*

We had hoped that was an isolated incident. Unfortunately, yesterday’s adoption of the Agricultural Mitigation Ordinance followed the same path: no transparency, due process, or public input.

These actions make it hard to believe that the planning process is being carried out in good faith. These types of decisions are precisely why California has been losing jobs, forfeiting tax revenue, and failing to build both energy infrastructure and new homes.

Further, this attitude towards economic development costs California taxpayers tens of billions of dollars. So far, under President Biden, \$206 billion of investments in clean technology manufacturing have been announced¹. Conservatively, based on our share of the overall US population, California taxpayers funded, through their federal taxes, about 12% of that amount, roughly \$25 billion. Yet we have only received about \$7 billion of those funds. **Our refusal to permit projects has subsidized other states by \$18 billion.**



¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2024-opinion-biden-ira-sends-green-energy-investment-republican-districts/>

Similarly, despite being home to important semiconductor players like Intel, Micron, Applied Materials, and Lam Research, California has received a tiny fraction of the \$52 billion CHIPS Act funding. Meanwhile, Arizona, Ohio, and New York are receiving tens of billions of federal subsidies to build semiconductor factories.

Finally, Texas has surpassed California in solar and wind energy generation, capturing tens of billions in federal subsidies², and most Inflation Reduction Act climate projects are going into southern states³.

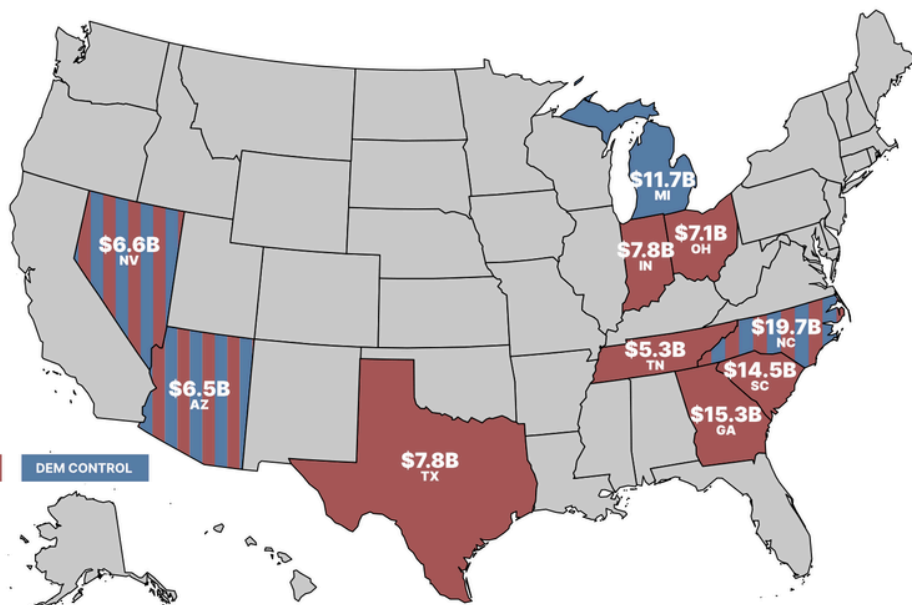
Top 10 states for spending on Inflation Reduction Act climate projects

Red states, many of them represented by Congress members who voted against the IRA, are the biggest beneficiaries.

DIVIDED CONTROL
OF GOVERNOR + LEGISLATURE

GOP CONTROL

DEM CONTROL



Source: Clean Economy Works:
Inflation Reduction Act Two-Year
Analysis, Aug. 14, 2024, E2
Credit: Lee Pedinoff / Floodlight

The facts speak for themselves: California is losing good-paying jobs to other states, our housing crisis is rapidly deteriorating, and we are behind our goals on the cost and availability of clean energy.

We see these problems mirrored in Solano County. On May 16th, we [announced 12 fast-growing employers](#) eager to come to Solano County if the East Solano Plan was approved. This represents the greatest interest in job creation in the county for decades. Based on our review of public information, in the 14 months since the East Solano Plan was introduced in August 2023, these are not merely the main employers who wanted to come – **they are the only ones.**

² <https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/archive/2024/07/texas-solar-wind-renewable-energy-climate-change/679281/>

³ <https://thecurrentga.org/2024/08/20/gop-gets-85-of-the-benefit-of-climate-law-some-still-hate-it/>

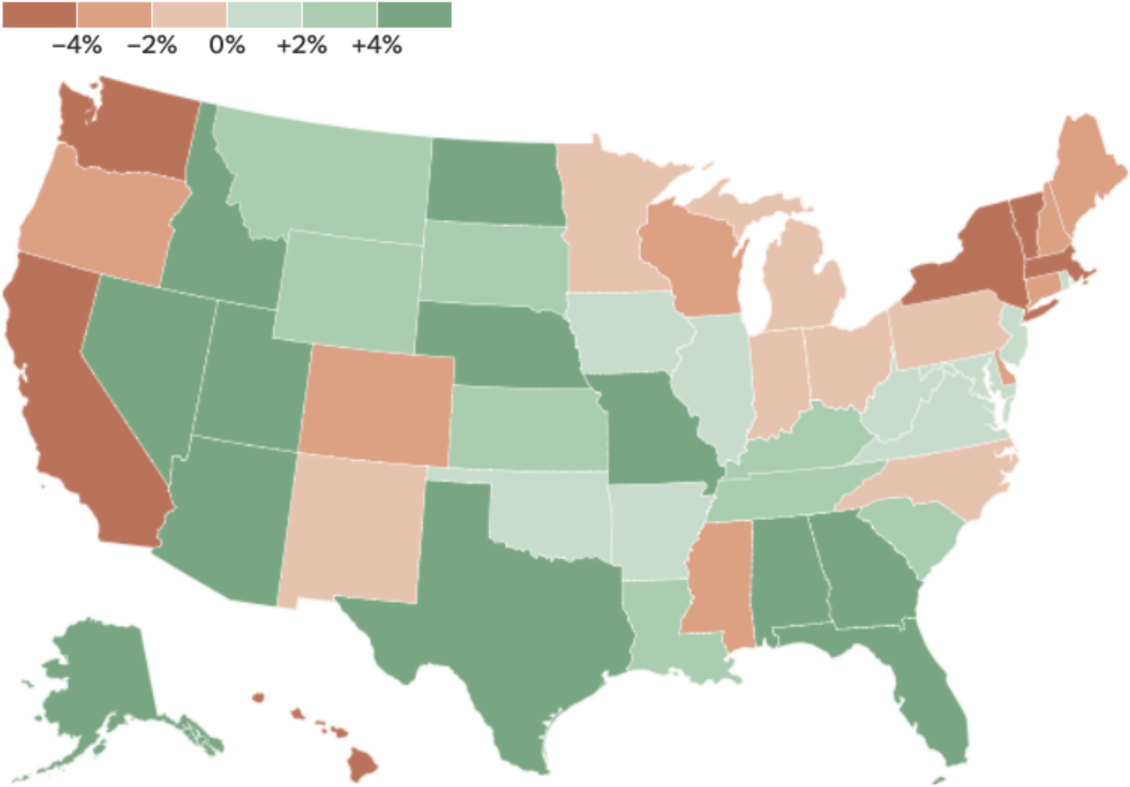
To reiterate: to our knowledge, except for the employers we recruited, Solano County has not benefited from any jobs created during the largest American manufacturing renaissance in half a century.

We successfully convinced companies to establish operations in East Solano, and all we asked the county in return was to let us build. We are puzzled by the county's obvious lack of motivation to move with the urgency required to actually bring any of these employers to Solano County.

Where manufacturing jobs have shifted since the pandemic

Between January 2020 and March 2024, the West Coast and Northeast have lost factory employment while many states in the Southeast have gained.

Percent change in jobs since Jan. 2020



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Labor Department • By The New York Times

It has not always been like that.

The Golden Gate Bridge started construction in 1933 and opened in 1937.

To celebrate its opening, in 1935, we decided to host the Golden Gate International Exposition on a 400-acre man-made island in the middle of the Bay. Treasure Island was completed in 1937.

In September 1966, Boeing purchased 780 acres to build a production plant for its new jet. The first production workers arrived in January 1967, and in September 1968, the first jumbo jet, 747-100, rolled out of the factory.



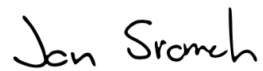
There are six years between 2023 and 2028. If we can build a bridge spanning the Golden Gate, a 400-acre island in the middle of the Bay, and a brand new jet that revolutionizes aviation, all in under four years, then surely we can plan a new community in less than six.

We are open to working with any partners who recognize the urgency of our call to action, that our county and state are not in a “business as usual” scenario, and that by the standards of the people who built the America we live in today, it should be entirely reasonable to get local approvals done by 2026, and shovels in the ground in 2028.

If you believe the best way to process this project is via a separate application, we are happy to work with you that way. If you believe the best way is to amend the General Plan, and we can

get that done by 2026, we are also happy to pursue that route. That would leave two years for final permitting before breaking ground in 2028.

Let's act with the urgency our situation demands and show California and America that Solano County is a place of opportunity, a place that reignites our spirit of innovation and optimism, a place that can build. We look forward to working with everyone who wants to ensure that our best days are ahead and that every generation is better off than their parents.



Jan Sramek
Founder & CEO



Michael Fortney
Head of Partnerships