

Committee adopts restrictive plan as guideline to Watsonville's growth

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Growth in the Pajaro Valley should be where urban services can be provided and not scattered all over the countryside, the Watsonville General Plan Steering Committee said in a policy statement yesterday.

The committee adopted a "very tight" urban limit line that "still allows for some expansion," city Planning Director Bud Carney said after the meeting.

The urban limit line, beyond which growth won't be allowed, follows closely what's already developed. The limit line would allow the Pajaro Valley's population to grow from its present 46,000 to 62,000 by 2005, a growth rate of about 2 percent a year.

The steering committee, a seven-member group with members from the City Council and three city commissions, is nearing completion of its review of the General Plan that will carry Watsonville through 2005. The plan will go to the Planning Commission for further review and the City Council for a final decision.

"What we're trying to do is eliminate the expansion of existing urban 'islands' or the creation of new islands," Carney said. Allowing such islands of development, Carney said, prevents preservation of agricultural land, a stated goal of the committee.

Even when it's approved by the

City Council, the urban limit line is not necessarily permanent, because future councils could change it.

The urban limit line extends into the developed areas of the Pajaro Valley that aren't in the city. What kind of development goes on outside the city is up to the county Board of Supervisors.

The committee voted yesterday

to include the Interlaken District east of the city, most of which is already developed, in the urban limit line.

The inclusion will make it easier for that area to annex to the city. City Manager John Radin, who attended yesterday's meeting, said there have been a number of inquiries in recent years about the possibility of that area being annexed at some future date.