Central California's Affordable Option

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More than 770,000 people call San Joaquin County home. That number is growing as Bay Area housing costs are increasingly out of reach for workers — and as remote working makes locations in the Central Valley more appealing. San Francisco is a 90-minute drive to the west from Stockton, the county seat, and the Altamont Commuter Express provides rail service to the Bay Area. But with quality of life emerging as a top site consideration for companies and employees alike, hours of commuting each day gets old quickly.

San Joaquin County has many locations where quality of life comes first. Housing can be found in every price bracket; infrastructure assets abound, including three Interstates, a deepwater inland port and airport; and the county is home to the University of the Pacific, San Joaquin Delta College and Teachers College of San Joaquin.

"The work from home movement has allowed more skilled employees from the Silicon Valley and San Francisco to work farther away from the office," notes Susan Dell'Osso, president of the River Islands Development in Lathrop, a master planned community. "Many of the new homes offered at River Islands have four, five and even six bedrooms. At any time, there is attainable housing available to a Bay Area workforce, at about half the price of housing in the core Bay Area."

Following are San Joaquin County location options that many companies already have chosen as the best locations for their operations.

Manteca

Population: 88,000

Infrastructure: Manteca is located between Interstate 5 and Highway 99, which connect via Highway 120 for excellent circulation for trucking transportation. Manteca is close to intermodal transportation facilities including rail, port, air, and trucking with major distribution centers.

Quality of Life: Manteca is known as the Family City with 10,000 entitled lots in the development pipeline for housing that runs 40% to 50% cheaper than Bay Area housing. It has two hospitals, parks, community centers, recreation complexes and entertainment venues.

Recent Project: The Great Wolf Lodge, a 500-room resort and indoor waterpark, chose Manteca because of its proximity to Northern California. The $150 million investment is in the Family Entertainment Zone (FEZ), which made the development process easy for Great Wolf. The FEZ has room for additional entertainment and recreation attractions.

Value Proposition: "Manteca is at the heart of the Central Valley and is not only a draw for Transportation Demand Logistics, but also a new tourist magnet," says Randy Saffold, senior management analyst with the City of Manteca. "With the recent opening of the Great Wolf Lodge and with existing attractions like Big League Dreams, Bass Pro Shops, and the planned Family Entertainment Zone Development, Manteca is expecting an additional 500,000 tourists per year."

Lathrop

Population: 28,700

Infrastructure: Lathrop offers immediate access to Interstate 5, Interstate I-205 and State Route Highway 120 as the connector to State Route Highway 99. Infrastructure includes maritime bulk-cargo services through the Port of Stockton and container transportation through the Port of Oakland, two railroad intermodal facilities operated by Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railways and the Stockton Metropolitan Airport for freight and limited passenger services. Passenger rail includes the Altamont Commuter Express (ACE).

Quality of Life: Lathrop offers a small town atmosphere with access to multiple recreational activities, including fishing, boating, water skiing, 25 parks (including a skate park and dog park), and family entertainment activities offered by the City's Parks and Recreation Department throughout the year.

Recent Project: Lathrop's biggest economic development win of 2021 was locating the Tesla Megafactory to a shuttered retail distribution facility. Tesla will be producing 40 GWh, utility-scale energy storage systems (Megapacks) per year at this plant. Tesla relocated its electric vehicle (EV) "mold casting" operation to Lathrop in 2014. Since 2014, Tesla has expanded