



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Public hearing to consider the adoption of the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan and related Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2019069117). The following applications have been filed by the Fresno City Council and pertain to approximately 7,077 acres in the Development Area-1 West Development Area:

1. RECOMMEND APPROVAL (to the City Council), of the findings set forth in the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR SCH No. 2019069117) (see Exhibits I, J, and K).
 - a. RECOMMEND ADOPTION (to the City Council) of an appropriate Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) as required by Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15097; and,
 - b. RECOMMEND ADOPTION (to the City Council) of findings based upon testimony presented by staff that there are significant, unavoidable, environmental impacts which have not been mitigated to a level below significant. Therefore, the City Council should adopt the findings of fact and consider an appropriate statement of overriding considerations.
2. RECOMMEND APPROVAL (to the City Council) of Plan Amendment Application P22-01351 which proposes to repeal the West Area Community Plan, pertaining to approximately 12,341 acres located in the Development Area-1 West Development Area, and the portion of the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan that overlaps the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan Boundary, approximately 455 acres (see Exhibit B).
3. RECOMMEND APPROVAL (to the City Council) of Plan Amendment Application P22-01352 which proposes to adopt the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan and accompanying Planned Land Use Map (see Exhibits C and F.1).
4. RECOMMEND APPROVAL (to the City Council) of Plan Amendment Application P22-01353 which proposes to update the Planned Land Use Map (Figure LU-1) of the Fresno General Plan to incorporate the land use changes proposed in the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan (see Exhibit D).
5. RECOMMEND APPROVAL (to the City Council) of Rezone Application P22-01353 which proposes to rezone approximately 1,172 acres of property within the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan area to be consistent with the planned land uses proposed in the Plan (see Exhibit E).
6. RECOMMEND APPROVAL (to the City Council) of staff-recommended Land Use Change Requests for a follow-up amendment to the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan to include land use change requests and an updated dual land use map (Exhibit N).

Sponsors: Planning and Development Department

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Exhibit A - Vicinity Map, 2. Exhibit B - Maps of the West Area Community Plan Area & Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan Area (P22-01351), 3. Exhibit C - Proposed Planned Land Use Map (P22-01352), 4. Exhibit D - Proposed Changes to General Plan Planned Land Use Map (P22-01353), 5. Exhibit E - Proposed Changes to the Zoning Map (P22-01353), 6. Exhibit F.1 - WANSP Planning Commission Draft [July 2022], 7. Exhibit F.2 - WANSP Revised Public Draft [April 2022], 8. Exhibit F.3 - WANSP Public Draft [April 2021], 9. Exhibit G - Comprehensive Redline Summary (Appendix C), 10. Exhibit H - Comment Summary Matrix & Comment Letters, 11. Exhibit I - Draft Program EIR, 12. Exhibit J - Final Environmental Impact Report, 13. Exhibit K - EIR - Findings of Fact & Statement of Overriding Considerations, 14. Exhibit L - Fresno Municipal Code Findings, 15. Exhibit M - Housing

Element Findings, 16. Exhibit N - Land Use Change Requests + Late Requests [updated 07/14/2022], 17. Exhibit O - Fresno Bee Notice [07-08-22], 18. Supplemental Exhibit P - Comment Letters Submitted to Planning Commission

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
7/20/2022	1	Planning Commission	APPROVED AS AMENDED	Pass

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

July 20, 2022

FROM: SOPHIA PAGOULATOS, Planning Manager
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SUBJECT

Public hearing to consider the adoption of the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan and related Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2019069117). The following applications have been filed by the Fresno City Council and pertain to approximately 7,077 acres in the Development Area-1 West Development Area:

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which proposes to update the Planned Land Use Map (Figure LU-1) of the Fresno General Plan to incorporate the land use changes proposed in the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan (see Exhibit D).

5. **RECOMMEND APPROVAL** (to the City Council) of Rezone Application P22-01353 which proposes to rezone approximately 1,172 acres of property within the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan area to be consistent with the planned land uses proposed in the Plan (see Exhibit E).
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed project is the adoption of the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan, which entails the repeal of the West Area Community Plan and a portion of the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan, amendment of the Fresno General Plan, and the rezoning of approximately 1,172 acres in the Plan Area. This report describes the planning process as well as the key elements of the Plan. The Planning Commission last acted on this item in May of 2019 when it recommended initiation of the Draft Land Use Map, Guiding Principles, corresponding amendment of the Fresno General Plan, and repeal or amendment of the West Area Community Plan and Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan.

BACKGROUND

Origins: The West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan (the Plan) addresses the anticipation of community-led refinement of the Fresno General Plan with emphasis on implementation and context-driven development. It builds upon key components in the Urban Form Element of the Fresno General Plan: a high-frequency bus route along Shaw Avenue supported by a transit-oriented town center, arrangement of complementing land uses and transportation along major corridors, access to greenspace, and the creation of complete neighborhoods.

Specific Plans: The California Government Code Section 65450 defines Specific Plans and sets out the regulations for their use. Specific Plans systematically implement the Fresno General Plan for all or part of the area under its scope in one of three ways: 1) by acting as statements of planning policy that refine the Fresno General Plan policies applicable to a defined area; 2) by directly regulating land use, or 3) by bringing together detailed policies and regulations into a focused development scheme. The Plan most closely represents 1 and 2, since it includes a new planning policy for the area, and it proposes to regulate land use by amending the planned land use of property in the area and correspondingly rezoning said property for consistency.

Budget: The initial budget for the Plan was \$399,726, which included an environmental impact report and infrastructure financing plan. Two contract amendments were approved during the planning process: the first to pay for additional environmental review for a total of \$29,880, bringing the total contract amount to approximately \$429,606 and the second to extend the contract timeline.

Consultant Team: The consultant for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was De Novo Planning Group (De Novo). De Novo conducted the necessary evaluation pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to determine the potential environmental impacts of the Plan. The

consultant team is listed on the acknowledgements page in the Plan.

Process: The planning process was kicked off in April 2018 at the first meeting of the Steering Committee and was focused throughout on community input and engagement. This is described in Chapter 2 of the Plan and is summarized below.

Steering Committee. An 11-member steering committee was appointed by Councilmembers representing Districts 1, 2, and 3. The Steering Committee was comprised of stakeholders, residents, and developers in the West Area. The Steering Committee met 17 times during the planning process. All meetings were noticed and open to the public.

Community Involvement. Community input was essential to the development of the Plan. A total of 17 steering committee meetings, 12 community meetings, three surveys, and 13 (other) committee presentations were conducted during the planning process. The purpose of these outreach efforts was to a) inform members of the community about the Plan process and b) inform the Steering Committee and the project team about the ideas and concerns of the residents and stakeholders. There were two distinct phases of community involvement defined by the release of the Public Review Draft of the Plan.

- Phase 1: Included community involvement that led up to and formed the development of the Public Review Draft. This included workshops and surveys that revealed important information on existing conditions, assets, and needs in the West Area. This input included the community supported vision for future development in the West Area.
 - o 2 Community Conversations
 - o 1 Coffee with the Clergy
 - o 1 Open House
 - o 1 EIR Scoping meeting
 - o 9 Steering Committee meetings

- Phase 2: Included community involvement that followed the release of the Public Review Draft. This included workshops to share key elements of the Plan and to solicit feedback from residents and stakeholders. This input would lead to refinement of the Draft Specific Plan. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic overlapped with this phase, therefore engagement occurred through written communication and online meetings.
 - o 6 topic-based Community Conversations held in partnership with the Central Southeast Area Specific Plan
 - o 10 committee meetings announcing the Public Review Draft to various bodies such as the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission, Fresno Youth Commission, District Review Committees, etc.
 - o 1 Decoding Density webinar
 - o 3 District Review Committee meetings to receive formal recommendations
 - o 8 Steering Committee meetings

In addition to meetings and workshops, three surveys were conducted over the planning process. The surveys covered existing conditions and vision, goal prioritization, and idea generations for the Catalytic Corridors.

Outreach. Outreach was conducted in multiple ways, including direct mailers, emails, phone calls,

radio announcements, and social media posts.

Seven mailers were sent to residents and property owners within the Plan Area between 2018 and 2022, containing information about public workshops and key dates in the planning process.

Timeline:

- 2018
 - o Community Conversations workshops
 - o Release of the draft land use map and guiding principles
- 2021
 - o Topic-based Community Conversations
 - Sent to all Plan Area residents and property owners
 - o Notification of land use changes
 - Sent to residents and property owners whose land use will change under the Plan
- 2022
 - o Announcement of Planning Commission and City Council hearing dates
 - o Notification of land use changes - reminder
 - Sent to residents and property owners whose land use will change under the Plan
 - o Land use change requests
 - Sent to residents and property owners whose land use was requested (via the public comment period) to deviate from the Plan

All Steering Committee meetings were noticed in accordance with the Brown Act. Most of the meetings pre-pandemic were held at either Glacier Point Middle School or Central High East Campus for their central locations within the Plan Area, while those held after 2020 were hosted through Zoom, an online meeting platform.

A stakeholder list was created for outreach via phone and email. Workshop attendees, agency partners, and other interested individuals were added to the list and received both emails and phone calls throughout the Plan process.

Social media was used to share updates and announcements throughout the planning process via the City of Fresno Facebook and Twitter accounts. One radio announcement was made on Punjabi Radio USA to share information about the release of the Draft Specific Plan and the topic-based Community Conversations series.

Plan documents were featured on a special webpage created for the project (www.fresno.gov/westareaplan <<http://www.fresno.gov/westareaplan>>) and hard copies were placed in the Central Branch Fresno Library and the Teague Branch Library in the Plan Area.

A project liaison was dedicated to answer questions about the Plan and communication materials were routinely provided in English, Spanish, Punjabi, and Hmong.

Plan Features:

Plan Area. The geographic area covered by the Plan is approximately 7,077 acres, or roughly 11 square miles, in the West Development Area defined in the Fresno General Plan and is a

triangular shape generally bounded by Highway 99 to the east, Garfield Avenue to the west, and Clinton Avenue to the south. It includes both land in the current Fresno City Limits (approximately seven square miles) and the land currently in Fresno County that is considered within the Sphere of Influence (SOI) of the Fresno General Plan (Figure LU-1) (approximately four-square miles).

Relationship to Other Plans.

The Fresno General Plan was adopted on December 18, 2014, and set a forward-looking course for the city focusing on infill development, Complete Neighborhoods, and multimodal transportation to achieve fiscally sustainable and environmentally responsible growth. The Plan builds upon and refines the Fresno General Plan with area-specific goals and policies. It also contains a proposed land use map which contemplates land use changes on approximately 33 percent of the Plan Area. Thus, the adoption of the Plan will require an amendment to the Fresno General Plan Land Use Map to maintain consistency (see Exhibit D).

The Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan, which applies to about five percent of the West Area, was adopted on January 6, 1998, and was prepared to address problems, issues, and opportunities of the Highway City neighborhood. One of the guiding principles for the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan encouraged development of neighborhoods characterized by a diverse but compatible arrangement of residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses to be supported by existing single-family residential areas. The Plan will replace the overlapping part of Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan but will carry forward applicable area-specific policies.

The West Area Community Plan was adopted on February 1, 2002, as “Appendix W” of the 2025 Fresno General Plan and covers a larger area than this Specific Plan, encompassing its boundaries plus the area generally between Grantland Avenue, Clinton Avenue, and Belmont Avenue. The core goals of the Community Plan were to develop the West Area as a planned community with a complete range of services, facilities, and public infrastructure development, and to minimize land use conflicts between agriculture and urban uses. Although the Plan will repeal the Community Plan, it updates and incorporates still-relevant policies.

Guiding Principles. The 20 Guiding Principles of the Plan were created by the Steering Committee (see page 42 of the Plan) and are summarized below. These principles reflect the key needs that were identified through community input: improved transportation access across Highway 99; safe and complete multimodal infrastructure; development of local amenities to meet daily needs; more housing variety; additional parks and trails; post-secondary educational opportunities; and development in harmony with agricultural uses.

Land Use Concept. After exploring various land use concepts as well as potential intensity of change, a transect concept that supported moderate change, including lower density throughout the Plan Area with focused density and commercial along key corridors, was selected to establish the urban form in the Plan Area. The key corridors were identified as Catalytic Corridors and include portions of: Shaw Avenue, Ashlan Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, Shields Avenue, Clinton Avenue, and Brawley Avenue (see Map 3-1 in the Plan).

Land Use. The proposed land use map is a result of combining public input from community meetings and surveys and the selected land use concept described above. Land use changes are proposed on approximately 2,330 acres of land in the 7,077-acre Plan Area. In general, areas near the outer edge of the Plan Area were designated with lower density residential to facilitate the transition from urban to agricultural uses. This coincided with an overall lowering of residential

density throughout the Plan Area, however more intense land uses, such as commercial, mixed-use, and higher density residential, were retained or re-located along the Catalytic Corridors.

Regional Park. Through the land use concept selection process, Steering Committee members requested that a regional park be planned for the Plan Area. The Steering Committee voted for three potential locations for a flagship regional park to be studied in the EIR (shown on Map 4-2 in the Plan).

- Option A: on undeveloped land in the northernmost portion of the Plan Area at the southeast corner of Herndon and Garfield Avenues.
- Option B: on farmland in the southerly portion of the Plan Area at the southwest corner of Shields and Bryan Avenues.
- Option C: on undeveloped land that incorporates the northwest corner of Shaw Avenue and Veterans Boulevard to the Bryan Avenue alignment, incorporating the future Class 1 trail along the south side of the Herndon Canal and continuing on the north side of the canal to the undeveloped land south of the Island Waterpark (resulting in a “barbell” shape).

From a list of 13 criteria (provided below), Option C scored the highest. This site is approximately 74 acres in size, and a portion is already planned for a Community Park. This site would be connected to the extended FAX 15 transit service along Shaw Avenue and would support the planned Class 1 trail along the Herndon Canal. It is also located in an area that is currently lacking park space and would be a supportive amenity to the Mixed-Use land use designations planned along Shaw Avenue.

Because this is proposed to be a Regional Park, rather than designating the Park through the WANSP, the Plan puts forward the highest scoring option, Option C, as a preferred location, but commits to holding citywide community input regarding its ultimate location and what desired features and amenities will be provided within the park.

Regional Park Options Criteria Scoring

Principle/Criteria	Option A	Option B	Option C
Create parks that are within existing and planned neighborhoods that are easily accessed by community members using pedestrian and bicycle pathways, transit services, or motor vehicles, consistent with the City of Fresno’s Parks Master Plan.	1	2	2
Provide for the location of a flagship Regional Park in the Plan Area that has components of the Plan Area’s agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation or trees, and the creation of public art that exhibits the Plan Area’s contribution to the agricultural industry.	2	2	2
Park Size Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park that is 40 acres minimum.	1	1	2
Available Land Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park in an area that is currently available for development.	2	2	1
Population Center Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park in a location that would be within ½-mile of the highest number of residents within the Plan Area.	1	1	2

Recreational Amenities Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park that can accommodate the majority of the following recreation activities: baseball, basketball, fishing (fresh water), softball, swimming, volleyball, and walking for exercise.	2	2	2
Community Feedback Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park in a location that is not within a ¼-mile of an existing or future park.	2	2	1
Community Feedback Criteria 2: Provide a Regional Park in a location that is within a ½-mile of any of the desired park locations established during the Stakeholder Workshop or Council District Community Workshops.	0	1	0
Park Accessibility Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park in a location that is within ½-mile of an existing Fresno Area Express bus stop.	0	0	2
Park Accessibility Criteria 2: Provide a Regional Park in a location that currently has adequate bicycle, pedestrian, and roadway facilities in the immediate area.	1	1	2
Environmental Justice Criteria 1: Provide a Regional Park in a Census Tract that has a CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Percentile at or above 90%.	0	0	0
Environmental Justice Criteria 2: Provide a Regional Park in a Census Tract that has a CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Pollution Burden Percentile at or above 70%.	2	0	2
Environmental Justice Criteria 3: Provide a Regional Park in a Census Tract that has a CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Population Characteristics Percentile at or above 70%.	0	0	0
Total	14	14	18

Implementation. Chapter 6 of the Plan includes tools for implementation. There is one Goal for this Chapter: “Pursue measures that implement the Goals of the Specific Plan.” It is accompanied by three implementing policies. Also included in Chapter 6 are Summary Tables that list every Goal and Policy in the Plan with suggested measurement criteria to help community members, planners, and decision makers measure progress over time. It is anticipated that full implementation of the Plan will occur over many years, but that progress will be measured annually.

Public Comment on the Plan

April 2021 Public Draft. The first public draft of the Plan was released on April 30, 2021, for a 90-day public comment period that was extended to 120 days, closing on September 1, 2021. During this time there were two Steering Committee meetings, seven community workshops, and three committee presentations. Shortly preceding the release of the Plan there was also one Steering Committee meeting and four committee presentations that shared an overview of the Plan.

In addition to comments provided during the above-mentioned meetings, staff also received formal comment submissions, primarily through email or letter. Thirty-one comment submissions were received, some technically being submitted prior to and after the public comment period, but each considered as submitted during the comment period. Additionally, one comment letter was received after the Committee was able to provide formal review and was therefore not brought before the Committee.

Staff reviewed each submission, summarized the discrete comments, and provided responses to

each comment. These comments and responses are recorded in the Comment Summary Matrix (see Exhibit H). The comments were categorized as follows:

- Category 1: Comments pertaining to the narrative, maps, and/or aesthetics of the Plan (24 comments)
- Category 2: Comments pertaining to the Goals & Policies of the Plan (52 comments)
- Category 3: Comments pertaining to the Land Use Map - (19 comments)
- Category 4: All other comments - (60 comments)

Sixty-nine of the 76 comments from Categories 1 and 2 led to changes to the Plan (with input from the Steering Committee), while comments in Category 3 (“Land Use Change Requests”) were considered individually by the Steering Committee for consideration to be added to a Plan Amendment that would be initiated following the adoption of the Plan.

April 2022 Revised Public Draft. The Steering Committee considered all plan comments for Categories 1 and 2 at its February 3, 2022 and March 7, 2022 meetings and voted on revisions to the Public Draft. The approved revisions were incorporated into the Revised Public Draft, which was released on April 25, 2022. There was also a minor modification made in response to comments received on the Draft EIR by the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, which resulted in replacing the phrase “flood-control/drainage facilities” with “rain garden” in Policy LUH 5.1.

July 2022 Planning Commission Draft. The Revised Public Draft was released on April 25, 2022 and was presented to the Project Review Committees for Districts 1, 2, and 3. The District 3 Project Review Committee suggested to modify Policy LUH 1.4 (related to a future Shaw Avenue Small Area Plan) to incorporate the remainder of the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan to ensure the area is planned for in a holistic manner. The District 3 Project Review Committee deferred making a recommendation to District 1, which met at a later date and concurred with the suggestion voting to revise the Policy. This revision was incorporated in the Planning Commission Draft.

The Planning Commission Draft also contains two updates made by staff. One pertains to the Herndon Canal Class 1 trail to designate which sides of the canal the trail is to be built on, as it is not currently designated in any known planning documents. The second change was to require a baseline of community engagement whenever Plan policies are proposed to be substantially modified, which would ensure an opportunity for community members to provide input.

The Planning Commission Draft was released on July 7, 2022.

Comprehensive Redline Summary. All changes made to the Public Draft, the Revised Public Draft, and the Planning Commission Draft are recorded in the Comprehensive Redline Summary document, which is shared as Appendix C to the Plan (see Exhibit G).

Fresno General Plan Consistency

The Government Code requires consistency between a Fresno General Plan and a Specific Plan. Since the Plan contains proposed land uses that are different than those on the Fresno General Plan Land Use Map (Figure LU-1) for approximately 33 percent of the Plan Area, a Fresno General Plan Amendment is proposed to ensure land use consistency between both plans. In

terms of policy, the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan is a refinement of the Fresno General Plan that includes goals and policies that reflect the needs and desires of West Area residents and stakeholders. These goals and policies are found to be consistent with those of the Fresno General Plan. Consistency with key Elements is discussed below.

Economic Development. This Element focuses on a balanced economic strategy for the city. The Plan can be found to be consistent with, and help implement, the following Objectives:

- *Objective ED-1:* Support economic development by maintaining a strong working relationship with the business community and improving the business climate for current and future businesses.
- *Objective ED-2:* Support local business start-ups and encourage innovation by improving access to resources and capital and help overcome obstacles hampering economic development.
- *Objective ED-3:* Attract and recruit businesses and offer incentives for economic development.
- *Objective ED-4:* Cultivate a skilled, educated, and well-trained workforce by increasing educational attainment and the relevant job skill levels in order to appeal to local and non-local businesses.

The Plan seeks to increase the development of local uses that will help residents meet their daily needs. This includes local-serving retail and healthcare options (see LUH Goal 3 and related Policies). The Plan also features land uses where higher education facilities can be located.

Urban Form, Land Use, and Design.

This Element envisions the West Development Area to develop with Complete Neighborhoods that are integrated with the urbanized area to the east via multimodal infrastructure and transit. Complete Neighborhoods are a core value and goal of the Fresno General Plan, and this is carried into the Specific Plan as well.

- *Objective UF-1:* Emphasize the opportunity for a diversity of districts, neighborhoods, and housing types.
- *Objective UF-14:* Create an urban form that facilitates multi-modal connectivity.

Through its land use arrangements and supportive policies, the Plan seeks to provide for a diversity of housing types, locating transit-supportive housing along transit routes, and is paired with infrastructure policies that facilitate enhanced multimodal connectivity (see LUH Goal 6 and Policy LUH 6.1; LUH Goal 4 and associated Policies; Policy LUH 1.4; Policy PF 1.4; and IPR Goal 1 and related Policies).

- *Objective LU-1:* Establish a comprehensive citywide land use planning strategy to meet economic development objectives, achieve efficient and equitable use of resources and infrastructure, and create an attractive living environment.
- *Objective LU-2:* Plan for infill development that includes a range of housing types, building forms, and land uses to meet the needs of both current and future residents.
- *Objective LU-5:* Plan for a diverse housing stock that will support balanced urban growth and make efficient use of resources and public facilities.
- *Objective LU-6:* Retain and enhance existing commercial areas to strengthen Fresno's economic base and site new office, retail, and lodging use districts to serve neighborhoods

and regional visitors.

- *Objective LU-8:* Provide for the development of civic and institutional land uses to meet the educational, medical, social, economic, cultural, and religious needs of the community.
- *Objective LU-9:* Plan land uses, design, and development intensities to supplement and support, and not compete with, the Downtown.

The Plan process was intended to be a refinement of Fresno General Plan goals to the specific needs of the West Area, and still serves as part of the comprehensive land use planning strategy for the city to meet its many goals. This includes planning for a range of housing types and building forms (see LUH Goal 6 and Land Use Map) that would develop over time in an orderly fashion (see LUH Goal 1 and related Policies). It also places emphasis on the creation of new and much-needed neighborhood-serving uses, such as retail and medical facilities (see Land Use Map and LUH Goal 3 and its related Policies). With a focus on neighborhood-serving amenities, the Plan does not compete with the primacy of Downtown.

- *Objective D-1:* Provide and maintain an urban image that creates a “sense of place” throughout Fresno.
- *Objective D-2:* Enhance the visual image of all "gateway" routes entering the Fresno Planning Area.
- *Objective D-5:* Maintain and improve community appearance through programs that prevent and abate blighting influences.
- *Objective D-6:* Encourage design that celebrates and supports the cultural and ethnic diversity of Fresno.

The Plan includes policies to create a desirable urban image that reflects the unique history and traits of the West Area, including through the promotion of scenic gateways to Fresno and proposal to develop landscape and art strategies for neighborhoods within the Plan Area (see IPR Goal 2 and associated policies and discussion on Catalytic Corridors on page 44 of the Plan). The Plan is also supportive of continuing programs that help homeowners with upkeep of their residences (see Policy LUH 6.4).

Mobility and Transportation. This Element envisions a multi-modal transportation system and complete streets that serve all city residents. The Plan maintains this vision for the West Area, where a top priority is roadway improvement (including sidewalk, curb, gutter, and bike lanes).

- *Objective MT-1:* Create and maintain a transportation system that is safe, efficient, provides access in an equitable manner, and optimizes travel by all modes.
- *Objective MT-6:* Establish a network of multi-purpose pedestrian and bicycle paths, as well as limited access trails, to link residential areas to local and regional open spaces and recreation areas and urban Activity Centers in order to enhance Fresno's recreational amenities and alternative transportation options.
- *Objective MT-8:* Provide public transit options that serve existing and future concentrations of residences, employment, recreation, and civic uses and are feasible, efficient, safe, and minimize environmental impacts.

As a primary concern for West Area residents, the Plan contains many policies to support the development of safe, reliable, multimodal, and well-connected transportation infrastructure. This includes supporting the development of priority areas to reduce infrastructure gaps, increasing connectivity to schools, and placing a higher emphasis on the pedestrian experience in a place

where many sidewalks are missing (see Goals IPR 1 and IPR 2 and related Policies). The Plan also calls for more support to develop planned trails (see Policies PF 1.7, PF 1.10, and PF 1.13). Finally, the Plan encourages the use of public transit by arranging land uses to support transit ridership (see Land Use Map) and through focused policies to enhance transit stops and working with schools and large employers to provide transit passes to students or employees (see Policies IPR 1.8, IPR 1.10, and IPR 1.11).

Parks, Open Space and Schools. This Element contains standards for acres of parkland per population and contains policies that support urban greening and walkable access to parks.

- *Objective POSS-1:* Provide an expanded, high quality and diversified park system, allowing for varied recreational opportunities for the entire Fresno community.
- *Objective POSS-2:* Ensure that adequate land, in appropriate locations, is designated and acquired for park and recreation uses in infill and growth areas.
- *Objective POSS-3:* Ensure that park and recreational facilities make the most efficient use of land; that they are designed and managed to provide for the entire Fresno community; and that they represent positive examples of design and energy conservation.
- *Objective POSS-7:* Support the San Joaquin River Conservancy in its collaborative, multiagency efforts to develop the San Joaquin River Parkway.
- *Objective POSS-8:* Work cooperatively with school districts to find appropriate locations for schools to meet the needs of students and neighborhoods.

The Plan analyzes parks in the Plan Area with the same standards as the Fresno General Plan and includes policies upholding Development Code standards for the creation of greenspace in new developments and co-locating in an efficient manner with school sites (see PF Goal 1 and PF Goal 2 and related Policies). The Plan also supports improved access to the San Joaquin River (see Policies PF 1.7, PF 1.12, and PF 1.13).

Public Utilities and Services. This Element provides a policy framework for the City to manage infrastructure and services, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that public utilities and services meet the needs of the community as the city grows.

- *Objective PU-1:* Provide the level of law enforcement and crime prevention services necessary to maintain a safe, secure, and stable urban living environment through a Police Department that is dedicated to providing professional, ethical, efficient, and innovative service with integrity, consistency, and pride.
- *Objective PU-2:* Ensure that the Fire Department's staffing and equipment resources are sufficient to meet all fire and emergency service level objectives and are provided in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
- *Objective PU-8:* Manage and develop the City's water facilities on a strategic timeline basis that recognizes the long-life cycle of the assets and the duration of the resources, to ensure a safe, economical, and reliable water supply for existing customers and planned urban development and economic diversification.

The Plan encourages the location of first responder facilities to meet efficiency and community safety goals and discourages new development outside of available service coverage areas (see PF Goal 4 and related Policies). The Plan continues to uphold the need for proper management and preservation of water resources (see IPR Goal 3 and related policies).

Resource Conservation and Resilience. This Element establishes objectives and policies for the conservation of natural resources in Fresno and to develop resiliency to disruption in resources that may impact everyday life.

- *Objective RC-1*: Make efficient use of existing and future public infrastructure.
- *Objective RC-2*: Promote land uses that conserve resources.

The Plan promotes efficient infrastructure by encouraging multimodal uses and co-location of community-serving uses (see Goals IPR 1, PF 2, PF 3, and PF 4 and related Policies). The Plan also promotes conservation of natural resources such as the San Joaquin River and agricultural resources (see page 84 of the Plan and LUH Goal 2 and related Policies).

Historic and Cultural Resources. The purpose of this Element is to provide policy guidance to protect, preserve, and enhance the city's cultural and historic resources.

- *Objective HCR-2*: Identify and preserve Fresno's historic and cultural resources that reflect important cultural, social, economic, and architectural features so that residents will have a foundation upon which to measure and direct physical change.

Although there is currently only one designated historic resource in the Plan Area (the José Garcia Adobe), The Plan recognizes that there is potential to discover or recognize additional historic resources in the Area and that efforts should be made to protect them (see Policy PF 1.14).

Healthy Communities. This Element focuses on the relationships between the built, natural, and social environments and community health and wellness outcomes, such as death, chronic disease, and the effects of drug abuse and crime.

- *Objective HC-2*: Create complete, well-structured, and healthy neighborhoods and transportation systems.
- *Objective HC-3*: Create healthy, safe, and affordable housing.
- *Objective HC-4*: Improve property maintenance.
- *Objective HC-5*: Promote access to healthy and affordable food.
- *Objective HC-6*: Improve access to schools and their facilities for the community.

A core value of the Plan is to create Complete Neighborhoods, with access to daily needs such as healthy groceries, parks, and efficient and active transportation systems- all within one's own neighborhood (see PF Goal 5, LUH Goal 3, LUH Goal 6, and respective related Policies). The Plan also calls for the development of a wide array of housing types to serve people of all incomes and life-stages, and to provide residents access to resources to help maintain their homes (see LUH Goal 6 and related Policies).

Housing Element. This Element includes objectives, policies, and programs to provide safe and affordable housing for all segments of the community.

- *Objective H-1*: Provide adequate sites for housing development to accommodate a range of housing by type, size, location, price, and tenure.
- *Objective H-3*: Address, and where possible, remove any potential governmental constraints to housing production and affordability.

By applying land use designations and evaluating the environmental impacts at a program level, the Plan can help streamline new housing development within the West Area. The Plan calls for the production of a variety of housing types that can serve people of all incomes and life stages and is ultimately expected to produce up to 54,953 new housing units.

Based on community feedback, the Steering Committee selected a land use map that lowered the density throughout the Plan Area, particularly near the western boundary, to uphold the transect land use concept in order to provide an improved transition from urban to rural/agricultural uses near and beyond the SOI.

In addition to Fresno General Plan consistency, the Government Code requires that findings be made for any proposed land use changes on housing element sites. Specifically, Section 65863 (b) of the Government Code states that no city shall reduce or permit the reduction of the residential density for any parcel at a lower residential density, unless it can make written findings that both of the following are true:

1. The reduction is consistent with the adopted Fresno General Plan; and
2. The remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to accommodate the jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need allocation (RHNA).

The proposed changes on housing element sites would be consistent with the Fresno General Plan because the adoption of the Plan also includes a Fresno General Plan Amendment to align planned land uses and make them consistent. In addition, the Plan is consistent with Fresno General Plan and Housing Element goals, policies and objectives as noted above.

Regarding the second point, there are 82 housing element sites in the Plan Area totaling 560 acres. Of those, land use and zoning changes are proposed on 25 sites totaling 545 acres (see Exhibit M). Some of these sites gained housing capacity and others lost housing capacity. The net overall change in housing capacity on these sites results in a capacity loss in the 16-30 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) category of -5,119 units; a net capacity gain in the 12-16 du/ac category of 1,625 units, and a net capacity loss in the 0-12 du/ac category of -53 units. In this 16-30 du/ac category, the Housing Element Sites Inventory included 3,408 dwelling units of excess capacity beyond the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 8,834 dwelling units. The reduction of the 16-30 du/ac category results in remaining capacity of 7,123 which is -1,711 units below the RHNA amount. This reduction will require the City to take action to add sufficient capacity back to meet the required level. Staff is in the process of identifying an adequate number of sites to restore the needed capacity and, in a subsequent action, will add these sites into the Housing Element Inventory.

Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (SB 330)

Senate Bill ("SB") 330, also known as the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 is a housing-related bill that went into effect on January 1, 2020, and will remain in effect through January 1, 2025. One of the applicable provisions of this legislation, as it relates to Plan Amendments and Rezoning, includes limitations wherein an affected City (which includes the City of Fresno) cannot change land use or zoning designations, nor alter the intensity of existing land use designations or zone districts, in a manner that reduces housing capacity below the capacity that was available on January 1, 2018; unless, there is a concurrent increase of capacity elsewhere within the city (i.e. corresponding up-zone) that ensures there is no net loss of housing capacity.

The land use changes proposed by the Plan would result in the loss of capacity for 12,253 housing units, therefore it is necessary that a concurrent proposal that would increase housing capacity to an equal or greater level accompany the Plan. In order to satisfy this requirement, staff is proposing the concurrent consideration of P22-02413, a Text Amendment to the Citywide Development Code that would remove maximum density limits for five zoning districts, anticipating this will provide an additional capacity of 21,762 housing units citywide. Should the Text Amendment and the Plan be adopted on the same day, there will not be a net loss of housing capacity and the Plan will comply with SB 330.

Council District Project Review Committees

The Plan Area includes Council Districts 1, 2, and 3. Therefore the Plan was presented to the Project Review Committees of each District. The Review Committees also provided recommendations for the Land Use Change Requests, which is summarized in the section below.

The Council District 1 Project Review Committee reviewed the Plan on May 3, 2022 and voted (yes: 6 | no: 0 | abstain: 1 | absent: 1) to recommend approval of the project with modified language for Policy LUH 1.4.

The Council District 2 Project Review Committee reviewed the Plan on May 9, 2022 and voted (yes: 2 | no: 0 | abstain: 0 | absent: 1) to recommend approval of the project.

The Council District 3 Project Review Committee reviewed the Plan on April 26, 2022 and voted (yes: 3 | no: 0 | abstain: 0 | absent: 1) to recommend approval of the project.

Proposed Follow-Up Plan Amendment

In order to properly evaluate and update the Dual Land Uses in the Plan Area for public facilities and to also to accommodate received land use change requests, a Plan Amendment is proposed to be initiated following the adoption of the Plan.

Dual Land Use Map

The Dual Land Use Map (Figure LU-2 in the Fresno General Plan) shows the secondary land use that is assigned to properties that are designated as park or other public facilities. This allows properties to develop to the second designation if the City is unable to enable the development of the park or public facility. Staff will incorporate the update of the Dual Land Use Map as part of the proposed Plan Amendment.

Land Use Change Requests

There were 19 requests to change the Planned Land Use Map received from community members and property owners during the public comment period and each were presented to the Steering Committee and applicable District Project Review Committees. There were also requests submitted after the committee met, which are noted as being "late land use change requests."

Exhibit N contains the list of requests and the recommendations provided by the Steering Committee, District Project Review Committees, and staff, or - for the late requests - a high-level consistency analysis provided by staff. Approved requests will be incorporated into the proposed Plan Amendment, which will allow for additional environmental analysis.

The Planning Commission has the following options for responding to these requests:

1. Recommend approval of staff's recommendations to be included in the Plan Amendment.

2. Recommend approval with modifications, adding to or removing from staff's recommendations; or
3. Recommend denial, resulting in none of the requests being included in the Plan Amendment

The Council District 1 Project Review Committee reviewed the land use change requests on June 7, 2022 and voted (yes: 5 | no: 0 | abstain: 1 | absent: 2) to concur with staff's recommendations for the requests located within the boundaries of District 1.

The Council District 2 Project Review Committee reviewed the land use change requests on May 9, 2022 and made recommendations by consensus on each of the land use change requests within the boundaries of District 2.

There were no land use change requests in the boundaries of District 3.

Notice of Planning Commission Hearing

The Planning Commission hearing was noticed in the Fresno Bee pursuant to Section 15-5007-d of the Fresno Municipal Code (see Exhibit O). A courtesy notice ("save the date") was also mailed to residents and property owners in the Plan Area. Additional courtesy notices were mailed to residents and property owners with proposed or requested land use changes.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

Environmental Impact Report Process

The City, as the lead agency under the CEQA determined that a program-level EIR was required for the proposed project. The consulting firm, De Novo, prepared the EIR. The review and certification of the EIR involves the following procedural steps: 1. Notice of Preparation, 2. Public Scoping Meeting, 3. Notice of Availability and Public Review Period, 4. Final EIR and Response to Comments, and 5. Certification.

Notice of Preparation (NOP): Upon the City's determination that an EIR was required for this project, a NOP was made available to the general public and responsible trustee agencies to solicit input on issues of concern that should be addressed in the EIR. The NOP was issued on June 28, 2019 and included a project description, project location, and a brief overview of the topics to be covered in the EIR. Thirteen comment letters were received from public agencies and community members and were incorporated into the Draft EIR (DEIR).

Public Scoping Meeting: On July 24, 2019, a project scoping meeting was held, to which the Responsible and Trustee agencies as well as interested members of the public were invited, and which had been duly advertised in advance. The meeting was held at the Glacier Point Middle School Cafeteria. Concerns raised were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR.

Notice of Availability (NOA): The City published a public NOA for the DEIR on February 10, 2022, inviting comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. The NOA was filed with the State Clearinghouse (SCH # 2019069117), the County Clerk, and was published in the Fresno Bee pursuant to the public noticing requirements of CEQA.

Comments on DEIR: The DEIR was available for public review and comment from February 10, 2022 through March 28, 2022. Nine written comments on the DEIR were submitted to the City of Fresno

during the review period. The comments were summarized and addressed in the FEIR. None of these comments contained new information that revealed any potentially new or more significant environmental impacts that could have required recirculation of the DEIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

Final EIR (FEIR): In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15088, the Final EIR responds to the written comments received on the Draft EIR. The Final EIR also contains minor edits to the Draft EIR. The FEIR was made available on the Plan webpage on July 7, 2022. Hard copies were also made available at the Central Branch and Teague Libraries.

Certification of the EIR: The City Council will hold a public hearing to consider the adequacy and completeness of the EIR under CEQA and to certify the EIR and adopt the necessary Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP): The City Council will also consider adopting a program to implement the EIR's recommended mitigation measures to mitigate, avoid, or substantially lessen the significant impacts of the project. The final MMRP is included in the FEIR.

Environmental Impact Report Analysis and Conclusions

Project Objectives

Pursuant to Section 15124 of the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR must identify the objectives of the project (the "project" means the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan, or "the Plan"). The following Specific Plan Guiding Principles functionally represent project objectives as required:

Transportation

- Accommodate and improve roadway access, connectivity, and mobility among all modes of transportation, and prioritize roadway widening where bottlenecking exists.
- Accommodate planned transit services in the West Area by locating routes near or adjacent to the community centers, schools, parks, and retail centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained sidewalk network from residential neighborhoods to commercial centers, schools, parks, and community centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained roadway network that allows for efficient and smooth access from the West Area to other sections of the city and region.

Parks & Trails

- Create parks that are within existing and planned neighborhoods that are easily accessed by community members using pedestrian and bicycle pathways, transit services, or motor vehicles, consistent with the City of Fresno's Parks Master Plan.
- Provide for the location of a flagship regional park in the Plan Area that has components of the Plan Area's agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation or trees, and the creation of public art that exhibits the Plan Area's contribution to the agricultural industry.
- Increase the tree canopy to improve air quality and health outcomes for residents while enhancing neighborhood streetscapes.

Agriculture

- Incorporate elements of agriculture in future parks by planting a mixture of native drought tolerant vegetation, shrubs, and trees that can serve to provide shade and enhance the

streetscape.

Retail

- Attract desired and needed local retail establishments to serve the needs of the West Area community. Such establishments include grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants (other than fast food), and boutiques.
- Discourage the expansion of undesirable retail establishments such as liquor stores, tobacco and vapor stores, short-term loan and pawn shops, and adult stores.
- Encourage the development of retail establishments along commercial corridors.

Housing

- Encourage a variety of housing types and styles.
- Encourage the development of housing to accommodate an aging population including, multi-generational houses and other elder housing options.
- Reaffirm the City's commitment and obligation to affirmatively furthering access to fair and affordable housing opportunities by strongly encouraging equitable and fair housing opportunities to be located in strategic proximity to employment, recreational facilities, schools, neighborhood commercial areas, and transportation routes.

Catalytic Corridors

- Encourage the orderly and consistent development of civic, parkland, retail and commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family uses along West Shaw Avenue, West Ashlan Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, West Shields Avenue, West Clinton Avenue, and Brawley Avenue.

Education

- Attract much-needed educational opportunities for the residents of the West Area, especially for post-secondary education, and access to programs for life-long learners.

Public Safety

- Provide for safe routes to schools for children, with the City and County working together with residents, to provide sidewalks in neighborhoods that have sporadic access.
- Work to promote Neighborhood Watch in all neighborhoods, and further assess the need for the location of emergency response facilities west of Highway 99.

Impacts Analyzed

The EIR analyzed impacts to the following environmental areas, as these were the areas determined to have potential impacts:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources (Chapter 3.1)
- Agricultural Resources (Chapter 3.2)
- Air Quality (Chapter 3.3)
- Biological Resources (Chapter 3.4)
- Cultural and Tribal Resources (Chapter 3.5)
- Geology, Soils and Seismicity (Chapter 3.6)
- Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change, and Energy (Chapter 3.7)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Chapter 3.8)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Chapter 3.9)
- Land Use (Chapter 3.10)

- Noise (Chapter 3.11)
- Population and Housing (Chapter 3.12)
- Public Services and Recreation (Chapter 3.13)
- Transportation and Circulation (Chapter 3.14)
- Utilities (Chapter 3.15)

The EIR found impacts to the following areas: Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Agricultural Resources; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural and Tribal Resources; Geology, Soils and Seismicity; Greenhouse Gases, Climate Change, and Energy; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Noise; Public Services and Recreation; and Utilities. The EIR includes recommended mitigation measures in these areas (see MMRP included in the FEIR). The recommended mitigation measures were found to reduce impacts to less than significant in all but the areas listed below:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Public Services and Recreation
- Utilities and Service Systems

Overriding Considerations

Pursuant to CEQA requirements, findings of fact and a statement of overriding consideration are required to approve the project because the project will result in significant unavoidable impacts. Staff recommends that the following overriding considerations be considered in approving the project despite its unavoidable significant impacts: Consistency with the Fresno General Plan, Consistency with the City's Zoning Ordinance, Consistency with the Fresno General Plan EIR, Supports Fresno General Plan Policies, Consistency with Smart Growth Principles, Create Employment Opportunities for Local Residents, Contribute to and Fund Needed Infrastructure Improvements, Generate Economic Benefits from Taxes, Expansion of the City's Housing Stock.

FRESNO MUNICIPAL CODE FINDINGS

Based upon analysis of the applications, staff concludes that the required findings of Section 15-5812 of the Fresno Municipal Code can be made. These findings are attached as Exhibit L.

CONCLUSION

The appropriateness of the proposed project has been examined with respect to its consistency with goals and policies of the Fresno General Plan; its compatibility with surrounding existing or proposed uses; and its avoidance or mitigation of potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. These factors have been evaluated as described above and by the accompanying EIR. Upon consideration of this evaluation, it can be concluded that the West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan, adopted through all the applications noted in the title of this staff report, is appropriate for the subject properties. Action by the Planning Commission will be a recommendation to City Council.

Attachments:

- Exhibit A - Vicinity Map
- Exhibit B - Maps of the West Area Community Plan Area & Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan Area (P22-01351)
- Exhibit C - Proposed Planned Land Use Map (P22-01352)

- Exhibit D - Proposed Changes to General Plan Planned Land Use Map (P22-01353)
- Exhibit E - Proposed Changes to the Zoning Map (P22-01353)
- Exhibit F.1 - WANSF Planning Commission Draft [July 2022]
- Exhibit F.2 - WANSF Revised Public Draft [April 2022]
- Exhibit F.3 - WANSF Public Draft [April 2021]
- Exhibit G - Comprehensive Redline Summary (Appendix C)
- Exhibit H - Comment Summary Matrix & Comment Letters
- Exhibit I - Draft Program EIR
- Exhibit J - Final Environmental Impact Report
- Exhibit K - EIR - Findings of Fact & Statement of Overriding Considerations
- Exhibit L - Fresno Municipal Code Findings
- Exhibit M - Housing Element Findings
- Exhibit N - Land Use Change Requests + Late Requests [updated 07/14/2022]
- Exhibit O - Fresno Bee Notice [07-08-22]
- Supplemental* Exhibit P - Comment Letters Submitted to Planning Commission