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**Title:** CONTINUED HEARING to consider initiation of the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan, pertaining to approximately 3,255 acres in the South Development Area of the Fresno General Plan, filed by the City of Fresno Development and Resource Management Department Director (The public input portion of the meeting was closed on 11/17/2016)

1. Direct staff to continue working with the Steering Committee and community to refine the plan and commence the Program Environmental Impact Report.
2. RESOLUTION - Initiating the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Draft Preferred Alternative and the corresponding amendment of the Fresno General Plan, the Fresno Chandler Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and Airport Environs Plan, and the Repeal or Amendment of the Edison Community Plan pertaining to approximately 3,255 acres located in the South Development Area to allow for future adoption of a Southwest Fresno Specific Plan.

**Sponsors:** Planning and Development Department

**Indexes:**

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:** 1. A-Project Location Map.pdf, 2. B-Project Schedul.pdf, 3. C-Steering Committee Roster.pdf, 4. D-Community Workshop Flyer.pdf, 5. E-Draft Preferred Alternative Specific Plan.pdf, 6. F-Plans in the Southwest Fresno Area.pdf, 7. G-Planning Commission Resolution.pdf, 8. H-Council Resolution.pdf, 9. Presentation\_CC\_111716\_v4\_DW.pdf, 10. Supplement to File ID 16-1271.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
12/8/2016	1	City Council	approved as amended	Pass

**REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

**December 1, 2016**

**FROM:** JENNIFER K. CLARK, Director  
Development and Resource Management Department

**THROUGH:** DAN ZACK, Assistant Director  
Development and Resource Management Department

**BY:** SOPHIA PAGOULATOS, Planning Manager  
Development and Resource Management Department

**SUBJECT**

CONTINUED HEARING to consider initiation of the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan, pertaining to approximately 3,255 acres in the South Development Area of the Fresno General Plan, filed by the City of Fresno Development and Resource Management Department Director (The public input portion of the meeting was closed on 11/17/2016)

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Public hearing to consider initiation of the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan, pertaining to approximately 3,255 acres in the South Development Area of the Fresno General Plan, filed by the City of Fresno Development and Resource Management Department Director

1. Direct staff to continue working with the Steering Committee and community to refine the plan and commence the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR).
2. RESOLUTION - Initiating the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Draft Preferred Alternative and the corresponding amendment of the Fresno General Plan, the Fresno Chandler Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and Airport Environs Plan, and the Repeal or Amendment of the Edison Community Plan pertaining to approximately 3,255 acres located in the South Development Area to allow for future adoption of a Southwest Fresno Specific Plan.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report describes the background, process, outreach, land use concepts, and planning efforts related to the Draft Preferred Alternative Southwest Fresno Specific Plan. The Draft Preferred Alternative contains guiding principles and a land use map proposed for initiation of the PEIR process and full development of the specific plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

The idea for a Southwest Fresno Specific Plan emerged from community members who wanted an actionable plan to address a broad array of neighborhood concerns. The last comprehensive planning effort that had been undertaken in the area besides the update of the General Plan in 2014 was the Edison Community Plan, adopted in 1977. \$750,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and \$39,000 in general fund monies were allocated in 2015 to finance the specific plan and a related PEIR. The boundaries of the specific plan area coincide with city limits, with one exception, since CDBG funds must be spent within city limits. The non-CDBG funds are allocated to planning within the one area outside city limits (see Project Location Map in Exhibit A). While the PEIR will only cover the land within the plan area boundaries, land use recommendations will also be included for the land between the plan area boundaries and the sphere of influence as a vision plan that could be adopted with additional environmental review.

In February of 2015, the City Council approved a contract with Placeworks, Inc. as the primary

planning and EIR consultant for the project, with subcontractors as described below:

Shared Spaces - Public Engagement  
Centro La Familia - Community Based Outreach  
Robert Mitchell - Local Engagement Specialist  
Pop-Up Design & Development, Participatory Design  
Fehr & Peers - Transportation  
H.T. Harvey & Associates - EIR - Biological Resources  
Sierra Valley Cultural Planning - EIR - Cultural and Historic Architectural Resources  
Blair, Church & Flynn - Infrastructure Engineers

## Planning Process Overview

The specific plan process includes the following steps, and was expected to take approximately 2 years from the beginning of the process in 2015. The process is now in Step 3. Future opportunities to comment on the plan will be scheduled in 2017 as part of Steps 5 - 8 below.

1. Project Kick-off and Existing Conditions Review
2. Community Engagement /Preparation of Draft Preferred Alternative
3. Plan Initiation through Planning Commission and City Council
4. Administrative Draft of Specific Plan
5. PEIR Initiation: Notice of Preparation and Scoping
6. Public Review of Draft Specific Plan
7. Draft and Final PEIR
8. Adoption

See Exhibit B for a project schedule.

## Outreach

The outreach and participation for the planning process to date has been multifaceted and extensive. It included 11 steering committee meetings, approximately 10 topic group meetings, and 3 community workshops. All meetings were open to the public and noticed in English and Spanish. A community office was established in a vacant storefront in the Marcus Center at 858 E. California Avenue to make it convenient for community members to participate. Each of these components is described below:

Steering Committee. A 21-member steering committee made up of neighborhood residents, business owners, developers, youth and other stakeholders was appointed by Councilmember Baines (see Exhibit C). Represented on the committee are community organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Action in Change, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, the Fresno Housing Authority, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueño, the Economic Development Corporation, Caltrans, and the Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce. Fresno Unified and Washington Union school districts are represented, as is the State Center Community College District. The committee's task has been to understand the desires of the community (as expressed at the community workshops and topic group meetings) and apply their own knowledge as stakeholders to development of the draft preferred alternative plan. The Steering Committee agreed at the commencement of the planning process that all of their decisions would be made by a 75% vote. The committee has consistently met from July 2015 until the present.

Community Workshops. The initial phase of the planning process included three community workshops, held on September 15 and October 13, 2015, and on February 16, 2016. They were attended by approximately 125, 70 and 60 persons, respectively. The tasks at the workshops were to identify community vision and issues and ultimately select a land use concept that would guide the development of the draft preferred alternative.

Topic Groups. Topic groups were organized by steering committee members with members of the public invited to provide input on the issues that surfaced at the first community workshop as being the most important. Topic group meetings were held at the community office during the period between the first and third community workshop. The topic groups established are noted below, and 10 meetings were held. It is estimated that approximately 70 people attended the topic group meetings:

- Housing
- Neighborhood-Serving Retail
- Parks & Open Space
- Jobs & Economic Development
- Community Environmental Health
- Transportation
- Industrial Compatibility

Community Office. A community office was established in a vacant storefront on California and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue to facilitate community input of various forms. In addition to the topic group meetings held in the office, a youth art-making workshop was held as was a produce market event.

Outreach Methods. Prior to the first workshop, a bilingual flyer was mailed to all property owners and residents in and beyond the plan area -- out to the sphere of influence boundary, inviting recipients to all three community workshops (see Exhibit D). Reminder postcards were mailed prior to each workshop. A webpage was established at [www.fresno.gov/southwestplan](http://www.fresno.gov/southwestplan) <<http://www.fresno.gov/southwestplan>> that provides workshop and meeting agendas and summaries and any other important documents. An email list has been created with all interested stakeholders, including all workshop and topic group attendees and anyone else who has requested to be on the list.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **The Draft Preferred Alternative**

The overarching goal of the planning process, as articulated by community and steering committee members, is to create a community-based plan that improves the quality of life for all residents (existing and new) and incentivizes new development in Southwest Fresno.

The Draft Preferred Alternative of the Southwest Specific Plan is the culmination of over 1 year of work by the community and steering committee. The planning process included two phases: conceptual alternative development phase and a mapping phase.

Phase 1: Conceptual Alternative Development. This initial planning phase included collection of data about existing conditions (Existing Conditions Profile is available on the webpage at [www.fresno.gov/southwestplan](http://www.fresno.gov/southwestplan) <<http://www.fresno.gov/southwestplan>>) and community input, and then consideration of various land use concepts that could be applied in the plan area to resolve issues that had been surfaced in the engagement process. The three possible conceptual land use alternatives considered by the steering committee and community members were:

*Alternative 1: Corridors and Neighborhoods:* This alternative is made up of three neighborhoods complete with housing, retail, parks and employment areas. These large neighborhoods are linked by well-defined corridors and lined with higher, more intensive development, and multimodal transportation improvements.

*Alternative 2: Many Smaller Neighborhoods:* This alternative is made up of roughly one-square-mile neighborhoods that include housing and community-serving uses, such as a small neighborhood park, school, and local retail. Multimodal transportation improvements are dispersed along the existing grid of arterial roadways throughout Southwest Fresno. This alternative is lower in density and has more single-family residential development than the other two alternatives.

*Alternative 3: Neighborhoods Around Magnet Uses:* This alternative is made up of three neighborhoods developed around higher intensity cores each with a primary magnet use. The three magnet uses are a new community college activity center, an improved regional sports complex, and a new regional retail center. Each neighborhood core is ringed with housing and/or employment areas that support the core. The neighborhoods are linked with pedestrian and bicycle connections that follow the existing water canals and roadways with less vehicular traffic.

Ultimately, a hybrid of the three alternatives was chosen, with many smaller neighborhoods surrounding two magnet cores, connected by corridors. The guiding principles and more detail is provided in the Draft Preferred Alternative, attached as Exhibit E.

Phase 2: Mapping. Once the land use concept was developed, the steering committee applied the principles to the land use map, making decisions with their established voting rules of 75% majority. The committee used all of the input provided from the community workshops, topic group meetings, and existing conditions report to make their decisions. The map represented in Figure 6 of the Draft Preferred Alternative, attached in Exhibit E, is the end result. Figure 7 shows the same map with the conceptual alternative overlays that depict the magnet cores, neighborhoods and corridors.

Land Use Issues. By far, the issues that required the most discussion and exploration by the steering committee members related to housing type and density and industrial land use. These issues are discussed further below:

- Housing Density - the committee wished to maintain a single family focus, while still encouraging a balanced range of housing types. The concept of complete neighborhoods was maintained, but with higher density housing placed along corridors instead of in the center of neighborhoods (as depicted in the General Plan). The California Avenue mixed use corridor was maintained in anticipation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) being implemented along the corridor, and the mixed use corridor was extended along Elm Avenue as well, with hopes that another possible BRT corridor could be established there.
- Industrial Land Use - the committee considered many options related to industrial land use,

with the goal that all land uses in southwest Fresno be neighborhood friendly; that is, acceptable as a next-door neighbor. Because Business Park allows some industrial land use, the committee decided against that option and elected instead to redesignate all industrial and business park designated land to the lowest intensity employment use: Office. It should be noted that the office land use designation (and corresponding zoning) allows more than simply offices. It allows a full array of public and semi-public land uses such as schools of all types, community and religious assembly, conference facilities, cultural institutions, day care centers, government offices, hospitals and clinics, park and recreational facilities and social service facilities. It also allows commercial uses such as artist's studios, automobile related uses, banks and financial institutions, banquet halls, restaurants, markets, hotels and motels, personal services, convenience retail and general retail. The only industrial uses allowed in the office zone are reverse vending machines and research and development. Minor utilities are also allowed in the zone.

The only exception to this land use change is shown on Figures 6 and 7 of the Draft Preferred Alternative around the property owned by Darling Ingredients, Inc: a dashed line was drawn around the property with a note stating "property excepted" meaning that no change to the industrial land use on that property is proposed at the current time due to legal discussions currently underway.

## **Relationship to Other Plans**

The Southwest Fresno Specific Plan relates to other planning efforts that have recently concluded or are currently underway. They are listed below:

Highway 41 + North Complete Streets Plan. This planning process was championed by Habitat for Humanity and funded by a Caltrans planning grant around the North/Elm neighborhoods. This plan included both transportation-related and land use recommendations. Since this plan did not come with any funds to do a plan amendment or environmental review, its recommendations have been incorporated into the Draft Preferred Alternative and will be included in the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan and PEIR. The proposed land uses from that process are currently reflected in the Draft Preferred Alternative land use map, and the transportation recommendations are being incorporated as well.

Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan. This plan was adopted on October 20, 2016, and abuts the plan area to the northeast, but does not overlap with the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Area.

Brownfields Areawide Planning Grant. The Environmental Protection Agency has granted the city \$175,000 for a brownfields planning grant along the Elm Avenue corridor. This process has been initiated and the public engagement process is expected to begin in 2017.

Parks Master Plan and the Active Transportation Plan. Both of these efforts are being coordinated with the Southwest Specific Plan process.

## **Planning Commission**

On November 2, 2016, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council initiate the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Draft Preferred Alternative as presented. Nine people spoke in favor of the proposal and two people spoke in opposition. The Planning Commission

resolution is attached for more information.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FINDING**

Initiation of a plan is a request for decision-making bodies to accept the plan for further study and commencement of the environmental review process. A PEIR will be prepared for the Draft Preferred Alternative if directed by the Council pursuant to staff recommendation.

### Attachments:

- Exhibit A - Project Location Map
- Exhibit B - Project Schedule
- Exhibit C- Steering Committee Roster
- Exhibit D- Community Workshop Flyer
- Exhibit E- Draft Preferred Alternative Southwest Fresno Specific Plan
- Exhibit F- Plans in the Southwest Fresno Area
- Exhibit G - Planning Commission Resolution
- Exhibit H- City Council Resolution  
PowerPoint presentation