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Title: HEARING to consider initiation of the Specific Plan of the West Area, pertaining to approximately 7,077 acres in the West Development Area of the Fresno General Plan, filed by the Development and Resource Management Department Director

1. RESOLUTION - Initiating the Specific Plan of the West Area Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles and the corresponding amendment of the General Plan, and repeal or amendment of the West Area Community Plan and Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan pertaining to approximately 7,077 acres located in the West Development Area to allow for future adoption of the Specific Plan of the West Area pursuant to Fresno Municipal Code Sections 15-5803-C and 15-4902-B.

Sponsors: Planning and Development Department

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Exhibit A Project Location Map, 2. Exhibit B Project Schedule, 3. Exhibit C Steering Committee Roster, 4. Exhibit D Draft Land Use Map, 5. Exhibit E General Plan Planned Land Use Map, 6. Exhibit F Draft Guiding Principles, 7. Exhibit G Regional Park Options, 8. Exhibit H Specific Plan of the West Area Initiation Report, 9. Exhibit I Planning Commission Resolution, 10. Exhibit J City Council Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/16/2019	1	City Council	continued	

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

May 16, 2019

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SUBJECT

HEARING to consider initiation of the Specific Plan of the West Area, pertaining to approximately 7,077 acres in the West Development Area of the Fresno General Plan, filed by the Development and Resource Management Department Director

1. RESOLUTION - Initiating the Specific Plan of the West Area Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles and the corresponding amendment of the General Plan, and repeal or amendment of the West Area Community Plan and Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan pertaining to approximately 7,077 acres located in the West Development Area to allow for future adoption of the Specific Plan of the West Area pursuant to Fresno Municipal Code Sections 15-5803-C and 15-4902-B.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council take the following action:

1. ADOPT RESOLUTION initiating the Specific Plan of the West Area Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles and the corresponding amendment of the General Plan, and repeal or amendment of the West Area Community Plan and Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan pertaining to approximately 7,077 acres located in the West Development Area to allow for future adoption of the Specific Plan of the West Area pursuant to Fresno Municipal Code Sections 15-5803-c and 15-4902-B.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the background, process, outreach, land use concepts, and planning efforts related to the Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles. The Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles recommended by the Steering Committee are proposed for initiation of the Environmental Impact Report and full development of the Specific Plan of the West Area. The Specific Plan will also include an Infrastructure Financing Plan.

BACKGROUND

The idea for a Specific Plan of the West emerged from community members who wanted a feasible advanced planning tool to address a broad array of concerns. The last comprehensive planning effort that had been undertaken in the area besides the update of the General Plan in 2014 was the West Area Community Plan adopted in 2002 as “Appendix W” to the 2025 General Plan, and the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan adopted in 1998. FY2018 allocated money to begin the specific plan process which included the creation of an existing conditions report and community outreach. \$400,000 was allocated in the FY2019 budget to finance the Environmental Impact Report and Infrastructure Financing Plan.

Planning Process Overview

The specific plan process includes the following steps and was expected to take less than 3 years from the beginning of the process in 2017. The process is now in Step 4. Future opportunities to comment on the plan will be scheduled throughout the remaining steps which involve the completion of the Environmental Impact Report and Infrastructure Financing Plan.

1. Project Kick-off and Existing Conditions Report
2. Initial Community Outreach
3. Selection of Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles by the Steering Committee
4. Plan Initiation through Planning Commission and City Council

5. Draft Specific Plan
6. Environmental Impact Report: Notice of Preparation and Scoping
7. Public Review of Draft Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report
8. Adoption

See Exhibit B for a project schedule.

Outreach

The outreach and participation for the planning process to date has been multifaceted to receive input from the 38,503 residents of the Plan Area. It included numerous stakeholder interviews, 2 community meetings billed as “Community Conversations”, a kick-off survey, and seven Steering Committee meetings. Also, focus group meeting occurred with religious leaders billed as “Coffee with the Clergy.”

Stakeholder Interviews. City staff held stakeholder interviews between January 2018 and April 2018 with city and county residents, developers, Central Unified School District, Highway City Community Development Corporation, religious leaders, and other city agencies.

Community Conversations. The initial phase of the planning process included two community conversations held on May 3, 2018 and June 14, 2018. They were attended by approximately 165 and 75 persons, respectively. The purpose of the first Community Conversation was to educate the public about the plan process and to solicit input from community members. Concerns centered on transportation, limited parkland, limited commercial and recreational amenities, and lack of neighborhood identity.

The task for the second Community Conversation was to identify key land use concepts that would guide future land use discussions of the Steering Committee. Community members were able to weigh in on the location of certain land uses (i.e., parks, commercial facilities, and housing) through a dot voting exercise on a blank map.

Kick-off Survey. A 10-question kick-off survey was produced and distributed to residents, business owners, and other interested parties. Approximately 373 individuals responded to the survey. The results of the survey were shared with the community and Steering Committee.

Steering Committee. An 11-member Steering Committee was appointed by Councilmembers representing Council District No. 1, Council District No. 2, and Council District No. 3. Represented on the committee are residents and residential and commercial developers. Central Unified School District is represented on the committee, as is State Center Community College District. The committee’s task has been to receive input from community members, and translate that input into the development of the Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles. At their first meeting, the committee elected a chairperson and vice chairperson, and adopted rules governing their decision-making process.

Coffee with the Clergy. Approximately 15 pastors and church staff attended the event. The purpose of the event was to inform religious leaders about the specific plan process and to encourage their involvement.

ANALYSIS

The Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles are the outcome of the initial planning process that included over a year of work by community members and the steering committee. The Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles reflect the desires of community members and the committee to create a feasible and implementable plan that improves the quality of life for current and future residents.

Phase 1: Land Use Framework. City staff provided three land use framework options for the committee to consider as the basis for refining the General Plan's land use map. The first option was a concentric model which would divide the Plan Area into five different concentric circles expanding from a core commercial center that had intense land uses surrounded by four levels of lower density land uses. The second option was the selection of a transect land use framework that allowed for a flow from rural to urban land use intensities. The third option was a catalytic corridors/centers concept which focused on strategically locating land use densities along corridors in the Plan Area in order to cause a positive economical reaction on surrounding parcels.

After discussion, the committee chose to incorporate the transect framework with the catalytic land use concept being strategically located on Ashlan Avenue, Shaw Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, and Shields Avenue. The committee also voted to incorporate agricultural components into open space corridors, trails, and future parks.

Phase 2: Conceptual Land Use Option. In addition to the land use framework alternatives described above, three conceptual land use options were presented to the committee for consideration. Option No.1 (more change) proposed preservation of agricultural/rural residential uses in the southwest corner of the Plan Area, reducing single family uses away from busy corridors, and reducing land use density within the interior of the quarter-sections. Option No. 2 (moderate change) proposed to lower land use density throughout the Plan Area, and focuses higher residential density and commercial land uses on portions of key corridors. The key corridors include portions of Ashlan, Blythe, Shaw, Veterans, Shields, and Clinton. Option No. 3 (less change) proposed lower density throughout the Plan Area, and preserved rural residential land uses throughout the Plan Area. The committee selected Option No. 2 (moderate change).

Phase 3: Draft Land Use Map & Guiding Principles. Once the land use framework and concept were determined, they were applied to the draft land use map. The committee used all of the input received from the community conversations, kick-off survey results, existing conditions reports, and individual discussions with community members to make their decisions. The draft land use map attached as Exhibit D is the end result of the committee's initial work.

Land Use. The committee voted to reduce the density of residential land uses along the most western and southwestern edge of the Plan Area, while still encouraging a balanced range of housing types throughout the West Area. The concept of complete neighborhoods established in the General Plan was reaffirmed by the committee, but with higher density housing, office, commercial, and mixed-use land uses placed along corridors instead of in the middle of neighborhoods as depicted in the General Plan's Planned Land Use Map. The committee maintained mixed-use land uses along the West Shaw Avenue corridor in anticipation of future transit service in the Plan Area. Also, the West Shaw Avenue corridor will serve as a town center for the Plan Area that will allow for pedestrian- and transit-oriented development.

Parks. The Parks Master Plan adopted in 2018 identified that Development Area - 1 North (DA-1

North), where the West Area is located, does not have any regional/open space/special use parks. The Parks Master Plan determined that approximately 71 acres of regional/open space/special use parks are needed to meet the 2017 population estimates, and 129 acres are needed to meet the 2035 population estimates. Community members and the committee expressed strong support for the location of a flagship regional park to be located in the West Area, and would like a regional park land use designation placed on the land use map. Planned parks, except parkland already owned by the City, are generally shown with a dual designation land use. Dual designation allows private development to occur in the instance that the City is not prepared to purchase and subsequently develop the parcel(s) into parkland. Community members and the committee have held vigorous debate over the location of a flagship regional park north and south of West Shaw Avenue. The committee voted to have three areas studied during the environmental review phase of the plan process. The three areas are attached as Exhibit G.

Sphere of Influence. The committee recommended studying the expansion of the Plan Area's Sphere of Influence through the environmental review process. The proposed area is bounded by West Shields Avenue to the north, Grantland Avenue to the east, West Clinton Avenue to the south, and North Garfield Avenue to the west. The proposed expansion of the Sphere of Influence is shown on the draft land use map which is attached as Exhibit D.

Guiding Principles. After receiving public input, the committee voted to accept the draft guiding principles. The draft guiding principles reflect the West Area community's vision to include an enhanced and improved multimodal transportation network, a variety of housing types, post-secondary educational opportunities, and components of agriculture within the Plan Area.

Relationship to Other Plans

The Specific Plan of the West Area relates to other planning efforts previously completed. They are listed below:

- **The Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan (1998)**

The Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan was adopted January 6, 1998 and was prepared to address problems, issues, and opportunities of the Highway City neighborhood, especially for individuals who live, work or have a long-time involvement in the community. One of the guiding principles for the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan encouraged development of traditional neighborhoods characterized by a diverse but compatible arrangement of residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses that was to be reinforced by existing and established single-family residential areas. The Specific Plan of the West Area would repeal a portion of the Highway City Neighborhood Specific Plan to avoid overlap and confusion with the Specific Plan of the West Area, but would carry forward any relevant area-specific policies.

- **The West Area Community Plan (2002)**

The West Area Community Plan was adopted on February 1, 2002 as "Appendix W" of the 2025 General Plan. 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. This Plan would replace the Community Plan, but would carry forward any relevant policies.

- **The General Plan (2014)**

The General Plan was adopted on December 18, 2014 and sets the stage for the initiation of this Plan. This Plan will refine the General Plan's vision for the West Area. The General Plan created policies and implementation plans to achieve a long-term vision which emphasizes infill development, complete neighborhoods, and multi-modal transportation.

- **Fresno Municipal Code Chapter 15: Citywide Development Code (2015)**

The main purpose of the Development Code, which was adopted in 2015, is to implement the General Plan and other adopted plans. The Development Code is the city's zoning code, and it seeks to protect and promote the public health, safety, peace, comfort, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the residents of the City of Fresno. It allows for the orderly allocation of land for development by classifying the city into districts or zones that allow various land uses, including residential single-family, residential multi-family, mixed-use, commercial, public and semi-public, downtown and employment districts. This Plan will reference the Development Code and applicable regulations for the West Area.

- **The Active Transportation Plan (2017)**

The Active Transportation Plan (ATP) was adopted on March 2, 2017 and serves as the city's comprehensive guide outlining the vision for active transportation. The ATP envisions a complete, safe, and comfortable network of trails, sidewalks, and bikeways that serve as a means for people to safely get to their destinations while reducing roadway congestion and improving the air quality. This also results in replacing vehicle miles traveled with walking or biking. Both existing and planned Class II bike lanes are outlined for the West Area. Class I bicycle and pedestrian paths are planned for in the West Area with three eastward connection points over Highway 99 at Herndon Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, Gettysburg Avenue, and the Herndon Canal which abuts West Shaw Avenue. The ATP will be referenced in this Plan.

- **The Parks Master Plan (2017)**

The Parks Master Plan (PMP) was adopted on December 14, 2017 and serves as a community-based vision and road map for planning a complete and functional park system in the city of Fresno. It examined the General Plan's level of service goals for park land and determined the amount of acreage needed for the city's existing and future population. The PMP articulates a vision for improving Fresno's park and open space system formed by public input and based on thorough analysis. Priorities of Fresno community members, institutional leaders, and policy makers are reflected in the PMP. The goals and recommendations of the PMP for the Plan Area will be further developed later in the planning process.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

Initiation of a Specific Plan is not a "project" for the purposes of CEQA Guidelines 15378.

Planning Commission

On May 1, 2019, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council initiate the Specific Plan of the West Area Draft Land Use Map and Guiding Principles as presented. The Planning Commission resolution is attached as Exhibit I.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference was not considered because this project does not include procurement.

FISCAL IMPACT

The FY2019 Budget appropriated \$400,000 from the General Fund to complete the Environmental Impact Report and Infrastructure Financing Plan.

Attachments:

- Exhibit A: Project Location Map
- Exhibit B: Project Schedule
- Exhibit C: Steering Committee Roster
- Exhibit D: Draft Land Use Map
- Exhibit E: General Plan Planned Land Use (West Area)
- Exhibit F: Draft Guiding Principles
- Exhibit G: Regional Park Options
- Exhibit H: Specific Plan of the West Area Initiation Document
- Exhibit I: Planning Commission Resolution
- Exhibit J: City Council Resolution