



TOWER DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE DRAFT DOCUMENT UPDATES

June 19, 2025



PRESENTATION AGENDA

1. Orientation to Today's Work
2. Health and Equity Framework
3. Other Changes

UPDATE PHOTO



01

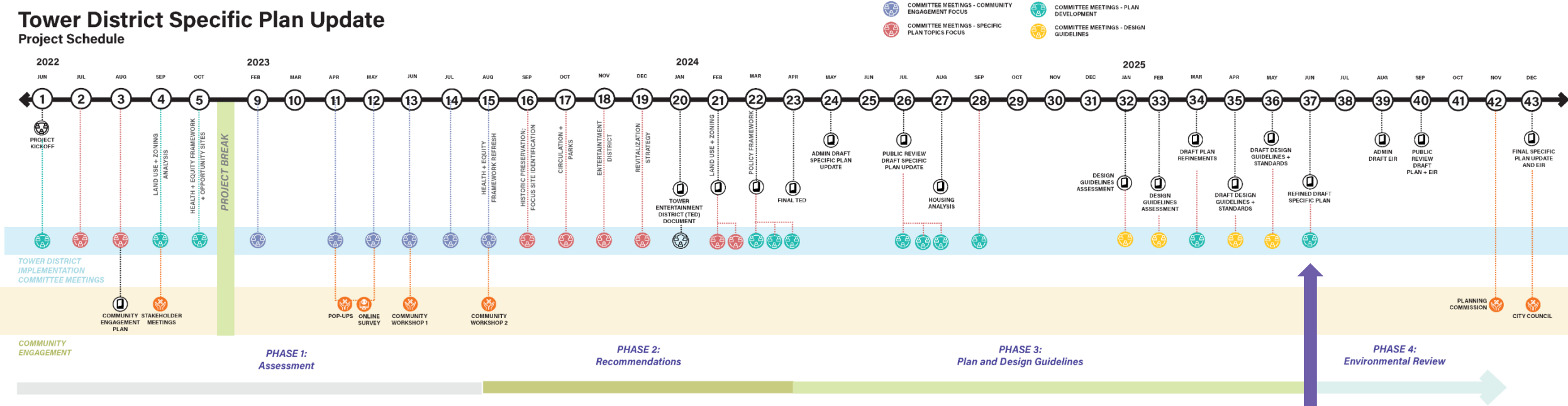
ORIENTATION TO TODAY'S WORK



ORIENTATION TO TODAY'S WORK

Project Schedule

Tower District Specific Plan Update Project Schedule



ORIENTATION TO TODAY’S WORK

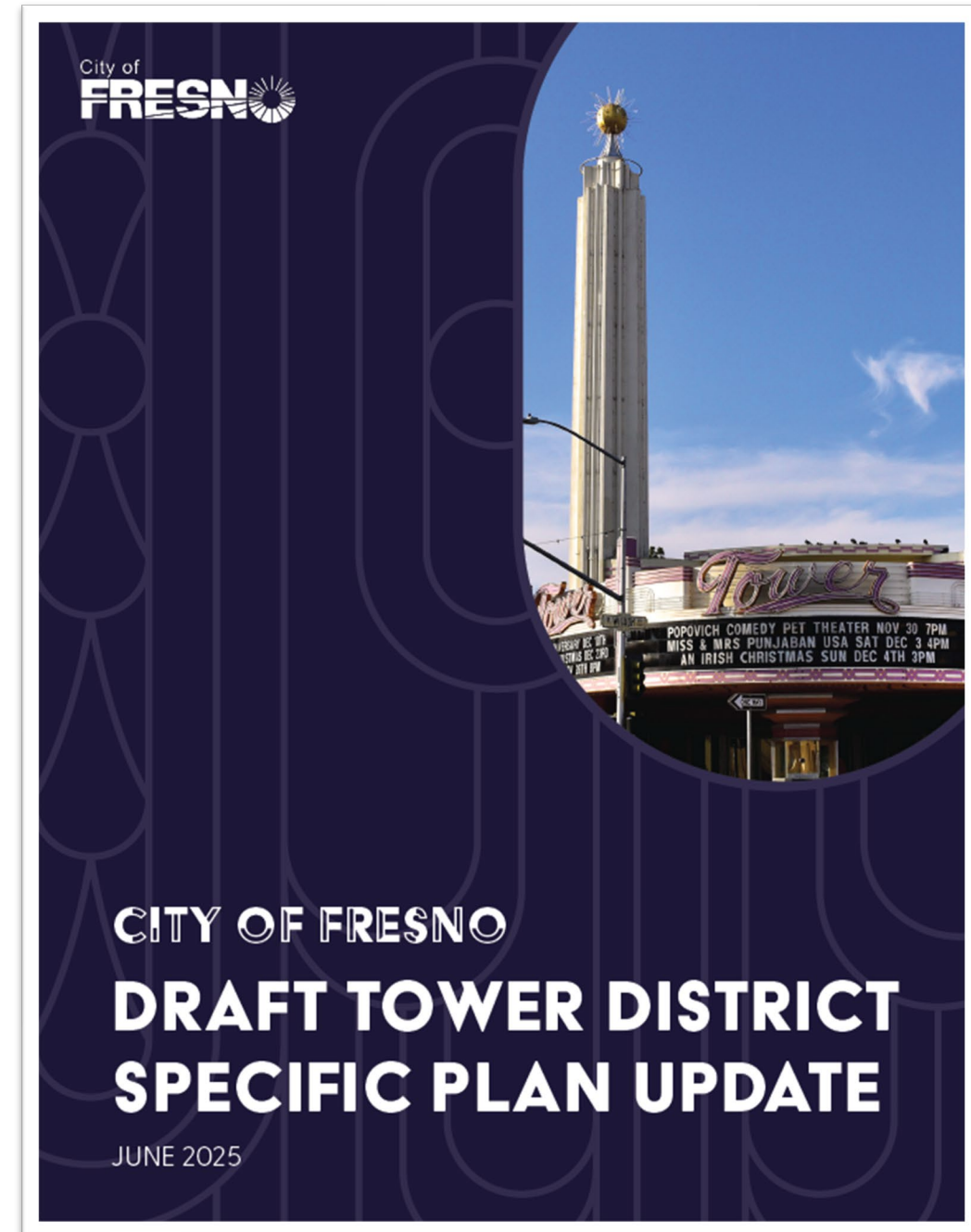
Draft Tower District Specific Plan Update Edits

EXHIBIT H: COMMITTEE COMMENT MATRIX				*Change called out in PowerPoint.
Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee Draft Plan Update Comments - 9/3/2024, 9/9/2024 & 9/17/2024				
Chapter	Page Number	Plan Text - July 2024 Public Draft	Committee Recommendation	Revision
Acknowledgements			Add staff member acknowledgements	
Table of Contents			Include Implementation Chapter	Implementation chapter added. Chapter includes detailed table of actions associated with each policy and responsible agency or organizations.
Introduction	9	<p>The District’s vitality extends to its residential neighborhoods. The earliest subdivisions were within walking distance of a streetcar and offered pedestrian-oriented streets lined by trees and porch-front homes. The District’s residential fabric is diverse -- from vibrant singlefamily estates, to bungalows, to apartments over retail shops.</p> <p>The Tower District is distinguished by its vibrant and diverse community, encompassing a rich mosaic of ethnic groups, families, singles, retirees, students, artists, and workers from various professions. Unlike many other neighborhoods, it thrived during the post-World War II years, maintaining its role as a cultural and entertainment hub. The District features unique Art Deco architecture, pedestrian-friendly streets, and a lively mix of cafes, nightclubs, theaters, bakeries, and specialty retail shops. Beyond the bustling commercial areas, the neighborhood offers a dense blend of offices, apartments, and singlefamily homes. The broad range of housing options, from granny flats to mansions, ensures accessibility for all economic strata and life stages. The dynamic lifestyle of residents manifests through regular art events, live performances, and food festivals.</p>	More mention of quality of the housing and resilience of designs in its bungalows and cottages.	Language added to highlight cottages as distinct architectural feature of the Tower District.
Introduction	12	Figure 1.4 Community Character [SEE MAP ATTACHMENT]	Proposed Historic District? Old Plan Producers. Industrial and commercial uses verified in the area south of Belmont. Correct on this map?	Proposed versus designated historic district differentiated. The industrial/commercial areas were based on available GIS data from a few year ago, changed to a bubble approach for commercial areas to denote the areas of commercial activity but not be site-specific.
Introduction	13	Figure 1.5 Demographics	Should we be comparing these to Fresno as a whole? Add those stats?	Fresno demographics added for comparison.
Introduction	15	<p>The Specific Plan (the Plan) provides strategic and comprehensive guidance for making decisions regarding Tower District’s built environment and landscape character, land use and activities, public open space, community facilities, transportation and other forms of infrastructure. It describes a shared set of goals, objectives, policies, and implementing actions.</p> <p>The Specific Plan also helps to implement goals and policies contained in Fresno’s General Plan, in ways that can be more specific to the District and provide additional planning control. California Government Code Section 65451 authorizes local jurisdictions to adopt specific plans “for the systematic implementation of the general plan for all or part of the area covered by the general plan.”</p> <p>This Plan updates the 1991 Specific Plan, to respond to issues that have remained, changed, and emerged. Recent decades have led to greater emphasis on housing availability and affordability, expanding recreational opportunities, calming auto-oriented roadways, and other issues addressed by the Plan. At the same time, this Plan continues the 1991 Plan’s focus on neighborhood character, walkability, and historic resources.</p>	<p>Since this document replaces the existing plan, we need to make sure nothing is missing that still needs to be done.</p> <p>Items missing so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Implementation Chapter-More emphasis that Tower is not dominated by the automobile-Improving the district’s infrastructure-Completing the landscape of all major streets, median islands, and buffer strips-Missing infrastructure items <p>Futher comparison to ensure all items are covered</p>	<p>Implementation chapter added. Chapter includes detailed table of actions associated with each policy and responsible agency or organizations.</p> <p>Utilities chapter has also been added.</p> <p>Circulation chapter addresses street environment and features policies for streetscape improvements.</p>
Introduction	19	Community vision for Tower District from Community Workshop 1	Include more examples of these work products	Photo of community workshop activity added. Findings of community engagement are addressed in each topic chapter.

ORIENTATION TO TODAY'S WORK

Draft Tower District Specific Plan Update Edits

- ❖ Submitted first draft in July 2024
- ❖ Received Committee comments August 2024
- ❖ Received additional Staff comments
- ❖ Updated draft and presented to the committee in March 2025
- ❖ Received staff comments on updated Admin Draft
- ❖ Revised Committee review draft prepared in July 2025





02

HEALTH AND EQUITY FRAMEWORK



Health and Equity Framing

- ❖ Expand Health and Equity narrative to provide further context.

1.5 Health and Equity Emphasis

Health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being. **Equity is achieved when corrective measures have been taken to enable all people to have the same opportunities. This Specific Plan Update prioritizes health and equity.**

Built environments relate to health and equity in many ways. For example, when land use and transportation patterns require people to use a vehicle to access basic life needs, this has implications for both health and cost of living. An average low-income American household spends nearly 40 percent of its budget on owning, insuring, and fueling cars. In comparison, a walkable community offers local destinations that are accessible by pedestrians. Land use patterns also influence the availability of grocery stores with healthful foods. Street design plays a critical role in providing protected pedestrian and bicycle routes and discouraging motor vehicles at unsafe speeds. Rates of obesity are lower in more walkable locations as daily routines provide physical activity.

Public infrastructure decisions and development patterns over time have resulted in disparate health and equity within the Tower District and in Fresno as a whole.

The construction of Highway 180 in the late 20th century further exacerbated these disparities. Like many freeway projects across the country, its alignment followed patterns of historic disinvestment, cutting through South Tower and severing its connection to adjacent neighborhoods like Lowell and Downtown. The freeway reinforced existing racial and economic divides, disrupting local businesses, displacing families, and increasing air pollution for residents who remained. South Tower, already disadvantaged by redlining, became further isolated, with increased vehicle emissions and truck traffic disproportionately affecting public health. The designated truck routes running through this part of the neighborhood bring high concentrations of diesel emissions, contributing to asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Meanwhile, the widening of State Route 41 enabled more affluent residents to move further north, accelerating the economic decline of older commercial corridors.

¹Rothstein, R. (2017). The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America. Liveright Publishing.

FIGURE 1.9 | Health and Equity Indicators



These decisions continue to shape housing affordability, environmental health, and economic opportunity in the Tower District today. Understanding this history provides essential context for addressing ongoing inequities and ensuring that future planning efforts work toward a more inclusive and equitable Tower District.

To study the present health and equity conditions of the Tower District, six broad categories were used. These are illustrated in Figure 1.9 and described below.

HOUSING STABILITY

High housing costs can lead to housing insecurity, frequent moves, overcrowding, and homelessness, all of which have detrimental effects on physical and mental health. **Most families become unhoused because they are unable to afford housing.** Overcrowded living conditions can increase the spread of infectious diseases, create stressful environments, and exacerbate chronic health conditions.² **Lack of housing creates even more severe impacts on individuals, as well as on the communities where unhoused people live.**

ACCESS TO JOBS

Employment provides the financial resources needed for individuals and families to maintain their health and well-being. Job accessibility

²American Hospital Association, "Housing and Health: A Roadmap for the Future," Chicago IL, online at <https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2021/03/housing-and-health-roadmap.pdf> (as of June 2024).

Health & Equity Indicators

- ❖ Replace Safety with Air Quality. Safety topics related to road safety to be addressed under Active Lifestyle.
- ❖ Revise Housing Burden to Housing Stability to be in line with other indicators.

Old Indicators



Revised Indicators



Health & Equity Considerations

- ❖ Integrate Health and Equity at the beginning of each chapter to highlight key issues.
- ❖ Add topic-specific Health and Equity narrative to provide context.

CIRCULATION

5.1 Tower District Context

The Tower District was settled as a streetcar suburb in the early 20th century before the rise of the automobile. Streetcar lines extended northward along Fulton Street to Olive Avenue, north along Wishon Avenue, west along Olive Avenue, and north along Blackstone Avenue. Development over time occurred within an expanding street grid, with major streets spaced uniformly every half mile. The District's street pattern offers motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians a variety of possible routes to get to local destinations. The connective street grid makes walking and bicycling routes more direct, and disperses vehicle traffic among multiple routes rather than concentrating traffic on wide arterial roadways.



Typical residential street



Human-scaled main street along Olive Avenue

Tower District streets serve a variety of transportation modes, from motor vehicles (including trucks), bus transit, to micro-mobility (including bicycles). Transportation improvements starting in the mid-20th century have generally sought to accommodate vehicles, often sacrificing sidewalks and pedestrian comfort. Still, the grid pattern, human-scaled streets, sidewalks, and trees provide a healthy walkable, bike-friendly, environment in much of the area.

Ambitious programs for bicycle improvements have emerged as a priority both nationally and locally, as bicycle-related infrastructure improvements have been implemented in Tower District. Improving walkability and keeping pedestrians safe is a top priority. Although "walkability" and "accessibility" are not exactly interchangeable and can have different meanings in different contexts, when this plan discusses places that are walkable the intended meaning is that they are accessible: nearby and safely accesses on foot.

The Tower District is also served by multiple bus routes and high-frequency service along Blackstone Avenue. Bus service is provided by Fresno Area Express (FAX), which provides transit service in Fresno and surrounding communities. As of 2024, the Tower District is served by eight fixed-route local bus lines, as well as enhanced bus rapid transit (BRT) service along Blackstone Avenue, and several of these lines provide direct service to destinations downtown. FAX also offers a paratransit "Handy Ride" service designed to meet the transportation needs of eligible persons with limited ability, who would find it difficult to use of FAX's fixed-route bus system.

Across transportation modes, much still needs to be done to serve the community needs in effective and balanced ways. To that end, Fresno's General Plan promotes "complete streets" that enable safe,

Health and Equity Considerations

- **Traffic Safety and Injury Risks:** Wide streets and high vehicle speeds on major corridors create unsafe conditions for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, increasing the risk of traffic-related injuries and fatalities. In the Tower District, key roads like McKinley Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Blackstone Avenue experience a high frequency of collisions, especially at intersections. Cut-through traffic in the neighborhoods adds to safety hazards in the area. Tower District is a very walkable neighborhood, but gaps in pedestrian infrastructure pose safety risks for the community.
- **Public Transit Accessibility:** While the Tower District has multiple bus routes, transit frequency and coverage may not fully meet the needs of residents who rely on it for jobs, healthcare, and daily necessities, particularly shift workers and lower-income populations. Transit users often experience long wait times, limited late-night service, and inadequate stop infrastructure such as shelters and seating. These issues disproportionately affect those without cars, including seniors, students, and low-income residents.
- **Impact of Regional Freeways on Connectivity and Neighborhood Disruption:** The construction of regional freeway infrastructure, including State Route 180, has influenced mobility patterns in and around the Tower District. Like many freeway projects in urban areas across the country, the expansion of Highway 180 introduced significant changes to the built environment, altering the connections between neighborhoods, shifting commercial activity, and increasing traffic-related air quality concerns. The freeway's alignment created a physical separation between South Tower and adjacent neighborhoods such as Lowell and Downtown, affecting historical community ties and the economic vitality of nearby commercial districts. Over time, changes in transportation infrastructure and regional development patterns have contributed to shifting land use trends, including reduced investment in older commercial corridors and localized air quality challenges near high-traffic roadways for part of the south and eastern Tower District.
- **Disproportionate Exposure to Air Pollution:** Residents living near major roadways face elevated pollution levels that can lead to serious health issues such as respiratory illnesses and heart disease. In the Tower District, those living near Highway 180, Blackstone Ave, and designated truck routes face some of the highest concentrations of vehicle emissions, including diesel particulate matter from heavy freight traffic. In South Tower, the combined effects of being close to freeways and increased truck traffic have created a significant environmental burden for the residents, many of whom belong to historically underserved communities.
- **Lack of Shade and Heat Exposure:** Many streets in the Tower District lack sufficient tree canopy, intensifying the urban heat island effect and making walking, biking, and waiting for transit uncomfortable, especially in the South Tower area. Key routes like Olive Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Blackstone Avenue show increased heat exposure for pedestrians and transit users. This issue disproportionately impacts lower-income residents who often lack access to air conditioning or personal vehicles.

Health & Equity Effects

- ❖ Add Health and Equity Effect summary at the end of each chapter after the objective to summarize positive and negative impact on each indicator.

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Health and Equity Effects

The Circulation policies strive to improve accessibility, mobility, and safety while promoting health and equity for all residents. These policies support a more walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-oriented environment, reinforcing social equity while reducing vehicular dependence. Below, we analyze the impact of these policies on essential health and equity categories to gain a clearer understanding of their overall effect on community well-being. For a detailed breakdown of policy-specific impacts, refer to Appendix A, which provides a matrix evaluating each circulation policy across key health and equity indicators.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMFORT

Environmental comfort is a critical consideration in circulation planning, particularly in addressing urban heat island effects and pedestrian experience. Policies such as **C 8.5: Planting street trees** and **C 4.5: Enhancing landscape buffering** help reduce heat retention on streets and sidewalks, improving shade coverage and overall climate resilience. These efforts are especially important in low-income areas, where limited tree canopy and cooling infrastructure make residents more vulnerable to heat stress and extreme temperatures. Additionally, policies that promote pedestrian-friendly design, such as **C 2.1: Adding pedestrian safety elements** and **C 2.2: Conducting a Sidewalk Gap Study**, enhance walkability by addressing gaps in infrastructure and ensuring safer, more comfortable routes for non-motorized users. Together, these strategies contribute to a healthier and more livable urban environment, reinforcing equitable access to safe and comfortable public spaces in the Tower District.

ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

The Circulation policies play a significant role in promoting an active lifestyle by making walking, biking, and public transit more safe, accessible, and convenient. Policies such as **C 1.3: Encourage active transportation modes** and **C 2.1: Add pedestrian safety elements** directly support physical activity by improving bike lanes, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings, encouraging more people to walk and bike instead of drive. Additionally, **C 1.10: Encourage Green Alleys** enhances safe, comfortable spaces for walking and biking, while **C 8.5: Plant street trees** improves shade and environmental comfort, making active transportation more appealing in hot weather. Some policies, such as **C 6.2: Evaluate demand and location for bicycle parking** and **C 2.2: Conduct a Sidewalk Gap Study**, have an indirect impact by removing barriers to active mobility, ensuring that infrastructure improvements support walking and biking as viable transportation options.

AIR QUALITY

Many circulation policies have positive impacts on air quality by reducing reliance on private vehicles and minimizing exposure to harmful emissions. Policies such as **C 1.3: Encouraging active transportation modes** and **C 1.10: Encouraging Green Alleys** expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, helping lower transportation-related emissions by shifting trips away from cars. **C 5.1: Rerouting truck traffic** specifically aims to reduce pollution exposure in residential areas, particularly in South Tower, where designated truck routes contribute to high concentrations of diesel emissions and particulate matter. Similarly, **C 4.1: Vehicular improvements at McKinley and Blackstone** helps mitigate congestion, which can reduce localized emissions hotspots.

ACCESS TO JOBS

Access to jobs is strengthened by policies that improve transit connectivity and expand multi-modal options. Policies such as **C 1.5: Increasing transit frequency** and **C 1.6: Increasing late-night transportation options** improve job accessibility, particularly for service and shift workers who rely on public transportation at non-peak hours. Additionally, **C 1.7: Establishing mobility hubs** creates centralized transfer points that improve last-mile connectivity, making it easier for residents to commute to employment centers beyond the Tower District.

ACCESS TO FOOD

The Circulation policies impact access to food by improving connectivity and mobility, making it easier for residents to reach grocery stores and food retailers. Policies such as **C 1.1: Improve multi-modal functions of key corridors** and **C 1.5: Increase transit frequency** enhance transportation options, ensuring that more people—especially those without cars—can access food more conveniently. Additionally, policies like **C 2.1: Add pedestrian safety elements** and **C 6.2: Evaluate demand and location for bicycle parking** have indirect benefits by improving walkability and biking access, making trips to food sources safer and more convenient. However, while these policies improve physical access, they do not directly address food affordability or food deserts.

HOUSING BURDEN

Housing burden is minimally affected by circulation improvements, with most policies having a neutral impact. However, some parking and transportation demand management policies **C 6.6: New development** may indirectly alleviate housing costs by reducing the need for excessive on-site parking, potentially lowering housing construction costs and increasing residential density.

Health & Equity Appendix

❖ Health and Equity evaluation for each policy in the Tower District Specific Plan.




HEALTH AND EQUITY INDICATORS + EVALUATION

INDICATOR	HEALTH	EQUITY
Air Quality	Focuses on how air pollution directly impacts human health, including respiratory diseases, cardiovascular issues, and exposure to toxins. Policies that reduce vehicle emissions, improve indoor air quality, or limit industrial pollution contribute to better health outcomes.	Examines whether certain communities—especially lower-income and marginalized populations—experience disproportionate exposure to air pollution due to their location near industrial zones, highways, or poor housing conditions. Policies should address environmental justice concerns by reducing air pollution in vulnerable communities.
Environmental Comfort	Focuses on how heat exposure, shade, and climate resilience affect physical well-being. Policies that increase tree canopy, mitigate urban heat islands, or provide cooling infrastructure improve cardiovascular health and prevent heat-related illnesses.	Examines whether low-income and vulnerable populations have equal access to shaded areas, green infrastructure, and climate adaptation strategies. Historically, poorer neighborhoods lack trees and suffer higher temperatures, exacerbating health risks for at-risk groups.
Active Lifestyle	Focuses on how access to safe sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and recreational spaces affects physical activity levels, which in turn influence obesity, cardiovascular health, and mental well-being. Policies that promote walkability and active transportation lead to better health outcomes.	Examines whether all communities—regardless of income or race—have equal access to safe spaces for physical activity. Many lower-income areas lack pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, making it harder for residents to engage in active lifestyles.

INDICATOR	HEALTH	EQUITY
Access to Food	Focuses on whether people have reliable access to fresh, nutritious food to support overall well-being and prevent diet-related illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Policies that increase proximity to grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food options improve public health.	Examines whether certain populations face systemic barriers to accessing affordable, healthy food due to food deserts, high grocery prices, or lack of transportation. Policies should address food insecurity in historically underserved areas.
Housing Stability	Focuses on how housing affects physical and mental health (e.g., overcrowding, indoor air quality, access to healthcare).	Focuses on who has access to affordable housing and whether certain groups are disproportionately affected by housing costs or displacement.
Access to Jobs	Focuses on how proximity to employment opportunities impacts mental and physical health. Long commutes, job insecurity, and lack of access to stable employment contribute to stress, financial strain, and reduced well-being. Policies that reduce travel time to jobs and increase employment opportunities can improve health outcomes.	Examines whether historically disadvantaged communities have equal access to stable, well-paying jobs. Low-income workers and people of color often face barriers such as lack of public transit, discrimination in hiring, or job displacement due to economic changes. Policies should ensure equitable access to employment opportunities.

Evaluation Symbology

In evaluating the health and equity impacts of each policy, symbols were used to represent the direction of impact across six key indicators.

-  Indicates a positive impact, meaning the policy is expected to advance health and/or equity outcomes for that category.
-  Represents a neutral or limited impact, where the policy may have minimal or indirect effects.
-  Denotes a potential negative impact, suggesting the policy could unintentionally worsen conditions for health or equity unless carefully mitigated.

Health & Equity
Appendix

❖ Health and Equity evaluation for each policy in the Tower District Specific Plan.

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CIRCULATION

Policy Recommendations	Air Quality		Environmental comfort		Active Lifestyle		Access to Food		Housing Stability		Access to Jobs	
	H	E	H	E	H	E	H	E	H	E	H	E
C 1 Improve Tower District streets to enhance access using all modes of transportation and create a better environment.												
C 1.1 Improve the multi-modal functions of key corridors.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	+	+
C 1.2 Enhance Main Streets.	○	○	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 1.3 Encourage active transportation modes by improving bicycle access, safety, and comfort for users of all ages and abilities.	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	+	+
C 1.4 Provide universal accessibility.	○	○	○	○	+	+	+	+	○	○	+	+
C 1.5 Increase transit frequency.	+	+	○	○	○	○	+	+	○	○	+	+
C 1.6 Increase late night transportation options.	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	+	+
C 1.7 Establish mobility hubs.	○	+	○	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	+	+
C 1.8 Improve transit amenities.	○	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 1.9 Coordinate curbside activities.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 1.10 Encourage "Green Alleys."	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 2 Focus circulation improvements on pedestrian safety.												
C 2.1 Add pedestrian safety elements.	○	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	+	+
C 2.2 Conduct a Sidewalk Gap Study.	○	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	+	+

Policy Recommendations	Air Quality		Environmental comfort		Active Lifestyle		Access to Food		Housing Stability		Access to Jobs	
	H	E	H	E	H	E	H	E	H	E	H	E
C 3 Enhance safety on local interior neighborhood streets.												
C 3.1 Calm vehicular traffic.	+	+	○	○	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 3.2 Provide mid-block crossings in critical locations in accordance with requirements established by the Department of Public Works.	○	+	○	○	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 4 Initiate projects that help mitigate adverse impacts resulting from regional circulation improvements.												
C 4.1 Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to complete the planned vehicular improvements at McKinley and Blackstone Avenues and support the installation of enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	+	+
C 4.2 Initiate pedestrian improvements at the SR 180 Access Ramps.	+	+	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 4.3 Address change to local traffic from High-Speed Rail improvements and State Route 99 ramp closures.	+	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 4.4 Address motorist needs and potential impacts from vehicles during special events.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 4.5 Enhance and maintain landscape buffering.	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
C 5 Minimize the impact of truck traffic on the residential neighborhoods of the Tower District.												
C 5.1 Rerouting of truck traffic.	+	+	+	+	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○



03

OTHER CHANGES



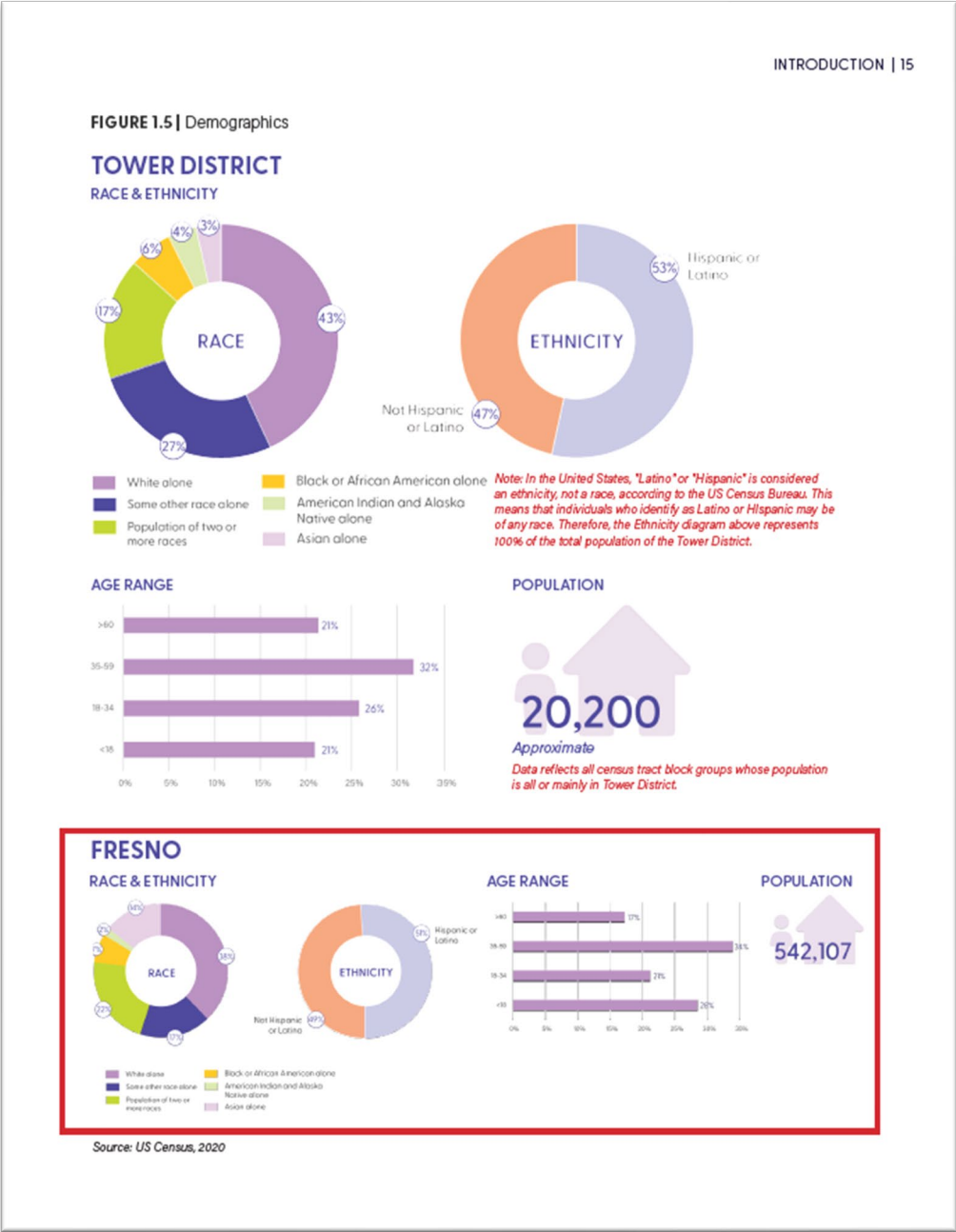
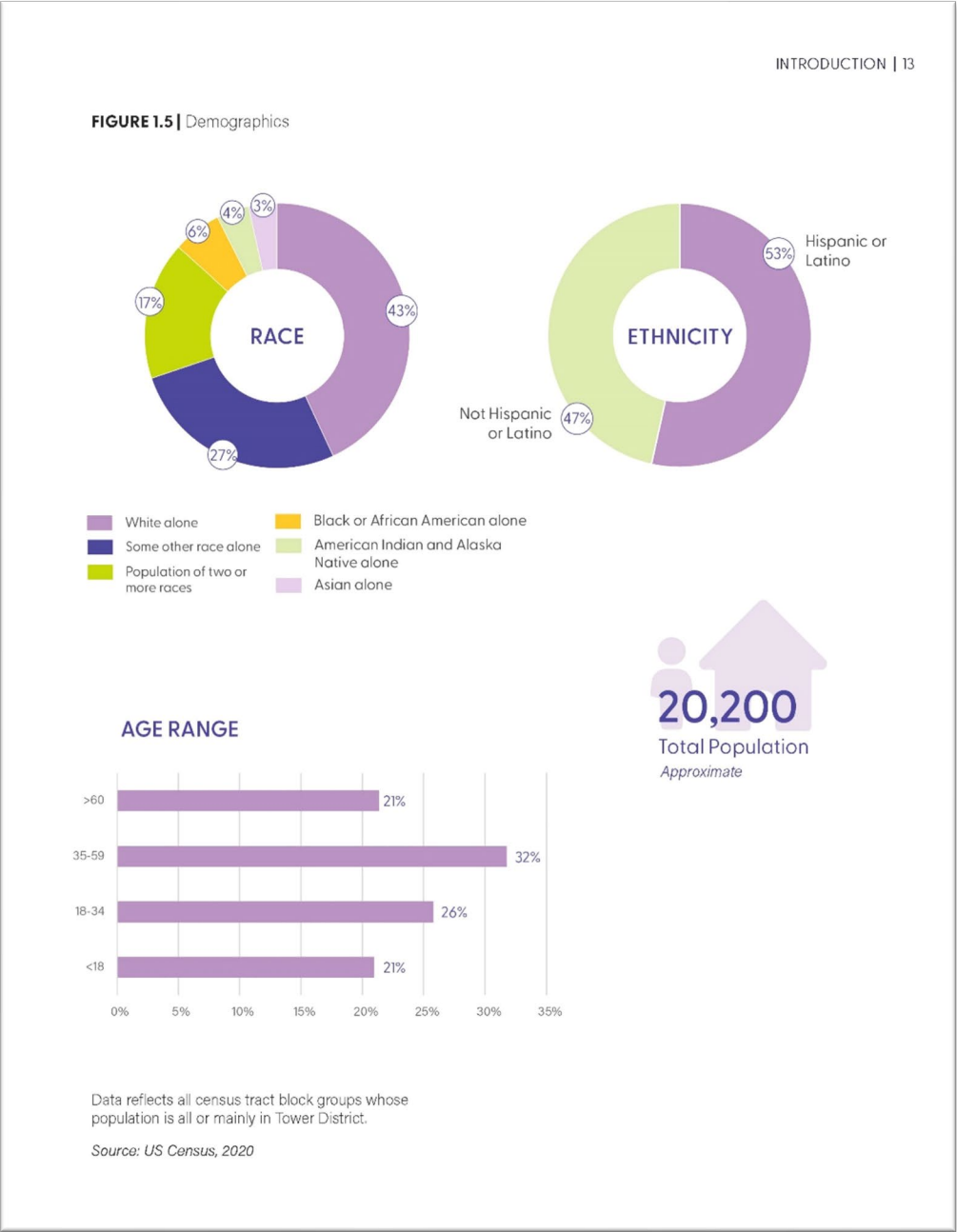


01

INTRODUCTION

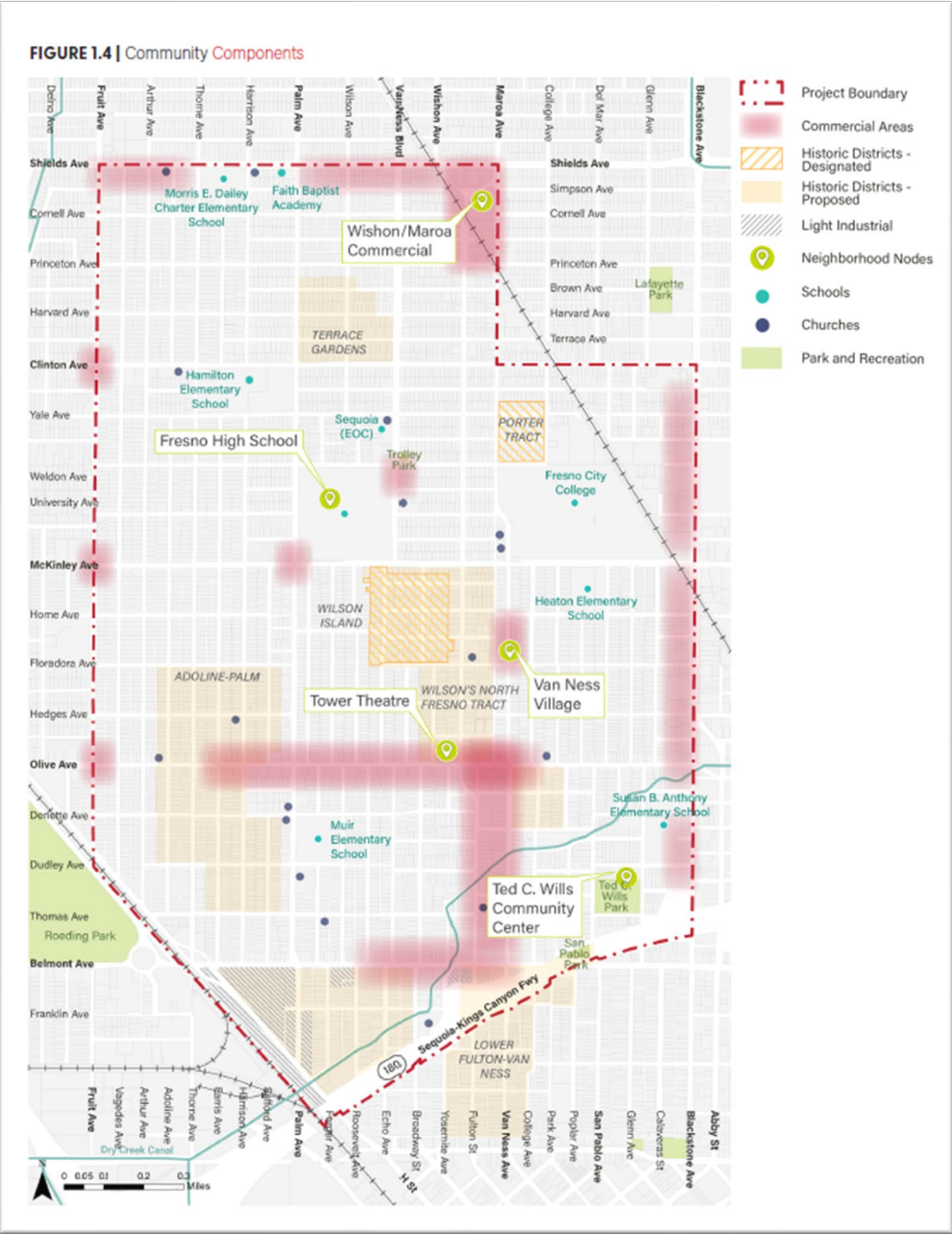
Demographic Comparison

- ❖ Context about “Latino/Hispanic” as an ethnicity
- ❖ Comparative City of Fresno demographics



Community Character

- ❖ Generalized commercial areas
- ❖ Distinction between existing and potential historic districts



Regulatory orientation

- ❖ Added narrative to describe how Specific Plan “works” in tandem with General Plan and zoning
- ❖ Added summary of how Guiding Principles, Objectives and Policies appear in the Specific Plan

1.3 Relationship with General Plan and Zoning

This Plan replaces the 1991 Tower District Specific Plan and is formally adopted by resolution, making it a regulatory document governing land use and guiding public investments in the Tower District.

Per California Government Code Sections 65450 et seq., a specific plan may be adopted to implement the general plan for a defined area, with text and diagrams specifying land use, streets and infrastructure; standards and criteria by which development and conservation will proceed; and a program of implementation measures. The specific plan is required to be consistent with the general plan.

To that end, this Plan will be accompanied by changes to designated land use and zoning, to be codified in amendments to the General Plan, adopted by resolution, and amendments to zoning, approved by Ordinance.

Meanwhile, the Tower District Design Guidelines adopted in 2005 are replaced by updated Tower District Design Standards & Guidelines. These Standards and Guidelines reflect the spirit and policy direction of this Plan Update, and are intended to result in compatible development, using objective metrics to the greatest extent possible.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that evaluates the potential effects on the environment of the Plan and its related plan amendments and rezones is certified. Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations are adopted, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program are approved.

work to move people and goods, while they also serve to support community life as vital public spaces. The chapter focuses on circulation across the overall street network and the design of streets themselves.

CHAPTER 6: UTILITIES

Existing utility infrastructure is currently in place - no new policies were needed for this plan, however, a **general** description of existing utilities is included in the Plan.

CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation chapter outlines the key actions needed to carry out the objectives and policies presented in the preceding chapters. It identifies responsible parties, funding considerations, and timeframes to ensure the Plan's vision is realized over time.

1.7 Guiding Principles, Objectives and Policies

This Plan features three levels of regulatory guidance: Guiding Principles, Objectives, and Policies. The **Guiding Principles** are discussed at the end of this Chapter 1 and they provide the broadest level of value-based intention. Each of the topic chapters that follows (Chapters 2 through 6) features a set of **Objectives** and **Policies**. The Objectives direct the City to take broad actions in a variety of categories and policies provide more detailed guidance for achieving those Objectives. These appear in the Plan using the following colors and format:

[CHAPTER CODE] 1: OBJECTIVE TITLE.

[CHAPTER CODE] 1.1 Policy Title.

Policy statement where provided below Policy Title, to be considered part of the policy itself.



02

**CONSERVATION
AND HISTORIC
PRESERVATION**

Health and Equity Considerations

CONSERVATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2.1 Historic Context

The Tower District is an exemplary representation of a longstanding pre-World War streetcar suburb. The District began to develop in the early part of the 20th century as one of Fresno's first suburbs, facilitated by streetcar lines that extended from Downtown Fresno and provided access to what was once farmland at the edge of the city.

When the Fresno Traction Company's streetcars extended into the area, a mix of apartment houses, small bungalows, and large homes evolved. As property values rose, the neighborhood became denser and more diverse, and commercial areas were established in locations near streetcar service.



Historic streetcar running along Fulton Street
Source: Interurbans Publications



Commercial storefront with big windows to engage pedestrians
Source: Fresno Bee Editorial Archives



Royce Hall, Fresno High in 1960s



Van Ness Boulevard
Source: Wayne Paperboy & Printing Corp.

Health and Equity Considerations

- **Balancing Growth with Neighborhood Character:** If not carefully managed, new development can lead to displacement and reduced housing access. Integrating growth with preservation goals is essential to support community stability and equitable access to housing and services.
- **Limiting Affordable Housing Options:** Regulations protecting historic buildings can restrict housing development and density, limiting opportunities for affordable housing construction or adaptive reuse.
- **Unequal Representation in Preservation Efforts:** Past preservation policies have often focused on architectural history over cultural and social histories, potentially overlooking historically marginalized communities' contributions to the District's identity.
- **Economic Challenges for Small Businesses in Historic Buildings:** Older commercial buildings may require costly retrofits for accessibility, energy efficiency, and seismic safety, creating financial burdens for small business owners and limiting economic activity.
- **Environmental Quality of Older Buildings:** Many historic structures may have poor ventilation, lead paint, or asbestos, contributing to indoor air quality issues and health risks for residents and businesses.



Tower Theater

During the decades after World War II, conventions in development and neighborhood design changed dramatically. As emphasis shifted from streetcars and pedestrians to the automobile, traditional building style changed from street-facing patterns to parking lots which lined public streets, changing the District's character. The Tower District remained resilient, as the walkable traditional fabric of the District remained mostly intact.

Against this backdrop, Tower District community members organized to protect the District's traditional fabric – beginning in the 1980s and leading to the adoption of the District's first Specific Plan in 1991. **This plan emphasized conservation of existing traditional housing stock, as well as streetscape elements and streetscape improvements in specific areas of the Tower District.** Community member involvement – and strong interest in the area's history and historic preservation – continues to this day.

Racially restrictive covenants legally barred nonwhite and immigrant residents from purchasing homes in areas classified as "best", including Wilson Island and the area around Van Ness Boulevard in the Tower District, ensuring that only white families benefited from homeownership opportunities.

Figure 2.1: Redlining Map of Fresno, 1936 shows the Redlining map of Fresno from 1936, classifying neighborhoods as: A (Best), B (Still Desirable), C (Declining), and D (Hazardous). These classifications

Redlining in the Tower District

❖ Narrative and map added to illustrate the impact on Tower District

Health and Equity Considerations

- **Balancing Growth with Neighborhood Character:** If not carefully managed, new development can lead to displacement and reduced housing access. Integrating growth with preservation goals is essential to support community stability and equitable access to housing and services.
- **Limiting Affordable Housing Options:** Regulations protecting historic buildings can restrict housing development and density, limiting opportunities for affordable housing construction or adaptive reuse.
- **Unequal Representation in Preservation Efforts:** Past preservation policies have often focused on architectural history over cultural and social histories, potentially overlooking historically marginalized communities' contributions to the District's identity.
- **Economic Challenges for Small Businesses in Historic Buildings:** Older commercial buildings may require costly retrofits for accessibility, energy efficiency, and seismic safety, creating financial burdens for small business owners and limiting economic activity.
- **Environmental Quality of Older Buildings:** Many historic structures may have poor ventilation, lead paint, or asbestos, contributing to indoor air quality issues and health risks for residents and businesses.



Tower Theater

During the decades after World War II, conventions in development and neighborhood design changed dramatically. As emphasis shifted from streetcars and pedestrians to the automobile, traditional building style changed from street-facing patterns to parking lots which lined public streets, changing the District's character. The Tower District remained resilient, as the walkable traditional fabric of the District remained mostly intact.

Against this backdrop, Tower District community members organized to protect the District's traditional fabric – beginning in the 1980s and leading to the adoption of the District's first Specific Plan in 1991. This plan emphasized conservation of existing traditional housing stock, as well as streetscape elements and streetscape improvements in specific areas of the Tower District. Community member involvement – and strong interest in the area's history and historic preservation – continues to this day.

Racially restrictive covenants legally barred nonwhite and immigrant residents from purchasing homes in areas classified as "best", including Wilson Island and the area around Van Ness Boulevard in the Tower District, ensuring that only white families benefited from homeownership opportunities.

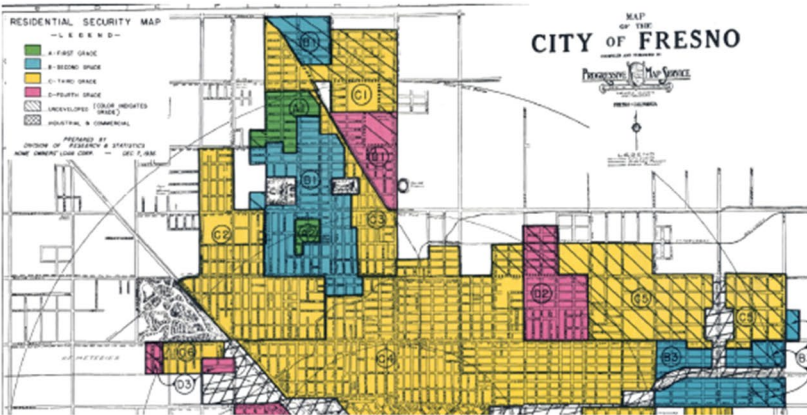
Figure 2.1: Redlining Map of Fresno, 1936 shows the Redlining map of Fresno from 1936, classifying neighborhoods as: A (Best), B (Still Desirable), C (Declining), and D (Hazardous). These classifications

were based on racial and ethnic composition, with neighborhoods that had Black, Mexican, Armenian, and Asian populations automatically receiving lower ratings.

The consequences of these classifications are still visible in Tower District today. The neighborhoods once graded as "A", including Wilson Island and the area around Van Ness Boulevard, remain largely residential with preserved historic character and stable home values, protected by zoning and historic districts. However, the areas marked as "C" or "D", including much of South Tower District, struggled with decades of disinvestment, leading to aging infrastructure, limited financial resources for homeowners, and declining commercial corridors. These neighborhoods also became the most vulnerable to speculative investment, rising rents, and displacement pressures, as reinvestment efforts often led to gentrification rather than equitable development.⁸

As if anticipated by the 1991 Specific Plan, cities across the country experienced a renaissance during recent decades. In many cities, downtowns and more urban neighborhoods gained population for the first time since the 1940s, as people increasingly valued traditional

FIGURE 2.1| Redlining Map of Fresno, 1936

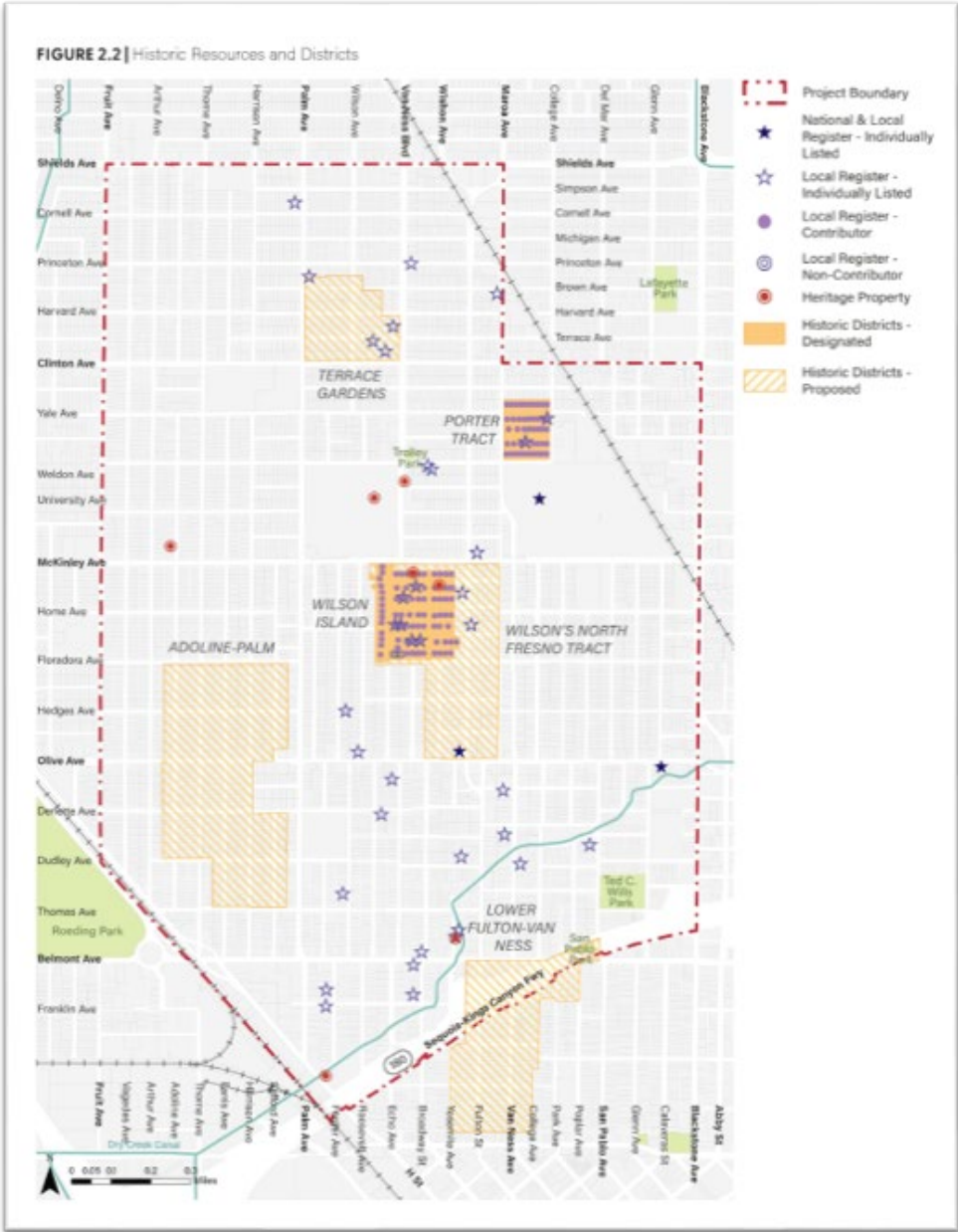


⁸ Chapple, K., & Loukaitou-Sideris, A. (2019). Transit-Oriented Displacement or Community Dividends? Understanding the Effects of Smarter Growth on Communities. MIT Press.

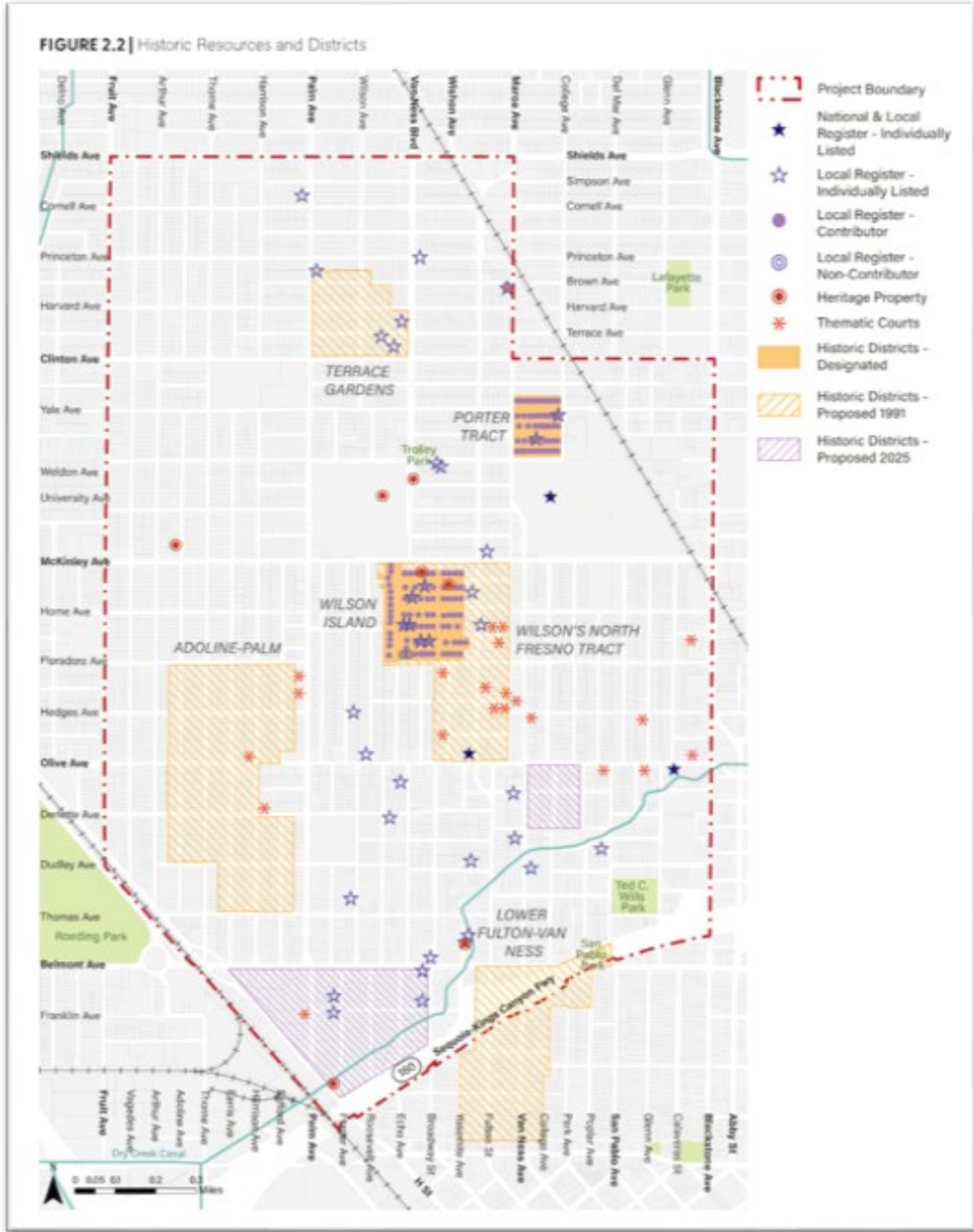
Historic Resources and Districts

- ❖ New districts for historic designation.
- ❖ Thematic courts added from the 1991 plan.

July 2024 Draft



June 2025 Draft



Additional Historic Designation Studies

- ❖ Add Policy CHP 1.5 to respond to the direction to add new districts for historic designation.

44 | TOWER DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN

CHP 1.5 Initiate a study for the historic designation of the following areas:

- **Area bounded by Olive and Van Ness, down to Elizabeth and San Pablo - east of Van Ness**
- **South of Belmont, West of Broadway**

Prioritize these areas for historic resource surveys and the evaluation of designated and potential resources, to provide for their potential designation as historic districts.

CHP 1.6 In keeping with the historic designation status, protect the Tower Theater as a community asset in alignment with the historic preservation ordinance.

CHP 1.7 Evaluate designation of potential resources in the public right-of-way.

Using historic resource survey(s) and community engagement for guidance, identify and evaluate public realm design elements that may be eligible for historic designation. These elements should be researched for their historic significance and, if eligible, nominated for designation accordingly. Elements located in the Tower District that have been discussed as potential resources include but are not limited to the following:

- Historic hitching posts
- Van Ness Avenue "pineapple" streetlights
- Historic signage
- Sidewalk WPA stamps
- Stone gateway features on Palm and Van Ness

CHP 1.8 Highlight assets important to community identity

Buildings, structures, objects, and sites that are not eligible for listing or designation as historic resources may still contribute to the character and identity of the community. These can include:

- Buildings that house or once housed long-term local businesses or institutions.
- Neighborhood-serving commercial nodes such as Weldon and



03

LAND USE

Health and Equity Considerations

LAND USE

3.1 Role of Land Use Planning

Land use planning establishes standards for types, uses and activities, as well as their relative intensity and density, in the context of a community's values and needs. Land use policies and regulations are used to avoid potential conflicts and provide community benefits. They provide a valuable tool for addressing a wide range of social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Land use intersects with all other aspects of the urban environment, from transportation to housing, economic development, infrastructure, and urban design.

In this Specific Plan, the land use map and objectives and policies help achieve the community's desired character, diverse and affordable housing, commercial activity, industrial employment and compatibility, recreation and education and economic development and feasibility.

3.2 Local Setting

Land use patterns in the Tower District are typical of American streetcar suburbs. Residents would walk to streetcar stops on foot, so residential growth was compact. Because residents converged at stops along the streetcar line, commercial development coalesced in those locations and formed Tower District's commercial corridors along Fulton, Olive, Belmont, Wishon, and Blackstone. Some of the buildings with commercial uses were accompanied by upstairs apartments that provided workforce housing.

Single-family residential uses comprise over half of the District's land area. Detached single-family homes are situated on lots that are typically 5,000 to 8,000 square feet -- about 5 to 8 dwelling units per net acre. In the Tower District, most residential neighborhoods have houses and multifamily buildings whose principal entrances and porches face the street. Some commercial streets retain their original pattern, with storefronts along the edge of public sidewalks. The walkability that accompanied this period of streetcar suburb development has left a legacy of livability that is enjoyed today.

Over time, many parcels with pedestrian-oriented commercial uses were redeveloped to make way for auto-oriented commercial developments that put parking lots near the street and position building entrances to face the parking lots. Parking lots generally comprise more than half of auto-oriented sites, which results in lower development intensity than pedestrian-oriented commercial.

Health and Equity Considerations

- **Housing Affordability and Displacement:** Long term residents are potentially vulnerable to displacement if Tower District becomes a more desirable place to live. Balancing new development with affordability protections is important.
- **Commercial Vitality:** Some neighborhood-serving retail corridors have experienced disinvestment, leading to vacant storefronts and reduced economic opportunities for small businesses and workers. Greater vibrancy could create additional economic opportunities.
- **Air Quality Concerns:** Proximity to major roadways like Blackstone Avenue and Highway 180 and truck traffic from industrial land uses exposes residents to air pollution, affecting public health and quality of life.
- **Access to Food:** Some areas lack grocery stores and fresh food options, making it more difficult for residents to access healthy food within walking or transit distance.



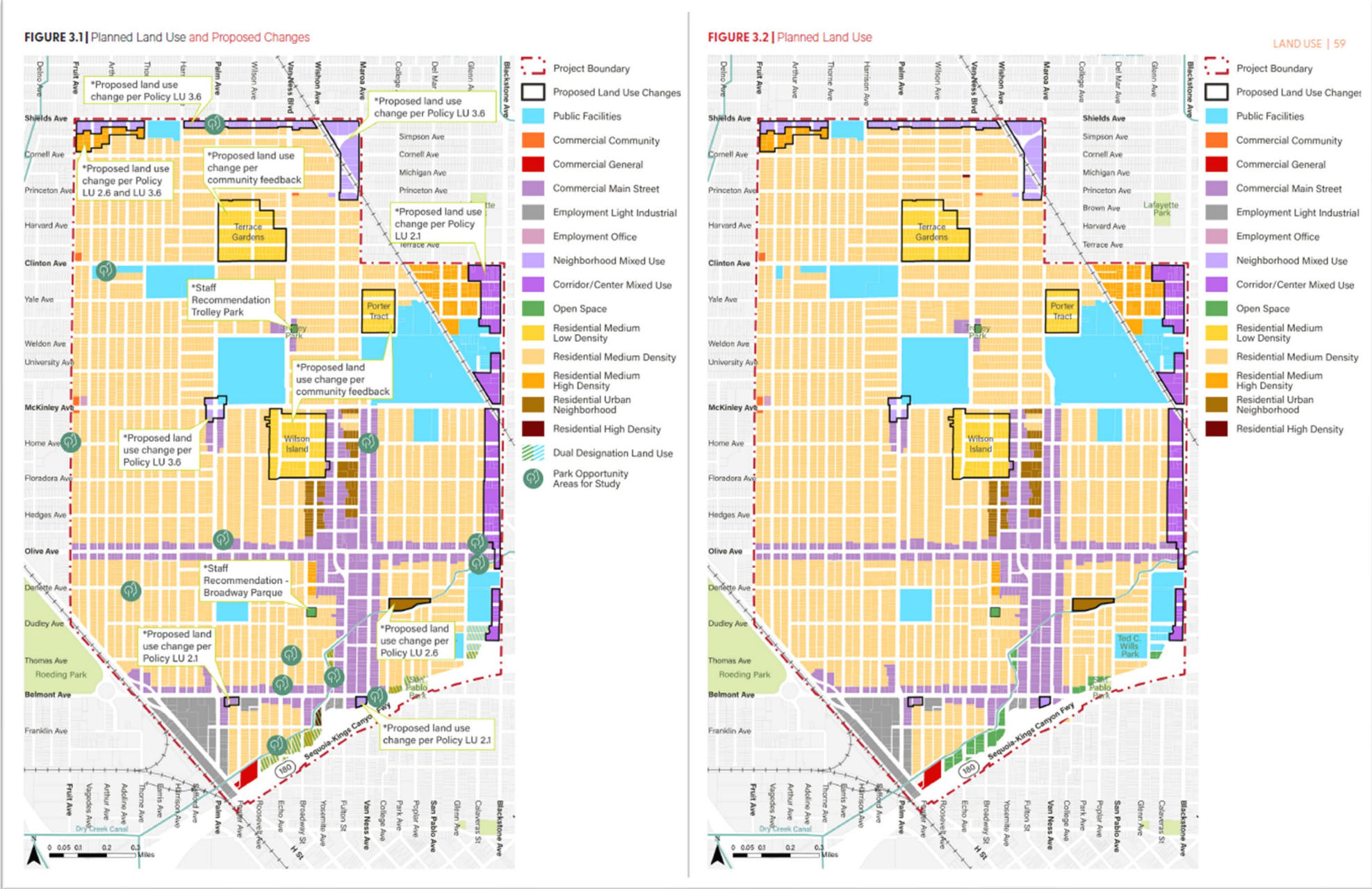
Pedestrian oriented commercial use invites people to populate and activate the street and creates a sense of place.



Auto-oriented commercial use does little to encourage people to spend time in a place and therefore does not foster active community spaces.

Clean Planned Land Use Map

❖ Planned Land Use
map for adoption.



Overlay Districts

- ❖ Remove Neighborhood Revitalization Overlay. Design standards and guidelines used instead.
- ❖ Differentiate Apartment Overlay existing and proposed.

FIGURE 3.3 | Planned Overlay Districts

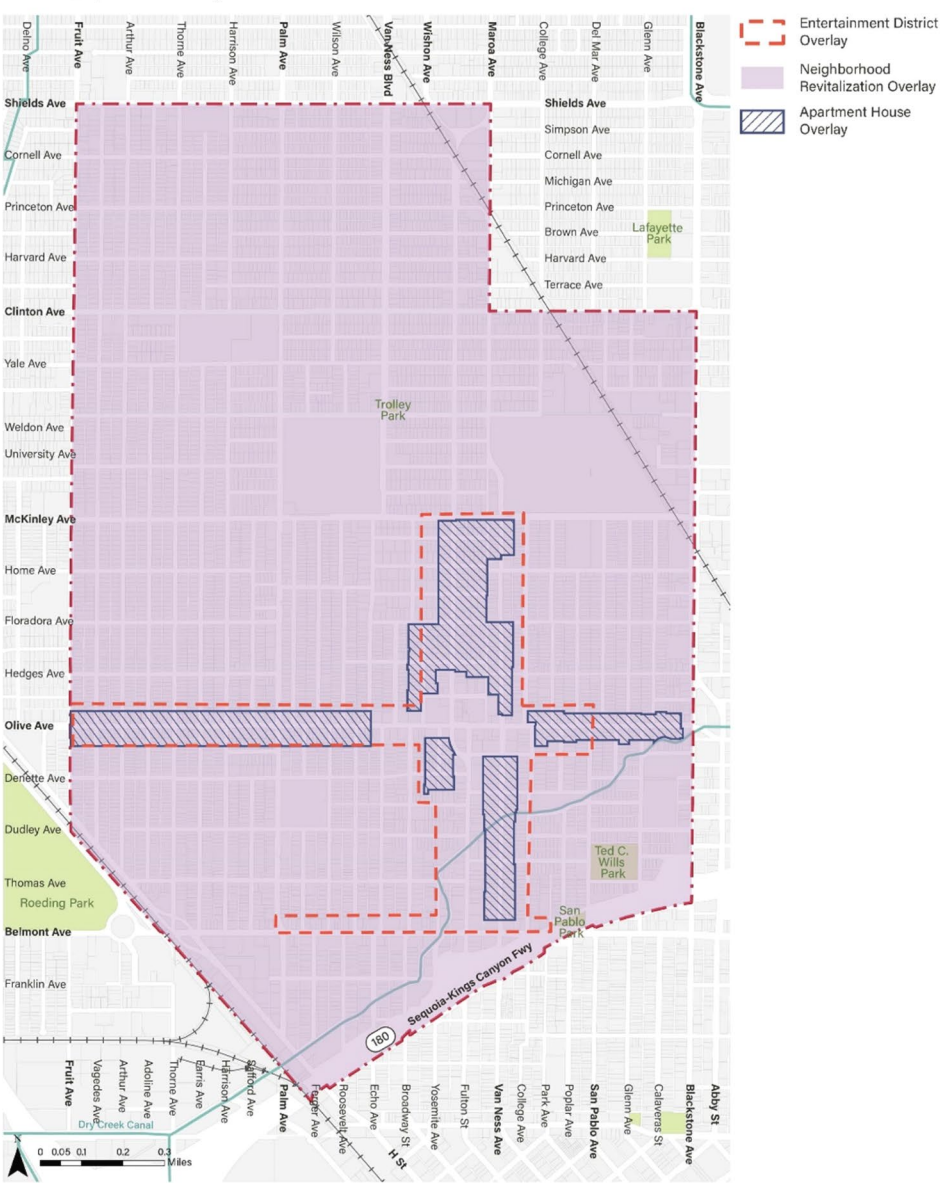
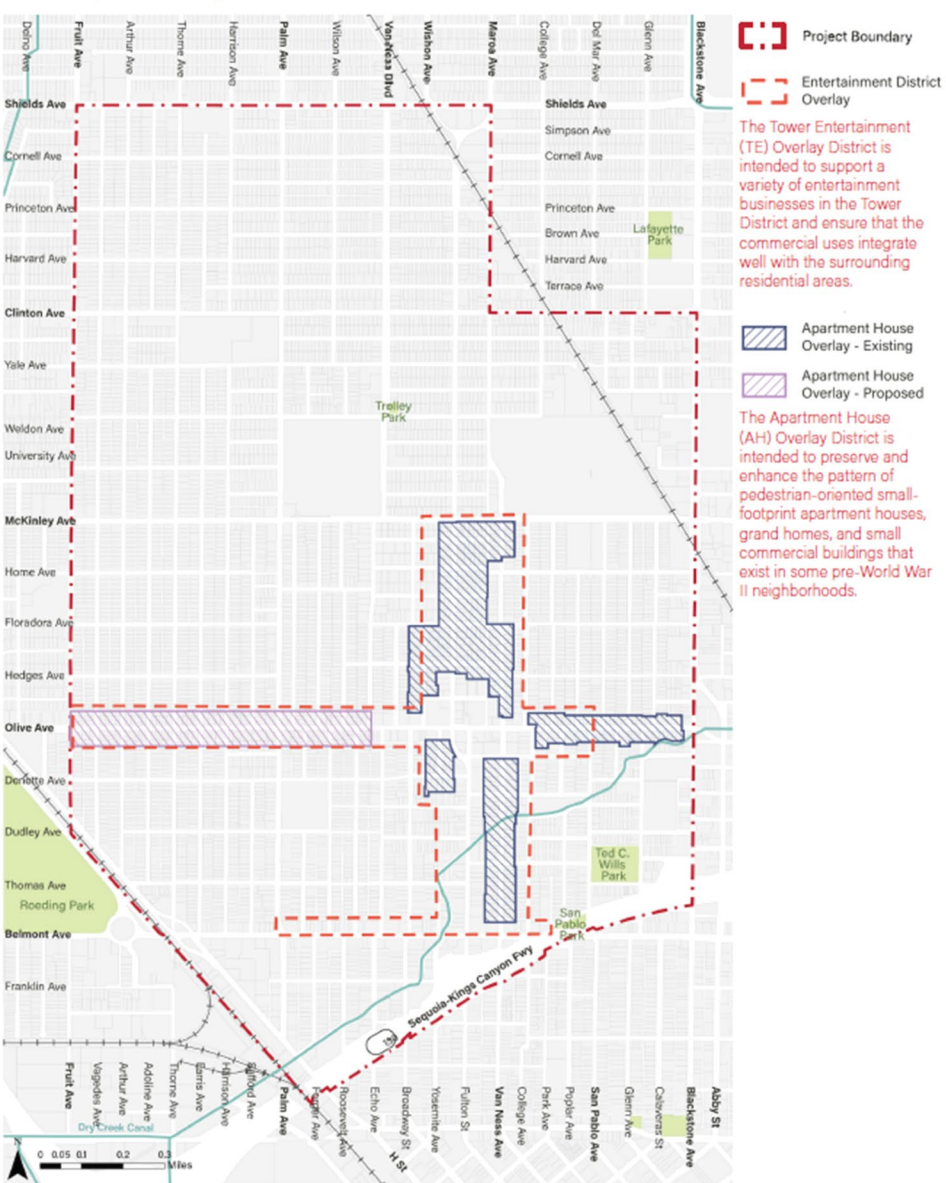


FIGURE 3.3 | Planned Overlay Districts



Diverse and Affordable Housing

3.4 Diverse and Affordable Housing

Housing addresses the human need for shelter and is foundational to more livable neighborhoods. Household needs and preferences vary, as do wealth and income – highlighting the need for a diversity of housing options. Affordable housing addresses challenges that arise when existing housing is in limited supply relative to demand, and costs of developing new housing are high.

In response, the predominance of single-family housing in the Tower District may need to be balanced with the creation of more multi-family dwelling units and “missing-middle” housing. Missing-middle housing describes multi-family housing types that are comparable in scale with larger single-family homes. Varieties include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, courtyard apartments, bungalow courts, townhouses, multiplexes, and live/work units.

Housing at higher densities is more affordable by design, and is also important in that it provides patrons who support the local shops and services that residents can walk to. Housing also activates communities with around-the-clock presence.

Diverse multi-family housing options available in Tower District.



3.4 Diverse and Affordable Housing

Housing addresses the human need for shelter and is foundational to more livable neighborhoods. Household needs and preferences vary, as do wealth and income – highlighting the need for a diversity of housing options. Affordable housing addresses challenges that arise when existing housing is in limited supply relative to demand, and costs of developing new housing are high. As illustrated in Figure 3.4: Low Income Housing Burden, many Tower District households face significant affordability challenges that impact overall housing stability.

In response, the predominance of single-family housing in the Tower District may need to be balanced with the creation of more multi-family dwelling units and “Missing Middle Housing” - although in relation to other neighborhoods, Tower has a larger mix of housing types and Missing Middle Housing.

Newer modes of housing, like modular housing and tiny homes, can increase both the variety of available housing and density. Although the Specific Plan cannot directly impact housing affordability, providing a variety of land use types can set the stage for a variety of types and affordable housing.

Housing at higher densities is more affordable by design, and is also important in that it provides patrons who support the local shops and services that residents can walk to. Housing also activates communities with around-the-clock presence. Many buildings in Tower were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s and, due to age and other factors, housing conditions vary throughout the District.

Diverse multi-family housing options in Tower District.



Policy Additions and Revisions

LU 2.5 Encourage the application of citywide anti-displacement policies within the Tower District.

Continue to work with residents to understand displacement as it occurs and how it can be better addressed. **Develop** strategies to strengthen neighborhood stabilization policies, such as establishing a local resource center to facilitate access to tenant protection and **buyer** assistance programs.

LU 2.6 To be consistent with existing use, rezone existing legal non-conforming multi-family residential uses with property owner support to the density-appropriate zoning district.

Rezone property with legally non-conforming multifamily residential uses to zoning consistent with the existing use. **Require** prior review and comment by the Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee and the Tower District Design Committee.

LU 2.7 Provide resources and education to Tower District residents of programs available such as eviction protection and buyer assistance programs, as well as other resources the City may have available.



LU 4 MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE EXISTING AND PROMOTE NEW NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED RETAIL SERVICE BUSINESSES WITHIN THE TOWER DISTRICT, WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH HISTORIC PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT. MAKE COMMERCIAL AREAS SAFE, CONVENIENT AND WELCOMING FOCAL POINTS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC LIFE.

LU 4.1 Support small commercial businesses.

To support neighborhood promotion, remove barriers for neighborhood festivals and events, and encourage heritage tourism.

LU 4.2 Require commercial projects to place pedestrian-oriented storefronts along public sidewalks and restrict parking along public sidewalks.

Generally, locate surface parking behind street-facing buildings and allow larger stores midblock where they can face off-street parking.

LU 4.3 Do not allow auto-oriented uses, such as drive-through restaurants, in the Commercial Main Street zone district.

Develop standards to minimize the disruption to walkability in other zone districts, where they are conditionally allowed.

LU 5 BALANCE NEIGHBORHOOD SERVING COMMERCIAL NEEDS AND QUALITY OF LIFE WITH THE CULTIVATION OF A SUCCESSFUL CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT.

LU 5.1 Encourage restrooms that are available to the public, such as in public buildings and parking garages.

Require portable toilets at significant events.

LU 5.2 Utilize zoning standards to mitigate conflicts and potential noise impacts, and support business owners by providing clear sound mitigation guidelines and strategies to ensure code compliance.

Appropriate noise mitigation approaches will be proposed.

LU 5.3 Encourage increased police presence at night and during major events.

LU 5.4 Support future street vending programs that establish consistent procedures and appropriately incorporate street vendors into the Tower District neighborhood.



04

**PARKS AND
PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Background and Health and Equity Considerations

- ❖ Updates text on Joint Use Agreements with School District
- ❖ Health and equity considerations added

PARKS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

4.1 Background

The Parks and Public Facilities chapter provides a framework for making decisions on how parks and public facilities can better address community needs today and in the future. It focuses on the location and extent of public open spaces, matching spaces to community needs, improving pedestrian and bicycle access, and leveraging co-benefits like ecological health and economic revitalization. This chapter also addresses additional public facilities, like trails, schools, and libraries.

Parks and public facilities support community life and contribute to the physical and psychological well-being of residents (particularly youth and families), workers, and visitors. Parks and public facilities can offer a range of activities and can be improved to provide things that community members need most, whether active recreation like playgrounds, passive recreation like lawns and picnic tables, event areas like small amphitheaters, and natural areas. When easy-to-access and inviting, parks and public facilities add value to the properties in their vicinity. They offer lifestyle choices and amenities that make urban neighborhoods more attractive and livable. Parks also make neighborhoods, cities, and regions more sustainable and resilient. They can also contribute to the ecological health of the watersheds to which they are connected.

Schools are valuable community assets that support human development, the economy and social health of communities. Outside of school hours, schools may serve as community centers and their schoolyards may be used for recreation. *At present, Fresno Unified School District has a closed campus policy. In the past, the City of Fresno has had joint use agreements with Fresno Unified School District for the limited use of some school play grounds and pools by the public but these agreements are no longer in place.* Like schools, public libraries provide more than one service and can also serve as community centers and support adult education.

4.2 Existing Parks and Park Needs

Tower District contains 6 acres of park land at three sites: Ted C. Wills Community Center, and San Pablo Park are both located near the southeast corner of the District; and Trolley Park at N. Van Ness Blvd and E. Weldon Avenue was recently completed. This translates to 0.36 park acres per resident, far below the City's standard of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents for pocket, neighborhood and community parks. One new park is under development (Broadway Parque) which will add

Health and Equity Considerations

- **Limited Park Access:** The Tower District has a parkland deficit, providing just 0.36 acres per 1,000 residents, well below the City's target of 3 acres per 1,000 residents, limiting opportunities for recreation.
- **Unequal Distribution of Green Spaces:** Some areas, particularly the western part of Tower, have fewer parks within a 10 minute walk, leading to limited recreational opportunities for residents.
- **Urban Heat and Climate Resilience:** The lack of shade and green infrastructure exacerbates the urban heat island effect particularly in South Tower, increasing health risks for vulnerable populations, including seniors and low-income households.
- **Parks and Housing Balance:** Expanding parkland and enhancing open spaces must be considered alongside housing needs to avoid potential displacement or affordability challenges.

0.6 acres of park land to Tower District. Parks outside of the planning area that can be walked to include Lafayette Park to the east and Roeding Regional Park to the west. Roeding Park is separated from the District by the UP Railroad, which constrains pedestrian crossings and puts fewer homes within walking distance. Quigley Park is located approximately 0.5 miles north of the District.

Walking distance to parks is critical to their ease of use and integration within community life. One measure for this is the extent to which homes are within a 10-minute walking distance from parks using public streets and free from barriers such as fences, railroad tracks and freeways. Today, a large number of Tower District residents live more than a 10-minute walk of an existing park, as indicated in Figure 4.1, which points to a need for more park land and recreation amenities in the District.

Park programming considers the type of facilities that are offered at a given park and the activities they support. Play equipment for small children addresses a different programmatic need than playgrounds for organized sports, and Fresno Chaffee Zoo in Roeding Park serves a different need than the daily needs of Tower residents. Trees, lawns, and other greenery are another aspect of parks that support psychological well-being. In summary, park deficiencies in the Tower District include:

- unmet demand as the acreage of parks in the Tower District is just twelve percent of the City's standard, and one planned parks will not make up this deficit;
- underutilized park space, such as insufficient active recreation amenities in Ted C. Wills Park; and
- gaps in walkable access as most of the District is not within a 10-minute walk of a park.



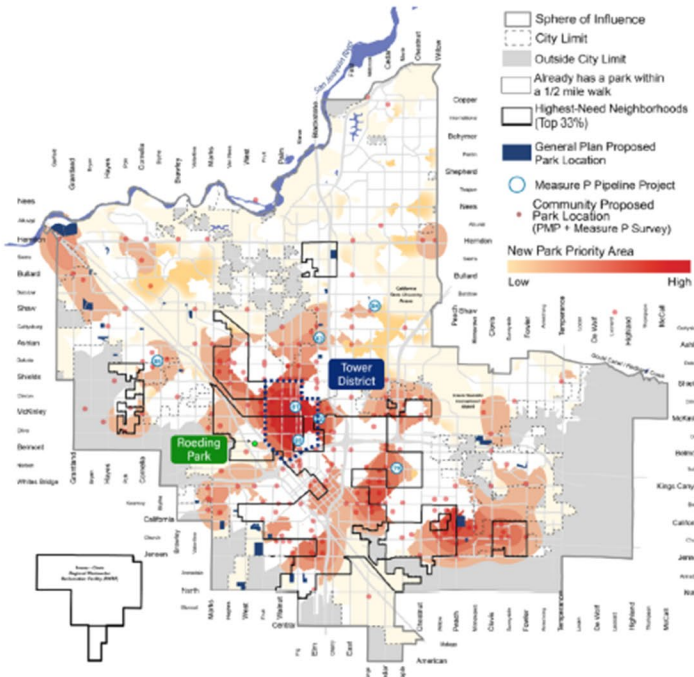
Measure P Maps

- ❖ Add inset map to zoom-in on Tower District
- ❖ Add list of Pipeline Projects in and around Tower District

Measure P requires that no less than 50 percent of funds are dedicated to "highest-need neighborhoods" that were defined using multiple factors that include: low park acreage per 1,000 residents, concentrated poverty, pollution burden, large numbers of youth and seniors, and more than one-half mile walking distance. This definition is revised every three years. Based on the 2023-2025 equity-based assessment definition, none of the existing parks are located within a "highest-need neighborhood," nearly however all of half of the area south of McKinley Avenue within the Tower District is considered a "highest-need neighborhood" as of 2024.

The Measure P process has also included a framework for evaluating specific parks that should be prioritized for new investment.

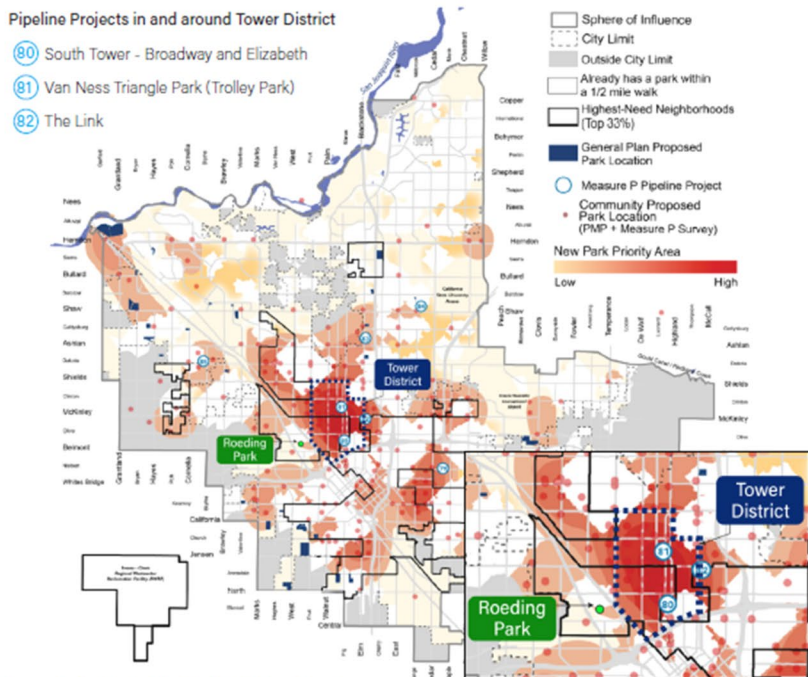
FIGURE 4.3 | Measure P Park Prioritization for Future Parks



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The Measure P process has also included a framework for evaluating specific parks that should be prioritized for new investment.

FIGURE 4.3 | Measure P Park Prioritization for Future Parks



Source: Parks Master Plan, Technical Amendment 2023. City of Fresno and WRT 2022

The background is a solid purple color with a repeating pattern of vertical lines and stylized chain links. The chain links are composed of rounded rectangles with a central circle, connected by teardrop shapes. The pattern is more prominent on the left and right sides, with a central vertical column of teardrop shapes.

05

CIRCULATION

Health & equity considerations

❖ Add summary of cut-through traffic issue to narrative

5.1 Tower District Context



Typical residential street



Human-scaled main street along Olive Avenue

CIRCULATION

The Tower District was settled as a streetcar suburb in the early 20th century before the rise of the automobile. Streetcar lines extended northward along Fulton Street to Olive Avenue, north along Wishon Avenue, west along Olive Avenue, and north along Blackstone Avenue. Development over time occurred within an expanding street grid, with major streets spaced uniformly every half mile. The District's street pattern offers motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians a variety of possible routes to get to local destinations. The connective street grid makes walking and bicycling routes more direct, and disperses vehicle traffic among multiple routes rather than concentrating traffic on wide arterial roadways.

Tower District streets serve a variety of transportation modes, from motor vehicles (including trucks), to bus transit to biking and walking. Transportation improvements starting in the mid-20th century have generally sought to accommodate vehicles, often sacrificing sidewalks and pedestrian comfort. *Still, the grid pattern, human-scaled streets, sidewalks, and trees provide a healthy walkable, bike-friendly, environment in much of the area.*

Ambitious programs for bicycle improvements have emerged as a priority both nationally and locally, as bicycle-related infrastructure improvements have been implemented in Tower. *Improving walkability and keeping pedestrians safe is a top priority. "Walkability" needs to be understood broadly to refer to the ability for people of all ages and abilities to get around safely and comfortably.*

The Fresno Area Express (FAX) provides bus service in Fresno and surrounding communities. As of 2024, the Tower District is served by eight standard bus routes and one bus rapid transit (BRT) high-frequency route along Blackstone Avenue. Several of these lines provide direct service to destinations such as the Downtown, Riverpark, Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FYT), Fresno Fairgrounds, Manchester Mall, Figarden Village, and El Paseo Shopping Center. *Though there are many transit stops in the Tower District they often lack seating, shade, or other amenities.* FAX also offers a paratransit "Handy Ride" service designed to meet the transportation needs of persons with limited ability, who would find it difficult to use FAX's fixed-route bus system.

Health and Equity Considerations

- **Traffic Safety and Injury Risks:** High vehicle speeds on major corridors create unsafe conditions for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, increasing the risk of traffic-related injuries and fatalities. In the Tower District, key roads like McKinley Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Blackstone Avenue experience a high frequency of collisions, especially at intersections. Cut-through traffic in neighborhoods adds to safety hazards. Tower District is a very walkable neighborhood, but gaps in pedestrian infrastructure pose safety risks.
- **Public Transit Access:** While the Tower District has multiple bus routes, transit frequency and coverage may not fully meet the needs of residents who rely on it for jobs, healthcare, and daily necessities, particularly shift workers and lower-income populations. Transit users often experience long wait times, limited late-night service, and inadequate stop infrastructure such as shelters and seating. These issues disproportionately affect those without cars, including seniors, students, and low-income residents.
- **Impact of Regional Freeways on Connectivity and Neighborhood Disruption:** The construction of regional freeway infrastructure, including State Route 180, has influenced mobility patterns in and around the Tower District. Like many freeway projects in urban areas across the country, the expansion of Highway 180 introduced significant changes to the built environment, altering the connections between neighborhoods, shifting commercial activity, and increasing traffic-related air quality concerns. The freeway's alignment created a

physical separation between South Tower and adjacent neighborhoods such as Lowell and Downtown, affecting historical community ties and the economic vitality of nearby commercial districts. Over time, changes in transportation infrastructure and regional development patterns have contributed to shifting land use trends, including reduced investment in older commercial corridors and localized air quality challenges near high-traffic roadways for part of the south and eastern Tower District.

- **Disproportionate Exposure to Air Pollution:** Residents living near major roadways face elevated pollution levels that can lead to serious health issues such as respiratory illnesses and heart disease. In the Tower District, those living near Highway 180, Blackstone Ave, and designated truck routes face some of the highest concentrations of vehicle emissions, including diesel particulate matter from heavy freight traffic. In South Tower, the combined effects of being close to freeways and increased truck traffic have created a significant environmental burden for the residents, many of whom belong to historically underserved communities.
- **Lack of Shade and Heat Exposure:** Many streets in the Tower District lack sufficient tree canopy, intensifying the urban heat island effect and making walking, biking, and waiting for transit uncomfortable, especially in the South Tower area. Key routes like Olive Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Blackstone Avenue show increased heat exposure for pedestrians and transit users. This issue disproportionately impacts lower-income residents who often lack access to air conditioning or personal vehicles.

Cut-through Traffic and Traffic Impacts

❖ Add summary of cut-through traffic issue to narrative

improve transit, as reliable and distinctive design of transit shelters can aid placemaking. Street improvements, such as pedestrian infrastructure, can also encourage transit use by making transit stops easier to access.

Fresno Area Express (FAX) provides bus routes along most collector and arterial streets, such that few locations are more than a quarter-mile from transit. Along the east edge of the District, Blackstone Avenue serves as a high-frequency bus corridor with longer hours of service. Fresno Area Express (FAX) has constructed a 15.7-mile bus rapid transit (BRT) route that connects Downtown to North Fresno. The BRT services decrease travel times by:

- giving buses priority in mixed traffic by using signal priority; and
- having fewer stops by increasing their spacing and providing more frequent service.

5.8 Motor Vehicles

Driving remains the dominant way of “getting there,” particularly for longer trips. In a 2023 survey that informed development of this Plan, 85 percent of respondents said that vehicle use was the transportation mode they used most.

The District’s street pattern offers a greater variety of possible routes getting to local destinations, which helps to distribute traffic among multiple routes. Street connections that connect beyond District boundaries are more limited, as they cross Union Pacific rail tracks to the west, BNSF rail tracks to the northeast, and State Route 180 freeway to the south. Street widening has occurred over time to accommodate higher traffic volumes, which often leads to higher vehicle speeds. Higher traffic volumes are generated along arterial and collector streets leading to and from freeway interchanges along SR 180 and along SR 99.

Vehicle collisions were concentrated along arterial and collector streets, which have wider travel lanes and higher vehicle speeds. As of 2023, the highest collision rates were: McKinley near Blackstone, Clinton near Van Ness Avenue, Belmont near Fulton and Van Ness Avenues, and Palm between Shields and Clinton Avenues. Principal reasons for collisions include unsafe speeds and traffic controls at intersections.¹⁸

¹⁸CHS Consulting, UC Berkeley SafeTREC, 2023.

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“Cut-through traffic”, traffic coming from commercial areas and detouring through neighborhoods, occurs often near entertainment and late night use areas. It is also caused by traffic back up on busy corridors, like Palm Avenue.

¹⁸CHS Consulting, UC Berkeley SafeTREC, 2023.

Alleys

- ❖ Define the potential for “green alleys”
- ❖ Clearly represent both positive and negative experiences with alleys

LOCAL STREETS AND ALLEYS

Local streets hold significant value in shaping community life and enhancing residents’ quality of life. Local streets also serve as complete streets that serve people who walk, cycle, drive, and use public transit. Well-designed local streets – with street trees, ample sidewalks, and relatively narrow traffic lanes -- foster community interaction, providing spaces for neighbors to meet, socialize, and engage with one another. In the Tower District, local streets also contribute to District connectivity and walkability. They “connect through” without the use of cul-de-sacs, and provide direct connections for getting to local destinations.

The Fresno General Plan describes local street fundamentals. Policy D-3-c says to develop local streets as urban parkways, with landscaping and pedestrian spaces, and Policy MT-1-i says to address particular characteristics including street width, traffic calming, public safety access, and quality of life.

The Tower District has numerous alleys, which are another street network element. They provide vehicle access to properties, which avoids street-facing driveways that diminish pedestrian comfort and safety along streetside sidewalks. Alleys also serve as service and loading areas that might otherwise face streets, and they can provide direct access to accessory dwelling units.

During Plan development, community members expressed interest in the potential of alleys, particularly green alleys. Alleys offer a casual neighborhood space adjacent to backyards and away from traffic, places where children ride bikes and play basketball. Across multiple streets, a continuous line of alleys can also serve as safe corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists.

“Green alleys” can address community drainage and stormwater needs. As a form of green infrastructure, green alleys use permeable pavers and pavement that allow rainwater infiltration and filter pollutants from run-off. By including subsurface retention, a network of green alleys can even help municipalities avoid needing to expand stormwater infrastructure capacity, which can be costly.

and provide direct connections for getting to local destinations.

The Fresno General Plan describes local street fundamentals. Policy D-3-c says to develop local streets as urban parkways, with landscaping and pedestrian spaces, and Policy MT-1-i says to address particular characteristics including street width, traffic calming, public safety access, and quality of life.

The Tower District has numerous alleys, which are another street network element. They provide vehicle access to the rear of properties. One neighborhood advantage to having alleyways is the potential to not have street-facing driveways that diminish pedestrian comfort and safety along streetside sidewalks. Alleys also provide the area needed for service access and loading that might otherwise occur on the street at the front of the property, and they can provide direct access to accessory dwelling units when located in the backyard.

During Plan development, community members expressed interest in the significant potential of their existing alleys to be transformed into vibrant public spaces. There was particular interest in green alleys. Green alleys are specially designed alleyways that use green infrastructure to manage stormwater, reduce flooding, and improve water quality. They often incorporate permeable pavers and pavement, landscaping, and other sustainable design elements to allow rainwater infiltration and filter pollutants from runoff. By including subsurface retention, a network of green alleys can even help municipalities avoid needing to expand stormwater infrastructure capacity, which can be costly. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Section 6.3 Stormwater and Drainage of this Plan, some localized flooding occurs during periods of heavy rain and stormwater quality is a concern.

Community members also expressed concern that neglected alleys can attract nuisances and lead to misuse. Over the years, residents have gated and closed some of the alleys to avoid misuse. This can be remedied with physical improvements that help bring positive activity and visibility. Once positively activated, alleys offer a casual neighborhood space adjacent to backyards and away from traffic, places where children can ride bikes and play basketball. Across multiple streets, a continuous line of alleys can serve as safe corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists. Once positively activated, the gated alleys can also be reopened.

The background is a solid purple color with a repeating pattern of vertical lines and stylized chain links. The chain links are composed of rounded rectangles with a central circle, and they are connected by vertical lines. The pattern is symmetrical and repeats across the entire width of the image.

06

UTILITIES

Sewer and stormwater systems

- ❖ Describe sewer and stormwater systems as depicted on maps

Stormwater quality is another consideration, particularly since pollution drains from streets and parking lots as urban runoff and can degrade downstream habitat if not treated. In response, FMFCD and other local public agencies have developed a storm water quality management program in compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

6.4 Solid Waste

The Solid Waste Management Division handles the collection of municipal solid waste, recyclables, green waste, and Operation Clean-up for 118,915 residential customers, which includes the Tower District area. In addition, the division oversees litter collection and responds to FresGO customer queries across 103 square miles within the city limits. These collection efforts generate about 4,918 tons of material weekly.

Moreover, responding to community needs, the division has implemented various initiatives including: Beautify Fresno, Oil Payment Program, Beverage Container Recycling, Organic Waste Recycling, Used Oil Program, Landfill Operating—Remediation and Oversight Services, and CalRecycle Household Hazard.

There is no planned capital expenditure associated with solid waste in Tower District. Any future development would need to be constructed to conform to standard specifications for solid waste (i.e. trash enclosure, space for sufficient turn radius, etc.)

6.3 Stormwater and Drainage

Sanitary sewer infrastructure generally relies on gravity for conveyance through pipes, along with pump stations in key locations. As shown in Figure 6.2: Existing Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure, the Tower District's network of sewer pipes generally flows to the south and west, and into trunk lines located along: McKinley Avenue, Olive-Palm-H Street, and Blackstone-San Pablo Avenues. There is a sewer lift located just north of the plan area near Shields and Wishon Avenues.

The Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District (FMFCD) is responsible for managing urban stormwater runoff in the Fresno metropolitan area. FMFCD's flood control program consists of stormwater infrastructure, control facilities and related streams and channel features. The Tower District's stormwater conveyance generally flows south and west, within a system of pipes. As shown in Figure 6.3: the stormwater system includes detention basins, and one detention basin is located just southwest of the Tower District at Belmont and Thorne Avenues.

Some localized flooding occurs during periods of heavy rain. A large part of the planning area has a 0.2% annual chance of flooding or 1% annual chance of flooding not more than one foot, as noted by FEMA and depicted in Figure 6.4: Existing FEMA Flood Zone Designations.¹⁹

Stormwater quality is another consideration, since oil and other pollutants can drain from streets and parking lots as urban runoff and degrade downstream habitats or groundwater if not treated. The Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District (FMFCD) has developed a system of stormwater detention basins throughout the city to capture stormwater to not only prevent flooding but to also allow for water storage that aids in water percolation down through the soil which naturally removes the pollutants and replenishing groundwater supplies. In response, FMFCD and other local public agencies have developed a storm water quality management program in compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

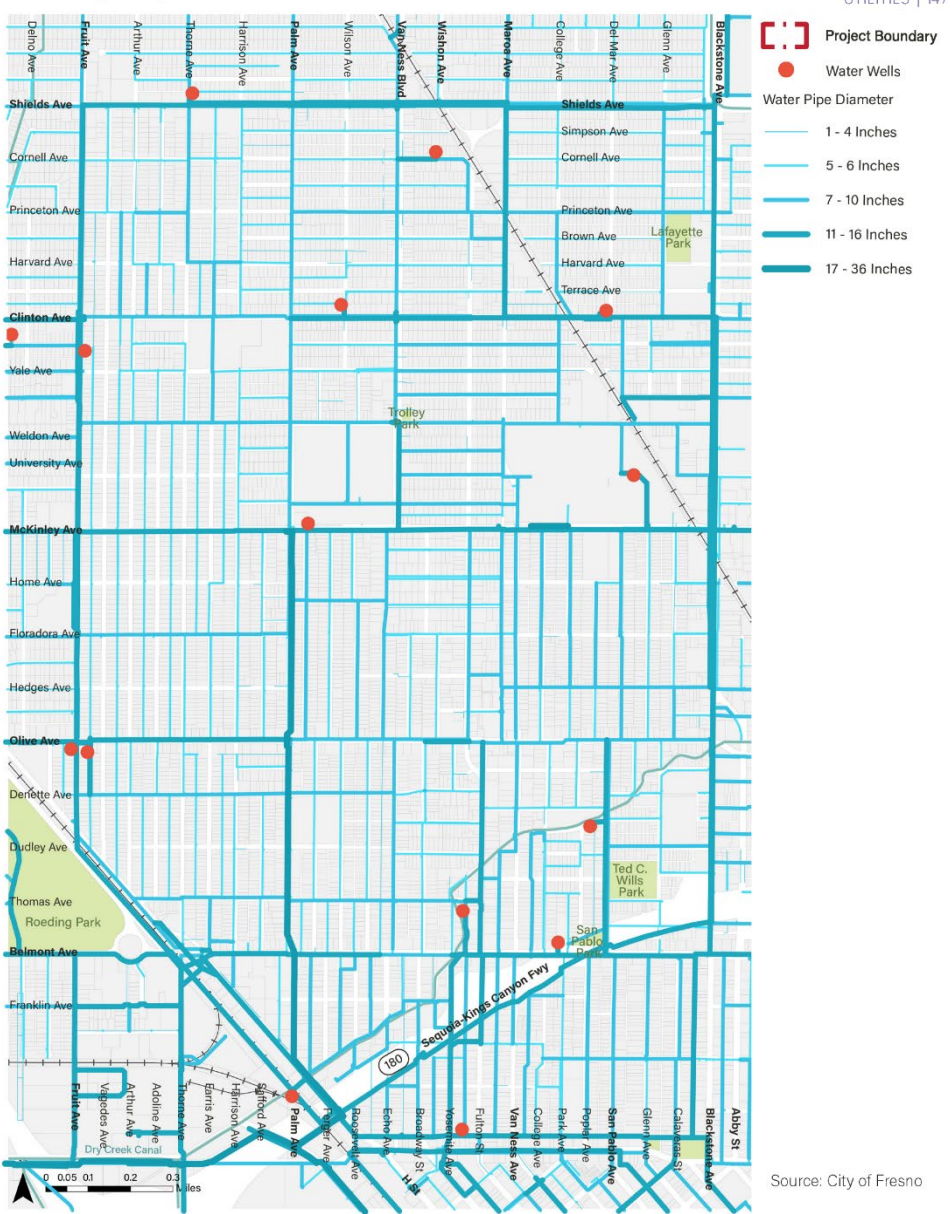
¹⁹Flood Maps | FEMA.gov

Water and sewer system maps

- ❖ Add water and sanitary sewer system maps, and describe in narrative

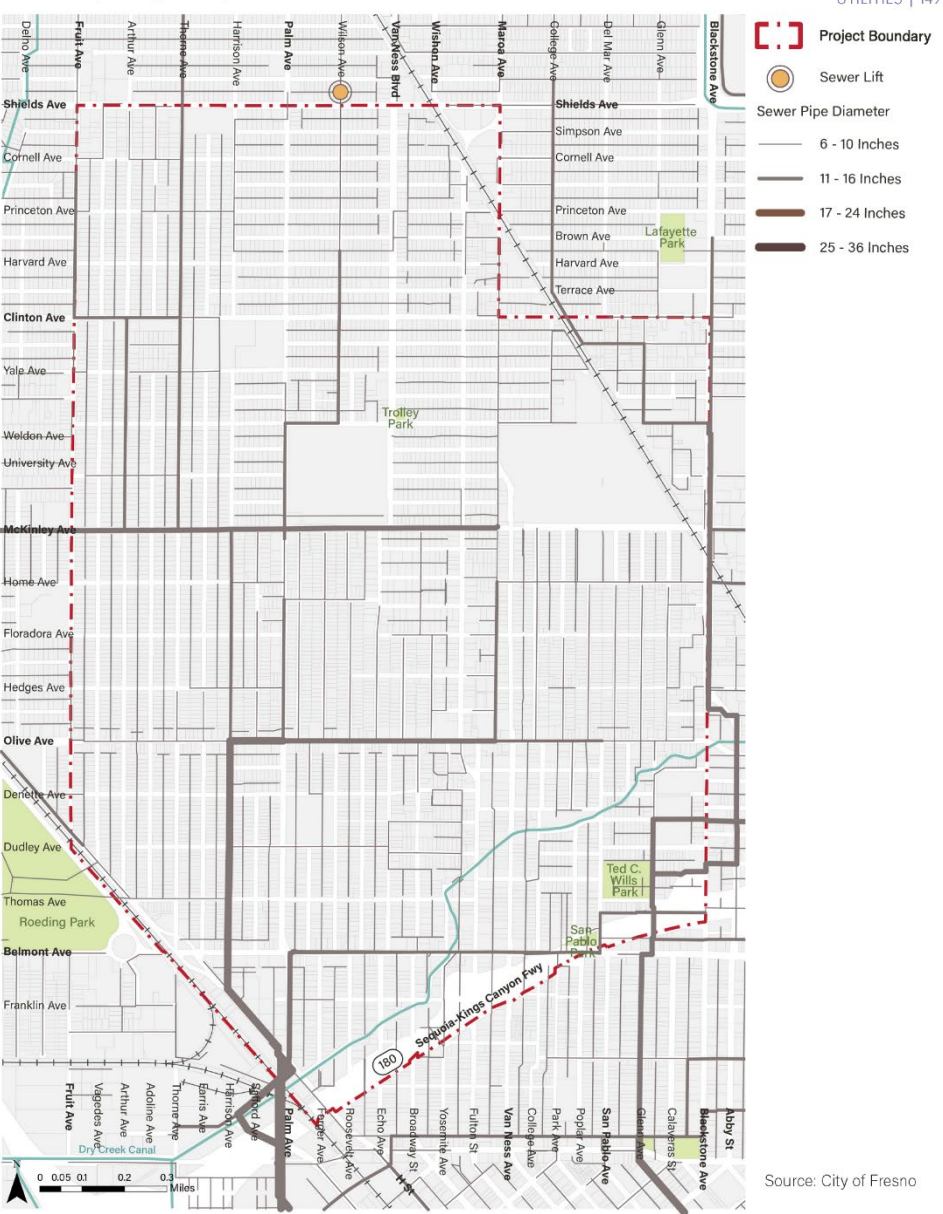
Water Infrastructure

FIGURE 6.1| Existing Water Infrastructure



Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure

FIGURE 6.2| Existing Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure



Stormwater system and flood zone maps

- ❖ Add stormwater map and FEMA flood zones maps, and describe the systems in text

FIGURE 6.3 | Existing and Planned Stormwater Infrastructure

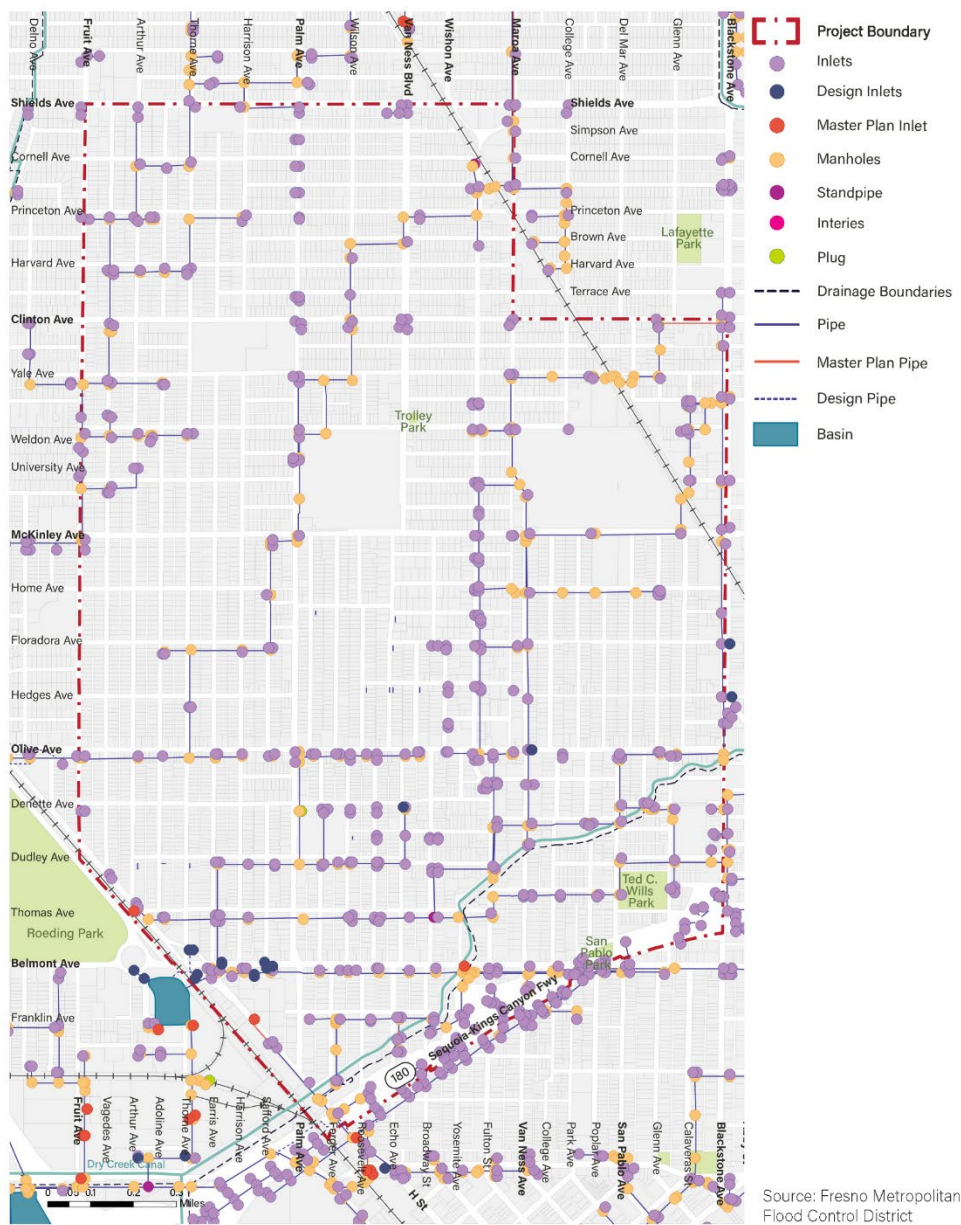


FIGURE 6.4 | Existing FEMA Flood Zone Designations



FID maps and narrative

- ❖ Add map and narrative summarizing Fresno Irrigation District infrastructure

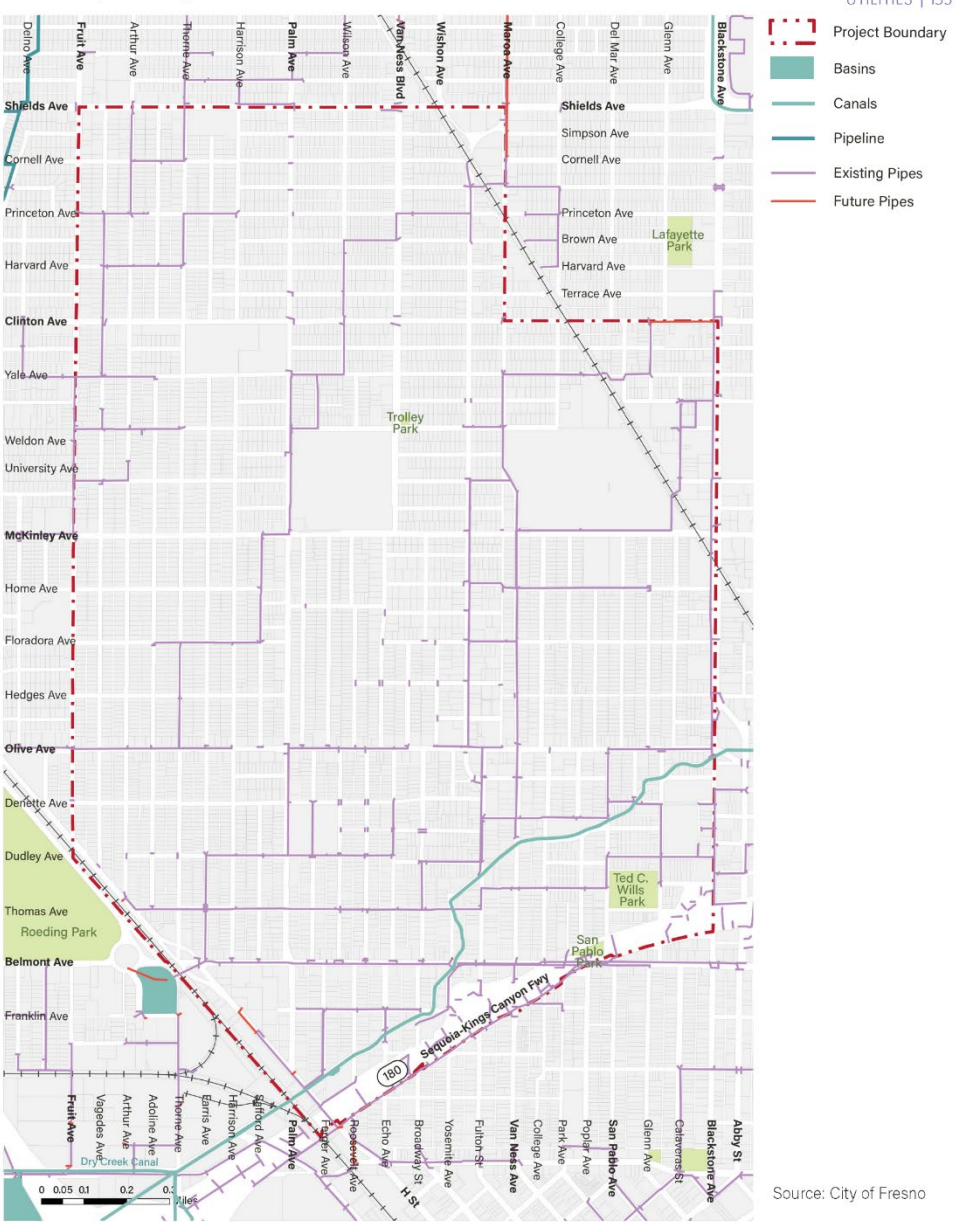
6.4 Solid Waste

The Solid Waste Management Division handles the collection of municipal solid waste, recyclables, green waste, and Operation Clean-up for **over 118,000** residential customers. The Division also oversees litter collection and responds to FresGO customer queries across 103 square miles in Fresno. These collection efforts **manage** about **5,000** tons of material weekly. Moreover, responding to community needs, the division has implemented various initiatives including: Beautify Fresno, Oil Payment Program, Beverage Container Recycling, Organic Waste Recycling, Used Oil Program, Landfill Operating—Remediation and Oversight Services, and CalRecycle Household Hazard.

6.5 Fresno Irrigation District

The Fresno Irrigation District (FID) comprises 245,000 acres in Fresno County, including the Fresno metropolitan area and the Tower District. FID diverts an estimated 500,000 acre-feet of water annually, primarily from the Kings River, and delivers it mostly to agricultural users and urban areas for groundwater recharge. As shown in Figure 6.5: FID canals and underground pipes run through the Tower District.

FIGURE 6.5 | Fresno Irrigation District



Source: City of Fresno

Policies

❖ Add policies to guide infrastructure management in Tower District

6.5 Objectives and Policies

UT 1 PROVIDE FOR THE ORDERLY PROVISION OF UTILITY SERVICES IN THE TOWER DISTRICT.

UT 1.1 Support regulations that require developers to make fair-share contributions toward infrastructure, through developer fees and in-kind improvements.

UT 1.2 Consider reducing developer fees when they could make development infeasible, if the proposed development advances Tower District goals and is consistent with its policies, standards, and guidelines.

UT 1.3 Encourage coordination among stakeholders interested in utility systems and programs.

Exchange information regarding infrastructure plans that could affect the Tower District, by engaging government agencies responsible for utilities, the Tower District Implementation Committee, businesses, and developers with specific utility-related needs.



UT 2 ADDRESS UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN WAYS THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE TOWER DISTRICT.

UT 2.1 Design utilities to be aesthetically pleasing and compatible with adjacent uses.

New development should generally locate new utility lines underground. Work with utility providers to underground existing above-grade utilities as opportunities arise. Encourage the placement of utilities in locations that do not interfere with street trees, such as in alleys or midblock easements.



UT 3 ENCOURAGE RESILIENCY AND SUSTAINABLE FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT.

UT 3.1 Encourage reduction in the use of potable water.

Promote water-conserving appliances, water reuse as part of industrial activities, and drought-tolerant planting, and other ways to use less potable water.

UT 3.2 Encourage retention of stormwater.

Minimize impervious surfaces. Encourage green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bio-retention swales, as part of streets, parks, parking lots, and other improvements.

UT 3.3 Reduce risk to property from flooding.

Share information regarding flood risks in the planning area. Consider raising the ground floor of new buildings in locations of significant flood risk, while meeting building accessibility standards.

UT 3.4 Encourage energy conservation and generation.

Encourage development to go beyond established energy code requirements, such as by incorporating passive solar architecture and installing photovoltaic panels.





07

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing actions, responsible departments

IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Introduction

The vision for Tower District **that is** embodied in this Plan’s policies, objectives, and guiding principles will require actions by the City, District property owners, interested organizations, and residents over the coming years. This chapter clarifies such actions and, for each, clarifies timeframe, responsibilities, partner agencies and organizations, and potential funding and other resources.

7.2 Implementing Actions

Implementing actions fall into these basic categories:

Studies examine a topic to make a determination or recommend an action. Studies can lead to programs, regulations, or improvements.

Programs organize related activities with a particular long-term aim, and are often implemented in an on-going way. Programs include maintenance, events, and other organized activities.

Design Standards and Guidelines regulate land use and development within the Tower District Specific Plan Area to make positive contributions to the Tower District’s unique character, beauty, and walkability. According to the *Fresno Municipal Code Section 15-104. Applicability, B. Relation to Other Regulations, 4. Priority of Plans*, the Tower District Specific Plan Design Guidelines are a higher priority than the Development Code (Chapter 15 of the Fresno Municipal Code), the Fresno General Plan, and the Tower District Specific Plan. In the event of a conflict between the Tower District Specific Plan Design Guidelines and the Development Code, Fresno General Plan, and this Specific Plan, the conflict shall be resolved in the following order: Tower District Specific Plan Design Guidelines, Development Code, Fresno General Plan, and then the Tower District Specific Plan. The Tower District Specific Plan Guidelines are being updated in tandem with the Specific Plan Update, as the *Tower District Design Standards and Guidelines*.

Regulations codify directives maintained by an authority, which for Tower District is Fresno’s Municipal Code.

Improvements involve physical construction, reconstruction, and alterations, occurring at once or in a phased manner. The Specific Plan will be implemented with the involvement of public agencies, private parties, and non-profits. Improvements made by public agencies

within public rights-of-way or other public land, are usually capital expenditures are authorized as part of a capital improvements plan (CIP). Improvements by private parties and non-profits normally occur on private parcels. As efforts are made by private or public entities, the City of Fresno will often play a role in coordinating stakeholders.

Financing programs undergird many implementing actions and are spelled out where possible. In some instances, sources of potential financing will need to be identified in consultation with partner agencies and organizations.

7.3 City of Fresno Departments Principally Responsible

Department of Public Utilities (DPU) supplies water to over 142,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers; conveys sewage from customers to the Fresno-Clovis Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility; and collects solid waste and recyclables for over 119,000 residential solid waste customers.

Department of Public Works (DPW) has authority over roadways and other public rights-of-way and focuses on planning, funding, building, and maintaining streets, sidewalks, traffic signals, streetlights, median islands, street trees, landscaping, trails, and public facilities.

Economic Development Department (EDD) manages initiatives and other programs that benefit businesses and other economic stakeholders, as affiliated groups with a common purpose and on an individual basis.

Fresno Area Express (FAX) is responsible for providing public transportation services, ensuring reliable and efficient transit for residents and visitors, and promoting accessible and sustainable transportation options.

Fresno Police Department (PD) is responsible for maintaining public safety and order. This includes patrolling the area, responding to emergencies, investigating crimes, and engaging with the community to address safety concerns and promote a secure environment.

Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services Department (PARCS) is responsible for creating and maintaining parks, plazas, and other open spaces. PARCS also manages recreation,

Review bodies, partner agencies and organizations

7.4 Review Bodies

youth-related, and community-related programs.

Planning & Development Department (PDD) has a lead role in matters that involve land use, development, historic preservation, housing, and many planning activities for which other Departments have ultimate responsibility. Within the PDD, the Housing and Community Development Division (HCDD) promotes housing affordability and diversity through a range of programs and partnerships with both non-profit and for-profit housing developers.

Tower District Implementation Committee (TDIC) plays a vital role in guiding and monitoring progress related to the implementation of this Plan, such as reviewing proposals for public streetscape improvements and private development projects.

Council District Project Review Committee (CDPRC) purpose is to provide the opportunity for citizen review on every entitlement request to ensure the voices of the community are heard including providing their own insight into the unique needs and concerns of that district. They act as advisors to the Planning Commission and City Council on the adopted plans pertaining to that district. The Tower District Specific Plan area coincides with Council District Project Review Committees 1, 3, and 7.

Planning Commission (PC) is an advisory body appointed by the City Council and Mayor to hear, review, and make recommendations to the City Council on development, land use, and environmental issues. PC also plays a role in guiding the city's growth and development through the Fresno General Plan and related community and specific plans.

FAX Board is responsible for the overall management of the FAX system, including setting policy, approving budgets, and ensuring the system operates effectively by determining fares, passes, new routes, expansions, and improvements to the system. It ensures that the FAX system is safe and accessible for all riders, including those with disabilities.

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) primarily focuses on protecting and preserving Fresno's historic and cultural resources.

This includes reviewing proposed alterations to historic properties, managing nominations for the Local Register of Historic Resources, and reviewing projects that could affect the city's historic heritage.

Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) advises the City Council, Office of the Mayor, and City staff on active transportation matters and recommends policies for the planning, development, and maintenance of active transportation systems for safe and enjoyable circulation for both bicycle commuters and recreation enthusiasts within the City.

Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) advises the Mayor, City Council, City Boards, Commissions, Committees, and staff on matters affecting persons with disabilities. As part of this advising the DAC provides review and comment on City policies, programs, and activities that affect people with disabilities, including efforts to remove physical and programmatic barriers to access.

7.5 Partner Agencies & Organizations

- Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF)**
- California Air Resources Board (CARB)**
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)**
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
- Fresno Arts Council (FAC)**
- Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG)**
- Fresno County Environmental Health Department (FCEHD)**
- Fresno Housing Authority (FHA)**
- Fresno Irrigation District (FID)**
- Fresno Metro Ministry (FMM)**
- Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District (FMFCD)**
- Fresno Unified School District (FUSD)**
- Friends of Fresno City Libraries (FoFCL)**

Implementation matrix

7.6 Implementation Matrix

- High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA)
- North Fresno Merchants Association (NFMA)
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD)
- South Tower Trust (STT)
- Tower District Preservation Association (TDPA)
- Union Pacific Railroad (UP)

The following tables clarify implementing actions related to Specific Plan policies. It assigns principal responsibilities to City of Fresno Departments, and identifies interested review bodies, partner agencies and organizations, and resources and funding sources that may be available. For each implementation action, a recommended timeframe helps to focus attention and resources and is based on community input during Specific Plan development. Near-term actions focus on immediate and urgent needs, quick wins, or foundational steps that enable future phases. Mid-term actions build on near-term efforts or are not as urgent as near-term actions. Long-term actions represent initiatives that are transformational over a longer time frame or are important but not as critical.

For each implementation action, a recommended timeframe helps to focus attention and resources and is based on community input during Specific Plan development. Near-term actions focus on immediate and urgent needs, quick wins, or foundational steps that enable future phases. Mid-term actions build on near-term efforts or are not as urgent as near-term actions. Long-term actions represent initiatives that are transformational over a longer time frame or are important but not as critical in the near term.

TABLE 7.1 | Implementation Matrix

Studies, Programs, Guidelines, Regulations, and Improvements	Related Plan Policies	Timeframe	City of Fresno Department Principally Responsible	Review Bodies	Partner Agencies & Organizations	Resources & Potential Funding
Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Studies						
Evaluate potential historic resources and provide for their conservation. Engage a qualified cultural-resources professional to create historic context statements & apply historic resource eligibility criteria to buildings, sites, street features, & potential historic districts.	CHP 1.1, CHP 1.2, CHP 1.3, CHP 1.4, CHP 1.5	Near-Term	PDD	HPC	TDPA TDIC	National Trust for Historic Preservation, State Office of Historic Preservation, Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program
Develop design standards & guidelines for historic properties and districts.	CHP 3.1					
Historic Resource Programs						
Establish programs for the acquisition, rehabilitation, & maintenance of historic & older buildings.	CHP 1.8, CHP 2.4, CHP 3.3, LU 2.4	Near-Term	PDD	HPC	TDPA TDIC	National Trust for Historic Preservation, State Office of Historic Preservation, National Endowment for the Humanities
Establish program for historic preservation information, training, & accountability tools, and highlight community assets without a historic designation.	CHP 1.6, CHP 1.7, CHP 2.1					
Establish program to protect & maintain historic streetscape features.	CHP 2.2					
Establish museum entity & venue.	CHP 1.11	Mid-Term				

THANK YOU!