

Tower District Specific Plan Update | DRAFT Objectives and Policies

Land Use

**Asterisks indicate where policies are adapted from current Specific Plan.*

Highlighted items represent policies the subcommittee wanted to discuss further

LU 1: *Maintain and enhance character-defining elements associated with the Tower District and its various subdistricts and corridors.*

LU 1.1: Require that new housing respects the character of existing housing stock.

Incorporate character-defining elements in development standards such as using similar materials, cadence/modulation, color, fenestration & entry patterns, cornice lines, massing, roof form, building “build-to lines,” or architectural features and motifs.

- Discussion on Tower District Design Guidelines not being objective enough
- Policy should reference ADA compliance
- Revise title of policy to include remodels

LU 1.2*: Implement code enforcement as violations occur, particularly as they relate to public safety and the condition of buildings and landscaping. **KEEP**

- Discussion to identify types of complaints that are not adequately addressed by code enforcement currently and consider changes in regulations to address such complaints.

[Adapted from Goal 2, Objective 1, Policy 5.]

LU 2: *Retain and expand the existing inventory of affordable housing in the Tower District and discourage displacement of its residents.*

LU 2.1*: Promote mixed-use development along commercial corridors. **REVISE**

Along the Tower District’s corridors, promote mixed-use development such that ground-level commercial uses front onto (and activate) public streets and sidewalks, while residential uses are located above commercial uses (“vertical mixed-use”) and/or are located behind commercial uses (“horizontal mixed-use”). Emphasize commercial frontage at street intersections, while allowing ground-floor residential in other locations if not adjacent or nearly adjacent to existing commercial frontage.

- Confirm what is meant by “corridors”

Staff Revisions

Along the Tower District’s corridors, promote mixed-use development such that ground-level commercial uses front onto (and activate) public streets and sidewalks, while residential uses are located above commercial uses (“vertical mixed use”) and/or are located behind commercial uses (“horizontal mixed use”). Specifically, enable high-

intensity development along Blackstone Avenue between Clinton and McKinley. Emphasize commercial frontage where commercial frontage now exists and at street intersections, such as to create a major mixed-use node at Shields and Maroa. Allow ground-floor residential in locations that are not adjacent or nearly adjacent to existing commercial frontage.

LU 2.2*: Enable development of well-designed “missing middle” housing within single-family and other areas. **KEEP**

Allow small multiplex buildings with six or less units on infill sites where their massing can have a positive effect on "density tolerant" sites that include street corners, along collector & arterial streets, adjacent to open space, and on larger properties where building mass can transition in scale to adjacent single-family homes.

- Discussion to consider pre-approved plans for tri-plexes

[Adapted from Goal 2, Objective 2, Policy 2.]

LU 2.3*: Discourage the redevelopment of existing residential uses for commercial-only development. **KEEP**

Where residential units are lost to commercial development, require that new units replace not less than the number of units lost.

Staff Revisions

Do not allow auto-oriented uses, such as drive-through restaurants, and develop standards to minimize their disruption to walkability if they are conditionally allowed.

Where residential units are lost to commercial development, require that new units replace not less than the number of units lost.

LU 2.4*: Support reinvestment in older building stock to support affordability and maintain neighborhood character. **REVISE**

Provide building rehabilitation programs or encourage community land trusts (CLTs) and/or forms of collective ownership.

- Discussion on distinguishing between ownership and rental programs and tie city-based programs that provide these types of offerings into this policy

[Adapted from Goal 2, Objective 2, Policy 4.]

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

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

- Discussion to elaborate on displacement in this policy

- Add language about tracking the causes of displacement in the Tower District

[Adapted from Goal 2, Objective 2, Policy 5.]

LU 2.6*:

To be consistent with existing use, consider rezoning of existing legal non-conforming multi-family residential uses to the density-appropriate zoning district. **REVISE**

Rezone property with legally non-conforming multifamily residential uses to zoning consistent with the existing use and encourage the current number of units and the mitigation of potential impacts on surrounding residential uses. Allow such rezoning to occur using ministerial procedures where the decision of Fresno's Director of Planning and Development is final, while ~~offering~~ **requiring** a prior opportunity for review and comment by the Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee and the Tower District Design Committee.

[Adapted from Goal 2, Objective 1, Policy 8.]

Staff Revisions

Rezone property with legally non-conforming multifamily residential uses to zoning consistent with the existing use, and encourage the current number of units and the mitigation of potential impacts on surrounding residential uses ~~Allow such rezoning to occur using ministerial procedures where the decision of Fresno's Director of Planning and Development is final, while and offer~~ a prior opportunity for review and comment by the Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee and the Tower District Design Committee.

Staff Comments

- An application to rezone a property is a discretionary action. The Director of Planning cannot approve a rezone ministerially.

LU 3:

Encourage appropriate mixed-use and multifamily development by reducing obstacles to financial feasibility of potential development projects.

LU 3.1*:

Streamline residential project review through the adoption of objective development standards and environmental clearance as required by California law. **KEEP**

[Adapted from Goal 2, Objective 1, Policy 4 and Goal 2, Objective 1, Policy 5.]

LU 3.2:

Consider regulatory changes to reduce costs and risks associated with mixed-use and multifamily development, such as to reduce parking requirements, allow tandem parking, and provide greater flexibility in addressing private open space requirements.

- Discussion on concern over too much density and not enough open space
- Hesitant to relax open space requirements (balconies shouldn't be considered open space)

LU 3.3:

Consider ways to increase potential residential yields, such as by increasing allowable densities and building heights as appropriate. **REVISE**

Pursue increasing the allowable building height limits in the Commercial Main Street (CMS) and Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMX) Zone to 45 feet to allow three-story mixed-use buildings with sufficient ceiling height for ground-floor retail feasibility. [Consider the height of landmark structures \(i.e. Tower Theatre\) and incorporate transitional height requirements adjacent to those structures.](#)

LU 3.4: [Emphasize placemaking in Tower District. **KEEP**](#)

Emphasize placemaking through development to make the Tower District a desirable place to live and invest in, such as to provide a mix of local commercial and cultural destinations, street-facing architecture, and character-defining elements that emulate the District's historic character. Also encourage public interventions that result in more pedestrian-friendly streets (see Chapter 5) and easy access to parks (see Chapter 4).

- Discussion to add a new policy: "add more daytime neighborhood community services (i.e. grocery stores, pharmacies, goods and service-based amenities) to draw more patrons to the Tower District."

LU 3.5: [Actively increase the affordable housing inventory in Tower District. **KEEP**](#)

Pursue potential funding sources for constructing affordable housing, such as government and philanthropic grants, and consider new programs to assist with development project financing, such as a revolving loan fund.

LU 3.6: [Proactively identify underutilized parcels for affordable housing and mixed-use development where appropriate. **KEEP**](#)

Consider a more active City role in identifying and assembling underutilized parcels for the development of workforce and affordable housing, such as to encourage the creation of mixed-use nodes at the Shields/Maroa and Palm/McKinley intersections, and to replace low-intensity uses along Shields (between Fruit and Del Mar) with mixed-use and multifamily development.

- Clarify what underutilized means

Staff Revisions

~~Consider a more active City role in identifying and assembling~~ Evaluate underutilized parcels for the development of workforce and affordable housing, such as to encourage the creation of mixed-use nodes at the Shields/Maroa and Palm/McKinley intersections, and replace low-intensity uses along Shields (between Fruit and Del Mar) with mixed-use and multifamily development.

Staff Comments

- The City does not maintain an active role in the development of individual properties.

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. **KEEP**

Provide guidance for more effective marketing and merchandizing and promote festivals/events and 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.

[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 3, Policy 3 and Goal 3, Objective 1, Policy 2.]

LU 4.3: Emphasize the creation of active frontage on Palm Avenue between McKinley Avenue and Olive Avenue.

Consider the addition of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs) frontage requirements along Palm Avenue to create an engaging street frontage. Limit the allowable ACU uses to neighborhood serving uses that do not increase car traffic and parking requirements along the street, such as offices, cafes, bookstores, hair salons, and retail stores. ACU's should have additional regulations as follows:

1. No customer parking requirement
2. Hours of operation: 7 AM to 10 PM
3. No outdoor seating
4. Lighting cutoff requirement
5. Direct pedestrian access

Staff Comments

- City staff does not recommend ACU's in residential neighborhoods as they have the potential to decrease existing residential character.

LU 4.4: Use design standards to promote safety for both daytime and nighttime (after dark) activities. **KEEP**

Use design standards to require street-facing windows/entrances, wall-mounted lighting, and to avoid obstructions to provide greater visibility between activities for "natural surveillance."

[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 2, Policy 2.]

LU 4.5: Encourage restrooms that are available to the public, such as in public buildings and parking garages. **KEEP**

Require portable toilets at significant events.

- Discussion on feasibility to include a permanent restroom along central core

LU 4.6: Adopt zoning standards to mitigate conflicts and potential noise impacts. **KEEP**

LU 4.7: Work to Encourage increased maintain nighttime police presence at night and during major events. **KEEP**

LU 4.8: Permanently implement the Sidewalk Vendors Pilot Program in the Tower District, with adjustments.

LU 4.9: Consider forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or Public Business Improvement District (PBID) to support on-going commercial area marketing, organization of festivals and other events, enhanced landscape maintenance and sidewalk cleaning, graffiti abatement, and other beneficial programs. **KEEP**

LU 4.10: Encourage grocery stores that offer fresh produce and other healthful foods. Consider incentives for changes in use and new development projects that result in grocery stores that commit to at least one fresh produce aisle.

LU 5: Ensure compatibility among light industrial and residential uses in the Tower District.

LU 5.1. Maintain industrial zoning for existing industrial uses, while striving to mitigate their negative effects on residential areas. **KEEP**

Examples of mitigation can include buffering using landscaping and trees, also see policies in Chapter 4: Circulation.

- Discussion on clarifying public vs. private landscaping

Staff Revisions

- Engage industrial business owners and nearby residents in dialogue regarding needs and impacts.
- Expand the City's noticing system to increase transparency and civic participation.
- Consider ways to reduce and mitigate truck traffic on surrounding residential streets, as described in Chapter 4: Circulation.
- Encourage buffer landscaping with shrubs and trees along street edges.
- Encourage light industrial uses to adopt improved technology.

LU 5.2: Allow light industrial uses to have neighborhood-serving retail. **KEEP**

Staff Revisions

Allow light industrial uses to have neighborhood-serving retail if the space fronts onto a public street.

LU 5.3: Enforce and monitor regulations around emissions as set by the City of Fresno and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. **KEEP**

Regularly monitor the data collected by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) under the Community Air Monitoring Plan and Community Emissions Reduction Program for South Central Fresno which includes the South Tower neighborhood.

Staff Revisions

Collaborate with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to monitor emissions. Enforce and monitor regulations around emissions as set by the City of Fresno and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Staff Comments

- Enforcing and monitoring regulations surrounding emissions as noted above is not within the City's purview. The City will continue to collaborate with CARB and the SJVAPCD, which are the agencies that regulate and monitor these standards.

LU 5.4: Significant improvements to properties should be accompanied by streetscape improvements and neighborhood landscape buffering, also see Chapter 4: Circulation.
KEEP

LU 6: *Recognize the unique strengths and address the needs of Tower District's subdistricts and corridors.*

LU 6.1*: Reinforce Fulton Street and Van Ness Avenue as major corridors with commercial destinations that serve Tower District's Central Area and adjacent neighborhoods.
REVISE

- Discussion to revise to improve overall synergies of Downtown and Tower on Fulton and Van Ness

[Adapted from Goal 1, Objective 1, Policy 1.]

LU 6.2: Encourage land use intensification that takes advantage of Tower District's unique position within Central Fresno and convenient transit connections to Downtown along Fulton Street and Van Ness Avenue. **KEEP**