

Tower District Specific Plan Update | DRAFT Objectives and Policies

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

Highlighted items represent policies the subcommittee wanted to discuss further

Circulation and Streetscape

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.

Co-create road diet designs with residents and business owners who live along key corridors in order to improve safety and reduce collisions. The co-created designs should elevate pedestrian safety as the highest priority, while also establishing a unique, visual identity for each corridor. The following corridors should be prioritized:

- Olive Avenue. Create a strong pedestrian-oriented environment.
- Clinton Avenue. Slow traffic to address safety issues, make consistent with Collector Street designation.
- McKinley Avenue. Implement traffic calming measures and Class IV bike lanes.
- Palm Avenue. Complete Class IV bike lanes and add safe pedestrian crossings.
- Belmont Avenue. Emphasize a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.

- Discussion on the number of bike lanes to expect
- Concern over roads in Tower becoming a thoroughfare for people to drive from north to Downtown

Staff Revisions

~~Evaluate-Co-create~~ road diet designs with residents and business owners who live along key corridors in order to improve safety and reduce collisions. The co-created designs should elevate pedestrian safety as the highest priority, while also establishing a unique, visual identity for each corridor. The following corridors should be prioritized:

C 1.2: Enhance Main Streets.

Along Olive Avenue, establish a traditional commercial “main street” environment that creates a sense of place and prioritizes pedestrian activity. Strengthen Olive Avenue by making the following improvements.

- Limit the number of travel lanes to no more than three, with one lane in each direction. While shared center left-turn lanes may be needed, the preferred arrangement of lanes is to have two travel lanes with one lane in each direction and on-street parking lanes to support street-facing retail land use.
- Limit travel lane widths to no more than 11 feet, except when implementing Class III bike routes on main streets, travel lanes should be no more than 12 feet wide to accommodate vehicle maneuvers around bicyclists.
- Provide bicycle facilities. Recommend Class III Bike Routes for low-speed Main Streets. Consider Class II Bike Lanes on main streets where curb-to-curb widths also allow travel lanes and on-street parking.

- On main streets, encourage pedestrian traffic by widening sidewalks to at least 12 feet with street trees in curb-adjacent tree wells and a minimum 6-foot clear walking zone. Also include high-visibility crosswalks and ADA-accessible curb ramps at intersections, pedestrian-scale lighting, street banners, and landscaping.
- Apply appropriate traffic calming measures: corner extensions / bulb-outs, raised intersections, road diet, mini roundabouts, chokers, chicanes, median refuge islands, street trees, and shared streets.
- Discussion to work with Caltrans to understand how to mitigate anticipated changes to HWY 99
- Do not want center turn lanes to be removed
- Consider developing Class 3 route alternatives off Olive

Staff Revisions

Enhance Streets Serving Commercial Main Street (CMS) zoned properties. Main Streets. Along Olive Avenue, establish a traditional commercial “main street” environment that creates a sense of place and prioritizes pedestrian activity. Strengthen Olive Avenue by making the following improvements.

- Limit the number of travel lanes to no more than three, with one lane in each direction. While shared center left-turn lanes may be needed, the preferred arrangement of lanes is to have two travel lanes with one lane in each direction and on-street parking lanes to support street-facing retail land use.
- Limit travel lane widths to no more than 11 feet, except when implementing Class III bike routes on Commercial Main Street zoned properties, travel lanes should be no more than 12 feet wide to accommodate vehicle maneuvers around bicyclists.
- Provide bicycle facilities. Recommend Class III Bike Routes for low-speed Commercial Main Street zoned properties. Consider Class II Bike Lanes on main streets where curb-to-curb widths also allow travel lanes and on-street parking.

Staff Comments

- This policy applies to streets that serve properties zoned Commercial Main Street (CMS). This would apply to Olive Avenue from Palm Avenue to San Pablo Street and Van Ness Avenue from Floradora Avenue to Home Avenue.

C 1.3: Encourage active transportation modes by improving bicycle access, safety, and comfort for users of all ages and abilities. **KEEP**

Establish a well-connected bicycle network that provides safe, convenient, and comfortable bike routes through and to the Tower District. Expand and enhance Tower District’s Bicycle Network.

Establish Primary Bikeways that provide through routes for bicycles and connect to the larger bicycle network.

- Design bicycle facility type dependent on primary roadway designations to address roadway design speed, while not oversizing facilities which would diminish the quality of abutting pedestrian routes.

- Discourage excessive vehicle speeds and volumes by implementing complete street designs that reduce adjacent vehicle travel lane widths to no more than 11 feet with a 7-foot-wide parking lane.
 - Widen sidewalks to at least 8 feet with a minimum 6-foot clear walking zone and buffer zone of at least 4 feet, where street trees can be planted between the sidewalk and parking lanes, travel lanes, or bike lanes.
 - Where observed travel speeds exceed 25 miles per hour, apply appropriate traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeding and increase safety and access for active modes.
- Concern over safety issues with right hand turn lanes at existing bike lanes
 - Discussion on adding a permanent trail on Wishon or Palm
 - Discussion to add potential policy for permanent versions of quick build infrastructure

Staff Comments

- The City of Fresno is currently in the process of updating the Active Transportation Plan (ATP). To access the current ATP, please visit: https://www.fresno.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/170022FresnoATPFinal2017Amended042022_compressed-1.pdf

- C 1.4*: Provide universal accessibility. **KEEP**
 Ensure full access for mobility impaired persons in all parts of the Tower District, especially in areas which are centers of public and community life.
[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 2, Policy 1.]
- C 1.5*: Increase transit frequency. **KEEP**
 Work with FAX to increase transit access and frequency in the Tower District.
[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 4.]
- C 1.6*: Increase late night transportation options. **KEEP**
 Work with FAX, other providers, and stakeholders to increase late night transportation options (e.g., "The Hop" Trolley) after midnight to serve residents who work late and don't drive a car, and to provide a safe ride home rather than driving while intoxicated. The service should have a user-friendly online interface with real-time location and estimated arrival time information.
[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 4.]
- C 1.7*: Establish mobility hubs. **KEEP**
 Work with the community to determine locations for a network of community mobility hubs in the plan area. Potential locations include the core of Tower or Fresno City College.
[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 4.]
- C 1.8: Improve transit amenities. **KEEP**
 Improve transit waiting areas with better shelters, seating, and live wait times.

C 1.9: Coordinate curbside activities. **KEEP**
Conduct a curbside management study of the commercial core, and define locations for where commercial loading needs to occur and pickup/drop-off such as for ride-sharing vehicles. Consider time-of-day restrictions to make best use of curbside zones.

C 1.10: Encourage “Green Alleys.” **KEEP**
To encourage walking and biking and activate underused alley infrastructure, establish a new green alleys program. Encourage community engagement by creating safe corridors for slower modes of travel that allow residents to interact.

C 2: *Focus circulation improvements on pedestrian safety.*

C 2.1: Add pedestrian safety elements. **KEEP**
Work with Public Works to install street lighting, crosswalk striping and installation of pedestrian safety measures, particularly at frequently used but unmarked pedestrian crossings.

Staff Comments

- The Department of Public Works has a policy to determine if/where uncontrolled crosswalks would be installed. Staff will coordinate with Public Works to understand policy details.

C 2.2: Conduct a Sidewalk Gap Study. **REVISE**
Undertake a detailed sidewalk gap study focused around schools, and seek funding to address gaps. Recommendations should locate and describe needed features, including high-visibility crosswalks at intersections, ADA-accessible curb ramps, pedestrian-scale lighting, street trees and raised speed tables at crosswalks.

C 3: *Enhance safety on local interior neighborhood streets.*

C 3.1: Calm vehicular traffic. **KEEP**
Install traffic calming measures within the residential neighborhoods to improve their safety and enjoyment. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, traffic circles, bulb-outs, neck-downs, stop signs, and other effective methods. Methods should be carefully considered for both their potential effectiveness as well as visual aesthetic consistent with the visual character of each neighborhood.

Staff Revisions

Install traffic calming measures within the residential neighborhoods to improve their safety and enjoyment. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, speed humps, traffic circles, bulb-outs, neck-downs, stop signs, and other effective methods. Methods should be carefully considered for both their potential effectiveness as well as visual aesthetic consistent with the visual character of each neighborhood.

Staff Comments

- The installation of speed humps is a viable traffic calming measure currently allowed by the City on residential streets.

C 3.2: Consider mid-block crossings in critical locations. **KEEP**
Provide safe mid-block pedestrian crossings where pedestrian safety would be significantly improved, such as near schools and in the middle of particularly long blocks

in main street areas. Accompany mid-block crossings with high-visibility crosswalks and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs).

Staff Comments

- This policy does not align with Objective C 3 to enhance safety on local interior neighborhood streets, as mid-block crossings would not be installed within a residential street/neighborhood.

C 4: *Initiate projects that help mitigate adverse impacts resulting from regional circulation improvements.*

C 4.1: Complete planned vehicular improvements at McKinley and Blackstone Avenues but modify as needed to emphasize pedestrian safety and the quality of walking environments. **REVISE**

Evaluate the number and width of vehicle travel lanes to reduce vehicle speeds through areas with significant pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Ensure that planned improvements feature comprehensive pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Implement traffic calming measures in neighborhoods surrounding adjacent development projects.

Staff Revisions

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. but modify as needed to emphasize pedestrian safety and the quality of walking environments.

Staff Comments

- The Blackstone/Mckinley project has previously been approved and is currently implementing enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The City does not anticipate additional modifications to occur. For more information on the Blackstone/McKinley Grade Separation Project, please visit: <https://www.fresno.gov/capitalprojects/projects/featured-projects/#bnsf-blackstone-mckinley-grade-separation-project>

C 4.2: Initiate pedestrian improvements at the SR 180 Access Ramps. **REVISE**

Implement complete street improvements on Fulton Street, Van Ness Avenue, and Belmont Avenue near the SR 180 access ramps. Sidewalks should be provided on both sides of the street, at least 8 feet wide with a minimum 6-feet of clear walk area, with broader cross-sections preferred, and including street trees, places to sit, pedestrian-scaled street lighting in keeping with the character of historic street lamps in the District, and gateway elements. Work with Caltrans to redesign the off-ramps to Fulton Street and Blackstone Avenue, to remove right-turn slip-lanes that allow high-speed vehicular traffic to continue at high speeds onto city streets.

C 4.3: Address change to local traffic from High-Speed Rail improvements. **KEEP**

Examine and mitigate potential traffic impacts on Olive Avenue due to the High-Speed Rail ramp closure at Belmont Avenue, such as to make streetscape improvements along Olive Ave.

- Create separate policies to address traffic impacts from both High-Speed Rail and Caltrans

Staff Revisions

- ~~Evaluate~~ ~~Examine and mitigate~~ potential traffic impacts on Olive Avenue due to the High-Speed Rail State Route (SR)-99 ramp closure at Belmont Avenue, such as to make streetscape improvements along Olive Ave.

C 4.4: Address motorist needs and potential impacts from vehicles during special events. **KEEP**
 Designate detour routes and provide consistent wayfinding signage to help visitors navigate the Tower District during special events. Protect neighborhoods from cut-through traffic.

C 4.5*: Enhance and maintain landscape buffering. **KEEP**
 Develop landscape improvement programs for streets to beautify Tower District, encourage walking, and address potential adverse impacts on adjacent residential properties and neighborhoods.

[Adapted from Goal 5, Objective 3, Policy 1.]

C 5: *Minimize the impact of truck traffic on the residential neighborhoods of the Tower District.*

C 5.1: Rerouting of truck traffic.
 Evaluate potential impacts from rerouting truck traffic due to High-Speed Rail and closure of SR99 interchanges, particularly health and equity-related concerns. Study potential effects of truck traffic and their mitigation, such as to make multimodal street improvements and designate truck routes away from residential neighborhoods. Specifically, study the potential effects of truck use of Weber Ave following the closure of Golden State Blvd and its potential effects on residential areas, notably South Tower.

- Discussion on further clarification on plans from both High-Speed Rail Authority and Caltrans

Staff Comments

- The City of Fresno is currently preparing the South Central Truck Re-Route Study, which includes areas of the Tower District. If you would like to participate in the process, please visit: <https://www.fresno.gov/publicworks/south-central-truck-re-route-study/>.
- High-Speed Rail impacts have previously been studied through the associated Environmental Impact Report for the project.
- Caltrans’s impact on the closures of Belmont have yet to be studied.

C 6: *Develop and adopt a parking and transportation demand management (TDM) strategy for the Tower District that supports commercial activity and enhances the pedestrian-oriented character of the District.*

C 6.1: On-street parking.
 Maximize on-street parking while providing adequate sidewalk widths and continuous street trees. Preserve existing on-street parking wherever possible. Consider ways to

increase on-street parking, such as by introducing diagonal parking along streets that with curb-to-curb dimensions in excess of what is functionally required.

- Discussion on concerns over payment for on-street parking

Staff Revisions

Maximize on-street parking while providing adequate sidewalk widths and continuous street trees. Preserve existing on-street parking wherever possible. Consider ways to increase on-street parking, such as by introducing diagonal parking along streets that do not include bicycle lanes with curb-to-curb dimensions, in excess of what is functionally required.

Staff Comments

- Diagonal parking along streets is only feasible along streets which do not include bike lanes.

C 6.2 Evaluate demand and location for bicycle parking.

To build on the multi-modal nature of the Tower District, encourage non-motorized modes of transportation.

~~C 6.2 Manage demand for on-street parking.~~

~~Consider charging for on-street parking where demand exceeds supply, and setting the price of parking so that every block face would offer about one parking space. Consider signage and web-based systems to communicate where parking is more available. Adjust parking time limits to support businesses, and discourage drivers from using a parking space for excessive amounts of time.~~

C 6.3*: Surface parking fronting major streets. KEEP

Establish development standards that dramatically limit on-site surface parking where it fronts major streets, such as to require that at least three-quarters of a parcel's street frontage be lined by building or community open space.

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

C 6.4*: Residential parking permit district. KEEP

Explore the creation of Residential Parking Permit Districts to manage spill over parking from commercial and institutional uses.

[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 3, Policy 4.]

C 7: *Enhance the unique identity of the Tower District with placemaking.*

C 7.1: Create unique gateways to signal entry into the Tower District. KEEP

The Tower District has many distinct entryways. Enhancing the sense of place at gateways can create pride among residents and highlight the district as a cultural hub of Fresno. Gateway locations may include:

- Van Ness, Wishon/Maroa, and Palm Avenues on the north
- Van Ness, Fulton, and Broadway on the south
- McKinley, Olive, Belmont (at San Pablo), and Maroa on the east

- McKinley, Olive, Belmont (at HSR crossing), and Shields on the west

Potential treatments include gateway structures, special signage, and public art.

C 7.2: Wayfinding and signage. **KEEP**

Develop wayfinding and signage branding for the Tower District to allow residents and visitors to explore the neighborhood. Help people navigate the district with its historic and cultural sites, public parking, retail areas and Fresno City College. Develop street signs in line with historic Tower elements in coordination with Public Works.

C 7.3: Support public art in the Tower District. **KEEP**

Include public art in the Tower District along sidewalks and in plazas and parks to tell the story of the neighborhood and reflect its culture. Public art should include installations and integrated elements like paving, lighting, and seating.

Require that new development along key corridors integrate public art elements or contribute to a public art fund. Public art will be administered through the Parks, Recreation and Arts Commission.

C 7.4: Create a demonstration program for alley enhancements. **KEEP**

Create the opportunity for property owners within a block to receive support for alley paving and enhancement for walking, biking, and access for garages and to potential accessory dwelling units. Enhance the spaces with landscaping and public art where possible.

Staff Revisions

~~Consider~~ **Create** a demonstration program for alley enhancements.

~~Consider a demonstration program for alley enhancements to support~~ **Create the opportunity for property owners within a block to receive support for** alley paving and enhancement for walking, biking, and access for garages and to potential accessory dwelling units. Enhance the spaces with landscaping and public art where possible.

Staff Comments

- Improvements on private property would be the responsibility of the property owner.

C 7.5: Enable temporary street traffic closures and slow streets. **KEEP**

Today, temporary street traffic closures on Olive Avenue enable the Pride and Mardi Gras festivals to bring life to the community. Additional temporary traffic closures (i.e. Sunday Streets) and/or traffic slowing programs (i.e. Slow Streets) can support neighborhood walking, biking, and quality of life.

C 7.6*: Public events.

Develop a program of public events to take place in Tower District neighborhood shopping areas.

[Adapted from Goal 3, Objective 2, Policy 4.]

C 8: ***Create Public Realm Improvements in the Tower District.***

C 8.1*: Provide streetscape elements, public plazas, and open space to engender public activities and functions. **KEEP**

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

C 8.2 Add features that bring comfort, safety and attractiveness to the public realm. **KEEP**
Develop a palette of high-quality public space furniture like trash cans, benches, bicycle stands, light fixtures, tree grates, planters, etc. to develop a cohesive public realm for the Tower District. Borrow from historic elements where possible to maintain the character of the neighborhood.

C 8.3*: Adequate Seating. **KEEP**

Provide adequate public seating along major corridors. Specifically, add seating in the core commercial area of the Tower District along Olive Avenue.

[Adapted from Goal 6, Objective 2, Policy 1.]

Staff Revisions

Through a Business Improvement District (BID) or other similar mechanism, provide adequate public seating along major corridors. Specifically, add seating in the core commercial area of the Tower District along Olive Avenue.

C 8.4: Trash Cans.

Add adequate trash cans along commercial streets including Olive, Van Ness, Belmont and Blackstone avenues. Extend the addition of trash cans to one block into the neighborhood around the core of the entertainment area.

Staff Revisions

Through a Business Improvement District (BID) or other similar mechanism, add adequate trash cans along commercial streets including Olive, Van Ness, Belmont and Blackstone avenues. Extend the addition of trash cans to one block into the neighborhood around the core of the entertainment area.

C 8.5*: Plant street trees to enhance tree canopy and maintain uniformity within plan areas.

Trees are essential in providing respite from urban heat, and infusing nature into the urban environment. Specific actions include:

- Examine the tree trimming policies and tree replacement policies to maintain tree health and shade in the Tower District. Add the tree data to the public data portal to allow residents to help report on tree health or surrounding issues.
- Plant street trees along sidewalks where missing, especially along Olive and Belmont avenues and in the South Tower neighborhood, to mitigate the urban heat island effect in these areas.

- Require the planting of trees in plazas and parking lots.
- Choose street trees with large canopies to provide adequate shade where planted. Use drought-tolerant, native species as much as possible to reduce maintenance needs.

[Adapted from Goal 6, Objective 3, Policy 3.]

Staff Revisions

- Through property owner support, a Business Improvement District (BID) or other similar mechanism, require the planting of trees in plazas and parking lots.