

City of Fresno

Tower Theater
815 E Olive Ave., Fresno, CA 93728



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

5:30 PM

Regular Meeting

Roger Rocka's & Zoom
1226 N Wishon, Fresno, CA 93728

Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee

Chairperson - Christopher Johnson

Vice Chair - Janay Conley

Board Member - Annie Lokrantz

Board Member - Michael Birdsong

Board Member - Myra Coble

Board Member - James Kitch

Board Member - Joseph Catania

THE COMMITTEE WELCOMES YOU TO ROGER ROCKA'S, LOCATED AT 1226 N WISHON AVE, FRESNO, CA 93728

The meeting can also be viewed live at 5:30 P.M. on Comcast Channel 96 and AT&T channel 99.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

The following options are available for members of the public who want to address Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee:

1. You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

a) Register in advance for this webinar:

https://fresno-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_taAP1qgNRGGeXj2cB5mzQQ

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

b) If you do not wish for your name to appear on the screen, then use the drop down menu and click on “rename” to rename yourself.

c) Those addressing Committee must state their name for the record.

OR

2. Join by phone: 1-669-900-9128

Webinar ID: 951 8694 8275

a) Those addressing the Committee must state their name and address for the record.

3. Email: LongRangePlanning@fresno.gov

a) Attendees may also email comments to be read during the meeting. Please include the agenda date and item number you wish to speak on in the subject line of your email. Include your name, and address for the record, at the top of the body of your email.

b) Emails will be a maximum of 450 words.

c) All comments received will be distributed to the Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee prior and during the meeting and will be a part of the official record.

d) Notwithstanding subsection c) above, unless otherwise required by law to be accepted by the City at or prior to a Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee meeting, no documents shall be accepted for review unless they are submitted to Long Range Planning at least 24 hours prior to the commencement of the meeting at which the associated agenda item is to be heard.

All participants will be on mute until they are called upon at which point they will be unmuted. To prevent participants from having their video on, we will remove the option to show their video.

Pursuant to the Executive Order, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in the Tower District Specific Plan Implementation Committee meeting, please contact the Planning Division, 559-621-8277 within 48 hours of the meeting.

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair called the meeting to order at 5:39 pm and initiated the roll call.

Also present were Long Range Planning staff Sophia Pagoulatos, Casey Lauderdale, Yamilex Nava, Preston Her, Maya Mubarak, Matthew Woodward, Kara Hammerschmidt, Emily Reyes, and Matthew Chea; Erika Pelayo-Lopez (Public Works), Council representative Karla Martinez and Laura Rios; consultant team Peter Winch, Deeksha Rawat, and Dan Zach.

Present 7 - Chairperson Christopher Johnson, Board Member Michael Birdsong, Board Member Annie Lokrantz, Vice Chair Janay Conley, Board Member Myra Coble, Board Member James Kitch, and Board Member Joseph Catania

II. Approve Agenda

On motion of Board Member Coble, seconded by Vice Chair Conley, the above AGENDA was APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chairperson Johnson, Board Member Birdsong, Board Member Lokrantz, Vice Chair Conley, Board Member Coble, Board Member Kitch and Board Member Catania

III. Approve Meeting Minutes

[ID 24-274](#) December 12, 2023 Tower District Specific Implementation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

On motion of Board Member Lokrantz, seconded by Board Member Birdsong, that the above Action Item be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chairperson Johnson, Board Member Birdsong, Board Member Lokrantz, Vice Chair Conley, Board Member Coble, Board Member Kitch and Board Member Catania

IV. Council District Updates

Staff member Martinez informed those present that Broadway Park is out to bid and will be constructed by the end of this year. Currently, infrastructure work is ongoing along Palm, Weber, Olive, and Belmont.

Staff member Rios provided an update regarding the anticipated date for the

opening of Trolley Park, which is tentatively set for March 8th.

V. Staff Updates

[ID 24-273](#) Update from Public Works on Van Ness Tree Maintenance

Staff member Pelayo-Lopez informed about the upcoming tree trimming project on Van Ness between Shields and Weldon. As a part of this project, three trees were identified as dead and will subsequently be removed. These trees will be replaced with Deodar Cedar trees.

Member of the public expressed concern that no one on Van Ness had any input regarding the recent tree trimming activity. They also requested information on the number of trees that were topped and the reason behind the trimming. Staff acknowledged the concern and requested the member of the public to connect with them after the meeting for further discussion and clarification.

VI. Continued Matters

N/A

VII. New Matters

[ID 24-275](#) Subcommittee Updates

1. Implementation Role Subcommittee
2. Historic Preservation Subcommittee
3. Land Use, Zoning, & Entertainment District Subcommittee
4. Circulation Subcommittee
5. Public Spaces Subcommittee

Catania gave a brief summary of what was discussed at the Land Use Subcommittee meeting and stated that he thought it was productive.

[ID 24-276](#) Presentation on Land Use Concepts

Winch provided an overview of the project schedule and emphasized the significance of the Existing Land Use map. He also elaborated on the distinction between Land Use and Zoning, and provided a detailed explanation to clarify any potential confusion.

Deeksha gave a comprehensive summary of the community feedback that was gathered from multiple sources including seven pop-up events, an online survey that received 682 responses, canvassing, social media posts,

and 18 other meetings. In addition, the Health and Equity analysis was mentioned along with other important topics such as housing burden, access to jobs, access to healthy food, walkability, and air quality.

Pagualtos gave a brief context for the Land Use Themes that were discussed.

Zack discussed the various Land Use Themes that were developed, including the Residential Theme, Main Streets Theme, Park Opportunities Theme, and the Employment Theme.

Catania expressed a desire for a seamless transition from office to residential areas, while also aiming to increase housing options without compromising the character and integrity of the neighborhood.

Birdsong stated that when the City updated the General Plan, there was no TDSP Committee to advise.

Member of the public mentioned that the FCC is acquiring parcels along Blackstone, which could impact child development and many new buildings.

Helen Hansen, President & CEO of La Tapatia, shared information about her business. They supply local stores and the Pacific Rim, and they purchase their corn and wheat locally. Hansen wants to expand the business to include a bakery restaurant. She highlighted that the employees have worked there for 30-40 years and that the business offers skills, training, and livelihood for many. Rezoning could impact food as well as jobs.

Alex expressed support for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), accessory commercial units (ACUs), and more lively alleyways. They would love to walk to a local shoe cobbler and see less industrial zoning to reduce asthma triggers. They suggested that the Central Valley Cheese Building should be mixed-use.

Katie asked a question about zoning and land use, specifically about the Circle K and car wash on Olive that don't seem to fit with the CMS zoning.

Justin Fortmeyer, of Patton AC said that they have been in their location for over 100 years and love the neighborhood. They intentionally chose to be

there and want to support the community. He expressed support for all the ideas discussed in the meeting.

Bob Boro, who owns a home in Wilson Island and a business in the Tower, spoke about non-conforming zoning. He suggested pruning the trees higher instead of removing them.

Lopez works for La Tapatia and shared that if there was a change in her work, it would affect her greatly. She walks to work. Her employer makes accommodations to help her care for her son and work at the same time. She thanked her employer for the work that she has been given and asked the committee to consider her words.

Andrew Feil echoed Alex's comments and said that he loves the idea of adding density in appropriate forms into the neighborhood. He thinks going higher on the corridors is a good idea and encouraged the committee to keep up the good work.

Arthur Robinson asked the Committee about walkability and accessibility.

Daniel Branick shared his thoughts on the presentation, saying that it aligned with what they had seen in the process. He expressed apprehension about doing more with CMS zoning and suggested a more phased or iterative approach to ministerial in strategic locations.

Chrystal Vasquez, a Tower resident for 20 years and local chef, mentioned the need to look at aging infrastructure and access to doctors and grocery stores. She said that there is a lot of focus on entertainment, but not enough on the community. She asked how they could make the area safer for all ages.

Nora Davis, from Thomas/Safford, was attending her first meeting and asked the Committee to consider traffic consequences of the issues discussed. She explained that Thomas is the last street after Weber and that lots of traffic would come through her neighborhood if H Street is closed. She asked the committee to consider traffic patterns, especially Palm and Belmont, and the consequences of H Street closure.

Shawn encouraged the Committee to think about whether the free market is the best approach to zoning changes. They suggested that publicly owned

grocery stores and city-built housing, like in Europe, could be alternatives.

Angela Christiano, a Producers Nurse, expressed appreciation for the wellness opportunities provided by Producers. She said that Producers is a mile from her home and that many employees live and shop in the Tower.

Shania, from North Ferris/Belmont, is also a nurse who works in the community. She talked about the corner of Ferris/Belmont being their bus stop and suggested that businesses should be community-facing. She thanked La Tapatia and Patton for having neighborhood-facing functions. To Producers, she expressed concern about truck traffic being scary.

VIII. Unscheduled Oral Communications

N/A

IX. Adjournment

*Next Meeting: February 27, 2023 at Tower Theater
The Chair adjourned meeting at 8:12 pm*