

Visalia

General Plan Update



Summary of the May 5-6th Community Leader Interviews

PREPARED FOR
THE CITY OF VISALIA BY:

DYETT & BHATIA
Urban and Regional Planners

MAY 2010

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INTRODUCTION

This introduction includes background on the General Plan Update and our approach to the community leader interviews, held at Visalia City Hall East on May 5th and 6th, 2010. The interviews included 37 participants, including elected officials, City staff members, representatives from major institutions and organizations, and others. Following the introduction are summaries of the key ideas and concerns that emerged from these interviews. Quotations are included to provide a feel for specific concerns. The findings of these interviews will help the consultant team focus on critical issues and priorities that are important to Visalia residents, City officials, community leaders and other stakeholders as work proceeds on defining a vision for the community, analyzing policy options and formulating land use and transportation planning concepts.


Background on the General Plan Update

In early 2010, the City of Visalia began the City's General Plan Update process. The General Plan Update will articulate a long-term vision for Visalia and outline policies and programs to realize this vision. Updating the General Plan will enable the City to affirm or modify existing policies and establish new policies; create a foundation for community involvement and informed decision-making; and react to recent and on-going regional housing, environmental and transportation planning efforts as well as the City's interest in job creation and economic development.

The first step in this process was to begin discussing issues and concerns to be addressed in the General Plan, collecting information from interviews with community leaders, and preparing an *Existing Conditions* report on key planning factors.

It is important to note that while the information from each individual and group interview session is confidential, this report is intended to summarize the comments made from these interviews. This document will serve as a valuable reference for the General Plan Update Review Committee (GPURC), City staff, the consultant team and others involved in the process during the initial phases of the General Plan Update.

The General Plan Update work program can be tracked according to the following order:

- Kickoff Meeting
- Community Leader Interviews  **WE ARE HERE**
- Community Workshop: Visioning
- Existing Conditions and Key Issues Report
- Alternative Plans Working Paper
- Alternative Plans Workshops
- Preferred Plan and Key Policies Working Paper
- General Plan Design and Drafting

Interview Process

Interviews with community leaders were held on Wednesday and Thursday, May 5th and 6th, 2010 in Visalia City Hall East in order to discuss their visions, issues and concerns regarding the General Plan Update. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) also was briefed on the General Plan Update and their input sought on issues and priorities. In total, 14 interview sessions with 37 participants were conducted. Each session included 2-5 participants and members of the consultant team. A list of those who participated in the interviews is in Appendix A. The CAC briefing PowerPoint is in Appendix B.

Key Themes

As participants were asked a series of questions addressing multiple aspects of life in Visalia, a number of key themes emerged from the conversations. These took the form of concerns, suggestions, and aspirations for the new General Plan. The key themes are summarized below, and discussed in greater detail in the next section of this report:

- *Build on Visalia's assets:* a close-knit community with a small town feel; strong and vital downtown; valuable open space and recreational amenities; well planned neighborhoods; good schools and services
- *Address challenges and threats:* funding shortages and fiscal constraints; continuation of growth management and provision of municipal services in the face of growth; retail, industrial, and overall economic competitiveness; revitalization of older neighborhoods; natural resource protection and conservation, particularly air quality and water supply
- *Increase educational and employment opportunities for residents:* Identification of a site for, and attraction of, a four-year university; attraction of high-paying employers; expansion of Visalia's economic base to new industries, including tourism; implementation of the East Downtown Strategic Plan
- *Maintain and improve community livability:* Continued acquisition of parkland and open space; new neighborhoods that offer housing choices, connectivity, and access to amenities and services; expansion and improvement of transit, pedestrian, and biking facilities; encouragement of infill and concentric growth; sustainable development that uses resources wisely while not stifling economic prosperity

SUMMARY

The following section presents each of the individual questions proposed to each of the workshop participants as well as major answers and themes revealed. It should be noted that these questions were used only to guide the interview process. Actual questions asked and time spent in each topic varied according to the specific concerns and priorities of each interviewed.

1. What do you think are the greatest challenges facing the City today? Which of these do you think should be highest priority for the General Plan update? Why?

- Those interviewed described a number of challenges that Visalia is currently facing. Many of these are associated with growth; namely, the process of transitioning from a small town to a large urban area. Participants expressed concern over maintaining Visalia's small-town feel and values while at the same time accommodating growth and providing greater opportunities for residents. Several people worried about growth causing social fragmentation and the loss of a sense of what has made Visalia unique and special. Many also felt that current economic conditions posed serious challenges: the city is fiscally strapped and the unemployment rate is high. But in that respect, numerous participants also felt that a challenge for the City would be balancing long term needs and visionary thinking with short term economic realities. An example of a long-term solution to economic challenges that was mentioned by a large number of participants was expanding educational opportunities and attracting a four-year university.
- City staff and elected officials emphasized that fiscal challenges were currently one of the City's top concerns. Several cited particular concern over the State both issuing mandates and taking larger portions of the City's funds away simultaneously. Regarding infrastructure, one staff member pointed out that the longer needed improvements are put off due to lack of funds, the more expensive they become to fix in the future.
- Natural resource protection was another topic of concern for many of those interviewed. Several cited a limited water supply as a major challenge moving forward; farmland preservation and air quality were also mentioned numerous times. In relation to these concerns, managing physical growth was a top priority for a number of people: encouraging infill and revitalization of existing built-up areas, keeping downtown central and vital, continuing concentric growth, and curbing sprawl.
- Other challenges and priorities mentioned included transportation mobility and mode share; implications of the new FEMA flood maps; retail strength and revitalizing Mooney Boulevard; public safety (particularly related to gang violence); and improvements to older north side neighborhoods. Several participants stated the importance of revitalizing the Oval area in particular: this historic neighborhood was viewed as both a source of pride and a source of problems for many residents.

"Let's make it someplace where you know your neighbors again."



"Reestablishing a consolidated identity is a high priority."



"Our resources are diminished, but the expectations of the public aren't."



"As a fourth-generation native, my biggest concern is air quality."



"We should build neighborhoods, not gang-hoods."



“Visalia is the gem of the Valley.”



“I came back with the intent of being involved in the community.”



“I love to spend time downtown. You see people you know, engage with them. It’s very friendly.”



“I love the waterways and the fact that the City cares about them.”



“For having 120,000 people, you still feel like it’s a small town.”



“Walkability doesn’t make sense if everything is designed around the car.”



2. What aspects of the City do you like most? What do you like about living here? Expanding on this idea, what are the community’s assets, and how should the General Plan build on them?

- Most participants identified Visalia’s small town character and feeling as what they liked the most, even in the face of growth and change. More specifically, those interviewed commented on the city’s positive atmosphere, friendly people, sense of community, lack of traffic congestion, and rural setting as desirable traits. Another aspect of Visalia that many people found attractive was the city’s affordability and relatively low cost of living: residents could experience a high quality of life and afford to raise their families.
- Many people cited the downtown as one of Visalia’s greatest assets, describing it as something that distinguished the city from many otherwise similar Valley communities. Several participants felt that good planning practices and growth management had contributed to the downtown’s vitality; for example, the city had respected its growth boundaries even though pressures to go beyond them were strong. This was viewed as something the General Plan should continue to support moving forward.
- Participants also saw the St. Johns River, city parks, trails, and recreation facilities as valuable community assets and good investments. The river and other waterways were viewed as unique and vital characteristics of Visalia. They took a great deal of pride in the City’s recent efforts to expand and improve these open space and recreational resources, and wanted this to remain a top priority for the updated General Plan.

3. Community livability has been an important concern, and many think of Visalia as one of the best places to live in the county. As the City looks ahead to potential growth areas—in the southeast, the 198 corridor west of town, along Mooney Boulevard, and other areas—what are the ideas you would like emphasized? (Community design, walkability, public space, etc.)

- Those interviewed expressed some conflicting priorities and desires related to community design and livability. While many participants felt the need for greater connectivity between neighborhoods and walkability to amenities such as parks and schools, there was also notable support for elements of community design that emphasized safety and security, such as cul de sacs, walls, and gated communities. For example, they noted that residents in developments with pedestrian access through cul de sacs had purposefully closed them off.
- What was important, several participants said, was that residents were given choices about what types of neighborhoods they could live in. A number of people also pointed out that while walkability was a desirable characteristic of new neighborhoods, the school locations, auto-oriented commercial areas, and developer reluctance meant that it was not a reality for most places in town. They would like to see what the new General Plan could do to encourage this type of development.

- Participants also had mixed feelings regarding smart growth and density. Some were strong advocates of smart growth and pointed to the Southeast Area Specific Plan as a good example of where Visalia should be headed; others doubted the marketability of higher density development and did not oppose more expansive residential development that might go beyond the St. Johns River, for example.
- In regards to community design standards, several interviewees were comfortable with the idea as long as they were not overly burdensome and did not involve architectural review. Another participant pointed out that while Visalia does not have a strong design identity, its historic structures are unique and valuable additions to the built environment, and should continue to be preserved. A number of people pointed out—and took pride in the fact—that Visalia is the oldest city in the Central Valley, and valued this cultural heritage.

4. What trends concern you when thinking about the future of Visalia?

- Increasing crime and gang activity were mentioned by numerous participants as rising trends that concerned them. These were also perceived as threats to the city’s close knit community feel that so many had said was an asset. Similarly, several participants were concerned by the perceived inevitability of growth and subsequent anonymity and loss of what made Visalia special. People were also concerned that growth causing a disconnect in the community between those who had lived in Visalia for a long time and the newcomers.
- City staff and elected officials had some concerns about Visalia’s fiscal stability, especially as the State demanded more of the City’s funds, and the City’s ability to continue to pay for needed services and maintenance of facilities. Additional concerns were expressed in regards to degradation and loss of environmental resources, especially air quality and water shortages, which would impact both quality of life and economic viability. One official was uncertain as to whether residents grasped the severity of the water supply issue and its implications for future growth.

“From the perspective of an old resident... I worry about the increase in gang violence and the impact on neighborhoods and the entire community.”



5. Economic development will be a cornerstone of the new General Plan: what specific industries or types of businesses have growth potential and how could the City use the General Plan process to attract them?

- Many of those interviewed described job growth as a top priority, particularly in industries that paid a living wage and offered opportunities for career advancement. Most participants recognized that lack of access to higher education is a serious barrier to achieving this goal: companies with high-paying jobs look for an educated workforce. Without a four year public university, residents leave Visalia for education and don’t necessarily come back.
- Identifying a site for a four-year university was cited many times as a top priority for this General Plan Update; many felt that without a sustainable, long term solution for educating the work force, Visalia would never be able to attract white-collar jobs. Several participants put forth the idea of locating the site downtown, and creating a central “Education Zone” Others questioned whether downtown was the best location and suggested other possible sites for a university campus, such as along the Highway 198 Corridor closer to the freeway.

“We’ve never wanted to be the ‘low-cost leader.’”



“If the City wants a four-year university, they have to go after it. Incentivize it.”



“Companies go where they’re wanted and stay where they’re appreciated.”



“We need to put out the welcome mat.”



“There are challenges even when times are good, and now we are asked to do more with less.”



“One of the defining aspects of Visalia is the landscaping, the trees, the riparian areas... people may not realize it consciously, but it adds value both intangibly and to property.”



- Participants also identified a number of industries well-suited to Visalia’s location and workforce, which the city could continue to attract: warehousing and distribution centers, which work well because of the central location, as well as food processing facilities and other manufacturers. However, several participants also pointed out that many similar cities up and down the Valley are competing for these same employers, so Visalia needs to be aggressive in marketing itself and being accommodating to businesses, with permitting processes are fair, competitively priced, and predictable. One person also mentioned the importance of providing rail access to large industrial employers.
 - Various people also suggested that Visalia could focus on tourist attraction, further capitalizing on the city’s proximity to Sequoia National Park, and/or exploring agriculture-based tourism, similar to Napa. Other innovative ideas for new economic drivers included developing solar technology and alternative energy production, hosting regional and state sports competitions, and promoting arts and cultural attractions. A couple of interviewees pointed out the Amgen Tour of California cycling race as a successful example of events-driven tourism.
- 6. Do you have concerns about Visalia’s ability to keep up with the provision of public services, such as improvements to the City’s street system, needs for parks and community facilities, maintenance or infrastructure extensions to growth areas? Do you think the City has adequate financial resources to maintain the present quality of public services in the future?**
- Many believed that Visalia is well-run, and in better shape regarding public services than a lot of other cities. They felt that residents here are invested, and while they are conservative, they will vote to fund things they trust and believe in (such as public safety, road improvement, etc.). No glaring deficiencies in infrastructure were noted, although the City’s ability to maintain the provision of public services in the face of rapid growth was a common concern. Additionally, many City staff members interviewed were concerned about the city’s fiscal resources: in times of recession, resources are diminished and yet demand for services increases.
 - A few participants doubted whether new development really “paid its way,” and some felt that the current fees do not actually cover the cost and upkeep of existing facilities. Several participants pointed out that older neighborhoods, which do not collect impact fees, are at a disadvantage and have less resources available for upkeep. Some people were interested in exploring innovative assessment districts for public safety, landscaping and lighting, and/or PBIDs for areas beyond downtown. City staff also offered some concrete ideas for providing services and facilities more efficiently, such as combining park space with stormwater ponding basins, and coordinating the siting of these facilities within subdivisions so that they are not being redundant.

7. Having a balanced transportation system is another planning objective in many communities; what works and doesn't work in Visalia? How well does the City balance the needs of cars, pedestrians, cyclists, and other modes of travel?

- Overall, the car is still the predominant mode of transportation in Visalia. Most agreed that traffic congestion is not a big problem; however, timing traffic signals and improving north-south connections were commonly cited as needed improvements. Especially as the city grows, maintaining smooth traffic flow will be a high priority, and it is something that residents value highly.
- There was some disagreement over whether planning for light rail is appropriate or not. Some felt that it was a necessity and that the city should be proactive in procuring right of way, whereas others felt that it was unrealistic, expensive, and unsupported from a population density and cost standpoint. However, most agreed that if High Speed Rail did indeed move forward with a station in the Hanford area, the City should prioritize making transportation connections to the station.
- Regarding bicycles, there was some shared sentiment that Visalia has the potential to be a great city to bike in. While there is some bicycle infrastructure in place, much more could be done to create a complete network and create a biking environment that people view as safe. Another participant pointed out the importance of building and maintaining sidewalks in all neighborhoods. Multi-use trails, such as the path along the St. Johns River, were also cited as good examples of paths for walking, running, and cycling.
- Bus service was seen as an important amenity, but in need of improvements in reliability, frequency, and stop locations. One participant pointed out the importance of transit and para-transit services for those who cannot drive or ride a bicycle. Additionally, it was mentioned that the need for expanded transit services will be particularly important when the College of the Sequoias (COS) opens up its campus in Tulare; students will need a way to travel between the two. Ultimately, the needs of college students could create support for a light rail system too.

"I worry about the fix – building capacity is not the answer. Improvements may just lead to more growth and more trips."



"Visalia is an 'in between town.' We're not big enough for light rail now, but maybe we should be planning for it."



"You wouldn't build an unsafe street system for cars, but bikes are legal vehicles too. We need to change that mindset and plan accordingly."



8. Parks, schools and recreation facilities are key elements of city building; what do you think the City has done well, and how can the park and open space system be improved?

- People agreed that Visalia's parks are a substantial asset to the community. There has been increased emphasis in recent years on providing multi-use paths and trails, particularly along waterways, which are very popular. The new sports park in the north was seen as one of the City's best investments, and is very heavily used. At the same time, numerous participants pointed out that the distribution of parks and recreational facilities is not equal; there is a dearth of these amenities south of Highway 198. Similarly, some older neighborhoods lack parks that are walking distance from many homes. Challenges moving forward regarding parks and recreation include providing programming for all segments of the population (particularly the elderly), achieving a higher standard of park acreage per population, and revitalizing the Oval.

"I feel like I'm a part of the community when I'm out there in the park."



"I'm worried that the County is trying to get into the development business."



"I'd hate to see a mall go in, or any large commercial development in the 198 corridor. There are other places for retail."



- Interviewees felt that the relationship between the Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) and the City Parks and Recreation department was strong, and that there was a good system of shared facility use. In fact, one participant felt that the extent of cooperation between them now verges on codependence. COS also opens their facilities for public use, and these are used heavily by the community. In terms of sites and facilities, VUSD believes that it is well positioned to serve a growing population, having identified a new school “supercampus” in the northwest. However, some participants expressed concern that the “supercampus” model of school siting undermined the traditional notion of neighborhoods being organized around an elementary school. COS is dealing with the pressures of having a small campus in Visalia, which it has entirely built out, and is expanding in neighboring cities.
9. **The County is doing a General Plan Update as well; what concerns do you have about what might be happening within and adjacent to the Study Area in unincorporated areas?**
- Numerous participants expressed concern over Tulare County’s growth and development plans, especially now that the County’s Draft General Plan has been released for comment. They felt that as the economy has faltered, the County has shifted from focusing on agricultural and rural issues to seeking more revenue sources. This is taking the form of commercial development historically seen in incorporated areas. One participant pointed out that there was no set tax sharing agreement in place between the City and the County. There was a sense among many of those interviewed that if Visalia did not articulate its vision for land adjacent to the city boundaries, the County might allow development to occur that was contrary to the City’s interest. Because Visalia has an interest in what occurs in the adjacent unincorporated area, and because the City’s growth boundaries encompass County land, people agreed that there has to be meaningful cooperation between the two jurisdictions as the General Plan Update process progresses.
 - The unincorporated area along the 198 corridor between central Visalia and Highway 99 was also a topic of interest for a number of interviewees. There was general support for the open space setback recently approved by the City Council; ideas for what land uses should occupy the remaining area included a business park, educational uses, or residential development. Several participants specifically did not want to see the area become another commercial center.

10. **Maintaining a strong urban edge is important in some agricultural communities where we have worked, and the idea of urban growth boundaries has been considered by many communities to promote “smart growth” and keep public services costs for new development down. How useful is this idea in Visalia? And, if so, do you think an urban limit line should be tightly or loosely drawn? How well have the current urban growth and development boundaries (based on population projections) worked for the City thus far?**

- Almost all of those interviewed supported the general idea of protecting agricultural lands around town and maintaining a buffer of farmland and/or open space between Visalia and neighboring communities. While most people experienced strong ties to the agricultural community and heritage, a few voiced concerns about land use compatibility conflicts arising between residential development and established farms.
- Many participants also believed that the city’s growth boundaries had successfully encouraged concentric growth and helped to keep the downtown relevant. There was less agreement on whether growth should extend all the way out to Highway 99: some felt that separation from the freeway was what kept Visalia unique and special, whereas others felt as though the City was squandering opportunities for economic growth that could result from freeway frontage and visibility. There was similar disagreement on whether new growth should extend beyond the St. Johns River.

11. **We have heard a lot in recent years about sustainability, being “green,” and doing what we can to reverse global warming trends. What do these ideas mean for people in Visalia? Do you have any specific thoughts about this, in terms of priorities for this General Plan Update, or any concerns we should know about?**

- Participants had mixed reactions to the concept of sustainability and “green” planning and development. For most, some elements of environmental protection resonated strongly, particularly air quality and water supply. While some identified with the concept of sustainability immediately and felt that sustainability should be a critical component of the General Plan Update, others had trouble defining what the term meant. A few interpreted “green” more literally, and brought up the importance of scenic corridors, trees and open space. Still others understood the ideas, but did not believe that sustainability should be a high priority, or felt that the City should not have to do anything beyond what was already mandated by the State (e.g., energy efficiency in buildings). One also doubted the efficacy of efforts Visalia could take to address global-scale environmental issues. Another common sentiment, echoed by numerous participants, was that Visalia should do its part to conserve natural resources and make environmentally conscious decisions, but only to the point that it makes economic sense.
- When asked about what sustainability means to the people of Visalia, several participants believed that there was not a high level of education about the concept and felt that the General Plan could be a good tool for teaching the public about the importance of these ideas. They felt that sustainability should be presented simply and accessibly, with clear facts and implications for what it means in residents’ daily lives.

“We’re intruding on farmers, not the other way around.”



“I don’t think we should approve another housing tract unless there’s a solar panel on every roof.”



“When agriculture was branded as the ‘evil empire,’ the sustainability movement lost credibility. It’s a fad that has negatively impacted farmers’ ability to be good stewards.”



“50 percent of people in the community wouldn’t know what we’re talking about when we say that sustainability is important. The other 50 percent would understand, and would push for it because they feel strongly.”



12. We always like to learn from real places, and provide concrete examples of successes in other communities. What cities do you think are good models for Visalia?

“San Luis Obispo has taken advantage of their history.”



“Visalia is not trying to be anything other than Visalia.”



“I want other cities to say, ‘Did you see what Visalia did?’”



- San Luis Obispo was most commonly mentioned as being a good model for Visalia, despite its coastal location. That city was seen as one that had built upon its history and culture, developed a nice downtown, and attracted tourists. However, several people also pointed out that San Luis Obispo has a more affluent demographic than Visalia. One participant brought up San Diego and San Jose as good examples of cities that have experienced strong downtown revitalization and public safety improvements. Other cities that people mentioned included Modesto, Chico, Davis, Clovis, Redlands, Napa, and Hanford, as well as St. George, Utah, and Holland, Michigan. One participant felt that the City of Tulare had been particularly entrepreneurial over the last several decades and had succeeded well in business attraction. Thriving downtowns (often including housing), strong economies, mixed use development, attractive retail, and efficient city governments were all seen as assets of successful cities.
- At the same time, a large number of participants felt that Visalia was one of the most successful cities they knew of, and its role was to be a model to other cities. A number of elected officials said that they were comfortable with Visalia taking a leadership role and being on the forefront of planning and development trends.

NEXT STEPS

The next step in the General Plan Update process is to convene the first General Plan Update Community Workshop, which currently is planned for June 9, 2010. This workshop will be structured as a visioning exercise, to help the consultant team identify important planning issues and learn about Visalia residents' aspirations for the future of their community. After this meeting, the consultant team and City staff will work together to respond to the issues identified during the interview process, at the community meeting, and by the General Plan Update Review Committee. The community's ideas as well as the technical studies currently being undertaken will be incorporated into the forthcoming *Existing Conditions* report.

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APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Benelli, Andrew
Director, Public Works Department

Blain, Brian
Tulare County Farm Bureau

Brown, Bob
Waterways and Trails Committee

Calhoun, Carla
Parks and Recreation Commission

Cavigla, Leslie
Deputy City Manager

Cochran, Dena
Kaweah Delta Hospital

Elizondo, Vince
Director, Parks and Recreation Department

Groom, Randy
Visalia Unified School District

Gubler, Warren
Councilmember

Haskill, Rick
Police Department Captain

Holkeboer, Dirk
Citizens Advisory Committee

Huott, Bill
*North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory
Committee*

Knopf, Mike
Tulare/Kings Homebuilder's Association

Kugler, Ken
Tulare County Affordable Housing

Lane, Terese
Planning Commission

Link, Bob
Visalia City Council

Lockwood, Nancy
Visalia Economic Development Council

Maaske, Brad
Tulare County Association of Realtors

Macareno, Raymond
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Mann, Dean
Environmental Committee

May, Harvey
Visalia Community Forum

McDonnell, Josh
Chamber of Commerce

Mestas, Colleen
Police Department Chief

Mijares, Robert
Parks and Recreation Commission

Mittlestead, Eric
College of the Sequoias

Nelsen, Steve
Councilmember

Nelson, Mark
Fire Department Chief

Olmos, Michael
*Assistant City Manager, Community
Development*

Owdom, Matthew
Historic Preservation Advisory Committee

Peck, Adam
Planning Commission

Robinson, Jim
Visalia Economic Development Council

Salinas, Vincent
Planning Commission

Salomon, Steve
City Manager

Segrue, Larry
Planning Commission

Simmons, Herb
Waterways and Trails Committee


Soltész, Roland
Planning Commission

Wright, Don
Mooney Boulevard Merchant's Organization

APPENDIX B: CAC PRESENTATION


Presentation to the Citizens Advisory Committee on the General Plan Update, May 5, 2010.

City of Visalia General Plan Update




Community Advisory Committee

Introductory Meeting
Issues and Priorities
May 5, 2010




City of Visalia General Plan Update




Agenda

- Introductions
- Overview of General Plan Update
- Where we are in the process
- Key issues for the General Plan
- Your issues and priorities
- Next steps




City of Visalia General Plan Update




A New General Plan for Visalia

- Give the community a voice in shaping its future
- Focus on the issues Visalia cares about
- Build consensus on controversial issues
- Identify key actions to make Visalia a better place over the next 20 years
- Provide comprehensive base data and maps




City of Visalia General Plan Update




Purpose of a General Plan

- Be the City's constitution
- Establish a long range Vision for the City
- Provide direction for physical development and infrastructure improvements
- Establish a basis for determining whether specific development proposals are in harmony with the Vision
- Allow agencies and developers to design projects that enhance and preserve community resources




City of Visalia General Plan Update




Where We Are in the Process



- Technical work:
 - Research on existing conditions, trends, opportunities and constraints underway
 - EIR Notice of Preparation being circulated; scoping session for agencies and others to be held May 7, 9 a.m.
- Outreach:
 - Stakeholder interviews conducted today and tomorrow
 - Newsletter and survey to be mailed May 20
 - Project website to be launched May 20
 - First community workshop to be held June 9



City of Visalia General Plan Update



Schedule

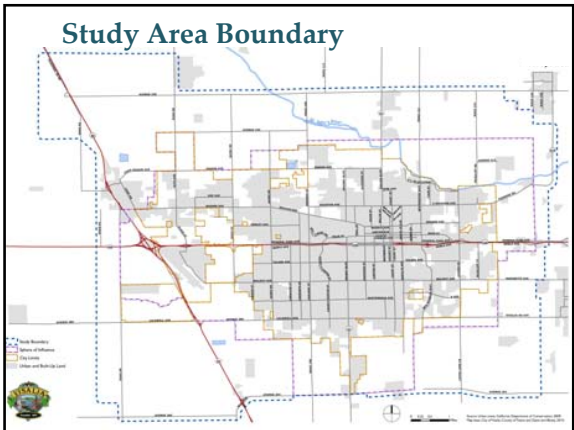



City of Visalia General Plan Update

Key Issues for the General Plan

- Physical growth
- Transportation
- Quality of life
- Economic vitality
- Environmental Conservation
- Municipal services
- Agriculture
- Other issues to be added based on community input*

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Physical Growth

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City of Visalia General Plan Update

Physical Growth

- Population Growth – 124,000 residents today
 - 50,000 people added since General Plan of 1991
 - 32,000 people added since 2000
- Population Projections by TCAG:
 - 2020 40,000 new people 165,000 Pop'n
 - 2030 45,000 new people 210,000 Pop'n
 - 2040 35,000 new people 250,000 Pop'n

Visalia is changing from a small town to a big city.

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City of Visalia General Plan Update

Physical Growth

- Children and Young Adults
 - 42,000 Children under 18 (almost 1/3 of the population)
 - 12,000 Young Adults, and a lot more coming
- Elderly and Retirees
 - Residents over 65 years old: 11% of the population
 - Growing rapidly – 150% by 2030, compared to 100% total population

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Physical Growth

- Diversity
 - 45,000 Hispanic, 25% Non-English Speaking
- Residential Unit Types
 - 1/3 renter; 2/3 owner
 - 75% single family homes; 25% multi-family
 - May need more townhome and multi-family residential development for future households

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Transportation




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Transportation



- Future street network and traffic capacity
- Focus on the idea of building “Complete streets” Accommodating all modes, not just cars
- Connectivity, walkability, bike network
- Transit service and High Speed Rail

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Quality of Life




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Quality of Life



- Community amenities and services
- Parks and trails, recreational programming
- Preservation of unique character
- Community values
- Equity and “Environment Justice”

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Economic Vitality




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Economic Vitality



- Job growth in key industries: manufacturing, distribution, health care, retail, education, government
- Continue to support Downtown and East Downtown
- Revitalize commercial corridors
 - Mooney Boulevard is one example
- Create policies for business attraction and retention


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Environmental Conservation

City of Visalia General Plan Update




Issue	Policy/Program Addressed	Reference to Other Plans
Land Use and Urban Design	Encourage development that meets local production	AB 32, SB 375
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	AB 32, SB 375
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	AB 32, SB 375
Transportation	Alternative modes	11.1.1, 14.1.1
	Transportation System Management (TSM)	12.0
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	14.4, 14.6, 15.0
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	14.4
Open Space and Recreation	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	12.0 through 12.0.6
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	12.0.6
Environmental Resources and Conservation	Conservation (preserving natural areas)	8B, C, 8C, 1, 8C, 4
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	8B, C through 8B, C-10
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	8C, 8C through 8C, 10
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	8C, 8C through 8C, 10
Health and Safety	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	10.1 through 10.1.1
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	10.1 through 10.1.1
Public Facilities and Services	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	95.1 through 95.1.1
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	95.1 through 95.1.1
	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	95.1 through 95.1.1




Environmental Conservation

City of Visalia General Plan Update








- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction; related State legislation – AB 32, SB 375
- Energy and water conservation
- Improving air quality
- Green building
- Community education and participation




Municipal Services

City of Visalia General Plan Update







Municipal Services

City of Visalia General Plan Update



- Public safety: police and fire
- Maintaining levels of service in all areas of town
- Water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure capacity and funding
- Efficiency: anticipating needed improvements associated with growth



Agriculture

City of Visalia General Plan Update












Agriculture

City of Visalia General Plan Update




- Agricultural land preservation: consideration of valuable farmland in annexation criteria
- Urban/farmland edge conditions; land use compatibility
 - Recognize different types of edge conditions
- Cooperation with Tulare County



City of Visalia General Plan Update

Your Top Issues




- What aspects of Visalia do you like the most?
- What do you think are the greatest challenges facing Visalia today?
- What trends concern you when thinking about Visalia's future?

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Urban and Regional Planners

City of Visalia General Plan Update

Your Top Priorities



- How should the General Plan build on the community's assets?
- Which of the issues you've identified should be a top priority for the General Plan Update?

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Next Steps



- Attend the first community workshop:
 - Wednesday June 9
 - 6-8pm
 - Visalia Convention Center
- Stay involved!

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Urban and Regional Planners

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