

Land Use and Urban Form

This chapter provides information on Visalia’s current land uses, the physical form taken by current development in the city, and details on ongoing planning processes that will continue to influence land use and urban form in the future. The chapter begins with a discussion of community design, which is an important part of how people experience places. It is the physical embodiment of community character, and it plays a significant role in neighborhood and city identity. For many, community design is the heart of the General Plan along with land use. Community design and urban form is examined on a range of scales, from the citywide down to the neighborhood, to the individual street and block. The chapter then examines the existing land use pattern across the planning area and the plans and regulations that have guided this growth in the city, county, and region. Finally, Visalia’s historic resources and its approach to historic preservation are examined.

4.1 City Form

In 2010, Visalia has a population of over 125,000; yet, an overwhelming number of residents identify Visalia as a “small town,” or as a growing city that has maintained its “small town feel.” This shared sentiment is testament to the City’s success in maintaining the quality attributes of a neighborly, close-knit community even in the face of rapid growth. As Visalia continues to add population over the next 20 years, the extent to which it can continue developing livable, desirable neighborhoods and commercial areas that reflect these values will be critical.

Evolution of City Form

Founded in 1852, Visalia drew its livelihood from the gold mines of the Sierra foothills and the fertile Kaweah River Delta. The town of 500 became the Tulare County seat in 1853 but was governed by the Board of Supervisors until its incorporation in 1864. Through expansion in the farming, cattle ranching, transportation, and trade, Visalia’s population continued to grow. By 1900, when Visalia became a main line stop on the Valley Railroad, it was home to over 3,000 residents.

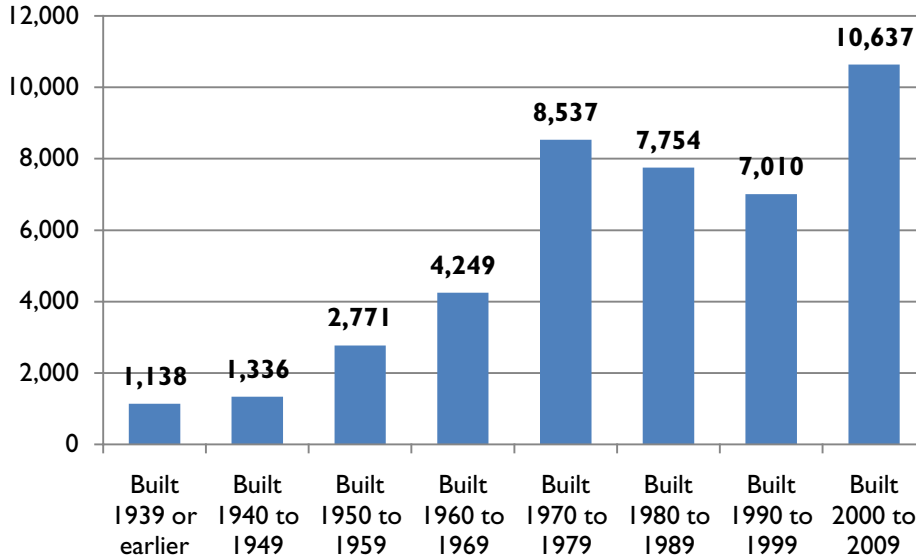
Visalia’s urban form differs from many other Central Valley towns on account of its separation from the main north-south rail line. Visalia was connected by several feeder lines, and therefore its street grid follows the conventional cardinal directions. Many Valley towns aligned their original streets with the diagonal railroad right of way. However, Visalia’s core is still marked by a formal grid shift to a diagonal pattern around Oval Park, just north of downtown.

Figure 4-1 illustrates Visalia’s historical growth. The city grew steadily through the first half of the 20th century; until 1950, both the city limits and overall urbanization remained strictly centered around the downtown. Faster growth and annexation began in the 1960s, when much of California experienced rapid suburban expansion. This period saw the development of the Visalia Municipal Airport, adjacent to Highway 99, and annexation of significant land area south and west of the traditional urban center. While not all of this land was immediately developed, Visalia was

positioning itself for future growth in those directions. By the 1990s, development had filled out the majority of the incorporated area, with notable residential development south of Highway 198 and industrial development beginning in the northwest. In the last 15 years, residential growth in the northern and eastern portions of the city has balanced out earlier development in the south. Development of the northwest industrial area has also continued.

Figure 4-2 shows the percentage of housing in the city built in each decade over the last 100 years. Housing built since 1970 accounts for over 75 percent of the total residential development in Visalia.

Figure 4-2: Visalia Housing Construction by Decade



Source: Census 2000; California Department of Finance, 2009

Citywide Structure

City Structure

As shown in the City Structure diagram in **Figure 4-3**, the majority of the city is comprised of residential neighborhoods with much of the city’s non-residential development oriented along key travel routes. Highway 198 is the city’s primary east-west route, and also serves as an important regional connection to Sequoia National Park and the Sierras. Much of the city’s public/institutional development, including the College of the Sequoias, Kaweah Delta Hospital and its related facilities, and the Downtown convention center, as well as newer highway-oriented commercial development, is located along the highway. The highway also serves as the southern edge of the city’s downtown mixed-use and eastern commercial core, focused around Main Street and Ben Maddox Way. Perpendicular to the Highway 198 corridor, Mooney Boulevard, or State Route 63, acts as the primary community and regional commercial core in the city. Smaller pockets of retail and neighborhood-oriented commercial development are distributed throughout the rest of the city; however, expansion and improvement of the downtown core, East Downtown (along Ben Maddox Way), and Mooney Boulevard will be a priority as the City works to redefine and improve key neighborhood and community destinations and promote revitalization of older shopping centers.

INSERT Figure 4-1 Historical Growth of Visalia

Back for Figure 4-1

INSERT Figure 4-3 City Structure

Back of Figure 4-3

INSERT 1st page of pictures – “City Structure”

Although the core of the city is located several miles to the east from Highway 99, development in the western reaches of the city has evolved over time to include the city's employment and industrial core, airport, and regional park space. As these areas continue to develop, maintaining the existing open space buffer between the highway and city core will be a key driver for location of new development and establishing a clear gateway into the city.

While the city boasts a full range of uses, many are located in distinct areas and are not organized as mixed use destinations. Accessibility to key services and neighborhood amenities, like retail and service-oriented uses, parks, and schools is important for establishing and maintaining a high quality of life. Additionally, opportunities to create walkable, mixed-use destinations that serve employers, visitors, and residents need to be explored as key areas like Downtown and East Downtown are re-envisioned. While much has been done already in terms of East Downtown planning, fitting all of the pieces together with a coherent urban design strategy will be one of the priorities for the General Plan Update.

Context and Edges

Visalia is a relatively free-standing city, surrounded almost completely by agricultural lands and natural open space. While some edges of the city are well defined by physical features like Highway 99, St. Johns River, and the airport along the east side of Highway 99, development primarily in the form of residential subdivisions feathers out into these agricultural areas, often resulting in an indistinct urban edge. Current planned development projects, including several new residential subdivisions, park space, and public facilities, continue this development pattern to the north and southeast. Closely guiding the design and location of new development will provide the opportunity to establish a more defined development edge that respects the city's natural and agricultural heritage.

Natural Systems

The city's gridded network of development overlays the natural Kaweah River Delta, which once defined the Visalia region. Still prominent in the overall structure of the city are its many rivers and creeks that wind their way through, alongside, and beneath the city. With significant views of the Sierra Nevada range to the east and agricultural lands beyond the edges of the city, these natural elements help define the overall image and character of Visalia today. Opportunities to daylight, naturalize, and provide recreation along existing creeks through the city will be an important aspect and organizational tool for new development. Additionally, preserving and re-establishing the city's natural system and Valley Oak tree groves with parks, conservation areas, and trailways will be key in retaining the city's unique character and high quality of life.

This page intentionally left blank.

Insert Picture Page 2 – Context/Edges, Natural Systems, Entrances/Gateways

4.2 City Identity

The key components that shape a city’s identity are those seen and experienced at the street level. This includes building design as well as the design of the streetscape and other public spaces and destinations. The design of highly visible areas also forges an identity for cities as a whole. In Visalia, these areas include major gateways, such as along Highway 198, Mooney Boulevard (State Route 63), and Main Street in Downtown. They also include various recognizable destinations and attractions, like Downtown itself, the Visalia Convention Center, East Downtown, and College of the Sequoias.

Entrances and Gateways

The main “entrance” to the city is from the west, on Highway 198. The City has worked to preserve this entrance vista, apart from Highway 99, with rural land uses on each side. This entrance is an important component of the city’s image, differentiating it from other Central Valley cities and towns. As shown in Figure 4-3, a 200-foot conservation buffer on either side of Highway 198 has been established to maintain this visual separation between the Highway 99 and core of the city. Conceptual planning for this corridor is underway as a separate effort, per City Council direction.

Other entrances into the city are from main roads and highways from other directions, including neighboring communities and rural areas to the east, north, and south. Establishing streetscape schemes along major corridors into the city and locating major park spaces like Mooney Grove Park and the planned 150-acre park off of Caldwell Avenue/Avenue 280 offer the opportunity to create distinctive entrances and gateways into the city.

Activity Centers and Nodes

Visalia’s nodes of activity, which include civic, educational, and employment centers, are primarily oriented along key travel routes through the city, including Highway 198, Mooney Boulevard, and Highway 99. These activity centers and destinations are key components of the City’s identity. Thus, improvements to the physical character and quality, as well as to access, visibility, and intensification of uses will be a key focus of the General Plan update. Activity centers and nodes include:

- Downtown/Convention Center
- Medical Center
- Golden West “super-campus”
- Mooney Blvd/ College of the Sequoias campus
- Northwest employment and industrial core
- Airport and environs
- Akers St./Cypress Ave. Medical Center
- Tulare County Courthouse

This page intentionally left blank

Insert Picture Page 3 – Activity Centers and Nodes

Streetscapes and the Public Realm

Visalia hosts a range of streetscape types, which give character and definition to different areas of the city. They provide clues about an area's age, its typical users, and its role in the daily lives of city residents and workers. These streets and corridors often act as Visalia's first impression on visitors, employees, and residents alike. How these streets are improved and structured will set the stage for the future image of the city.

- *Highway 198* is a limited access freeway that is below grade through the entire city. While it runs east-west through the center of Visalia, it is not visible from most places, and the rest of the city is not visible from the freeway either. Its role is rapid access and movement of people and goods.
- *Wide commercial corridors*, such as Mooney Boulevard and Dinuba Boulevard, are arterials with primarily commercial frontage. With two travel lanes in each direction, nearly continuous central turning lanes with little landscaping, these streets emphasize stores' visibility and access from the road. The wide right-of-way appears even wider as many commercial buildings are set back far from the street, with deep parking lots. Pedestrian access is permitted, but the streetscape character reinforces the dominance of the automobile.
- *Core Area/Downtown Streets* such as Main, Center, Court, and Locust, form the fine-grained fabric of Visalia's historic center. These narrow streets typically have one travel lane in each direction (or two in one direction, in the case of one-way streets), parallel or diagonal parking, ample sidewalk space, street trees, and landscaping. Buildings in the downtown core have no or very little setback, creating an "outdoor room" feeling of enclosure for cars and pedestrians. The street networks forms short blocks of around 300 feet.
- *Cross-Town Arterials*, such as Goshen Avenue, Ben Maddox Way, Lovers Lane, and Walnut Avenue, form the primary transportation network through Visalia. The character of these streets changes as they move through the city and pass through different land uses: they resemble the wide commercial corridors in sections where retail and service commercial uses dominate, and subtly shift when they pass through residential areas. Most strikingly, these arterials are lined with walls in residential neighborhoods. While automobiles tend to be the primary mode of transportation along these roads, many have sections of bike lanes and almost all have sidewalks. However, the scale of the streets and the manner in which the adjacent uses front the right of way makes travel most amenable to cars.
- *Parkways* tend to be wide curvilinear boulevards through older residential neighborhoods, such as Mill Creek and St. Johns, with uniform signage, landscaping, and lighting that lends identity to the neighborhoods. Because of their wide rights of way and landscaping, they can also function as buffers between land uses and/or form city edges (as is the case with the newly constructed Visalia Parkway in the south). While the parkway streetscapes generally make for a pleasant pedestrian experience, the wide lanes encourage speeding.
- *Neighborhood streets* vary in their characteristics based upon the age of the residential development, though they are all narrow and encourage slow traffic. The oldest neighborhoods have street parking, few or no garages facing the street, shallow setbacks, and the oldest and largest street trees. The oldest developments maintain the street grid with good connectivity. Subdivisions from the 1960s and 1970s features somewhat wider, curvier streets, one-story ranch-style homes with deep yards, and often lack sidewalks. "Loops and lollipops," or cul-de-sacs and non-connecting streets, are common. Newer residential development tends to feature slightly narrower streets with sidewalks, but the streetscape is dominated by garages and driveways creating consistent curb cuts through right of way.

This page intentionally left blank

Insert Picture Page 4 – Streetscapes and Public Realm

4.3 Neighborhood Form Analysis

At the neighborhood scale, the structure, dimension, and character of the built environment have a strong influence on pedestrian and vehicular experience of the setting, and create a “sense of place” that defines the neighborhood for the resident. The neighborhood form analysis gives the City an opportunity to assess its diverse neighborhood patterns and to determine the types of urban form it may wish to encourage as Visalia continues to grow and evolve.

Figure 4-4 identifies eight predominantly residential areas in Visalia that represent different phases and forms of development over the area’s history. **Figure 4-5** illustrates the neighborhood form analysis for these areas. The areas used in this analysis each represent a 200-acre square unit, so that areas of equal size are compared.

Study Areas

- **Downtown (1880s).** This area represents some of the earliest development in Visalia, located in the traditional core of the city around Oval Park. The formal street grid shift around the park is one of the area’s most distinguishing features. Low and medium density residential areas are complemented by commercial development around the Oval and scattered institutional uses.
- **Court/Tulare (1920s).** Characterized by small, regular blocks, alleys, and classic bungalow-style homes (many of which are listed as historic resources), the Washington neighborhood along Court and Tulare streets exhibits a high degree of connectivity. Primarily residential, the neighborhood is bordered by commercial uses to the north and public/institutional uses to the east and west.
- **Beverly Glen (1940s).** Beverly Glen, developed in the 1940s, illustrates a blending of the traditional grid with a curvilinear street pattern more typical of the postwar period. The neighborhood’s uniformly single family residential character contains a mix of lot sizes, whose irregularity is owed in part to the curved streets. Commercial development is located to the west, along Mooney Boulevard.
- **Birdland (1960s).** Originally developed in unincorporated Tulare County, the Birdland neighborhood (so named because of the bird-themed street names) exhibits curved streets, large blocks, and limited access points to collectors and arterials. Cul-de-sacs are also present. The neighborhood is essentially single-use (low density residential), with the nearest commercial area located to the southeast along Dinuba Boulevard.
- **St. Johns River (1970s).** The urban design of the St. Johns River area, centered on the St. Johns River Parkway, represents a significant departure from the other postwar residential development found in Visalia. It clusters higher density development in superblocks with very little connectivity to the broader road network. The area includes a mix of low and high density residential development, undeveloped parcels, and parkland and the St. Johns River to the north.
- **Togni/Southwest (1980s).** The neighborhood near the Togni Towne Center, located at Caldwell Avenue and Demaree Street, shows a return to straight streets and a grid-like pattern. However, as most of the local streets end in cul-de-sacs, access through and around the neighborhood is limited. In some instances, the cul-de-sacs back up to a small network of linear green space and mini-parks. While most of the neighborhood is low density residential, a cluster of high density residential development is located on Caldwell adjacent to a commercial center.

- **Akers/Goshen (1990s).** The neighborhood developed to the northeast of Akers Road and Goshen Avenue is characterized by a “loops and lollipops” street pattern, with very few through streets and limited connections to arterials. Interior local streets are primarily large loop roads with long, parallel cul-de-sacs. A medium density residential area is located in the southwestern corner, closest to the major streets, while the rest of the neighborhood is single-family, low density homes.
- **Lovers Lane (2000s).** One of Visalia’s newest neighborhoods, the area northwest of Lovers Lane and East Caldwell Avenue includes both low and high density residential development. While cul-de-sacs are still present, the road network exhibits a greater number of through streets and a smaller—if still irregular—block pattern than similar developments in the 1980s and 1990s. Design and development of this neighborhood was somewhat constrained by the irrigation canal cutting through the northern third of the area.

Comparative Evaluation of Neighborhood Form

Each study area identified in Figure 4-4 was evaluated according to a number of components that contribute to the form and character of the neighborhood: overall development pattern, number of intersections, number of through streets; average block size (acres); and typical housing density. Figure 4-5 analyzes several aspects of each neighborhood’s form, character, and structure.

Overall Development Pattern

These eight areas in the city represent the range of residential development types in Visalia, from the historical central area to various stages of postwar suburbanization. They show changes in street and lot patterns and urban form over Visalia’s development history. In the oldest areas, a fine grain of development is evident, with high connectivity typical of a traditional pedestrian-oriented grid network. Newer neighborhoods in Visalia are generally suburban with a loop-style network of curving streets and cul-de-sacs intended to discourage through traffic. Higher density residential areas are generally located along arterial streets, close to commercial uses.

Through Streets

Through streets provide accessibility by traversing the length of a neighborhood, and/or connecting to more than one collector or arterial. The number of through streets within a residential area indicates the relative ease with which one can travel to and from the neighborhood and to other parts of the city. Through streets are most plentiful in the two oldest neighborhoods, and also found equally in Beverly Glen and Togni/Southwest. They are almost nonexistent in the St. Johns River area and around Akers/Goshen.

Intersections

The number of intersections is a good indication of a neighborhood’s internal level of accessibility. A higher number of intersections translates to greater options for travel within the neighborhood. Additionally, intersections provide opportunities for interactions among residents, which may contribute to a stronger sense of place and livability. The Downtown/Oval area has the highest number of intersections in the study: 70. This is due in part to the grid shift that occurs around the Oval, creating more intersections than a standard grid arrangement. Court/Tulare and Beverly Glen, with more traditional grids, have approximately 50 each. St. Johns River, with large superblocks, has only 20 intersections, but pedestrian travel is still made possible throughout the clusters of high density housing.

-

INSERT Figure 4-4 Locations for Neighborhood Form Analysis

Back of Figure 4-4

INSERT Figure 4-5 Neighborhood Form Analysis

Back of Figure 4-5

Block Size

Average block size is an indicator of the urban scale of development. In Visalia, blocks in older neighborhoods such as Downtown, Locust/Court, and to some extent Beverly Glen, are relatively small, ranging from about 1.3 to 2.5 acres. More recent residential areas have blocks in the upper end of the range (2.5 to 4 acres). In the St. Johns River and Akers/Goshen neighborhoods, where “super blocks” dominate, a single block is greater than 5 acres. This is consistent with analyses of other components of neighborhood form, which reveal a greater degree of accessibility in older neighborhoods due to an increased number of intersections and through streets.

Residential Density

Residential density can be measured both in lot size (for single family homes) and units per acre (for all residential types). The oldest neighborhoods, Downtown and Court/Tulare, have residential densities of 9.0 and 10.1 dwelling units per net acre, respectively. (Net residential densities do not include land used for streets or other public rights of way, or other non-residential components of the site.) All other neighborhoods’ densities range from 3.9 to 4.8 units per net acre, with the exception of St. Johns River. In this neighborhood, homes achieve an average density of 5.9 units per net acre, which reflects the clustering of more compact homes.

4.4 Existing Land Use Pattern

A comprehensive survey of existing land use is necessary to take stock of the planning area’s existing assets as well as determine the development capacity of vacant and underutilized sites. Existing land uses were identified from field surveys, aerial photography, and City data. **Figure 4-6** shows the existing land uses in the planning area.

Land Use Pattern

Agriculture

Agriculture is the predominant existing land use in the study area, with 39,518 acres comprising 65 percent. Over 90 percent is outside of current city limits, but there are notable pockets of land under active cultivation even inside the incorporated area, which total approximately 2,800 acres. The types and nature of agricultural activities in the planning area are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Residential

After agriculture, residential land uses is the most prevalent land use within the planning area, at 18 percent or 11,136 acres. Residential land makes up 43 percent of the land inside city limits. Of the total residential land, the majority—60 percent—is low density (typically two to seven dwelling units per acre). Medium density (typically nine to 15 units per acre) comprises 1 percent, and the remaining 4 percent is high density residential (typically 15 to 30 units per acre). Thirty-seven percent is rural residential, at less than one unit per acre, and is located mostly outside of the city limits or on the outskirts of town. Within city limits, 78 percent is low density, 3 percent is medium density, and 2 percent is high density. The remainder, 18 percent, is rural residential.

Commercial

Commercial uses comprise 2 percent of the land area in the total planning area, equaling 1,341 acres, but 6 percent of the land in city limits. Around 60 percent is general retail/commercial uses, such as grocery stores, personal service establishments, neighborhood shopping centers, restaurants, etc. The remaining 40 percent is heavy/service commercial, consisting of uses such as automotive services and fast food establishments. In general, commercial uses are concentrated along the city's major corridors: Highway 198, Mooney Boulevard, and Goshen Avenue. Pockets of smaller, neighborhood-serving commercial establishments are scattered throughout otherwise residential areas. Downtown Visalia also hosts many commercial establishments, mixed in with office and residential uses.

Industrial

Visalia's industrial land concentrated in the northwest, and consists of a mix of light and heavy industrial uses. Total acreage is 1,770 acres. Three percent of the land in the planning area is in industrial use. Light industry makes up the majority of the existing industrial uses (85 percent) and consists of operations such as warehousing, distribution, research and development, and limited manufacturing; versus heavy industry, which includes more intense manufacturing and processing operations. A smaller concentration of industrial uses is also found east of downtown, along Ben Maddox Way and Goshen Avenue.

Public, Semi-Public, and Community Facility

There are 1,960 acres of public, semi-public, and institutional uses in the planning area, making up 3 percent of the total. Within city limits, public, semi-public, and institutional uses account for 8 percent of the total existing land use. These uses include schools and universities, City and County government facilities, utilities, and medical facilities. Many of these uses occupy very large parcels (e.g. College of the Sequoias, the northeast public school "super campus," the Municipal Airport) and are activity centers in the community.

Vacant Sites

Five percent of the land within the planning area is currently vacant (12 percent of land within city limits). Vacant land totals 2,917 acres, and consists of a wide range of parcel sizes, from small infill sites less than an acre in size in the older sections of the city, to larger sites of 10 acres or more. Vacant land is scattered throughout the planning area, but sites are often clustered, for instance, along Goshen Avenue east and west of Ben Maddox; near Houston Avenue, Goshen Avenue, and Demaree Street; in the northwest industrial area; and in north Visalia where subdivisions are not complete.

Table 4-1 displays the breakdown of existing land use in the planning area, both within city limits and outside.

Table 4-1: Existing Land Use in the Planning Area

<i>Land Use</i>	<i>Inside City Limits</i>		<i>Outside City Limits</i>		<i>Total Planning Area</i>	
	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Agriculture	2,778	15%	36,739	88%	39,518	65%
Low Density Residential	6,289	33%	351	1%	6,640	11%
Rural Residential	1,430	8%	2,675	6%	4,104	7%
Vacant	2,262	12%	656	2%	2,917	5%
Public/Institutional	1,554	8%	406	1%	1,960	3%
Light Industrial	1,180	6%	291	1%	1,471	2%
Parks and Recreation	1,108	6%	53	0%	1,161	2%
General Retail/Commercial	723	4%	79	0%	801	1%
Heavy/Service Commercial	343	2%	197	0%	540	1%
Office	338	2%	12	0%	351	1%
Heavy Industrial	233	1%	66	0%	299	0%
Medium Density Residential	262	1%	2	0%	264	0%
Right of Way	148	1%	106	0%	254	0%
Canal	34	0%	171	0%	205	0%
Water	163	1%	23	0%	186	0%
High Density Residential	126	1%	1	0%	127	0%
Railroad	46	0%	45	0%	91	0%
Grand Total	19,017	100%	41,872	100%	60,889	100%

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

This page intentionally left blank.

INSERT Figure 4-6 Existing Land Use

Back of Figure 4-6

4.5 Current General Plans

Visalia General Plan

General plans are intended to take a comprehensive view of conditions and of projected change, and set forth coordinated goals and policies to guide development over a long-range period. Visalia's first General Plan was adopted in 1963. The Plan has undergone two major updates, in 1976 and 1991. In each case, updates have been needed to adjust policies to meet new population and employment projections, and to reconsider major goals and objectives.

Boundaries

The General Plan covers a 90-square mile area defined by an Urban Area Boundary (UAB) which is seen as the city's "probable ultimate physical boundary," and includes lands not anticipated to develop during the 30-year planning period. The smaller boundary meant to accommodate urban growth through the year 2020 is called the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), or the "165,000 boundary," referring to the projected population at General Plan build-out. Finally, the Plan establishes Urban Development Boundaries (UDB's) intended to accommodate growth in ten-year increments. The currently applicable UDB is meant to accommodate a projected population of 129,000 in the year 2010.

Elements

In California, cities and counties are required to maintain a General Plan with at least the following "elements": Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. In addition to these, Visalia's current General Plan includes elements covering Seismic Safety, Historic Preservation, Scenic Highways, and Recreation and Parks. The Land Use Element is summarized below, while other elements are discussed in other sections of this document.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element is at the heart of the General Plan. Its goals, objectives, and proposed policies are the primary basis for the City's land use regulations. For some parts of the city, more detailed guidance is provided by Specific and Master Plans. The Land Use Element identifies eight goals. Each goal is supported by objectives and implementing policies. The Land Use Element goals are listed below; for further information on objectives and policies, please refer to the accompanying document *Review of Current General Plan Policies*, June 30, 2010.

Land Use Element Goals:

1. Preserve and Enhance Unique Character
2. Improve the Quality of Air, Land, Water and Plant and Animal Life
3. Diversify and Improve the Visalia Planning Area's Economy
4. Provide a Viable Range of Housing Alternatives in the Visalia Planning Area
5. Plan and Develop an Efficient Public Facilities and Services System to Serve as a Framework for Orderly Urban Development
6. Manage Planning Area Growth to be Contiguous and Concentric from the City's Core Area
7. Identify Issues or Areas Which Have Significant Impact on the Visalia Planning Area and Require Special Attention
8. Structure an Implementation Program to Achieve the Goals, Objectives and Policies of This Element

Land Use Designations and Land Use Map

Following are brief summaries of the land use designations on the General Plan Land Use Map (**Figure 4-7**) and of their distribution across the planning area. The Land Use map may be seen as a physical expression of the goals and objectives of the Land Use Element.

Residential Designations

The General Plan provides four residential land use designations: Rural Residential, Low Density, Medium Density, and High Density. The Low Density range (2 to 10 units per acre) is the most common in Visalia, and the designation predominates in the City's neighborhoods. The Medium Density designation facilitates duplexes and other small-scale multi-family housing, with developments restricted to 50 units and 5 acres. High Density allows up to 29 units per acre, with maximum project size varying based on location in relationship to arterial streets. These designations are scattered along collector and arterial streets.

Commercial Designations

The General Plan distinguishes between commercial areas based on their service area, scale, and mix of uses. Four designations, Convenience Center, Neighborhood Center, Community Center, and Regional Center, describe shopping areas with progressively broader catchment areas. The location and size of these districts is based on guidelines about the ideal spacing of each type, their orientation to arterials, and their accessibility to the larger region. The first three types are distributed throughout the city, while the Regional Commercial district is located along the Mooney Boulevard corridor only.

The Shopping/Office designation provides for a range of office and commercial uses. It is mapped intermittently along State Route 198, Dinuba Highway, and Ben Maddox Way, and in limited other locations. The Professional/Administrative Offices designation is concentrated along the Highway 198 corridor, but is also lightly distributed throughout the city.

Two commercial districts are highly concentrated in the Core Area: Central Business District (CBD), and Service Commercial. The Central Business District covers the traditional downtown and provides for higher-density development and a finer mix of uses. The Service Commercial designation allows for a heavy commercial uses, and is concentrated east of the CBD.

The Highway Commercial designation facilitates lodging, dining, and services and is mapped in the vicinity of SR 198 near Highway 99.

Industrial Designations

The current General Plan has two industrial classifications: Light Industry and Heavy Industry. Both are located almost entirely in western Visalia, with most industrial land reserved for Light Industry.

Community Facilities

The Public/Institutional designation applies to schools, hospitals, police and fire stations, and the airport, among other public use types. The designation is applied to existing facilities and to sites reserved for future facilities.

Open Space

The Parks designation is applied to parks, golf courses, and similar uses or sites planned for such uses. Agriculture is the designation applied to all land outside and adjacent to the planning area, as well as to an area of west Visalia along the SR 198 corridor which has been highly valued by Visalia. The Conservation designation is used to identify drainage and habitat corridors. Finally, the Urban Reserve designation is used to classify agricultural areas which may urbanize in the future. This zone is applied along the north, east, and south edges of the city, and within the planning area.

INSERT Figure 4-7 General Plan

Back of Figure 4-7

Other Elements

Other thematic elements of the current General Plan are discussed in other sections of this report, as follows:

- The *Historic Preservation Element* is discussed later in Chapter 4;
- The *Housing Element* is summarized in Chapter 5, Development Potential;
- The *Circulation Element* is covered in Chapter 6, Transportation;
- The *Conservation, Open Space, Recreation, and Parks Element* is discussed in Chapter 7, Public Facilities and Services;
- The *Noise; Safety; and Seismic Safety Elements* are covered in Chapter 8, Environmental Resources and Hazards.

Tulare County General Plan

The Tulare County General Plan guides County development, public services, and other decisions on all land in the county outside of incorporated cities. Parts of the current Tulare County General Plan date to 1964, with many updates in the years since. The County is undertaking a comprehensive update of its General Plan, and released a public review draft in 2010. The updated Plan has not been adopted and is not reviewed here.

The Plan includes the following Elements: Land Use and Urban Boundaries; Water and Liquid Waste Management; Safety; Noise; Scenic Highways; Environmental Resources Management; Housing; and Transportation/Circulation. It also features three “Area Plans” dealing with unique conditions: the Foothill Growth Management Plan, the Mountain Plan, and the Rural Valleys Land Plan. The Land Use and Urban Boundaries Element is summarized below. Other elements are discussed in other chapters of this document, where they are most relevant.

Land Use and Urban Boundaries Element

Land Use

The Land Use and Urban Boundaries Element describes the key land use characteristics of the County: its cities, its agricultural areas, and its small unincorporated communities. (Land in the foothills and mountains is dealt with separately in the Area Plans noted above.) The Land Use and Urban Boundaries Element affirms the importance of agricultural land use throughout much of the County. Its general approach to unincorporated communities is that they will mostly remain “rural service centers” and not grow significantly, but that community plans should be undertaken focusing on improving the environment for residents. Goshen is singled out as a community needing particular attention. (A community plan for Goshen was subsequently prepared, and is summarized separately in this chapter.) Finally, the Plan anticipates that existing cities will grow significantly.

Urban Boundaries

The Urban Boundaries section of the Element details the County’s approach to establishing planning boundaries around cities. In California, Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) establish a “Sphere of Influence” for each jurisdiction, determining service areas and “probably ultimate physical boundaries” of cities. In 1973, these SOIs were adapted, in Tulare County, to be used as official planning boundaries, called Urban Area Boundaries (UABs.) These UABs have been periodically reviewed and updated. Within UABs, cities and the County are expected to coordinate plans, policies, and standards. While still under County jurisdiction, land within UABs should be

recognized for its long-term relationship with adjacent cities. At the same time, urbanization is to occur only within cities or areas annexed or directly adjacent to cities.

To help provide for orderly growth, the Element establishes Urban Development Boundaries (UDBs) which are drawn more tightly around cities, to accommodate 20 years of projected development. The element specifies that urban development is only to take place within incorporated cities, with specified exceptions; within the urban development boundaries of unincorporated communities; within Foothill Development corridors; and within other areas suited for nonagricultural development, as determined by the procedures set forth in the Rural Valley Lands Plan. To the extent possible, any conversion of agricultural or open land to urban development within UDBs should be as an extension of the existing urbanized area of the community, and not in a piecemeal, “leapfrogging” fashion. UDBs are also drawn around unincorporated communities (such as Goshen) to serve as official planning boundaries for these areas.

The Element contains two sets of goals and related policies and implementation actions, covering Land Use and Urban Boundaries, respectively. Goals and policies which are directly relevant to the Visalia planning area are listed below.

Goals and Policies

The following list of goals and policies is not complete, focusing on goals and policies with direct relevance to unincorporated areas in Visalia’s planning area. Goals including “LU” in their name concern land use, while goals with “UB” concern urban boundaries.

- **Goal 1LU.A.** Retention of community identity, preservation of the agricultural economic base and control of urban sprawl.
- **Goal 1LU.B.** City-County coordination in controlling fringe development and improving general living environment.
- **Goal 1LU.C.** Economic Development – Resource Development and Conservation
- **Goal 1LU.D.** Recreation and Scenic Values
- **Goal 1UB.A.** The retention of community identity and enhancement of efficiencies in the provision of essential services by means of a framework of urban-related programs and policies designed to serve specific urban planning areas.
- **Goal 1UB.C.** The designation of realistic planning areas around cities and unincorporated communities which could be used to help determine boundaries for community service districts and County service areas, in areas where differing levels of service are required, and within which corporate annexations may take place.
- **Goal 1UB.F.** The maintenance of consistency among the goals and policies of the Urban Boundaries Element and those contained in other General Plan elements adopted by the County and the cities.

Goshen Community Plan

Goshen is a small, unincorporated community within the planning area, along Highway 99 and the Southern Pacific Railroad. A community plan for Goshen was completed in 1978. The Plan’s focus is on improvements to the physical environment, public services, and land use policies, and is intended to accommodate development over a 20-year period. The Plan recognizes the potential for Goshen to attract highway-oriented commercial development, and industrial development, relating

to the strong links to transportation and the surrounding agricultural area. It also identifies Goshen's key challenges: noise impacts from takeoffs and landings at the Visalia airport; the dilapidated quality of much of the community's housing; and the limited connections across Highway 99 and the railroad, breaking the community into separate parts.

The Plan calls for directing Goshen's residential growth to the northeast, away from the airport impact area. The elementary school would be relocated to this new area, and a small community commercial district would be created along Avenue 308 to serve Goshen residents. Further industrial development is slated for northwestern Goshen, and along Avenue 304 (Goshen Avenue), extending from the Visalia industrial area. Service commercial and highway-oriented commercial areas are provided along Highway 99. Low-intensity commercial and industrial uses would be encouraged in the area beneath flight paths, west of the railroad tracks. The Plan does not set aside area for multi-family housing, and notes that no development with density of more than seven units per acre is permitted unless connection to Visalia's sewer system is established.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Community Development

- Goal 1. Minimize Airport/Community Conflicts
- Goal 2. Foster a Cohesive Community with Easy Access to Necessary Services and Support Facilities
- Goal 3. Avoid Land Use conflicts Through Planned Separation of Uses
- Goal 4. Achieve Development Densities Consistent with Levels of Available Service
- Goal 5. Coordinate Community Development Decisions with the Adopted Visalia General Plan

Housing

- Goal 1. Provide Safe and Adequate Housing for All Citizens Within the Community

Economic Base

- Goal 1. Develop a Strong, Diversified Economic Community Within Goshen

Environmental Quality

- Goal 1. Preserve and Enhance the Quality of Life for Present and Future Generations of Goshen Citizens

4.6 Current Zoning

City of Visalia Zoning

Zoning is meant to “foster a workable relationship among land uses” and shape the character of future development. Zoning is a key regulatory tool used to bring about General Plan goals and other city policies. It consists of a zoning map defining the location of districts, and a code detailing requirements for each district. Where the General Plan covers a larger 90-square mile area, the zoning code covers only the city itself.

Visalia's zoning ordinance includes 24 zoning districts, including seven residential districts, eight commercial districts, four office districts, two industrial districts, and one district each for

agricultural, public or quasi-public, and airport uses. Table 4-2 below identifies these districts and how much land they cover in Visalia.

Table 4-2: Visalia Zoning Districts			
<i>Zoning District</i>		<i>Total Acres</i>	<i>Percent of City</i>
A	Agricultural	1,195	6%
R-A	Rural Residential	429	2%
R-I-20	Single-Family Residential, 20,000-sq.ft. Minimum Site Area	105	1%
R-I-12.5	Single-Family Residential, 12,500-sq.ft. Minimum Site Area	126	1%
R-I-6	Single-Family Residential, 6,000-sq.ft. Minimum Site Area	8,805	46%
P(R-I-4.5)	Residential, 4,500-sq.ft. Minimum Site Area	292	2%
P(R-M-2)	Multi-Family Residential, 3,000-sq.ft. Minimum Site Area	632	3%
P(R-M-3)	Multi-Family Residential, 1,500-sq.ft. Minimum Site Area	225	1%
P-C-C	Planned Convenience Commercial	12	<0.5%
P-C-N	Planned Neighborhood Commercial	113	1%
P-C-CM	Planned Community Commercial (Specific Plan Required)	118	1%
P-C-R	Planned Regional Retail Commercial	441	2%
P-C-DT	Planned Central Business District Retail	105	1%
P-C-SO	Planned Shopping/Office Commercial	389	2%
P-C-H	Planned Highway Commercial	32	<0.5%
P-C-S	Planned Service Commercial	589	3%
P-PA	Planned Professional/Administrative Office	360	2%
P-OC	Planned Office Conversion	27	<0.5%
P-BRP	Planned Business Research Park	133	1%
P-OG	Planned Office Garden	72	<0.5%
P-I-L	Planned Light Industry	501	3%
P-I-H	Planned Heavy Industry	1,707	9%
QP	Quasi-Public	2,066	11%
AP	Airport	599	3%
Subtotal (City)		19,074	100%
Outside City but Within Planning Area		19,371	
Total		38,445	

Source: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

Agricultural Zone

Visalia provides one zoning district permitting a broad range of agricultural uses, as well as single-family dwellings on 20-acre-minimum lots. A variety of other uses are conditionally allowed in the agricultural zone, including airports and cemeteries, as well as public uses and recreational facilities. The Agricultural zone is applied to about six percent of the city, in the West Highway 198 corridor, and west of Highway 99.

Residential Zones

Visalia provides residential districts to reflect neighborhood types ranging from quasi-rural single-family areas to suburban neighborhoods to multi-family housing areas. The regulations, governing which land uses are permitted and how buildings are placed, are meant to produce safe and attractive environments. Residentially zoned land covers about 10,600 acres, or 56 percent of the city.

- **Rural Residential Zone (R-A).** The Rural Residential zone allows single-family houses on lots of one acre or larger, with accessory buildings and limited agricultural uses. Secondary dwelling units are also allowed, as are adult or child daycare facilities with size limitations. Public or quasi-public uses such as churches and schools may be permitted conditionally, as can utilities, mobile home parks, and some other uses. The R-A zone covers about 430 acres at the western edge of the city's established neighborhoods.
- **Single-Family Residential Zones (R-1-20, R-1-12.5, R-1-6).** Single-family zones allow single dwelling units, daycare or group homes subject to size limitations, and certain other complementary uses. Lots are permitted to contain a second, smaller dwelling unit, with certain conditions. Public and quasi-public uses, utilities, and mobile home parks are allowed conditionally. The R-1-20 zone, with a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet, applies mainly to the Country Club Estates neighborhood, while R-1-12.5 (minimum lot size 12,500 square feet) applies mainly to the neighborhood around Tulare Avenue and County Center Drive. The R-1-6 zone, with a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet, is by far the most widespread zoning district, and applies to most of the city's neighborhoods.
- **Clustered Residential Zone (R-1-4.5).** This district provides for a mix of single-family and multi-family housing. It permits development with an average overall density of one unit per 4,500 square feet of site area, in flexible arrangements determined through site plan review. The R-1-4.5 zone was created to facilitate planned development in the Northeast Visalia Specific Plan area, particularly around new parkways.
- **Multi-Family Residential Zones (R-M-2 and R-M-3).** Visalia's two multi-family residential zones permit up to one unit for every 3,000 square feet (R-M-2) or 1,500 square feet (R-M-3) of site area. Multi-family zones provide many of the same conditional uses as single-family zones, and some others. The multi-family zones cover about 850 acres or 4.5 percent of the City. They are generally mapped over small areas, distributed along arterial and collector streets in many neighborhoods.

Development Regulations and Density in Residential Zones

The residential zones have development regulations covering the number of dwelling units permitted per site, the minimum size of a lot, maximum lot coverage, required setbacks, and maximum building height. These are summarized in Table 4-3. These standards can be modified to provide more flexibility for the development of affordable housing, infill sites, and difficult-to-develop sites.

Table 4-3 shows how the minimum site area allowed in each residential zone translates to maximum development densities. For large development sites, gross density is the best measure of actual development capacity, to account for the need to incorporate new streets, open spaces, and public facilities. For small infill sites, it is reasonable to assume that net permitted density can be reached, because there is generally no additional dedication of streets needed.

Relationship to the Existing General Plan

Development in the R-A (Rural Residential) and R-1-20 (Single-Family Residential with minimum lot size of 20,000-square feet) zones falls in the density range of under two units per acre, matching

the General Plan’s Rural Residential category. Development in the single-family zones with minimum lot sizes of 12,500, 6,000, and 4,500 square feet fills the General Plan’s Low Density Residential range of two to ten units per acre. The maximum gross density of development in the two multi-family zones matches the upper density thresholds for the General Plan’s Medium Density (15 units per acre) and High Density designations—15 and 30 units per acre, respectively.

Table 4-3: Residential Development Standards

Regulation	R-1-20	R-1-12.5	R-1-6	R-1-4.5	R-M-2	R-M-3
Minimum Site Area (New Parcels)	20,000 sq. ft.	12,500 sq. ft.	6,000 sq. ft.	4,500 sq. ft. per unit ¹	3,000 sq. ft. per unit ¹	1,500 sq. ft. per unit ¹
Minimum Street Frontage	40 ft.	40 ft	40 ft	NA	NA	NA
Minimum Site Width	100 ft ²	90 ft ²	60 ft ²	NA	NA	NA
Dwelling Units Per Site ³	1	1	1	NA	40	40
Maximum Lot Coverage	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Minimum Front Yard	35 ft ⁴	30 ft ⁴	House: 15 ft ⁴ Garage: 22 ft	Per Site Plan Review	Dwellings: 15 ft ⁴ Garage: 22 ft	Dwellings: 15 ft ^{4,5} Garage: 22 ft
Minimum Side Yards, Street Side on Corner Lot	20 ft	10 ft	10 ft	Per Site Plan Review	10 ft	10 ft
Minimum Side Yards, Interior	10 ft	5 ft	5 ft ⁶	Per Site Plan Review	5 ft ⁶	5 ft ⁶
Minimum Rear Yard ⁷	25 ft	25 ft	25 ft	Per Site Plan Review	25 ft	15 ft
Maximum Height	35 ft ⁸	35 ft ⁸	35 ft ⁸	45 ft	35 ft	35 ft

¹ Calculated as net project density.

² Additional 10 ft is allowed for corner lot.

³ Except as provided for in zoning for second dwelling units and planned developments, or through Site Plan Review.

⁴ Or Average setback of buildings on either side.

⁵ May be modified to 10 ft. for affordable housing, infill development, or difficult-to-develop lots.

⁶ May be modified to 0 ft. for affordable housing, infill development, or difficult-to-develop lots.

⁷ Encroachments under 12 ft in height allowed, with limitations.

⁸ Regulation applies to permitted uses, with conditional uses regulated through Site Plan Review.

Sources: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

Table 4-4: Zoning District Densities and Comparable General Plan Designations

Density (Units per Acre)	R-1-20	R-1-12.5	R-1-6	R-1-4.5	R-M-2	R-M-3
Gross Density	1.7	2.6	5.5	7.3	10.9	21.8
Net Density	2.2	3.5	7.3	9.7	14.5	29.0
Complementary General Plan Designation	Rural Residential	← Low Density Residential →			Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential

Note: A 0.75 net-to-gross factor is assumed, to reflect current development patterns and typical street cross-sections.

Source: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

Commercial Zones

Visalia's zoning means to facilitate development that puts everyday goods and services in close proximity to all residents, helps the city continue to be the retail center for the region, and supports the vitality of downtown. Residential units are allowed as a conditional use in all commercial zones, which are summarized below. Table 4-4 below provides further detail, showing which zones permit selected commercial uses. Altogether, commercial zones cover about 1,800 acres, or nine percent of the City.

- **Convenience Commercial Zone (P-C-C).** The Planned Convenience Commercial (P-C-C) district provides locations for and services needed on a daily basis by residents of the immediate area. It allows only small retail stores, personal services, and small offices, with more uses allowed conditionally.
- **Neighborhood Commercial Zone (P-C-N).** The Planned Neighborhood Commercial (P-C-N) zone provides for shopping centers about ten acres in size, anchored by a grocery store or pharmacy, and serving adjacent neighborhoods. The P-C-N zone is generally mapped at arterial intersections, at regular increments.
- **Shopping/Office Commercial Zone (P-C-SO).** The P-C-SO zone allows a variety of office, retail and service uses. It provides shopping opportunities in areas otherwise not well-served, and creates a transition between heavy or service commercial uses and retail or office areas. It is prevalent along the Highway 198 corridor, and along portions of Dinuba Boulevard and Ben Maddox Way.
- **Community Commercial Zone (P-C-CM).** The Planned Community Commercial (P-C-CM) is intended to provide for continued use, expansion and development of community-scale shopping centers that include a range of commercial goods and services as well as garden offices. Regional and CBD-scale commercial uses are intended to be excluded from this zone. Specific Plans are required for the development of Community Commercial sites, and have been created to guide development at Community Commercial-zoned areas around Demaree and Caldwell, Demaree and Riggin, and Riggin and Dinuba.
- **Central Business District Retail Zone (P-C-DT).** P-C-DT is mapped over 105 acres in the Downtown core, and facilitates commercial development that enhances Downtown's character and vitality. The zone allows a broad mix of both retail and office uses.

- **Regional Retail Commercial Zone (P-C-R).** The P-C-R zone is intended to facilitate retail development which attracts customers from the larger two-county area. Supermarkets and convenience stores are not permitted, and offices are limited. This zone applies mainly in the Mooney Boulevard corridor.
- **Highway Commercial Zone (P-C-H).** This zone is designed to accommodate uses that serve travelers: hotels and motels, restaurants, and gas stations. It is used sparingly along the Highway 198 corridor.
- **Service Commercial Zone (P-C-S).** The Service Commercial zone provides locations for businesses that produce and can tolerate significant noise and traffic, including automotive services and wholesale goods sellers. The zone plays an important role and covers the most territory of the commercial zones, with 589 acres concentrated east of Downtown.

Office Zones

Visalia's zoning code aims to reinforce downtown as the city's cultural and employment center. The code also provides for employment areas elsewhere, emphasizing convenient locations and good environments. Residential uses are permitted conditionally. Including the Central Business District Retail (P-C-DT) zone covered above and the Business Research Park (P-BRP) zone covered below, there are about 700 acres (3.7 percent of the city) for office uses.

- **Professional/Administrative Office Zone (P-PA).** The P-PA zone facilitates new office development, with a broad range of office types permitted. The zone is mapped in the downtown area around the retail core, in the Highway 198 corridor, and in scattered locations along Court Street, Mooney Boulevard, and elsewhere. It covers 360 acres, the most of any office district.
- **Office-Conversion Zone (P-OC).** The Office-Conversion zone is created to facilitate the preservation of old houses near Downtown by providing more flexibility of use. Uses such as medical offices which tend to bring a significant number of visitors are discouraged, to minimize parking and traffic impacts in older neighborhoods. The zone is applied only to a few blocks on the edges of Downtown.
- **Office-Garden Zone (P-OC).** The P-OC zone was created to provide for offices in community centers, as part of master-planned developments. Offices are zoned to cushion the effects of high-intensity commercial development on nearby residential development, and help to provide linkages. The zone is mapped in a few locations along Demaree Street and along Highway 198.

Business Research Park Zone (P-BRP)

The Business Research Park zone is meant for the coordinated development of campus-like environments for a range of educational, research, office, and/or light industrial uses. The zone requires that developments follow a master plan or Specific Plan. The Business Research Park zone covers 133 acres on both sides of Plaza Drive north of Highway 198.

Table 4-5 Selected Residential, Commercial and Office Uses Permitted by Zoning District

Use	Commercial Districts								Office Districts		
	C-C	C-N	C-SO	C-CM	C-R	C-DT	C-H	C-S	OG	PA	OC
Residential											
Residential Units	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Retail											
Department or Discount Stores		Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
Pharmacies with Gen. Merch.		Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
Convenience Stores, <7,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Supermarkets, Grocery Stores	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
General Retail, <4,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
General Retail, <6,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
General Retail, <40,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
General Retail, <60,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
General Retail, >60,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Services											
Bank, Branch Office ²	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Barbers, Hairstylists, Spas, Etc.	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Check-Cashing Service		Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
Laundry/Dry Cleaners	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted		
Food, Hospitality, Ent.											
Bars/Taverns ³		Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted					
Fast Food With Drive-Thru		Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Hotels and Motels			Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Movie Theaters			Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Restaurants/Cafés ¹	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Automotive											
Auto Repairs, Painting						Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Auto Sales						Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Gas Stations (Not Including Repair)	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted			
Parking for Off-Site Uses ¹			Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Office											
General Offices, < 2,000 SF	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
General Offices, >2,000 SF. ⁴	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Medical Offices	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted

¹ Convenience Stores, Restaurants/Cafes, and Parking Facilities are conditional uses in the two Industrial Districts not shown.

² Requires conditional use permit in most zones if includes drive-up window.

³ Requires conditional use permit if located within 300 ft. of any residence or public use.

⁴ If over 6,000 square feet, requires conditional use permit in C-R zone.

Permitted Use
Conditional Use

Industrial Zones (I-L and I-H)

The two industrial zones are intended to provide land for industrial uses, and to minimize conflicts with adjacent land uses, including other industrial uses. The Light Industrial zone (I-L) accommodates such uses as research and development, warehousing, and limited manufacturing activities. The Heavy Industrial (I-H) zone provides for most types of manufacturing, processing and assembling, as either permitted or conditional uses. Visalia's industrial zones are located entirely in the city's far northwest, with the I-L zone south of Goshen Avenue, and the I-H zone predominantly to the north. Together, the two zones cover approximately 2,200 acres, or 11.5 percent of the city.

Quasi-Public Zone (QP)

This zone is intended for the location of public or private cultural uses, parks and recreation, and public administration buildings. Schools, churches and hospitals are conditional uses. The district is mapped to cover most of the city's parks, schools, and government buildings, and totals just over 2,000 acres or 10.8 percent of the city.

Airport Zone (AP)

The Airport Zone covers the 600-acre Visalia Airport. Regulations developed by Tulare County for the airport land are incorporated into the City's zoning code by reference.

Design Districts

Unlike the residential zones, Visalia's commercial, office and industrial zones do not include development regulations. Instead, site planning and building standards are contained in Design Districts. This way, specific parts of the city can be treated with uniform development standards, regardless of internal differences in use. The purpose of these development regulations is to facilitate functional, attractive, and distinctive areas.

Design District regulations are summarized in Table 4-5. The Business Research Park zone is the city's only non-residential zone with its own development regulations. These are covered below, in the sub-section on Design District G, with which it shares boundaries.

- **Design District A** covers the Mooney Boulevard corridor, as well as areas around Court and Caldwell and east of Ben Maddox Way south of Highway 198. It includes nearly all of Visalia's Regional Retail Commercial (P-C-R) zoning, but also includes areas with other zoning designations. Development in District A must occur on sites of at least five acres. Buildings can rise up to 50 feet, but must set back considerably from streets.
- **Design District B** is mapped around Lincoln Oval, along sections of North Dinuba Boulevard and South Court Street, around Lovers Lane at Highway 198, and elsewhere. It includes several zoning designations. Like District A, 5-acre-minimum sites are required for development, but District B allows narrower setbacks.
- **Design District C** is located in the East Main Street corridor, the northern and western edges of Downtown, and along a stretch of South Santa Fe Avenue. It mainly includes areas zoned for service commercial uses. Its maximum building height and setbacks are similar to those in District B, but it allows more fine-grained development on sites as small as 6,000 square feet.
- **Design District D** covers the southern edge of downtown, between Acequia and Mineral King avenues, in the Central Business District and Professional Office zones. Here, sites as small as 3,000 square feet may be developed. Buildings are allowed to rise up to 100 feet,

with no front yard setbacks and minimal side and rear setbacks. Parking must be located to the side or rear of buildings.

- **Design District E** covers much of the area northeast of downtown, and small areas to the west. The area is mainly zoned for service commercial uses, and has a high proportion of vacant land. The zone's development regulations are very similar to District C's, though buildings can rise to 60 feet.
- **Design District F** is located along west Highway 198, in areas zoned for offices, a combination of shopping and offices, or highway-oriented commercial development. Like District A, it has a 50-foot building height maximum and relatively deep setback requirements. Development is allowed on sites three acres or larger.
- **Design District G and the Planned Business Research Park (P-BRP) Zone.** District G coincides with the Planned Business Research Park (P-BRP) zone, on the north side of Highway 198 at Plaza Drive. As noted earlier, the P-BRP zone has its own development regulations, as well as a requirement that all development be approved through Specific or master plans. The Design District and the P-BRP development regulations provide for different minimum lot sizes, maximum building heights, setbacks, and other features. The zoning code stipulates that when a site is zoned P-BRP but also within a Design District (as all sites in these districts currently are), the stricter development standard applies. It also requires that development be done with a master plan or Specific Plan, providing flexibility.
- **Design District H** takes in all of the industrially-zoned areas in the city's far northwest, along with land that is currently agricultural and designated as urban reserve in the General Plan. It allows buildings up to 75 feet high, accommodating the needs of manufacturing or processing facilities, and requires deep setbacks from streets, with landscaping.
- **Design District I** is very small, covering several blocks along West Main Street zoned for offices. The District limits buildings to 30 feet in height, to maintain the scale of the surrounding older neighborhood. Rear yards are required, and parking is required to be located behind buildings. Sites as small as 6,000 square feet may be developed.
- **Design District J** covers the area around Caldwell Avenue and Demaree Street, all of which is subject to a Specific Plan (Demaree-Caldwell or Togni Towne Centre). Instead of having its own development regulations, this District stipulates that site planning and building standards will be developed as part of a Specific Plan.
- **Design District K** covers convenience, neighborhood, and community commercial areas scattered throughout the city. The District specifies that development regulations for these sites are to be determined through the planned development process or site plan review.
- **Downtown Retail Design District (DRD)** covers the downtown core along Main and Center streets. This district is focused on preserving the traditional character of downtown Visalia. New buildings are to have setbacks and heights consistent with their neighbors, but in no case rise over 50 feet. Building owners are required to adequately maintain their properties. For new or renovated buildings, façade elements are to be harmonious with and to the scale of traditional facades, and the use of brick is encouraged.



Table 4-6: Design District Development Standards

Regulation	Design District										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G ¹	H	I	J ²	K ³
Maximum Building Height	50 ft.	50 ft.	50 ft.	100 ft.	60 ft.	50 ft.	75 ft.	75 ft.	30 ft.	NA	NA
Minimum Front Yard	35 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	0 ft.	10 ft. ⁴	30 ft.	50 ft. ⁵	Varies ⁶	25 ft.	NA	NA
Minimum Side Yards, Street Side on Corner Lot	25 ft.	10 ft.	15 ft.	0 ft.	10 ft. ⁴	25 ft.	35 ft.	40 ft. ⁵	10 ft.	NA	NA
Minimum Side Yards, Interior	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	20 ft.	0 ft.	5 ft.	NA	NA
Minimum Side Yards Abutting R-A, R-I or R-M District	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.		NA	NA
Minimum Rear Yard	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	30 ft.	0 ft.	25 ft.	NA	NA
Minimum Rear Yard Abutting R-A, R-I or R-M District	15 ft.	20 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	30 ft.	20 ft.	25 ft.	NA	NA
Minimum Site Area (New Parcels)	5 ac.	5 ac.	6,000 sq. ft.	3,000 sq. ft.	6,000 sq. ft.	3 ac.	5 ac.	5 ac.	6,000 sq. ft.	NA	NA

¹ Design District G is coterminous with the Planned Business Research Park (P-BRP) zone. The stricter regulations in each category apply.

² Design standards to be developed as part of required Specific Plan.

³ Design standards to be part of planned development permit, or determined by Site Plan Review Committee.

⁴ Properties in the P-C-DT zone may be located on property line.

⁵ 150 ft. required for front yard with frontage on Hwy. 198.

⁶ Required yard varies depending on type of street frontage. Required front yards for major, minor, and interior roads are 40 ft., 25 ft., and 15 ft. respectively.

Source: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010.

Tulare County Zoning

In the planning area outside Visalia limits, Tulare County zoning applies. The County’s zoning ordinance includes 31 zoning districts. Six of these are residential districts, seven are primarily

commercial districts, two are for industrial uses. There are seven zoning districts for agriculture and one for timber management. Other districts cover specific conditions or needs: there is an Airport Impact Zone, a Primary Flood Plain Zone, and “combining” zones covering scenic corridors, foothill areas, and areas where Site Plan Review is required. The County zoning districts represented within the planning area are summarized in Table 4-6 and briefly described below.

Agricultural Zones

Three of Tulare County’s agricultural zones are represented in the planning area, distinguished by in the intensity of agriculture they facilitate and in the minimum parcel size they allow.

- **Exclusive Agricultural Zone, 40 Acre Minimum (AE-40).** The AE-40 zone provides for “intensive and extensive” agricultural operations, on parcels 40 acres or larger. Most types of agricultural uses are permitted, including tree crops, field crops, and animal-raising operations. In addition to the principal residence, one additional residence is allowed for each 20 acres of property for family members or farm workers, up to nine (housing for more than nine workers is may be permitted with a Use Permit.) The AE-40 zone applies to most of the farmland within the planning area north of Visalia and west of Highway 99.
- **Exclusive Agricultural Zone, 20 Acre Minimum (AE-20).** The AE-20 zone aims to protect “intensive” agricultural operations from encroachment by incompatible uses. Most types of agricultural uses are permitted. The AE-20 zone does not allow land subdivision that would create new parcels smaller than 20 acres. In addition to the principal residence, one additional housing unit may be built for each 20 acres of land, for relatives or employees. Housing for more than ten farmworkers requires a Use Permit. The AE-40 zone applies to farmland directly around the City of Visalia, and extending to the east.
- **Agricultural Zone (A-1).** The A-1 zone is meant to prevent the introduction of incompatible uses into “predominantly agricultural areas,” and to preserve parcels large enough to function agriculturally while preparing for the longer-term possibility of urbanization. The zone has virtually the same use and use permit regulations as the AE-20 zone, but allows parcels as small as five acres. In the planning area, A-1 is mapped around the edges of the community of Goshen.

Residential Zones

A full range of Tulare County residential zones is present in the planning area, as summarized below.

- **Rural Residential Zones (R-A).** Rural Residential zones allow single-family houses and a variety of agricultural uses, with limitations on the number and density of animals that can be raised. On parcels larger than ten acres, up to nine farmworker housing units are permitted. Bed-and-breakfast and small adult daycare operations are also permitted. Four variations on the R-A zone are present in the planning area, distinguished by their minimum lot size. R-A zones with minimum lot sizes of 100,000 square feet and 2 acres (about 86,000 square feet) are mapped in certain areas north of the St. Johns River. R-A with a one-acre minimum lot size applies to certain areas directly adjacent to city limits on the south and west. R-A with 12,000-square foot minimum lot size applies to a rural residential subdivision in the planning area’s northeast.
- **Residential Estate Zone (R-O).** The Residential Estate zone allows single-family houses on 12,500 square foot lots, limited agricultural uses, bed-and-breakfast establishments, and small family daycares. It is mapped to land along Mooney Boulevard south of Visalia but within the planning area.

- **Single-Family and Two-Family Residential Zones (R-1 and R-2).** The Single-Family Zone (R-1) permits single-family houses on lots as small as 6,000 square feet, as well as limited agricultural uses, bed-and-breakfasts, and small adult daycares. Comparable to Visalia’s Single-Family Residential R-1-6 zone, R-1 applies to five small unincorporated “islands” within the city and in much of the Goshen community. The R-2 zone is equivalent to R-1, but allows structures with two units. It is mapped on residential blocks of Goshen between Highway 99 and the railroad, and certain blocks east of the railroad.
- **Multiple Residential Zone (R-3).** Tulare County’s R-3 zone allows development of multi-family housing; projects with more than four units per lot require site plan review. Group homes and boarding houses are also allowed. The zone applies to certain residential blocks in Goshen directly east of the railroad.

Development Regulations and Density in Residential Zones

The residential zones have development regulations covering minimum lot size, required setbacks, and maximum building height. These are summarized in Table 4-6.

Table 4-7: Tulare County Zoning, Residential Development Standards					
Regulation	R-A	R-O	R-1	R-2	R-3
Uses	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text
Minimum Lot Area per Family	Varies ¹	12,500 s.f.	6,000 s.f.	3,000 s.f. ²	600 s.f.
Minimum Front Yard	25% lot depth; need not exceed 25'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 35'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 25'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 20'	20% lot depth; need not exceed 15'
Minimum Side Yards	3' or 10% lot width; need not exceed 5'	3' or 10% lot width; need not exceed 5'	3' or 10% lot width; need not exceed 5'	3' or 10% lot width; need not exceed 5'	Same as other R districts, plus 1' for each add'l story above 2nd floor
Minimum Rear Yard	25% lot depth; need not exceed 25'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 25'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 25'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 25'	25% lot depth; need not exceed 20' for interior lots nor 15' for corner lots
Maximum Building Height	2.5 stories or 35'	2.5 stories or 35'	2.5 stories or 35'	2.5 stories or 35'	4 stories or 50'

¹ There are five R-A zones in the Planning area, which differ by their minimum lot size. These zones permit lots no smaller than 6,000 square feet; 12,000 square feet; 1 acre; 2 acres; and 100,000 square feet, respectively.

² 6,000 square feet per family for single-family use.

Source: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

Commercial Zones

The General Commercial Zone provides for a broad range of retail stores and businesses, as well as single-family or multi-family residential uses. The Service Commercial Zone facilitates wholesale, repair, and service uses, and does not allow new residential uses. Both districts allow buildings up to six stories high, and set a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet. Both districts apply to commercial sections of the Goshen community and around the Road 156 interchange on Highway 198 east of Visalia. The General Commercial Zone is also given to certain parcels adjacent two Highway 99 interchanges southwest of Visalia and within the planning area.

Tulare County also has a Neighborhood Commercial Zone (C-1) for local-serving retail and services, but this zone is not applied within the planning area. Finally, the Recreation Zone (O) allows residential uses, agricultural uses, and a range of commercial uses oriented toward tourism and recreation. It applies to a small piece of land east of Visalia within the planning area.

Industrial Zones (M-1 and M-2)

Much like Visalia's two industrial zones, Tulare County's M-1 and M-2 zones are intended to provide land for light manufacturing and heavy manufacturing uses, respectively. The Light Manufacturing Zone is mapped to existing industrial areas of Goshen as well as unincorporated areas adjacent to northwest Visalia's industrial area. The Heavy Manufacturing Zone applies to currently agricultural land north of Goshen alongside the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Airport Impact Zone (AP)

The Airport Impact Zone allows a range of agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses that can tolerate a high level of sound exposure cause by aircraft takeoffs and landings. Residential uses and noise-sensitive uses like churches, offices, and hospitals are not permitted. The AP zone is mapped to parcels in Goshen affected by airport noise on the border between residential and industrial areas and along Highway 99.

Table 4-8: Tulare County Zoning, Commercial and Industrial Development Standards

Regulation	C-1	C-2	C-3	M-1	M-2
Uses	See text	See text	See text	See text	See text
Minimum Lot Area	10,000 s.f.	10,000 s.f.	10,000 s.f.	10,000 s.f.	10,000 s.f.
Minimum Front Yard	10% lot depth; need not exceed 15' ^{2, 3}	10% lot depth; need not exceed 10' ^{2, 3}	Same as C-2	Same as C-2	None
Minimum Side Yards	5' where abuts any R zone; otherwise none required ^{2, 4}	Same as C-1	Same as C-1	Same as C-1	None
Minimum Rear Yard	15' ²	15' where lot abuts any R zone; otherwise none required ²	15' where lot abuts any R zone; otherwise none required	Same as C-3	20' where lot abuts any R zone; otherwise none required
Maximum Building Height	2.5 stories or 35'	6 stories or 75'	6 stories or 75'	6 stories or 75'	8 stories or 100'

¹ AP district also sets minimum lot width and depth at 100' each.
² Residential buildings must comply with regulations of R-3 zone.
³ On street frontages where 40% of existing buildings have front yards varying by less than 6 ft, new building is not to project beyond average front yard line.
⁴ Where airport zone height limitations apply, the stricter limitation prevails.

Source: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

4.7 Specific Plans and Master Plans

Specific Plans are guided by General Plan policies, and go further to establish detailed land use and development intensity, circulation, public facilities and services, infrastructure, and financing issues and policies for small sections of the city. Master plans are similar in scale to Specific Plans, but are not statutory planning documents. Specific Plans adopted since the General Plan was last updated in 1991 are identified in Table 4-8. Their areas are mapped in *Figure 4-8*.

Table 4-9: Specific Plans Since 1991

<i>Plan</i>	<i>Year Adopted</i>
Togni Towne Centre Specific Plan	1993
Demaree/Caldwell Specific Plan	1999
South Packwood Creek Specific Plan	2002
The Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan	2006
Orchard Walk Specific Plan	2007
Draft Southeast Area Specific Plan	NA

Source: City of Visalia, 2010

Recent Specific Plans

Demaree/Caldwell Specific Plan

The Demaree/Caldwell Specific Plan (1999) covers 66 acres of land on both sides of Demaree Street south of Caldwell Avenue, including a portion of the area designated in the 1991 General Plan as the Southwest Community Center. The Specific Plan seeks to set terms for bringing about the land use mix intended by the General Plan, in a way that ensures flexibility for individual property owners.

The Specific Plan identifies five sub-areas. The two subareas at the southwest and southeast corners of Demaree and Caldwell, covering approximately 37 acres, are slated for community retail development. Two subareas along the east side of Demaree, with approximately 17 acres between them, are slated for “garden office” development. High density residential development is identified for the fifth subarea, covering under nine acres on the west side of Demaree. Altogether, the Plan provides for 406,000 square feet of retail floor area, 181,000 square feet of office space, and 147 housing units.

Since adoption, one subarea has been developed as an office park, and a community commercial center anchored by WinCo Foods has recently been developed in the largest subarea.

South Packwood Creek Specific Plan

The South Packwood Creek Specific Plan (2002) provides the framework for development of 130 acres on both sides of Mooney Boulevard south of Packwood Creek, an area mainly outside the Urban Development Boundary prior to Plan adoption. The Specific Plan calls for the development of one million square feet of regional retail development over a 20-year period. The Plan was adopted concurrently with an amendment to the General Plan, changing the area’s land use designation from Regional Retail Reserve to Regional Retail.

According to the South Packwood Creek Specific Plan, development would occur in two phases. In the first five years, some 680,000 square feet of regional commercial space would be developed on 76 acres on both sides of Mooney Boulevard, including a home improvement store and two other large regional retailers. An additional 320,000 square feet of commercial development would take place

over the next 15 years on land to the east. The project includes improvements to Mooney Boulevard, and development of new arterial, collector, and local road segments, as well as utilities.

As of this writing, Phase 1 development is complete, and Phase 2 development is underway, with a new Costco store and new roadways.

The Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan

The Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan, adopted in 2006, applies to a 27-acre site at the northeast corner of Riggin Avenue and Demaree Street, within the 683-acre Shannon Ranch Planned Development area.

The Specific Plan details a retail development project on 20 acres of the site, featuring approximately 230,000 square feet of retail floor area, anchored by a Lowe's home improvement center. Two small office buildings totaling 9,500 square feet and 78 units of multi-family housing would be built later.

The project is currently under construction.

Orchard Walk Specific Plan

Like The Village at Willow Creek, the Orchard Walk Specific Plan (2007) lays the framework for a primarily commercial development in north Visalia, with a smaller multi-family residential component to follow. The Specific Plan provides site planning and development standards for a 56-acre area bisected by Dinuba Boulevard, directly north of Riggin Avenue.

The Specific Plan defines two commercial development sites of approximately 17 and 23 acres, and an approximately 16-acre residential development site. Both commercial portions feature an anchor tenant and supporting commercial development, for a total of 460,000 square feet of retail space. The residential portion is presented conceptually, as a complex of 224 housing units at a density of 14 units per acre. Residential development would require submittal of a development plan in the future.

As of early 2010, the eastern commercial portion of Orchard Walk, anchored by Target, is complete, along with streetscape improvements to Dinuba, Riggin, and Shannon Parkway. Site grading has taken place on the western commercial portion.

Draft Southeast Area Specific Plan

The proposed Southeast Area Specific Plan covers an 850-acre area bounded by Santa Fe Avenue on the west, Lovers Lane on the east, Caldwell Avenue on the north, and Avenue 272 on the south. The area is in agricultural use, and in 14 ownerships ranging from one to 230 acres.

The Plan calls for development of compact, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and high-quality public spaces, with a strong overall sense of place. The Plan's six neighborhoods are designed so that housing, schools, open space, and convenience shopping are all within a one-quarter mile walking distance. The Plan provides 75 acres of parkland, distributed among plazas, neighborhood and community parks, natural open space, and a greenway along Cameron Creek. It accommodates between 4,200 and 5,125 housing units, depending on density of build-out, along with some commercial and institutional uses. The Plan also includes development of a new medical center southwest of the intersection of Caldwell Avenue and Lovers Lane.

INSERT Figure 4-8 Specific Plans

Back of Figure 4-8

A form-based zoning code is proposed to guide this development. It features four basic zones: Neighborhood Edge (NE), Neighborhood General (NG), Neighborhood Center (NC), and Medical Services District (MD). Each zone corresponds with a matrix of allowed uses, site planning standards, street network standards, and architectural standards.

The Plan estimates the need for approximately \$125 million in public investment for infrastructure (utilities, streets, parks, paths.) This infrastructure could be phased in, with a basic “backbone” provided before development and complete amenities financed using development impact fees, benefit assessment districts, and other mechanisms. The City would also be expected to play a lead role in facilitating property line adjustments and sales between property owners, and entering into development agreements.

As of June 2010, in order to address some difficulties in implementation, the City is taking the following approach to the SEASP:

- The plan will be adopted as a master plan or set of guidelines, not a regulatory Specific Plan;
- Individual property boundaries will be respected and accounted for;
- The road network specified by the current General Plan Circulation Element will form the basis for the area’s transportation network;
- The public open space and facilities acreages will be reduced;
- Stormwater management will be accomplished with on-site detention basins until area-wide facilities are possible;
- Backbone infrastructure will be planned and sized to accommodate the maximum densities and mix of uses allowed by the plan; and
- Early development along Caldwell Avenue may proceed using existing infrastructure.

Older Specific Plans

Two Specific Plans that predate the last General Plan update but cover large areas of the city should also be discussed.

Northeast Area Specific Plan

The Northeast Area Specific Plan was adopted in 1979, following the policy established by the 1976 Land Use and Circulation Element to direct growth to the northeast. The Specific Plan covers approximately 1,700 acres between Houston Avenue and the St. John’s River east of the Santa Fe railroad, and from west of Lovers Lane to the eastern city boundary between Houston and Highway 198. The Specific Plan features a mix of single-family houses, clustered townhomes, and apartments, and two neighborhood commercial areas. In order to stimulate private investment, the Plan emphasizes the development of public amenities, including a park along the river and two new parkway boulevards.

1988 Revision

The Specific Plan was comprehensively revised in 1988, to adjust for market response, changing community priorities, and needed changes to project financing. The revised Plan limits the clustered housing designation to areas along the St. John’s River and Mill Creek, and reduces multifamily housing to smaller sites. The total residential potential of the Plan is reduced by 1,083 units, to 7,236.

The Plan revision also trims the circulation system, removing some proposed collector streets, and proposing bike lanes and storm water piping in some locations where separated bikeways and swales had been planned. It adds a 12-acre community park, responding to demands for more active recreational use areas. The revision calls for adjustments to the development fee charged to new housing units, to account for higher infrastructure costs, fewer projected units, and new fees being charged citywide.

Development to Date

A majority of the Northeast Visalia Specific Plan area has been built out. Still, several large undeveloped lots remain, and certain collector streets, and drainage basin parks have not yet been constructed.

West Visalia Specific Plan (WVSP)

The West Visalia Specific Plan was adopted in 1988, providing guidelines and standards for long-term development and infrastructure for 3,850 acres in the Highway 198 corridor. The plan area extends from Chinowth Road on the east to Road 68, west of Highway 99, with varying width in the north-south direction.

Background and Process

Highway 198 between Highway 99 and central Visalia was designated a “scenic highway” in the 1964 Tulare County General Plan, and included in the Master Plan for State Scenic Highways in 1966. Visalia General Plan updates in the mid-1970s renewed the City’s commitment to preserve the scenic character of the corridor. However, two mall proposals and two city studies in the mid-1980s confirmed retail development potential. Meanwhile, Caltrans announced its intention to redesign this segment of Highway 198 to freeway standards. Development pressure and the need to define the character of the corridor led to the Specific Plan effort. However, the General Plan Land Use Update (2020 Plan) that was adopted in 1991 did not incorporate all provisions of the WVSP. The WVSP has not been amended to correct all of these discrepancies. Where discrepancies occur, the City has deferred to the 2020 Plan.

Development Plan

The Plan adopted by City Council reinforces the City’s vision and prior policies for Highway 198 to be a scenic gateway into Visalia. By limiting commercial development in West Visalia, the Plan intends to support the City’s goal to grow concentrically, and to focus office development downtown and the East Visalia Redevelopment Area, and regional retail development to Mooney Boulevard.

The Plan reaffirms the agricultural land use designation for most of the land in the heart of the corridor, from Road 86 to Akers Road. Elsewhere, it supports some expansion of existing industrial, commercial, and residential areas. The Specific Plan signals the City’s support for a minimally intrusive highway design, and provides design standards for areas fronting on Highway 198.

Implementation

In order to preserve agricultural character, the West Visalia Specific Plan proposes that over time the City annex the entire corridor, including agricultural areas, so that it is responsible for the political challenges of achieving its vision. The Plan endorses the use of agricultural zoning to maintain scenic values, and advocates a minimum of public land acquisition. In early 2010, the City Council authorized the design of a planned riparian trail setback (approximately 200 feet wide) and consideration of an urbanization plan for the WVSP area.

Other Area Plans

Plans have been completed for several other parts of Visalia, in some cases overlapping with Specific Plan areas. The summaries that follow are organized geographically.

East Downtown

East Downtown Visalia Strategic Plan

The East Downtown Visalia Strategic Plan (2005) covers 175 acres directly east of downtown, within the East Visalia Redevelopment District, discussed in Chapter 4. The area is occupied mainly by service commercial uses, and has a significant amount of vacant land. It includes the as new transit center on Santa Fe Avenue. The Urban Design Plan is shown in **Figure 4-9**.

The Strategic Plan estimates that the area includes 88 acres of land with redevelopment potential, including 57 acres considered “near-term” opportunity sites. The Plan analyzes hypothetical development of four building types at four locations within the Plan area. It concludes that at this time, single-family housing is the most financially feasible type, and could catalyze other development. Higher-density housing with tuck-under parking could also be feasible. Feasibility of higher-density development types could be achieved if rents were 10 to 20 percent above market rates.

Such a condition could be created by enhancing the area’s desirability. To that end, the Plan calls for preserving historic buildings, creating a complete street network, developing Mill Creek as a linear open space feature, and providing distinct new public spaces within the Plan area. The Plan envisions the area around the transit center as a “business address,” East Main Street as a mixed-use environment, and a new Civic Center adjacent to Mill Creek.

The Redevelopment Agency would play an important role by acquiring and assembling land, completing Phase I environmental assessment, assisting in environmental remediation, marketing development sites, providing low-interest loan assistance, and structuring fees to create incentives for higher-density development. The City’s upfront infrastructure costs are estimated at \$8 million, including new parks, new streets, and streetscape improvements.

East Downtown Park and Infrastructure Master Plan

This Master Plan, not yet adopted, is a companion to the Strategic Plan discussed above, going into more detail on streets and public spaces. The Strategic Plan’s definition of six distinct districts was used as an organizing principle for streets and public spaces. The Park and Infrastructure Plan modifies the Strategic Plan in two important ways. It shifts primary vehicular circulation from Oak to School Avenue, and introduces a more curvilinear ^{street} system in the northwest corner, to respond to natural features and enlarge the space of the proposed Central Park.

See Chapters 6 (Transportation) and 7 (Public Facilities and Services) for more discussion of the *East Downtown Visalia Park and Infrastructure Plan*.

Civic Center Master Plan

The Civic Center Master Plan, also not yet adopted, carries forward the East Downtown Visalia Strategic Plan’s proposal for a Civic Center. The Civic Center would occupy a portion of the 40-acre Union Pacific site, on a long block between Oak and School avenues and Tipton and Burke streets.

The Civic Center is envisioned as having an urban physical character, and a mix of activities. The design is intended to facilitate mutual benefits for public and private partners, including shared

parking. These and other goals underlie site configuration, building massing, and circulation characteristics of the proposed plan.

The Plan recommends that Phase 1 include a new 44,000-square foot public safety building, and a 44,800-square foot office/retail building to be used as interim city offices. The City's tenancy would allow this building to be financed privately. Public costs for Phase 1 are estimated at \$55 million. The second phase would feature the 160,000-square foot Joint-Use Administration Building, meant to accommodate city offices for a population of 200,000, as well as two parking garages and the development of the Civic Center Park.

Medical District

Kaweah Delta Health Care District Hospital Expansion

The Kaweah Delta Health Care District (KDHCD) Hospital Expansion Plan (2002) aims to meet critical space shortages in the near term and sustained population growth in the service region over the long term. The Plan represents KDHCD's commitment to increasing its presence downtown, and establishes roles for both the Health Care District and the City in achieving the vision. The Plan coincided with approval of the first phase of expansion, the major portions of which have since been completed.

Phase I

The Immediate Expansion (Phase 1) consists of the following:

- Development of a 143,500-square foot expansion of the hospital to the north;
- A new 61,600-square foot Support Services Building on Mineral King Avenue between West and Willis streets;
- Renovation of 40,000 square feet of existing hospital space vacated by administrative functions;
- A new 700-space public parking garage north of Acequia Avenue;
- Conversion of Acequia Avenue to two-way traffic flow;
- Creation of a small public open space adjacent to a restored section of Mill Creek.

As of summer 2010, the Phase 1 program is virtually complete. The new Acequia Wing of the hospital consists of 3-, 4- and 6-story sections, and contains the Emergency Department, the Heart Institute, and other hospital programs, as well as the new main entrance at Acequia Avenue, directly across from the new City parking structure. The Acequia Wing's fifth and sixth floors were only completed to "shell" standards, but due to patient care demand the Hospital now plans to complete these floors within three years¹.

¹ Kaweah Delta Health Care District, 2010

INSERT Figure 4-9 Urban Design Plan, East Downtown Visalia Strategic Plan
(8.5x11, does not need a back page)

Phase 2

Phase 2 provides a conceptual framework for long-term hospital expansion. The ‘2030 Vision’ of the hospital site is based on the creation of a super-block hospital campus bounded by Acequia and Mineral King avenues and Locust and Johnson streets. The hospital would expand to the west, with five new towers, connected by a structure housing support services, with one million square feet of new medical and related office space. Portions of Willow Avenue and Willis and West streets would be vacated, and several existing buildings would be removed.

West Highway 198 Corridor**West Highway 198 Corridor Concept Plan (not adopted)**

In 2002, a preliminary Concept Plan was completed for the land on both sides of Highway 198 between central Visalia and Highway 99. The Plan’s vision is of a corridor whose rural character is preserved to define the western entry to the City, achieved by means which balance community and property owner objectives. The Concept Plan has not been adopted, but presents a different approach from that directed by the West Visalia Specific Plan.

Land Use and Open Space

The land use concept follows three key principles. It aims to produce a scenic travel experience along Highway 198; to concentrate urban uses in the eastern portion of the study area, reinforcing the city’s concentric growth pattern; and to maintain the character of much currently agricultural land. Proposed commercial uses include a business park at the western end of the corridor and an auto center at the eastern end. The Plan suggests housing types that minimize the impact of development on the landscape, proposing a mix of “agricultural residential” and clustered development with the potential to preserve open space. Altogether, an estimated 1,510 households and 9,924 jobs would be accommodated on 885 acres, while 374 acres of open space would be preserved. The open space system would include trails, neighborhood and community parks, recreation facilities, water features, and oak woodlands.

Implementation

The Concept Plan acknowledges the need for the City to make significant investments to secure the scenic corridor, but focuses on strategies to minimize public costs. To preserve rural land, the Plan proposes making use of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), agricultural easements, and State and Federal tax programs for property owners. Rural residential zoning, design guidelines, and landscaped setbacks from the highway are also proposed. To realize the open space concept, the Plan recommends coordination between the City, school districts, stormwater and irrigation districts, to achieve mutual benefits to the greatest extent possible.

Recent Action

In April 2010, the Visalia City Council approved the establishment of a 200-foot open space buffer on both sides of Highway 198, creating a scenic corridor between Highway 99 and central Visalia. The Council directed the Parks and Recreation Commission to begin formal corridor design and landscaping efforts. For more information on the planned open space corridor, please refer to Section 7.1 on Parks, Open Space, and Recreation.

Airport**Tulare County Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan**

The Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan (CALUP), adopted in 1992, establishes land use policies for the nine public-use airports in Tulare County, including Visalia Municipal Airport. Using authority granted by the Public Utilities Code, the Plan establishes policies to ensure that no

structures adversely affect aviation; limit the extent to which people are exposed to airport-related hazards and noise; and protect airports from encroachment by other land uses.

The CALUP establishes a series of airport height restriction zones, airport safety zones, and noise restriction areas. The height restriction zones use “imaginary surfaces” based on flight patterns, through which no structures may pass. The safety zones use a similar hierarchy of zones, with increasingly strict controls on land use with increasing proximity to aircraft operations. The safety zones generally restrict residential uses to low densities in the outer zones and prohibit them in inner zones, and restrict uses which congregate people or involve materials or processes which could pose dangers to aircraft.

The CALUP follows the State noise standards, which do not permit “incompatible uses” within the 65 db noise contour around the airport, using the Community Noise Equivalency Level (CNEL) model which will be discussed in Chapter 7. Noise-incompatible uses include residential uses, schools, and hospitals. The CALUP calls for land uses in the 60 to 65 db CNEL range to be “low human density” uses. For new buildings within these areas, the CALUP proposes that local regulatory bodies should require conditional use permits with easement agreements regarding noise. All new residential buildings or buildings where people congregate should be built to limit interior noise level to below 45 db.

These policies are implemented through local jurisdictions’ general plans and zoning, which are required by law to be consistent with the Airport Land Use Commission policies.

Visalia Airport Master Plan

The Visalia Airport Master Plan, completed in 2004, assesses demand and capacity needs at the airport over a 20-year period, and proposes a set of land use compatibility zones to minimize noise conflicts, safety hazards, and encroachment.

The Visalia Municipal Airport covers 722 acres southwest of the interchange of highways 99 and 198. It features one 6,559-foot runway with parallel taxiways, small general aviation and commercial terminals, and 17 hangars clustered on the north side of the airport. The airport provides a base for area pilots, private and business aircraft, and commercial airline service (six flights per day at the time of the Master Plan, four today).

The Master Plan forecasts modest growth in demand for “based aircraft” in Visalia, from 144 to 200 over twenty years, and a similar increase in demand for peak parking of “transient aircraft” from 20 to 30 spaces. It projects an increase from 26,000 to 33,000 flight operations per year.

Airport Facility Needs

Current airport facilities are more than adequate to accommodate the projected increase in operations, assuming some new hangars are built on available airport land. The runway length is a constraint to aircraft with heavy fuel or passenger loads, and extending the runway to 8,000 feet is presented as a long-term project, which will require some land acquisition and roadway realignment. A second parallel taxiway south of the runway, is also found to be needed if airport uses are to expand onto the southern part of the site (this project has been completed.)

The Master Plan identifies 82 acres beyond the “aviation use boundary” at the southern end of the airport which are surplus to aviation needs. These could be leased for private development.

Land Use Compatibility

Noise and safety are the two key considerations for airport land use compatibility. The Master Plan characterizes compatibility to be very good, at present, due to the rural environment. Noise measurements using the Community Noise Equivalency Level (CNEL) show the 60 db contour extending only 8,000 feet northwest of the runway, covering the freeway interchange and a few additional parcels, and only 2,000 feet southeast of the runway, on airport property. These contours are projected to expand slightly with the increase in airport operations over the planning period. Overflight noise is a concern beneath flight approach paths, though it is not quantified. Safety is a consideration for both flight passengers and persons on the ground; national data finds that most accidents occur at the airport, within runway protection zones, or in immediately adjacent areas.

The Master Plan reviews the CALUP's airport height restriction zones, airport safety zones, and noise restriction areas (see above). The Plan sets forth an alternative set of four zones which synthesize noise and safety compatibility goals, summarized below and shown in **Figure 4-10**.

The Runway Protection Zone (A) immediately surrounds the runway, and would allow only airport-related structures that don't rise above FAA height limits. Zone A is within the airport and immediately adjacent agricultural parcels.

In the Approach Departure Zone (B1), houses on 5-acre-minimum lots or uses involving minimal gathering of people (25 per acre) would be allowed with review and an aviation easement. In the Extended Approach/Departure Zone (B2), slightly higher congregations of people (50 per acre) would be allowed, and a deed notice may be used in place of an easement to protect aircraft use. Zone B1 covers mainly agricultural land and some light industrial uses; B2 extends over a considerable amount of the community of Goshen, as well as some rural residential development at the southeast fringe of Visalia.

Zone C, underlying a buffer area mainly south of the airport, would also limit residential development to one dwelling per five acres, and would prohibit schools, day care centers, hospitals and nursing homes, but allow non-residential uses concentrating up to 125 persons per acre. Zone C mainly applies to agricultural areas southwest and immediately northwest of the airport, as well as Valley Oaks Golf Course and Plaza Park and the developing business park and industrial area north of Highway 198.

Zone D completes Zone C's buffer ring around the airport, to the northeast. In this zone, housing at up to eight units per acre and non-residential uses at up to 125 persons per acre would be permitted. Only uses that are hazardous to flight would be prohibited. Zone D is mapped over a variety of existing land uses, including single-family and multi-family developments, schools, agriculture, and industry.

This page intentionally left blank.

INSERT Figure 4-10 Airport Land Use Compatibility Zones

Back of Figure 4-10

Industrial Park

Visalia Industrial Park Implementation Plan

The Industrial Park Implementation Plan, adopted in 2003, provides guidelines for annexation and infrastructure provision, identifies needed infrastructure, and provides a land use plan for some 5,463 acres in and adjacent to Visalia's northwest industrial area. The Plan also intends to help the City facilitate project review, and to expedite environmental review while meeting its obligations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Plan satisfies a policy in the current General Plan.

Market Analysis

The Implementation Plan included an economic study to determine the type and amount of industrial growth likely over a 20-year period. This study suggested that Visalia should target six industrial sectors: distribution and warehousing; trucking; food processing; communications equipment; machinery; and engineering laboratory services. The study estimated the need for between 600 and 1,000 acres of industrial land, with demand split evenly for parcels smaller and larger than ten acres. The study recommended that Visalia provide parcels larger than 40 acres, parcels served by rail, and parcels able to serve water-intensive users such as food processing facilities. In addition, the Study Area was determined that the Study Area could support a long-term demand for up to four convenience commercial centers.

Land Use

Analysis for the Plan determined that the current inventory of 275 acres of vacant, industrially-zoned land could meet demand for five to nine years, and that between 25 and 225 acres should be annexed in the near term to increase supply. Over the longer term, the Plan recommends that the Industrial Park expand northward along Plaza Drive, then east and west along Riggin Avenue (Avenue 312). It calls for industrial or service commercial uses along Road 76, and identifies the Road 74 alignment for to be designated as the consistent boundary between the City of Visalia and the community of Goshen between Goshen and Riggin avenues. Meanwhile Shirk Road would form the eastern boundary of the industrial district. The Plan identifies three locations for convenience commercial centers along the Plaza Drive corridor, and one at the corner of Goshen Avenue and Shirk Road.

Utilities

The Implementation Plan determined that utilities are adequate to meet short-term needs, but will require significant modifications to accommodate growth. Specifically, it identifies the need for transmission water mains on a one-half-mile grid, up to five new water wells, and water storage facilities for one million gallons. A new trunk sewer is anticipated to be needed along Shirk Road unless heavy users are located closer to the water treatment plant in the Southern Study Area west of Highway 198. Stormwater drainage basins will be required as development occurs. Altogether, "wet utilities" costs associated with industrial development over the 20-year plan period are estimated at \$12.9 million.

Circulation

The Implementation Plan estimates the need for \$70.2 million in roadway improvements to handle traffic generated by industrial park development. Development impact fees and County and State funds are projected to cover these costs.

Visalia Industrial Park Expansion Assessment

In 2006, the City undertook a new assessment of industrial land needs, in the context of a proposed annexation of properties north of Riggin Avenue. The Assessment detailed the significant increase in industrial development in the period since the Implementation Plan, noting that almost as much new

industrial space was developed in Visalia between 2004 and 2006 as was developed between 1994 and 2003. Most of the new development was in very large increments (in buildings between 100,000 to 250,000 square feet in size), with the greatest increase coming in spaces over 500,000 square feet. Analysis of recent industrial inquiries found this pattern to bear out with potential new space users.

The Assessment determines that Visalia has sufficient vacant industrial land in general, but has shortfalls in two parcel size categories—10 to 20 acres, and over 40 acres—and in the 100,000 to 250,000-square foot space category.

The Plan recommends that Visalia proceed with annexation of more land to fill these gaps, according to certain conditions. Among these: the City should remain consistent with established policies in the General Plan and the Visalia Industrial Park Implementation Plan; master plans should be required for annexed parcels, addressing the type, size, location, and phasing of proposed development; and development north of Riggan Avenue should be phased to provide for the logical extension of infrastructure and public services.

Recent Annexation

Since the Assessment, the City has annexed one of the two properties in consideration, totaling 480 acres, between Riggan Avenue and Road 320, on both sides of Plaza Drive. This expansion is consistent with the Implementation Plan’s Recommended Land Plan.

4.8 Historic Resources and Planning

As the oldest Central Valley city south of Stockton, Visalia hosts an impressive collection of historic sites and structures. The City’s Historic Preservation Element in the current General Plan, adopted in 1979, remains the City’s source of policies regarding historic preservation and development within the historic district.

A number of structures and sites in Visalia are on State and national preservation lists. There are four sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Table 4-9).

<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Period of Significance</i>	<i>Description</i>
Bank of Italy Building	128 East Main Street	1900-1924 1925-1949	Bank/Commercial building; Classical Revival architectural style
Hyde House	500 South Court Street	1875-1899	Single family dwelling; Tudor Revival architectural style
The Pioneer (statue)	27000 South Mooney Boulevard, in Mooney Grove Park	1900-1924	Original sculpture destroyed in earthquake; stand remains
U.S. Post Office, Visalia Town Center Station	111 West Acequia Street	1925-1949	Government building; Art Deco/Beaux Arts architectural style

Source: National Park Service, 2010

Visalia General Plan Historic Preservation Element

Visalia's Historic Preservation element was adopted in 1979. It opens with a history of the city's development, which serves to put the discussion of the city's historic and cultural resources in context. The interim historic district boundary is defined, within which a survey of structures was conducted. The results of the historic property survey are presented, including methodology and a sampling of significant architectural styles and structures present in the study area boundary. The third section of the element covers the existing land use and circulation patterns within the historic district, and the final section outlines goals, policies, and implementation strategies for historic preservation in Visalia.

The interim historic district, used to define the boundaries of the historic survey (which is then used later to develop the formal historic district) was bounded by Houston Avenue to the north, Santa Fe Street to the east, Tulare Avenue to the south, and Giddings Avenue to the west. The survey examined every property within the interim district. The area contained some 3,000 structures, and comprised the original townsite and early subdivisions of Visalia.

Historic Site and Structure Survey

The primary purpose of the survey was to gather reliable information that could then be used to develop a historic preservation plan and to allow the City to complete its historic resources inventory for the State. City staff could then also consult the database when new projects were proposed within the historic district.

The survey classified significant historical structures into three categories:

- *Exceptional* structures or sites were those having preeminent historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological, or aesthetic significance, and were considered candidates for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places;
- *Focus* structures or sites were those having significant value, of good to excellent quality, and should be considered for local recognition and protection; and
- *Background* structures or sites were those that may not be historically significant or unique in and of themselves, but that contributed positively as a group to the "visual fabric" of Visalia and were important in context. An example would be a collection of bungalow houses.

The element details a number of prominent architectural styles found in Visalia, including:

- Queen Anne/Eastlake (ca. 1870-1900): a variation on the Victorian theme, featuring elaborate ornamentation, latticework, towers, and turrets
- Colonial Revival (ca. 1890-1915): a simpler style than the classic Victorian, featuring symmetry, heavy columns, and gabled or hip roofs
- Mission Style (ca. 1890-1920): featuring stucco walls and low, red-tiled roofs; often including parapets or towers
- Spanish Colonial Revival (ca. 1915-1941): similar to the Mission Style, but more decorative and often including ornamental railings, trim, and grilles
- Bungalow (ca. 1890-1940): a common style of one-story house with a broad gabled roof, often accompanied by a front porch, heavy columns, and dormer windows

The survey also identified specific groupings of historic structures within the district, where collections of buildings shared similar characteristics or where an area had a distinct urban form amongst a cluster of historic buildings. Often, these subareas were not limited to one architectural style, making their aesthetics particularly interesting and unique.

Goals, Policies, and Implementation

The final section of the Historic Preservation element focuses on policies and implementation. It defines two major goals, under which policies are listed.

Goal I is to “assure the recognition of the city’s history through the preservation of historic sites, structures, and features. Policies include:

- Raising community awareness about the city’s history and inventory of historic sites and buildings;
- Encouraging the restoration of historically and architecturally significant sites and structures;
- Nominating appropriate sites to the National, State, and Local registries;
- Minimizing alterations to original structures when use changes occur;
- Adopting the California Historical Building Code; and
- Considering using redevelopment funds to provide low-interest loans for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

Goal II is “to assure that historic residential areas are maintained as healthy, cohesive neighborhood units through effective land use and circulation policies, and to assure consistency of appearance within the historic area.” Policies include:

- Continually upgrading the physical infrastructure (streets, lighting, alleys, etc.) of existing historic neighborhoods;
- Encouraging the preservation and enhancement of existing landscaping;
- Undergrounding of utility wires;
- Defining a historic district, within which all development and rehabilitation shall be reviewed for compatibility with adjacent uses, block, and neighborhood;
- Establishing a historic preservation advisory board to review all projects within the established district; and
- Reviewing the local registry of historic buildings and sites annually.

In order to implement the policies, the element splits responsibilities between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The City is to act as the “lead agency,” lending financial backing, providing information and technical assistance, and adopting a historic preservation ordinance. The City is also responsible for coordinating efforts on historic preservation that bridge multiple departments: planning, building, public works, redevelopment, etc. The historic preservation ordinance would also formally establish the historic preservation advisory board and define its roles and responsibilities.

The element sees the private sector as playing the “pivotal role” in historic preservation efforts in Visalia, their monetary investments in restoration of properties being likely larger than those of the

public sector. Supplemental activities, from fundraising to community education, would be taken on by interested groups in the nonprofit sector.

Current Historic District

Based on the results of the survey, which purposefully covered a large area in order to be comprehensive, the element ultimately redraws the boundaries of the historic district to cover a smaller area. This more precise district is to be used as an overlay zone for development review, as outlined in the policies. **Figure 4-11** outlines the current historic district overlay areas and shows the location of sites on the City's local registry.

This page intentionally left blank.

INSERT Figure 4-11 Historic District, Sites, and Structures

Back of Figure 4-11

4.9 Regional Plans

Blueprint Plan

The San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Plan is a region-wide effort to develop a preferred land use and transportation plan for the year 2050. The San Joaquin Valley is the fastest growing region in California, and the population of the eight counties covered by the plan is projected to grow from 3.3 million to over seven million in 40 years. Funded by the State of California and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the process brings together eight metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to develop a comprehensive growth management strategy. The Plan is meant to guide local jurisdictions as they update their general plans.

Regional Blueprint Plan

The three-year planning process began with community engagement, led in Tulare County by the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG). Under TCAG's guidance, four growth scenarios for the county were developed: one represented the "status quo." The others involved increasing the average density of development by 25, 50 and 75 percent, respectively; linking Visalia and Tulare with light rail; and extending Highway 65 through the eastern part of the county. In April 2008, Tulare County residents chose Scenario 2, which would increase average residential density by 25 percent over the 40-year planning period, as the locally preferred alternative. By 2050, the average density of new residential development in the county would increase from 4.3 to 5.3 units per acre.

San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Plan

Tulare County's preferred alternative was incorporated with local guidance from the other participating counties into a hybrid growth scenario that was adopted by the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council in April 2009. The Scenario follows "smart growth" principles of walkable neighborhoods, transit-oriented development, and agricultural preservation, and would increase average density of new residential development valley-wide from 4.3 to 6.8 units per acre.

Regional Transportation Plans

The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) does transportation planning for the County, identifying long-range needs and funding priorities. The Regional Transportation Plan, updated every four years, is the key planning document. TCAG also plans and administers projects funded by Measure R, the County's half-cent sales tax, and by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. County transportation plans are discussed in Chapter 6.

4.10 Issues and Planning Implications

Land use and urban form constitute the physical embodiment of a general plan, and are in some senses the "heart" of the overall General Plan Update. A good plan for the community evokes good design and enables the types of neighborhoods and public spaces that contribute to a high quality of life, but does not overly prescribe design direction and architectural details.

Emerging Themes

The following themes regarding land use and urban form have emerged from this research and public input into the planning process:

- Provide choice in neighborhood type and design. Community design should be a physical reflection of what people like and value in their neighborhoods, which may differ across the population.
- Plan for neighborhoods, not subdivisions. Residential areas should form cohesive neighborhoods and not be treated as a collection of subdivisions. Connectivity, a mix of uses, and shared public spaces should be emphasized.
- Explore new structural ideas. Planning for complete neighborhoods will explore some new ideas for structuring residential areas, focusing on neighborhood parks and schools as anchors, and “right-sized” retail spaces. Similarly, for non-residential areas, land use mix can create strong anchors around activity nodes, such as the College of the Sequoias, the hospital, a new 4-year college, or a new Civic Center.
- Honor the past; support existing neighborhoods. At the same time that the General Plan creates guidelines and direction for new growth areas, it must not forget the older existing neighborhoods that precede it. Safety, public realm improvements, and historic preservation must be given equal weight with new development efforts moving forward.
- Take advantage of natural resources as form-giving elements. Visalia is fortunate to be located in an area of natural beauty and resources, from the Valley Oak trees to the waterways that wind through town. Moreover, these are elements that residents recognize and value. The General Plan Update provides an opportunity to more closely link the built environment to the natural environment.

Planning Implications

The new General Plan will provide diagrams and policies that determine the location, type, and design of new residential and non-residential growth areas. At the same time, it will provide support for those areas of the city that exist currently, and identify ways to foster their preservation and continued improvement. Rather than adopt one design ethos, the plan should provide adequate flexibility in design standards and guidelines so that current and future residents are provided with a full range of housing and neighborhood types to suit their lifestyles. The next chapter, Growth and Development Potential, will evaluate the city’s current capacity for new development and compare it to the land demanded by a growing population and local economy. More work on this topic also will occur during alternatives evaluation phase of the planning process.