

Public Facilities and Services

7.1 Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

Many residents of Visalia regard the city's parks, open space, and other recreational amenities as one of the city's greatest assets. Maintaining existing facilities, acquiring and developing additional facilities to meet future needs, and providing programming for parks and recreation areas as the city's population grows will be an important component of the General Plan Update.

Parks and Public Open Space

Current Inventory

Visalia classifies parks and public open space into five general categories: mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, and linear parks/trails (Table 7-1). Facilities at each park type vary according to size. Most neighborhood parks have picnic tables, play equipment and drinking fountains; community and regional parks have these amenities as well as a combination of sports fields/courts, barbecue areas, parking, and restrooms.

Table 7-1: General Plan Park Size and Distribution Guidelines

Park or Open Space Type	Service Area Guideline	Size Guideline
Mini-Parks	< ¼ mile, 500-2,000 people	½ to 1 acre
Neighborhood Parks	¼ to ½ mile, up to 5,000 people	5 to 10 acres
Community Parks	1 to 2 miles, 20,000 people	10 to 100 acres
Regional Parks	1 hour driving time	100 to 200+ acres
Linear Parks and Trails/Bikeways	NA	Sufficient width to protect natural resources and provide room for passive recreational use

Source: City of Visalia, 2010

Three County parks are also within Visalia's Planning Area. Mooney Grove Park (139 acres) and Cutler Park (50 acres) attract people from the entire planning area and beyond. They feature important recreational and historical resources, and contain unique examples of Valley Oak forest and riparian vegetation. West Main Park (5 acres) is a small park along Mill Creek in central Visalia.

Visalia's current inventory of parks and recreation facilities is listed in Table 7-2. **Figure 7-1** maps their location in the Study Area. Mini- and neighborhood parks are dispersed throughout city neighborhoods; larger facilities, such as Plaza Park, St. Johns River Park, and the Riverway Sports Park are located at the periphery.

Table 7-2: Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory			
<i>Park or Recreation Facility Name</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Park or Recreation Facility Name</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
City Parks		City Parks cont'd	
<i>Mini-Parks</i>		<i>Community Parks</i>	
Community Campus	0.5	Recreation Park	13.6
Fieldstone Oaks 1-4 Park	0.8	Seven Oaks Park	12.0
Fox Wood 5 Park	1.6	Stonebrook Park	10.8
Lincoln Oval Park	1.6	Whitendale Park	8.9
Memorial Park	1.1	<i>Subtotal Community Parks</i>	<i>45</i>
Mayor's Park	0.6	<i>Regional Parks</i>	
Park Place Park	0.8	Plaza Park	40
Shannon Ranch 1 Park	0.9	Riverway Sports Park (Ph. 1)	60
Shannon Ranch 2 Park	1.2	<i>Subtotal Regional Parks</i>	<i>100</i>
Village Park	1.3	<i>Linear Parks and Trails/Bikeways</i>	
West Park 1 and 2	1.0	St. John's Parkway	111
Willow Creek Park	1.3	Other Waterway Trails & Setbacks	84.9
<i>Subtotal Mini-Parks</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>Subtotal Linear Parks and Trails</i>	<i>196</i>
<i>Neighborhood Parks</i>		County Parks	
Blain Park	7.0	Cutler Park	50
Burke Park	6.0	Mooney Grove Park	139
Cherry Meadow Park	4.7	West Main Park	5.0
Combs Park	8.9	<i>Subtotal County Parks</i>	<i>194</i>
Constitution Park	2.2	Golf Courses	
Crestwood Park	1.9	Valley Oaks Golf Course	191
Fairview Park	8.9	Total Developed Parkland	839
Houk Park	2.4	Not Including Golf Course	648
Ice House Park	2.7	Undeveloped Open Space / Future Parks	
Jefferson Park	3.6	Civic Center Park	2.8
Linwood Park	4.5	County Center & Visalia Parkway	3.0
Lions Park	4.0	Creekside Park	4.2
Mill Creek Garden	8.0	Goshen & Virmargo	6.0
Pinkham Park	2.6	Hwy. 198 & Road 152 (Blain)	98.6
River Bend Park	4.5	Hwy. 198 & Tiffany Ranch (Hillsdale)	16.4
Rotary Park	2.5	Majestic Oak Park	1.0
Alejandro Ruiz Park	9.3	Miki City Park	0.3
Summers Park	3.7	Riverway Sports Park (Ph. 2)	23
Willow Glen Park	3.7	St. John's River & Road 148	6.0
Sunset Park	3.5	Total Undeveloped Open Space	161
Woodland Park	5.5	<i>Source: City of Visalia, 2010</i>	
<i>Subtotal Neighborhood Parks</i>	<i>100</i>		

Insert Figure 7-1: Parks and Recreation

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INSERT Figure 7-2 Access to Parks

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Current Standards

Visalia’s current General Plan defines an overall parkland standard of 7.6 acres per 1,000 residents, including 4 acres of city parks, 3 acres of school playfields, and 0.6 acres of private open space (Table 7-3). At an estimated population of 126,000 in January 2010, and 454 acres of city parks, Visalia’s ratio of city parks per 1,000 residents is 3.6. When County parks are included, the ratio rises to 5.1 acres per 1000; this is appropriate, since County parks within the planning area are accessible to Visalia residents for a variety of active and passive recreation.

Table 7-3: General Plan Park Land Standards	
<i>Park or Open Space Type</i>	<i>Park Land Standard (Acres per 1,000 Residents)</i>
City Parks	4.0
School Sites	3.0
Private Open Space	0.6
Total Park Land	7.6

Source: City of Visalia, 2010

While Visalia’s total park acreage exceeds the current standards for the population, parkland is not evenly distributed throughout the city. Ideally, every residence should be within a quarter-mile walk of a neighborhood park. Current General Plan standards provide more flexibility, identifying the service area for neighborhood parks to be between a quarter- and half-mile. **Figure 7-2** shows the quarter-mile and half-mile walk-sheds from neighborhood parks and highlights existing residential areas that do not fall into that area. Meanwhile, Visalia Unified School District’s 22 elementary schools, four middle schools, five high schools, and special program facilities account for 460 acres of land in the planning area. If we assume that 50 percent of the schools’ acreage is devoted to recreational uses (230 acres), then this translates to 1.8 acres of school land per one thousand residents, falling short of the current standard. However, more school property may be devoted to recreational uses than assumed here.

Park Land Needs

Over the course of the 20-year planning period, Visalia’s population is projected to grow to a population of about 208,000. If the City’s park land standards remain the same, and taking local County parks into consideration, the City would need to add 182 acres of city park land by 2030 to accommodate the new population. As Table 7-1 shows, the City now has 161 acres of undeveloped or future park land. Please refer to Chapter 5 for further discussion of park land demand.

This analysis does not include shared-use school land. For a discussion of school land needs, please refer to the following section in this chapter, as well as Chapter 5.

Recreation Programs

The Recreation Division of the Parks and Recreation Department offers programming in the following areas:

- Youth Sports
- Adult Sports
- Aquatics Youth and Adult Classes
- Senior Services
- Teens
- Youth Enrichment
- Tiny Tots
- Certification Classes

The City operates three general Community Centers (Anthony, Manuel Hernandez, and Whitendale) as well as the Visalia Senior Center. The Recreation Division manages these facilities and also rents space to the general public. The location of these facilities is shown on *Figure 7-1*.

Current General Plan Policies

Conservation, Open Space, Recreation and Parks Element

Visalia's Conservation, Open Space, Recreation and Parks Element of the General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 1989, with numerous amendments in subsequent years. In addition to parks and recreation, the element includes policies pertaining to water quality, water conservation, air quality, biological resources, historic and archaeological resources, and cultural resources—all of which are covered in different sections of this report. With regards to parks and recreation, the element covers community waterways, open space resources, park acquisition and development, park location and design, trails and bikeways, and recreation programs and facilities. The implementation section includes fund raising and proposed park development and improvement projects. The element goals pertaining to parks and recreation include:

- **Goal 2:** Create and preserve an open space system in the Visalia planning area to meet a variety of needs.
- **Goal 3:** Develop a high quality public park system which provides adequate space and facilities for varied recreational opportunities which are conveniently accessible to all Visalia residents.
- **Goal 4:** Provide a range of leisure, recreation, and cultural programs and facilities that are accessible and affordable to all segments of the community.
- **Goal 5:** Structure an Implementation program for achieving the policies of this Element through a combination of public and private funds, regulatory processes, and innovative strategies.

Open space resources are broken down into four categories: open space for

- Preservation of natural resources;
- Managed production of resources;
- Outdoor recreation; and
- Public health and safety.

Open space designated for outdoor recreation consists of parks, trails, natural preserves, and bikeways. These areas may also serve dual natural functions as natural habitat, flood control, and irrigation. Policies pertaining to open spaces specify setbacks, appropriate adjacent uses, location and design standards for new facilities, and programming. Implementation policies for securing and funding open space resources include utilization of conservation easements, restrictive covenants, transferable development rights, and fees on new development.

Open Space Plans

Waterways and Trails Master Plan

The Waterways and Trails Master Plan, adopted in March 2010, outlines goals, policies, design standards, and implementation strategies for the development of a multipurpose trail system along Visalia's primary community waterways. The trail system would link neighborhoods, parks, schools, downtown, and other activity centers. The plan focuses on developing trails along three waterways:

Packwood Creek, Mill Creek, and Cameron Creek. These trails are designed to link up to the city's existing trail system along the St. Johns River and the bike network. Mill Creek is proposed to be fully daylighted through downtown. Ultimately, the completed system would form a "ring recreational trail" around the city's periphery, several cross-town routes along waterways and other primary corridors, and a major north/south route along Santa Fe Avenue. Along each waterway, a preferred trail alignment is identified, and recommendations and policies are made for landscaping improvements and habitat restoration within the waterway setback.

East Downtown Visalia Park and Infrastructure Master Plan

This Master Plan (not yet adopted) is a companion to the Strategic Plan discussed in Chapter 4, going into more depth 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. Community workshops helped to prioritize Plan goals, with stream restoration, preservation of old oak trees, and street connectivity ranking highly.

Civic Center Park and Central Park

The Plan focuses on two proposed parks, Civic Center Park and Central Park, and the waterways associated with each. Civic Center Park would be linear, and would have a more formal character. Mill Creek, along its southern edge, would remain seasonal. Three options are presented for the creek, to leave flexibility given its current location on private property.

Central Park, at 12 acres, would be the main open space for East Downtown, and would have a natural character. Year-round water flow would be introduced, and meanders would be created. New "oxbow" ponds would be play both landscape and drainage roles.

West Highway 198 Corridor Concept Plan

In 2002, a preliminary Concept Plan was completed for the primarily non-urbanized 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 promotes rural residential uses, clustered development, and landscaped buffers. It also calls for 374 acres of open space to be preserved, primarily south of Highway 198. The open space system would be developed concurrently with urban uses, and would include trails, neighborhood and community parks, recreation facilities, water features, and oak woodlands. To minimize public costs, the Plan recommends coordination between the City, school districts, and storm water and irrigation districts.

Recent Actions

In April 2010, City Council directed the design and establishment of a 200-foot setback from Highway 198, creating a substantial open space scenic corridor along both sides of the roadway. The open space corridor would also include land at the northwest corner of Highway 198 and Shirk, which allows the area around Mill Creek to develop an urban waterway trail in accordance with the Waterways and Trails Master Plan. In turn, the 1,100 acres of land beyond the corridor will be considered for urban uses in the General Plan Update, thus ensuring land owners that the opportunity to develop their land remains even after the establishment of the corridor. City Council directed the Parks and Recreation Commission to begin developing an open space corridor design for the 200-foot setback area.

7.2 Schools

Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) provides public education from Kindergarten through 12th Grade in the planning area, the communities of Goshen and Ivanhoe, and nearby rural areas. The District includes 24 elementary schools, four middle schools, four traditional high schools, and alternative education programs. Two of the district's elementary schools are outside the planning area, but students from these outlying areas attend middle and high school in Visalia. Altogether, just over 25,000 students attend public schools in the planning area. Public schools and enrollment are detailed in Table 7-4.

<i>School</i>	<i>2009-10 Enrollment</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>2009-10 Enrollment</i>
Elementary Schools (K-6)		Middle Schools (7-8)	
Annie R. Mitchell	642	Divisadero	908
Conyer	455	Green Acres	1,067
Cottonwood Creek	658	La Joya	876
Crestwood	677	Valley Oak	905
Crowley	615	<i>Subtotal Middle</i>	3,856
Elbow Creek ¹	499	High Schools (9-12)	
Fairview	543	El Diamante	1,925
Four Creeks	647	Golden West	1,772
Golden Oak	624	Mt. Whitney	1,642
Goshen	528	Redwood	1,874
Highland	475	Sequoia	363
Houston	532	<i>Subtotal High</i>	7,576
Hurley	510	Special Programs	
Ivanhoe ¹	633	Adult School	
Linwood	662	Charter Alternative (6-12)	122
Manuel F. Hernandez	775	Charter Home School ¹ (K-8)	81
Mineral King	668	Visalia Charter Ind. Study	409
Mountain View	643	River Bend	36
Oak Grove	775	Other (K-6)	357
Pinkham	598	Other (7-8)	115
Royal Oaks	632	Other (9-12)	258
Veva Blunt	616	<i>Subtotal Special Programs</i>	1,378
Washington	322	<i>Total Enrollment</i>	27,118
Willow Glen	579	Enrollment of Public Schools Within Planning Area	25,377
<i>Subtotal Elementary</i>	14,308		

¹ School located outside planning area.

Source: Visalia Unified School District, 2010

School Capacity and Needs

VUSD’s *School Facilities Needs Analysis* (2009) and *Level 1 Developer Fee Justification Study* (2010) determine that when state guidelines for counting portable classrooms and assuming class size are considered, the District’s current facilities have the capacity to serve 18,212 students—about 8,600 fewer than are actually enrolled. (Facilities have been stretched by using portables, holding larger classes, converting special purpose rooms to classrooms, and so on.)¹ The District projects that an additional 4,071 students will enroll over the coming years as a result of completion of 6,421 housing units that have been approved but not yet built. Over the longer, 20-year planning horizon, Visalia is projected to grow to a population of approximately 210,000 with nearly 25,000 new households, including 14,317 new students.

Using the District’s targets for school capacity and State guidelines for determining space needs, Visalia will need 21 new elementary schools, three new middle school and three new high schools over the next twenty years. Following the District’s site size standards, this would require 381 acres of land. The enrollment growth projection may actually be low, while expectations about school size and site area may be higher than future schools will accommodate. Table 7-5 compares current and projected enrollment and capacity in the Visalia school district.

Developer fees may only be used to pay for new facilities to the extent that development bears a “reasonable relationship” with needed new facilities. Developer fees, then, are only justified for facility need attributed to projected growth, and not to meet existing space shortages. VUSD’s *Level 1 Developer Fee Justification Study* determines that the District is eligible under State guidelines to raise \$43.3 million using developer fees, and is justified in levying residential and non-residential development fees at current maximum rates.²

School Facilities Development

Faced with the pressure of growth, area voters in 1999 passed Measure G, providing \$42.5 million for school construction and modernization and land acquisition. The bond measure supported the construction of Visalia’s fourth comprehensive high school, El Diamante, modernization projects at several existing schools, and four new elementary schools. El Diamante was completed in 2002, followed by Oak Grove (2004), Cottonwood Creek (2006), Manuel Hernandez (2008) and Annie Mitchell (2008) elementary schools.

The need for new schools to accommodate projected growth continues. The School District currently owns seven undeveloped sites totaling 241 acres, and may fund schools using developer fees, State modernization and new construction grants, and money set aside in a special reserve. While a 2006 VUSD school construction and modernization bond measure did not achieve the necessary approval of 55 percent of voters, future bond measures may be needed.

¹ Visalia Unified School District, *Level 1 Developer Fee Justification Study*, 2010.

² The Level 1 Developer Fee Justification Study determines that the City is only justified in charging \$0.24 per square foot in Level 1 developer fee to new rental self-storage construction, because of the very low employment density in that commercial sector.

Table 7-5: School Capacity, Projected Enrollment, and Facility Needs in 2030

	Existing Capacity ¹	Enrollment 2009-10	Inadequately Housed Students	Projected Enrollment Growth ²	Assumed School Capacity ³	New Schools Needed by 2030 ⁴	Assumed School Site Area ³	Acreage Needed for New Schools
Visalia Unified School District								
Grades 1-6	10,075	14,430	4,355	9,149	650	21	9.2	191
Grade 7-8	3,051	3,906	855	1,802	900	3	20.8	61
Grades 9-12	4,995	7,801	2,806	3,031	1,800	3	39.7	129
Special	91	667	576	336	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total	18,212	26,804	8,592	14,317		27		381

- 1 Capacity assumptions are those used to determine eligibility for State new construction funding.
- 2 Enrollment projections are based on "student generation rates" for elementary, middle, and high school students for single-family and multi-family units, and on projected growth during the planning period.
- 3 Target capacity for new schools and school site area as adopted by school board. Actual school and site sizes may be different.
- 4 Number of schools needed based on sum of inadequately housed students plus projected enrollment growth, divided by assumed school capacity.

Sources: Visalia Unified School District, *Level I Developer Fee Justification Study, 2010*; Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

Currently VUSD owns eight undeveloped parcels totaling 241 acres, where five new elementary schools, two new middle schools and a new high school are planned. The District’s existing schools, along with potential new school sites, are shown in **Figure 7-3**.

Alternative Education

VUSD Programs

Charter Schools

The Charter Alternatives Academy, located southeast of the city on Road 148, emphasizes structure, foundational education, and social rehabilitation for middle and high school students. Visalia Charter Independent Study High School, located at 1821 West Meadow Avenue near College of the Sequoias, aims to give students both more flexibility and more responsibility in completing their high school education. The Charter Home School Academy provides support to families that home-school their children.

Adult or Continuation Schools

Sequoia High School is a continuation high school located on the near north side, adjacent to Green Acres Middle School. VUSD’s Adult School, on the Northeast Visalia “super-campus,” gives adults the chance to receive their diploma. It also offers programs for earning a GED, and for students for whom English is a second language.

INSERT Figure 7-3 Schools

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Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) Programs

University Preparatory High School

The Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE), with support from College of the Sequoias (COS), has established an “early college high school” program on the COS campus. University Preparatory High School, opened in Fall 2009, allows students to earn college credit toward one of five “career pathways,” and involves students in service projects in the community.

La Sierra High School

La Sierra is a public charter school governed by TCOE, focused on providing vocational training in graphic arts, printing, building trades, hospitality, and horticulture, in addition to the requirements for a high school diploma. Students may also participate in the SEE Youth Employment Program. La Sierra has two campuses: one in Porterville, and one at 1735 East Houston Avenue in Visalia.

Court/Community Schools

TCOE also runs seven community schools and two court- or detention-based schools in Tulare County. These schools enroll an average of 500 students at a time, but a far greater number over the course of a school year. The court and community schools serve students who have been referred by school districts, other public agencies, the Juvenile Court or Probation Department. They aim to provide high-risk students with an alternative setting in which they can build social, academic, and life skills, and either return to traditional schools or earn GEDs.

Migrant Education Program

Children of migrant workers experience frequent interruptions in their schooling. Tulare County Office of Education is the local sponsor of a national program whose goal is to help migrant students and their families succeed academically.

Special Education

VUSD’s River Bend School, located on the northeast Visalia super-campus, is the District’s program for students with exceptional needs. Almost all students with special needs are taught at their home school.

TCOE provides support to VUSD and other County school districts in providing for special-needs students, in the form of psychological services, instructional support, and other auxiliary services. TCOE also conducts special classes for severely handicapped students, on school campuses and at special centers, including one in Visalia.

TCOE programs supporting pre-school-aged children and providing academic enrichment or support are covered in the *Social and Community Services* section.

Private Schools

Visalia is home to five private schools serving a significant number of students, summarized below.

Central Valley Christian School

Central Valley Christian School serves over 900 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade, at its campus at 5600 West Tulare Avenue. The school aims to provide an education with a strong Christian focus. It also has a full sports program and other extra-curricular activities. Over 100 children are enrolled in the companion pre-school.

Visalia Christian School

Visalia Christian School is affiliated with the Visalia First Assembly Church, and provides Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade education for 644 students. The middle and high school programs were relocated in 2009, joining the elementary school at the Church's recently developed campus at South Akers Street and Caldwell Avenue. About 100 students are enrolled in the companion pre-school program.

George McCann Memorial Catholic School

George McCann Memorial School is the school program of St. Mary's parish, located at Race Avenue and Church Street in downtown Visalia. The school serves some 240 students in Kindergarten through 8th Grade.

St. Paul's School

St. Paul's serves about 330 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade, at its campus at 6101 West Goshen Avenue. The school emphasizes high academic standards, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity, with a spiritual foundation.

Grace Christian School

Grace Christian School serves about 130 students in the elementary grades, in a facility adjacent to Grace Lutheran Church on South Conyer Street. The school aims to provide a strong foundation in core academic subjects, and a Christian education, along with extra-curricular and enrichment activities.

Colleges and Universities

College of the Sequoias

College of the Sequoias (COS), a division of the Community Colleges of California, provides public post-secondary education in Tulare County. Its 62-acre main campus is located on South Mooney Boulevard in Visalia.

In 2008, 777 students graduated with Associate's degrees, with the Liberal Arts program providing by far the greatest number (240) followed by Nursing (60) and Child Development (22).³ Enrollment in the fall semester of 2009 was 13,620, an increase of 3,200 students or 29 percent in ten years.

The College's 2005-2006 Educational Master Plan provides a growth framework involving the Visalia campus and satellite campuses in Tulare and Hanford. Most General Education classes are to continue to be held in Visalia, and key programs in child development, nursing, and fine arts would continue to be based there. The College projects that enrollment on the main Visalia campus will grow to 15,000 by 2012, 17,000 by 2020, and 20,000 by 2030, matching added educational capacity.

A new Tulare Center is to become the hub for programs in automotive technology, construction technology, architecture, and agriculture. A 100,000-square foot academic facility is planned for Tulare, to include the library, student services, lecture and computer labs. The new Hanford Educational Center, co-developed with the Hanford Joint Unified School District, will house programs in public safety and justice. It will be anchored by a planned 40,000-square foot academic center.

³ College of the Sequoias Annual Planning Compendium (2008).

Bond measures were passed in 2008 in Visalia and Tulare. Visalia's Measure I provided \$28 million for upgrades to the Visalia campus, to be matched by \$47 million in state funding. A new Nursing Building was completed on the Visalia campus in 2009, and a new gymnasium is to be completed in 2010. Tulare's Measure J allows COS to sell \$60 million in bonds and qualify for \$128 million in state funding to develop its Tulare Center, and add programs in Corcoran and Lindsay.

Five-Year Strategic Plan

COS' 2010-2015 Five-Year Strategic Plan, currently in draft form, includes goals and strategies which have General Plan relevance. The Plan calls for improving access to the physical campuses, including adding bicycle lanes and racks; increasing public transportation; providing an inter-campus shuttle; and increasing the parking supply.

The Strategic Plan calls for more student involvement with the local community, including fundraising, volunteering, and service learning opportunities. At the same time, the Plan envisions a role for the College in providing more cultural opportunities for the larger community.

The Plan features a section devoted to economic growth of Tulare and Kings Counties, whose goals are to:

- Ensure that those who complete our programs, certificates, and majors are employed or go on to higher learning;
- Create a culture of innovation and support for new enterprise among the COS community;
- Upgrade skill sets of COS graduates needed to serve local/regional employers; and
- Increase technological literacy of COS graduates.

Strategies identified to accomplish these goals include expansion of job placement and referral services; open communication with the larger community; and strengthening of connections with local businesses through internships, mentoring, and surveys of skill needs.⁴

It is a priority of COS to improve the alignment between certificate and degree requirements and job opportunities. COS sees the General Plan update process as a potential source of information on emerging industries and economic development strategies, which can help the College plan for meeting demand.⁵

Other Colleges and Universities

Five private, multi-campus institutions have local facilities in Visalia.

University of Phoenix

The University of Phoenix, the country's largest private university with 200 campuses, was a pioneer in the model of focusing on providing convenient advanced education for working adults. Its Visalia Learning Center is located downtown at 301 E. Acequia Avenue, and offers Bachelor's and Master's degrees in range of programs, led by programs in business and nursing.

Brandman University

Brandman University is a fully-accredited private university established to provide advanced education to working adults at 25 locations in California and Washington, and online. It is affiliated

⁴ College of the Sequoias, 2010-2015 Five-Year Strategic Plan (draft), 2010.

⁵ College of the Sequoias, Visalia General Plan Update Service Provider Form, 2010.

with Chapman University. Its Visalia Center, at 649 South County Center Drive just south of Highway 198, provides Visalia residents access to the University's degree and credential programs. Business administration programs are predominant, along with education-related credentialing.

Fresno Pacific University

Fresno Pacific University (FPU) is a fully-accredited Christian university in Fresno, offering a broad range of Bachelor's degrees as well as advanced degrees or credentials. The college has the highest four-year graduation rate in the Central Valley. While Fresno Pacific remains focused on its 1,600 full-time undergraduate students, it has established three satellite campuses where working adults can work toward degree completion, or on Master's degrees. One of these regional centers opened in 2008, on Plaza Drive in west Visalia.

San Joaquin Valley College

San Joaquin Valley College (SJVC) provides career training courses and certification online and at eight locations, including its facility at 8400 West Mineral King Avenue in west Visalia. SJVC offers courses providing skills for a variety of business, medical, and technical occupations.

Milan Institute

Milan Institute provides training courses in cosmetology, massage therapy, and associated business skills, online and at several campuses. Its Visalia campus is located at 6500 South Mooney Boulevard, just south of city limits.

7.3 Community and Social Services

Pre-School and Child Care

Visalia is served by a variety of pre-schools and daycare centers in addition to in-home child care providers. Six Child Development Centers in Visalia operated by Tulare County Office of Education follow national Head Start performance standards. In addition to child care, the Child Development Centers provide health, nutrition, parenting, and other services to low-income families. The Office of Education also provides the option for Head Start-trained educators to make one-on-one home visits with parents and children. State-funded pre-school programs for income-qualified families are located at ten public elementary schools as well as the Visalia Adult School. Some classrooms are reserved for children with special development needs.

The Child Development Centers enroll about 250 children in Visalia, while the VUSD pre-school classes currently have the capacity for 408 children. The remainder of Visalia's daycare and pre-school programs are operated by churches, institutions, non-profit organizations, and private companies or individuals.

Child Care Needs Assessment

In 1998, following a State mandate, the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency established a Local Child Care Development and Planning Council, responsible for assessing child care needs and making recommendations every five years. The 2008 Needs Assessment looks at several indicators of socio-economic status in Tulare County and its cities, and the capacity and demand for child care. It finds that Visalia has the capacity, as of 2008, to provide subsidized child care for 5,037 children, in 2,186 homes and 273 facilities. There is an estimated unmet need for subsidized child care for 573 children, or 16 percent of the total need. This unmet need will grow overtime. (By comparison, 48 percent of subsidized child care need is found to be unmet in Tulare County as a whole.)

The Needs Assessment further finds that affordable and high-quality child care options are very limited for infants; for children with special needs; and for parents who work non-traditional hours. To address these general and specific shortages, the Council makes the following recommendations:

- Approach industry to demonstrate how child care benefits the bottom line;
- Create opportunities for collaboration between non-profits, school districts and city recreation departments;
- Look into local revenues such as sales tax and developer fees to help fund the development of additional child care centers;
- Look at under-used public buildings as a way of developing additional child care centers;
- Hold a Child Care Summit to provide training, information and advocacy of child care issues;
- Seek funds to provide a certificate program for licensed child care providers (Tulare County Child Care Planning Council, 2008).

Early Childhood Intervention and Family Support

The California Children and Families Act, passed in 1998, established a 50-cent tobacco tax which funds early childhood development programs through the First 5 organization and its local county commissions. First 5 Tulare County receives approximately \$6 million annually to create programs and support existing services. United Way of Tulare County is another important source of support for social service programs. Programs that serve children and families in Visalia are summarized below.

Child Health and Development Programs

Tulare County Office of Education Programs. The Bright Start Parent/Infant Program (not funded by First 5) supports families in developing plans to help at-risk infants and toddlers reach developmental milestones. TCOE operates Bright Start centers in Porterville and Visalia. A second program, Bright Future, provides in-home services for children with autism or severe behavioral problems or developmental delays.

Tulare County Department of Public Health Programs. The Public Health Department seeks to support young and poor mothers and at-risk babies, by providing perinatal services; home visits from registered nurses; and case management for infants with serious medical conditions. The Medically Vulnerable Infant Program (MVIP) reached approximately 280 children Countywide in 2008-09.

Bridging the Gap. This Parenting Network program provides case management for children between the ages of 3 and 5 with disabilities, and aims to actively engage parents in early development activities. The program reached 145 children in Visalia in 2008-9.

Early Mental Health Program. Young children are referred to Synchrony of Visalia's Early Mental Health Program for mental health evaluations, counseling and intervention.

Children's Dental Disease Prevention Program. Tulare County HHS staff visited elementary schools and conducted oral health screenings for over 3,000 children in 2008-9.

Pediatric Oral Health Project. This project, run by Family HealthCare Network, involves oral health screenings in pre-school and Kindergarten classrooms, follow-up treatment, and education about maintaining oral health.

Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation Projects. First 5 has helped Kaweah Delta Hospital provide better services to young children, by hiring doctors for general and specialty pediatric care, and expanding the Kaweah Kids daycare space.

Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). CASA of Tulare County trains staff and volunteers to advocate for children in foster care, and to make home visits to monitor the ongoing health of children who have been victims of abuse and neglect.

First 5 Tulare County School Readiness Program. The School Readiness initiative has served children ages 0 to 5 and their families in sixteen elementary schools in the County, including Goshen and Houston elementary schools in the planning area. The program aims to coordinate health, developmental, parenting, and other services to improve child performance.

First Call. United Way of Tulare County's First Call provides a comprehensive, bilingual referral system to help parents connect with these and other services.⁶

Child and Family Counseling

Other programs receiving First 5 funding are targeted at improving the home environment for young children. These programs include:

Gang Awareness Parenting Project. This Tulare County Sheriff's Department program provides weekly visits and parenting classes to inmates with children under six and their families, with the goal of reducing the potential for violence to impact young children.

Family Referral, Education, and Empowerment (FREE). The FREE program, offered by Synchrony of Visalia, provides comprehensive parenting education to families with children ages 0 to 5, with courses, referrals, and a resource library.

Parenting Healthy Children Through Divorce. This Family Services of Tulare County (FSTC) program provides parenting counseling to separating or divorcing parents, and supervised visitation and exchange services in a neutral setting. It also helps to support family re-unification.

Other FSTC Programs. Family Services of Tulare County also provides individual, marriage, and family therapy; counseling services for children; and in-home parent education. The organization is currently expanding its Supervised Visitation and Exchange program to include supervising visits for children in foster care to meet with their parent(s) as well as for non-custodial parents in contested custody cases to visit their children. FSTC reports that in 2009 it had approximately 2,300 clients in the County, including about 800 in Visalia. Slightly less than half of services Countywide were provided by court referral.⁷

General Plan Priorities

First 5 Tulare County identified the following priorities for the General Plan Update, from the perspective of meeting the needs of families with children ages 0 to 5:

⁶ First 5 Tulare County, Local Annual Report 2008-2009)

⁷ Family Services of Tulare County Service Provider Response Form, 2010

- Incorporate active recreational opportunities for families with young children, from infant/toddler playgrounds to walkable neighborhoods;
- Ensure that transit routes efficiently serve neighborhoods and service sites such as schools, child development centers, and health clinics.

According to Family Services of Tulare County staff, there is a shortage of accessible and affordable mental health, family counseling, and other support services. FSTC identifies the need for the City to direct more resources to support children’s and family services. There is also room for improvement in the area of collaboration between City departments, the School District, and non-profit service providers.⁸

Youth Engagement

Academic Enrichment and Recreation

Below are key providers of after-school and summer programs for youth in Visalia.

After-School Education and Safety Program (ASES). This statewide program provides grants for local after-school education and enrichment programs for students in Kindergarten through 9th grade. Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) has partnered with Pro Youth HEART, the YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club, CSET, and the City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Department to develop after-school programs.

City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Programs. Visalia’s Parks and Recreation Department provides youth sports, youth enrichment, and activities for teens, as noted in this chapter’s Parks and Recreation section. Among current offerings are a variety of summer camps, sports and dance classes.

PAL Center. The Visalia Police Athletic League (PAL) was established in 1991 with the aim of building positive relationships between youth and police officers through recreational programs and activities. All programs are free, and efforts are made to reach “at-risk” youth. The Center is located at 701 East Race Avenue.

YMCA of Visalia. Visalia’s YMCA, located at 211 West Tulare Avenue, offers a variety of youth sports programs and academic enrichment programs. Camps are offered at Sequoia Lake. YMCA programs also cater to adults and young children.

Boys & Girls Club. The Tulare County arm of the Boys & Girls Club organization runs three clubs in the County, including one at 215 West Tulare Avenue, next door to the YMCA. The club includes a gym, a library, a computer lab, and activity rooms for art and games. The Club offers recreational as well as character-building and educational enrichment programs.

Loop Route. The City operates a free bus for Visalia youth called the Loop Route, connecting the Anthony Community Center, Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center, Fairview, Conyer, Houston, and Green Acres schools, the PAL Center and the Boys & Girls Club.

Impact Center. Peña Planetarium and Multi-Media Theater provide special facilities for area students to learn about astronomy, history, and social sciences, through projection and film. The Center is located in the Educational Enrichment Building at the Tulare County government center.

⁸ First 5 Tulare County, 2010

SCICON. TCOE's Clemente Gill School of Science and Conservation (SCICON) provides one-day and week-long outdoor education experiences for fifth- and sixth-grade students from area school districts. The program has strong community support, and features a natural history museum, a raptor center, an observatory, a nursery, and preserved natural areas on 110 acres.

Leadership Training and Character Building

CHOICES Prevention Programs. TCOE provides a variety of educational programs and activities whose aim is to help teens develop skills and character to manage risk factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, gang involvement, and bullying.

CSET Programs. Junior Leadership, a program of Community Services & Employment Training, Inc. (CSET), is a year-long curriculum for Tulare County youth between the ages of 10 and 18, focused on teaching good communication, conflict resolution, strategic planning, character development, and other leadership skills, with projects engaged in the community. Twenty-four Visalia youth (115 in the County as a whole) participated in 2009-10. CSET also runs a summer camp aimed at reducing gang involvement. GREAT Camp drew 106 youth in the summer of 2009, including an estimated 20 from Visalia.

Community Service

Sequoia Community Corps. CSET's Sequoia Community Corps provides Tulare County youth with job training and environmental awareness, while working to meet community needs. SCC participants are involved in recycling collection; home weatherization; construction trades training; and urban forestry. An estimated 124 Tulare County youth participated between July 2009 and February 2010, including 99 from Visalia.

SCC is a key program of Community Services & Employment Training, Inc. (CSET), whose mission is to strengthen youth and families and address root causes of poverty in Tulare County.

Counseling

Children's Counseling Center. Family Services of Tulare County provides a counseling center intended to be a safe space for children and teens to work through trauma and gain confidence and self-esteem, with therapists.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Family Services of Tulare County (FSTC) is a critical provider of services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Its programs include crisis intervention hotlines linked with hospitals; an emergency shelter and transitional housing for battered women; treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence and child abuse; and legal assistance with protection orders. Altogether, these programs served 2,130 persons in 2009, including approximately 1,270 in Visalia. FSTC's prevention and awareness programs reached an estimated 3,000 Tulare County residents, including 1,600 in Visalia.

Priorities

FSTC reports that a new shelter for battered women is needed in Visalia, the planning of which will require City involvement. The organization identifies top priorities as

- Well-trained and responsive first responders (primarily police) who understand sexual assault and domestic violence dynamics, connect victims with services, and collaborate well with service providers;
- Adequate services for non-English speakers and immigrants;

- Awareness of the impact of exposure to violence in the home and community to child development, and the importance of coordinated community response.⁹

Employment Assistance

TulareWORKs

Tulare County's Health and Human Services Agency is responsible for administering California's CalWORKs program, which provides cash aid to eligible families with children, while assisting in job placement. Participants are required to fulfill the state's welfare-to-work obligations, and are eligible for assistance with childcare, transportation, and other related costs. Services are provided at 1845 North Dinuba Boulevard in Visalia.

CSET Employment Assistance

The Employment Connection

Community Services & Employment Training, Inc. (CSET) provides assistance to both youth and adults in preparing for and finding work. Last year CSET became the operator of The Employment Connection, offering individualized support to job-seekers, resource referrals, and workshops and training programs. There are three Employment Connection centers in the County, including one in Visalia at 4035 West Noble Avenue. CSET estimates that there were 5,435 visits to the Visalia center between July 2009 and February 2010. The Center helped 1,817 Visalia job seekers develop employment plans, involved 383 in occupational skills trainings, and set up 185 contracts for on-the-job training or work experience placements.

Youth Employment

Beyond the programs discussed in the Youth Engagement portion of this section, CSET helps youth find and keep jobs, with workshops on basic skills, interviewing and application strategies; development of individualized plans to match goals; and assistance in paying for vocational training. The organization also runs the Job Opportunities for Young Adults (JOYA) program targeting youth at risk of joining a gang. Youth employment programs are conducted out of the CSET office at 312 Northwest 3rd Avenue. CSET estimates that 61 Visalia youth participated in the JOYA program between July 2009 and February 2010, and 45 took part in other CSET career development and training programs. CSET is working with the County to revive an employment training program for youth aging out of the foster care system.

Priorities

With the economic downturn, it is especially important for job seekers to have versatile skills. At the same time, the large pool of unemployed workers makes employers more hesitant to hire inexperienced and/or gang-involved youth. CSET proposes that connecting employers to job seekers, both youth and adults, who have completed job readiness programs should be a community priority. Involving youth in leadership and job training programs, and developing partnerships with local businesses, are critical.¹⁰

Housing Assistance

Affordable Housing

According to the City's 2009 General Plan Housing Element, there was a remaining need for an additional 4,019 housing units for low-, very-low, or extremely-low income households in Visalia through 2014, as well as 1,932 units for moderate-income families earning up to 80 percent AMI.

⁹ Family Services of Tulare County, 2010

¹⁰ Community Services & Employment Training, Inc, 2010

As described in Chapter 5, the City maintains a 5-year plan detailing how its three major funding sources for affordable housing—Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME grants, and Low and Moderate Income Housing Fund money from the Redevelopment areas—will be used. The 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan provides funding for homebuyers’ assistance; property acquisition; housing rehabilitation; senior home repairs; and emergency repairs and basic needs. Meanwhile the Housing Authority of Tulare County (HATC) provides housing to income-qualified families, while other subsidized housing developments set aside units for both low- and moderate-income households. These and other programs are summarized below.

Affordable Housing Programs

Income-Qualified Housing

The Housing Authority of Tulare County (HATC) provides housing to income-qualified families in the County, either in public housing, affiliated affordable housing, or with Section 8 vouchers for private housing. To qualify, households must have annual incomes at or below a certain threshold, depending on household size. Some units in affiliated, affordable housing properties are available to “moderate-income” households earning up to 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). In addition, some public and affordable housing is designed and reserved for families, some for seniors, and some for persons with disabilities.

The Housing Authority manages five properties in Visalia, with a total of 114 units. Four affordable housing properties managed by others but affiliated with the Housing Authority contain another 197 units for low or very-low income households. Of the 311 units managed or affiliated with HATC in the planning area, 180 (58 percent) are for seniors and 32 (10 percent) are for persons with disabilities. Fifteen (5 percent) are for farmworker families, and 84 (27 percent) are for families in general. Other subsidized, income-limited housing exists in the planning area as well. According to the City’s Consolidated Plan, there are 444 units in Visalia that receive local, state, or federal funds.

HATC also administers the federal Section 8 voucher program, allowing residents who qualify for housing assistance to receive payments toward rent on the private market. HATC provides 1,148 families with rental assistance currently, with more than 3,500 on the waiting list. The agency’s “Moving to Work” program limits use of Section 8 vouchers to 5 years.

Current Projects and Policies

The City and HATC have recently worked together on two projects: the development of the 71-unit Mill Creek Parkway Apartments, completed in 2008, and the rehabilitation and new construction of 20 units at the Paradise & Court project. The City’s Housing Element commits Visalia to help the Housing Authority increase by 550 the number of available Section 8 vouchers. The 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan sets aside \$420,000 in HOME funds as a City contribution to affordable housing development by a local non-profit.

Homebuyers’ Assistance

The Consolidated Plan allocates \$2.1 million over five years, or \$420,000 annually, to its ongoing First-Time Homebuyer Program. The program can provide up to ten low-interest second mortgages of up to \$40,000 to help qualifying families purchase homes. It is administered by Community Services & Employment Training, Inc. (CSET). CSET also conducts monthly workshops for homebuyers, covering credit, loan terms, budgeting, and other issues.

Fair Housing Hotline

The City uses CDBG funding (\$75,000 over five years) to fund a hotline for renters to use to learn about their rights and pursue complaints.

Home Repairs

The City has allocated \$905,000 over five years to help low-income seniors and families maintain their homes. CSET administers the Senior Home Repair program, which provides free handyman service to persons over the age of 55 or with disabilities. Meanwhile Self-Help Enterprises' Mobile Home Senior Handicap and Repair Program assists low- and extremely-low income families make repairs to their mobile homes.

Weatherization and Energy Assistance

Among the activities of CSET's Sequoia Conservation Corps (SCC, see Youth Engagement, above) is the agency's weatherization program. SCC participants, supervised by certified contractors, develop job skills while providing important, energy-saving improvements to homes, particularly for low-income families. (This program does not receive City funding.)

CSET receives State funds to assist qualifying Tulare County residents by helping to pay electricity or gas bills one time per year, to help sustain stable housing for low-income families. CSET reports that public awareness of these programs has been a barrier to their full utilization.

Neighborhood Revitalization***Neighborhood Stabilization Plan***

In response to the wave of home foreclosures that mounted in 2008, HUD created an emergency assistance program called the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Hard-hit communities were provided with grants to counteract neighborhood deterioration associated with foreclosed and abandoned homes, in the areas of greatest need. Visalia received a grant of just under \$2.4 million in 2008, and adopted a Neighborhood Stabilization Plan (NSP) to detail community needs and the use of funds. The Plan calls for a focus on the Lincoln Oval and Washington School neighborhoods and areas north of Houston Avenue on both sides of Dinuba Boulevard.

The NSP allocates \$1.5 million, or 65 percent of the total grant, to the purchase of eight to 10 homes for low- and moderate-income households, and \$600,000 (a mandatory 25 percent) to purchase of six to eight homes for very low-income households. The Plan entails the City buying foreclosed homes as a package from one or more banks, at below market value, rehabilitating the houses as needed, and re-selling them to qualified buyers, with the help of City-backed mortgages. Covenants would be placed on properties to ensure they remain occupied by qualified households.

Code Enforcement

The 2010-15 Consolidated Plan directs the City to channel \$800,000 in HOME funds over the five-year period to enforce building code violations in targeted neighborhoods, as a means of improving resident safety and neighborhood quality. The allocation is anticipated to pay for 200 inspections annually.

Homelessness

The City works with the Continuum of Care organization to survey the homeless population each year. The 2009 Point-in-Time survey found 966 homeless persons in Tulare and Kings counties, including 224 in Visalia. Of these 204 were adults and 20 were children. The City will contribute \$30,000 to a Continuum of Care effort to integrate and improve homeless services in Visalia. Current services are summarized below.

Shelter Services

Visalia Rescue Mission

Visalia Rescue Mission is the primary option for homeless men and women needing emergency shelter in Visalia. The Rescue Mission operates an overnight shelter for men that can accommodate 60, and provides dinner, breakfast, and a shower, and a 42-bed residential program for men. The women's shelter can house 26 women and children, and will house women for up to 30 days (45 days if women are with children) with three daily meals. The Rescue Mission offers a nine-month, faith-based program to help men and women re-integrate into society. The Mission reports that in 2009 it served 180,431 hot meals, provided 18,556 shelter nights, provided transitional housing for 3,218, clothing for 8,311, and food boxes for 1,430. Its recovery program reached 1,437 persons (Visalia Rescue Mission, 2010).

Battered Women's Shelter

A shelter funded by Tulare County provides 12 beds for women and women with small children.

Motel Vouchers

Community Services & Employment, Inc. (CSET) provides motel vouchers to families at risk of eviction or foreclosure. Funding for 600 bed nights per year is provided in part by the City and United Way of Tulare County.

Transitional Housing

Visalia Rescue Mission manages one apartment providing transitional housing for seven men. The Alternative Services program for recently released inmates and drug court clients has one six-bed house each for men and women.

Other Services

Clothing and Transportation

Visalia Emergency Aid Council (VEAC) has a thrift store on Houston Avenue where donated clothing can be bought at very low cost. VEAC also accepts donated vehicles, which are sold at low prices to families in need of transportation. Catholic Charities' Good News Center (1638 North Dinuba Boulevard) has a thrift store, and provides information and referrals.

Day Centers

Youth Vision provides a drop-in center for homeless teens, offering basic necessities and referrals. Catholic Charities' Good News Center is in the process of building a Hygiene Center, which will include restrooms, showers, and laundry facilities for homeless men and women. The Center will also include an office for counseling and information. Visalia Rescue Mission is also building a community center.

Additional Services

The Good News Center has goals of providing more extensive citizenship services; English as a Second Language classes; programs for youth; and housing. The Rescue Mission envisions adding case management capabilities.

Projects and Priorities

Both the Rescue Mission and the Good News Center are in the process of developing day-use centers for the homeless; Good News Center staff note that a "One-Stop Center" providing services as well as recreation and a sense of dignity for homeless men and women is a clear need for Visalia. The Visalia Rescue Mission identifies transitional housing and employment assistance as key needs.

Good News Center staff identifies several quality of life and public safety issues that should be addressed in the Center's north side neighborhood, including the need for community-oriented development, traffic calming, pedestrian crossings, and the securing of vacant lots.

Health Care Services

Kaweah Delta Health Care District

Kaweah Delta Health Care District (KDHCD) is the primary provider of medical services in Visalia and the planning area. Most services are provided at the Kaweah Delta Medical Center, located downtown. KDHCD recently completed the first phase of a planned expansion of the downtown campus, adding a six-story wing for patient care and the Heart Institute, and a new administration building. Significant additional expansion is planned over the next 20 years; see Chapter 4 for more detail.

KDHCD also has a West Campus, at West Cypress Avenue and Akers Street, where the district has Rehabilitation and Mental Health facilities, a small surgery center, and a "Lifestyle Center" including physical therapy, sports injury rehabilitation, and a fitness center. The West Campus is anchored by the affiliated Sequoia Regional Cancer Center. The South Campus, located on Court Street between Tulare and Walnut avenues, provides long-term and urgent care. The District also operates a small health clinic in Exeter and a dialysis center in Porterville. It owns some 100 acres of undeveloped land in the Southeast Area Specific Plan (SEASP) area, which it anticipates using for medical facilities of some kind in the future.

Community Programs

KDHCD's outreach programs include public awareness and support for good management of type 2 diabetes and asthma; obesity awareness and prevention; outreach to frequent Emergency Department users, to connect them with primary care doctors, insurance, mental health services and treatment; and a once-per-year dental clinic at an elementary school. The District provides health education and screening events geared toward migrant families as part of "Bi-national Health Week," and provides staff support to the Samaritan Center.

Health Care Clinics

Medical Care

At the Samaritan Center, operated by Visalia Ecumenical Charities, volunteer doctors and nurses provide free services to uninsured Visalia residents. The clinic is located at 200 Northwest 3rd Avenue.

The Tulare County Department of Public Health, a division of the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), provides primary and specialty medical care services to residents of the County regardless of their ability to pay. The Department operates three Health Care Centers, including one at 2611 North Dinuba Boulevard in Visalia. The Visalia Center also offers HIV/AIDS testing. HHSA reports that nearly 51,714 clients received services at the Visalia Health Care Center in 2008-09.

Mental Health Services

The Department of Mental Health operates two outpatient clinics for adults, including one at 3300 South Fairway in Visalia. For children's mental health services, the Department contracts with other providers; in the planning area, Visalia Youth Services, at 109 Northwest 2nd Street. Both the adult and children's clinics offer assessments, case management, individual and group therapy, medication support, psychiatric services, and related services, regardless of ability to pay. The Department reports 1,966 adults and 1,418 children received mental health care in Visalia in 2008-09. The Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Program served an additional 923 clients in Visalia.

Public Health Initiatives

In addition to providing direct services to those in need, the County's Public Health and Mental Health departments conduct various initiatives, including the following.

Communicative Disease Control and Prevention. The Public Health Department monitors, investigates, and responds to outbreaks.

Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health. The Department seeks to improve the health of women and infants and to reduce disparities related to income and race, by providing supportive services to young mothers under the age of 19; offering perinatal services and care focused on "high-risk" infants under the age of three; and providing home visits by registered nurses to first-time young mothers.

Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment and Prevention. In addition to providing direct treatment services, the Department of Mental Health aims to address alcohol and drug abuse through community-based prevention activities and outreach to pregnant women. In collaboration with Tulare County Superior Court, the Department operates Adult Drug Court and Recovery Court, which allow minor offenders to enter treatment programs.

Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP)

Obesity is a serious problem at the state and national level, and the obesity rate in Tulare County is above the California average. The Department of Public Health is a partner in a regional effort funded by the California Endowment to reduce obesity in the Central Valley by focusing on "place-based policy change that supports healthy eating and active living." The program follows a collaborative model to promote changes to school, city, and workplace policies. Policies proposed by CCROPP relevant to the Visalia General Plan Update include:

- Establishing farmers' markets, community gardens and markets with fresh foods in low-income neighborhoods; and
- Promoting "smart growth" strategies to help create healthier communities.¹¹

Tulare County Public Health Department staff identify obesity and the chronic conditions associated with obesity as a top public health priority for the General Plan Update. Injuries, both unintentional and intentional; and the quality of air and water are also identified as important issues. The ability to provide adequate services that meet state mandates to seriously mentally ill patients is also cited as a major concern.¹²

Emergency Food and Shelter

Food Assistance

Food Link for Tulare County seeks to eliminate hunger in the County. Its core program is a food bank, through which donated food is redistributed to emergency pantries, homeless shelters and soup kitchens.

Visalia Emergency Aid Council (VEAC), 217 Northeast 3rd Avenue, runs the County's most-used food pantry, providing families with nutritional food and fresh produce. In 2009, the Good News Center (1638 North Dinuba Boulevard) reports that it provided 2,962 clients with emergency food,

¹¹ Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, 2010

¹² Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, 2010

while Visalia Rescue Mission (500 East Race Avenue) reports that it provided 1,430 food boxes to families.

Food Link is the local partner in the US Department of Agriculture’s Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), and distributes commodities at 26 sites, including Anthony Community Center; Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center; the Samaritan Center on Northwest 4th Avenue; and the Town Meadows senior apartments. Recently FoodBank has initiated a program which goes to many of the same sites to distribute fresh fruits and vegetables and provide nutrition information.

Other FoodLink programs are geared to providing food to children. The USDA-sponsored Summer Food Service Program provides nutritious lunches to children who might not get them when school is out, while the After School Snack Program serves children at 30 schools, community centers, and other sites in Tulare County.

Hot Meals

Visalia Rescue Mission provides dinner and breakfast to its men’s shelter clients, and three daily meals to residents of the women’s shelter. The Mission reports that in 2009 it served 180,431 hot meals.¹³ The Good News Center operates a soup kitchen that provided nearly 42,000 hot meals in 2009, despite not serving dinner due to safety concerns about being open at night.¹⁴

7.4 Police, Fire, and Emergency Services

Police Services

Visalia Police Department

Crime Enforcement and Prevention

The Visalia Police Department (VPD) provides police protection in the City of Visalia. Police recorded 6,849 Part 1 crimes in 2009, down 10 percent from 2008. Motor vehicle theft led the decline, with 26 percent fewer recorded thefts than the year before. Larceny accounted for nearly half of all recorded Part 1 crimes, followed by assaults, and burglaries.¹⁵

The Police Department collaborates with other law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney’s office on crime prevention. VPD works with City and County agencies and education and social service providers on a variety of outreach and youth programs. The Department is engaged in gang prevention efforts ranging from school presentations to intensive management of high-risk probation cases to injunctions against two gangs and the establishment of a “safe zone” in north Visalia.

Facilities and Staffing

The Department has 143 sworn officers working out of two districts, as well as seven reserve sworn officers, 64 civilian officers, and 65 volunteers. Operations personnel are supported by dispatch, records, crime analysis, and other essential law enforcement units.

Police headquarters is at 303 South Johnson Street in downtown Visalia, adjacent to City Hall West. In 2007, the Department opened two substations, and shifted to district-based operations. The District 1 substation, serving northern Visalia, is located at 204 Northwest 3rd Avenue, near Lincoln Oval. District 2, at 4100 South County Center Drive, serves the southern part of the City. These facilities are intended to facilitate contact with the community and support robust incident response.

¹³ Visalia Rescue Mission, 2010

¹⁴ Good News Center, 2010

¹⁵ City of Visalia Police Department, http://www.ci.visalia.ca.us/depts/police_department/statistics.asp, accessed 2010.

VPD has sponsored a Police Athletic League (PAL) since 1991, aimed at providing strong connections with youth. Three thousand youth participated in PAL activities in 2008, and a PAL Center was opened at 701 East Race Avenue. **Figure 7-4** shows these and other public safety facilities.

Projected Needs

The Police Department has identified a new headquarters as a critical need. A new 44,000-square foot public safety building is included in the first phase of the Civic Center Master Plan, outlined in Chapter 4. The Master Plan has not been approved. The Police Chief notes that growth will impact service delivery over time, and there may be the need for additional substations within the 20-year planning period, located to serve growth areas.

Service Standards

VPD does not adhere to service standards in terms of officers per thousand residents, or incident response time. In 2008, the Department reports that its response times were under 15 minutes for 85 percent of all calls, and the average response time for Priority 1 calls was 4.2 minutes.¹⁶

Tulare County Sheriff's Department

The Tulare County Sheriff's Department provides police protection services and investigates crimes in unincorporated areas of the county, including the community of Goshen and other rural and semi-rural areas within the planning area. The Department is headquartered on the County administrative campus in Visalia.

¹⁶ Visalia Police Department, General Plan Update Service Provider Response Form, 2010.

Insert Figure 7-4

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Fire and Emergency Services

Visalia Fire Department

Fire and Emergency Response

The Visalia Fire Department (VFD) handles emergency and fire calls in the City. In 2008, the Department responded to over 10,000 alarms and calls. The great majority of these calls (94 percent) were not fire-related, with two-thirds of calls being for emergency medical or rescue services. Hazardous conditions, such as gas or oil spills and downed power lines, were the next most frequent source of alarms, at 11 percent. See Table 7-6, below.

Table 7-6: Fire and Emergency Alarms		
	<i>2008</i>	<i>Percent. of Total</i>
Non-Fire Alarms		
EMS/Rescue	6,971	67%
Hazardous Condition	1,107	11%
Service Calls	479	5%
Good Intent	965	9%
False Call/No Merit	299	3%
Other	23	0%
<i>Subtotal Non-Fire Alarms</i>	<i>9,844</i>	<i>94%</i>
Fire Alarms		
Structure Fires	134	1%
Vehicle Fires	100	1%
Grass and Vegetation Fires	154	1%
Trash and Dumpster Fires	201	2%
Other Fires	10	0%
<i>Subtotal Fire Alarms</i>	<i>599</i>	<i>6%</i>
Total Calls	10,443	100%

Source: Visalia Fire Department, 2010

Fire Prevention

Fire prevention is an important part of the Fire Department's work. The Department conducts weed abatement, and does public education programs in schools and other venues.

Plan Check and Access Requirements

Of note for the General Plan, Department officials are involved in checking all building and subdivision plans. The Fire Department's focus is on making sure that proposed projects will be adequately served by water, and accessible to emergency vehicles.

The Department enforces the City's Hydrant Ordinance, which determines minimum spacing for fire hydrants. Street dimensions are scrutinized to ensure that space will be preserved for ladder trucks to be stabilized, and for emergency vehicles to turn around. Basic requirements in the City's subdivision ordinance include 52-foot minimum right-of-way widths and a 53-foot turning radius for cul-de-sacs.

Mutual and Automatic Aid

The City of Visalia actively participates in the California Master Mutual Aid Plan. Formal mutual aid agreements have been written between the City and surrounding jurisdictions. A broad automatic aid agreement encompassing 59 square miles surrounding Visalia exists between Tulare County and the City.

Facilities and Staffing

Protecting a community of 125,000 residents and 36 square miles with limited resources is an ongoing challenge. The Visalia Fire Department (VFD) staffs five paramedic engine companies, one truck company and a Battalion Chief daily, from five fire station locations. The engines and truck are staffed with three personnel, giving the VFD a daily minimum staffing of 19.

Advanced Life Support (ALS)

All apparatus are staffed with a paramedic at all times.

Service Standards

The Fire Department has a current staffing ratio of 0.48 responders per 1,000 residents.

VFD follows the NFPA response time standard, aiming to respond to 95 percent of calls within 5 minutes, including one minute of “turnout” and four minutes of driving. The Department currently has an average response time of 5 minutes 37 seconds.

The Department has mapped the areas within four-minute driving-time range of each station, shown in **Figure 7-4**. Areas of southwest Visalia and smaller areas in the northwest and northeast cannot reasonably be served within the Department’s target response time.

Projected Needs

According to the Department, an area in the southwest is in need of a station now. This area is not currently being served adequately; 20 percent of calls annually do not meet the response time standard of five minutes or less 90 percent of the time. Additional facilities are also needed in the northeast and southeast sections of the city.¹⁷ These needs would become more acute if growth were to occur in the northwest, northeast, and southwest. The Department notes that increasing population has historically been accompanied by an increasing number of service calls, and there will be a need to increase staffing.

ISO Rating

As a firm specializing in information about property and casualty risk, ISO reviews and rates the fire-fighting capabilities of cities and fire districts. On a scale of 1 (exemplary fire protection) to 10 (not meeting minimum criteria) Visalia has an ISO rating of 4.

Tulare County Fire Department

Response and Prevention

The Tulare County Fire Department (TCFD) provides fire and emergency medical services in unincorporated areas. The Department’s Emergency Fire Communications Center, or Fire Com, provides dispatch services for the County Fire Department along with seven other rural fire districts, handling an average of 14,000 incidents annually.¹⁸

¹⁷ Visalia Fire Department, 2010.

¹⁸ Tulare County Fire Department, accessed at <http://www.co.tulare.ca.us/government/fire/default.asp>, 2010.

The County Fire Department is also engaged in fire prevention work. This includes inspecting buildings and enforcing fire safety codes, conducting plan review for new buildings and fire protection systems, and interpreting fire safety codes during the design phase of new buildings. It also includes ongoing public education programs.

Facilities and Staffing

TCFD has six battalion chiefs, 72 fire captains and lieutenants, and 400 reserve fire fighters. The Department operates 28 fire stations. Two are in the planning area: Fire Station 1 on South Lovers Lane and Fire Station 7 in Goshen. Fire Station 1 is staffed by reserves. The Emergency Fire Communications Center is also within the planning area, in Mooney Grove Park. TCFD headquarters are located in Farmersville.

7.5 Water and Sewer System

The Kaweah Groundwater Sub-basin

Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water within the planning area, which means Visalia's water comes from large, underground aquifers, rather than rivers, lakes, or reservoirs. The San Joaquin Groundwater Basin encompasses all of the Valley counties between Sacramento County and Kern County and also includes portions of Sacramento County and El Dorado County at the north end and a portion of Kern County at the south end. The San Joaquin Basin is divisible into two hydrologic regions. The southern region is called the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region and the northern region is called the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region.

Visalia is within the Kaweah Groundwater Subbasin within the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region. The total surface area of the Kaweah Subbasin is 446,000 acres or 696 square miles. The Subbasin lies between the Kings Groundwater Subbasin on the north, the Tule Subbasin on the south, crystalline bedrock of the Sierra Nevada foothills on the east, and the Kings River Conservation District on the west. It generally comprises lands in the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District (KDWCD). Major rivers and streams in the subbasin include the Kaweah and St. Johns Rivers, with the former being the primary source of recharge in the area. Groundwater flow is generally southwestward. Small groundwater depressions occurred to the north and south of Visalia and at the northwest corner of the subbasin, and a groundwater mound was present in the central western subbasin during 1999. Based on current and historical groundwater elevation maps, horizontal groundwater barriers do not appear to exist in the subbasin.

Water Supply and Distribution System

The groundwater supply is primarily distributed by California Water Service Company, (Cal Water). However, not all water in the City is distributed by Cal Water, as there is at least one mutual water district located within city limits. Cal Water's Visalia District supply wells extract groundwater from the Kaweah Groundwater Subbasin. The Cal Water system includes 75 groundwater wells, about one third of which have auxiliary power for backup. There are 519 miles of main pipeline in the system, ranging in size from two inch diameter to 12 inch diameter. The Cal Water system includes two elevated 300,000 gallon storage tanks, an ion exchange treatment plant, four granular activated carbon filter plants and one nitrate blending facility. These facilities are in place to provide Cal Water's customers with safe drinking water of a quality and quantity to meet State and Federal drinking water standards.

In addition to the system serving the City of Visalia, Cal Water also operates three other small systems in the Visalia area, defined as Oak Ranch, (wells with distribution pipeline), Post Mitts (two wells with distribution pipeline), and Fairway (well with distribution pipeline). The Post Mitts system and the Fairway system recently were tied into the main distribution system and the Oak

Ranch system will be tied into the main distribution system before the end of 2010. These systems are within Cal Water’s Visalia District system, but are outside of Visalia city limits.

Cal Water operates as a private utility with rates to its customers set and regulated by the California Public Utility Commission. Cal Water’s drinking water must meet standards set by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and the California Safe Drinking Water Act. The California act authorizes the California Department of Public Health to protect the public from contaminants in drinking water by establishing maximum contaminants levels that are at least as stringent as those developed by the U.S. EPA. Cal Water operates within these federal and State requirements and must meet reporting and operating requirements as regulated by the California Department of Public Health.

The system serves an estimated population of 136,270 which could grow to 238,980 by 2030 according to the adopted “California Water Service Company, 2007 Urban Water Management Plan - Visalia District.” (UWMP) Cal Water estimates it is serving 39,205 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in 2010, with an expected growth to 61,404 customers by 2030.

According to the UWMP, Cal Water has an estimated capacity to pump 105,668 acre-feet per year in 2010, all from groundwater. This maximum pumping capacity is expected to remain relatively constant through 2030. The UWMP indicates the pumping capacity at this level will continue to keep up with the demand requirements through 2030 and beyond. The water volume projected to be pumped based on recent estimates of demand is 37,220 acre-feet per year for 2010. Cal Water’s recent estimates also indicate a relatively uniform growth rate of 57,364 acre-feet per year by the year 2030. Table 7-7 below shows the annual estimated demand for the mix of uses in the Cal Water System for the years 2010, 2020, and 2030.

Table 7-7: Estimated Water Demand by Land Use Type, 2010, 2020, 2030

Customer Type	Projected Number of Customers 2010	Projected Annual Demand (2010 Acre-feet)	Projected Number of Customers 2020	Projected Annual Demand 2020 (Acre-feet)	Projected Number of Customers 2030	Projected Annual Demand 2030 (Acre-feet)
Single Family Residential	34,498	24,324	44,160	31,137	55,165	38,896
Multi Family Residential	439	2216	562	2837	702	3544
Commercial	3547	4913	3954	5476	4407	6104
Industrial	68	926	76	1043	86	1175
Government	574	1670	734	2138	917	2671
Other	79	270	101	345	127	431
Unspecified	N/A	2900	N/A	3668	N/A	4542
Total	39,205	37,219	49,587	46,644	61,404	57,363

Source: Cal Water Submittal to the City of Visalia, April, 2010

As can be seen in Table 7-7, growth is expected in each of the service types with residential and government demand growing at more than twice the rate of the commercial and industrial sector. In fact, Cal Water projects 57 percent more service connections in 2030 compared to 2010, with overall demand expected to be 54 percent higher than 2010. Recent legislation requires a 20 percent reduction by 2020.

In general, the system is described as a looped water distribution system with deep wells spaced throughout a distribution pipeline grid system. The deep well and pipeline grid has expanded with the growth of the City. Because of the flat topography, the entire system is in one pressure zone, with wells spaced throughout the system. Modeling analysis done for the “Water Supply and Facilities Master Plan” indicate the grid system pipe sizes and well spacing have kept normal operating pressures in the system above 40 pounds per square inch (psi) and fire flow pressure residuals at fire hydrants above 20 psi.

Groundwater Quality

The quality of the groundwater that underlies the City is excellent for domestic and agricultural uses. This is due to the abundant snowmelt that originates in the Sierra Nevada. However, the 2005 Water Supply and Facilities Master Plan for the Visalia District documents several constituents of concern in groundwater in the area. These include:

- Nitrate (fertilizer/private sewage disposal);
- Volatile Organic Chemicals;
- MTBE (gasoline oxygenate);
- DBCP (pesticide used until 1977); and
- Pentachlorophenol (a wood preservative).

Because these constituents have been found in the area and have caused shutdown of some wells, the Water Supply and Facilities Master Plan recommends not drilling new wells within one-half mile of wells that have been affected in the past. More specifically, the Master Plan recommends that Cal Water not drill wells within certain sections of land.¹⁹

Water quality typically deteriorates west of Highway 99. In addition, groundwater has been contaminated in two areas by past industrial activities. Wood preservatives from a 1940s utility treatment pool contaminated groundwater at the southeast corner of Ben Maddox Way and Goshen Avenue. Groundwater contamination from toxic chemical solvents has occurred at several sites along Goshen Avenue in the vicinity of Shirk Road. However, groundwater from the treatment pool is considered to be contained on-site.

Specifically, the groundwater in the basin is generally of calcium bicarbonate type, with sodium bicarbonate waters near the western margin. Total dissolved solids (TDS) values range from 35 to 1,000 mg/L, with a typical range of 300 to 600 mg/L. The State Department of Health Services, which monitors water quality standards, reports TDS values in 153 wells ranging from 35 to 580 mg/L, with an average value of 189 mg/L. There are localized areas of high nitrate pollution on the eastern side of the basin. There is also high salinity water between Lindsay and Exeter.

The City and KDWCD have mutual interests in restoring and maintaining groundwater supplies and controlling flood water. The City and the district have worked on a number of projects in the past that benefit City and District interests. A significant Army Corps of Engineers flood control project, that also benefited water supply for the area, was the recently constructed spillway raising project at Terminus Dam. This project raised the spillway by 21 feet, thereby increasing water storage

¹⁹ In Goshen Area: T18S/R23E, the east half of both Section 24 and Section 25 and T18S/R24E, Sections 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, and 30. In Central Visalia Area: T18S/R24E, Sections 25, 26, 34, 35, and 36; T18S/R25E, Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32; T19S/R24E, Sections 1, 2, and 3; and T19S/R25E, Section 6.

capability behind the dam by thirty percent. The City, KDWCD, and other agencies in the area work together in the efficient handling and importation of surface water for the purpose of recharging the Kaweah Subbasin's groundwater. This effort helps offset declines in groundwater elevations. This practice should continue at increased levels.

Additionally, the City of Visalia has implemented a Groundwater Overdraft Mitigation Ordinance (VMC Chapter 16.54), which imposes a groundwater mitigation fee on new development and a groundwater impact fee on all residential, commercial, and industrial water suppliers. These fees are used by the City to construct and improve groundwater recharge facilities and to purchase water for groundwater recharge. As of August, the City has purchased and recharged over 6,000 AF of water in 2010. Recharge efforts are coordinated by the City with KDWCD and local irrigation districts.

Cal Water has been operating over the years based on the assumption that groundwater will continue to be pumped in an un-adjudicated groundwater basin. Based on their assessment of water supply reliability, Cal Water concluded in the 2007 UWMP that it will be able to supply its customers' full service demand in the future. The Kaweah Subbasin continues to be un-adjudicated at this time.

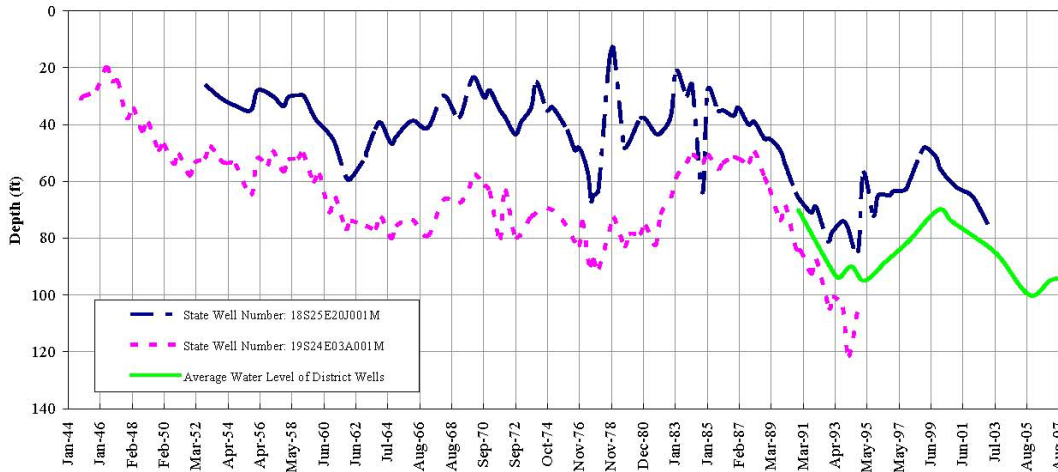
Future Supply Issues

However the water supply for the over-all San Joaquin Basin and the Tulare Lake Hydrologic Region is at increased risk of further degradation in today's regulatory environment. Though the UWMP indicates that groundwater will continue to be the sole source of water supply for Visalia in the foreseeable future, the next update to the UWMP may need to consider a change to this approach. There are several potential supply issues, described below.

There are a number of inactive wells in the Visalia District because of both mechanical problems and quality degradation of the underground supply. Cal Water has monitored the system over the years for quality as well as mechanical reliability and has taken the necessary corrective actions to keep the system operating within required standards for pressure, quantity, and quality. As the City considers future development updates for the General Plan Update that will increase water demand, especially for infill areas of the City, the inability to drill new deep wells within the sections of land where ground water quality is a concern will need to be taken into account. Larger transmission pipelines, with remote large volume deep wells, or construction of a surface water treatment plant are two alternatives that may need to be evaluated, in-lieu of drilling new wells within the restricted areas.

The Kaweah Sub-basin is considered to be in an overdraft condition on an average long term basis. The UWMP indicates groundwater elevations have declined up to 80 feet over a fifty year period. This is of concern for the area and the next update to the UWMP, due by 2012 or sooner, will need to address this issue. The City can use the UWMP update process to set water policy goals consistent with overall City goals; this issue should also be addressed in the General Plan Update. **Figure 7-5**, from the UWMP shows the downward trend in groundwater depths for the Cal Water System.

Figure 7-5: Groundwater Depth



The Department of Water Resources monitors groundwater levels all over the state of California. Water level changes were evaluated by quarter township and computed through a custom computer program using geostatistics. On average, the subbasin water level has declined about 12 feet from 1970 to 2000. The period from 1970 to 1978 showed steep declines totaling about 25 feet. The ten year period from 1978 to 1988 saw stabilization and rebound of about 50 feet, bringing water levels above the 1970 water level by about 25 feet. 1988 through 1995 again showed steep declines, bottoming out in 1995 at nearly 35 feet below the 1970 level. Water levels then rose about 22 feet from 1996 to 2000, bringing water levels to approximately 12 feet below 1970 levels.

Estimations of the total storage capacity of the subbasin and the amount of water in storage as of 1995 were calculated using an estimated specific yield of 10.8 percent and water levels collected by the State. According to these calculations, the total storage capacity of this subbasin is estimated to be 15.4 million acre-feet to a depth of 300 feet and 107 million acre-feet to the base of fresh groundwater.

Natural recharge is estimated to be 62,400 acre feet on an annual basis. Artificial recharge was not determined for all entities, but through its overdraft mitigation efforts, the City has recharged 6,000 AF thus far in 2010. There is approximately 286,000 acre feet applied water recharge into the subbasin. Subsurface inflow was not determined. Annual urban and agricultural extraction is estimated to be 58,800 acre feet and 699,000 acre feet respectively.

Based on past groundwater level data and recharge rates, the basin’s water supply is expected to continue to fluctuate. However, as population continues to grow, and farming practices continue at the current rate, groundwater levels will decline unless recharge is increased.

This increase in depth to groundwater is not just a municipal supply issue. As irrigation surface water supplies shrink in the surrounding farming areas, irrigation practices will become more dependent on groundwater pumping. Groundwater levels in Visalia and the surrounding areas in all directions are expected to be affected negatively. A reduction in surface water delivered to the area will cause a shift in water sources irrigation practices. This will likely cause an increase in groundwater pumping and could reduce the amount of land being farmed in the Central Valley.

Specifically, reductions in available surface water supplies to the region have occurred as a result of settlement of the flow and fishery issues involving the San Joaquin River and the Friant Division of

the Central Valley Project. These issues include recent court actions to protect Delta Smelt and Winter Run Salmon. It is anticipated that actions to help the Delta Smelt and Salmon will reduce supplies to the region including an impact on the Kaweah Subbasin. A percentage reduction to the Kaweah Subbasin is not yet known, though losses of fifteen to twenty percent of historic volumes of surface water diverted into the region are anticipated.

This risk will need to be taken into account with the next UWMP update. The City has already adopted numerous policies to reduce water demand through conservation and other means and to increase surface water imports to the City and surrounding areas. These include the Groundwater Overdraft Mitigation Ordinance and the Water Conservation Ordinance (VMC Chapter 13.20). Further, the City employs water conservation staff whose function is to educate the public regarding conservation and enforce the Conservation Ordinance. Cal Water has also been empowered by the City to enforce the ordinance.

The City, along with Cal Water, should consider a goal of long term sustainability of groundwater supply used by the Visalia District and other groundwater users within the City. The long term sustainability and reliability of the local groundwater to maintain existing uses and allow for planned growth is critical for Visalia. Furthermore, the State has had a continuing interest in groundwater control measures. This could develop into some form of groundwater regulation or adjudication for the area. Regulations that restrict groundwater pumping and/or an area-wide well tax are possible consequences.

Conservation

A factor that will encourage conservation and potentially reduce water demand for the area is a new State law requiring a 20 percent reduction in urban per capita water use in California by December 31, 2020. The law requires urban retail suppliers, such as Cal Water, to develop urban water use requirements. Cal Water has a water conservation program for Visalia that includes:

- Residential Water Use Survey Program;
- Residential High-Efficiency Toilet Rebate Program;
- Conservation Kit Program;
- Large Landscape Monthly Water Use & Survey Program;
- Large Landscape Rebate Program;
- Public Information Program; and
- School Education Program.

More information on these programs is available on the Cal Water web site at www.calwater.com. In addition to the programs listed above, Cal Water is in the process of converting its non-metered flat rate costumers to metered service connections.

Additionally, the City has adopted the State-mandated Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance. As over 60 percent of municipal water is used for landscaping, reducing of landscape irrigation is critical to reducing Visalia's overall water demand.

The City is also developing a recycled water system. Over time as water becomes more valuable, with shrinking supplies and increasing demand, this type of system may become more and more important. Currently, the City plans to use recycled water for irrigation of City facilities, including Plaza Park and Valley Oaks Golf Course, but plans to trade most of the water with a local irrigation district in exchange for upstream water to be used for groundwater recharge. Future phases of the

recycled water system could greatly expand the use of recycled water and directly affect reductions in groundwater pumping for irrigation of landscaping. It will be important to cooperatively work with Cal Water and other water users in the area. These are all measures that will help conserve water and avoiding groundwater pumping from a limited resource.

Treated surface water used for municipal purposes is generally more expensive to deliver than groundwater pumped from a deep well. However, surface water treatment and delivery is one of the best ways to directly reduce groundwater pumping and therefore reduce the groundwater overdraft this area is experiencing. This alternative may become necessary over time as ground water depths increase. A large water treatment plant would affect Cal Water's distribution system with the need for larger transmission mains, which are presently not in the distribution system. Also, a reliable and steady surface water supply would be an additional challenge.

Even with an aggressive conservation program, the City will need to look for additional ways to balance groundwater usage against an increasing demand and decreasing importation of water to the groundwater basin. The City will need to continue to use surface water for recharging of groundwater and look for increased surface water sources. The City also needs to work with Cal Water to evaluate the potential for using treated water from the City's WCP to maximize the positive groundwater benefits.

Wastewater Treatment

The City owns and operates a Water Conservation Plant (WCP), located west of Highway 99 and south of Highway 198. Presently, the WCP's permitted capacity established by the Regional Water Quality Control Board is 20 million gallons per day. As of the beginning of 2010, the plant operates at an average daily flow of 13 million gallons per day with effluent treated to a secondary treatment level, disinfected then discharged into Mill Creek and/or stored in basins owned by the City. Currently, the treated effluent from the WCP is discharged to Mill Creek under Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R5-2006-0091, issued by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region. Among other requirements, this order limits the WCP discharge to an average flow of 20 million gallons per day, which is 2 million gallons per day below the rated capacity of the existing treatment plant. The order further requires that the ammonia concentration in the discharge be reduced to 0.025 mg/L by March 25, 2011.

To avoid these limitations, which are expected to become even more stringent in the future, the City has plans to discontinue the discharge to Mill Creek and divert the plant discharge to City owned Basin No. 4. Basin 4 is a 160 acre settling basin located several miles west of the WCP. In addition, while there is no limitation at this time for the nitrogen concentration in the WCP discharge for disposal by percolation, it is expected that such limitation will be imposed on the City in the near future. Therefore, the upgrade of the WCP's wastewater treatment processes also include denitrification of the plant effluent.

As mentioned above, in recent years, the water demand of the city has rapidly increased and resulted in overdraft of the city's groundwater basin. Therefore, recycling and reuse of the Water Conservation Plant effluent is a part of the City's plan to reduce its demand for water. The Visalia Water Conservation Plant 2008 Master Plan identified the potential of recycled water reuse for irrigation of the Valley Oaks Golf Course, Highway 99 and 198 interchange and the local airport. Potential for recycled water reuse was further identified for irrigation of additional parks and agricultural lands within the City as well as a water exchange with the Tulare Irrigation District. The City intends to upgrade the Visalia Water Conservation Plant to produce recycled water suitable for the identified reuses in conformance with State regulation with a plant capacity of 22 million gallon per day. The capacity of the plant could be expanded further to 26 million gallons per day. These

capacity levels will require further evaluation as proposed development is considered with the General Plan Update.

Sewer Collection System

The Sewer System Master Plan for the City was completed in February 1994. The Citywide system was divided into eight service areas based on proposed and existing sewer trunklines. The proposed improvements in the Sewer System Master Plan were also divided according to three growth rings established for the 2020 Land Use Element of the General Plan. The City has used this information to aid in the development of its Capital Improvement Program for sanitary sewer facilities in subsequent years. **Figure 7-6** displays the current sewer collection system. The City has, in the last several years, done additional follow up analysis as growth patterns have changed since 1994. Therefore, the Sewer Master Plan is relatively up to date. It is anticipated that some adjustments will be needed as proposed changes in land use are considered and adopted.

Anticipated issues that will need to be addressed include the need to analyze and upgrade the Sewer System Master Plan to accommodate higher development densities within existing areas. For instance, the Downtown area has been a recent focus in this regard, with modeling and analysis done using proposed higher population densities. This has led to a decision to increase the size of the Mineral King Avenue trunkline through the Downtown area. Other areas that are proposed for higher densities will need to be analyzed in a similar manner with similar results.

Additional water conservation measures will likely cause reductions in average daily flows to the WCP. This will help delay the need for future expansions of the Water Conservation Plant and give the City potentially more flexibility in determining the types of development it deems appropriate. However, experience has shown that peak flows in the sewer collection system have not come down significantly. Peak flow is a key parameter in sizing of sewer trunk lines. Therefore, this will need to be taken into account as increased densities are proposed.

Because the City's Sewer Master Plan Model is fairly up to date, further analysis may be done efficiently, as proposed development patterns and densities are considered during the planning process rather than waiting for adoption of the General Plan.

7.6 Stormwater Management

The City's 1994 Storm Water Master Plan identified required facilities to accommodate "build-out" to the 2020 development boundary. This plan was updated from a prior plan adopted in 1989 with a very similar design basis, but an expanded urban development boundary. The Master Plan identified waterways through the City that convey storm water toward the southwest into a number of large basins on the west side of the city. **Figure 7-7** shows the City's storm drainage system.

The 1994 Master Plan established tributary areas for seven waterways, plus the Goshen Drain. The main drains identified in the Master Plan included the St Johns River, Modoc Ditch, Goshen Drain, Mill Creek, Evans Ditch, Packwood Creek, Cameron Creek, and Persian/Watson ditches. The proposed system takes street and lot drainage into a storm drain pipeline system that is directed generally by gravity and augmented with lift pumps toward the main drain system. The system relies on detention basins and several retention basins to slow and divert storm water for larger storms. This allows the creeks and ditches to convey storm water both during and after a storm and permits the existing creek and ditch system to handle larger storms than would otherwise be the case.

The creeks and ditches used for storm water conveyance also convey irrigation flows. The City has a number of agreements with agencies and companies that use these facilities for irrigation deliveries. The agreements set requirements and limitations on each of the parties for use of these creeks and

ditches. These agreements will need to be taken into account as changes are considered to the General Plan.

The City, in conjunction with Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, continues to develop ways to increase groundwater recharge capabilities. These efforts include use of the City's existing storm water basins as surface water layoff basins for groundwater recharge. Some of this effort is discussed in a document called "Phase I Storm Water Master Plan, City of Visalia," prepared for the City and Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District in December 2005. Shared use of facilities including creeks and ditches through the city, as well as upstream basins and downstream basins, are discussed and proposed for dual use to the benefit of both groundwater recharge and storm water protection. The Phase II portion of the Storm Water Master Plan will need to take the Phase I recommendations into account as the extent of proposed improvements are evaluated in conjunction with the General Plan update.

The adopted Storm Water Master Plan indicates direct connection of many storm drain pipelines to creeks and ditches. The Master Plan was adopted before more restrictive measures were required. Because of flat topography, the direct discharge concept in many cases has not been practical and therefore has not been implemented in as many places as was originally proposed. At this point, the City has a goal of not allowing direct new connection to creeks and ditches although there are some exceptions in existing developed areas, where there are no other options.

It is expected that over time, storm water treatment measures will become more important. Low Impact Design measures are already being proposed in some areas of the city, and this will likely be replicated to some degree throughout the city with increased demand for higher quality storm water discharge and the need to reduce storm water impacts with higher density development.

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7.7 Solid Waste Generation and Disposal

In 1989, Assembly Bill 939, known as the Integrated Waste Management Act, was passed because of the increase in waste stream and the decrease in landfill capacity. AB 939 required jurisdictions to meet solid waste diversion goals of 25 percent by 1995 and 50 percent by 2000. In 2009, AB 737 amended the Integrated Waste Management Act to require CalRecycle to adopt programs to increase statewide diversion to 75 percent by 2020. AB 737 also addresses recycling in the largely under-served commercial sector.

Regionally, the Tulare County Resource Management Agency manages solid waste disposal in accordance with the Tulare County Integrated Waste Management Plan. Programs include household hazardous waste disposal, electronics recycling, tire recovery, yard waste recycling, metal recycling and appliance recovery programs. The county landfills approximately 300,000 tons of waste per year, which is equivalent to about 5 pounds per person per day or one ton per county resident per year. The county operates three landfills: the Visalia Landfill, northwest of Visalia; the Woodville Landfill, southeast of Tulare; and the Teapot Dome Landfill, southwest of Porterville. The county also operates seven transfer stations. These transfer stations are located in rural areas for the convenience of the people who live near them and these facilities do not accept large volumes of waste. The county does not provide waste collection services.

Locally, Sunset Waste Systems provides solid waste collection and/or recyclable material processing services to several municipalities and commercial enterprises located throughout Fresno, Kern, Tulare and Kings counties, including the cities and jurisdictions of Fresno, Visalia, Sanger, Reedley, Delano, Woodlake, Biola, Lindsay, the Lemoore Naval Air Station, and unincorporated Fresno and Kings counties. The City of Visalia is contracted with Sunset Waste and pays Sunset Waste to provide recyclable material processing (not green waste). The City of Visalia provides all of the collection services for residential customers and for many of the commercial customers. Various private haulers provide refuse, recycling, C&D and green waste to the remainder of the commercial accounts, along with providing those services for construction sites and other cleanup jobs.

The City provides split containers for residential trash and recycling, and green waste containers for residential green waste and compostable materials. The City also actively encourages commercial recycling and provides refuse, green waste and recycling bins or boxes to the commercial accounts it services. As of 2006, Visalia also has a construction and demolition debris recycling and reuse plan requirement.

The Consolidated Waste Management Authority is a joint powers authority that is recognized by the State and collectively manages the solid waste recycling and diversion activities for 8 local area members including Tulare County, Tulare, Visalia, Dinuba, Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay and Porterville. The Consolidated Waste Management Authority has continued to improve its diversion rate as established by the State. The State recently changed its diversion calculation method from a percentage of waste diverted from the landfill to a calculation of pounds per person per day (PPD) that goes to the landfills. Most recent data shows that the CWMA has a base rate to achieve of 6.2 PPD, and the CWMA has been able to successfully achieve an annual PPD significantly lower than the benchmark established by the State. In 2008 the CWMA achieved a diversion rate of 5.2 PPD, and in 2009 lowered it even further to 4.4PPD.

Table 7-8 shows the collection efforts of the City of Visalia and a comparable PPD calculation.

Table 7-8: Waste and Recyclables Collected by the City of Visalia

Year	Total Waste Tonnage Collected	Population	PPD ¹
2009	70,844.22	123,670	3.1
2008	72,917.29	120,958	3.3
2007	79,614.62	117,138	3.7
2006	81,758.65	110,488	4.1

1. Calculated as pounds of waste per year/365/population.

Source: City of Visalia, 2010

Visalia waste collection efforts indicate that the City’s recycling rate calculated as PPD is consistently decreasing year to year, and is consistently below the PPD calculated for the CWMA (note that there is no established benchmark for the City of Visalia so a determination cannot be made as to whether or not the City of Visalia is meeting State goals for diversion on its own).

In an effort to increase the recycling and reuse participation rate in the city, Visalia very recently inaugurated a household compost collection program. According to an article in the *Visalia Times-Delta*, in July 2010, about 6,000 homes along four waste-collection routes received brochures describing common kitchen leftovers—including pizza boxes and hamburger wrappers—that may be placed in the new green-waste containers. In subsequent months, more homes (about 4,000 at a time) will be notified of the waste diversion effort, and the City expects it will take six to eight months to roll out the program to all households. The City is hoping to achieve an additional 20 percent participation rate once this program is fully and correctly implemented.

7.8 Issues and Planning Implications

The provision of adequate public facilities and services to residents and businesses is a key role that cities play, and the General Plan provides the framework for doing so. By and large, the City of Visalia has done a very good job in service provision, and maintained fiscal stability at the same time. Residents who participated in the outreach efforts recognized the City's accomplishments and provided their opinions on what facilities and services they would like to see expanded.

Emerging Themes

For the General Plan, policies and programs will be based upon the themes identified in this research, interviews with City staff and other service providers, and public input:

- Cure existing deficiencies. Some public facilities and services are currently experiencing deficiencies, in funding for ongoing maintenance, failure to meet current standards, or even residents' desires and expectations. Despite having added capacity in recent years, the Visalia Unified School District still has nearly 8,600 inadequately housed students per State standards. Similarly, new parks have been developed and are extremely popular amongst residents, but some older neighborhoods are underserved and still lack adequate access to neighborhood park facilities.
- Meet future needs. New residents and businesses will put increased demand on all public facilities and services, from schools and parks to sewer capacity. New facilities, such as police substations and fire stations, will likely be needed; their locations must be coordinated with the location and intensity of new growth. Existing service standards should be analyzed and revised, if necessary. In some cases, such as potable water provision, concerted efforts must be made at a system-wide level to ensure the continued availability of resources over the next 20 years.
- Emphasize conservation, reuse, and recycling. Many sections in this document touch on the importance of Visalia's natural resources, environmental stewardship, and conservation. These concerns are highly relevant to the provision of public services, particularly regarding water use and reuse, waste management, and parks and open space dedication. Visalia's new General Plan will take an integrated approach to achieving sustainability goals, of which efficient provision of services and use of resources will be an important part.
- Partner with providers to ensure high quality and efficient service. The City already has several successful partnerships with other agencies and external service providers, such as the School District, that enable it to share resources and efficiently provide for its residents. Over the next 20 years, the City should maintain and expand these working relationships and look for new opportunities to work with other agencies such as Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, Cal Water and the County in ways that support the City's planning goals.

Planning Implications

For public facilities and services, the General Plan Update will seek to address existing deficiencies, identify the service needs of new residential and employment growth, and provide these services in the most efficient, environmentally sound, and economical way possible. Beyond merely identifying needs and setting standards, the plan will also outline strategies for implementation, so that the City's fiscal stability is maintained and costs are spread amongst users, developers, and the City itself.

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