

3.1 Land Use

This section presents the environmental setting and impact analysis of land use in the Visalia Planning Area. Effects on nearby land uses created by other potential effects of the proposed Plan, such as noise and air quality, are addressed in those sections.

Environmental Setting

PHYSICAL SETTING

The City of Visalia is located in northwestern Tulare County, north of the City of Tulare and west of the City of Farmersville, in California's Central Valley. The City of Hanford, in Kings County, lies 12 miles to the west. Most of the remaining land uses surrounding the city are agricultural in nature. In 2010, the population of Visalia was 124,440, making it the largest city in Tulare County. The city covers an area of approximately 36 square miles, and its boundaries are depicted on **Figure 2.2-1** in the Project Description. The Planning Area used in the General Plan covers a total of 90 square miles as defined by the Urban Area Boundary, and includes the Urban Development Boundary and Urban Growth Boundary.

Highway 198, which serves as an important regional connection to Sequoia National Park and the Sierras, passes east-west through the center of the city, while Highway 99 runs north-south two miles from the western edge of the city. Highway 63 passes north-south through the center of the city. The city is also served by transit, including the Visalia City Coach (VCC) and Tulare County Area Transit (TCAT). Amtrak connects to Visalia via a bus service from the train station in Hanford. Additionally, the city is served by the Visalia Municipal Airport, which is located at the city's western edge, along Highway 99. Several creeks, rivers, and canals run through and adjacent to the city, including the St. Johns River, which forms the northeast border of the city. Mill, Packwood, and Cameron creeks run east-west through the city.

Existing Land Use

The existing land use pattern is shown in **Figure 3.1-1** and summarized in **Table 3.1-1**. Agriculture is the most prominent land use located within the Planning Area, occupying 39,518 acres or 65 percent of the land. Most of the agricultural land in the Planning Area is located on the borders of the city on all sides outside of the city limits. Over 90 percent of the agricultural land in the Planning Area is outside of current city limits, but there are notable pockets of land under active cultivation even inside the incorporated area, which total approximately 2,800 acres.

Low Density Residential (ranging from two to seven units per acre) occupies 6,640 acres or 11 percent of land in the Planning Area, the majority of which is located in the central part of the

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city, north and south of Highway 198. Rural Residential makes up 4,104 acres or 7 percent of the land within the Planning Area and is located on the borders of the city on all sides. The Planning Area also includes 2,917 acres of vacant land, or five percent of the land use. Vacant land consists of a wide range of parcel sizes, from small infill sites less than an acre in size in the older sections of the city, to larger sites of 10 acres or more. Vacant land is scattered throughout the Planning Area, but sites are often clustered, such as those along Goshen Avenue east and west of Ben Mad-dox; near Houston Avenue, Goshen Avenue, and Demaree Street; in the northwest industrial area; and in north Visalia where subdivisions are not complete.

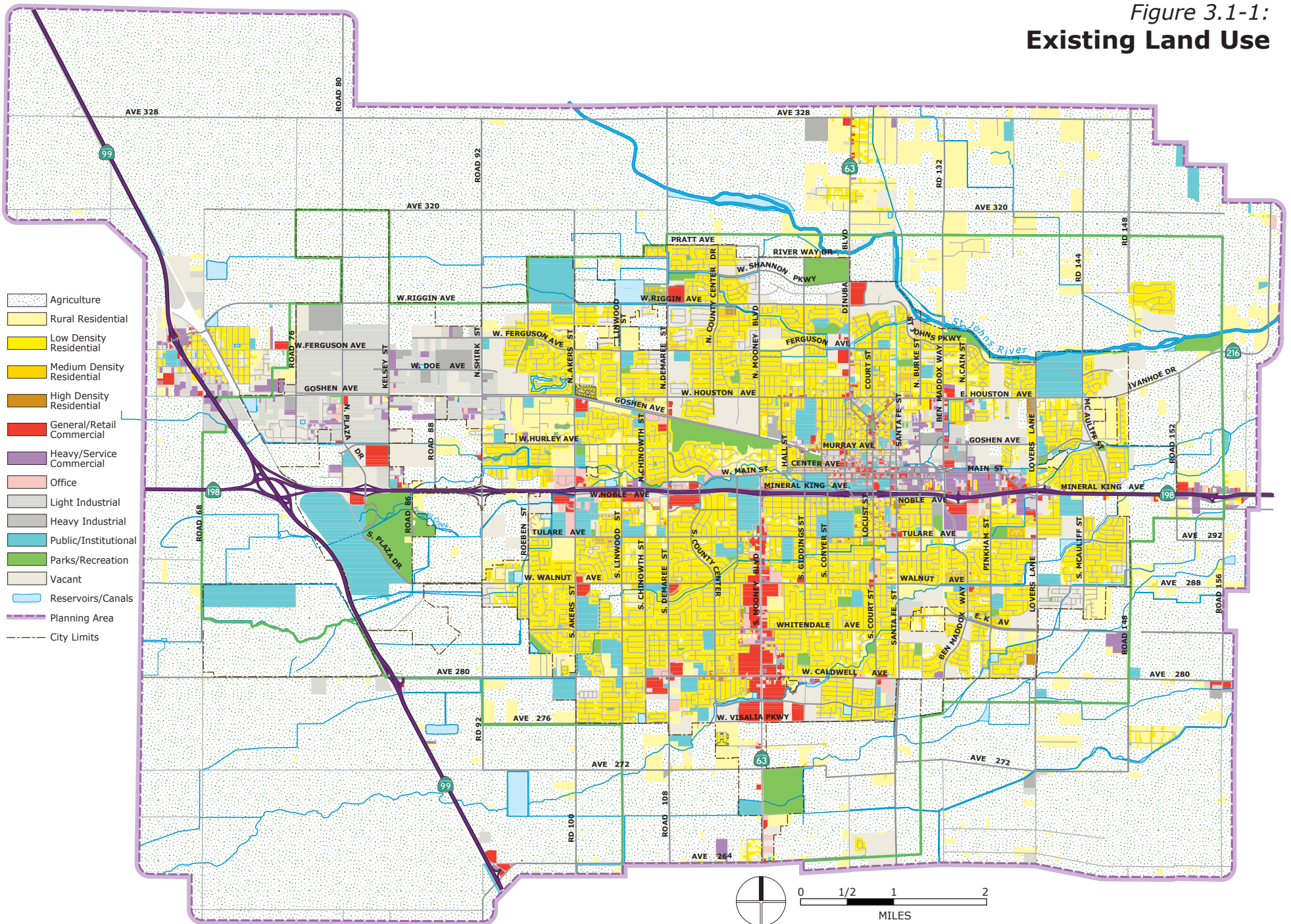
Table 3.1-1: Existing Land Use

Land Use	Inside City Limits		Outside City Limits		Total Planning Area	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Total Acres	Percent of Total
Agriculture	2,778	15%	36,739	88%	39,518	65%
Low Density Residential	6,289	33%	351	1%	6,640	11%
Rural Residential	1,430	8%	2,675	6%	4,104	7%
Vacant	2,262	12%	656	2%	2,917	5%
Public/Institutional	1,554	8%	406	1%	1,960	3%
Light Industrial	1,180	6%	291	1%	1,471	2%
Parks and Recreation	1,108	6%	53	0%	1,161	2%
General Retail/Commercial	723	4%	79	0%	801	1%
Service Commercial	343	2%	197	0%	540	1%
Office	338	2%	12	0%	351	1%
Heavy Industrial	233	1%	66	0%	299	0%
Medium Density Residential	262	1%	2	0%	264	0%
Right of Way	148	1%	106	0%	254	0%
Canal	34	0%	171	0%	205	0%
Water	163	1%	23	0%	186	0%
High Density Residential	126	1%	1	0%	127	0%
Railroad	46	0%	45	0%	91	0%
Total	19,017¹	100%	41,872	100%	60,889	100%

¹ Land use total inside city limits excludes area of roadways, which add approximately 4,136 acres, for a total of 23,153 acres, or approximately 36 square miles within city limits.

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2010

Figure 3.1-1:
Existing Land Use



Two types of commercial areas combine to make up 1,341 acres or 2 percent of the total Planning Area. Around 60 percent is General Retail/Commercial uses, such as grocery stores, personal service establishments, neighborhood shopping centers, restaurants, etc. The remaining 40 percent is Service Commercial, consisting of uses such as automotive services and fast food establishments. In general, commercial uses are concentrated along the city's major corridors: Highway 198, Mooney Boulevard, and Goshen Avenue. Pockets of smaller, neighborhood-serving commercial establishments are scattered throughout otherwise residential areas. Downtown Visalia also hosts many commercial establishments, mixed in with office and residential uses.

Land used for Office space makes up 351 acres or 1 percent of the land within the Planning Area, concentrated on Main Street as well as scattered throughout many parts of the city. Industrial land in Visalia is concentrated in the northwest, and consists of a mix of Light and Heavy Industrial uses, totaling 1,770 acres or 3 percent. Light Industry makes up the majority of the existing industrial uses (85 percent) and consists of operations such as warehousing, distribution, research and development, and limited manufacturing; versus Heavy Industry, which includes more intense manufacturing and processing operations. A smaller concentration of industrial uses is also found east of downtown, along Ben Maddox Way and Goshen Avenue.

Agricultural Land Use

Farmland is the most prominent land use in the Planning Area, and agriculture has been and continues to be an important contributor to Visalia's economy and character. The region contains rich soils, available water, good geography, and climatic conditions that allow farms to be highly productive. Agricultural land use and impacts to agriculture are discussed in Section 3.5, Agriculture and Soils.

Population and Housing

Demographic data for the City of Visalia is shown in **Table 3.1-2**. According to the 2010 US Census, the city had a population of 124,440 in 2010. In 2010, there were 43,900 housing units, out of which 18 percent were multi-family units and 80 percent were single-family units, with a 5.5 percent residential vacancy rate.

Table 3.1-2: Demographic Data

<i>Demographic</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2010¹</i>
Population		
<i>Persons</i>	116,306	124,440
<i>Households</i>	37,946	41,500
<i>Persons per Household¹</i>	3.1	3.0
Housing Units ¹	43,432 ²	43,900
Jobs	51,500	65,900

1. 2010 Data is from US Census

2. Number of Housing Units for 2009.

Source: American Community Survey; Tulare County Association of Governments, California Employment Development Department; Economic & Planning Systems, Inc., 2010.

Table 3.1-3 summarizes the growth projections that were used to guide development of the proposed Plan. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG), develops population and employment projections for Tulare County and each jurisdiction in the county for use in the development of the countywide Regional Transportation Plan and housing projections, per State law. The demographic projections developed by TCAG in 2009 indicated that Visalia would grow by about 2.6 percent annually between 2010 and 2030 to reach a population of 210,000 in 2030. During the same span of time, TCAG projected that the number of households will grow at about the same pace as population. The number of jobs was projected to increase by about 1.7 percent annually between 2010 and 2030, reaching a total of approximately 91,424 in 2030.

While these projections served as a guideline for developing the proposed General Plan land use map and buildout scenario, the actual buildout numbers in the proposed Plan vary somewhat from these original projections, based on City policy decisions and other factors.

Table 3.1-3: TCAG Projections for the City of Visalia (2010-2030)*

Year	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2010-2030 Growth		
						Change	Per- cent	Annual Percent
Population	142,079	155,119	174,259	190,900	210,000	65,503	46%	2.6%
Households	50,261	55,111	62,506	68,662	74,855	24,594	49%	2.0%
Employment								
<i>Agriculture</i>	702	659	601	561	524	-178	-25%	-1.5%
<i>Education</i>	4,565	5,294	6,188	6,948	7,734	3,169	69%	2.7%
<i>Government</i>	6,500	6,841	7,274	7,642	8,075	1,575	24%	1.1%
<i>Industrial</i>	12,296	13,439	14,898	16,167	17,741	5,445	44%	1.8%
<i>Office</i>	4,701	5,083	5,491	5,851	6,344	1,643	35%	1.5%
<i>Retail</i>	11,183	12,281	13,447	13,891	15,525	4,342	39%	1.7%
<i>Service</i>	25,957	28,067	30,693	32,967	35,481	9,524	37%	1.6%
Total Employment		71,664	78,592	84,027	91,424	25,520	39%	1.7%

*Note: Includes Adjacent unincorporated areas outside the city, such as Goshen.

Source: Tulare County Association of Governments, 2009; Economic & Planning Systems, Inc., 2009.

Recent and Approved Development

As of late 2011, there were 6,451 housing units in the development pipeline in Visalia, in a combination of tentative and final maps. Of these, 85 percent were single-family units and 15 percent were multi-family units. These residential pipeline projects total approximately 1,740 acres.

In addition, 17 non-residential development projects were also in various stages of permitting and development. These projects include 437,000 square feet of commercial uses, 139,000 square feet of office uses, 511,000 square feet of industrial uses, and 185,000 square feet of public/institutional uses, on a total of 155 acres. It is estimated that these projects, when completed, could create some 2,300 jobs in Visalia.

REGULATORY SETTING

The regulatory setting includes federal and State agencies and laws, local regulatory bodies, and local control mechanisms guiding land use decisions.

State Regulations

State Planning Law

State law [California Government Code Section 65300 et seq.] requires each California municipality to prepare a general plan. A general plan is defined as “a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning.” State requirements call for general plans that “comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.” While allowing considerable flexibility, State planning laws do establish some requirements for the issues that general plans must address. The California Gov-

ernment Code establishes both the required content of general plans and rules for their adoption and subsequent amendment. Together, State law and judicial decisions establish three overall guidelines for general plans:

- **The General Plan Must Be Comprehensive.** This requirement has two aspects. First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. That is, it must apply throughout the entire incorporated area and it should include other areas that the City determines are relevant to its planning. Second, the general plan must address the full range of issues that affect the City's physical development.
- **The General Plan Must Be Internally Consistent.** This requirement means that the general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. "Horizontal" consistency applies both to figures and diagrams as well as general plan text. It applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of the general plan, whether required by State law or not, have equal legal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element.
- **The General Plan Must Be Long-Range.** Because anticipated development will affect the City and the people who live or work there for years to come, State law requires every general plan to take a long-term perspective.

Department of Housing and Community Development

The State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is responsible for determining the regional housing need for all jurisdictions in California and ensuring the availability of affordable housing for all income groups.

LAFCO Municipal Service Review

State Government Code Sections 56425 and 56430 require that when the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) updates a Sphere of Influence (SOI), a Municipal Service Review (MSR) must be prepared. The MSR must consider growth and population projections for the affected area; present and planned presence of public facilities and adequacy of public infrastructure in place to serve the new growth; financial ability of relevant agencies to provide services; accountability of community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies; and any other matter related to effective and efficient service delivery, as required by LAFCO policy.

Local Control Mechanisms

Visalia General Plan

The current Visalia General Plan (comprehensively updated in 1991, with subsequent technical updates and amendments) is a document required under State law to address issues related to physical development and conservation of resources. Specifically, the General Plan has the following key purposes:

- Establish a long-range vision that reflects the aspirations of the community and outlines steps to achieve this vision;

- Establish long-range development policies that will guide the Community Development Department, Public Works Department, Finance Department, Police Department, Fire Department, Parks Department, and City Council in decision-making;
- Provide a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with plan policies;
- Reflect Visalia’s current planning and economic development efforts;
- Plan in a manner that improves the quality of life for the whole community and meets future land needs based on the projected population and job growth;
- Allow City departments, other public agencies, and private developers to design projects that will preserve and enhance community character and environmental resources, promote sustainability, and minimize hazards; and
- Provide the basis for establishing detailed plans and implementation programs, such as the zoning and subdivision regulations, specific and master plans, and the Capital Improvement Program.

The elements contained in the current Visalia General Plan include: Land Use; Circulation; Housing; Conservation, Open Space, Recreation and Parks; Noise; Safety; Historic Preservation; Seismic Safety; and Scenic Highways.

Specific Plans

Specific plans are guided by General Plan policies and go further to establish detailed land use and development intensity, circulation, public facilities and services, infrastructure, and financing issues and policies for small sections of the city.

Northeast Area Specific Plan

The Northeast Area Specific Plan (1988) covers 1,633 acres of land, mostly northeast of the intersection of Houston Avenue and Santa Fe Street, and mostly northeast of Mineral King Avenue and Lovers Lane, up to St. John’s River and including a portion of land southwest of the intersection of the two roads. The City Council and Planning Commission set the objectives of emphasizing detached single-family development, reducing large area multi-family designations, and eliminating “sewer allocations” for assigning densities on individual parcels, and maintaining density control by zoning.

Demaree/Caldwell Specific Plan

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

The Specific Plan identifies five sub-areas. The two sub-areas at the southwest and southeast corners of Demaree and Caldwell, covering approximately 37 acres, are slated for community retail development. Two sub-areas along the east side of Demaree, with approximately 17 acres between them, are slated for “garden office” development. High density residential development is identified for the fifth sub-area, covering just under nine acres on the west side of Demaree. Altogether,

the Plan provides for 406,000 square feet of retail floor area, 181,000 square feet of office space, and 147 housing units.

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

Caldwell 51 Specific Plan

The Caldwell 51 Specific Plan (1990) covers an area of 55 acres, bound by Caldwell Avenue on the north, West Street on the east, Cameron Avenue on the south, and Stonebrook Avenue on the west. Land uses anticipated in the plan include regional commercial, professional office, and low and medium density residential. The Caldwell 51 Specific Plan also includes plans for the extension of Cameron Avenue (east/west) and an extension of Stonebrook Street (north/south) at the South Packwood Creek Specific Plan's eastern boundary.

South Packwood Creek Specific Plan

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

According to the South Packwood Creek Specific Plan, development would occur in two phases. In the first five years, some 680,000 square feet of regional commercial space would be developed on 76 acres on both sides of Mooney Boulevard, including a home improvement store and two other large regional retailers. An additional 320,000 square feet of commercial development would take place over the next 15 years on land to the east. The project includes improvements to Mooney Boulevard, and development of new arterial, collector, and local road segments, as well as utilities.

As of this writing, Phase 1 development is complete, and Phase 2 development is underway, with a new Costco store and the improvement of several roadways, including Visalia Parkway.

The Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan

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

The Specific Plan details a retail development project on 20 acres of the site, featuring approximately 230,000 square feet of retail floor area, anchored by a Lowe's Home Improvement Center. A finished pad for a 52,000 square foot grocery remains unbuilt. Two small office buildings totaling 9,500 square feet and 78 units of multi-family housing would be built later.

Orchard Walk Specific Plan

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

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

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

Plans from Surrounding Jurisdictions and Other Agencies

Tulare County General Plan

In 2012, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors approved the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update. The Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update provides comprehensive, long-term plan for the future land use and physical development of the County through the year 2030. The Plan promotes healthy sustainable growth while protecting agricultural lands by directing growth to urban areas. The General Plan Update consists of policies that set forth objectives, principles and standards that guide future land use decisions within the County.

Tulare County Resource Management Agency staff has been working on the General Plan Update since 2003. During the update process a series of 19 workshops, 11 Board of Supervisors meetings, 12 technical advisory committee meetings and four joint Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission meetings were held to discuss, review, recommend and provide public input.

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

Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission

Under State law, each county must have a local agency formation commission (LAFCO), which is the agency that has the responsibility to create orderly local government boundaries, with the goals of encouraging the orderly formation of local governmental agencies and the preservation of open space lands, and discouraging urban sprawl. The Tulare County LAFCO's responsibilities include coordinating timely changes in local governmental boundaries, conducting special studies that review ways to reorganize, simplify, and streamline governmental structure, and preparing

Spheres of Influence for each city and special district within each county. The Commission's efforts are directed to seeing that services are provided efficiently and economically while agricultural and open-space lands are protected.¹

Goshen Community Plan

Goshen is a small, unincorporated community located within the City's planning area, located along Highway 99 and the Southern Pacific Railroad. A community plan for Goshen was completed by the county in 1978. The Plan's focus is on improvements to the physical environment, public services, and land use policies, and is intended to accommodate development over a 20-year period. The Plan recognizes the potential for Goshen to attract highway-oriented commercial development, and industrial development, relating to the strong links to transportation and the surrounding agricultural area. It also identifies Goshen's key challenges: noise impacts from take-offs and landings at the Visalia airport; the dilapidated quality of much of the community's housing; and the limited connections across Highway 99 and the railroad, which break the community into separate parts.

The Plan calls for directing Goshen's residential growth to the northeast, away from the airport impact area. The elementary school would be relocated to this new area, and a small community commercial district would be created along Avenue 308 to serve Goshen residents. Further industrial development is slated for northwestern Goshen, and along Avenue 304 (Goshen Avenue), extending from the Visalia industrial area. Service commercial and highway-oriented commercial areas are provided along Highway 99. Low-intensity commercial and industrial uses would be encouraged in the area beneath flight paths, west of the railroad tracks.

Impact Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Implementation of the proposed Project would have a potentially significant adverse impact if it would:

- Criterion 1:** Conflict with applicable area land use plans, including the County Plan and specific plans.
- Criterion 2:** Result in community residential or business disruption or displacement of substantial numbers of existing population and housing.
- Criterion 3:** Result in permanent alterations to the characteristics and qualities of an existing neighborhood or community by separating residences from community facilities and services, restricting access to commercial or residential areas, or eliminating community amenities.

¹ Tulare County LAFCO Website, <http://lafco.co.tulare.ca.us/>, accessed September 7, 2012.

METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

This analysis considered current and proposed General Plan policies, existing and proposed land use conditions, and applicable regulations and guidelines. It also compared the proposed General Plan land use diagram to the existing Plan and to existing land use conditions to determine whether implementation of the Plan will trigger any impacts.

The impact analysis considered the full buildout of the proposed General Plan, although it is uncertain when or if this full development would occur during the time horizon of the General Plan (through 2030). For the purposes of comparing the different land use designations between the existing and proposed General Plans, generalized land use categories were used. **Table 3.1-4** summarizes these categories.

Table 3.1-4: Correspondence of Generalized Land Use Categories to Current and Proposed Designations

<i>Current General Plan Designation</i>	<i>Proposed General Plan Designation</i>
Residential Uses	
Rural Residential	Very Low Density Residential
Low Density Residential	Low Density Residential
Medium Density Residential	Medium Density Residential
High Density Residential	High Density Residential
Mixed Uses	
–	Downtown Mixed Use
–	Commercial Mixed Use
Commercial and Office Uses	
Convenience Center, Neighborhood Center	Neighborhood Commercial
Central Business District	Downtown Mixed Use
Community Center, Shopping / Office Commercial	Commercial Mixed Use
Regional Retail Center, Highway Commercial	Regional Commercial
Service Commercial	Service Commercial
Professional / Administrative Office	Office
Industrial Uses	
Business Research Park	Industrial R&D
Light Industry	Light Industrial
Heavy Industry	Industrial
–	Airport Industrial
Public Uses	
Public/ Institutional	Public/Institutional
Parks	Parks/Recreation
Conservation	Conservation

Table 3.1-4: Correspondence of Generalized Land Use Categories to Current and Proposed Designations

<i>Current General Plan Designation</i>	<i>Proposed General Plan Designation</i>
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Source: City of Visalia, Dyett & Bhatia, 2010.

IMPACT SUMMARY

<i>Proposed Project Impact</i>	<i>Mitigation Measure</i>	<i>Significance after Mitigation</i>
The proposed General Plan could conflict with applicable land use plans, including the County General Plan and specific plans.	None required	Less than significant
The proposed General Plan could result in community residential or business disruption, or displacement of substantial numbers of existing population and housing.	None required	Less than significant
The proposed General Plan would not result in permanent alterations to the characteristics and qualities of an existing neighborhood or community by separating residences from community facilities and services, restricting access to commercial or residential areas, or eliminating community amenities.	None required	Beneficial

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES²

Impact

3.1-1 The proposed General Plan could conflict with applicable land use plans, including the County General Plan and specific plans. (*Less than significant*)

The proposed General Plan updates policies and land use designations for future development, and is therefore, by nature, often inconsistent with existing regulations. In order to effectively implement the new General Plan, these existing regulations will need to be updated as well. Future amendments to the proposed General Plan may also be required to ensure conformity with any State or federal law passed after its adoption, and to eliminate or modify policies that may become obsolete or unrealistic due to changed conditions.

Because the City’s Zoning Ordinance translates General Plan policies into specific land use regulations, development standards, and performance criteria governing development on individual properties, it too must be consistent with the General Plan. The proposed Plan directs the City to update the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map in order to maintain that consistency, to ensure that Plan policies are implemented, and to ensure that environmental resources earmarked for protection in the Plan will be preserved.

² As described in Chapter 2 “Project Description,” proposed General Plan polices also serve to mitigate environmental impacts. Specific General Plan policies are identified in impact discussions throughout the sections in this chapter.

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In addition to the General Plan, Visalia maintains a number of specific plans for various areas within the city. These allow the City to tailor appropriate policies and development standards to the unique characters of those areas. Relevant plans are detailed in the Regulatory Setting above. State law requires that specific plans be consistent with the adopted general plan of the jurisdiction in which it is located. The proposed General Plan maintains general consistency with all applicable specific plans.

Within Visalia City limits, Visalia's General Plan is not required to maintain consistency with the Tulare County General Plan. However, in order to promote effective and orderly management of urban development along growth boundaries at the edges of the city, the two plans should conflict as little as possible. The proposed General Plan is generally consistent with the Tulare County General Plan, and many of its policies are supportive of the County Plan's goals, particularly:

- Goal 1LU.A Retention of community identity, preservation of the agricultural economic base and control of urban sprawl.
- Goal 1LU.B City-County coordination in controlling fringe development and improving general living environment.
- Goal 1UB.B The designation of realistic planning areas around cities and unincorporated communities which could be used to help determine boundaries for community service districts and County service areas, in areas where differing levels of service area required, and within which corporate annexations may take place.
- Goal 1UB.C The maintenance of consistency among the goals and policies of the Urban Boundaries Element and those contained in other General Plan elements adopted by the County and the cities.

There is an overlap in the planning areas of the proposed General Plan and the County's General Plan in relation to numerous unincorporated County "islands." However, no land use changes are proposed for these areas, and their policies are consistent with existing County policies. The areas are within the City's LAFCO-approved Sphere of Influence and may be annexed by the City in the future. The proposed Plan's Sphere of Influence does not overlap with those of any other surrounding jurisdictions.

Overall responsibility for plan implementation is vested in the City's Planning Agency, which consists of the City Council, the Planning Commission, Site Plan Review (SPR) Committee, and the Community Development Director. Other regulatory mechanisms, such as subdivision approvals, building and housing codes, capital improvement programs, and environmental review procedures will also be used to implement Plan policies.

Given that the proposed General Plan does not conflict with specific area plans or the Tulare County General Plan, and that the proposed Plan itself details the preparation of zoning amendments where required, conflicts with existing land use plans, policies, and regulations are expected to have a less than significant impact.

Proposed General Plan Policies that Reduce the Impact

- LU-P-14 *Recognize the importance of agriculture-related business to the city and region, and support the continuation and development of agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises in and around Visalia by:
- Implementing growth boundaries and cooperating with the County on agricultural preservation efforts;
 - Accommodating agriculture-related industries in industrial districts;
 - Facilitating successful farmers' markets; and
 - Helping to promote locally-grown and -produced agricultural goods, and the image of Visalia and Tulare County as an agricultural region.
- LU-P-15 *Ensure high-quality, master-planned development at State Highway 198 and Plaza Drive and update or repeal the West Visalia Specific Plan to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and streamline the review and approval process.
- Because development plans and agreements for this area are in place and the updated General Plan and zoning will apply to all new development, a specific plan may no longer be needed.*
- LU-P-19 Ensure that growth occurs in a compact and concentric fashion by implementing the General Plan's phased growth strategy.
- The General Plan Land Use Diagram establishes three growth rings to accommodate estimated City population for the years 2020 and 2030. The Urban Development Boundary I (UDB I) shares its boundaries with the 2012 city limits. The Urban Development Boundary II (UDB II) defines the urbanizable area within which a full range of urban services will need to be extended in the first phase of anticipated growth with a target buildout population of 178,000. The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) defines full buildout of the General Plan with a target buildout population of 210,000. Each growth ring enables the City to expand in all four quadrants, reinforcing a concentric growth pattern.*
- LU-P-20 Allow annexation and development of residential, commercial, and industrial land to occur within the Tier I Urban Development Boundary (UDB) at any time, consistent with the City's Land Use Diagram.
- LU-P-21 Allow annexation and development of residential, commercial, and industrial land to occur within the Tier II UDB and the Tier III Urban Growth Boundary consistent with the City's Land Use Diagram, according to the following phasing thresholds:
- Tier II: The expansion criteria for land in Tier II to become available for annexation and development is that such annexation and development shall only occur if it does

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not result in excess of a 10-year supply of undeveloped residential land within the new Tier I. This is intended to be consistent with LAFCO policies discouraging residential annexations exceeding a 10-year housing inventory. Thus, the “inner” tier is distinguished from the GPURC-recommended Tier I in that it is not based on projected capacity and need, but rather on a requirement to be able to demonstrate that less than a ten year inventory of residential land exists.

Tier III: Tier III comprises full buildout of the General Plan. The expansion criteria for land in Tier III is that land would only become available for development when building permits have been issued in Tier I and Tier II at the following levels:

- Residential: after permits for 12,800 housing units have been issued, resulting in a target City population in Tier I of 178,000;
- Commercial: after permits for 960,000 square feet of commercial space have been issued; and
- Industrial: after permits for 2,800,000 square feet of industrial space have been issued

To complement residential neighborhood development, the City also may allow small annexations for sites less than 30 acres in size that are contiguous to the City limits to allow for efficient development of a neighborhood, commercial area or employment center, provided no General Plan amendment is required and infrastructure is available or can be extended at no cost to the City.

- LU-P-25 Provide planning and technical support for the relocation of agricultural operations currently located in the city to compatible locations in the Planning Area or the County.
- LU-P-26 Continue to follow the referral agreement with Tulare County, and work with the County to strengthen the implementation of the Visalia General Plan within the Visalia Urban Area Boundary.
- LU-P-28 Continue to use natural and man-made edges, such as major roadways and waterways within the city’s Urban Area Boundary, as urban development limit and growth phasing lines.
- LU-P-29 Use regional and community parks and open space to enhance gateways to the city and as a buffer between adjacent communities.
- LU-P-30 Maintain greenbelts, or agricultural/open space buffer areas, between Visalia and other communities by implementing growth boundaries and working with Tulare County and land developers to prevent premature urban growth north of the St. Johns River and in other sensitive locations within the timeframe of this General Plan.

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Techniques to be applied selectively at appropriate locations in consultation with landowners with the objective of preserving agricultural lands and open space around the City could include voluntary programs for establishing open space and conservation easement, purchasing development rights, support for agricultural land trusts and “land banking” and, if feasible, establishing a program for transfer of development rights. This program will need to be coordinated with post-2030 planning to avoid creating the potential for “leapfrog” development. See policy LU-P-27.

- LU-P-31 Promote the preservation of permanent agricultural open space around the city by protecting viable agricultural operations and land within the city limits in the airport and wastewater treatment plant environs.

Land around the Airport may be developed with site-appropriate industrial uses during the planning period, providing it conforms to the land use compatibility requirements for the Visalia Municipal Airport environs established by the City.

- LU-P-32 Continue to maintain a 20-acre minimum for parcel map proposals in areas designated for Agriculture to encourage viable agricultural operations in the Planning Area.

- LU-P-33 Work with Tulare County to prevent urban development of agricultural land outside of the current Urban Development Boundary and to promote the use of agricultural preserves, where they will promote orderly development.

- LU-P-41 Develop scenic corridor and gateway guidelines that will maintain the agricultural character of Visalia at its urban fringe.

- LU-P-44 *Promote development of vacant, underdeveloped, and/or redevelopable land within the City limits where urban services are available and adopt a bonus/incentive program to promote and facilitate infill development in order to reduce the need for annexation and conversion of prime agricultural land and achieve the objectives of compact development established in this General Plan.

Techniques to be used include designation of infill opportunity zones as part of the implementation process and provision of incentives, such as reduced parking and streamlined review, and residential density bonuses, and floor area bonuses for mixed use and/or higher-density development, subject to design criteria and findings of community benefit.

- LU-P-45 *Adopt and implement an incentive program for residential infill development of existing vacant lots and underutilized sites within the City limits as a strategy to help to meet the future growth needs of the community.

Infill will be supported by increasing allowable density or decreasing minimum lot size under zoning to the maximum limits set by the General Plan, by reducing off-street parking requirements, by creating an Infill Incentive Zone where reduced fees and other incentives may apply because infrastructure is in place, and by providing

incentives that respond to different challenges (for example in Downtown or in historically underutilized areas). Infill development also is supported by growth management policies; see Policy LU-P-21 for details.

- LU-P-74 Provide incentives for infill development of opportunity sites and adaptive reuse and restoration of existing buildings in Downtown and East Downtown.

New development in Downtown and East Downtown will realize the inherent potential for higher intensity use of this district, and should include offices, mixed-use and live-work buildings, storefront commercial buildings, apartments, condominiums and townhouses, and small-lot single-family houses. See also policies in section 2.8.

- LU-P-75 Improve and enhance East Downtown's physical image and desirability as a place to invest, through public investments in infrastructure, parking, streetscapes and public spaces.

Key investments will include extending the street and block pattern in the area, undergrounding utilities, and creating new parks.

- LU-P-90 Promote the development and implementation of special districts and master plan areas to preserve and enhance Downtown and East Downtown in the Core Area. Ongoing efforts include the Medical District Master Plan, and historic preservation district.

- LU-P-115 Coordinate airport area development proposals with the Tulare County Airport Land Use Commission.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Impact

- 3.1-2 The proposed General Plan could result in community residential or business disruption, or displacement of substantial numbers of existing population and housing. (Less than significant)**

While the proposed Plan does revise land uses for some parts of the city, none of these changes involve rezoning of a residential use to a non-residential use. Moreover, any new development is expected to take place on vacant, underutilized, or agricultural land. It is possible, given the long-range duration of the proposed Plan's implementation, that some residential uses may convert to higher density residential or mixed uses in the meantime. Overall, however, the proposed General Plan is expected to increase the number of residential units within the city by 25,700 at a mix of densities, such that any displaced residents will be able to find accommodations within the city.

Similarly, while it is possible that some businesses may be temporarily displaced during development activities, the additional commercial and retail space anticipated by the proposed General Plan (roughly 7,940,440 square feet) would more than accommodate relocation within the city.

Given that the proposed General Plan will not rezone or otherwise disrupt residential communities or commercial areas, and would provide additional space to accommodate any potentially displaced residents or businesses, impacts in these regards will be less than significant.

Proposed General Plan Policies that Reduce the Impact

LU-P-50 Provide development standards to ensure residential development is not negatively affected by adjacent non-residential land uses.

Development standards will be applied to both residential and non-residential development. Standards may involve required setbacks, building height step-backs, landscaping, screening, and other site characteristics.

LU-P-57 *Establish an Affordable Housing Overlay Zoning District (AHO) to promote the development of affordable housing on infill land within the existing City limits in areas designated by the General Plan for multi-family residential development. Participation by affordable housing developers in the AHO program would be voluntary, with the incentives offered intended to make development of affordable housing feasible.

The City will continue to work with affordable housing developers to provide housing development opportunities that are geographically accessible to services, retail clusters, transportation corridors, and key nodes. The AHO District would be an alternative to the State-mandated Residential Density Bonus Program and could be applied for qualifying projects as a “floating zone” and not require a General Plan amendment. It should be noted that in some cases re-zoning would be required to be consistent with the General Plan Land Use designation. Such re-zoning would be done concurrently with adoption of the AHO zoning district for the site.

Application requirements would be the same as those for the State-Mandated Residential Density Bonus Program, modified, as appropriate for the purposes of this district.

The City will initiate a work program to analyze the various options for an AHO District including the consideration of at a minimum the following development incentives:

- *Residential density increase beyond those provided by State Density Bonus Law;*
- *Flexible zoning standards, including reduced development and parking standards, coupled with Form-Based Code standards for infill sites to ensure land use compatibility;*
- *Priority permit processing, including any applicable CEQA exemptions;*
- *Design Review requirements; and*
- *Deferral or reduction of City permit and development impact fees based on the Priority Zone designation for the site, as defined by the Infill Development Incentive Program.*

- LU-P-59 Continue to enforce code compliance and provide support to neighborhood improvement efforts to ensure repair and maintenance of existing dwelling units.
- LU-P-71 *Ensure that noise, traffic, and other potential conflicts that may arise in a mix of commercial and residential uses are mitigated through good site planning, building design, and/or appropriate operational measures.
- LU-P-92 Work with the Downtown Property Owners Association (POA) and other Downtown-oriented organizations to continue investment in downtown infrastructure improvement projects such as the acquisition of property for parking facilities and graffiti removal programs.
- LU-P-96 *In order to avoid losing out on potential funding opportunities, to the extent financially feasible, prepare infrastructure improvement plans for future necessary facilities so that they are ready to bid when such funding opportunities become available.

Mitigation Measures

None required

Impact

- 3.1-3 **The proposed General Plan would not result in permanent alterations to the characteristics and qualities of an existing neighborhood or community by separating residences from community facilities and services, restricting access to commercial or residential areas, or eliminating community amenities. (Beneficial)**

The proposed General Plan includes changes to the land use designations and development standards in some areas of the city. However, these changes would not represent any significant departures from the existing characteristics of existing neighborhoods or physically divide any established communities. These changes mainly affect parts of the city that are currently undeveloped, and provide the framework for new community-oriented neighborhoods with a mix of amenities and services. Alterations that increase density and housing diversity for new developments are expected to promote the “small-town” feel of the city by encouraging compact and pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, while also helping to preserve agricultural land and providing for the needs of currently underserved demographics such as seniors, singles, new families, empty-nesters, and single parents.

In many cases, the proposed changes would improve connectivity among existing neighborhoods, and increase overall access to activity centers like Downtown and East Downtown, and public amenities like parks, schools, and community centers. Proposed Plan policies would improve local circulation for pedestrians, bicycles, and other forms of non-motorized transportation, while also improving vehicular access and parking infrastructure for regional destinations.

Actions under the General Plan will ensure a more cohesive and comprehensive approach for any future development that may occur. Given that the proposed General Plan would not physically divide any established communities or separate them from community facilities or services,

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commercial or residential areas, or amenities, but rather improve connectivity and access between many of these elements, these impacts can be considered beneficial.

Proposed General Plan Policies that Reduce the Impact

LU-P-40 *Use Mill, Packwood, and Cameron Creeks and other waterways as natural amenities and links between neighborhoods.

LU-P-47 *Establish criteria and standards for pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle circulation networks within new subdivisions and non-residential development.

LU-P-48 Preserve established and distinctive neighborhoods throughout the city by maintaining appropriate zoning and development standards to achieve land use compatibility in terms of height, massing, and other characteristics; providing design guidelines for high-quality new development; supporting housing rehabilitation programs; and other means.

LU-P-52 Integrate multi-family development with commercial, office, and public uses in neighborhood notes, Downtown, and with Commercial Mixed Use areas in East Downtown, along the Mooney corridor and elsewhere.

Multi-family housing should be accessible on foot to public parks and gathering places, commercial areas, and transit.

LU-P-58 Ensure that natural and open space features, such as Valley Oak trees and community waterways, are treated as special site amenities as part of any residential development.

See the Open Space, Conservation, Recreation and Parks Element for additional discussion and policies.

LU-P-60 Support the continued development and revitalization of the following corridors as integral parts of the community, with offices, commercial uses, multi-family residential, and mixed-use developments.

- Mooney Boulevard between Noble and Caldwell;
- Dinuba Boulevard between Houston and Ferguson;
- Ben Maddox Way between Tulare and Houston;
- Santa Fe Avenue between Tulare and Houston; and
- Houston Avenue between Hall and Cain.

The depth of commercial development along the Mooney Boulevard corridor, Ben Maddox Way, and North Dinuba Boulevard may be extended on a case by case basis if the extension increases the feasibility of commercial development and the proposed action will not create land use conflicts or reduce viability of adjacent residential properties for each zone classification.

- LU-P-62 *In higher-intensity and mixed-use areas, require pedestrian-oriented amenities such as small plazas, outdoor seating, public art, and active street frontages, with ground-floor retail, where appropriate and justified.
- New development can help create pedestrian environments with buildings oriented to the street, continuous walkways and sidewalks, limited blank walls, pedestrian-scaled buildings, and signage, parking screened from street view, landscaping and shading, and places for people to rest and meet.*
- LU-P-63 *Provide incentives for new pedestrian-friendly retail and mixed-use development along major transit corridors and pedestrian-oriented commercial streets.
- Incentives may include increased floor area ratios, reduced or deferred impact fees, reduced parking, and priority processing. This incentive program will be integrated with, and not duplicate, the Infill Development Incentive Program.*
- LU-P-64 Continue to require a master-planning process for community and regional commercial development to ensure compatibility with surrounding residential areas, an attractive appearance from major roadways, and pedestrian accessibility and safety.
- Planning strategies include the use of buffering land uses, such as office uses between residential and high intensity commercial uses, and sidewalk-facing retail and high-quality public realm elements that encourage pedestrian access.*
- LU-P-77 *In East Downtown emphasize creating and enhancing strong economic, pedestrian, and visual connections to adjacent neighborhoods and Downtown. East Main is envisioned as the “central spine,” Burke and Santa Fe as north-south civic streets; and Oak Street and Mill Creek as key east-west connectors.
- The block system should be designed to reflect a walking pace in terms of scale and amenities.*
- LU-P-79 *Improve Santa Fe Avenue to collector-street status.
- Santa Fe Avenue is intended to function as a major connection to neighborhoods north and south with Downtown.*
- LU-P-85 *Support revitalization of East Downtown by the extension of the city block pattern found in Downtown, and the creation of five distinct street types, with different roles and identities:
- *Transit Corridor.* Oak Street should support potential future light rail transit as well as on-street parking and pedestrian amenities, and function as a civic space.
 - *Thoroughfare Commercial Streets.* Ben Maddox and Mineral King require four lanes and a turn lane, carry citywide traffic, and have uses that can take advantage of regional access.

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- *Mixed Use Commercial Streets.* Santa Fe, East Main Street, and Burke Street should be two-lane streets with turn lanes at key intersections, parallel parking, and bus pull-outs. They have ground floor uses that add pedestrian interest and comfortable sidewalks, and provide key connections to Downtown.
- *Mixed Use Residential Streets.* Center and Acequia Avenues are two lane streets with turn lanes at key intersections, parallel parking, and bus pull-outs.
- *Neighborhood Streets and Alleys.* These are narrow two-lane streets with parallel and diagonal parking. They provide access to residential blocks and provide a quieter setting.

LU-P-91 Provide enhanced pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements in Downtown and East Downtown. Improvements may include landscaped open space areas, street furniture, lighting, and signage.

LU-P-93 Provide enhanced pedestrian connectivity between Downtown and the historic districts located both north and south of Highway 198 through construction of ADA-accessible sidewalks and entry signage.

LU-P-108 *Facilitate the creation of mixed-use activity centers on and adjacent to the College of the Sequoias campus and on other land designated for public/institutional uses by locating commercial and mixed land use areas adjacent to existing or planned public facilities, and by allowing mixed uses to be developed on Public/Institutional land through a master planning process.

Mooney Boulevard adjacent to College of the Sequoias and the vicinity of Caldwell Avenue and Lovers Lane adjacent to the planned new medical facility have the potential to be vital activity centers. Land designated for schools in several neighborhoods is intended to contribute to local “neighborhood nodes.”

Mitigation Measures

None required.

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