

CITY OF VISALIA

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

JANUARY 23 – 24, 2009

The trouble with our times is that the future
is not what it used to be.

Paul Valery

REPORT

Table of Contents

	Page No.
A. City Council and Staff Participants	3
B. Objective	3
C. Preliminary Reports	3
1. Progress on Projects from the 2008 Strategic Planning Workshop	
2. Visalia’s Economic Picture	
3. East Downtown Strategic Plan: What’s Next and When?	
4. Circulation Plan Update with Emphasis on Progress with Major Traffic Projects	
D. Discussion Topics	
1. Improving Operating Revenues and Efficiencies	4
2. Entertainment in the Downtown	7
3. Community Planning Issues	
a. Mooney Blvd. from Main St. to Caldwell Ave.	10
b. Economic Viability of Commercial Development Along State Route 63 North of the Oval	12
c. Smart Growth and Infill Land Use Planning	14
d. General Plan Update Process Discussion	14
4. Neighborhood Preservation	17
5. Sustaining Visalia’s “Place” in the Region	17
6. Gang Prevention and Suppression	18

7. Homeless Services	18
8. Communication with the Public	19
E. Projects List Exercise	19
F. Attachments	
1. Workshop Agenda	22
2. Community Member Interviews	
a. Residents Interviewed	23
b. Interview Comments	24
3. Citizen Advisory Committee Comments	29
4. Progress on Projects from the 2008 Strategic Planning Workshop	30
5. Discussion of City Finances	31
6. East Downtown Strategic Plan Update	32
7. Traffic Circulation and Related Information	33
8. Comparison of Focused and Comprehensive General Plan Updates	34
9. Gang Prevention and Suppression	35
10. Listing of Potential Topics for Discussion at the 2009 Workshop	36
11. Memorandum of January 20, 2009 from the Chamber of Commerce.	41
12. Memorandum of January 21, 2009 from the Home Builders Association of Tulare/Kings Counties	42
13. Tulare County Population Distribution Map	43

A. CITY COUNCIL AND STAFF PARTICIPANTS

City Council Members

Mayor Jesus Gamboa
Vice Mayor Bob Link
Councilmember Don Landers
Councilmember Greg Collins
Councilmember Amy Shuklian

City Manager and Department Heads

Steve Salomon, City Manager
Alex Peltzer, City Attorney
Michael Olmos, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director
Leslie Caviglia, Deputy City Manager
Eric Frost, Administrative Services Director
Robert Carden, Chief of Police
Mark Nelson, Fire Chief
Andrew Benelli, Public Works Director
Vincent Elizondo, Parks and Recreation Director
Ricardo Noguera, Economic Development and Housing Director

Facilitator

Michael Ramsey

B. OBJECTIVE

The 2009 City Council Strategic Planning Workshop objective was to discuss the major issues and challenges facing the City of Visalia with an emphasis on the next one to three years. City Council members provided direction to city staff regarding their preferences for the approach the city should take in addressing these challenges. City staff will report back to the City Council at a later date with a strategic plan for addressing the issues discussed

C. PRELIMINARY REPORTS

The Workshop opened with welcoming comments from Mayor Gamboa and introductory comments by City Manager Salomon. Public comments were

invited from the public in attendance, followed by preliminary reports from the city manager and staff. The preliminary reports were as follows:

Progress on Projects from the 2008 Strategic Planning Workshop (Attachment 4)

Visalia's Economic Picture (Attachment 5)

East Downtown Strategic Plan: What's Next and When? (Attachment 6)

Circulation Plan Update with Emphasis on Progress with Major Traffic Projects (Attachment 7)

The written drafts of these reports can be found in the Attachments section of this document.

D. DISCUSSION TOPICS

The Workshop Agenda (Attachment 1) lists 8 topics for consideration during the two-day event. These topics were selected by the City Council from a list of 29 (Attachment 10) that was compiled subsequent to interviews with each councilmember, the city manager and all department heads. It was anticipated that time might not allow for all of the topics to be covered during the two-day workshop and that proved to be the case. The topics and the discussion outlines are listed below in the order they were discussed followed by the discussion outlines of those topics that were not discussed. Those not discussed are available for consideration at future City Council meetings and Work Sessions.

1. Improving Operating Revenues and Efficiencies

What new or modified revenue sources can be used to broaden the city's revenue base?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What things would you like the city to be doing that it isn't doing?*
- 2. What existing revenue sources can be increased without adverse economic impact?*

3. *What new revenue sources can be added or modified?*
4. *What happens in the next 3 years if we don't see growth in our revenue base? Long term?*

This topic built on the information provided by Eric Frost, Administrative Services Director, in his preliminary report (Attachment 5) at the outset of the Workshop. The topic was discussed by the council members and staff in two separate discussion groups with input invited from the community members present. The two groups subsequently shared their comments with everyone. Those comments are summarized below.

Need to coordinate marketing efforts with the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC), the Visalia Economic Development Corporation (VEDC), the Chamber of Commerce and other agencies regarding redevelopment along Mooney Blvd.

Be more creative in allowing the reuse of buildings and properties along Mooney Blvd.

Re-evaluate signage criteria.

Examine rezoning along Mooney Blvd.

Nurture agriculture related retail uses Downtown.

Discuss with auto dealers along Mineral King about future hotel development.

Invest funds at the entrance ways north and south of the city limits for image enhancement.

Look at marketing Visalia in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas.

Convention Center – consider lower rates to be more competitive in attracting events.

Consider increasing the Transient Occupancy Tax (T.O.T).

Increase the number of hotel rooms downtown.

Consider private ownership and/or operation of the Convention Center.

Install an electronic billboard adjacent to Highway 99. It could be

financed by the private development community while generating revenue for Visalia.

Electronic Billboard

- Market shopping Centers/Auto Malls/Downtown.
- Developer driven similar to Union City, Vallejo, and Palo Alto.
- City generates revenues.
- Competitive edge through enhanced marketing.
- City owned property opportunities for billboard placements.
- Combine it with existing signs on Highway 99.

Develop a ballot initiative to approve utility fees.

Re-think economic development and redevelopment for Sequoia Mall and the former Costco and Homebase centers.

Use festivals to market Visalia.

Focus on agriculture, conventions, tourism and sporting events.

Market Visalia by working with retailers to provide discounts to Visalia residents.

Enhance the physical appearance of the Oval area and link to downtown.

Consider eliminating city fees for conversion of upper floors in downtown to support retail and office use.

Consider more concerts or events at the Fox Theater and Convention Center (weekly).

Aggressive recruitment/expansion of businesses in the Industrial Park.

Outreach to major shopping centers and downtown; how can we help in recruitment/retention/expansion?

Move aggressively on increasing the sales tax override.

Talk with Fairbanks regarding trends in the state on local tax initiatives and potential polling on Visalia perceptions.

Pursue legislation to provide fair taxation of internet shopping.

Review city service programs to determine whether outsourcing of additional services is cost effective.

Evaluate partnerships with other agencies to share costs (fleet maintenance, dispatch, animal control).

Extend replacement schedules for equipment.

Re-bid service contracts periodically to ensure competitive pricing.

Intensify monitoring of invoices to verify accurate/competitive costs.

Explore first time business owner incentives.

Encourage mixed uses in shopping centers (offices) to sustain them and provide a broader customer base.

Fees assessed to non-residents for use of city recreation facilities and parks.

Collect full cost of code enforcement actions.

In managing size of city staff, stress the importance of retaining and cross training the most productive staff.

Conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to determine impact on revenue if major retailers close.

City staff will evaluate each of these suggestions and report back to the City Council on those it can reasonably pursue.

2. Entertainment in the Downtown

In what ways is the image of downtown changing as entertainment is added to a greater number of restaurants?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What, if any, changes need to be made in the conditions applied to Conditional Use Permits issued for additional entertainment venues downtown?*

2. *What steps could be taken to ensure the downtown remains “family friendly”?*
3. *How might the city and downtown organizations collaborate to maximize downtown’s vitality?*

Public comments were received from community members present.

Troy Korsgaden, Crowdaddy’s Restaurant, spoke about the need for nightclubs in the downtown. He noted that he has had a very successful year due in large part to the entertainment offered at his restaurant.

Darlene Mata – spoke about the need for more opportunities (entertainment) in the downtown and that those opportunities are missed when there are too many requirements imposed by the city.

It was acknowledged at the outset of the discussion that entertainment in the downtown has added to its vitality. Contrary to concerns that the increase in this activity might be increasing calls for police intervention, a study done by the Police Department indicated that calls for service have not increased significantly in the past year.

Fred Brusuelas, Assistant Community Development Director, indicated that the zoning ordinance and conditional use permit process needs review and updating. Modifications that will streamline the conditional use permit for entertainment will be brought to City Council in the future for their consideration and approval. Mitigation measures also need to be in place so entertainment (music) doesn’t interfere with other businesses. Additional considerations are Building Code requirements for restrooms and maximum capacity and exit signage.

The topic was discussed by the council members and staff in two separate discussion groups after input was received from community members present. The two groups subsequently shared their comments with everyone. Those comments are summarized below.

Replace discothèques and night clubs.

Meet with owners and managements – review timeline/restrict live music until after 9 p.m.

Review signage, consider regulation of advertising of alcoholic beverages for sale (banners, etc).

Review ordinances used by San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara.

Extend retail store hours into the evening hours.

Improve coordination of special events with PBID, DTV – staff meetings/promotional meetings.

Consider a mounted patrol. Add to the PBID security funding.

Move the PBID office to a more accessible location.

Ensure proper lighting below the tree canopy.

Skilled officers – avoid intimidation.

Closed off Garden Plaza – more festive environment after hours.

Be more business-friendly and less “big brother.”

Ensure proper lighting to and from Main Street from branch streets- Encina, Bridge, and others).

Fill in dead space of vacant windows.

Concerned about noise level – amplified sound –that is heard on street (inside building okay).

Not every place has to be appealing to everyone – need to appeal to artistic community.

Use an administrative permit instead of CUP for quicker processing.

Can we reduce intimidation factors? Keep police officers downtown, need skilled officer, need mix of all groups to avoid the fear of the minority, augment with reserves, etc

Need more space on sidewalk, but we may need to control sidewalk usage.

Would like to expand dining to outside – close streets at certain nights after certain hours, increase police reserves.

City staff will evaluate each of these suggestions and report back to the City Council on those it can reasonably pursue.

3. Community Planning Issues

A. Mooney Blvd. from Main St. to Caldwell Ave.

What will this retail and business corridor look like in 20 years and what kind of city involvement does this suggest?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What revitalization themes should be explored in future planning efforts?*
- 2. How immediate is the need to begin work on a plan for Mooney Blvd. revitalization?*
- 3. To what extent is City Council willing to spend redevelopment money to work on this?*

The topic was discussed by the council members and staff in two separate discussion groups after input was invited from community members present. The two groups subsequently shared their comments with everyone. Those comments are summarized below.

Challenges:

Zoning along the area north of Walnut is not conducive to regional retail.

Old Costco shopping area and Sequoia Mall – there are multiple owners for these properties.

Don't move on to the next "greenfield" without looking at existing viable sites – creates urban sprawl.

Accessibility issues to side streets E/W.

Mooney Blvd. needs to sustain public transit – get people out of their cars.

Are we losing sales to other areas (leakage) because we don't have big box stores in this area on Mooney? Super Wal-Mart/Super Target, etc.

Zoning north of Walnut is not conducive to regionalization due to the small size of the parcels.

Multiple ownership provides challenges to redevelopment (Ex. Sequoia Plaza and Sequoia Mall).

Ideas for revitalization:

Explore possibilities with property owners – determine which properties may be available for purchase that may be accumulated.

Take steps now to replace/refresh Mooney Boulevard corridor for the benefit of the current tenants and future major retail with mixed uses.

Develop Mooney as the future transportation corridor from Visalia to Tulare.

Blend uses – mixed (live, recreate, shop, church).

Smart Growth policies and increased densities.

Multiple level buildings.

Light rail corridor.

More inviting streetscape/landscape and low cost maintenance.

Transportation.

Flexibility in planning/engineering to redevelop vacant buildings.

Does this work need to move forward immediately or can it be deferred until the GP update?

Shuklian – issues are interdependent. The planning needs to begin before the GP update.

Link – determine on a case by case evaluation – be flexible.

Landers – be flexible and evaluate each project as it comes.

Collins – get started right away on revitalization – GP update is another project altogether. Develop a specific plan .

Gamboa – begin planning effort now but be flexible.

City staff will evaluate each of these suggestions and report back to the City Council on those it can reasonably pursue.

B. Economic Viability of Commercial Development Along and Around Northern SR 63 (Dinuba Blvd.)

What can be done to increase the amount of land zoned for retail and commercial development along this increasingly vital corridor?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. To what extent does the zoning and General Plan designation for land along this corridor invite or discourage retail and commercial development?*
- 2. What strategies and incentives for stimulating additional development might be considered?*

The topic was discussed by the council members and staff in two separate discussion groups after input was invited from community members present. The two groups subsequently shared their comments with everyone. Those comments are summarized below.

Is there a need for commercial development in this area? Regional retail?

Bridge over St. John's – any plans to improve the roadway as it comes into Visalia? Bridges are narrow north of the river. Transportation Impact Fees includes a plan to widen the bridge over St. Johns. Caltrans studying the bridge.

Need a study of Dinuba Blvd. as a commercial corridor.

Connect Oval to the downtown with a more inviting corridor.

Historic areas – zoned single family – needs to be looked at. Don't need single family zoning here – allow other uses.

Safety issues need to be looked at.

Gamboa vision – shift from south to north – build community.

Sports Park is a magnet for this area and we should capitalize on this.

Efforts of other cities (Dinuba) to be self-sustaining impacts commercial development/sales tax rates.

Is there sufficient commercial land north of SR198 to meet demand?

There is limited interest in regional retail development from developers for this area. Need for retail land consideration on north side.

Consider the entire corridor – not parcel by parcel.

Do current zoning designations encourage or discourage commercial and retail development in this area? Is there a significant impact on opportunity?

Are there specific opportunities for regional retail development? Consider design, land use issues associated with development?

Consider development of a tree-lined corridor from Murray north along State Highway 63.

Collins – opportunity for regional retail – Murray to St. John’s River. Single family zoning on State highway has to go. Change the looks of State Highway. Need consultant to study.

Link – Develop Center Street north. Look at other locations where additional commercial can go.

Strategies for stimulating development:

Bring more detailed information to Council on what can be done to stimulate more development of this area.

It is not Council’s intent to commercialize everything.

City staff will evaluate each of these suggestions and report back to the City Council on those it can reasonably pursue.

C. Smart Growth and Infill Land Use Planning

What does sensible growth look like that won’t exceed our ability to provide infrastructure and services over the next decade?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *How great an increase in residential density will the community tolerate?*
2. *What, if anything, stands in the way of infill development?*
3. *What can we do about it?*

TOPIC “C” WAS CONSOLIDATED WITH THE FOLLOWING TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION.

D. General Plan Update Process

Which approach to updating the General Plan shall staff use:
Comprehensive or Focused?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What are the perceived objectives of the community stakeholders with an interest in this issue?

1. *What are the critical interests of the Council members?*
2. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of “freezing” all planning, development and entitlement processing outside of the current 129,000 population Urban Development Boundary until after completion of a Comprehensive Update?*
3. *What is the likelihood that future City Councils will follow the direction established by this Council in updating the General Plan until the project is completed?*
4. *How much is City Council willing to spend for professional consulting services in preparing a General Plan Update(s) that will have a useful shelf life of at least 10 years?*
5. *Which approach shall staff bring to the City Council for formal consideration and approval?*

The discussion of these two topics consumed the majority of time on the second day of the Workshop. A staff report was presented by Mike Olmos, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director and his staff

(Attachment 8). The direction given to staff at the conclusion of the discussion was to bring to City Council an outline of the Scope of Work that would be pursued in updating the current General Plan. The outline is to be a compilation of the advantages of both a Focused and a Comprehensive approach to the extent they can be synthesized.

It is anticipated that the Scope of Work will make use of the elements of the current General Plan that do not need to be revised while including the tasks that will improve the applicability of the General Plan over the next decade. It is also anticipated that blending these approaches will reduce both the cost and the time for completing the General Plan Update. Mike Olmos, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director will be drafting the Scope of Work.

The topic was discussed by the council members and staff and input was invited from community members present. Three community members offered the following input:

Jim Robinson – supports comprehensive GP Update. Need to market Visalia in order to attract a large college campus; we need to plan for this.

Steve Peck – All previous strategies from the 1991 plan have been played out. Work on policy. Current GP is holding you back from doing what you want to do with Mooney Blvd and Dinuba Blvd. Challenges with Mooney and Dinuba stem from this. What can we do to capture the industrial, commercial and mixed uses that can't be accommodated in the current plan? The current document is holding you back – deal with it now.

Brian Blain - spoke about the effect different types of development have on the water supply that is critical to the agriculture industry. Underground aquifers are being over drafted. Agriculture is the foundation of the economy of Tulare County and our area. Land use decisions need to be sensitive to their impact on the area's water supply.

The Council members' comments are summarized below.

We need to be clear about what we want to accomplish with a General Plan update. Considerations include:

- **Forum for public opinion for what growth looks like**
- **Increase revenues – more land for commercial/industrial/retail**

- Public input into process
- Will focused update hold up legally? What are the legal challenges with inconsistent GP elements?
- Doing focused now and then comprehensive later will cost more over the long run than doing a comprehensive now.

Collins – identify stakeholders: Oval/Washington neighborhoods, Mooney Blvd. merchants, Dinuba Blvd merchants, East downtown land owners, downtown merchants. The plan needs to be big enough to not impede development. Is the 1991 plan so broken/old that we have to start all over? Fundamentals are still there. Need 10 years of infill and fine tuning. Keep foundation of 2020 plan and add to it. 80% of the document will remain unchanged – only needs a 20% revision. This is not a great time to be spending money. The 98,000 Urban Development Boundary has enough area for another 52,000 people. Land within city limits needs to be infilled.

Shuklian – important to set new goals, the current plan is not broken but needs dusting off. There are more and different people, and a lot of it's been fulfilled. Would Open Space, Parks, Circulation be a part of it? (Olmos - Open Space & Parks would be a part of it. The Circulation Element also needs to be tweaked. Amendments to the GP would mean the GP is consistent so no legal challenge. Whatever you do to amend the GP as long as it's supported by an adequate EIR, it will be adequate).

Gamboa – Need focused direction due to budget issues. We have done a lot – Measure T, Task forces, neighborhood preservation. We're doing real things without it being in a plan. They are still real things. A lot of pockets left. Be cautious moving the Urban Development Boundary line. Doesn't have a problem with a hybrid approach. Both approaches allow for public input.

Link – if we want the same level of services, we have to increase our sales base. If we don't have enough of what commercial and industrial wants they will go elsewhere. We don't know what the whole community wants; they need to have an opportunity to participate. Questions on costs... Are there elements that we'll leave out? Will this put us at legal risk? We have enough residential land to go a long way. Concerns are commercial land, greenhouse gases and Industrial land.

Landers – Concerned about the cost. Staff should be able to do a lot of the work and keep the cost down. There needs to be public involvement in whichever approach is taken.

A Scope of Work will be drafted that incorporates the City Council’s input. It is expected to be presented to City Council within 90 days.

4. Neighborhood Preservation

How can we accelerate the Neighborhood Preservation effort?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What specific changes or improvements does City Council want to see over the next year in addition to what is currently being accomplished?*
- 2. What resources are to be allocated to the program to accomplish these additional objectives?*

This topic was not specifically addressed during the Workshop.

5. Sustaining Visalia’s “Place” in the Region

How do we sustain Visalia’s reputation as an exceptional community?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What does “Jewel of the Valley” mean?*
- 2. What are the community services and amenities that make Visalia exceptional?*
- 3. How far should the organization go in preserving this image in an atmosphere of declining resources?*

This topic was not specifically addressed during the Workshop.

6. Gang Prevention and Suppression

How should the Police Department administer this program differently than they are currently doing?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *What specific improvements are desired over the next year in addition to those that will be achieved by the current program?*
2. *What additional resources would be required to achieve the improvements?*

This topic was not specifically addressed during the Workshop. A staff report on this topic is included as Attachment 9.

7. Homeless Services

What is the city's role in providing basic services to the homeless in the community?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *How effective are our community non-profit organizations and county social service departments in coordinating their services available to the homeless?*
2. *To what extent does the City Council want the city to become directly involved in providing facilities and services to the homeless? At what cost?*
3. *How should the city address the issue of panhandling and loitering?*
4. *What is the city's fair share of housing and services for the broader area's homeless population?*

This topic was not specifically addressed during the Workshop.

8. Communication with the Public

How can the organization be more effective in reaching a greater number of community members, especially those who are new to the community?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What strategies in addition to those currently used and planned would City Council like to see used in communication between the organization and the community?*
- 2. Under what circumstances would the City Council want to see an increase in the 300 foot radius standard for notification regarding land use considerations to be acted on by the Planning Commission or City Council?*

This topic was not specifically addressed during the Workshop.

E. PROJECTS LIST EXERCISE

Each city councilmember listed on a flip chart 5 projects they wanted to see addressed in the coming year. Their lists were combined and they were asked to select the top 5 projects. The final list grew to 7 projects when the ranking was completed. Those projects are:

Sponsor an annual sporting event that will attract thousands of visitors to Visalia every year (e.g. 64 team baseball tournaments).

Distribute a Request for Proposals for lease of 16 acres, minus one acre for Ag Enterprise uses, on the north side of Hwy 198, east of Shirk Rd.

Fix the City of Visalia entrance sign at the Hwy 99/198 interchange and consider conversion to solar power.

Establish a program for downtown building renovation, including facade improvements, asbestos removal, and 2nd story development.

Create better Downtown lighting.

Repave roads/cul-de-sac at the animal control facility.

Develop a strategy to revitalize the former Bottling Company building near the Wittman Community Center.

The remaining projects that were considered in selecting the top 7 are:

Increase volunteer police patrols throughout the night during weekends.

Establish a second “Make a Difference Day to take place on Martin Luther King Day.

Maintain Visalia’s vitality.

Build a better relationship between downtown organizations and staff.

Provide more help with retail retention and development (diversification).

Get more people involved in city activities.

Balance the city’s finances with adequate reserves.

Establish traffic light synchronization city wide.

Resolve encroachment issues.

Stop graffiti – provide more aggressive surveillance and increase the arrests of people in the act of applying graffiti.

Stop assaults on the north side.

Implement paperless City Council packets.

Improve the commercial beautification and landscape in the Mineral King – County Center area.

Implement streaming video of Council meetings.

Complete Ferguson extension – keep on track.

Start and complete Santa Fe roundabout with monument.

Support Lincoln Oval – concert series.

Start and complete stop signs and/or signal lights at Chinowth and Goshen Ave.

The Workshop adjourned at approximately 3:15 p.m. on January 24, 2009.

ATTACHMENT 1

WORKSHOP AGENDA

ATTACHMENT 2.A

COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEWS

RESIDENTS INTERVIEWED

Rick Elkins – Valley Voice

Karen Cooper – Tulare County Family Services

Frank Escobar, Jr. – Visalia Unified School District

Carolyn Rose – CSET

Stan Bennett – Bennett’s Office Furniture

William Martin – Downtown Building Owner and PBID

Carlos Medina – Barber and Oval Area Property Owner

Don Wright- Wright’s Hallmark Cards/Mooney Blvd. Merchant

Danny Little – Rescue Mission

Lindsay Bailey – Self Help and Bike Trails Committee

Lali Moheno – Good News Center

Mary T. Hill – Community Bank

Stan Carrizosa – Supt. of Visalia Unified School District

ATTACHMENT 2.B

INTERVIEW COMMENTS

The following comments are compilations of viewpoints expressed by one or more community members who were interviewed. In some cases, several people shared the same opinion; in other cases only one person did. Therefore, the following comments should not be considered as representative of the viewpoint of each member who was interviewed.

Each person interviewed was asked what were the significant issues or challenges facing the community in the foreseeable future. These were the responses.

- 1. CORE MISSION.** The economic slowdown is pervasive and world-wide. Government programs at all levels will no longer have the resources to be all things to all people. Local governments like Visalia must refocus on a narrower role for government. Visalia must reassess its CORE MISSION and add on from there. It is better to do a few things well than to do many things mediocre. "Lose the frosting and make a better cake".
- 2. JOB DEVELOPMENT.** The local economy is softening in several important areas. Homebuilding is getting the most attention but the dairy industry may be following. Milk prices are falling and exports of powdered milk are declining. Dairies are operating at or below the breakeven point. They are also being solicited to move out of California to places where the environmental regulations are not as stringent and they are beginning to do so. What will be the local impact of a decline in the dairy industry? Business to business sales and jobs will suffer. Visalia needs to put maximum effort into attracting industries whose jobs pay well and can replace those lost in the dairy industry down the road.

Any federal stimulus money received should be used in areas that are going to produce jobs.

- 3. NEW PROJECTS AND SERVICES.** The city should refrain from taking on any new projects or additional services for at least one year. This

Attachment 2.B - continued

includes those that are paid for with grants that eventually require the city to pay for the ongoing personnel costs. Allow the economy to stabilize and decide then what the city can afford in the future. Every new service or project should be decided upon after asking the question, “How tolerant will the community be of an increase in their taxes or fees to pay for this?”

4. **PLAZA BUSINESS PARK.** The business park on Plaza Drive near Highway 99 presents an important image of Visalia to those entering the community from the west. It should be developed as a regional business hub.
5. **REGIONAL MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS.** Visalia should look for ways to collaborate with other nearby municipalities in order to maximize regional strengths in attracting retail development to the area. This would also minimize the public money that is offered to retail operations to choose one city over another when making their site location decisions. An example would be a revenue sharing and development agreement with the city of Tulare relative to Tagus Ranch.
6. **BOLD, FUTURISTIC THINKING.** The national economy injects an air of uncertainty in any planning the city might do. Nevertheless, Visalia must not lose its ability for bold thinking if it is to preserve the flavor, depth and richness that make Visalia so attractive. That thinking should be channeled into things over which Visalia actually has control.
7. **SAFETY AND GANGS.** More must be done to provide human services for youth if we are to succeed in our efforts to suppress gang activity.
8. **OVAL PARK DEVELOPMENT.** Drug dealing and public consumption of alcohol in the park must be stopped. The commercial building in the park needs to be occupied and a business development theme or specific plan should be implemented for the Oval Park area and continuing north on N.W. Third to Houston Ave. A business alliance similar to the one in operation in the downtown could be formed among the business and building owners to pay for additional amenities in the area like standardized trash containers in more areas, cleanup of buildings, updating building facades, etc.

Celebrations in the park should be conducted on a regular basis to draw more visitors to the area and a Sunday Farmers Market should be attempted.

Attachment 2.B - continued

- 9. JOINT EFFORTS WITH VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.** The city and school district already work well together and undertake cooperative programs. The slowdown in the development arena provides a good opportunity for the two agencies to spend time on long range planning to prepare for coming out of the economic slump. Three areas of importance to the school district are:
- a. Development of 4 to 5 new elementary schools after the usual residential building pace resumes.
 - b. Annexation of 160 acres at the northwest corner of Riggin and Akers Rd. for development of a high school and middle school.
 - c. Planning for a General Obligation Bond measure on a future ballot to qualify for state money in paying for the high school and middle school.
- 10. INDUSTRIAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS.** The industrial park area needs some basic improvements including smoothing out the railroad track crossings and widening Shirk Road north of Goshen Ave. in the areas of intersecting roads to make turning movements flow better without holding up vehicles proceeding straight ahead. This area of Visalia produces thousands of jobs and should not be overlooked in the city's infrastructure planning.
- 11. RENT CONTROL.** Consider the use of rent control to stabilize the availability of housing for lower income residents.
- 12. CULTURAL AWARENESS.** The architecture, arts and activities of Visalia need to be more representative of the varied cultures and ethnicities that are now a part of our community.
- 13. DEVELOPMENT TENSION.** We are seeing tension regarding the pace and look of development in Visalia. We need an updated vision and guiding principles on this subject.
- 14. ACCLIMATING NEW ARRIVALS.** We need to identify who the new arrivals are to the community and have an effective program for acclimating them to the city.
- 15. HOMELESS.** Services for the homeless are fragmented among public agencies and the non-profit organizations. This effort needs much better coordination to avoid duplication and increase effectiveness.

Attachment 2.b – continued

- 16. NORTH SIDE IMPROVEMENTS.** Implement an improvement program similar to that being studied for the Oval area. Focus on North Dinuba Highway between Houston Ave. and Prospect. There are pockets of extreme blight that are being ignored.
- 17. STUDENTS IN INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAMS.** Approximately 450 students living in north Visalia are on independent study. Their time outside of the classroom needs more structure to discourage getting into trouble during the day. We need the school district's help with this.
- 18. SIGN ORDINANCE REVIEW.** What happened to the work group meeting about this?
- 19. REDUCTION IN WORKFORCE.** The economy is likely to cause the city to reduce the number of its employees. Where are these reductions taking place and how are our services going to be effected? Residents want to hear more about this so we know what to expect.
- 20. MEARLES DRIVE INN.** What is going to be done to get this site back into production again? It is an eyesore on Mooney Blvd. and its "Historic Preservation" designation isn't helping to get it renovated.
- 21. COMMUNICATION WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.** Neither the city nor the Chamber of Commerce reaches out to the business and industrial community to ascertain their needs any longer the way they did many years ago. A city representative and Chamber representative used to call on businesses annually to complete a survey of their interests and satisfaction with city services. We are experiencing less cohesiveness in the community.
- 22. MOONEY BLVD. ROAD CONSTRUCTION PRIORITY.** Traffic loads and the amount of economic activity generated on Mooney Blvd. warrant it being at the top of the list for the use of Measure R and state road improvement money if the economy causes the city to lose funding.
- 23. DOWNTOWN GATHERING PLACE.** Visalia needs an outdoor public gathering place in the downtown that takes advantage of Mill Creek that presently flows beneath much of the downtown. Open it to view and provide amenities for people to gather there. Provide public restrooms.

Attachment 2.B – continued

- 24. EXPANSION OF THE DOWNTOWN CORE.** The downtown core needs to be expanded to the north and to the east over time to perpetuate the interest and variety of services in the downtown. Maintain the balance of retail, restaurant, entertainment, the arts, professional services, financial services and family activities.
- 25. FUTURE CLOSURE OF WEST ST. OFF OF MINERAL KING AVE.** Provisions need to be made for the convenient accessibility of the downtown to the motorist traveling east on SR 198 after West St. is closed to accommodate the expansion of Kaweah Delta Hospital. Resolving this will make investment in retail businesses on the west end of the downtown more acceptable.
- 26. CONCENTRIC GROWTH.** Hold the line. This approach has served Visalia well for decades.
- 27. GENERATIONAL TRANSITION.** The long term Vision for the city needs to be updated with input from the 18 to 29 year old age group. The city's current Vision and Mission Statement were crafted over a decade ago and may not reflect the values of those who will assume the leadership of this community in the years ahead. The city should do more to engage this age group.
- 28. WATER SCARCITY.** What does that mean for the city's future? How did we get here? What can we do about this? A renewed effort is needed to get the community to take this issue seriously.
- 29. ACCESS TO DATA.** Residents would benefit from online access to current data regarding crime statistics, Measure T and Measure R progress on projects, housing trends, development activity, street improvements, etc.
- 30. COLLEGE GRADUATES.** An organized effort should be made to attract Visalia's college graduates back to the community. We need to increase the pool of college educated men and women in order to attract business and industry that offers higher paying jobs. Greater social opportunities in Visalia that are attractive to young adults would make this a little easier.

ATTACHMENT 3

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

ATTACHMENT 4

**PROGRESS ON PROJECTS FROM THE 2008 STRATEGIC
PLANNING WORKSHOP**

ATTACHMENT 5

DISCUSSION OF CITY FINANCES

ATTACHMENT 6

EAST DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

ATTACHMENT 7

TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND RELATED INFORMATION

ATTACHMENT 8

**COMPARISON OF FOCUSED AND COMPREHENSIVE
GENERAL PLAN UPDATES**

ATTACHMENT 9

GANG PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION

ATTACHMENT 10

LISTING OF POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE 2009 WORKSHOP

THE ECONOMY

1. **Tax Revenue Base.** How do we retain Visalia's attractiveness when we are falling behind our neighbors in our tax revenue base? How do we regain parity with neighboring communities in the areas of the Property Tax Rate, the Sales Tax Override, the Transient Occupancy Tax and the Utility Users Tax Rate in order to invest in community amenities that keep Visalia an attractive place for quality development?

What new revenue sources can be added to broaden the city's revenue base?

PUBLIC SAFETY

2. **Neighborhood Preservation.** Accelerate the Neighborhood Preservation effort. Include rezoning Court St. and Locust St. between the Oval and Houston Ave. for office development. Use the Oval as a community gathering place with a Latino theme on weekends.
3. **Gang Prevention and Suppression.** What resources can we add to the ongoing efforts to address gang activity? How do we more effectively address the disproportionate level of violent activity on the north side of the community? Prepare a map of the incidents of violent crime (245 p.c. and 246 p.c.) in the community for the past 3 years to get an idea of where it is occurring most often.

COMMUNICATION

4. **Communicating With the Public.** How can we be more effective and reach a greater number of community members? For example, the 300 foot rule for public notice regarding planning issues is inadequate.

How can we make better use of the Public Opinion Survey? What are we trying to accomplish and how accurately does it reflect the demographics of our community? What are the acceptable levels of satisfaction for each

city service and what are we doing to follow up on those that don't meet the standard?

What might we do differently to acclimate newcomers to the community and get them more informed and involved in community affairs?

WORKFORCE

5. **Reduction In Workforce.** How is the freeze on vacant positions impacting staff's workload? Which services slow down or suffer in quality when there are fewer people and more limited resources to rely upon? Examples:

- Neighborhood preservation
- Fire prevention
- Capital projects
- Crime prevention

When is it better to discontinue a service in order to do a better job with the services we can more adequately staff with a reduced workforce?

6. **Employee Development.** What level of investment should the city be making in training and mentoring employees in order to assure a pool of talented prospects for promotion into future vacancies?

What, if any, policies need to be implemented to encourage building a workforce that reflects the faces seen in the community? What are we doing to get employees ready for promotion that will help us achieve gender and ethnic balance in the leadership positions of our organization? What baseline do we use to measure progress in this area?

7. **Volunteerism.** How do we make greater use of volunteerism to reduce reliance on city staff for providing community services?
8. **Collaboration.** What opportunities do we have for collaboration with the County, KDDH and School District to pool resources?

LAND USE

9. **Smart Growth and Infill Land Use Planning.** How will concentric growth guide future land use planning? Which of the recommendations from the Smart Growth Task Force remain to be implemented? How do

we want to handle growth when we come out of the current housing slump?

What does sensible growth look like that won't exceed our ability to provide infrastructure and services over the next decade?

10. **Mooney Blvd. from Main St. to Caldwell Ave.** What will this retail corridor look like in 20 years? In what ways will the city need to be involved to make it happen?
11. **General Plan Update.** Discuss the direction staff is to take with the General Plan Update. What is the decision really about? Include a presentation on the advantages and disadvantages of both the comprehensive and the focused approach. Include costs, timelines and staff capabilities of both approaches. Be specific regarding the impact of both approaches on the interests of the development community. Is there another approach for revising the existing General Plan that can accomplish the same thing?
12. **Highway 198 Scenic Corridor.** Where are we going with this?
13. **Commercial Development Zoning Parity.** What can be done to increase the amount of land zoned for commercial development north of Houston Ave. so it compares more favorably with land zoned commercially south of highway 198.
14. **Housing Density.** How dense are we willing to get?
15. **Retail Building Design Standards.** We need better design standards for retail buildings so plans don't have to be sent back through the review process so many times to get it right. The Lowes project is an example of this.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

16. **Sustaining Visalia's "Place" in the Region.** How competitive will the city be in the future in attracting quality development? How do we grow more jobs that lift the community? What can the city do to help the fragile retail environment?

Visalia used to be referred to as the “Jewel of the Valley”. Are we losing this? How do we sustain this reputation? What contributes to the appeal of having a Visalia address?

What are we doing to market Visalia? Who is doing it? What are we accomplishing?

INFRASTRUCTURE

17. **State Funding Freeze.** How is the state’s freeze of infrastructure money for local jurisdictions going to impact our capital projects? What do we do about it?
18. **Project Priorities.** Establish a hierarchy of importance for our Capital Improvement Projects. What can we reasonably expect to get done in the next 5 years? What will be on the “unfunded” list? What should be dropped off entirely?
19. **New Facilities Maintenance Costs.** Where is the funding going to come from to take care of the new recreation and park facilities that we are adding? What is the feasibility of a city-wide maintenance district for park and recreation facility maintenance?
20. **Conyer St. Parking Structure.** What is our plan for moving forward with this when the private sector begins building at its site?

QUALITY OF LIFE

21. **Downtown.** How do we address the changing character of the downtown as entertainment and alcohol consumption is added to greater numbers of restaurants? How is it impacting the pedestrian visitors, especially during the evening and nighttime hours?
22. **Green Movement.** What should we be doing to promote it in Visalia’s codes, planning designs, activities, transportation, etc.?
23. **Homeless.** How could the city provide for basic needs of the homeless that are not being met by any other public or private agency, i.e. Day Visit Centers? How would the city avoid becoming a magnet to the homeless

- from areas outside Visalia? How would facilities used by the homeless affect the surrounding neighborhood? What do we do to address the situation of neighboring communities transporting their homeless to Visalia?
24. **Hierarchy of Services.** What is Council's hierarchy of community services that are to be provided if the city has to cut back services in response to a continuing budget shortfall?
 25. **High Speed Rail.** What should the city be doing to get a station located in or near Visalia? How might Tulare County and Kings County work together on this? What is Visalia's role vis a vis TCAG?
 26. **District Representation for City Council Elections.** When is the right time to move to this method of electing City Council members?
 27. **Visalia's Mission and Vision.** Reaffirm the city's mission statement and Council's vision statement.
 28. **Immigration.** How is immigration impacting Visalia and how should the city be dealing with it?
 29. **College Education.** How can we expand college education opportunities in Visalia?

ATTACHMENT 11

**MEMORANDUM OF JANUARY 20, 2009 from the VISALIA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

ATTACHMENT 12

MEMORANDUM OF JANUARY 21, 2009 FROM THE HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF TULARE/KINGS COUNTIES, INC.

ATTACHMENT 13

TULARE COUNTY POPULATION DISTRIBUTION MAP