



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING**  
**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AND CAPITAL PROJECTS DIVISION**

**County of Fresno General Plan Review and  
Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update  
Final Program Environmental Impact Report  
(SCH No. 2018031066)**

**Fresno County Planning Commission**

**January 25, 2024**



# Key Documents:

1. **Final Program Environmental Impact Report/Response to Comments – released January 2024**
2. **CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations – January 2024 PC Staff Report**
3. **Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program – release January 2024**
4. **Response to Comments related to Changes to the General Plan (April 2023 to June 2023)**
5. **Comments and responses from prior document releases – (2018 through 2021)**
6. **Recommended Modifications to the General Plan Policy Document (Since April of 2023)**
7. **Recommended Modifications to the Zoning Ordinance (Since April of 2023)**
8. **Recommended Modifications to the Background Report (Since April of 2023)**
9. **Draft General Plan Policy Document (April 2023)**
10. **Draft General Plan Background Report (April 2023)**
11. **Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (April 2023)**
12. **Draft Zoning Ordinance Update (April 2023)**

# Public Workshops

- **Since 2018 staff has conducted or participated in 30 meetings or workshops related to the General Plan Review and Zoning Ordinance Update (Project).**
- **Meetings and workshops held throughout Fresno County Unincorporated Communities.**
- **Following the April 28, 2023 release of the Project Documents, staff held seven community workshops at various locations throughout the County in May and June of 2023.**
- **On September 14, 2023 staff conducted a workshop with the Planning Commission**

# General Plan Review and Zoning Ordinance Update:

- Extends the General Plan planning period from 2000 to 2042
- Retains the major themes of the current 2000 General Plan (directs urban growth to existing cities/unincorporated communities, limits intrusion of development and incompatible land uses onto productive agricultural land, limits rural residential development).
- Addresses several legislative bills through policy or zoning ordinance modifications: SB 99 (Residential Emergency Evacuation Routes); SB 379 (Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Strategies); AB 1409 (Evacuation Locations); AB 747 (Evacuation Routes); SB 743 (Vehicle Miles Traveled); AB 1763 and AB 2345 (Density Bonus); AB 101 (Low Barrier Navigation Centers); SB 290 (Affordable to Lower Income Households Clarification); AB 1174 (Streamlined Ministerial Approval Process for Housing Developments).

# General Plan Review and Zoning Ordinance Update continued:

- Includes new Environmental Justice Element addressing requirements of SB 1000 and AB 1528 (disadvantaged and environmental justice unincorporated communities) with new policies and implementation programs.
- Provides for an updated General Plan Safety Element, which was submitted to and approved by the State Board of Forestry, that addresses climate hazards including wildfires, fire vulnerability, and emergency evacuation.
- Includes Board-directed redesignation and rezoning of lands along and near Reno and Auberry Roads to reflect existing parcelization and land use of the area.

# General Plan Review and Zoning Ordinance Update continued:

- **New industrial development standards in the Zoning Ordinance intended to minimize potential impacts to sensitive receptors and land uses including those in proximity to disadvantaged communities.**
- **Additional Zoning Ordinance flexibility for Director’s determinations and the establishment of Temporary Use Permits for certain uses.**
- **The identification of two new special study areas relating to the County’s Business and Industrial Campus and a proposed educational-based Master Planned community north of State Route 180 along the Kings River.**
- **The incorporation of State-mandated requirements and updated zoning practices for accessory dwelling units, objective design standards for multifamily development, and the expansion of potential locations for emergency shelters, while addressing prior Zoning Ordinance ambiguities and expands the potential location for emergency shelters.**
- **Reformatting of the Zoning Ordinance by incorporating the use of user-friendly tables, diagrams, and graphics in the Zoning Ordinance.**

# Vision Statement:

**This General Plan sets out a vision reflected in goals, policies, programs, and diagrams for Fresno County through the plan horizon year of 2042 and beyond. This plan carries forward major policies that have been in place since the mid-1970s but expands and strengthens them to meet the challenges of the 21st century.**

**The County sees its primary role to be the protector of prime agricultural lands, open space, recreational opportunities, and environmental quality, and the coordinator of countywide efforts to promote economic development.**

# The General Plan Review carries forward the same Themes identified in the 2000 General Plan, with the addition of an Environmental Justice Theme:

1. *Economic Development*
2. *Agricultural Land Protection*
3. *Growth Accommodation*
4. *Urban-Centered Growth*
5. *Efficient and Functional Land Use Patterns*
6. *Service Efficiency*
7. *Recreation Development*
8. *Resource Protection*
9. *Health and Safety Protection*
10. *Health and Well-Being*
11. *Enhanced Quality of Life*
12. *Affordable Housing*
13. *Environmental Justice*



# Eight General Plan Elements:

Fresno County General Plan Elements	General Plan Elements Required by State Law										
	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety	Air Quality	Environmental Justice	Optional	
	Economic Development	X									X
	Agriculture and Land Use	X				X			X		
	Transportation and Circulation		X					X			
	Public Facilities and Services	X	X							X	
	Open Space and Conservation				X	X					
	Health and Safety						X	X	X		
	Environmental Justice								X		
	Housing (via separate adoption of Housing Element)			X							



# Environmental Justice Element

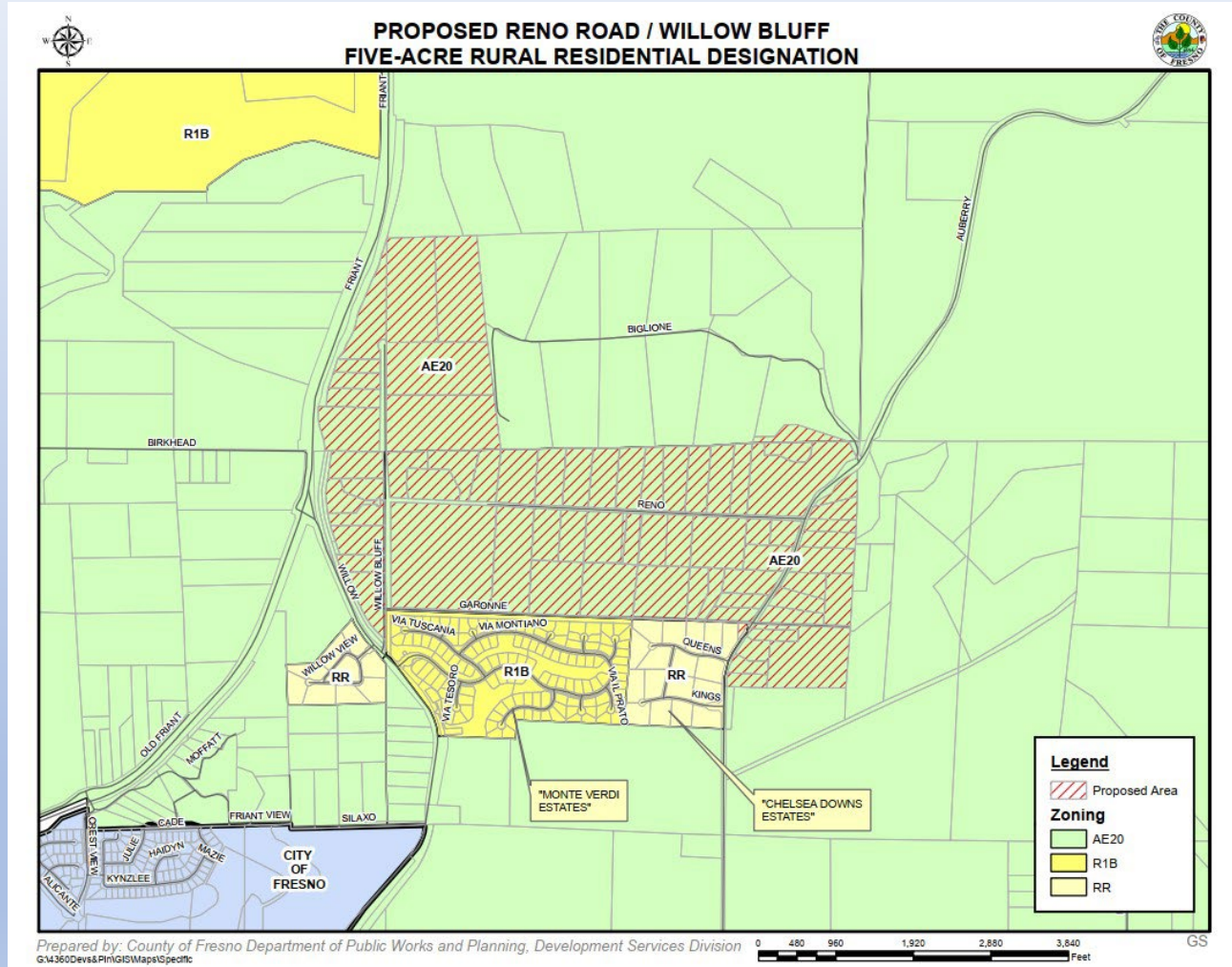
Through policies and programs, the following topics are addressed:

- Land use and the environment
- Promoting physical activity and facility access
- Access to health and healthy foods
- Safe & Sanitary Homes
- Community participation

# General Plan Safety Element

- **Safety Element was revised following the July 2021 redrafted General Plan Policy Document.**
- **Based on recommendations from County's land use/environmental consultant, data from the Climate Vulnerability Assessment and consultation with Cal Fire staff.**
- **Pursuant to state law (GC §65302.5) on May 9, 2023 County staff, the consultant and Cal Fire staff presented the revised Safety Element to the California Board of Forestry, which was accepted without requests for additional changes.**

# Reno Road Area Rezoning AE-20 to AL-20 and Policy (Pursuant to Board of Supervisor Direction received November 14, 2017).



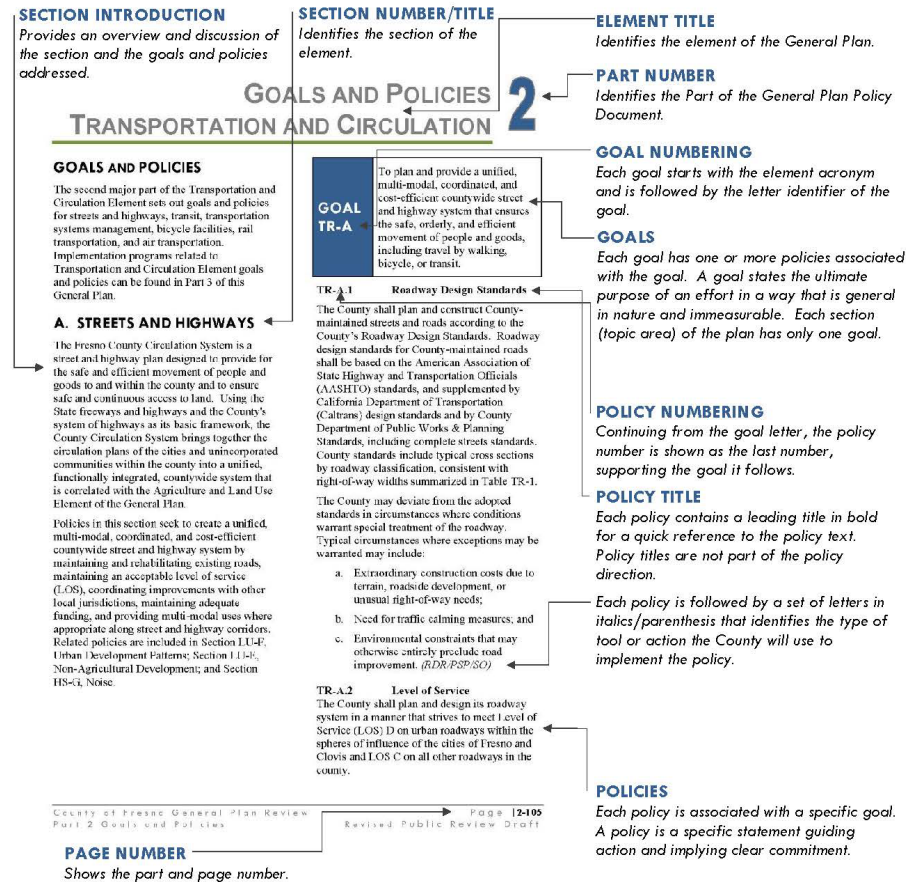
## RENO, GARONNE, WILLOW BLUFF RURAL RESIDENTIAL AREA

### LU-E.24 Reno, Garonne, Willow Bluff Rural Residential Area

The Rural Residential designation comprising an approximate 481-acre area generally bounded by Friant Road/Willow Avenue to the west, Garonne Avenue to the south, those parcels immediately east and adjacent to Auberry Road to the east and generally the Birkhead Road alignment to the north and encompassing those parcels immediately to the west, northeast, and east of the full length of Willow Bluff Avenue. This is an area committed to rural-sized parcels. The Limited Agricultural zoning reflects potential water resource constraints in the general vicinity. Future rezoning of this area to the implementing Rural Residential zoning district shall maintain a minimum five-acre parcel size and shall be subject to a determination of adequate water supply per Agriculture and Land Use Policy LU-E.8, and adequate road access and road maintenance as determined by the Director of the Department of Public Works and Planning (See Figure LU-4).

## GOALS AND POLICIES READERS' GUIDE

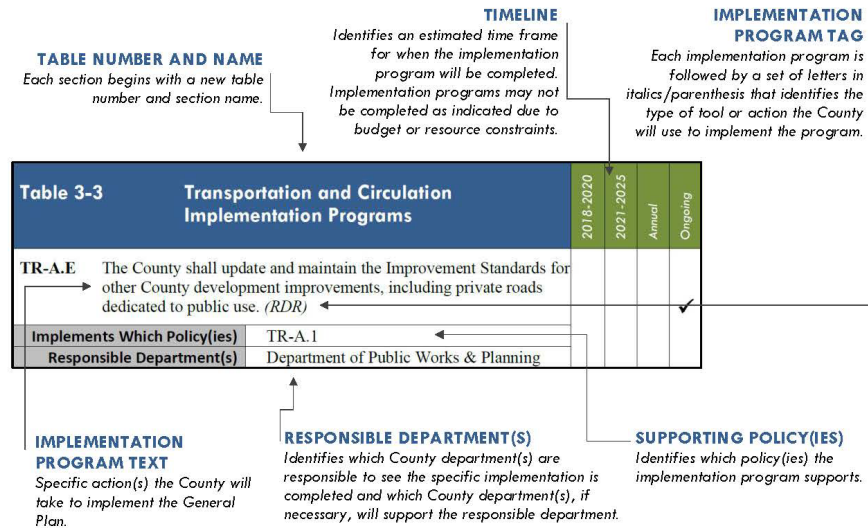
Each element contains the goals and policies that will be used by the County to guide future land use, development, and environmental protection decisions.



## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS READERS' GUIDE

To help ensure that appropriate actions are taken to implement the General Plan, the Plan includes a set of implementation programs. Implementation programs identify the specific steps to be taken by the County to implement the policies. They may include revisions of current codes and ordinances, plans and capital improvements, programs, financing, and other measures that should be assigned to different County departments after the General Plan is adopted. The types of tools or actions the County can use to carry out its policies and implementation programs generally fall into the eight categories listed below. These categories are explained in detail in Part 3, Administration and Implementation, along with a list of specific implementation programs.

- Regulation and Development Review (RDR)
- Plans, Strategies, and Programs (PSP)
- Financing and Budgeting (FB)
- Planning Studies and Reports (PSR)
- County Services and Operations (SO)
- Inter-governmental Coordination (IGC)
- Joint Partnerships with the Private Sector (JP)
- Public Information (PI)



# GOALS AND POLICIES 2

## AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

### LU-A.23 ~~Prime Farmland Conversion~~

~~The County shall require discretionary land use projects which propose the permanent conversion of forty acres or more of Prime Farmland (as designated by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program) to non-agricultural uses to undertake an evaluation of soil type, existing crop history and access to surface irrigation water to support the non-viability of the land for agricultural use. Should documentation indicate a loss of productive agricultural land would occur due to project development, consideration shall be given to offsetting land conversion through grants of perpetual conservation easements, deed restrictions, establishment of land trusts, in-lieu fee payment program or other County approved farmland conservation mechanisms for the purpose of preserving agricultural land. This policy does not apply to land zoned or designated in the General Plan for non-agricultural land uses.~~

For discretionary land use projects that are not directly related to or supportive of agricultural uses and which propose the permanent conversion of twenty acres or more of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance (as designated by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program) to nonagricultural uses, the County shall consider and adopt feasible measures including, but not limited to:

- Acquisition of conservation easements at a 1:1 ratio for lands lost to nonagricultural uses.
- Fee title of agricultural mitigation land that may be held by a third party or the County.
- In lieu fees paid to the County that may be used to acquire future mitigation property.
- Mitigation banks.

The County may exempt projects from agricultural mitigation requirements when it has

been determined that conversion is occurring pursuant to a local groundwater sustainability plan, or the project is for housing which is predominately for persons of low or moderate income as defined in section 50093 of the Health and Safety Code. Further, the County may exempt discretionary land use projects from agricultural mitigation requirements if it finds that the loss of agricultural land caused by the proposed conversion is outweighed by specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the conversion, as contemplated by section 21081(b) of the Public Resources Code.

### LU-A.24 Important Farmland Map

The County shall encourage the State of California Department of Conservation to update its Important Farmland Map in consideration of recent restrictions to groundwater pumping, reduced access to surface water and the potential loss of irrigable land.

## B. WESTSIDE RANGELANDS

The western rangelands of Fresno County's coastal foothills possess unique physiographic features and are relatively isolated from major population concentrations. This area is sensitive to human activity and is best suited for continuation of open space uses that protect important watershed areas, decrease flood hazards, and prevent loss of wildlife habitat, grazing land, and other desirable open space uses. At the same time, various non-intensive uses are suitable for this land including grazing and other agricultural operations, mining, oil and gas development, and various recreational activities such as hiking, hunting, and rock hounding.

Policies in this section seek to preserve rangelands by maintaining their open space character, minimizing grading and erosion, maintaining grazing and agricultural operations, accommodating mineral resource recovery, and protecting biological resources from development. Related policies are included in

<https://fresnocountygeneralplan.com> → Released Documents  
→ General Plan Policy Document Comparative Draft:  
Comparative Draft Page → General Plan Review Public Review  
Draft April 2023 to January 2024

# Zoning Ordinance Update

- Individual land use districts and their standards combined into Article 2
- Definitions moved to Article 7 and expanded
- Special standards for certain uses placed in Article 4
- Some key additions:
  - ✓ Objective Design Standards for Multi-family Development (834.4.430)
  - ✓ Commercial/Industrial/Warehousing Standards (834.4.450)
  - ✓ Temporary Uses (Chapter 858.5)
  - ✓ Director's Determinations (Chapter 802.1 and multiple locations)
  - ✓ Accessory Dwelling Units (Chapter 834.4.030)



# Zoning Ordinance Update Articles

## **ARTICLE 1 - Purpose and Applicability**

- **Chapter 800.1 Purpose and Effect of Zoning Ordinance**
- **Chapter 802.1 Interpretation of Regulations**
- **Chapter 804.1 Land Use Permit Requirements**

## **ARTICLE 2 - Zones, Allowable Land Uses, and Zone-Specific Standards**

- **Chapter 806.2 Zones Established, Zone Map Adopted**
- **Chapter 808.2 Agricultural Zones**
- **Chapter 810.2 Residential Zones**
- **Chapter 812.2 Commercial Zones**
- **Chapter 814.2 Industrial Zones**
- **Chapter 816.2 Special Purpose Zones**
- **Chapter 818.2 Overlay/Combining Zones**
- **Chapter 819.2 Specific Plans**

# Zoning Ordinance Update Articles Continued

## **ARTICLE 3 - Development and Operational Standards**

- **Chapter 820.3 Performance Standards**
- **Chapter 822.3 Property Development and Use Standards**
- **Chapter 824.3 Affordable Housing Incentives - Density Bonus**
- **Chapter 826.3 Landscaping Standards**
- **Chapter 828.3 Parking and Loading Standards**
- **Chapter 830.3 Signs**

## **ARTICLE 4 - Standards for Specific Land Uses**

### **Accessory Structures through Commercial/Industrial/Warehousing Development Standards**

# Zoning Ordinance Update Articles Continued

## **ARTICLE 5 - Land Use and Development Review Procedures**

- Chapter 838.5 Application Filing, Processing, And Fees
- Chapter 842.5 Conditional Use Permits
- Chapter 844.5 Development Agreements
- Chapter 846.5 Director's Review and Approval
- Chapter 852.5 Reasonable Accommodations
- Chapter 854.5 Site Plan Review
- Chapter 858.5 Temporary Use Permits
- Chapter 860.5 Variances/Minor Deviations

## **ARTICLE 6 - Zoning Ordinance Administration**

- Chapter 866.6 Administrative Responsibility
- Chapter 868.6 Permit Implementation, Time Limits, Extensions and Revocation
- Chapter 870.6 Nonconforming Uses, Structures, and Parcels
- Chapter 872.6 Amendments (General Plan, Zone Map, and Zoning Ordinance)
- Chapter 874.6 Public Hearings
- Chapter 876.6 Appeals
- Chapter 878.6 Enforcement

## **ARTICLE 7 - Definitions**

# Program Environmental Impact Report

The DPEIR was circulated for a 60-day public comment period from April 28, 2023 to June 27, 2023.

The Final PEIR was posted earlier this month first with the State Clearinghouse on January 5<sup>th</sup> and then released to interested parties and agencies on January 12th.

# Program Environmental Impact Report

- CEQA Guidelines §15121(a), “[a]n EIR is an informational document which will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. An EIR is not intended to recommend either approval or denial of a project. Rather, an EIR is a document whose primary purpose is to disclose the potential environmental impacts associated with an action or project.”

# Program Environmental Impact Report

The Draft PEIR determined that the Project would have less-than-significant impact regarding:

- Aesthetics
- Energy
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Biological Resources (with mitigation)

# Program Environmental Impact Report

The Project would have significant and unavoidable impacts regarding:

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Transportation and Traffic Quality
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

# Program Environmental Impact Report

A number of proposed or revised policies which represent DPEIR mitigation. For example:

Policy LU-A.23	Farmland Conversion
Policy OS-G.12	Architectural Coating Reactive Organic Gases Content Limits
Policy OS-E.19	Nesting Birds
Policy OS-J.2	Historic Resources Consideration
Policy OS-J.4	Cultural Resources Protection and Mitigation
Policy HS-G.12	Funding for a Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Preparation of a Climate Action Plan
Policy HS-G.13	Preparation and Implementation of a Climate Action Plan
Policy HS-H.10	Construction Vibration Control Measures
Policy TR-A.25	VMT Threshold



# Program Environmental Impact Report

Pursuant to Section 15091 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (and Section 21081 of the California Public Resources Code) a public agency, prior to approving a project, may identify significant project impacts of the project and make one or more written findings for each impact.

Exhibits 2 and 3 of the Planning Commission Staff Report contains those CEQA Findings for the General Plan Review and Zoning Ordinance Update and MMRP.

# Questions and Discussion



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**County of Fresno General Plan Review and  
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Final Program Environmental Impact Report  
(SCH No. 2018031066)**

**Fresno County Planning Commission**

**January 25, 2024**



# Planning Commission Motions:

## Recommended Motion (Approval Action)

1. Recommend the Board of Supervisors certify that the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) prepared for the Fresno County General Plan Review and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update, as complete and adequate in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
  - a. The Final PEIR (FPEIR) was presented to, reviewed and considered by the Planning Commission.
  - b. The recommendation to certify the FPEIR reflects the Planning Commission's independent judgement.
  - c. Recommend the Board of Supervisors adopt the required CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations, approve the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program included as Exhibits 2 and 3, and certify the Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2018031066) prepared for the proposed project.
2. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 529 relative to changes to the text and graphics of the General Plan Policy Document including modifications, deletion or addition of policies and programs and extension of the document's planning horizon to 2042; and
3. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors accept the revised General Plan Background Report; and
4. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve Amendment Application No. 3862 rezoning a 481-acre area bounded by Friant Road/Willow Avenue to the west, Garonne Avenue to the south, those parcels immediately east and adjacent to Auberry Road to the east and generally the Birkhead Road alignment to the north and encompassing those parcels immediately to the west, northeast and east of the full length of Willow Bluff Avenue from the AE (Exclusive Agricultural) to the AL (Limited Agricultural) Zone District; and
5. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve Amendment to Text No. 385 adopting the Comprehensive Update to the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance; and
6. Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

# Planning Commission Motions (Alternative Motions):

## Approval with Recommended Revisions

1. Recommend the Board of Supervisors certify that the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) prepared for the Fresno County General Plan Review and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update, as complete and adequate in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);The Final PEIR (FPEIR) was presented to, reviewed and considered by the Planning Commission.
  - a. The Final PEIR (FPEIR) was presented to, reviewed and considered by the Planning Commission.
  - b. The recommendation to certify the FPEIR reflects the Planning Commission's independent judgement.
  - c. Recommend the Board of Supervisors adopt the CEQA Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, approve the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program included as Exhibit 3, and certify the Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2018031066) prepared for the proposed project.
2. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors accept the revised General Plan Background Report; and
3. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 529, changing the text and graphics of the General Plan Policy Document including modifications, deletion or addition of policies and programs and extension of the document's planning horizon to 2042; recommend approval of Amendment Application No. 3862; and Amendment to Text No. 385 adopting the Comprehensive Update to the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance with modifications as noted by the Commission; and
4. Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

# Planning Commission Motions (Alternative Motions):

## Denial Action

1. Recommend the Board of Supervisors not certify that the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) prepared for the Fresno County General Plan Review and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update; and
2. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors not approve General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 529 relative to changes to the text and graphics of the General Plan Policy Document and not accept the updated General Plan Background Report; and
3. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors not approve Amendment Application No. 3862 rezoning a 481-acre area as noted previously from the AE (Exclusive Agricultural) to the AL (Limited Agricultural) Zone District; and
4. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors not approve Amendment to Text No. 385 adopting the Comprehensive Update to the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance; and Articulate in the denial motion the specific reasons for the motion; and
5. Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.