West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan
Guiding Principles, Goals and Policies

The Steering Committee recommended the following Guiding Principles to serve as a foundation for this Plan.

Transportation

- Accommodate and improve roadway access, connectivity, and mobility among all modes of transportation, and prioritize roadway widening where bottlenecking exists.
- Accommodate planned transit services in the West Area by locating routes near or adjacent to the community centers, schools, parks, and retail centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained sidewalk network from residential neighborhoods to commercial centers, schools, parks, and community centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained roadway network that allows for efficient and smooth access from the West Area to other sections of the city and region.

Parks & Trails

- Create parks that are within existing and planned neighborhoods that are easily accessed by community members using pedestrian and bicycle pathways, transit services, or motor vehicles, consistent with the City of Fresno's Parks Master Plan.
- Provide for the location of a flagship regional park in the Plan Area that has components of the Plan Area's agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation or trees, and the creation of public art that exhibits the Plan Area’s contribution to the agricultural industry.

Agriculture

- Incorporate elements of agriculture in future parks by planting a mixture of native drought tolerant vegetation, shrubs, and trees that can serve to provide shade and enhance the streetscape.
- Encourage and provide land use opportunities for agritourism ventures to occur in the West Area.
- Encourage the development of harvest-producing community gardens.

Retail

- Attract desired and needed local retail establishments to serve the needs of the West Area community. Such establishments include grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants (other than fast food), and boutiques.
- Discourage the expansion of undesirable retail establishments such as liquor stores, tobacco...
and vapor stores, short-term loan and pawn shops, and adult stores.

- Encourage the development of retail establishments along commercial corridors.

**Housing**

- Encourage a variety of housing types and styles.
- Encourage the development of housing to accommodate an aging population including multi-generational houses and other elder housing options.
- Reaffirm the City’s commitment and obligation to affirmatively furthering access to fair and affordable housing opportunities by strongly encouraging equitable and fair housing opportunities to be located in strategic proximity to employment, recreational facilities, schools, neighborhood commercial areas, and transportation routes.

**Catalytic Corridors**

- Encourage the orderly and consistent development of civic, parkland, retail and commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family uses along West Shaw Avenue, West Ashlan Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, West Shields Avenue, West Clinton Avenue, and Blythe Avenue.

**Education**

- Attract much-needed educational opportunities for the residents of the West Area, especially for post-secondary education, and access to programs for life-long learners.

**Public Safety**

- Provide for safe routes to schools for children, with the City and County working together with residents, to provide sidewalks in neighborhoods that have sporadic access.
- Work to promote Neighborhood Watch in all neighborhoods, and further assess the need for the location of emergency response facilities west of Highway 99.
Chapter 3 | Goals & Policies

The goals and policies within this section are based on input from community members, the recommendations of the Steering Committee, and current best practices. They are intended to advance the functionality and vibrancy of the West Area. For purposes of readability, the phrase “Infrastructure & the Public Realm” will be abbreviated as “IPR” in this section. Each policy shall be interpreted as an affirmative and required action.

**IPR Goal 1** Improve access, movement, and safety for all transportation modes in the West Area.

**IPR 1.1** Implement the Active Transportation Plan, ADA Transition Plan for ROW, and the General Plan to provide for complete, safe, and well-maintained sidewalk, bicycle, and trail networks that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and which connect established and planned residential neighborhoods to destinations such as commercial and employment centers, schools, parks, and community centers.

**IPR 1.2** Collaborate with Central Unified School District and Fresno County to support Safe Routes to Schools by collecting family travel data, prioritizing infrastructure improvements near schools, and promoting annual Walk & Bike to School Days to encourage active transportation.

**IPR 1.3** Create a connected, safe, and pleasant pedestrian experience by requiring the provision of curb, curb ramps, gutter, streetlights, sidewalks, and street trees on both sides of the street in all new developments.

**IPR 1.4** Encourage the provision of amenities that enhance the pedestrian experience, such as sidewalks that are 5-7 feet or wider to allow people to stroll both together or apart at comfortable distances, as well as benches, shade, greenery, and in more prominent gathering places - water features (using rainfall or recycled water).

**IPR 1.5** Require the installation of bicycle-supportive infrastructure to future development and roadway improvements, including bike parking facilities as well as through lanes and detection loops at every signaled intersection where Class II and Class IV bike lanes are existing and planned.

**IPR 1.6** Where Class II and Class IV bike lanes currently exist and are planned on roads with speeds of 30 mph or greater, add a painted buffer to the bike lane to provide improved safety and permit future installation of a protective barrier.
IPR 1.7
Expand transit services in the West Area as development occurs, by locating routes near or adjacent to civic centers, schools, public parks, and retail centers.

IPR 1.8
When a project generates Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) above an established threshold, require mitigation consistent with the City’s VMT Program. If consistent with the Program, mitigation could potentially include funding for active transportation improvements, such as upgrades to bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure, transit service extensions, or contributions to an active transportation fund.

IPR 1.9
When a development project is planned at major intersections or along a Catalytic Corridor with existing or future transit service, require enhancements to transit stops, such as sidewalks, benches, lighting, trash cans, accessibility improvements, shelters, and/or shading.

IPR 1.10
When improvements related to large employers or schools (defined as having 100 or more employees or students) are proposed, consider requiring a subsidized transit pass program for employees and students.

IPR 1.11
Improve multimodal transportation access to the east side of Highway 99 by completing the Veterans Boulevard interchange project and the underpass at West Gettysburg Avenue.

IPR 1.12
Designate Grantland Avenue and Veterans Boulevard between Shields Avenue and its overcrossing of the railroad tracks as a boulevard area, with a required 30-foot landscaped setback. Planned elements of the city’s master trail system may be located partially within this setback.

IPR 1.13
Examine truck routes in the West Area and provide a strategy to alter any routes that utilize lower-intensity residential roads or are near K-12 schools.

IPR 1.14
Continue to support and coordinate with California High Speed Rail to create a railroad overpass at Shaw Avenue and underpass at Herndon Avenue.

IPR 1.15
Work to reduce roadway bottlenecks and collaborate with Caltrans and other regional partners to improve the interchange at Highway 99 and Shaw Avenue.

IPR 1.16
Encourage the use of micromobility in the West Area, consider it when designing or retrofitting transportation-related infrastructure, and explore potential for integration with public transit.
Guiding Principles, Goals and Policies

IPR 1.17  As part of the next General Plan process, perform an analysis of access to transportation options across socio-economic factors to determine how to improve connections for currently under-resourced communities.

IPR Goal 2  Provide streetscapes that are welcoming and safe to all users, instill a sense of place within the West Area, and contribute to the community's safety and quality of life.

IPR 2.1  Install traffic calming elements such as bulb outs and trees in pedestrian-oriented areas, such as at intersections and crosswalks to lower speeds and increase safety.

IPR 2.2  Install pedestrian safety features such as midblock crossings, especially near schools; leading pedestrian intervals at intersections; median refuge islands along wider streets; scramble crossings in high pedestrian areas; and pedestrian-scale lighting along major corridors, at crosswalks, and at transit stops. Midblock crossings near schools should include Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHB) and traffic signal timing changes.

IPR 2.3  Build on the Highway 99 Beautification Master Plan and create attractive gateways from Highway 99 to the West Area.

IPR 2.4  Collaborate with the Fresno County Office of Tourism, the Vintners and Distillers of Fresno County, Fresno County Farm Bureau, and other potential partners to incorporate wayfinding signage throughout the West Area that promotes agritourism activities, including highlighting the locations of local wineries and farm stands.

IPR 2.5  Consider implementing a streetlight banner program along major streets and other pedestrian-oriented areas to promote spatial identity and local celebrations, including a military service banner program for Veterans Boulevard to permit families to apply to have a banner hung in honor of their loved one's military service.

IPR 2.6  Collaborate with Central Unified School District to identify and facilitate needed streetscape improvements to add safety features, create unique landscapes, and enable student-led art projects to increase visibility and sense of place around local schools.

IPR 2.7  Engage residents to identify cohesive neighborhoods within the West Area and develop landscape districts and arts strategies for each neighborhood.

IPR 2.8  Encourage streetscape improvements to incorporate tactile, visual, and audial elements to allow broad enjoyment of the public realm and prioritize these elements where there is significant pedestrian activity at retail or commercial centers, schools, bus stops, public parks, community resource centers, and places of worship.
IPR 2.9  Plant locally appropriate, drought-tolerant landscaping and, where possible, incorporate designs that can contribute to groundwater recharge, flood protection, and reduced urban heat island effects.

IPR Goal 3  Continue to plan for, properly manage, and preserve water resources and natural habitats in the West Area.

IPR 3.1  Encourage the incorporation of water conservation methods in new development, such as greywater systems, drought-resilient landscaping, and reduction of nonporous surfaces.

IPR 3.2  Continue to evaluate Capital Improvement Programs and update them to add missing infrastructure and to meet the demand for new development.

IPR 3.3  Continue to set appropriate conditions of approval for each new development proposal to ensure that water resource facilities are in place prior to construction and building occupancy.

IPR 3.4  Continue to plan for, install, and operate recycled water systems to benefit the West Area and to support local resource conservation goals.

IPR 3.5  Utilize existing regulations and procedures, including but not limited to, the Development Code and the environmental review process, in order to conserve any existing or discovered wetland, riparian, or other sensitive habitats within the Plan Area.

IPR 3.6  Where sensitive biological habitats have been identified or are discovered on or immediately adjacent to a project site, the project shall include appropriate mitigation measures determined by a qualified biologist.

IPR 3.7  Coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Fresno County, and local watershed protection groups to identify potentially impacted aquatic habitat within the Plan Area and to develop management guidelines to be implemented by development, recreation, and other projects adjacent to ponds, ditches, canals, and other waterways.
Chapter 4 | Goals & Policies

The goals and policies within this section are based on input from community members, the recommendations of the Steering Committee, and current best practices. They are intended to advance the functionality and vibrancy of the West Area. For purposes of readability, the phrase “Public Facilities” will be abbreviated as “PF” in this section. Each policy shall be interpreted as an affirmative and required action.

**PF Goal 1**  Develop new parks, trails, and open space within the West Area.

**PF 1.1** Meet the General Plan standard for at least three acres of parkland per 1,000 residents for parks less than 40 acres in size.

**PF 1.2** Establish new parks and open space through enforcement of Municipal Code requirements for new residential development; through the utilization of vacant and undevelopable land; and through partnerships with landowners, residents, community groups, and public agencies.

**PF 1.3** Pursue and advocate for new and prioritized funding sources for parks, trails, and open space.

**PF 1.4** Ensure parks are accessible to community members by multiple modes of transportation - including via sidewalks, bicycle facilities (with bike parking), and transit services - consistent with the City of Fresno Parks Master Plan and Active Transportation Plan.

**PF 1.5** Encourage the inclusion of neighborhood-serving amenities such as playgrounds, dog runs, picnic tables, barbeques, benches, and produce-growing community gardens in new residential subdivisions.

**PF 1.6** Plan for parks that collectively provide community members with passive and active recreation opportunities to be used by residents and visitors of all ages. These include, but are not limited to: illuminated practice fields and courts, fitness equipment, concert space, public gathering space, nature observation, walking/jogging paths, and seating areas.

**PF 1.7** Develop new trails according to the Active Transportation Plan and General Plan Figure MT-2 and explore additional future trails that can promote agritourism and access to the San Joaquin River.

**PF 1.8** Initiate a citywide community review of the proposed regional park designation as shown on Map 4-2 and cultivate a participatory strategy to identify the desired amenities and agricultural features to be incorporated along with methods to fund its development.
PF 1.9 Consider and explore the potential for shared parking and interconnected site design for the proposed regional park and adjacent existing and future commercial development to create efficient use of land and to generate a dynamic sense of activity between uses.

PF 1.10 Develop the Herndon Canal as a Class I trail, consistent with the ATP, and integrate it within the proposed regional park site while requiring new development abutting the segment between Highway 99 and Veteran’s Boulevard to provide open space and active frontage (i.e. front doors, windows, balconies, etc.) to support active use and safety for the trail.

PF 1.11 Provide trashcans and pet waste bins within parks and along trails to keep facilities tidy and enjoyable for all users.

PF 1.12 Support the creation of an access point to the San Joaquin River to provide a wide range of unique recreational opportunities from fishing and boating/kayaking to nature viewing and general exercise.

PF 1.13 Formalize the existing pathway connecting the West Area to the east of Highway 99, in alignment with the Active Transportation Plan, and advocate for the preservation of the area around the future aquarium between Herndon Avenue, Highway 99, and the River to be conserved as open space.

PF 1.14 Through conditions of approval or other mechanisms and strategies, ensure the preservation of the José Garcia Adobe, and elevate it as an important historic resource of the West Area.

PF 1.15 Continue to support Central Unified School District’s open campus policy, which provides recreational space for residents during non-school hours.

PF Goal 2 Encourage the role of schools as interconnected, neighborhood-supportive facilities.

PF 2.1 Work cooperatively with Central Unified School District to find appropriate locations for future schools to meet the needs of students and neighborhoods in the West Area.

PF 2.2 Encourage adjacency of proposed new school sites with parks and community centers.

PF 2.3 Continue to promote joint-use agreements to support increased recreational opportunities and community-oriented programming for West Area residents.

PF Goal 3 Advocate for the expansion of educational opportunities within the West Area, especially for higher education.

PF 3.1 Provide land use designations that permit higher education uses.
PF 3.2 Support strategies and programs of Central Unified School District and the Fresno County Office of Education that will provide access to alternative, vocational, and post-secondary education and support services.

PF 3.3 Attract and encourage the location of postsecondary educational or vocational educational uses along Catalytic Corridors and support Central Unified School District sites to serve as satellite campuses to existing colleges and vocational schools.

PF Goal 4 Develop public facilities for first responders that increase service efficiency and enhance community safety.

PF 4.1 Locate future public safety facilities according to their ability to meet efficiency and community safety goals.

PF 4.2 With input from residents, consider co-locating new facilities with other first-responder facilities, parks, or other public facilities, as may be appropriate.

PF 4.3 Discourage new development outside of existing service coverage/response time catchments, unless new facilities are planned for near-term construction that would provide adequate coverage to the development.

PF 4.4 With input from residents, explore and support approaches to community-based alternatives to, and/or community supported forms of, police facilities.

PF Goal 5 Increase access to new and existing community centers within the West Area.

PF 5.1 Partner with residents, developers, Central Unified School District, neighborhood groups, and faith communities to determine ideal locations for new community centers to serve existing and planned neighborhoods.

PF 5.2 Encourage community centers to host a variety of programs and services, including community meetings, educational courses, edible gardens, senior services, activities for teens and youth programs; and to provide space for establishments that support daily needs such as medical clinics, day cares, libraries, and post offices.

PF 5.3 Pursue and advocate for new and prioritized funding sources for community centers and programming.
Chapter 5 | Goals & Policies

The goals and policies within this section are based on input from community members, the recommendations of the Steering Committee, and current best practices. They are intended to advance the functionality and vibrancy of the West Area. For purposes of readability, the phrase “Land Use & Housing” will be abbreviated as “LUH” in this section. Each policy shall be interpreted as an affirmative and required action.

LUH Goal 1  Promote the orderly development of the West Area.

LUH 1.1  Continue to implement policies that encourage orderly development and discourage premature development of land near the planned urban fringe.

LUH 1.2  Uphold the General Plan’s vision for the sequencing of development priority areas. Focus development on land within the City Limits first, followed by land within the Growth Area.

LUH 1.3  Promote development of vacant, underdeveloped, re-developable land within the Plan Area where existing and planned public infrastructure is available.

LUH 1.4  Create a Small Area Plan for the West Shaw Avenue Town Center to further refine and support orderly, transit-oriented urban design and development.

LUH 1.5  Maintain the General Plan’s requirement that new residential and commercial developments that require annexations pay their fair and proportional share of needed community improvements.

LUH 1.6  Review annexation requirements for applications to demonstrate that they will not lead to peninsular or leapfrogged development patterns, where the urban edge intrudes into agricultural and undeveloped land on three sides.

LUH 1.7  Review annexation requirements for applications to demonstrate they will not lead to fragmented infrastructure systems, including bottlenecked roadway networks.

LUH Goal 2  Increase opportunities to retain agricultural uses and promote agritourism within the West Area.

LUH 2.1  Continue to recognize existing Agricultural Land Conservation Contracts (i.e., Williamson Act contracts) and promote the enrollment of all Prime Farmland outside of the Sphere of Influence.
LUH 2.2  Encourage new non-agricultural and non-recreational uses to provide a protective agricultural buffer setback from the Sphere of Influence.

LUH 2.3  Partner with the Fresno County Farm Bureau and other agriculture-focused organizations to develop a strategy to fund, protect, and promote agriculture in the West Area. The strategy should include an examination of potential funding and grant opportunities as well as appropriate activities to support, including, but not limited to: agritourism, farmers markets, farm incubators, farmland preservation, marketing & wayfinding programs, etc.

LUH 2.4  Promote the planting of home, school, and community gardens and consider revising the Development Code to remove provisions that prevent the keeping of chickens, bees, and goats.

LUH 2.5  Continue to apply the ANX overlay to rural and agricultural properties annexed into the city until a subsequent subdivision, rezoning, or special permit is approved for the property. Upon application for such a subsequent entitlement, permitted uses will be reconsidered for conformance to city zoning standards.

LUH 2.6  Encourage new developments to incorporate agricultural features, such as agrihood-style amenities, community gardens, farmers market plazas, or public art celebrating the West Area’s agricultural heritage.

LUH 2.7  Consider adopting an Urban Agriculture Incentive Ordinance to allow the reduction of property tax assessments on land dedicated to small-scale agriculture use, in alignment with AB 465.

LUH Goal 3  Create Complete Neighborhoods in the West Area that provide a variety of amenities within walking distance to meet the daily needs of residents.

LUH 3.1  Attract desired and needed local retail establishments to serve the needs of the West Area community, such as grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants (other than fast food places), and boutiques.

LUH 3.2  Consider updating the Development Code to permit limited, small-scale neighborhood commercial uses within all residential districts, with restrictions on the sale of items such as liquor, tobacco, and other adult products.

LUH 3.3  Support the co-location of community centers, such as libraries, within retail nodes to increase mutually supportive pedestrian activity.
LUH 3.4 Encourage the development of more adaptable retail formats, such as open-air markets or stores with smaller square footage, especially where such formats provide affordable space for local entrepreneurs and contribute to walkable and lively commercial nodes.

LUH 3.5 Continue to enforce strict application review processes and solicit community input regarding retail establishments with potential negative externalities such as liquor stores, tobacco and vapor stores, short-term loan and pawn shops, and adult stores.

LUH 3.6 Develop incentives to encourage redevelopment activities within the Highway City neighborhood to create a wide range of housing types and attractive, pedestrian-oriented commercial nodes.

LUH 3.7 Require transitions between land use types to emphasize the pedestrian experience. This should include, but is not limited to, attention to lighting, pathways, landscaping, fence types, and frequency of entry points.

LUH 3.8 Encourage use of a gridded street pattern in new development for optimal connectivity.

LUH Goal 4 Identify West Area neighborhoods as a means to leverage resources and build community.

LUH 4.1 Partner with West Area residents and educational institutions to identify the individual neighborhoods of the West Area, incorporating the history, natural features, amenities, and landmarks of each.

LUH 4.2 Following the completion of LUH 4.1, encourage community members to stay actively engaged through the establishment of neighborhood committees. The neighborhood committees can provide a platform for local needs and host events to bring community members together. Committees should provide mechanisms for equitable representation among their respective communities.
LUH Goal 5  Provide for urban edge transitions that respect existing rural residential and agricultural uses.

LUH 5.1  Consider updating the Development Code so that when land proposed for urban development abuts active farmland, planned farmland, or rural residential, the new project shall include and provide for the maintenance of one of the following design features to provide a rural/urban buffer:

- Provide landscaping and setbacks to fully obscure the new development's buildings and fences.
- Do not include fencing, or provide only see-through fencing no greater than four feet in height between the new development and the existing property.
- Provide open space such as edible gardens, landscaped walkways, trails or permanent on-site flood control/drainage facilities to be no less than 30 feet in width.
- Locate boundary streets between the new and existing developments.

LUH Goal 6  Establish clean, safe, and stable housing opportunities that provide for a variety of housing types; are available to people of all incomes, ages, and family sizes; and strengthen the pride and identity of residential neighborhoods.

LUH 6.1  Encourage the development of housing to accommodate multi-generational and aging households, including incorporating Accessory Dwelling Units into new housing designs.

LUH 6.2  As part of the next General Plan process, perform an analysis of access to housing options across socio-economic factors to determine how to improve opportunities for currently under-resourced communities.

LUH 6.3  Promote the use of “defensible space” and require future residences to face parks, public streets, and/or public schools in order to provide natural surveillance and security for all users.

LUH 6.4  Continue to support and develop resources for property owners to improve and maintain the conditions and appearance of existing residential structures.