



## TIGER 2013 Application for the Fulton Mall Reconstruction Project



CITY OF FRESNO, CALIFORNIA  
Ashley Swearngin, Mayor



# TIGER 2013 Application for the Fulton Mall Reconstruction Project

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Project Description.....	1
II. Project Parties.....	3
III. Grant Funds and Sources/Uses of Project Funds .....	4
IV. Selection Criteria.....	5
a. Long-Term Outcomes.....	5
i. State of Good Repair .....	5
ii. Economic Competitiveness .....	7
iii. Livability .....	10
iv. Sustainability.....	14
v. Safety .....	17
vi. Project Readiness.....	18
b. Innovation.....	23
c. Partnership .....	24
d. Results of Benefit-Cost Analysis .....	27
V. Planning and Environmental Approvals.....	27
VI. Federal Wage Rate Certification .....	30

## CONTACT

Elliott Balch  
Downtown Revitalization Manager  
City of Fresno  
2600 Fresno St., Room 2156  
Fresno, CA 93721  
(559) 621-8366  
*Elliott.Balch@fresno.gov*  
*www.fresno.gov/fultonmall*

## I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant project will restore critical elements of the disconnected street grid in an 18-square-block area of Downtown Fresno adjacent to the nation’s first proposed High Speed Rail station. Improvements will serve automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit modes through the introduction of “complete streets” on eleven city blocks where a pedestrian mall currently exists. The affected streets are Fulton Mall between Tuolumne and Inyo Streets (approximately 2,800 feet), Merced Mall between Congo Alley and Federal Alley (approx. 380 feet), Mariposa Mall between Broadway Street and Van Ness Avenue (approx. 720 feet), and Kern Mall between Home Run Alley and Federal Alley (approx. 380 feet). See Fig. 1. This application refers to this area collectively as the Fulton Mall or simply the Mall.

The Fulton Mall is the historic site of Fresno’s “Main Street” and the soul of its downtown. In its heyday, this was the central urban destination for a four-county region in California’s San Joaquin Valley that is now home to over 1.6 million people. Closed to vehicle traffic in 1964, these six blocks of Fulton and three cross streets have suffered economic decline for over four decades, reaching a state of total decay today. As discussed further in Section IV, economic conditions along the Fulton Mall are significantly worse than those found in the rest of the city, and even in the rest of the downtown. The Mall has:

- Office and large retail vacancies more than triple the downtown average;
- Major historic buildings with twice the vacancy rate of those nearby; and
- Taxable retail sales less than half of those found in comparable markets near downtown.

These facts match the anecdotal evidence of what many of the Mall’s business and property owners experience today. Property owners have reported that ground-floor tenants, some of them immigrant families aspiring to put their children through college, have had to come back more than once asking for rent concessions because revenues are insufficient to keep their family businesses afloat. These merchants do not have the marketing budgets to overcome the lack of visibility and serendipitous customer visits that a traditional Main Street provides.

One national survey found that 90% of downtowns with pedestrian malls became successful when they reopened the malls to vehicles while retaining pedestrian amenities.

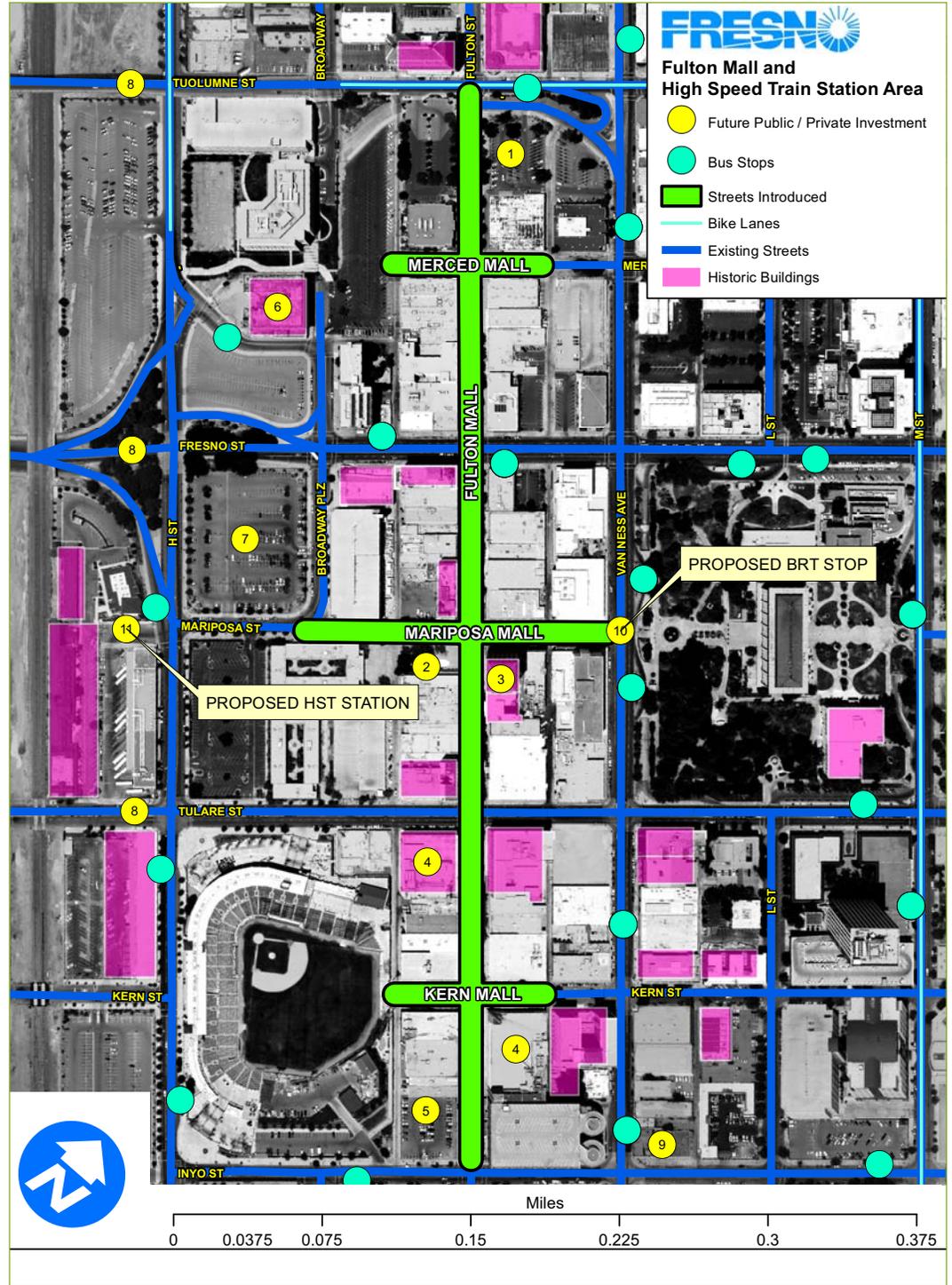
The TIGER project proposed in this application will address the transportation problem that underlies Fulton Mall’s stubborn economic challenges. Research by leading experts in urban revitalization shows that the lack of multimodal access for the buildings along Fulton makes it difficult to attract sufficient investment to revitalize this area. One national survey<sup>1</sup> found that 90% of downtowns with pedestrian malls became

successful when they reopened the malls to vehicles while retaining pedestrian amenities. A complete street that mixes travel modes, as opposed to a limited-mode pedestrian mall, is the best way to maximize “eyes on the street” and foot traffic. Several factors have led to the decline of Downtown Fresno over the decades, but transportation issues — visibility and access — are

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A to *City of Buffalo Main Street Multi-Modal Access and Revitalization Project Environmental Assessment* at [www.nfta.com/mainst.asp](http://www.nfta.com/mainst.asp).

**Figure 1. Map of Project Area.** The applicant project will restore key elements of the original Fresno street grid, connecting planned transit facilities and other investments to one another in a revitalized downtown core. At least 11 public and private projects are already planned or underway, representing tens of millions of dollars in investment.

- 1 Move of CVS drug store to corner and opportunity for mixed-use development on existing parking lots. Private project; City of Fresno and Housing Authority also control land in site.
- 2 Mariposa Plaza: gathering and performance area on Fulton Mall. Examined through Sustainable Cities Design Academy, and reactivation project is subject of pending National Endowment for the Arts funding request.
- 3 Pacific Southwest Building. Historic landmark recently purchased by Southern California developer; some floors being converted to rental lofts, others to restaurant or event space.
- 4 Historic JC Penney Building now in escrow with private developer. Approved plans create 66 residential units.
- 5 City negotiating sale of former Redevelopment Agency-owned land and buildings to developers to create mixed-use project overlooking ballpark outfield.
- 6 Vacant, historic Hotel Fresno. Private development plans create 79 mixed-income housing units.
- 7 Planned site for multimodal facility to connect HST station and Fulton with local transit.



- 8 High-Speed Rail Authority rebuilding street crossings of rail right-of-way.
- 9 Droge Project: Housing Authority developing 45 workforce housing units on site.
- 10 Proposed downtown stop at center of new, 13.8-mile Bus Rapid Transit system.
- 11 Proposed High-Speed Train station. Potentially the first station on the first high-speed rail segment built in the U.S.

by far the greatest factors today in the Fulton Mall’s persistently and acutely anemic economy.

While the challenges are great for the revitalization of Fulton Mall, this project also draws on the area’s tremendous assets. Although pedestrian traffic after dark is virtually nil, foot traffic counts in October 2010 found a daily average of 4,805 persons passing through the Mall’s center between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Over 300 loft housing units have been built in the blocks north of the Mall since 2001, and 500 more are planned or under construction, showing that there is growing interest in downtown development. The Mall contains Fresno’s densest stock of buildings, particularly historic buildings which today are 71% vacant. While some fountains need major repair, the Fulton Mall art collection — over 50 fountains, sculptures, and benches by local and internationally renowned artists — is stunning and will be woven into the redesign of the Fulton Mall. The project will keep in place some of the landscape features which helped earn the Mall a determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

The Fulton Mall’s location in the heart of Downtown Fresno may be its biggest asset. Downtown Fresno sits amid a freeway triangle that connects the area conveniently with the rest of the city, region, and state. One block east of Fulton, the central station for a 13.8-mile Bus Rapid Transit system will connect the downtown core to the city’s major corridors. Two blocks to the west, our nation’s first High-Speed Rail (HSR) station is scheduled to open in 2021.

---

Will the HSR’s Fresno passengers, projected to grow to 8,400 on an average weekday in 2035, be drawn into Downtown Fresno by vibrant streets and sidewalks? Or will the projected 82% of these passengers who access the station by private automobile be kept out of the heart of Downtown Fresno by a broken, confusing street grid?

---

If brightening Fulton’s future weren’t important enough to the region and its 1.6 million residents, the coming HSR station makes it a national imperative. The TIGER investment this application proposes — a two-lane, two way “Main Street” once again for Fresno — will bring millions of dollars in benefits to an economically distressed area, and make private investment and 24-hour vitality viable once again in the urban heart of California’s San Joaquin Valley.

## II. PROJECT PARTIES

**City of Fresno.** The City of Fresno (“the City”) is the public agency responsible for the design, permitting, and construction of the applicant project. The City is a municipal entity with a strong-mayor form of government. The mayor and seven City Council members are elected for up to two four-year terms. The Mayor serves as the City’s Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for appointing and overseeing the City Manager, recommending and signing legislation, and presenting the annual budget to the City Council. The City Council is the City’s legislative body.

The City provides a full array of services established in its charter. These services include public protection such as police and fire, parks and recreation, and public health systems such

as water, sewer, community sanitation, planning, housing and code enforcement.

**Downtown Fresno Partnership.** In sponsoring the project, the City will operate in coordination with the Downtown Fresno Partnership (DFP). DFP manages a property-based business improvement district (PBID) that was formed in 2010 through the majority support of property owners, and collects nearly \$600,000 per year. Combined with operating revenues, DFP’s annual operating budget is approximately \$1.4 million and growing. The organization’s activities are overseen by a 17-member board comprised of 15 private property owners and two business owners within the district.

DFP is strongly supporting the applicant project through advocacy as well as the commitment of \$250,000 toward construction. Additionally, DFP will be supporting the project by helping to minimize impacts to businesses during the construction period and effectively marketing and promoting the area once it opens again. Now in its third full year of operations, DFP has shown remarkable capacity to plan and operate events, mobilize stakeholders, and communicate effectively with the public. Even the most capable public agency can never replace the value of a committed, effective private sector champion — and for this project, DFP’s role is indispensable.

### III. GRANT FUNDS AND SOURCES/USES OF PROJECT FUNDS

As detailed below, \$4 million in nonfederal funds is committed to this project. The attached letter<sup>2</sup> from Mayor Ashley Swearingin commits to prioritizing local discretionary public funds for the project under the City of Fresno’s strong mayor form of government:

**\$2,000,000 City of Fresno Community Sanitation — Local funds**

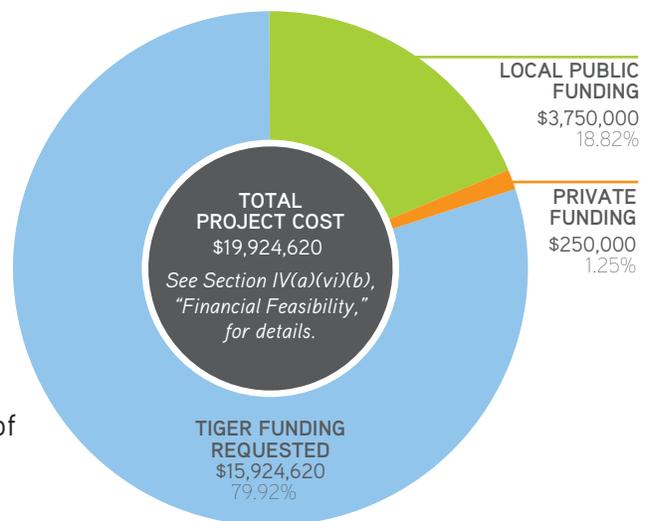
Funds can be used for capital projects in the right-of-way that provide operational and maintenance improvements.

**\$1,750,000 Fresno County Measure C transportation sales tax — Local funds**

Measure C is a self-help transportation tax approved by Fresno County voters. The Measure’s Transit-Oriented Development fund supports capital projects, like the applicant project, that encourage TOD development in Downtown Fresno.

**\$ 250,000 Downtown Fresno Partnership (DFP) — Private funds**

DFP’s role as a project party is described in Section II.



<sup>2</sup> Letters available at <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGERletters>.

The City of Fresno submitted the Fulton Mall project for a TIGER grant in 2012. While the project was not funded, the preconstruction phase of the project was awarded \$1 million from the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) program of the Federal Highway Administration. This award requires \$200,000 in nonfederal match. The City is exceeding this with \$474,810 now committed to the project from the local Measure C Transit-Oriented Development program (described above) for the project’s preconstruction expenses.

This TIGER application requests funds for construction activity only. Because the applicant project reconnects the broken street grid in a dense urban center, the City believes the entire project is required to complete the street grid and achieve utility.

## IV. SELECTION CRITERIA

### a. Long-Term Outcomes

#### i. State of Good Repair

*Improving the condition of existing transportation facilities and systems, with particular emphasis on projects that minimize life-cycle costs and improve resiliency.*

The applicant project will create substantial “state of good repair” benefits to the Fulton Mall area in the form of lower maintenance costs, both immediately and over the life of the project, as well as increased revenue. **This application’s benefit-cost analysis shows that the project reduces maintenance costs by 24%, and increases parking revenue in the project area by 482%.**

**Lower Maintenance Costs.** When the Fulton Mall was installed 49 years ago, the City and project backers invested heavily to remake the downtown retail hub into a place they hoped would compete successfully with suburban shopping centers that had begun to emerge far from



*Figure 2. A City sanitation crew member applies a pressure wash to “trouble spots” on the Mall as part of the daily maintenance effort that began in 2011.*

downtown. They hired a leading architect of shopping malls, Victor Gruen, whose plan called for a pedestrian mall along Fulton and its cross streets, parking facilities surrounding the new mall, and a one-way loop road to connect it all. Noted landscape architect Garrett Eckbo was hired to design the pedestrian mall as a pleasing and inviting space. Eckbo’s design featured a modernist layout of planters, benches, trees, and fountains amid a concrete expanse punctuated by ribbons of river rock. This design helped earn the Fulton Mall landscape a determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

Today much of the Mall’s infrastructure, both above and below the street surface, is in a decaying state. Many fountains sit empty due to leaks, water flow problems, or both. Pavement is heaving, creating tripping hazards,

and gouges are missing, speeding the pace of disintegration. Power is spotty for special events and other uses, and it proves difficult to keep many of the lights on. All of these issues threaten the accessibility of people to the Fulton Mall and limit the potential for economic revitalization.

These problems took many years to develop, and in many cases permanent solutions are now unavailable without major rebuilding. Nonetheless, in recent years the City has attempted to improve the level of day-to-day maintenance on the Mall, and even make needed repairs where possible. City crews have repaired fountains, leveled and patched pavement to prevent tripping, brought lights back online, systematically trimmed trees for the first time in many years, implemented a regular schedule for blowing and pressure washing, removed graffiti before most people have a chance to see it, and seasonally planted and mulched the many planter beds. All of this has occurred during extraordinary budget times in which the City has been forced to reduce its staff by 30% and implement across-the-board service reductions.

Despite the improved cleanliness and maintenance, there are still major repair jobs left to do. For example, the City has received estimates for needed rewiring work of over \$400,000.<sup>3</sup> Undertaking such work would almost certainly require cutting significant trenches in the surface which, when refilled, could interrupt the existing landscape pattern. The complete rehabilitation of the Mall, one of the other options considered in the planning process for the Mall's future, is believed to cost nearly as much as the transformation to a complete street.<sup>4</sup>

The project reduces maintenance costs by 24% and increases parking revenue in the project area by 482%,

**Improved Revenue.** In addition to lowering maintenance costs, the applicant project also **increases parking revenue in the project area by 482%**, even when discounting for parking that would have happened otherwise in nearby facilities. Together, the lower

operating cost and greater operating revenue of the street suggest that existing City resources now dedicated to Mall maintenance will be sufficient to maintain the new streetscape.

**Public-Private Partnership for Maintenance and Marketing.** The Downtown Fresno Partnership (DFP) is part of a unique approach to asset management on the Fulton Mall. DFP was formed in 2010 and began operations in 2011. The Mall is the core of the DFP's assessment area; Mall properties pay the highest assessment rates in return for the highest levels of services such as events, clean and safe programs, and marketing. In the past year the City has engaged the DFP to give the organization more authority for the oversight and management of the Mall, since its members have a vested interest in these operations. After the applicant project is constructed, DFP will help the City provide an elevated level of maintenance to the Mall area.

Through lower maintenance costs, increased revenue, and collaboration with the DFP for ongoing care of the street environment, the applicant project demonstrates the City's capacity to creatively and effectively manage the Fulton Mall.

<sup>3</sup> Borrelli and Associates Consulting Electrical Engineers, *Fresno Fulton Mall Lighting Study and Receptacle Power*, 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/fultonelectricalstudy>.

<sup>4</sup> Initial estimates by a landscape architect indicated that the complete rehabilitation of the pedestrian mall landscape would cost \$8–\$16 million — a wide range due to the uncertainties inherent in working with buried infrastructure whose potential for reuse is unknown. For details see the *Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Appendix* at [http://fresnodowntownplans.com/media/files/FCSP\\_Appendix.pdf](http://fresnodowntownplans.com/media/files/FCSP_Appendix.pdf).

The restoration of the street grid on Fulton would result in a 73% to 146% increase in economic activity within five years of reopening,

## ii. Economic Competitiveness

*Contributing to the economic competitiveness of the United States over the medium- to long-term by improving the national transportation system while creating and preserving jobs.*

The proposed project sits at the urban epicenter of a multi-county Economically Distressed Area, as defined by the U.S.

Department of Transportation (USDOT). The project will restore the street grid to an area where the original grid was intact until 1964. In that year, City and private sector leaders closed some streets, and made others highway-like, segregating transportation modes in hopes of creating a place that seemed more serene and suburban — the kind of place they thought retail customers were craving in the era of the big shopping mall.

Today, downtown stakeholders and the City of Fresno want to undo the damage from this urban renewal experiment and embrace a more sustainable transportation and development paradigm. Restoring the street grid will allow the revitalization of the City's core, setting Downtown Fresno and the region up for success in the high-speed rail era of the next 20 to 100 years or more.

***Improving Productivity and Economic Activity.*** The project area is ripe for improved economic productivity. A 2008 study<sup>5</sup> found that based on retail activity and property values, the Mall was performing at only 6% of its economic potential. Other data depicted in the chart below show the downtown area lagging behind the larger metropolitan area in several measures — and they show the Fulton Mall performing at an even more alarmingly low level.

This has been the common experience of almost all of the 200 American downtowns where pedestrian malls were installed, then later reopened. A 2011 study by Gibbs Planning Group found that **the restoration of the street grid on Fulton would result in a 73% to 146% increase in economic activity within five years of reopening**, depending on the amount of on-street parking provided. This result was informed by both examples of successfully reopened pedestrian malls around the country, and a careful understanding of Downtown Fresno's trade area. Because there is no other dense, urban place like Downtown Fresno and the Fulton Mall in the 25,000-square-mile San Joaquin Valley, much of these increases in activity reflect new value rather than simply a transfer from other areas of the regional market.

***Improving Connectivity to HSR.*** The project also creates economic competitiveness benefits through its connection to transportation investments, particularly the California High-Speed Rail system. The blocks affected are adjacent to the proposed Fresno HSR station, and this project will provide two important benefits for the station and the rail system. First, the project will improve automobile, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access to the station. Currently the station site is confusing to access, especially for new visitors, due to closed streets, grade separations, one-way streets, and the diagonal street grid. While the High-Speed Rail project is investing at least \$80 million to address some of the odd grade separations and one-way streets, the broken street grid in the core business district will remain unless the applicant project proceeds.

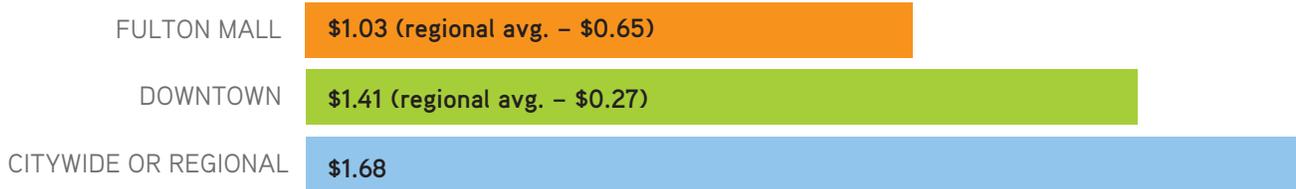
<sup>5</sup> Market Profiles, *Economic Impact Study: Listing of Fulton Mall on National Register of Historic Places*, 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/2008fultonmalleconstudy>.

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

### OFFICE VACANCY RATE SEVERITY OF PROBLEM: FULTON VS. DOWNTOWN $\times 3.5$



### OFFICE LEASE RATE PER S.F. PER MONTH SEVERITY OF PROBLEM: FULTON VS. DOWNTOWN $\times 2.4$



### MAJOR RETAIL VACANCY RATE SEVERITY OF PROBLEM: FULTON VS. DOWNTOWN $\times 3.2$



### TAXABLE SALES PER S.F. PER YEAR SEVERITY OF PROBLEM: FULTON VS. DOWNTOWN $\times 2.7$



\* Data for the Ventura/Kings Canyon corridor

### MAJOR HISTORIC BUILDING VACANCY SEVERITY OF PROBLEM: FULTON VS. DOWNTOWN $\times 2.0$



Second, the blocks surrounding the HSR station become Fresno's new face to the world. An economically distressed area surrounding the station is unlikely to generate much interest from train passengers. Improving the productivity of land surrounding the Fresno HSR station will encourage more riders to use it.

***Addressing Concentrated Poverty in Fresno's Urban Center.*** The applicant project will connect the Fulton Mall to other transportation modes and to productive employment opportunities for underemployed and disadvantaged populations. Already Downtown Fresno is a major regional jobs center with almost 32,000 employees. With arrival of HSR and the filling of the Fulton Mall's retail and office spaces, the project area has the potential to provide many more jobs. The economically distressed neighborhoods that surround the project area, and the residents themselves, will benefit from ready access to these opportunities.

In 2005, the Brookings Institution published *Katrina's Window*, a report on the phenomenon of "concentrated poverty" in major U.S. cities.<sup>6</sup> The report found that Fresno led the nation's 50 largest cities in concentrated poverty. The Census tracts that *Katrina's Window* highlighted as the places where this poverty is housed mostly surround Downtown Fresno. As shown in Fig. 3, ten years later, downtown neighborhoods still housed a large share of the city's poorest residents. Without a strong economy that gives Fresno residents opportunities for upward mobility, the conditions that created vast tracts of concentrated poverty in the center of Fresno will simply be passed along to another generation.

***Preserving and Protecting the Nation's Food Supply.*** The transformation of Downtown Fresno from economically distressed to vibrant will impact the entire San Joaquin Valley region and create national benefits. Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley are the dominant source of our nation's food supply, bringing in export revenues not only from specialty crops but from value-added food processing, and innovation in food science and water and energy technology. Today's suburban sprawl in Fresno and other Valley cities is the biggest threat to that food supply. Attracting interest and investment back into the city center will help preserve prime farmland.

***Creating Jobs and Supporting the City's DBE Program.*** Construction is anticipated to begin in January 2015 and last for 14 months until March 2016. Section IV(a)(vi)(c) provides a breakdown of the construction jobs created by this project per quarter, implying the creation of a total of 116 job-years.

The City of Fresno's Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) Program is integral to federally funded projects. The DBE Program certifies DBEs; administers the race-neutral DBE program for projects funded by USDOT; assists DBEs during the bidding process; holds at least one seminar per year for DBEs and prime contractors; and provides general outreach to the community through local small business organizations such as ethnic chambers of commerce.

The City will ensure that the applicant project supports entities with a sound track record on

<sup>6</sup> Alan Berube and Bruce Katz, *Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America*, 2005. [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2005/10poverty\\_berube.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2005/10poverty_berube.aspx). The report identifies concentrated poverty through the percentage of a city's poor population that lives in Census tracts where more than 40% of the residents are also poor, based on Census 2000 data.

**CONCENTRATED POVERTY**  
 % of Families with Incomes  
 below Poverty Level

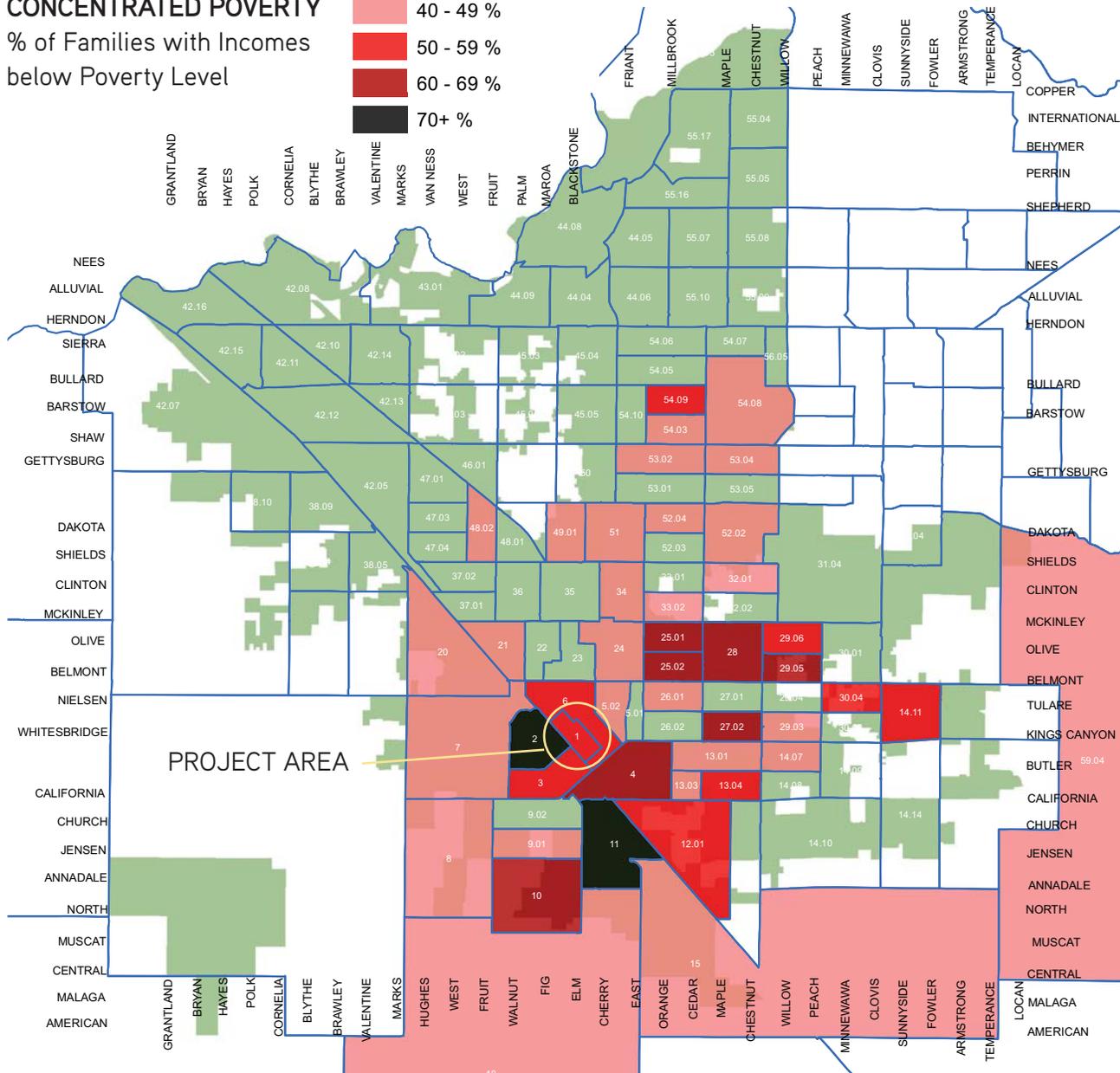
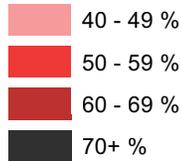


Figure 3. Concentration of poverty in Census tracts surrounding downtown Fresno. Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2007–2011.

labor laws and practices, to ensure that all Americans willing and available to work on this project have the opportunity to do so and will be treated fairly and safely regardless of their race, gender, age, disability, and national origin.

iii. Livability

*Increasing transportation choices and access to transportation services for people in communities across the United States.*

**Improving Transportation Choices.** Stories of revitalization in cities across the country, of every size, in every state, demonstrate that Americans love their Main Streets. The benefits to



Figure 4. The economy rebounded and pedestrian traffic increased along Fayetteville Street in Raleigh, NC (above), when the street was reopened in 2006 after 30 years as a closed pedestrian mall (top).

livability are automatic. As pedestrian life returns to the sidewalk, opportunities to use a variety of travel modes to live, work, and play increase for residents of different age, income, and physical ability levels.

From before Fresno was incorporated in 1885, until 1964 when it was closed to vehicle traffic, Fulton Street (previously named J Street) was Fresno’s “Main Street.” Like many downtown centers across the country in the 1960s and 1970s, Fulton then entered a period of rapid decline. However, unlike many other American Main Streets, after almost 50 years, the Fulton Mall has yet to emerge from this extended downturn.

In many cities where suburbanization and disinvestment harmed the Main Street and downtown core, the Main Street itself has been ground-zero for revitalization. A 2009 survey by the City of Buffalo, NY, of some 50 pedestrian malls that had reopened to traffic showed that **90% had experienced “significant improvements in occupancy rates, retail sales, property values, and private sector investment in the downtown area.”**<sup>7</sup> Far from turning off or scaring away pedestrians, the restoration of vehicle traffic to these streets actually created a place of greater interest and improved livability for pedestrians.

**Ingredients for Successful Revitalization and Improved Livability.** The Main Street Center at the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognizes the value of the traditional street grid to downtown business health. “Perhaps the most important reason for changing the traffic flow is to improve the economic well-being of the commercial district,” says a recent National Trust article on restoring two-way traffic to Main Streets.<sup>8</sup> “Retailers aren’t the only businesses dependent on easy-to-understand traffic operations....Service operations and professional offices also rely on a circulation system that is easy to understand and to navigate.”

With all the other assets in place today, a “Main Street” thoroughfare can work for Fulton and its businesses once again today. The buildings along Fulton are intact, with no “missing teeth” except at the north and south ends of the project area. Most of the ground floors of these buildings are either still in retail use or vacant. Seven of the buildings along the Mall are listed as historic and are grand in scale, with between 5 and 16 stories. Pedestrian counts performed

7 City of Buffalo, NY, *Main Street Multi-Modal Access and Revitalization Project Environmental Assessment*, 2009. <http://www.nfta.com/pdfs/COBMulti-Modal%20Access.pdf>. Also see survey results in Appendix A,

8 John D. Edwards and Linda Glisson, “Look Both Ways: Restoring Two-Way Traffic to Main Street.” November 30, 2011. <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/main-street-news/story-of-the-week/2011/111130/look-both-ways-restoring.html>.



Figure 5. A Mexican Independence Day celebration draws thousands to the central plaza on the Fulton Mall.  
Photo: Ralph Berrett, *Business Street*.

on three days in October 2010 found an average foot traffic count of 4,805 per day on the Mall,<sup>9</sup> and the High Speed Rail station is expected to bring a weekday average of 8,400 passengers to the area by 2035.<sup>10</sup> Finally, a detailed 2011 market study found the downtown could support an additional 313,500 s.f. of retail and restaurant space immediately, growing to 353,600 s.f. after five years.<sup>11</sup> All the ingredients exist for successful revitalization, once the necessary investments in transportation infrastructure are made.

A 2009 survey by the City of Buffalo, NY, of some 50 pedestrian malls that had reopened to traffic showed that 90% had experienced “significant improvements in occupancy rates, retail sales, property values, and private sector investment in the downtown area.”

**Part of a Community-Driven Planning Process.** In planning for these improvements, the City has undertaken a process which coordinates transportation, land use, and economics and has included a robust element of community participation. Over 1,000 residents have helped create the draft Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, which is now undergoing environmental review. This process has been funded primarily from the City’s allocation of Community Development Block Grant funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Simultaneously the Downtown Neighborhoods

Community Plan and new Downtown Development Code will apply state-of-the-art, form-based codes and policies to support the revitalization of Fresno’s oldest neighborhoods in a 7,290-acre area that includes the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Area in the downtown core.

The Specific Plan explicitly identifies sites for targeted development, plans for the future needs of downtown utility systems, and includes policies designed to encourage investment in historic resources. The Specific Plan includes an entire chapter specifically focusing on the future of

9 Henry D. Delcore, James Mullyooly, and Anne Visser, *Fulton Mall Pedestrian Count Project*, 2010. <http://tinyurl.com/2010fultonmallpedcount>.

10 California High-Speed Rail Authority, *California High-Speed Train Project EIR/EIS Ridership and Revenue Model*, 2011. <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/assets/0/152/302/321/dce0ae33-6717-43a0-bf82-a2e7825c6996.pdf>.

11 Gibbs Planning Group, *City of Fresno Downtown Retail Market Analysis*, 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/2011downtownfresnoretailstudy>.

the Fulton Mall,<sup>12</sup> which the Plan highlights as the top public investment priority in the downtown area because of its ability to generate significant amounts of private investment and vitality.

A Community Advisory Committee comprised of downtown and community stakeholders was appointed to oversee the preparation of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan. The Committee voted to recommend that three options for the future of the Fulton Mall receive further study.

The option that this application reflects is the City Administration's and Downtown property owners' preferred alternative. The project replaces the Mall's current pedestrian-only landscape with a two-lane, complete street that serves automobiles as well as pedestrians and bicyclists.

This includes very wide sidewalks that occupy roughly half the 80-foot street right-of-way,

The Specific Plan includes an entire chapter specifically focusing on the future of the Fulton Mall, which the Plan highlights as the top public investment priority in the downtown area because of its ability to generate significant amounts of private investment and vitality.

pedestrian-scale lighting and signage, ample shade, and the retention of most fountains and all of the sculptures and benches in the area today. The wide sidewalk areas imply a narrow street with low vehicle speeds, creating an ideal environment for bicyclists and crossing pedestrians. The City is now following through with high design quality by hiring the renowned landscape architecture firm of Royston, Hanamoto, Alley & Abey to create detailed designs.

**Improving Connectivity to Transportation Modes.** As described above, the sections of Fulton and its cross streets affected by this project extend within a block of the planned Fresno High-Speed Rail station, the central downtown stop for the City's new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, and the main hub for the City's existing bus system. The Fulton Mall already relies on transit accessibility today. In October 2010 pedestrian surveys, 30% of respondents stated that their trip to the Fulton Mall involved public transportation. The project area is also surrounded by residences, restaurants, and office space that houses nearly 32,000 jobs today. Pedestrian surveys suggested 39% of those present on the Mall were living or working in the downtown area. The revitalization of the economy on Fulton Mall puts a vibrant downtown area within easy reach of those who walk or rely on transit to get there.

The improved livability that occurs as a result of this project brings important benefits to economically disadvantaged populations, non-drivers, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities by virtue of the project area's connectivity to multiple modes of travel. In 2010 pedestrian surveys on the Mall, one-third of respondents reported coming from three low-income ZIP codes within and adjacent to the downtown. Minorities such as African-Americans and especially Latinos were more prevalent on the Mall than in the Fresno County population.<sup>13</sup>

The available data indicate that an enhanced street environment for all modes can lead to an

<sup>12</sup> City of Fresno, *Fulton Corridor Specific Plan*, Chapter 4. <http://fresnodowntownplans.com/project/details/fcsp>. A more complete description of community planning meetings and the decision-making process begins on page 1:10 of the *Fulton Corridor Specific Plan*. [http://fresnodowntownplans.com/media/files/FCSP\\_Ch\\_01\\_Intro\\_0.pdf](http://fresnodowntownplans.com/media/files/FCSP_Ch_01_Intro_0.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Henry D. Delcore, James Mullooly, and Anne Visser, *Fulton Mall Pedestrian Count Project*, 2010. <http://tinyurl.com/2010fultonmallpedcount>.



Figure 6. At the second in a series of 2010 public downtown planning meetings, Mayor Ashley Swearingin presents the vision statement for the project area that community members expressed at the first meeting. Photo: RC Jones Photography.



Figure 7. Over 400 community members attended a meeting where options for Fulton Mall's future were unveiled and discussed by experts in planning, landscape architecture, and urban retail. Participants left over 1,300 comments about the options on paper, on the walls, in drawings and via email. Photo: RC Jones Photography.

economic revival that benefits a broad economic mix across the Fresno region. Revitalization will bring new goods and services to the one location in the region that is best situated for access by disadvantaged populations, non-drivers, the disabled, and others who rely on public transportation. These new amenities also create livability benefits for the growing number of people living and working in Downtown Fresno who access the project area by walking or bicycling.

iv. Environmental Sustainability  
*Improving energy efficiency, reducing dependence on oil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and benefitting the environment.*

The applicant project is integral to the revitalization of Downtown Fresno, which is central to the City's effort to reduce sprawl and the impacts of growth on energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, ground-level air pollution, and the consumption of farmland and open space.

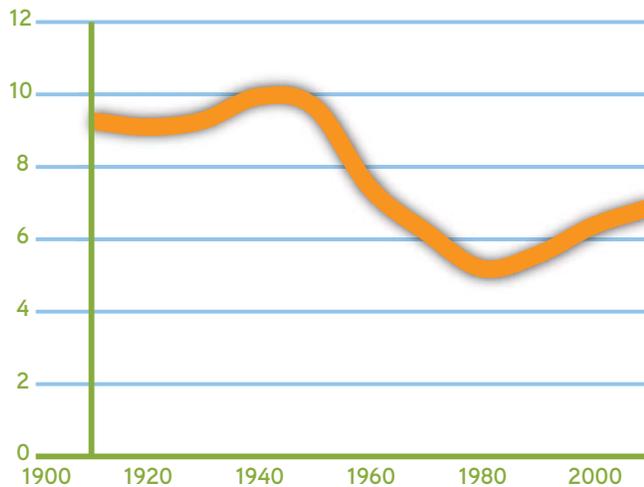
The economic decline of Downtown Fresno since 1960 has corresponded with a massive transfer of people and capital outward from the center of the city. As in many cities across America, low-density growth went hand-in-hand with the dominance of the automobile in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fresno's annexation and population history tell the story of a city that began to stretch outward in the decades following World War II.<sup>14</sup>

As shown in Fig. 8, between 1940 and 1980, as growth surged outward and the private automobile came to dominate transportation

within the city, areas like Downtown Fresno that were dense and convenient for walking, and well served by public transit, became irrelevant. The city's population density dropped by nearly half, from 9.94 to 5.19 persons per acre. Even public investments like the Fulton Mall project of 1964, whose singular purpose was to enable downtown's Central Business District to compete for retail dollars with suburban shopping centers, could not reverse the trend of where these dollars were headed.

14 Annexation data from City records. Population data 1910–1960 from <http://www.wikipedia.org>. Population data 1970–1990 from <https://data2.nhgis.org/main>. Population data 2000–2010 from <http://www.census.gov>.

## PERSONS PER ACRE



*Figure 8. Population density in persons per acre, 1910-2010. Rapid postwar suburban expansion drained both human and financial capital away from Downtown Fresno. The population density within city limits dropped 48% from 1940 to 1980.*

Decades of outward growth and disinvestment in Fresno's core are affecting the City's financial sustainability today. As the city has expanded outward, entire sections of the community have been left behind to neighborhood blight creating huge drains on public resources. For example, the Fresno Police Department reports that the Lowell neighborhood near Downtown Fresno, accounting for less than 1% of the city's land area and population, generates some 15% of the total police calls. Furthermore, Fresno today has as many lane-miles of roads as San Jose, but only half the population to pay the taxes that support road maintenance. This creates a draw on budget resources that is not sustainable in the short or long term.

Outward growth is also straining Fresno's natural resources, namely air and water. The

San Joaquin Valley's air quality is already in extreme nonattainment of the federal 8-hour ozone standard, and nonattainment for PM 2.5 particulate matter, and one in six Valley children has asthma. In place of fig orchards, vineyards, and other cropland — which generated export income through the use of untreated surface water and on-site groundwater — new homes and lawns, which do not contribute to the region's export revenues, now burden the City's drinking water system. Predictably, groundwater levels under the oldest areas of the city have dropped by 100 feet in the last 80 years. In fact, the trend has accelerated: 20% of this drop has occurred in just the last 10 years alone.

In 2010, the City of Fresno led the formation of a compact of 14 cities in the San Joaquin Valley, called Smart Valley Places, dedicated to sustainable regional planning. The compact received \$4 million from HUD's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. This federal investment has been used to update the City of Fresno's General Plan. In the last year the Fresno City Council has selected a preferred alternative for the General Plan update that stresses more careful and compact growth to help meet the City's fiscal, environmental, and public health goals. This alternative relies on the revitalization of Downtown Fresno to serve as the region's primary activity center. Research by Calthorpe Associates with a 2035 planning horizon shows that compared to recent trends, this alternative:

- Saves nearly 10 square miles of land from development.
- Reduces passenger vehicle travel equivalent to taking 40,000 cars off of Fresno roads for a year.
- Reduces gasoline use by 14.4 million gallons in 2035.
- Saves households an average of \$1,240 a year from reduced auto fuel and utility bills.
- Reduces energy use enough to power over 9,000 homes.

- Saves enough water to serve 7,500 homes.
- Reduces capital and O&M costs for infrastructure by \$162 million to 2035.
- Saves \$13.8 million in health care costs due to reduced air-pollution related illnesses in 2035.

Achieving these outcomes requires a revitalized “main street” in Downtown Fresno, anchoring revitalization of the entire City center. The City of Fresno is putting in place the appropriate development policies and infrastructure needed to make Downtown an area that appeals to investors. Motivated investors build developments that attract entrepreneurs, who then open stores and restaurants and other businesses that attract consumers. **The applicant project has been identified as the most critical public investment necessary to make Downtown Fresno more desirable to investors, entrepreneurs, and consumers over time.**

The project’s environmental benefits will be both direct and indirect. The direct environmental benefits will result from creating a “park-once” district in the revitalized project area, encouraging walking and transit use. This area is served by:

- Major stops for the existing Fresno Area Express (FAX) and proposed local Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services. On the two FAX lines alone that will become BRT routes, an estimated 2,000 riders board and alight the bus each day within a block of Fulton Mall.
- 4,000 off-street parking spaces available today to visitors and workers who arrive in the area by car. By virtue of the unique density of the downtown, multiple business stops are possible without moving a car.
- The first station in the California High-Speed Rail system, which will serve an estimated 8,400 passengers per day in 2035. The rationale for bringing HSR through cities in the first place, despite the additional difficulty and complexity, is to benefit both rider convenience and the vitality of historic city centers. The reconnection of the station area street grid through the applicant project will reduce the distance for drivers to “turn around the block” in the project area by 34%, relieving driver confusion and potentially eliminating some 76,000 vehicle miles traveled per year. Without the applicant project, the lack of a vibrant and accessible station area will limit the kinds of economic and transportation benefits that justify High-Speed Rail and its environmental impacts in the first place.

The indirect environmental benefits of the project relate to reversing the traditional development patterns in the region. Five decades of outward growth and disinvestment in the downtown core have left their mark on Fresno’s inner-city economy and the region’s environment. It will take more than regulation to stop suburban sprawl; it requires a vibrant, dense downtown where people actually want to be. The environmental benefits of revitalizing Downtown Fresno will be regional in scale, affecting the land use patterns of a major region of California.

Lastly, the effects on historic resources resulting from the project are being studied now in the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan’s environmental review process. While the project proposes changes to the Fulton Mall landscape, which has been determined eligible for the National

Register of Historic Places, the outcome of the project is expected to include substantial improvement in the viability of the project area’s historic buildings, one of which is listed on the National Register, and several others of which are believed to qualify for listing. A 2010 survey<sup>15</sup> revealed that the major historic buildings along Fulton Mall have a collective vacancy rate of 71%. Meanwhile, comparable historic buildings within two to three blocks of Fulton Mall have a vacancy rate of 35%. A fundamental objective of this project is to rehabilitate and preserve Downtown Fresno’s historic buildings, which today are sitting idle and in a state of disrepair.

v. Safety

*Improving the safety of U.S. transportation facilities and systems.*

The project is not expected to have any significant, harmful effect on driver safety in the region. To analyze this, City staff compared the accident history of the current Fulton Mall with the accident history of three blocks of Kern Street between Van Ness Avenue and N Street. Kern Street in this area is lined by numerous businesses and has moderate daytime foot traffic. Kern is a local street where the traffic moves slowly, intersected by two other local streets and two collectors. On a traffic operations level, Kern Street resembles the outcome of this project on Fulton Mall.

The following table provides a comparison of Kern and Fulton, including City of Fresno traffic accident reports dating from 1991 to 2012:

	KERN STREET: <i>Van Ness Ave to N Street</i>	FULTON MALL: <i>Inyo St to Tuolumne St</i>	FULTON MALL: <i>Inyo St to Tuolumne St, with project</i>
BLOCKS	3.5	6	6
COLLECTOR INTERSECTIONS	2	4	4
MINOR INTERSECTIONS	2	0	3
TOTAL ACCIDENTS	40	46	
VEHICLE-PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICLE-BIKE	6	8	
INJURY ACCIDENTS	10	18	
FATAL ACCIDENTS	0	0	

These data do not suggest a dramatic change will take place in accident frequency or severity with the introduction of slow-moving vehicle traffic along Fulton and three new minor street intersections. All 18 injury accidents along Fulton Mall have taken place near the four collector intersections. At this rate, Kern Street, with only two collector intersections, would have had nine injury accidents, but the records show there were 10. This suggests one injury accident (in over 20 years) may be attributable to the presence of street traffic and two minor intersections.

<sup>15</sup> City of Fresno website. <http://tinyurl.com/2010fresnohistoricvacancy>.

While nothing in the data suggests a negative impact on traffic safety, the project is expected to relieve inevitable congestion around the HSR station. Without the project, it is hard to navigate to the proposed station location. With 8,400 HSR passengers a day, considerable traffic safety and congestion issues may arise if the street grid is not corrected.

vi. Project Readiness

*For projects that receive funding in this round of TIGER, DOT is required to obligate funds to those projects by September 30, 2014, or the funding will expire. Priority will be given to projects that can meet all local, State, and federal requirements by June 30, 2014.*

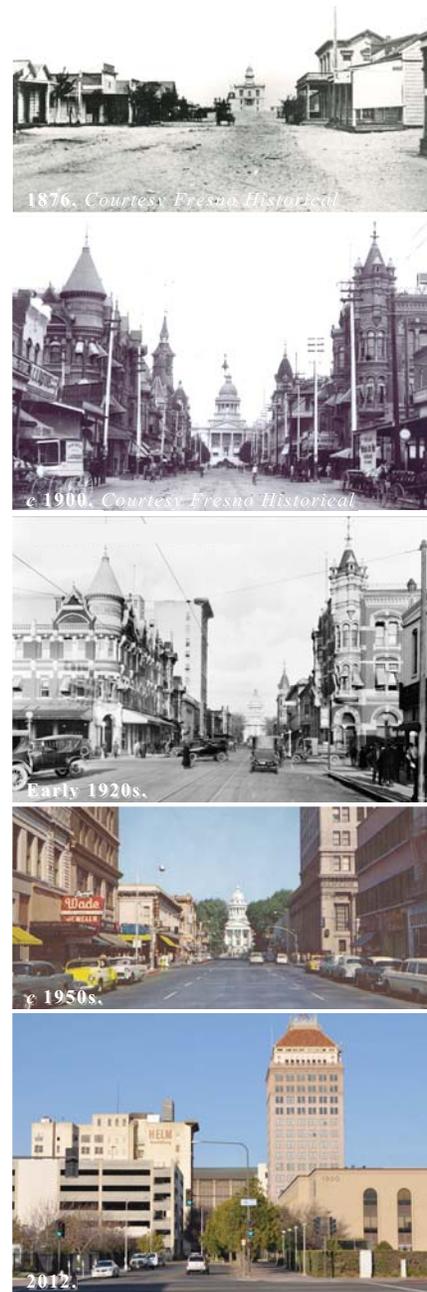
a. Technical Feasibility

A conceptual design of the applicant project is provided in Figure 10 and described below. The project is technically feasible and, from an engineering and construction perspective, routine.

The applicant project is to reconstruct the Fulton Mall (or “the Mall”) as a complete street by reintroducing vehicle traffic lanes to the existing pedestrian mall. The affected rights-of-way include the pedestrian areas between buildings located on the former City streets of Fulton, Mariposa, Merced and Kern, which function as an integrated pedestrian mall. The project does not include any work on the adjoining buildings or their facades.

The applicant project has two build alternatives. Alternative #1 consists of reopening the Mall with two-way streets, with one lane of vehicular traffic in each direction alongside bicycle and pedestrian modes. One 11 foot vehicle travel lane would run in each direction, with a parallel parking lane of 9 feet on both sides of the streets. A 20 foot sidewalk on both sides of the streets would allow for walking and seating, landscaping, lighting, and public art.

Alternative #2 consists of reconnecting the street grid as in Alternative #1, but would include rebuilding distinctive elements of the Mall in five to six specific locations, known as “vignettes.” Within the vignettes there would be no parking lane, and the existing Mall landscape elements (sculptures,



*Figure 9. Views from the proposed HST station site over the course of Fresno history show how the street grid ushered arriving rail passengers toward the city’s heart and through the applicant project area. In addition to a dazzling building stock, the photos show how the community has responded to travel demands by repeatedly taking action to reinvent the public right-of-way*

fountains, pavement pattern, trees, etc.) would be kept maximally intact. One 11-foot vehicle travel lane would run in each direction and would bend and curve through the vignettes. Outside the vignette areas the street would straighten, and the landscape would include a 9 foot parallel parking lane and a pedestrian-only walking, seating, vegetation, and public art area 20 feet in width on one or both sides of the street. The remaining space on each side of the street would be dedicated to pedestrian travel, seating, vegetation and artwork.

A total of 12 fountains — nine in vignettes and three on Kern Mall west of Fulton — would remain in place. The 12 fountains would be fully rebuilt or restored to working order. Fourteen of twenty sculptures would remain in their precise current locations. The other six (along with the various tile mosaics benches on the Mall today) would be reconfigured differently within the current right-of-way to accommodate the new streetscape. Street lighting outside the vignettes would be contemporary and pedestrian-oriented, but the original Mall fixtures would be retained within each vignette. The two tot lots present would be relocated and potentially combined into one larger tot lot in a prominent location in the project area.

Each build alternative proposes to reconstruct the Mall using “complete streets” design concepts such as narrow roadways, corner bulb-outs, and other traffic calming measures to lower driving speeds; street trees and other landscape elements; wide pedestrian sidewalks and crosswalks; and bicycle accommodations. These design concepts help retain the historic fabric of the existing landscape, and some of the unique feeling and experience of a pedestrian mall.

*Figure 10a.* The City Administration’s preferred alternative for the project, identified as Alternative #2, is seen in plan view at right and perspective view on the following page. This design attempts to create a welcoming environment for pedestrians by balancing the reintroduction of vehicle traffic with the preservation of key elements of the historic landscape, improved pedestrian-scale lighting, renewed exhibition of the existing public art collection, and low vehicle speeds.





*Figure 10b.* The City Administration's preferred alternative for the project, identified as Alternative #2, perspective view.

On a technical level, both Alternatives #1 and #2 will clear the existing right of way for the reconstruction of Fulton Street to provide two-way vehicular traffic, on-street parking and new pedestrian facilities. The proposed street improvements will include a new asphalt concrete pavement section to accommodate the predicted traffic index; curb, gutter and other necessary storm drainage facilities; pedestrian sidewalks and ADA accessibility improvements; traffic signal upgrades and installations; and connection to the intelligent transportation system network. Other improvements will include adjusting utilities to finished grade; upgrading fire suppression facilities; installation of signing and striping; installation of street furniture; installation of decorative street lights; and landscaping and irrigation upgrades. Although not a part of the applicant project, the excavation for the street work also provides an ideal opportunity for the urgently needed replacement or rehabilitation of decayed City sewer main lines running under the cross streets of Merced, Mariposa, and Kern.

The City has selected the renowned landscape architecture firm of Royston, Hanamoto, Alley & Abey (RHAA) and the local civil engineering firm of Provost & Pritchard to design and engineer the project. This team will carry forward the work begun in the Specific Plan, creating preliminary engineering drawings for the alternatives under ongoing study in the state and federal environmental review process, and then final drawings for the build alternative chosen.

As described previously in this section, the project consists of a six block long street plus cross streets estimated to cost \$19,924,620. The City's track record on budget contingency levels for major capital projects such as this is 1-5%. Nevertheless, the project budget provided below calls for a 10% contingency level. The City feels this level of contingency is a substantial but appropriate budget and scope risk-mitigation measure for the applicant project at this time.

#### **b. Financial Feasibility**

The City of Fresno annually manages hundreds of millions of dollars in capital improvement projects funded through local, state and federal programs, and oversees complex projects from preliminary design through final plan approval and construction. With over 100 years of experience, the City's Public Works Department is comprised of a dedicated team of professionals that oversees infrastructure in the City including land use planning, permit

issuance, inspection services and construction of public facilities. The department had a budget of \$288.6 million in the 2011–12 fiscal year, and has a long track record of completing projects similar in cost and complexity on a timely and successful basis.

A preliminary engineer’s estimate<sup>16</sup> has been prepared, providing a detailed breakdown of the project’s costs. The estimated total construction cost is \$19,924,620. The following detailed project budget is derived from the preliminary engineer’s estimate<sup>17</sup>:

ITEM	QUANTITY		DESCRIPTION OF WORK	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	% OF SUBTOTAL
1	1	L.S.	MOBILIZATION	LUMP SUM	\$550,000	3.3%
2	1	L.S.	TRAFFIC CONTROL	LUMP SUM	\$1,000,000	6.0%
3	1	L.S.	ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING AND IMPLEMENTATION	LUMP SUM	\$110,000	0.7%
4	1	L.S.	CLEARING AND GRUBBING	LUMP SUM	\$525,000	3.2%
5	1	L.S.	STORM DRAINAGE FACILITIES	LUMP SUM	\$531,000	3.2%
6	19,670	C.Y.	ROADWAY EXCAVATION AND GRADING	\$20	\$393,400	2.4%
7	8,530	L.F.	CONCRETE CURB AND GUTTER	\$30	\$255,900	1.5%
8	1	L.S.	DECORATIVE CONCRETE SIDEWALK AND ADA FACILITIES	LUMP SUM	\$2,328,950	14.0%
9	1	L.S.	MEDIAN ISLAND REPLACEMENT	LUMP SUM	\$50,000	0.3%
10	17,050	TON	AGGREGATE BASE, CLASS 2	\$40	\$682,000	4.1%
11	10,230	TON	ASPHALT CONCRETE, TYPE "A"	\$120	\$1,227,600	7.4%
12	1	L.S.	ADJUST UTILITIES TO FINISHED GRADE	LUMP SUM	\$250,000	1.5%
13	1	L.S.	ADJUST, RELOCATE AND REFURBISH EXISTING STRUCTURES	LUMP SUM	\$2,400,000	14.5%
14	1	L.S.	INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS COORDINATION	LUMP SUM	\$1,000,000	6.0%
15	1	EA	TRAFFIC SIGNAL MODIFICATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS	LUMP SUM	\$1,750,000	10.5%
16	1	L.S.	DECORATIVE STREET LIGHTING 12' POSTS	LUMP SUM	\$1,400,000	8.4%
17	1	L.S.	LANDSCAPING AND IRRIGATION	LUMP SUM	\$600,000	3.6%
18	1	L.S.	SIGNAGE AND STRIPING	LUMP SUM	\$50,000	0.3%
19	1	L.S.	STREET FURNITURE	LUMP SUM	\$1,500,000	9.0%
<b>CONSTRUCTION SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>\$16,603,850</b>	
CONTINGENCY					\$1,660,385	10.0%

16 <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGERestimate>

17 Note for preliminary engineer’s estimate: Quantities and items of work are approximate. This is an approximation of the probable cost of the proposed work based on previous competitive bids the City has received for similar work. It is not intended to be indicative of the final cost of the project. It is intended to represent a general magnitude of the cost of a competitively bid project. It is not intended to represent the cost of a project completed by City crews. Construction plans yet to be prepared will be used to generate a more precise final engineer’s estimate.

<b>CONSTRUCTION TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,924,620</b>
---------------------------	---------------------

The requested TIGER funds and matching fund commitments from local and private sources make up the following project budget:

<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	\$19,924,620	
<b>TIGER FUNDING REQUESTED</b>	15,924,620	79.92%
<b>LOCAL PUBLIC FUNDING</b>	3,750,000	18.82%
<b>PRIVATE FUNDING</b>	250,000	1.25%

This application seeks funding only for the construction phase of the applicant project. The nonfederal and private funds committed as match are for the construction phase as well. Already the project’s preconstruction phase has been awarded \$1 million from FHWA’s Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) program, and \$474,810 from the local Fresno County Measure C Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) program. These funds will primarily be expended before the construction period and are not considered a match for TIGER, but they do indicate the City’s proven ability to make other funding available for the project.

**c. Project Schedule**

The City, its consultants, and staff at Caltrans acting as the NEPA lead agency<sup>18</sup> are committed to meeting the TIGER obligation timeframe. Already, for several months, the environmental review process for the applicant project has been proceeding at the highest possible speed, in recognition of the tight TIGER statutory obligation deadline. The City is also in the process now of hiring the team to provide engineering drawings for the project. Because the project occurs entirely within City right-of-way, property acquisition is not an obstacle to obligating funds. The following tables provide an overall project schedule, followed by an estimated number of jobs created during the construction phase by quarter, beginning in January 2015.

PROJECT MILESTONE	DATES
START OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS	APRIL 2012 (STATE), MARCH 2013 (FEDERAL)
COMPLETION OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS AND APPROVALS	MARCH 2014 (STATE AND FEDERAL)
COMPLETION OF PRELIMINARY DESIGN	MARCH 2014
RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION	N/A: PROJECT OCCURS ENTIRELY WITHIN EXISTING CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY
APPROVAL OF PLANS, SPECIFICATIONS, AND ESTIMATES (PS&E)	JUNE 2014
OBLIGATION OF CONSTRUCTION FUNDING	JUNE 2014
PROCUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR	SEPTEMBER 2014
CONSTRUCTION	JANUARY 2015–MARCH 2016

18 See Caltrans letter stating the Director’s commitment to the project. <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGERletters>

CONSTRUCTION CALENDAR QUARTER	FTES EMPLOYED DIRECTLY ON THE PROJECT	CONSTRUCTION JOB-YEARS
JANUARY-MARCH 2015	45	11.25
APRIL-JUNE 2015	95	23.75
JULY-SEPTEMBER 2015	150	37.50
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2015	115	28.75
JANUARY-MARCH 2016	60	15.00
<b>TOTAL CREATED</b>		<b>116.25</b>

#### d. Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The City of Fresno has been working for three years in preparation for the applicant project, and many of the inherent execution risks at this point have been addressed or are at least well understood. The following are the most material risks to the project scope, budget, and timeline:

***Litigation upon certification of environmental reviews.*** Ultimately the decision of potential plaintiffs to sue, and the time involved in the response of the court, are beyond any project sponsor’s control. However, recognizing the sensitive nature of planning for major projects in the city’s historic urban core, the City has undergone a thorough process of involving the community in considering options for the future of the Fulton Mall, along with land use planning for the surrounding downtown area. The forthcoming state and federal environmental reviews will each consider an appropriate range of alternatives for the project and, for Section 4(f) in particular, possible measures to minimize impacts to the existing landscape while still achieving the objectives of the project.

***Delays in the project’s environmental review process.*** State and federal environmental review documents and technical studies are already well underway. The City, as project sponsor, is also the lead agency under CEQA, while Caltrans, with authority assigned by FHWA, is the lead agency for NEPA and other federal reviews. Delay could arise from the City’s inability to control the pace of NEPA reviews and the studies involved. To mitigate this risk, the City and Caltrans are entering into an agreement to allocate \$115,000 from the preconstruction budget provided by the federal TCSP program over two years to Caltrans to cover the costs of an increased level of attention to the project. Already this arrangement is bearing fruit, with Caltrans staff personally directing and performing various studies expeditiously. As stated in their letter supporting this application,<sup>19</sup> Caltrans is committing to seeing the environmental review process for the applicant project through to completion on a timeframe that meets the needs of the TIGER program.

## b. Innovation

*Use of innovative strategies to pursue the long-term outcomes outlined above.*

The project includes Intelligent Transportation System deployment and traffic synchronization. The new Fulton Mall road and the intersections included in the TIGER project will incorporate the installation of fiber or wireless communications, 2070L intersection controllers, cameras; detector loops, vaults, and cabinets per City of Fresno ITS Standards. This system will reduce the overall trip times and reduce the negative effects of trip delays.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See letters of support at <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGERletters>

<sup>20</sup> Information about the City’s ITS systems is available at <http://www.fresno.gov/Government/DepartmentDirectory/PublicWorks/TrafficEngineering/ITS/ITSBenefits.htm>.

The City is also committed to water efficiency in the project, based on Fresno’s environmental conditions and role as an international leader in water technology.<sup>21</sup> Since 2000, under the State of California’s Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, new landscapes must undergo a comprehensive analysis to ensure that water usage is below the maximum water usage set by the State, a level the City has also adopted as its own. This analysis applies a water usage factor to every plant selected, and every irrigation emitter installed.

### c. Partnership

*Demonstrating strong collaboration among a broad range of participants, integration of transportation with other public service efforts, and/or projects that are the product of a robust planning process.*

#### i. “Collaboration Among a Broad Range of Participants”

The downtown planning process described above under “Livability” is one reason Fresno was chosen by the White House as one of six “Strong Cities, Strong Communities” Initiative (SC2) pilot cities across the nation in 2011. Fresno, like the other five SC2 cities, has serious economic challenges: the downtown Fresno primary trade area<sup>22</sup> has a median household income of \$35,000, compared to \$61,000 statewide and \$54,000 nationally, and per capita income of \$13,000 compared to \$27,800 in California and \$26,700 in the U.S. The purpose of SC2 is to creatively seek ways for the federal government to be more responsive to a community that has a strategy for meeting its economic challenges — for example, identifying unnecessarily burdensome regulations or agency procedures, facilitating cross-agency collaboration, or inviting high-level attention to issues that are fundamentally unique. Efforts like the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan demonstrate the commitment of Fresno’s leaders to treat the underlying causes of these symptoms, and bend the community’s course toward a more prosperous and healthy future. From the beginning, the applicant project has been part of the SC2 work plan.

SC2 designation has brought an unprecedented level of federal attention to Fresno’s needs. Twelve federal agencies, including USDOT, have dedicated staff to Fresno’s SC2 program, and two agencies, HUD and the Environmental Protection Agency, have placed full-time staff on the ground in Fresno to give hands-on assistance and coordinate the multiagency effort. The SC2 Initiative began in September 2011, and Fresno’s designation ends this year.

In further recognition of the project area’s regional and national significance, the American Architecture Foundation has twice included the project area in its prestigious national programs geared toward design and sustainability. In 2009 Mayor Ashley Swearingin participated in the Mayor’s Institute on City Design with an examination of the economic and cultural resource issues along Fulton Mall and the need for change to the Mall’s form and function. In April 2012, City staff and private property owners participated with leading national experts in economics and design in the Foundation’s Sustainable Cities Design Academy, examining the “Mariposa Corridor” that leads from the front door of the HST station three blocks east to Van Ness Avenue, through the intersection with Fulton Mall.

<sup>21</sup> For more information see <http://www.icwt.net/>.

<sup>22</sup> Gibbs Planning Group, *City of Fresno Downtown Retail Market Analysis*, 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/2011downtownfresnoretailstudy>.

Economic limitations have forced the City to be creative in finding partners to fund work related to the applicant project. Although the City has devoted scarce General Fund resources to provide staff to oversee the creation of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, the major expenses have been supported by federal and state grants. In view of the project’s regional significance, the City is also accessing funds from a countywide transportation sales tax (Measure C) to engage in preconstruction engineering. In a region with high unemployment and poverty, amid the greatest economic downturn in decades, and with recent changes in state law, City redevelopment funds that might have been available in a different era simply do not exist.

The mix of public and private dollars uniting to meet the TIGER match requirement reflects the mix of public and private benefits of the project. The City Administration is committing a total of \$3.75 million in local public funds to the project. Property owners in the area have long recognized the importance of the project to the revitalization of downtown Fresno. The property owner-led board of the Downtown Fresno Partnership (DFP) not only supports the proposed project, but has committed \$250,000 to the construction, or nearly half of a year’s entire assessment revenues.

The federal, state, local, and private dollars that are part of the applicant project reflect the exceptionally broad range of participants in the planning and execution. The project is essential not only for the viability of individual Fulton Mall businesses and buildings, but at the community, regional, state, and even national levels.

ii. “Integration of Transportation with Other Public Service Efforts”

With federal funds designated for starting California’s High-Speed Rail system in the San Joaquin Valley, running from Merced in the north to near Bakersfield in the south, downtown Fresno is poised to become the location of the nation’s first HSR station. Planning for the area around this station will set a precedent, and the California High-Speed Rail Authority, the California Strategic Growth Council, and the Federal Railroad Administration have allocated a total of \$1.4 million to assist the City of Fresno in creating a development program and a financing plan for the auxiliary transportation facilities that will serve the new station.

A major input into this planning effort is the configuration of the street grid in the station area. By restoring important parts of the original downtown Fresno street grid, the applicant project improves the functionality of both the city’s one-time “Main Street” and the HSR station and related facilities two blocks away. The timing of TIGER 2013 awards will work in parallel with efforts later this year to carefully program development around Fresno’s HSR station.

As planning for the applicant project proceeds, numerous other public and non-governmental resources are coming into the project area to ensure revitalization once this project is complete:

PARALLEL ACTIVITY IN PROJECT AREA	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	TOTAL VALUE
New downtown development code, Specific Plan, and formal approvals for Mall project	Dept. of Housing & Urban Development; Calif. Strategic Growth Council (Prop. 84)	\$2.7 million
Fulton Mall preconstruction	Fresno County Transportation Authority (Measure C)	\$474,810

Preconstruction engineering for the applicant TIGER project	Federal Highways Administration (Transportation, Community, and System Preservation program)	\$1 million
Water and sewer system replacements and upgrades to enable building reuse, concurrent with TIGER project	City utility ratepayers for replacement cost; other funds pending	\$3.9 million
High-Speed Rail station area planning	Federal Railroad Administration; Calif. High-Speed Rail Authority; Calif. Strategic Growth Council (Proposition 84)	\$1.4 million
Mayor's Institute on City Design (2009) and Sustainable Cities Design Academy (2012)	American Architectural Foundation (private)	\$80,000 (est.)
13.8-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system with central stop in the project area	Federal Transit Administration	\$38 million
Pedestrian improvements at BRT station near Fulton Mall	Federal Transit Administration	\$2.4 million
Mixed-income housing in vacant, historic Hotel Fresno building	Dept. of Housing & Urban Devt.; local redevelopment	\$13.8 million
HSR station and medical, education, and food production industry attraction study	Environmental Protection Agency	\$78,362
Downtown Fresno Food Hub feasibility study	Funding proposals pending	<i>\$100,000 anticipated</i>
Property and Business Improvement District: marketing, clean & safe programs, events	Downtown property owner tax assessments, operating income	\$1.4 million per year

Building on these supportive investments in the project area, the applicant project is truly the linchpin in a multi-pronged effort to revitalize Downtown Fresno and the HSR station area.

iii. “Projects that Are the Product of a Robust Planning Process”

For the last three years, the City of Fresno has undertaken what is arguably the most comprehensive and robust planning effort in City history. The City is leading the charge on an 8-county regional plan; updating its General Plan with a balanced focus on infill and new growth; and developing aggressive plans for its Downtown. All of these planning efforts have been community-driven and engaged the public more than any other previous effort. This work has been funded with \$2.5 million in Community Development Block Grant funds from HUD, and nearly \$200,000 in planning and sustainability funds from the State of California. The Fulton Corridor Specific Plan for Downtown has been developed with technical support from 20 different firms with expertise in a range of planning, economic, transportation, sustainability, and other disciplines, and with participation and input from over 1,000 residents of Fresno and the region. The preferred alternative for the Fulton Mall’s future, which the applicant project will implement, has been supported by the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Community Advisory Committee, comprised of community stakeholders appointed to oversee the planning process.

The City of Fresno is responsible for the implementation of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan. The area served by the Specific Plan includes the applicant project area and the proposed High-Speed Rail station site. The Specific Plan seeks to achieve economic development and environmental sustainability efficiently, with scarce resources, by directing public investments in infrastructure to downtown locations strategically targeted for private investments in development. The transportation improvements planned focuses on complete streetscapes and the integrity of the street grid. **The Specific Plan identifies fixing the Fulton Mall as the single top public priority for encouraging downtown investment and redevelopment.**

As indicated, the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan is not an isolated document. It is being prepared by the City simultaneously with the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, which provides policies to guide the revitalization of the 7,290-acre area that surrounds and includes the downtown core, and the new Downtown Development Code, which will replace the existing zoning code in this 7,290-acre area in order to assist in the preservation and revitalization of Fresno’s oldest neighborhoods and commercial centers. These documents are undergoing environmental review now, and are expected to be adopted together in less than a year.

Lastly, the City is undergoing the required process of updating its General Plan on approximately the same timeframe, providing opportunities for the downtown planning effort to inform and receive support from the citywide plan. The General Plan and citywide development code update are being supported in part by a \$4 million HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant for the 14-city San Joaquin Valley partnership called Smart Valley Places.

In summary, the applicant project is the result of extensive community outreach and land use planning at the specific, neighborhood, citywide, and regional level.

#### d. Results of Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA)

As described earlier in this narrative, many benefits of the applicant project are regional in nature, supporting downtown revitalization in order to improve larger land use and economic patterns. It is inherently difficult to quantify such impacts in a benefit-cost analysis. Those benefits and costs that are quantifiable, however, show benefits of \$21.9 million to \$35.3 million, depending on the discount rate, and **a benefit-cost ratio for the project of 1.10 to 1.77.**<sup>23</sup>

## V. PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS

### a. Environmental Approvals

Reviews of the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other applicable federal laws, such as Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act, are ongoing.

#### i. NEPA and CEQA Status

The majority of work on both state and federal environmental and historical reviews has been completed, and draft documents are expected to be circulated to the public in the fall of 2013. The following table summarizes this progress at the time of submission:

	FEDERAL LAWS	STATE OF CALIFORNIA LAW
APPLICABLE LAW(S)	NEPA, §4f of USDOT Act, §106 of NHPA, §6f of LWCF Act	CEQA
LEAD AGENCY	Assigned by FHWA to California Dept. of Transportation (Caltrans)	City of Fresno

<sup>23</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGER-BCA>

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA) with integrated §4f analysis; §106 consultation and SHPO concurrence; relocation/replacement proposal for “tot lots” for §6f	Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
SCOPE OF REVIEW	Applicant project	Applicant project (at “project level”) and adoption of Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, and Downtown Development Code (at “program level”)
STATUS OF PROCESS	Preliminary Environmental Statement (PES) accepted by Caltrans March 2013	Notice of Preparation issued April 2012 with 30-day public review period;
STATUS OF TECHNICAL STUDIES	All 9 administrative drafts in progress or complete	All 10 administrative drafts in progress or complete
STATUS OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS	Portions already drafted; estimated completion and availability to the public in September 2013	Estimated completion and availability to the public in October 2013
ANTICIPATED COMPLETION	March 2014 certification of FONSI by Caltrans	March 2014 adoption of EIR by City Council

On November 8, 2011, the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Community Advisory Committee voted (unanimously) to recommend initiation of the Specific Plan adoption process, which includes environmental review. Technical studies to inform the EA and the EIR are now substantially complete or nearing completion. These include studies of impacts on traffic, air quality, cultural resources, and urban decay. The anticipated environmental review timeline is as follows:

DATE(S)	STATE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA) STEP OR CITY ACTION	FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (NEPA) STEP OR LEAD AGENCY ACTION
APRIL 2012	Notice of Preparation public review period, and Scoping Meeting; technical studies commenced	
MARCH 2013		PES form approved; technical studies and environmental document drafting underway
AUGUST 2013	Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) expected to City	Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) expected
SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2013	Draft EIR public review period	Draft EA public review period
MARCH 2014	EIR adoption by City Council	Final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by Caltrans
APRIL 2014	Window for legal challenges closes	

Preparation of the NEPA and CEQA documents is well underway. To date, of funds budgeted to create the Downtown Plans and Code and perform the environmental studies on these documents and the applicant project, \$2.27 million (or 78%) has been expended, and \$641,000 (or 22%) remains unspent. This application seeks TIGER funding for construction costs only, not preconstruction costs such as environmental analysis.

## ii. Reviews by Other Agencies

Work on NEPA with Caltrans as the lead agency is ongoing. Caltrans has approved the scopes for all technical studies to be performed by the City's consultant team. The majority of these studies have been performed or drafted, and Caltrans is in the process of reviewing and approving draft studies and chapters of the EA now. As indicated in the attached letter from Director Malcolm Dougherty,<sup>24</sup> Caltrans is committed to working very quickly and cooperatively toward completion of the federal environmental review process, within the tight TIGER timeframes.

Section 106 consultation is ongoing. As draft cultural resources technical studies are completed and the draft EA is prepared, the Section 106 process will include consultation with the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). In February 2013 City staff visited the State Historic Preservation Officer to discuss the project in detail, on a preliminary basis. City officials have also discussed with USDOT leadership the potential involvement, if necessary, of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).

The relocation of the two "tot lots" on the Fulton Mall is subject to review under Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act because LWCF dollars were once used for improvements at these sites. The City's Section 6(f) proposal must be reviewed and approved by the State Department of Parks and Recreation, followed by the National Park Service. In May 2012 City staff visited the appropriate State Parks staff personally and presented several concepts for the relocation of the tot lots in the project area. Based on the positive reaction of the State Parks officials, the City anticipates timely approval of the relocation plan as it is detailed during the design and engineering process for the project.

## iii. Environmental Documents

Consistent with the project schedules provided above, no draft environmental documents are yet available for public review.

## iv. Discussions with USDOT

Through the White House-led Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Initiative described in the "Partnership" section above, the City has had numerous conversations with FHWA California office staff, as well as USDOT leadership in Washington, about both the funding and environmental aspects of the project. At all levels the City has made it clear that the applicant project is the Administration's top infrastructure priority for the City. FHWA staff has been very helpful in several ways, for example in alerting the City to the possibility of applying for TCSP funds, and in later guiding Caltrans on eligible uses of those funds.

## b. Legislative Approvals

The available letters<sup>25</sup> from federal, state, and local elected officials, as well as other community institutions, demonstrate broad support for the proposed project.

Legislative approval from the Fresno City Council will be necessary to enter contracts and expend construction funds. Under California law, such approval may not be obtained until

<sup>24</sup> Dougherty's letter is included with the support letters at <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGERletters>.

<sup>25</sup> Letters available for download at <http://tinyurl.com/FultonMall2013TIGERletters>.

environmental impact analysis is complete. City Council adoption actions are expected to occur by March 2014, once this review is complete.

The City Council has been a part of the downtown planning process that has led to this project. The Council in January 2010 approved the \$2.7 million contract with a team led by Moule & Polyzoides to prepare the Plans and Code. The Council on five occasions has approved funding for the preparation of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan and related downtown planning and environmental documents. At various times during the planning process, the Council has received informational presentations, including explanations of the options under study for the future of the Fulton Mall. Several Council Members have participated personally in community meetings related to plan preparation. The Council has approved the use of local Measure C transportation sales tax to fund engineering and environmental work for the applicant project.

None of these actions binds the City to a particular outcome with respect to Fulton Mall, the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, or related documents. Yet taken as a whole, these actions clearly demonstrate the City Council’s recognition of the importance of downtown revitalization and the significance of the planning process that has led to the applicant project.

**c. State and Local Planning**

The table below indicates the plan amendments and approvals necessary for the applicant project to proceed. The City planning process is underway, while the attached letter from the Fresno Council of Governments (COG) indicates that the necessary steps outside the City will be taken consistent with this application’s timeframe.

AGENCY	DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS
FRESNO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (LOCAL MPO)	Amendment of the Federal Transportation Improvement Plan and Regional Transportation Plan to reflect the project.
	Approval of the project as part of adopting the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan.
CITY OF FRESNO	Modifications to the General Plan Circulation Element to reflect the Project.
	Amendments to Fresno Municipal Code to ensure consistency with project.

**VI. FEDERAL WAGE RATE CERTIFICATION**

Please see attached wage rate certification.