

# Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy

A BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLAN

FUNDED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



HR&A  
Center for Creative Land Recycling  
Precision Civil Engineering, Inc.  
Urban Diversity Design



PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT // JUNE 2019



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# Table of Contents

## USER GUIDE

---

### 1 INTRODUCTION

---

- 1.1 Community Profile
- 1.2 Leveraging Funds, Building on Plans
- 1.3 Engaging Stakeholders and the Community

### 2 A VISION FOR THE ELM AVENUE CORRIDOR

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- 2.1 Elm Avenue Today
- 2.2 Understanding the Market
- 2.3 Elm Avenue Vision
- 2.4 Implementation Actions

### 3 SITE REUSE CONCEPTS

---

- 3.1 Study Sites and Catalyst Sites
- 3.2 St. Rest Site
- 3.3 Elm/ Church Site
- 3.4 Elm/ North Site
- 3.5 Washington Unified School District Site
- 3.6 Implementation Actions

### 4 IMPLEMENTATION

---

- 4.1 Actions
- 4.2 Funding Sources

## APPENDIX

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The Brownfields Development Process



## LIST OF FIGURES:

---

1-1	Racial and Ethnic Mix
1-2	Families with Children
1-3	Historic Development of the Project Area
1-4	Study Area, Catalyst Sites, and Other Potential Study Sites
1-5	Elm Avenue Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Process
1-6	Issues on Elm
1-7	Development Priorities
2-1	Elm Avenue Vision (Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan)
2-2	Development along a Corridor (Southwest Fresno Specific Plan)
2-3	Existing Land Use
2-4	Existing Sidewalks, Shade, and Street Crossings
2-5	Planned Bike Network (Active Transportation Plan)
2-6	Pedestrian Priority Areas (Active Transportation Plan)
2-7	Conceptual Design for Elm Avenue (41+North Complete Streets Plan)
2-8	Retail Leakage (2017)
2-9	Elm Avenue Corridor Vision
3-1	St. Rest Site Location
3-2	Green Space Development Concept for the St. Rest Site
3-3	Phase 2 Development Concept for the St. Rest Site
3-4	Phase 3 Development Concept for the St. Rest Site - Housing Alternative for the St. Rest Site
3-5	Phase 3 Development Concept for the St. Rest Site - School Alternative for the St. Rest Site
3-6	Elm/ Church Site Location
3-7	Elm/ Church Development Concept 1
3-8	Elm/ Church Development Concept 2
3-9	Elm/ North Site Location
3-10	Washington Unified Site Location
3-11	Washington Unified Site Development Concept
A-1	Steps in the Development Process

## LIST OF TABLES:

---

3-1	Catalyst Sites and Other Potential Sites
3-2	Potential Development Summary for St. Rest Site and Adjoining Property
4-1	Funding Sources for Elm Avenue Corridor Revitalization

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# USER GUIDE

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## HOW WE GOT HERE & CALL TO ACTION

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It is important to acknowledge that the development of this document, the Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy, benefited greatly from the collaborative effort of property owners, developers, community members, community leaders, regulatory agencies, industry experts and the City of Fresno. It will take this same collaborative effort to see the corridor develop into the vision the community has created. To this end, this Strategy is organized like a playbook so that all stakeholders can make their way through the document to easily find where they can help with implementation. Symbols are used for each group of stakeholders as explained in the following pages of the User Guide. Stakeholder groups are not limited to participate in the areas identified by their symbol for it will take all members of each stakeholder group working together to see the vision and strategy through to fruition.

This Strategy was funded by the Environmental Protection Agency through the Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant program which seeks to assist communities in responding to local challenges where multiple brownfield sites are in close proximity, connected by infrastructure, and limit the economic, environmental and social prosperity of their surroundings. The Grant program provided guidance to insure economic viability was a part of the community's vision and so rather than contemplating land use changes this Strategy provides a road map to development which could lead to the revitalization of the Elm Avenue Corridor in Southwest Fresno (see Figure 1-4 on page 5 for the Study Area). As a road map, this Strategy identifies potential resources to help achieve the community's vision, but there is no funding allocated for development associated with this Strategy.

## NAVIGATING THIS DOCUMENT

The Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy is meant to be usable by anyone who has a role in creating a safer, more livable and more economically vital environment along Elm Avenue and adjoining neighborhoods. The document is organized as follows:

**Chapter 1: Introduction** describes the place and its people, and Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program. It gives a brief summary of previous plans, and summarizes how stakeholders and community members participated in the creation of this Strategy.

**Chapter 2: A Vision for the Elm Avenue Corridor** describes current development patterns, the circulation network and infrastructure, market conditions and opportunities. It illustrates how community-envisioned improvements along Elm Avenue can help create long-term, positive change.

**Chapter 3: Site Reuse Concepts** introduces current conditions on 12 study sites and 3 community identified catalysts sites that are currently vacant and considered brownfields. For these catalyst sites it shows how potential development could occur in a way that would be financially feasible, satisfy the needs of property owners, realize the community's vision and contribute to improving the character of the corridor as a whole.

**Chapter 4: Implementation** includes a summary list of initiatives described in Chapters 2 and 3, and potential funding sources.

**Appendix A: Brownfield Development Process** provides a more detailed guide to the challenges of development on potentially contaminated sites, and how to overcome those challenges.

Chapters 2 and 3 feature a series of action items to achieve the Corridor Vision and development on key sites. The roles of the community/neighbors (CN), the City of Fresno, as local government (LG), property owners (PO), developers/prospective purchasers (DP), regulatory agencies (RA) and qualified environmental professionals (QEP) are identified for each of these actions, using the symbols below.



Local Government (LG)



Community Members and Neighbors (CN)



Property Owners (PO)



Developer/ Prospective Purchaser (DP)



Regulatory Agency (RA)



Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP)

Each of these roles is defined in the context of brownfields development: see Appendix A.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

### STUDY AREA

The Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy focuses on the 2.25-mile Elm Avenue Corridor and adjacent neighborhoods in Southwest Fresno. The 1,092-acre Study Area is generally bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to the west, Highway 41 to the east, California Avenue and Ventura Street to the north, and North Avenue to the south.

### THE PEOPLE

Southwest Fresno and the Elm Avenue corridor are home to a diverse and engaged community. As of 2010, the community had a population of 11,128, representing about two percent of the city's population. More than half of the community (59 percent) is Hispanic or Latino, and one quarter is black or African American. Twelve percent of the population is Asian, while non-Hispanic whites make up 2 percent of community residents (shown in Figure 1-1).

Most households in the Study Area—83 percent—are families with children, compared to 38 percent in Fresno as a whole, as shown in Figure 1-2. The average household in the community has four people, compared to three citywide. About two out of three of the Study Area's households rent and one in three own (the ratio citywide is approximately 50-50).

The community generally has lower incomes and education levels compared to the city overall. While these data aren't available for the Study Area specifically, recent planning studies for overlapping areas report that over 40 percent of families live below the poverty line in the Downtown Neighborhoods, as do 34 percent of adults and 54 percent of children in Southwest Fresno.

Figure 1-1

#### RACIAL AND ETHNIC MIX

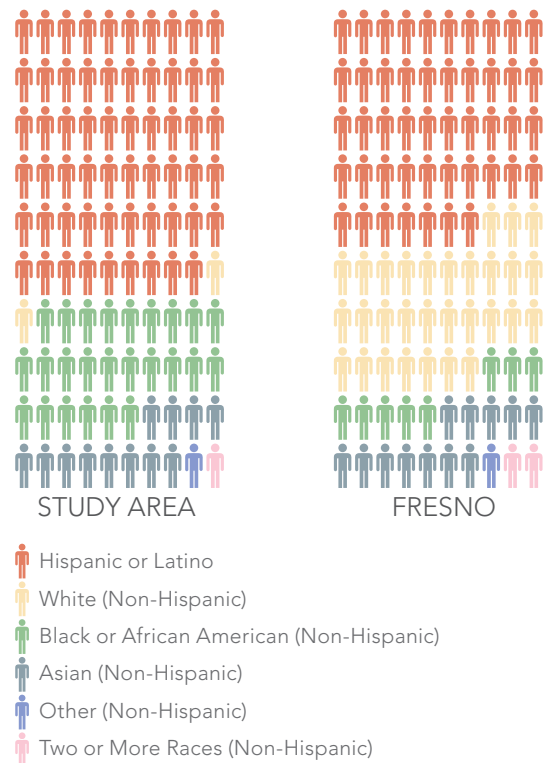
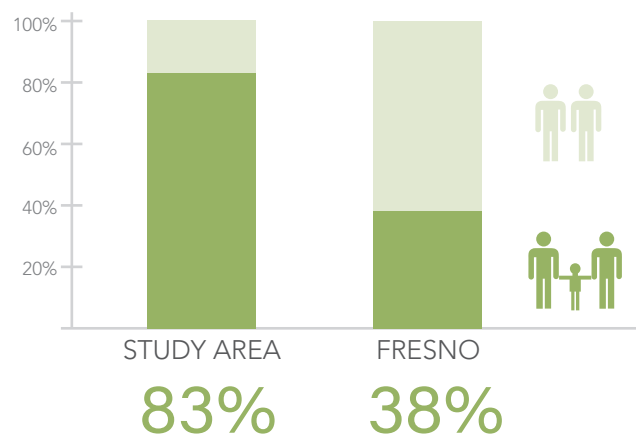


Figure 1-2

#### FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN



Source: US Census, 2010

## THE PLACE

In the Study Area, and in Southwest Fresno overall, development over the years has resulted in industry, residential neighborhoods, and remnants of agricultural land in close proximity. The northernmost portion of the Study Area had begun to develop by the beginning of the 20th century, but the area saw very little development again until the 1950s and '60s, when a sprinkling of new subdivisions began to sprout in the farmland, and new auto and industrial businesses grew up along Elm Avenue. This has continued somewhat in the years since, but on a scale dwarfed by Fresno's growth to the north and east. Figure 1-3 charts the historic growth of the Study Area.

The area has compact neighborhoods of houses and a sprinkling of apartments. There are three elementary and two middle schools, social service providers, and churches. Along Elm Avenue, there are vacant lots and auto repair and service businesses. Industries and auto businesses have come and gone, leaving behind sites that may be contaminated.



The corridor is marked by disinvestment, but it also offers a suburban environment with housing costs within reach of working families and good access to jobs. It has great cultural diversity. As the West Fresno Action Plan (2011) observes, "despite having the impacts of decades of public and private disinvestment, West Fresno possesses strong civic, cultural and physical assets upon which revitalization can build."

## CATALYST SITES

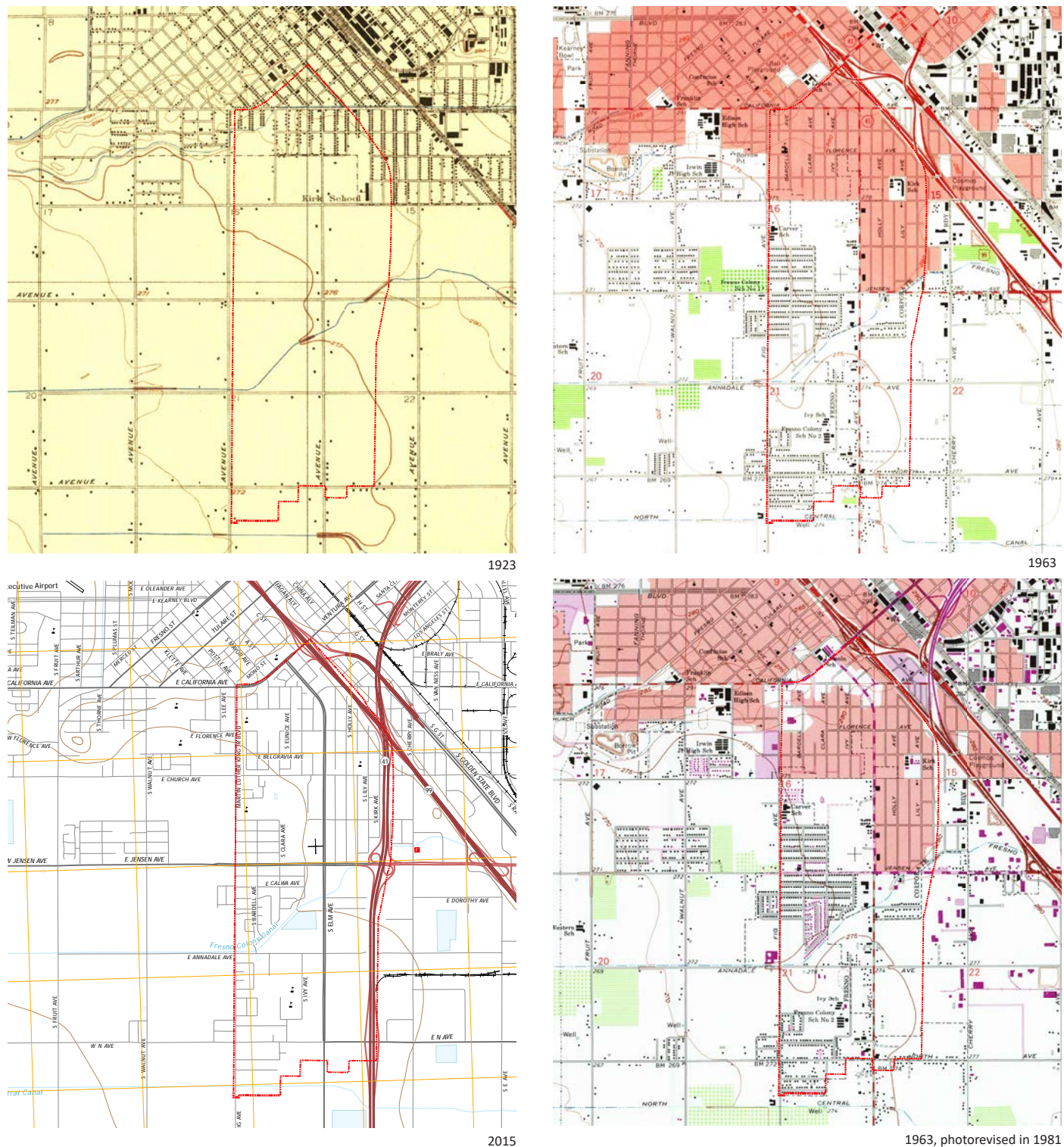
The City of Fresno identified several potential "brownfields" along Elm Avenue in preparation for this strategy. Three of these are identified as catalyst sites because of their potential to revitalize the neighborhood. Catalyst sites were chosen after a community stakeholder meeting and a tour of the corridor, and informed by previous research efforts and the priority sites listed in the West Fresno Brownfields Action Plan. Other sites also have potential to contribute to corridor enhancement.

Catalyst sites, other potential study sites, and the Study Area are shown on Figure 1-4.



The corridor is marked by disinvestment, but it also offers housing costs within reach of working families, good access to jobs, and cultural diversity. The Catalyst sites were identified because of their potential to revitalize the area.

Figure 1-3

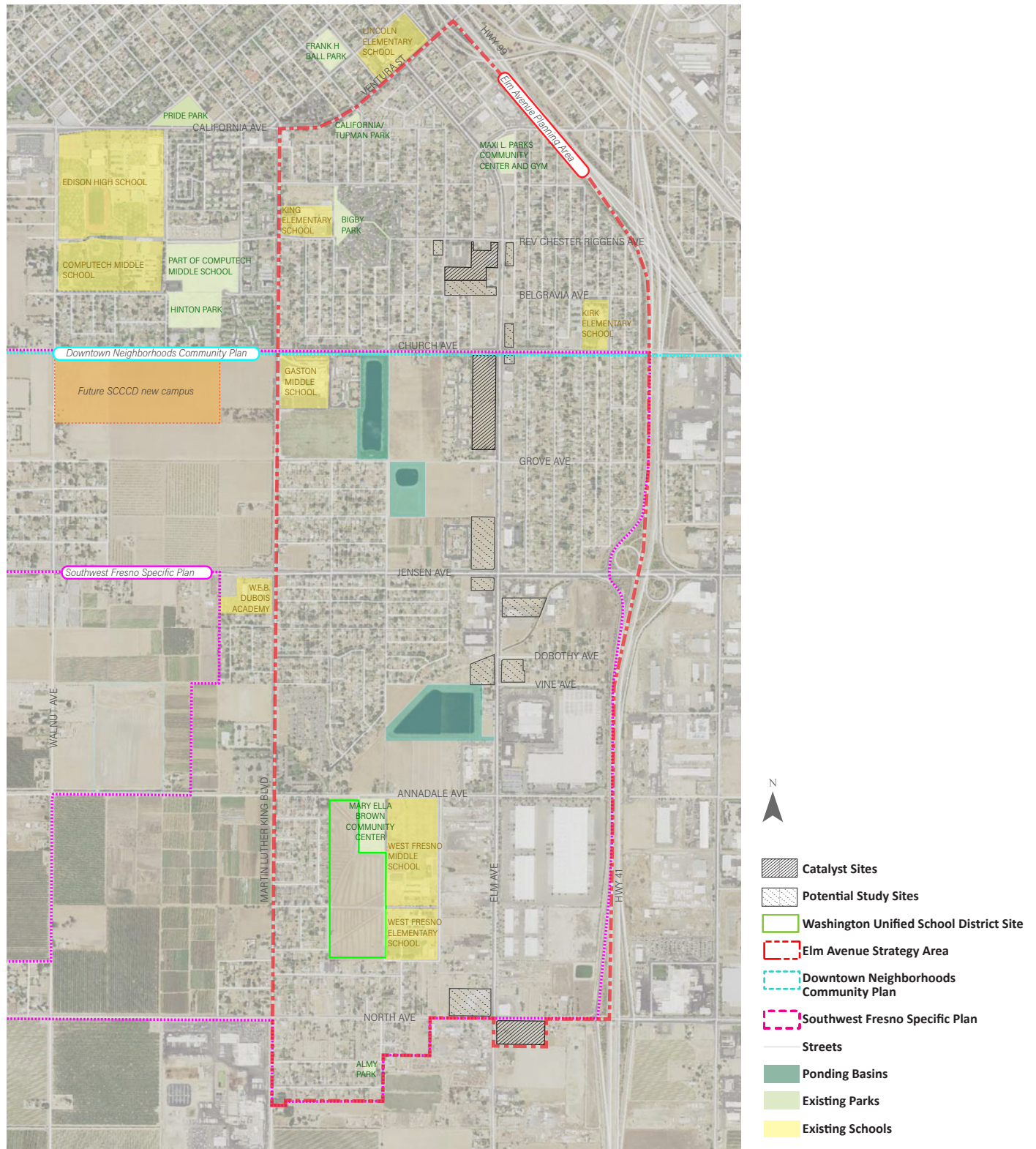
**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT)**

This series of maps shows how development progressed in the area between 1923 (top left) and 2015 (bottom left).

Source: USGS Historical Topo Maps



Figure 1-4

**STUDY AREA, CATALYST SITES, AND OTHER POTENTIAL STUDY SITES**

## 1.2 LEVERAGING FUNDS, BUILDING ON PLANS

### THE BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLANNING PROGRAM

The EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning grant program assists communities in responding to local challenges where multiple brownfield sites are in close proximity, connected by infrastructure, and limit the economic, environmental and social prosperity of their surroundings. The program aims to result in plans for future improvements that:

- protect public health and the environment,
- are economically viable, and
- reflect the community's vision for the area.

In 2015, EPA selected the City of Fresno as a Brownfield Area-Wide Plan grant recipient. Fresno received \$175,000 to work with community stakeholders to develop re-use concepts for catalyst sites and implementation strategy for the Elm Avenue corridor.

### BUILDING ON RECENT PLANS

Fresno's Brownfields area-wide planning work builds on previous EPA brownfields grants and technical assistance, including the 2011 West Fresno Brownfields Action Plan.

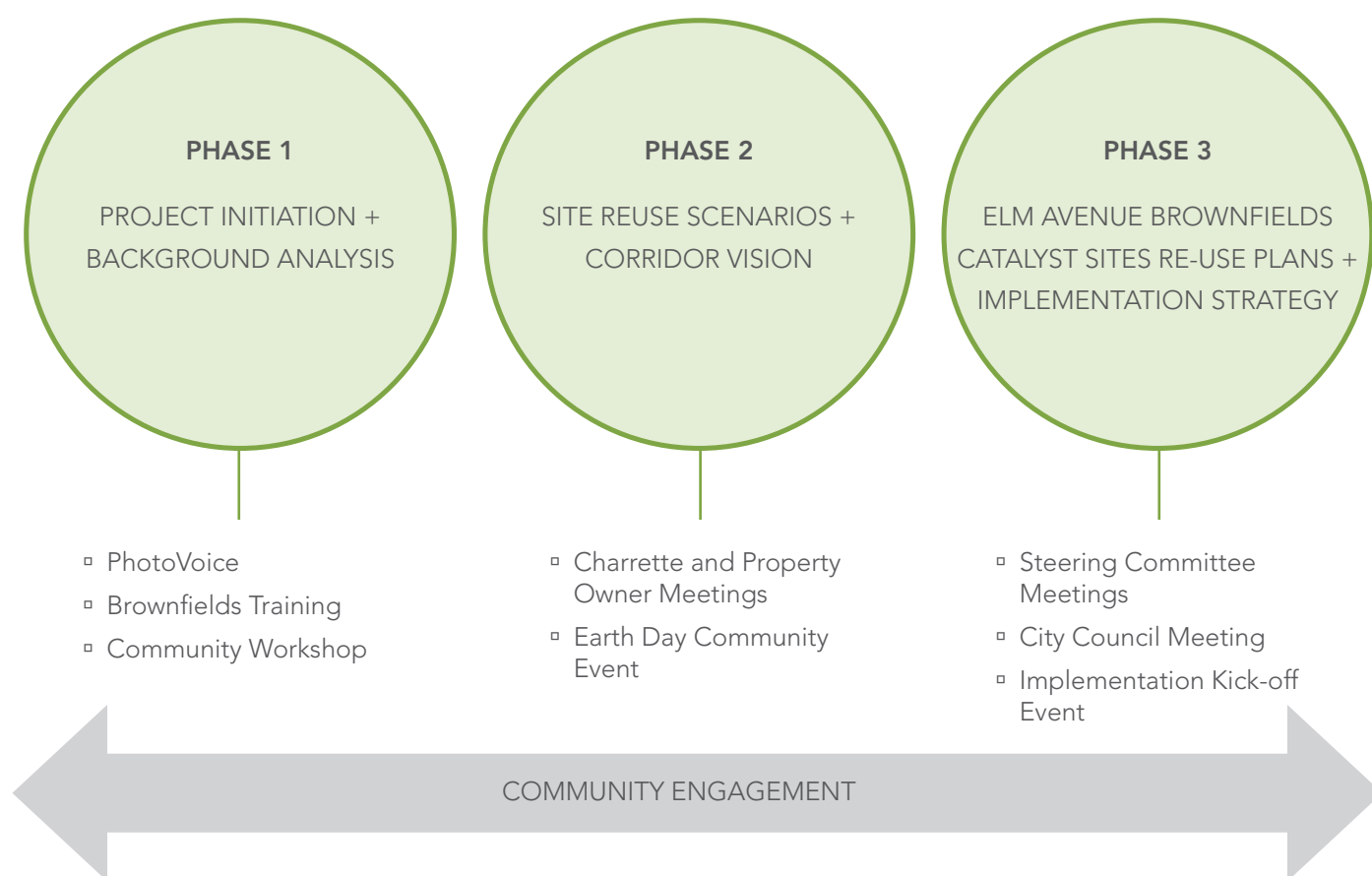
The revitalization of Elm Avenue with more community-serving uses was also feature of the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) cross-sector partnership's revitalization plan for Southwest Fresno, initiated in 2012. The BNCP program provided targeted federal assistance to help distressed communities "collectively solve problems, identify access and leverage existing resources, and put improvements in place."



Atlanta's Beltline received an EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant in the first year. Remediation and park development have followed.



Figure 1-5

**ELM AVENUE BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLANNING PROCESS**

This graphic outlines the process used by the project team and identifies the phases used to develop the strategy.

## 1.3 ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND THE COMMUNITY

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The Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy's community engagement work included a mix of targeted work with stakeholders and broad outreach to the community. Each component is described here, followed by a summary of what we learned about the community's desires and priorities.

### STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee made up of local community leaders was formed to guide the development of the Revitalization Strategy at key points. The Steering Committee met in January 2018, and received a presentation on the planning team's analysis of existing conditions; key points about brownfields development; outcomes from the first community workshop; and next steps. The Committee met again in May 2018 to hear the planning team's preliminary site reuse concepts and corridor vision, and to help guide the direction of these key elements of the Strategy. The Committee convened again in July 2019 to review the Draft Revitalization Strategy and make recommendations.

### PROPERTY OWNER MEETINGS

In April 2018, the WRT planning team gathered for a working session and met with representatives of the St. Rest and Elm / North sites. The team also had teleconference meetings with site representatives for the Elm / Church site. These meetings were productive and helped shape concepts for catalyst properties.

### BROWNFIELDS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Groundwork USA provided direct technical assistance to the effort, leading a workshop for community leaders in December 2017. The workshop covered what brownfields are, best practices for minimizing exposure, and how brownfield development can be part of a community revitalization strategy.

In February 2018, the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA) made site visits and met with property owners and community leaders as part of the EPA-funded Brownfields Technical Assistance Program. CDFA's resulting report, "St. Rest Campus & Elm Avenue Corridor Roadmap to Redevelopment," is an important source for this Strategy.

### PHOTOVOICE

During Fall 2017, Groundwork USA, Habitat for Humanity and City Staff carried out a program for local high school students that involved documenting Elm Avenue through photography and building community leadership skills. The PhotoVoice students met over the course of several weeks, culminating in a public presentation of their photographs and reflections on their neighborhood. A selection of these photos are shown on the following pages.

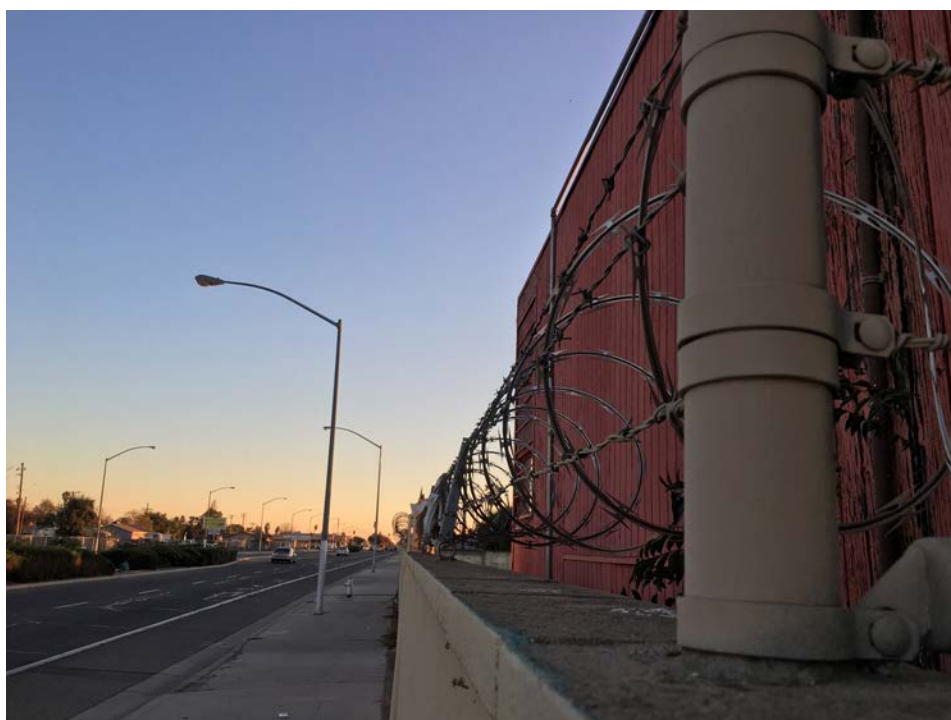


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“Isolation” Luis Duarte.

“If someone walks through this area they’re going to think it’s isolated because there’s nothing around there. Though they might not say it, they have different emotions because of what they’re seeing. I feel like this affects our community in a big way.”

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“The Difference,” Stefone Torres.

“I think they put up the dual sets of barbed wire because someone tried to climb the first set so they put up more so no one could get hurt. We can make this a better place by taking the pollutants out of the ground and building something more productive like a small store so people without a car won’t have to go far to get what they want or need.”

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“Abandoned House” Tyreshia Turner.  
 “This house looks abandoned because of the way it’s presented from the outside. The paint on the house looks like it is chipping and peeling. And then the bottom of the house looks torn from its foundation. The middle of the porch has a lot of junk and seems to be unwanted stuff. The windows are dusty and the screen door is broken. It looks like someone has tried to break in. Maybe this house can be fixed up. Flowers can be planted in the yard, the house can be repainted, and the junk should be moved away. And the windows and screen doors should be fixed.”

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“Giving” Luis Duarte.  
 “In the photo I see Giving. The toys in the box inspired me to take the photo. The part where it says free caught my attention because it has a lot of meaning to it. I think that the kids who owned these toys didn’t want them and wanted to give them to those kids who don’t have any. This connects with our community because many kids who can’t afford toys get the toys from unknown places.”

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“The Illusion Tunnel” Joshua Mina.  
“I was drawn to take this picture because inside of the barbwire I saw a tunnel that looked like a spiral illusion. I think they put the dual set of barbed wires because someone climbed the first set so they put more so no one would get hurt. The reason I think they did this was because the owner tore the building down and left pollutants in the ground. We can make this a better place by taking the pollutants out of the ground and build something productive like a small store so people without cars don’t have to go far just to buy what they need, a police station so when something happens they can respond more quickly, and an ice rink so people can have a good time with their families.”

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“The Endless Road” Stefone Torres.  
“I took this picture because it looked there was a road that never ended and just kept going with an orangish sunset above it. I think this connects with the community because this could be a place where people can hang-out and have fun with friends. I think this situation exists because people didn’t bother picking up the trash to keep it clean, what we could do is clean it up and put more trees so it looks like more than just a plane alleyway, and benches so people can relax and talk with friends.”

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## COMMUNITY EVENTS

The planning process featured numerous opportunities for the community at large to contribute.

A community workshop was held in December 2017 at the West Fresno Family Resource Center. The Photovoice students displayed and described their work, some of which is on the facing page. WRT presented the results of the existing conditions analysis, and led a workshop session in which small groups identified issues and priorities for future development. About 50 people participated--many of them local youth and their parents.

During the early Spring of 2018, City Staff and Habitat for Humanity visited schools and neighborhoods in and near the Study Area and had "coffee hours" for local students and their families, getting input from people who live and work in the neighborhood.

In April 2018, the planning team returned to the community with a booth at the Southwest Fresno Earth Day Festival. The team showed initial concepts for catalyst sites and a preliminary "corridor vision," and invited community members to share their input on what would make great public spaces, businesses, and buildings along Elm.

In November 2018, the team returned for a build day at the future location of the Saint Rest Plaza on Elm Avenue. The it's creation marked the beginning of turning the Revitalization Strategy actions into reality. The festival took place in the vacant lot at the corner of Elm and Rev. Chester Riggins Avenues, a key future development site on the corridor.



At the December 2017 workshop, PhotoVoice students showed their work, described what it meant, and worked with adults in small groups to identify issues and priorities.



# ELM AVENUE BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP 1

DEC 16, 2017

TABLE

1



## ISSUES ON ELM

Open lots, abandoned houses, trailers,  
closed streets, crime, drug dealing,  
homeless

The Value of downtown, West Essex Family  
Resource Center, Street police program,

## DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



# ELM AVENUE BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP 1

DEC 16, 2017

TABLE



## ISSUES ON ELM

UNEMPLOYMENT  
LACK of Code Enforcement  
to address blight - dilapidated  
at medium - low cost  
SPEEDING  
DRUG USE \*  
No Public Restrooms  
More Police - Sub-Station \*  
'Quality' \*  
MORE RETAIL  
LACK of Investment  
More Street lights \*  
BLIGHTED HOMES

## DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



# ELM AVENUE BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP 1

DEC 16, 2017

TABLE

2



## ISSUES ON ELM

1. Complete streets (no sidewalks)  
2. Blight (abandoned houses)  
3. Homelessness  
4. Lack of entertainment for youth

## DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



# ELM AVENUE BROWNFIELDS AREA-WIDE PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP 1

DEC 16, 2017

TABLE



## ISSUES ON ELM

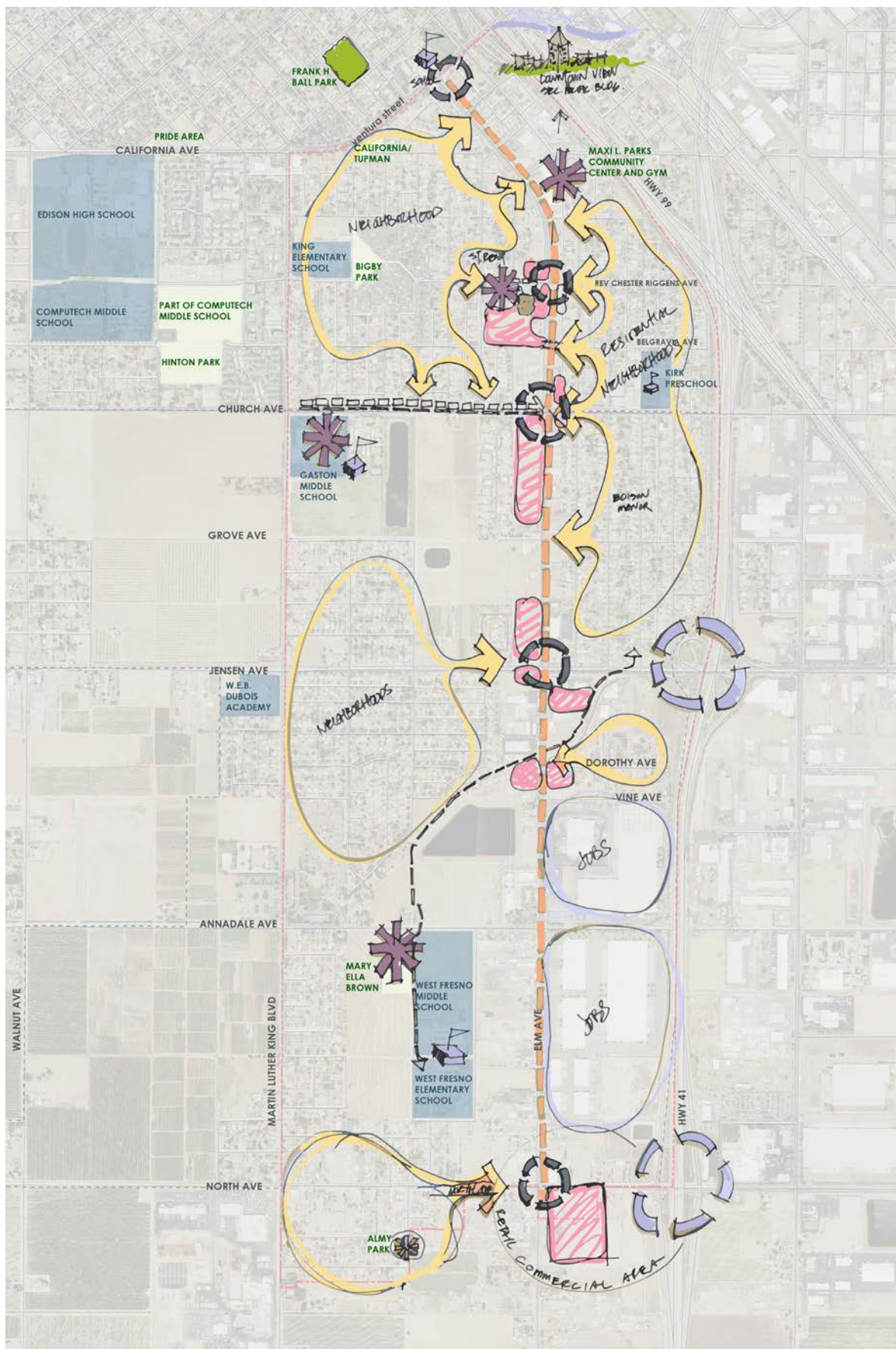
- Dirty and dirty  
- Blight  
- No sidewalks  
- Each need to be fixed  
- Small building  
- No green  
- No lights  
- No lights  
- No lights

## DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES









The initial Elm Avenue vision was sketched during a 2-day community and stakeholder charrette.

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## 2. A VISION FOR THE ELM AVENUE CORRIDOR



## 2.1 ELM AVENUE TODAY

### DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Most of the Study Area is composed of residential neighborhoods. There are five public schools, several churches and other community uses. Elm Avenue itself has a scattering of commercial development. South of Jensen Avenue, industrial uses predominate.

One third of all the land in the Study Area is vacant. Some of this land—especially along Elm—may have had previous auto service or industrial uses. Much of it is former agricultural land. The land use pattern in the Study Area is shown on Figure 2-3.

### DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY PLAN

The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan covers Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, including the Elm Avenue corridor north of Church Avenue.

Elm is designated as a “Neighborhood Mixed Use” district, which would feature small-scale retail, office, civic, and entertainment uses along with housing. See Figure 2-1.

### SOUTHWEST FRESNO SPECIFIC PLAN

The Southwest Fresno Specific Plan includes the Study Area south of Church, and envisions Elm Avenue as a “Mixed Use Jobs Corridor.” The planned land use pattern would bring about segments of mixed-use development, with commercial areas around Elm and Jensen and Elm and North. The new plan does not favor new industrial development in the area. The corridor concept is shown in Figure 2-2.

Figure 2-1

### ELM AVENUE VISION (Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan)



Source: Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan

Figure 2-2

### DEVELOPMENT ALONG A CORRIDOR (Southwest Fresno Specific Plan)

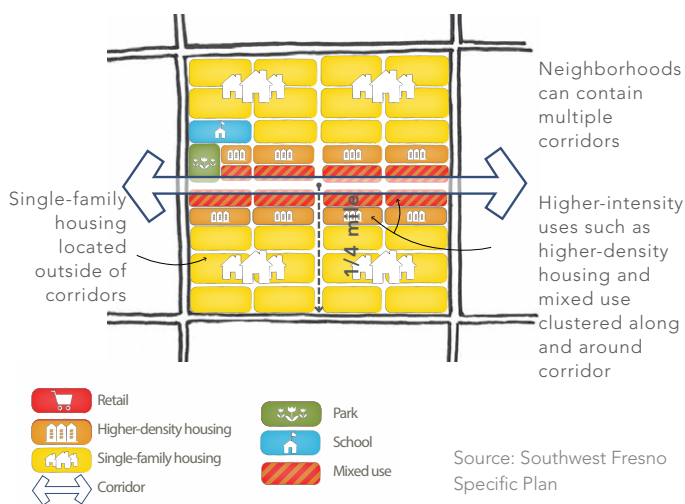
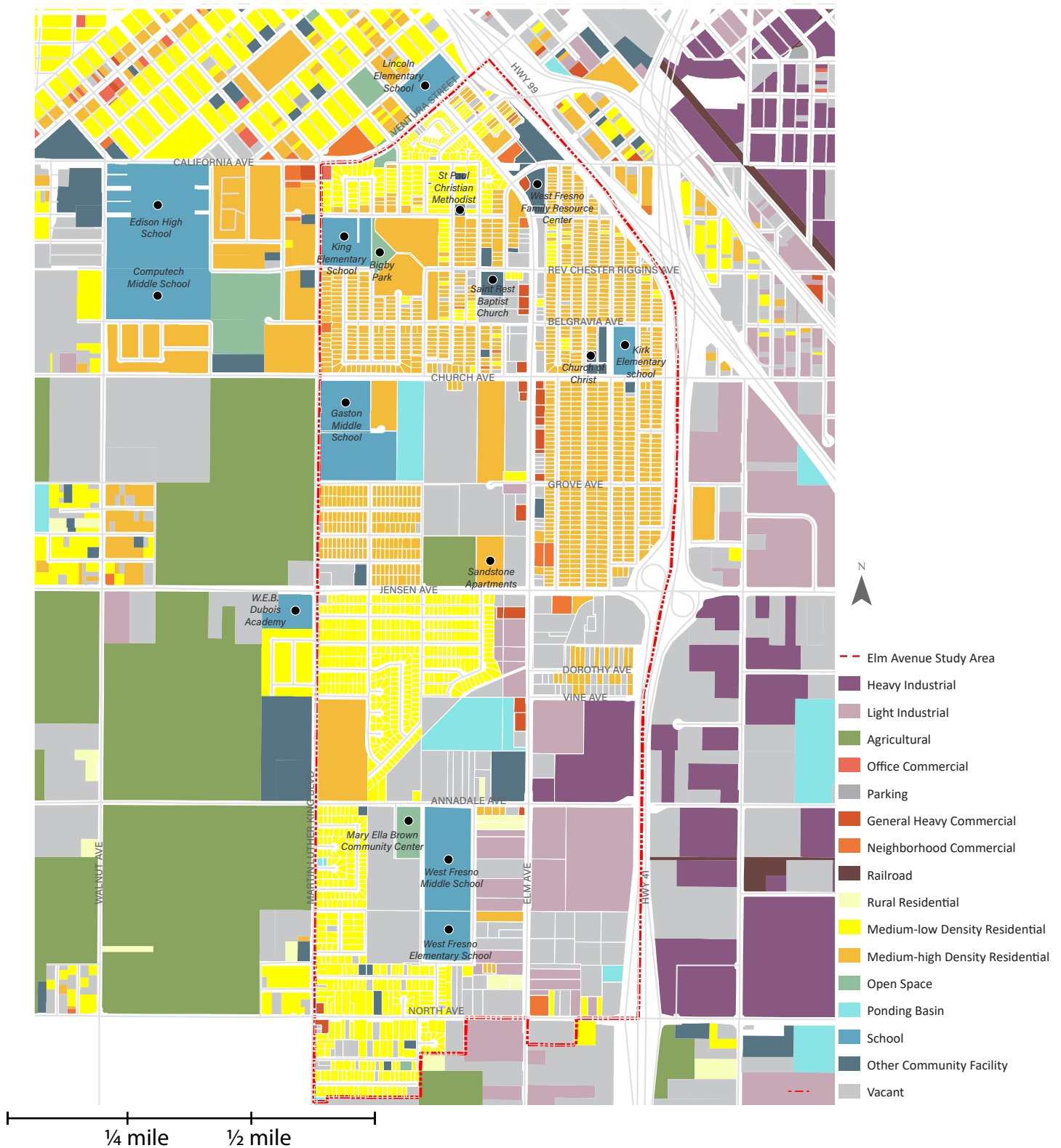




Figure 2-3

**EXISTING LAND USE**

## THE STREET ENVIRONMENT

Elm Avenue has sidewalks along most of the corridor, but a lack of crosswalks, street trees, amenities, long blocks, and few destinations make it a poor pedestrian environment.

Elm is generally built with two travel lanes in each direction, Class II bike lanes, and a center left turn lane or median. Recent plans envision a boulevard with widened sidewalks, corner bulb-outs, street parking, lighting, landscaping, and facade improvements.

Sidewalks, street trees, and street crossings are shown on Figure 2-4.

## BICYCLE FACILITIES

Consistent Class II bicycle lanes exist along the entire Elm Avenue corridor within the Study Area. The lanes connect the area to Downtown to the north. East-west Class II bicycle lanes crossing Elm Avenue exist on California Avenue/Ventura Street and also connect to Downtown and other neighborhoods. There are also Class II bicycle lanes on segments of Church and Jensen Avenues. Fresno's recent Active Transportation Plan describes most of the major streets in the Study Area as "high-stress" corridors for cyclists. The existing bike network is shown on Figure 2-3.

## PLANS FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

In the **Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan**, Elm is identified as a boulevard with bike lanes, widened sidewalks, corner bulb-outs, lighting and landscape improvements.

The **Southwest Fresno Specific Plan** shows a multi-use trail along the irrigation canal corridor and connecting to West Fresno Elementary and middle schools.

The City of Fresno **Active Transportation Plan** (ATP) provides the blueprint for citywide improvements to the bike and pedestrian network. Findings and recommendations include:

- The area between Elm and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard south of Annadale is identified as an area where sidewalk gaps and other pedestrian improvements should be prioritized.
- Continuous Class II bike lanes should be provided along North, Annadale, Jensen, and Church avenues.

ATP pedestrian and bike recommendations are shown on Figures 2-5 and 2-6.

The **41+North Complete Streets Plan** took a closer look at North Avenue between Elm and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and the neighborhoods to the north and south. The Plan identifies high-priority needs to improve safety and enhance identity. This Plan also provides street design guidance for Annadale Avenue, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and Elm Avenue itself. Potential long-term design for Elm Avenue, with one travel lane in each direction along with parking, bike lanes, and wide sidewalks, is shown on Figure 2-7.

## TRANSIT NETWORK

Three bus lines serve the Study Area: lines 32, 34 and 38. The northern portion of the Study Area is well connected and served by all three; the southern portion is only served by the 32 bus.

Figure 2-4

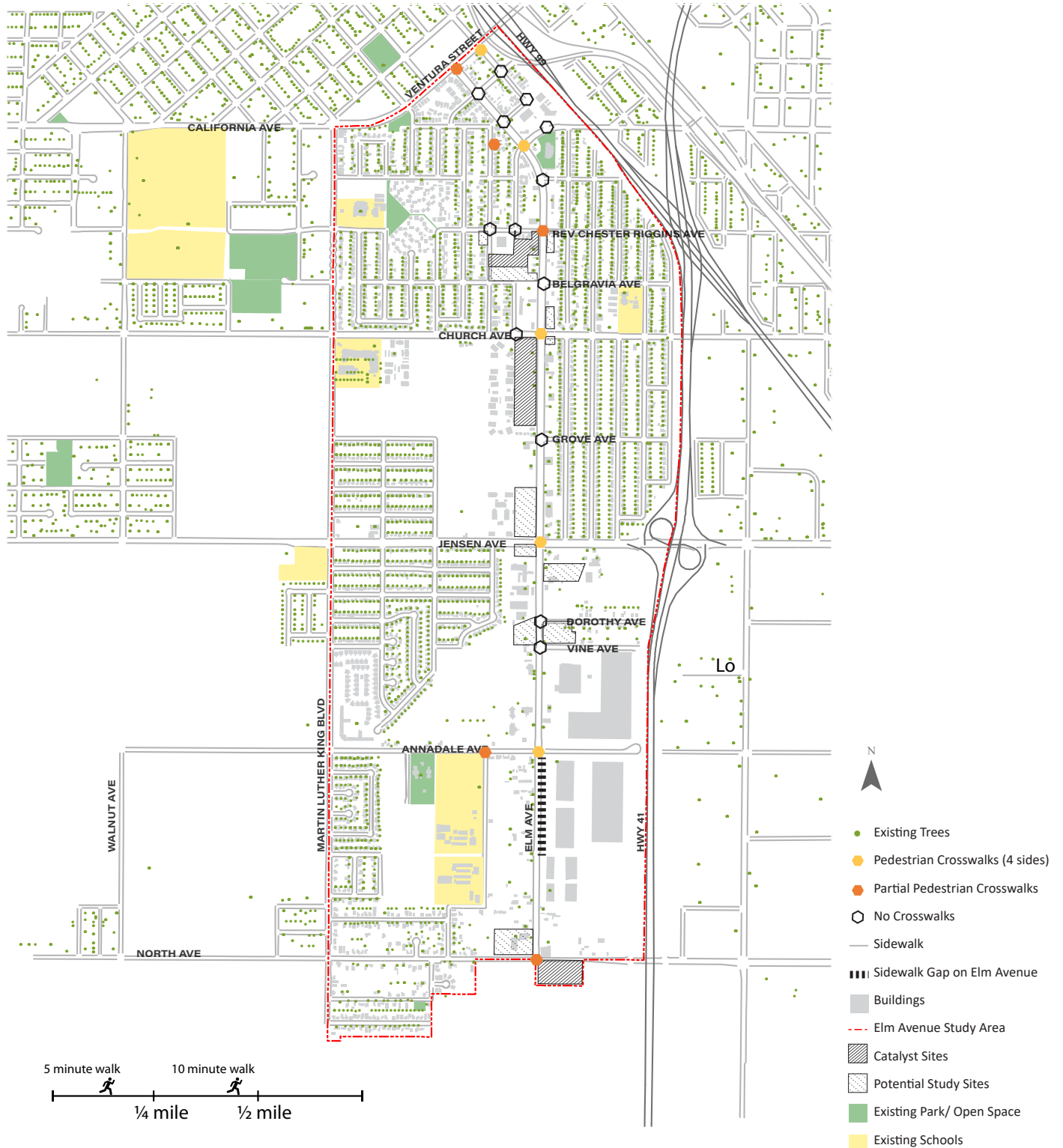
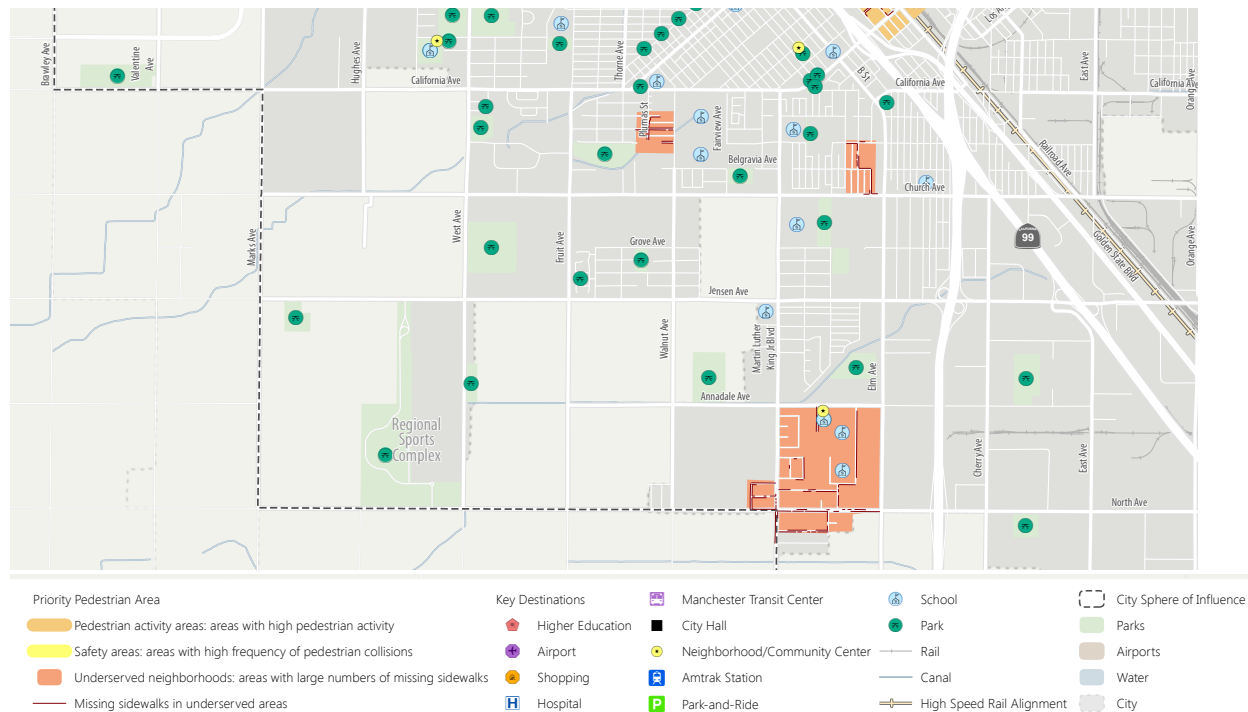
**EXISTING SIDEWALKS, STREET TREES, AND STREET CROSSINGS**

Figure 2-5

**PLANNED BIKE NETWORK** (Active Transportation Plan)

Source: City of Fresno Active Transportation Plan

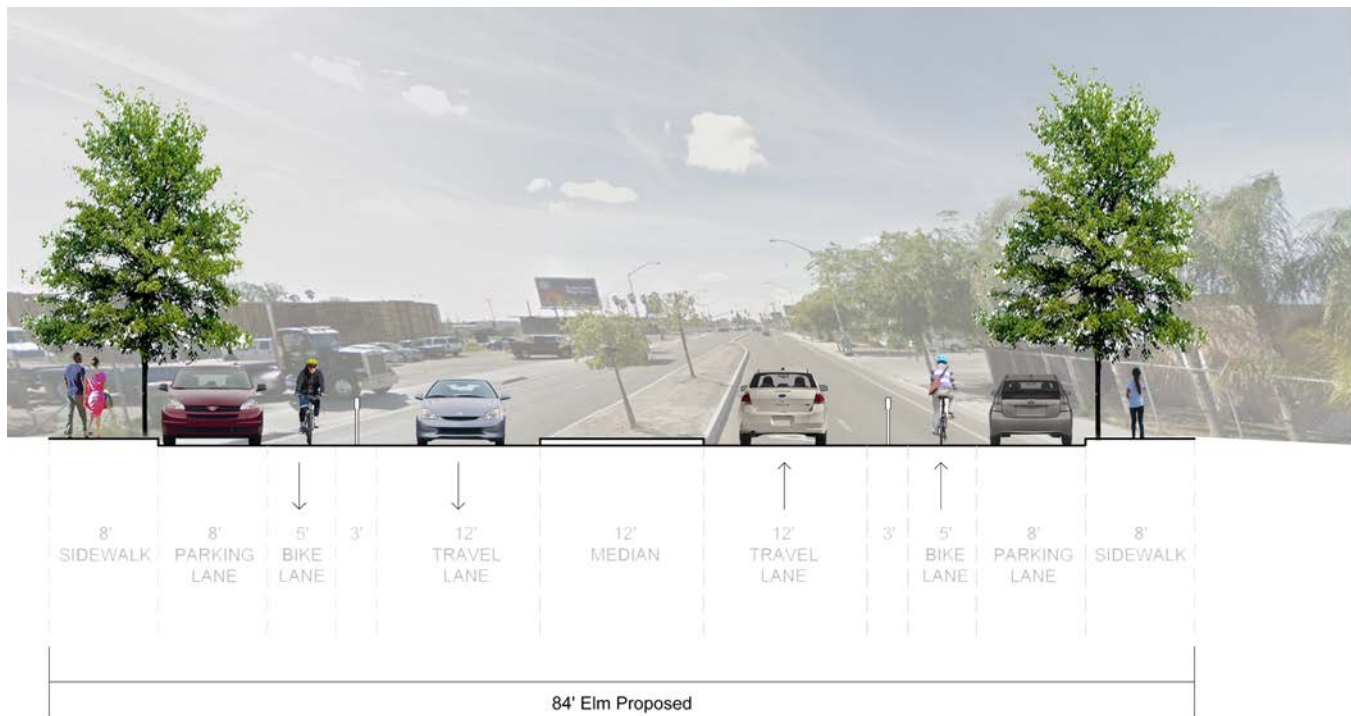
Figure 2-6

**PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY AREAS** (Active Transportation Plan)

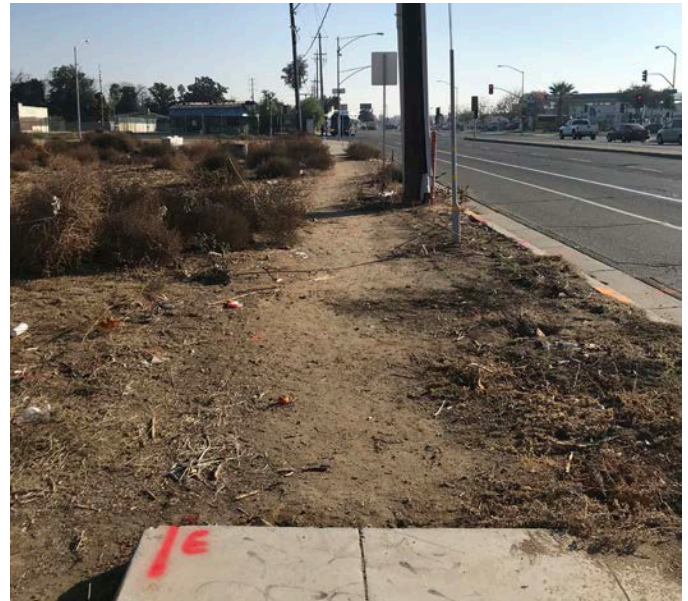
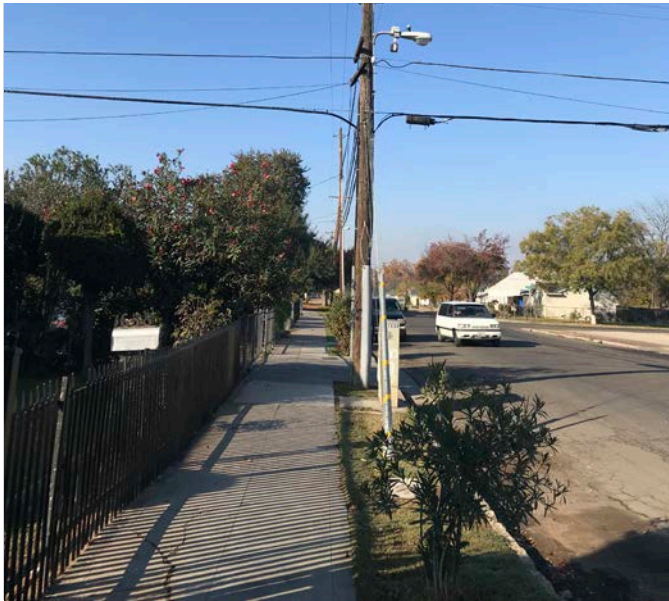
Source: City of Fresno Active Transportation Plan



Figure 2-7

**CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FOR ELM AVENUE** (41+North Complete Streets Plan)

Source: 41 + North Plan



Off of Elm, sidewalks are present along most streets, including Rev. Chester Riggins (left), but there are important gaps, including along Jensen Avenue (right).



## 2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET

### RESIDENTIAL, OFFICE AND RETAIL PROSPECTS

Current projections indicate a need for an additional 90,000 dwelling units citywide by 2050. A portion of this citywide growth could also be captured by new development in Southwest Fresno. Southwest Fresno's history of limited growth and larger household sizes provides an opportunity to capture some of this demand for housing.

Although Southwest is unlikely to capture demand for traditional office space, storefront community-serving offices such as medical offices, day cares, smaller insurance companies, and services, would likely be viable. Southwest Fresno residents currently have to leave the area for many of their retail needs. A portion of this "leakage" could potentially be re-captured in the area.



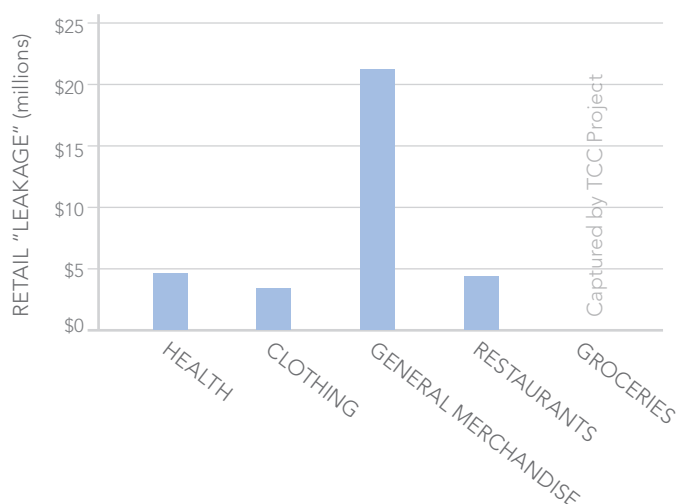
Iron Bird Lofts complex in Downtown Fresno; completed in 2010

### TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE COMMUNITIES GRANTS

Southwest Fresno is due to receive 70 million of TCC grants for a variety of open space, education and transportation projects. Funded projects include a new satellite campus for Fresno City College, a grocery store, an urban park and farm, and street improvements. The public-sector commitment to Southwest Fresno represented by these grants may stimulate additional private-sector investment. All together, these investments can improve quality of life and economic opportunity for people in the area.

Figure 2-8

#### RETAIL LEAKAGE (2017)



Source: Esri; HR&A Advisors

## PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO FACILITATE GROWTH

Fresno's aspirations to catalyze development along Elm Avenue are well-timed. The projects proposed for TCC grants show the City's confidence in and commitment to the future of Southwest Fresno. These projects are poised to provide a range of amenities for residents and potentially future employees, which may stimulate developer interest.

Still, a new development is likely to require partnership between property owners, non-profit organizations and/or developers, and potentially the City or other public entities. Retail and office uses in particular are likely to require developers to absorb above-average risk and/or subsidize rents to attract tenants. These considerations may make it difficult for a conceptual project to "pencil out," or become financially feasible. Furthermore, certain sites along the Elm Avenue corridor are likely to require creative funding strategies to support environmental remediation. These costs are likely to be higher for residential uses, which require more extensive mitigation.

There are a number of opportunities for property owners and the City of Fresno to partner with non-profits and other organizations to catalyze investments that meet the community's needs. These options include:

- The ability of landowners to "leverage" their real property assets to stimulate development of housing and other uses. Generally, this entails making land available at a below-market cost or delaying financial return until the project has been developed and is stabilized.
- Partnerships with non-profit developers and other community development organizations who can provide expertise to landowners who do not have experience with development. These organizations can also provide financial resources to generate mission-aligned community benefits, and generally have lower return expectations, as compared to for-profit financial institutions.
- Accessing grants, tax credits and other funding, which can lower financial risk to landowners and developers to help make community visions a reality. A note of caution: shifts in federal policy could affect the availability of resources.



The Juanita Tate Marketplace in South Los Angeles, which includes a grocery store, pharmacy and local bank, was developed by a partnership including a community group, private developer and the City of Los Angeles.

## 2.3 ELM AVENUE VISION

### CORRIDOR VISION

The Corridor Vision builds on recent plans for Downtown Neighborhoods and Southwest Fresno. It also reflects new analysis of current conditions along Elm and in surrounding neighborhoods, and incorporates opportunities for specific catalyst sites. It reflects the values and priorities expressed by members of the community, including youth who participated in PhotoVoice, Steering Committee members, and others. This vision is visually represented in Figure 2-9 - Elm Avenue Corridor Vision on the following page.

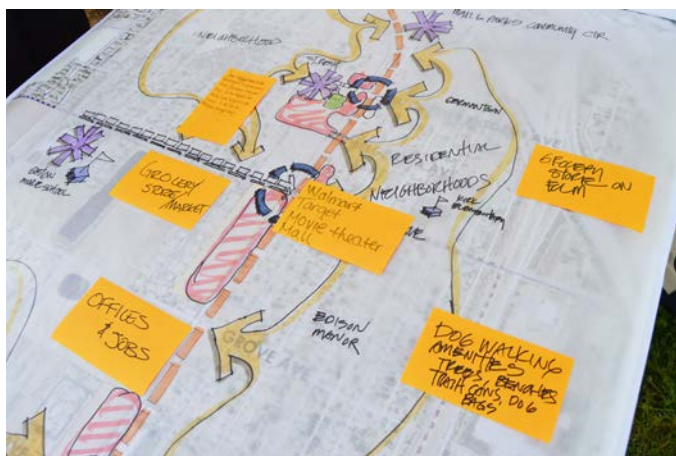
Elm Avenue should establish a positive image through **murals, signage, tree planting, and streetscape improvements.**

The Avenue will attract **a variety of stores and businesses**, making it convenient for neighborhood residents to get what they need and want.

Elm Avenue and its adjoining neighborhoods will provide **places for youth and people of all ages to recreate.**

Elm will have **strong connections** to its surrounding neighborhoods, key destinations in Southwest, Downtown, and agriculture.

Revitalization will be sparked by **community initiatives**, assisted by **creative partnerships and funding.**



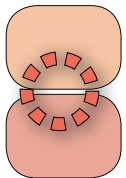
At Earth Day on Elm, April 2018. The planning team got feedback on what types of public spaces and development people want to see.



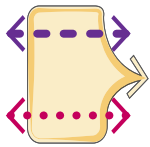
Figure 2-9

**ELM AVENUE CORRIDOR VISION****VISION COMPONENTS**

Streetscape improvements, identity graphics, murals, trees, high-quality bike facilities and bus service, and a strong connection to downtown



Stores and businesses, with concentrations around Elm/Jensen and Elm/North as well as all along the corridor



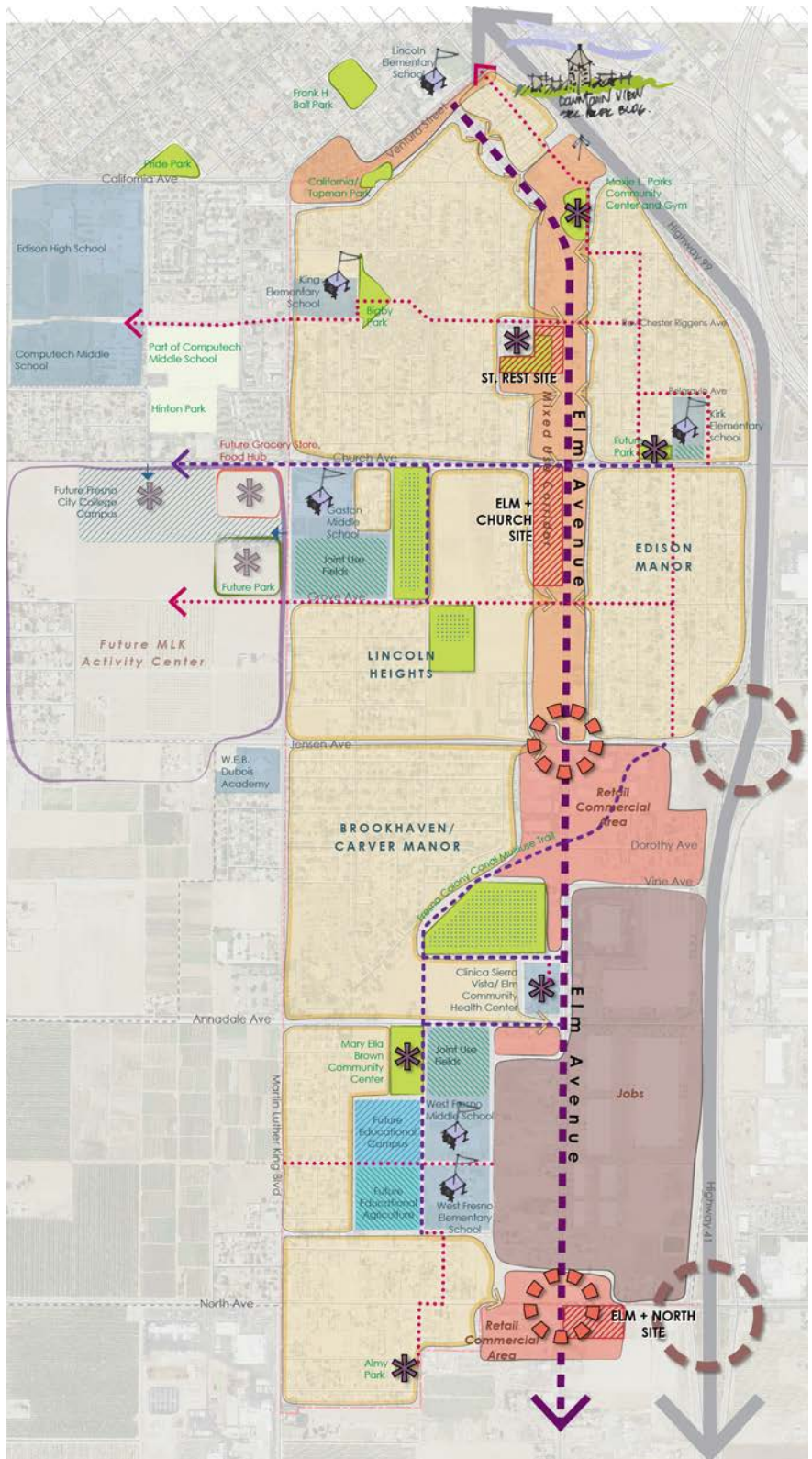
More street and pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods



Places for youth and people of all ages to recreate, learn and thrive



Gateways



## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and Southwest Fresno Specific Plan lay the framework for an Elm Avenue corridor with mixed-use development including ground-floor retail facing the street, with general commercial hubs around Elm and Jensen and Elm and North.

Community members are especially supportive of outdoor dining, food co-ops, and townhouses, as well as interim uses such as farmers markets. The interim uses may occur more easily in the short term and contribute to revitalization over the long term.

## STREET CHARACTER

Recent plans have described a future Elm Avenue as having buildings lining the street, inviting sidewalks, continuous planted parkway strips, shade-producing street trees, and bike lanes.

Community members involved in the Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy were very positive about the concept of “complete streets” accessible by all modes of travel, and confirmed the vision for more green, more street trees, and more inviting sidewalks. They liked public art, better lighting and signage, and features that promote local identity.



Land use and building types that community members were most positive about are shown here. These include both development and interim uses that can contribute to revitalization.



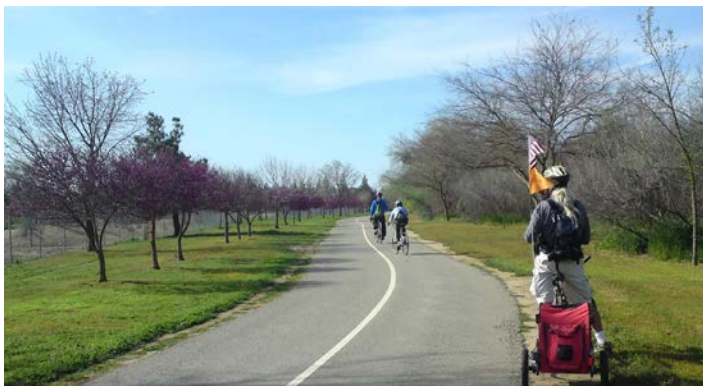
## PLAY AND RECREATION

The Fresno Parks Master Plan, adopted in 2018, found a high concentration of parks in poor condition in Southwest Fresno. The Plan recommends a variety of strategies to “close the gaps” where residents lack access to parks in good condition. These include expanding joint-use agreements at schools and ponding basins; targeting park renovations where they’re most needed; designating “flagship” parks in each council district, and creating new parks.

Within the Elm Avenue Study Area all of the Fresno Parks Master Plan recommendations are possible. The Mary Ella Brown Community Center is designated as a “Flagship” Priority Park, play fields and courts at Kirk Elementary, Gaston and West Fresno Middle Schools are prime for joint-use agreements, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District Ponding Basins KK and II1 are opportunities for future park dedications, existing California/Tupman and Bigby Parks are identified for re-master planning, and Maxie L. Parks Community Center and Gym is identified for critical improvements. Though new parks were not identified in the Fresno Parks Master Plan, guidance for locating them was given. Vacant lands within a ½ mile walking distance of existing or planned residential development are of greatest interest. Some potential new sites are shown in Figure 3-1 at the St. Rest Site and next to Kirk Elementary. The Fresno General Plan identified potential future park locations in Southwest Fresno, the locations are: west of Elm Avenue, at the southeast corner of the Grove Avenue aligned cul-de-sac, just south of Geneva Village as well as adjacent to Mary Ella Brown Community Center.

The Corridor Vision envisions a multiuse trail along the Fresno Colony Canal right-of-way and connecting West Fresno Elementary and Middle Schools. Community members engaged in the Elm Avenue Strategy showed strong interest in such a multiuse trail, as well as places where kids could play in water and enjoy imaginative play areas.

Pedestrian priority routes connecting neighborhoods, schools, and parks are also shown in the Corridor Vision. These routes would support safe travel on foot, incorporating traffic calming, safe crossings, and signage.



Community members envisioned tree-lined streets, wide sidewalks, green boulevard planting, murals and public art, and distinctive lighting and identity features. New play areas, including areas where kids can splash in the water, are also desired.



## 2.4 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

This section identifies a set of implementation actions for corridor revitalization to bring about positive development, improve public realm, and create new green spaces and places. Some can achieve results more quickly. Others rely on longer-term preparation, financing and market conditions. As described in the User Guide, key stakeholders for each action item are identified.

### LAND USE + DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. Resource Toolkit to Support Quality Development

##### Local Government (LG)



*City of Fresno Development and Resource Management Department (DARM), Fresno Housing Authority, Department of Public Works*

The City of Fresno Development and Resource Management Department (DARM) should develop a resource toolkit to support the creation or expansion of employment-generating uses, construction of affordable housing, and brownfield remediation. The toolkit should include the following actions.

- a) Identify a “point person” within City Hall to support City entities and Corridor leaders when applying for and/or accessing funds;
- b) Market Elm Avenue to potential investors, who may benefit from tax incentives designed to drive private investment in low-income areas. Priority programs include:

- Opportunity Zones, which will allow taxpayers to defer paying capital gains taxes by investing gains into qualified Opportunity Funds<sup>1</sup> or use gains to purchase property in these census tracts; and
- New Market Tax Credits (NMTC), which provide a credit against federal income tax to investors that invest in Community Development Entities (other financial intermediaries), which provide equity and loans to businesses and for projects in qualified NMTC areas.<sup>2</sup>

- c) Partner with the California Department of Housing and Community Development and the Fresno Housing Authority to leverage local, State and federal funds to increase the stock of affordable units for low- and moderate-income households and seniors. Potential resources include:

- County of Fresno’s Affordable Housing Development Program (AHDP), which provides loans for gap financing to non-profits and other eligible developers to construct new affordable housing or to substantially rehabilitate existing projects;
- U.S. Department of Housing’s (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), which provides grants to states and localities to fund the construction and/or preservation of affordable housing units;

1. Financial intermediaries that invest capital into businesses as equity.

2. The Elm Avenue Corridor is both a qualified Opportunity Zone and NMTC area.



- HUD’s Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, which provides agencies with tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of low-income rental housing;
  - HUD’s Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, which provides loans for economic development, housing rehabilitation, and other physical revitalization projects; and
  - HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Grants, which gives grants to communities to develop and implement corridor-wide revitalization plans.
- d) Leverage existing and new funding sources for brownfield remediation along Elm Avenue. Potential sources include:
- EPA’s Brownfield Grants Program, which provides multiple direct funding sources for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, and technical assistance.
  - Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs), a statewide tax increment financing tool that diverts local property tax revenues to either pay directly for or issue bonds for the construction of infrastructure and public facility improvements;
  - “Qualified” tax-exempt Private Activity Bonds (PABs), one of the most common financing sources for brownfield remediation costs, which can be issued by the California Municipal Finance Authority on behalf of private entities; and
  - A new revolving loan fund administered by the City, which could provide a sustainable source of gap financing for revitalization projects and could be initially capitalized by private philanthropy or a one-time allocation by the City.

## 2. Grow Community Capacity for Revitalization

### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)



*Community Leaders, Community-based Organizations, Potential Community Development Corporation (CDC), Workforce Development Organizations*



### Local Government (LG)

*City of Fresno*

Fresno and community partners should leverage the Transform Fresno momentum to identify, sponsor, and grow community capacity for revitalization. Corridor leaders should:

- a) Strengthen collaboration between community partners and evaluate new partnerships and organizations, possibly including an Elm Avenue Community Development Corporation (CDC). CDCs are nonprofit, community-controlled real estate and economic development organizations that undertake physical revitalization, economic development and other social service projects on behalf of the community. A successful CDC is likely to be most successful if it evolves out of an existing non-profit or religious organization with strong leadership.

- b) Identify City and State partners to provide seed funding and technical support for a CDC, if determined appropriate. Establishing a CDC would require strong leadership and partnerships - for business-focused technical assistance, and lead to the development of vacant parcels.
- c) Partner with non-profits or workforce development organizations to rent and activate ground-floor space in new projects to support their financial feasibility. This should include quasi-retail, employment-generating uses, and job training or technical assistance providers that provide direct benefits to community residents. Potential partnerships include:
  - Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission, which provides a range of human services and economic development programs for residents;
  - COMMON SPACE, a non-profit co-working space/incubator with an existing location in Downtown Fresno;
  - Workforce Connection, an organization funded by Fresno Regional Workforce Development, that provides occupational skills training, support services, and general career services to residents
  - Food Commons Fresno, a community non-profit food partnership that includes production, processing, distribution and sales and prioritizes equitable economic development.

### 3. Inventory of Publicly-Owned Parcels



#### Local Government (LG)

DARM



#### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

Community Leaders, Community-based Organizations

DARM should create an inventory of vacant and underutilized, publicly-owned parcels. The inventory should classify parcels based on use, lifespan, vacancy, zoning, and potential development uses. The City and Elm Avenue leaders should:

- a) Review the inventory to determine those with economic development or affordable housing potential and identify best use based on community needs.
- b) Identify priority projects for at least three underutilized parcels to pursue over the next three years; identify responsible parties for implementation and development partners; and assess what incentives could support the implementation of these projects.
- c) Identify funding sources and partnership opportunities. Partners may include local non-profits such as the Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, COMMON SPACE, or Workforce Connection (see CV-4). For potential funding sources, see CV-2.
- d) Develop a comprehensive asset management strategy to catalyze development on vacant or underutilized parcels. As part of these efforts,

the City should identify and acquire tax-delinquent or non-compliant privately-owned parcels to mitigate blight due to absentee ownership.

#### 4. Food Hubs/Food Incubator



##### **Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**

*Community Leaders, Food Commons*



##### **Property Owners (PO)**



##### **Local Government (LG)**

*DARM*

Establish one or more community gardens with areas for performance, farm stalls, food carts, and neighborhood get-togethers. The St. Rest and Elm/North catalyst sites represent good near-term options. These may act as a temporary use on sites targeted for development in the longer term.

In addition, explore the opportunity to establish a “food incubator” in the Corridor, potentially in partnership with Food Commons Fresno which would provide simultaneous job- and food-related community benefits. Food incubators can include leasable kitchen and community areas and can host training and other community events; food service and preparation jobs are often a ladder to higher-wage jobs in the formal economy and can provide entrepreneurial opportunities for community residents.





## 5. Good Urban Design



**Developers (DP)**



**Local Government (LG)**

*DARM*

Recent plans have emphasized that new development along Elm Avenue should be designed in a way that contributes to a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use environment.

DARM should work with owners to prepare development proposals that include high-quality urban design, following development standards for building orientation, building entrances, transparency, and variation. At the same time, given the limited market for neighborhood-serving commercial development, DARM should provide flexibility in density and/or commercial use regulations in order to support financial feasibility.

## 6. Incentives for Lot Consolidation



**Local Government (LG)**

*DARM*

DARM should incentivize lot consolidation to encourage development along Elm Avenue. The Department should evaluate incentives (which may include greater residential density, expedited permitting, and the streamlining of other procedures) for developers who acquire and consolidate multiple, smaller parcels.

## 7. Identify Commercial Tenants



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**

*Community Leaders*

Leaders should identify potential commercial tenants that contribute to the vitality of Elm. Because the viability of commercial development is currently untested, leaders should pursue partnerships with non-profits and other non-retail partners which could activate non-residential space in new development projects, support vibrancy along Elm Avenue, and support the financial feasibility of new development projects.

## 8. Leverage TCC-Funded Projects



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**

*Community Leaders*



**Developers (DP)**



**Local Government (LG)**

*City of Fresno, Fresno Community College*

Southwest Fresno is due to receive a large portion of roughly \$67 million of TCC grants for a variety of open space, education and transportation projects. These include a new satellite Fresno City College campus, a grocery store, an urban park and farm, and active transportation and public realm improvements.

In order to fully leverage these catalytic projects for additional community benefits, Elm Avenue leaders should:

- a) Seek to leverage and partner with the new grocery store, distribution center and orchard funded by TCC, to extend benefits to Elm Avenue. The grocery store project has potential to attract higher-quality residential development and demonstrate the potential for additional retail and/or community uses.
- b) Identify commercial partners and co-location development opportunities adjacent to the West Fresno Advanced Transportation Tech Training Program. This could create job opportunities for Training Program graduates and local residents.
- c) Advocate for good master planning and design of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Activity Center “magnet core,” including the proposed West Fresno satellite campus of Fresno City College and a new public park. Buildings, entrances, and public spaces should address city streets and reinforce connections with surrounding neighborhoods.
- d) Explore joint development opportunities to achieve both community and Fresno City College objectives. Opportunities could include student- and community-serving retail and restaurant spaces, flexible office space that could be used by an incubator or other entity, shared-use facilities, and student housing.

## 9. Washington Unified Site as a Catalyst



### Local Government (LG)

*DARM, Washington Unified School District*



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

*Community Leaders*

Approximately 25 acres on the Washington Unified School District property south of Annadale Avenue are vacant. This site could be a vital catalyst site.

Washington Unified is an essential leader for this effort, and the District’s goals must come first. For an outcome that also supports broad community revitalization goals, there is a need for a constructive working dialogue with the School District. Community leaders may help to build momentum for a development program such as the conceptual vision described in Chapter 3, including a specialized educational program, associated agriculture-related businesses, and housing.

## STREET ENVIRONMENT

### 10. Create the Boulevard



#### Local Government (LG)

DARM, Department of Public Works



#### Developers (DP)

Elm Avenue is envisioned as a boulevard with a high-quality pedestrian environment. This should include wider sidewalks, corner bulb-outs, well-marked pedestrian crossings, street lighting scaled to the pedestrian, street trees and landscaping. Corridor leaders should advocate for these improvements in the City's capital improvement planning process. While no TCC funding has been allocated for streetscape improvements on Elm, the City should pursue grant funding in future cycles. Funding sources may be related to greenhouse gas reduction, pedestrian safety, neighborhood revitalization, or other related outcomes.



Elm Avenue should also be evaluated for the potential to redesign as an 84-foot roadway with one travel lane in each direction, a center median, on-street parking, and buffered bike lanes.

### 11. Pedestrian Priority Improvements



#### Local Government (LG)

DARM, Department of Public Works



#### Developers (DP)

The Fresno Active Transportation Plan identifies the neighborhood around West Fresno Elementary and Middle School as a "Pedestrian Priority Improvements" zone because major streets lack sidewalks and many households do not have access to a car. Neighborhood leaders and the City should advocate for funding to construct sidewalks, safe street crossings, and other pedestrian improvements to support safety and quality of life.

In addition to the Pedestrian Priority Zone, the City should focus pedestrian enhancements along a network of routes linking schools, parks, and neighborhoods as shown in this Strategy. These include routes along streets, including Holly, Lotus and Reverend Chester Riggins avenues.



## 12. New Street Connections



### Local Government (LG)

*DARM, Department of Public Works*



### Developers (DP)

Elm Avenue's long blocks create limited connections to the neighborhoods on either side. The City should seek to create new street connections to Elm and to establish a finer grid of streets connecting Study Area neighborhoods in general. Street connections may be required as a condition of new development adjacent to these locations.

- Belgravia should be extended as part of the development of land south of St. Rest.
- Grove Avenue should be extended to provide direct access between the new MLK Activity Center park and Fresno City College campus and Elm Avenue.
- A new segment of Edgar Avenue should be developed, if possible, in tandem with new investment on and adjacent to the Washington Unified School District property.

## 13. Expand the Tree Canopy



### Local Government (LG)

*City of Fresno*



### Property Owners (PO)



### Developers (DP)



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

*Community Leaders, Tree Fresno*

Street trees add beauty, provide shade for pedestrians, help to cool the urban environment, and even help to absorb pollutants. Elm Avenue and each of the other major corridors in the Study Area are lacking in street trees, and should be priorities for community leaders and the City.

Corridor leaders should seek partners to take on this valuable work. Funding sources for tree planting may include Adopt-a-Tree or Adopt-a-Street programs, donations from businesses, organizations and individuals.

Public resources should also be pursued for tree planting and maintenance, and developers should be required to include street trees as part of future development.

## 14. Identity Graphics and Signage



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

Community Leaders



### Local Government (LG)

City of Fresno

Signage and banners can be used to help create a positive identity and sense of belonging for a neighborhood, a district or a city. Elm Avenue leaders should look to the broader community for ideas to shape a design identity, which can be expressed through signs and banners at gateways and along the corridor. This campaign could be folded into a larger branding and identity effort for the west side as a whole. One design concept is shown here.



## 15. Murals and Public Art



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

Community Leaders



### Property Owners (PO)

West Fresno Family Resource Center, St. Rest Baptist Church, Others

Murals and public art are another way to create positive identity and energy in the community. Community leaders should work with property owners and artists to support the creation of public art in the neighborhood. Blank walls along Elm provide a prime canvas. The old warehouse on the St. Rest property is proposed as an early action site. West Fresno Family Resource Center would be another important site.



## 16. Neighborhood Clean-up Party



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

*Community Leaders*

Community leaders can take the lead in enhancing neighborhood pride and building community by supporting a regular neighborhood clean-up party. The party could focus on different segments of Elm and other major streets on a rotating basis.

## GREEN SPACES AND PLACES

## 17. Renewed Mary Ella Brown Center



### Local Government (LG)

*PARCS Department*

The Fresno Parks Master Plan identifies the Mary Ella Brown Center as a priority for new investment, including a new aquatics center. The aquatic facility at this site would provide benefit to community and school user groups, as both would have increased access to recreation amenities. When operated as a joint-use site, the large athletic fields, swimming complex, locker rooms, and parking area offer valuable resources to school and public communities.





## 18. Joint-Use Recreation Partnerships



### Local Government (LG)

PARCS Department, Fresno Unified School District, Washington Unified School District, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

Trust for Public Land

Corridor Vision identifies sites where school play fields and storm drainage basins can be redesigned to bring more recreational space to the area.

- A joint-use agreement for playing fields at Gaston Middle School would complement the proposed MLK Activity Center Park, which is part of the TCC funding package and located directly west of Gaston.
- Joint use of the West Fresno Middle School athletic fields along Annadale Avenue would complement the planned enhancement of the Mary Ella Brown Community Center.
- Redesign of storm drainage basins could support links in a system of multi-use trails and provide attractive walking paths. Better still would be to redesign those basins to provide usable recreation amenities, trees and urban greening.

## 19. Multiuse Trails



### Local Government (LG)

PARCS Department, Fresno Unified School District, Washington Unified School District, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District



### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

Advocacy Groups, Trust for Public Land

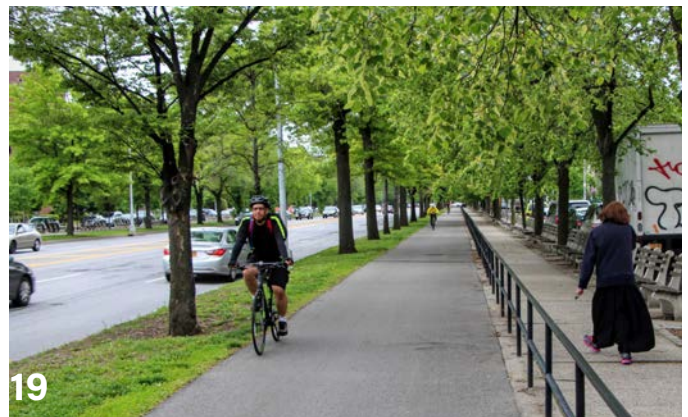


### Developers (DP)

New multiuse trails, including along Church Avenue; along the Fresno Colony Canal; and on a north-south alignment alongside the Mary Ella Brown Center and Washington Unified schools.

Funding for multiuse trails should be sought through the TCC's urban greening initiative and from other grant funding sources that support active transportation.

Trail development should also be created as part of future development.



**20. Park at Kirk****Local Government (LG)**

PARCS Department, Fresno Unified School District

**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**

Advocacy Groups, Trust for Public Land

The Edison Manor neighborhood east of Elm Avenue is completely lacking in parks. Kirk Elementary School may have excess land at its southwest corner which, especially if combined with an adjacent vacant commercial lot and with joint use of Kirk Elementary's playfield, could become a new park. Community leaders should explore this opportunity with Fresno Unified School District and Fresno's PARCS Department.

**21. Green Community Oases****Property Owners (PO)**

West Fresno Resource Center, Clinica Sierra Vista/Elm Community Health Center, St. Rest Baptist Church

**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**

Community Leaders

West Fresno Family Resource Center and Clinica Sierra Vista/Elm Community Health Center each have small green spaces that have potential for greater use by the community for recreation, rest and relaxation. St. Rest Church is in the process of creating a new green space for the community. These are vital resources, and should be nurtured by Corridor leaders.



## 22. Resource Toolkit for Urban Greening



### Local Government (LG)

*Roles: PARCS Department, DARM*

The PARCS Department, in partnership with the Housing & Community Development Division of the Development and Resource Management Department should develop a resource toolkit to help create and activate public spaces.

a) Actively pursue funding for greening spaces in the Corridor, including “garden hubs” and other temporary community places. Potential sources include:

- Community Development Block Grants and HOME Investment Partnerships. A portion of these regular allocations should be allocated to Southwest Fresno;

- California Urban Greening Program, which supports projects that reduce GHG emissions by establishing and enhancing parks and open space, greening lands and structures, and establishing green streets and alleyways;
- California Re-Leaf Program, which provides funding for tree planting and “green innovation” projects in low-income communities; and
- Infill Infrastructure Grant Program, which could be used for Corridor greening improvements.
- Partner to deliver regular programming and open space activation. Farmers’ markets, outdoor community shows, and pop-up events can help strengthen community bonds and attract investment.



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### 3. SITE REUSE CONCEPTS

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### 3.1 CATALYST SITES AND STUDY SITES

The planning team began with an inventory of potential brownfield sites along the Elm Avenue corridor. To identify sites, EPA's definition of a brownfield was used: "a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." Sites along the corridor were viewed using the following criteria:

- Is the site perceived to be a former or current commercial or industrial site?
- Does the site look abandoned?
- Does the site look like it could have the presence of a discharge of a contaminant?

Based on this broad definition, study sites are listed in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1

#### CATALYST SITES AND OTHER STUDY SITES

SITE ID	PARCEL ID (APN)	NAME	LOCATION	SITE AREA (ACRES)	CURRENT USE
1*	47818312	St. Rest Property	Rev. Chester Riggins and Elm Avenue, SW corner	3.14	vacant
	47818308				vacant
	47818319				vacant
	47818306				vacant
	47818307				general heavy commercial
2	47819122		Rev. Chester Riggins and Elm Avenue, SE corner	0.59	vacant
3	47826135		Church and Elm Avenue, NE corner	0.69	vacant
4	47909126		Church and Elm Avenue, SE corner	0.28	general heavy commercial
5*	47902043	Elm/Church	Church and Elm Avenue, SW corner	7.17	vacant
	47902039				general heavy commercial
	47902044				general heavy commercial
6	47902035		Jensen and Elm Avenue, NW corner	3.97	vacant
7	47924231		Jensen and Elm Avenue, SW corner	0.95	vacant
8	32819102		Jensen and Elm Avenue, SE corner	2.50	light industrial/ partially vacant
9	32825235		Vine and Elm Avenue, NE corner	1.65	vacant
	32825202				vacant
	32825203				vacant
	32825236				vacant
10	47926220		Vine and Elm Avenue, NW corner	1.99	light industrial
11	32815048		North and Elm Avenue, NW corner	3.67	office commercial/ partially vacant
12*	32917025	Elm/North	North and Elm, SE corner	3.89	vacant

\* Identified as Catalyst Sites



## SETTING PRIORITIES

Residents of the neighborhoods adjacent to Elm Avenue have been calling for its revitalization for decades. Long a patchwork of auto-body shops, manufacturing facilities, mostly abandoned gas stations, vacant lots, and liquor stores, the community desires the corridor to serve as the main street of this part of Southwest Fresno. It should provide residents with access to healthy food and a full-service grocery store, storefronts with opportunities for small businesses to thrive, and live-work spaces.

The EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning program requires grantees to identify a catalyst site or sites—sites that, if redeveloped, will have radiating positive effects for the surrounding community. The City and community partners identified three of the 12 sites listed in the table as catalysts: sites 1, 5, and 12. Catalyst sites were chosen for their potential to serve neighborhood revitalization goals. Each of these sites meets the EPA definition of a brownfield.

The site selection process included a community stakeholder meeting during the grant application process and a tour of the corridor. It was also informed by previous research, and the priority sites listed in the West Fresno Brownfields Action Plan.

This Strategy also addresses one more potential catalyst site not identified as part of the brownfields process: the Washington Unified School District property (not identified on Table 3-1.

## CATALYST SITES

### SITE 1: ST. REST PROPERTY

Site 1, the St. Rest property, is a 3.14-acre mostly vacant site located on the west side of Elm Avenue between Reverend Chester Riggins Avenue and Church Avenue. The site is adjacent to and owned by community partner Saint Rest Missionary Baptist Church, and has been vacant for several decades. A gas station was previously located on the corner piece of the property. Some environmental assessment was done to uncover potential contamination and leaking underground tanks, but the work has not been completed. Also included on the site is the former Farmer John Meat Company building and parking lot, which could have some potential contamination given it was a meat packing plant.



St. Rest Property. Catalyst Site shown in yellow boundary and Expanded Catalyst Site shown in green.

Underground utilities suitable for future development exist in the streets fronting the St. Rest Church area (Site 1). Elm Avenue and Rev. Chester Riggins Avenue both have curb, gutter and drainage inlets. South of the church along the west side of Ivy Avenue only have a curb without a gutter or drainage inlets: this presents an improvement opportunity.

Saint Rest Missionary Baptist Church has a long history in the community, and a vision to transform its vacant property and the former Farmer John site into a community-serving use.

### **SITE 5: ELM/CHURCH**

Site 5 is a 7.1-acre vacant parcel located on the west side of Elm Avenue just south of Church Avenue. The site has been vacant for several decades; a gas station was previously located on the site. Current information about the status of underground storage tanks is unknown.

During the EPA-funded West Fresno Brownfields Action Plan process, community residents identified Site 5 as an important catalyst. It is adjacent to a relatively new Fresno Housing Authority multifamily complex, and has potential to develop with more community-serving commercial or housing uses.

Existing underground utilities are adequate to allow for future development. Along the north edge of the site, a portion of Church Avenue has discontinuous curb and gutter. Development of the site and tie-in of this section to the surrounding infrastructure should provide improved drainage. Church Avenue contains sewer and storm drain trunk lines of large diameter (greater than 30"). These may present interference issues for trenching of new underground facilities.



Top: Site 1 view looking east from St. Rest Church toward vacant land and warehouse. Above: Site 5 view looking northwest from southern edge of property along Elm.



Site 5: Elm/Church

## SITE 12: ELM/NORTH

Site 12 is a 3.9-acre vacant parcel on the southeast corner of North Avenue and Elm Avenue. The site has been vacant for some time. It is currently often used for illegal dumping. Previous research on the site has uncovered that it may potentially be contaminated with benzene.

Site 12 is located a quarter-mile east of where Habitat for Humanity is focusing its neighborhood revitalization efforts at Clara and Casitas Avenues (not pictured). Given current dumping and potential previous contamination, reuse of this site would clear an environmental hazard for the community in addition to providing much-needed community serving uses.

Water and sewer services are present in North Avenue and could provide usable connections for future development at site 12. However services do not extend south of the intersection in Elm and there is the potential for future expansion opportunities that could improve service to the area. This area lacks significant storm drain services. FMFCD has plans for improvements in this area which would need to be built as part of future development. In addition, there is no existing curb and gutter along the south side of North Avenue or on Elm south of the intersection.



Site 12 view from Elm Avenue. The site has been identified by the community as a priority.



Site 12: Elm/North



## 3.2 ST. REST SITE

Catalyst Site 1 is the St. Rest Site and includes 5 parcels totaling 3.14 acres owned by and located adjacent to St. Rest Church, between Elm Avenues on the south side of Rev. Chester Riggins Avenue. Phase 1 and 2 Development Concepts occur on these properties. The parcels are vacant except for the former Farmer John Meat Company warehouse facing Elm Avenue.

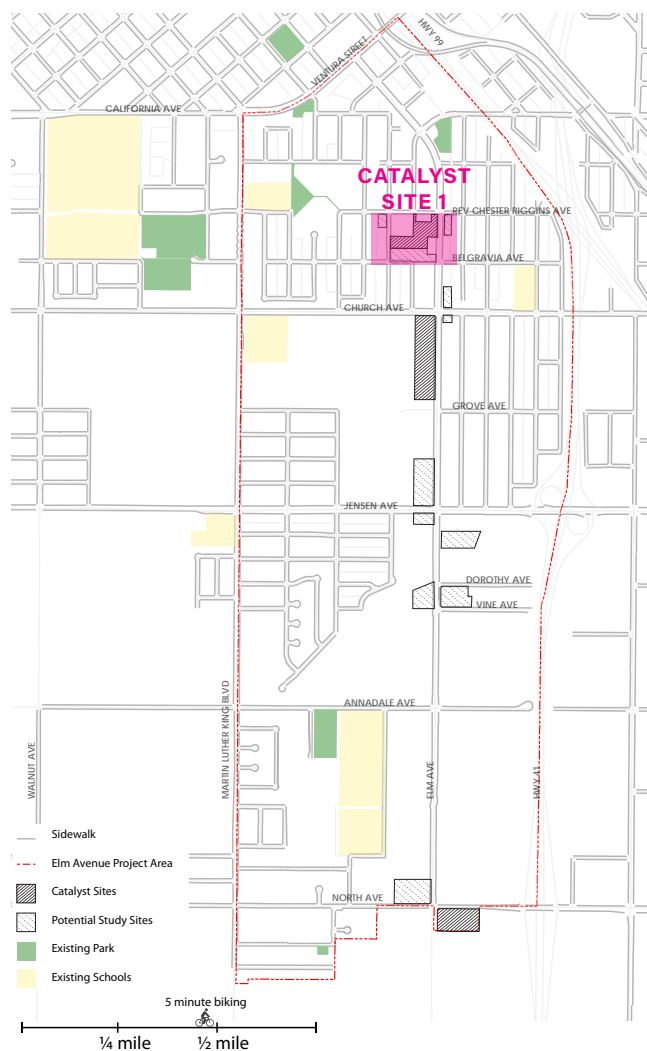
Four additional sites on adjacent or nearby properties have been analyzed to create an Expanded Catalyst Site 1. This has been generated to consider the revitalization opportunities as part of the Phase 3 Development Concept. The four sites are composed of a 2.41 acre parcel directly to the south of the St. Rest Site, a 0.79 acre parcel across Elm Avenue to the east, and two parcels totaling 0.51 acres across Ivy Avenue to the west.

### PHASE 1 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

In 1998 St. Rest began preparing to build a new church sanctuary to accommodate the growing congregation. By 2018, however, church leaders have shifted their focus to providing green space for the Southwest Fresno community, recognizing the relationship between access to open space and health outcomes, including life expectancy. Today, with grant funding from the Kaiser Foundation, the Church is in the process of developing an open play area southeast of the sanctuary. Plans also call for a community building for youth and other programs; an "airnasium" (an open air gymnasium), and additional green spaces on the southern portion of the property.

Figure 3-1

#### ST. REST SITE LOCATION





St. Rest Church plans to create community-oriented recreational facilities including an open play area, a community building for youth and other programs, and an “Airnasium” (pictured right).

Figure 3-2

**GREEN SPACE  
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT  
FOR THE ST. REST SITE**





## PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

This Strategy presents a conceptual plan for the next phase of development at St. Rest. In addition to the planned green spaces and airnasium, this Strategy envisions a 3- or 4-story mixed-use building at the corner of Elm and Rev. Chester Riggins Avenues with commercial and community uses on the ground floor including a food distribution center and affordable senior housing above. This building would embrace Elm Avenue and serve as a powerful investment in the corridor's revitalization.



The Revitalization Strategy presents an expanded concept that includes a mixed-use building at the site's key corner, where it can catalyze Elm Avenue. This photo shows a similar type of building on Broadway in Sacramento.

Figure 3-3

### PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR THE ST. REST SITE





## CONCEPTUAL PHASE 3

Expanding the development concept beyond the St. Rest Site to include adjacent vacant properties helps to form a unified approach to creating a neighborhood center. Two concepts are presented here. Both concepts envision a new mixed-use or live/work building on the vacant site directly across Elm Avenue from the St. Rest

property. Mixed use development on both sides of Elm would create a critical mass of activity and a strong sense of place.

Also, both concepts show how St. Rest Church could expand its campus on vacant land directly to the west, at Ivy and Rev. Chester Riggins Avenues.

Table 3-2

### POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY FOR ST. REST SITE AND ADJOINING PROPERTIES

	EXISTING CHURCH + PHASE 1 COMMUNITY BUILDING	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT WITH 3-STORY MIXED-USE CORNER BUILDING	PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT WITH 4-STORY MIXED-USE CORNER BUILDING	PHASE 3 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT, HOUSING ALTERNATIVE	PHASE 3 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT, SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE
St. Rest Church (sq.ft.)	15,600				
Additional Church and Community Uses (sq.ft.)	2,000	8,300	8,300	9,900	9,900
Commercial Uses (sq.ft.)		3,700	3,700	9,900	9,900
Affordable Senior Housing (units)		26	39	-	-
Townhouses (units)		-	-	25	-
Charter School (sq.ft.)					22,600



Illustrative view looking south on Elm Avenue from Rev. Chester Riggins. Mixed-use development on both sides of Elm Avenue would create a critical mass of activity and a strong sense of place.

### PHASE 3 HOUSING

This concept proposes new townhouses facing Belgravia which would enliven the street and enhance the neighborhood. Proximity to the St. Rest Site open space would be a recreational benefit to the new homeowners and extending Belgravia would allow for vehicular and pedestrian connectivity to Elm Avenue.



Expansion of the development concept to include the vacant property to the south could enable development of townhouses.

Figure 3-4

### PHASE 3 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT - HOUSING ALTERNATIVE FOR THE ST. REST SITE





### PHASE 3 SCHOOL

A second concept for the property south of St. Rest involves development of a charter school, as shown below. With this concept there would be great synergy between the school and the new green spaces and play areas and a new educational amenity for the neighborhood.



A new charter school could bring a new educational asset to the community (example above is from Downtown).

Figure 3-5

### PHASE 3 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT - SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE FOR THE ST. REST SITE





### 3.3 ELM/CHURCH SITE

The Elm/Church site consists of 2 vacant properties totalling 6.81 acres along Elm Avenue, currently under the same ownership, as well as a 0.36-acre property with a car wash at the southwest corner of Elm and Church Avenues. The owner of the vacant properties has proposed to develop 136 residential units in 17 2-story, 8-unit buildings

This Revitalization Strategy presents two concepts that meet or exceed the initial plan's development program while serving as a successful "catalyst site" for Elm Avenue.

#### DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT 1

The first development concept preserves the initial plan's 8-plex building form on the site interior, but replaces those buildings with townhouse-style stacked flats with entrances facing Elm. A single-story commercial building is also included to create a mixed-use program. This concept produces nearly the same number of units (138) in addition to a commercial component.

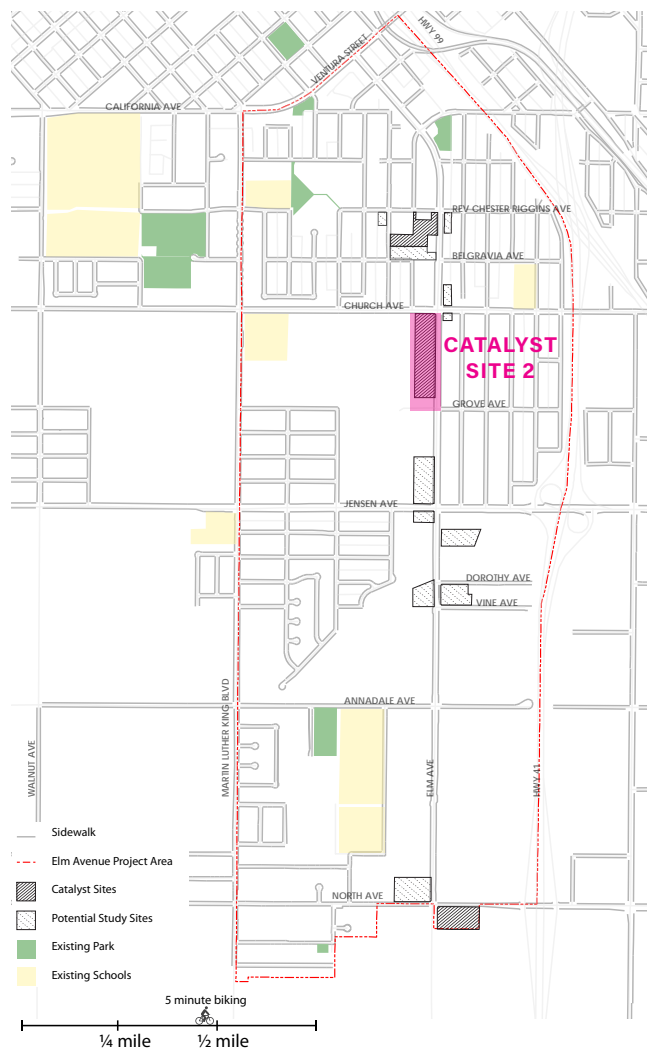
#### DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT 2

The second development concept uses higher-density garden apartment and townhouse-style building types which can be developed economically but offer a much higher-quality face to the urban environment.

This concept also envisions including a single-story commercial building, at the optimal location, the corner of Church and Elm. This would require purchase of that property.

Figure 3-6

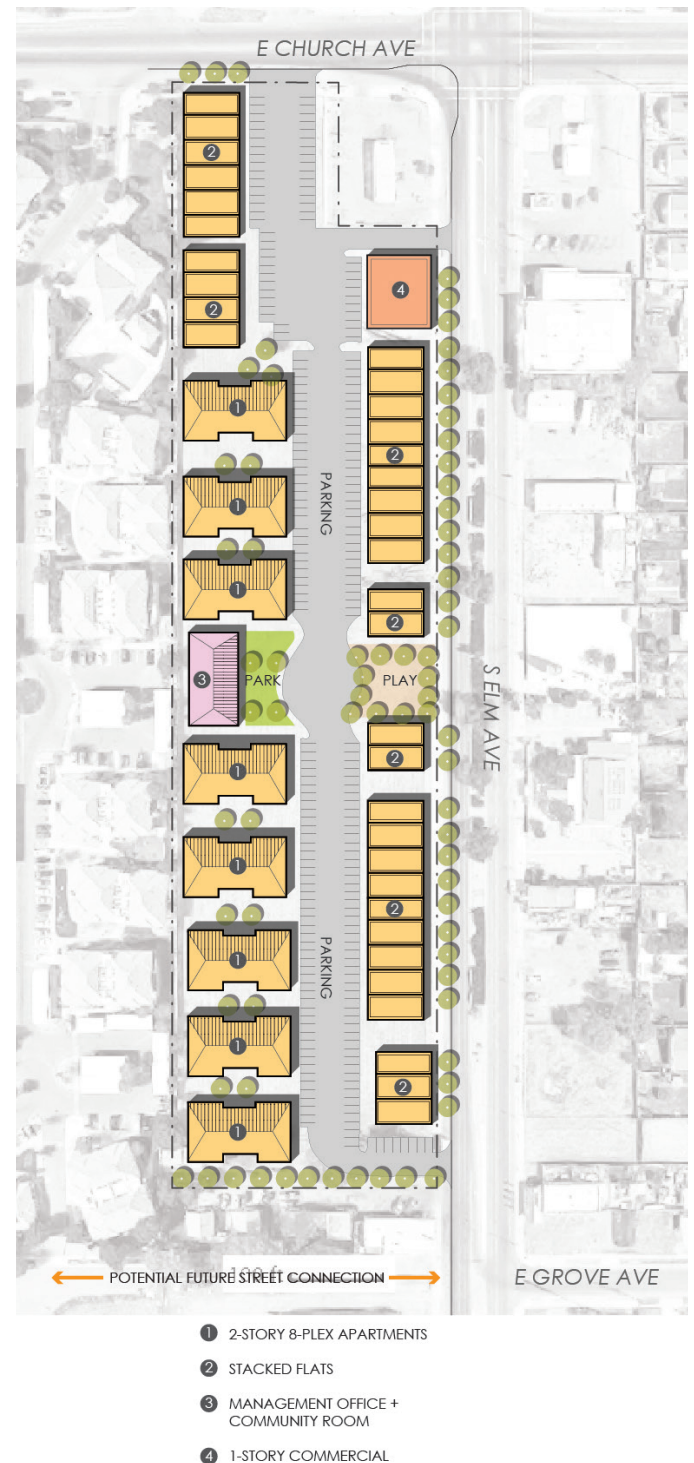
#### ELM/CHURCH SITE LOCATION





Concept 1 for the Elm/Church site would feature a stand-alone commercial building and townhouses facing Elm Avenue, providing an active street edge. 8-plex apartment buildings in the interior are consistent with a preliminary development plan for the site. Concept 1 would provide the same number of units as the preliminary development plan, while also including a commercial component and a residential building form that would help catalyze the corridor.

Figure 3-7

**ELM/CHURCH DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT 1**





In Concept 2, the corner property would be purchased and included in the development. This would allow for the commercial building to shift to the prime location. This concept also uses a 2- and 3-story garden apartment building type along Elm which both creates a welcoming street presence and a higher density compared to the townhouses shown in Concept 1. Shown here: LaVerne Village (LaVerne, CA), top, Waterloo Heights Apartments (Los Angeles), bottom.

Figure 3-8

**ELM/CHURCH DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT 2**



Table 3-3

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR THE ELM/CHURCH SITE AND ADJOINING PROPERTY

	CONCEPT 1: LOWER-DENSITY, ORIGINAL SITE	CONCEPT 2: HIGHER-DENSITY, EXPANDED SITE
Multifamily Housing (units)	134	150
Leasing Office/ Community Room (sq.ft.)	3,200	3,200
Commercial Uses (sq.ft.)	5,000	5,000

### 3.4 ELM/NORTH SITE

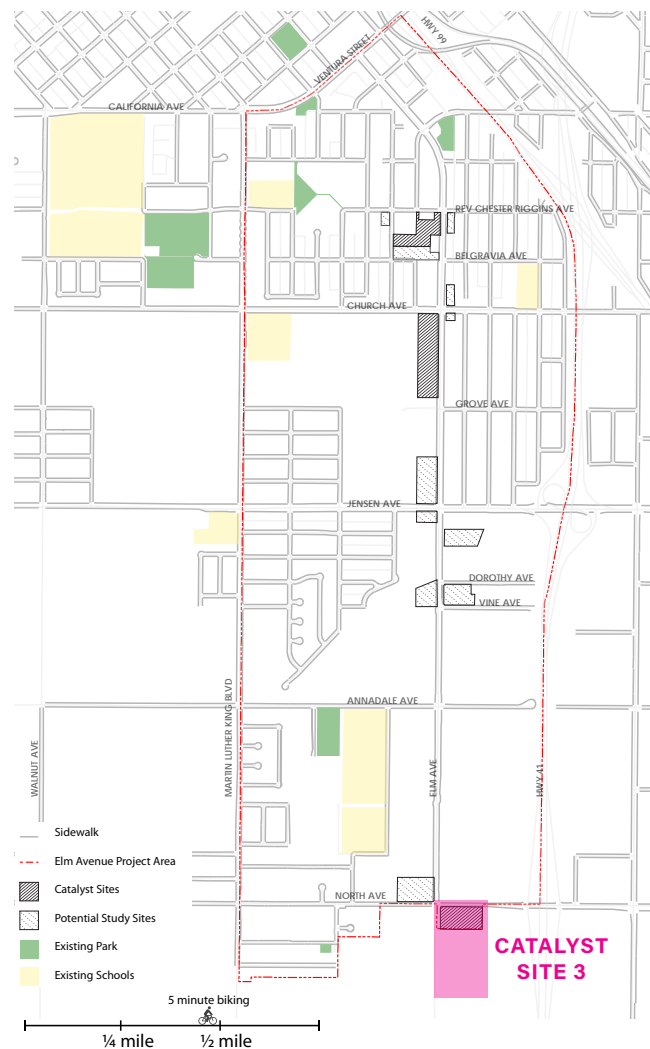
The 3.9-acre vacant property at the southeast corner of North and Elm Avenues is the third catalyst site. This site is distinct from the previous two in that it lies outside Fresno City limits. Both Elm and North Avenues adjacent to this site lack complete sidewalks and storm drainage infrastructure. The site faces a mix of commercial uses and vacant land in a very poor visual environment. On the other hand, the site could potentially serve as a gateway to the neighborhood from the south and from Highway 41, and could provide much-needed amenities for the neighborhood to the west.

There are significant development challenges here in the short term, but there is potential for low-cost, temporary uses to make this site a positive force.

As visualized in rendering on page 61, the property could include business incubator space, a food cart pod and gathering space, and potentially a demonstration garden where site owner Mid Valley Disposal's state-of-the-art composting process could be applied to community food production.

Figure 3-9

#### ELM/NORTH SITE LOCATION





The Elm/North site could host pop-up commercial spaces at the corner, and a demonstration composting area showcasing the site owner's state-of-the-art waste management practices.



Portland's Mercado provides low-cost commercial incubator development on vacant land along a challenging corridor. This model could be used to activate vacant sites along Elm Avenue.



### 3.5 WASHINGTON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SITE

Washington Unified School District (WUSD) owns 52 acres of land south of Annadale Avenue between Ivy and Bardell, west of Elm Avenue. The east side of the property is home to West Fresno Elementary and Middle Schools. Approximately 25 acres on the property's west side are vacant.

Here, we consider the potential for a new specialized educational program to be added to the site as the anchor for future development. The Strategy envisions an agricultural/technology magnet program with an adjacent agricultural site. Related commercial uses such as a farmers' market and restaurant are envisioned directly to the west with frontage on Elm Avenue, harnessing the new energy and investment provided by the school program to activate the corridor, and provide new lunch and after-work gathering options for business park workers.

A reinvented Mary Ella Brown Community Center is also included in this concept, along with new housing opportunities which could help to finance the project while filling a gap in the neighborhood.

This concept could be achieved with a new building for the ag/tech program, as shown on Figure 3-11. Alternatively, the Ag/Tech program could use the existing West Fresno Elementary School, putting it directly adjacent to related commercial uses. A new elementary school could be built west of the middle school, putting it directly adjacent to the Mary Ella Brown Center and closer to the neighborhood.

Figure 3-10

#### WASHINGTON UNIFIED SITE LOCATION

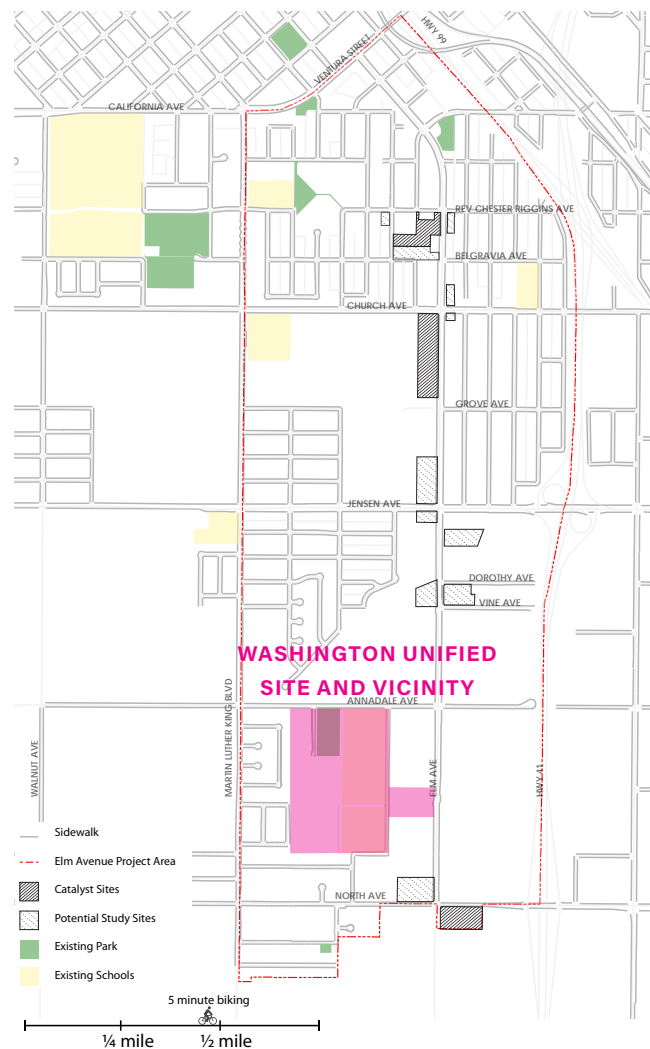
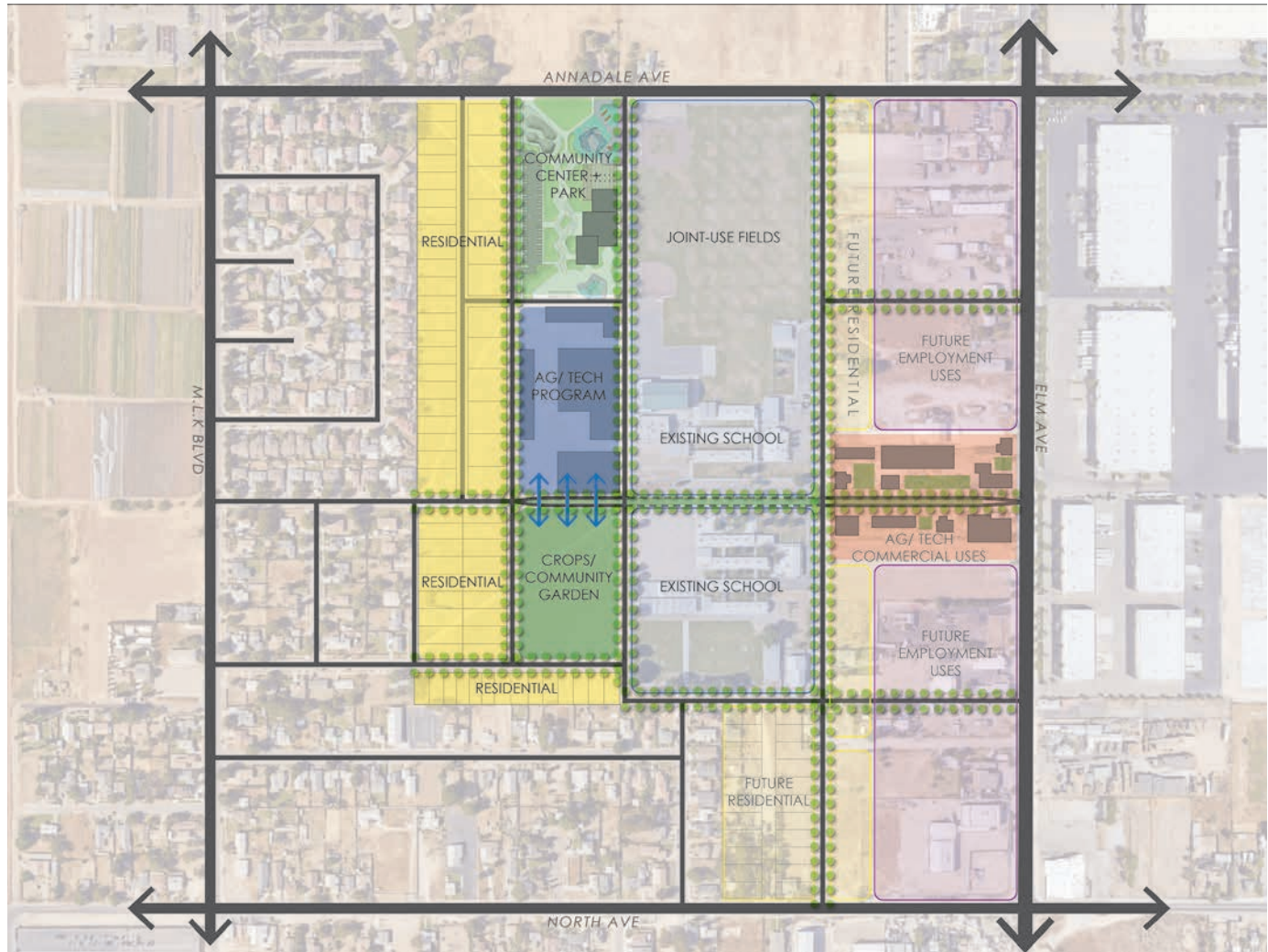


Figure 3-11

**WASHINGTON UNIFIED SITE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT**

The Center for Advanced Research and Technology, or CART, in Clovis, CA, represents a good local model for the Ag/Tech magnet program with its example of rigorous academics and career-specific labs.

Agritopia, in Gilbert, Arizona, combines agriculture, farm-to-market businesses, a school and housing (above). This could be a model for the Washington Unified site.



### 3.6 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

#### ENVIRONMENTAL DUE DILIGENCE

This section addresses the steps necessary to clear each catalyst site and its component parcels of potential environmental issues. This section describes the main considerations for each parcel in the context of the process for new development:

- Predevelopment considerations include the current and proposed use and zoning of each parcel, and the layout of proposed buildings and improvements.
- Assessment considerations include potential concerns on each parcel, and how Phase 1 and 2 will address these concerns. This report will explain the necessity and timing for conducting Environmental Site Assessments (ESA, e.g. Phase 1, 2, and other studies), what sampling and risk assessments will accomplish.
- Cleanup planning will consider alternative ways of remediating the site, and the trade offs of pristine and risk based cleanup, and how the alternatives impact the cleanup process, duration, and management.
- Remediation considerations include limiting impacts to the community from the remedial activity and cost effective remedial approach.

The roles of the community/neighbors (CN), the City of Fresno, as local government (LG), property owner (PO), developer/prospective purchaser (DP), regulatory agency (RA) and qualified environmental professional (QEP) are discussed in activities such as removing contamination, liability protection, and addressing impacts during remediation.

#### ASSESSMENT

##### 23. Phase 1 ESA Reports

 **Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)**

 **Property Owners (PO)**

 **Developers/Prospective Purchasers (DP)**

 **Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**

 **Regulatory Agency (RA)**

 **Local Government (LG)**  
*City of Fresno*

Phase 1 ESA reports are used to obtain background information on sites, and are useful in determining whether soil and/or groundwater samples should be collected for analysis. These reports are prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) on behalf of entities that are planning to participate (i.e., as a purchaser, lender or developer) in the acquisition of real property.

The QEP who prepares the Phase 1 ESA reports should recognize past agricultural, light-industrial and auto-related uses, former improvements and underground structures that are suspected on these parcels, and the uses on adjacent properties. The QEP should also consider the proposed use, such as residential or school, mixed-use, and infrastructure such deep earthwork and utilities.



When any of the following conditions apply difference between current and proposed uses, difference in land use on adjacent properties, cleanup to less than residential standards - there is a likelihood that a clean-up or Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) will be required for remediation and any new development.

The Phase 1 ESA will culminate in recommendations as to whether or not there are Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) on a parcel. A REC is a "the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at a property: (1) due to release to the environment; (2) under conditions indicative of a release to the environment; or (3) under conditions that pose a material threat of a future release to the environment..."

- a) If no RECs are identified, it will not be necessary to conduct Phase 2 ESA activities (i.e., collection and analysis of soil and/or groundwater samples is unnecessary.
- b) If an entity other than the PO plans to purchase and redevelop these parcels, the Phase I ESA needs to be updated to All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) standards, this AAI Phase 1 ESA cannot be more than 180 days old at the time of escrow closing.
- c) In instances where a property transaction occurs, the buyer (who could be developer or purchaser (DP)) may seek indemnity from the PO for any contamination that was found before the sale. An attorney with expertise in real estate transactions and

environmental regulations usually facilitates such arrangements.

- d) Regardless of whether there is an indication of RECs or not, the Phase 1 report does not have to be submitted to a RA. If these studies are conducted under a Federal or state grant, the granting agency will require a copy of the Phase 1 for the grant file.

## 24. Phase 2 Reports



**Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)**



**Property Owners (PO)**



**Developers/Prospective Purchasers (DP)**



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**



**Regulatory Agency (RA)**

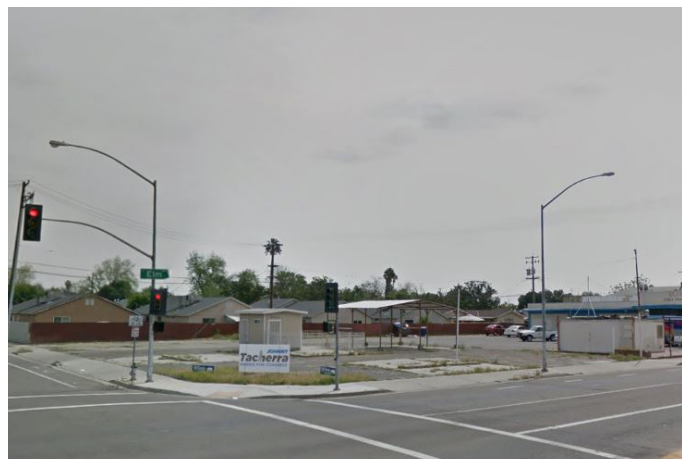


**Local Government (LG)**

*City of Fresno*

If RECs are identified, a QEP must be engaged to conduct the necessary site investigation activities. This will include the preparation of sampling and analysis plans, quality assurance plans, collecting soil and/or groundwater samples, conducting laboratory analysis on these samples, and preparing Phase 2 ESA reports. Additional reports may be necessary if these activities are conducted under a state or federal grant.

- a) Based on Phase 1 findings, the QEP will prepare sampling plans that recommend locations to collect soil and/or groundwater samples and contaminants of concern (COC) such as metals, petroleum, pesticides, and other potential contaminants that may be present due to the site history or past industrial operations.
- b) The QEP will collect samples at the designated locations. The laboratory analyses of these samples are compared with guidelines (regulatory screening levels) for each COC detected. If samples are below screening levels, additional analysis is unnecessary. The QEP will certify the results, which are made part of any property record at the City (e.g., the Initial Study, as part of a project file). In most cases, the development of the project may proceed without additional environmental work.
- c) If soil and/or groundwater samples are above screening levels, this is an indication that there may be potential threats to any current occupants and neighbors, future workers or residents, construction workers, and to soil, groundwater, air and wildlife, all of which are referred to as “receptors”.
- d) At this point, the QEP may have sufficient information to contact the appropriate RA to determine whether additional sampling and analysis and/or studies, such as risk assessments, are necessary. The QEP and RA will establish cleanup goals for each parcel and decide what actions, if any, are necessary to mitigate these threats. The mitigations may include removal and/or treatment of soil or groundwater, or AULs, engineering controls (ECs, like capping of contamination that is safe to leave in place), and/or institutional controls (ICs, for example deed restrictions, periodic inspections, etc. to ensure any contamination that is left in place are no longer threats to the public and environment.)



- e) The PO or DP may also enroll in a regulatory cleanup program that provides some liability relief for contamination for which they are not responsible. Many factors are taken into consideration in determining the appropriate program, including the type of contaminant, gravity of contamination, applicant (PO or DP), proposed land use and other factors. Such arrangements are usually facilitated by an attorney with expertise in real estate transactions and environmental regulations.

## CLEANUP PLANNING

### 25. Cleanup Planning for All Sites



Once cleanup goals have been established for a parcel, and conceptual or final building, site, utility and landscape designs have been prepared, the QEP can prepare alternative approaches to cleaning up the parcel. These plans will be submitted to the RA for their approval. A

variety of cleanup strategies will be analyzed for effectiveness, implementability and cost.

Where a site is zoned for residential use but is proposed to include commercial, the RA may require a cleanup appropriate for residential use, or require a rezoning to change to commercial land use. Under most circumstances, a cleanup to standard other than residential will require AULs to prevent future exposure to residual contaminants left in place.

For parcels that are seeking state or federal grants, an Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) will be prepared to compare various cleanup options.

### 26. Cleanup Planning for Existing Buildings



In considering adaptive reuse of an existing building, the cost of reuse should be compared with the cost of demolition. The functionality of the building for the proposed program and



current code need to be evaluated. In either case, hazardous building materials need to be abated.

In some instances, only portions of the building can be salvaged, including some structural features, like walls and floors. These need to be abated of any hazardous building materials like lead paint and asbestos. If contamination is found under building slabs, risk assessments need to be conducted to ascertain that the at-grade use is safe from any residual contamination. In some cases, vapor barriers and/or venting systems may need to be installed under the existing slab to prevent exposure from contaminants.

## REMEDIATION

### 27. Remediation



**Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)**



**Property Owners (PO)**



**Developers/Prospective Purchasers (DP)**



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**



**Regulatory Agency (RA)**



**Local Government (LG)**

*City of Fresno*

- Impacts during remediation: During remediation, soils may be excavated, treated on site and/or hauled away. Clean backfill will need to be imported. Heavy equipment will be used during these operations. Combined, these activities may cause traffic, air quality and noise impacts. Measures should be put in place to mitigate these impacts. Alternately, green remediation practices, such as use of mist machines, use of equipment that run on biodiesel or solar, and other low-impact practices will reduce stress to neighboring properties.
- A cleanup to commercial standards will require less on-site activity and the application on AULs. The LG should keep records to ensure that any AULs, such as periodic monitoring and additional environmental review for any future construction, be maintained to ensure the protectiveness of the remedies.
- In many instances, any contamination that is currently on the site and left undisturbed is not a threat to the public and environment, and can remain until it is time to redevelop the parcel. As interim measures, soil management measures, such as mulch, seeding or other protective covering can be applied.

Remediation considerations are highly dependent on site and building plans. At this stage, the LG and CN should be most concerned with the following:

## ST. REST SITE AND VICINITY

### 28. St. Rest Plaza on Elm



#### Property Owners (PO)

St. Rest



#### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

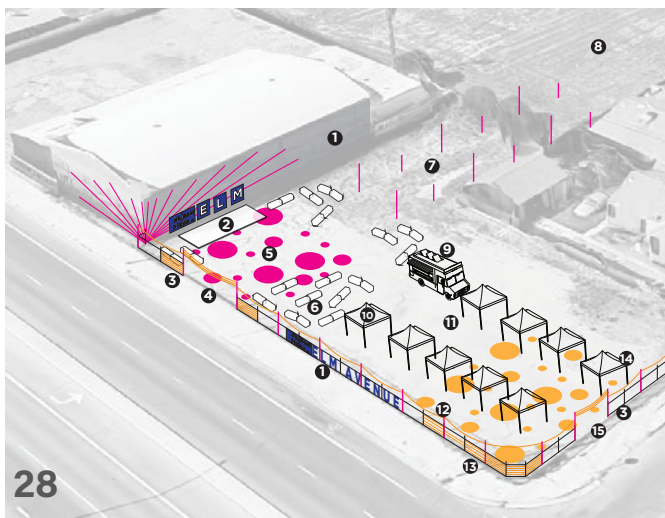
Community members



#### Local Government (LG)

City of Fresno

St. Rest, the City of Fresno, and community leaders have come together to create a temporary plaza on Church-owned vacant land at the corner of Elm and Rev. Chester Riggins Avenues. The plaza will be used to host community gatherings with food, music, and vendors, and to catch the eye and the spirit of community residents in the near term.



28

### 29. Complete the St. Rest Green



#### Property Owners (PO)

St. Rest



#### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

St. Rest, Community members



#### Local Government (LG)

City of Fresno

St. Rest is developing an open play area southeast of the sanctuary. Plans also call for a community building for youth and other programs; an "airnasium," and additional green spaces. These passive and recreational amenities can be a valuable asset for community members. The Church should continue to seek funding sources to complete the St. Rest Green.



29

### 30. Partner with an Affordable Housing Developer to Co-Lead Phase 2



**Property Owner (PO)**

St. Rest



**Developer/Prospective Purchaser (DP)**

*Affordable housing developer*

St. Rest should partner with a non-profit affordable housing developer to co-lead the mixed-use building development in Phase 2. This organization should have experience developing projects that include ground floor retail and/or community space. A partnership with an affordable housing developer will increase the Church's capacity to implement a mixed-use affordable housing development and increase access to funding sources. Potential partnerships include:

- LINC Housing Corporation ("LINC"), a Long Beach-based non-profit developer that recently renovated a mixed-use affordable housing project in Fresno County;
- Affordable Housing Development Commission ("AHDC"), a statewide housing development commission with several affordable housing projects in Fresno;
- Innovative Development and Living Solutions of California ("IDLS"), a non-profit developer that specializes in affordable senior living and has completed projects in Fresno;
- Self-Help Enterprises, a Central California-

based community development organization that develops affordable rental units and helps fund community revitalization activities, with projects in Fresno; and

- Fresno Housing Authority, the County's affordable housing public agency.

Phase 2 also includes additional green space, a multi-use field and an "airnasium." A development partner should help Saint. Rest identify additional funding for these project components.

### 31. Pursue Phase 2 Funding: Affordable Housing, Non-Residential Uses, and Brownfield Remediation and Cleanup



**Property Owner (PO)**

St. Rest



**Developer/Prospective Purchaser (DP)**

*Affordable housing developer; Other partners*

St. Rest leaders should pursue funding for affordable housing and gap financing for non-residential uses on the Site. The Church's contribution of land for the project would contribute to Phase 2's early timeline and financial success, although the Church may also be able to generate a modest amount of one-time or ongoing revenue, depending on a deal structure between the Church and an affordable housing developer. The project is estimated to require approximately \$6.7 million in capital funding, including approximately \$3.1 million for the construction of senior affordable housing units and another



\$1.0 million for the construction of non-residential uses, along with \$2.6 million related to “soft” and financing costs. Potential funding and financing sources available to a non-profit affordable housing developer include:

- *County of Fresno’s Affordable Housing Development Program*, which could be used to fund senior affordable housing construction;
- *HUD’s Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program*, which could be used to finance senior affordable housing construction and non-residential community-serving uses on the Site;
- *HUD’s Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) Program*, which could also be used to fund both senior affordable housing construction and non-residential community-serving uses on the Site;
- *PABs*, as described previously, which can also be used to finance affordable housing and senior housing;
- *New Market Tax Credits (“NMTC”) Program*, which could be used to raise equity for non-residential uses on the site; and
- *Opportunity Zones*, which as described in CV-2 will allow taxpayers to defer paying capital gains taxes by investing those gains into qualified Opportunity Funds and which could be used to raise equity in a range of projects or businesses.

See Table 4-1 for more detail.

Additionally, the Church should pursue funding for initial brownfield remediation and site cleanup. Potential sources include EPA grants, tax increment financing, bond financing, and a potential new revolving loan fund. For a list of funding sources, see CV-4 and the attached funding matrix.



### 32. Explore “Phase 3” Development Around St. Rest Site



**Property Owner (PO)**

St. Rest



**Developer/Prospective Purchaser (DP)**

Affordable housing developer; Other partners

In the longer term, St. Rest and partners should explore development opportunities on vacant land adjacent to the Church property, including the contiguous parcel to the south and vacant properties across Elm Avenue to the east and across Ivy Avenue to the west. Expanding the development concept to include adjacent property would allow for a greater synergy and mix of uses, and for the creation of a new street connection to Elm Avenue at Belgravia.

Chapter 4 illustrates two concepts for the parcel to the south, one with housing and one with a school. Mixed-use or live-work development is pictured for the parcel on the southeast corner of Elm and Rev. Chester Riggins, and potential church campus expansion is envisioned on the southwest corner of Rev. Chester Riggins and Ivy.

### 33. Environmental Due Diligence at St. Rest and Vicinity



**Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)**



**Property Owners (PO)**

St. Rest, Others



**Developer/Prospective Purchaser (DP)**



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**



**Regulatory Agency (RA)**



**Local Government (LG)**

City of Fresno

Proposed development at St. Rest involves three potential phases and eleven parcels. These are described below along with the current status of environmental site assessments (ESA). Where appropriate, these sites are grouped by ownership, current use, past use, zoning, and status of environmental site assessment.

**St. Rest Green.** The first phase of development at St. Rest takes place on three vacant Church-owned parcels: APN 47818308, 47818312, and 47818319. Phase 1 could also involve changes to the parcel where the Church itself is located, APN 47818313. Key considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** Proposed development on the vacant parcels include a small classroom or community building, green space, paved walkways, parking, a multipurpose sports field and an airnasium. These parcels have no access to Elm Street and narrow access to Rev. Chester Riggins. Work may also include

reconfiguring of landscaping and parking on parcel with the sanctuary, and may involve trenching for utilities.

- **Assessment:** There have been no ESA reports prepared for these parcels. The next steps for ESA reports include conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2. In preparing these reports, the preparer should consider the issues identified in the Assessment Considerations section of this chapter.
- **Cleanup planning:** The portion of the site planned for a small community building may be cleaned up to commercial cleanup standards. Landscaped areas and playgrounds may need to be cleaned up to residential standards. Since these parcels are zoned for residential use, the RA may require activity use limitations (AUL) as discussed in the Cleanup Planning section of this chapter.

**Mixed-Use Corner.** The next stage of development at the St. Rest site, as envisioned in this Strategy, would take place on the two Church-owned parcels along Elm Avenue: APN 47818306 and 47818307. Key considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** 47818306 is currently vacant. There is a vacant building (the old Farmer John's warehouse) on 47818307. These parcels are zoned for mixed-use development. Proposed development on these parcels includes a mixed-use building and paved areas.
- **Assessment:** Phase 1 and Phase 2 ESA reports have been prepared for these parcels. A

building materials survey has also been completed. The next steps involve additional ESA reports include sampling for data gaps in areas that were not sampled or inaccessible during previous work. It may be necessary to abate and demolish buildings and paving, or use sampling techniques that penetrate slabs, and can be used inside buildings. Additional sampling may be necessary in areas where deep soil excavations and utilities are anticipated.

- **Cleanup planning:** The long-term reuse plans allow for a cleanup standard appropriate for commercial use. Some surface soil removal will be necessary, as well as deeper removal in areas where additional sampling reveals elevated contamination levels where underground utilities will be installed.

**South of St. Rest.** Two concepts for development of the parcel directly south of the St. Rest site (APN 47818317) are presented. In one version, the parcel would be developed with townhouses and a community center/leasing office. In the other, a charter school is pictured. In both cases, Belgravia Avenue would be extended to connect to Elm Avenue using currently undeveloped right-of-way. Environmental due diligence considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** The parcel is zoned for mixed-use development. The parcel is currently vacant and has a dirt trail and a billboard.
- **Assessment:** No ESA reports have been



prepared. The next steps for ESA reports include conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2.

- **Cleanup planning:** The areas where the footprint of buildings, and any active play areas, will need to be cleaned up to residential standards. Portions of these parcels that will be under parking lots may be cleaned up to commercial standards. There may be surface contamination in the vicinity of the billboard. Cleanup may be necessary if contamination is found in areas where utilities will be installed. Since this parcel is publicly owned and planned as a street, the cleanup standard should be one that is protective of construction workers.

#### **Southeast corner of Elm and Rev. Chester**

**Riggins.** The Phase 3 development concept also envisions mixed-use or live/work development on the vacant parcel on the southeast corner of Elm and Rev. Chester Riggins, directly east of the proposed mixed-use building on the St. Rest site (APN 47819122). Environmental due diligence considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** This parcel is currently vacant and designated for mixed-use development.
- **Assessment:** No ESA reports have been prepared for this parcel. The next steps for ESA reports include conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2.
- **Cleanup planning:** The development concept would allow for a cleanup standard appropriate for commercial use.

#### **Southwest Corner of Ivy and Rev. Chester**

**Riggins.** The Phase 3 concept includes development of educational or community buildings for St. Rest on the southwest corner of Ivy and Rev. Chester Riggins (APN 47818202 and 47818215), directly west of the church. Environmental due diligence considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** These two parcels are vacant; they are in a residential area and zoned residential.
- **Assessment:** No ESA reports have been prepared for these or any nearby parcels. The next steps for ESA reports involve conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2.
- **Cleanup planning:** This reuse concept would allow for a cleanup standard appropriate for commercial use. Since these parcels are zoned for residential use, the RA may require activity use limitations (AUL) as discussed in the Cleanup Planning section of this chapter.

## ELM/ CHURCH SITE

### 34. Community/City/Developer Dialogue



**Local Government (LG)**

*DARM*



**Developer/ Prospective Purchaser (DP)**

City staff should continue to engage in constructive problem-solving with potential developers at the Elm/Church site, to reach a proposal that meets both developer and community objectives. Recommendations CV-1: Advocate for Urban Design – and Be Flexible; CV-2: Identify Commercial Tenants; and CV-3: Incentives for Lot Consolidation are especially relevant to this site.

### 35. Environmental Due Diligence for the Elm/ Church Site



**Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)**



**Property Owners (PO)**



**Developer/ Prospective Purchaser (DP)**



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**



**Regulatory Agency (RA)**



**Local Government (LG)**

*City of Fresno*

Two options are presented for future development at the Elm/Church site. Both concepts involve development of the primary site that consist of two parcels (APN 47902043 and 47902044) under common ownership.. Development Concept 2 also includes the corner site (APN 47902039) at the southwest corner of Elm and Church Avenues.

**Primary Site.** On the 6.6-acre primary development site, environmental due diligence considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** Both parcels have numerous curb cuts along Elm Avenue where improvements appear to have been demolished.
- **Assessment:** No ESA reports have been prepared for these parcels. The next steps for ESA reports include conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2.
- **Cleanup planning:** Both alternatives involve ground floor residential use. It would be necessary to clean up all areas under residential and playground uses to residential cleanup uses. Portions of the site that will be under parking lots and commercial buildings may be cleaned up to commercial levels.
- **Additional ESA next steps.** If an entity other than the current property owner plans to purchase and redevelop these sites, the Phase I ESA needs to be updated to All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) standards, this AAI Phase 1 ESA cannot be more than 180 days old at the time of closing.

## Elm/Church Site Financial Feasibility Analysis

To assist in implementation of a high-quality project, HR&A prepared a static pro-forma financial model to estimate the feasibility of two alternative development scenarios summarized in Chapter 4.

HR&A found that both would be financially feasible, generating acceptable returns to the property owner and potential developer. For Alternative 1, development costs total about \$20.7 million and Net Operating Income (NOI) totals about \$1.5 million during stabilized occupancy. The resulting return on total development cost (i.e., NOI divided by total development cost) is 7.5 percent as compared with a minimum threshold of 7.25 percent. Based on acceptable industry standards, the minimum threshold was set at one percentage point higher than the applicable income capitalization (or “cap”) rate (i.e., 6.25%) for new development at this location, to account for investment risk and that we believe would be required to attract investment capital to the project. The specified cap rate is based on HR&A’s analysis of sales since 2016 for newer multifamily apartment buildings in Fresno. After using that cap rate to estimate the value of this development at stabilized operation, and then deducting costs of sale and total development costs, the ratio of developer profit to net after-sale value produces a profit margin of 13.6 percent, as compared with a minimum threshold of 12.5 percent, which in our experience is a necessary return threshold for Central Valley development projects. Therefore, this development scenario is financially feasible.

For Alternative 2 development costs for the core development program total about \$20.6 million and Net Operating Income (NOI) totals about \$1.5 million. The resulting return on total development cost is 7.5 percent as compared with a minimum threshold of 7.25 percent. The ratio of developer profit to net after-sale value produces a profit margin of 12.5 percent, as compared with a minimum threshold of 12.5 percent, which in our experience is a necessary return threshold for Central Valley development projects. Therefore, the core development program is financially feasible. The proposed scenario includes a corner parcel which is not currently controlled by the owner of the 6.6-acre site. Acquisition of this property could enable the developer to meet the City’s objectives for commercial activation while allowing for a greater number of residential units. This parcel was not included in the financial analysis as the timing and cost of acquisition is unknown.



**Corner Site.** Development Concept 2 also includes the lot on the corner of Elm and Church (APN 47902039). Here, environmental due diligence considerations include the following:

- **Predevelopment:** The site is occupied by a car wash. It is designated for mixed-use development.
- **Assessment:** No ESA reports have been prepared for this parcel. The next steps for ESA reports include conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2. In preparing these reports, the preparer should consider the issues identified in the Assessment section. A hazardous building material survey also needs to be completed.
- **Cleanup planning:** The long-term reuse plans allow for a cleanup standard appropriate for commercial use. The building may need to be abated for any lead and asbestos before demolition.

## ELM/NORTH SITE

### 36. Site Activation and Partnership



#### Property Owners (PO)

*Property owner (Mid-Valley Disposal)*



#### Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

*Community members*



#### Local Government (LG)

*DARM*

There are significant development challenges to development of the Elm/North Site in the short term, but there is potential for low-cost, temporary uses to make this site a positive force. The Revitalization Strategy promotes partnership between the property owner and community entrepreneurs to “activate” the site with uses that could include a food cart pod and gathering space and a demonstration garden.



### 37. Environmental Due Diligence at Elm/North



**Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)**



**Property Owners (PO)**



**Developer/ Prospective Purchaser (DP)**



**Community Members and Neighbors (CN)**



**Regulatory Agency (RA)**



**Local Government (LG)**

*City of Fresno*

Recognizing the market barriers to a new development on the Elm/North site in the near term, the Revitalization Strategy envisions activating the site with temporary uses, potentially including food vendors and environmental education.

Environmental considerations include:

- **Predevelopment:** The site is currently vacant, and occupied by a commercial drop-off facility. It is designated for commercial use. The conceptual rendering prepared for the site is consistent with the proposed commercial development zoning.
- **Assessment:** No ESA reports have been prepared for this parcel. The next steps for ESA reports include conducting an ESA Phase 1, and if necessary, Phase 2. In preparing these reports, the preparer should consider the issues identified in the Assessment section.
- **Cleanup planning:** The long-term reuse plans allow for a cleanup standard appropriate for commercial use.



## 4. IMPLEMENTATION

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## 4.1 ACTIONS

The Strategy identifies steps that community leaders, City departments, property owners and others can take to help revitalize the Elm Avenue corridor.

The first set of actions describe ways to bring about positive development, improve the public realm, and create green spaces and places throughout the Study Area. Some actions can achieve results more quickly; others rely on longer-term preparation, financing and market conditions.

Actions are presented here by name and roles.



Local Government (LG)



Community Members and Neighbors (CN)



Property Owners (PO)



Developer/ Prospective Purchaser (DP)



Regulatory Agency (RA)



Qualified Environment Professional (QEP)

## Land Use + Development

### 1. Resource Toolkit to Support Quality Development



*Roles: City of Fresno Development and Resource Management Department (DARM), Fresno Housing Authority, City of Fresno Department of Public Works*

### 2. Grow Community Capacity for Revitalization



*Roles: Community Leaders, City of Fresno, Community-based Organizations, Potential Community Development Corporation (CDC), Workforce Development Organizations*

### 3. Inventory of Publicly-Owned Parcels



*Roles: DARM, Community Leaders, Community-based Organizations*

### 4. Food Hubs/Food Incubator



*Roles: Community Leaders, Food Commons Fresno, DARM*

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## 5. Good Urban Design, and When to Be Flexible



Roles: DARM, Community Leaders

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## 6. Incentives for Lot Consolidation



Roles: DARM, Property Owners

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## 7. Identify Commercial Tenants



Roles: Community Leaders, Community-based Organizations

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## 8. Leverage TCC-Funded Projects



Roles: Community Leaders, Community-based Organizations, Developers, City of Fresno

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## 9. Washington Unified Site as a Catalyst



Roles: Washington Unified School District, Community Leaders, DARM

# Street Environment

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## 10. Create the Boulevard



Roles: DARM, City of Fresno Department of Public Works, Developers

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## 11. Pedestrian Priority Improvements



Roles: DARM, City of Fresno Department of Public Works, Developers

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## 12. New Street Connections



Roles: DARM, City of Fresno Department of Public Works, Developers

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## 13. Expand the Tree Canopy



Roles: Community Leaders, Tree Fresno, Community-based Organizations, City of Fresno

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## 14. Identity Graphics and Signage



Roles: Community Leaders, City of Fresno

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### 15. Murals and Public Art



*Roles: Community Leaders, West Fresno Family Resource Center, St. Rest Baptist Church, Community-based Organizations, Property Owners*

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### 16. Neighborhood Clean-up Party



*Roles: Community Leaders, City of Fresno*

## Green Spaces and Places

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### 17. Renewed Mary Ella Brown Center



*Roles: PARCS Department, Community Leaders*

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### 18. Joint-Use Recreation Partnerships



*Roles: PARCS Department, Fresno Unified School District, Washington Unified School District, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, The Trust for Public Land, Community Leaders*

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### 19. Multiuse Trails



*Roles: PARCS Department, Fresno Unified School District, Washington Unified School District, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, The Trust for Public Land, Community Leaders*

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### 20. Park at Kirk



*Roles: PARCS Department, Fresno Unified School District, The Trust for Public Land, Community Leaders*

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### 21. Green Community Oases



*Roles: West Fresno Resource Center, Clinica Sierra Vista/Elm Community Health Center, St. Rest Baptist Church, Other Community-based Organizations*

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### 22. Resource Toolkit for Urban Greening



*Roles: PARCS Department, DARM*



## Assessment

### 23. Phase 1 ESA Reports



Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals

### 24. Phase 2 ESA Reports



Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals

## Cleanup Planning

### 25. Cleanup Planning for All Sites



Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals

### 26. Cleanup Planning for Existing Buildings



Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals

## Remediation

### 27. Remediation



Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals

### ST. REST SITE AND VICINITY

#### 28. St. Rest Plaza on Elm



Roles: St. Rest, Community Members, City of Fresno

#### 29. Complete the St. Rest Green



Roles: St. Rest, Community Members, City of Fresno

#### 30. Partner with an Affordable Housing Developer to Co-Lead Phase 2



Roles: St. Rest, Affordable Housing Developer

#### 31. Pursue Phase 2 Funding: Affordable Housing, Non-Residential Uses, and Brownfield Remediation and Cleanup



Roles: St. Rest, Affordable Housing Developer, Other Partners

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### 32. Explore “Phase 3” Development Around St. Rest Site



*Roles: St. Rest, Affordable Housing Developer, Other Partners*

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### 33. Environmental Due Diligence at St. Rest and Vicinity



*Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals*

### ELM/CHURCH SITE

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### 34. Community/City/Developer Dialogue



*Roles: Property Owner/Developer, DARM, Community Members*

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### 35. Environmental Due Diligence for the Elm/Church Site



*Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals*

### ELM/NORTH SITE

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### 36. Site Activation and Partnership



*Roles: Property Owner (Mid-Valley Disposal), DARM, Community Members*

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### 37. Environmental Due Diligence at Elm/North



*Roles: Community Members, City of Fresno, Property Owners, Regulatory Agency, Qualified Environmental Professionals*

## 4.2 FUNDING SOURCES

Table 5-1 provides a list of key potential funding sources for revitalizing the Elm Avenue Corridor. For each source, the table identifies who allocates the funding; who is eligible to apply; what type of funding is available (e.g.,

financing, loans, grants); the process by which funding is awarded; and what types of activities the funding source can be used for (for example, economic development; brownfield remediation.)

Table 4-1

### FUNDING SOURCES FOR ELM AVENUE CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION

SOURCE OF FUNDING	ALLOCATION AUTHORITY	APPLICANT	FUNDING TYPE	PROCESS	ECONOMIC/ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	HOUSING	BROWNFIELD	OPEN SPACE
Federal Funding Sources								
Opportunity Zones	US-Treasury	Opportunity Funds	Financing	Competitive	X	X		
New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)	US-Treasury	Community Development Entities	Financing	Competitive	X			
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	US-HUD	Cities and Counties	Grant	Formula	X	X		
CDBG - Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program	US-HUD	Cities and Counties	Guarantee	Formula	X	X	X	X
HOME Investments Partnerships Program	US-HUD	Participating jurisdictions	Grant	Formula		X		X
CHOICE Neighborhood	US-HUD	Joint application w/ local govt.	Grant	Competitive		X		
State Funding Sources								
California Organized Investment Network (COIN)	CA-Insurance	Non-profits, local govt. businesses	Financing	Rolling applications	X	X	X	X
Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC)	CAHCD	Developers w/ public agency	Loan/ Grant	Competitive		X		
Infill Infrastructure Grant Program (IIG)	CAHCD	Developers w/ housing authority	Grant	Competitive	X	X		X
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program	CTCAC	Developers	Financing	Competitive		X		
California Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (I-Bank)	State of California	Any subdivision of local govt.	Financing	Rolling applications	X	X	X	X
Local Funding Sources								
Facade and Commercial Enhancement Program (FACE)	Fresno County	Small businesses	Loans	Rolling applications	X	X		
Affordable Housing Development Program (ADHP)	Fresno County	Developers	Financing	Rolling applications		X		
Rental Rehabilitation Program (RRP)	Fresno County	Landlords	Loans	Rolling applications		X		



Table 4-1

**FUNDING SOURCES FOR ELM AVENUE CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION**

SOURCE OF FUNDING	ALLOCATION AUTHORITY	APPLICANT	FUNDING TYPE	PROCESS	ECONOMIC/ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	HOUSING	BROWNFIELD	OPEN SPACE
Other Funding Sources								
VALUE CAPTURE								
Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFD)			Financing					
Community Revitalization and Investment Authorities			Financing					
EQUITY								
Public-Private Partnerships (P3)			Financing					
Philanthropy			Financing					
DEBT								
Private debt			Financing					
Bond Financing			Financing					
General Obligation Bond			Financing					
Revenue Bonds			Financing					
Private Activity Bond			Financing					

# APPENDIX

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## THE BROWNFIELDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This section describes the different phases of the brownfields development process: site assessment, predevelopment, cleanup planning, remediation, development and occupancy. For the purposes of this report, stakeholders are considered to be:

- The local government (LG),
- the community/neighbors (CN),
- the property owner (PO), and
- the developer/prospective purchaser (DP).

Regulatory agencies (RA) and Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEP) also play important roles. Each of these roles are defined on pages A4 - A5.

### THE PROCESS IN A NUTSHELL

**Predevelopment:** The predevelopment phase consists of schematic planning and early financial projections. During this phase, project proponents may conduct market analysis, site appraisals, and design alternatives based on the desired land uses. Community meetings

may be held to solicit ideas and concerns from the community/neighbors.

**Assessment:** The Assessment phase is when Phase I and Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) are conducted by qualified engineering professionals under contract with the property owner, local government or developer/prospective purchaser. The goal of this phase is to determine whether the site is safe for the intended use, or if additional studies and/or cleanup is necessary.

**Cleanup Planning:** If a Phase 2 ESA shows evidence of contamination, the qualified engineering professional may conduct additional assessments and, if necessary, prepare cleanup alternatives for stakeholders to consider, under the oversight of a regulatory agency. The goal of this phase is to develop a cleanup plan, and any associated site management.

**Remediation:** Remediation is the response action to remove and/or limit exposure to site contaminants. This may involve removing toxics from the soil and or groundwater and mitigating any impacts to those who

Figure A-1

#### STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS\*



\*The development process may not be linear. Steps will vary based on when stakeholders become aware of contamination.



may be impacted by removal activities. It also involves incorporation of Activity Use Limitations (AUL). These may be engineering controls (EC), or barriers to limit exposure to toxics that are allowed to remain on site, and institutional controls (IC) to inform all stakeholders of the presence of residual contamination and the EC measures. The goal of this phase is to implement the cleanup plan.

**Development and Occupancy:** The development phase usually overlaps with or follows remediation. Once construction of improvements is completed, the development project is complete and the project can be occupied. The goal of this phase is to ensure that the parties monitor the AULs for compliance with the cleanup plan.

The end goals of a brownfields development include the following:

1. Removal of blight and contamination from the community
2. A redeveloped project that provides community benefits, affordable housing, sustainable industry and/or living wage employment
3. Cleanup and construction process that minimizes impacts to the community/neighbors and environment. This third goal is the topic of this section.

A simple diagram of the process is shown on Figure 3-6.

Since development occurs under many circumstances, the following must be taken into consideration:

- **The development process is not linear.** The steps will vary based on when stakeholders become aware of contamination. Sometimes, contamination is suspected at the beginning of the process. Other times, the contamination is discovered after construction has started.
- **The development process is location-specific.** In California, oversight of cleanup activities varies by geographic location, the contaminants of concern, severity of the contamination, proposed land use and other factors.
- **The process may vary depending on which party initiates development.** The property owner, developer/prospective purchaser or community/neighbors may take the lead, which changes the process. For instance, there are times when the development process starts without local government and/or community/neighbor knowledge or involvement. The developer/prospective purchaser and property owner may conduct studies before sharing the information with the community/neighbors. For the purposes of this report, the assumption is that all parties are aware at project inception.
- In addition to the end goals mentioned above, **the priorities of the stakeholders are all different.** For a local government, additional priorities may include a development project that promotes broad planning goals, minimizes costs, and provides long-term tax generation. For the developer/prospective purchaser it could be maximizing revenues and limiting liability. For the property owner, it may be maximizing the selling price.

## The City's Role, as Local Government (LG)

As the Local Government (LG), the City of Fresno may facilitate new developments by:

- Taking an active role in assessment, cleanup and new development processes. As a public entity, the LG can request free technical assistance and/or compete for assessment and cleanup grant funds.
- Facilitating any required cleanup by taking title to the property and obtaining grant funding. After cleanup, the City may sell of the site to a developer.
- Helping build partnerships among other stakeholders.
- Helping provide certainty in the development process that can help reduce the time and risk.
- Promoting interim uses that mitigate market or safety concerns in neighborhoods impacted by blight.

## The Role of Community Members and Neighbors (CN)

Residents and neighbors can serve as partners for redeveloping these brownfield priority sites. Residents may provide comments on any parcel to ensure that the proposed cleanup measures are protective and that the impacts from cleanup activities are sufficiently mitigated.

## The Role of Property Owners (PO) Developers and Prospective Purchasers (DP)

Property owners (PO) are individual or companies that have title to a piece of land or building. A developer is an individual or company whose activities involve buying and selling land and/or buildings, and arranging for new buildings to be built for the purpose of selling or operating. A prospective purchaser is an individual or company that has expressed an interest in buying property. These actors are instrumental in bringing about site reuse.

Under new guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, **nonprofit** entities designated under 501(c)3 of the IRS regulations, including affordable housing developers or entities that own/operate community serving uses such as clinics and urban gardens, may be eligible to get grants and technical assistance.

## Designation of the Environmental Regulatory Oversight Agency (RA)



The agencies involved in soil and groundwater contamination are designated as the local Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). In Fresno this includes the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) or the CalEPA Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). In most cases, a lead RA is determined and other agencies may coordinate.

Hazardous building materials are under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (Air District). If lead, asbestos or other hazardous substances are found in the building, it may be necessary to remove the contaminants from the building before it is demolished. The City building department coordinates with the Air District for these activities.

California laws and regulations prescribe which state agency serves as the RA for each site. QEPs typically recommend first contacting the CUPA. In most cases, the relevant agencies will coordinate cleanup and new development requirements. In addition, if hazardous building materials are involved, Air District regulations will be followed.

At this stage of sampling at the brownfield priority sites, the designation of the RA cannot be ascertained. The CUPA may be able to provide some guidance once Phase 2 laboratory analysis is completed on each parcel.

## Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP)



A QEP is a person who has sufficient specific education, training, and/or experience to exercise professional judgment to develop opinions and conclusions regarding the presence of releases or threatened releases to the surface or subsurface of a property or off-site areas.



## PREDEVELOPMENT

Every project begins with a predevelopment phase. During this time, the project lead – whether it is the local government, developer/prospective purchaser, property owner or community/neighbors, conducts studies, market research, schematic planning and financial projections to determine the acceptability and feasibility of a project. The predevelopment activities vary by type of project, and whether it is a public or private project. For instance, affordable housing projects begin with market studies, community outreach and financial projections. Open space projects may involve budget projections and design meetings. Commercial projects may involve traffic and noise analysis, research on tax incentives and employee sourcing.

Analyzing consistency with land use and compatibility with adjoining properties is a common predevelopment activity. During this early stage, the project proponent should research the history of uses in the neighborhood to determine if the proposed reuse will be compatible with the past uses on the site and surrounding neighborhood. Often, “windshield” surveys are conducted during this phase, which includes scoping the neighborhood for possible contamination sources and concerns.

## ASSESSMENT

The Assessment phase begins when a qualified engineering professional conducts an ESA. This is necessary for a number of reasons. For the developer/prospective purchaser, or a local government wishing to purchase a site, an ESA is required to obtain liability protection for contamination caused by past owners,

operators or adjacent properties. If loans or grants of any type are part of project financing, the lender or granting agency requires an ESA. If there is any planned excavation or land use change, the local government usually requires a site assessment. The assessment phase is generally divided into the steps below:

1. A Phase 1 ESA is conducted to research potential environmental concerns on a site, based on its history and any available records. It includes a search of several databases from various federal, state and county regulatory agencies. An All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) Phase 1 is a type of ESA that, in order for the prospective purchaser to obtain immunity from liability, requires specific activities, including a site visit and interviews of past owners, occupants and operators. An AAI Phase 1 has a shelf life of six months. The property owner, or a developer/prospective purchaser and local government that is granted site access typically has an ESA prepared by a qualified engineering professional. If no site acquisition is contemplated within the next six months, it will not be necessary to complete all the steps of an AAI Phase I. The key end products of a Phase 1 is a finding that no additional assessment is necessary, or that there are recognized environmental conditions (REC) that need further study.
2. If the Phase 1 finds RECs that need additional study, the qualified engineering professional may recommend soil, groundwater, and if applicable, building material sampling and analysis. Phase 2 and/or building materials survey (for lead, asbestos and other chemicals) reports are generated. These reports will confirm whether contaminants exist

that are potentially harmful to people and the environment. At this point, the regulatory agency jurisdiction may be determined, or might require additional analysis. The sampling results from a Phase II are valid for as long as the site condition remains as it did during the time of sampling. Often, sampling results are “data points” that can be used to analyze trends.

The environmental regulatory agencies that may be involved in soil and groundwater contamination are usually the local Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA), which in Fresno is the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health), the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) or the CalEPA Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). In most cases, a lead regulatory agency is determined and other agencies may coordinate.

Hazardous building materials are under the jurisdiction of the local air board (which in Fresno is the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District).

3. Often, sampling and analysis is incrementally repeated, usually to define the extent of contamination, and to define and refine any cleanup activities necessary. The results of this sampling will determine if the site is safe, or if cleanup is necessary for the intended use. If there is no use proposed at that time, the regulatory agency uses the site’s current land use and zoning as the basis for the cleanup standard, (which is discussed below). Additional studies such as risk assessments and fate and transport analysis are also conducted during this phase.

## CLEANUP PLANNING

This phase is an extension of the assessment phase. In this phase, the Project Lead - the local government, property owner or developer/prospective purchaser – commissions additional sampling and analysis is conducted to define the depth and lateral extent of contamination, and the applicable site cleanup goals. At this juncture, it is ideal to have a development site plan(s) on which to base the cleanup plan. In many cases, cleanup planning is incorporated into a project entitlement and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) process. The steps involved in cleanup planning include:

1. Determine site cleanup goals based on land use, and if available, site plan or proposed building design.
2. Determine the appropriate remediation methods for soil and groundwater. For soil, alternatives may include a combination of excavation and disposal to a landfill, encapsulation, and treatment (in place, on- or off-site). For groundwater, alternatives may include a combination of pumping out and treating the groundwater, reinjection or disposing of treated water into the sewer or stormwater system, or treating the groundwater in place. It may also be necessary to control for vapors that originate from the subsurface.
3. Determine if any AULs are necessary, the most common of which are restricting allowable land use on the site, installation of ECs to prevent exposure to any residual levels of toxins in soil or groundwater, and instituting reporting and monitoring requirements.

4. The alternative methods, and the costs and impacts from implementation are analyzed and presented at public meetings. Comments from all stakeholders are considered by the regulatory agency prior to selection of the final remedy.

## REMEDIATION

Remediation begins when the project lead – the property owner, developer/prospective purchaser or local government – commissions the design and engineering of the selected remedy, and implementation of the response actions to remove or limit exposure to site contaminants. The steps involved in remediation include:

1. Finalizing the engineering and logistical steps in the site cleanup plan for the approval of the regulatory agency. This includes finalizing truck routes to/from the site, traffic controls, dust and noise control measures, stormwater management, public noticing, and other construction related activities.
2. Implementing the removal actions and/or treatment, installation of the ECs, or barriers to limit exposure to toxics that are allowed to remain on site, and ICs to inform all stakeholders of the presence of residual contamination and the EC measures. The removal action could be brief or take many years to complete, and is influenced by the financial resources for cleanup, complexity of cleanup requirements, size of the site, and many other factors.
3. Obtaining a closure document from the regulatory

agency, such as a no further action, certification of completion, or site closure.

## DEVELOPMENT AND OCCUPANCY

The development phase usually overlaps with or follows remediation. In some instances, features of the redeveloped project, such as a parking lot or building foundation, are part of the remedial measures. Once construction of improvements is completed, the development project is complete and project can be occupied. It will be necessary to monitor all the AULs that were approved as part of the cleanup plan to ensure compliance.

In many communities, the responsibility for monitoring the AULs falls on different parties. In California, CalEPA has two registries – DTSC’s Envirostor, and the State Water Board’s Geotracker. Other means of monitoring AULs are part of the project entitlement process, where title searches or Phase I’s are necessary.

## THE END GOAL: A CLEAN SITE. BUT WHAT DOES “CLEAN” MEAN?

Regulatory agencies have established standards and processes to ensure that sites are safe for the intended use, whether that be residential, commercial, industrial or open space. The end goal is for any contaminant level that may be on the site to be below threshold levels that are known to cause harm to the public and environment. Prescriptive standards, such as “screening levels” or “cleanup numbers” are conservative standards developed to gauge the safe level of contamination at a site, based on the intended use. Residential cleanup



levels are most conservative since calculations are based on constant exposure of a child to contaminants, whereas industrial standards are based on 12-hour exposure for an adult. Construction worker standards may also apply. In urban areas and areas where there are naturally occurring minerals that exceed cleanup numbers, these conservative standards are usually difficult to meet.

In addition, it is often prohibitively expensive and economically infeasible to meet conservative cleanup levels at every site. Digging up and pumping large amounts of soil and groundwater, transporting and depositing these contaminated soils to distant landfills also has harmful impacts on the environment.

As an alternative to cleanup numbers, regulatory agencies use risk assessments to calculate cleanup levels based on the projected land use and anticipated period of exposure of different receptors - such as children, workers, wildlife and natural resources , etc. – to the contaminants. Fate and transport studies are also conducted to model the movement of residual chemicals in the soil, groundwater, soil vapor, and air.

**So, what does “clean” mean?** In the context of brownfields development, it is the level of contamination allowed to be left in place that, if exposed to the receptors, has a very low likelihood – measured in excess cancer and hazard risk - of causing harm.









