



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

FOR THE

SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

JULY 2019

Prepared for:



Development and Resources Management Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 621-2485

Prepared by:

De Novo Planning Group
1020 Suncast Lane, Suite 106
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
(916) 580-9818



D e N o v o P l a n n i n g G r o u p

A Land Use Planning, Design, and Environmental Firm



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Prepared for:



Development and Resources Management Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
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NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING

DATE: July 2, 2019

To: State Clearinghouse
State Responsible Agencies
State Trustee Agencies
Other Public Agencies
Organizations and Interested Persons

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Specific Plan of the West Area

LEAD AGENCY: City of Fresno, Development and Resources Management Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 621-2485

PROJECT PLANNER: Rodney Horton
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(559) 621-8181

PURPOSE OF NOTICE

This is to notify public agencies and the general public that the City of Fresno, as the Lead Agency, will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Specific Plan of the West Area. The City of Fresno is interested in the input and/or comments of public agencies and the public as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project, and public input. Responsible/trustee agencies will need to use the EIR prepared by the City of Fresno when considering applicable permits, or other approvals for the proposed project.

COMMENT PERIOD

Consistent with the time limits mandated by State law, your input, comments or responses must be received in writing and sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 5:00 PM, August 2, 2019.

Please send your comments/input (including the name for a contact person in your agency) to: Attn: Rodney Horton at the City of Fresno, 2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065, Fresno, CA 93721; or by e-mail to rodney.horton@fresno.gov.

SCOPING MEETING

On July 24, 2019, the City of Fresno will conduct a public scoping meeting to solicit input and comments from public agencies and the general public on the proposed project and scope of the EIR. This meeting will be held at the Glacier Point Middle School, Cafeteria, located at 4055 N. Bryan Avenue, Fresno, CA 93722, from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM.

This meeting will be an open house format and interested parties may drop in to review the proposed project exhibits and submit written comments at any time between 6:00 PM and 7:30 PM. Representatives from the City of Fresno and the EIR consultant will be available to address questions regarding the EIR process and scope. Members of the public may provide written comments throughout the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the scoping meeting, contact Rodney Horton, Project Planner, at (559) 621-8181 or rodney.horton@fresno.gov.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Specific Plan of the West Area (also-known-as “Specific Plan” or “West Area”) encompasses approximately 7,077 acres (or a little more than 11 square miles) in the City of Fresno city limits and unincorporated Fresno County. The footprint of the Specific Plan is referred to as the “Plan Area.” Of the eleven square miles within the Plan Area, 6.9 square miles are in the city limits and 4.1 square miles are in the growth area. The growth area is land outside the city limits but within the City’s Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary, which is the adopted limit for future growth.

The Plan Area is triangular in shape and located west of State Route 99. It is bounded on the south by West Clinton Avenue, and to the west by Grantland and Garfield Avenues. The Plan Area includes the southwest portion of Highway City adjacent to State Route 99. See Figure 1 for the regional location map and Figure 2 for the Plan Area vicinity map.

PROJECT SETTING

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The Plan Area is relatively flat with natural gentle slope near State Route 99. The Plan Area topography ranges in elevation from approximately 283 to 315 feet above mean sea level. A significant amount of land in the Plan Area is farmland or rural residential lots with large, uneven, and underutilized parcels. The West Area has approximately 3,070.95 acres of land that is classified as Urban and Built-Up, according to the State Department of Conservation. Prime farmland is principally located outside of the Plan Area. The West Area has 285.65 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance which is located primarily in the western edge of the Plan Area. Approximately 509.39 acres of Unique Farmland is located within the Plan Area, most of which is within the southwest portion of the Plan Area. Farmland of Local Importance is located throughout the entire Plan Area, and totals approximately 1,562.82 acres. Vacant or Disturbed Land and Rural Residential Land account for approximately 1,650.17 acres within the growth area. See Figure 3 for an aerial view of the Plan Area.

SURROUNDING LAND USES

Surrounding land uses include State Route 99, the unincorporated communities of Herndon, Highway City, and Muscatel, and incorporated areas of the City of Fresno to the north (including mostly industrial uses), incorporated areas of the City of Fresno to the east (also including mostly industrial uses), unincorporated Fresno County and incorporated areas of the City of Fresno to the south (including farmland uses, rural residential uses, low density residential uses, and underutilized parcels) and unincorporated Fresno County to the west (including farmland and rural residential uses).

EXISTING LAND USES AND ZONING

A portion of the Plan Area is located within the City of Fresno city limits, and a portion is within unincorporated Fresno County (but within the City's SOI). The City of Fresno General Plan designates the Plan Area as: Low Density Residential, Medium Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Urban Neighborhood Residential, High Density Residential, Community Commercial, General Commercial, Recreation Commercial, Office, Business Park, Light Industrial, Corridor/Center Mixed Use, Regional Mixed Use, Community Park, Open Space – Ponding Basin, Neighborhood Park, Open Space, Public/Quasi-Public Facility, Special School, Elementary School, Elementary, Middle & High School, and High School. See Figure 4 for the existing City General Plan land use designations.

The City of Fresno Zoning Map provides zoning for those portions of the Plan Area located within the city limits, but not for areas within the unincorporated County. Zoning designations are generally consistent with the existing General Plan land uses. The City zoning designations for the Plan Area include: Residential Estate (RE), Residential Single-Family, Extremely Low Density (RS-1), Residential Single-Family, Very Low Density (RS-2), Residential Single-Family, Low Density (RS-3), Residential Single-Family, Medium Low Density (RS-4), Residential Single-Family, Medium Density (RS-5), Residential Multi-Family, Medium High Density (RM-1), Residential Multi-Family, Urban Neighborhood (RM-2), Residential Multi-Family, High Density (RM-3), Mobile Home Park (RM-MH), Commercial Community (CC), Commercial General (CG), Commercial Regional (CR), Commercial Recreation (CRC), Light Industrial (IL), Corridor/Center Mixed Use (CMX), Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMX), Regional Mixed Use (RMX), Business Park (BP), Office (O), Open Space (OS), and Park and Recreation (PR). See Figure 5 for the existing zoning designations.

The Fresno County Zoning Map designates the portions of the Plan Area outside the city limits as: Rural Commercial Center (RCC), Central Trading (C4), General Commercial (C6), Light Industrial (M1), Exclusive Agricultural (AE20), Limited Agricultural (AL20), Rural Residential (RR), Single Family Residential Agricultural (RA), Single Family Residential (12,500) (R1B), and Trailer Park Residential (TP). Upon a proposal to annex unincorporated land into the city limits, the City of Fresno would prezone the land to a zone that is consistent with the General Plan land use. Once annexation occurs, the County zoning would not apply to the parcel.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Guidelines Section 15124(b), a clear statement of objectives and the underlying purpose of the proposed project shall be discussed. The objectives of the proposed project include future development of land for a wide variety of land uses including: Low Density Residential, Medium Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Medium High Density Residential, Urban Neighborhood Residential, High Density Residential, Community Commercial, Recreation Commercial, General Commercial, Regional Commercial, Office, Business Park, Light Industrial, Corridor/Center Mixed Use, Regional Mixed Use, Pocket Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Open Space, Ponding Basin, Public Facility, Church, Special School, Elementary School, Elementary, Middle & High School, High School, and Fire Station uses, as well as the required transportation and utility improvements.

Other objectives and purposes of the Specific Plan are summarized as follows:

- Accommodate and improve roadway access, connectivity and mobility among all modes of transportation, and prioritize roadway widening where bottlenecking exists.
- Accommodate planned transit services in the West Area by locating routes near or adjacent to the community centers, schools, parks, and retail centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained sidewalk network from residential neighborhoods to commercial centers, schools, parks, and community centers.
- Provide a complete, safe, and well-maintained roadway network that allows for efficient and smooth access from the West Area to other sections of the City and region.
- Create parks that are within existing and planned neighborhoods that are easily accessed by community members using pedestrian and bicycle pathways, transit services, or motor vehicles, consistent with the City of Fresno's Parks Master Plan.
- Provide for the location of a flagship Regional Park in the Plan Area that has components of the Plan Area's agricultural history through the planting of drought-resistant vegetation or trees, and the creation of public art that exhibits the Plan Area's contribution to the agricultural industry.
- Incorporate elements of agriculture in future parks by planting a mixture of native drought tolerant vegetation, shrubs, and trees that can serve to provide shade and enhance the streetscape.
- Encourage and provide land use opportunities for agri-tourism ventures to occur in the West Area.
- Encourage the development of harvest – producing community gardens.
- Attract desired and needed local retail establishments to serve the needs of the West Area community. Such establishments include grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants other than fast food places, and boutiques.
- Discourage the expansion of undesirable retail establishments such as liquor stores, tobacco and vapor stores, short-term loan and pawn shops, and adult stores.
- Encourage the development of retail establishments along commercial corridors.

- Encourage the orderly and consistent development of civic, parkland, retail and commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family uses along West Shaw Avenue, West Ashlan Avenue, Veterans Boulevard, West Shields Avenue, West Clinton Avenue, and Blythe Avenue.
- Encourage a variety of housing types and styles.
- Encourage the development of housing to accommodate an aging population including, multi-generational houses and other elder housing options.
- Reaffirm the City's commitment and obligation to affirmatively further access to fair and affordable housing opportunities by strongly encouraging equitable and fair housing opportunities to be located in strategic proximity to employment, recreational facilities, schools, neighborhood commercial areas, and transportation routes.
- Attract much needed educational opportunities for the residents of the West Area, especially for post-secondary education, and access to programs for life-long learners.
- Provide for safe routes to schools for children, with the City and County working together with residents, to provide sidewalks in neighborhood that have sporadic access.
- Work to promote Neighborhood Watch in all neighborhoods, and further assess the need for the location of emergency response facilities west of State Route 99.

PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS AND DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The proposed Specific Plan process officially started in September 2017 with the drafting of the existing conditions report. That document provides a detailed overview of the existing land uses within the Plan Area. Outreach to the West Area community started in early 2018 with individual meetings between City staff and community stakeholders, including residents, local agencies, institutional partners, elected officials, land owners, and developers. Public outreach included community stakeholder interviews, Steering Committee orientation sessions and meetings, community meetings and workshops, and an on-line survey.

The 11-member Steering Committee, established in March 2018 by the Fresno City Council, held regular public meetings to provide recommendations to the draft land use map and guiding principles based on input received from community members. Additionally, approximately 25 community stakeholders were interviewed from January 2018 to April 2018. Next, a kick-off survey regarding the Plan Area was released in April 2018. The survey covered topics such as quality of life, needed improvements, needed housing and commercial development, agri-tourism, and the overall future vision for the Plan Area. Two community conversations (i.e., workshops) were also held in order to receive feedback: Community Conversation No. 1 was held in May 2018, and Community Conversation No. 2 was held in June 2018. The Steering Committee then held meetings in June, July, August, November, and January 2018 in order to review and select the conceptual land use options. The draft land use map and guiding principles were released to the public on November 28, 2018. The draft land use map was then amended by the Steering Committee in January 2019. Lastly, an agri-tourism workshop was held in the spring of 2019.

INTRODUCTION

The proposed Specific Plan will establish the land use planning and regulatory guidance, including the land use and zoning designations and policies, for the approximately 7,077-acre Plan Area. The Specific Plan will serve as a bridge between the Fresno General Plan and individual development applications in the Plan Area.

The Specific Plan of the West Area seeks to provide for the orderly and consistent development that promotes and establishes the West Area as a complete neighborhood with enhanced transportation infrastructure, development of core commercial centers, creation of additional parkland, and encouraging the development of a diverse housing stock. The Plan Area does not currently have needed commercial amenities, forcing residents to travel east of State Route 99 for retail services. The Plan Area also lacks a complete roadway network and parkland.

LAND USE MAP AND MAXIMUM BUILDOUT POTENTIAL

The proposed Specific Plan refines the General Plan's land use vision for the West Area. The draft land use map proposes the relocation of higher density land uses away from the most western and southwestern portions of the Plan Area where they are distant from public transit and community amenities and transfers those higher density land use designations to major corridors. The Specific Plan of the West Area land use plan utilizes the City's existing General Plan land use designations to maintain or re-designate some parcels in the West Area. Some of the designation changes include: Low Density Residential (1 to 3.5 dwelling units per acre [DU/AC]), Medium Low Density Residential (3.5 to 6 DU/AC), Medium Density Residential (5 to 12 DU/AC), Medium High Density Residential (12 to 16 DU/AC), Urban Neighborhood Residential (16 to 30 DU/AC), High Density Residential (30 to 45 DU/AC), Community Commercial (1.0 maximum floor-area-ratio [FAR]), Recreation Commercial (0.5 maximum FAR), General Commercial (2.0 maximum FAR), Regional Commercial (1.0 maximum FAR), Office (2.0 maximum FAR), Business Park (1.0 maximum FAR), Light Industrial (1.0 maximum FAR), Corridor/Center Mixed Use (16 to 30 UD/AC and 1.5 maximum FAR), Regional Mixed Use (30 to 45 UD/AC and 2.0 maximum FAR), Pocket Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Open Space, Ponding Basin, Public Facility, Church, Special School, Elementary School, Elementary, Middle & High School, High School, and Fire Station. See Table 1 for a summary of the existing and proposed land uses within the city limits, growth area, and Plan Area. See Figure 6 for the proposed General Plan land use designations.

As previously indicated, the City of Fresno Zoning Map designates the Plan Area as: RE, RS-1, RS-2, RS-3, RS-4, RS-5, RM-1, RM-2, RM-3, RM-MH, CC, CG, CR, CRC, IL, CMX, NMX, RMX, BP, O, OS, and PR. The Fresno County Zoning Map designates the portions of the Plan Area outside the city limits as: RCC, C4, C6, M1, AE20, AL20, RR, RA, R1B, and TP. In conjunction with the approval of the Specific Plan, the parcels in the City which would have a changed land use designation as a result of the Specific Plan would be rezoned to the corresponding City zoning designation.

TABLE 1: PARCEL ACREAGES BY LAND USE CLASSIFICATION FOR GENERAL PLAN AND PROPOSED SPECIFIC PLAN

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATIONS	CITY LIMITS			GROWTH AREA			PLAN AREA TOTAL		
	GENERAL PLAN ACRES	SPECIFIC PLAN ACRES	DIFFERENCE IN CITY	GENERAL PLAN ACRES	SPECIFIC PLAN ACRES	DIFFERENCE IN GROWTH AREA	GENERAL PLAN ACRES	SPECIFIC PLAN ACRES	OVERALL CHANGE
Low	146.20	95.82	- 163.47	671.59	420.76	- 143.64	817.79	516.57	- 307.11
Medium Low	582.37	821.03		243.59	635.94		825.97	1,456.98	
Medium	1,460.88	1,240.70		896.13	824.67		2,357.00	2,065.37	
Medium High	261.09	224.31		88.33	51.24		349.42	275.55	
Urban Neighborhood	214.65	96.53		213.96	75.11		428.61	171.64	
High	28.00	51.33		37.76	0.00		65.76	51.33	
<i>Subtotal - Residential</i>	<i>2,693.19</i>	<i>2,529.72</i>		<i>2,151.36</i>	<i>2,007.72</i>		<i>4,844.55</i>	<i>4,537.44</i>	
Community	81.87	27.40	- 40.68	56.79	25.34	+ 36.56	138.66	52.74	- 4.11
Recreation	41.34	41.34		0.00	0.00		41.34	41.34	
General	141.59	155.38		1.63	65.40		143.21	220.78	
Regional	0.00	0.00		0.00	4.24		0.00	4.24	
<i>Subtotal - Commercial</i>	<i>264.80</i>	<i>224.12</i>		<i>58.42</i>	<i>94.98</i>		<i>323.21</i>	<i>319.10</i>	
Office	7.51	42.94	+ 32.91	0.00	45.87	+ 26.92	7.51	88.81	+ 59.84
Business Park	22.71	20.57		54.40	35.45		77.11	56.02	
Light Industrial	33.13	32.75		0.00	0.00		33.13	32.75	
<i>Subtotal - Employment</i>	<i>63.35</i>	<i>96.26</i>		<i>54.40</i>	<i>81.32</i>		<i>117.75</i>	<i>177.59</i>	
Neighborhood	0.00	211.12	+ 114.60	0.00	44.83	+ 69.06	0.00	255.95	+ 183.66
Corridor/Center	106.19	71.78		0.00	24.23		106.19	96.00	
Regional	144.72	82.61		0.00	0.00		144.72	82.61	
<i>Subtotal - Mixed Use</i>	<i>250.90</i>	<i>365.50</i>		<i>0.00</i>	<i>69.06</i>		<i>250.90</i>	<i>434.56</i>	
Pocket Park	2.45	1.55	+ 24.58	0.00	0.00	+ 14.49	2.45	1.55	+ 10.09
Neighborhood Park	36.67	39.22		47.04	47.04		83.71	86.26	
Community Park	24.20	24.20		13.98	0.00		38.18	24.20	
Regional Park	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	
Open Space	5.03	5.03		1.76	1.76		6.79	6.79	
Ponding Basin	67.06	89.99		40.12	39.60		107.18	129.59	
<i>Subtotal - Open Space</i>	<i>135.41</i>	<i>159.99</i>		<i>102.90</i>	<i>88.41</i>		<i>238.31</i>	<i>248.40</i>	
Public Facility	4.98	12.64	+ 32.05	16.81	14.78	+ 25.59	21.78	27.42	+ 57.65
Church	9.93	21.20		1.66	34.60		11.59	55.80	
Special School	4.50	4.50		13.88	13.88		18.38	18.38	
Elem. School	56.18	66.17		25.65	25.65		81.82	91.82	
Elem./Middle/High School	145.37	145.37		0.00	0.00		145.37	145.37	
High School	46.95	46.95		0.00	0.00		46.95	46.95	
Fire Station	0.20	3.32		5.32	0.00		5.52	3.32	
<i>Subtotal - Public Facilities</i>	<i>268.10</i>	<i>300.15</i>		<i>63.32</i>	<i>88.91</i>		<i>331.41</i>	<i>389.06</i>	
Grand Total	3,675.75	3,675.75	--	2,430.39	2,430.39	--	6,106.14	6,106.14	--

The parcels that are currently within the County will not be rezoned. Instead, upon a proposal to annex unincorporated land into the city limits, the City of Fresno would prezone the land to a zone that is consistent with the General Plan land use. Once annexation occurs, the County zoning would not apply to the parcel.

Table 2 summarizes the acreages of each land use, the maximum number of units, and the maximum non-residential square footage that would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan.

TABLE 2: MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL WITHIN SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATIONS (AND DENSITY/INTENSITY)	SPECIFIC PLAN ACRES	MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL	
		DWELLING UNITS	NON-RESIDENTIAL SF
Low (1-3.5 DU/AC)	516.57	1,807	--
Medium Low (3.5-6 DU/AC)	1,456.98	8,741	--
Medium (5-12 DU/AC)	2,065.37	24,784	--
Medium High (12-16 DU/AC)	275.55	4,408	--
Urban Neighborhood (16-30 DU/AC)	171.64	5,149	--
High (30-45 DU/AC)	51.33	2,309	--
<i>Subtotal - Residential</i>	<i>4,537.44</i>	<i>47,199</i>	<i>--</i>
Community (1.0 Max. FAR)	52.74	--	2,297,354.40
Recreation (0.5 Max. FAR)	41.34	--	900,385.20
General (2.0 Max. FAR)	220.78	--	19,234,353.60
Regional (1.0 Max. FAR)	4.24	--	184,694.40
<i>Subtotal - Commercial</i>	<i>319.10</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>22,616,787.60</i>
Office (2.0 Max. FAR)	88.81	--	--
Business Park (1.0 Max. FAR)	56.02	--	--
Light Industrial (1.0 Max. FAR)	32.75	--	--
<i>Subtotal - Employment</i>	<i>177.59</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
Neighborhood (12-16 DU/AC; 1.5 Max. FAR)	255.95	4,095	16,723,773.00
Corridor/Center (16-30 UD/AC; 1.5 Max. FAR)	96.00	2,880	6,272,640.00
Regional (30-45 UD/AC; 2.0 Max. FAR)	82.61	3,717	7,196,983.20
<i>Subtotal - Mixed Use</i>	<i>434.56</i>	<i>10,692</i>	<i>30,193,396.20</i>
Pocket Park	1.55	--	--
Neighborhood Park	86.26	--	--
Community Park	24.20	--	--
Regional Park	0.00	--	--
Open Space	6.79	--	--
Ponding Basin	129.59	--	--
<i>Subtotal - Open Space</i>	<i>248.40</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
Public Facility	27.42	--	--
Church	55.80	--	--
Special School	18.38	--	--
Elem. School	91.82	--	--
Elem./Middle/High School	145.37	--	--
High School	46.95	--	--
Fire Station	3.32	--	--
<i>Subtotal - Public Facilities</i>	<i>389.06</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
Grand Total	6,106.14	57,891 DU	52,810,183.80 SF

As shown in the table, the Specific Plan would allow for the future development of up to 57,891 DU (including 47,199 DU in the residential category and 10,692 DU in the mixed use category) and 52,810,183.80 SF of non-residential uses. The proposed land use plan also designates public facility uses that are currently existing within the Plan Area, including schools and churches. In the northern portion of the Plan Area, Fire Station No. 18 is located off of West Bullard Avenue at 5938 North La Ventana Avenue. Fire Station 18 will be relocated to a permanent location on

the south side of the 6000 block of West Shaw Avenue to maximize the department's "4 Minutes to Excellence" response time goal. Additionally, the proposed land use plan would allow for approximately 248 acres of park, open space, and ponding basin uses. The Specific Plan also includes circulation and utility improvements, some of which are planned in the City's current program for capital improvements.

The Specific Plan is designed to provide flexibility, so there is an extensive number of hypothetical variations/combinations for residential and non-residential development. However, the data within the above table represents the maximum density allowed without an amendment approved by the City. In effect, this is very likely an overestimate of what will actually be developed, but for purposes of environmental analysis in the EIR it represents the worst-case scenario.

It is noted that the proposed Specific Plan would amend the land uses for approximately half of the land within the Plan Area. The remaining parcels would maintain their existing land use and zoning designations. The parcels that are proposed for change by the proposed land use map are shown in Figure 7.

REVISIONS TO CORE GOALS

In addition to the proposed land use plan, the following are revisions to the core goals provided in the General Plan for the West Area:

1. West Shaw Avenue Town Center: The West Shaw Avenue Town Center (the Town Center) will extend from State Route 99 to the east side of Grantland Avenue and is envisioned to be comprised of mixed-use development supported by enhanced transit service. Land on the south side of West Shaw Avenue will provide additional neighborhood and commercial mixed-use opportunities.
2. Catalytic Corridors: The proposed Specific Plan designates higher density land uses along corridors for the purpose of providing easy access to major arterials and streets, retail centers, and community amenities. Catalytic corridors will include transit services. The corridors are designed to include neighborhood and pocket parks, commercial and retail uses, educational facilities, multi-family dwelling units, and professional offices. The corridors are located on the following streets:
 - a) West Shaw Avenue, from State Route 99 to the east side of Grantland Avenue;
 - b) West Ashlan Avenue, from State Route 99 to the commercial nodes located on the west side of Grantland Avenue;
 - c) North Blythe Avenue, from West Shields to West Ashlan Avenue;
 - d) West Clinton Avenue from State Route 99 to North Brawley Avenue; and
 - e) Veterans Boulevard, from West Gettysburg Avenue to West Barstow Avenue.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires that an EIR analyze a reasonable range of feasible alternatives that meet most or all project objectives while reducing or avoiding one or more significant environmental effects of the project. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that

requires an EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[f]). Where a potential alternative was examined but not chosen as one of the range of alternatives, the CEQA Guidelines require that the EIR briefly discuss the reasons the alternative was dismissed.

Alternatives that are evaluated in the EIR must be potentially feasible alternatives. However, not all possible alternatives need to be analyzed. An EIR must “set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice.” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.6(f).) The CEQA Guidelines provide a definition for a “range of reasonable alternatives” and, thus limit the number and type of alternatives that need to be evaluated in an EIR. An EIR need not include any action alternatives inconsistent with the lead agency’s fundamental underlying purpose in proposing a project. (In re Bay-Delta Programmatic Environmental Impact Report Coordinated Proceedings (2008) 43 Cal.4th 1143, 1166.)

First and foremost, alternatives in an EIR must be potentially feasible. In the context of CEQA, “feasible” is defined as:

... capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors. (CEQA Guidelines 15364)

The inclusion of an alternative in an EIR is not evidence that it is feasible as a matter of law, but rather reflects the judgment of lead agency staff that the alternative is potentially feasible. The final determination of feasibility will be made by the lead agency decision-making body through the adoption of CEQA Findings at the time of action on the Project. (Mira Mar Mobile Community v. City of Oceanside (2004) 119 Cal.App.4th 477, 489 see also CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15091(a)) (3) (findings requirement, where alternatives can be rejected as infeasible); 15126.6 ([an EIR] must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation”).) The following factors may be taken into consideration in the assessment of the feasibility of alternatives: site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plan or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and the ability of the proponent to attain site control (Section 15126.6 (f) (1)).

ALTERNATIVES SELECTED FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

Equally important to attaining the project objectives is the reduction of some or all significant impacts, particularly those that could not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The exact alternatives that will be evaluated in the Draft EIR will be determined through the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Scoping Process. Through preliminary discussions, there are three alternatives to the proposed Specific Plan that are being contemplated for evaluation in the Draft EIR. The alternatives being considered include the following:

- **No Project (Existing General Plan) Alternative:** Under this alternative, the Plan Area would remain in its current General Plan land use and zoning designations. Future development allowed under the existing General Plan land use map would be permitted in the Plan Area.
- **Regional Park Alternative:** Under this alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map. However, this alternative would provide a Regional Park within the Plan Area, which would be a minimum of 40 acres in size.
- **Lower Density Alternative:** Under this alternative, future development in the Plan Area would occur similar to what would be allowed under the proposed land use map, but at lower densities.

It is noted that the final alternatives selected for analysis in the Draft EIR will be based on the public scoping process, including input received through public comment.

PLAN ADOPTION AND REGULATION

The Specific Plan may include certain development regulations and standards that are intended to be specific to the Specific Plan Area. Where there is a matter or issue not specifically covered by the Specific Plan development regulations and design standards, the Fresno Zoning Code would apply. Where there is a conflict between the Specific Plan and the Zoning Code, the Specific Plan would prevail.

The Specific Plan is intended to be adopted by the City Council and to serve as a tool for the City of Fresno to implement. The Specific Plan is to be used by designers, developers, builders, and planners, to guide development of the Plan Area. The land use, development standards, and design guidelines are provided to ensure that all proposed developments remain consistent with the vision established by the Specific Plan as the Project is built over time. The Specific Plan development concepts, design guidelines, and standards are in accordance with the City's General Plan, Municipal Ordinances, and City Specifications. The Specific Plan shall be used to review, process, and approve development proposals for the Project site including but not limited to site specific development applications and site improvement plans.

TYPE OF EIR

The CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. The program-level analysis considers the broad environmental effects of the proposed project as a whole.

It is noted that the Specific Plan provides a very broad level of planning detail. To the extent that sufficient detail is available in the Specific Plan, a more detailed level of analysis is provided in this EIR. Examples of a more detailed level of analysis would include topics that are related to the physical acreage affected (i.e. the project footprint), maximum number of units (or FAR), land uses/zoning, or other design parameters. In many cases, there will be site specific uses that

will have design details developed at a later date. These details are unknown at this time and cannot reasonably be analyzed at a project-level at this time.

This EIR examines the planning, construction and operation of the project. The program-level approach, with limited project-level analysis, is appropriate for the proposed project because it allows comprehensive consideration of the reasonably anticipated scope of the development plan; however, as discussed above, not all design aspects of the future development phases are known at this stage in the planning process. Subsequent individual development that requires further discretionary approvals will be examined in light of this EIR to determine whether additional environmental documentation must be prepared.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 states that a program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

1. Geographically,
2. As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions,
3. In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or
4. As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

According to CEQA Guidelines section 15168, subdivision (c)(5), “[a] program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible.” Later environmental documents (EIRs, mitigated negative declarations, or negative declarations) can incorporate by reference materials from the program EIR regarding regional influences, secondary impacts, cumulative impacts, broad alternatives, and other factors (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[d][2]). These later documents need only focus on new impacts that have not been considered before (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[d][3]).

Section 15168(c), entitled “Use with Later Activities,” provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

Subsequent activities in the program must be examined in the light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared:

1. If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new Initial Study would need to be prepared leading to either an EIR or a Negative Declaration.
2. If the agency finds that pursuant to Section 15162, no new effects could occur or no new mitigation measures would be required, the agency can approve the activities as being within the scope of the project covered by the program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required.
3. An agency shall incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the program EIR into subsequent actions in the program.

4. Where the subsequent activities involve site specific operations, the agency should use a written checklist or similar device to document the evaluation of the site and the activity to determine whether the environmental effects of the operation were covered in the program EIR.

Here, the City anticipates preparing an initial study whenever landowners within the Plan Area submit applications for site-specific approvals (i.e. tentative maps, conditional use permits, or other discretionary entitlements). The initial study would serve in part as a consistency checklist to determine if the application for site specific approval is consistent with the General Plan, Specific Plan, Conditions of Approval, and Mitigation Measures, and it would also include a review of the project details relative to what was anticipated and analyzed in the program EIR (i.e. are there new environmental effects that were not covered by the program EIR). The City's expectation, at least at present, is that the initial study will conclude that most components of the Specific Plan can be developed with no new analysis of environmental effects given that there has been analysis in this program EIR. In some cases, however, a site-specific application (i.e. commercial use) may have specific issues associated with the project, or business, that this program EIR could not anticipate given the information that was available at this time. In those situations, the detailed site-specific information from that application could have site-specific effects not wholly anticipated in this EIR and would require some additional environmental review. (See also CEQA Guidelines section 15063, subd. (b)(1)(C).)

Future site-specific approvals may also be narrowed pursuant to the rules for tiering set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15152. "[T]iering is a process by which agencies can adopt programs, plans, policies, or ordinances with EIRs focusing on 'the big picture,' and can then use streamlined CEQA review for individual projects that are consistent with such...[first tier decisions] and are...consistent with local agencies' governing general plans and zoning.'" (*Koster v. County of San Joaquin* (1996) 47 Cal.App.4th 29, 36.) Section 15152 provides that, where a first-tier EIR has "adequately addressed" the subject of cumulative impacts, such impacts need not be revisited in second- and third-tier documents. Furthermore, second- and third-tier documents may limit the examination of impacts to those that "were not examined as significant effects" in the prior EIR or "[a]re susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by the choice of specific revisions in the project, by the imposition of conditions, or other means." In general, significant environmental effects have been "adequately addressed" if the lead agency determines that:

1. they have been mitigated or avoided as a result of the prior environmental impact report and findings adopted in connection with that prior environmental impact report; or
2. they have been examined at a sufficient level of detail in the prior environmental impact report to enable those effects to be mitigated or avoided by site specific revisions, the imposition of conditions, or by other means in connection with the approval of the later project.

Here, as noted above, the City anticipates preparing Initial Study whenever landowners within the Plan Area submit applications for site-specific approvals (i.e. tentative maps, conditional use

permits, or other discretionary entitlements). The checklist would serve in part as a consistency checklist to determine if the application for site specific approval is consistent with the General Plan, Specific Plan, Conditions of Approval, and Mitigation Measures, and it would also include a review of the project details relative to what was anticipated and analyzed in the program EIR (i.e. have all significant environmental impacts identified been “adequately addressed” in the program EIR). Thus, if a new analysis is required for these site-specific actions, it would focus on impacts that cannot be “avoided or mitigated” by mitigation measures that either (i) were adopted in connection with the Specific Plan or (ii) were formulated based on information in this EIR.

In addition, because the EIR addresses the effects of rezoning the land within the proposed Plan Area, future environmental review can also be streamlined pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21083.3 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15183. These provisions, which are similar but not identical to the tiering provisions, generally limit the scope of necessary environmental review for site-specific approvals following the preparation of an EIR for a “zoning action.” For such site-specific approvals, CEQA generally applies only to impacts that are “peculiar to the parcel or to the project” and have not been previously disclosed, except where “substantial new information” shows that previously identified impacts would be more significant than previously assumed. Notably, impacts are considered not to be “peculiar to the parcel or to the project” if they can be substantially mitigated pursuant to previously adopted, uniformly applied development policies or standards. As noted above, the City anticipates that, in assessing the extent to which the Specific Plan EIR has previously addressed significant impacts that might occur with individual projects, the City may conclude that in some instances (e.g., with respect to agricultural resources, cultural resources, geology, soils, and paleontological resources), no further analysis beyond that found in the program EIR will be necessary.

Finally, for purely residential projects consistent with the Specific Plan, the City intends to preserve its ability to treat such projects as exempt from CEQA pursuant to Government Code section 65457. Subdivision (a) of that statute provides that “[a]ny residential development project, including any subdivision, or any zoning change that is undertaken to implement and is consistent with a specific plan for which an [EIR] has been certified after January 1, 1980, is exempt from the requirements of [CEQA].” The statutes go on to say, moreover, that “if after adoption of the specific plan, an event as specified in Section 21166 of the Public Resources Code occurs, the exemption provided by this subdivision does not apply unless and until a supplemental [EIR] for the specific plan is prepared and certified in accordance with the provisions of [CEQA]. After a supplemental [EIR] is certified, the exemption ... applies to projects undertaken pursuant to the specific plan.” (See also CEQA Guidelines section 15182.)

When purely residential projects are proposed, the City will consider whether they qualify for this exemption or whether the Specific Plan EIR must be updated through a supplement to this EIR or a subsequent EIR as required by Public Resources Code section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines sections 15162 and 15163.

PROJECT ENTITLEMENTS

The City of Fresno will be the Lead Agency for the proposed project, pursuant to the State Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA, Section 15050. Actions that would be required from the City include, but are not limited to the following:

- Certification of the EIR and adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP);
- Approval of the Specific Plan of the West Area;
- Approval of the General Plan amendment modifying land uses.
- Approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendment modifying zoning.

The EIR analyzes the impacts of the Specific Plan and the anticipated subsequent filing of maps and other development applications in the future. Therefore, the EIR analyzes the maximum impacts of the Specific Plan, including these applications yet unfiled, so that future filings will not require separate environmental analysis, as long as development proposed does not substantially deviate from the approved Specific Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The review and certification process for the EIR will involve the following general procedural steps:

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The City must circulate a NOP of an EIR for the proposed project to responsible and trustee agencies, the State Clearinghouse, and the public. A public scoping meeting must be held during the public review period to present the project description to the public and interested agencies, and to receive comments from the public and interested agencies regarding the scope of the environmental analysis to be included in the Draft EIR. Concerns raised in response to the NOP will be considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP and responses to the NOP by interested parties will be presented in an appendix to the EIR.

DRAFT EIR

The Draft EIR will contain a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives, identification of significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. The Draft EIR will identify issues determined to have no impact or a less than significant impact, and provides detailed analysis of potentially significant and significant impacts. Comments received in response to the NOP will be considered in preparing the analysis in the EIR. Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the City will file the Notice of Completion (NOC) with the State Clearinghouse of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin the 45-day public review period.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

Following the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to significant environmental issues raised either in written comments received during the public review period or in oral comments received at a public hearing during such review period.

CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

CEQA Guidelines Section 15090 requires lead agencies to certify the final EIR prior to approving a project. The lead agency decision making body shall certify that (i) the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; (ii) that the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body, which reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final EIR prior to approving the project; and (iii) that the Final EIR reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.

For the proposed project, the City Council City shall be the City's ultimate decision-making body. The Council will therefore review and consider the Final EIR and make a determination regarding whether the document is "adequate and complete." In general, a Final EIR meets this standard if:

1. The EIR shows a good faith effort at full disclosure of environmental information; and
2. The EIR provides sufficient analysis to allow decisions to be made regarding the proposed project in contemplation of environmental considerations.

The level of detail contained throughout the EIR is intended to be consistent with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines and recent court decisions, which provide the standard of adequacy on which the document is based. The Guidelines state as follows:

"An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of the environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure."

Following review and consideration of the Final EIR, the City may take action to approve, modify, or reject the project. As part of project approval, the City also is also required to adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, as described below, prepared in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15097. This Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program must include all of the mitigation measures that have been incorporated into or imposed upon the project to reduce or avoid significant effects on the environment, and would be designed to ensure that these measures are actually carried out during project implementation.

USES OF THE EIR AND REQUIRED AGENCY APPROVALS

The City of Fresno will be the Lead Agency for the proposed project, pursuant to the State Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA, Section 15050. Other agencies may be required to issue permits or approve certain aspects of the proposed project.

Actions that would be required from the City include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Certification of the EIR;
- Adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program;
- Approval of City of Fresno General Plan Amendments;
- Approval of City of Fresno rezoning;
- Approval of Specific Plan;
- Approval of Development Agreement;
- Approval of future tentative and final maps;
- Approval of future improvement plans;
- Approval of future grading plans;
- Approval of future building permits;
- Approval of future site plan and design review;
- City review and approval of future project utility plans.

The other governmental agencies that may require approvals in connection with the project include, but are not limited to, the following:

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- California Department of Transportation;
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board - Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan approval prior to construction activities pursuant to the Clean Water Act;
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District - Approval of construction-related air quality permits;
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District - Authority to Construct, Permit to Operate for stationary sources of air pollution;
- State Water Resources Control Board.

AREAS OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

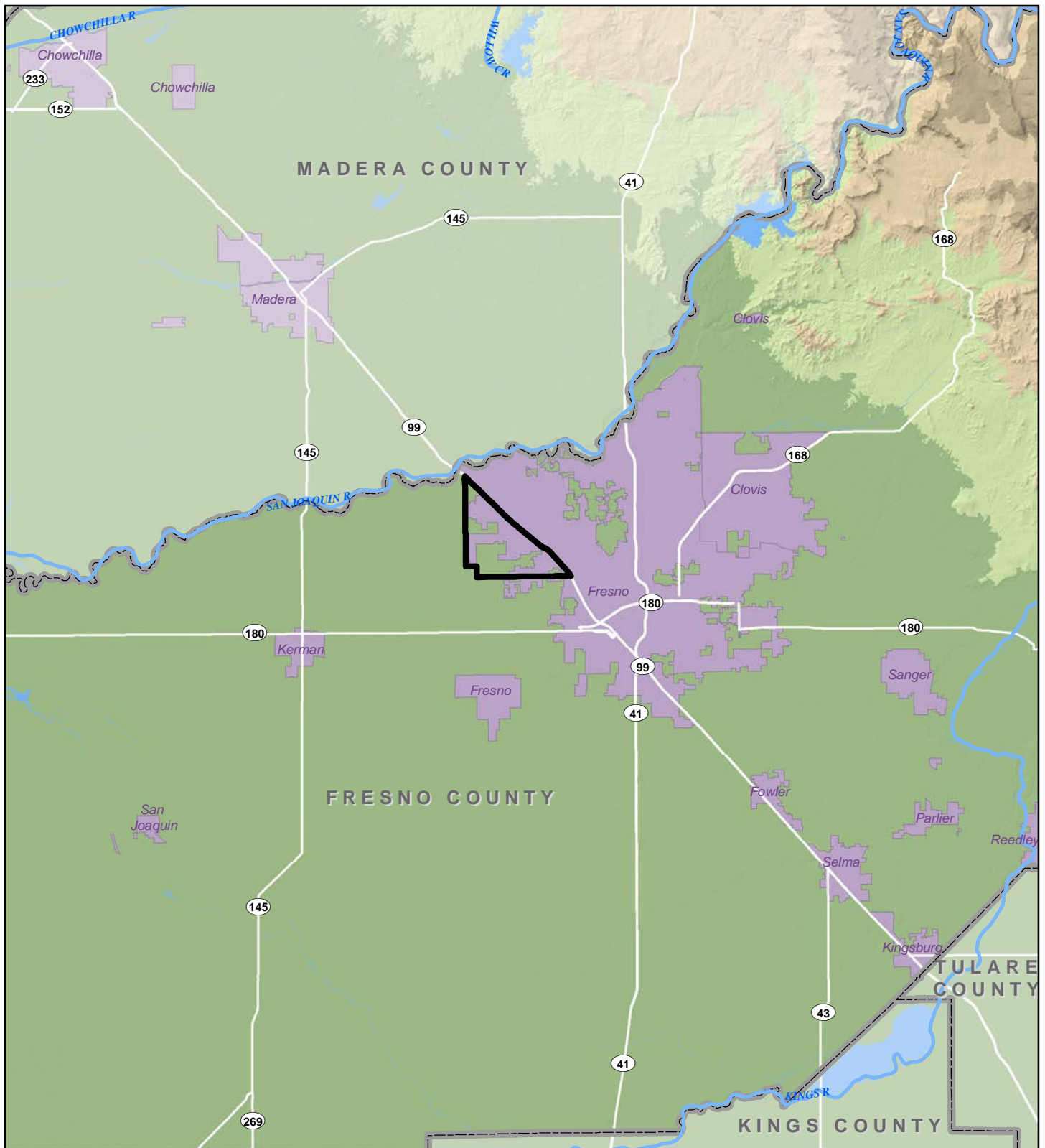
An Initial Study has not been prepared for this project. All environmental topics identified in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines will be analyzed in the EIR, including: Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forest Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities, Wildfire, Cumulative Impacts, and Growth Inducing Impacts.

Date: June 28, 2019




Signature: 

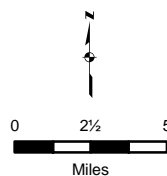
Name/Title: Rodney L. Horton, MPA, Project Planner

Phone/Email: 559-621-8181/Rodney.Horton@fresno.gov



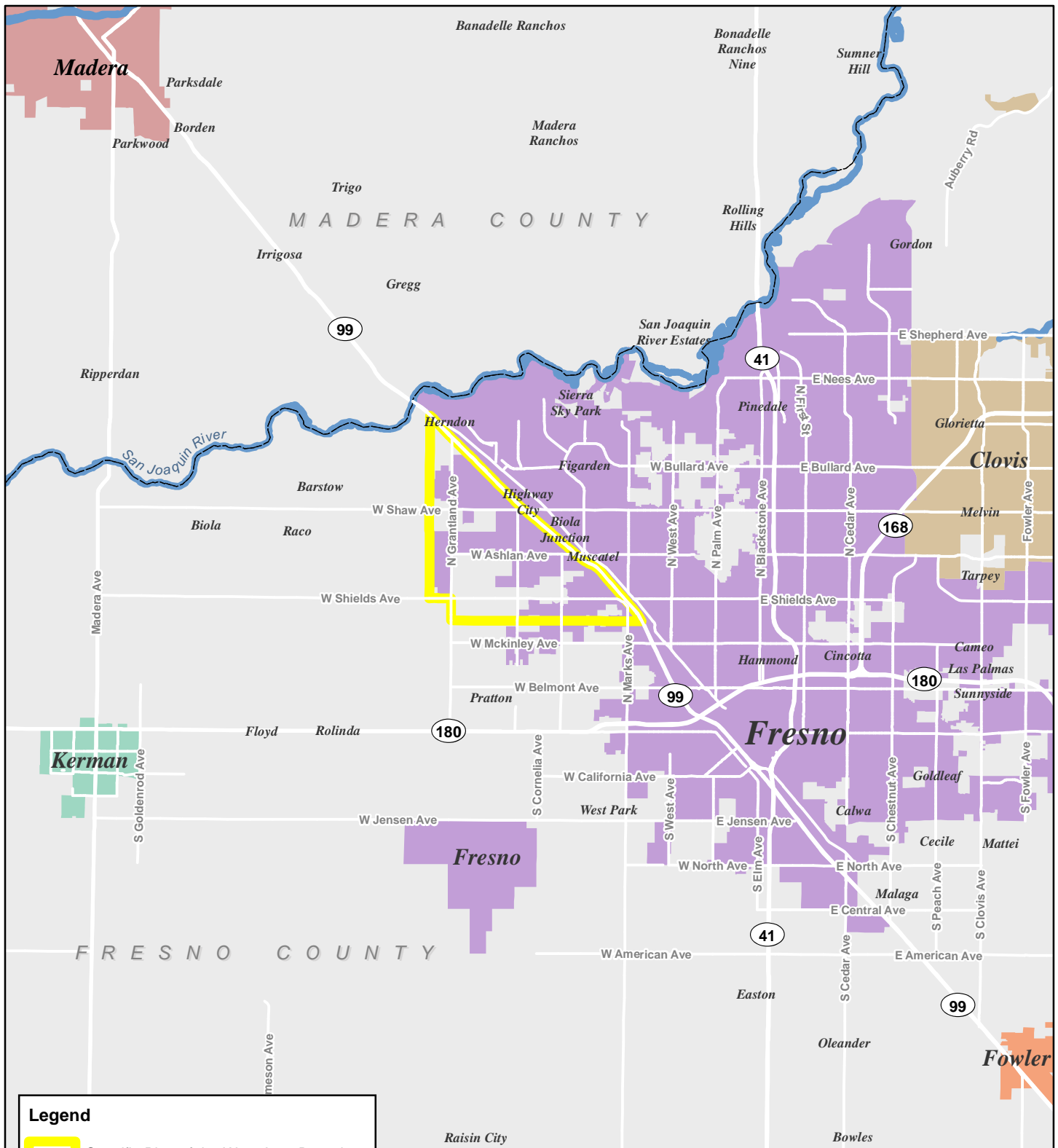
Legend

-  Specific Plan of the West Area
-  City Area
-  County Boundary



CITY OF FRESNO SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

Figure 1. Regional Location Map

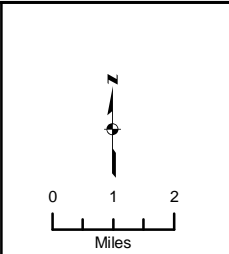


Legend

- Specific Plan of the West Area Boundary
- County Boundary

City Areas

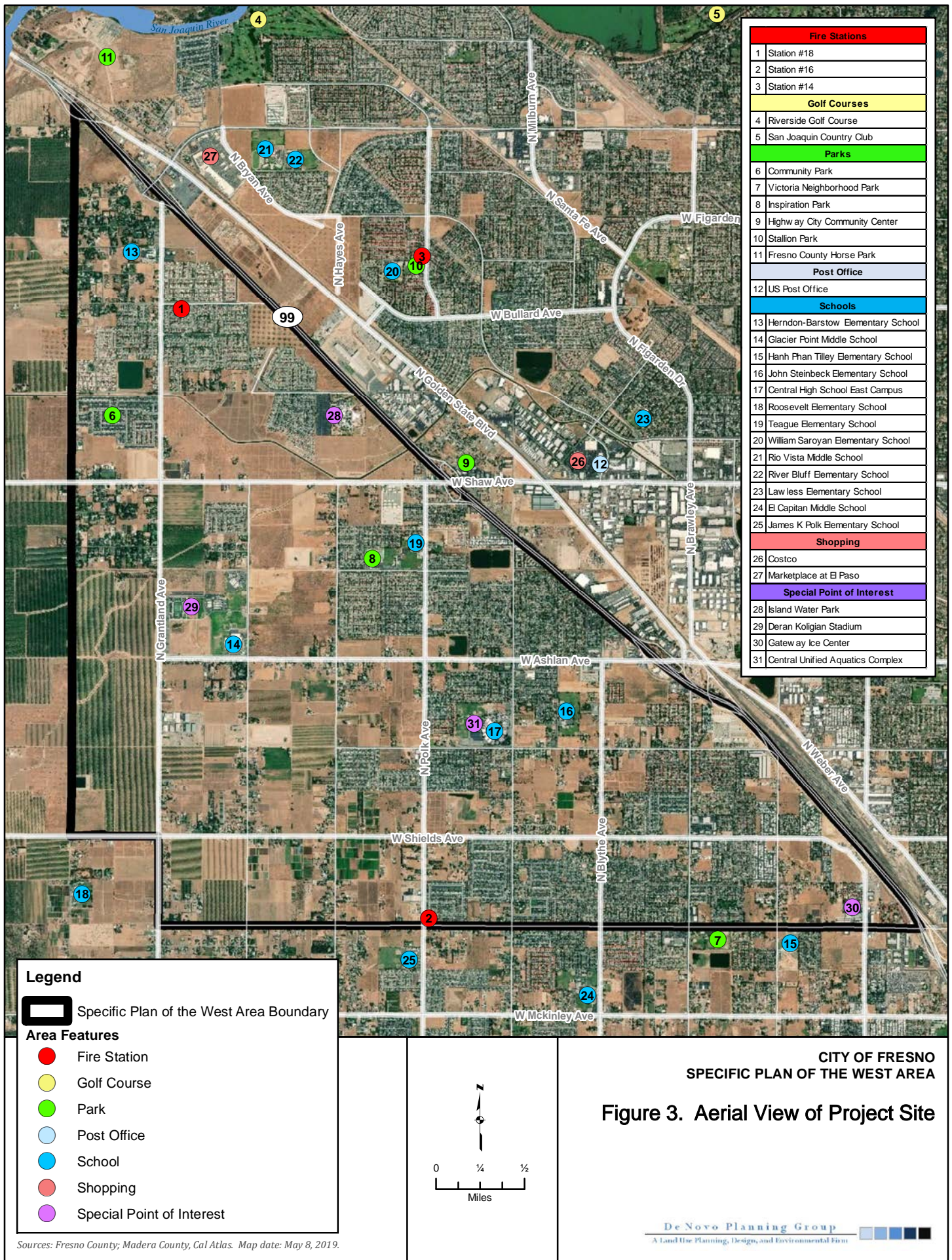
- Clovis
- Fowler
- Fresno
- Kerman
- Madera



**CITY OF FRESNO
SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA**

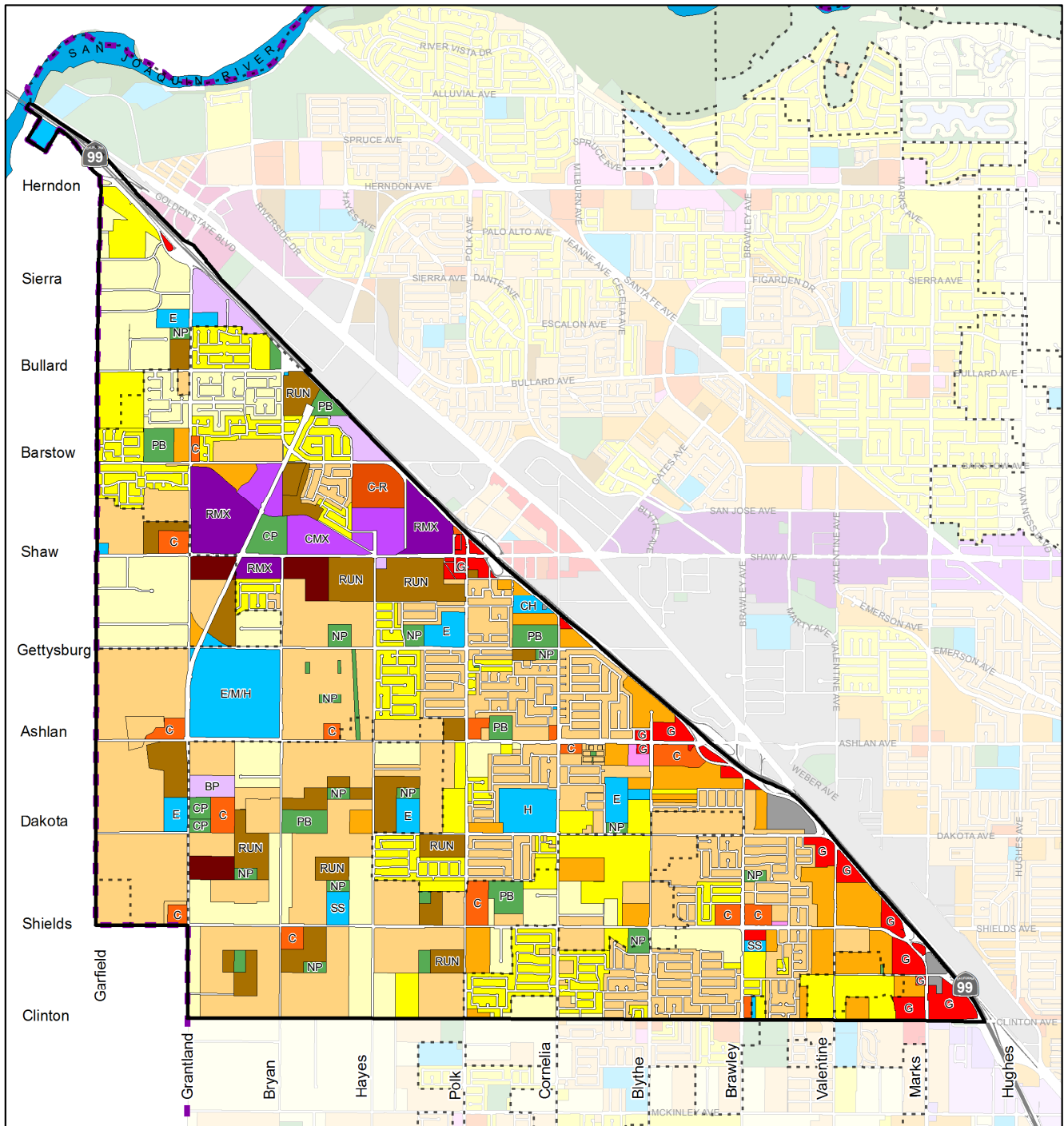
Figure 2. Vicinity Map

Sources: Fresno County; Madera County, Cal Atlas. Map date: May 7, 2019.



CITY OF FRESNO
SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

Figure 3. Aerial View of Project Site



BOUNDARIES

- City Limits
- West Area Specific Plan Boundary
- Sphere Of Influence

RESIDENTIAL

- Low Density (1-3.5 D.U./acre)
- Medium Low Density (3.5-6 D.U./acre)
- Medium Density (5.0-12 D.U./acre)
- Medium High Density (12-16 D.U./acre)
- Urban Neighborhood (16-30 D.U./acre)
- High Density (30-45 D.U./acre)

PUBLIC FACILITIES

- Public/Quasi-public Facility
- SS Special School
- E Elementary School
- E/M/H Elementary, Middle & High School
- H High School
- CH Church
- FS Fire Station

EMPLOYMENT

- Office
- BP Business Park
- Light Industrial

MIXED USE

- CMX Corridor/Center Mixed Use
- RMX Regional Mixed Use

OPEN SPACE

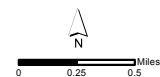
- CP Community Park
- PB Open Space - Ponding Basin
- NP Neighborhood Park
- Open Space
- P Park

COMMERCIAL

- Community
- Recreation
- General

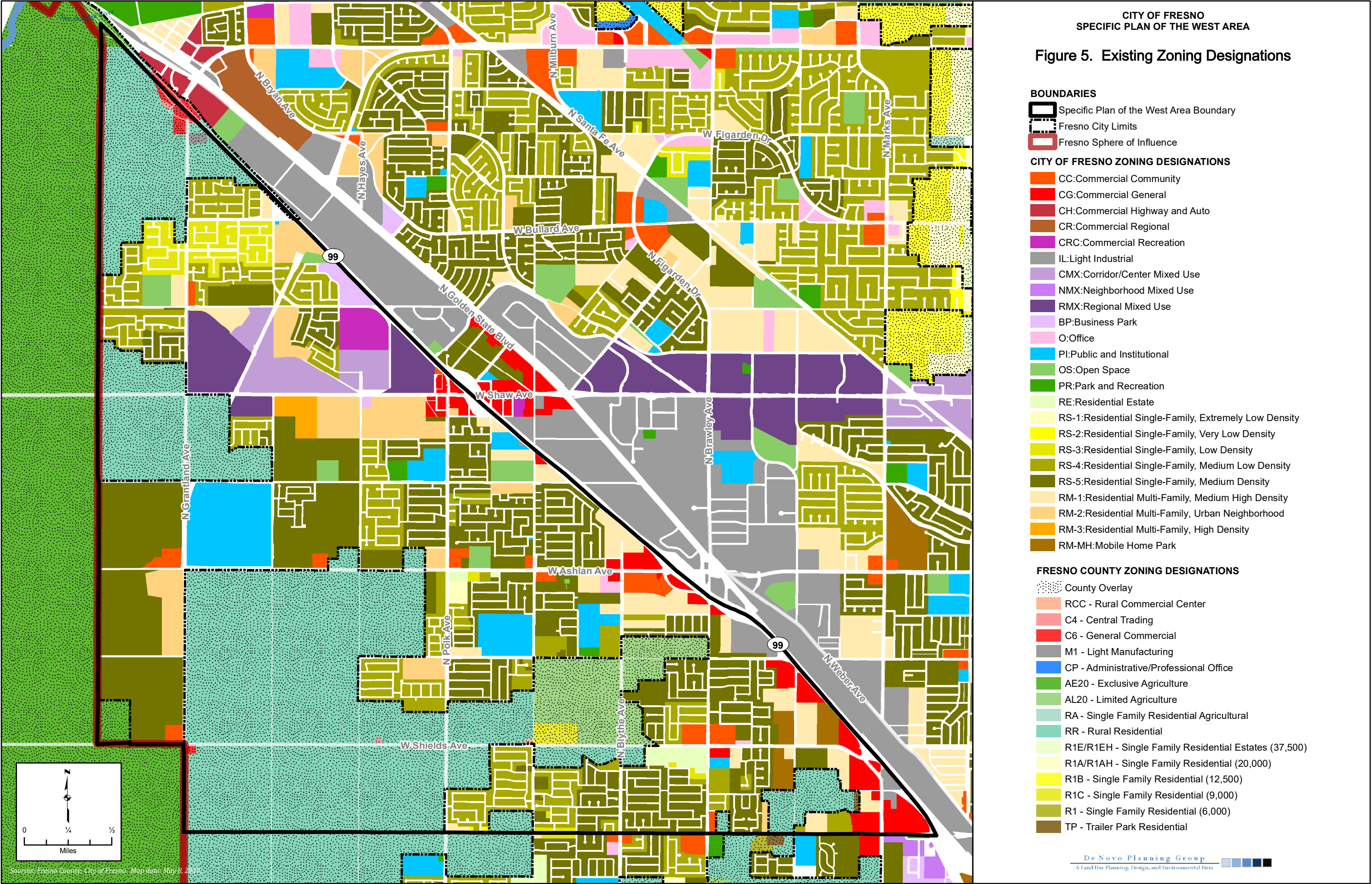
CITY OF FRESNO SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

**Figure 4. Existing General
Plan Land Use Designations**



CITY OF FRESNO
SPECIFIC PLAN OF THE WEST AREA

Figure 5. Existing Zoning Designations



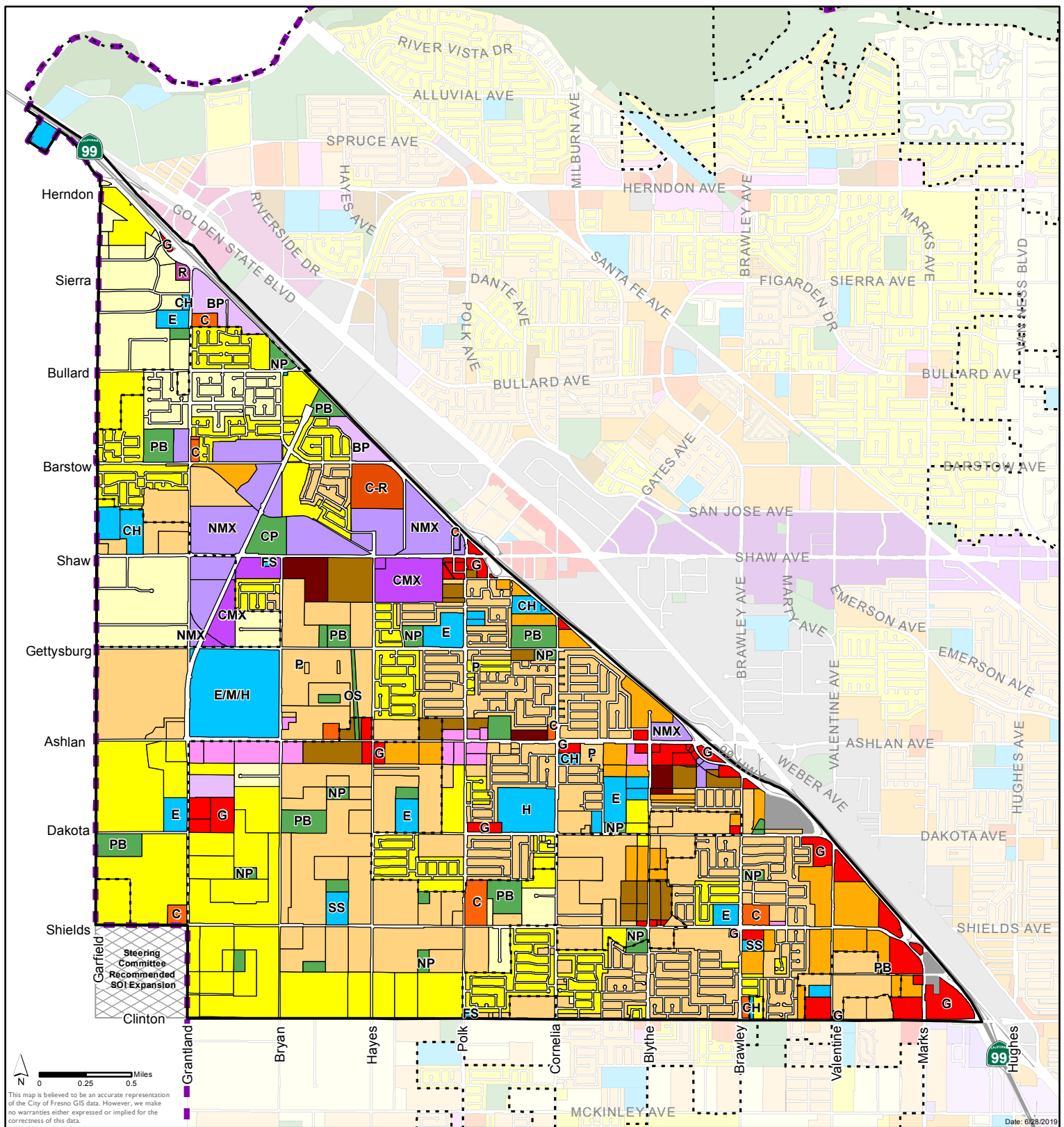


Figure 6. Proposed General Plan Land Use Designations

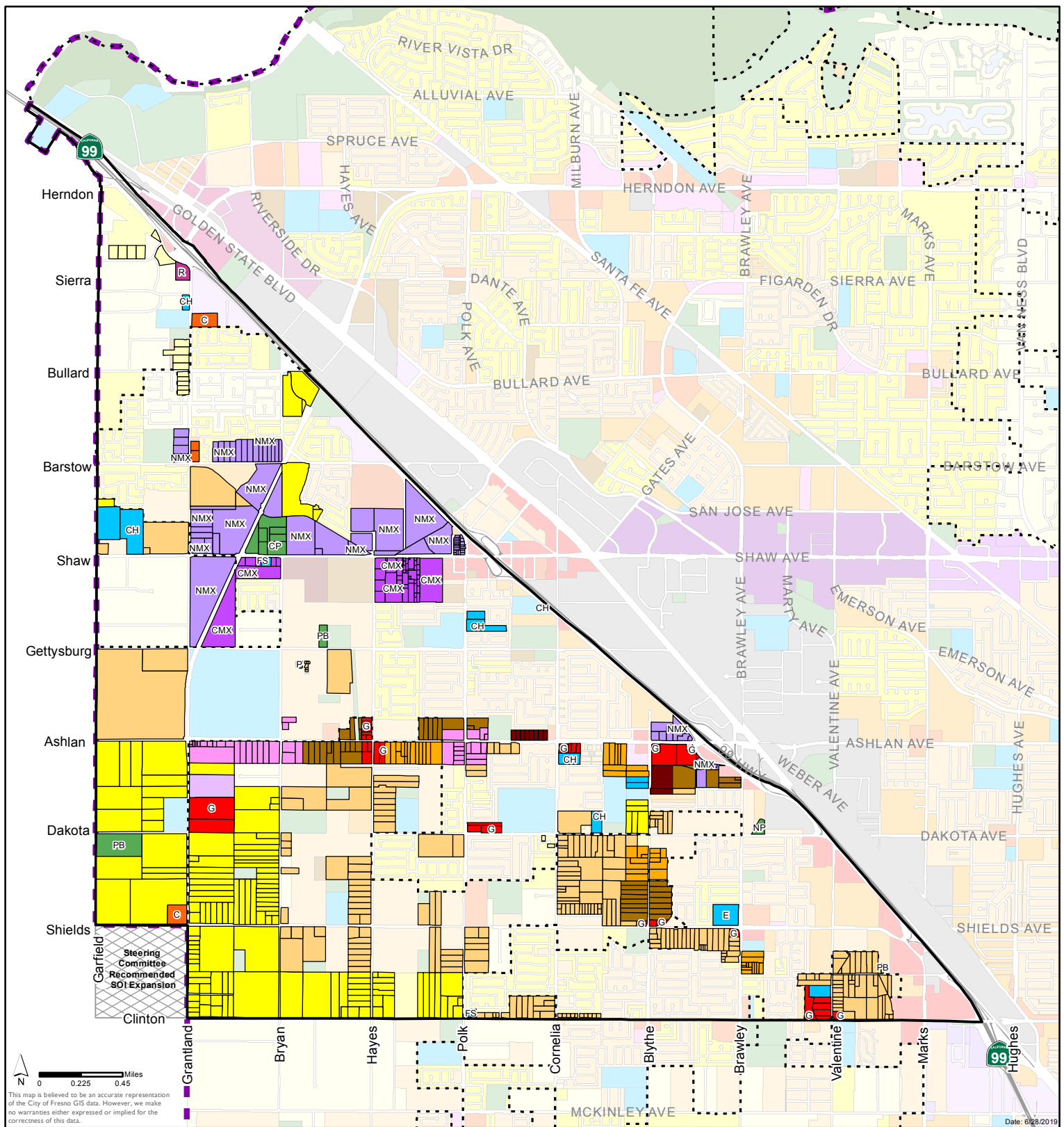


Figure 7. Parcels Proposed for Change in Proposed Land Use Map