

# **DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

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SOUTHWEST FRESNO SPECIFIC PLAN



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# *Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Draft Preferred Alternative*

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## INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the elements of Southwest Fresno Specific Plan's Draft Preferred Alternative, as developed, reviewed, and refined by the community and Steering Committee. A key step in the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan process is determining the community's preferred land use and circulation scenario for future development in the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Area. The Preferred Alternative should be considered the "vision" for the area and the underlying foundation for the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan. The contents of the Draft Preferred Alternative contained in this report include:

- A set of guiding principles that serve as the framework for the development of the Draft Preferred Alternative;
- A vision diagram that illustrates the anticipated changes to the physical environment, which includes the Specific Plan Area and immediately surrounding Sphere of Influence (SOI) lands (Southwest area), at a conceptual level;
- A map that shows the Preferred Alternative land uses in the Southwest area;
- A land use map showing the General Plan's approved land uses for comparison with the Preferred Alternative's land uses, with areas of change highlighted; and
- A development capacity analysis describing the number of single-family and multi-family housing units; square feet of commercial, office, and public facility development; and park acreage anticipated in the Southwest area in the 30-year timeframe of the Specific Plan.

## CONTEXT

Initially agricultural land, Southwest Fresno has gradually transitioned with more residential, industrial, and commercial uses sprinkled throughout. Today, Southwest Fresno is made up of a patchwork of land uses that abut each other, such as existing subdivisions, industry, and farmland. Many pockets of residential land uses are adjacent to vacant land, agriculture, and/or industrial uses. Incompatible land uses are located near one another, including truck routes, noise or odor-producing industrial facilities, and land with hazardous materials. The area within the City's SOI contains a significant amount of vacant land that is residentially designated, but the area has not yet exhibited much market demand to develop typical suburban neighborhoods with desired commercial and retail services.

The Specific Plan Area is bounded by Highway 180 in the north and by Highway 41 in the east (see Figure 1). It does not include the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan Area, nor does it include the county/SOI land that is outside the city limits, with the exception of the Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard (MLK) Activity Center. The following maps and graphics show and consider the SOI as a matter

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of good planning, but the scope of the project, including the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), will focus on the Specific Plan Area only.

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The guiding principles below were used as a framework for the development of the Draft Preferred Alternative. The figures following the guiding principles show the Draft Preferred Alternative, which has been carefully reviewed and refined by the Steering Committee.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. *Existing residential properties in the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan are assumed to remain residential. Uses other than existing residential are subject to change.*

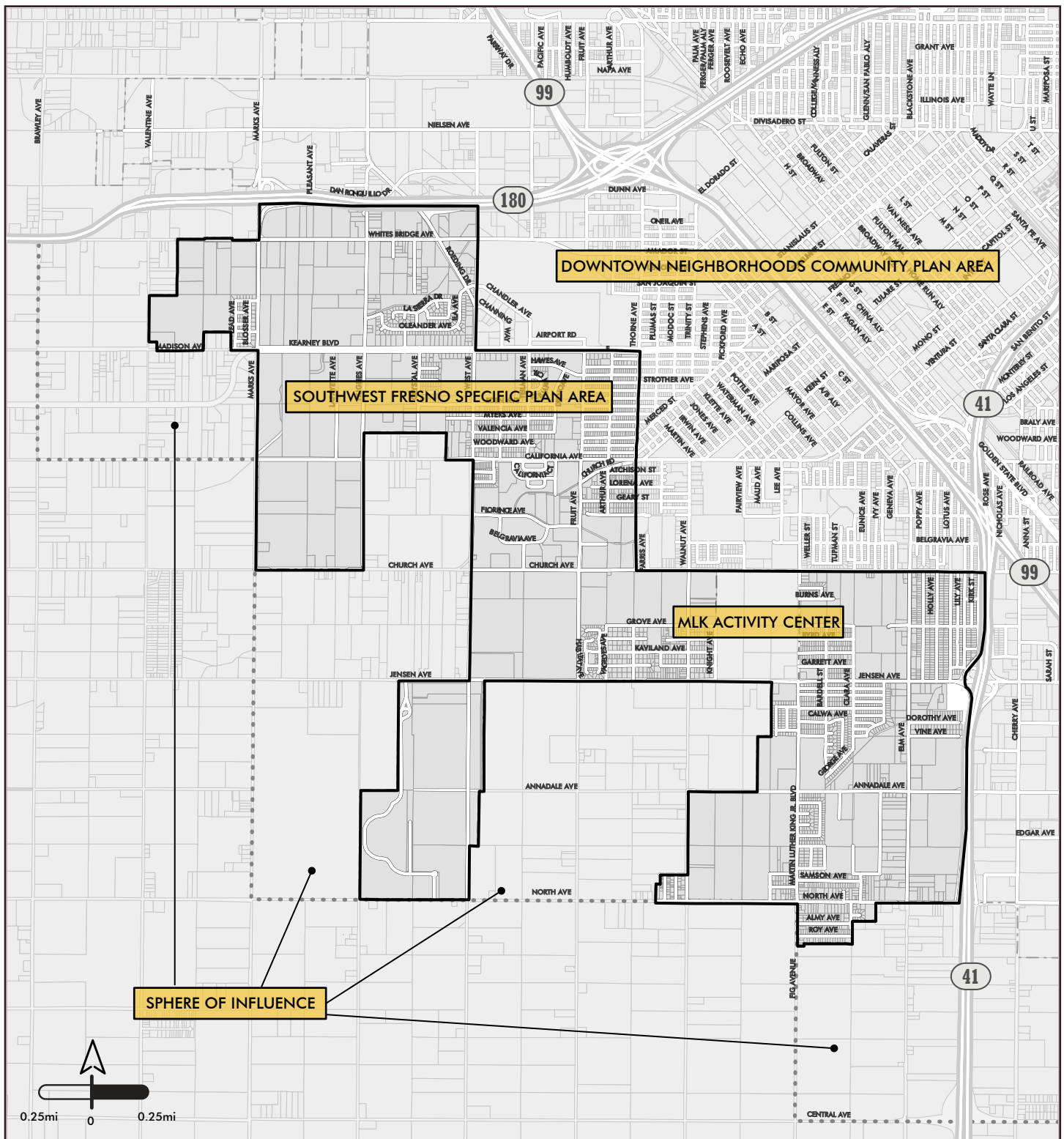
This principle assures community members that the Draft Preferred Alternative does not propose to change the use of their property or other nearby properties on existing residential streets.

2. *In general, locate higher intensity uses in magnet cores and along corridors, while allowing the rest of the area to have a residential neighborhood focus.*

In the Draft Preferred Alternative, higher intensity uses, including higher density housing, are focused within magnet cores and along the corridors (see Figures 2 and 3). To balance the overall development buildout and create more single-family housing, some land outside of the magnet cores and corridors would be planned and zoned to a lower density residential use, especially in the SOI lands.

3. *Create two magnet cores that would attract a significant amount of new development and would accommodate regional retail stores, educational and/or medical facilities, and a range of housing types.*

The proposed locations for magnet cores in the Draft Preferred Alternative will serve different parts of Southwest Fresno and would be accessible to regional travelers. The southern magnet core is proposed between Jensen and Church Avenues, west of MLK Jr. Boulevard (see Figure 2). This area is identified as the “MLK Activity Center” in the General Plan and proposes a regional shopping center and higher density neighborhood district. The community and Steering Committee would prefer to include an educational use in this area, particularly a community college campus. While it is not certain that a community college campus in Southwest Fresno will be funded and built, there has been discussion about this possibility with the State Center Community College District’s Board. Other uses could also serve as magnet uses to attract development, including large-scale retail, medical clinics or campuses. The Draft Preferred Alternative proposes a set of flexible uses at this location to accommodate any of these uses.

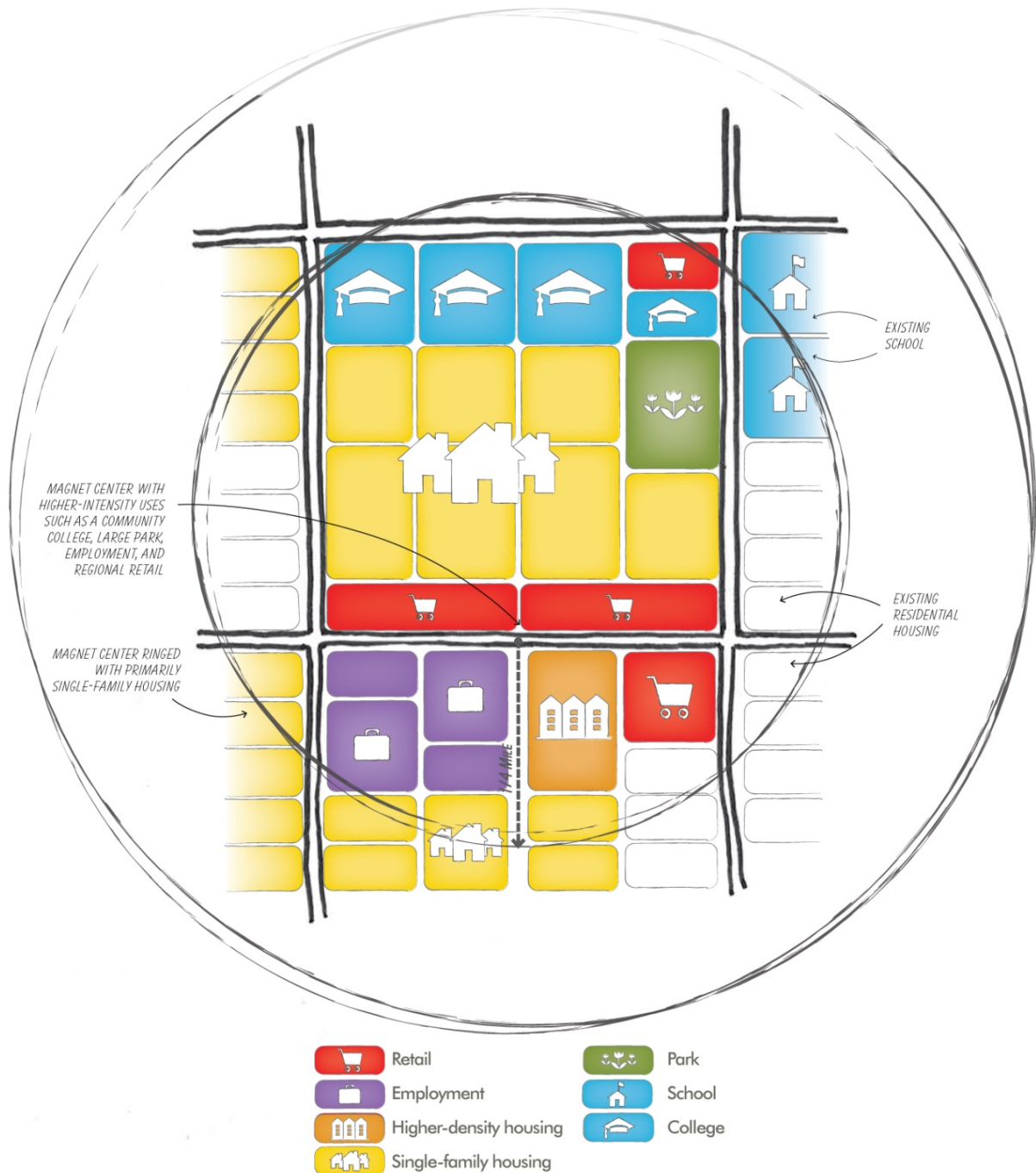


**Figure 1. Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Area Map**

- Plan Area
- City Limit
- Sphere of Influence Boundary

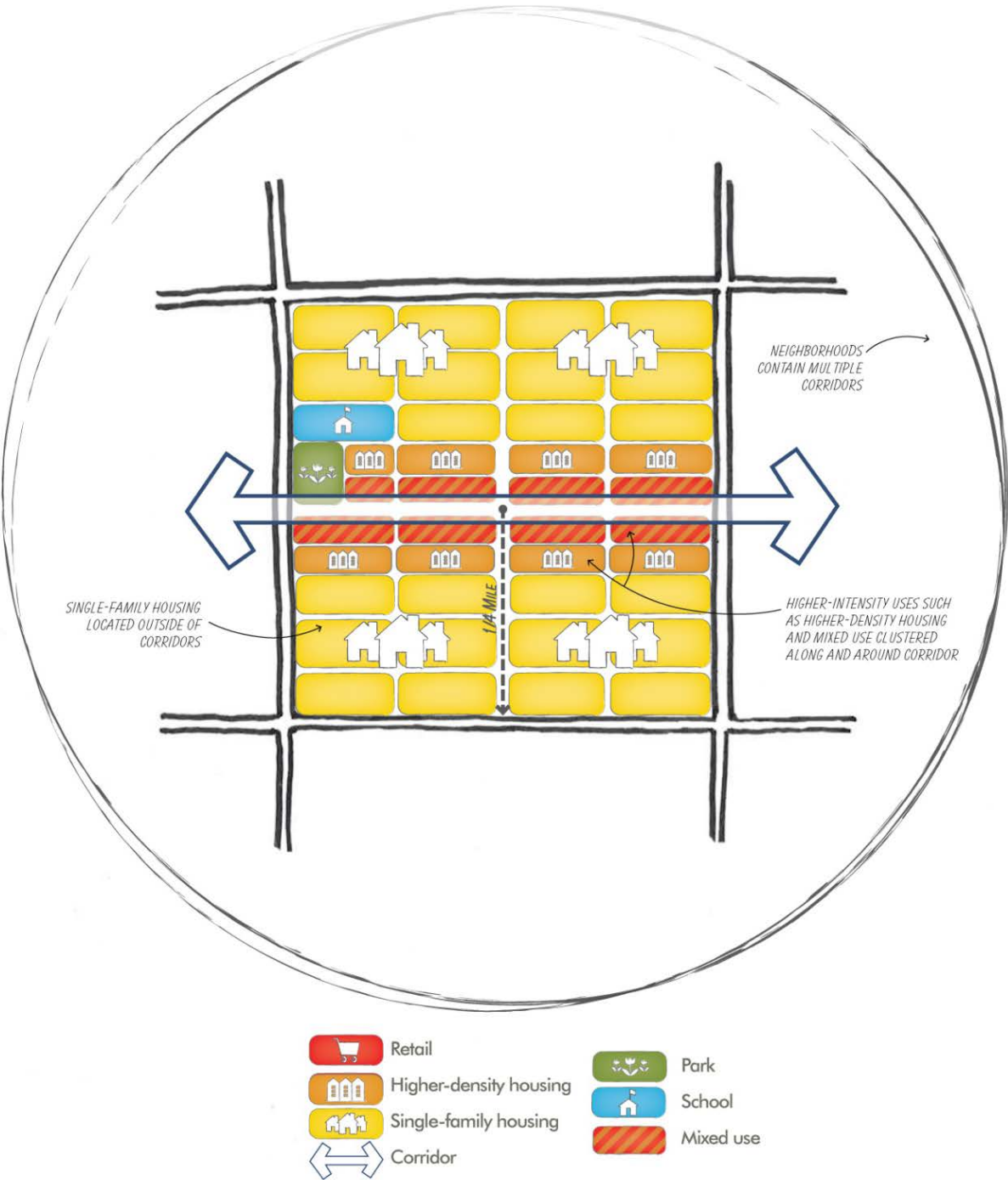
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Figure 2. Conceptual Diagram of Development around a Magnet Core



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Figure 3. Conceptual Diagram of Development along a Corridor



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The northern magnet core is located at Marks and Whites Bridge Avenues where there is both access from Highway 180 and from existing and new residential development in the western part of the Specific Plan Area. This magnet core is anticipated to be developed with regional retail uses accessible to both travelers on Highway 180 and residents of the Southwest neighborhood. A medical clinic or similar use is also desired in this magnet core.

**4. *Enhance existing key corridors in Southwest Fresno, building off the existing character and potential of the streets to attract new development and to connect neighborhoods and magnets.***

There are several existing major corridors in Southwest Fresno that the community recommends enhancing. These corridors are likely to be the location for vehicular access and bus service in the future; new development along these corridors will take advantage of these transportation connections (see Figure 3). The corridors identified in the Draft Preferred Alternative each have a different emphasis based on the existing character of the street. They include:

- A Regional Retail Corridor along Whites Bridge Avenue with regional-serving, big box retail, housing and parks;
- A Historic Corridor along Kearney Boulevard, enhanced with landscaping and lined with residential development;
- A Mixed Use Corridor along California Avenue, connecting to Downtown Fresno with a future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line;
- A Jobs Corridor along Jensen Avenue, connecting the magnet core west of MLK Jr. Boulevard to Highway 41; and
- A Mixed Use and Jobs Corridor along Elm Avenue, which could have the potential of a future BRT line to connect to the southern portion of the Specific Plan Area.

**5. *Strengthen existing neighborhoods and create new complete neighborhoods by providing centers, or nodes, within walking distance of residents. Nodes should consist of a park, a school, and retail stores; these nodes should be surrounded by residences.***

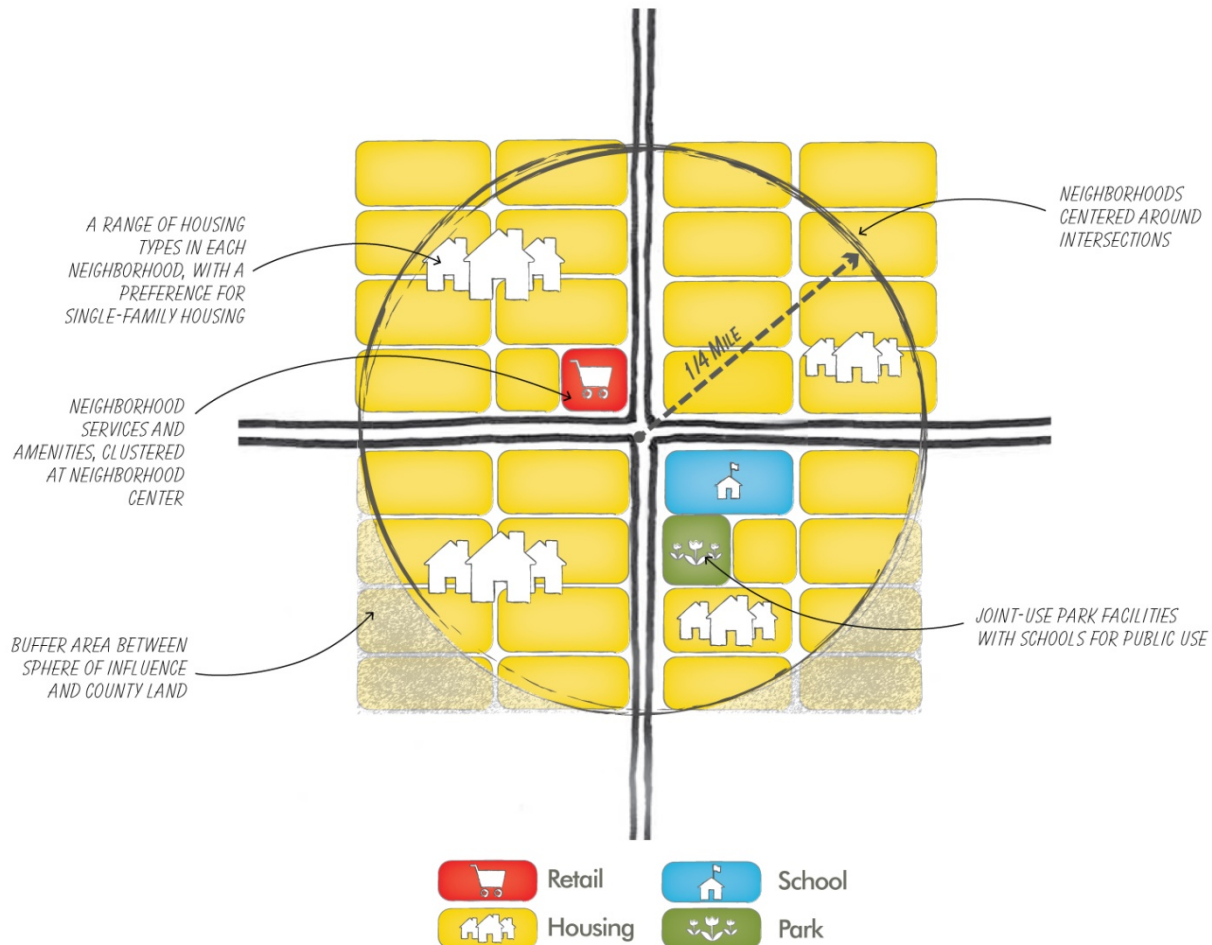
The community and Steering Committee expressed a preference for a series of small, complete neighborhoods in the Southwest Fresno area. Each of the complete neighborhoods would contain a node made up of community-serving uses, including retail, a range of housing types, a school, and a park (see Figure 4). Surrounding the nodes would be existing or new single-family residences, within a reasonable walking distance of ½-mile.

The planning team along with the Steering Committee has reviewed existing neighborhoods and potential new neighborhoods to identify the best locations for these nodes. Where possible, they are located at the intersections of arterial streets for easy access and high visibility. In the case of existing neighborhoods, locations that could become stronger nodes if retail or park uses are incorporated have been identified. For potential new neighborhoods, the nodes would be sited at a location accessible to both nearby residents in the new neighborhood and visitors from outside the neighborhood.



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Figure 4. Conceptual Diagram of Development within a New Complete Neighborhood



6. *New residential development should be primarily single-family residences. Where appropriate, new multi-family condominiums and apartments should not be overly concentrated in a single location and should be located close to neighborhood nodes, near magnet cores, and along corridors.*

The Draft Preferred Alternative sets aside the majority of land for single-family residential and locates higher density residential at some neighborhood nodes, near magnet uses, and along corridors. This will allow walkable access for greater numbers of residents to shopping, schools, parks, and transit such as buses and BRT.

To provide affordable new single-family housing, the Preferred Alternative should include areas that allow or require smaller lot sizes.

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- 7. *New retail development should be a mix of larger regional retail at a few key locations and neighborhood stores in neighborhood nodes and along corridors.***

The best locations for large-scale, regional-serving retail are those that have good proximity, visibility, and access from the greatest number of people, while having enough distance away from other similar retail to avoid competition. In the Draft Preferred Alternative, regional retail is shown in two locations: with access from Highway 180 at Marks and Whites Bridge Avenues and from Highway 41 near Jensen Avenue and MLK Jr. Boulevard. These locations would allow new retail businesses to draw customers from areas beyond Southwest Fresno. On the other hand, smaller scale neighborhood retail shops can be more dispersed as long as they are located along well-traveled streets. In the Draft Preferred Alternative, smaller neighborhood retail locations are shown in each of the neighborhood nodes and along corridors with mixed use.

- 8. *Large-scale office and institutional uses, including, educational facilities, and medical facilities, should be located where vehicles and transit have access, and where they will attract other similar uses. Smaller scale employment uses such as professional offices can be located in more remote locations and along corridors.***

In the Draft Preferred Alternative, larger scale employment uses such as offices, colleges, and medical facilities are concentrated in three locations: along the Retail Corridor on Whites Bridge Avenue; along the Jobs Corridor on Jensen Avenue (including the magnet core at Jensen Avenue and MLK Jr. Boulevard); and along the Mixed Use/Jobs Corridor on Elm Avenue. Opportunities for smaller scale offices are allowed along other corridors, including the Historic Corridor on Kearney Boulevard, if designed appropriately.

- 9. *Employment areas in Southwest Fresno should be planned and zoned for “healthy” businesses.***

While more jobs in Southwest Fresno are desirable, the businesses that provide them must be healthy, safe, good neighbors, next to which each of us would be comfortable living. To assure this good neighbor policy, new employment areas would be planned and zoned "Office" and all previously "Light Industrial," "Heavy Industrial," "Business Park," or "Regional Business Park" areas would be planned and zoned "Office."

- 10. *Park improvements for Southwest Fresno’s existing parks should be the highest priority, followed by the creation of new parks within walking distance of residential areas.***

The priorities for park spending should be in following order: 1) upgrade and better maintain existing parks, and then 2) develop new parks in areas where residents have no park within walking distance.

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- 11. The transportation network should be improved to serve all members of the community whether they wish to travel by car, bus, bicycle, foot, or wheelchair. Transit should be focused on corridors that have more intensive land uses. Truck routes should be located away from residential uses whenever possible.*

The Draft Preferred Alternative identifies new transit connections along California, Jensen, and Elm Avenues. These transit connections would run through the entire length of the streets within the Specific Plan Area and provide connections to the Fresno Area Express (FAX) and future High-Speed Rail (HSR) stations located in Downtown. BRT will be located along California and Elm Avenues.

Bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including trails, are to be determined in future discussions.

- 12. Urban Greening ideas and actions should be applied to Southwest Fresno.*

Urban Greening is a concept that leads to the creation of places that are more environmentally healthy. For Southwest Fresno, Urban Greening actions should include the following:

- Support environmental health and address West Fresno's top ranking as most burdened by multiple sources of pollution and its associated poor health outcomes;
- Create outdoor spaces that people care about, which will be key to having a healthy and active community;
- Integrate the natural environment with the built environment, which can include creek corridors, parks, and open spaces;
- Facilitate alternative modes of transportation, including safe walking, biking and transit use;
- Increase the urban tree canopy to create unified aesthetics along streets, provide needed shade, and improve environmental health; and
- Manage stormwater on-site to cleanse, diffuse, and absorb rainwater where it falls by creating rain gardens, swales, infiltration areas, and other attractive areas that bring nature and beauty into developed areas

## DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE LAND USES

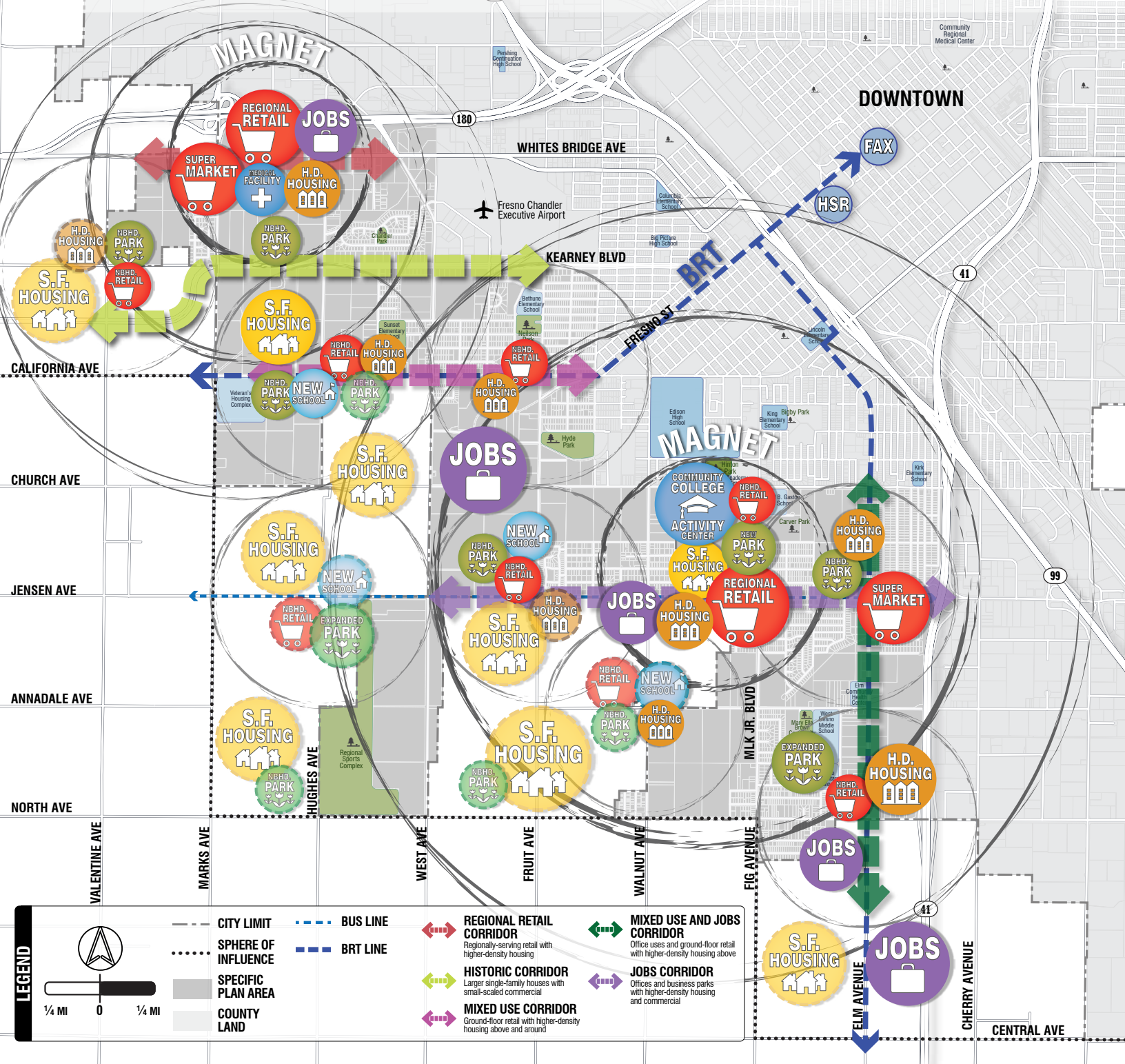
Figure 5 shows the conceptual vision for the Draft Preferred Alternative and Figure 6 is the Draft Preferred Alternative which identifies land use changes for the Southwest area. Figure 7 shows the Draft Preferred Alternative with the conceptual overlay for comparison purposes.



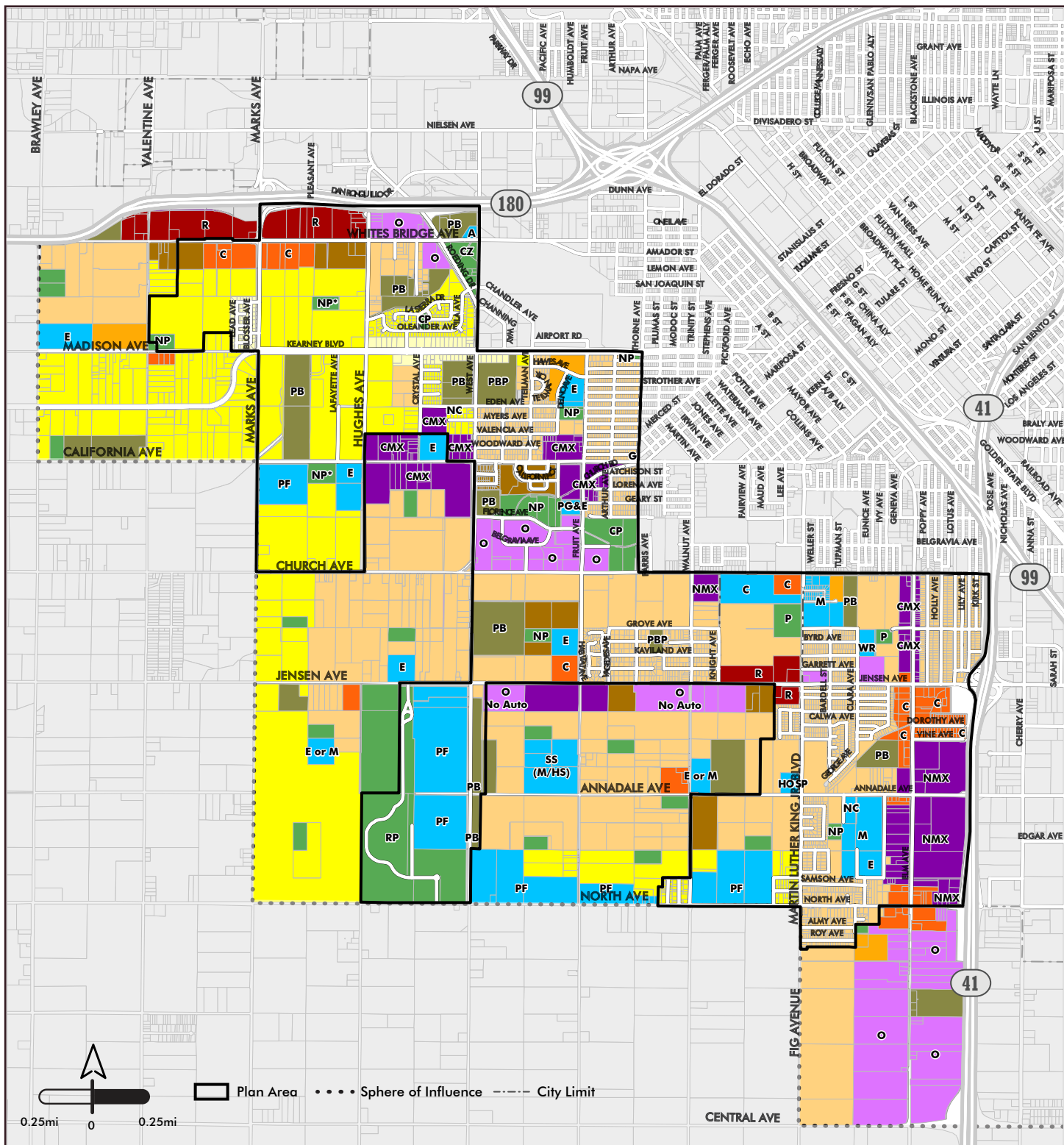
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**FIGURE 5. CONCEPTUAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE VISION DIAGRAM**

Two higher intensity cores near major highway interchanges each with a primary magnet use. Magnet cores are ringed with smaller complete neighborhoods that support the core. Each complete neighborhood includes housing and a node with community-serving uses. Neighborhoods are linked by well-defined corridors lined with higher intensity uses.

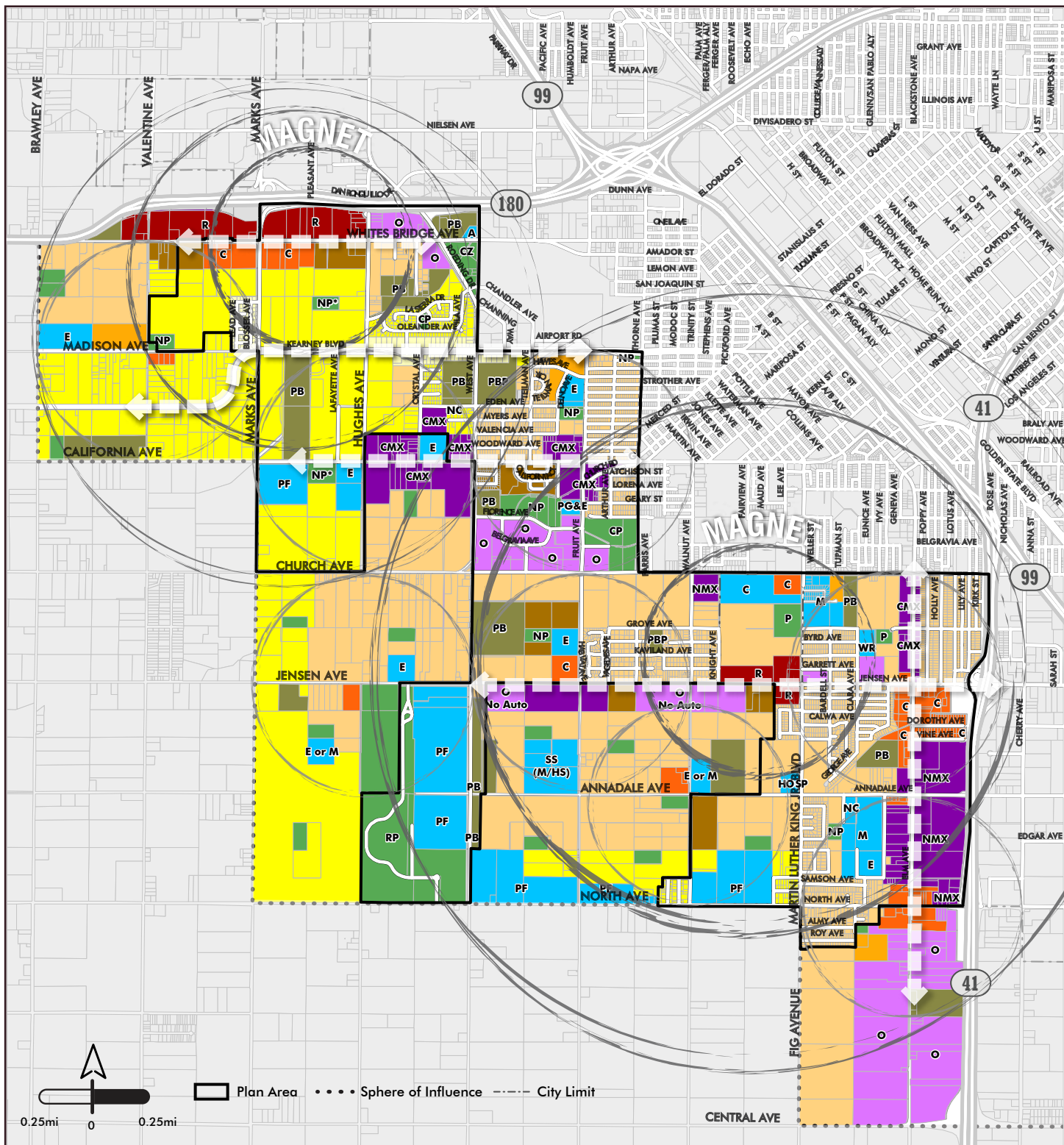




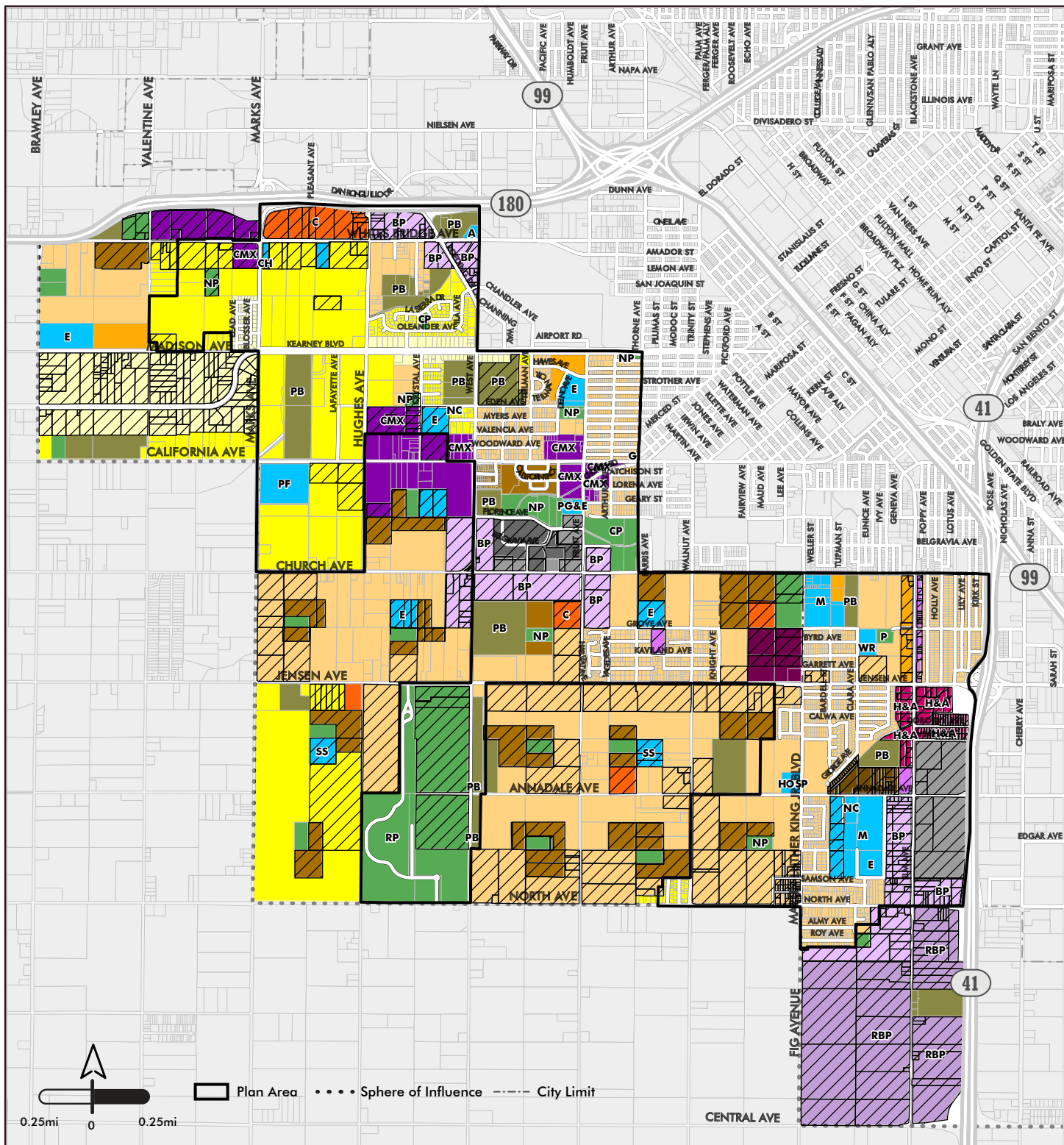


**Figure 6. Preferred Alternative Land Use Map (12-8-16)**

RESIDENTIAL	EMPLOYMENT	COMMERCIAL	PUBLIC FACILITIES	OPEN SPACE
Low Density (1 - 3.5 du/ac)	Office	Community	Public Facility	Park
Medium-low Density (3.5 - 6 du/ac)	Office Restricted	Regional	Elementary School	Neighborhood Park
Medium Density (5 - 12 du/ac)		General	Middle School	Neighborhood Park (Mission Ranch)
Medium-high Density (12 - 16 du/ac)			Airport	The exact location of these parks within the future Mission Ranch development are to be determined in a future planning process.
Urban Neighborhood (16 - 30 du/ac)			Church	Community Park
		<b>MIXED USE</b>	Hospital	Regional Park
		Corridor/Center Mixed Use	Neighborhood Center	Clear Zone
		Neighborhood Mixed Use	PG&E Station	Ponding Basin
				Ponding Basin Park







**Figure 8. Fresno General Plan Land Use Map for Southwest Fresno**

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### DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Development capacity numbers were calculated for the Draft Preferred Alternative based on the Draft Preferred Alternative's land uses, using the General Plan's dwelling unit per acre (du/acre) and floor area ratio (FAR) capacity numbers (see Table 1). For reference, the General Plan's land uses are shown in Figure 8 to compare the differences between the Preferred Alternative's and General Plan's land uses. The General Plan's development capacity numbers are also shown in Table 1 for comparison.

**Table 1. Development Capacities for the Draft Preferred Alternative and General Plan in the Southwest Fresno Specific Plan Area**

	Single-Family Housing (DU)	Multi-Family Housing (DU)	Housing Total (DU)	Commercial (Bldg. SF)	Employment (Bldg. SF)	Parks/Open Space (Acre) <sup>a</sup>	Public Facilities (Acre)	Public Facilities (Bldg. SF)
<b>Draft Preferred Alternative Combined</b>	<b>12,369</b>	<b>3,421</b>	<b>15,790</b>	<b>2,340,955</b>	<b>4,689,926</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>3,265,900</b>
Specific Plan Area	4,371	1,774	6,146	1,501,367	748,820	77	192	2,411,064
SOI	7,998	1,646	9,644	839,588	3,941,106	114	65	854,836
<b>General Plan Combined</b>	<b>10,810</b>	<b>7,862</b>	<b>18,672</b>	<b>2,022,053</b>	<b>6,910,736</b>	<b>243<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>95</b>	<b>1,144,453</b>
Specific Plan Area	4,108	2,616	6,723	1,330,831	1,780,080	184 <sup>b</sup>	57	643,377
SOI	6,702	5,247	11,948	691,222	5,130,656	59	38	501,076

Notes: DU = dwelling units. SF = square feet.

a. Excludes land uses designated as "clear zone," "ponding basin," and "ponding basin park."

b. Includes approximately 112 acres of landfill located directly east of the Regional Sports Complex. The Steering Committee does not consider this land to be parkland and therefore the Draft Preferred Alternative shows this acreage designated as "public facility."

The table above contains the development capacity of the land uses proposed in the Specific Plan Area over the Specific Plan's 30-year timeframe. It should be noted that, like the General Plan, the development capacities above are for new development and only take into account the development of parcels that have higher opportunities for development, such as parcels that are vacant, open agriculture, or rural residential (partially vacant). These opportunity sites for development are highlighted in Figure 9.

Development capacities are broken down into Specific Plan Area and SOI. The development capacities for the General Plan are also shown in the table for comparison against the Draft Preferred Alternative's development capacities.

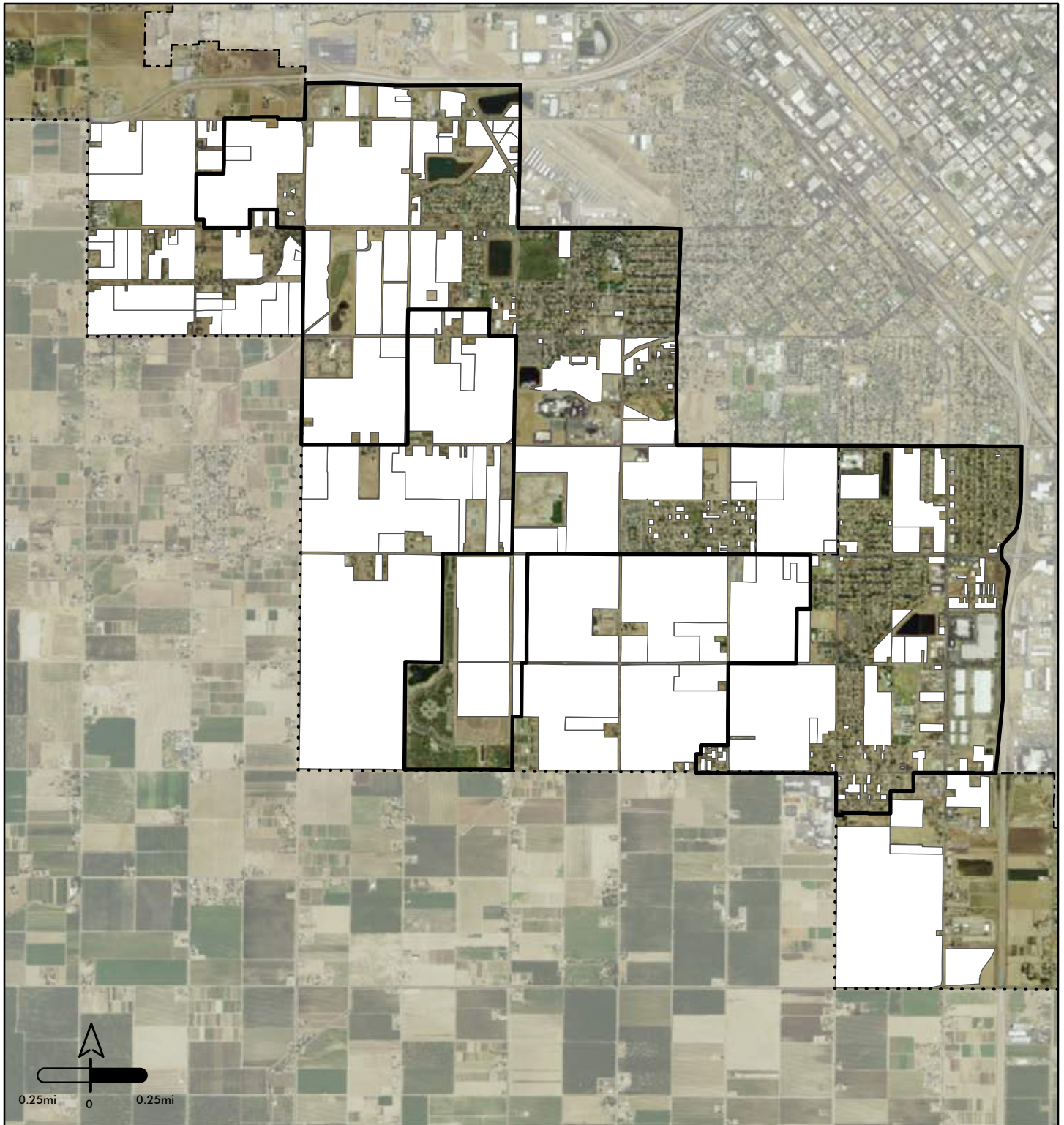
Some findings from the development capacity analysis are described below:

- Housing.** The total number of housing units in the Draft Preferred Alternative is less than the General Plan's total number of housing units. The main reason for this decrease is because of the community and Steering Committee's desire for a shift in ratio for a larger amount of single-family housing compared to multi-family housing. The General Plan's ratio of single-family housing to multi-family housing within the Specific Plan Area is 61 percent single-family housing to 39 percent multi-family housing. The Draft Preferred Alternative's ratio is 71 percent single-family housing to 29 percent

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multi-family housing in the Specific Plan Area. The Draft Preferred Alternative results in 577 fewer dwelling units than the General Plan's total dwelling units within the Specific Plan Area.

- **Commercial.** The amount of commercial development in the Specific Plan Area is greater in the Draft Preferred Alternative than in the General Plan by approximately 170,500 square feet. Several factors contribute to this increase, including new corridor/center mixed use, neighborhood mixed use, regional commercial, and community commercial areas.
- **Employment.** The amount of employment space in the Specific Plan Area (i.e., office, business park, regional business park, light industrial, and heavy industrial uses) in the Draft Preferred Alternative is significantly less than in the General Plan; the Preferred Alternative shows approximately 1 million square feet less in employment uses in the Specific Plan Area. The reason for this decrease is because of the change of business park and regional business park uses to other land uses such as residential, park, mixed use, and commercial.
- **Parks/Open Space.** The Specific Plan Area's total park acreage in the Draft Preferred Alternative is less than in the General Plan because the General Plan counts the approximately 112 acres directly east of the Regional Sports Complex as parkland. The Steering Committee expressed that this land should not be considered parkland since it is landfill. The removal of this "parkland" is a more accurate reflection of the amount of usable parkland in Southwest Fresno. With the exclusion of the 112 acres of landfill from the General Plan's parks/open space development capacity, the amount of parkland within the Specific Plan Area for the Draft Preferred Alternative is slightly higher by 5 acres compared to the General Plan's park acreage. The amount of parks/open space in the SOI increases more significantly in the Draft Preferred Alternative by 55 acres, largely because of the new parkland located directly to the west of the Regional Sports Complex, which was a decision made by the Steering Committee. Although this large amount of new parkland is located in the SOI, it could still serve Specific Plan Area residents since it is adjacent to the Regional Sports Complex.
- **Public Facilities.** The amount of public facilities development in the Draft Preferred Alternative is significantly larger than the amount in the General Plan. The primary reasons for this increase include the re-designation of the aforementioned 112-acre landfill from park to public facilities and the inclusion of a new college in the MLK Activity Center.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, iCubed, USDA, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community, PlaceWorks, 2016.

**Figure 9. Opportunity Sites and Existing Development Map**

Opportunity Sites
  Existing Development
  Plan Area
  Sphere of Influence
  City Limit

