

Notice of Availability

Fresno West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan

Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report

LEAD AGENCY:

City of Fresno Planning and Development Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 621-8003

EIR CONSULTANT:

De Novo Planning Group
1020 Suncoast Lane, Suite 106
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
(916) 235-0116

PROJECT TITLE: West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan

PROJECT LOCATION: The West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan (also-known-as “Specific Plan”, “Plan 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.” The Plan Area is located generally west of Highway 99, north of Clinton Avenue, east of Garfield Avenue, and south of the San Joaquin River. 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 not included on the lists of sites enumerated under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List maintained by the Department of Toxic Substances Control).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The following provides a brief summary and overview of the proposed project. Chapter 2.0 of this EIR includes a detailed description of the proposed project, including maps and graphics. The reader is referred to Chapter 2.0 for a more complete and thorough description of the components of the proposed project.

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 proposed Specific Plan refines the General Plan’s land use vision for the Plan 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 West Area Neighborhoods Specific Plan land use plan utilizes the City’s existing General Plan land use designations to maintain or re-designate some parcels in the Plan Area. See Table 2.0-1 for a summary of the existing and proposed land uses within the city limits, growth area, and Plan Area. See Figure 2.0-6 for the proposed General Plan land use designations.

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 pre-zone the land to a zone that is consistent with the General Plan land use. Once annexation occurs, the County zoning would no longer apply to the parcel.

The Specific Plan land use plan would allow for the future development of up to 83,129 dwelling units (DU) (including 339 DU in the commercial category, 49,355 DU in the residential category and 33,436 DU in the mixed use category), and 59,777,271.15 square feet (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, fire stations, and places of worship. Additionally, the proposed land use plan would allow for approximately 338.95 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.

For more details regarding the project background, development allowance, land uses, and guiding principles, please see Chapter 2.0, Project Description, of the Draft EIR available at: <https://www.fresno.gov/westareaplan>

SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The Recirculated Draft EIR identifies significant environmental impacts related to the following environmental topics: Aesthetics; Agricultural Resources; Air Quality; Public Services and Recreation; Transportation and Circulation; Utilities and Service Systems; Cumulative Aesthetics; Cumulative Agricultural Resources; Cumulative Air Quality; Cumulative Public Services and Recreation; and Cumulative Transportation and Circulation. All other environmental issues were determined to have no impact, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation measures incorporated into the project.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: The City published a public Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIR on February 10, 2022 inviting comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. The NOA was filed with the State Clearinghouse (SCH # 2019069117) and the County Clerk, and was published in a local newspaper pursuant to the public noticing requirements of CEQA. The Draft EIR was available for public review and comment from February 10, 2022 through March 28, 2022.

The City received nine written comments on the Draft EIR. Some of the comments included text clarifications and corrections, and requested changes to a mitigation measure proposed to address impacts to Important Farmlands. Additionally, City of Fresno staff initiated several changes to the Project Description and identified clarifications and/or corrections needed to the proposed Land Use Map. The Land Use Map and allowed land use densities were updated to have no net loss of housing capacity compared with the current General Plan housing capacity for the Plan Area. The complete summary of changes to the Project Description is included in Section 1.3 of Chapter 1.0 of the Draft EIR.

In response to the comments, and due to the Project Description changes, City staff determined that the Draft EIR be revised to address the land use modifications and revised environmental analysis associated with the increase in residential development potential.

All sections of the original Draft EIR have been revised and, given the extent of these changes and in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5, the City has elected to recirculate the entire revised Draft EIR, with associated appendices, to provide the public and agencies with ample opportunity to review and comment on the updated analysis and new project information, including additional technical data related to circulation and vehicle miles travelled (VMT), air quality modeling, water demand estimations, and traffic noise modeling. Procedures for commenting on this revised analysis are detailed further below.

City of Fresno staff initiated several changes to the Project Description and identified clarifications and/or corrections needed to the proposed Land Use Map. The Land Use Map and allowed land use densities were updated to have no net loss of housing capacity compared with the current General Plan housing capacity for the Plan Area. The Specific Plan analyzed in the original (2022) Draft EIR allowed for the future development of up to 54,953 dwelling units (DU) (including 67 DU in the commercial category, 47,072 DU in the residential category and 7,814 DU in the mixed use category) and 60,621,006 square feet (SF) of non-residential uses. The Specific Plan analyzed in this (2024) Recirculated Draft EIR allows for the future development of up to 83,129 DU (including 339 DU in the commercial category, 49,355 DU in the residential category and 33,436 DU in the mixed use category) and 59,777,271 SF of non-residential uses. This increase accounts for an increase in allowed densities in the mixed use zones, per Council Ordinance 2022-029.

The original (2022) Land Use Map did not have dual designations assigned erroneously; the dual designations have been assigned under the proposed (2024) Land Use Map. Future development would be allowed under the dual designation, and the dual designation would represent the capacity of the property. For instance, if a property has a dual designation of park-allowing uses, and the City cannot purchase it, the land owner is allowed to build under the dual designation instead (i.e., residential, commercial, etc.). The development projections provided assume the more intensive land use would be developed if a parcel has a dual designation.

Additionally, to increase residential capacity in the city, in Fall 2022, City Council approved Ordinance 2022-029, which removed maximum density limits for Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMX), Corridor/Center Mixed Use (CMX), Regional Mixed Use (RMX), and Commercial Regional (CR) land uses. In order to provide a practical maximum density, the development potential calculations use the following densities:

- NMX: 64 DU/AC;
- CMX: 75 DU/AC;
- RMX: 90 DU/AC; and
- CR: 80 DU/AC.

Further, since the original (2022) Draft EIR was published, Fire Station 18 in the Plan Area has opened on Shaw Avenue and is included in the updated Land Use Map.

A 47-day public review period for the Draft EIR will commence on March 12, 2025 and end on April 28, 2025 for interested individuals and public agencies to submit written comments on the document. Written comments concerning the Recirculated Draft EIR are due by 5:00 p.m. on April 28, 2025 and should be submitted to the attention of Casey Lauderdale, Supervising Planner, at the City of Fresno, 2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065, Fresno, CA 93721; or by e-mail to casey.lauderdale@fresno.gov, 559.621.8515. Copies of the Recirculated Draft EIR can be reviewed at the following locations and online at: <https://www.fresno.gov/westareaplan>.

City of Fresno
Planning & Development
2600 Fresno St., Rm. 3043
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 621-8003

Central Branch Library
2420 Mariposa Street
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 600-READ (7323)

Teague Branch Library
4718 N Polk Avenue
Fresno, CA 93722
(559) 275-3918