



STAFF REPORT: CITY OF FOWLER CITY COUNCIL

To: City Council
From: Sara Allinder, AICP, Project Manager
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Date: November 5, 2019
Subject: General Plan Update City Council Workshop No. 1 – Key Issues and Vision

I. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council receive the report and presentation and provide feedback on the Key Issues Report and draft Community Vision for the General Plan Update, as appropriate.

II. Discussion

The City is embarking on its first comprehensive update to the General Plan since 1976. The update process includes six phases, consisting of the following:

- **Phase 1: Discovering** the existing conditions and community profile for the City of Fowler.
- **Phase 2: Listening** to the feedback received from stakeholders, residents, and other interested groups and identify key issues and a draft vision for the community.
- **Phase 3: Vetting** concepts for addressing key issues and implementing the vision through goals and policies for the community.
- **Phase 4: Documenting** the goals, policies and implementing actions to support the community vision in the draft General Plan and preparing the required Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
- **Phase 5: Presenting** the draft materials for public review.
- **Phase 6: Adopting** the General Plan after certifying the EIR through the public hearing process.

Between the months of April and May of 2019, the consultant team for the City of Fowler's General Plan Update conducted 14 stakeholder interviews. As a supplement to the stakeholder interviews, the consultant team also prepared a Community Report, which summarizes existing conditions within the City of Fowler. Together, the stakeholder responses and the Community Report informed the key issues identified that will be considered in the drafting of the General Plan update. The key issues provided the basis for the draft community vision statement and will inform subsequent, goals, policies, and actions included in the final General Plan document. These documents were presented to the Planning Commission at a public workshop held on October 3, 2019. A summary of these comments will be provided as part of the workshop presentation.

These activities have represented work completed under **Phase 1: Discovering** and **Phase 2: Listening** of the work program.

Stakeholder Interviews

The consultant team interviewed stakeholders individually or, in some cases, in groups of two. While there was a standard list of questions prepared to ensure that interviewers touched on particular topics, the questions were not shared with the interviewees. This allowed the meetings to be conversational and provided an opportunity for individual concerns to be expressed based on the interviewees' relevant experience with City processes and challenges rather than be limited to pre-determined questions. Interviewees were also informed of the intent to keep individual comments confidential to encourage more frank discussions with the consultant team.

Results of the stakeholder interviews are summarized in *Attachment 1: Stakeholder Interview Summary Memo*.

Community Report

The Community Report provides useful background information for future environmental analysis and will inform the General Plan update process. Notably, conditions documented in the Community Report were used to inform the Key Issues Summary, which identifies key issues to be addressed as part of this update. As part of the General Plan process the Community Report may be added to as new information becomes available or is warranted.

The Community Report is included as *Attachment 2: Fowler Community Report*.

Key Issues

Together, the stakeholder responses and the community report inform the selection of key issues that will be considered in the drafting of the General Plan update (see *Attachment 3: Key Issues Report*). Identifying key issues early in the process allows for the consultant team, City staff, decision makers, and the public to identify and understand the issues of importance for Fowler. As noted above, the key issues identified below provided the basis for the draft community vision statement and will inform subsequent, goals, policies, and procedures included in the final General Plan document.

Several primary themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews as well as information from the Community Report and represent high-level issues reflective of the most common input heard during the interview process. Key issues identified are in response to the challenges that exist for expansion of City limits and top challenges to businesses and residents in general. The key issues include:

Economic Development. Increase the amount of business support services offered by the chamber of commerce. Help the chamber become a “one stop shop” for business development for the City and consider pursuing branding efforts to help attract development and increase amenities.

Local Amenities. Increase amenities which help attract and keep residents and businesses in the area.

Growth Coordination. Growth coordination and expansion will be a key focal point of future long-range planning efforts. Concerns include expanding the Sphere of Influence, LAFCO coordination, environmental regulation, and land use planning.

Infrastructure Expansion. Infrastructure and City service expansion were considered both opportunities and constraints to future growth. Road infrastructure as well as police, water, and fire services were all cited as being top concerns in the face of expansion of the planning area.

Circulation. Connection points, road capacity, design principles, pedestrian enhancements and linking the east and west sides of the City are an existing challenge and will be a key issue when considering expansion of the planning area.

Parks and Recreation. Identify opportunities to increase efficiency of current joint use agreements, address maintenance issues, and implement a plan for increased park and recreation facility demands.

Community Character. A small-town character was identified as one of Fowler's top assets. Preservation of that community character should be a top priority in future planning efforts.

Draft Community Vision

The draft community vision for Fowler is expressed through a vision statement and a series of supporting principles and is a declaration of the kind of community that Fowler wants to become in the future. The community vision establishes the basis for General Plan goals and policies. The **vision statement** describes the values and aspirations for Fowler in the future. It identifies key characteristics necessary for sustaining what is important to the community and for Fowler to achieve its potential. The vision statement is supported by five **supporting principles**, statements that together contribute to the larger community vision and provide more specific guidance for general plan goals and policies.

Based on the responses identified in stakeholder summaries and additional inputs from the Community Report, the consultant team and City staff has developed the following vision statement and accompanying supporting principles for each of the key issue areas identified. Staff is seeking feedback on these draft materials.

Vision Statement

The City of Fowler is...

A safe, affordable place to live with a small-town feel. Fowler's community events and thriving schools create a place where you can raise your family and know your neighbors. Fowler fosters a dynamic business-friendly environment, where shared goals and cooperation support local businesses and new economic investment. Thoughtful policies help conserve natural resources and provide well maintained infrastructure to support responsible growth and development while preserving the unique, small town identity that makes Fowler a great place to live, work, and play.

Supporting Principles

The following statements are guiding principles which implement the broader community vision and will inform the goals and policies of the General Plan.

Our Economy Thrives and Businesses Provide Local Amenities. We value and support businesses which bolster the community by providing jobs, services, goods, and recreational opportunities. Economic development focuses on supporting business expansion and diversification. Our small-town character is preserved while also providing jobs and increased local amenities, ensuring residents the opportunity to live, work, and recreate all in one place.

Growth Occurs Thoughtfully and is Shaped by Our Community. A creative growth management strategy allows expansion to occur in a way that aligns economic needs, community vision, and regional goals. There is a strong system in place to guarantee that as the community accommodates new neighbors and new jobs, it continues to maintain and improve upon the lives of City residents, ensuring infrastructure and services successfully reach growth areas while continuing to serve established neighborhoods. New development is executed through land use decisions which involve careful research, coordination and community outreach.

Our Community is Mobile and Connected. Our circulation system is complete, with amenities which make walking, biking, and transit use a safe, comfortable, and viable means of getting from place to place. Roadways are scaled appropriately for the types of land uses that surround them and provide access to jobs, services, goods, and recreational opportunities. The central commercial core is contiguous, with a well-maintained streetscape. Our circulation patterns are shaped by urban design principles which value street design as a method of community connection and placemaking.

Parks and Recreation are a Focal Point of Our Community. Our parks and recreation facilities are safe, accessible, and connected to the community they serve. Passive and active recreation opportunities are abundant and coordinated across local facilities and organizations.

Protecting our Community's Character. We celebrate Fowler's unique small-town character and balance it with the need to foster growth both physically and economically. Our commitment to facilitating growth in a way that complements our character is reflected in core planning documents. Growth policies preserve our central commercial core, residential neighborhoods, and support local businesses that contribute to the fabric of our community.

III. Next Steps

Confirmation of the Community Vision by the City Council will inform next steps in the General Plan update process and initiate the next phase of work, **Phase 3: Vetting.**

Over the next six to eight months, the consultant team will define the scope of changes to existing goals and policies in order to support the updated Community Vision, as confirmed by the City Council. A review of the existing General Plan relative to state requirements for general plans will also inform identified changes necessary to the General Plan. Alternative development scenarios will be developed for review and consideration by City staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, and the public. The conclusion of work under Phase 3: Vetting will result in the selection of a preferred land use scenario for inclusion in the General Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report.

The alternative development scenarios will be presented at a Planning Commission workshop and a preferred land use scenario will be confirmed by City Council at a workshop following consideration of input received on the alternative scenarios.

IV. Attachments

1. Stakeholder Interview Summary Memo
2. Fowler Community Report
3. Key Issues Report