

# **CHAPTER 2.0**

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## **Project Description**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The project analyzed in this EIR is the proposed City of Tulare 2030 General Plan Update project (Proposed Project). This chapter provides background information regarding the regional location of the City; describes what comprises a general plan in California; and identifies the key themes/components of the Proposed Project. Additional details are provided in the Goals and Policies Report of the General Plan (see Appendix C). Alternatives to the Proposed Project are described in Chapter 13.0 of this EIR.

### **2.2 Project Setting**

Located 60 miles north of Bakersfield and 45 miles south of Fresno, the City of Tulare is situated along a stretch of California's Central Valley (see Figure 2-1). The second largest city in Tulare County, Tulare offers a rich combination of relaxed tree lined streets, a downtown business corridor, and the center of a regional agricultural industry. The Mediterranean climate, fertile topsoil, adequate water supply, and long harvest season combine to provide favorable agricultural conditions in the surrounding area.

### **2.3 Project Description**

#### **Purpose of the General Plan Update**

The Proposed Project represents a partial update to the City's 1993 General Plan. The Proposed Project is an update to the City's 1993 General Plan for the Land Use, Transportation & Circulation, and Conservation & Open Space Elements. Other elements will remain as currently adopted. Preparation of the EIR and General Plan will be conducted concurrently in order to develop a self-mitigating General Plan. The Draft EIR will be completed in December 2007 and will provide an assessment of the updated General Plan, an updated citywide traffic model, and potential expansion of the City's existing Sphere of Influence (SOI).



## General Plans in California

Every city and county in California is required by State law (Government Code Section 65300) to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan. A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for community land use and resource conservation decisions. Decision makers in the City will use the City of Tulare General Plan to provide direction when making land use and public service decisions.

Once a general plan is adopted, its goals, policies, implementation measures and diagrams will form the basis for City zoning, subdivision, and infrastructure actions. Under California law, no specific plan, area plan/community plan, zoning map, subdivision map, nor public works project may be approved unless the City finds that it is consistent with the adopted general plan.

## Project Goals

Based on community input received during the public participation process and an analysis of existing conditions in the City, seven themes were identified and used to guide the development of the goals, policies, and implementation measures included in the draft General Plan as well as the draft Land Use Diagram. These themes are summarized in Table 2-1, below.

**TABLE 2-1  
KEY GENERAL PLAN THEMES**

<b>Growth</b>	Growth should be contiguous, taking advantage of infill opportunities, should protect the City's agricultural areas, and should transition smoothly from intense to less intense uses.
<b>Downtown</b>	Future development should create a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented downtown area that encourages full day use and defines key entry points to enhance downtown gateways.
<b>Transportation</b>	The City should provide a variety of transportation choices, expand its current trails system, and focus on higher density housing near transit stops.
<b>Residential</b>	An integrated mixture of housing choices, including "upper end" housing options, is encouraged to support a balanced community; rural residential areas should have visual designation along the City edge to provide a transition; the City center should accommodate a pedestrian-oriented downtown with higher density.
<b>Commercial</b>	Clustered commercial land use should be promoted with a variety of horizontal and vertical mixed-use. "Big box" retail development should occur only in regional commercial centers such as the regional retail along the Highway 99 corridor.
<b>Parks and Open Space</b>	A regional park will be located near the airport, and an open space buffer along Elk Bayou. Village areas will reserve at least 20% of land for open space with parks located within walking distance to neighborhood centers.
<b>Villages</b>	Community "Villages" will support a variety of housing choices and opportunities, create a connected system of neighborhoods designed to avoid land use conflicts, preserve farmland through compact development, and provide residents with centered community facilities including neighborhood parks and various open space areas.

## Planning Boundaries

The 2030 General Plan Planning Area is shown on the Draft Land Use Diagram shown in Figure 2-2. Established by the City of Tulare, the planning area includes unincorporated areas beyond the City’s current sphere of influence. The Planning Area selected includes those areas the City feels will influence the future of the community and have bearing on the City’s future plans.

## Buildout under the Draft General Plan

The Draft Land Use Diagram for the General Plan is shown in Figure 2-2. This diagram is a hybrid of five concept alternatives identified during four community workshops, seven Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) workshops, and four joint City Council and Planning Commission workshops. This diagram represents the Preferred Land Use Alternative and will serve as part of the Proposed Project for the development of the General Plan EIR. The Draft Land Use Diagram is comprised of various land use designations as identified in the Goals and Policies Report. Table 2-2 provides a list of these designated land uses.

The EIR assumes that total buildout of the Proposed Project will not occur by 2030 for all land use types (specifically those lands identified as “Reserve”). Development under the Proposed Project will be incremental and timed in response to market conditions. The proposed General Plan will include policies intended to control the amount and location of new growth.

**TABLE 2-2  
DESIGNATED LAND USES PROPOSED UNDER THE GENERAL PLAN**

Land Use Designations	Vacant Acres	Percent Vacant	Ag Acres	Percent Ag	TOTAL Available Acres	TOTAL Designated Acres	% of TOTAL	% Available
<b>Residential Designations</b>								
Rural Residential	63	5.4%	328	1.3%	391	817	2.1%	47.8%
Rural Estate	21	1.8%	343	1.4%	364	627	1.6%	
Low Density Residential	117	10.1%	1,324	5.3%	1,441	5,625	14.5%	25.6%
Medium Density Residential	75	6.5%	86	0.3%	161	747	1.9%	21.6%
High Density Residential	14	1.2%	0	0.0%	14	66	0.2%	21.5%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>24.9%</i>	<i>2,081</i>	<i>8.3%</i>	<i>2,371</i>	<i>7,883</i>	<i>20.3%</i>	<i>30.1%</i>
<b>Commercial Designations</b>								
Neighborhood Commercial	4	0.4%	5	0.0%	9	18	0.0%	51.7%
Community Commercial	251	21.5%	268	1.1%	519	894	2.3%	58.1%
Regional Commercial	76	6.5%	204	0.8%	280	280	0.7%	100.0%
Service Commercial	60	5.1%	41	0.2%	101	577	1.5%	17.5%
Central Business District	6	0.5%	0	0.0%	6	130	0.3%	4.3%
Entertainment Commercial	0	0.0%	928	3.7%	928	937	2.4%	99.1%
Office Commercial	13	1.1%	16	0.1%	29	35	0.1%	81.9%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>396</i>	<i>34.0%</i>	<i>1,446</i>	<i>5.8%</i>	<i>1,843</i>	<i>2,871</i>	<i>7.4%</i>	<i>64.2%</i>
<b>Industrial Designations</b>								
Light Industrial	92	7.9%	1,250	5.0%	1,343	1,876	4.8%	71.6%
Heavy Industrial	329	28.2%	1,854	7.4%	2,183	3,106	8.0%	70.3%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>422</i>	<i>36.2%</i>	<i>3,104</i>	<i>12.5%</i>	<i>3,526</i>	<i>4,983</i>	<i>12.8%</i>	<i>70.8%</i>

**TABLE 2-2  
DESIGNATED LAND USES PROPOSED UNDER THE GENERAL PLAN**

<b>Land Use Designations</b>	<b>Vacant Acres</b>	<b>Percent Vacant</b>	<b>Ag Acres</b>	<b>Percent Ag</b>	<b>TOTAL Available Acres</b>	<b>TOTAL Designated Acres</b>	<b>% of TOTAL</b>	<b>% Available</b>
<b>Other Designations</b>								
Public/Quasi-Public	5	0.4%	458	1.8%	463	2,315	6.0%	20.0%
Parks & Recreation	2	0.2%	146	0.6%	148	495	1.3%	29.9%
Open Space	21	1.8%	9,792	39.3%	9,813	11,962	30.8%	82.0%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>2.4%</i>	<i>10,395</i>	<i>41.7%</i>	<i>10,423</i>	<i>14,773</i>	<i>38.1%</i>	<i>70.6%</i>
<b>Reserve Designations</b>								
Village*	23	2.0%	2,346	9.4%	2,369	2,544	6.6%	93.1%
Residential Reserve**	0	0.0%	3,569	14.3%	3,569	3,673	9.5%	97.2%
Commercial Reserve**	6	0.5%	474	1.9%	479	513	1.3%	93.3%
Industrial Reserve**	1	0.0%	1,519	6.1%	1,519	1,551	4.0%	97.9%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>2.5%</i>	<i>7,907</i>	<i>31.7%</i>	<i>7,937</i>	<i>8,282</i>	<i>21.4%</i>	<i>95.8%</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,166</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>24,934</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>26,099</b>	<b>38,791</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>67.3%</b>

\*Lands designated Village are assumed to completely develop, regardless of current use.

\*\* Reserve areas indicate the City's planned growth beyond the planning horizon (2030). Proposed uses in these areas are restricted to those indicated in the Agricultural/Open Space Designation.

## General Plan Organization

The Goals and Policies Report sets out a hierarchy of goals, policies, and implementation measures designed to guide future development in the City. The Goals and Policies Report is divided into three elements in addition to the Introduction.

Each element contains a set of closely related topics, as outlined on Table 2-3. The three updated elements cover four of the State mandated elements: Land Use, Transportation & Circulation Element, and a consolidated Conservation & Open Space Element.

Each element will contain the following:

- The guiding principles used to develop the element;
- An overview of the topics covered;
- Key terms used in the element; and
- The goals, policies, and implementation measures that will be used to guide the future of the City.

The three updated elements and the topics that comprise each are summarized in Table 2-3. The other elements that make up the current General Plan (and are required by State law) are not proposed for update at this time, and thereby, will not be analyzed as a proposed change as part of this EIR.



**TABLE 2-3  
SECTIONS OF THE GOALS AND POLICIES REPORT**

<b>Land Use Element</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Use Diagram and Standards</li> <li>• Growth Pattern</li> <li>• Residential Development</li> <li>• Commercial Development</li> <li>• Downtown Development</li> <li>• Industrial Development</li> <li>• Mixed Use Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Villages</li> <li>• Reserve Lands</li> <li>• Airport</li> <li>• Municipal Services</li> <li>• Higher Education</li> <li>• Community Character/Design</li> <li>• Administration/Implementation</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation &amp; Circulation Element</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadway System</li> <li>• Road Improvement Funding</li> <li>• Transit</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Non-vehicular Circulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation System Management / Transportation Demand Management</li> <li>• Goods Movement</li> <li>• Aviation</li> <li>• Rail</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation &amp; Open Space Element</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Resources</li> <li>• Biological Resources</li> <li>• Agricultural Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Recreation</li> <li>• Cultural and Archeological Resources</li> <li>• Energy Conservation</li> </ul>

## Alternatives to the Proposed Project

CEQA requires that an EIR consider alternatives to a project (Section 15126 [a]). According to CEQA Guidelines, the range of alternatives “shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic purposes of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant impacts” (Section 15126 [d] [2]).

The following alternatives are currently being proposed for evaluation in the EIR for the proposed project (Preferred Land Use Alternative):

- Alternative 1— Concentric/Infill Growth Pattern
- Alternative 2— Northeast Expansion Growth Pattern
- Alternative 3— Northwest Expansion Growth Pattern
- Alternative 4— Southeastern Expansion Pattern
- Alternative 5— No Project Alternative (Build-out of existing 1993 General Plan)

### Alternative 1— Concentric/Infill Growth Pattern

This alternative focuses on the revitalization of the existing City with commercial, employment, and multifamily growth directed in the downtown. Additional commercial development is positioned to the north at Oakdale and Highway 99, and along Foster to the south. New

employment centers would be focused northwest of the airport. New residential growth would include higher densities, located around the existing urbanized City. A band of “urban reserve” land is included around the new growth area that could be developed in the event that new growth exceeds the projected population through 2030. This alternative would establish a permanent open space greenbelt along Mooney Boulevard between the Cities of Tulare and Visalia.

### **Alternative 2— Northeast Expansion Growth Pattern**

This alternative directs most new commercial growth to the north, along State Route 99, and in the south along Foster. New employment growth would be concentrated around the airport, where residential uses are not allowed. Most new residential growth would incorporate low density uses and “neighborhood centers” of higher residential densities, focused northeast of the existing urbanized area along the Mooney Boulevard corridor. Rural residential uses would be included to buffer urban and agricultural uses. “Urban reserve” lands are included to the north and east of the new growth area that could be developed in the event that growth exceeds projections through 2030. This alternative would encourage development that would eventually abut the City of Visalia.

### **Alternative 3— Northwest Expansion Growth Pattern**

This alternative directs most new commercial growth to the north, along State Route 99 and Oakdale, and in the south along Foster. New employment growth would be concentrated around Mefford Airport. Most new residential growth would be at moderate densities, focused northwest of the existing urbanized City, and would incorporate higher density “neighborhood centers.” Rural residential uses would be included to buffer urban and agricultural uses. “Urban reserve” land is included to the north and west that could be developed in the event that growth exceeds the projected growth through 2030. Finally, this alternative would establish a permanent open space greenbelt along Mooney Boulevard between Tulare and the City of Visalia.

### **Alternative 4— Southeastern Expansion Pattern**

This alternative directs most new commercial growth to the southeast and east of the existing City Limits. New employment growth would be concentrated around Mefford Airport. A majority of new residential growth would be accommodated by low density uses that are focused southeast of the existing urbanized area around the proposed COS extension site, and would include higher density “neighborhood centers.” Rural residential uses would be included to buffer urban and agricultural uses. “Urban reserve” lands are included to the north and west of the new growth area that could be developed in the event that growth exceeds projections through 2030. This concept also preserves the agricultural and open space lands along Mooney Blvd in the north. This alternative would encourage development that would eventually separate Tulare from the City of Visalia.

### **Alternative 5— No Project Alternative (Build-out of existing 1993 General Plan)**

This alternative would continue, for the most part, the existing pattern of land use. This will serve as the “No Project” alternative required for inclusion in the environmental impact report (EIR) that will be prepared for the General Plan.

### **Public Input into the Development of the General Plan**

Throughout the General Plan process, the City solicited public input to identify issues, opportunities, and responses for the development of the General Plan. During the process, several hundred people participated in four community workshops, six CAC workshops and four joint City Council and Planning Commission workshops. The workshops allowed the public to voice their concerns and provide suggestions for improving and enhancing the community.

The City’s General Plan Update website ([www.westplanning.com](http://www.westplanning.com)) contains information regarding available documents, a schedule of events with upcoming hearings, and a place to submit comments.