

**AGENDA SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Joint Work Session Visalia City Council & Planning Commission**  
**Saturday, February 24, 2007**  
**Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia, Visalia, CA**  
**8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

City Council

Mayor: Jesus J. Gamboa  
Vice Mayor: Greg Kirkpatrick  
Council Member: Greg Collins  
Council Member: Donald K. Landers  
Council Member: Bob Link

Planning Commission

Chairperson: Vincent Salinas  
Vice-Chair: Lawrence Segreue  
Commissioner: Victor M. Perez  
Commissioner: Sam Logan  
Commissioner: Adam Peck

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**CITIZENS REQUESTS** – This is the time for members of the public to comment on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Visalia City Council/Planning Commission. The Council and Commissioners ask that you keep your comments brief and positive. Creative criticism, presented with appropriate courtesy, is welcome. The Council/Commissioners cannot legally discuss or take official action on citizen request items that are introduced today. In fairness to all who wish to speak, each speaker from the public will be allowed three minutes. Please begin your comments by stating and spelling your name and providing your address.

1. Introduction
2. Work Session Items (*Council may take action or provide direction on these items*)
  - A. Downtown Development – Form Based Zoning, Parking & Other Dynamics
  - B. Discussion of process to incorporate Smart Growth and Neighborhood Sustainability Strategies into City Development Standards
  - C. Update on Undeveloped Residential Land Report from Joint City Council-Planning Commission Workshop of June 12, 2006 and discussion and direction on development within the 129,000 and 165,000 population boundaries currently designated in the General Plan.
  - D. Overview of 2006 Annexation Activity and Policy Considerations for Future Annexations
3. Topics for Next Meeting
4. Adjourn

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**Upcoming Council Meetings**

Monday, March 5, 2007 - City Hall Council Chambers

Monday March, 19, 2007 - City Hall Council Chambers

Monday, March 26, 2007 - Joint City Council/Planning Commission (4:00 p.m. Convention Center)

Work Session 4:00 p.m.

Regular Session 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers

707 West Acequia Avenue

**City of Visalia**  
**Joint Work Session Agenda Item Transmittal**

**Meeting Date:** February 24, 2007 – Joint City Council/Planning Commission Meeting

**Agenda Item Number (Assigned by City Clerk):** A

**Agenda Item Wording:** Downtown Development – Parking, Form Based Zoning and Other Dynamics

**Deadline for Action:** NA

**Submitting Department:** Community Development

**Contact Name and Phone Number:** Mike Olmos 713-4332

**Department Recommendation:**

Information and discussion item – provide comments and direction as appropriate on the following discussion topics identified in this report:

1. The City will soon be transitioning two key areas of the community (East Downtown and Southeast Area Specific Plan) from traditional zoning to form based codes. What additional outreach strategies should be implemented to educate decision makers, development community, and general public about form based codes and how they will be applied in the City?
2. Current East Downtown Interim Zoning utilizes reduced parking standards and a 50% mandatory parking in lieu fee for non-residential uses. Should the City consult with Downtown Alliance and other stakeholders regarding the potential for applying reduced parking standards in the core Downtown and converting a portion of parking requirements from a voluntary to mandatory parking in lieu fee obligation?
3. Current City standards allow private parking to be provided off-site. To exchange pedestrian corridors, encourage greater development densities, and improve the retail/ dining/ entertainment environment in the downtown, should off-site parking be prohibited in favor of strategically located public parking facilities utilizing the parking in lieu fee program?

**Summary/background:**

Downtown Visalia continues to experience strong economic activity and steady development of complementary uses around its fringe, particularly

**For action by:**

- City Council
- Redev. Agency Bd.
- Cap. Impr. Corp.
- VPFA

**For placement on which agenda:**

- Work Session
- Closed Session

**Regular Session:**

- Consent Calendar
- Regular Item
- Public Hearing

Est. Time (Min.): \_\_\_\_\_

**Review:**

**Dept. Head** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Initials & date required)**

**Finance** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City Atty** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Initials & date required or N/A)**

**City Mgr** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Initials Required)**

If report is being re-routed after revisions leave date of initials if no significant change has affected Finance or City Attorney Review.

the east and northeast. Recent development activity indicates that the City's current efforts on eastward revitalization and downtown enhancement are being successful.

Projects recently completed or now underway in the downtown include the following:

Public Projects:

- Work is continuing on the 6-story Kaweah Delta Hospital expansion project. This facility is scheduled for completion in Spring, 2008.
- The new 700-space downtown parking structure located across Acequia Avenue from the new hospital expansion project is nearing completion and will be operational in Spring, 2007.
- Design firm EDAW and its subconsultants are now working on an infrastructure master plan for the East Downtown area and a design plan for the future linear park along Mill Creek at the future Civic Center. Engineering work continues on development of a water source to provide year round flows in Mill Creek to create an aesthetic enhancement and groundwater recharge facility.
- The City completed the purchase of the Gas Company site located at the northeast corner of Tipton and Oak Avenue. This site is being renovated to a public parking lot.
- The City will soon begin soliciting proposals from interested development teams for a new mixed use "liner building" (retail and offices) located along Oak Avenue, east of Tipton Street. This will be the first structure to occupy the future Civic Center complex to be located on Oak Avenue between Tipton Street and Burke Street.
- A competitive process is underway to select a development team to purchase an 11,600 sq. ft. site located at the southeast corner of Acequia and Santa Fe Street for development of a multi-story mixed use complex. Three development teams are under consideration for this project and will be interviewed in late February.
- Negotiations are currently underway with RRM urban design group of San Luis Obispo for preparation of a master plan for future development of the two block area bounded by Mineral King Avenue, Johnson Street, Conyer Street and Acequia Avenue.
- Tulare County is currently out to bid on a project to convert the 1936 library located at Court and Oak Street into a wing devoted to children's resources and connect the building to the 1976 main library building with a new lobby. Tulare County received a \$3.4 million dollar State grant for the project and the remaining funding is being provided through contributions from numerous sources including, Tulare County, Visalia Heritage, the Friends of the Library, Visalia/Tulare County Library Foundation and countless individuals and businesses. The City of Visalia is contributing \$500,000 toward the project.

Private Projects:

- Crowdaddy's Restaurant was completed in late Fall, 2006, and the restaurant has first and second floor facilities operational and the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor residence is

occupied.

- Paloma Development received approval of a conditional use permit for 90,000 sq. ft. of professional offices (three phase development) at the northeast corner of Murray Avenue and Santa Fe Street. The first phase (approximately 30,000 sq. ft.) will house the professional offices for Buckman Mitchell Insurance.
- Attorneys Michael Lampe and Michael Farley are refurbishing a 2 story brick building at Court Street and Center Avenue for professional offices (law offices).
- Paloma Development is purchasing a site located the southwest corner of Bridge Street and Oak Avenue for expansion of its existing professional office complex located on the other half of the block.
- The former Radisson Hotel was sold and recently converted to a Marriott, including an \$8.5 million upgrade.
- The former Razarri Ford building located on Center Street between Garden and Church Streets is being refurbished to accommodate professional office and restaurant uses.

While these projects reflect the ongoing strength and vibrancy of downtown, strategies are needed to facilitate further enhancement and maintain downtown's strong position in the region. Parking must be expanded to serve growing customer and employment demands. Downtown zoning and development standards must be evaluated and re-structured as needed to meet contemporary development trends. These and other items will be discussed in this report.

### **Form Based Zoning for Downtown**

Land uses, site design criteria, and parking requirements are primarily regulated through the City's zoning standards. As most other Valley cities, Visalia has historically used conventional zoning techniques that establish zoning districts with lists of specific permitted and conditional uses. Conventional zoning (Euclidean zoning) separates land uses into zone districts with specific categories (such as residential, commercial, offices). This zoning approach does not promote the mix of uses, and actually discourages mixed uses by requiring discretionary land use entitlements (planned unit development permit) for this type of development.

In other areas of California, many built projects now exist that show how residential, retail, and professional office uses can be combined into successful mixed use neighborhood, particularly in the downtown. Many of these projects have been facilitated by recently adopted "form based" zoning codes. Form based codes do not promote separation of uses, but instead view the mixing of dependent land uses (residential, commercial, offices, institutional) in neighborhoods as a means of creating efficient, sustainable and desirable communities. In addition, form based codes take a different approach in regulating the form of development than conventional zoning. Rather than prescribing a development form that establishes building envelopes on lots based on anticipated uses, form based codes establish more uniform envelopes designed to accommodate all types of urban densities, street relationships, and building

heights.

As defined by the Form Based Codes Institute, a form based code is a method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. Form-based codes create a predictable public realm by controlling physical form primarily, with a lesser focus on land use, through city regulations.

Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a *regulating plan* that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land-use types, permissible property uses, and the control of development intensity through simple numerical parameters (e.g., FAR, dwellings per acre, height limits, setbacks, parking ratios). Not to be confused with design guidelines or general statements of policy, form-based codes are regulatory, not advisory.

Form-based codes commonly include the following elements:

- *Regulating Plan.* A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply, based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area being coded.
- *Building Form Standards.* Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.
- *Public Space/Street Standards.* Specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, street trees, street furniture, etc.).
- *Administration.* A clearly defined application and project review process.
- *Definitions.* A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

To achieve an optimum land use and building form regulation system, Council has authorized preparation of a form based code for the East Downtown area. This work is underway and should be completed around the end of 2007. The City is also working to establish a new form based code for the 850 acre Southeast Specific Plan Area.

The City's progression from traditional zoning to form based codes in certain areas of the Community creates a need to educate the general community and development industry about the details of the new codes and how they will work. Work sessions will be scheduled with the Planning Commission and City Council on the draft East Downtown form based code this spring. Community outreach efforts will also be undertaken in the form of public workshops, presentations to interested groups, and dissemination of information packets. Council and Commission may have other suggestions for public outreach to assist in the transition to form based codes.

### **Downtown Parking Standards**

The success of downtown has created several challenges, one of most important being

the provision of parking for patrons, employees and professional office workers. As the downtown has grown as a shopping/dining/entertainment venue, service sector, and employment hub, the City has continued to expand public parking facilities to meet ongoing demands. Several completed and ongoing projects described above are directed at the provision of additional public parking. For the downtown to continue to be successful, the City must implement an effective strategy to meeting increasing parking needs.

Recent parking projects implemented by the City include:

- Completion of a public parking lot at northeast corner of Santa Fe and Oak Avenue (55 spaces)
- Completion of a public parking lot at the southwest corner of Oak Avenue and Tipton Street (23 spaces)
- Construction of a new 700 space downtown parking structure located on Acequia Avenue from the Kaweah Delta Hospital expansion (scheduled for completion in Spring 2007).
- Completion of public parking facilities (expansion and upgrade) providing 108 permanent spaces and 20 temporary spaces at the southeast corner of Acequia Avenue and Conyer Street.
- Renovation and upgrade of a public of a public parking lot at the northeast corner of Court Street and Center.
- Acquisition of Gas Company property located at northeast corner of Tipton Street and Oak Avenue. A portion of this site will be refurbished for public parking.
- Restriping, reduction in speed limit, and safety improvements to convert the south side of Center Street, between Bridge Street and Conyer Street, to diagonal parking, resulting in a net gain of 47 parking spaces.

Rising land demand and increasing land cost in downtown create incentives for higher densities, multi-story construction, and greater land efficiencies. In general, private surface parking in the downtown is not cost efficient, nor is it an effective means to satisfy downtown parking demands. Recognizing this, the City favors a strategy that minimizes private surface parking in the downtown and maximizes public parking facilities, most effectively in structural parking.

In the East Downtown area (see attached map), the City has developed a strategy for reducing parking standards in three key areas, as follows:

### East Downtown Interim Zone Parking Space Requirements

| Type of Use            | Total Required Spaces                    | On-site Allowed | Off-site/In-lieu Fees           | Core Downtown Parking Standards          |
|------------------------|--|-----------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Commercial Retail      | 3/1000 SF                                | Up to 50% max   | Up to 3/1,000 SF                | <b>3.33/1000</b>                         |
| Office                 | 3/1,000 SF                               | Up to 50% max   | Up to 3/1,000 SF                | <b>4/1000 General<br/>5/1000 Medical</b> |
| Commercial Mixed-use   | Blended requirement                      | Up to 50% max   | Up to 21,000 SF                 |  |
| Residential Mixed-use  | Blended requirement                      | Up to 100%      | Up to 3/1,000 SF for Commercial |  |
| Residential Apartments | 1DU and .25 Visitor Parking              | 100%            | NA- All required to be on-site  | <b>1.5 Per Unit</b>                      |
| Residential Townhouses | 2/DU for 2+BR<br>1/DU for 1BR and Studio | 100%            | NA- All required to be on site  | <b>2 Per Unit</b>                        |
| Live-Work              | 2/DU                                     | 1/DU            | 1/DU                            |  |

In addition, current development standards for the East Downtown allow only 50% of required parking for new development to be provided on site. In the East Downtown, at least 50% of required parking must be satisfied through the City's parking in lieu fee program. The current parking fee is currently \$3426 per space. While the current East Downtown parking standards requires 50% of required parking to be purchased through the parking in lieu fee program, up to 100% of required parking may be purchased through the program.

Parking in lieu fees paid to the City are used exclusively for the provision or improvement of downtown public parking facilities.

The City also implements the parking in lieu fee program in two other districts in the downtown, as shown in the attached parking districts map. Zone A voluntarily allows parking in lieu fees to be paid for up to 100% of a project's parking obligation. Zone B voluntarily allows up to 50% of a projects parking obligation to be paid as in lieu fees. (Areas of East Downtown lying within Zones A and B are not subject to these requirements but must comply with interim zoning standards for parking).

The parking in lieu fee program can facilitate more effective land utilization and foster higher density development in the downtown. It also is a less costly alternative to providing surface parking on private sites when the cost of land and improvements are considered. The program now being implemented in the East Downtown (reduced parking standards combined with an in lieu fee requirement) could be implemented in



the core downtown to reduce the overall cost of development and encourage further business expansion.

The parking in lieu fee program puts a significant responsibility on the City to expand public parking facilities to meet demands as the downtown grows. This is a significant challenge, in that the cost of building parking facilities was estimated in October 2006 at \$6800 per space for surface parking and \$23,880 per space for structured parking (both estimates include land costs). Historically, the parking in lieu fee revenue alone is not sufficient to cover the cost of building new parking facilities in the downtown. Other sources of revenue must be combined the parking in lieu fees to create sufficient funding for new downtown parking facilities.

Structured parking, while costly, is the most effective and efficient method in providing public parking for the downtown. Because of its land efficiency, structured parking minimizes site area requirements and reduces land costs and complexities in assembling parking sites. A map of possible future parking structure sites in the downtown is enclosed.

The City and downtown stakeholders may want to consider extending East Downtown parking standards reductions and establishing a mandatory parking in lieu component to the core downtown area. This would allow reduced parking requirements for the core downtown, thereby lowering costs for new and expanding businesses. By establishing a mandatory parking in lieu requirement, this change would also help implement the City's strategy of prioritizing public parking in the downtown and enhance funding for this effort. Finally, reduction of parking standards combined with a mandatory parking in lieu fee component will facilitate greater development densities in the downtown with increased opportunities and returns to property owners/ investors.

#### **Off- Site Parking In Downtown**

Recently, the Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit to establish a private parking lot for Crowdaddy's Restaurant, a site located on Main Street and Garden Street. The issuance of a CUP was consistent with current City zoning standards and therefore justified approval. However, from a policy perspective, the location of private parking in the downtown should be evaluated. In particular, the continued success of Main Street, Center, Acequia, Santa Fe and other key pedestrian and vehicle routes will depend significantly on pedestrian oriented, linear storefront corridors and tenant mix. Parking areas located on a busy retail street can disrupt the linear storefront and office experience and affect the quality of the downtown environment.

The Council and Commission are requested to discuss the implications of current City code standards that allow off-site parking to be utilized. Consideration should be given to prohibiting off-site parking, and allowing projects to satisfy parking obligations through the in lieu fee program. The City would then take responsibility for providing parking in strategic locations around the downtown.

**Prior Council/Board Actions:** N/A

**Committee/Commission Review and Actions:** N/A

**Alternatives:** N/A

**Attachments:**

1. Downtown Aerial Photos
2. East Downtown Area Map
3. Parking Districts Map
4. Possible Parking Structure Sites Map

**Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):**

Discussion and comments as appropriate.

***Environmental Assessment Status***

**CEQA Review:**

**NEPA Review:**

Copies of this report have been provided to:

# City of Visalia Agenda Item Transmittal

**Meeting Date:** February 24, 2007

**Agenda Item Number (Assigned by City Clerk):** B

**Agenda Item Wording:** Incorporation of Smart Growth and Neighborhood Sustainability Strategies into City Development Standards

**Deadline for Action:** None

**Submitting Department:** Community Development

**Contact Name and Phone Number:** Fred Brusuelas 713-4364

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that consideration be given to adopt a Smart Growth Policy and incorporate Smart Growth Initiatives into the General Plan Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Engineering Improvement Standards. It is recommended that the following process be used:

1. Consider adoption of the Ahwahnee principles as the foundation for Smart Growth planning in Visalia.
2. Establish a Smart Growth Task Force comprised of two Council Members and two Planning Commissioners to work with City staff, Home Builders Association, and Development Standards Task Force to draft Smart Growth Policies for incorporation into the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and Engineering improvements Standards.

As part of this effort, the Task Force and City staff will conduct community outreach efforts to receive public input on the draft Smart Growth initiatives. Draft standards will be reviewed with the Planning Commission and City Council in future work sessions prior to scheduling public hearings for Commission and Council review of General Plan and Code amendments.

**For action by:**

City Council  
 Redev. Agency Bd.  
 Cap. Impr. Corp.  
 VPFA

**For placement on which agenda:**

Work Session  
 Closed Session

**Regular Session:**

Consent Calendar  
 Regular Item  
 Public Hearing

Est. Time (Min.) 30 min.

**Review:**

**Dept. Head** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initials & date required)

**Finance** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City Atty** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initials & date required or N/A)

**City Mgr** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initials Required)

If report is being re-routed after revisions leave date of initials if no significant change has affected Finance or City Attorney Review.

### **Background:**

Smart Growth and Neighborhood Sustainability Strategies have been topics of discussion among the City Council and Planning Commission. These topics have been discussed during review of numerous Planned Residential Developments and Subdivision projects. Design elements such as neighborhood context, street connectivity, pedestrian access, gated residential projects, public open space, cul-de-sac streets, park/ponding basins and architectural design have been discussed as it relates to implementing current city standards and establishing additional standards that reflect Smart Growth Principles.

The currently adopted development standards contained in the Subdivision Ordinance, Engineering Improvement Standards, and Zoning Ordinance are the documents used to review and approve development projects. These existing standards are based on conventional design criteria which do not reflect contemporary Smart Growth Principles.

Many projects are reviewed and approved on the basic standards contained in those documents. There are, however, other development projects required to have a Specific Plan, Master Plan or Conditional Use Permit. These discretionary projects will often deviate from the basic adopted standards. This typically occurs when a desired project outcome by the city or developer can not be achieved with the basic standards.

Incorporating discretionary standards during the review process will often lead to debate because the standards have not been officially adopted. This can be avoided by the City Council and Planning Commission by incorporating new standards that achieve desired outcomes. This would also streamline the process for the developers, create greater certainty in the process (less risk) and help the city achieve desired design outcomes.

Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and Sustainable Communities are contemporary initiatives aimed at improving the quality of physical development in the city. These initiatives are comprised of numerous Principles and Standards and offer a different way of doing things. Many of these principles and standards are not new. They are, however, crafted in such a way as to give thought in reviewing and approving projects in a different way. The intent is that a different way will result in a better way. Determining a necessary change to the standards will be a matter of new policy adoption. New policy adoption is based upon desired goals of the City Council with input from the Planning Commission.

### **Consideration to adopt Smart Growth Initiatives**

Consideration to adopt Smart Growth Initiatives begins with understanding what they are and determining if they are necessary to produce the city's desired results for physical development. There is no one size fits all approach to implementing Smart Growth Initiatives. Each community must develop their own sensible approach and craft policies based upon local values, vision and goals.

*Smart Growth is a concept and term used to set policies that will govern land use planning in a manner that will create sustainability, preserve the natural environment and optimize the physical built environment.* The Smart Growth concept advocates land use patterns that are compact, transit-oriented, walkable, bicycle friendly, and that includes mixed-use development with a range of housing choices.

This philosophy keeps density concentrated in the center of the city, combating urban sprawl and encouraging sustainability. In addition, Smart Growth advocates comprehensive planning to

guide and design the creation of neighborhoods and communities. The Smart Growth Principles used to prepare land use policy are as follows:

1. Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
2. Create Walkable Neighborhoods
3. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
4. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
5. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
6. Mix Land use
7. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas
8. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
9. Strengthen and Direct Development Toward Existing Areas
10. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

There are, in addition to the Smart Growth concept, other land use policy initiatives such as "Ahwahnee Principles" (*changing inefficient patterns of development through better community planning*), "Community Sustainability" (*providing the best outcomes for humans and the natural environment now and into the future*) and "New Urbanism" (*also called Neotraditional Design, Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit Oriented Development and Location Efficient Development*). The New Urbanism and Ahwahnee Principles share a similar philosophy with Smart Growth in its approach toward land use efficiency, preventing urban sprawl and creating quality of life physical environments.

New Urbanism has its own set of guiding Principles that are highly focused on physical development criteria and neighborhood design. New Urbanism is more specific in its approach to creating neighborhoods and communities. Those principles comprise design elements of walkability, interconnected streets, civic sites, traditional neighborhood design, transit connections, mixed uses and no gated projects or walls constructed along the street frontage.

The City Council and Planning Commission have incorporated numerous Smart Growth, Ahwahnee Principles and New Urbanism principles into recent Master Plans, Specific Plans and development projects. The South East Area Specific Plan is a true New Urbanism planning document incorporating the full range of New Urbanism principles. The Lowery Ranch project initiated by the City Council has numerous Smart Growth principles and some New Urbanism principles. The East Downtown Strategic Plan also has a mix of Smart Growth and New Urbanism Principles.

Numerous Goals and Objectives of the 2020 General Plan have aspects of Smart Growth principles contained in the Land Use Element. These General Plan Goals and Objective are helpful in giving generalized guidance for decision makers.

However, current City of Visalia Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Standards do not have codified or adopted polices that specifically establish Smart Growth, Ahwahnee Principles, or New Urbanism Principles suitable for project level review and approval. Absent adopted principles and details, the implementation of Smart Growth Initiatives will remain open to discussion and debate on a project by project basis.

The policy question regarding Smart Growth and like kind Initiatives is whether or not there is an interest in considering the formal adoption of new Land Use Planning and Development Policies based upon those principles. Based upon past actions of the City Council and Planning Commission, there is an interest in pursuing Principles of Smart Growth as an overall approach to physical development of the city. Consideration as to how these growth principles can be incorporated in the decision making process have yet to be determined. At the direction of the City Council, staff can be directed to begin work on preparing a Smart Growth Initiatives report for consideration.

### **Smart Growth Items for Consideration**

Past review of development projects by the City Council and Planning Commission have created discussion, raised questions and generated opinions regarding currently adopted design criteria and overall development standards.

Items of discussion have included whether or not the current design criteria or city policy should be changed as it affects: gated residential projects, cul-de-sac- streets, walls along street frontages, pedestrian access, transit access, mixed use development and other design elements.

Smart Growth Initiatives comprise many Principles and Design Elements. An understanding of the broad context of Smart Growth Initiatives is necessary prior to accepting them as apart of the city's development standards. This may be accomplished through a Smart Growth presentation. It is therefore recommended that a joint City Council/Planning Commission Work Session be convened for the purpose of having a comprehensive Smart Growth Presentation prior to adoption of any new standards.

### **Smart Growth Implementation**

Smart Growth Initiatives may be implemented in two fundamental steps. The first step is through adoption of the various Smart Growth Principles as city policy including consideration of adoption of the Ahwahnee principles. The second step is by amending the General Plan Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Engineering Improvement Standards to reflect the adopted Smart Growth Principles.

**Alternatives:** Do not adopt new Smart Growth Policies Standards or Principles. Continue to use current Polices and Development Standards.

**Attachments:** Ahwahnee Principles

**Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):**

1. Direct staff to schedule Ahwahnee Principles for consideration of adoption by Planning Commission and City Council.
2. Initiate process to prepare Smart Growth standards, community outreach, and draft amendments to plans and codes.
3. Request Commission and Council volunteers to sit on Smart Growth Task Force.

***Environmental Assessment Status***

**CEQA Review: None**

**NEPA Review: None**

**Tracking Information:** *(Staff must list/include appropriate review, assessment, appointment and contract dates and other information that needs to be followed up on at a future date)*

Copies of this report have been provided to:

**City of Visalia**  
**Joint Worksession Agenda Item Transmittal**

**Meeting Date:** February 24, 2007

**Agenda Item Number (Assigned by City Clerk):**

**Agenda Item Wording:** Update on Undeveloped Residential Land Report from Joint City Council-Planning Commission Workshop of June 12, 2006 and Discussion of UDB Expansion.

**Deadline for Action:** None

**Submitting Department:** Community Devt. - Planning Division

**Contact Name and Phone Number:**

Michael Olmos, AICP, Assistant City Manager, 713-4332  
Brandon Smith, Associate Planner, 713-4636

**Department Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the City Council and Planning Commission review the materials contained in the staff report, including the recommended policy initiatives, and direct staff to prepare corresponding policy actions for future consideration. Specifically, staff recommends that the following actions be considered pertaining to the Urban Growth Boundaries:

1. Continue to use the accepted methodology for differentiating developed parcels from undeveloped parcels.
2. Continue to use the accepted methodology of including a vacancy factor to the number of designated residential acres when evaluating buildout in a boundary.
3. Consider reducing the vacancy factor for residential development in the current Growth Area from 30% to 25% or less.
4. Consider increasing the minimum residential densities for new residential annexations to at least midrange or higher for that density range.
5. Consider increasing the population benchmarks of the current 129,000 and 165,000 UDBs by 10% to 142,000 and 181,500 respectively.

**Update of Undeveloped Residential Land Acreages**

In June 2006, staff prepared a report to the City Council that estimated the amount of undeveloped residential land in the 129,000 population Urban Development Boundary and gave some scenarios of population capacity on this undeveloped land. The undeveloped land was assessed using a methodology that has routinely been used since the City has measured residential development when considering growth boundary expansions. This definition of undeveloped land generally includes vacant land, large agricultural parcels with rural home

**For action by:**

City Council  
 Redev. Agency Bd.  
 Cap. Impr. Corp.  
 VPFA

**For placement on which agenda:**

Work Session  
 Closed Session

**Regular Session:**

Consent Calendar  
 Regular Item  
 Public Hearing

Est. Time  
(Min.): 40

**Review:**

**Dept. Head** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Initials & date required)**

**Finance** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City Atty** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Initials & date required or N/A)**

**City Mgr** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Initials Required)**

If report is being re-routed after revisions leave date of initials if no significant change has affected Finance or City Attorney Review.



sites, vacant land with approved tentative subdivision maps, and vacant land with approved conditional use permits for development. The definition does not include underdeveloped land that has been developed at less than the minimum allowable density established by the General Plan. (The complete definitions of developed and undeveloped land are included as Exhibit "A" at the end of this report.)

To bring the Council up to date on the City's inventory of undeveloped land, staff has updated the acreage counts of undeveloped residential land and a map (Map 1) that shows undeveloped land inside the 129,000 UDB as of January 1, 2007.

Table 1 below shows the total amount of developed and undeveloped land inside the current 129,000 Growth Boundary as of January 1, 2007. These figures include all residential land within the 98,700 and 129,000 Growth Boundaries inside and outside of the City limits.

**Table 1: Total Residential Land in the 129,000 Growth Boundary (Excluding Goshen)**

| Residential Land Use Category | # of Acres Designated | Developed  |                  | Undeveloped |                  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
|                               |                       | # of Acres | % of desig. land | # of Acres  | % of desig. land |
| Rural                         | 879                   | 581        | 66.11%           | 298         | 33.89%           |
| Low Density                   | 14,094                | 10,259     | 72.79%           | 3,835       | 27.21%           |
| Medium Density                | 888                   | 573        | 64.56%           | 315         | 35.44%           |
| High Density                  | 337                   | 211        | 62.50%           | 127         | 37.50%           |
| TOTAL                         | 16,199                | 11,624     | 71.76%           | 4,575       | 28.24%           |

Table 2 below shows the total amount of developed and undeveloped land only inside the City limits as of January 1, 2007. These figures include all residential land within the 98,700 and 129,000 Growth Boundaries that is inside the City limits.

**Table 2: Total Residential Land in the City limits**

| Residential Land Use Category | # of Acres Designated | Developed  |                  | Undeveloped |                  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
|                               |                       | # of Acres | % of desig. land | # of Acres  | % of desig. land |
| Rural                         | 489                   | 406        | 83.18%           | 82          | 16.82%           |
| Low Density                   | 11,716                | 10,093     | 86.15%           | 1,623       | 13.85%           |
| Medium Density                | 762                   | 549        | 71.97%           | 214         | 28.03%           |
| High Density                  | 281                   | 210        | 74.56%           | 72          | 25.44%           |
| TOTAL                         | 13,248                | 11,257     | 84.98%           | 1,990       | 15.02%           |

Table 3 below breaks down the undeveloped tally in Table 2 into two sub-categories: land that has been tentatively approved for subdivisions, and land that not been approved for subdivisions. The attached Undeveloped Residential Land Map (Map 2) shows the locations of the undeveloped land in the City limits represented by the acreages below. Tentatively mapped land is indicated by shades of blue, and un-mapped land is indicated by shades of yellow/green. In both color schemes, the lighter color is used to denote rural and low density development, and the darker color is used to denote medium and high density development.

**Table 3: Total Undeveloped Land in the City limits, differentiated between tentatively mapped and un-mapped**

| Residential Land Use Category | # of Acres Undeveloped | Tentatively Mapped |                  | Un-Mapped  |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|
|                               |                        | # of Acres         | % of desig. land | # of Acres | % of desig. land |
| Rural                         | 82                     | 24                 | 29.41%           | 58         | 70.59%           |
| Low Density                   | 1,623                  | 978                | 60.24%           | 645        | 39.76%           |
| Medium Density                | 214                    | 86                 | 40.03%           | 128        | 59.97%           |
| High Density                  | 72                     | 8                  | 11.80%           | 63         | 88.20%           |
| TOTAL                         | 1,990                  | 1,096              | 55.06%           | 895        | 44.94%           |

### Recap of How Visalia Reached the 129,000 UDB

Since the 1970's Visalia's growth management system consisting of general plan policies and urban growth boundaries has contributed to the orderly growth of residential development, and has helped the City's Core Downtown Area to remain the axis of Visalia's residential growth. The current Growth Boundaries were drawn in 1991 as part of the Land Use Element Update. According to Policy 6.2.3 in the Land Use Element, development is restricted to areas within the current Growth Boundary and may not proceed to a succeeding Boundary until certain criteria are met. In addition to making findings of adequate land use capacity, adequate infrastructure, and community growth priorities, fixed criteria must be met before expanding to the next boundary. These criteria can be summarized into three general categories:

- Year. The three boundaries were drawn with the intent that they would provide available land to the years 2000, 2010, and 2020.
- Population. The three boundaries would correspond to the growth areas reaching population milestones of 98,700, 129,000, and 165,000 in the years specified above.
- Percentage of Buildout. The City could move to the next growth boundary only if the amount of developed land inside the current boundary reaches a 30% vacancy factor (flexibility factor). In addition, the amount of developed residential land in previous growth boundaries, including the 1988 Urban Improvement Boundary, must meet progressively increasing levels of percentage (i.e. area in the 1988 boundary must have 20% vacancy when expanding to the 2010 boundary, 15% vacancy when expanding to the 2020 boundary, etc.).

Table C-1 on the right, reproduced from Appendix C of the Land Use Element, illustrates the percentages off buildout required for each boundary.

|  | 1988    | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
|--|---------|------|------|------|
| Before expanding to 2010 boundary need     | 80%     | 70%  |      |      |
| Population Threshold                       | 98,700  |      |      |      |
| Before expanding to 2020 boundary need     | 85%     | 80%  | 70%  |      |
| Population Threshold                       | 129,000 |      |      |      |
| Before expanding beyond 2020 boundary need | 90%     | 85%  | 80%  | 70%  |
| Population Threshold                       | 165,000 |      |      |      |

As early as 1994, staff had begun preparing reports that analyzed whether or not the buildout thresholds for expanding to the next Growth Boundary (129,000) were met. Reports prepared

in 1994, 1998, and 2000 all concluded that the percentages of buildout criterion had not been met. In May 2003, a report was prepared that concluded that the required buildout percentages would be met by the end of that year, and the boundary was expanded at that time, roughly 3.75 years past the timeframe anticipated by the 2020 plan.

## **Buildout Methodology**

In determining the percentage of buildout for a growth boundary, the City has been using a methodology accepted by the City Council in November 2000 that evaluates buildout based on adding a 30% vacancy factor to the number of designated residential acres rather than finding that there must be 30% vacant residential land within the current growth area. Adding the 30% vacancy factor follows Land Use Policy 4.1.1 which states that “a supply of zoned residential land equal to 130% of the total acreage necessary to accommodate total planning area residents projected to the succeeding ten years”.

Following are two scenarios that explain the two different methodologies that could be used to determine percentage of buildout. Both scenarios examine how buildout in the 16,199 acres of designated residential land in the current 129,000 UDB can be viewed.

**Scenario 1:** The 30% vacancy factor is already included in the amount of designated residential land in a growth boundary. This means that the 16,199 acres represents 130% of the total acreage needed to accommodate a certain population within the growth boundary. Taking the 30% vacancy factor away from the 130% of designated land, then there are about 12,460 acres (16,199 divided by 130%) needed to accommodate a certain population within the growth boundary. Thus, at least 12,460 acres must be considered developed in order to meet the 30% threshold.

**Scenario 2:** There must be a 30% vacancy in the amount of designated residential land in a growth boundary. This means that the 16,199 acres represents 100% of the total acreage needed to accommodate a certain population within the growth boundary, and that the 30% threshold is reached if 70% (100% minus 30%) of the acreage is developed. Thus, at least 11,339 acres must be considered developed in order to meet the 30% threshold.

Scenario 1 follows the methodology selected by the City Council in November 2000 to determine percentage of buildout, and used when the City made the findings to expand to the next growth boundary in 2003. Staff believes that using this methodology most accurately follows the intent of adding a 30% flexibility factor to the UDBs. Using this methodology is further supported by several references, including Page 2-37, Table 2-11, and Policy 4.1.1 of the General Plan Land Use Element, and Table 16-1 of the Final EIR for the Land Use Element. As illustrated above, this methodology requires that more land to be considered developed than the latter methodology.

## **Current Status of Residential Buildout:**

In updating the city's undeveloped residential land acreages, staff also updated residential buildout percentages for each of the previous growth boundaries to see how close the City is to meeting the buildout criteria for expanding to the 165,000 UDB. These buildout percentages, defined in Appendix C of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, state that before the City expands to the 165,000 UDB (a.k.a. 2020 UDB):

- 85% of the area within the 1988 Urban Improvement Boundary must be developed (i.e. 15% vacancy factor must be met),
- 80% of the area within the 98,700 UDB (a.k.a. 2000 UDB) must be developed (i.e. 20% vacancy factor must be met), and

- 70% of the area within the 129,000 UDB (a.k.a. 2010 UDB) must be developed (i.e. 30% vacancy factor must be met).

Tables 4, 5, and 6 identify the amount of residential land designated in each growth boundary, the amount of developed land, and the respective buildout percentages required for expansion. Figures in Tables 5 and 6 are cumulative from the previous boundaries.

**Table 4: Residential Development in the 1988 Growth Boundary as of January 1, 2007**

|                               | <b>Inside 1988 Boundary</b> |                      |                        |  |  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Residential Land Use Category | # of Acres Designated       | # of Acres Developed | # of Acres Undeveloped | # of Acres Designated Excluding 15% Flexibility Factor | # of Acres remain to be developed in threshold |
| Rural                         | 369                         | 319                  | 51                     | 321  | <b>3</b>                                       |
| Low Density                   | 8,630                       | 7,779                | 851                    | 7,504  | -275   |
| Med. Density                  | 575                         | 489                  | 87                     | 500  | <b>12</b>                                      |
| High Density                  | 204                         | 187                  | 16                     | 177  | -10  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>9,778</b>                | <b>8,773</b>         | <b>1,004</b>           | <b>8,503</b>   | <b>-271</b>                                    |

**Table 5: Residential Development in the 98,700 pop. Growth Boundary as of January 1, 2007**

|                               | <b>Inside 98k Boundary</b> |                      |                        |  |  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Residential Land Use Category | # of Acres Designated      | # of Acres Developed | # of Acres Undeveloped | # of Acres Designated Excluding 20% Flexibility Factor | # of Acres remain to be developed in threshold |
| Rural                         | 670                        | 563                  | 106                    | 558  | -5   |
| Low Density                   | 11,636                     | 9,814                | 1,822                  | 9,697  | -117   |
| Med. Density                  | 787                        | 564                  | 222                    | 655  | <b>91</b>                                      |
| High Density                  | 264                        | 202                  | 63                     | 220  | <b>19</b>                                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>13,356</b>              | <b>11,143</b>        | <b>2,214</b>           | <b>11,130</b>  | <b>-12</b>                                     |

**Table 6: Residential Development in the 129,000 pop. Growth Boundary as of January 1, 2007**

|                               | <b>Inside 129k Boundary</b> |                      |                        |  |  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Residential Land Use Category | # of Acres Designated       | # of Acres Developed | # of Acres Undeveloped | # of Acres Designated Excluding 30% Flexibility Factor | # of Acres remain to be developed in threshold |
| Rural                         | 879                         | 581                  | 298                    | 676  | <b>95</b>                                      |
| Low Density                   | 14,094                      | 10,259               | 3,835                  | 10,842   | <b>583</b>                                     |
| Med. Density                  | 888                         | 573                  | 315                    | 683  | <b>110</b>                                     |
| High Density                  | 337                         | 211                  | 127                    | 260  | <b>49</b>                                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>16,199</b>               | <b>11,624</b>        | <b>4,575</b>           | <b>12,460</b>  | <b>836</b>                                     |

Analysis in these tables conclude that as of January 1, 2007, the number of acres needing to be developed in the 1988 Urban Improvement Boundary and the 98,700 UDB have been reached.

In the 129,000 UDB, 836 more acres would need to be developed to meet the threshold of the UDB.

It is very noteworthy to observe that it only took about four years between 2003 and 2007 for the City to meet the thresholds required in the 1988 and 2000 Boundaries. Staff believes that this surge in development can largely be attributed to several successive years of robust residential activity, particularly in the northwest quadrant of Visalia where most of the land is in the 98,700 UDB.

**Visalia’s Growth since Reaching the 129,000 UDB:**

In the three years since expanding to the 129,000 Population Boundary, only 10% of the land added to the City’s growth boundary has been developed. The expansion to the 129,000 Boundary added approximately 2,843 acres of residential land to the City’s growth area. Currently, 289 acres of this land have developed, 75 acres have annexed and have approved tentative maps, and 98 acres have annexed but are un-mapped or vacant. Figure 1 shows the residential areas added to the City’s growth area by the 129,000 UDB, with developed areas in the dark purple and undeveloped areas in green.

The City Council has been studying two locations in the expansion area that will be master-planned for residential development: the Southeast Area Master Plan (700 acres designated for residential) and the Lowery Ranch Community (280 acres designated for residential). It is anticipated that properties in these planned areas would likely annex and subsequently develop over the next few years.

**Figure 1: Residential areas added to the City’s growth area by the 129,000 UDB**

Much of the residential land that has developed over the past three years has been within the 98,700 UDB. The last three years continued with the trend of seeing subdivision activity on largely undeveloped site (10 or more acres). The northwest quadrant has been the recipient of a majority of the development, followed by the southeast quadrant. In the last couple years however, there has been a rise in development and subdivision activity on smaller parcels, most which can be classified as “infill” parcels that are substantially surrounded by existing development. In 2006 alone, 22 out of the 33 residential subdivisions approved by the Planning Commission were on sites less than 10 acres. The Planning Division also saw several more infill development projects approved at Site Plan Review level as outright permitted uses.

On the whole, the City experienced a significantly greater amount of residential development activity on average in the last five years than in the previous decade. Subdivision activity has slightly subsided in 2006 with less approved tentative lots and less recorded final lots, though infill projects that are outright permitted have increased. Table 7 compiles development statistics since the year 2000 and demonstrates the City’s rise in issued building permits, approved tentative lots, and recorded final lots to levels that were twofold or more of the levels in the 1990s and early 2000s. While this growth is clearly strong, it has offset unusually slow development activity that occurred in the late 1990s. The recent housing market has caused the City to reach development projections identified in the 2020 Plan.

**Table 7: Residential Development Statistics by Year, 2000 – 2006**

| Year | Single Family Residential Activity |  |                                  | Multi Family Residential Activity |  |                                  | Residential Annexation Activity             |            |
|------|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|------------|
|      | # of Building Permits Issued       | # of Lots Approved thru Tentative Maps | # of Lots Recorded in Final Maps | # of Building Permits Issued      | # of Lots Approved thru Tentative Maps | # of Lots Recorded in Final Maps | # of Apps. Received (approved & unapproved) | # of Acres |
|      |                                    |  |                                  |                                   |  |                                  |   |            |

|      |              |              |              |            |            |            |           |              |
|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| 2000 | 660          | 585          | 574          | 14         | 0          | 0          | 3         | 479.5        |
| 2001 | 818          | 1,129        | 686          | 18         | 0          | 0          | 1         | 10.3         |
| 2002 | 860          | 927          | 1,079        | 69         | 38         | 0          | 3         | 53.8         |
| 2003 | 994          | 1,367        | 1,102        | 86         | <b>509</b> | 120        | 7         | 599.5        |
| 2004 | 1,104        | <b>4,376</b> | 1,166        | 165        | 264        | <b>276</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>765.7</b> |
| 2005 | <b>1,450</b> | 2,156        | <b>2,787</b> | 100        | 206        | 10         | 7         | 708.5        |
| 2006 | 1,317        | 1,596        | 1,532        | <b>429</b> | 494        | 44         | 2*        | 34.1         |

**Bold indicates peak year**

\* 1 annexation still pending

## Looking Toward the Future in the 129,000 UDB

The Land Use Element of the General Plan has projected that Visalia would be expanding to its next growth boundary – the 165,000 UDB – in 2010, three years from now. Though the previous boundary expansion ultimately did not occur until 3.75 years after the 2000 milestone anticipated by the General Plan, current residential development suggests that the subsequent growth boundary expansion would be occurring closer to the year 2010 rather than several years afterwards.

Considering Visalia's January 1, 2006 population of about 114,500 persons inside the UDB (111,168 inside City limits + 3,200 in County islands & un-incorporated areas) and a historic growth rate of about 3.25%, reaching the population criteria for the current boundary will likely occur near 2010. With regard to land absorption, Table 6 shows that 836 more acres would need to be developed in order to meet the buildout criteria for the current boundary. At a current average rate of development of at least 20 acres a month, this threshold could be met as soon as the year 2010 (consistent with the 2020 Plan). Furthermore, with the significant increase in residential activity over the past five years demonstrated by Table 7, the buildout criteria for the current UDB may be reached even sooner. Also, the adoption of the East Downtown Strategic Plan will promote more residential growth (1,000 units proposed) in an area designated for mixed commercial and office uses, also increasing Visalia's growth rate.

While Visalia may be meeting the requirements for boundary expansion in the next three to five years, a majority of the residential land that has come in with the 129,000 UDB expansion remains undeveloped. These "Greenfield" areas are generally located on the north and the southeast sides of Visalia (see Figure 1).

## Conclusion

Over the last year, City staff has held work sessions and has prepared reports to the City Council that analyze different approaches to best utilize residential land in the 129,000 population UDB before the City is able to meet the factors for expanding to the 165,000 UDB. Over the course of these meetings, the Council has expressed a desire for accommodating growth in ways that promote the best utilization of land while working to minimize impacts such as the premature loss of farmland and agricultural resources, and the premature extension of City services such as roads, sewers, and other infrastructure.

Based on the Council's interest to make the most resourceful use of residential land in the 129,000 UDB and to defer the expansion from the boundary until it is absolutely necessary, it is recommended that the Council consider the City's current growth trends in both the 98,700 and 129,000 UDBs and direct staff to prepare policy actions, ensuring that a subsequent growth boundary expansion does not occur at a premature time.

Staff's recommended policy actions for residential growth are as follows:

- 1) Continue to use the accepted methodology for differentiating developed parcels from undeveloped parcels.

Staff prepared a methodology to differentiate developed parcels from undeveloped parcels that was used to determine residential buildout in the Growth Boundary expansion completed in 2003. The definitions for developed and undeveloped land utilize a more "conservative" approach in accepting what is developed, and were prepared in a manner that sides with prolonging the life of undeveloped land until land will be built upon as intended by the policies of the Land Use Element. For example, the definition of "developed" land does not include unrecorded tentative maps since it is uncertain exactly when and if these maps may ever record. Likewise, the definition does not include approved CUPs for multi-family or other developments. Also, the definition of "undeveloped" land does include large sites that would be considered under-developed, such as agricultural parcels containing rural homesites.

- 2) Continue to use the accepted methodology of including a vacancy factor to the number of designated residential acres when evaluating buildout in a boundary.

The Council accepted using a methodology in November 2000 which evaluates buildout based on adding a 30% vacancy factor to the number of designated residential acres rather than finding that there must be 30% vacant residential land within the current growth area. Again, this methodology utilizes a more "conservative" approach to determining when development has reached the thresholds prescribed by the corresponding Growth Boundary, and requires that a slightly larger amount of land be developed based on adding the vacancy factor to the amount of designated land. This in turn prolonged the Boundary expansion in 2003, but not so much as to interrupt Visalia's pace of development at the time.

- 3) Consider reducing the vacancy factor for residential development in the current Growth Area from 30% to 25% or less.

Reducing the vacancy factor for residential development would increase the amount of residential land needing to be developed in the current growth area before expansion. The vacancy factor was established in the Land Use Element as a way for growth areas to meet the threshold for expansion without requiring that every piece of available residential land be developed first. In 2003, the 30% vacancy factor for the 98,700 UDB expansion allowed for 3,000 acres of undeveloped residential. Based on staff's calculations in Table 6, the 30% vacancy factor for the 129,000 UDB expansion allows for 3,739 undeveloped acres.

While the intent for this vacancy factor is to accommodate un-interrupted residential growth, it does not address an equal relationship between the growth in the previous UDB and growth in the current UDB. Staff analysis in Tables 4 and 5 has found that growth in the previous UDBs has surpassed the required thresholds, plus there are several approved tentative maps in the previous UDBs that will likely develop in the next few years. Conversely, there is still plenty of potential for growth in the 129,000 UDB. Reducing the vacancy factor for the 129,000 UDB would reduce the possibility of a pre-mature expansion that could be attributed to growth in the previous UDBs and not enough in the current UDB, and would attribute to prolonging the life of the current UDB.

- 4) Consider increasing the minimum residential densities for new residential annexations to at least midrange or higher for that density range.

A report prepared for consideration by the Council on June 12, 2006 illustrated how the Visalia's population capacity could be increased if the minimum residential densities on vacant properties inside the current UDB. Currently, the Land Use Element requires that new residential development must be consistent with the specific density range for the land use designation (i.e. 2 to 7 units / acre for Low Density Residential). By increasing the minimum density in the range

and/or narrowing the density range, new developments may have the cumulative effect of placing the same number of units on less area, thereby deferring the conversion of agricultural farmland and reducing the costs of extending urban services further outward. The Annexation Worksession Item also proposes considering this policy action, and includes additional design and product selection techniques that are currently available for new residences.

- 5) Consider increasing the population benchmarks of the current 129,000 and 165,000 UDBs by 10% to 142,000 and 181,500 respectively.

Increasing the minimum population benchmarks would require a greater population to be living inside the current UDB before expansion. Staff believes that in the next few years, the City's rate of population increase will rise faster than residential land absorption due to increased residential densities and due to residential growth in non-residential designated areas like the East Downtown. It should be noted that Visalia's growth rings were drawn with the ability to hold at least 30% more persons beyond the benchmark figures, so increasing the population benchmarks by 10% would not necessitate redrawing the growth rings.

**Prior Council/Board Actions:**

On June 12, 2006, a Council work session was held to discuss a report prepared by the Planning Division which identified locations of undeveloped residential land and presented scenarios for population capacity inside the City's current 129,000 UDB.

On October 16, 2006, a Council work session was held in follow-up to the June 12 work session to discuss in-fill strategies for residential land inside the 129,000 UDB.

**Committee/Commission Review and Actions:** None

**Alternatives:** The City Council and Planning Commission could recommend making no changes to adopted City policies regarding growth.

**Attachments:**

- Map 1: Undeveloped Residential Land inside 129,000 UDB
- Map 2: Undeveloped Residential Land and Tentative Maps in City limits
- Exhibit "A": Methodology for Determining Developed and Undeveloped Lands

**Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):**



**Tracking Information:** *(Staff must list/include appropriate review, assessment, appointment and contract dates and other information that needs to be followed up on at a future date)*

Copies of this report have been provided to:

## EXHIBIT “A”: METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING DEVELOPED AND UNDEVELOPED LANDS

Staff has used the following methodology to determine the amount of developed and undeveloped land inside the City’s Urban Area Boundary. This methodology has been used on an ongoing basis to give estimates of developed and undeveloped acreages to the Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission, who request that these figures accompany applications for annexations into the City limits to help determine whether the City is exceeding a 10-year supply of residential land. This methodology was also the basis for determining build-out percentages and threshold acreages when the City was considering advancing to the 129,000 Population Urban Development Boundary.

### Use of GIS to determine acreage calculations

The City of Visalia currently has a Geographic Information System (GIS) that stores data based upon a spatial component. Many hours have been invested to develop and now maintain an accurate and reliable database of the parcels of land in and around the city. The GIS is able to calculate the square footage of each parcel and then add them together to determine the acreage of a specified area. Each parcel also has data attributes such as property owner name, zoning designation, and Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) so that parcels can be grouped according to a certain attribute in order to calculate the sum of their combined area. By using the City’s GIS system the area of the land within the current Urban Development Boundary and the land use designations associated with the land is easily calculated by adding the area of all parcels and road rights of way within the boundary. With GIS we able to provide calculations of the total land acreage designated for residential development within the current Boundary.

### Exclusion of Goshen in Calculations

While developing the calculations for this report, the issue of whether or not to include Goshen in the calculations was considered. Goshen is within the current Urban Development Boundary, but is outside the City’s Sphere of Influence as determined by the Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). Since the City does not have authority over how, when, and where Goshen develops and because the annexation of Goshen into the City would first require a Sphere of Influence amendment by LAFCO, Staff determined that the residential designations in Goshen should not be included in the calculations to determine buildout. An estimated figure of the amount of undeveloped land in Goshen was included in Table 1 for informational purposes only.

### Determining the land designated for development

The following figures illustrate how the total residential land designated was determined. The dark line in the figures represents the current city limits. The figures are provided to illustrate the process only. They are not meant to be used to identify specific sites.

First, the land within the current Urban Development Boundary was highlighted, as shown in Figure A-1.

**A-1**  
Land within Current UDB (28,375 acres)

Then the areas that were not designated Rural Residential, Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, or High Density Residential were removed. This left only land within the boundary that is designated for residential use. Finally, the Goshen residential area was removed from the area to be studied. Within the Goshen Area (the area outside the Sphere of Influence of Visalia but inside the 98,700 Population Boundary) there are about 1,136 acres of land. Over half of this land is designated for Industrial use. There are 373 acres designated Low Density Residential with 141 developed. The total land studied is shown in Figure A-2.

**Figure A-2**  
Land within Current UDB designated residential, excluding Goshen (16,199 acres)

Developed and what land is undeveloped

When the 16,199 acres in the study were determined, then the parcels were each tagged in the GIS system as either being developed or undeveloped. Once all the parcels were tagged the developed areas and the undeveloped areas could be added separately. Building permits, aerial photos, and final maps were used to help in tagging parcels.

A method was needed for determining which parcels to consider developed and which parcels to consider undeveloped. While this question initially does not sound like a difficult one, a number of considerations do arise. Staff made the following determinations on what should be considered developed and what should be considered undeveloped. Explanations are given as to why Staff made the determinations it did.

Legend for Figure A-2:  
 Land within Current UDB designated residential  
 City Limits

**Generally, land area that was considered developed includes:**

D1. Parcels containing development.

Parcels with development should obviously be considered developed. However, large parcels that could still sustain agricultural use (generally 10 acres or more) are considered undeveloped even if they contain a house. See U2 below.

D2. Land that is road right of way, railroad right of way, or high voltage power transmission line right of way, even if the right of way is adjacent to undeveloped land.

This land has been developed for its intended purposes and will not contribute to the ability to build additional housing.

D3. Parcels that are single-family lots and are a part of a single-family residential subdivision that is currently marketing new homes, even if the particular lot does not yet have a home on it.

It is assumed that the lots of recent final maps are going to be developed in the near future. It is more appropriate to consider the entire subdivision development as one development than to chart when each specific house is built. This method is also makes easier to track, which aids in the accuracy of the findings.

D4. Parcels owned by the Visalia Unified School District on the date of the study are considered developed, even if the school site has not been built.

Most of the Visalia Unified School District's properties are not designated Residential and are therefore not included in the study. However, there are three vacant sites totaling 100 acres that were owned by the District on January 1, 2000, that are within the Boundary. This land is encumbered by the District and is therefore not available for residential development. All of the built schools are not included in the study because they are designated Public Institutional, not Residential. As with subdivisions currently being marketed, Staff believes that School District properties should be counted as developed whether they are actually developed or not. If the School District were to sell vacant land to a private owner, then that site would be reevaluated in future studies.

D5. Parcels owned by the Visalia cemetery District on the date of the study are considered developed, even if the cemetery facilities have not been built.

The Visalia cemetery District owns 55 acres of land that is currently undeveloped and designated for residential use. Since this land is encumbered in a similar way that the School District land is encumbered, it is appropriate to count the land as developed. If the land were to be sold, then site would be reevaluated in suture studies.

**Generally, land that is considered undeveloped includes:**

- U1. Land that is vacant, except for single-family lots described in D3 above.
- U2. Land that is primarily in agricultural use, including land that contains rural homesites.

There are a number of rural homesites on large agricultural parcels. Generally, the homesite portion is between 1 and 2 acres of the entire site. In the past when development has occurred on similar parcels, some homesites have been demolished and some remain. Because Staff cannot foresee which houses would remain and which would be demolished, and because counting parcels as partially developed and partially undeveloped could bring about a whole new level of required assumptions and methodology determinations, Staff determined that these parcels should be counted as entirely undeveloped.

- U3. Land that contains approved tentative subdivision maps that have not been finalized.

There are a number of tentative maps that are still active that have not been finalized. These maps can be anywhere from a few weeks to as much as four years old. Staff determined that maps should be considered developed when they are finalized based upon the amount of investment that must go into finalizing a map. A tentative map can be submitted and approved with relatively minimal investment, while a final map requires a substantial investment of time and finances to design, engineer and pay required development fees.

- U4. Land that is vacant but has an approved conditional use permit for development.

Again, Staff determined that the time that multi-family or other developments should trigger a change in designation from undeveloped to developed should be when the building permit is approved, not when the use permit is approved. This determination was made because a number of conditional use permits are never acted upon.

**City of Visalia**  
**Joint Worksession Agenda Item Transmittal**

**Meeting Date:** February 24, 2007

**Agenda Item Number (Assigned by City Clerk):** D

**Agenda Item Wording:** Overview of 2006 Annexation Activity and Policy Considerations for Future Annexations.

**Deadline for Action:** None

**Submitting Department:** Community Development

**Contact Name and Phone Number:**

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**Department Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the City Council and Planning Commission review the materials contained in the staff report, including the recommended follow on policy initiatives, and direct staff to prepare corresponding policy actions for future consideration. Specifically, staff recommends that the following actions be considered pertaining to future annexations:

- Continue to apply General Plan Land Use Element Policy 6.2.6 to guide considerations for future Annexations; and,
- Identify potential new General Plan policies that specify priorities, criteria, and standards for future annexations of residential, industrial, and agricultural lands.

Attached is a smart growth proposal prepared by Council Member Greg Collins for consideration by Council during discussion of this item.

**Background/Summary**

During calendar year (CY) 2006, the City received three new owner-initiated annexation applications:

1. Annexation No. 2006-01 (Doe) for 160 acres of industrial land near the northwest corner of Plaza Dr. and Riggin Ave., was withdrawn by the applicant in November 2006.

**For action by:**

City Council  
 Redev. Agency Bd.  
 Cap. Impr. Corp.  
 VPFA

**For placement on which agenda:**

Work Session  
 Closed Session

**Regular Session:**

Consent Calendar  
 Regular Item  
 Public Hearing

Est. Time  
(Min.): 30

**Review:**

**Dept. Head** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initials & date required)

**Finance** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City Atty** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initials & date required or N/A)

**City Mgr** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initials Required)

If report is being re-routed after revisions leave date of initials if no significant change has affected Finance or City Attorney Review.

2. Annexation No. 2006-08 (Pratt): The 20-acre low density residential designated Pratt property, located on the southwest corner of the extension of Mooney Blvd. and Pratt Road, in the north part of the City. The Pratt Annexation is presently in review by City staff. It is awaiting submittal of a companion subdivision development proposal which is in process through the Site Plan Review (SPR) Committee (SPR 2007-004). The subdivision proposal is for a single-family subdivision that essentially matches that of the Shannon Ranch development to the west and south. The proposed density is approximately 4.1 units per net acre.
  
3. Annexation No. 2006-09 (Akers-Ferguson NE): The 14-acre low density residential designated area includes a proposed five-acre Blooming Hills Estates Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5527 and Planned Residential Development with 17 single-family residences, and gated, private streets. The project applications were received in September 2006, and were deemed incomplete. The entire project has since been withdrawn by the applicant.

In CY 2006, The City completed three property owner initiated annexations, as follows:

**Table 1**

| <b>Name</b>                     | <b>Annexation No.</b> | <b>Acreage</b> | <b>Type</b> | <b>Land Use/UDB</b>  | <b>Date Approved by City Council</b> | <b>Date completed</b> | <b>Purpose</b>                    |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lowrey Ranch (southern portion) | 2005-04               | 176            | Uninhabited | Residential/ 98,700  | 8/15/05                              | 2/16/06               | Future Master Planned Development |
| Walnut-McAuliff SE              | 2005-09               | 53             | Uninhabited | Residential/ 129,000 | 9/19/05                              | 2/16/06               | Residential Subdivision           |
| Shirk-Walnut SE                 | 2005-16               | 20             | Uninhabited | Residential/ 98,700  | 11/21/05                             | 5/8/06                | Residential Subdivision           |

In addition, Annexation No. 2003-08 (Elliott East), an EIR and GPA from Agriculture to Low Density Residential on approximately 80 acres, located generally south of Tulare Ave. and east of Shirk St. The request for Annexation and GPA were denied by the City Council (vote 4-0-1) on August 21, 2006.

This demonstrates that annexation activity has substantially slowed since the recent calendar year 2004 high point of 12 owner-initiated annexations, totaling 766 acres, and seven owner-initiated annexations of over 700 acres in 2005. One new annexation is anticipated in 2007. This is annexation of all or a portion of the 480-acre industrially designated Vargas property on the northeast corner of Plaza Dr. and Riggin Ave. This will accommodate a large industrial user whose exact business and user's name have not been formally announced.

The City also completed ten County Island annexations adding 341 acres, 1,036 homes, and approximately 2,780 new residents to the City. There are two pending Island Annexations that are intended to be initiated in 2007 [Annexation No. 2006-07 (Sol Road, 75 acres), and Annexation No. 2005-02 (James Road, 11 acres)] There are also six other predominately residential county islands totaling 197 acres remaining in the City's corporate boundaries. Additionally, there is one 550-acre county island that

contains a mix of 325 acres agricultural and 125 acres of industrial designated land and one commercial County Island totaling nine acres.

As of January 31, 2007, the amount of undeveloped and non-annexed land in the 98,700 and 129,000 UDBs are approximately as follows:

**Table 2**

| <b>CATEGORY</b>           | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>98,700 UDB</b> | <b>129,000 UDB</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Residential               | 2,666        | 200               | 2,466              |
| Industrial                | 946          | 306*              | 640                |
| Agricultural/Conservation | 1,100        | 1,006             | 94                 |
| Commercial                | 40           | 0                 | 40**               |
| Public Institution/Park   | 95           | 0                 | 95**               |
| Office Professional       | 43           | 0                 | 43**               |

\* partially developed \*\* In SEASP project area

## **Discussion**

The land inventory in Table 2 suggests that new annexation policy strategies should be considered to control outward expansion of the City's boundary, and to affect more intensive use of the City's next 10-20 year supply of residential and industrial lands, to preserve agriculture lands within the 98,700 UDB and 129,000 UDB. Commercial and Professional Office lands are a less immediate concern. First, the potentially affected land is already part of a Specific Plan proposal (South East Area Specific Plan). Second, the General Plan already has policies for the detailed timing and existing commercial space absorption criteria that must be met before annexing new commercial lands. These policies have been successfully applied in deferring requests in prior years to pre-maturely extend the Mooney Blvd. corridor south into the Urban Reserve area. These General Plan Policies are included as attachments to this report.

Staff recommends that the City Council consider exploring new policies that will help facilitate the other overarching policies of encouraging increased urban residential densities, promoting economic development in the industrial area, and preserving agricultural land resources. The following are recommended actions and criteria for further policy direction concerning residential, industrial, and agricultural lands being considered for annexation:

### **Commercial and Office Professional Annexations**

Take no new action at this time.

### **Residential Annexations**

1. Affirm Land Use Policy 6.2.6, but modify it to give priority consideration and more streamlined processing to annexations of residential lands in the 98,700 UDB. Secondary priority would be for annexations of residential land in the 129,000 UDBs. This could be implemented by requiring annexation requests in the



129,000 UDB to be approved for filing by the City Council. Council would review these requests with regard to connectivity to the existing urban framework and linkages to area annexation system. Annexations in the 98,700 UDB could be exempted from the preliminary requirement to be authorized for initiation by the City Council. This would save approximately eight to 10 weeks in the total processing time expended at the City level before an annexation application is forwarded to LAFCO for final annexation approval.

Annexations in the 165,000 UDB, would not be considered in the near term. This is a refinement of Policy 6.2.6 that is also consistent with past City practices by use of the "Reserve" designations for lands in the 165,000 UDB. The "Reserve" designation has facilitated the goal of avoiding speculative development proposals to the benefit of orderly urban development emanating outward from the City Core.

2. Require new residential annexations in the 129,000 UDB to be master planned. This requirement would help ensure that future residential annexations bring the highest possible comprehensively planned developments into the City's residential inventory. Master plans would be reviewed during the pre-annexation process and included as a requirement in the annexation agreement. Early master planning efforts before annexations are allowed to proceed helps ensure that project densities, design, amenities, and infrastructure and services to support the new residential area are assured as a condition of the annexations. Examples of areas that are being master planned before annexation include portions of the Lowrey Ranch project area, South East Area Specific Plan (SEASP), and Sierra Village. Sierra Village (Annexation No. 2005-08) is a proposed 34-acre mixed use (residential/office) project. The proponent is presently working with the City on details of a master plan for the project.
3. Require new residential annexations to achieve minimum net densities at the midrange or higher density range for that land use designation. Taking the example of the Pratt Annexation, applying this policy would ensure the minimum density would be close to five units/acre for a total of approximately 90 units. By contrast, the average density of the surrounding and nearby subdivisions such as Shannon Ranch is approximately 3.75 units/acre. The allowable density range for Low Density Residential is 2–7 unit/acre.

Increased single-family residential densities in the 5-7 units/acre range can be achieved through several design and product selection techniques. These include:

- Adding a mix of multi-family units, smaller single-family units, unit clustering, and flexible lot size standards.
- Increasing on-site open space, thereby reducing the net project area size but still allowing acceptable dwelling unit yields through intensified densities. This open space can be in the form of pocket parks and recreational areas, greenbelts, trails, or native habitat features left undisturbed (passive open space).

- Incorporating affordable housing units into the project to gain density bonuses and other incentives.
- Multi-family residential project densities can also be increased through the above listed techniques, as well as considering incentives and/or mandatory practices to increase these developments to three stories or more, particularly where streets and utilities are already available, and where increased building heights would not adversely impact adjacent residential developments.

All of these techniques are presently available through the City's Codes on an "encouraged" or incentive basis. However, none of these techniques are presently employed with the weight of mandated City policy direction.

4. Require an Agricultural Land mitigation program as part of pre-annexation agreements, even where there is no Williamson Act contract cancellation. This would further augment the current City policy that requires Williamson Act contract cancellations to include a "1240" agriculture conservation easement, in accordance with state law (Govt. Code 51256), as was recently done with the contract cancellation on the Hughes property near the northeast corner of Riggan Ave. and Dinuba Blvd.

This additional mitigation program would be on land not subject to the Williamson Act to also participate in agricultural land preservation. This could be in the form of acquisition of agriculture preserve easements on the City's Urban Area Boundary, or the payment of fees that would be pooled with other funding sources to acquire agriculture easements for the benefit of the City.

## **Industrial Annexations**

With regard to industrial land annexations, staff recommends that the following criteria be considered:

Encourage annexation of all industrial land within the 129,000 UDB. This would allow the City to proceed on a timely and predictable path in attracting prime industrial developments. These development interests often "shop" other jurisdictions. Typically, the ability to secure streamlined entitlement permits for construction and opening for business are key to the final location decision. Already annexing land within the 129,000 UDB (approximately 946 acres) will save an estimated nine months on the development timeline, as well as reduce the number of variables that are beyond the City's immediate control (final LAFCO annexation approval).

## **Agricultural Annexations**

With regard to Agricultural land in the 129,000 UDB annexations, regardless of land use designation, staff recommends that the following criteria be considered:

1. Allow annexations of agricultural land only in accordance with a City-developed or approved master plan or specific plan. The intent would be to encourage long

range planning and avoiding piecemeal parcelization and development that may conflict with master planning efforts in the project area.

2. Require annexations of land to mitigate loss of agricultural land by establishing agriculture conservation easements on other lands approved by the City. Annexation of such easement lands will help ensure the property placed into agriculture conservation easements are preserved for this use, and that land use proposals on adjacent properties account for the presence and permanency of agriculture conservation easements. Ag land mitigation could be accomplished through the 1240 exchange program in cases where agricultural preserves are found to be appropriate for cancellation, or pursuant to a future mitigation program for lands where no ag preserve is present.

## **Summary**

In calendar year 2006, annexation activity slowed substantially compared to the 2004-2005 periods. There appears to be less pressure to expand the City's urban growth into predominately agricultural lands in the 129,000 UDB. The vigorous County Island Annexations efforts have added almost 2,800 residents. This program will take a less prominent role in the coming years.

Staff recommends that the City Council provide direction to annex industrial land in the 129,000 UDB as early as possible in advance of actual development proposals. With regard to residential lands, staff recommends that the City Council direct staff to initiate policies to prioritize annexations based on the 98,700 UDB, agricultural land mitigation, and master planning to achieve increased densities and high quality design and infrastructure support. With regard to agriculture lands, staff recommends that the City Council consider policies to encourage preservation of agricultural land by increased attention to Williamson Act contract cancellations and establishment of an agricultural land mitigation program.

### **Attachments:**

General Plan Policies, Extract of Policies Pertaining to Annexations  
Annexation Progression Map  
County Islands Map  
Smart Growth Proposal – Council Member Collins

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| <b>Tracking Information:</b> |
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