

Creating Prosperity in Fresno

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As a group of civic-minded Fresno residents and business owners, we have a common goal—create jobs, and promote economic prosperity for our community and its citizens.

City leaders and others are working hard to bring back downtown as part of an overall effort to improve our community and attract more jobs to this area. We are supportive of this effort and believe that a commitment to achieving the following recommendations will generate more economic development, jobs, and prosperity throughout our entire county.

GOALS

We can significantly increase the number of good jobs in Fresno by immediately achieving the following goals:

1. Ensure that the General Plan and City and County policies promote job creation and infill development equally throughout the City's entire Sphere of Influence.
2. Streamline the planning/permitting/project approval process in the City and County to promote more timely development and to better compete with neighboring jurisdictions and regions.
3. Implement true technical and arts programs in our schools.
4. Make Fresno known as a more business friendly community.

ISSUES & CONCERNS

- We currently have more than 29,000 people unemployed in the City of Fresno and 58,500 in the County according to the Employment Development Department.

- The economy is on the rebound and jobs are being created in surrounding communities as a result of large distribution centers and food processors locating within those communities due to the ease of doing business.
- Lack of funding in the Code Enforcement Department has resulted in blighted neighborhoods.
- Lack of joint planning and cooperation within our region.
- Distribution centers, manufacturing companies, food processing companies decline to locate in Fresno due to a) the difficulty of our planning/permitting and project approval processes, b) the length of time it takes to get approvals, c) lack of infrastructure in key areas, d) high fees, and e) a lack of readily available business parks that are 80 acres or larger.
- We need a vibrant downtown, however, the focus on this one area of the City of Fresno should not limit development in other areas; rather, development in other areas of the City will assist in the revitalization downtown.
- General Plan updates should include policies that will attract developers to Fresno and allow for housing that fulfills all market demands.
- All land within the City of Fresno's 1983 Sphere of Influence is not considered infill but should be.
- Development of all infill lots does not always make economic sense for the builder, homebuyer or renter.

SOLUTIONS

1. Ensure that the City and County General Plans:
 - Facilitate the creation of diversified, private sector manufacturing, distribution, construction, food processing, office and financial, retail and personal service jobs.

- Are updated only after considering all viable land use and development strategy alternatives.
 - Continue to follow the 2025 General Plan, City and County Memorandum of Understanding for phased development in the City's Sphere of Influence.
2. Streamline planning/permitting/project approval processes by establishing a Rapid Response Team.
 3. Create a physically and operationally centralized application assistance center which is:
 - Led by the Planning Department
 - Offers fee deferral and other financial incentives in the City and County of Fresno.
 - Properly and continually staffed by expert project evaluation personnel from all reviewing divisions and departments
 - Properly resourced
 - Responsible for the following processing and review timelines of properly submitted applications:
 - site plan reviews and construction drawings within 25 days
 - tentative parcel and subdivision maps within 50 days
 - conditioned use permits within 75 days
 - rezonings consistent with general plan within 75-100 days
 - general plan amendments within city sphere of influence within 100-120 days
 - public works improvement plans within 21 days
 - public utilities improvement plans within 21 days
 - final parcel and subdivision maps within 21 days
 - community facilities district processing including hearings within 60 days
 4. Adjust municipal water and sewer fees to compete with other Central Valley communities to better attract new development and jobs.

5. Identify land and seek all available public and private infrastructure funds to immediately construct new, and complete existing business, and industrial parks.
6. The City of Fresno should develop and implement effective policies to address regional planning and cooperation.
7. Consider and equally promote and prioritize all land in the 1983 Sphere of Influence as infill development.
8. Assemble a diversified body of interested groups when planning for growth of the City and County. Listen and consider recommendations that advance our mission to create jobs.
9. Create a Community Facilities District to finance and maintain public improvements in older neighborhoods.
10. Proactively seek grant funds for median landscape maintenance.
11. Measure C TOD funds should be aggressively pursued for Downtown revitalization.
12. TOD funds should be used in Downtown to improve infrastructure deficiencies affecting water, sewer, storm drains and electrical lines.
13. Help revitalize downtown by promoting and incentivizing builders in other areas of the City to construct Downtown.
14. Involve those already operating businesses and building housing downtown in discussions to craft future growth plans.
15. Identify all historic buildings and historic resources that cannot be demolished or altered and make that list available to interested developers and investors at the front end of their planning process.

16. Develop a campaign with the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote Fresno city and county as business friendly places.
17. Focus on improving career, technical, and arts education in all school districts.
18. Work with all local school districts to plan and build additional housing to support and accommodate more families.

Action is needed now to create more jobs and prosperity in Fresno. We sincerely and collectively believe that the recommendations of this report be considered and proactively pursued by the City and County, and that a public progress report on their implementation be made in 30 days.