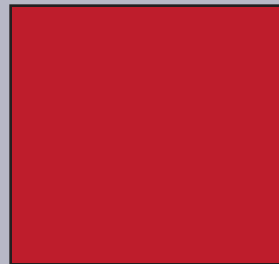


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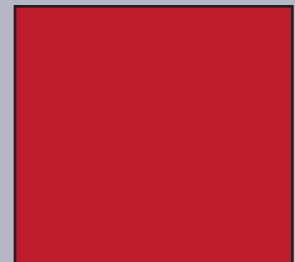
Central Valley Health Policy Institute

A Fair and Healthy Fresno: Community Voices on the 2035 Fresno General Plan Update



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Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño
Centro La Familia Advocacy Services
Faith in Community
Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, Inc.
Fresno Metro Ministry
West Fresno Family Resource Center



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COMMUNITY VOICES ON THE 2035 FRESNO GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Since 2011, the City of Fresno has been updating its General Plan and Zoning Ordinance with assistance of planners, consultants and community members. In the spring of 2014, the City Council will vote on the plan that will shape growth and development choices for years to come. An initial draft was approved by the City Council in April 2012 calling for renewed attention to Fresno's core, more density and greater in-fill development, and new investments in public transportation and mixed-use, mixed-income complete communities. The General Plan sets out policies that guide the City in approving new development projects and transportation improvements. The plan will be used to make sure that the City departments and other public agencies provide services that enhance the "character and quality of the community."¹

The Plan is important to all Fresno residents: it sets out a vision for the future of the city and guides decisions about the opportunities and challenges regular people face every day. Although the primary focus of the General Plan is land use and the physical infrastructure of the city, these urban choices are primary drivers in neighborhood social and economic outcomes.



Figure 1: Elements of the 2035 Fresno General Plan Update

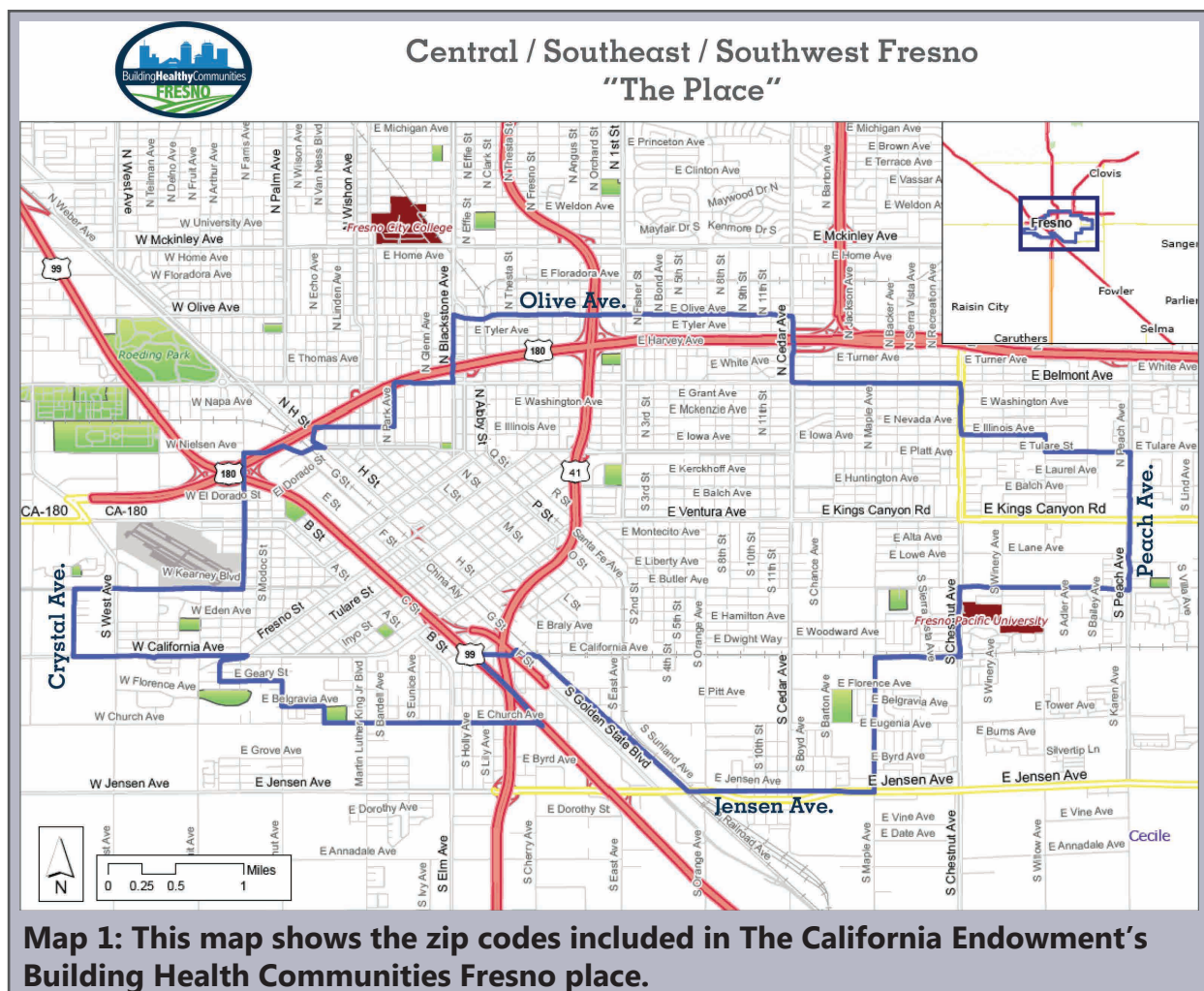
- *Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability*
- *Public Utilities and Services*
- *Parks, Open Space and Schools*
- *Healthy Communities*
- *Historic and Cultural Resources*
- *Noise and Safety*
- *Resource Conservation and Resilience*
- *Mobility and Transportation*
- *Urban Form, Land Use and Design*

Since 2011, six non-profit organizations: Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, Inc., Fresno Metro Ministry, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, Centro La Familia Advocacy Services, Faith in Community, and West Fresno Family Resource Center have played a noteworthy role in the planning process, meeting with public officials and community residents around each element of the General Plan Update. With support from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities, the six organizations have sought to provide a coordinated community voice in the planning process as the Fresno Leaders Advocating for Regional Equity Together (FLARE).

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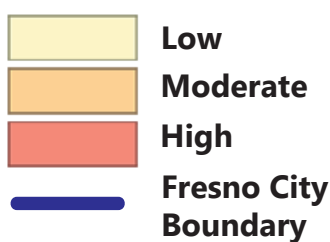
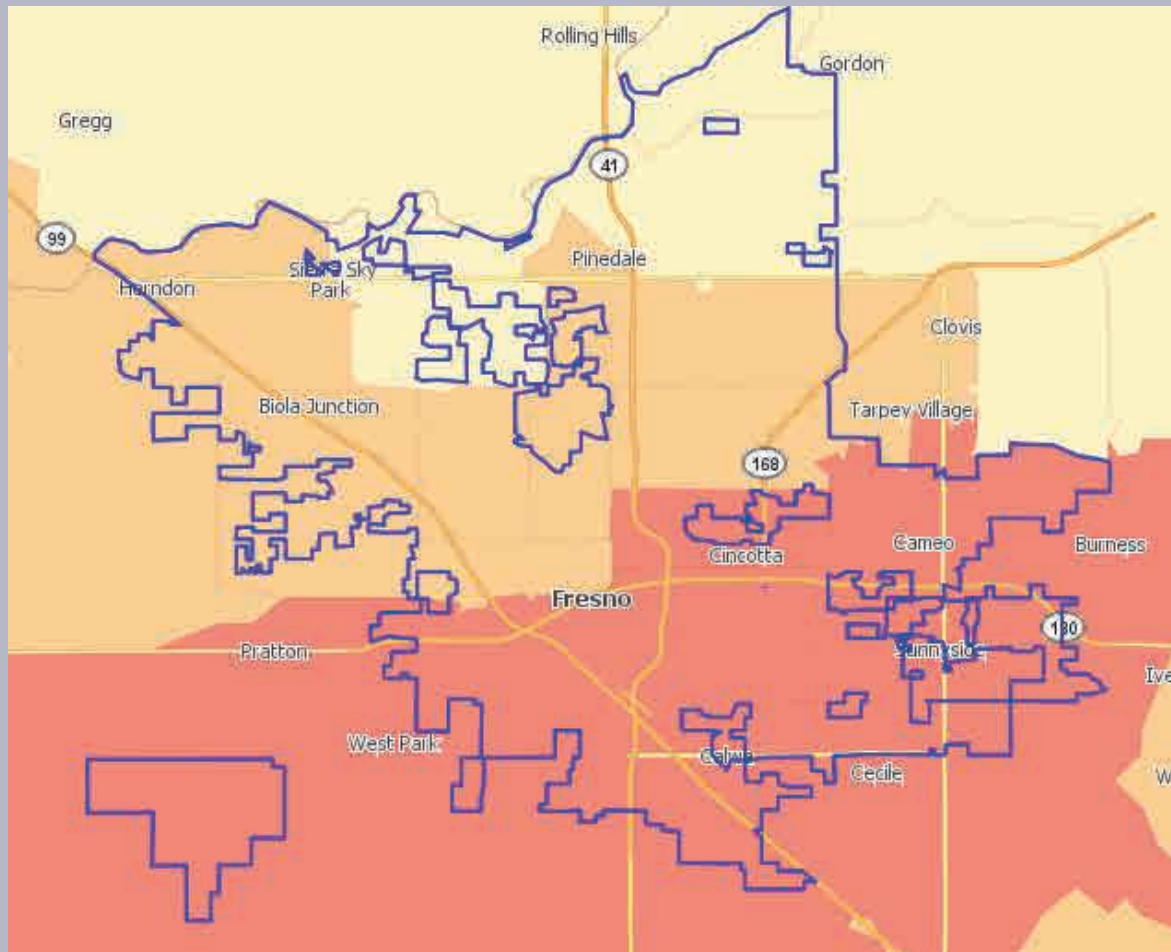
This brief highlights some key areas of consensus among FLARE organizations around values and recommendations for the General Plan Update. By highlighting these areas, the brief offers a summary of the beliefs, questions and suggestions that are likely to emerge in ongoing efforts to build a healthy and fair future for Fresno by implementing the General Plan.

Health Perspective on the General Plan Update: There is growing consensus that the built and social environments of cities have profound influences on health. The 2035 Fresno General Plan Update recognizes the important connection between urban choices and community health. Consistent with the goals of the Building Health Communities program, FLARE sees this process as an opportunity for Fresno to adopt policies that address the **social determinants of health inequalities** (see maps: 1, 2).



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Map 2: Poverty and Pollution Burden in Fresno's Neighborhoods



This map shows zip codes with 25% or more of the population living below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and high pollution burden scores. Depending on family size, FPL ranges from between \$11,000-\$39,000 per year. The pollution burden score is part of the Cal EnviroScreen and measures multiple sources of exposure to air and other pollutants. The neighborhoods represented by FLARE face concentrated poverty and among the highest levels of pollution burden in California (from CalEnviroScreenData_v1.xlsx accessed from <http://oehha.ca.gov> October 1, 2013).

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In Fresno and many other cities nationwide, historical and ongoing land use policies concentrate **health hazards** (brownfield sites, polluting industries) and fewer **community facilities to support healthy choices** (parks, walkable neighborhoods, access to affordable fresh food, cultural and commercial venues) and **low-income communities of color** in a small number of neighborhoods, and notably so for the Fresno Building Healthy Community neighborhoods and other older neighborhoods. These same communities experience more **chronic disease** and **premature death** (see maps: 3, 4).

From this perspective, policies that seek to reduce hazards and increase facilities in the most impacted neighborhoods have the best prospect for improving public health. We believe that the needed policies address the social determinants of health inequality by increasing prospects for better health outcomes in the least positively developed communities.

Figure 2: Key Community Values for Development in Fresno:

- *Affordable Variety of Housing Options*
- *Anti-Displacement*
- *Completing Existing Neighborhoods*
- *Funding for Infrastructure*
- *Healthy Air and Food*
- *Local Jobs and Homegrown Businesses*
- *Parks and Open Space*
- *Efficient and Effective Transportation*
- *Safe Streets and Parks*

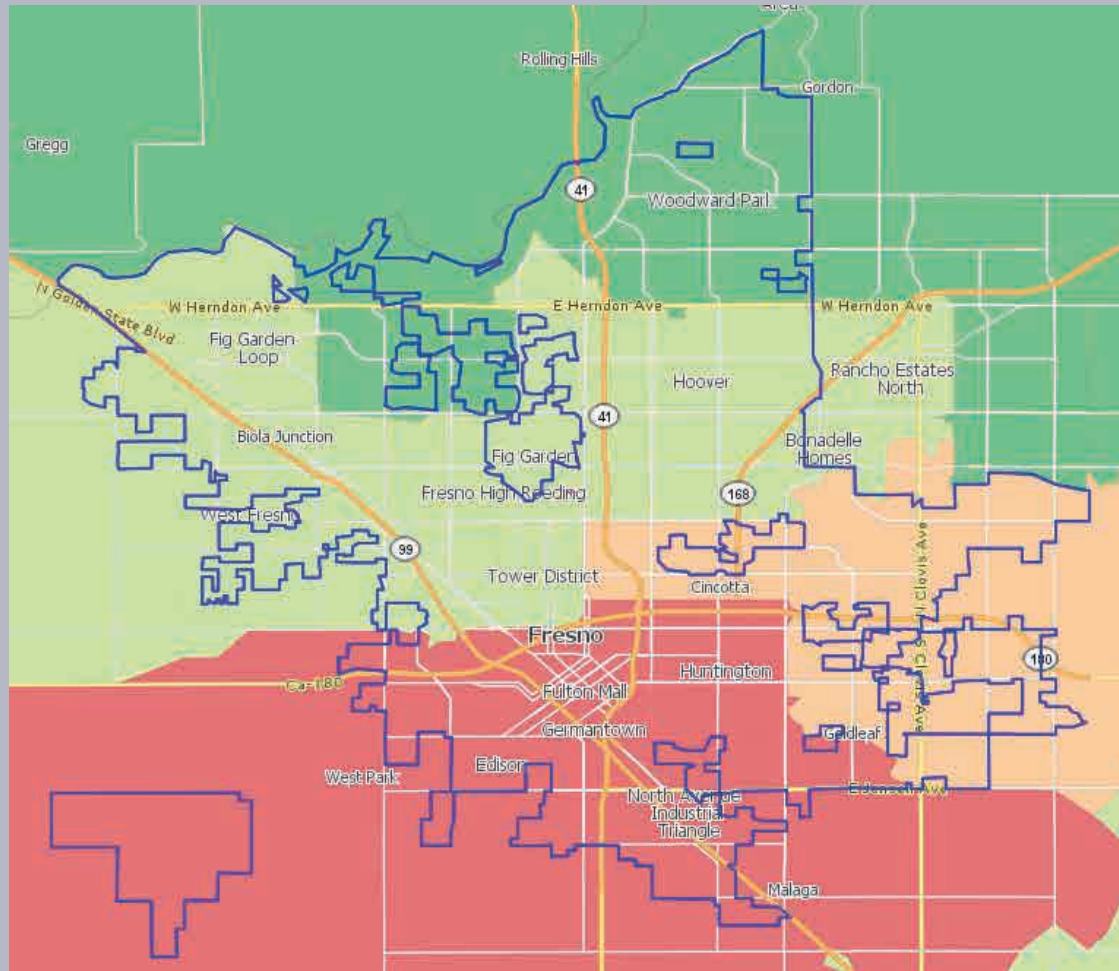
Fairness Perspective on the General Plan Update: As FLARE residents and staff met, helped planners explore key aspects of development, and learned of experiences in other cities, they developed a shared commitment to the need for a fairness perspective to be reflected in all elements of the Fresno General Plan Update and implementing city policies and practices. Discussions of fairness have the potential to be viewed as divisive because there are well-established and competing frameworks with links to political ideologies. New techniques for assessing fairness in policy and practice have emerged that support consensus building: they focus on identifying questions or tests that most would agree to, even if they have different views of justice or fairness or the goals of public policy making. Two questions seemed to be at the heart of community perspectives on the general plan:

1) Are all neighborhoods treated equally in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of Fresno's built and social environments?

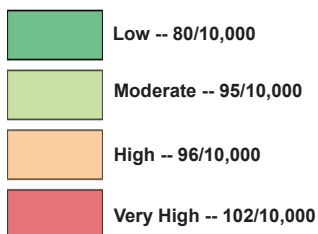
2) Do all neighborhoods have equal opportunity for consideration in decision-making about Fresno's built and social environments?

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Map 3: Impact of Pollution Burden and Poverty on Chronic Disease in Fresno's Neighborhoods



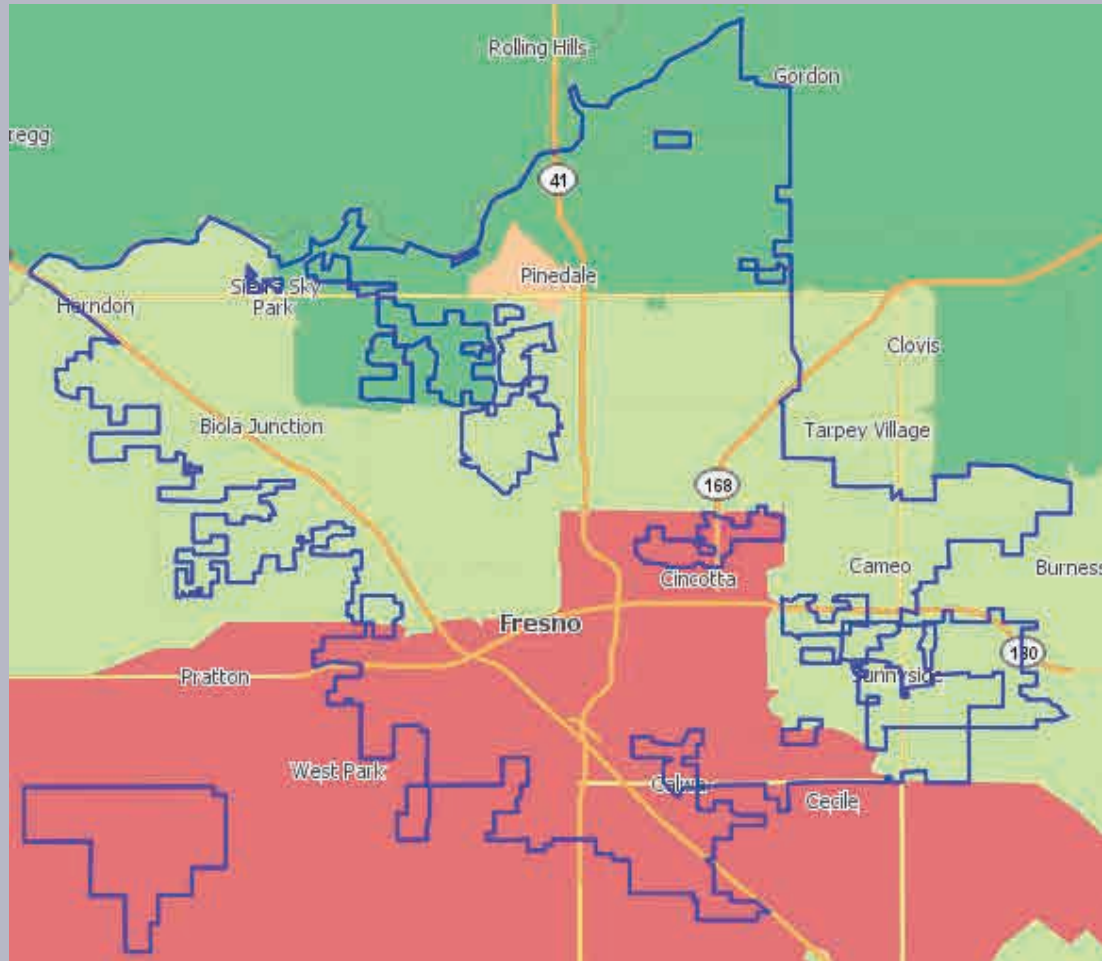
Expected Hospitalizations



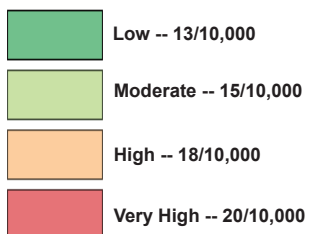
Map 3: This map is drawn from a regional analysis of hospitalizations in the eight San Joaquin Valley counties for respiratory conditions in 2010. After accounting for other differences, the zip codes in red have significantly higher than expected respiratory hospitalizations and also have high levels of poverty and pollution burden. Zip codes in dark green, after accounting for other factors, have significantly lower than expected respiratory hospitalizations and low levels of poverty and pollution. The neighborhoods represented by FLARE suffered greater life disruption and costs for asthma and related diseases in part because of concentrated poverty and pollution exposure.²

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Map 4: Impact of Poverty and Racial Segregation on Chronic Disease in Fresno's Neighborhoods



Expected Hospitalizations



Map 4: This map is drawn from a regional analysis of hospitalizations in the eight San Joaquin Valley counties for diabetes conditions. After accounting for other differences, the zip codes in red have significantly higher than expected diabetes hospitalizations and also have high levels of poverty and higher proportions of people of color residents. Zip codes in dark green, after accounting for other factors, have significantly lower than expected diabetes hospitalizations and low levels of poverty and majority white resident. The neighborhoods represented by FLARE suffered greater life disruption and costs for diabetes in part because of concentrated poverty and segregation.²

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There may be lots of room for debate about how equal distribution and equal process are defined or the relative weight that planners should give to these questions as compared with others as they seek consensus. Recognizing historical and current inequalities in neighborhoods across Fresno, FLARE recognizes that equal benefits/burdens and equal voice are not always possible: they seek explicit discussion of obviously unequal results of public policy and practice.



Data on the distribution of Fresno hazards and facilities, benefits and burdens of city life demonstrate large differences, with more hazards and fewer facilities in traditionally excluded Southwest and Southeast Fresno neighborhoods compared to the most well-off northern suburbs and unincorporated islands.

A fairness perspective calls for explicit attention in the 2035 Fresno General Plan Update to reducing hazards and increasing facilities in

these most impacted neighborhoods.

Community Goals and the General Plan

FLARE engaged with planners and community members in an iterative process around elements of the General Plan Update and commented on the dozens of specific visions and proposals included in the final documents. Important community recommendations have been incorporated in many of the elements. Figure 2 highlights key values for community members as identified by FLARE in its initial work with its communities.

Yet other interests have also shaped the City documents and may seek to shape implementing choices in the coming months and years.

Community members can continue to coalesce around four key themes: **1) a new narrative for Fresno; 2) address unequal burdens; 3) base job creation on community assets and; 4) equal access to neighborhood facilities.**

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1) A New Narrative for Fresno

The story a city tells itself, as well as potential visitors and investors, is crucial to its success. Fresno makes most sense by embracing its complexities. Fresno has often led with its brightest new neighborhoods, rather than with determination and creativity of residents reclaiming gritty urban neighborhoods. Fresno is “downtown” to the nation’s most productive agricultural economy and “home base” for visiting our most prized wild lands. We need to examine how all residents can benefit from these assets. Fresno is also epicenter for a complex history of labor strife, environmental degradation and iconic movements for social change. A proud history as a place where immigrant families have come to start a new life is underscored by lingering reminders of segregated neighborhoods and failed enterprises. It is by acknowledging these complexities that Fresno is understood as an exciting city with rich cultural diversity and distinctive neighborhoods. By seeking both overall growth and targeted investment in communities with the lowest improvements, Fresno can be recognized for innovative approaches to creating prosperity for all residents.

2) Base Job Creation on Community Assets

The General Plan Update highlights ways that city initiatives can promote economic development for all residents and attract residents to mixed-income, mixed-use urban core neighborhoods. It highlights initiatives to attract new professionals and new industries. Such strategies might not ensure new business development and new opportunities for human capital formation benefit residents of Fresno’s poorest neighborhoods. From the community perspective, shorter term strategies that stimulate business activity in existing neighborhood centers would be desirable. They would seek to promote long term growth by using the diversity of our communities and their cultures as strengths. The City could promote the development of new art, culture, hospitality, and retail activities around existing neighborhood centers that build on the unique history and current diversity of each of these areas of the city. New human capital investments (such as education, job training, business incubators, micro-loans) should be specifically designed and delivered in response to development barriers in under-resourced neighborhoods. The General Plan should also promote the development of urban land trusts and other neighborhood organizations with mixed public and private financing for hazard mitigation and in-fill development projects.

3) Address Unequal Burdens

Multiple analyses have shown that Fresno groups and neighborhoods face unequal burdens associated with environmental pollution: current industrial uses, brownfield

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sites (potentially toxic sites from former industrial uses), and proximity to highways are heavily concentrated in and near the Building Healthy Communities neighborhoods. Even as Fresno adopts more environmentally sensitive building and development policies, it can continue to address the unequal burdens of pollution. The City should commit to conducting a comprehensive survey of potential brownfield sites and develop specific mediation plans for these legacy and current pollution sources. Planning can also specifically address buffer zones around industrial uses in core neighborhoods. For neighborhoods that are close to pollution sources and industrial development, work with neighborhoods to identify facilities and other initiatives to partially mitigate impacts.

4) Equal Access to Neighborhood Facilities

The Plan Update struggles with how to conceptualize and finance neighborhood amenities (parks, streetscapes, transportation hubs, cultural and community centers) and relies on community service districts as a major funding tool. Yet these amenities can have important roles in improving life opportunities and spurring economic development. Promoting other General Plan goals requires that neighborhood amenities be understood and financed as citywide resources. Community members have neighborhood specific ideas about how development in general and improvements to neighborhood facilities should proceed.

While the General Plan Update envisions a vibrant network of neighborhood associations to provide guidance in these areas, it does not outline a clear role for these groups. Along with investments in nurturing the development of these groups, the Plan should outline specific responsibilities and powers for these groups. One aspect of development where neighborhood associations could provide significant guidance is around transportation improvements. New transportation plans should be responsive to differences in transit needs between urban core and suburban areas of the city.

Building a Healthy and Fair Fresno

The Fresno General Plan and Zoning Ordinance update projects have been unprecedented in their engagement of community organizations and responsiveness to community voices. As the plan documents are finalized, approved and implemented, community organizations such as FLARE, will continue to raise up the perspectives and concerns of residents within the Building Healthy Communities place and low-income, communities of color citywide. Two broad ideas will continue to influence community perspectives. First, in order to co-create Fresno as a healthy community, the City needs to adopt and implement policies that **reduce hazards and increase neighborhood**

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facilities for communities facing the greatest health risks. Second, in order to co-create Fresno as a fair community, the City needs to **adopt and implement policies that increase equality in access to the benefits of living here.**

We will continue to identify and promote policies based on these perspectives, including efforts to craft a new narrative for Fresno that embraces its complex history of opportunity and oppression, focuses job-creation on the diverse cultural assets of existing communities, addresses unequal exposure to pollution sources, and ensures equal access to community facilities.

References

¹ General Plan and Development Code Update. Development and Resource Management Administration. City of Fresno. <http://www.fresno.gov/Government/DepartmentDirectory/DARM/AdvancedPlanning/About+Project.htm>

² Maps were compiled using the Healthy City mapping tool, US Census Data (2010) and California Office of Statewide Health and Planning Development Data (OSHPD, 2009). Location was analyzed using US Census tract boundaries. The OSHPD dataset consists of hospitalizations in the city of Fresno categorized by ICD-9 codes, as reported by hospital staff during patient admission. Patient residence is based on reported zip code. Disease rates represent the rate of hospitalizations per 10,000 residents for each zip code by disease. The values depicted in the maps were calculated with SPSS using regression analysis controlling for age, race and poverty status. opportunity and oppression, focuses job-creation on the diverse cultural assets of existing communities, addresses unequal exposure to pollution sources, and ensures equal access to community facilities.

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The institute's mission is to improve equity in health and healthcare by developing the region's capacity for policy analysis and program development, implementation and evaluation through integrating and leveraging the resources of California State University, Fresno and the institutions and communities of the San Joaquin Valley.