

# **General Plan Annual Progress Report 2024**



City of Visalia

**Prepared by the City of Visalia, Planning and Preservation  
Department, Planning Division**

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Appendix A Government Code Section 65400

## **Introduction**

This report has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of Government Code Section 65400. Guidance for preparation of the report is provided by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR).

The purpose of the document is to report on the City of Visalia's progress in implementing its General Plan. The document will be provided to the Planning Commission and City Council for their review and submitted to the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

## **General Plan Background**

The State of California requires that every city and county adopt a long-term General Plan. A jurisdiction's General Plan addresses state General Plan requirements. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65302, a General Plan shall consist of a statement of development policies and shall include diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals. General Plans shall also address eight specific topics or "elements," listed in Section 65302. The General Plan may also address other topics the community feels are relevant. Regardless of the format or issues addressed, the Plan must be internally consistent.

The City of Visalia's 2030 General Plan was adopted as a comprehensive update to the General Plan on October 14, 2014. The Plan includes six of the eight elements required by State law: Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Safety, and Noise. Open Space and Conservation are combined, as are Safety and Noise. It also includes two optional elements that address local concerns: Historic Preservation and Parks, Schools, Community Facilities, and Utilities. The General Plan clearly communicates the City's vision of its future and establishes a policy framework to govern decision-making concerning the physical development of the community. It also provides assurances that the community at large will be supported by an adequate range of public services and infrastructure systems.

## **Purpose of the General Plan Annual Progress Report**

California Government Code Section 65400 mandates that cities and counties submit an annual progress report (APR) each year on the General Plan and progress on its implementation to the legislative body, (in this case the City Council), followed by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). The four basic purposes of the annual report are as follows:

- To provide information to assess progress on implementation of the General Plan in accordance with the stated goals, policies, and implementation measures.
- To provide information to identify necessary course adjustments or modifications to the General Plan as a means to improve implementation.

- To provide a clear correlation between land use decisions made during the reporting period, and the goals, policies, and implementation measures in the General Plan.
- To provide information regarding local agency progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the development of housing.

This year will be the City of Visalia's second APR regarding the 2030 General Plan. The APR covers the period of the previous calendar year, 2024. The APR for the General Plan and for the Housing Element of the General Plan have separate reporting requirements and forms, and as such have been prepared as two separate documents.

The rest of this report will present the chronology of adopted amendments to the General Plan through 2024, present major milestones and projects that occurred in the reporting period, a status update of the implementation measures for the General Plan, and finally a summary of any grants received to assist in implementing the General Plan, along with the next areas of focus in the plan's continued implementation.

### **Informational Document**

This document is a reporting document. The material and information provided within does not create or alter policy. Content provided within this document is provided for informational purposes only and is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guidelines Section 15306, which exempts data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

## I. Adopted Amendments to the Plan, Projects, and Accomplishments

### Adopted Amendments

The General Plan remains a current document responsive to the community's needs. Requests for amendments may be submitted by individuals or initiated by the City. Amendments to the Visalia General Plan through December 2024 are listed below.

Amendments to the Visalia General Plan (January 2024 – December 2024)			
General Plan Amendment (GPA) Number	Action	Applicant	Description
GPA 2024-01	Approved <u>Resolution No. 2025-07</u>	City of Visalia	A request by the City of Visalia to adopt a comprehensive update to the Safety Element of the Visalia General Plan, and to adopt a new Environmental Justice Element for inclusion in the Visalia General Plan.
GPA 2024-02	Yet to be scheduled for public hearing.	Derrel's Storage / Greg Dowds	A request by Derrel's Storage to change the land use designation upon APN 098-050-038 from High Density Residential to Commercial Service for a 9.42-acre parcel, and the change of land use designation upon APN 098-050-060 from Low Density Residential to High Density Residential for a 9.08-acre parcel.
GOZ 2024-03	Yet to be scheduled for public hearing.	Derrel's Storage / Greg Dowds	A request by Derrel's Storage to change the zoning designation upon APN 098-050-038 from Multi-family Residential (R-M-3) to Commercial Service Commercial (C-S) for a 9.42-acre parcel, and the change of land use designation upon

			APN 098-050-060 from R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential 5,000 sq. ft. minimum site area) to Multi-family Residential (R-M-3) for a 9.08-acre parcel.
CZA 2024-04	Yet to be scheduled for public hearing.	Derrel's Storage / Greg Dowds	A request by the Derrel's Storage to establish conditions for a storage facility upon APN 098-050-038.
GPA 2024-05	Recommended for approval to the City Council by the Planning Commission on March 24, 2025. Scheduled for City Council public hearing on April 21, 2025.	City of Visalia	A request by the City of Visalia to expand the Urban Growth Boundary by annexing two parcels into the City limits, and to change approximately one acre on the site from Residential Very Low Density land use designation to Parks/Recreation land use designation.

## Building Permits

The Engineering and Building Department received a grand total of 5,236 building permits in 2024. This figure includes new construction and renovations; however, staff will focus primarily on new construction for this section. New single-family residential units accounted for 302 of those permits, while 40 permits were for accessory dwelling units and 69 permits were for new commercial buildings.

In addition to building permits submitted, in the 2024 calendar year, building staff also finalized a total of 2,189 permits. Of that total, there were 317 single-family home production permits, 18 multi-family production permits, 19 custom home permits, and 19 accessory dwelling unit permits. Please note that some of the permits finalized in 2024 would have been submitted in calendar year 2023 as a "new" permit.

Also in 2024, staff received a total of six new residential developments (i.e., tentative maps, parcel maps, SB9 lot splits, etc.). The residential development proposals totaled 455 housing units. Four of these submittals were for residential subdivisions and the remaining two were for in-fill development through minor land divisions (i.e., parcel maps or SB9 lot splits). The housing applications were submitted to the Planning Division for either entitlement or deemed a "by-right" use and reviewed for zoning consistency and development standards or state allowances.

## **Planning Entitlements and Site Plan Review**

The Planning Department also processed a variety of land use permits during 2024, including but not limited to annexations, conditional use permits (CUP), variances, tentative subdivisions maps, parcel maps, and associated environmental reviews. During the past year, the Planning Commission agendas included the following application types:

- 49 Conditional Use Permits
- 6 Tentative Parcel Maps
- 6 Zoning Text Amendments
- 4 Tentative Subdivision Maps
- 3 Annexations
- 1 Variance

Of the projects reviewed by the Planning Commission, eight projects were also presented to the City Council.

## **Other Plans and Projects**

The following discussion summarizes other projects which the City expended substantial efforts in 2024.

### ***Environmental Justice Element***

The City began finalizing work on the Environment Justice Element to meet the requirements set out by the Department of Housing and Community Development when certifying the City's sixth cycle of the Housing Element Update. The drafting of the Environment Justice Element required a considerable amount of time and effort as it involved incorporating a significant public outreach campaign, establishing goals and policies, and implementation measures found in other areas of the General Plan, relevant to the objectives and goals mandated for the Environmental Justice Element. Pursuant to Senate Bill 18, tribes were notified about the proposed Environmental Justice Element adoption and presented an opportunity to request consultation. The Environmental Justice Element has been reviewed by the Planning Commission on January 27, 2025, and was recommended for approval to the City Council. The Environmental Justice Element was then public heard and considered for adoption by the City Council on February 17, and adopted as recommended by the Planning Commission and staff.

### ***2021 Housing Element Update***

The City of Visalia began work on the City's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update during the summer of 2022. This included securing a Regional Local Early Action Planning (REAP) grant and the Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) grant from the State. The City spent a tremendous amount of time and effort in updating its Housing Element with assistance from Mintier Harnish consultants to meet all of the new requirements within the statutory deadline. The 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update was completed and adopted by City Council and submitted to the State Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department in December 2023. The Housing Element was certified by HCD August 2024, and all rezones required within the first year were completed.

### ***Short-term Rentals***

In 2023, the City determined that short-term rentals would require a ministerial permit within all Residential Zoning Districts. Short-term rentals were presented in work session format to the Planning Commission in August 2023 and to City Council in May 2023. With direction provided, staff reviewed how other agencies had addressed short-term rentals and drafted potential regulations for the use in all residential zones. In October 2023 an ordinance was approved by the City Council allowing for the short-term rental of residential properties subject to an approval of a ministerial permit. The City began approving permits for short term rentals in December 2023. Based on public input and recommendations from the Council, an update on the number of short-term rental permits issued and outstanding unpermitted operators will be revisited by the Council in summer of 2024. This meeting will help to better understand whether an ordinance will need to be drafted to further amend the use. The Short-Term Rental Ordinance was approved by the City Council on January 24, 2024.

### ***Zoning Ordinance/General Plan Update***

In the 2024 calendar year, staff has conducted a zoning ordinance text “clean-up” that was adopted by the City Council to further identify was to streamline housing approvals, including the removal of the conditional use permit requirement for re-establishing residential units in the Office Conversion zone for former residential structures that were converted to commercial office space. This process is now listed as a “by-right” use. The removal of the CUP requirement eliminates entitlement processing fees and the public hearing process to re-establish a residential unit.

### ***Specific Plans***

In 2023 the City approved the Carleton Acres and Pratt Family Ranch Specific Plans. These entitlements include an approximate total land area of 563.86-acres and a total housing unit potential of 3,415 units across two development growth boundaries. The Carlton Acres Specific Plan project is the larger of the two, measuring approximately 468.3-acres and the Pratt Family Ranch Specific Plan measuring approximately 95.56-acres. Entitlements for housing subdivisions were approved as part of the specific plan approval and final maps are currently being processed for recordation. In addition to the single-family approvals, one entitlement for multi-family development was reviewed and approved in December 2024.

### ***Storm Water and Sanitary Sewer (Water Reclamation Facility) Master Plan Update***

The City’s Capital Improvement Project engineering staff have been actively working to complete updates to the City’s sanitary sewer and storm water master plans in accordance with the General Plan and the land use diagram. The study area for the update has predominantly been the Tier 3 urban growth boundary with the exception of the waterways and basins located outside the city’s boundary to the east and west. The following General Plan policies specifically apply to the update. These policy descriptions are a summary of the actual policy wording that only focuses on the portion applicable to storm drainage.



- **Policy P-55 (Wastewater)** requires periodic review and updates to development Impact Fees, wastewater connection charges, and monthly service charges to provide adequate funds are collected to operate and maintain existing facilities and to construct new facilities.
- **Policy P-57 (General Utilities)** requires updates to public facility master plans related to infrastructure development to provide existing levels of service that can be maintained for proposed land uses and development densities.
- **Policy P-59 (General Utilities)** requires implementation of public facility master plans through various funding mechanisms including assessment districts, user fees, development Impact Fees, reimbursement agreements, and/or other mechanisms that provide for equitable distribution of development costs.
- **Policy P-1 (Park System Planning)** requires an assessment of opportunities for joint use of city parks with storm water basins.
- **Policy P-46 (Water Conservation)** is a broad policy for the CITY to continue in an active role in regional and local water management planning. This policy focuses on storm water by identifying the configuration of storm water facilities designed to retain and recharge as much storm water as possible within and near the CITY.
- **Policy P-61 (Storm Drainage)** requires the CITY to establish a Storm Water Management Program and adopt a Storm Water Management Ordinance to minimize storm water runoff rates and volumes, control water pollution, meet regulatory requirements, and maximize groundwater recharge. New development will be required to include Low Impact Development (LID) features that reduce impermeable surface areas and increase infiltration.
- **Policy P-62 (Storm Drainage)** requires updating the Storm Water Master Plan to provide site-appropriate solutions that protect surface water quality and meet regulatory requirements as directed by the Storm Water Management Program.
- **Policy P-46 (Implementation)** uses the term “storm water facilities,” and this applies to two types of facilities in the city: basins and waterways. Implementing this policy results in retaining the design storm in basins citywide as much as is practical. The CITY discharges some of its storm water into waterways. These discharges should be prevented from continuing downstream and instead be diverted into off-stream storage basins as much as is practical. There is a priority for implementing this policy for Visalia being a member of the Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency, and the Agency is actively working to develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

## **II. General Plan Elements**

The General Plan details the City's guiding principles for a variety of planning topics and is the roadmap for future development. California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. provides direction and specifications for the content of the General Plan. The following eight elements are required:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Noise
- Safety
- Environmental Justice

The elements may be combined or renamed, but basic requirements must be included. An agency may adopt any type of optional element, such as an Economic Element, at its discretion. Only the Housing Element must be certified by another agency (i.e., HCD). The City of Visalia General Plan consists of the following Elements:

- Land Use
- Historic Preservation
- Circulation
- Parks, Schools, Community Facilities, and Utilities
- Open Space and Conservation
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases
- Safety and Noise

Subtopics are included in the elements to meet California's requirements. The following sections address implementation for each of the County's General Plan Elements.

### **Land Use Element**

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to present a framework to guide future land use decisions and development in Visalia, while also enhancing community character and improving the city's look and feel. The element forms the core of the General Plan, and its policies articulate the community's land use and growth management priorities through 2030.

The element includes the Land Use Diagram, land use classifications, standards for density and intensity, and growth boundaries and phasing. The objectives and policies focus on several distinct areas: economic development; urban boundaries and growth management; rural buffer and edge conditions; community design; infill development incentives; residential neighborhoods; commercial and mixed uses; Downtown and East Downtown; industrial land uses; institutional and civic land uses; and the airport. Together, these policies help define Visalia's physical development and reinforce its commitment to balancing land use requirements with community needs and economic growth, while also allowing for flexibility in implementation

to respond to the real estate market.

### **Historic Preservation Element**

As the oldest Central Valley city south of Stockton, Visalia hosts an impressive collection of historic sites and structures, including four that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Numerous distinctive architectural styles are present in Visalia, concentrated in the city's historic core; particularly notable examples are recorded in the city's local registry.

The Historic Preservation Element features a summary of Visalia's historic resources and its existing historic district. It presents the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and identifies other complementary programs, as well as factors that may have the effect of discouraging historic preservation. The Element presents a set of objectives and policies that reflect recommendations of the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, as confirmed by the General Plan Update Review Committee (GPURC).

### **Circulation Element**

The Circulation Element of the 2030 General Plan is intended to provide guidance and specific actions to ensure the continued safe and efficient operation of Visalia's circulation system. The Element is based on a fundamental philosophy that traffic conditions in the City can be managed through a comprehensive program of transportation planning, land use planning, and growth management strategies. This Element includes provisions for roadways, transit, aviation, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation modes, as well as parking conditions.

The Circulation Element responds directly to the Government Code [Section 65302(b)], which requires "a circulation element consisting of the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, any military airports and ports, and other local public utilities and facilities, all correlated with the land use element of the plan."

State Law recognizes that circulation and land use are closely related and requires that policies in this Element and the Land Use Element be linked. Careful integration of the City's traffic and circulation policies with its land use policies will ensure that there is sufficient roadway capacity to accommodate traffic generated by planned future development. The City is committed to designing a system of regional routes, local roads, public transit and bicycle and pedestrian pathways that will enhance the community and protect the environment.

The Land Use Element contains policies related to the physical framework for development that the circulation system is designed to serve all transportation users including vehicles, trucks, bicyclists and pedestrians. This Element also addresses landscaping along major streets and planning for street connectivity in new neighborhoods. It discusses how to create pedestrian-friendly environments and design for alternate modes of transportation. The Noise Element of the General Plan includes policies to alleviate noise generated by traffic conditions.

### **Parks, Schools, Community Facilities, and Utilities**

This element presents Visalia's policies and programs for the development and maintenance of parks, schools, and other fundamental building blocks for new neighborhoods to be built over the next two decades. As presented in the Land Use Element, new neighborhoods are designed to protect and enhance community assets, including small town character and a strong sense of community. Policies in this chapter also reinforce the linkages between schools and parks envisioned in the Transportation Element, with roadways, bikeways, trails, safe routes to schools and pedestrian facilities. Finally, this chapter presents objectives and policies for the fire and police services, water supply and conservation, wastewater and solid waste collection, treatment and disposal, and utilities that are essential to support urban development.

### **Open Space and Conservation Element**

The Open Space and Conservation Element establishes policies for the conservation of natural resources in Visalia. The Element addresses open space resources; land resources including farmland and minerals; water resources including groundwater and waterways; biological resources; and cultural and historic resources. Air quality and greenhouse gases are also important environmental issues for the Planning Area and are addressed in Chapter 7.

The City of Visalia defines open space as any parcel of land or body of water that is essentially unimproved and undeveloped or is used for recreation. This includes agricultural land, recreation areas, areas with hazardous conditions, and conservation areas as well as open space to shape and limit urban form. Currently there are approximately 39,760 acres in agricultural use, accounting for 65 percent of all land in the Planning Area. In addition, there are about 400 acres of land in and along waterways or canals, and 1,167 acres of park land.

### **Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases Element**

Visalia is located in the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB). The Air Quality monitoring has been conducted in the SJVAB for many years. While new and innovative pollution controls have made the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) a leader in the rate of improvement, the region is not in attainment for numerous criteria air pollutants and the air basin still has poor air quality. Much of this pollution is attributed to the Valley's topography, meteorology, two major highways, and intensive agricultural uses. In 2011, the major sources of air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley were heavy duty trucks, other mobile sources, autos and light trucks, and fuel combustion from stationary sources. Ozone and particulate matter are the two largest contributors to the Valley's poor air quality. The causes and effects of these and other air pollutants are discussed in the next section. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) operates a regional network of air pollution monitoring stations that provide information on ambient concentrations of criteria air pollutants and toxic air contaminants. In Tulare County, CARB measures certain air pollutants, such as carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM-2.5). Data is collected at five active air quality stations located in Tulare County. The station in Visalia is on North Church Street

### **Safety and Noise Element**

The purpose of the Safety and Noise Element is to identify the natural and man-made public health and safety hazards that exist within the City, and to establish preventative and responsive policies and programs to mitigate their potential impacts. This Element addresses geologic hazards, flood hazards, hazardous materials, wildfire hazards, and safety services. It also includes policies on natural hazards mitigation planning, which respond to the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's implementing regulations and support the County's Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Airport safety is addressed in the Land Use and Circulation Elements, as well as in the Noise section of this chapter. The purpose of the Noise section is to identify the noise sources that exist within the City, and to establish policies and programs to mitigate their potential impacts through both preventative and responsive measures. The regulation of some noise sources such as railroad operations and aircraft operations is overseen by state and federal agencies. This element has a direct correlation with the land use, circulation, and housing elements. It guides the location of industrial land uses and transportation facilities, since they are common sources of excessive noise levels. This element also guides the location of particularly noise-sensitive uses, such as residences, schools, churches, and hospitals, so that they may be less affected by noise.

### **III. General Plan and Zoning Code Updates**

The City comprehensively updated its General Plan on October 14, 2014. One of the follow-up actions was to update the City's Zoning Code per the direction provided in the General Plan. During the past several years staff continues to review and periodically update the Zoning Code based primarily on State changes to housing law.

### **IV. Conclusion**

The General Plan is the City's constitution and guiding vision. Due to the world's ever-changing nature, upkeep and maintenance of the General Plan is a continuous process. The City implements the General Plan's vision on a day-to-day basis in its many planning projects, and strives to include the public in the decision-making process.

The City provided leadership and participated in many planning activities in 2023, as identified in this report. It continued its project review responsibilities to further the General Plan's goals, policies, programs, and implementation measures.

## **Appendix A**

### **Government Code Section 65400**

(a) After the legislative body has adopted all or part of a general plan, the planning agency shall do both of the following:

(1) Investigate and make recommendations to the legislative body regarding reasonable and practical means for implementing the general plan or element of the general plan, so that it will serve as an effective guide for orderly growth and development, preservation and conservation of open-space land and natural resources, and the efficient expenditure of public funds relating to the subjects addressed in the general plan.

(2) Provide by April 1 of each year an annual report to the legislative body, the Office of Planning and Research, and the Department of Housing and Community Development that includes all of the following:

(A) The status of the plan and progress in its implementation.

(B) The progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs determined pursuant to Section 65584 and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 65583.

The housing element portion of the annual report, as required by this paragraph, shall be prepared through the use of forms and definitions adopted by the Department of Housing and Community Development pursuant to the rulemaking provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2). Prior to and after adoption of the forms, the housing element portion of the annual report shall include a section that describes the actions taken by the local government towards completion of the programs and status of the local government's compliance with the deadlines in its housing element. That report shall be considered at an annual public meeting before the legislative body where members of the public shall be allowed to provide oral testimony and written comments. The report may include the number of units that have been substantially rehabilitated, converted from non-affordable to affordable by acquisition, and preserved consistent with the standards set forth in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c) of Section 65583.1. The report shall document how the units meet the standards set forth in that subdivision.

(C) The degree to which its approved general plan complies with the guidelines developed and adopted pursuant to Section 65040.2 and the date of the last revision to the general plan.

- (b) If a court finds, upon a motion to that effect, that a city, county, or city and county failed to submit, within 60 days of the deadline established in this section, the housing element portion of the report required pursuant to subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) that substantially complies with the requirements of this section, the court shall issue an order or judgment compelling compliance with this section within 60 days. If the city, county, or city and county fails to comply with the court's order within 60 days, the plaintiff or petitioner may move for sanctions, and the court may, upon that motion, grant appropriate sanctions. The court shall retain jurisdiction to ensure that its order or judgment is carried out. If the court determines that its order or judgment is not carried out within 60 days, the court may issue further orders as provided by law to ensure that the purposes and policies of this section are fulfilled. This subdivision applies to proceedings initiated on or after the first day of October following the adoption of forms and definitions by the Department of Housing and Community Development pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (a), but no sooner than six months following that adoption.