City of Visalia, CA

Windshield Survey

September 2024

VISALIA

bakertilly

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Introduction

History of Visalia

The City of Visalia is located along State Highway 198, east of State Highway 99, in the southern portion of the agricultural San Joaquin Valley. Visalia is the oldest San Joaquin Valley town, and the largest in Tulare County, which has an overall population of 477,544.

Nathanial Vise, one of the original inhabitants of a fort built at Four Creeks – named after the watersheds and creeks which emptied in the area from the Sierra Nevada Mountains – was tasked with surveying the town. He envisioned the area becoming the capital seat of Tulare County, and one year later in 1853, Visalia did become the county seat. The City of Visalia takes its name from Visalia, Kentucky, the original home of Nathanial Vise, after whose family the Kentucky city was named.

The City of Visalia is located between Bakersfield and Fresno. The gold rush along the Kern River led to growth in Visalia. Many of its early inhabitants were gold miners who hailed from the South. Many failed miners stopped and remained in Visalia on their journeys home.

On September 15, 1857, John Butterfield, a businessman and financier out of Utica, New York, won a six-year, $600,000-a-year contract to transport U.S. mail twice a week between St. Louis, Missouri, and San Francisco. To deliver the mail year-round, from St. Louis to San Francisco in 25 days, Butterfield's route went south through Texas, west through New Mexico Territory, passing Fort Yuma Arizona, and to Visalia before rolling on to San Francisco. Saloons and hotels were built near the stage stop which aided commerce.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Camp Babbit was constructed. The Camp was constructed by the federal government to quell sympathy for the Southern cause due to the number of Southern migrants residing in Visalia at the time. Union soldiers were not tasked with fighting but did keep order in the area. During this period, in 1874, Visalia was incorporated as a city with a common council and an ex-officio Mayor and President, and today is a charter city. The City of Visalia continued to grow at a steady pace due to its livestock, railroads, hydroelectrical power and irrigation water, which makes the area very suitable for agriculture. Today, many of Visalia's historic downtown buildings comprise the Main Street shopping and dining district. Visalia is also located in close proximity to Sequoia National Park.

According to the 2022 1-Year American Community Survey (ACS), the population of Visalia is 143,965, up 1.8% and 15.7% from the 2020 and 2010 US Census, respectively. The US Census Bureau's Gazetteer Files show that Visalia has a total land area of 37.91 square miles. The City's Finance Department – Housing Division, is responsible for carrying out projects and programs with the use of funds received from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The US Census Bureau reported a slight decrease in average household size in Visalia from 3.00 to 2.99 from 2020 to 2022, compared to an average household size of 2.98 persons per household in 2010. These slight changes are likely indicative of household formation changes remaining relatively constant between 2010 through 2022. Across the same time period, housing stock has increased by 9.9% in Visalia according to Esri, but slowed substantially between 2020 to 2022, with housing stock increasing only 0.2%, less than the city's annual average increase of 0.8% between 2010 and 2022.

Methodology

A windshield survey is a component of data-gathering to assess housing conditions. It gives insight to real-time existing conditions that may not have been present at previous inspections of the housing units. Baker Tilly Advisory Group, LP ("Baker Tilly"), in collaboration with City staff and respondents from citizen surveys directed and identified areas of Visalia to complete the windshield survey. Baker Tilly and City staff conducted these surveys on September 4th – 5th and 18th, 2024. Baker Tilly and City staff drove through the identified neighborhoods and randomly selected homes to profile to ensure impartiality and provide a better reflection of the neighborhood being surveyed. These homes were considered a representative sample of conditions within the neighborhood. Using a rubric created jointly by Baker Tilly and City staff, the following variables were identified:

1. Type of building (single family/multifamily/mixed use)
2. Overall neighborhood condition
3. Roof Condition
4. Siding Condition
5. Landscaping Condition
6. Fence Condition
7. Right of Way Condition
8. Average age of housing stock

Variables 2 through 8 were given ratings of poor, fair, good, or great. The ratings are defined as follows:

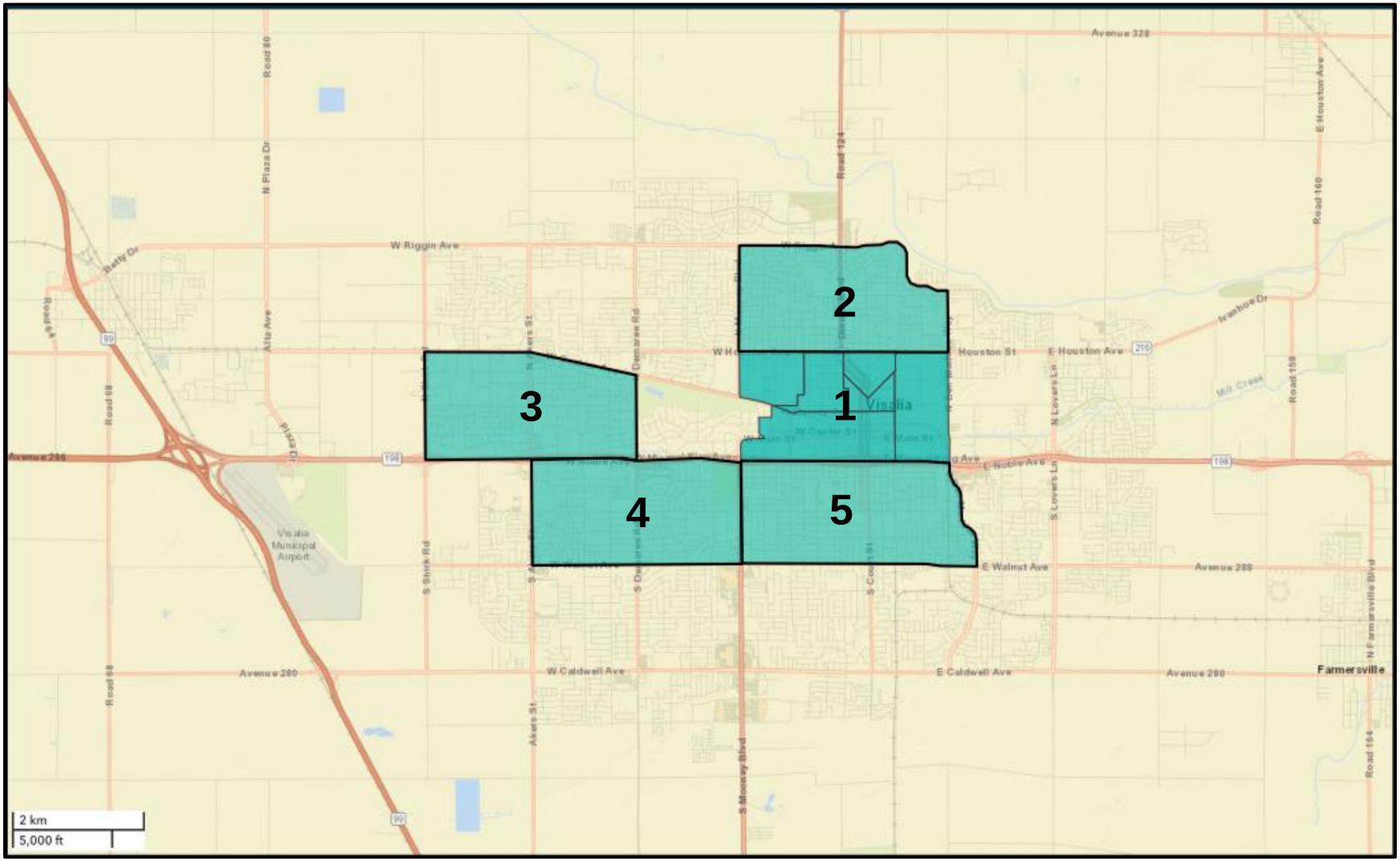
Definitions of Ratings
Poor
Homes constructed prior to 1978
Showing signs of deferred maintenance
Unkempt yard, siding falling off, roof needs replacement
Fair
Home greater than 30 years old
Showing signs of needing renovation
Home may need rehabilitation soon
Good
Home between 15-30 years old
Home may be becoming slightly outdated
Will need slight renovations in the near future
Well-Kept
New home
Well maintained yard with new roof and siding

Boundaries

Five neighborhoods were analyzed within the City of Visalia, as well as twenty-one total subsections of these neighborhoods. These neighborhoods consist of the following Block Groups as well as the following general boundaries:

1. Oval Park Neighborhood: Block Groups: 11.011, 11.012, 11.021, 11.022. 12.001, and 13.051
2. North Mooney to North Ben Maddox Way, bound by: North Mooney Boulevard to the west, West Riggin to the north, North Ben Maddox Way to the east, and West Houston Avenue to the south
3. North Shirk Road to North Demaree Road, bound by: North Shirk Road to the west, West Goshen Avenue to the north, North Demaree Road to the east, and County Highway 198 to the south.
4. South Akers Street to South Mooney Boulevard, bound by: South Akers Street to the west, County Highway 198 to the north, South Mooney Boulevard to the east, West Walnut Avenue to the south.
5. South Mooney Boulevard to South Ben Maddox Way, bound by: South Mooney Boulevard to the west, County Highway 198 to the north, South Ben Maddox Way to the east, and West Walnut Avenue to the south.

Boundary Map of Area Surveyed



Housing Data

According to Esri, there are 48,470 occupied housing units within the City of Visalia as of 2024. Of these 28,653 (59.1%) are owner occupied, while 17,978 (37.1%) are renter occupied, with the remaining 1,882 (3.9%) housing units being vacant. As of 2024, the median price of a home within Visalia is $401,500, up 5.4% from 2023. According to CoStar and apartments.com, rents range from $1,239 for a studio apartment to $2,599 for a 4-bedroom apartment.

The windshield survey data examined a representative sample of single-family, owner-occupied housing units, as well as multifamily renter occupied housing units. Units analyzed in this report were in areas outlined by community members as locations that are perceived to be more likely to contain substandard housing and infrastructure than other portions of the City of Visalia.

Single-Family Homes

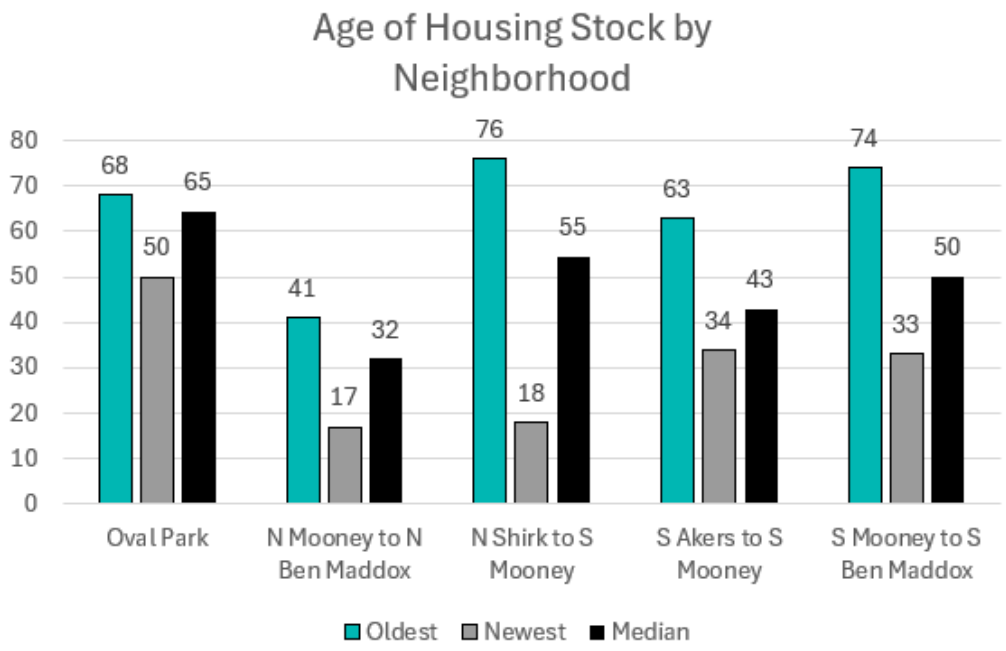
The findings below were calculated using both on-site data collected as well as information available from Realtor.com, Zillow.com, Trulia.com, the US Census Bureau, and Esri. It should be noted that while many of the homes surveyed had available information on these websites, there were a few outliers with no detailed information available. In those cases, the default was to leave those sections blank and provide only the information that was available to the City.

Average Age of Housing Units

The average housing unit within Visalia was built in 1987 and is currently 37 years old, as can be seen in the table below. Of the twenty-one areas surveyed for the Windshield Survey, buildings in these areas skew older than the median for the city and were built in 1974 and are currently 51 years old. Overall, the housing stock of the City of Visalia consists of older homes.

Housing Unit by Year Structure Built		
Year Structure Built	Number	% of Total Units
Built 2020 or later	321	0.7%
Built 2020 to 2019	4,731	9.9%
Built 2000 to 2009	10,001	21.0%
Built 1990 to 1999	6,589	13.8%
Built 1980 to 1989	7,126	15.0%
Built 1970 to 1979	9,079	19.1%
Built 1960 to 1969	3,384	7.1%
Built 1950 to 1959	3,445	7.2%
Built 1940 to 1949	1,527	3.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	1,379	2.9%
Total	**47,191**	**100%**

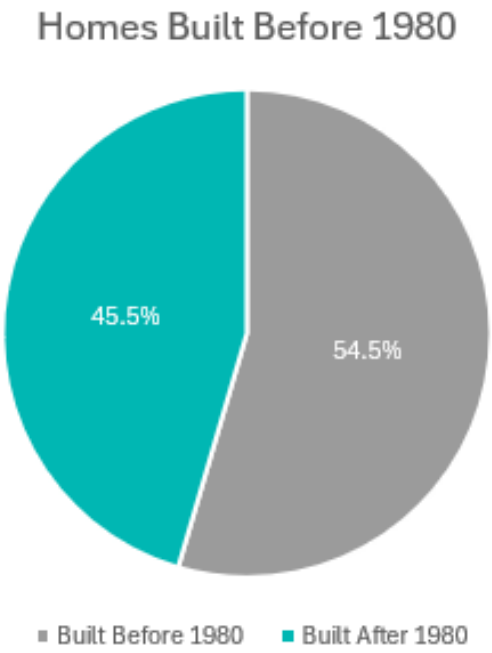
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ASC Housing Summary ESRI Forecasts for 2018-2022.



Number of Single-Family Homes Built Before 1980

Lead-based paint was widely used in the United States in homes prior to 1978. The U.S. Congress banned the use of lead- based paint in residential structures and environments in 1971 (United States Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act) but this regulation was not implemented until 1978 by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission).

As shown in the previous table, there are currently 18,814 (39.9%) housing units within Visalia that were built before 1980. Additionally, of the twenty-one areas analyzed, the median homes within twelve areas were built before 1980, meaning over half of the homes in the analyzed neighborhoods may have lead-based paint.



Number of Bedrooms of Single-Family Homes

According to HUD, households with 1.01 to 1.5 persons per room are considered overcrowded, while households with more than 1.51 persons per room are considered severely overcrowded. According to the 2022 1-Year ACS, there are currently 970 total overcrowded owner-occupied units (3.4%) and 2,028 total overcrowded renter-occupied units (11.1%). Overcrowding impacts renter occupied housing more substantially, thus the neighborhoods with greater multi-family buildings (North Shirk to South Mooney and South Akers to South Mooney) may have greater overcrowding issues than other neighborhoods.

Over Crowding
Owner and Renter Households

	1.01 to 1.50 Occupants per Room	>1.51 Occupants per Room	Total Overcrowded	Total Occupied Units	Percent Overcrowded
Owner-Occupied	623	347	**970**	28,743	3.4%
Renter-Occupied	1,770	258	**2,028**	18,232	11.1%

Source: 2022 1-Year ACS

Price of Single-Family Homes

Over the past five years, the median home value in the City of Visalia has increased by 54.1%, with the median gross rent increasing by 53.4%. These increases are substantially greater than the previous five-year increase (2012-2017) of 43.8% and 4.3% for home value and gross rents, respectively. These increases are greater than the State of California and the United States as a whole. Median home value and median gross rents have increased 40.5% and 29.2% and 47.5% and 28.5%, respectively, within the State of California and the United States. These significant increases are due to a variety of factors in this five year span, including low interest rates, high construction costs, and remote work allowing flexibility for workers to move outside of urban areas, causing an increase in demand outside of urban cores.

Median Home Value and Gross Rent
(2017-2022)

	2012	2017	2022	Percent Change (2012-2017)	Percent Change (2017-2022)
Median Home Value	$162,600	$233,900	$360,500	43.8%	54.1%
Median Gross Rent	$927	$967	$1,483	4.3%	53.4%

Sources: 2012, 2017, and 2022 1-Year ACS

Physical Conditions Analysis

While analyzing the five neighborhoods and the overall twenty-one areas within these neighborhoods, a physical conditions analysis was done for a variety of variables. These variables included the conditions of roofing, siding, landscaping, fencing, and right of way. Overall neighborhood condition was determined by accumulating the rankings of these variables. These variables were ranked poor, fair, good, or well-kept. Descriptions of each ranking are described within each section.

Of the twenty-one areas analyzed on these five variables, a vast majority were in good condition (73.3%) with the remainder split between poor (12.4%) and fair (14.3%). No area analyzed was considered in well-kept condition meaning all areas have opportunity for some improvement. Of the thirteen poor rate variables, twelve were within the Oval Park neighborhood, making Oval Park the neighborhood which could benefit from the most improvements.

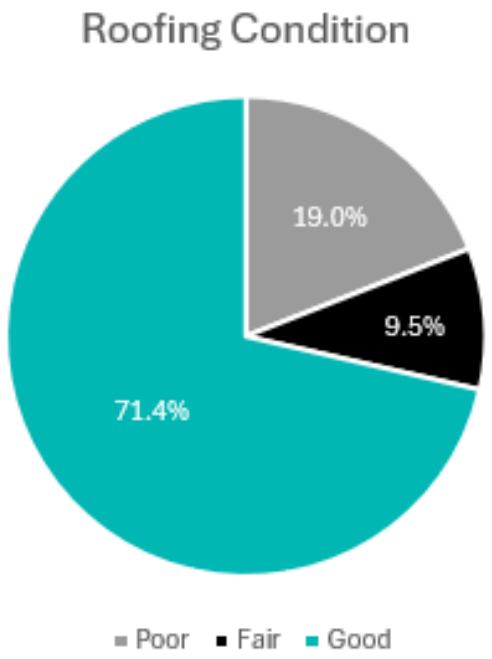
Additionally, of these twenty-one areas, it was determined if they predominantly consisted of single-family, multi-family, or mixed-use buildings. Predominant building use was split up fairly evenly, with single-family and mixed-use buildings making up 38.1% of the analyzed areas, and multi-family making up 23.8% of analyzed areas. It does not appear that there is one building type that is in worse condition than any others. The data shows a greater relationship between building location and condition, than it does to building type and condition. For example, single-family buildings in the Oval Park neighborhood are predominantly ranked poor or fair, while single-family buildings in the North Mooney to North Ben Maddox neighborhood are predominantly ranked good. Condition of building types is further analyzed in a later section.

Roofing

During the windshield survey, Baker Tilly and City staff observed the roof condition of the buildings that were surveyed. Roofs were determined to be Poor/Fair/Good/Well-Kept (as defined below).

Roof
Poor
Visible holes
Significant broken or missing tiles
Frame is visibly compromised
Fair
Old but intact structure
Color is faded
May need repairs soon
Good
Structure is solid
Slight color fading
May be in need of minor repairs
Well-Kept
New roof
Structure is solid

Overall, there were four areas with poor roofing (19.0%), two areas with fair roofing (9.5%) and fifteen areas with good roofing (71.4%). All four of the poor rankings are within the Oval Park neighborhood, meaning Oval Park could use the most assistance for updating roofing. The South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood contained the two examples of fair roofing, making this the next neighborhood most in need.

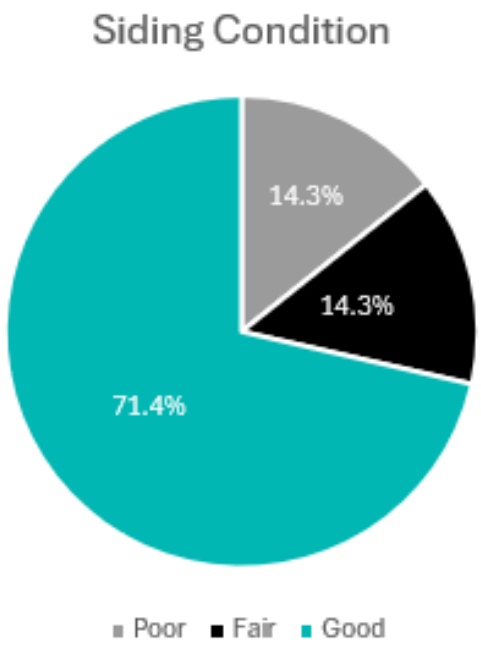


Siding

During the windshield survey, Baker Tilly and City staff observed the siding condition of the buildings that were surveyed. Siding was determined to be Poor/Fair/Good/Well-Kept (as defined below).

Siding
Poor
Cracked or missing stucco/side panels
Paint is significantly faded
Fair
Portions of siding may be missing or broken
Color is faded
May need repairs soon
Good
Structure is solid
Slight color fading
May be in need of minor repairs
Well-Kept
New siding
Color is not faded

Overall, there were three areas with poor siding (14.3%), three areas with fair siding (14.3%) and fifteen areas with good siding (71.4%). All three of the poor rankings are within the Oval Park neighborhood, meaning Oval Park could use the most assistance for updating siding. The South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood contained two of the three examples of fair siding, making this the next neighborhood most in need.

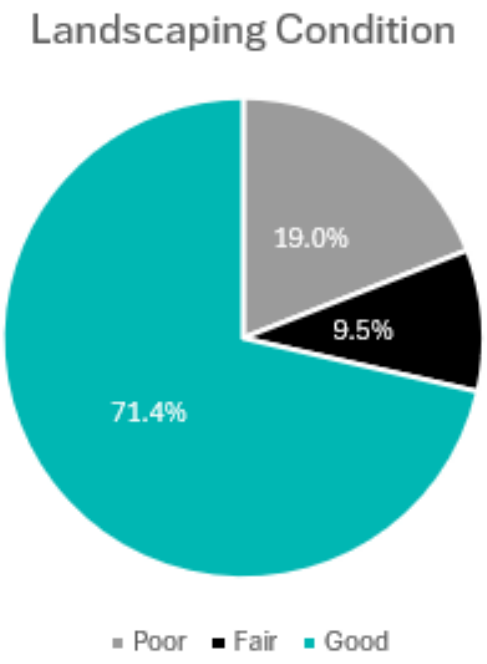


Landscaping

Overall, the homes surveyed displayed good landscaping. Of the 7% of homes observed to have "poor" landscaping, they tend to cluster in the North part of the City of Visalia (as shown in the map below).

Landscaping
Poor
No landscaping, dirt yard
Overgrown weeds
Fair
Some landscaping (grass and plants)
Weeds are present
Good
Grass and plants in flower beds present
Few weeds present
Well-Kept
Well maintained and groomed yard
Visibly taken care of and may include decorations

Overall, there were four areas with poor landscaping (19.0%), two areas with fair landscaping (9.5%) and fifteen areas with good landscaping (71.4%). Three of the four poor rankings are within the Oval Park neighborhood, meaning Oval Park could use the most assistance for updating landscaping. The South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood contained one example of fair and poor landscaping making this the next neighborhood most in need.

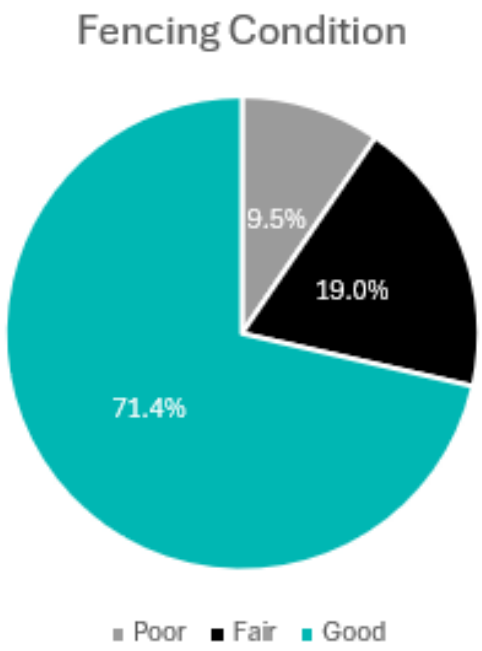


Fencing

From observational notes, most of the fencing rated poor was due to missing fencing, or chain fencing that is rusted and/or broken.

Fencing
Poor
Fence is broken
Panels need to be replaced
Fair
Older fencing
Chain link fencing
Structurally functional but in need of repairs
Good
Fence built within the last 10 years
Structurally functional
May be in need of minor repairs
Well-Kept
New fence
No panels missing or broken

Overall, there were two areas with poor fencing (9.5%), four areas with fair fencing (19.0%) and fifteen areas with good fencing (71.4%). All of the poor rankings and two of the fair rankings are within the Oval Park neighborhood, meaning Oval Park could use the most assistance for updating fencing. The South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood contained two examples of fair and poor fencing making this the second most in need neighborhood.

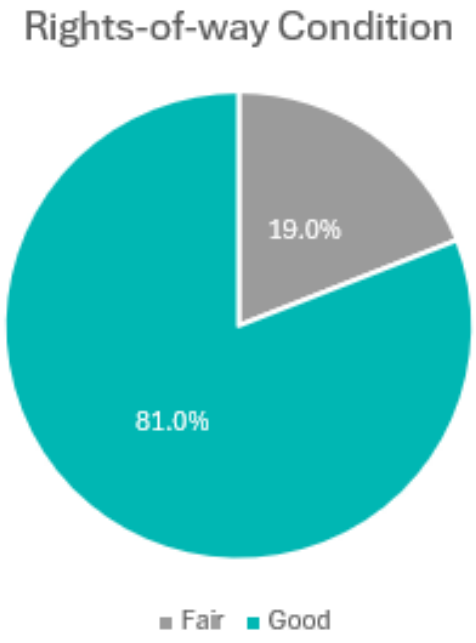


Condition of Right-of-Way

The City of Visalia expressed interest in noting the conditions of the public right-of- way, specifically ADA compliant sidewalks and the condition of existing sidewalks. A poor rating not only indicates that the existing right-of-way needs maintenance, but also that there may be no right-of-way in existence at all.

Right-of-Way
Poor
No right-of-way
Significant cracks, missing pieces
Significant weeds
Fair
Cracks but no missing pieces
Curb is intact
Some weeds
Good
Cement and curb intact with minimal cracks
Few weeds
May be in need of minor repairs
Well-Kept
Cement and curb intact with no weeds or cracks
ADA compliant

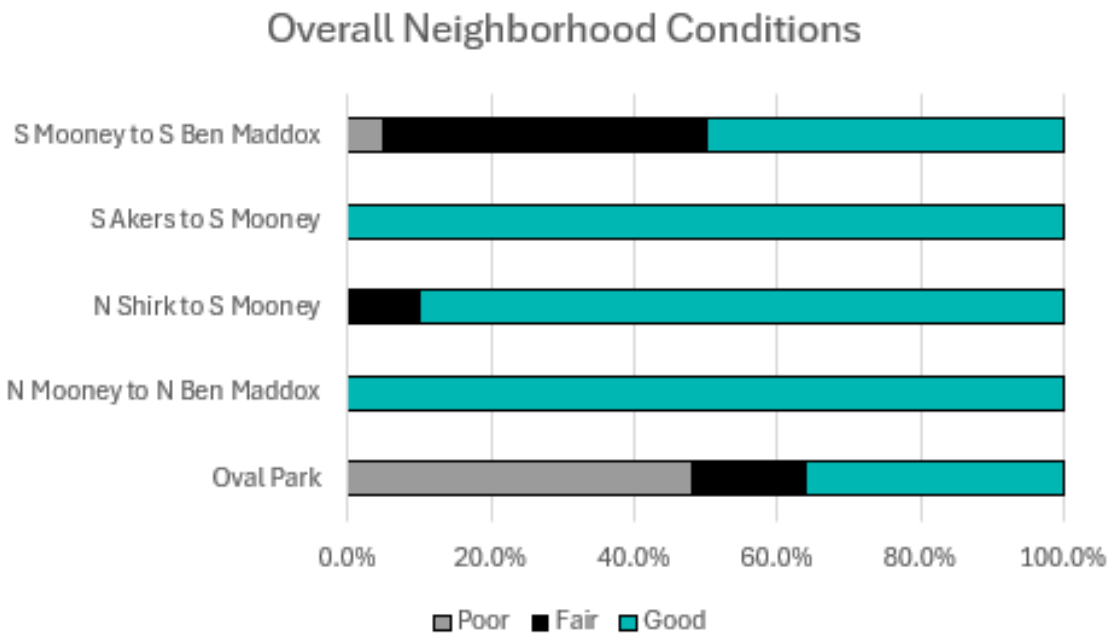
Overall, there were four areas with rights-of-way in fair condition (19.0%), and seventeen areas with rights-of-way in good condition (81.0%). The fair ratings are split between the North Shirk to South Mooney neighborhood, as well as the South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood, indicating rights-of-way repair could be split between these two neighborhoods to improve their quality.



Neighborhood Conditions

Overall neighborhood conditions were determined based on the accumulation of the previously outlined variables. Within the five neighborhoods, a vast majority of roofing, siding, landscaping, fencing, and rights-of-ways, were in good condition. Of the five neighborhoods, three of them (North Mooney to North Ben Maddox, North Shirk to South Mooney, and South Akers to South Mooney) had a combined 96.7% of their variables considered good, with 3.3% of variables considered fair. These neighborhoods are overall in good condition and will not need substantial renovations in the near future.

The remaining two neighborhoods, Oval Park and South Mooney to South Ben Maddox, showed signs of buildings in fair or even poor condition. Within Oval Park, 48.0% of variables were considered poor, with 16.0% considered fair, and 36.0% considered good. Within South Mooney to South Ben Maddox, 5.0% were considered poor, 45.0% were considered fair, and 50% were considered good. In both neighborhoods, rights-of-way conditions were predominantly good, with a few instances of fair quality rights-of-way. A vast majority of poor and fair ranked variables were for roofing, siding, and landscaping. Future economic development activity by the city should be focused on the Oval Park neighborhood, followed by the South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood, targeting roofing and siding, if possible.

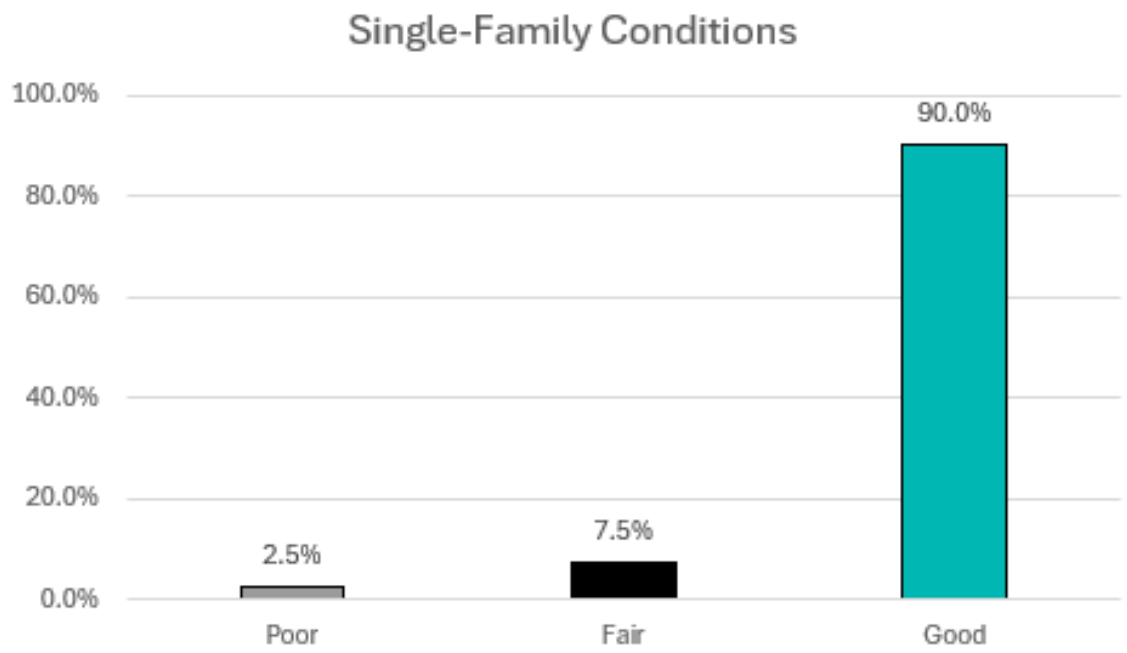


Building Type Analysis

During the course of the assessment, it was determined whether the areas analyzed had predominantly single-family, multi-family, or mixed use neighborhoods. As was previously mentioned, it appears there is a greater relationship between building location and condition, opposed to building type and condition.

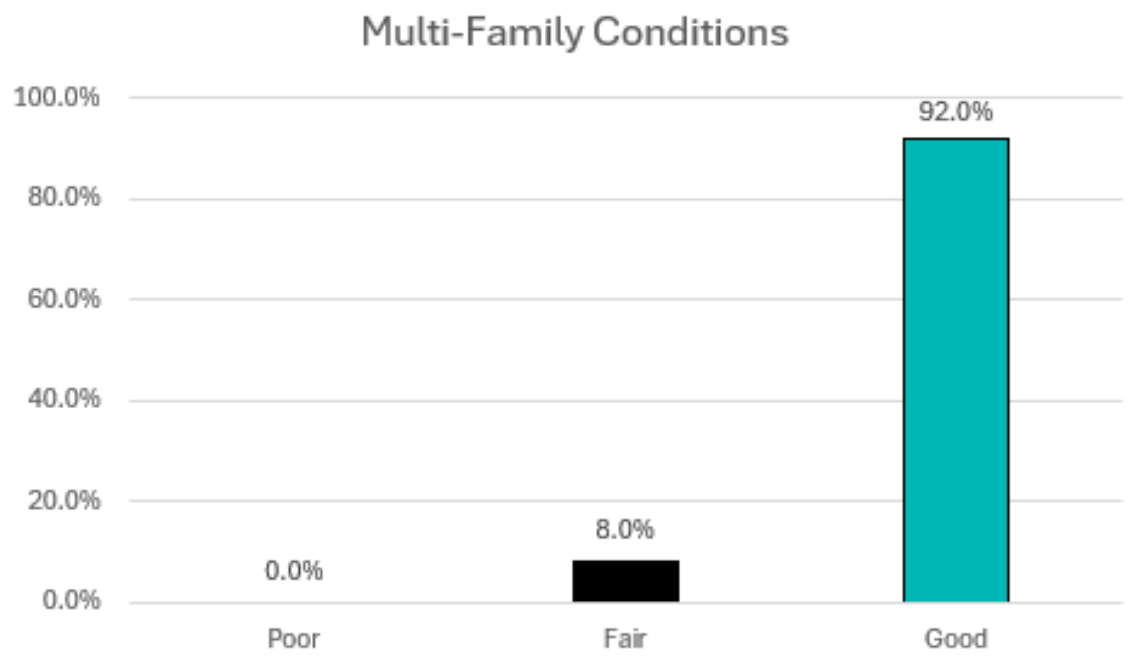
Single-Family

Of the twenty-one total analyzed areas, eight were predominantly single-family homes. Of the five variables used to analyze condition (roofing, siding, landscaping, fencing, right-of-way), only 2.5% of these variables were considered poor and only 7.5% of these variables were considered fair. The remaining 90.0% of variables were considered good. It should be noted that the one instance of a poor variable and three instances of fair variables were observed in one portion in the Oval Park neighborhood that was predominantly single-family.



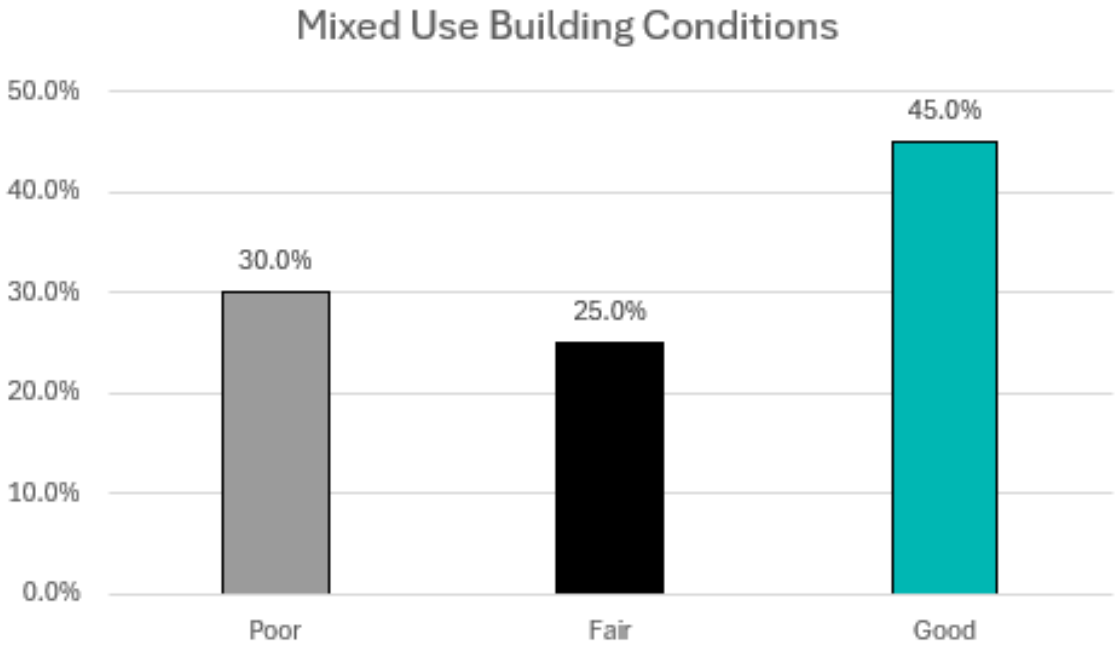
Multi-Family

Of the twenty-one total analyzed areas, five were predominantly multi-family buildings. Using the five previously mentioned variables to analyze condition, these building types had no variables in poor condition and only two in fair condition (8.0%). The remaining variables were all ranked good (92.0%). Overall, multi-family buildings within the analyzed areas are in good condition and only slight renovations are needed to improve these areas.



Mixed Use Neighborhoods

Of the twenty-one total analyzed areas, eight were predominantly mixed use. Of the previously stated five variables used to analyze condition, 30.0% of these variables were considered poor and 25.0% of these variables were considered fair. The remaining 45.0% of variables were considered good. Of the building types, it appears that mixed use neighborhoods are in the worst condition. However, a majority of the poor and fair ratings were within the Oval Park neighborhood, with several other fair ratings and one poor rating within the South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood. If the Oval Park neighborhood were excluded from the analysis, only 5.0% of variables were considered poor, with 45.0% being considered fair and 50.0% being considered good. This indicates that the Oval Park neighborhood should be the target of City funds and economic development initiatives, opposed to mixed use areas specifically being an issue. Secondarily, the South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood could also benefit from revitalization efforts.



Summary

The majoirty of neighborhoods in the City of Visalia are in good condition. Of the twenty-one areas analyzed, 73.3% were in good condition, with the remainder split between poor (12.4%) and fair (14.3%). The neighborhood rights-of-way were in the best condition, with no instances of poor rights-of-way, while landscaping and roofing were in the worst condition with 19.0% of areas analyzed being considered poor.

Of the building types analyzed, mixed use neighborhoods were in the worst condition, with 30.0% of these areas considered in poor condition and 25.0% considered in fair condition. However, a majority of the poor and fair ratings were within the Oval Park neighborhood, with several other fair ratings and one poor rating within the South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood. Multi-family areas were considered to be in the best condition, as 92.0% of areas with predominantly multi-family buildings were in good condition, with no examples of poor conditions. Single-family areas were closely followed with 90.0% of variables considered good and only 2.5% considered poor.

Overall, the main areas in need of City assistance and economic development is the Oval Park neighborhood, which was in the worst condition with 48.0% of areas in poor condition. The next target area should be the South Mooney to South Ben Maddox neighborhood, which had 45.0% of areas in fair condition. As previously mentioned, the overall City neighborhood conditions are considered to be good, but no areas were considered well-kept. After needs in the two target neighborhoods are addressed, small renovations and improvements could be done throughout the City to improve overall physical condition.