



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	Public Hearing and Ordinance Adoption - - General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02: A request by the City of Visalia to change the land use designation on a 21-acre parcel from Parks/Recreation to Commercial Mixed Use. - First Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-04 to adopt Change of Zone No. 2025-03: A request by the City of Visalia to change the zoning designation on a 21-acre parcel from QP (Quasi-Public) to C-MU (Commercial Mixed Use). Location: The site is located on the northwest corner of Akers Street and Riggins Avenue, within the City of Visalia, County of Tulare (APN: 077-100-103).		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. Attachment 1 -- Figure 1, 2, & 3 report references, 2. Attachment 2 -- Resolution 2026-37 - IS ND, 3. Attachment 3 -- Resolution 2026-38 - GPA 2025-02, 4. Attachment 4 -- Ordinance 2026-04 for COZ 2025-03, 5. Attachment 5a -- NW Parks Map 2026, 6. Attachment 5b -- NW Parks Neighborhood and Pocket 2026, 7. Attachment 6 -- Non Residential Land Use Map, 8. Attachment 7 -- Allowed Uses Table for C-MU, 9. Attachment 8 -- SCH 2026041213_DTSC Comment, 10. Attachment 9 -- PC Staff Report GPA-COZ Akers-Riggins, 11. Attachment 10 -- Initial Study Neg Dec 2026-14 -- Akers-Riggins, 12. Attachment 11 -- Maps		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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Agenda Item Wording:

Public Hearing and Ordinance Adoption -

- General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02:** A request by the City of Visalia to change the land use designation on a 21-acre parcel from Parks/Recreation to Commercial Mixed Use.
- First Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-04 to adopt Change of Zone No. 2025-03:** A request by the City of Visalia to change the zoning designation on a 21-acre parcel from QP (Quasi-Public) to C-MU (Commercial Mixed Use).

Location: The site is located on the northwest corner of Akers Street and Riggins Avenue, within the City of Visalia, County of Tulare (APN: 077-100-103).

Agenda Date: 06/15/2026

Prepared by:

Brandon Smith, Principal Planner, brandon.smith@visalia.gov, (559) 713-4636;
Paul Bernal, Planning and Community Preservation Director, paul.bernal@visalia.gov, (559) 713-4025

Department Recommendation:

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council take the following actions, consistent with the staff recommendation made to Planning Commission on June 8, 2026:

- 1) Adopt Initial Study / Negative Declaration No. 2026-14 (Resolution No. 2026-37 required);
- 2) Approve General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02 (Resolution No. 2026-38 required); and,
- 3) Conduct the first reading of Ordinance No. 2026-04 to adopt Change of Zone No. 2025-03.

If approved by the City Council, staff will bring back the second reading of Ordinance No. 2026-04, at the July 20, 2026, City Council meeting.

The entitlements are supported by both the Planning Commission and staff based on the project's consistency with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the entitlements are consistent with the recommendation of the City Council during the public hearing item held on September 2, 2025, where Council favored the entire 21-acre site being designated for Commercial Mixed Use, rather than the previous concept to change 16 acres out of the 21-acre parcel toward Commercial Mixed Use and retain 5 acres on the northwest portion of the parcels for potential park use. Additional information regarding park plans in the northwest quadrant has been provided in the report below and illustrated in the map included as Attachment 5.

Summary:

General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02 and Change of Zone No. 2025-03 together are a request by the City of Visalia to change the general plan land use and zoning designations on a 21-acre parcel from Parks/Recreation land use (QP zone) to Commercial Mixed Use (C-MU zone), as shown in the exhibit to each entitlement's respective resolution. The 21-acre parcel is an undeveloped parcel located on the northwest corner of North Akers Street and West Riggan Avenue (see aerial map in Attachment 11).

The proposed project only changes the land use and zoning designations associated with the parcel. No specific development is being proposed or is planned in correlation with the General Plan Amendment / Change of Zone.

The reclassification of land use and zoning designations toward a commercial designation was based upon the recommendation of the City Council upon the conclusion of four work session discussions held between January 16, 2020 and August 19, 2024. The site has always held the general plan land use and zoning designation of Parks/Recreation / QP zone since the property's annexation in 2010. Visalia Unified School District sold the site to the City of Visalia in 2014 and has retained property to the north for development of a middle school and future high school. Visalia's General Plan, adopted in 2014, illustrates this site in a Parks/Facilities Map as a potential location for a new community park serving the northwest quadrant (see Attachment 1). General Plan Policy PSCU-P-5 more explicitly calls for the creation of a new community park to be built in and to serve the northwest quadrant.

Background Discussion:

Over the course of the four work sessions held to discuss land uses on the site, City staff suggested that the City-owned property at Akers & Riggan may be better suited for a land use other than Parks/Recreation given its location at a major intersection, with speculation towards a commercial designation. The potential change is further supported by Land Use Policy LU-P-6, which states,

“Strive for a balanced mix of local, regional, and national retailers that offer a diversity of product and pricing choices, and undertake strategic initiatives to attract new retail development. Initiatives could include: Promote catalyst projects at key locations to stimulate private investment; Encourage quality retail and restaurant uses to locate where “multiplier effects” are most likely; Build on synergies that could occur between complementary businesses.”

The redesignation of the site to facilitate mixed use commercial development provides a range of opportunities to serve both existing and future residents. Between the times that the four work sessions were held, the Carleton Acres Specific Plan was drafted and adopted in 2023, solidifying a new commercial land use designation further to the west.

The City Council’s direction to staff from the last work session meeting was to also prepare and release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit potential land developers to submit design proposals for this site, and to hold a future meeting to discuss design stipulations and use limitations on the site. However, prior to the preparation of a RFP, the City must declare the property as Surplus Land in order to take action of selling the property.

In 2025, staff prepared an environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute & Guidelines and brought a GPA and COZ request to the Planning Commission and City Council to change a 16-acre portion of the parcel, consistent with the Council’s direction from the 2024 work session item.

At the City Council public hearing held on September 2, 2025, the Council recommended, on a 5-0 vote, to refer the matter back to staff to designate the entire 21 acres as Commercial Mixed Use (rather than only a 16-acre portion), and to direct staff to prepare the appropriate analysis and the appropriate CEQA documentation.

The City Council further recommended that that staff return with a park plan for the northwest quadrant prior to further discussion of the rezoning at a future meeting. Under the new GPA/COZ proposal, a community park could still be developed on a different site in the northwest quadrant.

In addition, the Parks and Recreation Department has hired PROS Consulting of Brownsburg, Inc. to prepare the Visalia Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Needs Assessment and Park Impact Fee Study. Although this study is underway, the consultant is aware of the potential land use redesignation of this 21-acre site.

Surrounding Uses:

To the north, on the north side of the Sedona Avenue alignment, a 103-acre parcel owned by Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) contains Ridgeview Middle School and land that was planned for a future high school campus.

To the west of the city-owned site is a 29-acre parcel that is owned by a private entity and is zoned for high-density multi-family residential use. This parcel has been incorporated into the Carleton Acres Specific Plan. On April 27, 2026, Conditional Use Permit No. 2025-16 was approved for a 442-unit development on this site, at a density of 15 units / acre consistent with R-M-3 zone standards.

The surrounding area beyond the VUSD parcel is currently seeing a steady amount of growth and interest in future development planning. To the east, the 219-unit Ritchie Reserve Apartments were completed within the last year, and the 320-lot small-lot single family residential subdivision Ritchie Ranch was approved on August 25, 2025. To the west and northwest, the Carleton Acres Specific Plan was approved in 2023 for the long-term buildout of approximately 3,200 dwelling units.

Commercial development the Carleton Acres consists of a 29-acre site anchored by Costco Wholesale at the northeast corner of Shirk & Riggins and a future neighborhood commercial designation at the southwest corner of Akers Street & Avenue 320 (see illustration in Attachment 1: Figure 1 and Figure 2).

General Plan Consistency - Community Park Designation:

General Plan Policy PSCU-P-5 calls for the creation of a new community park to be built in and to serve the northwest quadrant. The policy generally states that the park shall be in the northwest, and the facility map shown as Figure 3 identifies the 21-acre site as the potential location of the community park (see illustration in Attachment 1: Figure 3). A map illustrating all developed and undeveloped / designated park sites in the northwest is included as Attachment 5.

Policy PSCU-P-5 further states that community parks shall be 5 to 12 acres in size or more, and are intended to include resources beyond those found at neighborhood parks, such as a community center building, reserved picnic facilities, tennis courts, aquatic center, and/or outdoor concert area.

A community park would fill a void that currently exists for this type of facility that would be comparable to Recreation Park / Anthony Community Center or Whitendale Park / Community Center. The General Plan notes that the northwest quadrant currently lacks a community center building, and Policy PSCU-P-16 calls to provide at least one community center in each of the City's four neighborhood quadrants.

The community park would be different from Riverway Sports Park, located 2.5 miles to the east. The 83-acre Riverway Sports Park is considered a "large city park" that serves the greater Visalia area and contains several playing fields; however, it contains no community center or multi-use courts. The community park would also be larger in scale than neighborhood parks found throughout the City - the closest being Lions and Soroptimist Parks located one mile southwest or southeast from the site.

The current size of the project site, at 21 acres, is significantly larger than the policy guideline of "5 to 12 acres or more" for community parks.

Alternate Community Park Sites

Within the City's northwest quadrant, there are four other undeveloped Park land use designations that could facilitate the northwest quadrant's community park based on their acreage, described as follows and labeled in Attachment 1: Figure 3 above:

1. 15 acres near the northeast corner of Demaree Street & Pratt Avenue.

There is a potential opportunity for the City to purchase the Demaree & Pratt land based on early preliminary discussions with a property owner in that area seeking to develop their property that has a park land use designation of equivalent acreage.

2. 10 acres fronting the future Riverway Avenue extension north of Modoc Basin.

There have been no discussions with this property owner, who also owns other adjacent property to the west, south, and southeast. Development in this area has been progressing at an increasing rate. Site access would require construction of at least two of the following roadways: Shannon Parkway westerly from Demaree Street; Shannon Parkway easterly from Akers Street; Linwood Street northly from Riggins Avenue.

3. 7 acres fronting the future Hurley Avenue extension west of Shirk Street, east of Road 88

(Clancy Street).

There have been no discussions with this property owner. Development and site access would require the assembly of multiple properties. Site access would require construction of Hurley Avenue between Shirk Street and Road 88 (Clancey Street).

4. 5 acres near the northeast corner of Mooney Blvd. & Riverway Avenue.

There have been no discussions with this property owner. While this would be a potential site, its proximity to Riverway Sports Park might make it a less desirable choice.

It should be noted that the conceptual use plan for Carleton Acres calls for parks to be scattered throughout the development, though none are classified as neighborhood or community parks over two acres in size. This is intentional since the General Plan did not designate any land use designations for parks on the Carleton Acres site. The Parks and Recreation Department does not anticipate purchasing any land in the Carleton Acres neighborhood bound by Shirk, Akers, and Avenue 320.

In addition, the future high school site north and west of Ridgeview Middle School is currently not budgeted for completion and its future as a high school site is uncertain. Thus, there may be potential that this property could be reconsidered for alternate uses, including a park site.

Attachment 6 illustrates non-residential land use designations in the surrounding vicinity.

General Plan Consistency: Land Use Element/General Plan/Zoning:

Land Use Policy LU-P-66 states that the Commercial Mixed Use land use designation allows for either horizontal or vertical mixed use development and a range of commercial, service, office, and residential uses. Commercial uses must be allowed for in a development, while residential uses may or may not be part of a development. The Zoning Ordinance further states, in Section 17.19.010, that the mixed use commercial zone district may permit development at both at key activity nodes and along corridors. There is no further locational criteria regarding Commercial Mixed Use elsewhere in the City.

Among Visalia's commercial designations (i.e. Regional Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial), Commercial Mixed Use zone provides the largest amount of flexibility for a commercial-oriented designation in terms of uses, size, and placement. The northwest area is not significantly underserved with retail uses at this time; however, the nearest existing shopping areas from the intersection are located at Demaree / Riggan (Lowes / Village at Willow Creek), Akers / Goshen (Save Mart / Key West Center), and Shirk / Riggan (Carleton Acres / Costco), all of which are one mile away.

The project site has the potential to be served by multiple single-family and multi-family residential uses and major school facilities that are all adjacent to the site and would be accessed from the adjacent arterial/arterial intersection. Vacant land to the west is slated for the inclusion of an off-street bike/pedestrian trail linking the City site to the rest of the Carleton Acres development.

A larger Commercial Mixed Use designation (10+ acres) could facilitate a shopping center consisting of a variety of retail, service, and professional spaces, and may be anchored by a supermarket, warehouse supermarket, or home improvement store.

The C-MU designation provides for the widest range of possible non-residential land use alternatives: commercial, retail, restaurant, professional and medical office uses, or residential as a stand-alone or

mixed use. A full summary of all allowed land uses (permitted and conditionally permitted) in the C-MU zone is provided in Attachment 7.

Potential Design Considerations and Future Request for Proposal (RFP) Process:

If the City Council approves the proposed GPA / COZ, staff intends to prepare and circulate a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit potential land developers to submit design proposals for this site that demonstrate the Council's desire to have a superior development design and layout for this site. The RFP process would spell out expectations of the development to embody a well-designed and attractive development with a high likelihood of success that will be compatible with and serve the school population as well as the surrounding existing and future neighborhoods. The RFP would address the developer's responsibility to process the necessary Planning entitlement applications (if applicable) and CEQA environmental analysis for the alternative land use.

Staff's expectation is that a future City Council work session will be held to discuss the potential design requirements and land use limitations or stipulations that would apply to the site to ensure a superior development that aligns with Council's vision. This work session would be necessary to finalize the RFP's scope and content prior to its release. Upon successful completion of the RFP process, staff could then present the submittals to Council for their selection on the best design proposal submittal.

Public Hearing & Review held by Planning Commission:

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on June 8, 2026, to consider General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02 and Change of Zone No. 2025-03, changing the entire 21 acres to the Commercial Mixed Use designation. The affiliated staff report is provided as Attachment 9.

During the public hearing, no members of the public spoke regarding the item.

Planning Commissioners made a motion for each individual entitlement, and each item passed on a 4-0 vote (Commissioner Norman, absent). Commissioner Beatie, who previously recommended against the recommendation in 2025 towards 16 acres of CMU and 5 acres of Park designation, recommended in favor after staff responded to her inquiries about the ongoing status of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. (To date, the master planning effort has included online surveys, interactive mapping tools, and public engagement events offering in April and May 2026.)

Fiscal Impact including annual maintenance and operating costs: The General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone actions will have no impact to the city. Regarding the sale of the site, since the City purchased the site using Park Impact Fees, any portion of land that will be sold for non-park use will require payment back to the Park Impact fee program.

Prior Council Action:

- On January 16, 2020, at a Joint City Council-Planning Commission meeting, in the context of land use planning around VUSD's future high school site, the Council directed staff to proceed with a recommended motion to research and present back for Council consideration of potential land use and zoning designations to the 21-acre parcel.
- On June 7, 2021, the City Council met to discuss and seek direction on potential changes to the zoning and General plan designation on the subject site. Council favored the Commercial Mixed Use zone as a preferred land use / zone district alternative, but tabled taking any action on the item so that staff could prepare a list of allowed uses in the Commercial Mixed Use

(CMU) zone and to consider park opportunities in the Carleton Acres Specific Plan area, which would be later adopted in 2023.

- On August 19, 2024, the City Council confirmed the type and amount of the alternative land use and zoning for the subject site, and further directed staff to prepare and release a RFP for the solicitation of design proposals for the site. Council further directed staff to return to discuss the specific design, land uses, and limitations on the property.
- On September 2, 2025, the Council held a public hearing for GPA No. 2025-02 and COZ No. 2025-03 wherein the request was to change the land use designation on only a 16-acre portion of the 21-acre parcel from a Park designation to a Commercial Mixed Use designation. The Council recommended to refer the matter back to staff to designate the entire 21 acres as Commercial Mixed Use, to direct staff to prepare the appropriate analysis and the appropriate CEQA documentation, and to return with a park plan for the northwest quadrant prior to further discussion of the rezoning at a future meeting.

Alternatives:

The City Council may, in lieu of the recommended motion specified above, consider any of the following alternatives:

1. After opening and closing the public hearing, if the Council seeks additional information, continue the agenda item to a City Council meeting on a specified date.
2. If Council is considering a different amount of Commercial Mixed Use land use and zoning designation acreage, refer the item with revisions back to the Planning Commission.
3. Deny the entitlements.

Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):

I move to approve Resolution No. 2026-37 to adopt Initial Study / Negative Declaration No. 2026-14; and,

I move to approve Resolution No. 2026-38, to approve General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02; and,

I move to conduct the first reading of the approval of Ordinance No. 2026-04 to adopt Change of Zone No. 2025-03.

Environmental Assessment Status & CEQA Review:

An Initial Study and Negative Declaration were prepared for the proposed project. This environmental review was prepared for the proposed General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone only and does not consider any environmental impacts regarding any future development, as such development would also be subject to separate environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) once details of the development are known.

Initial Study and Negative Declaration No. 2026-14 (see Attachment 10), prepared in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, disclosed that environmental impacts are determined to be not significant. Staff concludes that Initial Study and Negative Declaration No. 2025-28 adequately analyzes and addresses the proposed project and concludes that environmental impacts related to this project will be at a level that is less than significant.

During the public comment period for the Negative Declaration, one comment letter was received by the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (see Attachment 8). The letter recommends that in

instances where land is proposed to be rezoned to residential use, that the lead agency shall identify certain pesticide materials as described in the letter, which would determine if any remedial action is needed to bring levels below thresholds. Since no activity is proposed on the site and since no residential uses are being considered, no mitigation is necessary in response to the letter.

Deadline for Action: 06/15/2026

Attachments:

1. Staff Report References - Figures 1, 2, and 3
2. Resolution No. 2026-37 - Adopting Initial Study / Negative Declaration No. 2026-14
3. Resolution No. 2026-38 - Adopting General Plan Amendment No. 2025-02
4. Ordinance No. 2026-04 - Adopting Change of Zone No. 2025-03
5. Northwest Park Maps illustrating
 - Developed / Undeveloped Park Locations
 - Neighborhood and Pocket Parks Locations
6. Map illustrating Non-Residential Land Uses
7. Table listing Uses Allowed in the C-MU Zone
8. Correspondence from State Department of Toxic Substances Control
9. Planning Commission Staff Report of June 8, 2026
10. Initial Study / Negative Declaration No. 2026-14
11. General Plan, Land Use, Zoning, and Location Maps

Strategic Goal: Indicates which City Strategic Goal(s) this item supports. Check all that apply.

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Economic Vitality	Organizational Excellence	Fiscal Strength	Infrastructure & Growth	Quality of Life