

FORWARD

Modesto Urban Area General Plan Amendment

Modesto launched its most recent City-initiated General Plan amendment (GPA) in 2011, after being awarded a US HUD-DOT-EPA federal planning grant as one of 14 San Joaquin Valley cities known as the Smart Valley Places (SVP) consortium. While the SVP GPA was never intended to be a comprehensive General Plan update, its scope did grow over the multi-year timeframe of the project.

Initially planned to be focused solely on the land use and circulation elements, the project ultimately resulted in changes to nearly every chapter, section and element of Modesto's general plan. This evolution in scope of the project resulted from both opportunity and necessity. Examples of opportunities include changes to policies and other content where City staff recognized deficiencies that could be improved or corrected (e.g. outdated information in certain sections that are unrelated to land use or circulation); other amendments were necessary due to new state laws and statutory requirements regarding general plan content (e.g. disadvantaged unincorporated communities, environmental justice).

The overarching goals of the SVP GPA are to: revise the land use element, including the land use diagram, to provide enhanced economic development opportunities as new development occurs; revise the circulation element to provide a mode-balanced and cost-effective transportation system; update policies to reflect applicable state laws and regulations; and, update the General Plan Master EIR to allow subsequent projects to benefit from streamlined review based on its environmental analysis. The project objectives are to:

- 1) Comply with new State and Federal laws;
- 2) Increase acreage for Business Park and related revenue-generating and jobs-producing land use types within the Sphere-of-Influence to promote economic development;
- 3) Provide improved transportation alternatives, including transit, bicycle & pedestrian facilities;
- 4) Facilitate an improved mix of land uses to reduce vehicle miles traveled by locating residential land uses close to employment, retail and services;
- 5) Promote infill development;
- 6) Provide framework for intensified development in Modesto's downtown area;
- 7) Align Modesto's land use and transportation goals and policies;
- 8) Establish a realistic set of assumptions for infrastructure needs and funding;
- 9) Facilitate complete, safe and walkable neighborhoods;
- 10) Provide for a variety of transportation options;
- 11) Promote equitable, affordable housing;
- 12) Support existing neighborhoods / communities; and,
- 13) Maintain the 1995 General Plan and Sphere-of-Influence boundaries upon adoption of the 2040 GPA.