

City of  
**FRESNO** 

2024-2029 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



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# 1 Introduction

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The City of Fresno, in California's Central Valley, is the County seat of Fresno County. Its 2023 population of 543,420<sup>1</sup> makes it the most populous city in Fresno County and the fifth most populous in California. Originally founded as a railway station, it has grown into the Central Valley's economic hub. Much of the City's economy is tied to large-scale agricultural production and processing, healthcare, and education. The City has experienced strong interest in and some recent investment from research and technology firms.

Fresno's location near the geographical center of California gives industry, residents and visitors access to major markets such as Sacramento, the Bay Area, Los Angeles and other western regions, recreation centers and state and national parks. Access to these areas is made easy by a strong highway network traversing through the City—State Routes 99, 41, 168 and 180—Fresno Yosemite International Airport, additional major metro airports nearby, rail and deepwater ports.

While the City of Fresno recovered well from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still facing challenges due to the state of the national economy, local population growth and much-needed infrastructure investment to upgrade and expand services.

The City launched the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to bring focus to its economic development efforts to strengthen resiliency, stimulate private investment, target public investment, and increase equitable employment opportunities and economic prosperity for all Fresno residents. The CEDS will be submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) as a step in applying and receiving federal funds for infrastructure and other projects.

The strategic framework, objectives and tasks developed for the City of Fresno CEDS are meant to achieve a balance between the City's physical, economic, and social environments and align with the five principles of resilience stated in the City of Fresno's General Plan:

1. Provide quality of life and basic services in all neighborhoods.
2. Ensure a prosperous City centered on a vibrant downtown.
3. Prepare ample industrial and employment land ready for job creation.
4. Care for the built and natural environment.
5. Adhere to fiscally responsible and sustainable land use policies and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Finance

# Vision

The Fresno General Plan "envisions Fresno as a vibrant, growing city infused with a sense of heritage and community... a balanced city with an appropriate proportion of its growth and reinvestment focused on the central core, Downtown, established neighborhoods and along Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors."

## CEDS Goals

**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES** — Enhance the Economic Centers' competitiveness and vitality to attract and retain targeted industries that meet or exceed identified criteria.

**PLACEMAKING** — Create quality Economic Centers where businesses thrive and people want to live, work, play and learn.

**TALENT DEVELOPMENT** — Create a resilient next-generation workforce.

## CEDS Process

The City of Fresno initiated this nine-month strategic planning process in June 2023 to complete a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS), establish priorities and provide direction to the City's Economic Development Department. The process included the following.

- Reviewed over two dozen relevant studies, plans, and documents (Appendix E).
- Conducted personal interviews with approximately 50 community stakeholders.
- Conducted online public surveys provided in multiple languages (Appendix F).
- Researched and analyzed economic data (Appendix B).
- Engaged the public
  - Presented in council district town hall meetings, an overview of CEDS and the importance of public participation through survey and interviews.
  - Promoted electronic and print surveys in traditional and social media.
  - Distributed print and electronic promotional flyers at a variety of community events, at City public counters, and via social media outlets.
  - Provided promotional information to council and CEDS committee members to share with constituents and members.
  - Created a project-specific website (FresnoCEDS.com) to provide information, timelines, host documents and surveys.
  - Presented at the March 21, 2024 City of Fresno Council meeting which initiated the 30-day public review process.  
An invitation to view and comment on the CEDS was published in The Business Journal. Notices were published on March 25, April 1, 8, and 15, 2024.

# Organization of the CEDS

The City of Fresno CEDS addresses economic challenges, identifies opportunities, and includes a plan for building a resilient local economy with increased commerce and employment options. Organization of the CEDS follows the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s guidelines.

- **Economic Conditions** is a discussion of the City, County, and regional economic, physical, and social environments.
- **SWOT Analysis** identifies the critical internal and external factors that affect the City's economic development potential. Along with data analysis, findings from the SWOT process led to strategies that focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities, overcoming weaknesses or challenges and mitigating threats.
- The **Strategic Framework** is built on focus areas - Economic Opportunities, Placemaking and Workforce Development. The framework includes objectives, strategies, tactics, and performance metrics.
- **CEDS Implementation** and Management is provided in the final chapter.

## CEDS Committee

To guide the development of the CEDS, the City created an informal CEDS strategy committee (right) that includes leadership from organizations that are part of the Organizational Ecosystem (Appendix C).

Implementation of the CEDS will be carried out by the City of Fresno Economic Development staff and partners.

The CEDS committee provided their knowledge and expertise to weigh in on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) findings (Appendix A) and formulate the goals, objectives, and strategies.

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| Michael Lukens, California State University Fresno                                 |
| Elliott Balch, Downtown Fresno Partnership   |
| Brett Zall, Fowler Packing/San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance               |
| Chuck Riojas, Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings Building Trades Council                |
| Yery Olivares, Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation                                     |
| Amy Fuentes, Fresno Chamber of Commerce  |
| Scott Miller, Fresno Chamber of Commerce   |
| Dr. Robert Pimentel, Fresno City College   |
| Will Oliver, Fresno County Economic Development Corporation                        |
| Dr. Cassandra Little, Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce                       |
| Blake Konczal, Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board                         |
| Lisa Oliveira, Fresno/Clovis Convention and Visitors Bureau                        |
| Genelle Taylor Kumpe, San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance                    |
| Liz McIlvaine, Total Concept Enterprises/San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance |

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## 2 Economic Conditions

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A community's economic, physical, and social environments are connected and influence each other. For example, (1) infrastructure (streets, utilities, etc.) and housing constitute Fresno's "Physical Environment;" (2) population, income and support services are Fresno's "Social Environment." Both the physical and social characteristics influence and define the City's "Economic Environment," opportunities and success. Achieving a balance among the economic, physical, and social environments is necessary to create and sustain a socio-economically healthy community. The challenges and opportunities to achieve this balance are summarized here.



Whenever possible, City-specific data is used here. Data from regional, state, and national sources is often available only at the County level. Because the City of Fresno is the County's economic engine, County-level data provides a good measure.

### Economic Environment

A summary of Fresno's economic environment is presented here. A more detailed discussion, data and analysis is in Appendix B-Economic Conditions.

#### Labor Force and Employment

**Labor Force.** The City of Fresno has recovered well from the recent pandemic. Data show that the County was among the fastest-growing labor markets in California and one of the earliest counties to emerge from the pandemic and see job growth from pre-pandemic levels. While the City and County of Fresno have closed the unemployment gap, both remain above the state average as of June 2023.

**Wages.** Overall, wages in Fresno County have increased from 2019 to 2023 due to low unemployment rates, job growth and a slowly growing regional labor force. However, some occupations in critical industries did not fare as well. Healthcare and protective services have seen more downward pressure in the past year than in other occupations. Even though wages

have increased for some, so has the cost of living, significantly reducing purchasing and real personal wealth.

**Commute.** Most (74%) of Fresno's employed residents work in the City. Most of the remaining workers are employed in the County or nearby cities of Clovis, Madera and Sanger.

**Talent Pipeline.** The source of Fresno's future workers (population aged zero to 19) has seen small, slow growth—a situation seen in many communities around the nation. Actual and projected declines in this age group are common. Fortunately for Fresno employers, this category shows some growth. Also, the region's substantial college student population could and should be attracted to employment opportunities in Fresno.

**Educational Attainment.** The educational attainment of Fresno's population over the age of 25 is improving. From 2011 to 2021, the share of the population with a bachelor's or graduate degree went from 20% to nearly 34%. In addition, the percentage of residents with less than a high school education (diploma or equivalent) is decreasing.

**Skills Training.** California has seen declining enrollment in higher education and career and technical education (CTE) programs. This decline is also seen in the State Center Community College District, which includes Fresno City College and other regional colleges. Fortunately, the District has fared a little better on enrollments than the state overall, and while fewer students are enrolling, the number of earned certifications is increasing.

## Industry and Jobs

**Industry Mix.** Seven industries dominate the City of Fresno's economy. Over 60% of the City's employment is in government and public education, healthcare, real estate, wholesale, manufacturing, professional services, and retail. Because Fresno is in the center of California's Central Valley, one might expect to see agriculture representing a large share of the City's economy, but ag employment is generally outside the City limits and accounts for just 3% of employment in the City.

**Gross Regional Product (GRP).** Most (77%) of Fresno's GRP comes from local-serving businesses. From 2011 to 2021, goods-producing and local serving businesses grew by just over 5% while the visitor-serving sector declined by 0.6%, which can be attributed to the pandemic and the slow re-opening of the economy.

**Taxable Sales.** Fresno sales tax receipts consistently represent more than half of Fresno County's total taxable sales. Total taxable sales in certain categories have declined in the City since 2021.<sup>2</sup>

**Transient Occupancy Tax.** 2010 to 2019 was a growth phase. More people visited the region and the state. With the onset of COVID, the next two years saw a sharp decline and lingered for about another 12 months before picking up—an indication of Fresno's visitor market resiliency.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B, page 5 more detailed data

# Physical Environment

A summary of the Fresno and regional physical environment is presented below. More detailed discussion, data and analysis is included in Appendix B-Economic Conditions.

## Infrastructure

**Downtown.** The City recently acquired nearly \$300 million for infrastructure improvements expected to catalyze and accelerate new investment in residential and mixed-use developments. Funding is slated for two additional parking structures, a new intermodal transit center, sidewalks, street lighting, landscaping, stormwater facilities, water distribution, wastewater improvements and new public parks and green spaces.

**Municipal Services.** Even with this unprecedented public infrastructure investment, there remains a substantial need for additional public investment throughout the City to accommodate years of deferred maintenance, equipment purchases and needed upgrades to essential infrastructure and services, including water, wastewater, transportation, energy management, ADA compliance projects, neighborhoods parks and recreation facilities.

**Broadband.** About 84% of Fresno County households have access to broadband, which is in line with the state (90%) and the nation (87%). The Information Technology Master Plan details continued improvements needed to improve the City's competitiveness and expand access to affordable broadband, especially for residents and businesses in less affluent neighborhoods.

**Public Transportation.** The City offers 18 fixed-route bus lines, a green fleet of paratransit buses and an express bus service. However, more lines are needed to meet demand (frequency and connections). A new trolley system, the FresnoHOP, is a free option that connects Fresno State and Campus Pointe to popular shopping and entertainment destinations throughout the City with hourly departures.

**Parks.** The City's adopted Parks Master Plan shows that 80% of Fresno's parks are in fair or poor condition and presented a plan for improvements. Fresno voters approved the Measure P sales tax initiative to help fund new, maintain, and improve neighborhood parks, facilities and trails.

## Sites and Buildings

The City has a very limited inventory of commercial and industrial development sites to support new business investment or the expansion of existing businesses and industries. Areas that are desirable or have been identified for job-creating development face long-term obstacles to being market ready e.g., inadequate infrastructure, absence of and cost to acquire utility services and neighborhood resistance to development. Development opportunities and related challenges are detailed in Appendix D, Economic Centers.

## Housing

**Affordability.** Fresno has relatively affordable housing when compared with other areas in the state. This can be an economic and workforce development asset. The tight housing market and



rising costs can motivate people to look further from where they work in search of more affordable housing.

**Mix.** The mix of single-family homes compared to multifamily homes has remained consistent in Fresno since 2011 (66% single-family to 33% multifamily). This is less than the County’s mix of single-family homes (83%) but compares well with the statewide data (68%).

**Rentals.** Renters occupy a larger proportion of the housing stock versus homeowners, especially when compared to the County, state, and nation. In contrast to other California areas, rental prices in Fresno continued to rise alongside home prices after the pandemic, which compounds affordability issues. According to the Fresno County 2022 Affordable Housing Needs Report, asking rents throughout the County increased by 10.7% (2020 to 2021). Additionally, renters in Fresno County need to earn 1.6 times the state minimum wage to afford the average monthly asking rent.

## Environment and Natural Disasters

**Hazard Mitigation Plan.** The City of Fresno and regional agencies partnered to create a hazard mitigation plan to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and emergencies.

**Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).** This City program trains citizens to be better prepared to respond to emergencies in their homes, workplaces, and community.

**Wildfires.** According to riskfactor.com, the City of Fresno has only a moderate risk of wildfires over the next 30 years. An exceptional year was 2020, when over 400,000 acres burned in Fresno and Madera Counties due to two incidents—the Creek Fire (379,895 acres) and the Mineral Fire (29,667).

**Flooding.** The Fresno/Clovis urban area is protected by three dams, seven large detention basins and a system of more than 700 miles of pipeline, 150 plus stormwater retention basins and over 20 stormwater basins used for recreation.

**Drought.** California's severe drought has been a decades-long safety and economic problem. The severity of drought conditions in Fresno County from 2013 to 2023 ranged from exceptional to abnormal. During the latter half of 2021 and early 2022 a majority of the land area was in exceptional or extreme drought conditions.

**Air Quality.** The region's primary contributors to air quality problems are population growth, emissions from traffic on two of the state's most-traveled transportation routes (Interstate 5 and Highway 99), farm equipment and wildfires. Geography also plays a role in air quality. Surrounding mountain ranges can cause air pollutants to concentrate in the valley and be trapped if prevailing winds cannot rise over the mountain ranges.

**Seismic Stability.** The City of Fresno and most of the County are situated in an area of relatively low seismic activity; however, there are fault systems that have the potential to produce high-magnitude earthquakes. According to the U.S. Geological Society (USGS) maps, most seismic activity occurs to the west of Fresno County and the east in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

# Social Environment

A summary of Fresno's social environment is presented below. More detailed discussion, data and analysis are included in Appendix B-Economic Conditions.

## Population

**Growth.** For the first time in recorded history, California lost population in 2020; the decline is expected to continue. Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR) found two primary reasons for the outmigration: 1) high cost of living and 2) regulatory policies and mandates. Unlike the state, the Department of Finance predicts the City and County will gain population.

**Age.** Like much of the nation, Fresno's population is maturing. Almost 40% of Fresno's population is between 25 and 55 years old, prime earning and parenting years. Nearly 12% are over 65.

**Diversity.** The ethnic and racial mix of Fresno's population is similar to Fresno County. A slightly larger share of the City's population is Hispanic, Asian, or Black (22% vs 16% in the County). According to a recent analysis from U.S. News & World Report, Fresno ranks as the 9<sup>th</sup> most racially diverse large cities in America (cities with a population of 300,000 or more).<sup>3</sup>

## Wealth

**Income.** The median household income in Fresno experienced a 10-year average annual increase of 0.71%, more than Fresno County (0.23%) or the State of California (0.68%). However, the median household income in Fresno remains lower than that of the County, state, and nation.

**Poverty.** The poverty level in Fresno (25% in 2021) is consistently higher than in the County (22%), state (13%), and nation (13%).

**Sources of Income.** The share of personal income from earned wages (vs passive income such as social security, retirement, or public assistance) in Fresno is substantial (79%) and has remained unchanged since 2017. The fact that a large majority are receiving income from wages suggests that people are in Fresno to work.

**Cost of Living.** Living in Fresno is nearly 104% more expensive than the U.S. average. However, Fresno's cost of living is much more affordable than the state average of 150%. The cost of utilities and housing are the two primary components of the higher cost of living.

## Health and Safety

**At-Risk Population.** The Census Bureau's Community Resilience Estimates (CRE) measures vulnerable populations based on several factors, including poverty level, senior population, single-parent households, and households with no vehicle. Over half of Fresno County (and

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<sup>3</sup> The Business Journal. January 23, 2020. *Fresno Among Most Diverse US Cities, though its Diversity is Falling*

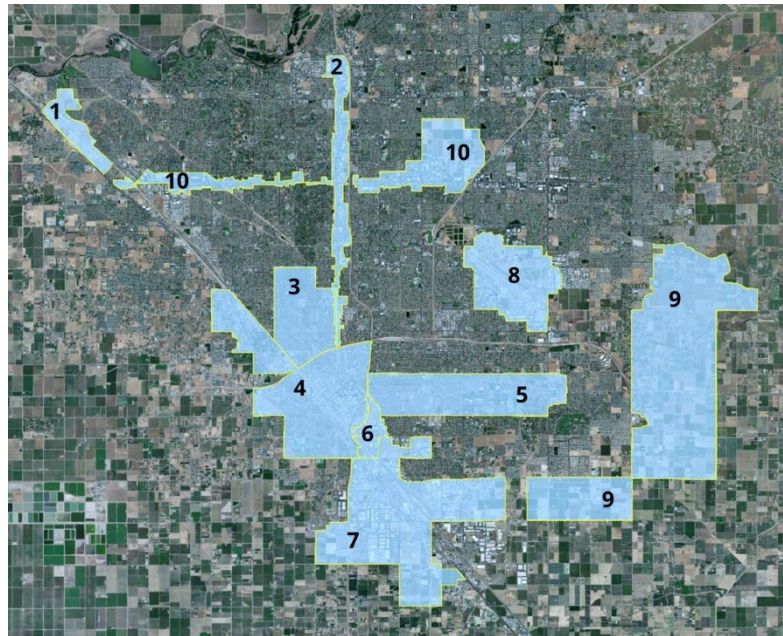
surrounding counties) have one or more risk factors, which is in line with the state but higher than the nation.

**Unhoused Population.** According to the 2023 Fresno Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC) Point in Time (PIT), 4,493 persons in these two counties were experiencing homelessness as of January 24, 2023—a 7% increase from 2022.

**Childcare.** Fresno is not meeting the demand for affordable, quality childcare. Only 23% of children (aged 0-12) in working families have access to childcare services, leaving 77% of working families unserved and an untapped workforce at home at a time when many jobs go unfilled.

## Development Opportunities

This CEDS focuses on ten distinct economic opportunity areas or centers (Centers). These Centers were identified by their short-term development potential (appropriate zoning, entitlements, and infrastructure). This focus in no way excludes other areas or specific sites in the City from development. Additional Centers or sites can be added and boundaries expanded in CEDS updates to accommodate these opportunities.



Business activity in the Centers generates revenue for the City through sales, property and lodging taxes and provides diverse employment options for Fresno area workers. The economic health of these Centers is essential to improving and sustaining Fresno as a healthy community with balanced economic, physical, and social environments.

Understanding how each Center functions from an economic development perspective is also important to understanding and planning for future economic and job growth and diversification. These Centers include opportunities for new and in-fill

| ECONOMIC CENTERS |                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1                | Herndon-Highway 99                    |
| 2                | Blackstone Corridor                   |
| 3                | Tower District                        |
| 4                | Downtown-Chinatown                    |
| 5                | Kings Canyon-Ventura Corridor         |
| 6                | South Van Ness Industrial Area        |
| 7                | South Central Specific Plan Area      |
| 8                | Fresno Yosemite International Airport |
| 9                | Southeast Development Area (SEDA)     |
| 10               | Shaw Avenue                           |

development, revitalization, and enhancement of space for industrial, commercial, retail and visitor uses. In-fill development is a City priority.

Improvements to the Centers will result in a more competitive City that is attractive to employers and workers, helping to diversify the economy and providing a range of employment opportunities.

Shown on the map are the 10 Centers which total over 30,000 acres, include 9,000 businesses and nearly 125,000 employment opportunities.

Further descriptions and data on business and employment mix and infrastructure needs are detailed in Appendix D.

## Target Industries

As these Centers are further improved and made ready for private investment, they can be expected to be among the City's best bet for business attraction and employment growth based on forecasted job growth (Appendix B). These industries also align with the target industries of other regional organizations engaged in business attraction and entrepreneurial growth.



**Advanced Manufacturing** is typically defined as firms that use innovative technologies that improve products or processes e.g., artificial intelligence, robotics, advanced materials, laser machinery. Many manufacturing firms today could be considered advanced. Industries typically associated with advanced manufacturing are automotive, medical devices, pharmaceuticals, consumer products, energy equipment and scientific instruments.



**Agri-Business and Food Processing.** While Fresno's expected growth in manufacturing jobs is essentially flat, it is an important regional employer. Nationally, food manufacturing is growing at a pace faster than the economy as a whole. Over the last five years, jobs in this sector increased 6.6 percent. Jobs growth over the next five years is estimated to be 8% (Expansion Solutions Magazine, Nov/Dec 2023 issue).



**Biomass and Renewable Energy** industries convert waste from plants and animals into usable energy and fuels. Fresno's competitive advantage in this industry is its access to source materials—timber, ag crops, and animal waste. National and global demand for biofuels remains strong.



**Entertainment and Recreation.** While this sector is not a targeted industry throughout the region, it is a major employment category in Fresno. Many jobs in this category are lower-paying entry-level positions. These jobs are important for students and people entering or re-entering the workforce. This industry sector also provides a substantial revenue source for the City and its small businesses.



**Healthcare.** The nation's aging population drives the high demand for healthcare services. The share of Fresno's population over 65 today is 12% and is expected to be 17% by 2030. This will require healthcare workers at all skill levels—highly-skilled medical professionals, mid-skilled technicians, and entry-level support staff—many of which may come from UC Merced's new medical education pathways program.



**Information Technologies (IT)** includes businesses that provide goods and services related to computing e.g., hardware, software, telecom, data analytics and cybersecurity. Today IT is used by everyone and the demand for IT workers will continue to grow - both skilled and entry-level. Access to colleges and universities is a critical location factor.



**Logistics** is already a successful industry sector in Fresno due in part to the City's desirable location that offers a strong highway network and access to airports and seaports. The existence of a logistics cluster is evidence of the competitive advantages and workforce Fresno offers.



**Professional and Scientific Services** include a wide range of disciplines, including research and development, labs, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, energy, environmental sciences and more. Access to and collaboration with universities and workspaces like those available in Fresno is important to this work. The future of this work is likely to be strong as technological progress, societal needs and global challenges drive it.



**Water Technologies** encompasses a wide range of technologies, solutions and services that address water management, treatment, distribution, and conservation challenges. As populations grow, urbanize, and face the impacts of climate change, the importance of advanced water technologies will increase. The California Water Institute at Fresno State University, a recognized leader in this work, offers a strong competitive advantage.

# 3 S.W.O.T.

This assessment of the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) is a culmination of data and trends analysis, review of recent documents, community surveys and personal interviews with stakeholders. These factors are the basis for the CEDS Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics. A more detailed analysis of the SWOT factors and data is provided in Appendix A (SWOT) and Appendix B (Economic Conditions Report).

| STRENGTHS  | WEAKNESSES  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic stability</li> <li>• Full-service city</li> <li>• Favorable cost of living</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Diverse and unique neighborhoods</li> <li>• Growing population</li> <li>• Strong entrepreneurial spirit</li> <li>• Business GRP, jobs growth</li> <li>• Access to talent</li> <li>• Improving educational attainment</li> <li>• Increasing median household income</li> <li>• Income source from wages</li> <li>• Access to markets</li> <li>• Infrastructure improvements</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited job growth in some industry sectors</li> <li>• Unequal wage growth (occupations)</li> <li>• Image, perception</li> <li>• Perceived cumbersome development process, cost</li> <li>• Slow growth of the talent pipeline</li> <li>• Limited inventory of sites, buildings</li> <li>• Underinvestment in recreational facilities</li> <li>• Deferred public investment in infrastructure</li> <li>• Inequities in broadband access</li> <li>• Worker-affordable housing</li> <li>• Increasing unhoused population</li> <li>• Unmet childcare needs</li> <li>• Poverty rate</li> <li>• Delayed development due to utility availability, access, cost</li> </ul> |
| OPPORTUNITIES  | THREATS   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten Economic Centers that support short- and long-term industrial, commercial, entrepreneurial and small business investment</li> <li>• Approved funding for critical infrastructure projects that support economic growth in the Economic Centers</li> <li>• A robust organizational ecosystem that can be relied upon to lead, support and implement priority strategies</li> <li>• A growing population and strong entrepreneurial spirit support small business growth and a more diverse mix of businesses</li> <li>• Leadership and participation in California Jobs First initiative (CERF) to support CEDS goals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and federal regulatory environment (i.e. burden placed on small businesses and fast-food operations by the increased minimum wage)</li> <li>• Long-term sustainability of water supply</li> <li>• Sustained improvement in air quality</li> <li>• Natural and weather-related disasters</li> <li>• Health-related disasters</li> <li>• Utility (gas and electric) disruptions caused by wildfires and other natural disasters</li> <li>• Proposed SB531 will change where sales tax receipts are collected, impacting City's revenue stream</li> <li>• Potential impact on local jurisdictions' revenue due to the State budget shortfall</li> </ul>         |


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## 4 Strategic Direction

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Through the process of developing the CEDS, ten (10) Economic Centers were identified that provide distinct economic opportunities for the City (Appendix D). The CEDS strategies presented here apply to and target these ten (10) Centers.

The strategic framework for these Economic Centers is built on three focus areas:

 **Economic Opportunities**—ensuring the City has an inventory of market-ready sites and buildings suitable for employers offering high-quality jobs.

 **Placemaking**—ensuring that the benefits of developing the Economic Centers are shared and impact to residents and the environment is minimized.

 **Workforce Development and Talent Attraction**—ensuring an educated and skilled talent pool is available to Fresno employers.

The strategies are based on the SWOT analysis, economic conditions, document review, stakeholder interviews and public engagement. The tactics establish the steps necessary to ensure these Economic Centers remain viable and/or transform underperforming Centers into vibrant economic engines.

Implementing the near-term and long-term tactics requires a partnership of local organizations, associations, and agencies to ensure success and continued progress. An economic development organizational ecosystem is presented in Appendix C. Over two dozen agencies and organizations in the City of Fresno, County of Fresno and the greater Central Valley region are actively working independently and collaboratively on programs and initiatives to protect and improve the region's economic future.

The CEDS strategies and tactics are intended to augment many of the initiatives currently underway, support the needs of businesses in the City's Economic Centers and result in an improved and equitable quality of life for Fresno residents.

One of the most critical roles the City of Fresno can play in this ecosystem is to bring leadership together, connect groups and strategies, ensure information flows among the organizations, and protect against duplication of efforts and conflicts. Specific implementation responsibilities will be decided collaboratively.

# Economic Opportunities

The key to economic development success in growing and attracting business is understanding 1) the location drivers of emerging, growing, and legacy industries, 2) the location needs of these industries and 3) translating this knowledge into community and real estate readiness. The strategies presented here are focused on ensuring the City has an inventory of market-ready sites and buildings suitable for employers offering high-quality jobs.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Increase the total square feet and/or acres of market-ready sites and buildings to accommodate targeted business/industry, small business growth and support local entrepreneurs ready to scale up operations.

**STRATEGY:** Proactively support, encourage, and spearhead efforts to make industrially zoned properties market and investment ready.

- Use Economic Center data (Appendix D) to create near- and long-term building and site inventory.
- Identify vacant or underutilized buildings/sites within each Economic Center that could be a catalyst project that revitalizes the Center, creates opportunities for entrepreneurial growth and sparks additional investment.
- Contact property owners and developers of near-term opportunities to identify their near- and long-term plans to market or develop buildings/sites.
- Develop marketing plan/strategy and implement.
- Investigate online site inventory apps to promote near-term opportunities.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Upgrade, expand and/or create resilient infrastructure to support targeted business/industry on the most promising near- term development opportunities.

**STRATEGY:** Identify and map infrastructure needed to support near-term development opportunities.

- Partner with City departments, utilities, and broadband providers to map infrastructure deficiencies.
- Identify and pursue potential sources of funding.

**GOAL:** Enhance the Economic Centers’ competitiveness and economic vitality to support local entrepreneurial and small business growth and attract and retain targeted traded sector industry that meets or exceeds identified criteria (e.g. family sustaining wages, investment impact, equity, resiliency, support for existing industry).

**OUTCOME METRICS**

- Square feet of new market ready industrial space
- Acres of new market ready industrial sites
- Jobs created by new and expanded businesses
- Equity and resiliency



**OBJECTIVE 3:** Develop City-specific business/industry targets based on near-term economic opportunity areas and identified key criteria (e.g. family sustaining wages, suitability for potential sites, multiplier effect, etc.).

STRATEGY: Spearhead efforts to grow local business and attract business and industry targets.

- Create an industry target list for near- and long-term prospects.
- Partner with stakeholders (property owner(s), brokers, workforce, education, small business and entrepreneurial service providers, etc.) to develop and implement an outreach strategy.
- Consider contracting for lead-generating services.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Cultivate a business climate that welcomes and supports new business investment, business expansions and robust entrepreneurial growth.

STRATEGIES: (1) Identify and support opportunities for business innovation, retention, expansion and entrepreneurship through equitable access to support services and capital. (2) Address internal and external concerns regarding the City's perceived cumbersome permitting and development process. (3) Support efforts of the Organization Ecosystem to improve the business climate.

- Determine key business climate issues, identifying and implementing solutions.
- Build on the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem that allows entrepreneurs to quickly find knowledge and resources they need to succeed.
- Build a business support and response team to address issues/concerns as they surface and identify opportunities for growth and sustainability.
- Increase access to venture and other forms of investment capital and financing.
- Identify options for incentives, development agreements, labor or hiring agreements and other assistance options to offset potential environmental impacts and promote equitable hiring.
- Develop a key message platform, including business cases and testimonials for internal and external distribution.

# Placemaking

Placemaking strategies are focused on commercial Centers and industrial areas that contain a residential component to ensure that the development benefits are shared and impact to residents and environment is minimalized. These goals, strategies and tactics are intended to be applied to some or all of Fresno's Economic Centers as appropriate.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Create quality Economic Centers where businesses thrive and people want to live, work, play and learn.

STRATEGY: Prioritize the Economic Centers.

- Determine the criteria and prioritize Centers (existing infrastructure, sites and buildings, highways, access to public transportation, environmental impact, etc.).
- Engage City, property owners, businesses, residents on potential development uses, amenities and other services needed within the selected Centers.
- Determine feasibility and costs.
- Develop new or update existing plans for infrastructure and other improvements in conjunction with strategies and tactics presented in the Economic Opportunities section.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Encourage and support clean, attractive, safe Economic Centers.

STRATEGY: In partnership with the Fresno Arts Council, City's Parks Department, and other partners, identify resources and funding for façade improvements, streetscaping, parklets, outdoor dining, wayfinding and public art within the Economic Centers.

- Consider design standards that address attractive building fronts, buffering and screening from storage yards and signage that promote a "sense of place" for commercial and industrial areas and business parks.
- Continue to fund, promote, and expand existing façade programs.
- Continue to fund, promote, and identify locations for 1) murals on public and/or private buildings and 2) public art installations.
- Create a plan for murals and public art that uses local artists.
- Identify neighborhoods or corridors within the Economic Centers that would benefit

**GOAL:** Create quality Economic Centers where businesses thrive and people want to live, work, play and learn.

**OUTCOME METRICS**

- Improved utilization of sites and buildings
- Increased ridership in Fresno public transportation
- Reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Expanded range of housing options
- Dollars invested in improving facades, streetscapes, murals, public art and other amenities that contribute to a sense of place
- Reduced vacancies

and be eligible for a façade improvement program, enhanced streetscaping and signage/wayfinding.

- Identify funding resources for improvement projects.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Provide a network of well-maintained parks, open spaces, athletic facilities and walking and biking trails that connect the City's Economic Centers with resident and worker neighborhoods.

STRATEGY: Ensure Measure P funds are adequately allocated to areas within the Economic Centers.

- Identify areas within the Economic Centers that are under-served by parks, facilities, trails, and worker amenities.
- Work with City departments to prioritize investment in Economic Centers.
- When possible, leverage parks investment with private development investment in the Economic Centers.
- Include these park upgrades as a part of the workforce and business retention and attraction strategies.

# Workforce Development and Talent Attraction

An educated and skilled workforce and talent pool is the cornerstone to improving and sustaining a strong economy. Finding available and qualified workers is a challenge faced by businesses throughout California and the nation. Slow population growth, declining school enrollment and workers aging out of the workforce all exacerbate the workforce challenges and are seen as red flags for new industry and expanding businesses. The following strategies and tactics are intended to augment many of the initiatives currently underway, support the needs of businesses in the City's Economic Centers and result in an improved and equitable quality of life for Fresno residents.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Establish a highly effective education, business, workforce collaborative dedicated to addressing educational and workforce training excellence.

**STRATEGY:** Build a robust pipeline of talented workers with the skills necessary for in-demand occupations and careers.

- Formalize and expand existing partnerships and cooperation among education, workforce development and training partners e.g., Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board, PreK-12 and regional colleges and universities.
- Actively support and participate in implementing the Good Jobs Challenge.
- Encourage greater diversity and cross-representation on boards and committees.
- Establish information sharing protocols (e.g., labor force and industry trends, economic data, critical employer issues) and collaboratively identify opportunities and solutions.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Ensure businesses in each of the priority Economic Centers have access to talented workers with the skills necessary for in-demand occupations and careers.

**STRATEGY:** Involve industry in identifying the skills, training, certifications, and licenses required for their workers and new hires.

- Fully understand the industry mix within each Economic Center.
- Ascertain the in-demand training and skills through a variety of avenues of employment engagement e.g., retention visits, industry groups, civic and community organization meetings. Share information with workforce development and training partners within the Organizational Ecosystem (Appendix C).

**GOAL:** Create a resilient next generation workforce.

## OUTCOME METRICS

Increased or improved:

- CTE completions, certificates, licenses
- Enrollment and graduates
- Median wages or median personal income
- Educational attainment
- Employment in high-skilled occupations
- Employment rate

- Expand existing and develop new career pathway initiatives and sector-based training programs that are aligned with industry needs.
- Participate in efforts to establish new and/or modify existing training programs.
- Participate in efforts to identify and secure funding for training facilities, equipment, technology, and instructors

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Grow the talent pool by attracting and retaining talented workers with the skills necessary for in-demand occupations and careers.

STRATEGY: Increase awareness of the diverse employment and career opportunities with Fresno employers to college, high and middle school students throughout the region.

- Engage members of the Organizational Ecosystem in a collaborative multi-media messaging campaign(s) that promotes career opportunities and advancement, quality of life, cultural diversity and affordability in Fresno.
- Support placemaking initiatives as a way of attracting and retaining prospective workers and professionals.
- Participate in career days and speaking engagements at area schools.
- Facilitate tours of local businesses to become more familiar with their products, operations, production, and markets.
- Sponsor industry-specific business/student roundtable discussions.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Address challenges of adult students and those in a career transition or re-entering the workforce.

STRATEGY: Engage policy makers, businesses, and educators in identifying solutions and funding for support services.

- Ensure quality and affordable childcare is accessible in Economic Centers.
- Ensure public transportation routes connect neighborhoods and Economic Centers.
- Promote and incentivize family-friendly workplace practices.
- Support initiatives and identify funding sources for materials and equipment needed for education and training.

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# 5 Implementation

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The City of Fresno and the greater Central Valley region enjoy a substantial and proactive group of organizations working collaboratively to protect and improve the region's economic, social, and physical future. Listed on the following page is the Organizational Ecosystem charged with implementing the CEDS according to the organization's area of expertise. Appendix C presents the mission and priorities of these organizations.

Effectively moving the strategies and tactics forward to ultimately realize the goals requires this team of dedicated professionals. Implementing the CEDS strategies involves each member of the Organization Ecosystem to some degree. The schedule below is intended to provide the CEDS Committee, Implementation Team, and City staff with direction on getting started with implementation tasks.

| 0-30 Days  | 30-60 Days  | 60-90 Days  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine strategies and tactics to be implemented in Year 1.</li><li>• Confirm roles and responsibilities for lead and partner organizations.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider using an existing (or obtaining a new) project management and reporting tool.</li><li>• Ensure all implementing partners have access.</li><li>• Establish reporting protocols.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine the specific performance metrics to be monitored.</li><li>• Establish a timeline and responsibilities for collecting and reporting performance.</li><li>• Input relevant data into project management tool.</li></ul> |

# CITY OF FRESNO CEDS ORGANIZATIONAL ECOSYSTEM

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & JOB CREATION

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Asian Business Center and Resource Institute                    | Fresno/Clovis Convention and Visitors Bureau |
| California State University, Fresno Women’s Entrepreneur Center | Downtown Fresno Partnership                  |
| California Central Valley Economic Development Corporation      | Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation              |
| California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley               | Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce             |
| Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative              | Fresno Business Council                      |
| Chinatown Fresno Foundation and Partnership                     | Fresno Chamber of Commerce                   |
| Community & Economic Development Partnership                    | Fresno Economic Development Corporation      |
|   | Hmong Business Incubator                     |
|   | San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance    |
|   | Valley Small Business Development Corp.      |

## COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

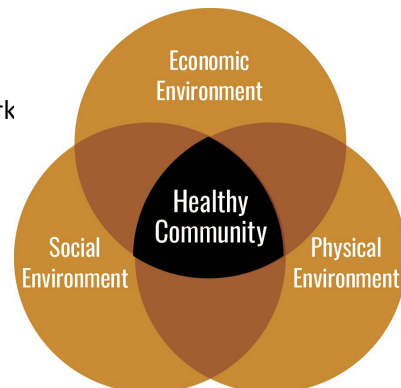
|   |  |
|---|--|
| Asian Business Center and Resource Institute      | Fresno Building Healthy Communities          |
| California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley | Fresno/Clovis Convention and Visitors Bureau |
| Central California Environmental Justice Network  | Fresno Economic Development Corporation      |
| Chinatown Fresno Foundation and Partnership       | Invest Fresno                                |
| Community & Economic Development Partnership      | Leadership Council for Justice               |
| Downtown Fresno Partnership                       | Tower District Marketing Committee           |
|   | Vision View                                  |

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, ACCESS

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Asian Business Center and Resource Institute       | Chinatown Fresno Foundation & Partnership    |
| California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley  | Community & Economic Development Partnership |
| Central California Environmental Justice Network   | Fresno Building Healthy Communities          |
| Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce    | Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation              |
| Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative | Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce             |
|  | Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission     |
|  | Leadership Council for Justice               |
|  | Vision View                                  |

## EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

|   |
|---|
| California Partnership of the San Joaquin Valley  |
| California State University, Fresno   |
| Fresno City College   |
| Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission Fresno Regional Work Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance |



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# 6 Appendix

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- A. Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
- B. Economic Conditions
- C. Organizational Ecosystem
- D. Economic Centers
- E. Reference Documents
- F. Public Survey
- G. Public Notice