

# 1: Introduction

## What is the Purpose of the Downtown Farmersville Specific Plan?

The Downtown Farmersville Specific Plan is intended to assist in transforming downtown Farmersville into an exciting and thriving pedestrian-oriented shopping, dining, residential and entertainment district for Farmersville.

## What Lands Are Affected?

The area subject to the Downtown Specific Plan includes the Farmersville Boulevard corridor, extending from Visalia Road on the south to the San Joaquin Valley Railroad on the north, including private properties bordering the east and west side of the street, along with alleys that parallel Farmersville Boulevard (see Map 1)



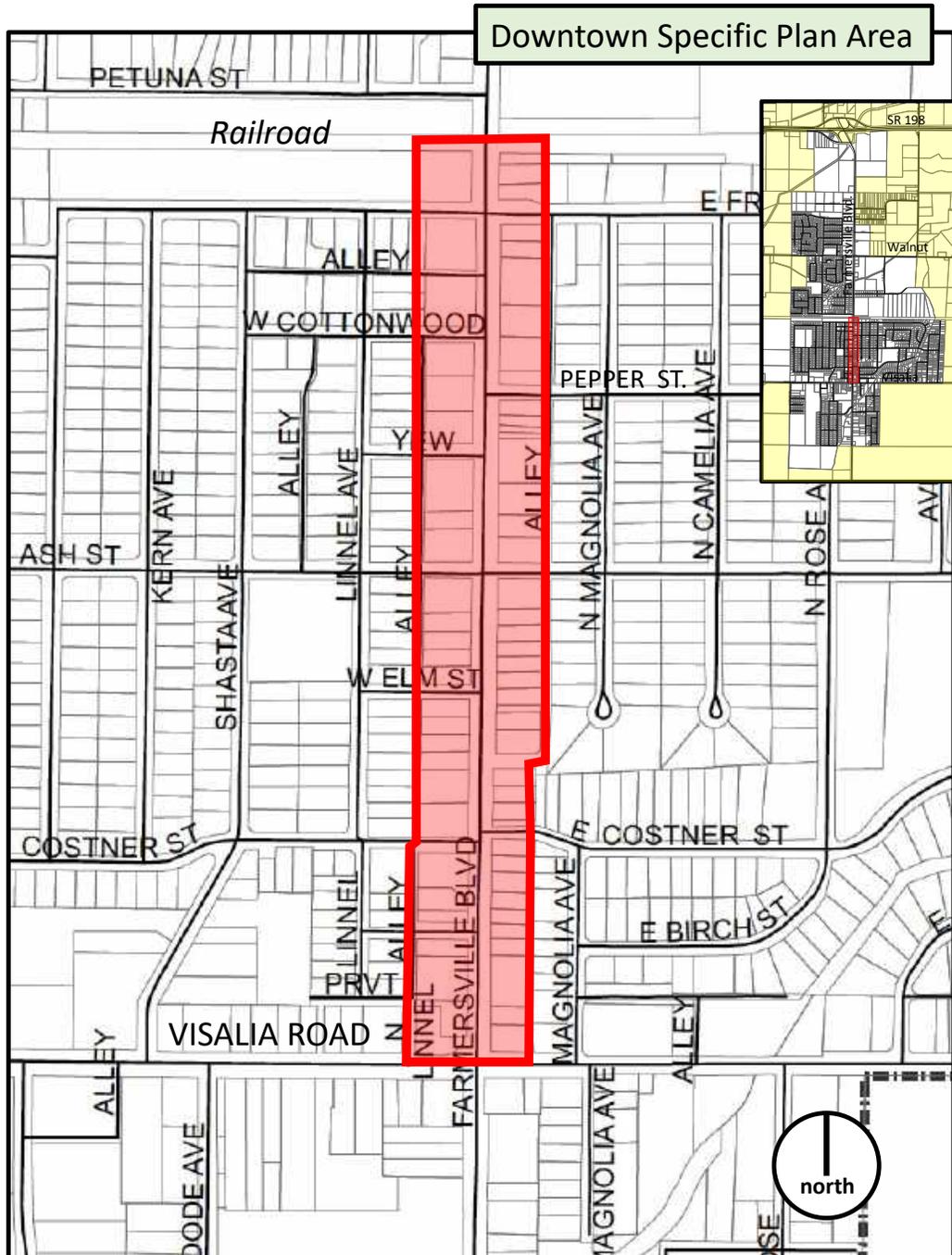
## Key Issues Facing Downtown

Downtown Farmersville is the commercial heart of the City but it faces a number of challenges for it to become a truly successful and thriving part of the City. These issues include:

- With four lanes, Farmersville Boulevard is considered too wide to function as an intimate, pedestrian-friendly street that is common in successful downtowns.
- The quality of existing building stock is mostly old and in poor conditions, creating safety and hazard concerns, hampering investment.
- There are a number of old single-family homes (some in poor condition) that are considered to be non-conforming uses, that hamper revitalization of the corridor area.
- Public facilities that make for a great downtown (such as a park, plaza or civic center) are very limited or nonexistent.
- There is a lack of clean affordable housing immediately in the downtown that would introduce and maintain a 24-hour population to visit stores restaurants and offices.
- There is a lack of shade trees and landscaping that would make walking and pedestrian shopping more attractive.
- Nighttime lighting is poor.



Map 1-1: Downtown Farmersville Specific Plan Area





- The City has a lack of staff and resources to implement programs.
- As more commercial development occurs outside the downtown area (such as on North Farmersville Boulevard) the downtown will need to find a niche to become more competitive. A part of this niche could consist of mixed use development, combining residential units and commercial uses within the same building or the same site.

### How Does This Relate to the Farmersville General Plan?

The 2025 Farmersville General Plan was adopted in 2002 and includes policies and action plans for the City to revitalize downtown. There are in fact specific action plans calling for preparation of a Downtown Specific Plan, including Action Plan II.3.:

*“The City should prepare a Downtown Farmersville Specific Plan which outlines land use, circulation and aesthetic strategies to improve the downtown area. The City Manager will work to identify funding sources for preparation of the plan.”*

A complete list of goals and action plans (from the 2025 General Plan pertaining to downtown) is shown in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1

### 2025 Farmersville General Plan Policies and Action Plans for Downtown

#### Character and Quality of Environment

##### **I. Enhance Farmersville’s quality of life by providing a Downtown which is inviting, friendly, clean, safe and aesthetically pleasing.**

1. The Redevelopment Agency shall establish a facade improvement program whereby low- or no-interest loans are made to businesses to improve their exterior appearance. Such programs exist in Exeter and Woodlake.
  - a. The Executive Director and City Planner will work together to formulate a facade rehab program.

##### **II. Maintain the Downtown as the government, civic and retail/office center for the City.**

1. The City should try to locate future government facilities in the downtown area. Future school district and county facilities should also be encouraged downtown.
2. The City should implement the recommendations of the “Farmersville Boulevard Revitalization Study”, prepared by Urban Futures, Inc. in 2001. This study features a number of recommendations, listed to the right.
3. The City should prepare a Downtown Farmersville Specific Plan which outlines land use, circulation and aesthetic strategies to improve the downtown area. The City Manager will work to identify funding sources for preparation of the plan.

##### **III. Identify and promote Downtown as the entertainment, cultural and community activity center of Farmersville.**

1. The City should encourage downtown merchants to form an association or perhaps a property-based improvement district.

#### Housing

##### **I. Promote multi-family and senior citizen housing in the Downtown area, to facilitate diversity, security and to extend “life of the streets” into evening hours.**

1. The City should promote the downtown area as a location for future multi-family development
  - a. The Land Use Map identifies the downtown as a mixed use area, which permits the combination of residential and commercial land uses.

*continued*



## How is the Downtown Specific Plan organized?

The Master Plan is organized into the following chapters:

1. **Introduction:** This chapter establishes the basis for the Specific Plan and explains why it is being prepared and how it will be used.
2. **Existing Conditions:** This chapter explores existing conditions in the planning area, including land uses, circulation features, utilities, and opportunities and constraints
3. **Goals, Objectives and Action Plans:** This chapter establishes goals, policies and action plans for development that is envisioned for downtown Farmersville. Items that are addressed include:

- Proposed Land Uses
- Circulation and streetscape features
- Design Guidelines
- Utilities
- Financing

## General Plan Policies for Downtown Farmersville (continued)

### II. Protect and enhance the integrity of the residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Downtown.

1. In the establishment of new uses, ensure that adequate screening and buffering are provided to protect adjacent neighboring uses. At the same time, work to establish good pedestrian connections between the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.
  - a. The Site Plan Review process will focus on techniques to buffer adjacent neighborhoods from the undesirable effects of adjacent commercial development.

### Circulation

#### I. Create a safe and comfortable environment in the Downtown where pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicular traffic and parking work in harmony.

1. The to-be-prepared Downtown Specific Plan will propose circulation improvements in the downtown area.

#### II. Identify the location of the Downtown for the traveling public.

1. The City should prepare unique and attractive directional signs that point the way to downtown.

### Parking

#### I Provide sufficient, accessible parking for automobiles and bicycles.

1. The proposed Downtown Specific Plan shall analyze existing parking conditions and make recommendations to increase the supply of parking both on and off street, in the downtown area.
2. The City should encourage the use of shared parking agreements in the downtown area, in order to reduce the amount of land consumed for surface parking.
  - a. Survey other cities that utilize shared parking agreements to determine the best method for doing this.

#### II. Ensure parking areas are convenient, attractive and safe. At the same time, minimize the negative visual impacts of parking lots through careful placement, landscaping and screening techniques.

#### III. Balance the parking downtown so there are sufficient spaces to efficiently meet shoppers' and tenants' needs for future land requirements for new building construction.

#### IV. Provide and maintain infrastructure to meet the needs of Downtown growth.

The City shall continue to monitor infrastructure needs and make repairs and upgrades as necessary. The proposed Downtown Specific Plan should identify any deficiencies in the infrastructure system and propose remedies.



## What About public participation in the planning process?

The Downtown Specific Plan was prepared at an unusual and difficult time in the history of Farmersville and indeed the world – due to the COVID19 pandemic. This has prevented the normal extensive public outreach, community involvement and meetings that would normally be involved in such a planning effort. In light of these restrictions the City decided to move forward with using the Planning Commission as an erstwhile Downtown Specific Plan Committee.

However, the City did implement an outreach program to property and business owners in the downtown (as well as the community at large) by sending out a survey (both online and via mail) to gauge the concern of those affected regarding the future of downtown and efforts that could be undertaken to revitalize it. A summary of results is provided below, with a more complete record of survey results provided in Appendix “A” of the Specific Plan.

### **Key Survey Results**

The following are key responses that were obtained from the survey:

#### **Question: What Do You Like Most About Downtown?**

1. Small town character
2. Restaurants
3. Local stores and shops

#### **Question: What Are the Key Issues that Downtown is Facing?**

1. Cleanliness
2. Safety

## Downtown Specific Plan Survey Questions

*The following questions were sent in a survey to downtown property and business owners and the community at large, beginning in February, 2021. For most questions a list of choices was provided. These can be seen in their entirety in Appendix “A”.*

1. *How often do you visit Downtown?*
2. *What are the reasons you come to Downtown?*
3. *Currently, there are some good things about Downtown Farmersville. What do you like most about Downtown?*
4. *What are the key issues that Downtown is currently facing?*
5. *What elements help make a downtown successful?*
6. *Currently, there are a lot of opportunities in the Downtown to build on. Which opportunities are most exciting to you?*
7. *If you could pick one “new” use to be added to the downtown, what would that be?*
8. *Is there anything else you would like to share about the future of downtown Farmersville?*
9. *What is your age range?*
10. *Where do you live?*



3. Crime
4. Not enough light at night

***Question: What Elements Do You Think Would Make Downtown More Successful?***

1. Varied choice of uses and experiences – retail, restaurants, entertainment, civic, service or non-profits
2. Pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment – comfortable, walkable, shaded, lighting
3. More shade trees and landscaping
4. Outdoor seating and dining

***Question: Currently there are many things to build on in downtown. What top three are most exciting to you?***

1. Bringing more users and momentum into Downtown (e.g. More stores and restaurants, offices and entertainment uses)
2. An opportunity to redesign Farmersville Boulevard (the current roadway is very wide) - widen sidewalks, add bike lane, trees, shade landscaping, seating, etc.)
3. Construction of housing in the downtown (which will bring more people to the area).

**What About Environmental Review?**

In compliance with CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) the City has prepared an Initial Environmental Study for the Specific Plan.

The purpose of the Initial Study is to provide City decision-makers (the City Council, Planning Commission, staff, etc.) the general public and affected agencies with the environmental consequences of implementing the Specific Plan. The Initial Study also identifies any mitigation measures that could be utilized to reduce the impact of the Specific Plan on the environment.

In general, environmental impacts of the Specific Plan are expected to be minor and in fact some policies in the plan are intended to reduce environmental impacts (such as placing housing in the downtown, which allows people to walk to destinations instead of driving a car).