



CITY OF SALINAS PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

DATE: OCTOBER 1, 2025

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: COURTNEY GROSSMAN, PLANNING MANAGER

TITLE: STUDY SESSION: 2025 SCHEDULE, CITY PLANNING DOCUMENTS OVERVIEW AND ZONING CODE UPDATE DRAFT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

No action required. Receive a presentation on the proposed 2025 study session schedule, hierarchy and relationship of City planning documents and Zoning Code Update Draft Public Engagement Plan and provide direction.

DISCUSSION:

Proposed Study Sessions/Trainings for Remainder of 2025

On September 17, 2025, the Planning Commission discussed potential study session/training topics. Below is a schedule of proposed topics for the remainder of the 2025 calendar year for discussion.

10/1/25 – Overview and Hierarchy of Planning Documents and Zoning Code Update Engagement Plan.
10/15/25 – Planning 101 (navigating the development review process)
11/5/25 – Role of the Planning Commission
11/19/25 – General Plan Public Review Draft Study Session
12/3/25 – PlaceWorks' Zoning Code Update Kick-Off
12/17/25 – California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) 101 (levels of environmental review)

The Institute for Local Government developed a Planning Commissioner Training series available [online](#). This series addresses some of the above topics. For example, for more information on the hierarchy of planning documents, see the Introduction to Planning and Planning Framework session. City staff will use materials from this series in future study session training materials.

Overview and Hierarchy of Planning Documents

One of the potential training topics requested by the Planning Commission at the September 17, 2025, meeting was an overview of our local planning documents and how they related to each other.

General Plan

At the top of the local hierarchy is the General Plan. State law requires each incorporated city adopt a general plan as the guiding policy document for the physical development of the city ([Government Code Section 65300](#)). Government Code also establishes elements, or topics, that a General Plan must include, but is not limited to, land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, safety, and environmental justice ([Section 65302](#)). The format of these elements can be tailored to meet the needs of the community, provided that required topics are addressed, and elements are internally consistent.

Salinas' current General Plan is comprised of three major documents – the 2002 General Plan, the 2017 Economic Development Element, and the 2023-2031 Housing Element. Links to these and other documents referenced in this discussion are included in Attachment 1. Plan List. The City currently does not have a required Environmental Justice Element, which is being prepared as part of the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan Update. See the Joint City Council-Planning Commission [Study Session](#) Staff Report for more on the proposed element structure of the General Plan Update.

Specific Plan

A specific plan implements the General Plan in an identified planning area by establishing an overall land use concept and development framework. Specific plans also have required components under state law (Government Code Sections [65450-65457](#)) and include tailored land use regulations, financial and engineering analysis and subsequent implementation measures, and may provide zoning for their particular area. Salinas requires specific plans for new development with Future Growth Areas (General Plan Implementation Program LU-4). Salinas has adopted eleven (11) specific plans and two more are currently in development.

Community Plans

The City also has other plans that focus on particular topics citywide. Some of these plans, such as the Stormwater and Sanitary Sewer Master Plans, go into more depth than is feasible for something like the General Plan, and must be updated on a more frequent schedule. Others are required by other laws, such as the Consolidated Plan, which is federally required for communities that receive U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant funds. Additional recent citywide plans include the Urban Forest Management Plan, Parks, Recreation and Libraries Masterplan, and Active Transportation Plan.

The City also has plans focusing on certain areas of the City (Downtown Vibrancy Plan, Alisal Vibrancy Plan, Chinatown Revitalization Plan). These area plans are not required by any law and do not carry the same legal weight as the General Plan but can organize the community behind a

powerful vision that drives change. The Downtown Vibrancy Plan, Alisal Vibrancy Plan, and Chinatown Revitalization Plan are all examples of plans that are not required but provide the community vision and framework which allows the City to pursue grant, local, and private funding for plan implementation.

Zoning Code Update Draft Public Engagement Plan

As discussed in the June 10, 2025 Joint City Council-Planning Commission [Study Session](#) and the September 17, 2025 [Administrative Report](#), the City is embarking on a comprehensive Zoning Code Update (ZCU). Community involvement will be a key component of the ZCU and the public engagement approach for this project must be appropriate for Salinas and designed to ensure the resulting Zoning Code aligns with the vision of the community and users of the Zoning Code. Engagement for the ZCU will be:

- Transparent – by creating public awareness of the project, regular updates and direction vetting through the Planning Commission and City Council and clearly articulating the basis and context of proposed changes; and
- Inclusive – by offering multiple avenues for participation throughout the project and increasing the accessibility of engagement activities; and
- Collaborative – by giving the community and the stakeholders most impacted by the Zoning Code meaningful opportunities to shape the new Zoning Code and ensuring their input is reflected in the final product.

The Planning Commission will play a major role in the ZCU. City staff will meet frequently with the Planning Commission to review the current Zoning Code and recommended changes. The Planning Commission must make formal recommendations prior to City Council consideration of any amendments. A summary of proposed ZCU Engagement is provided as Attachment 2. A more detailed ZCU Draft Public Engagement Plan is provided as Attachment 3.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Plan List
2. ZCU Engagement Overview
3. ZCU Draft Public Engagement Plan
4. PowerPoint Presentation