

**REPORT TO THE  
CITY COUNCIL**  
*City of Salinas, California*

DATE: February 7, 2017

FROM: Gary Petersen, Director of Public Works

BY: Michael Ricker, Environmental Resource Planner

SUBJECT: **DRAFT NEIGHBORHOOD VIBRANCY-URBAN GREENING PLAN**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council approve the attached Resolution accepting the Draft Salinas Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan (the Plan).

**DISCUSSION:**

Neighborhoods are cities' fundamental building block. Over time, infrastructure ages, technology advances and people change. To keep pace with these changes, neighborhoods must be updated. Over a two-year period, a 13-member Plan Advisory Committee (PAC), along with City staff and over 150 members of three neighborhoods worked collaboratively to develop three neighborhood plans to transform their quality of life. The Plan reflects: 1) residents' desires as provided in ten neighborhood meetings, 2) recommendations of local subject matter experts (PAC), and 3) professional urban design consultants' guidance. It is a start to transform Salinas' neighborhoods into places that meet 21st Century living and that foster a better quality of life.

The Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan

Cities soar when neighborhoods provide a high quality of life. And when people care about the place they live, neighborhoods thrive. To achieve this goal, three neighborhoods were selected to represent Salinas. These include: Creekbridge, the "Southside Area" (Maple Park and Monterey Park subdivisions) and the "Eastside Alisal Area". By analyzing a wide range of neighborhood attributes, including their location and conditions, broad lessons could be learned that would later be applied. The goal was to leverage grant funds for maximum benefit such that all City neighborhoods would eventually be improved. Neighborhoods were selected based upon their diversity of attributes and funding constraints. For example, the Creekbridge Area was selected for its relative new development; its pattern of development with a centralized commercial area; for its natural waterways; its proximity and role as a link to emerging areas within Salinas to Carr Lake and the proposed subdivisions north of E. Boronda Road, as well as having an evolving middle-income demographic.

The Eastside Alisal Area was selected because of its unique physical and demographic qualities. It was built prior to annexation into the City and its development reflects that fact. Its location proximate to downtown and to Carr Lake afford opportunities for physically connecting communities and linking residents with centers of activity. Neighborhood commercial areas here distribute shoppers along several strip shopping areas, rather than converging them into a central core like Creekbridge. Its

limited amenities, such as substantially fewer trees, presented opportunities for significant improvement. In terms of demographics, the Alisal is perhaps one of the most culturally rich and cohesive of Salinas' neighborhoods that arguably provides opportunities for improvements to the built environment to foster a sense of community like no other in Salinas.

The Southside Area of Maple Park and Monterey Park present a still different palate. It is one of the City's earliest neighborhoods and the location of its commercial shopping areas draws residents away from the neighborhood core—in direct contrast to the other neighborhoods. It has some tree-lined streets, yet next to no parks. In terms of connections, it is linked to the South Main Street shopping district and is the gateway neighborhood into Salinas from the Monterey Peninsula. In terms of demographics, it is an older community with a different composition than other Salinas neighborhoods. Together, these three neighborhoods represented broadly differing built environments and communities of people from which to learn and develop design ideas, recommendations and policy improvements all contained within one plan.

Plan preparation was made possible by a grant of funds from the State's Strategic Growth Council and the Natural Resources Agency. These agencies have an oversight role that includes Plan review.

The intent of the Plan was: 1) to work within each neighborhood to create a unique place that people will care about and thrive living in, and 2) take lessons learned and apply them city-wide over time. Goals included improve quality of people's lives by providing greater opportunity for connection between people and place; address chronic disease and "health in all policies" goals by providing safe and comfortable alternative transportation options, such as walking and biking; enhance environmental conditions; create neighborhoods that people care about; and reduce crime by fostering a sense of community. The Plan includes a range of actions to the built environment that would transform how people live and neighborhoods function. The intent is similar to the recently accepted Downtown Vibrancy Plan, where "downtown" is considered one of Salinas' neighborhoods. Resultant changes to the built environment enable people to establish and nurture culture.

The Plan benefits from having had terrific expert guidance. Together, a 13-member panel of experts, e.g. the Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) brought broad local, professional technical knowledge and wisdom to each of the Plan's subject areas. The list of the dedicated PAC members follows:

Plan Advisory Committee Members:

Jose Arreola, City of Salinas--CASP: Community Safety and Well-being  
Libby Barnes, architect: Built environment urban design & energy efficiency  
Mike Bellinger, landscape architect: Connecting people to place  
Cynthia Bojorquez, City of Salinas: Library and Community Services  
Carmen Gil, County Health Dept., Health in All Policies  
Arianna Green, transportation planner TAMC: Complete Streets/active mobility  
Lynn Hamilton, community representative: educator and artist  
Sarah Hardgrave, Big Sur Land Trust, city planning  
Krista Hani, PhD, County Environmental Health: Community Health  
Sheila Molinari, City of Salinas: Neighborhood/Community Services  
Jeanette Pantoja, Building Healthy Communities: Environmental and Social Justice  
Rachel Saunders, Big Sur Land Trust: Connecting People to Nature  
John Sorensen, City of Salinas: Landscape & Parks Maintenance and Urban Forest Management

In addition to the PAC and the scores of citizens involved, Plan preparation was guided by an award-winning urban design consulting firm who, working with the community, the PAC and city staff produced the Plan. Plan components include: 1) an opportunity and constraints analysis (Green Atlas),

2) a Needs Assessment, 3) Design Guidelines and 4) an Action Plan. An internet link to the Plan is attached for review.

A full description of each neighborhood design is contained in the Plan. Plan implementation is envisioned through its Action Plan and other steps. Ultimately, projects contained within the Plan would be brought back for City Council approval as part of a capital improvement or other programs. At that time, staff will prepare any necessary environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**ISSUE:**

Shall the City Council accept the Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan? State of California Strategic Growth Council and Natural Resources Agency Grant provisions require that the City accept the Plan before they conduct their review and approve grant fund reimbursement. If the City decides to reject the Plan, it risks losing grant funding.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There are no fiscal impacts from Plan acceptance. However, should the City Council decide to not accept the Plan, the City would likely be in default of its grant and could well forfeit grant funds. Implementation of the Plan will be integrated into future City efforts as determined. Cost for recommended actions will be determined at that time.

**TIME CONSIDERATIONS:**

As a condition of the grant, City Plan acceptance is required by February 10. If the City does not act by that date, it would be required to submit a request for an extension of time or possibly risk grant forfeiture.

**ALTERNATIVES/IMPLICATIONS:**

The City Council may request amendments to the Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan. If the Council desires to make amendments that would require additional time, a request for an extension of time will likely need to be filed. See above discussion on time consideration.

**CITY COUNCIL GOALS:**

The Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan addresses four of the five City Council goals of: Safe and Livable Community; Excellent Infrastructure; Quality of Life; and Economic Diversity and Prosperity.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

The Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan was produced with extensive community and expert stakeholder involvement over a two-year period. It includes proposals that will shape three neighborhoods and will inform future planning efforts. The Plan offers recommendations for more livable neighborhoods that will improve residents' personal health, calm traffic, improve the environment, reduce crime and create places where people will make lifelong memories. The Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan is a plan for a bright and energetic future in Salinas.

Back Up Pages:  
Resolution  
Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan (via external link)

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_ (N.C.S.)**

**A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE DRAFT SALINAS NEIGHBORHOOD VIBRANCY-URBAN GREENING PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, on October 22, 2013, the City issued a Request for Proposals to prepare a Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan (Plan) driven by neighborhood residents and stakeholders committed to establishing a vibrant vision for three neighborhoods to serve as a template; and

**WHEREAS**, the City selected PlaceWorks, a professional design firm with extensive experience in urban green plan preparation, to prepare the Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, City also formed a thirteen-member Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of local subject matter experts across the broad spectrum of Plan subjects to provide Plan guidance; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan Advisory Committee held more than ten meetings over a 24-month period, and staff held thirteen (13) neighborhood meetings to engage citizens and capture their thoughts, concerns and desires, and reflect those back to the community in the text of the Plan defining the City’s collective identity as the body of the Salinas Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Draft Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan is being presented to the City Council for purposes of acceptance; and

**WHEREAS**, the City will review and evaluate the plan and action items of the Draft Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan for consistency with the General Plan and for potential impact on the environment and the level of review required by the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”).

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALINAS** hereby accepts the Neighborhood Vibrancy-Urban Greening Plan document for the City of Salinas.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 7th day of February 2017 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

APPROVED:

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Joe Gunter, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Patricia M. Barajas, City Clerk