

# SALINAS PLANNING COMMISSION

## Staff Report

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CDD Director Approval

Agenda Item

**DATE:** October 16, 2019  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Megan Hunter, Community Development Director  
**BY:** Lisa Brinton, Planning Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Alisal Vibrancy Plan

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending that the City Council accept the Draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan (the “AVP” or “Plan”) is an action-oriented, comprehensive strategy for Salinas’ Alisal (East Salinas) neighborhoods. In this staff report and in the AVP, Alisal is used interchangeably with East Salinas to recognize the community’s intergenerational connections to the neighborhood. Older generations identify the planning area as the Alisal, while the younger population refers to it as East Salinas.

The AVP’s purpose is to communicate the collective vision, goals and desires of those who live, work, worship, and shop in the Alisal. Over 1,500 residents and community stakeholders participated in a community-led engagement process that resulted in more than 150 strategies. Community recommendations evolved into goals, policies and actions that are the “heart” of the Plan and will inform the update of the City’s General Plan, anticipated to begin in 2020.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan is the result of years of visioning, community organizing, and relationship building between the City of Salinas and Alisal residents. In 2013, the City was in the process of developing a Downtown Vibrancy Plan and Economic Development Element (EDE). The City, in partnership with Building Healthy Communities – East Salinas Collaborative (BHC), conducted a community meeting for East Salinas residents to give input on EDE development. Residents at this meeting identified the desire and need to have a community plan to improve East Salinas, and with assistance from the BHC Collaborative, advocated for a plan of their own.

### **Context with other Plans**

The Salinas General Plan states the City's vision for the community's future and outlines goals, policies, and implementation measures to achieve its vision. Since its adoption in 2002, the City has updated the Housing Element (2015), added a new Economic Development Element (2017) and undertaken multiple plans and planning efforts; some addressing regional and citywide topics, while others focusing on geographical areas in the City. Regional and citywide plans include the Consolidated Five-Year Action Plan (2015), Regional Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan (July 2018), Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (2019), Parks, Recreation and Libraries Master Plan (July 2019), and Public Art Master Plan (underway – anticipated Fall 2019). Area specific plans include the Alisal Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2015), Downtown Vibrancy Plan (2015), East Alisal Street Corridor Plan (January 2019), and the Chinatown Revitalization Plan (underway – anticipated December 2019). All plans are available on the City's website.

### **Community Outreach and Engagement**

Equity is at the center of AVP community engagement with the goal of inclusion, building community capacity and resident empowerment. From June 2017 to April 2019, the City in collaboration with community members and grassroots organizations from the greater Alisal neighborhood, engaged residents and community stakeholders to develop plan content. Over 1500 stakeholders participated in eight (8) community workshops, twenty-four (24) pop-ups, twenty (20) Steering Committee meetings, thirty-four (34) Working Group meetings, and twenty (20) community stakeholder meetings. Direct outreach was also conducted as City and Building Healthy Communities staff and Steering Committee members canvassed residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors at various planning phases to inform community members about the AVP and to encourage engagement.

The heart of the AVP community engagement process is the resident-led Steering Committee and five Working Groups supported by City, agency/technical, and community-based organization staff. Between November 2017 and June 2018, Working Groups

drafted over 150 strategies and developed plan content in the five topic areas of Housing and Neighborhoods, Economic and Workforce Development, Community Health and Safety, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Arts, Youth and Open Space. The Steering Committee discussed the topic of Land Use.

During its May 1, 2019 study session, staff provided the Planning Commission with an AVP overview focusing on each topic area's chapter summary and implementation matrix. Since then staff has been responsible for pulling together the content and leading the preparation of the public review draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan with consultant support. Steering Committee, Working Group members, community-based organizations, City staff and technical professionals all took part in reviewing and commenting on the administrative draft AVP. Comments received were incorporated in the public review draft document released on October 7, 2019.

Visit the AVP website [www.alisalvibrancyplan.org](http://www.alisalvibrancyplan.org) for more details regarding the AVP community engagement process, Steering Committee and Working Group agendas and minutes, Working Group topic area content matrices, community meeting materials and summaries, draft studies and planning documents and the public review draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan is organized into the following ten chapters:

1. Community Vision and Introduction
2. Alisal Community Overview
3. Community Engagement
4. Land Use and Design
5. Housing and Neighborhoods
6. Economic and Workforce Development
7. Community Health and Safety
8. Transportation and Infrastructure
9. Youth, Art, Parks, Recreation and Enrichment
10. Next Steps and Implementation

Chapter 1 states the community's vision for the Alisal and offers a broad overview of the Plan's purpose and policy context. Chapter 2 provides community background, historical context, and a summary of existing conditions. Chapter 3 provides a summary of community engagement that occurred throughout the planning process and led to the vision, goals, policies and implementation actions in this plan.

The subsequent six chapters (Chapters 4 through 9) provide context and recommendations in six key topic areas: land use and design; housing and neighborhoods; economic and workforce development; community health and safety; transportation and infrastructure; and art, youth and open space. Each topic chapter begins with the community's

aspirational vision, a summary of topic goals and their connection to the Visión Salinas Guiding Principles. An assessment of related assets and challenges provides the context for the goals, policies and implementation actions recommended by the Steering Committee, Working Groups and community members. Each goal and policy is discussed followed by an implementation matrix of action items. Most of the goals, policies and actions come directly from the community. Staff, technical professionals and the consultant team did add a few policies and actions that either did not come up in community conversations, incorporate best practices, or provide for a more comprehensive approach to achieving the community's desired outcome.

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan is action driven and contains efforts that could span 10 to 15 years. Each topic chapter concludes with identifying emerging implementation priorities for the chapter, as defined by the community. Residents, community stakeholders, and the City are to revisit implementation progress and priorities annually. Chapter 10: Next Steps and Plan Implementation describes the more immediate actions that capitalize on current strengths and opportunities to move the community's vision forward over the next one-to-two years. This chapter also identifies potential government funding sources for implementation and acknowledges that it is through strong partnerships between the City, County, other local government agencies, philanthropy, businesses, community stakeholders and residents that the community's vision can be implemented.

### Community Vision Statement

Through the Alisal Vibrancy Plan process, Alisal residents have come together to envision a better life that they themselves can help create in partnership and collaboration with the City and other community stakeholders. Over 80 residents attended a Vision workshop in October 2017 to share their vision for the Alisal through small group discussions. Conversations from the October workshop served as the foundation for the Steering Committee to refine a vision statement that represents a collective vision for the Alisal community. This vision statement was shared with residents at pop-ups in early 2019 and at the Draft Plan Celebration (April 2019) for further review and comment.

*We are an attractive, welcoming, united, clean and safe community that celebrates cultural diversity using family spaces. We nurture young people who prosper through recreational and educational programs and provide access to affordable housing and well-paying jobs for all residents. We foster healthy and prosperous living that benefits the generations of today and tomorrow. We are Alisal.*

### Overarching Themes

Overarching themes of inclusion, equity, cultural-competency and youth as the future emerged through the planning process. Priority recommendations focused on the need for more affordable housing and increased tenant protections, improved safety, maintenance and appearance of public spaces including streets, sidewalks and parks, and increased

access to education, training and employment resources and opportunities, art and recreation programs, and mental and physical health services. Attachment 2 provides a summary by topic of top community concerns and recommendations and Attachment 3 provides a goal summary for each topic chapter area.

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan contemplates the realignment of future land use to ensure the built environment matches the needs of its population. Recommended land use and zoning policies and actions seek to balance density with livability, create walkable neighborhoods, ensure ample open space, provide sufficient parking, and increase overall housing supply and affordability without displacing residents or businesses. Residents, community stakeholders, technical professionals and staff utilized a placemaking land use planning approach to discuss and define the community's desired sense of character, public features, and building form, uses and intensity for the Alisal. This Plan is a strategic planning document. In order to make its land use recommendations enforceable they must be incorporated into the City's General Plan and Zoning Code. AVP land use recommendations will inform the General Plan update anticipated to begin in 2020.

As stated above, Chapter 10: Next Steps and Plan Implementation describes the more immediate actions that capitalize on current strengths and opportunities to move the community's vision forward over the next one-to-two years.

### **DRAFT PLAN COMMENTS**

On September 25, 2019, staff previewed the administrative draft AVP with Steering Committee and Working Group members. Comments received were incorporated into the public review document released on October 7, 2019. Staff will provide any comments received after the submission of this report at the October 16, 2019 Planning Commission meeting. Public comments received at the Planning Commission meeting will be documented in an Errata sheet for City Council consideration on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan is a strategic planning document. The proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines section 15378). If recommended policies or actions progress to a "project" level further CEQA analysis will be required to address potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION ROLE**

The Planning Commission is to consider a recommendation to the City Council on the acceptance of the draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan. The recommendation to the City Council is in the form of approving a resolution prepared and attached to this staff report.

## **TIME CONSIDERATION**

The City Council will consider the Alisal Vibrancy Plan and the Planning Commission's recommendation on November 5, 2019. Staff would then prepare the final Plan incorporating public, Planning Commission and City Council comments.

## **ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO THE COMMISSION**

The Planning Commission has the following alternatives:

1. Recommend acceptance by adopting the attached Planning Commission resolution with modification to the resolution; or
2. Find that the acceptance of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan is not appropriate and establish findings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan represents the community's shared vision for a prosperous, livable, safe, and attractive Alisal for all residents. This vision describes a present and future Alisal that embraces its rich history, cultural diversity, entrepreneurial and innovative spirit, and young population as assets to improve the overall quality of life and prosperity of Alisal residents. The Plan provides the framework for Alisal residents, community stakeholders and organizations, and City and other governmental agencies to work collaboratively to implement specific action steps toward realizing the community's vision. AVP recommendations will also inform the General Plan update anticipated to begin in 2020.

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
MEGAN HUNTER  
Community Development Director

Attachments:

1. Planning Resolution Recommending City Council Acceptance of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan
2. "What We Heard" – Community identified issues and recommendations
3. Topic Chapter Goal Summaries
4. Public Review Draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan