



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 5, 2019
DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
FROM: MEGAN HUNTER, DIRECTOR
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TITLE: ALISAL VIBRANCY PLAN

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion to approve a resolution accepting the Draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan as a key strategic planning document.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council approve the attached resolution accepting the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (Exhibit “A” to the resolution) as a key strategic planning document.

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 2,000 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 (DVP) 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, with 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 and related documents 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 2,000 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 BHC staff and Steering Committee members canvassed residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors at various phases in the planning process 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 Youth, Art, Parks, Recreation and Enrichment. The Steering Committee discussed the topic of Land Use and Design.

During a 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.

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. Bound copies of the Plan were made available on Wednesday, October 9, at the City of Salinas Community Development Department (65 W. Alisal Street), City Hall (200 Lincoln Avenue), the Cesar Chavez Library (615 Williams Road), the Hebbbron Family Center (683 Fremont Street), Bread Box Recreation Center (745 N. Sanborn Road), and Firehouse Recreation Center (1330 E. Alisal Street).

On October 16, 2019, the Planning Commission received a presentation on the public review draft AVP and heard public comment from members of the Steering Committee and community organizations supporting the Plan. A representative from BHC indicated that they would be submitting more detailed written comments by the October 21st deadline. The Planning Commission voted three to one to recommend City Council acceptance of the AVP. Since only four of seven commissioners were present, there was confusion as to whether or not the vote constituted denial, no action or approval. It was later verified by the City Attorney that the Commission approved a recommendation of acceptance as a majority of Commissioners present voted in the affirmative.

Written comments were received from Building Healthy Communities East Salinas Collaborative (BHC) in emails dated October 14 and 19, 2019, and a letter dated October 21, 2019. Comments received are provided as Attachment 4 to this staff report. A brief summary of comments received is provided under the Discussion section that follows. Attachment 5 is staff's response to comments, and Exhibit "B" to the resolution is an errata sheet that lists edits, changes and modifications recommended for incorporation into the public review draft Plan.

Visit the AVP website 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 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.

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, parks recreation and enrichment. 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 and Priorities

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.

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.

Summary of Written Public Comment and Response

BHC's comment letter is organized by chapter topic. Discussion under each topic section affirms community top concerns and recommendations, states BHC support of overarching themes, goals policies and actions, identifies goal, policy, and action narrative that needs further clarification, refinement or modification, and lists BHC's priorities. Preliminary emails received from BHC mostly focused on word choice, grammatical edits and typos. BHC comments are provided as Attachment 4, with staff response to comments detailed in Attachment 5. Edits, changes and modifications that are recommended for incorporation into the public review draft Plan are listed in the errata sheet provided as Exhibit "B" to the resolution.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

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.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The preparation and development of the AVP is a key objective under Economic Diversity and Prosperity. Topic areas covered in the Plan also include recommended policies and actions that address the initiatives of a Safe, Liveable Community, Effective, Sustainable Government, Well-Planned City and Excellent Infrastructure, and Quality of Life.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Community Development Department Plan and Project Implementation Division lead the planning process and prepared the public review draft Plan with consultant support. Staff from other Community Development Divisions, Library and Community Services, Public Works and Police Department participated in or assisted with the facilitation of community workshops, working group meetings and/or pop up events.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

In FY 2015-2016 the City Council budgeted for the preparation of the AVP by creating a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) account (9249) funded through Measure G and the General Fund. In August 2016, the City entered into a Professional Services Agreement with Raimi+Associates to prepare the AVP for an amount not to exceed \$400,000, of which \$387,081.53 has been expended to date. Staff's time working on the preparation of the Plan is included in the City's annual budget.

The AVP is intended to be a foundation for ongoing collaboration between city, other agencies, residents, and community stakeholders. The Plan contains efforts that could span 10 to 15 years, with a lot of actions that fall outside of direct City responsibility, but the City may want to advocate for or support in other ways. It is expected that the City Council will use the AVP to inform the budgetary process in future fiscal years and establish new CIPs for core infrastructure projects. As part of the 2020-2021 budget process, staff will present recommendations for the funding of priority policy and action items based on emerging priorities identified in Chapter 10.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution Accepting the Alisal Vibrancy Plan as a strategic planning document
 - a. Exhibit "A": Public Review Draft Alisal Vibrancy Plan
 - b. Exhibit "B": Errata Sheet- Recommended Edits, Changes and Modifications
2. "What We Heard" – Community identified issues and recommendations
3. Topic Chapter Goal Summaries
4. Written comments from Building Healthy Communities - East Salinas Collaborative
5. Staff Response to Comments