

1.0 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

This is an update to the General Plan of the City of Wasco. By State Law, each City and County in California is required to prepare and maintain a General Plan that contains the City's policies and standards for growth and development in the community. The General Plan includes an identification of the general pattern and intensity of growth over the next thirty years, and policies and standards to be applied to specific development projects. The General Plan is to contain a minimum of seven "elements", each addressing a special aspect of local growth concerns. This General Plan contains an optional element—agriculture—because of the community's concerns and priorities regarding the continued feasibility of agriculture in the community.

1.2 UPDATE PROCESS

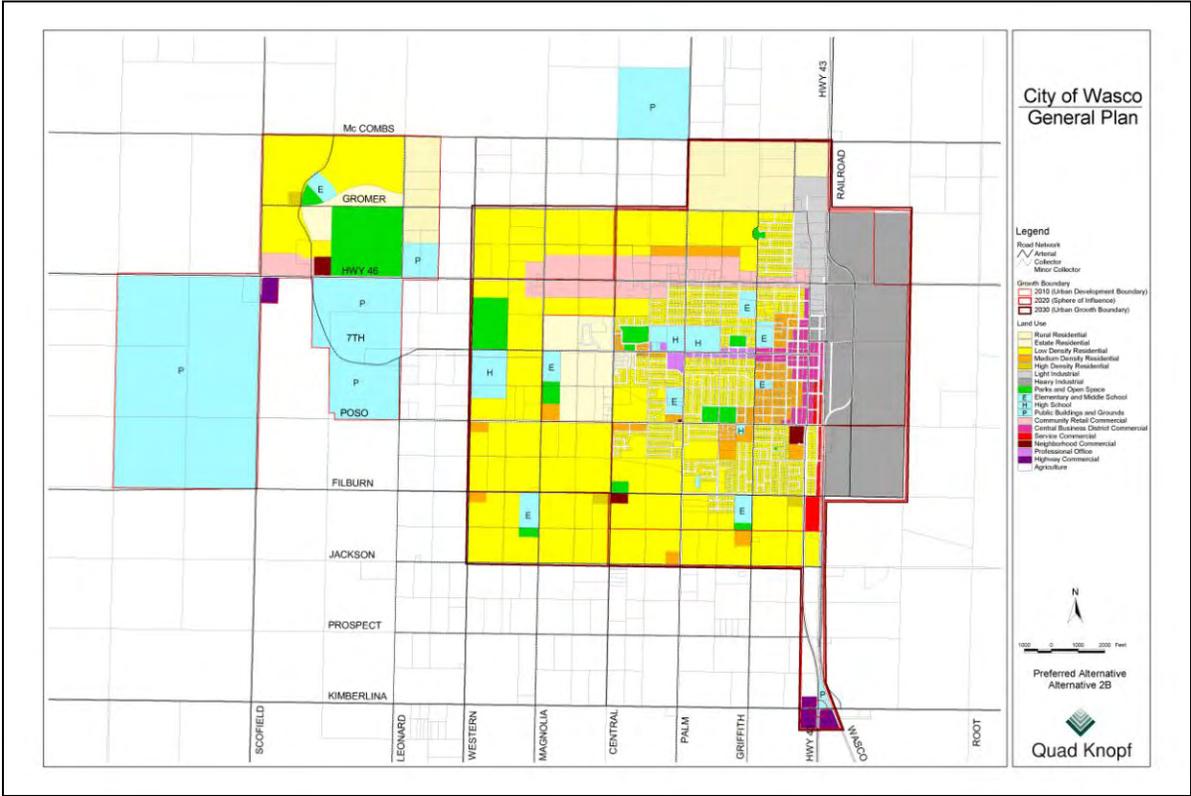
The General Plan Update was started with visioning workshops where citizens and civic leaders expressed their opinions about the city and its growth issues, opportunities, and constraints. Planning Commission and City Council General Plan Advisory Committee meetings were also held to discuss existing conditions, community visioning, development alternatives, comments and expectations about the General Plan process. The first step in the workshop process was to review the purposes and processes for the General Plan, existing General Plan policies, and to identify specific additional areas for development and discussion. The next exercise in the workshop was to break into small groups to discuss; "What do you like about Wasco?", "What do you dislike about Wasco?", and "What would you change if you could?". The likes, dislikes and changes were reviewed with the entire group. This exercise highlighted the community's strengths and weaknesses, and began the articulation of ideas for achieving a preferred future.

These workshops identified needed changes in the community and established the core values for development of the General Plan. Groups were formed and then asked to create a "picture" of the future of Wasco. Based on the workshops, the following Planning Principles were developed:

1. Development to the south and west is preferred; however, vacant areas need to be filled in to the north and services need to be added to ensure their viability.
2. Provide adequate land for a wide range of industrial uses. Larger scale uses (warehousing) and higher intensity uses not compatible with residential development should be located outside of the present industrial park, either east of the community, or along SH 99 adjacent to the prison. In order to increase capture of industries in the community, such areas should be master planned to expedite processing of applicants, and aggressively marketed (along with the industrial park) to targeted industries.

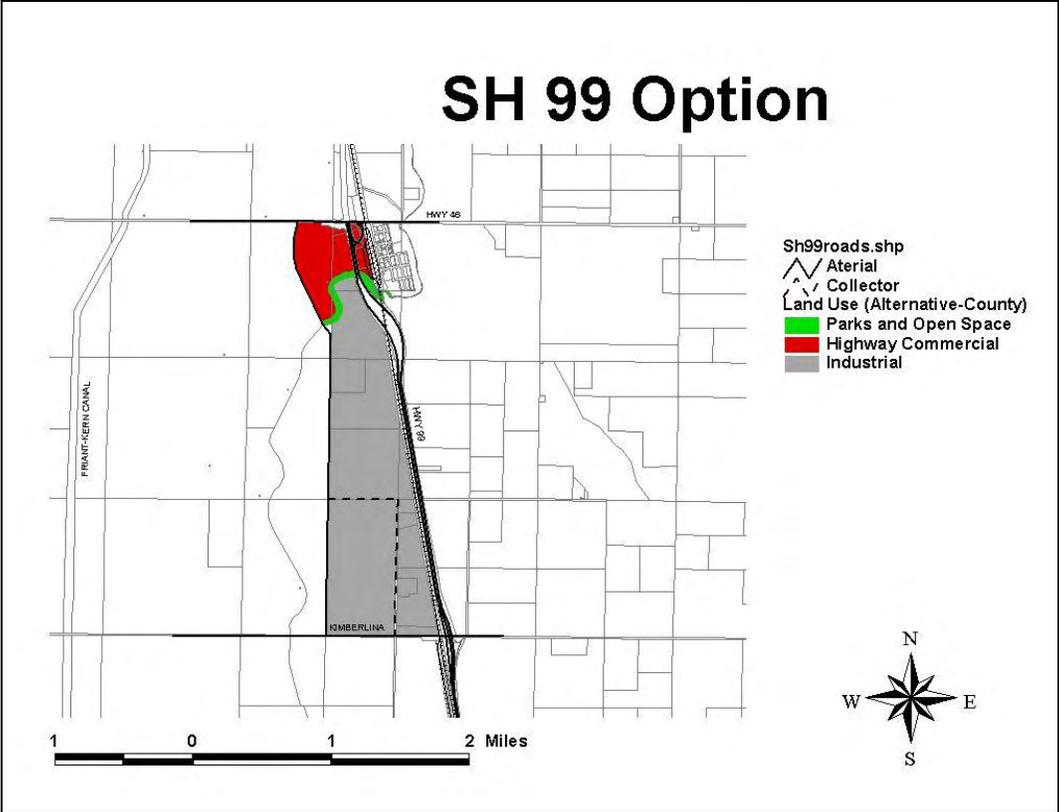
3. Downtown should not be allowed to further decline in its importance as the geographic and service center of the community.
4. Avoid nuisance areas such as the airport (noise, safety), wastewater treatment plant (odor and noise), railroad (noise), and prison (glare). Buffer the prison and wastewater treatment plant through open space/agriculture zoning and usage of community-level parks.
5. Capitalize on SH 99 for unique development opportunities that cannot be accommodated in town, but don't compete with existing commercial and industrial areas. Make sure that this is a design asset from the community through high design standards.
6. Preserve small town atmosphere through preservation of downtown, infill of unused or underutilized parcels, usage of street standards that are appropriate for neighborhood scale and planned traffic levels, and the preservation and enlargement of community meeting spaces. Plan for the expansion of the downtown in proportion to growth in the community.
7. Maintain the City's high level of circulation service, increase connectivity of neighborhoods, and minimize division of the community caused by major transportation facilities (e.g., railroads, highways and arterials).
8. Use schools, parks and central features of neighborhoods, and use pedestrian friendly features to create neighborhoods, not just housing tracts. Place greater emphasis on larger lot housing to accommodate all housing needs.
9. Use SH 46 as the circulation and commercial "spine" of the community.
10. Increase the beauty of the community through the usage of additional large trees, removal of blight, and increased design standards.
11. Make growth contiguous. Provide incentives for infill development, develop growth-phasing boundaries, and ensure development and/or redevelopment of underutilized properties.
12. Increase economic vitality and competitiveness of community through job growth, new commercial development, increased health services, family entertainment services and the quality of residential areas.
13. Develop feasible financing mechanisms that will ensure the development and maintenance of infrastructure and community amenities in conformance with standards established in the General Plan.

On March 5, 2002, the Planning Commission and City Council adopted these principles to guide the development of the General Plan, and asked that a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) review the policies appropriate to implement these principles, to develop a land use plan, and to develop appropriate zoning designations and regulations in conformance with the General Plan. Three land plans were considered, plus an option to develop along the State Highway 99 Corridor. A "Northern" Alternative was reviewed that would expand growth north of McCombs, a "Western" growth Alternative that would direct growth along the 7th Street Corridor and State Highway 46, and a "Southern" Alternative that would direct growth south to Prospect Avenue.



"Preferred" Alternative

The Planning Commission and City Council also reviewed an option to each of the plans to designate development along the SH 99 corridor. This option would anticipate development along this corridor and hold it in reserve for uses that cannot be accommodated within the contiguous community. A conceptual plan was developed for this area and is shown below.



Highway 99 Conceptual Development Plan

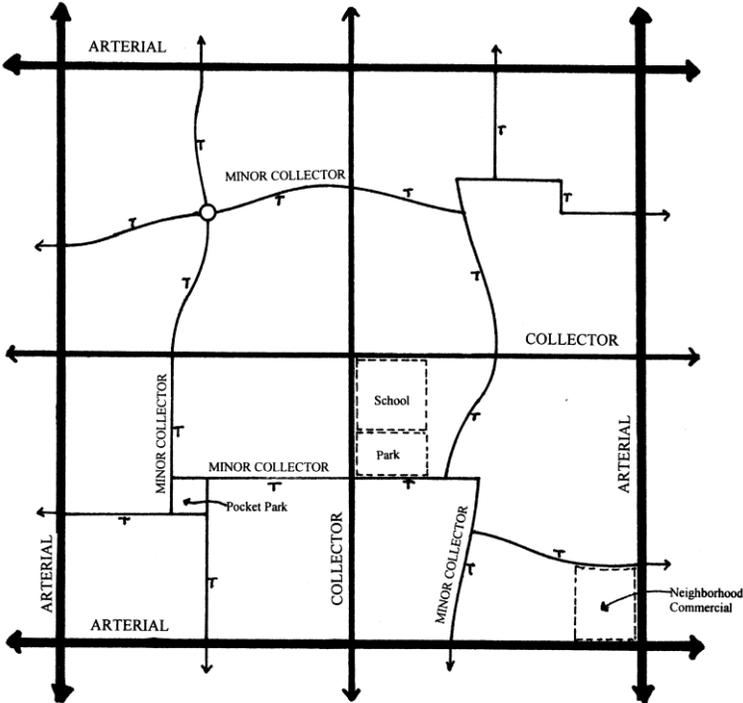
On June 4, 2002 the City Council adopted the above "Preferred Alternative" land use plan, including the State Highway 99 option, and conceptually approved the draft land use policies. The GPAC met nine times to review General Plan policies, land use plan options, and a revised Zoning Ordinance.

1.3 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

This document contains the policies and standards developed by the staff, consultant and GPAC. There are policies for land use, conservation and open space, agriculture, circulation, housing, safety and noise. Many of the policies in the General Plan are a continuation of existing policies and practices. There are, however, a number of new policies and policy directions that are worth noting. These include the following:

1. Development of the community along the 7th Street and Highway 46 axis. Previous plans showed growth north, south and east, with limited growth to the east. This General Plan directs growth primarily to the west, with some growth to the south. (Policy 2.1.A.4)
2. Development should be directed away from the County Airport. Limited, lower intensity uses would be permitted north of SH 46. (Policy 2.1.C.3)

- 3. Growth in the community would be guided by phasing lines. Growth would be contiguous to existing development and within the designated phasing lines. Expansion of these phasing lines would be permitted upon significant buildout of existing planned areas. (Policy 2.1.B)
- 4. A new hierarchy of residential land uses would be established. (Policy 2.2).
- 5. A new hierarchy of commercial and industrial land uses would be established (Policies 2.3 and 2.4)
- 6. Schools and parks would function as central features of planned neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods would have planned pedestrian, transit, and vehicular "connectivity" through the usage of Minor Collectors. (Policy 2.1.A.5)
- 7. New standards would be established for the City's circulation system. The new system would include Local streets, Minor Collectors, Collectors, and Arterials. Traffic calming measures would be required to protect neighborhoods from excessive through traffic trips, but would permit pedestrian access throughout the neighborhood. Local streets would be narrower; all streets would have parkway landscaping. Neighborhoods would be developed in accordance with the following conceptual circulation network (Policy 5.1).



T = Traffic calming devices as required to maintain a speed of 25 MPH or less.

8. The Sphere of Influence lines in the community would be amendment to implement the plan. The existing Sphere of Influence lines would be amended to reduce area to the north and east, and would be expanded to include the a narrow strip along the SH 46 and the SH 99 frontage included in the SH 99 option.