NEWSLETTER #1:
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Imagine Merced marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the City of Merced. This visionary effort invites the community to help plan what Merced could become over the next 20 years.

> *What will our city look like two decades from now? What kinds of businesses and industries will thrive here? How will California High-Speed Rail shape the future of Downtown? And what steps is the City taking to improve the lives of all residents?*

To answer these questions, and many more, the City of Merced is launching a major planning effort made up of two key components: a **General Plan update**, and the development of a **Downtown Station Area Plan**.

General Plan Update and Downtown Station Area Plan

What is a General Plan?

Every city and county in California must have a general plan, which is a local government's long-term framework or "constitution" for future growth and development. The general plan represents the community's vision for its future and establishes the development needs necessary to support that vision. Once the General Plan is adopted, the City Council and Planning Commission will base their land use decisions on the City's General Plan. Typically, general plans are designed to address issues and opportunities over the following 20 years.

A general plan has three defining features:

- **General.** A general plan provides general policy guidance that will be relied on to guide future land use and resource decisions.
- **Comprehensive.** A general plan is comprehensive in nature, covering a range of topics, such as land use, housing, economic development, infrastructure, public safety, recreation, natural resources, and much more.
- **Long range.** A general plan provides guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 or more years in the future. To achieve the vision, a comprehensive plan includes goals, policies, and actions that address both immediate and long-term needs.

Why is the General Plan being revised?

A general plan is a living, adaptive document that evolves with the changing needs and vision of a community. The City of Merced adopted its current General Plan on January 3, 2012. The City is initiating this update to modernize land use patterns, address emerging trends and recent State laws, continue planning efforts in areas of the city needing investment, incorporate UC Merced and other annexations into the City's long-term goals, and prepare for major transportation and rail projects that are proposed to be developed in Merced.

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What is the Downtown Station Area Plan?

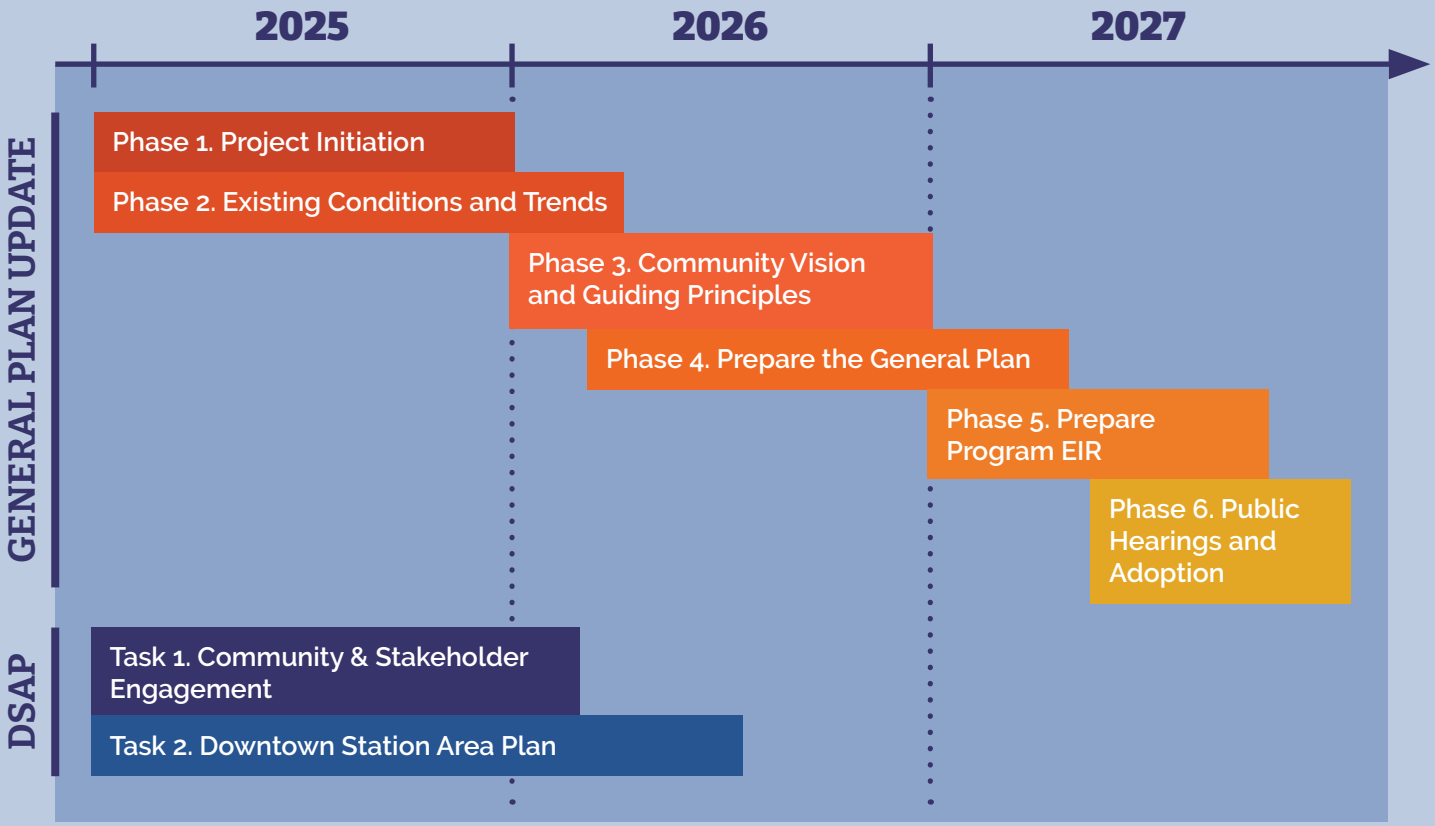
The Downtown Station Area Plan (DSAP) will inspire and regulate change in the district centered around Merced's historic downtown and new rail station. The future Merced rail station will be unique in that it will be the only place where Amtrak San Joaquin, Altamont Corridor Express, and future High Speed Rail (HSR) come together, in addition to new facilities for Merced County Transit. The DSAP will be critical to Downtown Merced's success as a thriving mixed-use district and destination, particularly as it relates to leveraging economic development and community improvements near HSR.

How does the DSAP relate to the General Plan?

The DSAP will integrate multimodal transportation, economic development, land use, and placemaking for the project area into the City's short- and long-term goals. Drafting the DSAP and General Plan Update concurrently will allow the community to decide what life in the city will look like 20 years from now and how the HSR will shape the future of the city's downtown.

Project Schedule

The overall project will be completed in about three years, wrapping up in 2027. The DSAP will be drafted and adopted on a shorter schedule, with adoption expected to occur mid-2026. This project will take place in the following phases:



Project Documents

1 Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook

The Workbook will tell the engaging story of Merced – where it has been, where it is today, and the trends that will shape its future.

2 Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report

The report will include a summary of key community takeaways on assets, issues, and opportunities in the city.

3 Vision and Guiding Principles

The Vision Statement and Guiding Principles will represent the ideal future for the community and its core values. They will be based on the 2030 General Plan community vision, input gathered at community open houses, and input from City Planning staff.

4 General Plan Update

All existing elements in the General Plan will be updated and two new elements will be drafted based on the changing needs of the community and changes to State law.

5 Downtown Station Area Plan

A Downtown Station Area Plan will be drafted, including goals, policies, strategies, and implementation programs.

6 Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

A Program EIR for the General Plan update and Downtown Station Area Plan will be drafted in compliance with CEQA requirements.

Visit the project website below to view project documents as they are released!

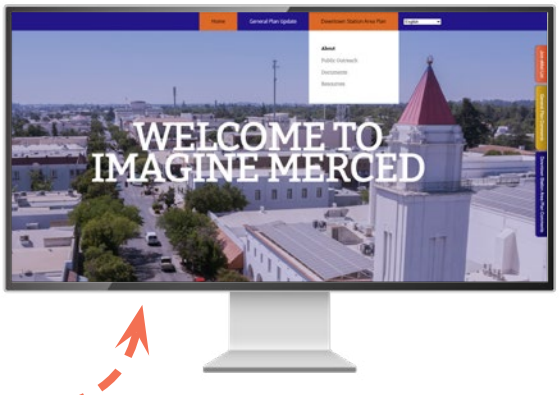
ImagineMerced.com

Get Involved!

The General Plan Update and DSAP projects offer a unique opportunity for community members to actively shape and influence the future of Merced. In order to accurately reflect the collective vision and priorities of residents, we need to hear from you! There are a number of ways to get involved in the process and provide your input:

Online Engagement

- **Visit the Project Website.** Check out the project website (ImagineMerced.com) to get frequent updates on the status of the project, view documents, and learn about upcoming meetings, workshops, and other ways to stay involved.
- **Sign Up for Email Updates.** You can join our email list by visiting ImagineMerced.com. When you sign up, you will get notifications of newly released documents and any opportunities to participate in workshops, meetings, and more.



Upcoming Workshops

Public engagement events are a great opportunity to learn about the General Plan and DSAP, connect with other members of the community, and share your ideas about the future of Merced. Visit our project website at the link below to sign up for project updates and engagement opportunities!

Questions?

Email us at:
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Visit the project website:
ImagineMerced.com

Call us at:
(209) 385-6858