

# Atwater General Plan Update Visioning Workshop #1

January 31, 2024

De Novo Planning Group



A Land Use Planning, Design, and Environmental Firm



# WORKSHOP OVERVIEW



- General Plan Overview and State Requirements
- Summary of the General Plan Update Process
- Public Outreach and Community Involvement
- Assets and Challenges Activity
- Vision Statement Activity
- Mapping Activity
- Next Steps and What we Heard

# WHY IS THE GENERAL PLAN IMPORTANT?



## Community Vision

The General Plan Update is an opportunity to reaffirm and refine the Community's Vision for itself:

- Quality of life
- Preservation of Open Space and Agriculture
- Innovation and Sustainability
- Vibrant economy
- Jobs and housing

# WHY IS THE GENERAL PLAN IMPORTANT?



## Comprehensive in Scope

The General Plan serves as the City's 'playbook' for land use and planning decisions relative to:

- Land Uses (residential, commercial, industrial, business parks, open space, etc.)
- Infrastructure Planning (roads, water, sewer, etc.)
- Public Services (police, fire, parks, libraries, cultural activities, etc.)
- Resource Conservation (clean air, sensitive habitat, waterways, groundwater, agriculture, etc.)

# WHY IS THE GENERAL PLAN IMPORTANT?



- Strategically identifies budget and capital investment priorities based on realizing the General Plan's vision
- Serves as a management tool used by staff and decision-makers
- Provides guidance regarding priorities for City services including the Capital Improvement Program, Parks Planning, and Utilities Master Plans
- Streamlines development that is consistent with City's vision
- Compliance with State laws and grant eligibility

# EXISTING GENERAL PLAN

- Last comprehensive update was 2000
  - Housing Element updated in 2017 (currently being updated via a separate process)
- Numerous changes to State law and Local Conditions
  - Climate change and Adaptation
  - Environmental justice
  - Complete streets
  - Flood and Fire protection
  - Regional Growth
  - Recession
  - Housing booms and busts
  - UC Merced
  - Pandemic



# GENERAL PLAN CONTENT



## REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Safety
- Noise
- Housing *(will be adopted this year)*

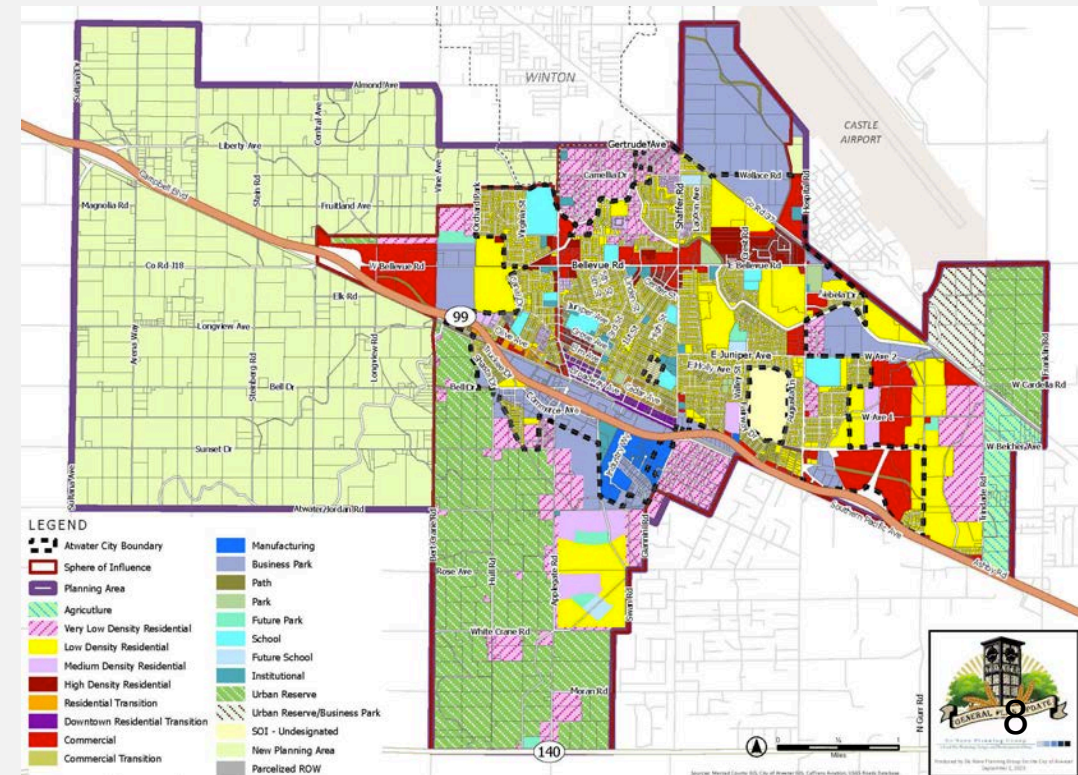
## OPTIONAL ELEMENTS

- Economic Development
- Sustainability
- Growth Management
- Parks and Recreation
- Environmental Justice
- Administration and Implementation

# LAND USE MAP



- The Land Use Map assigns a designation to every parcel within the **City limits**, the City's **Sphere of Influence (SOI)**, and the larger **Planning Area**.
- Determines what can be built, and where
- Similar to the Zoning Map, but at a more general level of detail
- The GP Update provides an opportunity to further refine key areas within and around the City, make adjustments, and plan for future growth and resource conservation





# SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS



Public Participation

Existing Conditions Report



We are here!

Identify Community Priorities



Land Use Map Revisions

General Plan Goals, Policies,  
and Programs

Draft General Plan

Environmental Impact Report

Public Hearings - General Plan  
and EIR

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



- Planning Commission/City Council Study Sessions
- Community Visioning Workshops
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Community Open House Workshops
- General Plan Technical Advisory Committee
- Public Hearings
- Digital Engagement



# DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT



- Dedicated Website  
[www.Atwater.GeneralPlan.org](http://www.Atwater.GeneralPlan.org)
- Leverage existing City social media accounts
- Online surveys
- Newsletters

**What's New**

Work on the City's General Plan Update is just getting started. The City has contracted with a consulting firm, De Novo Planning Group, to lead this effort and guide the City through this process.

**We Want to Hear from You!**

In January and February, the City will host two General Plan Visioning Workshops. Please attend to learn more about the project, discover ways to participate, and share your ideas for the future of Atwater.

**Welcome**

Welcome to the Atwater General Plan Update website! The City is excited to embark on the process of updating its General Plan, and this website will provide the community with an ongoing resource to provide input, track progress, review resource documents, and participate in this very important project.

Each city in California is required to have a General Plan, which serves as a guiding document for the city's long-term growth and development. Atwater's existing General Plan dates back to 2000, and a lot has changed since then. New housing developments have been built, business and industry are changing, and the city has grown.

The General Plan addresses a range of important community topics like land use, housing, economic development, transportation, parks and recreation, public safety, and more. City staff, elected and appointed officials, business owners, developers, and citizens can reference the General Plan for guidance on what the community values and what are its priorities.



# POST-IT NOTE EXERCISE



## What are Community ASSETS in Atwater? (x3)

- What do you value most about Atwater?
- What makes this a special place to live or work?
- What are your favorite things about this City?

## What CHALLENGES are Atwater facing? (x3)

- What issues or challenges are facing the City that need to be addressed in the General Plan?

*Write one thought per Post-It Note*

*Place the Post-It Notes on the board, clustering yours with similar ideas*



## Activity 2: Visions



# VISIONS

## What Are Your Visions for the Future of Atwater?

- What does the ideal or dream City look and feel like?
  - Who lives, works, and plays there in the future?
  - What is going on in the City?
  - What do you hope stays the same?
- 
- *Using the large paper at your table, as a group brainstorm key words/ ideas to incorporate into a vision.*



# VISION STATEMENT



The General Plan Update should be guided by a Vision Statement. The Vision Statement should be concise and clear, and should articulate the overarching goals of the community. For example:

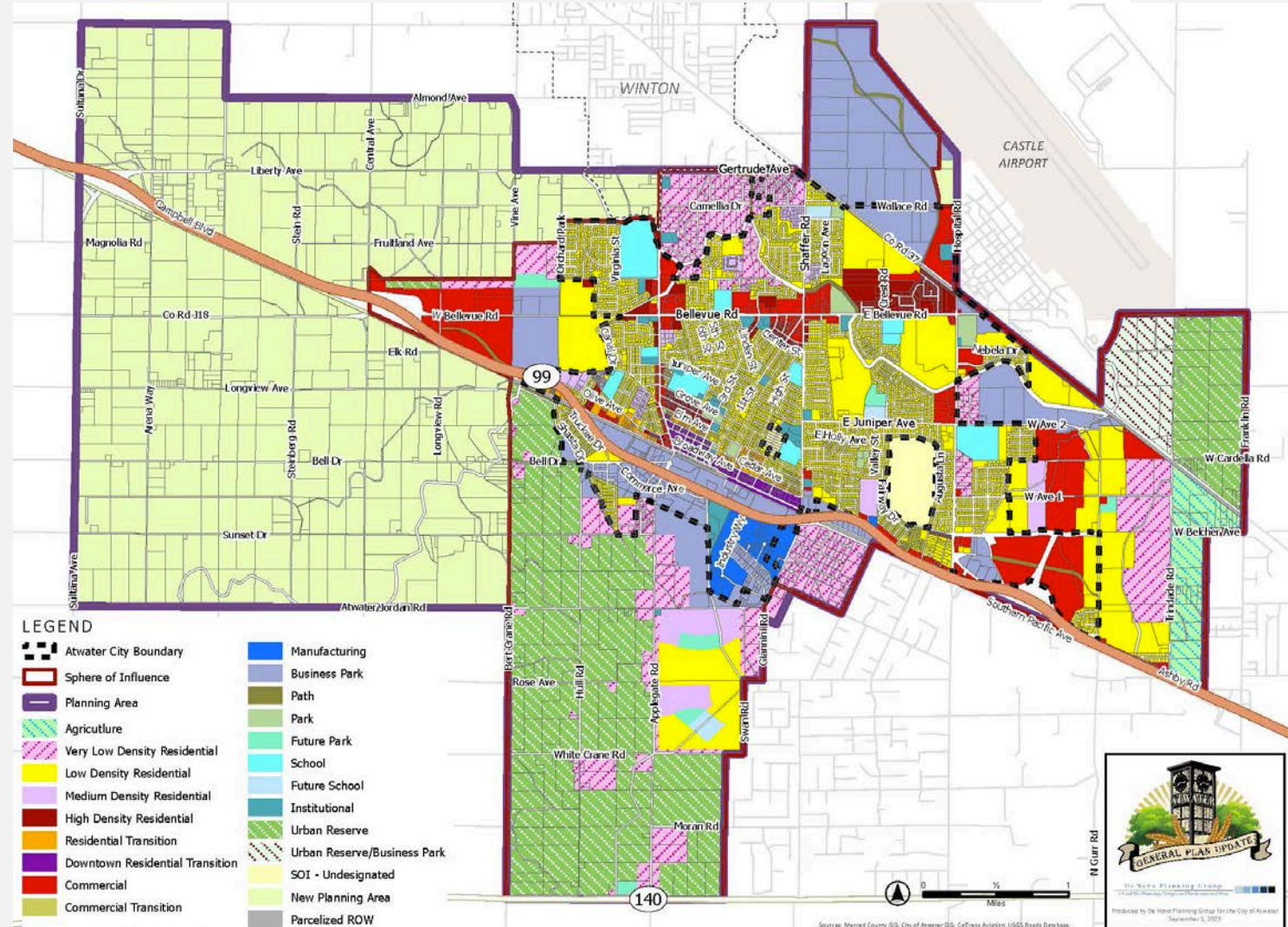
*Our city is a desirable community to live, learn, work, and play. Our city has maintained its small-town character and feel, while growing into a healthy and vibrant mid-size city that celebrates its surrounding environmental resources, agricultural heritage, and cultural diversity. Our community is healthy, safe and family-oriented, with thriving schools, parks, shops, entertainment, and businesses.*

Working individually, or as a group, please develop a Vision Statement for the Atwater General Plan Update. Your Vision Statement should be 3-4 sentences long, and should include your most important guiding principles.





# Activity 3: Land Use Mapping



# LAND USE MAPPING

*Working as a group, address the following questions on the map*

- What types of land uses and development should the City plan for in the 5 identified Opportunity Areas?
- Where are the City's key destinations or community gathering places?
  - What are the greatest assets in these areas?
  - How can these areas be improved?
- Are there areas within the City where existing land uses should transition to a new or different use? (example: A commercial district that should transition to residential or mixed use)



# NEXT STEPS



- Visioning Workshop #2: **February 28th**  
*6pm, City Hall, Council Chambers*
- Complete Existing Conditions Report **Winter 2024**
- Public Outreach Summary Report **Spring 2024**
- Begin work on the General Plan Update Alternatives

**[www.Atwater.GeneralPlan.org](http://www.Atwater.GeneralPlan.org)**