

# Fresno Mayor Swearingin corrals business, education leaders to support downtown efforts

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/02/26/3791931/fresno-mayor-swearingin-corrals.html>

By Tim Sheehan

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Visitors walk past chalk drawings created to support pedestrian traffic along the Fulton Mall Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014 in downtown Fresno. ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — THE FRESNO BEE

Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin is gathering a cadre of the city's heavy hitters on Fulton Mall on Wednesday to proclaim their support for "bringing new life to downtown Fresno" and pledge to tackle other challenges.

Swearingin's new Presidents' Council includes nearly two dozen chief executives from education, health care, agriculture, business and banking. The formal announcement of the new

panel at 12:30 p.m. at the north end of the Fulton Mall comes one day before the Fresno City Council will consider Swearengin's proposal to tear out the 50-year-old pedestrian mall and reopen Fulton Street to traffic between Tuolumne and Inyo streets.

In a statement issued in advance of Wednesday's announcement, Swearengin's office said the leaders would present a declaration to advocate for a "vibrant downtown as a focus of innovation, entrepreneurship and culture."

The statement said the panel members will commit in their declaration to support "public investments necessary to restore downtown Fresno as a regional center for commerce and culture.

Swearengin said she convened the panel "to confront head-on the long-term challenges of our city: unemployment, a deteriorating city center, education attainment and access to health care."

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