

Foundation promotes Fresno's general plan

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From left, Dora Westerlund, Arthur Moye and Tim Rios promote Fresno's 2035 General Plan as part of the Foundation for Fresno's Future.

Fresno's 2035 General Plan was the first order of business for the new Foundation for Fresno's Future during a press conference this morning promoting the city's blueprint for the next 20 years.

With the plan up for approval by the city council in the next several months, the foundation's three board members reminded those in attendance that there is still time for residents to give their feedback to ensure a safer, more vibrant future for Fresno.

Community members can share their thoughts on neighborhood improvement, parks and recreation, public safety, transportation, downtown revitalization and other issues contained in the plan by visiting the foundation's website at www.yourplanyourcity.com.

Speaking at a residence in the Fresno High District, Tim Rios, senior vice president of corporate community development for Wells Fargo, highlighted the importance of the general plan in addressing opportunities for low and moderate individuals.

"There's no greater pleasure than seeing those in Fresno succeed," said Rios, who helped form the Foundation for Fresno's Future over the last few months. "Especially those that have had the hardest time. Those that are living in moderate- or low-income communities."

Another foundation board member Arthur Moyer, founder of MBS Accountancy Corporation in Fresno, said that it's business attraction and job creation that are among the most crucial components of the general plan.

"Also of interest is a focus on recruiting cutting edge industries to Fresno and allowing them a way to operate here easily and developing a workforce to staff those industries," Moyer said.

Dora Westerlund, president and CEO of the Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation, said the plan also focuses on fixing up existing neighborhoods and encouraging the construction of new homes and buildings in underutilized lots within the city's limits.

"This type of development is particularly important given that it protects property values and promotes a ripple effect for nearby businesses and neighborhoods," Westerlund said.

It's been 12 years since the city has rewritten its General Plan, which is required by state law to guide the city's growth until the year 2035.

Fresno's draft 2035 general plan was developed under the leadership of the General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee based on the feedback of thousands of local residents, businesses, property owners and city officials.

The document contains a number of strategies to enhance economic development, increase public utilities and services, improve health and wellness, provide for parks and schools and contain urban sprawl with greater infill development.

While no public opposition has been voiced against Fresno's vision for the future, Rios said it's still important for the public to get involved in the process and take ownership in the evolution of their city.

"Even if it's going to sail through approval, I want to know day one what my role is in making it a reality and that's the appeal for me," Rios said.

The general plan can be downloaded at www.fresno.gov. It will be up for review until Aug. 18. After that, it will be up to the Fresno City Council to either accept or reject the blueprint.