

# Fresno Planning Commission sends 2035 growth plan to City Council

By George  
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- If you go:

What:

Fresno City Council hearing on 2035 general plan update

When:

5 p.m. Thursday

Where:

Convention Center New Exhibit Hall, 848 M St.

It's one down, three to go for Mayor Ashley Swearingin's 2035 general plan update.

The proposed blueprint for Fresno's growth now has the Planning Commission's blessing.

Next up is a City Council hearing Thursday at the Convention Center's New Exhibit Hall. If all goes according to mayoral design, the council will vote yes on the plan on Dec. 18.

It should be a lively journey if Monday's Planning Commission meeting set a trend.

City staff's advice to commissioners was clear. First, take a look at the plan's environmental impact report, then recommend that the council adopt it. Second, take a look at the plan itself, then recommend that the council adopt it.

This the commission did, but not until more than four hours of lively debate ensued.

The vote was 6-1, with Luisa Medina on the losing side. Medina said there's much to like about the plan. But, she added, the plan is so full of intriguing ideas that the public should have another month to review it all.

The other commissioners said the plan in one form or another has been kicking around Fresno for several years. They said the plan will evolve for years to come. They said it's time to act.

Swearingin on Tuesday said the vast majority of Fresnans are coming together in support of the plan.

"While there is no such thing as a perfect plan, the 2035 general plan update is a balanced approach to moving Fresno forward and giving our city the best chance for success," Swearingin said.

Dozens of people spoke to the commission.

Most embraced the plan's goal of slowing suburban growth and refocusing community resources on inner-city rebirth. Several wondered if the plan's emphasis on higher-density residential living will come back to haunt Fresno. Others suggested waiting two or three months until a reformed development code is ready to accompany the plan to the council dais.

Another issue never stated on Monday but always in the background was the City Council District 1 seat. Council Member Blong Xiong, termed out in early January, has eight years of land-use experience under his belt. Does the council make use of his expertise or wait until Esmeralda Soria is sworn in as Xiong's District 1 successor?

Xiong says he'll accept the council majority's decision, but adds with a fighter's resolve that "I never shy away from a vote."

Planning commission meeting — check. City Council marathon hearing — days away. City Council vote — right around the bend.

What's No. 4 on Swearingin's general plan to-do list?

Accomplish something.

Staff at the commission meeting had no trouble spinning the plan's dreams. With enough commitment, Fresno can be a land of jobs, parks, peace and equality.

Xiong said he's heard it all before.

"The real battle," he said, "will be on the implementation side."

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