

Dora Westerlund and Ryan Jacobsen: Approve Fresno's new general plan Dec. 18

After reading The Bee's Dec. 9 editorial urging the Fresno City Council to put the brakes on approving the 2035 General Plan Update, we're confused. This message is contrary to the process we've been involved in.

Our organizations, comprised of small business and farms from around Fresno County, have participated in the development of the 2035 General Plan Update since the beginning. We believe in this plan, and we want our city leaders to finally take the important steps forward on the path to Fresno's revitalization.

That's where our confusion comes in. The Bee wants a delay to allow more time for public review and input. We've been witness to the city's unprecedented levels of public involvement in crafting the General Plan Update and have helped to organize meetings for our members so that they are fully informed on the contents of the plan. We support the general vision — hence the title "General Plan" — for what we want Fresno to look like 20 years from now. And we have since the first draft was presented back in the summer.

The Bee itself, in its July 28 editorial, "Fresno's 2035 General Plan deserves support," offered full-throated endorsement of the document, as well as its public process by stating, "The city of Fresno's 2035 General Plan has been available for the citizens to look over and chew on since July 2."

That was over five months ago. Five months filled with additional public presentations that generated plenty of comments and phone calls and emails that ran the gamut of opinion. These five months were on top of a public process that started in 2010, four years ago. Given the sheer volume of opportunity the city has already provided over those five months, and the four years before that, we believe it is time to move this plan forward.

The groups we are hearing from right now have polar opposite views on the General Plan Update. One group thinks the city goes way too far in promoting infill, and the other is concerned the city doesn't go far enough. The city has found the right balance in forging a path down the middle, with realistic opportunities and guidelines for a more prosperous Fresno. That's the mark of community collaboration and leadership.

Speaking of leadership, it only seems fair that Mayor Ashley Swearingin and the City Council respect the amount of time and attention that outgoing Council Member Blong Xiong and his staff have already given to reviewing and discussing the General Plan Update. He has been fully invested in the entire process and has earned the right to vote on its approval.

We're certain that incoming Council Member Esmeralda Soria will have a significant impact on the Development Code, a companion document that provides the specifics of implementation that will complement the long-range vision of the city's General Plan, and all the work that needs to be done to implement the plan. She'll have plenty of time to ensure the successful implementation of the plan, but it seems rash to deny the current council member who has been immersed in the General Plan policy discussions for the last four years the opportunity to vote on its final adoption.

We see the General Plan Update as a guideline that lays the foundation for the policies that will improve the quality of life, not only for Fresno today, but for the future of our kids, their families, businesses and neighbors. It's our plan for our city; it reflects input from as broad an audience as possible.

A balanced, sensible plan for a vibrant city is within our reach. We are hearing opposing voices in our community argue for delayed action, but those of us in the middle think that it's time to act. We urge the City Council to approve

this plan on Dec. 18 and are committed to working with the city and all interested stakeholders on the successful implementation of the plan.

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