

Downtown needs population density

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As I read articles and letters regarding the Fulton Mall and downtown development, I am disheartened that the most important element in revitalizing Fresno's downtown, or any downtown for that matter, continues to be absent from the discussion. You must have population density in and around the city center to have a vital economic core.

The mixed-use developments going in around Fulton and Divisadero streets, with retail on street level and residential housing above, are an example of what works. There are many components to a vital city center, and Fresno, with the Convention Center, centralized government, the Fulton Mall, etc, has many elements in place. But without a population base and without the full backing of city leaders, nothing will succeed, and Fresno's downtown is a case in point writ large.

Mayor Arthur Selland knew what worked and population density was part of the overall plan, but after his sudden death in 1963, Mayor Floyd Hyde capitulated to north Fresno developers and the downtown plan was abandoned before it was given a chance to work. Classic Fresno land-use politics. It seems as if true leadership in Fresno died along with my grandfather.

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