

EDITORIAL: New Fresno zoning rules are long overdue



A dead pine tree stands next to a graffiti marred sign at a closed Chinese restaurant, originally a Happy Steak, at the southwest corner of Blackstone and Clinton, the site of a proposed Smart & Final. The Southern California-based retailer had wanted to build a store on the southwest corner of Blackstone and Clinton avenues, not far from Fresno City College and Ratcliffe Stadium. A dispute with City Hall popped up over whether the project should have one or two smaller buildings fronting Blackstone. The two sides couldn't settle their differences.

JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

There are few words more likely to make your eyes glaze over than “development code.”

It is the stuff of planners, developers, architects and land agents. They must master the language and concepts of zoning — or find something else to do to make a living.

But code development should be important to everyone, because it touches many aspects of life, such as where you are able to live, shop and work, and even the size and appearance of the buildings where you do those things.

Code development is especially important to Fresno now because the city hasn't had a complete zoning ordinance overhaul since 1962 (when gas was 28 cents a gallon and Fresno's population was 134,000).

By any measure, new zoning for our city is long past due, and we concur with this statement on the City Hall website:

“Tastes and needs have changed over the past five decades, and the Development Code should change with them. Although there have been several piecemeal efforts to make modifications since the current Code was adopted in 1962, such amendments have resulted in a fragmented Code that is often difficult to comprehend. A fresh start is in

order.”

One more thing: The Development Code Update that is under way is intended to underpin the 20-year General Plan passed by the City Council last December.

Without smart, new zoning ordinances, the 2035 General Plan will have no chance of fulfilling its goal of rebuilding Fresno’s urban residential and business districts, directing half of new growth inward and promoting a sustainable city.

City Hall has completed its draft of the Development Code Update.

You can read it on the city website (www.fresno.gov) or use this direct link: <http://bit.ly/1zH9ntg>. Hard copies are available at Fresno libraries.

It’s encouraging that city planners are promising a “streamlined approval process” for “proposals which conform to the new vision.”

Developers and business owners have complained about needless delays in the permit process for many years.

We have offered our opinion; City Hall needs to hear from you, too.

Two public information meetings, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., have been scheduled next week:

- Tuesday at the Hoover High School cafeteria, 5550 N. First St.
- Wednesday at Yokomi Elementary School, 2323 E. McKenzie Ave.

Go to a meeting to learn about where Fresno is headed and to share your thoughts with city leaders.

Comment by going to fresnobee.com and clicking on the editorial.