



Atwater General Plan Update Council Workshop

April 28, 2025

De Novo Planning Group



A Land Use Planning, Design, and Environmental Firm



MEETING OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

- Update on project status and work completed to-date
- Review and Discuss Working Draft Land Use Map
 - Seeking general support from Council to proceed with Draft Map and subsequent analysis
- Next steps and path forward



PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN



- Define a long-term vision for future growth and resource management within the City over the next 20 years
- Reflect the goals and values of the City
- Include opportunities for public outreach and community participation
- Balance growth, economic development, conservation, and quality of life

WHY IS THE GENERAL PLAN IMPORTANT?



- Strategically identifies budget and capital investment priorities based on realizing the General Plan's vision
- Serves as a management tool used by staff and decision-makers
- Provides guidance regarding priorities for City services including the Capital Improvement Program, Parks Planning, and Utilities Master Plans
- Streamlines development that is consistent with City's vision
- Compliance with State laws and grant eligibility

GENERAL PLAN CONTENT

GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Safety
- Noise
- Housing**
- Economic Development
- Parks and Recreation
- Environmental Justice
- Sustainability
- Growth Management
- Administration and Implementation

*** The Housing Element is being updated via a separate process.*



SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS



Public Participation

Existing Conditions Report



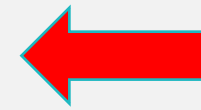
Identify Community Priorities



Issues, Opportunities, and Land Use Alternatives



General Plan Goals, Policies, and Programs



Draft General Plan

Environmental Impact Report

Public Hearings - General Plan and EIR

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TO-DATE



- General Plan Website: www.atwater.generalplan.org
 - Online surveys, newsletters, meeting info, document library, contact project team, etc.
- Visioning Workshops
 - 4 workshops were held between Jan-Mar 2024
 - Interactive activities and mapping exercises
 - Emphasis on land use, circulation, assets/challenges, community priorities
 - Online survey provided additional feedback opportunity
- Stakeholder Interviews
 - (County, Caltrans, LAFCO, school districts, local businesses, etc.)
- The ***Outreach Summary Report*** provides a detailed summary of feedback.



LAND USE MAP DISCUSSION



- The following slides focus on the Working Draft Land Use Map
- The project team is seeking feedback from the Council regarding the Draft Land Use Map, as we are at a critical stage in the project and process.
- We are not seeking formal action. Rather, we are seeking support and feedback to ensure we're on the right track.
- There will be additional opportunities to further refine and modify the Land Use Map before the General Plan Update is completed.

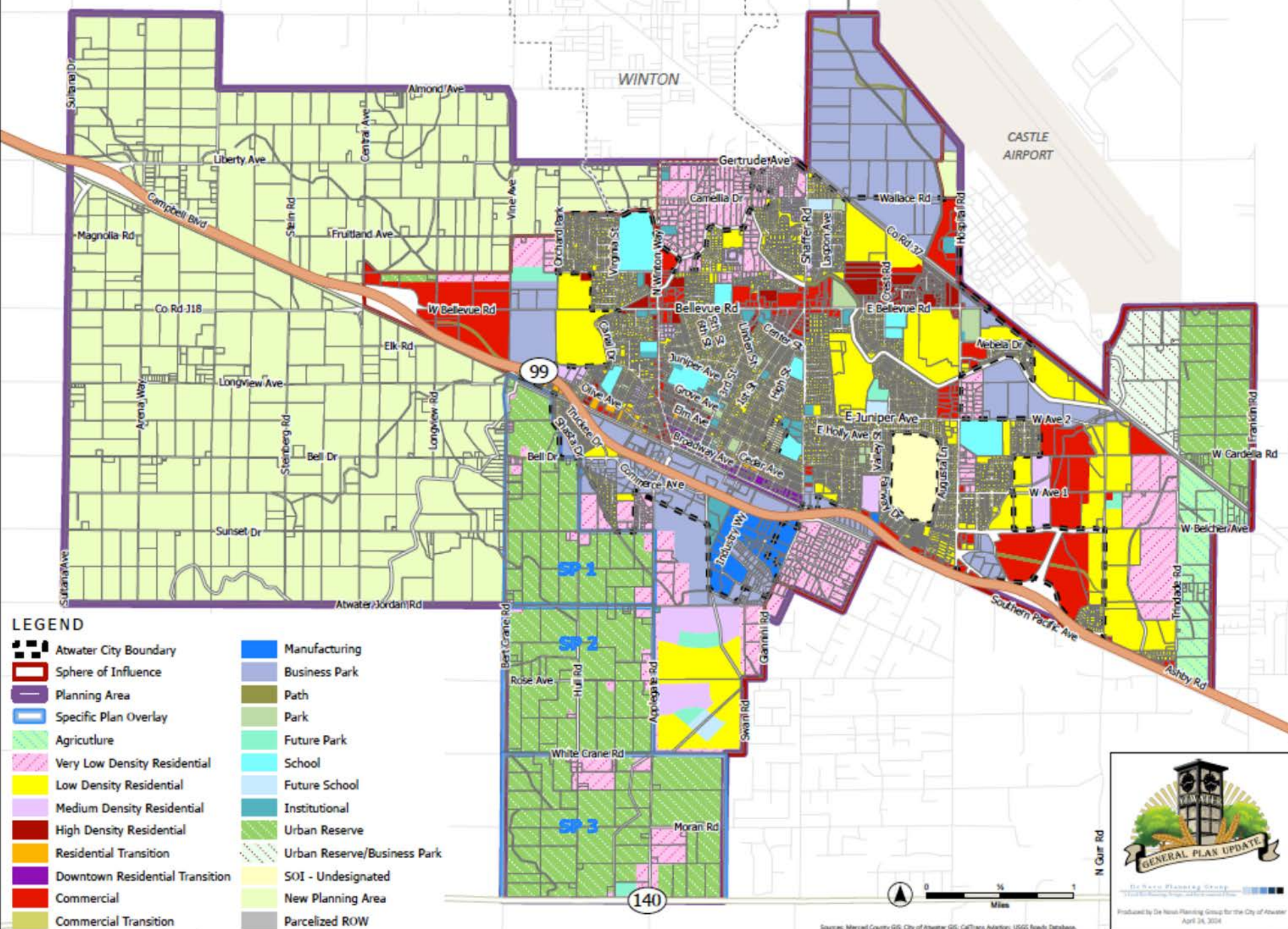
LAND USE MAP



- The Land Use Map assigns a designation to every parcel within the City limits, the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), and the larger General Plan Planning Area
- Determines what can be built, and where
- Similar to the Zoning Map, but at a more general level of detail
- The GP Update provides an opportunity to further refine the long term planning area, revisit SOI land uses, make adjustments within the City, and plan for future growth

- **City Limits:** The City Limits include all area within the City's corporate boundary, over which the City exercises land use authority and provides public services.
- **Sphere of Influence (SOI):** A Sphere of Influence (SOI) is the probable physical boundary and service area of a local agency, as adopted by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).
- **Planning Area:** For the purposes of the General Plan, the Planning Area is defined as the city limits, SOI, and a larger area of interest that is included in the analysis and planning for the 20-year horizon of the General Plan.

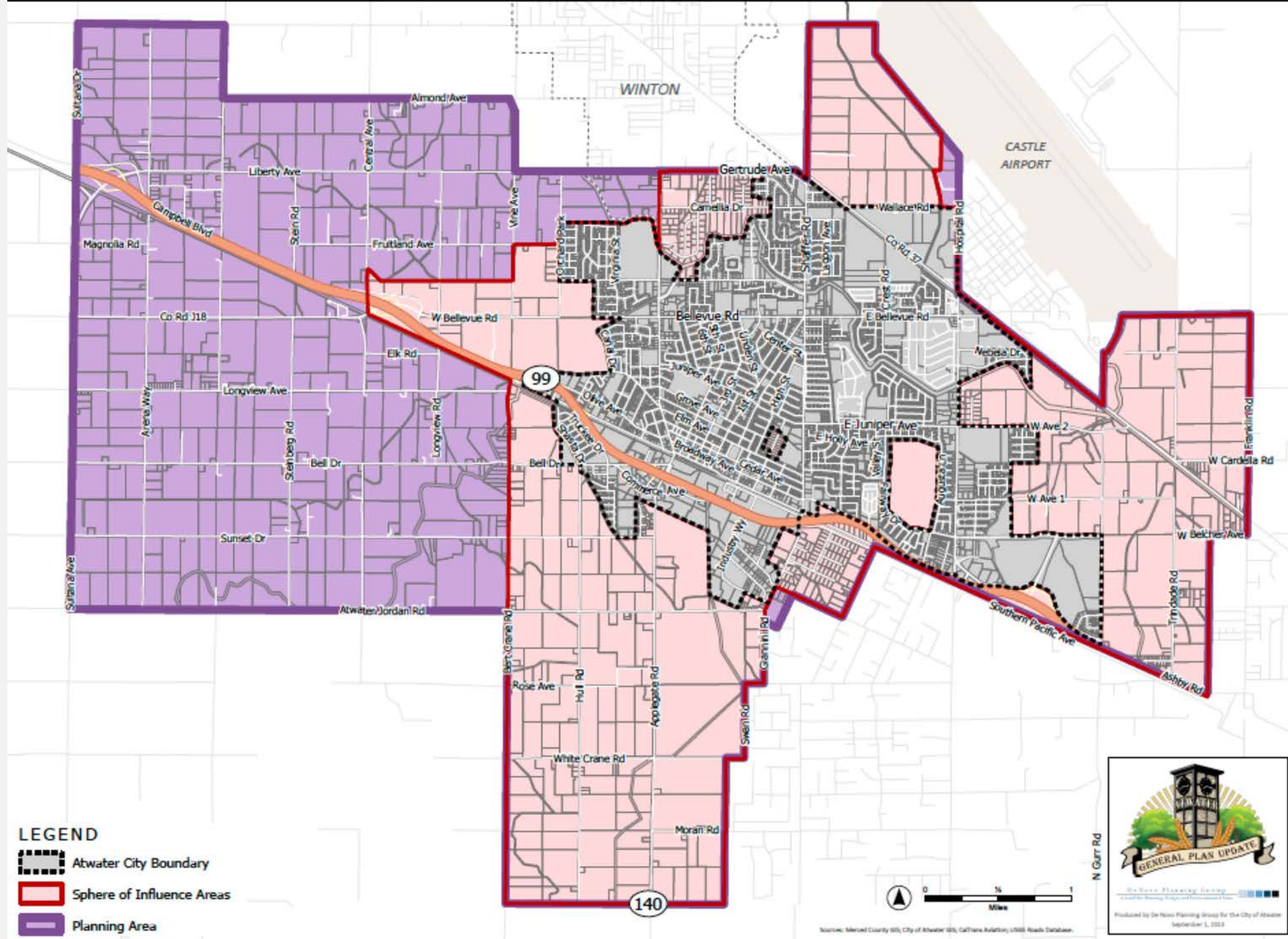
CURRENT LAND USE MAP



Sources: Merced County GIS; City of Atwater GIS; CalTrans Aerials; USGS Roads Database.

De Niro Planning Group
1100 N. Main Street, Suite 200, Atwater, CA 95301
Produced by De Niro Planning Group for the City of Atwater
April 24, 2024

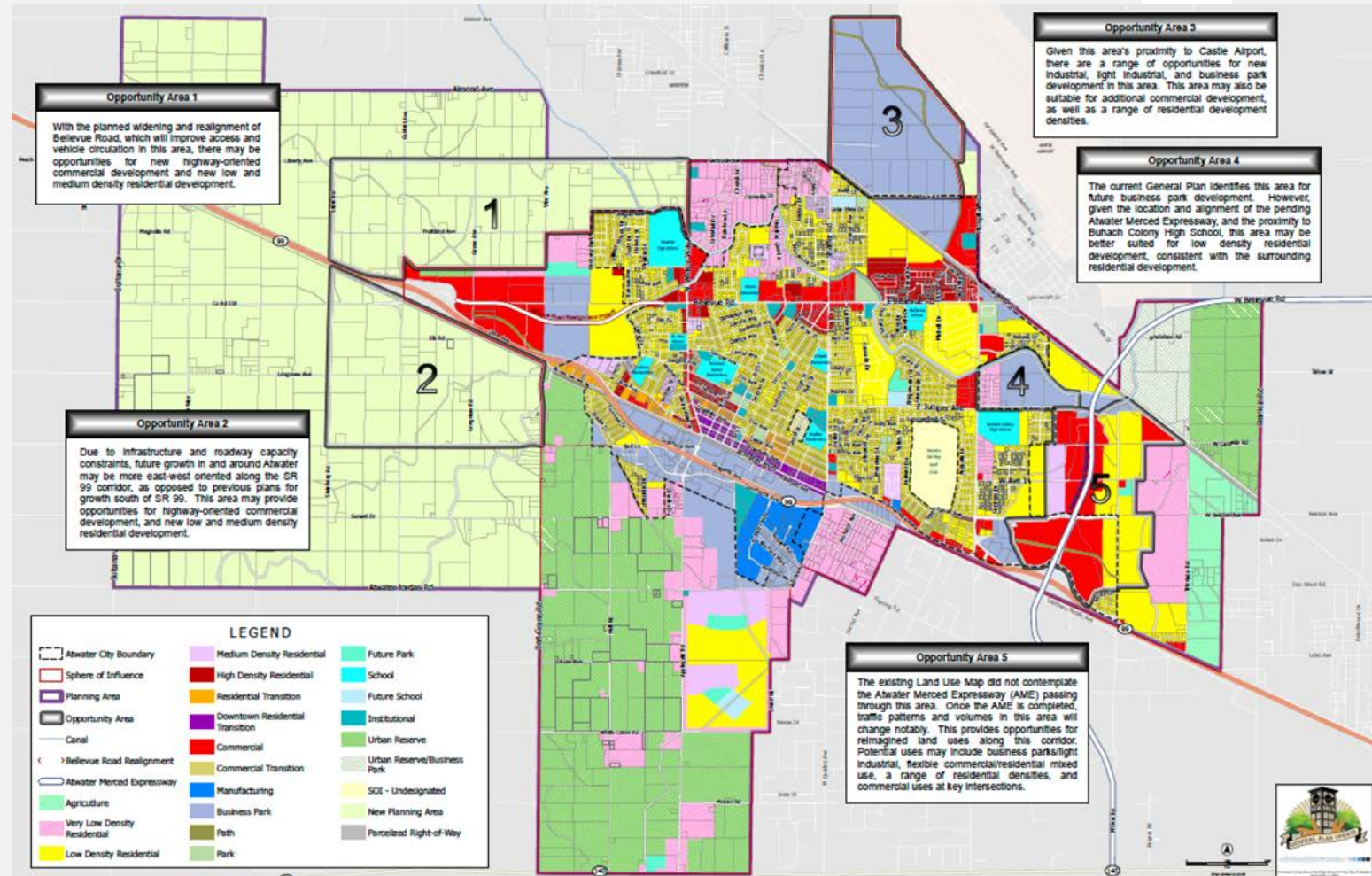
Planning Area Boundaries



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LAND USE REVISIONS



- Feedback received from community during the Visioning Workshops



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LAND USE REVISIONS




- Protection of established residential neighborhoods
- Increase economic development opportunities
- Capitalize on uses near Merced-Castle Airport
- Meet regional housing needs requirements and provide a range of housing choices
- Feasibility of infrastructure expansion
- East-West growth orientation along HWY 99 corridor
- Atwater-Merced Expressway (AME)
- Bellevue Rd Realignment

City of Atwater

Proposed General Plan Map

Explanation of Proposed Changes

 Area of Proposed Change

1 This portion of the Planning Area, outside of the City and the Sphere of Influence, is proposed to be Urban Reserve. Located on either side of Highway 99, it is a suitable area for future urban development.

2 This portion of the Sphere of Influence is currently designated as Very Low Density Residential and Urban Reserve, along with a smaller proportion of Commercial and Business Park. However, with the extension of Bellevue Road and the increasing accessibility of this area, it is proposed to have a higher proportion of Business Park and Commercial north of Bellevue Road, with Low Density Residential and Mixed Use south of Bellevue Road along the Vine Avenue Extension.

3 This area of the City is currently designated as Business park, with limited areas of Low Density Residential. The Draft Housing Element identifies several High Density Residential sites in this area, as well as the parcels denoted with a blue square (■). This area is still being refined by staff to ensure consistency with existing and pending development, as well as requirements from the Housing Element.

4 This area of the city is currently designated as Business Park and is proposed to convert to Commercial.

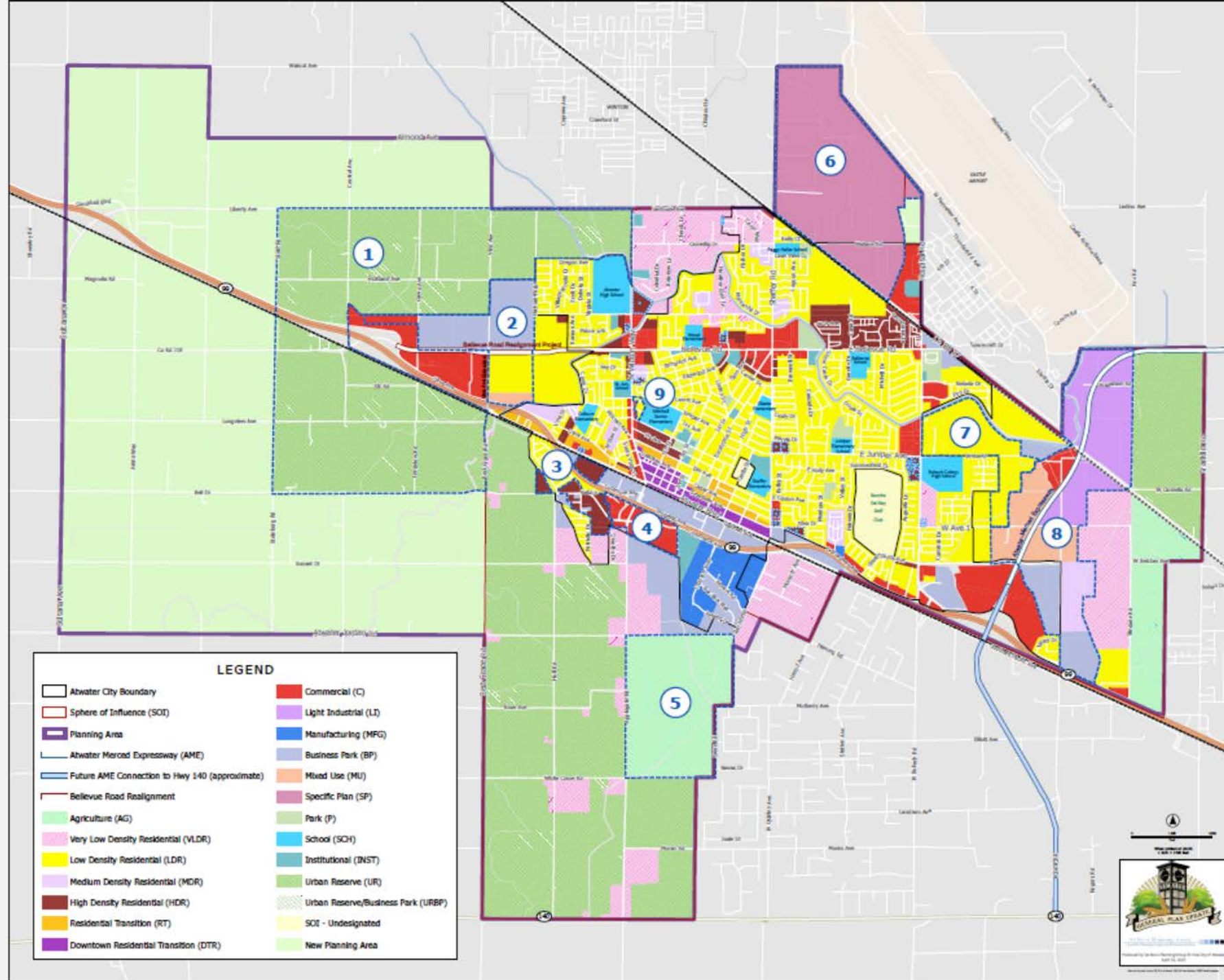
5 This area within the Sphere of Influence is currently designated Residential in a variety of densities, as well as for future schools and parks. During the previous General Plan Update, a Specific Plan was assumed. Due to its distance from major thoroughways, and challenges associated with infrastructure extension, it is not in a prime location for development. Therefore, it is proposed to be Agricultural, consistent with the County's designation.

6 This area is currently designated business park, but is proposed to change to Specific Plan. The General Plan will identify a range of residential, commercial, and industrial uses as being suitable for the Specific Plan. It is anticipated that a Specific Plan would be prepared following adoption of the General Plan.

7 The current General Plan identifies this area as Business Park, Commercial, and Very Low Density Residential. However, given the location and alignment of the pending Atwater Merced Expressway and the proximity to Buhaich Colony High School, this area is proposed to be Low Density Residential.

8 The existing Land Use Map did not contemplate the Atwater Merced Expressway (AME) passing through this area. Once the AME is completed, traffic patterns and volumes in this area will change notably. Currently this area is a mix of Business Park, Commercial, Low Density Residential, and Urban Reserve Business Park. Under the Proposed General Plan, Business Park and Commercial designations will remain and Light Industrial, Mixed Use, and Medium Density Residential will be introduced.

9 This area of the city is currently designated as Commercial Transition. As part of the General Plan update, the CT designation is being eliminated. Therefore this area will be converted to Low Density Residential.



LEGEND

 Atwater City Boundary	 Commercial (C)
 Sphere of Influence (SOI)	 Light Industrial (LI)
 Planning Area	 Manufacturing (MFG)
 Atwater Merced Expressway (AME)	 Business Park (BP)
 Future AME Connection to Hwy 140 (approximate)	 Mixed Use (MU)
 Bellevue Road Realignment	 Specific Plan (SP)
 Agriculture (AG)	 Park (P)
 Very Low Density Residential (VLDR)	 School (SCH)
 Low Density Residential (LDR)	 Institutional (INST)
 Medium Density Residential (MDR)	 Urban Reserve (UR)
 High Density Residential (HDR)	 Urban Reserve/Business Park (URBP)
 Residential Transition (RT)	 SOI - Undesignated
 Downtown Residential Transition (DTR)	 New Planning Area



SUMMARY OF ACREAGE CHANGES INSIDE CITY LIMITS



Land Use Designation	Existing	Proposed	Difference
Business Park	356.39	230.09	-126.30
Commercial	380.92	397.57	16.65
Manufacturing	103.87	103.87	0.00
Downtown Residential Transition	45.79	45.79	0.00
Residential Transition	59.47	63.56	4.09
High Density Residential	179.59	273.02	93.43
Medium Density Residential	85.74	85.74	0.00
Low Density Residential	1,589.30	1,541.33	-47.98
Very Low Density Residential	113.48	115.15	1.68
Specific Plan	0.00	78.95	78.95

SUMMARY OF ACREAGE CHANGES IN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE



Land Use Designation	Existing	Proposed	Difference
Business Park	905.76	366.20	-539.57
Commercial	318.17	162.04	-156.13
Manufacturing	19.42	19.42	0.00
Light Industrial	0.00	304.84	304.84
High Density Residential	2.64	2.64	0.00
Medium Density Residential	151.67	62.86	-88.81
Low Density Residential	634.65	465.89	-168.76
Very Low Density Residential	987.46	823.53	-163.93
Specific Plan	0.00	566.58	566.58
Agriculture	233.76	647.96	414.20
Urban Reserve	2,271.19	2,270.84	-0.35
Urban Reserve Business Park	220.49	0.00	-220.49

NEXT STEPS AND PATH FORWARD



- Finish drafting GP elements
- Complete EIR
- Release GP and EIR for public review and conduct public workshops
- Return to PC and CC with public feedback to get direction
- Adoption hearings