



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY REPORT

January 2016



C ★ E ★ R ★ E ★ S
**GENERAL
PLAN UPDATE**

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I Introduction

1.1 Background on the Ceres General Plan Update

The existing General Plan for the City of Ceres dates back to 1997, and new opportunities, challenges, and approaches to planning and development have emerged in recent years. Thus, in 2015, the City initiated the multi-year process of updating the General Plan, beginning what will be a unique and important opportunity for residents to share their ideas about the community's future. The General Plan Update process provides an opportunity to explore these ideas and shape the city's future, by putting policies in place to guide development and investment for the next twenty years.

The General Plan is a policy document that implements the vision of the community. Therefore, public participation is an important part of the process of shaping the Plan. Opportunities for public input have been designed to allow the planning team to learn directly from city residents, business and property owners, and other community members about their needs and values, as well as to allow the public to provide feedback throughout the phases of the planning process. Community members and interested parties are invited to participate in the process and stay informed in many ways, including:

- Stakeholder interviews;
- Community workshops;
- City Council and Planning Commission meetings;
- Community-wide mail-in surveys;
- Newsletters;
- Reviewing and commenting on draft documents;
- Comments via e-mail; and
- Project website at <http://www.ceresgeneralplanupdate.com/>.

1.2 Stakeholder Interviews Purpose and Process

The General Plan Update work program is designed to identify issues, opportunities, and challenges early on in the planning process to enable the planning team to reflect on these issues in the preparation of alternative planning scenarios. The lead consultants, Dyett & Bhatia conducted in person interviews on December 8 and 9, 2015 with a cross-section of stakeholders identified by the City. In addition, City staff is planning to present material prepared by the

consultants to introduce the General Plan Update and collect feedback from additional organizations and community groups. Further community input will be gathered through a community-wide mail-in survey and a community visioning workshop.

A total of 28 stakeholders participated in the interview process. The stakeholders represented a diverse range of local and regional interests including: agriculture, County agencies, education, historic preservation, local business, real estate and development, regional transportation, and social services. Many of the interviewees were residents of Ceres as well. A complete list of stakeholders interviewed can be found in Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted in-person in groups of one to three people, and one interview was by phone on December 14. Most sessions lasted approximately one hour. The structure was loosely guided by an initial set of questions used as prompts; however, responses were “free form.” Stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide their viewpoints on issues of significance, Ceres’ future, general planning concerns, and other topics of specific interest. The “prompt” questions used in the interviews are included in Appendix B.

The varying points of view offered by individual and group stakeholders are recognized in this report. To understand perspectives of the general Ceres community, the City will be undertaking additional outreach efforts that are targeted at and open to the community at large.

1.3 Report Organization

Chapter 2 presents the comments from the stakeholder interviews by topic. The topics were identified subsequent to the interviews, based on themes that emerged across a wide cross-section of stakeholder interviews. The report concludes with information about how this input will be used during the next steps of the General Plan Update process. Appendix A includes a list of those interviewed and Appendix B includes the questions asked at the interviews.

It is important to recognize that the issues presented in this paper may not necessarily be representative of the community at large or a comprehensive assessment of opportunities and challenges faced in the city. While the stakeholders represented a diverse spectrum of the Ceres community, no sampling techniques were employed in selecting the stakeholders, and consequently, the results cannot be generalized as the sentiments of the population at large. This report presents the perceptions and opinions of stakeholders interviewed; it does not represent the perspective of the consultant team or the City of Ceres.

2 Major Themes

During the stakeholder interviews, several themes were repeatedly identified. Major issues identified by multiple stakeholders are listed below for quick reference and explained further in sections 2.1 and 2.2.

Ceres' greatest assets were identified as:

- Proximity to State Route 99 (SR-99)
- Small-town character
- Downtown (its future potential)

Challenges identified as most important to be addressed were:

- Economic development
- City identity
- SR-99 access and Mitchell Road Interchange
- Retail opportunities
- Downtown (its current state)

Other common topics included:

- Residential Development
- Circulation
- Agriculture
- Schools
- Infrastructure
- Public Engagement

2.1 Primary Topics Addressed

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development was a common topic of discussion amongst stakeholders, although stakeholders had different definitions of and strategies for economic development. In regards to the general approach to economic development, one stakeholder thought that the City should take a holistic approach by creating an attractive environment with a strong Downtown, good community character, and a clean aesthetic, rather than focusing on getting any single business to locate in Ceres. Another stakeholder criticized the City Council for not investing sufficiently in economic development since it is a stated priority and gave the example that the City's Economic Development Director position is not fully funded. Stakeholders discussed job growth and ways the City can attract business through efficient governance. In addition, when talking about economic development, they also discussed the other major topics including the city's identity, highway access, retail growth, and Downtown Ceres, indicating the inter-relationship between many of the topics.

Jobs and Labor

Although "economic development" was discussed by almost all stakeholders, some specifically discussed job growth rather than retail development, fiscal growth, population growth, or other components of economic development.

Some stakeholders discussed how the quality of life in Ceres affects business attraction. For example, Ceres has features attractive to professionals—it is much more affordable than many other California cities, and it has access to San Francisco, the coast, Napa wine country, and Yosemite National Park. Yet, a stakeholder explained that Ceres is losing professionals, including police, who are moving to work in other San Joaquin Valley cities. In addition, a wider variety of housing options is important for attracting large employers and professionals.

In addition, a few stakeholders explained the difficulty of finding skilled labor. More and more jobs—even in the industrial sector including warehouse stocking and forklift operation—require English literacy and computer literacy, which many potential workers lack. There are some existing programs to help with jobs training, including at California State University, Stanislaus and provided by G3 Enterprises.

A couple of stakeholders warned against repeating the mistake of other General Plans in inflating potential job growth and "over-zoning" for job centers, giving the example of other cities that have inaccurately over-estimated their new job projections and consequently have designated too much land in commercial, industrial, business-park, or similar zones. As described by a stakeholder, in this situation, new residential developments often have to pay higher fees to help mitigate the impacts of the planned commercial and industrial development, yet the commercial and industrial development never actually materializes.

Some stakeholders also emphasized a regional approach to job growth, stating that if large employers choose to locate in cities near rather than in Ceres, Ceres still benefits. Any job growth

in the region benefits Ceres residents and helps support additional economic development within Ceres.

In terms of particular industries, it was explained that Modesto has many medical services and Turlock has a university, therefore it would be difficult for Ceres to create a niche in either the medical or educational industries. Other industries, such as agricultural processing, seem to have more potential for growth in Ceres.

Land Inventory for Large Commercial/Industrial Development

Stakeholders discussed the need for identifying land for commercial and industrial development. To attract large industrial businesses, the City needs to identify parcels of about 20 to 100 acres that are fully entitled and serviced with sewer and water, and these parcels must have good access to SR-99. In addition, the Union Pacific Railroad serves Ceres, and rail service and a connection to the Port of Oakland are desirable characteristics for many large commercial and industrial enterprises. Stakeholders explained that there is potential for industrial development in Ceres. In particular, there is strong demand for food grade industrial space and agricultural processing. Speculative development was recommended as a way to attract businesses, but a stakeholder explained that there is concern amongst developers about speculative building because the market is not strong enough in the region to support the risk.

In southwest Ceres, there is the 93-acre, 78-parcel Morgan Road Industrial Park (MRIP) zoned as commercial/industrial. Since MRIP was developed, the market has declined and resulted in vacancies in the industrial park. One stakeholder described it as the last large area of commercial/industrial land with City services. The types of businesses that have demonstrated interest in purchasing lots in the MRIP include small manufacturing, truck parking, electrical contracting, welding, and others. A few stakeholders explained that MRIP is a little far from SR-99—some commercial/industrial development opportunities closer to the highway would be more desirable. In addition, one stakeholder thought that allowing for more flexible uses in Ceres' industrial zones would be helpful so that there could be more local-serving retail stores in the area for workers to get refreshments and lunch and to allow industrial users to sell their products on-site.

Stakeholders also identified competing space in other cities: Modesto has the Beard Industrial Park, but it only offers land for lease rather than for purchase; Turlock has the Westside Industrial Specific Plan, which has helped attract large businesses due to its large parcel sizes, water/sewer infrastructure and the property owners' willingness to invest and position themselves for development before a tenant is identified.

Efficient Processes and Governance

Stakeholders, including developers and realtors, generally said that the City has been easy to work with, although one stakeholder said that it should be easier to contact the City and recommended having one single receptionist answering all calls. A couple of the stakeholders recommended that Ceres continue to keep any design guidelines and other regulations simple since this is one of the actions the City can take to create a competitive edge for business attraction. Stakeholders described that unlike some other cities closer to the Bay Area, Ceres is not an affluent community that can demand anything it wants from developers. Where possible, impact fees should be as

transparent and predictable as possible. And, if Ceres is not able to reduce its impact fees, it can attract developers by expediting entitlements and building permits to the extent feasible and practical.

Young People / Innovation

Some stakeholders discussed the future of Ceres and how the City should focus more on the younger generation. Many young people go away for college and may return when ready to buy a house or raise a family. However, there needs to be good jobs available to attract these young people back to Ceres. Some stakeholders explained that the City could take some small actions, such as modifying the City's traditional events, to better cater to young people.

CITY IDENTITY

In many of the interviews, stakeholders discussed the identity and character of Ceres, identifying positive aspects and strengths as well as challenges and weaknesses.

Positive Aspects and Strengths

Most stakeholders mentioned Ceres' "small-town" feel. Some described the city's annual events such as the Ceres Street Faire as a point of pride for which thousands of people come to visit Ceres, and others proudly described the active community groups such as the Soroptimist Club, Lion's Club, Mason's, Garden Club, and Historical Society. Many stakeholders said that the schools, the police department, and the fire department were all strong assets of Ceres that should be used to attract new business and residents. Similarly, most but not all stakeholders were pleased with the current Mayor and City Council. The Tuolumne River was identified as a special asset of Ceres that is underutilized.

Challenges and Weaknesses

Many stakeholders also discussed the challenges and weaknesses that they saw associated with the current character and identity of Ceres.

Lack of Clear Identity

A few stakeholders discussed the lack of a physical focal point in the City that could help contribute to a cohesive identity. They thought that development in the City has been a "hodge-podge" of things partly because Ceres gets the "leftovers" from Modesto and Turlock. One stakeholder thought that expanding from one to two high schools divided the community and "threw off the center of gravity."

From a more political rather than physical perspective, one stakeholder opined that part of Ceres's problem is the City staff not being in sync with the community. As explained by a stakeholder, City staff has had a lot of turnover and new staff members have neglected to get to know the community members who have been consistently involved as community leaders. As a result, the identity of the government and the identity of the community are not consistent.

Lack of Vitality

Several stakeholders were disappointed that many City staff, police and fire leaders, and members of the Ceres Unified School District School Board do not live in Ceres. It was indicated that the

City would generally benefit if more City leaders lived within the city. In addition, many stakeholders explained that there is a lack of things to do in Ceres. For example, many of the stakeholders bemoaned the lack of restaurants (and lack of diversity of restaurants) in Ceres. Some described Ceres as a bedroom community with a limited variety of dining options, where most restaurants close before dinner service. A few explained that there is nothing to do at night in Ceres.

Reputation and Image

Many stakeholders discussed the poor reputation and “bad image” of Ceres. Some stakeholders believed that Ceres “should not be something it’s not,” but there was general agreement that the City should work to improve its reputation. Some stakeholders opined that having better aesthetics and a “cleaner city” would help. Other issues that stakeholders felt contributed to the City’s bad reputation included: cars parked on front lawns; the homeless camp visible from SR-99; and the Ceres police officer who was shot about ten years ago. Some stakeholders hoped that the General Plan update could help make a difference in how Ceres residents perceive themselves and how neighbors perceive them. A few expressed appreciation that SaveMart and Bank of America on Whitmore Avenue are being renovated, and cited these as examples of how businesses on older corridors could help improve the City’s image.

Relationship to Modesto and Turlock

Some stakeholders expressed that Ceres is in the shadow of Modesto and Turlock and has lost any unique character that it once had. Turlock has a university, a busy Downtown, and the Monte Vista Crossing shopping center. Modesto is a bigger city—one stakeholder claimed that if it were not for the Tuolumne River, Ceres would be part of Modesto.

Changing Demographics

There were several comments about the changing demographics in Ceres. Some stakeholders opined that the large amount of population growth and the recent shift in the composition of the population to have a greater proportion of Hispanic/Latino residents have contributed to a change in the community character in Ceres. An example given to illustrate the changes is the new mix of businesses in the City. A few stakeholders described that some businesses in Ceres have been replaced by new businesses that are patronized more by the Hispanic/Latino population, which may represent a shift in market demand for the City.

SR-99 ACCESS / MITCHELL ROAD INTERCHANGE

As part of planning for economic development and population growth, many stakeholders discussed the importance of access to SR-99.

Ceres’ visibility from SR-99 provides a means for attracting visitors and businesses, and some stakeholders thought the City should allow for bigger signs along the highway to leverage Ceres’ proximity to SR-99. Several stakeholders suggested that Downtown Ceres has potential for development due to its accessibility and visibility from the highway. Others thought that all of the land lining SR-99 provides opportunity for development to compete with Modesto and Turlock.

Many stakeholders also described the importance of improving SR-99 access with regards to goods movement and commercial and industrial development, claiming that currently there is

limited access that restricts growth. In particular, one stakeholder said that the current access to SR-99 South from western Ceres needs improvements to expand capacity, which will be difficult due to the location of the railway tracks along the western side.

In nearly every interview, there was excitement about the potential Mitchell Road interchange. Some stakeholders said that a new interchange was needed for industrial growth, and others described the Mitchell Road interchange as the “last chance” for substantial commercial development in Ceres. One stakeholder echoed the Mayor’s comments at the November 30 joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting on the need for some kind of destination in Ceres, and described the Mitchell Road interchange as providing the only option for developing such a destination. One stakeholder explained: “the interchange equals development in a lot of people’s minds,” and another stated that the interchange was needed to improve internal mobility to connect the west side of Ceres to the east.

Some stakeholders were skeptical of the potential for development around a new Mitchell Road interchange. A couple said that development in Ceres could never compete with the retail at Turlock’s Monte Vista Crossings. One stakeholder thought that the Mitchell Road interchange would not see large-scale commercial development, and another said that the interchange does hold some promise, but that Hatch Road had held similar promises in the past, and the stakeholder indicated disappointment in what Hatch Road has become. One stakeholder opined that the potential interchange is just a subsidy for Walmart. Related interview responses are given below under “Retail Opportunities.”

RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES

Stakeholders explained that the lack of retail opportunities in Ceres is an important challenge to address and is related to economic development, identity, and SR-99 access. As was discussed in relation to the identity of Ceres, stakeholders explained that there are hardly any restaurants and shops in Ceres. In addition, stakeholders explained that the retail options that do exist do not attract new customers and generally are of low quality.

Small Businesses & Grocery Stores

Several stakeholders discussed the lack of local and small businesses in Ceres and mentioned numerous examples of local businesses that had closed. One mentioned seeing a billboard that read: “Shop Ceres First” and not knowing what the options for local shopping were. A few stakeholders expressed that the only competitive retail edge that Ceres could develop is with small and boutique businesses, as Turlock and Modesto have already attracted so many major national chains.

In addition, several stakeholders discussed the lack of healthy grocery options. They explained that the Raley’s grocery store and others went out of business, and there is now a lack of good, full-service supermarkets with fresh produce. In addition, one stakeholder described the west side of the city as a food desert in need of grocery stores.

Walmart “Supercenter”

Generally, many stakeholders referred to the Mitchell Road interchange and the potential new Walmart interchangeably. There was a mix of conflicting opinions regarding the potential development of a Walmart in southeast Ceres. Some stakeholders claimed they knew that some businesses have already closed due to the potential new Walmart, and one opined that the Walmart might generate some new tax dollars, but that it will not help small businesses in the long run. In fact, numerous stakeholders said that they knew many small business owners have postponed renovations or expansions waiting for the arrival of the Walmart. One stakeholder thought that Walmart owes the community more and should better maintain their buildings and offer a more pleasant shopping experience. Others expressed that it was a shame that a small group of people have been able to postpone the development of the new Walmart through litigation, saying that there is a lot of postponed construction and development waiting for the result of the litigation. In all, stakeholders were relatively evenly split in supporting or opposing the new Walmart.

Design Guidelines / Regulation

Different stakeholders also had conflicting opinions about the role of design guidelines and regulations in commercial development. Some thought that Ceres is a small city that should have modest rules and regulations; the General Plan should not create obstacles to development that could only be overcome in cities with stronger real estate markets. Some other stakeholders thought that Ceres needs to improve the aesthetics of its development and hold businesses to a higher standard. For example, the shopping center on the south side of Hatch Road in Ceres is not as visually appealing as the shopping center on the north side in Modesto.

DOWNTOWN

Nearly all of the stakeholders discussed Downtown Ceres, some with disappointment and a feeling of fatigue and others with great optimism and vision. Some stakeholders explained that Downtown Ceres was a “complete little city” with everything one needed, including doctor’s offices, grocers, banks, and clothing stores, up until the 1990s. One stakeholder recommended a general approach for the City to improve Downtown through 1) using policy and investment to catalyze improvement, and 2) personally reaching out to local property owners and businesspeople to build relationships.

Many stakeholders discussed the Downtown area’s potential. As one stakeholder said, “Downtown is a gem waiting for the right buyer, with the right vision and some deep pockets.” A few stakeholders pointed to Turlock and how its Downtown has greatly improved and become an appealing destination. Some stakeholders explained that the ACE train extension may have a stop in Downtown Ceres and that the General Plan update should plan for this great opportunity. One stakeholder described a vision to move the Whitmore Park closer to the Whitmore Mansion and develop the remaining lot with multi-story retail and housing. Some stakeholders thought that the Community Center and the Whitmore Mansion should be better leveraged for both development and events. Some stakeholders thought that there is potential for boutique shops, and others thought there is unmet demand for offices and professional spaces.

Almost all of the stakeholders who discussed Downtown described a challenge of a single landowner who owns a lot of the property and has not been willing to sell or lease it. Another challenge discussed was that the Downtown Specific Plan was written when the Redevelopment Agency still existed and now that it does not, the City lacks the power to effect change without significant private investment. Other challenges included competition with Turlock and Modesto and difficulty getting the initial interest from businesses to invest Downtown to create a critical mass that would encourage further development. One stakeholder said that he/she had heard of people wanting to bulldoze Downtown, because people are tired that nothing has been done to improve it.

2.2 Other Common Topics

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Supply / Product Mix

A few stakeholders emphasized the need for more affordable housing in the whole San Joaquin Valley, including Ceres. A few described the lack of rental options, including apartments. A stakeholder explained that not enough affordable apartments are getting built because existing residents only want luxury-type apartment buildings, which increases costs and discourages developers. One stakeholder explained that the population of Ceres is growing, but that there is little residential development, indicating that residents are crowding in existing units. And, one stakeholder opined: “Senior affordable housing is the most important thing any community can plan for. There is only an increasing need.”

In addition, a few stakeholders described a lack of “premium” housing in Ceres that could help attract wealthier residents and employers. It was recommended that the best location for premium housing is on the east side of Ceres, although the airport adds limitations. However, a stakeholder explained that developers are mostly building single-family units on small parcels, rather than the very large houses that were being built at the peak of the market in the 2000s.

To address the need for different housing products, one stakeholder recommended that the zoning code be more flexible so that developers do not need to seek General Plan amendments for every change in housing type.

Planned / Recent Development

There was a mix of opinion about new residential growth, with no stakeholders being adamantly supportive of or opposed to any particular projects. Some stakeholders expressed concern about the pattern of growth—one said that Ceres should not develop new housing until it is able to better maintain existing housing, and another was critical of new expansion when all the potential infill has not been built.

In regards to location of growth, several stakeholders were critical of the location of a few of the new schools in south Ceres where there is no nearby housing. Some stakeholders explained that it will be hard to develop in southeast Ceres because the land is already divided into large residential “ranchette” parcels. Other stakeholders expressed doubt about the planned residential

development in western Ceres due to the reputation and crime of southwest Modesto. As one stakeholder said, "Crow's Landing is known to be one of the worst parts of the county."

CIRCULATION

Many of the stakeholders referred positively to the County's potential plan to develop Faith Home Road as an expressway, as well as the prospect of building a bridge over the Tuolumne River. They said that currently, the only way to Beard Industrial Park in Modesto is by Hatch Road and Mitchell Road, which results in a lot of truck traffic through the city.

Some stakeholders discussed the need for transportation infrastructure improvements on the west side of Ceres to better serve industry and truck traffic. The South County Corridor was mentioned a few times as an important project to connect I-5 and SR-99.

HEALTH / SERVICES

A few stakeholders described different vulnerable populations in Ceres, including low-income households, adults with limited English language skills, and senior citizens, as well as existing social services and the need for additional services. One stakeholder mentioned that there is a migrant camp in the Caswell neighborhood.

According to stakeholders, important needs for the health, safety, and quality of life of Ceres residents that are currently going unmet, included the following:

- **Access to healthy food options:** There is a glut of corner stores with unhealthy options and prominent advertising for unhealthy products while there is a lack of neighborhood grocery stores.
- **Sidewalks:** Schoolchildren walk to school less than they might otherwise, due to a lack of safe sidewalk infrastructure.
- **Clean water:** Some community members have smelled strange odors from their water. One explanation might be contamination from nearby dairies.
- **Sufficient park amenities:** Some parks lack restrooms, which is inconvenient for people who walk or travel out of their neighborhood to the park.
- **Bus service:** Residents often need to take two to three buses to get across Ceres for such purposes as medical appointments. The buses are not well connected in a cohesive network, and they do not run frequently.
- **Senior services:** There are some services provided to seniors and veterans, but there is great unmet need for transportation services. In addition, the Ceres Community Center is a great potential asset, but it is prohibitively expensive to rent for some public agencies and nonprofits that serve seniors. One stakeholder recommended that the City prepare for the growing senior population by helping prepare for senior employment opportunities, such as part-time positions and job-sharing programs.

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Land Preservation

The stakeholders expressed only support for agricultural land preservation. As one explained, “As cities keep growing and their Spheres of Influence expand, we should preserve the prime agricultural land that will disappear forever if developed. This is a unique global resource—would you subdivide and develop in the oil fields of Saudi Arabia?” When asked, some stakeholders recommended that the City include some type of agricultural land mitigation program as part of the General Plan.

Stanislaus has a County Agricultural Land Preservation Policy that requires cities proposing development that would impact agricultural land to create a plan for agricultural land preservation. The plan must demonstrate consideration of infill, prove imminent need, and prevent annexation of very large parcels. This policy also applies to land already within a Sphere of Influence. Modesto, Patterson, and Oakdale have all created plans under this policy.

Compatibility with Schools

Some stakeholders described the regulations and attention given to the application of agricultural pesticide near schools. The County Agricultural Commission has a detailed online map of all the educational institutions in the county to help growers determine where to modify their application of pesticides. According to stakeholders, the Ceres Unified School District and the agricultural community do not have any major conflicts, except that there was concern raised about the location of schools on agricultural land. Otherwise, Stanislaus is a “right-to-farm” county with a focus on agriculture.

SCHOOLS

Stakeholders agreed that the Ceres Unified School District is well-funded, giving examples such as every student in the School District having a Chrome Book and full mental health services. A stakeholder from the School District explained that there tends to be more students than predicted every year, likely because students are coming from Modesto to attend the Ceres schools.

A stakeholder described that in the late early 2000s, the School District’s philosophy changed to focus on providing smaller neighborhood schools with less busing. The School District was very successful at getting state funding to help build more schools and built four to seven schools in two years from 2004 to 2005. For example, the Eastgate community was growing, so the District built La Rosa Elementary south of Eastgate. Then, growth was planned in southern Ceres, so schools were built there, but the residential growth did not occur. This has resulted in several relatively isolated schools that are not walkable from the neighborhoods they serve. Instead, there is now planned growth in western Ceres, so two Elementary Schools are planned in the West Landing neighborhood. A few stakeholders expressed the feeling that the School District has an approach of “if you build it, they will come,” rather than the more common approach of building schools after residential development has been built. One stakeholder was critical of the School District’s approach since it led to conversion of farmland and, as the schools in southern Ceres are located far from residences, does not allow students to walk to school. Another stakeholder

explained that there is a lot of traffic from the schools and even students who live nearby, do not walk.

In regards to school capacity, stakeholders explained that the School District as a whole has enough capacity but that it is not evenly distributed, with schools in central and north Ceres are near capacity while schools in southern Ceres are under-capacity. A third high school or an addition to Central Valley High School might be needed soon. According to stakeholders from the School District, development of new elementary schools requires 10 acres of vacant land, junior high schools need 20 acres, and high schools need 50 acres.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

Several stakeholders discussed the unincorporated county islands in Ceres. One explained that the Redevelopment Agency had invested in sewer and water in both islands, but that there are no sidewalks, curbs, or drains. A few other stakeholders explained how the island in southern Ceres should be annexed—that the Don Pedro community in the south needs a lot of investment and its residents want it to be annexed.

The Turlock Irrigation District (TID) provides electricity to Ceres. According to a stakeholder, there is enough electric power available for ample growth in Ceres, including industrial growth. Ceres undergrounds all utilities, which is relatively expensive.

A couple of stakeholders mentioned the difficulty of storm drainage in Ceres, specifically the lot-by-lot treatment of storm drainage. One stakeholder pointed out that linear parks—which can be used for storm drainage—are currently not technically considered “park” space that meets development requirements. The stakeholder recommended changing this interpretation so that linear parks could help meet requirements for park space.

Ceres provides wastewater to the TID power plant in Turlock for cooling and power generation. The Surface Water Project took 25 years to complete and was just adopted in the summer of 2015. Modesto backed out of the agreement, so Ceres and Turlock are looking for another small City to join. The treatment facility will be outside of the Planning Area to the east of Ceres on Hatch Road. TID will sell river water to the cities. The treatment facility will be on-line in probably five to seven years.

Safety along the canals is a big concern. Therefore, any recreation (such as walking or biking trails) along the canals needs a large setback to allow room for safety measures.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Many stakeholders offered to help reach out to organizations in which they are involved to improve public engagement during the General Plan update process. Other recommendations for the City included the following:

- Reaching out to groups that have shown opposition to planning and development efforts;
- Using social media and provide online engagement options;

- Personally reaching out and building relationships—notification in the newspaper is not sufficient; and
- Leveraging the networks in the schools for public engagement.

3 Next Steps

The input gathered during the stakeholder interviews will be used in subsequent phases of the General Plan Update process. The first-hand knowledge and experiences of the stakeholders will be invaluable in creating a new Plan that reflects the community's collective goals and visions.

After carefully reviewing information shared by the stakeholders; an assessment of the city's opportunities and challenges; and general public input from the community workshops, the survey, and City Council and Planning Commission meetings, the planning team will prepare alternative land use and transportation planning scenarios and review them with the community. A Preferred Plan will be prepared, and following City Council endorsement, draft planning documents will be prepared and reviewed with the community.

Appendix A: Stakeholders Interviewed

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Steve Ames	Stanislaus Alliance
John Beckman	Building Industry Association
Colleen Bergamashci	Local citizen committees
Jim Bergamashci	Local citizen committees
Couper Condit	Ceres Planning Commission
Gary Del Nero	Ceres Planning Commission
Jim DeMartini	Stanislaus Board of Supervisor – District 5 and Local Agency Formation Commission
Charlie Fernandes	Turlock Irrigation District/County Ford Trucks
Elisabeth Hahn	Stanislaus County Council of Governments
Casey Hashimoto	Turlock Irrigation District
Bev Hatcher	United Samaritans Foundation
Brian Jones	Northstar Engineering Group
Bob Kachel	Ceres Planning Commission
Jeff Le Beof	Ceres Chamber of Commerce/ ER Vine
Renee Ledbetter	Ceres Chamber of Commerce/ Exit Reality
Sara Lytle-Pinhey	Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission
Lisa Mantarro-Moore	Whitmore Mansion Foundation
Fred Miller	RE/MAX Real Estate
Milton O'Haire	Stanislaus County Agricultural Commission
Nick Pallios	Richland Shopping Center
Margie Palomino	Stanislaus County Aging and Veterans Services
Lourdes Perez	Ceres Partnership for Healthy Families
Amy Peterman	Ceres Unified School District
Rick Ringler	GDR Engineering, Inc.
Dave Romano	Newman-Romano LLC
Jay Simmonds	Ceres Unified School District
Laurie Smith	Ceres Planning Commission
Amy Wolfe	G3 Enterprises

Appendix B: Stakeholder Interviews Prompts / Guiding Questions

1. What are Ceres' strengths as a city and as a community? What has the City done right?
2. What do you foresee to be the city's greatest challenges as it grows and changes over the coming decades? What are the key issues, both opportunities and constraints?
3. From the perspective of the organization or group that you represent, how supportive has the City been for your purpose or discipline?
4. What should the City be doing to plan effectively for the future?
5. What do you think Ceres will be like in 20 years?

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