



## My Strategy for Downtown Revitalization

### **THE CITY OF FRESNO: BECOMING A TOP-TIER CITY IN CALIFORNIA**

Within the last two years, Fresno has surpassed Sacramento to become the largest city in the Central Valley and is today the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in California. We have gotten bigger. Now, it's time for Fresno to get better and to become a top-tier city in California. Fresno, the “city with potential,” must become the “city with results.”

Being a top-tier city in California means having a thriving downtown. A city's downtown is its calling card. If we want to improve our confidence and self image as a city, Fresno must have a vibrant downtown. Otherwise, it will be impossible to meet our long-term goals in creating jobs, reducing crime, and improving distressed neighborhoods.

### **‘BACK TO THE BASICS’ OF DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

I am a strong advocate for the revitalization of downtown Fresno, but I do not believe in “silver bullet” fixes for the area. Unfortunately, our downtown has deteriorated beyond the repair of any one project, no matter how big or small. I believe it is time to get back to the “basics” of downtown revitalization and employ the tactics that have worked well for other large cities and have brought back to life downtown areas that were as bad as, or worse, than Fresno's. These include San Diego, San Jose, Pasadena, Portland, Cleveland, and Charleston. Some of those “basic” tactics include:

### **REMOVING BARRIERS AND ENCOURAGING 24 HOUR USES**

Our limited resources should be used to support businesses that will add to the entertainment choices and night life in downtown Fresno. When someone proposes opening a downtown business that will increase evening activity, they should receive the highest priority for city staff assistance and experience expedited processing of permits and licenses. When the business opens, I will be present at grand openings to use the public relations resource of my office to let the community know about the good things that are happening.

## PROGRAMMED ACTIVITY AND MARKETING

Foot traffic is the key ingredient for a successful downtown. Our downtown area needs constant, well-managed activity on the Fulton Mall. Music, festivals, sidewalk sales, holiday activities, art shows, car shows, and ethnic celebrations attract thousands of people to downtowns around the country and can generate the kind of activity that can support retail, restaurants and music clubs and draw people from throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Downtown's activities, its historic buildings, the urban environment, and the multicultural atmosphere should be built upon and marketed to make downtown a destination that people want to visit, live and work. A reformatted business assessment district and/or a property based improvement district are in development and can fund these ongoing activities.

## DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

Downtown districts are an effective tool that has been used to revitalize downtowns in major cities across the U.S. The downtown districts in Fresno need to be clearly defined and have their own unique guidelines that build on the strengths of each area, and encourage appropriate investments and growth. Each district should have its own graphic identity marked throughout the area on banners and signage so that people know where they are at any time. This will help make downtown Fresno better understood and more accessible to Fresnoans and other visitors. Community leaders and property owners are banding together to create the Cultural Arts District in downtown Fresno. In my first year as Mayor, I will make a major push to ensure the district is formed and fully functioning. We can use the development of the Cultural Arts District as a model for the development and promotion of other districts in the Downtown Triangle.

## FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Cities around the country have used façade programs as a cost-effective way to improve the historic "feel" of their downtown areas. This effort will result in the re-use of second floors as lofts or offices, which adds to the number of people living and working in downtown.

## PARKING

We need to remove the existing barriers to downtown patrons. For example, parking meters should not be enforced at night. However, meters are a helpful tool to keep the best spaces open for customers during the daytime. Daytime employees should be directed to park in garages and lots. People who park in garages should get discount coupons for various downtown merchants, which will help offset the cost of parking and will promote downtown businesses.

## DOWNTOWN DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Great downtown directional signage has been discussed for years, yet it has not been implemented. Signage is an effective tool for downtown redevelopment that can be implemented quickly and inexpensively.

## **VACANT BUILDING CODE**

The City's "vacant building" code needs to be updated to give the City more authority to require negligent property owners to either repair or sell their buildings in a shorter period of time.

## **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AND REJUVENATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS SURROUNDING DOWNTOWN**

It is well known and widely discussed that a key to downtown Fresno's turnaround is residential development. As people move into downtown, commercial and retail development will follow. When you consider the projects that are planned or are in development in downtown Fresno, there are approximately 700 to 1,200 residential units being proposed. That's an important step in the right direction, but it is still a long way from creating a critical mass of downtown living.

In addition to supporting residential development in the heart of downtown Fresno, I propose focusing on rejuvenating the local school-based neighborhoods within the downtown freeway triangle, including Jefferson, Yokomi and Lowell neighborhoods, as well as the neighborhoods that surround the downtown like Hildalgo, Rowell, Jackson, Muir, Anthony, Webster, Columbia, Lincoln, King and Kirk. In doing so, we will be positively impacting 15,000 to 20,000 residential units around downtown and will create more opportunity for commercial and retail development in downtown.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

If we want a thriving downtown, the City must ensure the infrastructure is in place to support it. Based on the information I've received from city officials and downtown developers, our water and sewer infrastructure in downtown Fresno is aging and needs significant upgrades. Making those kinds of investments requires advanced planning and budgeting. I will begin the work now to ensure the infrastructure is in place to support and sustain the comeback of downtown Fresno.

## **COORDINATING EFFORTS**

The downtown Fresno "Triangle," as defined by Freeway 41, Highway 99, and 180 is two square miles, which is a very large area for a downtown. There are a lot of agencies, non-profits, neighborhood associations, and property owners that are encompassed in the downtown Fresno area, and there are many well-intentioned efforts under way by those organizations to rejuvenate downtown. However, the efforts lack coordination and an effective across-the-board strategy. As the Mayor, I will work hand-in-hand with the Chairperson of Fresno's Redevelopment Agency board and staff and the City staff to make sure our efforts are coordinated and leveraged in order to get the best results for the people of Fresno.