

# Memorandum

**DATE** November 16, 2009

**TO** City of Clovis General Plan Advisory Committee

**CONTACT**

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**SUBJECT** Guiding Principles – A Primer

**PROJECT NO.** CLO-14.0L

It is very common, and quite easy, to confuse the meaning of the myriad terms we use in developing a general plan. The primary terms—Values, Principles, Goals, Policies, and Actions—all have specific definitions, but are not always applied correctly. Frequently, we find goals and values appear interchangeably in a narrative, while implementation actions masquerade as policies. To avoid confusion and better clarify how the updated Clovis General Plan will operate, we have prepared the following primer on Guiding Principles.

We will conduct a workshop on how to write Guiding Principles next month, but before we talk about principles let's define a fundamental term, values. **Values** express what really matters to the community—the beliefs about basic considerations that should apply to whatever the city does. We've already discussed Clovis' values: education, heritage, regional leadership, sense of place, etc. These values are the underpinning of the General Plan's Guiding Principles.

**Principles are the action form of values.** More directly, a **principle** is a fundamental rule that governs how things are to be done. Principles typically influence the development of the goals and policies for achieving the community vision. In other words, principles serve as reference points—the overarching rationale—for specific goals and policies.

We are all familiar with several principles that have shaped our democratic country:

- All men are created equal (Declaration of Independence)
- Individuals are guaranteed the right to have their day in court (The Constitution, Fourteenth Amendment due process clause)
- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion (The Constitution, First Amendment)

These principles reflect our national values of equality, fairness, and religious freedom, respectively. They establish the rules by which we govern.

# creating better places



So how do we apply principles (the community rules) in the General Plan? By stating goals and policies, and defining actions for the supporting topics.

**Goals** are statements of desired future conditions, regarding a particular topic in the community, toward which effort and use of resources are directed. For example, a goal related to land use may be: "Clovis has a spectrum of housing types and price ranges that match the jobs in the City so that residents can both live and work in Clovis." Both the city government and the community (e.g., developers and builders) will need to devote resources to achieve this goal.

**Policies** are statements that guide decision-making and specify an intended level of public commitment on a subject. If you are faced with a decision on this subject, here is the policy you are to follow. For example, a policy related to mobility may be: "We require development and urban design that reduces reliance on the automobile and capitalizes on multi-modal transportation opportunities." When a development project is being evaluated, here's what should be considered in its design.

**Actions** are individual steps taken to implement one or more policies. Developing a park master plan, creating a commercial recycling program, installing bike racks and storage facilities, and administering a housing rehabilitation grant and loan program are all examples of discrete actions that support city policies.

So, values lead to principles, which in turn shape goals and policies that result in actions. Pretty simple. Not easy, though.

Here are two diagrams demonstrating how the hierarchy works with a few Clovis examples:

**VALUE:** We believe education is a community responsibility

**PRINCIPLE:** Design neighborhoods to focus on educational facilities and services

**GOAL:** We have neighborhoods integrated with learning centers so that schools become the cores of the community

**POLICY:** We require all neighborhood-scale development to provide pedestrian greenways and open space trails that link to existing networks serving school facilities

**ACTION:** In conjunction with local serving school districts, develop design guidelines to provide safe and accessible walking and biking routes to local schools

**VALUE:** We believe Clovis should be a leader in regional planning

**PRINCIPLE:** Use the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint to shape the land use plan

**GOAL:** We have a land use plan consistent with the Valley Blueprint objectives

**POLICY:** We promote development of local street patterns and pedestrian networks that create and unify neighborhoods rather than divide them, and create cohesive and continuous corridors rather than independent "islands"

**ACTION:** Create a new Specific Plan for the Shaw Avenue corridor that creates distinct activity nodes, connects the existing adjacent neighborhoods to local-serving commercial uses, and creates a western gateway to the city.

This primer is intended to give you a foundation for our next workshop in December. At that time we will capitalize on the GPAC's assessment of the existing Clovis Vision and Values and start crafting the General Plan's new Guiding Principles.