

Options being shaped for Chico's future growth

By JENN KLEIN - Staff Writer

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CHICO — City planners are at work putting together different maps for Chico that will lay out the future of growth within the city.

The work will likely result in three different maps showing three different growth scenarios as part of the city's process for updating its General Plan, city planner Holly Keeler said. She said the maps will not only look how the city grows within its existing boundaries, but also deal with changes within the city limits as well as redevelopment.

Potential changes include whether downtown should grow up with higher-story buildings, or out by expanding south to Park Avenue. The alternatives will also take a look at whether Park Avenue should stay an industrial area, or what kind of industry Chico should even have, Keeler said.

She added the maps are not just about where the city will put new homes or apartments, but where it puts industry and what kinds of jobs or stores the city will have.

Keeler said the in-progress growth alternatives will be the attempt of planners to translate the feedback gathered from community members onto a map. She said while some expressed compact growth as their priority, others were concerned about making sure the city had enough housing to support jobs and business.

"Not everyone in the community is on the same page, so the range of what we heard is expressed on the map. ... We're trying to create bookends, in

essence how the map would look following both of the extremes," Keeler said.

Keeler said while all of the in-progress alternatives will "reflect good planning," city planners will want to know whether the maps capture the wishes of the community. They will be seeking feedback on the maps once they are finished.

"This is like the most important community input opportunity because it's going to define what we study in terms of the General Plan process," Keeler said.

Keeler said any of the changes made to the General Plan will be significant, because once the General Plan is adopted it's very difficult to change.

Keeler said the alternatives go before community workshops, "stakeholder" interviews, and the council's citizen-appointed General Plan Advisory Committee. The city will also collect comments through its General Plan Web site. Then the a decision on what the preferred alternative is will go before the Planning Commission in July, then on to the City Council.

But Keeler said even once the city has picked a preferred alternative, it's still not a done deal. The General Plan will adopt that alternative with the intent of moving forward with environmental and economic analysis, but the alternative will be adjusted if something doesn't pencil out, she said.

Next year the city will then move on from maps to talking about the General Plan's policies, including how the city spends its money, and what it should focus on, Keeler said.

Planners will present the alternatives to the public during a workshop from 6:30-8:30 p.m. June 10, at the California Park Pavilion, 2565 California Park

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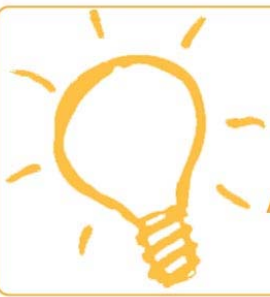
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