

Options for expansion: Blueprint looks at housing, jobs, stores

By JENN KLEIN - Staff Writer

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CHICO -- While one option for Chico to grow during the next 20 years shows the city staying compact, other ideas allow it to expand "upward and outward."

City planner Holly Keeler said three maps looking at how Chico could grow also show potential changes to areas already within the city limits. She said while some neighborhoods are fairly fixed and don't have much room to change, others — such as the Barber Yard area in southwest Chico and the Chico Nut in the avenues — may be areas where changes could happen.

"All three alternatives represent a really good planning option and all the alternatives try to reference what we heard from the community and their desires," Keeler said. "But of course, not everyone is in agreement, so we're looking at some alternatives."

The "growth alternatives" are part of the process of updating the city's General Plan, which will serve as a blueprint for how the city grows until 2030. Keeler said as well as looking at places where new residents could live, it also looks at where people will shop and what kinds of jobs they will have.

The city will need to study what kind of jobs it wants to bring in and where it wants those jobs to be located, Keeler said.

"There's jobs and there's jobs. Are they going to be all retail low-end or are we going to be able to attract well-paying jobs that help our community's

economy?" Keeler asked.

The alternatives will eventually go before the Chico City Council, which will choose a "preferred alternative" to be studied for the General Plan. Keeler said planners will come up with another map for the council showing the community's wishes, which could incorporate parts of all three maps.

The alternatives look at any vacant land in the city, and ask whether the city wants to make changes or if it looks good the way it is, Keeler said.

That includes areas such as the North Valley Plaza. Keeler said it's currently a "quiet" shopping area, but if the city does grow, it will need more shopping areas. This site is already carved out as retail, so the city would focus on making it a more vibrant area.

Mangrove Avenue is being looked at as a potential for redevelopment, Keeler said, as it's an area with great "retail energy."

Park Avenue and the area south of downtown also have a lot of redevelopment potential and are being looked at as a place downtown could grow, Keeler said. A change in downtown would be to allow taller buildings and have more "mixed use" buildings with commercial and residential.

New areas for Chico to grow out are also proposed in the maps, including changes to the "green line" along the western edge of the city that separates it from agriculture land, and to the eastern boundary.

Keeler said two alternatives propose changes to the green line in the Bell-Muir area and the southwest portion of the city. She said growth is proposed to the east along Highway 32 and areas north and south of the Skyway. Growth in those areas will respect the informal boundary known as the "gold line" and include ways to protect the view, she said.

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Other areas of growth are to the north and south, including the portion of the North Chico Specific Plan adopted by the county and an area south of Mud Creek and west of Hicks Lane.

In-depth versions of the alternatives will be presented at a public workshop from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday at California Park Lakeside Pavilion, 2565 California Park Drive.

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