



St. Rest Campus & Elm Avenue Corridor Roadmap to Redevelopment

Prepared for:
City of Fresno &
St. Rest Baptist Church

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Council of Development Finance Agencies

April 2018

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About the Roadmap to Redevelopment

The *Roadmap to Redevelopment* is a product of the [CDFA Brownfields Technical Assistance Program](#), which is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The program provides technical assistance to brownfields communities on redevelopment finance. For communities that require detailed, hands-on assistance for their redevelopment efforts, CDFA Brownfields Project Response Teams comprised of CDFA staff and technical assistance partners are available to conduct site visits and offer financing strategies. The goal of these visits is to provide communities specific, actionable steps that can transform brownfields into economically-productive sites in accordance with the goals and plans of the community. CDFA will coordinate 36 Brownfields Project Response Teams over the life of the program.

The *Roadmap to Redevelopment* was developed through a two-day process that included interviews with numerous stakeholders from the government, business, and non-profit sectors. The plan provides actionable steps for the financing of the St. Rest Baptist Church campus and the redevelopment of the Elm Avenue Corridor in Southwest Fresno.

The *Roadmap to Redevelopment's* suggestions combine the input of development finance experts, CDFA staff, and the interests of stakeholder groups gathered during the Project Response Team site visit.

Background & History

The Saint Rest Baptist Church (St. Rest) property is a 3.5-acre site located in the southwest region of the City of Fresno. For years, the church leaders and congregation have discussed the build-out of a church campus that would accommodate the fast-growing congregation. Among desired amenities are green space, recreational facilities for youth, and housing for seniors within the community. Under the current leadership of Pastor DJ Criner, the church has made steady progress toward realizing some of these goals.



Sanctuary of St. Rest Baptist Church

The 3.5 acre church owned parcel is adjacent to the church’s existing sanctuary and parking lot, which has housed the congregation of St. Rest since 1978. Most of the 3.5 acre property is vacant with the exception of the former Farmer John Meat Packing warehouse, which the church currently uses as a food distribution center. The first phase of the planned expansion project is the construction of a public park and playground and 2500 square foot youth ministry center for congregation use. The total costs for this first phase is approximately \$911,000, of which \$246,000 is still needed to start construction. Eventually, the Church would like to provide multiple ball fields, an outdoor prayer garden, and an Airnasium (an open-air gymnasium). The long-term plan also involves the renovation of the former meat packing warehouse to serve additional uses along with the current food pantry.

The St. Rest property is the northern entrance to the Elm Avenue Corridor, a 2.25-mile long corridor connecting several economically disadvantaged southwest Fresno neighborhoods along a stretch of many vacant and potentially contaminated lots. A legacy of automobile industry and related uses has left behind several vacant and blighted properties along the corridor. The area’s poverty rate of 43 percent and an unemployment rate of 21 percent are more than double the state averages. With ample land available for development and a prime location next to downtown, Southwest Fresno is a promising reinvestment area.



The future site of the Youth Ministry Center and public use Park on the St. Rest Campus

The Church property is one of several sites identified by community stakeholders as a catalyst site in the Elm Avenue Brownfields Area-Wide Plan. The Area Wide Planning Grant, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) allowed the City of Fresno to develop a participatory reuse plan for the corridor, build resident capacity to identify and assess brownfields, and address land use issues in the community. St. Rest hopes to contribute to the resurgence of the community by leading efforts to cleanup and redevelop the Elm Avenue Corridor.

The objective of the Project Response Team was three-fold: 1) to provide ideas for the immediate needs of the St. Rest Expansion; 2) to provide long-term financing strategies to St. Rest to achieve their long-term vision; and 3) to provide recommendations to the City to support redevelopment of a greater number of Elm Avenue properties in Southwest Fresno.



Conceptual Site Plans of the 3.5-acre St. Rest Campus

St. Rest Campus & Elm Avenue Corridor Roadmap to Redevelopment

Strategies

Part I: Financing the Immediate Needs of St. Rest Green Space

Most urgently, St. Rest seeks \$246,000 to fund the first phase of their campus expansion plan. This will include the 2500-square foot youth ministry building and the public park. The youth ministry building has a total cost of \$581,000, and a \$500,000 line of credit has already been granted. The public park has a total cost of \$330,000; the church has already raised \$165,000 through a combination of donations and grants. This includes a \$70,000 grant from Kaiser Family Foundation to develop a play structure on the green space. The resources identified in this section have potential to fund phase one activities without altering the current plans for development.

i. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The City of Fresno is the annual recipient of federal housing and community development funds through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). CDBG funding is a flexible spending program and allows jurisdictions to address various community development needs in four main funding categories: Public Service, Community and Economic Development, Capital Improvements Projects, and Planning and Administration. Both the public park and the youth ministry building would be eligible uses of the funds. The City Councilor for the district indicated a willingness to make the project a priority for CDGB funding.

ii. California ReLeaf Grants (Open Space Funding Recommendation)

The California ReLeaf seeks and provides pass-through grants to ReLeaf Network Members and other community groups interested in planting and caring for trees in California. In the past, grant funding has been provided through the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Region IX of the Environmental Protection Agency and the USDA Forest Service.¹ All funded projects must reduce greenhouse gasses, with emphasis on supporting projects located in disadvantaged communities. To the extent that St. Rest wishes to include trees in the creation of the public park, these funds can greatly reduce costly landscaping expenses that St. Rest will incur while developing their campus spaces.

¹ ReLeaf Grants. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://californiareleaf.org/programs/grants/>

iii. The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land helps state and local governments design, pass, and implement legislation and ballot measures that create new public funds for parks and land conservation. The Trust for Public Land is an authoritative source for information on these and other funding options and may be able to offer technical assistance to St. Rest for the public park.²

iv. Bank Investment

St. Rest should actively engage the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) officers at local and regional banks. The possibility of bank lending, investment, and grants could support various phases of the St. Rest project. Avenues for bank investment include:

CRA Audit

Some banks have great need to raise their CRA activity due to poor CRA ratings. Banks that are looking to raise their CRA rating may be willing to provide grants or low interest loans that St. Rest can utilize. The coalition of community development organizations in Southwest Fresno including the St. Rest Economic Development Corporation may want to meet with area banks and provide lending and investment opportunities to the banks particularly those seeking to maintain or improve their CRA rating.

Special Funding Initiatives

St. Rest may be able to receive RFP support or gain the collaborative support of multiple smaller CDFIs with programs such as Chase: Pro Neighborhoods Initiative. Capital One, Regions, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, and CitiBank have similar initiatives.

v. Borrow from Existing Line of Credit to Fund Park

The Kaiser Grant funds require that the playground be completed by October 31, 2018. If pressed for time and other funds are not readily available for the project, the Church could borrow from its existing line of credit for the youth ministry building to complete the park. CDBG funds or CRA investments, including grants, could then replace funding for the youth ministry building, or St. Rest may consider expanding the line of credit. The last option may require St. Rest to identify a future source of revenue from the building (see Part II for more information).

² The Trust for Public Land Fund. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.tpl.org/node/85613/>

Part II: Establishing Future Revenues for St. Rest Youth Ministry Building

Both CDBG funds and CRA loans or investments are good potential funding sources for both the public park and the youth ministry building. However, the Church may wish to identify potential revenue opportunities from the youth ministry building to fill any remaining financing gaps or to create an operational fund for ongoing maintenance and future improvements. The following strategies could assist St. Rest in determining potential for revenue-generating activities.

- i. Develop a Business Plan

Although the Church’s original plan for the youth ministry building does not include revenue-generating activities, they should consider whether some money can be earned (possibly by renting out a community space to public, etc.) so they can expand their line of credit to fund this project and/or future projects. A business plan will help lenders and other funders understand potential revenue flows and define their capacity to pay back funds over time. The plan should include an operating budget analyzing current and projected expenses and revenues. If St. Rest can demonstrate that there is an income from the building, local banks or CDFIs may provide an additional line of credit.

- ii. Establish Local Partnerships

A local partnership with an established community mission-driven organization could enhance programming for the St. Rest youth ministry building. One such organization, Bitwise Industries, describes itself as “the mothership of technological education, collaboration, and innovation in Fresno.” Bitwise empowers residents to build careers, technology, and companies in Fresno through providing education, execution, and place.³ Such a partnership could support St. Rest youth and provide access to technology and programming that would otherwise not be available.

Part III: Building Capacity of the St. Rest EDC

St. Rest EDC has the potential to lead redevelopment efforts throughout the Elm Avenue Corridor, however, they do not currently have the financial or organizational capacity to do so. With some structural enhancement and revenue generation, St. Rest EDC could partner with the City and other organizations to serve in various roles including real estate development, economic development, community planning, and small business technical assistance. Below are some resources to assist St. Rest EDC in building capacity beyond grants and CDBG funding.

- i. Annenberg Foundation

Originally focused on public education, the Annenberg Foundation has evolved from a traditional grant-making institution to one that is also directly involved in the community with its unique charitable activities through which large-scale solutions to systemic

³ Bitwise Industries. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://bitwiseindustries.com/>

problems are pursued.⁴ The foundation may grant funds to St. Rest EDC for planning and developing access to capital resources.

ii. Democracy Collaborative

The Democracy Collaborative recognizes the importance of economic development corporations to catalyze community-based programs aimed at improving neighborhood conditions. Through their Community-Wealth initiative, organizations such as the St. Rest EDC can find more resources about capacity building, structure and organization. In addition, the St. Rest EDC can utilize the Community-Wealth portal to connect with organizations that assist EDCs including LISC (Local Initiatives Support Coalition), Enterprise Community Partners, and NeighborWorks.⁵

iii. Build Financial Capacity

Like the Church, the EDC should investigate opportunities for revenue-generating activities to fund the non-revenue generating ones. The revenue-generating activities should be included along the Elm Avenue Corridor to further catalyze redevelopment efforts. For instance, affordable housing can be developed that not only serves area residents but potentially generates developer fees and operating cash flow income.

Part IV: Financing the Long-Range Plans for the St. Rest Campus

The long-range vision of the Church is to implement a variety of community-serving facilities. The congregation and community have identified senior housing and a Charter School as desired options. St. Rest EDC may pursue the reuse of the former meat-packing warehouse as a fresh food market and distribution center. The resources identified in this section have potential to finance these activities if St. Rest decides to include them in the campus plan.

i. Cleanup funding for Warehouse:

EPA Cleanup Grants

The Former Farmer Johns Meat Packing plant and the adjacent corner lot owned by the Church will require remediation to address lead, asbestos, and any other potential contaminants. The EPA has grant programs to finance the initial process. EPA Cleanup grants provide up to \$200,000 per site for cleanup activities on brownfields. Cleanup grants require a 20 percent cost share, which may be in the form of a contribution of money, labor, material, or services. Although this project aligns with the goals of the EPA programs, it is recommended that the Church work with a consultant to prepare the grant application as these grants are highly competitive.

⁴ Who We Are. (2017, October 20). Retrieved from <https://www.annenberg.org/who-we-are/who-we-are>

⁵ Overview Community Development Corporations (CDCs). Retrieved from <https://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/cdcs/index.html>

ii. Senior Housing:

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

Based on area median income of the community, LIHTC would be a likely financing tool for a senior housing project. LIHTC is designed to subsidize either 30 percent or 70 percent of the low-income unit costs in a project. The subsidized number of units corresponds with the tax credit reward, 4 percent and 9 percent, respectively.⁶ Many developers are experienced in using LIHTC; St. Rest should partner with a developer who has a successful track record of utilizing the credits. A project along the Elm Avenue Corridor is likely to be highly competitive.

California Statewide Communities Development Authority (CSCDA) Housing Bonds

The CSCDA Housing Bond Program is designed to assist both for-profit and nonprofit developers in accessing tax-exempt bonds for the financing of low-income multifamily and senior housing projects. The Bonds may be used to finance or refinance the acquisition and rehabilitation of an existing project or for the construction of a new project, provided the developer agrees to set aside all, or a portion, of the units in a project for individuals and families of very low, low or moderate income.⁷ A developer can finance a project at a lower interest rate than available through conventional financing because the interest paid to bondholders is exempt from federal income taxes.

iii. Charter School:

Charter School Capital

Charter School Capital provides growth capital and facilities financing to charter schools nationwide. The mission of the organization is to give school leaders access to the resources necessary for schools, and their students.⁸ Along with a myriad of resources for Charter Schools, Charter School Capital has a financing product that offers a borrower with a long-term lease 100 percent of the total project cost. It allows schools to access funding through all stages of growth.

iv. Fresh Food Access – Local Market:

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services – Office of Community Service

The Office of Community Service offers Community Economic Development (CED) Grants to community development corporations for commercial development projects.⁹ Many CED grantees are using their CED grant funding to implement food-related projects as a way to create business and employment opportunities for low-income individuals. These projects add grocery stores, restaurants, food distribution centers, urban gardens, and other

⁶ LIHTC. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/resourcecenters/taxcredits.html>

⁷ Housing Bonds. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://cscda.org/private-activity-programs/housing-bonds/>

⁸ Empowering Charter Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://charterschoolcapital.org/>

⁹ "CED Grant Awards FY 2017." *Office of Community Services | ACF*, www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/ced-grant-awards-fy-2017.

businesses to the community. The grants are competitive and the funding round is typically in the spring of each calendar year.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The USDA supports public and private investments in the form of loans, grants, promotion, and other programs designed to create healthy food options in food deserts across the country. USDA can provide technical and financial assistance for healthy food retailers to increase the availability and accessibility of regionally produced foods in underserved areas. Listed below are some potential opportunities for St. Rest to pursue:

The Farmer’s Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

The FMPP supports farmers markets, mobile markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture programs, agro-tourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.¹⁰

The Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)

The LFPP offers grant funds with a 25 percent match to support the development and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets.¹¹

Part V: Financing the Elm Avenue Corridor

The City of Fresno is interested in supporting the redevelopment of many of the vacant parcels along the Elm Avenue Corridor. With the Area-Wide Planning grant and the completion of the Southwest Specific Plan the City has already begun to engage stakeholders and residents in planning and visioning efforts for the corridor. This final set of recommendations is intended for the City to increase their capacity to support redevelopment activities along the Elm Avenue Corridor.

i. Investigate New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)

The NMTC Program provides incentives for community development and economic growth using tax credits to attract private investment to distressed communities. Corporate investors receive a tax credit against their federal income tax in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries, Community Development Entities (CDEs). The CDE allocates the invested funds to viable projects. In February 2018, Treasury allotted \$3.5B in NMTC allocations to 73 CDEs nationally.¹² The entire Elm Avenue Corridor is located in an NMTC eligible census tract. As NMTCs are highly competitive, projects will be evaluated based on their readiness and overall community impact. This region has strong

¹⁰ Grants & Opportunities. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/>

¹¹ Grants & Opportunities. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/>

¹² Tax Credit Finance Resource Center. (n.d.). Retrieved March, 2018, from <https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/resourcecenters/taxcredits.html>

environmental justice, community development, and cultural vitality impacts needs, which should enhance the NMTC attractiveness of any project submitted. Additionally, the City of Fresno should consider creating an NMTC-CDE using the track record of the City's balance sheet. The cities of Phoenix and Los Angeles are excellent examples of city-owned CDEs.

ii. Prepare for the Potential to Maximize Opportunity Zone Investment

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (HR 1) signed into law late in 2017 creates a new tax incentive to attract capital to low-income census tract areas. By investing in Opportunity Zones, investors stand to gain a temporary deferral on their capital gains taxes if they hold their investments for at least 5 years, and a permanent exclusion from a tax on capital gains if the investments are held for 10 years.¹³ States are allowed to designate up to 25% of their low-income census tracts as opportunity zones. Zone designations will have a 10-year duration. On March 21, California Governor Jerry Brown submitted 879 census tracts for opportunity zone designation. All of Southwest Fresno including the Elm Avenue Corridor was designated as qualified opportunity zones.¹⁴ The City of Fresno will need to gather civic leaders as well as banks, CDFIs, and CDEs, to devise an implementation strategy for accessing Opportunity Funds.

iii. Conduct a Housing Needs Assessment and Market Analysis

A comprehensive housing needs assessment and market analysis typically involves compilation and evaluation of specific demographic data, economic characteristics and trends, current housing inventory and characteristics, government policies and incentives, and the adequacy and availability of selected community services. These assessments typically also involve collecting the input of area stakeholders and residents. The results of the assessment should quantify the number of housing units needed in the market by tenure (rentals vs. for-sale), price point, bedroom type, and market segment. The market analysis will also provide traditional lenders and CDFIs with a pipeline of housing transactions and their financing needs and gaps.

iv. Conduct Inventory of Publicly-Owned Vacant Parcels Along Elm Avenue

The City should conduct an inventory of lots along the Elm Avenue corridor that are owned by themselves, the County, or another public agency. These sites would be the easiest to control and should be evaluated for development potential. The City (by itself or in partnership with the controlling entity) could invest in site prep if needed, and market the properties to a community-based developers or local EDCs for below market value to subsidize the redevelopment cost for organizations willing to pioneer development efforts.

¹³ Investing in Opportunity Act. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/pages/iioa.html>

¹⁴ Department of Finance State of California. (n.d.). Opportunity Zones in California. Retrieved from http://dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/opportunity_zones/index.html

v. Establish an Enhanced Infrastructure Finance District for Corridor Improvements

In 2014 the California Senate adopted Senate Bill 628, which set up Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFD). EIFDs provide a new financing option for public agencies in the wake of the dissolution of the Redevelopment Districts that California cities once used to obtain tax increment financing for capital improvement projects. An EIFD can finance traditional public works, such as transportation, transit, parks and libraries, water and sewer facilities, solid waste disposal, and flood control and drainage.¹⁵ The legislation emphasizes projects that support sustainable community goals, energy efficiency, and reducing the carbon footprint of California's economy. An EIFD requires significant planning and collaboration with other agencies that are affected by the establishment of the district. Prior to the formation of the district, there must be an Infrastructure Financing Plan (IFP). This requires that the City is made aware of the projects to be included and works with other public agencies in developing tax-sharing agreements. Once the IFP has been approved, then the EIFD can be formed.

vi. Establish a Revolving Loan Fund for Southwest Fresno Redevelopment (RLF)

The City should investigate opportunities to capitalize a revolving loan fund (RLF) for development projects in the Elm Avenue Corridor or throughout southwest Fresno. As a self-replenishing pool of money, an RLF can provide gap funding to multiple projects over time, utilizing interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones. There are several methods to establish an RLF.

Most revolving loan funds have at least one local public source for capitalization combined with other sources. If capitalization is exclusively local, the RLF may have greater flexibility in lending, as state and federal involvement tend to include restrictions that may not fit local business needs. State and local governments often use one or a combination of the following to capitalize an RLF: tax set asides, general obligation bonds, and direct appropriations from the state legislature, annual dues from participating counties or municipalities, and funds directed from the state lottery.

The federal government is another common source of capitalization. Communities may apply for funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (via the Rural Economic and Community Development Administration), Housing and Urban Development (via Community Development Block Grants), the Department of Commerce (via the Economic Development Administration), and the Environmental Protection Agency (via Brownfields Grants).¹⁶ Each of these funders will restrict the use of the RLF to fit within the eligible activities of the respective programs.

¹⁵ A New Financing Tool for California: Enhanced Infrastructure Finance Districts. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.planetizen.com/node/88347/new-financing-tool-california-enhanced-infrastructure-finance-districts>

¹⁶ Capitalizing a Revolving Loan Fund. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ordredirect.html?open&id=riffactsheet.html>

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Additional Resources

CDFA Brownfields Financing Toolkit |

[http://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ord/201502_BF_Toolkit/\\$file/CDFA%20Brownfields%20Financing%20Toolkit%2002.02.15.pdf](http://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ord/201502_BF_Toolkit/$file/CDFA%20Brownfields%20Financing%20Toolkit%2002.02.15.pdf)

CDFA Online Resource Database |

<http://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ordsearch.html>

CDFA Federal Financing Clearinghouse |

<https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ffcsearch.html>

Types of Brownfields Grant Funding (Environmental Protection Agency) |

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding#tab-1>

Tax Credit Reference Guide |

<https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ordredirect.html?open&id=taxcreditfinrefguide.html>

Annenberg Foundation |

<https://www.annenberg.org/>

Department of Health and Family Services – Office of Community Service |

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/ced>

ReLeaf |

<http://californiareleaf.org/programs/grants/>

Trust for Public Land |

<https://www.tpl.org>

Democracy Collaborative |

<https://community-wealth.org/>

Opportunity Zones in California |

http://dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/opportunity_zones/index.html

Acknowledgements

A Project Response Team site visit requires a significant commitment of time and resources. The authors would like to recognize the commitments of many individuals throughout this process. Firstly, the authors would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their involvement:

Individuals

Oliver Baines III
Scott Berry
Darrell Carter
Rev DJ Criner
Laura Floria
Tate Hill
Michaelynn Lewis
Jose Mora
Cherella Nicholson
Will Oliver
Sophia Pagoulatos
Tiffany Magnum
Yolanda Randles
Kyle Schmit
H Spees
Drew Wilson
Peter Winch

Organizations

Access Plus Capital
Action in Charge
Central Valley Community Foundation
City of Fresno Chamber of Commerce
City of Fresno City Manager Office
City of Fresno Mayors Office
City of Fresno Planning Department
Fresno Economic Development
Corporation
Fresno Housing Authority
Northern California Community Loan
Fund (NCCLF)
Saint Rest Missionary Baptist Church
Southwest Fresno CDC
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Wallace Roberts & Todd
Washington School Board
West Fresno Family Resource Center

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The *Roadmap to Redevelopment Plan* was authored by the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), a national association dedicated to the advancement of development finance concerns and interests. Learn more about CDFA at www.cdfa.net.

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CDFA was advised during the Brownfields Project Response Team site visit by a team of technical assistance advisors:

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Carras Community Investment, Inc.

Russell Goings, Senior Vice President
Hutchinson Shockey Erley & Co.



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