

## **FRESNO, CALIFORNIA - EMPOWERMENT ZONE ROUND III**

### **Application Summary**

Fresno is situated at the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley. It is legendary for its unsurpassed agricultural productivity and well known for its chronic economic challenges.

There are six census tracts in the Empowerment Zone area with poverty rates from 33% to 57%. There are three developable sites located in proximity to the EZ designated area. These sites are centered on the Fresno Yosemite Airport. In comparing key socio-economic indicators of the Fresno area to those at the national, State and City levels, unquestionably the designee's area exhibits the characteristics of a highly distressed community. The area's unemployment rate of 26.1% exceeds the national level of 4%, the State level of 4.9% and the City level of 12.9%. Its Per Capita Income of \$6,542 and Median Household Income of \$14,052 is about 50% below the same key indicators at the national, State and City levels. The area's high school drop out rate is double that of the State and local rates.

The Tax Incentive Utilization Plan is the strongest element of the application. The Fresno EZ plans to use 5 of the 11 available tax benefits and has successfully demonstrated a high level of sophistication in its plan to utilize these benefits in the EZ area. For example, Fresno has a proposal for bundling these incentives with state and local taxes to encourage businesses already in the nominated area to expand and induce new businesses to locate in the area as well.

To meet its goal to increase job opportunities in the area, Fresno has creatively combined a number of its proposed projects and programs with its use of tax incentives. The applicant has also developed a unique multi-dimensional marketing approach that personalizes the use of tax incentives by using a story type format for marketing them to business managers, investors and potential employers. Additionally, the designee proposes a network of partners to include bank personnel, human resource departments and the Fresno City Tax Department to collaborate on the marketing efforts and to provide on-going technical assistance. This approach will highlight an illustration of the incentives being people-centered and multimedia marketed.

Fresno has established very solid relationships with local banks, colleges, faith-based organizations, community based organizations, legal service firms, and the California Society of CPAs. Being designated an Empowerment Zone will now afford this community the opportunity to create a true renaissance for its community.