

CITY OF MERCED

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND DOWNTOWN STATION AREA PLAN



**mintier
harnish**
Planning Consultants, LLC

ATTACHMENT 1



Citizens Advisory Focus Group (CAFG)

Meeting #2

OCTOBER 8, 2025

Meeting Objectives

Meeting Purpose

- To review the Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook and provide a summary of key findings

Agenda

- General Plan Overview and Schedule
- The Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook
- Next Steps

A scenic landscape featuring a river in the foreground, a row of cherry blossom trees in full bloom along the bank, and a blue sky with light clouds. The trees have white and pink blossoms. The river reflects the sky and the trees. The overall scene is peaceful and beautiful.

GENERAL PLAN OVERVIEW

What is a General Plan?



- Required by State law for every jurisdiction
- Represents the community's long-term vision for the future
- Establishes goals and policies on which the City Council bases a variety of decisions (i.e., land use, economic development, equity)

General Plan Project Schedule

	2025												2026												2027											
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec				
Phase 1: Project Initiation	* Kick-off Meeting * Newsletter #1 * All-hands Study Session																																			
Phase 2: Existing Conditions and Trends																																				
Phase 3: Community Vision and Guiding Principles																																				
Phase 4: Prepare the General Plan																																				
Phase 5: Prepare Program EIR																																				
Phase 6: Public hearings and Adoption																																				

* Existing Conditions & Trends Workbook
* CAFG Meeting #2
* Newsletter #2
* CC/PC Joint Study Session #1
* Community Open House #1
* Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report
* CAFG Meeting #1
* CAFG Meeting #3

* Community Open House #2
* CC/PC Joint Study Session #2
* Vision and Guiding Principles

* Admin Draft GP
* Prelim Public Review Draft GP
* * * CAFG Meetings #5, #6, #7
* Revised Prelim Review GP
* PC Study Session
* CC Study Session
* Public Review Draft General Plan
* Newsletter #4
* Community Open House #3
* Public Hearing Draft General Plan

* Administrative Draft PEIR
* Public Review Draft PEIR
* Final PEIR

* PC Hearing
* CC Hearing
Adoption Hearing*

General Plan Project Schedule

Phase 2: Existing Conditions and Trends

- CAFG Meeting #1 - **COMPLETE**
- Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook (ECTW)
- CAFG #2
- Newsletter #2
- Community Open House #1
- Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report
- CAFG Meeting #3
- City Council/Planning Commission Joint Study Session #1

PLACEHOLDER FOR COVER

An aerial photograph of a city, likely San Francisco, showing a dense urban landscape with various buildings, streets, and green spaces. A semi-transparent blue rectangular overlay covers the left portion of the image, serving as a background for the title text.

THE DRAFT EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS WORKBOOK

Draft Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook

The Draft Workbook is intended to be:

- A high-level snapshot of existing conditions based on recently published plans, reports, and data.
- A concise, engaging, and highly graphical analysis that incorporates infographics, charts, maps, and photographs.

The Draft Workbook is informed by:

- Existing regional and local data
- Regional plans impacting or involving Merced

PLACEHOLDER FOR COVER

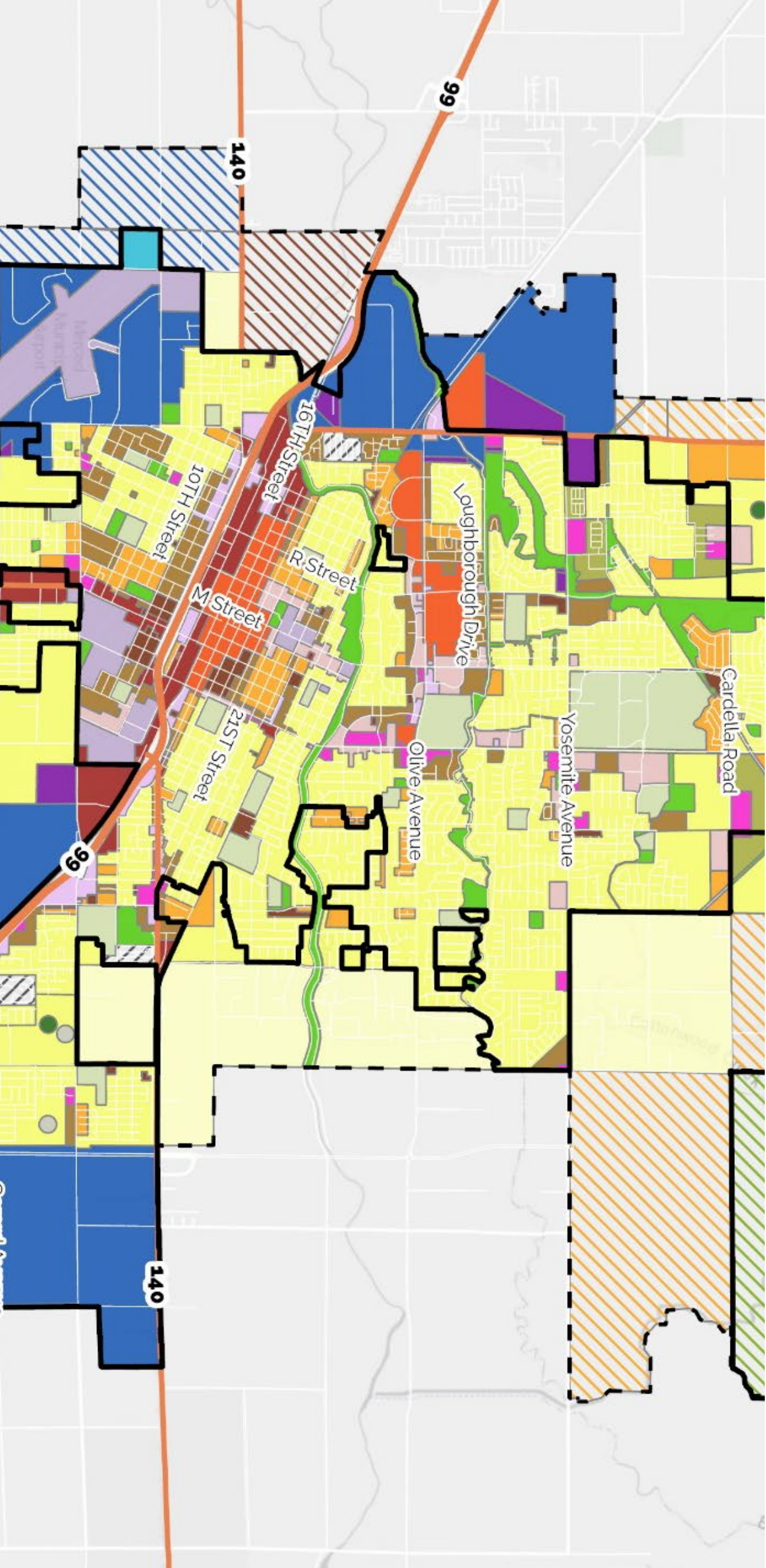
Input Desired

- The consulting team is seeking Citizen Advisory Focus Group feedback on the data presented in each chapter.
- *Missing data points or sources*
- *Inaccurate data (or data that conflicts with your experience)*
- *Clarity needed*

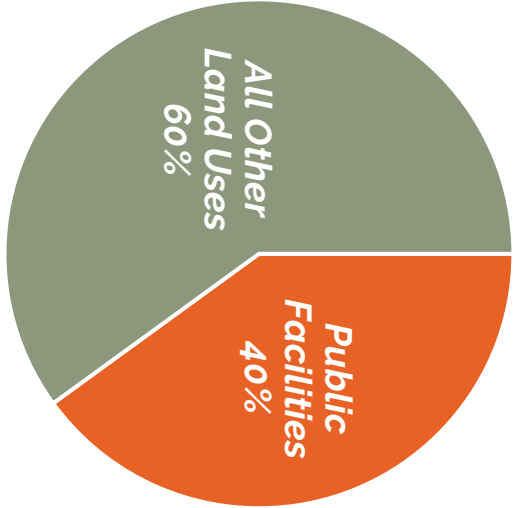
Contents

1. Introduction
2. Land Use
3. Population, Employment, and Housing
4. Mobility
5. Market and Economic Conditions
6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure
7. Open Space, Parks, and Recreation
8. Air Quality
9. Environment
10. Safety
11. Environmental Justice

2. Land Use



2. Land Use



- **Existing Land Uses**

Public facilities account for nearly 40 percent of existing land uses according to the County Assessor's Office.

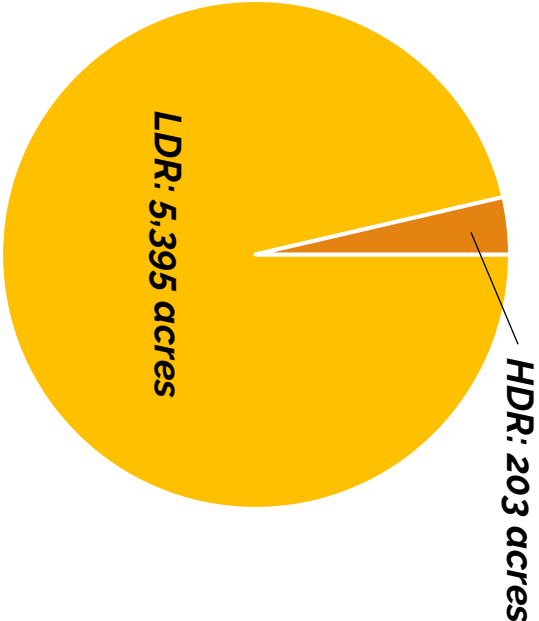
- **Existing 2030 General Plan Land Use**

- Emphasized Low Density Residential (~22 percent) and High Density Residential (~15 percent)

- **Existing Zoning**

- The Low-Density Residential (LDR) zone accounts for more than 32 percent of total acreage.
- The Planned Development zoning is well used (20 percent)

Comparison of LDR and HDR Zones by Acreage



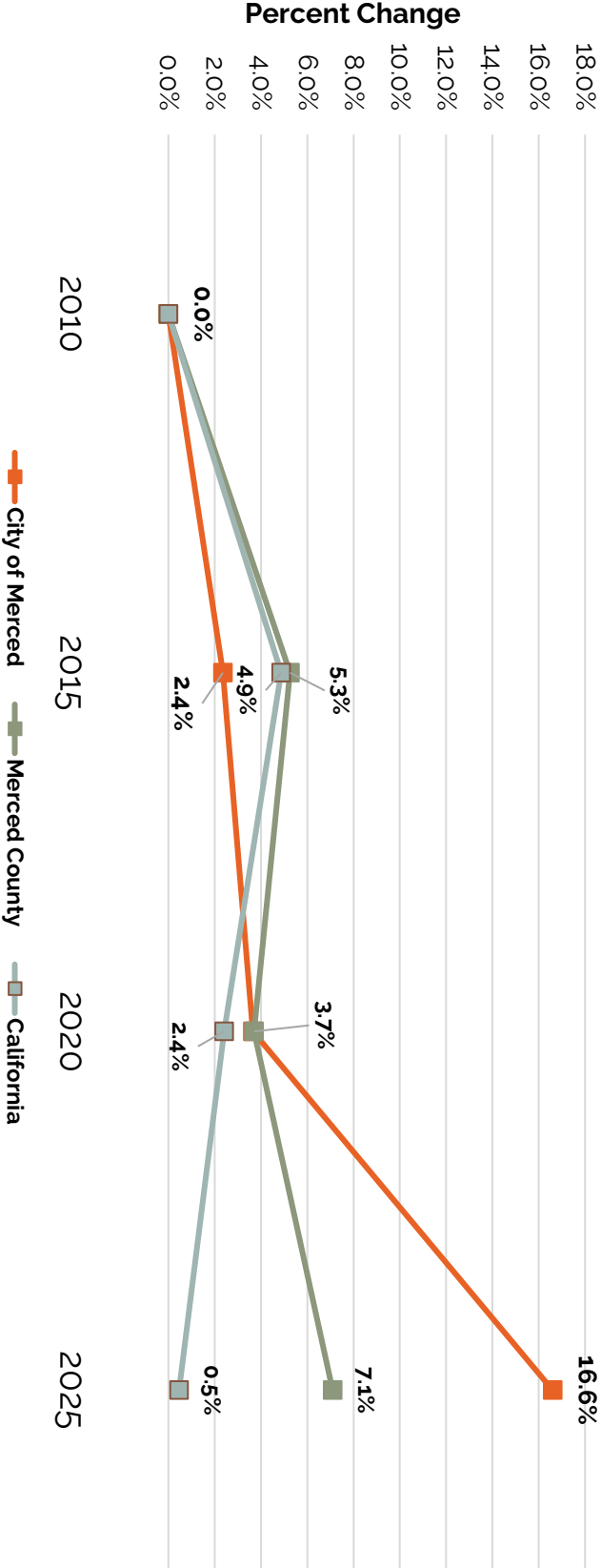
3. Population Employment and Housing



3. Population Employment and Housing

2025 Population
Merced: 98,039

Population Trends by Percent Change

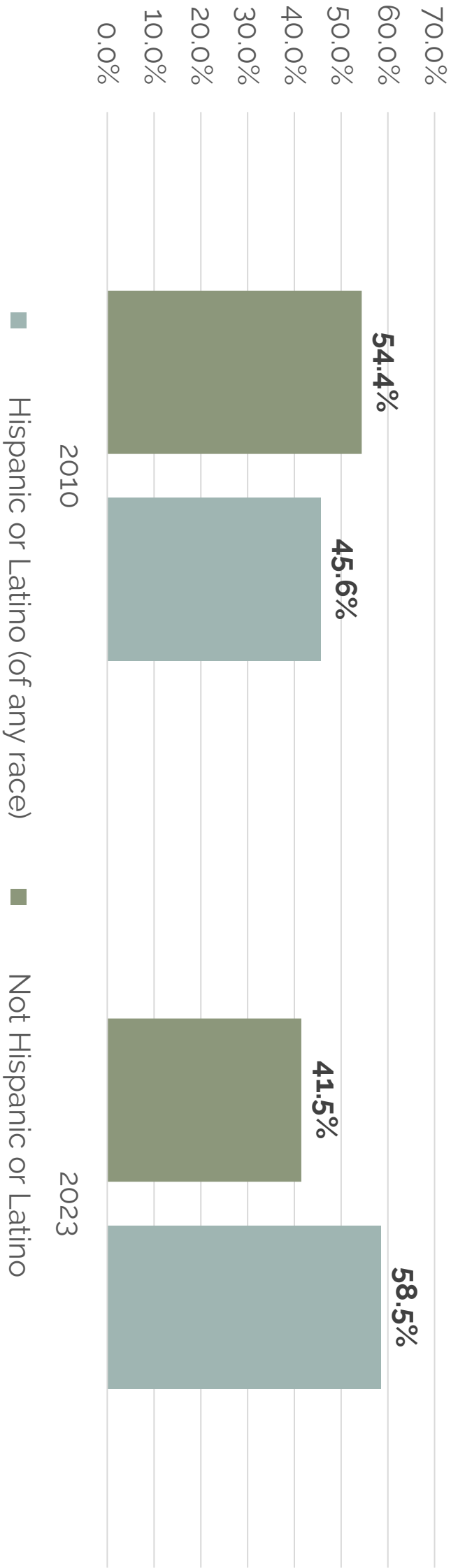


Population Trends, 2010-2025

	2010	2015	2020	2025	Percent Change 2010-2025	Annual Growth Rate
Merced	79,254	81,120	84,081	98,039	24%	1.43%
Merced County	250,699	263,885	273,661	29,080	17%	1.05%
California	36,637,290	38,421,464	39,346,023	39,529,101	8%	0.51%

3. Population Employment and Housing

Ethnicity, Merced, 2010 and 2023



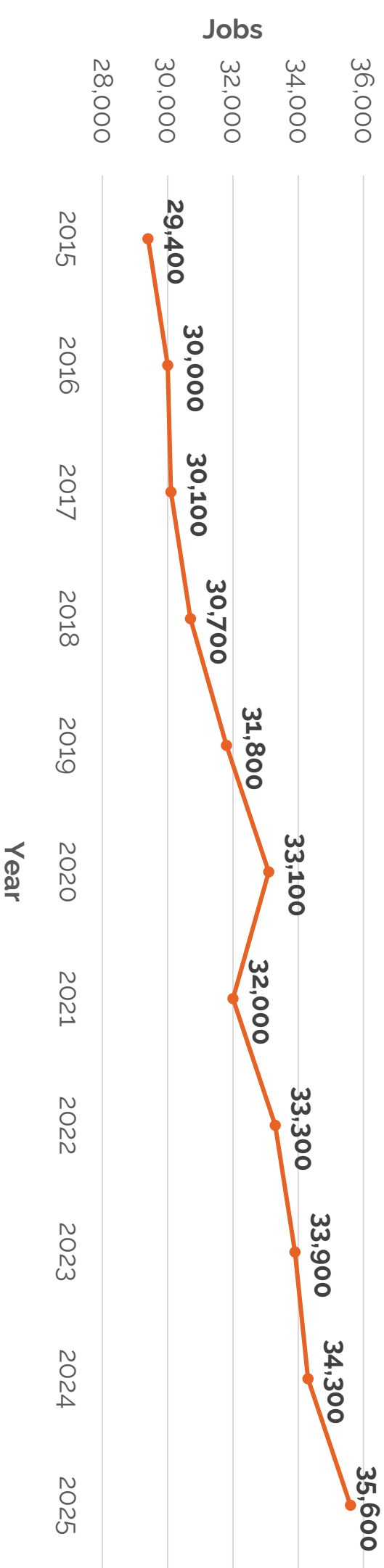
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 5-year Estimates, Table DP03, 2010, 2023.

3. Population Employment and Housing

Top Three Industries in Merced, by Number Employed

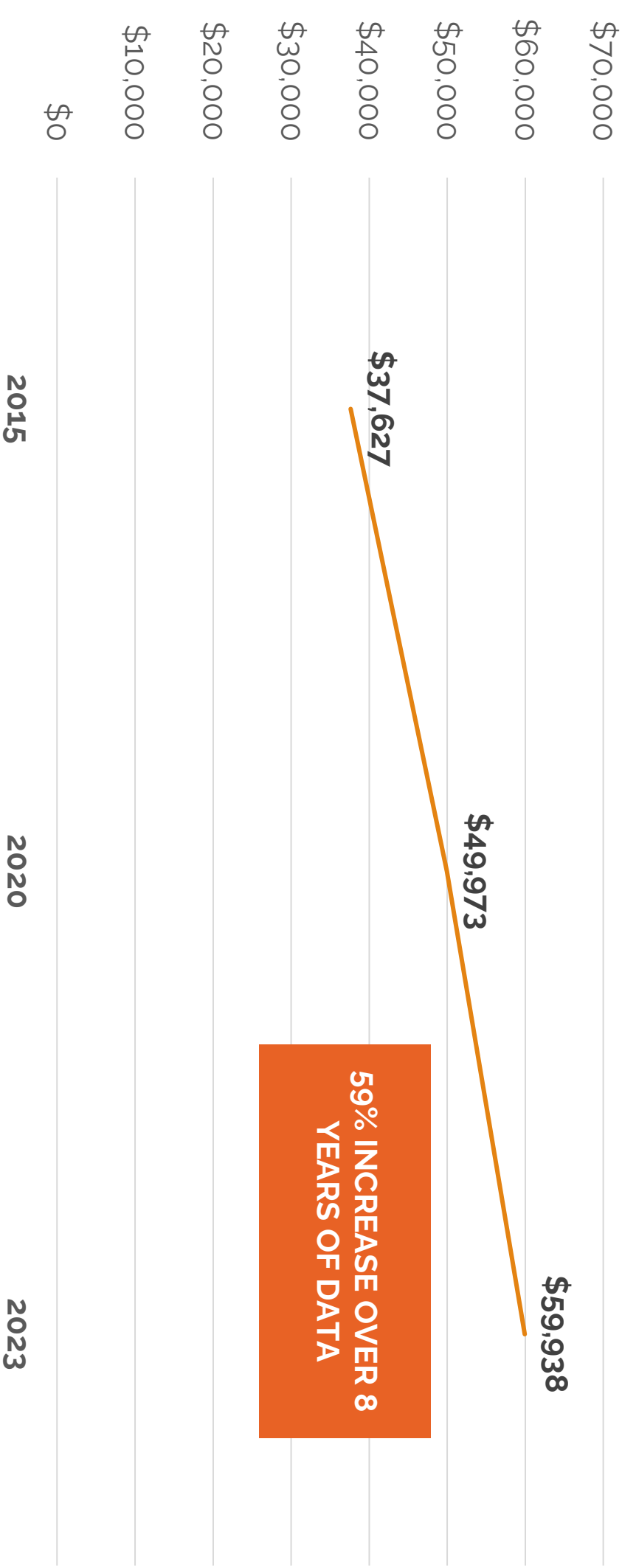
Industry	Total	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	35,750	100.0%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	9,267	25.90%
Retail trade	3,940	11.00%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3,805	10.60%

Employment, Merced, 2015-2025



3. Population Employment and Housing

Median Household Income (ACS 5-year)



3. Population Employment and Housing

- Housing Mix



Single-Unit Detached Homes account for around 65 percent of the City's housing stock.

This is a lower percentage than the county (~74 percent) but greater than the state (~57 percent).

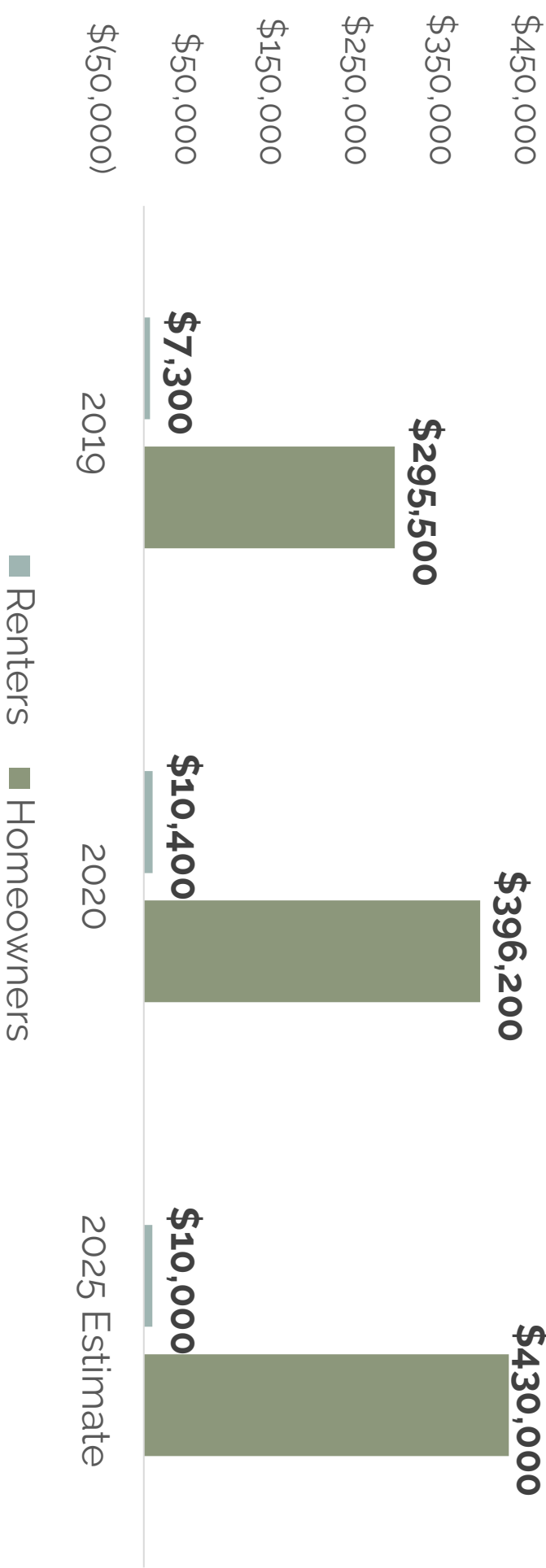


Large Apartments

Merced has a higher proportion of 20 or more-unit complexes (~6 percent) than the county (about three percent) but a significantly lower proportion than the state (over 13 percent).

3. Population Employment and Housing

Median Net Worth by Tenure

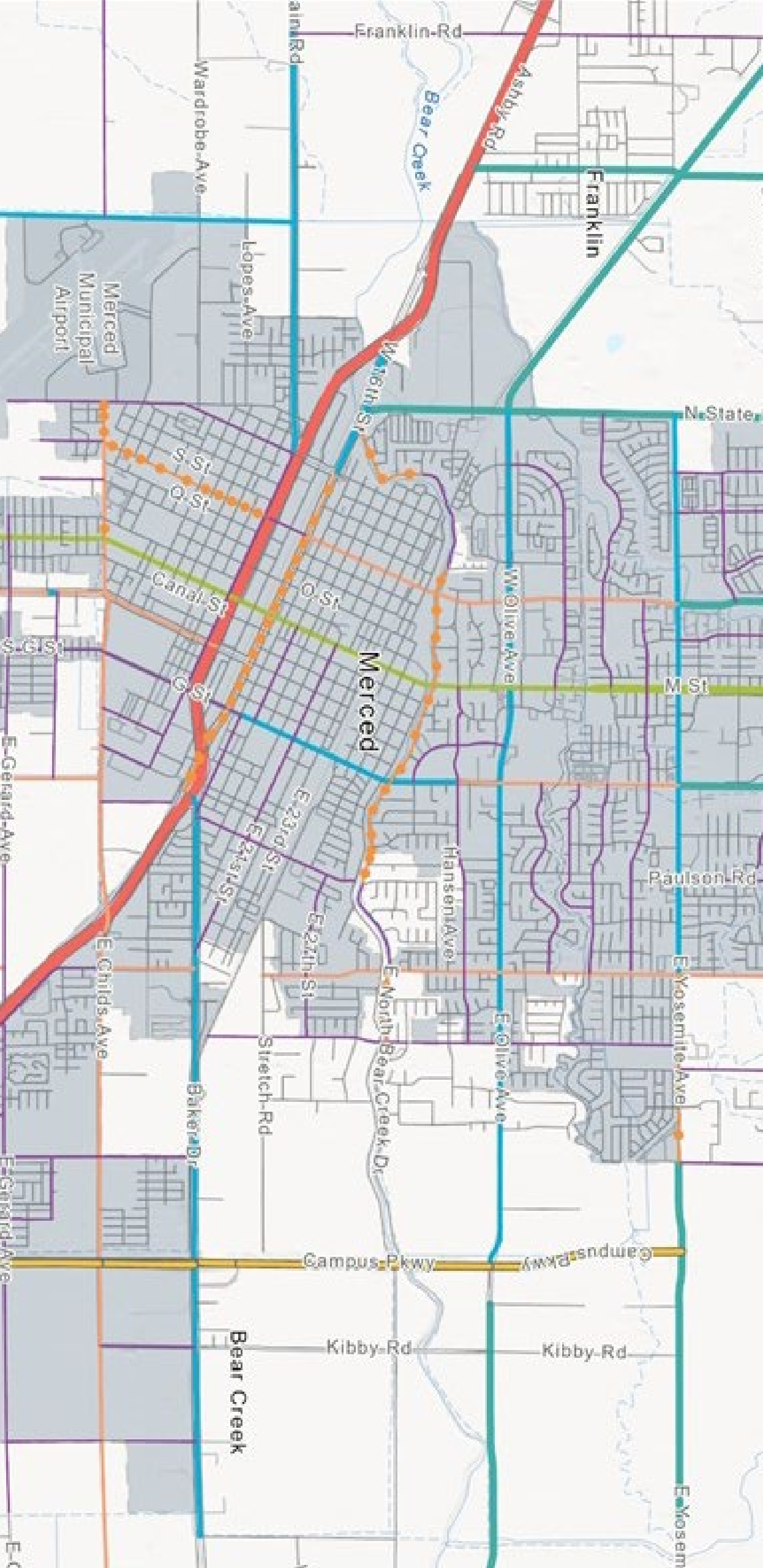


AVERAGE HOME VALUE: City of Merced, Aug. 2025:

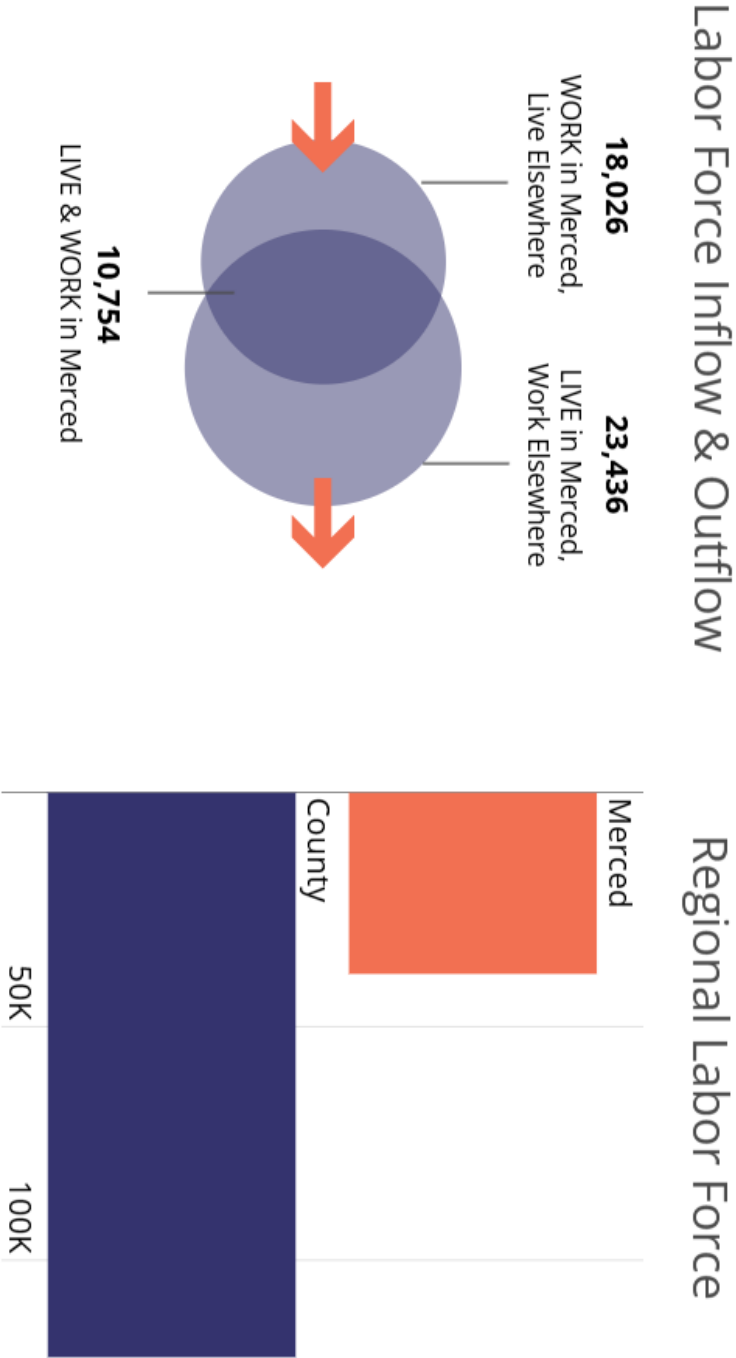
\$397,655

Source: Zillow Home Value Index

4. Mobility



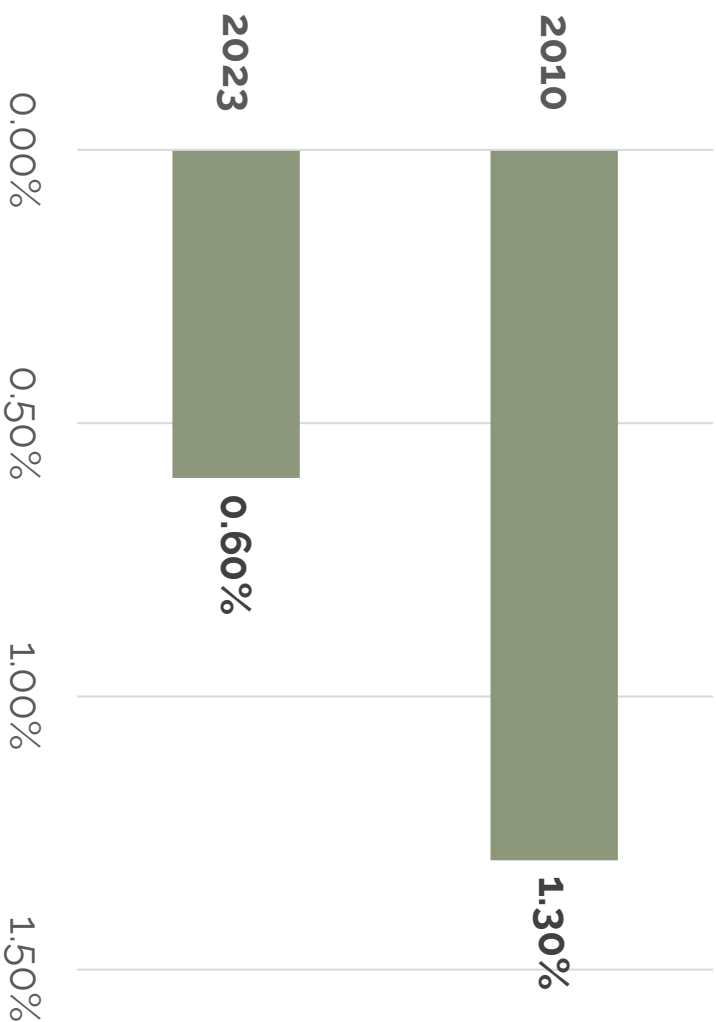
4. Mobility



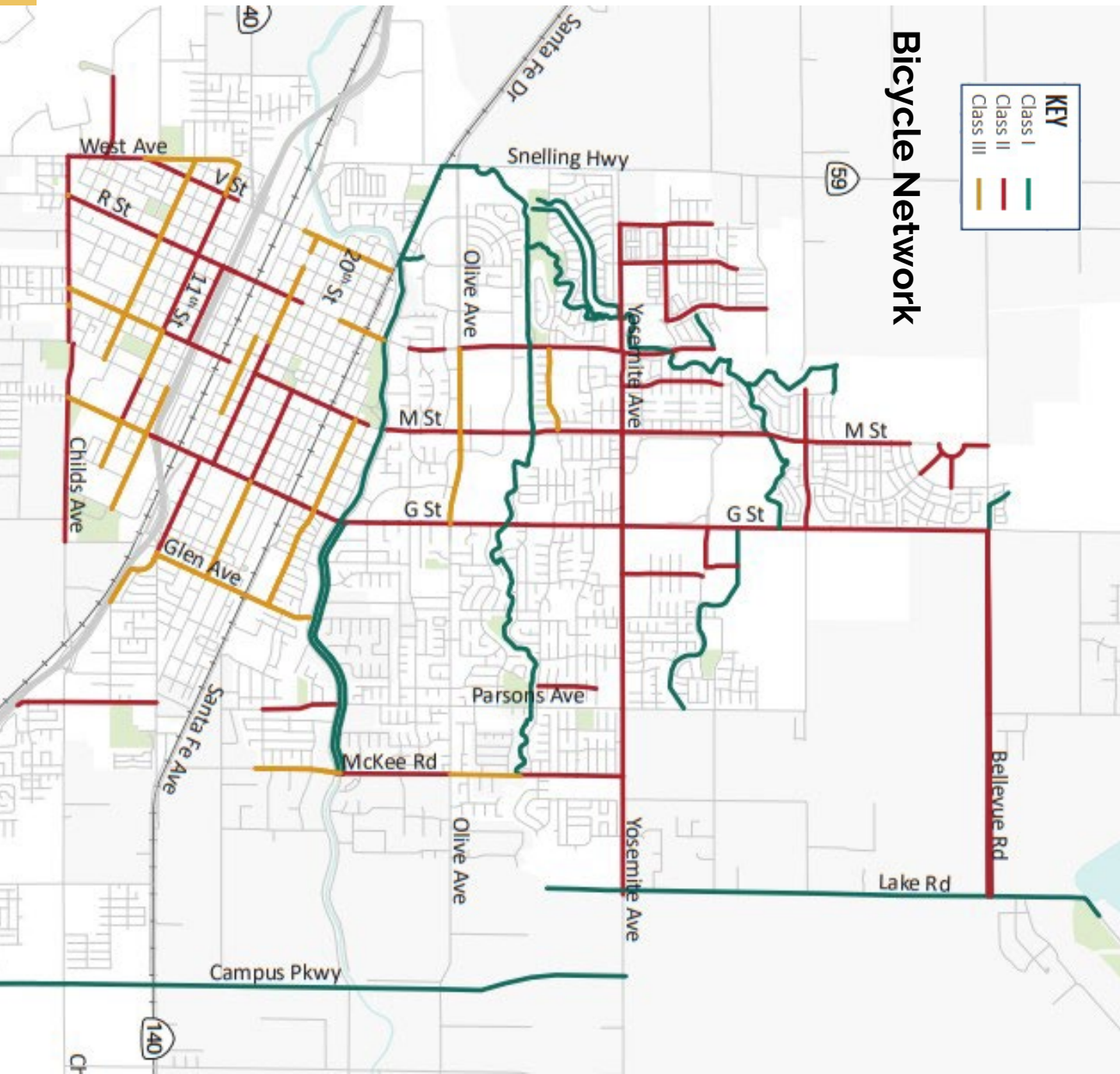
4. Mobility

■ Active Transportation

Percentage of People Who Bike to Work in Merced



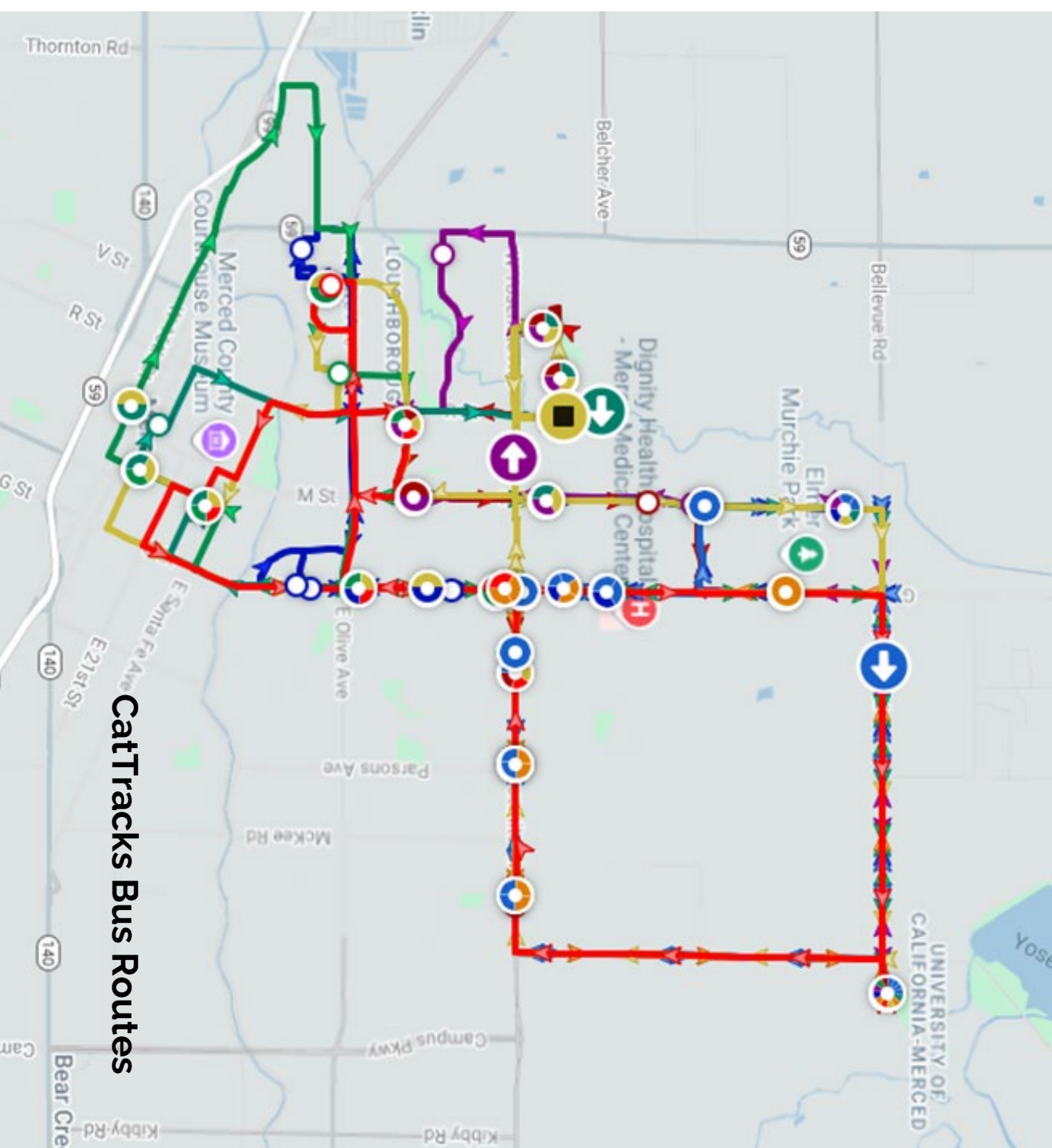
Bicycle Network



4. Mobility

■ Public Transit Services

- MTA “The Bus”
- CatTracks
- Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS)
- Intercity Bus Routes
 - FlixBus
 - VIA Charter lines
 - Greyhound
 - Amtrak Thruway Buses

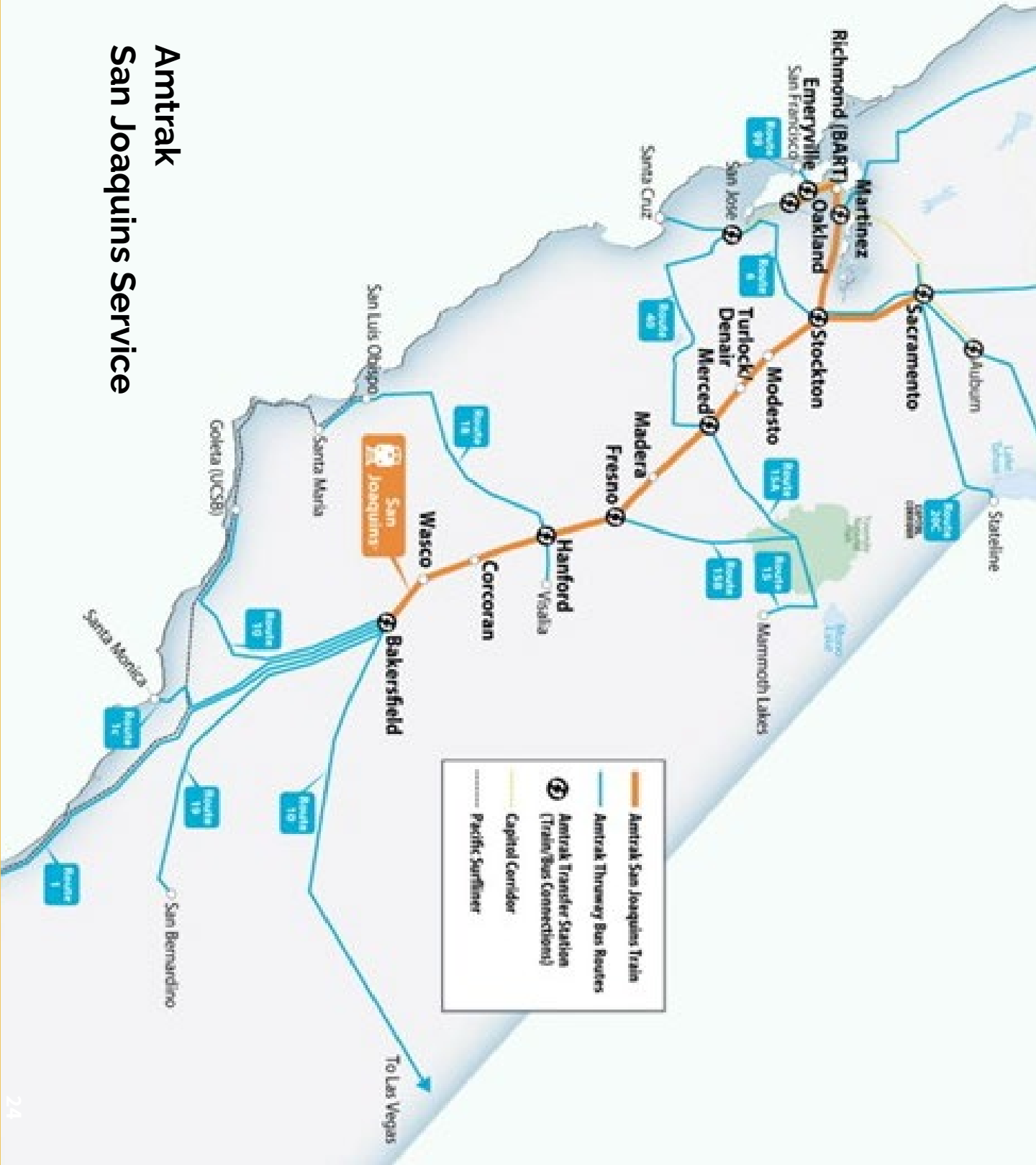


CatTracks Bus Routes

4. Mobility

- Passenger Rail

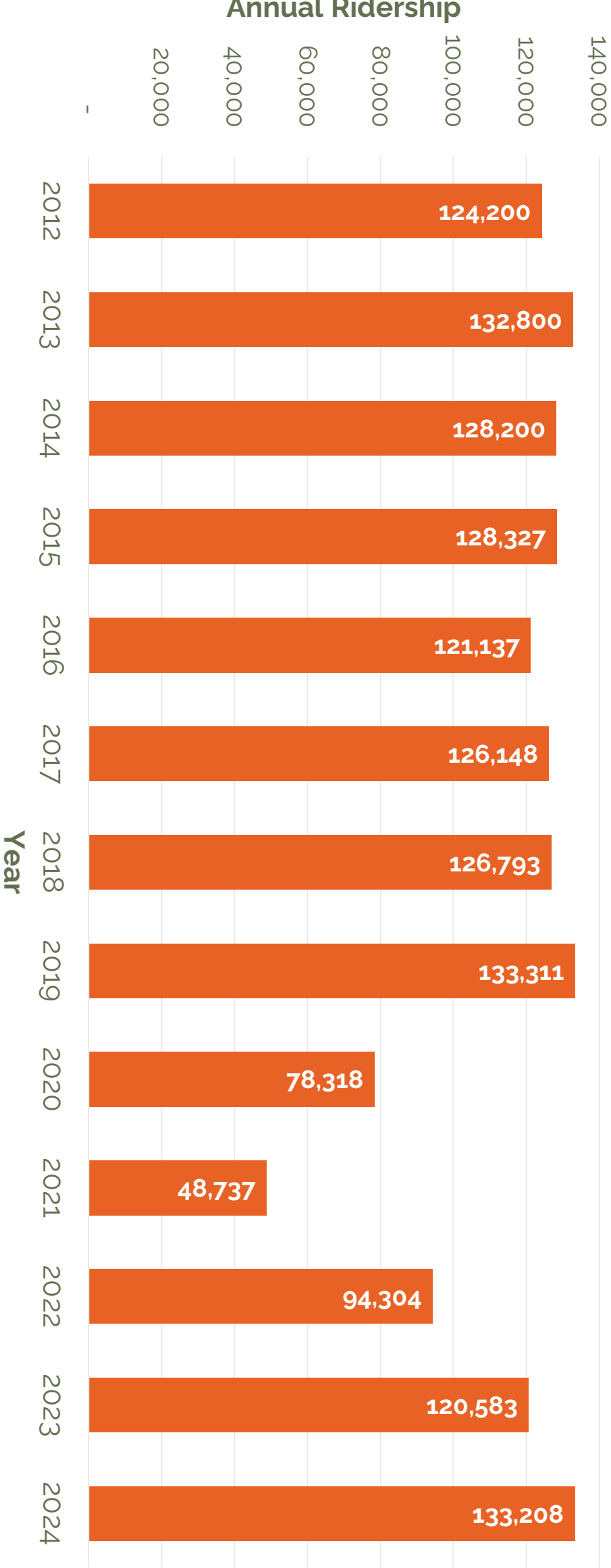
- Amtrak



Amtrak
San Joaquins Service

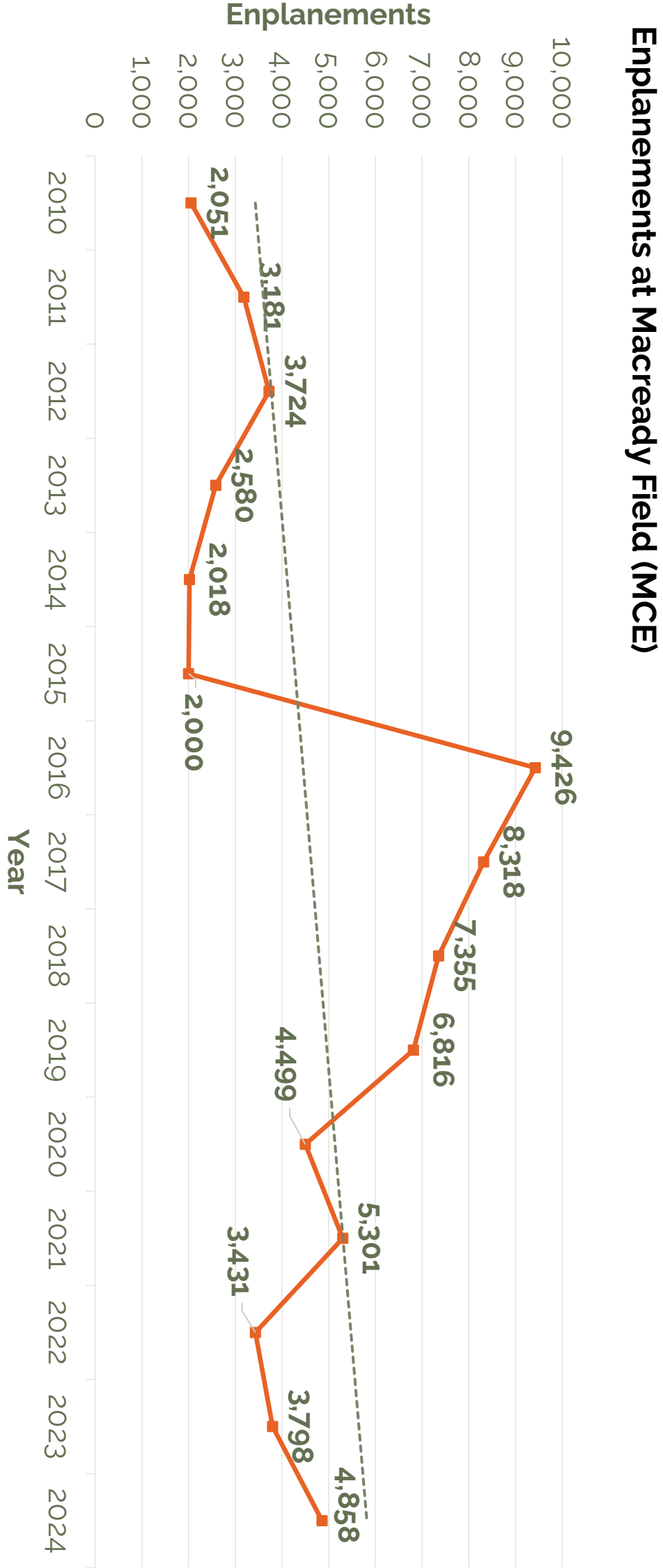
4. Mobility

Amtrak Annual Ridership Using the Merced Station



4. Mobility

- **Aviation Facilities:** **MACREADY FIELD (MCE, City):** **CASTLE AIRPORT (MER, County)**



5. Market and Economic Conditions



5. Market and Economic Conditions

Comparative Market Analysis

- **Age and Housing Composition**

- Merced has a young population with 45 percent of residents under age 25, compared to 36 percent in Modesto and 37 percent in Stockton.

- **Commute and Work Behavior**

- Merced has the shortest mean travel time to work (~26 minutes) when compared to Modesto and Stockton.

- **Labor Market Conditions**

- The unemployment rate in Merced is ~12 percent, higher than Modesto and Stockton.

5. Market and Economic Conditions

Industry and Occupation Profile

- Merced has a higher concentration of employment in:

Education, healthcare, and social assistance (~25 percent), above both Modesto (~23 percent) and Stockton (~22 percent).

Government, at 21 percent, compared to 15 percent in Modesto and ~15 percent in Stockton.

Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (15 percent) higher than Modesto (~11 percent) and Stockton (~12 percent).

5. Market and Economic Conditions

Retail Sales and Economic Activity

- From 2015 to 2024, Merced's taxable retail sales increased by 37 percent, below both the county and state growth rates.
- Taxable sales per capita in 2024 are lower than in Modesto, Stockton, Merced County, San Joaquin County, and Stanislaus County.
- Retail sales performance is especially weak in categories such as motor vehicle and parts dealers and general merchandise stores, relative to state and cities of Modesto and Stockton.

5. Market and Economic Conditions

Commercial Real Estate Market Overview

- **Retail Market:** Vacancy increased to ~6 percent in Q2 2025 (from ~5 percent the prior year); net absorption was negative for the second consecutive year.
- **Office Market:** Vacancy remains low at ~2 percent, though net absorption turned negative in the latest period.
- **Industrial Market:** Vacancy rose from 14~ percent to ~16 percent, with continued negative net absorption and modest rent increases.

5. Market and Economic Conditions

- Market Forecasts

Potential Demand for New Development

Land Use Type	Existing Development (square feet)	Forecast Scenario (2025-2045)	
		Baseline	Aggressive
Office	2,455,663	+195,000	+250,000
Retail	5,903,638	+700,000	+700,000
Industrial	5,572,961	+550,000	+735,000
Residential – SF (units)	19,292	+7,237	+7,237
Residential – MF (units)	8,607	+3,930	+3,930
Hospitality (rooms)	1,110	TBD	TBD

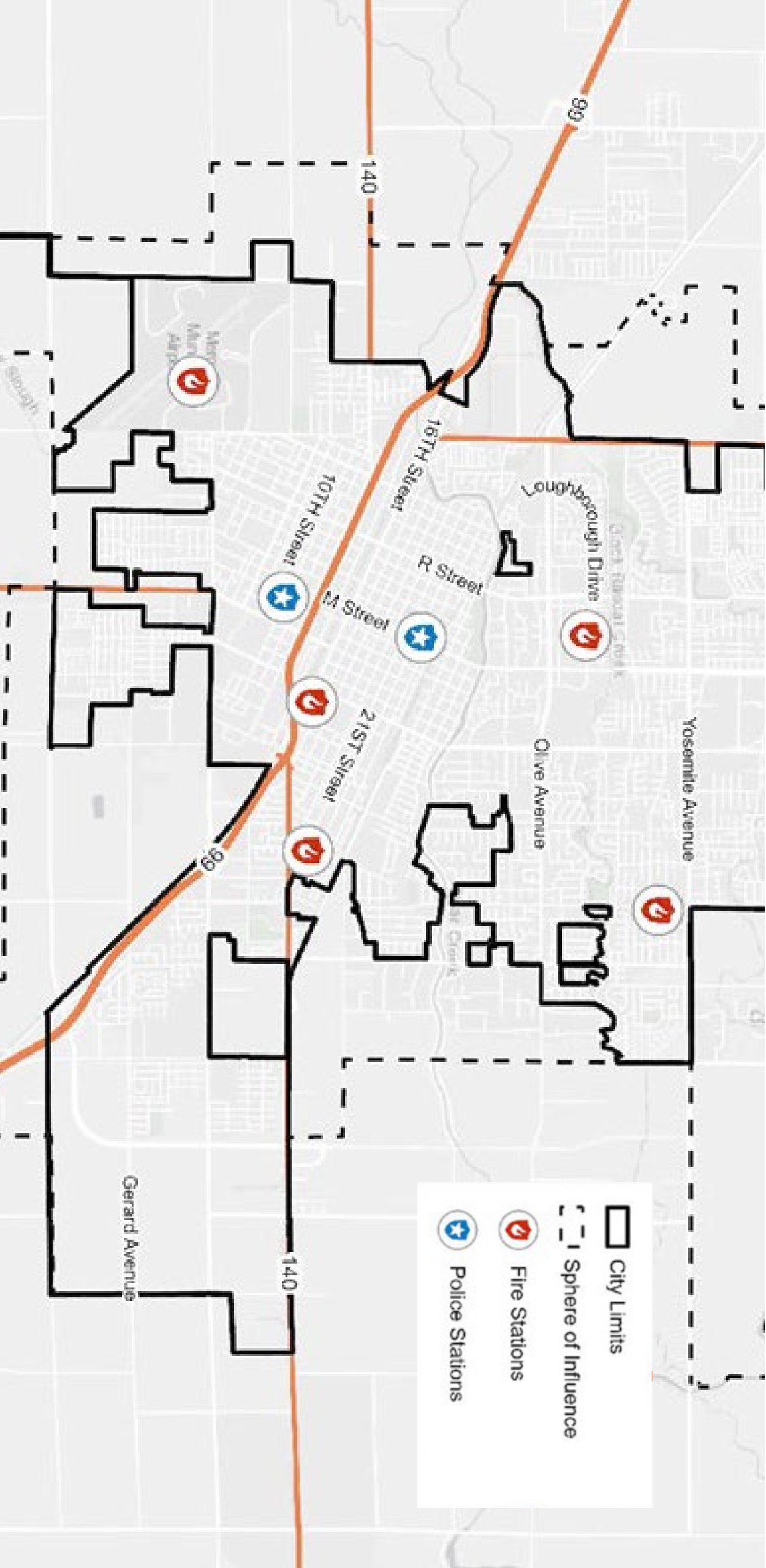
BASELINE SCENARIO

Assumes continuation of existing development trends.

AGGRESSIVE SCENARIO

Assumes increased demand for industrial and office uses.

6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure



6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure

■ Water Supply and Delivery

- In 2020, the City supplied 20,076 AF of potable water and 4,050 AF of recycled water.
- Potable water demands are projected to increase to 31,825 AF by 2040 due to population increases, including the UC Merced population.
- The City's water supply is projected to sufficiently meet expected demands through 2040 assuming:
 - The installation of additional groundwater wells and
 - Construction of a 10 million gallon per day (mgd) surface water treatment plant by Merced Irrigation District by 2030

6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Merced Police Department

Personnel:

98 sworn

46 non-sworn

Operate from two stations in Merced

FIRE PROTECTION

Merced Fire Department

Service Area: 23 miles

85 sworn personnel

5 stations, 7 engines, 1 truck, 1 ambulance



Merced Police Department

Photo Credit: Merced Police Department

6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure

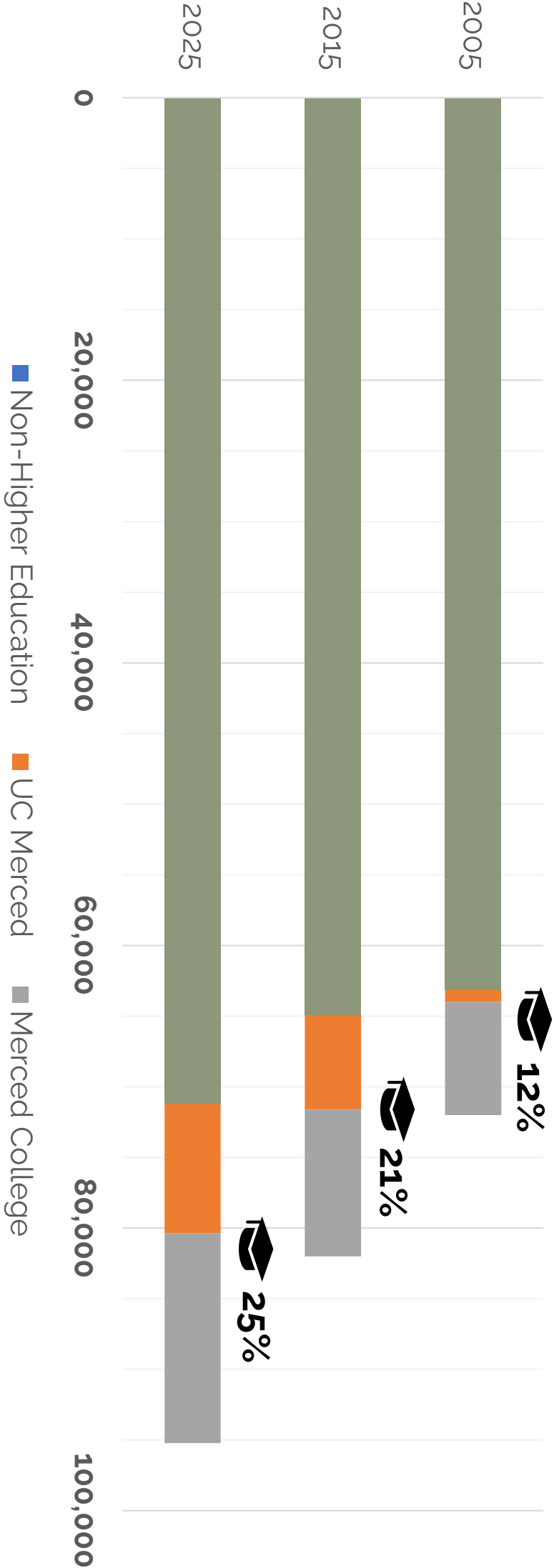
■ Higher Education

- *UC Merced:*
 - Top-100 research university and the fastest-growing public university in the nation
 - On the cutting edge of sustainability in campus construction and design,
 - Supports high achieving and dedicated students from the underserved Central Valley and throughout California.
- *Merced College*
 - Enrollment: 11,839 students for the 2023/2024 school year.
 - About 41 percent of students are full-time
 - The most common areas of study are liberal arts and sciences, agricultural mechanics and equipment, and automobile mechanics technology

6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure

- Higher Education

Higher Education Population Over Time



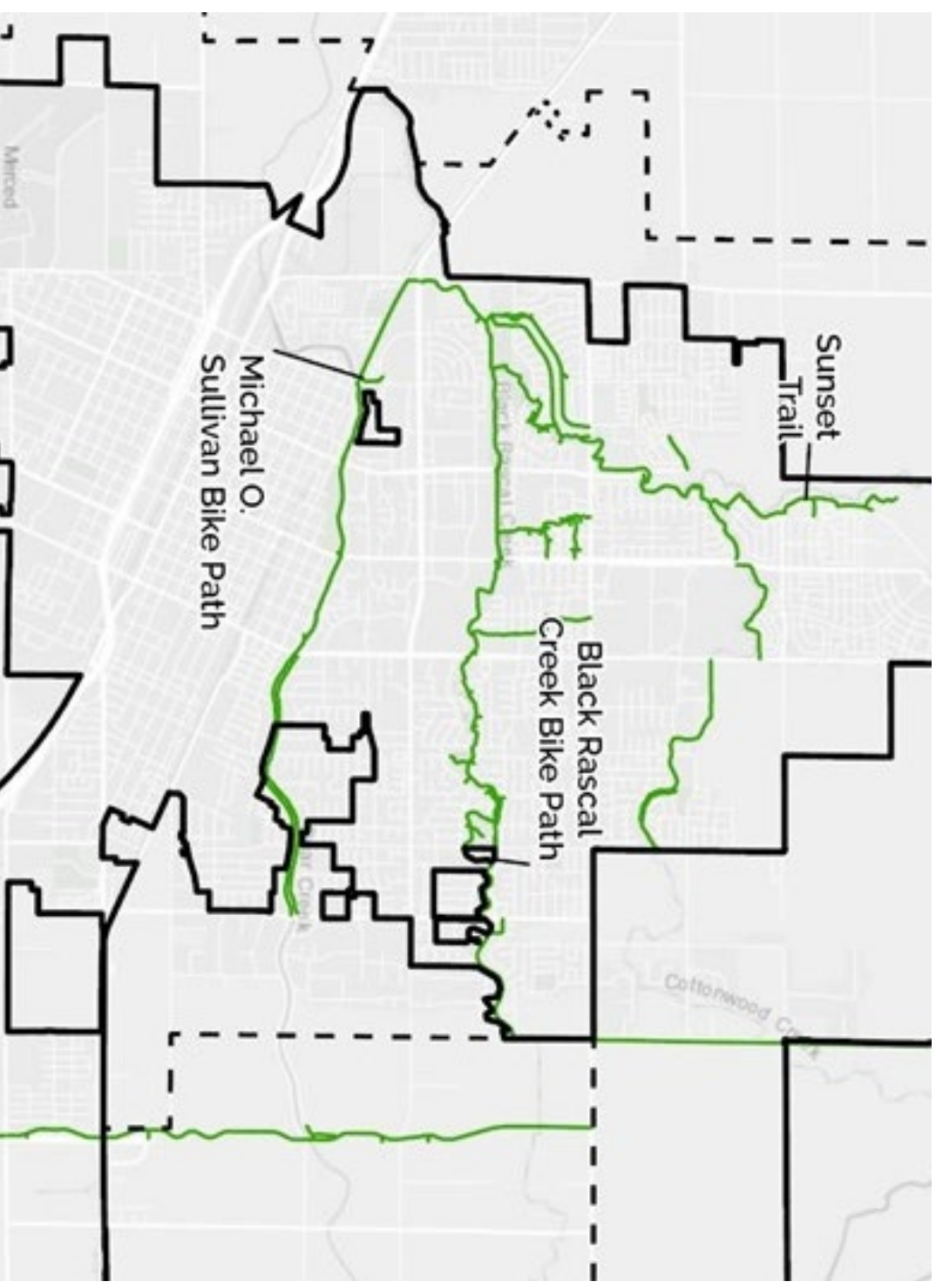
7. Open Space, Parks, and Recreation



7. Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

■ Trails

- Sunset Trail
- Michael O. Sullivan Bike Path
- Black Rascal Creek Bike Path



7. Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

■ Parks

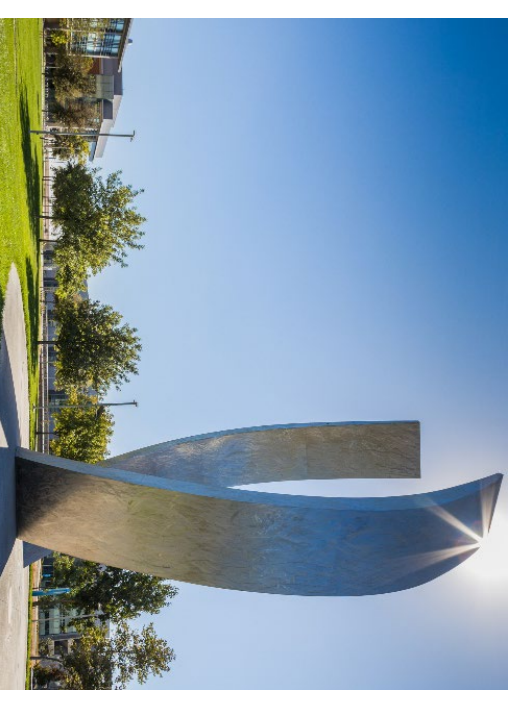
- 17 Mini-parks
- 14 Neighborhood parks
- 4 Community parks
- 3 Regional parks



7. Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

■ Public Art

- Murals
- Painted utility boxes
- Gateway monuments
- Sculptures



7. Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

- Programming and Activities

Applegate Park Zoo
Senior Community Center
Youth and adult sports
Summer Camp
Classes



8. Air Quality



8. Air Quality

- Air Pollutants of Concern

Ozone (O₃)

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)

Respirable and
fine particulate matter
(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

Lead

Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂)

Reactive organic gases (ROG) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are considered ozone precursors

8. Air Quality

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) Attainment Status

Pollutant and Averaging Time		Designation/Classification	
		State Standards	Federal Standards
Ozone (1-hour)	Non-attainment/Severe		Revoked ^a
Ozone (8-hour)			Non-attainment/Extreme
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Attainment/Unclassified		Unclassified/Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	Attainment		Unclassified/Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide (SO ₂)	Attainment		Unclassified/Attainment
Respirable Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)	Non-attainment		Attainment
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	Non-attainment		Non-attainment

Vulnerable Communities

- Merced includes several census tracts with CalEnviroScreen scores near 70 to 80, with some above 90, qualifying them as disadvantaged communities.
- Indicators for these communities generally contribute the most to their high percentile scoring experienced citywide

CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Percentile Scores Citywide Summary

Indicator		Percentile Score
Exposure		
Ozone		73
PM _{2.5}		88
Children's Lead Risk from Housing		66
Diesel Particular Matter		61
Drinking Water Contaminants		66
Pesticide Use		38
Toxic Releases from Facilities		13
Traffic Density		44
Sensitive Population		
Asthma		93
Cardiovascular Disease		98
Low Birth Weight Infants		63
Environmental Effects		
Educational Attainment		77
Housing Burden		70
Linguistic Isolation		61
Poverty		87
Unemployment		88

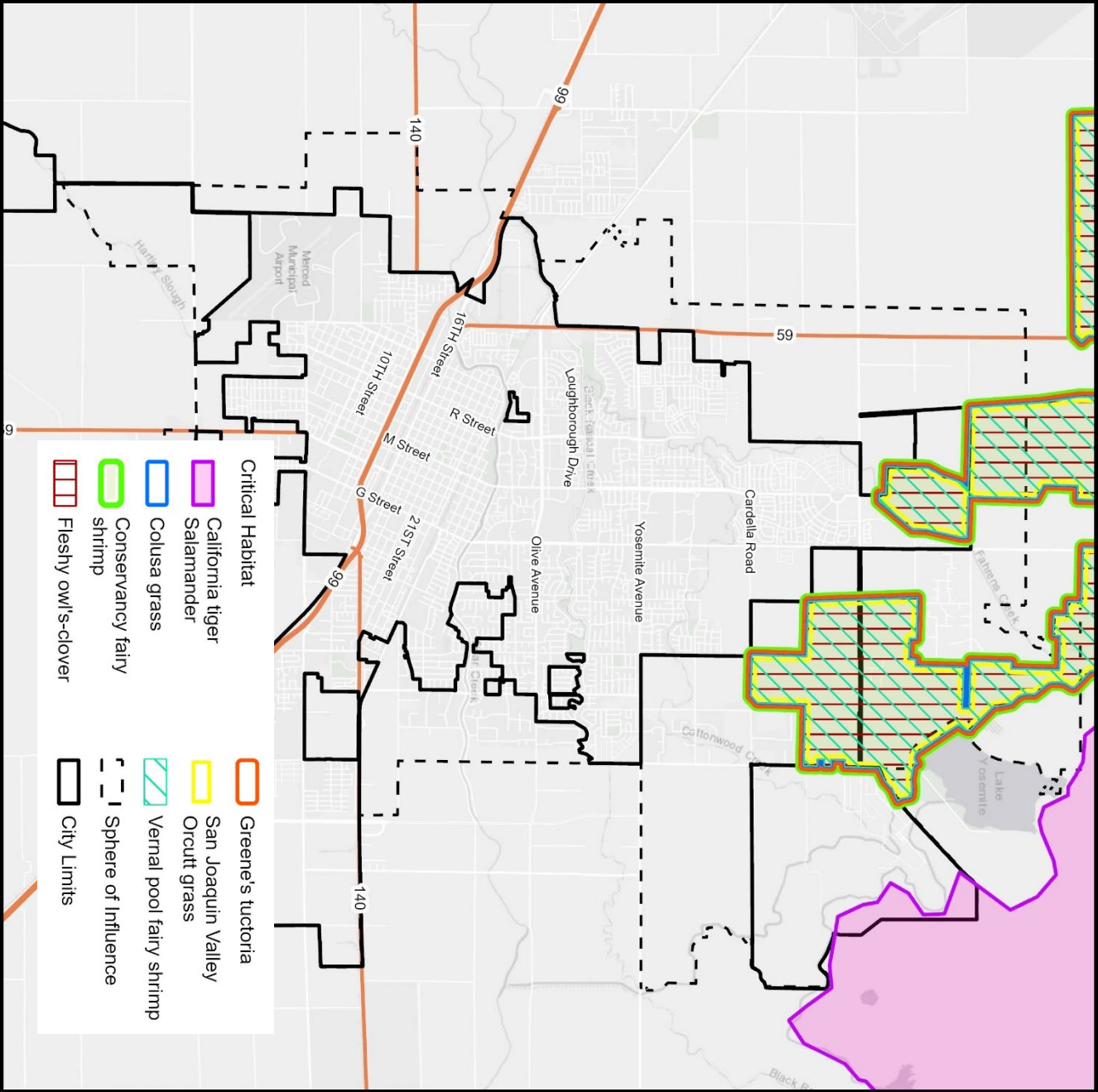
9. Environment



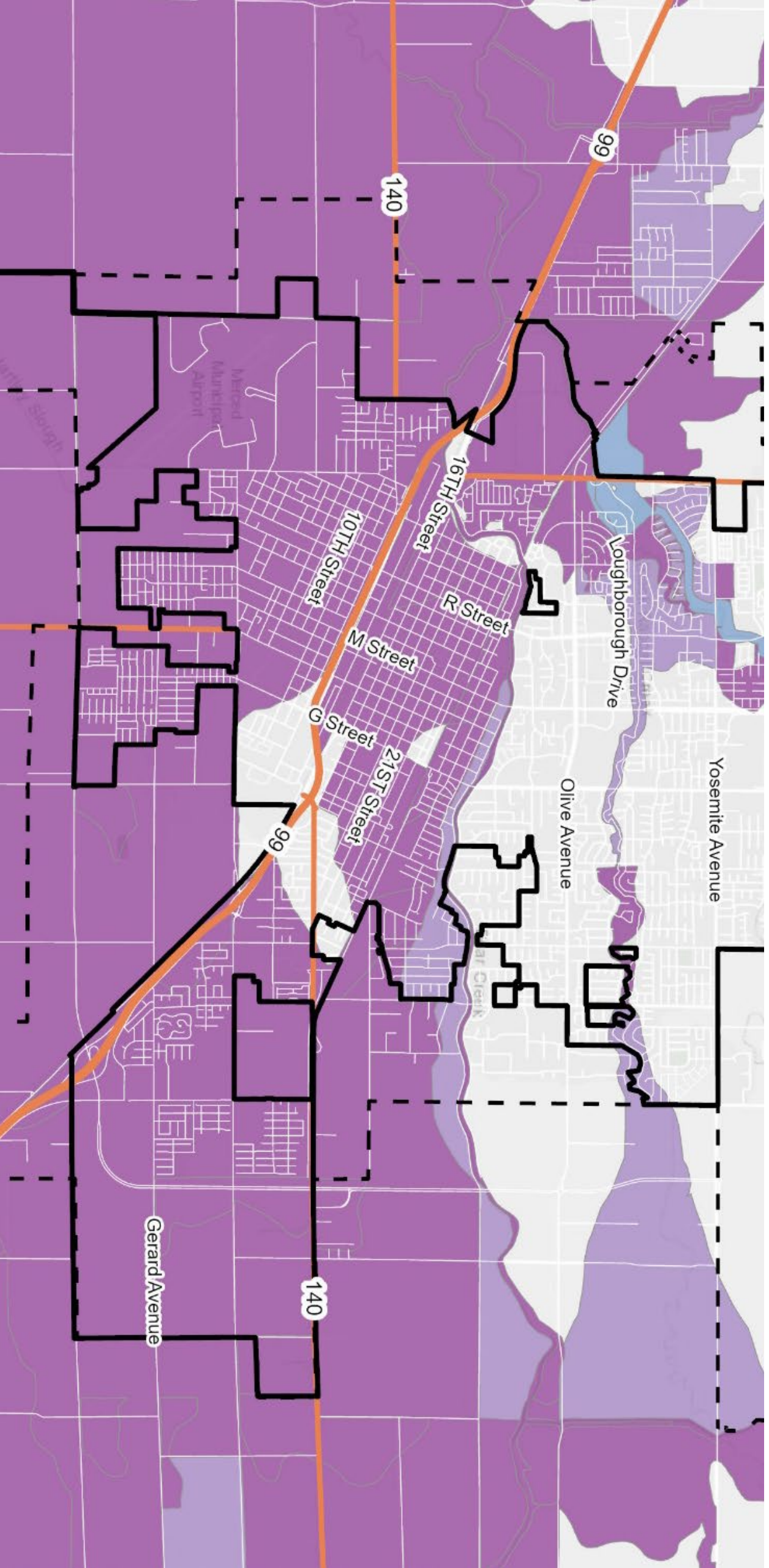
9. Environment

- **Water Resources**
- **Biological Resources**
 - Threatened, endangered, and special-status plants and wildlife
 - Sensitive habitats
- **Cultural Resources**
 - Historic sites
 - Tribal and cultural resources
- **Energy, Soil, and Mineral Resources**

Critical Habitats



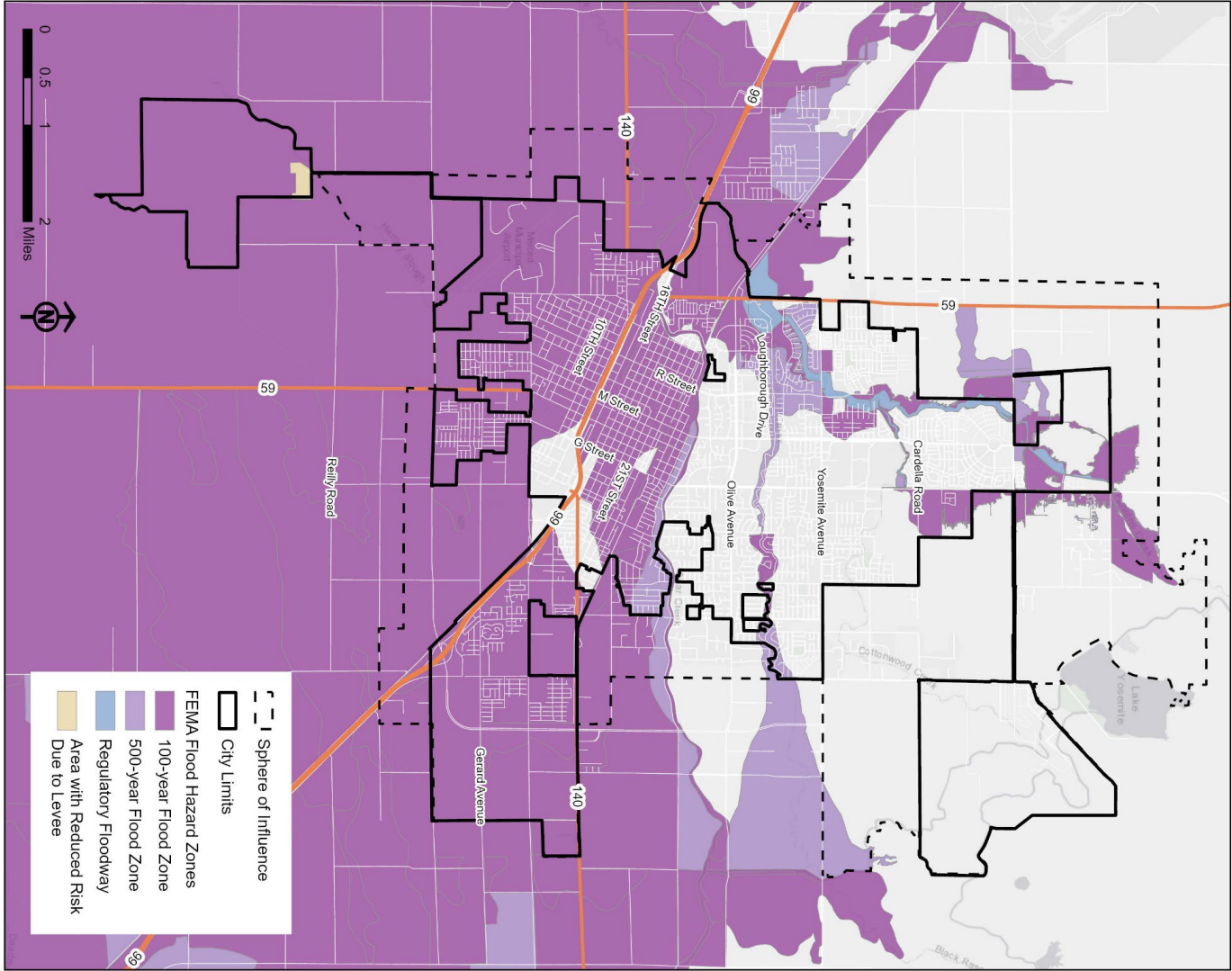
10. Safety



10. Safety

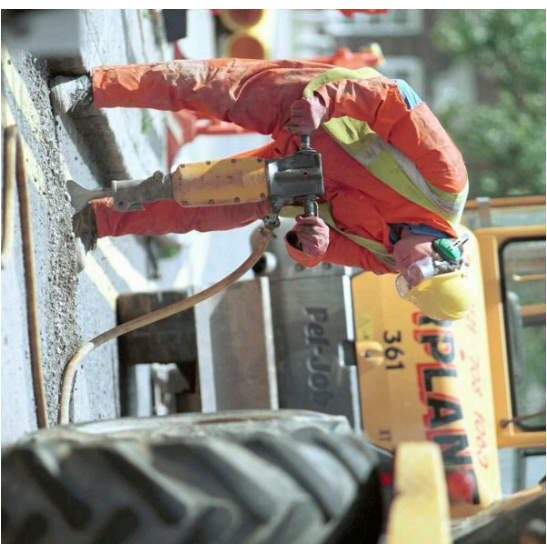
- **Geologic and Seismic Hazards**
- **Fire Risks**
- **Climate Change**
- **Drought**
- **Extreme Heat**
- **Flooding**
 - Most of the southern portion of the city is within the 100-year flood zone

FEMA Flood Zones

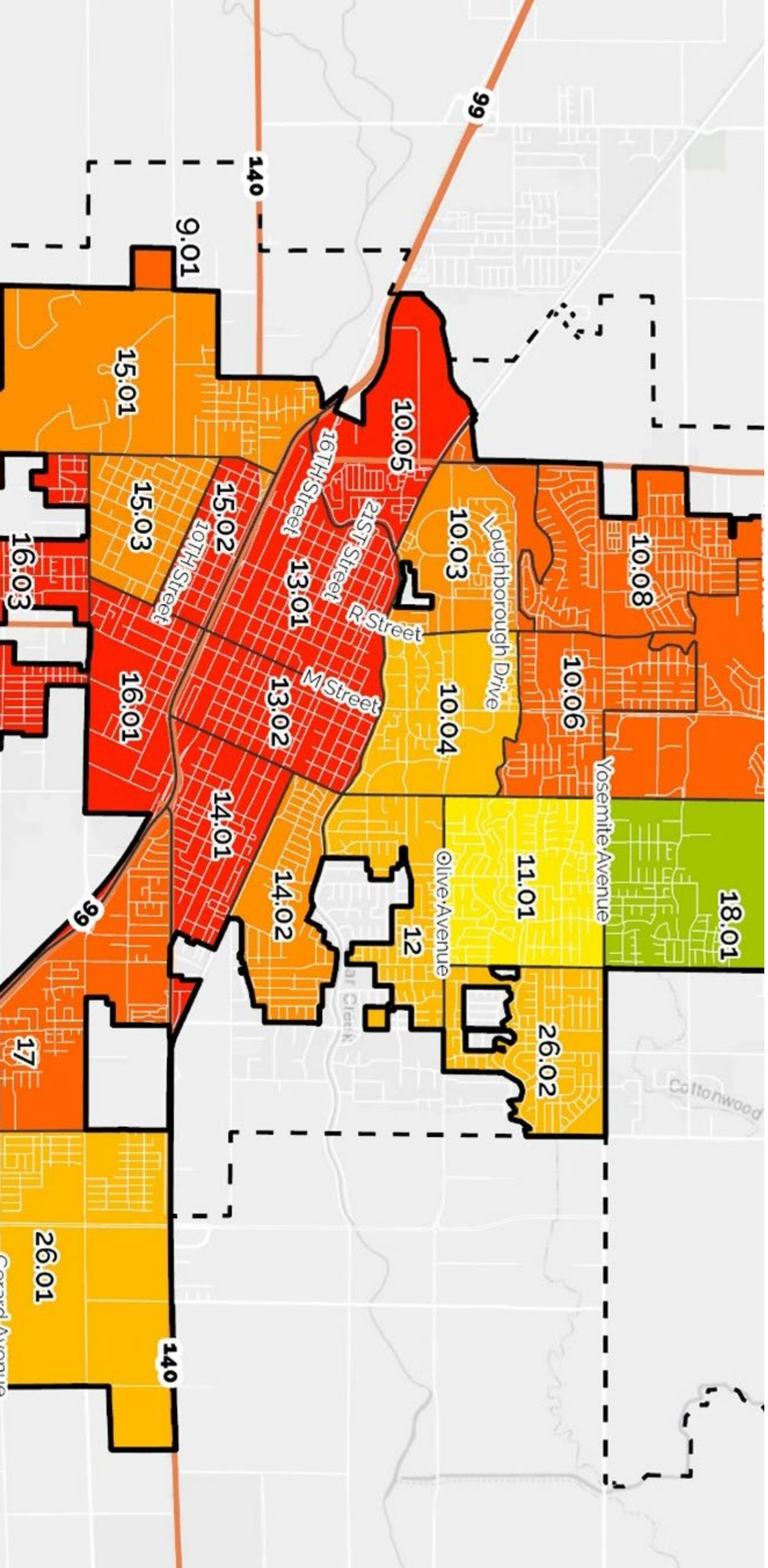


10. Safety

- **Noise**
- **Hazardous Materials**
- **Aviation Hazards**
- **Crime and Crime Prevention**
 - Crimes against people have increased in total since 2014, though murders are down by 50%.
 - The total number of crimes against property is generally the same as in 2014, however, arsons have doubled.



11. Environmental Justice



11. Environmental Justice

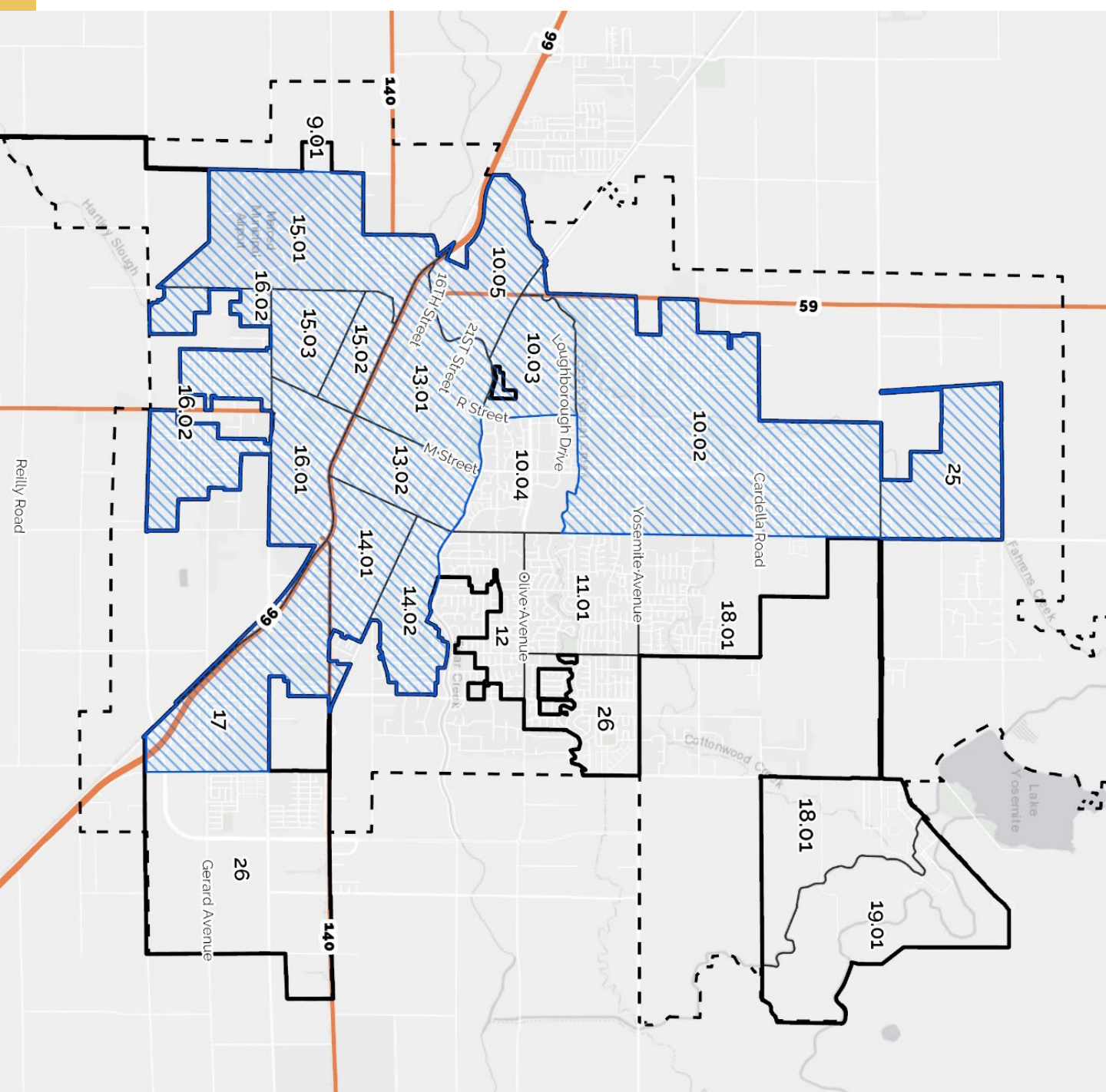
■ What is Environmental Justice?

- Communities with disproportionately lower incomes, lower levels of education, and higher proportions of minority residents often bear a disproportionately large burden of exposure to environmental hazards and health risks.
- These conditions can often be traced back to a variety of factors, including underinvestment, inequitable land use and zoning practices, and fewer opportunities for public engagement.
- ***Environmental justice seeks to minimize the effects of these hazards*** for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level, ***while improving access*** to healthy foods, clean environments, safe housing, and accessible parks and recreational facilities.

11. Environmental Justice

- There are 14 census tracts in the city that fall within the top 25 percent of overall CalEnviroScreen 4.0 scores
- These 14 census tracts also have percentile scores within the top 25 percent of Statewide EJScreen environmental indicator scores.

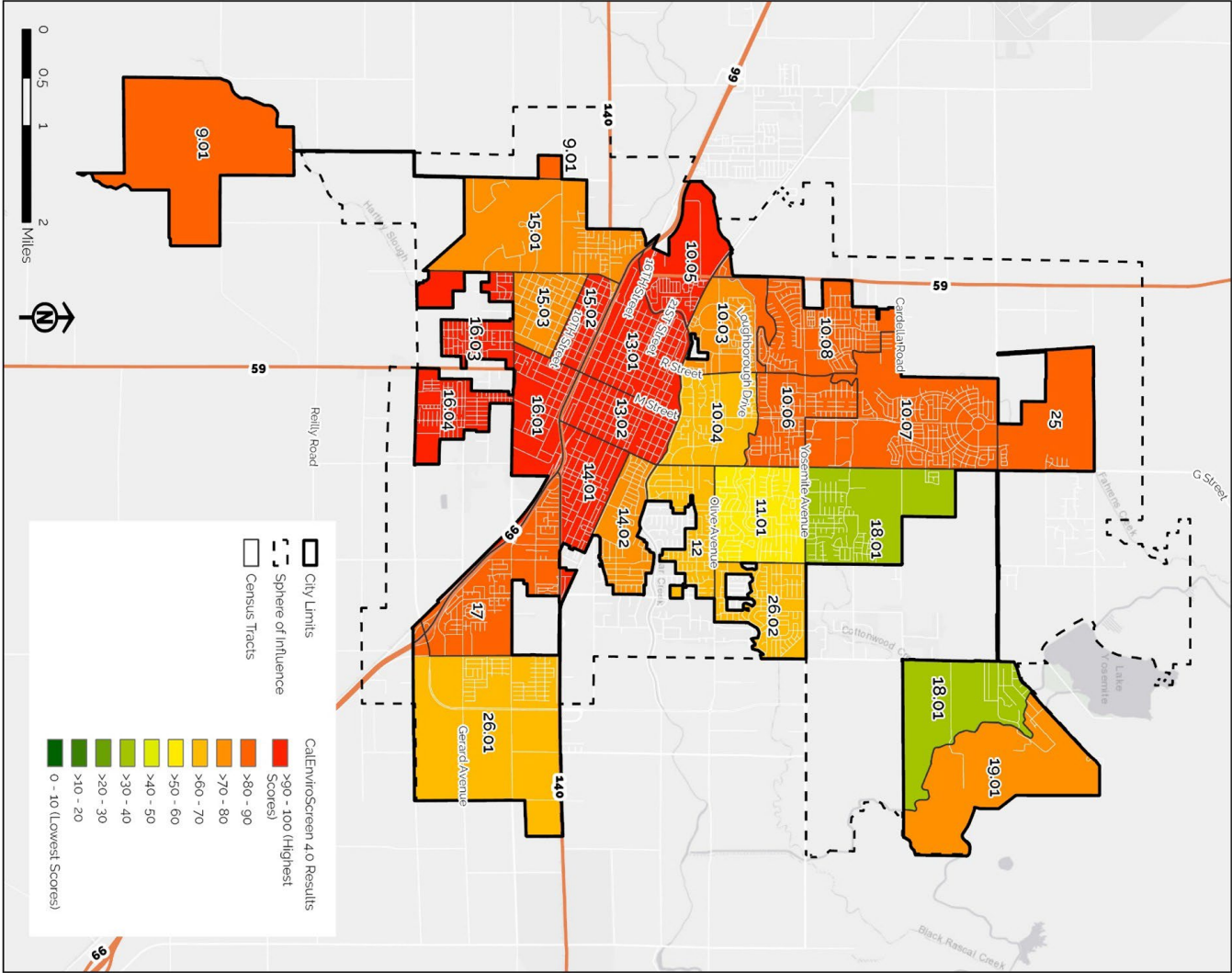
CalEnviroScreen 4.0: Disadvantaged Communities



11. Environmental Justice

CalEnviroScreen 4.0: Merced Environmental Justice Communities

Census Tract (2010)	Census Tract (2020)	CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Result
6047001302 (13.02)	No change	98.2
6047001301 (13.01)	No change	98.2
6047001601 (16.01)	No change	96.9
6047001005 (10.05)	No change	94.9
6047001502 (15.02)	No change	93.8
6047001401 (14.01)	No change	92.5
6047001602 (16.02)	6047001603 (16.03) 6047001604 (16.04)	92.0
6047001700 (17)	No change	82.1
6047002500 (25)	No change	80.8
6047001002 (10.02)	6047001006 (10.06)	80.4
	6047001007 (10.07)	
	6047001008 (10.08)	
6047001503 (15.03)	No change	79.5
6047001501 (15.01)	No change	77.2
6047001402 (14.02)	No change	76.9
6047001003 (10.03)	No change	75.9



11. Environmental Justice

City edges

- **Pesticide use:** higher exposure risk in census tracts near the edges of the city.

Central Portions of the City

- **Traffic proximity:** higher exposure risk near freeways in the central portions of the city.
- **Lead Exposure:** highest in older homes, generally concentrated in the center of the city.
- **Language Isolation:** highest in central portions of the city

Southern and Central Portions of the City

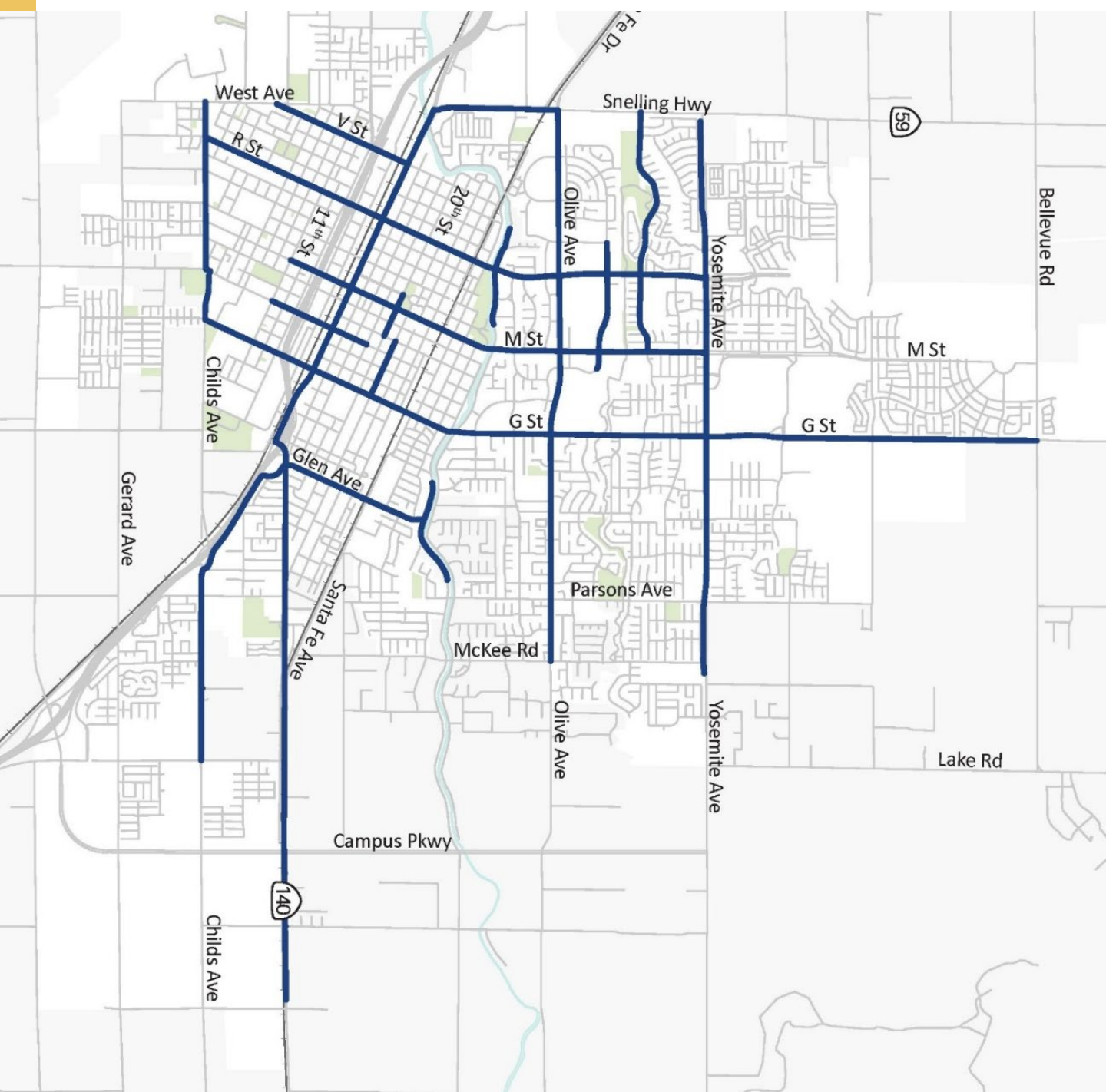
- **Cost burden:** many low-income households in Merced are housing cost burdened, particularly those living in census tracts in the central and southern portions of the city

11. Environmental Justice

■ Local Roadway Safety

- The vast majority of collisions in Merced occur within disadvantaged areas, including 93 percent of all injury collisions and 90 percent of all Killed or Severely Injured (KSI) collisions.

High Injury Network





NEXT STEPS

Critical Upcoming Dates

- **Community Workshop #1**
 - General Plan and Downtown Station Area Plan
 - Sam Pipes Room, City Hall
 - Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 6pm
- **CAFG Meeting #3 | Downtown Station Area Plan Alternatives**
 - City Council Chambers
 - Monday, November 10, 2025, at 6pm
- **CAFG Meeting #4 | Assets, Issues, and Opportunities**
 - City Council Chambers
 - Wednesday January 28, 2026, at 6pm
- **CAFG Meeting #5 | Draft Vision and Guiding Principles**
 - February 2026 (date TBD)