

General Plan Policies and Implementing Actions and Annexation Criteria

Policy UE-1.4

Continue Joint Planning Efforts on the UC Merced Campus and University Community Plans.

The University Community Plan area is planned as an urban area requiring urban services. Consideration has been given to making this area part of the incorporated City of Merced. Cooperative planning efforts will be necessary to ensure the effective development of this area for all interested and affected parties.

Implementing Actions:

1.4.a Incorporate the UC Merced campus area as part of the City's SUDP/Sphere of Influence and begin planning for the eventual annexation of the Campus.

This designation within the SUDP/SOI would facilitate the eventual incorporation of the Campus into the City. The City should begin the process of planning for the eventual annexation of the Campus to the City, including evaluating various corridors for possible annexation in order to bridge the gap between the current City limits and the Campus boundary. Planning of the land uses along those corridors should also begin as well, including possible locations for research and development parks.

1.4.b Working in cooperation with the County, implement the following policy statement from City Council Resolution #2006-89 regarding the University Community Plan Area.

MERCED CITY COUNCIL: UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY POLICY STATEMENT

The City Council establishes the following as the City of Merced's position regarding the development of the University community.

Long-term Land Use and Governance

The University Community should be incorporated into the City of Merced, and should not be part of the unincorporated County, or a separate City.

- It is in the public interest that the University Community's development not result in the creation of a new city or other jurisdiction.

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- Multiplication of jurisdictions can lead to conflicts, which should be avoided. A separate city on Merced's border is inherently undesirable.
- The University Community is expected to develop at an urban density. Merced County does not currently provide urban services. The City is already serving the University of California campus, and it is logical for the City to serve the adjacent area as well.
- No separate wastewater treatment plant should be allowed or constructed in the area, given the risks to the City's groundwater supply that could result, and competition for qualified licensed operators. This statement does not, however, preclude consideration of innovative methods of wastewater treatment for the area which are reasonably viable from an economic perspective.
- The University Community should be developed with the use of annexation agreements and phased annexations, not through the creation of a County services district, either as an interim or permanent measure.

Phasing of Development and Services

The City of Merced is willing to provide interim sewer and water services from existing sewer and water lines along Bellevue Road that serve the University campus, provided that certain conditions are met:

- Interim services to the University Community require compliance with environmental law and permitting, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo).
- Prior to providing interim services, the City must receive an acceptable plan for long term service provision, enforceable commitment for annexation, and financial planning and commitments necessary to fund long term services.
- The City should encourage annexation along the Bellevue Corridor to provide contiguity between the University Community and the City of Merced.

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- The Bellevue corridor is expected to become a major regional transportation arterial. Bellevue Road also contains sewer and water lines which have been extended from the City to the University of California campus. The western half of the Corridor, from G Street to Golf Road, is already within Merced's SUDP, and annexation proposals are pending. East of Golf Road, the area along Bellevue Road is held in large tracts by a few land owners, and is mostly undeveloped. It is realistic to expect development proposals in this area in the near term.
- Phasing of the University Community's development should provide for logical extension of urban services.
- The Merced County "Rural Residential Center" bounded by Lake Road, Cardella Road, Yosemite Avenue, and Golf Road (extended) should be annexed into the City of Merced as well. However, this area, which is already developed to a large extent, should be allowed to retain its rural character, with a special plan Designation to be worked out through the General Plan update process.

Planning Processes

The City accepts the University Community Plan adopted by Merced County on December 21, 2004 as a general conceptual framework for the planning of the University Community.

- That existing plan can be used as foundational work for further planning for the area, with the City as lead agency in the planning process.
- If a special planning process or framework is used for the development of the University Community, then the costs of that planning process shall be borne by applicants and developers, not by Merced residents.
- The City should revise all of its various planning documents to accommodate the incorporation of the University Community into the City of Merced. These include not only the General Plan, but also plans for wastewater treatment, water, storm drainage, parks, fire protection, and other services.

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<i>Policy UE-1.3</i>	
<i>Control the Annexation, Timing, Density, and Location of New Land Uses Within the City's Urban Expansion Boundaries.</i>	
<i>Implementing Actions:</i>	
1.3.g	<p>Evaluate future annexation requests against the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Is the area contiguous to the current City limits and within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI)? Do the annexed lands form a logical and efficient City limit and include older areas where appropriate to minimize the formation of unincorporated peninsulas? b) Is the proposed development consistent with the land use classifications on the General Plan Land Use Diagram (Figure 3.1)? c) Can the proposed development be served by the City water, sewer, storm drainage, fire and police protection, parks, and street systems to meet acceptable standards and service levels without requiring improvements and additional costs to the City beyond which the developer will consent to provide or mitigate? d) Will this annexation result in the premature conversion of prime agricultural land as defined on the Important Farmland Map of the State Mapping and Monitoring Program? If so, are there alternative locations where this development could take place without converting prime soils? e) Will a non-agricultural use create conflict with adjacent or nearby agricultural uses? If so, how can these conflicts be mitigated? f) Does annexation of the area help the City reach one of the following goals? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Does annexation of the area bring the City closer to annexation of the UC Merced campus and University Community? 2) Does the area contain significant amounts of job-generating land uses, such as industrial, commercial, office, and business/research & development parks? 3) Does the project provide key infrastructure facilities or other desirable amenities, such as the extension of major roads, utility trunk lines, parks and recreational facilities, etc.?

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Criteria “a”--Is the area contiguous to the Current City Limits and within the City’s Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI)? Do the annexed lands form a logical and efficient City limit and include older areas where appropriate to minimize the formation of unincorporated peninsulas?

Evaluation

Because of the terms of AB 3312 (see Finding C), the City is allowed to annex the UC Merced Campus along a roadway strip. The Bellevue Road right-of-way will be annexed from the current City Limits at G Street for approximately 2 miles to Lake Road to connect to the UC Campus Main Campus and Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) boundary.

Criteria “b”--Is the proposed development consistent with the land use classification on the General Plan Land Use Diagram (Figure 3.1)?

Evaluation

The UC Merced Campus LRDP area is designated on the General Plan Land Use Diagram as “School”. The proposed rezoning of “Public Facility” (P-F) is consistent with that designation.

Criteria “c”--Can the proposed development be served by the City water, sewer, storm drainage, fire and police protection, parks, and street systems to meet acceptable standards and service levels without requiring improvements and additional costs to the City beyond which the developer will consent to provide or mitigate?

Evaluation

The City would be able to provide services to the annexation area as spelled out in the Urban Services Agreement from 2003. See Finding C for further details.

Criteria “d”--Will this annexation result in the premature conversion of prime agricultural land as defined in the Important Farmland Map of the State Mapping and Monitoring Program? If so, are there alternative locations where this development could take place without converting prime soils?

Evaluation

As identified on the most recent data provided by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, the annexation area contains area of land that is considered Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Farmland of Local Importance, Urban and Built-Up Land, and Grazing Land. As noted in the Environmental Document at Attachment D of Planning

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Commission Staff Report #23-102, the conversion of this farmland was evaluated in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan EIR*. The EIR included a mitigation measure (MM #3.2-1) that among other things, requires the City to protect agricultural land by establishing conservation easements. UC Merced has placed enough Important Farmland under conservation easements to compensate for the conversion of Important Farmland to campus uses. Therefore, any impacts to the Important Farmland within the annexation area is off-set by the conservation easements.

Criteria “e”--Will a non-agricultural use create conflict with adjacent or nearby agricultural uses? If so, how can these conflicts be mitigated?

Evaluation

The UC Campus would not conflict with any nearby agricultural uses. As discussed in the environmental document at Attachment D of Planning Commission Staff Report #23-102, the area proposed for annexation is within the 8,758 acres of agricultural land where potential impacts due to land use conflicts were disclosed in the adopted GP PEIR. The area north and east of the UC Merced campus outside of the SUDP/SOI evaluated in the GP PEIR is within an area zoned as Exclusive Agricultural (A-2) by Merced County (Merced County n.d.). This includes Lake Yosemite and Lake Yosemite Regional Park managed by Merced County and the Merced Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve established by UC Merced. Due to existing uses and land use restrictions, these areas would not convert to nonagricultural uses as a result of development or annexation of UC Merced. The agricultural land to the southeast would be buffered from the developed portion of the university by passive open space.

Criteria “f”--Does the annexation area help the City reach one of the following goals?

- 1) *Does annexation of the area bring the City closer to annexation of the UC Merced campus and University Community?*
- 2) *Does the area contain significant amounts of job-generating land uses, such as industrial, commercial, office, and business/research and development parks?*
- 3) *Does the project provide key infrastructure facilities or other desirable amenities such as the extension of major roads, utility trunk lines, parks and recreational facilities, etc.?*

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Evaluation

- 1) The proposed annexation would meet this criterion by bringing the UC Merced campus into the City Limits. It is anticipated that land within the northern portion of the University Community currently owned by the Virginia Smith Trust would annex soon after.
- 2) The UC Campus currently has over 3,000 employees. As the UC Campus grows additional jobs would be generated both on campus and throughout the region.
- 3) The development of the UC Merced Campus has involved the development of key infrastructure in the area, including the extension of water and sewer lines that currently serve the UC Campus. These lines which were installed in Bellevue Road would also serve other annexations in the area.

UC Merced is responsible for a pro-rata share of the cost to widen Bellevue Road from two lanes to four lanes. This project would happen gradually as development occurs along Bellevue Road and right-of-way is acquired.