

## **Urban Expansion General Plan Goals, Policies, and Implementing Actions**

### **Goal Area UE-1: Urban Expansion**

#### **GOALS**

- **A Compact Urban Form**
- **Preservation of Agriculturally Significant Areas**
- **Efficient Urban Expansion**

#### **POLICIES**

- UE-1.1** Designate areas for new urban development that recognize the physical characteristics and environmental constraints of the planning area.
- UE-1.2** Foster compact and efficient development patterns to maintain a compact urban form.
- UE-1.3** Control the annexation, timing, density, and location of new land uses within the City's urban expansion boundaries.
- UE-1.4** Continue joint planning efforts on the UC Merced and University Community plans.
- UE-1.5** Promote annexation of developed areas within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI) during the planning period.
- UE-1.6** Consider expansion of the City's SUDP/SOI boundary for areas within the Area of Interest when certain conditions are met.

#### ***Policy UE-1.1***

***Designate Areas For New Urban Development That Recognize the Physical Characteristics and Environmental Constraints of the Planning Area.***

#### ***Implementing Actions:***

- 1.1.a Direct development away from significant concentrations of "Prime" agricultural soils and give priority to the conversion of non-prime agricultural land if reasonable alternatives exist.
- 1.1.b Limit development and development related impacts on agricultural lands along the City's urban fringe.
- 1.1.c Incompatible urban development should not be approved which would endanger the continued operations of the Merced Regional Airport.
- 1.1.d Work with Merced County to establish policies to protect prime agricultural areas around the SUDP/Sphere of Influence, including the areas north of Highway 140 and east of the proposed Campus Parkway, from future development. This process should include consideration of:
- a) A process to implement techniques (transfer of development rights, agricultural easements, Farmland Trusts, etc.) in order to establish a limited access Campus Parkway with no adjacent urban development outside of the Merced SUDP/SOI.
  - b) Designation of an "Area of Interest (AOI)" or other process to require referral for comment to the City of any proposed development projects within the AOI boundary.
  - c) Limiting the expansion of the existing Rural Residential Centers and SUDP's into prime agricultural areas around the SUDP/Sphere of Influence.
- 1.1.e Explore techniques to preserve areas of significant agricultural soils, aircraft noise and safety zones, buffers between cities, scenic areas, flood plains, endangered species habitats, etc. from incompatible urban development.
- 1.1.f Work with Merced County and the other cities in the County to develop a County-wide agricultural land preservation policy.

***Policy UE-1.2******Foster Compact and Efficient Development Patterns to Maintain a Compact Urban Form.******Implementing Actions:***

- 1.2.a Encourage development on in-fill sites by amending the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to better accommodate such requests.
- 1.2.b Work with Merced County to ensure that existing unincorporated Rural Residential Centers in the Merced area are not expanded and no new Rural Residential Centers are established.
- 1.2.c Continue to limit the expansion of City utilities to only those areas within the established urban boundary.
- 1.2.d Promote higher residential densities within the Merced urban area.

***Policy UE-1.3******Control the Annexation, Timing, Density, and Location of New Land Uses Within the City's Urban Expansion Boundaries.******Implementing Actions:***

- 1.3.a The City should continue to require that all new urban development and annexations be contiguous to existing urban areas and have reasonable access to public services and facilities.
- 1.3.b The City should adequately plan for public improvements/services to support designated land uses for all areas as they become suitable for development and/or proposed for annexation.
- 1.3.c The City shall encourage phasing of new development.
- 1.3.d The City shall continue to utilize and refine systems to evaluate the cost of providing various municipal services to new development and/or areas proposed for annexation and establish clear policy for meeting those costs.
- 1.3.e The planning for land uses in newly developing areas should reflect a mix of land uses which will support a neighborhood, including a variety of residential densities and price ranges, neighborhood and convenience shopping facilities, job creation, and public facilities such as schools and parks.
- 1.3.f Work with the County to implement the land use provisions of the "Property Tax Sharing Agreement between the City of Merced and the County of Merced" (Section 2.3.4) and negotiate a new agreement that reflects the SUDP/Sphere of Influence (SOI) and Area of Interest (AOI).
- 1.3.g Evaluate future annexation requests against the following conditions:
  - 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 for development 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?
    - 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.?

***Policy UE-1.4******Continue Joint Planning Efforts on the UC Merced Campus and University Community Plans.******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.
- 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.

***Policy UE-1.5******Promote Annexation of Developed Areas Within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI) During the Planning Period.******Implementing Actions:***

- 1.5.a The City should continue to promote the annexation of unincorporated urban areas within the urban expansion boundaries, which cause a duplication of public services and hinder extension of City services to new development, if they are financially feasible.
- 1.5.b Review relevant City improvement and development policies to remove unnecessary obstacles to annexation.
- 1.5.c Provide assistance to residents of unincorporated areas to address public health and safety concerns of on-site water and sewer systems.
- 1.5.d Establish annexation policies and outreach program regarding the annexation of the existing Rural Residential Centers (existing development on one-acre lots)
- 1.5.e Provide information to interested unincorporated area residents on the benefits of annexation.
- 1.5.f Target the State Route 59 (South) Corridor as a priority annexation area.

***Policy UE-1.6******Consider Expansion of the City's SUDP/SOI boundary for Areas within the Area of Interest When Certain Conditions are Met.******Implementing Actions:***

- 1.6.a For areas within the City's Area of Interest (AOI), these areas can be considered for future inclusion in the City's SUDP/SOI as long as they are consistent with the criteria below:
  - a) City SUDP/SOI boundary is contiguous, and no "islands" are created;
  - b) A Community or Area Plan is approved that addresses land use, circulation, public facilities, infrastructure, and phasing of development;
  - c) The Public Facilities Financing Plan has been updated to include the area with revenue sources identified;
  - d) The property owner is committed to finance the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant & capacity is available;
  - e) New sewer trunk lines are planned and have capacity;
  - f) The developer agrees to install all off-site intervening infrastructure;
  - g) Community or Area Plans need to include adjacent areas within the SUDP/SOI that are affected by the development of Master Plans;
  - h) The inventory of vacant land within the City's SUDP/SOI has reached a certain level as determined by the City Council to ensure that development within the Area of Interest will not unduly delay development within the SUDP/SOI.
- 1.6.b Work with Merced County to define a process of dealing with properties proposed for development within the City's Area of Influence prior to being included in the City's SUDP/SOI boundary.