



Legislation Text

File #: 23-219, Version: 1

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SUBJECT: Public Hearing to Consider General Plan Amendment #22-03, Initiated by Eric Pluim on Behalf of Gateway Park Development Partners, LLC.; This Application Involves a Request to Change the General Plan Roadway Classification from Divided Arterial to Collector for a Portion of Mission Avenue from Coffee Street East to the End of the City Limits at Tower Road (Extended)

REPORT IN BRIEF

Request for City Council approval of a General Plan Amendment to amend the roadway classification from Divided Arterial to Collector in the General Plan Circulation Element for a portion of Mission Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopting **Resolution 2023-31**, A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Merced, California, approving an Addendum to the General Plan EIR (Environmental Review #22-25) and General Plan Amendment #22-03 Changing the Roadway Classification from Divided Arterial to Collector for a Portion of Mission Avenue from Coffee Street East to the End of the City Limits at Tower Road (Extended).

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve as recommended by the Planning Commission and staff; or,
2. Approve subject to modifications as conditions by City Council; or,
3. Deny; or,
4. Refer back to staff for reconsideration of specific items (to be addressed in the motion); or,
5. Continue to a future meeting (date and time to be specified in the motion).

AUTHORITY

Title 19 of the Merced Municipal Code outlines environmental review procedures and California Government Code Section 65358(a) grants authority to amend all or part of an adopted General Plan. Merced Municipal Code Section 20.80 and 20.82 outlines procedures for zone changes and General Plan Amendments.

DISCUSSION

Project Description

Gateway Park Development Partners is requesting the General Plan roadway classification for a portion of Mission Avenue be changed from Divided Arterial to Collector. The section proposed to be changed would be from Coffee Street, east to the end of the City Limits (extended) (refer to the map

at Attachment 1). This section is adjacent to the Merced Gateway Marketplace southern boundary as well as vacant land to the east zoned Business Park and Heavy Industrial as shown on the map at Attachment 1.

Section 4.3.2 of *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* provides guidance on road classifications and design standards. This section identifies different street types and classifies them by categories that reflect their importance and function.

The proposed change to the roadway classification for this portion of Mission Avenue would reduce the need for right-of-way and the improvements installed. Freeways are the highest level of roadway, with fully controlled access, high operating speeds and volumes, and highest design standards. Local streets and alleys are the lowest functional classification, with low speeds and volumes and direct access to adjacent property. Table 4.2 of the Circulation Element provides the different road classifications, amount of right-of-way needed, number of lanes provided, street intersection spaces, and parking. Below is an excerpt from this table showing the classification, the right-of-way, and the number of lanes. The full table is provided at Attachment 2)

| Road Classification | Right-of-Way | No. Of Lanes |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Expressway | 150 ft. | 4-6 |
| Major Arterial | 128 ft. | 4-6 |
| Arterial | 128 ft. | 4-6 |
| Divided Arterial | 118 ft. | 4-6 |
| Minor Arterial | 94 ft. | 2-4 |
| Major collector | 68-74 ft. | 2-4 |
| Collector | 68 ft. | 2 |
| Local | 51-62 ft. | 2 |
| Transitway | Varies | 2-6 |

Mission Avenue is currently designated as a Divided Arterial which would have a 118-foot-right-of-way with 4-6 lanes. The proposal to change the classification to a Collector would reduce the right-of-way to 74 feet which would provide two travel lanes (one in each direction), a bicycle lane, on-street parking, a park strip, and sidewalk on both sides of the street.

The need for this segment of Mission Avenue to be a Divided Arterial was diminished with the construction of Campus Parkway and the future extension of Pluim Drive from Gerard Avenue south to Mission Avenue. The construction of the Mission Avenue Interchange as part of the Campus Parkway project eliminated direct access to Hwy 99 from Mission Avenue. The portion of Mission Avenue between Coffee Street and Hwy 99 became a dead-end with the construction of the interchange. That segment of Mission Avenue was vacated by the City in 2019.

The Merced Gateway Marketplace Shopping Center Master Plan shows two driveways on Mission Avenue. There is currently one constructed with the Tractor Supply project, east of the building (refer to the Site Plan at Attachment 3). The exact location of the second driveway has not been determined but would be located between the first driveway and Pluim Drive (extended). The Merced Marketplace Shopping Center is required to construct Mission Avenue along its project frontage

[Coffee Street east to Pluim Drive (extended)]. By changing the road classification, the amount of right-of-way needed is reduced. Thus, the number of improvements required is also reduced. The width of the paved area of the road would be reduced from 36 feet to 24 feet. This reduction in paving translates to cost savings for the Merced Marketplace project.

Traffic Analysis

A traffic analysis was prepared by KD Anderson & Associates and supports the change in classification (Attachment 4). The analysis provided long-term daily traffic volumes and resulting traffic conditions under the current General Plan circulation plan. A transportation model obtained from the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) was utilized to determine the estimated traffic volume in the area. The applicable roadway classification for this segment of Mission Avenue was then determined based on the daily traffic volume and the General Plan's applicable Level of Service (LOS) thresholds.

The results of the analysis show that if the segment of Mission Avenue from Coffee Street to the City Limits at Tower Road (extended) is reduced to a 2-lane Collector, the section from Coffee Street to approximately 1,300 feet east of Pluim Drive (extended) would operate at LOS D. From this point to Tower Road (extended) would operate at LOS C. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* identifies LOS D as an acceptable level of service. Therefore, even if the classification for this segment is changed, it would still operate at a better level than is acceptable per the General Plan.

The Merced Gateway Marketplace Shopping Center is expected to have two driveway entrances from this segment of Mission Avenue. Local traffic from the immediate area could continue to use Mission Avenue, but with the extension of Pluim Drive, would also have access to Campus Parkway and Gerard Avenue without using this segment of Mission Avenue. A traffic signal would be installed at the intersection of Campus Parkway and Pluim Drive with a future phase of development within the shopping center. This will allow any traffic traveling north on Pluim Drive from Mission Avenue to have full turning movements. Currently, a four-way stop exists at the intersection of Coffee Street and Campus Parkway that allows left and right-hand turns. Campus Parkway runs parallel to this segment of Mission Avenue, therefore, the majority of traffic in this area would use Campus Parkway rather than Mission Avenue.

Improvements

If the requested change is approved, Mission Avenue would be constructed as a Collector with a 74-foot right-of-way (Attachment 5). This would include the following:

- Two 12-foot-wide travel lanes (one in each direction)
- A 7-foot-wide parking area
- A 5-foot-wide bicycle lane
- A 7.5-foot-wide park strip
- A 5-foot-wide sidewalk
- A 6-inch gap between the sidewalk and the property line

The parking area, bicycle lane, park strip, and sidewalk would ultimately be required on both the north and south side of Mission Avenue. The Merced Gateway Marketplace project is required to

install all improvements on the north side of the center line in Mission Avenue (Condition #5 of Planning Commission Resolution #4097 at Attachment 6). The improvements south of the center line of Mission Avenue would be installed when the property to the south develops.

Vacation of Right-of-Way

Currently, the City has acquired enough Mission Avenue right-of-way from the Merced Gateway Marketplace property and the Lyon's property to the east to accommodate the width of a Divided Arterial (118-foot-wide). If the classification is reduced to a collector, the City will have excess right-of-way. Therefore, Condition #6 of Planning Commission Resolution #4111 requires that the developer of the Merced Gateway Marketplace initiate a vacation application to request that the City vacate the excess right-of-way and return it to the Merced Gateway Marketplace property. The request should also include the vacation of the excess right-of-way in along the Lyon's property frontage. Condition #7 of Planning Commission Resolution #4111 requires that the property vacated along the Merced Gateway Marketplace frontage be landscaped to match the rest of the shopping center landscaping. When the Lyon's property is developed, the vacated right-of-way would be incorporated into their development plans.

As part of the vacation process, the existing Public Utilities Easements may need to be adjusted to avoid having a large easement or a gap between two easements. These details would be worked out with the Engineering Department through the vacation process (Condition #6 of Planning Commission Resolution #4111)

Planning Commission Action/Background

The Planning Commission considered a request to change the roadway classification for a smaller portion of Mission Avenue [from Coffee Street east to Pluim Drive (extended)] on January 18, 2023. At that time, the Planning Commission recommended approval to the City Council.

Prior to the City Council meeting to consider the matter, the applicant requested to revise their request to include all of Mission Avenue from Coffee Street, east to the end of the City Limits at Tower Road (extended). Therefore, on March 6, 2023, the City Council tabled the matter to allow it to go back to the Planning Commission for consideration of the revised project.

On April 5, 2023, the Planning Commission considered the revised project description to change the roadway classification for Mission Avenue from Coffee Street east to the end of the City Limits at Tower Road (extended). At the Planning Commission meeting, Eric Pluim, representing the applicant, spoke in support of the project. John Kinsey representing Merced Gateway, LLC, the property owner of the adjacent property to the east spoke in support of the project. Angel Cortez, a nearby property owner also spoke requesting additional information about the project. He was neither in support of or in opposition to the project. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the project to the City Council. Planning Commission Resolution #4111 is provided at Attachment 6. The Planning Commission staff report is provided at Attachment 7.

Environmental Review

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the project was reviewed and an Addendum to the Environmental Impact Report for the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*

SCH#2008071069 (Attachment 8) was prepared.

City Council Action

After the public hearing, staff recommends the City Council adopt the Draft Resolution at Attachment 9 approving Environmental Review #22-25 (Addendum to the General Plan EIR) and General Plan Amendment #22-03.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

The proposed changes to the roadway classification would not impact City Resources.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map
2. Table 4.2
3. Site Plan for Merced Gateway Marketplace
4. Traffic Analysis
5. City Standard ST-2 (Collector Street)
6. Planning Commission Resolution #4111
7. Planning Commission Staff Report #23-283
8. Environmental Review
9. Resolution 2023-31
10. Presentation