

LETTER AU



**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

*Agricultural Commissioner • Weights and Measures • Animal Control*

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OCT -4 2001

October 3, 2001

Robert E. Smith, Planning Director  
Merced County University Community Development Office  
3351 "M" Street, Suite 240  
Merced, CA 95348

RE: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the  
Merced County University Community Plan

As the Agricultural Commissioner of Merced County, it is my duty by state statute to promote and protect the Agricultural industry and well-being in the County and State.

To that end, I wish to make a comment for the record. It is my wish that the growth-inducing impacts and subsequent cumulative impacts on the surrounding agricultural lands from the development of the UC Merced Campus and adjacent community be considered. I also hope there will be a way to insure that there will be development limits set in perpetuity to insure that surrounding lands will be preserved for agricultural uses.

AU-1

Much time, effort, and money has been, and will continue to be expended to protect, preserve, and save wetlands and endangered species actually and potentially affected by the UC Merced campus. I believe that the preservation of agricultural lands must be given the same amount of consideration and protection.

AU-2

I recognize that this University Community Plan will generate significant discussion and comment from the Merced Community, particularly those residents and landowners who believe they will be impacted by the Plan. Many of these residents and landowners rely heavily on the county's agricultural industry for their livelihood and welfare. I request that you give a thorough and thoughtful consideration of the impacts of the Plan to these residents and landowners.

AU-3

I also request that the Community Plan incorporate additional strong measures to lessen the impact on Merced County's productive agricultural lands.

Very truly yours,

Michael J. Tanner  
Agricultural Commissioner

MJT/jn

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**COMMENT LETTER AU: MICHAEL J. TANNER  
MERCED COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE**

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**Response to Comment AU-1:**

Growth inducing impacts associated with the UCP are discussed in Volume 2 of the DEIR on page 6-1. The cumulative loss of agricultural lands due to the UCP area is discussed on page 4.2-28, in Impact 4.2-4, of the DEIR (please see also Chapter 2, Revisions to the DEIR for text changes). The decision makers will consider these effects when they act on the UCP. The support for limiting development on lands surrounding the UCP area is hereby forwarded to the decision makers for their consideration.

Please see Master Response 7 for information on the Board of Supervisors' preliminary determination regarding the feasibility of agricultural mitigation and direction to staff.

**Response to Comment AU-2:**

The Draft UCP included Agricultural Policies designed to minimize impacts on active agricultural areas adjacent to the project site. The commentor's concern for the preservation of agricultural land is hereby forwarded to the decision makers for their consideration. Please see Master Response 7 for information on the Board of Supervisors' preliminary determination regarding the feasibility of agricultural mitigation and direction to staff.

**Response to Comment AU-3:**

The environmental impacts associated with implementation of the University Community Plan have been thoroughly addressed in the Draft EIR prepared for the project. In accordance with CEQA, the Draft EIR was available for public review and comment from August 13 through October 4, 2001. In addition, three public hearings were held to accept oral comments on the adequacy of the EIR.

As discussed above, Section 4.2, Agricultural Resources, evaluates impacts to agricultural land associated with the UCP. The UCP included policies designed to minimize impacts to agricultural resources (see pages 196 through 200 in the Community Plan or pages 4.2-18 through 4.2-19 in the Draft EIR for a list of agricultural policies). Master Response 7 contains a discussion of agricultural mitigation. Please also see Master Responses 4 and 6 regarding the Board of Supervisors' decision making authority and the public review process, respectively.

The concern for residents and landowners who could be affected by the UCP is hereby forwarded to the decision makers for their consideration.