

AREA PLAN

Development of the University of California Merced and associated University Community introduces an urban function and uses into an area historically committed by the County of Merced for agriculture, open space, and low density rural uses that serve as a transition between the urbanized City of Merced and surrounding agricultural production. This area also serves as a primary recreational amenity for the region, centered on Lake Yosemite Park. Inherently, these important characteristics and functions will be significantly affected by the development of the campus and community.

The economic, social, and cultural benefits accruing from the development of UC Merced and the Community are of considerable significance and, as such, are fully supported by the County of Merced. The policies for the development of the University Community, as presented in earlier sections of this Plan, and the adopted Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) for the campus provide for development that, while urbanized, considers the region's agriculture, open spaces, and historic patterns of development.

While supporting the campus and community, the County of Merced recognizes the long-standing imperative to preserve its agricultural lands, assure an appropriate transition between urbanized lands and agriculture, and protect Lake Yosemite Regional Park as an asset for its residents. To this end, the University Community Plan expands upon its core policies for the development of lands within the defined limits of the planning area by the establishment of goals and policies in this section of the Plan to address these critical values in relationship to how they affect surrounding lands. In general, these pertain to lands within two miles of the University Community.

AGRICULTURE—SUSTAINING THE REGION'S PARAMOUNT RESOURCE

OVERVIEW

One of the central themes of the Merced County General Plan is the conservation of important agricultural lands and the protection and enhancement of the County's important agricultural industry. A reflection of this commitment is the presence of an Agricultural Element as a distinct element in the County General Plan. This section of the University Community Plan responds to (1) the presence of designated prime agricultural lands and productive agricultural activities in areas south and southeast of the University Community planning area, and (2) concerns that development of the University Community or related infrastructure could adversely affect the long-term viability of this area as a key component of the County's agricultural industry. The following goals, objectives, and policies provide guidance to ensure that the future development of the University Community reflects the County's commitment to farmland conservation and enhancement of agricultural productivity through strengthening the linkages between the County's urban areas and its agricultural industry, targeted voluntary preservation strategies, and limitations on infrastructure capacity.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal

Strengthen economic and social linkages between the University Community's urban consumers and regional small-scale farms.

Objective

AA 1.0

Support agriculture by encouraging farmers to deliver agricultural products directly to consumers.

Policies

AA 1.1

Encourage the development of agricultural retail businesses by promoting local agricultural events and other direct marketing programs by advertising for them through regional media. *(Imp 1.4, 3.5)*

AA 1.2

Facilitate a farmers' market in the University Community, in coordination with the Merced County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, by providing a suitable low-cost site in a central location and other resources to develop and promote it. *(Imp 1.4, 3.5)*

AA 1.3

Encourage the use of local agricultural goods for use in local restaurants, schools, and grocery stores, when possible. *(Imp 3.5, 5.10)*

Goal

Preservation of important farmlands south and east of the University Community.

Objective

AA 2.0

Protect land located south of the University Community boundary and immediately east of the City of Merced.

Policies

AA 2.1

Establish the University Community boundary as an urban limit line, outside of which no urban uses will be permitted in agricultural areas (refer to Policies LU 2.4 to LU 2.6). *(Imp 2.1)*

AA 2.2

Design and develop infrastructure to serve development within the University Community boundary, except where necessary for joint use by the Community and UC Merced and to provide connections to regional systems. *(Imp 2.4, 4.13)*

LAKE YOSEMITE REGIONAL PARK—SUSTAINING MERCED’S MOST IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL ASSET

OVERVIEW

The general underlying themes in the University Community Area Plan relative to recreation include the importance of Lake Yosemite Regional Park to Merced County, the nature and amount of increased demand for recreational facilities caused by the new population generated by the University Community and the UC Merced campus, and the roles of Merced County, UC Merced and the University Community in providing recreational facilities sufficient to meet potential demand.

The goals and policies presented below assume, and seek to address, future demands on regional recreational facilities, especially Lake Yosemite Regional Park. These policies also establish a framework for future individual and collective action by Merced County, the University Community and UC Merced to respond effectively over time to the recreational needs of a growing population in eastern Merced County.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal

Joint use of the University of California, Merced recreation facilities, and Lake Yosemite Regional Park.

Objective

ALY 1.0

To meet the recreational needs of UC Merced students, staff and faculty, as well as University Community residents.

Policies

ALY 1.1

Work with UC Merced for the shared use of its on-campus recreational, parking and sports facilities with the Merced community, especially with regards to campus parking in areas bordering Lake Yosemite Regional Park. Such cooperative programming may diminish impacts on the existing Park by providing additional recreational opportunities and shared parking for Park users. *(Imp 3.3, 5.6)*

ALY 1.2

Encourage UC Merced to provide students, staff, and faculty with active recreational and sports facilities and programs on campus that meet or exceed any recommended standards for the anticipated campus population, concurrent with increases in campus population. *(Imp 3.3, 5.6)*