
TOPOGRAPHY

CONTEXT

The University Community planning area is characterized by gently sloping lands from the northeast to the southwest that exhibit little topographic form. The maximum elevation change across the property is approximately 60 feet. As a consequence, there is little inherent opportunity to use the site's topography to distinctively shape development patterns or the urban form.



The Le Grand Canal, along the eastern portion of the Community site acts as a distinct barrier differentiating the flatlands from the more variable and rolling topography to the east. The northern portion of the University Community site is separated from the UC Merced campus site by an ephemeral drainage corridor, Cottonwood Creek.

Within the site, Cottonwood Creek and several smaller drainages define a number gently sloping mesas and mounds. These are subtle changes in topography that are not readily apparent when viewed at any distance. But, on site, they provide physical relief and character.

OVERVIEW

The objective of the policies is to create an urban form that recognizes the site's topography and establishes a distinct sense of place, quality, and character. The Community's physical development will reflect the nature of its topography, retaining basic forms, contours, and elevations while eliminating the use of extensive flat pads and cut-and-fill slopes. Natural drainage channels will be retained for multiple uses including stormwater control, wildlife value, and recreation.

Goal

A community whose form respects the site's natural topography, creating a distinct sense of place, quality, and character.

USING TOPOGRAPHY TO SHAPE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Objective

TO 1.0

Locate and design development in consideration of the site's subtle topography.

Policies

TO 1.1

Require that the development of the University Community site reflect the character of its underlying topography, retaining basic forms, contours, and elevations.

TO 1.2

Require that the University Community site be graded to ensure appropriate and continuous transitions with adjoining properties. Abrupt changes of topography and the use of retaining walls shall be discouraged. *(Imp 2.7)*

TO 1.3

Require that development be located and designed to mimic the natural topography in areas characterized by topographic diversity and preclude the use of extensive flat pads and cut-and-fill slopes, providing that this does not result in extraordinary costs that impact financial feasibility. *(Imp 2.5, 2.7)*

TO 1.4

Retain natural drainages for storm drainage, detention, recreation, and open space, except where modifications may be necessary to accommodate cohesive transportation and utility infrastructure. *(Imp 2.5, 2.7)*