
VIEWSHEDS

CONTEXT

As indicated previously, the University Community planning area is characterized by gently sloping lands from the northeast to the southwest with little elevation change. They transition from the rolling grasslands in the northeast to the flat agricultural lands to the west and south. As such, viewsheds from the site are short-distanced and, primarily, of surrounding properties. Views to the Sierra Nevada to the northeast are possible, due to their height and visual dominance.



The elevation change between the Golf Course, in particular the location of the proposed initial phase campus buildings, and the Community offer opportunities to establish viewing corridors from the Community (in the vicinity of the proposed Town Center and north-south open space corridor) to the proposed campus core.

Viewsheds and the visual quality of the University Community are also affected by the ambient lighting conditions. The lack of development on and in proximity to the site, offers opportunities for dramatic views of stars in the nighttime sky and low levels of illumination for existing rural housing. Development of urban uses in the Community will substantially increase ambient levels of illumination and glare during the evening, changing the area's character.

OVERVIEW

Policies provide for the creation of viewing corridors of the Sierra and proposed campus core. These view opportunities will be strengthened through siting and design requirements for transportation corridors, plazas, and squares. The

creation of urban viewsheds of the Town center, campus, and landmark buildings enhance the sense of place and visual connectivity of the Community.

Additionally, policies provide for the use of lighting elements that minimize ambient illumination and glare during nighttime hours.

A COMMUNITY THAT VALUES IMPORTANT VIEWSHEDS

Goal

A community that recognizes its location through the maintenance of viewsheds of the Sierra, adjoining open spaces, and key landmarks within its urban development.

Objective

V 1.0

To develop a pattern of urban development, transportation corridors, and open spaces that provides high quality views.

Policies

V 1.1

Locate and design principal transportation corridors to provide public views of the Sierra Nevada and, where appropriate, the UC Merced campus core. (*Imp 2.4, 2.5*)

V 1.2

Incorporate plazas and squares at the confluence and termination of streets and pedestrian paths, in the principal Community activity centers (Town Center and Residential Village Neighborhood Centers), and other public places and design them to provide views of the Sierra Nevada, surrounding grasslands, and, where appropriate, the UC Merced campus core. (*Imp 2.5*)

V 1.3

Locate and design sites and buildings to serve as visual landmarks within the University Community (e.g., siting of buildings and parks as visual termini of streets, neighborhood areas, etc.; use of towers and other architectural elements; and so on). (*Imp 2.5*)

V 1.4

Design principal entry corridors to the University Community as landscaped amenities that provide view of the Town Center, UC Merced campus core, Sierra Nevada, and other visual assets. *(Imp 2.4, 2.5)*

MAINTAINING LEVELS OF ILLUMINATION THAT ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Goal

Levels of nighttime illumination that enhance Community quality, while maintaining public safety.

Objective

V 2.0

To control levels of nighttime illumination and glare to sustain opportunities for night-sky viewing and the region's rural character, without sacrificing public safety.

Policies

V 2.1

Require that outdoor lighting fixtures be located and designed to minimize ambient levels of illumination and glare, while providing adequate illumination for public safety. *(Imp 2.5)*

V 2.2

Require that outdoor lighting fixtures be located and designed to prevent spillover and impacts on adjoining properties (e.g., use of fixtures that cast their illumination downward and in a contained area). *(Imp 2.5, 2.8)*

V 2.3

Require that buildings in the University Community minimize the use of surface materials and glazing that are highly reflective of sunlight and nighttime outdoor lighting and/or place such materials in locations that will not impact adjoining uses. *(Imp 2.5, 2.8)*

V 2.4

Establish standards to minimize the levels of illumination of outdoor signs in the University Community. *(Imp 2.5)*

AIR QUALITY

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The California Government Code does not mandate air quality issues be addressed by local planning efforts. As such, the existing Merced County General Plan includes only one Open Space/Conservation goal related to air quality: "...to properly manage air resources." Regionwide air quality planning efforts are conducted under the Health and Safety Code (§§40910–40930) by the local air quality management district (San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, or SJVUAPCD) in conjunction with transportation planning agencies. Congestion management programs are required by the Government Code (§65089) to address air quality consequences of regional transportation planning efforts.

Merced County is encouraged by the SJVUAPCD to use its land use and transportation planning authority to help achieve region-wide air quality goals. The *Air Quality Guidelines for General Plans*, published in 1994 by the SJVUAPCD, provides assistance for developing policies and implementation strategies at the local level

that will be consistent with regional efforts to manage air quality. These guidelines recommend incorporating air quality considerations when developing land use and transportation plans. Examples of this would be considering transportation demand (and motor vehicle emissions) that would be associated with land use patterns or considering land use compatibility of agricultural and industrial uses with uses that would be "sensitive" to localized air quality conditions. These guidelines provide the basis for the air quality components of the University Community Plan.