

4.11 POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING

This section reviews existing population, employment, and housing conditions for the project site and surrounding areas, including the cities of Atwater and Merced, and the unincorporated part of Merced County. This section describes the growth in population (students, faculty, staff, and their families) directly related to development and operation of the campus. The section also describes other growth that may be indirectly induced by development and operation of the University. It evaluates the anticipated changes to population, employment, and housing that could result from the development of the proposed UC campus.

This EIR assumes that changes in population growth, employment opportunities, and housing demand are more accurately described as social and economic effects, not environmental effects. According to CEQA, these effects should be considered in an EIR only to the extent they create adverse impacts on the physical environment. According to Section 15382 of the CEQA Guidelines, “An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment.”

Public comments received in response to the Notice of Preparation related to the growth-inducing impacts to Tuolumne County and Mariposa County and growth-inducement caused by the extension of utilities between the existing Merced urban area and the University campus. These issues are addressed in Section 6, Growth Inducement.

4.11.1 Summary of Site Selection EIR Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The SSEIR evaluated the impacts on population, employment, and housing from the selection and eventual development of a new campus at the Lake Yosemite site, focusing on the increase in regional population that would be triggered by the new campus, its impact on housing stock, and the employment benefits from the new campus.

All impacts identified in the SSEIR that are relevant to the proposed project are presented in the following table. For all impacts, the level of significance before and after application of mitigation measures identified in the SSEIR is also presented in the table. As described in Section 2, the location of the proposed campus has been shifted farther south on the VST property compared to the location evaluated in the SSEIR. All other attributes, including the size of the campus population and proposed activities on campus, are unchanged. The change in the campus location does not affect the significance or the severity of impacts previously analyzed in the SSEIR.

SITE SELECTION EIR IMPACT	Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation	Level of Significance after/with Mitigation
Selection of a site and development of a campus would generate new concentrations of population in the area surrounding the site, the nearby metropolitan area, and the rest of the County.	S	SU ₂
Buildout of a campus at any of the sites would create a demand for on- and off-campus housing.	LS	N/A
Development of a campus at any of the sites would generate direct and indirect employment growth. Direct employment growth	B	N/A

SITE SELECTION EIR IMPACT	Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation	Level of Significance after/with Mitigation
would be associated with UC faculty and staff; indirect employment growth would be generated by the expenditures of UC students, faculty, and staff in the local economy.		
PS=Potentially Significant; S=Significant; LS=Less than Significant; B=Beneficial; NI=No Impact; N/A=Not Applicable; SU ₁ = Impacts that cannot be mitigated, or for which it is not certain that mitigation could reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level; SU ₂ = Impacts that could reduce the impact to less-than-significant levels but require action by a jurisdiction other than the University; SU ₃ = Impacts that, even with mitigation, cannot, or might not, be reduced to a less-than-significant level, and for which mitigation would not be under the University’s jurisdiction.		

The SSEIR identified a significant and unavoidable impact with respect to concentration of population in the area surrounding the campus site. The LRDP EIR as described below finds that, although the new campus would result in a substantial increase in county population, the impact would be less than significant because this growth has been anticipated in municipal general plans.

Mitigation measures in the SSEIR include the following:

- SSEIR Mitigation Measure 4.10-1**—*Local jurisdictions have authority over planning for future populations growth and ensuring that adequate development capacity is allowed for in their General Plans. Current plans to update General Plans which would accommodate projected baseline and campus-related growth should be implemented and campus-related growth should be implemented by local jurisdictions.*

The City of Merced updated its General Plan in 1997 and extended its sphere of influence to include the campus site. The City of Atwater General Plan dates from 2000. Both these documents have incorporated campus-related growth projections as suggested in Mitigation Measure SSEIR 4.10-1. As discussed below, the County General Plan also designates ample unincorporated land with land uses appropriate for growth related to the proposed development of the project.

4.11.2 Environmental Setting

Please see Section 3 for a discussion of existing and projected population and employment.

4.11.3 Existing and Projected Housing in the County

According to the most recent DOF population and housing estimates (DOF, 2000), Merced County’s overall housing stock totaled 69,684. As shown in Table 4.11-1, a total of 43,443 dwellings units were located in the cities of the County, and 26,242 units in the unincorporated areas. Table 4.11-1 also shows that of Merced County’s total housing stock, 51,830 units are single-family houses, 12,713 are multifamily homes, and 5,141 are mobile homes. Thus, single-family units comprised the majority of units, or more than 74 percent; 18 percent were multifamily units and mobile homes comprised about 7 percent. The average vacancy rate for the County is about 6.7 percent, which indicates a small surplus in housing (a rate of 5 percent is considered optimal in terms of supply and demand).

**Table 4.11-1
2000 Housing Estimates in Merced County**

	Total Number of Units (DOF)	Housing Units (DOF)			Vacancy Rate (DOF)	Total Number of Units (Census)	Vacancy Rate (Census)
		Single	Multiple	Mobile Homes			
City of Merced	20,965	13,317	7,074	574	3.6	21,532	5.1
City of Atwater	8,651	6,115	1,928	608	14.19	8,114	10.7
Other Cities	13,826	11,365	1,972	489	4.49	13,752	3.9
Total Cities	43,442	30,797	10,974	1671	6.18	43,398	6.6
Unincorporated Area	26,242	21,033	1,739	3,470	7.53	24,975	NA
Total Merced County	69,684	51,830	12,713	5,141	6.69	68,373	6.7

DOF, 2000. U.S. Census 2000.

The City of Merced's overall housing stock in 2000 was estimated to total 20,965. Of this amount, 13,317 were single-family homes, 7,074 were multifamily units, and 574 were mobile homes. Single-family units comprised 64 percent of the total, multifamily dwellings made up 34 percent, and mobile homes comprised less than 3 percent (DOF, 2000). The City of Merced General Plan identifies 2,526 gross acres of developable land designated for housing. Almost 82 percent of this land is designated for low-density housing. Depending on the extent of buildout and infrastructure, this acreage could support between 6,187 and 15,385 dwelling units.

The City of Atwater's overall housing stock in 2000 was estimated to total 8,651. Of this total, 6,115 were single-family homes, 1,928 were multifamily houses, and 608 were mobile homes (DOF, 2000). Single-family units comprised 71 percent of the total, multifamily dwellings made up 22 percent, and mobile homes comprised 7 percent.

According to federal estimates based on surveys carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Merced County Metropolitan Statistical Area fair market rent in 2001 was estimated to range from \$459 for a one-bedroom unit to \$909 for a four-bedroom unit (U.S. HUD, 2001). The median family income for the Merced Metropolitan Statistical Area is \$38,300 in 2001.

4.11.4 Impacts and Mitigation

4.11.4.1 Standards of Significance

The following standards of significance are based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. For the purposes of this EIR, the project would have a significant impact with regard to population, employment, and housing if it would

- create a demand for housing that could not be accommodated by local jurisdictions.

CEQA Checklist Items Not Analyzed in the Impact Discussion

The following checklist item under Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, Population, Employment, and Housing, does not directly apply to the proposed project and therefore is not discussed in the following impact analysis.

- induce substantial population growth in the area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through the extension of roads or other infrastructure).

This topic is addressed in Section 6, Growth Inducement.

- displace substantial numbers of people or substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

The project site is currently undeveloped except for grazing facilities and a golf course. No housing is located on site. Therefore, there would be no displacement of existing housing.

4.11.4.2 Project Impacts and Mitigation**4.11-1 Implementation of the LRDP would create a demand for housing but that demand would be accommodated by local jurisdictions. This is considered to be a *less-than-significant* impact.**

Adequate land has been designated on the campus and the adjacent University Community to provide the number of housing units that would be required by the students, faculty, and staff at the full development of the LRDP. Therefore, in the long run, the campus would not directly place a demand on housing resources in the region. The environmental effects of the construction of new housing within the University Community have been addressed in the EIR prepared for that project, and those impacts are also included in the analysis of cumulative impacts in the various sections of this EIR. As shown in Section 6, if the campus attains its housing goals, and the University Community develops as planned, there could potentially be housing in the University Community to accommodate some of the households associated with the indirect and induced growth.

In the near term (opening day through 2010–11), the campus would house about 50 percent of the student population, and the rest of the campus-related population would need housing in the regional communities because significant amounts of housing may not be constructed in the University Community until after 2010. Using the 2010–11 enrollment level to estimate this demand for off-campus housing, an estimated 2,780 housing units would be required. As demonstrated by the job-housing ratio in the County, there is more housing than jobs. Therefore, housing would be available for the new population. As discussed in Section 4.9, Land Use and Planning, several large specific plans and master plan developments have been approved or are in the process of obtaining approval in the cities near the campus. Some of these developments could individually or in combination with other developments provide all the housing needs of the campus-related direct and induced population in the near term. For the approved plans, environmental review has been completed that addresses the impacts of the development. For the plans under review, environmental impacts will be analyzed as part of the review process and mitigated to the extent feasible. The impact of the proposed project on housing would be *less than significant*.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation required.

4.11.4.3 Cumulative Impacts

4.11-3 **The proposed project, in conjunction with the University Community and other projects, could result in a demand for housing but that demand would be accommodated by local jurisdictions. This cumulative impact is considered less than significant.**

Campus, University Community, and Campus Parkway. The campus at buildout would cause a substantial growth in the population of Merced County. To handle the demand for housing, the campus includes adequate acreage to house about 50 percent of the student population and 50 percent of the faculty. The University Community has been proposed and designed to house all of the population directly related to the campus. Some of the population associated with indirect and induced campus-related jobs may also be accommodated within the University Community. The two projects together would not create a demand for regional housing. In the near term, when the housing in the University Community would not be developed, some of the campus-related population would need housing in the region.

Other Cumulative Development. There is adequate land designated in the region for housing to handle the projected increase in the regional population.

REFERENCES

City of Atwater, 1993. General Plan Housing Element.

City of Atwater, 2000a. City of Atwater General Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Report. State Clearinghouse No. 99061027. Adopted July 24.

City of Atwater, 2000b. City of Atwater General Plan. Adopted July 24.

City of Merced, 1997a. Merced Vision 2015 General Plan Final Program Environmental Impact Report. State Clearinghouse No. 95082050. Adopted April 7.

City of Merced, 1997b. Merced Vision 2015 General Plan. Adopted April 7.