

The CEQA guidelines (Section 15126) require that all phases of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment: planning, acquisition, development, and operation. As part of this analysis, the EIR must identify the following three components: (1) significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented; (2) significant irreversible environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed project should it be implemented; and (3) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project. The following is a discussion of each of these components.

## 7.1 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section identifies significant impacts that could not be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level by mitigation measures imposed by the University. The final determination of significance of impacts and of the feasibility of mitigation measures will be made by The Regents of the University of California as part of their certification action.

The following significant and unavoidable impacts would result from development proposed under the LRDP:

### *Aesthetics*

- 4.1-3 Implementation of the LRDP could affect existing visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings.
- 4.1-4 Lighting of the buildings and other facilities on the proposed campus would create a new source of substantial light or glare.
- 4.1-5 Implementation of the LRDP together with cumulative development in the vicinity will change the visual character of the area.
- 4.1-7 Implementation of the LRDP together with cumulative development in the vicinity will create new sources of light and glare that could affect nighttime views in the area.
- 4.1-8 Implementation of the LRDP together with cumulative development in the vicinity could adversely affect scenic vistas and scenic resources.

### *Agricultural Resources*

- 4.2-3 Cumulative development will result in the conversion of prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, and unique farmland to nonagricultural use.

### *Air Quality*

- 4.3-2 Construction activities and development allowed under the LRDP would generate increased levels of CO, O<sub>3</sub> precursors (ROG and NO<sub>x</sub>), and PM<sub>10</sub> emissions. This could hinder air quality attainment and maintenance efforts even though those emissions were included in air quality planning efforts.
- 4.3-6 Development allowed under the LRDP, in conjunction with cumulative development in the region, could hinder air quality attainment and maintenance efforts for criteria pollutants.

*Biological Resources*

- 4.4-11** Development under the LRDP, in conjunction with other cumulative development would result in the loss or adverse modification of important native plant and wildlife habitat, including wetlands, vernal pool habitat, clay playa habitat, and annual grassland habitat, and adverse effects to special-status species associated with these habitats.

*Land Use and Planning*

- 4.9-3** The Campus, in conjunction with the University Community would result in incompatibilities with adjacent land uses.

*Noise*

- 4.10-1** Implementation of the proposed LRDP would result in increased vehicular traffic on the regional road network, which would increase ambient noise levels.
- 4.10-3** Construction of the campus facilities could expose nearby receptors, especially users of the County Park to elevated noise levels.
- 4.10-8** Implementation of the proposed LRDP in conjunction with the University Community and the Campus Parkway projects and the regional growth would increase the traffic on the regional road network, which would increase ambient noise levels.

*Public Services*

- 4.12-4** The development of the campus would generate demand for elementary and secondary educational services, which could result in physical effects on the environment.

*Recreation*

- 4.13-3** Cumulative growth in area population will result in an increased demand for recreational facilities, which could cause a deterioration of the facilities.

*Transportation and Traffic*

- 4.14-10** Implementation of the LRDP, in combination with the proposed University Community and regional growth in Merced County, would result in increased traffic levels in the vicinity of the campus site, and exceedances of the roadway LOS thresholds.

*Growth Inducement*

- 6-1** Implementation of the LRDP would induce substantial economic and population growth in the region, and would result in the construction of additional housing.

## 7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

This section identifies the use of nonrenewable resources during implementation of the LRDP that would create an irreversible commitment of resources or irreversible damage to the environment. Significant irreversible changes to the environment resulting from development under the LRDP would generally fall into three categories: (1) irretrievable commitment of materials and energy during construction and maintenance of the project; (2) loss of agricultural and biological resources because of the conversion of undeveloped lands to urban uses; and (3) increased use of natural resources because of increased population at and surrounding the campus site. The following presents a discussion of each of these three types of changes.

### 7.2.1 Irretrievable Commitment of Construction Materials

Development under the LRDP would irretrievably commit nonrenewable energy resources, primarily in the form of fossil fuels, including fuel oil, natural gas, and gasoline for automobiles and construction equipment. The consumption or destruction of other nonrenewable and slowly renewable resources would also result during construction and operation of the proposed development. These resources include but are not limited to lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, metals, etc.

### 7.2.2 Loss of Agricultural and Biological Resources

#### Agricultural Resources

Dedication of undeveloped lands currently used for agricultural uses would constitute an irretrievable use of these lands because once buildings or pavement are constructed, underlying soils would no longer be available or viable for agricultural production. The proposed campus site does not contain prime agricultural lands within its boundaries, though it is currently used for cattle grazing. Cumulatively, the campus and proposed University Community would result in the loss of 1,420 acres of prime agricultural lands.

#### Biological Resources

Development under the LRDP would result in the loss of approximately 708 acres of California annual grassland habitat and approximately 78 acres of wetland habitat. Of the 78 acres of wetlands affected, approximately 58 acres consist of vernal pool and swale complexes, and 6 acres are designated as clay playa habitat. Through the removal of these areas, special-status species that utilize these habitat types would be removed. Removal of clay playa and vernal pool and swale complexes and their subordinate wildlife would be considered an irretrievable loss of biological resources at this location. As discussed in Section 3.4, the University would implement mitigation measures to reduce impacts to these sensitive biological communities, as well as provide preservation and creation of appropriate habitat elsewhere within the eastern Merced region.

### 7.2.3 Increased Use of Natural Resources Because of Increased Population

Development under the LRDP would generate increased transportation and housing needs within the eastern Merced region. In addition, campus-related growth would require the provision of energy resources. By making these services available to the proposed campus, it would constitute an irreversible commitment of natural resources.