

MERCED COUNTY UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY PLAN POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER

Land Use

For CPAC Discussion: March 29, 2001 Meeting

INTRODUCTION

The University Community Plan will encompass a hierarchy of goals, objectives, policies, and programs for each of the topics listed in the *“Preliminary Outline”* that was previously distributed to the Community Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC). During the next series of meetings, **preliminary** policy options will be presented for CPAC’s review and consideration. Your input will be solicited regarding their appropriateness for inclusion in the UCP document. They are intended to serve as a framework for discussion and have not been endorsed by the County of Merced Board of Supervisors.

In many respects, the preliminary policies represent new planning approaches that have not previously been implemented in the County, but arise from the unique opportunity and issues associated with the development a University related community. These are intended as a “first-cut test” of ideas and concepts, which may be modified in response to further analyses including the assessment of financial feasibility.

The **Land Use** Policy Discussion Paper presents a framework of overarching concepts and principles that will be used as a framework to guide the formulation of detailed policies as the planning process evolves. These are intended to represent basic policy “themes” that will be supplemented by detailed principles/standards and illustrative diagrams. The policies are largely based upon the *“Planning Principles Framework I”* reviewed by the CPAC in March 2000. For this discussion, formal “plan language” is not always used, in some cases simplified bullets and lists are presented. Detailed policy language and complete policies will be reviewed at a subsequent CPAC meeting.

The core of the policy will be the **Land Use Diagram**. While we will review several options for land use distribution at the March 29 meeting, it is expected that the Plan Diagram will evolve somewhat over the next couple of months to reflect and be consistent with policies that are developed for other Plan topics (e.g., Transportation, Infrastructure, Environmental Resource Management, etc.).

The desired input sought from the CPAC varies among the policies. In most cases, we are requesting your confirmation or suggested revisions for a single policy direction. In some, we are presenting a number of options, from which we are requesting input regarding your preferences. The latter cases are clearly identified in the Discussion Paper.

ISSUES

The fundamental issue for land use planning of the University Community is the absence of existing development and the objective for accommodating new uses that will be generated by and support the presence of the University of California Merced campus. From a simplistic perspective, we have a “clean slate” on which the types and densities/intensities of use to be accommodated, their organization and distribution, and design and development characteristics can be defined. Many of these will be grounded by the visions that have previously been defined for the University Community-- sustainable environment, economic prosperity, livable neighborhoods, social well-being, and so on. However, we must be mindful that it is not an entirely “clean slate.” In making land use decisions, the site’s characteristics and resources, availability of infrastructure and services, and “fit” with surrounding land uses must be considered (note: policies for these issues will be addressed in a separate Discussion Papers).

PRELIMINARY POLICY FRAMEWORK

Please review and provide comments regarding the following land use planning options.

IT SHALL BE THE POLICY OF THE COUNTY OF MERCED TO:

1.0 Land Uses Types

- 1.1 Accommodate land uses that support the successful development of the University of California Merced campus, promote the vitality of the region’s economy, support the social well-being of residents, and are environmentally sustainable.
- 1.2 Accommodate a mix of land uses that support the campus, including housing, retail, offices, industrial, entertainment, cultural, recreational, public/civic, institutional, and related uses.
- 1.3 Accommodate land uses that complement the economic vitality and are coordinated with the City of Merced and other major activity centers.
- 1.4 Accommodate a mix of land uses that, over time, can be supported by the marketplace and adequately financed.
- 1.5 Accommodate convenience goods and services that meet the normal daily needs of its residents (e.g., food, personal services, prescription drugs, and so on).
- 1.6 Accommodate a balanced mix of uses that contribute to the sense of complete neighborhoods offering a variety of housing types, supporting convenience commercial, job opportunities, schools, parks, and open spaces to meet the needs of a diverse population.
- 1.7 Allow for flexibility in uses and densities that may be accommodated over time to reflect the evolving characteristics, needs, and objectives of the marketplace, provided that the overall objectives for the form, character, and qualities of the University Community are maintained.

- 1.8 Develop and integrate open spaces as essential amenities that distinguish the University Community, provide recreational opportunities for residents, contribute economic value, serve as visual relief, and reflect the region's distinct character.

2.0 Land Use Structure/Organization

- 2.1 Concentrate land uses to minimize impacts on natural environmental resources and the extent of supporting infrastructure, as well as maximize community/pedestrian activity and transit use.
- 2.2 Establish a land use pattern composed of distinct districts and neighborhoods differentiated by function, use, density, physical form and character, and design that are integrated into a cohesive and definable community. This shall be structured by distinct residential neighborhoods/villages oriented around a Town Center that serves as the primary focal point of Community identity and Community-campus interaction. Each neighborhood/village shall contain a mix of housing units/densities that are focus on a school, park, local retail, and other services. A business center shall be developed adjacent and relate to the Town Center and UC Merced campus.
- 2.3 Locate the highest development densities adjacent to the Town Center, UC Merced campus, and primary transit corridors and stations.
- 2.4 Integrate the Community's land use patterns and urban form with those of the UC Merced campus, promoting a seamless interaction of community and campus activities.
- 2.5 Establish a system of open space amenities that provide form and organize the land use pattern including a centralized "village green," parklands, trails, and natural drainage corridors.
- 2.6 Site and design land uses and buildings to maximize the Community's quality of life, including the establishment of pedestrian-oriented mixed use districts and residential neighborhoods that reflect the traditional qualities of Merced, while providing opportunities for innovative and creative forms of development.
- 2.7 Locate and design development in consideration of the Community's climatic conditions, including the configuration of buildings and public spaces to provide shelter from winds and use of architectural elements and building materials to reduce the impacts of temperature extremes.
- 2.9 Incorporate water amenities as a relief from heat, with emphasis on the use of treated gray water.
- 2.10 Site and design land uses to reflect and incorporate the property's natural drainage courses, to the extent feasible in consideration of public safety and habitat preservation.
- 2.11 Promote the use of building materials that incorporate recycled materials and minimize energy use.

- 2.12 Require the use of drought-tolerant and native plant materials in site and streetscape landscape, to the extent feasible.
- 2.13 Establish appropriate land use and open space transitions to reflect long-term development, agricultural, and conservation objectives for properties abutting the University Community.
- 2.14 Accommodate land use development in accordance with the *Land Use Diagram* and supporting land use classification and development capacity tables.

3.0 Land Use Phasing

- 3.1 Phase the timing and location of development to promote a cohesive and concentrated pattern of use, minimizing impacts on environmental resources, farmlands, vehicle miles traveled, and infrastructure.
- 3.2 Prioritize the development of uses that are of immediate importance in supporting the successful development of the UC Merced campus.
- 3.3 Locate initial uses in the northern portion of the Community, with subsequent phases extending southerly along Lake Road, and the last phases located in the southeast along Yosemite Avenue (as shown on Figure ___).
- 3.4 Establish Urban Limit Lines to define each phase of development.
- 3.5 Require that all new development and infrastructure be located within defined urban limit line until a majority of its capacity (75 percent or greater) has been exhausted through the entitlement process. When this threshold is reached, the County will consider expansion of the urban limit line to the next planned phase.

4.0 Town Center

Uses

- 4.1 Develop the Town Center as the symbolic and functional center of the University Community and establish linkages with the University campus core.
- 4.2 Accommodate a broad mix of uses including retail, office, entertainment, civic, cultural, food service, housing, and similar uses that are supportable in the marketplace.
- 4.3 Encourage the development of buildings and sites that contain a mix of uses, including the vertical integration of housing with retail, office, or other uses. (*Note: it may be appropriate to specify a minimum percentage of housing units*).
- 4.4 Integrate public uses (e.g., day and senior care facilities, community meeting rooms and recreation facilities, health facilities, and so on) with other uses in the Town Center.
- 4.5 Collaborate with the University of California to identify the uses that can be developed in the Town Center that support both the campus and community and normally would be sited internally on the campus.

Density/Intensity

- 4.6 Develop the Town Center with the highest densities in the University Community to reinforce its role as the “heart” of the community and foster pedestrian and transit use, according to the following standards:
- Retail and office uses minimum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.35 and maximum of 1.0¹
 - Mixed use (housing/retail or office) minimum FAR of 1.5 and maximum 2.5, with a minimum FAR of 0.35 and maximum of 0.8 for retail or office components
 - Residential minimum of 18 and maximum of 32 units per net acre

Design and Development

- 4.7 Require that buildings be located to front onto public sidewalks and plazas forming a semi-continuous “building wall” (with parking located to the rear or in structures with ground level retail uses), that the ground floor of buildings be restricted to uses that have a high level of customer activity, and that buildings be designed to open onto the sidewalk/plaza and provoke visual interest (e.g., visual transparency, façade modulation, etc.).
- 4.8 Incorporate a major public plaza/town square to serve as the centerpiece of community activity that shall be designed to accommodate events, celebrations, outdoor performances, community meetings, and similar functions.
- 4.9 Design public streetscapes to enhance pedestrian activity including the integration of landscape, street furniture, signage, lighting, public art, and other amenities.
- 4.10 Incorporate a transit center to serve both the community and core campus to be developed at the earliest feasible date to lessen automobile dependence.
- 4.11 Develop shared parking facilities in lieu of separate parking for each site/use in the Town Center, including possible parking facilities to serve both community and campus uses.
- 4.13 Design internal local streets to emphasize pedestrian activity (15’ plus wide sidewalks) and slow traffic using such techniques as appropriate width, angled parking, traffic circles, landscaped “bulb outs,” alleys, and comparable techniques.

¹ Note:all FARs in the Land Use Policy Discussion Paper should be considered as preliminary and represent levels of development considered to be appropriate to the intended scale and character of the land use district based on prior experience. These will be reviewed for their appropriateness based on potential market support.

5.0 Residential Villages

Uses

- 5.1 Integrate a mix of housing types within each *Residential Village* with supporting schools, parks, retail, and other uses that support local needs.
- 5.2 Accommodate a maximum resident population of 7,500 residents (or population equivalent to that necessary to support on K-6 school) within each *Residential Village*.
- 5.3 No *Residential Village* shall be developed exclusively with a single housing type.

Residential

- 5.4 Distribute the mix of single and multi-family units among the *Residential Villages* according to Table ___ and as determined in response to resident needs, market conditions, innovation, and creativity.
- 5.5 Concentrate off-campus student housing within walking or bicycling distance of the UC Merced campus.
- 5.6 Accommodate innovative forms of housing that may emerge during the buildout of the Community Plan, contingent on their compatibility with adjacent uses and achievement of other Land Use objectives and policies.
- 5.7 Provide opportunities for the development of housing types to meet the special needs of students and others attracted to a “University environment” (e.g., co-housing, higher density units, sustainable building materials, etc.). This may include areas set aside for the development of experimental or housing prototypes.

Village Centers

- 5.8 Accommodate local-serving commercial, services, small restaurants/cafes, public/civic meeting facilities, libraries, cultural facilities, parks, schools, religious facilities, public plazas, and comparable uses as the physical, functional, and symbolic focal point of neighborhood identity and activity and supportable by the market.

Density/Intensity

- 5.9 Accommodate a mix of residential densities, with single-family units at an average of 4.7 units per gross acre and multi-family units at an average of 24 units per gross acre². Densities may be varied throughout the *Residential Village*, provided that the total number of permitted units in the designated planning area is not exceeded.
- 5.10 Establish minimum and maximum lot size limits for each *Residential Village*.
- 5.11 Accommodate commercial and/or office uses in the *Village Center* at a minimum FAR of 0.2 and maximum FAR of 0.35³, with a limit of 80,000 square feet in three

² See Footnote 1

³ See Footnote 1

of the Villages and 150,000 square feet in one of the Villages (to accommodate a second grocery store).

Design and Development

- 5.12 Require the development of neighborhoods that integrate a diversity of housing types and densities, with a standard of a minimum of 100 multi-family or other “innovative/alternative” types of housing, integrated into areas containing a 400 single family detached units.
- 5.13 Prohibit the over-concentration of multi-family units by limiting the maximum number of such units to 250 in any contiguous area, except within and abutting the *Town Center* and the *Village Centers* (note: “contiguous area” will be subsequently defined).
- 5.14 Encourage innovative design techniques that integrate a diversity of housing types on individual neighborhood blocks.
- 5.15 Site and design housing to enhance neighborhood quality of life by:
 - physically and visually relating the unit to the street frontage;
 - locating and designing garages to minimize their visual dominance from the street;
 - incorporating sidewalks and parkways to foster pedestrian activity and enhance the quality of the neighborhood; and
 - other appropriate techniques.
- 5.16 Design the *Village Center* as the focal point of neighborhood identity and activity incorporating community meeting facilities and plazas for public gatherings, streetscape improvements, and pedestrian-oriented buildings (sited along the street frontage, visual transparency, and so on).
- 5.17 Locate *Village Centers* within walking distance of all homes within the village/neighborhood.
- 5.18 Support the development of public uses that offer the opportunity for the sharing of facilities such as the integration of school play fields and athletic facilities with public parks, multi purpose auditoriums that serve multiple schools, and libraries that serve both schools and the general public.

Housing Affordability*

(The following lists potential policy options, many of which have not previously been implemented in the County. Some are mutually exclusive of one another. These have not been presented to the CPAC previously and we seek your insights regarding their appropriateness or other options).

- 5.19 Provide for the development of an adequate supply of housing affordable to meet the diverse needs and incomes of the University Community—students, faculty, staff, retail and office employees, service providers, and so on).

- 5.20 Require all developers of 50 or more units to allocate a minimum of 25 percent of the total housing units for low and moderate-income households.
- 5.21 Provide a bonus density of 25 percent above the permitted residential density for developers that provide a minimum of 25 percent of the total housing units for low and moderate-income households in
 - conventional single or multi-family projects;
 - mixed-use buildings that integrate housing with retail and/or office uses; and
 - live/work buildings.
- 5.22 Support the development of housing construction technologies and building materials that reduce the cost of housing.
- 5.23 Encourage the development of live/work facilities for professionals and artists.
- 5.24 Work with the University of California to promote the development of student, faculty, and staff housing located within the University Community.
- 5.25 Access and use federal, state, and institutional grants, loans, and other programs to help subsidize the development of housing units for low and moderate-income households.
- 5.26 Allocate County Redevelopment Project tax increment housing “set-aside” funds for the development of housing units for low and moderate-income households in the University Community.
- 5.27 Promote the establishment of and support non-profit corporations engaged in the production of housing for low and moderate-income households.
- 5.28 Assess a fee for all industries that are developed in the University Community, pro-rated according to the number of employees, for the development of housing for low and moderate-income households.
- 5.29 Establish procedures to stabilize the rental price and manage increases of low and moderate-income housing units.
- 5.30 Monitor and assess annually the zoned housing capacity of the University Community and environs to assure adequate supply of affordable units and, if deficient, amend the zoning to meet these needs (*note: in the long term, this could infer expansion of urban land use designations in environmental resource areas or farmlands*).

6.0 Business Centers

Uses

- 6.1 Accommodate the development of a University-related *Business Center* that contain research and development, light manufacturing, electronic/digital, and other uses that provide job opportunities that uniquely are induced by the presence of the University of California campus.

- 6.2 Accommodate a mix of uses that support primary research, industrial, and manufacturing functions and products such as limited retail, financial, personal service, dining, entertainment, recreation, and similar uses.
- 6.3 Allow for the development of new types of industries as they evolve in the marketplace, provided that they complement existing uses.

Density/Intensity

- 6.4 Accommodate the development of *Business Center* uses at a minimum FAR of 0.35 and maximum FAR of 2.0.⁴

Design and Development

- 6.5 Site and design *Business Center* development to achieve a cohesive and integrated district including the use of unifying streetscape and signage, location of buildings in proximity of and incorporation of retail shops and restaurants along street frontages, inclusion of architectural and landscape elements that unify sites, and comparable techniques.
- 6.6 Develop a network of streets, sidewalks, bicycle trails, infrastructure, and open spaces that are connect with and continue the basic pattern established in abutting University campus, the *Town Center*, commercial districts, and *Residential Villages*.

7.0 Public Uses

- 7.1 Integrate schools, libraries, cultural facilities, parks, civic, and similar public uses into the *Town Center* and *Residential Village* Neighborhood Centers to maximize their accessibility by local residents and recognize their contribution to community and neighborhood identity.
- 7.2 Cluster elementary, middle, and/or high schools for the purposes of sharing capital-intensive facilities such as auditoriums, libraries, athletic fields, multipurpose meeting rooms, and similar uses.
- 7.3 Integrate public libraries and community multipurpose facilities with schools, where feasible.

8.0 Open Spaces--General

- 8.1 Design open spaces as amenities that contribute to the quality of life, image, and economic value of the University Community.
- 8.2 Develop open spaces for the purposes of active and passive recreation, habitat preservation, education and research, flood control/public safety, and similar functions.
- 8.3 Use natural drainages, trails, recreation areas, and similar techniques to link the University Community's land use districts and open space elements, the UC

⁴ See Footnote 1

Merced campus, Merced County Regional Park/Lake Yosemite, and surrounding open spaces.

9.0 Open Spaces—Village Green/Central Park

- 9.1 Develop a major park of at least 80 acres as the centerpiece of the University Community (“Village Green/Central Park”), which will be linked with each Village Center and Community open spaces by a network of connecting trails.
- 9.2 Accommodate a diversity of active and passive recreational uses (athletic fields, picnic facilities, performance venues, gardens, resource interpretation, and so on).
- 9.3 Require that the acquisition and development of the “Village Green” be funded equitably by all development within the University Community.
- 9.4 Design the “Village Green” as an organizational element for the siting and design of development, such as the orientation and linkage of multi-family housing and commercial uses to the park (e.g., restaurants “opening” onto the park).