



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UC MERCED, MERCED COUNTY RELEASE IMPORTANT DRAFT PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW DOCUMENTS

UC Merced: Draft Long Range Development Plan and Draft EIR Merced County: Draft University Community Plan and Draft EIR

Merced, CA – The University of California, Merced and Merced County today each released two key draft documents in the planning process for the new UC Merced campus and the related University Community. UC Merced unveiled a draft Long Range Development Plan [LRDP] and a draft Environmental Impact Report [EIR] on the creation of the proposed UC Merced campus. Merced County released a draft University Community Plan [UCP] and a draft EIR on the development of the proposed mixed-use University Community.

UC Merced Chancellor Carol Tomlinson-Keasey said she welcomed the public release of the documents. “The documents released today are the result of numerous scientific and other studies. We are pleased now to invite public review and comment of these important reports.”

Merced County UC Project Director Greg Wellman added: “It is indeed a great day in the long road to the UC campus in Merced. This project will result in bringing a wonderful asset – a UC campus -- to the San Joaquin Valley, as it allows us the opportunity to promote careful development that sets a regional standard.”

The documents released today were made available to the public and forwarded to a large number of federal and state regulatory agencies for review. The documents are also available to the public at repositories in Sacramento, Merced, and Los Banos. Additionally, the documents are available on CD-ROM to any interested parties. The documents will be posted on the web site <http://www.ucmercedplanning.net> within a few days.

All in all, the documents released today total more than 2,000 pages in length, and represent the culmination of years of planning and study of the future campus and community. Release of the draft EIRs falls under the California Environmental Quality Act and begins a statutory 45-day public comment period for the EIRs.

UC Draft LRDP

The draft LRDP describes in detail the University’s proposal to create the new campus near Lake Yosemite. The document takes into account the entire plans for creation of the campus, including the initial phase for the opening in fall 2004 plus plans for future full development of the LRDP to serve 25,000 students. The report is comprised of policies, illustrations, maps, and charts indicating efforts planned for land conservation and development in addition to planned land uses on the proposed campus, circulation and parking, utilities and infrastructure, site and building design, and phasing of the campus creation.

UC Draft EIR

The draft EIR for the proposed UC campus assesses the potential environmental effects of the full development of the LRDP, identifies means to reduce or eliminate potential adverse impacts, and evaluates

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reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. Such issues as aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology, hazardous materials, hydrology, land use/planning, population increases, public services, recreation, traffic, and utilities are described in the document. In a separate volume, the EIR also addresses, in detail, impacts of the first phase of the campus.

Merced County Draft University Community Plan

The Draft University Community Plan provides guidance for the development of a new mixed-use community to the immediate south of the UC Merced campus. The Plan ultimately calls for a community that will host approximately 31,000 residents and a mix of uses that supports the successful development of the University of California, Merced, promotes the vitality of the region's economy, sustains the region's valuable agricultural and natural resources, and provides for the social well-being of its residents. The Plan establishes a framework of land uses and the phasing of development, the provision of housing that will be affordable to the campus population over the long-term, economic development that will be complimentary to the City of Merced and the region as a whole, creation of innovative and sustainable infrastructure and services, protection of the County's important agricultural and environmental resources, and programs to ensure and enhance public safety. The Plan also includes an Area Plan that contains strategies to address the impacts of the community and campus on adjacent and nearby lands.

Merced County University Community Plan Draft EIR

The Draft EIR for the proposed University Community assesses and describes the potential environmental effects of the Community, identifies measures that would reduce or eliminate potential adverse impacts, and evaluates a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the proposed University Community Plan. Such issues as aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology, hazardous materials, hydrology, land use/planning, population increases, public services, recreation, traffic, and utilities are considered in the document.

Public Comment, Hearings

The release of the planning and environmental review documents by UC Merced and Merced County will be followed by several opportunities for public comment. Individuals and groups wishing to review the documents are asked to visit the public repositories, view the web site postings, and/or request individual CD-ROM copies of the documents. Those wishing to submit written statements on the UC Merced LRDP and EIR must submit them to UC Merced, and those wishing to submit written comments on the University Community Plan and EIR must submit them to Merced County. In addition, public workshops and hearings are planned to be held, starting with presentations of the University Community Plan and EIR on August 21 and 22. Information about the hearings is available from UC Merced, the Merced County UC Development Office, or from the project website at <http://www.ucmercedplanning.net>.

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