

## AGRICULTURE— SUSTAINING THE REGION’S PARAMOUNT RESOURCE

### ■ OVERVIEW

One of the central themes of the Merced County General Plan is the conservation of important agricultural lands and the protection and enhancement of the County’s important agricultural industry. A reflection of this commitment is the presence of an Agricultural Element as a distinct element in the County General Plan. This section of the University Community Plan responds to (1) the presence of designated prime agricultural lands and productive agricultural activities in areas south and southeast of the University Community planning area, and (2) concerns that development of the University Community or related infrastructure could adversely affect the long-term viability of this area as a key component of the County’s agricultural industry. The following goals, objectives and policies provide guidance to ensure that the future development of the University Community reflects the County’s commitment to farmland conservation and enhancement of agricultural productivity through strengthening the linkages between the County’s urban areas and its agricultural industry, targeted voluntary preservation strategies, and limitations on infrastructure capacity.

### ■ GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

#### Goal

Strengthen economic and social linkages between the University Community’s urban consumers and regional small-scale farms.

#### Objective

**AA 1.0** Promote Community supported agriculture by encouraging local farmers to deliver agricultural products directly to consumers.

#### Policies

**AA 1.1** Encourage the development of agricultural retail businesses by promoting local agricultural events and other direct marketing programs by advertising for them through regional media. *(Imp 1.4, 3.5)*

**AA 1.2** Facilitate a farmers’ market in the University Community, in coordination with the Merced County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, by providing a suitable low-cost site in a central location and other resources to develop and promote it. *(Imp 1.4, 3.5)*

**AA 1.3** Increase access to affordable fruits, vegetables, and healthy food for all University Community residents through support of farmer’s

markets, community supported agriculture, produce stands and other farm to neighborhood marketing strategies. *(Imp 1.4, 3.5, 5.10)*

**AA 1.4** Provide accurate, on going, and culturally appropriate nutrition education to residents promoting increased consumption of fruits, vegetables and complex carbohydrates. *(Imp 3.5, 5.10)*

**AA 1.5** Encourage the use of local agricultural goods for use in local restaurants, schools, and grocery stores, when possible. *(Imp 3.5, 5.10)*

### Goal

Preservation of important farmlands south and east of the University Community.

### Objective

**AA 2.0** Protect land located south of the University Community boundary and immediately east of the City of Merced.

### Policies

**AA 2.1** Establish the University Community boundary as an urban limit line, outside of which no urban uses will be permitted in agricultural areas (refer to Policies LU 2.4 to LU 2.6). *(Imp 2.1)*

**AA 2.2** Target future conservation easements for land located south of the University Community boundary and immediately east of the City of Merced (refer to Policy A 3.1). *(Imp 2.1, 3.3, 4.11)*

**AA 2.3** Establish an Agricultural Green Belt Agreement with the City of Merced. *(Imp 3.3)*

**AA 2.4** Design and develop infrastructure to serve development within the University Community boundary, except where necessary for joint use by the Community and UC Merced and to provide connections to regional systems. *(Imp 2.4, 4.14)*