

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CITY OF MERCED

■ CONTEXT

In 1997, the County and City entered into an agreement for the sharing of revenue for newly annexed areas to the City of Merced. Such a Revenue Sharing Agreement is required prior to the processing and approval of an annexation application to the City of Merced by the Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The Revenue Sharing Agreement contains provisions governing County land use within the City’s Growth Area (SUDP) Sphere of Influence, and the Rural Residential Centers that exist in the vicinity of the City of Merced. Under the current terms of the agreement, the County is limited within this RRC to residential land uses at a density no greater than one unit per net acre, even though County zoning provisions allow a greater density and certain institutional uses.

The proposed site of the University Community SUDP is located approximately one mile east of the City’s SUDP. In addition, Bellevue Road is designated by the City of Merced as a future transit corridor that would connect the University Community and campus with downtown Merced (via “M” Street). Cumulatively, these factors suggest that the intervening lands between the City and Community SUDPs, currently designated for rural uses, be reconsidered for higher density development comparable to those uses permitted on adjoining lands. This could create a continuous pattern of urban uses of comparable density between the City and University Community. While this may be viewed as a benefit, it may also be perceived as a detriment. Arguably, one-acre lot development is urban in character and, in many communities, is the density of upscale housing neighborhoods. The lack of a clearly defined transitional area could negatively impact the ability to establish the identity of a distinct community that may be necessary to attract the involvement of a high quality master developer.

This issue, along with the potential growth inducement associated with development of the University Community SUDP and Campus Parkway, begs fundamental questions about the long-term urban growth boundaries for the City and protection of agricultural lands. Such issues cannot be resolved independently and require collaborative efforts that build upon the history of collaborative planning fostered by the Revenue Sharing Agreement. A number of ancillary issues emerging from the development of the campus and Community, such as their impacts on the use of Lake Yosemite Regional Park, would also benefit from a collaborative approach.

■ GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal

Complementary and compatible land used development on lands between the University Community and City of Merced that reflect the area’s characteristics and natural resources.

Objective

ARM 1.0 To establish a process and policy, standards, and regulations for the development of lands between the University Community and City of Merced to ensure their compatibility with the University Community, UC Merced campus, and City of Merced.

Policies

ARM 1.1 Collaborate with the City of Merced in the joint planning of lands located between the University Community and City SUDP (location to be mutually determined by the County and City) that will designate land uses to be accommodated, development and design standards, transportation and infrastructure improvements, public services (schools, parklands, etc.), open spaces, resource management strategies, and governance. This would be accomplished through a Memorandum of Understanding, which builds upon the collaborative planning commitments in the existing Revenue Sharing Agreement. Figure 17 incorporates a preliminary depiction of the area between the University Community and City for which collaborative planning should be initiated. *(Imp 3.3)*

ARM 1.2 Assure that development in the area between the City and University Community SUDPs complements (in type, density/intensity, and design) and does not adversely impact uses in these areas. In particular, control uses located at key entries and edges to ensure that their quality is reflective of the campus and Community. *(Imp 2.1, 3.3)*

ARM 1.3 Plan for the development of a cohesive transportation (roadways, transit, bikeway, and pedestrian) and infrastructure (water, wastewater, storm drainage, telecommunications, and energy) systems that link the University Community, campus, and City, where needed and appropriate. *(Imp 2.1, 2.4, 3.3)*

Goal

A long-term growth and development strategy for the greater Merced urban area, including the University Community, which recognizes the importance of preserving opportunities for agricultural uses.

Objective

ARM 2.0 To establish a process and policy, standards, and regulations for the management of agricultural lands.

Policies

- ARM 2.1** Collaborate with the City of Merced in establishing a strategy for the long-term growth and management/protection of agricultural lands on properties east of the City, extending to and beyond the proposed Campus Parkway. *(Imp 2.1, 3.3, 4.11)*
- ARM 2.2** Collaborate with the City of Merced in implementing agricultural protection policies defined in the Area Plan—Agriculture (preceding section). *(Imp 3.3, 4.11)*

Goal

Maintenance and enhancement of Lake Yosemite Regional Park as a recreational amenity serving residents of the County, City of Merced, and greater region.

Objective

- ARM 3.0** To establish a process and policy, standards, and procedures for the long term use, management, improvement, and funding of Lake Yosemite Regional Park.

Policy

- ARM 3.1** Identify community recreational needs and potential funding sources for the Lake Yosemite Regional Park in collaboration with the City of Merced and other jurisdictions that benefit from the Park's use. While the Park is the authority of the County, the City and all jurisdictions whose constituencies use that Park should seek to identify how they can contribute to the Park's maintenance, enhancement, and programs (refer to policy ALY 3.2). *(Imp 3.3, 4.8, 5.6)*

Goal

Provision of adequate public services to the University Community throughout its development life.

Objective

- ARM 4.0** To engage the City of Merced as a partner in providing adequate urban services to the University Community in the early years of development.

Policy

- ARM 4.1** Enter into agreements with the City of Merced to provide interim police, fire, library, and other services to the University Community during the initial stages of development and sufficient resource capacities are created to support local services. *(Imp 3.3)*

Goal

Clearly understood linkages to City and County destinations.

Objective

- ARM 5.0** To develop a system of information, visual elements, and transportation that integrate the County, City, and University Community into a cohesive community fabric.

Policies

- ARM 5.1** Work with the City of Merced to develop a well-designed street signage and monuments/ landmarks program that will be commonly used throughout the University Community, City of Merced, and adjoining areas that provides clear information regarding major destinations and travel routes (“wayfinding”). *(Imp 3.3)*
- ARM 5.2** Work with the City of Merced in establishing a unified transit system that connects the University Community with key destinations in the City. *(Imp 3.3, 4.1)*