

Trevor and Linda Hirst  
1355 Ahwahnee Ct  
Merced  
CA 95340

Subject: Strong opposition to proposed rezoning,  
high-density housing and commercial development

To: City of Merced Planning Commission

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed rezoning and housing development between the Yosemite Surgery Center and Ahwahnee Ct in our community of Oakmont. As concerned residents of Ahwahnee Ct who will be directly impacted by the proposal, we believe this project would have serious negative impacts on our community's infrastructure, quality of life, and property value.

### **Impact on Community Character and Property Values**

The character of our neighborhood is one of the main reasons we chose to live here. The zoning of the land behind the house as office space was another reason we chose our home. The proposed rezoning and development will fundamentally alter the feel of our home by crowding us in, increasing light and noise pollution and introducing a level of overcrowding that is inconsistent with the existing residential setting. The proposed development squeezes nearly double the number of existing homes along the shared boundary, and features two-story homes, which will tower over the existing single-story residences, resulting in a loss of privacy for current homeowners. Close-packed housing developments have been shown to negatively affect property values, causing financial harm to long-standing homeowners who have invested in this community. Existing homeowners should not bear the financial burden of a decision that benefits developers.

### **Traffic and Infrastructure Concerns**

Our current infrastructure around Yosemite Avenue is already strained, with congestion at the junction of Yosemite and Parsons avenue increasing dramatically at rush hour over the past few years. Yosemite narrows to a single lane road there on the way to the UC and adding this housing complex and commercial facility will only exacerbate these issues, making daily commutes longer, causing problems at the junction and increasing the risk of accidents. Current infrastructure is inadequate for this proposed development. The single lane road at Yosemite is currently in very poor condition and cannot handle more traffic. This is one of only two access routes to the UC campus from town and the route already cannot handle any more traffic in that direction. Regarding the specific proposed

development plan, a single narrow road is planned as the entryway into the housing area. This does not provide adequate parking or space to handle the number of cars that will enter and exit at that point as is currently the case in the Moraga development where parking congestion in similar streets has become extremely problematic.

### **Environmental Concerns**

The proposed site for this development includes mature pine trees (approximately 20 years old) along the shared boundary that block sound from Yosemite Avenue, provide shade and cooling to the yard and – most importantly – privacy. The proposed development appears to include the removal of these trees. This will result in inadequate shade (which negatively impacts power use) and, in concert with two story buildings, will exacerbate loss of privacy in existing homes, dramatically affecting quality of life. Removal of these well-established mature trees will very negatively impact our property in a way that will take at least 15 years to replace.

### **Conclusion**

We strongly urge City Planners to reject this rezoning proposal. The proposed development is highly inappropriate for the current area, and damage the higher value nature of the local area. Squeezing this high-density house development into a relatively small space is clearly not in the best interest of our community where there are several larger more open spaces available for development very close by, including the opposite corner of Yosemite and Gardner where space considerations are less of a problem.

We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and request that our concerns, along with those of our neighbors – a large number of whom have signed a petition opposing this proposal – be taken into serious consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Trevor P. Hirst



Linda S. Hirst