

RE: General Plan Amendment #24-02 / Site Utilization Plan Revision #3 to Planned Development #20 / Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1332 / Site Plan #551/ Minor Use Permit #24-13 – Yosemite Avenue Self Storage and Residential Project

April 8, 2025

Dear Planning Commissioners,

Thank you for representing the interests and vision for Merced and all who live here through creating spaces that support the life, livelihoods and culture of our community. I have lived here 10 years, returning after college and growing up in Mariposa. I am grateful for your work to expand parks and greenspaces. I am pleased with many of the improvements to our community. However, smart growth requires the courage to say no to developments that only serve individuals and bring minimal benefit to homeowners, local businesses and community members. **I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed General Plan Amendment 24-02, which proposes the rezoning and development of dense housing and storage facility along a primary corridor in Merced.** This is not helpful, beautiful, economically viable, or reasonable to change a clean slate into a hot, dirty, pavement for single use.

Mini-storage is the symptom of overconsumption, but the ill of modern society is not seeking solutions for stuff. The ill is limited space for engagement, community, commerce, creativity. It is not having the green space to choose other ways of being in the world besides consumption. Mini storage facilities, with their large, dark, and often concrete structures, contribute to the urban heat island effect (UHI) by absorbing and retaining heat, particularly during the day, and then releasing it slowly at night, which can lead to higher temperatures. This night time heat source will make it more unpleasant to live near it. It's also a place where no people are—only things. That means that it is a place of minimal and limited commerce. One contract and that is limited value. However, small stores and green spaces can contribute to the economy, employ more people, serve as a place for healthy choices, act as a heat sink instead of a source, increase the beauty and quality of life of Merced community members.

There are already other spaces for storage nearby (R and Yosemite, and on 59 for example). This is an open space, a huge opportunity other cities would wish for. I want to live in a Merced that thinks about the world to come—with more than 60 days over 100 degrees F—and plans for it, mitigates the stress on people, and builds community. I would love to have a north Merced Bob Hart square, or another park, or other uses. The artist Brian Andreas writes, “if we fail this time, it will be a failure of the imagination.” Please join me in imagining a higher, greener, safer, cleaner, healthier, BETTER use of this space. Please open the discussion to other opportunities and reflect the Merced Vision 2030 General Plan.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Regards,

Leigh Bernacchi, PhD

Bellevue Ranch area, Merced, CA Resident since 2015