

**From:** [Jean Okuye](#)  
**To:** [cityclerk](#)  
**Subject:** Merced City public access for budget comment period June 2-16  
**Date:** Monday, June 2, 2025 9:06:06 AM

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

I would like to understand how the budget process works and where we are with infrastructure maintenance. A short YouTube video on each topic posted to the city facebook page and on other social media places can help me and others understand the budget better and be more educated in responding.

Also, how we can submit our comments clearly stated would be helpful.

A suggestion for transparency and education to post the budget in the City Hall on the first floor display area, have articles in the county times and Merced SunStar newspapers

.Planning for income to cover future maintenance expenses must be done to provide an accurate financial picture. Is the city doing this? I suggest that using accrual accounting the city will have the best information for the true costs which include future cash flow for maintenance for infrastructure. This is also recommended by the Strongtowns nonprofit.

Knowing what the costs are for development of houses can be a baseline. The city should require the actual cost for construction of homes versus the cost to buyers of houses since the city will be responsible for infrastructure maintenance.

Having opportunities for the public to make comments such as at town hall meetings could be done earlier in the planning stages, with a follow up of feedback from the city on the concerns of the citizens so there is a better bottom up approach.

Many people I believe don't think they have any power as they make comments but get no feedback. For example, addressing the speeds on many streets in the city such as from Hwy140 on 21st Street into downtown where neighbors say they can't safely get out of the driveways. Studying what other cities have done by providing inexpensive traffic calming methods can be found on [strongtowns.org](http://strongtowns.org).

Education, transparency and financial planning for not only cost now but anticipated costs with money set aside to cover these future costs is important.

Ask the WHY we are where we are.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Jean Okuye, property owner in Merced City.

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**Comment for Item G.1 25-536 - Public Hearing to Allow the Interested Public an Opportunity to Provide Input on the Content of the City Council, Public Financing and Economic Development Authority, Parking Authority, and Successor Agency to the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Merced Fiscal Year 2025-26 Proposed Budget and After Hearing all Comments Continue the Public Hearing to June 16, 2025**

As the City of Merced finalizes its budget priorities, I urge our leaders to take a more equitable and community-driven approach—especially regarding infrastructure investments such as wastewater connections and the development of public parks and green spaces.

The recent release of the Wastewater Master Plan is a significant step in planning for the city's future. However, it's concerning that the majority of proposed wastewater connections are concentrated in North Merced—an area largely undeveloped—while existing neighborhoods in South Merced continue to wait for wastewater services. For years, residents in South Merced have advocated for these essential services, and yet their needs remain unmet. This isn't just a matter of pipes and planning; it's a matter of environmental justice and public health. Access to wastewater infrastructure is foundational. It supports cleaner neighborhoods, healthier families, and future housing opportunities. To continue sidelining South Merced is to ignore generations of residents who have contributed to this city but have not seen their neighborhoods equitably invested in.

The city has already invested in developing a Wastewater Master Plan and has created an initial map outlining potential main pipe extensions in South Merced. To build on this work and move toward implementation, the city should allocate \$120,000 for a Water and Sewer Service Extension Feasibility Study. This study would provide the detailed analysis needed to apply for state and federal funding for the design and construction of these critical infrastructure projects. Without it, South Merced risks being excluded from future funding opportunities that could finally bring long-awaited services to the community.

Moreover, as the city considers where to allocate resources, I also call attention to the pressing need for more parks and green spaces—especially in underserved parts of Merced. Parks are not a luxury; they are vital for mental and physical health, community connection, youth engagement, and environmental sustainability. Green spaces help reduce heat in urban areas, improve air quality, and provide safe places for families and children to gather, play, and grow.

If Merced is truly committed to inclusive growth, we must ensure that current residents—particularly in South Merced—are not left behind while we plan for future development.

Thank you.

Comment for Item H.2 25-530 - Authorization of Use of South Merced Funding from General Fund of \$350,000 and Economic Development Opportunity Funding of \$154,291 Towards the Completion of Stephen Leonard Youth Center Up to an Amount not to Exceed \$504,291. Transferring to and Appropriating Within Fund 5000-Parks and Community Services Capital Improvement Project (CIP)

Good afternoon Mayor, Councilmembers, and City Staff,

My name is Alicia Rivera and I work for Leadership Counsel. While it is encouraging to see the City Council prioritizing the restoration and improvement of the Stephen Leonard Youth Center, which serves as an important space for youth engagement and community programs, it is crucial to ensure that the use of South Merced's designated funding reflects the broader needs and priorities of the community.

The proposed allocation of over \$500,000 from General Fund CP240001 South Merced Improvement and Fund 1017- Economic Development Opportunity raises important concerns about how these resources are being used. Economic development funds should primarily be directed toward long-term investments that drive sustainable economic growth, create jobs, support small businesses, and improve infrastructure in underserved neighborhoods like South Merced.

Residents continue to face systemic challenges related to housing, employment opportunities, and access to essential services. These funds should be strategically invested in ways that directly uplift the community and improve quality of life over the long term.

Additionally, transparency and community engagement are vital. Major financial decisions, especially those involving funds intended for South Merced, should involve public input. Residents deserve to be informed when allocations are being considered, and they must have the opportunity to voice their priorities and participate in the decision-making process. This is not just about fairness—it's about making sure investments reflect the actual needs and aspirations of the people who live there.

Going forward, South Merced residents should be clearly informed about how these funds are being used and what they're intended for. There must be transparency and community involvement, especially when funding meant to support South Merced's economic opportunity is being reallocated.

Thank you,

Alicia Rivera