

MERCED VISION 2015 GENERAL PLAN (Adopted 1997)
GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS
(Edited and Updated for the General Plan Update—January 2008)

URBAN EXPANSION GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

Goal Area UE-1: Urban Expansion	
GOALS	
■ A Compact Urban Form ■ Preservation of Agriculturally Significant Areas ■ Efficient Urban Expansion	
POLICIES	
UE-1.1	Designate areas for new urban development that recognize the physical characteristics and environmental constraints of the planning area.
UE-1.2	Promote a compact urban form. Foster compact and efficient development patterns
UE-1.3	Control the annexation, timing, density, and location of new land uses within the City's urban expansion boundaries.
UE-1.4	Establish joint City-County planning program on the UC San Joaquin (Merced) site and Smith Trust lands. Continue joint planning efforts on the UC Merced and University Community plans.
UE-1.5	Work with Merced County and the City of Atwater to establish a Greenbelt area between the Cities of Atwater and Merced.
UE-1.6	Preserve the projected "Northern City" urban expansion area for anticipated growth needs beyond the year 2015. Ensure connectivity between existing and planned urban areas.
UE-1.7	Promote annexation of developed areas within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/ Sphere of Influence (SOI) during the planning period.
UE-1.8	Policies will need to be added that address the new Sphere of Influence (SOI), the SUDP, and the Area of Interest (AOI) in regards to how a property in the AOI can move into the SOI in the future, the phasing of development within the SOI, the structure of proposed "Community Plans," what is allowed in "Reserve" areas, etc.

Policy UE-1.1

Designate Areas For New Urban Development That Recognize the Physical Characteristics and Environmental Constraints of the Planning Area.

The City of Merced is situated in an area which contains physical characteristics and environmental constraints that would be adversely impacted by poor urban expansion policy. It is in the long term interest of the City to promote urban expansion policies which protect and promote avoidance of sensitive environmental and resource areas.

Implementing Actions:

1.1.a Direct development away from significant concentrations of “Prime” agricultural soils and give priority to the conversion of non-prime agricultural land if reasonable alternatives exist.

Urban expansion should be directed away from significant concentrations of “prime” soils and where agricultural use can still be economically sustained. Development within the City’s SUDP should be developed in such a manner as to minimize impacts on “prime” soils along the City’s urban fringe. It is recognized that it is not possible to avoid all “prime” soils. Some areas that contain prime soils are adjacent to important circulation and employment corridors and will need to be developed for urban use in order to achieve critical City economic development and circulation goals. Accommodating growth in a compact form within the City’s growth area will decrease the pressure to develop outside urban areas where more prime soils and intensive agricultural operations now exist.

1.1.b Limit development and development related impacts on agricultural lands along the City’s urban fringe.

Less intense development (i.e. large lot single-family housing on 10,000 and 20,000 square foot lots) should be directed toward the eastern and western fringes of the City, except where more intense development can be served by major transportation corridors. The City will consider adopting a “right-to-farm” ordinance to protect existing agricultural operations by notifying homeowners moving to areas adjacent to these operations of the continued use of agricultural chemicals and the operation of heavy farming equipment.

1.1.c Incompatible urban development shall not be approved in designated airport clear zones.

It is in the City’s interest to protect the airport “Clear Zones” within the Planning Areas. This may include clear zones for the Merced Municipal Airport as well as any newly-established clear zones for the Castle Airport. To this degree, the City may include these Clear Zones within the Merced SUDP or Sphere of Influence with the intention of establishing land use policy which limits residential development while allowing some industrial and commercial development which would not interfere with airport operations.

1.1.d Work with Merced County to establish policies to protect prime agricultural areas around the Sphere of Influence, including the areas north of Highway 140 and east of the proposed Campus parkway, from urban development. This process should include consideration of:

- a) A process to implement techniques (transfer of development rights, agricultural easements, Farmland Trusts, etc.) ~~as part of the UC Campus Parkway corridor planning~~ in order to establish a limited access ~~Campus Parkway parkway~~ with no adjacent urban development outside of the Merced SUDP/~~SOI and the University Community SUDP~~.
- b) Designation of an “Area of Interest (AOI)” or other process to require referral for comment to the City of any proposed development projects within ~~a to be established~~ AOI boundary.
- c) Limiting the expansion of the existing Rural Residential Centers and SUDP’s into prime agricultural areas around the Sphere of Influence.

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The agricultural areas north of Highway 140 and east of ~~Lake Road (extended)~~ the proposed Campus Parkway are not included in the City's SUDP ~~or Sphere of Influence~~. However, the City does retain an interest in seeing that this area remains agricultural. The City has for many years sought to direct urban development away from this area in order to preserve its prime agricultural soils. ~~In fact, the City rejected the proposed Merced 2030 Scenario III which directed significant growth to the east for that reason.~~ The City will work with Merced County to establish policies which reinforce this goal and which seek to protect **all** prime agricultural land around the City's Sphere of Influence.

1.1.e Explore techniques to preserve areas of significant agricultural soils, aircraft noise and safety zones, buffers between cities, scenic areas, flood plains, endangered species habitats, etc. from incompatible urban development.

The City's growth has been directed mostly to the north and south for many years by general plan policy in order to protect agriculturally-significant lands and/or aircraft noise and safety zones to the City's east and west from incompatible urban development. The City should work in cooperation with the Merced County Farm Land and Open Space Trust and Merced County to explore alternatives for assuring the continued preservation of these areas, including transfer of development rights, agricultural easements, aircraft approach protection easements, etc.

1.1.f Mitigation for loss of prime agricultural land within the expanded Sphere of Influence? (Policy issue that will need to be addressed)

LAFCO staff have requested that the City consider a program to mitigate for the conversion of prime agricultural land within the expanded Sphere of Influence.

(Chapter 7--Open Space, Conservation, & Recreation contains additional policies (Policy OS-2.1) regarding the preservation of agricultural land.)

Policy UE-1.2

~~Promote a Compact Urban Form.~~ Foster compact and efficient development patterns.

Through the promotion of compact urban form, the City of Merced can achieve several important environmental and community planning goals. Through the concentration of urban development within the City's SUDP/SOI, impacts on surrounding agricultural resource lands can be reduced and important prime soils preserved. Additionally, through compact urban development, efficient public transit systems can operate to protect the regions air quality. Compact urban development also reduces public infrastructure development and maintenance costs to the City and its residents.

Implementing Actions:

1.2.a Encourage development on in-fill sites by amending the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to better accommodate such requests.

There are areas within the existing incorporated limits of the city which are undeveloped or under-developed. These areas provide development opportunities which will somewhat relieve the need to expand the city's urban limits. Many of these sites are vacant and/or undeveloped due to their unique site constraints. A review and possible revision of City policies and standards, relative to these sites is appropriate. Redevelopment is also a tool that can be used to encourage in-fill development in the Downtown and Gateways Redevelopment Areas (see Chapter 3).

1.2.b Work with Merced County to ensure that existing unincorporated Rural Residential Centers in the Merced area are not expanded and no new Rural Residential Centers are established.-

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~~A large Rural Residential Center is currently located along the east side of the City's SUDP west of Lake Road along with a small RRC along Highway 140 west of the City's SUDP (Massasso Road).~~ RRC's are not efficient uses of land and have not proven to be ideal buffers between urban and agricultural uses. Existing RRC's can remain but should not be enlarged and no new RRC's should be established in accordance with County (and City) General Plan policy and provisions of the City/County Property Tax Sharing Agreement (Section 2.3.4). The City will work with the County on service issues relating to the RRC's. Industrial and business park development do provide good buffers adjacent to agricultural land and are designated along the City's ~~proposed new~~ SUDP to the west, south, and east (south of Highway 140).

1.2.c Continue to limit the expansion of City utilities to only those within an established urban expansion boundary.

Proposals for urban development within the City's SUDP shall be considered only after annexation has taken place. To be eligible for annexation, a property must be contiguous to the City Limits and be located within the SUDP. City utilities should not be extended outside of the City limits except in cases where public health and safety are threatened or a significant public interest (such as the UC campus) is served.

1.2.d Promote higher residential densities within the Merced urban area.

The City will continue to promote the use of higher residential densities, especially small-lot single-family residential and multi-family residential in order to make the most efficient use of land and maintain a compact urban form.

(Chapter 3--Land Use contains additional policies regarding the promotion of a compact urban form.)

Policy UE-1.3

Control the Annexation, Timing, Density, and Location of New Land Uses Within the City's Urban Expansion Boundaries.

Implementing Actions:

1.3.a The City should continue to require that all new urban development and annexations be contiguous to existing urban areas and have reasonable access to public services and facilities.

"Leap-frog development" tends to be cost-prohibitive in these times due to the high up-front costs of extending utility lines, streets, etc., across undeveloped properties to outlying areas. Such development should be discouraged in most cases because of the service inefficiencies it creates. Exceptions can be made for industrial areas which for business recruitment reasons often need to provide infrastructure and services prior to development. Other exceptions may be made, with strong justification on a case-by-case basis, for other areas which may serve the public interest through early development.

1.3.b The City should adequately plan for public improvements/services to support designated land uses for all areas as they become suitable for development and/or proposed for annexation.

The City should ~~prepare~~ continue to revise master plans for providing sewer, water, fire protection, police protection, drainage, and other services for all new growth areas after the adoption of the General Plan. Refer to Chapter 5--Public Services and Facilities for specific policies regarding each of these areas.

1.3.c The City shall encourage phasing of new development.

Phasing of new development will prevent the premature conversion of agricultural land, and permit the efficient and cost effective extension of services.

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- 1.3.c The City ~~should develop~~shall continue to utilize and refine systems to evaluate the cost of providing various services to new development and/or areas proposed for annexation and establish clear policy for meeting those costs.**

The City ~~needs to~~has developed appropriate tools and techniques for evaluating the fiscal impacts of new development, including the costs of providing services and needed infrastructure. Policies (such as those contained in the Public Services and Facilities Chapter of this plan) ~~need~~should continue to be ~~established-enforced~~ to insure that new development pays for the impacts it causes, ~~so~~ensuring that the burden does not fall on current City residents.

- 1.3.d The planning for land uses in newly developing areas should reflect a mix of land uses which will support a neighborhood, including a variety of residential densities and price ranges, neighborhood and convenience shopping facilities, and public facilities such as schools and parks.**

The City will continue to promote the use of the mixed-use, pedestrian- and transit-friendly neighborhoods (“Urban Villages”) in all new growth areas of the City as much as feasible.

- 1.3.e Work with the County to implement the land use provisions of the “Property Tax Sharing Agreement between the City of Merced and the County of Merced” (Section 2.3.4) and negotiate a new agreement that reflects the expanded Sphere of Influence (SOI) and Area of Interest (AOI).**

The City will work closely with the County to implement the land use provisions of the agreement, which include a) maintenance of existing agricultural zoning within the SUDP/SOI; b) requirements and procedures for areas currently zoned for urban development; ~~c) agreement by the County not to expand the existing Rural Residential Centers in the Sphere of Influence outside the University SUDP~~; and, d) cooperative planning and referral of projects within the University Community SUDP. A new agreement will need to negotiated to adopt land use provisions that relate to the new SOI and AOI and that address financial inequities that make annexation difficult for the City.

- 1.3.f Evaluate future annexation requests against the following conditions:**

- a) Is the area contiguous to the current City limits and within the City’s Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/SOI?
- b) Is the proposed development consistent with the land use classifications on the General Plan Land Use Diagram (Figure 3.1)?
- c) Can the proposed development be served by the City water, sewer, storm drainage, fire and police protection, parks, and street systems to meet acceptable standards and service levels without requiring improvements beyond which the developer will consent to provide?
- d) Will this annexation result in the premature conversion of prime agricultural land as defined on the Important Farmland Map of the State Mapping and Monitoring Program? If so, are there alternative locations where this development could take place without converting prime soils?
- e) Will a non-agricultural use create conflict with adjacent or nearby agricultural uses? If so, how can these conflicts be mitigated?

Future annexation requests will be evaluated against the above criteria as well as against the Policies and Implementing Actions of the *Merced Vision ~~2015~~2030* General Plan, including but not limited to the following:

- a) Urban Expansion Policies--UE-1.1, UE-1.2, UE-1.3, and UE-1.7.
- b) Land Use Policies--L-1.1, L-2.1, L-2.7, L-3.1, and L-3.2.
- c) Transportation and Circulation Policies--T-1.1, T-1.3, T-1.8, T-2.2, and T-2.4.
- d) Public Facilities and Services Policies--P-1.1, P-1.2, P-1.3, P-2.1, P-3.1, P-4.1, P-5.1, and P-7.1.
- e) Open Space and Conservation Policies--OS-1.1, OS-1.2, OS-2.1, OS-2.2, OS-3.1, and OS-4.1.

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1.3.g Below is a list of proposed policies that a project will need to be consistent with, prior to being included within the SUDP/SOI, and is also the criteria on which lands within the SUDP/SOI will be evaluated prior to annexation:

- City boundary is contiguous (or annexation is imminent), and no “islands” are created
- A Community or Area Plan is approved with land use, circulation, public facilities, and infrastructure
- The Public Facilities Financing Plan has been updated to include area; revenue sources identified
- The property owner is committed to finance WWTP & capacity is available
- New sewer trunk lines are planned and have capacity
- A revised Revenue Sharing Agreement with Merced County is in place
- The developer agrees to install all off-site intervening infrastructure
- Community or Area Plans need to include adjacent areas within the SOI that are affected by the development of Master Plans

Policy UE-1.4

~~Establish Joint City-County Planning Program on the UC San Joaquin (Merced) Site and Smith Trust Lands.~~ Continue joint planning efforts on the UC Merced campus and University Community plans.

~~The UC Merced site campus and Smith Trust Lands and University Community will likely become an urban area requiring urban services. Consideration will likely be given to making this area part of the incorporated City of Merced. Cooperative planning efforts will be necessary to ensure the effective development of this area for all interested and affected parties. The University Community Plan area is planned as an urban area requiring urban services. Consideration has been given to making this area part of the incorporated City of Merced. Cooperative planning efforts will be necessary to ensure the effective development of this area for all interested and affected parties.~~

Implementing Actions:

1.4.a ~~Incorporate the UC Merced campus area and adjacent lands owned by the Cyril Smith and Virginia Smith Trusts as part of the City's Sphere of Influence.~~

~~This designation would permit the City to provide services to these areas in the future and would facilitate incorporation of the campus into the City if this is determined to be appropriate at a later date. This designation would also require, by State law, that the City be notified of any development proposals in the area and be given a chance to comment on such proposals. This designation would facilitate the incorporation of the Campus into the City.~~

1.4.b ~~Participate in cooperative planning of UC Merced and its surrounding lands.~~ Implement the following policy statement from City Council Resolution #2006-89 regarding the University Community Plan Area.

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MERCED CITY COUNCIL: UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY POLICY STATEMENT

The City Council establishes the following as the City of Merced's position regarding the development of the University community.

Long-term Land Use and Governance

The University community should be incorporated into the City of Merced, and should not be part of the unincorporated County, or a separate City.

- It is in the public interest that the University community's development not result in the creation of a new city or other jurisdiction.
- Multiplication of jurisdictions can lead to conflicts, which should be avoided. A separate City on Merced's border is inherently undesirable.
- The University community is expected to develop at an urban density. Merced County does not currently provide urban services. The City is already serving the University of California campus, and it is logical for the City to serve the adjacent area as well.
- No separate wastewater treatment plant should be allowed or constructed in the area, given the risks to the City's groundwater supply that could result, and competition for qualified licensed operators. This statement does not, however, preclude consideration of innovative methods of wastewater treatment for the area which are reasonably viable from an economic perspective.
- The University community should be developed with the use of annexation agreements and phased annexations, not through the creation of a County services district, either as an interim or permanent measure.

Phasing of Development and Services

The City of Merced is willing to provide interim sewer and water services from existing sewer and water lines along Bellevue Road that serve the University campus, provided that certain conditions are met:

- Interim services to the University community require compliance with environmental law and permitting, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo).
- Prior to providing interim services, the City must receive an acceptable plan for long term service provision, enforceable commitment for annexation, and financial planning and commitments necessary to fund long term services.

The City should encourage annexation along the Bellevue Corridor to provide contiguity between the University community and the City of Merced.

- The Bellevue corridor is expected to become a major regional transportation arterial. Bellevue Road also contains sewer and water lines which have been extended from the City to the University of California campus. The western half of the Corridor, from G Street to Golf Road, is already within Merced's SUDP, and annexation proposals are pending. East of Golf Road, the area along Bellevue Road is held in large tracts by a few land owners, and is mostly undeveloped. It is realistic to expect development proposals in this area in the near term.
- Phasing of the University community's development should provide for logical extension of urban services.
- The Merced County "Rural Residential Center" bounded by Lake Road, Cardella Road, Yosemite Avenue, and Golf Road (extended) should be annexed into the City of Merced as well. However, this area, which is already developed to a large extent, should be allowed to retain its rural character, with a special plan Designation to be worked out through the General Plan update process.

Planning Processes

The City accepts the University Community Plan adopted by Merced County on December 21, 2004 as a general conceptual framework for the planning of the University community.

- That existing plan can be used as foundational work for further planning for the area, with the City as lead agency in the planning process.
- If a special planning process or framework is used for the development of the University community, then the costs of that planning process shall be borne by applicants and developers, not by Merced residents.
- The City should revise all of its various planning documents to accommodate the incorporation of the University community into the City of Merced. These include not only the General Plan, but also plans for wastewater treatment, water, storm drainage, parks, fire protection, and other services.

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The City will participate with the University of California, the County of Merced, other public agencies, ~~the Cyril and Virginia Smith Trusts~~, and other land owners in planning of the campus and its surrounding areas. Issues will include the timing of development relative to the UC construction, transportation access to the site, extension of urban services to the site, and possible future annexation to the City of Merced.

~~1.4.c Work closely with the University of California and the County of Merced in development of the UC Merced Campus Plan and University Community and provide assistance in the expansion of infrastructure to service the site as required.~~

City staff will provide technical support to campus planners in the coordination of infrastructure expansion to serve the site. Areas to be addressed will include, but are not limited to:

- ~~a) extension of public transit service to the site;~~
- ~~b) provision of sewer and water to the site as required;~~
- ~~c) development of public protection facilities and expansion of public protection services to the site as necessary;~~
- ~~d) coordinated development of site access streets, public transportation systems, etc., as required, and~~
- ~~e) cooperate in the development of other necessary campus support facilities, such as flood control and drainage facilities, extension of power, gas and telecommunications infrastructure, etc.~~

Policy UE-1.5

Work with Merced County and the City of Atwater to Establish a Greenbelt Area Between the Cities of Atwater and Merced.

It is the long-standing policy of both the City of Atwater and the City of Merced that a non-urbanized buffer area be established between the two cities.

Implementing Actions:

1.5.a Establish a “Greenbelt” area between the City of Merced and the City of Atwater.

The City of Merced will propose to the City of Atwater and the County of Merced that a “greenbelt” be established. This process should include the establishment of a set of goals and policies for the Greenbelt area as well as definition of more precise boundaries. The major goal should be the preservation of this area as a permanent agricultural/open space area. Consideration should be given to involving the Merced County Open Space and Farmland Trust in the preservation of this area through the use of agricultural easements, the purchase of development rights, etc.

1.5.b Designate the Greenbelt area as an “Area of Interest” in accordance with policies contained in the Merced County General Plan.

The Greenbelt area will be designated as an “Area of Interest” (see definition in Section 2.6.3) in the City of Merced General Plan and as such, would be considered appropriate for agricultural use exclusively except for areas where substantial urban development (i.e. the Franklin Beachwood SUDP) already exists. The City should then encourage the City of Atwater and Merced County to include such a designation in their General Plans as well.

Policy UE-1.6

Preserve the “Northern City” Urban Expansion Area for Anticipated Growth Needs Beyond the Year 2015. Ensure connectivity between existing and planned urban areas.

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~~The “Merced 2030 Plan” identified the most appropriate long term growth option for the City to follow—the “Northern City” alternative. This area is necessary for the growth of the City beyond the 2015 planning horizon of the General Plan. This future urban expansion area needs to be protected from premature and scattered “suburban” development which may result from development of the UC San Joaquin (Merced) Campus in the area. In order to foster a sense of community among all citizens of Merced, and avoid separate “enclaves” within the city, all development should be required to extend access and access to services to surrounding existing community areas or vacant land.~~

Implementing Actions:

- 1.6.a** ~~Develop a cooperative planning program with the County of Merced for review of development proposals submitted in the “2030 Plan” expansion area.~~ Ensure multiple points of access for all new development.

~~The City of Merced and the County of Merced may establish a set of development goals and policies for this area. These policies would serve as guidelines for development proposed in this unincorporated area and subject to City of Merced and County of Merced review procedures.~~ Maximizing access between new development and adjacent existing neighborhoods (or vacant land) promotes interaction between residents.

- 1.6.b** ~~Designate the “2030 Plan” expansion area as an “Area of Interest” in accordance with policies contained in the Merced County General Plan.~~ Prohibit large-scale gated developments.

~~The “Merced 2030” expansion area is proposed as an “Area of Interest” in the Merced City General Plan and, as such, should be considered appropriate for agricultural use exclusively except for areas where substantial urban development exists. The City of Merced should request that the Merced County General Plan be modified to reflect the City’s policy regarding this area. Boundaries will also need to be defined. Gated developments typically isolate neighborhoods from each other, and serve to “balkanize” the city.~~

Policy UE-1.7

Promote Annexation of Developed Areas Within the City’s Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI) During the Planning Period.

Unincorporated suburban development within the City’s SUDP has resulted in problems of public protection (police and fire) service delivery to residents in addition to posing potential long term problems to residents with respect to maintenance of on-site water systems and wastewater disposal (septic) systems. Such problems could also threaten the City’s future water quality. Also, residents of these areas, while directly impacted by the City’s planning decision making process, have no direct voice in municipal affairs. In the long-term interest of both the City and the residents, these unincorporated suburban areas should be annexed to the City of Merced.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.7.a** The City should continue to promote the annexation of unincorporated urban areas within the urban expansion boundaries, which cause a duplication of public services and hinder extension of City services to new development.

To make annexation more attractive to these areas, the City will explore different options regarding the timing and cost of connecting to City sewer and water (perhaps allowing a longer time period than the current code-required six years), the allowance of different public improvement standards, and the establishment of a “rural agricultural overlay” zone for limited areas where the keeping of farm animals may be allowed within the City limits. (Implementation of the “rural ag overlay” has occurred on some newly annexed areas on a case-by-case basis.)

- 1.7.b** Review relevant City improvement and development policies to remove unnecessary obstacles to incorporation.

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The formation of assessment districts to pay for needed infrastructure improvements should be explored. City policies relative to mandatory connection to the City's sewer and water system should be reviewed. Consideration might be given to establishment of policies which would allow residents, presently served by private sewer and water systems, to remain on these systems unless they pose a problem to public health and safety.

1.7.c Provide assistance to residents of unincorporated areas to address public health and safety concerns of on-site water and sewer systems.

The City may assist residents with coordinated expansion of utility service, where desired by the residents, and in support of an annexation petition.

~~1.7.d Review and revise zoning standards which restrict limited agricultural uses on large-lot residential development.~~ **1.7.d Establish annexation policies and outreach program regarding the annexation of the existing Rural Residential Centers (existing development on one-acre lots)**

~~City "Rural Residential" zoning standards should be developed to reflect the County "Rural Residential" standards of use, including the keeping of animals for 4 H purposes.~~ With the inclusion of many of the existing Rural Residential Centers within the SUDP/SOI, the City will need to establish policies and possibly an outreach program to address whether those areas should be annexed and services provided. Modifications to the City/County Tax-Sharing Agreement will likely be necessary to make annexation of these areas financially feasible for the City.

1.7.e Provide information to interested unincorporated area residents on the benefits of annexation.

The City can develop and distribute information to county residents within the SUDP on the pros and cons of annexation, including comparisons of costs of City vs. County services, taxes (no difference), development standards, etc. City staff can attend meetings with neighborhood groups in unincorporated areas to explain the annexation process and City policy regarding annexing unincorporated areas.

Policy UE-1.8

Policies will need to be added that address the new Sphere of Influence (SOI), the SUDP, and the Area of Interest (AOI) in regards to how a property in the AOI can move into the SOI in the future, the phasing of development within the SOI, the structure of proposed "Community Plans," what is allowed in "Reserve" areas, etc.

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Implementing Actions:

1.8.a

LAND USE GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

Goal Area L-1: Residential & Neighborhood Development

GOALS

- **Housing Opportunities in Balance with Jobs Created in the Merced Urban Area**
- **A Wide Range of Residential Densities and Housing Types in the City**
- **Preservation and Enhancement of Existing Neighborhoods**
- **Quality Residential Environments**
- **Mixed-use, Transit and Pedestrian-Friendly Residential Environments**
- **Ensure adequate housing is available to all segments of the population**

POLICIES

- L-1.1** Promote balanced development which provides jobs, services and housing.
- L-1.2** Encourage a diversity of building types, ownership, prices, designs, and site plans for residential areas throughout the City.
- L-1.3** Encourage a diversity of lot sizes in residential subdivisions.
- L-1.4** Conserve residential areas that are threatened by blighting influences.
- L-1.5** Protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible developments.
- L-1.6** Continue to pursue quality single-family and higher density residential development.
- L-1.7** Encourage the location of multi-family developments on sites with good access to transportation, shopping, and services.
- L-1.8** Create livable and identifiable residential neighborhoods.
- L-1.9 Locate commercial node in new growth areas to avoid the aesthetic and circulation issues associated with “strip commercial.”**
- L-1.10 Implement the 2007 Downtown Strategy.**

Policy L-1.1

Promote Balanced Development Which Provides Jobs, Services and Housing.

The long term economic health of the City is enhanced by maintaining housing opportunities that accommodate the local labor force. At the same time, residential development must have adequate and appropriate services which are accessible. The balance between job growth, housing opportunity and services not only supports stable economic growth in Merced, it also reduces vehicle trips for work commutes and service, and enhances the overall quality of life for Merced residents.

Implementing Actions:

1.1.a Promote mixed use development combining compatible employment, service and residential elements.

Mixed use development plans would typically be proposed in the new growth areas of Merced in accordance with the Urban Villages development standards. The City should ~~consider~~ continue reviewing its zoning and development codes in the established areas of the City to determine if policies and programs could be proposed which would facilitate the location of appropriate employment centers and services.

1.1.b Periodically review job growth statistics in the Merced urban area compared to new residential development.

The City should continue to maintain and monitor housing cost data for different types of housing in the Merced Metropolitan area and for different parts of the City. This data would need to be periodically compared to existing employment opportunities to determine if there is a reasonable relationship between housing and jobs and determine if increased housing costs in a sector or area indicates demand for a particular type of housing.

1.1.c Determine the types of housing opportunities needed for the type of employment opportunities being created in the City.

The City should periodically review State employment statistics for the Merced Metropolitan Area and determine if new housing construction has been occurring in relative balance with job growth. Value and type of housing should be somewhat related to the types of jobs being created. Over time, if it appears that normal market forces are not matching housing growth with employment, the City may need to take action to promote the appropriate type of housing development by type and location.

Policy L-1.2

Encourage a Diversity of Building Types, Ownership, Prices, Designs, and Site Plans For Residential Areas Throughout The City.

Implementing Actions:

1.2.a Encourage higher-density residential developments within walking distance (approx. 1/4 mile) of commercial centers.

The Urban Villages Concept calls for higher-density residential developments within walking distance of village commercial cores. A wide range of densities, including small-lot single-family, townhouses, and apartments, can be allowed in these "Village Core Residential" areas to achieve an overall average density of at least 10 units per acre. This residential development will help ensure greater support for transit and the economic viability of the commercial uses. These principles should be applied to most of the City's new growth areas and financial incentives explored for promoting their use.

1.2.b Encourage residential and/or office above retail in the downtown area and in neighborhood commercial cores.

The City's Central Commercial (C-C), Neighborhood Commercial (C-N), and Office Commercial (C-O) zones currently allows residential uses as well as commercial uses, ~~but most of the other commercial zones do not allow residential uses.~~ Most of the zoning downtown is C-C. ~~Consideration should be given to amending the Zoning Ordinance to allow and encourage residential above retail in other commercial zones or making use of Planned Development zoning to allow such uses.~~ Traditionally, retail uses outside of the downtown area are in single-story buildings. Additional upper floors with residential or office uses should be encouraged in order to provide a higher degree of street security at night, concentrated pedestrian activity, increased support for transit, and a greater number of lunch-time and after-work shoppers.

1.2.c Continue to allow second units in single-family areas ~~and consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to allow rental of these units to people other than relatives or age 65 or older.~~

The City's Zoning Ordinance currently allows the second units in single-family areas without discretionary review in accordance with State law. ~~but they must be occupied by relatives by blood or marriage of the owner-occupant of the principal dwelling or people age 65 or older. Second units of this type can offer important housing opportunities for singles, low-income tenants, and college students if allowed.~~ Second units which can be rented to students and entry-level staff and faculty could provide an important housing resource to the UC campus. Performance standards ~~would need to be~~ have been established for such units which ~~should~~ still require the owner to occupy the primary unit on the lot to avoid problems with "absentee" landlords.

1.2.d Encourage duplexes on corner lots in low-density residential areas.

The City's Zoning Ordinance currently allows duplexes on corner lots in single-family residential areas with a conditional use permit ~~if the lots are at least 8,000 square feet and the lot does not front only on an alley or collector or higher order street.~~ Such duplexes should be encouraged. ~~Consideration should be given to allowing these duplexes as permitted uses as long as the same requirements are met.~~

1.2.e Consider density increases for existing residential sites where the necessary conditions exist for higher densities.

Areas where such density increases should be considered would be areas along major transit corridors (such as the M Street transitway), areas within walking distance of commercial services, and infill sites.

1.2.f Create a new zoning category to correspond with the "Village Core Residential" land use category for mixed densities in residential areas within walking distance of neighborhood commercial centers.

The "Village Core Residential" land use category proposed in this general plan does not have a corresponding zoning category. (This category is known simply as "Village Residential" on the Land Use Diagram, Figure 3.1.) Planned Development zoning could be used on an interim basis (Table 3.2). A new zoning category should be created which would allow a mix of densities and housing types (small-lot single-family, townhouses, duplexes, apartments) in order to achieve a minimum average density of 10 units per acre.

Policy L-1.3.

Encourage a Diversity Of Lot Sizes In Residential Subdivisions.

*To encourage a wide variety of housing types to meet the City's diverse housing needs, the City shall promote the following **Implementing Actions:***

1.3.a Continue the use of Residential Planned Developments to provide for smaller lot sizes in single-family developments.

The City's Low-Density Residential (R-1) zones currently have 5,000-, 6,000-, 10,000-, and 20,000-square foot minimum lot sizes. With the use of Residential Planned Developments, smaller lot sizes and other options (zero-lot-line, cluster housing, etc.) can be allowed, thus offering a variety of housing choices to meet the City's diverse housing needs.

1.3.b Continue to retain large lot parcel zoning (10,000 to 20,000 square feet) along Bear Creek and in areas adjacent to the urban fringe.

Larger residential and estate lots have traditionally been required along Bear Creek Drive to preserve its rural and scenic nature. Larger lots and estate lots adjacent to the urban fringe provide a good transition from higher urban densities to adjacent agricultural or rural residential uses. The City should review its policies and standards to make sure no barriers exist to developing larger lots within the City limits to meet market demand.

1.3.c Continue to use the “Random-mixed Lot” ordinance (MMC 20.10.065) to allow a mix of lot widths and lot sizes in R-1-6 (single-family residential-- 6,000 square-foot minimum lot size) zones.

This ordinance allows a mixture of lot widths ranging from 45 to 65 feet in single-family residential areas. The smaller lots are required to be “mixed-in” with the other lot widths with no more than two of these lots adjacent to one another. Up to 40 percent of the lots in a subdivision may be of this smaller width as long as 25 percent of the remaining lots are at least 65 feet wide. This allows a greater variety of housing designs while rewarding the developer with a small percentage of additional lots.

Policy L-1.4

Conserve Residential Areas That Are Threatened by Blighting Influences.

Many of Merced’s existing residential neighborhoods are threatened by blighting influences. Merced’s neighborhoods are the life blood of this community and considerable effort must be made to avoid their deterioration.

Implementing Actions:

1.4.a Conduct a study of non-conforming land uses and determine if the land use designations/zoning should be changed to conform to the existing use or if changes should be made to the Zoning Ordinance restrictions on non-conforming uses.

There exist a number of land uses throughout the City which are “non-conforming,” meaning that the existing use of the property would not be allowed under the current zoning even though the use was allowed under the zoning which was in place when it was built. For example, an area which was once residential has been converted to a commercial district. Over time, most residences were torn down and replaced with commercial development, but some “non-conforming” residences continue to exist.

Under the provisions of the City’s Zoning Ordinance (MMC 20.60), these non-conforming uses may continue to exist, but their survival is not encouraged. This means that they cannot be enlarged or extended nor can they be rebuilt if they are substantially destroyed. Non-conforming structures often have trouble obtaining insurance and financing because of these restrictions, which can lead to blight. For the most part, these non-conforming uses should not be encouraged. However, a study of these uses should be conducted to see if there may be some existing non-conforming uses which may merit special consideration. This special consideration may lead to a change in land use/zoning designation or possible changes to the Zoning Ordinance restrictions.

(Notes: For additional implementing actions, please refer to the Housing Element (Chapter 9)--Goal Area 2.)

Policy L-1.5

Protect Existing Neighborhoods From Incompatible Developments.

Merced’s existing neighborhoods should be protected from incompatible commercial and industrial uses which may cause adverse impacts on the residences.

Implementing Actions:

1.5.a Continue to use the Interface Overlay Zone regulations for the review of proposed land uses adjacent to residential areas.

The Interface Overlay regulations (MMC 20.52.010) require conditional use permits for commercial, and industrial developments directly adjacent to residential uses. The purpose of the use permit is to ensure that the residential areas are protected from possible negative effects such as obtrusive lighting, traffic, noise, loss of privacy, etc., from adjacent higher-intensity uses. Expanded setbacks, landscape

buffers, height limits, restrictions on lighting and access, limited store hours, and other measures can be applied to these developments to make them better neighbors. These regulations also apply to high density residential uses adjacent to single-family zones.

1.5.b Evaluate traffic and circulation generated by large scale commercial and industrial projects and limit their adverse impacts on residential areas.

Sometimes commercial and industrial development can cause negative impacts on residential areas without being directly adjacent to them, and thus could not be addressed under the Interface Overlay regulations. Traffic is a particular concern. Traffic from employees or customers going to commercial and industrial areas can pass through residential areas and cause adverse impacts. Through the City's Development Review process, the City should watch for circulation patterns which may encourage such pass-through traffic and make alternatives available to eliminate or limit these patterns. Changes to collectors and other streets that may cause existing traffic to take new routes should also be monitored.

1.5.c Continue to implement City Council Resolution #84-105 establishing policy for zone changes in the Central Residential Area of the City (bounded by 18th Street on the south, Glen Avenue on the east, and Bear Creek on the north and west).

- This resolution declares the City's desire "to protect and preserve the single-family character of the City's Central Residential Area by discouraging any application of a zone change which would result in the creation of additional commercial or multi-family residential uses within the area unless the applicant establishes, by clear and convincing evidence, that the benefits of the rezoning outweigh the perceived detriment to the City."
- The following impacts are to be considered criteria for evaluating a zone change request:
 - 1) negative or economic impacts on existing residential properties;
 - 2) impacts on the City's Redevelopment Area goals and objectives;
 - 3) impacts on the number of owner-occupied dwellings; and
 - 4) the impact on the availability of affordable single-family housing in the area.
- The resolution additionally requires that public hearing notices for such zone change requests be sent to all property owners within 500 feet of the property instead of the State-required 300 feet.

Policy L-1.6.

Continue to Pursue Quality Single-Family And Higher Density Residential Development.

*To ensure the quality of the City's residential areas, the City shall pursue the following **Implementing Actions**:*

1.6.a Continue to review proposed subdivision designs to ensure the provision of adequate circulation, public improvements, common open space, landscaping, maintenance, etc. through the Development Review process.

Subdivision maps are reviewed by City staff and the Planning Commission prior to approval through the public hearing process. The maps are reviewed to ensure that adequate circulation (auto, bicycle, and pedestrian), public improvements, open space, landscaping, etc. are provided.

1.6.b Continue to require multi-family projects to comply, at minimum, with the adopted standards and design guidelines contained in the "City of Merced Multi-Family Design Standards and Guidelines."

Multi-family projects of three or more units are subject [to](#) the *City of Merced Multi-Family Design Standards and Guidelines* (MMC 20.54.290 to 20.54.310). There are different standards for planned development projects, non-planned development projects of six or more units, and non-planned development projects of three to five units. Standards are set for building design, setbacks, signs,

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mechanical equipment, trash collection areas, fencing, landscaping, parking areas, and addressing.

1.6.c Continue to require residential subdivision projects to comply, at minimum, with the adopted standards and design guidelines contained in the "City of Merced Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines."

These Guidelines are intended to guide development on lots in Planned Developments designated Village Residential or Low Medium Density.

Policy L-1.7.

Encourage the Location of Multi-Family Developments on Sites With Good Access to Transportation, Shopping, and Services.

Multi-family developments are crucial to meeting the housing needs of Merced's growing population. They need to be located in appropriate areas where services are readily available to serve the needs of residents in an efficient manner.

Implementing Actions:

1.7.a Designate areas adjoining arterial streets, major transportation routes and commercial areas for multi-family development.

Through the general plan process, sufficient areas for multi-family residential development should be designated. Locations appropriate for such development include areas adjoining arterial streets, major transportation routes, and commercial areas. On a yearly basis during the General Plan Annual Review, the City should determine if the inventory of available multi-family property will be sufficient to meet the City's needs. Potential multi-family sites which are too distant from necessary services should be discouraged.

1.7.b Use the Urban Village Concept to promote higher density residential development adjacent to commercial services and transit.

Multi-family development should be located in Village Core Residential areas for ready access to commercial services and transit.

Policy L-1.8.

Create Livable and Identifiable Residential Neighborhoods.

Implementing Actions:

1.8.a Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs and other neighborhood associations throughout the City which facilitate concern for and contact with one's neighbors.

Continue to promote Neighborhood Watch, the Community Action Network, and other such programs which lead to increased interaction between neighbors.

1.8.b Define specific neighborhood boundaries using natural or man-made features, such as creeks and roads, or by common community facilities (parks, schools, shopping centers). Ethnic and economic boundaries are discouraged.

As part of a neighborhood planning process, specific neighborhood boundaries will need to be determined. These neighborhood boundaries should be based on the above criteria as much as possible.

1.8.c. Develop a neighborhood planning process by which the concerns of specific neighborhoods can be addressed through neighborhood plans.

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After adoption of the General Plan, the City should explore various options for creating a neighborhood planning process to address the needs of individual neighborhoods. These options could include the formation of new neighborhood associations or councils or the use of existing Neighborhood Watch and Community Action Network associations. These plans should strive for a high-level of public participation at the neighborhood level.

Goal Area L-2: Economic & Business Development

GOALS

- Increased Employment Opportunities for the Citizens of Merced
- A Diverse and Balanced Merced Economy
- Preservation of the City's Economic Base
- High Quality Industrial Areas
- More high-quality research/development park land use
- Ready Access to Commercial Services Throughout the City
- A Distinguished ~~Revitalized~~ Downtown ~~Area~~

POLICIES

- L-2.1** Encourage further development of appropriate commercial and industrial uses throughout the City.
- L-2.2** Locate new or expanded industrial parks in appropriate areas.
- L-2.3** Promote the retention and expansion of existing industrial and commercial businesses.
- L-2.4** Provide a range of services adjacent to and within industrial areas to reduce auto trips.
- L-2.5** Maintain attractive industrial areas.
- L-2.6** Provide neighborhood commercial centers in proportion to residential development in the City.
- L-2.7** Locate and design new commercial development to provide good access from adjacent neighborhoods and reduce congestion on major streets.
- L-2.8** Encourage a mixture of uses and activities that will maintain the vitality of the downtown area.
- L-2.9** Identify locations and develop standards for campus-type research and development parks.
- L-2.10** Encourage well-planned freeway-oriented developments

Policy L-2.1

Encourage Further Development of Appropriate Commercial and Industrial Uses Throughout the City.

In order to further develop the City's economic and job base, new areas for commercial and industrial development must be designated. In addition to designating such land, the community needs to be actively involved in recruiting new industries and businesses.

Implementing Actions:

2.1.a Designate adequate amounts of commercial and industrial land to serve the City's employment needs through 2015~~30~~ and beyond.

Based on employment projections and employee per acre ratios, the amount of land needed to accommodate commercial, office, and industrial uses can be determined. The General Plan Land Use Diagram contains sufficient amounts of appropriately designated land to meet these needs. Since these projections will change over time with changing market conditions, it will be necessary to update this information on a regular basis in order to ensure that the City's supply of commercial and industrial land remains adequate. The Planning Commission's General Plan Annual Review would be the appropriate time to review this information.

2.1.b Maintain an inventory of vacant commercial and industrial land and make this inventory available to the public and the development community.

Several sources for such information currently exist. The City of Merced Economic Development Department maintains such an inventory. In addition, "Site-Find" is a countywide site selection search service created by the Merced County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDCO) using the Geographic Information System (GIS) developed by the Merced County Association of Governments. "Site-Find" can conduct a comprehensive search of Merced County's more than 63,000 parcels and deliver a list of available commercial and industrial properties within minutes. The City will continue to work with MCAG to make sure the system or a similar system remains up-to-date. [\(Need to confirm that these tools are still available.\)](#)

2.1.c Continue the City's Economic Development activities.

Work closely with the Chamber of Commerce, Merced County Economic Development Corporation, the Business Council, the Economic Development Advisory Committee, etc. to implement the City's Economic Development Business Plan.

2.1.d Develop incentives as appropriate to encourage new commercial and industrial development.

Work with agencies involved in economic development activities to develop incentives such as those offered through the Enterprise Zone to encourage new commercial and industrial development.

2.1.e Specifically target South Merced as an area that needs more commercial retail and office development.

South Merced's large residential population is currently underserved by retail commercial and office uses. Except for some scattered convenience commercial uses, this area lacks even the most basic services. Because of the low average incomes of this area, it is difficult to entice major commercial users to locate in South Merced even though most of the available land is located in the Enterprise Zone. The City will need to make considerable effort to turn this situation around. The ~~new~~ [Gateways](#) Redevelopment Area ~~for this area~~ would provide the necessary incentives.

2.1.f Promote industrial development that offers full-time, non-seasonal employment.

Merced's traditionally agriculture-based economy has led to large swings in unemployment due to the seasonal nature of agriculture. The City should, therefore, target new industries for recruitment purposes

who can offer year-round employment.

2.1.g Maintain a list of target industries for economic development purposes.

The City's Economic Development Business Plan outlines target industry sectors for both industrial and commercial development. These are intended to be impermanent target choices which will be reviewed and modified as economic conditions change by the City's Economic Development Advisory Committee. Choice of target industries does not mean that other users are excluded from the community; it only indicates where it is believed active development recruitment efforts will be the most effective. Geographic target markets are also defined and prioritized for recruiting efforts in the Business Plan.

2.1.h Evaluate the future role of the Merced Airport and the desirability of expanding uses in the Airport Industrial Park to further promote tourism uses dependent on aviation access.

It may be desirable to promote tourist-related services in the area surrounding the Merced Municipal Airport to take advantage of Merced's status as the "Gateway to Yosemite" and being the nearest airport to Yosemite capable of handling large aircraft. ~~At the same time, options should be explored for possible future non-aviation uses of the Airport if the reuse of Castle AFB leads to the development of a competing airport.~~

2.1.i Actively market the benefits of the Merced-Atwater Enterprise Zone and Recycling Enterprise Zone.

The City of Merced will continue to cooperate with the Merced Chamber of Commerce's calling programs for local businesses located within the Enterprise Zone and describe the Enterprise Zone program and its benefits to them, as well as the Recycling Zone. Seminars and presentations will also be conducted on a periodic basis. The City will also highlight the benefits of the Enterprise Zone in its marketing brochures and other promotional material.

Policy L-2.2

Locate New or Expanded Industrial Parks in Appropriate Areas.

It is important to designate areas for new industrial development ahead of other uses due to the area and access needs of industry as well as the need to avoid planning for incompatible uses adjacent to industrial areas which might interfere with continued industrial operations.

Implementing Actions.

2.2.a Industrial areas should be located where they will have good access to air transportation, rail transportation, or major highway transportation links.

Merced's three existing industrial parks are located where they have good access from air, rail, and/or highway transportation. New and expanded industrial areas proposed on the Land Use Diagram (along North Highway 59, along Highway 99, etc.) are also located to take advantage of good access. Any future industrial areas would also need to follow this criteria.

2.2.b Industrial reserve areas should be protected from non-industrial use or premature development through agricultural zoning until such time as the land is needed for industrial development.

The City will work closely with the County to assure that industrial reserve areas are protected from premature or incompatible development. Generally, areas designated as "Industrial Reserve" will be combined with an interim use classification, such as Agriculture on the County General Plan, which maintains existing use practices in the area but establishes expected future uses based on need. Industrial reserve areas are designated on the Land Use Diagram within the Merced SUDP south of Mission Avenue adjacent to Highway 99.

2.2.c Parcels of land in industrial reserve areas should remain as large as possible in order to accommodate a variety of plant sizes and types in the future.

Lot splits should be discouraged in industrial reserve areas until such time as they are ready for development in order to provide maximum flexibility for future uses. The City will work with the County to ensure that industrial reserve areas are zoned for the appropriate Agriculture Zones which require 20-acre or 40-acre minimum parcel sizes.

2.2.d Develop an action program which outlines priorities for annexing new industrial and commercial areas and includes plans for providing services and infrastructure to these future industrial/commercial areas.

Under the direction of the Economic Development Advisory Committee and the Planning Commission, the City should establish an action program for annexing new industrial and commercial areas which would include plans for providing infrastructure. Since it takes time to bring industrial sites “on-line”, it is imperative that this be done in a timely manner. The first priority has been identified as providing services to the South Airport Industrial Park.

Policy L-2.3

Promote the Retention and Expansion of Existing Industrial and Commercial Businesses.

In order to maintain the City’s economic base, it’s not enough to attract new businesses. Existing businesses, if taken for granted, can leave the area, go out of business, or stop growing. By reaching out to existing businesses, the City can make sure that their current and future needs are being met as well as promote their expansion.

Implementing Actions:

2.3.a Protect industrial areas from encroachment by non-industrially-related uses.

Designate buffer areas (which may include open space areas, business parks, commercial development, and/or heavily-landscaped roadways or parkways) between industrial and residential uses. Guidelines should be established for these buffer areas to address their minimum size, development standards, etc.

2.3.b Continue to improve the permit approval process to ensure that industrial development project are approved in a timely manner.

The Development Services Department has over the last few years made considerable effort to streamline the permit approval process for residential, commercial, and industrial projects. These efforts are expected to continue on an ongoing basis. The development of design guidelines for commercial and industrial projects could be developed to make the City’s expectations clearer.

2.3.c Maintain a business outreach program to ensure that the needs of existing businesses are being met.

The City’s Economic Development Department along with the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Advisory Committee, and the Small Business Development Center, participate in various programs which contact local businesses regarding retention and expansion opportunities.

Policy L-2.4

Provide a Range of Services Adjacent to And Within Industrial Areas to Reduce Auto Trips.

By providing services adjacent to or within industrial areas so that employees don't have to leave the area to eat lunch or run errands, the number of noon hour auto trips may be reduced.

Implementing Actions:

2.4.a Establish a new zoning designation called "business park" which would allow a mix of heavy commercial, "back office," and light industrial uses.

The General Plan introduces a new land use designation, "Business Park. "Planned Development zoning can be used on an interim basis, but a "business park" zone should be established which would allow a mix of heavy commercial, "back office," and light industrial uses. By allowing this mix of uses, the number of auto trips may be reduced within these areas.

2.4.b Continue to allow services, such as restaurants and other retail commercial uses which mainly serve industrial employees, to locate in industrial zones as discretionary uses.

The City's Light Industrial Zone allows restaurants which serve employees and are located in main buildings as accessory uses. Retail commercial uses which are deemed appropriate by the Planning Commission are allowed as conditional uses.

2.4.c Consideration should be given to provide attractive, efficient, and affordable means of mass transit between industrial areas and residential areas of the City.

Transit routes should serve industrial areas so that employees can reach their jobs by means other than the private automobile. The location of industrial areas and other major employment centers will be considered as transit routes are established.

2.4.d Consideration should be given to making changes to the Zoning Ordinance which allow for some commercial and service activities in and/or convenient to industrial areas.

Because of increasing air quality and traffic concerns, it is becoming desirable to provide commercial and service activities convenient to industrial activities for easier accessibility by industrial employees. If restaurants, health clubs, daycare centers, auto services, some offices, and limited retail activities that draw primarily from industrial areas could be located convenient to such zones, it could have substantial traffic and air quality benefits to the community as well as making it easier for industrial employees to conduct business, run errands, etc. without having to drive across town.

The City currently does not encourage or even allow in some cases these kinds of uses. Changes to the Zoning Ordinance will be necessary to achieve this objective.

Policy L-2.5

Maintain Attractive Industrial Areas.

For the purpose of recruiting new businesses and retaining existing businesses and for overall City image and appearance, attractive industrial areas should be maintained.

Implementing Actions:

2.5.a Continue to require Site Plan Review of new industrial development and the application of standards regarding landscaping, appearance, circulation, access, and parking.

The City currently requires Site Plan Review for new industrial development and the expansion of existing industries. This staff-level review applies consistent standards regarding landscaping, access, etc. to ensure that industrial areas are developed in an attractive manner while still recognizing that industrial development standards need to be flexible to balance aesthetic needs with operational practices. The emphasis should be placed on maintaining an attractive appearance along the perimeter of industrial areas where they are visible to other land uses and the public.

2.5.b Consider requiring the planting of parking lot trees in industrial areas, perhaps at a reduced standard instead of the one tree for each six parking spaces required in other areas, to provide shade, reduce glare, and reduce reflective heat.

Residential and commercial development throughout the City is required to provide one tree for each six parking spaces in parking lots to provide shade, reduce glare and reflective heat, and to promote a more attractive appearance. Industrial areas are not required to do the same even though they often have large expansions of asphalt which would benefit from the introduction of trees. The City should consider requiring the planting of parking lot trees in industrial areas but at a reduced rate so as not to create an undue burden on industrial development.

2.5.c Require the removal or screening of all rubbish, abandoned buildings, processing wastes, old equipment, or other forms of blight in industrial areas.

Through the Site Plan Review process, the City requires the screening of unsightly areas from view from the public streets.

2.5.d Investigate the possibility of regulating industrial development on the basis of or in combination with performance standards instead of strictly by definition of specific allowable uses as in the Zoning Ordinance.

Performance standards, if they can be made applicable, have the capability of translating the classified industrial categories (light and heavy industrial) into a well-defined and meaningful system for identifying possible impacts of different industrial uses. Under such a system, industrial land uses can be located and administered in a more effective and flexible manner.

Policy L-2.6

Provide Neighborhood Commercial Centers In Proportion to Residential Development in the City.

Residents of the City should have ready access to commercial services in close proximity to their homes for convenience and to eliminate the need for excessive automobile trips. Neighborhood centers with grocery, drug, video, and other stores which serve the needs of surrounding residents should be distributed throughout the City to serve most residential areas.

Implementing Actions:

2.6.a Neighborhood commercial centers should be located approximately one mile apart along major arterial streets adjacent to residential areas throughout the City.

A one-mile radius is the standard service area for neighborhood commercial centers. Therefore, in order to ensure that most residents in Merced have ready access to commercial services, neighborhood commercial centers should be located at regular intervals (approximately one for each square mile of residential development) along major streets within the SUDP. The Land Use Diagram attempts to meet this standard, but additional sites may need to be designated in the future. The General Plan Annual Review would offer a good opportunity to review neighborhood commercial needs on a yearly basis.

2.6.b Special emphasis should be placed on encouraging the development of neighborhood commercial center(s) in the general vicinity of the South Highway 59 corridor to serve the needs of South Merced residents.

The South Merced area is currently underserved by commercial services. Many South Merced residents need to travel to Central and North Merced for even their basic shopping needs because of the lack of neighborhood commercial services in South Merced. Although several areas have been designated for such development, actual development has not taken place or has been limited. The City will explore alternatives for encouraging neighborhood commercial services in the area. ~~Among the possible tools may be the Enterprise Zone and the Gateways Redevelopment Project Area, both which include this area.~~

2.6.c Efforts should be made to encourage the development of a neighborhood commercial center in the area east of G Street between Yosemite Avenue and North Bear Creek Drive.

This nearly 2-mile-square-mile area is almost entirely built-out with single-family development, with some scattered duplex development. The only commercial services in the area are located along the far edge of this area, G Street, leaving those residents who live on the eastern edges (Parsons and McKee) over one mile or more from commercial services. There are very few vacant sites left in this area which would be suitable for commercial development. Additionally, residents may be concerned about the impacts of commercial uses on their neighborhoods. Efforts should be made, perhaps through a neighborhood planning process, to determine if there is a suitable commercial site in the area which would be supported by neighborhood residents.

2.6.d ~~Efforts should be made~~Continue to encourage the development of a neighborhood commercial center(s) in Southeast Merced in the general area east of Parsons Avenue on Childs or Gerard Avenue.

This area bounded by Highway 140 to the north and Parsons Avenue and Highway 99 to the south and west is also underserved by neighborhood commercial uses. Several vacant or underutilized sites are currently zoned for commercial uses but have not been developed with uses that serve the adjacent neighborhoods. The City should explore alternative strategies for encouraging the development of these sites with services to serve the residents of this area.

Policy L-2.7

Locate and Design New Commercial Developments To Provide Good Access from Adjacent Neighborhoods and Reduce Congestion on Major Streets.

Neighborhood, Regional, Community, and Convenience Commercial areas throughout the City serve many adjacent neighborhoods. Their locations along major arterials also offer these commercial areas good visibility from passing motorists, which allows them to serve more than just their immediate neighbors. Sometimes, however, this- leads to the reduced efficiency of these arterials if commercial driveways are allowed to proliferate in areas near major intersections. These problems can be minimized if commercial developments are located and designed carefully.

Implementing Actions:

2.7.a New retail commercial designations shall be located along arterials at their intersections with collector streets (at 1/4 mile or 1/2 mile locations) in new growth areas. These commercial areas should not be located at the intersections of two arterials.

Locating commercial developments at the corners of two major streets is fairly common practice in cities throughout the country. However, these locations, while offering maximum visibility to drive-by traffic, often lead to access and circulation problems. Conflicts often arise between slower motorists

entering or leaving these commercial areas and motorists using the arterials for higher speed cross-town trips. These conflicts not only decrease the efficiency of the intersection over time (the number of vehicles able to pass through the intersection within a certain period), but can lead to increasingly difficult access to and from these centers by customers. Locations away from these major intersections but still along arterials at collector street intersections offer the combined benefits of high visibility and easier access for both drive-by traffic and for adjacent residential areas.

On the Land Use Diagram, new commercial centers are located along major streets at their intersections with collector streets at the 1/2 mile point on a mile grid of major arterials. Traffic signals will likely be required at these intersections, providing a full range of turning movements into the shopping areas. Several examples of such developments already exist (Wal-Mart, Olivewood Center, Bear Creek Galleria, Bear Creek Plaza, etc.).

2.7.b Commercial centers shall be designed to provide direct vehicular and pedestrian access from surrounding neighborhoods. In no case shall trips which could be internal (from adjacent neighborhood to center) be forced onto an arterial.

Commercial centers should allow vehicular and pedestrian access from adjacent neighborhoods through the use of internal street access, driveways off of residential streets, and pedestrian accessways.

2.7.c The number of commercial driveways on major streets shall be minimized and located in areas where they will cause minimal conflicts with traffic flow on major streets and through intersections.

Commercial driveways should be kept to a minimum on major streets and located in areas away from intersections where they can cause conflicts with intersection turning movements, traffic flow, and signal loop/detection areas. When possible, they should be placed adjacent to whichever property lines are the farthest distance from the intersection; but in no case should driveways be closer than 25 feet from an intersection.

2.7.d Cross-access and shared driveways between adjacent commercial uses shall be provided as much as feasible.

Adjacent commercial uses should allow access between them without customer traffic having to go back out onto the public streets to travel between uses. Driveways off major streets should be shared as much as feasible between adjacent businesses to minimize the number required on major streets. This should be applied to all new development as much as feasible and to existing development whenever possible.

2.7.e Commercial developments shall be designed to encourage pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access.

Sidewalks, pedestrian accessways, bike racks and/or lockers, on-site transit stops, and transit shelters are among the design features that can be used in commercial areas to encourage alternative modes of access for their customers.

2.7.f Continue to implement City Council Resolution #93-10 establishing policy for the location of retail and service related uses in North Merced.

This resolution states that “the City desires to establish a policy which balances the need for commercial growth with the need to preserve the capacity of arterial streets and achieve long-standing planning objectives.” The resolution sets forth the following guidelines for the location of retail and service-related uses in North Merced (north of Bear Creek):

- 1) “Freestanding retail and service-related uses on arterial streets in North Merced are discouraged in order to minimize the number of driveways and to better control location of driveways in relation to signalized intersections, with the objective of improving safety and not reducing capacity.”
- 2) “Clustering of retail and service-related uses in shopping centers is encouraged for convenient pedestrian circulation, simpler internal circulation, and as a contribution to energy-efficient

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- circulation and improved air quality (less start-and-stop car hopping).”
- 3) “Freestanding retail and service commercial land uses in North Merced should be located either: a) inside shopping centers (subject to the provisions below); or b) outside shopping centers if limited to professional offices, financial institutions, and restaurants.”
 - 4) “Freestanding uses in shopping centers and sites which can be integrated with shopping centers are appropriate locations for offices and financial uses, restaurants, auto-oriented uses such as service stations and fast-food restaurants, and retail and service commercial uses providing these uses are consistent with the General Plan and Site Utilization Plan or zoning district.”
 - 5) “Uses on freestanding pads should: a) be compatible and consistent in design, materials, and colors with the main building complex; b) have circulation and access consistent with the Site Utilization Plan (SUP) if located in a Planned Development; and c) share common driveways with no new driveways on arterial streets.”

Policy L-2.8

Encourage a Mixture of Uses And Activities That Will Maintain the Vitality of the Downtown Area.

In ~~1991~~2007, the Downtown ~~Merced Market~~ Strategy Task Force (a ~~25~~20-member group representing a broad range of community interests) was formed to develop a consensus on the proper direction for downtown. They developed the following strategies for achieving the goal of maintaining downtown as the City’s center of cultural and civic activity, finance, and government. ~~These efforts would be led by the Economic Development Committee, the Chamber of Commerce, the Merced Downtown Association, the Redevelopment Agency, and others. It has been observed that the presence of a university, even those not adjacent to downtowns, often stimulate downtown retail growth in such areas as theaters, pubs, restaurants, book and clothing stores, and other retail. Merced’s future UC campus may have the same effect.~~

Implementing Actions:

2.8.a ~~Strengthen downtown cultural activities and focus on Merced’s cultural diversity~~Solidify Downtown’s role as the arts, entertainment and dining destination.

Strategies for achieving this include ~~development of a senior center, a youth center, and a multi-cultural arts center as well as establishing a major annual event downtown, expanding the Farmers Market, and developing a program to retain or relocate clubs and civic groups to the downtown~~encouraging the creation of a strong Arts and Entertainment Committee and developing a program to increase the amount of public art throughout Downtown.

2.8.b Retain all existing and attract new financial service businesses, office uses, and government-related offices in downtown Merced.

The identification of sites for additional financial activities and the recruitment of new institutions (especially back office functions, data centers, and regional headquarters) is a top priority. Existing City and County government offices should be encouraged to remain downtown and new government-related social service offices should be encouraged to locate in the downtown.

2.8.c ~~Create a compact, walkable retail core with multi-cultural offerings and mixed-use development~~Ensure that the Downtown is connected to the rest of the city through improved bus service, better bicycle/ pedestrian connections, and enhanced connections between Downtown and Merced College and the UC campus.

Attempts will be made to create unified store hours, recruit restaurants and apparel retailers, intensify the downtown promotion program, and cluster retail uses in a more compact area of downtown (generally bounded by 19th Street, O Street, the Southern Pacific railroad tracks, and Martin Luther King Jr. Way).

2.8.d Develop a mix of regionally-oriented businesses along Highway 99.

Possibilities include further development of a major discount retail center, a freeway-oriented factory outlet center, and an international marketplace as well as renovation of the K-Mart/Savemart Center at 15th and Martin Luther King.

2.8.e ~~Preserve the existing housing stock and build a mix of new higher density housing~~Develop the Mid-town neighborhood as a premiere residential district.

~~Working with the City Housing Program and the Redevelopment Agency, rehabilitation of the existing housing stock would be pursued through the implementation of financial incentives and policy changes. Affordable high density infill housing for seniors, low and moderate income households, singles, and downtown workers would be encouraged along with market rate condominiums.~~Identify design standards that will preserve historic character, while promoting upscale residential construction.

2.8.f Develop more office space downtown through renovation and new construction

The City will attempt to create more office space downtown for all types of businesses and services concentrated near the retail core. Renovation of upper floors of existing buildings for office use will also be encouraged and a business recruitment program to attract new downtown businesses will be considered.

2.8.g Strengthen transportation systems to support downtown's economic base

Creation of an internal downtown transit system, improvements to the City transit system, and expansion of downtown arterial street capacity would be sought.

2.8.h Develop downtown educational and training facilities and activities

Strategies include the development of a consolidated education center (including Merced College, satellite locations for higher education, and adult education and training) and a downtown day care center.

2.8.i. Continue to use Redevelopment funds to upgrade downtown's appearance and infrastructure, to develop new public projects to implement the Downtown strategy, to assist in the development and financing of private projects, and to market the downtown area.

The Merced Redevelopment Agency has been used for all these purposes in the past and should continue to pursue these goals. Focus redevelopment resources on key properties identified in the 2007 Downtown Strategy.

Policy L-2.9

Identify locations and develop standards for campus-type research and development parks.

Implementing Actions (Will Need to Develop)

L-2.10

Policy L-2.10

Encourage well-planned freeway-oriented developments

Implementing Actions: (Will need to be developed more extensively)

2.10.a. Implement the following policy per City Council Resolution #2007-89 regarding Freeway-Oriented Commercial Developments":

(1) The City acknowledges the substantial public investment in the new Mission/Highway 99 Interchange and the proposed Campus Parkway and needed for other Highway 99 connections in Merced. As required by the California Environmental Quality Act and the General Plan, the City intends to review potential traffic impacts and other connecting streets in a careful manner before making any land use decisions in the freeway corridor; and,

(2) Consistent with General Plan Policy UE 1.3, Ensure that the sequencing of freeway commercial development shall be done so in an orderly manner based upon access to public services and facilities.

Goal Area L-3: Urban Growth and Design

GOALS

- **Living Environments which Encourage People to Use a Variety of Transportation Alternatives**
- **A Compact Urban Village Design for New Growth Areas**
- **Self-sustaining, Mixed-Use, Pedestrian-Friendly Neighborhoods**

POLICIES

- L-3.1** Create land use patterns that will encourage people to walk, bicycle, or use public transit for an increased number of their daily trips.
- L-3.2** Encourage infill development and a compact urban form.
- L-3.3** Promote site designs that encourage walking, cycling, and transit use.

Policy L-3.1

Create Land Use Patterns That Will Encourage People to Walk, Bicycle, or Use Public Transit For an Increased Number of Their Daily Trips.

Existing land use patterns in some of the City of Merced, like many other urban areas in the San Joaquin Valley, are not conducive to walking, cycling, and transit use. Many office developments have low employment densities and are often isolated from commercial services, forcing people to drive to eat lunch or to complete errands. High-density residential projects often have little if any commercial development nearby or discourage pedestrian access to commercial uses with block walls and large parking lots. The most common single family lot size of 6,000 to 10,000 square feet leads to population densities too low to support frequent and direct transit service. The predominant suburban development patterns force all local trips for shopping, recreation, school, as well as commute trips onto the arterial street system. This leads to ever wider, more congested arterial streets which in turn discourage people from walking or cycling to even nearby destinations.

Implementing Actions:

3.1.a Encourage pedestrian or transit-friendly designs at suitable locations.

Most of the new growth areas in North and South Merced would be appropriate for pedestrian- and transit-friendly developments. Encourage the preparation of a specific or community plan for large scale new development which incorporates the goals and policies of the City's Urban Design Chapter.

3.1.b Work to preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods and commercial districts which have transit and pedestrian-friendly designs.

Pursue redevelopment projects to improve the image of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and shopping districts (pedestrian amenities, street trees, transit facilities, etc.).

3.1.c Plan areas for higher density development within 1/4 mile of locations identified as transit hubs and commercial centers.

Review and revise as necessary the City's development and the Zoning Ordinance standards and maps designating high-density land uses in areas planned for transit hubs and commercial centers.

3.1.d Encourage higher housing densities in areas served by the full range of urban services.

- Encourage high and medium-density housing at sites within walking distance of transit and neighborhood commercial services during general plan updates and developer initiated general plan amendments.
- Consider higher housing densities for areas around existing and planned transit hubs.

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- Encourage developers to take advantage of density bonus provisions of the Zoning Ordinance for projects located around transit hubs on existing or planned transit corridors.

3.1.e Encourage mixed-use developments that provide commercial services such as day care centers, restaurants, banks, and stores near employment centers.

Establish mixed-use zone district standards. Tailor the allowed uses to those best suited for a pedestrian environment.

3.1.f Work closely with school districts to help them choose school site locations that allow students to safely walk or bicycle from their homes.

When specific plans or subdivisions propose school sites for dedication, accept sites that emphasize the ability of students to safely walk or bicycle to school. Incorporate school sites into larger neighborhood activity centers where practical; this concept could include parks, day care facilities, and neighborhood commercial uses. Schools will be encouraged to locate adjacent to Village Core Residential Areas.

3.1.g Encourage regional shopping malls/centers at sites capable of support by a full range of transportation options.

Identify sites with access by freeway or major arterial and potential for light rail access. The site could be a regional transit hub and major pedestrian-oriented activity center to increase transit mode share.

3.1.h Consider air quality and mobility when reviewing any proposed change to the land use pattern of this community.

This step ~~could be~~ is part of ~~a~~ the CEQA process established by the City of Merced in reviewing ~~General Plan Amendments~~ development applications.

Policy L-3.2

Encourage In-Fill Development and a Compact Urban Form.

Sprawling, low-density and discontinuous development discourages the use of alternative transportation modes and increases travel distances. Infrastructure costs and most environmental impacts are less when development is more compact.

Implementing Actions:

3.2.a Encourage infill of vacant parcels.

- Conduct a survey of vacant lands. Develop strategies for encouraging their development with appropriate uses.
- Encourage infill projects that are determined to be compatible with existing development.
- Encourage growth to occur in and around activity centers, transportation nodes, underutilized infrastructure systems, and redevelopment areas.
- Work with land owners to re-designate vacant lands suitable for higher densities or for transit/pedestrian-oriented developments during general plan updates and periodic reviews.

3.2.b Encourage infill and redevelopment projects within the urban area that could enhance the effectiveness of the transit system.

- Encourage projects that increase pedestrian activity and mixed-uses.
- Encourage commercial uses that are complementary to urban employment centers.
- Strategically locate high-density development to provide good transit access.

(Notes: Please refer to the Urban Expansion Chapter for policies relating to keeping a compact urban form while promoting urban expansion.)

Policy L-3.3

Promote Site Designs That Encourage Walking, Cycling, and Transit Use.

Most developments are designed to provide the most direct and convenient access by car at the exclusion of other modes of transportation. It is possible to design sites in ways that encourage less polluting transportation modes and still support access by motor vehicle.

Implementing Actions:

3.3.a Encourage project designs which increase the convenience, safety and comfort of people using transit, walking or cycling.

Review the City's Zoning Ordinance for possible amendment to include air quality design standards. Design standards must be general enough to apply under all but the most unusual circumstances to avoid the need for numerous zone variances and modifications. Some design measures like sidewalk widths and landscaping requirements are very appropriate for design standards. Design measures dealing with parking lot designs and building facades may be better left as guidelines because of site to site differences.

3.3.b Encourage all subdivision street and lot designs, commercial site plans, and multi-family site plans to improve access by transit, bicycle, and walking.

Review the City's development review procedures and modify, as appropriate, to include policies that accommodate access and internal circulation by alternative transportation modes. Develop design guidelines that illustrate preferred designs.

Just a few examples of design measures that could be recommended during design review include:

- Direct access to commercial centers from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Intra-development designs that incorporate integrated street patterns rather than designs which limit ingress and egress options to the development and restricts traffic to a limited number of arterials.
- Primary ground floor commercial building entrances should orient to plazas, parks, or pedestrian-oriented streets, not to interior blocks or parking lots as feasible.
- Promote the use of trees and plants in travelway landscaping and residences.
- Building facades should be varied and articulated to provide visual interest to pedestrians.
- Street trees should be placed in planter strips or tree wells. Tree species should be selected to create a unified image for the street and provide an effective canopy.
- Sidewalks should provide an unobstructed path. Larger sidewalk dimensions are desirable in commercial areas where pedestrian activity will be greatest.
- Encourage the use of front porches, bay window, and balconies which face onto the street to increase social interaction and provide heightened security for residential streets.
- Identify locations suitable for street furniture, and encourage its use.

3.3.d Encourage all development projects proposed within 2,000 feet of an existing or planned light rail transit, commuter rail, express bus or transit corridor stop, to incorporate site design measures that improve accessibility to the transit system.

Analyze existing land use patterns and constraints around transit facilities to identify appropriate design measures

Policy L-3.4

South Merced Community Plan Policies.

Policies specific to South Merced Community Plan need to be developed.

Implementing Actions:

3.4.a .

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTIONS

<i>Goal Area T-1: Streets and Roads</i>
GOALS ■ An Integrated Road System that is Safe and Efficient ■ A Circulation System that is Convenient and Flexible ■ A Circulation System that Minimizes Adverse Impacts upon the Community
POLICIES T-1.1 Design streets consistent with circulation function and affected land uses. T-1.2 Coordinate circulation and transportation planning with pertinent regional, State and Federal agencies. T-1.3 Design major roads to maximize efficiency. T-1.4 Promote traffic safety. T-1.5 Minimize unnecessary travel demand on major streets. T-1.6 Minimize adverse impacts on the environment from existing and proposed road systems. T-1.7 Minimize street system impacts on residential neighborhoods and other sensitive land uses. T-1.8 Use a minimum peak hour Level of Service (LOS) “D” as a design objective for all new streets in new growth areas and for most existing City streets except under special circumstances.

Policy T-1.1

Design Streets Consistent with Circulation Function and Affected Land Uses.

It is extremely important to coordinate circulation and land use planning. Street systems are intended to move motor vehicles but streets also are expected to provide access to near-by land uses. Smaller streets called upon to carry heavy traffic to major activity centers can create large circulation problems. Large streets carrying heavy traffic through residential or other sensitive land use areas can create significant conflicts.

Implementing Actions:

1.1.a Implement the General Plan Circulation Plan (Figure 4.1) as development occurs.

The City will implement the General Plan Circulation Plan as development occurs in new growth areas and in developed areas, as feasible. This may be accomplished through the dedication of needed right-of-way or transportation easements, the construction of roadway improvements, and/or the collection of fees, consistent with the impacts of new development.

1.1.b Whenever feasible implement a system of arterials and higher order streets in new growth areas based upon the adopted concept of arterials/expressways.

The adopted concept of arterials/expressways is designed to carefully separate streets by circulation function, and locate land uses consistent with these functions (Figure 4.1). Arterials and higher order streets will carry the higher-speed traffic to adjacent commercial, industrial and other major destinations. Collectors and local streets will be designed for local, neighborhood traffic that is either traveling towards a neighborhood destination or is exiting the area. It is important to try to apply these same principles to the extent possible in planning partially developed areas that have incomplete road networks.

1.1.c Evaluate existing streets in older portions of the City, and identify means of upgrading the system where necessary.

As in-fill development and redevelopment occurs, existing street systems should be evaluated to determine if there are ways that circulation efficiency can be improved without causing undue impacts on the neighborhoods.

1.1.d Design and build residential collector streets that balance as effectively as possible competing needs to be safe and efficient.

The community needs to continue to seek and evaluate design options and other ways that might help to reconcile the competing functions of residential collector streets (to be safe for local neighborhood residents while being reasonably efficient traffic carriers). The City also needs to distinguish collector streets ("Major Collectors") that, because of certain characteristics, are likely as time passes to experience increasing traffic pressures and impacts on adjacent residential settings.

[NOTE: A "Major Residential Collector" is defined as 1) being of one-half mile or more in uninterrupted length; 2) having a current or projected ADT (Average Daily Trips) of 1,500 or higher; and 3) having outlets to at least one higher order street at an intersection which is either signalized or projected for future signalization. A Major Collector by its location a) is a central element of its neighborhood circulation system with connection to additional neighborhoods; and b) will receive, or is projected to receive, significant through traffic increases from outside its primary service area to major destinations to which the major collector has convenient access. Major Collectors would be the same width as other Collectors, but should have no residential driveways accessing directly upon them. See Appendix 4.8.1.]

1.1.e Study projected future areas of city expansion prior to development to identify the most effective circulation pattern(s).

Conceptual circulation planning should identify potential points of concern as early as possible in the

planning process in order to obtain the most effective land use and circulation decisions. Circulation patterns should be based upon such factors as current patterns of land ownership, existing land use activities, present circulation patterns, and adopted land use plans.

1.1.f ~~Evaluate the area in proximity to the Childs Avenue/Martin Luther King Jr. Way intersection to obtain at least preliminary information regarding the general extent of area required to achieve an acceptable alignment of the intersection.~~

~~Signalization of the intersection is currently being planned. However, it is important for both the City and potentially affected property owners in the area to have some idea of the possible adjustments that will be needed in order to provide a better aligned intersection.~~

1.1.g ~~Evaluate the current “Cardinal Drive” access point to G Street shown on the Northeast Yosemite Specific Plan Area map, to determine if a more appropriate access location exists to G Street for that Specific Plan area.~~

~~Any official consideration of relocating “Cardinal Drive” to a more central access point between Cardella Road and Yosemite Avenue would require agreement by two separate ownership groups within the Northeast Yosemite Specific Plan area. Coordination of access at the one-half mile point would appear to offer significant advantages to both owners and future residents of the area. The addition of a right turn in/right turn out intersection should also be considered 1/4 mile south of Cardella. Evaluation of this issue should take place with a minimum of delay, in order to minimize impacts on future development.~~

Policy T-1.2

Coordinate Circulation and Transportation Planning with Pertinent Regional, State and Federal Agencies.

Traffic-related problems including significant concerns over air quality in the Great Central Valley have helped to forge requirements for more and more inter-governmental cooperation and planning, often tied to prospective State and Federal funding. The City needs to remain active in these efforts, while also periodically reviewing its position within these procedures.

Implementing Actions:

1.2.a Work with Caltrans, the County, and MCAG to implement the current Highway 99 Major Investment Study Regional Transportation Plan (MIS RTP) once it is adopted and amend the City’s General Plan as necessary.

The Highway 99 Major Investment Study Regional Transportation Plan (see Section 4.7.3) addresses necessary improvements to Highway 99 and its interchanges as it travels through the City as well as the City’s major street system as it ties into Highway 99 and other regional roadways the regional transportation system. It is intended that the General Plans of the City of Merced, Atwater, and Merced County will be amended to incorporate the conclusions of the MIS.

1.2.b Coordinate local circulation/transportation plans, the financing and construction of improvements, and right-of-way preservation programs with interested area and regional agencies.

The City works with numerous other bodies, including Merced County, Merced Association of Governments (MCAG), and Caltrans (the California Department of Transportation), concerning transportation and circulation matters. This will become even more important in the future as traffic volumes increase and funding sources decrease.

1.2.c Identify a hierarchy pattern of major streets within the City’s General Plan and Sphere of Influence areas, and work with the County of Merced and Caltrans to retain unimpeded future rights-of-way to accommodate the current general plan period and projected future growth.

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It is extremely important that prospective right-of-ways (ROW's) be protected from permanent development whenever feasible, not only within the City and in its immediate growth areas but also in areas projected for longer term growth. This will benefit both City and County, in terms of reduced costs as well as potential efficiencies to be gained from sufficient roadways. This will involve working with the County on developing an appropriate fee structure that would be used for specific identified road improvements on a priority basis. Maintenance issues relating to roadways built to City standards in areas not yet annexed can also be addressed through this process.

The City shall also work with Caltrans and MCAG to insure the preservation of adequate rights-of-way for State highways and interchanges as outlined in the Highway 99 Major Investment Study, the Regional Transportation Plan, and other regional plans.

1.2.d ~~Continue to w~~Work with the County and Caltrans to implement ~~improvements to the Highway 59 Merced-Atwater Expressway project corridor~~ as a high priority to serve the northern growth area. ~~An important first step will be the development of a Project Study Report (PSR) for the corridor.~~

More detailed work needs to be done on the proposed Highway 59 Merced-Atwater Expressway before it can be funded and constructed. ~~One such important step is the development of a Project Study Report. This report would address alignment, scope, preliminary engineering, needed right of way, cross-section design, access restrictions, frontage road configurations, and costs of expressway alternatives. After this report is completed, a plan line could be adopted in order to preserve necessary right of way for the project.~~

Policy T-1.3

Design Major Roads to Maximize Efficiency.

Based upon the physical characteristics of a particular roadway, it is possible to calculate the maximum "peak-hour carrying capacity" for that road. Carrying capacity refers to the maximum number of motor vehicles the road can carry past a given point within a specific period of time, at a pre-determined realistic or reasonable speed. If the number of vehicles were to exceed this maximum capacity, the vehicles will begin to slow down, which in turn reduces the number of vehicles the road can safely carry. Every intersecting street, as well as every curb cut, that allows vehicles to interrupt the traffic flow, either by slowing down to exit or by entering the road, affects both the speed and number of peak-hour vehicles the roadway can accommodate.

Implementing Actions:

1.3.a Adhere, to the greatest possible extent, to the standards adopted for spacing streets that intersect arterials and higher order roadways.

The locations at which streets intersect a major roadway, and the spacing or distance between such intersecting streets, are important factors affecting how well the major road fulfills its traffic carrying responsibility. The growth of traffic over time, along with accompanying disruptions such as increasing numbers of vehicle accidents, can significantly affect the efficiency of intersections.

Spacing is a critical element in any subsequent need for installing traffic signals. Effectively spaced traffic signals can be efficiently synchronized. This allows greater peak hour efficiency, with more vehicles traveling farther, and faster, during these problem periods. As spacing becomes less consistent, traffic signals can themselves cause disruption and be less effective for moving traffic. Poor locations and/or spacing create problems that even signals will not be able to overcome. Proper distances involve one-eighth and/or one-quarter mile spacing for streets intersecting with divided and higher order arterials, and one-mile distances for streets intersecting with expressways (refer to Appendix).

1.3.b Improve traffic flow of all new arterial streets to the greatest possible extent by the use of

median strips of sufficient width to facilitate vehicle movement.

Medians of sufficient width provide the necessary space for turning lanes that help to keep traffic moving efficiently. They also allow a safe haven for cross-traffic vehicles where there are median openings for such traffic. In addition, they may act as a safety island for pedestrians who may be crossing, and add a measure of safety for separating traffic traveling in different directions.

1.3.c Improve traffic flow of arterials and other major roadways whenever possible by avoiding or eliminating on-street parking.

On-street parking affects traffic speed and movement, and can increase safety problems along major roadways.

1.3.d Work to insure that land uses fronting major streets have shared access across adjacent properties and provide sufficient on-site parking to avoid depending upon on-street parking.

Shared access across adjacent properties helps to improve the efficiency of major streets by allowing traffic movements between adjacent properties to take place on-site and off the public street. This is particularly important for adjacent commercial properties. This shared-access should be formalized with mutual access easements as much as feasible.

On-street (curb-side) parking on major streets may be eliminated if traffic conditions warrant. Elimination of curb-side parking can create a negative impact on adjacent land uses and its residents/customers if they have grown to depend upon it. Occasionally site plans may orient a land use activity in a way that makes on-street (curb-side) parking more convenient to an entrance than on-site parking. Such designs should be discouraged. On the other hand, care should be taken to consider the location of public transit stops (which are unlikely to change) and the provision of convenient access to these stops.

1.3.e Promote the provision of on-site visitor parking in multi-family projects.

It is important to consider whenever possible the provision of on-site visitor parking in multi-family complexes so that on-street parking (which could be restricted in the future along major roadways) is not solely relied upon.

1.3.f Whenever feasible avoid, or eliminate, unnecessary or poorly placed median openings.

Median breaks can cause interruptions in the free flow of traffic on a major street. Effective placement of these openings helps to minimize traffic disruptions and works to maximize major street efficiency.

1.3.g Avoid residential “fronting lots” on Major Collectors and higher order streets.

Residential traffic entering or leaving private driveways that front upon major collectors and other higher order streets (that are intended to efficiently carry traffic) create safety conflicts with traffic and affect traffic movement, particularly during peak traffic periods and if vehicles are backing onto the street. When the front of the house faces directly onto the street, residents also tend to be concerned about high-speed traffic passing by their front yards where children may play and where noise impacts are greater.

1.3.h Obtain whenever feasible necessary rights-of-way in proximity to major intersections for needed turn lanes.

Intersections can become bottlenecks to efficient traffic movement. A key to maintaining smooth-flowing traffic is to avoid as much as possible the disruption of through traffic by turning vehicles. Turn lanes of sufficient length are effective for removing traffic that is slowing to turn, with a minimum of impact upon through traffic. This can be especially important in older areas of the City where widening the entire street may not be possible, but where expanded intersections can reduce congestion.

1.3.i In new growth areas, obtain expanded arterial intersection rights-of-way (ROW) requirements.

As development projects are proposed in new growth areas, the expanded arterial intersection ROW's generally described in the Appendix (Section 4.8) should be dedicated, so that turn lanes can be established in these intersections when traffic conditions warrant.

1.3.j Maintain the land use and access restrictions identified for major collector and higher order street intersections.

Streets have functions that are often at odds with each other. Major roads are expected to carry large amounts of traffic at reasonable speeds. Each intersection, driveway access, or median break that allows other traffic to enter or otherwise disrupt the traffic flow of a major street reduces efficiency (traffic-carrying ability) from that major street. An intersection of two major streets becomes a point where each disruptive movement within proximity to the intersection has heightened potential to affect traffic flows on each street. Major traffic entering and leaving large commercial complexes or other major vehicle destinations create a variety of traffic movements that can magnify disruptions on traffic flow. Avoiding driveway access movements in the vicinity of major intersections promises to help maximize traffic flows, thereby maintaining efficiency while reducing air quality impacts at those intersections.

1.3.k Approve driveway access locations only if consistent with approved minimum acceptable distances from major intersections, except in unusual circumstances.

Driveways can help disrupt major street traffic flows. Over time a driveway can be expanded, land uses can intensify, and other changes can take place that can significantly increase the impacts of a driveway on major street traffic. It is important to maintain adopted driveway location standards, and to avoid driveway locations that can conflict with major street intersections. It is also important to consider the ultimate build-out of the area when determining needs at the time of initial construction.

(Notes: Chapter 5, Public Services and Facilities, contains policies relating to the timing of infrastructure improvements, including circulation improvements.)

Policy T-1.4

Promote Traffic Safety.

As traffic levels on a street approach the street's effective capacity, and as various factors affect how a roadway functions, safety is also affected. This interrelationship lends itself to some repetition among implementing actions relating to safety.

Implementing Actions:

1.4.a If fronting driveways cannot be avoided on a Major Collector or higher order street (see Action 1.3.g), seek design solutions that will allow automobiles to avoid backing out.

There are driveway designs that allow residential vehicles to avoid backing out into street traffic. Examples are circular driveways or the provision of "hammerhead" turn-arounds on site. Typically, however, such designs are more workable with larger residential lots, and the most effective solution remains the avoidance of direct residential driveway access if at all possible where backing traffic will create particular disruptions (refer to previous Implementing Action 1.3.g).

1.4.b Allow only adopted spacing of streets intersecting and traffic signals on any Arterial or higher order street, unless prior actions or unusual circumstances make this infeasible.

Effective intersection spacing contributes to more efficient traffic flow and helps reduce unnecessary stop and go traffic.

1.4.c Promote increased traffic safety with special attention to hazards which could cause personal injury.

Continue to maintain existing practices related to safety such as: maintain adopted sight-line requirements (line of uninterrupted vision along which a vehicle operator can see traffic, bicycles or pedestrians approaching from an intersecting street) at designated street intersections; continue to monitor street intersections to identify unusual levels of traffic accidents; etc. Evaluate ways to increase the effectiveness of traffic safety efforts.

1.4.d Reserve adequate road and intersection right-of-way to provide for the needs of traffic safety.

Sufficient right-of-way for facilities such as right and left turn lanes help to improve traffic movements in the vicinity of intersections.

1.4.e Continue as feasible to mitigate or reduce safety hazards, and program improvements to congested intersections before they become significant problems.

It is important to implement improvements as feasible. It is also important to recognize that it is often more cost effective to avoid creating significant traffic conflicts than it is to attempt to reduce or mitigate them once they have become problems. The City should continue to review development applications to mitigate prospective concerns as they are identified.

1.4.f Seek to improve or correct the specific problem locations identified as “Circulation System Improvement Problems” in the City’s Circulation Element. (Will need to review and update this list).

Pursue all available inter-governmental assistance and other sources, as feasible, for help to mitigate problem intersections and other identified site specific problems within the City’s circulation system.

Policy T-1.5

Minimize Unnecessary Travel Demand on Major Streets.

Traditional circulation patterns often tend to make it inconvenient for a driver to make a neighborhood or other local trip without getting onto a major street. It is important to have a circulation system that provides the flexibility to allow neighborhood and other trips on local roads, while encouraging non-local trips to use the major road system.

Implementing Actions:

1.5.a Encourage design of local and collector streets within Villages/Neighborhoods to provide multiple, reasonably direct routes to local neighborhood destinations.

It is important to build flexibility into neighborhood circulation for reaching local destinations. At the same time, it is important to provide the opportunity for a local driver to reach the nearest major (arterial) road directly and quickly, if the destination is more distant. These needs must be carefully balanced with the need to discourage outside traffic from taking shortcuts through residential neighborhoods as described in Implementing Action 1.7.b. In other words, routes may need to be less direct in order to discourage such shortcuts but not so indirect as to make it difficult for neighborhood residents to reach their destinations.

1.5.b Avoid whenever feasible neighborhood street system designs that make it more convenient for a local resident to use an arterial street to reach an in-neighborhood destination than to remain on the local street system.

Often local street circulation patterns, whether intended or not, include barriers to the local driver who seeks to go to certain near-by destinations. The result is often that the driver is forced to go onto the major street system in order to reach a destination adjacent to the local neighborhood. This also usually means that a bicycle rider or pedestrian would have been forced into the same inconvenient, out-of-the-way trip, which is often the reason such trips are only made by automobile.

Policy T-1.6

Minimize Adverse Impacts on the Environment from Existing and Proposed Road Systems.

In an automobile-oriented economy, growing urban areas like Merced have significant and growing numbers of vehicle trips per day. The amount of fossil fuels used and the amount of air pollution created each day by these trips are just two ways in which the environment is affected by Merced's traffic. The more efficient traffic movement is, the less fuel is consumed and the less air pollution is created. As traffic movements become less efficient (more stops, more slowing down and speeding up, etc.), the more traffic-related impacts are created on the environment.

Implementing Actions:

1.6.a Continue working to minimize environmental impacts associated with heavily traveled traffic corridors, such as high noise levels and stop and go traffic situations (which contribute heavily to air pollution problems).

Noise impacts can be reduced by such methods as solid walls, and heavy landscape barriers such as trees or heavy foliage. In the case of new roads it may be relatively easy to find the opportunity to use these design methods. In older residential areas, however, with houses facing directly onto roadways that are becoming more heavily traveled, options to use noise barriers are typically more constrained. The use of some types of barriers on medians (if space is available) may reduce some noise but, perhaps as importantly, reduces visual impacts.

1.6.b Make a strong commitment to increase the number of people per vehicle so that the existing street system is utilized to its fullest.

Continue to support MCAG efforts to encourage and promote carpooling and other alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles. Consider the use of HOV lanes if and when they become feasible to use in Merced.

1.6.c Consider ways to encourage employers to reduce impacts upon the existing street system.

Examples could include encouraging large employers to promote carpooling and other transportation alternatives within their work force, as well as encouraging, if feasible, staggered working hours.

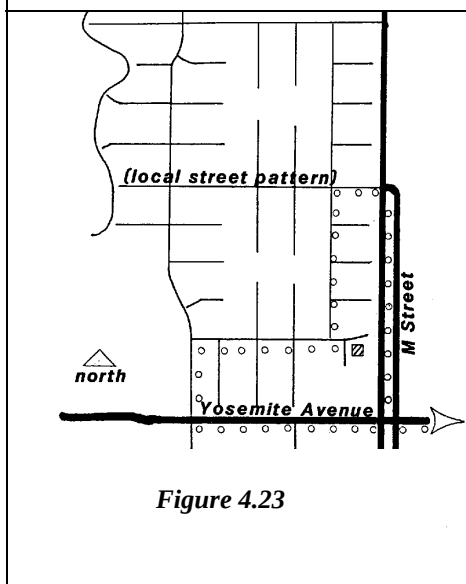


Figure 4.23

1.6.d Avoid neighborhood street system designs whenever possible that require a local resident to travel away from a local destination in order to reach it.

Street systems at times force inefficiency by requiring vehicles and pedestrians to double-back or double the distance they travel in order to reach a nearby destination. Such situations should be avoided if at all possible.

For example, in **Figure 4.23**, the nearest retail center is one-half mile (along the directional arrow) from the indicated residential site. With the given road pattern, however, the shortest automobile distance is nearly one-mile (indicated by o o o o).

1.6.e Install traffic control devices only where warranted except in unusual circumstances.

Caltrans has established a rating system for determining where traffic control devices, such as stop signs and traffic signals, should be installed. This “warrant” system considers such factors as the numbers of accidents, traffic volume, numbers of pedestrians, and the presence of schools. Traffic control devices should only be installed where they meet the minimum requirements of this warrant system. “Unwarranted” signals and signs may cause excessive delay, disobedience of traffic regulations, circuitous travel of alternative routes to avoid the devices, and increased accident frequency. These conditions negatively impact air quality and the efficiency and safety of the circulation system.

Policy T-1.7

Minimize Street System Impacts on Residential Neighborhoods and Other Sensitive Land Uses.

The City has for many years fostered an inter-departmental, inter-agency development review process which evaluates matters such as street design and street improvements, and their possible impacts upon affected land uses.

Implementing Actions:

1.7.a To the greatest extent feasible, maintain a distinct hierarchy of streets that will provide for major roadways between neighborhoods rather than through neighborhood areas.

Major streets on the perimeter of neighborhoods or villages promise to cause the least amount of disruption to those areas. In new growth areas arterials and higher order streets should be located to form the boundaries of neighborhoods, by placing them parallel to each other at one mile intervals, perpendicular to similarly spaced major street patterns to form approximate one-mile square neighborhoods or village areas. These villages are intended to be oriented around local activities such as parks and schools, as well as some level of commercial activity that would be located at the village edge with the intent to also avoid unnecessary intrusion through the neighborhood.

1.7.b Whenever feasible, approve street circulation patterns that discourage exterior traffic from driving through neighborhoods.

The intent is to make local trips, within the neighborhood or shortly beyond, convenient for the local resident (Action 1.5.a) while at the same time, making it inconvenient for the driver from outside that neighborhood to use the same road system as a short-cut during a longer trip. This is a critical distinction. If a street system is designed to be “perfectly convenient” for the local driver, it will almost surely be as convenient for outside drivers who speed through that neighborhood on their way to somewhere else.

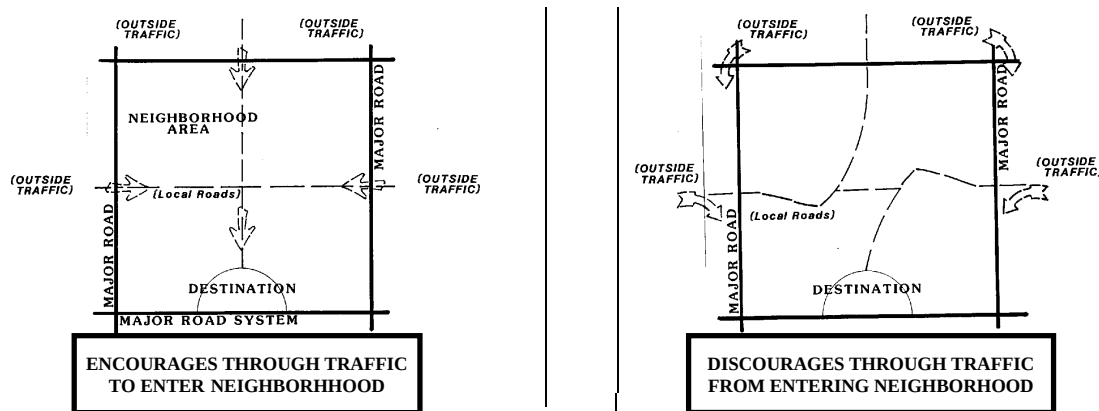


Figure 4.24

Policy T-1.8

Use A Minimum Peak Hour Level of Service (LOS) “D” As a Design Objective for All New Streets in New Growth Areas and for Most Existing City Streets Except Under Special Circumstances.

As the City grows, traffic volumes will increase significantly. In designing the City’s future circulation system, the City has required sufficient rights-of-way be preserved to maintain an adequate level-of-service, a minimum of LOS “D” but typically LOS “C” or better. On some existing roadways, such a standard will most likely not be able to be maintained without widening these roadways and causing great disruption to adjacent properties. The City will strive to maintain the minimum LOS throughout the system, but some exceptions may need to be made.

Implementing Actions:

1.8.a Traffic studies will be conducted as needed to determine the traffic impacts and to apply appropriate mitigation measures for new development projects.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires cities to assess the environmental effects, including traffic impacts, of new development. Based on the conclusions of the “initial study,” the number of trips generated, or cumulative impacts, a detailed traffic analysis may be required. When the traffic analysis shows that the development will cause an intersection or roadway segment to drop below desired LOS standards, the City will require the new development to alleviate its share of the congestion as a condition of project approval.

1.8.b Use peak-hour Level of Service “D” (“Tolerable Delays”) as the design standard for new streets and intersections in new growth areas.

The preferred LOS levels are typically “C” and “D,” particularly for larger roads and major intersections. With LOS C the road provides stable operation but is still underutilized to some degree. LOS D represents a fine balance between the relatively large number of vehicles served and the generally acceptable level of service provided. It is the intent of the City’s standards and policies for new and most upgraded intersections and road segments to be designed and built so as not to drop below LOS D (“tolerable delay”) during peak traffic periods.

1.8.c Establish minimum Level of Service standards for existing roadways and intersections that reflect the special circumstances of the surrounding area.

Maintaining a Level of Service D on existing roadways and intersections is not always feasible, appropriate, or necessary. People may expect and tolerate varying levels of congestion depending on location (e.g. central Merced) and time of day. Heavier traffic can also be a reason to encourage greater pedestrian activity and heavier transit use in such areas. Other factors may make higher levels of service infeasible. In central Merced, for example, widening existing streets could create great disruption to stable, older neighborhoods. In these areas, “significant delays” (LOS E) or even LOS F may have to be acceptable at peak hours. Special studies may be necessary to determine the appropriate LOS standards in such areas.

1.8.d Promote Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies in areas where LOS standards fall below the minimum.

Traffic signal timing or coordination, additional lanes at intersections, transit service enhancements, parking management and traffic management are all examples of transportation system management strategies which can be expected to be used in the future. Ridesharing programs, preferential treatment for High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV’s), Park-and-Ride lots, one-way streets, the provision of bicycle facilities, and the promotion of variable work hours and telecommuting are also strategies which will be promoted by the City of Merced.

Goal Area T-2: Alternative Transportation

GOALS

- **An Efficient and Comprehensive Public Transit System**
- **A Comprehensive System of Safe and Convenient Bicycle Routes (Within the Community and Throughout the Urban Area)**
- **A Comprehensive System of Safe and Convenient Pedestrianways**

POLICIES

- T-2.1** Provide for and maintain a major transitway along "M" Street and ~~possibly~~along the Bellevue Road/Merced-Atwater Expressway.
- T-2.2** Support and enhance the use of public transit.
- T-2.3** Support a safe and effective public transit system.
- T-2.4** Encourage the use of bicycles as alternative transportation.
- T-2.5** Provide convenient bicycle support facilities to encourage bicycle use.
- T-2.6** Maintain and expand the community's existing bicycle circulation system.
- T-2.7** Maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- T-2.8** Improve planning for pedestrians.
- T-2.9** Ensure that new development provides the facilities and programs that improve the effectiveness of Transportation Control Measures and Congestion Management Programs.
- T-2.10** Investigate the feasibility of providing alternative transit options between Castle Airport and the U.C. Merced campus.

Policy T-2.1

Provide for and Maintain a Major Transitway Along "M" Street and ~~Possibly~~along the -Bellevue Road/Merced-Atwater Expressway.

The City is fortunate to have a central corridor, containing many of the major land use destinations within the urban area, aligned in general proximity to the length of "M" Street. These destinations would be convenient to a primary transit route on this roadway, and additional urban area destinations would be convenient to secondary or connecting routes on roads perpendicular to "M." In addition, the Merced-Atwater Expressway would provide a connection to the "M" Street transitway, as well as a potential for future connection to Castle Airport.

Implementing Actions:

- 2.1.a** **Continue to review land use decisions in the vicinity of the entire length of "M" Street to avoid creating or increasing conflicts with the intent of a major transitway.**

Major land use project proposals in proximity to the "M" Street area should be evaluated for possible long term consequences, such as orienting primary vehicle access for such projects directly onto "M"

Street, if another option(s) exists.

2.1.b Cooperate with Merced County and other interested agencies outside the City to maintain long-term flexibility to achieve an “M” Street Transitway.

“M” Street is designated a “Transitway” within the City’s general plan growth areas on the Community’s Circulation Plan Map. This corridor should be shown on regional circulation plans, illustrating a broad-based planning effort to maintain future public transit options to accommodate city expansion as well as possible University of California (UC) growth in the region.

2.1.c Continue to review land use decisions in the vicinity of “M” Street and Bellevue Road to avoid creating or increasing conflicts with the proposed future major commercial and office park sites at the major transfer point between designated transitway corridors.

The prospective intersection of Bellevue Road and the future “M” Street (extended) is also the intersection of two transitway corridors designated on the Circulation plan. The proposed “M” Street Transitway is projected to run the entire north-south length of the City, while the prospective ~~Bellevue Road~~Merced-Atwater Expressway~~Transitway~~ would tie the “M” Street Transitway eastward towards the ~~future~~ University of California (UC) campus (and possibly westward to the potential regional job center at Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center). It is important that land use decisions, relating to major commercial activities proposed for the immediate area, are carefully considered to avoid conflicts with the major public transit function also proposed in the location.

2.1.d Cooperate with Merced County and other interested agencies outside the City to maintain a viable option for a Bellevue Road Transitway to provide regional public transit access to the University of California (UC) campus.

The Bellevue Road Transitway Corridor concept needs to be considered as part of any cooperative planning process for the future University of California (UC) campus and its environs. This may also include further evaluation to confirm viability of this concept for providing public transit access to the UC.

2.1.e Cooperate with Merced County and other interested agencies outside the City to evaluate the need to extend westward the Bellevue Road Transitway Corridor Concept.

The General Plan’s Circulation Map identifies a Bellevue Road Transitway, extending eastward from the “M” Street Transitway corridor, providing regional public transit access to the ~~future~~ UC campus. In connection with this prospective transitway to the east, it may also be advantageous to have the Bellevue Transit corridor extend westward, as part of the Merced-Atwater Expressway, in order to provide regional public transit access to the regional job center at the Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center site.

~~**2.1.f Work cooperatively with Merced County and other interested agencies to review and evaluate development proposals in the vicinity of Bellevue Road that might conflict with the prospective Bellevue Transitway.**~~

~~Bellevue Road is designated as both an “Arterial” and a “Transitway” on this General Plan’s Circulation Map. It will be important to obtain full regional cooperation to protect the future right of way (ROW) for this corridor, and to mitigate prospective impacts from any development projects upon these potential functions of this major roadway.~~

Policy T-2.2

Support and Enhance the Use of Public Transit.

Continue to cooperate with MCAG and other interested administrations and agencies to develop ways and seek methods for making public transit more successful in the Merced area.

Implementing Actions:

2.2.a Promote land development patterns and site design criteria that support and enhance the use of public transit.

While public transit ridership has not been particularly significant in the past in Merced, it has provided an important service to focused groups within the community. As Merced grows and as other factors change, it is more than likely that the use of public transit will increase in this area. It is important for the City to carefully evaluate how it can most effectively plan for this expanded demand before it happens. In this way, the City can seek to maintain flexibility to facilitate expected future public transit demands.

2.2.b Whenever feasible, avoid residential subdivision designs that require pedestrians to duplicate walking distance (double-back) to reach public transit routes.

A key to public transit is to make the system readily available. Land planning that actually builds barriers into the system for prospective transit users does not encourage transit use.

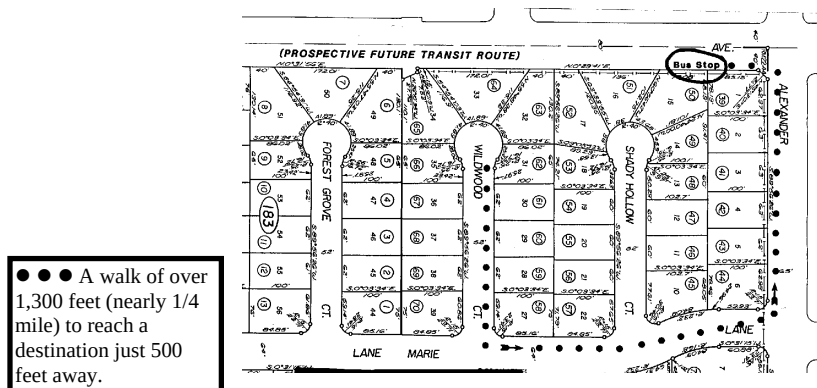


Figure 4.25

2.2.c Whenever feasible, avoid creating barriers that prevent convenient access to current or prospective public transit routes.

Considerable care needs to be taken to insure that development and redevelopment designs provide as much flexibility as feasible for non-vehicle circulation. Long, unbroken walls, misplaced cul-de-sacs, ill-conceived residential subdivision road patterns, etc., all can create limitations on how conveniently pedestrians can circulate through a neighborhood. It is important for residents to be able to reach the closest public transit route as directly and easily as possible. The more difficult it is for riders to reach a transit route, because of unnecessary or ill-conceived barriers, the more difficult it will be for public transit to serve the population effectively.

2.2.d Work with the consolidated transit system to seek Federal, State, and other funding sources which provide major funding for transit equipment, maintenance, and operation. Support legislation which will provide additional funding.

The City has received considerable assistance over many years from outside funding sources to supplement City expenditures for transit equipment, maintenance and operation. The City should continue to support similar efforts as part of the consolidated transit system.

2.2.e Support and participate in regional public transit planning

Through MCAG and the Merced County Consolidated Transit Agency, the City of Merced should continue to participate in planning efforts which promote improvements to the regional and local public transit systems.

2.2.f Plan for multi-modal transfer sites that incorporate auto parking areas, bike parking, transit, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and park and ride pick-up points.

Identify locations where transportation systems converge and designate such areas as potential multi-modal transfer sites.

2.2.g Encourage park and ride lots at suitable locations serving long distance and local commuters.

There are many ways for providing such facilities. The City should evaluate possible alternatives, including:

- 1) working with Caltrans and the Air District (SJVUAPCD) to identify suitable sites, which could be designated on the general plan land use and circulation plans;
- 2) consideration of funding of park and ride lots as mitigation during CEQA review of residential development projects;
- 3) coordinating with appropriate transportation agencies and major employers to establish express buses and vanpools to increase the patronage of park and ride lots; and,
- 4) allowing developers to reach agreements with auto-oriented shopping center owners to use commercial parking lots as park and ride lots and multi-modal transfer sites.

Policy T-2.3

Support a Safe and Effective Public Transit System.

Cost effective, efficient public transportation is important in any effort to provide a level of service necessary to attract increasing public ridership.

Implementing Actions:

2.3.a Include public transportation access in the review process for major public and private development projects, as well as all significant land use design proposals considered by the City.

In view of the urban area's growth potential, including the future addition of the University of California (UC) which will no doubt add to the demand for public transit, it is important for public transportation management to take a long range view of how land and site planning can possibly affect future public transit options.

2.3.b Provide transit stops on major streets.

The City's needs to evaluate where future bus routes are likely to go and obtain facilities for such service, as feasible.

2.3.c Avoid whenever possible public transportation transfer points that force passengers to cross major vehicle routes on foot.

If feasible, public transit route transfer points should be located at one point, such as in conjunction with a major commercial area, so that passengers can go from one route to another with minimum inconvenience.

2.3.d Provide off-street passenger loading/unloading at major public transportation destinations (shopping centers, etc.) whenever possible.

This is more convenient for a higher percentage of passengers and also facilitates transfers, easing passenger problems in inclement weather, etc.

Policy T-2.4

Encourage the Use of Bicycles as Alternative Transportation.

Studies have indicated that bicycles are the most efficient form of transportation ever devised, from the standpoint of energy expended versus distance/speed attained. Given Merced's attractive climate and flat terrain, bicycle transportation can be very effective.

Implementing Actions:

2.4.a Encourage area employers to promote bicycle use through incentive programs or other means.

A number of governmental agencies are concentrated in the central portion of the City, which could lend itself to the use by the City and other large employers of successful methods for increasing bicycle ridership.

2.4.b Study options and opportunities for extending the off-street trail (pedestrian and bicycle path) system to and through those portions of the City of Merced south of Highway 99.

This is a proposed topic for study/evaluation after completion of this General Plan process.

2.4.c Continue to support whenever feasible local efforts to promote cycling.

In recent years, private promotion has brought a series of special cycling races/events to the Merced area. These events have been a worthwhile public relations for both the Merced area and for cycling, and have helped to promote public awareness of the potential for bicycle riding in this area.

2.4.d Seek to involve a cross-section of actual bicycle users in bicycle planning efforts and transportation-related bicycle activities.

Bicycle users may be valuable resource people for bicycle-related planning efforts. It is important to remember that there are very different bicycle populations. There are recreational bicycle users, those who commute to work, and also the "semi-professional riders" who are intense cyclists. There may be large differences of opinion between these groups regarding various bicycle topics, and broader input is needed in order to obtain a reasonable array of information and usable advice.

Policy T-2.5

Provide Convenient Bicycle Support Facilities to Encourage Bicycle Use.

Because bicycles are light and mobile, it is extremely important that facilities be provided to secure them. Support facilities that help to make bicycle use convenient are important to encouraging a greater level of bicycle usage.

Implementing Actions:

2.5.a Develop guidelines for public and private development relating to the design and location of bicycle parking facilities.

It is not good enough to provide parking facilities merely consistent with those provided for automobiles. If a bicycle rider is forced to park a bicycle in an inconvenient area, subject to bad weather, or walk just as far in inclement weather as someone using a car, incentive is greatly reduced for the average rider. Bicycle parking needs to be protected, needs to be more convenient than that provided for cars, etc. There have to be special advantages granted to those willing to ride, to make bicycling a realistic option.

2.5.b Design criteria in the construction of all bicycle trails, lanes and routes (Class I, II, and III bikeways) should conform to the State of California “Planning and Design Criteria for Bikeways in California;” Class I bikeways should have grade separation with all major streets where possible.

The off-road bicycle/pedestrian trail system in the Merced region, financed in part by State and Federal funding, meets the construction standards required in order to obtain this assistance. Experience over many years with the existing standards has indicated a high level of public acceptance and satisfaction as well.

2.5.c Consider providing bicycle racks on buses.

The provision of bicycle racks on buses has proven in other areas to be an effective tool for promoting bicycle and transit use.

Policy T-2.6

Maintain and Expand the Community’s Existing Bicycle Circulation System.

The City of Merced and Merced County have cooperated to develop an impressive regional bicycle system in the Merced/Lake Yosemite area. This has helped to place this area in a position to attract major cycling events. The bicycle system is also an important community and regional recreational asset. In addition, location of the University of California (UC) in proximity to Lake Yosemite will make an attractive and usable regional system much more useful and valuable.

Implementing Actions:

2.6.a Continue to coordinate implementation and planning of the Bicycle Transportation Plan with the County of Merced and the University of California.

City and County have a tradition of working together on off-road bicycle/pedestrian trails, as evidenced by the existing regional trail system tying together Merced and a significant portion of the greater urban area, including Lake Yosemite. Given Merced’s flat terrain, there is potential for bicycle commuting to be a significant travel mode for the UC campus. A 1970’s UC study suggested that bicycle usage is significant at all UC campuses for student commutes up to 5 miles, about the distance from Merced to the campus. Coordinating bicycle planning with the University will, therefore, be critical.

2.6.b Pursue all available revenue sources for implementing the Bicycle Transportation Plan.

The City has been very successful over many years in obtaining monies that have helped to put the existing bicycle/pedestrian trail system in place. These efforts should continue.

Policy T-2.7

Maintain a Pedestrian-Friendly Environment.

It is extremely important for the City to work to insure its ability to obtain whenever feasible the most efficient, most flexible, pedestrian access to important community destinations.

Implementing Actions:

2.7.a Retain parkstrip and street tree planting requirements in residential areas.

Parkstrips offer distance from a street and thus a degree of security to a pedestrian. This is particularly important for younger children, especially those who may be actively engaged in an activity such as bicycle riding, roller skating or skateboarding. Street trees increase the feeling of security, help air quality, and the overhead canopies they form across residential streets are a strong aesthetic encouragement to pedestrians.

2.7.b Locate streetlights, street signs, fire hydrants, and other obstacles so they do not obstruct sidewalks and other pedestrianways.

It is important to keep pedestrianways/sidewalks clear of any intruding city equipment. (The American with Disabilities Act requires a minimum of four feet of unobstructed width.) This is another reason for making sure that sufficient rights-of-ways are obtained to match not only current but prospective traffic demands, in order to avoid future street expansions that leave too little room for sidewalks.

2.7.c Continue to require corner curb cuts to accommodate wheelchairs.

This is a federal and State requirement. The City of Merced has also incorporated the provision into its design standards. These curb cuts also assist baby strollers and carts.

2.7.d Work to maintain safe and convenient streetscapes for pedestrians.

This is especially important in the downtown and other urban areas that attract significant amounts of pedestrian traffic. The City has been involved with activities that serve as examples of what can be done, such as increased non-motor-vehicle police presence and the use of citizen volunteers.

2.7.e Continue to require sidewalks and pedestrianways for subdivisions and other development projects.

The City requires the provision of sidewalks in all new residential and commercial developments. This requirement should be maintained.

2.7.f Continue to encourage safe and convenient pedestrian environments in the downtown and other areas that attract a great deal of pedestrian traffic.

The City has been involved with activities that serve as examples of what can be done, such as increased non-motor vehicle police presence and the use of citizen volunteers.

2.7.g Continue to encourage the provision of plazas, malls, arcades, and walk-throughs.

These can be important pedestrian links in high-traffic areas that are visible and can be maintained.

2.7.h Encourage the planting of shade trees and, as a minimum, plan for the prospective establishment of rest areas with seating facilities along major pedestrianways.

These facilities can be important for making an inviting pedestrian environment. If such facilities are not feasible at the time of initial planning of such areas, flexible designs should be created that would

facilitate later re-design/reconstruction at minimum cost in the future.

2.7.i Continue to review and evaluate possible options for dealing with the issue of incomplete pedestrian access to development projects that will be major pedestrian destinations.

State of California provisions require access for the elderly and handicapped to public use facilities (such as government buildings) and privately funded facilities intended for public use (commercial establishments, etc.). City design standards require on-site sidewalks for individual development projects. In recent years development of some major projects in growth areas that are not fully built out have resulted in the problem of large segments of missing sidewalk. These missing segments, while not located on project property, have invariably been on the most direct pedestrian/bicycle route to or from the major pedestrian destination.

Policy T-2.8

Improve Planning for Pedestrians.

Providing a pleasant pedestrian environment can often be achieved with very little cost or effort, but it is often overlooked when overall circulation needs are evaluated. By making planning for pedestrian access an integral part of the circulation planning process, significant enhancements to pedestrian access within and around Merced's neighborhoods can be accomplished. Significant air quality benefits can be derived from promoting pedestrian-friendly environments.

Implementing Actions:

2.8.a Seek to provide more flexible, more usable pedestrian access opportunities to land uses and land use combinations that are prospective pedestrian destinations (sports club facilities, schools, government facilities, parks, public open space areas, etc.).

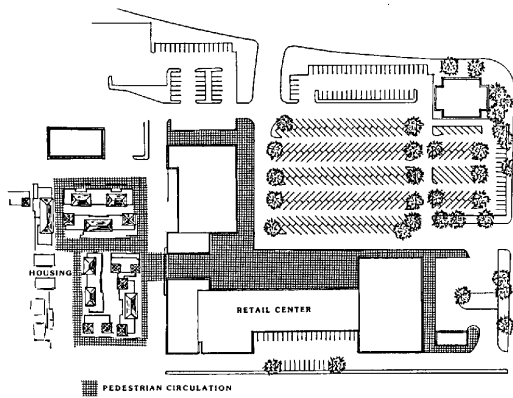
Examples include both public and private facilities. Schools, parks, trail systems and government centers are all activity areas that could be greatly enhanced by having one or more connecting pedestrian links to a nearby street(s), trail system, etc. A special case commercial example might be an athletic or sports club that could experience greater foot or bicycle traffic if made more accessible to other than motor vehicle traffic. Obvious prospective destinations such as commercial centers are often walled off from all direct access except motor vehicles using major streets.

2.8.b Evaluate the future need for sidewalks in business parks and industrially-zoned areas.

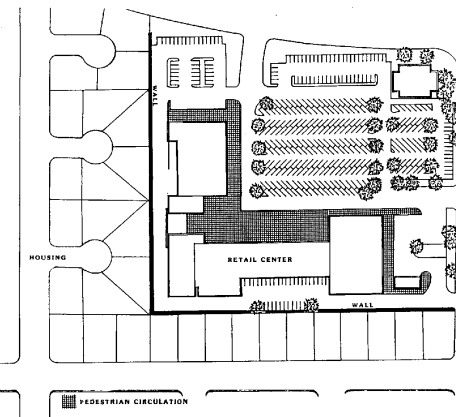
Increasing regional air quality problems are leading to requirements that make major job centers such as industrial areas more logical destinations for public or other forms of collective transit. This in turn may lead to a greater need for pedestrian distribution within these areas. An evaluation should consider any efficient and potentially cost-effective options.

2.8.c Continue to review land use and project proposals with the intent to avoid pedestrian barriers that prevent, or create unnecessarily circuitous, access to community and commercial areas.

It is important to continue to seek enhanced pedestrian access to major destinations such as shopping centers, schools, recreational areas, etc. **Figure 4.26** shows how the College Green Shopping Center as built on the left with good pedestrian circulation and how it could have been built on the right with little pedestrian access.



Preferred



Discouraged

Figure 4.26

Policy T-2.9

Ensure That New Development Provides the Facilities and Programs that Improve the Effectiveness of Transportation Control Measures and Congestion Management Programs.

State and federal legislation requires local government to include strategies to increase the efficiency of transportation infrastructure and to reduce vehicle trips in their transportation plans. Transportation control measures are most effective when infrastructure is in place that supports alternative transportation modes. This would include community-wide transportation improvements and on-site improvements at individual worksites and businesses. The City of Merced can support these strategies by encouraging developers to construct infrastructure that reduces congestion and/or trips.

Implementing Actions:

2.9.a Consider measures to increase the capacity of the existing road network prior to constructing more capacity (additional lanes, new freeways, etc.).

Measures that may be included in local and regional transportation plans and capital improvement plans that may increase the capacity and reduce congestion on existing roads include the following:

- Establish an integrated and synchronized traffic signal network for major thoroughfares to assure smooth-flowing traffic through intersections and to minimize congestion through maintenance of

stable traffic flow at intersections.

- Convert congested streets to one-way couplets where it would improve traffic flow and congestion.
- Modify intersections using turn restrictions, channelization, etc. where necessary and feasible.

2.9.b Work with employers and developers to provide employees and residents with attractive, affordable transportation alternatives.

Encourage new development to provide on-site facilities that encourage employees to use alternative transportation modes as air quality and transportation mitigation measures. Some examples include:

- Showers and lockers provided in office buildings
- Safe and secure bicycle parking areas
- On-site employee cafeterias and eating areas
- Convenient access to transit waiting areas from offices

The City may provide reduced parking requirements as an incentive for projects to incorporate measures proven to reduce employee commute trips or customer trips.

Some methods developers/employers may use to encourage trip reduction and increased Average Vehicle Ridership include:

- Rideshare matching, transit subsidies, vanpool subsidies, flexible work schedules, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, shuttle services, parking management, and guaranteed rides home
- Encouraging employers to provide preferential or subsidized parking for ride-sharing vehicles
- Providing land use patterns and site designs that increase commuters ability to walk, bicycle, or use transit to get to work

Goal Area T-3: Air and Rail Service

GOAL

- **Air and Rail Systems that Provide Safe and Convenient Service to the Community**

POLICIES

AIR

T-3.1 Preserve the municipal airport and its protective zones from incompatible encroachment.

T-3.2 Promote and encourage the orderly and timely development of commercial and general aviation facilities.

T-3.3 Provide adequate ground transportation systems that complement air transportation facilities.

RAIL

T-3.4 Reduce rail system impacts on circulation within the urban area.

T-3.5 Support enhanced railroad passenger service for Merced.

T-3.6 Retain and expand as needed rail facilities serving industrial development.

Policy T-3.1 AIR

Preserve the Municipal Airport and its Protective Zones from Incompatible Encroachment.

The City has worked for many years to provide protection of its airport. As the urban area expands, it is likely that growth pressures may increase in the general area of this facility. In addition to growth itself, the promotion of Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center and the ~~pending~~ development of the University of California offer possibilities that may change the future of the airport in ways completely unforeseen. It is important to retain an unencumbered facility in order to maintain necessary options for the future.

Implementing Actions:

- 3.1.a Continue to protect the viability of approach areas and control zones for both existing and future runway systems through land use restrictions and property acquisition where necessary.**

The City should continue to review opportunities that may arise.

- 3.1.b Carefully review any zone changes or development proposals within the general area with special regard to identifying and evaluating possible long-term consequences upon the airport.**

The City should apply the comprehensive planning process to any proposed development in the general area, taking care to look at any development proposals in terms of both present and future impacts on airport operations.

- 3.1.c Continue to work with Merced County to retain low-intensity, compatible County zoning in the vicinity of the Airport Clear Zone, to avoid an increase in land use pressures.**

This appears to be the most effective way to continue long-term protection of the facility.

(Notes: Additional policies regarding the airport clear zones can be found in the Safety Element, Chapter 11.)

Policy T-3.2 AIR

Promote and Encourage the Orderly and Timely Development of Commercial and General Aviation Facilities.

This needs to be carefully reviewed on a periodic basis, as urban growth continues, Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center develops, and planning for the University of California continues.

Implementing Action:

- 3.2.a Implement the Merced Municipal Airport Master Plan and update as necessary.**

The Master Plan, adopted in 1991, outlined the course for long-term development of the Merced Airport. It concluded that the existing airfield would meet the needs of the community for the next 20 years, and thus focused on refinements to existing facilities and the preservation of options for future development. ~~This master plan should be updated as circumstances regarding regional air traffic (the development of Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center, the possible elimination of the Essential Air Service, etc.) bring about changes in the mission of the Merced Airport.~~

Policy T-3.3 AIR

Provide Adequate Ground Transportation Systems that Complement Air Transportation Facilities.

Circulation planning in the general area needs to keep transportation needs of the airport and its adjacent industrial area firmly in mind.

Implementing Action:

3.3.a As development in the area around the Airport takes place, consideration should be given to providing transit and truck access to airport facilities.

Good transit and truck access to the Airport and its surrounding industrial areas is necessary to maintaining an economically-viable facility. Enhanced access from State Highways 99, 59, and 140 to the Airport area should be a high priority in this regard.

Policy T-3.4 RAIL

Reduce Rail System Impacts on Circulation within the Urban Area.

The City needs to continue to review and evaluate possible ways to reduce impacts of the rail system on the City's circulation efficiency. The two sets of railroad tracks which bisect the community make cross-town trips more difficult given the limited number of crossings.

Implementing Actions:

3.4.a Review land use decisions in the vicinity of major at-grade railroad crossings to avoid the creation of unnecessary land use and circulation conflicts within areas that already experience special problems.

When feasible any land use decisions in these areas should be evaluated in an effort to see if any prospective future conflicts, such as traffic signal and driveway locations, can be reduced or mitigated.

3.4.b Continue to seek approval of additional at-grade railroad crossings in the urban area.

Public Utility Commission (PUC) regulations are very stringent and it is quite difficult to obtain approval for new at-grade rail crossings. This creates a real handicap to urban areas, and especially to those areas that are experiencing significant growth like Merced. It is important to continue to pursue PUC approval of additional rail crossings for the Merced urban area, including ~~two~~ (Parsons Avenue, and Mistwood Drive) that ~~have~~ has been sought for many years.

3.4.c Continue efforts to develop a ~~centrally-located, cross-town,~~ separated-grade railroad crossing at G Street and the Burlington Northern crossing.

The City should continue to work towards the provision of a centrally-located separated-grade railroad crossing which would provide uninterrupted emergency access across Merced from north to south. Once the most important and cost-effective candidate is determined, the City should pursue its construction or its conversion to a separated-grade facility if it is currently an at-grade facility.

3.4.d Continue to communicate with railroad companies relating to traffic stoppage situations.

Attempt to work with the rail companies to reduce as much as feasible conflicts that currently develop between trains and waiting vehicles at the City's existing at-grade railroad crossings, particularly during peak-hour traffic times.

Policy T-3.5 RAIL

Support Enhanced Railroad Passenger Service for Merced.

The City should work to keep all options available to Merced for future passenger service improvements in the Central Valley.

Implementing Actions:

3.5.a Support efforts to extend existing rail passenger service directly to both Los Angeles and Sacramento.

This would make rail service more convenient for passengers using the service from Merced and other Central Valley communities.

3.5.b Support efforts to provide high speed rail passenger service to the Central Valley including a stop in Merced.

Such service would offer enhanced rail opportunities for Central Valley communities. A stop in Merced would be very desirable. As further details become available, the City will work with involved agencies regarding preservation of right-of-way and possible station locations.

3.5.c Study, as an outgrowth of independent efforts to resurrect some form of rail service from the Central Valley to Yosemite National Park, possible options for connecting Merced to such a rail system.

Any possibility of rail service being resurrected to Yosemite National Park would be a huge opportunity for any communities in this portion of the Central Valley. Because of Merced's historic connection with rail service to Yosemite, it is important for Merced to remain aware of this effort and to be ready to become involved in any serious consideration of such a project. The preservation of appropriate right-of-way could be considered once a route is determined.

Policy T-3.6 RAIL

Retain and Expand as Needed Rail Facilities Serving Industrial Development.

Two industrial areas (the Western Industrial Park and Santa Fe Industrial Park) currently offer access to rail connections, and it is important for these facilities to remain available as long as this is a viable industrial service.

Implementing Action:

3.6.a When feasible seek to retain the availability of industrially-designated land in proximity to railroad tracks for industrial activities that actually require rail service.

Additional industrial land adjacent to the Western Industrial Park and Santa Fe Industrial Park is designated on the Land Use Diagram.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Goal Area P-1: Public Facilities and Services

GOALS

- Maintenance and Improvement of Merced's Existing Infrastructure
- New Development Which Includes a Full Complement of Infrastructure and Public Facilities
- Efficient and Cost-Effective Public Service Delivery

POLICIES

- P-1.1** Provide adequate public infrastructure and services to meet the needs of future development.
- P-1.2** Utilize existing infrastructure and public service capacities to the maximum extent possible and provide for the logical, timely and -economically efficient extension of infrastructure and services where necessary.
- P-1.3** Require new development to provide or pay for its fair share of public facility and infrastructure improvements.

Policy P-1.1

Provide Adequate Public Infrastructure and Services to Meet the Needs of Future Development.

One of the key elements to promoting a healthy local economy in Merced is the quality of life enjoyed by the City's residents. The quality and availability of urban services and infrastructure is found to be an important measure of urban quality [of life](#).

Implementing Actions:

- 1.1.a** Through development review [and long range planning efforts](#), ensure that utilities are adequately sized to accommodate the proposed development and, if applicable, allow for extensions for future developments, consistent with master plans.

Improvement standards applied through the [long range planning and/or](#) development review processes should be based upon existing and potential utility needs to a site [as well as existing and potential utility needs in surrounding areas](#).- The review process will consider both municipal utility services and utility services provided by quasi-public or private utility service providers as much as feasible.

- 1.1.b** Master infrastructure plans for newly developing areas may be prepared and adopted as necessary.

The City may prepare master infrastructure plans for newly developing areas. Individual development proposals will need to develop plans and specifications for accessing planned City infrastructure.

- 1.1.c Include in Specific Plans and master plans, a phasing plan for providing access, sewer, water, drainage, flood control, schools, parks and other appropriate governmental facilities and services.**

A phasing plan helps ensure that adequate service facilities can be accommodated in the planning area and that new facilities and services will be provided in a manner that keeps pace with population growth.

- 1.1.d Construct ~~a-the~~ stormwater drainage ~~system~~, water ~~system~~ and sewer systems in accordance with adopted master plans.**

Master plans which identify needed infrastructure improvements and extensions, phasing options, cost estimates and potential funding alternatives may be prepared.

- 1.1.e Apply for Federal, State and regional funding sources set aside to finance infrastructure costs to the maximum extent feasible.**

Use of public funding sources to help off-set infrastructure costs could benefit the entire community by increasing housing and employment opportunities.

Policy P-1.2

Utilize Existing Infrastructure and Public Service Capacities to the Maximum Extent Possible and Provide For the Logical, Timely and Economically Efficient Extension of Infrastructure and Services.

It is in the community's interest to maintain an efficient and cost effective public service delivery system. To this end, the City supports development that utilizes and improves existing infrastructure and service delivery systems as much as possible.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.2.a Develop plans which establish priorities to address existing inadequacies in the City's infrastructure system.**

~~Present~~ Current sewer, water, drainage and circulation plans ~~shall~~need to be ~~periodically~~ reviewed and updated to reflect planned and existing circumstances. The updates should identify existing ~~and to note~~ system deficiencies and propose~~possible~~ corrective measures.

- 1.2.b Expand existing facilities to the extent possible at present locations.**

As long as it remains cost-effective, existing facilities (such as the Wastewater Treatment Plant) should be expanded at their present locations to save the cost of obtaining and constructing new facilities. Long term facility development plans should include adequate area for future expansion. Shared or regional facilities are also encouraged where appropriate to avoid duplication of services.

- 1.2.c Periodically evaluate the City's service delivery system and identify policies and programs which may improve operating efficiency and/or reduce service delivery costs.**

The City ~~will~~shall on a continuing basis evaluate its service delivery systems to search for ways of improving efficiency and service, reducing costs, etc.

Policy P-1.3

Require New Development To Provide or Pay For its Fair Share of Public Facility and Infrastructure Improvements.

New growth and development within the City is accommodated to assure that adequate space is provided to meet future population growth needs. The City will endeavor to provide for cost-effective new infrastructure and public service expansion to serve that growth. It is the City's policy, however, that new development should not create a financial burden for existing city residents and that all new development should be ~~more~~-self supporting with respect to infrastructure availability, maintenance, and future service provision.

Implementing Actions:

1.3.a Prepare and adopt adequate fee schedules commensurate with the cost of planned improvements and services, with annual review and update.

The City ~~should~~-shall review and periodically update its public services and ~~facilities~~facility fee structure to assure that it adequately provides for the maintenance of City service levels.

1.3.b Periodically evaluate the City's service delivery system and identify policies and programs which may be applied to new development to improve operating efficiency and/or reduce service delivery costs.

Design elements and standards for new development should be periodically upgraded to reflect modern technological advances and standards. Standards should be developed to minimize long-term operations, maintenance, and replacement costs.

1.3.c All new development shall contribute its fair share of the cost of on-site and off-site public infrastructure and services as appropriate.

~~This could include installation of public facilities, payment of impact fees, and participation in a public facilities financing program which may be adopted by the City to provide for development of city-wide public facility needs~~ This includes installation of public facilities and payment of impact fees for infrastructure, and annexation to the City Community Facilities District for annual operating costs of City services.

1.3.d The City may require developments to install off-site facilities which also benefit other properties.

The City may establish funding mechanisms to reimburse developers for infrastructure capacity in excess of the fair share costs resulting from a specific development's impacts if these excess facilities are deemed necessary to efficient and orderly development.

Goal Area P-2: Police and Fire Protection Services

GOAL

- ~~A Community Reasonably Safe From~~ Maximum Crime and Fire Protection Services

POLICY

P-2.1 Maintain ~~sufficient and enhance~~ public protection facilities, equipment, and personnel to the maximum extent feasible to serve the City's needs.

Policy P-2.1

Maintain and Enhance Sufficient Public Protection Facilities, Equipment, and Personnel to the Maximum Extent Feasible to Serve the City's Needs.

Public protection services and facilities are to be maintained in the City of Merced at a level that promotes the health and welfare of the city's residents. The City is committed to assuring that facilities, equipment and staffing levels of its fire and police service units meet the highest standard that can be accommodated within the resource constraints of the City.

Implementing Actions:

2.1.a Periodically review existing and potential station facilities, equipment and manpower in light of protection service needs.

Fire-fighting equipment and companies of personnel should be sufficient in number and adequately distributed throughout the planning area in order to allow optimum response time to calls within the primary service areas of a fire station and to ensure prompt availability of additional companies for serious or simultaneous fires. Police service districts should be sized to promote community-based policing concepts and to maintain sufficient personnel to promote crime prevention and to combat criminal activity.

2.1.b Determine that new development is adequately served by fire and police protection services.

Fire stations should be located so that no development in the City is outside the primary response areas (4 to 6 minutes) of at least one fire station.- Development plans should be reviewed with respect to existing and planned future fire station sites and police resources.

2.1.c Fire station sites should be selected based on the distribution of land uses and population projected when the area is fully developed.

Future sites should be located within planned urban service centers based on future use.

2.1.d Ease of access should be a primary consideration in selecting a fire station site.

The following guidelines should be considered when siting new ~~firehouse-~~ fire station facilities:

- a) Fire stations should be located on streets close to and leading into major or secondary thoroughfares.
- b) Fire stations should be ~~so-located as to minimize~~ such that delays caused by incomplete street patterns are minimized.

- c) A fire station should be near the center of its primary service area, measured in terms of driving time to the periphery of this area.
- d) Fire stations should be convenient to high value areas of commercial or industrial districts, but not located in them unless such a location is necessary to maintain the required service radius [and/or response time](#).
- e) Fire stations should be located, as much as feasible, away from other uses which may be sensitive to the noise impacts of frequent alarms.
- f) Fire stations and their sites should be designed to fit in with their surroundings, including consideration of open spaces, off-street parking, landscaping, and general appearances, especially when located in residential districts.
- g) In residential service areas, fire stations should be located in or near those sections which have the highest density.

2.1.e Maintain an adequate and reliable water system to serve fire protection needs.

An adequate and reliable water system is a key element in maintaining adequate fire protection to the community. In fact, the adequacy of the water system is one of the criteria used for determining the City's fire protection rating from the Insurance Services Office (refer to Section 5.2.1).

2.1.f Provide fire facilities and related resources to support the "central station concept."

In order to maintain above-average fire insurance ratings, fire facilities should be provided and sited to support the "central station concept" described in Section 5.2.1 of this chapter.

2.1.g Utilize existing community resources, to the maximum extent feasible, in the provision of public protection services.

The City should continue participation in and support ~~in~~-community level crime prevention programs such as the Neighborhood Watch and VIP (Volunteer In Police) programs.

2.1.h Assure that new development utilizes modern public protection concepts in their design and development.

Development review processes should involve public protection service providers in the city. Public protection planning concepts such as "defensible space", security lighting, access, visibility, etc., may be applied to new development to reduce policing problems and improve police effectiveness.

(Notes: Additional policies and implementing actions regarding police and fire protection services can be found in the Safety Element, Chapter 11.)

Goal Area P-3: Water

GOAL

- **An Adequate Water Source, Distribution and Treatment Infrastructure System in Merced**

POLICIES

- P-3.1.** Ensure that adequate water supply can be provided within the City's service area, concurrent with service expansion and population growth.
- P-3.2.** In cooperation with the County and the Merced Irrigation District, work to stabilize the region's aquifer.

Policy P-3.1

Ensure That Adequate Water Supply Can Be Provided Within the City's Service Area, Concurrent With Service Expansion and Population Growth.

According to the Merced Water Supply Plan, the City of Merced currently has adequate water resources and will continue to do so if they are properly managed to meet its future growth needs. According to the Merced Water Supply Plan, these resources need to be managed, however, in cooperation. The City must continue to work closely with the Merced Irrigation District (MID) in order to ensure that these resources remain stable. The City of Merced is committed to a program of cooperating in the long-term management of the area's water resources and utilizing policies and programs which conserve and manage water use in such a manner as to maintain the potable quality of the City's system and reduce treatment costs on applications which do not require the use of treated water.

Implementing Actions:

3.1.a Pursue innovative programs to reduce the demand for potable ("drinkable") water.

The City should explore programs for utilizing untreated water since many urban water uses do not require treated, "drinkable" water. Non-treated water can be used for landscape irrigation, industrial processing, and other uses. Possible sources of non-treated water might include: (1) MID surface water supplies; (2) stormwater; or (3) reclaimed water.

3.1.b Update the City's Water Master Plan for the Sphere of Influence Area.

The update should shall include a detailed analysis of adequacy of existing and planned water distribution and storage facilities to meet minimum pressure and flow requirements throughout the existing and future service area and needed expansion to service the UC San Joaquin (Merced) campus and possibly the Smith Trust lands in addition to the 2030 expansion area. The updates should also analyze the existing and planned water distribution and storage facilities for their ability to service the UC Merced campus and possibly Smith Trust lands. The update should also integrate the principles of the Merced Water Supply Plan and plan for recharge facilities. The update shall include a detailed analysis of adequacy of existing and planned water distribution and storage facilities to meet minimum pressure and flow requirements throughout the existing and future service area. The Update should integrate the principles of the Merced Water Supply Plan and plan for recharge facilities. The Water Master Plan update shall utilize the entire City SOI/SUDP area as its boundary. The update shall serve as a basis for calculating development connection fees and shall establish standards for on-site requirements for water system design on new development projects.

~~3.1.c Update the City's Water Master Plan to include the entire expanded City SUDP area.~~

~~The Water Master Plan update shall utilize the entire expanded City SUDP area as its boundary. The update shall. This plan would serve as the basis for calculating development connection fees and shall establish standards for on-site requirements for water system design on new development projects.~~

3.1.d Review the current water system maintenance program and coordinate planned water main replacements with the updated Water Master Plan.

Plans must be reviewed in light of needed system upgrades to service an expanded service area and assure that appropriate facilities are resized to meet future demands, rather than replace existing system components without consideration for future requirements. Upgrades and replacements should be scheduled prior to substantial deterioration of facilities in order to avoid service disruptions.

3.1.e Continue to work with ~~Merced Irrigation District~~MID and the County of Merced to ensure that adequate water supply and distribution facilities can be developed to meet the growth of the Merced metropolitan area.

Coordination will not necessarily require the development of common water supply and distribution facilities among the agencies involved. The primary goal of such coordination shall be the development of individual agency, or joint agency, programs and facilities that will meet the water supply needs of the current, and future, metropolitan area while protecting the area's valuable natural resource by maintaining a water balance between the extraction of groundwater and recharge to the groundwater aquifer.

3.1.f Continue to support policies and programs which discourage the use of private wells and water systems within the City limits.

Private wells are normally drilled at smaller depths than City-owned wells, which tends to make them more vulnerable to contamination. City wells are also consistently monitored to assure health and safety standards. For these reasons, the City seeks to limit the use of private wells within the City limits.

3.1.g Plan and design water facilities to efficiently serve the City's urban area.

~~Extension of water service to areas~~ Areas along the City's urban fringe, ~~which that~~ are not proposed for long term urban expansion, should not be planned to have water services extended to them. Such a practice would ~~designed to~~ promote growth in areas ~~to be maintained identified~~ for agricultural use. Water lines along the urban fringe, however, will need to be adequately sized in order to achieve efficient "looping" and reliability of the water system and adequate fire flow.

3.1.h The City shall not extend water service outside its incorporated limits.

City policy requires that an area be annexed to the City before City water can be provided. ~~—~~Exceptions to this policy include emergencies where public health and safety are threatened or a significant public interest is served, such as the proposed UC campus. (Refer to the Urban Expansion Chapter for other policies which relate to the UC.)

[Notes: The Urban Expansion Chapter (2) includes policies regarding the extension of City services to outlying areas. The Open Space, Conservation, & Recreation Chapter (7) contains policies relating to water quality and water conservation. The Sustainable Development Chapter (8) also contains a discussion of water resources.]

Policy P-3.2

In Cooperation with the County and the Merced Irrigation District Work to Stabilize the Region's Aquifer.

Studies have concluded that the long-term potable water needs of the City can best be served through the use of the area's groundwater resources. To the same degree, there is a need to improve and enhance the ability of agricultural users to utilize surface water resources and to develop groundwater recharge facilities for the long-term stabilization of the regional aquifer. The City has historically cooperated with the Merced Irrigation District to preserve and enhance the regional water resources and is committed to continuing this cooperation.

Implementing Actions:

3.2.a Work closely with the State and County agencies in exploring innovative technology and procedures for water conservation and reuse.

The State Department of Water Resources and Department of Health, along with the County Environmental Health Department, can provide the City and MID with resources and information on innovative water conservation and reuse strategies. The overall goal of the program should be to conserve water pumped from wells and promote development of systems that can utilize non-treated or reused water where appropriate.

3.2.b. Work cooperatively with MID to preserve and enhance its surface water delivery system.

It is important that the viability of the MID irrigation system be preserved and enhanced to assure long term, cost-effective water supplies for area agricultural interests. MID's water rights must also be protected. The long term strategy of promoting surface water use by area farms will reduce agricultural demands on the area's groundwater resources and promote water conservation throughout the region.

The existence of this historic agricultural water use system in the expanding urban area provides a significant future opportunity for the City to develop innovative means of landscape maintenance in addition to meeting some of the area's groundwater recharge needs. This surface water system also provides an important open space element to the city's urban environment.

3.2.c Explore the use of MID water resources for applications that do not require treated water to reduce demand on the regional groundwater supplies and reduce costs of water treatment.

By using surface water for uses such as landscape maintenance that do not require treated water, the City can reduce its demand on regional groundwater supplies and perhaps reduce the costs of water treatment.

3.2.d Cooperate with MID and the County in the development of groundwater recharge facilities as called for in the Merced Water Supply Plan.

Groundwater recharge has been identified in the Water Supply Plan as ~~the~~ key to maintaining an adequate water supply into the future. Groundwater recharge can operate in conjunction with park and open space facilities incorporating the development of recreational lakes and use of stormwater retention basins for summer recharge programs. ~~These Recharge~~recharge facilities should be designed ~~to be~~ as multi-use facilities within the Merced urban area where feasible.

3.2.e Obtain, purchase or preserve rights to open space such as transitioning agriculture lands for proposed major treatment plants, ground water recharge and storage facilities.

~~Comprehensive facility~~Master plans should identify potential sites.

Goal Area P-4: Wastewater

GOAL

- **An Adequate Wastewater Collection, Treatment and Disposal System in Merced**

POLICIES

- P-4.1** Provide adequate wastewater collection, treatment and disposal capacity for [existing and](#) projected future needs.
- P-4.2** -Consider the use of reclaimed water to reduce non-potable water demands whenever practical.

Policy P-4.1

Provide Adequate Wastewater Collection, Treatment and Disposal Capacity for [Existing and](#) Projected Future Needs.

Future growth and development will ~~rely~~ [depend](#) on the availability of wastewater system capacity. The City is committed to keeping the City's system current with respect to present and projected future needs of the growing urban area.

Implementing Actions:

4.1.a Maintain [and enhance](#) the existing wastewater system to increase the lifetime of the system.

The City ~~will~~ [shall](#) utilize modern wastewater system management technology to identify deteriorating system components and replace or repair worn equipment as required. ~~Plans for increasing the capacity of the City Wastewater Treatment Plant at its present location are in place.~~

4.1.b Develop [and maintain](#) wastewater master plans to serve future Merced urban expansion.

~~The City shall review all existing wastewater master plans for comprehensiveness. Each master plan shall be reviewed to determine whether it accommodates for all planned growth within its boundaries and the immediate vicinity. Where planned growth areas are not accommodated for under existing wastewater master plans, the master plans shall either be revised or new master plans shall be created to accommodate for the planned growth areas. The North Merced Wastewater Master Plan, adopted in 1982, covers the 1981 SUDP area; it will need to be updated to cover the expanded SUDP area along North Highway 59. Master plans for South and Southeast Merced are scheduled to begin preparation in mid-1996. These plans will include options for serving the UC San Joaquin (Merced) campus site. Subsequent amendments should incorporate the long term needs of the City's Sphere of Influence, the Merced 2030 expansion area, and the Smith Trust properties surrounding the campus site.~~

4.1.c Design wastewater collection systems that discourage development of prime agricultural soils.

Sewer facilities shall be designed to serve the SUDP area and future expansion areas only. This would include reducing collection system size to restrict capacity of sewer lines as they extend towards areas which are outside the City's SUDP and not planned for long term expansion of the City where feasible.

4.1.d Coordinate wastewater planning activities with the County.

The City and County should develop a joint strategy for accommodation of development in the County Rural Residential areas along the City's SUDP boundaries to minimize ground water contamination from septic tank systems. Additionally, development proposed within the City's SUDP and not yet annexed to the City or proposed within an area [that will likely be annexed in the future](#) ~~which will be used for future municipal expansion~~ should be reviewed by both the City and County to assure its future compatibility with the City's wastewater collection, treatment and disposal plans. Plans for servicing the UC campus should also be coordinated.

4.1.e Prohibit the extension of wastewater service outside of city limits, except in unique circumstances.

“Unique circumstances” is defined as a “substantial public use,” such as the UC campus or “health and safety” emergencies..

Policy P-4.2

Consider the Use of Reclaimed Water to Reduce Non-Potable Water Demands Whenever Practical.

In future years, the urban expansion area of Merced may require the development of additional wastewater treatment systems as part of a long-term comprehensive wastewater treatment plan. In the event that new systems are proposed, their design should incorporate beneficial use of treated wastewater. It is necessary that other development components also be planned to incorporate the potential to utilize reclaimed water as a primary or secondary disposal process.

Implementing Actions:

4.2.a–c Consider the development of designs for reclaimed water systems, including pipelines, pump stations and storage ponds, to primarily serve as irrigation for feed and fodder crops.

Design and development would be dependent upon proximity of the system to potential users, agricultural use areas.

4.2.b–a Consider conducting a reclaimed water market study to identify potential users.

Potential users include cemeteries, industrial users, agricultural irrigation, golf courses, and transit corridor parkways. The use of reclaimed water as a part of the overall groundwater recharge strategy for the region can also be studied. In general, the use of reclaimed water for uses that have a high degree of evapo-transpiration (landscape irrigation) are more desirable for reuse strategies than groundwater recharge provided that adequate levels of treatment can be obtained to meet state health guidelines.

4.2.e–b Consider preparing a plan for the use of reclaimed water which evaluates the facilities and costs required to serve potential users, determines required capacities of facilities, and presents an implementation plan.

As part of the long-term wastewater service plan for the City’s expansion areas, the use of reclaimed water should be studied as one of the alternatives to wastewater disposal with an analysis of additional treatment costs, costs of delivery of reclaimed water to a beneficial user, etc.

Goal Area P-5: Storm Drainage and Flood Control

GOAL

- **An Adequate Storm Drainage Collection and Disposal System in Merced.**

POLICIES

P-5.1 Provide effective storm drainage facilities for future development.

P-5.2 Integrate drainage facilities with bike paths, sidewalks, recreation facilities, agricultural activities, groundwater recharge, and landscaping.

Policy P-5.1

Provide Effective Storm Drainage Facilities For Future Development.

Merced is located in an area with little topographical relief. ~~This-which~~ results in poor drainage and potential flooding during peak storm events. The City presently relies on a combination of natural drainage courses, MID canals and stormwater retention basins to manage storm waters. Urban expansion will require development of new long-term stormwater facilities in the City's urban area. The City is committed to providing overall coordination for the management of stormwater within its urban limits and working cooperatively with other agencies in resolving regional stormwater management ~~problems~~ issues.

Implementing Actions:

- 5.1.a** Continue to implement, ~~along with MID and Merced County, the~~ City's Stormwater Master Plan. ~~Merced County Critical Area Flooding and Drainage Plan within the Merced urban area under the overall jurisdiction of the Merced County Flood Control District (MCFCDD).~~

~~The City of Merced and its proposed SUDP is located within an area served by the MCFCDD Plan. The City and County implement the plan at the project level and have jurisdiction to the point of discharge into a disposal system.~~ Detention basins are to be developed and maintained under the jurisdiction of the City ~~and County~~ within the Merced urban area wherever feasible. The Merced Irrigation District has jurisdiction of flood waters deposited within its canal system and the MCFCDD has responsibility for water deposited in the area's natural drainage channels.

- 5.1.b** Work with the MCFCDD, MID and the County to update the City's Stormwater Master Plan ~~Merced County Critical Area Flooding and Drainage Plan~~ to account for changes in expected storm drainage runoff due to expanded land uses within the Merced area.

~~The Merced County Critical Area Flooding and Drainage Plan~~ Stormwater Master Plan, adopted in 1983, does not include all the UC San Joaquin (Merced) campus site, the Smith Trust property around Lake Yosemite, or parts of the City's proposed SUDP. The system, ~~as it passes through the Merced SUDP,~~ will need to be reevaluated in light of new development plans.

- 5.1.c** ~~In cooperation with MID and the County, prepare a storm drainage master plan to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act.~~

~~When a jurisdiction's service area reaches a population of 100,000, the Clean Water Act requires that a storm water discharge permit be obtained. These permits are issued by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. In order to meet the requirements of the board, a master plan which deals with the management of storm drainage facilities must be prepared. Since drainage issues cross jurisdictional lines, it is best to deal with these issues on a regional level. Therefore, the City of Merced will work~~

with MID and/or the County to prepare a regional plan which will be designed to serve the needs of existing and future City development.

5.1.d Continue to require all development to comply with the ~~Merced County Critical Area Flooding and Drainage~~Storm Water Master Plan and any subsequent updates.

All new development proposals will be reviewed for consistency with the plan and shall be responsible for construction of stormwater retention basins, collection, treatment and disposal facilities necessary to adequately support the project. Where development is proposed in an area which lacks basic drainage infrastructure at present, the development project may be required to construct the necessary improvements with non-project related costs to be reimbursed as other development occurs in the area.

5.1.e Installation of facilities necessary to provide services to development projects will be based on the full buildout scenario.

Short-term or intermediate flood control and storm drainage facility improvements can result in higher long-term costs for ultimate system development and result in short-term flooding on adjacent areas. At the same time, if it can be demonstrated that an immediate development project's stormwater can be contained completely on-site without off-site impacts to the regional drainage system, such proposals can be approved provided that the project contribute its fair share towards the regional flood control and drainage system.

Policy P-5.2

Integrate Drainage Facilities With Bike Paths, Sidewalks, Recreation Facilities, Agricultural Activities, Groundwater Recharge, and Landscaping.

In order to provide for the most cost effective infrastructure development and maintenance strategy, the City is committed to a program of developing facilities that can accommodate multiple uses. To this end, the City will identify multiple use sites throughout the Merced SUDP expansion area.

Implementing Actions:

5.2.a Provide drainage channels in transportation or canal easement areas to the extent as much as feasible.

Reflect the planned regional street and open-space network to the degree possible when siting new future drainage facilities.

5.2.b Stormwater ~~detention and groundwater recharge ponds should be designed to appear natural in character as much as feasible and dual use of recreation facilities should be promoted where conditions are compatible~~facilities shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the standards in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and the Storm Water Master Plan.

The City's ~~Recreation Parks and Open Space~~ Master Plan and Storm Water master plan ~~shall will be updated to~~ include design criteria and standards for ~~these~~ joint use facilities. ~~Potential dDesign~~ Such criteria ~~could include the encourage the~~ use of rounded or sculpted edges, natural materials, and abundant landscaping ~~while accommodating efficient storm drainage~~.

Goal Area P-6: Solid Waste

GOAL

- **Solid Waste Management Services That Accommodate the Local Population Without Causing Significant Damage to Environmental Resources**

POLICIES

- P-6.1** Establish programs to recover recyclable materials and energy from solid wastes generated within the City.
- P-6.2** Minimize the potential impacts of waste collection, transportation and disposal facilities upon the residents of Merced.

Policy P-6.1

Establish Programs to Recover Recyclable Materials and Energy From Solid Wastes Generated Within the City.

State law mandates that the waste stream be reduced significantly ~~in coming years~~ and that local governments implement programs and activities to accomplish this objective. The City of Merced deems that it is in the City's long term interest to support efforts to reduce the amount of solid waste deposited in the County's landfill site and support private and public recycling efforts.

Implementing Actions:

- 6.1.a** ~~Continue to implement~~**Implement** source reduction and recycling programs to minimize waste at the point of manufacture or use.

Such programs ~~should~~**could** include the following: 1) ~~Working with County officials to implement~~**Continuing** citywide recycling efforts for homes and businesses. 2) Supporting public and private recycling efforts to divert wood, leaves and yard waste from being deposited in the landfill site. 3) Assisting the private sector wherever possible in developing methods for the reuse of inert materials (concrete, asphalt and other building materials waste) which currently use valuable landfill space and increasing resource and material recovery from solid wastes.

- 6.1.b** **Work with County officials in seeking federal and state funds for projects utilizing resources and material recovery processes.**

Support County efforts to obtain grants and loans to subsidize recycling center operations and to market recycled materials in the Merced urban area.

- 6.1.c** **Participate in resource and material recovery studies.**

Support County-initiated efforts to study the region's waste stream and develop recovery methodologies that will facilitate and promote **enhanced** recycling **efforts** and **further** reduce the volume of waste material deposited in the County landfill site.

Policy P-6.2

Minimize the Potential Impacts of Waste Collection, Transportation and Disposal Facilities Upon the Residents of Merced.

The County's landfill is located on the western side of the City's 2030 expansion area along Highway 59. This facility will most likely be in operation well into the next century and will impact development and growth on the City's northwestern edge. It is in the City's interest to work closely with Merced County on solid waste reduction programs and to develop strategies for protecting the existing landfill site from encroachment by non-compatible uses.

Implementing Actions:

6.2.a Intermediate processing facilities and materials recycling facilities should be distanced and buffered from sensitive land uses.

Where feasible, intermediate waste processing facilities and materials recycling facilities should be sited in or adjacent to compatible heavy commercial or industrial areas, with access to major roadways.

6.2.b Cooperate with Merced County to implement recommendations for source reduction programs which have the least environmental and economic impacts on the City and its residents.

The City development review process should incorporate policies and programs for waste collection points and waste transfer points which minimize traffic, noise, and other adverse impacts on surrounding areas. The City will cooperate with the County on implementing actions directed at reducing solid waste and to promote community awareness of recycling program activities and services available in the City.

6.2.c Continue implementation of programs in cooperation with the County of Merced to meet solid waste diversion goals.

The City's waste reduction efforts should be designed to complement County efforts.

(Notes: Policies regarding hazardous materials disposal are included in the Safety Element, Chapter 11.)

Goal Area P-7: Schools

GOAL

- **Adequate School Facilities for All Students in the Merced Urban Area**

POLICIES

P-7.1 Cooperate with Merced Area School Districts to provide elementary, intermediate and high school sites that are centrally located to the populations they serve and adequate to serve community growth.

P-7.2 Support higher educational opportunities.

Note: Modifications to Policy P 7.1 are still being worked on in conjunction with City Staff and the TAC School Subcommittee, which met several times over the last few months to discuss the proposed General Plan policies suggested by the School Districts. Until that work is further along and the City Attorney has had adequate time to review, those modifications were NOT included in this DRAFT.

Modifications to these policies will be presented at a later date.

Policy P-7.2

Support Higher Educational Opportunities.

The City of Merced is fortunate to have well regarded institutions of higher education. ~~been selected as the home of the tenth University of California campus. This major educational facility will enhance the present higher educational resources of the area (CSU Stanislaus, CSU Fresno and Merced Community College) and provide new and expanded opportunities for the area's residents.~~ The City is committed to promoting these institutions and facilitating their growth and development.

Implementing Actions:

7.2.a Work with Merced Community College to ensure that facilities and grounds are available to meet future student needs.

The City ~~should~~shall participate, as required, with Merced Community College planning efforts. The City will provide assistance in obtaining necessary campus development permits.

7.2.b Work closely with both the Merced Community College District and University of California Chancellor's Office to assure that adequate community infrastructure is available to meet their institutional needs.

The City's street system, along with water, sewer, and drainage systems, serve the existing Merced Community College campus site and ~~may serve the new UC~~ San Joaquin (Merced) campus site. The City will work closely with Merced Community College and the UC system on future campus expansion and development plans, coordinate infrastructure extension, and upgrade programs to meet the development needs of these two campuses to the maximum extent feasible.

7.2.c Work with the County and UC ~~San Joaquin~~ (Merced) planning staff in the preparation of necessary plans and studies for the expansion~~development~~ of the UC campus site and grounds.

Land use on the UC San Joaquin (Merced) campus site ~~is will be~~ under the jurisdiction of the Regents of the University of California with only limited review available to the City or Merced or the County. There is a need, however, to assure that infrastructure planning (sewer, water, drainage systems) and circulation system planning be well integrated with existing and planned City and County systems. The City will continue to work with UC staff, and the County of Merced, to provide assistance in matching campus needs with City resources.

Goal Area P-8: Cultural and Community Services

GOAL

- **Support for Cultural and Community Services that Improve and Maintain the Quality of Life for the Residents of Merced**

POLICIES

- P-8.1** The City will support the cultural and health related needs of the community by incorporating such facilities and services in development and redevelopment proposals.
- P-8.2** The City shall promote consolidation of complementary or support services to avoid duplication of programs.
- P-8.3** Work with others to study innovative ways of delivering library services at the neighborhood level to promote community education and provide a focus for community activity and cultural development.

Policy P-8.1

The City Will Support The Cultural and Health Related Needs of the Community by Incorporating Such Facilities And Services in Development And Redevelopment Proposals.

The long term vision of the City of Merced is that of a major urban center in the San Joaquin Valley. With growth comes the normal problems of urban expansion but along with the problems come expanded opportunities. Facilities and services ~~that which~~ are not practical for a mid-sized community can be supported in a larger metropolitan area. ~~With the development of the UC San Joaquin (Merced) campus, many new cultural resources will become available in the City of Merced.~~ The City's vision is to plan for the development of facilities ~~which that~~ complement the expanded community resources and reflect the future status of Merced as a major metropolitan area in the region .

Implementing Actions:

- 8.1.a** Encourage a range of health related facilities in Merced to meet the needs of a growing and aging population, including rehabilitation centers, walk-in medical centers, and full service hospitals.

The City will periodically review its development regulations to ~~insure~~ensure compatibility with current medical technology and service delivery philosophy.

- 8.1.b** Encourage the continued implementation and enhancement of the planning and implementation of a multi-cultural and performing arts program and facilities in the downtown area of Merced.

The City will continue to work closely with civic groups and other public agencies in the ~~development and~~operation and ongoing enhancements of this facility.

8.1.c Examine and address the ongoing demand~~needs~~ for developing youth services programs and supporting facilities.

Youth services and ~~center~~-facilities may be integrated into joint use facilities and operated in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation programs, or separate programs and facilities may be developed as desired.

~~8.1.d Review the long-term feasibility of development of a motel~~hotel~~/convention center in the downtown core area.~~

~~The center could be developed as a public/private partnership project scaled to meet the present and future needs of the region.~~

Policy P-8.2

The City Shall Promote Consolidation of Complementary or Support Services to Avoid Duplication of Programs.

The City of Merced recognizes that local governments ~~will be increasingly~~are faced with increasingly limited resources and ~~increasing~~while demands for community services is constantly increasing~~in future years~~. New ways of providing cost effective public services must be explored if existing service levels are to be maintained. ~~A key element in any effort to improve the cost effectiveness of providing public services is the facilities that are developed to house service providers. The Urban Village model of development provides a unique opportunity to explore innovative public service delivery systems. The City of Merced will be exploring means by which to maximize the utility of this planning concept.~~

Implementing Actions:

8.2.a ~~Within the Urban Village Core areas, senior~~Senior centers, satellite libraries, adult education, recreation and/or other public facilities should be located in proximity to each other in each ~~the~~ Village Core mixed-use areas to allow for integrated activities to the maximum extent feasible.

Specific plans, site plans and other development plans for Village Core areas should be reviewed to ~~assure~~ensure that adequate area is available for the development of these types of uses. Not every village will have these facilities. ~~; but if the need for such facilities exists, However, when they are provided,~~ they should be located in core areas where they will serve the population most efficiently.

8.2.b Continue to get ~~Target~~ downtown Merced as the central location for public and government facilities in the City (e.g., County and City government centers, civic center, post office, hotel/conference center, department of motor vehicles, federal and state offices, etc.).

These facilities should be located in close proximity to, or adequately served by, public transportation services.

8.2.c Encourage development of child care centers and homes in all areas, including non-residential areas. ~~day care centers to locate near schools and employment centers to allow for before and after school care and one stop convenience for pre school/daycare facilities for toddlers and infants.~~

~~Day care facilities should be located in areas with similar uses like schools to allow convenient drop-off by parents. Locating child day-care facilities in areas with similar uses like schools and near employment centers will also help reduce unnecessary vehicular trips and to facilitate parental involvement.~~

8.2.d Assess the demand for child care in new housing development and encourage the inclusion

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES

of space for childsh care, particularly in affordable housing developments.

Care should be taken to ensure that child care facilities are easily located in newly developing areas.

8.2.d—e Promote the development of shared cultural and recreational facilities and programs between the community and local educational facilities.

Work with local school districts and secondary education institutions to develop cultural and recreational facilities and programs that can be available for local community purposes.

8.2.e—f Continue to encourage parks to be located adjacent to schools in order to promote the joint use of buildings and sports facilities.

~~New park site development shall give~~Give priority consideration to sites located near school campuses. The City shall work with local school districts to develop joint use sports facilities with shared development, operation and maintenance responsibilities.

Policy P-8.3

Work with Others to Study Innovative Ways of Delivering Library Services at the Neighborhood Level to Promote Community Education and Provide a Focus for Community Activity and Cultural Development.

Library services are an important element of any community's cultural resources. Technological developments ~~has~~ have created new opportunities to deliver information at the neighborhood level in an efficient and cost effective manner. ~~This technology, coupled with community education outreach programs, cultural, recreation and civic programs, create new opportunities.~~ The community is committed to improving the quality of its cultural resources, such as library services, and will study and evaluate means by which this can be accomplished.

Implementing Actions:

8.3.a Explore ways to incorporate “information access” into public facilities and buildings.

Public facilities located in neighborhoods, such as fire stations, police stations, parks, etc., can provide important opportunities for providing public access to information resources. The location of computer terminals or kiosks in these facilities should be considered to allow ready public access to information on City business, library services, cultural and historical attractions, etc.

8.3.b Work with the County of Merced to define an efficient means of maintaining and delivering library services within the Merced urban area.

In early 1997, the City and County adopted a property tax sharing agreement in which the County will receive a share of the tax increment from Redevelopment Project Area #2 specifically for library purposes. The County could receive up to \$8 million from this source through the year 2014. The City will continue to work with the County to explore other options for maintaining library services for Merced residents.

~~**8.3.c Explore cooperative library facility development with local school districts and secondary education institutions.**~~

~~The City should coordinate with and education institutions to can study means by which joint powers authorities can be established for development of new joint use facilities.~~

~~**8.3.d Explore the expansion of the City's telecommunications resources to encompass access to City documents and other resources.**~~

~~Utilizing commercial and/or business sponsored telecommunications media, the City can promote community access to municipal affairs which can also support limited library resource and referral services available at the neighborhood level.~~

URBAN DESIGN GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Goal Area UD-1: Urban Villages

GOALS

- **An Integrated Urban Form**
- **Transit-Oriented Community Design**
- **Pedestrian- and Bicycle-Compatible Neighborhoods**

POLICIES

UD-1.1 Apply Urban Village design principles to new development in the City's new growth areas.

UD-1.2 Distribute and design Urban Villages to promote convenient vehicular, pedestrian, and transit access.

UD-1.3 Promote and facilitate Core Commercial design principles in Village commercial areas.

UD-1.4 Promote and facilitate Urban Village residential area design principles.

UD-1.5 Design and develop public and quasi-public buildings and uses utilizing Urban Village principles.

Policy UD-1.1

Apply Urban Village Design Principles to New Development in the City's New Growth Areas.

~~The "Merced Village Concept Plan" for North Merced area was approved by the City in 1991.~~ The fundamental building block of the Plan is the Village, a compact, mixed-use district that will accommodate projected growth, maintain Merced's present quality of life and help ensure its continued economic vitality. Villages achieve these goals by encouraging pedestrian and transit travel, and by minimizing single-use, low density developments that generate traffic congestion, air pollution, a scarcity of affordable housing, monotonous landscapes and poor utilization of environmental and land resources. The City of Merced has established the "Urban Village" model as the basic design concept governing urban form in new growth areas. Its principles should be applied as much as feasible in new growth areas throughout the Merced urban area.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.1.a** The focus of new development will be the "Urban Village," which are mixed-use, pedestrian- and transit-friendly communities within a one-square mile area.

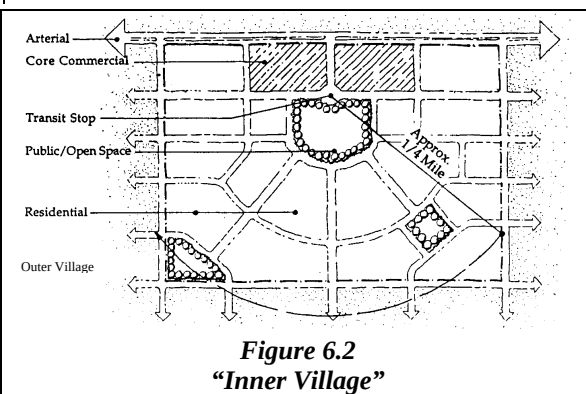


Figure 6.2
"Inner Village"

Villages should include a mixture of parks, shops, a variety of housing types, and civic uses. Villages combine these uses within a convenient distance, making it easier for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle or foot as well as by car. Village sites should be located on or near planned transit segments and provide a physical environment that encourages pedestrian and transit travel.

1.1.b Each village shall have a mixed-use “Core Commercial” area located immediately adjacent to Village Core Residential neighborhoods.



At a minimum, plans for designated Core areas should provide convenience retail and civic sites. Larger cores may also include major supermarkets, professional offices, day care, restaurants, service commercial, entertainment uses, comparison retail and other retail stores located adjacent to the transit stop. Optional upper floor office and residential uses in the Core Commercial area increase the mixed-

use, round-the-clock nature of the Core area. A transit stop and village green should be located between commercial uses and Village Core Residential areas.

Three kinds of Core Commercial areas may occur:

- a) Convenience Centers — providing a convenience “mini-market” with some ancillary retail (typically 3-10 acres);
- b) Neighborhood Centers — providing a supermarket with an additional anchor store, major ancillary retail and professional offices (typically 10-20 acres); and
- c) Community Center — providing a supermarket and drugstore, ancillary retail, professional offices and additional anchors such as junior department stores, cinemas and health clubs (ranging from 20-60 acres).

1.1.c “Village Core Residential Areas” (part of the “Inner Villages”) shall include residences that are within a convenient walking distance from Core Commercial areas and transit stops, and are built at densities high enough to help support them.

Village designs should incorporate an average minimum gross density of 10 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) which will allow a mix of small lot single-family, townhomes and apartments in Village Core Residential areas. All Village Core Residential areas should be pedestrian in scale, ranging from slightly under to slightly over one-quarter mile in radius and should provide direct and easy access to Core Commercial areas and transit stops.

Village Core Residential areas may contain a variety of housing types and ownership’s, ranging from small lot single-family homes to apartment buildings, as long as the overall average gross density of the Village is at least 10 du/ac. (Gross densities calculations should include the area in lots as well as in streets and alleys immediately in front and behind the lots). While housing diversity is desirable, this density requirement could be achieved using only a single-family product — small lots with carriage (ancillary) units. Small village parks should be provided as an urban amenity within these denser Village Core Residential areas.

1.1.d Each Village will have an “Outer Village” adjacent to it which includes lands no further than one mile from the Core Commercial area.

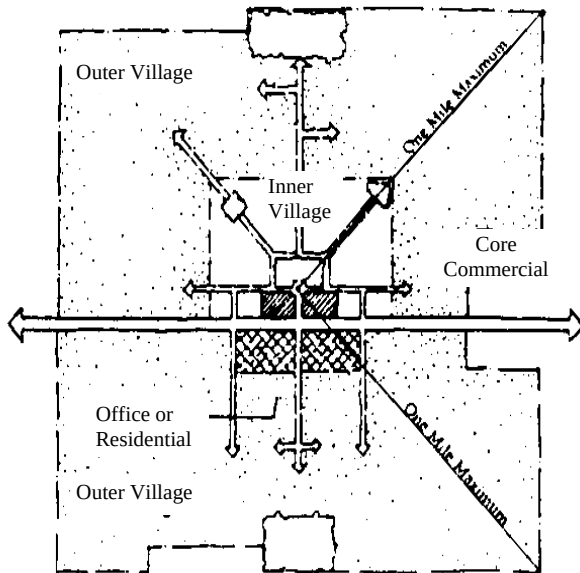


Figure 6.3
Urban Village

Site plans for the “Outer Village” street network must provide multiple direct street and bicycle connections to the center without use of an arterial street. Outer Villages may have lower density housing, public schools, community parks, limited areas of office uses, and park-and-ride lots.

The Outer Village is intended to provide uses that are not appropriate in the Inner Villages, because they are not sufficiently compact and are more reliant on the automobile. Public schools and parks that provide services to both the Inner and Outer Village should be located in Outer Villages near the boundary of the Inner Village.

Commercial uses that are very similar in nature and market appeal to those located in the Village's Core Commercial area are generally not allowed in Outer Villages because they diminish the viability of the Village's retail center.

1.1.e The location of parks, plazas, and trails should be coordinated to distribute a variety of recreation opportunities throughout the area.

The Urban Village area should contain a network of open space including community parks, neighborhood parks, village parks, village greens, plazas and an interconnected “greenway” trail system. Bicycle and pedestrian trails should be created along major creeks, high-voltage power lines, transitways, and along the abandoned Yosemite Valley Railroad (YVRR) railroad bed in North Merced to provide easy access to parks and schools that should be located along them.

1.1.f Uses which rely extensively upon autos or trucks are encouraged to locate in Business Park or other commercial areas along major transportation corridors.

An important concept of Urban Village development is to create areas which are less dependent upon auto and truck transportation than other areas of the City. Many uses typically allowed in commercial areas rely predominantly upon auto travel to generate business patrons. These uses, such as auto dealers and repair shops, mini-storage facilities, travel commercial complexes, and motels, should not be permitted in Villages in most cases. These uses should be accommodated in nearby areas where the street and highway system can support the traffic loads that they generate. For example, such uses are appropriate in business park areas adjacent to Highway 59 in North Merced.

Similarly, light industrial uses should not generally be permitted in Villages. Industrial uses are appropriate, however, where existing industrial activities occur and along major transportation corridors.

1.1.g The City will work with individual property owners within the Village areas to assure that development occurs in a balanced manner to assure economic viability of individual projects.

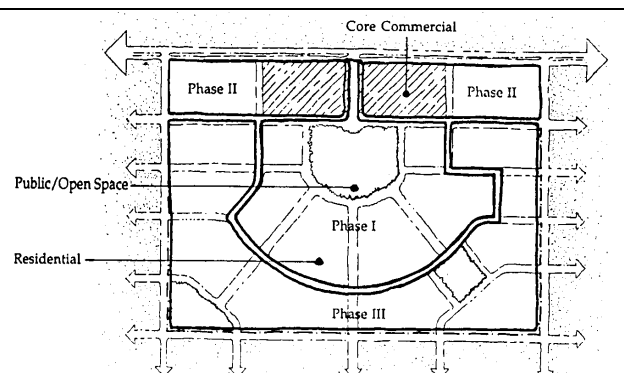


Figure 6.4
Conceptual Phasing of a Village

The growth area must be developed in a balanced phasing pattern. Schools and parks must be dedicated concurrent with commercial and residential uses. Further-more, areas must be set aside for land uses that will be needed in later phases, but where market demand needs to mature, such as Core Commercial and higher density housing areas. For this reason, development of Villages is seen as a cooperative effort between the City, landowners and the development community.

Villages represent relatively large projects which may be executed over several years. The phasing of the project is critical to its success, both as a financial undertaking and as a mechanism to encourage transit use. In order to encourage the public service agencies to provide public facilities in a timely manner to serve the needs of residents, developers are asked to dedicate sites designated for public uses concurrent with development of commercial and residential uses. Developers should also work with the City to ensure that the recommended mixture of land uses is achieved in a timely manner and development costs remain low.

Policy UD-1.2

Distribute and Design Urban Villages to Promote Convenient Vehicular, Pedestrian, and Transit Access.

Villages should be distributed throughout the study area in a pattern that allows the greatest number of residents access to a variety of shopping opportunities. Villages should be distributed to permit residents to walk to retail and public facilities without having to cross an arterial street. Villages should also be located to take advantage of main transit lines and existing retail market demand.

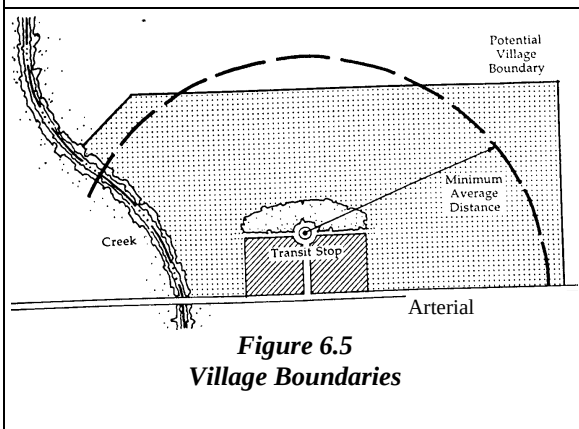
The Urban Village circulation system encourages alternative modes of travel, while providing adequate access for automobile traffic. This street pattern is achieved by providing multiple routes to destinations without relying on arterials. This pattern of multiple routes keeps traffic volumes lower on individual connector streets and allows pedestrians and bicyclists to avoid unfriendly arterials. This pattern also favors pedestrians by slowing traffic, reducing pavement and improving the sense of shelter afforded by houses and trees. Within the Urban Village development concept, local and connector streets should be designed to discourage through traffic, while still providing an interconnected and a legible circulation network.

Implementing Actions:

1.2.a Villages should be located to maximize access to their Core Commercial areas from their adjacent neighborhoods without relying on arterials.

Villages with major retail centers should be spaced at least one mile apart and should be distributed to serve various growth sub-areas. Generally, there should be one Village for each full square mile bound by arterials, except in rural residential areas.

1.2.b The boundary of each village varies with the size of the Core Commercial area and does not extend across arterials.



While the shape of the Village may vary, the size of the Inner Village should not be less than the area described by the quarter-mile walking distance radius (ranging from 1200 to 1600 feet) from the transit stop and core commercial area.

The minimum size of an Inner Village should vary according to the kind of Core Commercial area within the Village; larger Villages are associated with larger Core Commercial areas. The minimum distance requirement does not apply to areas with major intervening features such as major creeks and high-voltage power lines, where the boundary should follow the major feature.

Inner Villages should typically be at least 100 acres

when associated with a Community Center, 70 acres when associated with a Neighborhood Center, and 50 acres when associated with a Convenience Center.

1.2.c Building intensities and densities should meet the minimum requirements set forth for a Village to promote more active centers, support transit, and encourage pedestrian-oriented development that fronts onto the street.

Compared with other Village areas, the Inner Villages should have the highest commercial intensities (the amount of building relative to the size of the site) and the highest residential densities (the number of dwelling units in a given area). Core Commercial areas should be intensive enough to provide a "main street" shopping spine. Multi-storied buildings and structured parking are strongly encouraged near transit stops to better utilize the lands adjacent to the transit line and to provide additional transit ridership. A development pattern is encouraged where densities are highest at the center of the Village and become lower as the distance from the center increases. Thus higher density housing types such as apartments and townhouses are most appropriate adjacent to the Core, with lower density single family housing placed further out.

1.2.d The Village street system should provide multiple and parallel routes between the Core Commercial area and the rest of the Village. In no case shall trips which could be internal to a square mile bound by arterials be forced onto an arterial.

The collector street pattern should be simple and memorable. Winding roads, dead end streets and cul-de-sacs that cut off direct access to Village Centers should be discouraged in Village Core Residential Areas, but may be appropriate in some Outer Village areas. Streets should converge near common destinations that contribute to an area's unique identity, such as transit stops, Core Commercial areas, schools and parks

The street system should allow autos, bikes, and pedestrians to travel on small local streets to any location in the Village. At no time should an arterial street be the only preferable route to and from the Inner Village and its Outer Village.

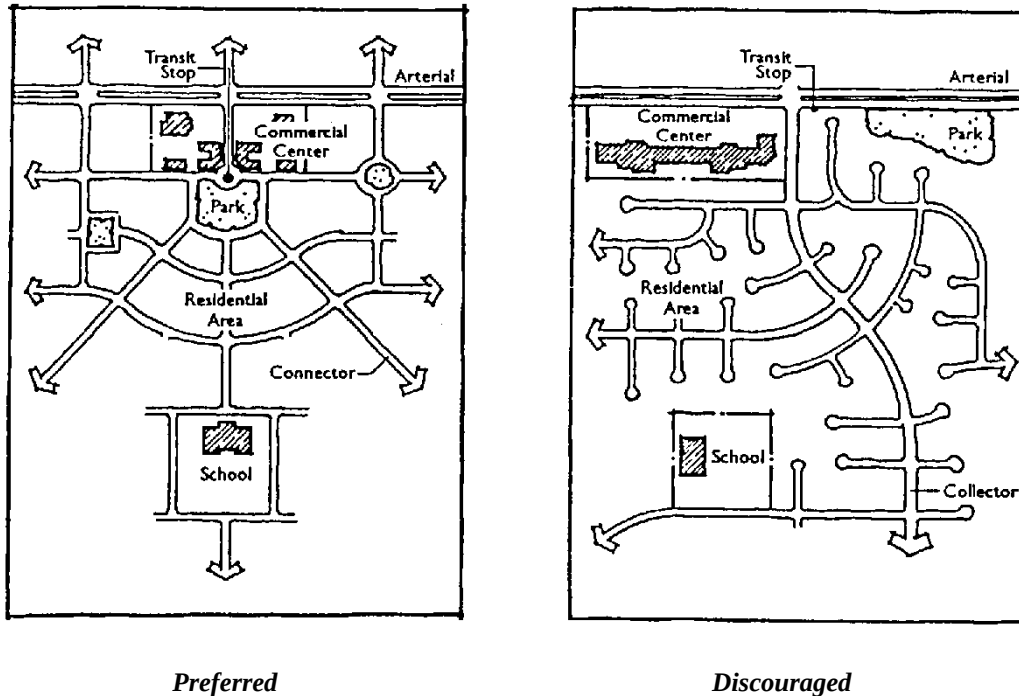


Figure 6.6
Village Street Systems

1.2.e Arterial streets should allow efficient conveyance of through traffic and must not pass through Villages.

The paved width of arterials should provide for safety, efficiency and long term needs. The regional traffic circulation system is dependent upon an efficient and smooth-flowing network of arterials. The required right-of-way for arterials varies with anticipated need. (Refer to Chapter 4, Circulation Map.)

1.2.f Collector and local streets should connect the Inner and Outer Village to Core Commercial areas, schools, and community parks without the use of arterials.

In general, Collectors should be designed to carry moderate levels of local traffic smoothly, in a way that is compatible with bicycle and foot traffic. A network of collectors should provide alternative paths to destinations within the village for neighborhood residents. The collector network should not provide a speedy through-route alternative to arterials. "T" intersections and "dog leg" alignments could be used to reduce through traffic and reduce speeds. The precise alignment of collectors will be determined as individual projects are designed.

Collectors should contain bikeways. Driveway cuts should be minimized and alley access to rear garages is encouraged to minimize potential conflicts among autos and bicyclists, and for the convenience of residents along collectors. Collectors and some local streets should be aligned along the edge of parks and open space to enhance the aesthetic character of the streets and sidewalks.

1.2.g The pedestrian and bicycle system must provide clear and direct access to the Core Commercial area and the transit stop.

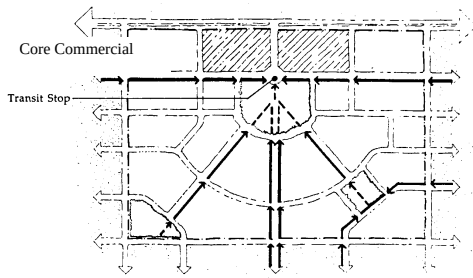


Figure 6.7
Pedestrian & Bicycle System

Although the street and sidewalk system will accommodate many destinations within Villages, the primary destination will be the commercial Core and transit stop. Direct paths to the transit stop should be lined with activities and be shaded. The configuration of parking, shopping and pedestrian routes should reinforce access to transit. A feeling of safety for pedestrians and bicyclists can be provided through the use of park strips between the curb and the sidewalk or bike path which provide separation from auto traffic.

Policy UD-1.3

Promote and Facilitate Core Commercial Design Principles in Village Commercial Areas.

The commercial core of the Village plan provides the focus for service, employment, recreation and entertainment within each Village area. It is vital that these core areas contain ample space to accommodate all necessary uses and activities and at the same time be highly accessible to surrounding residential areas by non-vehicular means. Core Commercial areas must be adjacent to a future transit stop. Street-level retail space should form a pedestrian-oriented “main street” that is accessible from the surrounding Village without using an arterial road. Shopping malls and centers should face shops onto streets that connect to the surrounding neighborhood without large intervening parking lots. The design of Core Commercial areas should encourage shopping enroute to the transit stop or by office workers during the day.

Implementing Actions:

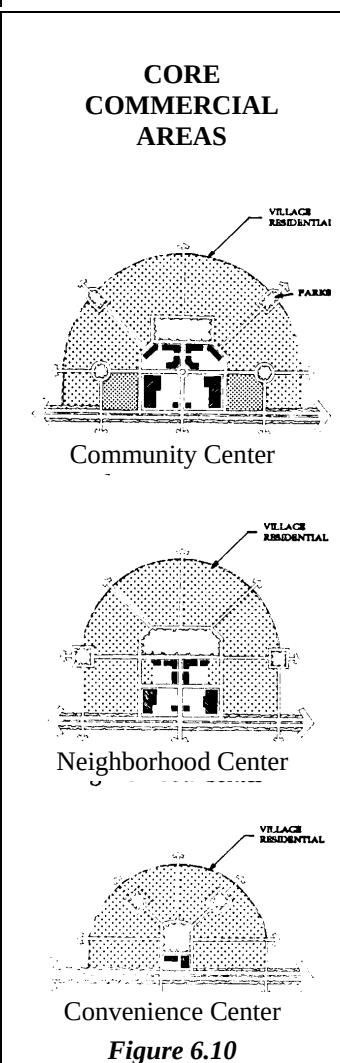
1.3.a Each Village must have a mixed-use Core Commercial area containing ground floor retail and commercial space, including: Convenience Centers, Neighborhood Centers, and Community Centers.

The size and uses in each Core area can vary, depending on the size, location, and village's function in the region. At a minimum, it should serve as a transit destination and convenience shopping area for Village residents, and can contain professional offices as well as retail uses.

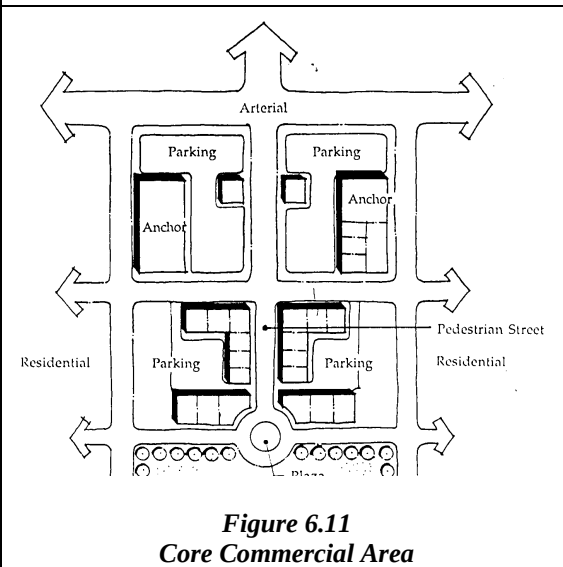
Community Retail Centers should concentrate a diverse set of major commercial and civic uses such as junior department stores, discount stores, cinemas, restaurants, health clubs, grocery stores, drug stores, hardware stores, public offices, and day care. Large-scale office areas should be located across an arterial road from Community Retail Centers.

Neighborhood Retail Centers should serve the growth area with major grocery stores, drug stores, ancillary shops, and offices. Professional office uses may also be located across arterial roads from Neighborhood Retail Centers.

Convenience Retail Centers should provide convenience “mini-markets” and some ancillary commercial uses. Convenience Retail Centers must not contain major anchor stores.



1.3.b Core Commercial areas must be developed at sufficient intensity (typically a F.A.R. of at least 0.25) to create a focus of activity at the center of Villages.



The F.A.R. can be achieved with a mix of traditional retail, offices, and entertainment uses. F.A.R.'s (Floor Area Ratios) are the ratio of the total floor area to the lot area, excluding public streets. Office and residential uses over ground floor retail are encouraged. Joint use parking should be provided wherever possible, making higher intensities feasible. Structured parking is also encouraged and should be considered in the design of Core Commercial areas, even if implemented in later phases.

1.3.c Office areas should be built at an intensity that concentrates activity near transit stops and Core Commercial areas.

A F.A.R. of 0.35 to 0.60 is encouraged without structured parking, and may be as high as 1.00 F.A.R. with structured parking. Larger office areas should be located across from the Community Retail Centers. Smaller office areas should be located across from Neighborhood Retail Centers. Professional and commercial office uses are also permitted in Core Commercial areas. In most cases offices will be developed with surface parking. As land values rise in Merced, structured parking will become more economically feasible. This guideline encourages development of multi-story buildings with structured parking, thereby allowing more efficient use of land near transit stops.

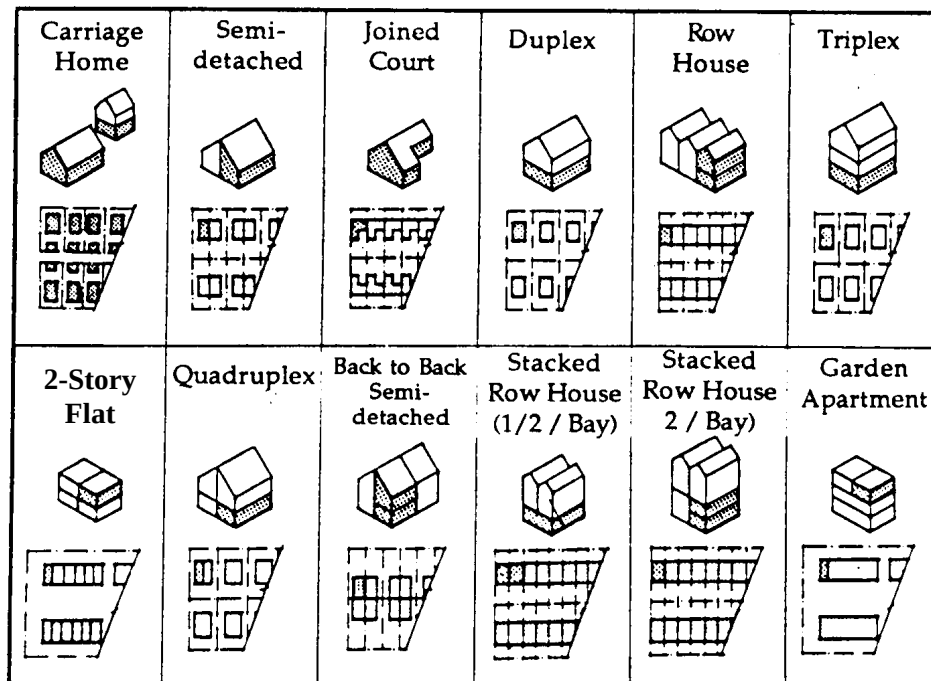
Policy UD-1.4

Promote and Facilitate Urban Village Residential Area Design Principles.

Within a Village development, a wide range of housing types and sufficient density needs to be developed to meet the varied housing needs of residents and to promote the economic stability necessary to support a healthy commercial core area.

Implementing Actions:

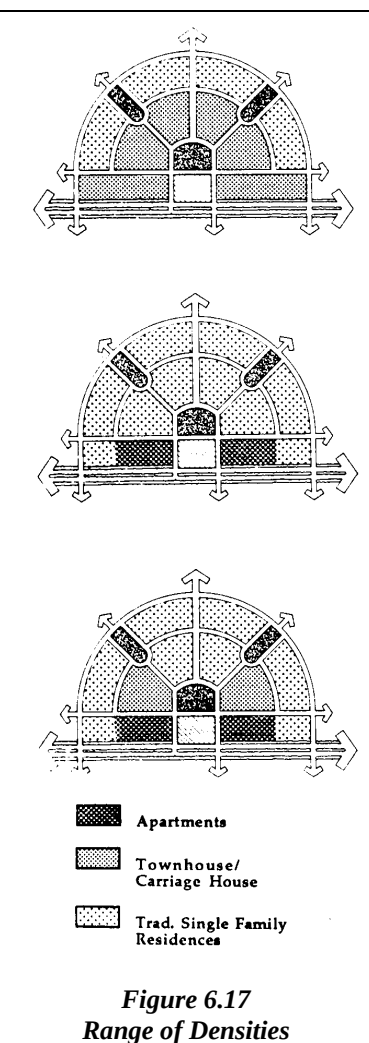
1.4.a A mix of residential densities, ownership patterns, cost, and building types is desirable in Villages.



**Figure 6.16
Housing Types**

While each Village will take on a different character and will have a different proportion of single-family and multi-family densities, care should be taken to provide a variety of housing types, costs, and ownership opportunities within each Village. The Village Core Residential portion of the Village can be a combination of small-lot single-family units, duplexes, townhouses, and up to three-story apartment buildings. Outer Village areas provide opportunities to develop other lower density housing types.

1.4.b A range of densities and dwelling types are permitted in Villages.



Gross residential densities within Village Core Residential areas should be a minimum of 7 units per acre, an average of at least 10 units per acre, and a maximum of 30 units per acre. Gross residential densities within Outer Village areas should have a minimum average density of 4.5 units per acre with a minimum of 2 units per acre. These gross density requirements must be met to ensure the viability of transit and retail centers, as well as providing housing opportunities for a range of households. (Gross density calculations should include the area in lots as well as in streets and alleys immediately in front and behind the lots, except where existing property configurations and site constraints reduce effective densities.)

Many single-family residential types will meet these requirements, especially if ancillary units are used. Many multi-family housing types are permitted in Inner Villages; duplex and triplex units are also permitted in Outer Village Areas. The range of permissible housing types are illustrated in the following guidelines.

Policy UD-1.5

Design and Develop Public and Quasi-Public Buildings and Uses Utilizing Urban Village Principles.

Public facilities and services are a central part of the design and development of a successful Village. The application of public facilities planning principles in designating space for public and quasi-public services at the neighborhood or "Village" level will help assure that future community service needs can be met in a cost effective manner.

Implementing Actions:

1.5.a Civic services should be placed in central locations in Villages.

Public buildings should be placed in central locations, in highly visible focal points, or adjacent to public parks and plazas. Civic uses such as an urban plaza, community center, post office, and library, are best located in the Core area in conjunction with retail businesses and offices and adjacent to village greens. Recreation-oriented uses, such as parks, recreation facilities, and community buildings, should be centrally located with easy access from both residential and Village Core areas. In most cases, parks and plazas should also be provided.

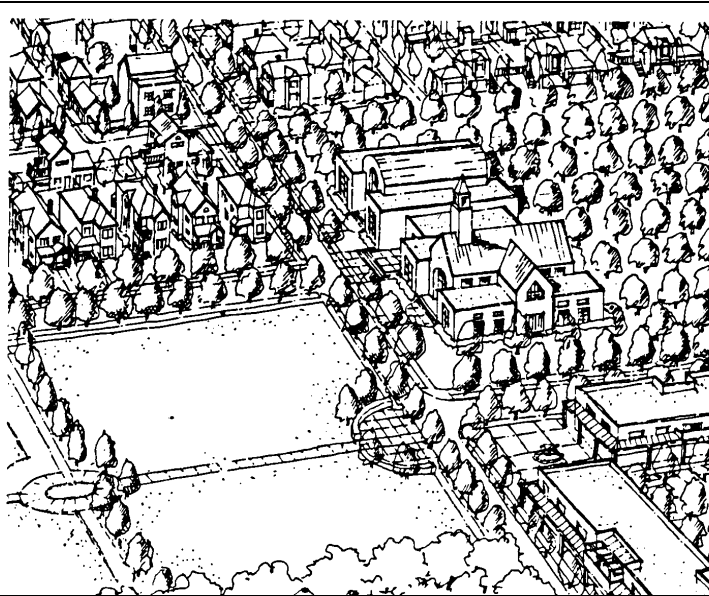
Developers should work with City agencies to determine needed locations for future public parks, plazas and buildings, and conditions for their provision. Public service providers are encouraged to make every effort to place new facilities in Villages to provide a transit travel option for patrons.

Major entries should face public streets and be articulated architecturally. The building and architectural features should be sited to take advantage of vistas along streets, to visually connect these civic buildings with their surrounding neighborhood. Major public buildings should have a civic presence enhanced by their height, mass and materials. Construction and materials should convey a sense of permanence and importance.

1.5.b Schools should be sited in a way that provides opportunities to use pedestrian trails and bicycle routes to and from school and minimizes the need for students to cross arterial streets.

Schools should also be designed to communicate their civic importance and located on or near a “greenway” bicycle and pedestrian trail to provide safe and convenient access to school. Elementary schools should be distributed so few students have to cross arterials. Junior high school and senior high schools should be distributed to minimize the need for busing. High school sites should be served by transit.

1.5.c Quasi-Public buildings such as religious buildings, fraternal halls, daycare facilities and private schools are encouraged to be situated and designed to face neighborhood parks or village greens.



**Figure 6.20
Village Green**

Religious buildings, fraternal halls and other quasi-public buildings are encouraged to be sited adjacent to neighborhood parks, with entrances in front and parking to the rear or side, or below the building. The civic importance of these buildings should be enhanced through their height, mass and architectural features and materials.

1.5.d Utility facilities such as wells, pump stations, and electrical substations should be located in sites poorly suited for other forms of development, such as small sites bounded by high voltage power lines and arterials.

Utility facilities should be screened by dense vegetation or architectural

features. Areas that are poorly suited to residential and other uses could be used efficiently as locations for utility facilities. Locations adjacent to arterials may be desirable but should be accessible by local streets if possible and should be designed to accommodate needed equipment.

1.5.e Public parks and plazas should be designed for both active and passive uses. They should reflect and reinforce the character of the surrounding area.

Various types of parks and plazas can be designed for Villages to establish an identity or character for each neighborhood. For example, plazas in commercial Core areas may be most appropriately designed with finished pavement materials such as stone or brick, and include fountains and seating areas; parks in residential areas could be developed with grassy fields, play equipment, and sports facilities. Parks should be located and designed to take advantage of view corridors along streets to create a legible and memorable street pattern.

Goal Area UD-2: Overall Community Appearance

GOALS

- **A Unique Community Image**
- **Attractive Neighborhoods and Districts**
- **Attractive and Memorable Public Streets**

POLICIES

UD-2.1 Utilize Urban Village design concepts in neighborhood revitalization programs.

UD-2.2 Maintain and enhance the unique community appearance of Merced.

Policy UD-2.1

Utilize Urban Village Design Concepts in Neighborhood Revitalization Programs.

Urban Village development policies and principles can result in improved neighborhood environments, reduced traffic congestion, and better and more cost effective service delivery systems. Although some existing neighborhoods throughout Merced contain certain elements of the Urban Village, some service and infrastructure improvements could enhance these “Villages.” Through the use of the Specific Plan and Redevelopment Plan process, existing neighborhoods could be revitalized utilizing modified Urban Village policies, programs and standards.

Implementing Actions:

2.1.a Identify existing or potential neighborhood core areas that could serve as a Core Commercial area.

Specific planning areas have been identified in South and Southeast Merced where Village design principles may be applied. City staff should inventory the existing commercial service centers in these designated planning areas and evaluate their potential for application of Core Commercial planning principles.

2.1.b Evaluate public transit alternatives and service levels within existing neighborhoods.

Based on existing population and service centers, locate optimum public transportation service routes, park and ride facilities, transit stops, etc. Through the Specific Plan or other appropriate planning technique, prepare a program for developing necessary public transit support facilities within existing neighborhoods throughout Merced.

2.1.c Identify needed neighborhood level public and quasi-public service facilities within existing neighborhoods.

Prepare a plan and program for the development of public and quasi-public facilities which should be located in the vicinity of existing or planned Core Commercial service centers.

Policy UD-2.2

Maintain and Enhance the Unique Community Appearance of Merced.

Over the years, the City of Merced has developed a unique physical character and civic flavor. The City's compact form, tree shaded streets, well kept neighborhoods and extensive open space areas have contributed to its charm and attractiveness. The Courthouse Square and re-energized downtown commercial center have maintained their human scale which enhances the small town flavor of Merced even though the city has grown significantly in recent years. To preserve and enhance this positive community appearance, the City has traditionally committed to a policy of civic improvement and beautification.

Implementing Actions:

2.2.a Encourage joint City and County cooperation in establishing land use and development standards along all major gateways to the City.

Highways 99, 59 and 140 are important entry points into the Merced urban area. Scattered and unsightly development along these entry points detracts from the overall positive appearance of the city. To a large extent, these entry corridors are subject to development rules and regulations administered by Merced County. Working in cooperation with the County, the City shall propose development standards for these city entrances and outline a strategy for implementation.

2.2.b Encourage the design of buildings that are in scale with adjacent development and harmonize with the character of the area or neighborhood.

Through the site plan and design review process, encourage the preparation of architectural renderings of new buildings in scale and context with existing improvements in the area to permit a broader range of review options.

2.2.c Discourage the visual monotony along major streets created by designs which use uninterrupted walls or fences with little or no landscaping.

Where it is necessary to develop fences or walls as visual screens or sound barriers, encourage the use of earth berms and other landscape techniques to minimize visual monotony. Fences and walls shall have landscaped areas with varied setbacks where they are visible from public streets. Adequate measures, such as the establishment of maintenance districts, shall be imposed on development permits to assure that long-term maintenance of these areas can be assured. Openings for pedestrian access in such walls will also be encouraged at intervals along arterial streets. Modified open-end cul-de-sacs will be encouraged in place of continuous walls along collector and lower-order streets.

2.2.d Encourage the development of methods to require acceptable levels of landscaping for new development and for effective maintenance in highly visible areas of the community.

Landscape designs should incorporate water conservation and low maintenance features.

2.2.e Expand the City's programs for undergrounding utility lines.

Working closely with PG&E and other utility companies, the City shall continue its efforts to place existing overhead electrical and communication lines underground. All new utility lines should be placed underground.

2.2.f Expand the City's policies which require architecturally suitable means of screening utility equipment and garbage containers.

Site plan review procedures shall consider screening of utility equipment, garbage collection/recycling stations and other necessary appurtenant features of urban development.

2.2.g Require, where possible, the landscaping of railroad corridors through the City with low maintenance yet highly effective plant materials as commonly used in the community by various Caltrans facilities.

Through the development review process, developments proposed along a railroad corridor may be required to contribute to a landscape improvement fund or establish a landscape improvement and maintenance district along a rail corridor adjacent to the development site. The City may investigate other programs and actions which would assist in the financing of landscape efforts along these railroad corridors.

2.2.h Support merchant groups that initiate improvement programs that make commercial centers more attractive and more efficient.

The City shall work closely with various merchants and merchant groups to facilitate improvements to existing commercial centers. Particular attention should be given to improving pedestrian and transit support facilities to assure that these older centers are competitive with newer more transit/pedestrian oriented centers.

2.2.i Continue to support the long-term beautification and preservation of downtown commercial areas.

The City's Redevelopment program efforts shall be maintained in this area.

2.2.j Add (Actions regarding Ceity sign ordinance and sign policies)

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CONSERVATION GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Goal Area OS-1: Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources

GOALS

- Maintenance of Merced's Biological Resources
- A High-Quality, Expanding Urban Forest
- Preservation of Scenic Corridors and Resources
- Improvement and Enhancement of Water Quality

POLICIES

OS-1.1 Identify and preserve wildlife habitats which support rare, endangered, or threatened species.

OS-1.2 Preserve and enhance creeks in their natural state throughout the planning area.

OS-1.3 Promote the protection and enhancement of designated scenic routes.

OS-1.4 Improve and expand the City's urban forest.

OS-1.5 Preserve and enhance water quality.

(Notes: The preservation and protection of important soil resources is addressed under Conservation [erosion], Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources [agricultural preservation policies], and the Urban Expansion Chapter of this General Plan, where the issue of growth impacts on prime soils is addressed.)

Policy OS-1.1

Identify and Preserve Wildlife Habitats Which Support Rare, Endangered, or Threatened Species.

The Merced Planning Area is known to contain potential habitat for several sensitive wildlife species. Much of this potential habitat is located along riparian corridors of the community's creek system and in vernal pools found in the northeastern part of the City's ~~SOI~~UDP area. As a matter of law, the City is required to review development proposals that threaten to impact known sensitive species. As a matter of policy, the City is committed to integrating potential wildlife habitat into the regional park and recreation system to enhance community awareness of the region's wildlife resources and to provide shelter for native plant and animal life of the area.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.1.a** Identify, and recognize as significant, ~~wetland~~-critical habitats areas which meet the appropriate legal definition of Federal and State law.

Wetlands, as defined by statute, have special regulations which must be followed as opposed to other riparian or "water" areas of the community. This policy provides for the identification of those lands subject to special Federal and State rules and standards and those which are solely subject to local policies and standards. Development applications will be reviewed to determine if potential wetland habitats exist on-site, and wetland delineation may be required in accordance with current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers guidelines.

“Wetlands” containing sensitive plant and/or animal species should be protected according to law. Specific protection policies should include:

- a) protection of wetland watershed areas;
- b) establishment of minimum setback areas around “wetlands” in accordance with the recommendations of California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or a qualified wildlife biologist.

The City, in cooperation with the County, may consider establishing a mitigation “banking” program in accordance with state and federal guidelines for vernal pools and other types of wetland habitats. Vernal pool preserves may be incorporated into other open space preserves (i.e. parks and trails) that would not be directly impacted by urban development.

1.1.b Urban development should occur away from identified ~~sensitive species~~ critical habitats areas ~~unless specific provisions to ensure adequate protection and monitoring exist.~~

When, as a result of specific site studies, it is determined that “potential” habitats actually contain sensitive or endangered species, development rules, policies and standards should be applied to assure that further degradation of these species does not occur. These policies should emphasize “avoidance” as the most desirable mitigation alternative. In instances where open space areas are established to protect a sensitive wildlife species, those areas shall be subject to appropriate management principles as approved by the City upon recommendation of the California Department of Fish & Game or the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

1.1.c Establish development review procedures which minimize impact on sensitive species and their habitat.

Maintain an inventory of potential wetlands, vernal pools, threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species sightings, and wildlife habitat areas. Require detailed biological assessments of these areas, including mitigation plans if necessary, prior to development. To permit contiguous development with sufficient density, it may be necessary to develop some areas containing vernal pools and marshes; on-site mitigation areas for these wetlands should be contiguous with existing wetlands or the open space network of parks and trails.

1.1.d Design parks and open space corridors to provide linkages between potential habitat areas.

It is important to develop linkages between open space areas to facilitate wildlife movement between designated habitat areas. This can be accomplished by connecting the East-West trending urban stream corridors with a north-south corridor provided by power lines, railroad rights-of-way and the regional irrigation canal network. Whenever possible, park open space areas should be connected to one or more of these designated open space corridors.

1.1.e Manage Open Space areas to reduce the risk of injuring wildlife species with harmful chemicals, insecticides, herbicides, etc.

Within the City’s open space network containing protected wildlife species, specific management practices may be required under Federal and/or State regulations. In other open space areas, care should be taken to assure that management practices do not cause an unnecessary threat to area native plant and animal life.

1.1.f Design improvements within parks, open space areas and open space corridors to facilitate animal life movement.

Creek road crossings should utilize culvert or bridge designs which provide adequate areas for wildlife to travel along the creek corridor without being forced into a motor vehicle pathway. Fences and other barriers should be designed to allow passage of native wildlife species throughout the open space area.

Policy OS-1.2

Preserve and Enhance Creeks in Their Natural State Throughout the Planning Area.

The urban creek system of Merced provides an important open space element within the City and provides important wildlife habitat. This creek system is also an integral part of the City's drainage system. The City is committed to a policy of preserving and protecting these important open space resources and assuring their continued viability as open space and drainage corridors.

Implementing Actions:

1.2.a Designate major creeks, streams, woodlands, and other appropriate areas in the City's SUDP as Open Space corridors.

Major creeks, riparian habitat, significant woodlands, and other sensitive environmental features should be conserved as open space amenities, when feasible. Significant stands of trees and knolls should also be preserved. Fencing and piping of creeks should be avoided. [Open Merced Irrigation District canals](#) ~~channels~~ should not be considered as Open Space corridors, but -where MID canals have been undergrounded, MID is open to working with the City on establishing open space corridors (with limited landscaping).

Channelization improvements should be naturalized. Whenever possible, in keeping with City standards and CEQA required mitigation measures, major creeks, riparian habitat, significant woodlands and other environmental features should be incorporated into the design of development.

1.2.b Continue to acquire a minimum 50-foot dedication from the centerline (or 25 feet from the crown, whichever is greater) of all creeks within the planning area in order to maintain these open space areas as natural riparian preserves and recreation areas.

Public access should be permitted, while important natural features and sensitive habitats are preserved. Corridor width shall be dictated by site specific circumstances of the creek, however, at least the established minimum setback shall be maintained as Open Space.

1.2.c Encourage alternatives to concrete channeling of existing creeks and streams as part of any flood control project and support more natural flood control methods.

There is an inherent conflict between flood control and drainage needs of the community and the value of natural drainage course as open space and wildlife habitat areas. While meandering streams and vegetation have the best wildlife values, they are least efficient in terms of removing flood waters from the community. Stream-way improvement plans must attempt to strike a compromise between drainage needs and open space needs on a case by case basis.

1.2.d Recognize Bear, Black Rascal, Cottonwood, and Fahrens Creeks as important open space resources and promote their protection and enhancement through the use of natural plant materials.

Use of natural or native plant landscape material instead of turf along creek banks whenever possible may result in improvement of the habitat value of the channel and reduce maintenance costs to the City.

Policy OS-1.3

Promote the Protection and Enhancement of Designated Scenic Routes.

Historically, the City of Merced has developed along routes and corridors which have come to be part of the City's identity. The City has designated many of these scenic routes for special development review regulation in the past. This practice has served the City well and will be continued into the future.

Implementing Actions:

1.3.a Identify, and where appropriate, designate additional scenic routes within the City's expanded SUDP and Sphere of Influence.

Use the following criteria to identify scenic routes:

- a) The scenic area through which the corridor passes should possess important scenic, historic, or aesthetic value.
- b) As appropriate, the scenic corridor should contain a variety of vegetation or landscape types.
- c) Routes of historic significance which connect places of interest should be considered even though the route is of marginal scenic value.
- d) Routes which incorporate significant views or vistas should be considered.

The proposed UC Campus Parkway should be considered for scenic corridor status once an alignment has been established.

1.3.b Preserve the nine currently-designated Scenic Corridors. (Need to review and update)

The nine Scenic Corridors are as follows:

- a) North and South Bear Creek Drive within the City limits.
- b) N Street from 16th Street to the Merced County Courthouse.
- c) 21st Street from the Merced County Courthouse to Glen Avenue.
- d) M Street from Black Rascal Creek to ~~Cardella~~ Bellevue Road.
- e) West 28th Street from Mercy Hospital to G Street.
- f) Lake Road from Yosemite Avenue to Lake Yosemite.
- g) R Street (extended) from Black Rascal Creek to ~~Bellevue~~ Old Lake Road.
- h) Olive Avenue East of McKee Road.
- i) M Street from 18th Street to Bear Creek.

1.3.c Utilize established guidelines for the review of projects proposed within a designated Scenic Corridor.

The following guidelines apply to the review of applications for development in vicinity of a designated Scenic Corridor:

- a) Utility lines should be placed underground whenever feasible.
- b) Signing should be carefully controlled to insure that it does not detract from the scenic beauty of the corridor. Specific guidelines for signing along these corridors should be established.
- c) Limit the intrusion of future land uses which may detract from the scenic quality of the corridor.
- d) Unsightly mechanical and utility structures shall be screened from view by use of planting, grading, and fencing.
- e) Heights and setbacks of buildings should be regulated to avoid obstructing important scenic views.
- f) Every effort should be made to preserve and properly maintain existing stands of trees and other plant materials of outstanding value.
- g) Structures on private and public properties visible from the corridor should be maintained in good condition (free of trash, weeds, etc.).
- h) Architectural and landscape design should result in an attractive appearance and a harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment.

1.3.d Explore the feasibility of creating some scenic corridors in South Merced through the use of special landscaping standards..

As part of the specific planning process proposed for South Merced, potential scenic corridors can be identified and preliminary policies proposed for adoption.

Policy OS-1.4

Improve and Expand the City's Urban Forest.

Early in the development of Merced, trees were planted to provide shelter from wind and summer heat. As a result, the City has a large number of mature trees along its streets, in public places and in private yards and has been designated a "Tree City USA". The City's urban forest provides valuable wildlife habitat and creates an attractive atmosphere for residents and visitors alike. Additionally, the City's trees have substantially reduced summer heat and glare around paved areas, thereby helping the City maintain a cooler summer average temperature and reduce energy usage. In continuing this tradition, the City of Merced has established policies and programs to protect, maintain and expand its urban forests.

Implementing Actions:

1.4.a Continue the City's Street Tree program (Merced Municipal Code 14.12) and explore alternative funding sources for providing long-term maintenance.

The City needs to explore new and innovative ways of maintaining trees in public spaces. This could include establishment of landscape maintenance service areas within new developments and other programs such as an "Adopt-A-Tree" program within the City where a business or individual would assume the responsibility for the long-term care and maintenance of a significant urban tree or stand of trees.

1.4.b Continue to require new development to plant street trees approximately 40 feet apart, at a maximum, along City streets.

Tree planting policies have been established by the City for new development projects. These practices are to be continued. Exceptions to the spacing requirements are granted in selected areas where trees may interfere with other public facilities, such as street lights, traffic signals, etc.

1.4.c Work with local non-profit agencies, service clubs, and other voluntary organizations to plant trees and shrubs in appropriate areas throughout the City.

As part of an overall City beautification effort, local residents and service clubs, along with non-profit groups and businesses, can assist in expanding the City's urban forest programs into areas which are already developed with less than a full complement of tree plantings.

1.4.d Continue to promote Merced's "Tree City USA" designation with Arbor Day and other public events.

These programs serve to generate public awareness of the City's urban forest and the need to protect and enhance this urban amenity.

Policy OS-1.5

Preserve and Enhance Water Quality.

Water has become one of the most important resources for determining a region's ability to grow and prosper. California has enacted several major laws which require local communities to address the complicated issue of resources. The City of Merced has adopted policies addressing the conservation of urban water use and a development strategy to meet future water needs (see Section 5.2.3). The final element in the City's comprehensive water strategy is the preservation of water quality. It should be noted that these policies are directed towards enhancing or implementing the many existing water quality regulations which affect the City and its residents.

Implementing Actions:

1.5.a Utilize storm water retention basins and other “Best Management Practices” to improve the quality of stormwater discharged into the region’s natural surface water system.

Working in cooperation with the Merced Irrigation District and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, study alternative means of implementing cost effective “Best Management Practices” for the treatment of stormwater discharges into the regional surface water system. (“Best Management Practices” are defined as the most up-to-date methods of dealing with a problem as determined by experts in the field. These practices change over time as new techniques and methodologies are developed.) A program may be developed which integrates the use of stormwater retention ponds, groundwater recharge basins, swails, or other techniques which could improve the quality of storm water run-off. Additionally, design guidelines for new development may be prepared to address stormwater treatment prior to its entry into the City’s storm water drainage system.

1.5.b Monitor known sources of groundwater contamination within the City and its future expansion area.

In cooperation with the State Department of Health Services, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Merced County Environmental Health Department, the City will maintain an inventory of known sources of groundwater contamination in the City’s planning area. When appropriate, the City may implement policies and/or programs which minimize the threat of aggravating existing problems and eliminate potential future problems of ground water contamination. In some instances, the City may consider extending municipal water service to suburban areas on the City’s urban fringe experiencing problems from polluted ground water or to prevent future problems.

1.5.c Monitor ground water in areas in and around the City using septic system wastewater disposal systems.

In cooperation with the Merced County Environmental Health Department, monitor developed areas within the City’s planning area for nitrate concentrations exceeding state standards. Where problem areas are identified, study potential resolutions to the problem, including annexation and the extension of City sewer service to the area.

(Notes: Additional policies regarding water supply can be found in Chapter 5, Public Facilities (Goal Area P-3), and policies regarding water conservation can be found later in this Open Space Chapter (Goal Area OS-5).

Goal Area OS-2: Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources

GOAL

■ **Protection of Regional Agricultural Resources**

POLICIES

OS-2.1 Protect agricultural areas outside the City’s SUDP from urban impacts.

OS-2.2 Relieve pressures on converting areas containing large concentrations of “prime” agricultural soils to urban uses by providing adequate urban development land within the Merced City SUDP.

Policy OS-2.1

Protect Agricultural Areas Outside the City’s SUDP From Urban Impacts.

Regional agricultural cropland provides an economic base for the City of Merced, and the long term economic health of the City is directly linked to conserving the productive capacity of regional farmland. To this degree, the City has established urban expansion policies directing urban growth away from “prime” agricultural soils. Policies are also needed to protect farmland along the urban perimeter and to promote open space policies which protect farmland and the farming industry.

Implementing Actions:

2.1.a ~~Continue to~~ Explore the use of Farmland Trusts, exclusive agricultural zoning, and the transfer of development rights to protect prime agricultural areas.

The City, in cooperation with the County of Merced and the City of Atwater, can explore various agricultural preservation programs in proximity to the City. The policies should limit present tendencies towards suburbanization of farmlands into large lot Rural Residential developments which have a long term adverse impact on the productive capacity of the region’s agricultural production capacity. The possibility of establishing a land bank should be investigated further.

2.1.b Establish policies and programs which minimize conflicts between urban and agricultural uses.

Consider adoption of a “right-to-farm” ordinance to inform residents of continued agricultural production and the lawful use of agricultural chemicals, including pesticides and fertilizers, in proximity to urban areas. Also, to assert that no pre-existing or future agricultural operation would be considered a nuisance solely due to a change in adjacent land use or adjoining residential development.

2.1.c Minimize conflict between agricultural and urban uses by requiring buffers, such as landscape areas, roadways, or creeks, to separate these uses.

The City should periodically review its urban boundary policies to assure that adjacent farm lands are adequately buffered from urban uses.

(Notes: This policy is supported by other policies and implementing actions found in the Land Use and Urban Expansion Chapters of this Plan.)

Policy OS-2.2

Relieve Pressures on Converting Areas Containing Large Concentrations of “Prime” Agricultural Soils to Urban Uses by Providing Adequate Urban Development Land Within the Merced City SUDP.

Generally, overly restrictive growth and development policies within a city can translate into increased development pressure on rural areas. The City of Merced is committed to providing adequate and economically competitive development land within its urban growth area in order to reduce rural development pressures on the valuable agricultural lands outside the City’s SUDP and in the surrounding region.

Implementing Actions:

This important policy will be carried out through several implementing actions found in the Land Use, Public Services and Facilities, and Urban Expansion Chapters of the *Merced Vision 2015-2030 General Plan*. These programs are not duplicated here under this policy heading.

Goal Area OS-3: Open Space for Outdoor Recreation

GOALS

- **High-Quality Recreational Open Space**
- **Adequate Public Recreation Facilities**
- **Comprehensive Urban Trail and Bike Path System**

POLICIES

- OS-3.1** Provide high-quality park and open space facilities to serve the needs of a growing population.
- OS-3.2** Maintain and expand the City's Bikeway and Trail System.
- OS-3.3** Maintain the City's existing high-quality open space facilities.
- OS-3.4** Develop a diverse and integrated system of park facilities throughout Merced.

Policy OS-3.1

Provide High-Quality Park and Open Space Facilities to Serve the Needs of a Growing Population.

The City of Merced has benefited from the foresight of early leaders in the City's development with respect to parks and open space. The City's growth has historically incorporated its natural open space resources along Bear Creek and other lesser drainage courses into an overall open space network which has become a major source of civic pride. The City is committed to continuing this high standard of park and open space development in the expansion areas to the north and south of the existing city.

Implementing Actions:

3.1.a Continue efforts to acquire new park sites within future growth areas in advance of development to meet the recreation open space needs of an expanding population.

Overall, a total of five (5) acres of parkland should be provided per 1,000 residents in the City, of which 1.5 acres should be in community park and 3.5 acres should be in various forms of neighborhood parks, including village greens, school parks and other neighborhood parks. "Greenway" trails should provide bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the City and its growth areas.

3.1.b Consider density bonuses for development proposals which offer extra park land dedications where needed.

Density bonuses on new development should be linked to park land needs for the area and exclude areas which must be set aside as wildlife preserves or left undeveloped for other environmental concerns. Land dedication for planned trails and bikeways are appropriate, but areas used for drainage facilities to serve a development would not be considered for parkland except those areas to be improved for park and open space use by the developer.

3.1.c Continue to implement the City's Parks and Open Space Master Plan and undertake a comprehensive update of the plan after adoption of the General Plan.

The City's Parks and Open Space Master Plan provides specific system design and implementation standards for the development of the City's park system. This plan serves as a basis for requiring development recreation dedications as well as a guide for public facilities expenditures in the parks and

recreation category. This plan requires periodic update and will need to be revised to reflect the City's expanded growth area and the parks and open space opportunities and needs resulting from development of the U.C. San Joaquin (Merced) campus and surrounding development in the Lake Yosemite area.

3.1.d Continue to encourage joint use agreements between the City and local school districts to combine the design and use of park and school facilities when feasible.

This policy supports and complements other joint use facility policies of the Public Facilities chapter of this General Plan. A 5- to 10-acre neighborhood park should be associated with each elementary and junior high school. These schools and school parks should be centrally located, placed at the edge of a Village or neighborhood center and along greenways when possible. By designing both facilities at the same time, the functionality can be significantly improved.

3.1.e Use the City's Park Dedication Ordinance to develop the City's park system.

A strong effort should be made to use the following criteria to locate parks:

- a. No household should have to walk more than approximately one-half to three-quarters of a mile to a park site.
- b. Parks should be located adjacent to schools as much as feasible.
- c. Provide visual, pedestrian and vehicular access to all parks by requiring them to front on public streets on as many sides as possible and not be surrounded by privately owned property. Adequate parking facilities should be provided where needed.
- d. Neighborhood park sites should front on at least one side on a collector street with the remaining sides on local streets. Community or Regional parks may front on arterials.
- e. Park sites should be located so as to incorporate naturally-occurring open space features, such as significant stands of trees, riparian and wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and creeks and drainage canals.
- f. Park sites should be located adjacent to bikeway facilities.
- g. Park sites should be located near higher-density residential areas as much as possible.
- h. Parks should have access to nearby subdivision and greenways by means of cul-de-sacs, access easements, etc.

3.1.f Design and develop parks which are compatible with adjacent land uses through the establishment of a park planning process that is responsive to community and neighborhood input.

Existing parks should be evaluated periodically by the Recreation and Parks Commission to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the neighborhoods in which they are located, and programs for expansion/relocation/reconfiguration should be established when needed.

3.1.g Develop a priority system for acquiring parks and open space based on need, neighborhood input, growth trends, and funding sources.

The specific planning process for South Merced, coupled with the need to update the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, provides the City with the opportunity to prioritize park and open space needs within the fiscally-constrained setting which exists and is likely to exist into the foreseeable future. These planning processes will permit residents of the City to focus on the subject of future park and open space needs in light of new opportunities and developments which have occurred in recent years.

Policy OS-3.2

Maintain and Expand the City's Bikeway and Trail System.

Merced's bikeway and urban trail system has become a model for the region and an important element of the character of Merced. The system's use of the natural open space resources of the community has benefited the public and helped to preserve important open space lands in addition to providing recreation and alternative transportation to residents. Bikeways and urban trails are an important element of the greenway system and provide linkages between other elements of the park system, public transportation, and residential and commercial areas throughout the City. The City is committed to

building upon this system and expanding it into the growth areas to the north in addition to developing a new system in the South Merced area. The 2004 Park and Open Space Master Plan provides a detailed needs assessment, along with policies and design standards for the acquisition, development and maintenance of new park and recreation facilities.

Implementing Actions:

3.2.a Utilize the urban stream system in the planning and design of bikeways and trails.

It is the City's policy to acquire a minimum 50-foot dedication from the centerline (or 25 feet from the crown, whichever is greater) of all creeks within the planning area in order to maintain these open space areas as natural riparian preserves and recreation areas. Development of bikeways and trails in these open space areas can enhance the open space value of the urban stream system provided that the trails do not unnecessarily interfere with other open space goals and policies.

3.2.b Make use of creekside areas, utility line easements, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, and canal easements for bikeway purposes.

These areas are generally set aside as open space areas, and their use for bikeway and trail systems would enhance the public value of open space in addition to providing an important amenity to neighborhood residents.

3.2.c Provide links between parks, schools, and open space areas via the bikeway system.

The bikeway system can also be part of a greenway.

3.2.d Provide a link between the City and County bikeway systems by establishing a connector to the Lake Road Bikeway Corridor out to Lake Yosemite.

This area will become an important bikeway link to the new U.C. Campus area and its surrounding development. Plans may be integrated with future development of the eastern beltway system and linear open space plans along drainage courses and irrigation canals.

3.2.e Develop an off-street bikeway and trail system in South Merced.

As part of the ~~specific South Merced Community Plan planning process in South Merced~~, an inventory of potential off-street routes ~~should be taken and was~~ reviewed by neighborhood groups. ~~A system was developed to~~ This system should link existing and planned future park areas and provide links to other open space and school areas as well as being integrated into the rest of the City's bikeway system. The City should explore using existing drainage facility easements to accommodate such a system. The planned system should be implemented.

3.2.f Expand the existing bikeway system to all new growth areas as development occurs.

As part of the development review process, bikeway dedications should be required, when appropriate, as a condition of permit approval.

3.2.g Explore the possibility of providing unpaved trails for equestrian and mountain bike use as part of the overall trail system.

These types of trail systems may be appropriate along the eastern fringe of the City where lower density Rural Residential development permits the keeping of horses and other livestock on large lots.

3.2.h Bike path designs should reflect security and other needs of the surrounding community.

When locating bike paths and trails, the design should be sensitive to the need for privacy and security of neighboring residents. If feasible, bikeways should be designed with multiple access points from surrounding neighborhoods so there is sufficient visibility from public roadways to facilitate surveillance by residents and police patrols. Open fencing along bikepaths should be considered, especially adjacent to multi-family developments.

Policy OS-3.3

Maintain the City's Existing High-Quality Open Space Facilities.

Resources for parks and recreation programs and facilities are derived from the same sources which provide essential public services such as public protection. Within the municipal finance structure of the City, it can be expected that other municipal needs may limit the resources which can be dedicated to maintaining and improving existing park and recreation facilities. At present, park and open space expansion is funded largely through exactions and dedications resulting from growth and development. These resources cannot necessarily be applied to the maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities. For these reasons, the City is committed to exploring new alternatives for meeting the park and open space maintenance obligations for existing facilities.

Implementing Actions:

3.3.a Design park facilities so that a high quality of maintenance can occur with minimum effort.

This should include the use of sturdy, low-maintenance plant materials, equipment, and surfaces. Where practical, existing facilities should be upgraded utilizing low maintenance materials and design techniques.

3.3.b Encourage community participation in park maintenance and improvement programs.

Community and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to "adopt-a-park" or playground and become involved in the planning, upgrading and maintenance of the park and its facilities. Monthly or semi-annual neighborhood park special events or programs can be planned involving park users, neighborhood residents and local service organizations in park clean-up and maintenance efforts. These events could also be used as fund raising events for needed park improvements.

3.3.c Explore park concession opportunities as a revenue source for park improvements and maintenance.

In appropriate park locations, the City may consider establishment of concession stands or vending machine locations which could be leased to concessionaires; revenues would be deposited into a park maintenance and improvement fund. Concession operators may include local youth service, neighborhood, or community groups, which could operate the concessions to raise money for charitable purposes.

3.3.d Encourage neighborhood participation in policing and park security efforts.

In cooperation with the Police Department, involve the "Community Action Network" or similar groups in providing park security to discourage vandalism.

Policy OS-3.4

Develop a Diverse and Integrated System of Park Facilities Throughout Merced.

Throughout the City, a system of park and open space facilities should exist which include neighborhood parks, community parks, and greenways. This park system should be developed to serve all age, social, and economic groups in every geographic area of the City.

Implementing Actions:

3.4.a Community parks should be distributed throughout the City.

There should be at least 1.5 acres of community park provided per 1,000 residents. Community parks are usually 15 acres in size or greater. Community parks are major recreation facilities and contain

many ball fields, playlots, picnic opportunities and other facilities. They must be located along a greenway and should be at the junction of two greenways when possible. Greenways, streets and landscaping should be used to minimize and buffer residences from the noise and nighttime lighting associated with ball fields.

3.4.b Neighborhood parks and village greens are to be located within Villages.

Neighborhood parks should be distributed so most areas are less than one-mile from any park. Within any square-mile quadrant bounded by arterial roads, a total of 3.5 acres of neighborhood parks should be provided for each 1,000 residents. "Village greens," which are a special form of "Neighborhood Park," should be located between Core Commercial areas and Village Core Residential areas, and may be used to meet village park acreage requirements. Parks should be situated away from arterial streets. Public facilities, such as day care, libraries, community centers and post offices, may be developed within or immediately across from village greens when possible.

In the location, design, and maintenance of neighborhood parks, it should be kept in mind that they are fundamental features of livable and enjoyable higher-density neighborhoods. Neighborhood park sites should reinforce retail and residential areas by creating "town squares" suitable for informal gatherings, public events, and recreation. Neighborhood parks should create a formal focus within villages.

3.4.c Greenways should be designed to connect various park sites, schools and other public places with paths exclusively for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Greenways weave through the residential neighborhoods connecting larger public uses (schools, open space, commercial uses, etc.) and provide many points of physical and visual access to the park sites. Some greenways may also act as mini-parks because of play and exercise equipment placed along the paths. Greenways act as valuable greenbelts of open space through a neighborhood. Greenways should be designed in association with bike paths, trails, and pedestrian ways to follow creeks, canals, power line easements, etc.

Greenway design should emphasize access. Access has a major effect on whether a greenway is used. If a greenway is hidden, tucked away in a neighborhood, enclosed by high fences, and/or unmaintained, the public may avoid using them and they may become unsafe.

3.4.d In cooperation with Merced County [and the Merced Irrigation District](#), evaluate the Lake Yosemite regional park to identify how it might adequately meet the needs of the City of Merced and the new growth areas in the region including the U.C. San Joaquin (Merced) campus.

Regional parks can serve many cities and are sometimes used as resting stops for travelers. Often their focal points are lakes, rivers or other natural resources. Typically, they are provided by counties and the state. Because of their distance from a city, their accessibility is generally limited to those who can drive there. Lake Yosemite Park is a regional park located in the northern expansion area of the City and operated by the County of Merced. Lake Yosemite Park is of special interest to Merced because of its water recreation opportunities and open space qualities in addition to the fact that it is within bicycle commute range for many residents.

Lake Yosemite will likely become more heavily used by City residents as Merced grows and the U.C. Merced campus is built and occupied. As the City expands to the north and public transportation becomes more available in the area, Lake Yosemite Park will become even more accessible to local residents. As a result, additional space and facilities may be required to accommodate future growth. Some of the area around the park contains potential wildlife habitat which limits development options for land owners. The City and County might cooperate in developing a wildlife mitigation banking program for this area which would allow landowners to transfer development rights to other lands upon dedicating habitat and potential park land for public use.

Goal Area OS-4: Open Space for Public Health and Safety

GOAL

- **A Safe Environment For Merced's Citizens**

POLICY

OS-4.1 Preserve open space areas which are necessary to maintaining public health and safety.

Policy OS-4.1

Preserve Open Space Areas Which Are Necessary to Maintaining Public Health and Safety.

Areas within the City which may represent a substantial risk to public health and safety have historically been designated for open space uses which may permit limited public or private use but generally reduce potential exposure of the public to potential health hazards. The City is committed to continuing to protect public health, where practical, by limiting the potential for public exposure through the sound application of open space practices and policies.

Implementing Actions:

4.1.a Continue enforcement of the City's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (MMC 17.48) to discourage construction in high-risk areas.

Areas that are known to represent a flood hazard to people and property are subject to land use standards which would limit exposure. These policies could allow limited development with special development standards to accommodate periodic flooding or exclusive use of the area for parks and open space.

Agricultural uses are appropriate in some areas which exhibit ~~1~~200-year flood risk potential. [The State of California now requires that floodplain regulations be applied to the 200-year floodplain.](#)

4.1.b Utilize areas along railroad rights-of-way and under high-voltage power transmission lines as open space.

These areas could be used as greenways and open space areas which would provide scenic buffers from potential health hazards in addition to providing visual (and noise in the case of railroads) buffers to surrounding areas. These areas could also be developed with storm water retention basins, groundwater recharge basin or used as part of the municipal water or other utility systems where the risk of public exposure to health hazards could be minimized.

4.1.c Continue enforcement of the City's weed abatement program to ensure undeveloped areas do not become fire hazards.

Weed abatement programs are an important management concept in open space areas to minimize the risk of fire. In all cases, open space areas are best used with planned plantings of native trees, brush and other plants in a park type setting. When possible, unused plots of land may be appropriately used for community garden uses for neighboring residents. This use would be most appropriate in areas where there is a large number of multi-family dwellings and few public parks or are available.

4.1.d Continue to discourage residential uses in Merced Municipal Airport Clear Zones.

Airport clear-zones and approach and landing corridors represent potential hazard areas to residential development. The areas are subject to noise nuisances as well. These areas are best used for open space purposes such as agriculture, golf courses and other types of uses that do not involve large populations.

[Notes: Other Open Space for Public Health & Safety policies are contained under Goal Area OS-1.5, where the issue of water quality is addressed, and in the Safety Element (Chapter 11.)]

Goal Area OS-5: Conservation of Resources

GOALS

- **Conservation of Water Resources**
- **Preservation and Protection of Soil Resources**

POLICIES

OS-5.1 Promote water conservation throughout the planning area.

OS-5.2 Protect soil resources from the erosive forces of wind and water.

Policy OS-5.1

Promote Water Conservation Throughout the Planning Area.

Water is a finite resource in the Central San Joaquin Valley and is an essential ingredient to the region's continued agricultural production capacity as well as a vital element in the continued growth of the Merced Metropolitan Area. The City, in conjunction with the Merced Irrigation District, has studied the long-term needs for water and concluded that water conservation must be part of any successful long term water development strategy. For this reason, the City is committed to continue its water conservation efforts and expand on those efforts where necessary.

Implementing Actions:

5.1.a Continue implementation and enforcement of the City's Water Shortage Regulations (MMC 15.42.010-100).

The City's emergency water shortage regulations are appropriately implemented during periodic drought years and may be necessary at other times to ensure an adequate water supply into the future.

5.1.b Continue implementation of the Water Efficient Landscaping and Irrigation Ordinance (MMC 17.60.010-070).

Promote the conservation of water and the preservation of water quality by requiring drought tolerant plant material in landscaping and the retention of existing natural vegetation on new development projects.

5.1.c Provide leadership in conserving urban water resources.

City buildings and facilities should be equipped with water saving devices whenever practical. Municipal parks and playgrounds should employ water conservation techniques such as mulching, drip irrigation and other appropriate technologies.

5.1.d Encourage public water conservation efforts.

Through established public information systems in the community, the City should promote water conservation by providing information on water savings from low-flow fixtures and the value of insulating hot water lines in water recirculating systems. Other conservation techniques can be addressed such as the use of non-potable water for landscape irrigation purposes (water re-use, MID water, etc.).

[Notes: Water conservation policies are supported by other policies in this General Plan to protect regional water resources (Public Facilities Goal Area P-3) and water quality (Open Space Policy 1.5).]

Policy OS-5.2

Protect Soil Resources From the Erosive Forces of Wind and Water.

Merced is situated on some of the finest soil resources found in the Central San Joaquin Valley. Some of these soils are of a silty-loam texture and highly vulnerable to erosion from wind and water. Wind erosion contributes to the region's PM₁₀ air quality problems, as discussed in the Sustainable Development Chapter(8) of this General Plan, and water erosion can contribute to sedimentation of the region's surface water drainage system. In all cases, the loss of soil through erosive forces of nature degrades the productive capacity of the land and contributes to regional environmental problems.

Implementing Actions:

5.2.a Reduce soil erosion potential of new development.

During the development review process for projects which involve grading and excavation, apply permit conditions which reduce or prevent erosion, siltation and contamination of storm water during construction. Techniques such as mulching of exposed surfaces, restricting major excavation projects during peak storm periods, or watering exposed surfaces during summer dry periods, can be successfully employed to reduce construction-caused erosion.

5.2.b Encourage the planting of trees as windbreaks in agricultural areas of the community.

Historically, trees have been successfully used as wind-breaks in the region. Stands of wind-break trees can be established as part of an open space corridor, along roadways and bike paths, or at appropriate locations along the urban perimeter adjacent to agricultural land.

5.2.c Maintain adequate vegetation along the banks of urban streams and storm water drainage channels.

The erosive force of storm water can cause damage to stream channel banks that have be cleared of their vegetative cover. Where it is necessary to remove natural vegetation along stream channels to improve storm water flows, "rip-rap" (rocks, concrete, etc.) should be applied to reduce erosion and sedimentation hazards.

(Notes: These policies are proposed in support of Air Quality PM₁₀ policies contained in the Sustainable Development Chapter of this Plan--Chapter 8.)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Goal Area SD-1: Air Quality

GOALS

- Clean Air with Minimal Toxic Substances and Odor
- Clean Air with Minimal Particulate Content
- Effective and Efficient Transportation Infrastructure
- Coordinated and Cooperative Inter-Governmental Air Quality Programs

POLICIES:

- SD-1.1** Accurately determine and fairly mitigate the local and regional air quality impacts of projects proposed in the City of Merced.
- SD-1.2** Coordinate local air quality programs with regional programs and those of neighboring jurisdictions.
- SD-1.3** Integrate land use planning, transportation planning, and air quality planning for the most efficient use of public resources and for a healthier environment.
- SD-1.4** Educate the public on the impact of individual transportation, lifestyle, and land use decisions on air quality.
- SD-1.5** Provide public facilities and operations which can serve as a model for the private sector in implementation of air quality programs.
- SD-1.6** Reduce emissions of PM10 and other particulates with local control potential.

Policy SD-1.1

Accurately Determine and Fairly Mitigate the Local and Regional Air Quality Impacts of Projects Proposed in the City of Merced.

The environmental assessment process required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is by far the most important tool for local government to communicate with other agencies and the public on the air quality impacts of development within a community. CEQA, however, has only limited applicability with respect to development review and approval. The law focuses on “Discretionary” projects, as opposed to “administrative” development proposals. As a result, large scale developments, which typically require “discretionary” permits are often subjected to CEQA mitigation that is not required of “administrative” projects. While consistent application of CEQA can make a difference in project-level air quality impacts, uniform air quality standards for all projects could make a significant contribution toward limiting regional, cumulative air quality impacts.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.1.a** ~~Develop~~**Implement** uniform standards for mitigating air quality impacts resulting from development.

The City will work closely with the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (SJVUAPCD) to develop ~~and implement~~ uniform standards for determining “thresholds of significance”

for air quality impacts for use in the City's CEQA review process. The City will also identify cost effective and uniform mitigation standards and use these standards in a manner that they can be applied to all development in a consistent and uniform manner.

1.1.b Ensure that significant air quality impacts identified during CEQA review are consistently and fairly mitigated.

The City will work closely with the SJVUAPCD, builders and other interested parties to develop uniform and appropriate mitigation measures in the City. City policies and provisions will attempt to eliminate mitigation policies and practices which discourage large-scale comprehensively planned projects.

1.1.c All air quality mitigation measures should be feasible, implementable, and cost effective.

City planning efforts have focused on development standards which discourage growth patterns that unnecessarily have an adverse impact on air quality. Further mitigation of air quality impacts, at the project specific level, should focus on the unique circumstances of the project and the site with respect to air quality impacts. Project specific mitigation measures will be developed to assure that they can be implemented in a manner so as to achieve the desired effect and that the benefits in improved air quality are justified in light of private and public expenditure.

1.1.d Work with the SJVUAPCD to identify regional cumulative transportation and air quality impacts.

The City shall work with the SJVUAPCD, and other local governments in the region, to perform uniform air emissions modeling on the cumulative land use changes in the region. The City will participate in regional planning efforts which will fairly assess the air quality impacts of various local governmental growth policies. It is expected that this effort would lead to regional growth and development strategies (developed, administered and implemented at the local government level) which will substantially reduce the adverse impacts of new growth and development on regional air quality.

1.1.e Reduce the air quality impacts of development projects that may be insignificant by themselves, but cumulatively are significant.

Small residential and commercial projects usually do not cause significant air quality impacts, but when a number of small unrelated projects are developed in an area, they produce a cumulative impact. These potential impacts have been addressed in the development of the Merced General Plan Land Use Diagram. Individual projects which are consistent with these General Plan policies should be subject to limited air quality analysis which focuses on neighborhood level impacts. Other projects will need to be evaluated within the context of the net cumulative effect on regional air quality. These principals of review shall also be applied to development proposed outside of the City's SUDP which are subject to City review and comment.

1.1.f Encourage innovative measures to reduce air quality impacts.

Innovative measures can be identified during a pre-application consultation process and during city staff/applicant consultation over CEQA mitigation approaches.

Policy SD-1.2

Coordinate Local Air Quality Programs With Regional Programs and Those of Neighboring Jurisdictions.

Effective coordination and cooperation between local agencies in the implementation of government air quality programs is critical. Air quality problems transcend local agency boundaries and management of these problems requires various units of government to search for comprehensive solutions to the

problem. Local governments working together for a common interest can multiply the resources available to accomplish air quality goals.

Implementing Actions:

1.2.a Work with neighboring jurisdictions and affected agencies to address cross-jurisdictional and regional transportation and air quality issues.

The City can create an environment that allows and encourages staff members to keep up with activities in neighboring jurisdictions and regional agencies. This may be accomplished by sending representatives to appropriate meetings, by contacting counterparts in other agencies when developing programs, and most important, by active participation in regional program planning.

The Planning Department, as required by law, maintains internal procedures to ensure that all affected jurisdictions and agencies are notified of development proposals. When another agency notifies the City of a pending project, air quality related issues, such as the following, should be examined:

- 1) Congestion on City streets from increased traffic caused by the project;
- 2) Effects on the viability of transit and pedestrian-oriented developments in your area (i.e., approval of a low density development on the same transit corridor as your transit-oriented development could reduce the ability of the transit provider to provide reasonable headways);
- 3) Failure of the other jurisdiction to require the construction of a segment of a bikeway planned in the regional bikeway plan;
- 4) Proposed circulation amendments that may restrict traffic flow to or from the City or that produce urban sprawl.

1.2.b Consult with the SJVUAPCD during CEQA review for discretionary projects.

Ensure that the SJVUAPCD is on the distribution list for all CEQA documents. Conduct a pre-application air quality review to identify issues or problems that might require redesigning or major alterations of the project.

1.2.c Coordinate with other jurisdictions and other regional agencies in the San Joaquin Valley to establish consistent and uniform implementation measures (trip reduction ordinances, indirect source programs, etc.).

The City will work with the Council of Governments on programs implementing transportation control measures. Work with the County and neighboring cities to ensure programs are complementary. The City will maintain its involvement in the rule development process and provide representation on air quality steering and advisory committees.

1.2.d Support cost-effective multi-use modeling and geographic information system (GIS) technology.

Maintain participation in the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) GIS project which is part of the Valley-wide GIS project with the Valley Councils of Government and the SJVUAPCD. This land use data can be used to evaluate air quality impacts in the City.

Policy SD-1.3

Integrate Land Use, Transportation, and Air Quality Planning for the Most Efficient Use of Public Resources and for a Healthier Environment.

In the past, transportation planning emphasized the construction of new roadway capacity to reduce congestion and to meet the needs of planned development. Air quality legislation now mandates all transportation plans to consider air quality. This new emphasis requires our land use and transportation plans to create patterns of development and transportation infrastructure that reduce the need for new capacity and improve air quality.

Implementing Actions:

1.3.a The City of Merced will consider air quality when planning the land uses and transportation systems to accommodate the expected growth in this community.

Develop coordinated land use and transportation plans to meet federal, state, and local air quality requirements. Ensure that land uses proposed in general plan updates and general plan amendments are supported by a multi-modal (auto, transit, bicycling, pedestrian, etc.) transportation system and that the land uses themselves support the development of the transportation system.

1.3.b Transportation improvement should be consistent with the air quality goals and policies of the General Plan.

Analyze project submittals for consistency. Examples of inconsistent projects are a road widening project that does not consider transit, bicycling, and pedestrian needs along the route or an intersection signalization project that does not involve the installation of signal actuators that can be activated by bicyclists or pedestrians.

1.3.c The City of Merced will consult with transit providers to determine project impacts on long range transit plans and ensure that impacts are mitigated.

Work with transit providers to develop long range transit plans based on land use plans supportive of future transit service. Consult with transit providers during the CEQA process to determine the impacts of development projects on the transit system.

1.3.d Encourage the construction of low income housing developments that use transit-oriented and pedestrian-oriented design principles.

The Village Plan policies provide sufficient density to make public transit feasible. The City, in cooperation with other public agencies, may explore the use of special funding sources which could assist in financing necessary infrastructure which would enhance residential development and maintain affordability for low and moderate income households.

1.3.e The City of Merced will work with Caltrans and MCAG the Regional Transportation Planning Agency to minimize the air quality, and mobility impacts of large scale transportation projects on existing neighborhoods.

Use existing rail right of ways where feasible. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and shopping areas when they become separated by new rail or freeway projects

(Notes: The Urban Design goals and policies contain specific standards for land use which incorporate the Urban Villages design concepts for developing land uses which support development and operations of public transportation systems and other alternative modes of transportation.)

Policy SD-1.4

Educate the Public on the Impact of Individual Transportation, Lifestyle, and Land Use Decisions on Air Quality.

Without the understanding and support of the general public, local air quality programs cannot be expected to achieve the desired results. Programs to educate the public on air quality issues are a vital component of a successful air quality program

Implementing Actions:

1.4.a Work to improve the public's understanding of the land use, transportation, and air quality link.

The City should support the SJVUAPCD efforts to educate developers and the public on the benefits of pedestrian and transit friendly development and should participate in local programs that can reduce vehicle trips and miles traveled

1.4.b Support SJVUAPCD efforts to encourage formation of local groups that provide air quality education programs.

The City supports the SJVUAPCD efforts in forming a community-wide public/private air quality organization to promote air quality education programs. To this end, the City will work with the SJVUAPCD, Farm Bureau, the University of California Extension Studies and farm organizations on educational programs.

Policy SD-1.5

Provide Public Facilities and Operations that can Serve as a Model for the Private Sector in Implementation of Air Quality Programs.

City and county governments are often the largest employers in a jurisdiction and operate large vehicle fleets. While it is recognized that the City of Merced has very limited resources with which it can play any meaningful role in supporting private sector energy conservation efforts, the City can pursue policies and programs which may have private sector applicability. In this respect, the City may take a leadership role in implementing employer-based trip reduction programs and fleet operator programs to reduce the City's emissions, demonstrate cost effective energy management techniques, and save public money. Options available to the City of Merced and other larger employers include:

Implementing Actions:

1.5.a Continue to Sstudy and implementing innovative employer-based trip reduction programs for their employees.

Ensure that employment contracts negotiated with employee unions are flexible and allow workers to participate in programs that reduce commute trips.

1.5.b Fleet vehicle operators should evaluate alternatives which include replacing or converting conventional fuel vehicles with clean fuel vehicles.

Budget for clean fuel vehicles in long range capital expenditure plans.

1.5.c Support the use of teleconferencing in lieu of employee travel to conferences and meetings when feasible.

Work with the telephone company and interested public agencies to develop a multi-user teleconferencing center. Use commercial teleconferencing facilities if they are cost competitive

considering travel costs and employee time savings.

1.5.d Make use of telecommuting programs as part of their trip reduction strategies.

Identify positions where telecommuting is feasible. Consider a pilot program with employee volunteers for the most promising positions.

1.5.e Encourage the development of state of the art communication infrastructure linked to the rest of the world.

Support changes to the State Uniform Building Code to encourage new homes and businesses to be wired with fiber-optic cables or to encourage wiring conduits with easy access and adequate capacity to allow for efficient retrofitting. Encourage the development of video-teleconferencing facilities and telecommuting centers. The City should study formation of public/private partnerships with major employers employing large numbers of long distance commuters. Telecommuting centers are generally compatible with mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented neighborhood commercial areas.

Policy SD-1.6

To Reduce Emissions of PM₁₀ and Other Particulates With Local Control Potential.

The levels of PM₁₀ (particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter) exceed state and federal health based standards. The San Joaquin Valley is classified as a serious non-attainment area for PM₁₀ under the federal criteria. Because of this classification, the Air District is subject to a series of federal mandates aimed at achieving federal ambient air quality standards. Control efforts for sources under the jurisdiction of cities and counties can significantly reduce these emissions.

Implementing Actions:

1.6.a Work with the SJVUAPCD to reduce to the maximum extent feasible particulate emissions from construction, grading, excavation, and demolition.

The City should include PM₁₀ control measures as conditions of approval for subdivision maps, site plans, and grading permits. This will assist in implementing the District's PM₁₀ regulation.

The City should inform developers of the requirements of the District's PM₁₀ regulation when they apply for a grading permit.

Use strategies to minimize soil disturbances including:

- Minimize vegetation removal required for fire prevention to the extent compatible with public safety considerations. Utilize alternatives to disking, such as mowing, to the extent feasible. Where vegetation removal is required for aesthetic or property maintenance purposes, encourage or require alternatives to disking.
- Condition grading permits to require that graded areas be stabilized from the completion of grading to commencement of construction.

1.6.b Reduce PM₁₀ emissions from City maintained roads to the maximum extent feasible.

Continue the City's street cleaning program aimed at removing heavy silt loadings from roadways which result from sources such as storm water runoff and construction sites.

Goal Area SD-2: Cultural Resources

GOALS:

- **A Diverse And Rich Historic and Cultural Resource Environment**
- **A Long-Term Community Historic Preservation/Improvement Program**

POLICIES:

SD-2.1 Identify and preserve the City's archaeological resources.

SD-2.2 Identify and preserve the City's historic and cultural resources.

SD-2.3 Develop and promote financial incentive programs for historic preservation efforts.

Policy SD-2.1

Identify and Preserve the City's Archaeological Resources.

It is thought that the San Joaquin Valley was inhabited in the late Pleistocene and early Holocene period, dating from perhaps as early as 12,000 years before the present (B.P.). Prior to Euro-American arrival, the San Joaquin Valley was occupied by Yokuts Indian populations. The Yokuts settlement system was characterized by principal villages on terraced areas adjacent to watercourses. Knowledge of these early inhabitants is limited. It is likely that the streams traversing the Merced Planning Area served as settlements for Yokuts and it is a State policy to preserve and protect the archaeological resources of the region

Implementing Actions:

2.1.a Utilize the inventory of known archeological sites maintained the Central California Information Center for the review of development proposals.

The Archaeological Inventory shall be used to identify areas within the Merced Planning Area subject to preservation practices. For large scale development projects proposed in close proximity to a natural water course, or in an area which exhibits potential for containing cultural resource material, preliminary cultural resource inventories should be conducted by a qualified archaeologist. Information from these site investigations shall be provided to the Central California Information Center for recordation.

2.1.b Utilize standard practices for preserving archeological materials that are unearthed during construction, as prescribed by the State Office of Historic Preservation.

Cultural resource discoveries are subject to the rules and regulations in State law. The City should work closely with the building trades industry to facilitate compliance with these laws and to assist where necessary in minimizing the adverse impacts of the implementation of these laws on the City's construction industry.

2.1.c If appropriate, consider reconstruction of archaeological sites in city parks, on school grounds, in open space areas, or other suitable locations where they can serve an educational purpose.

In order to increase the public's awareness to the cultural heritage of Merced, the City should support the efforts of Native American groups and individuals to develop cultural displays and exhibits in local public places.

Policy SD-2.2

Identify and Preserve the City's Historic and Cultural Resources.

The City of Merced contains many fine examples of its early development. Historic buildings, tree plantings, and other improvements serve to give the city a special character which is unique in the San Joaquin Valley. The City of Merced is dedicated to preserving, protecting and enhancing its historic and cultural resources.

Implementing Actions:

2.2.a Expand City cultural and historic information resources.

Establish and maintain an inventory of cultural, historic, and architecturally significant resources within the City and the planning area by expanding and improving the existing inventory of the downtown area. Consider a program or support other programs which designate historic landmarks and architecturally significant structures in the City.

2.2.b Support community groups and individuals working to preserve, protect and enhance the City's Historic and Cultural Resources.

In accordance with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (MMC 17.54) which outline procedures and criteria for historic designation, continue to support Historic Preservation Commission activities. Support, as feasible, both private and public efforts to preserve and rehabilitate historic structures in the City, including the need to protect a site from intrusion of surrounding land uses which are uncomplimentary or incompatible.

2.2.c Review and revise as necessary, the City's development/construction regulations to facilitate the preservation of historic structures.

Investigate and consider the possibility of using historic overlay zones in conjunction with the Historic Preservation Ordinance to control the use or modification of significant historic areas in the community.

2.2.d Support, as feasible, efforts to promote the preservation of historically or architecturally significant structures in the City.

Support the preservation of the downtown's historically and architecturally significant structures. Encourage the design of new developments to be consistent with the design, character, and building bulk of the existing downtown. Encourage and support efforts to preserve historic structures in the Courthouse Square area, Downtown, Central Merced, and throughout the City.

2.2.e Support efforts to designate historic districts within the City.

The 1985 City of Merced Historic Building Survey, prepared by the City of Merced Redevelopment Agency, documents the existence of four residential and one commercial district which may be designated as "Historic Districts." The City should, as appropriate, be supportive of private efforts to have these districts achieve appropriate recognition and designation as National Registry Districts or by means of some other historic district recognition.

These "Historic Districts" are generally as follows:

- 1) "Little Snelling"--A residential district bounded by the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks to the north, "O" Street to the west, Highway 99 to the south, and the midline of the 600 block between 14th and 15th Streets to the east;
- 2) A residential district in East Central Merced bounded by the Santa Fe Railroad tracks to the north, "G" Street to the east, 18th Street to the south, and Canal Street to the west;
- 3) A residential district in West Central Merced bounded by the 800 block of 23rd Street to the

- north, “O” Street to the east, 18th Street to the south, and “R” Street to the west;
- 4) A fourth residential district in North East Central Merced bounded by Bear Creek to the north, “G” Street to the east, the Santa Fe Railroad tracks to the south, and “I” Street to the west; and,
 - 5) The “Downtown Merced Historic District,” which centers on the 300 to 600 blocks of Main Street terminating at the old Golden State Theater on the east and the Hotel Tioga on the west. It also extends up Canal Street, incorporates the 400 block of 18th Street, and includes the western side of “M” Street near 16th Street.

Policy SD-2.3

Develop and Promote Financial Incentive Programs for Historic Preservation Efforts.

Historic and cultural resources can be a financial liability to private citizens. In many instances, it is more economical to demolish and build new structures than to rehabilitate historic structures. The economics of maintaining and improving historic properties have resulted in many building and structures being lost or allowed to deteriorate to such a degree that preservation is impractical. The City will assist in the identification of financial resources that can be used by individuals and groups in the city to preserve, enhance and protect the historic and cultural resources of the city

Implementing Actions:

2.3.a Work to identify financial resources which can be used for historic preservation efforts in Merced.

Utilize, where possible, Redevelopment Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program funds to help finance restoration of historic buildings and structures in Merced. Identify other sources of historic preservation funds, such as Community Development Block Grants, Office of Historic Preservation Grant Funds, tax incentives, etc., to be used to finance historic renovation/restoration projects.

2.3.b Provide access to information on financial resources available to property owners to assist in historic preservation/restoration efforts.

Refer interested property owners to the State Office of Historic Preservation, for information regarding tax advantages of National Registry of historic properties, special building code standards applicable to historic buildings and structures, and loan and grant programs available to finance historic preservation/renovation.

Goal Area SD-3: Energy Resources

GOAL

■ **Sustainable Energy Resource Use in the City of Merced**

POLICIES

SD-3.1 Promote the use of Solar Energy technology.

SD-3.2 Encourage the use of energy conservation features and low-emission equipment for all new residential and commercial development.

Policy SD-3.1

Promote the Use of Solar Energy Technology.

Merced is located in an area that can benefit from the use of solar energy technology to lower household heating costs.

Implementing Actions:

3.1.a Encourage the use of solar energy in design and management of all new construction in the City.

The City should work with members of the building and utility industries in identifying public policies and regulations which inhibit the construction of energy efficient development. The City should prepare guidelines and standards which can be used by members of the construction industry in the design of new building and development projects.

3.1.b Require all new subdivisions to maximize, to the extent feasible, proper orientation of lots with regard to solar utilization.

Proper solar orientation of lots often results in inefficient or poor circulation system designs. Good subdivision design attempts to maximize the benefits of lot orientation for solar access while maintaining the optimum circulation system design. The City planning staff should develop a library of subdivision design concepts that have proven effective in furthering energy conservation goals in other similarly situated communities and the City of Merced. This information should be made available to real estate developers and home builders.

3.1.c Encourage developers and builders to properly design all structures on each building lot in the City to take fullest advantage of solar use in heating and cooling.

The City planning staff should develop a library of building design concepts that have proven effective in furthering building energy conservation goals in other similarly situated communities. This information should be made available to real estate developers and home builders.

3.1.d Encourage developers and builders to maximize “passive” solar design, such as large south-facing windows for winter heat gains and overhangs and shading for summer heat protection.

The City should collect and make available to builders and homeowners design solutions to passive solar construction problems and support local the building industry’s efforts to comply with State regulations on energy conservation design standards.

3.1.e Pursue further investigation of potential benefits utilizing building code revision, narrower streets, solar access rights, and other energy-saving techniques.

The City should continue to monitor policy developments at the state level and in other San Joaquin Valley communities to determine the most efficient and effective design policies which might be applied to new development in the City. Where appropriate, staff should recommend changes in policies and standards where it can be demonstrated that such changes will appreciably reduce energy consumption.

(Notes: These policies are based on the City’s Energy policies adopted in 1979.)

Policy SD-3.2

Encourage the Use of Energy Conservation Features and Low-Emission Equipment for All New Residential and Commercial Development.

Natural gas burning appliances used for space heating, water heating, and cooking are a sizable source of NO_x emissions. Consumption of electricity causes pollutant emissions when the power plant is fueled by fossil fuels. Local efforts to reduce energy consumption can save consumers money and improve air quality.

Implementing Actions:

3.2.a Work with the local energy providers on voluntary incentive-based programs to encourage the use of energy efficient designs and equipment.

- Encourage the incorporation of energy conservation features in the design of all new construction and the installation of conservation devices in existing developments.
- Encourage energy audits of existing structures, identifying levels of existing energy use and potential conservation measures.
- Encourage the use of passive design concepts that make use of the natural climate to increase energy efficiency.
- Encourage new development not to preclude the use of solar energy systems by uses and buildings on adjacent properties.
- Incorporate the most energy-efficient design consistent with a reasonable rate of return and the recognition of the environmental benefits of energy conservation for all local government facilities and equipment.
- Perform an energy audit of existing public buildings and retrofit where cost-effective.
- Develop an energy management system for public buildings.

3.2.b Cooperate with the local building industry, utilities and the SJVUAPCD to promote enhanced energy conservation standards for new construction.

Work with the California Energy Commission (CEC) and local utilities to identify areas of the existing state standards that can be enhanced most cost-effectively.

3.2.c Encourage new residential, commercial, and industrial development to reduce air quality impacts from area sources and from energy consumption.

- Support the use of weatherization programs for existing residential units and businesses.
- Encourage the installation of supplemental solar water heaters for new residential units.
- Support future SJVUAPCD incentives and regulations to reduce emissions from swimming pool heaters.
- Encourage the use of solar water and pool heaters, and energy efficient lighting.
- Encourage developers to orient housing units and landscape building sites to maximize solar heating and cooling.
- Encourage the installation of energy efficient fireplaces and wood stoves in lieu of normal open hearth fireplaces.
- Establish standards for the provision of natural gas lines or electrical outlets to backyards to encourage the use of natural gas or electric barbecues, and electric gardening equipment.
- Support the use of electric vehicles, such as golf carts, where appropriate. Provide electric recharge facilities for electric vehicles.
- Encourage the installation of natural gas hook-ups for washers and dryers in housing units.

HOUSING GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS (ADOPTED 2004)

Please note that the Housing Element is due to be updated, per the schedule in State Law, by August 2009 and is NOT included in the comprehensive General Plan Update.

Goal Area H-1: New Affordable Housing Construction

GOALS

- **Increase The Stock of Affordable Housing for Very Low, Low, and Moderate Income Households**
- **Encourage A Mix of Housing Throughout the City To Meet The Needs of Different Income Groups**
- **Encourage The Construction of Housing and Facilities To Meet Special Needs, Including Farmworkers, Homeless, Large Families, Seniors, And People With Physical Or Mental Disabilities**

POLICIES

- H-1.1** Support increased densities in residential areas.
- H-1.2** Review design standards to support affordable housing.
- H-1.3** Develop and implement an Affordable Housing Ordinance.
- H-1.4** Pursue joint development agreements.
- H-1.5** Provide priority review and permitting for affordable housing projects.
- H-1.6** Support the construction of second units.
- H-1.7** Pursue State and Federal funds for new housing construction.
- H-1.8** Support housing to meet special needs.
- H-1.9** Continue the “Build-A-House” Project with Merced College.

Policy H-1.1

Support Increased Densities In Residential Areas.

*To lower the per-unit land costs for new construction, the City of Merced shall explore the potential for increasing residential densities in areas of the City where such increases are in keeping with the City’s General Plan goals. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

1.1.a Evaluate Residential Densities Through the General Plan Process.

Conduct an evaluation of residential densities during the update of the City’s General Plan Land Use Element to identify areas where densities might be increased to encourage affordable housing and respond to the goals of the General Plan. In particular, density increases should be considered in residential areas that are: 1) within one-quarter mile of school facilities, retail areas, or employment districts; or 2) within three city blocks of major arterials and public transportation routes. Density

increase recommendations must take into consideration potential impacts on other facilities and services, including sewers, fire and police protection, and schools. As an end result, the density evaluation should strive to achieve an equal percent distribution of residential zoning districts between North, Central, and South areas of the City. In particular, the City shall seek to rezone areas from R-3 to R-4 to ensure that there is adequate land available to accommodate the development of low and very low income housing.

Target date: Conduct evaluation through the General Plan Update process, with completion by July 1994.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.1.b Promote Use of Residential Planned Development Zoning Designation.

As part of the General Plan Update, promote the application of Residential Planned Development designations in areas of new development to encourage innovative site planning and clustered housing design.

Target date: Complete General Plan Update process by July 1994.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.1.c Review Minimum Area Requirements for RPD Districts.

To support innovative site planning and affordable housing construction, the City should review its Zoning Ordinance policies for Residential Planned Development districts to remove the minimum area requirements. The City might condition reduction or removal on requirements on the provision of affordable housing as part of the Affordable Housing Ordinance (policy H-1.3).

Target date: Decision by December 1994.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.1.d Encourage Mixed Use Development Downtown.

Encourage mixed-use residential/office/retail approaches to new development in the City's downtown area to support both affordable housing and economic development goals.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Redevelopment Agency, Housing Program, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.1.e Review Maximum Lot Coverage for R-1-5, R-2, and R-3 Districts.*

To support the construction of large-family housing on smaller, less expensive lots, the City should consider allowing increased lot coverage in R-1-5 Districts. Through the mechanisms of the Affordable Housing Ordinance (Policy H-1.3), the City could allow, for example, an increase from 40% to 50%, with setback requirements reduced to 15 feet, when units are guaranteed at rates affordable to low and moderate income families. In R-2 and R-3 districts, the City might consider increasing lot coverage to 60%.

Target date: Decision by December 1994.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council

1.1.f Review R-2 District Requirements.*

For eligible projects under the City's Affordable Housing Ordinance, the City should consider reducing the required lot area for R-2 Districts to 5,000 square feet, with the area per dwelling unit requirement reduced accordingly to 2,500 square feet. In addition, the City should consider revising the conditional use requirements for multi-family construction to allow the construction of four units on lots of 10,000 square feet or more.

Target date: Decision by December 1994.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council

1.1.g Allow Subdivision of Deep Lots*

To support innovative site planning and affordable housing construction, the City should consider revising the Zoning Ordinance to permit the subdivision of deep lots (e.g., a lot 50' x 150' into 2 lots 50' x 75') that stretch between the two points of access (e.g., two roadways or a roadway and an alley), for eligible projects of access under the Affordable Housing Ordinance. This would allow the construction of two single family dwellings with land cost split between them.

Target date: Decision by December 1992.

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council

**Programs that could be implemented as part of the Affordable Housing Ordinance (H-1.3).*

Policy H-1.2

Review Design Standards To Support Affordable Housing.

*To help reduce construction costs while ensuring continued high quality in new housing construction in Merced, the City shall review its residential subdivision standards. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

1.2.a Review Water and Sewer Pipe Requirements.

Support the review by both the City and the Building Industry Association of standard specifications requirements for water and sanitary sewer pipes. Through the process, identify potential revisions in material and size requirements that could reduce construction costs without endangering the quality or capacity of service.

Target date: Complete review of requirements by December 1993.

Responsibility: Planning, Public Works, Fire and Police Departments, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.2.b Review Street Width Requirements and Classification Procedures.

In conjunction with the Building Industry Association, review street width requirements for residential subdivisions in the City. In particular, focus on street classification procedures and exploration of alternatives for reducing off-site improvement costs for new housing developments. Potential width reductions or altered street classification procedures shall then be extended to residential subdivision proposals which guarantee 20 percent or more of the units to be constructed at below-market rents or sales prices (as part of the proposed Affordable Housing Ordinance).

Target date: Complete review of requirements by December 1993.

Responsibility: Planning, Public Works, Fire and Police Departments, Planning Commission, and City Council.

Policy H-1.3

Develop and Implement an Affordable Housing Ordinance.

*To promote new housing construction that meets the affordability needs of all income groups, and To pursue a more equitable distribution of household incomes throughout Merced, and To encourage the construction of affordable housing for low and moderate income households at the same rate as the construction of affordable housing for above moderate income households, The City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

1.3.a Adopt an Affordable Housing Ordinance.

Develop and adopt an Affordable Housing Ordinance to provide incentives for development of low to moderate income housing. The ordinance would detail the conditions under which certain benefits would accrue to developers of projects that include below market rate units to be sold or rented to persons of low to moderate income. Examples of potential incentives include:

Density Bonuses. To decrease the per-unit costs of the development, the City could provide a density bonus for eligible projects. Density increases could be provided through several of the programs described in Policy H-1.1, namely H-1.1f (reduced lot sizes for R-2 districts) and H-1.1g (subdivision of deep lots). The City might also allow increased lot coverage for affordable large-family developments (as described in H-1.1e). Alternately, a percentage bonus (e.g., 20% greater than that allowed under the designated zoning), could be offered. For example, a development site of 90,000 square feet could accommodate 15 units under R-1-6 zoning. With density bonus, the site would accommodate 18 units (at 5,000 s.f. per unit).

Fee Deferment. To reduce the “carrying costs” of the project, the City could provide a deferment for payment of permit and development fees through the duration of the project’s construction loan. Fees would be due at the point when long-term financing for the development is secured or the project is sold. A maximum deferment period could also be set (e.g., two years).

Low Interest Financing/Equity Sharing. Developments that are deemed eligible, could be provided low-interest financing or even equity participation by the City through Policy H-1.4, Joint Development Agreements. Such projects might be required to meet stricter eligibility requirements (e.g., a higher percentage of units affordable to low and moderate income households).

Infrastructure Financing Assistance. To reduce the “up-front” infrastructure improvement and development costs, the City could provide assistance in developing alternative, long-term infrastructure financing. Such financing might include formation of a Mello-Roos or special assessment district to support a long-term, low interest revenue bond to fund infrastructure improvements. Bond interest and principal would be paid over time by homeowners in the assessment district.

Target date: Develop, adopt, and implement ordinance by December 1993.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Finance Department, City Attorney, Planning Department, Public Works Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.3.b Establish and Monitor Affordability Levels.

Determine the annual maximum sale prices and rents that may be levied on BMR units as well as the percentage increase that may be levied each year for units with affordability guarantees. In addition, monitor affordability levels through an annual survey of BMR units to ensure compliance with the specified affordability levels. Make affordability level and survey information available to the public.

Target date: Annual.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

1.3.c Provide Eligibility Screening and Referral.

Oversee the application and selection process for households qualifying for BMR units, providing developers and realtors with a listing of households that meet eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements might include point bonuses for households with established residency in Merced, ensuring that new affordable units respond to existing need in the City. In addition, the City should provide information to BMR-unit homebuyers and renters on their rights and responsibilities as well as on assistance that may be available from the City’s housing affordability programs (see Goal Area H-3).

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-1.4
Pursue Joint Development Agreements.

*To actively support the construction of new affordable housing units and to leverage public funds for maximum benefit, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**:*

1.4.a Participate in Joint Development Agreements.

Authorize City staff to explore and, if feasible, develop agreements for the joint public/private development of affordable rental and ownership housing in the City of Merced. City participation in development agreements shall:

- Ensure a minimum affordable housing mix (e.g., 20% very low income, 15% low income, and 15% moderate income).
- Ensure affordability of rental units for a period of twenty (20) years minimum.
- Require that for-sale units be owner-occupied and that they carry subsidy recapture provisions for a minimum time period (e.g.; 20 years) with the level of City subsidy determined at the time of construction as a percentage of development costs. For example, if the City provides a subsidy of \$5,000 towards a unit that costs \$50,000 to construct and that unit is sold in 25 years for a sum of \$500,000, the City shall receive \$50,000 from the sale to reinvest in new affordable housing developments through the proposed Affordable Housing Community Fund;

or

Require that units receiving subsidy be guaranteed at below-market rents or sales prices for a period of time (e.g., 20 years, 100 years), with annual rents and allowable sale prices adjusted for inflation. The City may also retain “first right of refusal,” i.e., the right to purchase the unit before it is offered for sale to any other buyers.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Planning Department, Redevelopment Agency, City Attorney, Finance Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

Policy H-1.5
Provide Priority Review and Permitting for Affordable Housing Projects.

*To encourage and facilitate the construction of affordable housing for low and moderate income households, the City shall pursue and implement the following **Implementing Program**.*

1.5.a Provide Priority Review and “Fast-Track” Permitting for Affordable Housing Developments.

Review the City’s current procedures for processing development proposals and approving permits, to identify strategies for accelerating the permitting process for affordable housing developments. This will help shorten the pre-construction period for these projects and reduce their carrying costs. Possible recommendations might include procedural changes, one-stop processing, or increased staffing for review of applications.

Target date: July 1992.

Responsibility: Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments.

Policy H-1.6

Support the Construction of Second Units.

*To encourage infill-type development and the construction of new affordable housing units, the City shall pursue and promote the following **Implementing Programs**:*

1.6.a Review Second Unit Occupancy Requirements.

Consider revision of the occupancy requirements stated in the Second Unit Ordinance (20.10.170, subsection F) to allow occupancy by non-owner occupants regardless of age or relation by blood or marriage to the owner-occupants.

Target date: Decision by July 1993

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.6.b Increase Lot Coverage for Second Unit Lots in R-1-6 Districts.

Increase the maximum lot coverage from 40 percent to 50 percent for R-1-6 zoned lots where a Second Unit is constructed.

Target date: Decision by July 1993

Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

1.6.c Encourage Homeowners to Construct Second Units.

Publicize the Second Unit Ordinance and the income benefits of second unit construction to homeowners in the City. Link this promotion with information on the availability of low-interest rehabilitation loans and other funding programs to support second unit development and provide technical support as necessary to interested homeowners.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-1.7

Pursue State and Federal Funds for New Housing Construction.

*To maximize the public monies available for new housing construction in Merced and fully leverage the use of local funds, the City shall pursue and promote the following **Implementing Programs**.*

1.7.a Apply for State and Federal Funds to Support New Housing Construction.

Identify and apply for funding at the State and Federal levels to finance the construction of new affordable housing in the City. When possible, pursuit of State and Federal monies shall be coordinated with other local agencies and jurisdictions, with private developers and/or with local lending institutions.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

1.7.b Provide Assistance for Private and Nonprofit Applicants to State and Federal Programs.

Assist private and nonprofit individuals or organizations in applying for State and Federal funds. Assistance may take the form of information referral, consultation regarding program applications, and/or lobbying by local officials on behalf of the applicant.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-1.8

Support Housing to Meet Special Needs.

*To ensure that housing in Merced responds to the full range of housing needs present in the population, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Program**.*

1.8.a Promote and Develop Housing to Meet Special Needs.

Work with private and nonprofit developers as well as the Merced College “Build-A-House” Project to finance, design, and construct housing to meet special needs. Such projects might include, but are not limited to: senior housing, including congregate care facilities; housing for people with physical and mental disabilities; farmworker housing; transitional housing for the homeless; an emergency shelter for the homeless; and housing for large families.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-1.9

Continue the “Build-A-House” Project with Merced College.

*To encourage continued cooperation between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in responding to Merced’s affordable housing needs and to support valuable educational and training opportunities for Merced residents, the City shall continue its funding and support for the “Build-A-House” Project with Merced College. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Program**.*

1.9.a Support the “Build-A-House” Project with Merced College.

Continue to support and seek to expand the Build-A-House Project, sponsored in conjunction with Merced College. The project provides funding and technical assistance for residential development in which college students are responsible for construction. As a priority, target projects to provide housing for special needs groups.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Goal Area H-2: Housing Conservation and Rehabilitation

GOAL

- **Ensure Quality Affordable Housing through the Conservation and Rehabilitation of the Existing Housing Stock**

POLICIES

H-2.1 Continue the City’s Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program.

H-2.2 Promote preventative maintenance and energy conservation in older housing units.

H-2.3 Pursue State and Federal funds to support conservation and rehabilitation.

H-2.4 Retain existing subsidized lower-income units.

Policy H-2.1

Continue the City's Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program.

*To help retain existing affordable housing units and to ensure a high-quality housing stock, the City of Merced shall provide low-interest loans to homeowners to assist them in rehabilitation efforts. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

2.1.a Continue the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program for Homeowners and Owners of Rental Properties.

Allocate monies from the City's Affordable Housing Community Fund to expand the City's Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program. Through the Program, provide low-interest rehabilitation loans to qualifying homeowners and owners of rental properties. Loan principal and interest are paid back over time through a revolving loan pool that is then used to assist others in upgrading their units to meet code requirements and quality standards. Program loan monies may also be supplemented with Home Improvement Funds from PG&E based on fund availability and household eligibility.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

2.1.b Identify and Notify Owners of Substandard Units

Based on the results of the City's recent housing inventory, identify substandard units in need of rehabilitation and notify owners of the availability of financing through the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-2.2

Promote Preventative Maintenance and Energy Conservation in Older Housing Units.

*To help ensure that existing housing units are preserved in good condition and kept from becoming substandard, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

2.2.a Identify and Notify Owners of Older Units or Units in Need of Moderate Repairs.

Based on information collected during the City's recent housing conditions inventory, identify older housing units in need of repair *to keep them from becoming substandard*. Notify the owners of these units that low-interest financing is available to assist them in minor rehabilitation.

Target date: June 1992 and ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

2.2.b Provide Public Information on Preventative Maintenance and Energy Conservation.

Utilize public information programs to educate the public on low-cost preventative maintenance and energy conservation measures they can take to prolong the life and quality of their home and reduce their long-term utility and maintenance costs.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-2.3

Pursue State and Federal Funds to Support Conservation and Rehabilitation.

*To maximize the public monies available for housing conservation and rehabilitation in Merced, the City shall pursue and promote the following **Implementing Program**.*

2.3.a Apply for State and Federal Funds to Support Housing Conservation and Rehabilitation.

Direct City staff to identify and apply for funding at the State and Federal levels to help finance housing conservation and rehabilitation in the City. When possible, pursuit of State and Federal monies shall be coordinated with other local agencies and jurisdictions, with private developers and/or with local lending institutions.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-2.4

Retain Existing Subsidized Lower-Income Units.

*To ensure that existing subsidized very low-, low, and moderate-income housing units, especially those which will be available for conversion to market rate housing by the year 2000, are retained as part of the City's stock of affordable housing, the City shall pursue and promote the following **Implementing Programs**.*

2.4.a Monitor Affordable Projects At Risk of Conversion to Market Rate.

Maintain regular communication with the owners of all subsidized projects in Merced to keep up-to-date on their plans to maintain affordability.

Target date: Annual discussions with each property owner, especially to monitor the following projects for conversion to market rate: Merced West Manor (currently in process); Parkwood Apartments (October 1997); and Merced Gardens (April 1994). The last two projects are Section 8 opt-out risks.

Responsibility: Housing Program

2.4.b Work With the Merced County Housing Authority to Maintain and Seek Additional Section 8 Funding.

Monitor Federal actions and appropriations regarding extension of Section 8 contracts, and actively support additional appropriations.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

2.4.c Continue Rental Subsidy Allocations in Merced.

Continue to participate in the Housing Authority Allocation of housing rental subsidies in Merced for very-low and low-income households.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

2.4.d Assist Local Nonprofits in Purchasing At-Risk Projects.

Work with nonprofit organizations, such as the Merced County Coalition for Affordable Housing, in assembling resources to purchase at-risk projects when they are offered for sale.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program; Merced County Coalition for Affordable Housing.

Goal Area H-3: Housing Affordability

GOALS

- **Increase Homeownership Opportunities for Low and Moderate Income Groups**
- **Provide Financial Assistance as Needed to Very Low and Low Income Renter Households**

POLICIES

- H-3.1** Provide downpayment assistance to qualifying homebuyers.
- H-3.2** Work with the Housing Authority to continue and expand Section 8 Programs.
- H-3.3** Explore the potential for an experimental rental assistance program for the homeless.
- H-3.4** Coordinate with local agencies to provide assistance to the homeless.
- H-3.5** Pursue State and Federal funds to assist affordability efforts.

Policy H-3.1

Provide Downpayment Assistance to Qualifying Homebuyers.

*To make home ownership accessible to households of low and moderate income, the City shall provide low-interest loans to assist such households with their downpayments. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Program**.*

3.1.a Establish a Downpayment Assistance Program.

Establish a revolving loan pool to provide low-interest loans to first-time low and moderate income homebuyers. The loan pool would be established and operated as a self-sustaining funding source, with established guidelines setting forth terms and conditions for downpayment loans. Such guidelines might include a percentage-of-buying-price or total dollar limit on loans and conditions for interest and principal re-payment (e.g., due after 20 years or at time of resale). Guidelines will be developed based on the dual goals of making the loan pool self-sustaining and lowering the financial burden on first-time, low and moderate income homebuyers.

Target date: January 1993.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Redevelopment Agency, City Attorney, Finance Department, City Council.

Policy H-3.2

Work with the Housing Authority to Continue and Expand Section 8 Programs.

*To help reduce the high incidence of rent overpayment among very low and low income households in Merced, the City shall work with the Merced County Housing Authority to maximize use of the Federally funded Section 8 rental assistance programs in the City of Merced. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Program**.*

3.2.a Continue Cooperative Efforts with the County Housing Authority.

Continue working with the Merced County Housing Authority to maximize use of Section 8 rental assistance programs in the City of Merced. Cooperative activities may include, but are not limited to: identification and/or development of housing units available for Section 8 occupancy; identification of households eligible for Section 8 assistance; and assistance in lobbying the Federal government for an increased allocation of Section 8 vouchers and certificates for Merced County's large and growing population of very low and low income households.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-3.3

Explore the Potential for an Experimental Rental Assistance Program for the Homeless.

*To assist homeless individuals and families in re-entering the housing market, the City shall explore the potential for providing temporary rental assistance to the homeless. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Program**.*

3.3.a Explore the Potential for an Experimental "Rental Assistance Program" for the Homeless.

Work with community agencies (e.g., Community Action Agency and Salvation Army) to fund and operate an experimental "temporary rental assistance program" to assist households who have been displaced from their home or apartment. Funding could be provided by the City or a coalition of agencies. The program would provide a limited financial grant or deposit to assist low-income, qualifying households in re-entering the housing market. The program could be established and monitored for a twelve-month trial period. If the program is evaluated highly, the City would consider funding it as an ongoing program.

Target date: Establish experimental program by January 1993.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, City Council

Policy H-3.4

Coordinate with Local Agencies to Provide Assistance to the Homeless.

*To address the needs of families and individuals who have been displaced from the housing market, the City shall work with relevant service agencies to provide assistance in locating housing and related support services. To the extent possible, the City shall also coordinate with County agencies and nonprofit service providers to secure transitional housing to meet the temporary housing needs of these households. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

3.4.a Continue to Support Efforts to Coordinate Homeless Services.

The City shall continue to work with the United Way, Merced County Human Services Agency, the County Housing Authority, local church groups, and other service providers to support their efforts in providing shelter and services to the homeless.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force.

3.4.b Explore the Feasibility of Developing Transitional Housing for the Homeless and a permanent Emergency Shelter facility.

Provide technical assistance and financial support for development of transitional housing to serve homeless families and individuals. In addition, work with other agencies and nonprofit organizations to explore the feasibility of developing a permanent emergency shelter facility in the City.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-3.5

Pursue State and Federal Funds to Assist Affordability Efforts.

*To maximize the public monies available for affordability efforts in Merced, the City shall pursue and promote the following **Implementing Program**.*

3.5.a Apply for State and Federal Funds to Support Affordability Efforts.

Identify and apply for funding at the State and Federal levels to help bridge the “affordability gap” between housing prices and household incomes in the City (e.g., assistance for first-time homebuyers). When possible, pursuit of State and Federal monies shall be coordinated with other local agencies and jurisdictions, with private developers and/or with local lending institutions.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Goal Area H-4: City Coordination

GOALS

- **Coordinate Innovative Housing Efforts with Private and Nonprofit Developers as well as Other Jurisdictions and City Departments.**
- **Ensure Accountability and Success of the Housing Action Plan.**

POLICIES

H-4.1 Establish an Affordable Housing Community Fund.

H-4.2 Educate the public regarding affordable housing issues and programs.

H-4.3 This policy was deleted by City Council Action on November 4, 1996.

H-4.4 Support the City of Merced General Plan Update.

H-4.5 Periodically review and evaluate the Housing Action Plan.

H-4.6 Ensure that the City of Merced provides its fair-share of affordable housing.

Policy H-4.1

Establish an Affordable Housing Community Fund.

To support the City's affordable housing efforts, the City shall establish an Affordable Housing Community Fund to serve as a centralized funding pool and high-visibility statement of the City's support for affordable housing. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following
Implementing Programs.

4.1.a Establish an Affordable Housing Community Fund.

Establish a new City account under the title of "Affordable Housing Community Fund" to serve as the depository for monies designated for general use in affordable housing programs (project-specific monies excluded). The Fund shall be managed by the City's Housing Program, with policy oversight and monitoring from the City's Affordable Housing Task Force. Potential uses for Fund monies shall include land acquisition for affordable housing, participation in affordable housing development projects, contributions to the City's Rehabilitation Loan and Rental Assistance programs, low-interest financing for the construction of second units, and support for downpayment assistance for first-time homebuyers. Goals and priorities for use of Fund monies shall be established by the Affordable Housing Task Force and City Council.

Target date: July 1992

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Redevelopment Agency, Finance Department.

4.1.b Maximize Public and Private Contributions to the City's Affordable Housing Community Fund.

Explore potential funding contributions from both public and private sources for the City's Affordable Housing Community Fund. Potential sources include:

- 20 percent set-aside from Redevelopment Agency tax-increment income;
- Documentary transfer tax contributions; and
- Contributions from private sources.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Redevelopment Agency, Finance Department

Policy H-4.2

Educate the Public Regarding Affordable Housing Issues And Programs.

To ensure that the City's affordable housing programs and related efforts have maximum impact and benefit, to promote equal housing opportunities for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, or color, and to build public awareness of and support for affordable housing programs, the City shall provide public information and educational materials on affordable housing issues and the programs being undertaken by the City to address those issues. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following
Implementing Programs.

4.2.a Provide Ongoing Public Information on Affordable Housing Issues and Programs.

Ensure that information on affordable housing issues and programs in the City of Merced is made available to city residents, developers, and local lenders, by placing program brochures, copies of city documents, and other pertinent information in the city libraries and at the Merced Civic Center. In addition, make this information available to community-based groups serving lower income residents, such as the Lao Family Community Center. Maximize public visibility for housing programs by encouraging representatives of the local media to cover affordable housing as an important community issue in need of community-wide attention and response.

Target date: Ongoing.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

4.2.b Establish a Tenant and Landlord Education Program.

Work with the County Housing Authority, the Merced County Rental Housing Association, and other relevant organizations to develop and implement educational materials and classes (perhaps in the form of an ongoing speakers series focusing on special topics or issues) to educate tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities. Focus on pro-active strategies and skills to improve public safety, housing conditions, and tenant-landlord relations, covering issues such as fire safety, neighborhood watch, and personal financial management.

Target date: Establish program by July 1993.

Responsibility: Housing Program; Affordable Housing Task Force.

Policy H-4.3

This policy was deleted by City Council Action on November 4, 1996.

Policy H-4.4

Support the City of Merced General Plan Update.

To provide long-term planning support for its affordable housing development, the City shall complete a comprehensive update of its General Plan. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following Implementing Program.

4.4.a Work with Planning Staff to Update the City of Merced General Plan.

Housing Program staff will work with the City's planning staff on the comprehensive update of the City of Merced General Plan. In particular, the General Plan Land Use Element shall be reviewed and updated to reflect the goals and policies of the Housing Action Plan and Housing Element of the General Plan, including an evaluation of residential densities (*Implementing Program H-1.1a*) in the City and mechanisms for increasing density (e.g., allowing multi-family construction) where appropriate and where a percentage of units are guaranteed at below-market rates (in accordance with the proposed Affordable Housing Ordinance).

Target date: Complete update by 1994.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

Policy H-4.5

Periodically Review and Evaluate the Housing Action Plan.

*To ensure accountability to the Housing Action Plan's goals and to ensure a Plan that is responsive to changing needs, the City shall conduct an annual review and evaluation of the Housing Action Plan. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Programs**.*

4.5.a Conduct an Annual Program Review and Evaluation.

Direct City staff to review and evaluate program implementation on an annual basis and to present the results of that review in written form to the Affordable Housing Task Force, the Planning Commission, and the City Council. The review shall be conducted in conjunction with the City's annual budgeting process and shall include expenditures and results by program, summary of success towards meeting stated targets, and an update on progress towards longer range goals. Recommendations for revisions and/or specific program alteration may also be made and submitted for approval.

Target date: Annual.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Planning Commission, and City Council.

4.5.b Review, Revise and Confirm Goals, Policies, Programs and Quantified Objectives Every Five Years.

Conduct a comprehensive review of goals, policies, programs, and quantified objectives included in the Housing Action Plan on a five-year interval. Revise and re-confirm goals, policies, and programs and identify new quantified objectives during the review process. Update the City's Housing Element and Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy to reflect the new five-year Housing Action Plan.

Target date: 1997.

Responsibility: Housing Program, Affordable Housing Task Force, Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council.

Policy H-4.6

Ensure that the City of Merced Provides Its Fair-Share of Affordable Housing.

*To respond to the overall need for affordable housing in Merced County and to recognize that affordable housing is an issue that crosses jurisdictional boundaries, the City shall strive to provide its fair share of affordable housing in the County as identified by the Merced County Association of Governments. To this end, the City shall promote and pursue the following **Implementing Program**.*

4.6.a Coordinate with County-wide Policies and Objectives.

City staff shall work with staff from the County to periodically review and update policies, programs, and quantified objectives identified in the City of Merced Housing Action Plan and related policy documents to ensure consistency with projections from the Merced County Association of Governments. Consistency between the City and County housing policies and programs shall also be reviewed, with opportunities for cooperative efforts identified and pursued. The review shall coincide with the Annual Program Review authorized in Implementing Program H-4.5a.

Target date: Annual.

Responsibility: Housing Program.

NOISE GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Goal Area N-1: Noise

GOALS

- A Quiet Environment
- Sensitive Land Uses Protected From Excessive Noise

POLICIES

- N-1.1** Minimize the impacts of aircraft noise.
- N-1.2** Reduce surface vehicle noise.
- N-1.3** Reduce equipment noise levels.
- N-1.4** Reduce noise levels at the receiver where noise reduction at the source is not possible.
- N-1.5** Coordinate planning efforts so that noise-sensitive land uses are not located near major noise sources.
- N-1.6** Mitigate all significant noise impacts as a condition of project approval for sensitive land uses.

Policy N-1.1

Minimize the Impacts of Aircraft Noise.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.1.a** Continue to follow the established noise abatement procedures for the Merced Municipal Airport, ~~such as no right turn after take-off from Runway 30.~~
- 1.1.b** Encourage the use of noise-reducing flight procedures for large aircraft using Merced Municipal Airport, such as maintaining minimum flight altitudes.
- 1.1.c** Follow the recommendations stated in the Merced Municipal Airport (MMA) Master Plan, such as to limit industrial/commercial uses to those with peak occupancy levels of no more than 25 persons/acre in the designated Safety Zone #2 of the Airport Land Use Commission Policy Plan; and to prohibit residential land use designation within the referral area of the MMA in the Land Use Element.
- 1.1.d** Work with ~~the Joint Powers Agency~~ Merced County to minimize ~~future~~ noise impacts from ~~any proposed aircraft reuse of the former~~ Castle Air port ~~Force Base (CAFB)~~ facility.
- 1.1.e** Update projected noise contours as information becomes available.

Policy N-1.2

Reduce Surface Vehicle Noise.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.2.a** Continue to discourage truck traffic and through traffic in residential areas in Merced.
- 1.2.b** Evaluate the need to prepare and adopt a Noise Ordinance for the City of Merced.

Policy N-1.3

Reduce Equipment Noise Levels.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.3.a Limit operating hours for noisy construction equipment used in the City of Merced.
- 1.3.b Review City functions (e.g. construction, refuse collection, street sweeping, tree trimming) to insure that noise generated by equipment has been reduced to the lowest practicable level.
- 1.3.c Include maximum noise level permitted for City equipment purchases and construction contracts.

Policy N-1.4

Reduce Noise Levels at the Receiver where Noise Reduction at the Source is Not Possible.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.4.a Require new residential projects to meet acceptable noise level standards as follows:
 - A maximum of 45 dB for interior noise level for residential projects.
 - A maximum of 60 dB for exterior noise level, especially when outdoor activities are important components of a project.
 - A maximum of 65 dB when all the best available noise-reduction techniques have been exhausted without achieving 60 dB, and the strict application of such a maximum becomes a hindrance to development needed or typical for an area.
 - A maximum of 70 dB for rail noise when 45 dB is maintained in bedrooms and the accumulation of the total number of noisy events does not exceed 45 dB for more than 30 minutes during night-time hours (11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) and does not exceed an accumulated 60 minutes during any 24-hour period.

[Need to review the above to address issues associated with residential development adjacent to State Highways.](#)
- 1.4.b ~~For areas within Merced that were formerly impacted by aircraft noise from Castle Air Force Base (CAFB), work to eliminate added federal noise mitigation measures that apply to construction only within these areas.~~ Encourage Merced County to update the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for Castle Airport.
- 1.4.c Use the "normally acceptable" noise levels as established in the "Noise and Land Use Compatibility Guidelines" (Figure 10.6) for the review of non-residential land uses.
- 1.4.d ~~Evaluate the need for, and the cost of, setting up an enforcement program, including liaison with the Merced County Health Department, for assistance in on-site noise measurement.~~

Policy N-1.5

Coordinate Planning Efforts so that Noise-Sensitive Land Uses are not Located Near Major Noise Sources.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.5.a** Create a master noise contours map to be used in the review and approval process for development proposals, as well as for evaluating Circulation, Land Use, and Open Space plans to minimize noise impacts on noise-sensitive areas.
- 1.5.b** As feasible revise and redesignate in the Land Use Element areas that are in conflict with the noise level generated in the vicinity.
- 1.5.c** As feasible, require noise barriers and/or increased setbacks between heavy circulation corridors and noise-sensitive land uses (see Figures 10.2a and 10.2b).
- 1.5.d** Require field noise measurements when new development may be impacted by high noise levels.

Policy N-1.6

Mitigate All Significant Noise Impacts as a Condition of Project Approval for Sensitive Land Uses.

Implementing Actions:

- 1.6.a** Consider site design techniques for new construction as the primary means to minimize noise impacts, such as building placement, increased landscaped setbacks, orientation of noise-tolerant components (i.e. parking, utility areas, maintenance facilities) between the noise source and the receptor, use of a combination of noise barriers and landscaped berms, etc. (see Figures 10.2a and 10.2b).
- 1.6.b** Encourage developers to consider alternative architectural designs as a means of meeting noise reduction requirements, such as:
 - Use noise tolerant rooms (kitchen, garages, bathrooms) to shield other noise sensitive rooms or areas (living rooms, bedrooms).
 - Locate bedrooms away from major roadways.
 - Use architectural design techniques and materials for building facades that will help shield noise.
 - Avoid balconies or operable windows facing major travel routes.

SAFETY GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

<i>Goal Area S-1: Disaster Preparedness</i>
GOAL
■ General Disaster Preparedness
POLICY
S-1.1 Develop and maintain emergency preparedness procedures for the City.

<i>Policy S-1.1</i>
<i>Develop and Maintain Emergency Preparedness Procedures for the City.</i>
<i>Implementing Actions:</i>
1.1.a Keep up-to-date through annual review the City's existing Emergency Plan.
1.1.b Prepare route capacity studies and determine evacuation procedures and routes for different types of disasters.
1.1.c Require that all new annexation areas be incorporated into the City's emergency plan at the time of annexation.
1.1.d Establish a process whereby the City of Merced systematically encourages review of and familiarity with the most current community disaster plan by those in local government and other local residents who hold responsible positions.
1.1.e Continue to adopt and respect agreements with the County and adjacent communities for mutual and automatic aid assistance.
<u>1.1.f Implement the policies and procedures recommended in the National Incident Management System.</u>

<i>Goal Area 2: Seismic Safety</i>
GOAL
■ Reasonable Safety for City Residents from the Hazards of Earthquake and Other Geologic Activity
POLICIES
S-2.1 Reduce the potential danger from earthquake and seismic-related activity from existing buildings where necessary.
S-2.2 Encourage the improvement of all public facilities and infrastructure such as natural gas, fuel, sewer, water, electricity, and railroad lines and equipment with up-to-date seismic safety features.
S-2.3 Restrict urban development in all areas with potential ground failure characteristics.

Policy S-2.1

Reduce the Potential Danger from Earthquake and Seismic-Related Activity from Existing Buildings Where Necessary.

Implementing Actions:

- 2.1.a Evaluate the need for and the cost of setting up an enforcement program for eliminating any unreasonable risk associated with seismically unsafe buildings through reinforcement or removal where necessary.
- 2.1.b Study the possibility of obtaining State Historic Preservation, Community Development Block Grant, Redevelopment, or other available money to assist with repairs of unsafe buildings..
- 2.1.c Continue to require that new development meet the standards of Seismic Zone 3..
- 2.1.d Pursue uniform infrastructure, building, and land use requirements and policies regarding disaster avoidance within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan boundaries.
- 2.1.e Review all possible new additions to the City's Building and Fire Codes based on up-to-date technology every three years.
- 2.1.f Develop mitigation plans for each of the buildings identified in the Building Division's 1990 Seismic Evaluation of Downtown Merced as "immediate hazards."
- 2.1.g Continue to implement the 1993 State law requiring seismic retrofitting of existing buildings when there is a change of use, additions, or remodeling that affects unreinforced masonry portions of the structure.

Policy S-2.2

Encourage the Improvement of All Public Facilities and Infrastructure, Such as Natural Gas, Fuel, Sewer, Water, Electricity, and Railroad Lines and Equipment with Up-To-Date Seismic Safety Features.

Implementing Actions:

- 2.2.a Work with Caltrans to review and, where possible, increase the earthquake stability of grade-separated transportation structures such as highway bridges and overpasses within the City's planning area.
- 2.2.b Provide adequate storage facilities to insure an adequate supply of water in the event of seismic activity. An evaluation of the seismic safety of the water system, including the elevated water towers, should be completed as part of the update of the Water Master Plan.

Policy S-2.3

Restrict Urban Development in All Areas with Potential Ground Failure Characteristics.

Implementing Actions:

- 2.3.a Investigate the feasibility of performing an inventory of areas with generally unstable ground within the SUDP area and work with the County to restrict or prohibit their development. In the Merced planning area, most of the unstable ground are in old streams beds, near embankments, and adjacent to streams with sufficient velocities to erode the bank.
- 2.3.b Retain a high level of groundwater supply in order to reduce the possibility of land subsidence, including the initiation of an educational program to discourage excessive, inefficient uses of water.

Goal Area 3: Flooding

GOAL

- A City Free From Other Than Street Flooding

POLICIES

- S-3.1 Endeavor to remove most of the existing City, and the vast majority of the SUDP, from the 100-year floodplain.
- S-3.2 Maintain essential City services in the event of flooding or dam failure.-

Policy S-3.1

Endeavor to Remove Most of the Existing City, and the Vast Majority of the SUDP, From the 100-Year Floodplain.

Implementing Action:

- 3.1.a Work on the development and implementation of a funding plan to provide for the City's share of the Merced Streams Project. Consider basing assessments on those areas which would benefit from removal from the 100-year flood and/or Lake Yosemite's inundation area.

Policy S-3.2

Maintain Essential City Services in the Event of Flooding or Dam Failure.

Implementing Actions:

- 3.2.a Continue to build all pump stations (both sewer and water) entryways at one (1) foot above the 4200-year flood elevation (when it has been determined and mapped), and ~~consider~~ continue to implement additional standards to address flooding due to dam failure.
- 3.2.b Continue the "flood-proofing" of high-value or important City infrastructure, such as lift stations and signal control functions, as required by the City's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

Goal Area 4: Fire Protection

GOAL

- **Fire and Hazardous Material Safety for the Residents of the City and For Those Working in Fire Suppression**

POLICIES

- S-4.1** Promote the concept of fire protection master planning with fire safety goals, missions, and supporting objectives for the community.
- S-4.2** Maintain a reasonable level of accessibility and infrastructure support for fire suppression, disaster, and other emergency services.

Policy S-4.1

Promote the Concept of Fire Protection Master Planning with Fire Safety Goals, Missions, and Supporting Objectives for the Community.

Implementing Actions:

- 4.1.a** Provide additional fire station locations as expansion of the City occurs in order to maintain a response objective of 4 to 6 minutes citywide.
- 4.1.b** Work with the Fire Department and the Environmental Health Division to identify fire districts that will require specialized manpower and equipment, such as businesses that use hazardous materials, and request that land uses or structures with similar needs be confined to these districts.

Policy S-4.2

Maintain a Reasonable Level of Accessibility and Infrastructure Support for Fire Suppression, Disaster, and Other Emergency Services.

Implementing Actions:

- 4.2.a** Continue to use 8-inch or larger pipe in high-value districts. In residential districts, additional "looping" or completion of water main grids shall continue to be provided where possible so that lengths of 6-inch pipe on the long side of the block will not exceed 600 feet.
- 4.2.b** Maintain current standards defined in the ~~Uniform~~-International Fire Code and City Standards for the spacing of fire hydrants. In general, these standards call for 500-foot spacing in residential areas and 300-foot spacing in commercial and industrial areas.
- 4.2.c** Continue to provide fire prevention and disaster preparedness information through the schools, public interest groups, and other facilities and people.
- 4.2.d** Expand the inspection program to include the following recommendations by the Insurance Services Office ~~of California~~:
- a. Perform fire prevention inspections of all buildings other than dwellings once a year, except hazardous occupancies which should be inspected twice a year.
 - b. Establish a program of adequate reinspection of electrical wiring and equipment.
 - c. Perform fire inspections on residential rental properties on a change in tenants.
- 4.2.e** ~~Expand~~ Continue to enforce the present nuisance abatement program ~~to include a~~ regarding a height limit on weeds during the dry season (mid-April through mid-November) in both vacant and developed lots, abandoned vehicles, and vacant buildings.

Goal Area 5: Airport Safety

GOAL

- **A Safe Airport Environment Both Above and On the Ground**

POLICIES

- S-5.1** Continue to protect approach areas and control zones for both existing and future runway systems through land use regulations and property acquisition where necessary.
- S-5.2** Prevent the encroachment of potential hazards to flight within the Airport's airspace.

Policy S-5.1

Continue to Protect Approach Areas and Control Zones for Both Existing and Future Runway Systems Through Land Use Regulations and Property Acquisition Where Necessary.

Implementing Actions:

- 5.1.a** Retain existing agricultural land uses and discourage residential land use designations within the Merced Municipal Airport referral area.
- 5.1.b** Limit industrial/commercial uses to those with peak occupancy levels of 25 persons/acre or less within Zone 2 of the Merced Municipal Airport referral area..
- 5.1.c** ~~Explore~~ Continue to utilize various alternatives for acquiring approach protection easements and overflight easements for properties within the Merced Municipal Airport referral area.

Policy S-5.2

Prevent the Encroachment of Potential Hazards to Flight Within the Airport's Airspace.

Implementing Action:

- 5.2.a** Continue to follow Federal Aviation Regulation standards regarding the maximum height of structures and other objects within the Merced Municipal Airport referral area.

Goal Area 6: Crime

GOAL

- **Reduced Criminal Activity and An Increased Feeling of Safety and Security in the Community**

POLICIES

S-6.1 Provide superior community-based police services.

S-6.2 Provide services and personnel necessary to maintain community order and public safety.

Policy S-6.1

Provide Superior Community-Based Police Services.

Implementing Actions:

- 6.1.a** Continue programs, such as "Neighborhood Watch" which increase residents' involvement in, and ownership of, police operations.
- 6.1.b** Direct services and outreach programs towards youths in the community.
- 6.1.c** Locate future police facilities to enhance the "community policing" concept through the expansion of existing or the addition of new police service districts as the City grows.

Policy S-6.2

Provide Services and Personnel Necessary to Maintain Community Order and Public Safety.

Implementing Actions:

- 6.2.a** Maintain a police force sufficiently staffed and deployed to ensure quick response times to emergency calls.
- 6.2.b** Encourage approaches to crime prevention to be designed into new buildings and subdivisions.
- 6.2.c** Identify changes to current laws and ordinances or create new ones to help carry out crime prevention strategies.

Goal Area 7: Hazardous Materials

GOAL

- **Hazardous Materials Safety for City Residents**

POLICIES

- S-7.1** Prevent injuries and environmental contamination due to the uncontrolled release of hazardous materials.
- S-7.2** Ensure that hazardous materials are cleaned up before a property is developed or redeveloped.

Policy S-7.1

Prevent Injuries and Environmental Contamination Due to the Uncontrolled Release of Hazardous Materials.

Implementing Actions:

- 7.1.a** Support Merced County in carrying out and enforcing the Merced County Hazardous Waste Management Plan.
- 7.1.b** Continue to update and enforce local ordinances regulating the permitted use and storage of hazardous gases, liquids, and solids.
- 7.1.c** Continue to make sure underground storage tanks containing hazardous materials are properly installed, used, and removed.
- 7.1.d** Provide continuing training for hazardous materials enforcement and response personnel.

Policy S-7.2

Ensure that Hazardous Materials are Cleaned Up Before a Property is Developed or Redeveloped.

Implementing Actions:

- ~~**7.2.a** Request an assessment of the past use of hazardous materials and soils analysis on proposed development sites.~~
- 7.2.ba** Continue to work with the State Department of Health Services and Merced County in developing cleanup programs for known hazardous waste sites within the Merced planning area.