COVER PAGE

CHAPTER 3: Land Use

Chapter 3—Land Use

What existing land uses will affect the pattern of future uses in the Plan area? Where will future UC spin-off developments be located? How does the Plan provide for continued success of Downtown Merced? What are the housing needs in the Plan area, and how will these be provided? How will the Plan's land use plan provide for the flexibility needed to accommodate future unknown market interests? This chapter addresses these and related questions.

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OPEN SPACE

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OVERVIEW

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UC MERCED

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

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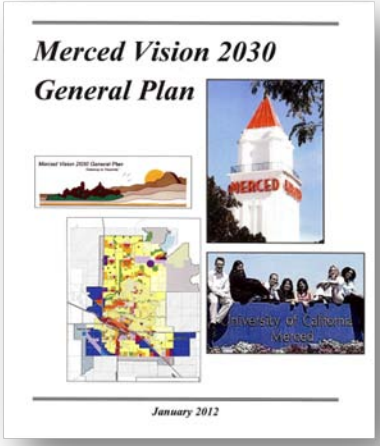
3.4 Consistency with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*

INTRODUCTION

To assure that the Bellevue Community Plan was crafted in a manner consistent with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, this section describes how General Plan policies and implementing actions were utilized to develop and implement the "Land Use" Chapter of the BCP.



For ease of reference, BCP applicable Land Use General Plan polices and implementing actions are listed here. These may be applicable for various reasons:

- guided the crafting of the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP);
- guide design of future development projects; and
- formed the foundation upon which new policies were written to apply specifically to the BCP. Where used to develop policies for the BCP, a brief discussion is added to explain the relevance of the BCP planning area to the policy.

Use of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* goals and policies in this manner assures that the Community Plan is consistent with the City's General Plan.

Subject areas include:

- Residential & Neighborhood Development
- Economic and Business Development
- Urban Growth and Design

3.4.1 Residential & Neighborhood Design

Land Use Policy L-1.1

The long term economic vitality of the City is enhanced by maintaining housing opportunities that accommodate a diversely skilled 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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*1.1*.**of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Promote Balanced Development Which Provides Jobs, Services and Housing."***

Promote Mixed Use Development

Implementing Action L-1.1.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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 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, including knowledge-based research and development and green industries.

Land Use Policy L-1.2

With a diverse population of ages, races, incomes, and lifestyles, Merced's housing stock must reflect that diversity as well. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*1.2*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Encourage a Diversity of Building Types, Ownership, Prices, Designs, and Site Plans for Residential Areas Throughout The City."***

Encourage High Density Housing

Implementing Action L-1.2.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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.

Land Use Policy L-1.7

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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*1.7*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Encourage the Location of Multi-Family Developments on Sites With Good Access to Transportation, Shopping, Employment Centers, and Services."***

Designate Areas for Multi-family Development

Implementing Action L-1.7.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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.

3.4.2 Economic and Business Development

Land Use Policy L-2.2

It is important to designate areas for new industrial, research & development, and technology 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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*2.2*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Locate New or Expanded Industrial Parks, Research & Development, Technology, and Business in Appropriate Areas."***

Annex Job-Based Sites and Develop Plans to Provide Infrastructure

Implementing Action L-2.2.d of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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."** With the advice 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. Special attention should be given to areas within the northeastern portion of the City as job centers for businesses seeking a location near UC Merced.

Land Use Policy L-2.3

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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*2.3*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Promote the Retention and Expansion of Existing Industrial and Commercial Businesses."***

Update the Zoning Code to be User-Friendly and to Streamline the Development Process

Implementing Action L-2.3.d of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, **Review and update as necessary the City's Zoning and Sign Ordinances in order to streamline and make the development process more**

business-friendly and understandable." The City's Zoning Ordinance, adopted in the 1960's, has only been periodically updated over the years and has never been comprehensively updated. The City's sign ordinances, adopted in the 1970's, is also in need of a comprehensive update (refer to Policy UD-2.2.j). Neither ordinance addresses "modern" concepts (i.e. mixed-use zoning, signs that use LED technology, etc.), and there is much interpretation by City staff involved for land uses that are not specifically described in the ordinance because they did not exist at the time the ordinance was written (i.e. dialysis centers, internet cafes, etc.) A comprehensive update of both the Zoning and Sign Ordinances are needed to make them more user-friendly and easier to understand for City residents and prospective and existing businesses. Many cities have found form-based zoning codes to better meet the needs of their communities and the City will consider implementing such a form-based zoning code as part of this Update process.

Land Use Policy L-2.6

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, pharmacy, and other stores which serve the needs of surrounding residents should be distributed throughout the City to serve most residential areas. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*2.6*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Provide Neighborhood Commercial Centers In Proportion to Residential Development in the City."***

Appropriately Space Neighborhood Commercial Sites

Implementing Action L-2.6.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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. The Land Use Diagram attempts to meet this standard, but additional sites may need to be designated in the future.

Land Use Policy L-2.7

Neighborhood, Regional, and Community 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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*2.7*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Locate and Design New Commercial Developments to Provide Good Access from Adjacent Neighborhoods and Reduce Congestion on Major Streets."***

Location Standard of Commercial Development and Exception

Implementing Action L-2.7.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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, except under very unique circumstances."** Commercial locations away from arterial street

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. Although the City believes that new commercial centers should not ideally be located at the corner of two arterials, the City will consider extremely limited exceptions for large-scale (minimum of 20 acres), high-quality projects which agree to abide by strict access and land use restrictions in proximity to the intersection (i.e. no freestanding pads with multiple curb cuts and no driveway cuts on arterials—only on internal streets), provide internal access and strong connectivity from the adjacent neighborhood, provide a mix of uses and residential densities throughout the project, provide good transit and pedestrian access, provide high-quality architecture, landscaping, site design, and signage, and provide significant public improvements.

Create Commercial Nodes / Update Code to Implement the City's Urban Design Principles

Implementing Action L-2.7.g of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**Locate commercial nodes in new growth areas to avoid the aesthetic and circulation issues associated with "strip commercial" development through the implementation of the policies of the Urban Design Chapter (Chapter 6), particularly the Core Commercial principles."** In order to ensure high-quality commercial developments and to avoid typical "strip commercial" development, the policies and guidelines in the Urban Design chapter should be implemented for new developments. The City's Zoning Ordinance should be updated and revised to implement these principles.

Land Use Policy L-2.8

In 2007, the Downtown Strategy Task Force (a 20-member group representing a broad range of community interests) was formed to develop a consensus on the proper direction for Downtown with the goal of maintaining Downtown as the City's center of cultural and civic activity, finance, and government. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*2.8*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Encourage a Mixture of Uses and Activities That Will Maintain the Vitality of the Downtown Area."***

Provide Circulation-Related Connections between Downtown and UC Merced

Implementing Action L-2.8.c of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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."**

Land Use Policy L-2.9

With the location of the UC Merced Campus by Lake Yosemite, there is a need to designate future sites near the Campus for research and development parks. One of the economic benefits of having a major research university is the "spin-off" businesses that develop from the research conducted by professors and students at the University. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*2.9*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Identify Locations and Develop Standards for Campus-type Research and Development Parks."***

Plan for Research and Development Parks

Implementing Action L-2.9.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**Plan for job centers in the northeastern portion of the City capitalizing on the proximity to a research university, UC Merced."** As part of the development of the northeastern area, research and development campuses should be encouraged. The size and precise location would need to be determined through a market/economic study. However, as with

retail commercial uses, research and development parks should be focused at the ¼ or ½ mile transit nodes along the arterials to avoid traffic congestion at the intersection of two arterials. Business parks to accommodate research and development, technology, light industry, and business uses complimentary of the UC Merced Campus research could also be located on appropriately-designated properties along the Bellevue Corridor and other transportation corridors in the vicinity of the UC Merced Campus if the market exists for such uses.

Zone for Research and Development Parks

Implementing Action L-2.9.b of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**Develop zoning and development standards for campus-type research and development parks."** The City's Zoning Ordinance does not currently contain zoning standards for campus-type research and development parks. Such standards will need to define permitted and conditionally permitted uses, taking into account desired uses in such districts, which might include restaurants and hotels to serve the employees and clientele; setbacks, building heights, etc.

3.4.3 Urban Growth and Design

Land Use Policy L-3.1

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 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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*3.1*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Create Land Use Patterns That Will Encourage People to Walk, Bicycle, or Use Public Transit for an Increased Number of Their Daily Trips."***

Encourage Pedestrian and Transit-Friendly Designs

Implementing Action L-3.1.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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.

Plan for High and Medium-Density Housing near Transit Hubs and Commercial Centers

Implementing Action L-3.1.c of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**Plan areas for higher density development within 1/4 mile of locations identified as transit hubs and commercial centers."** Designate high-density land uses in areas planned for transit hubs and commercial centers.

Implementing Action L-3.1.d of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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. Consider higher housing densities for areas around existing and planned transit hubs.

Encouraged a Mix of Land Uses

Implementing Action L-3.1.e of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**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.

Land Use Policy L-3.3

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. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*3.3*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Promote Site Designs That Encourage Walking, Cycling, and Transit Use."***

Encourage Construction of Transit, Bicycling and Walking Features in Future Developments

Implementing Action L-3.3.b of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, **"Encourage all subdivision street and lot designs, commercial site plans, and multi-family site plans to improve access by transit, bicycle, and walking."** 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.

Permit Transit-Friendly Projects

Implementing Action L-3.3.c of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, **"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

Land Use Policy L-3.6

The Community Plan process is envisioned as an important implementation tool in the Merced Vision 2030 General Plan for large-scale new developments. It is important to note, however, that it is intended to be a flexible tool that accomplishes a definite planning purpose yet does not unnecessarily frustrate the development process. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*3.6*** of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* spotlights the need to "***Require Community Plans for Large New Development Areas within the City's SUDP/SOI Prior to Development."***

Require Community Plans Prior to Development

Implementing Action L-3.6.a of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, **"Require the development of Community Plans for large-scale new developments within the City's SUDP/SOI prior to development.'** As envisioned in this plan, a "Community Plan" may or may not conform with the requirements of Government Code Section 65450 for "Specific Plans." The Community Plans proposed are intended to recognize specific projects that have undergone significant developer-driven planning efforts but need to fit in with the Merced Vision 2030 goals and objectives. These projects will undergo additional detailed planning and environmental review when formally proposed to the City for development.

Utilize Community Plan Guiding Principles

Implementing Action L-3.6.b of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, **"Make use of guiding principles in developing Community Plans."** The following guiding principles should be used in developing these community plans:

- The "Urban Villages" concept should be incorporated into the planning of these areas as much as feasible.
- Community Plans which include or are adjacent to established neighborhoods will address the needs of these neighborhoods and potential adverse impacts resulting from plan implementation.
- The Community Planning process should be focused on the planning issues or concerns which need to be resolved for that planning area and, to this degree, provide data, information or policy clarification necessary to carry out the goals of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. Public participation by area residents and property owners in the planning process will be emphasized.
- Community Plan areas need connectivity with existing and planned urban areas. This includes all modes of transportation, including vehicles, bicycles, public transit, etc.
- Community Plans will include a land use and infrastructure phasing plan.

Land Use Policy L-3.7

In 2006, the eight Councils of Governments in the San Joaquin Valley (representing the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern) came together to develop a coordinated valley vision, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint. In April 2009, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council adopted a Preferred Blueprint Growth Scenario and a list of Smart Growth principles to be used by local jurisdictions in updating their General Plans. Conformity to Regional Blueprint plans are likely to be required per California Senate Bill (SB) 375 in the future. For these reasons, the **Land Use Policy L-*3.7*** of the *Merced Vision*

2030 General Plan spotlights the need to ***"Implement Policies and Principles to Conform to the Intent of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint."***

Implement City Policies that Align with the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint

Implementing Action L-3.7.b of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* states, "**Continue to implement City policies and programs that conform to the Smart Growth Principles of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint."** The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* contains many policies that relate to the principles below, which are spread throughout the General Plan Elements, including Land Use, Transportation, Public Facilities & Services, Urban Design, Open Space & Conservation, Sustainable Development, etc.

- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Mix Land Uses
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities.
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Enhance the economic vitality of the region.
- Support actions that encourage environmental resources management.

3.5 Bellevue Community Plan Goals, Policies and Actions

INTRODUCTION

Consistent with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the goals of this BCP chapter are grouped into three areas as follows. This approach fosters consistency and builds on the City's broader General Plan guidance; these subjects include:

- ***Goal Area LU 1:*** Residential and Neighborhood Design;
- ***Goal Area LU-2:*** Economic and Business Development; and
- ***Goal Area LU-3:*** Urban Growth and Design.

Policies and Implementing Actions specific to the BCP planning area are set forth in the Tables below:

Goal Area LU-1: Residential and Neighborhood Development

GOAL

- C_____

POLICIES

UE-1.1 E_____

UE-1.2 P_____

Policy UE-1.1
E_____

Implementing Actions:

1.1.a P-----

1.1.b T------

1.1.c A--------

1.1.d W-------

Goal Area LU-2: Economic and Business Development

GOAL

- C_____

POLICIES

UE-1.1 E_____

UE-1.2 P_____

Policy UE-1.1
E_____

Implementing Actions:

1.1.a

1.1.b

1.1.c .

1.1.d W-------

Goal Area LU-3: Urban Growth and Design

GOAL

- C_____

POLICIES

UE-1.1 E_____

UE-1.2 P_____

Policy UE-1.1
E_____

Implementing Actions:

1.1.a P-----

1.1.b T------

1.1.c A--------

1.1.d W-------

3.6 Bibliography

1. *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*
2.
3.
4.
5.