



## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

# The North Merced Annexation Feasibility Study

## Summary of First Community Meetings

*( Held May 21, 2019 at 3PM & 6PM )*

Two public meetings were held on May 21, 2019, to present information, answer questions, and receive comments from the public about a Feasibility Study currently underway within the City of Merced. The same information was presented at each meeting. Approximately 100 people attended the 3 p.m. meeting and approximately 60 persons attended the 6 p.m. meeting.

The presentations included information about the purpose of the North Merced Feasibility Study and provided information about what is planned to be addressed in the Study. Public input and comments about thoughts and items to consider in preparing content for the Study were requested. City staff and consultants preparing the Feasibility Study responded to questions and comments expressed by meeting participants, as did a representative from the Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

It is important to note that there are no proposals or requests for annexation currently pending before the City. The purpose of the Study is to provide information to assist the City of Merced in decision-making should it receive requests to the City from landowners with property within the Study area.

The area for which possible future incorporation into City boundaries (annexation) would be considered is located north of the City's existing boundaries and contains approximately 7,600 acres currently located within the County of Merced. The area is generally near UC Merced and is mostly rural, but has some existing housing developments and some limited businesses in addition to the University campus.

The City designated the northern area for possible future urban growth in its adopted General Plan. The City anticipates future needs for new housing, retail and commercial businesses, and infrastructure improvements (such as roadways and water and sewer systems).

Annexation could potentially include all or only portions of the northern area. Existing residences and businesses may or may not be included in an annexation depending upon where, when and how annexation may

be proposed by owners of land within the area. The City has stated that if existing residents and businesses were included in an area proposed for annexation, they could retain flexibility in existing property uses, but potentially could be required in certain circumstances to connect to and participate in funding City-provided water and sewer service depending upon if, when and which parts of the area might be annexed.

The Study will identify possible future options for how and where future annexations might occur and identify types of City services that might be needed for such annexation options. Should the City receive formal requests for annexation, there are specific and separate approval processes that must be followed including City approvals and subsequent approvals by LAFCO.

Participants in both sessions were primarily owners of single family homes in existing subdivisions, most having homes on 2 acres or less. A smaller number of participants were property owners with 2-20 acres, and a few participants were owners of significantly larger properties in the area. In addition, staff from several public agencies, school districts and an agricultural organization were also present.

The following summary of comments is consolidated from input provided at both meetings. A number of comments and questions, primarily from property owners in the Hillcrest, Bellevue and Lake areas, reflected concerns about the annexation process and expressed general opposition to their properties being annexed. Responses to topics/comments are briefly summarized as shown in italics below.

- There were several questions/comments asking about the City and LAFCO roles and processes, and who has ability to initiate annexation. (*Any landowner in the area could request annexation. Annexation requires approvals from both the City and LAFCO in separate and independent processes*).

- There were several questions/comments about activities and uses such as keeping animals, farming, and as allowed in the County compared to activities allowed in the City. (*The City indicated that generally, existing uses can continue*).
- Concerns were expressed regarding larger landowners possibly trying to force annexation on other property owners in the area. (*Comments were noted and will be considered in preparing the Feasibility Study*).
- There were questions about whether people could comment on any annexation in the area even if their property is not specifically included in a proposed annexation. (*Yes*).
- Concerns were expressed about potential annexation and impacts on quality of life, including for adjacent properties even if those properties were not included in an annexation action, and about desire to maintain rural lifestyle and not have City density/intensity in the area. (*Comments are noted and will be considered in preparing recommendations in the Feasibility Study*).
- There were questions to clarify who defines proposed annexation boundaries and if and how owners/voters in a proposed annexation area are notified. (*A property owner may initiate an annexation. If an annexation proposal is received, it legally must be considered by the City. The City may or may not approve the proposal. If the City does approve the proposal, it must also then be approved by LAFCO in a separate process, including notification to property owners within the proposed annexation boundary. Currently no annexation proposals have been submitted for consideration within the Study Area*).
- There were questions about types of changes that could be required of existing property owners in the area related to water and septic requirements,

whether existing residences would be required to connect to City services with annexation, and whether existing properties could remain on wells and septic systems. *(In general, should there be annexation of all or parts of the northern area, existing properties can retain wells and septic as is. An exception may be if there is a system failure on the property. Need for a replacement permit could potentially require a property owner to hook into a City system if a City system is available at that time. For additional information, please read the document entitled “Annexation Questions and Answers” shown on the City’s Feasibility Study web page).*

- There were questions/comments regarding sufficiency of water supply from the City to meet irrigation demand on rural properties that might be annexed. *(Comments are noted).*
- There were questions about costs for annexation, potential increases in property taxes, and costs for connecting to City systems and services. *(Comments are noted and being considered in preparing the Feasibility Study. Please also see the “Annexation Questions and Answers” document on the City’s Feasibility Study web page.)*
- There were questions about service capacity and costs for water and sewer systems if upgrades

are needed. *(Comments were noted and will be considered in preparing the Feasibility Study).*

- There were comments and concerns regarding whether the City can accommodate additional population and the potential impact on existing City service needs, and comments about considering infill within areas of the current City boundaries prior to considering annexation of additional area. *(Comments were noted and will be considered in preparing the Feasibility Study).*
- There were comments that needs of and impacts on school districts need to be considered and that school districts want to be involved in annexation discussions and processes. *(Comments were noted).*

Two additional Community Meetings are scheduled for **Wednesday, August 7, 2019 at 3:00pm and 6:00pm**. The public is welcome to attend and participate in either or both meetings; however, it is not necessary to attend both meetings since the same information will be provided at each meeting session. The meetings will be held in the **Sand Pipes Room** located on the **first floor of the Merced Civic Center at 678 West 18th Street**. The meetings will include updates about the progress of the Study and information about content and recommendations being considered. Questions and comments from the public will again be welcomed.

## Information Summary



Questions and comments can be submitted by email to [planningweb@cityofmerced.org](mailto:planningweb@cityofmerced.org) or by contacting Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager for the City of Merced, at (209) 385-6858. All comments will be considered by the City and the EMC Team as the Study is prepared.