CITY OF MERCED
Development Services

TO: Bicycle Advisory Commission
FROM: Bill King, Principal Planner
DATE: April 24, 2012
SUBJECT: Bellevue Corridor Community Plan

ACTION REQUIRED:

Information item and opportunity to comment.

BACKGROUND

Recognizing that long-term urban growth will occur in the area between the City and ever growing UC Merced, the recently adopted *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* identified a need to prepare a Community Plan to guide future growth in the area between "G" Street and Lake Road, along Bellevue Road. The *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan* (BCCP) encompasses an area of 2.42 square-miles, and will establish a land-use map, a mobility plan, and tackle questions such as the location and amounts of student housing, research and development parks, and the design of Bellevue Road.

In December 2010, the City was awarded $251,000 through the State of California Strategic Growth Council (SGC), to prepare the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan* (BCCP). In August 2011, City Staff received a final contract from the Strategic Growth Council to receive the grant funding. Lisa Wise Consulting (LWC) will be assisting the City in this endeavor.

DISCUSSION

Attachment A, the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan Overview*, provides a comprehensive discussion of the Project. Please review this attachment prior to the meeting.

ACTION

In the Summer of 2012, City Staff and the consultant will begin to research various design options of BCCP focal elements. Public outreach events will be held in Spring 2013 to narrow these options into the preferred design for the Plan. BAC input at this stage in the process will help us identify those options with community-based support and or interest. BCCP focal elements that the BAC is invited to review and comment on include: 1) Complete Streets, and 2) the BCCP Bike Facilities Plan. Please be aware that the community plan elements need to be consistent with a jurisdiction's general plan. Thus, the BCCP will generally supplement and enhance the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

1. Complete Streets

   The "Complete Streets" concept emphasizes use of all forms of transportation on streets, including automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit.

2. BCCP Bike Facilities Plan

Attachment B shows the "Bicycle Transportation Plan," Figure 4.9 of the *Merced Vision 20130 General Plan*, which also appears in the *2008 Merced Bicycle Plan*.

Attachment

A. Bellevue Corridor Community Plan Overview

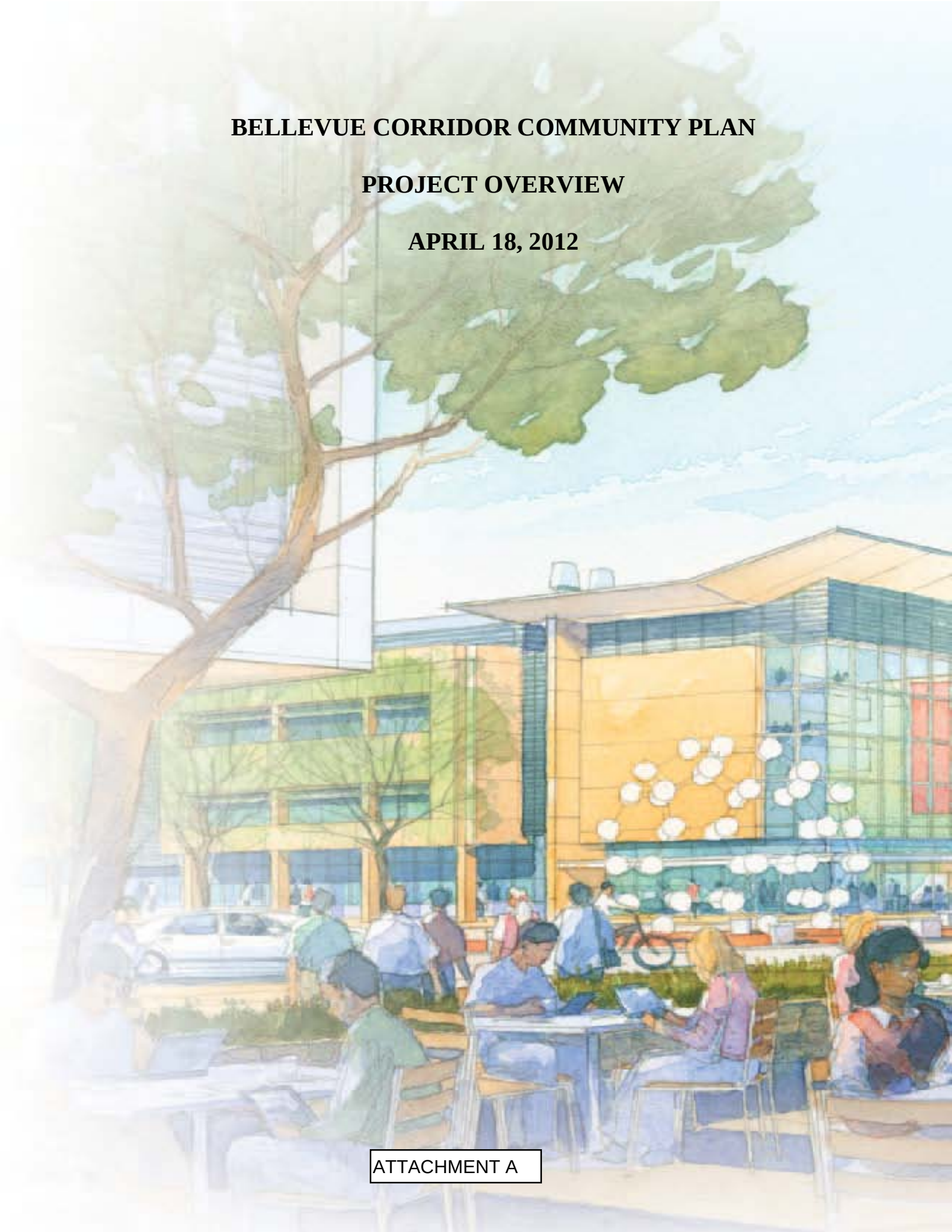
B. Bicycle Transportation Plan (Circulation Map)

bk:BAC:4-24-2012SR_Bellevue Corridor Community Plan

BELLEVUE CORRIDOR COMMUNITY PLAN

PROJECT OVERVIEW

APRIL 18, 2012

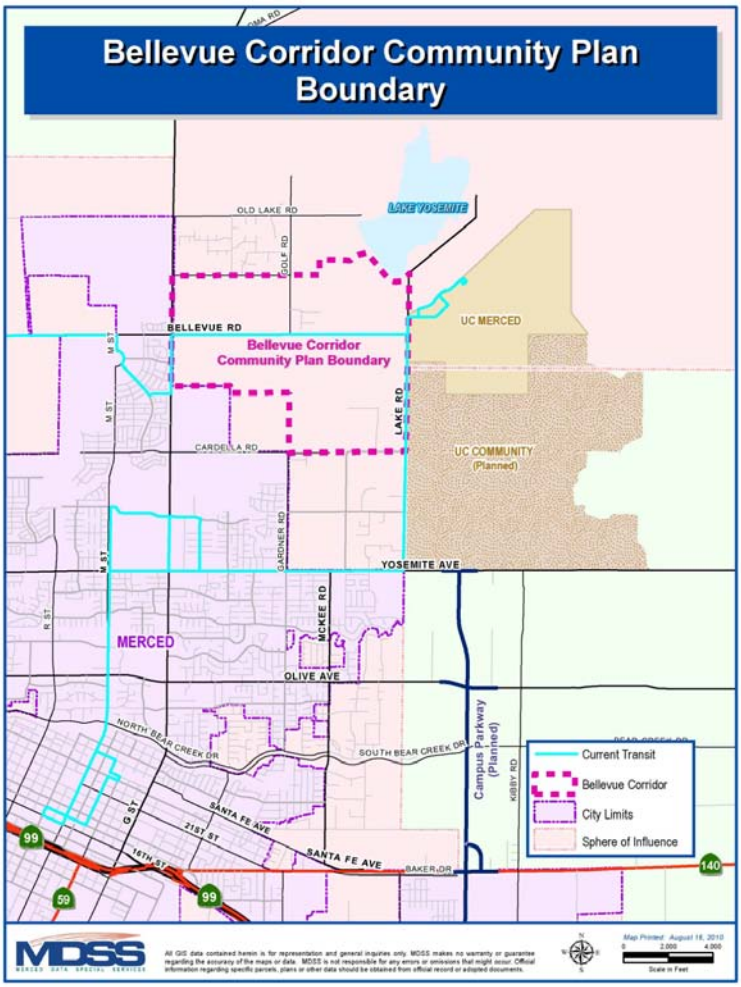


ATTACHMENT A

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION / PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Site Characteristics

The planning area is generally located between "G" Street (city limits) and Lake Road (UC Merced), and generally ½ to 1 mile on either side of Bellevue Road, and occupies an area of 2.42 square miles. With exception of a few pockets of rural residential homes, the planning area is predominately used for rangeland. The terrain is generally level, though a low-profile hilltop is situated just south of Bellevue Road in the mid-section of the planning area. The area is located in Merced County, outside of the City limits. The majority of the planning area is currently within the City's Sphere of Influence, with the remainder to be formally included in 2012, however.



B. City Planning Influences on Project

General Vision

The recently adopted *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* describes Bellevue Road as a gateway to UC Merced connecting the UC Merced Campus to Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center, other employment centers, and to Downtown Merced via the "G", "M", and "R" Street corridors. As such, the economic development strategies of these nodes should be compatible and complementary. They should also connect to one another via a network of transportation and communications systems that optimize access between and among them. Due to the unique nature of this Planning Area and the complexity of issues, landowners and agencies involved, the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan* is being proposed.

The corridor should be designed as a place where services, shops, schools, businesses, public uses, and residences mix in a vibrant setting. The plan should assess the viability of expanding office, commercial, and research and development land use capacities in the plan area. The City's Urban Village will be the backbone concept model for creating core commercial nodes along Bellevue Road connected to neighborhoods to the south and north. Some of the land uses could connect to research and development activities associated with the campus research programs or professional services associated with the campus's professional schools.

It will be essential that adequate rights of way be reserved along all major corridors. The design cross-section of these corridors may vary depending upon the adjacent land uses, but they should have two characteristics in common. They should be designed as multi-modal access corridors that accommodate automobiles and a public transit system, (rubber tire or light rail), as well as bicycles and pedestrians. Further, they should be designed to unify, rather than separate the elements of the community located on opposite sides of the road. These roads should be designed as landscaped multimodal boulevards.

Comprehensive Planning Concepts

The recently adopted *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes several guiding comprehensive planning concepts, and include:

1. Government Code Section 65450 for "Specific Plans"

   As envisioned in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, General Plan Land Use Policy L-3.6, a "Community Plan" may or may not conform with the requirements of Government Code Section 65450 for "Specific Plans." The *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan* is envisioned to be a Community Plan, and is not bound to conform with the requirements of a Specific Plan.

2. *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* – Corridor Land Use Design and Function

   Section 3.5.5 of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (pgs. 3-37-41) describes the Bellevue Corridor Community Planning area as a Commercial and Industrial Employment Corridor. While the corridor will provide for this land use, the overriding character of the corridor will be mixed-use based after the Urban Village Design concept. Specifically, as described on page 3-57 of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*:

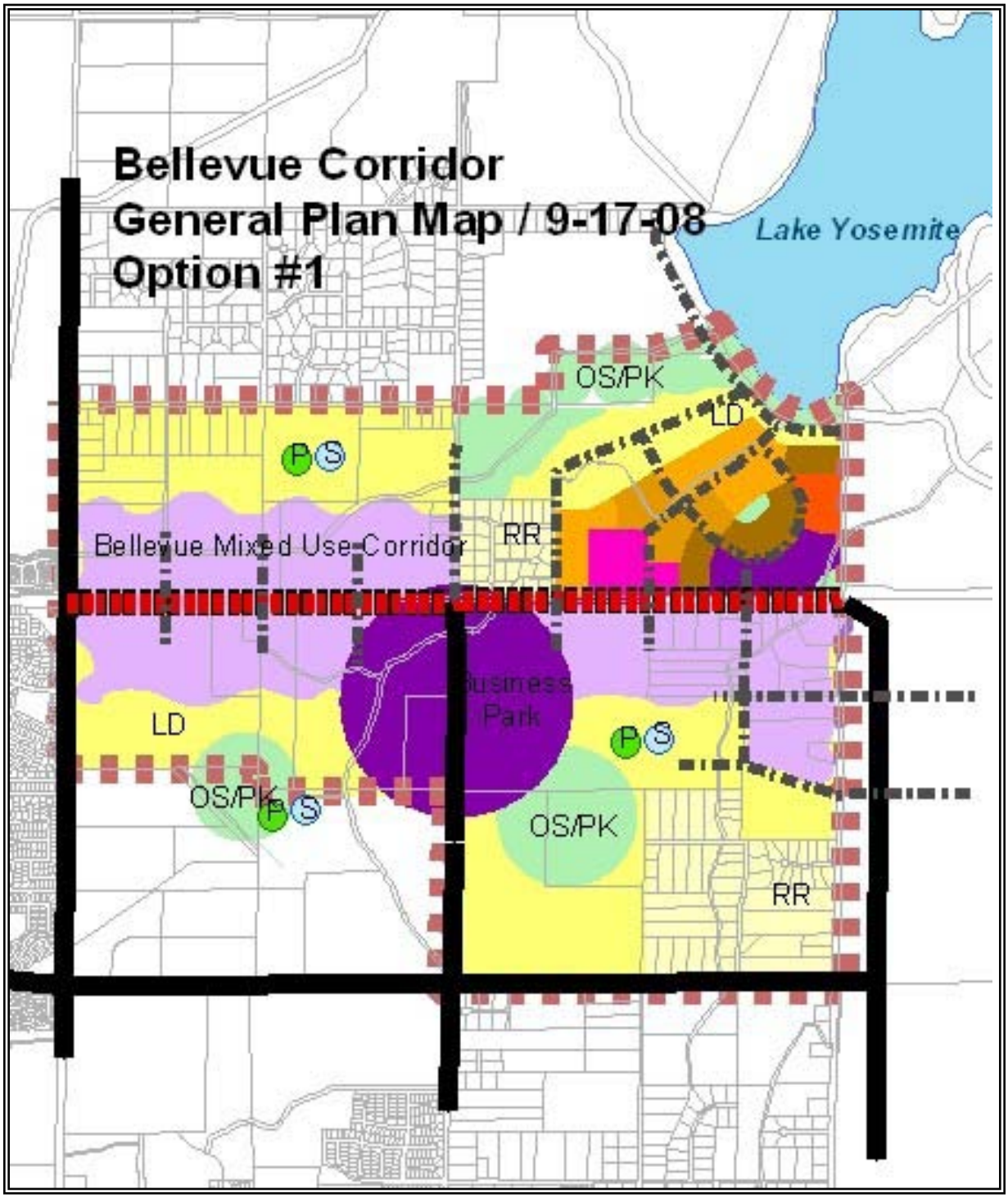
   > *"The composition and pattern of land uses in the Urban Villages near UC Merced along Bellevue Road will have unique designs and functions due to the economic opportunities and connectivity to the university. Each of the "Urban Villages" between Lake Road and "G" Street should contain in addition to "Neighborhood Commercial," "Village Residential," and "Professional Commercial-Office," the opportunity for an expanded urban core comprised of a jobs based office, business park or research and development type land use supported or spun-off from UC Merced. This additional land use potential is represented on the Land Use Diagram by the Community Plan. This, along with other components of the Bellevue Road Corridor Community Plan" is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.7."*

3. "Community Plan Guiding Principles" and "Key Features and Issues"

   Through description of "Guiding Principles, Key Features and Issues", the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* provides a general vision of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan, and serves as an outline of important elements of the Plan. See Table 3 for a full listing of these principles, features and issues.

4. Merced Vision 2030 General Plan "Illustrative Community Plan"

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes an illustrative plan (below) for the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan* area. Illustrative plans are not adopted plans and are only included in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to inform the public of preliminary land use concepts under consideration in each of the Plan areas. NOTE: The land uses shown in the upper right quadrant were part of the formally adopted land use map for the City of Merced, however.



5. The Bellevue Corridor Community Plan will be consistent with the intent of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint. Land Use Policy L-3.7, implementing action: 3.7.b of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* reads, "Continue to implement City policies and programs that conform to the Smart Growth Principles of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint"

    - 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.

C. Grant Influences on Project

Strategic Growth Council (SGC) Program Objectives and Key Deliverables of the BCCP

In December 2010, the City was awarded a grant through the State of California Strategic Growth Council, to prepare the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan* (BCCP). Lisa Wise Consulting (LWC) will be assisting the City in this endeavor. The BCCP packages the required components of the Strategic Growth Council Grant. Table 1 summarizes the relationship between SGC program objectives with key deliverables of the BCCP. LWC will prepare these key deliverables for incorporation into a broader community plan to be prepared by the City of Merced Planning Staff.

Table 1 (next page) details how the key deliverables of the BCCP contribute to attaining the twelve SGC Program Objectives. There are other elements of the BCCP, such as the open-space element and conservation element (not shown in the table), that will also seek to implement these objectives.

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TABLE 1: Relationship between Strategic Growth Council's Program Objectives with Key Deliverables of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan.

	Key Deliverables of BCCP				
	Complete Streets	*Mixed-Use Form Based Code*	*ROW/Semi-Public Templates*	*Transit Priority Projects*	*Economic Study*
Strengthen the Economy	×	×			×
Improve Air and Water Quality	×	×		×	
Promote Public Health	×		×		
Promote Equity	×	×		×	×
Increase Housing Affordability		×		×	
Promote Infill and Compact Development	×	×	×	×	×
Revitalize Urban and Community Centers	×	×	×		
Protect Natural Resources and Agricultural Lands					
Reduce Automobile Use and Fuel Consumption	×			×	
Improve Infrastructure Systems	×		×	×	
Promote Water Conservation					
Promote Energy Efficiency and Conservation	×		×	×	

Key Deliverables of the BCCP Required by Strategic Growth Council

The BCCP will be a comprehensive Community Plan, including typical planning-related elements including land-use, circulation, housing, public facilities, etc. The key deliverables refer to focused efforts within these elements that pull the SGC twelve objectives into the overall Plan. Table 2 below summarizes the key deliverables described in the Project work plan of the SGC Grant, as well as a description of those responsible for said action.

Integrated into the process of drafting the BCCP are three broad steps for each of the key deliverables, and include:

Step 1 Conducting research and preparing findings and options; and,

Step 2 Hosting community workshops to gather comments, ideas and direction from stakeholders, project committees, underrepresented groups and the general public, about the work done in Step 1; and,

Step 3 Preparing final language and images for inclusion into an administrative draft of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan (BCCP).

TABLE 2: Components of Key Deliverables

Six Key deliverables	Step 1: Research	Step 2: Workshops	Step 3: Draft Plan
Complete Streets	staff	consultant	staff
Form Based Code	consultant	consultant	consultant
Right-of-Way/Semi-Public Space Templates	consultant	consultant	consultant
Transit Priority Project	consultant	consultant	consultant
Economic Study	consultant	consultant	staff
Quantified Projected Outcomes	consultant	consultant	consultant

D. Relationship of SGC Deliverables to Project-related Goals of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

The alignment of SGC contract deliverables with *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* "Community Plan Guiding Principles" and "Bellevue Corridor Community Plan Key Features and Issues" is charted in Table 3 (next page). This Table will be used by City Staff and LWC to ensure that these *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* comprehensive planning concepts are incorporated into the deliverables of the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan*.

TABLE 3: Relationship of Merced Vision 2030 Planning Concepts with SGC Key Deliverables		
Community Plan Guiding Principles	***Bellevue Corridor Community Plan Key Features and Issues***	***SGC Key Deliverables***
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.	(Land Use) Interface issues and infill land use patterns adjacent to and within preexisting "Rural Residential" properties;	Form Based Code
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*.	(Transportation Circulation) Establish "Bellevue Parkway Planning Principles" describing the design (including appropriate right-of-way, function, and land use pattern along Bellevue Road (to be renamed "Bellevue Parkway") recognizing two key traits: (1) multi-modal access corridor that accommodates both automobiles and public transit systems, as well as bikes and pedestrians; and, (2) designed to unify rather than separate the communities located on opposite sides of the road; --- (Character and Design) Establish through the Community Plan process design guidelines for development along the Bellevue Corridor in accordance with the City's Urban Design principles outlined in Chapter 6 of the General Plan; --- (Character and Design) The natural hill, which occurs on the south side of Bellevue Road between G Street and Gardner Road, should be considered as a focal point for the Corridor; --- (Land Use) The influence and effects of the UC Merced and University Community land use and circulation plans on adjacent (western) properties; --- (Transportation Circulation) Establish a system of collector streets and arterials with appropriate rights-of-way to encourage internal circulation within the Community Plan area. This would include determining the proper alignment and right-of-way for Gardner Road.	Complete Streets Form Based Code ROW/Ped-zone Templates Transit Priority Project Economic Study
Public participation by area residents and property owners in the planning process will be emphasized.		Public Outreach Elements

Relationship of Merced Vision 2030 Planning Concepts with SGC Key Deliverables		
Community Plan Guiding Principles	***Bellevue Corridor Community Plan Key Features and Issues***	***SGC Key Deliverables***
Community Plans will include all elements determined necessary to ensure consistency with the General Plan. These elements may include, but not be limited to, Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, and infrastructure phasing. Community Plans will include a land use and infrastructure phasing plan.	--- (Economics/Market) Economy-based/market study in terms of long-term sustainability and demand to determine size and location of Research and Development Office Parks, medical/professional offices, retail commercial uses, and housing within the proposed SUDP/SOI area, with detailed assessment of a Lake Road site and/or Gardner Road site for research and development uses within the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan*. --- (Land Use) Land Uses should be compatible and complimentary with one another and planned as integrated, coordinated mixed-use neighborhoods and communities. --- (Land Use) A variety of housing types and densities should be encouraged within the Community Plan area in addition to job generating uses consistent with the City's overall economic strategy and the Bellevue Corridor market study. --- (Public Facilities) Location and financing of public facilities, including a fire station, schools, roadways, off-street bike and pedestrian paths, and parks/open space. --- (Environment) Lake Yosemite Inundation Area; --- (Environment) Sensitive species and habitat conservation.	Complete Streets Form Based Code Transit Priority Project Economic Study
The "Urban Villages" concept should be incorporated into the planning of these areas as much as feasible.	(Land Use) Special "Urban Village" designs suited to the "Bellevue Corridor Planning Principles" and potential expansion thereof to provide for increased opportunities for job-based land uses attracted by a university climate while still maintaining the basic concept of mixed-use, pedestrian, and transit oriented communities. These "Urban Villages" may differ from others in the Community in the mixture of business park, research and development, office, public/cultural uses, and retail uses within the Village Core areas instead of the retail/office/public facilities focus of other Villages which are more residential in nature.	Complete Streets Form Based Code ROW/Ped-zone Templates Transit Priority Project Economic Study
Community Plan areas need connectivity with existing and planned urban areas.		Complete Streets

Strategic Growth Council Program Objectives

1. Strengthen the Economy
Work will include investigation of the area's potential to attract research-based companies and large corporations that provide a significant employment with competitive salaries and benefit packages, as well as the appropriate amounts and mixes of commercial and residential uses. Special attention will be given to secure a diverse set of businesses that cater to the University population, including entertainment options, retail stores, and student-oriented services.

2. Improve Air and Water Quality
Mixed-use zoning, with strategic blend of housing and business opportunities, will allow the City to reduce the need for long commutes. If planned well, the Bellevue Corridor will become a thoroughly walkable community, offering housing, services, recreation, and shopping options within walking distance of each other. "Complete Streets" design concepts will accommodate and, just as importantly, attract pedestrians and bicyclists. Public transportation options and off-street bike paths will contribute to the area's layout.

3. Promote Public Health
This Complete Streets approach to transportation will result in cleaner air, reducing the incidence of asthma for residents of the Bellevue Corridor. The BCCP would map out the area's first public park space and recreational facilities, encouraging physical activity. The Complete Streets design will encourage travel by walking and cycling.

4. Promote Equity

The BCCP will guide the economic growth adjacent to the university, striving for job creation suited for a variety of skill sets. Housing options will be diverse to fit budgets from all income levels, and public transportation will be designed for convenience and efficiency. The creation of public green space will be particularly valuable to this underserved population.

5. Increase Housing Affordability
The mixed-use Urban Village design intended for the Bellevue Corridor will be highly conducive to creating housing options for people with limited income. With the university population growing tenfold in the next 20 years, current housing density will need drastic revisions. The project will allow the City to increase the Corridor's housing supply and diversify housing types, tenure, and affordability. The end result will be affordable, high quality, socially integrated, and location-efficient housing.

6. Promote Infill and Compact Development
The project will convert the City's urban design guidelines to zoning code for the Mixed-use portion of the Community Plan. Mixed-use zoning will blend residential, commercial and research park areas, creating an Urban Village layout. High density housing will mix with parks, offices, shops, services, and transit options to create a well-balanced, walkable community.

7. Revitalize Urban and Community Centers
The area's current zoning is agricultural-residential, with no focal point or public facilities. When implemented, the BCCP will lay out a compact community.

8. Protect Natural Resources and Agricultural Land
The project will be consistent with the California Wildlife Action Plan in that the policies included in the plan will aim to preserve, protect, and/or mitigate the loss of resources, promote the long-term vitality of natural resources within the larger regional context. The City will aim to integrate natural resources into development, promoting the use of drought-tolerant native vegetation for landscaping purposes and connecting open spaces to allow the presence of wildlife within the Bellevue Corridor.

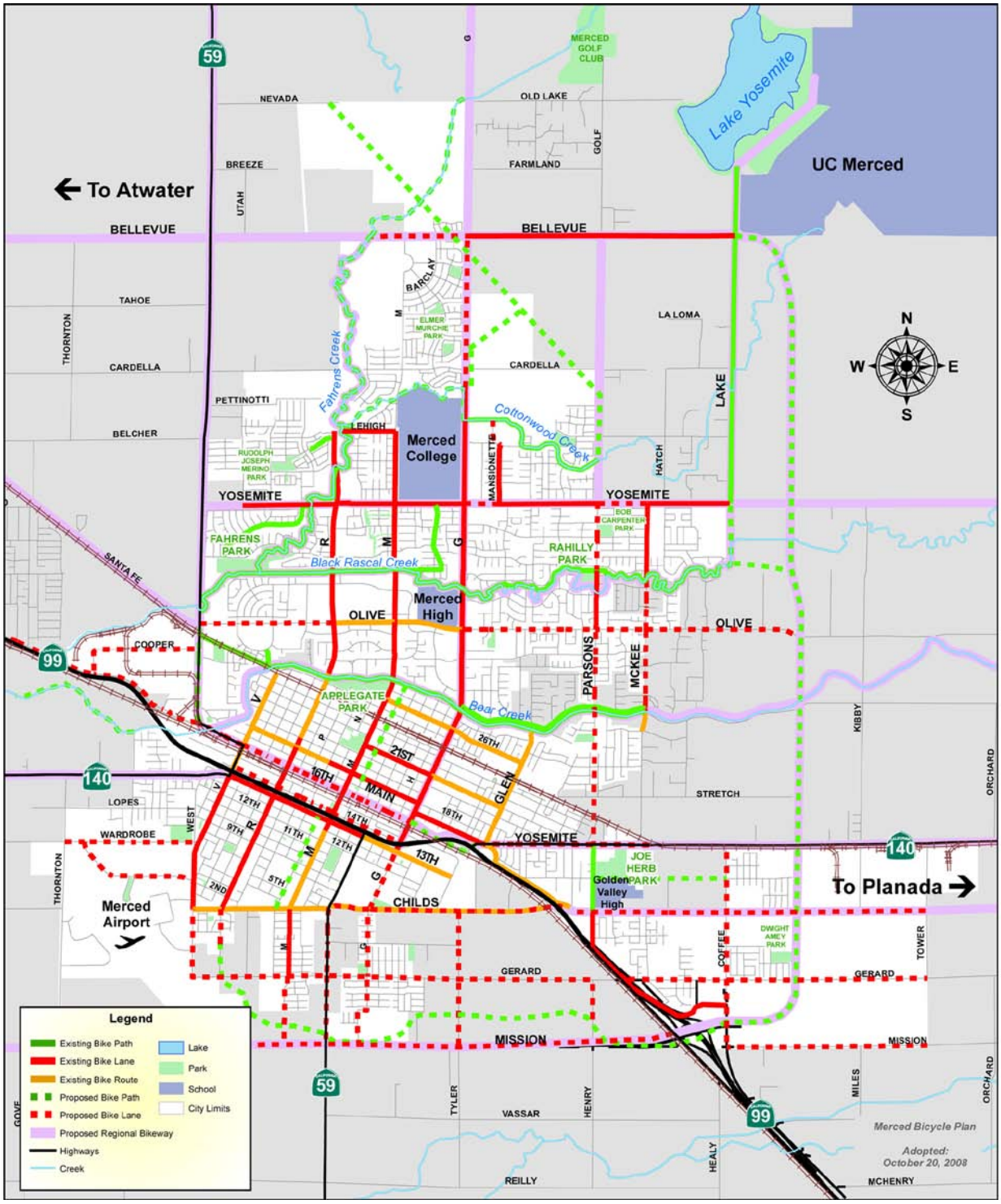
The BCCP will communicate the vision for the Bellevue Corridor as a compact, transit-oriented "Urban Village." Compact design will confine the burgeoning population to a small, but vibrant mixed-use area west of the UC, filling in a gap between the City and UC Merced rather than sprawling into the more pristine wildlife habitats and agricultural lands east of campus.

9. Reduce Automobile Use and Fuel Consumption
The project will create a strategy for transit-oriented development. Complete Streets will encourage cycling and walking as feasible and attractive modes of transportation. Bike facilities will link to the City's award-winning network of paved recreational trails, which lace through most parts of Merced and will eventually merge with a large regional system.

10. Improve Infrastructure Systems
The BCCP's infrastructure guidelines will expand and improve upon the area's current infrastructure. The Plan will lay out goals and policies for accessible, efficient transportation systems; a solid waste program characterized by source reduction and modern recycling components; sustainable energy infrastructure; and integrated water-related infrastructure that addresses potable water, wastewater, and storm water concerns.

11. Promote Water Conservation
The BCCP will discuss multi-objective storm water projects, including construction of permeable surfaces and collection basins and barriers. Consumption of potable water will be minimized through the innovative use of recycled wastewater and storm water.

12. Promote Energy Efficiency and Conservation
A conservation-oriented energy supply will be encouraged through building-related conservation techniques. The Plan will promote renewable energy sources such as solar panels and geothermal designs.



BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

ATTACHMENT B

Figure 4.9