Chapter 5--Public Services and Facilities

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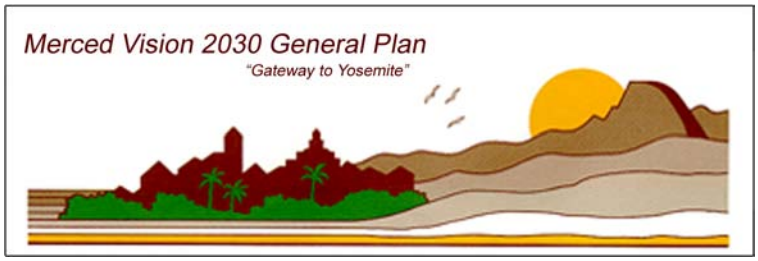


Chapter 5
Public Services and Facilities

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Public places provide a shared sense of belonging for all of Merced's citizens. They foster a humane and caring community and promote pride and mutual respect. Children in Merced develop much of their sense of community and well-being from their schools, neighborhood parks, the County Courthouse, the Civic Center, and other public places. These do more than provide public services; they are symbols of Merced and a necessary part of the collective self-esteem of the community.

The Land Use Element of the General Plan is required to address the general location and distribution of "recreation facilities, educational facilities, and public buildings and grounds" [Government Code Section 65302(a)], but a separate "public facilities element" is not required under State law. The City of Merced has chosen to prepare a "Public Facilities Element" because of the challenge of providing public services and facilities to a growing community.

The goals and policies contained in this chapter address the provision of public services and facilities necessary to meet the demands of Merced's residents now and in the future. The General Plan postulates what facilities may be needed or desired in the future. This includes looking for the most cost-effective and efficient ways of providing services as well as searching for alternative means of financing capital improvements.

This chapter does not prioritize or offer a method of prioritizing specific projects. Where more detailed information is needed for specific projects or types of services, the policies contained in this chapter should be used as guidelines for requiring the preparation of various master plans or studies to clearly define the need, priority, or method of providing services and facilities. In addition, use of the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) can establish the means of correlating public projects with the needs of the community and available funding sources.

A wide variety of public services and facilities are addressed in this chapter, including services provided by other public agencies or the private sector that affect Merced's citizens and thus require coordination with the City. These services include:

- Fire and Police Protection
- Water & Wastewater
- Storm Drainage/Flood Control
- Solid Waste Disposal
- Schools
- Library and Cultural Services
- Health and Justice Services
- Public Utilities and Telecommunications

Transportation and transit services are addressed in the Transportation and Circulation Element (Chapter 4), and recreational facilities are addressed in the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Element (Chapter 7).

5.2 SETTING

5.2.1 Fire Protection

History of the Merced Fire Department

The concern for fire protection in the City of Merced can be traced back to 1873 when the first fire department, "Eureka Engine Company No. 1," was formed. A used fire engine was obtained in 1874 and christened "Old Betsy." The first engine house wasn't built until 1885 on 18th and Canal Streets. In 1889, the second floor of this engine house was converted into the city hall and council chambers for the newly-incorporated City of Merced. In 1891, the original engine company was replaced by "El Capitan Hose Company No. 1," a volunteer group which served until 1952 when it opted to disband.

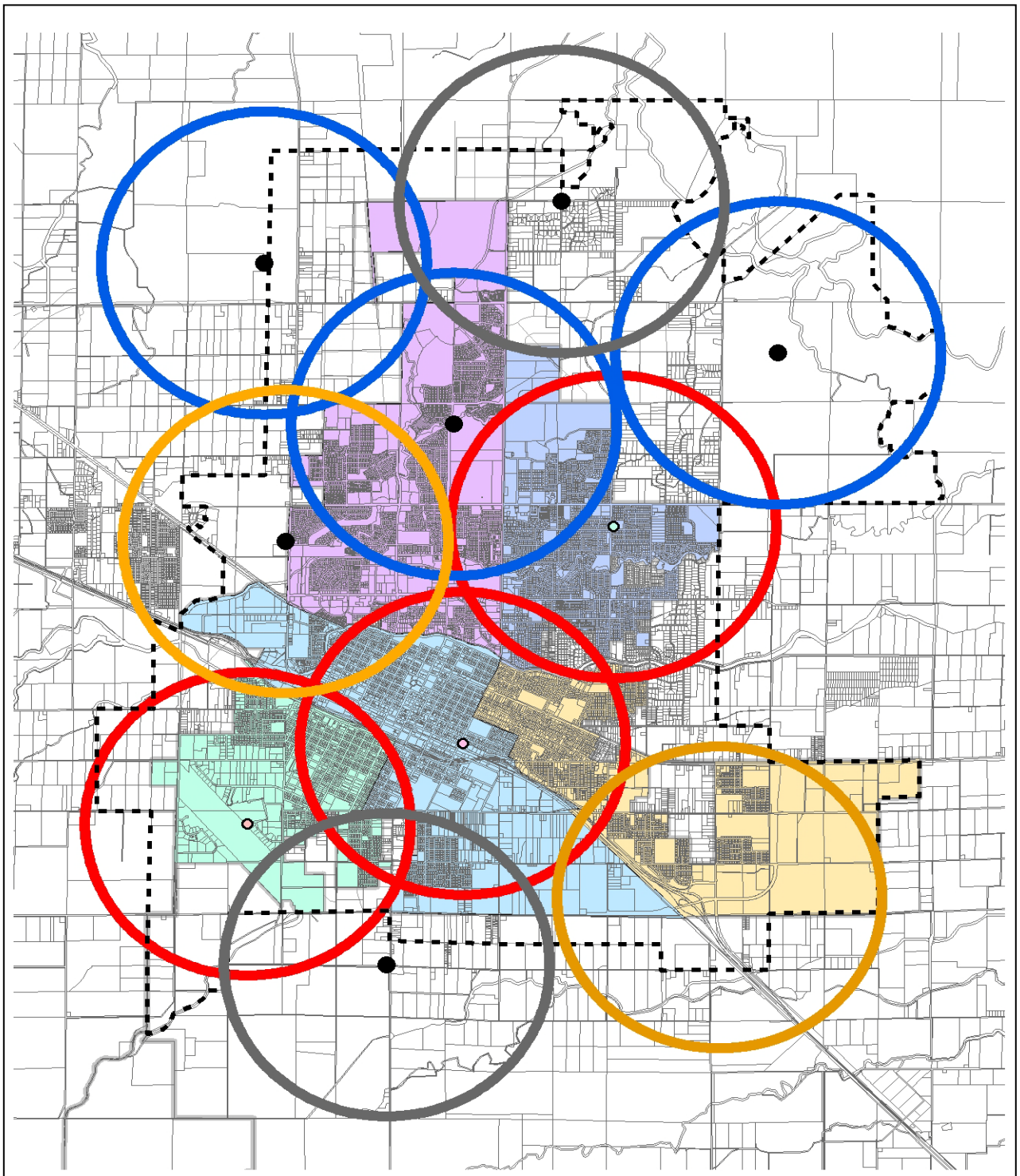
Merced Fire Department

The City of Merced Fire Department provides fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services from five fire stations strategically located throughout the City. The Department's Headquarters (Station 51) is located near the intersection of East 16th and G Streets. Station 52 is located at Merced Regional Airport on Falcon Way; Station 53 is on Loughborough Drive adjacent to the Merced Mall; Station 54 is on East 21st Street; and Station 55 is at the intersection of Parsons and Silverado within Carpenter Park.

The Fire Department call volume continues to increase on an annual basis. Some of the increase is a result of a larger population base, others significant factors that affect the call volume are socioeconomic factors and access to services. In 2010, the Department responded to 6325 incidents: 6% of which were to fires and 57% were emergency medical or rescue incidents. The remaining 37% of incidents were comprised of good intent calls, false alarms, service calls, and other special types of incidents.

Fire Department personnel are typically assigned to a three-shift work schedule, which provides the City coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Department equipment includes engine companies (water, hose, and pump), and ladder companies (ladders, rescue tools, and rescue equipment), aircraft rescue firefighting (ARFF) vehicle, medium rescue trailer, mass decontamination trailer, personnel rehabilitation unit, and other support vehicles.

The Department is regularly evaluated and rated by the Insurance Services ~~Office~~ Organization (ISO). The ISO utilizes the Fire Protection Rating System (FPRS) to assess the Department and to provide a final score. The score defines the level of fire protection services on a scale of 1 to 10; with 1 representing the best level of protection and 10 indicating no protection at all. The Department's current rating is Class 2, which is considered to be well above average. The Class 2 rating is used to determine the fire insurance premiums for businesses and residences within the City.



EXISTING & PROPOSED
FIRE STATION LOCATIONS

Figure
5.1

Fire stations are strategically located, fixed facilities that are developed to house personnel and equipment to provide the identified level of service to a specific geographic area or district. The Fire Department Facilities Master Plan is developed using the approach previously outlined and is used in the planning of stations to provide protection within a primary service area. The Department has a goal of maintaining a response time of four to six minutes for the first crew to arrive at a fire or medical emergency within an assigned district. This goal was chosen on the basis of proven factors affecting property damage and, more importantly, life.

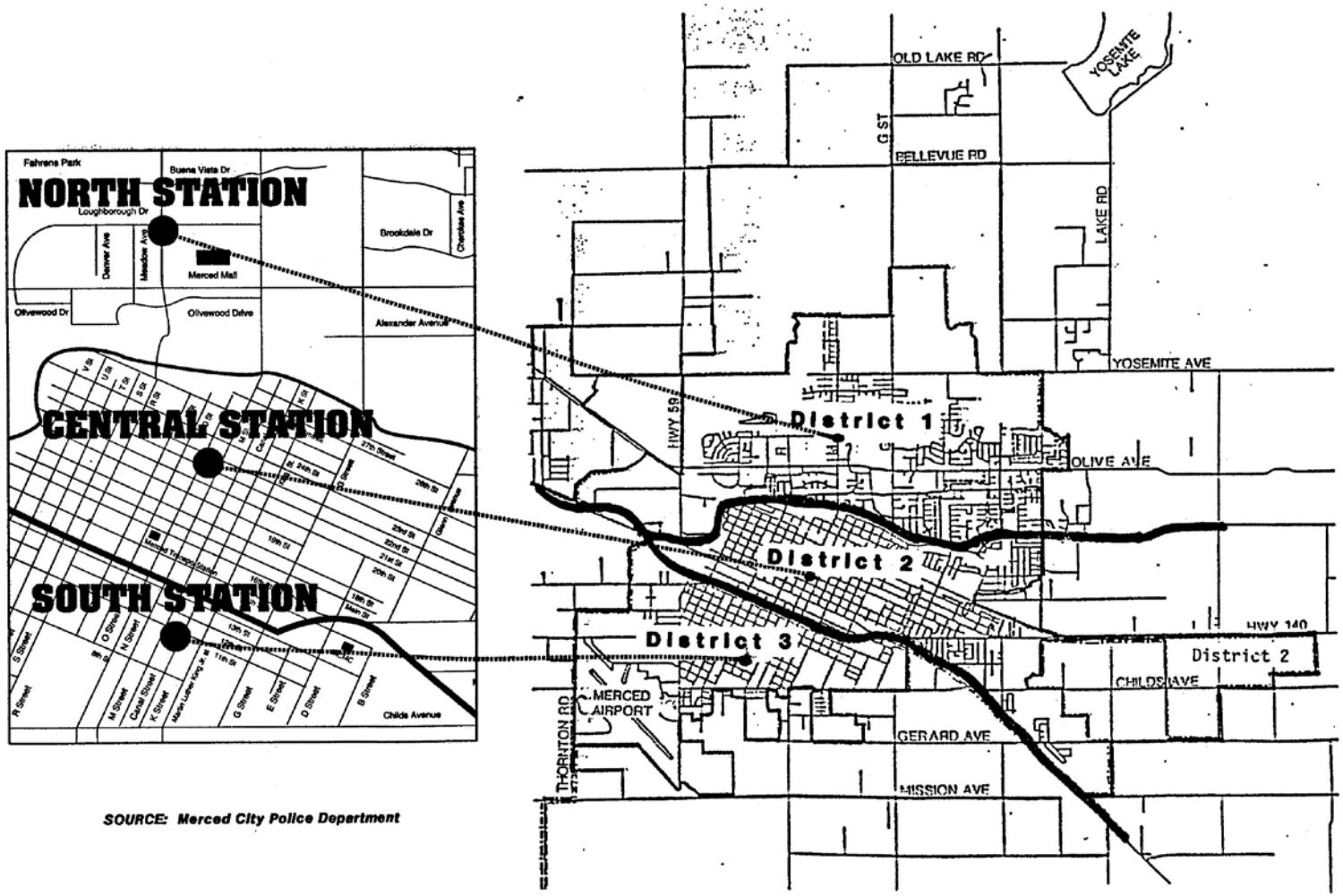
As the City continues to grow in population and area, the fire protection system will need to evolve to meet this response time standard. This would require the potential relocation of existing facilities and the development of new stations with personnel and equipment to be added to the system. ***Figure 5.1*** shows tentative fire station locations within the Area of Interest.

5.2.2 Police Protection

Police protection for the entire City is provided by the City of Merced Police Department. The Police Department employs a mixture of sworn officers, non-sworn officer positions (clerical, etc.), and unpaid volunteers (VIP's). The service standard used for planning future police facilities is approximately 1.32 sworn officers per 1,000 population.

Merced is divided into three police districts ***(Figure 5.2)***, each with its own police facility and officers. District One serves the area north of Bear Creek from the North Station on Loughborough Drive. District Two serves the area between Highway 99 to the south and Bear Creek to the north from the Central Station at M and 22nd Streets. District Three serves the area south of Highway 99 from the South Station on W. 11th Street within McNamara Park.

The primary reason for the three districts is to place police officers closer to the neighborhoods and citizens they serve. The Police Department feels that this "community policing" concept will be successful in combating a growing incidence of crime as the City grows. Citizen councils have been established in each district to meet with area commanders and develop



SOURCE: Merced City Police Department

POLICE STATION LOCATIONS

Figure 5.2

strategies for combating crime in their neighborhoods. Neighborhood Watch programs are located throughout the City and have been highly successful.

Criminal activity and calls for police service will increase due to population growth alone. By 2030, officer responses to incidents could increase from nearly 65,000 in 2009 to over 130,000 annually if current population trends hold true. To cope with this anticipated workload, additional officers, equipment, and facilities will need to be added. Police districts may be revised or added. The Central Station will be relocated in the future to a site in North Merced near Mansionette Drive and Yosemite Avenue.

5.2.3 Water

Under the water rights of the Merced Irrigation District (MID), the City of Merced received its water from the Merced River via Lake Yosemite until 1917. Since then, the City has relied on groundwater as its primary water source, but groundwater is recharged almost entirely through agricultural application of surface water from the Merced River.

In 2010, the City's water supply system consisted of four elevated storage tanks with a combined storage capacity of approximately 1.6 million gallons, and 21 wells and 14 pumping stations equipped with variable speed pumps that attempt to maintain 45 to 50 psi (pounds per square inch) nominal water pressure. The City is required to meet State Department of Health Services pressure requirements, which call for a minimum of 20 psi at every service connection (in 2010) under the annual peak hour condition and maintenance of the annual average day demand plus fire flow, whichever is stricter. All of Merced's wells are now equipped with emergency standby diesel generators.

Through the Capital Improvement Program, the City plans to increase water wells to match the requirements of development, generally one well per square mile. The City continues to monitor any ground water contamination and the cleanup of contamination upon detection. Water treatment includes fluoridation and chlorination at each well site.

<u>Merced Water Supply Plan</u>

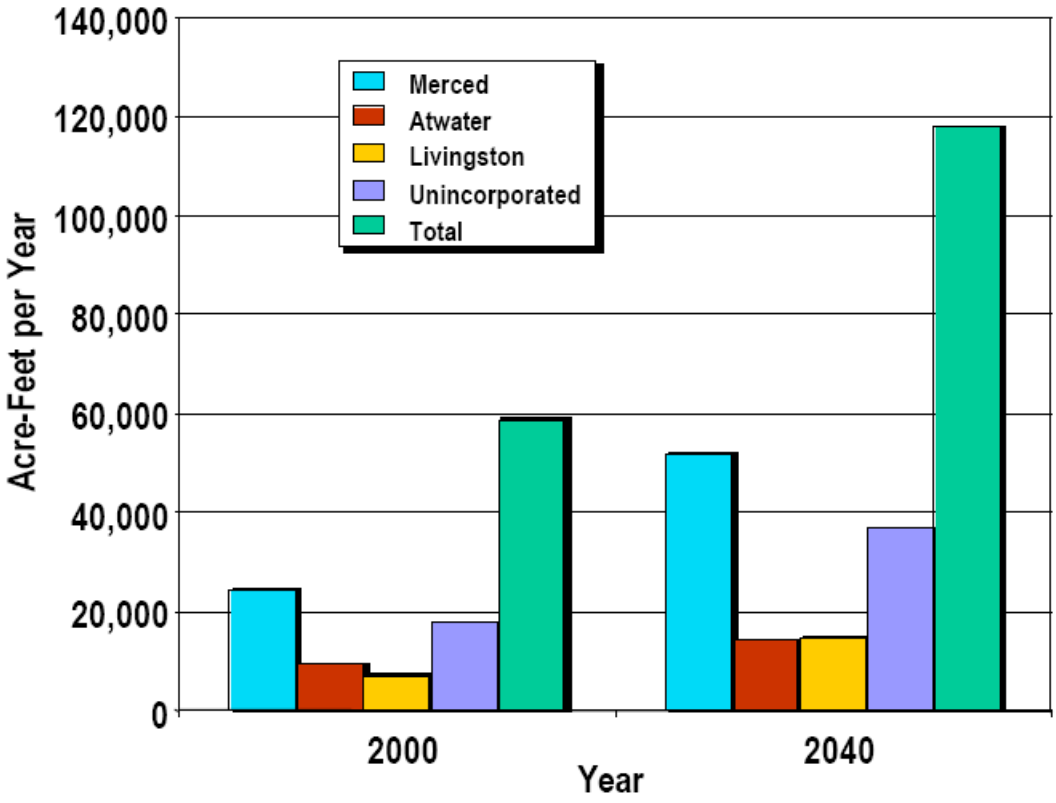
Increasing urban demand and population growth, along with an increasing shift by farmers from surface water to groundwater and prolonged drought, have resulted in

declining groundwater levels due to overdraft. Recognizing this point, the City of Merced and the Merced Irrigation District (MID) in 1993 began a two-year planning process to assure a safe, reliable water supply for eastern Merced County through 2030. The result of this planning process was the *Merced Water Supply Plan*, adopted in 1995 and updated in 2001.

The Merced Water Supply Plan evaluated future water needs, which showed increasing urban water needs due to population growth. It was projected that the City of Merced's needs could increase from 15,000 acre feet (a/f) in 1995 to 60,000 acre feet by 2040.

The plan determined that if these patterns continued and no action was taken, groundwater levels would continue to decline, resulting in increasing costs and poorer water quality. Several options for meeting the region's future water needs were studied in the plan, including the possible use of surface water to meet urban water demands. ***Figure 5.3*** shows the anticipated increase in water demand.

Figure 5.3
Merced County Water Demand Projections



After extensive public involvement in all phases of the plan, the "groundwater recharge" alternative was selected because the Project Advisory Committee felt it was the most cost effective and environmentally sound approach. Under this Preferred Alternative, the cities will remain on groundwater (constructing new wells as needed); groundwater recharge facilities will be constructed on an annual basis with the goal of stabilizing groundwater at 1992 levels, and MID will increase the delivery of surface water to agricultural users along with installing new wells to protect against droughts.

In 1997, several agencies in the groundwater basin adopted resolutions of intent to adopt a Groundwater Management Plan pursuant to Water Code Section 10753. In addition, these agencies formed the Merced Area Groundwater Pool Interests (MAGPI) for the purpose of developing a basin-wide groundwater management plan to guide the management of groundwater resources in the Merced Groundwater Basin (MGWB).

The 1997 Groundwater Management Plan was the result of the planning efforts of the City of Merced and MID on behalf of MAGPI. In June 2001, the Department of Water Resources entered into a memorandum of understanding to work cooperatively to promote conjunctive use of surface and groundwater projects within the MGWB.

In 2005, the City adopted an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), as required by State law. The UWMP further describes the availability of water, and discusses water use, reclamation, and recycling activities. In addition to assessing the projected needs, the UWMP identifies a number of conservation practices which, when implemented, will relieve the pressure on groundwater supplies. The UWMP will need to be updated on a regular basis as defined in State law.

Issues that will need further study include the location and construction timing of groundwater recharge facilities, which agency or agencies will operate and maintain these facilities, and what costs should be shared.

5.2.4 Wastewater Collection & Disposal

Wastewater (sanitary sewer) collection and treatment in the Merced urban area is provided by the City of Merced. The wastewater collection system handles wastewater generated by residential, commercial, and industrial uses in the City.

In the 1980's, the *Wastewater Master Plan for North Merced* was established in order to provide a collection system for future

northern growth. The Master Plan has been revised, in 2002 and in 2007. These revisions examined alternative methods of providing connections to the northeast area of the SUDP/SOI in order to service the U.C Merced campus and University Community. This revised plan also incorporated options which would afford service to new development in all of the other portions of the SUDP/SOI, as development in these areas are approved. The 2007 Draft Plan will need to be completed once the SUDP/SOI boundary is approved.

The City Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), located in the southwest part of the City about two miles south of the Airport, has been periodically expanded and upgraded to meet the needs of the City's growing population and new industry. The City's wastewater treatment facility has a permitted capacity of 10 million gallons per day (mgd), with an average 2008 flow of 8.5 mgd.

The City has initiated an expansion project to increase capacity to 12 mgd and upgrade to tertiary treatment with the addition of filtration and ultra-violet disinfection. Future improvements would add another 8 mgd in capacity (in increments of 4 mgd), for a total of 20 mgd. This design capacity can support a population of approximately 150,000. The collection system will also need to be expanded as development occurs.

Treated effluent is disposed of in several ways depending on the time of year. Most of the treated effluent (75% average) is discharged to Hartley Slough throughout the year. The remaining treated effluent is delivered to a land application area and the on-site City-owned wetland area south of the WWTP.

The City negotiated throughout 2008 with MID for exchange of surface water for effluent from the Grove Road WWTP. Effluent will be used in the wildlife refuges south of the City. The exchange benefits the City by having surface water at higher elevations for park irrigation. (The City elevation average is about 170 feet whereas the WWTP is at an elevation of 150 feet.) The exchange would also benefit the groundwater basin by allowing agricultural irrigation from "exchange" surface water north of the City, and upgrading the City's groundwater use. Because of water-rights considerations, MID could not otherwise serve these areas outside District boundaries.

5.2.5 Storm Water Drainage and Flood Control

The City has prepared a *Storm Drain Master Plan* (2002), which identifies the infrastructure improvements necessary to accommodate storm water runoff at build-out of the *Merced Vision 2015 General Plan* SUDP. The Plan addresses the collection and disposal of storm water and lays out a system of storm drain pipes and basins to serve the 1997 SUDP/SOI. The City will need to revise this document in order to address the proposed SUDP/SOI boundary.

The City requires the construction of storm water percolation/detention basins with new development. Percolation basins are designed to collect storm water and filter it before it is absorbed into the soil and reaches groundwater tables. Detention basins are designed to temporarily collect runoff so it can be metered at acceptable rates into canals and streams which have limited capacity. The disposal system is mainly composed of Merced Irrigation District (MID) facilities, including water distribution canals and laterals, drains, and natural channels that traverse the area.

The City of Merced has been involved with developing a Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) to fulfill requirements of storm water discharges in accordance with the Federal Clean Water Act. The Merced Storm Water Group (MSWG) is a coalition of municipalities, including the Cities of Atwater, Merced, and Livingston, Merced County, and MID. The MSWG will implement the SWMP to limit the discharge of pollutants from storm water systems, using specific control measures and Best Management Practices (BMP).

Mitigation of potential flood impacts is addressed by the City's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. The ordinance restricts development of flood-prone areas, and mandates special construction requirements for those developments allowed within the floodplain. Currently, floodplain requirements are based on a 100-year event. The State of California has enacted legislation requiring communities to prepare flood damage control ordinances based on a 200-year event, which may require the City to update this ordinance for certain areas of the City.

5.2.6 Solid Waste

Solid wastes within the County of Merced are disposed of at two landfill sites owned and operated by the Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority. The west side of the County is served by the Billy Wright Road landfill, and the east side (including the City of Merced) by the Highway 59 landfill, just 1 and 1/2 miles north of Old Lake Road.

The County of Merced is the contracting agency for landfill operation and maintenance. It is estimated that the remaining capacity of the Highway 59 site will last until the year 2030.

The City of Merced provides services for all refuse pick-up within the City limits, including green waste and recycling. Street sweeping services are also offered.

5.2.7 Schools

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Public schools play an important role in the community. Schools educate the City's children, offer open space and playing fields, and give a sense of identity to the City's neighborhoods. High quality education produces future leaders and skilled workers and contributes to the City's cultural and social well being.

Public schools are operated by school districts, which are autonomous governmental agencies separate from the City. They have their own elected officials and source of funding. There has been a long tradition of support and cooperation between the school districts and the community because public schools are so important to Merced. The City coordinates with the school districts on the locations of future school sites, the collection of developer impact fees, and joint activities and facilities (i.e. school parks).

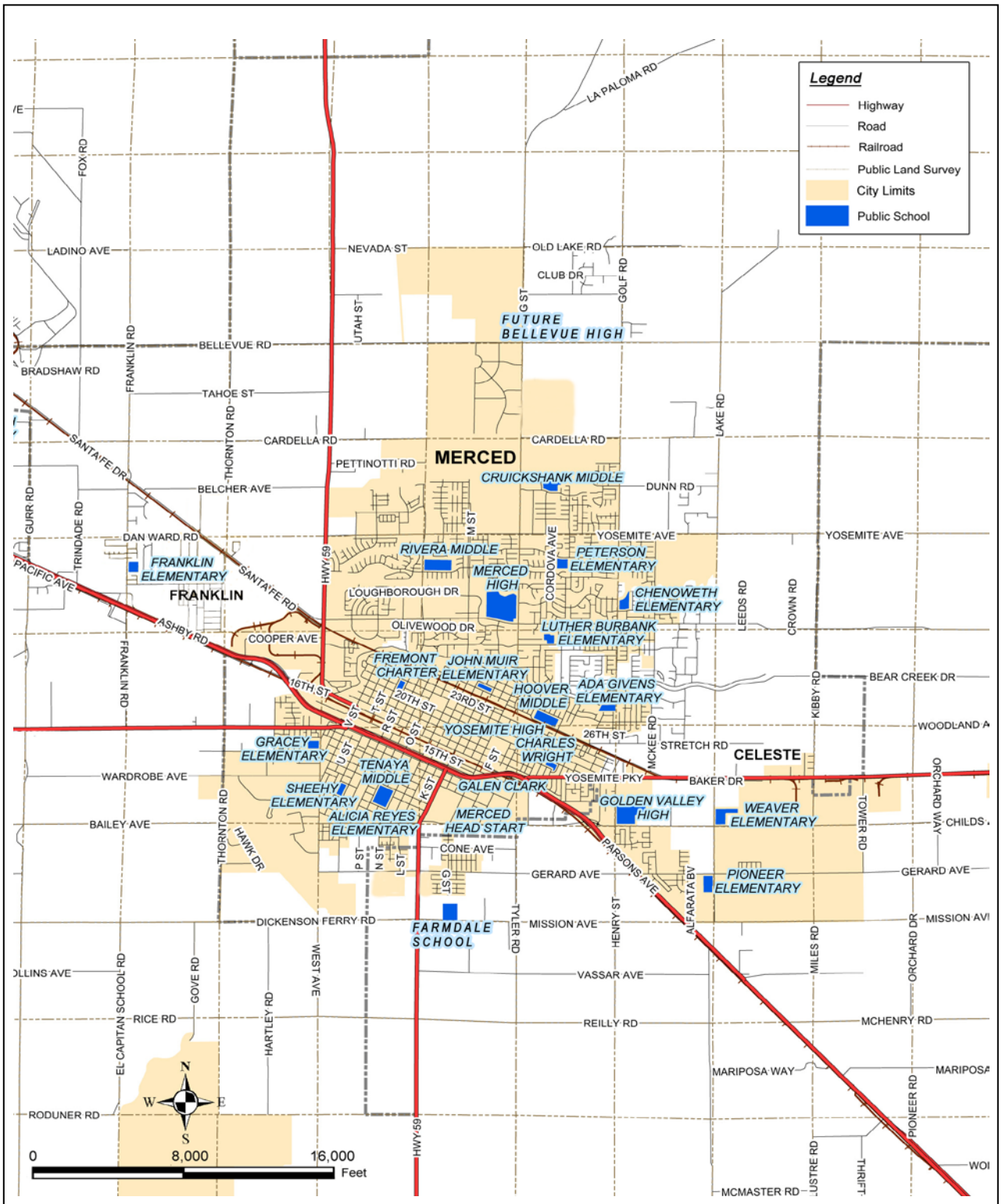
The public school system in the Merced SUDP/SOI is served by four districts:

1) Merced City School District (elementary and middle schools);
2) Merced Union High School District (MUHSD);
3) Weaver Union School District (serving a small area in the southeastern part of the City with elementary schools); and,
4) McSwain Union Elementary School District (serving a small area in the southwestern portion of the Area of Interest).

The districts include various elementary schools, middle (junior high) schools, and high schools ***(Figure 5.4).***

As the City grows, new schools will need to be built to serve our growing population. From time to time, the school districts prepare development fee justification studies which show student generation rates for various types of development. The latest studies for each District are on file with the City.

On the General Plan Land Use Diagram, new school sites are indicated with green dots, which reflect a general location only based on projected need. In other words, a school should be located in the general area shown but not necessarily in the precise location of the dot. This is done in order to allow the school districts flexibility in locating specific school sites and negotiating with property owners.



MERCED SCHOOLS

Figure 5.4

Financing New Schools Required for Growth

The City recognizes that education and public schools are an important and integral part of a well-balanced community—providing not only educational opportunities for our youth, but also vital recreation and open space for our community.

In addition to providing educational opportunity for our residents, quality public schools also serve as a foundation of long-term economic development and for a healthy local economy. The City also recognizes that public school districts are organized, funded, and established as distinct and separate legal entities having separately elected governing boards and missions while sharing many of the same constituents as the City. It is the primary responsibility of these school districts and their governing boards to provide for the budgetary priorities to address their needs.

State legislation has severely constrained and limited the ability of the City to require development interests to do more than the statutory minimums to mitigate development's impacts on the public schools systems. However, the City, in recognizing the importance of public education to the well balanced community we desire, will look to those seeking entitlements from the City to be good trustees of the future and to go beyond the statutory minimums to address the impacts of their development on schools by entering into voluntary agreements with the relevant school districts.

While the City may not be able to deny a project because of its impact on schools, development interests can and should anticipate being asked what they have done to address those impacts. To this end, the City will seek to facilitate discussions between development interests and the relevant public school districts regarding these voluntary agreements to address the needs of the school districts.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Merced College

Merced College, one of the California Community Colleges, provides Merced County residents with the opportunities for educational development, cultural enrichment, and personal growth. The College's strong program of academic courses, combined with a wide variety of vocational programs, allows the College to serve the needs of a diverse student population. Two-year Associate in Arts or Sciences degrees as well as Certificates of

Completion in selected vocational areas are available, along with other programs designed to transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

The main campus covers over 270 acres and is located north of Yosemite Avenue between M and G Streets. A satellite campus is located in Los Banos to serve the west side of the county. Main campus facilities include classrooms and laboratories, a theater, art gallery, gymnasium, swimming pool, football stadium, tennis courts, library, and agricultural area.

One of the major commitments of Merced College is to provide vocational training to prepare the student for positions within the business and industrial sectors of the community. Examples of these training programs include business and computer science, allied health professions, and industrial technology. In addition, the College provides special training programs for specific local industries such as insurance, welding, truck driving, tool and die, administration of justice, and automotive technology.

Merced College also offers a wide choice of educational and cultural programs, including fine arts presentations, a conservatory theater, escorted trips and tours, the summer College for Kids program, enrichment classes, and continuing education.

University of California Merced

The 1995 decision of the Regents of the University of California to locate its tenth campus at Lake Yosemite has greatly expanded higher educational opportunities for students throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The first phase of the campus opened in Fall 2005 with 875 students. Development of the campus has advanced significantly, with approximately 5,200 students attending the Fall 2011 session. At completion, which is expected to take 30 years, the campus will house 25,000 full-time students and offer a wide variety of majors, minors, and graduate programs.

In 2010, UC Merced had three schools—Engineering, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences, Humanities, & Arts—and is

planning two more—Management and Medicine. Special Research Institutes have also been established on Campus, focusing on biomedicine, energy, and the Sierra Nevada.

5.2.8 Library Services & Cultural Facilities

Libraries

The Merced County Library system was established in 1910, and at its peak provided library services at the Main Library in Merced and 18 branch locations throughout the County. Currently, the library has 15 branches, in addition to the main library. The Main Library is located next to the historic Merced County Courthouse at 21st and O Streets. Merced College's Lesher Library also provides limited library services to the public within the City of Merced. All branches of the library offer Internet access.

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.

Cultural Facilities

Merced hosts a number of arts facilities and programs which enrich the lives of its citizens. Most of these activities are supported by private funds.

In 1995, construction began on the City's Multi-Cultural Arts Center adjacent to the Merced Civic Center. This center, funded by Redevelopment bonds and run by the Merced County Regional Arts Council, is a multi-purpose arts facility which is designed to serve the diverse needs of the entire community. The Merced County Regional Arts Council is a membership organization governed by an elected board of directors. The Council sponsors arts programs for elementary school children, arts festivals, writing groups, and exhibits.

The Merced Open Air Theater (MOAT) in Applegate Park was dedicated in 1989 with funds raised by private individuals and groups. This neoclassical outdoor amphitheater hosts concerts, theatrical

performances, and art displays. The Theatre on the Square (Playhouse Merced) also hosts theatrical performances Downtown.

The Merced Symphony Orchestra was organized by a small group of musicians in 1958 and has blossomed into one of California's finest community symphonic orchestras. The symphony performs an annual subscription season of concerts and is governed by the non-profit Merced Symphony Association.

Community Activities/Events

A number of annual community events take place in Merced throughout the year, including the Merced County Fair, various Downtown bike races, the Cap 'N" Town festival, the Summer Fest, parades, art festivals, etc..

5.2.9 Government, Health, Public Utilities, and Telecommunications

Government Facilities

The City of Merced owns and operates several civic facilities to serve the needs of its citizens. The Merced Civic Center, opened in 1988 and located at 18th and N, houses most City departments, and hosts public meetings of the City Council and other City boards and commissions, art exhibitions, and other civic activities. The City also operates the Transpo Center, the Senior Center, the McCombs Youth Center, the Merced Regional Airport, the City Corporation Yard, the Ralph H. Shannon and Merced Center Parcades, and other City parking lots.

Other City-owned facilities, such as fire stations, police stations, sports facilities, and parks, are discussed elsewhere in this Public Facilities Chapter and in the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Chapter (7).

The City of Merced, as the County seat, contains many County and State owned government facilities as well. Chief among these facilities are the County Administration Building at M and 21st Street, the historic Merced County Courthouse and new Justice Facility at 21st and N Streets, and the Merced County Fairgrounds at Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Childs Avenue.

Health Services

The citizens of Merced enjoy good health care provided by Merced's hospital, surgical and diagnostic centers, urgent care facilities, convalescent facilities, as well as many fine private physicians.

Mercy Medical Center Merced, located at the corner of G Street and Mercy Avenue in North Merced, opened in May 2010. The first phase of the hospital consists of an 8-story, 260,000-square-foot hospital with 185 beds, a power plant, a helipad, and approximately 950 parking spaces. When all three phases are complete, the facility will be over 600,000 square feet and have 460 beds. In addition, there will be over 200,000 square feet of medical office buildings on the 30-acre site, located on both sides of Mercy Avenue.

Mercy Medical Center—Dominican Campus, located on the corner of Bear Creek and M Streets, was Merced's Catholic Hospital, originally established in 1923. The facility no longer functions as a full-service hospital and currently houses outpatient services.

Merced Medical Center—Community Campus (formerly known as Sutter Merced Medical Center and Merced Community Medical Center before that) is located near 13th and D Streets and served the citizens of Merced County for nearly 120 years. Mercy had offered hospital services at that location under a long-term lease with the County. However, the Community Campus closed in May 2010 with the opening of the New Mercy Medical Center (above). The facility is once again owned by the County, but Mercy still maintains urgent care and clinical services there. Plans for the reuse of the facility have not yet been finalized.

Public Utilities & Quasi-Public Facilities

Many public services are provided by federal and State agencies at facilities such as the Main Post Office, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and Social Security Office. There are also quasi-public uses, such as churches and non-commercial private schools.

In addition to services provided by the City of Merced and other government agencies, public utilities are also available from other sources. Natural gas and electrical power in the City are supplied by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E). Merced Irrigation District (MID) also provides electrical service to some customers. Telephone service is provided by various vendors. Cable television is available from Comcast, and satellite television is available from several sources. Similarly, cellular telephone service can be purchased from a number of vendors.

5.3 ISSUES AND INTENT

In order to ensure the provision of high-quality, cost-effective public facilities and services for the City of Merced as it grows, several issues needed to be addressed in the Goals, Policies, and Actions (Section 5.4) of this chapter. A brief summary of the issues covered under each of the goal areas follows.

General public facilities and service issues are addressed under Goal Area P-1. Master planning of major facilities and infrastructure, the cost-effective delivery of existing services, and the requirement for new development to provide its fair share of public improvements are some of the issues covered.

5.3.1 Fire Protection

The location of fire facilities is a critical factor in providing adequate fire protection to the citizens of Merced. The time and distance that must be traveled to the scene of an emergency can determine whether fire suppression efforts will be successful. The goals, policies, and actions (Goal Area P-2) in this chapter address locational criteria and distribution goals for new fire facilities. Additional goals, policies, and actions relating to fire prevention methods, disaster preparedness, and hazardous materials safety can be found in the Safety Element (Chapter 11).

5.3.2 Police Protection

Community-based policing aims to bring police officers into the neighborhoods they serve to try to deter criminal activity before it starts. This chapter includes goals, policies, and actions (Goal Area P-2) designed to implement these concepts. Additional goals, policies, and actions relating to community-based policing concepts and crime prevention can be found in the Safety Element (Chapter 11).

5.3.3 Water

The City has evaluated the City's water needs through 2030 and has developed strategies for meeting those needs. In cooperation with the County and MID, the City will develop conservation and recharge efforts to stabilize the region's aquifer. The goals, policies, and actions (Goal Area P-3) in this chapter address those efforts. Additional policies regarding water quality and water conservation are contained in Chapter 7, Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation, and a discussion of water resources can be found in the Sustainable Development Chapter (8).

5.3.4 Wastewater Collection & Disposal

The provision of adequate wastewater facilities to serve the City's new growth areas will require master planning for new collection facilities and expansion of the City's treatment plant. These issues as well as the promotion of uses for reclaimed water are addressed in the policies (Goal Area P-4) of this chapter.

5.3.5 Storm Water Drainage and Flood Control

The master planning of facilities for managing and disposing of storm water run-off continues to be a priority as the City grows. Working with the County and MID, the City will support a regional approach to addressing this mandate. The goals, policies, and actions (Goal Area P-5) in this chapter address the above efforts as well as designing multi-use (storm drainage, groundwater recharge, flood control, and recreation/open space) facilities.

5.3.6 Solid Waste

State law mandates that the amount of solid waste deposited in landfills be reduced significantly in the coming years. The City is committed to working with the County to promote source reduction, material recovery, and recycling programs while at the same time reducing impacts from disposal facilities on City residents. This commitment is reflected in the policies (Goal Area P-6) of this chapter.

5.3.7 Schools

As the City grows, new school facilities will need to be provided. Although the responsibility for providing these facilities resides with the school districts, it is in the City's interest to make sure that schools are adequately sized, centrally located to the populations they serve, and adequately served by infrastructure. The policies (Goal Area P-7) in this chapter address desired school location criteria, the collection of school impact fees, and cooperative planning of higher educational facilities.

5.3.8 Government, Health, Library, and Cultural Facilities

Government, health-related, library and cultural facilities are essential to maintaining Merced's high quality of life. The goals, policies, and actions (Goal Area P-8) in this chapter reflect the City's support for these services by exploring long-term financing options, planning for new facilities, encouraging joint use of facilities, encourage the central location of major government facilities in the Downtown area; and encourage convenient access to health-related facilities for all of Merced's citizens.

5.3.9 Telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure and services are important community resources, especially when it comes to economic development. The policies (Goal Area P-9) in this chapter address the development of City standards for such infrastructure, increasing public safety, and keeping the public informed through telecommunications.

5.4 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 Municipal Public Facilities**
- **Efficient and Cost-Effective Public Service Delivery**

POLICIES

P-1.1 Provide adequate public infrastructure and municipal 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 municipal 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 Municipal 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. It is understood that facilities and infrastructure not provided by the City is the planning and funding responsibility of other governmental, quasi-public, or private entities.

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. It is understood, however, that facilities and infrastructure not provided by the City is the planning and funding responsibility of other governmental, quasi-public, or private entities.

1.1.b Master municipal 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 Community Plans, 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. It is understood, however, that facilities and infrastructure not provided by the City is the planning and funding responsibility of other governmental, quasi-public, or private entities.

1.1.d Construct the storm water drainage, water and sewer systems in accordance with adopted master plans.

City Master Plans identify needed infrastructure improvements and extensions, phasing options, cost estimates and potential funding alternatives.

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.

Current sewer, water, drainage and circulation plans shall to be reviewed and updated to reflect planned and existing circumstances. The updates should identify existing system deficiencies and propose 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 municipal 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. However, if not possible, new municipal facilities should be located in central locations, close to the residents being served.

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 shall on a continuing basis evaluate its municipal 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 Municipal 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 municipal 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 shall review and periodically update its public services and facilities 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 municipal services as appropriate.

This could include installation of public facilities, payment of impact fees, and annexation to the City Communities Facilities District for annual operating costs of City services. New development shall provide adequate financing, as necessary, to meet all identified costs associated with new development, including, but not limited to, public facilities and municipal services where nexus can be shown. It is understood, however, that facilities and infrastructure not provided by the City is the planning and funding responsibility of other governmental, quasi-public, or private entities.

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.

1.3.e Master Plans, Community Plans, General Plan amendments, pre-zoning, and annexation proposals, through the Development Agreement process, shall ensure that infrastructure development and public facilities and municipal services are consistent with overall local public agency plans, and that the local public agencies can reasonably provide and/or extend services within the proposed development time frame of implementation.

Master Plans, Community Plans, General Plan amendments, pre-zoning, and annexation proposals prepared for areas subject to annexation to the City shall include an evaluation (prepared by the applicants with input from the City, School Districts, and other service providers) of all infrastructure, public facilities, and services under the jurisdiction of all local public agencies. These Plans for Service should include an evaluation of existing infrastructure and services, future public facilities and services required to serve the development, and the timing and funding of such public facilities and municipal services. The determination of the ability to reasonably provide or extend services for purposes of this implementing action rests with the City Council when considering the master plan, community plan, or annexation as a whole.

1.3.f Consider changes to the Public Facilities Financing Plan and Public Facilities Impact Fee program, under applicable provisions of law, to reflect lower fees for "in-fill" development, transit-oriented development, and new development within the 2015 SUDP vs. areas being added to the SUDP/SOI in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

The Public Facilities Financing Plan and Public Facilities Impact Fee Program will need to be updated after the adoption of the new *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* in order to reflect the proposed SUDP/SOI and more infrastructure projects within those areas. At the same time, the City should consider whether lower impact fees should be offered to those developments that are closer to current City infrastructure and services, such as "in-fill" development within the existing City limits, transit-oriented development, and areas within the existing 2015 SUDP. This would also discourage "leap-frog" development within the SUDP/Sphere of Influence. This would also be in keeping with greenhouse gas reduction and agricultural preservation goals to discourage City development far from existing infrastructure.

Goal Area P-2: Police and Fire Protection Services

GOAL

- **Maximum Crime and Fire Protection Services**

POLICY

P-2.1 Maintain and enhance public protection facilities, equipment, and personnel to the maximum extent feasible within the resource constraints of the City to serve the City's needs.

Policy P-2.1
Maintain and Enhance Public Protection Facilities, Equipment, and Personnel to the Maximum Extent Feasible Within the Resource Constraints of the City 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 staffing levels 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.

Subject to the resource constraints of the City, fire stations should be located so that no development within the City is located outside the primary response time objectives (4 to 6 minutes, at least 90 percent of the time) for at least one fire station. Development plans should be reviewed with respect to existing and planned future fire station sites and police resources. Consider the use of closed circuit TV systems to enhance security in new developments.

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 locating new firehouse facilities:

a) Fire stations should be located on streets close to and leading into major or secondary thoroughfares.

b) Fire stations should be located such that delays caused by incomplete street patterns are minimized, and developments required to minimize incomplete street segments or be required to complete those sections concurrent with the early phases of development.

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 primary 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 Fire Department Facilities Master Plan and any subsequent updates.

In order to maintain fire insurance ratings and the plan for additional stations, fire facilities should be provided and sited to support the current Fire Department Facilities Master Plan and any subsequent updates.

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 community level crime prevention programs such as the Neighborhood Watch, VIP (Volunteer In Police), and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) 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, closed-circuit TV surveillance, 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 and the Urban Water Management 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. 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) storm water; or (3) reclaimed water.

3.1.b Update the City's Water Master Plan and Urban Water Management Plan as needed.

The updates 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 Updates 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. The Urban Water Management Plan is required to be updated every 5 years with the next update due in July 2011.

3.1.c 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.d Continue to work with 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.e Continue to support policies and programs which prohibit 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 does not generally allow the use of new private wells within the City limits.

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

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.g The City shall not extend water service outside its incorporated limits, except under limited circumstances.

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 UC campus or as otherwise determined by the City Council. (Refer to the Urban Expansion Chapter for other policies which relate to the UC.)

3.1.h The City will convert flat-rate water services to water meters in compliance with the California State Water Code Section 527.

The City will continue its program of converting flat-rate water services to water meters (just as required of all new construction for many years) in compliance with the timelines and provisions of California State Water Code Section 527.

[Note: 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 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 recycling.

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 recycled 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.

Groundwater recharge has been identified as 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 storm water retention basins for summer recharge programs. Recharge facilities should be designed 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.

Master plans should identify potential sites for such uses.

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 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 shall utilize modern wastewater system management technology to identify deteriorating system components and replace or repair worn equipment as required.

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 wastewater master plans shall either be revised or new master plans shall be created to accommodate for the planned growth areas and growth in these areas required to cover the cost of facilities.

4.1.c Coordinate wastewater planning activities with the County.

The City and County should develop a joint strategy for accommodation of development in the Rural Residential areas to minimize ground water contamination from septic tank systems. Additionally, development proposed within the City's SUDP/SOI and not yet annexed to the City or proposed within an area that will likely be annexed in the future 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 Merced campus and University Community should also be coordinated.

4.1.d 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, "health and safety" emergencies, or as otherwise determined by the City Council. In recent years, there has been some discussions regarding the desirability from an environmental and financial aspect of providing wastewater treatment on a "regional basis." The City of Merced may want to consider initiating an analysis of possible costs and benefits of providing wastewater treatment to areas outside the City's SUDP/SOI on a limited basis. Such an analysis, which should be financed by those entities wishing to utilize the City's wastewater system, should consider the land use and governance implications (i.e. desire for City wastewater treatment is a significant incentive for annexation), as well as the engineering, environmental, and fiscal impacts of such an endeavor.

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 expanded wastewater treatment systems as part of a long-term comprehensive wastewater treatment plan. In 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 Consider the development of reclaimed water systems, including pipelines, pump stations and storage ponds.

Design and development would be dependent upon proximity of the system to potential users.

4.2.b 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-transporation (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. The City should continue to explore with the Merced Irrigation District the exchange of reclaimed water for MID water if the exchange meets the water quality requirements of both entities and is economical.

4.2.c 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 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 storm water retention basins to manage storm waters. Urban expansion will require development of new long-term storm water facilities in the City's urban area. The City is committed to providing overall coordination for the management of storm water within its urban limits and working cooperatively with other agencies in resolving regional storm water management issues.

Implementing Actions:

5.1.a Continue to implement, the City's Storm Water Master Plan and the Storm Water Management Plan and its control measures.

The City's Storm Water Management Plan, adopted in 2007, was required by the State to meet the National Pollution Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) permitting requirements. Implementation of the control measures contained in the City's Storm Water Management Plan are expected to result in significant reductions of pollutants discharged into receiving water bodies. Detention basins are to be developed and maintained under the jurisdiction of the City within the Merced urban area wherever feasible in accordance with the Storm Water Master Plan. The Merced Irrigation District has jurisdiction of flood waters deposited within its canal system and Merced County has responsibility for water deposited in the area's natural drainage channels.

5.1.b Work with the MID and the County to update the City's Storm Water Master Plan to account for changes in expected storm drainage runoff due to expanded land uses within the Merced area.

The Storm Water Master Plan does not include all of the City's proposed SUDP/SOI. The system will need to be reevaluated in light of new development plans. 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.c Continue to require all development to comply with the 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 storm water 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.d Installation or design of facilities necessary to provide services to development projects will be based on the full build-out 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 storm water 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/SOI.

Implementing Actions:

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

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

5.2.b Storm water 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 Parks and Open Space Master Plan and Storm Water Master Plan include design criteria and standards for joint use facilities. Design criteria include the use of rounded or sculpted edges, natural materials, and abundant landscaping.

Goal Area P-6: Solid Waste

GOALS

- **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 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 Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority's landfill sites and support private and public recycling efforts.

Implementing Actions:

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

Such programs should include the following:

1) 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 Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority officials in seeking federal and state funds for projects utilizing resources and material recovery processes.

Support 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 Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority 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 landfill sites.

Policy P-6.2
Minimize the Potential Impacts of Waste Collection, Transportation and Disposal Facilities Upon the Residents of Merced.

The Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority landfill is located on the western side of the City's 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 Regional Waste Management Authority 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 Regional Waste Management Authority 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 polices 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 Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority 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 Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority to meet solid waste diversion goals.

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

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

Goal Area P-7: Schools

GOALS

- **Adequate School Facilities for All Students in the Merced Urban Area**
- **Excellent Cooperative Relationships between the City, the School Districts, and the Development Community**

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.

Policy P-7.1
Cooperate With Merced Area School Districts to Provide Pre-Kindergarten, Elementary, Intermediate, And High School Sites That Are Centrally Located to the Populations They Serve and Adequate to Serve Community Growth.

While the primary responsibility of providing education services in the City of Merced belongs to the various school districts which operate in the community, the City can provide an important element of support to education service providers. In a time of limited resources, cooperative arrangements between all levels of local government are essential to maintaining and enhancing service levels. The City of Merced is committed to working cooperatively with local educational service providers, both public and private, in the improvement of the educational resources available to City residents.

Implementing Actions:

7.1.a. The City recognizes that education and public schools are an important and integral part of a well balanced community—providing not only educational opportunities for our youth, but also vital recreation and open space for our community.

In addition to providing educational opportunity for our residents, quality public schools also serve as a foundation of long-term economic development and for a healthy local economy. The City also recognizes that public school districts are organized, funded, and established as distinct and separate legal entities having separately elected governing boards and missions while sharing many of the same constituents as the City. It is the primary responsibility of these public school districts and their governing boards to provide for the budgetary priorities to address their needs.

State legislation has severely constrained and limited the ability of the City to require development interests to do more than the statutory minimums to mitigate development's impacts on the public school systems. However, the City, in recognizing the importance of public education to the well balanced community we desire, will look to those seeking entitlements from the City to be good trustees of the future and to go beyond the statutory minimums to address the impacts of their development on schools by entering into voluntary agreements with the relevant public school districts to the extent permitted by law. While the City may not be able to deny a project because of its impact on schools, development interests can and should anticipate being asked what they have done to help address those impacts. To this end, the City will seek to facilitate discussions between development interests and the relevant public school districts to address at a global or project specific level the reaching of voluntary agreements to address the needs of public school districts.

7.1.b. The City of Merced will assist, support, collaborate and cooperate with the school districts having jurisdiction in planning for and providing of educational services and School Facilities to meet the needs of current and projected future students and employees. The City will work with the school districts to negotiate a memorandum of understanding (MOU)/cooperative agreement, which will address how the school impacts of development projects will be analyzed, the preparation of plans for services by developers, and school funding issues.

Such memorandum(s) of understanding shall ensure that the relevant district is planning and developing new school sites which minimize negative impacts on the community and demonstrate recognition by the district(s) of its obligation to participate early in the City's development review process. Should a district fail to have such a memorandum of understanding with the City, the City will consider any input by the district, but the provisions of this implementing action shall not limit the City's ability to approve new development applications or projects.

The planning and site plan review for the development of new growth areas should involve school planners as early in the process as feasible. Where school districts have cooperative agreements with the City, the City will provide information and timely notification to the School Districts regarding Annexation applications, Master Plans, Specific Plans, General Plan Amendments, Zone Changes, and Development Agreements, so that the Districts can provide information to the City regarding the impacts of the applications on school facilities and that information can be provided to the Planning Commission and City Council during the public hearing process. As part of the cooperative agreements, details regarding the level of analysis required for various development applications, the topic areas to be covered, and

timelines for preparing the analysis will be negotiated between the City and the School Districts. The MOU should also address the preparation of a plan for services by the developers and various school funding issues, including the use of public tax exempt financing.

7.1.c. The City will promote the clustering of public and quasi-public uses such as schools, parks, child care facilities, and community activity centers. Joint-use of public facilities will be promoted and agreements for sharing costs and operational responsibilities by school districts and public entity partners will be encouraged.

The purpose of developing "joint use" facilities is to reduce facility construction and operating costs for local public agencies. Joint use facilities may require development of joint use agreements between participating agencies. Normally a joint use facility would involve design components which would exceed individual agency needs and therefore increase overall facility costs; however, joint use facilities may reduce total costs for facility development and operation. Individual facility studies would need to be conducted on facility designs to assure a positive cost benefit to the agencies involved.

Exploration of new opportunities for joint use school facilities may include, but are not limited to, gymnasiums and/or multi-purpose buildings, libraries, play fields and nearby restrooms, child and/or senior care facilities, after school tutoring centers, and community meeting facilities. Efforts to create school facilities should reflect attractive design to serve as neighborhood and community gathering places, and contribute to neighborhood identity and pride. The City will cooperate with school districts to establish systems of planning and collaboration that result in effective communication and relationships leading to the creation, maintenance, and improvement of joint-use agreements which provide mutual benefits to their shared constituents. The City will continue to enter into memorandums of understanding with school districts for the shared planning, design, operation, and maintenance of facilities associated with adjoining parks and schools. Joint-use agreements should seek to maximize facility use, reduce overall costs of operation and maintenance, provide for the use of school facilities by City as well as school district sponsored recreational, athletic, and educational programs during non-school day operational times.

7.1.d. In general, schools should be located within residential neighborhoods near parks, bikeways, and other open space amenities. Schools should not be located within industrial areas. In urban village areas, schools should be located adjacent to Village Core Residential (higher density) areas.

Schools should be sited near open space areas such as parks and bikeways in order to promote joint use of facilities and good bicycle and pedestrian access. In urban villages, schools should be located adjacent to the "Village Core Residential" areas where densities are higher.

7.1.e. The City and the School Districts will work together toward circulation and transportation systems within the City that provide for the movement of students from homes to schools, including considerations for pedestrian, bicycle, and overall safe routes to school.

The City and the School Districts will work together to establish safe and convenient systems of public transportation and circulation linked to residential neighborhoods, business centers, parks, schools, and other public facilities which encourage walking or bicycling as an alternative to driving. Overall designs for access/egress to schools should include student/passenger drop-off and pick-up areas whenever possible.

7.1.f. School Districts will select new school sites consistent with the Land Use Diagram in accordance with City policies and based on its own site selection studies in coordination with the City of Merced.

The City's General Plan Land Use Diagram identifies general areas where school facilities are expected to be needed based on proposed land uses. Implementing Actions P-7.1.c, P-7.1.d, P-7.1.f, P-7.1.g, and P-7.1.h address the City's preferences for locating school facilities. Specific sites would only be designated after the school district's site selection process has resulted in a site being obtained by the district to provide the district with maximum flexibility in obtaining new school sites. For the purposes of this section, "obtain" (above) means actual ownership or an agreement between the School Districts and the property owner to acquire or designate a school site.

7.1.g. Designate specific school site locations on the Land Use Diagram as needs and sites are identified and ensure their compatibility with adjacent development.

Once the school districts have selected and obtained school facility sites, the City will review existing land use plans to assure compatibility with the proposed site. Through the City's environmental review process, development permits adjacent to, or in the immediate vicinity of, a proposed school site will be reviewed to address any negative impacts on the school as long as the school site is located consistent with City policies.

The City of Merced will designate, in cooperative and ongoing dialogue with school district officials, adequate, appropriately located land for City and School Facilities, which the School Districts will verify compliance with the District's school facility plans and the requirements of the California Department of Education. Sites should be sized and sited to accommodate all grade levels that are required to be housed generated from the developing area. The City will support school districts in identifying school sites which are appropriately located and sized within attendance areas and appropriately distributed throughout the community. The design and site configuration of school facilities should be in accordance with the requirements and standards of school district master plans, inclusive of but not limited to net acreage requirements, access by the public and necessary off street parking, and safe routes of access/egress.

In the event, a district overrides the City's zoning for a site, any obligation the City has under this Implementing Action shall be inapplicable to that site.

7.1.h. Elementary school sites should be encouraged to locate on collector streets near but not directly on arterials.

New elementary school sites should not result in the creation of hazards for City residents or students. The City will assist by providing data as required by the school districts so the districts can ensure that safe, adequate access is provided to school sites. This will best be served by locating schools on collector streets where access is good but lower traffic speeds lead to a safer environment for students walking to school. At the same time, schools should be located near arterials but not on them, so that bus transportation to the school will not unnecessarily disrupt residential neighborhoods. Off-street passenger loading and unloading areas should be encouraged. Good pedestrian and bicycle access is also an important factor to be considered. Future school sites should have as many sides fronting on streets as possible.

7.1.i. Cooperate with the school districts to ensure that school facility impact fees are collected in accordance with State law. In addition, the City will work with the School Districts to coordinate discussions with developers of residential projects to enter into voluntary agreements with the school districts with provisions that child care and school facilities required by development are funded in a timely and adequate manner, concurrent with development, and in accordance with the standards and requirements of the school district having jurisdiction.

The City will work closely with the school districts in the management of the School Impact Fee system and to encourage developers to enter into voluntary agreements with the school districts to fund child care and school facilities.

7.1.j. Work with the school districts to obtain adequate funding for infrastructure improvements on and adjacent to school sites.

The City will work with the school districts so that funding for school construction includes mitigation of off-site impacts, such as traffic signals, sidewalks, and street improvements. All infrastructure utility systems should be provided to the property line of all school sites by private development where feasible at school district expense and should include water, gas, electricity, telephone, sewer, storm drainage, cable television and wiring and conduit for cabling systems to serve modern telephone and computer systems.

7.1.k. The City of Merced will support and cooperate with the School Districts in planning for and providing child care and educational services and School Facilities with sufficient capacity, to meet the needs of current and projected future student enrollments and employees. To this end, the City will work cooperatively with the School District(s) in monitoring housing, population and school enrollment trends to plan for future School Facility and Child Care Facility needs.

In order to maintain an adequate and sufficient level of public facilities and services for child care the following should be considered and provided:

1. Public facilities and services for child care should be encouraged in any land use designation, except open space and heavy industrial designations.
2. The City will work with, assist and coordinate policing and public safety programs and activities with the local School District to enhance the safety, security, and protection of property and persons of the District's schools.
3. Encourage the use of public facilities for child care services, including collaboration between schools and parks, faith based institutions, community centers, and senior centers.
4. School Facilities, and education programs, including child care options for all City residents, should be an integral component of residential neighborhoods.
5. The site planning and design of developments, which include school sites, should provide efficient and effective pedestrian and vehicular access/egress to such sites and to utilities.
6. The City will work with local child care advocacy organizations including the Local Child Care and Development Planning Council and the Child Care Resource and Referral office to determine unmet community child care needs which will be considered in site plans and designs of developments.

7.1.l. Through the City's environmental review process, reasonable attempts will be made to reduce the effects of incompatible land uses and noise adjacent to or within a quarter mile of school facilities and other noise sensitive land uses.

Land uses and developments which emit excessive noise, exceeding noise standards established in the City's General Plan, odors, particulates, light and/or glare, vibration, or other environmentally sensitive contaminates will need to address and reduce as much as feasible any negative impacts on school facilities within a quarter-mile of the proposed use when such school facilities are located on sites zoned for residential use. In the event, a school district overrides the City's zoning, the provisions of this implementing action will be inapplicable to that school site.

Policy P-7.2
Support Higher Educational Opportunities.

The City of Merced is fortunate to have well regarded institutions of higher education. The City is committed to promoting these institutions and facilitating their growth and development.

Implementing Actions:

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

The City will participate, as required, with Merced 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 College campus site and the UC 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. The City anticipates and expects these institutions to pay their fair share of facility costs and to mitigate their impacts on the community.

7.2.c Work with the County and UC Merced planning staff in the preparation of necessary plans and studies for the expansion of the UC Merced campus site and grounds.

Land use on the UC Merced campus site is under the jurisdiction of the Regents of the University of California with only limited review available to the City 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. The City anticipates and expects these institutions to pay their fair share of facility costs and to mitigate their impacts on the community.

7.2.d Develop programs with UC Merced students, faculty, and employees to gain their prospective on future development goals for the City.

In 2006, the City's Economic Development Office met with focus groups of UC Merced students to learn which types of retail and entertainment opportunities they would like to see in Merced in the future, how students receive information about what is going on in Merced, and what modes of transportation the students use. The information from those focus groups has been very helpful to Economic Development staff. The City should develop similar on-going programs to encourage UC Merced's students and employees to become involved in Merced's future development.

Goal Area P-8: Government, Health, Library, & Cultural Facilities

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 will 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, comes expanded opportunities. Facilities and services which are not practical for a mid-sized community can be supported in a larger metropolitan area. With the development of the UC 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 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 compatibility with current medical technology and service delivery philosophy.

8.1.b Encourage the continued operations of the multi-cultural and performing arts program and facilities in the Downtown area of Merced.

The City will work closely with civic groups and other public agencies in continuing to support arts programs in the Downtown area.

8.1.c Examine the 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.

Policy P-8.2
The City Will Promote Consolidation of Complementary or Support Services to Avoid Duplication of Programs.

The City of Merced recognizes that local governments are faced with increasingly limited resources and while demand for community services is constantly increasing. New ways of providing cost effective public services must be explored if existing service levels are to be maintained.

Implementing Actions:

8.2.a Senior centers, satellite libraries, adult education, recreation and/or other public facilities should be located in proximity to each other in each Village Core mixed-use area 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 ensure that adequate area is available for the development of these types of uses. Not every village will have these facilities. 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 emphasize 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, department of motor vehicles, federal and state offices, etc.).

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

8.2.c Encourage development of child care centers in all areas, including non-residential areas.

Locating child care facilities in areas with similar uses like schools and near employment centers will help reduce unnecessary vehicular trips and to facilitate parental involvement. The development of a Downtown child care center is of particular interest to the City.

8.2.d Encourage the inclusion of child care facilities in new housing developments.

Regularly work with child care advocacy organizations, including the Local Child Care and Development Planning Council and the Child Care Resource and Referral office, to prioritize and determine unmet community needs. Care should be taken to ensure that child care facilities are easily located in newly developing areas, particularly within affordable housing developments.

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

Give priority consideration to sites located near school campuses. The City will 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 have created new opportunities to deliver information at the neighborhood level in an efficient and cost effective manner. 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.

Goal Area P-9: Telecommunications

GOAL

- **Development of Infrastructure and Service to Allow All Merced Residents to Utilize New Technologies to Communicate with the Region, the Nation, and the World**

POLICIES

P-9.1 Develop City standards for telecommunications infrastructure and encourage its installation in all new development.

P-9.2 Make information regarding City government and decision-making, local services, and opportunities to participate in City governance available to Merced citizens in electronic form.

P-9.3 Make use of telecommunications services to increase public safety.

Policy P-9.1
Develop City Standards for Telecommunications Infrastructure and Encourage its Installation in All New Development.

Telecommunications infrastructure and services have been identified as important community resources, which are likely to be important to the continuing economic development of the community as basic infrastructure, such as sewer, water, and road systems.

Implementing Actions:

9.1.a The City will consider new development standards for the installation of telecommunications infrastructure so that new residential, commercial, and industrial development projects include the infrastructure components necessary to support modern communication technologies.

The City would develop plans and standards for the installation of telecommunications infrastructure. Examples would include conduit space within joint utility trenches for future high speed data equipment and flexible telephone conduit to allow for easy retrofit for high speed data systems. To minimize street cutting and trenching for the City, consideration should be given to requiring installation of conduit when streets are initially constructed. This conduit can be empty, and available for any and all service providers to fill with cable; filled with 'dark' fiber that is owned by the City, and leased for use by service providers; or, filled with 'lighted' fiber that allow the City to operate its own telecommunications services. Merced should develop a telecommunications infrastructure that is not dependent on any single medium, but incorporates a variety of media such as wireless and fiber optics as appropriate. Encourage new residential development to provide for the maximum reasonable bandwidth connectivity to each unit.

9.1.b Work with other agencies, such as the County of Merced and neighboring cities and schools, to integrate telecommunication infrastructure planning on a regional basis

Working with other local agencies should help bring down costs and increase the availability of infrastructure to all City residents and businesses.

9.1.c Work with service providers to encourage the provision of high-speed telecommunications service to all existing areas of the community.

This will require installation of new facilities and retrofitting existing facilities to ensure that all areas receive service. Use City right-of-way as a resource to foster development of a "public utility" telecommunications networking infrastructure to provide high-speed networking throughout the community, and to make the community attractive to information-based businesses.

9.1.d Develop standards for electronic map and plan submittals.

The City should develop new application submittal requirements so that new development provides accurate maps based upon the Citywide Control Network and Geographic Information System (GIS). New tentative and final map applications should include electronic submittals and infrastructure layers tied to the control network. Locations of new public facilities should be electronically mapped. The City should establish a format for submittal of electronic parcel and facility maps as well as building permits.

9.1.e Continue implementation of the City's Wireless Communications Facilities Ordinance (MMC 20.92).

When approving telecommunications and similar facilities, balance the need for aesthetics and screening with the function of the facility and the need to provide services to the public. Identify areas where telecommunications providers can jointly locate equipment such as switching shelters. These shared locations can increase service availability and reduce cost by allowing for sharing of security, landscaping and maintenance costs.

Policy P-9.2
Make Information regarding City Government and Decision-making, Local Services, and Opportunities to Participate in City Governance Available to Merced Citizens in Electronic Form.

Electronic forms of communication have become much more available to all citizens so it is important for the City to keep up with the new technologies and attempt to communicate with its citizens in most popular forms of communication.

Implementing Actions:

9.2.a Make appropriate City documents and information regarding City services available for immediate retrieval by means of electronic access and the Internet

Continue to update and upgrade the City's website to provide information to citizens on a 24-hour, 7 days per week basis. Most important City documents should continue to be made available in electronic form and posted on the Internet, including agendas, minutes, and staff reports for the City Council and all City boards and commissions.

9.2.b Use electronic communication in citizen input procedures, such as electronic mail, websites, news groups and social media to the extent feasible and practical.

Utilize new technologies to conduct citizen outreach and to seek citizen input on important City issues.

Policy P-9.3
Make Use of Telecommunications Services to Increase Public Safety.

Telecommunications services have become important tools for the law enforcement and emergency medical services. Not only is radio used to dispatch units, but also data on suspects and patient records is commonly sent to vehicle-based computer systems. Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers are also used to keep track of emergency response vehicles. A high quality telecommunications system for City safety services can be enhanced by joint use with private telecommunications facilities.

Implementing Actions:

9.3.a Develop a plan for locating telecommunication facilities to serve emergency response providers in the City.

The plan should also include the following: 1) Where possible, reduce equipment and service costs by sharing facilities with other service providers; 2) Include CCTV cameras and wireless support for new development; and, 3) Ensure that the City's telecommunications and Internet services are capable of providing timely emergency information.

9.3.b Review the potential health and environmental impacts of new telecommunications facilities, consistent with the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations.

Wireless telecommunications facilities emit radio-frequency electromagnetic radiation (EMR). The power and frequency of these emissions is regulated by federal law, administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). So long as transmitters operate within the FCC limits, the City is limited by law in its ability to consider EMR as an environmental or health factor.

5.5 PUBLIC FACILTIES FINANCING

5.5.1 Public Facilities Financing Plan

Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, California cities have been faced with unprecedented challenges in financing capital improvements necessary to community growth. No longer can cities simply adjust property tax rates to raise needed money. Instead, cities have turned to a variety of other means to finance critically needed facilities.

Merced is no exception to this problem. Because Merced has grown rapidly since 1980, the community was having problems keeping up on capital facilities such as roads, bridges, and parks. The projected growth of the community, including the new University of California campus, far outpaces the amount of money available to pay for this needed infrastructure.

In the past, the City had financed needed capital facilities from its General Fund, grants from State and federal governments, developer contributions, sewer and water funds accumulated from user fees, and some miscellaneous sources. The City’s General Fund, however, was and still is under increasing pressure just to pay for City operations. State and federal grants are decreasing. Other sources of revenue are basically driven by development, but are small in comparison to the size of the overall

need. A gap continues to widen between the existing base of revenues and the needs for funding.

In May 1998, the Merced City Council adopted the Public Facilities Financing Plan, based on the *Merced Vision 2015 General Plan* SUDP boundary. The Public Facilities Financing Plan was the basis for the Public Facilities Impact Fees described below and has been comprehensively updated in 2003 and 2006. Other minor adjustments to the Plan have been made on a regular basis through the annual review of the Plan. The Public Facilities Financing Plan defines projects, prioritizes those projects, and establishes potential and existing funding for those projects over a 20-year period.

5.5.2 Public Facilities Impact Fee Program and Community Facilities Districts

The Public Facilities Impact Fees, adopted in 1998 along with the Public Facilities Financing Plan above, will provide partial funding for needed capital facilities and infrastructure generated by new development over the 20 years. These fees are charged on a one-time basis on all new residential, commercial, and industrial developments based on their impacts on capital facilities. Capital projects included in the fee calculations are arterial streets, traffic signals, bridges, railroad crossings, fire stations, police facilities, community parks, bikeways, and other public facilities. By State law, these fees can only be spent on capital facilities and cannot be used for operations or maintenance. The fees are adjusted on an annual basis and modifications to the fee ordinance have been made in July 2003, May 2006, August 2009, and August 2010.

A Regional Transportation Impact Fee was adopted in May 2005 to pay for regional transportation improvements, such as the Campus Parkway, freeway interchanges, etc. This fee program is administered by the Merced County Association of Governments and most cities in Merced County and the County participate.

In 2000, the Merced City Council began to require new developments to annex to the Community Facilities District (CFD)—Services. The Services CFD imposes an annual assessment on new homes and businesses to pay for their impacts on City services, including police and fire protection, parks maintenance, storm drainage, street trees, street lights, etc. The CFD replaces the old maintenance districts that the City used for many years to address the above services (except police and fire).

The Public Facilities Financing Plan and Public Facilities Impact Fees are reviewed annually to make sure that the service and infrastructure priorities of the community are being met as Merced grows. The Plans will also need to be updated after the adoption of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* in order to address new projects needed to serve the proposed SUDP/SOI (see Implementing Action 1.3.f).