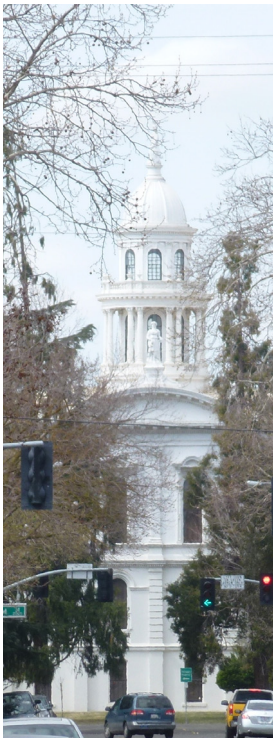

CITY OF MERCED

Bellevue Community Plan
Public Review Draft

JULY 2014

LWC

SARGENT TOWN PLANNING

NELSON NYGAARD

TPA

EPS

CITY OF MERCED | **Bellevue Community Plan**

Lead Consultant

Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc.
Lisa Wise, President
983 Osos Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805.595.1345

Sub Consultants

Sargent Town Planning
David Sargent, Principal
448 South Hill Street, Suite 418
Los Angles, CA 90013
213.599.7680

Tony Perez Associates
Tony Perez, Principal
225 Camino La Madera Avenue
Camarillo CA 93010
805.377.1209

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting, Assoc.
Colin Burgett, Principal
116 New Montgomery Street, Suite 500
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.284.1544

Economic & Planning Systems, Inc.
Jason Moody, Principal
2501 Ninth Street, Suite 200
Berkeley, CA 94710
510.841.9190

JULY 2014

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City Council
Stan Thurston
Noah Lor
Kevin Blake
Tony Dossetti
Mike Murphy
Josh Pedrozo
Michael Belluomini

Citizen Advisory Committee
Jerry Callister
Susan Gerhardt
Melbourne Gwin, Jr.
Bill Hvidt
Dan Holmes
Sharon Hunt-Dicker
Richard Kirby
Lee Kolligian
Walt Lopes
Carol McCoy
Ken Robbins
Steve Simmons
Justi Smith
Bill Spriggs
Greg Thompson
Steve Tinetti
Jeff Pennington
Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo
Mary Ward
Janet Young

Technical Advisory Committee
Norm Andrade
Gene Barerra
Michael Conway
Richard Cummings
Ken Elwin
Kim Espinosa
Kraig Magnussen
Matthew Fell
David Gonzalves
Rod Ghearing
Richard Green
Mark Hamilton
Mark Hendrickson
Bill King
Thomas Lollini
Michael McLaughlin
Maria Mendoza
Stan Murdock
Bill Nicholson
Ron Price
Frank Quintero
Steven Rough
Ken Rozell
John Sagin
Julie Sterling
David Spaur
Mike Wegley
Phillip Woods

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) was developed to be consistent with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, and is highly reflective of its policies, illustrative plans and guiding features, such as providing significant employment generating uses that would benefit from being in close proximity to the UC Merced campus. The BCP establishes a high-level planning framework that strikes a balance between certainty and flexibility by anchoring key land uses while allowing their size to adapt to changing market conditions in response to economic growth and the expansion of UC Merced. While the BCP provides a broad range of uses and densities that could occur throughout the plan area, it emphasizes the foundational building blocks of street connectivity, functional mobility choices, active and passive recreation open space corridors and bikeways, gateway street designs, and attractive business park settings to create a great sense of place with investment certainty.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The development of the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) was designed to be a dynamic process built on:

- Realistic assessments of past and future conditions;
- Consistency with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and other guiding documents;
- Professional planning and engineering guidance;
- Stakeholder participation, outreach to underrepresented groups, and public workshops; and,
- Actions of an ad-hoc advisory committee, with input from an engaged community.

Public Workshop Presentation

Technical Memorandum F (Appendix F) includes a detailed description of plan development process and the community participation program that helped shape the BCP.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Urban development pressure is growing in the northeast section of the City's growth area. The siting of the UC Merced Campus, combined with the forecasted dramatic population increase in California's Central Valley, and the continued northern growth of the City of Merced, all point to the expectation for future growth. This expectation is reflected in several long-range planning efforts including UC Merced's 2020 Plan, the University Community Plan, Yosemite Lake Estates, as well as recent development interests within the City in response to growth at the campus. The presence of sewer and water lines, and need for expanded roads to service growth of the campus, are concrete signs of financial resources being expended in response to growth.

There is a growing demand to provide shovel-ready projects that will respond to the growing market for housing and services. With these projects, however, comes the responsibility to provide adequate public services and facilities in a manner that is sustainable in terms of the capacity of the environment and the fiscal solvency of the community. The Merced City Council recognized these needs, and as part of the adoption of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan,* identified the need to prepare a

community plan in the area west of UC Merced along the Bellevue Road prior to review of annexation requests. The Bellevue Community Plan can be an important tool for the community to bridge the goal to enable shovel-ready projects with the community values noted above. The need and function of this tool is evident on several levels, including the land use entitlement process, infrastructure services, and quality neighborhoods and jobs; which are summarized below.

THE ENTITLEMENT PROCESS

Shovel-ready projects are issued building permits, but before that type of permit can be issued, the development site needs to be annexed. In order to annex, decisions need to be made about what urban zone to provide properties that are currently zoned for agricultural use in the county. Adoption of a community plan provides guidance to this question. The plan describes a flexible vision for how unincorporated lands with county agricultural zoning can be provided with an urban zone when annexed.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Whereas shovel-ready projects provide jobs, housing and retail opportunities, these projects also demand public facilities and services. In order to assure that adequate levels exist, impact fees are collected, which are based primarily on master plans for water, sewer, emergency services, parks and transportation. Master Plans are formed from the City's General Plan and Community Plans. Thus, the Bellevue Community Plan includes vital information that leads to the ability of the community to understand infrastructure costs that are borne primarily by development projects.

QUALITY NEIGHBORHOODS AND JOBS

The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) establishes a high-level planning framework that strikes a balance between certainty and flexibility by anchoring key land uses while allowing their size to adapt to changing market conditions in response to economic growth and the expansion of UC Merced. While the BCP provides a broad range of uses and densities that could occur throughout the plan area, it emphasizes the foundational building blocks of street connectivity, functional mobility choices, active and passive recreation open space corridors and bikeways, gateway street designs, and attractive business park settings to create a great sense of place with investment certainty.

For these reasons, the Bellevue Community Plan serves a vital role toward attainment of shovel-ready projects in a sustainable manner while contributing to the development of healthy living environments.

PLAN ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

The Bellevue Community Plan is comprised of Plan Chapters, Technical Appendices and Environmental Review Documents. The Plan Chapters, described below, include narratives, images and policy language.

PLAN CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 – Introduction identifies the context which the plan was developed, including descriptions of the community and physical setting, the parameters and relevant issues of the plan area established by the City's General Plan, and plan area assumptions, opportunities and constraints.

Chapter 2 – Vision and Urban Design provides the long-term vision of the Plan and policy direction about core design principles which broadly influence mobility, open space, land use and public services and facilities in the plan area.

Chapter 3 – Mobility emphasizes the development of a municipal circulation and transportation system, integrated with open spaces and land uses, and accommodates all modes of transit (automobiles, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians), including provision for Transit Priority Projects (TPP). Chapter 3 includes rights-of-way templates and graphics depicting future streets, pathways and transit corridors within the Plan Area.

Chapter 4 – Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation elements are designed in a comprehensive multiuse approach addressing recreation, storm-drainage, joint use school facilities, connectivity of uses, and natural resource needs of the planning area and surrounding lands.

Chapter 5 – Community Character anticipates and identifies locations for future land uses, and arranges them in a pattern that is both complementary and compatible with nearby uses including the UC Merced, Rural Residential Neighborhoods, and planned communities.

Chapter 6 – Urban Expansion describes governance challenges, growth factors and several growth scenarios for the plan area. The Urban Expansion Chapter emphasizes a comprehensive and collaborative approach, identifying infrastructure planning and fiscal responsibility as key drivers in future decisions concerning urban expansion.

Chapter 7 – Public Services and Facilities addresses the public service and facility needs of an expanding City population.

Chapter 8 – Plan Maintenance describes how the Bellevue Community Plan may be implemented, monitored, and updated, as needed.

On the topics of sustainable development, housing, noise and safety, the Bellevue Community Plan defers to the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

TECHNICAL APPENDICES

Plan Appendices contain detailed background information that is foundational to the discussion and policies of the Bellevue Community Plan, and includes the following topics:

A. Bellevue Community Plan Consistency with the City's General Plan.

B. Development Projects and Plans.

C. Applicable Merced Vision 2030 General Plan Goals, Policies and Actions.

D. Technical Circulation Memorandum.

E. Foundation Report.

F. Plan Development and Community Participation.

G. Merced Loop Road.

H. Innovation Hub Elements, Relevance and Suggested Policies.

I. Findings Report with Supporting Background Reports.

J. Relevance of the Urban Land Institute to the BCP.

K. Anticipated Research and Development.

L. University Community Plan Town Center.

M. Plan Assessment Tool.

CORE FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

DEFINED YET FLEXIBLE

The Bellevue Community Plan is a long-term document with a tremendous amount of uncertainty. To counter this, the plan has a policy framework for future master planning that is comprehensive and is supported by the community. The policy and development framework will deliver an interconnected transit-oriented development pattern, clarity of urban character and flexibility of use to respond to changing markets.

INVESTMENT CERTAINTY

While the Bellevue Community Plan provides a broad range of uses and densities that could occur, it also emphasizes the development of a great sense of place with investment certainty. The BCP is geared to make projects that are connected to their neighbors and to the transit spine with complete, walkable streets. So the City creates a systematic development pattern where the next development is framed by the preceding development site that implements the overall vision, rather than a smattering of projects.

A STRONG DOWNTOWN

Downtowns are sensitive to market forces, particularly to urban growth in other areas. Initially, an identity distinct from Downtown Merced will need to be fostered by the City to develop a separate and non-competing center in the BCP plan area. Over time, as the market expands, greater flexibility in land uses may be achieved.

ATTRACTING JOBS-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes numerous policies and narratives concerning the anticipation for significant jobs-based land uses within the BCP. Following the lead of the General Plan, the BCP includes a "Research and Development Park Character Area" that could accommodate up to 2.9 million square-feet of Research and Development floor space. The Plan is flexible, supporting the size of this land use to adjust depending upon market conditions. The Research and Development employment corridor is infused with innovation hub design elements to attract new firms and industry wishing to locate near the campus.

HOUSING

The Bellevue Community Plan relies on the housing-related narrative, images, diagrams and policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to guide planning, provision and development of future housing units in anticipation of Merced's increased population. The BCP includes a wide variety of housing types ranging from rural residential estate homes to high-density multifamily dwellings.

A TAILOR-SUITED LAND USE MODEL

Certain features of the planning area have strongly influenced the land use structure of the BCP; these include: 1) proximity to UC Merced and associated compatibility needs; 2) anticipated job-based land uses attracted by a university climate: 3) the regional attributes of Bellevue Road as part of the Merced Loop Road; and 4) the community-wide transit corridor linking UC Merced to downtown and beyond. Their influence is revealed in the amounts and location of land uses. For example, 1) the amount of low-density residential has dropped while the amount of land set aside for research and development parks have increased, resulting is a more balanced jobs-to-housing ratio; 2) as specified in the BCP, the placement of retail uses may locate at a corner of two arterial roads, expanding sites beyond just the corner of a collector and arterial road; 3) dense housing and retail may locate within one-quarter mile

of the Mandeville Transit Corridor between G Street and Lake Road, and not be confined to a single node surrounded by low-density housing; and 4) a vertical and horizontal mix of land uses may occur throughout most of the plan area. Thus, a land use design unique to the planning area and distinct from the City's Urban Village Concept is recommended by the BCP (described in greater detail in the land use section of Technical Appendix A).

CONSERVATION OF NATURAL LANDS

In that the Bellevue Community Plan contains sensitive species and habitat areas, the Plan considered and recommends several methods to conserve these natural resources. Consistent with adopted mitigation measures of City's General Plan EIR, property owners are required to prepare delineations of Waters of the U.S. and Wetlands prior to annexation, and to obtain permits from relevant state and federal agencies. Property owners also need to comply with the adopted Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Merced and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, the Open Space Master Plan of the BCP establishes several open space corridors that include identified sensitive habitats. For example, the Plan proposes a large open space corridor extending from Cardella Road to Lake Road at a point north of Bellevue Road. These may shrink or expand depending upon the findings and actions of the permitting process described above.

OPEN SPACE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

The Bellevue Community Plan includes several active parks including three neighborhood parks, a community park and several urban plazas. Neighborhood parks are recommended to be combined with future school sites to serve the anticipated population, and urban plazas will add open space opportunities to high-density populations along Mandeville Lane. Open space corridors featuring pedestrian and bicycle pathways connect to parks and other destinations.

SUPPORT CIRCULATION MODES THROUGH LAND USE DESIGN

Along Bellevue Road the goal is to emphasize smooth traffic flow and provide access to adjacent uses at appropriate intervals and through innovative means, while also creating a distinct gateway appearance through attractive building designs and associated landscaping. Within the Mandeville transit route, which links the planned transit stations in Bellevue Ranch and UC Merced, new development should be organized in the form of complete neighborhoods and districts and be oriented to pedestrians and transit. Higher-intensity development and activities should be concentrated near planned transit stops. This arrangement supports regional automobile trips on Bellevue Road, while creating a pedestrian-oriented corridor along Mandeville Lane, and enhances the value of the research and development area that is to be located between these roads.

NEIGHBORHOOD MASTER PLANNING

The Bellevue Community Plan recommends that the City create a dynamic "neighborhood master plan" process to ensure that each new increment of development is well-connected to existing and future adjacent development, while responding to market. The framework for new development would be a clear and interconnected – yet flexible – network of complete streets and community open spaces. This process acts as the fundamental tool to ensure that the overall physical community structure is developed as envisioned in the BCP.

NEXT STEPS

PLAN INTEGRATION

Upon adoption of the Bellevue Community Plan, the City should begin the process to integrate it with existing master plan documents and processes, including but not limited to the following:

- Merced Vision 2030 General Plan.
- City of Merced 2013 Bicycle Transportation Plan.
- 2003 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Capital Improvement Planning.
- Public Utility Master Plans.
- Transit Planning Documents.
- Regional Transportation Plans (as appropriate).

COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT

A common vision and approach to urban expansion creates certainty, and certainty attracts investments, and investments create jobs. Yet, as evidenced in the growth scenarios of the BCP (Chapter 6, Urban Expansion), along with concerns raised by the BCP Ad-hoc Advisory Committee, there are numerous unanswered questions and challenges concerning infrastructure, financing and phasing of growth in and adjacent to the BCP planning area. The BCP supports a collaborative effort to create a multi-jurisdictional infrastructure and service plan to support growth in a manner that serves the interest of the community as a whole, in a fiscally sound manner. Partners with the City in this effort would include Merced County, the University of California, as well as the Merced Irrigation District, local schools and the Merced County Association of Governments. The UC Merced Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), the University Community Plan (UCP), and the Bellevue Community Plan, among other plans, provide the necessary information and options from which a unified development phasing plan could be crafted. Future outcomes of this collaborative effort could include:

- Select a growth scenario, or combination thereof.
- Develop a strategic phasing plan and plan for services that coordinate expenditure of resources, provides certainty in the marketplace, and leads to an efficient use of public infrastructure and services.
- Update financing and master plans and programs to align with the broad decisions concerning financing, infrastructure, and phasing in the northeast Merced SOI.

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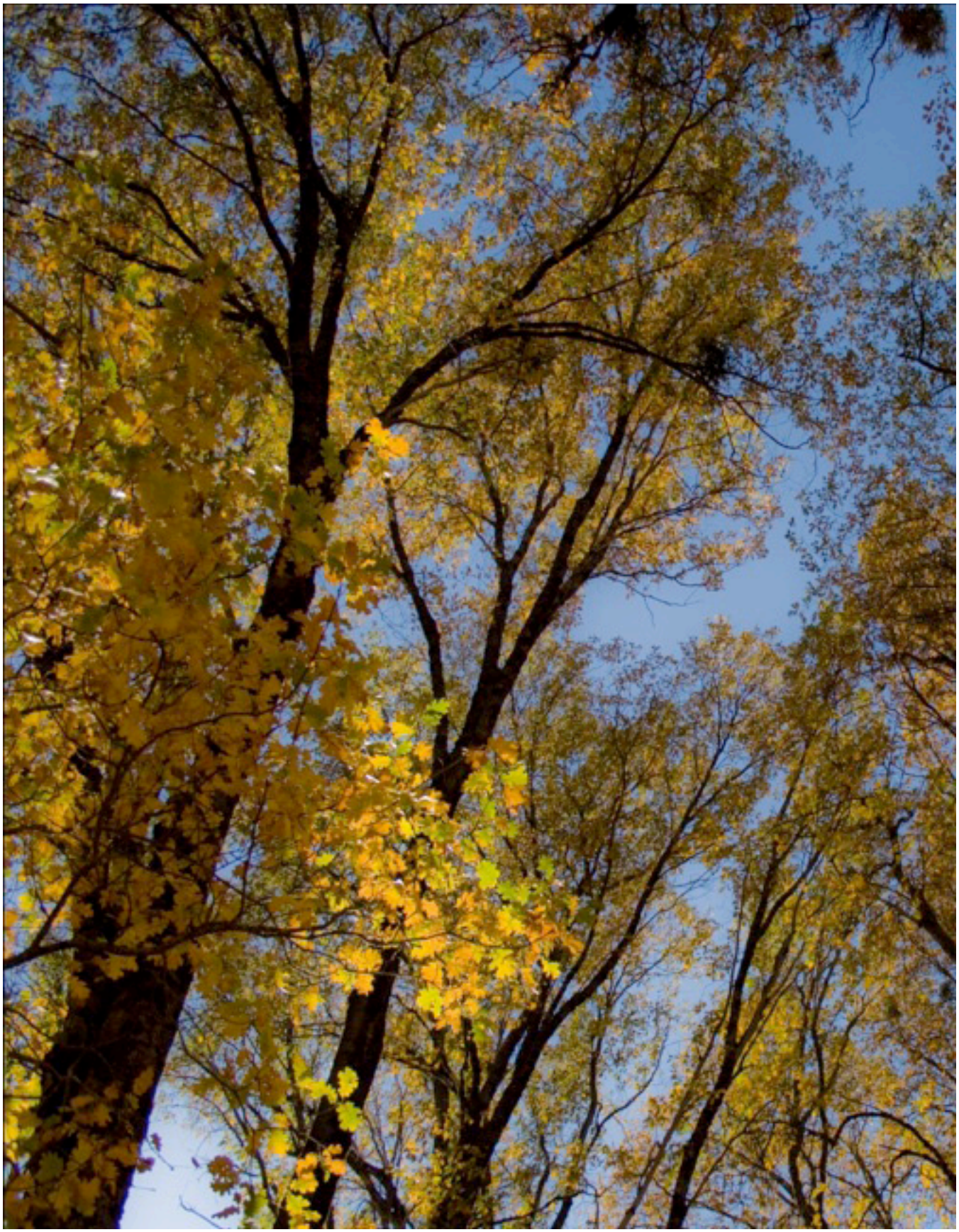


1. INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY PLAN OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP or Plan) provides policy direction to the decision making process for development within a defined geographic portion of the Planning area of the City's *General Plan*. The plan forms a broad framework for mutual understanding among citizens, public agencies, and the development community. Preparing a community plan serves the following purposes:

- To facilitate the Planning Commission and City Council concurrence on long-range development policies;
- To provide a basis for evaluating the level to which private development proposals and public projects are consistent with these policies;
- To better enable the public and government entities to design projects that are consistent with City policies, or to seek changes in these policies through the General Plan Amendment process;
- To record the City's policies and standards for the maintenance and improvement of existing development and the location and characteristics of future development;
- To better inform citizens on land use policy issues and promote opportunities to participate in the local planning and decision-making process;
- To serve as a blueprint for future growth and development within a defined area of the City of Merced's Sphere of Influence (SOI);[1] and,
- Community Plans may, but are not required to, identify components of infrastructure needed to support planned land uses, as well as appropriate financing mechanisms. [3]

The BCP focuses on providing a vision and framework for coordinating transportation, infrastructure, and open space, with varied land use mixes and intensities.

A "Community Plan" serves as a blueprint for future growth and development within a defined area of the City of Merced's growth boundary.

Aerial View of Merced

THE CITY'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY PLANS

General Plans provide a policy framework upon which community plans are constructed and a foundation to build more detailed implementation tools including community plan diagrams, policies, maps and illustrative plans.

The City's Guiding Principles for local community plans (Section 3.7.2, *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*) are:

- Community Plans which include or are adjacent to established neighborhoods will address the needs of these neighborhoods and potential adverse impacts resulting from plan implementation.
- Public participation by area residents and property owners in the planning process will be emphasized.
- Community Plan areas need connectivity with existing and planned urban areas.
- Community Plans will include all elements determined necessary to ensure consistency with the *General Plan*. These elements may include, but not be limited to, Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, and infrastructure phasing. Community Plans will include a land use and infrastructure phasing plan.
- The "Urban Villages" concept should be incorporated into the planning of these areas as much as feasible.
- The Community Planning process should be focused on the planning issues or concerns which need to be resolved for that planning area and, to this degree, provide data, information, or policy clarification necessary to carry out the goals of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

BCP RELATIONSHIP TO FUTURE ANNEXATIONS AND GROWTH

The BCP is not a project that will annex unincorporated properties into the City of Merced. That action occurs through a separate process usually initiated by private property owners with specific development interests, and then only after a formal annexation request is granted by both the City of Merced and the Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). For more information on annexation and implementation of the Plan see Chapter 6 (Urban Expansion).

FRAMEWORK PLAN VS. DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The BCP is not a development project. A development project contains specific land-use entitlements with specific standards. As with the City's General Plan, the BCP is a conceptual framework within which future decisions about development projects would be made when more information is in place. The BCP does not include the specificity or rigidity that comes with a development plan as does, for example, the *Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan*.

PLANNING VS. ZONING

The Bellevue Community Plan does not rezone property. Upon adoption of the Plan, properties within the planning area will remain in Merced County and will retain their current zoning designations. As there is no City zoning within the plan boundaries, the BCP effort does not affect current property rights. The BCP provides a foundation for future development in a manner that will benefit the property owners and the community.

VISION VS. CONSTRUCTION

The BCP planning process allowed the community to take a comprehensive approach to examining land use, circulation, and other issues. As the City's urban fabric expands with market demand, the BCP offers guidance for growth that is grounded in the community's vision, takes advantage of existing resources, and avoids potential constraints. However, for future urbanization to occur in the Plan Area, additional input will be needed from the community as the scope and scale of development becomes influenced by market conditions, decisions from local landowners, and the availability of public services.

Tour of Bellevue Corridor Project Area and Presentation

SETTING

COMMUNITY SETTING

The Bellevue Community Plan study area is located outside but adjacent to the Merced City limits, and within the City's planned growth area, otherwise known as the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) and Sphere of Influence (SOI).

The City of Merced is approximately seven miles long from north to south and six miles at its widest point from east to west. In January 2012, the City of Merced covered approximately 23 square miles and had an estimated population of 79,328. The Bellevue Community Plan area is located to the northeast of the City of Merced, and covers an area of approximately 2.4 square-miles. The planning area is generally bounded by G Street on the west; Farmland Avenue on the north; Lake Road on the east and Cardella Road on the South (between Lake Road and Gardner Road), and generally ½ mile south of Bellevue Road (between Gardner Road and G Street). Lake Yosemite, UC Merced and the northern part of the UC Community Plan area abuts the eastern edge of the BCP study area. From the project boundary, Downtown Merced is 3.5 miles to the southwest, and Castle Airport and the City of Atwater are 6 miles to the west.

The Bellevue Community Plan study area is located outside but adjacent to the Merced City limits, and within the City's planned growth area, otherwise known as the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) and Sphere of Influence (SOI).

PHYSICAL SETTING

The northeastern portion of the City's planned growth area is characterized by gently rolling terrain while the remainder of the City is relatively flat. The northern, western, and eastern portions of the City contain a number of creeks and canals including Bear Creek, Black Rascal Creek, Fahrens Creek, and Cottonwood Creek. These creeks all traverse the City from east to west. With the exception of a few pockets of rural residential homes, the BCP planning area is predominately grasslands.

Figure 1. Bellevue Community Plan Area in Relation to Downtown Merced

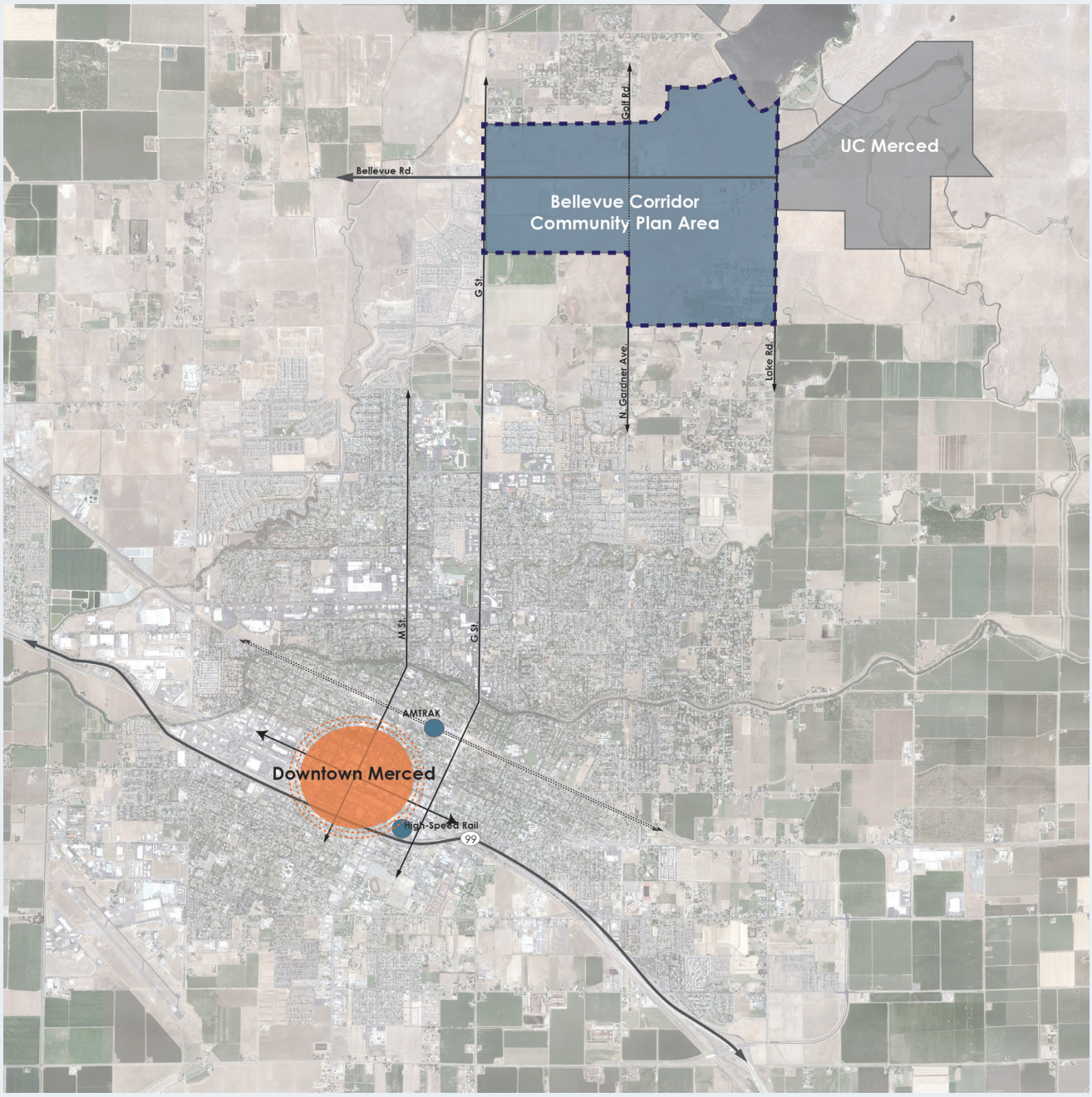
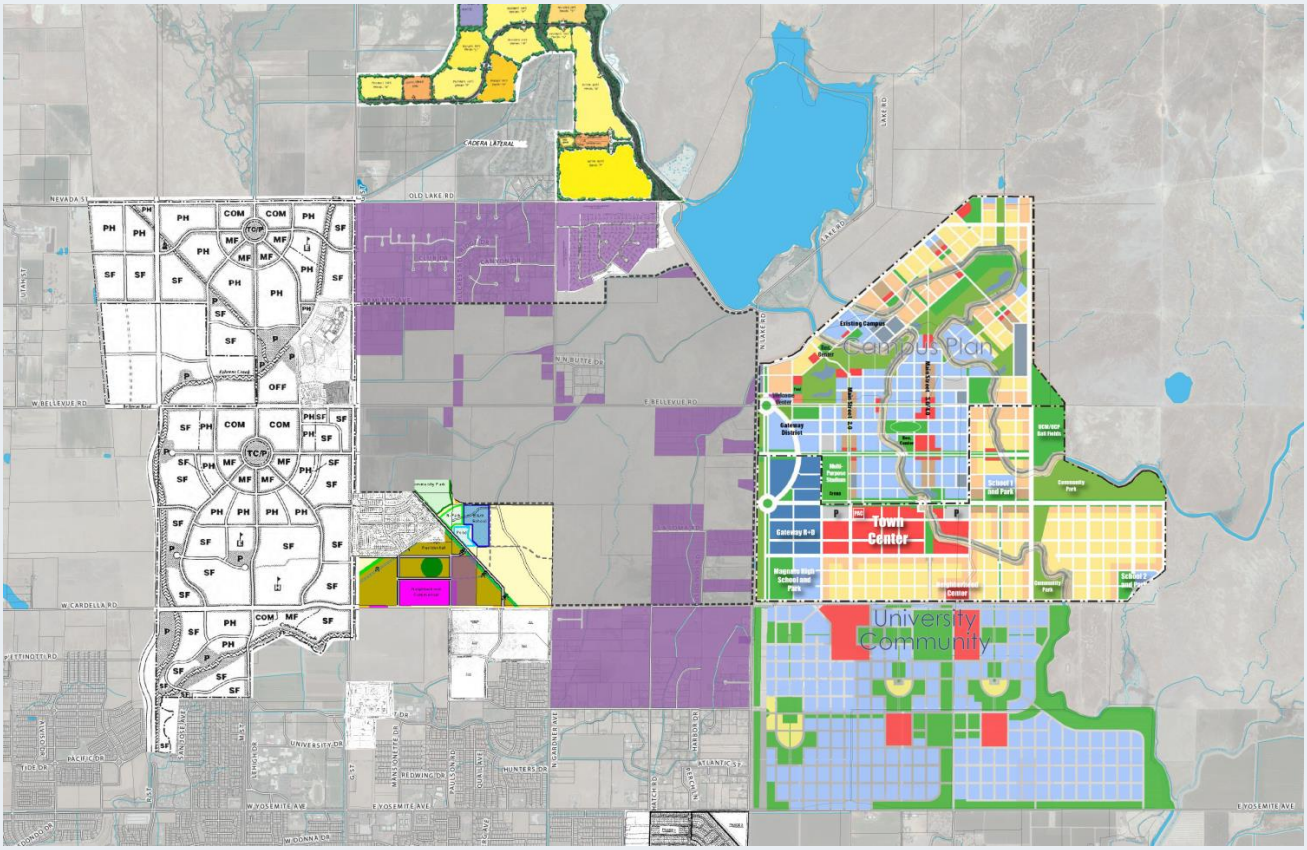


Figure 2. Proximate Development Plans and Projects surrounding the Bellevue Community Plan Area



The community of Merced has participated in important planning initiatives over the past several years including the City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, UC Merced's Long Range Development Plan, and Merced County's University Community Plan.

PROXIMATE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROJECTS

The community of Merced has participated in important planning initiatives over the past several years including the City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, UC Merced's Long Range Development Plan, and Merced County's University Community Plan. The outcomes of these and other planning initiatives serve as an important basis for the BCP. A detailed description of development plans and projects occurring within and near the Bellevue Community Plan area is provided in Technical Memorandum B (Appendix B) of the BCP. The "Projects and Plans" document identifies and describes recent and anticipated growth patterns.

GENERAL PLAN GUIDANCE

CONSISTENCY WITH THE *MERCED VISION 2030 GENERAL PLAN*

The Bellevue Community Plan was developed to be consistent with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, and reflects key criteria detailed in the *General Plan*. The following sections from the *General Plan* created the foundation of the BCP and established the Core Principles discussed in Chapter 2 (Vision and Urban Design chapter):

- Key Goals, Policies and Implementation Actions
- Key Features and Issues of the Bellevue Community Plan
- The Bellevue Community Plan "Illustrative Plan"

Merced Vision 2030 General Plan

KEY GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

A complete and full listing of *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* goals, objectives, policies, and implementing actions that have notable relevance to the BCP project area and/or plan objectives are listed in Technical Memorandum C (Appendix C) of the BCP. This appendix also includes policies crafted as a part of the BCP, which offer greater detail and refinement of the broader *General Plan* language. The policies in Technical Memorandum C are a key part of the BCP and are intended to guide and inform development-related activities in the project area.

KEY FEATURES AND ISSUES OF THE BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (Section 3.7.4) identified several key features and related direction for the BCP, including: economic development, land use, transportation, public facilities, environment and urban design.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City's *General Plan* describes Bellevue Road as a gateway to UC Merced connecting the campus to Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center, other employment centers, and to Downtown Merced via the G, M and R Street corridors, and that (1) their economic development strategies should be compatible and complementary; and (2) they should connect to one another via a network of transportation and communications systems that optimize access between and among them.

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* also describes the Bellevue Corridor as likely to contain significant employment generating uses that would benefit from being in close proximity to the UC Merced campus (Section 3.5.5), and is identified as a Commercial and Industrial Employment Corridor to contain heavy concentrations of commercial and industrial development.

The emphasis on economic development also appears in a *General Plan* discussion to adjust the City's Urban Village concept near UC Merced. The *General Plan* states, "The composition and pattern of land uses in the Urban Villages near UC Merced along Bellevue Road will have unique

designs and functions due to the economic opportunities and connectivity to the university. Each of the "Urban Villages" between Lake Road and G Street should contain, in addition to "Neighborhood Commercial," "Village Residential," and "Professional Commercial -Office," the opportunity for an expanded urban core comprised of a jobs-based office, business park or research and development type land use supported or spun-off from UC Merced. This additional land use potential is represented in Figure 37, Community Character Place Type Plan.

LAND USE

The City's *General Plan* describes the Bellevue Corridor as one that should be designed as a place where services, shops, schools, businesses, public uses, and residences mix in a vibrant setting. The BCP should assess the viability of expanding office, commercial, and research and development land use capacities in the plan area. The City's Urban Village will be the backbone concept model for creating core commercial nodes along Bellevue Road and a connection to neighborhoods to the south and north. Some of the land uses could connect to research and development activities associated with the campus research programs or professional services associated with the campus's professional schools. The City's *General Plan* specifically identifies that the following features should be included in or influence the creation of the BCP:

- Special "Urban Village" designs suited to the "Bellevue Corridor Planning Principles" and potential expansion thereof to provide for increased opportunities for job-based land uses attracted by a university climate while still maintaining the basic concept of mixed-use, pedestrian, and transit oriented communities. These "Urban Villages" may differ from others in the Community in the mixture of business park, research and development, office, public/cultural uses, and retail uses within the Village Core areas instead of the retail/office/public facilities focus of other Villages which are more residential in nature; and,
- Land Uses should be compatible and complimentary with one another and planned as integrated, coordinated mixed-use neighborhoods and communities; and,
- The influence and effects of the UC Merced and University Community land use and circulation plans on adjacent (western) properties; and,
- Interface issues and infill land use patterns adjacent to and within pre-existing "Rural Residential" properties; and,
- A variety of housing types and densities should be encouraged within the Community Plan area in addition to job-generating uses consistent with the City's overall economic strategy and the Bellevue Corridor Economic Analysis (see Appendix I).

Urban Village Design

Urban Villages are described in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* as mixed-use, mixed-density neighborhood developments incorporated into and planned in conjunction with a network of interconnected, walkable streets. This design allows for a variety of land uses including jobs-based land uses attracted to a university climate to be intermixed within the BCP framework.

TRANSPORTATION

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

Establish "Bellevue Parkway Planning Principles" describing the design [including appropriate right-of-way, function and land use pattern along Bellevue Road] recognizing two key traits: (1) multi-modal access corridor that accommodates both automobiles and public transit systems, as well as bikes and pedestrians; and (2) designed to unify rather than separate the community located on opposite sides of the road.

Establish a system of collector streets and arterials with appropriate rights-of-ways to encourage internal circulation within the Community Plan area. This would include determining the proper alignment and right-of-way for Gardner Road.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

The City's *General Plan* states the BCP should establish adequate public facilities to accommodate growth within the area. The *General Plan* states the BCP provide the, "Location and financing of public facilities including a fire station, schools, roadways, off-street bike and pedestrian paths, and parks/open space."

ENVIRONMENT

The BCP addresses specific environmental issues and vulnerable areas relevant to the plan area which necessitate protection or preservation. The City's *General Plan* states that the BCP should address the following: "Lake Yosemite Inundation Area and Sensitive species and habitat conservation."

CHARACTER/DESIGN

The *General Plan* states the BCP should include design parameters to guide the future development of the plan area. The *General Plan* identifies the following characteristics be included in the BCP:

- Establish, through the Community Plan process, design guidelines for development along the Bellevue Corridor in accordance with the City's Urban Design principles outlined in Chapter 6 of the *General Plan*.
- The natural hill, which occurs on the south side of Bellevue Road between G Street and Gardner Road, should be considered as a focal point for the Corridor.

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

THE BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN "ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN"

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes "illustrative plans" as an appendix to its Land Use Chapter. Illustrative plans are not adopted plans and are only included in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to inform the public of preliminary land use concepts under consideration in each of the Plan areas. No land use entitlements are granted by including illustrative plans in that appendix. The land uses shown in the northwest corner of Lake Road and Bellevue Road are a part of the formally adopted Land Use Diagram of the City of Merced, and not considered "illustrative." The "Illustrative Plan" (Figure 3) below from the *General Plan* shows a conceptual land use plan for the BCP area.

Figure 3. Bellevue Community Plan "Illustrative Plan"

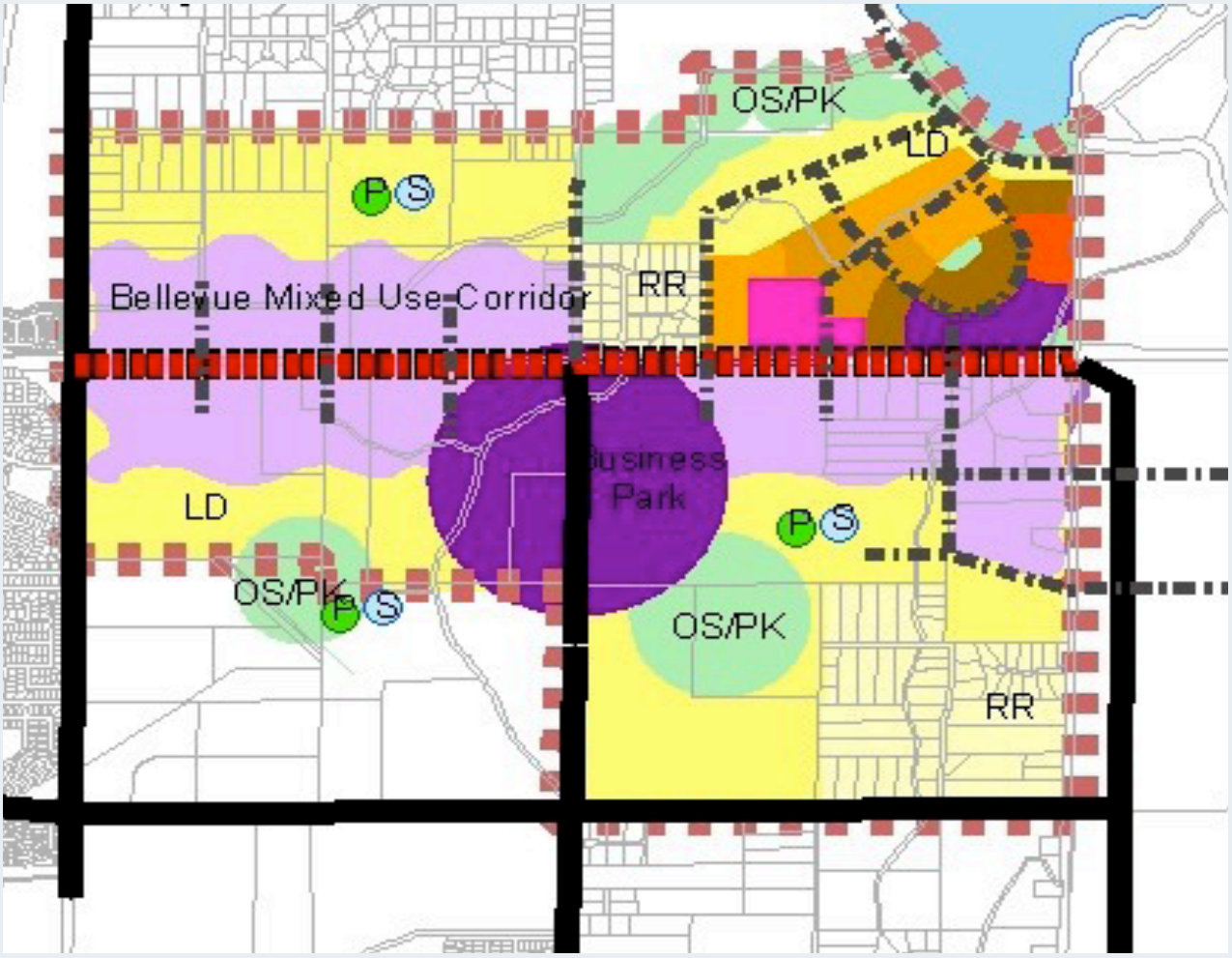


Table 1 Land Use Designations from the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*

Land Use Designations	Key	Intended Uses	Density
Rural Residential (RR)	Light Yellow	Residential: single-family	1 – 3 units per acre
Low Density Residential (LD)	Yellow	Residential: single-family detached, condominium, and zero-lot line	2 – 6 units per acre
Low-Medium Density Residential (LMD)	Tan	Residential: single-family detached, duplex, triplex, fourplex, condominium, zero-lot-line	6.1 – 12 units per acre
High-Medium Density Residential (HMD)	Light Brown	Residential: multifamily, apartment, condominium, triplex, fourplex	12.1 – 24 units per acre
High Density Residential (HD)	Dark Brown	Residential: multifamily	24.1 – 36 units per acre
Neighborhood Commercial (CN)	Pink	Commercial: retail, eating and drinking, commercial recreation, auto services, etc.	Average 0.35 FAR
Bellevue Corridor Mixed Use	Light Purple	A mixture of LMD, HMD, HD, CO and CN.	Varies
Thoroughfare Commercial (CT)	Red	Commercial: auto-oriented commerce, large recreational facilities, some heavy commercial, lodging and hospitality, automobile sales and services	0.35 Floor Area Ratio
Business Park (BP)	Purple	Commercial and industrial: heavy commercial, office, research and development, light manufacturing, warehousing, information-based and service-based activities	0.40 Floor Area Ratio
Open Space – Park/Recreation Facility (OS-PK)	Green	Recreation: public parks, golf courses, greens, commons, playgrounds, and other public and private open spaces	0.10 Floor Area Ratio
School	Blue Circles	Public Elementary Schools	N/A

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN (BCP)

The *General Plan* conceptual land use plan (for illustrative purposes only) for the BCP is shown on the previous page. This illustrative plan also appears on the City's Official Land Use Diagram. Through the development of the BCP, the *General Plan* "Illustrative Plan" and land use designations (Table 1), described above, were refined in order to develop the community's vision for the BCP area in the following chapters of this community plan.

ASSUMPTIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CONSTRAINTS

The Bellevue Community Plan was guided by the following assumptions and the assessment of opportunities and constraints regarding anticipated future conditions to the year 2030 listed in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and developed through the community engagement process.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Although essentially vacant today, the BCP is surrounded by existing and proposed urban and suburban land uses. All lands within the City's adopted Sphere of Influence within and near the BCP will be developed.
- Development within the BCP area will be guided by "Urban Expansion" policies in the City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* as well as Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO) procedures, codes, and actions.
- Significant amounts of job-generating land uses will be located in close proximity to the UC Merced Campus.
- The University of California Merced (UCM) campus will continue to expand in the vicinity of Lake Yosemite on the northeastern edge of the Merced growth boundary or SUDP/SOI along with a future University Community.
- Urban development (residential, commercial, and industrial) will continue to be focused within the City of Merced's growth area (SUDP/SOI) and not in the unincorporated areas surrounding the City.

From City Council Resolution #2006-89 regarding the University Community:

- The University Community will be incorporated into the City of Merced and will not be a separate city or part of the unincorporated County.
- Annexation along the Bellevue Corridor is encouraged to provide contiguity between UC Merced and the City of Merced. It is realistic to expect development proposals in the BCP planning area in the near-term.
- Though no separate wastewater treatment plant should service the University Community, consideration of innovative methods of wastewater treatment for that area may occur.
- The City will encourage annexation along the Bellevue Corridor to provide contiguity between the University Community and the City of Merced.

OPPORTUNITIES

The BCP presents important opportunities for the City of Merced. The continued growth of UC Merced will provide an influx of people, ideas, and energy. The plan should capitalize on this growth and ensure that new development meets the needs and desires of new and existing residents. Potential opportunities include the following:

Growing University-Oriented Population

At full buildout, UC Merced is expected to grow to approximately 25,000 students and over 6,500 faculty and staff members. As the population grows, there will be an expanding market for housing, goods, and services.

Future Research and Development Park Sites

The plan should anticipate and prepare for the market demands caused by a growing University, including identifying sites for future job generating research and development parks and encouraging multiple interests to collaborate for long-term economic and fiscal benefits.

Home for Entrepreneurs

The plan should help foster a living and working environment to attract a new generation of entrepreneurs, leading to innovations, technologies, and expansion of local investment and job-generators.

Alternative Transportation

The plan should identify and implement circulation and land use standards that encourage multi-modal transportation including walking, biking, transit, and driving. By implementing the complete transportation network and shifting away from auto-centric mobility patterns, it is possible to compliment and build upon the UC Merced investment while moderating the environmental impacts of increased development within the BCP area. It is essential to offer multi-modal access to the student population of UC Merced and to future BCP residents.

Leverage New Investment

The expanding University community has and will continue to spark associated investment in Merced. The plan should identify opportunities to leverage new investments in the University to improve citywide economic vitality.

Low-Impact Development

Well-planned growth in the BCP area can ensure that development minimizes impacts to natural resources, air quality, and water quality. The plan should identify and incorporate concepts for development patterns and solutions that conserve and enhance resources from which a community prospers.

Community Character

There is little existing development within the BCP area, thus the BCP presents an important opportunity to elaborate on *General Plan* vision concepts for developing a unique community character. The plan should encourage memorable livable, human-scale public spaces and distinctive community centers that facilitate positive interaction and idea sharing.

Existing Rural Residential Communities

Though primarily located outside the Plan Area, existing "ranchette neighborhoods" provide a semi-rural lifestyle defined by open space and agricultural uses. The BCP provides an opportunity to maintain and strengthen the character of these neighborhoods with appropriate soft transitions to new higher intensity development; these neighborhoods can also provide development themes for some areas of the BCP, such as equestrian-oriented facilities and trails.

Regional Attributes

Bellevue Road will serve as part of the Merced Loop Road connecting Northern California from Highway 99 and leading to UC Merced. UC Merced services roughly a third of its students coming from Northern California, another third from the San Joaquin Valley and a third from Southern California. UC Merced already has an international reputation in various fields of study and is likely to spawn business opportunity, start-up companies and research labs adjacent to the campus within the City of Merced. Given that that Bellevue Road will likely serve as one of the first impressions of the Merced community for commuters, the land uses and design aspects of the North and South corners of Bellevue Road and G Street could take on a more regional nature as juxtaposed to the community serving and local transit character established for much of the planning area.

The scale of the Plan area and timing of the UC campus build-out will make phasing an important consideration in Plan implementation. The pattern and timeframe in which the area develops will impact transit opportunities, development feasibility, and interim community character.

Ownership Blocks

A large portion of the plan area is owned by a handful of owners, enabling planned growth and coordinated design elements with the BCP.

CONSTRAINTS

While there are many opportunities for the City to capitalize on, the following constraints and challenges have been taken into account during the development of the Plan.

Development Phasing

The scale of the Plan area and timing of the UC campus build-out will make phasing an important consideration in Plan implementation. The pattern and timeframe in which the area develops will impact transit opportunities, development feasibility, and interim community character.

Natural Resource and Habitat Disruption

Portions of the Plan area are home to sensitive natural resources such as vernal pools that must be considered and which have the potential to enhance unique public open spaces.

View of Bellevue Road

Multiple Interests

The project area is within the City's SOI and SUDP, but is currently under County jurisdiction. Addtionally, the BCP area will be developed by many property owners and developers over the course of several decades. BCP standards and policies must address the needs and concerns of the individual property owners and local jurisdictions, while ensuring each unique development contributes to a unified whole.

Multiple City Focus Points

The City has important existing resources including the charming downtown and several historic neighborhoods. The BCP must ensure that development within the BCP complements, rather than competes with these and other existing or future community focal points.

An Uncertain Economy

The current economy is still uncertain and growth forecasts for Merced and the BCP vary widely.

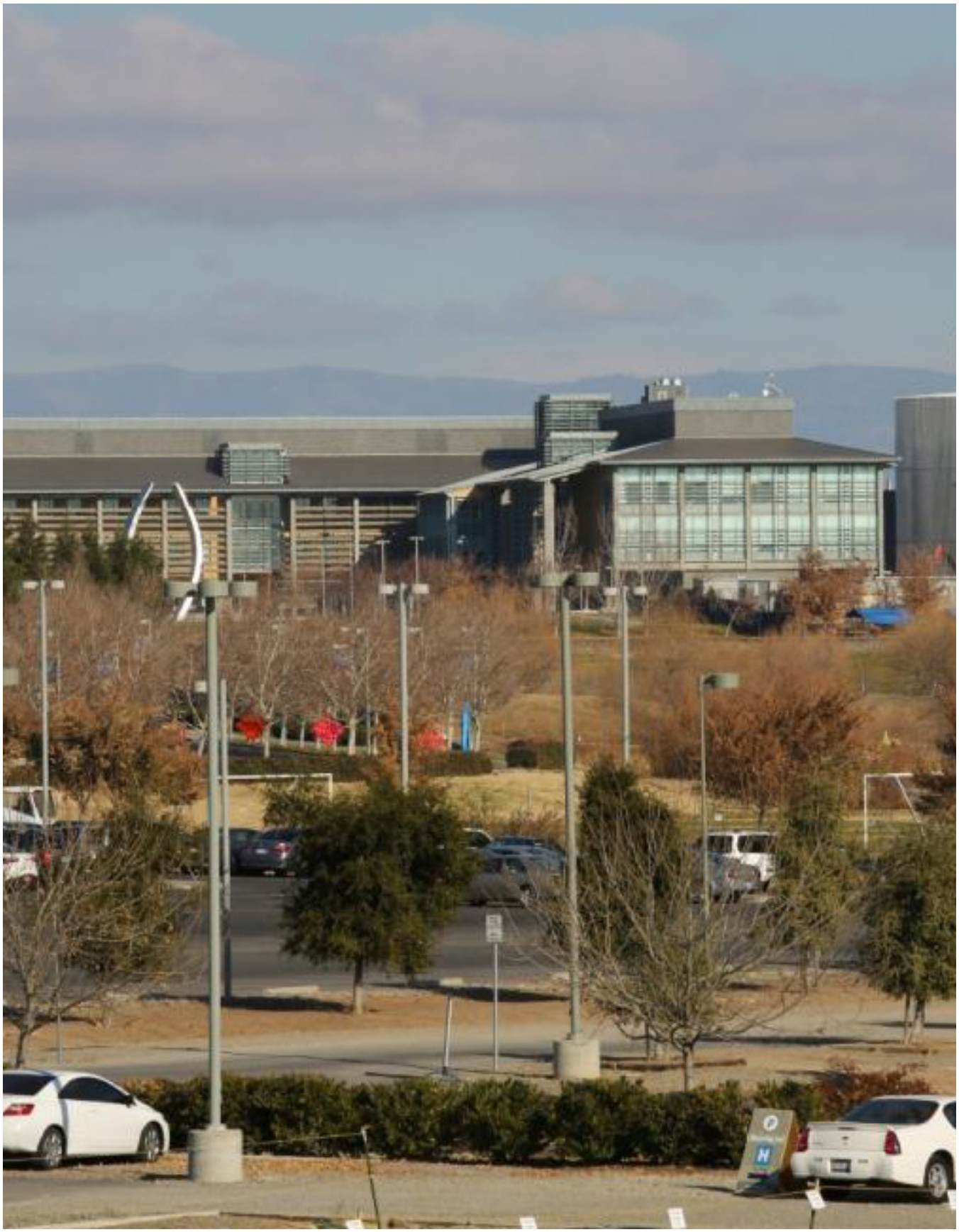
Competition to Serve the UCM Market

The BCP area and the University Community will potentially be competing for valuable economic development and expensive infrastructure capacity for many decades to come.

Affect on Downtown

Downtowns are sensitive to market forces, particularly to urban growth in other areas, including the development of the BCP.

A focused and consistent effort will be needed on the part of decision makers so ensure successful, long-term implementation.



2. VISION & URBAN DESIGN

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* provides valuable direction for the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) and is the starting point for this plan. The General Plan identifies regional features that will shape the community plan area, for example, the Merced Loop Road and interest to identify sites for future job-generating uses near UC Merced. From the City's *General Plan*, five core principles establish the urban design framework upon which the remainder of the structure (urban expansion, land use, transportation, public facilities and services and urban design) of the plan is based.

REGIONAL FEATURES AND CODE PRINCIPLES

REGIONAL FEATURES

This section describes how the BCP implements the goals of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and integrates with other planning efforts in the community, specifically:

- Merced Loop Road
- Research and Development Sites
- Preservation of Downtown Cultural Center
- City of Merced Transit Corridor
- UC Merced Gateway District
- Expanded Community Arterial Network
- High Speed Rail Connection

MERCED LOOP ROAD

The Merced Loop Road concept came from the Highway 99 Major Investment Study which began in 1993 and was adopted by the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) in 1997. It was derived from the idea that State Highway 99 through Merced/Atwater could only fit 6 lanes on the existing footprint, although 8 lanes would be needed in the future. However, with a full loop-road, 6 lanes would suffice. The Campus Parkway segment of the loop idea came from the City of Merced's "Eastern Beltway" study. The Atwater-Merced Expressway segment originated from plans for a functional north-south state highway to replace the existing Highway 59 alignment. The components of the loop were drawn where they seemed most reasonable.

As part of the loop road network, Bellevue Road has the potential to be a much more significant regional route in the foreseeable future than other east-west arterials shown on the City's Circulation Plan.

As part of the loop road network, Bellevue Road has the potential to be a much more significant regional route in the foreseeable future than other east-west arterials shown on the City's Circulation Plan. This makes it imperative that necessary rights-of-way (ROW's) be obtained throughout its corridor, in order to ensure its future viability. Bellevue Road will also connect to the Merced-Atwater Expressway project west of Highway 59, which will ultimately connect Bellevue Road to Highway 99.

CITY OF MERCED TRANSIT CORRIDOR

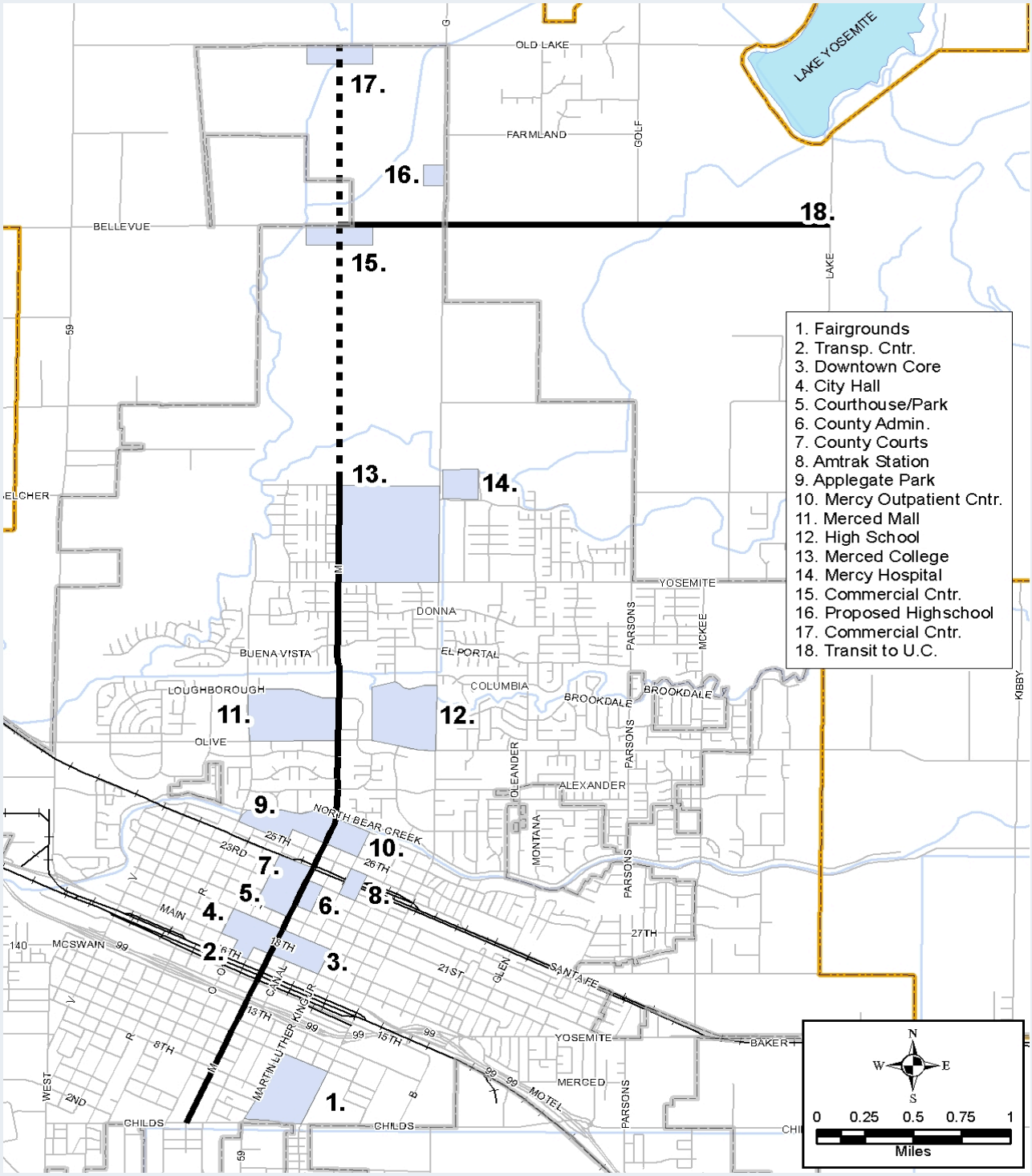
Numerous policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* identify the need to plan for a transit corridor to connect downtown Merced with UC Merced, specifically mentioning the Bellevue Road corridor (see Figure 4). Future transit stations are proposed within UC Merced and the Bellevue Ranch Development. As such, the Bellevue Community Plan forms a critical link in the provision of Merced's transit service, including a link to the potential high-speed rail station in downtown. Building upon this foundation of a transit corridor, the BCP planning process set out to examine Transit Priority Project (TPP) needs, potential locations, and design solutions, notably, to define TPPs in keeping with SB 375 and to describe anticipated transit needs for use as a key driver in establishing the land use and design elements of the Plan. Transit Priority Projects are eligible for various levels of CEQA-based permit streamlining, encouraging development that is consistent with the goals of the BCP. (See Mobility and Land Use chapters for additional information on TPP)s.

The Bellevue Community Plan forms a critical link in the provision of Merced's transit service, including a link to the potential high-speed rail station in downtown.

EXPANDED COMMUNITY ARTERIAL NETWORK

The BCP planning area includes two arterial streets that are essential parts of regional and community-wide infrastructure needs. First, the roles and values that Bellevue Road brings to the community are numerous and essential. Already a major conduit for UC Merced related-traffic, this role will dramatically increase in the near and long-terms as improvements link the Atwater-Merced Expressway to Bellevue Road. The extension of Gardner Road to Bellevue Road in the BCP planning area will complete the City's easternmost arterial road, which when complete, will extend from Highway 99 through Southeast Merced, the eastern edge of Central Merced and all of North Merced. The completion of Cardella Road will provide important east-west traffic flow for the community. Together, these roads will serve as important linkages between UC Merced and the rest of the City of Merced. Development of these roads will also minimize traffic impacts on Lake Road.

Figure 4. City of Merced Transit Corridor



UC MERCED GATEWAY DISTRICT

Distinct from the BCP Design Gateways on Bellevue Road and Lake Road, the UC Merced Long Range Development Plan describes the UC Merced 'Gateway District' as the campus entrance and public face of the University. The UC Merced Gateway Distrct is located immediately east of Lake Road, south of Bellevue Road, placing it adjacent to the BCP's Mixed-Use TOD Center. The Gateway District is the link between UC Merced and Central Valley communities; serving UC Merced's core mission of focused education, research, and public service on the one hand, and the private sector on the other. The characteristics make it a resource for public-private ventures and a means for expression of the growing entrepreneurial culture at UC Merced. The Gateway District is planned to include visitor and conference facilities as well as associated support services for those engaged with the campus in joint research, education, and public service initiatives.[18] Administrative offices and continuing education or extension programs can also be located in this district. Within the context of the Gateway District, the City should allow public and government offices and service centers in the Mixed-Use TOD to enhance, support, or complement uses that may occur in UC Merced's "Gateway District" area. The formation of public-private partnerships in or adjacent to this area could form a strong economic-driver for the local and regional economy.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SITES

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* describes seven "Commercial and Industrial Employment Corridors" with heavy concentrations of commercial and industrial development; the BCP is one of these areas, and is described as likely containing significant amounts of job generating uses that wish to be located in close proximity to the UC Merced campus. In numerous locations, the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* describes a vision for future jobs-based land uses in the BCP planning area:

- Provide for increased opportunities for job-based land uses attracted by a university climate while still maintaining the basic concept of mixed-use, pedestrian, and transit oriented communities. (pages 3-71 to 3-73)
- Each of the "Urban Villages" between Lake Road and G Street should contain in addition to "Neighborhood Commercial," "Village Residential," and "Professional Commercial -Office," the opportunity for an expanded urban core comprised of a jobs-based office, business park or research and development type land use supported or spun-off from UC Merced (page 3-56).
- The plan should assess the viability of expanding office, commercial, and research and development land use capacities in the plan area (pages 3-71 to 3-73)
- Some of the land uses could connect to research and development activities associated with the campus research programs or professional services associated with the campus's professional schools. (pages 3-71 to 3-73)

The City of *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* encourages the expansion of office, commercial, and research and development land use capacities in the Bellevue Corridor Plan Area.

Example of R&D Site

HIGH SPEED RAIL

The proposed High Speed Rail system will connect San Francisco to Los Angeles, with a large portion of the system running through the Central Valley with a station in Merced, see Figure 5.

Figure 5. California High Speed Rail Proposed Alignment

Since UC Merced would be a significant attraction for potential riders of the HSR, demand for transportation linkages between the HSR station and UC Merced will develop. Thus, the BCP will need to include designs and infrastructure that accommodate transit and supporting modes of transportation linked to the proposed High Speed Rail station in Merced.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Supplementing key regional features discussed above are local features that shaped many aspects of the BCP, specifically:

- Interconnected ad Complete Streets
- Natural Landforms
- Innovation Hub

CA High Speed Rail

The construction of the proposed High Speed Rail system would provide new jobs for Merced residents and help connect Merced to large population and job centers throughout the State.

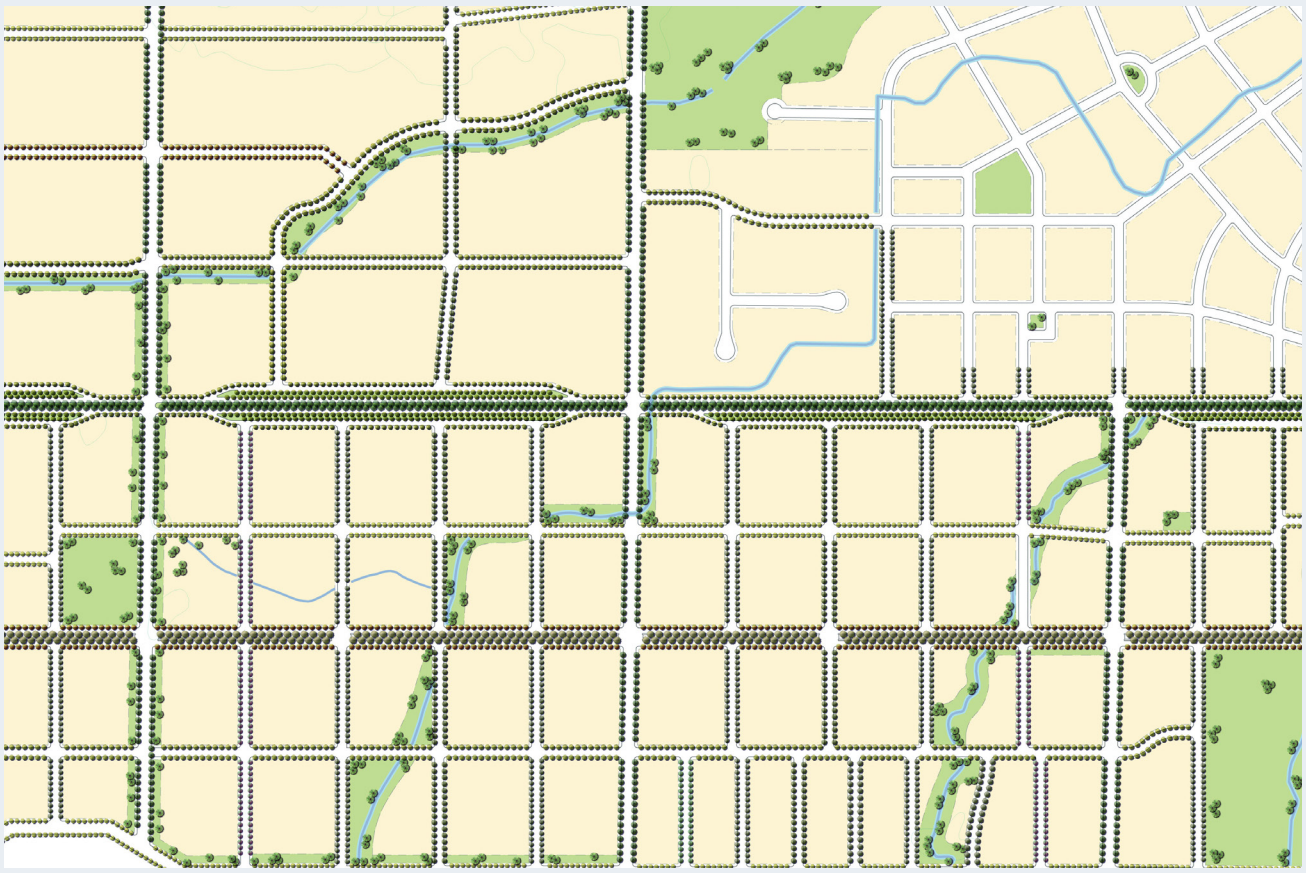
To balance the need for regional vehicular access to UCM and the BCP area with the imperatives of pedestrian-oriented, transit-ready mixed-use neighborhood development, a conceptual network of "complete streets" forms the framework of the BCP.

- Design Gateways
- Natural Resources and Energy Utilization

INTERCONNECTED NETWORK/COMPLETE STREETS

To balance the need for regional vehicular access to UCM and the BCP area with the imperatives of pedestrian-oriented, transit-ready mixed-use neighborhood development, a conceptual network of "complete streets" forms the framework of the BCP. Complete local and collector streets – designed to provide a relatively quiet, low-speed driving environment that is safe and comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists – organize the area into walkable blocks, which are variable in size and shape to accommodate a very wide range of land uses and development types. This network of local and collector streets is carefully connected to the major cross-town arterial corridors at widely spaced intersections to ensure that the vehicular capacity of those corridors is maintained. Frontage roads (also known as side access lanes) may be appropriate along Bellevue Road to allow abutting development to face the corridors to create an attractive urban "gateway", rather than turning their backs to face local streets.

Figure 6. Illustration of an Interconnected Block Structure



NATURAL LANDFORMS

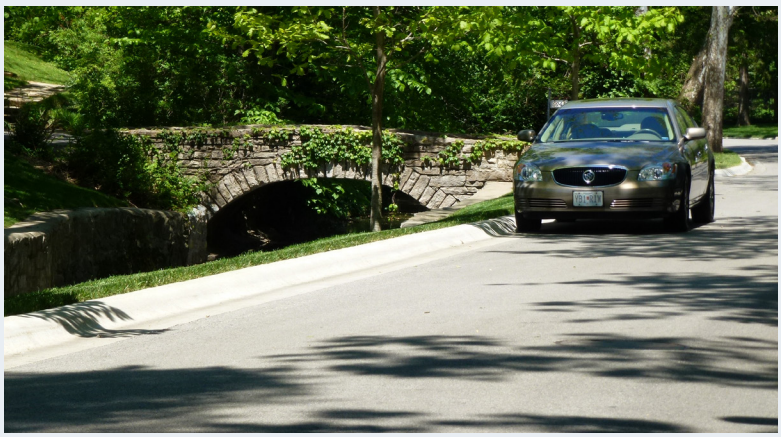
The conceptual street network is shown to generally follow the natural contours of the site to preserve the natural landforms of the BCP. These subtle but distinctive landforms include a number of natural drainages and a low hill at the center of the BCP area, just south of Bellevue Road and straddling Gardner Road. Because Gardner Road is a major north-south circulation corridor - and because the grades along its trajectory are not severe – it is not diverted to follow topographic contours, but streets to the east should bend to conform to the natural contours and adjacent seasonal creek. The pattern of curving streets is truncated to the west of Gardner Road, because the southwest quadrant of the hill lies outside the BCP. However a similar pattern in that area would help to implement the *General Plan* intentions that development be designed in harmony with the natural land.

Natural Hill Landform near UC Merced within the BCP

Single-loaded "drives" are recommended for selected creekfront stretches of these streets, affording motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists views of natural greenways containing preserved and enhanced creeks, rather than relegating the creeks to "drainage alleys" running along the back sides of private properties.

The land uses prioritized for the hilltop area include research and development and potentially multi-family housing as well, either or both of which could benefit from such a central and attractive location.

Example of a Single-loaded Drive



Innovation Hub to Promote STEM Employment and Attract R&D Development

Excerpt from the Brookings Institute Report *The Hidden STEM Economy*:

"Today, there are two STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) economies. The professional STEM economy of today is closely linked to graduate school education, maintains close links with research universities, but functions mostly in the corporate sector. It plays a vital function in keeping American businesses on the cutting edge of technological development and deployment. Its workers are generally compensated extremely well. The second STEM economy draws from high schools, workshops, vocational schools, and community colleges. These workers today are less likely to be directly involved in invention, but they are critical to the implementation of new ideas, and advise researchers on feasibility of design options, cost estimates, and other practical aspects of technological development. Skilled technicians produce, install, and repair the products and production machines patented by professional researchers, allowing firms to reach their markets, reduce product defects, create process innovations, and enhance productivity. These technicians also develop and maintain the nation's energy supply, electrical grid, and infrastructure."

By providing ample space in the BCP for innovative businesses to thrive, the City of Merced can better position itself to support both levels of STEM economies. Through connecting with both UC Merced and Merced College, businesses will be able to access a range of STEM workers to support direct flows of information between the universities and surrounding enterprises.

INNOVATION HUB

The BCP provides an opportunity for UC Merced and the community to fuse and become a hub for innovation in the Central Valley. An innovation hub is a place that supports the flow of information. Innovation can be any groundbreaking approach, idea, or advancement that changes the way we live, work, and play. Through this direct flow of information among the University and surrounding enterprises original ideas can manifest from an educational thought to a service or product on the market.

By planning the BCP as an innovation hub it is possible to increase the potential for businesses to take innovative ideas from mind to market using this type of environment. Innovation starts with the under-story of the economic food chain, the entrepreneurs, which would locate in this type of setting.

The creation of collaborative work environments interlaced with walkable, transit-oriented places to meet, network, and provide housing for employees is essential to supporting entrepreneurial businesses who value face-to-face interaction. This type of physical environment encourages groups of diverse, future-oriented thinkers who have the potential to advance the economy despite downturns, to locate in Merced. Innovation is about people, and it is important to foster an environment that facilitates interaction among individuals. Thus, it is important to create public spaces of interest to attract a variety of people with varying ideas and perspectives. Tech firms value public realms that foster a melting pot of ideas.

DESIGN GATEWAYS TO UC MERCED

Distinct from UC Merced's Gateway District, both Lake Road and Bellevue Road are identified as scenic corridors in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. The position of UC Merced at their intersection further emphasizes the need to enhance the visual character of these roads and to create attractive entryways. In the long-term, Bellevue Road will accommodate regional vehicular traffic, whereas Lake Road will be a local road emphasized by low vehicle speeds and continuous pedestrian and bicycle pathways. Collaboration between the City of Merced and Merced County is needed to craft detailed design standards for these roadways and adjacent properties.

BELLEVUE BOULEVARD

The BCP envisions Bellevue Road as a landscaped boulevard to UC Merced, with sufficient room for 4-lanes or 6-lanes (if needed). Bellevue Road would also be defined by a cohesive design for buildings that address the street to create an awe-inspiring and eye-pleasing gateway to the Central Valley's only UC campus. As an important gateway, a boulevard to UC Merced, the character of Bellevue Road should be attractive, not a default solution. Land uses at the G Street and Gardner Road intersections should exhibit a proud welcoming gateway to the Bellevue Corridor and "driveway" towards UC Merced.

Figure 7. Illustration of Possible Gateway Design Overlay Along Bellevue

LAKE ROAD

In the long-term, regional and community north-south oriented traffic will occur on the Campus Parkway Expressway to the east of Lake Road. Consistent with the traffic study for UC Merced and the northern portion of the University Community, the function of Lake Road will serve local traffic, creating an opportunity to emphasize a linear open space corridor with strong pedestrian and bicycle facilities, along with a landscaped buffer between the rural residential properties to the west of the more intensely developed University Community.

Both Lake Road and Bellevue Road are identified as scenic corridors in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. The position of UC Merced at their intersection further emphasizes the need to enhance the visual character of these roads and to create attractive entryways.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY UTILIZATION

The University of California, Merced has set standards in sustainable planning and environmentally forward design. In order to build upon the framework established by UCM, the BCP carries forward many of the UCM Long Range Development Plan goals and strategies for sustainability while adapting them to address the constraints of the plan area. The UCM Long Range Development Plan principles were created using a triple net zero commitment:

Using the model set by UCM, the BCP should also encourage and utilize renewable sources of energy including solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal power. UCM plans to achieve all three triple net zero commitments shown above by 2020. The City of Merced and the BCP are committed to adhering to principles of sustainable environmental stewardship, conservation and habitat protection in the planning, design, and construction phases of the BCP area. While protecting the natural environment and conserving resources is of the utmost importance, newly constructed buildings should maximize energy efficiency and include passive environmental systems such as shading,

Image of UC Merced's Central Plant received a LEED Gold rating

orientation, and roof configuration. Buildings should also strive to achieve U.S. Green Building Council LEED certification. Landscaping should also be designed to conserve water and recharge groundwater supplies. Likewise, roadways, parking lots, and circulation pathways should minimize, detain, and filter stormwater run off.

Figure 8. UCM Triple Zero Commitments

PLAN STRUCTURE

URBAN DESIGN

The focus of new development will be mixed-use, pedestrian and transit-ready communities, with standards that make the BCP area a gateway to UC Merced and encourage employment-generating uses. Lower-density residential land uses to the north and south of the focus area will form a compatible transition to the existing residential neighborhoods.

MOBILITY

The circulation network for the BCP should balance the need for efficient regional access for motorists with the need for safe and efficient local circulation by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and automobiles. Innovative designs for the major roadways – including Bellevue Road – and for an interconnected network of local streets and collectors are encouraged to achieve this balance.

OPEN SPACE, CONSERVATION, AND RECREATION

The BCP takes an innovative approach to ensuring an interconnected network of parks, trails, and multi-use open space areas. This approach understands that connectivity between open space and recreational areas is as important as the quantity of space.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

New development should take the form of complete, mixed-use, mixed-density, walkable, bikable and transit-oriented neighborhood patterns. These patterns, based on the City's urban design principles, should integrate single-family, multi-family and commercial development, along with significant employment centers for new research and development businesses related to the growing success of UC Merced. To ensure well-connected and integrated development patterns, require that each sub-area be master planned prior to development of individual projects. (See Chapter 5 for more information on implementation.)

URBAN EXPANSION

Urban expansion should be contiguous with existing developed areas to avoid fiscally unsustainable "leap frog" development. New development should employ compact, efficient and mixed-use urban forms that do not unnecessarily or prematurely consume or fragment agricultural land, rural land, or other non-renewable resources. Expansion in the BCP area should be coordinated with the UCM campus and other community plans, and should be oriented in relation to the existing and planned corridors connecting the City with UCM.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Plan for the orderly, phased expansion of urban services – including but not limited to utility systems and public safety facilities – in coordination with new development. The capital cost and operating expenses of such systems should be fiscally sustainable and equitably borne by the benefiting parties.

PLAN FRAMEWORK AND FLEXIBILITY

The BCP is a framework and a set of principles/strategies to help the City expand in a more fiscally sustainable manner and to manage a number of "critical uncertainties" to increase the chances of building an interconnected set of valuable pedestrian and transit-oriented places over a long time. The BCP faced many critical uncertainties during the creation of the plan including the following:

- The timeline for build out of the plan area is not known. Any improvement or condition that is conceived of as "interim" may last a year or 25 years.
- The timeline for buildout of the adjacent University Community Plan area is unknown.
- The growth rate for UC Merced may vary and could grow at a rate as planned, faster, or even slower than predicted.
- The development of the California High-Speed Rail is unpredictable and could impact the demand for space in the city.
- Location, timing, and funding of sewer and water line improvements could prevent buildout of the plan area if not adequately identified or established.

These uncertainties point to the need for the BCP to be flexible, but to establish a vision so that when the area develops, the BCP guides new growth toward the community vision for the area.

A FRAMEWORK OF CERTAINTY

The BCP is a long-term document with a tremendous amount of uncertainty as described above. As such, the plan has a policy framework so when future master planning occurs there is a comprehensive approach in place that is supported by the community. However, since development in the BCP will occur over the long-term, it is important to build flexibility into the plan document. The intent of the plan is to be flexible and to adapt to market changes. The BCP contains minimum and maximum development standards that are crafted with flexibility to enable the plan to respond to future markets.

While the BCP provides a broad range of use and densities that could occur, it emphasizes the foundational building blocks (of street connectivity, transit use, etc.) to create a sense of great place with investment certainty.

While the BCP provides a broad range of uses and densities that could occur, it emphasizes the foundational building blocks (of street connectivity, gateway streets, active and passive open space, transit use, etc.) to create a great sense of place with investment certainty. Through the neighborhood master planning process as described in Chapter 5, the BCP is geared to make projects that are connected to their neighbors and to the transit spine with complete, walkable streets, so the City creates a systematic development where the next development is framed by the preceding development site, and the City is not left with a smattering of projects, but rather the development of a vision.

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PLAN VISION AND STRATEGIES

Throughout development of the Plan, members of the BCP Ad-hoc Citizen Advisory Committee and the community expressed their desired outcomes of the Plan, which can be summarized as a Plan that will create a community that is a beacon of pride for the San Joaquin Valley and the people of the State of California as a whole. Specifically, the community vision includes achieving the following outcomes:

Table 2 Citizen Advisory Committee Desired Outcomes of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan
Community Support
A plan developed out of public outreach and input
A plan reviewed by the development community
Neighborhood Compatibility
Plan elements that provide compatibility with existing 1-acre lots.
A plan that is not offensive to existing residents
A plan that maintains the quality of life for existing residents
Mobility/Circulation
A plan that includes an off-street pedestrian/bike path that parallels Bellevue Road.
A plan that provides a greater awareness of cyclists, pedestrians and users of alternative forms of transportation as a legitimate part of the community, and for their safety as it relates to other vehicles.
A plan that includes a light rail easement to Castle Airport and Atwater.
A plan that results in traffic flow, not congestion, in the area near the campus.
A plan that respects existing property owners along Bellevue Road, and other plan elements that provide compatibility with existing 1-acre lots.
A Plan that connects with downtown at all transportation scales.
A Plan that motivates people to live and work in the Plan area and not migrate to other communities or into farmland areas.
Land Use
A plan that includes economically feasible variety of land uses that are compatible with UCM.
A 21st Century Plan looking to the future and with adequate flexibility to accommodate future technological developments.
An appropriate range of new neighborhoods, commercial centers and transition areas that are anticipated to occur due to UC Merced.
A Plan that is responsive to how the younger population wishes to live; not everyone wants to live in single family homes. How we live today is going to be different from how they choose to live in the future.
A Plan that looks at the long-term, and is not reactive to the immediacy of the current market.

Business Growth
A plan that supports business growth.
A plan that maintains the quality of life for Merced, while providing economic development of the area.
A plan that emphasizes the establishment of sustainable jobs and creative uses.
A Plan that exhibits environmentally and technologically forward thinking, as demonstrated in the development of the UCM campus itself.
Design/Aesthetics
Create an attractive gateway for UC Merced.
A Comprehensive Long-Term Infrastructure Plan
A plan that dovetails with University Community Plan area, and includes an infrastructure plan that is compatible with the larger planning area.
A comprehensive plan, integrated with other planning efforts, for example, the Atwater-Merced Expressway effort.
An infrastructure plan that provides for long-term future growth.
A plan that addresses the interface with the community of Merced, including small-scale connectivity between the City and Campus, not simply by regional improvements.
Coordinated Growth
A plan that coordinates rather than competes with other planning efforts.
A plan that addresses the interface between the Plan area and UCM, making sure there is proper synergy between the plan areas.
Well thought out and careful planning approach for future growth that serves the City of Merced, County, and property owners.
Governance
Plan elements that describe the regulatory "interface" (responsibility and obligations) between property owners and local governments.

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The goal headings of this BCP chapter are grouped into the same policy topics as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. This approach fosters consistency and builds on the City's broader *General Plan* guidance. In furtherance of consistency with the City's *General Plan*, Appendix C, policies specific to the BCP planning area are described in greater detail and grouped with the goals and policies it shares in common with the City's *General Plan*. In addition to the goals and policies below, Master Plans/projects/permit applications need to take into account the BCP in its entirety and be consistent with the language herein.

Table 3 Vision and Urban Design Goals and Policies Specific to the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan consistent with the City's *General Plan*

Goal Area UD-1: Transit-Ready Development or Urban Villages

Policy UD-1.1: Orient buildings to address the street.

Creating a physical environment that encourages pedestrian and transit travel is more than simply providing a sidewalk. Actual use is based on the design of adjacent uses and proximity to a variety of uses. Positioning buildings next to the street and sidewalk (addressing) creates a pleasing environment for the pedestrian where they can enjoy proximity to building entrances, window displays, architectural interest, and other people. This context attracts pedestrians and provides a worthwhile return of the City's investment to construct and occupy space within a public right-of-way.

Policy UD-1.2: Seek to provide incubator-spaces for small businesses.

Through zoning, site design planning and economic development tools seek to provide spaces throughout the planning area, but notably within the Mandeville Corridor, that offer office, retail and small-scale manufacturing incubator-sites for entrepreneurs who are attracted to a university setting.

Policy UD-1.3: Strive to meet the commercial services of not only students, but the local community as well.

Serving a diversified market guarantees services and related activities year-round, not just during the academic schedule. A variety of retail outlets should be present in the BCP to reflect the interests of a diverse population.

Policy UD-1.4: Seek to attract and retain entrepreneurs and UCM graduates.

Some of the most important meetings are spontaneous. Spontaneous meetings occur when paths intersect while traveling from one place to another or standing in line for coffee or lunch. Chance interactions have the qualities of being informative, creative, and social in an important way that reinforces relationships. The Bellevue Corridor should be a place that enables such interactions, such as:

Housing: To encourage the flow of ideas, the BCP should not only have places to meet, but a population to fill such space. The population in the BCP will include: 1) researchers expanding on current and new research and development; 2) students and graduates; 3) young families seeking new business or research opportunities; 4) those wanting to embrace a lifestyle of creativity with the incorporation of thoughts inspired by surrounding people; 5) entrepreneurs who wish to be part of an innovative community; and, 6) small business owners in an innovative community (restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques, apparel stores).

Events and Activities: Support and encourage farmers-markets for local farmers and shoppers, live music to showcase local talent, or other events available to community residents, hosted by local businesses throughout the BCP.

Pedestrian-Related Street Components: Develop streetscapes with ample amenities such as landscaping, shade trees, generous sidewalks, street furniture, signage, lighting, and art to promote pedestrian movement, community attractiveness, and informal meeting spaces. Done right, pedestrian-related street components can spark street-level interaction and maximize the potential for informal contact of the average person in a given public space at any given time.

Scale: To assure frequent interactions, ensure that pedestrian-scale design exists throughout the plan area, but particularly in highly populated areas. At the individual space level, indoor and outdoor spaces will be intimate and active enough to encourage people to meet or stop to engage when they encounter one another.

Goal Area UD-2: Overall Community Appearance and Function

Policy UD-2.1: Development of private and public lands will seek to maintain existing topographical features.

The hilly terrain in the planning area is unique to the City of Merced and should be maintained. The vista and swale topography provide opportunities for open space corridors, curving roadways, and distinct place-making opportunities whether on public or private lands. Removal of large amounts of soil should be avoided; rather the development should fit the character of the land.

Policy UD-2.2: Working in cooperation with the County, the City shall propose development standards for Bellevue Road and Lake Road.

Both Lake Road and Bellevue Road and adjacent environs should be constructed as important gateway roads. Development standards should include a unique roadway cross-section, appropriate siting and aesthetic architecture of adjacent buildings and required yard areas, a complementary street furniture zone (where appropriate), and landscaping both within and along the rights-of-way. The character of these streets should be unique and attractive, and be as much a gateway to UC Merced as a gateway to the City of Merced. Landscaping shall be included within these rights-of-way to create a Boulevard appearance.

Policy UD-2.3: Continue to work with UC Merced and Merced County on cross-jurisdictional, regional transportation and air quality issues, as described in Merced Vision 2030 General Plan policy SD-1.2.

In the future, a functional and interconnected network of regional roadways, transit service and community-wide bikeways will be essential to the formation of a quality living environment near and within the BCP. Lack of coordination between agencies with jurisdiction in the area will likely result in a suite of negative transportation, land use and air quality impacts.

Policy UD-2.4: Through the permitting process, implement employer-based trip reduction programs for employees who work in the BCP plan area.

The BCP planning area includes sizable amounts of land for future employment-based land uses. The BCP is also planned to provide a broad range of functional mobility options including transit, bicycles, pedestrians and cars and trucks. Employer based vehicle trip-reduction programs compliments these features. Consistent with existing General Plan Sustainable Development Policy SD-1.2, the City should implement innovative employer-based trip reduction programs.

Policy UD-2.5: Consistent with existing General Plan Sustainable Development Policy SD-1.7, the City should apply applicable greenhouse gas reduction actions to development and activities within the BCP.

The City's October 2012 Climate Action Plan includes recommended actions that support a broad range of community values related to resource conservation, energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, building healthy communities and establishing leadership and partnerships.

Policy UD-2.2: Working in cooperation with the County, the City shall propose development standards for Bellevue Road and Lake Road.

Both Lake Road and Bellevue Road and adjacent environs should be constructed as important gateway roads. Development standards should include a unique roadway cross-section, appropriate siting and aesthetic architecture of adjacent buildings and required yard areas, a complementary street furniture zone (where appropriate), and landscaping both within and along the rights-of-way. The character of these streets should be unique and attractive, and be as much a gateway to UC Merced as a gateway to the City of Merced. Landscaping shall be included within these rights-of-way to create a Boulevard appearance.

Policy UD-2.6: BCP Policy UD-2.6: All new City facilities in the BCP plan area should be designed, equipped and operated to conserve energy at a higher level than current practice.

Led by the City's Development Services Department, in coordination with the Public Works Department, and others as appropriate, a comprehensive action plan to implement this policy should be developed. As an initial step, the targeted level of energy conservation should be set by the City Council. The action plan would include all City facilities, including but not limited to buildings, external lighting, and pumps. The City should involve local industry representatives, other public agencies, local schools, colleges and universities, and the general public in the development of the action plan. Existing guidelines and codes related to energy use should be considered and updated to emphasize energy efficiency. This work could be funded and supported through grants and local partnerships.

3. MOBILITY

Consistent with State Law and building on the goals of the City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the BCP mobility plan integrates a multi-modal system comprised of automobiles, a public transit system (rubber tire or light rail), as well as bicycles and pedestrians. Each mode is a component of a comprehensive mobility plan. Hinged to this goal of Complete Streets are many supportive features that are foundational to the success of each mode of transportation. In this context, the BCP provides a greater awareness of cyclists, pedestrians and users of alternative forms of transportation as a legitimate part of the community, and for their safety as it relates to other vehicles.

The BCP is based on the "Complete Streets" concept, which emphasizes use of all forms of transportation, including automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit.

Circulation planning is more than including a sidewalk for pedestrians, travel lanes for automobiles, a bus stop for transit or a painted marking for bikes. While these features create spaces for various transportation modes, the essential aspect of circulation planning is attracting mode users to these spaces, which is accomplished by including supportive features in the design of the BCP. Among others, supportive features for all modes of transportation include the following, and are discussed in this chapter:

- Safe travel corridors and street crossings
- Space for landscaping, particularly to provide a buffer for pedestrians and motor vehicles
- Transit-ready developments
- Connection to destinations
- Grid street pattern; and
- Parking facilities.

The use of street-related design elements vary throughout the BCP. While all forms of mobility should be represented in the design of the public rights-of-way, some areas emphasize the need to accommodate heavy loads of auto traffic, whereas others emphasize transit and associated pedestrian travel. Figure 10 indexes the various Complete Streets designs components incorporated in the BCP.

In addition, as described in Appendix D the traffic volume generated by future development in the BCP is anticipated to be almost twenty percent lower than traffic volumes projected in the General Plan. This is primarily the result of modifications to the mix of land uses in the BCP as compared to the General Plan. However, greater reductions in traffic volumes could be achieved if future traffic studies take into account more dispersed traffic patterns and mobility mode splits. The overall benefits of the potential reductions in traffic volumes are reflected in the Plan in terms of recommendations for reductions in the number of traffic lanes (and possibly right-of-way), which could result in lower capital costs for future infrastructure and lower ongoing maintenance costs.

SETTING

The BCP aims to develop an integrated roadway network which achieves the City's goals while accommodating future population growth and development in the BCP area. In order to achieve a high level of multi-modal connectivity, it is important that the BCP be fully integrated into the existing and planned local and regional circulation network. The Vision and Urban Design Chapter already highlighted important regional elements of this mobility network including the Atwater-Merced Expressway/Loop Road, the City of Merced planned transit corridor, the extension of the City's community arterial network, and the potential high speed rail line and station. The section below discusses planned mobility networks within the community plan area.

CONNECTION TO UC MERCED AND THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

The BCP area borders the UC Merced campus is a key trip generator. The proximity to UC Merced, which is projected to grow to approximately 25,000 students and 6.500 employees at full buildout, will have a significant impact on the circulation network within and around the BCP area. In order to address the future growth of UC Merced and the University Community, the BCP takes a pro-active approach to accommodating additional vehicle trips. Consistent with the complete streets focus and *General Plan* principles of compact and efficient development patterns, the BCP plans for future mobility needs through a multi-modal circulation network and by dispersing automobile traffic on a connected grid system. Connection points from the Bellevue Community Plan to these plan areas to the east include Cardella Road, Foothill Road, Mandeville Lane (connecting with the planned transit center at UC Merced), and Bellevue Road. Bikeways are also planned to connect (see Figure 25). Future consideration to connect Old Lake Road with Lake Road should occur, and result in a decision as to the type of connection ranging from an off-street bike path to no more than a minor collector roadway.

Amtrak Service Through Downtown Merced

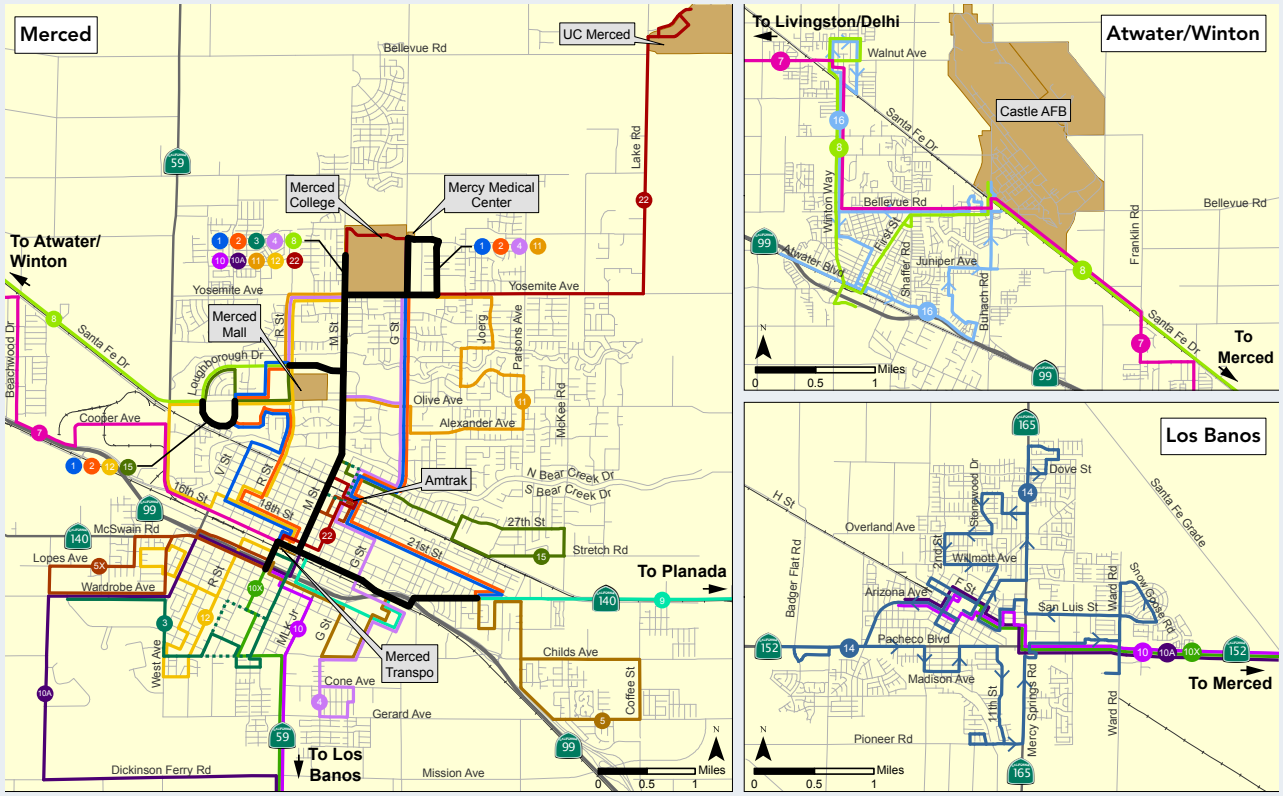
TRANSIT

The BCP provides for increased public transit options and creates a greater ability to connect other regional transit systems, such as regional rail services or bus routes, which depart from downtown Merced and connect to surrounding cities.

EXISTING TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) *Short Range Transit Plan 2012-2017* shows the existing network of public transit options available in Merced. Connections also provide access to Atwater, Winton, and Los Banos. Figure 9 shows existing local and regional transit routes.

Figure 9. Existing Regional Bus Connectivity



MCAG Short Range Transit Plan 2012-2017

BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Through the BCP, the City of Merced bikeway network of 22 miles of bike paths and 29 miles of bike lanes will be expanded and connect to bicycle resource rich locations, namely the Lake Road Bike Path and linkage to Lake Yosemite, and to the UC Merced campus. To match anticipated bicycle ridership at UC Merced, bicycle use within the BCP is anticipated to be extensive. Bikeways will serve pedestrian traffic too, and together support an active lifestyle within the community.

TRAFFIC REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Traffic volumes in the plan area will increase with development of the City's general plan. Bellevue Road may experience traffic volumes up to 50,000 to 60,000 daily vehicles trips (DVT) with 30,000 to 40,000 DVT on Cardella Road, and over 30,000 DVT on G Street. To maintain adequate levels of service while encouraging complete streets and walkability, the BCP emphasizes alternative strategies to meet this increased demand, including the development of a smaller street grid network. Additionally, the General Plan 50,000 to 60,000 DVT estimate is based on employees and consumers commuting from outside of Merced. The BCP addresses the imbalance between jobs and housing, reducing the inflow of vehicle trips, as many of these trips could be accommodated locally, with other forms of transportation.

COMPLETE STREETS

MULTI-MODAL

On September 30, 2008, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 1358, the California Complete Streets Act. The Act directs local jurisdictions to find innovative ways to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and to shift from short trips in the automobile to biking, walking, and use of public transit through the establishment of a balanced multi-modal transportation network.

There are many "Complete Street" Implementing Actions in the City's General Plan that also apply to the BCP area, including Implementation Action 2.1.d, which states, "The Bellevue Corridor and other important corridors should be designed using the Complete Streets concept, which emphasizes use of all forms of transportation on streets, including automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit."

These principles emphasize planning, design, and construction for all modes in a manner that results in high usage levels. As such, roadways are treated as the essential element in the urban fabric that connects rather than separates neighborhoods located on opposite sides of a road.

CONNECTED

The full and varied use of all forms of transportation not only reduces traffic, but also enables active lifestyles, results in cleaner air, an increase in disposable income, and attracts a population that values these qualities. The degree to which people choose to utilize transit, bicycling, and walking as a viable form of transportation is grounded in the design of a community's street network, which can be summarized as "walkable-urban," and "driveable-suburban." The BCP includes both forms by providing the necessary community and regional scale arterial streets for long-distance travel, and by infusing an interconnected format of roads at the collector and local street level through the use of the grid-street pattern. Interconnected streets with pedestrian scale features create transit, bike, and pedestrian-friendly environments, and offer an amazing amount of flexibility for land use development (intensity and a horizontal and vertical mixing of land uses), and potential to remove street segments to create super blocks where necessary.

DISPERSAL

The multi-modal and connected nature of the circulation system in the BCP will also tend to disperse all modes of traffic. Not only does this reduce congestion and associated noise and pollution that tends to form with other forms of street networks, but it also maximizes the utility of land set aside as right-of-way, resulting in a cost-effective use of public funds.

TRANSIT-READY DEVELOPMENT

Transit connects passengers to destinations and is an integral component of shaping future growth into a more sustainable form. The creation of truly transit-oriented land uses along transit corridors can be a challenge and often results in transit-adjacent development (TAD) that is not truly transit oriented.

TAD characteristics include: a suburban street pattern; low densities; dominance of surface parking; limited or no pedestrian access; single-family homes; industrial land uses; segregated land uses; and gas stations, car dealerships, drive-thru stores, and other auto-focused land uses. For example, newer segments of the M Street Transitway Corridor have been developed with characteristics of TAD. Land uses are internally oriented with sound walls separating the transit corridor from adjacent residences.

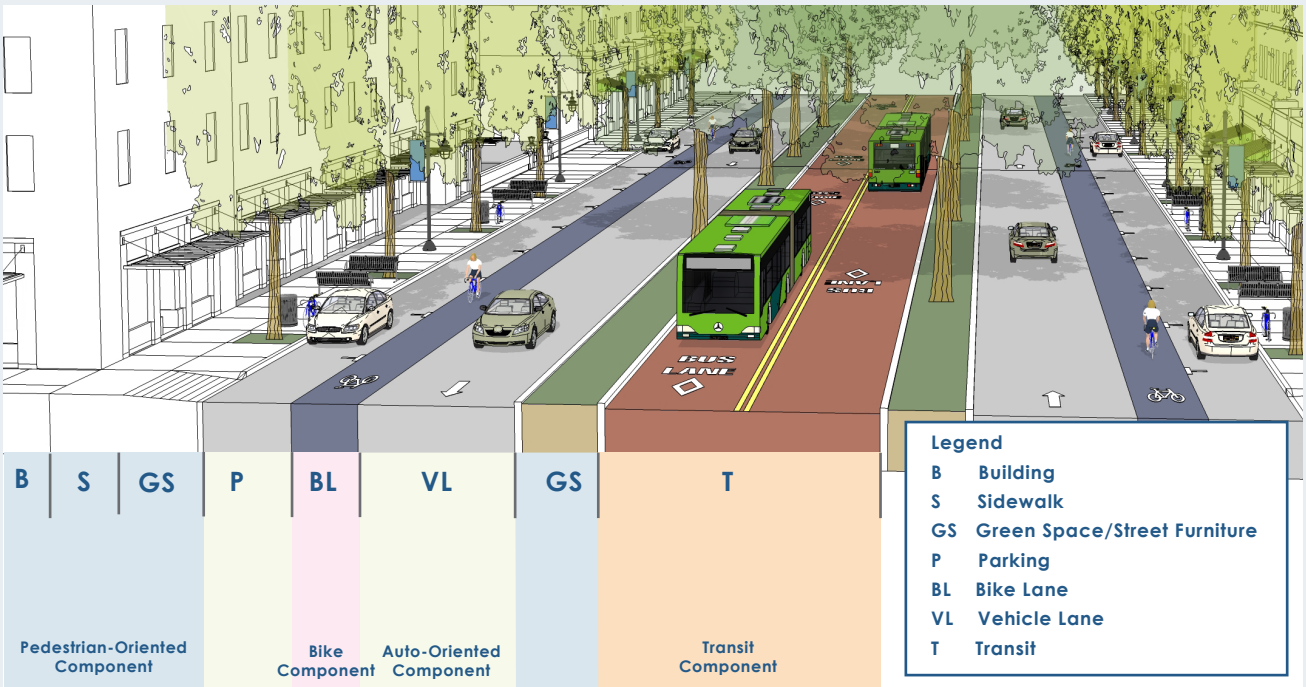
The BCP discourages the formation of TADS, and encourages the creation of transit oriented development (TOD). A TOD is characterized by land use patterns that are oriented to maximize access to transit stations within a one-quarter mile radius (a five-minute walk). Characteristics include: a grid street pattern, high densities, mostly underground or structured parking, pedestrian-focused design, bicycle access and parking, multi-family homes, office and retail land uses (especially along main streets), vertically and horizontally mixed land uses, and stores and local-servicing land uses designed for pedestrian access. Older segments of Merced's street network were developed with land uses oriented toward adjacent streets, a desirable trait for promoting TOD.

Whereas the entire BCP utilizes these strategies at varying levels, at the core of the BCP is the High Quality Mandeville Transit Corridor, one-half mile in width, and situated between Bellevue Ranch Master Planned Development and UC Merced, which maximizes these strategies to their fullest (see Figure 24 on page 54).

BCP CIRCULATION PLAN COMPONENTS

The BCP sets up the framework for an interconnected street network which can accommodate transit, bicycle infrastructure, and pedestrian amenities. This network will be the foundation for establishing and enhancing walkability of the area. A multi-modal street network is a vital component to encouraging increased and efficient use of public transit and transit oriented development. This section introduces the four components of the BCP Circulation Plan that will implement the City's Complete Streets vision, and include 1) the Auto-Oriented Component; 2) the Transit-Oriented Component; 3) the Bicycle Oriented Component; and 4) the Pedestrian-Oriented Component. Depending upon the context of the road, varying use of these modes occur throughout the Plan area. For example, the circulation network emphasizes automobiles along Bellevue Road, but emphasizes transit along Mandeville Lane. The design cross-section and streetscape design varies depending upon the street classification, its regional or community-wide context and adjacent land uses. Figure 10 depicts the BCP Complete Streets Components.

Figure 10. Complete Street Components in the Bellevue Community Plan



AUTO-ORIENTED COMPONENT

A street network can foster or constrain economic and social activity, enhance or limit social equity in ability to travel, and provide or negate a setting for high quality design at all scales: building, neighborhood, and region. The BCP proposes a grid street network which creates equality in modal type without diminishing regional connectivity or flow of traffic on major arterials. Grid circulation networks provide many route options, reduce vehicle speed, are more conducive to walking and cycling, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and are associated with compact development and conservation of open spaces.

Table 4 describes the proposed roadway network in the BCP, and Figure 11, the Official BCP Street Classification Map, illustrates the street and roadway types included in the BCP. These include arterial, collector and local streets. All roadway alignments proposed under this plan are conceptual and may be varied, curved, or otherwise realigned as appropriate. Intersections on Bellevue Road with collectors will be appropriately spaced to accommodate signalized intersections, if needed. It is important to ensure the BCP roadway network as a whole generates an interconnected network that supports pedestrian, bike, and transit travel, and that high volumes of high-speed automobile traffic, while necessary on some roads, does not preclude functional multi-modal travel on others. The proposed grid-type street network, especially at the local street scale, creates walkable pedestrian scale blocks.

Each type of roadway located within the BCP area is described in the narratives on the following pages.

Table 4 Street Classifications within the Bellevue Community Plan

Streets in the BCP	Proposed Street Classification	Right-of-Way	# of Lanes	Driveway Access Restrictions	Street Intersection Spacing	Parking
Bellevue Rd. [1]						
	Major Arterial with Side Access Roads	150' - 200' (dependent on side access roads on 1 or both sides)	6 lanes with one-way or two-way frontage roads	Full (driveway access from frontage roads)	1/4 mile for signalized intersections	No (parallel or diagonal permitted on side access roads)
Cardella Rd.	Divided Arterial	118'	4-6 lanes with median / left-turn pockets	Partial	1/4 mile to 1/2 mile (see *General Plan*)	No
G St.	Major Arterial	128'	4-6 lanes with median / left-turn pockets	Full	1/4 mile to 1/2 mile (see *General Plan*)	No
Gardner Road	Minor Arterial	94' Divided	2-4 lanes with median / left-turn pockets	Partial	1/8 mile to 1/4 mile (see *General Plan*)	No
Mandeville Lane. (New)	Transit Avenue	120' - 130'	2 lanes	No (rear alley access recommended)	As needed	Permitted
	Collectors	60' - 80'	2 lanes with median / left-turn pockets	No (rear alley access recommended)	As needed	Permitted
	Local Roads	51' - 62'	2 lanes	No	As needed	Permitted

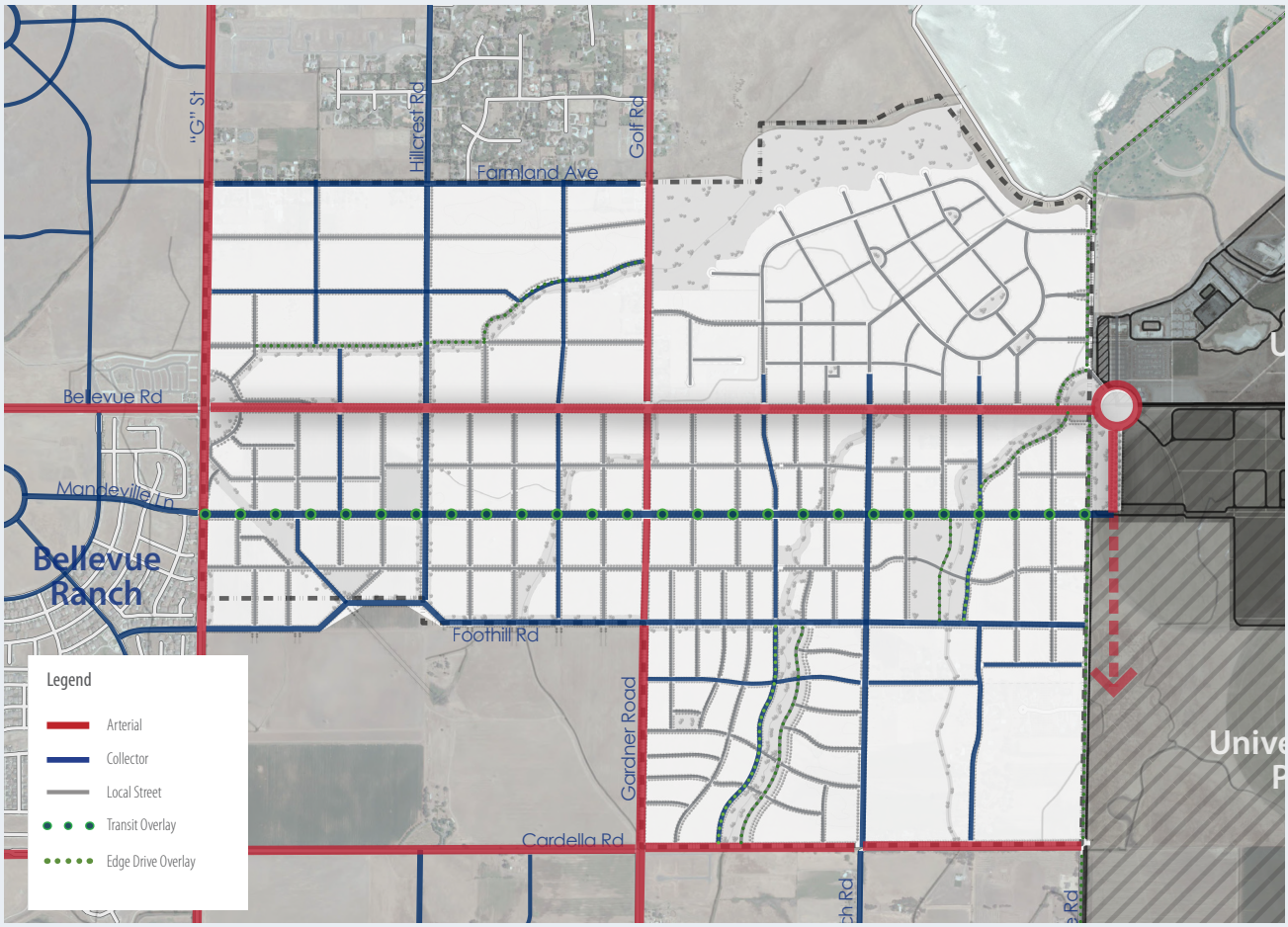
Notes:

1. The Merced Vision 2030 General Plan designates Bellevue Road as a six lane facility; however, the BCP recommends a future study to reduce Bellevue Road to a preferred four-lane facility with side access roads

2. The Merced Vision 2030 General Plan designates Gardner Road as a four lane facility; however, the BCP recommends a future study to reduce Bellevue Road to a three-lane boulevard with limited driveway access. Depending on the results of the study, Garder Avenue/ Golf Road, north of Bellevue Road, could be reduced to a two-lane street.

3. The street right-of-ways (ROWs) may vary depending on the final design characteristics chosen for each street type.

Figure 11. BCP Street Classification



Arterial Streets - RED SOLID & DASHED

Within the BCP, arterial streets fall into two categories. Class S (Standard) Arterials are those that are consistent with the City's adopted *General Plan* and Official Design Standards. These roads include G Street and Cardella Road. Class V (Variable) Arterials incorporate variations in street design that are needed to be consistent with and to support design objectives specific to the BCP, namely to create a gateway image and to create a transit supportive setting. Variable Arterials include Bellevue Road and Gardner Road. After Plan adoption, an important next step will be to set road plan lines for arterial streets in order to ensure adequate future ROW with minimal impact to existing structures.

Bellevue Road

Although Bellevue Road is a part of the regional traffic serving Merced Loop Road, it will serve future local land uses with access needs. The Bellevue Road standard balances these needs, and provides an aesthetic gateway design component. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* designates Bellevue Road as a six lane facility; however, the BCP recommends a future study to reduce Bellevue Road to a preferred four-lane facility, provided that local traffic is provided for in one of the methods described below. Bellevue Road is planned to have adequate right-of-way for these features, which would also include a landscaped median, a bikeway, a parkway, and a sidewalk. Sound walls would not be allowed.

Urban design features that emphasize accessibility and views of buildings are encouraged within the BCP. In terms of accessibility, development of adjacent properties would conform to one of the following options: 1) access by internal connection to local area streets; 2) where additional side-road access is planned, required, or desired by the owner, the buildings will be located adjacent to a one-way side access slip road that branches off of and runs parallel to Bellevue Road or a two-way, larger side access road (see Figure 12, Figure 13, and Figure 14). Angled back-in parking is encouraged along one-way side access roads and parallel parking is encouraged on the side of the street adjacent to buildings for two-way side access roads, or 3) in areas where additional vehicular access is not needed, the buildings could be located along the sidewalk, provided housing units adequately buffer or shield noise impacts, and an additional (3rd) travel lame may be required pending a traffic assessment. For purposes of planning, Option 1 is considered the standard design unless changed by the City through the Neighborhood Master Planning process outlined in the Community Character Chapter. The benefits of side access roads include:

- Allows buildings to face or address the street, creating a more visually pleasing setting and gateway environment, as opposed to a long blank sound wall or loading dock;
- Creates a space for pedestrians to access buildings and to use mobility options (transit, bike lanes, sidewalks);
- Provides a place for on-street parking; and
- Provides a place for local traffic to maneuver without slowing thru-traffic on Bellevue Road.

Alternatively, creating large streets without the provision for "address making" along it, reduces development flexibility and increases the odds of creating an impaired visual environment.

Figure 12. Bellevue Road with Two-way Side Access Road

Figure 13. Example of a Boulevard with One-way Side Access Slip Road and Intersections in Berkeley, CA

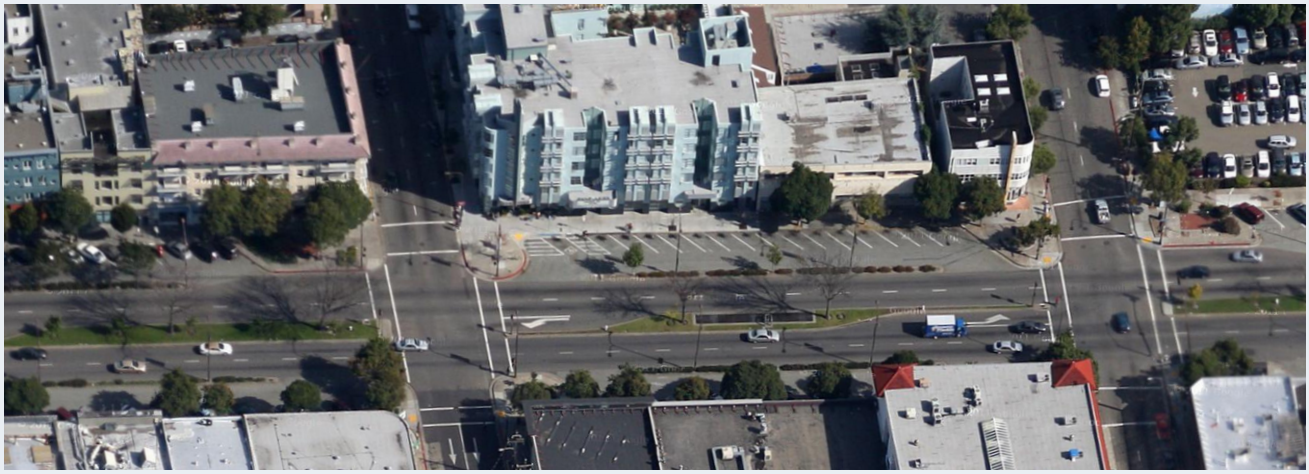


Figure 14. Example of a Boulevard with One-way Side Access Slip Road in Berkeley, CA

Gardner Road

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* classifies Gardner Road as a Minor Arterial with up to four lanes and a median with left-turn pockets. Subject to future study, the BCP recommends transitioning the road, north of Foothill Drive, into a three-lane boulevard with limited driveway access, balancing the need to accommodate high-traffic capacity with neighborhood compatibility. (Note: North of Bellevue Road, Gardner Road/Golf Road could become a two-lane road subject to a future study.) The proposed lane configuration, to one lane in each direction plus a center turn lane, is compatible with the smaller block network of the residential areas north of Foothill Drive. Buildings would be oriented facing the street according to the standards of the character area. Residences would have large front yards in the Single-Family Character Area (Figure 15) and in high-intensity areas between Foothill Drive and Bellevue Road the yards would be replaced by a wider sidewalk, tree-wells and a furniture zone.

South of Foothill Drive, Gardner Road is envisioned to remain a four lane Minor Arterial as described by the General Plan. This section will have limited driveway access to adjacent properties with right-turn-in/right-turn-out access at 1/8 mile to 1/4 mile intervals.

Figure 15. Gardner Road in Single Family Character Area

Cardella Road

Consistent with Table 4.2 of the City's *General Plan*, this road is planned to be a divided arterial with a 118 foot right-of-way to contain between 4 to 6 lanes with partial driveway access restrictions. Outside of the BCP, a 6-lane segment of Cardella Road is planned between M Street and R Street. Collector street intersection spacing ranges from ¼ mile to ½ mile. On-street parking is not permitted.

G Street

Consistent with Table 4.2 of the City's *General Plan*, this road is planned to be a major arterial with a 128 foot right-of-way to contain 4 lanes with full driveway access restrictions. North of Bellevue Road, the *General Plan* plans for up to 6 lanes. Collector street intersection spacing ranges from ¼ mile to ½ mile. On-street parking is not permitted.

Collector Streets- BLUE SOLID & DASHED

Collector streets, including Foothill, Hillcrest, Paulson, Hatch, and Farmland, are generally spaced at ¼ mile intervals to facilitate traffic flow and signal timing, as needed. Collector streets should have one travel lane in each direction, bike lanes, curbside parallel parking, and parkway strips with street trees and sidewalks. Similar to major arterials, sound walls are not allowed and buildings will face the street. BCP collector streets have a unique cross section with wider parkway strips in residential areas. In high-intensity Character Areas (Mixed Use TOD, Business Park, Multifamily Neighborhood and Flex-Mixed Use), the travel lanes will be wider, bike lanes will be provided between the travel lanes and parking lanes, and the parkway strip would be replaced with a wide sidewalk (14 to 18 feet) with tree wells and street furniture. Intersections would be designed for pedestrian safety, incorporating cross walks and pedestrian bulb-outs, as appropriate. Collector roads that link newly urbanized areas of the BCP with existing rural residential neighborhoods should include design features that minimize traffic impacts anticipated to occur as a result of build-out of the BCP.

Figure 16. Collector Street through a Typical Multi-Family Character Area

Figure 17. Collector Street through a Typical Mixed-Use Character Area

Figure 18. Collector Street through a Typical Single-Family Character Area

Mandeville Lane

Mandeville Lane is a collector road, and the recommended transit route. The alignment of Mandeville Lane is designed to connect pedestrians and bicyclists to the transit route within five-minute, ¼ mile walking distances and, as shown in Figure 19, includes:

1. A dedicated bus guideway down the median east of G Street (transit west of G Street will share travel lanes with automobiles).
2. One lane of traffic each direction, bike lanes on each side of the street, and on-street parallel parking on both sides of the street.
3. Left turn lanes at controlled intersections (signal or stop-sign). The parking lane would be removed to allow for the additional lane which would improve intersection performance. This could effect the curvature of the through traffic lanes and may reduce traffic speeds.

4. Sidewalks and parkway strips. The sidewalk width and street furniture vary, depending on location. Sidewalks in residential areas shall have minimum 5 to 6 feet of walkable space area and wide landscaping strips. Along Mixed-use TOD, R&D, and Neighborhood Centers, Mandeville Lane shall have wider sidewalk widths, 12-14 feet, to accommodate tree wells and street furniture while not blocking or impeding pedestrian movement.

Over time, the Mandeville Transit corridor could transition from a bus route to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. BRT improvement and service options would provide dedicated travel lanes for bus service in combination with high-occupancy transit vehicles, enhanced boarding platforms and signal pre-emption measures to minimize travel time and maximize potential ridership. A main component of BRT is a dedicated travel lane, reducing conflict between cars and buses and also reducing time delays. BRT can be phased into the BCP area by use of a vegetated median strip in the interim. This strip can be turned into the dedicated bus lane as funding becomes available. By planning ahead and establishing the BRT design framework early in the planning stages, potential future retrofitting costs can be significantly reduced.

Several traffic control options are available for Mandeville Lane, depending on the function of the roadway and the presence of BRT. The BCP recommends traffic signals where Mandeville lane intersects with collector or arterial streets. Roundabouts could be an alternative option, and would require further study. In general, roundabouts would be a more feasible option on north/south collector streets, where the roundabout would not need to accommodate a transit stop, as on Mandeville Lane.

Figure 19. Mandeville Lane- Transit Avenue - T.O.D. Center

Local Streets- GRAY DASHED

As mentioned earlier, the creation of a network of local streets with short blocks is necessary to encourage walking, biking, and transit use which is the foundation of any transit-oriented development. The Plan recommends small walkable blocks in the TOD core areas, with larger blocks permitted to accommodate larger buildings in the Research and Development Character Area. Local streets are highly interconnected to disperse traffic across the grid and provide pedestrian, vehicle, and bicycle direct access to a variety of destinations. The street cross-section is consistent with adopted City design standards. Figure 21 and Figure 22 illustrate the different characteristics depending on adjacent uses.

The local roads depicted on the Street Classification Map (Figure 11) represent a circulation concept and does not dictate specific form on any particular property. The actual location of local streets is flexible as long as it maintains a high degree of connectivity. Natural features and certain land uses may influence the trajectories of roads, and the map shows how variations may include curving roads along open space corridors or hillsides, and removal of local roads in research and development, entertainment or community commercial areas.

While continuity and interconnectedness are essential features to the overall local street network in the BCP, there may be situations where providing public spaces or accommodating new development may result in dead-end local streets. For example, in mixed-use, research and development, and commercial centers local streets may be terminated in a close or a rosewalk (pedestrian-only street/green). In Single-Family and Rural Residential Characters Areas, select streets may end as open-ended cul-de-sacs. All configurations should allow pedestrians and bicycles to pass freely to maintain the transit-oriented design of the circulation network.

Example of a Rosewalk

Example of an Open-Ended Cul-de-sac

STREET OVERLAY DESIGNATIONS

High Quality Transit Corridor (Open Green Circle)

Mandeville Lane is positioned well to offer excellent transit service to the community and points beyond. In addition to the ease of connecting to future north-south transit routes, it directly connects the transit centers planned in the Bellevue Ranch Development and UC Merced. To either side of Mandeville Lane for a distance of two miles, pedestrian-oriented land uses and street designs create a transit-ready development pattern that has the potential to generate a large demand for transit services. Mandeville Lane should be designed to allow pedestrians to easily cross the street.

These streets are highly interconnected to disperse traffic and to provide pedestrian, vehicle, and bicycle access to a variety of destinations.

Edge Drives (Green Dashed)

Edge drives are single-loaded streets (can be local or collector streets) that run along the edges of significant community open spaces providing motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists daily access to green space, such as creek greenways, parks, and the Lake Road greenway near the UC Merced Campus. These drives have a parkway strip and sidewalk. The residential side has a curb, with tree-wells and street furniture when the drive runs along mixed-use or commercial properties. The greenway side of the street will be designed to allow for natural runoff and storm water infiltration while also contributing to the natural setting. Parking on the green space side can be provided for park visitors using pervious pavement which still maintains the natural drainage features of the greenway side of the road. A Class 1 bikeway, jogging path, or equestrian trail can also be provided along the greenway.

Lake Road is a local road that runs alongside the Rural Residential and Mixed Use TOD Character Areas. In both, the road is a two-lane road with open space on the east side. The design elements on the west side of the road reflect the nature of the character areas (see Figure 21 & Figure 22). In the Rural Residential Area, the road retains its rural character with no sidewalks and a drainage swale. In the Mixed-Use TOD Area, the urban side of the street has on-street parking, street trees, and a sidewalk. The transition from rural to urban frontages would occur around Foothill Drive.

Figure 20. Typical Edge Drive with Side Parking

Figure 21. Lake Road - Natural Rural Edge Drive

Figure 22. Lake Road - Edge Drive with Mixed-Use Character Area

Gateways

Both Lake Road and Bellevue Road are identified as scenic corridors in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. The position of UC Merced at this intersection further emphasizes the need to enhance the visual character of these roads and to create attractive entryways. In the long-term, Bellevue Road will accommodate regional vehicular traffic, whereas Lake Road will be a local road characterized by low vehicle speeds and continuous pedestrian and bicycle pathways. Bellevue Road should create a gateway design at the intersection with G Street to create a sense of arrival while travelling to UC Merced through the BCP area. Figure 23 illustrates a gateway design concept for Bellevue Road. See Chapter 2 for more information on Gateways. Collaboration between the City of Merced and Merced County is needed to craft detailed design standards for these roadways and adjacent properties.

Figure 23. BCP Gateway Overlay at Bellevue Road & G Street

PARKING

On street parking can be important in the urban environment for the success of the retail businesses that line the street and to provide a buffer for pedestrians and help calm traffic speeds. On-street parking occupies about half the surface area per car compared to off-street facilities, which require driveways and aisles for access and maneuvering.

Where angled parking is proposed for on-street parking on frontage streets, designers should consider the use of reverse-in angle (or front out) parking in lieu of front-in angled parking. Motorists pulling out of reverse-in angled parking can better see the active street they are entering. This is especially important to bicyclists. Moreover, people exiting cars do so on the curb side and aren't likely to step into an active travel lane.

Another tool for on-street parking is the park assist lane. Often when on-street parking is provided on busy roads, drivers find it difficult to enter and leave their parked vehicle. Where space is available, consideration should be given to adding a park assist lane between the parking lane and travel way to provide 3 feet of space so car doors can be opened and vehicles can enter or depart with a higher degree of safety and less delay. Parking assist lanes also narrow the feel of the travel lane and slow traffic.

Parking within the BCP area is provided through a combination of on- and off-street parking. On-street parking varies with the street classification type, where appropriate. As the population within the BCP increases into the future, the flexibility of the BCP allows gradual transition to off-street, structured parking facilities. For details on type, and location of parking, see Table 4, and the description of each street type, above.

Example of Back-in Angled Parking & Assistance Lane

Source: City of Richmond

Example of Reverse-in Angled Parking

TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMPONENT

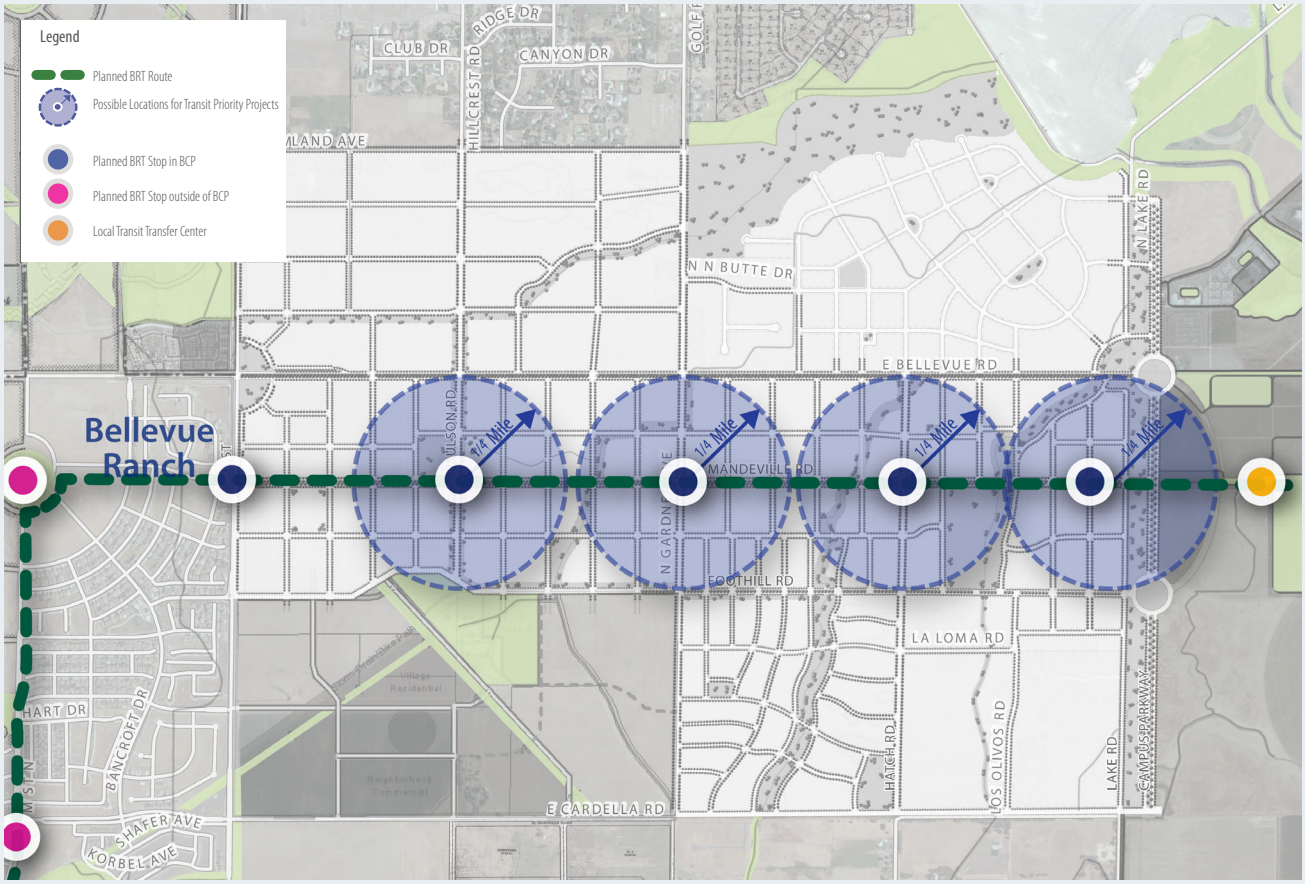
While necessary, operating buses and bus-stops do not constitute the full spectrum of a successful transit system. Land uses, from the perspective of origins and destinations, along with an environment that attracts pedestrian use are equally important. The extent of the transit system in the BCP encompasses all aspects of a successful system, which include transit-ready developments (discussed early in the chapter) and transit priority projects, a highly connected street system, transit accommodations, together with the "pedestrian-oriented" and bicycle-oriented components of the BCP Circulation Plan.

Full transit-service will be phased in over several years. Until BRT level services are provided, a wide, landscaped median will reserve a site for the BRT guideway.

CONNECTIVITY

The recommended local street layout supports functional transit nodes that can be accessed within a five minute, ¼ mile, walking radius, and is an essential component of a successful transit system. The intent is to emphasize that a high degree of interconnected roads are needed to link a variety of places so people can walk to and from home, work, transit, and other destinations without being discouraged by having to walk a long distance. The actual design and placement of local streets is flexible; the intent is connectivity.

Figure 24. Five Minute Walk from Proposed Transit Line



HIGH QUALITY TRANSIT CORRIDOR

The BCP establishes a transit route along a centralized transit-oriented avenue, Mandeville Lane. This alignment establishes a direct connection between the adjacent Bellevue Ranch Master Plan transit center and the proposed UC Merced Transit Hub. Transit stations are proposed along Mandeville Lane at ¼ mile intervals from Bellevue Ranch to the UC Merced Campus as depicted in Figure 24.

TRANSIT ACCOMMODATIONS

Public transit serves a vital transportation function for many people; it is their access to jobs, school, shopping, recreation, visitation, worship, and other daily functions. Public transit should be planned and designed as part of the street system. It should interface seamlessly with other modes, recognizing that successful transit depends on customers getting to the service via walking, bicycling, car, taxi, or transit.

Transit stops should be planned following these principles:

- The essential streetscape elements for transit include signs, shelters, and benches. Shelters should be located in a sidewalk's furniture zone so they don't conflict with the pedestrian zone.

- Transit stops should be easily accessible, with safe and convenient crossing opportunities.
- Transit stops should be active and attractive public spaces that attract people on a regular basis, at various times of day, and all days of the week.
- Transit stops should also provide other amenities to make waiting for the next bus comfortable.
- Transit stops function as community destinations. The largest stops and stations should be designed to facilitate programming for a range of community activities and events.
- Transit stops should be attractive and visible from a distance.
- Streets that connect neighborhoods to transit facilities should be especially attractive, comfortable, and safe and inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists.

TRANSIT PRIORITY PROJECTS

Transit Priority Areas were introduced in California's Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) intended to align regional transportation, land use, housing and greenhouse gas emissions planning. A key element of SB 375 is the option for regions and their local governments to provide significant California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) regulatory streamlining incentives for Transit Priority Projects (TPP). CEQA streamlining can provide greater time certainty and reduce costs for infill and transit-oriented development. One main requirement of a TPP is that it be located within one-half mile of either a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan (RTP), with service intervals of not less than 15 minutes during peak commute hours.

Transit Priority Projects (TPP) are housing or mixed-use residential projects which are located within walking distance to transit services. TPPs are eligible for CEQA streamlining under California SB 375.

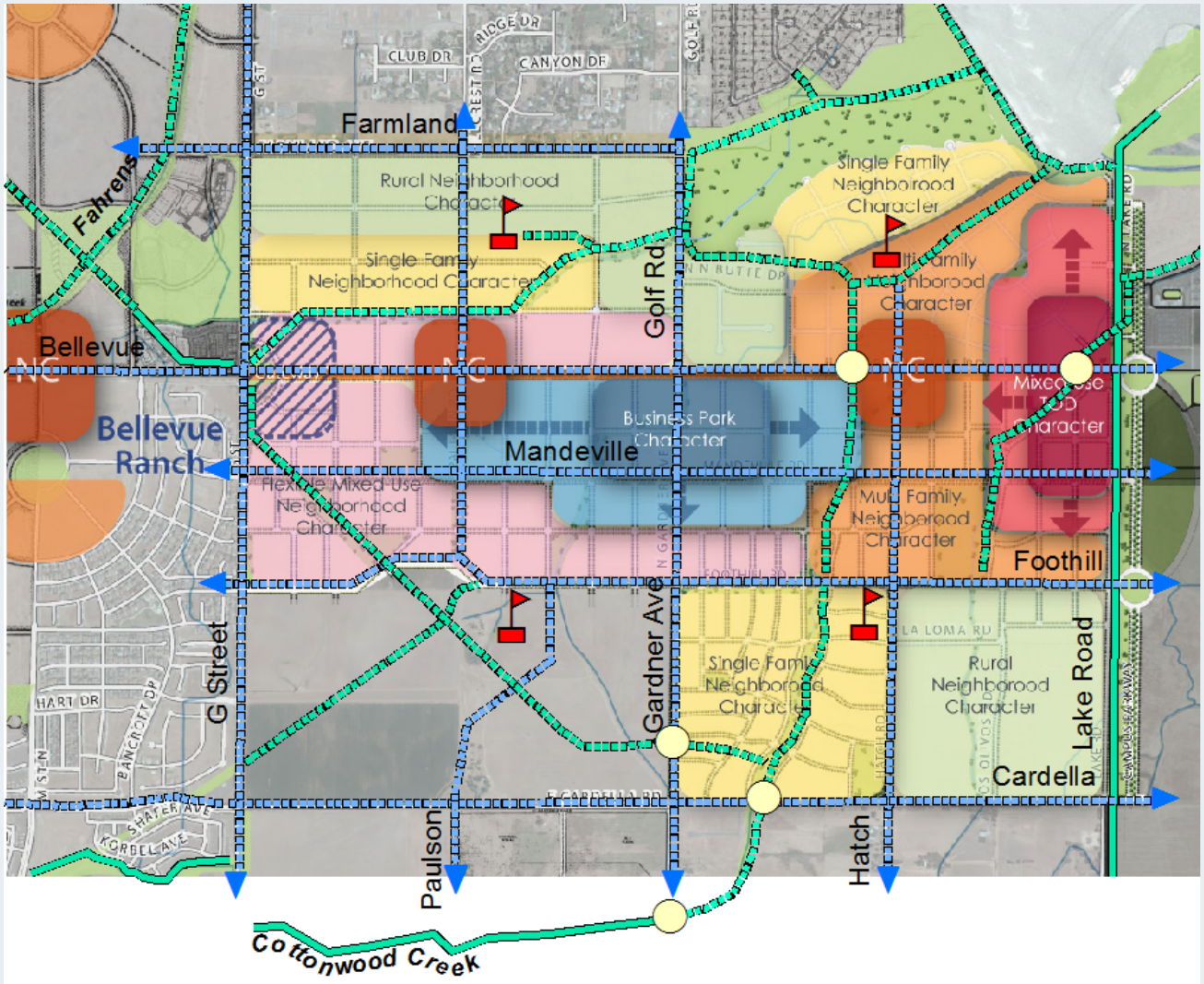
In addition to proximity to transit, a Transit Priority Project is required to be 50 percent residential, by square footage, with a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre. If a TPP includes a commercial component, it must meet a floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.75 unless the commercial component accounts for less than 25% of the total TPP square footage. In which case, there is no minimum FAR requirement.

The BCP allows for densities and intensities to meet TPP requirements along the Madeville transit route (see also Table 9). However, since TPPs will be implemented at the project level, the exact size and locations have not been determined.

BICYCLE-ORIENTED COMPONENT

Utilizing the interconnected street and open space pattern, bikeways in the BCP should be placed along open space corridors, canal easements (where appropriate), and connect with Lake Yosemite and the Lake Road bike path. The close proximity to UC Merced supports the creation of a world-class bike system to accommodate students, residents, and employees within and surrounding the BCP area. Additionally, the City of Merced 2013 Bicycle Transportation Plan should be updated in conjunction with this plan to

Figure 25. Bicycle Transportation Map



coordinate the BCP and Citywide efforts. Planned bikeways within the BCP are detailed in Figure 25.

Important bicycle planning elements should be considered during the development of the BCP's circulation system:

- Coordinate bike planning and construction with UCM and Merced County;
- Explore provision of unpaved trails in rural residential areas;
- Placement of a bicycle boulevard in the area bounded by G Street, Bellevue Road, Lake Road and Foothill Drive;
- Connect bikeways to parks and schools; and
- Plan bike paths to encourage crime prevention through design.

PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMPONENT

Merced has many senior citizens, young people, and other residents who have limited access to an automobile. The ability to access shopping, community activities, and work within safe, easy walking distances to home is essential to support the needs of the local population. People who utilize cars and trucks can go anywhere, but students, youth and seniors must walk, bike, or use transit to go places they may need or want to go.

The street classification system and grid network of the BCP is designed to promote and increase walkability of the BCP area. Walkability is not only determined by close proximity between destinations, but also the pedestrian experience while moving between locations. Creating pedestrian scale environments that encourage walking, is accomplished with the following basic design principles which are depicted in the BCP Pedestrian Transportation Map (Figure 26):

Figure 26. Pedestrian Transportation Map

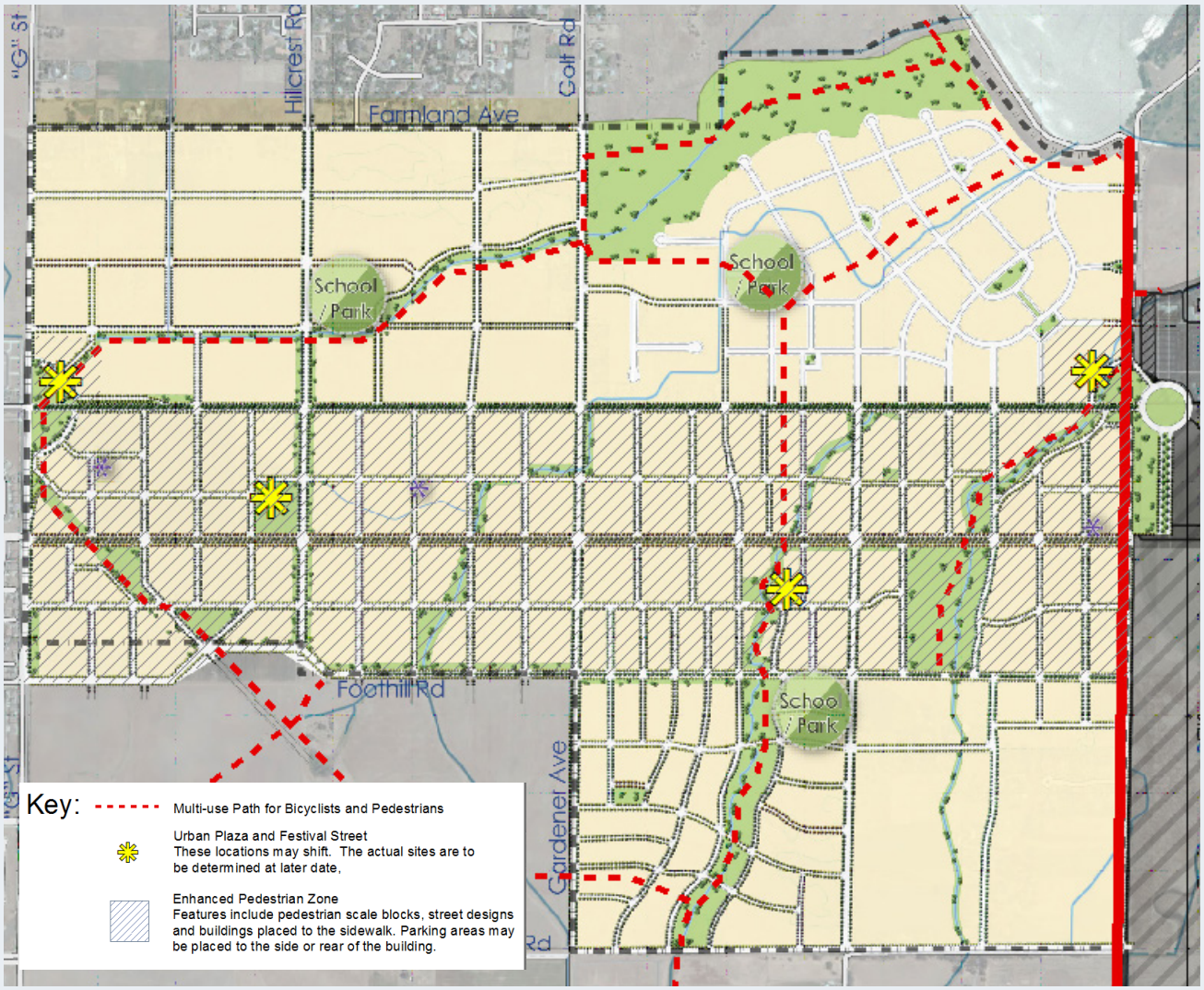


Figure 27.Examples of Street Landscape Features

Street Trees and Buffer

Stormwater Swale

- A street block structure of closely spaced and interconnected streets with slow vehicular speed;
- Pedestrian scale development including open space, parks, and festival streets which increase pedestrian activity
- Visible cross walks, bulb outs, and other pedestrian and traffic calming designs to improve safety during street crossings;
- Appropriate walk-zone and planting/amenity zones, including sidewalks, trees, benches, and lighting; and
- Parking facilities that encourage shoppers to 'stop and walk'.

OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND FESTIVAL STREETS

Public rights- of-way can be designed with features that support and enhance walking. These features include street trees, parkways, street furniture areas, stormwater drainage swales, and festival streets. Open-space features combined with enhanced architectural designs and urban plazas can create memorable community gathering places and gateways in the community.

Open Space

Street landscape features bring many benefits to a community including storm-water management, lower ambient air temperature, a comfortable and visually interesting environment for all users, and traffic-calming. Spaces for these open space features are provided through placement of street trees, islands, curb extensions, etc., in the right-of-way. Figure 27 shows examples of some of these features.

Parks

The urban nature of the BCP along the Mandeville Transit Corridor warrants the consideration of urban plazas. The City's 2000 Merced Park and Open-space Master Plan defines an urban plaza as a small park, usually passive, that provides an opportunity for the public to gather in urban locations. The BCP proposes at least three urban plazas (see Figure 28) to be located within or near neighborhood commercial centers, and connected to the area's open-space and bikeway network.

Figure 28. Example of an Urban Plaza and Festival Streets

Festival Streets

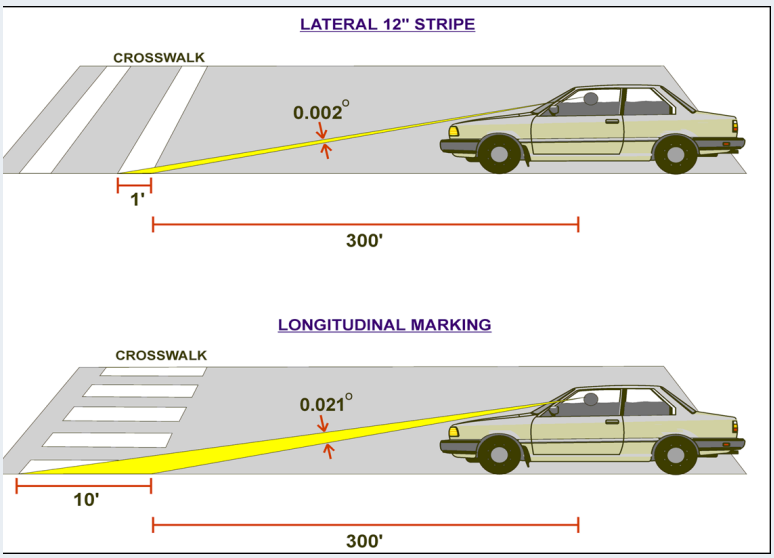
Streets are a huge part of any community's public space network, and historically served as meeting places, playgrounds for children, marketplaces, and more. As populations spread out from city centers, most American cities have come to view streets primarily as conduits for moving vehicles from one place to another. While moving vehicles is one of their purposes, streets are spaces, even destinations in and of themselves. By approaching streets as public spaces, cities redirect their attention from creating merely traffic conduits to designing a place that offers greater value to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. This comprehensive approach requires intentional positioning of urban features to create these public spaces. The BCP identifies several urban plazas in land use and roadway settings to enable future public events using City streets. Festival Streets should contain traffic calming, flush curbs, and streetscape features that allow for easy conversion to public uses such as farmers' markets and music events (other ideas can be found at the Los Angeles County Model Design Manual for Living Streets, Chapter 12).

Pedestrian Crossings/Traffic Calming

There are several methods to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian crossing, including providing crosswalks spaced at appropriate intervals, reducing crossing distance, and managing speed and flow of vehicular traffic. The following tools are options to use within the BCP to improve pedestrian safety (see Figure 29 & Figure 30):

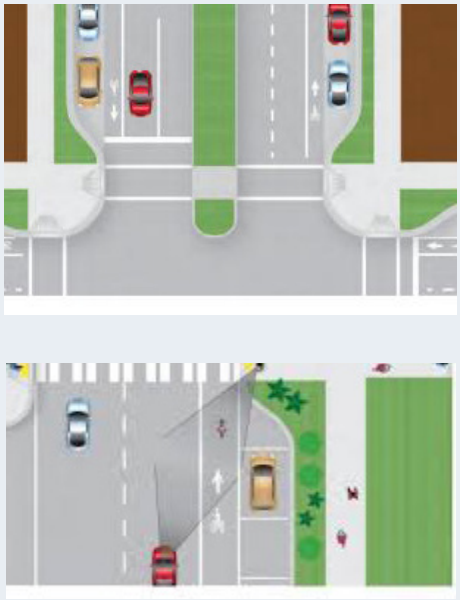
- High visibility cross walks
- Pedestrian crossing warning signs
- Medians
- Bulb-outs and curb-extensions
- Pedestrian refuge islands

Figure 29. Crosswalks



Crosswalk striping patterns with lines longitudinal to the roadway are more visible to approaching motorists than the two transverse lines used on many crosswalks. High visibility patterns are especially beneficial at uncontrolled crossing locations (i.e., where there are no stops signs or traffic signals requiring vehicles to stop).

Figure 30. Bulb-outs



Curb extensions, or bulb-outs, can reduce the distance for pedestrian crossing while still accommodating bikepaths and on-street parking. Additionally, bulb-outs reduce vehicular speed and increase visibility at busy intersections, increasing pedestrian safety.

Source: Bikepedsafe.org

Walk, Planting, and Amenity Zones

Sidewalk width is a key component of providing safe routes for pedestrian travel. Wider sidewalks within mixed-use or heavy traffic areas act as a physical buffer from vehicular traffic and provide a sense of safety and security for pedestrians. Additionally, wider sidewalks can accommodate more foot traffic and are most appropriate in commercial areas. Sidewalk characteristics, including addition of tree wells, planting strips, or street furniture varies depending on street classification and community character area. The parkway use type can be either a fully landscaped zone (L), or a furniture zone (F). There are character areas where no street furniture or

landscaping may be required in order to maintain consistency with existing neighborhoods. Figure 31 shows the location of different zones in the public realm. The sidewalk is made up of three main zones: amenity zone for landscaping and street furniture, the walk zone to allow pedestrian travel, and the frontage/setback zone which allows transition between the sidewalk and the building without blocking moving pedestrian (see Table 5 for exact standards).

While in some cases it may be appropriate to locate furniture or other landscaping amenities in places outside of the planting/amenity zone, the intent is to keep the walk zone free from obstacles to ensure easy pedestrian flow.

Figure 31. Pedestrian Realm

Table 5 Pedestrian Way Standards

Place Type	Planting/Amenity Zone Use Type	Planting/Amenity Zone Width	Minimum Walk Zone Width	Frontage/ Setback Zone Width	Total Sidewalk Width
Mixed-Use TOD	F	4 ft	8 ft	2 ft	14 ft
R&D Employment District	L	4 ft	6 ft	2 ft	12 ft
Neighborhood Centers (NC)	F	4 ft	6 ft	2 ft	12 ft
Flex-Mixed Use Neighborhood	F/L or L	4 ft	6 ft	2 ft	12 ft
Multi-Family Neighborhood	L	3 ft	6 ft	1 ft	10 ft
Single Family Neighborhood	L	7 ft	5 ft	per setback	N/A
Rural Residential Neighborhood	L	7 ft	4 ft	per setback	N/A

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The goal headings of this BCP chapter are grouped into the same policy topics as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. This approach fosters consistency and builds on the City's broader *General Plan* guidance. In furtherance of consistency with the City's *General Plan*, Appendix C, policies specific to the BCP planning area are described in greater detail and grouped with the goals and policies it shares in common with the City's *General Plan*. In addition to the goals and policies below, Master Plans/projects/permit applications need to take into account the BCP in its entirety and be consistent with the language herein.

Table 6 Mobility Goals and Policies Specific to the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan Consistent with the City's *General Plan*
Goal Area M-1: Streets and Roads
Policy M-1.1: Pursue the completion of the City's arterial grid network. All proposed arterial streets within and adjacent to the BCP are essential roadways that need to be completed. Bellevue to serve as an urban arterial in the loop road system; Gardner Road south of Bellevue Road to connect the BCP, UCP and UCM with the Merced Community; Campus Parkway as part of the urban fabric to the east; and Cardella Road and Yosemite Avenue providing important east-west oriented linkages knitting the long-term growth areas of the City of Merced.
Policy M-1.2: Examine the possibility to reduce the number of lanes on Gardner Road, Bellevue Road and Golf Road. Inclusion of a broad range of transportation-related factors such as the addition of side roads along both sides of Bellevue Road for local traffic may result in a finding that would support fewer through travel lanes on plan area arterial roadways. Complete a traffic impact analysis that considers the function of all transportation modes, land use patterns and both collector and arterial street designs to examine the potential to reduce the number of through lanes from 6 to 4 on Bellevue Road, from 4 to 3 on Gardner Road (between Bellevue Road and Foothill Drive), and from 4 to 2 on Golf Road (north of Bellevue Road).
Policy M-1.3: Update the City's Standard Designs to incorporate the special cross-sections for collector roads within the BCP. The BCP includes several special collector-street cross-sections that were designed to reconcile the competing functions of streets, and include: Lake Road (Figure 21 & Figure 22); Mandeville Lane (Figure 19); Hatch Road (Figure 17); and Paulson/Hillcrest Avenue (Figure 16.).
Policy M-1.4: In consideration of existing Rural Residential neighborhoods, the use of design features such as traffic calming and street off-set designs should be utilized to minimize traffic impacts.
Policy M-1.5: Work with Merced County to identify future right-of-way locations for plan area arterial and collector streets and intersections. Collaboration between the City and County to define arterial street locations within the BCP should occur soon after its adoption to avoid development within these important community rights of way. The location of these roadways should be designed flexibly to avoid or minimize impacts to existing uses while (1) assuring adequate width will be provided in the long-term; and (2) minimizing impacts to natural resources such as topography, sensitive habitats and water features. Of particular note are the alignments of Bellevue Road, Gardner Road, Foothill Avenue, Hatch Road, and the intersections involving (a) Bellevue Road, Campus Parkway and Lake Road; and (b) Bellevue Road with Paulson/Hillcrest Avenues (extended).
Policy M-1.6: Develop Bellevue Road to enhance the value of adjacent properties in an urban setting, while secondarily also serving as a route for regional traffic as a link in the City's Loop Road System. While Bellevue Road is a link in the regional loop road, and will accommodate regional traffic, it is foremost an urban arterial with important land uses that will face it. Bellevue Road is also a gateway to and from UC Merced.

Policy M-1.7: Explore the use of Traffic Circles and Roundabouts.

Fully examine the value of placing roundabouts along the BCP's various roadways, considering such factors as infrastructure and operating costs, and compatibility with transit services, and pedestrian and bicycle movements.

Policy M-1.8: Include side roads in the design of Bellevue Road.

Use of a side access road adjacent to Bellevue Road brings several benefits, including, allows buildings to face or address a street, creating a more visually pleasing setting and gateway environment, as compared to sound walls or loading docks; creates a space for other modes of mobility (transit, bike lanes, sidewalks) to access buildings; provides for on-street parking; could reduce the number of through travel lanes on adjacent arterial roadways; and maximizes access to uses without substantial slowing of through traffic on Bellevue Road. Additionally, side roads create a setting that provides more site design options for adjacent buildings, allows for very different land uses to locate on opposite sides of the road; and for building sites, overtime, to change. Note, when used in combination, the side roads and through travel lanes will total six lanes.

Policy M-1.9: Synchronize traffic signals along Bellevue Road.

Heavy traffic loads, including through traffic are anticipated on Bellevue Road. To facilitate good vehicular flow and to avoid congestion at intersections, the traffic signals along Bellevue Road should be synchronized.

Policy M-1.10: Seek to implement an interconnected street grid.

An interconnected street pattern is foundational to the achievement of many goals of the BCP, including: 1) development of a successful transit system; 2) enabling functional sites for transit priority projects; 3) increased travel by pedestrians and bicyclists; 4) formation of an innovation hub and associated population; and 5) attracting research and development offices. Figure 11 of the BCP, an important illustrative diagram, should be utilized in the design of future development projects.

Policy M-1.11: Where possible, allow and encourage parking structures especially within or near *Transit Priority Projects* and in the *Mixed-use Transit-Oriented Development* and *Research and Development Park* place types.

Goal Area M-2: Bikes, Pedestrians, and Public Transit

Policy M-2.1: Establish Mandeville Lane as the extension of the City's "M" Street Transit Corridor to UC Merced.

During the BCP planning process, there were extensive discussions about the placement of the transit corridor, either on Bellevue Road or Mandeville Lane. For many reasons described in the BCP, Mandeville Lane was selected as the appropriate roadway to develop the transit corridor. The Mandeville Lane Transit Corridor provides for multiple options to connect to or extend it as needed.

Policy M-2.2: Seek to develop an interconnected street grid on both sides of Mandeville Lane.

The interconnected roadway grid is an essential foundational component of the urban fabric to support a successful transit system. A street network with a clear block structure and relatively closely spaced cross streets, whether curved, straight or otherwise, and having slower traffic than roads built to accommodate through-traffic, enables high-levels of access to transit and nearby uses and neighborhoods.

Policy M-2.3: Update the City's Bicycle Transportation Plan by incorporating the bikeway facilities planned in the BCP.

Figure 25 depicts the bike lanes, paths, and sharrows planned in the BCP. Placing these in the City's official bike plan will maximize the community's awareness of how bikeways will connect with UC Merced and to County areas outside the City's Sphere of Influence.

Policy M-2.4: Identify a suitable location for a bicycle boulevard.

As the community plan develops and traffic patterns are formed, monitor circulation patterns and take steps to install a bicycle boulevard in the area bounded by Bellevue Road, Foothill Avenue, G Street and UC Merced.

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MCP

4. OPEN SPACE, CONSERVATION, AND RECREATION

Open-space takes many forms, and integrates a wide variety of needs including recreation, resource conservation, public health and safety, natural beauty, and wildlife protection.

Similar to the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) takes an integrated approach to managing and planning for open-space resources. The goal of the Open-space, Conservation, and Recreation Chapter of the BCP is to provide an interconnected network of open-space land while still allowing for new development in appropriate areas. This Chapter outlines the varied types of open-space land and provides examples of how additional land for open-space, conservation, and recreation can be integrated with the City's existing and planned network of trails, drainage basins, and urban plazas.

An integrated design with a focus on the connectivity of open-space will help further the City's goals of not only protecting natural and man-made resources, reducing impact on wildlife habitat, and managing water and agricultural resources, but also providing an expanded network of on- and off-street bike paths, preserving Merced's unique character, and planning for a sustainable future. Also, by providing a range of open-space types, the BCP allows flexibility for design depending on the surrounding environment and intended role of the open-space land for resource preservation, recreation, health and safety, or conservation. This strategy avoids the potential for ad-hoc and haphazard placement of inaccessible and ultimately, ineffective, open-space land.

Open-space is one of the essential elements contributing to the high quality of life in the City of Merced. It provides a multitude of functions that are beneficial to the community.

View of Agriculture Land Near Plan Area

Lake Road Scenic Corridor

SETTING

Open-space is one of the essential elements contributing to the high quality of life in the City of Merced. It provides a multitude of functions that are beneficial to the community. The BCP recognizes that the urban form of the planning area will be shaped in a positive manner through retention of open-space elements, including sensitive species habitat, creek and/or irrigation channels, street design, and recreation-based parks. Providing a well designed open-space network will attract residents, future employers, and investment.

This section provides an overview of the setting and environmental factors most significant to the open space, conservation, and recreation system.

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural lands provide a valued aesthetic and lifestyle contrast to the more urbanized areas. Agriculture open space is seen as an intermediary use until such areas are needed for urban expansion, however.

SCENIC CORRIDORS

Bellevue Road and Lake Road are listed as Scenic Corridors in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and are also identified in the BCP as Gateways. The scenic character of Lake Road is proposed to be maintained and enhanced, where possible. Lake Road forms the eastern boundary of the BCP planning area and acts as an important element of the large rural residential character area, buffering this area from future urbanization anticipated to occur to the east. More information can be found on the Gateway design principle in Chapter 2 of this document.

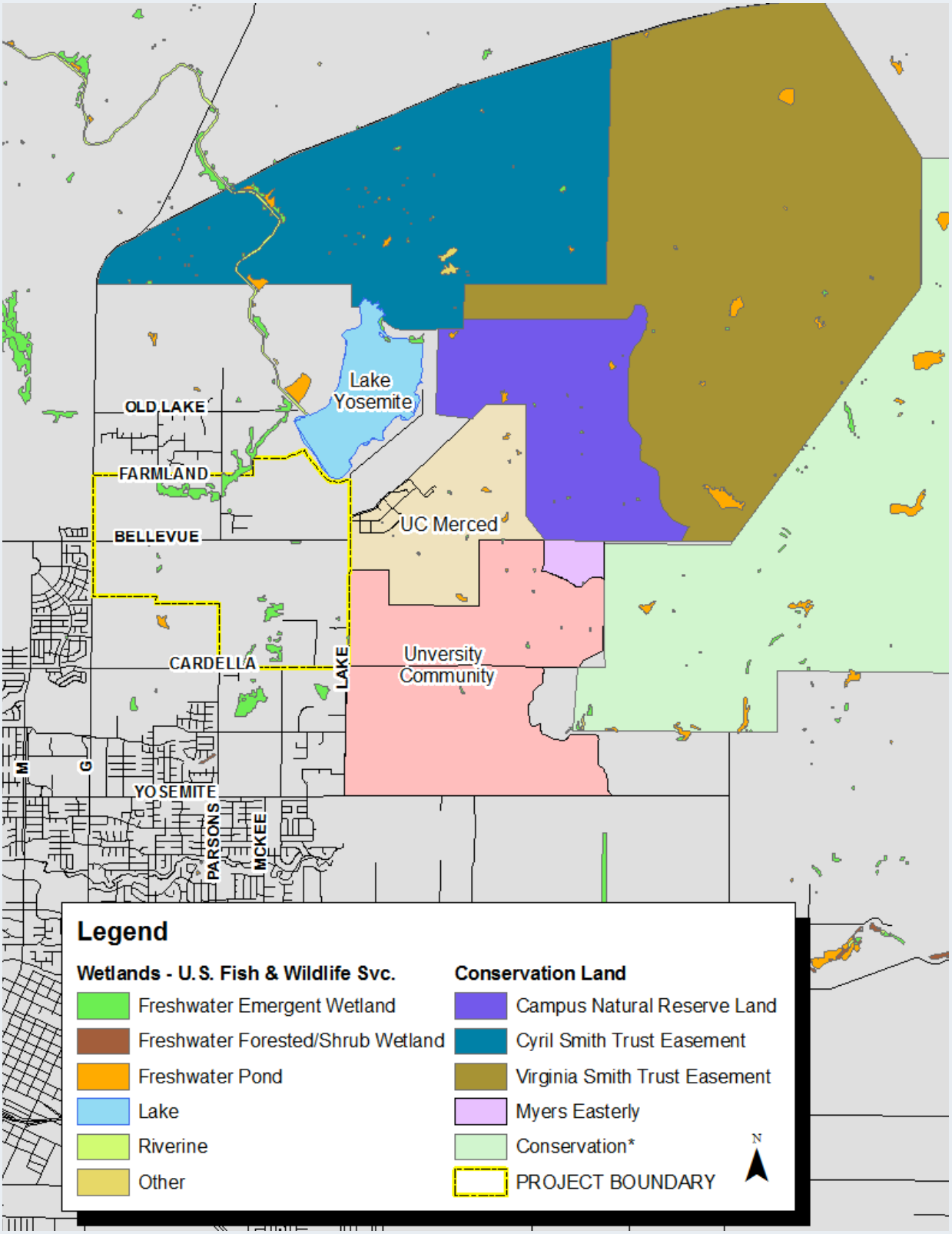
TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Streets, bike paths, and transit facilities can include linear or nodal open-space features for the use and enjoyment by the public. These features include street trees, parkways, street furniture areas, storm water drainage swales, and public art. Open-space features combined with enhanced architectural designs and urban plazas can create memorable community gathering places and gateways in the community.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The BCP seeks to continue the tradition of preserving and protecting open-space corridors along natural drainages in the plan area, and to enhance or create open-space corridors in appropriate environmentally sensitive areas. Open-space Land Use, Urban Expansion, and Sustainability policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, which are also applicable to future development in the BCP, ensure that sensitive habitat areas, and the plants and animals found in them, are adequately considered and managed to reduce any adverse effects from development. In an effort to avoid significant future amendments to the BCP, a conceptual open-space network has been crafted to take into consideration the long-term protection of habitat and riparian areas. At the same time, the BCP recognizes that the BCP Open-space Map

Figure 32. Sensitive Habitats and Conservation Lands within and near the Plan Area



(Figure 36) may need to be adjusted to account for increases or decreases in the amount of lands to be conserved, depending on how future development projects provide for conservation and protection of sensitive habitat and species. It is important to note that while the size of an open-space corridor or area may be reduced, it should not be removed altogether.

Figure 32 from the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* depicts the location of conservation areas and sensitive lands within and near the BCP area. Table 7.2 in the City's *General Plan* contains a list of Special Status plants and animal species, which are likely to be found in the City's Sphere of Influence, including the BCP area.

CONSERVATION LANDS

North and east of the BCP, many acres of land have been set-aside to protect sensitive species and habitats located in the region (see Figure 32). These sites act as a natural boundary to urbanization in Northeast Merced. The size and location of future additional conservation areas, whether adjacent to these sites or within the BCP, is unknown at this time. Consistent with the mitigation measures for the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, these determinations will occur either prior to or concurrent with annexation proposals. The timing of this determination aligns with the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Merced and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which sets forth development permit review procedures related to the identification and protection of sensitive species and habitats in North Merced.

POTENTIAL SENSITIVE HABITAT AREAS

The BCP planning area contains several water features, ranging from ephemeral streams, irrigation channels, wetlands, and vernal pools that may provide habitat for several sensitive species. These features are distributed throughout the BCP area and are depicted in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. Prior to development on public or private lands, detailed biotic assessments will be conducted. The results of these assessments, the determinations and requirements made by resource agencies, and any applicable mitigation measures, can play a major role in the future design of development projects.

CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATIONS

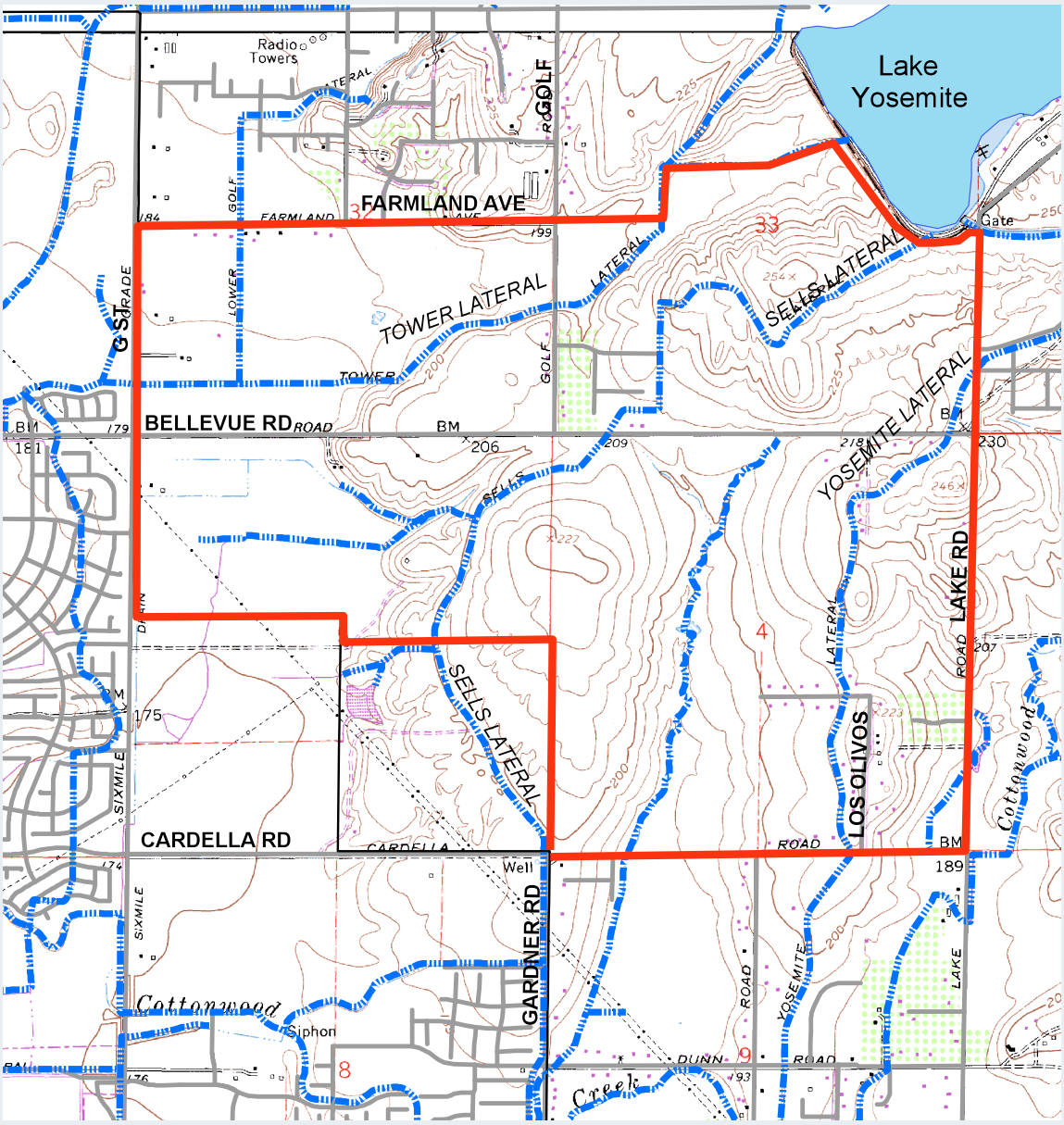
Portions of the BCP are designated critical habitat for various sensitive species. While such designation does not preclude development, it does raise the level of resource agency review and possible conservation-related requirements.

WATER RESOURCES

The water resources of the Merced area are derived from two sources: local rainfall and runoff from the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Both sources contribute to groundwater and surface water resources of the BCP area. The Merced Irrigation District (MID) irrigation reservoir and canal system captures and distributes surface water resources.

Figure 33 depicts the locations of existing natural drainages, irrigation channels and existing storm-water drainage facilities.

Figure 33. Site Topography and Drainage Features Within and Near the Planning Area



SURFACE WATER

The City of Merced contains a rich and varied surface water system which includes a natural creek and drainage system, the MID irrigation canal system and Lake Yosemite in the northeastern portion of the City's planning area. Surface water features within the BCP include the following, and are depicted in Figure 33 and Figure 34:

- Tower Lateral
- Sells Lateral
- Yosemite Lateral
- Lower Golf Lateral

Water flow in these laterals are less than 100 cubic feet per second (cfs), which is the threshold used by the Merced Irrigation District (MID) to bury open laterals as development occurs adjacent or over them.

Irrigation-related laterals could be piped and placed in an easement containing public open-space with or without an off-street bike path. This design option currently exists along the Buhach Lateral in the City of Atwater and could have application to irrigation laterals in the plan area. Alternatively, a collaborative approach between the City, MID and property owners to create open space corridors in the BCP with surface water should also be explored further. For example, the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (Figure 7.1) depicts a well-defined open-space recreational land use area between Lake Yosemite and Golf Road, and the Tower Lateral extends through this area as well, providing an opportunity for an open-space corridor and/or bike path.

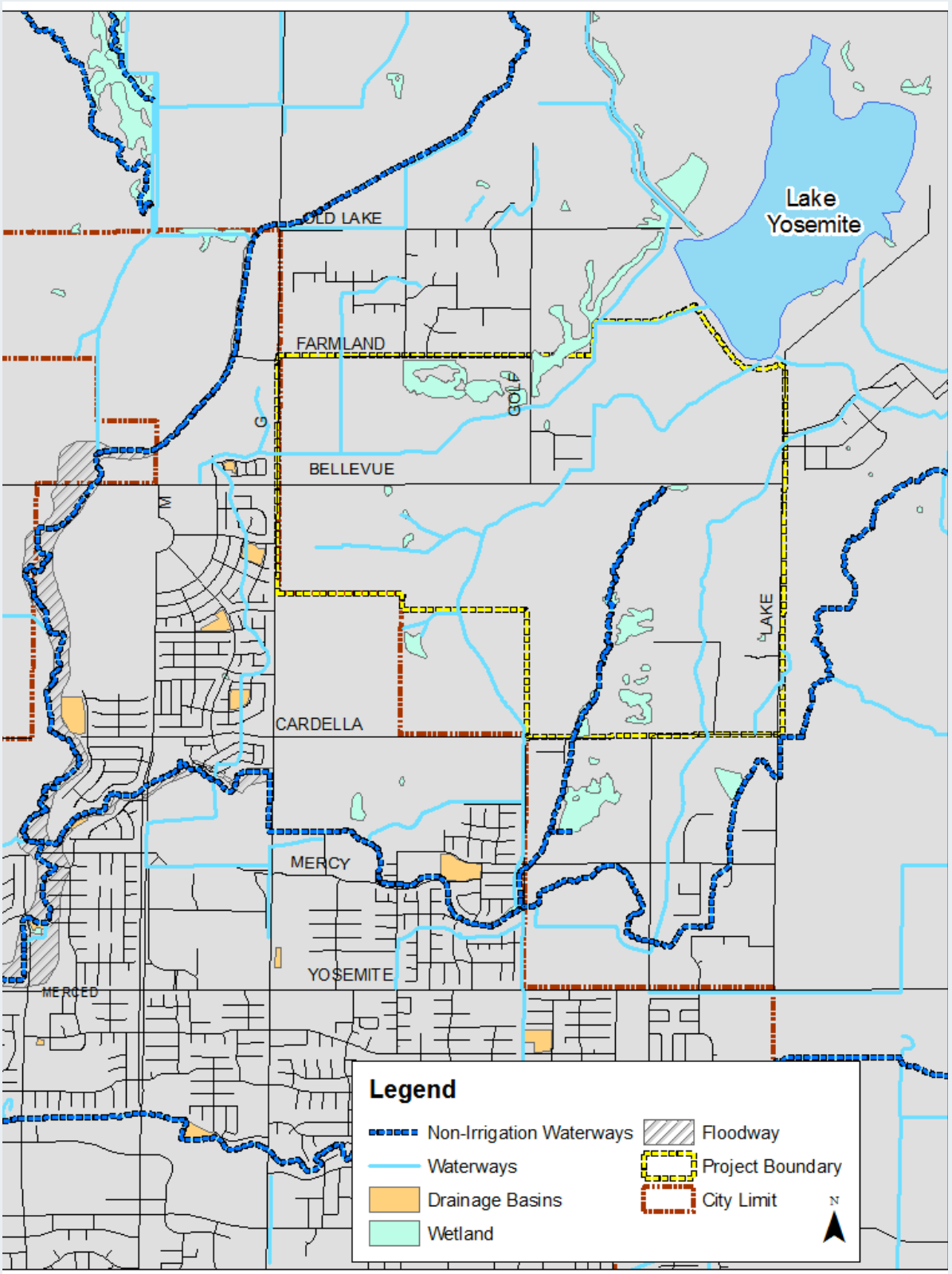
Natural drainages that are not managed for irrigation purposes can be designed as open-space corridors that maintain natural surface water and riparian features. A tributary to Cottonwood Creek, located between the Sells Lateral and the Yosemite Lateral, provides an opportunity to develop an uninterrupted bikeway between Cardella Road and Bellevue Road. Figure 33 depicts natural drainage features and site topography within the BCP area.

Example of a Stormwater Detention Basin

STORM-DRAINAGE

The City of Merced Storm Drainage Master Plan (2002) requires the retention of stormwater to regulate the flow into drainage channels. Storm water retention and/or detention basins are primarily used for flood control, with a secondary purpose of providing ground water recharge where soil conditions allow. These basins can also be utilized for open-space and limited recreational uses, where practical. Additionally, while the BCP area does not include sites for deep groundwater recharge, stormwater basins have the potential to recharge shallow aquifers. While joint use is encouraged, park-related uses in storm-drainage basins only partially satisfy City requirements for amounts of parkland needed to serve local populations. Opportunities to create storm-water related open-space features are discussed in the Public Facility Chapter of the BCP.

Figure 34. Wetland Features with and near the Plan Area



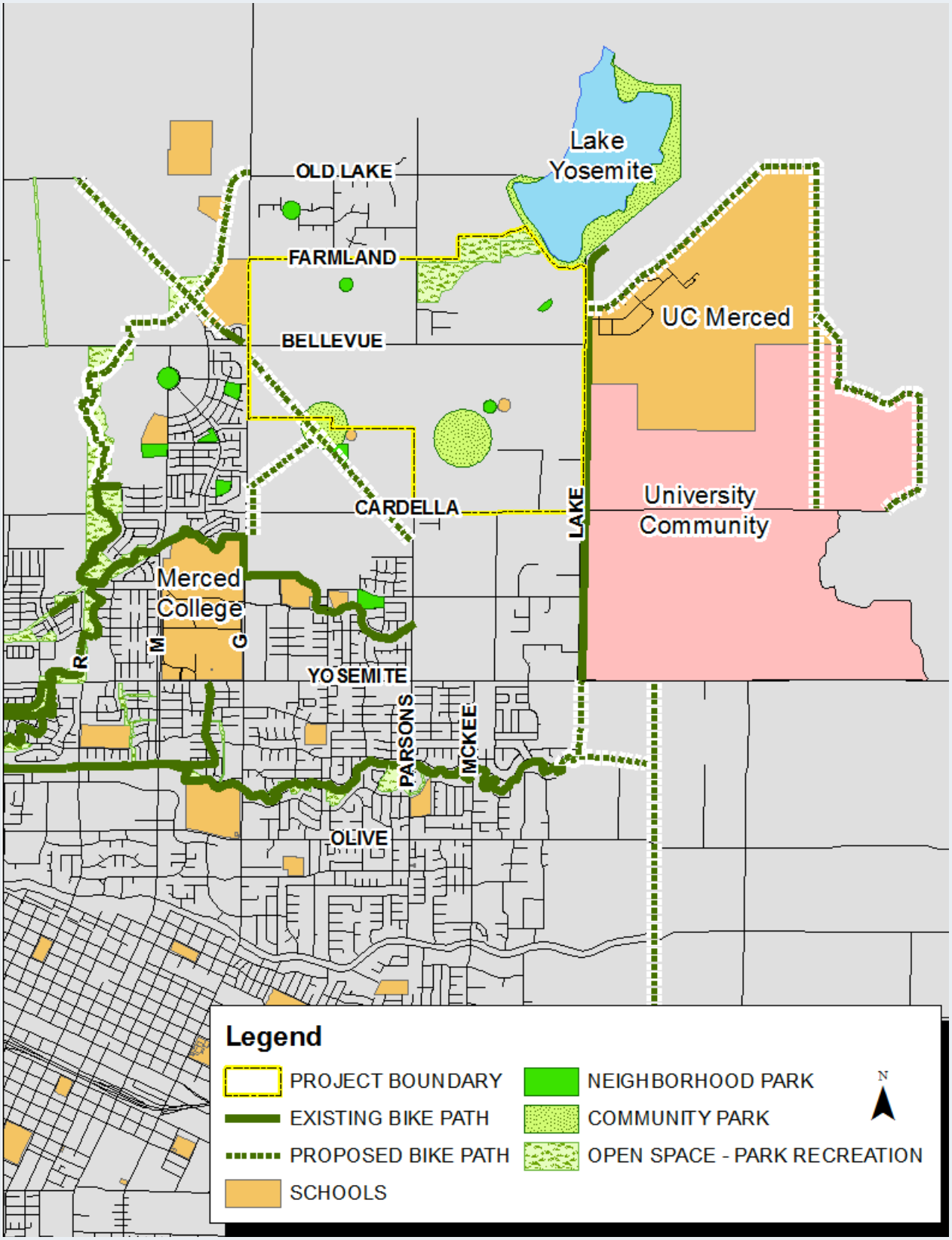
A general underlying goal of the BCP is to provide adequate services and amenities to current and future populations.

OPEN-SPACE SERVICE STANDARD

A general underlying goal of the BCP is to provide adequate services and amenities to current and future populations. This is achieved by knowing the nature and amount of increased demand for recreational facilities resulting from increased population of the BCP, and assuring the BCP provides recreational facilities or resources sufficient to meet potential demand. The City of Merced has historically used the standard of five acres of City park land for every thousand residents. Figure 35 on the following page details the existing and planned recreational facilities.

School grounds, church grounds, and Lake Yosemite are not included in the park standard; these supplement the network of the City's park lands. The City and local school districts have worked closely in the past to share facilities and programs. Similarly, lands required to be set-aside to conserve sensitive habitat are not counted when determining the amount of City park land.

Figure 35. Existing and Planned Recreational Facilities Within and Near the Plan Area



PARK TYPES

Parks in Merced are classified into the following types: Regional Parks, Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Mini-parks, linear parks, school parks, special use areas, urban plazas, and athletic parks. The following describes the types of recreation and park facilities which can most likely be used to meet the increase in park demand within or near the BCP area.

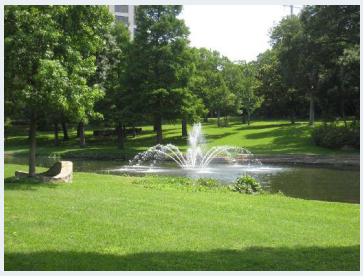
REGIONAL PARK

Lake Yosemite Regional Park is located northeast of the City and operated by Merced County. Lake Yosemite Regional Park is of special interest to the broader Merced community because of its water recreation opportunities and open-space qualities. It is also within bicycle commute range for many residents. It is the intent of the BCP to provide options for open-space and trail linkages to Lake Yosemite Regional Park.

COMMUNITY PARK

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (Figure 7.1 of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, showing conceptual park locations) depicts a large "floating" open-space recreational land use area in the area bounded by Bellevue Road, Lake Road, Cardella Road and Gardner Road (extended). This land use corresponds with proposed Community Park CP-43.

Examples of Community Parks



NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (Figure 7.1 of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, showing conceptual park locations) depicts four neighborhood parks distributed throughout the BCP planning area.

Examples of Neighborhood Parks

MINI-PARK AND URBAN PLAZAS

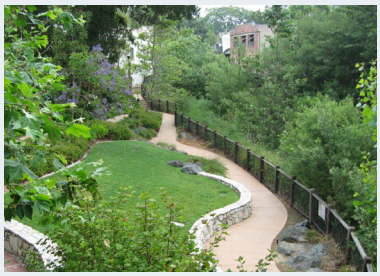
In addition to the provision of neighborhood and community parks, the urban nature of the BCP along the Mandeville Transit Corridor warrants the consideration of urban plazas. The City's 2000 Merced Park and Open-space Master Plan defines an urban plaza as a small park, usually passive, that provides an opportunity for the public to gather in urban locations, such as "Bob Hart Square". The BCP proposes at least three urban plazas to be located within or near neighborhood commercial centers, and connected to the area's open-space and bikeway network.

Examples of Urban Plazas

LINEAR PARKS AND OPEN SPACE CORRIDORS

In addition to provisions for park and recreational facilities, the BCP also emphasizes connectivity between open-space and encourages joint-use of existing open-space corridors. The BCP acknowledges that the connections within and between existing and planned open space is equally important to the total amount of open-space.

Examples of Open-space Corridors

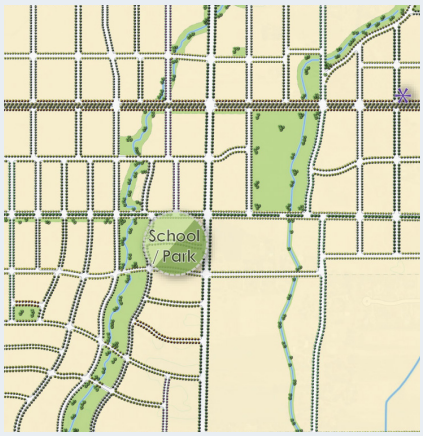


In Merced's built urban environment, many off-street bike paths run parallel with the numerous creeks that traverse the City. At UC Merced, bike paths are planned with campus expansion. The BCP presents opportunities to create important transportation and recreation corridors by connecting the off-street bike paths in the City and County with those of UC Merced.

Within the BCP, continuing emphasis should be placed on locating new park sites adjacent to existing open-space corridors such as wetlands, riparian areas, and irrigation canals and ditches. Placement of off-street bike paths within these linear parks and open-space areas should be considered, especially when able to connect to local and regional destinations and other bike paths. There are several opportunities for adding open space corridors to the existing bike network, including the Tower Lateral Bikeway, the Cottonwood Creek Tributary Bikeway, and the extension of bikeways from the PG&E open-space corridors located to the southwest of the BCP planning area.

Examples of Off-Street Multi-Use Paths

Open-Space Corridor Illustration



Merced is familiar with off-street pathways alongside natural watercourses and through parks, but has little experience with off-street pathways that extend through urban cores, campuses, or institutional sites. The BCP abuts UC Merced and will contain many Research and Development (R&D) employment centers, providing an opportunity to create a continuous off-street bikeway. The features of this bikeway will change depending upon the surrounding environment. For example, part of the bikeway may traverse through an urban plaza, a R&D campus, alongside an active linear park, or as Merced's first cycle-track (a bike path parallel but physically and spacially separated from vehicle traffic).

Examples of Bike Paths near or through R&D Centers

Creekside Greenway Illustration

Safe environments for cycling facilities are essential. The application of five principles during the design process for bike paths and other human environments can reduce the incidence of crime, and include: natural surveillance, territoriality activity, access control and maintenance. For example, the principle of natural surveillance is directed primarily at discouraging criminal activity by ensuring that public spaces are easily observable. Designing for natural surveillance involves providing ample opportunity for legitimate users, engaged in their normal activities, to observe the space around them. The "eyes on the street" principle keeps more lines of sight open for normal users and potential witnesses. The overall sense of safety improves when people can easily see others and be seen.

CONCEPTUAL OPEN-SPACE DIAGRAM

The conceptual BCP open-space diagram (Figure 36) is a composite of the open-space characteristics described in this chapter, and includes the following elements:

Open Space Map Key Elements

1. Open-space Network of Sensitive Habitat and Wildlife Lands and Corridors
2. Irrigation Channels and Natural Drainages
3. Passive and Active Recreational Sites
4. Conceptual Locations of Storm-Drainage Facilities

The BCP open-space diagram is meant to be a guiding and dynamic tool. The map establishes a network of City park land with corridors connected to important destinations and maintains acreage consistent with the City's park standard. The intent of the illustrative open-space plan for the BCP area is to establish an open-space framework consistent with community needs, but flexible enough to accommodate new information and approaches which could shift alignments and the amount of park and natural open-space lands to accommodate new information provide a better or more effective network. The open-space diagram provides the large, generally flat BCP area the opportunity to highlight and emphasize the subtle, existing natural terrain. By incorporating the existing topography, the BCP area celebrates the unique, natural qualities already present in Merced.

As with park-sites, these corridors are mapped so that future development can be designed in harmony with them, and not break or develop disconnected parks or detention basins that then become the default open-space features of the area. Rather, individual development in the BCP would help create its part of the larger interconnected open-space network.

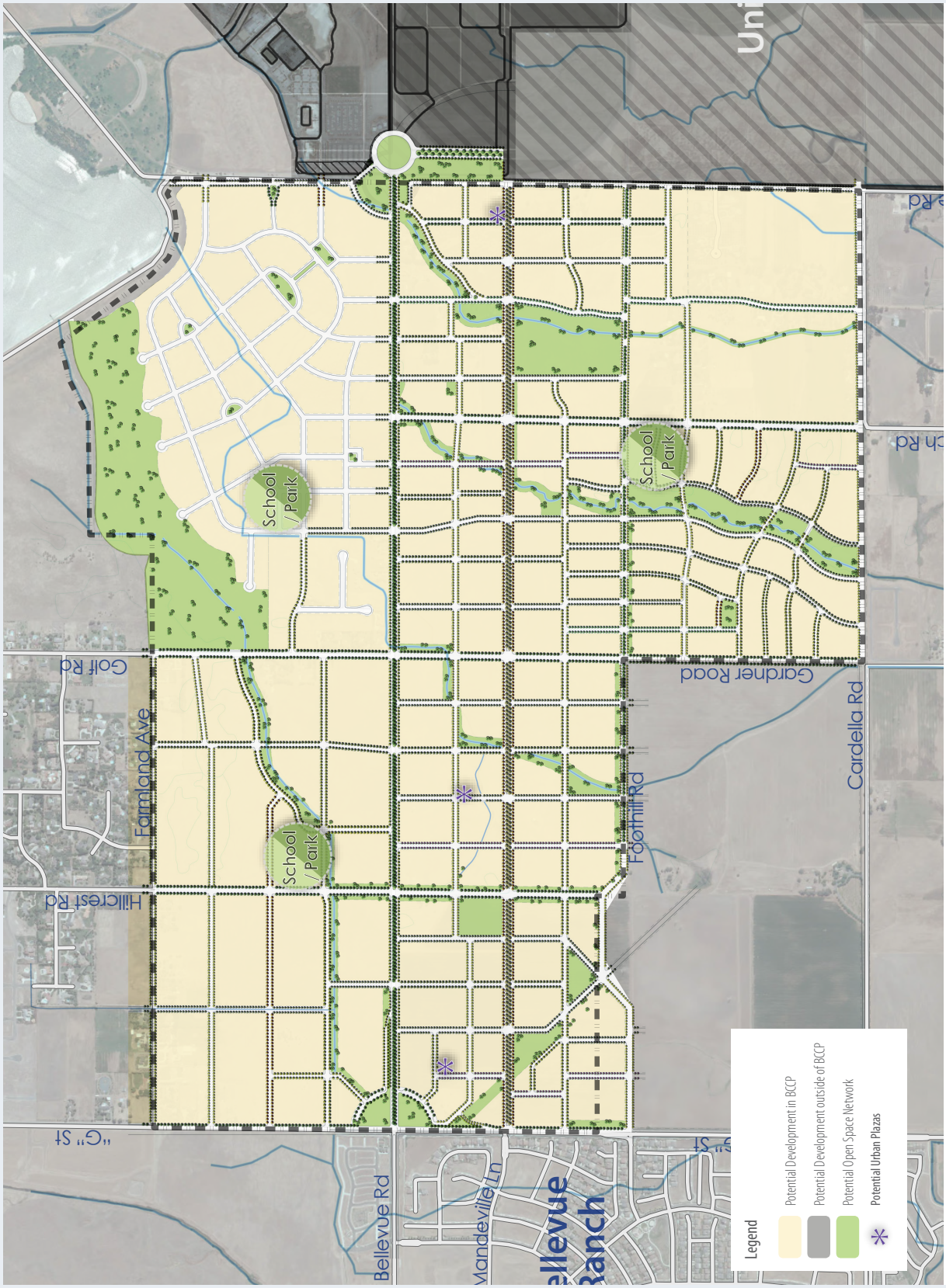


Figure 36. BCP Open-Space Diagram

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The goal headings of this BCP chapter are grouped into the same policy topics as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. This approach fosters consistency and builds on the City's broader *General Plan* guidance. In furtherance of consistency with the City's *General Plan*, Appendix C, policies specific to the BCP planning area are described in greater detail and grouped with the goals and policies it shares in common with the City's *General Plan*. In addition to the goals and policies below, Master Plans/projects/permit applications need to take into account the BCP in its entirety and be consistent with the language herein.

Table 7 Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Goals and Policies Specific to the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan consistent with the City's *General Plan*

Goal Area OS-1: Open-space for the Preservation of Natural Resources
Policy OS-1.1: Utilize the BCP Open Space Map as both a guiding framework and an adjustable dynamic planning tool. The BCP Open Space Map, which emphasizes avoidance of sensitive habitats, may be adjusted upon annexation if supported by biological studies, and comments by state and federal resource agencies, and if alternative mitigation supported by them, and is implemented by the property owner. The BCP Open Space Map includes potential long-term habitat and riparian areas, and shifts essential land uses such as research and development parks and land uses within one-quarter mile of Mandeville away from these areas. While this approach avoids the potential loss of these significant uses due to a state or federal requirement to scale-back development, the BCP allows development to occur within the open space corridor in the event that no mitigation or alternative mitigation is applied. Pending final determinations about the extent of actual habitat area needs, the map may be amended by either increasing, decreasing or relocating the amounts of open-space lands, and meeting minimum land amount requirements by the City.
Policy OS-1.2: Encourage property owners to collaborate their planning and habitat protection and conservation responsibilities. A collaborative approach to planning and habitat protection and conservation can allow for greater flexibility in locating development in the BCP area. Regardless of the method, steps to involve review of development proposals by resource agencies should occur early in process.
Policy OS-1.3: Encourage the formation of continuous open-space corridors. Open-space corridors, whether developed, natural or a combination of both, should be formed with multiple use pathways within or immediately adjacent to these areas. The BCP Open Space Map includes two potential continuous open-space corridors that will offer habitat and bikeway connections to Lake Yosemite and UC Merced. The "Tower Lateral Bikeway" corridor located north and generally parallel to Bellevue Road connects to Lake Yosemite. The "Cottonwood Creek Tributary Bikeway" corridor located south of Bellevue Road connects to UC Merced. Work with the Merced Irrigation District to create approaches to permit the Tower Lateral to continue to flow along the surface and not be under-grounded.
Policy OS-1.4: Plan for the construction and use of an off-street bike path within an open space corridor along the tributary to Cottonwood Creek (The "Cottonwood Creek Tributary Bikeway"). The "Cottonwood Creek Tributary Bikeway' is located within the area bounded by Cardella Road, Lake Road, Bellevue Road and Gardner Road extended. Options for the actual location of the pathway, as well as the size and extent of the open space drainage corridor, will need to be explored as part of a master drainage study by the property owner prior to or as part of any future plans. The size and extent may also be affected by actions to conserve any proximate sensitive lands.
Policy OS-1.5: Seek to maintain the rural character of Lake Road, and shift community and regional traffic to the Campus Parkway in the long-term. The City's General Plan lists Lake Road as a scenic corridor. Its current design features include a two-lane road, natural drainages, a separate off-street multi-use pathway and street trees; these should be maintained and enhanced. Generally, improvements to reduce vehicular traffic congestion or to increase vehicular traffic capacity should not be made unless it is consistent with and enhances the current design features described above. Sub-standard traffic level of service may occur in order to satisfy this policy.

Policy OS-1.6: Encourage designs within the Bellevue Community Plan area that enhances the view of UC Merced from Lake Road and its multi-purpose path.

The natural elevation of the northern portion of Lake Road and accompanying bike path provide a unique opportunity to maintain and enhance the ability to view areas east of these facilities. The future design of roadways, landscaping, public access points and buildings within the plan area should consider and include features that maintain and enhance the ability of view lands east of the BCP.

Policy OS-1.7: Coordinate Urban Forestry Projects with other community goals.

It is possible to advance many community goals through urban forest projects. Whether the goal is to improve energy efficiency, to enhance aesthetics, to encourage walking or bike riding, to enhance property values or to prepare for increased temperatures, trees are the common solution. Urban forestry projects in the City currently include street and parking lot trees. Explore opportunities, supported by community, to expand and enhance the function of trees in the Bellevue Community Plan.

Goal Area OS-2: Open-space for Outdoor Recreation

Policy OS-2.1: Plan for and construct the "Cottonwood Creek Tributary Bikeway."

A tributary to Cottonwood Creek extends from UC Merced to Cottonwood Creek (located south of Cardella Road) through the BCP planning area. Prior to any subdivision along either side of this watercourse, a plan that describes the location and design of how this Class I Bike Path will cross or extend under streets between UC Merced and Cottonwood Creek needs to be developed.

Policy OS-2.2: Plan for and construct the "Tower Lateral Multipurpose Pathway."

The Tower Lateral is an existing canal that extends from Lake Yosemite to G Street. Prior to any subdivision along either side of this canal, a plan that describes the location and design of how this Pathway will cross or extend under streets between Lake Yosemite and G Street needs to be developed.

Policy OS-2.3: Seek to develop Community Park CP-43 in the BCP.

Consistent with the 2004 Park and Open Space Master Plan, CP-43 should be located on arterial or collector streets, be highly visible from adjoining streets, and should be a minimum of 20-acres in size, with the optimum being about 30-acres. Provided active recreation facilities can be provided, the community park may be sited alongside any natural open-space lands in this area.

Policy OS-2.4: Consider the utility and designation of the land immediately south and west of Lake Yosemite (between the earthen dam and Golf Road) for public park use.

This consideration could occur as part of the next update to the City's Recreation and Parks Master Plan, or as a separate action. This site is currently designated as Park and Open Space/Recreation on the City's Land Use Map. The site is proximate to Lake Yosemite Regional Park and has limited development potential. Significant City park resources will be located south of Bellevue Road closer to the highest population density on the BCP, however. Justification for public use and availability of funding need to be further explored prior to any expansion of the City's planned recreation and parks open-space system.

Goal Area OS-3: Open-space for Public Health and Safety

Policy OS-3.1: Maintain the current Open Space/Parks-Recreation Land Use Designation that is located south and west of Lake Yosemite (between the earthen dam and Golf Road). Consider expanding the area as appropriate.

Proposals from property owners of land located adjacent to the site to expand the Open Space/Parks-Recreation Land Use Designation onto their properties will be considered. There may be interest by these property owners to transfer any density rights to another property within the BCP.

Goal Area OS-4: Open-space for Conservation of Resources

Policy OS-4.1: All new City facilities in the BCP plan area should be designed, equipped and operated to conserve water at a higher level than current practice.

Led by the City's Public Works Department, in coordination with the Development Services Department, Recreation and Parks Department, and others as appropriate, a comprehensive action plan to implement this policy should be developed. As an initial step, the targeted level of water conservation should be set by the City Council. The action plan would include all City facilities, including but not limited to all park types, public rights-of-way, and City owned or leased buildings. The City should involve local industry representatives, other public agencies, local schools, colleges and universities, and the general public in the development of the action plan. Existing guidelines and codes related to water use, for example, the list of appropriate street trees, should be considered and updated to emphasize the need to conserve water. This work could be funded and supported through grants and local partnerships.

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5. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The impetus for the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, and the focus of several General Plan policies, is the eventual expansion of the City toward and adjacent to UC Merced. The BCP covers land between the City boundary and west of UC Merced and establishes a high-level planning framework that strikes a balance between certainty and flexibility by anchoring key land uses while recognizing that their size may wish to adapt to changing market conditions in response to economic growth and the expansion of UC Merced. The BCP also protects the character of existing rural neighborhoods in the Plan area

The Bellevue Community Plan sets the foundation for how land uses connect along the proposed circulation networks.

The Community Character Chapter sets the foundation for how land uses are organized in the Plan Area. As described in Chapter 2 (Vision and Urban Design), the Core Principles from which the Plan was created include providing a "gateway" for UC Merced; making a network of "complete streets"; and creating neighborhoods and districts oriented to pedestrians and transit that are compatible with existing neighborhoods. Moreover, the community clearly expressed a desire for the Plan to be able to respond to market demands and leverage investment in UC Merced. Business growth is supported in the BCP through the creation of a flexible Research and Development employment corridor that is infused with innovation hub design elements in order to attract new firms and industry wishing to locate near the campus. Similarly, land use along Bellevue Road will be influenced by its character as a regional traffic conduit. To accomplish these objectives, the BCP establishes several "Place Types". Place Types are generally mixed-use environments, but may be dominated by a particular land use (for example residential uses or employment centers). Because the BCP focuses on urban form and a mixed-use environment, the term Place Type is used instead of the more conventional "land use", which is the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* nomenclature. The Place Types are defined by their location in the Plan, distinct physical characteristics (Table 9), and proximity to the circulation network set forth in the Mobility and Open Space Chapters.

The Community Character Chapter, together with mobility and open space elements, establishes a platform from which infrastructure and phasing planning can be undertaken (see "Next Steps" in the Urban Expansion Chapter), and upon which Neighborhood Master Planning (as described in this chapter) can occur prior to actual development within the BCP.

SETTING

The Plan area is surrounded on all sides by existing or proposed future urban development. However, while there are a few rural residential areas to the north and southeast corners of the Plan area, it is largely vacant. The area is generally well positioned to accommodate regional and UC-related growth, but local decision makers and property owners need to work together to overcome annexation, infrastructure, environmental, and other potential obstacles to development.

EXISTING LAND USE ENTITLEMENTS

Please refer to Technical Appendix B (Development Projects and Plans) for land use entitlements near the Plan area.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

While the *General Plan* regulates land use and approximate land use distribution, the Bellevue Community Plan builds upon this vision, and based on community input, provides more specific policies and implementation recommendations.

While all of the BCP area is outside the City limits, it is within the proposed Sphere of Influence and Area of Interest, and therefore governed by the policies outlined in the City's General Plan. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* Land Use Chapter provides key guidance in establishing land use goals and policies that can be implemented in the Bellevue Community Plan. These goals and policies provide direction for where new development will occur and how existing uses should be preserved. While the *General Plan* regulates land use and approximate land use distribution, the Bellevue Community Plan builds upon this vision, and based on community input, provides more specific policies and implementation recommendations.

The *General Plan* Land Use Chapter covers four major issue areas including: Residential Neighborhoods, Economic Environment, Urban Growth and Design, and Community Plans. The guidance provided by the *General Plan* encourages the use of the "village concept" design when possible, which supports the cohesive mix of land uses that is proposed in the BCP. The BCP land use plan (referred to as the Community Character Place Type Plan, Figure 38) is intended to be a more flexible land use option with mixed uses, high densities and sustainable job creation attributes, thereby allowing higher density uses next to the UC Merced campus and within close proximity to proposed transit locations, while at the same time considering the regional nature of the intersection of G Street and Bellevue Road as a gateway into UC Merced. Additionally, the Bellevue Community Plan aims to protect the character of and provide adequate transitions to the Rural Residential communities in and near the project area. This is accomplished by determining appropriate locations for various densities of residential development and compatible commercial and professional development.

The BCP establishes a range of land use amounts and intensities that are consistent with those assumed in the City's General Plan. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes an illustrative land use plan (Figure 3 in the Introduction Chapter) as a guide to craft the Bellevue Community Plan. The illustrative plan designates large stretches of Bellevue Road within the project area as "Mixed-Use" and a "Business Park" to support a dynamic assortment of future employment generating uses, housing options and commercial and office uses. Surrounding Bellevue Road are areas of Low Density Residential

(LD) and Rural Residential (RR). Closer to the UC Merced campus land uses transition from Low to Medium Density Residential (LMD), High to Medium Density Residential (HMD), and then to High Density Residential (HD). The southern portion of the project area contains an established Rural Residential (RR) center.

Intermixed with the varying residential land uses near UC Merced, at the intersection of Bellevue Road and Lake Road, are areas designated as Business Park (BP), Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) and Neighborhood Commercial (CN). The table depicting the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* land use designations and densities which the BCP community character areas are derived from can be found in the Introduction of this plan (Table 1).

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* depicts a large area of Open Space – Park Recreation (OS-PK) at the southern end of Lake Yosemite. This creates a natural flow from the existing recreational areas near Lake Yosemite to the proposed nearby residential areas. There is also an Open Space – Park Recreation designation in the southern portion of the Bellevue Community Plan area within a Low Density Residential area. The BCP Open Space corridors allow for additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the neighborhoods to act as connectors to other nearby areas and provide outdoor amenities to residents directly adjacent to homes and neighborhood conveniences.

More information about how the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* supplies the foundation for the Bellevue Community Plan can be found in Appendix A.

CORE ELEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY CHARACTER AREAS

TRANSIT PRIORITY PROJECT COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

The foundation of the BCP is set up by the interconnected street network discussed in the Mobility Chapter of this Plan. The grid patterned street structure promotes walkable connections to transit, bicycle infrastructure, and other pedestrian amenities. A multi-modal street network is a vital component to encouraging increased and efficient use of public transit and transit oriented development. The grid structure of the street system also promotes the benefit for residents and visitors to park once and walk to multiple destinations or "Place Types" within the BCP.

A key feature of most of the Place Types located within a quarter-mile of Mandeville Lane is the ability to meet the requirements of Transit Priority Projects (TPP). TPPs were introduced in California's Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) and are intended to align regional transportation, land use, housing, and greenhouse gas emissions planning. One main requirement of TPPs is that it be located within one-half mile of either a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan, with service intervals of not less than 15 minutes during peak hours (see Figure 24). This criteria reinforced the need for a basic, connected block structure (see Figure 6) which forms the basic structure of the mobility framework and the community character designations.

Requirements of Transit Priority Project (TPP)

TPPs must meet the requirements of SB 375 which include the following:

- TPPs must be located within 1/2 mile of either a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor
- Service intervals of transit must not be greater 15 minutes during peak operating hours
- 50% of a TPP must be residential use by square footage
- Minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre (20 du/ac)
- Commercial uses within a TPP are not required to meet a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) if the use accounts for less than 25% of the project area by square footage.
- Commercial uses which account for 26 - 49% of a TPP area by square footage, must meet a required FAR of no less than 0.75.

Transit Priority Projects which meet the requirements of SB 375 can invoke significant California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) regulatory streamlining. The BCP allows for densities and intensities to meet TPP requirements along the Mandeville transit route. However, since TPPs will be implemented at the project level, the exact size and locations have not been determined.

COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT WITH EXISTING & PLANNED NEIGHBORHOODS

It is a priority of the BCP to protect the character of existing neighborhoods within the Plan area. There are two Rural Residential neighborhoods within the northern and southern portions of the Plan area. Through the proposed interconnected street network, these neighborhoods will be afforded the same pedestrian and transit amenities as the rest of the area. By establishing where key features and land uses should be located and how they interface with existing homes, the existing neighborhoods can be integrated into the overall framework of the planning area while retaining their current character.

In addition, connections with street networks adjacent to the BCP will provide for greater overall connectivity from the UC Merced campus to other parts of the City along transit routes. This structure will position the BCP as a central connection between downtown Merced and UC Merced. The walkable block structure of the BCP allows infrastructure to easily connect with adjacent plan areas. This will support natural transitions from the BCP to other plan areas such as the Bellevue Ranch Master Plan and the University Community Plan.

COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT WITH UC MERCED

The BCP includes an appropriate mix of compatible uses that are anticipated to occur in close proximity to UC Merced. The Plan's Place Types respond to UC Merced's campus 'Gateway District,' while providing an attractive location for businesses to convert new ideas into functional technologies which can provide many social, economic, and environmental benefits to Merced.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT USES

The placement of UC Merced within the growth boundary of the City presents an opportunity for the BCP to create a setting for entrepreneurs, businesses, and social enterprises to benefit from the research activity and competencies of innovations at the University. To capitalize on this opportunity and create an innovation hub, the Plan includes a research and development (R&D) employment area geared to attract and foster talent in the 21st century.

While the uncertainty surrounding UCM's future research programs and their potential for technology transfer coupled with the lack of an established real estate market for R&D space in Merced make it difficult to establish an estimate of long-run demand for such space, a review of market areas with a UC campus provide a basis for a potential range. For example, Yolo County, near Sacramento and home to the UC Davis campus (established more than 50 years ago), supports about 500,000 square feet of R&D/flex space.

Meanwhile, Orange County, where UC Irvine is located, supports roughly 18 million square feet of such space. However, employment in scientific industries in Orange County is dramatically higher than in both Yolo and Merced Counties.

Overall, given consideration of real estate market factors, employment characteristics, UC programs, and the City's desire for employment-supporting uses, planning for 2.5 to 5 million square feet of R&D/flex space in the BCP area would be reasonable albeit slightly aggressive, provide sufficient capacity to satisfy near-term R&D demand, and allow for long-term upside potential for new development and job growth. As such, the BCP provides for nearly 3 million square feet of R&D space in about 100 acres. In addition, the Plan provides for expansion of this R&D area (see light blue area in Figure 37) with additional CEQA review.

COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The BCP encourages a mix of land uses, whether in a multi-story building or spread horizontally throughout a project or neighborhood. To overcome potential conflicts between adjacent uses and their occupants, the BCP advances several proven strategies and includes provisions for urban form, design, and performance standards, and incorporates a master planning process. Refer to the "Neighborhood Master Planning" section at the end of this chapter for more information.

Place Types provide flexible land uses and are designed to adapt to future growth within the BCP. Several areas are designed to be Transit Priority Project compatible.

PLACE TYPES/CHARACTER AREAS:

The BCP builds upon the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* land uses by establishing specific Place Types. These Place Types provide flexible land uses and are designed to adapt to future growth within the BCP. Figure 37, on the following page, illustrates the recommended general distribution of Place Types, each of which is characterized by a range of land uses and a range of development types, scales, and intensities (See also Table 8). The Mixed-Use TOD, Research and Development (R&D) Employment District, and Neighborhood Centers are intended to be flexible in size to respond to future market conditions, but should generally be centered where shown below, and could even grow into the Flexible Mixed-Use Neighborhood area. The Multi-Family Neighborhood is intended to have flexible and variable residential density, including single-family types. The quantified physical characteristics of these place types are as summarized in Table 9. Although, real zoning regulations should be developed to implement the Plan.

The descriptions in this section focus on their physical design and basic land use characteristics. The general location of joint-use school and park sites, while not a Place Type, are depicted on the Place Type Map. Similarly, the Bellevue Gateway is not a Place Type, but a special design area which is described in the Urban Design Chapter. The BCP recognizes the potential to expand some Place Types. This increased development potential is based on future development patterns and additional CEQA review would be required. See Appendix A for further discussion of development capacity.

Table 8 Place Type Characteristics

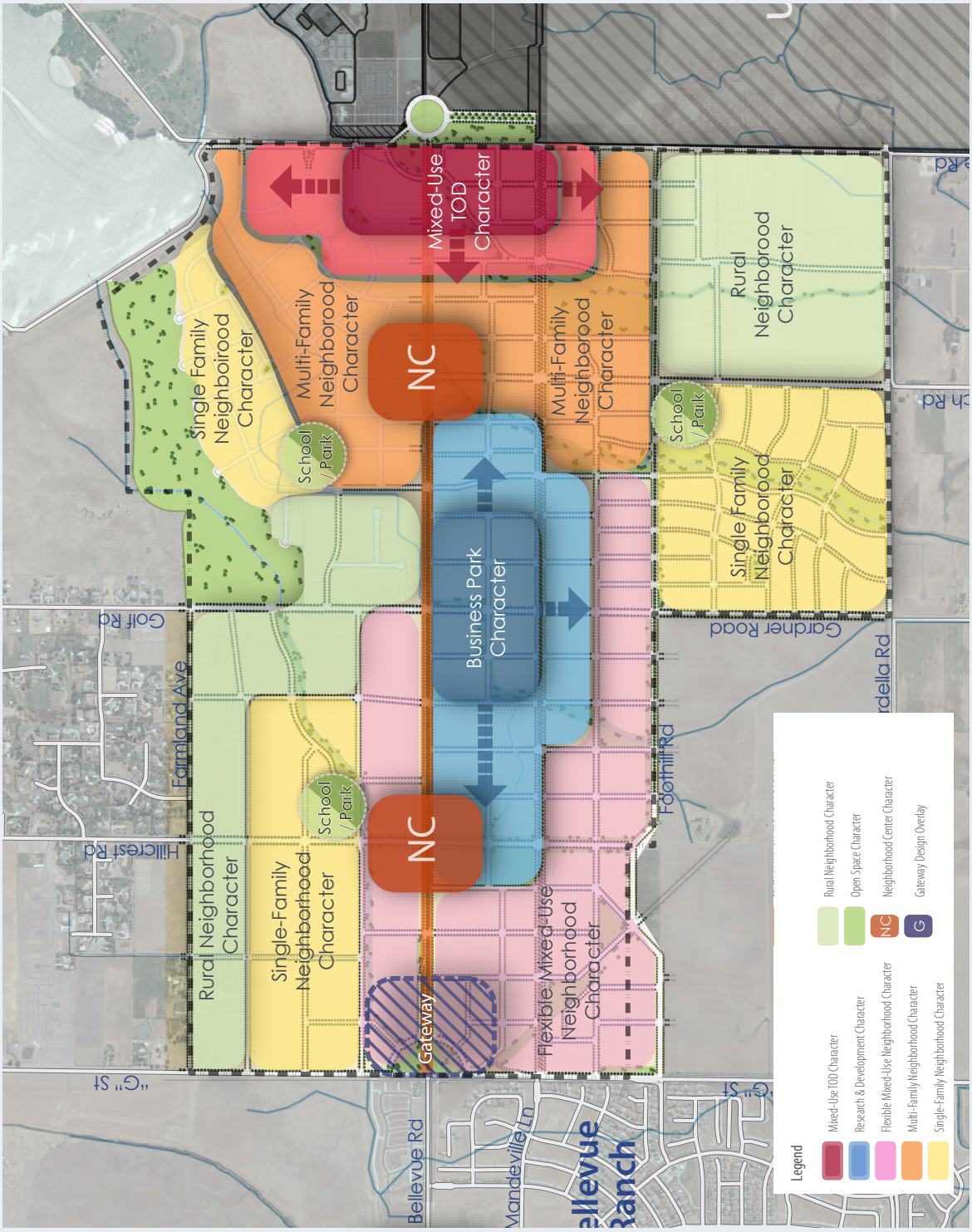
Place Type	Approximate Acreage in the BCP (Gross)
Rural Residential Neighborhood	192
Single Family Neighborhood	417
Multi-Family Neighborhood	120
Flex-Mixed Use Neighborhood	147
Neighborhood Centers (NC)	25
Mixed-Use TOD	74
R&D Employment District	103
Potential Expansion Area[2]	335
Other[1]	182
Total:	1,595

1. Including ROW (except local roads) and open space.

2. Requires additional CEQA review.

3. Joint use school and park sites are anticipated to be 10-13 acres and would primarily be located in the Single-Family Neighborhood

Figure 37. Community Character Place Type Plan



BLOCK CONFIGURATION

The conceptual land use and block structure diagrams below illustrate two of the many variations that may evolve as each property owner pursues development opportunities based on economic conditions at the time of development. In both diagrams the general location and street orientation of buildings is illustrated by the heavy black lines and rust colored areas, and the general land use and development intensity of each block - or in some cases each frontage of a block - are color coded per the legend. R&D employment district uses (blue and purple) are prioritized along the south side of Bellevue Road to the east and west of Gardner Road.

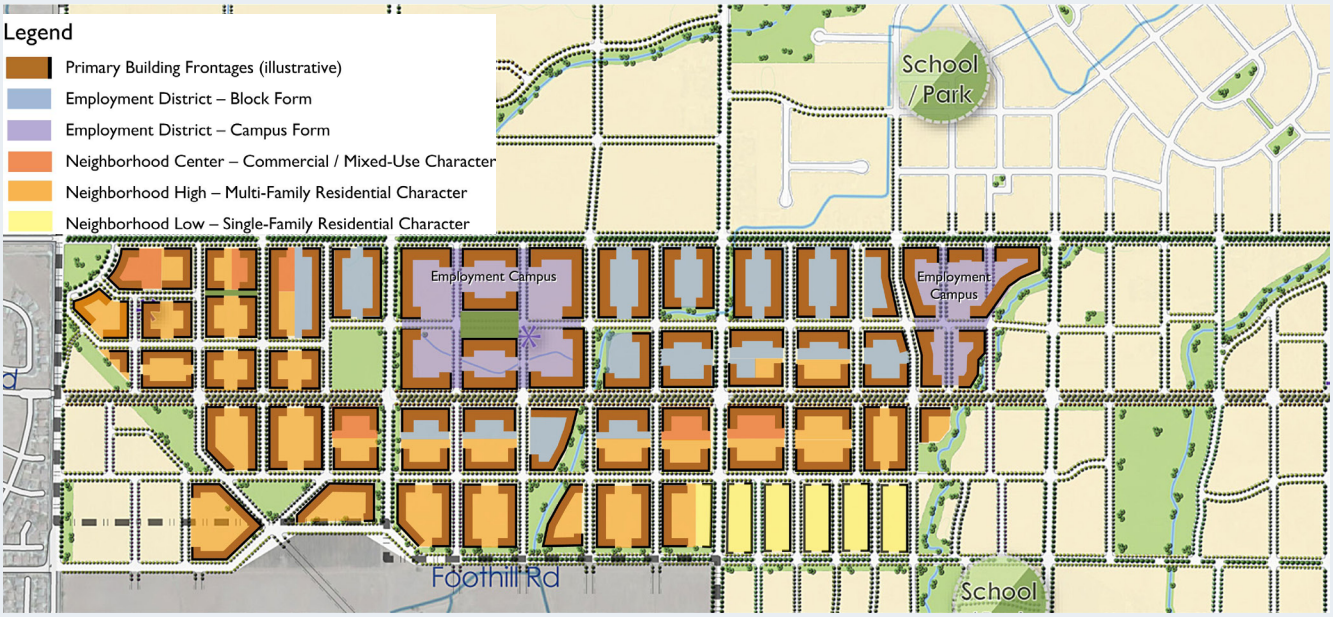
Also, in both diagrams, mixed density neighborhoods with significant amounts of multi-family housing (orange) abut the R&D blocks, generally back to back rather than face-to-face. Mixed-use neighborhood centers (red) are located at key transit nodes, and may be either small retail centers or mixed-used development that includes multi-family residential and neighborhood-serving commercial uses. And in both diagrams, blocks to the south transition to single-family neighborhood character, which may include small-scale multi-family uses in the form of duplexes or triplexes or quadplexes, and perhaps townhomes.

The first diagram illustrates more blocks of R&D development than the second diagram, and also illustrates that in some areas R&D development may aggregate multiple blocks into larger "R&D campus" environments. Within such campuses pedestrian and bicycle connectivity is maintained - along with internal vehicular circulations and shared parking arrangements - but public streets are not extended through.

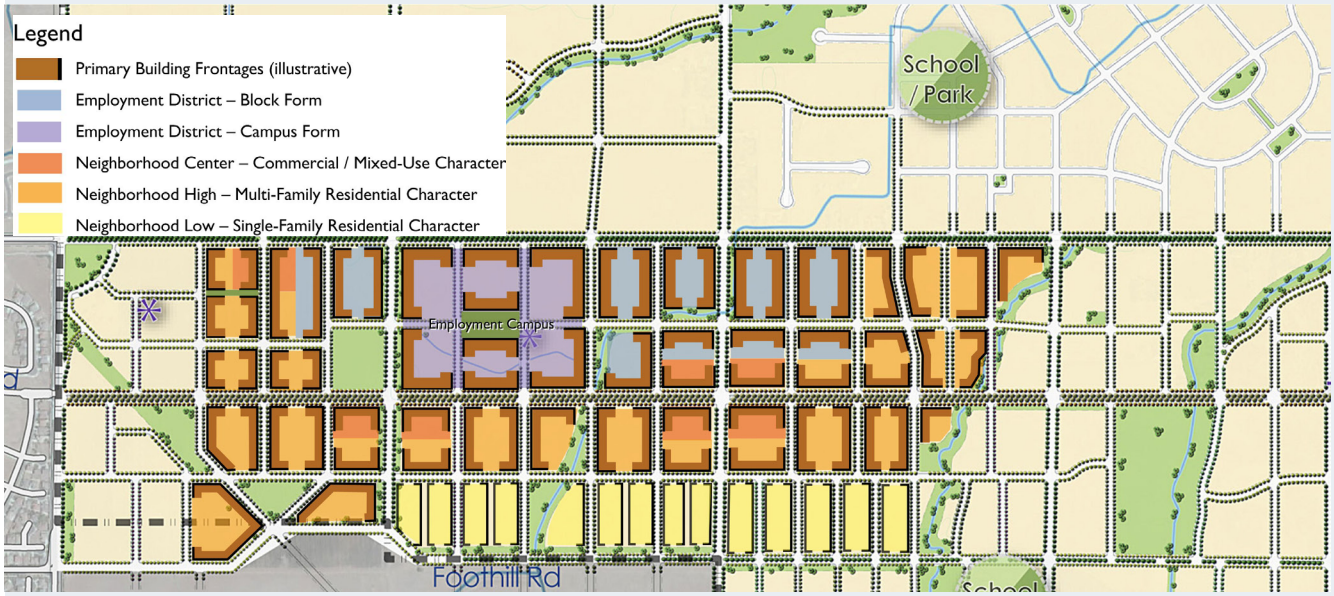
Diagram 2 illustrates a more modest amount of R&D development, which although not currently the preferred scenario could nonetheless be dictated by future demand for such products. In this case, mixed-density neighborhoods, multi-family neighborhood development and single-family neighborhood development could expand northward to fill in.

Note that in each case the transition from R&D to mixed-density to single-family neighborhood character occurs systematically across multiple blocks to avoid an incompatible patchwork of R&D development and low-intensity housing. Note also that these transitions are accomplished by changing development character at major streets, greenways and back-to-back within blocks, so that all development can be oriented to the streets. As opposed to backing up to streets with sound walls and screen walls, which would be contrary to the core Plan goals of walkability and transit-orientation.

Sample Block Configuration- Diagram 1



Sample Block Configuration- Diagram 2



Mixed-Use T.O.D. development is characterized by a mix of uses in generally equal proportions ranging from multi-family residential to community retail to office and R&D, with some elements of entertainment and assembly.

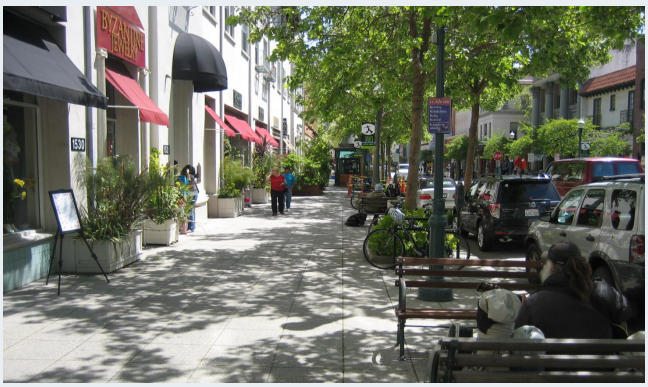
MIXED-USE TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

The Mixed-use Transit Oriented Development (T.O.D.) is the most intense urban environment anticipated in the BCP. By placing a T.O.D. directly next to the UC Merced campus, it will serve a variety of needs for students, professors, other UC employees, and campus visitors. Mixed-Use T.O.D. development is characterized by a mix of uses, generally in equal proportion, ranging from multi-family residential to community retail to office, and small to moderate scale R&D, with some elements of entertainment and assembly. Buildings generally range between 3 and 5 stories in height, are set close to the street with shallow front yards at residential or office ground floors and shop-fronts set right on the sidewalk for retail and entertainment uses. Initially, an identity distinct from Downtown Merced will need to be fostered by the City to develop a separate and non-competing center in the Mixed-Use T.O.D.

Initially parking is expected to be surface parking with shared parking encouraged. A minimal number of spaces should be dedicated for residential uses, typically one per dwelling. Curbside parking is provided on all streets in Mixed-use T.O.D. areas, in some cases angled in at retail frontages. Over time, parking could transition to structured facilities and should be managed to generate revenue for the City (or a parking district) and to reduce development costs. Another benefit of a compact, transit-oriented environment is a lower car ownership rate and lower household costs.

Examples of Mixed-Use / T.O.D. Centers

Examples of Pedestrian Features in Mixed-Use / T.O.D. Centers



R&D EMPLOYMENT DISTRICT

The R&D Employment District provides an opportunity to attract and incubate new businesses that will benefit from the presence of the intellectual capital and research of UC Merced while providing job opportunities for local residents. Offices and light manufacturing are the primary uses envisioned in this Place Type. This Place Type is similar in character and scale to business and research "parks", characterized by one and two (or three) story larger office buildings, each usually with its own parking lot. This Place Type is inherently automobile-oriented, as it was developed for places like the Silicon Valley and Irvine, CA that are designed for auto access almost exclusively. The variation intended for the BCP provides large blocks (comparable to those in Irvine and the Silicon Valley) but framed by complete streets for use by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit. Typical R&D site plans should include street facing buildings with on-street front entries, major parking lots located beside or behind buildings, and limited visitor parking near front entries. Some amount of commercial and office uses associated with the Research and Development Employment District and its workforce population are encouraged to locate within this character area, for example, along Gardner Road between Bellevue Road and Mandeville Lane, or other nearby urban setting. Limited retail, financial, personal service, dining, entertainment, recreation, and similar uses in mixed-use buildings that support the research and light manufacturing functions of this Place Type should be encouraged between other place types to the east, south and west.

Typical R&D site plans should place buildings facing streets with front entries, and major parking lots typically beside or behind buildings, and limited visitor parking in front near entries.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Neighborhood Centers are the places that can provide certain daily necessities and amenities within comfortable walking or biking distance of many residences. Neighborhood Centers should be designed to primarily serve adjacent neighborhoods and the north east corner of the City. The scale and program of such centers must be calibrated to the location, the intensity of surrounding neighborhoods, the presence of other nearby options for such goods or services, and generally to the market. Neighborhood centers are typically located at the edge of a neighborhood, preferably at the junction of multiple neighborhoods, on a street with relatively high traffic volumes

Neighborhood Centers are the places that can provide certain daily necessities and amenities within comfortable walking or biking distance of many residences.

Figure 38. Illustration of a R&D Employment District

Examples of R&D Employment Centers

R&D Centers with Bike Access and Sustainable Parking Lots

to help support the businesses. Minor arterials or major collector roads are suitable locations for neighborhood centers and should be configured for convenient access from major as well as smaller local neighborhood streets. In addition to providing local access to goods and services, neighborhood centers also act as social gathering places and provide opportunity for new businesses. Such centers are also ideal locations for important transit stops, allowing transit riders access to a range of good and services, easily incorporated into their daily activity and travel patterns. The BCP anticipates three types of neighborhood centers: Major Neighborhood Center, Mixed-use Neighborhood Center, and Rural/Small Neighborhood Center. Mixed-use Neighborhood Centers are identified on Figure 37, however exact locations for the Major Neighborhood Center and Rural/Small Neighborhood Centers are not provided and locations may vary.

Figure 39. Illustration of a Typical Neighborhood Center

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Based on estimates of aggregate spending by new workers and persons in the Plan Area (by BCP consultants, Economic Planning Systems), new residential and nonresidential development could support between 450,000 and 500,000 square feet of retail. Retail uses within this range and spread throughout the Neighborhood Centers of the BCP would complement existing commercial focal points such as Downtown Merced, the Merced Mall area, and other planned regional retail areas including those along Highway 99 and Bellevue Road. In this manner, the BCP works hand-in-hand with the market to balance supply and demand, helping to attain City goals related to reducing traffic congestion and to supporting the formation of commercial services. As a long-term plan that does not establish zoning, but rather provides flexible land use designations, the City may seek further market analysis at the time of annexation and/or rezoning to enable consideration of any unintended consequences that a major neighborhood center may have on existing or future retail sites either within or outside the BCP.

MAJOR NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The BCP supports the siting of a Community Center at Bellevue Road east of G Street that could function as the neighborhood center for rural residential neighborhoods to the north and east, for mixed-density neighborhoods to the south of Bellevue Road, and for regional traffic travelling on the Merced Loop Road. This larger center would have a more auto-oriented character than the other Neighborhood Center types.

Figure 40. Illustration of Major Neighborhood Center Character Area

Examples of Major Neighborhood Centers

The BCP considers the placement of this major neighborhood center to be consistent with the City's General Plan Policy (Land Use Policy 2.7.a) which also includes design features that will enable the site to be developed in a compatible manner with nearby land uses, and in a complementary manner to the nearby arterial roads. The features include:

- Strict access and land use restrictions in proximity to the intersection;
- Strong connectivity from the adjacent neighborhood;
- No freestanding pads with multiple curb cuts to arterial streets;
- A mix of uses and residential densities throughout the project;
- Access to a wide range of mobility options including transit, bikeways, and sidewalks;
- High-quality architecture, landscaping, site design, and signage; and
- Significant public improvements.

MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

This type of center has shops and service businesses that are oriented to a major multi-modal street, such that customers arrive on foot, by bike, by car, and by transit. Retail shops, restaurants, and service businesses in these types of neighborhood centers are usually less than 5,000 square feet in size, although with careful design – and the market supporting – could include a small supermarket up to 20,000 square feet. The BCP envisions such a mixed-use neighborhood center transitioning to multi-family residential and finally single family residential several blocks away.

Examples of Mixed-use Neighborhood Centers

While some of the buildings are likely one-story retail buildings, multi-story mixed- use office and residential buildings are allowed and encouraged. Shared parking arrangements are also encouraged, as provided in the larger neighborhood centers described above.

RURAL/SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

In some of the lower density rural residential neighborhoods along Lake Road or north of Bellevue Road, small neighborhood centers are still an option and can act as valued meeting places. Small neighborhood centers are compatible in scale and in character with their surroundings. In the context of the BCP, this would likely take the form of a single building such as a country store or roadside restaurant at a crossroads. Outdoor dining areas, hitching posts, big shade trees, and other rural design elements can make a small commercial business a very welcome neighbor and unique amenity.

Examples of Rural Neighborhood Center

Multi-family neighborhoods are predominantly residential in use and that include multi-family housing at a range of densities mixed with smaller amounts of single family housing.

MULTI-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD

Adjoining the "Mixed Use T.O.D." and allowed in the "Flexible Mixed Use Neighborhood" area, Multi-Family Neighborhoods are predominantly residential and include multi-family housing at a range of densities combined with some single family housing. Commercial uses are generally limited to one or two buildings scaled to serve the surrounding neighborhoods and customers passing by on adjacent arterial or collector streets, not including mixed-use neighborhood centers or major neighborhood centers. The residential and commercial composition is expected to shift from street-to-street and block-to-block. Facing buildings within a block will be similar in scale and character; however, scale and use may change for non-facing buildings, particularly those separated by an alleyway (See Figure 41).

This traditional pattern for mixing various uses and densities allows, for instance, apartment buildings and neighborhood-serving shops to face each other at a key intersection, while allowing houses and duplexes behind or a block away. It will be critically important in implementing such patterns that each neighborhood area (quarter section) be master planned at one time, rather than allowing an apartment builder to build "an apartment project" in one quadrant, a "patio-home builder" to fill up another quadrant with that product, and then fill the rest with houses. As evidenced by a great deal of local, regional, and national experience in recent decades, that invariably generates places that are not connected, walkable, or transit-ready.

Examples of Multi-Family Residential

Figure 41. Illustration of Multi-Family Neighborhood Character Area

RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND SINGLE FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS

A great deal of the BCP area is expected to be made up of low-density residences, which typically means single-family homes with or without accessory dwellings and duplexes. Triplexes and four-plexes, designed to be compatible in scale and appearance with single-family homes can be located along collector roads or along the single-loaded roads delineated in the plan. Pedestrian-oriented, walkable blocks can form a seamless part of a transit-ready community. Neighborhood streets of the type illustrated in Figure 42 can connect directly to the streets of any of the other place types, allowing residents to live in a quiet residential environment that is a convenient and safe 2, 5, or 10 minute walk or bike ride from a bus stop, a shop, a job, a park, or a school.

Some blocks would not have alleys, and in such cases driveways would connect to the street. In this case, residential lots should be wide with narrow paved driveways to prevent visual domination of the front yard, the sidewalk, and the parkway strip by pavement and cars. Homes that front major arterials or collectors should be equipped with alleys. A small amount of locally serving retail should be encouraged within or near these neighborhoods, provided they are designed at a compatible scale with residential heights, setbacks, building materials and operation.

Figure 42. Illustration of Single Family Residential

Examples of Neighborhood Development and Street Types

Rural Residential

Single-Family Residential

FLEX-MIXED USE NEIGHBORHOOD:

Because the BCP is expected to be developed over the course of many decades, it is not reasonable to expect that the ultimate mix of uses within each area can be predicted at this time. Accordingly, this designation will allow neighborhood planning areas (typically quarter mile square areas) to be developed as any one of the other Place Types above. Neighborhood Master Planning outlines procedures for assigning one or a combination of the Place Types when development is timely, providing for appropriate transitions between each Place Type.

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NEIGHBORHOOD MASTER PLANNING

In order to create compatible adjacent land uses, the BCP encourages Neighborhood Master Plans to be prepared prior to subdividing any land and that no zone changes be approved without a concurrent neighborhood subdivision and block structure. This process acts as the fundamental tool to ensure that the overall physical community structure meets the requirements of Transit Priority Projects and connects adequately with any adjacent subdivisions. Subdivisions proposed within the BCP should also have block structures that connect adequately to adjacent subdivisions outside of the plan area to promote future transit routes. Neighborhood Master Plans create the manner in which the community character Place Types interact and establish how the BCP functions. The Neighborhood Master Plans will incorporate the broad set of parameters identified in this Chapter to carry forward the vision of the BCP and inform zoning decisions which implement this vision on a daily basis. Neighborhood Master Plans should also include appropriate performance standards in order to further encourage compatibility of adjacent uses.

After the adoption of the BCP the City will need to establish a Neighborhood Master Plan review process. The BCP recommends the use of the following key review parameters to guide this process. Even though development projects may be smaller, the minimum size of a Neighborhood Master Plan should be 160 acres. The objectives of the master planning process are to:

- Create a dynamic "Neighborhood Master Plan" process to ensure that each new increment of development is well-connected to existing and future adjacent development, while responding to market.
- Focus near-term investments in transit and utility infrastructure to support the development of complete centers, districts and neighborhoods.
- Collaborate with the University and other nearby growth areas to ensure the orderly and fiscally sustainable expansion of urban infrastructure.
- Ensure that development standards deliver the performance of an interconnected transit-oriented development pattern, clarity of urban character and flexibility of use to respond to changing markets.
- Organize new development in the form of complete neighborhoods and districts, oriented to pedestrians and transit.
- Establish a clear and interconnected – yet flexible – network of complete, green streets and community open spaces as the framework for new development.
- Provide for a mix of uses within each neighborhood and district, with flexibility to respond to future market conditions.
- Concentrate higher intensity development and activities near planned BRT stops.
- Define the general scale and urban character of key centers, flexible in size, with appropriate transitions to adjoining neighborhoods.

The review should occur as part of annexation applications and prior to subdivision, and be acted on by the City Council with a recommendation from the Planning Commission.

Urban Design Framework

1 Organize new development in the form of complete neighborhoods and districts, oriented to pedestrians and transit.

2 Establish a clear and interconnected – yet flexible – network of complete, green streets and community open spaces as the framework for new development.

3 Provide for a mix of uses within each neighborhood and district, with flexibility to respond to future market conditions.

4 Concentrate higher intensity development and activities near planned BRT stops.

5 Define the general scale and urban character of key centers, flexible in size, with appropriate transitions to adjoining neighborhoods.

BCP REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The following Table details the physical characteristics of the character areas. More detailed zoning regulations should be developed to implement the plan

Table 9 BCP Character Area Descriptions and Regulatory Framework

	TOD Center	R&D Employment District	Neighborhood Centers		
			Mixed-Use	Major	Rural/Small
General Descriptions	Regional node with a walkable design and high density, high quality development within a 10-minute walk of a transit station and a wide mixture of uses in close proximity, including residential, office, services, retail, and civic. The transit station should be a prominent feature and the pedestrian is the top priority. Designed to support feeder transit systems and easy use of other non-auto modes of transit. Reduced and/ or managed parking programs.	R&D/business park districts would be research and employment centers that have strong ties to UCM and attract workers from throughout the region. Districts are areas that because of their size or function need to be regulated differently than other centers. These districts are typically located along or near major corridors.	Centers are located to serve adjacent neighborhoods and districts and are typically located along a Corridor. One of three types of Centers is applied to a location along a Corridor or along the edges of a District or Neighborhood. Streets and streetscapes are the most urban of all in the BCP. Three types of centers provide for the expected range of land use activity.		
			Contains retail and service businesses aimed at the greater BCP and City.	Contains retail and service businesses aimed at the greater BCP and residents.	Contains retail and services to serve nearby neighborhoods or businesses.
Physical Description					
Residential Density	12 - 36 du/ac	24 - 36 du/ac	12 - 36 du/ac	12- 24 du/ac	6 - 24 du/ac
Non-Residential Intensity	0.35 - .75 FAR	0.35 - 0.75 FAR	0.35 - 0.50 FAR	0.35 - 0.50 FAR	0.35 FAR
Height	3 - 5 stories	1 - 3 stories	1 - 4 stories	1 - 3 stories	1 - 3 stories
Typical Block Size (Perimeter)	400 ft x 325 ft (1,600 ft)	400 ft x 600 ft (2000 ft)	1,600 - 2,400 sf perimeter		
Other Features	Streetscapes mostly with tree wells but parkway strips in residential areas allowed. Pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks, small parks, and plazas, incorporated.	Streetscapes would be treelined streets with onstreet parking.	Streetscape mostly with tree wells but parkway strips in residential areas allowed. Pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks, small parks, and plazas, incorporated.		
Permitted Uses (Supplemental Retail and Service could be allowed where appropriate)					
Residential	●	◔	○	○	○
Office	◑	●	◑	◑	◑
Retail	●	◔	●	●	●
Restaurants/ Coffee shops	●	◑	●	●	●
Services- personal and business	◑	◑	●	●	●
Hotel/Meeting facilities	◑	◑	○	○	○
Theater/ Entertainment	◑	◔	○	○	○
Light Industrial	○	●	○	○	○
TPP Compatible	**Potential**	**Potential**	**Potential**		**Potential**

● Primary ◑ Secondary ◔ Limited ○ Not Permitted

	Neighborhoods			Flex Neighborhood
	Multi-Family	Single-Family	Rural	
	Neighborhoods are located between corridors and accommodate a wide range of housing choices with the most intense housing nearer corridors, centers, and Districts. Depending upon location, neighborhoods are composed of at least two and up to three neighborhood residential environments.			This designation will allow neighborhood planning areas (quarter mile square areas, typically) to be developed as a mix of the other place types above. The development code will provide procedures for assigning a combination of these designations to each neighborhood planning area when development is timely, providing for appropriate transitions between each place type.
	Consists of the most intense housing in the neighborhood and between 30 and 62% of the total housing area depending upon location.	Consists primarily of single-family housing and, on average,55 % of the total housing area depending upon location.	Consists primarily of single-family housing on large lots and makes up 13 -35% of the neighborhood, depending upon location.	
Physical Description				
Residential Density	12 - 36 du/ac	6 - 12 du/ac	2 - 6 du/ac	6 - 24 du/ac
Non-Residential Intensity	0.35 - 0.50 FAR	0.35 - 0.50 FAR	0.35 FAR	0.35 - 0.75 FAR
Height	1 - 4 stories	1 - 2 stories	1 - 2 stories	1 - 4 stories
Typical Block Size (Perimeter)	1,600 - 2,400 sf perimeter		TBD	Varies
Other Features	Streetscape mostly with tree wells but parkway strips in residential areas allowed. Pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks, small parks, and plazas, incorporated.			Varies
Permitted Uses (Supplemental Retail and Service could be allowed where appropriate)				
Residential	●	●	●	●
Office	◔	◔	○	◑
Retail	◔	◔	◔	●
Restaurants/ Coffee shops	◔	◔	◔	●
Services- personal and business	○	○	○	●
Hotel/Meeting facilities	○	○	○	◔
Theater/ Entertainment	○	○	○	◔
Light Industrial	○	○	○	○
TPP Compatible	**Potential**		**Potential**	

● Primary ◑ Secondary ◔ Limited ○ Not Permitted

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The goal headings of this BCP chapter are grouped into the same policy topics as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. This approach fosters consistency and builds on the City's broader *General Plan* guidance. In furtherance of consistency with the City's *General Plan*, Appendix C, policies specific to the BCP planning area are described in greater detail and grouped with the goals and policies it shares in common with the City's *General Plan*. In addition to the goals and policies below, Master Plans/projects/permit applications need to take into account the BCP in its entirety and be consistent with the language herein.

Table 10 Community Character Goals and Policies Specific to the Bellevue Community Plan consistent with the City's *General Plan*

Goal Area CC-1: Residential & Neighborhood Design

Policy CC-1.1: Follow Table 9 as a guide to prepare and assess future zoning regulations, master plans, or specific plans within the BCP.

Table 9 describes the range and intensities of land uses that may or may not occur within the character or bubble areas of the BCP, as presented in the BCP Land Use Map. The BCP provides for a wide range of land uses to occur within the character areas, and is based heavily on successful implementation of the form of the urban fabric discussed in the Urban Design Chapter. If this urban form is provided, the flexible nature of permissible land uses can be offered.

Policy CC-1.2: Encourage and support the development of Transit Priority Projects within the Mandeville Transit Corridor.

The Mandeville Transit Corridor, bounded by Bellevue Road, Foothill Road, G Street and Lake Road, should include high-density residential, research and development, and retail land uses within a transportation fabric that emphasizes a pedestrian-scale streetscape. This structure is intended to support a functional transit service, and to create opportunities for qualified transit priority projects.

Policy CC-1.3: Seek to create compatible developments adjacent to existing Rural Residential neighborhoods.

When designing new neighborhoods adjacent to existing rural residential neighborhoods, the new development should incorporate compatibility strategies to minimize impacts on existing neighborhoods, such as: 1) when backing up to existing lots, use similar rear-setbacks, minimum lot area and height standards as the existing neighborhood; (2) when fronting new lots across a street from existing lots, use similar front setbacks, lot width, height standards and road standards as the existing neighborhood.

Policy CC-1.4: Encourage multi-family development to occur within ¼ mile of the Mandeville Transit Corridor.

Multifamily housing is emphasized to occur in the Multi-Family Neighborhood Character Area. Moderate amounts may occur in the Mixed Use TOD Character Area, and the Flexible Mixed Use Neighborhood Character Area. Refer to Table 1 (BCP Character Area Descriptions and Regulatory Framework) for details of relative amounts anticipated to occur throughout the BCP planning area.

Policy CC-1.5: Provide opportunities for the development of housing types to meet the special needs of students and others attracted to a University environment.

Housing types related to the needs of a university may include co-housing, higher density units, group quarters, etc. This may include areas set aside for the development of experimental or housing prototypes provided they are compatible with adjacent uses.

Goal Area CC-2: Economic and Business Development

Policy CC-2.1: Emphasize the key role of the BCP as a tool to identify and set-aside lands for future opportunities for research and development sites near UC Merced.

The designation of sites for future research and development land uses need to be highlighted in the community and fixed at specific locations but flexible to grow and shift. Fixed R&D sites are essential to both anchor the BCP and to reserve areas as other land uses develop around the R&D sites.

Policy CC-2.2: Emphasize commercial development within the plan's Neighborhood Commercial centers.

The Plan's neighborhood commercial centers within the Mandeville Corridor contribute significant value to the livability of the future community. The variety of land-uses provided in close proximity to housing and employment supports the function of the transit corridor, the complete-street infrastructure improvements and the level of pedestrian and bicycle travel.

Policy CC-2.3: Consider the development of commercial center, appropriately-scaled to the adjacent neighborhood and consistent with the design parameters of General Plan Policy L-2.7.a, at the corner of G and Bellevue Road.

The design parameters are intended to minimize vehicular congestion, support a successful long-term commercial site, and to achieve general City goals and policies to provide clean air resources and mobility options.

Policy CC-2.4: Work to implement the mobility chapter of the plan, especially its bikeway and transit corridor features.

The BCP provides important bikeway and transit links between Downtown, Merced College and UC Merced. Mandeville Lane is the extension of the main transit corridor to downtown. G Street and Gardner/Parsons are important roadway linkages. Bikeways will extend from Cottonwood Creek and the PG&E transmission line corridor. This integrated system will help to ensure Downtown is connected to the City as it expands toward UC Merced.

Policy CC-2.5: Focus a Research and Development center in the vicinity of Bellevue Road and Gardner Road, and allow it to expand with market demand.

Research and Development uses should be developed as an integrated campus connected by public spaces with an urban pedestrian-oriented scale. Surface parking lots may be permitted in the near-term, but the site should be designed to allow conversion to parking structures in the long-term. R&D uses should be supported by nearby compatible land uses to create a live, work, play environment, and may include varied uses including restaurants, retail, daycares and gyms in a dense urban setting that emphasizes mobility by transit, bikes and pedestrians.

Goal Area CC-3: Urban Growth and Design

Policy CC-3.1: Create a mixed-use, transit ready corridor along Mandeville Lane.

A carefully designed urban environment with appropriate paired land uses and circulation options can well serve a large population and associated commercial service market. The Mandeville Corridor is such a place. The synergy created by the paring of mixed-use with transit and other mobility options will help to attract research and development firms to the BCP.

Policy CC-3.2: Balance the ability to permit a range of land uses with the need to emphasize particular types in specific areas of the BCP.

While the BCP enables a variety of land uses to occur in the most of the Character Areas (see Table 1), this should not be interpreted as any use can go anywhere in any amount. The following tools have been crafted to explain the function of the character areas, and should be used to guide land use decisions in the BCP: 1) written narrative of Character Areas; 2) Table 9; and 3) the assumed land use amounts in the BCP traffic assessment.

Policy CC-3.3: Seek to undertake a study or assessment of the likely future demographics to locate within the BCP in order to understand what they may need or do concerning housing, services and jobs so that these demands may be met where possible within the BCP.

Given the proximity of the UC Merced campus to the BCP, future planning and permitting could benefit from understanding what people ages 17 to 28 may need and do. This population cohort may likely occupy a large portion of the housing in the area. Providing uses that meet these needs near housing may help to reduce traffic impacts that would otherwise exist should these uses be sited farther away from this demographic. Such study would also be valuable when making land use decisions that could negatively affect downtown Merced, and could also help to identify a unique district of uses that could exist next to UC Merced.

Policy CC-3.4: Implement the Pedestrian Plan as an essential component of the BCP's Circulation Plan.

The City's standard designs for roadways allow for pedestrian and bicycle use. Such use can be enhanced through a variety of other features, as noted in Implementing Action L-3.3.b, however. The BCP's use of an interconnected grid street, mainly occurring along the Mandeville Lane transit-corridor and the Mixed-Use TOD is one such feature. Figure 11 of the BCP depicts where other mobility-enhancing features are encouraged to occur.

6. URBAN EXPANSION

The Urban Expansion Chapter discusses topics associated with the urbanization of the BCP area including a comprehensive approach to governance and identifying factors affecting growth. In turn, these influence future growth scenarios for the BCP planning area. The Urban Expansion Chapter emphasizes the need for a regional and collaborative approach to long range planning for the area surrounding UC Merced. Such an approach can help resolve complex infrastructure and governance issues, whereas a divided approach could result in fragmented development without adequate infrastructure or public services. Without coordination, these deficiencies could hinder the growth of UC Merced and surrounding lands.

Governance and Terminology

In addition to forming a foundation in understanding urban expansion challenges and opportunities, this section helps the community to understand governance issues related to urbanization of unincorporated lands. Issues include long-term growth boundaries, fringe development, and annexation.

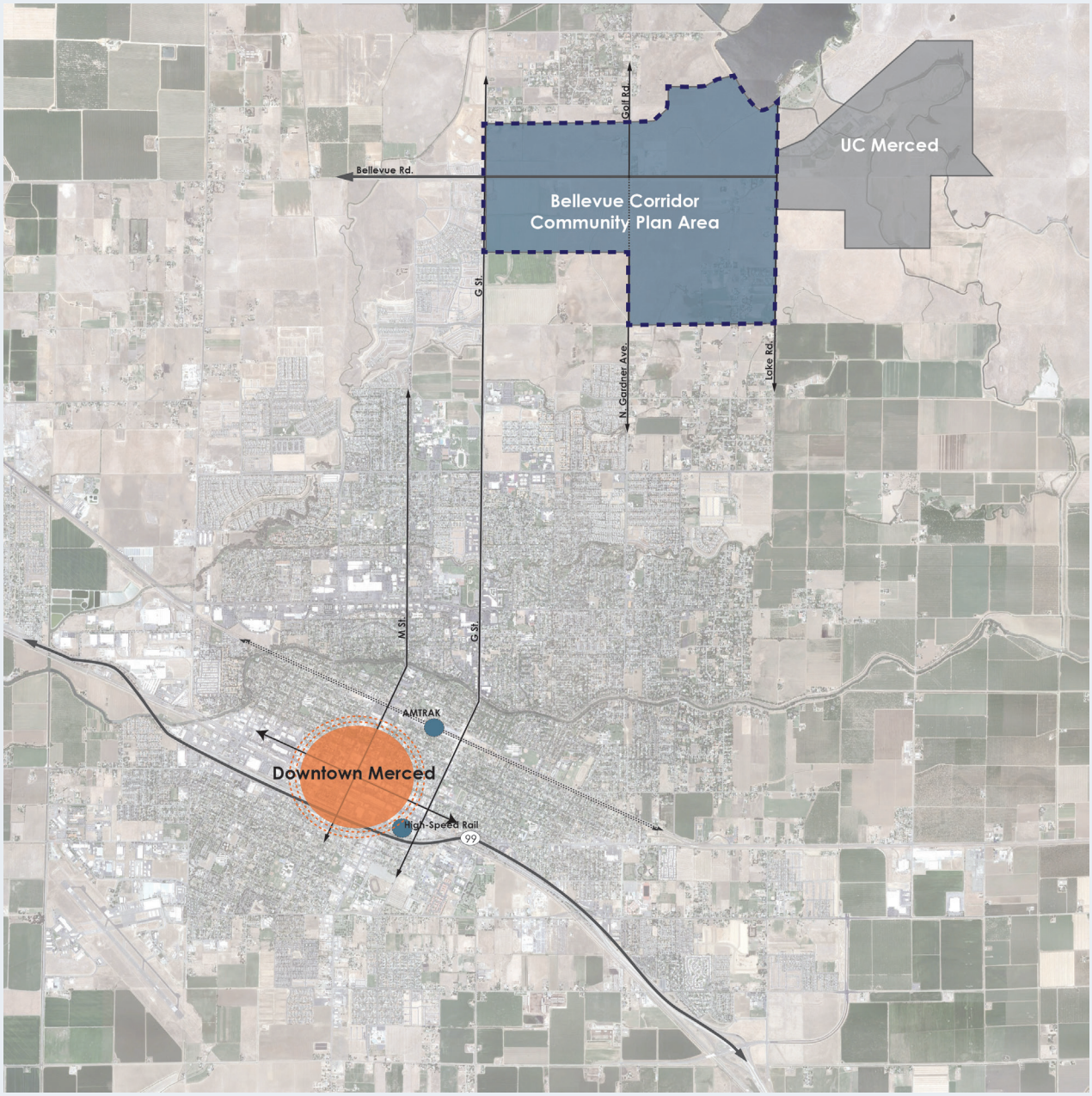
Comprehensive Approach

The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) area is located in close proximity to UC Merced, the City of Merced and lies within the City of Merced's Sphere of Influence (see Figure 44). As an area where future growth is encouraged, the BCP builds upon and integrates concepts from current and past planning efforts, as appropriate. This section describes how the BCP implements the goals of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and integrates with other planning efforts in the community. For example, the BCP recognizes and supports the development of the Merced Loop, with Bellevue Road acting as a functional roadway link between the Atwater-Merced Expressway and the Campus Parkway Expressway.

Growth Factors

Demand for services, housing, and employment exert pressure for growth and development in the BCP and surrounding areas. However, internal and external factors can inhibit or prevent orderly growth. It is important to understand how these growth factors, such as availability of services and infrastructure, can directly affect the form, pattern, and cost of urban expansion. Many of these decisions are made locally, and can be informed by this plan.

Figure 43. Bellevue Community Plan Area



Growth Scenarios

As introduced above, the expansion of the BCP area is heavily reliant on collaboration between decision makers. With many infrastructure-related decisions yet to be made, there are several possible growth scenarios for the Bellevue Community Plan area. The growth scenarios presented in this section set the stage for further community discussion regarding future expansion.

GOVERNANCE AND TERMINOLOGY

The BCP area lies within unincorporated Merced County with future growth and development related decisions guided by the County of Merced General Plan. The *General Plan* for the County of Merced focuses its discussions and policies on the unincorporated areas of the County, as incorporated cities have their own general plan goals and policies separate from, but not inconsistent with, the County. In addition, cities within the county have their own set of urban expansion boundaries that include portions of unincorporated lands to be urbanized and incorporated in the future. Urban expansion boundaries extend beyond a city's corporate limits and must be appropriately planned for and included in any long range development plan or policy. The Area of Influence (AOI), Sphere of Influence (SOI), and Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) all help to describe a city's long-term boundary for urban expansion into unincorporated lands.

In addition to a City's corporate limits, the Area of Influence (AOI), Sphere of Influence (SOI), and Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) all help to describe a City's long-term plan for urban expansion into unincorporated lands.

URBAN EXPANSION AND THE *MERCED VISION 2030 GENERAL PLAN*

The Bellevue Community Plan, though located outside Merced's corporate city limits, lays completely within the City's urban expansion boundaries. Therefore, the City of Merced has interest and influence over development within the BCP area. While Merced County has zoning and development authority over unincorporated land within a City's SOI, there are mechanisms for cities and counties to coordinate growth and development efforts (see discussion under Fringe Development later in this chapter). This collaboration is important for successful long-term planning, as a city must prove it is capable of providing infrastructure and services to land within its SOI before it can be annexed. Similarly, the Urban Expansion chapter of the City's *General Plan* includes several planning tools to guide well-planned growth into unincorporated lands, including a list of annexation criteria.

It is important to note that urban expansion occurs in response to the market, is initiated by property owners, and is regulated in large part by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

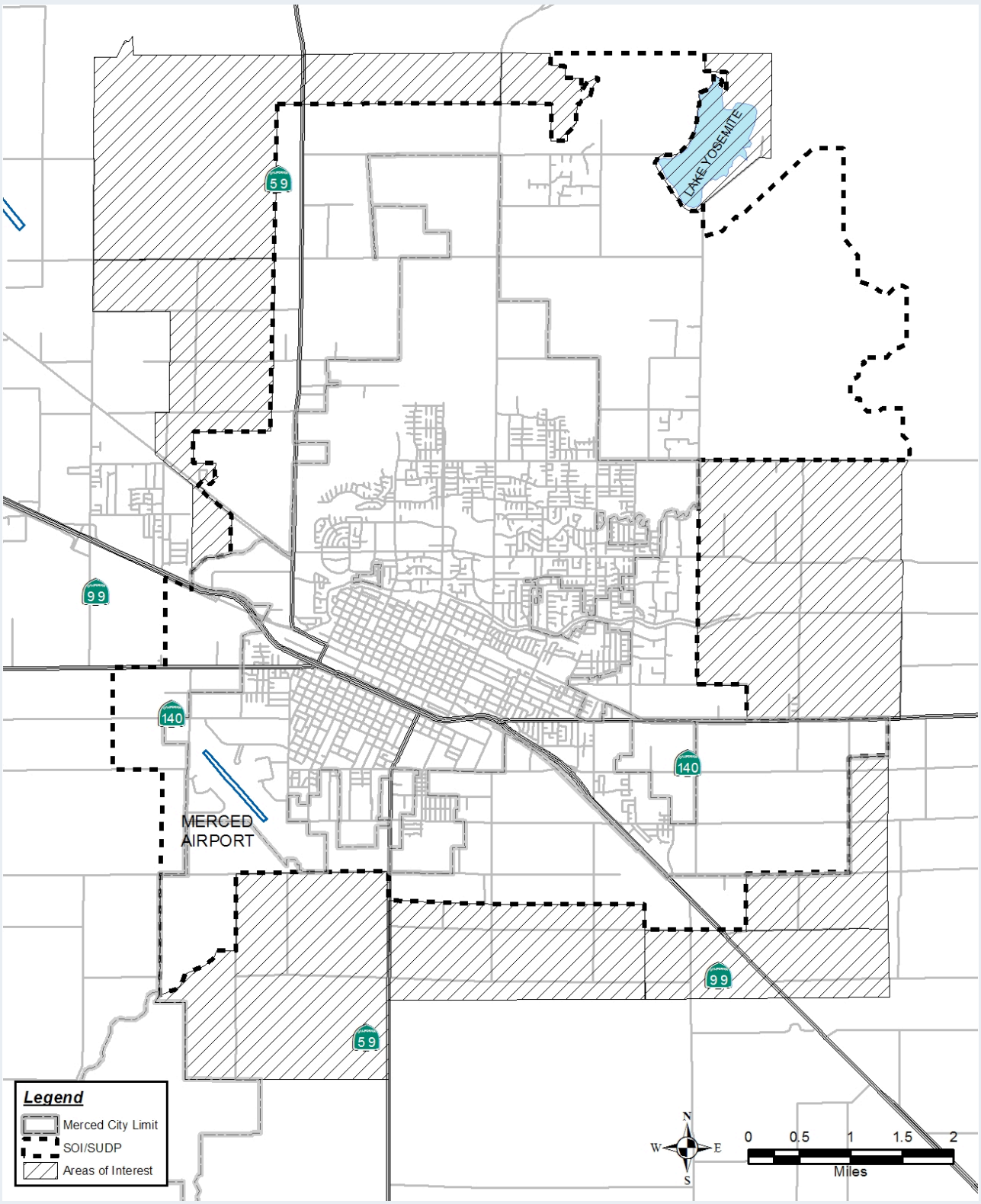
URBAN EXPANSION BOUNDARIES

While City limit boundaries are commonly understood, there are a variety of other governance-related boundaries. These include the Area of Interest (AOI), the Sphere of Influence (SOI) and the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP). These growth-related boundaries are utilized by cities and counties to manage urban expansion. While the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) is located outside Merced's current municipal boundary, it is located within all three of the above listed boundaries. Figure 44 depicts the relationship of the BCP to the City corporate limits, the AOI, SOI, and SUDP.

AREA OF INTEREST - AOI

The AOI describes lands for which a City has a long-term development interest, but which are unlikely to urbanize within the 20-year plan horizon of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (See Figure 44). Though originally

Figure 44. Merced City Limit, Sphere of Influence (SOI), Sphere of Specific Urban Development (SUDP), and Area of Interest (AOI)



considered to be placed in the City's SOI, the Castle Farms and Mission Lakes development plans eventually became a part of the City's AOI instead. Lands near UC Merced were retained within the City's proposed SOI/SUDP. As discussed below, lands in the City's SOI/SUDP are anticipated to develop prior to those in its AOI.

The Area of Influence describes lands for which a City has a long-term development interest.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE - SOI

The Sphere of Influence defines the primary area within which urban expansion is to be encouraged. The entirety of the BCP planning area was enclosed within the SOI established in 1997. In 2012, with adoption of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the City included the University Community Plan area within its proposed SOI. LAFCO officials and local decision-makers recognize the logical assumption that the lands lying within the SOI are those that the City may someday propose to annex. See Figure 45 for the City's 2015 and 2030 SOI boundaries.

The Sphere of Influence defines the primary area within which urban development is to be encouraged.

SPECIFIC URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN - SUDP

With adoption of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* in January 2012, the Merced City Council placed the entirety of the BCP within the City's SUDP. Whenever land is added to an SUDP, the decision is made that it will ultimately be converted to an urban use. An SUDP has a boundary line which is recognized as the ultimate growth boundary of the community over the life of the Plan, and all land within the SUDP is planned for eventual development in a mixture of urban and urban-related uses.

The BCP is located within Merced's Specific Urban Development Plan which contains land to be converted to urban use.

ANNEXATION

Once the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has approved the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), annexation requests from the City for areas inside the SOI require only limited review by LAFCO. This review deals with the appropriateness and efficiency of the boundary and conformance with the City's *General Plan*, including relevant phasing policies and public service availability. LAFCO's were created by the State to oversee changes in jurisdictional boundaries. Locally, Merced County LAFCO is composed of two members of the Board of Supervisors, two members that represent the six incorporated cities in Merced County, and one independent public member.

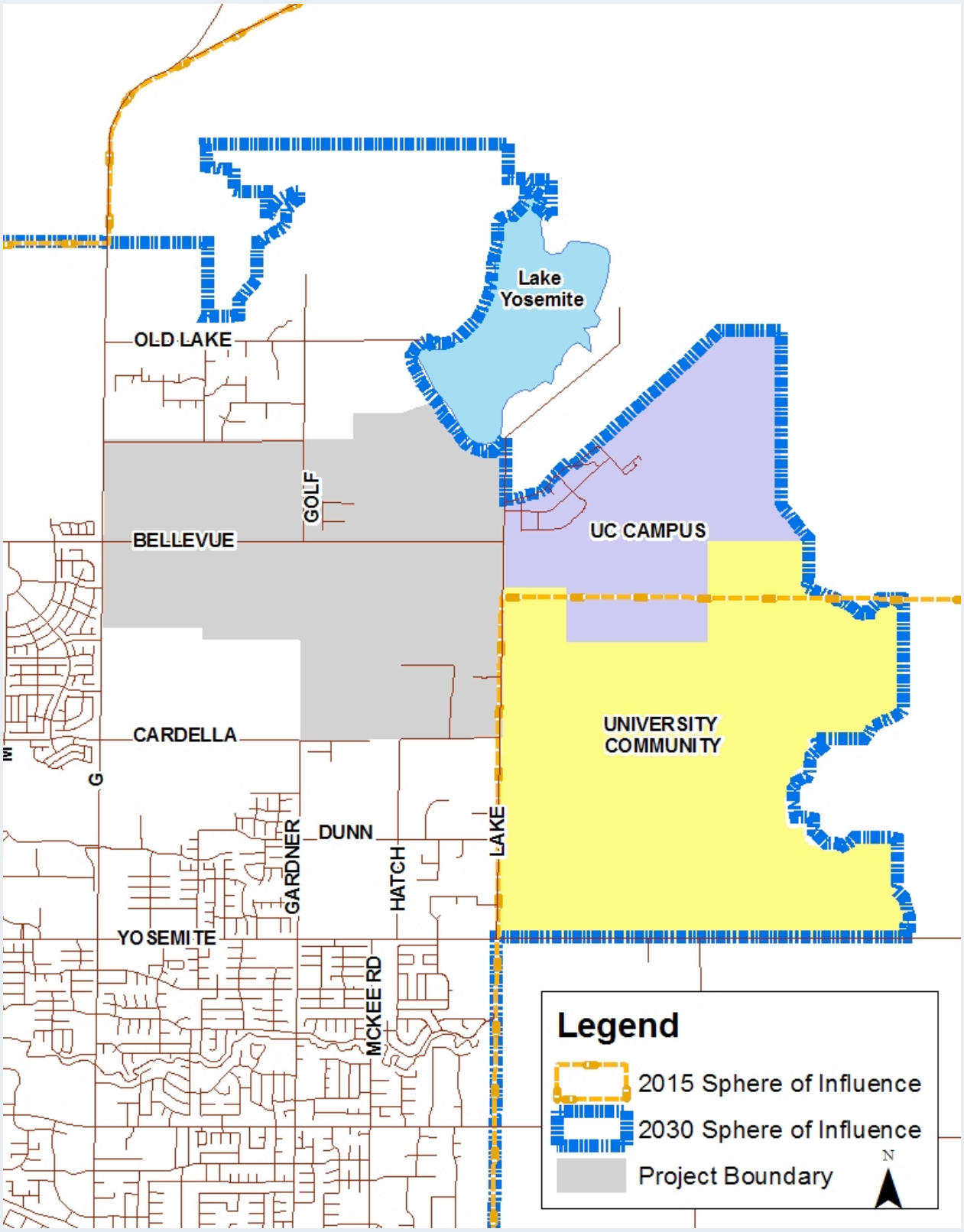
When a property is located within all three urban expansion boundaries (AOI, SOI and SUDP), and is located adjacent to a city limit boundary, it becomes eligible for annexation to that City. The BCP planning effort does not involve an annexation request by the City of Merced. Rather, the purpose of the BCP planning effort is to establish a conceptual land use framework and set of policies in preparation to respond to private property owner requests for annexation. Annexation requests are usually initiated by a property owner that has an interest to urbanize their property.

The purpose of the BCP planning effort is to establish a conceptual land use framework and policy set in order to be ready to respond to private property owner requests for annexation.

CRITERIA

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes updated policy language that is used to evaluate future annexation requests (Implementing Action UE-1.3g). Building upon the 5-point list of annexation criteria is a sixth criteria which

Figure 45. City of Merced 2015 and 2030 Sphere of Influence (SOI)



supports annexations that help the City reach one of the following goals. The sixth criteria emphasizes the following three conditions:

- Does annexation of the area bring the City closer to annexation of the UC Merced campus and University Community?
- Does the area contain significant amounts of job-generating land uses, such as industrial, commercial, office, and business/research & development parks?
- Does the project provide key infrastructure facilities or other desirable amenities, such as the extension of major roads, utility trunk lines, parks and recreational facilities, etc.?"

Taken as a set, these policies support the future annexation of the BCP planning area or parts thereof.

CITY/COUNTY TAX SHARING AGREEMENT

In February 1997, the Merced City Council and Merced County Board of Supervisors adopted the "Property Tax Sharing Agreement between the City of Merced and the County of Merced" which included various land use provisions. By adopting the Agreement, the County agreed to amend the *General Plan* to accommodate future growth of the City of Merced. The agreement includes project review procedures, the circumstances when City development standards apply to development, and terms for payment of development impact fees for new construction. This agreement was a critical landmark in City/County cooperation and granted the City some control over development within its SOI and SUDP.

Planning the Bellevue Corridor

"The City should begin the process of planning for the eventual annexation of the Campus to the City, including evaluating various corridors for possible annexation in order to bridge the gap between the current City limits and the Campus boundary. Planning of the land uses along those corridors should also begin as well, including possible locations for research and development parks."

--Implementing Action UE 1.4.a, *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

Figure 46. Key Growth Factors for the Bellevue Community Plan

1 Physical Constraints

2 UC Merced

3 Population Growth

4 Public Infrastructure and Services

5 The Regulatory Environment

6 Coordinated Development

GROWTH FACTORS

Urban Expansion in the BCP area will be strongly influenced by certain growth factors. Understanding these growth factors will help the community anticipate growth-related needs and to predict probable growth patterns (discussed in the next section). The key growth factors for the BCP include:

- Physical Constraints
- UC Merced
- Population Growth
- Public Infrastructure and Services
- The Regulatory Environment

Taken as a whole, a combination of growth factors could dramatically limit the development potential of any given site near UC Merced. Thus, a strategy to assure the ability to respond to growth pressure being generated from UC Merced is to prepare several nearby development sites and form a community-wide development phasing plan. The phasing plan is defined, in part, by understanding the reality of how different growth factors affect the timing and location of new development.

PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* identified several physical growth constraints that restricted or severely limited the growth potential of areas other than the BCP. These constraints included proximity to airports, flooding potential, high water tables, presence of prime agricultural soils, lack of roads and public services, and sensitive habitats. While the BCP planning area does not contain all of these growth constraints, there are some that need to be considered, including agricultural lands, sensitive species and habitats, and flooding.

AGRICULTURAL LAND

Urban expansion into the BCP is not constrained by the presence of significant agricultural resources. As such, it offers a potentially reasonable alternative location for urban growth rather than sites that do provide valuable agricultural resources, especially given the BCP's ability to provide key circulation infrastructure (Bellevue Road) and economic opportunities (Research and Development sites) for the community.

SENSITIVE SPECIES AND HABITATS

Natural resource agency requirements to protect and conserve sensitive species and habitats have affected the location and intensity of development near the BCP planning area. For a variety of reasons described in the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Chapter, it is reasonable to assume that future development within the BCP would be affected as well. To avoid dramatic changes to key land uses and circulation components, the BCP includes an Official Open Space Map that includes likely resource lands. It is important to note that this map is flexible, allowing for increased development should impacts to resources be addressed through other means. However, growth may be constrained by the presence of sensitive habitats,

such as vernal pools. Consistent with the City's *General Plan* EIR, private property owners are required to resolve these issues prior to or concurrent with annexation proposals, and have the option to do this individually or as a group in a programmatic manner.

FLOODING

There are no floodways in the planning area or lands affected by a regulatory floodplain. A large portion of the BCP planning area is located within the flood-inundation area of Lake Yosemite, however. This potential constraint was evaluated as part of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, which concluded the threat low enough to allow urban land use designations within this area. Nevertheless, shallow seasonal stormwater occurs in the planning area (see discussion on stormwater drainage in Chapter 2).

UC MERCED

UC Merced is a significant growth node that will strongly influence the rate and opportunity for nearby development. UC Merced is anticipated to have a campus population of 10,000 students by the year 2020, with ultimately a capacity of 25,000 students and 6,500 employees at full buildout.

UC Merced is a significant growth node that will strongly influence the rate and opportunity for nearby development.

Images of the UC Merced Campus

POPULATION GROWTH

The Great Recession has had a profound impact on the San Joaquin Valley; most of the Valley's counties have been affected substantially worse than the national or State average in terms of employment losses, reductions in growth and development, and general weakening of the local economy. Merced County has been one of the most affected counties and has impacted the City's economy and growth rates. While conditions have stabilized somewhat during 2012, housing supply and demand relationships remain weak and pricing is such that little to no new development can occur. Growth projections used in the preparation of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, however, remain optimistic in order assure adequate infrastructure can be planned for build out.

REGIONAL INFLUENCES

By 2030 the Central Valley is anticipated to exceed 6.5 million people, a 60% increase over the 2009 Central Valley population estimate of nearly 4 million people provided by the California Department of Finance. Increases in population will result from new births and from new residents moving to the area. In addition, at build out, UC Merced anticipates having a student population of 25,000, a faculty and staff population of 6,500, and a daily population of about 600 others. This population cluster, located approximately 5 miles from downtown Merced, has and will now demand new residential, employment and commercial services. In addition to the UC Merced campus, the proposed high-speed rail (HSR) station in Merced is another population generator. The general population increase in the Central Valley, together with locally generated populations of UCM and the HSR, as well as normal growth locally, is forecasted to dramatically increase the population of the City of Merced to 137,400 people by the year 2030 according to projections from the California Department of Finance.

POPULATION FORECASTS

Merced currently has a population of 79,328 and 27,412 households. A large number of new housing developments were built in the City during the economic boom of the mid-2000s. Since the onset of the national economic recession, development and annexation activity, which was significant during the preparation of the 2004 Municipal Service Review (MSR), is largely on hold. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* projects a City population of approximately 137,400 by 2030, an increase of 58,442, or 74 percent, not including UC Merced. The population of the City will continue to be largely influenced by the growth of UC Merced, which, since its opening in 2005, has steadily increased its student body, faculty, and staff.

Assuming an average household size of 3.2 persons per dwelling unit, by 2030 Merced will need to accommodate roughly 43,000 new housing units (compared to 27,400 in 2010) and 35,000 new employment opportunities (compared to approximately 22,000 in 2010). However, these projections may be revised due to remaining uncertainty regarding local housing and job markets.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

While most growth factors generally affect development potential, it will most likely be the decisions regarding public infrastructure and services that define the timing and location of urban expansion. This in turn will determine whether UC-based growth impacts on the City will be positive or negative. The value of infrastructure-based decisions will be determined by the success of collaboration between the City, Merced County, and UC Merced. This is the reason the ULI Report emphasized the formation of a "collaborative working group" comprised of these entities. It is not the goal or role of the BCP to formulate this group or to define a common purpose and approach. Rather, following the lead of the City's recently adopted *General Plan*, the BCP expands the platform upon which future development can occur, and provides a complete vision for urban expansion in the area near UC Merced. This information can then be used to comprehensively plan for the future roll-out of public infrastructure and services in a manner that achieves the best interest of the community.

THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

The regulatory environment includes the policies, laws, standards and procedures used by various government entities to comply with state or local directives. These can limit where, when and the form of development. For example, LAFCO regulations would not allow the City to incorporate land next to UC Merced if in a form separate or disjoined from the rest of the City; though demand for housing and services could be best served in this manner. Thus, instead of a small annexation, LAFCO rules in this case could lead to annexation of a large swath of properties in order for housing and commercial services to locate next to the campus.

However, as it applies to development near UC Merced, large portions of lands have been included in either a SUDP or SOI, laying the foundation for future near-term development options. Regulations regarding formation of service districts, city limits, and ability to install infrastructure will help define

the project-readiness of various areas near UC Merced. For example, tapping into the City's wastewater treatment plant which is planned to operate at 20 million gallons per day would be easier than attempting to receive State of California permits for a new wastewater treatment plant.

Annexation is a precursor to urban expansion. If the City agrees to annex a property, it is agreeing to provide City services (i.e. sewer, water, police, fire, garbage, etc.). The City and the County have a "master property tax exchange agreement" in place that may constrain annexation because under the agreement the County retains its share of property taxes following annexation. Under these circumstances it is more challenging for the City to fund needed municipal services to the annexed area. It is likely that some revision of this agreement will be necessary before substantial annexations within the SUDP/SOI will occur.

COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT

The preparation of long-range planning documents, such as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the UC Merced Long Range Development Plan, the University Community Plan (UCP), and the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) are important first steps in establishing a shared vision for the future. These, and other development plans, help set the foundation upon which infrastructure, service and phasing plans will be developed. This section broadly describes the numerous planning and development efforts underway near the Bellevue Community Plan, setting the stage for a discussion of recommended next steps at the end of this chapter.

A detailed description of development plans and projects occurring within and near the Bellevue Community Plan area is provided in Technical Memorandum B (Appendix B) of the BCP. The "Development Plans and Projects" document identifies and describes recent and anticipated growth patterns. Figure 4 shows approved and planned developments in the northwest growth area of the City of Merced.

The preparation of long-range planning documents, such as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the UC Merced Long Range Development Plan, the University Community Plan (UCP), and the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) are important first steps in establishing a shared vision for the future.

UC MERCED

The form in which the campus grows has and will continue to affect adjacent development and public infrastructure and service needs. For example, in 2013, the Long Range Development Plan concept was adjusted based on recommendations from the Urban Land Institute (ULI), resulting in a smaller and contracted development site, increased land use densities, and shifting of non-academic uses (such as offices) to off-site locations. The ULI Report strongly recommended strengthened partnerships with the City of Merced, stating that the fates of UC Merced and the City of Merced are inextricably linked.[16]

CITY LIMITS

Lands within the City Limits have completed the annexation process, and are developed, used for agriculture purposes, vacant or partially constructed and occupied. These lands are generally ready to develop as they are usually immediately adjacent to development, city services and infrastructure, and require relatively few permits. Lands to the south and west of the Bellevue Community Plan are within the City Limits.

Many public comments received at the BCP public workshops pointed out the unfinished nature of the Bellevue Ranch Development and their support to complete that development prior to opening new lands for development. Lands within, adjacent to, and near the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) planning area are in various stages of development entitlements such as formation of Specific Urban Development Plans and subdivisions. Narrative descriptions, maps, and tables presented in Appendix B depict current and future land uses.

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* also includes many policies that encourage a compact urban form and logical growth, and to avoid leapfrog development. At the same time, it encourages sites to be ready for industrial development and to extend services to sites proposed for significant employment-related uses.

FRINGE DEVELOPMENT

Fringe development occurs outside a City but within its Sphere of Influence (SOI) or Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP). Counties possess zoning jurisdiction over this unincorporated territory. However, the State legislature recognized (in passing AB 2838) that as the future service provider of such unincorporated lands in the City's SOI, the City should have an opportunity to address how land in the SOI is planned for and developed in anticipation of future annexations. In the BCP planning area, these opportunities exist in the context of Rural Residential Centers and the City-County Tax Sharing Agreement.

Rural Residential Centers (RRC's) contain concentrations of suburban housing on a minimum of one-acre lots without commercial services. RRC's typically lack municipal sewer, water, and emergency services; curbs, gutters, and sidewalks; street-lights; and fire hydrants. There are five RRC's in Merced County; one is located adjacent to the City of Merced, with a portion located within the eastern half of the BCP.

CHALLENGES OF RURAL RESIDENTIAL CENTERS

Although RRC's provide a unique semi-rural character that is prized by residents, governance challenges with Rural Residential Centers include: 1) extremely inefficient land use in terms of agricultural land conversion and service delivery costs to the County; 2) potential for ground water contamination from the concentration of septic tanks on one-acre lots; and 3) the increasing difficulty in obtaining potable drinking water from individual wells due to stricter state-wide standards.

Some of the RRC's within or adjacent to the BCP are already developed and subdivided into one- to two-acre lots which makes redevelopment or redesignation of these properties unlikely. The City's General Plan supports the maintenance of existing RRC's, but no new ones. However, in the area along the Bellevue Road corridor the City's Land Use Diagram indicates this area as Mixed-Use. The presence of major water and sewer lines; large vacant parcels; and the potential to develop job-generating uses in proximity to UC Merced support higher intensity uses along the Bellevue Corridor, in lieu of the neighboring RRC designation.

INTERIM ENTITLEMENTS AND PERMITS IN THE BCP

The City of Merced has control over the land use and development decisions within its city limits. In the fringe area, while lands retain county land use and zoning designations, the City and County are committed to coordinating future land uses. LAFCO officials and local decision-makers recognize the logical assumption that lands lying within the SOI are those that the City may someday propose to annex. As noted above, through AB 2838, the City has opportunity to address how land in the SOI is planned for and developed in anticipation of future annexations. This is accomplished through management of Rural Residential Centers and implementation of the 1997 Property Tax Sharing Agreement between the City of Merced and the County of Merced.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL CENTERS

The fringe area within the BCP planning area is designated in the Merced County General Plan as Urban Expansion Area (UE), and Agricultural-Residential (A-R), with the A-R designation coinciding with county Rural Residential Centers. Merced County General Plan policies prohibit the creation of any new, or the expansion of any existing Rural Residential Centers in the unincorporated county, and limits the amount of new growth within existing Rural Centers by allowing only residential uses, limiting public services, and prohibiting commercial uses. To protect existing rural residential neighborhoods, developed A-R lands are designated "Rural Residential" in the BCP.

All properties within the BCP are outside the city limits and zoned Agricultural Residential (A-R). The purpose of the agricultural-residential zone is to provide areas for rural residential development. It is intended that this zone typically serve as a transitional area between more dense urban communities and agricultural uses. Given the planned urban nature of UCM and the University Community, the intended transitional function of A-R zoned lands in the eastern portion of the BCP is dramatically reduced. Additionally, Merced County General Plan policy LU-10.7 states, "Evaluate, during the update of the county's community plans, the alternative of redesignating undeveloped rural-residential areas to the Urban Reserve designation to support the effort of the affected city to achieve more efficient use of land within its existing sphere of influence." There are several undeveloped rural residential areas within the BCP planning area. The City's effort to achieve more efficient use of land can be supported by Merced County if these areas received an Urban Reserve designation. Finally, Merced County General Plan policy states, "Apply, as appropriate, the Urban Reserve designation to unincorporated properties within city spheres of influence that are planned for future development by the city in their general plan.

TAX SHARING AGREEMENT

In this agreement, Merced County agreed to amend the General Plan to accommodate future growth of the City of Merced. The agreement includes: a) project review procedures that include the City; b) description of circumstances when City development standards apply to development; and c) terms for payment of development impact fees for new construction. This agreement was a critical landmark in City/County cooperation and granted the City some control of development within its SOI and SUDP.

Examples of a Rural Residential Centers

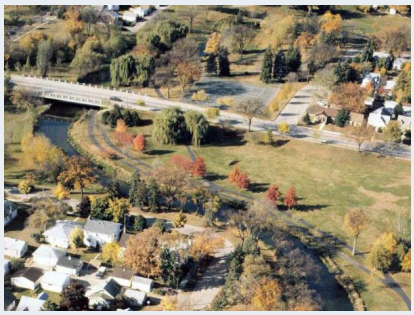
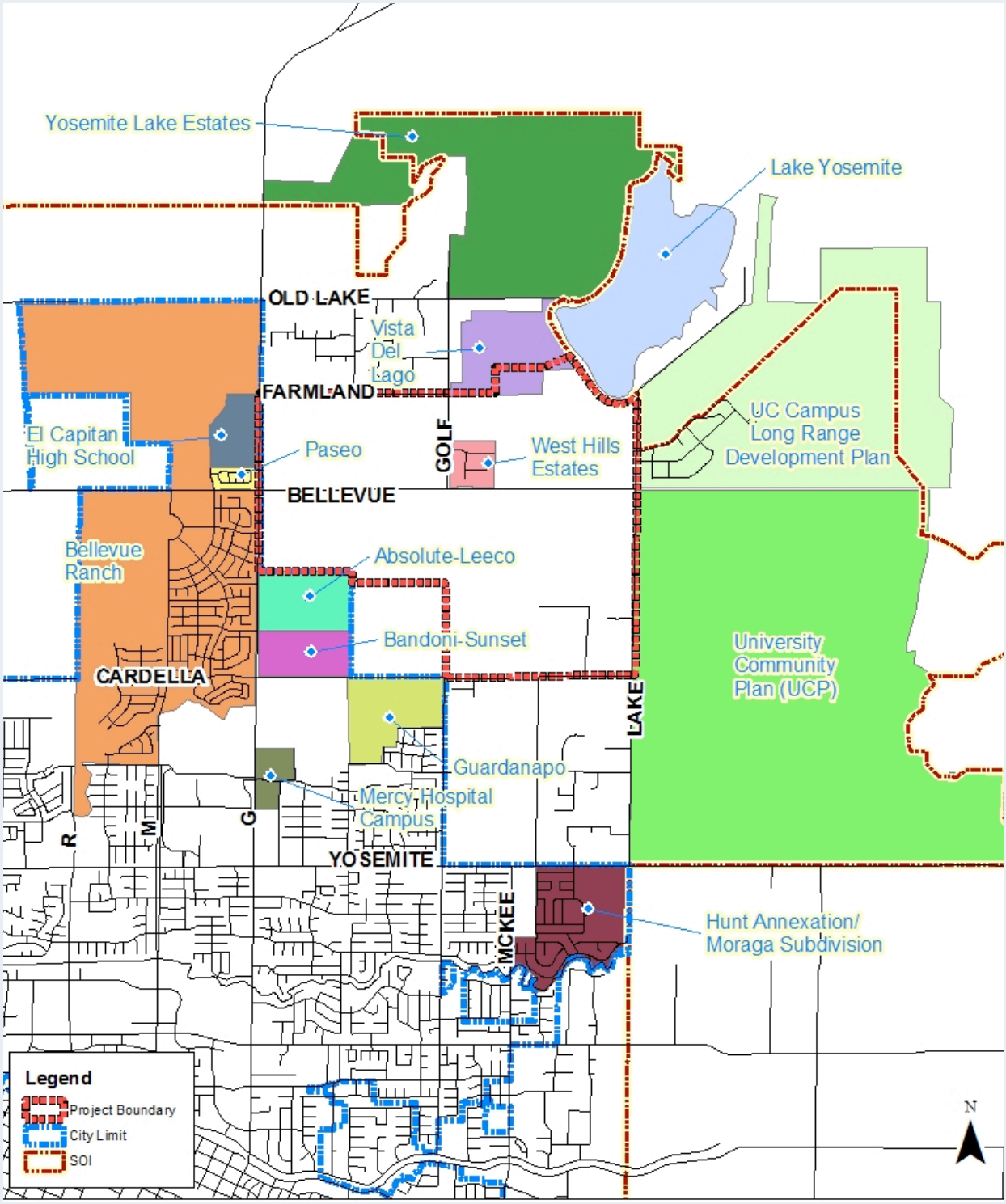


Figure 47. Bellevue Community Plan Project Index



COMMUNITY PLAN GROWTH SCENARIOS

The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) describes the endpoint of a development vision. The scenarios of how this vision may be constructed over time in the plan area are varied, however. Growth could occur adjacent to the University of California at Merced, in multiple locations adjacent to the City of Merced, as programmed growth within a large annexed area, or any combination of the above. As with the City's General Plan, it is not the place of the BCP to determine which growth scenario will be implemented. Rather, this section of the BCP describes various urban expansion options, their likely infrastructure roll-out outcomes, and identifies supportive factors of future annexation proposals.

ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT - OVERVIEW

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (CKH) encourages collaboration among LAFCO's, cities, counties, landowners, and other local agencies to balance the timing and location of development within Spheres of Influence (SOI). This is consistent with the legislative intent of the CKH to promote:

- Orderly development;
- Discourage urban sprawl;
- Preserve open space and prime agricultural lands;
- Provide housing for persons and families of all incomes; and
- Encourage the efficient extension of governmental services. [4]

Though with varying degrees, all growth scenarios presented herein are aimed to be consistent with the intent of the CKH.

SCENARIO 1: GROWTH WITHIN THE CITY

For two key reasons, vacant lands within the City are more likely to be developed than lands outside the City. 1) These vacant lands have already been through the annexation process, and 2) are either immediately adjacent to public services or contain some, many or all of the required public services and infrastructure. Provided the markets created by UC Merced and the general market in Merced are not particular as to location, these sites will develop first. These sites will absorb market pressures and reduce growth pressure outside the City Limits.

SCENARIO 2: GROWTH CONTIGUOUS TO THE CITY

This option describes the business-as-usual model of urban expansion whereby development occurs immediately adjacent to the City of Merced, expanding the City generally from the southwest to the northeast within the City's SUDP/SOI. There are several variations of this scenario ranging from development directly from the west or south of UC Merced. Since it includes a relatively large area, the availability of public services and infrastructure will be a limiting factor. Unless there is a deliberate effort to focus public

infrastructure and services in a specific geographic area, connecting the urban fabric to UC Merced will take many years and potentially result in a hodge-podge development pattern. Development could be frustrated by limiting availability of financial resources that are used for improvements in a haphazard uncoordinated fashion.

SCENARIO 3: DIRECTED GROWTH

This scenario is based on selection of a preferred growth area within which development is more certain to benefit from a coordinated deployment of public services and infrastructure. A geographic area would need to be selected before any annexations occur in the northeast region of the City's SOI, and to minimize the creation of peninsular form. Absent these actions, this scenario would be very unlikely to occur.

SCENARIO 4: NODAL DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO UC MERCED

This scenario places private development immediately adjacent to UC Merced. Phasing within both approaches described below would be geared to: 1) prevent the premature conversion of agricultural land; 2) assure efficient and cost effective extension of services; 3) work with the ability of the City to provide infrastructure and municipal services; and 4) designate certain areas for development relative to other phases. Complementing the flexible nature of the BCP's land use element, this urban expansion model also provides for the greatest degree of responsiveness to the market.

Though the later approach has significant challenges, the nodal growth scenario could happen through two approaches, specifically by:

- Programmed or phased growth within a large annexation area extending between the City of Merced to and including UC Merced. This approach involves the annexation of a large land area between UC Merced and the City of Merced. Submitted with the annexation would be master utility and service plans that define the circumstances under which the various phases would be developed, emphasizing growth next to UC Merced. This approach could be limited by the need for a large block of land owners to agree to the annexation.
- Ability to develop adjacent to the UC Merced campus without a contiguous annexation with the City. Though unlikely, this could occur in two ways: 1) if the State of California were to allow an exemption to LAFCO policies and allow annexation immediately adjacent to UCM as a separate and second growth node in the City's SOI; or 2) through some form of extraterritorial service agreement between the City and County.

SCENARIO 5: CONCURRENT SCENARIO 2 AND SCENARIO 4

In this scenario, development may occur simultaneously next to the City of Merced and next to UC Merced. This scenario assumes two factors: 1) a strong market to support growth at multiple sites within the BCP, and, 2) that an approach to annex next to UC Merced has been successfully deployed as described in Scenario 3 or Scenario 4.

NEXT STEPS

A common vision and approach to urban expansion creates certainty, and certainty attracts investments, and investments create jobs. Yet, as evidenced in the growth scenarios above, along with concerns raised by the BCP Ad-hoc Advisory Committee, there is an unstable investment climate. A collaborative effort to create a multi-jurisdictional infrastructure and service plan could sort through these challenges and result in decisions that direct growth in a manner that serves the interest of the community as a whole in a fiscally sound manner.

CHALLENGES

During the preparation of the BCP that involved input from area property owners and representatives of UC Merced, Merced County and the Virginia Smith Trust, there was a strong concern expressed about the need to 1) coordinate development; 2) advance fiscally sound plans; and 3) to plan for the adequate provision of public services and infrastructure. While each planning area in northeast Merced strives for such goals, implementing them is challenged due to conflicting growth policies or interpretations thereof; support for competing plan areas; and a "wait-and-see" approach to public infrastructure and services. These do not create an atmosphere of certainty, but instead creates an unstable investment climate.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- What is the ratio of use between future developments and UC Merced of the remaining capacity in existing sewer collection facilities? For example, is new development favored, or should a large share of it be reserved for the growth of the campus?
- What is the ratio of road fund expenditure between Bellevue Road and Campus Parkway? For example, should the City expend its funds to improve Bellevue Road, or Campus Parkway? If the latter, then should it be spent on constructing the northern section to serve nearby developments including UC Merced?

FINANCING

- Are new financing mechanisms needed to address growth?
- Absent an updated tax-sharing agreement, will growth be limited to lands within the existing City Limits?
- What is the total cost to serve the planned growth in Merced's northeast growth area?

PHASING:

- How much growth is directed to lands within the current City Limits versus new annexations?
- Where should initial annexation efforts be supported?
- Is growth next to UC Merced, whether in the County or City or not, considered "compact," and if so, what is the best method to enable growth next to UC Merced?

COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT

Key to coordinated development is the formation of a collaborative effort to create a multi-jurisdictional infrastructure and service plan to sort through these challenges. Such discussion and decisions would involve the University of California, the City of Merced, Merced County, as well as the Merced Irrigation District, local schools and the Merced County Association of Governments. The UC Merced Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), the University Community Plan (UCP), and the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP), among other plans, provide the necessary information and options from which a unified development phasing plan could be crafted. Figure 54 illustrates the relationship between the BCP and surrounding plans.

The City of Merced, Merced County and UC Merced, and other affected agencies, should form a collaborative working group to establish a shared vision for growth in Merced's northeast SOI, and addressing unresolved infrastructure, financing and phasing issues. Three outcomes from this effort should be:

1. Select a growth scenario, or combination thereof;
2. Develop a strategic phasing plan and plan for services that coordinate expenditure of resources, provides certainty in the marketplace; and leads to an efficient use of public infrastructure and services.
3. Update the City's Tax-Sharing Agreement to align with the broad decisions concerning financing, infrastructure and phasing in the northeast Merced SOI.

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The goal headings of this BCP chapter are grouped into the same policy topics as the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. This approach fosters consistency and builds on the City's broader *General Plan* guidance. In furtherance of consistency with the City's *General Plan*, Appendix C, policies specific to the BCP planning area are described in greater detail and grouped with the goals and policies it shares in common with the City's *General Plan*. In addition to the goals and policies below, Master Plans/projects/permit applications need to take into account the BCP in its entirety and be consistent with the language herein.

Table 11 Urban Expansion Goals and Policies Specific to the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan consistent with the City's General Plan Regarding Urban Expansion

Goal Area UE-1: A Compact Urban Form/Efficient Urban Expansion
Policy UE-1.1: : In cooperation with Merced County, seek to designate undeveloped parcels within the RRC as "Urban Reserve," a Merced County General Plan Land Use Designation.
Policy UE-1.2: Promote high residential densities along the Mandeville Transit Corridor within the Bellevue Community Plan. The population near UC Merced will consist of a higher percentage of students, teachers, and employees than in other part of Merced. This population will need opportunities for a range of housing opportunities ranging from apartments, condominiums, rooming homes, among others.
Goal Area UE-2: Joint Planning Efforts
Policy UE-2.1: Seek to form a collaborative approach to planning and implementing future growth near UC Merced. A broad discussion of how best to utilize limited financial resources, to devise an intra-government infrastructure plan for roads and sewer, etc., and to decide governance issues should occur prior to development within or near the BCP. These efforts would be aimed to result in decisions that direct growth in a manner that serves the interest of the community as a whole. Such discussion an decisions would involve the University of California, the City of Merced and Merced County, as well as the Merced Irrigation District, local schools and the Merced County Association of Governments.
Policy UE-2.2: In conjunction with the collaborative approach above, assess annexation options, and where appropriate, consistent with these efforts, encourage annexation of lands between the City and UC Merced. Annexation of lands between UC Merced and the City need to be consistent with a community-based strategic approach to infrastructure improvement and property development in order to avoid: 1) an uncoordinated dispersal of infrastructure; 2) uncertainty in the marketplace; and 3) inefficient use of public infrastructure, services and funds.
Goal Area UE-3: Timing, Density and Location of New Growth
Policy UE-3.1: Development of Research and Development Parks that are not contiguous to existing urban areas may be considered. Implementation Action UE-1.3a of the Merced Vision 2030 General Plan emphasizes that new urban development and annexations be contiguous to existing urban areas and have reasonable access to public services and facilities. Given that the City also seeks to provide significant job-based land uses, flexibility on the proximity of these land uses may be permitted. Important considerations include: reasonable provision and access to public services and facilities; extent of new jobs compared to community needs; impact costs of services and infrastructure and sources to compensate and mitigate.

Policy UE-3.2: In the context of Implementing Action UE-1.3.a, of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* growth adjacent to or in close proximity to UC Merced is considered one that is contiguous to an existing urban area. The siting of UC Merced has created a second growth node within the City's Sphere of Influence. The City's model to form a compact urban form can be applied to a community with more than one center. Development adjacent to UC Merced, concurrent with growth adjacent to the City's traditional form, should be considered.
Policy UE-3.3: Support efforts that permit campus serving housing, office and commercial development adjacent to UC Merced. Under circumstances that are compatible with logical provision of City public infrastructure and services, development adjacent to UC Merced could be supported. The development should be related to proven market demands that originate predominately from UC Merced, and may include housing, office and commercial development.
Policy UE-3.4: Annexation proposals in the BCP shall be accompanied by a phasing plan. In order to assure efficient and cost-effective extension of services, a phasing plan that matches infrastructure needs with anticipated development will need to be submitted with applications to annex lands within the Bellevue Community Plan area. The Phasing Plan will need to be consistent with City mechanisms and tools to finance and install public infrastructure and services.
Policy UE-3.5: Further study of the anticipated need of future populations of the planning area. Seek to undertake a study or assessment of the likely future demographics to locate within the BCP in order to understand what they may need or do concerning housing, services and jobs so that these demands may be met where possible within the BCP.

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7. PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The City's Municipal Service Review (MSR), approved by LAFCO on May 23, 2013, provides information about public services for future applications and LAFCO actions. The MSR addresses fire and police emergency services, storm-drainage, wastewater and water in the context of several determinations: population growth; disadvantaged unincorporated communities; infrastructure capacity, needs and deficiencies; financial ability of agencies to provide services; shared facility opportunities; and accountability.

This Chapter addresses the availability of public infrastructure and services, the challenges of providing these, and the steps necessary to overcome these challenges. For example, there is a need to: 1) craft infrastructure Master Plans (sewer, water and storm drainage) that address the needs of development areas within the City's Sphere of Influence; and 2) coordinate efforts concerning short-term and long-term infrastructure needs, expenditures, and improvements to the roadways which serve the northeast area of the SOI, namely Bellevue Road, Mandeville Lane and Campus Parkway. Where appropriate, these actions should consider new approaches to design, operations, and financing. These efforts will also create the tools needed to select and implement infrastructure phasing plans, which in turn provide certainty and direction for development to proceed in a manner that serves the interests of the community.

SETTING AND ISSUES

FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION

FIRE PROTECTION

Currently, there are no fixed services, such as fire stations or fire-hydrants, operated and maintained by the City in the BCP planning area. However, through a mutual-aid agreement with Merced County, the City may provide limited services to the planning area until such time as it is annexed to the City. Various fire coverage and protection strategies will be needed to provide adequate service levels for urbanization of the BCP area. Strategies include station service, site access, piped water, and mitigating building and site designs (see Figure 5.1 of the City's *General Plan*). While the *General Plan* does not specifically include a fire station in the BCP planning area, the *General Plan* anticipates needing up to four additional fire stations in the City's SOI by the year 2030, with three of the four proposed sites near the BCP area. As with other infrastructure improvements, the location and timing of the construction of the City's next fire station can strongly influence the location of future development.

Currently, there are no fixed services such as fire stations or fire-hydrants operated and maintained by the City in the BCP planning area. Through a mutual-aid agreement with Merced County, the City may provide limited services to the planning area until such time as it is annexed to the City, however.

Development will need to meet the City's fire protection standards; including, but not limited to, street width and connectivity, building siting and construction, and water pressure.

Merced Fire Station 55

Image courtesy of City of Merced

POLICE PROTECTION

Similar to the City's Fire Department, the Merced Police Department provides limited service to the BCP area until such time as it is annexed to the City. Additional officers, equipment, and facilities will need to be added to the City's Police Protection System in order to serve substantial growth in the BCP area. However, due to the mobile nature of the police force, construction of a new station may not be essential. (Note: Consistent with the City's *General Plan*, the BCP does not include a proposed police station site; but at the same time, the BCP does not preclude the placement of a station in the planning area.)

WATER

The City of Merced pumps, treats, and delivers potable water exclusively from the Merced Groundwater Basin. Water is pumped at 17 active well sites and routed through approximately 500 miles of pipe. In 2009, the City supplied 20.8 million gallons per day to approximately 86,000 users. This equates to about one well site per 5,000 users. With a population of approximately 17,000 or more residents planned in the BCP, 3 to 4 additional well sites would be needed. A water line currently runs underneath G Street and Bellevue Road, and terminates at an active well site serving UC Merced.

GROUNDWATER RECHARGE

Long-term hydrographs in the Merced sub-basin show that most groundwater levels are declining. Beginning in 2010, the sub-basin entered into a state of emergency due to overdrafting. Using the growth rate of the City's 2010 Urban Water Management Plan, total water use in Merced will increase by 188

percent by 2030. To stop the decline of groundwater resources, groundwater recharge programs by the Merced Irrigation District are necessary.

The BCP supports several opportunities for groundwater recharge, encouraging surface water flows along existing natural drainages and irrigation laterals; a multi-use distributed storm-water system; and development of multiuse storm drainage basins.

While recharge is the primary tool to ensure an adequate water supply, the City seeks to attain a twenty percent reduction in water use per capita by 2020. Since 1979, likely due to the City's conservation efforts, per capita water demand has steadily decreased despite the continued increase in total demand. Future reductions can be achieved by implementing reclaimed water projects, which take many forms. Private distributed reclaimed water systems should be encouraged provided that water quality issues can be adequately addressed. These systems may involve the collection of rainwater, the use of gray-water, or other similar reclaimed technologies. Secondly, large portions of the BCP Park and Open Space network is planned to be located adjacent to Merced Irrigation District surface waters, that can be used for landscape irrigation, thereby reserving clean groundwater for potable uses. Finally, innovative uses of storm water could supplement groundwater sources.

While recharge is the primary tool to ensure an adequate water supply, the City seeks to attain a 20% reduction in water use per capita by 2020. Part of this reduction can be achieved by implementing reclaimed water projects, which take many forms.

WASTEWATER COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

Wastewater, generated from a combination of residential, commercial, and industrial sources within the City and Phase I of the UC Merced campus is conveyed to the City's waste water treatment plant. The waste water treatment plant has a current design capacity to treat an average annual flow of 12 million gallons per day (mgd). The City has environmental clearance to treat 20 mgd; additional improvements to the waste water treatment plant are needed for this to occur, however.

A capacity of 20 mgd would be able to serve a population of approximately 174,000, which is more than 12 percent higher than the 2030 projected population within the 2030 Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) and SOI of 155,000 (which includes UC Merced and the University Community).

Wastewater generated within Merced is collected by a series of pipelines that are owned, operated, and maintained by the City. The City's pipelines include over 400 miles of gravity sewers ranging in size from 6 to 48 inches in diameter. A 48-inch sewer trunk line collects waste from areas north of Bear Creek and conveys it to the wastewater treatment plant. The update to the City's Sewer Master Plan will need to examine alternative locations for installation of an additional sewer trunk line to serve the expanded SUDP to the northeast of the City.

In addition, Rural Residential land uses in the northern and southern portions of the BCP currently rely on septic systems that could either fail or become illegal due to the State of California concern with groundwater contamination. The update to the City's Sewer Master Plan should include a strategy that accommodates development in the Rural Residential areas of the City's SOI (including those in the BCP planning area) while providing opportunities to minimize ground-water contamination.

Rural Residential land uses in the northern and southern portions of the BCP currently rely of septic systems that could fail or be required to be phased-out by the State due to concerns of groundwater contamination.

EXTRA-TERRITORIAL SERVICE TO UC MERCED

Through an extra-territorial service agreement with the City of Merced, Phase I of the UC Merced campus was granted use of the City's wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure. In 2004, a sewer collection line was installed in G Street and Bellevue Road connecting Phase I of the campus with a 48-inch sewer trunk line in the City. The 27-inch line extends through lands presently within the City's SOI and SUDP. At least one other major sewer line will be needed in northeast Merced to serve development within the City's SOI/SUDP.

An assessment of capacity constrictions downstream of the G Street/Bellevue Road sewer line will need to be performed to determine the presence of other growth constraints. It will also be important to coordinate wastewater planning activities with UC Merced and Merced County, such as including the land use plans for UC Merced, the University Community Plan, and BCP and other development plans within the City's Sphere of Influence, in any updates to the City's Sewer Master Plan.

STORM WATER DRAINAGE AND FLOOD CONTROL

The topography in the BCP planning area sheds storm-water in three areas. The primary drainage area is located southwest of Lake Yosemite and aligns proximate to the Tower Lateral. The second drainage area is generally bounded by Bellevue Road, G Street, Mandeville Lane (future), and Gardner Road (future). Portions of the Sells Lateral approximate the ephemeral watercourses in this small drainage area. Water from these two drainages flow in a westerly direction. The third drainage is roughly bounded by the Sells Lateral to the north and west and by the Yosemite Lateral to the east. Water from this drainage flows south out of the BCP. A natural drainage swale has formed in this area (See Figure 49).

The BCP proposes that master planning for storm water drainage be done in coordination with other community goals, such as the desire to: 1) develop groundwater recharge; 2) protect sensitive species and their habitats; and 3) create attractive public spaces along transportation and recreation corridors.

The BCP planning area is generally free of large flood prone areas because it contains: 1) several low hilltops, 2) the headwaters of small drainages; and 3) no creeks or rivers.

The BCP planning area is generally free of large flood prone areas because it contains: 1) several low hilltops, 2) the headwaters of small drainages; and 3) no creeks or rivers. The 100-year floodplain waters from Fahrens Creek occur in the BCP planning area between G Street, Farmland Avenue, the Lower Golf Lateral, and the Tower Lateral. While there are no regulatory floodways, the flood inundation area of Lake Yosemite cover a portion of the far north and far west portions of the BCP planning area. The inundation areas of Lake Yosemite and Bear Creek covers most of Merced north of Highway 99 (see Figure 11.3 of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*). Earthen dams could fail due to the erosion of the breach if over-topped. Flood waters would build gradually to a peak and then decline. Finally, the natural drainage area located west of the Yosemite Lateral is unregulated (see Figure 48). The BCP proposes that this area be a natural open space corridor linking to area schools and parks and fitted with recreational pedestrian and bicycle trails.

Figure 48. Image of Lake Yosemite and Area Storm Water Runoff

Image is looking north with Dunn Road in the foreground and Parsons Avenue on the left; Lake Yosemite appears at the upper right corner of the image.

MERCED IRRIGATION DISTRICT IRRIGATION LATERALS

Several Merced Irrigation District (MID) laterals trace through the BCP conveying Merced River surface water in the spring and summer (May to October) to agricultural fields both inside and outside of the BCP planning area. To the east of the BCP planning area is Yosemite Lake Regional Park and UC Merced including the campus' canal-based open space features, the Lake Road bike-path, and future bikeways within and around UC Merced. The BCP planning area is void of any notable creeks that can connect Merced to these features. The MID laterals in the BCP provide a unique opportunity to link these features and address a range of community needs including groundwater recharge, storm-water management, and recreational open space corridors. A collaborative effort between the City, Merced County, and MID should be initiated to create a long-term multiple-use strategy for the future use of MID laterals in the BCP.

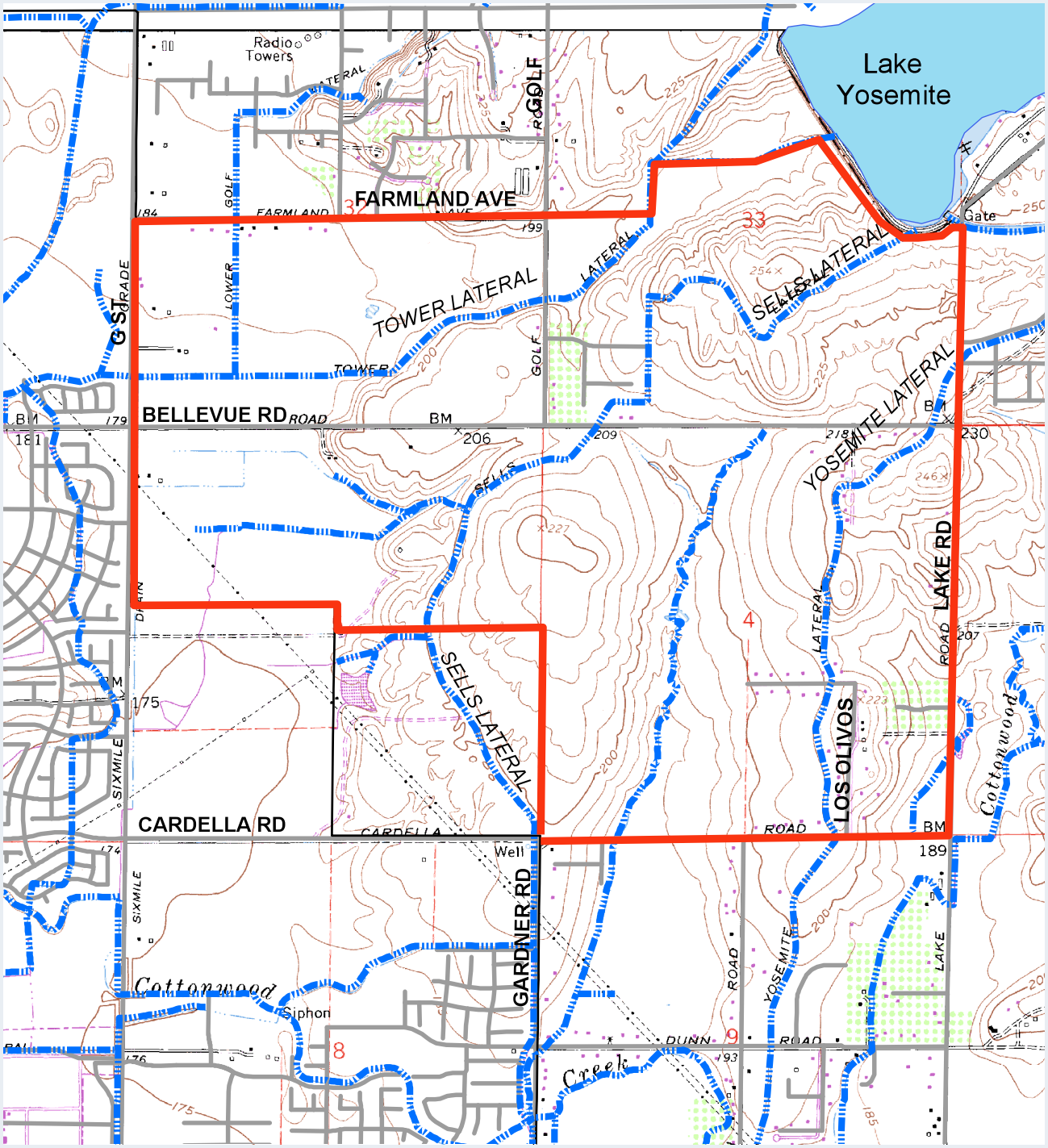
STREET DESIGN

The BCP encourages a multiple use approach to storm-water management by examining the value and feasibility of using a variety of multi-purpose storm-water capture strategies to minimize the extent of the traditional curb-and-gutter system. Instead of following the current practice of capturing and transporting water immediately into basins, a multi-use distributed system that captures and slows the flow of water can offer multiple benefits to the City and residents. The capture and use of rainwater on private properties, the siting of street planters, curb extensions, and green strips in medians can implement several City objectives including the ability to:

- Provide cost-effective peak flood reduction;
- Filter pollutants;
- Provide a source of groundwater recharge;

Example of a Bioswale to Capture Stormwater

Figure 49. Site Topography and Water Features within and Near the Plan Area



- Improve pedestrian safety;
- Beautify neighborhoods;
- Help to alleviate the urban "heat-island" effect; and
- Conserve the City's potable water source.

The strategy to capture storm-water before entering a regional collection and storage system can reduce infrastructure costs of the regional system.

STORM DRAINAGE SYSTEM

The City's Storm-water Master Plan will need to be updated to cover the City's expanded SUDP. The plan will need to assure that storm-water flow from and through the BCP is addressed on a regional scale, taking into consideration the important opportunities and constraints of the Lake Yosemite Reservoir. The plan will need to identify conveyance channels and stormwater basins, whether inside or outside the BCP, in anticipation of future flood waters and need to divert water from urbanized areas, including UC Merced. As part of this assessment, the plan should include methods to create a multi-use distributed storm water management system with co-beneficial features (in lieu of the simple curb and gutter system).

SOLID WASTE

The City of Merced provides services for all refuse pick-up within the City limits, including green waste and recycling. The City implements recycling efforts and public education programs to minimize the waste stream. Additionally, the City requires that adequate solid waste collection is provided for commercial, industrial, and residential uses in accordance with state law. In 2007, the University of California adopted a Policy on Sustainable Practices, which sets waste diversion goals of 75 percent by June 2012 and zero waste by 2020. This presents an opportunity for the City of Merced to collaborate with UC Merced to identify and implement new programs to reduce the waste-stream in the City. Collected wastes are disposed of at the State Route 59 Landfill located several miles to the northwest outside the planning area.

SCHOOLS

Several long-range planning efforts in the City's Sphere of Influence (see Appendix B), including this BCP, have set the stage for the Merced Union High School District and the Merced City School District to begin the process of updating school-siting plans. City Staff and representatives from these school districts estimated the need for 3 primary and possibly 1 secondary public school sites to be located in the BCP. Consistent with the approach of the City's *General Plan*, these "floating school sites" represent the general location of future schools needed in the BCP and are anticipated to be 10-13 acre joint-use school and neighborhood park sites with 8-10 acres for the school (see Figure 37 on page 89).

During future annexation reviews, City Staff will work with property owners and school districts to more definitively site potential schools in appropriate areas. Due to their singular-use and non-residential or commercial nature, these school sites should be located outside the Mandeville transit-corridor

Floating school sites are located near future high population areas, share planned active recreational facilities managed by the City, and will be connected to neighborhood bikeways and sidewalks.

El Capitan High School Near the BCP Area

and the Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development place-types. The floating school sites are located near future high population areas, share planned active recreational facilities managed by the City, and will be connected to neighborhood bikeways and sidewalks.

GOVERNMENT, HEALTH, LIBRARY, AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

While the population of the BCP will need to be served by government, health, library, and cultural facilities, the Plan does not identify a need for a significant concentration of these uses as occurs in other areas of the City. For example, Downtown Merced will continue to be the center of government, library, and cultural facilities, and Mercy Medical Center has expansion plans at its current location. Nevertheless, satellite uses to serve the local population could occur in the BCP. For example, the City should allow public and government offices and service centers in the Mixed-Use TOD character area to enhance, support, or complement uses that may occur in UC Merced's campus "Gateway District" area. The City will need to balance the allowance of these uses without negatively affecting downtown Merced as the center of multi-cultural and performing arts programs and facilities, and 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.).

PUBLIC FACILITIES FINANCING

Public Facilities Financing is a key ingredient to realization of land use plans. Public facilities need to be aligned with the community's ability to construct and operate them.

Capital facilities and services are financed from various sources:

- The City's General Fund;
- Grants from State and federal governments;
- Developer Infrastructure Improvements;
- Sewer and Water Funds / accumulated from user fees;
- Public Facilities Impact Fees / determined by the City's Public Facilities Financing Plan. By State law, these fees can only be spent on capital facilities and cannot be used for operations or maintenance:
- Regional Transportation Impact Fee to pay for regional transportation improvement; and,
- 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

2012 CITY OF MERCED PUBLIC FACILITIES FINANCING PLAN

In 2012, the City of Merced adopted a comprehensive update to its Public Facilities Financing Plan (PFF) for public improvements that will be required through 2030 (the 2012 PFFP does not include sewer, water, flooding/ drainage, public works, and airport projects). The PFFP identifies resources to ensure that adequate public facilities will be available to meet the projected needs of the City as it grows, and to further ensure that the facilities planned are consistent with the City's General Plan. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* serves as the basis for the PFFP. The consistency of the BCP with the City's *General Plan* ensures that adequate public facilities will be available in the plan area.

MASTER UTILITY PLANS

The BCP does not include improvement standards for sewer, water, and storm-drainage utilities. The BCP, along with other long-range planning efforts within the City's Sphere of Influence, identify desired arrangement and density of land uses that can be used to determine the design needs of these utility improvements. To ensure that infrastructure will be adequately sized to serve proposed development within the BCP, as with other lands within the City's Sphere of Influence, further studies are needed. Infrastructure Master Plans for sewer, water, and storm-drainage are needed to describe the system needed to serve the land use plans, and should be conducted in a collaborative manner with UC Merced, the Merced Irrigation District, and Merced County. Along with such determination, it is important to reassess the adequacy of

The BCP, along with other long-range planning efforts within the City's Sphere of Influence, identify desired arrangement and density of land uses that can be used to determine the design needs of these utility improvements.

funding sources for such improvements, and to make necessary adjustments to funding sources or to amend the long-range planning documents to align with funding resources for these utilities. This describes a continuous iterative process that occurs between planning and engineering.

Relevant Financing Tools from the *Infrastructure Financing Options for Transit-Oriented Development* Report Provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency, January 2013

Direct fees: Charges paid by the users of the infrastructure.

1. User fees and transportation utility fees
2. Congestion Pricing

Debt tools: Mechanisms for borrowing money to finance infrastructure.

1. Industrial loan companies and industrial banks
2. General obligation bonds
3. Revenue bonds
4. Private activity bonds
5. Certificates of participation and lease revenue bonds
6. Revolving loan funds
7. State infrastructure banks
8. Grant anticipation revenue vehicle bonds
9. Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing

Credit assistance: Mechanisms that improve the creditworthiness of the borrower issuing a bond or requesting a loan and thus provide access to better borrowing terms.

1. Credit assistance tools
2. Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act

Equity sources: Tools that allow private entities to invest (i.e., take an ownership stake) in infrastructure in expectation of a return.

1. Public-private partnerships
2. Infrastructure investment funds

Value capture mechanisms: Tools that capture the increased value or savings resulting from the public provision of new infrastructure.

1. Developer fees and exactions
2. Special districts
3. Tax increment financing
4. Joint development

Grants: Funds that do not need to be paid back.

1. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
2. Transportation Alternatives Program
3. Urbanized Area Formula Funding Program
4. Community Development Block Grant Program
5. Economic Development Administration grants
6. Foundation grants
7. Program-related investments

Emerging tools: New concepts for making TOD-related infrastructure possible. Most of the tools in this category do not fit neatly into any of the other categories.

1. Structured funds
2. Land banks
3. Redfields to greenfields
4. National infrastructure bank

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The BCP goal headings below are the same as those listed in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. This approach fosters consistency with the City's *General Plan*. Policies specific to the BCP are listed beneath each goal. In furtherance of consistency with the City's *General Plan*, Appendix C is arranged such that BCP policies are "nested" within the broader goals, policies and implementation actions of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. In addition to the goals and policies below, Master Plans/projects/permit applications need to take into account the BCP in its entirety and be consistent with the language herein.

Table 12 Public Services and Facilities Goals and Policies Specific to the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan consistent with the City's *General Plan*

Goal Area P-1: Public Facilities and Services
Policy P-1.1: Ensure that utilities are adequately sized to serve proposed development within the BCP and other lands within the City's Sphere of Influence. The BCP does not include improvement standards for utilities. It along with other long-range planning efforts within the City's Sphere of Influence identify desired arrangement and density of land uses, which can be used to determine improvement needs. Infrastructure Master Plans for sewer, water, storm-drainage are needed to describe the system needed to serve the land use plans. Along with such determination, it is important to identify feasible funding for such improvements, and to make necessary adjustments to the long-range planning documents to align with fiscal constraints or opportunities. The study should include the urban expansion area in northeast Merced, and be developed collaboratively with UCM and Merced County.
Policy P-1.2: Development within the BCP should be based on "Plans for Service", which will be prepared at the time of annexation of the project site. As part of the decision-making process, "Plans for Service" will be prepared and considered by the City and Merced County LAFCO to assure that infrastructure development and public facilities and municipal services are consistent with overall local public agency plans. These public agency plans include Master Infrastructure Plans that need to be prepared using the BCP and other long-range land use plans as a basis for assessment and provision of service.
Goal Area P-2: Police and Fire Protection
Policy P-2.1: Ensure adequate service levels for police and fire protection in order to service substantial growth in the BCP area. Consistent with the City's General Plan, the BCP does not include a proposed police of fire station site; but at the same time, the BCP does not preclude the placement of a station in the planning area.
Goal Area P-3: Water
Policy P-3.1: Examine the value and feasibility of using a variety of multi-purpose storm-water capture features compared with the traditional curb-and-gutter system. In lieu of current practice of capturing and transporting water immediately into basins, a multi-use distributed system of features can offer multiple benefits to the City and residents. Along with encouraging the capture and use of rainwater on private properties, the siting of street planters, curb extensions, and green strips in the medians can provide cost-effective peak flood reduction, filter pollutants, be a source of groundwater recharge, improve pedestrian safety, beautify neighborhoods, help alleviate the urban "heat-island" effect, and conserve the City's potable water source. This alternate system could blend well with the rural character of the plan's residential neighborhoods.

Policy P-3.2: Initiate a program to irrigate public parks with MID surface water supplies.

Large portions of the BCP park and open space network is planned to be located adjacent to MID surface waters, that can be used for landscape irrigation, thereby reserving clean groundwater for potable uses.

Policy P-3.3: Coordinate with the Merced Irrigation District (MID) to design and operate laterals as sites for recharge, storm-water management and recreational open space corridors while protecting its primary function as conveyance of water to agricultural pursuits.

Several MID laterals trace through the BCP conveying Merced River surface water in the spring and summer (May to October) to agricultural fields both inside and out of the BCP planning area. To the east of the BCP planning area is UCM including its canal-based open space features, the Lake Road bike-path, future bikeways within and around UC Merced, and Yosemite Lake Regional Park. The planning area is void of any notable creek that can connect Merced to these features. The MID laterals in the BCP provide a unique opportunity to link these features and address a range of community needs including groundwater recharge, storm-water management and recreational open space corridors. A collaborative effort between the City, Merced County and MID should be initiated to create a long-tem multiple-use strategy for the future use of the MID laterals.

Goal Area P-4: Wastewater

Policy P-4.1: Coordinate wastewater planning activities with UCM and Merced County.

Include the Bellevue Community Plan, the University Community Plan and UCM's Long-Range Development Plan, as well as other development plans within the City's Sphere of Influence in any update to the City's wastewater planning activities. Such studies should include an assessment of potential strategies to minimize groundwater contamination from septic tank systems in Rural Residential areas.

Policy P-4.2: Encourage innovative distributed reclaimed water improvements for buildings.

Private on-site systems should be encouraged provided that water quality issues can be adequately addressed. These systems may involve the collection of rainwater, the use of gray-water, or other similar reclaimed technologies. For example, buildings can incorporate wastewater reuse systems, encouraging on-site water recycling for cooling systems and landscaping needs.

Goal Area P-5: Storm Drainage and Flood Control

Policy P-5.1: Craft a Storm-water Master Plan that emphasizes multiple use objectives of the community.

Assure that storm-water flow from and through the BCP is addressed on a regional scale, taking into consideration the important opportunities and constraints of the Lake Yosemite Reservoir. The plan will need to identify conveyance channels and stormwater basins, whether inside or outside the BCP, in anticipation of future flood waters and need to divert water from urbanized areas, including UC Merced. As part of this assessment, the plan should include methods to create a multi-use distributed system of features (in lieu of the simple curb and gutter system). Such features can include the capture and use of rainwater on private properties, the siting of street planters, curb extensions, and green strips in street medians. These features can provide cost-effective peak-flood reduction, filter pollutants, be a source of groundwater recharge, improve pedestrian safety, beautify neighborhoods, help alleviate the urban "heat-island" effect, and conserve the City's potable water source.

Policy P-5.2: Examine the value and feasibility of using a variety of multi-purpose storm-water capture features compared with the traditional curb-and-gutter system.

In lieu of current practice of capturing and transporting water immediately into basins, a multi-use distributed system of features can offer multiple benefits to the City and residents. Along with encouraging the capture and use of rainwater on private properties, the siting of street planters, curb extensions, and green strips in the medians can provide cost-effective peak flood reduction, filter pollutants, be a source of groundwater recharge, improve pedestrian safety, beautify neighborhoods, help alleviate the urban "heat-island" effect, and conserve the City's potable water source. This alternate system could blend well with the rural character of the plan's residential neighborhoods.

Goal Area P-6: Solid Waste

Policy P-6.1: Collaborate with UC Merced to implement new recycling, composting, and source reduction programs.

In 2007, the University of California adopted a Policy on Sustainable Practices, which sets waste diversion goals of 75 percent by June 2012 and zero waste by 2020. This presents an opportunity for the City of Merced to collaborate with UC Merced to identify and implement new programs to reduce the waste-stream in the City.

Goal Area P-7: Schools

Policy P-7.1: During the annexation process of any of any portion of the BCP, work with property owners and the school district to more definitively site potential schools in appropriate areas.

Due to their singular use and non-residential or employment nature, school sites should not be located within one-quarter mile of Mandeville Lane, or within the Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development place-type. Outside these areas, schools should be located near high population areas, share active recreational facilities; and be well connected to bikeways and sidewalks.

Schools that are designed with limited outdoor open space, dense populations and a small footprint may be appropriate within transit-oriented development place-types, especially the mixed-use flex place-type. While these may take the form of private technical schools, the BCP would not preclude a public school with such design.

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

Policy P-8.1: Encourage senior centers, satellite libraries, adult education, recreation and/or other public facilities to locate near each other in neighborhood centers.

Policy P-8.2: Allow public and government offices and service centers in the Mixed-Use TOD place-type to enhance and support a community-related use within UCM's "Gateway" area.

Policy P-8.3: Encourage child care centers to locate near schools and high-employment areas.

8. PLAN MAINTENANCE

The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) includes a Plan Maintenance Program to insure that it remains an active and relevant document, assuring an ongoing effort to implement, monitor and assess the utility of Plan. It's the follow-through component of the planning process, and involves five key characteristics (Figure 50):

Figure 50. Plan Maintenance Key Characteristics

PLAN DISTRIBUTION AND OVERSIGHT

After adoption of the BCP, the City Planning Division assumes two key roles: (1) to distribute the plan to City Departments, partner agencies involved in Plan Maintenance activities; and to the general public; and (2) to provide Plan Maintenance oversight. This later step includes keeping the BCP at the forefront of community decision making by prioritizing and tracking plan recommendations and ensuring that other City plans and programs reflect the vision and goals of the BCP (see also Plan Integration below).

Continued involvement by affected individuals and groups is imperative for the success of the BCP. Copies of the Plan will be provided to Merced County, the University of California at Merced, and other local jurisdictions. A public review copy of the BCP will be available at the City Planning Division and local libraries. The BCP will also be posted on the City's Planning Division website. The availability of the BCP will be publicized in the City newsletter which reaches every utility customer in the City, and will be made known to the City's development community by the City Planning Department.

The Bellevue Corridor Community Plan integrates existing planning-related documents and processes including, but not limited to the following:

- ***Merced Vision 2030 General Plan***
- **City of Merced 2013 Bicycle Transportation Plan**
- **2003 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**
- **Capital Improvement Plans**
- **Public Utility Master Plan**
- **Transit Plans**

INTEGRATION

Upon adoption of the BCP by the Merced City Council, the Planning Division will begin the process to integrate it with existing planning-related documents and processes, including but not limited to the following:

- *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*
- City of Merced 2013 Bicycle Transportation Plan
- 2003 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Capital Improvement Planning
- Public Utility Master Plans
- Transit Planning Documents

PLAN ASSESSMENT

Planning is an ongoing process and as such, the Bellevue Community Plan should be treated as a living document that will grow and adapt to keep pace with changes. Some changes that could affect the BCP include:

- New *General Plan* policies, or interpretations of existing ones
- Changes to nearby area plans, for example the University Community Plan or the UCM Long Range Development Plan;
- Influences of various State of California and/or Federal actions;
- Changes in foundational BCP assumptions and/or findings of the BCP Background Report.

The Planning Department will monitor and assess how changes may affect the BCP. When a corresponding change to the BCP is warranted, the City will follow *General Plan* Amendment process.

Plan assessment also includes continued public and stakeholder involvement and input through public meetings, web postings, and press releases to local media.

MEASURING PROGRESS TO IMPLEMENT THE GOALS OF THE PLAN

As a guiding document, the BCP will be used by the community as a tool to attain long-range urban growth-related goals. Whether or not the community actually attains these goals, however, won't be revealed for several decades. Near-term development of the plan area presents opportunities to measure the direction and pace the community is making toward its stated goals, and with this knowledge, adjustments may be made so that long-term goals are more likely to be reached. This process generally includes the identification of a starting point (baseline), an end-point (goals and objectives), and measurable aspects of development (indicators) that reflect attainment of goals and objectives. Technical Memorandum M (Appendix M) assembles these components into a tool that the City will use to assess the progress to implement the BCP.

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7. *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, Section 3.7.4 "Bellevue Corridor Community Plan," page 3-71.
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10. APPENDIX

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LWC