Agenda Item:@.0
Meeting Date:7/7/2014

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Print

TO: City Manager

FROM: Bill King, Principal Planner

DATE: 06/19/2014

SUBJECT: Draft Bellevue Community Plan Overview

REPORT IN BRIEF

The City Council is presented with an overview of the Draft Bellevue Community Plan [BCP] and development process.

RECOMMENDATION:

No recommendation is provided at this time. This report is provided to inform the City Council about the Bellevue Community Plan, notably its purpose, content and development process.

DISCUSSION:

The Report is intended to provide an overview of the plan and issues. Later this year, a formal recommendation on the plan and related changes to the City's General Plan will be presented by Staff for City Council consideration and action. At the Council meeting, City staff will provide an overview of the Plan and answer questions from the City Council.

History and Past Actions:

Following submittal of a grant application in 2010, the City was awarded $251,000 from the California Strategic Growth Council in 2011 to complete the *Bellevue Corridor Community Plan*. Lisa Wise Consulting was hired to assist City staff with the Plan, and in 2012, the City Council appointed an ad-hoc Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), consisting of 18 members. In March 2014, a public review draft of the community plan was released. A CAC meeting was held June 12, 2014, to review the draft document prior to scheduling public hearings for consideration of adoption in Fall 2014.

Description:

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.

In response to the need for a community plan, the City's Planning Staff competed for and was awarded funds from the State of California to prepare a community plan. 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; these 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 informed 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 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 to work toward the attainment of shovel-ready projects in a sustainable manner while contributing to the development of healthy living environments.

The Planning Commission Staff Report (Attachment 1) provides a good overview of the draft Plan. Additional details can be viewed in the draft plan itself (Attached), and can also be viewed from the project website at:

http://www.cityofmerced.org/depts/cd/planning/bellevue_corridor_community_plan/draft_documents/default.asp

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Under the guidance of the City of Merced Planning Division, the DRAFT Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) was prepared by lead consultant Lisa Wise Consulting and four sub-consultants. Community participation included a Citizen's Advisory Committee composed of 18 members with broad backgrounds, who held 8 public meetings from August 2012 through June 2014. Supporting the efforts of the Planning Division, Citizen's Advisory

Committee, and consultant was a 28-member Technical Advisory Committee representing many interests such as Merced County, UC Merced, and the Merced Irrigation District. Two public workshops were held during the preparation of the draft plan to inform and solicit comments from area property owners. See Appendix F of the draft plan for more detail.

DRAFT BCP REVIEW PROCESS

The DRAFT BCP, available since March 31, 2014, has been presented at various study sessions to the following standing City Committees and Commissions:

April 2014	Economic Development Advisory Committee
May 2014	Planning Commission
June 2014	Recreation and Parks Commission

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Staff would like to take this time to thank the Bellevue Community Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee for their important contributions to the BCP, which include such topics as:

- Compatibility between new uses and existing rural residential development;
- Mobility connections to UC Merced, surrounding neighborhoods, regional transportation modes, and downtown Merced;
- A flexible land-use plan that can respond to a changing marketplace, population and needs of an expanding UC campus;
- A high aesthetic standard for buildings and landscaping along important corridors in the plan area;
- A modified urban village model, which includes key urban design principles, but allows for variable land use patterns, such as more flexible commercial locations, smaller amounts of low-density residential, and linear- community centers, as compared to nodes (see discussion under *Urban Design*, in Appendix A for a detailed discussion);
- A plan that supports business growth;
- Infrastructure planning that is coordinated with other planning areas (see detailed discussion in *Urban Expansion* Chapter 6); and,
- Governance topics related to urban growth and development.

The Bellevue Community Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee met on June 12, 2014, and offered several comments on the initial draft BCP. Their comments, together with those from the Economic Development Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and Recreation and Parks Commission, will be reviewed by staff and the project consultant, who will make amendments to the attached initial public review draft. The advisory committee will review the amended draft plan later this summer, and will be asked to indicate whether or not they support the Plan as written..

FINAL PUBLIC REVIEW

Later this year, Staff will bring the final public review draft to the Planning Commission and City Council for their consideration to adopt the plan.

Budget/Appropriate Action:

No budgetary action is needed.

Respectfully Submitted, Reviewed,

Bill King, Principal Planner

David B. Gonzalves Director of Development Services

Approved By,

John M. Bramble

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1: Planning Commission Staff Report #14-06
- Attachment 2 - Exec Summary and Chapter 1 Introduction
- Attachment 3 - Chapter 2 - Vision and Urban Design
- Attachment 4 - Chapter 3 Mobility
- Attachment 5 - Chapter 4 Open Space
- Attachment 6 - Chapter 5
- Attachment 7 - Chapter 6 Urban Expansion
- Attachment 8 - Chapter 7 Public Services
- Attachment 9 - Chapter 8 Plan Maintenance
- Attachment 10 - Chapter 9 Works Cited
- Attachment 11 - Appendices A-Fb
- Attachment 12 - Appendices G-M

CITY OF MERCED
Planning & Permitting Division

STAFF REPORT:	**#14-06**	**AGENDA ITEM:**	**4.1**
FROM:	Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager	**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE:**	**May 21, 2014**
PREPARED BY:	Bill King, Principal Planner		

SUBJECT: **Bellevue Community Plan Study Session** to brief and receive comments from the Planning Commission on the effort by City Staff to draft the Bellevue Community Plan (BCP), applicant City of Merced, for a 2.4 square-mile area in northeast Merced, generally located between G Street, Lake Road, Farmland Avenue, and Cardella Road.

ACTION: Review and Comment / Study Session

OVERVIEW

Under the guidance of the City of Merced Planning Division, the DRAFT Bellevue Community Plan (BCP) was prepared by lead consultant Lisa Wise Consulting and four sub-consultants. Community participation included a Citizens Advisory Committee composed of 18 members with broad backgrounds. Supporting the efforts of the Planning Division, Citizens Advisory Committee, and consultant was a 28 member Technical Advisory Committee.

To provide a foundation for the discussion with the Planning staff, attached for the Commission's review are the BCP Executive Summary and Introduction chapters.

Executive Summary Excerpt: The 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 the land use plan and circulation element (discussed below). 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 REVIEW PROCESS

This public DRAFT of the BCP, available since March 31, 2014, has and/or will be presented at various study-sessions as follows:

April 2014	Economic Development Advisory Committee
May 2014	Planning Commission
May 2014	Recreation and Parks Commission
June 2014	Bellevue Community Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee
July 2014	City of Merced City Council

City Planning Staff will collect and consider comments from these groups and the public as part of their effort to prepare a final public review draft, which will be routed through the normal public hearing process in the Fall of this year. As part of this process, the Planning Commission will hold a formal public hearing and will take action concerning an application to adopt the plan, which will be forwarded to the City Council.

ACCESSING THE DRAFT PLAN

A full electronic copy of the BCP will be provided to the Planning Commission and distributed at the meeting of May 21, 2014.

A full copy of the BCP is available on the City of Merced website at the following address:

http://www.cityofmerced.org/depts/cd/planning/bellevue_corridor_community_plan/draft_documents/default.asp

COMMENTING ON THE DRAFT PLAN

After the DRAFT BCP is presented to the Planning Commission in May 2014, members will be asked to review the document and provide their feedback on the document to the Planning Division. This feedback can be provided at the May 2014, study-session, or an additional study-session can be scheduled for a later date prior to July 2014. Individual Commissioners can also comment by email to Principal Planner Bill King at kingb@cityofmerced.org.

BCP CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN

Similar to a general plan, a community plan addresses broad planning parameters, but for a smaller geographic area of a community's growth area, and also addresses issues specific to that sub-area of the general plan in a programmatic manner. The City's *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* identified the need to develop a community plan in the area between the current city limits along G Street and the UC Merced campus, and provided general guidance. As discussed below, the *Bellevue Community Plan* was crafted to be consistent with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, and reflects several guiding aspects of the City's General Plan. It is important to note that all adopted policies and CEQA-based mitigation measures for the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* apply to the BCP planning area. While new BCP policies are recommended, these clarify General Plan policies as to their relevance to the planning area, and are not contradictory to General Plan policies.

URBAN EXPANSION

Urban expansion in the BCP planning area was considered within the regulatory framework of several influences including: 1) the regulatory setting of the Merced Local Agency Formation Commission; 2) the City's annexation policies; 3) regional needs such as intrastate rail and roadways, transit and arterial street needs, and future job generating uses near UC Merced; and, 4) key growth factors such as physical constraints, the UCM growth node, forecasted population growth, costs to install and operate public infrastructure and services, and need to coordinate growth among competing interests.

Given the above considerations, and in the context of the City's General Plan goal to grow orderly, that is, compactly while preserving open space and prime agriculture and in a manner that extends government facilities and services in an efficient manner, the BCP presents four possible growth scenarios, some more probable than others; no recommendation is provided. Rather, the BCP identifies the need for a collaborative effort to create a multi-jurisdictional infrastructure and service plan that can result in decisions that direct growth in a manner that serves the interest of the community as a whole in a fiscally sound manner. The BCP emphasizes that challenging questions pertaining to infrastructure, financing, and phasing should be addressed before further growth and development occur in the northeast growth area of Merced.

LAND USE

The land use design of the BCP was crafted based on four guiding subjects: 1) residential and neighborhood design; 2) economic and business development; 3) urban growth and design; and 4) the illustrative plan of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan (below) as found in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

RESIDENTIAL & NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN

The City's General Plan *Guiding Principle #1 for Community Plans,* identifies the need to address adverse impacts to existing neighborhoods that may be caused by new development in the community plan area. The BCP minimized potential impacts by: 1) identifying and setting logical boundaries for expansion and strengthening of existing rural residential neighborhoods; 2) locating complementary and compatible land uses within and adjacent to them; and, 3) focusing the new intensive growth away from these neighborhoods. The BCP also includes permitting strategies to maximize compatibility between new development and existing home sites.

ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

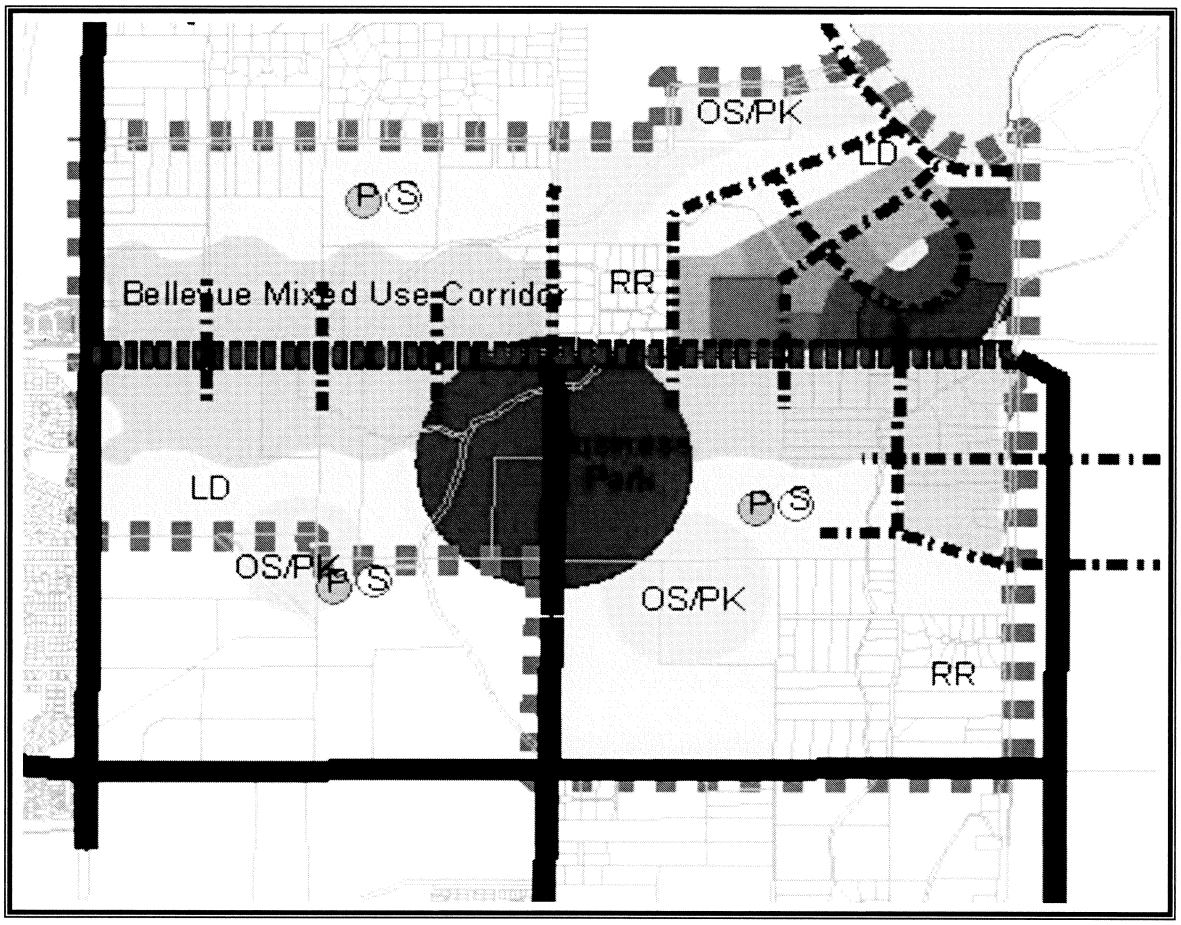
The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* includes numerous policies and narratives concerning the anticipation for significant jobs-based land uses within the BCP. Following the lead of the General Plan, the BCP includes a "Research and Development Park Character Area" that could accommodate approximately 2.8 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.

URBAN GROWTH AND DESIGN

The City's General Plan *Guiding Principle #5 for Community Plans*, emphasizes that the "Urban Villages" concept should be incorporated into the planning of these areas as much as feasible. A discussion on this Goal Area is provided under "Urban Design" on page 10 of this report.

BELLEVUE CORRIDOR COMMUNITY PLAN ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

Section 3.7.4 of the General Plan, "Bellevue Corridor Community Plan," is a narrative statement describing the vision of this community plan area. Regarding land use, it describes the need for a variety of housing types, a mix of land uses in a vibrant setting, and for commercial sites to be located in nodes, as opposed to strip-commercial. The land use concepts of this vision were supported in the General Plan through the establishment of an "Illustrative Plan" titled, "Bellevue Corridor Community Plan." While some variation from the "Illustrative Plan" is to be expected, it anchored several key concepts, including: 1) provision of a mixed-use corridor between G Street and Lake Road in the vicinity of Bellevue Road; 2) low density land uses on either side of the mixed use corridor to blend with these existing or planned uses to the north and south; 3) reservation of a large area of land for anticipated jobs-based research and development parks; 4) retention of the *Callister* development plan (northwest corner of Bellevue Road and Lake Road); and, 5) connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and UC Merced.



Above: Illustrative Plan of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan

Table A-7: Summary of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and the *Bellevue Community Plan*

Land Use Types	*Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*	*Bellevue Community Plan (BCP)*
Dwelling Unit Related Uses	Total Dwelling Units	Total Dwelling Units
Single-Family	3,522	3,421
Multifamily	2,909	3,254
Total	***6,431***	***6,675***
Employee Related Uses	Total Employees	Total Employees
Retail	2,583	1,292
R&D/Office	6,305	9,765
Total	***8,989***	***10,967***
Other Uses	Total Acreage	Total Acreage
Open Space	138	165
Schools	30	48

The "*Character Type Plan" (Chapter 5, page 91)* of the *Draft Bellevue Community Plan* is a refinement of the Illustrative Plan, and contains all the key concepts anchored by it. A comparative assessment of the land uses in these plans is provided for in Table "A-7" above and reveals substantial consistency between the total number of dwelling units and employees. The increase in the number of employees from an estimate of 8,989 (Illustrative Plan) to 10,967 (BCP), corresponds to the General Plan policy that seeks to provide opportunities for future jobs-based land uses near UC Merced. Potential expansion areas are denoted in the BCP as light blue (Research and Development), and light red (Mixed Use). These areas are not represented in the aforementioned tables, and further environmental assessment would be necessary for such growth in these areas.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

STREETS AND ROADS

Consistent with *Guiding Principle #3 for Merced's Community Plans*, the BCP includes multiple points and methods of connectivity with existing and planned urban areas. For example, during the development process of the BCP, the Plan Leadership Team considered and assessed the influence that the UCM Campus and University Community land use and circulation plans had on the BCP. Connections to these areas include the extension of the City's one-mile grid of arterial streets (G Street, Cardella Road, Bellevue Road, and Gardner Road), and the one-quarter mile spaced network of collector roadways. Along and outside the eastern boundary of the BCP, the Plan anticipates the future construction of a limited-access arterial (the extension of the Campus Parkway Extension), which together with Bellevue Road and the Atwater Merced Expressway (AME), will form a future loop road around Merced connecting with State Route 99 to serve regional traffic needs. The BCP includes several design options for Bellevue Road that blend the regional nature of this road while recognizing its importance as a gateway and need to serve anticipated adjacent land uses.

Arterial Street Travel Lanes

Table 4.2, "Summary of Street and Highway Standards," of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, describes the characteristics of roadway categories. Arterial roads, depending upon type, can have between 2 to 6 lanes of traffic. The Environmental Study for the General Plan identified the minimum number of lanes needed for certain roads to avoid sub-standard level of service. No assessment of collector road level of service was performed with the City's General Plan. Table 1 (presented below) compares the number of lanes that occur in the City's General Plan and what is recommended in the BCP, revealing consistency between the two planning documents.

Table 1: Arterial Streets within BCP Planning Area

Road Segment	General Plan (GP) Data			Bellevue Community Plan Project
	GP Table 4.2	GP Traffic Study	GP Forecast LOS	
G Street Cardella Rd. to Bellevue Rd	*Major Arterial* 4-6 lanes	4 lanes	LOS D with 4 lanes	No changes are proposed.
G Street Bellevue Rd to Old Lake Rd	*Major Arterial* 4-6	6 lanes	LOS D with 6 lanes	No changes are proposed.
Bellevue Road G St. to Gardner/Golf Rd	*Major Arterial* 4-6 lanes	6 lanes[1]	LOS E with 6 lanes	Although no changes are proposed, the BCP recommends a traffic study be prepared to confirm the BCP's finding that 4 lanes may be adequate, and also provides for the use of side streets on either side of Bellevue Road.
Bellevue Road Gardner/Golf Rd to Campus Pkwy	*Major Arterial* 4-6 lanes	6 lanes	LOS D with 6 lanes	Although no changes are proposed, the BCP recommends a traffic study be prepared to confirm the BCP's finding that 4 lanes may be adequate, and also provides for the use of side streets on either side of Bellevue Road.
Cardella Road	*Divided Arterial* 4-6 lanes	4 lanes	LOS D with 4 lanes	No changes are proposed.
Gardner Road Cardella Rd to Foothill Ave.	*Minor Arterial* 2-4 lanes	4 lanes	LOS D with 4 lanes	No changes are proposed.
Gardner Road Foothill Ave. to Bellevue Rd	*Minor Arterial* 2-4 lanes	4 lanes	LOS D with 4 lanes	Although no changes are proposed, the BCP recommends a traffic study be prepared to confirm the BCP's findings that a 4 to 3 lane roadway (one travel lane in each direction and a turn lane) may be adequate.
Golf Road Bellevue Rd to Old Lake Rd	*Minor Arterial* 2-4 lanes	4 lanes	LOS F with 2 lanes LOS C+ with 4 lanes	Although no changes are proposed, the BCP recommends a traffic study be prepared to confirm the BCP's findings that a 2 or 3 lane roadway may be adequate.

[1] Per the GP Traffic Study, even with 6 lanes, this segment is forecasted to experience LOS E Conditions. A statement of overriding considerations was adopted by the City as part of the EIR for the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

Collector Street Travel Lanes

Consistent with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, all collectors within the BCP will include a total of two travel lanes (one for each direction). The treatment of on-street parking, bikeways, parkstrips, medians and sidewalk width and location may vary, however. These treatments are intended to enhance the "complete street" nature of the public rights-of-way resulting in an increase in overall travel capacity of the roadway network. On Mandeville Avenue, transit use will be emphasized.

BICYCLES, PEDESTRIANS, AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

Consistent with the goal of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to plan for roads that are multi-modal for use by automobiles, transit, bicycle,s and pedestrians, the BCP includes several elements that support its functional implementation, and include: 1) adequate rights-of-way that accommodate these transportation methods; 2) plans that identify the location where these different mobility forms are to be emphasized; 3) a land use plan that allows for a wide variety of land uses to be placed near one another; and, 4) design standards to create places that are suited to pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles alike.

The BCP's Bicycle Master Plan extends the City's off-street and on-street bikeway system through and beyond the BCP, ensuring connectivity to UC Merced, Lake Yosemite Regional Park, and to nearby schools, parks, neighborhoods, and shopping and employment districts. A high percentage of the UCM population will use bicycles for transportation. To provide for this population, and to reduce impacts and costs related to constructing roadway travel lanes, the BCP's Bicycle Master Plan provides several bikeway connections between the campus and the employment, shopping, and residential neighborhoods planned in the BCP.

The BCP emphasizes the formation of a transit-corridor, linking the planned transit stations in Bellevue Ranch and at UC Merced. This corridor is located one-quarter mile south of and parallel to Bellevue Road. This arrangement supports regional automobile trips on Bellevue Road, while creating a pedestrian-oriented corridor along Mandeville Avenue. This transit-corridor will be essential to unify neighborhoods rather than separate them. The design of Bellevue Road, while providing for regional traffic, is planned as a gateway, emphasizing the value aesthetics and access to unify both sides of this road as a distinct place as opposed to a sterile and walled expressway.

The BCP Circulation Plan, comprised of several travel components or modes, contains all essential travel functions assumed in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, including: 1) the alignments and types of street classifications; 2) connectivity to adjacent properties and planning areas; 3) a transit corridor between UC Merced and the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan transit circle; 4) Bellevue Road designed to accommodate anticipated regional traffic needs as part of Merced's "Loop Road;" 5) Scenic Corridor of "gateway" designs for Bellevue Road and Lake Road; and, 6) "complete street" designs incorporating pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and transit. BCP Technical Appendix D (Appendix C

of this EIS) compared the traffic trip generation between the General Plan and the Bellevue Community Plan, and found that daily trip generation would be approximately 17% lower under the BCP conditions.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Though the BCP includes a Public Facilities and Services chapter, the narrative, images, diagrams, and policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* concerning this general topic provide overall guidance to the BCP. While the BCP includes a discussion about most General Plan Goal Areas related to public facilities and services, the Goal Areas concerning storm-drainage and flood control, schools, and wastewater are particularly pertinent to the BCP study area and received greater discussion.

STORM-DRAINAGE AND FLOOD CONTROL

The City's General Plan recognizes and encourages the value of addressing storm-drainage, flooding, water resources, and open space through the design of an integrated system. The BCP follows this lead by recommending: 1) the continued use of surface water flow in the plan area's irrigation laterals and natural drainages; 2) the use of flood control basins as recreational spaces; and, 3) the capture and slowing of storm water runoff within open space features within rights-of-way.

SCHOOLS

Consistent with policies in the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, during the process of developing the BCP, the City coordinated with the local school districts to identify potential future school sites central to the proposed neighborhoods. The BCP identifies and plans for the siting of three schools within the plan area boundary, and that neighborhood park sites be combined with the schools to form joint-use facilities.

WASTEWATER

The use of the existing sewer collection lines in the BCP planning area along Bellevue Road was assessed to examine the extent of future development potential. The sewer line was constructed at a time when the eastern half of the BCP planning area (east of Gardner Road) was located outside the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP). At the time, while an out-of-boundary service was permitted, future sewer connections in this eastern area were limited to emergency cases only. With adoption of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, the SUDP shifted east so that all of the BCP is within the City's near-term development area. Limitations that were based on the former boundary no longer apply. While some collection capacity would remain, use of the line by UC Merced (today and in the future), and by other already annexed lands in and near the Plan area will utilize most of the capacity in the existing sewer line in G Street and Bellevue Road. Additional sewer collection lines will be needed to serve future development within the northeast portion of Merced's SUDP.

All adopted policies and CEQA-based mitigation measures for the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* concerning public facilities and services apply to the BCP planning area. While new BCP policies are recommended, these clarify General Plan policies as to their relevance to the planning area, and are not contradictory to General Plan policies.

URBAN DESIGN

TRANSIT-READY DEVELOPMENT/URBAN VILLAGES

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* contains policy direction to utilize the Urban Village as a design template for future growth areas in the City, including the BCP. Statements in the General Plan and comments received from the community made it clear that the urban design of the BCP would be unique, however. Additionally, General Plan Policy UD-1.1h calls for "special 'Urban Village' designs to be developed for increased opportunities for job-based land uses attracted by a university climate." Comments received during preparation of the BCP expressed concerns about the amount of low-density residential that has traditionally been located in the City's Urban Villages, as well as the location and intensity of commercial uses. Thus, as part of the process to develop the BCP, the Plan Leadership Team identified and assessed the components of the City's Urban Village model in order that a unique design for the BCP study area could be crafted in a manner consistent with the General Plan and with the input received from the public. Urban Villages are defined by several policies in the City's General Plan. As part of the assessment, Staff grouped similar policies into the following design principles for urban villages:

- Pedestrian-friendly settings
- Mobility/travel options, reduced vehicle road noise, and safer roadways
- Increased access to neighborhood centers and less congested intersections
- Proximity between a variety of housing types and destinations (retail, offices, public spaces)
- Open space networks

Using these design principles as a guiding framework to assure consistency with the General Plan, a unique urban village design was crafted and applied to the BCP, which exhibits the following characteristics:

- A corridor approach located south of Bellevue Road, as compared to the half-circle shape. This allowed for the inclusion of job-generating land uses and enhanced the vitality of future transit use.

- Placement of the "urban center" along Mandeville Avenue. This effectively doubles potential for all forms of transportation to serve the area, boosting social and economic interactions.

- Massing a mixture of land uses, including job-generating research and office parks, along Mandeville Avenue. This created numerous destination sites, instead of the singular "commercial core" destination site. The proposed plan creates a series of centers, which will be linked by east-west connections as well as from neighborhoods located to the north and south. This improves the use of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes by increasing the proximity of land uses with housing.

- Placement of a large research and development site at the intersection of Bellevue Road and Gardner Road, a long-planned north-south arterial street connecting many areas of Merced with a future employment zone.

- Transit Priority Projects (TPP) may occur throughout the Mandeville Transit Corridor. TPP's are high-density residential (no less than 20-units per acre) or mixed-use developments serviced by a major transit stop or corridor. A key driver of the TPP is the success of the transit function of the corridor, which in turn is driven by a vibrant mixed-use pedestrian-oriented design.

- Consistent with General Plan policy L-2.7.a, the City may consider and permit commercial development to occur at the corner of G Street and Bellevue Road.

OVERALL COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

The City's General Plan includes policies to enhance the appearance of the community through several means, such as creating gateways, landscaped medians, and use of important physical attributes, for example, hilltops. The BCP considered this direction and includes: 1) plans to create gateway roads for both Bellevue Road and Lake Road; 2) a landscaped median in Bellevue Road and residential collectors; and, 3) encourages site-designs to emphasize a hilltop focal point in the area near Gardner Road, south of Bellevue Road. The BCP also recommends that the City's adopted urban design guidelines set the framework for City expectations of site plan designs within the BCP.

OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND CONSERVATION

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.

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.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development goals, policies, and actions are, by necessity, integrated throughout the BCP. For example, foundational aspects of the Plan's Mobility Chapter include effective and efficient transportation infrastructure, and integrated land use and transportation planning. Similarly, the Plan's Open Space, Recreation, and Conservation Chapter, emphasizes increased physical activity of residents and urban forestry. The Public Facilities and Services Chapter promotes conservation of resources, resilient natural open space features, and use of solar energy technologies. Supplementing these actions are additional goals, policies, and actions that can be found in the Sustainable Development Chapter of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. The BCP relies on the *Sustainable Development* narrative, images, diagrams, and policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to further guide development and operations within the BCP planning area.

HOUSING

The BCP relies on the *Housing* 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 homes to high-density multifamily homes with densities of at least 20-units per acre, as is discussed in the Community Character Chapter of the Plan.

NOISE

The BCP relies on the *Noise* narrative, images, diagrams, and policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to address noise concerns in an expanding City as well as those from operations from established uses. The BCP does not include or expand air and rail services, though as anticipated in the General Plan, the planning area will be served by arterial streets and be populated with sensitive populations.

SAFETY

The BCP relies on the narrative, images, diagrams, and policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* to guide urban growth and safety-related practices and operations. The concern about the Lake Yosemite Inundation Area was adequately discussed in the General Plan and associated Environmental Review documents.

RECOMMENDATION: Review, Discuss, and Comment.

Attachments:

A) BCP Executive Summary and Introduction

Ref: N/shared/planning/grants/Bellevue Corridor Community Plan/Partner and Public Involvement/Planning Commission

CITY OF MERCED

Bellevue Community Plan
Public Review Draft

MARCH 2014

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ATTACHMENT A

CITY OF MERCED | **Bellevue Community Plan**

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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.

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's 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

The Merced Vision 2030 General Plan contains policy direction to utilize the Urban Village as a design template for future growth areas within the Bellevue Community Plan area. Statements in the General Plan and comments received from the community made it clear that the urban design of the BCP would be unique, however. General Plan Policy UD-1.1h calls for unique "Urban Village" designs to be developed for increased opportunities for job-based land uses attracted by a university climate. The community also expressed concerns about the amount of low-density residential that has traditionally been located in the City's Urban Villages, and the location and intensity of commercial uses. Thus, a unique design is recommended that is consistent with the General Plan while responding to concerns of the community, and is discussed 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 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 Avenue. 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 Avenue, 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 is 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.

1. INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY PLAN OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

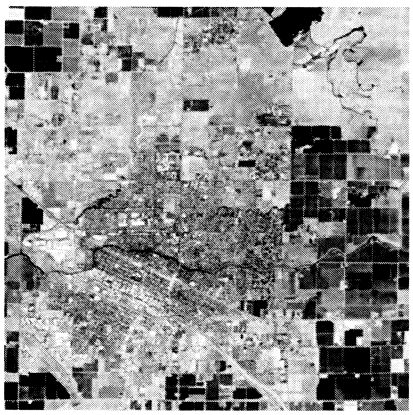
The Bellevue Community Plan (BCP or Plan) provides policy direction to the decision making process for development within a defined geographic portion of the Planning area of the City's *General Plan*. The plan forms a broad framework for mutual understanding among citizens, public agencies, and the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

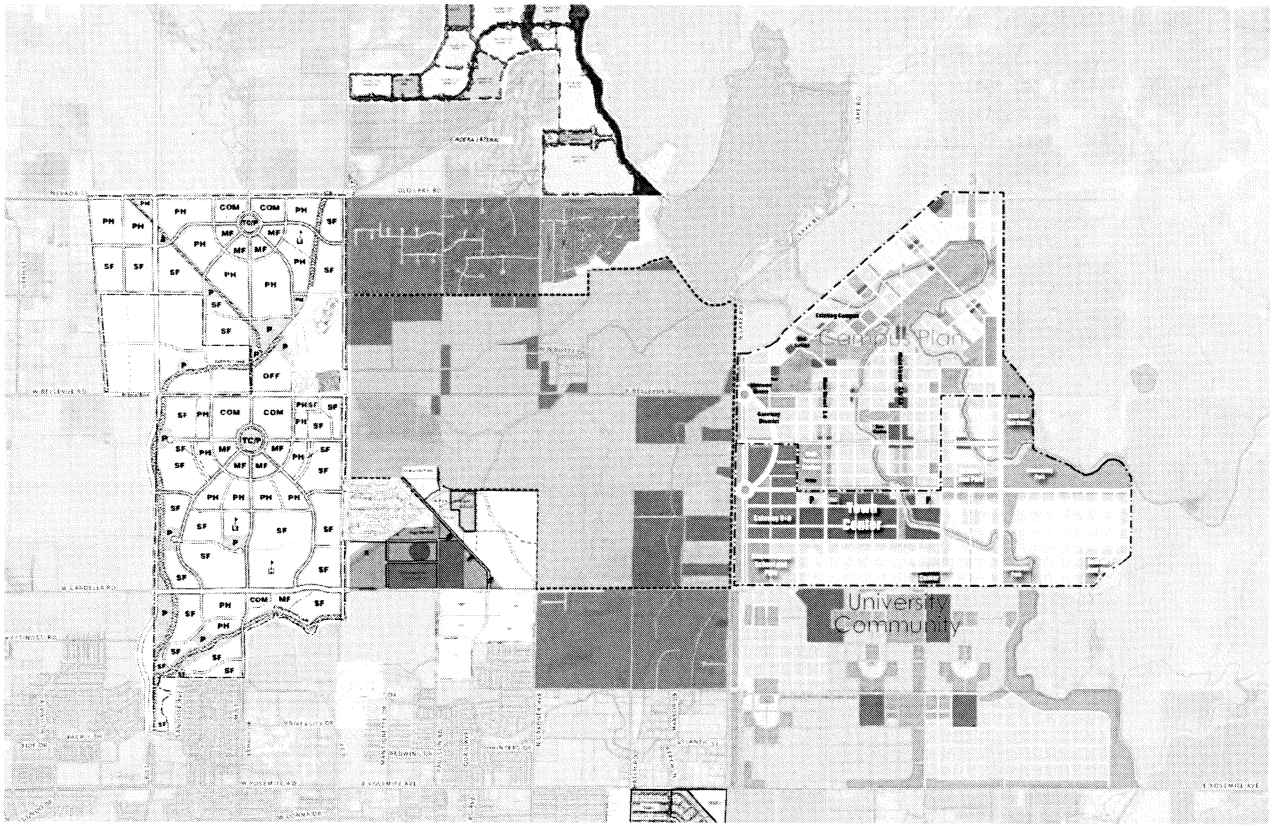
The Bellevue Community Plan study area is located outside but adjacent to the Merced City limits, and within the City's planned growth area, otherwise known as the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) and Sphere of Influence (SOI).

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 38. 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:

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.

- 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).

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"

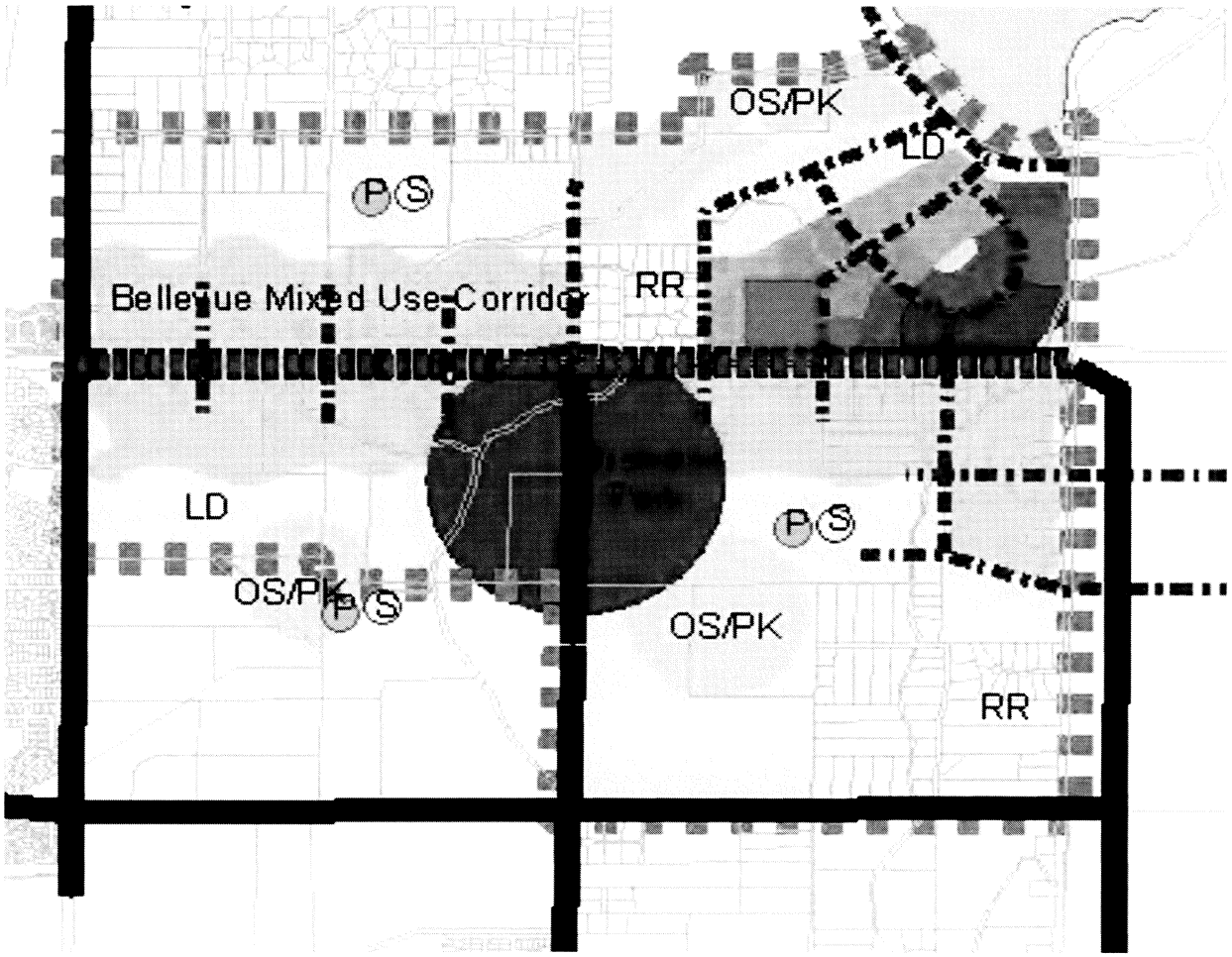


Table 1 Land Use Designations from the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*

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.

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.

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.

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.

Multiple Interests

BCP standards and policies must address the needs and concerns of individual property owners and local jurisdictions, while ensuring each unique development contributes to a unified whole. The project area is within the City's SOI and SUDP, but is currently under County jurisdiction.

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.

Campus Parkway Regional Traffic (Loop Road)

Bellevue Road is part of Merced's planned loop road to carry regional traffic. While this serves an important regional transportation need, it limits the use of the road for transit, bicycling, and pedestrian-scale development.

View of Bellevue Road

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.

Disparate Visions

The BCP area will be developed by many property owners and developers over the course of several decades. A focused and consistent effort will be needed on the part of decision makers to ensure successful, long-term implementation. This Plan provides an overall vision and general framework for new development, and also provides procedures for the preparation of more detailed neighborhood master plans to help coordinate and connect new development among and between multiple property owners.

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

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BELLEVUE CORRIDOR
COMMUNITY PLAN
(PUBLIC REVEW DRAFT)

REFER TO THE CITY'S WEBSITE
AT:

http://www.cityofmerced.org/depts/cd/planning/bellevue_corridor_community_plan/draft_documents/default.asp