Welcome
North Merced Annexation Feasibility Study
Community Meeting #1

EMC PLANNING GROUP
May 21, 2019
Introduction

- Consultant team
  - Ron Sissem, *EMC Planning Group*
  - Shoshanna Wangerin, *EMC Planning Group*
  - Candy Ingram, Principal, *The Ingram Group – Community Relations*
  - Other team members
    - California Strategies - *Community Relations*
    - Applied Development Economics - *Economic Consulting*
    - Stantec Engineers - *Wastewater Planning*
    - KD Anderson & Associates - *Traffic Planning*
    - Northstar Engineering - *Infrastructure Planning*
Community Meeting Purpose

- Present information about City planning for future development within the North Merced Annexation Area
- Receive your input on issues, concerns, and interests
- Use your input during preparation of the North Merced Annexation Feasibility Study
Community Meeting Format

- Workshop format
  - Presentation
  - Questions and answers
- Available workshop materials
North Merced Development Planning Context

- City identifies North Merced as a destination for future growth in the Merced Vision 2030 General Plan
- General Plan process - extensive public outreach, technical analyses and environmental review
- General Plan includes policies for future urban development in areas located outside the city limits
- General plans commonly provide development guidance for a 20- to 30-year period
- Full development of all areas addressed in a general plan rarely, if ever, occurs within this timeframe
- City completes Bellevue Corridor Community Plan in 2015 – more detailed planning for a portion of the North Merced Study Area – a factor going forward
North Merced Study Area Characteristics

- Currently within Merced County
- Approximately 7,600 acres
- Approximately 700 parcels/600 property owners
- Significant vacant land acreage
- A number of homes on lots of 1-3 acres
- UC Merced a major existing land use
- Identified for future incorporation (annexation) into the City in the General Plan
- City has assigned future uses in the General Plan
Traditional First Step to Development - Annexation

- Annexation = process of bringing County land into city limits to be governed by the City and provided with city services
- Annexation required before land can be developed at urban intensities per the General Plan
- Urban development is enabled as a result of City providing water and sewer utilities and public services (fire, police, parks, libraries, etc.)
Annexation Process

- An annexation is typically initiated by a landowner or landowner representative
- Landowner submits application to the City
  - City review and evaluation, including consistency with General Plan policies regarding annexations
  - Analysis of City ability to provide services and utilities
  - Environmental review process
  - Opportunities for public comment
  - City Council approves or denies
- If City approves, application sent to Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
Annexation Process

- LAFCO consideration process
  - LAFCO review for consistency with LAFCO policies and General Plan policies
  - Opportunities for public comment
  - LAFCO approves or denies
  - If LAFCO approves, opportunity exists for landowners or registered voters to protest the LAFCO decision
    - Depending on protest, vote of landowners or registered voters within annexation area may occur
    - Vote outcome can result in LAFCO approval being reversed or upheld
- Entire annexation and development approval process – commonly 2 years minimum, often more. Physical development could then occur
Implications for Residents/Landowners

- Potential Opportunities
  - Higher level/quality of services – e.g. police and fire
  - Access to City water and sewer services – reliability/quality
  - Amenities (commercial services, schools, libraries, parks)
  - Potential increase in property value – diversity of uses/increase in development intensity

- Resident/owner commitments and changes
  - May be required to participate in funding City services (e.g. sewer collection or treatment)
  - Changes in land use intensity from rural to urban

- Most uses/activities allowed in County are allowed to continue until property is proposed for urban development

- See Annexation “Questions and Answers” handout
North Merced Feasibility Study – Why?

- Multiple landowners in area interested in annexation
- City/LAFCO seeking a logical, structured approach to considering individual annexations – not random/ad hoc
- Consistency with General Plan and LAFCO policies is important (especially growth adjacent to city limits)
- “Logical” must consider City ability to provide services
- Some development opportunities related to UC Merced may exist near the UC - not adjacent to the city limits

**Purpose of study:** provide recommendations to City Council for considering future annexation requests through a structured, predictable process
Feasibility Study – Primary Content/Scope

- Environmental constraints to development (e.g. biological resources, agricultural land quality, hazards)
- Input from landowners/stakeholders interested in annexation/development
- Input from residents/voters
- Technical studies
  - Sewer analysis
    - Collection system capacity/costs/phasing/funding
    - Treatment plant capacity/costs/phasing/funding
  - Economic analysis
    - How much land demand for new development over short-, medium-, and long-term?
    - Costs to develop as a constraint?
    - Alternatives for funding costs of services/utilities?
Feasibility Study – Primary Content/Scope

- Consider alternatives to traditional annexation
  - “Out of Boundary” – not adjacent to city limits
  - City provides specified services (e.g. water/sewer)
  - Area remains in County, but agrees to annex in the future

- Input from City Council, Board of Supervisors, agencies, etc.

- Evaluation of General Plan policies and LAFCO policies – recommendations for changes, if any

- Recommendations about annexation “pathway” options/annexation phasing over time

The Study is not an annexation proposal – solely recommendations for considering future annexations
Next Steps/Schedule

- Interviews/information gathering
- Technical studies
- Input from community
  - Next community meeting in later July
  - Subsequent public meeting - Planning Commission and City Council workshop in September/October
  - Email/written comments
  - Contact information/documents on handouts/City project website
- Goal is to bring a final study to the City Council in October/November 2019
Questions and Answers

- Thank You for Coming!

- Your Thoughts/Ideas About Future Annexation Considerations and Issues – verbal, comment forms, email

Contact:

Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager
City of Merced
678 West 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 385-6858
planningweb@cityofmerced.org

(Comments and responses may be recorded to ensure accuracy of input)