

**CITY OF MERCED**  
**Planning & Permitting Division**

**STAFF REPORT:** #14-02

**AGENDA ITEM:** E

**FROM:** Kim Espinosa,  
Planning Manager

**BELLEVUE COMMUNITY PLAN**  
**AD-HOC CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**PREPARED BY:** Bill King, AICP  
Principal Planner

**MEETING DATE:** August 25, 2014

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**SUBJECT**

Summary of changes to the draft Bellevue Community Plan.

**REQUESTED COMMITTEE ACTION**

Review draft changes, comment on changes, and vote on the draft plan.

**OVERVIEW OF CHANGES TO THE DRAFT PLAN**

Staff received many comments during the public review period of the *Bellevue Community Plan* (BCP). Additionally, study sessions were held with various committees and commissions. Comments came from the Bellevue Community Plan Advisory Committee, the City Council and its commissions and committees, as well as individuals. The following substantive changes were made. Several grammatical and format changes were also made, but are not listed here. Except where noted, all page numbers below refer to the updated public review draft made available on August 18, 2014.

1. Emphasized the unique and distinct urban design model of the BCP as compared to the City's Urban Village Concept (Executive Summary, pages iv and v).
2. Clarified that a major retail center at the corner of G Street and Bellevue Road is supported by the Committee (page 96) , but that there are considerations, specifically: 1) inclusion of design features in the site plan consistent with existing City Policy (page 97) ; and, 2) market study considerations of potential impacts to existing and future retail sites in the BCP and other parts of the City (page 95). Policy CC-2.3 was also modified to highlight the need to consider design parameters of current City Policy (page C-44).
3. Removed the ambiguity about future uses at Bellevue Road and G Street, and, change "only" to "consideration" with regard to balancing commercial types in the plan area (page 95).
4. Repositioned and amended the discussion about "retail development" that originally appeared as a sub-topic to "Compatible Development Strategies," from page 89 to page 95.
5. Added new text (page 46) to address traffic interface conflicts with existing Rural Residential Neighborhoods. Similarly, added Policy M-1.4 language (page C-11) addressing needs and methods to reduce traffic impacts to existing rural residential land uses.
6. Added new Urban Expansion Scenario #5 describing concurrent annexations adjacent to UCM and City Limits to the south and west (page 125).

7. Added clarifying language about the distinct locations and purposes of the two types of gateway districts within and adjacent to the BCP planning area (pages 20, 24, 25 and 52).
8. Amended policy language regarding the view shed east of the BCP (BCP Policy OS-1.6, page C-28), to read, “Encourage designs within the Bellevue Community Plan area that enhances the view of UC Merced from Lake Road and the multi-purpose path.”
9. Added text to end of paragraph for “Connection to UC Merced and the University Community” (page 36), about the possibility of connecting Old Lake Road with Lake Road.
10. Clarified Bellevue Road right-of-way and cross-section designs (page 43), Street Classification Table 4 (page 41), and policies M-1.2 M-1.8 in Table 6 (pages 61 & 62).
11. Created an “*Ownership Block*” sub-section in the section about Plan Opportunities (page 14).
12. Created a “*Regional Attributes*” section in the Introduction Section (page 14).
13. Removed and/or modified imagery related to the size and direction of proposed Campus Parkway, including: (a) Figure 4, original page 18 of Plan; (b) Unnumbered image on original page G-2; (c) original Figure 1-3, Appendix I, original page 5 (Nelson/Nygaard Document); and, (d) Figure 2-2, Appendix I, original page 20 (Nelson/Nygaard Document).
14. Amended policy language to be consistent with the design of Bellevue Road (Table 6, policy M.1.2 and M 1.8, pages C-10 and C-14 respectively).
15. Removed original Policy OS-1.1 (pages 79 and original page C-21 of March 2014 draft), concerning review of sensitive habitats, and renumber remaining policies.
16. To assist with future permit decisions, added a policy that encourages further study of the anticipated future demographics of the planning area, and identification of what they want and need, to read: “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.” See BCP Policy CC-3.3, pages C-48 & 49.
17. Included a policy that establishes standards and funding sources to construct parking structures, to read: “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.” See BCP Policy M-1.11, page C-16.
18. Added policies to address water conservation and alternative energy sources, such as the requirement for plantings that are more suited to Merced’s dry climate (Policies OS-4.1 and UD-2.6, pages C-36 and C-93 respectively).
19. At the request of the City Manager, placed language concerning the purpose of the plan in the executive summary (pages i and ii).
20. At the request of Council Member Belluomini, added text to describe measures that may enable the full vision of the BCP to occur, in light of the fact that all properties are currently located outside the city limits of the City of Merced (pages 119 to 121).

21. Synced policy-related changes (text and numbering) that appear in Appendix C and at the end of the Plan Chapters.

### **DISCUSSION OF ITEMS NOT CHANGED**

Staff received some requested changes that were found to be inconsistent with other City policies or planning practices.

1. ***Remove reference to critical habitat (page 68)***

Some of the lands within the BCP are designated critical habitat. This designation applies to several sensitive species and guides the actions of resource agencies. Knowledge of this designation assists property owners and local jurisdictions about issues of significance, and can lead to early resolution of the matter and/or significant alterations in development plans. Matters such as these should be flagged early in the development process to enable property owners to begin what could be lengthy federal and state resource agency reviews.

2. ***By policy, distinguish the regional attributes of Bellevue Road (Table 3, Policy UD 2.2).***

BCP Policy UD 2.2 (page C-8) addresses aesthetics, and the interest to create an attractive gateway along Lake Road and Bellevue Road. The regional attributes of Bellevue Road are a separate issue and are given much discussion in the body of the BCP, as well as Mobility Policies M-1.1 (page C-10), M-1.6 (page C-13) and M-1.9 (page C-15).

3. ***Regarding the major retail center, to: a) Create a Major Neighborhood Center TOD with the Gateway Designation as a subset within it; b) Remove requirement for further market study (page 97); and, c) Remove application of design criteria to the major retail center (Policy CC 2.3), page C-44).***

a) The BCP has been about balancing flexibility and certainty, giving much flexibility to land use. The areas near G Street and Bellevue Road have been given the most flexible land use designation, the “Flexible Mixed Use Character Area.” Additionally, the plan lends significant support to the possibility for a major retail center in this area. As with other sites in the BCP area, the permitting of a particular use should occur after adoption of the plan. As a side note, the Gateway District is not a land use district, but rather a design overlay zone to address with aesthetics.

b) Plan discussion and policy calling for a market study requirement has been removed. The BCP retains a discussion of the value of a market study noting that the City could opt to use this information, however, as part of future considerations of land use entitlements.

c) It is important to note that these design criteria do not become law or code; they remain a policy to guide future decisions. The design criteria 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. The criteria add significant justification for allowing commercial sites at the corner of two arterial streets. It should also be noted that General

Plan policies cannot be amended without environmental review, public review, and public hearings.

**4. *Remove reference that 20% less anticipated traffic counts are expected in the BCP (the last paragraph on page 35, also referenced in Appendix D).***

This traffic-related finding supports the discussion that the BCP is no more intense in this regard than that examined in the City's General Plan. The finding also supports recommendations in the plan to evaluate the need for numerous travel lanes on its arterial streets, notably Golf Road north of Bellevue Road and Gardner Road, south of Bellevue Road. The finding also supports the value of coordinating mobility options with a variety of land uses. Finally, the finding supports interests to reduce unnecessary public improvement costs and public rights-of-way needs. Thus, the figure is an indicator of the success of the objectives of the Plan and should not be removed from the BCP.

**5. *Allowing the corner of Bellevue Road and G Street to exceed 3 stories.***

A key objective and guiding principle in the development of the plan was to keep the overall intensity of the project below thresholds that would trigger the need for an EIR, and as a related matter, to maintain a high degree of consistency with the recently adopted *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. Boosting the intensity of this area to allow 5-story developments would exceed the threshold, and require other areas to be less intense, which raises concerns from other interests. Additionally, in an attempt to be compatible with the existing planned uses next to the BCP, another objective of the plan was to enable greater intensity near UCM while reducing intensity in the western portion. The allowance for 3 stories is a good balance of the above objectives and constraints. At time of permitting, requests to increase the intensity of a site may still occur.

**6. *Reconsider utility of the Master Planning Process (page 103).***

The Master Development process folds into the existing entitlement process to assure the broad vision of the plan is implemented by individual development proposals. It is this process that will assure well connected growth in a manner where adjacent properties contribute to the overall vitality and value of the neighborhood. The process isn't so much about developers with different interests trying to devise a site plan, as it is about the developer working to achieve the goals of the community as expressed in the BCP. Absent this critical process, a disjointed growth pattern with incompatible developments along with a cookie-cutter appearance may emerge.

**ACCESS TO UPDATED DRAFT PLAN**

The updated draft plan can be found at the following web address.

[http://www.cityofmerced.org/depts/cd/planning/bellevue\\_corridor\\_community\\_plan/draft\\_documents/default.asp](http://www.cityofmerced.org/depts/cd/planning/bellevue_corridor_community_plan/draft_documents/default.asp)