



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING FOR THE YOSEMITE AVENUE - GARDNER AVENUE TO HATCH ROAD ANNEXATION PROJECT

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
DECEMBER 9, 2016 through JANUARY 9, 2017**

As the Lead Agency, the City of Merced (City) will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Yosemite Avenue - Gardner Avenue to Hatch Road Annexation Project (proposed project). The EIR is being prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Under CEQA, upon deciding to prepare an EIR, the City, as lead agency, must issue a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform trustee and responsible agencies, and the public, of the decision to undertake preparation of an EIR. The purpose of the NOP is to provide information describing the proposed project and its potential environmental effects to those who may wish to comment regarding the scope and content of the information to be considered in the EIR.

The proposed project was initiated by University Village Merced, LLC, on behalf of Cliff Caton, property owner. The EIR will evaluate potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the University Village Merced Student Housing and Commercial component of the proposed project on a project level, consistent with Section 15161 of the CEQA Guidelines. The remaining 40 acre portion would be evaluated on a program level, consistent with Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines. The project description, location, and environmental issue areas that may be affected by future development of the proposed project are described below. The EIR will evaluate the project-specific and cumulative impacts, identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce or avoid significant project impacts, and identify a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS

The City is soliciting comments from public agencies, organizations, and members of the public regarding the scope and content of the EIR, and the environmental issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIR. Public agencies may need to use the EIR when considering permitting or other approvals that are germane to the agencies' responsibilities in connection with the project.

Comments as to the appropriate scope of analysis in the EIR are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the EIR for the proposed project should be directed to Bill King, Principal Planner (address below). Due to time limits mandated by state law, public agencies and other interested parties must submit any comments in response to this notice at the earliest possible date, but not later than **5:00 p.m., January 9, 2017**, to the address shown below (postmarks are acceptable). If you wish to be placed on the notification list for this project, or if you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Mr. King.

City of Merced Planning Division, Attn: Bill King, Principal Planner
678 West 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340
Phone: (209) 385-4768, Fax: (209) 725-8775
email: KingB@cityofmerced.org

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

A public scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, December 15, 2016, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Sam Pipes Room in the Merced Civic Center, located at 678 W. 18th Street, Merced. Trustee and responsible agencies, as well as members of the public are invited to attend to learn more about the project and to provide written input on the scope of the EIR. The scoping meeting will have an “open house” format, so participants can attend at any point between 4:30 and 6:00 p.m. Participants arriving after 4:30 p.m. will not miss any meeting content.

PROJECT LOCATION

The approximately 70-acre project site is located in Merced County on the north side of E. Yosemite Avenue between N. Gardner Avenue and Hatch Road (Exhibit 1). The site is unincorporated land contiguous with the City of Merced and is located approximately three miles from the UC Merced campus. The project site is bounded by the City on two sides and would be annexed into the City to receive full urban services.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City is proposing to annex the entire 70-acre project site into the City limits. The project includes the University Village Merced student housing and retail component that proposes to provide off-campus student housing and commercial retail uses on a 30-acre portion of the site at the northeast corner of E. Yosemite Avenue and N. Gardner Avenue (Exhibit 2). No development is proposed on the remaining 40 acres that surround the 30-acre portion. The City is proposing land use and zoning designations of Urban Transition (U-T) and Low Density Residential (R-1-10) for this land.

University Village Merced, LLC (project applicant) is requesting entitlements to allow construction of the student housing and retail component of the project. A general overview of the project elements is included below (Exhibit 3).

- 330 residential units in 22 three-story buildings;
- 813 spaces for student parking;
- An approximately 10,000 square foot (sf) single-story clubhouse/administration building, with gymnasium and study/lounge area;
- Outdoor recreation area and amenities including landscaping;
- 66,000 sf of commercial retail space in five single-story buildings with the potential for 18 extended stay units and 12 apartments above;
- 323 retail parking spaces; and
- Stormwater retention basin accommodating runoff from all 30 acres.

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

The proposed project requires the following discretionary approvals from the City of Merced and the Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo).

- Approval from Merced County LAFCo to annex 70 acres to the City of Merced;
- Pre-zoning to Planned Development (P-D), Low Density Residential (R-1-10), and Urban Transition (U-T);
- General Plan Amendment to change the land use designations from Rural Residential (RR) to Neighborhood Commercial (CN) and High-Medium Density Residential (HMD);

- Site utilization plan for the University Village Merced portion of the site;
- Minor subdivision map;
- Approval of a Development Agreement for the University Village Merced portion; and
- Certification of the EIR.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR

The EIR will evaluate whether the proposed project may potentially result in one or more significant environmental effects, which will be evaluated in the relevant EIR sections listed below.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Aesthetics, Light and Glare | • Hydrology, Drainage and Water Quality |
| • Agricultural Resources | • Land Use and Demographics |
| • Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions | • Noise |
| • Biological Resources | • Utilities and Service Systems |
| • Cultural Resources | • Transportation |

EFFECTS FOUND TO BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT

Unless specific comments are received during the NOP public comment period that raise specific concerns or request an issue be addressed unique to the project site, the following issues are anticipated to be less than significant and will be addressed in the Initial Study.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

The project site contains flat relief and no known earthquake faults exist in the project vicinity.

These conditions make it unlikely that the proposed project would be exposed to significant hazards during a seismic event. Furthermore, the proposed project’s construction activities would involve grading and soil engineering activities intended to abate any adverse soil conditions that may exist, and would ensure that project buildings have adequate structural support. No impacts would occur.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The project does not propose uses that would require the generation or use of hazardous materials and would not create a risk to the public or to schools in the project vicinity. The project site is not within two miles of an airport and would not interfere with an adopted emergency evacuation plan. It is anticipated that impacts would be less than significant.

Mineral Resources

The project site does not support mineral extraction operations. Neither the State of California nor the City of Merced designates the project site as a location of known mineral deposits. These conditions preclude the possibility of a loss of mineral resources of statewide or local importance. No impacts would occur.

Population and Housing

The project would introduce new residents into the City of Merced, but would not displace any housing or require the construction of housing elsewhere. It is anticipated there would be no

impacts to housing. Growth associated with the project and potential growth inducing effects will be addressed in the EIR.

Environmental documentation for this project will be available for review at the City's Planning Division, 678 West 18th Street, Second Floor, Merced, CA 95340, during regular business hours and online at: <https://www.cityofmerced.org/>.

