



July 3, 2021

Merced City Council  
City of Merced  
678 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Merced, CA 95340

City Clerk: [cityclerk@CityofMerced.org](mailto:cityclerk@CityofMerced.org)

On behalf of the Virginia Smith Trust (VST), thank you for the opportunity to comment again on the recommendation for pre-annexation agreements and annexation reviews. Thank you to staff for taking into consideration VST's comments made on the previous iterations of this matter. Overall, VST supports this process as a way of reducing the risks of development by clarifying the City's commitment to development. Many communities in the Central Valley use this approach to ensure that developments can be successfully completed once they are initiated; and, conversely, to identify projects that may not be ready enough for actual development to justify the commitment of City staff time and City utilities capacity.

We acknowledge and encourage the usage of "readiness" and community benefits as factors in determining which projects should be given high priority. Some properties in North Merced have already cleared environmental processing and master planning hurdles, while others have not. The rating and prioritization criteria references community benefits and standards more thoroughly and comprehensively than the previous proposal, and which items are of higher importance. Community benefits could include environmental benefits such as reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and associated greenhouse gas emissions; implementation of water conservation (and sewage generation) strategies; and, meeting an urgent development need (such as multifamily housing or other affordable housing).

We are supportive of Mr. Lakireddy's comments on the proposal relative to readiness, commitment of City utility capacities, prioritizing "ready" projects to maximize the effectiveness of staff time, and on modification of the Merit Criteria to reflect the annexation of UC Merced and adjacent properties under AB 3312.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Peck, AICP

President, Peck Planning and Development, LLC  
VST Planner and Project Manager

Xc: Scott McBride, Development Services Director  
Dr. Steve M. Tietjen, Ed D  
Stephanie Dietz, City Manager