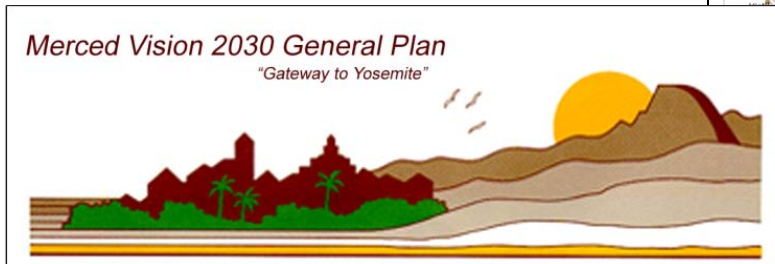
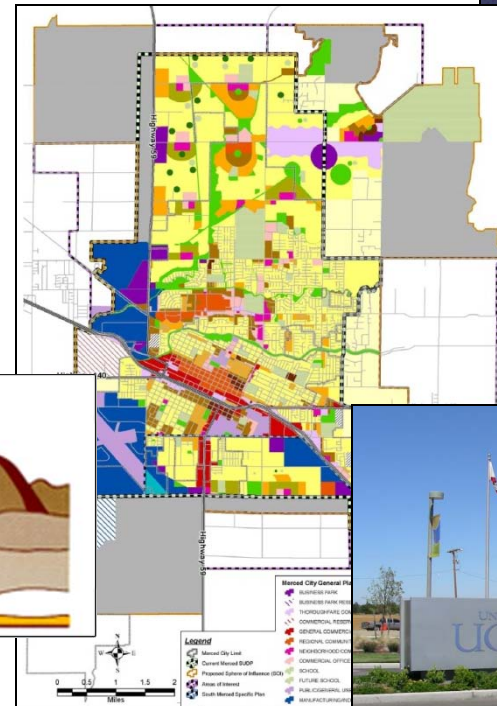


# Merced Vision 2030 General Plan

City Council  
Public Hearing

September 19, 2011



Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager

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# Tonight's Meeting

- **Staff Presentation**
  - What Is the General Plan and Why Is It Important?
  - General Plan Update Process
  - Guiding Principles
  - Overview of Draft General Plan
  - Overview of the EIR
  - Recommendation
- **Public Hearing**
- **City Council Direction**
  - Any changes to the policies or boundary?
- **Continue Public Hearing to Oct 3**



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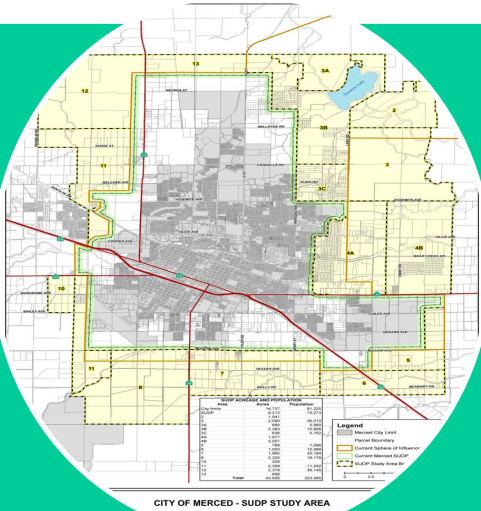
# What is the General Plan and Why Is It Important?

Each City and County in CA is required to adopt a General Plan which provides for “the physical development of the County or City, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning” and to keep it up-to-date.

The General Plan is the “Constitution for Future Development” (A Vision for Future Growth), but Not a Document To Promote Growth. Charter City status gives City some flexibility to adopt a General Plan to suit the community’s needs.

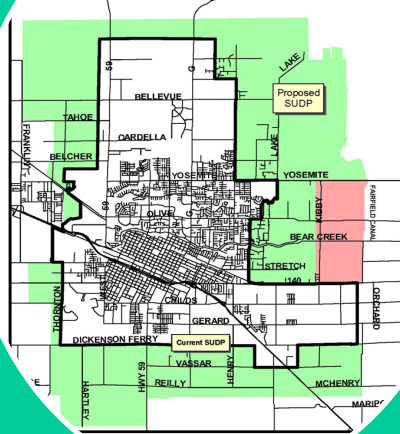
Provides guidance in the planning & evaluation of future land and resource decisions. (All future land use decisions must be consistent with the adopted General Plan as well as City master plans for infrastructure, fees, etc.) Without a General Plan, no new development can be approved.

# Overview of General Plan Process

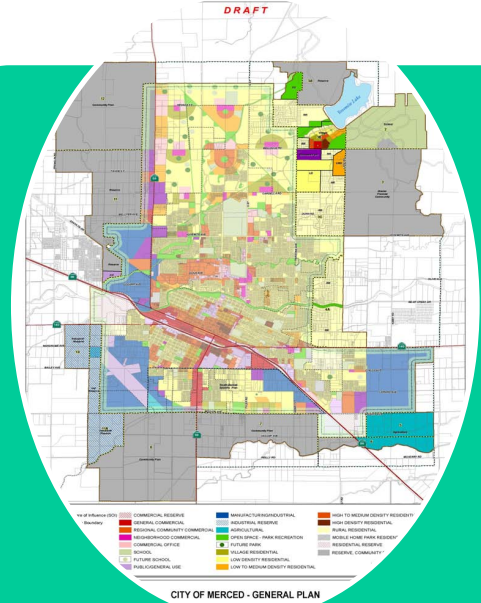


2005-06:  
Process Begins &  
Study Area Defined  
and Expanded.

Specific Urban Development Plan  
Proposes of Completing the General Plan Update  
Adopted by Merced City Council—July 17, 2006

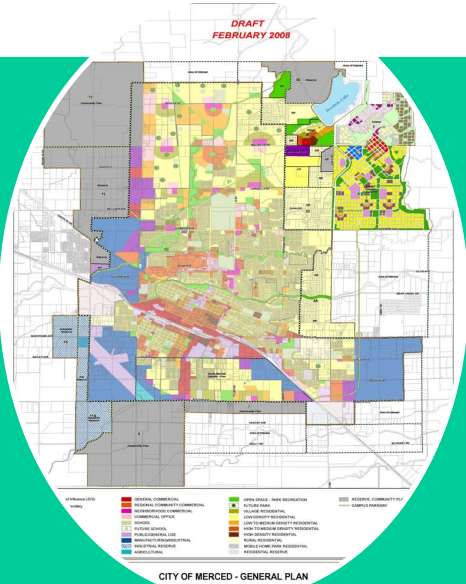


July 2006:  
Draft SUDP/SOI  
Boundary Adopted



Sept 2007: Draft  
Land Use Diagram  
Released

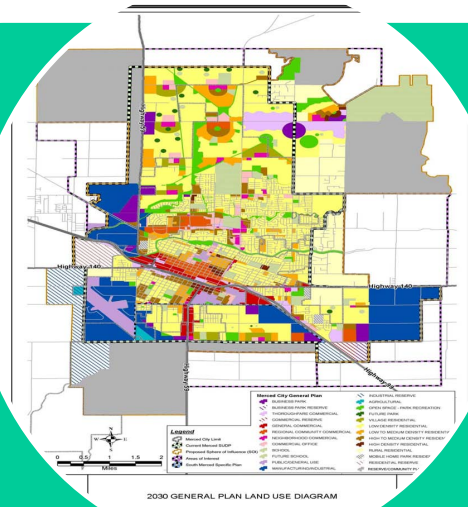
# Overview of General Plan Process



Feb 2008:  
Draft Land Use  
Diagram Revised



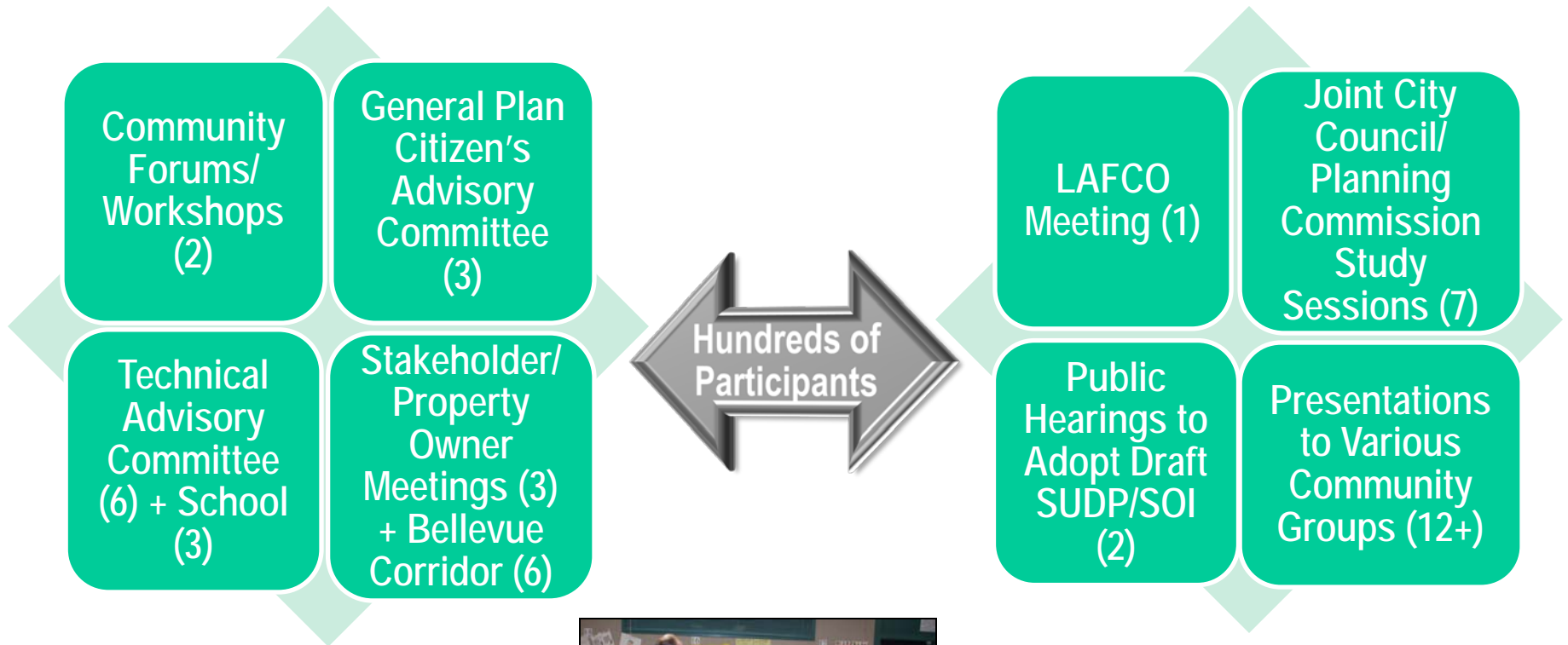
2008-2010:  
Draft Document  
Prepared.



Aug 2010:  
Draft General Plan &  
EIR Released



# Public Participation



# Guiding Principles (Page 1)

Expansion of the Sphere of Influence and city boundary with phasing of development to avoid premature conversion of agricultural land and to plan for cost-effective extension of municipal services.



Foster compact and efficient development patterns.



# Guiding Principles (Page 2)

Connectivity between existing and planned urban areas. Examples include the northeast area toward UCM, the University Community, and South Merced.

Merced as the single municipal service provider in the expanded Sphere of Influence.

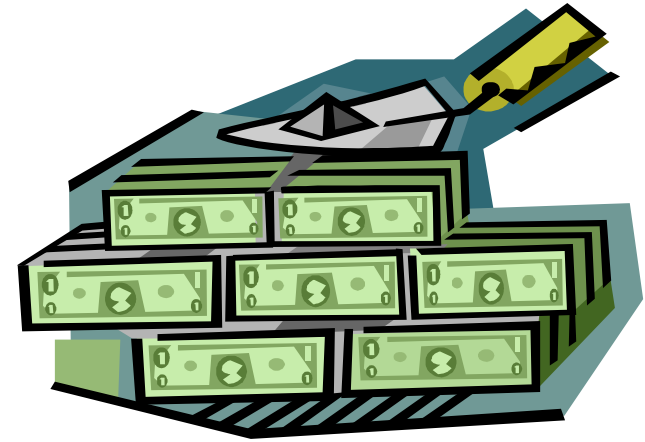




# Guiding Principles (Page 3)

New development provides or pays its fair share of public services and facilities to avoid burdening existing city residents (in short, new growth pays for itself).

Mixed-use, transit and pedestrian friendly urban villages in growth areas with direct access to commercial cores from surrounding neighborhoods.



# Guiding Principles (Page 4)

Commercial nodes in new growth areas to avoid the aesthetic and circulation issues associated with more common “strip commercial”.

Circulation: Recognition of the cost and importance of the arterial street system and protect capacity with access standards. Designs that encourage all modes of transportation.



# Guiding Principles (Page 5)

Build community quality. High community standards for Merced's services, infrastructure, and private development as a strategy for attracting business and industry and to benefit the City's residents.



Planning well in advance for industrial/business park uses and for the infrastructure needed to support such development.



A diversity of housing types and opportunities.

# Guiding Principles (Page 6)

Encouraging Sustainable and “Green” Development

Planning for the provision of infrastructure ahead of development

Maintaining Merced’s high quality of life and keeping it a nice place to live

Encouraging new research parks and the use of new technologies

Protection of the Merced Regional Airport as an important community asset





# Guiding Principles (Page 7)

Maintaining a quality educational environment for pre-school, K-12, and higher education

Maintaining our quality parks and recreation systems, including the bike path system

Encouraging a healthy community through improved medical facilities, air quality, parks & recreation opportunities, etc.



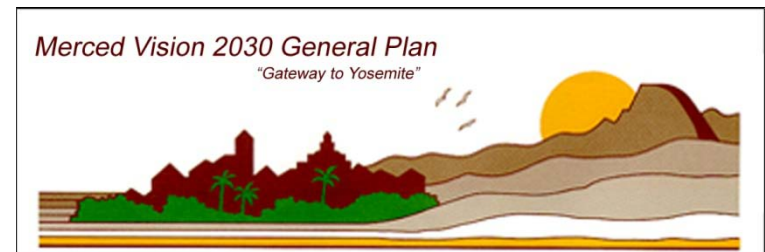
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# General Plan Components

## Required & Optional Elements in the Merced 2015 & 2030 General Plans

- Urban Expansion
- **Land Use Element (includes a Land Use Plan)\***
- **Circulation Element (includes a Circulation Plan)\***
- Public Services and Facilities Element
- Urban Design Element
- **Open Space\*/Conservation\*/Recreation Element**
- Sustainable Development
- **Housing Element\*** (adopted separately—May 2011)
- **Noise Element\***
- **Safety Element\***

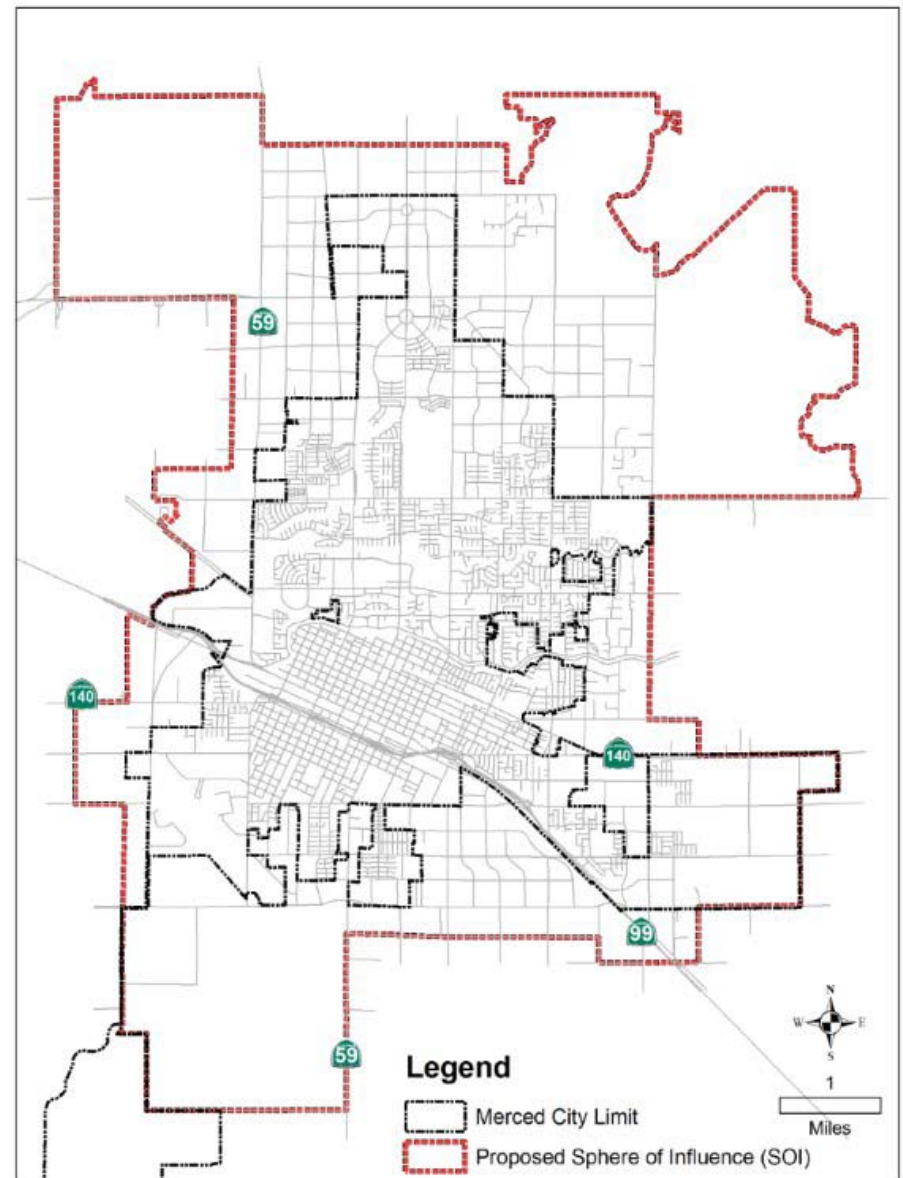
\*State Required Elements; Others Optional



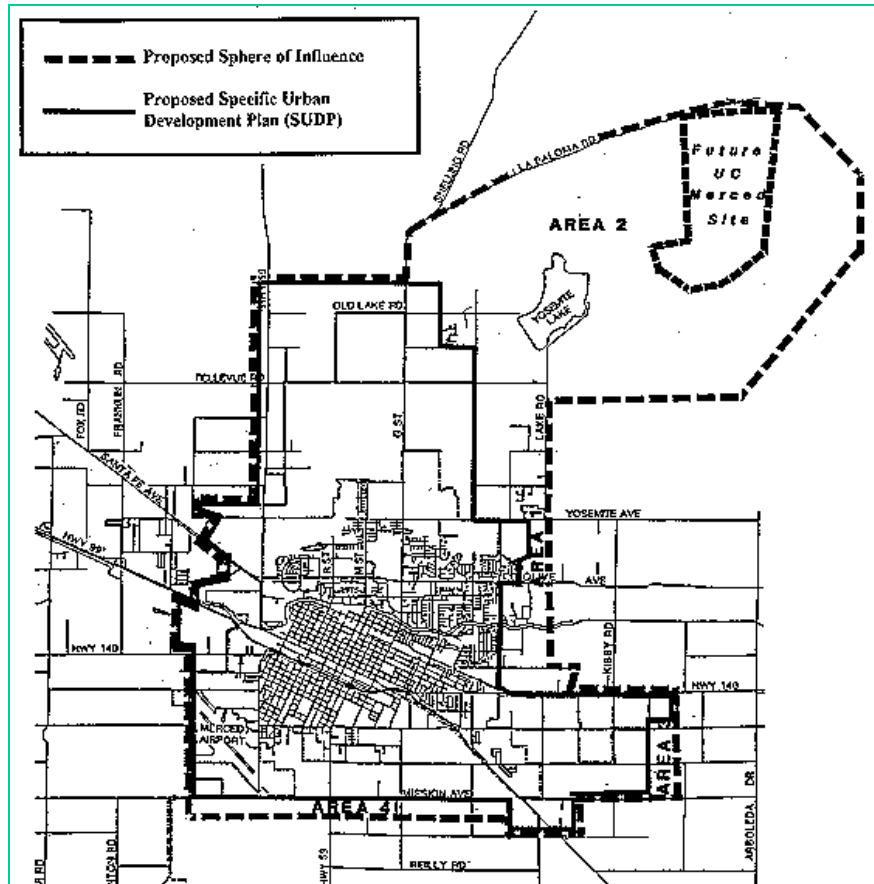
# *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*

## **Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI)**

**Coterminous SUDP and SOI  
to delineate growth area with  
City land use designations**

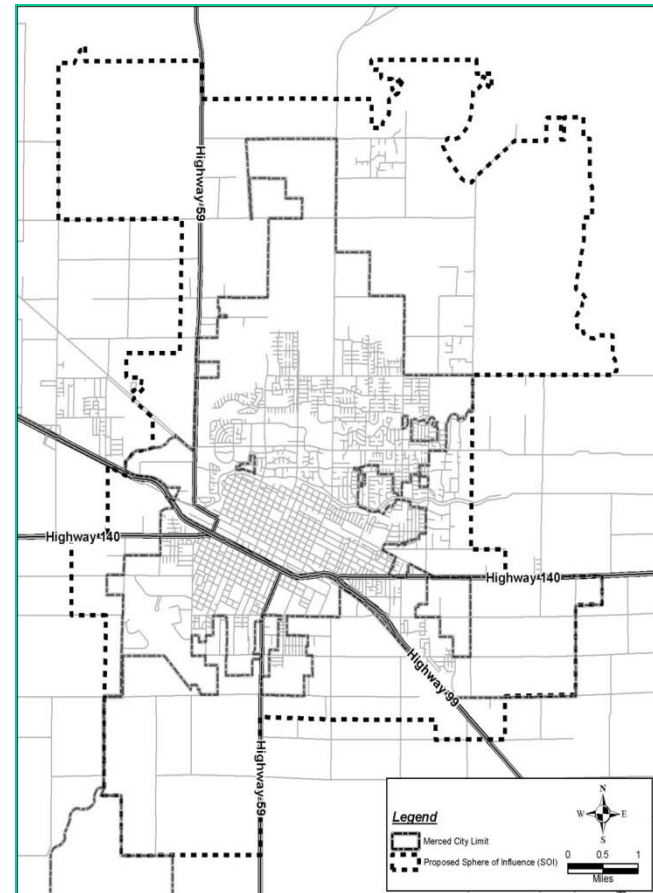


# *Merced Vision 2015 General Plan (1997) vs. Draft Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*



*SUDP = 20,700 acres*

*SOI = 37,300 acres*



*Combined SUDP/SOI*

*= 33,576 acres*



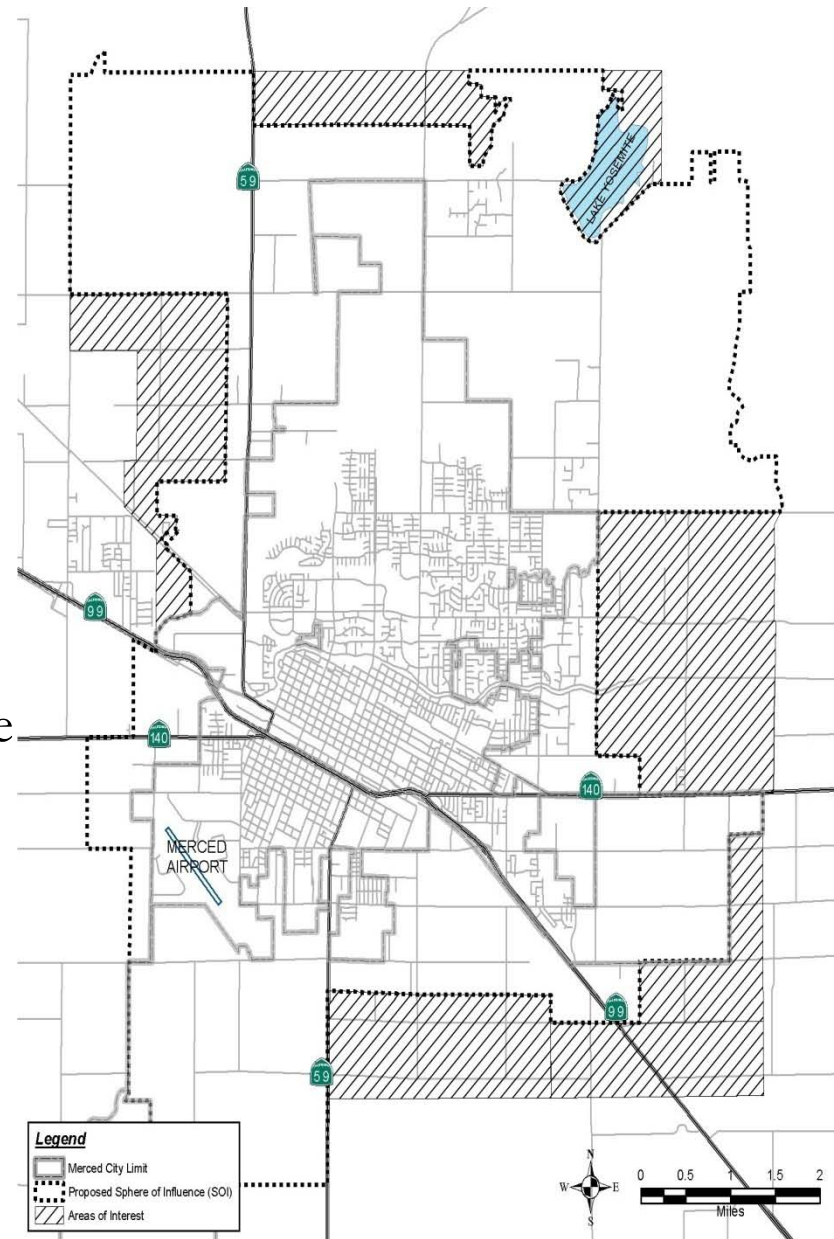
# *Merced Vision 2030*

## *General Plan*

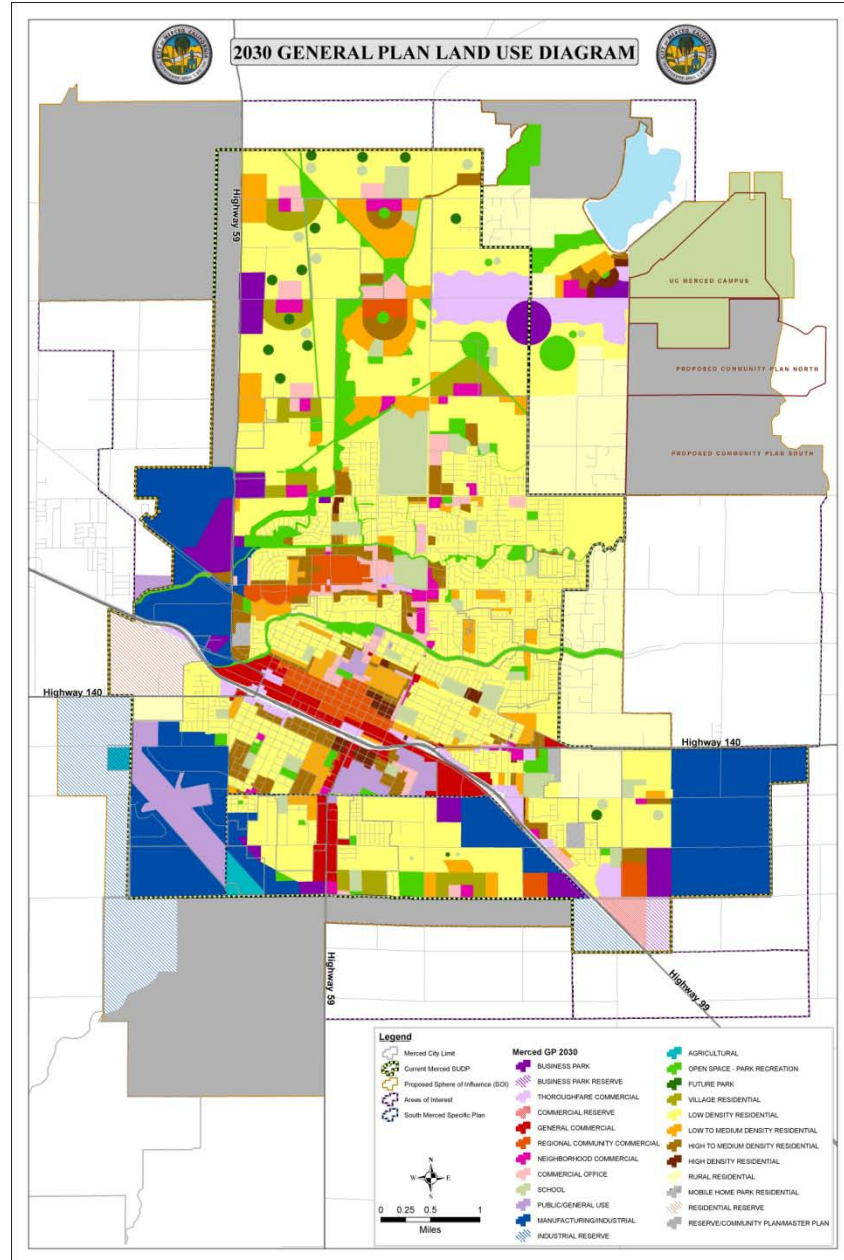
# Area of Interest (AOI)

## 40+-Year Planning Area

- To provide long-range look at future City growth areas (Not required)
- No City Land Use designations or infrastructure plans
- Criteria must be met to add to SUDP/SOI along with additional environmental review
- Approximately 10,000 acres

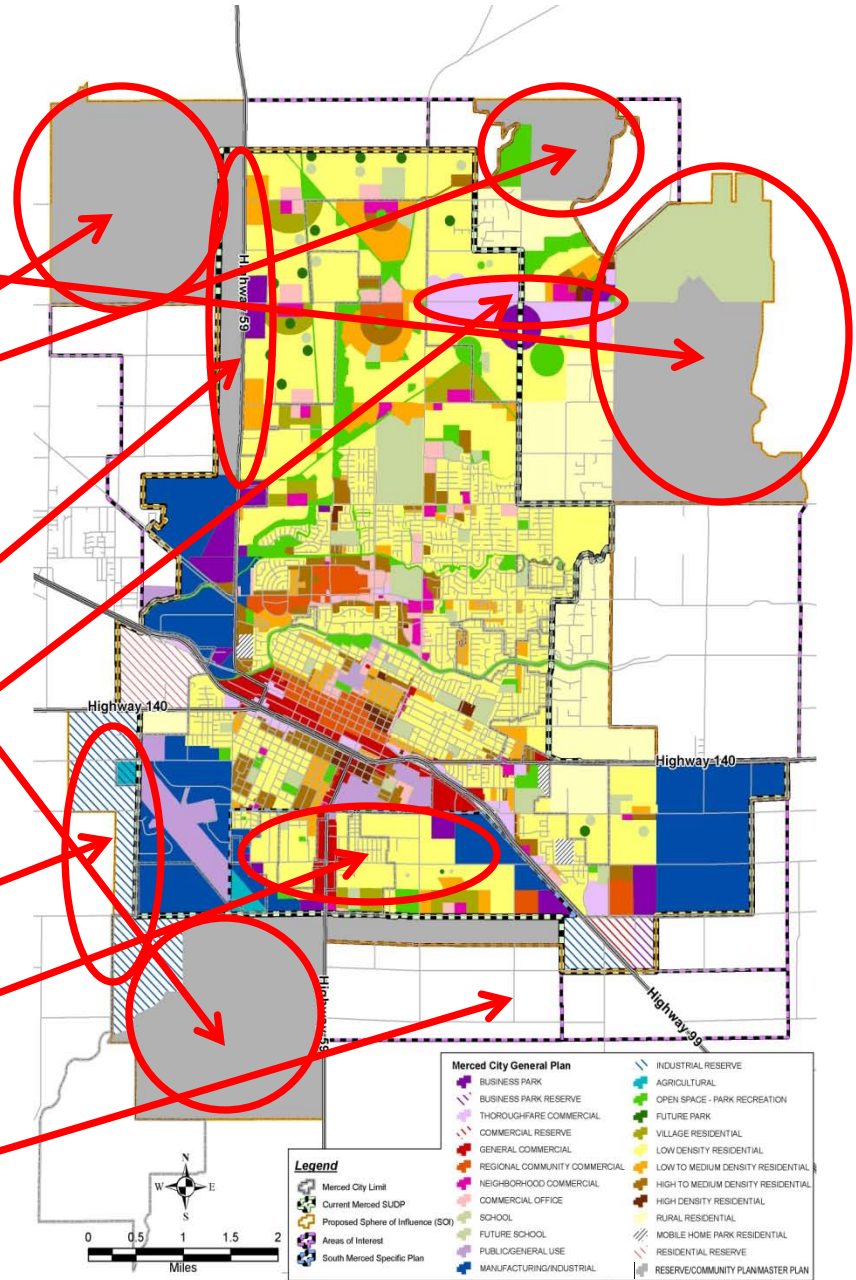


# Merced Vision 2030 General Plan Land Use



# Major Changes Since 1997

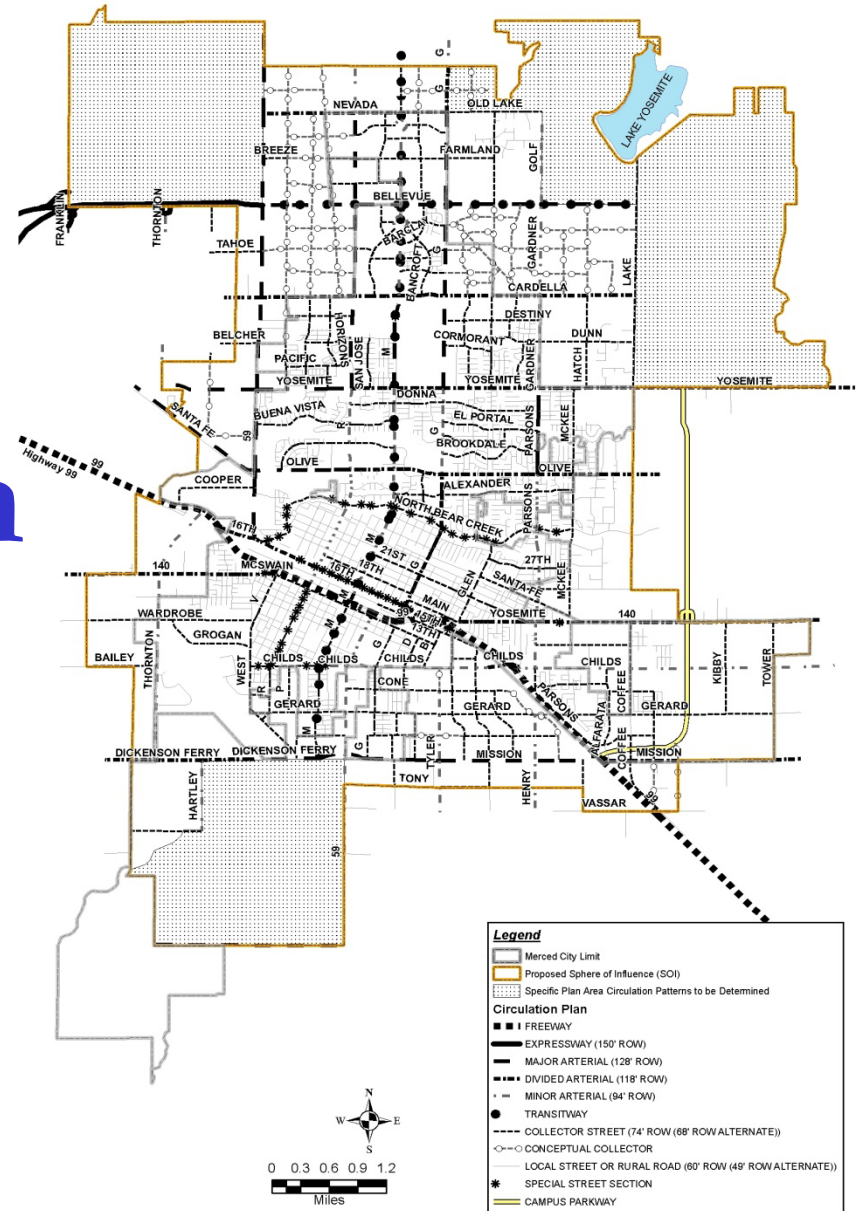
- UC Merced & University Community Added
- Community Plan Areas Added (Castle Farms, Mission Lakes, Yosemite Lakes, etc.)
- Highway 59 Corridor Land Use Changes
- Bellevue Corridor Plan
- Industrial Reserve Added
- South Merced Community Plan Incorporated
- Areas of Interest Added





# Merced Vision 2030 General Plan

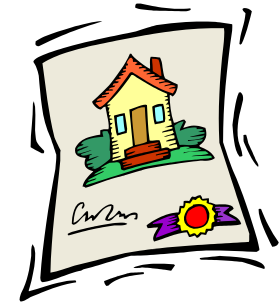
# Transportation & Circulation







# Goals, Policies, & Implementing Actions



**Goal** = A general, overall, and ultimate purpose, aim, or end toward which the City will direct effort.

**Policy** = A specific statement of principle or guiding action which implies clear commitment. A general direction that the City will follow in order to meet its goals by undertaking specific action programs. It is assumed that each policy statement is preceded by the phrase, "The City shall..."

**Implementing Action** = An action, activity, or strategy carried out in response to adopted Policy to achieve a specific Goal.

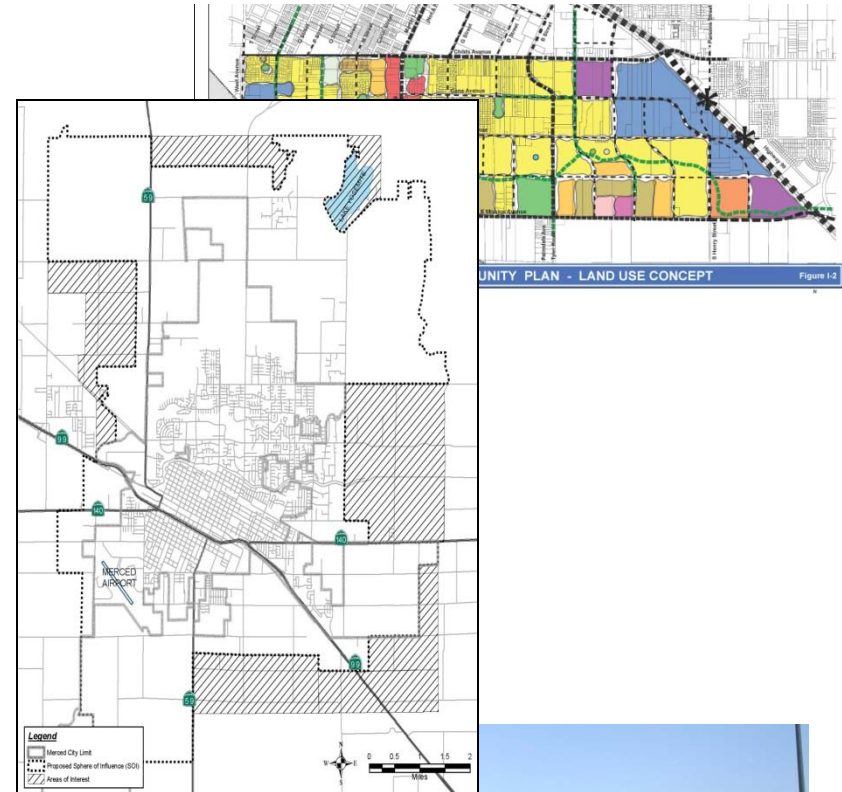
# Major Policy Additions Since 1997

## Urban Expansion

- Co-terminus SUDP/SOI
- Area of Interest

## Land Use

- Increased flexibility for retail at major intersections under unique circumstances
- Development standards for large research parks
- Freeway-Oriented Developments
- South Merced Community Plan



# Major Policy Additions Since 1997

## Land Use (Cont.)

- Transit-Oriented Development Overlay Zone Adjacent to High Speed Rail Station in Downtown Merced
- Large Community Plan Areas (University Community, Castle Farms, Bellevue Corridor, etc.)
- Implementation of San Joaquin Valley Blueprint policies & principles and densities
  - Blueprint says 6.8 du/ac; Merced has 7.1 du/ac in Draft Plan



# Major Policy Additions Since 1997

## Transportation

- “Complete Streets”
- Merced-Atwater Expressway & Bellevue Corridor Transitway
- Bicycle Advisory Commission and Bike Friendly Community



## Public Facilities

- Significantly revised school policies to define City/School District relations
- Telecommunications (new goal area)





# Major Policy Additions Since 1997

## Urban Design

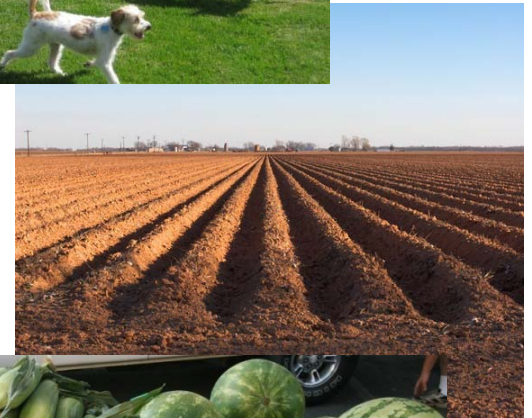
- No major changes

## Open Space/Conservation

- Integrate 2004 Parks & Open Space Master Plan
- Wetlands & Wildlife Resources

## Sustainable Development

- Climate Change, Climate Action Plan, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction, & Green Building Codes
- Healthy Communities



# Major Policy Additions Since 1997

## Noise

- New Noise Measurement Techniques
- Updated Noise Data



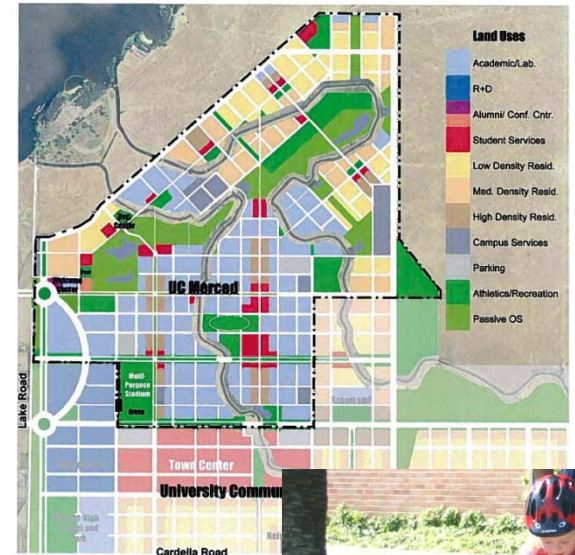
## Safety

- Updated Emergency Preparedness Procedures
- 200-Year Floodplain



# Major Changes Since Aug 2010 Draft

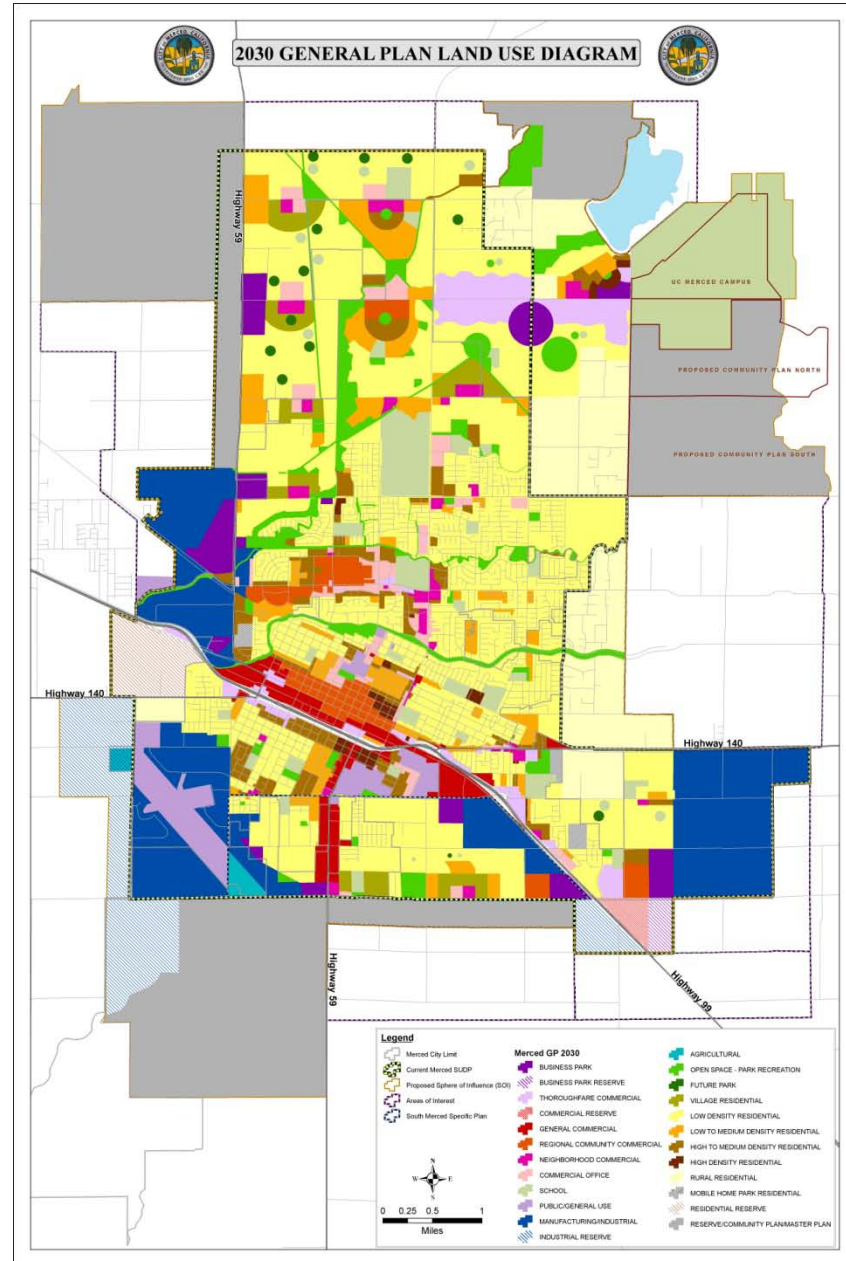
- Chapter 3 (Land Use)—New UC Merced/ University Community Boundary
- Chapter 4 (Transportation)—Changes Recommended by Bicycle Advisory Commission & Regarding Castle Airport
- Chapter 5 (Public Services) & Chapter 11 (Safety)—Changes Recommended by New Fire Chief





# *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*

## Modified Land Use Diagram (with UC boundary changes)





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# Draft & Final Program Environmental Impact Report

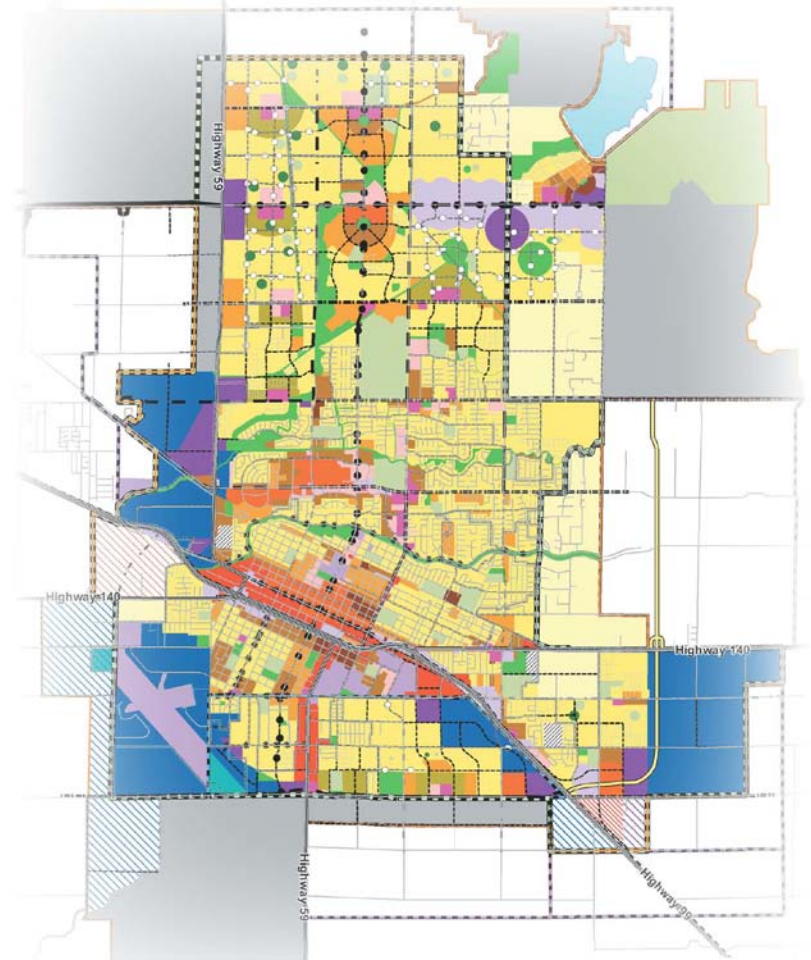
## Merced Vision 2030 General Plan

SCH# 2008071069

Prepared for:

City of Merced Development Services Department  
Planning & Permitting Division


August 2010/July 2011



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# EIR Timeline


July 14, 2008: Notice of Preparation Distributed (30 days)




August 24, 2010: Draft EIR completed and released for 60 days of agency/public comment



September 15, 2010: Community Meeting held on General Plan and Draft EIR



October 22, 2010: Close of public comment period on the Draft EIR. (26 letters received)



July 8, 2011: Final EIR released, including responses to the comments, minor changes to the Draft EIR, and the Mitigation Monitoring Program.



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# Project Mitigations

## Aesthetics

- Outdoor Lighting Guidelines

## Agriculture

- Conservation Easements;
- Infill Development Preference

## Air Quality

- SJVAPCD Regulations;
- Reduce emissions during construction;
- Best Available Control Technology for discretionary projects;
- Encourage Energy Conservation

## Biological Resources

- Surveys/Mitigations for Special Status Species;
- “No Net Loss” Streambed Alterations;
- Wetlands Delineations

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# Project Mitigations (Cont.)

## Noise

- Criteria for Construction Vibration

## Traffic

- Increase Number of Travel Lanes on 53 Various Roadway Segments to achieve LOS D or better
- Require Traffic Studies for GPA's, Community Plans, & Annexations

## Greenhouse Gas Emissions

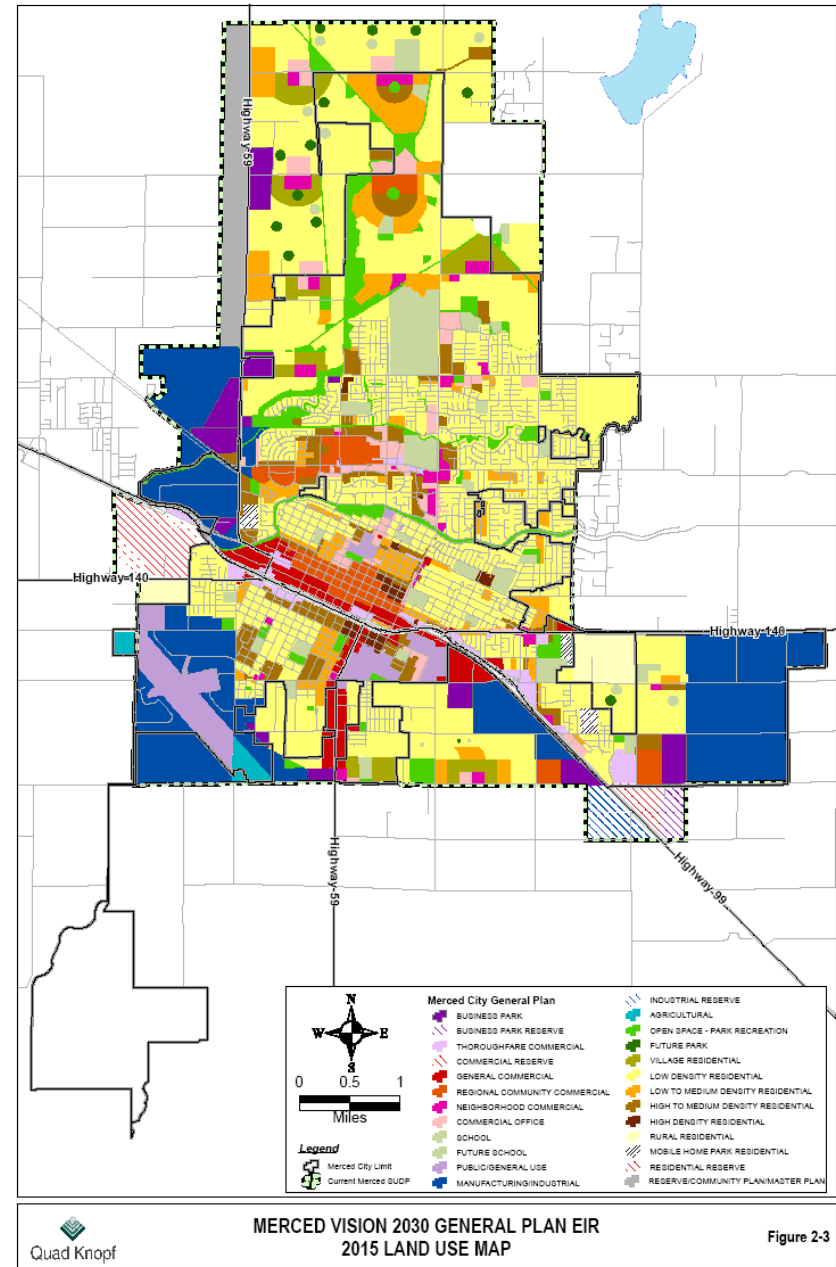
- CEQA Evaluations for Projects;
- Climate Action Plan;
- Measures for New Development (i.e. recycling, mixed use, tree planting, motor vehicle emission reductions, water use, & energy efficiency)



# Alternative #1

## Existing General Plan (No Project)

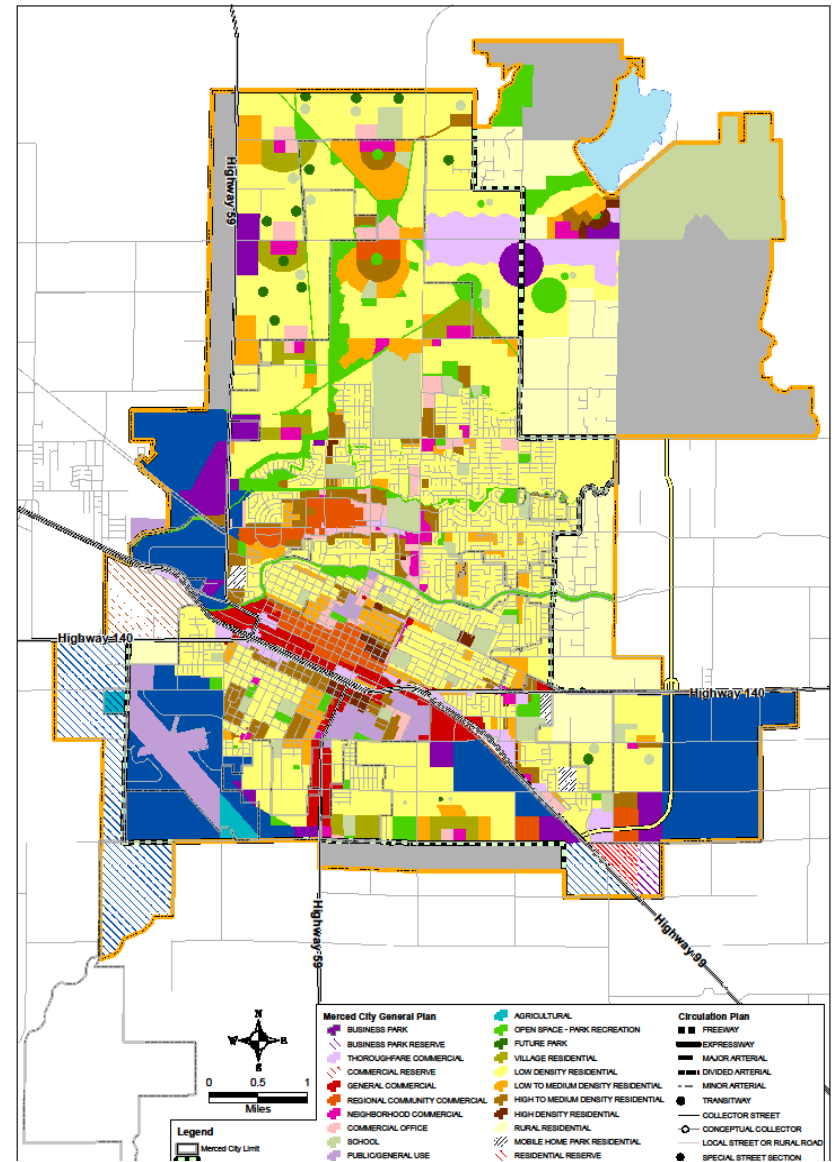
- *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* would not be adopted, and existing *Merced Vision 2015 General Plan* would remain in effect (SUDP = 21,700 acres).
- Would result in the reduction of 10 impacts, the increase of 3 impacts, and 4 impacts remain unchanged compared to the Draft General Plan (Project)
- Found to be environmentally inferior to the Project and other alternatives for failing to meet project objectives.



# Alternative #2

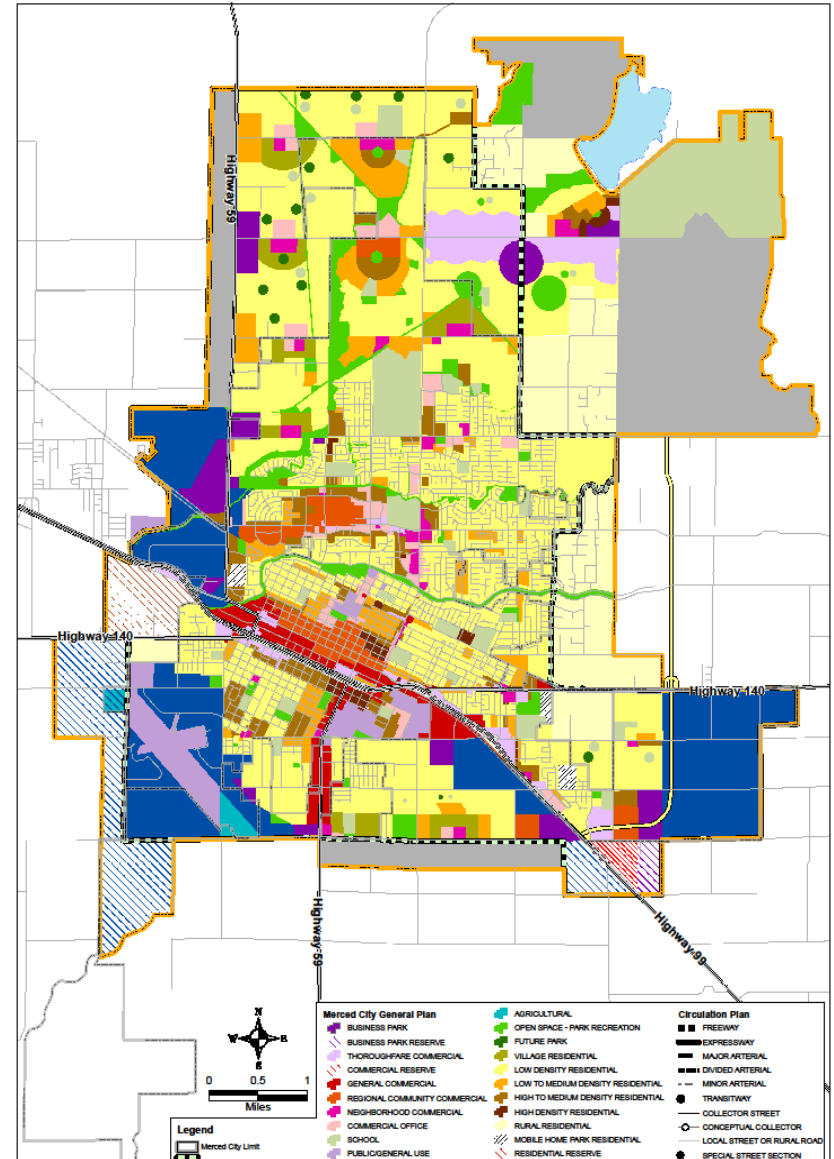
## Reduced Project Area

- Slightly less new development allowed in comparison with the proposed General Plan.
- Growth restricted to a smaller expansion area, including UC Merced & University Community (2005 Draft SUDP), but removes 2 other large community plan areas added in 2006-07 (SUDP = 28,576 acres).
- Considered feasible because the City could grow at a slower pace than expected.



## Alternative #2 (cont.)

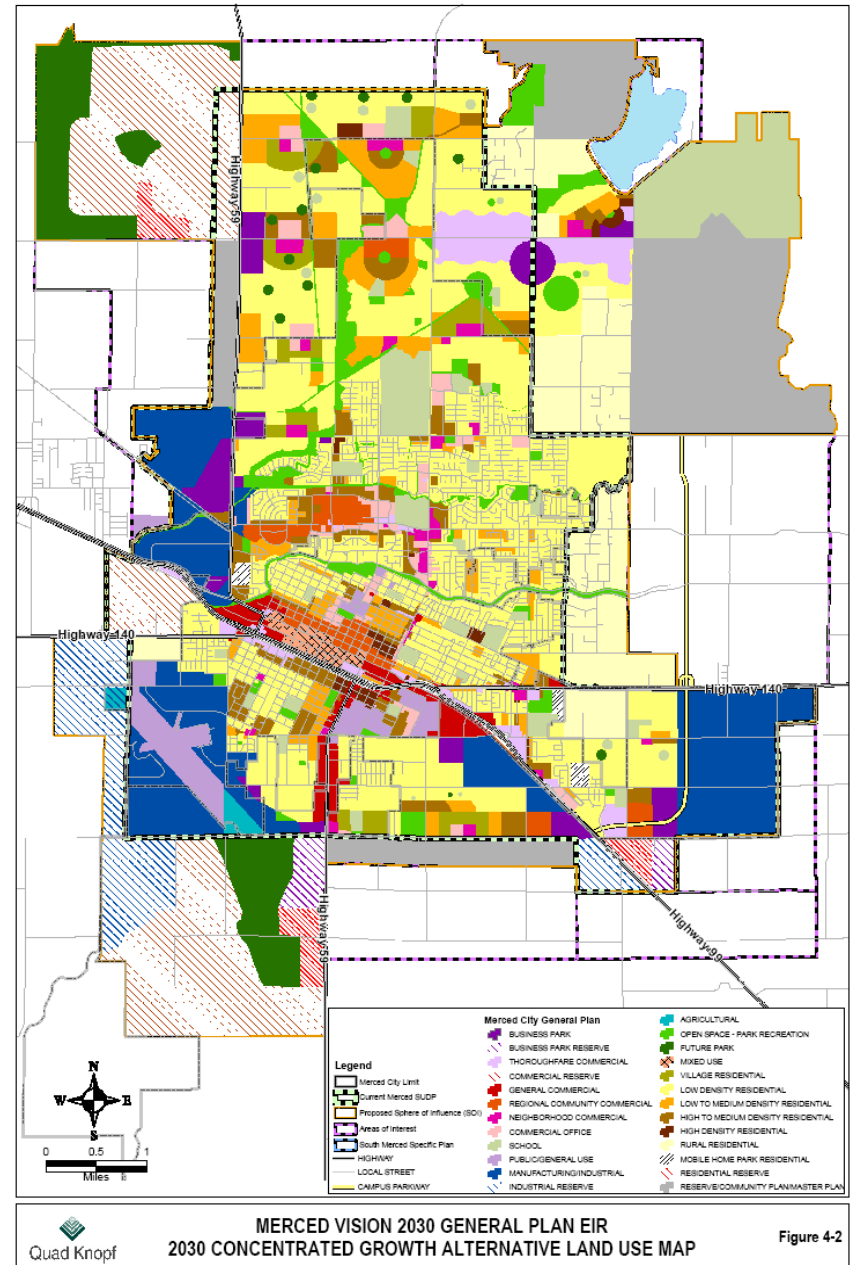
- Would result in the reduction of 11 impacts, the increase of 0 impacts, and 6 impacts remain unchanged compared to the Draft General Plan.
- Alt #2 is the “environmentally superior alternative” because it reduces more potential impacts than the others.
- However, #2 is less desirable than the Project because the Project has mitigation measures that will lessen most impacts and #2 does not accomplish all the Project objectives.



# Alternative #3

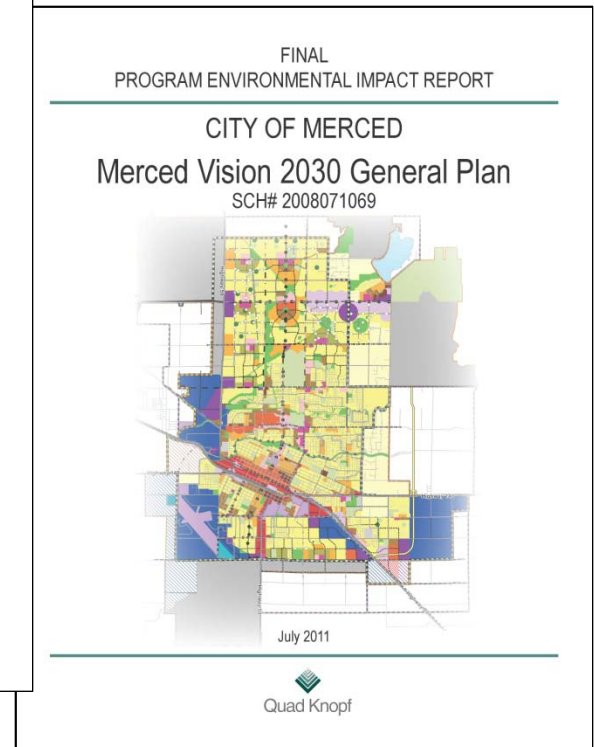
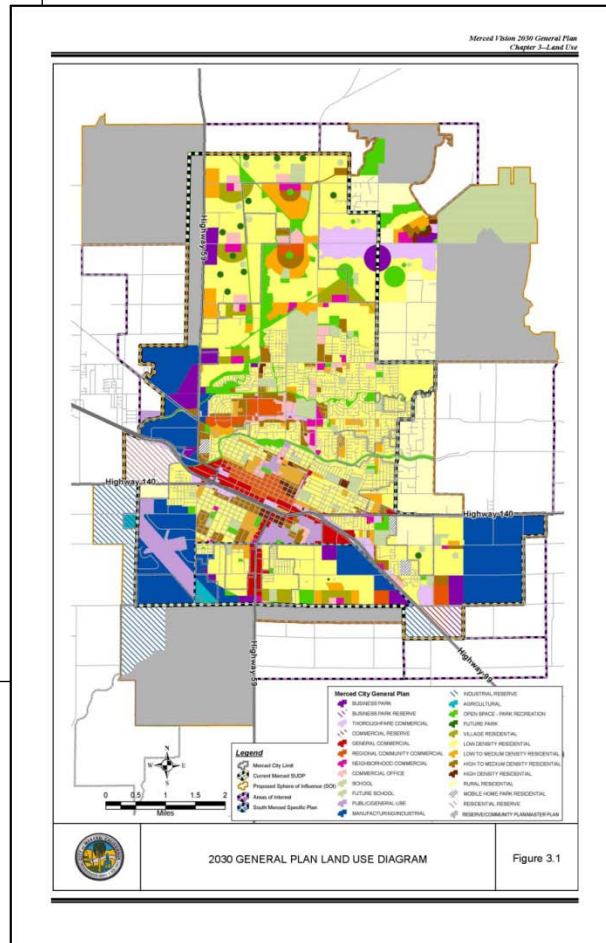
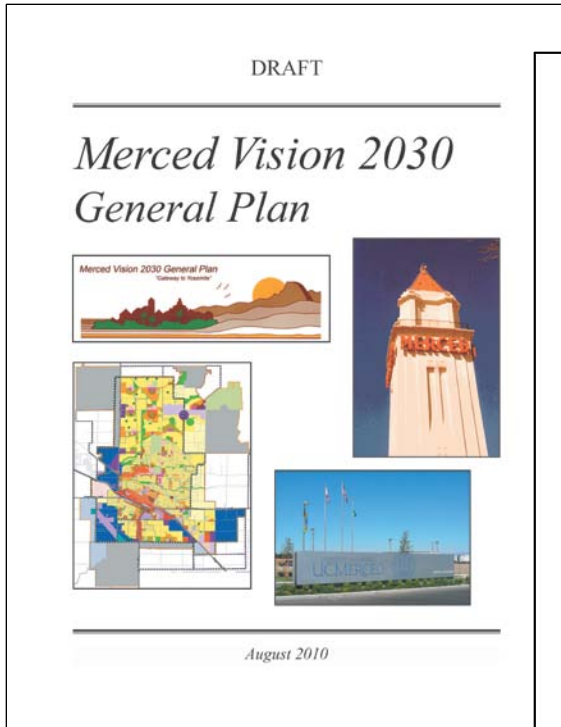
## Concentrated Growth

- Total amount of new units similar to that allowed under the Plan but residential densities would be increased (SUDP remains the same).
- More land designated as Open Space or Reserve.
- Would result in the reduction of 8 impacts, no impacts would increase, & 9 impacts would remain unchanged.
- Found to be less desirable than the proposed General Plan for the same reasons as Alt #2.





# Recommendation



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# Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council:

- Open the public hearing and accept public testimony; then,
- Provide staff with specific direction regarding any proposed changes in the Draft General Plan, including policy changes or changes in the Draft SUDP/SOI boundary; and,
- Continue the public hearing to the October 3, 2011 City Council Meeting for consideration of adoption of the General Plan and EIR.
  - Please note that unless specific direction is given for changes, the General Plan will be presented as is on October 3.

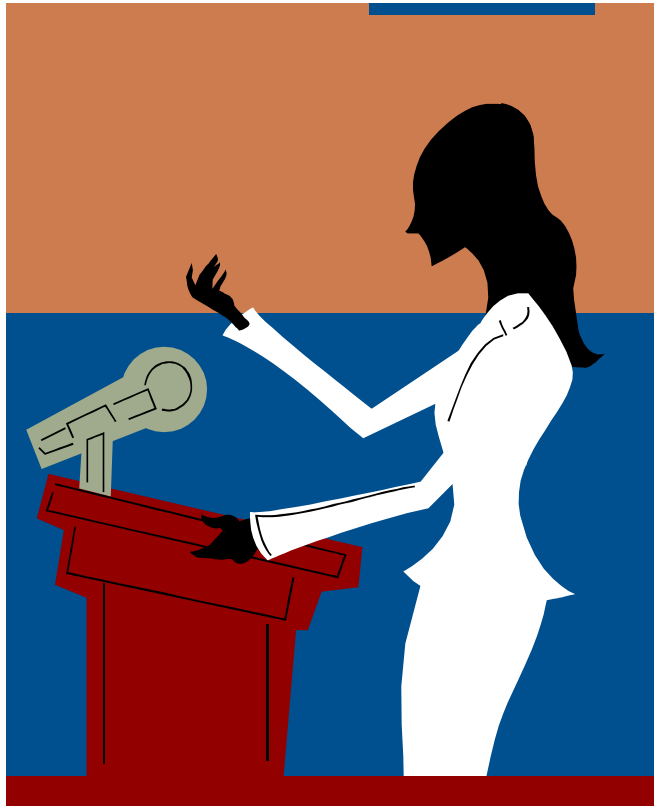
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# Questions?



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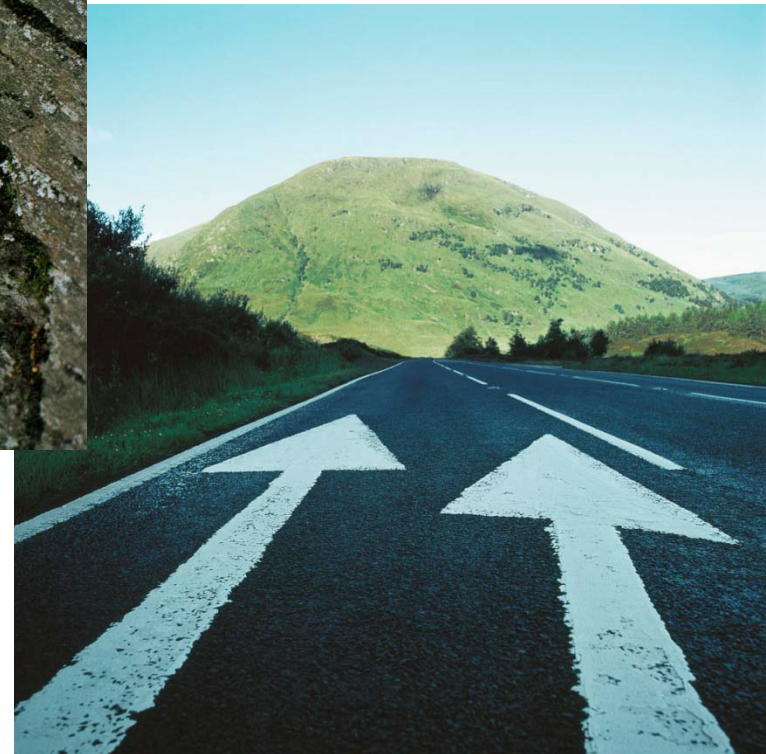
# Public Hearing





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# City Council Direction



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# Continue Public Hearing to October 17, 2011

