

3.14

PUBLIC SERVICES

3.14 Public Services

This section of the Draft EIR presents information on existing public services in Merced, including police and fire protection, schools and libraries, and describes the potential effects of the proposed General Plan related to the provision of these services. Parks and recreation are discussed in Section 3.13, Recreation. One comment letter was received regarding public services. The commenter commented on “fire safety protection and the timing of the construction of public fire safety protection infrastructure to an operational level, so that the necessary fire station infrastructure, equipment, and staffing is identified and clearly stated in specific terms as implementation measures and standard Conditions of Approval for annexation and subdivision agreements and as mitigation measures.”

3.14.1 SETTING

Environmental Setting

POLICE

Police protection for the entire City is provided by the City of Merced Police Department. The Police Department employs a combination of sworn officers, non-sworn officer positions (clerical, etc.) and unpaid volunteers (V.I.P.S). The 1995 service criteria used for planning future police facilities was approximately 1.32 sworn officers per 1,000 population. In 2010, the Merced Police Department had 111 sworn officers. Based on a population of 80,985, this ratio exceeds the standard of one (1) officer per 1,000 citizens.

Merced is divided into three police districts, each with its own police facility and officers. District 1 serves the area north of Bear Creek from the north station on Loughborough Drive. District 2 serves the area between Highway 99 to the south and Bear Creek to the north from the central station at M and 22nd Streets. District 3 serves the area south of Highway 99 from the south station in McNamara Park.

The primary reason for having the three districts is to place police officers closer to the neighborhoods and citizens they serve. The Police Department is of the opinion that this “community policing concept” will be successful in combating increases of crime as the City continues to expand. Citizen councils have been established in each district to meet with area commanders and develop strategies for combating crime in their neighborhoods. To augment police department efforts, Neighborhood Watch Programs are established throughout the City and have been highly successful.

The Merced Police Department provides patrol and crime prevention services as well as operation of a SWAT and Tactical Negotiations Team, Bomb Squad, Domestic Violence Response Team, K-9 Units, Bicycle Patrol, Mounted Patrol, and providing identification and fingerprinting services.

The unincorporated component of the General Plan area slated for urban expansion through the Specific Urban Development Plan/Sphere of Influence process is currently under the jurisdiction

of the Merced County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department is located at 700 West 22nd Street in Merced. The Sheriff's Department presently employs approximately 80 plus sworn deputies to provide police protection for the unincorporated portions of the county, with at least six deputies and a sergeant on duty at any one time.

The Merced Sheriff's Department provides patrol and crime prevention services as well as maintaining the county jail, operation of a SWAT team, and providing identification and fingerprinting services.

Merced County Sheriff's Department operates the Merced County Correctional facilities which houses jail in-mates living in the County. The County also provides court services (including probation, etc.), which supports the local law enforcement efforts of both the Merced County Sheriff's Department and the Merced City Police Department.

FIRE PROTECTION

The City of Merced Fire Department provides fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services from five fire stations throughout the urban area. The City central fire station is located in the downtown area. There is a station on East 21st Street near Yosemite Park Way, a station north of the Merced Mall on Loughborough Drive, a station on Parsons, and another at the Regional Airport.

Fire Department personnel are typically assigned on a three-platoon work schedule, which provides the City coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Department equipment includes first-line engine companies (carry and pump water), ladder companies, reserve engines and ladder trucks, airport emergency vehicles and other miscellaneous vehicles.

Merced's fire protection system operates according to a central station concept. Under this concept, a central station can respond to calls from within its own service area or district, and can provide back-up response to other districts as well. From 1990 to 2010, response activity doubled.

The Fire Department provides around-the-clock coverage with a full-time staff upwards of 54 Line Personnel (15 Captains, 18 Engineers, 21 Firefighters) three Battalion Chiefs, two Division Chiefs, one Chief, and two Secretaries. The Fire Department is a paid only career department (no Volunteers, Reserves, or PCFS). Equipment includes five Frontline Engines, two Reserve Engines, Frontline Truck, Reserve Truck, Reserve Squad, Aircraft Crash / Fire Engine, California State Office of Emergency Services (OES) Engine, Rescue Trailer, Public Education Trailer, HAZMAT Decon Trailer, Rescue Boat, two Fire Prevention Vehicles, four Administrative Vehicles, and two Support Vehicles. The Fire Department also has one training tower.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) defines fire protection services on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing the best level of protection and 10 indicating no protection at all. The City of Merced's 2010 rating, Class 2, is considered to be well above average, despite manning levels

below national averages. This rating helps keep the costs of fire insurance premiums low for City businesses.

The City's Fire Department Master Facilities Plan is used in the planning of stations that will provide protection within a primary service area. The Department has a goal of maintaining a response time of four to six minutes for the first crew to arrive at a fire or medical emergency within an assigned district. This goal was chosen on the basis of proven factors affecting property damage and, more importantly, life.

The City of Merced Fire Department has a mutual aid agreement with the Atwater and County Fire Departments. This agreement enables the different jurisdictions to request aid from another when necessary.

The Merced County Fire Department (MCFD) provides fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services to all unincorporated areas of the County. Additional fire and medical service personnel are provided through contract with the California Department of Forestry (CDF). The nearest Merced County Fire Department station at 3360 North McKee Road is responsible for the unincorporated areas surrounding the City. The McKee Road station is staffed 24-hours per day by either a fire captain or a fire apparatus engineer and augmented with 15 volunteer personnel. The McKee Road response area is approximately 150 square miles and response times vary. The goal for this area is an arrival response time of 10 minutes.

The Merced County Fire Department has an ISO rating of 5 within a 5-mile radius of the station where there are fire hydrants, and a rating of 8 in this same area where there are no hydrants. Areas farther than 5 miles from the station have an ISO rating of 9.

SCHOOLS

Public schools are operated by school districts, which are autonomous governmental agencies separate from the City. They have their own elected officials and source of funding. There has been a long tradition of support and cooperation between the school districts and the community of Merced. The City coordinates with the school districts on the locations of future school sites, the collection of developer impact fees, and joint activities and facilities (i.e. school parks).

Primary and Secondary Education

The public school system in Merced is served by four districts, which include elementary schools, middle (junior high) schools, and high schools.

1. Merced City School District (elementary and middle schools);
2. Merced Union High School District (MUHSD); and
3. Weaver Union School District (serving a small area in the southeastern part of the City with elementary schools).

4. McSwain Union Elementary School District (serving a small area in the southwestern part of the City with an elementary school).

As the City grows, new schools will need to be built to serve Merced's growing population. Student generation rates vary with each school district and are subject to change based on the latest impact fee justification studies prepared by the school districts. Examples of the most recent student generation rates from the Merced City School District and Merced Union High School District in 2010 are shown below in [Table 3.14-1](#).

Table 3.14-1

Student Generation Rates in Merced City School District and Merced Union High School District (2010)

Unit Type	Elementary (k-6)	Middle (7-8)	High School (9-12)
Single-Family Detached	0.352	0.105	0.227
Multi-Family	0.459	0.100	0.109

In 1986, the California Legislature passed legislation (Government Code Section 53080 and 65995) authorizing local school districts to levy fees on new development at a rate authorized by the State as a method for partially financing the expansion and construction of school facilities made necessary by new growth.

The School Facilities Law of 1986 limited the amount of any fee or other requirement imposed on a development project for the mitigation of impacts on school facilities. Although the law appeared to prohibit denial of a project on the basis of inadequacy of school facilities, three subsequent court decisions held that this prohibition applied only to administrative land use approvals (such as tentative maps, use permits, and building permits), not to legislative land use approvals (such as general plan amendments and rezoning). These court decisions became known as the Mira-Hart-Murietta trilogy. In reliance on these decisions, many cities and counties required payment of school fees in excess of the statutory limits as a condition to granting approval of general plan amendments, specific plans, rezoning, and other legislative approvals.

Proposition 1A/Senate Bill (SB) 50 (Chapter 407, Statutes of 1998) was a school construction measure that was approved by the voters on the November 3, 1998 ballot. It authorized the expenditure of State general obligation bonds totaling \$9.2 billion through 2002, primarily for the modernization and rehabilitation of older school facilities and the construction of new school facilities related to new growth. Of the \$9.2 billion, \$2.5 billion was targeted for higher education facilities and the remaining \$6.7 billion was targeted for K-12 facilities, throughout the state.

SB 50 overturned the Mira-Hart-Murietta cases by expressly prohibiting local agencies from using the inadequacy of school facilities as a basis for denying or conditioning approvals of any "legislative or adjudicative act . . . involving . . . the planning, use, or development of real property" (Government Code 65996(b)). In other words, the regulations also explicitly prohibit local agencies from imposing school impact fees in excess of those provided by the statute in connection with approval of a project. Additionally, a local agency cannot require participation in a Mello-Roos for school facilities; however, the statutory fee is reduced by the amount of any voluntary participation in a Mello-Roos.

Proposition 1A/SB 50 has resulted in full State preemption of school mitigation. Satisfaction of the statutory requirements by a developer is deemed to be “full and complete mitigation” in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. The law does identify certain circumstances under which the statutory fee can be exceeded. These include preparation and adoption of a “needs analysis,” eligibility for State funding, and satisfaction of two of four requirements identified in the law including year-round enrollment, general obligation bond measure on the ballot over the last four years that received 50 percent plus one of the votes cast, 20 percent of the classes in portable classrooms, or specified outstanding debt.

Assuming a district can meet the test for exceeding the statutory fee, the law establishes ultimate fee caps of 50 percent of costs where the State makes a 50 percent match, or 100 percent of costs where the State match is unavailable. All fees are levied at the time the building permit is issued. District certification of payment of the applicable fee is required before the City or County can issue the building permit.

Higher Education

Merced College, a California Community College, provides Merced County residents with opportunities for educational development, cultural enrichment, and personal growth. The College’s strong program of academic courses, combined with a wide variety of vocational programs, allows the College to serve the needs of a diverse student population. Two-year Associate in Arts or Sciences degrees, as well as Certificates of Completion in selected vocational areas are available along with other programs designed to transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

The main campus covers over 270 acres and is located north of Yosemite Avenue between M and G Streets. A satellite campus is located in Los Banos to serve the west side of the county. Main campus facilities include classrooms and laboratories, a theater, art gallery, gymnasium, swimming pool, football stadium, tennis courts, library, and agricultural area.

UC Merced is the 10th campus in the University of California system. UC Merced is diverse, growing, and committed to those ideals that serve the state, nation and world through education, research and public services. UC Merced is a student centered research university that opened in September 2005 alongside Lake Yosemite. As the University continues to grow the list of majors, minors and graduate programs expand. The student body is projected to consist of approximately 3,500 as of Fall 2010, with over 75 clubs and organizations.

LIBRARIES

Libraries in Merced County are provided by the Merced County Library System, which has one main library in Merced and 15 branch libraries throughout the County.

The main library is located next to the Merced County Courthouse at 21st and O Streets. Merced College’s Leshner Library also provides library service within the City of Merced. It should be noted that non-Merced College students are prohibited from checking books out of the library, but may use the resources on-site. UC Merced Library also provides library services to the City of Merced.

In January 1994, budget constraints resulted in the Library operations being reduced to a minimal level. Beginning that year library services in Merced County were scaled back and funding, programs, hours, and staff were reduced or terminated. In early 1997, the City and County adopted a property tax sharing agreement in which the County would receive a share of the tax increment from the City of Merced's Redevelopment Project Area 2 specifically for library purposes. While this agreement is currently in place, the County library system still lacks the funding necessary to provide adequate circulation and staffing for existing libraries. Compared to a State average library-spending rate of \$20.65 per capita, Merced County's per-capita expenditure in 1998 was \$4.03.

Efforts continue to fund restoration of hours and staffing. As of the fiscal year 2006-2007, the Library began implementing a five year plan to restore professional infrastructure of the County Library System and hours of Operation at the Main Library in Merced as well as the four larger branches (Atwater, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos).

HEALTH SERVICES

The citizens of Merced enjoy good health care provided by Merced's hospital, surgical and diagnostic centers, urgent care facilities, convalescent facilities, as well as many private physicians.

Mercy Medical Center—Community Campus (formerly known as Merced Community Medical Center) was located near 13th and D Streets and served the citizens of Merced County for nearly 120 years, first as a public hospital, and later operated by Catholic Healthcare West under a long-term lease with the County. This acute care facility offered a full-range of in-patient and out-patient services. This facility has been replaced as of May 2010 with the new Mercy Medical Center Merced below. Limited outpatient and urgent care services remain at the site. Outpatient services are also offered at the Mercy Medical Center—Dominican Campus at M and W. 27th Streets.

The Mercy Medical Center Merced is a new facility located in North Merced at G Street and Mercy Avenue that opened in May 2010. Construction of the project will ultimately include three phases. Phase 1, which was completed in May 2010, includes a 8-story 264,000 square foot acute care tower with 218 beds, a 4-story 80,000 square foot medical office building and central plant. The medical office building is connected to the hospital tower by a one-story circulation spine. Surface parking is provided for patients, staff and visitors.

Phase 2 will include a 6 to 7 story acute care tower, a 3-story 60,000 square foot medical office building and central plant expansion. The medical office building will be connected to the hospital by a one-story circulation spine. The area and number of floors of the tower will be determined after a detailed capacity analysis. Surface parking will be provided for patients, staff and visitors. This phase will increase capacity to approximately 362 beds. Phase 2 estimated date of completion is 2018.

Phase 3 will include a 5 to 6 story acute care tower, a 3 story 60,000 square foot medical office building, central plant expansion and a 4 story parking structure for approximately 370 cars.

Surface parking for patients, staff and visitors is provided on both parcels. This phase will increase capacity to approximately 450 beds. Phase 3 estimated date of completion is 2023.

GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

The City of Merced owns and operates several civic facilities to serve the needs of its citizens. The Merced Civic Center, opened in 1988 and located at 18th and N, houses most City departments, and hosts public meetings of the City Council and other City boards and commissions, art exhibitions, and other civic activities. The City also operates the Transpo Center, the Senior and Community Center, the Merced Regional Airport, the City Corporation Yard, the Ralph H. Shannon and Merced Center Parcades, and other City-owned parking lots.

The City of Merced, as the County seat, contains many County- and State-owned government facilities. Chief among these facilities are the County Administration Building at M and 21st, the historic Merced County Courthouse and other justice facilities at 21st/22nd and N, and the Merced County Fairgrounds at Martin Luther King and Childs.

Many public services are provided by federal and State agencies at facilities such as the Main Post Office, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Social Security Office. There are also quasi-public uses, such as churches and non-commercial private schools.

Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL

There are no specific federal regulations applicable to public services.

STATE

Assembly Bill 2926 School Development Fees

Assembly Bill 2926 (AB 2926), passed into law January 1987, allows school districts to levy three different levels of development fees directly on new residential, commercial, and industrial development (Government Code § 65995).

- Level 1 fees are the base statutory fees. As of January 27, 2010, Level 1 fees are \$2.97 per square foot for new residential development and \$0.47 per square foot of chargeable, covered and enclosed floor space for new commercial/industrial development. These amounts currently represent the maximum that can currently be legally imposed upon new development projects by a school district unless the district qualifies for a higher level of funding (Education Code § 17620-17621).
- Level 2 fees allow the school district to impose developer fees above the statutory levels, up to 50% of certain costs under designated circumstances. The state would match the 50% funding if funds are available.

- Level 3 fees apply if the state runs out of bond funds after 2006, allowing the school district to impose 100% of the cost of the school facility or mitigation minus any local dedicated school moneys.

Districts set their own fees within this limit based on a nexus study establishing their funding requirements. Since Proposition 1A was passed by the voters and SB 50 was passed by the State Legislature in 1996, payment of these school development fees is deemed to constitute full, complete, and adequate mitigation of project impacts on school facilities. Further, state law prohibits a local agency from either denying approval of a land-use project because of inadequate school facilities or imposing school impact mitigation measures other than designated fees. The California Legislature has found and declared that the mitigation of the impacts of land-use approvals on the need for school facilities¹ are matters of statewide concern. For this reason, the Legislature has occupied the subject matter of requirements related to school facilities levied or imposed in connection with, or made a condition of, any land-use approval, and the mitigation of the impacts of land-use approvals on the need for school facilities, to the exclusion of all other measures, whether financial or non-financial.

In addition, the payment or satisfaction of a fee, charge, or other requirement levied or imposed pursuant to Education Code Section 17620, in the amount specified in Government Code Section 65995 and, if applicable, any amounts specified in Sections 65995.5 or 65995.7, is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property on the provision of adequate school facilities.¹ In fact, a state or local agency may not deny or refuse to approve a legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property on the basis of a person's refusal to provide school facilities mitigation that exceeds the amounts authorized pursuant to Government Code Section 65995 or pursuant to Sections 65995.5 or 65995.7, as applicable.²

Accordingly, mitigation on the need for school facilities in land-use approvals is limited by the California Legislature to the payment of mitigation fees under Government Code Sections 65995, 65995.5, or 65995.7, as applicable, and the payment of such fees is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any local agency action involving the planning, use, or development of real property.

While current state law limits the consideration by cities and counties of school facilities issues in the land use approval process, local governments still have the power to use the General Plan and zoning to reserve and designate areas for schools. For example, California Government Code Section 65302 mandates that General Plans include a Land Use Element that designates the proposed general distribution, location, and extent of various land uses, including educational facilities. The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* accomplishes this through a set of policies and by designating "floating school" sites throughout the planning area. These future school sites are

¹ "School facilities" is defined as any school-related consideration relating to a school district's ability to accommodate enrollment [Government Code §65995(e)].

² Government Code §65995(h).

³ Government Code §65995(i).

referenced in this way because the actual location of school sites is determined at a later stage in the planning and development of the City (e.g., during annexation or subdivision platting).

LOCAL

General Plan Consistency

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* contains a number of policies that apply to public services impacts in conjunction with ultimate build-out of the City in accordance with the General Plan. The specific policies listed below contained in the Urban Expansion, Land Use, Transportation and Circulation, Public Services and Facilities, Urban Design, Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation, Housing and Safety Elements of the General Plan are designed to ensure that public services impacts are minimized as development occurs in accordance with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*.

Urban Expansion Policies:

- UE-1.2** Foster compact and efficient development patterns to maintain a compact urban form.
- UE-1.5** Promote annexation of developed areas within the City's Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI) during the planning period.

Land Use Policies:

- L-1.7** Encourage the location of multi-family developments on sites with good access to transportation, shopping, employment centers, and services.
- L-1.9** Ensure connectivity between existing and planned urban areas.
- L-2.7** Locate and design new commercial development to provide good access from adjacent neighborhoods and reduce congestion on major streets.
- L-3.1** Create land use patterns that will encourage people to walk, bicycle, or use public transit for an increased number of their daily trips.
- L-3.2** Encourage infill development and a compact urban form.
- L-3.3** Promote site designs that encourage walking, cycling, and transit use.

Transportation and Circulation Policies:

- T-2.1** Provide for and maintain a major transitway along "M" Street and possibly along the Bellevue Road/Merced-Atwater Expressway and Campus Parkway corridors.
- T-2.9** Ensure that new development provides the facilities and programs that improve the effectiveness of Transportation Control Measures and Congestion Management Programs.

Public Services and Facilities Policies:

- P-1.1** Provide adequate public infrastructure and municipal services to meet the needs of future development.
- P-1.2** Utilize existing infrastructure and public service capacities to the maximum extent possible and provide for the logical, timely and economically efficient extension of municipal infrastructure and services where necessary.
- P-1.3** Require new development to provide or pay for its fair share of public facility and infrastructure improvements.
- P-2.1** Maintain and enhance public protection facilities, equipment, and personnel to the maximum extent feasible within the resource constraints of the City to serve the City's needs.
- P-3.1** Ensure that adequate water supply can be provided within the City's service area, concurrent with service expansion and population growth.
- P-3.2.** In cooperation with the County and the Merced Irrigation District, work to stabilize the region's aquifer.
- P-4.1** Provide adequate wastewater collection, treatment and disposal capacity for existing and projected future needs.
- P-4.2** Consider the use of reclaimed water to reduce non-potable water demands whenever practical.
- P-5.1** Provide effective storm drainage facilities for future development.
- P-5.2** Integrate drainage facilities with bike paths, sidewalks, recreation facilities, agricultural activities, groundwater recharge, and landscaping.
- P-6.1** Establish programs to recover recyclable materials and energy from solid wastes generated within the City.
- P-6.2** Minimize the potential impacts of waste collection, transportation and disposal facilities upon the residents of Merced.
- P-7.1** Cooperate with Merced area school districts to provide elementary, intermediate and high school sites that are centrally located to the populations they serve and adequate to serve community growth.
- P-7.2** Support higher educational opportunities.
- P-8.1** The City will support the cultural and health related needs of the community by incorporating such facilities and services in development and redevelopment proposals.

- P-8.2** The City will promote consolidation of complementary or support services to avoid duplication of programs.
- P-8.3** Work with others to study innovative ways of delivering library services at the neighborhood level to promote community education and provide a focus for community activity and cultural development.

Urban Design Policies:

- UD-1.1** Apply Transit-Ready Development or Urban Village design principles to new development in the City's new growth areas.
- UD-1.2** Distribute and design Urban Villages to promote convenient vehicular, pedestrian, and transit access.
- UD-1.3** Promote and facilitate Core Commercial design principles in Village commercial areas.
- UD-1.4** Promote and facilitate Urban Village residential area design principles.
- UD-1.5** Design and develop public and quasi-public buildings and uses utilizing Transit-Ready Development or Urban Village principles.

Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Policies:

- OS-1.2** Preserve and enhance creeks in their natural state throughout the planning area.
- OS-1.4** Improve and expand the City's urban forest.
- OS-3.1** Provide high-quality park and open space facilities to serve the needs of a growing population.
- OS-3.4** Develop a diverse and integrated system of park facilities throughout Merced.
- OS-4.1** Preserve open space areas which are necessary to maintaining public health and safety.

Housing Policies:

- H-1.8** Support housing to meet special needs.

Safety Policies:

- S-1.1** Develop and maintain emergency preparedness procedures for the City.
- S-3.2** Maintain essential City services in the event of flooding or dam failure.

- S-4.2 Maintain a reasonable level of accessibility and infrastructure support for fire suppression, disaster, and other emergency services.
- S-6.1 Provide superior community-based police services within the resource constraints of the City.
- S-6.2 Provide services and personnel necessary to maintain community order and public safety.

3.14.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project is considered to have a significant impact on the environment if it will:

- Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services including fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, and other public facilities (potential parks and recreation impacts are discussed in Section 3.13).

3.14.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact #3.14-1: Result in a substantial adverse physical impact to the continued provision of law enforcement services in the City

Discussion/Conclusion: Growth allowed under the General Plan would result in a potential population increase of approximately 36,200 additional residents by 2030 (General Plan buildout). Therefore, implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in an increased need for police service. The City would continue to provide police services within the City limits, which would eventually expand to include lands annexed from the SUDP/SOI in preparation for development.

Current staffing levels are adequate to meet existing needs. Using the service criteria of 1.32 sworn officers per 1,000 population, which exceeds the typical standard of one sworn officer per 1,000 population, the City would need an additional 91 officers to meet the needs of new development. To support the additional officers, supplementary support staff, equipment and increased facility space will also be needed.

Implementing Action 1.3.c of Policy P-1.3, states that all new development shall contribute its fair share of the cost of on-site and off-site public infrastructure and services as appropriate. This could include installation of public facilities, payment of impact fees, and participation in a public facilities financing program. These have been adopted by the City to provide for development of city-wide public facilities along with use of a Community Facilities District to help offset costs of annual operations caused by new growth.

The proposed General Plan includes Policy P-2.1, which will maintain sufficient public protection facilities, equipment, and personnel to the maximum extent feasible within the resource constraints of the City to serve the City's needs. Applicable Implementing Actions of this policy include 2.1.a which states that the City will periodically review existing and potential station facilities, equipment and manpower in light of protection service needs, and 2.1.b in which the City will determine that new development is adequately served by fire and police protection services.

Policies S-6.1 and S-6.2 of the proposed Safety Element call for the City to provide superior community-based police services within the resource constraints of the City and provide services and personnel necessary to maintain community order and public safety. Implementing Action 6.1.c of Policy S-6.1 states that the City will locate future police facilities to enhance the "community policing" concept through the expansion of existing or the addition of new police service districts as the City grows. Implementing Actions 6.2.a and 6.2.b of Policy S-6.2 call for the City to maintain a police force sufficiently staffed and deployed to ensure quick response times to emergency calls and encourage approaches to crime prevention to be designed into new buildings and subdivisions.

As stated above, the City will continue to implement a variety of policies and implementation actions designed to ensure that new development projects plan and finance future required protection services, and that the City maintains sufficient public protection facilities, equipment, and personnel to serve the City's needs. Therefore, implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in a *less than significant* impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact #3.14-2: Result in a substantial adverse physical impact to the continued provision of fire protection services in the City

Discussion/Conclusion: The City has a Fire Department Master Facilities Plan used in the planning of stations. The Department has a goal of maintaining a response time of four to six minutes for the first crew to arrive at a fire or medical emergency within an assigned district. This goal was chosen on the basis of proven factors affecting property damage and, more importantly, life. As the City continues to grow in population and area, the fire protection system will have to change if it is to maintain this response time standard. This would require two existing stations to be relocated and five new facilities with personnel and equipment to be added to the system.

If new development occurs pursuant to the proposed General Plan, there would be increased demand for fire and emergency medical protection. Additional staff, equipment and facilities would be required to ensure adequate levels of service and maintain, or exceed, current response times. The actual location of new and expanded facilities will depend on the pattern of growth that occurs in the City limits and proposed SUDP/SOI, which is not known at this time.

However, fire and emergency response facilities would be allowed in most proposed General Plan land use designations.

Recognizing that there would be an increased demand for fire and emergency medical response, the General Plan includes several policies to support the activities of the Merced Fire Department and other service providers. For example, Policy P-2.1 states that the City will maintain sufficient public protection facilities, equipment, and personnel to the maximum extent feasible within the resource constraints of the City to serve the City's needs. Applicable Implementing Actions of this policy include 2.1.a which states that the City will periodically review existing and potential station facilities, equipment and manpower in light of protection service needs, and 2.1.b in which the City will determine that new development is adequately served by fire and police protection services. Implementing Action 2.1.c states that fire station sites should be selected based on the distribution of land uses and population projected when the area is fully developed. Implementing Action 2.1.d provides guidelines for siting new firehouse facilities. Guidelines include fire stations being located on streets close to and leading into major or secondary thoroughfares; fire stations being near the center of their primary service area; convenient to high value areas of commercial or industrial districts; stations being located away from other uses which may be sensitive to the noise impacts of frequent alarms; and residential service areas, fire stations should be located in or near those sections which have the highest density.

Implementing Actions 2.1.e, 2.1.f and 2.1.h of Policy P-2.1 call for the City to maintain an adequate and reliable water system, support the “central station concept,” and assure that new development utilizes modern public protection concepts in their design and development.

Policy S-4.1 of the proposed Safety Element states that the City will promote the concept of fire protection master planning with fire safety goals, missions, and supporting objectives for the community. Policy S-4.2 calls for the City to maintain a reasonable level of accessibility and infrastructure support for fire suppression, disaster, and other emergency services. Implementing Action 4.1.a of Policy S-4.1 states that the City will provide additional fire station locations as expansion of the City occurs in order to maintain a response objective of 4 to 6 minutes citywide, at least 90 percent of the time.

As stated above, the City will continue to implement a variety of policies and implementation actions designed to ensure that new development projects plan and finance future required fire protection services and facilities. Financing mechanisms include impact fees and annexation into the Services Community Facilities District. New development will also be subject to the Building Code and the Fire Code with regard to building construction and related items such as the care of vacant lots and the storage of flammable liquids. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would result in a ***less than significant*** impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact #3.14-3: Result in a substantial adverse physical impact to the continued provision of school services in the City

Discussion/Conclusion: Implementation of the proposed General Plan is projected to increase the population by approximately 36,200 new residents by the year 2030. This increased population will result in increased student generation and the need for additional Merced elementary, junior high and high school facilities. Student generation rates are shown in Table 3.14-1. Consequently, new facilities and personnel will be required in order to provide adequate service for future growth. Although school districts have plans for the construction of new facilities, the continued provision of adequate funding sources (i.e., developer impact fees, etc.) and the dedication of future school sites will be necessary to ensure continued development of future school facilities.

Policies and implementation actions included as part of the proposed General Plan that address additional school services are summarized below. Policies P-7.1 and P-7.2 of the proposed Public Services and Facilities Element state that the City will cooperate with the area school districts to provide school sites that are centrally located to the populations they serve and adequate to serve community growth, and support higher educational opportunities. Implementing Action 7.1.b of Policy P-7.1 states that the City will assist, support, collaborate and cooperate with the school districts in planning for and providing of educational services and facilities to meet the needs of current and future students. Implementing Action 7.1.c states that schools should generally be located within neighborhoods near open space amenities in urban village areas, schools should be located adjacent to Village Core Residential (higher density) areas. Implementing Action 7.1.f requires the City to designate specific school site locations on the Land Use Diagram as needs and sites are identified and ensure their compatibility with adjacent development. The City will cooperate with the school districts to ensure that school facility impact fees are collected in accordance with State law (Implementing Action 7.1.i). The City will also work with the school districts to obtain adequate funding for infrastructure improvements on and adjacent to school sites (Implementing Action 7.1.j).

Implementing Actions 7.2.a and 7.2.b of Policy P-7.2 call for the City to work with Merced College and UC Merced to ensure adequate facilities and grounds and community infrastructure are available to meet future student needs.

On the General Plan Land Use Diagram, future school sites have been indicated, but only reflect a general location based on projected needs. Construction of school facilities is provided for through a combination of state and local sources. Local sources rely heavily on the imposition of school impact fees on new construction.

Payment of statutory fees under SB 50 is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of impacts for any legislative or judicative act, or both involving, but not limited to, the planning use or development of real property. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would have ***no impact***.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact #3.14-4: Result in a substantial increase in the demand for other public services and facilities

Discussion/Conclusion:

Libraries

Increased growth in the City of Merced, surrounding areas and throughout the County of Merced, can be expected to increase demands on library services. The City had a limited role in the provision of this service in the past and there are currently no plans for the City to become a library service provider. The Plan does, however, contemplate public facilities that could be linked with the County's library system to facilitate the provision of neighborhood level service within the City of Merced.

Increased growth in the City of Merced, surrounding areas, and throughout the County of Merced can be expected to increase demands on library services. The General Plan intends that the County library system provide neighborhood-level service within the City of Merced.

Policy P-8.3 of the proposed Public Services and Facilities Element calls for the City to work with others to study innovative ways of delivering library services at the neighborhood level to promote community education and provide a focus for community activity and cultural development. Implementing Actions of this policy include exploring ways to incorporate "information access" into public facilities and buildings; working with the County to defining an efficient means of maintaining and delivering library services; exploring cooperative library facility development with local school districts and secondary education institutions; and exploring the expansion of the City's telecommunications resources to encompass access to City documents and other resources (Implementing Actions 8.3.a and 8.3.b).

Implementation of the policies noted above in the Draft General Plan will result in a ***less than significant*** impact to library service in Merced.

Government and Health Service Facilities

General governmental services and facilities (Merced Civic Center, Transpo Center, Community Center, Merced Regional Airport, City Corporation Yard, etc.) will need to expand in response to future growth trends in the region. Facility development will be part of the on-going capital facility management strategy for governmental entities throughout the region. The General Plan provides some designated lands for public facility development. Other entities will use the plans policies for siting facilities in response to service demands.

Expanded health service facilities will be required as a general response to regional growth. Merced, as a regional health service center, will grow with respect to the extent of services which can be provided to local residents. Planning policy accommodates the expansion of health service facilities, both public and private.

Policy P-8.1 of the Draft Public Services Element states that the City will support the cultural and health related needs of the community by incorporating such facilities and services in

development and redevelopment proposals. Policy P-8.2 states that the City shall promote consolidation of complimentary or support services to avoid duplication of programs. Implementing Actions 8.1.a and 8.1.c encourage a range of health related facilities in Merced to meet the needs of the growing and aging population including rehabilitation centers, walk-in medical centers, and full service hospitals; and examining the needs for developing youth services programs and facilities. Implementing Action 8.1.b encouraged the continued operation of a multi-cultural and performing arts program and facilities..

Population growth will increase the demand on governmental and medical services and facilities in Merced throughout the planning period. Implementation of the policies noted in this section from the Draft General Plan will result in a ***less than significant*** impact to these public facilities.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Future regional growth would result in increased demand for police and fire services and facilities throughout the County; however, since Merced would provide for additional police and fire services and facilities within its own boundaries to address the potential impacts of development within it's boundaries, implementation of the proposed General Plan would not contribute to a countywide cumulative impact related to police and fire services.

Future regional growth would result in increased demand for additional school facilities within the Merced school districts. While the majority of the demand for schools would result from growth within the City of Merced, as is addressed above, there will be demand for new school facilities outside of the Merced City limits. However, as with the proposed General Plan program-level analysis, it is unknown exactly where these school facility expansions would occur to support the cumulative increase in population, though they would occur within urbanized areas where there is a concentration of population. As specific school expansion or improvement projects are identified, additional project-specific, second-tier environmental analysis would be completed. As a result, a significant cumulative impact associated with schools would not occur. Payment of fees for construction of new facilities under SB50 is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of development-related impacts on schools.

Future regional growth would result in increased demand for library facilities throughout the County. As a result, the Merced County Library system would probably need to expand library facilities to meet the increased demand. It is unknown exactly where these library facility expansions would occur to support the cumulative increase in population, though they would most likely occur within urbanized areas where there is a concentration of population. As specific library expansion or improvement projects are identified, additional project-specific, second-tier environmental analysis would be completed.

Future regional growth would result in increased demand for other public services and facilities throughout the County. As a result, the County of Merced would probably need to expand these

services and facilities to meet the increased demand. It is unknown exactly where these facility expansions would occur to support the cumulative increase in population, though they would occur within urbanized areas where there is a concentration of population. As specific public services and facilities expansion or improvement projects are identified, additional project-specific, second-tier environmental analysis would be completed. As a result, a significant cumulative impact associated with other public services and facilities would not occur.