

# Merced County General Plan Update

Presentation  
to the Merced  
City Council



May 21, 2007

**Mintier  
& Associates**  
PLANNING CONSULTANTS

# Agenda



1. Introductions
2. General Plan Update Overview
3. Schedule
4. Questions and Answers



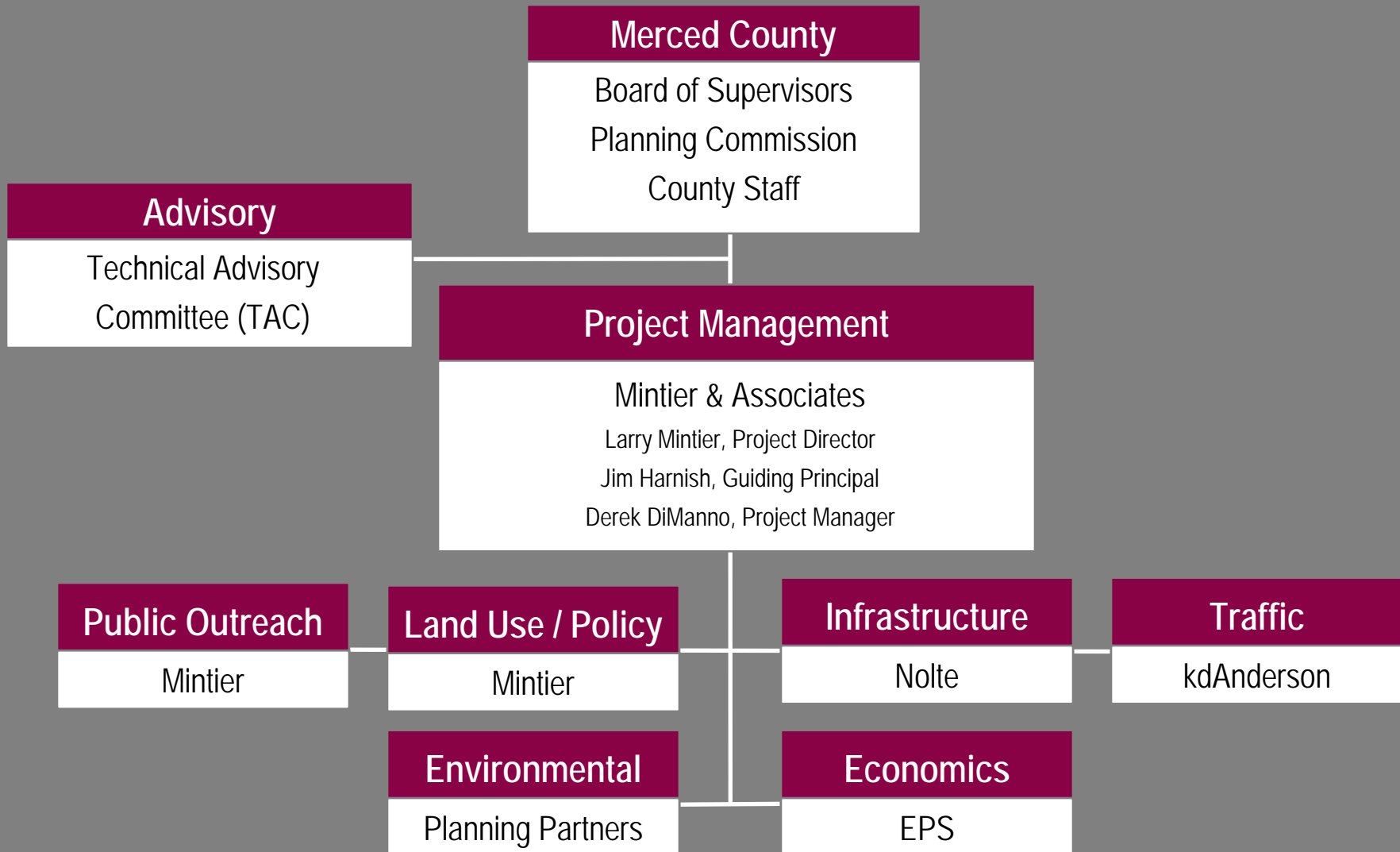




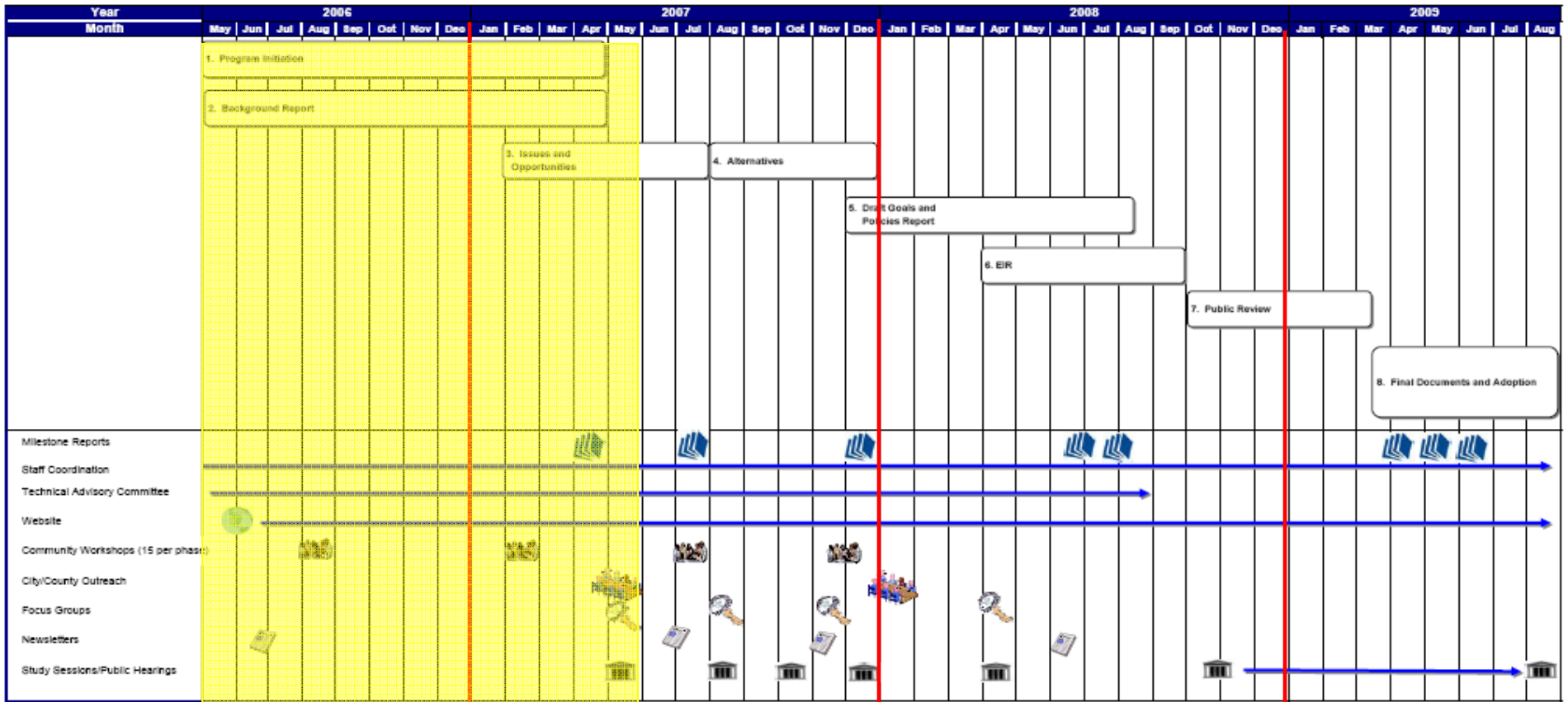
# GENERAL PLAN UPDATE OVERVIEW



# Project Organization



# GPU Project Schedule



Project Schedule  
**MERCED COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND EIR**

**Mintier & Associates**  
 PLANNING CONSULTANTS

# 1) Program Initiation



- Scoping
- Land use database
- Base maps
- Formation of Technical Advisory Team
- Project Website
- Newsletter: *The General Plan Update Process*
- Community Workshops

Merced County  
General Plan Update

Home Overview Schedule Documents & Maps Workshops & Meetings Get Involved Contacts

### General Plan Update Homepage

**Welcome**  
Merced County has begun a three-year process to update its General Plan. The plan, which was last comprehensively updated in 1990, is the overarching policy document that guides land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, community design, and other decisions. Please click the links on the title bar for detailed project information.

What's New?	How to Get Involved
<a href="#">Community Newsletter #1</a>	We need your input and feedback, let your voice be heard! Click here to learn more: → <a href="#">Get Involved!</a>
<a href="#">Community Workshops</a>	

Upcoming Events	Project Status
Hilmar MAC Meeting 7/24/2006 Hilmar Community Center	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Project Initiation <input type="radio"/> Background Report <input type="radio"/> Alternatives Report <input type="radio"/> Goals & Policies Report <input type="radio"/> Environmental Impact Report <input type="radio"/> Public Hearings <input type="radio"/> Adoption
<b>Public Meetings:</b> Community Workshops City/County Outreach BOS/PC Joint Meetings	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Completed <input type="radio"/> Drafting/in progress <input type="radio"/> Not started

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# GPU Project Website



**Merced County General Plan Update**

Home Overview Schedule Documents & Maps Workshops & Meetings Get Involved Contacts

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## General Plan Update Homepage

[www.co.merced.ca.us/gpu](http://www.co.merced.ca.us/gpu)



# Community Newsletter #1



### How Can You Be Involved?

**Website**  
The General Plan website provides a one-stop location to get the latest information on the General Plan program. The website will provide up-to-date information on upcoming events and allow anyone to download copies of meeting minutes/agendas and documents/reports prepared for the General Plan.

**Newsletters**  
During the General Plan Update, a series of newsletters, like this one, will be prepared to provide an overview of the progress being made and the direction being pursued.

**Community Workshops**  
A number of community workshops will be held along with regular MAC meetings to gain input on issues and opportunities, alternative futures, and the General Plan documents. Dates will be posted on the website when they are available.

**Workshops/Hearings**  
Workshops will be held with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors throughout the development of the General Plan. At the end of the process, formal public hearings will also be held to consider the General Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

**Focus Groups**  
Six focus groups will be created to provide the General Plan Consultant Team and County Staff feedback at four points during the update program. The focus groups will address agriculture, economic development, public infrastructure, open space/habitat, water resources, and climate.

<http://www.co.merced.ca.us/gpu/>

### Upcoming MAC Meetings

MAC	Meeting Location	Date	Time
Hilmar/Steinwin	Hilmar Community Center	7/24/2006	7:00 pm
McSwain	McSwain School Gymnasium	7/27/2006	6:30 pm
Planada	Planada Community Center	8/3/2006	7:00 pm
LeGrand	LeGrand Community Center	8/7/2006	7:30 pm
Snelling	Snelling Community Center	8/9/2006	7:00 pm
Delhi	Delhi School Conference Room	8/10/2006	7:00 pm
Winton	Winton Community Hall	8/15/2006	7:00 pm
Franklin/Beachwood	Franklin School Cafeteria	8/21/2006	6:30 pm

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### Merced County General Plan Update

Newsletter #1 • July 2006

#### Merced County Citizens

Earlier this year, the Merced County Board of Supervisors approved a three-year program to update the County General Plan. The General Plan was last comprehensively revised in 1990 and the time has come for an update to reflect changing conditions in the county.

#### What is a General Plan?

Every city and county in California is required by State law to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan. A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for future decisions concerning land use, infrastructure, public services, and resource conservation. All specific plans, subdivisions, public works projects, and zoning decisions made by the County must be consistent with the General Plan.

The current General Plan Update program approved by the Board of Supervisors is designed to update the 1990 General Plan. The program will:

- Provide the public opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning and reexamining process;
- Provide a description of current conditions and trends shaping Merced County;
- Identify planning issues, opportunities, and challenges that should be addressed in the General Plan;
- Explore land use and policy alternatives;
- Ensure that the General Plan is current, internally consistent, and easy to use;
- Provide guidance in the planning and evaluation of future land use patterns and resource conservation decisions in the unincorporated area of the County; and
- Provide a vision and framework for future development within the county.

A general plan typically has three defining features:

- General.** As the name implies, a general plan provides general guidance that will be used to direct future land use and resource decisions.
- Comprehensive.** A general plan covers a wide range of social, economic, infrastructure, and natural resource factors. These include topics such as land use, agriculture, housing, circulation, wildlife, public services, recreation, biological resources, and many other topics.
- Long-range.** General plans provide guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 or more years in the future (the proposed General Plan will look out about 22 years to the year 2028). To help achieve this envisioned future, the updated General Plan will include policies and actions that address both immediate and long-term needs.

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of the conditions, trends, and regulations that are influencing Merced County today. Compiling this information will involve reviewing existing studies and documents (e.g., existing specific plans, master plans, special studies, environmental documents) and contacting appropriate agencies and organizations. The information on existing conditions will be used to better understand the issues facing the county and lead to the development of a plan that helps the County address each issue appropriately. This document will also be used as the environmental setting portion of the environmental impact report that will be prepared for the General Plan.

**Issues and Opportunities Report.** Based on public input from the community workshops, the Technical Advisory Committee meetings, and direction from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, the Issues and Opportunities Report will provide a summary of the critical policy and program issues to be addressed in the General Plan. The report will also present opportunities for growth and transportation within the county. The County will work with the community, Municipal Advisory Councils, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors to identify key issues and opportunities and develop a general vision for the future of Merced County.

**Goals and Policies Report.** This report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the land use diagram, goals, and policies that will guide future development within the county. It also identifies a full set of implementation measures that will ensure the policies of the General Plan are carried out.

**Environmental Impact Report (EIR).** The EIR prepared for the General Plan will meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will use the EIR during their consideration of the draft General Plan to understand and address the potential environmental implications resulting from the General Plan.

**Agriculture.** This element will address issues of agricultural land preservation and conversion, agricultural zoning, the Williamson Act, confined animal facilities, right-of-way, agricultural buffers, interjurisdictional agreements, conservation easements, land trusts, and LARCO policy.

**Recreation and Cultural Resources.** This element will address outdoor recreational opportunities (e.g., parks) and resources for outdoor recreation such as wildlife refuges and hunting (including) and conserving the historic and cultural resources of the county.

**Public Facilities and Services.** This element will address the following public facilities and services, including water service, wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal; storm drainage and flood protection; schools; gas, electric, and telecommunications services; fire departments; solid and hazardous waste disposal; utilities (gas, electric, water, sewer, and telecommunications); and the funding and financing of public facilities and services.

**Health and Safety.** This element will address a number of public safety issues, including air quality, noise, seismic and geologic hazards, flooding hazards, fire hazards, aircraft crash hazards, and hazardous materials.

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### General Plan Update

#### Steps in Updating the General Plan

- 1** **Program Initiation**  
Coordinate with County staff and present approach to Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- 2** **Background Report**  
Collect information on current conditions and trends. Prepare Background Report.
- 3** **Issues, Opportunities, and Vision**  
Work with focus groups, BOS, PC, and the public to identify key issues and opportunities and develop a vision statement.
- 4** **Alternatives Report**  
Develop a range of alternatives based on issues and opportunities identified in Phase 3.
- 5** **Goals and Policies Report**  
Draft a set of goals, policies, and actions that the County needs to follow in order to achieve its desired vision.
- 6** **Environmental Impact Report**  
Assess the environmental implications of the proposed General Plan.
- 7** **Public Review**  
Review and comment on the proposed General Plan at hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- 8** **Final Documents and Adoption**  
Prepare the final General Plan and EIR following public review and hearings.

#### Schedule for General Plan Update

Phase 1 Program Initiation	May 2006 - July 2006
Phase 2 Background Report	May 2006 - January 2007
Phase 3 Issues, Opportunities, and Vision	November 2006 - April 2007
Phase 4 Alternatives Report	April 2007 - September 2007
Phase 5 Goals and Policies Report	August 2007 - May 2008
Phase 6 Environmental Impact Report	December 2007 - June 2008
Phase 7 Public Review	May 2008 - November 2008
Phase 8 Final Documents and Adoption	November 2008 - March 2009

#### Keep Up To Date

During the General Plan Update process, the County will maintain a mailing list of individuals who want to be kept informed on the latest program events. If you would like to be added to this list, please write, fax, or sign-up online to:


Bill Nicholson  
Assistant Development Services Director  
Merced County  
2222 "N" Street, 2nd Floor  
Merced, CA 95340  
Tel: (209) 726-5720  
[www.merced.ca.us/gpu/](http://www.merced.ca.us/gpu/)

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# Phase 1 Community Workshops


Merced County General Plan Update



**Phase I Community Workshop  
Partial Results**



October 2006



**Merced County  
General Plan Update**

*In this summary...*

- General Plan Update Overview ..... 2
- Phase I Workshops Overview ..... 3
- How you can get involved ..... 3
- Phase I Workshop Summary (workshops 1-10) ..... 4
- Appendix A: Workshop 1-10 Results ..... 14

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## Summary of the McSWAIN Workshop July 27, 2006 • McSwain School Gymnasium

On July 27, 2006, 49 people met at the McSwain School Gymnasium in McSwain to discuss key issues that face the community and county.



### Results

The following represents a summary of the top three issues for each question. Appendix A shows the full results from this meeting.

#### Top 3 McSwain Assets:

- Agriculture
- Quality of life and community values
- Open space

#### Top 3 McSwain Problems:

- Loss of agricultural land to urban sprawl
- Poor infrastructure
- Bad traffic

#### Top 3 Merced County Problems:

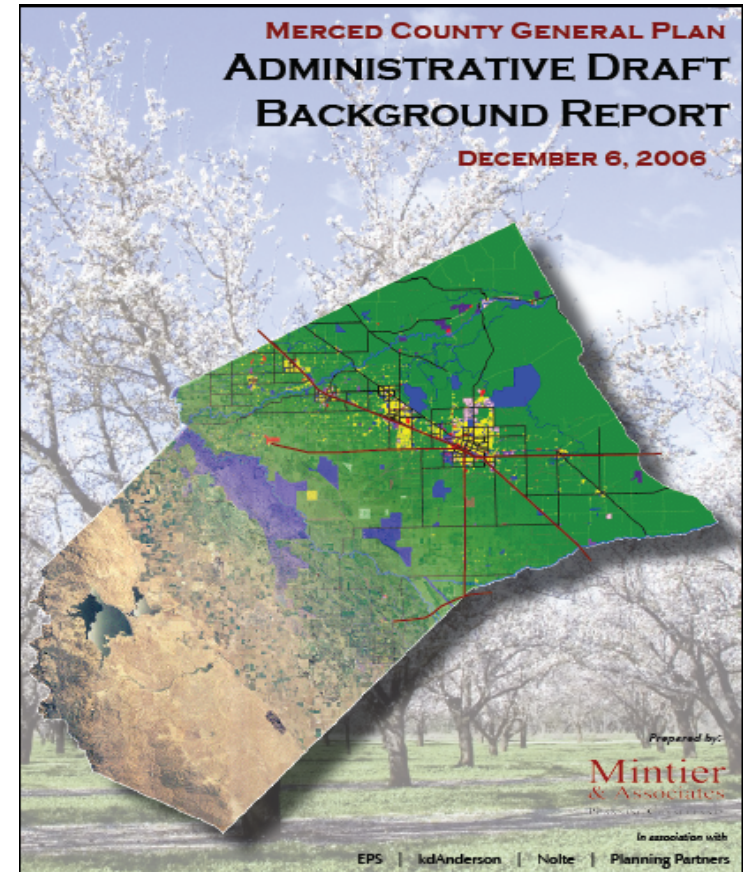
- Loss of agricultural land to urban sprawl
- Poor infrastructure
- Need stricter requirements placed on developers to provide infrastructure



## 2) Background Report



- Administrative draft Background Report
- Public review draft Background Report





# 3) Issues, Opportunities and Visions



- Issues and Opportunities Summary
- Newsletter #2: *Overview of Issues and Opportunities*
- Community Workshop #2
- BOS/PC Study Session

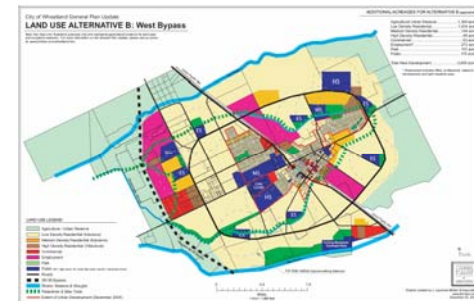
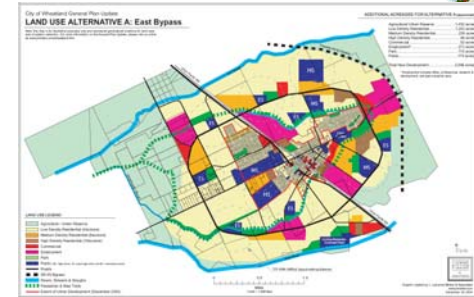




## 4) Alternatives Report



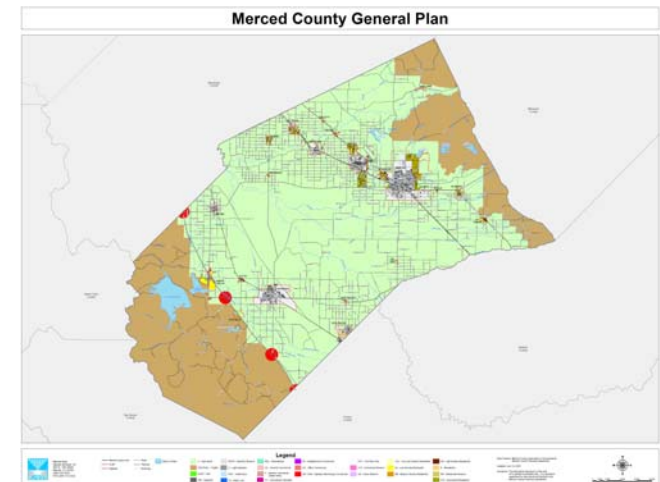
- Develop policy and land use alternatives
- Evaluate growth alternatives
- Administrative draft Alternatives Report
- Public Draft Alternatives Report
- Newsletter: Alternatives
- Community Workshop
- BOS/PC study session



## 5) Draft Goals and Policies



- Administrative draft Goals and Policies Report
- Land Use Diagram
- Circulation Diagram
- Public review draft Goals and Policies Report
- BOS/PC study session



## 6) Environmental Impact Report



- Administrative draft EIR
- Public Draft EIR





## 7) Public Review



- Newsletter: Draft General Plan and EIR
- Community Workshop
- Planning Commission hearings
- Board of Supervisors hearing



## 8) Final Documents and Adoption



- Response to public comments on draft EIR
- Final EIR
- Final General Plan documents
- Adoption hearings



# Public Outreach Program



- **Project website**
- **Newsletters**
- **E-Updates**
- **Translation services**
- **Community workshops (3 sets of 15 workshops)**
- **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**
- **Focus group meetings (4 sets of 6)**
- **Presentations to cities (2) and surrounding counties**
- **Joint BOS/PC study sessions**
- **Public hearings**







## Next Steps



- **Summarize issues and concerns in the Issues and Opportunities Report**
  - Mid June
- **Joint Board of Supervisors/ Planning Commission Joint Study Session**
  - June 26, 2007
- **Community Workshops to address Issues and Opportunities (2<sup>nd</sup> set of 15 workshops)**
  - July/August

# Questions for Merced City Council



## Questions

- What issues or concerns do you have regarding the County General Plan Update?

