



City of Merced General Plan Vision 2030

City Council/Planning Commission Joint Study Session
May 21, 2007

Meeting Overview

- General Plan Progress Thus Far
- Issues to Address
- All about LAFCo
- Population projections for Merced
- SUDP's (urban development area), old and new
- Plans in the pipeline
- Options for the future
- Wrap up and next steps/schedule

Criteria used to develop the General Plan

- Community Visioning Workshops
 - Likes and dislikes
 - List of needs
- City Staff
 - Identify specific needs
 - Provide feedback on draft policies
- General Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee
 - Provide input on Land Use Alternative maps
 - Review and critique draft elements
- Technical Advisory Committee
 - Provide input on feasibility of various growth proposals



Significant Issues to Address

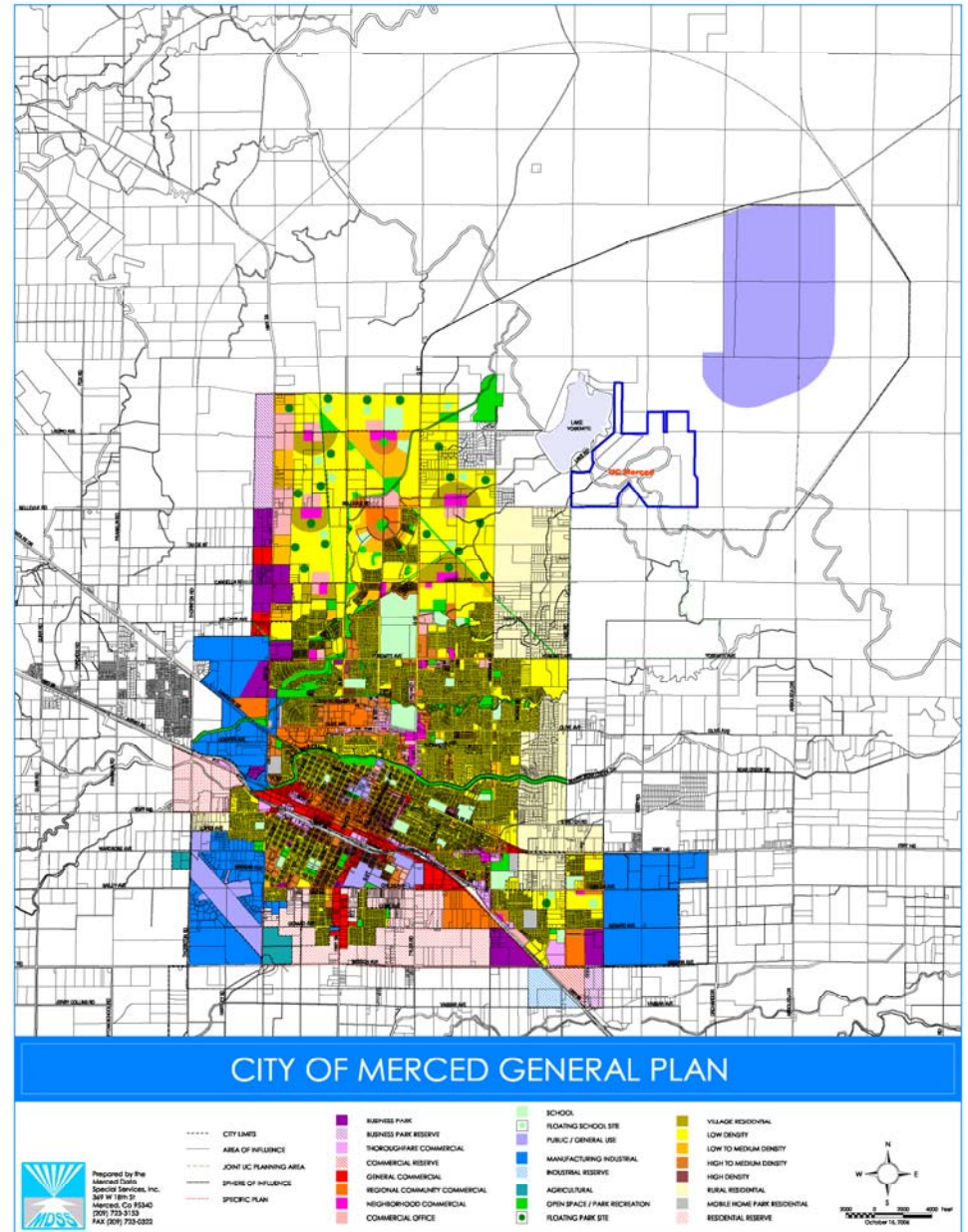
- Address large areas with developer plans in progress
 - Ensure plans are consistent with General Plan
- Future circulation system components
 - Access to U.C. campus (east side)
 - Merced/Atwater Expressway & Hwy 59 (west side)
- Analysis of constraints within new SUDP areas
 - Prime agricultural lands
 - Merced and Castle Airports
 - Wetlands and vernal pools
- Other Issues???

Land Use Issues to Address

- North Highway 59 Corridor—Change from Employment Focus on Current General Plan?
- Mission/99 Interchange—How much commercial development to allow?
- Bellevue Corridor—Appropriate Land Uses?
- Areas 3A, 3B, & 3C (RRC's)—Appropriate Land Uses given current rural character & development?
- Other Issues???

Group Discussion regarding Other Significant Issues

City of Merced General Plan



What is LAFCo?

- Created by State Law – One LAFCO per county
- Local Agency Formation Commission
- LAFCO oversees governmental boundary changes
 - Annexations and Detachments
 - Incorporation of new cities and creation of new special districts
- Commission Membership varies slightly by county - Merced County
 - Two Members from the Board of Supervisors
 - Two Members from the 6 City Councils (Selected by the Mayors)
 - Public Members (Selected by the other Commissioners)
- LAFCO's Use Two Major Tools
 - Set Spheres of Influence
 - Review Individual Annexations

Sphere of Influence

- Purpose of Spheres of Influence
 - Establish the outer boundary for annexations
 - Typically adopted with reference to the General Plan
 - City has no additional authority within the Sphere of Influence
 - LAFCO considers municipal ability to provide services, agricultural preservation, ultimate boundaries between agencies, etc.

Relationship of Sphere, SUDP and Areas of Interest

- Intend to propose coterminus Sphere and SUDP to delineate growth area
 - Will have City land use designations
- Area of Interest for 40-year planning area
 - No City Land Use designations
 - Criteria to add to Sphere/SUDP

LAFCo Sphere of Influence Criteria

- 1) Does the City's General Plan identify the desired Sphere of Influence and all planned land uses within the Sphere?
- 2) Does the General Plan contain policies regarding phasing of future annexations?
- 3) Are there local policies re: timing of conversion of agricultural and open space lands and the avoidance of conversion of prime soils?
- 4) Does the General Plan demonstrate the present & probable need for public facilities & services (including the sequence, timing, & probable cost) within the Sphere?
- 5) Does the General Plan identify the existence of any social or economic communities of interest (adjacent cities or special districts) within the planning area which may affect the boundaries?

Annexation policies

- Individual Annexations
 - Each proposed annexation is considered by LAFCO
 - Encourage compact, orderly growth and development
 - Create logical city boundaries
 - Preserve prime agricultural land where possible

Constraints to development

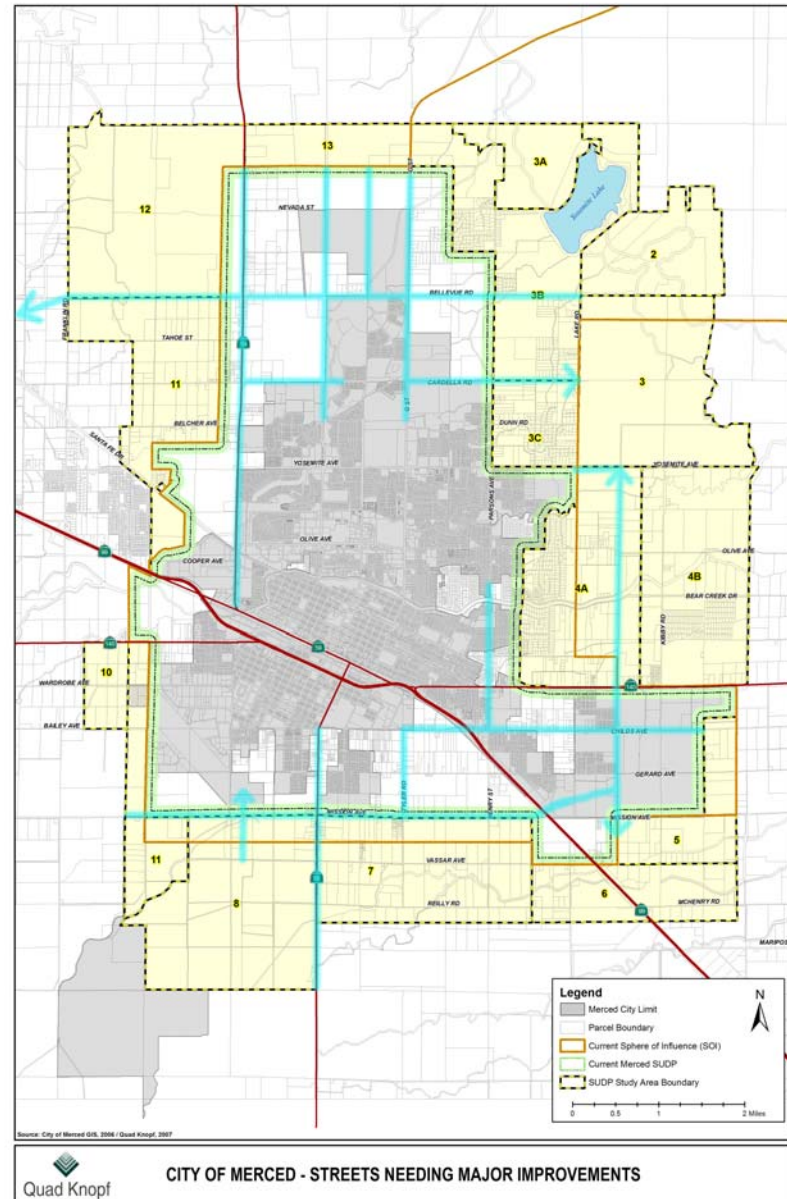
- Natural
 - Prime agricultural land
 - Sensitive habitat (vernal pools, wetlands)
 - Floodplains
- Regulatory and Policy requirements
 - City and County General Plan policies
 - Airport land use restrictions
 - LAFCo Criteria
- Physical
 - Undeveloped Circulation system
 - Water and sewer service
- Fiscal
 - How to pay for infrastructure, including Wastewater Treatment Plant, schools, fire stations, roads, etc.



Constraints-Fiscal

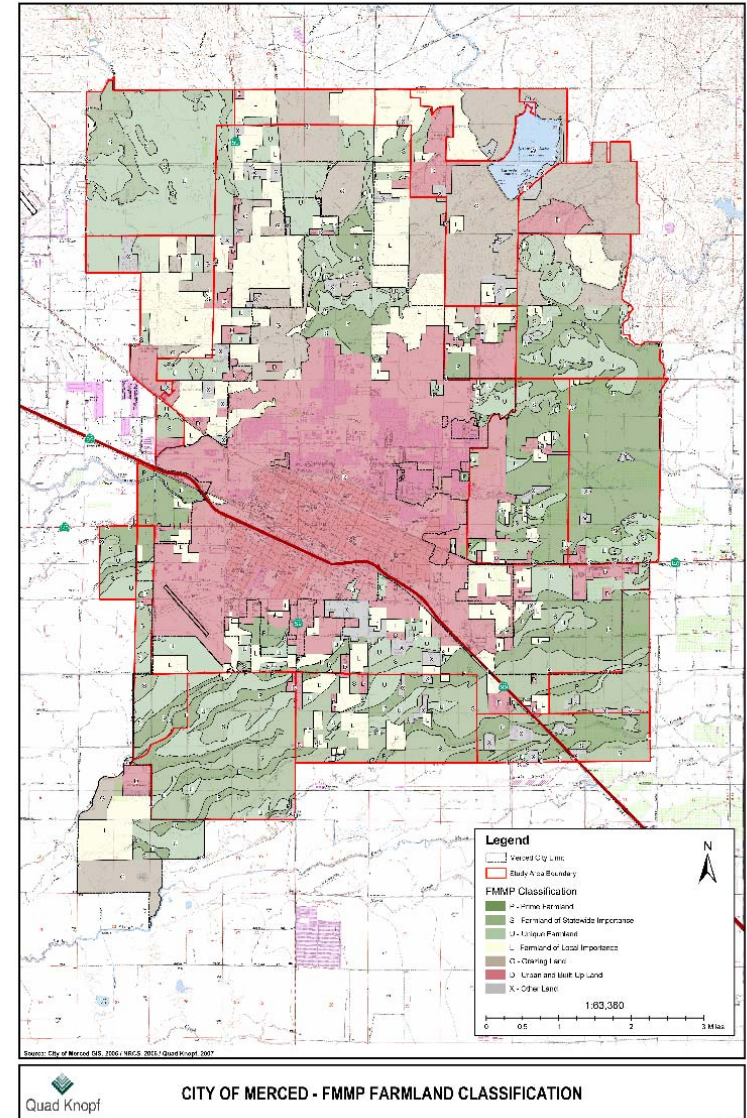
- Sewer trunk lines would be needed in east, west, and south study area
- Needed major street - See following map for existing priorities
- Existing priorities for capital funding for fire protection for next 10+ years
 - Funds are already committed within current SUDP

Needed Major Street Improvements



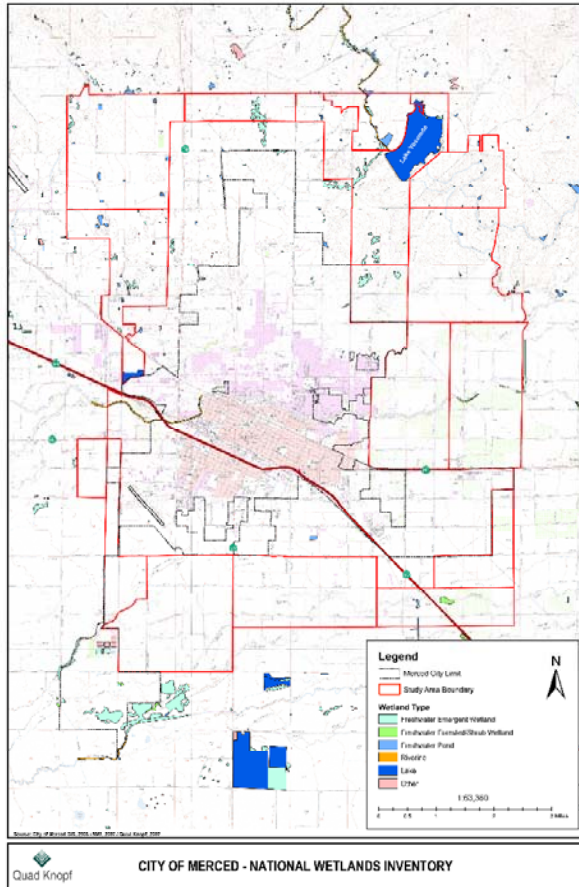
Agricultural soils

- Ag. Soil categories:
 - Prime
 - Statewide importance
 - Local importance
 - Unique

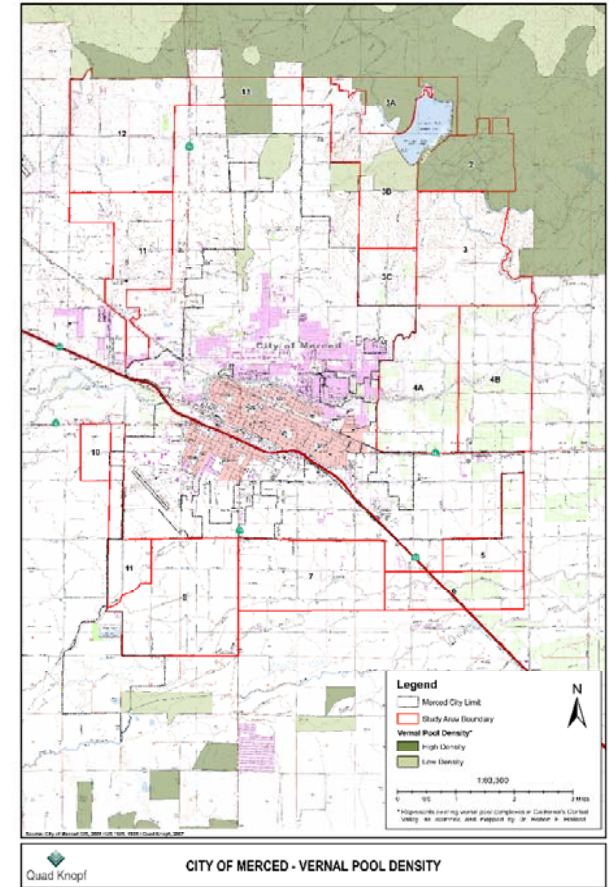


Sensitive habitat

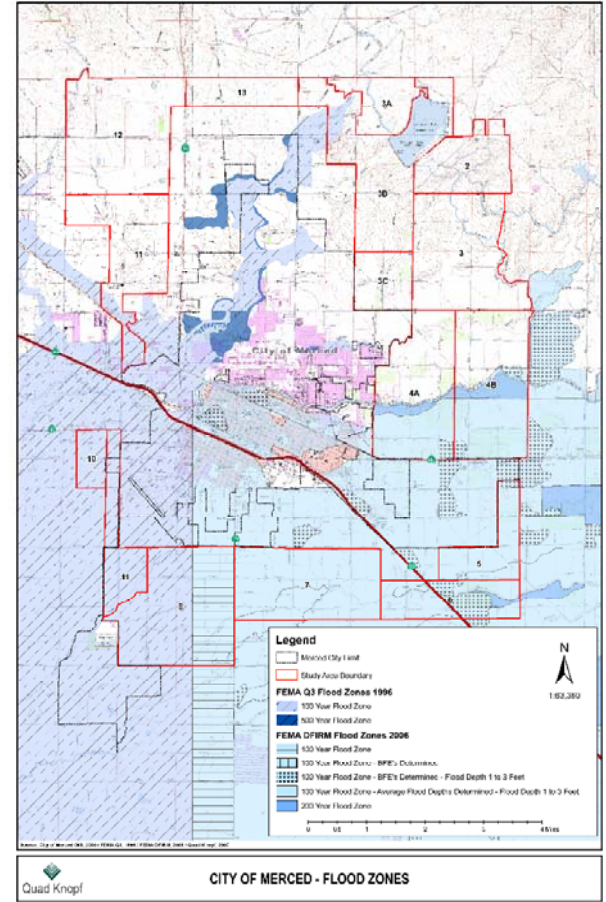
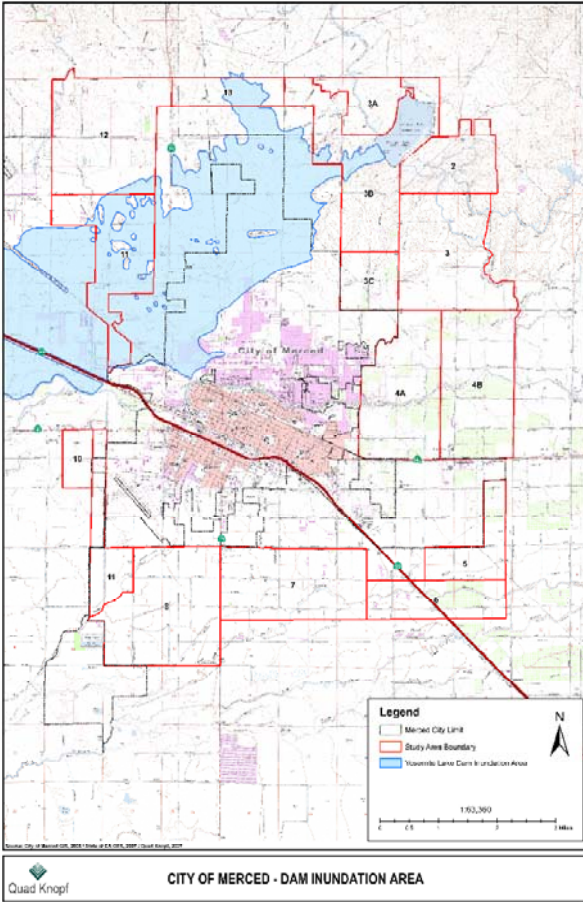
Wetlands



Vernal pools



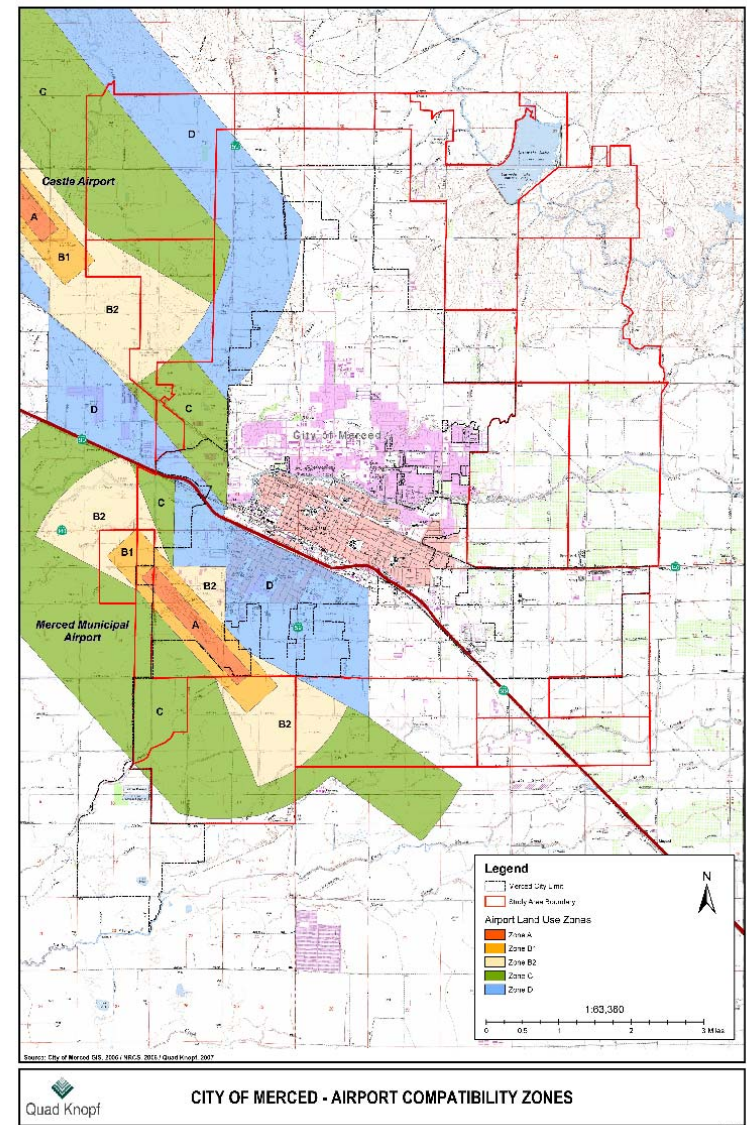
Floodplains



Airport land use restrictions

Areas B1 and B2 restrict residential densities

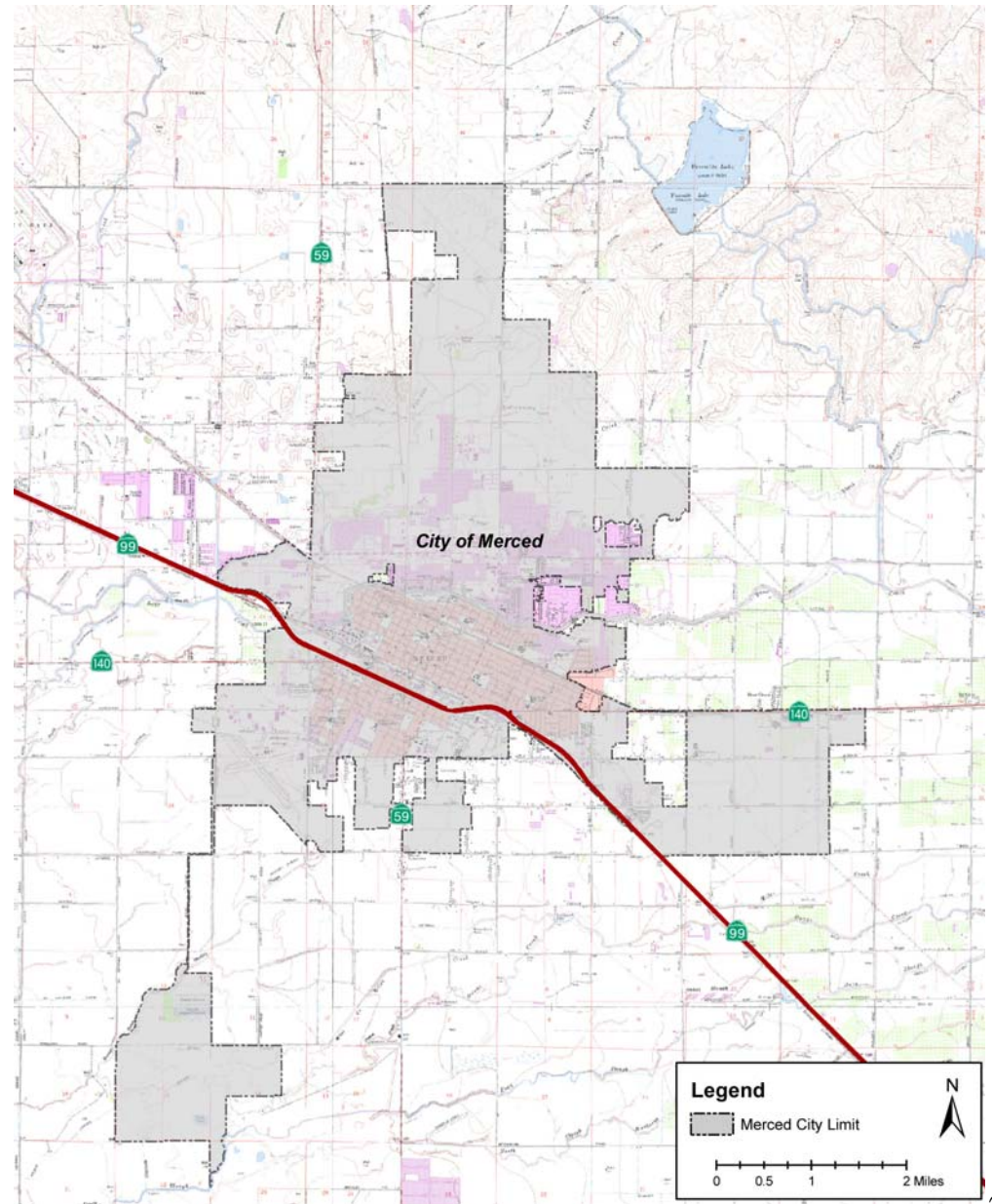
Area C prohibits most public facilities, such as schools and hospitals



Group Discussion Regarding Constraints to Development

Population Projections for Merced

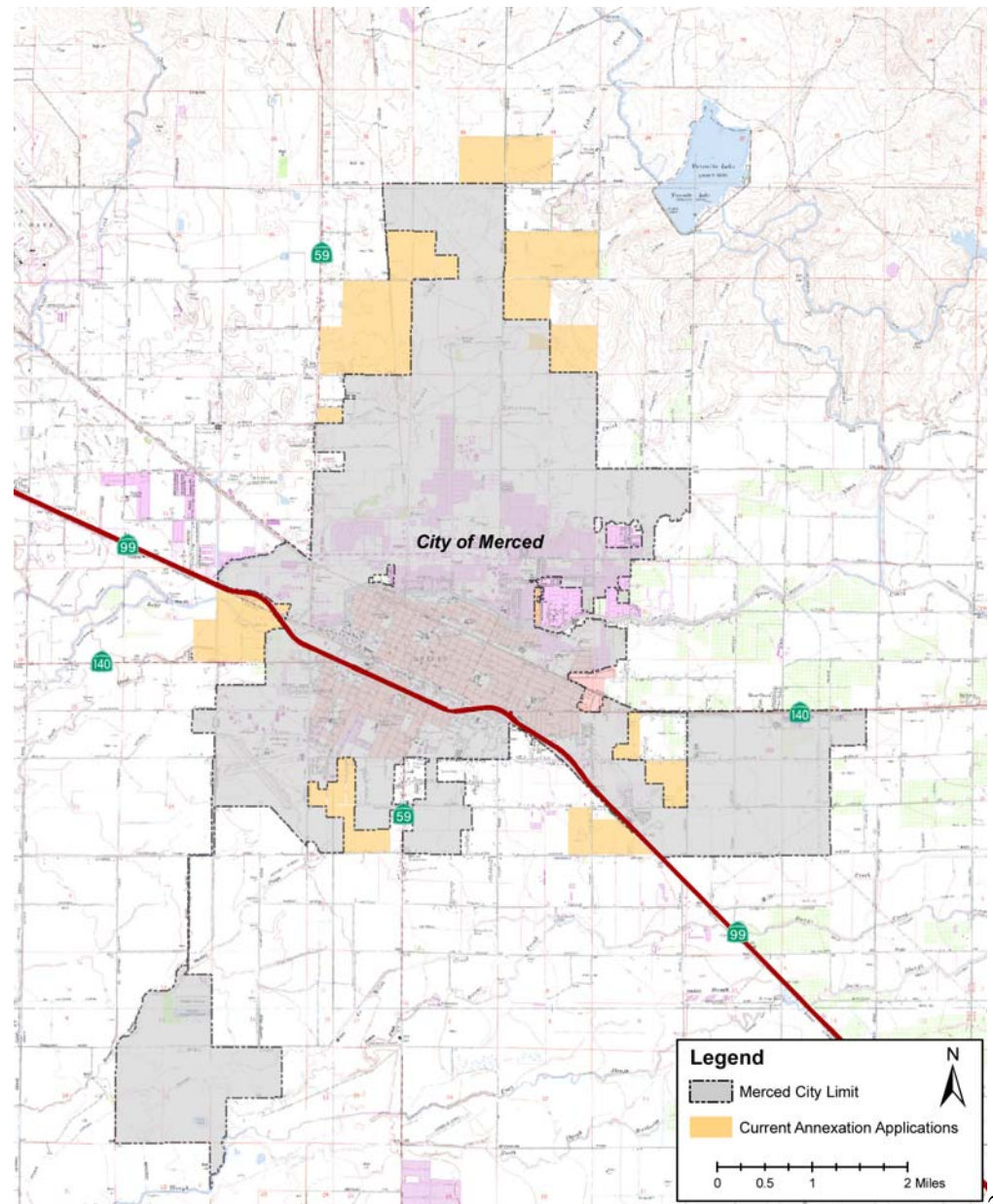
- City of Merced 2006 population:
81,225 people
14,000 acres



Annexations

- Annexations currently in process:
 - 32,365 people
 - 3,054 acres

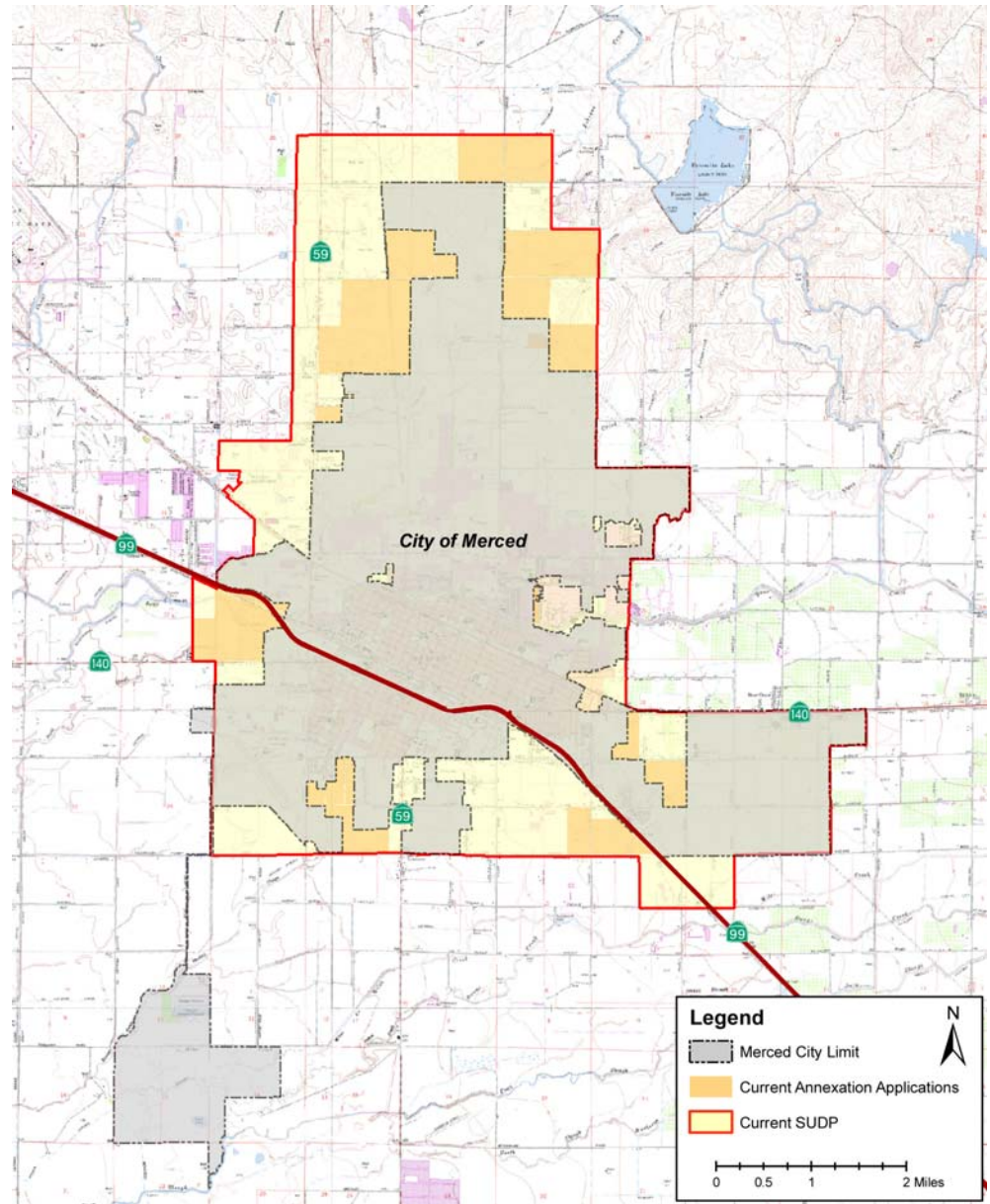
Total population:
108,590



Current SUDP

- Remainder of current SUDP:
 - 37,908 people
 - 3,159 acres

Total population:
151,498

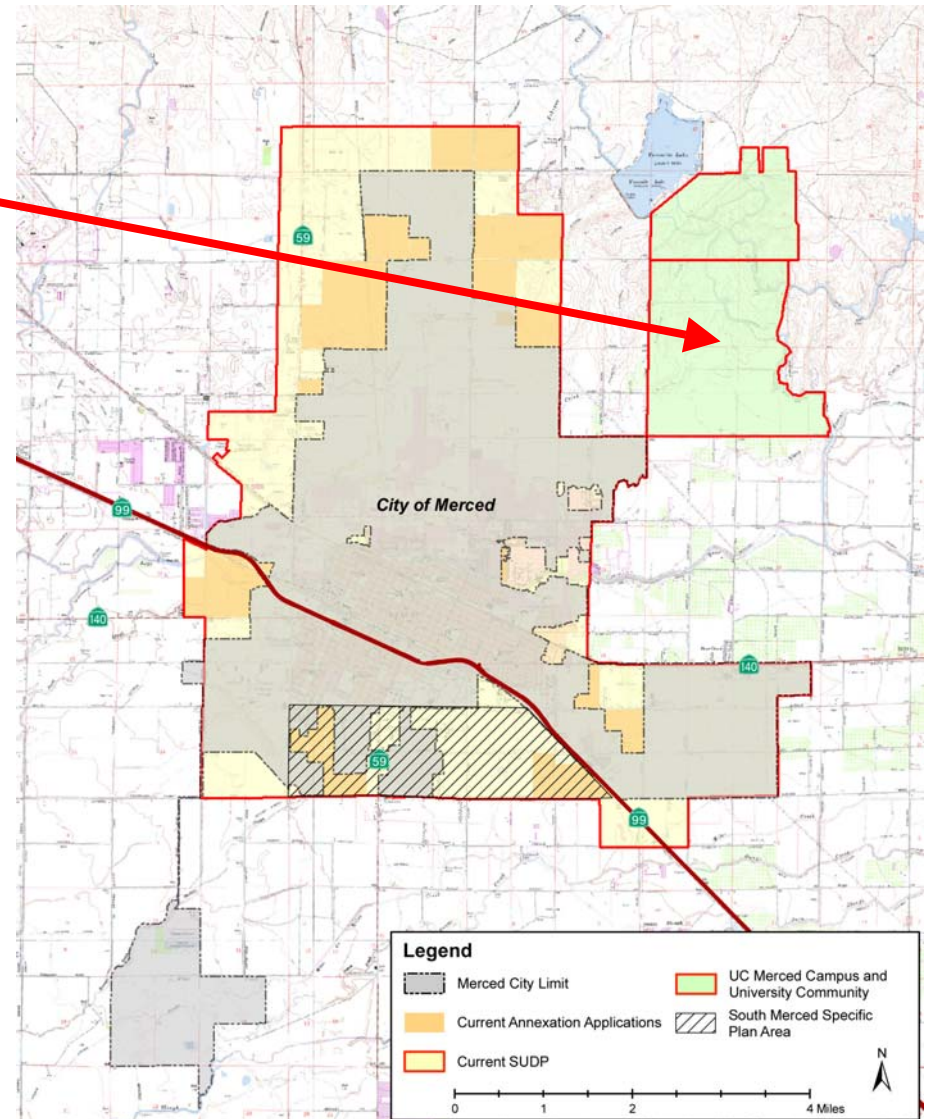


U.C. Merced

– University community

- 2,090 acres
- 36,010 people

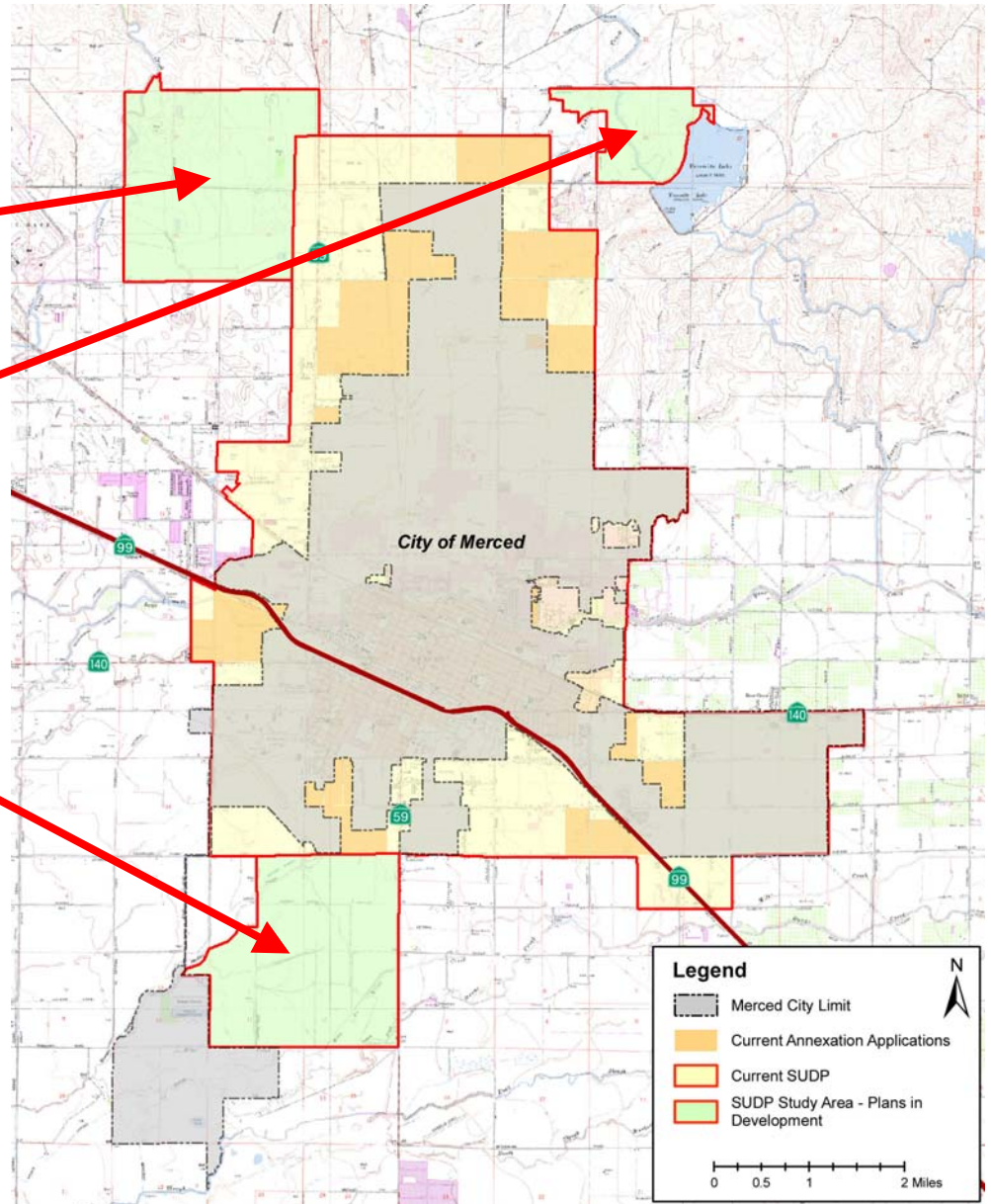
Total population:
187,508



- Areas with Developer Plans in Progress:

- Castle Farms
 - 36,145 people
 - 2,606 acres
- Yosemite Lakes
 - 3,799 people
 - 660 acres
- Mission Lakes
 - 16,176 people
 - 2,325 acres

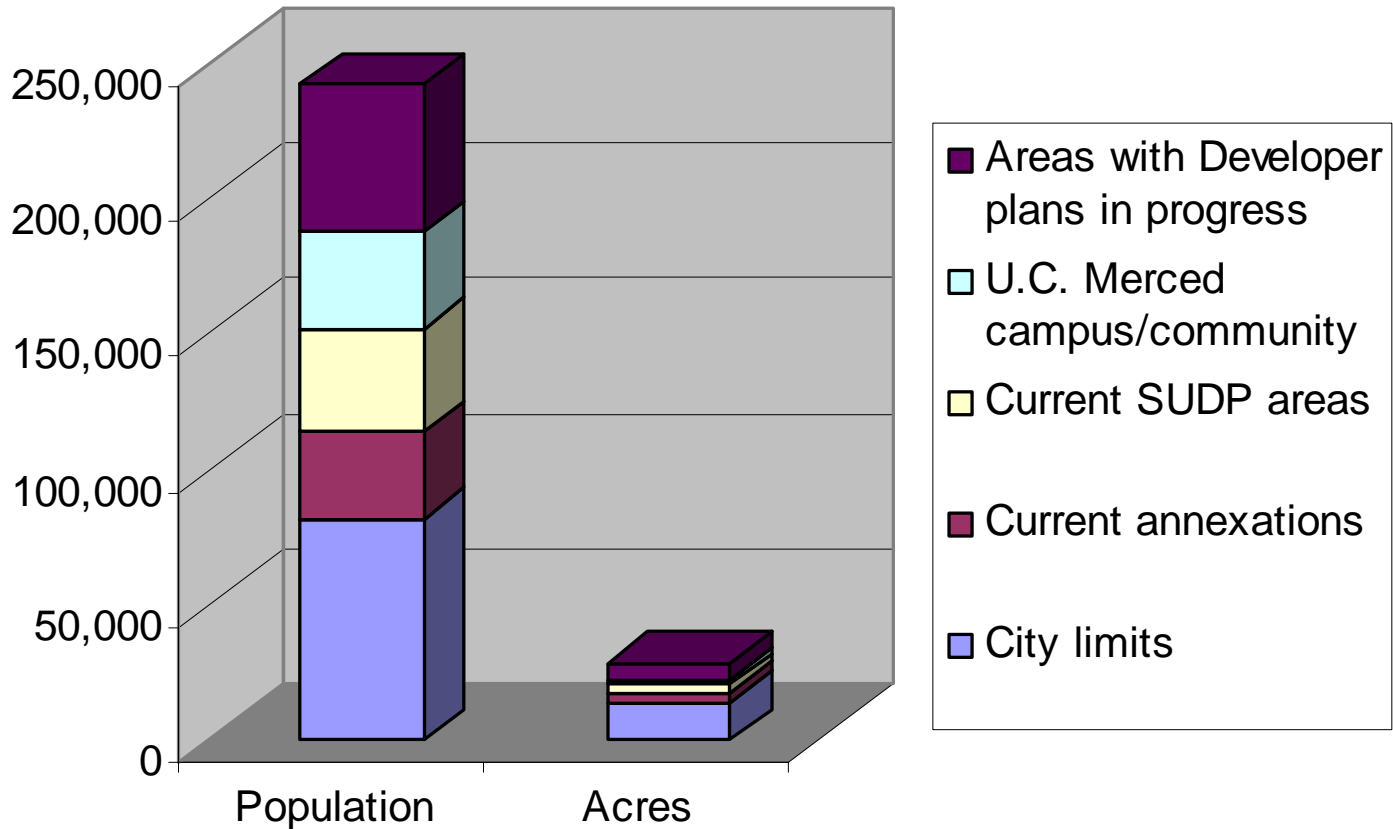
Total population:
243,628



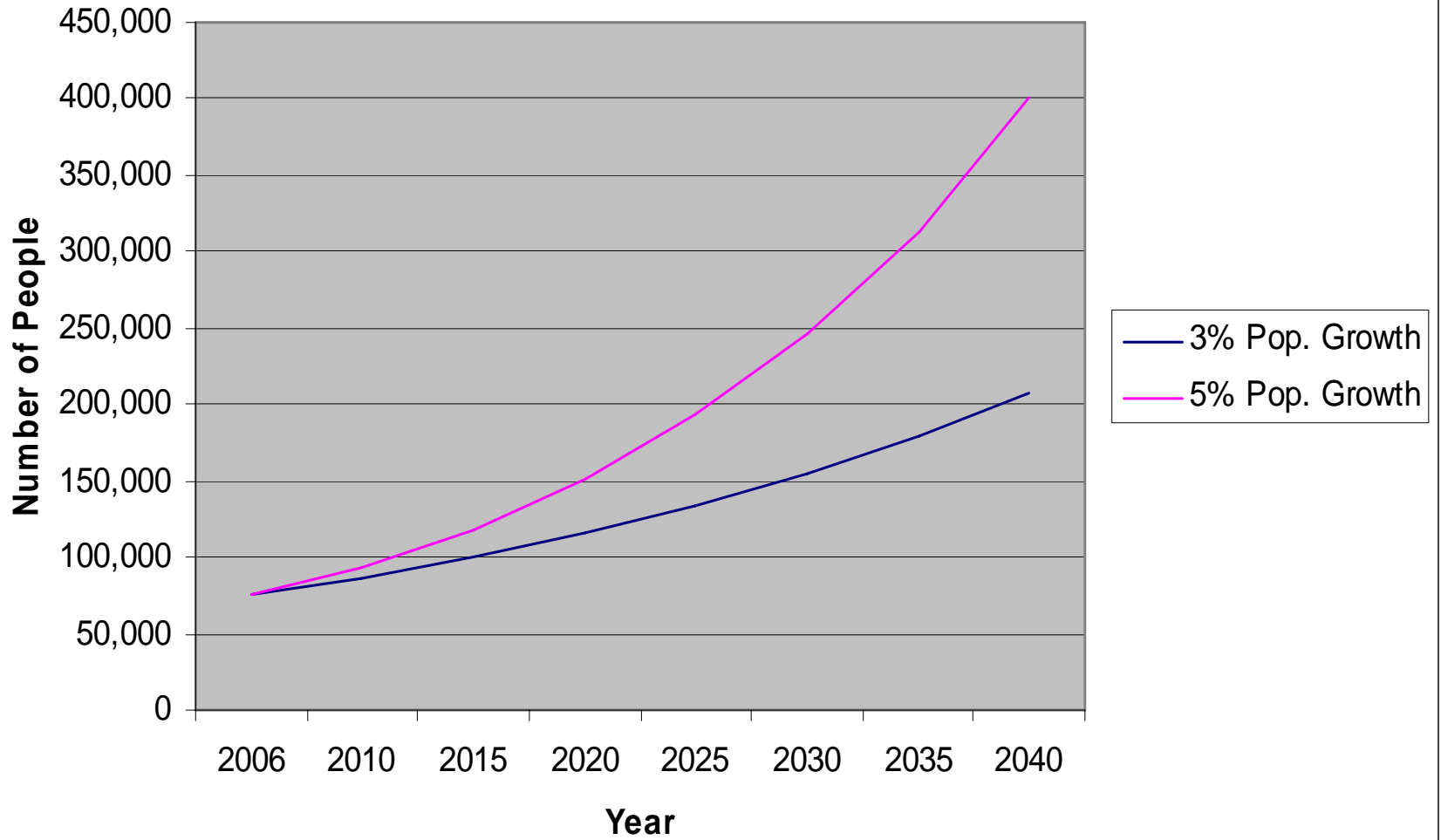
Historic growth

- From 2000 to 2006, Merced grew at an annual rate of 3%
- At this rate, a population of 250,000 won't be reached until the year 2046
- A 5% growth rate would see the city's population reach 250,000 in 2031

City of Merced Population Projections



Merced Population Projection

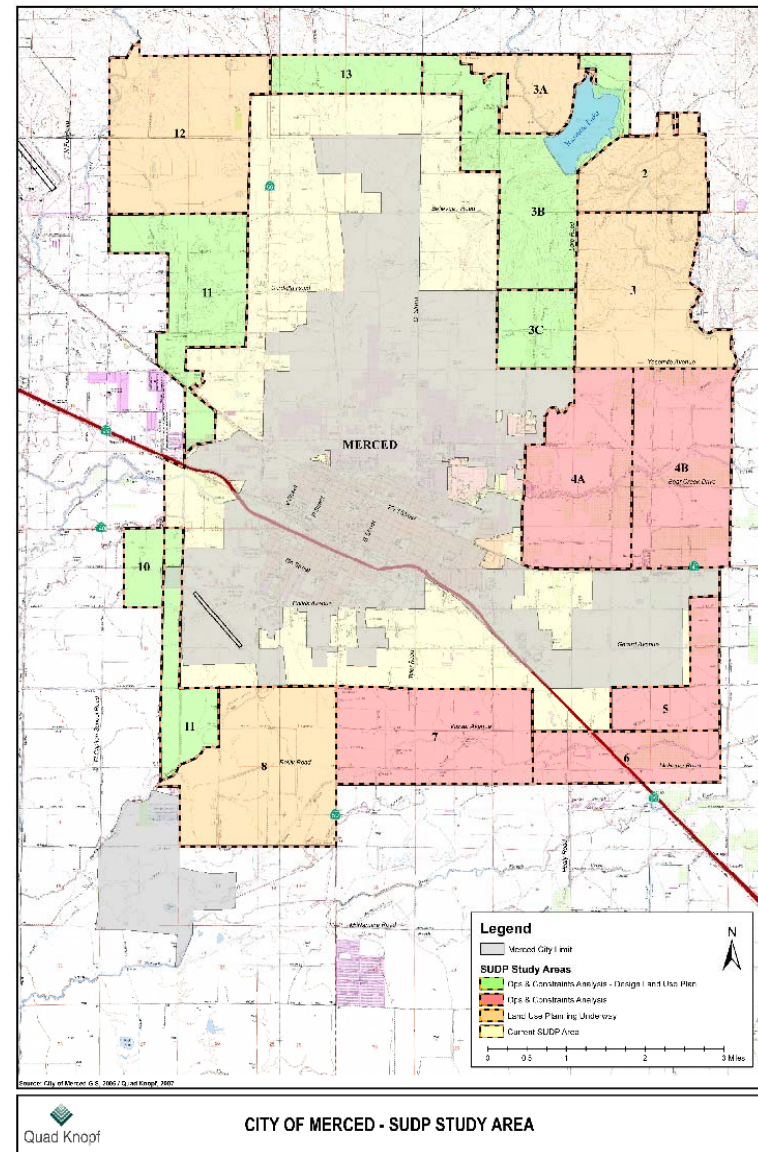


Comments and questions regarding Population Projections

Planning Areas

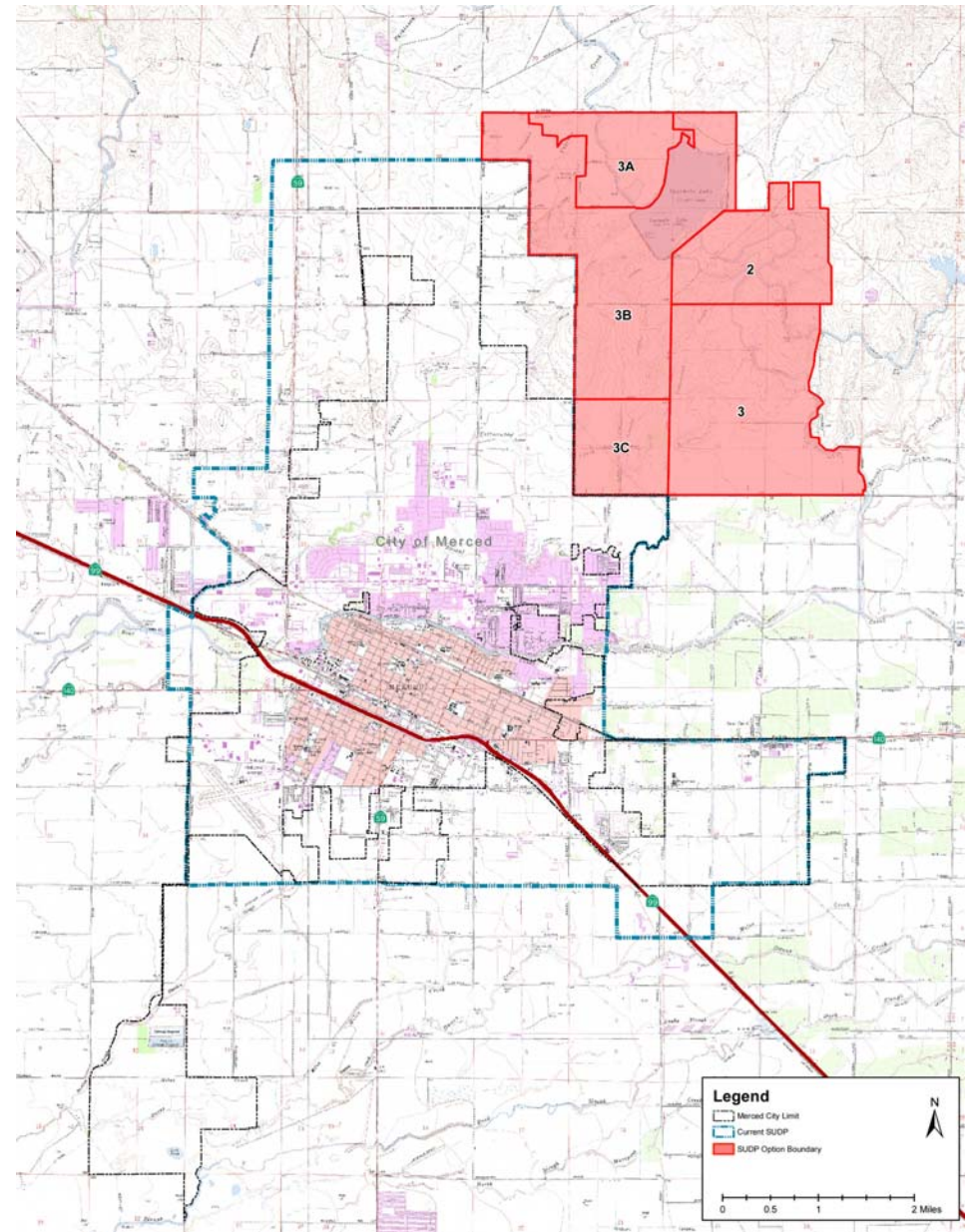
Recent General Plan history

- SUDP study areas
- Developer plans in progress
- Long-range planning (40 years)
- Critical areas
- LAFCo issues



Option #1: Existing SOI Plus

- Includes Existing SUDP plus areas in the existing SOI
- Includes Areas 2, 3, 3A, 3B, & 3C
- Population for option: 207,996
- Acreage for option: 27,770

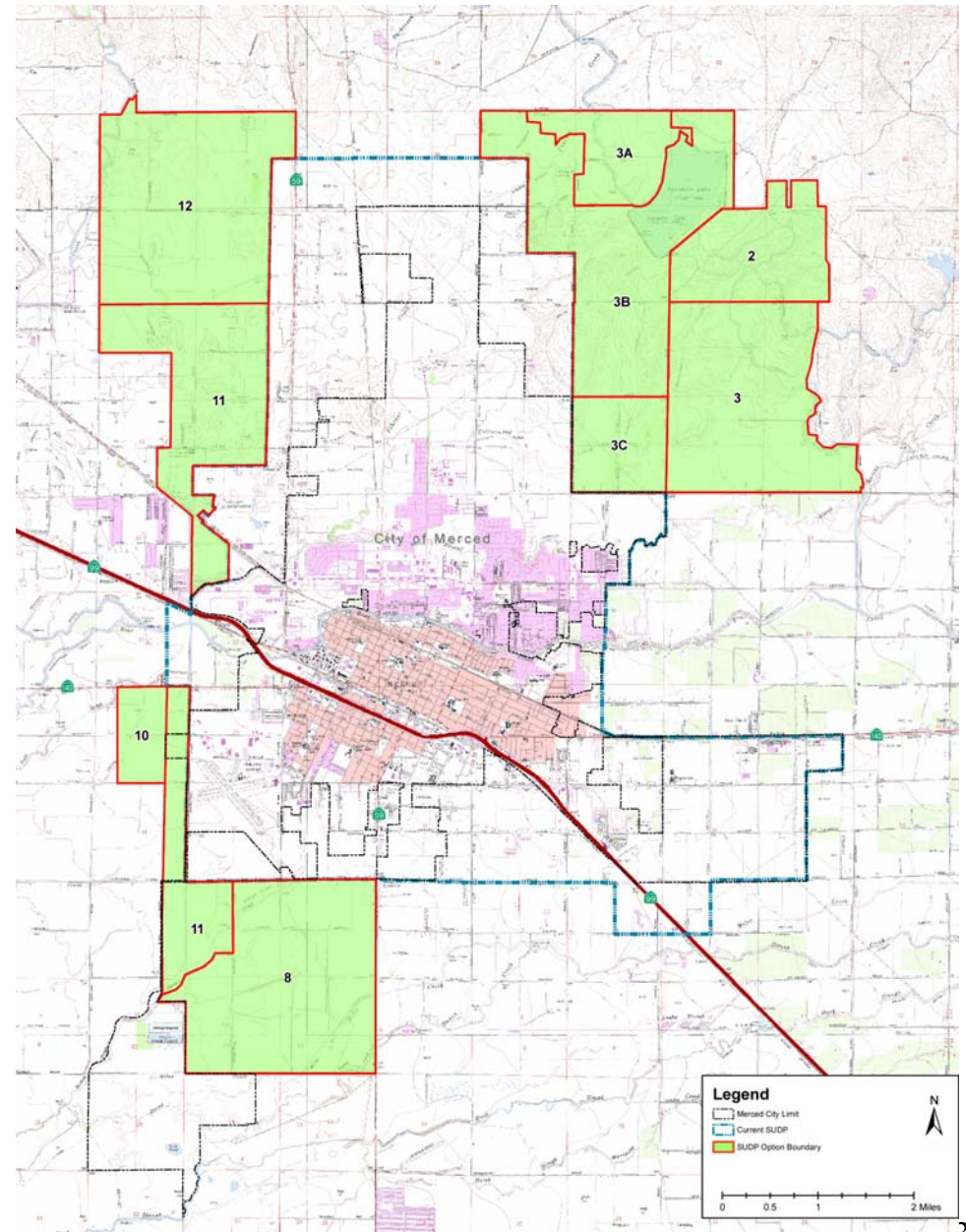


Option #1—Existing SOI Plus

- Reasons for inclusion
 - Existing SUDP plus these areas will serve projected population for next 40 years
 - Areas are adjacent to current urban boundary and ready for development and annexation
 - Some infrastructure plans have been prepared
 - Areas 2 & 3 included per prior direction from City Council and substantial planning efforts have been completed
 - Areas 3A, 3B, & 3C are all in the City's current SOI and must be included to develop Areas 2 & 3
- Phasing criteria and policies to be included outlining how other areas can be added to the SOI in the future

Option #2: Option #1 Plus Master Plan Areas

- Includes Areas 2, 3, 3A, 3B, 3C, 8, 10, 11, & 12
- Population for option:
271,558
- Acreage for option:
35,162

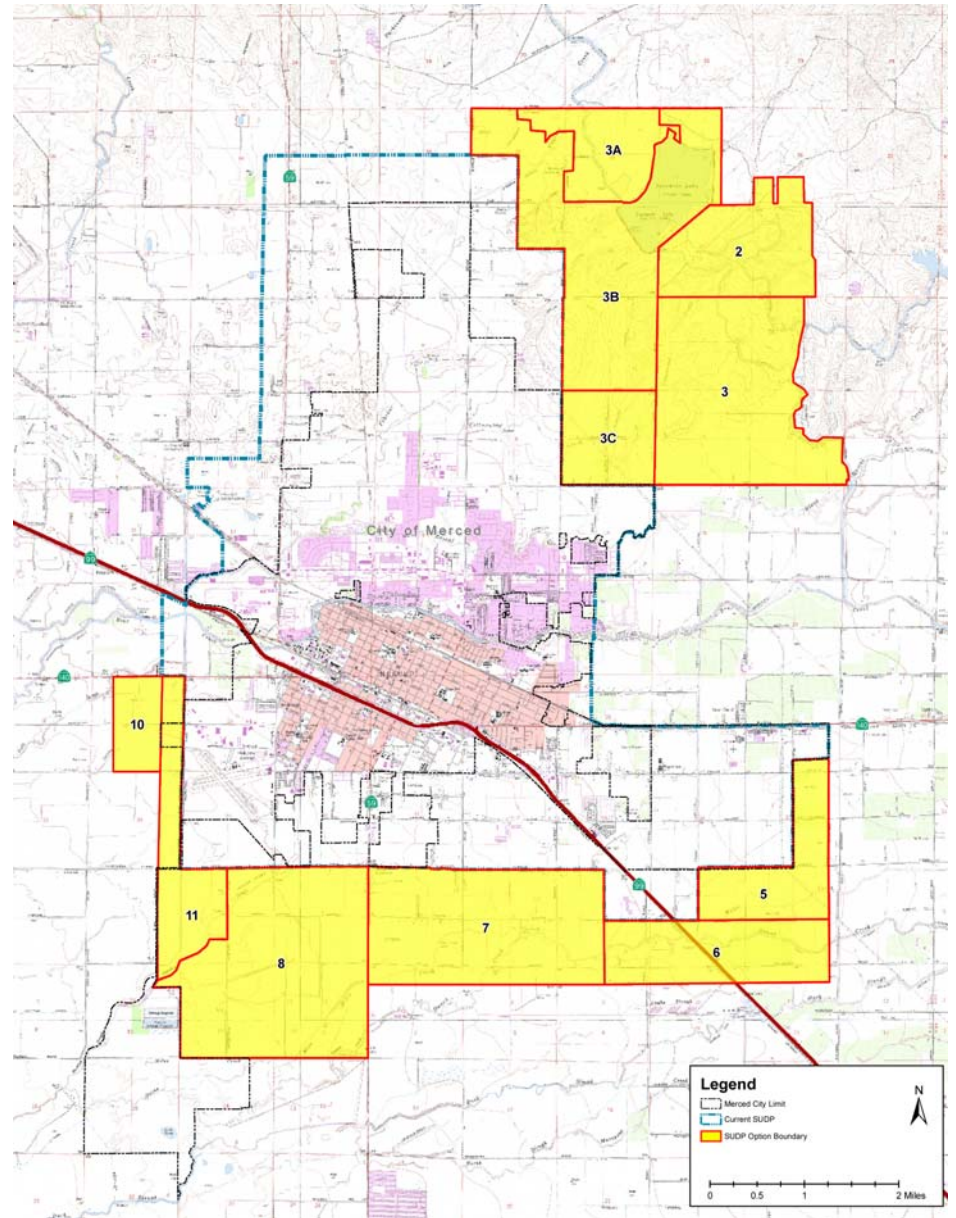


Option #2: Option #1 Plus Master Plan Areas

- Reasons for Inclusion
 - Developer plans in progress for Areas 8 & 12
 - Need to look at Area 11 North and South in relation to Areas 8 & 12 (rely on each other for infrastructure, etc.)
 - Area 10 is included for economic development purposes (entire area is industrial)
 - Area 13 NOT included because majority of area is unavailable for development due to vernal pools and habitat areas
- Phasing criteria and policies to be included outlining how other areas can be added to the SOI in the future

Option #3: Option 1 Plus South Area Development

- Includes Areas 2, 3, 3A, 3B, 3C, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, & 11 South
- Population for option: 278,002
- Acreage for option: 34,915



Option #3: Option #1 Plus South Area Development

- Reasons for Inclusion
 - City boundary is at Mission Ave in some areas already (adjacent to Areas 7 & 8)
 - Close to Downtown and Highway 99/New Mission Interchange
 - Proximity to Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Natural Continuation of South Merced Specific Plan process
 - Prime ag land and floodplain constraints exist but can likely be addressed and few vernal pools are in the area
- Areas 4A & 4B will be a joint City/County Planning Area outside of the SOI due to prime farmland, Campus Parkway, and amount of existing development limiting the likelihood of annexation in the near term
- Phasing criteria and policies to be included outlining how other areas can be added to the SOI in the future

Preliminary Criteria for Adding Areas to SOI

- Criteria for Adding areas within Area of Interest to the SOI
 - City Boundary is contiguous (or annexation is imminent), and no “islands” are created
 - A Specific or Area Plan is approved with land use, circulation, public facilities, and infrastructure
 - Public Facilities Financing Plan updated to include area; revenue sources identified
 - Property owner is committed to finance WWTP & capacity is available
 - New sewer trunk lines planned
 - Revised Revenue Sharing Agreement with County in place
 - Developer agrees to install all off-site intervening infrastructure
 - Specific or Area Plans need to include adjacent areas within the SOI that are affected by the development of Master Plans

Group Discussion Regarding Sphere of Influence Options

Overview of Comments Received at April 12, 2007 Public Forum

Questions received at community workshop:

- How does zoning get established?
- Where is the City's existing land use diagram available?
- When was LAFCo created?
- Can LAFCo influence the zoning of an area to be annexed?
- What influence or impact do residents have on their land being annexed?
- Does this process address the future use of Merced Airport?
- If an unincorporated area outside of a new development gets annexed, who pays for infrastructure hook ups?
- How were vernal pool areas determined?
- How would sewer work under Option #3 in the NE area?
- The Preliminary Criteria for adding areas to SOI does not address characteristics or constraints of the land itself. Floodplains, airport conflict, compact transportation/land use patterns, AG Land, habitat, etc. should be in SOI criteria. As it seems any land is good for SOI if there is enough money to fix it.

More Questions From Community Workshop

- Does the annexation protest process explain why there are unincorporated islands?
- What is the difference between the Sphere of Influence and the SUDP?
- What is minimum annexation size?
- How is capacity of infrastructure addressed during annexations?
- How often is the General Plan updated?
- When would build out of the study area occur?
- Does Option #1 assume that UC Merced would be annexed?
- Does the City provide water/sewer to the UC Community?
- What is the advantage to the City or UC for annexing the campus?
- How are population projections made?
- How does the City's funding for infrastructure, to far outlying areas, work? Is location a factor for fees?
- Weren't the campus and the University Community supposed to be self-sustaining?
- Is the City's R-2, R-3 zoning consistent with the commercial reserve designation?

Community Workshop Map Exercise

- Participants were given a map showing the current City limits and SUDP area, and the Study Area boundaries, and asked to draw their “ideal” new SOI/SUDP boundary.
- Staff received 20 maps, but a review did not show any consensus on where new boundary should be.
- Submitted maps have been posted to the General Plan FTP site.

Next Steps

- Prepare draft land use diagram and text revisions
- City Council/Planning Commission study session
- CAC/TAC meeting to review drafts
- Prepare new Admin. Draft, and Public Review draft
- Preparation of Environmental Impact Report (concurrent with Plan update)
- Public discussion and hearings
- Adoption of General Plan

Schedule

2007

- May CAC meeting on draft land use policies and diagram, TAC meeting on options and technical issues
- June TAC meeting on draft policies
- July Public Review Draft of Land Use diagram, Community workshop, CC study session, begin EIR preparation
- Oct. Draft General Plan elements for city staff review
- Dec. Draft General Plan for public review

2008

- Jan. General Plan EIR available for 45-day public review
- Feb.–Mar. Preparation of Final EIR and final General Plan
- April-May Public hearings on General Plan and EIR