



# City of Merced General Plan Vision 2030

Community Workshop  
April 12, 2007

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# Meeting Overview

- What is a General Plan?
- All about LAFCo
- Population projections for Merced
- SUDP's (urban development area), old and new
- Plans in the pipeline
- Options for the future
- Group exercise
- Wrap up and next steps/schedule

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# What is a “General Plan”

- 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.”
- The General Plan is the “Constitution for Future Development”
- The General Plan must be:
  - Comprehensive, Internally Consistent, Have a Long-Term Perspective
- A General Plan is made up of text describing Goals, Objectives, Policies as well as maps and diagrams

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# General Plan Update Components

- *Noise Element\**
- *Safety Element\**
- *Open Space\*/Conservation\*/Recreation Element*
- *Circulation Element\**
- *Land Use Element\**
- Urban Design Element
- Public Services and Facilities Element
- *Housing Element\** (previously adopted)
- Land Use & Circulation Plan

\* *State Required Elements*; Others Optional

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# 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



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# The General Plan Update Will:

- Provide opportunities for meaningful public participation in the planning and decision making process
- Identify planning issues, opportunities & challenges to be addressed
- Explore land use and policy alternatives
- Ensure that the General Plan is current, internally consistent and easy to use
- Provide guidance in the planning & evaluation of future land and resource decisions
- Provide a vision and framework for the future growth of the City

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# Significant Issues to Address

- Community character
- Retention of “Neighborhood” centered General Plan policies
- Address large areas with developer plans in progress
  - Ensure plans are consistent with General Plan
- Future circulation system components
  - Access to U.C. campus is significant issue
- Analysis of constraints within new SUDP areas
  - Prime agricultural lands
  - Merced and Castle Airports
  - Wetlands and vernal pools
- Preferred growth model

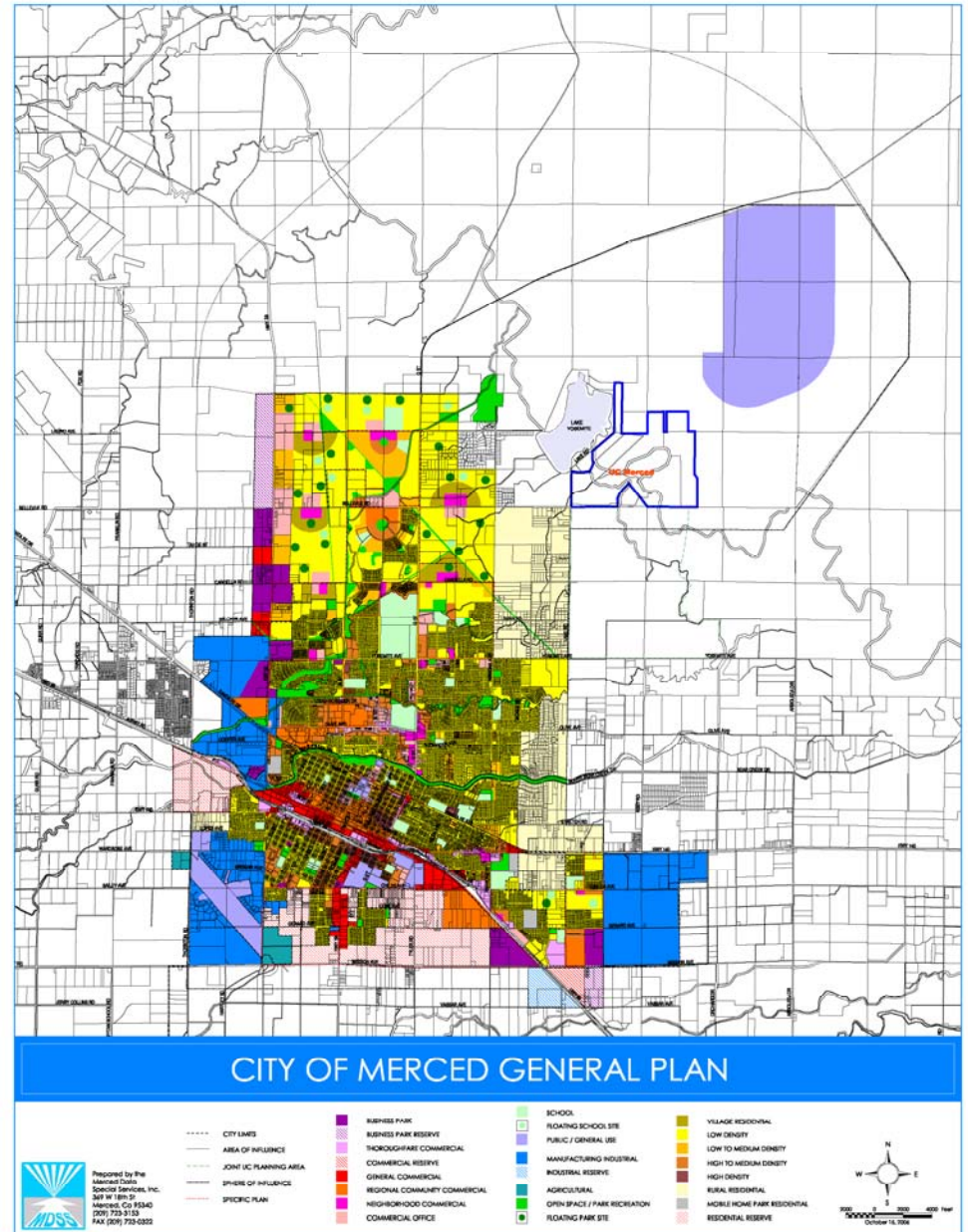
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# State Requirements to Address

- Adequacy of General Plan
  - Comprehensiveness, entire planning area & broad range of issues
  - Internal consistency of all elements
  - Must be possible to make a consistent interpretation and application under the same set of facts (not arbitrary)
  - Long-term perspective



# City of Merced General Plan



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# 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

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# 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.

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# 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?

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# 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

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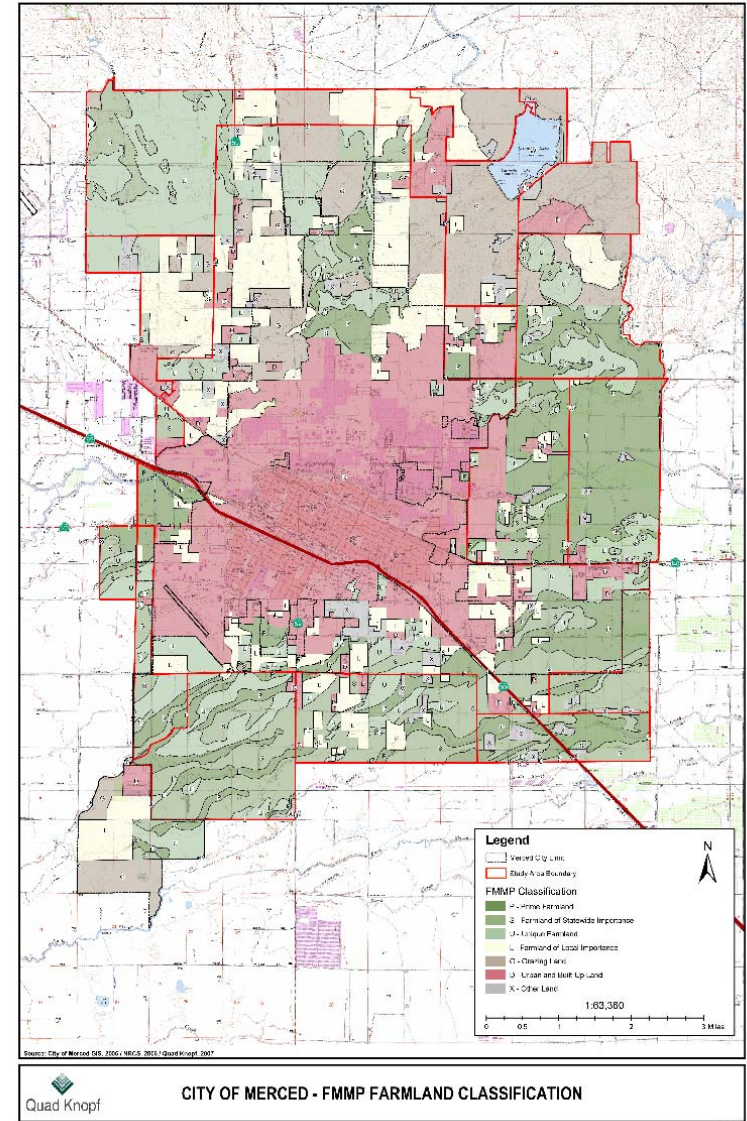
# Constraints to development

- 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.



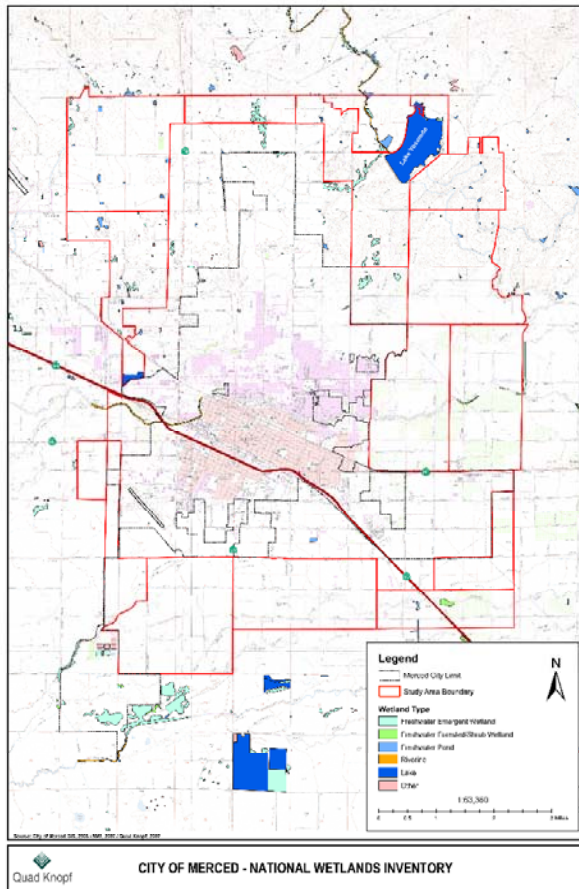
# Agricultural soils

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

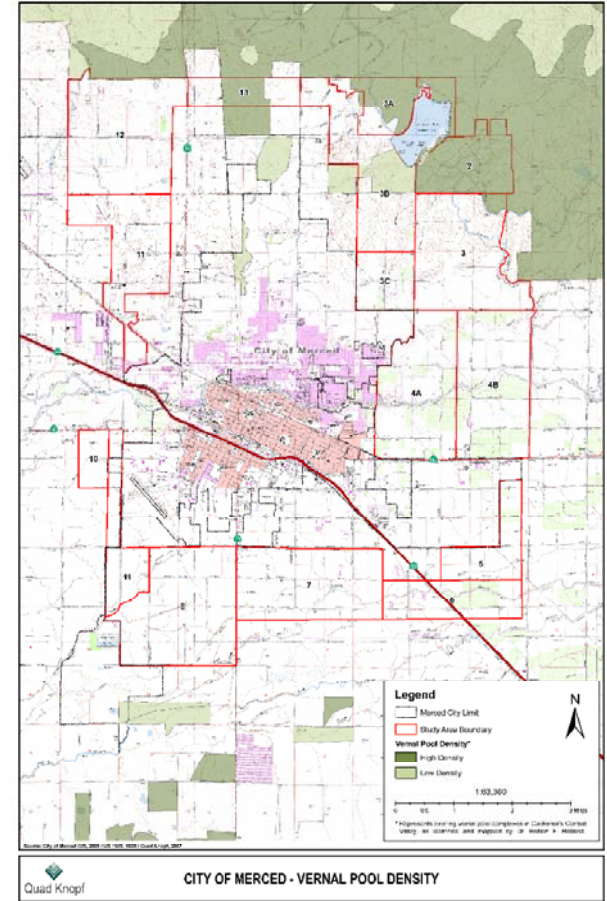


# Sensitive habitat

## Wetlands

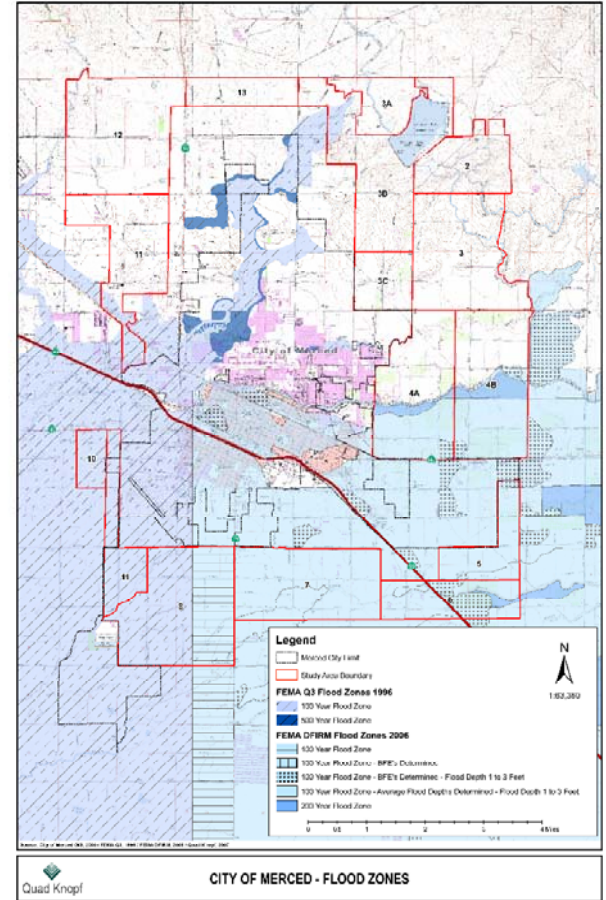
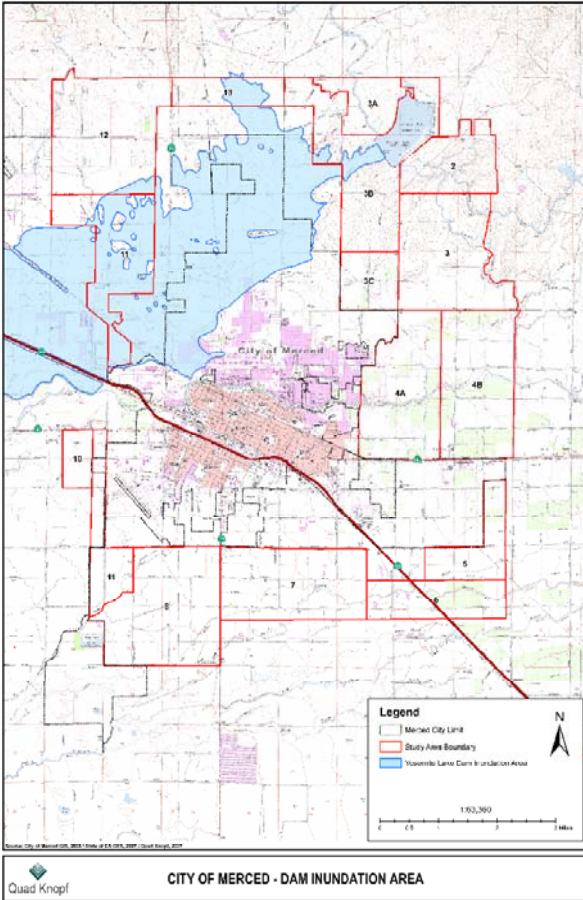


## Vernal pools





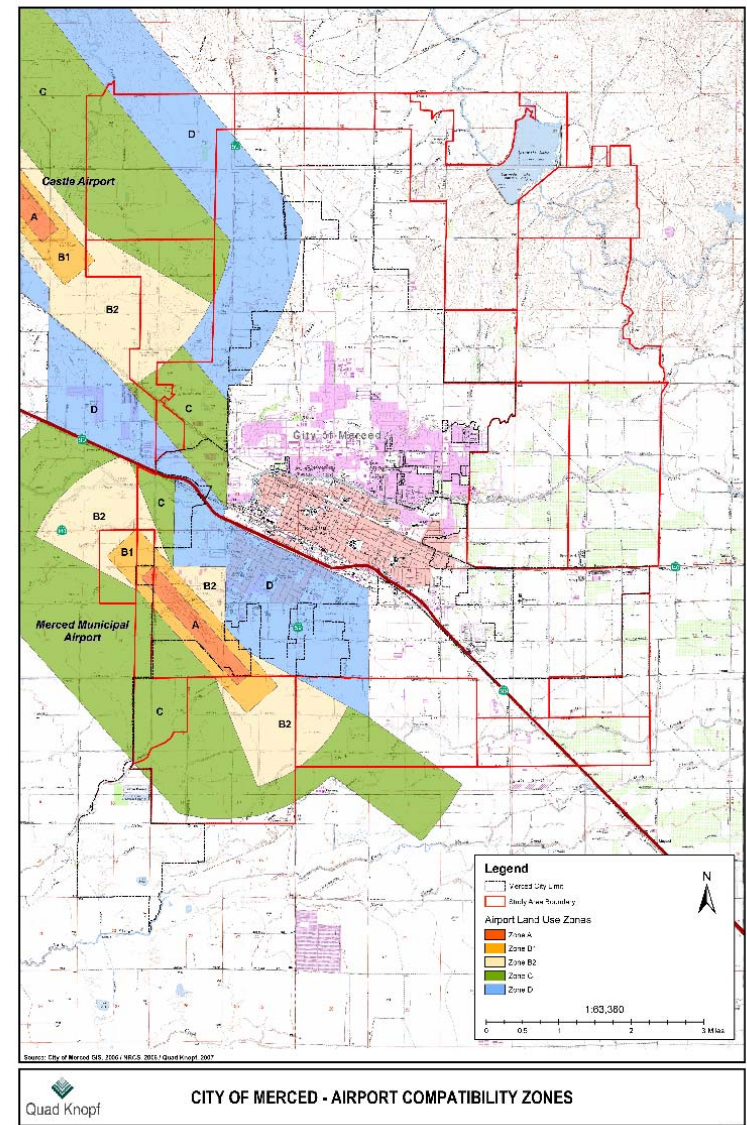
# Floodplains



# Airport land use restrictions

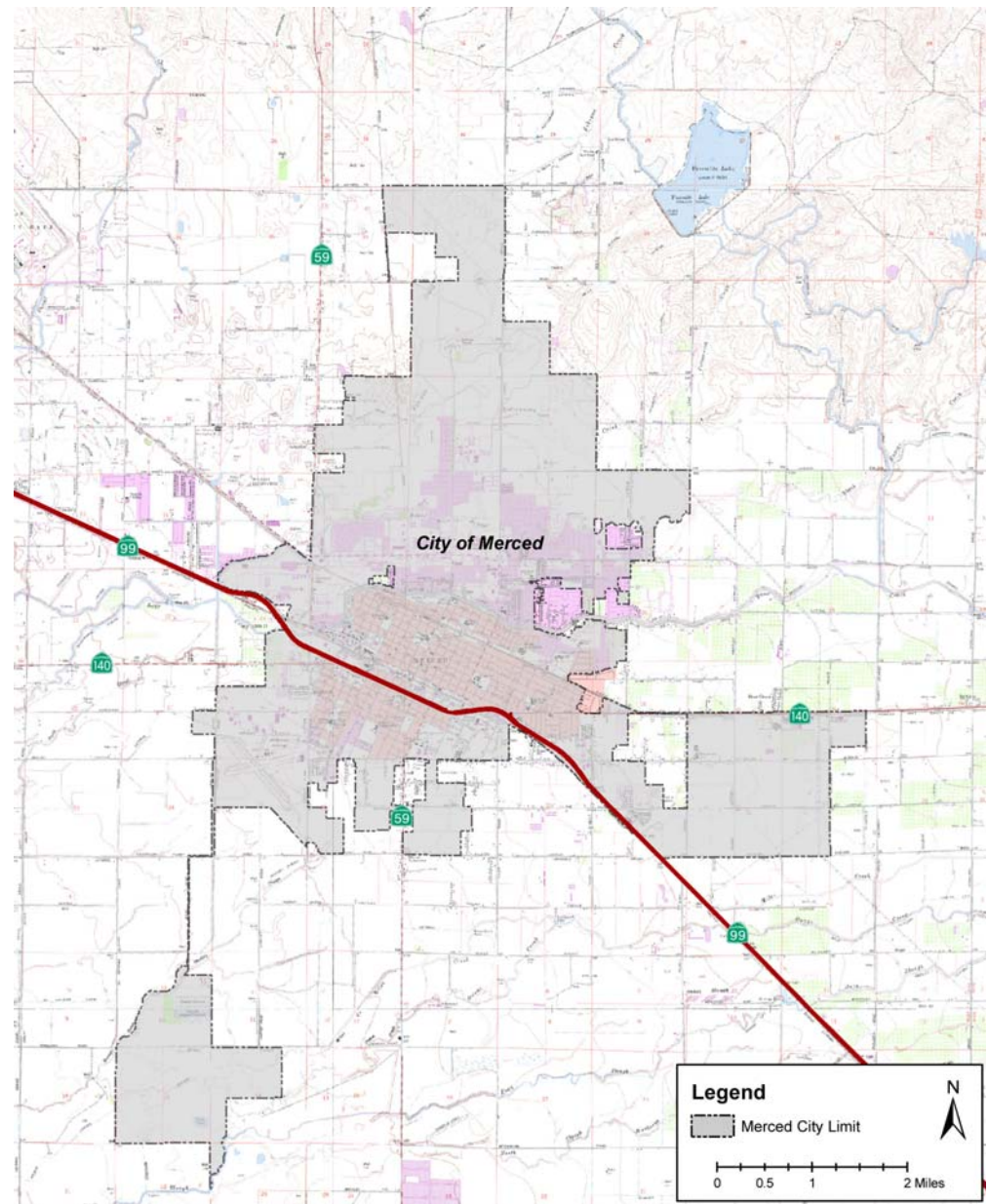
Areas B1 and B2 restrict residential densities

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



# Population projections for Merced

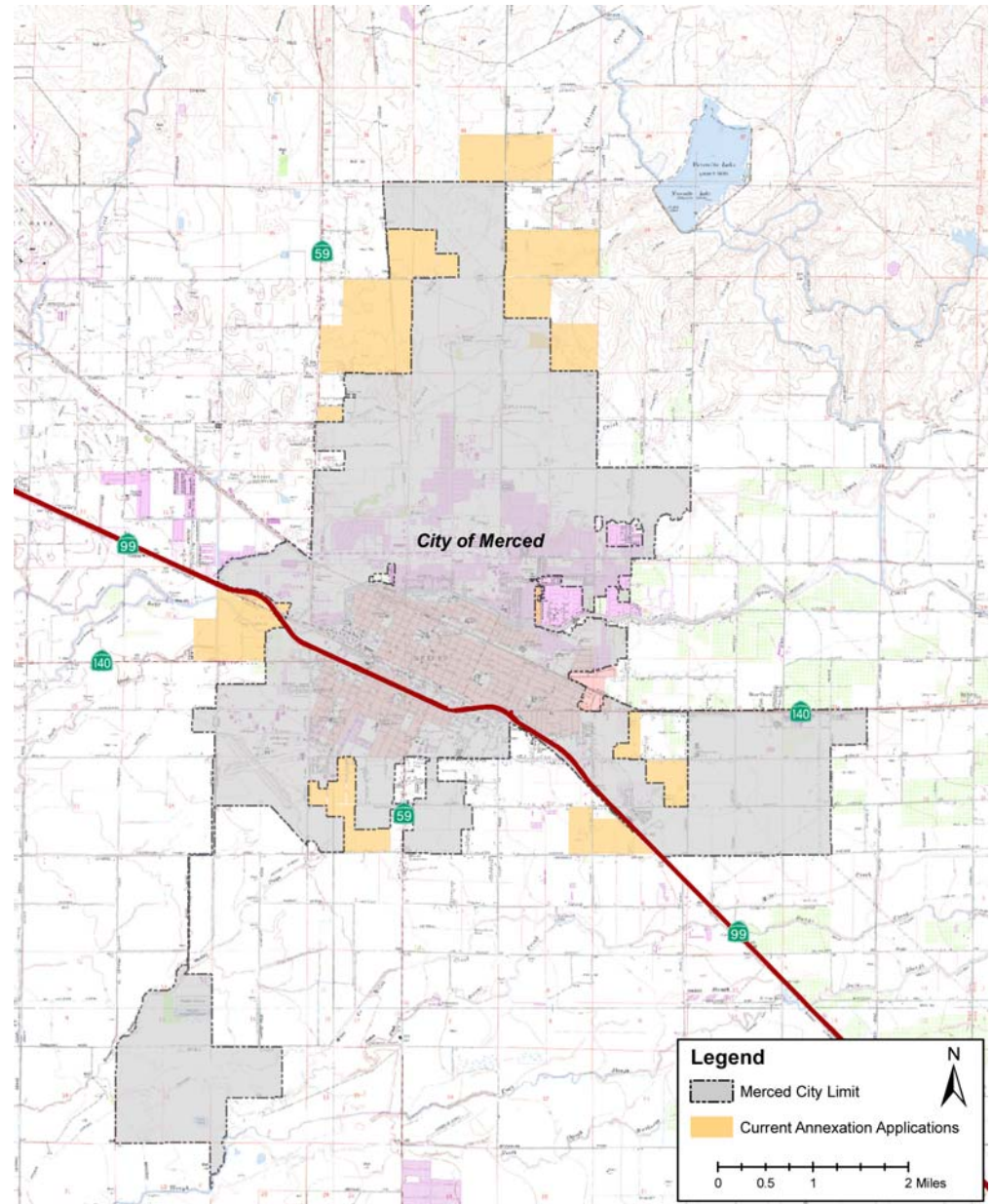
- City of Merced 2006 population:  
81,225 people  
14,000 acres



# Annexations

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

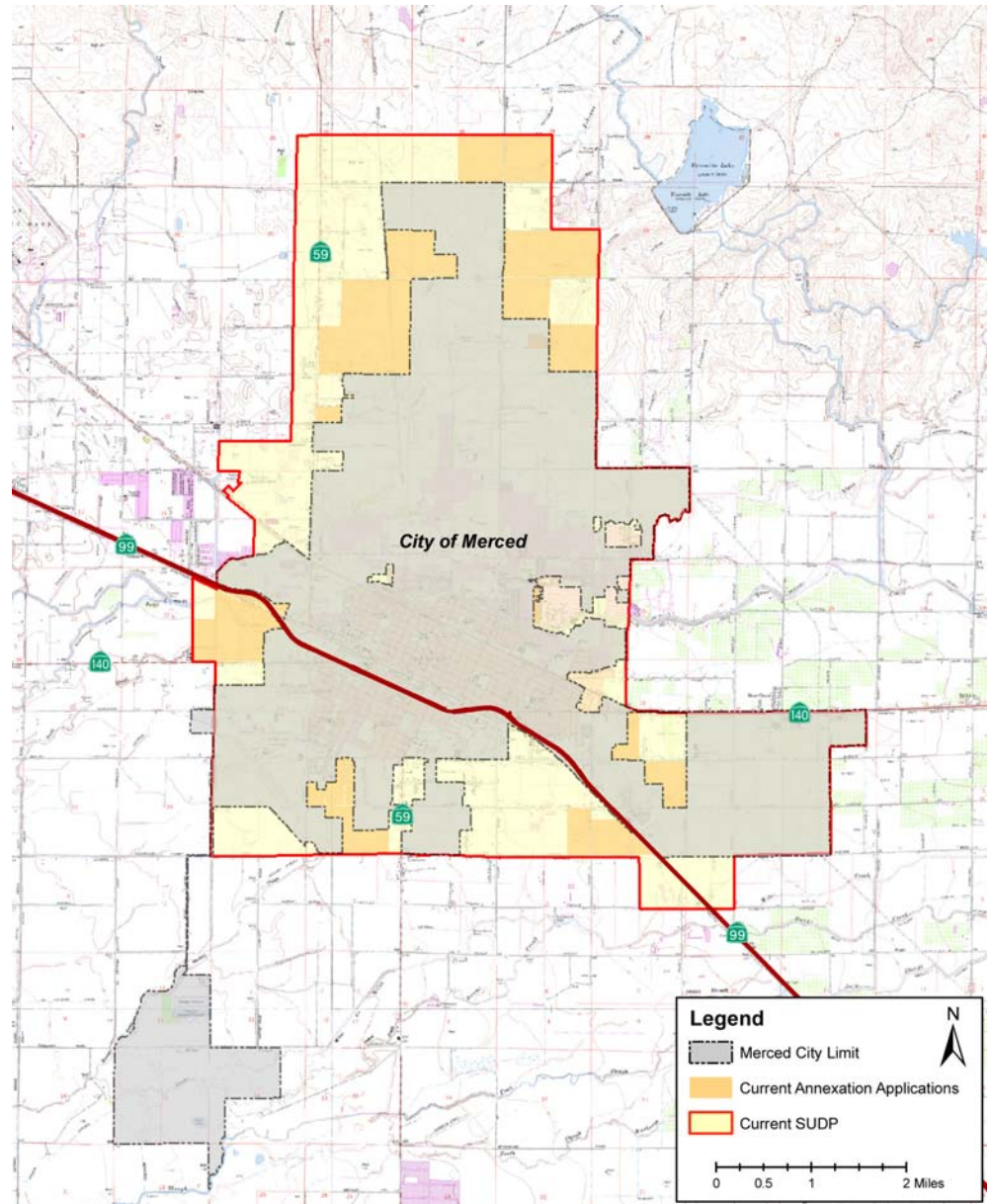
Total population:  
108,590



# Current SUDP

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

Total population:  
146,498

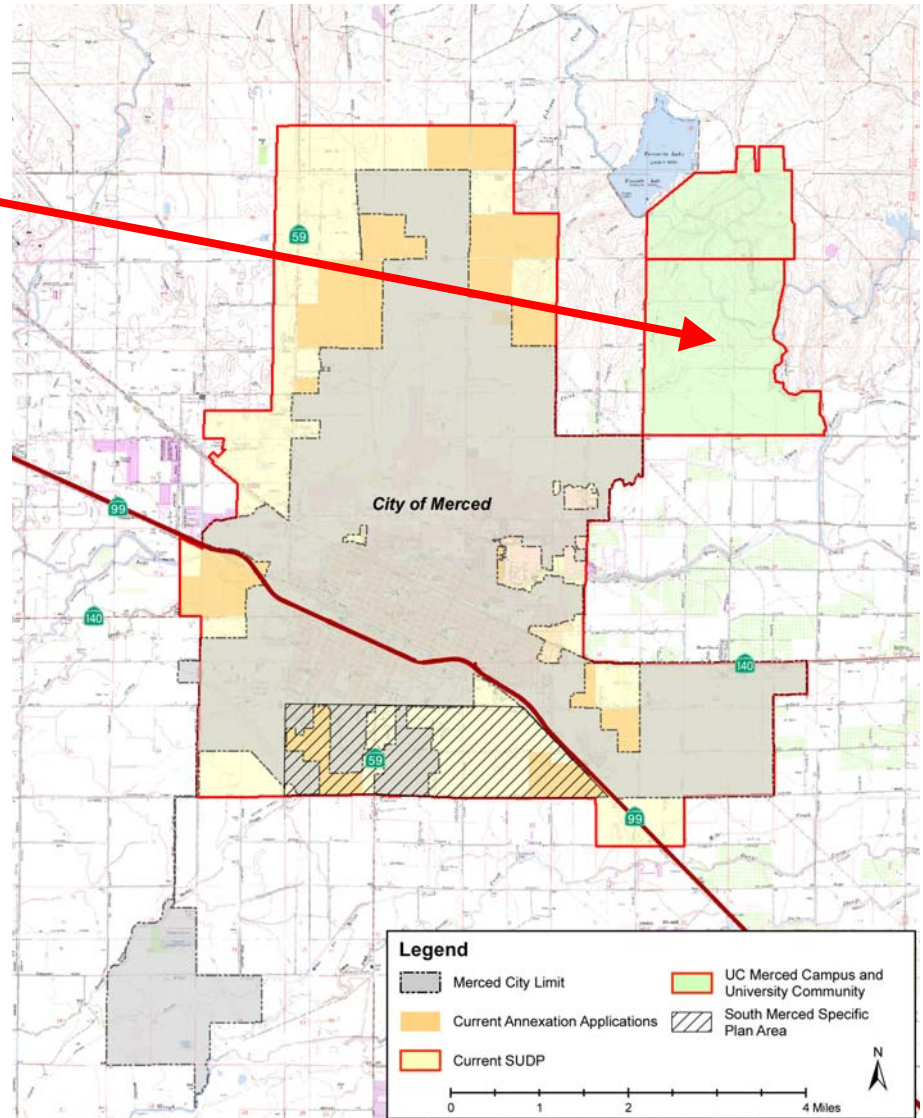


# U.C. Merced

## – University community

- 2,090 acres
- 36,010 people

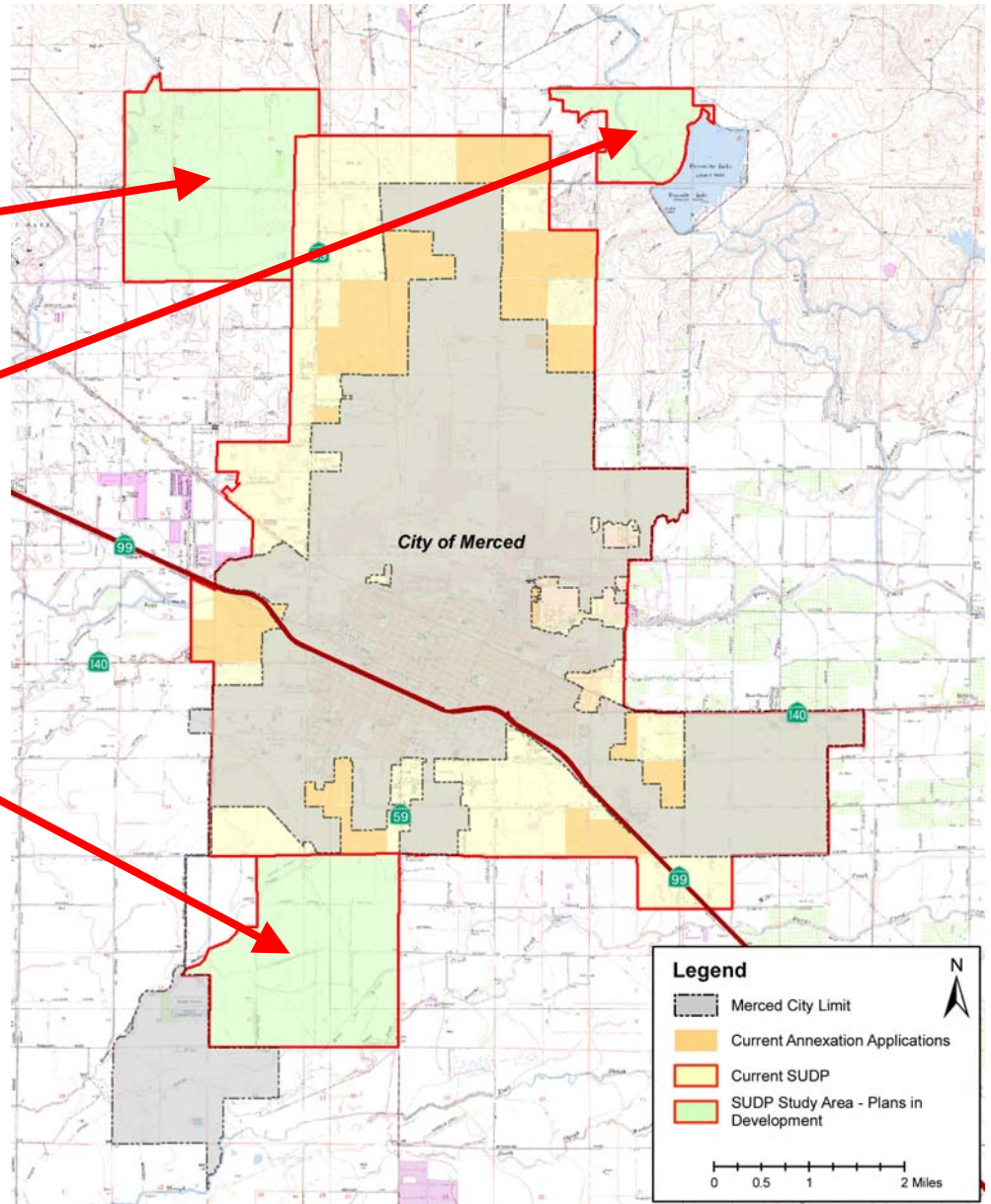
Total population:  
182,508



- Areas with Developer Plans in Progress:

- Castle Farms
  - 36,145 people
  - 2,606 acres
- Yosemite Lakes
  - 2,031 people
  - 660 acres
- Mission Lakes
  - 16,176 people
  - 2,325 acres

Total population:  
236,860



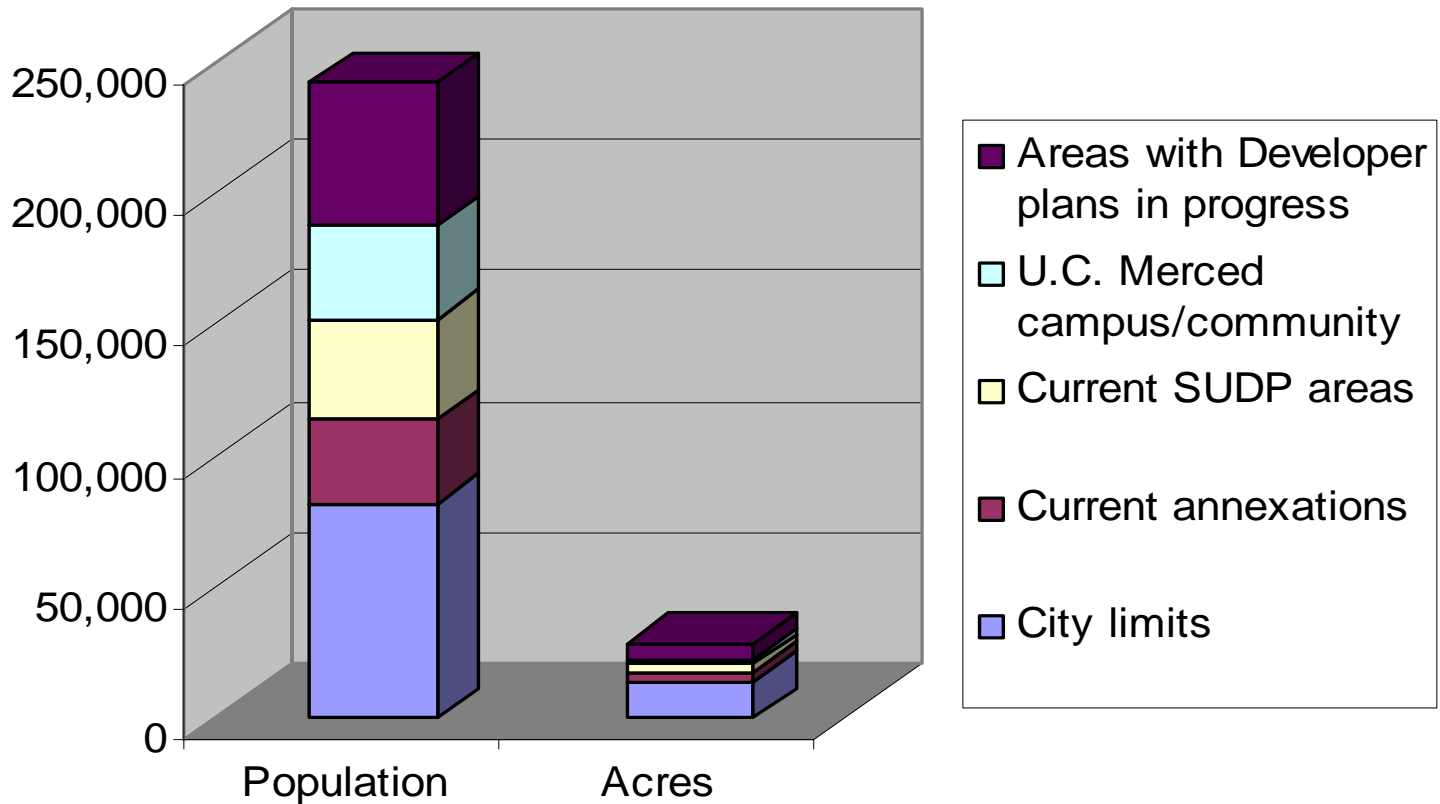
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# Historic growth

- 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



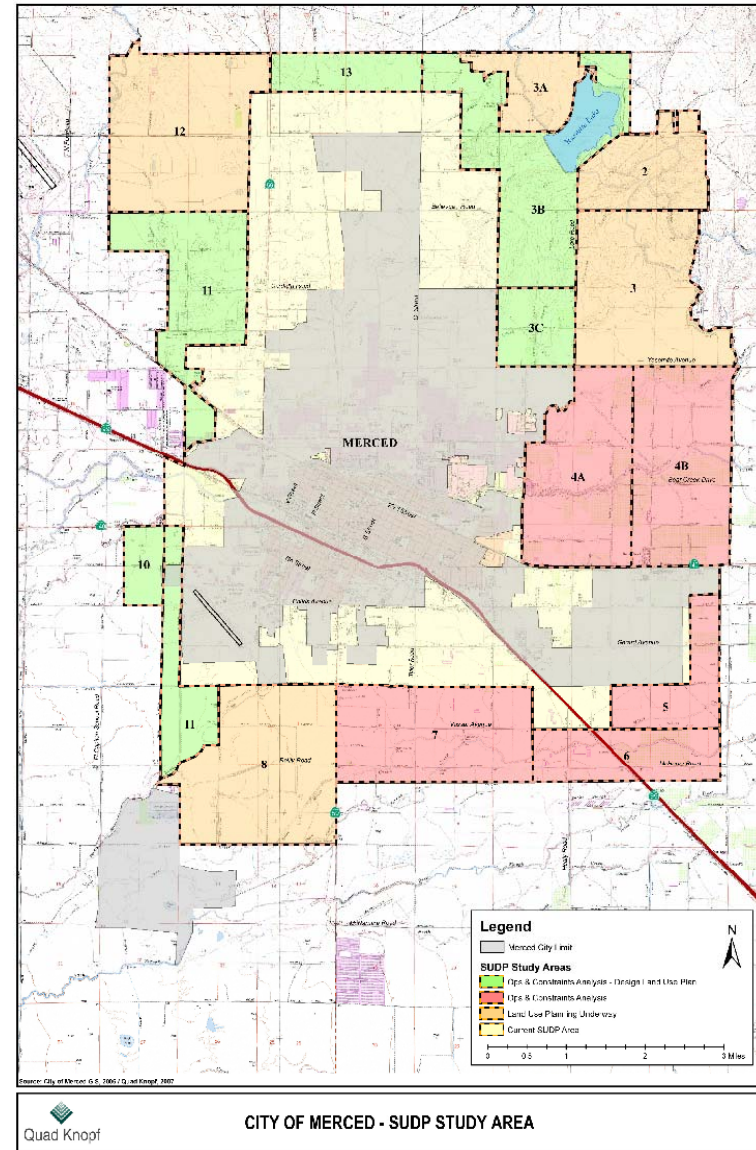
## City of Merced population Projections



# Planning Areas

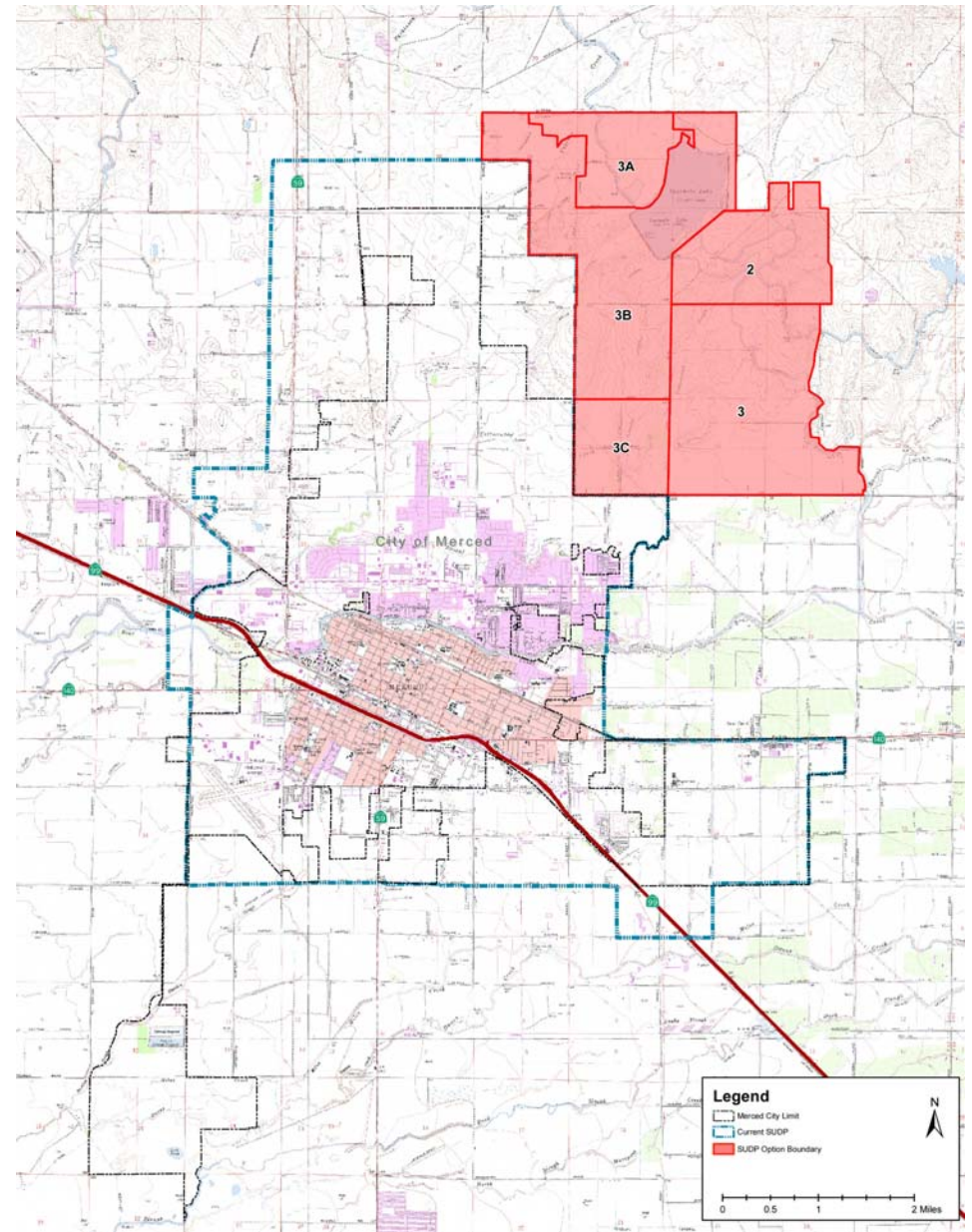
## Recent General Plan history

- 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: 210,176
- Acreage for option: 27,770



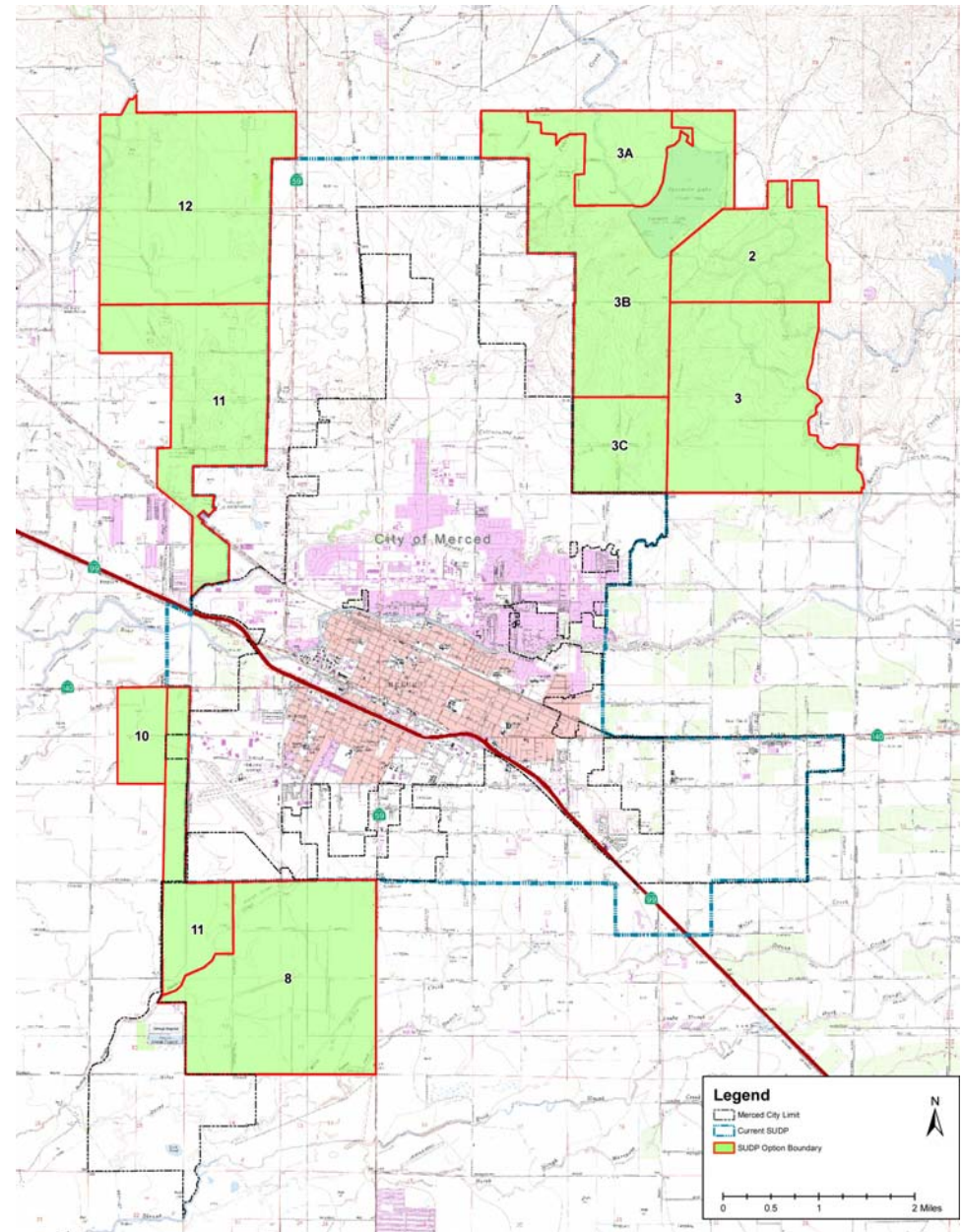
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# Option #1—Existing SOI Plus

- 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:  
266,481
- Acreage for option:  
35,162



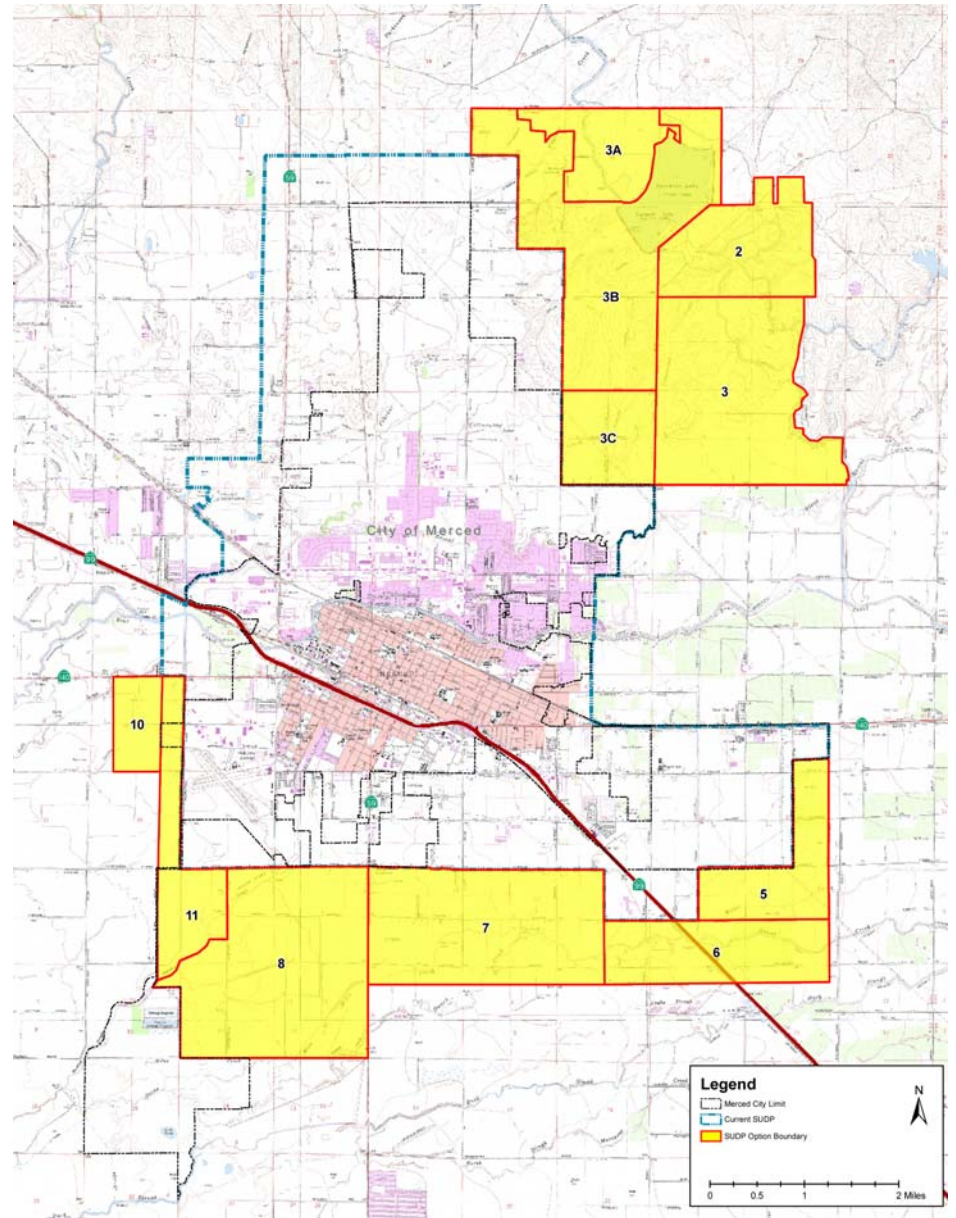
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# Option #2: Option #1 Plus Master Plan Areas

- 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: 280,183
- Acreage for option: 34,915



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# 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



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# 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

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# Comments and questions

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# 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

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# 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