

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN

FEBRUARY 21, 2012

CALTRANS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GRANT



Merced City Council

Stan Thurston, *Mayor*
Noah Lor, *Mayor Pro Tempore*
Bill Blake
Tony Dossetti
Mike Murphy
Josh Pedrozo
Mary-Michal Rawling

Bill Spriggs, Former Mayor
John Carlisle, Former Councilperson
Michelle Gabriault-Acosta, Former Councilperson

Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC)

Thank you RDAC for your bi-monthly participation to create the
Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

Clifford Blauert, Chair
Jennifer Madkins, Vice-Chair
Teresa Burrola
Mary Camper
Gloria Conlin
Carol Greenberg
Joe Ramirez
Staci Santa
Michael Sullivan
Ken C. Testa, Ed.D.
Lisa Wegley
John White

City of Merced

Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan

Prepared by

City of Merced
Planning Department

February 21, 2012



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN

PART 1: PLAN OVERVIEW

Section 1.1 – Acknowledgements..... ..1-3

- Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee
- City Staff and Agency Involvement
- In Memoriam – Linda Lopez

Section 1.2 – Executive Summary..... ..1-11

- Origin and Purpose of the Plan
- Plan Objectives
- Development of the Plan
- Implementation Initiatives

Section 1.3 – An Historical Perspective..... ..1-23

- A Look Back to Look Forward

PART 2: PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Section 2.1 – Plan Area and Issues2-3

- Plan Area
- Plan Issues

Section 2.2 – Purpose of the Plan..... ..2-5

- Revitalization
- Community-Based Planning
- Springboard for Future Actions
- Foundation for Future Funding

Section 2.3 – Plan Objectives2-6
Objective 1 / Travel Modes
Objective 2 / Safe Movement
Objective 3 / Land Use Pattern
Objective 4 / Road Crossings

Section 2.4 – Development of the Plan2-9
Organize Resources and Involve the Public
Identify and Describe the Existing Conditions
Develop the Action Strategy Matrix
Implement, Evaluate and Revise the Plan

PART 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS BACKGROUND REPORT

Section 3.1 – Multi-Modal Transportation System3-3
Bicycles
Pedestrians
Transit

Section 3.2 – Land Use Patterns 3-11
Introduction
Existing Land Use and Conditions
Assets, Opportunities and Constraints

Section 3.3 – Crossing Sites and Patterns of the Corridor3-32
Overview
Data Collection
Pedestrian and Bicyclist Data
Semi-Trailer (Big-Rig) Truck Traffic

Section 3.4 – Road Design and Safety of the Corridor.....3-51
Overview
Roadway Design and Traffic Volumes
Past and Planned Circulation Improvements

PART 4: PUBLIC OUTREACH

Section 4.1 – Public Outreach Overview4-3
Government Agencies	
General Public and Organizations	
City Commissions, Committees and Council Involvement	
Section 4.2 – Public Agencies & Organizations4-6
Planning Team	
Team Formation and Plan Contributions	
Public Agency Stakeholders	
Section 4.3 – Public Involvement in the Planning Process4-8
Public Outreach Events	
Results from Public Outreach	
Section 4.4 – City Commissions, Committees and Council Involvement.....	...4-17
Ad-hoc Committee Members	
Ad-hoc Committee Community Meetings	
Other Commissions, Boards, Associations, and Council	

PART 5: STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Section 5.1 – Recommended Actions5-3
Introduction	
Travel Modes	
Safe Movement	
Land Use Patterns	
Safe Crossings	
Section 5.2 – Action Plan5-13
Implementers	
Funding Opportunities	
Implementation Mechanisms	
Committee Priorities	
Action Plan Matrix	

Section 5.3 – Plan Maintenance 5-28
 Post Plan Adoption Oversight
 Annual Assessment Report
 Continued Public Involvement

PART 6: APPENDICES

Section 6.1 – Public Outreach 6-3
 Event Summaries and Photos
 Survey Questionnaires, Outreach Letters, and Flyer
 Map of Venue Locations

Section 6.2 – Plan Adoption 6-41
 Letters of Support/Endorsement/Resolutions
 Ad-Hoc Committee Speakers at City Council Meeting

Section 6.3 – Data Collection 6-58
 Survey Location Map
 Pedestrian/Bicycle Survey



PART 1:

Plan Overview



PART 1: PLAN OVERVIEW

PART 1 acknowledges plan participants and provides an Executive Summary of the Plan, describing its purpose, project objectives, plan development strategy, and implementation initiatives.

SECTION 1.1



Acknowledgments

SECTION 1.2



Executive Summary

SECTION 1.3



An Historical Perspective

Section 1.1 Acknowledgments

The plan was formulated through a collaborative process involving public agency staff and the community. The City of Merced gratefully acknowledges the following citizen volunteers, student interns, staff members, and public agencies for their contributions in preparation of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Lilia Aguilar

Lilia was born in Mexico. Her family came to Merced as immigrants when she was 3-years-old. At the age of 15, she returned to Mexico where she completed high school and 2 years of college at the University in Morelia Michoacán. She later returned to Merced where she graduated from the Vocational Nursing Program at Merced College in 1986. Lilia worked at convalescent homes, rehabilitation facilities, and Mercy Home Care before joining Golden Valley Health Center (GVHC). She has been working at GVHC for the past 18 years as an office supervisor. Lilia enjoys serving the Hispanic community by interpreting and advocating for them and their medical issues. As a resident of South Merced, she is a member of “Building Healthy Communities” and has been actively involved with groups supporting improvements in that area. Lilia is married, has two wonderful boys, and one beautiful grandson.



Grace Booth

Grace grew up in South Merced on W. 12th Street. At age 12, her family moved into the County, but they attended church on the corner of Childs Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. She graduated from Merced High School (1966) and Merced College. Grace is a widow, mother of five children (raised seven children), and grandmother of ten. She attends First Church of Christ Holiness USA at Childs Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and holds the titles of Church Clerk, Sunday School Teacher, and District UCWM Financial Secretary. She is a member of the Salvation Army/Home League, National Council of Negro Women, Chairman of Book Give Away, Merced Historical Society, NAACP, United Christian Women’s Board Member, Multicultural Artree, and is an Afro-American Storyteller teaching mostly the “Golden Rule.” Grace has a passion for children and feels that children in the community need a lot of help. She would like to see more efforts put into things for children to do. She is a very gregarious person who enjoys helping.



Teresa Burrola

Teresa is a young 50, has lived in Merced County for 36 years, and has been married to Christopher for 29 years. She has 2 children – Candice, 28 and Robert, 23. Teresa worked at Farmers Insurance for 19 years before its closure. Teresa went to work for the Merced County Fairgrounds in 1998 and is currently the Business Assistant/Office Manager. She was also a Merced County Chamber of Commerce Board Member from 2005 to 2010. She is a member of the City of Merced's Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) and was appointed by her peers on RDAC to serve on the Ad-Hoc Committee for Martin Luther King Jr. Way.



Amelia Bustos

Amelia was born and raised in Merced and graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School. During the 23 years that she was employed by Merced College, she interacted with students of all ages, instructors, fellow employees, served on various committees, and in her spare time, attended classes until she earned her degree. Amelia was also a union representative for a couple of years while on campus. In addition to various committees at work, she participated in committees at her children's schools. She feels that she has the ability to be objective, listen to the opinions of others, and work well with others to fulfill the goals of the Committee. Amelia has two grown daughters, five grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, four dogs, and cats.



Thomas Bustos

Tom was born in Arizona, but was relocated to Planada at the age of 4 or 5. He went to Merced College when it was located at the Merced County Fairgrounds, and then attended the existing location at M Street and Yosemite Avenue. Tom worked for Chevron Oil, Fresno County, Merced County, and AT&T (where he retired). He currently does bookkeeping and taxes from home. He also enjoys photography. He does not reside within the focus area, however, wants to help people with issues (and was encouraged to be their voice on the committee).



Cesar Garcia

Cesar was born in Durango, Mexico, and is the second oldest of a family of 6 siblings. He graduated from Leland High School in San Jose, CA in 1991. He completed with honors an AA Degree from San Jose City College, a BA degree in Clinical/Counseling Psychology, and an MA Degree in Experimental Psychology from San Jose State University. From 2000 -2002, Cesar worked on a research project in the Office of Human Relations of Santa Clara County, which was unveiled at the “Summit on Immigrant Needs,” and provided information on the lives of immigrants in Santa Clara County. He is married, and has a 4-year-old daughter, and 2-year-old son. Cesar moved to Merced in 2003 and lives in South Merced where he is an active parishioner of the Sacred Heart Church. He has worked for Golden Valley Health Center for the last 8 years as a program coordinator in the Health Promotions Department. He’s bilingual in English and Spanish, and has considerable experience in translations, and some experience interpreting between the two languages. Cesar enjoys talking to people, especially at a personal level, and helping those who are in need and doing justice for them. [Note: Prior to Cesar’s appointment to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, he translated, in Spanish, many documents for the Public Engagement part of the strategy (i.e., flyers, surveys, informational forms, etc.).]

**Mayko Lozano**

Mayko is currently a senior attending Golden Valley High School. Hoping to get into the right AP courses, he plans to attend Merced College as a freshman and eventually become a student at UC Merced. Mayko likes to work on cars, wants to be an auto mechanic, and his dream is to have his own auto repair shop.

**Sam Malaythong**

Sam was educated in Laos, receiving his Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering. He came to the United States in 1972 and obtained his PHD in Business Administration. He worked with the Lao Family Community in Orange County from 1978 to 1980 as a Senior Vocational Training Instructor teaching basic plumbing, electrical, and carpentry skills. He recently joined the Board of Directors for the Southeast Asian Professional Association of Merced County and serves as an advisor of the Merced Laotian Association and Laotian Buddhist Community of Fresno. Sam is married, has three beautiful children, and one beautiful granddaughter. Sam moved to Merced in 1991 and is self-employed as the owner of “Sam Cafe” on W. 12th Street. He is also proud to be a volunteer with the Merced Police Department as a VIP. Sam has 3 dogs and loves to work on cars (as a hobby). Sam says he was honored to be a part of the committee.



Tom Musser

Tom recently celebrated his 36th year in fair management, and more than 46 years working in fairs. Tom started at age 12 in his hometown Redwood Empire Fair in Ukiah, CA doing such tasks as litter pick-up and cleaning stalls. After graduation from Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), he became Assistant Manager of the San Mateo County Fair, San Mateo, CA. He then became an Event Manager for the Cow Palace in San Francisco. For the next eleven years, Tom was manager of the Gold Country Fair in Auburn, CA; then worked as a business manager for a small carnival and amusement park company based in Sacramento, followed by Interim Manager of the Antelope Valley Fair and manager of the Madera District Fair. From 1994 and continuing for the next 15 years, Tom managed the Clark County Fair in Vancouver, WA. The fair was \$4.7 million in the red when he arrived. Thanks to the work of tremendous staff, dedicated volunteers, and a Board of Directors with a vision, the Fair eliminated the debt and continues to prosper. Since August 1, 2009, Tom has been the CEO of the Merced County Fair. The strong agricultural roots of the area and the desire of the community for the fair to succeed are great qualities of the Fair that Tom enjoys. Tom proudly states that he owes his success to his wife, Debbi, who he has been married to for 36 years.



Michelle Paloutzian

Michelle was born in Fresno and grew up in Kingsburg (a small town on the southern border of Fresno County). She went to college at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and got her degree in Landscape Architecture. She moved to Merced and began working at Pacific Landscape. Michelle serves on the Board of Directors of Habitat for Humanity of Merced County. The organization's current project is near the South Police Station at 512 W. 11th Street, and there are at least two other Habitat houses within the project area. On a personal note, she sings in the choir at Saint Patrick's Church, does all kinds of designing and creative crafts, and she studies family history and genealogy to the point she has her own blog on the subject. She is happy to be on the Committee and meeting new people.



Carl Pollard

Carl was born and raised in Merced, and attended Merced High School and Merced College. He has spent his 48-years staying active within his community. Carl said he enjoys meeting, working, and helping people. He was appointed to the Merced City Planning Commission for two four-year terms. In 2005 Merced City Council and served until 2007. He was a Residential Member of the South Merced Neighborhood Council and advocated for many south side improvements and local and state governmental attention to the needs of the community. Carl has a passion for South Merced. He also enjoys singing, karaoke, politics, and helping less fortunate people.

**Isabel Sanchez**

Isabel is retired after working 26 years for the Merced City School District (Tenaya Middle School, Galen Clark Pre-school, and Alicia Reyes Elementary School). She belongs to the Sacred Heart Altar Society in Merced and teaches Catechism at Sacred Heart Church. She resides in South Merced where she has been actively involved in South Merced issues over the years, including being a representative for South Merced residents at a Caltrans meeting in Stockton for consideration of a traffic signal at Childs Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. She remains actively involved in helping to improve South Merced.

**Nancy Tapia**

Nancy was born in Merced and has lived here most of her life. She obtained a degree in Liberal Studies and a Teaching Credential and currently works for Merced County Public Health Department teaching public health education. Her job frequently brings her to the focus area. She has two daughters in college, and a dog.



Paul Thao

Born in Laos, Paul Thao came to the United States in 1990 and attended Merced schools, including Merced College. He was hired by Merced Lao Family where he has worked for 11 years. He is married and has 7 children; three of whom are in college. He's a busy father.

***Other Agencies Providing Funding and Technical Support***

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way/South Highway 59 Revitalization Plan would not have been possible without significant financial support **through a 2009-10 Environmental Justice Grant / Context-Sensitive Planning** from the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The City of Merced wishes to thank Caltrans for this opportunity to prepare a comprehensive plan to guide revitalization efforts along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Highway 59) corridor in South Merced. Special thanks go out to Tom Dumas, Chief, Office of Metropolitan Planning, and Sinarath Pheng, Associate Transportation Planner, for their guidance with this plan.



CITY STAFF & AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Project Management

Julie Sterling, Associate Planner
Bill King, AICP, Principal Planner
David Gonzalves, Director of Development Services
Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager
Julie Nelson, Planner
Nat Fierro, Engineering Technician
John Franck, Senior Civil Engineer (Retired)
Ruthanne Harbison, GIS Coordinator
Mark Hamilton, Planner
Kim Nutt, Planning Technician

Secretarial Support

Vicci Lane, Secretary II
Nancy Lee, Secretary II
Terri Lucas, Secretary III

Interns

Pamela Contreras, Historian
Emma Go, Public Outreach
Ryan Heller, Public Outreach/Data Collection
Mallorie Hodge, GIS Specialist/Cartographer

Technical Committee

Daniel Ainslie, Redevelopment Coordinator (former)
Daryl Jordan, City Engineer
Frank Quintero, Director of Economic Development
Maria Mendoza, Development Associate
Stan Murdock, Director of Public Works, Operations
Andre Matthews, Police Lieutenant

Facilities

A special thank you to the Merced City Police Department for allowing the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Meetings to be held at the South Station.

IN MEMORIAM – LINDA LOPEZ – 1951-2011

Linda was an advocate for all of Merced, but particularly for South Merced. On May 27, 2011, the City of Merced recognized her dedicated service to the community by presenting a Proclamation that highlighted some of her accomplishments: Linda was involved in civil rights and social justice for over 40 years and was considered among the influential Latinos in the Central Valley; she faithfully served the City of Merced on the Redevelopment Agency Gateway Projects Citizen’s Advisory Committee (1996), Planning Commission (1999-2004), and City Ad-Hoc Committees including Open Space and Parks, South Merced Specific Plan, CP-42 Park Project, Wastewater Advisory Committee and Citizen’s Oversight Committee Measure C; and, Linda has held positions with Central Valley Opportunity Center, TV Guide Magazine, the National Park Service, the Great Valley Center’s Central Valley Digital Network and was last employed as a Constituent Services/Field Representative with the Office of Congressman Dennis Cardoza; Linda’s civic participation included serving on the San Joaquin Valley Partnership Telecommunications Committee and the California State Advisory Board for Transportation Planning and Environmental Justice; and, was commended by the City Council for her dedicated service to the City of Merced and this community for the countless hours she spent enriching and bettering the lives of our citizens. The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee dedicates this Revitalization Plan to Linda Lopez, a long-time resident, friend, and voice for South Merced, who left us far too soon.



Section 1.2 Executive Summary

The City of Merced presents the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan which is a conceptual Plan that offers Merced a long-term vision for the Plan area. Understanding the scale of project execution will depend upon economic recovery. The committee recognizes the small steps that may be met even in these hard times (i.e. community services and infrastructure upgrades). Creating the long term plan will enable the City and Community to work together to fulfill many of these goals, one step at a time, seeking out innovative and creative ways as a team to finance prioritized items until a steady stream of funding is once again available.

This Section contains four subsections:

- Origin and Purpose of the Plan
- Project Objectives
- Development of the Plan
- Implementation Initiatives

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Origin

In September 2009, the City of Merced was awarded an Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning Grant from the California Department of Transportation to prepare the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. The work was initiated by the City of Merced to establish a long-term vision for the future of this gateway neighborhood. The need for the Plan was identified by the City's Redevelopment Staff. The Plan area is located immediately south of Downtown Merced at the crossroads of State Route 99 and State Highway 59 South. It is a primary gateway to the City of Merced. Yet, the aged buildings, strip commercial land uses, deteriorating infrastructure, and lack of aesthetic street features, create an unwelcoming appearance for locals and visitors alike. The City's grant application to Caltrans highlighted the following issues:

- Presently, the corridor does not have a complete sidewalk system, nor does it contain appropriate bicycle facilities. This is highly unfortunate as the socio-economic realities of the neighborhood necessitate residents to use non-auto sources of transportation. The lack of improvements and the economic conditions force many residents to walk or ride bicycles on the shoulder of the state highway.
- The highway is a heavily traversed truck-route throughout the year. In addition, Highway 59 currently serves as the primary north-south arterial through this

community. Throughout the day, this heavy use causes severe strains on its overall efficiency.

- Efforts to locate appropriate sites for regional retail and professional centers are currently compromised by traffic congestion, parcel assembly and misalignment of local roads.
- It is a common sight to see mothers pushing strollers and senior citizens walking along the shoulder of the highway as traffic rushes by at 40 miles per hour. This dangerous situation is further exacerbated by the lack of controlled pedestrian crossings. Throughout the day, an onlooker can see numerous pedestrians running across four lanes of highway traffic attempting to dodge high speed trucks in an effort to cross the highway.

Purpose of the Plan

Following the lead of the City's application and subsequent grant award from Caltrans, the Plan focuses on four objectives, aligned with concerns described above. As crafted, the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan has several purposes, foremost of which is to guide revitalization efforts of the corridor and adjacent neighborhoods. An ingredient to successful plan implementation is the presence of an advocate for change; therefore, the development of the Plan was crafted on a strong foundation of public participation to promote ownership and support for the Plan. The Plan presents simple, clear and actionable initiatives to be carried out by responsible agencies and community partners. Finally, the Plan itself functions as a tool that will allow the City to position itself to compete for state and federal funds for project implementation in the coming years.

Martin Luther King Jr. Way / Hwy. 59 Revitalization Plan Area



PLAN OBJECTIVES

Four inter-related objectives formed the foundation of the Plan’s studies, public discussions, and outcomes. The objectives are derived from the grant application and award.

Objective #1

Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit).



Objective #2

Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People.



Objective #3

Assess the Feasibility of New Office, Commercial, and Residential Uses.



Objective #4

Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan was developed with these four principal phases in mind:

Phase 1—Organize Resources and Involve the Public

The plan was formulated through a collaborative process involving public agency staff and the community. The planning team consisted of staff from the City’s Planning, Redevelopment, and Economic Development Divisions, as well as student interns from local universities. The team assembled the document for review and action by the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Advisory Committee at advertised public meetings. Numerous public outreach events were held. Additional support was provided during specific sections of plan development by the Merced County Association of Governments, Merced County, and Caltrans. Staff regularly updated the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) and received feedback from them regarding the Plan.

Phase 2—Describe the Existing Setting

To identify study area assets, opportunities, and constraint, an assessment of the Plan area’s existing conditions was performed by the Technical and Plan Preparation Team with input from the public, stakeholders, and Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. Aligned with Plan objectives, the existing conditions assessment focused on the following topics: 1) Mobility; 2) Corridor Design and Safety; 3) Land Use; and 4) Pedestrian Crossing Sites of the Corridor.

Phase 3—Develop the Action Strategy Matrix

The Action Strategy Matrix is a key element of this plan. It is through the implementation of these actions that the City of Merced can strive to attain the community vision expressed in the Plan. The Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee established implementation initiatives based on information gained from the “Existing Conditions Report,” discussed potential initiatives, and established and prioritized a final set of implementation initiatives.

Phase 4—Establish a Method to Implement, Evaluate, and Revise the Plan

This plan includes a plan implementation and maintenance section that details the formal process for ensuring that the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan remains an active and relevant document.

IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES

The strategy's implementation outcome is a list of initiatives that the City and its partners will undertake to further support the realization of this vision. The initiatives are loosely defined in order that public dialogue and final decisions as to the exact shape and form of the initiatives may be made in light of the actual funding source, additional public input, and environmental review. On the other hand, the initiatives clearly express the vision of the community members who have participated in the effort to prepare this Plan.

An Action Strategy Matrix, which matches implementers and possible funding sources with these initiatives, is provided in PART 5 of the Plan, along with a discussion of how the Committee prioritized the recommended actions.

Action Item #1: Provide Handicap Ramps on Street Corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way

A significant finding of the Plan's Existing Conditions Background Report (PART 3 of this Plan) was the tremendous amount of pedestrian travel that occurs along and across Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Pedestrian traffic is high along and across Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and is populated with not only handicapped individuals, but also children, baby strollers and elderly. Such travel is difficult due to the lack of handicapped facilities. The placement of handicapped ramps on all street corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way will strengthen and increase safe pedestrian movements. It is also important to note here the need to coordinate this improvement with Action Item #4, the widening of the sidewalk along the corridor.

Action Item #2: Repaint Crosswalks, Striping and other Safety Markings

Caltrans is responsible for striping and other pavement markings within their right-of-way along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Hwy. 59). The City of Merced is responsible for the side streets that intersect with MLK Jr. Way. The Committee felt that street maintenance, such as repainting street markings, is an immediate need and an inexpensive safety measure for both Caltrans and City-owned roadways.

Action Item #3: Provide Bus Turn-Outs on Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Despite the corridor's high pedestrian travel and presence of three bus routes, there are no bus pull-outs or bus stop amenities (bench, shelter and trash receptacle) on either side of Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Action

#3 calls for the placement of at least one of these improvements on each side of the road, sited in consultation with THE BUS.

Action Item #4: Strengthen Pedestrian Circulation by Widening Sidewalks along Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Though a large amount of pedestrian traffic already occurs on the road, improvements and widening are requested to address multiple issues facing this travel facility. A variety of pedestrian users, including wheelchairs, strollers, and large groups, often including children and bicyclists, use the 5-foot wide sidewalk that is located immediately adjacent to a curb with no park-strip or on-street parking, placing pedestrians immediately adjacent to the heavy auto and “big-rig” truck traffic. The City Engineer has indicated that there is enough right-of-way along Martin Luther King Jr. Way to widen the sidewalks on both sides of the roadway. The interface of these pedestrian users with a four-lane state highway and truck route speaks to the need and benefit of a wider sidewalk. This improvement should be coordinated with Action Items #1 and #8.

Action Item #5: Explore Design Options for Canal Street to be used as a Predominantly Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Road

Martin Luther King Jr. Way provides for all transportation modes, but is utilized primarily by autos and trucks. This action item seeks to provide a transportation corridor in the Plan Area that emphasizes pedestrians and bicycle travel to northern and southern destinations. Anchored by one of the area’s landmarks - McNamara Park - Canal Street, with its relatively low-vehicle traffic and access under State Route 99 to Downtown, affords an opportunity that cannot be achieved on other plan area roadways. The intent of this action is for further analysis, public outreach and design options to be explored to answer whether or not the idea has merit, and if so, what ultimate design and travel options can be deployed.

Action Item #6: Prioritize Infrastructure Needed along the Corridor and Pursue Improvements as Funding is Available

The Committee’s priority list has been established and is presented in PART 5 of this Plan. The Committee is aware that outside factors may affect the order in which those action items are implemented, and include: 1) limitations or restrictions in funding opportunities; 2) the need

for and associated time and costs needed for subsequent project-level environmental reviews; and, 3) challenges of interagency coordination and authority. Despite these barriers, Plan implementers will aim to maintain the spirit of the Committee's recommended priority, but will make necessary adjustments. These will be described and explained in the Annual Reports prepared by the City.

Action Item #7: Provide a Pedestrian Activated Crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Way

South Merced is very mobile as was shown when staff and volunteers assisted in data collection in late 2010 over a 4-day period of time where pedestrians, bicyclists and big-rig trucks were counted at four locations along Martin Luther King Jr. Way. As explained in the Existing Conditions Background Report (PART 3 of the Plan), one Zone was reported to have pedestrian movements crossing MLK Jr. Way from 221 times on 11/30/2010, to over 600 on 12/11/2010. Zone 2 had from 276 to 435 pedestrian movements on the same dates. Safe crossing for pedestrians/bicyclists at MLK Jr. Way was discussed repeatedly at Committee community meetings with the suggestion being a pedestrian-activated crosswalk and associated signs and lights on Martin Luther King Jr. Way. As part of this action, consideration of a pedestrian bridge should also be explored.

Action Item #8: Install Bulb-Outs on Side Streets that Intersect with MLK Jr. Way

Since MLK Jr. Way (Hwy. 59) is under Caltrans jurisdiction, any proposed improvements need approval from them. However, the City of Merced has jurisdiction on side streets that intersect with Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The Committee felt any improvements, such as bulb outs on the side streets, that can provide a shorter walking distance and include additional lighting and/or landscaping would bring much needed safety and beautification to the area.

Action Item #9: Limit Curb Cuts and Consolidate Access Points along the Corridor

Removing driveway curb-cuts provides opportunities for an improved pedestrian environment by removing vehicle-pedestrian conflicts and by providing space for landscaping. Removing curb-cuts also increases the traffic capacity of the highway and reduces potential vehicle conflicts. Alternative access to any given property may or may not exist, however. A full site assessment of these issues, along with maintaining adequate business access value, must occur before a decision to remove curb-cuts is made.

Action Item #10: Improve Lighting of Alleys and Side Streets

Through an energy grant and a long-term financing program (Siemens contract/energy grant), the City recently went through and changed out the street lights (1 for 1 replacement with energy efficient lighting). However, the grant did not include adding additional streetlights. The Committee felt that any new lighting should be energy efficient lighting, but that more lighting was also needed along the Corridor.

Action Item #11: Coordinate with Other Agencies to Divert Truck Traffic or Implement Improvements for Co-mingling all Corridor Travelers

The Committee's preference is to divert truck traffic from traveling on Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Diversion is consistent with long-term plans that direct traffic to the Mission Avenue Interchange after closure of the MLK/Hwy 59 on-and-off ramps. If diverting truck traffic becomes infeasible, then the Committee recommends that roadway improvements be installed on Martin Luther King Jr. Way to minimize the impacts of the heavy through and non-local truck traffic that impacts the roadway. Such features could include medians, and pedestrian activated stop-lights. For either method, coordination with Caltrans, the Highway Patrol, and the trucking industry will be needed.

Action Item # 12: Install New Water & Sewer Lines to Encourage Development along MLK Jr. Way

There are some commercially-zoned properties within the Focus Area that are not served by municipal water and/or sewer services. Providing these services will encourage redevelopment of under-utilized sites and the development of vacant sites.

Action Item #13: Undertake Streetscape Upgrades at Key "Gateway" Entry Points to the Corridor

Enhancing both private and public land along the Corridor is important to the Committee. With the exception of a few properties, the area is devoid of street trees, ornate lighting, or landscaping of any kind; some buildings are in a state of disrepair; and vacant properties are a continuous magnet for debris and have been used as a collection point for other unwanted items. The Committee recognized that many residents and business owners who take pride in South Merced routinely participate in organized "clean up" events.

Action Item #14: Encourage Existing Businesses to Enhance their Buildings and Sites to Further Improve our Gateways; Encourage Façade Improvement for Businesses along Corridor

The City should explore methods to allow and encourage private property owners to upgrade building façades, signage, and landscaping. Since traditional methods of funding such upgrades through redevelopment funds are no longer available; creative solutions need to be identified and pursued.

Action Item #15: Undertake Land Assembly to Facilitate Redevelopment with a Focus on Key Opportunity Areas

In order to attract a wider range of commercial development along the corridor, efforts are necessary to assemble adjacent smaller parcels.

Action Item #16: Offer Streamlined Review and Permitting for Projects that meet Pre-determined Eligibility Criteria which Support the Objectives and Actions of the Plan

Private development projects that include building and site upgrades consistent with the Plan's goal to increase building and sign aesthetics, more landscaping, and an improved pedestrian environment should be offered as well as streamlined review and permitting with the City. Outreach and participation by the business community should be an essential task to prepare and market this effort.

Action Item #17: Create a Positive “Brand” for the Corridor and Focus Area

As new businesses develop or existing businesses improve their buildings and/or sites, the Committee felt it was important to integrate a consistent landscape palette, lighting fixtures, street furniture, and trash receptacles for the Focus Area. They were also in favor of incorporating artwork such as sculptures, a welcome sign, organized murals on buildings, and other positive artistic means that reflect positive elements in South Merced.

Action Item #18: Pursue Infrastructure and Telecommunications Upgrades, Including the use of Renewable Energy

Similar to the provision of municipal sewer and water, business development is supported and encouraged in areas having telecommunication infrastructure and access to reduced energy-costs.

For example, recently enacted state laws permit voluntary districts to be formed whose purpose is to finance energy-efficiency upgrades for commercial users. Cities throughout the nation are assisting their business and industrial districts to access lower-energy costs through construction of renewable energy sources.

Action Item #19: Develop a “Planned Development” with a Designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Commercial Thoroughfare (C-T) for Properties along the MLK Jr. Way Corridor (Hwy. 59) including One Block on Either Side

The establishment of a Martin Luther King Jr. Way Planned Development (PD) is intended to allow for a greater type of land uses than is currently allowed. For example, the Committee noted the need for a greater range of neighborhood commercial services. After future adoption of the Martin Luther King Planned Development by the Merced City Council, some form of administrative review for subsequent land use proposals, instead of Planning Commission review through the Conditional Use Permit Process, should be further explored. Such action is intended to streamline the review process to incentivize land use change along the corridor. The exact location and types of land uses and subsequent review procedures need to be defined at a later date, and are not part of this Plan. (It should be noted that although there are benefits to having a PD Zone, the property owner may wish to be excluded.)

NOTE: Frank Quintero, Director of Economic Development, indicated that different zoning (other than a Planned Development) may be more appropriate. In general, this Committee supports actions that promote new, attractive developments and zoning that would encourage this.

Action Item #20: Implement Design Guidelines for New Construction of Businesses

Establishing a document titled “Design Guidelines for Building and Site Improvements along Martin Luther King Jr. Way,” will improve communication between the City and local business owners, laying the foundation for benefits to both. This user-friendly guide will inform readers of applicable City codes and how they apply to them, taking out any guess work or surprises, and the associated potential stress of dealing with regulators. The guide will also introduce readers to common, practical, and inexpensive optional methods to upgrade properties. Such methods would focus on the design-related actions recommended by the Committee.

Action Item #21: Develop Form Based Codes

The Committee expressed a desire for a form-based code to apply to the Plan area. A form-based code emphasizes high quality architecture as opposed to a zoning code based primarily on land use types. Additionally, a form-based code has the potential to allow a greater number of land uses, provided the site design and building have high aesthetic and architectural value. The Committee recognized that the effort to establish a form-based code for the Plan area would be part of a larger City-wide effort.

Action Item #22: Review Signage Flexibility along the Corridor

The Committee supports City efforts to examine possibilities of providing additional signage for retail uses near to but lacking frontage onto Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Action Item #23: Increase Police and/or Community Patrols to Discourage Criminal Activity

The Committee encourages additional police presence, additional lighting in the alleys and on the streets, and welcomes measures to remove blight in the area.

Action Item #24: Encourage Neighborhood Watch Groups

Recreation and Community Services are currently the lead in assisting in this effort.

Action Item #25: Evaluate Opportunities for Four-Way Stops

The Plan's mobility study supports the Committee's recommendation to evaluate the utility of installing a four-way stop along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, north of the Fairgrounds. While a large amount of east-west pedestrian traffic exists, issues of air quality impacts from associated stop-and-go traffic, and need of such improvement by vehicular cross-traffic, needs further review and consideration.

Section 1.3 - An Historical Perspective – “A Look Back to Look Forward”

In order to better understand why things are the way they are, it is important to reflect back on our history. It is for this reason that this Chapter is entitled, “A Look Back to Look Forward.” This section describes one of the oldest entryways into the City of Merced – State Highway 59, as well as one of Merced’s oldest landmarks – Merced Fairgrounds. A section of State Highway 59 and all of Merced Fairgrounds are located within the “Focus Area” of the Revitalization Plan and bring historical understanding and value to the community.

STATE HIGHWAY 59

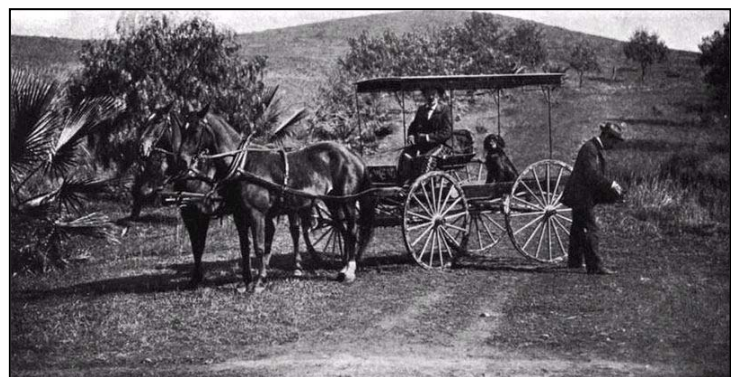
Merced has been a part of the earliest transportation systems from the beginning of California. Merced has witnessed boats (from the Merced River), horses, carriages, trains, and automobiles, which all lead to what we now refer to as some of our main highways. Highway 59 (originally named “Legislative Route 123”), which is most commonly used as a link to Highway 152/Pacheco Pass, has been one of the longest standing highways in California.

Riverboats and Rowboats

Before land was used as a source of transportation, explorers used rivers, such as the San Joaquin and Merced Rivers, to explore California.

Wagons and Carriages

Wagons and carriages made the riverboats and rowboats a thing of the past. Man-made trails for horse and carriages were made by luck and what was visible to the eye. Carriages in the past used the same constant trail until it became efficient and worn out enough to be called a “road.” By the year 1849, ox pulling crates became old fashioned and new and improved horses pulling wagons were the reliable and practical source of transportation. Not only did wagons, which are completely separate from carriages, encourage different groups of people and livestock to settle into the Merced area, but also gave way to many different ideas for transportation and road making. Los Banos, Merced, and Snelling became part of mail service stops.



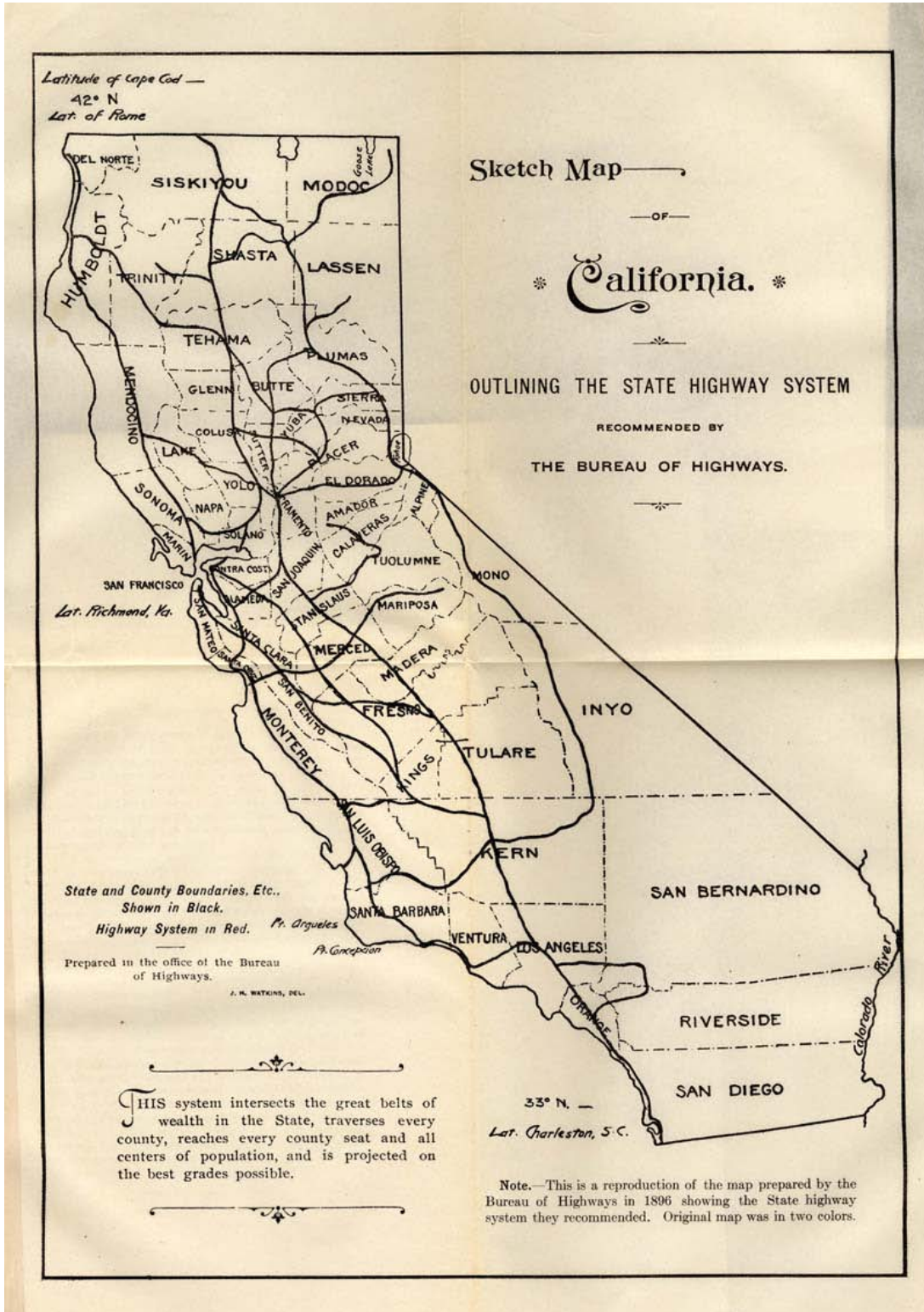
Railroad

The next stop on the transportation evolution was the railroad. Trains were used for one main purpose and that was to resolve the speed of mail delivery considered too sluggish for residents of the State of California. The arrival of the Central Pacific Railroad through the Central Valley brought a new importance to the area. Merced replaced Snelling as the county seat because of the arrival of rail transportation. Over time, other transportation routes were improved, and the City is now located at a crossroads served by two railroads and three highways. State Highway 59 is one of these routes.

State Highway 59

In 1895, the state legislature created the three-person Bureau of Highways to coordinate efforts by the counties to build good roads. The bureau traveled to every county of the state in 1895 and 1896 and prepared a map of a recommended system of state roads that would not only grow through 25-28 counties, but would land directly in several different cities, one being Merced. The proposal states that “A highway, commencing at a point on the state highway through Santa Clara County, at or near Gilroy (currently Hwy 152), and extending thence southeasterly and easterly...through counties of...Merced (currently Hwy 59), and Fresno” (pg. 74, *California Highways and Public Works*). The proposed system of state roads was submitted to the Governor on November 25, 1896. Much of the surrounding streets on Highway 59 were built after Highway 59 was established and a lot of the businesses found along the highway have been there for years and years. The road was widened to four lanes in 1957.

The map below is of that proposed State Highway System for California, which included State Highway 59, originally named Legislative Route 123, and US Route 99.



MERCED COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

Early Days

Except for a few years when money was scarce, and during World War II, Merced County has had a fair since 1891. The first Merced County Fair, representing the districts of Merced and Mariposa counties, was held in a pavilion on 18th Street on September 2, 1891. The beginning of the fair "as we know it today," according to the first fair manager, W.C. Woxberg, was a two-day event on Sept. 14-15, 1929, in the old Municipal Baseball Park we now call Applegate Park. The Merchants' Association sponsored fairs there through 1931 and usually had a rodeo and small 4-H livestock shows.

Today's fairgrounds began in 1931 with a small parcel at 11th and G Streets. In 1933, the State legalized wagering at racetracks, including Merced's, to support fairs, but for the first few years there wasn't enough money to cover the prizes paid out. In 1934, a building was erected to house the stock show. By 1936, the fair was broke, so there wasn't one that year. Donations by businesses got the fair going again in 1937. The next year the fair began charging 25 cents for general admission. Kids under 12 got in free.

The 1937 Merced-Mariposa Fair was a big deal and included a parade, a three-day horse racing program, livestock show, farm exhibits and a Hollywood Revue. By 1941, the fair was a financial success – the Pavilion was built, and the fair not only got out of debt, but ended up \$2,000 in the black "with an unheard of crowd of 18,000 people," according to Mr. Woxberg. But that wouldn't last. . .



Merced County Fairgrounds

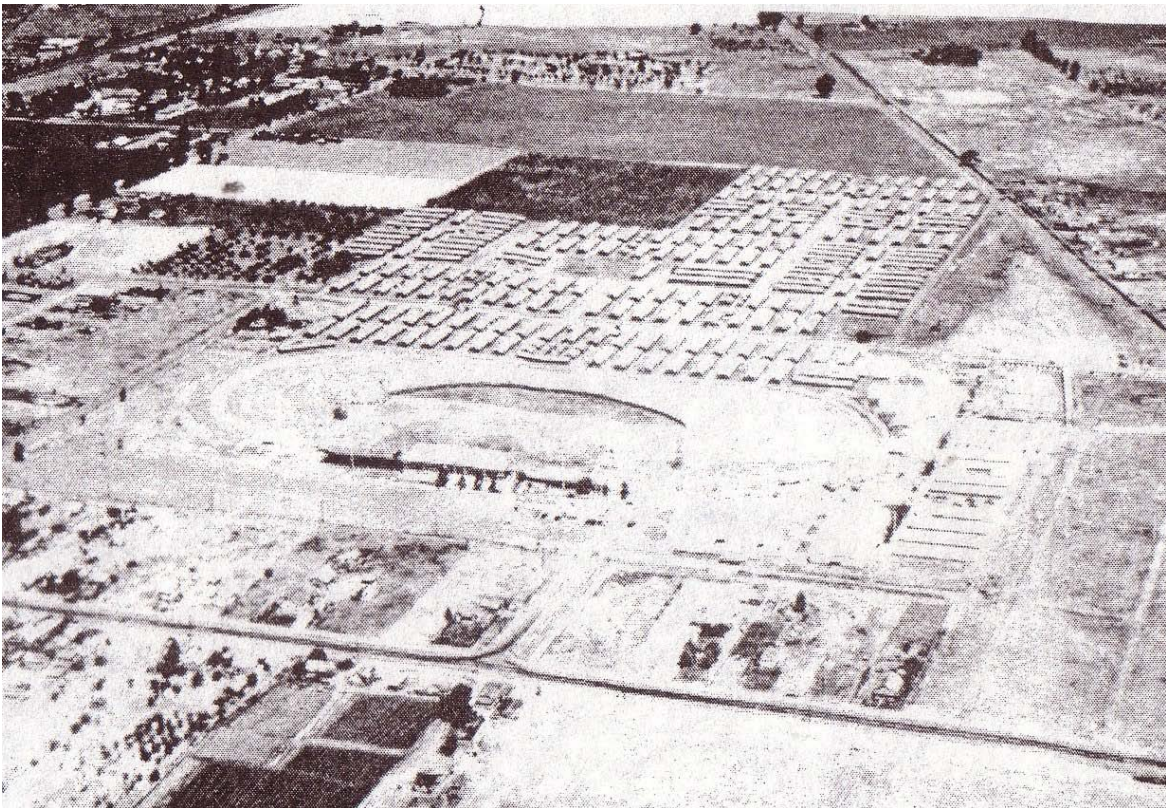


1939: 8 years after the opening of the Merced County Fairgrounds.

Merced Assembly Center

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which called for the removal of West Coast residents of Japanese ancestry. The fairgrounds were leased to the federal government and the construction of the Merced Assembly Center began on March 26, 1942. More than 1,000 men, including students from Merced High School and the US Army, erected more than 250 buildings. It took 11 days to complete the construction of the barracks and community buildings.

People of Japanese ancestry from the northern California coast, west Sacramento Valley, and the northern San Joaquin Valley occupied the Assembly Center from May 6, 1942, to September 15, 1942. The Merced Assembly Center housed a total of 4,669 people (with a maximum of 4,508 at one time).



1942: Japanese Detention Camp, 200 barracks held Japanese-Americans and American Soldiers.

Although their journey began at the Merced Assembly Center, the detainees were shipped to Granada, Colorado, where many stayed for up to three years in “Amache,” one of the 10 more

Permanent “relocation centers” built for the confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II.



First evacuee arrivals at Granada assemble alongside the train awaiting bus transportation to the relocation center which is located some 2-1/2 miles away. These evacuees are from Merced Assembly Center, Merced, California

Source: <http://www.bookmice.net/darkchilde/japan/granada.html> / Accessed 12-14-2010

After the war, Japanese-Americans became integral components of many communities. In 1988, the U.S. government formally apologized for the unconstitutional imprisonment of 120,000 Japanese Americans and granted them redress. In the spring of 2008, Representative Dennis Cardoza asked the Livingston-Merced and Cortez Chapters of the Japanese American Citizens League to work on a monument (photo below) to commemorate the 4,669 detainees of Japanese ancestry who spent their summer of 1942 at the Merced Assembly Center.

Source: <http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2010/02/09/1304518/merced-assembly-center-memorial.html#ixzz188HChWTw>



Suitcase Sculpture:
The suitcases represent transience. The young girl sitting on top of them adds the human element.

Camp Merced

There was a fair in 1942 but it didn't include many agricultural exhibits because farmers were too busy growing food to feed the nation. The fair was held only during daylight hours because of the wartime curfew and blackout restrictions. With the departure of the Japanese, the installation was turned over to the 4th Air Service Area Command. Later in 1942, Army personnel arrived at the fairgrounds for training, including a chemical warfare section and an infantry unit. After the war, the fairgrounds were turned over to the 35th District Agricultural Association and the fair returned in 1946 with a record-breaking attendance of 30,000. [Source: <http://www.militarymuseum.org/MercedAssyCenter.html> / Accessed 12-14-10.]

A Community Asset

In addition to the fair, the Merced County Fairgrounds has also housed a County Library branch, a fire station, a school for the handicapped, a preschool program and it was the "birthplace" of Merced College and Gracey Elementary School.

Sports

In 1949, to ensure that all local baseball teams had an up-to-date baseball field where they could play night games, a park was constructed at 11th and G Streets. Football games were played there before Stadium '76 was constructed at Merced College.

Museum

The County's museum was originally located at the fairgrounds in what was once a home facing onto J Street (Note: J Street was subsequently re-named Martin Luther King Jr. Way in May 1992). In 1948, remodeling began on the cobblestone building for the "J. Emmett McNamara Memorial Museum," named for the man who spearheaded the drive to acquire a permanent fair site. The museum and contents were moved to the Old Courthouse Building beginning in 1977. Today, it serves as a polling place during elections, and as the "Director's Lounge" throughout the year.

Emergency Services

A Merced County Fire Department station was located at the fairgrounds before moving to the new station across the street.

Community Organizations

Over the years, a variety of organizations have been housed at the fairgrounds including the Tuberculosis Association, The Polio Association, The American Cancer Society, the Bureau of

Reclamation, the local Farm Bureau Chapter, the Catholic Youth Organization, the American Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, the Sea Scouts, the Army Reserve, and a model railroad club.

Education

The Merced County Office of Education once leased space at the fairgrounds for a school for mentally handicapped children. For the first three weeks of the 1986 school year, the 650 students and staff of Leontine Gracey School held classes at the fairgrounds while their new school was finished. In 1963 Merced College also got its start at the fairgrounds.

Merced Head Start

The Merced Head Start Program serves families city-wide with over 200 infants, toddlers, and pre-school children (0-5 years of age) enrolled in the program. The Merced County Board of Supervisors delegated responsibility to the Merced Community Action Agency. In 2005 the Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) took over the existing Head Start Program which is located at the fairgrounds within a building near G Street. One bus serves the program; however, many children are either driven to the site or walk there with a parent or caretaker.

[Source: http://www.mercedcountyfair.com/pages/history/history_main.html]
Accessed 12-14-10



PART 2:

Plan Vision and Objectives



PART 2: OVERVIEW OF “PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES”

PART 2 describes the Plan area, issues, purposes and objectives of the Martin Luther King Jr. Revitalization Plan and provides an overview of how the Plan was crafted.

SECTION 2.1



Plan Area and Issues

SECTION 2.2



Purpose of the Plan

SECTION 2.3



Plan Objectives

SECTION 2.4



Development of the Plan

Section 2.1 Plan Area and Issues

In September 2009, the City of Merced was awarded an Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning Grant from the California Department of Transportation to prepare the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. This work was initiated by the City of Merced to establish a long-term vision for the future of this gateway neighborhood.

PLAN AREA

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way study area is bound by Highway 99 to the north, Childs Avenue to the south, and M and G Streets to the west and east respectively.



PLAN ISSUES

The age, scale and condition of buildings and infrastructure along the corridor vary widely, and there are some incompatibilities between land uses that have evolved over time. Many properties along Martin Luther King Jr. Way are suffering from ongoing disinvestment. While many well maintained properties are present along the corridor, the overall perception of blighted conditions has stifled investment in expansion, upgrades, or even new buildings.

The following is a list of opportunities and constraints in the Plan area.

Opportunities

- Potential for infill development
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle realm
- Add landscaping and trees
- Potential shopping center sites
- Vacant or underutilized lots
- Supplement street lighting
- Improve worn sidewalks, driveways, and add ramps
- Pedestrian crossings of Martin Luther King Jr. Way
- Improve drainage
- Increase private investment
- Use new projects or upgrades to begin transforming streetscape

Constraints

- Auto dominated nature of Martin Luther King Jr. Way
- Through Truck traffic
- Limited connectivity between South Highway 59 and G Street
- Limited cross-traffic control
- Limited landscape and tree areas
- Cannot go from one business to another without re-entering highway traffic

Section 2.2 Purpose of the Plan

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan has several purposes. Foremost, is the Revitalization of the corridor and adjacent areas. Knowing that an ingredient to successful revitalization is the presence of an advocate for change, the development of the Plan was crafted on a foundation of public participation to promote ownership and support for the Plan. The third purpose of the Plan is the presentation of simple, clear, and actionable initiatives to be carried out by responsible agencies and community partners.

REVITALIZATION

The City of Merced received an Environmental Justice Grant from Caltrans to devise a plan to revitalize Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Developed long ago, disinvestment of the corridor exists as evidenced by crumbling and cracked streets, alleys and sidewalks, and the need to plant street trees and add street lights. Improvement to this infrastructure is needed to serve the heavy pedestrian traffic in the area. Lack of utilities in some areas, heavy truck traffic, and other traits hinder the ability to attract new and engaging businesses. The Plan aims to result in a complete strategy that prioritizes needed improvements and includes a funding plan for the eventual construction of these facilities.

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING

The Plan was formed from the results of a community planning process, involving local stakeholders and the community at large who discussed creative solutions to stem further decline along Martin Luther King Jr. Way. A citizen-based ad-hoc committee developed the Plan with staff's guidance. By way of this process, the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor Revitalization Plan provides a consensus-based strategy to undertake targeted public investment and fosters public-private partnerships aimed to stabilize and enhance the corridor.

SPRINGBOARD FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

This plan is a springboard to change, containing simple yet effective actions recommended by community members who live, do business in, or are closely aligned with the Plan area. The Plan contains a Strategy Action Matrix that includes a prioritized list of recommended actions, along with a description of Plan partners, likely funding sources, and implementation mechanisms to use to achieve Plan objectives.

FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE FUNDING

The approval of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan will allow the City to position itself to compete for state and federal funds for implementation of the Plan Objectives in the coming years.

Section 2.3 Plan Objectives

The City of Merced was awarded an Environmental Justice Grant to prepare a plan that addressed four inter-related objectives. These objectives formed the foundation of the Plan's studies, public discussions, and outcomes. As a whole, the objectives guided the formation of a Revitalization Plan. Based on the grant application and award, the City of Merced Planning team set out to develop a planning vision document that would meet the Plan Objectives:

Objective #1

Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit).

Objective #2

Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People.

Objective #3

Assess the Feasibility of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses.

Objective #4

Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites.

Through these objectives, the Plan establishes a springboard of future actions that will occur through key initiatives including: reinvestment opportunities, public realm improvements, economic development, and interagency collaboration. This Vision can only be achieved through the coordinated and sustained efforts of both the public and private sectors and stakeholders throughout the Corridor. This report concludes with a list of initiatives that the City and its partners will undertake to further support the realization of this Vision.

The initiatives are loosely defined in order that public dialogue and final decisions as to the exact shape and form of the initiatives may be made in light of the actual funding source, additional public input, and environmental review. On the other hand, the initiatives clearly express the vision of the community members who have participated in the planning effort to prepare this Plan.

Objective #1 / Travel Modes

Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit)

One of the key action items that will result from the Plan will be the inclusion of multi-modal choices for travelers of the corridor. Presently, the corridor does not have a complete sidewalk system, nor does it contain appropriate bicycle facilities. This is highly unfortunate as the socio-economic realities of the neighborhood necessitate residents to use non-auto sources of transportation. The lack of improvements and the economic conditions of the communities force many residents to walk or ride bicycles on the shoulder of the state highway. In addition, sites will be identified for possible future intra-city bus stops. This study will result in a complete strategy that prioritizes needed improvements and includes a funding plan for the eventual construction of these facilities.



Above: A pedestrian navigating alongside a car and truck dominated roadway.

Objective #2 / Safe Movement

Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth Through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People

The highway (Hwy. 59) is a heavily traversed truck-route throughout the year. In addition, the highway currently serves as the primary north-south arterial through the community. Throughout the day, this heavy use causes severe strains on its overall efficiency. The study will identify where projects are needed to enhance the performance of the current state highway. Specifically, many of these improvement projects will allow for safe multimodal use. In addition to identifying where improvements are needed, the study will develop a logical phasing plan for the needed improvements. The misaligned intersections and lack of pedestrian and bicycle features limit the full functionality of the highway. Currently, there is no plan to address these needs. A thorough study will provide clear objectives and priorities, allowing progress to be made in highway system issues.



Above: A big-rig blocks a heavily trafficked crosswalk at Martin Luther King Jr. Way and 12th Street.

Objective #3 / Land Use Pattern

Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses

A comprehensive revitalization plan promotes more efficient land uses immediately adjacent to the roadway. Of particular interest, this study will locate appropriate sites for regional retail and professional centers. This effort is currently compromised by the traffic congestion, parcel assembly and misalignment of local roads. This study will investigate the most efficient placement of centers and construct a potential financing source for an eventual development. In addition to retail and professional centers, the same analysis will be conducted for affordable housing developments along the corridor.

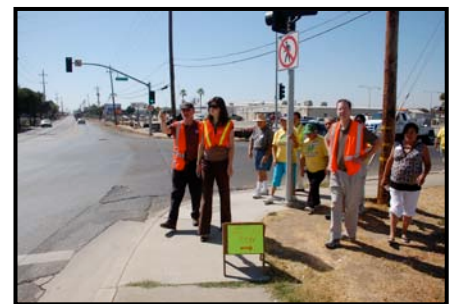
Below: Vacant land located at the southwest corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and W. 11th Street



Objective #4 / Road Crossings

Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites

In its present condition, the corridor presents a significant safety hazard for cross-highway automobiles, pedestrians and bicyclists. It is unfortunately a common sight to see mothers pushing strollers and senior citizens walking along the shoulder of the highway as traffic rushes by at 40 miles per hour. This dangerous situation is further exacerbated by the lack of controlled pedestrian crossings. Throughout the day, an onlooker can see numerous pedestrians running across four lanes of highway traffic attempting to dodge high speed trucks in an effort to cross the highway. This study will identify these deficiencies and develop a strategy to address these present safety concerns.



Above: On Saturday, September 25, 2010, at Childs Avenue and Hwy. 59, a facilitated neighborhood walk took place as part of a Walkable Community Workshop to learn what works, what doesn't work, and how to improve conditions for walking.

Section 2.4 Development of the Plan

The development of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan was carried out over the following four principle phases:

- Phase 1—Organize Resources and Involve the Public
- Phase 2—Describe the Existing Setting
- Phase 3—Develop the Action Strategy Matrix
- Phase 4—Establish a Method to Implement, Evaluate, and Revise the Plan

PHASE 1—ORGANIZE RESOURCES AND INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

A Planning Team was created from members of the Planning Department, Redevelopment Agency, and Interns from UC Merced, Stanislaus State University, and San Jose State University. A Project “Kick-Off” meeting for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan was held on May 6, 2010, with representatives from Finance, Redevelopment, Planning Staff and the Public Information Officer in attendance (Caltrans was unable to attend the kick-off meeting).

A Technical and Plan Preparation Team, consisting of City staff from key City departments, was also assembled to provide technical support to the Advisory Committee and to prepare draft and final plan elements (maps, tables, text, images, and formatting) of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. The planning process and Ad-hoc Advisory Committee were formally recognized by the Merced City Council. Full coordination with other local, county, and state agencies having an interest or responsibility in the study area occurred from the onset of this plan’s development through its completion.

Staff began engaging the public with outreach opportunities in June 2010, and continued with these efforts throughout the planning process, collecting survey sheets from the public at each outreach event. For additional details of the various public engagement efforts, please refer to PART 4. A detailed project timeline and task schedule was prepared to develop a baseline of existing conditions. A meeting with Planning and Redevelopment staff resulted in positive suggestions for the Plan’s future advisory ad-hoc committee to create a vision for the area that would be both economically viable and take advantage of its unique characteristics.

In October 2010, the City Council approved the formation of an Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee consisting primarily of residents and businesses within the Plan area, and recruitment of Committee members began. As part of the process to develop the Revitalization Plan, staff attended a Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) Meeting to request a member be appointed from RDAC to the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. In addition to that appointment, and as a result of the outreach efforts, a 13-member Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee was appointed by Merced City Council in December 2010.

The diverse Committee (see Part 1) consisted of long-term residents, business owners, property owners/managers, or representatives from various organizations, such as a non-profit, educational, health or faith-based, that is located within the project area, and other stakeholders in the planning area.

Plan sections were drafted in preparation of committee and public meetings, and finalized upon receipt of input at these events. The draft plan was reviewed and commented on by the Technical and Plan Preparation Team, the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, and affected and interested public agencies. Staff updates to RDAC every other month (opposite of the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Meetings) were also made. The public was also provided opportunities to review and comment (see PART 4).

PHASE 2— IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE THE EXISTING CONDITIONS

To identify study area assets, opportunities, and constraints, an assessment of the plan area's existing conditions was performed by the Technical and Plan Preparation Team with input from the public, stakeholders, and Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. A large part of this undertaking involved the collection of pedestrian/bicycle and truck data along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor between Childs Avenue and 14th Street. Aligned with Plan objectives, the existing conditions assessment focused on the following topics:

- Mobility
- Corridor Design and Safety
- Land Use
- Crossing Sites of the Corridor

Work was organized based on four objectives of the plan that addressed: 1) multi-modal transportation; 2) infill land uses; 3) highway enhancement projects; and 4) design and safety. Planning Staff and interns walked and photographed the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor identifying assets, constraints and opportunities for the Revitalization Plan. Various maps were prepared regarding infrastructure (e.g., missing, damaged, or in good repair), as well as identifying land uses in the focus area.

In November and December 2010, Planning staff, with the assistance of various volunteers from the City, Interns, and interested citizens (some of whom were later appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee), collected data and recorded the movements of pedestrians and bicyclists, and the number of trucks traveling along Martin Luther King Jr. Way between Childs Avenue and 13th Street over a 4-day period of time. The data collected has provided significant information in identifying opportunities to install improvements that provide safe crossings for all modes of transportation. For more information on the results of this effort, please refer to Section 4.2.3.

PHASE 3— DEVELOP THE ACTION STRATEGY MATRIX

Using the organization and information established in Phases 1 and 2, the foundation was set for developing the Action Strategy Matrix. With support from the Technical and Plan Preparation Team, the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee performed a series of facilitated exercises to generate the following components of the Plan:

- Confirm existing conditions report (amend/update as appropriate)
- Create a catalog of potential action alternatives
- Select implementation actions and prioritize them, emphasizing benefits vs. costs when appropriate

PHASE 4— IMPLEMENT, EVALUATE AND REVISE THE PLAN

The plan includes a plan implementation and maintenance section that details the formal process for ensuring that the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy remains an active and relevant document. The plan maintenance process includes a schedule for monitoring and evaluating the plan's progress annually. This phase includes strategies for continued public involvement and incorporation of the recommendations of the plan into other planning mechanisms of the City, such as the General Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, Permit Streamlining, and Development Design Guidelines.

The Action Strategy Matrix is a key element of the plan. It is through the implementation of these actions that the City of Merced can strive to attain the community vision expressed in the Plan. The Action Strategy Matrix includes the following topics:

- Recommended Actions
- Action Plan
- Accountability Plan



PART 3:

Existing Conditions Background Report



PART 3

PART 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS BACKGROUND REPORT

PART 3 is an assessment of existing conditions related to the four Plan objectives, and includes multi-modal transportation, land use patterns, crossing sites of the corridor and road design, and safety of the corridor.

SECTION 3.1



Multi-modal Transportation System

SECTION 3.2



Land Use Patterns

SECTION 3.3



Crossing Sites and Patterns of the Corridor

SECTION 3.4



Road Design and Safety of the Corridor

Section 3.1 Multi-Modal Transportation System

This Section describes the existing conditions regarding different forms of transportation, most specifically bicycles, pedestrians, and transit. A description of existing vehicle traffic (trucks and vehicles) conditions can be found in Section 3.4.

BICYCLES

While there are a great number of residents in the area that ride their bikes within the project area, most of the individuals that staff observed were either riding their bikes on sidewalks, against traffic, or riding on the side streets.

Current Bicycle Facilities

Bike route and bike lane facilities occur on the periphery of the Study Area. The area is served primarily by bike routes. The only clearly painted Bike Lane within the project area is on M Street near the intersection of 13th Street. Bike lanes are planned for G Street and 13th Street, between M Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. There are no bike facilities along Martin Luther King Jr. Corridor, nor are they planned. Of the bicyclists that choose to ride along the corridor, many of them prefer to ride their bikes on the sidewalks for personal safety reasons.

The figures on the following pages show the location of existing bike lane and bike routes in the Study Area, as well as future planned bike lanes.



FIGURE 3.1-1

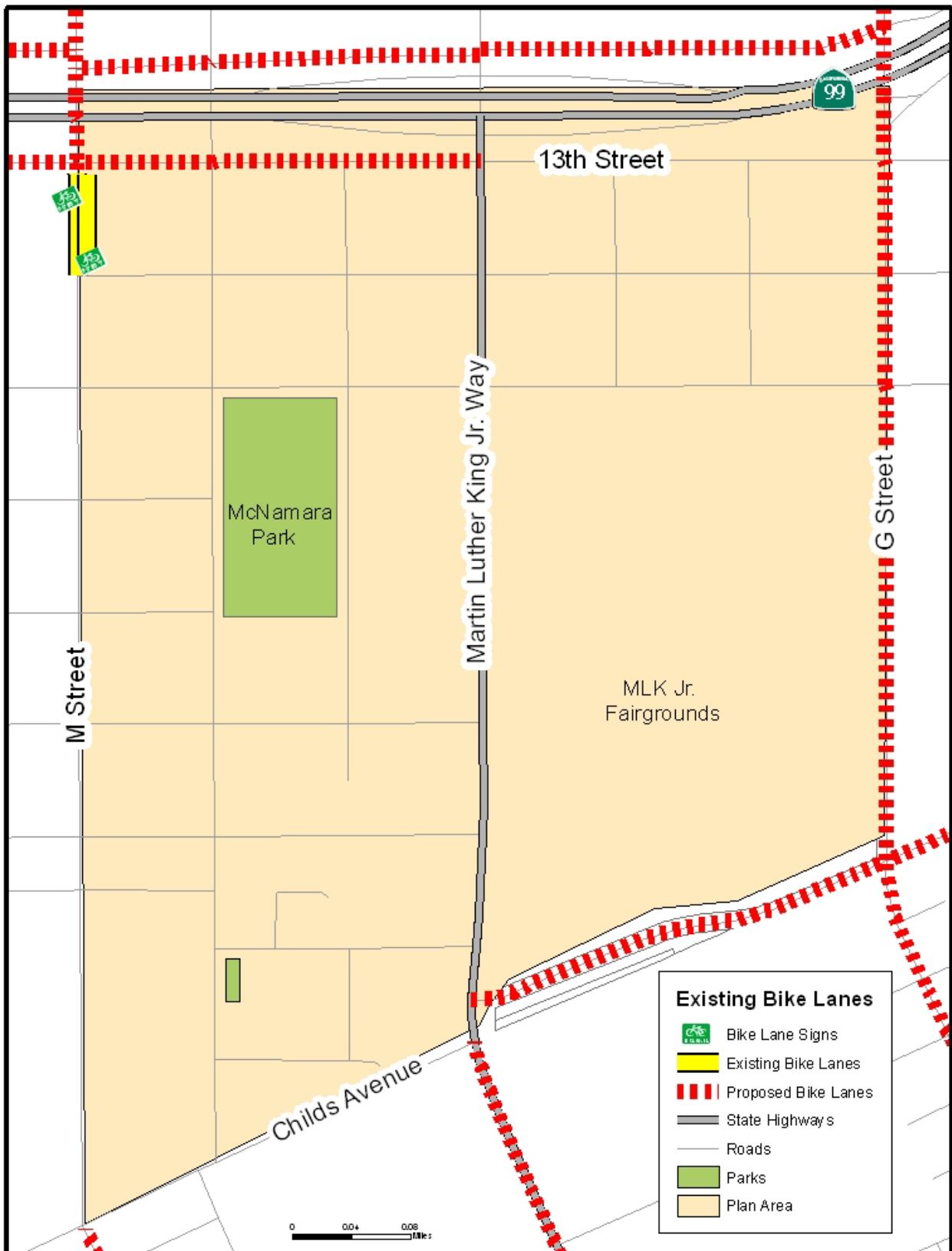
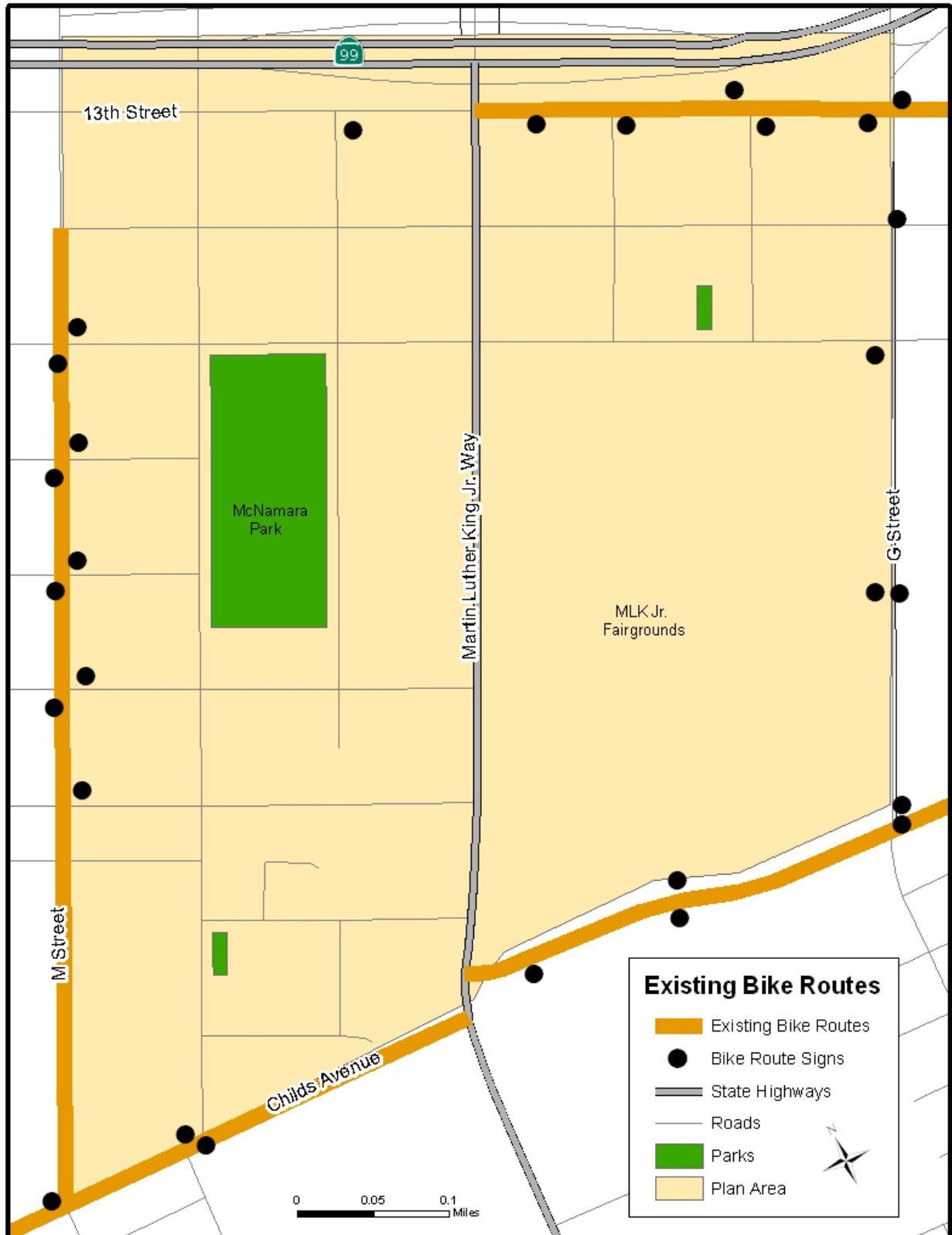


FIGURE 3.1-2



A Bicyclist's Perspective

The City of Merced is fortunate enough to have an avid bicyclist on the Planning Department staff. She agreed to take her bike out for a ride through the project area. The following is a recap of her experience.

As a cyclist comfortable with riding in traffic, riding in the MLK Jr. Way Revitalization Study Area was both enjoyable and somewhat frightful.

My assignment that fall day was to ride the study area and map where the City of Merced currently has bike lane pavement markings and corresponding bike lane signs, and also to map where signs indicate if a road is a designated bike route.

Choosing to tackle the busiest road with no bike lane in the best daylight conditions first, I chose to ride on-street on southbound Martin Luther King Jr. Way from W. 13th Street to Childs Avenue. Though a relatively short section, the road contains many holes, ruts, and fissures in the asphalt in the legal riding area (2-3 feet from curb face) that were wide enough to catch my mountain bike's wide tires in them. Thus, the very poor condition of the road required that I not only had to watch for cross traffic and pedestrians, but watch specifically where I placed the bike in the riding area. The awareness that I was actually at high risk on this section of road was definite and palpable, most especially while being passed closely by passenger vehicles and freight trucks. It felt dangerous enough that I thought that I had better not try out the northbound side of the street if I didn't need to.



There is a sidewalk on MLK Jr. Way, and the City of Merced does not prohibit riding on the sidewalk in this section of the City. However, riding on the sidewalk is also risky, due to the number of pedestrians in the area, the narrow width, sometimes lack of, and poor condition of the sidewalks, and the absence of ramps at the corners. Thus, with either on-street or sidewalk bicycle travel, this section is simply not safe.

From MLK Jr. Way, the route eastward on W. Childs Avenue and then northbound on G Street was pleasant, given the wide roads. The "Bike Route" designations given to these two streets are warranted, as they provide a good connection in both directions to and from the Fairgrounds, including the Saturday Flea Market property, and nearby schools. From G Street, east- and west-bound W. 13th Street was also rideable and is striped bike lanes, as they should be. The neighborhood "grid" streets within the area described by these streets, MLK Jr. Way, Childs Avenue, G Street, and W. 13th Street, which includes the Fairgrounds, were quiet and easily ridden. Vehicles generally travelled slowly and were courteous in giving me space on the road.

Crossing MLK Jr. Way at W. 13th Street, I traveled to the western boundary of the study area, M Street. Here, I traveled southward, then west to east, block by block, as I checked the streets for bike route signs and bike lanes. As I rode these blocks, I gained a real sense of the neighborhood and community, noting the busy corner market, at 8th and M Streets, where I saw kids buying their candy, and McNamara Park, at W. 11th and Canal Streets, where there were domino games underway, curious residents asking what I was there for, and children playing carefree in their front yards.

The streets in the western half of the study area, bounded by W. 13th Street, M Street, and Childs Avenue, were generally in good condition and easily ridden. Childs Avenue, a designated bike route, was wide and accommodating; however, the busy and awkward intersection of Childs Avenue and MLK Jr. Way required my knowledge and skills for riding in traffic, as there was no crosswalk on the right side of the road, where there is no sidewalk.

In this area, the east/west neighborhood street grid provided quiet travel between M Street, Canal Street, and K Street, which were wide enough to accommodate both vehicle and bicycle comfortably in the space, as well. These three were the most enjoyable streets to ride, especially the sections of Canal and K Streets that front the east and west side of McNamara Park. Given the genuine risk felt while riding on MLK Jr. Way, either of these two north/south connections would be this cyclist's choice for a close-by alternate connection to Childs Avenue from downtown or MLK Jr. Way.

PEDESTRIANS

This section discusses the existing pedestrian conditions within the study area.

Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Section 3.3 of “Existing Conditions Background Report,” provides an in-depth assessment of pedestrian-related traffic along and across Martin Luther King Jr. Way. For example, while most of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor has sidewalks, one area along this corridor does not have sidewalks installed--the east side of Martin Luther King Jr. Way north of Childs Avenue, and south of the Merced County Fairgrounds parking lot. However, discussions and coordination between Caltrans and the City will result in construction of this sidewalk along with a much needed crosswalk at the intersection of Childs Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The improvements are planned to occur in early 2012.



Overview

The Study Area, with the exception of the Merced County Fairgrounds, is a traditional grid-layout with a few modifications. With the exception of Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and one cul-de-sac street (Jonathan Court), all streets are designed with park-strips, though many street trees are missing. Other pedestrian-oriented features, such as street lights and handicapped ramps, also exist though not consistently throughout the neighborhood.

Figure 3.1-3 displays pedestrian-oriented features that are missing in the Study Area (page 3-9).

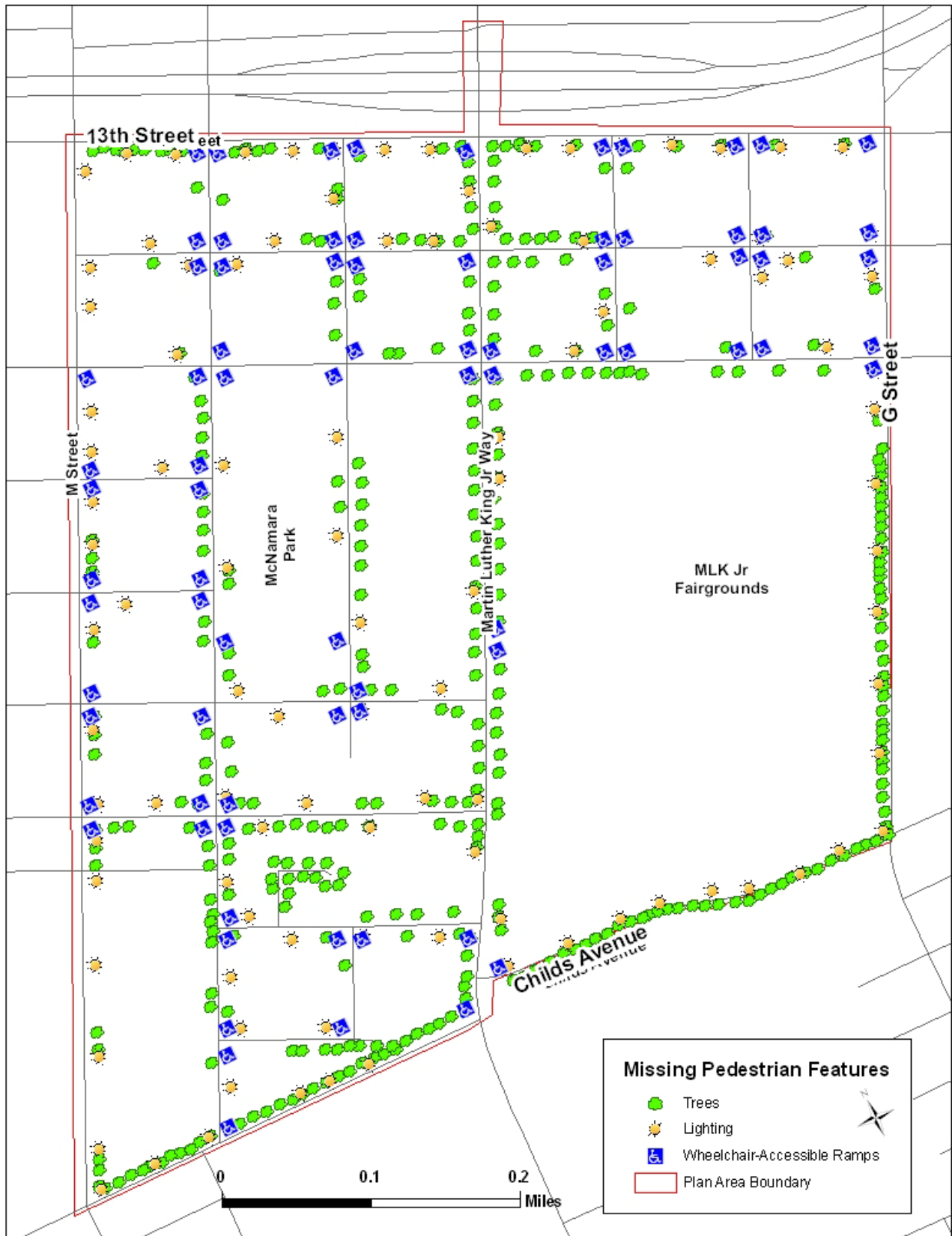
Safe-Routes to School

According to the Caltrans website, the Safe Routes to School program is an international movement that has taken hold in communities throughout the United States. The concept is to increase the number of children who walk or bicycle to school by funding projects that remove the barriers that currently prevent them from doing so. Those barriers include lack of infrastructure, unsafe infrastructure, and lack of programs that promote walking and bicycling through education/encouragement programs aimed at children, parents, and the community. Through the years, the number of children walking or bicycling to school has dropped dramatically. Thirty years ago, 60% of children living within a 2-mile radius of a school walked or bicycled to school. Today, that number has dropped to less than 15%. Roughly 25% commute by school bus, and well over half are driven to or from school in vehicles. Back then, 5% of children between the ages of 6 and 11 were considered to be overweight or obese. Today, that number has climbed to 20%. These statistics point to a rise in preventable childhood diseases, worsening air quality and congestion around schools, and missed opportunities for children to grow into self-reliant, independent adults.

Safe Routes to School Programs are intended to reverse these trends by funding projects that improve safety and efforts that promote walking and bicycling within a collaborative community framework. It is through local champions working with a coalition of parents, schools, professionals in transportation, engineering, health, and law enforcement that the most sustainable projects are expected to emerge.



FIGURE 3.1-3



TRANSIT

Merced is primarily served by three regional transit systems, which are “The Bus,” “Cat Tracks,” and “YARTS,” with various other private transportation providers in the area (e.g. Medical transport, school buses, etc.). Even with three transit providers within the Merced City limits, none of these have specific designated stopping points along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor.

“The Bus” has excellent coverage in the Plan Area, including two regional bus routes (10 and 10A) that travel along Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor. These two regional routes’ destination is the southwestern area of Merced County (Los Banos, Dos Palos, and El Nido). There are no local transit stops along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor within the project area. In the Study Area, Route 3 travels on M Street, Route 9 travels on 13th Street, and Route 5 travels on G Street.



“Cat Tracks” (UC Merced’s transportation system for students) doesn’t have any routes at this time that travel south of Main Street (previously 17th Street) within Merced. “YARTS” (Yosemite Area Rapid Transit System) has one route that comes to Merced and then travels to Yosemite National Park. This route does not stop within or traverse through the study area at this time.



Section 3.2 Land Use Patterns

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter describes existing land use conditions in the study area, and serves to lay the foundation to imagine and define changes, where appropriate, of the land use pattern of the study area. The findings of the existing land use conditions will be used as an aid to accomplish the third objective of the plan, which is to assess the feasibility for new office, commercial and residential land uses, specifically:

- Prepare a comprehensive revitalization plan that promotes more efficient land uses immediately adjacent to the roadway;
- Suggest appropriate sites for retail and professional centers; and,
- Define potential financing sources for eventual development of sites.

The Chapter begins by describing the different land use districts within the planning area, and then shifts gears to describe in detail its “assets,” “opportunities,” and “constraints,” using maps, photographs, and text. The Chapter concludes with a summary assessment of existing land use patterns within the study area.

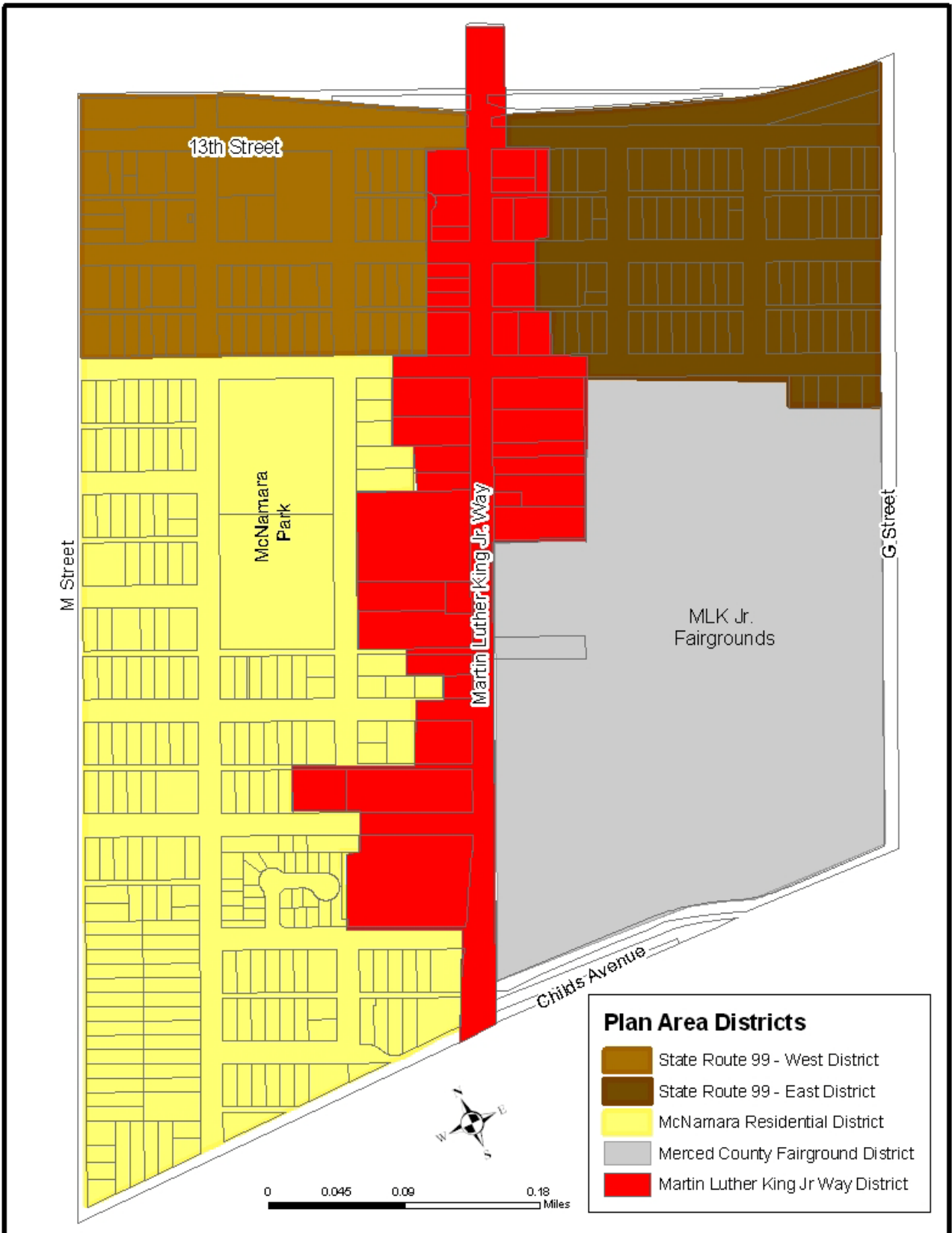
EXISTING LAND USE AND CONDITIONS

Plan Area Districts

Project team members identified the existing land use composition of the study area by using the City’s Arc Map “assessor parcel data” as a base document, upon which field observations of the actual land uses were recorded. Five distinct districts emerged from the land use study, whose acreages are:

Merced County Fairground District	53-acres or 33% of study area
McNamara Residential District	47-acres or 29% of study area
Martin Luther King Jr. Way District	25-acres or 16% of study area
State Route 99 -West District	18-acres or 11% of study area
State Route 99 -East District	18-acres or 11% of study area

FIGURE 3.2-1



Martin Luther King Jr. Way District - Although only consisting of 16% of the non-roadway land in the study area, this District is the focus of the Revitalization Plan. It is comprised of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor and contains a total of 25 acres of land. Twenty of these acres are occupied with “Minor Commercial” land uses, with 3 acres of Government Land and 2 acres of vacant land. The corridor is dominated by heavy commercial uses, primarily automotive. Commercial establishments include tire sales, auto repair and service, a few restaurants (mostly located within one strip development, as well as two small, independent buildings), a laundromat, multiple liquor stores, County uses (Fire Department and Public Works Administrative Offices), car rental, and other industrial uses, such as a small distribution site. This District has a high ratio of vacant lots, accounting for 40% of the 5-acre total for the entire study area. The primary thoroughfare is Martin Luther King Jr. Way, which serves as both an automobile route and a route for trucking.

State Route 99 Districts (East and West) – These Districts are bounded on the north by State Route 99, on the south by 11th Street, on the eastern and western edges by the project area boundaries (M and G Streets), and is bisected into two parts by the Martin Luther King Jr. Way District. While both areas are generally similar, there are some differences. The west side contains 18 acres or 11% of the study area, and includes a church and some government-owned properties, whereas these are absent in the east. The east side contains 83 lots compared with 67 lots on the west side, with the difference mainly due to fourteen (14) more “Residential (1 Dwelling) Units.” The east side also contains “Minor Commercial” land uses, whereas the west side does not. Although the east side also contains 18-acres or 11% of the study area, it has more vacant lots than does the west side. The street layout of both east and west sides is a traditional grid. Pedestrian activity and cycling appear to be high-frequency modes of transportation.

McNamara Residential District - This District is bound on the north by 11th Street, on the east side by the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor, on the west side by M Street (project area boundary), and on the south by Childs Avenue (project area boundary). The District is 47 acres in size and comprises 29% of the study area acreage. It also includes the greatest variety of land uses. The dominant land uses in the neighborhood are residential, with single family homes occupying 20 acres on 116 lots. The second largest land use is “Residential (2-4 Dwelling Units),” occupying 12 acres on 65 lots. Unlike the State-Route 99 Districts, this District is served by a few small commercial establishments that are located within the residential neighborhoods. These businesses tend to be liquor and convenience stores. This neighborhood benefits from the presence of McNamara Park, as well as the City of Merced Police South Station, which is located within the park. As shown on Figure 3.2-1, the street layout of the District is a traditional grid with occasional termini (end).

Merced County Fairground District – Containing 53 acres or 33% of the study area, this District consists of the Merced County Fairgrounds, which is owned by the State of California, but lies within the project area. It contains the fairground facilities, as well as surrounding offices and other uses, primarily located along Martin Luther King Jr. Way. It should be noted that with the exception of the main entrance, this District is entirely fenced off from the rest of the project area.

Land Use Categories

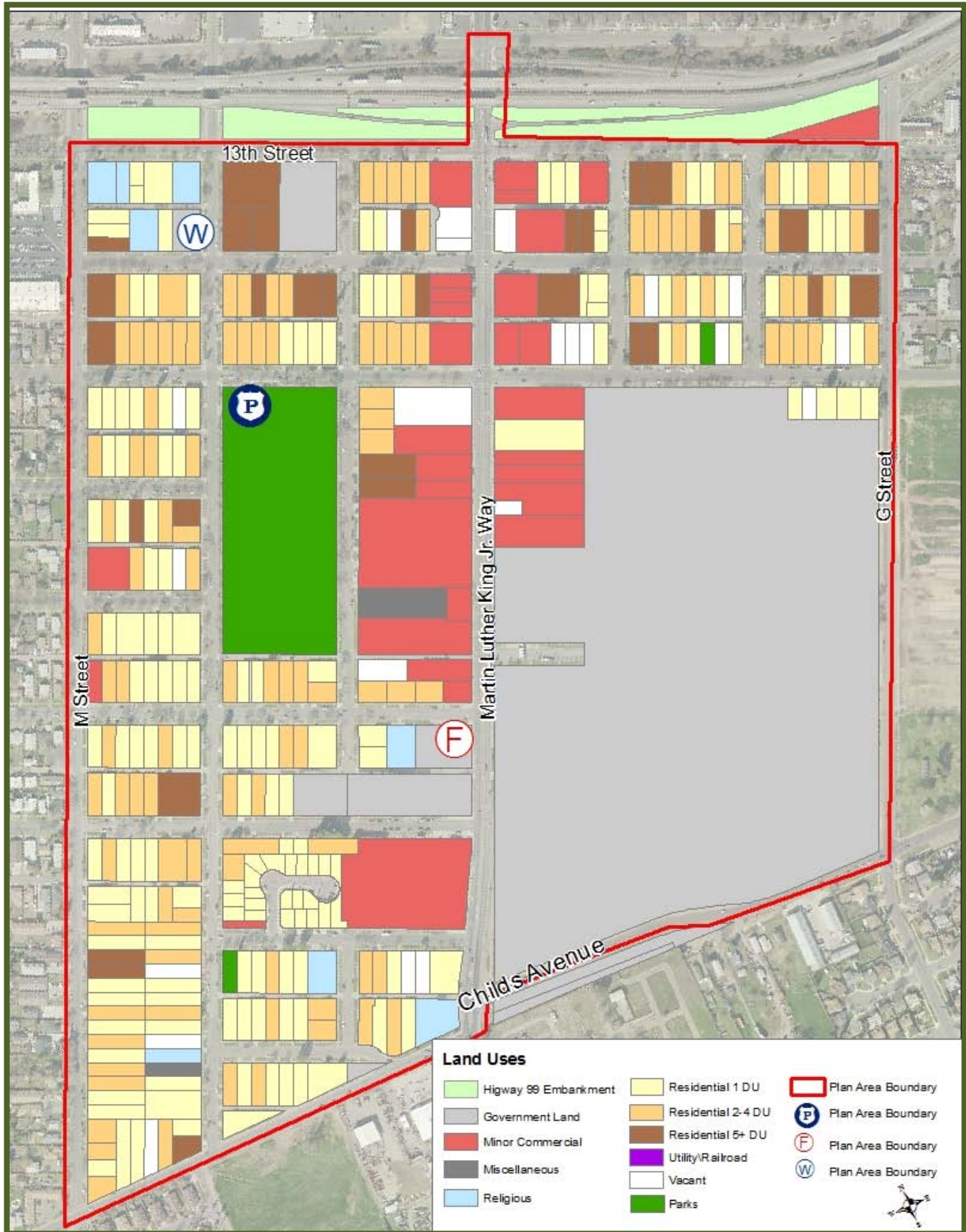
The Geographic Information System (GIS), a computer resource that provides *Assessor Parcel Data*, includes numerous categories of land use types that actually exist on the land. The State Route 99 Embankment (see below) was added to recognize the unique non-taxed land in the study area. Figure 3.2-2 depicts the spatial distribution of these land use categories. Table 1 and Table 2 present the amount of acreage and number of lots that occur with respect to the Plan Area Districts and Land Use Categories.



Photos show State Route 99 Embankment (along W. 13th Street).



FIGURE 3.2-2



	MLK Jr. Way	Fairgrounds	McNamara	SR 99- West	SR 99- East	Total No. of Acres	% of Total Study Area
Government Land	3	53	9	2	0	67	42%
Minor Commercial	19	0	1	0	1	21	13%
Misc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Religious	0	0	1	1	0	3	2%
Residential (1 DU)	1	0	20	3	5	29	18%
Residential (2-4 DU)	0	0	12	5	5	22	13%
Residential (5+DU)	0	0	2	4	3	9	6%
Utility	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Vacant	2	0	2	0	1	5	3%
SR 99 Embankment	0	0	0	3	2	5	3%
Total Acres	25	53	47	18	17	160	100%
Percent of Total Study Area	16%	33%	29%	11%	11%	100%	

	MLK Jr. Way	Fairgrounds	McNamara	SR 99- West	SR 99- East	Total No. of Lots	% of Total Study Area
Government Land	3	1	4	2	0	10	3%
Minor Commercial	28	0	3	0	3	34	9%
Misc	0	0	1	0	0	1	0%
Religious	0	0	4	4	0	8	2%
Residential (1 DU)	2	0	116	18	32	168	41%
Residential (2-4 DU)	0	0	65	28	27	120	30%
Residential (5+DU)	0	0	8	11	12	31	8%
Utility	0	0	0	1	0	1	0%
Vacant	5	0	8	1	8	22	6%
SR 99 Embankment	0	0	0	2	1	3	1%
Total Number of Lots	38	1	209	67	83	398	100%
Percent of Total Study Area	10%	0%	52%	17%	21%	100%	

Key Study Area “Land Use” Characteristics

With roadways, the total size of the study area is approximately 206 acres. Not counting public roadways, the study area consists of 160 acres divided into 398 lots.

Government Lands: When looking just at the 160 acres of non-roadway lands, the highest percentage of land occurring in the study area is “Government Land,” at 42%. Sixty-seven (67) acres is designated “Government Land,” with fifty-three (53) acres allotted to the Merced County Fairgrounds. Hence, the government controls most of the land within the study area, primarily as roads and the fairgrounds.



Low Density Residential: The second highest ranking land use of the non-roadway lands consists of twenty-nine (29) acres of “Residential (1 Dwelling Unit),” with 168 lots, mostly occurring in the *McNamara Residential District*.



Minor Commercial: Twenty-two (22) acres of “Minor Commercial” with 34 lots are located mostly in the Martin Luther King Jr. Way District.



Medium Density Residential: Twenty-two (22) acres of “Residential (2-4 Dwelling Units),” with 120 lots, are concentrated in the *McNamara Residential District*.



High Density Residential: Another nine (9) acres are occupied with “Residential (5+ Dwelling Units),” which brings the total acreage of residential land to sixty (60) or 37% of the non-roadway lands. Residential lots also account for a large portion of the lots in the study area, capturing 319 of the overall 398 lots, with just over half of the residential lots being occupied with single-family homes.



Vacant Lots: The area has five (5) acres of vacant land spread across 22 lots



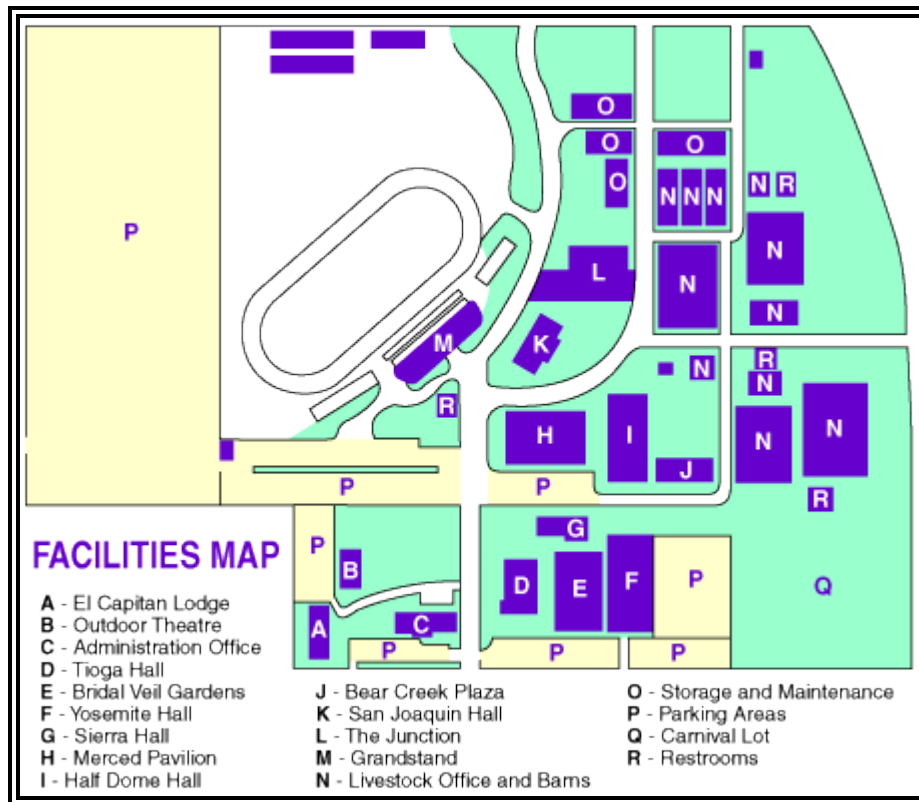
Religious: The area has three (3) acres of land designated “Religious” spread across eight (8) lots.



Public Lands / Government Facilities

Merced County Fairgrounds - The Merced County Fairgrounds covers 53 acres, generally bound by Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Childs Avenue, G Street, and 11th Street. The land is owned by the State of California under the supervision of the 35th District Agricultural Association. The Fairgrounds property contains the fairground facilities, as well as surrounding offices and other uses, primarily located along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (see site plan below). The Merced County Fair plays an important role in the economic vitality of the community as a whole as well as the study area. According to a study by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, in 2009, the Merced County Fair had a \$30,615,000 positive economic impact with 533,523 people attending the Merced County Fair and other events held at the Fairgrounds. In 2009, the Fairgrounds hosted 689 non-fair events (plus 6 fair days), with non-fair estimated attendance of 465,019 (+ 68,504 fair for a total of 533,523). The Merced County Fair generated \$251,000 in tax revenue and employed 354 full-time employees with a labor income of \$9,728,000 in 2009.

FIGURE 3.2-3



Merced County Fire Station – The Merced County Fire Station 81 is located on ½ acre at the southwest corner of 8th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. This station also serves as the administrative offices for the Merced County Fire Department as well as the Emergency Operations Center and the Prevention Bureau.

Merced County Public Works Administration – The Merced County Public Works Administration Office is located on 2 acres at the northwest corner of 7th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The facility houses the administrative offices of the Merced County Department of Public Works along with maintenance and fleet operations.

McNamara Park/City of Merced Police South Station – McNamara Park is located on 8.7 acres of City of Merced property, which also contains the City of Merced Police South Station, generally bounded by 11th Street, K Street, the alley between 9th and 8th Streets, and Canal Street. The Park includes a playground, picnic shelter, swimming pool, ball fields, restrooms, soccer fields, horse shoe pit, recreation hall, barbeque grill, and basketball courts. (See the “Recreational Facilities” section beginning on page 3-22 for more details.) The City of Merced Police South Station is located at 470 W. 11th Street and serves the community in a wide variety of manners that range from interpretation for officers in the field to helping individuals work their way through the criminal justice system as well as intervention with at risk families. Animal Control, Parking Enforcement, and Volunteers In Police Service (VIPS) are all located at the station.



South Merced
Police Station



Existing Zoning

The zoning along the Corridor itself (Figure 3.2-4) is mostly General Commercial (C-G) with a small Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) area at the corner of Childs and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The Merced County Fairgrounds property is actually zoned Low Density Residential (R-1-6), which would normally allow only single-family homes. [It should be noted that the Fairgrounds is State-owned property so it is exempt from City zoning regulations.] Residential Zoning exists throughout the Study Area.

General Commercial (C-G) is defined in Merced Municipal Code (MMC) Section 20.28 and generally allows such uses as wholesale businesses, warehousing, auto service stations and repair facilities, building material sales yards, contractor’s storage yards, animal hospitals, bakeries, truck depots, fuel & feed storage, carpenter & machine shops, print shops, cemeteries, furniture upholstery shops, and plant nurseries as principally-permitted uses, which means such businesses may locate there without any special approvals from the City.

Conditional uses in the C-G zone, which can be approved by the Planning Commission through the conditional use permit (CUP) process, include public uses, commercial recreational facilities, concrete mixing yards, limited retail uses, car washes, drive-through restaurants, day care facilities, and personal services (beauty salons, massage, nail salons, etc.).

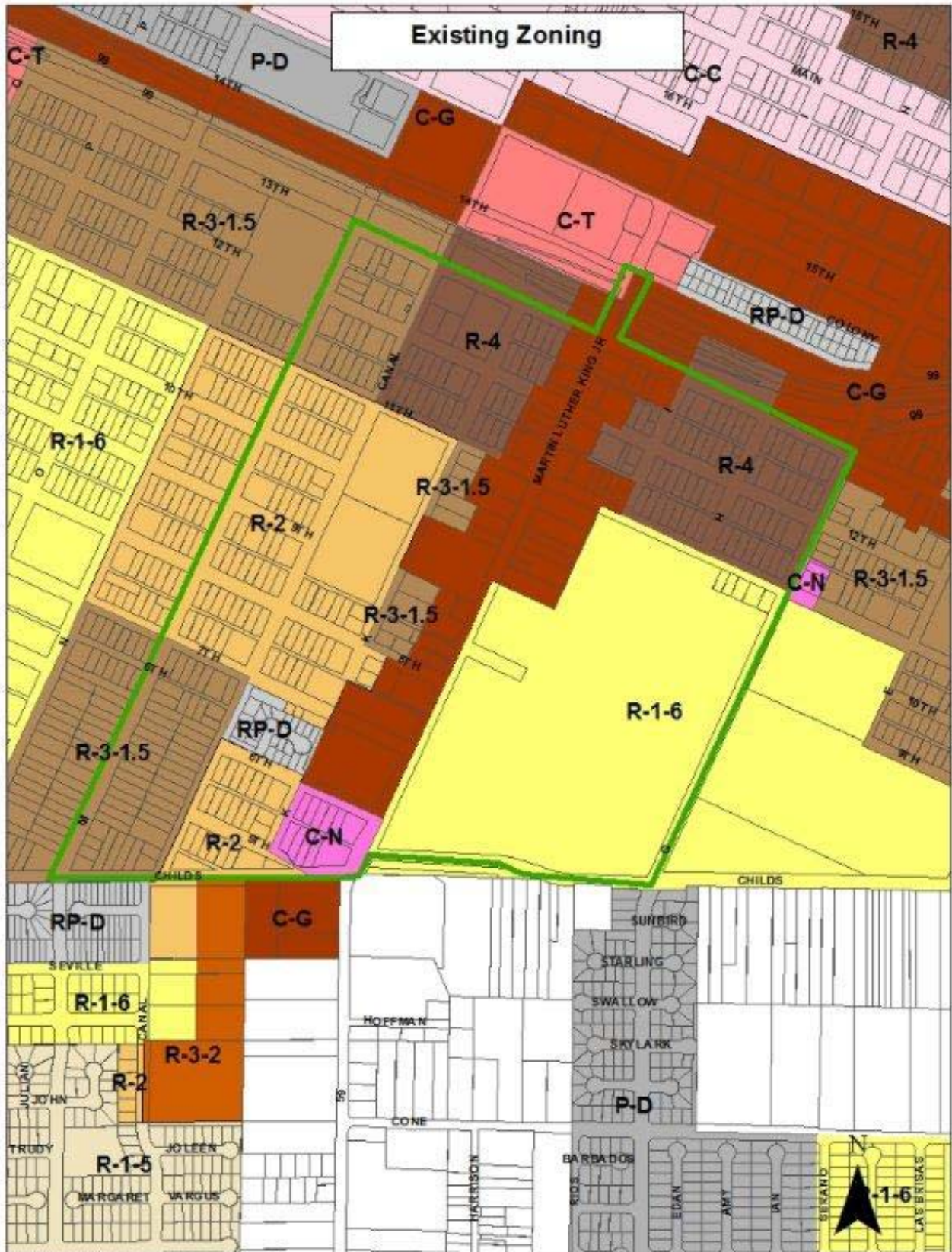
The purpose of the Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) zone as defined in Merced Municipal Code (MMC) Section 20.22 is “to provide a center for convenience shopping in a residential neighborhood. New C-N districts shall have a minimum of 3 acres and shall be located only where analysis of residential population demonstrates that such facilities are justified.” The C-N zone allows such uses as retail businesses and services supplying commodities or performing services for residents of the neighborhood (such as grocery stores, drug stores, barber and beauty shops, laundry, professional offices, and banks), restaurants and cafes (but not ones that serve alcohol or include entertainment or dancing), and personal services as principally permitted uses. Conditional uses include public uses, auto service stations, sidewalk cafes, social halls, drive-in or drive-through restaurants, residential uses, theaters, restaurants that serve alcohol, car washes, convenience markets, supermarkets, daycare facilities, retail businesses under 10,000 square feet selling alcohol for off-site consumption, and tattoo parlors.

Medium Density Residential (R-2) is defined in MMC 20.12 and generally allows residential uses (single family homes and duplexes) from 6 to 12 units per acre or 1 unit for each 3,000 square-feet of lot area.

High to Medium Density Residential (R-3-1.5) is defined in MMC 20.14 and generally allows residential uses (homes, apartments, and condos) from 12 to 24 units per acre or 1 unit for each 1,500 square feet of lot area.

High Density Residential (R-4) is defined in MMC 20.16 and generally allows residential uses for 24 to 36 units per acre or 1 unit for each 1,000 square feet of lot area. Conditional uses in most residential zones could allow churches, schools, nursing homes, social halls, and day-care facilities with a conditional use permit approved by the Planning Commission.

FIGURE 3.2-4



ASSETS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

This section of the report discusses the assets, opportunities and constraints that exist within each of the four areas of the corridor. Because there are some strengths and weaknesses that are relevant corridor-wide, the discussion first focuses on the entire corridor before addressing each section of the corridor individually.

Assets

Although the study area is marked by disinvestment, it also contains a framework of positive features that if protected and enhanced, could help to form a foundation for revitalization. These area wide assets include the existence of parks and open space features and nearby schools; streets lined with mature trees and sidewalks that provide a pleasant walking environment; a public-street right-of-way network that allows for all forms of transportation; a large variety of land uses in which to live, play and work; and vibrant walkable neighborhoods where people are out-and-about their day's business. The study area has "location-location-location" traits, located within walking distance of downtown, having direct access to State Route 99, and with parks, schools, and commercial and employment centers nearby.

Job Sites / Asset

What the area lacks in major employers, it makes up for in the variety of employment opportunities. The small scale nature of businesses provides stability against large swings in availability of nearby jobs, and also provides for a variety of commercial services. The Martin Luther King Jr. Way District contains the largest grouping of businesses which is predominantly automobile-related.

Vibrant Use Areas / Asset

A variety of uses offer the surrounding community opportunities for social gatherings and cultural events. These include Club Mercedes, the Merced County Fairgrounds, McNamara Park, mini-parks and numerous churches. A local fire station and police substation also serve as important social anchors.

Open Spaces and Recreational Sites / Asset

The following descriptions appear in the *2004 Merced Park and Open Space Master Plan*.

McNamara Park McNamara Park is a very heavily used park, and contains the largest City-owned swimming pool. Although this park is small, it serves the community park function. There is a fairly large children's play area with a sand surface, a play structure, and spring toys. A basketball court is located adjacent to the parking lot. There are also two lighted softball fields. The park was developed in a piecemeal fashion, and none of the architecture or materials are consistent. The youth drop-in center is a former fire station and could use significant renovations. The police station is new and fairly attractive, but was not designed to fit into an overall architectural program for the park.



11th and H Mini Park* This is one of the smaller (mini-park) sites (about 7,500 square feet) and does not appear to get much use.

Love Veasley Family Park* This park is located at 6th and Canal Streets and is the size of a single family home site (about 7,500 sq.ft.). The play structure is very small, and there are no other facilities or landscaping at the park. This site is within walking distance of Gilbert Macias Park, McNamara Park and Harriet Tubman Park, all of which have nicer and more interesting play equipment.

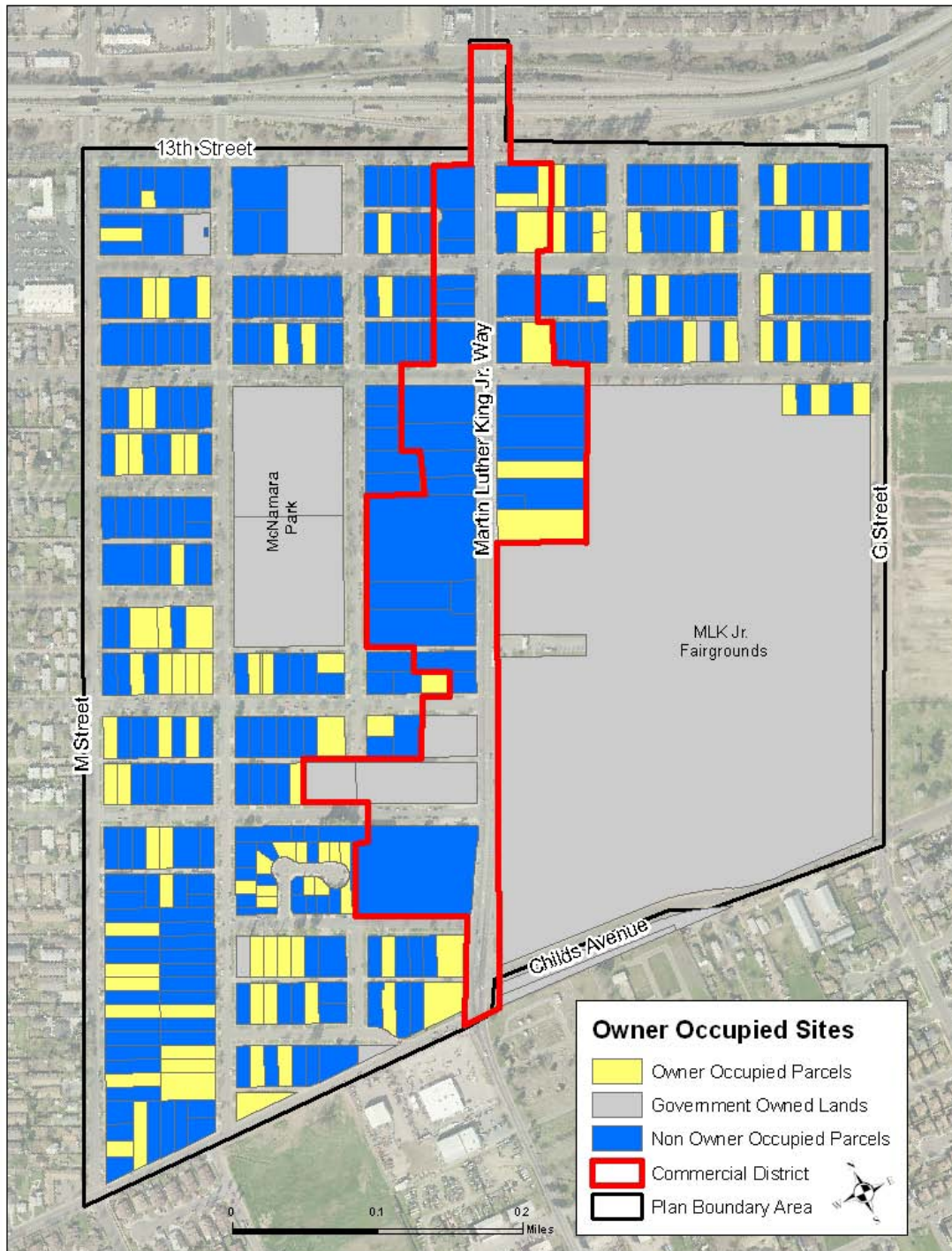
- * Due to these parks' limited recreation value and overlapping service area, the *2004 Merced Park and Open Space Master Plan* recommended that the City should consider disposing of these sites. They are the size of residential lots, and are located among single family residences.

State Route 99 Frontage The embankment of State Route 99 forms the study area's northern boundary {with the exception of the roadway (Martin Luther King Jr. Way) directly beneath the Highway 99 overpass to 14th Street}, and is characterized by a dense planting of mature trees located in a wide band of property set between 13th Street and the southern edge of an elevated freeway, giving the area a forested sloped appearance. These trees form a visual barrier to the elevated freeway, although noise can be obtrusive to occupants of properties on the south side of 13th Street.

Owner-Occupied Housing / Asset

Of the 388 non-government owned lots, 102 are owner-occupied. The majority of these lots are single-family homes. The Diagram below depicts the spatial distribution of owner-occupied lots. Although there are comparatively few of these lots, they are distributed fairly evenly throughout the study area.

FIGURE 3.2-5



Opportunities

While there are opportunities for new development, reinvestment of existing structures, and improved living conditions for many existing and future residents, there are an equal amount of constraints (see discussion in next section). Based on the study area's location and structural nature of the neighborhood, opportunities for redevelopment of residential and commercial lots exist throughout the area in the form of vacant and underutilized lots. But the largest opportunities lay in upgrades and reinvestment of existing structures by private owners. Strategic public investments, assistance programs and improvements could spur private interest to create a renaissance (rebirth) in the area.

Some stakeholder interviewees noted that the corridor was in better physical condition than it has been in the past, particularly near the airport, but that improvements are mitigated by a general sense of disinvestment and stagnation, if not actual decline. Despite the challenges facing the corridor, some interviewees found that the existing conditions presented several strengths that could be leveraged for redevelopment and revitalization. Specific strengths include:

- A number of vacant or underutilized lots available for redevelopment.
- The possibility of a large grocery store and ancillary stores at Canal Street and Childs Avenue (just outside of the focus area).

Vacant and Underutilized Land Assessment

State Route 99 Frontage The embankment of State Route 99 forms the study area's northern boundary, and is characterized by a dense planting of mature trees located in a wide band of property set between 13th Street and the southern edge of an elevated freeway, giving the area a forested sloped appearance. The area along 13th Street, closest to SR 99, is occupied with an unattractive chain-link fence and some asphalt placed next to the curb that is used by pedestrians. The north side of 13th Street is void of any sidewalk. Development of an attractive pedestrian walkway, or other open space enhancement, would capitalize on this opportunity to improve the neighborhood.

Public Rights-of-Way

Martin Luther King Jr. Way: The last major improvement that defined this road was in 1957 when it was widened to four lanes and engineered primarily for vehicles. Now, more than 50 years later and essentially used in the same manner, there is tremendous opportunity to integrate all forms of mobility and to soften the harsh expanse of asphalt and concrete with landscaped medians and pedestrian zones.

Alleys: Alleys are an essential component of a traditional grid road design, and are experiencing a renewal in urban designs as an efficient way to provide access to smaller homes placed on small lots. There are numerous alley segments in the study area, some of which connect with Martin Luther King Jr. Way. New planning concepts exist that can provide an aesthetic and safe realm in what are now dirty, avoided, and ignored public spaces.

Hazard Remediation Sites

There are five properties within the project area that have experienced contamination issues, according to the data maintained by the County of Merced and the State of California. A description of each of these sites follows along with a brief history, current status, and timelines for clearance as appropriate.

Former World Oil #53 - This site is located at 1244 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Merced County is the lead agency regarding the remediation of the site. The site is currently vacant with remediation infrastructure on-site within a fenced compound.

The case began in 1996 when gasoline released from former underground storage tanks was discovered. The groundwater generally flows toward City Well Site #3C (1000 feet west of the site), but no contamination has been found in the well. The gasoline tanks were removed in 1999. The site was originally cleaned up with over excavation of impacted soils. Since 1999, soil vapor extraction and air/oxygen injection to the groundwater has been used. The site's groundwater wells are monitored on a semi-annual basis. The site is currently under consideration for closure as "low risk" pending the soil vapor investigation.

U-Haul - This site is located at 1247 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Merced County is the lead agency regarding the remediation of the site. U-Haul continues to operate on-site. The case was opened in 1990 and the case was closed in 1999. Issues were waste oil, hydraulic oil, and lube oil releases. No information is available on the clean-up, but generally in these situations (minor oil spills), soil disposal is used.

Leonard Truck Repair / also known as Merced Truck & Trailer - This site is located at 625 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Merced County was the lead agency, but the site contamination "co-mingled" with the adjacent Merced County Public Works Administration groundwater contamination, so the State Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) is now the lead agency for the "co-mingled" groundwater contamination.

The case started in 1991 with gas and diesel fuel releases from former underground storage tanks and fueling systems. Site clean-up began in 2007. Since May 2010, a soil vapor extraction treatment system has been in operation and the system is in the process of being augmented with air injection below the water table. According to the City's Environmental Project Manager, these systems should be sufficient to stop the plume from further migration. The site's groundwater wells are monitored on a semi-annual basis. According to the Regional Water Quality Control Board's August 2, 2010, status letter, site clean-up for both sites is expected to take 4 to 7 years.

Merced County Public Works Corporation Yard - This site is located at 715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way (see previous paragraph).

Former Condor Freight Lines This site is located at 841 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Merced County was the lead agency regarding the remediation of the site. The site is currently vacant. This site was impacted by vehicle fuel releases from underground storage tanks. The site was investigated, clean-up actions were initiated, and ultimately the site received "regulatory closure" on August 18, 2009.

Planned Improvements

There are a number of planned improvements to infrastructure in the Study Area.

McNamara Park: The City of Merced recently received a \$2.3 million grant. Planned improvements include three new soccer/football fields; public art, an open-air performing area; renovated playground area; new landscaped boulevard; and new security cameras.

Sidewalks and Handicapped Ramps: The City has a multi-year project, utilizing federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, to replace sidewalks and handicap ramps in the Study Area. These include four ramps on the north side of Childs Avenue, two on M Street, and two on 5th Street. The recently completed traffic signal project at Childs and G Street also installed handicap ramps at all four corners.

Childs Avenue Pedestrian Crossing on Highway 59: Another City project, which went out to bid in June 2010, would install a Childs Avenue pedestrian crosswalk on Highway 59 to complete the recently completed Childs/Highway 59 traffic signal project. Sidewalk will be installed on the east side of the Highway to connect to the existing stub on Childs Avenue and the existing end of the sidewalk at the County Fairground's main entrance.

Capital Improvement Plan Projects: On an annual basis as part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process, the City determines priorities for replacing/upgrading sewer mains, water mains, street and alley resurfacing, and other related projects. However, funding is usually only available for a limited number of sites each year. One example of a water main which should receive some attention is the main in the 11th/12th Street alley from G to I Streets, which generates a lot of calls for repair.

Constraints

Public perception of the corridor is that of a heavy commercial zone dominated by an ugly road (Hwy. 59). Equally damaging has been the widespread decay of City infrastructure and private properties. These trends need to be reversed in order to successfully revitalize the corridor and study area.

The majority of the comments made during stakeholder interview sessions were concerns that the existing physical and economic conditions of the corridor are negatively impacting its capacity for redevelopment. Five weaknesses were repeatedly cited during interviews:

- Decreasing truck accessibility and poor traffic flow at key intersections;
- Aging industrial infrastructure;
- Negative perception created by crime, drug dealing, and prostitution along the corridor;
- Unattractive physical appearance overall; and,
- Weak real estate market, with the exception of demand for industrial space.

Missing or Underperforming Utilities

Wastewater System

The area is completely served by public sewer; no properties are on private septic systems.

The majority of properties are served by 6", 8", 10" and 12" lines located in alleys and streets. There is a 16" sewer line in 11th Street. In 1982, the Canal Street Relief Sewer, a 24-inch sewer-trunk line, was installed in Canal Street from 11th Street to Gerard Avenue, as a project from a citywide sewer facilities study.

Although most sewer lines are located within public road rights-of-way, there is a 12" line of approximately 0.5 mile in length between 11th Street and Childs Avenue (1/2 block west of Martin Luther King Jr. Way) that runs through private properties and alongside and under buildings. Due to the risk of leaks and associated sink-hole formation, lines should be placed

away from building sites. Though rare, there is also a risk of methane gas explosions. The presence of this line, therefore, is a constraint to development in this part of the project area.

There are two sewer lines that need to be replaced: (1) the line in the alley on the east side of Martin Luther King Jr. Way, between 12th and 13th Streets; and (2) the line in the alley between Martin Luther King Jr. Way and K Street, between 11th and 12th Streets.

Any major change in land use designation would need a review to verify that sewer flows would be adequate from the Canal Street sewer trunk or larger lines would need to be installed by the proposed development.

Water System - The water system within the Study Area is centered around three backbone streets (Childs Avenue, Canal, and G Street), City Well Site #3C and one elevated tank at 511 W. 12th Street. There is a 16-inch and a 10-inch water main in Canal Street, a 12-inch main in Childs Avenue, and parallel water mains (an 8-inch and a 10-inch) in G Street. Most water mains throughout the area are 6-inch lines with some 8-inch lines. The smaller mains are mostly in the alleys with large portions of local streets having no water mains. State Highway 59 has two 6-inch water mains, one on each side of the roadway. These mains are, on average, over 80 years old.

In other parts of the City, 6-inch lines are being replaced by 8-inch lines to comply with current City standards. This should also be the case when any 6-inch mains are replaced in the Study Area. It is recommended that a localized water study occur in the Study Area to examine existing fire flow capabilities, measured against various development scenarios that may require increased fire flow. In addition, the possible need for additional redundancy in the water system should also be analyzed. Those parcels that have water mains on the opposite side of Highway 59 from their parcel may experience significant costs to provide necessary water to their parcels upon development or redevelopment.

Storm Drain System The area is primarily served by 12" and 18" pipes at street intersections, except that the McNamara Neighborhood District does not include such improvements. Additionally, 24" storm-drain lines exist along 13th Street and on the east side of Martin Luther King Jr. Way/Highway 59 between 6th Street and Childs Avenue. A 48" storm-drain trunk line exists in G Street.

The 2002 *City of Merced Storm Drain Master Plan*, not officially adopted but used by City staff for guidance, shows three storm drain upgrades and one new storm drain needed in the study area. The three upgrades are: (1) G Street from Childs Avenue to 13th Street; (2) Childs Avenue near M Street; and (3) 13th Street from Highway 59 to M Street. Each proposed storm drain is larger than the current lines in place. The proposed new storm drain is in Highway 59 from 11th Street to Childs Avenue, where no storm drain currently exists.

On the east side of Highway 59 from 13th Street to Childs Avenue, storm flows in the gutter vary from 4 feet wide at 11th Street to up to 12 to 16 feet just north of Childs Avenue. This all flows east to a State-owned storm drain pump on Childs Avenue. The pump station needs to be upgraded for increased reliability. It often clogs with silt, which causes significant ponding in Childs Avenue, up to a couple of feet deep.

All other streets in the Study Area have surface flow of storm water. Many of these local streets and alleys are too flat to drain properly. Ponding at street corners is common and gutter flows of up to 3 feet wide occur on some streets every year.

Unightly Property

While some bright spots exist, the area as a whole, but particularly along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, is unattractive. Listed below are items within the study area that are particularly impacted:

- *Building Facades;*
- *Alleys;*
- *Fencing (Commercial and Residential);*
- *State Route 99 Frontage with 13th Street;*
- *Intersection of 13th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way;*
- *Intersection of 12th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way;*
- *Intersection of 11th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way;*
- *Intersection of 8th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way; and,*
- *Park strips (due to lack of trees and upkeep).*

Section 3.3 Crossing Sites and Patterns of the Corridor

OVERVIEW

The main corridor within the study area is Martin Luther King Jr, Way (also known as South State Highway 59). Pedestrian crosswalks are striped at the intersections of 8th, 11th, and 12th Streets. Because the east/west roadway alignment at Childs Avenue is off-set, there is no marked cross-walk at this controlled intersection. There is also no sidewalk on the east side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way along the southerly portion of the Fairgrounds Frontage (See Figure 3.3-1).

Figure 3.3-1:
*Project Area
Existing
Improvements*



Martin Luther King Jr. Way is highly traveled by both vehicles and pedestrians. Although this section of roadway is technically a state highway, the volume of pedestrian traffic is extremely high. Pedestrians cross Martin Luther King, Jr. Way throughout the day and night. With the fairgrounds located on the east side of the road, the pedestrian volume increases substantially when an event is held at the fairgrounds and on Saturdays for the weekly flea market.



Many residents in the area do not own a vehicle and either walk or ride a bike to conduct their typical day-to-day activities. This includes children going to school as well as adults going to work, shopping, or doing other activities. Because of the different commercial businesses in the area, many residents walk to the grocery store, laundry mat, and convenience markets on a regular basis. In addition, there are several eating establishments in the area that are frequented by a large number of pedestrians daily.



Vehicles along this roadway include passenger vehicles, small delivery trucks, and a large number of big-rig trucks. Preliminary observations indicated a large number of northbound trucks travel through the area to connect with northbound Highway 99. There are also a large number of trucks exiting from southbound Highway 99 and continuing southbound on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, bypassing Merced with the exception of the short stretch along Martin

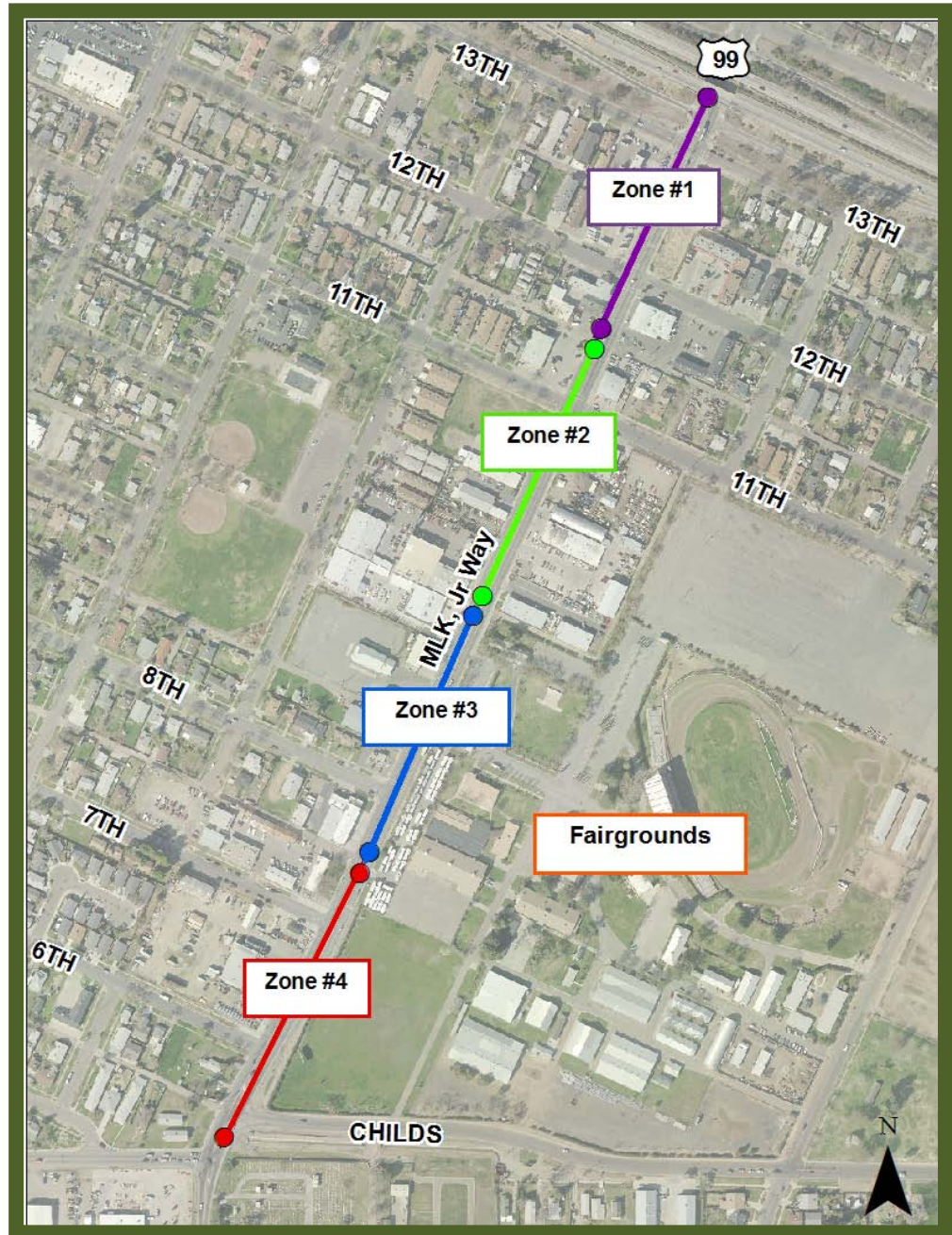


DATA COLLECTION

This area is unique in the fact that there appear to be a large number of pedestrians and bicyclists traveling in the area, while the roadway is highly traveled by vehicles and especially large trucks. Because of the perceived travel patterns along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, City staff chose to further analyze these patterns to determine destination points, travel patterns, volume of pedestrians, volume of trucks, the interaction of vehicles and pedestrians along this roadway, and possible hazards. The City's goal for analyzing this information is to identify conflicts and reveal opportunities for improvements and prepare key action items, including multi-modal transportation choices for travelers of the corridor.

In an effort to gather information, City staff coordinated a group of volunteers and staff members to record the movements of pedestrians and bicyclists, and the number of trucks traveling along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Staff divided the road segment from 13th Street to Childs Avenue into four different zones to track pedestrian and bicycle travel and two zones for truck travel. A map of the boundaries for each zone is shown at Figure 3.3-2.

Figure 3.3-2:
Boundaries for Data Collection Zones 1-4



Volunteers were asked to record pedestrian and bicycle movements in all directions showing the direction from which they were coming and going. Volunteers were able to talk to some of the pedestrians to obtain information about their reason for traveling, final destination, and frequency of travel. Data was recorded in either fifteen (15) or thirty (30) minute segments, depending on location and traffic volume. It's important to note that pedestrian and bicycle movements were tracked, not necessarily the number of pedestrians or cyclists. In some cases, the same pedestrian or cyclist may have traveled in more than one direction. For example, a pedestrian may have crossed the street from east to west to take care of business or run an errand and then returned to the point of origin by crossing again going west to east. In this case, the single pedestrian was tracked as making two movements. Therefore, the number of movements does not necessarily equal the number of pedestrians. For counting bicycles, volunteers tracked the movements of the bicycle, but also the number of persons on the bicycle. However, as with the pedestrians, a bicyclist may have traveled in more than one direction. Therefore the numbers indicated in the graphs and elsewhere in the report are not direct reflections of the number of pedestrians or bicyclists, but the number of movements along the road.

Staff determined that in order to estimate or find the average number of trucks using South Highway 59 as a connection point to Highway 99 or coming from Highway 99 to travel on South Highway 59 to a final destination, a volunteer was posted at each end of the study area along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, one at 13th Street (near the Freeway) and another at Childs Avenue (the southern boundary of the study area and the boundary of the City Limits). Volunteers were asked to count the number of trucks traveling in each direction. Data was recorded in thirty minute segments at both locations.



Data was collected on Tuesday, November, 30, 2010, and Thursday, December 2, 2010, from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm. for both truck and pedestrian traffic. Data was recorded for truck traffic only on Saturday, December 4, 2010, for the same hours. Due to inclement weather, pedestrian and bicycle data was not collected on December 4th, but postponed and collected Saturday, December 11, 2010.

DATA COMPILATION

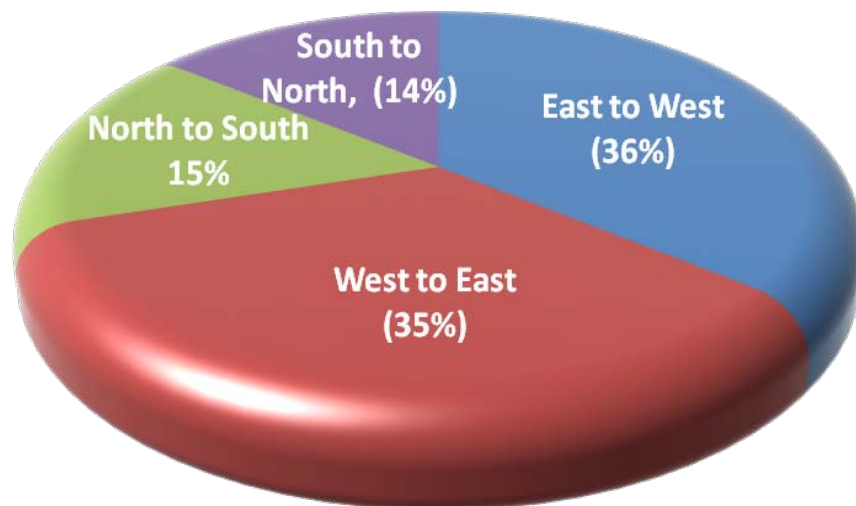
Once the data was collected, staff compiled it into spreadsheets to determine what the data revealed for both pedestrian, bicycle, and truck traffic in the area. Upon reviewing the data, staff realized the significance of the number of pedestrians, bicyclists, and the truck traffic along this roadway. Although preliminary reviews of the area gave an indication that this area is highly traveled, the numbers gathered by the volunteers showed the areas with the greatest concentration of travel and revealed more definitive information regarding the destinations of those traveling.

In order to provide a better understanding of the information gathered, this report will provide some of these numbers and attempt to provide an explanation for traffic patterns identified. Because Staff was unable to talk to everyone and were unable to interview the drivers of the trucks, some of the assumptions made are just that – assumptions. However, Staff feels these assumptions are valid based on the observations recorded by our staff and volunteers.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE DATA

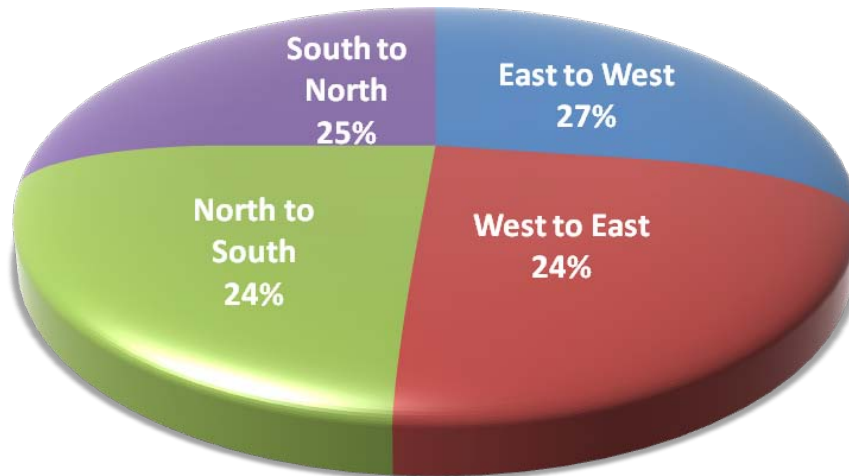
On the days for which information was gathered, the pedestrian and bicycle traffic along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way appeared to be the heaviest between 11th and 13th Streets. The highest volume of pedestrian traffic tended to be in the afternoon, with peaks reaching twenty to thirty pedestrian movements within a fifteen minute period. Although there are a number of pedestrians and cyclists moving north to south along this roadway, an even larger number were moving east to west and west to east (Figure 3.3-3). According to the data totals, movements in both of these directions were almost evenly split. This could indicate that the majority of the pedestrians traveled from one side of the street to the other and then back again. This assumption is also supported by the volunteers’ visual assessments.

Figure 3.3-3:
Total Pedestrians, All Zones



The data collected for bicyclists indicates bicycle movements were nearly equal in all directions (Figure 3.3-4). Although several conclusions could be drawn from this information, based on visual assessment, it appears that bicyclists travel further distances on bicycles, but also return to their point of origin.

Figure 3.3-4:
Total Bicyclists, All Zones



While the percentages showing direction of travel help to reveal the destinations of pedestrians and bicyclists, the actual number of pedestrian and bicycle movements reveals the high volume of pedestrian and bicycle travel in the area. Although the number does not truly represent the actual number of pedestrians/bicyclists, it does paint a clear picture of the large population in this area that relies on pedestrian and bicycle travel as their main means of transportation. In addition, it shows the large number of pedestrian movements crossing Martin Luther King, Jr. Way at uncontrolled intersections and at mid-block locations. The map shown in Figure 5 illustrates the pedestrian travel patterns in all directions (north, south, east, and west) over a two hour period on December 2, 2010. The map at Figure 6 shows the travel patterns only for pedestrians crossing Martin Luther King, Jr. Way (east to west and west to east).



Figure 3.3-5: All Directions

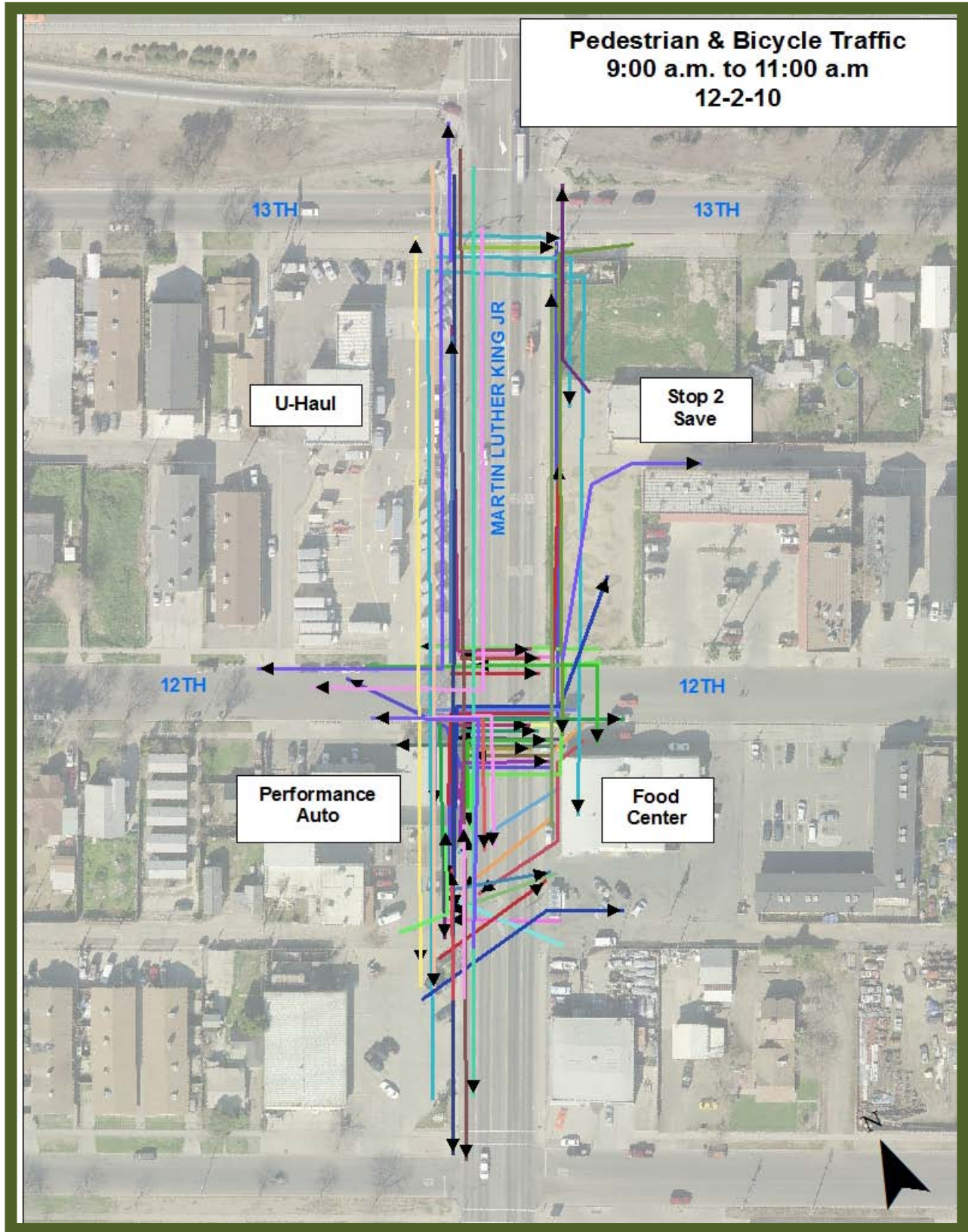
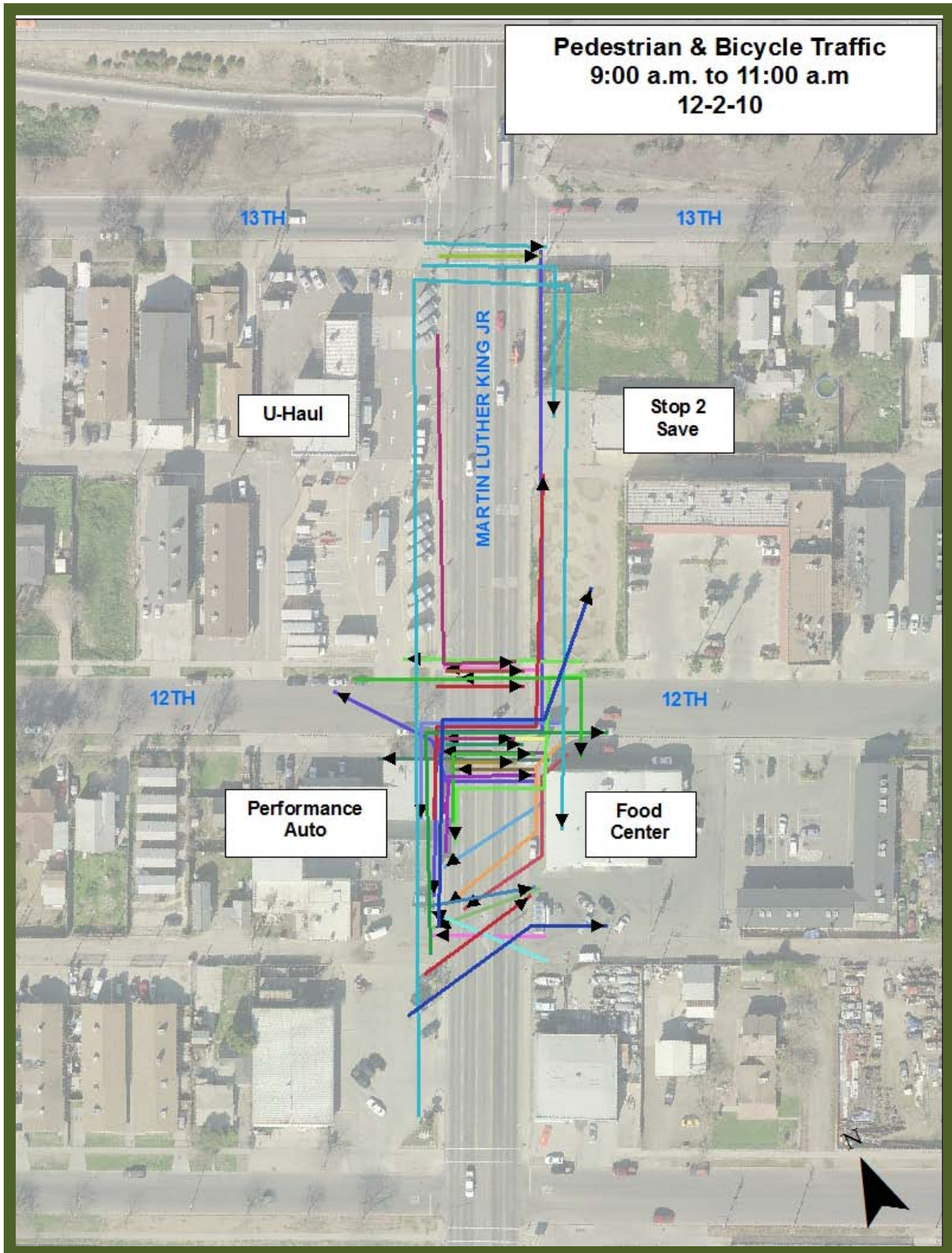
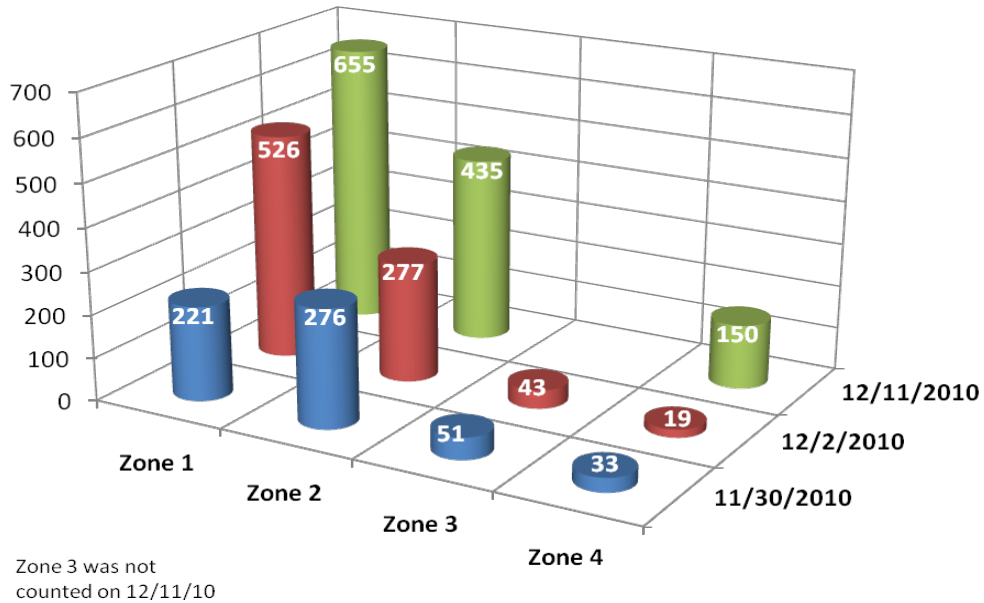


Figure 3.3-6: East to West and West to East (Crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way)



The graph shown at Figure 3.3-7 shows that on November 30, 2010, the number of pedestrian movements were in excess of 200 for Zone #1 (between 13th Street and the alley between 11th and 12th Streets – refer to Figure 3-3.2). On December 2, 2010, they were in excess of 500, and on December 11, 2010, they exceeded 600. In Zone #2 (from the alley between 11th and 12th Streets and the northern edge of the fairgrounds property – refer to Figure 3-3.2), there were more than 250 movements on November 30, 2010 and December 2, 2010, and more than 400 on December 11, 2010.

Figure 3.3-7



Saturday, December 11, 2010, had the highest total in each zone for each of three days recorded, with the exception of Zone #3 (see footnote on Chart). Because this was a Saturday and the weather was fairly good (sunny to partly cloudy and cool), it seems safe to assume that more travel movements were recorded due to the Flea Market, which is only open on Saturdays (7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.) during good weather.



Popular Destinations

Many people from the surrounding area walk to the Flea Market that is located just outside this study area, but still on Merced Fairgrounds property at the northwest corner of Childs Avenue and D Street (see map at Figure 3.3-8).

Figure 3.3- 8: Flea Market Location



Other popular pedestrian and bicycle destinations in this area are the neighborhood grocery stores (Buy Rite and Food Center), the Wash ‘n Dry Laundromat, the recycling facility, the taco truck located just south of the Food Center, and the taco shop at the corner of 8th Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. In addition to the popular destinations within the project boundary, there are also three fast-food restaurants located just outside of the project boundary (north of 14th Street) that also appear to be popular destinations for pedestrians and bicyclists. All these destinations are depicted on the map below (Figure 3.3-9).

Figure 3.3-9: Popular Pedestrian and Bicyclist Destinations



Pedestrian Survey

While collecting data on the travel patterns of pedestrians and bicyclists, volunteers and staff also conducted a survey of some of the pedestrians/bicyclists to gather information on where they were going, the reason for the trip, the origin of the trip, the length of the trip, and other information to help provide a clear picture of the needs in the area as well as the reasons behind the travel. A copy of the survey can be found at Appendix 6.3.

Although data was collected on three separate days, due to a language barrier and an unwillingness of some people to participate in the survey, information was gathered for only a small number of people. However, coupled with the visual assessments of volunteers and staff, it helps provide a better picture of the habits of pedestrians/bicyclists in the area. The majority of people surveyed were shopping or running errands.

As shown in the charts at Figures 3.3-10 and 3.3-11, most of the trips began at home (79 percent of those surveyed live within the project boundary) and averaged between one-quarter and one-mile in length.

Thirty-five percent of those surveyed traveled the route they were taking on a daily basis. Forty-five percent had traveled the route they were taking between zero and five times during the last month. Based on the location of the surveys, visual assessments, and the reason for travel, most of the people who had traveled the route zero to five times in the last month were making their weekly trip to the Flea Market.

Figure 3.3- 10:
Trip Origin

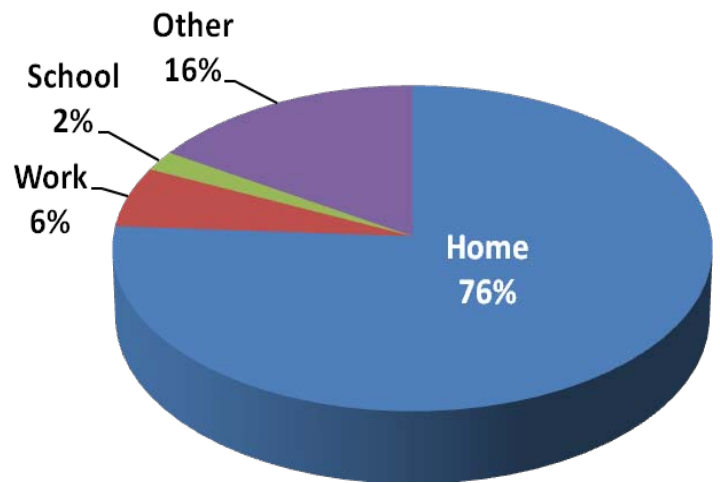
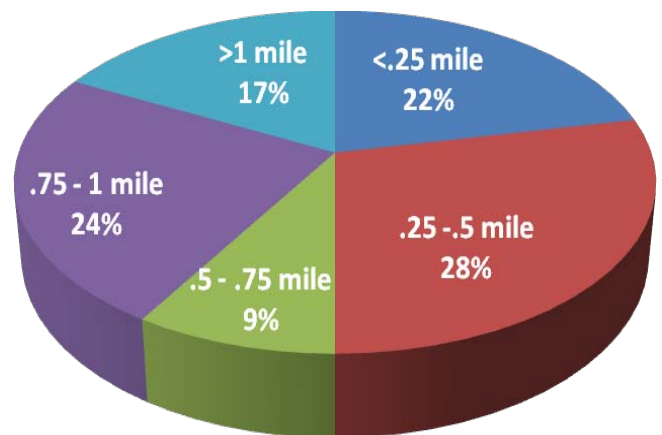


Figure 3.3- 11:
Distance of Trips



While the data collected helps to illustrate the travel patterns on a typical day in this area, it does not include the travel generated when an event is held at the Fairgrounds. Fairgrounds staff noted that during community events, the amount of pedestrian/bicycle traffic in this area, and especially in front of the Fairgrounds, increases dramatically. Considering on a typical Saturday there were over 1,200 combined pedestrian travel movements along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, it's very likely that the number of people walking or cycling in the area would double and likely triple (or more) when an event such as the County Fair or Hmong New Year is held at the Fairgrounds.

Figure 3.3-12:
Frequency of Trips

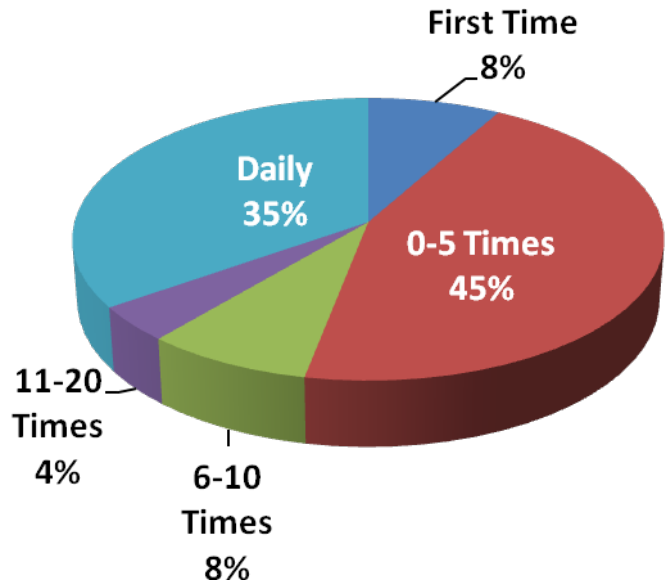
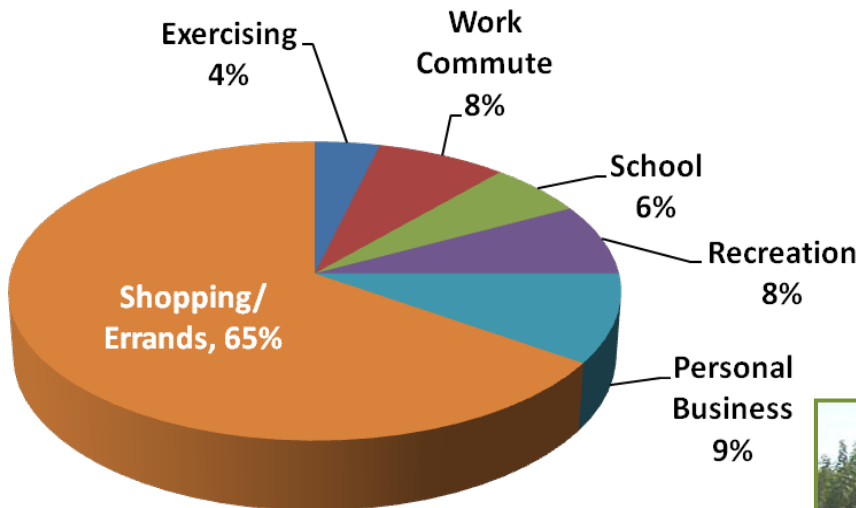


Figure 3.3-13:
Reason for Trips



Pedestrians with Special Needs

Another issue of interest within the study area is the travel patterns of people with special needs. Travel along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way can be quite challenging for persons with special needs. It is common to see individuals using walkers, wheelchairs and motorized scooters waiting in the right-of-way within a crosswalk for an opening between vehicles to be able to cross the street. There are no handicap ramps at many of the intersections, in fact there are no intersections that have full handicap access at all four corners. The only crosswalk that offers handicap access for crossing Martin Luther King, Jr. Way is the northern crosswalk at the corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and 12th Street. Figure 3.3-14 illustrates the locations of the missing handicap ramps along this corridor. In addition to missing ramps, many areas of sidewalk are in poor condition and non-existent in other areas. The poor condition of the roadway surface at several of the crosswalks deters pedestrians, especially those with special needs, from using the crosswalk. In addition, bicyclists use the sidewalks because there is no bike lane along the roadway to allow safe travel.

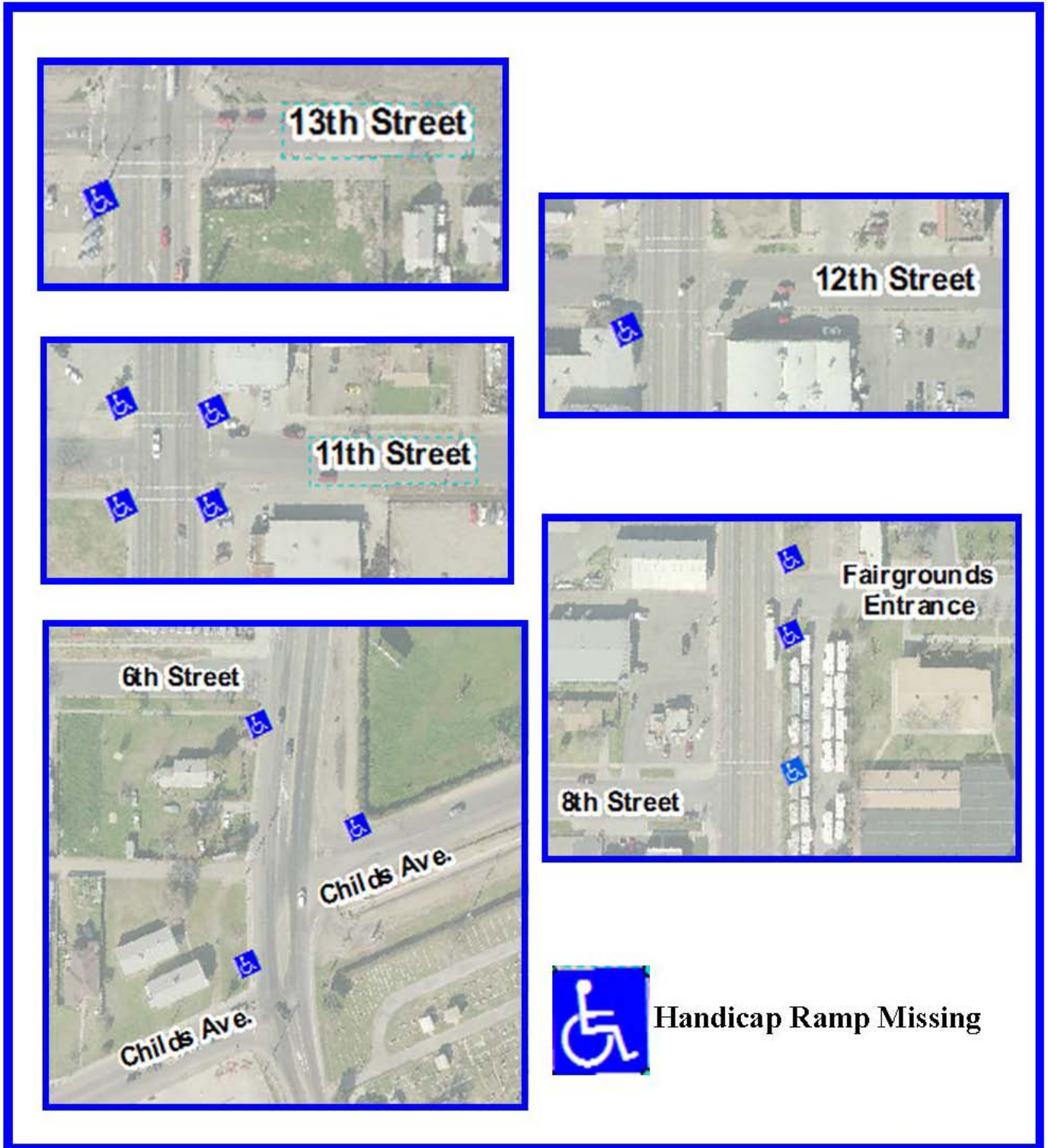
Right:
*Special Needs Person
crossing near Childs
Avenue*



Right:
*Special Needs Person
crossing near 11th Street*



Figure 3.3-14: Locations with Missing Handicap Ramps



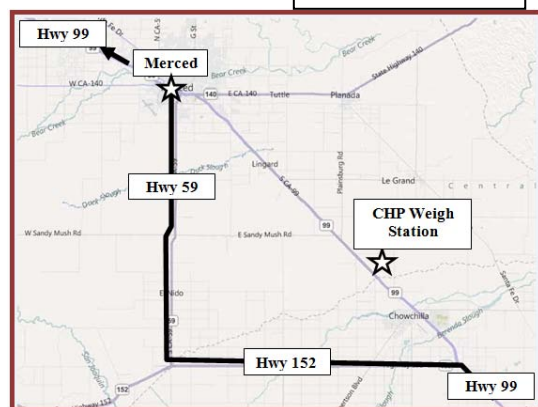
SEMI-TRAILER (BIG-RIG) TRUCK TRAFFIC

Semi-trailer (“Big Rig”) Truck Traffic

The segment of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way included in the project area (from 14th Street to Childs Avenue) is technically a state highway (South Highway 59). This segment also provides direct access to State Highway 99 (northbound and southbound). The interest in truck traffic was focused on semi-trailer trucks, also referred to as “big rigs.” Data was not collected for smaller trucks, such as delivery vans (i.e. UPS, MAC Tools, etc.), two-axle trucks, or other small commercial vehicles.

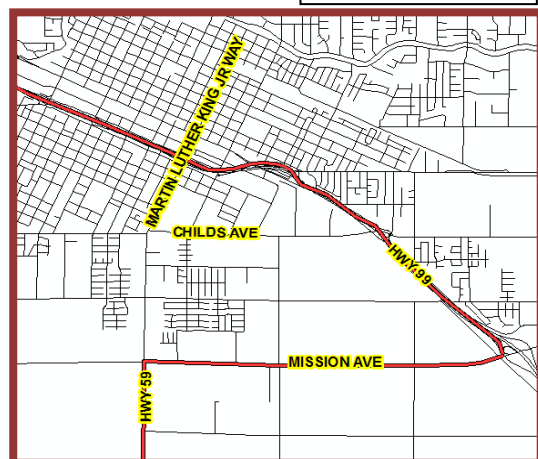
In order to track the movements of “big rig” trucks, volunteers were posted at the southern boundary of the focus area at the intersection of Childs Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way (Zone #4) and at the northern boundary of the focus area at 13th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way (with visibility of Highway 99) (Zone #1). Travel movements were recorded for trucks going in all directions, including entering and exiting Highway 99. Although Staff did not have the technology to watch the movements of each truck as they entered the study area, traveled through, and then exited the area, based on the number of trucks entering and exiting the study area in both directions along with the fact that the majority of the trucks are not stopping along this road segment, the data indicates trucks are using Martin Luther King, Jr. Way as a connection to North Highway 99 and are not serving the Merced area at all.

Figure 3.3-15



Volunteers throughout the area confirmed that very few trucks were stopping at the businesses along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The visual assessments also revealed that many of the trucks were transporting goods that are not available within the City or along this route within the City Limits (i.e., live poultry, raw milk, etc.). Another reason for such a high volume of trucks traveling northbound could be that they are using the route as a “cut-through” for bypassing the weigh station on North Highway 99. Trucks traveling north on Highway 99 can divert to Highway 152, then to South Highway 59 and back to Highway 99 (Figure 3.3-15) to miss the weigh station. An alternative to trucks using Martin Luther King, Jr. Way could be to route them from South Highway 59 to Mission Avenue and back to Highway 99. With the recent improvements to the Mission Avenue Interchange, this route could be used for both north and southbound traffic.

Figure 3.3-16



Pass-Through Truck Traffic

As shown in the charts below (Figures 3.3-17 and 3.3-18), on November 30, 2010, 89.2 percent of the trucks traveling northbound on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, entered North Highway 99. On the same date, 94.5 percent of the trucks traveling northbound along South Highway 59, traveled straight through, past Childs Avenue and into the project area. Coupled with the number of northbound trucks entering Highway 99, the data suggests that the majority of the trucks traveling northbound along Highway 59 are ultimately entering Highway 99 and continuing northward.

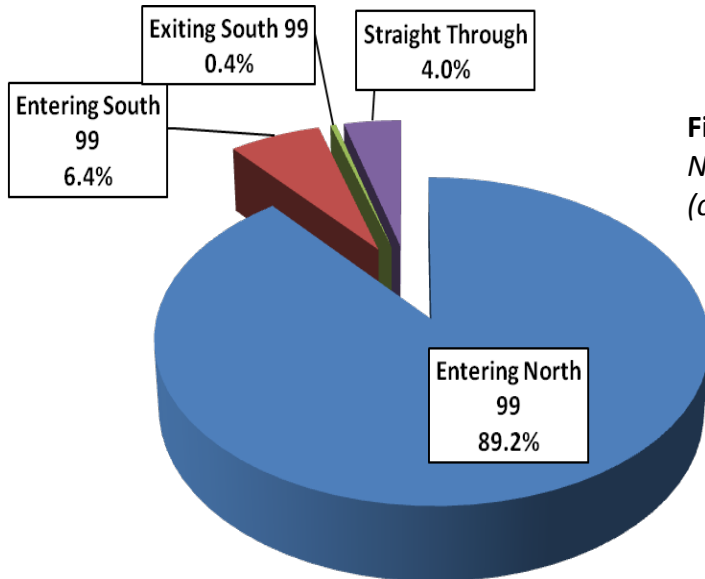
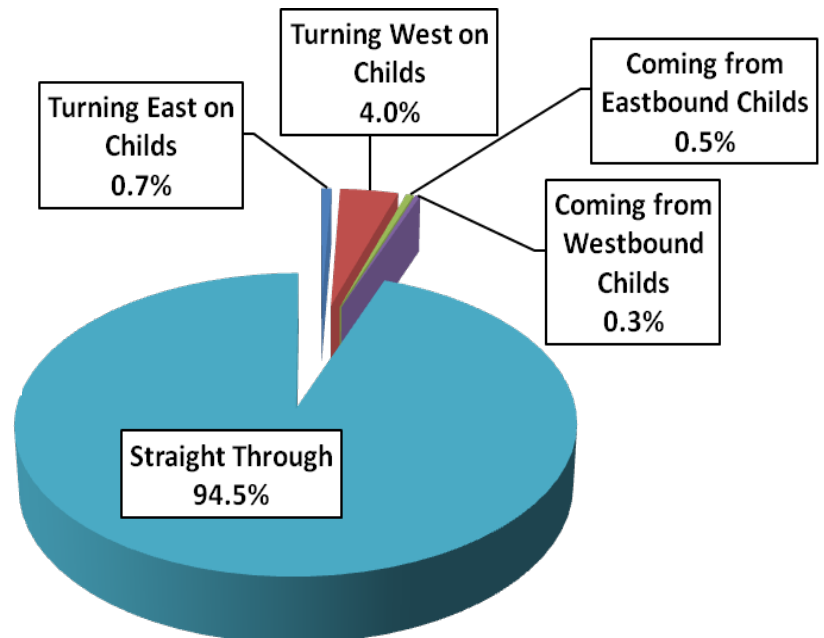


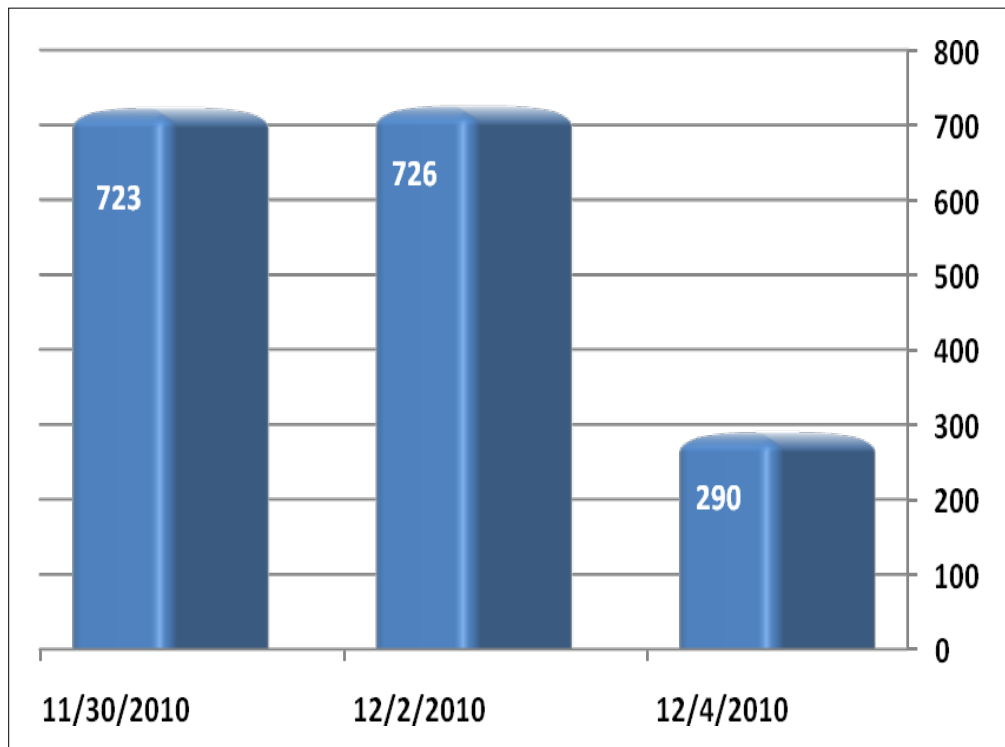
Figure 3.3-17:
*Northbound Trucks
(counted at MLK & 13th St.)*

Figure 3.3-18:
*Northbound Trucks
(counted at MLK &
Childs Avenue)*



The southbound traffic also revealed that the majority of trucks coming from South Highway 99 are continuing south on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way past Childs Avenue to South Highway 59. The data collected on December 2, 2010, shows that 83 percent of the trucks traveling southbound on Martin Luther King Jr. Way came from South Highway 99. Only 15 percent were traveling straight through on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and 2 percent came from northbound Highway 99. Based on this, it appears that only a small percentage of the total number of trucks using southbound Martin Luther King, Jr. Way may have been providing goods or doing business within the City of Merced. On average, there were approximately 580 trucks counted per day. That equates to an average of 58 trucks per hour for each of the ten hours documented per day. However, looking at the number of trucks counted on Saturday, December 4, 2010, that number is approximately 40 to 50 percent less than the number of trucks counted on the weekdays (Tuesday, November 30, 2010 and Thursday, December 2, 2010), so there seems to be a reduction in the amount of truck traffic on weekends compared to weekdays.

Figure 3.3-19:
Average Number of Trucks per day.

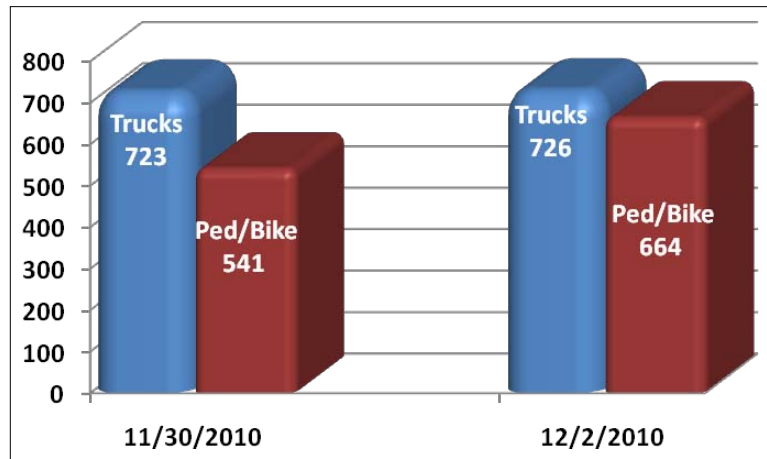


Comparison of Big Rig Trucks and Pedestrians

In order to get a clear picture of the big rig truck and pedestrian traffic along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, consideration needs to be given to the number of trucks compared to the number of pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the roadway. The chart below shows this comparison for November 30, 2010 and December 2, 2010. As you can see, the number of pedestrians crossing the roadway is very close to the average number of trucks. Another way to visualize the traffic is to look at the number of trucks per minute compared to the number of pedestrians per minute. On November 30, 2010, there were 1.2 trucks per minute compared to 0.9 pedestrians/bicyclists crossing the roadway per minute. This represents a 3:4 ratio of pedestrians to trucks.

While it’s clear that the number of trucks using Martin Luther King, Jr. Way compared to the number of pedestrian and bicycle movements crossing the road creates a dangerous situation, these numbers only take into account the number of trucks and does not consider the number of other vehicles such as passenger vehicles, small delivery vehicles, etc., which would only increase the risk for pedestrians and bicyclists. It should also be kept in mind that this data was collected in late November and early December when the weather is cold and wet. If this same data was collected during the summer or spring months, it is reasonable to expect that the number of pedestrians and bicyclists would increase dramatically.

Figure 3.3-20:
Average Number of Trucks compared to total pedestrians/bicyclists crossing MLK Jr. Way



Section 3.4 Road Design and Safety of the Corridor

OVERVIEW

This section will discuss the existing roadway conditions of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor as it functions as a major transportation corridor for trucks and automobiles. Roadway design and traffic volumes, traffic speeds and safety, and current and future circulation improvements in the area are discussed. Chapter 3.1 discussed the multi-modal functions of the corridor, including bicycles, pedestrians, and transit.

Martin Luther King Jr. Way is a State Route (Highway 59) that is a north/south roadway extending from Route 152 (south of El Nido) to Snelling (north of Merced.) It enters Merced from the south via Martin Luther King Jr. Way (previously South J Street), crosses the City via Highway 99, and continues (typically by way of 16th Street) northward on its own Highway 59 corridor.

State Route 59 serves as the secondary farm-to-market route for the transportation of agricultural products, as a regional truck route, and as a route for recreational traffic. Highway 99 is also a major freight corridor, with trucks comprising up to 30% of total traffic on a typical weekday. The roadway is a transitional urban area, bringing with it dispersed commercial activity in the unincorporated areas leading to denser commercial and some residential development to the north as the corridor approaches Highway 99 and Downtown Merced.

The area of Martin Luther King Jr. Way from 13th Street to 14th Street is a part of the study area. A benefit of including this area allows the Revitalization Study to interface with the recently completed City beautification efforts located north of 14th Street. Thus, there will not be a gap in design or upgrade efforts between 14th Street and 13th Street. This section involves the Highway 99/South Highway 59 interchange and the on and off ramps. The area is needed to link both sides of Highway 99 with continuity and connectivity. The feeling of one street is the desired result.

Currently Highway 99, which is elevated at this location, acts more as a barrier and would require upgrades, such as improved lighting, landscaping, or other improvements, to gain the desired effect of “one continuous street.” The current emphasis is on the function of the overpass and not much attention is paid to what is underneath the overpass, the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor. One function of the Revitalization Plan will be to address the underpass beneath the freeway, so that its full connection potential can be realized.

Martin Luther King Jr. Way is vital to businesses located along this corridor as well as to the various agricultural industries located along this corridor between Merced and Highway 152. While the corridor is designated as a “truck route,” most trucks use this corridor as a bypass from the existing truck scales located north of Minturn Road on Highway 99 in the southern portion of Merced County. It is common knowledge, according to various law enforcement

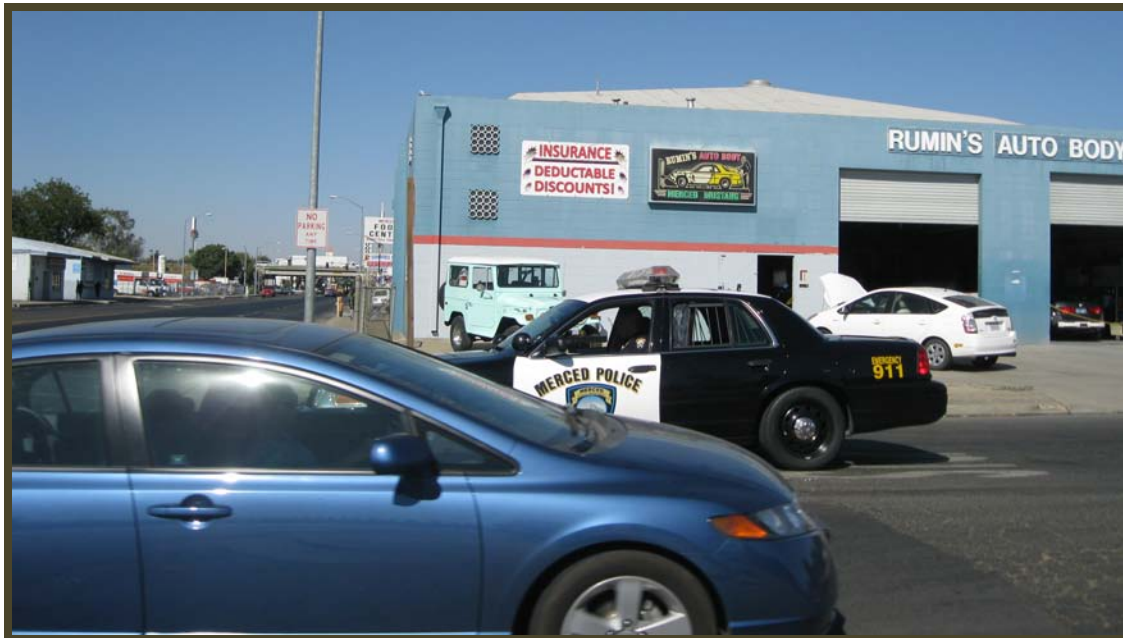
agencies, that many of the trucks traveling along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor are trying to bypass the scales (weigh station).

Recently, the City of Merced Police Department has begun training its officers to issue commercial citations to trucks traveling along this corridor that exceed the trailers’ posted weight limits. It is evident that due to the increase in these types of trucks on this roadway, the pavement on this stretch of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor is deteriorating at a faster pace than normal.

DESIGN AND SAFETY

Traffic Speeds

The current speed that is enforced along this corridor is 30 miles per hour (MPH) from Highway 99 to Childs Avenue. The City of Merced Police Department routinely has traffic officers enforcing safe traveling speeds within the project’s study area.



City Traffic Accident Data

From October 1, 2009 to November 3, 2010, the City of Merced Police Department reported a total of 1,858 incidents (police unit sent to the area by dispatch) within the study area. Of those incident reports, 961 of them were for Traffic Stops and 64 were for traffic accidents. Within that same time frame, there were a total of 721 tickets issued, with 488 of them for moving violations.

In 2010, the City of Merced began sending various traffic officers to training for Commercial Vehicle Violations. The Police Department, with the assistance of the California Highway Patrol, have been increasing their efforts to identify Semi-Trucks (big rigs) that are over the designated weight loads and writing tickets for Class A drivers that are carrying loads in excess of what they are permitted by their license.

California Highway Patrol Reports

The California Highway Patrol identified one traffic incident in the past year (2010), but they were unable to provide staff with traffic violation data for the section of roadway that is located within the study area.

When staff contacted the Merced County Sherriff's Department regarding any reports, staff was told that they had no information to report due to the roadway being located within the City of Merced and enforced by either the Merced City Police and/or the California Highway Patrol.

Public Perceptions

The perception along this roadway is that vehicles are routinely traveling at a high rate of speed. Pedestrians must cross the roadway quickly when a vehicle is approaching due to the fear the vehicle may not stop in time and could potentially hit the pedestrian. In looking at the current design of Martin Luther King Jr. Way, vehicles may appear to be traveling at faster speeds due to fewer traffic devices, such as traffic signals, stop signs, landscaping, traffic calming, etc., along this stretch.

Many business owners and residents have also expressed concerns regarding the project area's lack of lighting, dumping of debris in the alleys, poor road conditions (pot-holes), gang activity, and undesirable individuals lingering around the area.

ROADWAY DESIGN AND TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Truck Routes

The primary truck route in the area is along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor. However, there are two other streets within the project area that are also designated for truck travel. The other designated roadways for trucks are Childs Avenue from West Avenue to Parsons Avenue and 13th Street from Massasso Street to G Street. These two roadways run along the northern and southern boundaries of the study area.

Traffic Volumes (Current and Projected)

For the Martin Luther King Corridor from Highway 99 to Childs Avenue, the average daily traffic was 11,700 trips north of Childs Avenue and 14,200 trips south of Highway 99, according to counts published by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the "2011 Regional Transportation Plan for Merced County" (July 2010).

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* (August 2010 Draft) indicates that the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor from Highway 99, south to Childs Avenue, currently has a traffic volume of 16,300 Average Daily Trips (ADT) with a Level of Service (LOS) for this corridor rated as "C+". The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* projection by the year 2030 for this segment of roadway is 29,260 ADT's with a LOS of "D."

PAST AND PLANNED CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

Merced Vision 2030 General Plan and Citywide Circulation Improvements

Ultimate build out of the City's proposed growth boundary [known as the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)/Sphere of Influence (SOI)] is anticipated to require significant public improvements to the circulation system. Based upon traffic and growth projections for the City of Merced, there will need to be two additional interchanges built on Highway 99, transit-way(s), over 60 miles of new or improved major streets, more grade-separated railroad crossings, and numerous new bridges and traffic signals built within the City by the year 2030.

With such improvements, the circulation system would be expected to maintain satisfactory movement in and around the community. Overall, LOS for major streets would not fall below standards currently expected by the public. Limited areas (downtown, etc.) may experience significant traffic congestion during the peak hours of the day (peak hours are generally the times when people are traveling to or from their place of employment).

LOS standards can be used to help analyze the potential impacts of prospective land use changes and growth to routes and intersections. When service drops below a particular level, a

road segment or intersection can be considered deficient and in need of capacity improvements. LOS is influenced by a number of factors. These include existence of on-street (curbside) parking, frequency and spacing of traffic signals, number and frequency of intersecting side streets and curb cuts, level of pedestrian activity, and existence of left-turn pockets and right-turn lanes.

Ironically LOS “A”, or the “best” condition in terms of freedom for an individual vehicle to move on a particular road segment, may not be best from other perspectives. LOS “A” indicates that a road has very little traffic on it in relation to how much traffic it could carry. Such a situation is appealing for a local neighborhood street. It could be very inefficient for a major street, though, indicating that the public is not getting full value from that roadway. At the other extreme, Level “F” means that the cost per vehicle using the roadway has been reduced. However, other costs to the drivers, such as large time delays, number of accidents, maintenance problems, air pollution levels, etc., all continue to increase. The preferred LOS levels are typically “C” and “D”, particularly for larger roads and major intersections. With LOS “C,” the road provides stable operation but is still underutilized to some degree. LOS “D” represents a fine balance between the relatively large number of vehicles served and the generally acceptable LOS provided.

It is the intent of the City’s standards and policies for new and upgraded intersections and road segments to be designed and built to function at LOS “D” (“tolerable delay”), at least, during peak traffic periods. Maintaining a LOS “D” at existing intersections is not always feasible, appropriate, or necessary, however. People may expect and tolerate varying levels of congestion depending on location (e.g. central Merced) and time of day. Heavier traffic can also be a reason to encourage greater pedestrian activity and heavier transit use in such areas. Other factors may make higher levels of service infeasible. In central Merced, for example, widening existing streets could create great disruption to stable, older neighborhoods. In these areas, significant delays, LOS “E” or even LOS “F” may have to be acceptable at peak hours.

Public Facilities Financing Plan and Regional Transportation Plan Projects

In 1998, Merced City Council adopted the *Public Facilities Financing Plan* and it has been updated through the years as the community’s needs have changed. The Financing Plan was adopted to identify and mitigate the impacts to the City’s infrastructure and public facilities generated by new developments. Subsequently, the City’s Public Facilities Impact Fees (Merced Municipal Code 17.62) were adopted.

In 2005, the Merced City Council adopted the Regional Transportation Impact Fees (Merced Municipal Code 17.64). The fees are based on the *Regional Transportation Impact Fee Study* adopted by the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) in 2005. The fees have been adopted by Merced County and other cities in the County to fund improvements to the regional roadway network to accommodate traffic generated by new development within the County. The approved list of projects includes widening Highway 59 from 2 to 4 lanes from Mission Avenue to Childs Avenue, just south of the Study Area, and also widening Highway 59

to 4 lanes from Mission Avenue to Highway 152. Improvements to North Highway 59 are also included.

MCAG does not currently have any projects programmed in the Regional Transportation Plan specifically within the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor Study Boundaries; however, the exception of the signalization of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Childs Avenue intersection was recently completed. MCAG is currently working on a county-wide sidewalk inventory that is funded by MCAG’s General Fund to aid jurisdictions (within the County) to seek grants or other funding resources for future construction.



Childs Avenue and South Highway 59



Intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Childs Avenue

The *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* Circulation Map classifies both Martin Luther King Jr. Way/South Highway 59 and Childs Avenue (east of their intersection) as “Arterials.” Childs Avenue to the west is classified as a “Collector” Street.

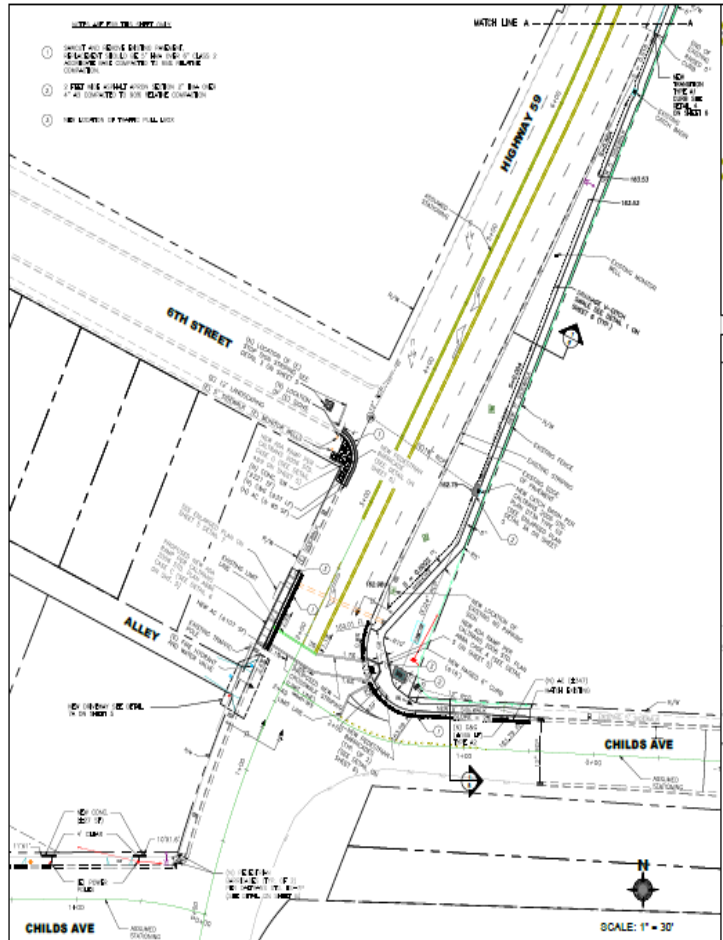
At the present time, the east and west portions of Childs Avenue at Martin Luther King Jr. Way are not aligned. There is a difference of approximately 65 feet between the centerline of Childs Avenue east of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and the Childs Avenue centerline to the west, which creates numerous design challenges and made signaling the intersection difficult. Despite those difficulties, a traffic signal was installed at that intersection in 2009.

Working with Caltrans, the City will be installing other improvements in and around the intersection to accomplish the goal of improving visibility and pedestrian safety.

Figure 3.4-1



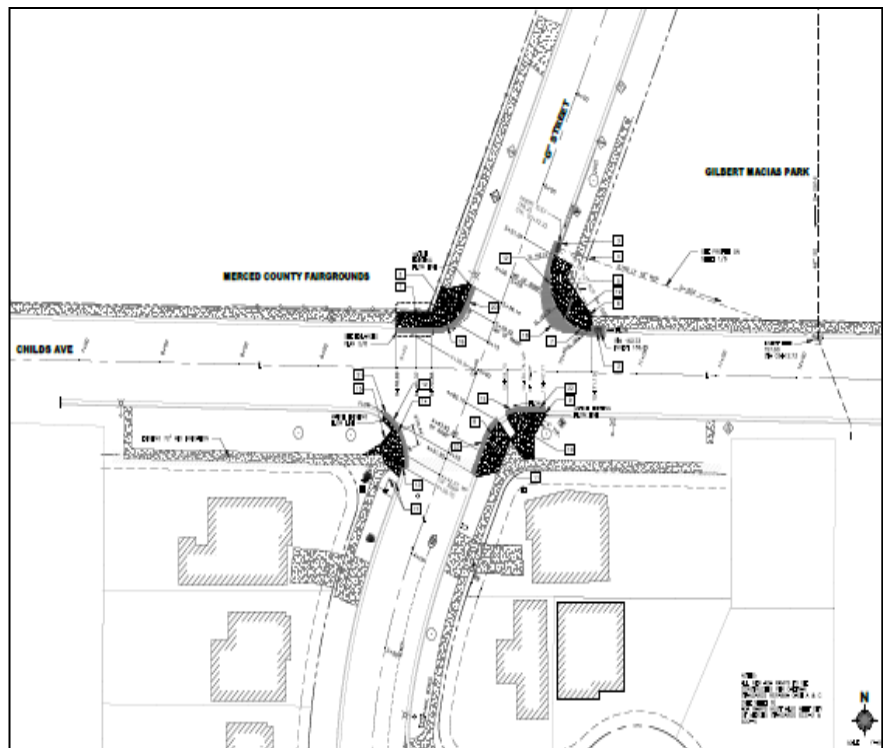
Figure 3.4-2



Intersection of Childs Avenue and G Street

Figure 3.4-3

In 2006, the City of Merced received the Hazard Elimination Safety (HES) Grant for \$190,000 for a traffic signal at the intersection of Childs Avenue and G Street (southeast corner of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor Study Area). The City applied for the grant with Caltrans after an article was published in the *Merced Sun-Star* describing the intersection as unsafe. The federally funded grant was awarded by Caltrans due to the intersection having a high Safety Index Number in conjunction with the intersection being skewed.

**Caltrans One-Way Couplet Design**

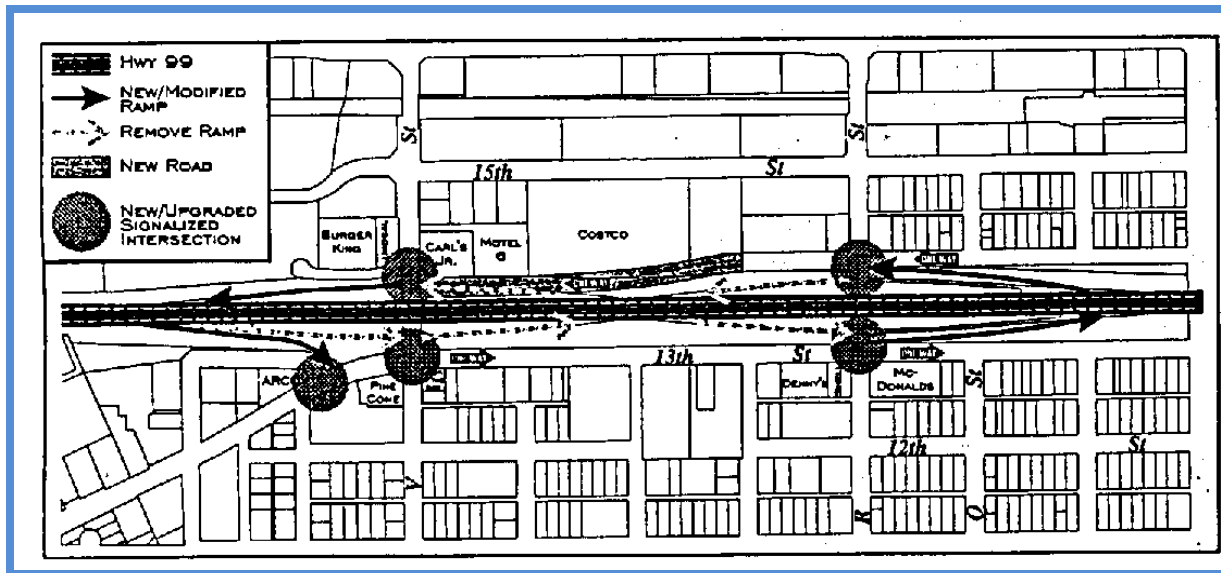
Several years ago Caltrans presented a concept to the City of Merced to increase the distance between the on-and off-ramps on Highway 99 between G Street and V Street to try to meet the State standard of no less than one mile between interchanges. Caltrans intended to reduce the number of on-and off-ramps to the freeway and to modify the neighboring streets into one-way streets. Caltrans has already constructed a portion of the One-Way Couplet design concept (see image below) west of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way project area with modifications to interchanges at R Street and V Street. As part of the Proposition 1B Bond that was approved by the voters in 2008, the one-way couplet design concept is projected to be continued to the east when Highway 99 is widened from 4 lanes to 6 lanes. However, at this time, the project is considered a low-priority. Once the project has been funded, the project would include modifications to the Interchanges along Highway 99 with G Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way, in addition to widening the freeway from 4 to 6 lanes.

According to the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, left-turn movements from the off-ramps are especially difficult, resulting in average delays of 30 seconds during certain peak periods. Proximity (approximately 40 feet) of both southbound ramps to signalized intersections on 13th Street increases the congestion and delays. It is anticipated that a significant upgrading of City

streets in proximity to Highway 99 will be required in order to keep State Highway 99 operating at a viable level-of-service in the future. This is possible if large numbers of short or local trips can be kept off the highway by offering efficient options.

The continuation of the one-way couplet design to the east will not only improve 13th Street eastbound and 14th Street westbound traffic, but it is also anticipated that this design would also improve the function of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and G Street interchanges with Highway 99. The improvements to these future interchanges could possibly improve the circulation within the eastern portion of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization study area.

Figure 3.4-4





PART 4:

Public Outreach



PART 4: PUBLIC OUTREACH

PART 4 describes the involvement of the community from the grass-roots level on up to formal meetings and actions by elected and appointed officials.

SECTION 4.1



Public Outreach Overview

SECTION 4.2



Public Agencies and Organizations

SECTION 4.3



Public Involvement in the Planning Process

SECTION 4.4



**City Commissions, Committees,
and Council Involvement**

Section 4.1 Public Outreach Overview

One of the major components of the Revitalization Strategy involved public outreach with participation from local stakeholders as well as input from a cross section of the diverse community guided by staff from the City of Merced. There were a series of public forums seeking input from residents, business owners, and the general public who participated in completing surveys. The input from participants provided staff with insight into the issues of the area, requests for needed public improvements, goods and services, and safety concerns.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Representation from government agencies is vital to an implementable plan. Representatives from all of the public agencies with jurisdiction along the corridor were invited and encouraged to participate in development of the Strategy. Representatives from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), the Merced County Fire Department, Merced County Public Works, Merced County Fair, as well as representatives from the City of Merced Engineering, Public Works, Planning, and Redevelopment Departments met to discuss the project and were asked to prepare Commitment Letters in support of the revitalization strategy. These Governmental/Public Agencies either have jurisdiction along the corridor or are located within the Focus Area of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. Interestingly, one of the largest land owners within the focus area is a Public Agency Stakeholder - the Merced County Fairgrounds located at the northeast corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Childs Avenue.

Right: Public Agency Orientation Meeting at Merced County Public Works Office on September 30, 2010 with Caltrans, Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), Merced County Fire and Public Works, and City of Merced Departments.



GENERAL PUBLIC AND ORGANIZATIONS

South Merced is the epitome of diversity. Merced is ranked the sixth most diverse city in America, with South Merced containing a disproportionately high number of minority populations. The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy is, therefore, driven by the active participation of several groups. These groups include the Merced Lao Family Community, Inc., Merced Hispanic Chamber, South Merced Neighborhood Council, and various South Merced neighborhood groups. The study group included participation from representatives of the Merced County Housing Authority, Merced County Office of Education, and faith-based groups. By including these participants, a cross-section of the community can be ensured. The study also sought representation from the major landowners and businesses along the corridor. The largest landowner, the Merced County Fair, expressed interest in the study as did various businesses along the corridor.

Right: Mayko Lozano, Golden Valley High School Senior and Member of the Citizens Advisory Ad-Hoc Committee gives a presentation to other members regarding his examples of good and bad design of the area.



Below: Grace Booth, also a Committee member, presents her examples to the Committee.





Left: Michelle Paloutzian gives her presentation to her fellow Committee Members.

Right: Teresa Burrola, shared her photo board with the Committee, reflecting on a typical Saturday at the Flea Market.



CITY COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES, AND COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT

Community awareness and support of the Plan was extended to elected and appointed officials that have jurisdiction in the Strategy area. In addition to the Martin Luther King Ad-hoc Advisory Committee, these included:

- City of Merced Bicycle Advisory Commission
- City of Merced City Council
- City of Merced Economic Development Advisory Commission
- City of Merced Parks and Community Services
- City of Merced Planning Commission
- City of Merced Redevelopment Advisory Committee
- Merced County Association of Governments
- Merced County Fair Board
- Merced County Fire Department
- Merced County Public Works

Section 4.2 Public Agencies and Organizations

The plan was formulated through a collaborative process involving public agency staff, nonprofit groups, and various organizations.

PLANNING TEAM

The planning team consisted of staff from the City’s Planning, Redevelopment, and Economic Development Divisions, as well as student interns from local universities. The team assembled the document for review and action by the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Advisory Committee at advertised public meetings.

TEAM FORMATION AND PLAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Members of the Technical and Plan Preparation Team		
Name/Title	Contribution/Role	Agency
Bill King, AICP, Principal Planner	Project Manager/Report Preparation	City of Merced
Julie Sterling, Associate Planner	Project Co-Manager/Report Preparation	City of Merced
David Gonzalves, Director of Development Services	Administrator	City of Merced
Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager	General Plan/Environmental/Report Preparation	City of Merced
Julie Nelson, Planner	Data Collection, Safe Crossings	City of Merced
Mark Hamilton, Planner	Transportation (Multi-Modal)	City of Merced
Kim Nutt, Planning Technician II	Bicycle Survey	City of Merced
Vicci Lane, Secretary II	Administrative Support	City of Merced
Nancy Lee, Secretary II	Layout Specialist	City of Merced
Terri Lucas, Secretary III	Administrative Support	City of Merced
Jennifer Riedeman, Accountant II	Grant – Financial Monitor	City of Merced
Deborah Richardson, Accountant I	Grant – Financial Monitor	City of Merced
Daniel Ainslie, Redevelopment Coordinator	Redevelopment Advisor	City of Merced
Maria Mendoza, Redevelopment Technician	Redevelopment Representative and Translator	City of Merced
Daryl Jordan, City Engineer	Traffic Design & Safety	City of Merced
Andre Matthews, Police Lieutenant	Public Safety	City of Merced
Stan Murdock, Director of Public Works-Operations	Streets and other infrastructure	City of Merced
RuthAnne Harbison, GIS Coordinator	Geographical Information - Mapping	City of Merced
INTERNS		
Pamela Contreras	Historian	City of Merced
Emma Go	Public Outreach	City of Merced
Ryan Heller	Public Outreach/Data Collection	City of Merced
Mallorie Hodge	GIS Specialist/Cartographer	City of Merced

PUBLIC AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

There are several governmental/public agencies with property and/or jurisdiction along the corridor or within the broader Study Area of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan, and include: 1) Merced County Fire Department; 2) Merced County Public Works; 3) Merced County Fair; 4) Merced County Association of Governments; 5) City of Merced; and 6) Caltrans. The image below shows the large land area under direct control of many of these agencies. Their participation is vital to the ensuing implementation of the resulting plan.

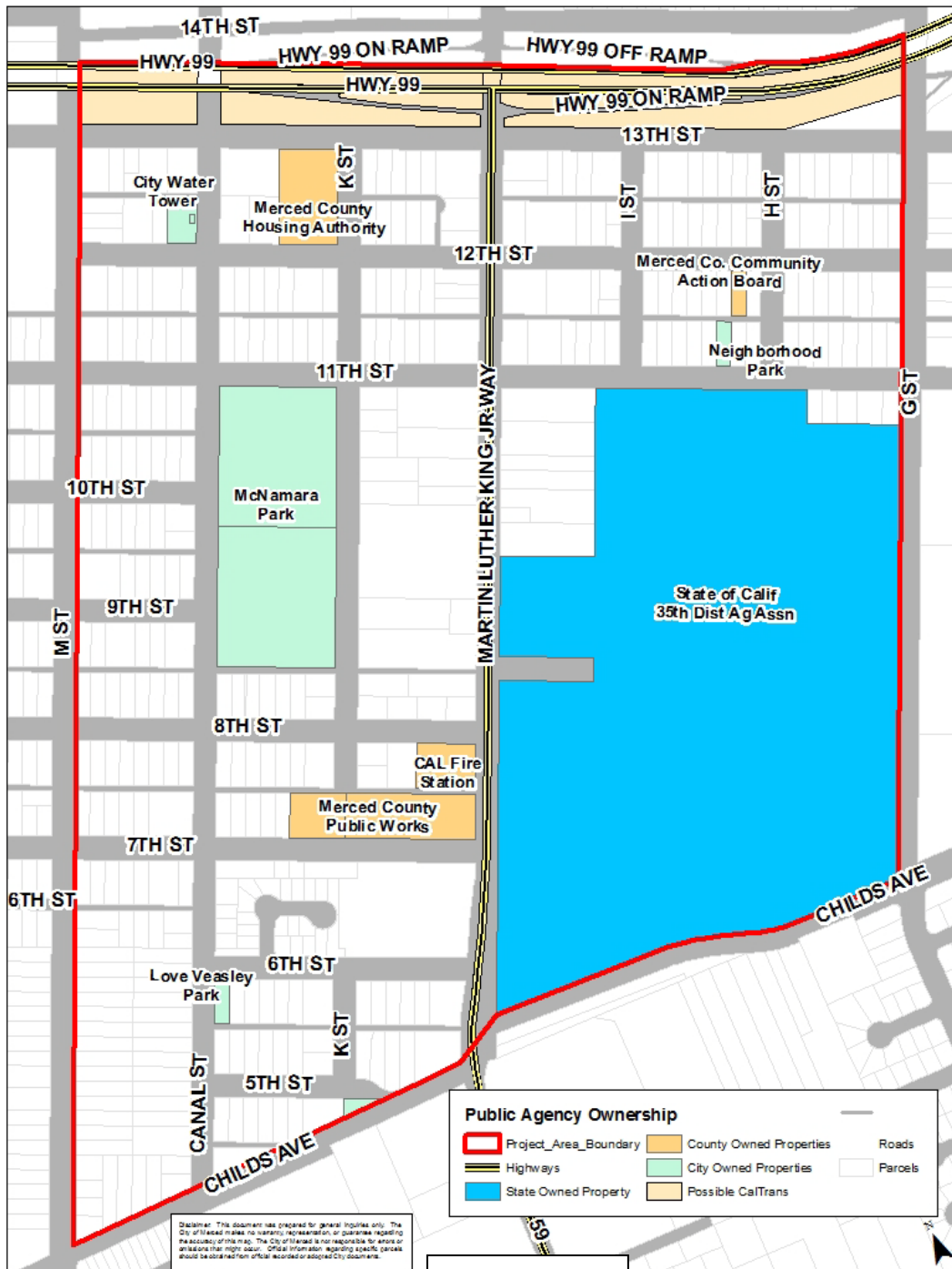


Figure 4.2-1

Section 4.3 Public Involvement in the Planning Process

A key objective in the public outreach strategy was to give the public as many opportunities to be involved in all aspects of the Plan. This objective was achieved, and the events and activities utilized are summarized in this Chapter as well as in Appendix Section 6.1 of the Plan.

PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENTS

Central to a process involving community participation is public outreach and consensus building involving residents, business owners, stakeholders, and interested parties throughout the process itself. As the City engaged the public through the various outreach opportunities (including circulating a questionnaire/survey regarding the project area), many of the requests involved public improvements along Hwy 59 such as requests for signals, pedestrian crossings, and other right-of-way improvements, etc. The City of Merced worked on establishing an Advisory Committee including Stakeholders, such as Caltrans. Additionally, the City of Merced asked that Caltrans attend some of the Committee Meetings to determine if some of the improvements are possible.

Outreach efforts included broad contact throughout South Merced as well as creation of a Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, appointed by the City Council, following numerous outreach recruitment efforts. Community involvement is essential for the success of this revitalization strategy. The Planning Department participated in various public outreach events such as:

Right: Summerfest.

(Downtown Event – 8/19,
8/26, and 9/2/10)



Outreach Events2010

- Merced County Fair (June 15-20, 2010)
- KYOS Radio Announcement “Community Conversation” (8/11/10)
- 3 SummerFest Events (Downtown Event – 8/19, 8/26, and 9/2/10)
- Neighborhood Block Party (Golden Valley Health Center on 9/1/10)
- Walking School Bus Meeting Merced Police Dept. (9/21/10)
- ComVIP Meeting (9/23/10)
- “Walkable Community Workshop” a collaborative effort facilitated by the Local Government Commission with Merced County Association of Governments, City of Merced, and Golden Valley Health Center (GVHC) participating (9/25/10)
- Public Agency Meeting at Merced County Public Works (9/30/10)
- Healthy South Merced Partners’ Meeting (10/5/10 and 12/7/10)
- 2nd Radio Announcement (10/6/10)
- Building Healthy Communities Collaborative (10/20/10)
- Business Owners Outreach (Sam Café on 10/12/10, 11/9/10, and 1/12/12)
- “Your City Connection” Newsletter (utility bill insert, November 2010)
- Merced Lao Family Meeting (11/3/10)
- Residents/non-profits east of MLKJr Way (11/3/10)
- Residents/non-profits west of MLKJr Way (11/4/10)

2011/2012

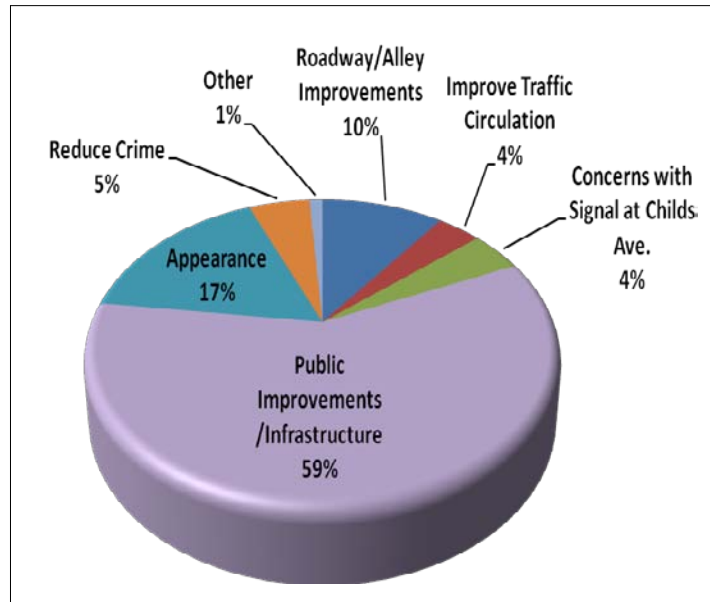
- South Merced Networking Roundtable (12/6/11)
- South Merced Neighborhood Group (9/7/11 and 1/4/12)
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. March/Celebration (1/16/12)
- Merced County Association of Governments – Citizens Group (2/2/12)

NOTE: Additional information from the above outreach events can be found in the Appendix 6.1 of the Plan.

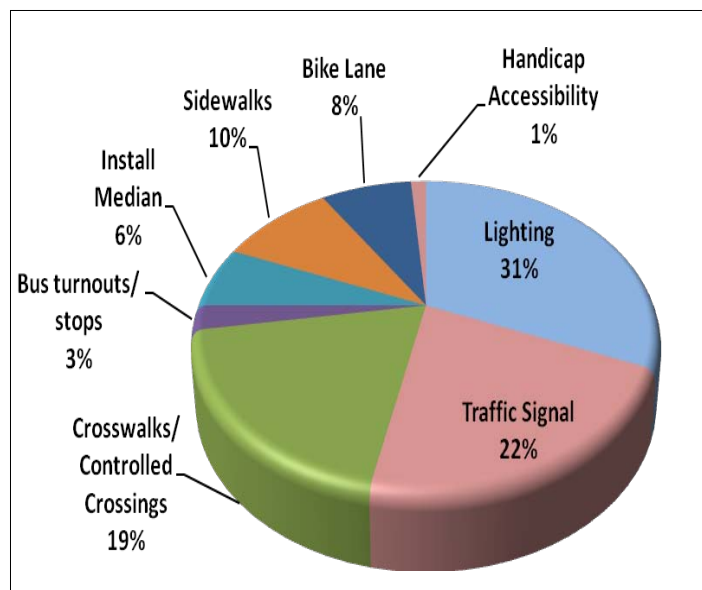
RESULTS FROM PUBLIC OUTREACH

As previously described, the City gathered information from citizens at a number of venues. The chart at Figure 4.3-1 shows the overall general concerns identified by the surveys and outreach efforts at the Merced County Fair and Summerfest. While there were a wide variety of concerns, public improvements and infrastructure were the top priorities, with the appearance of the area being the second highest concern. The chart at Figure 4.3-2 shows the more specific concerns dealing with public improvements and infrastructure.

Right: Figure 4.3-1: Overall Concerns from Public Outreach Survey.

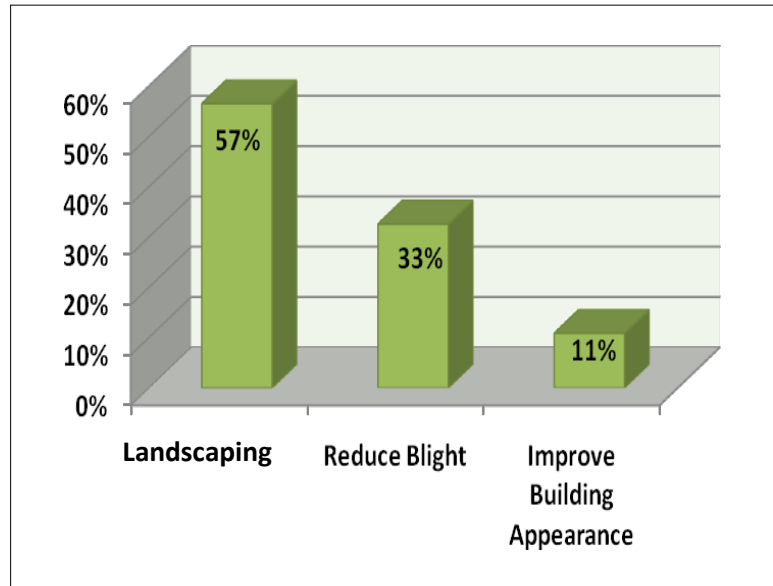


Right: Figure 4.3- 2: Public Improvements and Infrastructure.

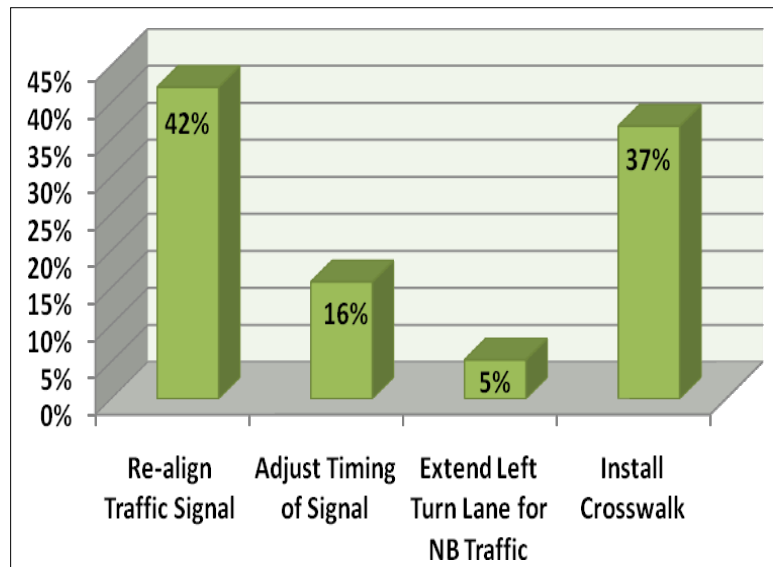


Concerns regarding the appearance of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor included the need for more landscaping and open space, reduced blight in the area, and improved the appearance of the buildings (Figure 4.3-3). Although concerns with the signal at Childs Avenue didn't rank as high as other suggested improvements, there were some very specific concerns and suggestions to help alleviate the problem with this signal. The chart at Figure 4.3-4 depicts the suggested measures to help improve the traffic flow and pedestrian safety at this intersection.

Right: Figure 4.3-3:
Appearance



Right: Figure 4.3-4:
Improvements for Signal at
Childs Avenue.



The concerns and suggestions for public improvements and infrastructure weighed heavily in three areas: lighting, traffic signals, and crosswalks. There were three locations that people primarily wanted to see a traffic signal installed. These were the intersections of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and 8th, 11th, and 12th Streets. Although a traffic signal at all of these intersections may be desired, the majority of survey participants indicated a signal at 11th Street is the most desired location.

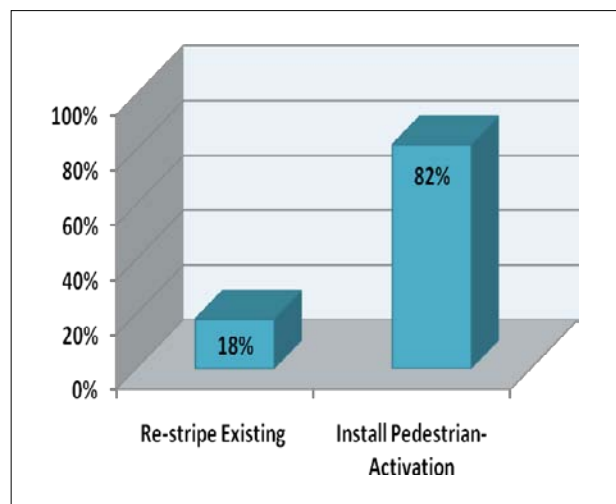
Pedestrian safety was also a high priority. The need for additional crosswalks and improved safety and visibility at existing crosswalks topped the list of concerns for pedestrians. Providing a crosswalk at Childs Avenue topped the list of proposed new locations. The second most suggested location for a crosswalk was in front of the Merced County Fairgrounds.

Pedestrian Crossing

Right: It is not uncommon to see pedestrians crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way several times a day to reach their destination.



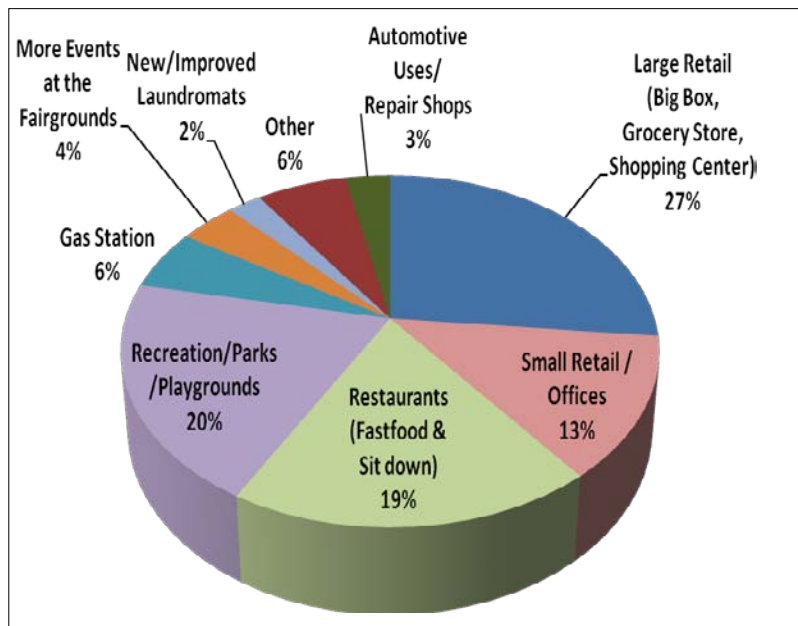
Right: Figure 4.3-5: Suggested Improvements for Signal at Childs Avenue. Improvements to the existing crosswalks were also seen as an important issue for promoting pedestrian safety. Suggested improvements included re-striping the lines for the crosswalks and providing pedestrian-activated crosswalks. As shown in the chart at Figure 4.3-5, the pedestrian-activated crosswalks were seen as a much higher priority.



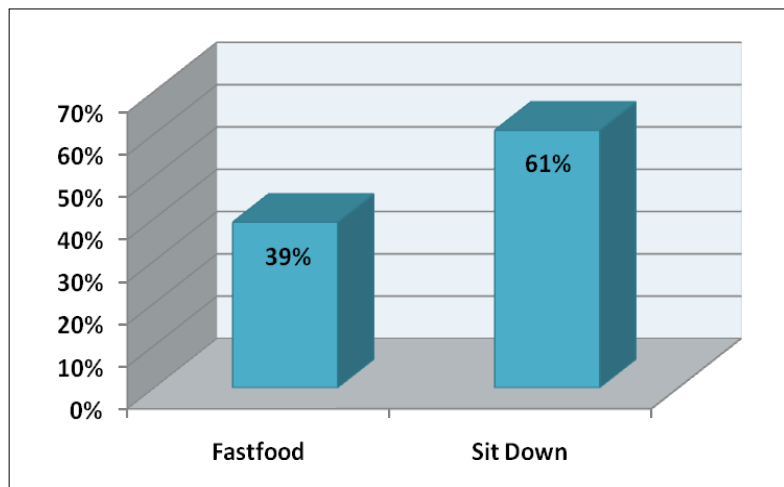
Land Uses

As part of the survey conducted, participants were also asked what kind of uses they would like to see in the area (i.e. retail, offices, housing, etc.). The majority of people suggested some type of large retail or grocery store. The second most popular use was some type of recreational facility (i.e., parks, theme parks, entertainment). The results of this survey are shown in Figure 4.3-6. The majority of those surveyed indicated a grocery store was the most popular use. Shopping centers and other large retailers, such as Target and Wal-Mart, were also high on the list. Sit-down restaurants were favored over fast-food, and some form of entertainment was more popular than parks and playgrounds. These results are all depicted in the charts below and on the next page (Figures 4.3-7, -8, and -9).

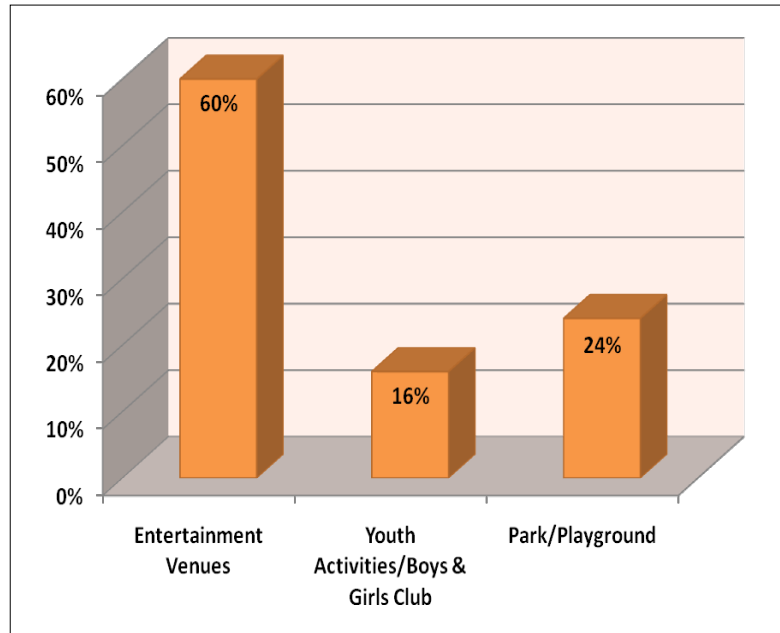
Right: Figure 4.3-6:
Preferred Uses



Right: Figure 4.3-7:
Preferred Restaurants



Right: Figure 4.3- 8:
Recreation and Entertainment



Right: Figure 4.3-9:
Large Retail Uses



Comments from the Community

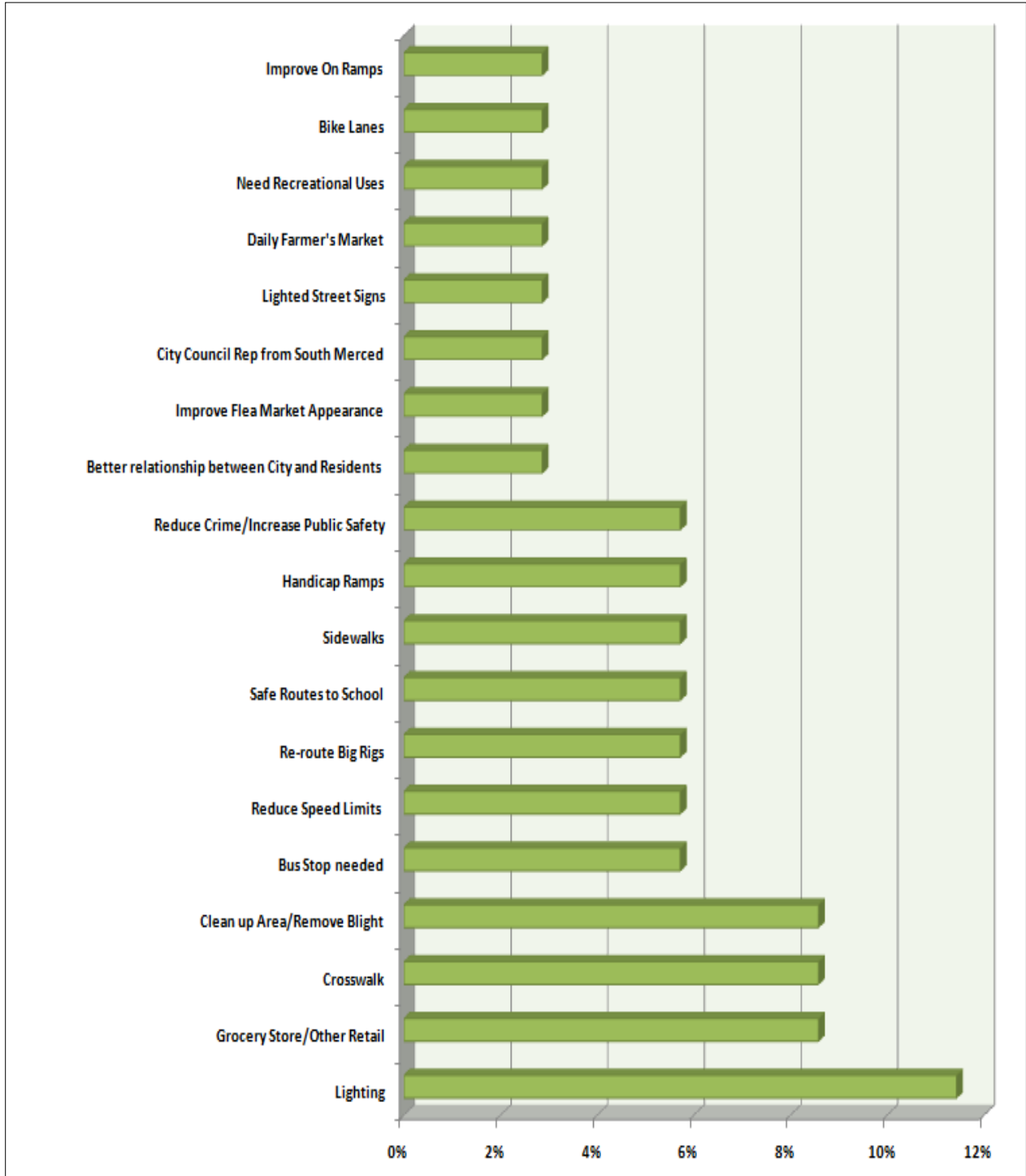
The outreach efforts at the Merced County Fair and Summerfest represented just a sampling from the overall community. As shown in Figure 4.3-10, the residents consider safe routes to schools, reducing speed limits, and providing a daily farmer's market as improvements to the overall community. A number of the other suggestions were also voiced through the public surveys. In comparing the community meetings and the public surveys, the following issues stand out as common issues:

- Need for more lighting
- Need for safe pedestrian crossings
- Clean up the area and remove blight
- Provide a grocery store and other retail uses in the area
- Resolve issues arising from heavy truck traffic
- Need for sidewalks
- Reduce crime in the area

Additional information on these outreach activities and the information gathered through these events can be found at Appendix 6.1.



Figure 4.3-10: Concerns, needs, and desires of the people directly affected by this plan.



Section 4.4 City Commissions, Committee, and Council Involvement

The Highway 59/Martin Luther King Jr., Way Revitalization Strategy Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee was created by City Council Resolution 2010-91 to recommend to the City Council the adoption of a Revitalization Strategy. The plan addresses the following objectives: Improve Transportation Options (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, and transit); Enhance the Safety for all Travelers; Support Economic Growth; Assess the Feasibility of new Land Uses in the Area (Office, Commercial, and Residential); and Identify Opportunities to Provide Safe Crossing Sites. The Committee consisted of residents and representatives from local businesses within the project area (between 13th Street and Childs Avenue and from G Street to M Street), schools, colleges and universities, churches, public entities, the building and development community, and those who have been vested in South Merced for years. Meetings began in January 2011 and ended in January 2012. The Revitalization Plan could not have been completed without the efforts and dedication of the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. For more information on the Committee refer to Part 1 – Plan Overview for their biographies.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee		
Name	Association	Agency
Thomas Bustos Sr.- Chairperson	Business Representative	Bookkeeper, Tax Preparer
Carl Pollard - Vice Chairperson	Advocate for South Merced	Ex-City Council Member and Planning Commissioner; Current Recreation & Parks Commissioner
Lilia Aguilar	Resident of South Merced	Registered Nurse, Golden Valley Health Center
Grace Booth	Previous Resident; Teaches Sunday School in area	Retired
Teresa Burrola	RDAC Representative	Merced County Fair
Amelia Bustos	Resident of South Merced	Retired, Merced College
Cesar Garcia	Lives and works in the area	Program Coordinator, Golden Valley Health Center
Mayko Lozano	Young Adult, Resident of South Merced	Student at Golden Valley High School
Sam Malaythong	Business Owner	Owner of Sam Cafe
Thomas Musser	Works/manages State Property	CEO/Merced County Fair Manager
Michelle Paloutzian	Bldg./develop.; Resident	Landscape Architect
Isabel Sanchez	Resident of South Merced	Volunteer at Golden Valley Health Center
Nancy Tapia	Instructor of Public Health	Merced Co. Public Health
Paul Thao	Lao Family Representative	Merced Lao Family

AD-HOC COMMITTEE COMMUNITY MEETINGS

On December 30, 2010, the City Council accepted the nominations and appointed 13 individuals (plus 1 Redevelopment Advisory Committee Member) to serve as members of the Ad-Hoc Citizens Advisory Committee for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. The Ad-Hoc Committee met 8 times over the course of 13 months. The majority of the meetings were held at the South Police Station located at 11th and Canal Streets.

The Committee's role and duties were to hold public meetings and make recommendations to staff regarding specific issues concerning the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan; however, its primary role was to recommend "Actions" to achieve the four objectives of the strategy.

The community meetings that were held were specific to residents, property, and business owners in the area. The input received at these events provided a clear picture of some of the concerns, needs, and desires of the people directly affected by this plan. Many of the issues are the same as those revealed by the general survey. However, some are more specific to the unique needs of the South Merced community.

1st Meeting – January 20, 2011

The first meeting was an organizational meeting where many important tasks were accomplished, including: oaths of office, discussing the Statements of Economic Interests (700 Forms) and Ethics Training, Meeting Schedule and Attendance Policy, discussing the roles and duties of the Committee, selecting a Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, participating in an overview of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy, and discussing a public survey sent prior to the meeting regarding the Focus Area.

2nd Meeting – March 15, 2011

The March meeting was an "educational" meeting for the Committee. Staff presented certain chapters that had been prepared based on field reviews, which incorporated research, public comments, and other essential elements of the plan. At this point in the process, the chapters were not entirely complete. This allowed for feedback from the Committee on the elements of the Plan as they relate to the four objectives of the Plan.

The Committee was asked to review certain sections of the Revitalization Plan that included: The Plan Overview, Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, Get to Know Your Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee (bio's of each committee member), and the Executive Summary. Additionally, the Committee reviewed the following Chapters of the Background Report:

- Chapter 1: Narrative Description of the Planning Process
- Chapter 2: Persons, Companies, Agencies & Organizations involved in the Planning Process
- Chapter 3: Public Involvement in the Planning Process

- Chapter 5: A Look Back To Look Forward
- Chapter 6: Multi-Modal Transportation System
- Chapter 7: Land Use Patterns
- Chapter 8: Crossing Sites and Patterns of the Corridor
- Appendices

3rd Meeting – May 17, 2011

Guest Speaker Matthew Fell, Senior Planner from Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), gave a presentation of a county-wide inventory of sidewalks and discussed and distributed information regarding various funding opportunities available for infrastructure.

The 3rd Objective - “Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses” was the focused topic at this meeting where the Committee discussed some options for more efficient or flexible land uses adjacent to or in close proximity to Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Three options were proposed to consider possible land use changes that may promote appropriate sites for retail and professional office centers.

COMMITTEE REVIEW AND ACTION OF PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ZONE

Action Item #19 describes the use of a Planned Development zone along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor as a method to encourage the siting of different land uses. The following is a detailed discussion of this topic, and has its basis in Project Objective #3 (assess the feasibility of new office, commercial and residential uses).

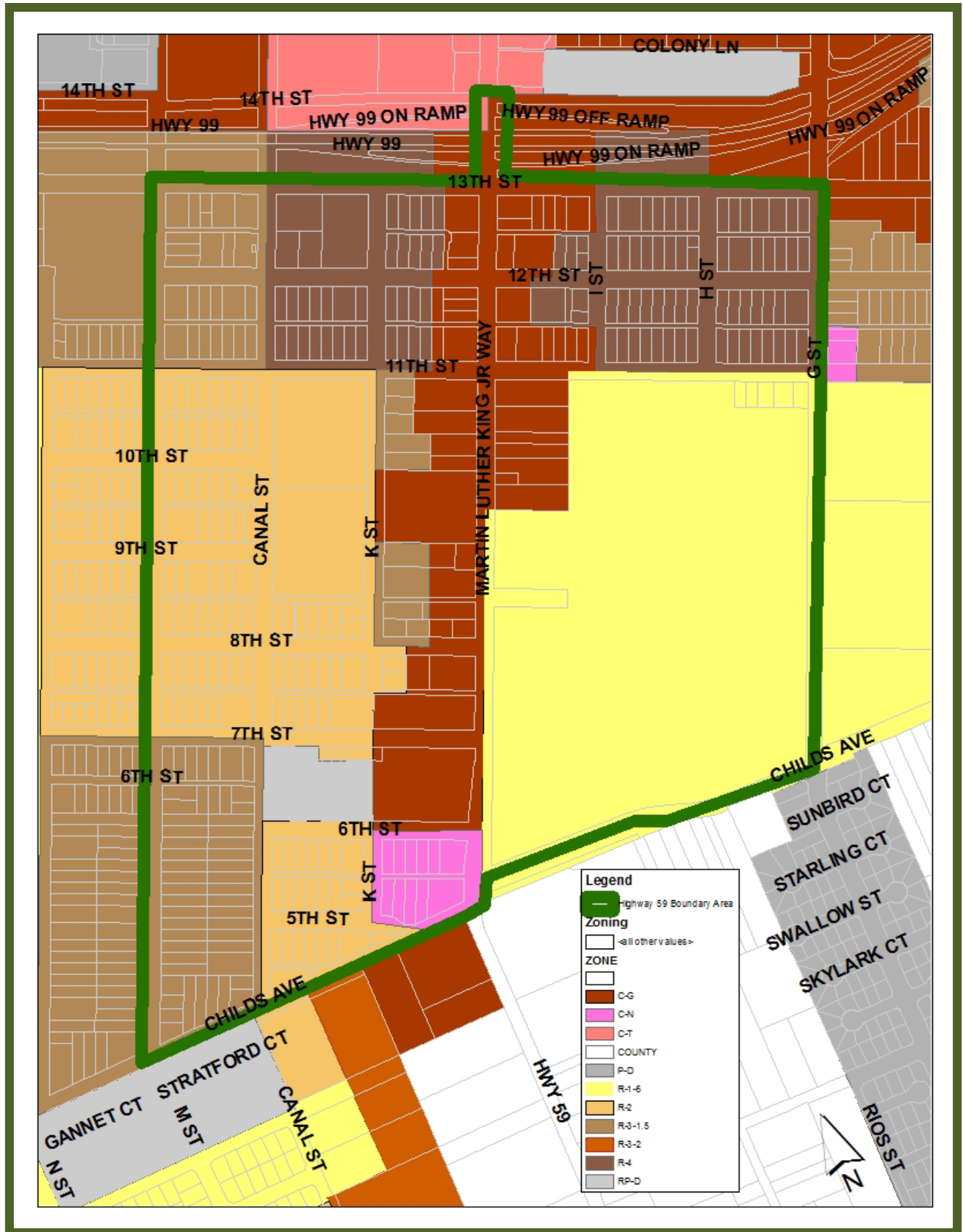
Existing Land Use and Zoning

The Study Area contains a mixture of commercial, residential, and public land uses. Along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor, the predominant land use is commercial (grocery stores, convenience markets, auto repair, auto body and paint shops, a laundromat, recycling facility, restaurants, and mobile food vendors) with various public uses (the Merced County Fairgrounds, Merced County Fire Station, Merced County Public Works, etc.) interspersed throughout (Figure 4.4-1). The zoning along the Corridor (Figure 4.4-2) is mostly General Commercial (C-G) with a small Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) area at the corner of Childs and Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Figure 4.4-1



Figure 4.4-2



Per Merced Municipal Code (MMC) 20.42, a “Planned Development” is “a zone which can permit and enjoin logical or desirable development and carry out the objectives of the General Plan by:

- “ A) Permitting the initial development or enlargement of commercial districts in close proximity to residential areas while protecting the character and quality of adjacent residential uses;
- “ B) Permitting clusters of multiple-family developments in appropriate locations within single-family zones with suitable controls imposed;
- “ C) Providing for the location, under suitable safeguards, of desirable types of research and manufacturing uses adjacent to and within commercial or residential areas;
- “ D) Permitting planned developments on a large scale which would include a combination of any two or all of the above mentioned developments;
- “ E) Permitting the redevelopment of parcels for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes or any combination thereof, in areas already built upon, but which now have marginal development.”

Certain findings must also be met to establish a Planned Development, which requires public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council, as spelled out in MMC 20.42.030:

- A) That each individual unit of the development if built in stages, as well as the total development, can exist as an independent unit capable of creating a good environment in the locality and being in any stage as desirable and stable as the total development;
- B) That the uses proposed will not be a detriment to the present and proposed surrounding land uses, but will enhance the desirability of the area and have a beneficial effect;
- C) That any deviation from the standard ordinance requirements is warranted by the design and additional amenities incorporated in the development plan which offer certain unusual redeeming features to compensate for any deviations that may be permitted; and
- D) That the principles incorporated in the proposed development plan indicate certain unique or unusual features which could not otherwise be achieved under the other zoning districts.

In exchange for the increased flexibility in allowed land uses within a Planned Development, higher development standards are required within Planned Developments and most uses require a Conditional Use Permit before they can be constructed. This could add time and increased uncertainty to the development process.

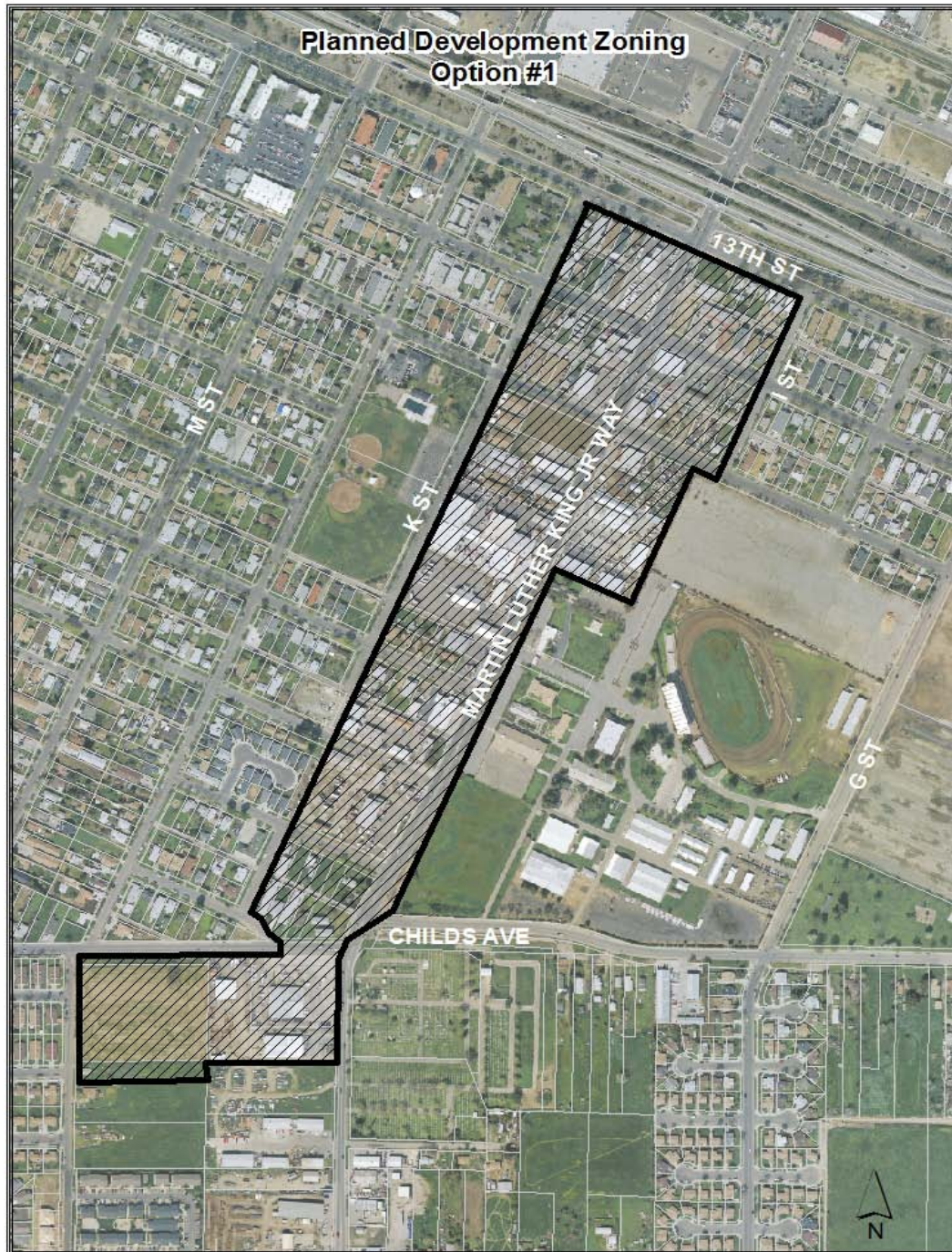
Land Use Options

City staff developed three possible options to consider for possible land use changes that may promote appropriate sites for retail and professional office centers in the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor.

Two of the options involve a Planned Development “Concept” with a designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T) for properties along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor including one block on either side. Option 1 proposes a Planned Development and includes property just outside of the “Study Area” to include the “future” grocery store proposed at Canal and Childs Avenue. Option 2 would also involve a proposed zone change to Planned Development but would NOT include that area since it is outside the Study Area. Option 3 includes re-zoning all properties along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (plus one block on either side) minus the public agencies and automotive repair businesses to either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T). Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) Zoning would allow offices, retail, grocery, and residential uses while Thoroughfare Commercial Zoning (C-T) allows auto-related, retail, grocery, offices, and recreational uses. Both may be more feasible than a Planned Development designation due to the requirements of establishing such a zone.

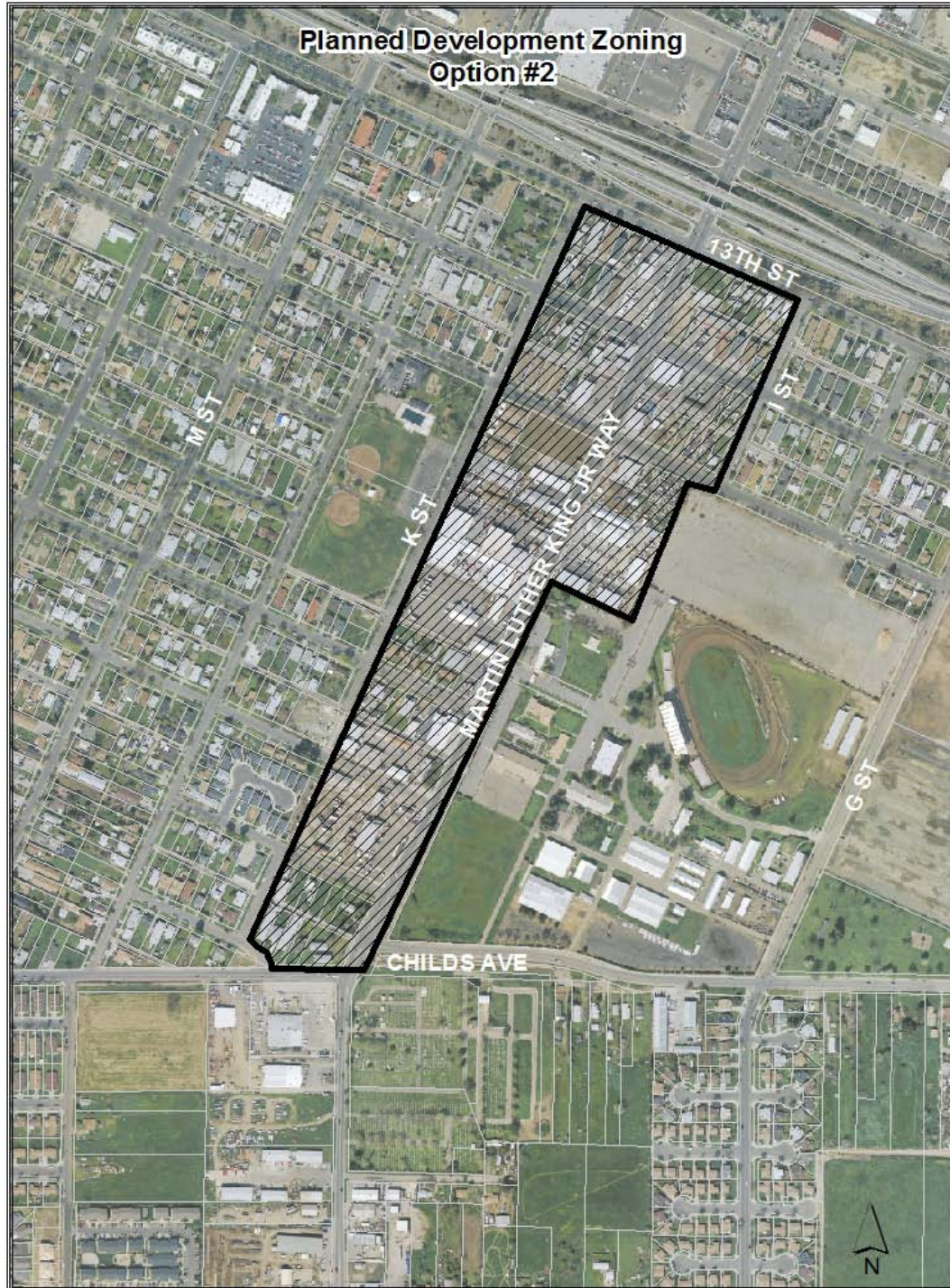
Option 1 (Figure 4.4-3):

Option 1 involves a Planned Development “Concept” with a designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T) for properties along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor including one block on either side, and including property just outside of the “Study Area” to include the “future” grocery store proposed at Canal and Childs Avenue.



Option 2 (Figure 4.4-4):

Option 2 involves a Planned Development “Concept” with a designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T) for properties along the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor including one block on either side, but would NOT include the area at Canal & Childs since it is outside the Study Area.



Option 3 (Figure 4.4-5):

Option 3 includes re-zoning all properties along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (plus one block on either side) minus the public agencies and automotive repair businesses to either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T). Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) Zoning (MMC 20.22) would allow offices, retail, grocery, and residential uses while Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T) Zoning (MMC 20.26) allows auto-related, retail, grocery, hotels/motels, restaurants, and recreational uses geared toward the needs of the travelling public.



Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Review of Land Use Options (May 17, 2011)

The 3 land use options above were presented to the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. The Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using Planned Development zoning. Planned Developments offer the benefit of a more cohesive design, the ability to require higher standards and connectivity between commercial parking lots, flexibility in land uses allowed, etc. However, Planned Developments do add an extra layer of entitlements that need to be obtained from the City prior to development, which can add to the timetable and increase the uncertainty of getting a project approved (a concern for most developers). It is possible to get good design without a Planned Development, but it is more likely to be a cohesive design with the Planned Development. It should also be noted that the project area being within the Gateways Redevelopment Area plus the Enterprise Zone would also benefit the area and give additional tools to attract new development. (Note: The Gateways Redevelopment designation has since been abolished.)

The Committee also discussed large grocery stores vs. “ma and pa” specialty stores. It was noted that large grocery stores generally have lower prices and a larger variety of goods than the small “ma and pa” stores as well as having large parking lots to accommodate customers (unlike most businesses on MLK) and the ability to incorporate banks and pharmacies as amenities within their stores. There is no large grocery store in the area that residents can walk to, so they have to drive a long distance to the nearest one, which can be a challenge to those without transportation. It was noted that the Rancho San Miguel market at Yosemite Park Way and Parsons Avenue offers transportation back home to customers if they can make it to the store on their own. However, some members preferred the smaller stores.

The proposed grocery store at Childs & Canal was discussed and it was noted that one of the challenges with attracting a grocery store to the area was that it is not on a prime corner, and grocery stores rely heavily on traffic counts. For example, one of the selling points is Golden Valley Health Center and their expansion with servicing the seniors as well as the industrial park which is roughly a mile away, with its 500 employees going back and forth (a lunch and early morning crowd as well as those stopping on the way home to buy groceries) along Childs Avenue. The future soccer fields at McNamara Park could also bring shoppers to the area. The City has to demonstrate that there’s not only population in the area, but there’s spending capacity to support the stores. In South Merced, the reality is that customers will walk further to go to grocery stores and will go there more frequently.

The Committee also acknowledged that it may be necessary to tear some of the old buildings down and redevelop them to upgrade the area. The Committee wanted there to be a community gathering place in the area as well as more recreational opportunities, like bowling alleys, ice rinks, miniature golf, water slides, arcades, etc.

The future of the Merced County Fairgrounds was also discussed. There have been rumors that the facility would be relocated, but the cost and the process of going through the State to build a new facility makes that very unlikely to occur. The Fair Board, however, was open to finding ways to generate more revenue at the Fairgrounds on a year-round basis and was open to

suggestions for opening up some of the Fairground property for some restaurants, retail stores, and recreational facilities, especially for children.

The general consensus from the Committee was for Option 1 with the Planned Development, including the future grocery store at Childs and Canal.

4th Meeting – July 19, 2011

Since a significant part of the “Existing Conditions” part of the report involves transportation and safe crossings, two objectives of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan, Objectives #1 and #4, staff placed both on the same agenda to discuss. The objectives are listed below:

- 1. Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit)**

- 4. Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites**

City Engineer Daryl Jordan was invited to give a presentation at the meeting. The Committee discussed topics including the review of several scenarios for the future MLK Jr. Way corridor, the process and costs involved with the scenarios, the potential for obstacles, and setting priorities for improvements and infrastructure.

The Committee was then given an exercise to choose their top four priorities for the corridor. Using a list of eleven potential transportation and safe crossing priorities that staff prepared from comments voiced by the Committee (13 members present) and audience, the following results were found:

- #1 Priority – Pedestrian Safety (improvements include sidewalks, handicap ramps, lighting, and pedestrian-activated crosswalk)
- #2 Priority – Vehicle Safety (co-mingled with truck traffic)
- #3 Priority – Four-way stop at 11th Street (with flashing light)
- #4 Priority – Widen Sidewalk for Pedestrians & Bikes on MLK Jr. Way

The other seven topics in order of priority included:

- Bicycle and disabled access
- Landscaping/park strips
- Bicycle lanes relocated to G and Canal Streets;
- Bus stops
- Median in Martin Luther King Jr. Way
- No bicycle lanes on Martin Luther King Jr. Way
- Traffic Signal at 11th Street

5th Meeting – September 20, 2011

The Committee discussed the final Objective (#2) to the Martin Luther King Jr. Way / Highway 59 Revitalization Plan involving transportation needs, priorities, and phasing:

2. Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers/ Support Economic Growth Through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People

After some discussion, the Committee noted the top four streets or alleys that they felt should be considered for improvements as follows:

- a. Alley west of MLK Jr. Way between 11th & 12th Streets
- b. MLK Jr. Way to Canal Street between 11th and 12th Streets
- c. The east side of MLK Jr. Way alley between 11th and 12th Streets
- d. Caltrans off-ramp at 13th Street (traveling east)
- e. Childs Avenue and Canal Street (flooding issues)

There was also some discussion about showcasing the positive elements that South Merced has to offer including “celebrating this area’s diverse and rich culture” and that “positive things are happening in South Merced” in the document as evidenced by the new Senior Care Facility under construction, the various churches, McNamara Park, the Head Start Program and other great celebrations that take place at the Fairgrounds, and the “festival” every Saturday at the Flea Market.

6th Meeting – November 20, 2011

Staff presented the Action Strategy Matrix from three initiative categories that included: Physical Improvement, Redevelopment and Economic Development, and Organizational/Administrative. After reviewing and discussing the “draft” Action Strategy Matrix for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Highway 59) Revitalization Strategy, the Committee helped prioritize the 25 Action Items (from the Action Strategy Matrix) by placing a maximum of three dots on any action item they felt strongly about. As a result of this exercise, the Action Plan was prepared. Refer to Part 5 – Strategy and implementation Plan.

7th Meeting – December 14, 2011

Staff reviewed the results from the Draft Action Strategy Matrix (a total of 25 items) from the meeting in November. In response to a request if other Action items should be included in the Plan, Committee member THAO suggested development of a community garden is important to the well being of the Lao Family elders.

Staff explained the importance of staying active in the community, including assisting the Revitalization Plan in moving forward to the next level. Encouragement was also given to the Committee for opportunities within South Merced or the entire City. Speakers included Mary-

Michal Rawling who explained that she was helping recruit for two members to participate on the Measure C Committee. Ms. See Lee presented an overview of the organization she works for, Building Healthy Communities, and their involvement in the community.

8th Meeting – January 17, 2012

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee reviewed and commented on the completed Draft Plan and voted to recommend that the City Council adopt the Revitalization Plan. Committee members then went around the room and expressed what each felt about their role on the committee. It was suggested that they stay active in furtherance of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan as well as in their community. (See Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee’s Resolution in the Appendix 6.1 Section of the report.)

City Staff wanted to note that it has truly been a pleasure to work with such a hard-working, dedicated, and compassionate Committee as this one!

OTHER COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES, BOARDS, ASSOCIATIONS, AND COUNCIL

Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC)

The Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) was advisory to the Redevelopment Agency (City Council), and staff on redevelopment policies and programs. The Committee was appointed by and responsible to the Redevelopment Agency. Members of the RDAC had to have direct interests in either the Gateways Redevelopment Project Area or Redevelopment Project Area 2.

The role of the RDAC in this project was twofold: (1) Committee review/comment on the draft plan; and, (2) RDAC representation on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Committee. With this in mind, every other month, RDAC was presented with plan development updates. The first meeting on 10/19/10 was to request a representative from their Commission to participate on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. Teresa Burrola volunteered to be their representative. Staff subsequently provided updates to RDAC about the Ad-Hoc Committee Meetings’ topics and discussions. Staff met with RDAC on the following scheduled meeting dates: 2/15/11; 4/19/11; 6/21/11; 8/16/11; 10/2011; and 11/15/11.

However, due to the unfortunate elimination of Redevelopment Agencies throughout the State, RDAC’s previously-assumed role with the Revitalization Plan has ceased. The Committee and staff would like to thank members of RDAC for their efforts regarding the Revitalization Plan.

Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)

EDAC is advisory to the City Council, Redevelopment Agency, and staff on business and industrial development policies and programs. The Committee acts on issues referred by the City Council, or those originated by the Committee and referred to the Council. EDAC advises in the development of sound regulatory policies affecting business and industry, as requested by the City Council; advises in the development of the annual work program and budget for the City's economic development program; and, furnishes additional expertise to supplement staff skills in fields such as finance, transportation, industrial management, real estate, employment training, retail management, and utility resources. These are tools that may be needed in the implementation of the revitalization strategy. Staff presented the Revitalization Plan to EDAC on February 8, 2012, and they voted to support the Plan, its priorities, goals and objectives, and recommended that the City Council approve the Plan.

Planning Commission

Since the Planning Commission is the body that holds public hearings and makes recommendations to the City Council on matters involving the General Plan, Zoning, and land uses, it was imperative to involve the Commission in the Revitalization Plan. This is because one of the Objectives (Objective 3 - entitled, "Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses") involves promoting more efficient land uses within the Focus Area. Any future projects involving land use changes may be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

On October 5, 2011, staff presented an "Overview of the Revitalization Strategy" focusing on the Existing Conditions and Land Use to the Planning Commission. The Commission gave positive comments regarding efforts made from the Citizen's Advisory Committee with a couple of Commissioners indicating that it appeared as though all issues were identified.

Subsequently, on December 7, 2011, staff made a second presentation to the Planning Commission on the Plan's initiatives on the Matrix including the proposed implementation of the initiatives, the organizations that are involved, and potential funding sources. Since a portion of the Matrix involves action items involving Land Use, such as developing a "future" Planned Development or Formed Based Codes for example, staff wanted to give an update to the Commission regarding this important part of the Strategy and to seek input on planning-related actions/initiatives.

Lastly, on January 18, 2012, staff presented the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan at the regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting. The Commission concurred with the Findings in the staff report and recommended to City Council Adoption of a Statutory Exemption and Adoption of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan after a public hearing. (See Planning Commission Resolution in the Appendices Section of the Plan – 6.1.)

Bicycle Advisory Commission

On October 25, 2011, staff presented an overview of the Revitalization Strategy with a focused concentration on bicycle planning and infrastructure. The Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) commented that bicycles are inappropriate on Martin Luther King Jr. Way due to safety issues. Additionally, they felt that Childs Avenue should have bike lanes and was intrigued by the idea of having a “bike-boulevard”-style design for Canal Street, where pedestrians and bicycles are predominant users of a street. Overall, the BAC concurred with the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee regarding bicycle transportation and safety.

Merced County Fair Board

On December 12, 2011, staff presented an overview of the Plan to the Merced County Fair Board explaining the Project objectives, existing conditions, public outreach opportunities, data collection and results, land use suggestions, and priority results from the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. They were provided with a map of the “Focus Area” and the “draft” Strategy and Implementation Plan with recommended actions, potential funding opportunities, and the Action Plan Matrix. Comments were both complimentary for the Committee’s efforts and surprised at the information gathered during the data collection relating to pedestrians, bicyclists, and big rig trucks. The Board indicated their appreciation of the information, expressed support for the project, and is looking forward to working with the City of Merced to improve the area.

Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG)

Merced County Association of Governments is an association of city and county governments (six cities and the county), with members who meet to solve regional problems such as transportation, solid waste, and air quality. This Association of Governments is where the cities and the county come together as equal partners to solve problems that can only be accomplished by working together. As a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and Metropolitan Planning Organization, MCAG is the primary transportation facilitator in Merced County. Responsibilities are many, from identifying priority projects to assuring money accepted for improving transportation has been properly utilized. They also prepare grant proposals for projects that benefit MCAG member jurisdictions and continue to attract resources with which identified projects may be implemented. As the county-wide primary transportation facilitator, MCAG’s endeavors are important to the success of funding resources for transportation improvements listed in the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Plan. Jesse Brown, Executive Director of MCAG, submitted an endorsement letter in November 2010 (a copy of this letter can be found in the Appendices Section of the Plan).

In February 2012, staff made presentations to MCAG’s Transportation Planning Committee and Citizens Group, in an effort to receive support and endorsement for the Revitalization Plan.

Merced City Council

The City of Merced operates under the Council/Manager form of government. This seven-member City Council takes action on matters involving ordinances, resolutions, as well as monetary actions that include grants like the Revitalization Plan. The following includes some of the actions already taken by City Council, but it should be noted that other Council actions could occur regarding future efforts of the Revitalization Plan's Actions:

March 16, 2009 - The City Council adopted Resolution No. 2009-10 approving the Transportation Planning Environmental Justice Grant Application and Funding Plan and committing matching funds.

April 5, 2010 - The City Council adopted a motion to accept and appropriate the Environmental Justice Grant for the South Highway 59 Revitalization Strategy in the amount of \$250,000 and authorized the Planning Staff to implement the program.

October 18, 2010 – The City Council accepted the nominations and appointed 13 individuals (plus 1 Redevelopment Advisory Committee Member) to serve as members of the Ad-Hoc Citizens Advisory Committee for Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

At their regularly scheduled meeting of December 19, 2011, an Overview of the Revitalization Plan was presented to the City Council. Comments included noting parcels that were known to have contamination and their status in the document; adding language to the Action Strategy Matrix to look at a pedestrian overpass and the costs involved; and, looking forward to seeing a completed document.

Subsequently, City Council held a public hearing on February 21, 2012, and adopted the Plan.



PART 5:

Strategy and Implementation Plan



PART 5: STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PART 5 describes and prioritizes the Committee’s recommended actions, establishes an Action Plan Matrix listing implementers and potential funding sources, and outlines future oversight of the Plan.

SECTION 5.1



Recommended Actions

SECTION 5.2



Action Plan

SECTION 5.3



Plan Maintenance

Section 5.1 Recommended Actions

INTRODUCTION

Following the lead of the City’s grant application and award by Caltrans to craft a Plan based on four key objectives, Staff and the Ad-hoc Committee aimed to establish action items to attain those objectives. These actions were based on the findings of the plan’s “Existing Conditions Report” (PART 3), and input received during the Project’s extensive public outreach efforts. A total of 25 action items were identified. NOTE: Some of these actions are applicable in more than one objective.

Total Votes by Plan Objectives		
Key	Objective	Actions
Travel Modes	Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit)	7
Safe Movement	Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People	7
Land Use Patterns	Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses	16
Safe Crossings	Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites	7

OTHER ACTIONS OF MERIT

During the course of the Committee’s identification of recommended actions, other ideas unrelated to the Plan objectives were discussed, and include:

- Support Development of Community Gardens
- Clean up Brownfield Sites

TRAVEL MODES

The following set of recommended actions is associated with the Plan objective to Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit).

Action Item #1: Provide Handicap Ramps on Street Corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way

A significant finding of the Plan's Existing Conditions Background Report (PART 3 of this Plan) was the tremendous amount of pedestrian travel that occurs along and across Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Pedestrian traffic is high along and across Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and is populated with not only handicapped individuals, but also children, baby strollers and elderly. Such travel is difficult due to the lack of handicapped facilities. The placement of handicapped ramps on all street corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way will strengthen and increase safe pedestrian movements. It is also important to note here the need to coordinate this improvement with Action Item #4, the widening of the sidewalk along the corridor.

Action Item #2: Repaint Crosswalks, Striping and other Safety Markings

Caltrans is responsible for striping and other pavement markings within their right-of-way along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Hwy. 59). However, the City of Merced is responsible for the side streets that intersect with MLK Jr. Way. The Committee felt that street maintenance, such as repainting street markings, is an immediate need and an inexpensive safety measure for both Caltrans and City-owned roadways.

Action Item #3: Provide Bus Turn-Outs on Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Despite the corridor's high pedestrian travel and presence of three bus routes, there are no bus pull-outs or bus stop amenities (bench, shelter and trash receptacle) on either side of Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Action #3 calls for the placement of at least one of these improvements on each side of the road, sited in consultation with THE BUS.

Action Item #4: Strengthen Pedestrian Circulation by Widening Sidewalks along Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Though large amounts of pedestrian traffic already occur on the road, improvements and widening are requested to address multiple issues facing this travel facility. A variety of pedestrian users, including wheelchairs, strollers, and large groups, often including children and bicyclists, use the 5-foot wide sidewalk, that is located immediately adjacent to a curb with no park-strip or on-street parking, placing

pedestrians immediately adjacent to the heavy auto and “big-rig” truck traffic. The City Engineer has indicated that there is enough right-of-way along Martin Luther King Jr. Way to widen the sidewalks on both sides of the roadway. The interface of these pedestrian users with a four-lane state highway and truck route speaks to the need and benefit of a wider sidewalk. This improvement should be coordinated with Action Items #1 and #8.

Action Item #5: Explore Design Options for Canal Street to be used as a Predominantly Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Road

Martin Luther King Jr. Way provides for all transportation modes, but is utilized primarily by autos and trucks. This action item seeks to provide a transportation corridor in the Plan Area that emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle travel to northern and southern destinations. Anchored by one of the area’s landmarks - McNamara Park - Canal Street with its relatively low-vehicle traffic and access under State Route 99 to Downtown, affords an opportunity that cannot be achieved on other plan area roadways. The intent of this action is for further analysis, public outreach and design options to be explored to answer whether or not the idea has merit, and if so, what ultimate design and travel options can be deployed.

Action Item #6: Prioritize Infrastructure needed along the Corridor and Pursue Improvements as Funding is Available



The Committee’s priority list has been established and is presented in PART 5 of this Plan. The Committee is aware that outside factors may affect the order in which those action items are implemented, and include: 1) limitations or restrictions in funding opportunities; 2) the need for and associated time and costs needed for subsequent project-level environmental reviews; and, 3) challenges of interagency coordination and authority. Despite these barriers, Plan implementers will aim to maintain the spirit of the Committee’s recommended priority, but will make necessary adjustments. These will be described and explained in the Annual Reports prepared by the City.

SAFE MOVEMENT

The following set of recommended actions is associated with the Plan objective to Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth Through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People.

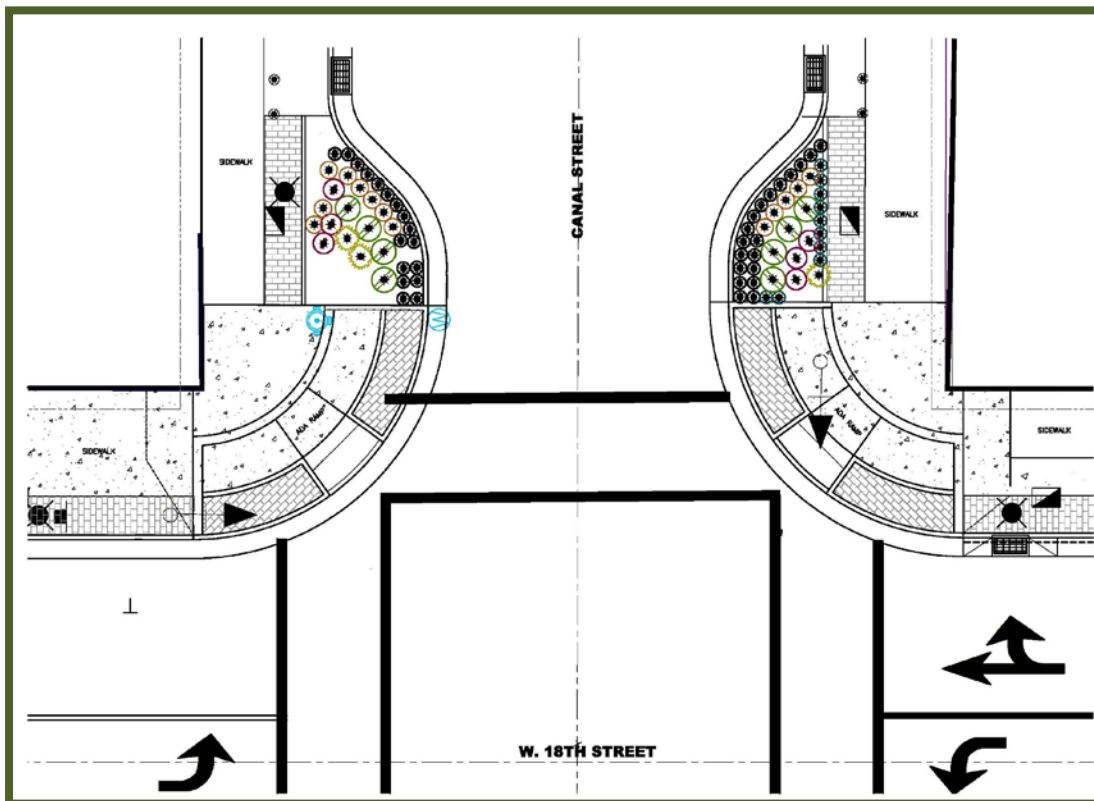
Action Item #7: Provide a Pedestrian Activated Crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Way



South Merced is very mobile as was shown when staff and volunteers assisted in data collection in late 2010 over a 4-day period of time where pedestrians, bicyclists and big-rig trucks were counted at four locations along Martin Luther King Jr. Way. As explained in the Existing Conditions Background Report (PART 3 of the Plan), one Zone was reported to have pedestrian movements crossing MLK Jr. Way from 221 times on 11/30/2010, to over 600 on 12/11/2010. Zone 2 had from 276 to 435 pedestrian movements on the same dates. Safe crossing for pedestrians/bicyclists at MLK Jr. Way was discussed repeatedly at Committee community meetings with the suggestion being a pedestrian-activated crosswalk and associated signs and lights on Martin Luther King Jr. Way. As part of this action, consideration of a pedestrian bridge should also be explored.

Action Item #8: Install Bulb-Outs on Side Streets that Intersect with MLK Jr. Way

Since MLK Jr. Way (Hwy. 59) is under Caltrans jurisdiction, any proposed improvements need approval from them. However, the City of Merced has jurisdiction on side streets that intersect with Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The Committee felt any improvements, such as bulb outs on the side streets, that can provide a shorter walking distance and include additional lighting and/or landscaping would bring much needed safety and beautification to the area (see bulb out example below).



Action Item #9: Limit Curb Cuts and Consolidate Access Points along the Corridor

Removing driveway curb-cuts provides opportunities for an improved pedestrian environment by removing vehicle-pedestrian conflicts and by providing space for landscaping. Removing curb-cuts also increases the traffic capacity of the highway and reduces potential vehicle conflicts. Alternative access to any given property may or may not exist, however. A full site assessment of these issues, along with maintaining adequate business access value, must occur before a decision to remove curb-cuts is made.

Action Item #10: Improve Lighting of Alleys and Side Streets



Through an energy grant and a long-term financing program (Siemens contract/energy grant), the City recently went through and changed out the street lights (1 for 1 replacement with energy efficient lighting). However, the grant did not include adding additional streetlights. The Committee felt that any new lighting should be energy efficient lighting, but that more lighting was also needed along the Corridor.

Action Item #11: Coordinate with Other Agencies to Divert Truck Traffic or Implement Improvements for Co-mingling all Corridor Travelers



The Committee’s preference is to divert truck traffic from traveling on Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Diversion is consistent with long-term plans that direct traffic to the Mission Avenue Interchange after closure of the MLK/Hwy 59 on-and-off ramps. If diverting truck traffic becomes infeasible, then the Committee recommends that roadway improvements be installed on Martin Luther King Jr. Way to minimize the impacts of the heavy through and non-local truck traffic that impacts the roadway. Such features could include medians, and pedestrian activated stop-lights. For either method, coordination with Caltrans, the Highway Patrol, and the trucking industry will be needed.

Action Item #6: Prioritize Infrastructure needed along the Corridor and Pursue Improvements as Funding is Available

Refer to Narrative of Action Item #6 on page 5-5.

LAND USE PATTERNS

The following set of recommended actions is associated with the Plan objective to assess the feasibility of new office, commercial, and residential uses.

Action Item # 12: Install New Water & Sewer Lines to Encourage Development along MLK Jr. Way

There are some commercially-zoned properties within the Focus Area that are not served by municipal water and/or sewer services. Providing these services will encourage redevelopment of under-utilized sites and the development of vacant sites.

Action Item #13: Undertake Streetscape Upgrades at Key “Gateway” Entry Points to the Corridor

Enhancing both private and public land along the Corridor is important to the Committee. With the exception of a few properties, the area is devoid of street trees, ornate lighting, or landscaping of any kind. Some buildings are in a state of disrepair, and vacant properties are a continuous magnet for debris and have been used as a collection point for other unwanted items. The Committee recognized that many residents and business owners who take pride in South Merced routinely participate in organized “clean up” events.

Action Item #14: Encourage Existing Businesses to Enhance their Buildings and Sites to Further Improve our Gateways; Encourage Façade Improvement for Businesses along Corridor

The City should explore methods to allow and encourage private property owners to upgrade building façades, signage, and landscaping. Since traditional methods of funding such upgrades through redevelopment funds are no longer available; creative solutions need to be identified and pursued.

Action Item #15: Undertake Land Assembly to Facilitate Redevelopment with a Focus on Key Opportunity Areas

In order to attract a wider range of commercial development along the corridor, efforts are necessary to assemble adjacent smaller parcels.

Action Item #16: Offer Streamlined Review and Permitting for Projects that meet Pre-determined Eligibility Criteria which Support the Objectives and Actions of the Plan

Private development projects that include building and site upgrades consistent with the Plan’s goal to increase building and sign aesthetics, more landscaping, and an improved pedestrian environment should be offered streamlined review and permitting with the City. Outreach and participation by the business community should be an essential task to prepare and market this effort.

Action Item #17: Create a Positive “Brand” for the Corridor and Focus Area

As new businesses develop or existing businesses improve their buildings and/or sites, the Committee felt it was important to integrate a consistent landscape palette, lighting fixtures, street furniture, and trash receptacles for the Focus Area. They were also in favor of incorporating artwork such as sculptures, a welcome sign, organized murals on buildings, and other positive artistic means that reflect positive elements in South Merced.

Action Item #18: Pursue Infrastructure and Telecommunications Upgrades, Including the use of Renewable Energy

Similar to the provision of municipal sewer and water, business development is supported and encouraged in areas having telecommunication infrastructure and access to reduced energy-costs. For example, recently enacted state laws permit voluntary districts to be formed whose purpose is to finance energy-efficiency upgrades for commercial users. Cities throughout the nation are assisting their business and industrial districts to access lower-energy costs through construction of renewable energy sources.

Action Item #19: Develop a “Planned Development” with a Designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Commercial Thoroughfare (C-T) for Properties along the MLK Jr. Way Corridor (Hwy. 59) including One Block on Either Side (including from Canal to Hwy. 59 south of Childs Avenue to the future grocery site on Childs Ave. and Canal Street to Hwy. 59)

The establishment of a Martin Luther King Jr. Way Planned Development (PD) is intended to allow for greater types of land uses than is currently allowed. For example, the Committee noted the need for a greater range of neighborhood commercial services. After future adoption of the MLK Planned Development by the Merced City Council, some form of administrative review for subsequent land use proposals, instead of Planning Commission review through the Conditional Use Permit Process, should be further explored. Such action is intended to streamline the review process to incentivize land use change along the corridor. The exact location and types of land uses and subsequent review procedures need to be defined at a later date, and are not part of this Plan. (It should be noted that although there are benefits to having a PD Zone, the property owner may wish to be excluded.)

NOTE: Frank Quintero, Director of Economic Development, indicated that different zoning (other than a Planned Development) may be more

appropriate. In general, this Committee supports actions that promote new, attractive developments and zoning that would encourage this.

Action Item #20: Implement Design Guidelines for New Construction of Businesses

Establishing a document titled “Design Guidelines for Building and Site Improvements along Martin Luther King Jr. Way,” will improve communication between the City and local business owners, laying the foundation for benefits to both. This user-friendly guide will inform readers of applicable City codes and how they apply to them, taking out any guess work or surprises, and the associated potential stress of dealing with regulators. The guide will also introduce readers to common, practical, and inexpensive optional methods to upgrade properties. Such methods would focus on the design-related actions recommended by the Committee.

Action Item #21: Develop Form Based Codes

The Committee expressed a desire for a form-based code to apply to the Plan area. A form-based code emphasizes high quality architecture as opposed to a zoning code based primarily on land use types. Additionally, a form-based code has the potential to allow a greater number of land-uses, provided the site design and building have high aesthetic and architectural value. The Committee recognized that the effort to establish a form-based code for the Plan area would be part of a larger City-wide effort.

Action Item #22: Review Signage Flexibility along the Corridor

The Committee supports City efforts to examine possibilities of providing additional signage options for retail uses near to but lacking frontage onto Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Action Item #23: Increase Police and/or Community Patrols to Discourage Criminal Activity

The Committee encourages additional police presence, additional lighting in the alleys and on the streets, and welcomes measures to remove blight in the area.

Action Item #24: Encourage Neighborhood Watch Groups

There are no established Neighborhood Watch Groups within the Focus Area of South Merced. Recreation and Community Services are currently the lead in assisting in this effort.

**Action Item #6: Prioritize Infrastructure needed along the Corridor and Pursue Improvements as Funding is Available**

Refer to Narrative of Action Item #6 on page 5-5.

Action Item #10: Improve Lighting of Alleys and Side Streets

Refer to Narrative of Action Item #10 on page 5-7.

SAFE CROSSINGS

The following set of recommended actions is associated with the Plan objective to identify opportunities to design and install improvements that provide safe crossing sites.

Action Item #25: Evaluate Opportunities for Four-Way Stops

The Plan's mobility study supports the Committee's recommendation to evaluate the utility of installing a four-way stop along MLK Jr. Way, north of the Fairgrounds. While a large amount of east-west pedestrian traffic exists, issues of air quality impacts from associated stop-and-go traffic, and need of such improvement by vehicular cross-traffic, needs further review and consideration.

Action Item #1: Provide Handicapped Ramps on Street Corners

Refer to Narrative of Action Item #1 on page 5-4.

Action Item #4: Strengthen Pedestrian Circulation by Widening Sidewalks along Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Refer to Narrative of Action Item #4 on page 5-4.

Action Item #6: Prioritize Infrastructure needed along the Corridor and Pursue Improvements as Funding is Available

Refer to Narrative of Action Item #6 on page 5-5.

Action Item #7: Provide a Pedestrian Activated Crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Refer to Narrative of Action Item #7 on page 5-6.

Action Item #11: Coordinate with other agencies to Divert Truck Traffic or Implement Improvements for Co-mingling all Corridor Travelers
Refer to Narrative of Action Item #11 on page 5-7.



Section 5.2 Action Plan

Successful implementation of any Plan is based on the coordinated action of three elements: 1) implementers; 2) funding opportunities; and 3) incentives and other implementation mechanisms.

Some components of the Plan, such as infill development, façade improvements, etc., will occur at the will (or in partnership with) of local property owners who seek to enhance lot coverage or redevelop a particular site. Those improvements will occur gradually over time and will be guided by the corridor plan and design guidelines. The public improvements will likely be phased since procurement of construction funds is always difficult and impacts to existing businesses and residents can be better managed in smaller projects.

IMPLEMENTERS

A key achievement of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan is the formation of a coalition of local business owners and residents dedicated to the betterment of their neighborhood. This group is described in detail in PART 4 of the Plan. In addition to this group, numerous local government agencies and nonprofit groups were engaged in the development of the Plan, and are likewise committed to creating a positive change in the community. Many of these groups have provided commitment letters and resolutions (PART 6, Appendices). A key partner in the development and future implementation is CalTrans, which has the most direct capacity for development of improvement Projects along the Plan corridor, Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Brownfield Redevelopment and Funding - Numerous funding opportunities and programs exist at the local, state and federal levels, and include the following:

US Environmental Protection Agency

- Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields and Land Revitalization program

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)

- Targeted Site Investigations
- Revolving Loan Fund Program

State Water Resources Control Board

- Orphan Site Cleanup Fund (OSCF Program)

- California Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Fund

State of California Pollution Control Finance Authority

- CAL REUSE Program

A comprehensive description of funding and technical assistance can be found at www.cclr.org/resources/CA.

Business Improvement District (BID) – Also known as Business Improvement Area (BIA), Business Revitalization Zones (BRZ), Community Improvement Districts (CID), Special Services Areas (SSA), or Special Improvement Districts (SID), these designations can be used to define areas within which businesses pay an additional tax or fee in order to fund improvements within the district's boundaries. BIDs provide services, such as cleaning streets, providing security, making capital improvements, construction of pedestrian and streetscape enhancements, and marketing the area. These services provided by BIDs are supplemental to those already provided by the municipality.

Monitoring of Funding Opportunities - Simultaneous to these efforts, it is important to maintain a constant monitoring of funding opportunities that can be leveraged to implement some of the more costly recommended actions. This will include creating and maintaining a bank of ideas on how any required local match or participation requirement can be met. When funding does become available, the City and other groups will be in a position to capitalize on the opportunity. Funding opportunities to be monitored include special district budgeted funds, state or federal earmarked funds, and grant programs, including those that can serve or support multi-objective applications.

Affordable Housing - The City's Housing Division offers various structure rehabilitation and affordable in-fill programs that can serve to implement some of the actions of the Plan. Some of the funding opportunities for affordable housing include: 1) Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program; 2) First Time Home Buyer Loan Program; and, 3) the CALHOME Loan Program.

Table 5.1: Applicable Transportation Funding by Program and Mode of Travel

Funding Program	Decision Maker	Regional Improvements	Local Roads	Transit	Control Measures	Bicycle / Pedestrian
Federal Funding Sources						
Surface Transportation Program (STP)	MCAG		✘			
Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)	MCAG			✘		✘
Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA)	MCAG					✘
Federal Transit Administration Section 5307(FTA 5307)	MCAG			✘		
Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 (FTA5311)	MCAG			✘		
Federal Transit Administration Section 5309 (FTA 5309)	FEDERAL			✘		
Highway Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation (HBRR)	CALTRANS	✘				
Hazard Elimination/Safety (HES)	CALTRANS		✘			

Funding Program	Decision Maker	Regional Improvements	Local Roads	Transit	Control Measures	Bicycle / Pedestrian
State Funding Sources						
Interregional Improvement Program (IIP)	CALTRANS	×				
Regional Improvement Program (RIP)	MCAG	×				
Local Transportation Funds (LTF)	MCAG		×	×		
State Transit Assistance Fund (STAF)	MCAG			×		
Gas Tax Prop 111	LOCAL		×			
State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP)	CALTRANS	×				
Caltrans Minor Program (Minor)	CALTRANS	×				
Bicycle Transportation Grants (BTA)	CALTRANS					×
99 Bond Program	CALIF. TRANSP. COMMISSION	×				
State Transportation Program (STP)	MCAG		×			
State Gas Tax subventions	LOCAL		×			
Safe Routes to School Program	CALTRANS					×
Highway Safety Improvement Program	CALTRANS					
Local Funding Sources						
Regional Transportation Impact Fee	MCAG	×				
Development Fees, other Local funds	LOCAL		×			
Transportation Measure	MCAG					
Transit Fare-box Recovery	LOCAL			×		

IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

Not all recommended actions of the Plan are dependent on funding; other tools can be utilized. The City can deploy a variety of incentives and mechanisms to implement the other recommended actions of the Plan. These are briefly described below.

Early Successes / Project Focus - Implementation implies two concepts that are closely related: action and priority. While this plan puts forth many worthwhile and high priority recommendations, the decision about which action to undertake first will be the initial task facing the City. Two factors will help make that decision: priority and funding. Thus, pursuing low or no-cost high-priority recommendations will have the greatest likelihood of success.

Incorporation into Existing Implementation Mechanisms - Another important implementation mechanism that is highly effective and low-cost is incorporation of the Plan recommendations and their underlying principles into other City plans and implementation mechanisms.

The Plan provides a series of recommended actions - many of which are closely related to the goals and objectives of existing City programs. The City has the opportunity to implement recommended mitigation action items through existing programs and procedures. Therefore, this Plan recommends using existing plans and/or programs to implement projects and actions, where possible, in order to capitalize on the momentum developed through previous and related City efforts and programs. For example, the action items in the Plan may be achieved through activities recommended in the City's Capital Improvement Plans (CIP). Various City departments develop CIP plans, and review them on an annual basis. Other existing suitable plans and programs include:

- *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*
- City Ordinances
- Capital improvement plans and budgets
- Other plans, regulations, and practices with a redevelopment focus

Within a year of formal adoption of the Plan, the recommended actions should be incorporated into the process of existing planning mechanisms at the City level, where appropriate.

Exclusive Right-to-Negotiate – City Staff could seek to establish an exclusive right to negotiate with developers on behalf of the Merced County Fairgrounds. Such arrangement is attractive to development interests since this affords them a direct connection to redevelopment programs, as well as to knowledge of City development-related issues. It also affords the City the ability to front-load site design options without additional regulatory steps.

Development of Brownfield Sites – The Existing Conditions Background Report (PART 3 of the Plan) describes several sites constrained by contamination. Removal of contamination substances is a key action to enable redevelopment and revitalization of the Plan area. The City

employs an environmental remediation specialist who can guide successful approaches to clean up these sites. The City will need to exercise caution in defining such approaches in order to avoid unintended legal or financial ramifications and avoiding extended or unnecessary clean-up practices.

Community Coalition – Efforts to establish community coalitions that supplement or support the recommended actions in the Plan should be encouraged and promoted. Existing efforts, such as the *Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development* (www.fwced.com), are models of effective partnerships that operate community-spirited programs that facilitate economic and social change in West Fresno. The Plan, together with the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, may be the platform upon which a similar coalition can be established in the City of Merced.

Enterprise Zone – Enterprise Zones (EZ) are intended to encourage development in blighted neighborhoods through tax and regulatory relief to entrepreneurs and investors who launch businesses in the area. EZs are areas where companies can locate free of certain local, state, and federal taxes and restrictions.

COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee members were requested to rank their individual preference of the recommended actions. Each member was given 25 colored adhesive dots to place next to their preferred actions, with no more than 3 dots applied to any one action. Each dot represents a vote. City Staff tallied the votes and expressed them in three ways: 1) total votes; 2) total votes by Plan Objectives; and 3) average votes per action, which highlights important categories having few actions. This sub-section describes these priorities so that implementers have a full understanding of the Committee's wishes. The Committee is also aware that outside factors may affect the order in which the actions and programs are implemented, such as: limitations or restrictions in funding opportunities; the need for and associated time and costs needed for subsequent project-level environmental reviews; and challenges of interagency coordination and authority. Despite these barriers, Plan implementers will aim to maintain the spirit of the Committee's recommended priority.

Total Votes

Below, the action items are ranked highest to lowest score. Scores, the most number of votes, are shown in parentheses.

- Undertake streetscape upgrades at key “gateway” entry points to the Corridor (25)
- Provide a pedestrian activated crosswalk for safe crossing for pedestrians/bicyclists at MLK Jr. Way (22)

- Create a “brand” for the Corridor through use of consistent landscape palette and lighting fixtures, street furniture, and trash receptacles for the Focus Area as new businesses (18)
- Increase police and/or community patrols to discourage criminal activity, neighborhoods working with the City on identification and support (18)
- Develop a “Planned Development” with a designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Commercial Thoroughfare (C-T) for properties along the MLK Jr. Way Corridor (Hwy. 59) including one block on either side (including from Canal to Hwy. 59 south of Childs Avenue to the future grocery site on Childs Avenue and Canal Street to Hwy. 59) (15)
- Encourage existing businesses to enhance their buildings and sites to further improve our gateways; Encourage Façade Improvement for businesses along Corridor (13)
- Strengthen pedestrian circulation by widening sidewalks along MLK Jr. Way (12)
- Consider/identify Canal Street as a predominant pedestrian/bicycle/transit road (11)
- Undertake land assembly to facilitate redevelopment with a focus on key opportunity areas (11)
- Improve lighting of alleys/side streets (10)
- Install new water/sewer lines to encourage development along MLK Jr. Way (10)
- Pursue infrastructure and telecommunications upgrades, including the use of renewable energy (10)
- Pursue coordination with Caltrans, Highway Patrol, and other organizations (including Trucking Industry) to either divert truck traffic to Freeway 99 prior to entering Focus Area or implementing further devices for co-mingling of all travelers (10)
- Provide handicap ramps on street corners of MLK Jr. Way/Hwy 59 (9)
- Limit curb cuts and consolidate access points along the Corridor as opportunities arise for safety purposes (9)
- Provide bus stops/bus turn-out on MLK Jr Way (one in each direction of travel) with improvements (including a minimum standard of a concrete pad, between sidewalk and curb, bench / shelter, and trash receptacle) (8)
- Encourage Neighborhood Watch Groups (8)
- Repaint crosswalks, striping and other safety markings (7)

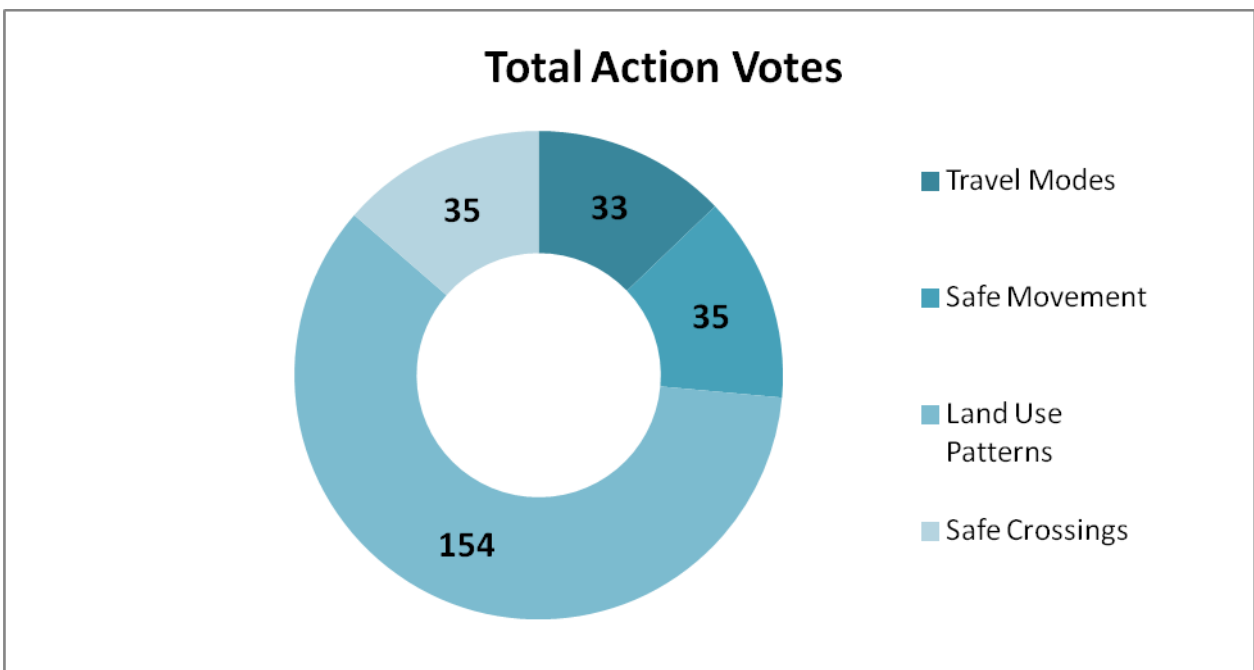
- Review signage flexibility for proposed grocery store at the southeast corner of Canal St. and Childs Avenue (7)
- Prioritize infrastructure needed along the Corridor and pursue improvements as funding is available (7)
- Offer streamlined review and permitting for projects that meet pre-determined eligibility criteria which support broad policy goals (6)
- Install bulb-outs on side streets that intersect with MLK Jr. Way (5)
- Evaluate the potential need for a four-way stop along MLK Jr. Way north of the Fairgrounds and south of 13th Street (5)
- Develop Form Based Codes (5)
- Implement Design Review standards for new construction of businesses (3)



Total Votes by Plan Objectives

Committee votes were also tallied by Plan Objectives. The “Land Use Patterns” objective scored high, but this is due to the relatively large number of recommended actions for this category. The four objectives align with the chart below as follows:

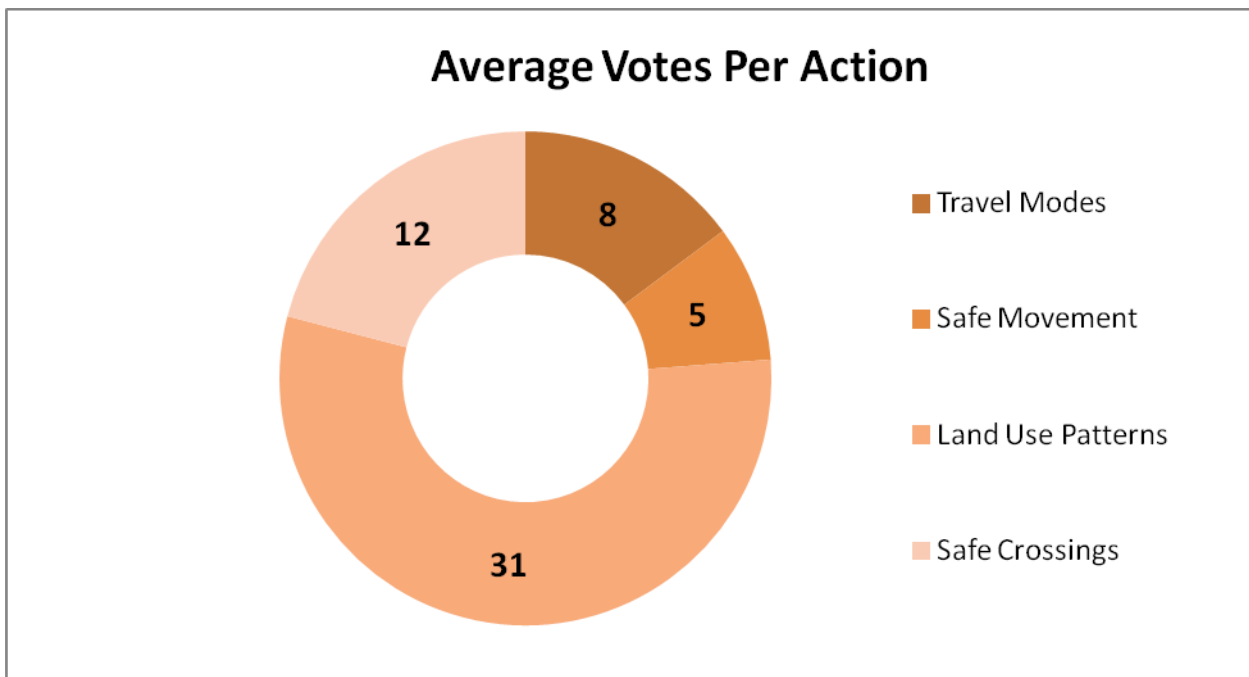
Total Votes by Plan Objectives		
Key	Objective	Votes
Travel Modes	Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit)	33
Safe Movement	Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People	35
Land Use Patterns	Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses	154
Safe Crossings	Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites	35



Average Votes per Action

Because not all objectives have the same number of recommended actions, the “Total Action Votes” chart somewhat obscures the “objective importance values” of the Committee. The “Average Votes per Action” method aims to account for this effect. For example, though “travel modes” received less total votes than “safe movements,” the adjustment shows a stronger voting pattern for “travel modes.” The adjustment below also shows a strong importance value on the “safe crossings” objective. The important value of the “Land Use Patterns” objective remains very strong.

Average Votes Per Action		
Key	Objective	Average Votes
Travel Modes	Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit)	8
Safe Movement	Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People	5
Land Use Patterns	Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial and Residential Uses	31
Safe Crossings	Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites	12



ACTION PLAN MATRIX

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN ACTION STRATEGY MATRIX						
PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES						
Action	Objective	Implementation Number of Years			Organization(s)	Potential Funding Sources
		1 to 2	3 to 4	5+		
Action Item #1: Provide Handicap Ramps on Street Corners of Martin Luther King Jr. Way.	1 and 4	√			Caltrans	Caltrans grant; Safe Routes to School
Action Item #2: Repaint Crosswalks, Striping and other Safety Markings.	1	√			Caltrans	
Action Item #3: Provide Bus Turn-Outs on Martin Luther King Jr. Way.	1	√			Caltrans	MCAG
Action Item #4: Strengthen Pedestrian Circulation by Widening Sidewalks along Martin Luther King Jr. Way.	1 and 4	√			Caltrans	
Action Item #5: Explore Design Options for Canal Street to be used as a Predominantly Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Road.	1			√	City	
Action Item #7: Provide a Pedestrian Activated Crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Way.	2 and 4	√			Caltrans and City Engineering	Safe Routes to School; Caltrans grant

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN ACTION STRATEGY MATRIX						
PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES						
Action	Objective	Implementation Number of Years			Organization(s)	Potential Funding Sources
		1 to 2	3 to 4	5+		
Action Item #8: Install Bulb-Outs on Side Streets that Intersect with MLK Jr. Way.	2		√		Caltrans and City Engineering	CIP
Action Item #9: Limit Curb Cuts and Consolidate Access Points along the Corridor.	2			√	Caltrans	
Action Item #10: Improve Lighting of Alleys and Side Streets.	2 and 3		√		City Engineering	CIP; Safe Routes to School
Action Item #12: Install New Water & Sewer Lines to Encourage Development along MLK Jr. Way.	3		√		Engineering	SB375/CDBG Grants
Action Item #13: Undertake Streetscape Upgrades at Key “Gateway” Entry Points to the Corridor.	3			√	Caltrans	
Action Item #25: Evaluate Opportunities for Four-Way Stops.	4		√		Caltrans and City Engineering	CIP; Safe Routes to School

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN ACTION STRATEGY MATRIX						
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES						
Action	Objective	Implementation Number of Years			Organization(s)	Potential Funding Sources
		1 to 2	3 to 4	5+		
Action Item #14: Encourage Existing Businesses to Enhance their Buildings and Sites to Further Improve our Gateways; Encourage Façade Improvement for Businesses along Corridor.	3			√		Merced County Revolving Loan Fund; Small Business Administration Loans
Action Item #15: Undertake Land Assembly to Facilitate Redevelopment with a Focus on Key Opportunity Areas.	3		√		Economic Development	Grants
Action Item #16: Offer Streamlined Review and Permitting for Projects that meet Pre-determined Eligibility Criteria which Support the Objectives and Actions of this Plan.	3	√			Development Services	
Action Item #17: Create a Positive “Brand” for the Corridor and Focus Area.	3		√		Engineering	
Action Item #18: Pursue Infrastructure and Telecommunications Upgrades, Including the use of Renewable Energy.	3			√	Economic Development	

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN ACTION STRATEGY MATRIX ORGANIZATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES						
Action	Objective	Implementation Number of Years			Organization(s)	Potential Funding Sources
		1 to 2	3 to 4	5+		
Action Item #19: Develop a “Planned Development” with a Designation of either Neighborhood Commercial (C-N) or Commercial Thoroughfare (C-T) for Properties along the MLK Jr. Way Corridor (Hwy. 59) including One Block on Either Side (including from Canal to Hwy. 59 south of Childs Avenue to the future grocery site on Childs Ave. and Canal Street to Hwy. 59).	3		√		Planning	
Action Item #20: Implement Design Guidelines for New Construction of Businesses.	3	√			Development Services / Economic Development	
Action Item #21: Develop Form Based Codes.	3	√			Planning Dept.	Various State and Federal Grants
Action Item #22: Review Signage Flexibility along the Corridor.	3	√			Planning Dept.	General Fund

Action Item #23: Increase Police and/or Community Patrols to Discourage Criminal Activity.	3	√			Public Safety	
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN ACTION STRATEGY MATRIX ORGANIZATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES						
Action	Objective	Implementation Number of Years			Organization(s)	Potential Funding Sources
		1 to 2	3 to 4	5+		
Action Item #24: Encourage Neighborhood Watch Groups.	3	√			Public Safety, Parks and Community Services	
Action Item #6: Prioritize Infrastructure needed along the Corridor and Pursue Improvements as Funding is Available.	1, 2, 3, 4		√		Caltrans and City	
Action Item #11: Coordinate with Other Agencies to Divert Truck Traffic or Implement Improvements for Co-mingling all Corridor Travelers.	2 and 4	√			Caltrans, Hwy. Patrol, City	

Section 5.3 Plan Maintenance

This plan includes a formal process to insure that the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan remains an active and relevant document. This “Plan Maintenance Program” includes a method and schedule for regular assessments and reporting. This section also outlines the City’s continuing public participation efforts for the Plan. Revitalization of this Gateway is recognized as a benefit to the City of Merced, and area businesses and residents.

POST-PLAN ADOPTION OVERSIGHT

The idea for a Martin Luther King Jr. Way Plan was initiated by the City’s Redevelopment Agency, and tasked to the Planning Division to prepare. Upon adoption of this Plan, it was also envisioned that the City’s Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) would take the lead oversight role of the Plan. As described in PART 4 of this Plan, RDAC was engaged throughout the planning process of the document.

Prior to completion of this plan, however, the California Supreme Court upheld Legislation ABx126, which disbanded Redevelopment Agencies throughout the State, and as of February, 1, 2012, the Merced Redevelopment Agency ceased to exist. The City’s commitment to City revitalization and reinvestment efforts remains, however.

To make up for the loss of the Merced Redevelopment Agency, Staff will monitor and report to City Council in order to carry out the needs of the plan. Plan oversight duties described in the following paragraphs will be tasked to staff. Not all recommended actions of the Plan are dependent on funding; other tools can be utilized. The City can deploy a variety of incentives and mechanisms to implement the other recommended actions of the Plan.

Plan Oversight

Staff will help ensure that the associated member agencies and organizations follow through on any commitments made in the Plan. With adoption of this plan, Staff will be tasked with plan implementation and maintenance, which may include the following activities:

- Act as a forum for Plan-related issues;
- Disseminate action ideas and activities to Plan participants;
- Pursue the implementation of recommended actions;
- Keep the Plan at the forefront of community decision making by identifying plan recommendations when other community goals, plans, and activities overlap, influence, or directly affect the recommendations of the Plan;
- Maintain a vigilant monitoring of multi-objective, cost-sharing opportunities to help the community implement the plan’s recommended actions for which no current funding exists;

- Report annually on plan progress; and,
- Inform and solicit input from the public.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Planning is an ongoing process and as such, the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan should be treated as a living document that must grow and adapt in order to keep pace with changes. An annual assessment and report will be completed to track and record such changes. To thoroughly track the status of the Plan's actions, City Staff will monitor and document the progress of the implementation of the actions. Though actions may be delegated to different departments within the City, Staff will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the following:

- To examine the progress of the recommended actions in the Plan;
- To determine the effectiveness of actions, and to reflect changes in the Plan area or City programs that may affect Plan implementation priorities; and,
- To document changes in the Plan area (i.e., land use, contamination clean-up, truck routes, etc.) to determine whether or not these would impact the conclusions or recommended actions associated with the Plan.

The evaluation process includes a schedule and timeline, and identifies the local agencies and organizations participating in plan evaluation. The coordinating organizations responsible for the various action items will be requested to report on the status of their projects, the success of various implementation processes, difficulties encountered, success of coordination efforts, and which strategies should be revised. Staff will meet at least annually to review progress on completing the action items delineated in the Plan and report to the City Council.

To facilitate this assessment and reporting process, the Plan's Action Plan Matrix provides a mechanism for monitoring the overall implementation progress. Each recommended action in the Plan is included in the matrix. The matrix is designed to monitor actions according to City project managers, project status, and project milestones on an annual basis.

Adjustments may be made to accommodate projects that have failed or are not considered feasible after a review of their consistency with established criteria, time frame, community priorities, and/or funding resources. Priorities that were not ranked high but were identified as potential actions will be reviewed as well to determine feasibility of future implementation.

The results of these evaluations should be folded back into the planning process and should yield decisions on how best to implement the Plan. For example, Staff will review action items and make recommendations for any alternative scheduling or funding that may eventually arise.

CONTINUED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Continued public involvement is also imperative to the overall success of the plan’s implementation. The plan assessment and reporting process will include continued public and stakeholder involvement and input through attendance at public meetings, web postings, and press releases to local media. Members of the former Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee will be invited to public meetings, and be provided with copies of the annual report. The assessment and reporting process provides an opportunity to publicize success stories from the plan implementation and seek additional public comment.

The public will also have the opportunity to provide feedback about the Plan. Copies of the Plan will be catalogued and kept at all of the appropriate City Departments. The existence and location of these copies will be publicized in the City newsletter which reaches every utility customer in the City and copies will be maintained on the City’s website.





PART 6:

Appendices



PART 6: APPENDICES

PART 6 is a collection of project-related documents pertaining to public outreach efforts, support letters, and resolutions from plan partners and the Merced City Council; and plan study data, notably from the existing conditions report.

SECTION 6.1



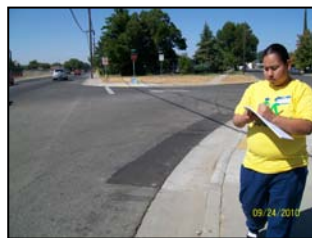
Public Outreach

SECTION 6.2



Plan Adoption

SECTION 6.3



Data Collection

Section 6.1 Public Outreach

EVENT SUMMARIES AND PHOTOS

**1) Community Outreach – Merced Fairgrounds –35th District Agricultural Association
900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
June 15-20, 2010 – Public Input Survey Results**

The Merced County Fair (run by the 35th District Agricultural Association, a State agency) is an annual event that brings thousands of people to the City of Merced and includes a carnival, vendors, exhibits, livestock showing/judging, excellent food, and entertainment for all ages, including a rodeo, stock car races, etc.

Staff began the first marketing campaign with a community outreach opportunity during the Merced County Fair from June 15-20, 2010. Staff rented a booth at the Merced Fairgrounds that was an interactive learning experience for the public. There were various informational handouts, maps, and various activities for children and adults. Approximately 150 people per day participated in the booth activities.

Various City Departments, including Engineering, Code Enforcement, Fire, and GIS, assisted Planning staff with the booth activities including informing the public and answering many questions regarding the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan as well as other Planning-related topics. We appreciate the efforts from Mark Hamilton, RuthAnne Harbison, Bill King, Roberta Medina, Julie Nelson, Jesse Oswald, John Sagin, and Jeremy Sterling (a non-City employee) for their participation in operating the City Planning Fair Booth. In an effort to gather data regarding the Focus Area of the Revitalization Plan, staff collected a total of 36 Public Input Survey forms with the following three questions:

- a) What improvements to the street, landscaping, traffic signals or lighting do you believe are needed in this area?
- b) What kinds of homes, businesses, offices or stores would you like to see within the area?
- c) General Comments/Ideas?

**2) Community Outreach – Radio Merced
August 11, 2010 @ 3:00 p.m.**

Staff participated in a radio announcement regarding the South Hwy. 59 Revitalization Plan. We were grateful to have Emma Go, a UC Merced Intern for the City of Merced, participate in public outreach efforts for the Revitalization Plan for Martin Luther King Jr. Way and this outreach opportunity. This was a public service program that the City of Merced and Merced County Office of Education put together with KYOS called “Community Conversation.” The show, which focuses on community, education, and government news affecting residents throughout Merced County, aired on KYOS, 1480 AM, at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and 3:00 p.m. Sunday. Refer to the second Radio announcement on Page 6-13 for more details. The following were the areas covered during the Radio announcement.

What is the outcome of the Plan and **Where** in Merced will it apply?

Why is the Plan needed?

Who will be involved in creating the plan?

How will the Plan be crafted and implemented?

What sorts of activities are planned? **When?**

**3) Community Outreach – Summerfest in Downtown Merced (Main and Canal Streets)
August 19, 26, and September 9, 2010 from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

The City of Merced was very fortunate to have two UC Merced Interns partner with the Planning Division to work on community outreach efforts for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. Both Emma Go and Ryan Heller participated in two of the three evening events explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on the Ad-Hoc Citizen’s Advisory Committee. Julie Nelson, Planner, explained elements about the project on the third evening. The informational booth included information regarding the project as well as other City information, interactive materials to keep children busy while discussing the project with parents, and aerial maps showing the project area. Forty-three people visited the booth, and 22 Public Input forms were completed on August 19, 2010. Sixty-three people visited the booth, and 22 Public Input forms were completed on August 26, 2010. Lastly, forty-one people visited the booth and 20 Public Input forms were completed on September 9, 2010. By using an aerial photo of the focus area, the visitors to the booth were asked to identify locations along Martin Luther King Jr. Way that were in need of a safe crossing using a pin map system. Results of this effort indicate that both 11th Street and 12th Street at Martin Luther King Jr. Way were locations to consider for some method of safe crossing. Other locations along the corridor include 8th Street and Childs Avenue.

Figure 6.1-1



The above aerial map was used at various public outreach locations to illustrate where safe crossings were needed, opportunities for economic development recommended, or improvement needed. The most pins were placed at 12th Street and MLK Jr. Way.

**4) Community Outreach – South Merced Night Out (Block Party)
Wednesday, September 1, 2010 (5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.)
4th and N Streets (Golden Valley Health Center)**

Staff was invited to participate in a South Merced Night Out “Block Party” at the Golden Valley, Health Center on Wednesday, September 1, 2010, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. There were several information booths, pot-luck and free hot dogs, and lots of activities for children. Other City booths included Merced Police, Public Works, and Recreation and Parks/Community Services. This was a great opportunity for the residents to meet their neighbors and make a promise to keep their neighborhood safe. Emma Go (UC Merced Intern) and Planning Staff Julie Sterling attended the above outreach to engage the public about the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way) Revitalization Plan, explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on a temporary Citizen’s Advisory Committee. The Planning Department booth included information regarding the project as well as other City information, interactive materials to keep children busy while discussing the project with parents, and aerial maps showing the project area. The event was well-attended by families from the area, and 34 Public Input forms were completed (results can be found in the Appendices section of this report). Staff was grateful for Spanish translation efforts provided by Minerva Perez, Golden Valley Health Center. The information gathered from this event was from residents within the surrounding area.



**5) Community Outreach – Walking School Bus Meeting
Tuesday, September 21, 2010 (11:00 a.m.)
Merced Police Department - Classroom**

Staff attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way) Revitalization Plan and as an invited guest by Lieutenant Andre Matthews to provide information at a Walkable Community Workshop in which the City collaborated with Golden Valley Health Center, Merced County Association of Governments, and the Local Government Commission on September 25, 2010.

Others participating in the meeting included Uday Bali and Priet Sandhu of Bali Learning Center; Tony Slaton, Boys and Girls Club; Claudia Corchado, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) Program Manager, and Solenia Magsalay, also from CCROPP; Greg Spicer, Merced City Schools; Lola Barnett, Merced Police Department VIP; and Lieutenant Andre Matthews.

Discussions revolved around “The Walking School Bus” funded by the California Endowment to get children (no longer picked up by school buses) to walk safely with volunteer parents to Alicia Reyes School (Model School Program). Children would walk no more than 12 blocks and then be fed a breakfast prior to school beginning. Ms. Corchado advised that National Walk to School Day is October 6, 2010, and she hoped to have a “kick-off” that week. Greg Spicer indicated that meetings were warranted by school personnel, the director of transportation, the principal and other personnel, not to mention notifying the parents of this opportunity. Another meeting was scheduled for October 5, 2010, to discuss transportation and school issues. There was mention that high school students may be able to receive community service hours for donating their time to this safety plan. Although Alicia Reyes School is just outside of the focus area (southwest corner of Childs Avenue and N Street), children would be walking within the focus area to get to and from school. Staff indicated that part of the background report would address infrastructure that may be missing or in a state of disrepair.

As a result of this meeting, Claudia Corchado offered to assist with verbal translation at future flea market events at the Merced County Fairgrounds for the MLK Jr Way outreach efforts. Flyers advertising the Walkable Community Workshop were distributed.

6) ComVIP Meeting
Thursday, September 23, 2010 (11:30 – 12:30)
Fernando's Bistro

Merced Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Task Force (ComVIP) provides leadership in prevention of violence, intervention and enforcement to help our community become a safer place for all. The committee is comprised of City, County, School District Leaders, various law enforcement representatives throughout Merced County, Health Officials, and various Non-profits involved with youth (crisis center, domestic violence, etc.), who meet monthly to discuss various topics relating to Violence Intervention and Prevention. Guest speakers are invited to attend monthly, and round table discussions take place regarding various programs or activities that are on-going or in the works. Planning staff attended the meeting to explain the grant received from Caltrans for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (South Highway 59) Revitalization Plan and requested input from the committee to identify problems in the community. Staff also distributed flyers and Public Input Surveys that have been circulated at various public outreach events, and requested participation in the Walkable Community Workshop. Suggestions included participation with Building Healthy Communities, and contacting Merced Head Start located at the Merced County Fairgrounds.

7) Walkable Community Workshop
Saturday, September 25, 2010 (10:00 am to 2:00 pm)
Golden Valley Health Centers, 797 West Childs Avenue

The Walkable Community Workshop was a public outreach opportunity where the City of Merced partnered with Merced County Association of Governments and Golden Valley Health Center, each who had grants within South Merced and/or the County of Merced. Paul Zykofski and Laura Podolsky from the Local Government Commission were asked to bring the three entities together to better enhance each of our respective goals from grants we received. Flyers advertising the event were circulated at various outreach events as well as being broadcasted on the Radio through “Community Conversation.”



What is a walkability audit?

A walkability audit is an unbiased examination/evaluation of the walking environment. The general purpose of an audit is to identify concerns for pedestrians related to the safety, access, comfort, and convenience of the walking environment.



The Workshop included a presentation about Creating Healthy, Walkable Communities and a facilitated neighborhood walkable audit of the Highway 59 Corridor in which participants identified what works, what doesn't and how to improve conditions for walking. While working in groups, participants highlighted neighborhood maps with suggestions on how to improve specific infrastructure features. By taking the ideas discussed in the workshop,



participants identified specific short- and long-term actions to improve community walkability. Both Paul Zykofski and Cesar Garcia provided bilingual translation throughout the workshop.

Information from the City Planning Department was provided to encourage participants to think about and/or apply for the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. As a result of this outreach, three participants, Cesar Garcia, Mayko Lozano, and Isabel Sanchez were appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.



Participants identified areas that could use improved specific infrastructure features.

Participants in the walkable audit began at N Street and Childs Avenue, traveled east to Martin Luther King Jr. Way, north to 7th Street, and returned to N Street.

**8) Orientation Meeting: Technical Advisory Staff (Public Agencies)
Merced County Public Works Office, 715 Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Bldg A)
September 30, 2010, 11 A.M. to Noon**

Staff met with representatives from various Governmental/Public Agencies with jurisdiction along the corridor or that are located within the Focus Area for an overview of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan including one of the largest landowners – Merced County Fair. In addition to the development of the Plan, their participation is vital to the ensuing implementation of the resulting Plan.

Participating Agencies included:

County of Merced: Dana Hertfelder, Public Works; Battalion Chief Brian Neely, and Don Thrasher, Merced County Fire

Caltrans: Tom Dumas and Ms. Sinarath Pheng

Merced County Fair: Tom Musser, CEO

Merced County Association of Governments: Marjie Kirn and Matt Fell

City of Merced: Josh Ewen, Redevelopment; Daryl Jordan, Engineering; Michael Miller, Public Works; Bill King and Julie Sterling, Planning & Permitting

Staff provided a presentation with an overview of the Revitalization Plan including its purpose, some existing conditions of the project area, identified the Project Objectives, proposed community engagement and vision of a citizen-based committee, Public Agency involvement, and the role of the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC). The Project Objectives, Project Timeline of the grant, maps and flyers were distributed to the participants, and the public agencies were asked to submit Commitment Letters or Resolutions in support of the Revitalization Plan for Martin Luther King Jr. Way.



9) **Community Outreach – Healthy South Merced Partners’ Meeting**
Tuesday, October 5, 2010 (4:00 p.m.)
Golden Valley Health Center’s Boardroom

Healthy South Merced Partner Meeting is conducted on a monthly basis with various Partners who share mutual interests in South Merced. Typically, partners include representatives from the Merced County Public Health Department, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP), Poder Popular, UC Cooperative Extension, City of Merced, Merced County Association of Governments, Golden Valley Health Center, and Building Healthy Communities. Staff attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way) Revitalization Plan and as an invited guest to give an update on the recent Walkable Community Workshop in which the City collaborated with Golden Valley Health Center, Merced County Association of Governments, and Local Government Commission on September 25, 2010.

As a result of explaining the MLK Jr. Way Plan, two people indicated their interest in participating on the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee:

Cesar E. Garcia

Farm Worker Services/Literacy Coordinator
Golden Valley Health Centers

and

Lilia Aguilar

Golden Valley Health Centers

The two staff members of Golden Valley Health Center both live and work in South Merced. Staff is invited to attend the monthly meetings to give updates on the MLK Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

10) **Community Outreach – Radio Merced #2**
October 6, 2010 @ 3:00 p.m.

Staff participated in a second radio announcement regarding South Hwy. 59/MLK Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. The first radio announcement was on August 11, 2010. “Community Conversation” focuses on community, education, and government news affecting residents throughout Merced County, airs on KYOS, 1480 AM, at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and 3:00 p.m. Sunday. The following captures the information provided during the Radio announcement.

Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan

Why don’t you remind us what this is revitalization plan all about and what its objectives are?

The City of Merced received an Environmental Justice Grant from Caltrans to *address* transportation and land use challenges and opportunities along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and the area bounded by State Highway 99 and Childs Avenue, and M Street and G Street. The Plan will be a comprehensive effort to address the following objectives:

- *Improve transportation options for travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit);*
- *Enhance the safety performance of the State Highway for all travelers;*
- *Support economic growth through enhancing the movement of goods and people;*
- *Feasibility assessment of new office, commercial, and residential uses; and*
- *Identify opportunities to design and install improvements that provide safe crossing sites.*

Who will be involved in creating the plan?

- *Local residents, property owners, and businesses*
- *City of Merced citizens*
- *Temporary Citizen Advisory Committee*
- *City Staff, led by City Planning Staff*
- *Redevelopment Advisory Committee and City Council*

How will the plan be crafted and implemented?

- *Community Outreach / Ideas and Needs*
- *Funding Opportunities*
- *Prioritize Projects for future improvement*
- *Significant Coordination with Caltrans – Hwy 59 is managed by Caltrans*

Since the broadcast in August, what kind of community outreach has the Planning Department been involved in?

Community involvement is essential for the success of this Revitalization Plan. The Planning Department has participated in various public outreach events such as:

- *Merced County Fair (June 15-20, 2010)*
- *Radio Announcement “Community Conversation” (Aug. 11, 2010)*
- *SummerFest (Downtown Event – 8/19, 8/26, and 9/2/10)*
- *Neighborhood Block Party [Golden Valley Health Center (GVHC) on Sept. 1, 2010]*
- *Walking School Bus Meeting (9/21/10)*
- *ComVIP Meeting on (9/23/10)*
- *Walkable Community Workshop (GVHC on 9/25/10)*
- *Public Agency Meeting (Merced County Public Works on 9/30/10)*

Will there be more informational meetings in the near future?

The Planning Department will be having more informational Meetings including businesses along Martin Luther King Jr. Way; residents throughout the project area; non-profits (churches, schools, etc.); and the Lao Family during the month so that you can find out and inquire about:

- *Why a plan is being prepared;*
- *How you can be involved;*
- *The planning steps and schedule of the project; and*
- *Actions planned after adoption of the Plan.*

In December 2010, Staff asked the Merced City Council to appoint a temporary Citizens Advisory Committee comprised of local businesses and residents within the Highway 59 focus area while also seeking participation from a broad spectrum of community members to help draft a Revitalization Plan for South Highway 59; and, by the end of 2011 or early 2012, the City Council of the City of Merced will adopt a comprehensive Revitalization Plan for South Highway 59.

How can the public become involved with this effort?

Planning Staff is in the study area gathering data for an “existing conditions” report. Ms. Sterling advised, “If you are interested in walking an area with us, please let me know and we’ll be happy to walk and talk with you about your knowledge and concerns about the project area. Please call the Planning Department at (209) 385-6858 and ask for Julie Sterling.”

Please look for future flyers regarding public outreach for this project either on the City’s website at www.cityofmerced.org , at various locations within the focus area, and from us as we walk the area.

11) Community Outreach – Business Meeting
Tuesday, October 12, 2010 (5:30 p.m.)
Sam Cafe, 235 W. 12th Street

Planning Staff members Bill King and Julie Sterling attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLKJr Way) Revitalization Plan and to provide information about the revitalization plan, explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on the recently approved (by City Council) temporary Citizen’s Advisory Committee (that we are recruiting for). Staff mailed over 50 letters to property owner/business owners (English/Spanish letters and flyers) inviting them to attend this public engagement opportunity. There were 3 business owners in attendance including the owner of Sam Café (located within the project area). Translation services were provided by Maria Mendoza, a Redevelopment Technician from the Redevelopment Agency. As a result of this meeting, Sam Malaythong applied for and was appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

A second business meeting was held on November 9, 2010, and afterward staff walked the corridor inviting the business owners to attend (see Community Outreach #17 that was held on November 9, 2010).

12) Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) Regularly Scheduled Meeting at Noon on October 19, 2010

The Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) has a significant role in the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. The role of RDAC in this project is twofold: (1) Committee review/comment on the draft plan; and, (2) RDAC representation on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Committee. Staff attended the RDAC Meeting on October 19, 2010, and gave an overview of the Revitalization Plan, including the objectives to the Plan.

Committee Review:

Every other month, staff summarized the progress of the project to RDAC and requested comments on the various aspects of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

Implementation:

Staff explained that a key element of the Implementation Phase of the project would be the ongoing actions of the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC). With regard to the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan, the Committee would:

- Meet twice a year to review progress to date on completing the action items delineated in the study;
- Review action items and make recommendations for any alternate scheduling or funding that may eventually arise;
- Track actions/success of associated member agencies; and,
- Review and approve an “annual report card” and distribute it to various news outlets to help nurture an environment of accountability.

RDAC Representation:

Staff recommended that the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC) appoint a representative from their committee to attend and participate in the temporary Citizen’s Advisory Committee that will meet every other month (opposite RDAC’s meetings). As a result of this meeting, Teresa Burrola was appointed to represent the Redevelopment Advisory Committee on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

13) “Your City Connection” Newsletter (utility bill insert, November, 2010)

The City of Merced prepares a monthly newsletter regarding various City-related topics. The “City Connection” Newsletter is inserted in all utility bills, is posted on the City’s webpage, and is located at all City offices. This outreach opportunity brought in one Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee member, Michelle Paloutzian. The excerpt below is from the November 2010 “City Connection”:



Plan to improve Highway 59/MLK

The City has received a \$250,000 grant to improve transportation and economic development along part of South Highway 59/ Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The area included is between Childs Avenue and M, G and 13th streets.

As part of the grant, the City is creating an advisory committee of neighbors,

businesses and others to help develop the strategy that is due back to the Council by early 2012.

The City has already starting soliciting comments at SummerFest, the fair, block parties and other events.

If you are interested in joining the committee call Julie Sterling at 385-6929.

**14) Community Outreach – Merced Lao Family Meeting
Wednesday, November 3, 2010 (5:30 p.m.)
Merced Lao Family Offices, 855 W. 15th Street**

Planning staff attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way) Revitalization Plan. As an invited guest, staff provided information about the revitalization plan, explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on the recently approved temporary Citizen’s Advisory Committee. There were approximately 35 people in attendance including the President of the Lao Family. Translation services were provided by the Lao Family. As a result of this outreach opportunity, Paul Thao applied for and was appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

As a result of a question and answer session, the following comments/requests were made by members of the Lao Family:

- a. *Provide a Farmers Market every day in a park/public or private property as it would be safer than closing a street and having market vendors in the street (example: Downtown Thursdays - Summerfest)*
- b. *A large scale grocery store is needed in South Merced that is within walking distance. A comment was made about Save Mart closing a few years ago at 15th & Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and that the small grocery stores are too expensive.*
- c. *It is important to have a City Council representative from South Merced.*
- d. *Need additional lighted street signs at intersection for visibility purposes (Example: some cities have lights above the signals where signs are hung).*
- e. *Reduce speed limits prior to coming into the City limits (example: traveling northbound on Hwy. 59 prior to the City limits near Childs Avenue).*
- f. *Re-route the big trucks (big rigs that travel Hwy. 59 to get to Hwy 99) to Mission Avenue and connecting to Hwy. 99 from there.*
- g. *It’s too dark on the streets; some streets are without streetlights or are not bright enough.*
- h. *Huge support for a new grocery store (at the southeast corner of Canal Street and Childs Avenue).*
- i. *Support crosswalk at Childs Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way as it is too dangerous to walk across the street to Flea Market. (Note: Merced Fairgrounds staff has data indicating that from 5,000 – 7,000 people go to the Flea Market every weekend.)*
- j. *Support for a lighted crosswalk at both 8th Street and 11th Street (pedestrian-activated crosswalks).*

15) Community Outreach – 1st Residential/Non-profit Meeting
Wednesday, November 3, 2010 (6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.)
Merced County Fair (El Capitan Building), 900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way

Planning Staff Bill King and Julie Sterling attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLKJr Way) Revitalization Plan, explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on the recently approved Ad-Hoc Citizen’s Advisory Committee. There were 4 residents/property owners in attendance as well as Teresa Burrola, Merced County Fair Staff and member of the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RDAC). Translation services were provided by Marcy Gamble. As a result of this neighborhood meeting, Amelia Bustos applied for and was appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

As a result of a question and answer session, the following comments were made:

- a. *School buses cross Martin Luther King Jr. Way.*
- b. *Don Stowell Elementary School, located at 251 E. 11th Street, provides services to the majority of the Plan area. As such, students walk to and from school crossing both G Street at 11th Street (a 4-way stop) and Martin Luther King Jr. Way at 11th Street (a 2-way stop for east/west traffic). Additionally, Alicia Reyes Elementary School, 123 South N Street, serves the southwesterly area where there is a traffic signal at Childs Avenue and N Street.*
- c. *The City needs to bring the proposed grocery store to Canal and Childs Avenue, including the “right” businesses to tie into the community.*
- d. *We need safe routes for children; it’s not well-lit or safe for kids.*
- e. *The Merced Flea Market held every Saturday at the Fairgrounds is attended by 5,000-6,000 people.*
- f. *There needs to be sidewalks, handicap ramps, etc., for our disabled students and residents.*
- g. *There are foreign words on forms. We need to get out to PTSA/School Site Councils of schools, suggest meetings with translation available for parents to share concerns. Schools within the area include Farmdale, Alicia Reyes, Don Stowell, and Tenaya.*
- h. *There is blight in South Merced especially along the Hwy. 59 entryway to Merced.*
- i. *Children cross Martin Luther King Jr. Way at 11th Street as they travel to and from school every day. Sadly, they pass transients that are inebriated or urinating while they walk along 11th Street from the bus stop at G Street walking west (crossing Martin Luther King*

Jr. Way) and past Bi-Rite Liquors. Need to engage the Police Department and also Public Works for clean-up opportunities.

- j. In the 100 block of G Street and in other locations of South Merced, people hang their laundry up on the fences making it look “ghetto”. Can’t the City do something about that?*
- k. Staff explained that South Merced is within the Gateways Project Area and is eligible to participate in the façade improvement program whereby the Redevelopment Agency pays for one-half of the exterior improvements such as carports, painting, fencing, etc.*
- l. There are missing street lights along W. 11th Street between G Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way. A resident indicated that she called P.G. & E. about one of their pole lights being out; however, due to it not being energy efficient, they removed it completely. More lighting is necessary to make it safer.*
- m. Buses unload kids daily at 11th and G Streets (Note: there is an elementary school – Don Stowell a couple of blocks east of G Street). Speeders race down 11th Street with no regard for the children.*

16) Community Outreach – 2nd Residential/Non-profit Meeting
Thursday, November 4, 2010 (6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.)
Club Mercedes, 569 W. 9th Street

Planning Staff Bill King and Julie Sterling attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLKJr Way) Revitalization Plan, explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on the recently approved temporary Citizen's Advisory Committee. Out of 350 letters that were mailed to residents/property owners/non-profits, there were 2 residents/property owners in attendance as well as Maria Mendoza, Redevelopment Technician (and translator). As a result of this Residential/Non-profit Meeting, Grace Booth applied for and was appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

As a result of a question and answer session, the following comments were made:

- a. *Merced needs a "World Market" with a wide variety of food and/or other goods demonstrating the various cultures in Merced (i.e., a "China Town", "Tijuana", etc.).*
- b. *Pride in Community is important.*
- c. *Improve the existing Flea Market at the Merced Fair Grounds (i.e., add new covers, paint, landscaping, including trees, sheds, etc.) as it looks bad.*
- d. *Either provide people with clotheslines or prohibit drying of clothing on fences; the same can be said for indoor furniture brought outside.*
- e. *Revenue generator for the City of Merced regarding Street Sweeping; charge a vehicle fee if not removed on the day the street is swept.*
- f. *Concerns for jaywalking between 11th and 12th Streets by those going to and from the laundromat and/or the Food Center.*
- g. *Buses are always late, therefore, having minimal ridership.*
- h. *More marketing of tour buses to Yosemite National Park and other locations is needed.*
- i. *A bus stop is needed at 11th Street & Martin Luther King Jr. Way.*
- j. *Recreation facilities are needed in South Merced such as: water slides, bowling alley, skating rink, laser tag/paint ball, or a 5-cent arcade (similar to North Merced).*
- k. *Other businesses suggested to bring to the area include: Kinko's, Golden Corral, Wal-Mart, Thrifty's, or CVS, variety stores that are reasonably priced, and a good BBQ Restaurant. (Note: It was stated that businesses should hire locally.)*
- l. *Street lights are needed for safety.*
- m. *Crosswalks are needed.*
- n. *Consider Special Needs buses throughout area especially in the area of 3rd and 4th Streets and S and T Streets.*

17) Community Outreach – Business Meeting
Tuesday, November 9, 2010 (5:30 – 7:30 p.m.)
Sams Cafe, 235 W. 12th Street

Julie Sterling, with UC Merced Intern Ryan Heller, attended the above outreach to share the progress being made on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr Way) Revitalization Plan and to provide information about the revitalization plan, explaining the objectives of the grant, and seeking participation on the recently approved Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. Staff mailed 54 letters inviting the Local Business Community owners to the meeting. There were 7 business owners in attendance (located within the project area) including the owner of Sam Café. Translation services were provided by Minerva Perez, Golden Valley Health Center. As a result of this outreach opportunity, Thomas Bustos applied for and was appointed to the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

As a result of a question and answer session, the following comments/requests were made by those present:

- a. *Divert truck traffic (big rigs) that pass through town (avoiding weigh station near Chowchilla) to Hwy. 99 thereby reducing congestion and improving safety.*
- b. *Extend one-way couplet from R Street to G Street along Hwy 99.*
- c. *Problem – Truck Parking on Martin Luther King Jr. Way (drivers leave trucks unattended in the middle of Hwy. 99 for food or other services); this occurs daily.*
- d. *Infrastructure needed:*
 - *Bicycle Lanes*
 - *Sidewalk widening*
 - *Bus Turn-outs*
 - *Crossing/signal at 11th, 12th, or 8th Streets*
 - *Pedestrian Activated Crosswalks*
 - *Improved street lighting on west side of MLK Jr. Way and along 12th Street*
 - *Improve Hwy. 99 on-ramp capacity*
 - *Alley lighting/improvements (11th Street); and, more police presence after 5:00 p.m. (Note: It was stated that prostitutes soliciting and drug sales occur frequently); suggest periodic stake-outs.*
- e. *Neighborhood Watch Program needed.*
- f. *Need to remove abandoned signs along the corridor, one specifically where a previous gas station was located (between 12th and 13th Street, east of MLK Jr. Way).*
- g. *Code Enforcement and/or Planning needs to remove old signs/banners (near 12th Street).*
 - *Illegal dumping occurs frequently after dark and includes furniture and other garbage (it was requested that cameras be installed).*

- h. Better City Oversight needed/Inter-departmental correspondence (advocacy).*
 - *Contact list/Organizational chart for citizens requested.*
- i. More frequent patrols by Merced Police Department.*
 - *Increased presence by 12th Street.*
 - *Continued speed enforcement.*
 - *Vehicles are not stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks. Suggestion: Have MPD perform a “Crosswalk Sting” (note: Washington State does this where one officer steps off a curb at a crosswalk, and a motorcycle pulls over violators).*
 - *Pedestrians are not using crosswalks; rather, they step off curb regardless of a crosswalk.*
 - *Crosswalks need to be re-painted (bolder colors/or wider lines).*
- j. Consider Safe Routes to School Grants for children crossing at 11th Street and other locations.*
 - *Suggestion for a safety ramp at MLK Jr. Way and 11th Street.*
- k. Question – approximately 1 to 1½ years ago the lane closest to the curb for southbound traffic on Hwy. 59/MLK Jr. Way was improved from 13th Street to 8th Street; businesses inquired why the improvement ended at 8th Street and why the entire roadway surface was not improved. (Note: Staff indicated we would ask Caltrans since the roadway is under their jurisdiction.)*
- l. Suggestion to rebuild the gas station (Beacon/Shell) at the northeast corner of W. 12th & MLK Jr. Way. Concern that trucks park on this vacant property.*
- m. Focus needs to be on the use of the corridor (i.e., MLK Jr. Way), noting how successful In-N-Out Burger is (at 15th & MLK Jr. Way). Need more restaurants/coffee shops, fast food included (visitors are en-route to Yosemite, Sonora, UC Merced, etc.).*
 - *There are opportunities for all kinds of businesses (good mixture).*
 - *Example - Local farmers and workers frequent Mario’s Tacos daily – It’s a “go-to” place.*

**18) Community Outreach – Healthy South Merced Partners’ Meeting
Tuesday, December 7, 2010 (4:00 p.m.)
Golden Valley Health Center’s Boardroom**

Staff has participated at some of the Healthy South Merced Partners’ Meetings utilizing this opportunity to share updates with the group regarding the on-going status of the MLK Jr. Way Revitalization Plan as well as seeking potential participants for the Ad-Hoc Advisory Commission. As a result of explaining current efforts in data collection of pedestrians, bicyclists, and big rigs along the corridor for the “Existing Conditions” part of the plan, and explaining the difficulty in getting volunteers to assist with this endeavor, Nancy Tapia, Health Education Specialist from Merced County Public Health, indicated her interest in participating in the data collection for Saturday, December 11, 2010.

It should be noted that as a result of Ms. Tapia’s participation on the data collection, she applied for the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee (CAC). Also, Claudia Corchado, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP), and Program Manager for United Way of Merced, volunteered her time and efforts in surveying pedestrians with a questionnaire about traveling within the focus area during the data collection on December 7, 2010. Lastly, one of our continued supporters, Minerva Perez, Program Associate for Healthy South Merced Partners’ Meeting at Golden Valley Health Centers (GVHC), indicated that she would network with others regarding the recruitment for the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee.

19) South Merced Neighborhood Meeting
Golden Valley Health Center (GVHC), 737 W. Childs Avenue
Wednesday, September 7, 2011, from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Staff requested to be a guest speaker at a monthly South Merced Neighborhood Meeting for public outreach to provide an overview of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy. The majority of the attendees are monolingual in Spanish, and Cesar Garcia (an employee of GVHC and a Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Member) provided translation services.

- Staff's PowerPoint presentation had lots of pictures and graphics and the presentation was approximately 35 – 40 minutes
- Maps showing the "Focus Area" and photo boards were displayed
- The audience was interactive, asking many questions about the project
- There were over 20 people attending from the neighborhood
- Light refreshments were provided
- Topics that were covered included:
 - Background of the project
 - What the end goal is
 - What has been covered thus far in the process
 - Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Members Cesar Garcia, Isabel Sanchez, Lilia Aguilar, and Mayko Lozano were asked to present their photo boards. Photos were taken by each of them showing things they liked or disliked in Merced or elsewhere. Some positive examples included: landmarks in South Merced (i.e., churches, schools, and parks), good building design, and architecturally-pleasing elements in shopping centers, art, landscaping, and signs. Some negative examples included: properties that have not been maintained by their owners, missing or damaged public improvements, safety issues, traffic, illegal signs and banners, etc.



20) South Merced Neighborhood Meeting
Golden Valley Health Center (GVHC), 737 W. Childs Avenue
Wednesday, January 4, 2012, from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Staff was a guest speaker at a monthly South Merced Neighborhood Meeting to provide an overview of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan. Several attendees were monolingual in Spanish, and Fabian Alberto (an employee of GVHC) provided translation services. Golden Valley Health Center is located within South Merced (just outside of the Plan's Focus Area). Their efforts and support of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan is greatly appreciated. The presentation included the following:

- *The PowerPoint presentation was approximately 35 – 40 minutes long*
- *The audience was interactive, asking many questions about the project*
- *There were approximately 20 people attending from the neighborhood*
- *Since the Plan is, for the most part, completed, topics that were covered included:*
 - *An overview of the Plan*
 - *Design and layout of the Plan*
 - *Part 5 - Strategy and Implementation of the Plan*
 - *Recommended Actions*
 - *Action Plan*
 - *Plan Implementation*
 - *Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Member Mayko Lozano was asked to discuss his involvement on the Committee. He indicated that improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, including crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and bringing more positive opportunities to South Merced were important to him.*

The South Merced Group indicated that they were happy with the Plan. They wanted to know what could be done to ensure a large grocery store is built in the area, noted that although some improvements were made to sidewalks and handicapped ramps, there are more improvements needed; and expressed the need for businesses to be given incentives for locating in Merced as well as reducing unnecessary restrictions on businesses.



21) Community Outreach – Business Meeting
Tuesday, January 12, 2012 (5:30 – 7:00 p.m.)
Sam Cafe, 235 W. 12th Street

Julie Sterling attended the above public outreach to share the progress to date on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (MLK Jr. Way) Revitalization Plan. Prior to the Business Meeting, Tom Musser, CEO of the Merced County Fairgrounds, and Sam Malaythong, business owner of Sam Café, distributed flyers to the business community within the area advertising the public outreach opportunity. Both gentlemen are on the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee for MLK Jr. Way. Two business owners and one representative for a business owner were in attendance, including the owner of Sam Café. Translation services were provided by Minerva Perez, representative from Golden Valley Health Center. The following topics were discussed:

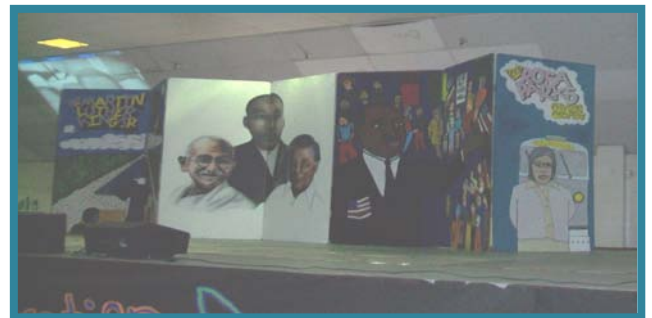
- A description of the Actions was presented noting that the Plan is a vision-type plan
 - Reasons to seek funding were discussed
 - Potential projects were identified
- It was explained that the Plan is the beginning of the Process
 - In order to pursue further process, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be required on projects within the Revitalization Plan
- More work and public involvement could occur
- Business owners are welcome to join in
- The Group was encouraged to continue to meet (on their own) in furtherance of implementation of the proposed Action Items

Business owners were encouraged to attend the City Council Meeting on February 21, 2012, for the proposed Adoption of the Plan.



22) 16th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration
January 16, 2012 from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Merced County Fairgrounds - Exhibit Building
900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way

This year’s event began with a March from the Amtrak Station (355 W. 24th Street) to the Merced County Fairgrounds. Staff shared a booth with Sylvia Fuller, Celebration Committee Member for the event. The event included inspirational speakers, various singers and dancers (children and adults), and information booths. Participating children were also provided lunch. Copies of the Executive Summary of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan and the Plan’s Objectives were available for public outreach. An aerial photograph board was provided and passersby asked questions about the project. An overview of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan was given verbally. There were over 1,000 people attending this outreach opportunity.





SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy Survey

1. What land uses (stores, offices, parks, churches, or other services) in the study area do you value the most, and why? (For example: Riches Auto Body Shop employs me.)
2. What are the most attractive items or locations within the study area, and why? (For example: the street trees in fall make the neighborhood colorful.)
3. What locations within the study area can be changed for the better, and how would you like to see them changed? (For example: there are a lot of vacant lots next to the highway that could be used for businesses to serve Merced residents.)
4. What existing feature or features within the study area are restricting positive things or actions from happening? Describe the feature and the positive thing or action. (For example: missing street lights discourage people from walking in the neighborhood at night.)
5. How often do you cross Martin Luther King Jr. Way (between 13th Street and Childs Avenue) on foot or by bicycle? (For example: every day, once a week, often, rarely, never, other?)
6. At what locations do you generally cross Martin Luther King Jr. Way by foot or bicycle (Childs Avenue, 8th Street, 11th Street, 12th Street, 13th Street, or other location)?
7. Where is your favorite crossing location and why?
8. If you are not using your favorite crossing location, why is that?
9. What would make you feel safe while crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way? (Examples: crosswalk, traffic signal, lighted crosswalk, or other device).
10. When crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way, where are you going? (For example: To the store, laundromat, school, work, other).

11. How do you feel about the truck traffic along Martin Luther King Jr. Way? Should the truck traffic be moved to another street? If so, which one?
12. Would you like to see more bus stops along Martin Luther King Jr. Way between 13th Street and Childs Avenue? If there were more bus stops, would you use them?
13. What type of improvements would you like to see along Martin Luther King Jr. Way? (For example: cross-walks, sidewalks, street lights, street trees, or on-street parking; similar to Main Street.)
14. What would you do to improve the safety along Martin Luther King Jr. Way?
15. Do you use Martin Luther King Jr. Way as a way to work, school, home, or for services (For example: food, laundry, auto-related use, or other)?
16. What streets in our study area do you notice vehicles using the most to cut through to other streets/areas? (For instance, drivers who might use your street to get to Martin Luther King Jr. Way, rather than travelling to W. 13th Street or M Street to Childs Avenue to connect to it.)
17. What streets in our study area do you notice are most used by bicyclists? [For example: those bicyclists who appear to be on their way to/from work or school (consider bicycle riders of all ages and possible skill levels, even children and seniors)?]
18. If there were bike lanes and bike racks at stores, offices, etc., in your neighborhood, would it encourage you to use your bicycle to travel where you want to go, rather than using your vehicle or even walking?
19. We know that Martin Luther King Jr. Way is unsafe for bicyclists. Would you be in favor of a parallel bike path (basically, a very wide sidewalk) along the length of MLK Jr. Way – OR – would you rather see either K or Canal Streets converted (or changed) into a street where bicyclists would be the main user of the street (one-way for vehicles), in order to provide a safe north/south route for bicyclists?
20. If you walk through the neighborhood in our study area, what route(s) do you use? What streets do you use the most, and why? Are there areas that you avoid, and why?

- 21. What streets in our study area seem to be used more by pedestrians? Why do you think that is? Do they seem to be going somewhere in particular? If so, where?

- 22. When you ride the transit bus, do you walk to the bus stop? Ride your bike to the bus stop? Are there bike racks, benches, and a weather shelter there?

- 23. How close (by number of blocks, quarter-miles, etc.) is the nearest bus stop to you?

- 24. Would you ride the transit bus if the bus stop(s) were closer to you?

- 25. Thinking about all the different users of the road system – pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, trucks, and transit/taxis – do you feel the current layout or design of our streets is adequate? How could it be better?

- 26. Are there more direct paths of travel you would rather have through neighborhoods, to be able to travel to shopping, schools, and other places faster/easier? If yes, where?

Please sign and date:

Please return to:

Julie Sterling
City of Merced
Planning Department
678 W 18th Street
Merced CA 95340



September 28, 2010

Dear Property Owner/Business Owner:

**Re: "Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy"
Local Business Community Meeting
Tuesday, October 12, 2010 from 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at Sam's Café, 235 W. 12th Street**

The City of Merced received an Environmental Justice Grant from Caltrans to address transportation and land use challenges and opportunities along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and the area bounded by State Highway 99 and Childs Avenue, and "M" Street and "G" Street. The strategy will be a comprehensive effort to address the following objectives:

- Improve transportation options for travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit);
- Enhance the safety performance of the State Highway for all travelers;
- Support economic growth through enhancing the movement of goods and people;
- Feasibility assessment of new office, commercial and residential uses; and
- Identify opportunities to design and install improvements that provide safe crossing sites.

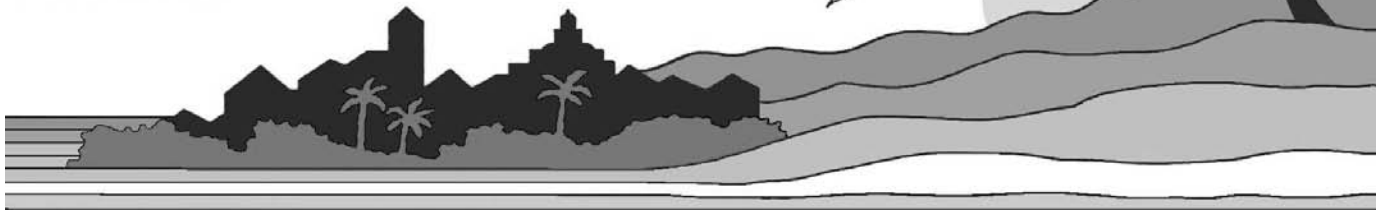
Community involvement is essential for the success of this revitalization strategy. You are invited to attend an informational meeting to find out and inquire about:

- Why a strategy is being prepared;
- How you can be involved;
- The planning steps and schedule of the project; and
- Actions planned after adoption of the Strategy.

On behalf of the City of Merced Planning Department, thank you for your time and interest in the continued betterment of our community. Please R.S.V.P. at (209) 385-6858 (Nancy or Vicci) by Friday, October 8, 2010, as we will be having light refreshments at Sam's Cafe. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact me at the same number or email me at sterlingj@cityofmerced.org.

Sincerely,

Julie Sterling
Associate Planner

CITY OF MERCED*"Gateway to Yosemite"*

October 26, 2010

Dear Resident/Property Owner/Non-Profit:

Re: "Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy"

Wednesday, November 3, 2010, from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Merced Fair Grounds (El Capitan Lodge); or

Thursday, November 4, 2010, from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at Club Mercedes, 569 W. 9th Street

The City of Merced received an Environmental Justice Grant from Caltrans to address transportation and land use challenges and opportunities along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and the area bounded by State Highway 99 and Childs Avenue, and "M" Street and "G" Street. The strategy will be a comprehensive effort to address the following objectives:

- Improve transportation options for travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit)
- Enhance the safety performance of the State Highway for all travelers
- Support economic growth through enhancing the movement of goods and people
- Feasibility assessment of new office, commercial and residential uses
- Identify opportunities to design and install improvements that provide safe crossing sites

Community involvement is essential for the success of this revitalization strategy. You are invited to attend an informational meeting to find out and inquire about:

- Why a strategy is being prepared
- How you can be involved
- The planning steps and schedule of the project
- Actions planned after adoption of the Strategy

On behalf of the City of Merced Planning Department, thank you for your time and interest in the continued betterment of our community. Please R.S.V.P. at (209) 385-6858 (Nancy or Vicci) by Tuesday, November 2, 2010, as we will be providing food. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact me at (209) 385-6858 or email me at sterlingj@cityofmerced.org.

Sincerely,

Julie Sterling
Associate Planner



Highway 59 Plan

Public Input

The City of Merced and community, in conjunction with Caltrans, is at the beginning stage of preparing a Revitalization Plan for that section of Martin Luther King Jr. Way, between W. 13th Street and Childs Avenue. The objectives of the plan are to improve traffic conditions for transit, bicyclists and pedestrians, while maintaining the function of the road for business and truck use, and, to identify future sites for new land uses.

What improvements to the street, landscaping, traffic signals or lighting, do you believe are needed in this area?

What kinds of homes, businesses, offices or stores would you like to see within this area?

General Comments / Other Ideas?

If you wish to be noticed of future events and activities related to the drafting of the Highway 59 Strategic Plan, then please write your name and mailing address here, and mail to Julie Sterling, Merced City Planning Department, 678 W. 18th Street, Merced CA 95340.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City / Zip: _____

FLYER

Martin Luther King, Jr Way Revitalization Strategy

What is it?

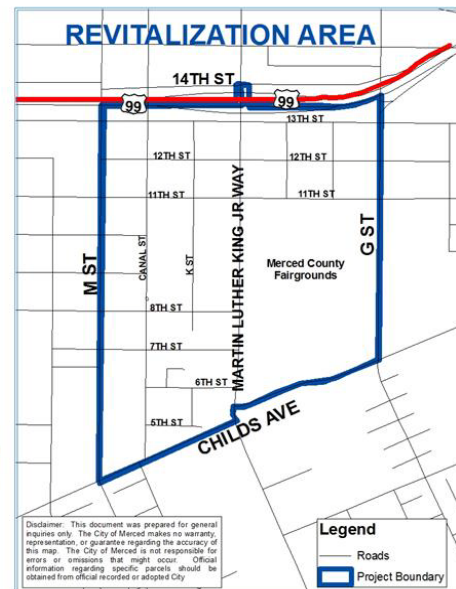
The City of Merced is creating a plan to address the following objectives in the area shown below:

- ◆ Improve Transportation Options (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, and transit)
- ◆ Enhance the Safety for all Travelers;
- ◆ Support Economic Growth;
- ◆ Assess the Feasibility of new Land Uses in the Area (Office, Commercial, and Residential) ; and
- ◆ Identify Opportunities to Provide Safe Crossing Sites.

Community Involvement is Essential for the Success of this Strategy!

To find out how you can get involved, call Associate Planner Julie Sterling at 209-385-6858

GET INVOLVED!

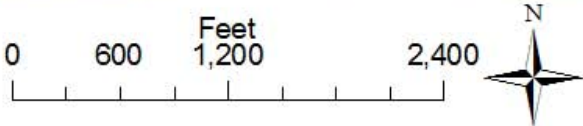


MAP OF MEETING VENUES

Martin Luther King Jr. Way / South Highway 59 Revitalization Strategy



Disclaimer: This document was prepared for general inquiries only. The City of Merced makes no warranty, representation, or guarantee regarding the accuracy of this map. The City of Merced is not responsible for errors or omissions that might occur. Official information regarding specific parcels should be obtained from official recorded or adopted City documents.



More Outreach Photos (Golden Valley Neighborhood Meeting)





Photos from the Hmong New Year





Section 6.2 Plan Adoption

The Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan has several purposes. Foremost, is the Revitalization of the corridor and adjacent areas. Knowing that an ingredient to successful revitalization is the presence of an advocate for change, the development of the Plan was crafted on a foundation of public participation to promote ownership and support for the Plan. The third purpose of the Plan is the presentation of simple, clear, and actionable initiatives to be carried out by responsible agencies and community partners.

DESCRIPTION OF PLAN ADOPTION

The City of Merced received an Environmental Justice Grant from Caltrans to devise a strategy to revitalize Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Developed long ago, disinvestment of the corridor exists as evidenced by crumbling and cracked streets, alleys and sidewalks, and the need to plant street trees and add street lights. Improvement to this infrastructure is needed to serve the large pedestrian travel in the area. Lack of utilities in some areas, heavy truck traffic, and other traits hinder the ability to attract new and engaging businesses. The Plan aims to result in a complete strategy that prioritizes needed improvements and includes a funding plan for the eventual construction of these facilities.

RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT

The Plan was formed from the results of a community planning process, involving local stakeholders and the community at large in discussing creative solutions to stem further decline along Martin Luther King Jr. Way. A citizen-based ad-hoc committee developed the Plan, and staff will assist in implementing it. By way of this process, the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Corridor Revitalization Plan provides a consensus-based strategy to undertake targeted public investment and fosters public-private partnerships aimed to stabilize and enhance the corridor.

On January 17, 2012, the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee recommended approval of the Plan.

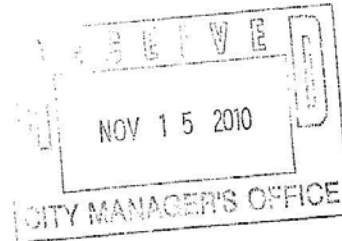
On January 18, 2012, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the Plan.

On February 8, 2011, the Economic Development Advisory Committee recommended approval.

On February 21, 2012, the City Council adopted the Plan by Resolution.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT/RESOLUTIONS

Letters of Support and Committee/Commission Resolutions appear on the following pages.



November 10, 2010

John Bramble, City Manger
City of Merced
678 W 18th St
Merced, CA 95340

Re: Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning – “Martin Luther King Jr. Way – South Highway 59”

Dear Mr. Bramble:

I am writing to endorse and commend the leadership of the City of Merced for the Environment Justice Planning Grant application.

Highway 59, Martin Luther King Jr. Way, not only serves as the primary north/south arterial through Merced, it dissects the community. The area of the study is mostly impoverished with high pedestrian traffic crossing the Highway that has a large volume of trucks and other vehicles.

As CEO of the Merced County Fair, I experience the need due to the number of people that walk to the fairgrounds for the fair and year round events and activities. I also see the need to offer a reason for the commercial property owners to improve and develop their properties into something that will not only improve the tax base for this area, but be a positive reflection of all that Merced has to offer.

To study the mitigation of negative impacts while increasing mobility, safety and economic vitality of the neighborhood is a very important beginning. I look forward to participating in this project.

Thank you for all the effort being put forth for the successful completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Musser, CEO

35th District Agricultural Association • 900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way • Merced CA 95341
(209) 722-1506 • Fax (209) 722-3773 • www.MercedCountyFair.com



PH: 209.723.3153
FAX: 209.723.0322
www.mcagov.org
369 W. 18th Street
Merced, Ca. 95340

November 12, 2010

John Bramble, City Manager
City of Merced
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340



Re: Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning – “Martin Luther King Way-South Highway 59”

Dear Mr. Bramble:

I am writing to fully endorse the City of Merced’s Environmental Justice Planning Grant application. As you are aware, Highway 59 serves as the primary arterial through south Merced. It bisects an impoverished community that is characterized by a high degree of diversity.

Highway 59 effectively dissects this community. Currently, east and west bound traffic, pedestrian and bicycle traffic are greatly limited due to the high traffic volume. The large number of trucks that make use of this roadway compounds this situation. In addition, there are several misaligned perpendicular local roads. All of these conditions impair successful economic development efforts in this neighborhood.

The proposed study will investigate ways to mitigate these negative impacts while increasing the mobility, safety and economic vitality of the neighborhood. I look forward to participating in the public outreach for this project and in working with the City and Redevelopment Agency on this vital project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse B. Brown".

Jesse B. Brown
Executive Director



December 12, 2011

City Council
City of Merced
678 W. 18th St
Merced, CA 95340

Dear City Council:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the 35th District Agricultural Association, thank you for your work to improve the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor.

The corridor serves as an important gateway to Merced. Along with being a much traveled highway, Martin Luther King Jr. Way greets over 500,000 local and out of town guests attending events held at the Fairgrounds each year. For many, this is their total impression of Merced. Revitalization of this area is critical to the future of the Fair, the City and the neighborhood businesses, as well as the safety of the community.

The corridor has deteriorated as is evidenced by the lack of proper sidewalks and cross walks in an area that serves a large pedestrian need; crumbling streets; the lack of street and ally lighting; and the hindered ability to attract new and engaging businesses and other concerns.

The study is a beginning to a welcome change. The recommendations put forth by a committee of community members who live, do business in or are closely aligned with the Plan area, contain simple, effective actions. As for our part, we are working to improve our impact with efforts such as planting more trees, especially along our periphery, and clean-up of litter along MLK.

We support the efforts to implement measures to revitalize this area of the City, especially to improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety. We look forward to working with you as the recommendations are put into effect.

Again, we appreciate and congratulate you on the completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Musser, CFE
CEO 35th DAA

35th District Agricultural Association • 900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way • Merced CA 95341
(209) 722-1506 • Fax (209) 722-3773 • www.MercedCountyFair.com



CORPORATE OFFICE
737 West Childs Avenue • Merced, CA 95341
(209) 383-1848 • (209) 383-0136 www.gvhc.org



LOCATIONS
• Ceres • Dos Palos • Le Grand • Los Banos • Merced • Modesto
• Newman • Patterson • Planada • Riverbank • Turlock • Westley

January 10, 2012

City Council
City of Merced
678 W. 18th St
Merced, CA 95340

Dear City Council:

Golden Valley Health Centers is a non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center that has been serving the community from its South Merced headquarters for 40 years. Our mission is to improve the health of our patients by providing quality, primary health care services to people in the communities we serve regardless of language, financial or cultural barriers.

On behalf of the Golden Valley Health Centers, thank you for your work to improve the Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor in South Merced.

The corridor serves as a main transportation passage for the patients that rely on Golden Valley for their health services. Revitalization of this area is critical to ensure the safety of our patients and improve the health of the community

Developed long ago, disinvestment of the corridor exists as evidenced by crumbling and cracked streets, alleys and sidewalks, and the need to plant street trees and add street lights; improvements to this infrastructure is needed to serve the large pedestrian travel in the area. Lack of utilities in some areas, heavy truck traffic, and other traits hinder the ability to attract new and engaging businesses that offer healthier options to the community.

This plan is a springboard to change, containing simple yet effective actions recommended by community members who live, do business in, or are closely aligned with the Plan area. We are proud to be a part of this community and have closely worked with the Planning Department to outreach to South Merced residents to actively take part in the Plan. We welcome continued opportunities to form partnerships that result in increased quality of life and positive perception of the City. As for our part we will continue our "Community Clean-Up" events to remove litter and debris from the neighborhood as well as continue to support the City in making the Plan a reality.

We support the efforts to implement measures to revitalize this area of the City, especially to improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety and beautify the area. We look forward to working with you as the recommendations are put into effect.

Again, we appreciate and congratulate you on the completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Michael O. Sullivan
Chief Executive Officer



PH: 209.723.3153
FAX: 209.723.0322
www.mcagov.org
369 W. 18th Street
Merced, Ca. 95340

February 24, 2012

John Bramble, City Manager
City of Merced
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340

Dear Mr. Bramble:


I am writing to endorse the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

The corridor is a much traveled highway and also serves as an important gateway to Merced – for many, this is how they enter and exit the City. Unfortunately it is in a state of disrepair and neglect. Crumbling infrastructure, heavy truck traffic, and a lack of improvements such as street lights, trees, sidewalks and crosswalks hinder efforts to attract investments to improve the community. Revitalization of this area is also important to improve the mobility and safety of the traveling public.

We support the City's efforts to revitalize this area, especially to improve pedestrian safety and mobility and reduce conflicts between vehicular and non-vehicular travel. We look forward to working with you as the recommendations are put into effect.

We appreciate and congratulate you on the completion of this study.

Sincerely,


Jesse B. Brown
Executive Director

**A RESOLUTION OF THE AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN OF
THE CITY OF MERCED, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING
ADOPTION OF THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
WAY/HIGHWAY 59 REVITALIZATION PLAN RESULTING
FROM THE PLANNING COMMUNITY–BASED PLANNING
GRANT RECEIVED FROM THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION – CALTRANS**

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2009, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2009-10 approving the Transportation Planning Environmental Justice Grant application and Funding Plan and committing the matching funds; and,

WHEREAS, The City of Merced received a letter dated September 10, 2009, stating the City of Merced was awarded the FY 2009-10 Environmental Justice: Context Sensitive Planning Grant from the California Department of Transportation in the amount of \$250,000; and,

WHEREAS, subsequent to the City receiving the Caltrans Contract in April 2010, the City Council adopted a motion to accept and appropriate the Environmental Justice Grant for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way/Highway 59 Revitalization Plan in the amount of \$250,000 and authorized the City to draft the plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Environmental Justice Grant Application sought to provide funding for transportation and economic development planning for the South Highway 59 corridor area along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and the area bound by State Highway 99, Childs Avenue, M Street, and G Street; and,

WHEREAS, on October 18, 2010, the City Council authorized recruitment for a temporary advisory committee for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way/Highway 59 Revitalization Plan, and setting a general schedule for preparation of said plan. The City Council also renamed the project from "Highway 59" to "Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy"; and,

WHEREAS, on December 30, 2010, the City Council accepted the nominations and appointed 13 individuals (plus 1 Redevelopment Advisory Committee Member) to serve as members of the Ad-Hoc Citizens Advisory Committee for Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Revitalization Plan is a stand-alone community-based policy document that establishes objectives and actions intended to become a road map for the revitalization of the Highway 59 corridor; and,

WHEREAS, the Action Items are directed towards addressing the transportation, economic development, and design and safety concerns of the corridor; and,

WHEREAS, the planning process has included considerable public involvement from residents, businesses, property owners, and the general public throughout the area; and,

WHEREAS, the Committee's role and duties were to hold public meetings and make recommendations to staff on specific issues concerning the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan, however, its primary role was to recommend "Actions" to achieve the four objectives of the strategy which include:

- A. Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit);
- B. Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers / Support Economic Growth Through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People;
- C. Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial, and Residential Uses; and,
- D. Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites; and,

WHEREAS, the Ad-Hoc Committee and City Staff drafted Action Items and prepared an Action Strategy Matrix based on needs for the area as discussed at public meetings; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Department has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of the Grant Program and preparation of the Revitalization Plan and said document will require a resolution certifying the approval of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan by the City Council of Merced, due in February 2012; and,

NOW THEREFORE, THE AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN OF THE CITY OF MERCED DOES RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL:

SECTION 1. Approval of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

Upon motion by Committee Member MALAYTHONG, seconded by Committee Member TAPIA, and carried by the following vote:

AYES:	Committee Members Aguilar, A. Bustos, Garcia, Lozano, Malaythong, Paloutzian, Pollard, Sanchez, Tapia, Thao, and Chairperson T. Bustos
NOES:	None
ABSENT:	Committee Members Booth, Burrola, and Musser
ABSTAIN:	None

Adopted this 17th day of January 2012



TOM BUSTOS, CHAIRPERSON
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY
AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ATTEST:



JULIE STERLING
COMMITTEE SECRETARY

**CITY OF MERCED
Planning Commission**

Resolution #2998

WHEREAS, the Merced City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of January 18, 2012, held a public hearing and considered **Recommendation on Adoption of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan**, initiated by the City of Merced. The City of Merced received an Environmental Justice Grant from the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to address transportation and land use challenges and opportunities along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and the area bounded by State Highway 99 and Childs Avenue, and “M” Street and “G” Street. The Revitalization Plan outlines a vision for the planning area, including an action plan for achieving that vision, which will be implemented through future physical projects and administrative actions. Plan topics include: traffic safety, pedestrian crossing of Highway 59, mobility/complete streets, and land use; and,

WHEREAS, the Merced City Planning Commission concurs with Findings A through G of Staff Report #12-01; and,

WHEREAS, after reviewing the City’s Draft Environmental Determination, and discussing all the issues, the Merced City Planning Commission does resolve to hereby recommend to City Council Adoption of a Statutory Exemption and Adoption of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan.

Upon motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Acheson, and carried by the following vote:


AYES: Commissioner Madayag, Colby, Ward, Amey, Acheson, and
Chairperson Cervantes
NOES: None
ABSENT: Commissioner McCoy
ABSTAIN: None

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION #2998

Page 2

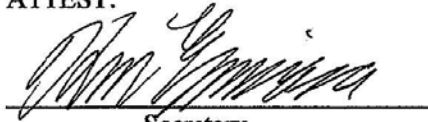
January 18, 2012

Adopted this 18th day of January 2012



Chairperson, Planning Commission of
the City of Merced, California

ATTEST:



Secretary

n:\shared\planning\PC Resolutions\Adoption of MLK Jr Way Revitalization Plan



CITY CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I, JOHN M. BRAMBLE, City Clerk of the City of Merced, California, do hereby certify that the attached document, entitled:

RESOLUTION 2012-16

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCED, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN RESULTING FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: CONTEXT-SENSITIVE PLANNING APPLICATION GRANT RECEIVED FROM THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - CALTRANS

is a true and correct copy of the original on file in the Office of the Merced City Clerk, Merced, California.

DATED: February 22, 2012

JOHN M. BRAMBLE, CITY CLERK



BY: Jamie Fanconi
JAMIE FANCONI
Deputy City Clerk

RESOLUTION NO. 2012- 16**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF MERCED, CALIFORNIA,
ADOPTING THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
WAY REVITALIZATION PLAN RESULTING
FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:
CONTEXT-SENSITIVE PLANNING
APPLICATION GRANT RECEIVED FROM THE
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION – CALTRANS**

WHEREAS, On March 16, 2009, the City Council adopted Resolution 2009-10 approving the Transportation Planning Environmental Justice Grant application and Funding Plan and committing the matching funds; and,

WHEREAS, The City of Merced received a letter dated September 10, 2009, stating the City of Merced was awarded the FY 2009-10 Environmental Justice: Context Sensitive Planning Grant from the California Department of Transportation in the amount of \$250,000; and,

WHEREAS, Subsequent to the City receiving the Caltrans Contract in April 2010, the City Council adopted a motion to accept and appropriate the Environmental Justice Grant for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way/Highway 59 Revitalization Plan in the amount of \$250,000 and authorized the City to draft the plan; and,

WHEREAS, The Environmental Justice Grant application sought to provide funding for transportation and economic development planning for the South Highway 59 corridor area along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and the area bound by State Highway 99, Childs Avenue, and M Street and G Street; and,

WHEREAS, On October 18, 2010, the City Council authorized recruitment for a temporary advisory committee for the Martin Luther King Jr. Way/Highway 59 Revitalization Plan, and setting a general schedule for preparation of said plan. The City Council also renamed the project from “Highway 59” to “Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy;” and,

WHEREAS, On December 30, 2010, the City Council accepted the nominations and appointed 13 individuals (plus 1 Redevelopment Advisory Committee Member) to serve as members of the Ad-Hoc Citizens Advisory Committee for Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan; and,

WHEREAS, The Revitalization Plan is a stand-alone community-based policy document that establishes objectives and actions intended to become a road map for the revitalization of the Highway 59 corridor; and,

WHEREAS, The Action Items are directed towards addressing the transportation, economic development, and design and safety concerns of the corridor; and,

WHEREAS, The planning process has included considerable public involvement from residents, businesses, property owners and the general public throughout the area; and,

WHEREAS, The Committee's role and duties were to hold public meetings and make recommendations to staff on specific issues concerning the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan, however, its primary role was to recommend "Actions" to achieve the four objectives of the strategy which include:

- A. Improve Transportation Options for Travelers (vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, transit);
- B. Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers/Support Economic Growth Through Enhancing the Movement of Goods and People;
- C. Feasibility Assessment of New Office, Commercial, and Residential Uses; and,
- D. Identify Opportunities to Design and Install Improvements that Provide Safe Crossing Sites; and,

WHEREAS, The Ad-Hoc Committee and City staff drafted Action Items and prepared an Action Strategy matrix based on needs for the area as discussed at public meetings; and,

WHEREAS, Because of the end of redevelopment in California pursuant to AB 1x 26, local redevelopment funds will not be available to help fund the Action Items; and,

WHEREAS, The Planning Department has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of the Grant Program and preparation of the Revitalization Plan and said document will require a resolution certifying the approval of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan by the City Council of the Merced, due in February 2012.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCED DOES HEREBY RESOLVE, DETERMINE, FIND, AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The City Council hereby approves the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan, with the understanding that the Action Items identified in the Plan shall be funded through state and federal grants and not the City’s General Fund.

///

///

///

///

///

///

///

///

///

///

///

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Merced at a regular meeting held on the 21st day of February 2012, by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members: BLAKE, DOSSETTI, MURPHY, RAWLING, LOR, PEDROZO, THURSTON

NOES: Council Members: NONE

ABSENT: Council Members: NONE

ABSTAIN: Council Members: NONE

APPROVED:

[Handwritten Signature]
Mayor

ATTEST:
JOHN M. BRAMBLE, CITY CLERK

BY: *[Handwritten Signature]*
Assistant/Deputy City Clerk

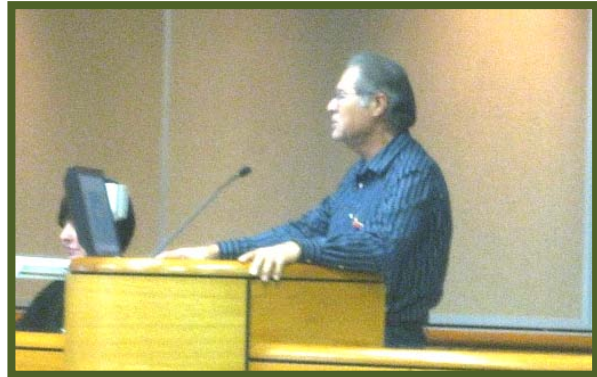
(SEAL)



APPROVED AS TO FORM:

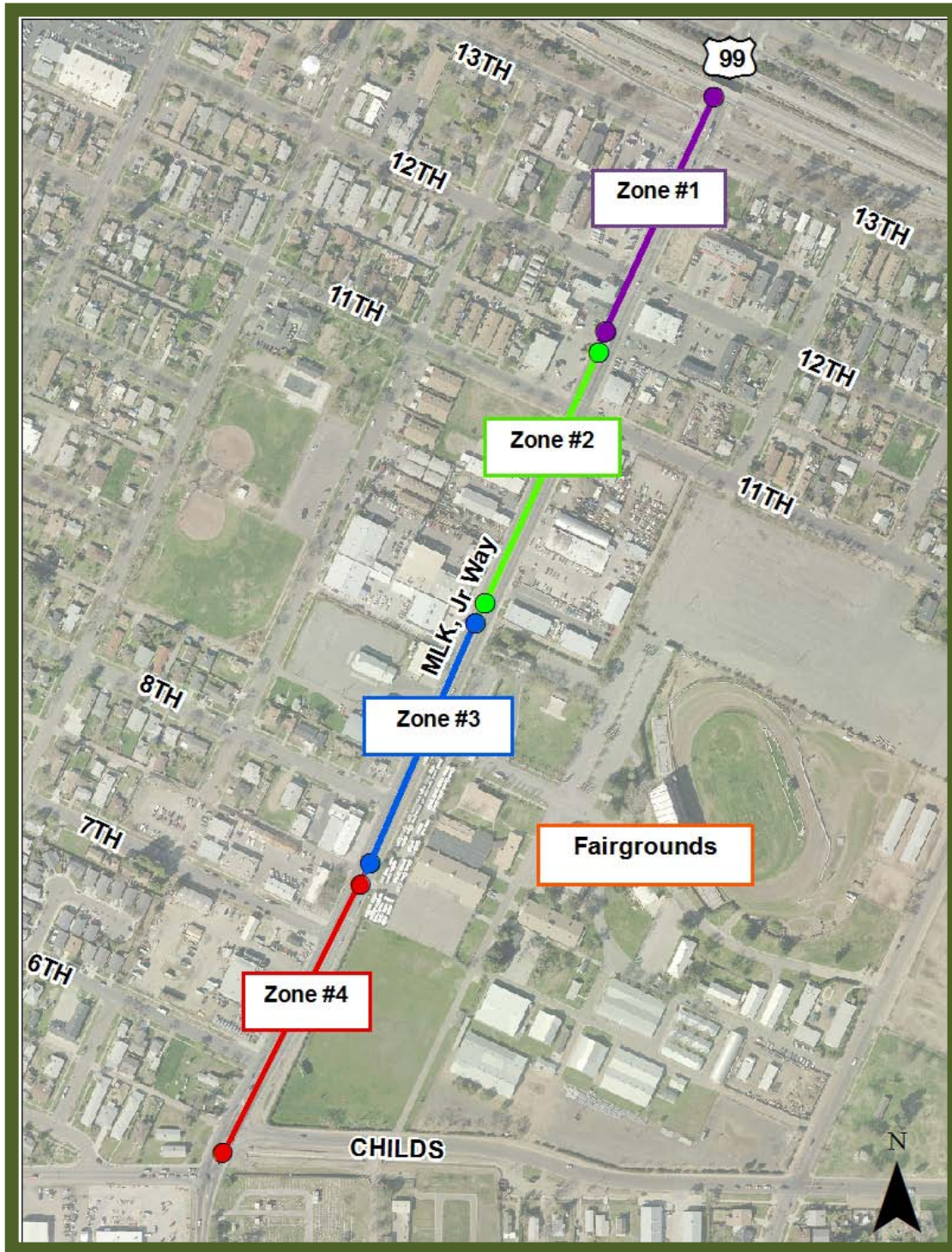
[Handwritten Signature] 1/17/12
City Attorney Date

Ad Hoc Committee speaking in favor of the adoption of the Revitalization Plan at the City Council Meeting on 2-21-2012 .



Section 6.3 Data Collection

Zone Map for Survey



PEDESTRIAN / BICYCLIST SURVEY

STANDARD PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE SURVEY

Location: _____ Date: _____ Time _____
 Surveyor: _____ Weather: _____
 (sunny, cloudy, rainy, windy, hot, and/or cold)

“Excuse me, but may I ask you a few questions? I’m with the City of Merced and we want to learn more about why people walk where they do. This will take less than two minutes and the information will be kept confidential.”

Please check one **Pedestrian** **Bicyclist**

1. What best describes the purpose of this trip?

Exercise Work Commute School Recreation
 Personal Business (medical, visiting friends, etc.) Shopping/doing errands

2. In the past month, how often have you walked/bicycled here?

First time 0 - 5 Times 6 - 10 Times 11 - 20 times Daily

3. Where did this trip begin?

Home Work School Other

4. What’s the approximate distance of this trip? _____

5. Why are you using this route as opposed to walking/biking somewhere else?

Direct route to destination Shortest route to destination
 Other _____

6. What about the road is preventing you from taking another route?

No crosswalk No traffic signal No street lights (for night-time travel)
 This is my preferred route Other

7. How would you describe yourself?

Resident of the area (between M St. & G St. & Freeway and Childs Ave.)
 Employee of the area
 Merced resident (outside of the area described above)
 Visitor to Merced

