

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Merced County
Community and Economic Development Department
2222 M Street
Merced, CA 95340

CONTACT: Diana Lowrance, Planner III, Community and Economic Development Department

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Winton Community Plan Update


PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: November 20, 2020, through January 4, 2021

Merced County has prepared an environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed Winton Community Plan. The Draft EIR is available on the Merced County, Community and Economic Development Department web page and at the Community and Economic Development Department, 2222 M Street, Merced, California, 95340; phone: (209) 385-7654.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

Written comments regarding the Draft EIR should be **mailed to the** Community and Economic Development Department, at 2222 M Street, Merced CA, 95340 or **emailed** to Diana.Lowrance@countyofmerced.com

Date: 11/19/2020

Signature: 
Diana Lowrance, Planner III

**Notice of Availability
Winton Community Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Report**

Attachment 1

Project Location

Winton is an unincorporated community located in Merced County, immediately north of the City of Atwater (see Figure 1, Regional Location) and approximately 8 miles northwest of the City of Merced. The closest highway is Highway 99, approximately 2 miles to the west of Winton. The Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad bisects the Plan Area in a northwest to southeast direction, parallel to Santa Fe Avenue. Castle Airport is located approximately 1 mile to the west of the Plan Area.

Proposed Project Description

The proposed Community Plan is intended to guide development in Winton through the year 2040.

The proposed Community Plan would alter the boundaries of the Community Plan Area (Plan Area), increasing the size of the Plan Area from 1,275 acres to 1,412 acres. As shown in Figure 2, Proposed Community Plan Area Boundaries, the proposed boundary would be coterminous with the current boundary, except in three areas. A triangular area north of Gertrude Avenue, east of Winton Way and west of Santa Fe Drive would be added along with several parcels east of North Vine Avenue and north of Almond Avenue. In addition, a small portion of the existing Plan Area west of Cypress Avenue, north of Gertrude Avenue and south of Almond Avenue would be removed from the Plan Area. The Winton Water and Sanitary District (WWSD) Sphere of Influence would also need to be adjusted to add those areas that would be served by the District.

The proposed land uses are shown in Figure 3 and Table 1.

The proposed Community Plan is projected to increase the community population to a total of approximately 15,629 residents, an increase of approximately 55 percent if the Plan were to fully buildout. Commercial, mixed-use and business park development would increase to approximately 1.8 million square feet, an increase of approximately 180 percent. Industrial uses would increase from very little (approximately 110 square feet) to approximately 68,000 square feet. Note that the Industrial designation falls entirely within the BNSF right-of-way, so BNSF would need to approve of any development there. No new schools are proposed, although additional schools would be allowed in areas designated for residential development.

The proposed Community Plan provides for 23 acres of new neighborhood parks, which would provide approximately 3 acres of parkland per resident, as called for in the County General Plan. The neighborhood parks would be located in existing and new residential areas throughout the Plan Area. No new community parks are proposed. Neighborhood parks would range from one to seven acres in size, and could include such features as playgrounds or play areas, picnic areas and passive spaces. Other possible amenities include community gardens, tot lots, dog parks, walking paths and multiuse lawn areas. Pocket parks of less than one acre could also be located in and around residential neighborhoods. A community-wide multiuse

trail on the west side of Santa Fe Avenue is also proposed, along with several other trails within the Plan Area. New parks would be funded through a combination of parkland dedications within new developments, park fees paid by new development and/or developer funding.

The proposed Community Plan would amend the County General Plan and provide policies to ensure that the Community Plan is implemented as envisioned by Winton residents and the County. The County zoning map would also be amended to reflect the zones associated with the proposed land use designations.

In addition to land use, the proposed Community Plan addresses circulation, recreation, noise, and public facilities. In addition, Community Design and Administration and Implementation chapters are included.

The proposed Community Plan does not include any specific development projects. In order to determine the potential impacts of the proposed Community Plan, the EIR will assume, at buildout, the land uses and levels of development shown in Table 1. If the proposed Community Plan is adopted, proposals for new development would need to demonstrate that they are consistent with the land use designations and policies of the adopted Community Plan.

Project Schedule

The proposed Community Plan, if adopted, is expected to take approximately 20 years to build out. The actual duration would depend on market and other factors.

Significant Environmental Impacts

Under CEQA, a significant effect on the environment is defined as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. Significant impacts of the proposed Community Plan would include loss of prime farmland; increased air pollutants; harm to special-status species and/or loss of their habitat; fill of wetlands; damage to or destruction of historic, prehistoric and paleontological resources; greenhouse gas emissions, incompatible land uses; construction and operational noise; increased vehicle miles traveled; potential conflicts between vehicles and bicycles and pedestrians; potential conflicts with the rail line; and cumulative increases in groundwater withdrawals. Many of these significant impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with mitigation identified in the EIR. In some cases, impacts would remain significant even after mitigation, including the loss of Prime Farmland, generation of air pollutants, conflict with an air quality plan; cumulative loss of special-status species habitat; loss of historically significant buildings, sites and/or facilities; generation of greenhouse gasses, increased vehicle miles traveled, and increases in groundwater withdrawals.

Document Availability and Review

The Draft EIR is available on the County's website at: <https://www.countyofmerced.com/3492/Environmental-Impact-Report-EIR>, a printed copy is available for viewing, and/or disk copies are also available from the Merced County Community and Economic Development Department at 2222 M Street, Merced.

Written comments on the Draft EIR should be directed to the following address by **5:00 p.m. Monday, January 4, 2021**. E-mail comments will be accepted.

Diana Lowrance, Planner III
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2222 M Street
Merced, CA 95340
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TABLE 1
Winton Community Plan
Land Use Summary

Land Use	Acres	Dwelling Units/Square Feet ¹ /Number		
		Existing	Potential New DU/SF	Total
Residential				
Very Low Density (VLD)	231	110 du	133 du	243 du
Low Density (LD)	549	2,138 du	875 du	3,013 du
Medium Density (MD)	141	670 du	639 du	1,309 du
Mixed Use (MU)	11	33 du	29 du	62 du
Non-Residential Designations ³		44 du	(20) du	24 du
<i>Total Residential</i>	932	2,995 du	1,656 du	4,651 du
Non-Residential				
Commercial				
General Commercial (GC)	38	146,519 sf	249,547 sf	396,066 sf
Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	8	21,638 sf	67,543 sf	89,181 sf
Commercial Transition	4	0 sf	28,500 sf	28,500 sf
Mixed Use (MU)	See above	117,163 sf	95,516 sf	212,679 sf
<i>Total Commercial</i>	50	285,320 sf	441,106 sf	726,426 sf
Business Park				
Business Park ²	78	289,256 sf	734,268	1,023,524 sf
Industrial				
Industrial (IND) ²	9	110 sf	67,953 sf	68,063 sf
Non-residential uses within residential designations ³	n/a	70,509 sf	(11,174) sf	59,335 sf
Total Non-Residential	137	645,465 sf	1,232,153 sf	1,877,348 sf
Schools				
Elementary School (INST) ⁵	42	1 du 3 schools	0	1 du 3 schools
Middle School (INST)	18	1 school	0	1 school
Other (INST)	1	18,813	0	18,813
<i>Total Schools</i>	61	1 du 4 schools	0	1 du 4 schools
Parks				
Community Park (REC)	21	231 sf	0	231 sf
Neighborhood Park ⁴	23	0	0	
Pocket Park	1	0	0	
<i>Total Parks</i>	45	231 sf	0	231 sf
Other				
Other (e.g. roads, canals)	237	n/a	n/a	237 acres
Total		4,652 dwelling units		
1,412 acres		1,896,390 sf non-residential⁶		

Notes:

Slight discrepancies in totals are due to rounding.
du=dwelling units sf=square feet

- Potential building square footage is derived by multiplying the typical floor area ratio by proposed acreage. Existing building square footage has been subtracted from the total shown.
- Some residential units are located within areas that are not zoned for residential development; it is assumed that these non-conforming units will be removed as development occurs. Similarly, some non-residential uses occur within residential areas. The dwelling units and square footage that are

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Land Use Summary

anticipated to be removed as nonconforming uses are included in the "Future" column (i.e., Future is the net of new minus existing-to-be-removed uses).

3. Assumes typical development rate rather than maximum development potential.
4. Elementary school acreage does not include anticipated additional school to accommodate future enrollment. Site selection and school construction timing to be determined by Winton School District. Site could be located within the Plan Area or elsewhere in the District.
5. The recreational acreage used in calculation assumes that buildout will meet County park standards (3 acres/1000 residents).
6. Does not include school square footage.

Source: RRM Design Group, 2020