

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
UC VILLAGES PROJECT**



To all interested parties:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Merced (City), as the Lead Agency, has determined that the UC Villages project (proposed project) will require preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project includes the annexation of six parcels totaling 37.23 acres from Merced County into the City of Merced. The site would be pre-zoned as Planned Development (P-D), which allows for a variety of development types that carry out the objectives of the City's General Plan. Within the annexed area, 35.6 acres would be developed with up to 700 multi-family and/or student housing residential units with approximately 18,000 square feet (sf) of amenity buildings (recreational center), approximately 30,000 sf of commercial/retail, and an approximately 75,000-sf hotel with up to 200 guest rooms.

The UC Villages project proposes the development of two types of land uses – Commercial and Residential. The Commercial area is located in the northeast corner of the site and west of Lake Road. The vision for this area is to include approximately 105,000 sf of retail and commercial uses, including a potential 75,000-sf hotel with 200 guest rooms. Also included in this area is a landmark artistic feature, such as a water tower-style feature, at or near the northwest corner, showcasing a pedestrian-friendly entrance into the retail/commercial center that will be inviting to pedestrian and bicycle traffic from the UC Merced campus in particular. It is anticipated that the Commercial area would include neighborhood retail serving commercial, such as restaurants, retail stores, bank, personal services, a hotel and other commercial uses typically associated with a mixed-use retail/commercial center.

The Residential area is located west of Lake Road and east of the Merced Irrigation District (MID) Yosemite Lateral and Los Olivos Road. The vision for this area is to take advantage of the project's close proximity to the UC Merced campus and develop high-quality off-campus housing. The housing component would be complemented with a social hub and recreational amenity space, potentially one associated with each phase, or shared by multiple phases. The recreational space may include a variety of amenities including, but not limited to, work/study areas, a fitness center, areas of recreational activities such as cornhole, bocce ball, pickleball, bike repair stations and a recreational pool.

The project site is anticipated to be a walkable neighborhood, with buildings oriented toward the street. The proposed project will develop a mix of uses over six phases of development; each phase may occur over 2-3 years, depending on market conditions.

The UC Villages project includes the following proposed entitlement applications to the City, requiring Planning Commission review with final action by the City Council:

- Annexation approval and the annexation of the subject parcels by the City of Merced and Merced Local Agency Formation Commission;
- Pre-zoning of the project site to Planned Development (P-D);
- Vesting Tentative Parcel Map; and
- Pre-Annexation Development Agreement.

Following approval of the project, the City would submit an application to the Merced County Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCo) to annex the project site from Merced County to the City of Merced.



PROJECT LOCATION: The UC Villages project site is located in unincorporated Merced County, to the northeast of the City of Merced's city limits. The site is at the southwestern corner of the Bellevue Road and Lake Road intersection. The project site is surrounded by rural residential and agricultural uses to the north, west, and south. The University of California, Merced (UC Merced) campus lies to the northeast of the project site, and agricultural uses are farther to the east. The project site is bordered by Bellevue Road to the north, Lake Road to the east, lands designated Mixed Use and Low Density to the south and Los Olivos Road and the Yosemite Lateral canal to the west.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: An EIR will be prepared to address potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed project. Potential key environmental considerations to be addressed in the EIR include: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology/Soils/Paleontological Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use/Planning, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities/Service Systems, and Wildfire. The Draft EIR will include a discussion of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6. The Draft EIR will also include an analysis of cumulative effects, as well as other required CEQA sections.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that this Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared in accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines and will be circulated for a 30-day review period during which your comments and suggestions regarding the scope of the Draft EIR are welcomed. The NOP comment period will extend from March 29, 2024, through April 29, 2024. The NOP, which includes additional information regarding the project including a regional location figure and Land Use Map figure identifying the inventory and opportunity sites, is available for review during regular business hours at:

- City of Merced, Development Services Department, 678 West 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340
- The document may be accessed online at: <https://www.cityofmerced.org/>.

Your scoping comments must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 5:00 PM on April 28, 2024. Comments on the scope of the Draft EIR and questions regarding the proposed project and scoping meeting can be made to:

City of Merced Planning Division
Attn: Kim Espinosa, Temporary Director of Development Services
678 West 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340
Phone: (209) 385-6858
Email: espinosak@cityofmerced.org

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that, pursuant to Section 21083.9 of the Public Resources Code, the City will hold a public Scoping Meeting to obtain information regarding the content and scope of the EIR for this project. This scoping meeting will be held in-person on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Merced Civic Center – Samuel Pipes Room (1st Floor), 678 West 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340.