

**REVISED NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY / NOTICE OF COMPLETION OF A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
UC VILLAGES PROJECT**



Date: April 30, 2025

To: Responsible/Trustee Agencies, Other Public Agencies, Advocacy Groups and Interested Parties:

Project Title: UC Villages

Project Location: The project site is 37.23 acres located at the southwestern corner of the Bellevue Road and Lake Road intersection within Merced County.
(APN#s 060-590-016, -017, -019, -025, -026, and 060-020-016)

Lead Agency: City of Merced

State Clearinghouse No.: 2024031198

Public Review Period: 45 days, April 30, 2025 to June 16, 2025 at 5:00 pm

Contact (for question or submitting comments): City of Merced Planning Division
678 West 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340
Phone: (209) 385-6858

Attn: Diana Lowrance, Deputy Director of Development Services
Email: lowranced@cityofmerced.org
or
Attn: Jonnie Lan, Principal Planner
Email: lanj@cityofmerced.org

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City of Merced, as Lead Agency, completed a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the project described below. The Draft EIR is being made available to the public in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act for a 45-day comment period. Written comments on the Draft EIR may be submitted to the mailing or email address listed above. All comments must be received no later than 5:00 pm on June 16, 2025.

The City will provide written responses to all comments received by the end of the public review period. Comments and responses will be included in the Final EIR and provided to the City of Merced Planning Commission and City Council for their consideration. along with the City's consideration of action on the project applications.

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.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The project level Draft EIR analyzes potentially significant impacts associated with approval and implementation of the UC Villages project. The Draft EIR evaluates the full range of environmental issues contemplated under CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. The Draft EIR provides an evaluation of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and recommends mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

With the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed in the Draft EIR the following environmental impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level: Biological Resources (*Impacts 3.4-1, 3.4-2, 3.4-3, 3.4-4, 3.4-5 and Cumulative Impact 3.4-7*), Cultural Resources (*Impacts 3.5-1, 3.5-2, 3.5-3 and Cumulative Impact 3.5-4*), Geology, Soils, and Seismicity (*Impact 3.7-5 and Cumulative Impact 3.7-10*), Hazards and Hazardous Materials (*Impact 3.9-2*), Noise (*Impact 3.12-1*), and Tribal Cultural Resources (*Impact 3.16-1 and Cumulative Impact 3.16-2*). No significant and unavoidable environmental impacts would occur as a result of the project.

PUBLIC REVIEW: The Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with Section 15084 of the CEQA Guidelines and will be circulated for a 45-day review period during which your written comments regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR are welcomed. The Draft EIR comment period will be from **April 30, 2025 through June 16, 2025**.

Electronic versions of the Draft EIR and the technical appendices are available for review online at <https://www.cityofmerced.org/departments/planning-division/environmental-review-documents/-folder-2491>.

Printed copies of the Draft EIR are available for review during the public review period at Merced City Hall, 678 West 18th Street Merced, CA, 95340.