

## Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

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**Date:** May 2, 2024

**To:** Responsible Agencies, Interested Parties and Organizations

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Branford Point Development Project

**Lead Agency:** City of Merced

**Project Applicant:** Bonique Emerson  
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**Project Title:** Branford Point Development Project

**Notice is Hereby Given:** The City of Merced (City) is the Lead Agency on the below-described Branford Point Development Project (Project) and has prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The NOP is intended to disclose environmental information and to solicit the views of the public, interested parties, and/or agencies as to the scope and content of the environmental information. Specifically, the City is requesting that commenters provide comments on the NOP, identify additional environmental topics (and/or special studies) that they believe need to be explored in the forthcoming EIR, and to identify other relevant environmental issues related to the scope and content of the forthcoming EIR.

**Project Location:** The proposed Branford Point Development Project (referred to herein as the “Project” or “proposed Project”) is located on approximately 48-acres in the northeastern area of the City of Merced, California and is generally bound by Lake Road to the east, La Loma Road to the south, Bellevue Road to the north and the Yosemite Lateral canal to the north and west. The site is comprised of one parcel: APN 060-020-044. The entire site is outside the Merced City limits but within the City’s planned growth area, the Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) and Sphere of Influence (SOI). The site has historically been used for agricultural purposes; however, is within the Bellevue Community Plan, which has been identified as likely to contain significant employment generating uses that would benefit from being in close proximity to the UC Merced campus, approximately 0.15 miles to the east. See Figure 1 – Regional Location Map and Figure 2 – Project Aerial Vicinity Map.

**Project Description:** The Project Applicant is proposing a General Plan Amendment, Annexation, Rezone/Prezone, and a Tentative Subdivision Map (TSM) to facilitate the development of approximately 48

acres into a mixed-use development project. The Project will feature a variety of uses including, multi-family housing, commercial, hospitality and research and development office spaces. Residential development is proposed on lots 1 – 4 and 9 – 10 of the TSM while commercial development is proposed over lots 5 – 8 of the TSM, see Figure 3 – Tentative Subdivision Map. The proposal features several different types of housing for a total of up to 700 residential units at buildout and is broken down as follows: affordable housing – maximum of 98 units; apartments – maximum of 372 units; and townhomes – maximum of 230 units. The proposed Project also includes up to 16.1 acres of commercial development (for a total of approximately 778,853 square feet of commercial area). The commercial developments will occur in the proposed Regional/Central Commercial Zone (C-C), which allows a diversity of commercial and residential uses. The commercial facilities are located to provide efficient accessibility to residents of the Project and the surrounding areas. Various other infrastructure improvements (water, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure, roadway improvements, and related improvements) will be required by the Project.

**Scope of the Environmental Impact Report:** The forthcoming EIR will address the following CEQA Guidelines Appendix G topics: Aesthetics, Agriculture/Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire. The EIR will also review Project alternatives as well as cumulative impacts. To support the analysis in the EIR, the following technical studies will be prepared: Air Quality / Greenhouse Gases / Energy Study, Biological Resources Report, Cultural Resources Report, Noise Assessment, Traffic Impact Study, and a Water Supply Assessment.

**Document Availability and Public Review Timeline:** Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response to the NOP must be sent *no later than 30 days* after receipt of this notice. The review period for the NOP will be from May 2, 2024 to June 3, 2024. Copies of the NOP can be obtained by request to Kim Espinosa, whose contact information is given below. Electronic copies can also be accessed on the City's website at [www.cityofmerced.org](http://www.cityofmerced.org)

**Public Scoping Meeting:** In addition to the opportunity to submit written comments, one public scoping meeting will be held by the City to inform interested parties about the proposed Project, and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide comments on the scope and content of the forthcoming EIR. This meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on May 16, 2024 in the Sam Pipes Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor of Merced Civic Center located at 678 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced, CA.

**Submitting Comments:** Comments and suggestions as to the appropriate scope of analysis of the EIR are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the EIR for the proposed Project should be directed to the City of Merced at the following address by 5:00 p.m. on June 3, 2024. Please include the commenter's full name and address. Please submit comments to:

Kim Espinosa, Temporary Director of Development Services  
City of Merced Planning Department  
678 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
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Figure 1 – Regional Location Map



Figure 2 – Project Aerial Vicinity Map



