

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A DRAFT SUBSEQUENT EIR FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

NOTICE is hereby given that a Draft Focused Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) has been prepared by the County of Merced, State of California, and is available for public review pursuant to State of California, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines for the project listed below:

PROPOSED PROJECT: UCP Update and VST Specific Plan (State Clearinghouse No. #2001021056).

PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT PERIOD: April 28, 2023 to June 12, 2023

PROJECT LOCATION: The University Community Plan (UCP) area is located in unincorporated Merced County, northeast of the City of Merced, south of UC Merced, and within the City of Merced's sphere of influence. The proposed UCP Update area encompasses 1,841 acres and includes two properties: the Hunt and VST properties. The Hunt property, referred to as UCP South in the Adopted UCP, includes approximately 1,187 acres of land south of UC Merced. The Hunt property is generally bounded by Lake Road on the west, Cardella Road to the north, Fairfield Canal to the east, and Yosemite Road to the south. The VST property, which is the subject of the VST Specific Plan, encompasses the remaining 654 acres of the UCP area. The VST Specific Plan area is bounded generally by Lake Road on the west, UC Merced property (specifically the proposed UC Merced Campus Expansion Area) to the north, Cardella Road on the south, and the Orchard Drive alignment on the east.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The UCP supplements the goals, objectives, and policies of the County of Merced General Plan to reflect the unique issues, planning vision, and objectives for development of the University Community. The proposed UCP Update would modify the UCP boundary (468.7 acres of property owned by UC Merced would be removed and 176.76 acres would be added to the UCP to encompass the full VST Specific Plan); revise the policy plan to reflect current conditions, regulations, and best practices; and update the land use and circulation diagram to reflect the land uses proposed within the VST Specific Plan and establish the alignment of Campus Parkway through the plan area to its ultimate connection to Bellevue Road to complete the eastern side of the Merced-Atwater perimeter expressway. The land use diagram for UCP South would not change except to revise roadway alignments. The project would also result in an update to the Circulation Element of the General Plan to include the revised alignment of Campus Parkway, both within and outside of the UCP. Based on preliminary calculations of the anticipated amendment, the total number of dwelling units in the UCP would decrease, from 11,616 to 9,680, and the potential amount of non-residential development would decline from 2,022,900 square feet to 1,246,150 square feet due to changes proposed in the VST Specific Plan area and the revision to the UCP boundaries.

The newly proposed VST Specific Plan re-envision the portion of the UCP owned by VST so that it would be more responsive to expected market conditions, while preserving the basic UCP plan components: commercial uses, the town center concept, and relatively high-density housing. The specific plan would revise density and intensity of these uses compared to the Adopted UCP. It would also adjust timing and phasing for installation of parks and public services to appropriately meet demand. Transportation facilities, including roads and bike paths, would be reconfigured in the specific plan to better serve the project and existing and planned surrounding land uses. Finally, with the passage of Assembly Bill 3312, VST is now seeking annexation into the city of Merced.

SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: Significant and unavoidable impacts have been identified for the following resource areas:

Aesthetics
Agricultural Resources
Biological Resources

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change
Noise and Vibration

Significant and unavoidable impacts to aesthetics, agricultural resources, and biological resources are unchanged and consistent with the conclusions of the 2001/2004 UCP EIR. New impacts associated with greenhouse gas emissions and noise and vibration were identified applying currently accepted best practices for evaluation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: The County Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing will be held during the public review period to receive comments on the Draft EIR. The date, time, and place of the Planning Commission hearing are presently unknown. A second notice providing the date, time, and place of the Planning Commission hearing will be provided once a date has been finalized.

DRAFT SEIR REVIEW: The Draft SEIR is available for review during normal business hours at the Merced County Main Administration Building and County Clerk's Office in Merced (2222 M Street, Merced, CA 95340) and the Merced County Library (2100 O St, Merced, CA 95340).

The Draft SEIR is also available online at:

<https://www.countyofmerced.com/414/Environmental-Documents>

COMMENTING ON THE DRAFT SEIR: Consistent with the requirements of Section 15087 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this Draft SEIR is being made available on April 28, 2023, for public review for a period of 45 days. During this period, the general public, agencies, and organizations may submit written comments on the content of this Draft SEIR to Merced County. Comments received on the Draft SEIR will be responded to in the Final SEIR.

SEND COMMENTS TO:

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Comments should be provided at the earliest possible date but must be received by **5:00 p.m. on June 12, 2023**. Failure to comment will not preclude your right to testify at a future public hearing for the proposed project.