

4.6 POPULATION AND HOUSING

4.6.1 Introduction

This section describes the population and housing characteristics within eastern Merced County, and evaluates potential impacts to those characteristics that could result from implementation of the 2020 LRDP.

Sources of information used in this analysis include:

- U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2010 Census and 2012-2016 American Community Surveys
- Department of Finance (DOF 2018)
- Merced Vision 2030 General Plan (City of Merced 2012)
- Merced County 2030 General Plan Draft Program EIR (Merced County 2012)
- Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG 2018)

4.6.2 Environmental Setting

Population

Current Population

The County of Merced (County) consists of six incorporated cities (Merced, Atwater, Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston and Los Banos) and unincorporated land. **Table 4.6-1, Merced County Population**, identifies the 2010 population for the County and the cities based on the 2010 US Census and the current (2018) population reported by the California Department of Finance (DOF). As shown in **Table 4.6-1**, the current (2018) population of Merced County is 279,793 residents, of which 95,125 individuals reside in unincorporated areas. The remainder of the County population resides in the City of Merced (86,750), Atwater (31,235), and Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos (66,867, combined). Since 2010, the County's population has increased by 9.5 percent, the population of the unincorporated areas has increased by 6.7 percent, and the population of Merced, Atwater, and other cities has increased by 9.9 percent, 10.9 percent, and 12.4 percent, respectively.

Forecast Population

Table 4.6-2, Merced County Population Projections, presents the projected population of the County, its cities, and unincorporated areas based on Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG)

forecasts. As shown in the table between 2018 and 2030, the County population (including unincorporated areas) is forecast to increase by 19.4 percent to 334,443 residents; the population of the unincorporated areas is forecast to increase by 21.2 percent to 115,315 residents; and the population of Merced, Atwater, and other cities is anticipated to increase by 18.7 percent, 17.8 percent and 18.7 percent, respectively, over the same period (MCAG 2018). These forecasts prepared by MCAG incorporate the most up to date background data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Internal Revenue Service and the California Vital Statistics Query System. They incorporate feedback from Merced County along with the incorporated cities within the County.

**Table 4.6-1
Merced County Population**

| | 2010 (US Census) | 2018 (DOF) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| City of Merced | 78,958 | 86,750 |
| City of Atwater | 28,168 | 31,235 |
| Other Cities ¹ | 59,500 | 66,867 |
| Total Cities | 166,626 | 184,852 |
| Unincorporated Area | 89,167 | 95,125 |
| Total Merced County | 255,793 | 279,977 |

Source: US Census Bureau 2010; California Department of Finance 2018.

¹ Other cities include Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos.

**Table 4.6-2
Merced County Population Projections**

| | 2018 ² | 2020 | 2030 | 2035 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| City of Merced | 86,750 | 89,719 | 102,952 | 109,986 |
| City of Atwater | 31,235 | 32,037 | 36,803 | 39,331 |
| Other Cities ¹ | 66,867 | 68,400 | 79,373 | 85,201 |
| Total for All Cities | 184,852 | 190,156 | 219,128 | 234,518 |
| Unincorporated County | 95,125 | 100,900 | 115,315 | 122,978 |
| Total Merced County | 279,977 | 291,056 | 334,443 | 357,496 |

Source: MCAG, 2018 Regional Transportation Plan for Merced County.

¹ Other cities include Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos.

² California Department of Finance

The City of Merced anticipated growth within the Merced Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP) in the currently adopted Merced Vision 2030 General Plan (2012). In the adopted General Plan, the City of Merced projected that the population of Merced would approach 159,900 by 2030 (City of Merced 2012). Should the City's population increase to 159,900 by 2030, it would represent an increase of 84.3 percent

between 2018 and 2030. The campus is included in the Merced SUDP, and the City’s General Plan reported a campus population of up to 25,000 students. As shown in **Table 4.6-2**, MCAG forecasts, which are more recent and reflect lower growth rates, include a lower estimate of 102,952 residents for the City by 2030. MCAG forecasts are updated every two years and typically reflect the most accurate population forecasts for the cities and Merced County.

Housing

Current Supply

Table 4.6-3, Merced County Housing Stock, presents the number of dwelling units located within Merced County. As of January 1, 2018, based on California Department of Finance data, there are 85,927 dwelling units within Merced County, of which 28,525 are located in unincorporated areas. The City of Merced contains 27,863 dwelling units, Atwater contains 10,130 dwelling units, and the remaining cities contain 19,409 dwelling units.

**Table 4.6-3
Merced County Housing Stock**

| | 2010 (US Census) | 2018 (DOF) |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| City of Merced | 27,446 | 27,863 |
| City of Atwater | 9,771 | 10,130 |
| Other Cities ¹ | 18,482 | 19,409 |
| Total Cities | 55,699 | 57,402 |
| Unincorporated Area | 27,999 | 28,525 |
| Total Merced County | 83,698 | 85,927 |

Source: US Census Bureau 2010; California Department of Finance 2018.

¹ Other cities include Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos.

Housing Projections

The City of Merced does not prepare projections of additional housing that could be built in the future. However, an estimate of additional housing in the City that could be considered foreseeable can be derived based on the applications that are on file with the City for new housing development. Based on proposed and pending projects that are listed in **Table 4.0-1, Cumulative Project List** in **Section 4.0**, about 3,662 units would be added to the housing stock of the City.

The State Housing Law requires the preparation of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) by the local council of governments, in this case MCAG. The RHNA quantifies the need for housing within

each jurisdiction during specified planning periods. Communities use the RHNA in land use planning, prioritizing local resource allocation, and in deciding how to address identified existing and future housing needs resulting from population, employment and household growth. The City complies with the State Housing Law and RHNA and updates its Housing Element periodically. The latest update of the Housing Element was completed in 2016. The Housing Element includes the City of Merced’s RHNA for the period of 2014 to 2023 for low-income units and concludes that the City has sufficient sites zoned appropriately to accommodate the RHNA requirement of 2,303 units for extremely low-, very low- and low-income housing. The City’s General Plan Housing Element also notes that vacant land designated for residential uses within the City could accommodate between 6,523 and 12,636 additional dwelling units (City of Merced 2016).

With regard to housing in unincorporated County areas in the vicinity of the campus, according to the County about 105 dwelling units could be developed in the Bellevue corridor within the timeframe of the 2020 LRDP. In 2019, VST commenced an application process with Merced County for the development of the former University Community North, with the purpose of developing a mixed-use project south of the campus. VST’s application is not included in the Cumulative Project List, however, as VST’s application had not been submitted at the time of publication of the NOP and scoping for this SEIR.

Table 4.6-4, Merced County Housing Projections, presents MCAG projections which indicate that county-wide the number of dwelling units is projected to increase by approximately 14,265 units between 2020 and 2030, and housing stock in the City of Merced would increase by approximately 4,900 dwelling units during the same period. This number is consistent with the City’s General Plan which, as stated above, shows that land zoned for residential development in the City could accommodate a substantially higher number of housing units.

**Table 4.6-4
Merced County Housing Projections**

| | 2018 ² | 2020 | 2030 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|
| City of Merced | 27,863 | 30,545 | 35,416 |
| City of Atwater | 10,130 | 10,853 | 12,599 |
| Other Cities ¹ | 19,409 | 20,898 | 24,510 |
| Total Cities | 57,402 | 62,296 | 72,525 |
| Unincorporated County | 28,525 | 29,393 | 33,429 |
| Total Merced County | 85,927 | 91,689 | 105,954 |

Source: MCAG, 2018 Regional Transportation Plan for Merced County.

¹ Other cities include Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos.

² California Department of Finance

Housing Vacancy Rates

According to the Merced County General Plan Housing Element, housing vacancy rates historically have ranged from an average of 8.3 percent in 2000 to 11.2 percent in 2013 in the unincorporated areas of the County and 5.8 percent in 2000 to 9.4 percent in 2013 in the incorporated areas of the County. **Table 4.6-5, Housing Vacancy Rates**, presents housing vacancy rates for the City of Merced and Merced County based on the California Department of Finance estimates. The table also reports comparable vacancy rates for the state as a whole. As shown, housing vacancy rates for the City of Merced are lower than comparable rates for the County and state as a whole.

**Table 4.6-5
Housing Vacancy Rates**

| Year | City of Merced (%) | Merced County (%) | State of California (%) |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2014 | 5.8 | 7.3 | 7.4 |
| 2015 | 4.3 | 6.4 | 7.2 |
| 2016 | 3.6 | 5.9 | 7.1 |
| 2017 | 3.6 | 6.2 | 7.2 |
| 2018 | 4.6 | 6.8 | 7.4 |

Source: DOF 2018.

Employment

Table 4.6-6, 2016 Merced County Employment, identifies the number of employed persons residing in Merced County in 2016 based on the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, the most recent data available. The total number of employed residents in Merced County in 2016 was 97,146 persons, of which 34,198 resided in unincorporated areas. The remainder of the employed population resided in Merced (29,020); Atwater (10,795); and Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos (23,133, combined).

**Table 4.6-6
2016 Merced County Employment**

| | Employed Residents |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| City of Merced | 29,020 |
| City of Atwater | 10,795 |
| Other Cities ¹ | 23,133 |
| Total Cities | 62,948 |
| Unincorporated Area | 34,198 |
| Total Merced County | 97,146 |

Source: US Census Bureau 2016.

¹ Other cities include Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos.

According to MCAG, the number of jobs within Merced County totaled 72,864 in 2015, of which 23,995 resided in unincorporated areas. The remainder of jobs were located in Merced (29,693); Atwater (5,002); and Dos Palos, Gustine, Livingston, and Los Banos (14,174, combined). The number of jobs by city and unincorporated area is not readily available. As shown in **Table 4.6-7, Merced County Employment Projections**, based on MCAG projections, employment is anticipated to increase to 137,200 jobs by 2030.

**Table 4.6-7
Merced County Employment Projections**

| | 2010 | 2020 | 2030 |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|---------|
| Merced County ¹ | 95,200 | 116,800 | 137,200 |

Source: MCAG, 2007 Regional Transportation Plan for Merced County.

¹ *Employment projections by city/unincorporated area are not available from MCAG.*

The unemployment rate in Merced County has been high historically. Based on data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) the average annual unemployment rates for Merced County have ranged between 9.3 percent and 10.1 percent in the last 10 years compared to the average annual unemployment rates for State of California which ranged from 4.8 percent to 5.4 percent over the same period (EDD 2018). As of August 2018, the County's unemployment rate was 7.0 percent (EDD 2018).

4.6.3 Regulatory Considerations

State Regulations

Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan

California General Plan law requires each city and county to have land zoned to accommodate a fair share of the regional housing need. The share is known as the Regional Housing Needs Allocation and is based on a Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan (RHNA Plan) developed by councils of government. MCAG is the lead agency for developing the RHNA Plan for the County. The 2009 LRDP is accounted for in the current housing need projections developed by MCAG as part of the 2015-2023 RHNA Plan. If approved, the 2020 LRDP would be included as part of future housing need projections developed by MCAG.

Local Plans and Policies

University of California President's Housing Initiative

On January 20, 2016, the University of California announced a housing initiative aimed at supporting current students and future enrollment growth across the UC system. Through the Housing Initiative, UC expects to expand the pool of student housing over the next four years (through 2020), and to accelerate the timetable for completing student housing developments that are already in the planning phase. Current estimates project that UC could add nearly 14,000 new affordable student housing beds to the campuses' stock by fall 2020, and one of the initiative's central tasks will be accelerating this timeline. This includes the creation of new beds for undergraduates in residence halls and the addition of more graduate student housing and other apartments that are generally open to all students. Communities around California for years have faced the challenge of ensuring sufficient affordable housing for residents. Housing availability is in particularly short supply in some of the communities that are home to UC campuses.

The Housing Initiative addresses those circumstances by harnessing the expertise and resources of the UC system to accelerate the creation of affordable student housing at every UC campus. The Housing Initiative provides an ambitious target for new student housing within the 10-campus UC system and does not set individual targets or policy numbers for any campus. In 2016, UC Merced began student housing projects within the framework of the Merced 2020 Project that would provide up to 1,680 new beds. The additional beds provided as part of the 2020 Project fulfills the Merced Campus's obligation under the Housing Initiative to provide additional student beds through 2020.

4.6.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria

This Draft SEIR uses significance criteria derived from Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. For the purposes of this Draft SEIR, impacts related to population and housing would be significant if implementation of the 2020 LRDP would:

- Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure); or
- Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Issues Not Discussed Further

The following CEQA checklist issues are not evaluated further in this Draft SEIR because they are adequately addressed in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR.

- Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Impacts on the displacement of people or housing from development of the campus and University Community North sites were evaluated in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR and no impacts were found related to this criterion. Except for student housing on campus, no dwelling units or businesses are currently situated on the campus site, and thus no housing units, residents or employees would be displaced. This impact is adequately addressed in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR.

Methodology

Various data sources were reviewed to describe existing conditions in the project region related to population and housing. As noted in **Section 4.8, Transportation**, a GIS analysis of the locations of student and staff residences within Merced and the greater region was conducted based on 2013 place of residence data provided by UC Merced staff. Based on this data, a majority of students (95 percent) and faculty/staff (83 percent) live within 40 miles of the campus. This distance captures all the major cities within Merced, Madera, and Stanislaus Counties. Using this distribution pattern, the new students and employees were distributed among the communities. The number of students, faculty, and staff, along with their dependents that would require housing in the City of Merced was calculated and compared to the number of vacant residential units, approved and pending residential units, and projected residential units in the City to determine if enough housing would be available to meet the demand generated by the campus and well as future development. In addition, the number of students, faculty, and staff, along with their dependents that would demand housing outside the City of Merced but within a 40-mile radius of the campus was calculated and compared to the number of vacant residential units and projected residential units in Merced County, as well as large portions of Madera and Stanislaus Counties.

4.6.5 LRDP Impacts and Mitigation Measures

LRDP Impact PH-1: Implementation of the 2020 LRDP would not result in substantial unplanned population growth and related demand for housing in the City of Merced and in surrounding communities. (*Less than Significant*)

The 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR analyzed the potential for campus development under the 2009 LRDP to result in substantial population growth in the City of Merced and Merced County. The analysis under Impact SOC-1 in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR was based on the assumption that campus enrollment would increase to 25,000 students by 2030 and that the campus would also have an employee population of 6,560 faculty and staff. The EIS/EIR also estimated students and employees who would be already living in the area and hence would not represent new population and the number of persons who would be new to the area. The EIS/EIR estimated and reported the number of dependents that would accompany the students and employees that would relocate into the City of Merced and the County. The EIS/EIR estimated that a population of 38,044 persons associated with the campus would be added to the area by 2030. The EIS/EIR noted that while this increase was already accounted for in the MCAG projections for the City and the County and was also accounted for in the City's General Plan, this population would represent a substantial population increase within the City and County of Merced. The primary concern with a substantial population increase due to a project is the potential for that increase to result in environmental impacts. The 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR noted that the adjacent University Community would provide all of the housing, retail, and public service needs of this new population, including the indirect/induced population. The development of that community would result in significant and unavoidable impacts, and therefore the substantial population growth due to the proposed campus would result in a significant impact for which no feasible mitigation is available.

As noted in **Section 3.0, Project Description**, UC Merced is now projected to grow at a slower pace than originally anticipated, adding no more than 5,300 additional students between 2020 and 2030, such that by 2030, the enrollment level is expected to be 15,000 students, and the faculty and staff projection for 2030 is also substantially lower than previously projected and analyzed in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR. Additionally, while a University Community to house the campus-related population was envisioned in 2009, such a community has not developed near the campus and it is not foreseeable that such a community would develop within the timeframe of the 2020 LRDP. Given this change in the proposed project and the conditions in which it would be implemented, a revised analysis of the project's population growth and housing impacts is presented below.

According to the significance criteria for evaluating environmental effects, the proposed project's impact related to population would be significant if the proposed project induced substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure). The direct increase in

population from the growth of the campus is evaluated below. Population growth indirectly induced through extension of roads or other infrastructure is addressed in **Section 6.4, Growth-Inducing Impacts**.

Table 4.6-8, Campus Student Population and Employees, summarizes enrollment and employment at UC Merced under current and future conditions. In fall 2018, approximately 8,500 students attended UC Merced and there were 1,215 faculty and staff on campus, for a total population of 9,715 persons. By 2030, this is projected to increase to 17,411, an increase of 7,696 persons over current conditions and an increase of 6,431 persons from 2020 conditions.

**Table 4.6-8
Campus Student Population and Employees**

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2020 | 2030 | Projected Increase 2020-2030 |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| Commuting Students | 5,152 | 4,997 | 4,900 | 7,800 | 2,900 |
| Resident Students | 2,815 | 3,503 | 4,800 | 7,200 | 2,400 |
| Subtotal | 7,967 | 8,500 | 9,700 | 15,000 | 5,300 |
| Faculty | 384 | 415 | 440 | 786 | 346 |
| Staff (on-campus) | 756 | 800 | 840 | 1,625 | 785 |
| Subtotal | 1,140 | 1,215 | 1,280 | 2,411 | 1,131 |
| Total Population (excluding dependents) | 9,107 | 9,715 | 10,980 | 17,411 | 6,431 |

Source: University of California, Merced 2019

Student Population and Housing Demand

As the table above shows, enrollment is anticipated to increase by 5,300 students between 2020 and 2030. Although some of these students would be graduates from local high schools in the City of Merced and greater Merced County, and some would be transfer students from local community colleges, and therefore already living in the area at the time of initial enrollment, however, for purposes of this analysis, it is conservatively assumed that all new students would be from outside Merced County and would require new housing.

Some of the students relocating from outside the area would be accompanied by a certain number of dependents. It is assumed that 10 percent of students would have families, each with 1.5 dependents. Therefore, a population of 795 dependents would accompany the student population relocating to the area. Combined, a population of 6,095 students and their dependents are anticipated to relocate to the City of Merced and the surrounding area.

The 2020 LRDP plans to provide on-campus housing for at least 50 percent of all enrolled students. UC Merced also has instituted a requirement that all freshmen and sophomores live on campus. Therefore, in

addition to the new beds that will be added to the campus when the 2020 Project is completed in Fall 2020, more housing will be added to the campus under the 2020 LRDP. As a result, of the 5,300 new students, 2,400 students would be housed on the campus with the remaining 2,900 new students residing off campus. No housing for student families would be provided on the campus. Therefore, students with families are included in the new students who would live off campus. To estimate the housing demand associated with the 2,900 new students who would live off campus, the analysis assumes that approximately 530 of these students would have families and require one residential unit each. With respect to the new students with no dependents, the analysis conservatively assumes that there would be 2 students per dwelling unit; therefore the remaining 2,370 students living off campus would require approximately 1,185 resident units. Combined, off-campus students would demand up to 1,715 housing units. In 2013, 31.6 percent of student households lived in the City of Merced and 49.8 percent lived outside the City of Merced but within a 40-mile radius of campus in communities such as Atwater, Turlock, and Modesto. This distribution of student households has not changed substantially over the last five years, and thus it is expected that new students who would live off campus would result in a demand of 542 units in the City of Merced and 854 units in other communities within 40 miles of the campus.

Faculty and Staff Population and Housing Demand

Between 2020 and 2030, faculty at UC Merced is anticipated to increase by 346 persons and staff is anticipated to increase by 785 persons, for a total employment increase of 1,131 persons. Faculty and staff that are hired could already be living in the City of Merced or within the 40-mile radius of the campus at the time of hire. However, for purposes of this analysis, it is conservatively assumed that all new faculty would relocate from outside the area while half of staff would relocate from outside the 40-mile radius area (half of the new staff would be local hires). Based on these assumptions, approximately 739 new employees would relocate from outside the area. The faculty and staff population relocating from outside the area would be accompanied by dependents. The current (2018) household size in the City of Merced is 3.22 persons per household (DOF 2018). Based on an average of 2.22 dependents per employee, employees relocating to the project area would be accompanied by approximately 1,641 dependents. Combined, a population of 2,380 persons (employees and their dependents) are anticipated to relocate to the City of Merced and the surrounding area.

The 739 employees relocating from outside the area would require housing and assuming one residential unit per employee, would require 739 units. In 2013, 49.3 percent of UC Merced faculty and staff lived in the City of Merced while 34.0 percent lived outside the City of Merced but within a 40-mile radius of the campus. This distribution of employees has not changed substantially over the last five years, and thus it

is expected that the new employees would demand 364 units in the City of Merced and 251 units in other communities within 40 miles of the campus.

Based on the above calculations, a total of population of 8,475 students and employees, and the dependents of each group would relocate into the City of Merced and surrounding communities from other locations. This increase is substantially lower than the increase of 30,044 persons previously projected in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR. Further, the General Plans of the City of Merced and County of Merced include the population increase of 30,044 persons that was based on the enrollment projection of 25,000 students by 2030. As the population increase due to the implementation of the 2020 LRDP would be substantially lower than the growth that has been accounted for in the general plans, it would not represent substantial unplanned growth, and the impact related to population growth would be less than significant.

The significance of this population increase is analyzed below in terms of its effects on available housing in the study area, focusing on whether there would be adequate housing in the City of Merced and surrounding communities to house this population.

Impact on Housing

Based on the population numbers and assumptions set forth above, **Table 4.6-9, Estimated LRDP Population Related Housing Demand and Available Supply**, below presents the estimated demand for off-campus housing by the LRDP-related new population. As the table shows, this LRDP-related population would require approximately 906 residential units within the City of Merced and about 1,105 residential units in other communities within 40 miles of the campus (i.e., Rest of Study Area).

**Table 4.6-9
Estimated LRDP Population Related Housing Demand and Available Supply (Dwelling Units)**

| | City of Merced | Rest of Study Area | Total |
|---|----------------|--------------------|--------|
| Students | 542 | 854 | 1,396 |
| Faculty and Staff | 364 | 251 | 615 |
| <i>Total Demand</i> | 906 | 1,105 | 2,011 |
| Existing Vacant Housing | 1,278 | 19,078 | 20,356 |
| Projected Housing based on applications with the City | 3,662 | NA | 3,662 |
| MCAG Projections | 4,900 | 52,850 | 57,750 |

Source: DOF 2018, Impact Sciences 2018

Note: The previously circulated Draft SEIR included an estimated 2,050 new dwelling units as a housing projection for the City of Merced. That number was in error and did not agree with the total number of dwelling units that are planned or proposed in the City based on the list of cumulative projects in Table 4.0-1. Based on the projects in Table 4.0-1, a total of 3,662 new housing units are projected; this number is also consistent with the growth projections used in the transportation impact analysis.

Impact on City of Merced Housing

The vacancy rate in the City of Merced is presently 4.6 percent, and with a total of 27,863 residential units in the City, there are currently 1,278 unoccupied units in Merced (DOF 2018). While some of these units may be unavailable due to safety or code violations, a majority of them are available for purchase and/or rent. In addition, as shown in **Table 4.0-1**, there are a large number of proposed and pending residential projects in the City of Merced which, when completed, would provide an additional 3,662 residential units in Merced. Finally, MCAG projects that the City of Merced will add approximately 4,900 new units between 2020 and 2030. This projection is based on estimates contained in the City of Merced's General Plan, which took into account campus growth within its SUDP. The amount of campus growth within the City's SUDP was based on the 2009 LRDP, which planned to accommodate up to 25,000 students by 2030. Thus, given the number of units currently available, the number of units proposed and pending, and the fact that the City's General Plan planned for more campus growth than is now projected through 2030 under the 2020 LRDP, there would be enough housing in the City of Merced to accommodate the LRDP-related population expected to reside within the City's limits. As noted above, the University will develop more on-campus housing so that at least 50 percent of the enrolled students under the 2020 LRDP can be housed on campus. Development of housing off campus is outside the purview of the University. However, in compliance with State Housing Law the Cities of Merced and Atwater periodically update their General Plan Housing Elements and plan to provide adequate land for the needed housing identified for each city by MCAG under the Regional Housing Needs Allocation program. Furthermore, as noted above, an additional 3,662 residential units are included in the list of proposed and pending projects in the City.

Comments received on the Draft SEIR assert that the LRDP-related demand for housing in the City of Merced would result in increases in rents and the cost of housing for the public. This SEIR does not analyze any indirect socioeconomic effects, such as effects on the cost of housing, that could result from the campus-related demand for housing. CEQA does not require a discussion of socioeconomic effects except where they would result in physical changes, and states that social or economic effects shall not be treated as significant effects (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15131).

Impact on Housing within the Rest of Study Area

The rest of the study area comprises communities within a 40-mile radius of the campus. It includes all of Merced County and large portions of Madera and Stanislaus Counties that contain urban centers. The vacancy rate in Merced County is presently 6.8 percent while the vacancy rates in Madera and Stanislaus Counties are higher at 10.1 and 7.1 percent, respectively (DOF 2018). With a total of 58,064 residential units within Merced County (excluding the City of Merced), there are currently 3,948 unoccupied units in

the County. With a total of 50,315 residential units in Madera County and 141,516 residential units in Stanislaus County, there are currently 5,082 and 10,048 unoccupied units in each jurisdiction, respectively. For the same reasons discussed, most of these units are also available for purchase or rent. In addition, MCAG projects that incorporated and unincorporated portions of Merced County (excluding the City of Merced) will add approximately 9,400 new units between 2020 and 2030. Similarly, Madera County is projected to add approximately 18,700 households, which is a proxy for housing units, between 2020 and 2035 (MCTC 2014), while Stanislaus County is projected to add about 24,750 new residential units over the same period of time (StanCOG 2018). Therefore, given the number of units currently available and projected residential units in communities within a 40-mile radius of campus, there would be enough housing in the area to accommodate the LRDP-related population expected to reside within these communities.

In summary, as enough housing is available and planned in the City of Merced and in communities within the 40-mile radius study area to house additional students, employees, and dependents that would relocate into the study area, the impact on population growth and housing would be less than significant.

With respect to small-scale projects that may be located within lands designated CMU, CBRSL or ROS, due to the location, small size, and nature of these projects, they would not cause the campus population to increase, and to the extent a small project would add employees to the campus, those new employees are accounted for in the employment increase analyzed above. For the same reasons that are set forth above, the impact of small-scale projects on population and housing would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.

4.6.6 Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Cumulative Impact C-PH-1: Development of the campus under the 2020 LRDP, in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development in the project area, would not substantially increase regional population. (*Less than Significant*)

The year of analysis for the cumulative impact analysis is 2035. Although the horizon year used in this Draft SEIR for the 2020 LRDP is 2030 and the plan does not provide land use planning for campus growth beyond that year, it is anticipated that the campus will continue to grow beyond 2030, although the rate and manner of that growth is not known at this time. For purposes of the cumulative impact analysis in

this Draft SEIR, it is assumed that enrollment will continue to increase at the same annual rate as is currently projected between 2020 and 2030. Based on this assumption, the enrollment is projected to increase to 17,500 students, and faculty and staff are projected to increase to 2,975 employees by 2035 (see **Table 4.6-10**). In addition, approximately 1,200 additional students would be housed on the campus over this 5-year period. When combined with the number of students and employees added under the 2020 LRDP through 2030, the campus is expected to add 7,800 students, 460 faculty members, and 1,235 staff between 2020 and 2035. In addition, 3,600 of the 7,800 new students would be housed on the campus by 2035.

Table 4.6-10
Campus Student Population and Employees by 2035

| | 2020 | 2030 | 2035 | Projected Increase 2020-2035 |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Commuting Students | 4,900 | 7,800 | 9,100 | 4,200 |
| Resident Students | 4,800 | 7,200 | 8,400 | 3,600 |
| Subtotal | 9,700 | 15,000 | 17,500 | 7,800 |
| Faculty | 440 | 786 | 900 | 460 |
| Staff (on-campus) | 840 | 1,625 | 2,075 | 1,235 |
| Subtotal | 1,280 | 2,411 | 2,975 | 1,695 |
| Total Population (excluding dependents) | 10,980 | 17,411 | 20,475 | 9,495 |

Source: University of California, Merced 2019

Student Population and Housing Demand

Assuming that 10 percent of students would have families, each with 1.5 dependents, a population of 1,170 dependents would accompany the student population relocating to the area, thus resulting in additional combined population of 8,970 students and their dependents between 2020 and 2035. As a total of 3,600 students would be housed on the campus, the remaining 4,200 would reside off campus. As no family housing would be provided on the campus, approximately 780 of these students would have families and thus would require one residential unit each. Again, based on a conservative assumption of two students per unit, the remaining 3,420 students living off-campus would require an additional 1,710 residential units. Combined, by 2035 new students living off campus would require 2,490 residential units. Assuming the same distribution of students living in the City of Merced and in the surrounding study area as above, approximately 787 units would be needed in the City while the remaining 1,240 units would be needed outside Merced but within a 40-mile radius.

Employee Population and Housing Demand

Based on the same assumption that all faculty members and one-half of staff members would originate outside the study area, a total of 1,078 employees would relocate to the City of Merced and surrounding study area between 2020 and 2035. Furthermore, assuming an average of 2.22 dependents per employee, approximately 2,393 dependents would accompany the new faculty and staff members, thus resulting in additional combined population of 3,471 employees and their dependents over this 15-year period. Combined, faculty and employees would demand 898 units. Assuming the same distribution of employees living in the City of Merced and in the surrounding area as above, employees would demand an additional 531 residential units in the City and 367 additional residential units outside Merced but within the 40-mile radius study area.

Based on the above calculations, by 2035 a total of 12,441 students and employees, and the dependents of each group would relocate into the City of Merced and surrounding communities from other locations. This increase is substantially lower than the increase of 30,044 persons previously projected in the 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR. Further, the General Plans of the City of Merced and County of Merced include the population increase of 30,044 persons that was based on the enrollment projection of 25,000 students by 2030. As the population increase due to campus growth through 2035 would be substantially lower than the campus growth that has been accounted for in the general plans, it would not represent substantial unplanned growth, and the cumulative impact related to population growth would be less than significant.

Impact on Study Area Housing

Based on calculations presented above, the students, employees, and dependents would demand about 1,460 residential units within the City of Merced and about 1,607 residential units in other communities within 40 miles of the campus by 2035.

According to MCAG, the City of Merced is expected to add 20,267 residents between 2020 and 2035, and with a current household size of 3.22 residents per unit, would require the addition of 6,294 residential units. Merced County (not including the City of Merced) is also expected to add 46,173 residents over the same 15-year period, and with a current household size of 3.41 residents per unit, would require 13,540 residential units. Finally, Madera and Stanislaus Counties are expected to add 59,354 and 102,880 residents between 2020 and 2035, respectively. Madera County currently has a household size of 3.34 residents per unit while Stanislaus County has a household size of 3.25 residents per unit. Based on these figures, population growth in Madera and Stanislaus Counties would require the addition of 17,771 and 31,655 residential units in each jurisdiction, respectively.

Combined, campus growth and expected growth in the City of Merced would require an additional 7,754 residential units. As discussed above, there are currently 1,278 unoccupied units in the City of Merced, and a total of 3,662 new residential units are including in proposed and pending projects. Combined these unoccupied and new units would meet approximately 64 percent of campus demand and expected growth in Merced. In addition, according to MCAG projections for the City of Merced, which take into account campus growth, the City is projected to add approximately 20,267 new units between 2020 and 2035, which would cover the remainder of campus growth and expected growth in Merced. For these reasons, there is enough existing and planned housing in the City of Merced to accommodate future growth in the City, including campus growth.

Combined, campus growth and projected growth outside the City of Merced but within a 40-mile radius of the campus would require an additional 64,573 residential units. **Table 4.6-11, Existing and Projected Housing Supply within a 40-mile Radius through 2035**, below presents the current and projected housing in Merced, Madera and Stanislaus Counties.

Table 4.6-11
Existing and Projected Housing Supply within a 40-mile Radius through 2035

| County | Existing Vacant Housing | Projected New Housing |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Merced (excluding City of Merced) | 3,948 | 66,440 |
| Madera | 5,082 | 18,662 |
| Stanislaus | 10,048 | 35,717 |
| Total | 19,078 | 120,819 |
| Cumulative Demand | 64,573 | |

Source: MCAG 2018, Impact Sciences 2018

As discussed above, there are currently 3,948 unoccupied units in Merced County (excluding the City of Merced), 5,082 unoccupied units in Madera County, and 10,048 unoccupied units in Stanislaus County. In addition, MCAG projects that incorporated and unincorporated portions of Merced County (excluding the City of Merced) will add approximately 66,440 new units between 2020 and 2035. Similarly, Madera County is projected to add approximately 10,562 households, which is used as a proxy for housing units, between 2020 and 2035 (MCTC 2018), while Stanislaus County is projected to add about 35,717 new residential units over the same period of time (StanCOG 2018). Combined, unoccupied units within a 40-mile radius of the campus would meet approximately 30 percent of campus demand and expected growth in Merced, Madera, and Stanislaus Counties, while the additional housing projected in surrounding communities would cover the remainder of campus growth and other foreseeable growth in the area. There would be enough housing in the area to accommodate future growth within a 40-mile radius of the campus, including campus growth.

In summary, as enough housing would be available in the City of Merced and in communities within a 40-mile radius of the campus, implementation of the 2020 LRDP along with reasonably foreseeable development would not induce substantial population growth in the study area, and this cumulative impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.

4.6.7 References

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