<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>DESIGN PRINCIPLES</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.0 INTRODUCTION
The 2023 Physical Design Framework document communicates UC Merced’s design aspirations and vision for the physical development of the campus. This policy document includes overarching design guidance for the architectural design of new campus buildings, landscaping, and infrastructure.

The conceptual diagrams, informational examples, and images incorporated into the document are not intended to be prescriptive requirements. Rather they illustrate what has worked well in the past, and they identify concepts that are important to perpetuate in the new campus development.
1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in 2005, UC Merced has committed to developing a physical presence to model a healthier future for the region, the state, and the world. The campus is a ‘living laboratory’ that provides an educational experience for those who want to learn, live, teach and work at UC Merced while providing a live demonstration of the way that communities can develop, support, and sustain social, economic, and environmental health for current and future generations. The physical design of the UC Merced campus integrates environmental considerations with the overall strategic organization of the campus's functional program and its distribution within the planned campus form.

In 2020, the Regents of the University of California approved UC Merced’s 2020 Long Range Development Plan to facilitate future development and enable the campus to grow to 15,000 students. The Physical Design Framework is derived from the 2020 LRDP which details policies and strategies to ultimately accommodate 15,000 students. The Physical Design Framework has been developed with the goal of highlighting the opportunities to deploy systems that lead to cost-effective, sustainable development, and operation of the campus.
1.1 INTRODUCTION

While the 2020 LRDP provides principles and policies to guide overall campus development, the 2023 Physical Design Framework provides guidance to inform the planning and design of individual building projects. The goal of the Physical Design Framework is to create a common vocabulary for planning and design at the campus, while demonstrating how processes and standards at the campus support consistent implementation.

The Physical Design Framework is a comprehensive document that identifies the campus's goals and criteria for the design of the physical environment and how they are integrated into project planning and design. The Physical Design Framework provides a diagram (map) that provides a physical framework showing the circulation systems, open space and “blocks” where future campus development would be located. It should be noted that the map is only illustrative and that the location of actual campus development could change.
The 2023 Physical Design Framework document replaces the 2010 Physical Design Framework document. It is a companion document to the 2020 LRDP and it provides guidance that design professionals will utilize to develop a coherent yet distinctive architectural character for the UC Merced campus.

UC Merced’s goal with the 2023 Physical Design Framework and 2020 LRDP is to integrate new buildings within the existing physical context of the campus community defined by a sustainable living and learning environment. The intent is to produce a campus where architecture, planning, infrastructure, and landscape are uniquely regional in character and model sustainable design excellence for the campus.
1.1 INTRODUCTION
2.0 BACKGROUND
2.1 Long Range Development Plan

The 2020 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) provides an updated land use plan and accompanying goals and objectives that are intended to guide future physical development of the campus. The 2020 LRDP facilitates the Merced campus to grow in an efficient and orderly manner, promotes a compact footprint that preserves land resources and provide land use flexibility. The 2020 LRDP identified student population growth targets as well as development objectives and principles, delineates new land uses, and provides an estimate of building space needed to support program and population growth over the next ten years and beyond.

The 2020 LRDP established a land use framework to accommodate 15,000 students on a 1,026-acre campus and has capacity for an additional 1.8 million square feet of new campus development. Key features of the 2020 LRDP are described below:

• Implements a mixed-use planning concept that creates a dynamic physical environment and interconnected community for research, teaching, residential life and visiting.
• Incorporates a contextual approach to campus design that produces a fine-grained development pattern.
• Creates and integrates high quality public realm amenities within and among academic, mixed-use and residential facilities that promotes social interaction and vitality.
• Creates a flexible land use plan that integrates sustainability and is adaptable to accommodate future development needs; and
• Fosters a strong sense of community by providing active connections that enhance pedestrian and transit-oriented mobility on campus.
2.2 CAMPUS MIXED USE APPROACH

The 2020 LRDP envisions a collaborative, mixed use development that integrates new buildings within the campus context to expand campus community that is defined by a sustainable living and learning environment. The setting for mixed use development on campus is a network of high-quality open spaces and landscape that supports UC Merced's goals of sustainable development integrated with the built environment. Students, faculty, and researchers will share classrooms and outdoor spaces, the transit system will provide access to the heart of the campus, connections to open space will be deliberate, and recreation opportunities will be prominent.
The 2020 LRDP incorporates a Design Element that provides design guidance for buildings and development. The applicability of the campus design goals, and the associated implementation strategies depends on specific building program requirements and actual site conditions. The framework of the Campus Design Element focuses on eight guiding goals that include designing buildings to respond to site and natural environment conditions; providing visual connections and frame of reference to major campus features; creating activity nodes and points of connection; creating an active streetscape; creating a vibrant live/work environment; creating a high quality public realm; incorporating an architectural contextual approach for building design; and incorporating compatible architectural elements that match existing scale and character of the campus.
The Design Principles in the 2023 Physical Design Framework are consistent with the 2020 LRDP and illustrate the programmatic intentions of future development. The 2020 LRDP contains Campus Design Goals, which establish the campus principles and objectives for design of the physical environment and set the foundation for the overall campus design. The 2023 Physical Design Framework helps implement those goals by providing design principles for the planning and design of campus facilities in a more detailed and building level approach.

The Design Principles integrate planning, public realm and landscape principles into the Physical Design Framework. The intentions of the Design Principles are articulated through the goals and Design Strategies illustrated throughout the document. Each new landscape or building project at UC Merced has a role to define public space and engage other buildings thereby collectively creating a placemaking context.
The Physical Design Framework is an advisory and informational tool for development of the campus. The examples within the document are not prescriptive rules. They identify the existing context and principles that have guided the evolution of UC Merced’s building, public realm and landscape. The 2023 Physical Design Framework document provides information for design professionals to help them conceptualize a coherent, remarkable character for campus expansion while nurturing a culture of sustainability and a mobile pedestrian-oriented culture. The premise of the document is that exceptional design is derived from a thoughtful and creative response to the site rather than a rigid application of standards.

It is expected that design teams consider these guiding characteristics and build upon the foundational legacy of sustainable place-making. Design teams will be mindful that the spaces between buildings — specifically, open spaces, streets, plazas, courtyards, pathways, and canals — and the edges of development that carry infrastructure, are equal elements in shaping campus culture and identity.
In accordance with University of California Regental policy, the Physical Design Framework document delineates the information and processes that will inform Chancellor-level approval of capital projects and Regental approval of projects. It should be noted that having an accepted Physical Design Framework along with approved LRDP is one of the determining factors for approval path for a UCOP capital project.

The Physical Design Framework identifies area for growth based on the 2020 LRDP parameters for building space. The Physical Design Framework provides an illustrative plan that shows development utilizing the building space needs assumptions from the 2020 LRDP. It reflects the programmatic needs based on program requirements and adjacency use requirements. Subsequent sections of this document provide more detailed design guidance including design goals and criteria for building projects.
2.0 BACKGROUND

Photo Credit: Jeremy Bittermann / JBSA

Academic Walk looking northeast
3.0 CAMPUS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Sense of Place
2. Place to Experience
3. Vernacular Landscape
4. Unique Architectural Identity
5. Timeless Quality
6. Symbolic Presence
7. Well Defined Skyline
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1

Sense of Place

The architectural dialect of the campus reinforces the concept of ‘Genius Loci’, or spirit of place, in that it embraces an aesthetic inspired by the utilitarian agricultural and industrial structures of California’s Central Valley region. Places that are evocative, from the natural environment to significant human constructs, embrace us and give a sense of belonging.

The design of buildings is similar to that of agricultural and industrial complexes in that buildings are added over the course of time and demonstrate a common theme that unifies their design. This approach to design combines the Central Valley heritage with a 21st century ambition to create a campus which is of the Valley, while upending traditional notions of what a campus should look like. This is intended to provide continuity and contribute to a coherent fabric over the course of time.
DESIGN STRATEGIES

1.1

Incorporate design cues from the Central Valley’s agricultural and industrial buildings to include the honest expression of building structure and materials.

The Pavilion adheres to the Goal of “Structures of Utility” using a regionally referential form, regional materials, exposed structure, and careful treatment related to solar and view orientation. (Photo Credit: Dave Burk © SOM)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

1.2

Create a distinctive campus environment by using building form to define the public realm on campus.

The Kolligian Library and Classroom and Office Building 2 define a public realm by creating a quad with amenities such as seating and shaded areas. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)
SUPPORTING DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1B

Frame of Reference

The sensory experiences of destinations, visual connections, and sense of entry and departure on campus serve the purpose to locate campus users in the environment and mark their experience with heightened meaning and importance of place. The location of one’s precise physical position on the campus through the use of identifiable landmarks is helpful in navigating around campus.

The principles in this section include incorporating a high degree of visual connectivity in building projects, developing active street edges and using corners as placemaking elements to accentuate their location. This creates opportunities for allowing a variety of conditions for a unique environment that helps to humanize the scale of the campus into discernible segments.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

1.3

Maintain a visual connection and frame of reference on campus that provides a sense of location by using design elements to delineate navigation points.

Classroom & Office Building I and Science & Engineering I employ architectural forms, that use solid and void elements that aid navigation on campus, and provide a frame of reference. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)

Science & Engineering II incorporates a “breezeway” to aid navigation and provides a frame of reference. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2

Place to Experience

The sensory experiences of destinations, visual connections, and sense of entry and departure on campus serve the purpose to locate campus users in the environment and mark their experience with heightened meaning and importance of place.

Buildings should incorporate a high degree of visual connectivity in building projects, developing active street edges and using corners as place making elements to accentuate their location. This creates opportunities for allowing a variety of conditions for a unique environment that helps to humanize the scale of the campus into discernible segments.

GOAL

ESTABLISH MEMORABLE OUTDOOR PLACES THAT CREATE A PLACE TO EXPERIENCE CAMPUS LIFE.

The grand and rigorously articulated Carol Tomlinson-Keasey Quad, bracketed by Science and Engineering I along with the “The Beginnings” sculpture offer a memorable open space on campus. (Upper Photo Credit: University of California, Merced; Lower Photo Credit: Dave Burk © SOM)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

2.1

Create linear places for social interaction along primary pedestrian pathways.

The linear design of Scholars Lane, with its arcades, landscaping, and grand proportions provide for a memorable pedestrian experience, and opportunity for different scales of interaction. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

2.2

Create outdoor spaces for students, staff and visitors to interact, hold informal meetings or dine.

Leon & Dottie Kolligian Library - with its retractable window walls, deep overhangs with solar shading, and varied furnishings - offers a variety of indoor/outdoor spaces for interactions. (Photo Credit: © Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP | Cesar Rubio, 2015. All rights reserved.)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

2.3

Use building form to define outdoor gathering spaces that are protected from wind, provide shade and are oriented toward the sun.

The orientation and building form - including deep overhangs, landings, and covered arcades - and bosque fronting Classroom and Office Building 2 (formerly CAOB) offer a variety of gathering spaces protected from harsh sun and wind throughout the day. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced - Bruce Damonte)
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3

Vernacular Landscape

UC Merced is visually connected to a unique, natural landscape. The site is characterized by seasonal grasslands - rich in green grasses and wildflowers in the wet seasons and drying to very pale beige in the hot summer. While irrigation provides the opportunity for the developed campus to be green and oasis-like even in summer, concerns about resources and water use require that the intent, design and maintenance of the landscape support campus goals of sustainability and a model for growth.

Stylistically, the goal is to achieve a context inspired by California’s Central Valley. Through plant selection, arrangement and design, the aim is to pull from existing and established patterns of vegetation, whether they be natural, cultural or human-made.

The design of UC Merced’s landscape and the character of the campus go beyond simple interest in urban form. Landscaping is UC Merced’s connective element, with far reaching benefits to the community, its identity and to the natural environment.

GOAL
CREATE A LANDSCAPE THAT FOSTERS EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF UC MERCED’S OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT.

Seasonal vernal pools, orchards, and grass lands are defining landscape features of the Central Valley which are reinterpreted on Campus. (Top Left Photo Credit: University of California, Merced; Bottom Photo Credit: Dave Burk © SOM)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

3.1

Create memorable outdoor places that promote collaborative interactions and foster enjoyment of UC Merced’s unique setting.

The boardwalk between Granite Pass and Little Lake provides a memorable area for gathering while offering views of Little Lake. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

3.2

Use landscape to create a variety of places in neighborhoods and districts that allow people to use the space to come together and provide an enriching campus life.

The bosque of Science and Engineering 1 recalls the agrarian landscape to create shaded places for people to come together. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)

Academic Quad features a drought-tolerant landscape. (Photo Credit: Jeremy Bittermann / JBSA)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

3.3

Incorporate a common landscape theme and vernacular materials to create continuity throughout the campus.

The symbolism and order of the surrounding agriculture - namely orchards - is used on campus as a nod to its context within the Central Valley. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)

The Central Plant appropriates the forms and materials of the agricultural environment that surrounds the campus. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4

Unique Architectural Identity

A very distinctive architectural vision has been established at UC Merced. The campus aesthetic is inspired by the utilitarian agricultural and industrial structures of California’s Central Valley region. Building form and function is expressed through architectural form and building materials that are durable, sustainable, and adaptable to the Central Valley’s climate. Buildings are designed to be compatible with the surrounding environment. It is expected that buildings shall make their contributions to this environment by building upon the existing architectural context. However, it is envisioned that the architectural design of new buildings will evolve over time. Similar to agricultural and industrial complexes, buildings are added over time and unified by a common design theme but not necessarily designed to match.

Typically, buildings are seen as contextual solutions when they appear similar to other buildings in their surroundings. This does not mean that buildings should just reinterpret the stylistic features of existing buildings. To create architectural diversity, the building design needs to incorporate visual variety and complexity. The architectural expression should reflect its context and program.

GOAL

ENHANCE THE ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY ON CAMPUS THAT INCLUDES A FOCUS ON FORM, FUNCTION, STRUCTURAL EXPRESSION, MATERIALS AND DETAILS.

The solar array over Science and Engineering 2, offers a unique architectural expression as well as providing shade and are oriented towards the sun. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

4.1

Incorporate human-scale references in building forms through expression of balconies, overhangs, roof terraces, handrails and other design features that engage people at the human scale.

Though the 3-story entrance expression is grand, the covered arcades, exterior stairs, portico, and details at Classroom and Office Building 2 articulate human scale effectively. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

4.2

Detail the building with rigor and clarity to reinforce the design intentions and to articulate and express the interior functions of the building.

This detail of Science and Engineering Building II effectively expresses interior functions through the use of large glazed areas (indicating circulation or lobbies) and solid facades with punched windows behind which are housed offices and similar program spaces. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)
4.3

Ground floor facades are to be designed to reinforce a sense of quality and permanence.

The use of concrete, glass and metal siding on the Sustainability, Research & Engineering Building are regionally appropriate materials used to convey permanence, quality, and durability. (Photo Credit: Dave Burk © SOM)
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5

Timeless Quality

Buildings shall aim for a “timeless design” and employ sustainable materials and careful detailing that have proven longevity. The design of the urban fabric of the campus is to remain visually coherent in its development over time.

A coherent architectural context is a necessary condition for a unique architectural expression. New buildings being designed for the campus should build on the existing architecture found on campus.

GOAL

CONTRIBUTE TO ARCHITECTURAL CONTINUITY BY INCORPORATING DESIGN ELEMENTS THAT ARE FOUND ON CAMPUS.

Building details and contextually relevant forms and materials of durability (such as those of Classroom and Office Building 1) are, set in curated landscapes with regionally appropriate planting and long vistas. These gestures exemplify a timeless quality of design. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

5.1

New Buildings should respect and accentuate the surrounding campus context, academic district and residential neighborhoods.

Half Dome Residences incorporate the materials, forms, and solar shading recalling the agrarian context of Merced. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)

Buildings at Academic Plaza are arranged to create shaded areas and portals yield to vistas of the surrounding landscape. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
5.2

Preserve and enhance the scale and character of existing districts and residential neighborhoods by providing appropriate transitions and buffering.

The character and scale of the Joseph E. Gallo Recreation & Wellness Center enhances the residential neighborhood district of campus, and provides a nice transition to larger academic districts of campus. (Photo Credit: Tim Griffith)
Utilize and interpret existing architectural elements and materials found on campus to create a consistent and cohesive campus fabric.

Arts & Computer Sciences takes cues from key features of the existing campus classroom building typology, including the use of exterior circulation under covered colonnades, elevated walkways, and use of cast in place concrete. Light and shadow play result, while providing refuge from the harsh summer sun. (Photo Credit: Jeremy Bittermann / JBSA).
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6

Symbolic Presence

The design of the fabric of the campus is to remain not only visually coherent, but also consistent in its development over time. A unique architectural expression should reflect the campus’ unique architectural context. New buildings being designed for the campus should utilize existing architectural character found on campus. Buildings shall aim for a “timeless design” and employ sustainable materials and careful detailing that have proven longevity.

GOAL

CREATE A DYNAMIC, ACTIVE AND ENGAGING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, AND PRODUCTIVITY.

Science and Engineering Building 2’s form engages the landscape, with gestures to the landscape from covered terraces and balconies, and an open ground floor that allows the landscape to read through. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

6.1

Design buildings to be a “living laboratory” to convey the core values of the campus’ academic mission.

The Sustainable Research & Engineering Building promotes transparency, collaboration, and flexibility, with large operable glass garage doors, flexible plans and interior systems designs. (Photo Credits: Dave Burk © SOM)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

6.2

Incorporate architectural elements that define an academic environment where activities take place 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Yablokoff-Wallace Dining Center is designed to offer views into the interior space and also provide outdoor areas for various activities during the day and evening hours. (Photo Credit: Mark Luthringer)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

6.3

Provide exterior space to support social interaction through the use of different architectural features, such as gathering steps, terraces, and wide pedestrian walkways.

Half Dome Residence Hall provides a variety of exterior spaces that encourage social interactions. (Photo Credit: Bruce Damonte)
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 7

Well Defined Skyline

The campus skyline is composed of a collection of individual buildings that define an urban environment. Buildings, massing and roof forms should be designed to be appreciated and recognizable when viewed as part of the distant skyline, from above or at the most intimate level by the pedestrian.

The building form should be sensitive to the natural environment of the site, including topography, landscape, sky and distant views of the Sierra Nevada. The roof and horizontal plane of a building should be used to clarify the building’s uses and visually differentiate ground floor uses from core functions and to define how the building ‘meets the sky.’

It should be noted that roof line is treated in several different manners that include a cornice line for datum for example along Scholars Lane and some buildings have a distinctive skyline components like the Leon & Dottie Kolligian Library and the Joseph E. Gallo Recreation & wellness Center have light monitor.

GOAL

DEVELOP A COHESIVE, DISTINCTIVE, AND HARMONIOUS CAMPUS SKYLINE BY INTEGRATING THE BUILDING ROOF LINE AS THE “FIFTH FACADE”.

The rooftop of Classroom & Office Building 1 is articulated as a 5th facade, further defining the skyline of the campus. It also provides visual interest by recalling the building forms of an agrarian landscape. (Photo Credit: University of California, Merced)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

7.1

Strategically plan the building as part of the campus skyline with an emphasis on the horizontal nature of the earth and sky relationship.

Articulated roof form and lanterns like those capping Science and Engineering I enhance the otherwise low, linear forms of campus buildings. These lanterns capture light during daytime hours, and emit light like beacons for way finding during the night. (Photo Credit: Tim Griffith)

Arts & Computational Sciences building emphasizes the horizontal nature of the agrarian landscape Plaza. (Photo Credit: Jeremy Bittermann / JBSA)
DESIGN STRATEGIES

7.2

Integrate building massing and siting with the natural setting and topography, landscape, sky and distant views of the Sierra Nevada.

The low-profile barn-like massing, with pop up light monitors, and earthy hues, capture the essence of the surrounding agrarian environment, while taking advantage of the abundant natural light. (Photo Credit: Tim Griffith)
Design the roof as an element integral to the architectural massing of the building for the integrity of campus skyline.

The articulation of mass and changing roof line of Social Sciences and Management Building provides vertical interest, references the language of agricultural structures, and an interesting skyline, in an otherwise very horizontal landscape. (Photo Credit: STUDIOS Architecture Sharon Riesdorph)
4.0 APPENDIX
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SQUARE FOOTAGE</th>
<th>ARCHITECT</th>
<th>OPENING YEAR</th>
<th>LEED STATUS</th>
<th>USE</th>
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## ON CAMPUS BUILDINGS

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<td>HOK</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Platinum</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
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<td>Administration building</td>
<td>76,839</td>
<td>WRNS Studio</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Platinum</td>
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<td>Conference Center</td>
<td>25,435</td>
<td>Mahlum Architects</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Platinum</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
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IMPORTANT RESOURCES

UC Merced 2020 Long Range Development Plan
University of California Merced

the Great Central Valley: California’s heartland
Stephen Johnson University of California Press

Structures of Utility: David Stark Wilson

A Geographer Looks at the San Joaquin Valley Carl
Sauer Memorial Lecture, (James Parsons)
UC Merced's 2023 Physical Design Framework provides a summary of the design principles and aspirations that help define UC Merced's physical realm. The concepts and images describe the fundamental characteristics of the University's setting, climate, landscape and architectural character.