



# West Ceres Specific Plan Opportunities and Constraints Analysis

*May 2008*



**LAMPHIER·GREGORY**  
URBAN PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS



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# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
	City of Ceres Specific Plan Process.....	1
<b>2</b>	<b>Location and Land Use .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	Location .....	4
	Land Use .....	4
	Existing Land Uses .....	4
	Adjacent Uses .....	4
	General Plan Land Uses.....	5
	Location and Land Use Opportunities and Constraints .....	5
<b>3</b>	<b>Property Ownership .....</b>	<b>7</b>
	Property Owners .....	7
	Non-Sponsoring Property Owners.....	8
	Property Owners Opportunities and Constraints .....	9
	Stanislaus County .....	10
	Stanislaus County Properties Opportunities and Constraints .....	10
	Carol Lane Neighbors.....	11
	Carol Lane Neighbors Opportunities and Constraints.....	12
<b>4</b>	<b>Williamson Act Contracts .....</b>	<b>14</b>
	Williamson Act Overview .....	14
	West Ceres Specific Plan Contracts.....	14
	Williamson Act Opportunities and Constraints .....	15
<b>5</b>	<b>Land Use Plans and Policies .....</b>	<b>16</b>
	A. City of Ceres 1997 General Plan .....	16

	Urban Growth Area.....	16
	Land Use Designation.....	17
B.	Overview Of Concepts Within The General Plan As They Related To The WCSP .....	18
	Urban Form.....	18
	Growth and Development.....	21
C.	Market Assessment .....	22
	Plans and Policies Opportunities and Constraints .....	24
<b>6</b>	<b>Traffic and Circulation .....</b>	<b>26</b>
	Regulatory Setting .....	26
	Existing Conditions.....	31
	Roadway Network .....	31
	Traffic Levels.....	32
	Transit Services.....	35
	Future Roadway Improvements.....	37
	Other Considerations .....	40
	Traffic and Circulation Opportunities and Constraints.....	41
<b>7</b>	<b>Infrastructure .....</b>	<b>43</b>
A.	Water.....	43
	Water Supply and Infrastructure Analysis.....	43
	Water Opportunities and Constraints.....	45
B.	Wastewater.....	46
	Collection and Treatment.....	46
	Wastewater Opportunities and Constraints.....	48
C.	Storm Drainage and Flood Protection .....	49
	Storm Drainage and Flood Protection Opportunities and Constraints .....	50

D.	Turlock Irrigation District 8.....	50
	Turlock Irrigation District 8 Opportunities and Constraints.....	51
<b>8</b>	<b>Public Services .....</b>	<b>53</b>
A.	Fire Protection and Emergency services.....	53
B.	Police .....	55
C.	Libraries .....	55
D.	School Services.....	56
E.	Parks.....	57
	Public Services Opportunities and Constraints.....	57
<b>9</b>	<b>Other Environmental Issues .....</b>	<b>59</b>
A.	Biological Resources .....	59
	Habitat for special-status Plants and Animals .....	59
	Wetlands .....	60
	Biological Resources Opportunities and Constraints .....	60
B.	Cultural And Historic Resources .....	61
	Cultural and Historic Resources Opportunities and Constraints .....	62
C.	Geology and Soils.....	62
	Geology and Soils.....	62
	Geologic Setting .....	62
	Regional Faulting and Seismicity .....	62
	Soils .....	63
	Groundwater .....	63
	Contamination.....	64
	Geology and Soils Opportunities and Constraints.....	64
D.	Hazardous Materials .....	65
	Regulatory Database .....	65

# Table of Contents Continued

E.	Noise .....	66
	Noise Opportunities and Constraints .....	66
F.	Odors.....	67
	Odor Opportunities and Constraints .....	67

## **Figures**

Figure 2.1 – Regional Location Map

Figure 2.2 – West Ceres General Plan Land Use Exhibit

Figure 3.1 – Stakeholder Groups

Figure 4.1 – Williamson Act Parcels

Figure 5.1 – City of Ceres General Plan

Figure 7.1 – Existing Regional Water Service Facilities

Figure 7.2 – Existing Onsite Water Service Facilities

Figure 7.3 – Existing Regional Wastewater Service Facilities

Figure 7.4 – Existing Onsite Wastewater Service Facilities

Figure 7.5 – Existing Regional Storm Drain Service Facilities

Figure 7.6 – Existing Onsite Storm Drain Service Facilities

Figure 7.7 – Existing Turlock Irrigation District Regional Electrical Facilities

Figure 7.8 – Existing Turlock Irrigation District Onsite Electrical Facilities

Figure 7.9 – Existing Turlock Irrigation District Regional Irrigation Facilities

Figure 7.10 – Existing Turlock Irrigation District Onsite Irrigation Facilities

Figure 9.1 – Elderberry Shrub Location

Figure 9.2 – Potential Historical Structure Location Map

Figure 9.3 –Soils Classification

Figure 9.4 –Farmland Classification

Figure 9.5 – Hazardous Information

## **Appendices**

A Preliminary Traffic Study

B Historical Information

# **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Prior to the presentation of the Land Use alternatives for the West Ceres Specific Plan (WCSP) Area, the City had requested the preparation of a summary of the Opportunities & Constraints findings for the WCSP Area. The purpose of this document is to provide a preliminary analysis of the Specific Plan area and identify any special or unique factors that might influence how the WCSP land use area should be developed. Areas of study included within this report are Location and Land Use, Property Ownership, Williamson Act, Land Use Policies, Traffic and Circulation, Infrastructure, Public Services, and Other Environmental Issues. The report is intended to provide an overall assessment of the potential opportunities and constraints that may influence, constrain, or help further define possible alternative growth scenarios. In addition, the project team will be partaking in community involvement including workshops to answer any questions and inform individuals of the Specific Plan Process and how it affects the neighboring community.

## **CITY OF CERES SPECIFIC PLAN PROCESS**

The City of Ceres, along with the consultant team led by Wood Rodgers, is undertaking a planning process for a 960-acre site on the City's western border. This planning effort will result in the West Ceres Specific Plan, which will be a policy document to guide future land use, infrastructure and public service planning and investment in the area, and a regulatory document to provide rules and standards by which new development within the planning area may proceed.

The City's process for consideration of Specific Plan approvals includes a comprehensive public participation/community workshop effort, consideration of alternative development scenarios for the site, and then selection of a preferred land use alternative. The preferred alternative will then be the subject of a thorough assessment of development policy and a detailed environmental review.

The public participation/community workshop effort includes stakeholder meetings with each of the four (4) stakeholder groups who have ownership interest in the WCSP area, and community workshops intended to inform the public about the Specific Plan process and to seek their input regarding future development. It is anticipated that the first community workshop will be held in May 2008. The purpose of this workshop is to present the opportunities and constraints identified in this report, and to receive additional input from the community prior to development of the final land use alternative.

The processing of this Specific Plan will include a General Plan Amendment, Pre-Zoning and Annexation of the site from the County of Stanislaus to the City of Ceres. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the project.

## **Overarching Opportunities within the West Area**

Overall, this Specific Plan Area represents a significant opportunity for the City of Ceres, landowners and stakeholders, public agencies and decision-makers, and citizens of the City, to have a marked influence on the City's future character and image, and to establish a benchmark and precedent for future development not only in Ceres proper but in surrounding areas as well. This Specific Plan program will establish an innovative implementation of the City's General Plan vision and policies that have been constrained heretofore. Some of these visions and policies involve such elements as:

- A more fully connected open space and greenway system, opening the way for more non-motorized transportation opportunity within the West Area, within the City and between Cities and towns;
- a more "pedestrian/bicycle-friendly" walking and biking environment which would help encourage people to leave their cars behind for shorter community trips;
- a more distinctive community identity and image for the West Area—often referred to as a "sense of place"-- including "gateway" entries into the City, more attractive streetscapes, iconic landscape and architectural design features, strong sightlines and orientation patterns, and land uses that reinforce the traditional "small town" image which the City of Ceres seeks to enhance;
- being surrounded by four future major roadways, an optimum opportunity for expanded transit facilities and potentially for pockets of transit-oriented development;
- "village-style" compact development offering a wide range of housing opportunities, densities, and products for future residents;
- a progressive jobs-housing relationship within the community;
- potential for effective integration of mixed-use developments within parcels, as well as mixes of uses between parcels, given the diversity of land uses already existing on the site; and
- implementation of other innovative programs and features within the Planning Area that will begin to distinguish Ceres with its own identity as a distinct community apart from the surrounding towns and cities in the region.

AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, has resulted in increasing emphasis on mandates for "green," sustainable development and growth. In addition, more and more California developments today are seeking certification under Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards and giving new projects today the opportunity of becoming the vanguards of future development in the Central Valley and other regions of Northern California.

It is acknowledged in the General Plan that this western area represents the availability of a large parcel of open, potentially developable, land, particularly west of Crows Landing Road. This allows for a development vision and program less constrained than other areas which may already have existing development. This allows for the planning of land which will optimize the residential and employment base for Ceres' future growth.

These opportunities are made especially timely by the current residential development and market climate in this region of the Central Valley. The current slowdown in housing construction, and consequently the slowdown in individual subdivision application processing, offers a unique window of time within which to devote City resources. This will broaden the scope of planning opportunities for the City's future growth areas. A consolidated focus on larger parcels of land such as this West Ceres 960-acre Planning Area, is not only made possible, but long-range and overarching goals and objectives envisioned in the General Plan will be given definition and focus.

## 2 LOCATION AND LAND USE

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### LOCATION

The 960-acre West Ceres Specific Plan area is located in an unincorporated area of Stanislaus County, adjacent to the City of Ceres. The City is located approximately 4-miles south of Modesto, and approximately 10-miles northwest of the City of Turlock, along State Route 99 (SR 99). (Figure 2.1) The plan area boundaries are:

- Whitmore Avenue to the north
- Union Pacific Railroad to the east
- Service Road to the south, and
- Ustick Road to the west.

The Specific Plan area is directly accessible from the Whitmore Avenue, Crows Landing Road, and Service Road from existing and anticipated interchanges with SR-99.

### LAND USE

#### Existing Land Uses

The Specific Plan area includes a variety of existing land uses. Agricultural uses are located in the western and central plan area. Rural home sites are distributed throughout the plan area, and include the Carol Lane development. The G3 industrial and commercial uses are located in the northeastern plan area. El Rematito Flea Market is located at the northwest corner of Crows Landing Road and Hackett Road. Stanislaus County uses are located in the southeastern plan area, these uses include:

- County Center #1 – Community Services Agency, Department of Child Support
- County Public Safety Center – Sheriff’s Admin and Operations and County Jail
- County Department of Environmental Resources, Parks and Recreation
- Office of Agricultural Commissioner
- University of California Cooperative Extension
- Criminal Justice Training Center

#### Adjacent Uses

The WCSP area is surrounded by a variety of land uses as summarized below:

- Low-density residential subdivision and industrial uses to the north
- Low-density residential subdivision to the east
- Industrial, commercial and agricultural uses to the south
- Agricultural uses to the west

## **General Plan Land Uses**

The City of Ceres General Plan (General Plan) designates the following uses in the WCSP: (Figure 2.2)

- Office (O)
- Community Commercial (CC)
- Light Industrial (LI)
- General Industrial (GI)
- Community Facilities (CF)
- Residential Reserve (RR)

## **Location and Land Use Opportunities and Constraints**

### **Opportunities:**

- The Specific Plan area's location offers opportunities to create "gateways" into the City and a "village-type" introduction to the City that will sharply distinguish its image and character from the City of Modesto at the northern border and the County at its western border.
- Existing roadways in and around the Specific Plan area, combined with access to SR 99 via interchanges at Whitmore Avenue and Crows Landing Road, present exceptional access to the site to support industrial, commercial and office uses.
- The planned Service Road interchange with SR 99 will provide direct access to the Specific Plan area along its southern edge.
- Existing uses in the plan area, such as those on G3 and Stanislaus County properties provide jobs and commercial services for future residents of the Specific Plan area. In addition, these businesses act as anchors for future businesses in the commercial/mixed use corridors and districts of the plan area.
- Adjacent industrial and commercial land uses to the north and south of the project site along Crows Landing Road help to establish the commercial viability of this corridor.
- The primary focus of growth in the City is located in the southern and western areas of the City. The West Ceres Specific Plan area is contiguous to the City's boundary and represents the logical expansion of the City's urban land uses.
- The diversity of existing General Plan land uses provide the framework for a mixed-use community, distinct from the homogenous residential super blocks described in the General Plan.
- The diversity of existing land uses presents an opportunity to arrange certain uses as buffers or transitions uses between incompatible uses, such as office located between residential and industrial.

### **Constraints:**

- The surrounding and internal expressway and arterial roadways may be incompatible with certain land uses due to existing and/or future traffic, noise and air quality impacts.
- Existing uses in the plan area, such as residential uses on Carol Lane, may be incompatible with future land uses proposed in the plan area, such as high density

residential, commercial and industrial uses. Appropriate location and distribution of land uses, and/or appropriate buffering between incompatible land uses will be necessary.

- El Rematito Flea Market and the County Jail facilities may be incompatible with future land uses proposed in the plan area, such as low and medium density residential, school and park uses. Appropriate location and distribution of land uses, and/or buffering will be necessary.
- Uses adjacent to the plan area may be incompatible with certain future land uses. Appropriate location and distribution of land uses, and/or appropriate buffering between incompatible land uses will be necessary.

### 3 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

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The West Ceres planning area encompasses 960-acres divided among 58 parcels. Ownership within the plan area has been categorized in the following groups: (Figure 3.1)

- Property Owners
- Stanislaus County
- Carol Lane Neighbors

The Specific Plan process includes consultation with landowners and residents of the plan area, referred to in this document as “stakeholders”. Three different stakeholder groups were identified early in the process, as listed above. Because each stakeholder group has unique needs and concerns regarding the development of this Specific Plan, separate meetings for each group were held during February and March of 2008. The discussions and conclusions of this chapter have been informed by the discussions held at these meetings with the stakeholder groups.

#### **Property Owners**

Property Owners not included in the other stakeholder groups (Stanislaus County and Carol Lane Neighbors) encompass the majority (78%) of the plan area, 732.5 acres. This group can be further divided into Sponsoring Property Owners and Non-Sponsoring Property Owners, as described below and in the following subsections.

Certain property owners requested that the City initiate a Specific Plan process for the area. These property owners are providing funds for drafting of the entire Specific Plan, and are referred to as the Sponsoring Property Owners in this document. This allows drafting of the Specific Plan and subsequent development of their properties at an earlier timeframe than may otherwise be possible if the City was to fund the planning process. As allowed by State law, the sponsoring property owners could be reimbursed by other property owners at the time that the other property owners wish to develop their lands under the completed Specific Plan. The property owners not sponsoring the Specific Plan process are referred to in this document as Non-Sponsoring Property Owners.

The Specific Plan process would have the potential to both increase property values as the Specific Plan is drafted and then as the land is entitled for development, and possibly constrain its sale/development through regulations intended to set standards for quality. Additionally, though considered unlikely based on preliminary analysis completed for this report, environmental review of the Specific Plan could detect environmental concerns that could affect the value and/or development potential of properties.

Certain supporting uses will need to be included in the plan area, such as new roadway connections, utility infrastructure, stormwater collection and detention systems, parks

and open space, and facilities for services, possibly a school, a police sub-station and a fire station. The equitable distribution of these supporting uses, either through physical planning or financial methods of balancing values is a concern for property owners.

Sponsoring Property Owners

The Sponsoring Property Owners own approximately 494-acres of land, representing 53 percent of land included within the plan area. The ten parcels included in this group range in size from approximately 1 acre to 138 acres. (Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1)

The properties represented by this group include the existing G3 Enterprises industrial facility at the corner of E. Whitmore Avenue and Crows Landing Road and lands across Crows Landing Road that have been acquired by G3 Enterprises and are currently in agricultural use. The residential reserve area comprising the western side of the plan area is also included in this group.

**Table 3.1 – Sponsoring Property Owners – 494 acres**

<b>APN</b>	<b>Owner Name</b>	<b>Lot Acreage</b>
056-055-001-000	G3 PROPERTY INC	18.58
056-055-002-000	G3 ENTS INC	33.54
056-057-001-000	RUTLAND PROPERTIES INC	88.68
056-057-002-000	RUTLAND PROPERTIES INC	88.30
056-057-003-000	BOYLE B S JR FAMILY LTD PRTSHP	137.67
086-015-008-000	G 3 ENTS INC	0.84
086-015-018-000	G 3 ENTS INC	2.00
086-015-019-000	G3 ENTS INC	14.26
086-015-020-000	G3 ENTS INC	53.45
086-015-021-000	G3 ENTS INC	57.10
<b>Sub-Total Acreage</b>		<b>494.42</b>

Non-Sponsoring Property Owners

The Non-Sponsoring Property Owners represent approximately 238 acres, accounting for 25 percent of land within the plan area. The eighteen parcels included in this group range in size from a 1/3 of an acre to 57 acres. (Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1)

The majority of these properties are currently in agricultural use. Many property owners have expressed interest in exploring the possibility of their properties developing with other uses and are interested in the relative market demand (value and timescale for development) of various land uses.

**Table 3.2 – Non-Sponsoring Property Owners – 238 Acres**

<b>APN</b>	<b>Owner Name</b>	<b>Lot Acreage</b>
056-055-003-000	PEDRO MARQUEZ	9.73
056-055-004-000	QUETZAL CORP	9.61
056-055-005-000	MARQUEZ PEDRO & C FAMILY TRUST	9.21
056-055-006-000	DAVID L REHDER	4.62
056-055-007-000	NASARIO GARCIA	0.39
056-055-008-000	EDWIN J VARGAS	19.74
056-055-009-000	PETE J VERDEGAAL	30.55
056-055-010-000	DON R & LIVING PAYNE	4.86
056-055-011-000	CLAUDIO A NAYARES	0.76
056-055-012-000	JOSE H & MARIA N AMADOR	0.96
056-055-013-000	FLETCHER & WINONA R RICHARDSON	0.94
056-055-014-000	JAYMES J MICHELENA	57.34
056-055-019-000	RALPH A BAVA	29.79
056-055-021-000	ERNEST PAUL SCHEUBER	20.04
056-055-022-000	ERNEST P SCHEUBER	19.95
086-015-011-000	MODESTO CITY OF	0.03
056-055-023-000	CORDA	1.00
056-055-025-000	VERDEGAAL	18.56
<b>Sub-Total Acreage</b>		<b>238.08</b>

## **Property Owners Opportunities and Constraints**

### **Opportunities**

- With certain property owners sponsoring the specific plan process up-front, the other property owners will not need to contribute reimbursement for the entitlement of their properties until they are ready to develop.
- The Specific Plan can help regulate the quality of development, and higher quality generally equates to higher value.
- Consideration of financial methods for equitable distribution of the loss of value related to supporting uses could allow consideration of land use plans that focus more on the future development pattern than being constrained by existing property lines.
- A well established company, G3 Enterprises, has expressed interest in expanding their industrial and commercial facilities, which would increase employment opportunities and further define the Crows Landing Road commercial corridor.

### **Constraints**

- There is the potential for disagreement and concern over which land uses are assigned to which landowners' parcels.
- Multiple ownerships leads to uncertainty about phasing as different owners will want to develop at different times. Infrastructure and phasing plans will need to address this inherent uncertainty.

## Stanislaus County

The Stanislaus County properties include four parcels representing approximately 19 percent of the plan area. The parcels range in size from 10 to 117 acres and are located on the east side of Crows Landing Road. (Table 3.3 and Figure 3.1)

The County site focuses on the public safety center consisting of a prison as well as administrative and operations facilities. Other uses buffer the prison from surrounding properties including a family services center, agricultural center, and criminal justice training center. Some buffering parcels currently remain vacant, though may be developed at a later date. A veteran's hospital is being pursued for the southeast corner of this property, though it is unknown at this time if or when this would be developed.

Since original procurement of the site, the County has had a very specific plan for expansion. This plan for expansion is currently being updated to reflect changes in incarceration policies (a greater need for central services and less need for minimum security capacity). The County intends to update their existing environmental analysis to reflect these changes as well as incorporate recent environmental regulations.

Some portion of expansion is anticipated to begin soon and the County intends to initiate a community outreach program to assuage any concerns over a prison expansion. This near-term expansion of the prison will include the addition of a central booking facility.

Due to the County facilities being developed on unincorporated land, but require city services, various agreements are in place, some with City of Modesto and some with City of Ceres, for provision of utilities and emergency services. The resulting system is somewhat cumbersome.

**Table 3.3 – Stanislaus County Properties – 177 Acres**

<b>APN</b>	<b>Owner Name</b>	<b>Lot Acreage</b>
086-015-005-000	STANISLAUS COUNTY OF	27.15
086-015-014-000	STANISLAUS COUNTY OF	116.53
086-015-015-000	STANISLAUS COUNTY OF	10.16
086-015-016-000	STANISLAUS COUNTY OF	23.52
<b>Sub-Total Acreage</b>		<b>177.36</b>

## Stanislaus County Properties Opportunities and Constraints

### Opportunities

- The timing with the County's near-term expansion and master plan update may enable a joint effort for cooperation on outreach to the community and coordination of environmental analysis.
- The Specific Plan may provide the opportunity to restructure and simplify the provision of utilities and services to this area.

### **Constraints**

- The County prison serves a necessary and important function and the continuing ability to expand this facility will need to be protected.
- A planned addition of a central booking facility would be expected to generate market pressure for bail bond services nearby.
- While a buffer to the prison is built into the County's site, nearby land uses will need to be carefully considered to avoid potential conflicts or nuisances.
- The County has the ability to assert its own authority and could not be required to conform to City of Ceres standards, rules, and regulations, even if annexed into the City. Any standards, rules and/or regulations intended to apply to the County properties would need to be negotiated up-front.

### **Carol Lane Neighbors**

Located on the south side of E. Whitmore Avenue, Carol Lane includes twenty-six parcels ranging in size from ½ to 1-½ acres (Table 3.4 and Figure 3.1). These parcels represent 2 percent of the plan area acreage.

The Carol Lane neighborhood can best be described as rural residential ranchettes. Under the existing County regulations, the residents have kept farm animals and grown crops. While opinions of a specific plan and subsequent annexation into the City of Ceres varied, the Carol Lane neighbors shared concern about the appropriateness of future adjacent uses and loss of their current lifestyle.

Carol Lane is a dead-end street off of East Whitmore Avenue, a busy road intended to become an even busier thoroughfare. The street itself is to County standards, and does not include curbs or sidewalks or a turn-around for emergency vehicles. Residents have noted poor maintenance and drainage problems in wet weather.

If the Carol Lane neighborhood did not exist today, it is unlikely that a neighborhood would be planned in that location because of the sole access off busy Whitmore Avenue and awkward spacing from the parallel Knox Road. A Specific Plan process often triggers changes in land use patterns that can result in the transition of existing uses over time. However, because Carol Lane is an established neighborhood consisting of many high-quality homes and lots, there is no logical scenario under which Carol Lane would transition to a different use in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the Carol Lane neighborhood will be considered an existing and continuing use in the plan area.

**Table 3.4 – Carol Lane Neighbors – 18 Acres**

<b>APN</b>	<b>Owner Name</b>	<b>Lot Acreage</b>
056-056-002-000	CH CHRIST OF WHITMORE C LANE	1.57
056-056-004-000	ROBERT HILTERBRAND	0.46
056-056-005-000	MARIANO CASTILLO	0.92
056-056-006-000	ALLEN & ESTELLA OLIVER	0.92
056-056-007-000	MAXIMILIANO A & MARGARITA DIAZ	0.81
056-056-008-000	ELIAS & ARACELI SANCHEZ	0.57
056-056-009-000	MARIA L VILLALOBOS	0.46
056-056-010-000	ROBERT R & STACI A GRAHAM	1.08
056-056-011-000	RAVAE HENSON	0.38
056-056-012-000	WAYNE A HAAS	0.38
056-056-013-000	TAMERA F GARDNER	0.47
056-056-014-000	THELMA FARRIESTER	0.85
056-056-015-000	KEITH & SALLY WATERMAN	0.92
056-056-017-000	ROGELIO A & CARMELA C GARIBAY	0.96
056-056-018-000	FRANCISCO & ISABEL CHAVEZ	0.43
056-056-019-000	FRANCISCO & ISABEL CHAVEZ	0.43
056-056-020-000	EDUARDO & MARIA E BRAVO	0.45
056-056-021-000	MARIANO CASTILLO	0.45
056-056-022-000	MARIANO CASTILLO	0.30
056-056-023-000	ARMANDO VALENCIA	0.54
056-056-024-000	BERTOLDO & GUADALUPE LOPEZ	0.39
056-056-025-000	STEVE JACKSON & LUCILLE EDNA FORD	0.60
056-056-026-000	JOHN DIPPOLITO	1.28
056-056-027-000	DALE E & JENNIE S KETTNER	0.97
056-056-028-000	CH CHRIST OF	0.88
056-056-029-000	LUIS J DIAZ	0.46
<b>Sub-Total Acreage</b>		<b>17.93</b>

### **Carol Lane Neighbors Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities**

- The Specific Plan process allows for discourse with the Carol Lane neighbors, hopefully leading to mutual understanding of and agreement on plan constraints and solutions related to the Carol Lane neighborhood.
- Due to concerns of Carol Lane residents having been taken into account up-front, alternative land use plans can propose practical methods for addressing these concerns.
- Following annexation, the City would provide on-going maintenance to Carol Lane as a City road.

### **Constraints**

- As an established neighborhood of the size and quality of Carol Lane, there is no feasible scenario under which this use would transition to a different use in the foreseeable future. This existing use will need to be considered in planning efforts and will constrain the possible development scenarios.
- Current activities on the Carol Lane properties are not generally allowed on incorporated residential lots, such as the keeping of farm animals. If special regulations are included in the Specific Plan to allow these uses to continue, they could be incompatible with future adjacent uses, particularly if these are residential uses.
- While the Carol Lane neighbors have expressed the preference to remain a dead-end road, access to/from East Whitmore Avenue could get increasingly difficult as the roadway traffic increases according to area plans. Appropriate emergency vehicle access will also need to be considered, which would need to either be a roadway connection, a turn-around, or select access measures such as a Knox-box controlled gate.

# 4 WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACTS

## WILLIAMSON ACT OVERVIEW

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 – commonly referred to as the Williamson Act – enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting contracted property to agricultural or related open space land use. In return, landowners receive lower property tax assessments based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to a higher, full market value. Local governments receive reimbursement for forgone property tax revenues from the state.

Williamson Act contract agreements extend for a rolling term, 10-year contract (i.e., unless either party files a notice of non-renewal, the 10-year contract is automatically renewed for an additional year). Local governments or landowners can initiate a contract non-renewal process. A notice of non-renewal starts the 9-year non-renewal period. During the non-renewal process, the annual tax assessment gradually increases until, at the end of the 9-year non-renewal period, the contract is terminated. Alternatively, a landowner can petition to cancel a contract prior to the end of the non-renewal period.

### West Ceres Specific Plan Contracts

According to Stanislaus County’ GIS data, four parcels within the plan area are under Williamson Act contracts. In order for development within these parcels to occur, notices of non-renewal or cancellation of existing contracts will need to be initiated. A notice of non-renewal has been filed for one (1) Williamson Act contract.

Table 4.1 lists the parcels that are currently operating under a Williamson Act contract. For a graphic depiction of the Williamson Act parcels, please see Figure 4.1.

**Table 4.1 – Parcels Under Williamson Act**

APN	Owner	Size (AC)	Contract Dates	
			Start	End
056-057-003	Boyle Family	137.67	January 1, 1978	January 1, 2016
056-055-008	Vargas, Edwin	19.74	January 1, 1976	Not filed **
056-055-009	Verdegaal, Pete	30.55	Not in Williamson Act *	Not filed **
056-055-019	Bava, Ralph	29.79	January 1, 1978	Not filed **
Table 4.1				
Parcels under Williamson Act				
Source: Stanislaus County GIS Information and Stanislaus County Assessor Office				
* County Assessor Records state that this parcel is not under Williamson Act				
** Notice of Nonrenewal has not been filed for this parcel.				

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## **Williamson Act Opportunities and Constraints**

### **Constraints**

- Williamson Act contracts exclude all land uses other than agricultural and uses compatible with agriculture for the duration of the contract. Therefore, non-renewal or cancellation of the contracts will be necessary to allow development of the plan area.
- Properties with current Williamson Act Contracts will need to file Cancellation Notices or Notice of Non-Renewals upon annexation into the City of Ceres.

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# 5 LAND USE PLANS AND POLICIES

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## A. CITY OF CERES 1997 GENERAL PLAN

### OVERVIEW

The West Ceres Specific Plan area currently falls under the jurisdiction of Stanislaus County, but is within the Phase 1, Phase 2 and Reserve Urban Growth Areas of the City of Ceres 1997 General Plan (Figure 5.1). Accordingly, the General Plan designates lands uses for the West Ceres Specific Plan (WCSP) in anticipation of its eventual development. When adopted, the WCSP area will be annexed to the City of Ceres and will be subject to the City's policies and codes. As such, this section evaluates opportunities and constraints as they relate to the City of Ceres 1997 General Plan, the most current version of the document.

### Urban Growth Area

Lands within the City of Ceres Urban Growth Area are divided between Phase 1, Phase 2 and Reserve Areas. As defined by the General Plan Policy 1.B.4, the two phases of growth within the Urban Growth Area are shown in Figure 5.1. Residential development will be permitted within the second phase when there is a demonstrated need for additional land and there is less than a five-year supply of appropriately-designated land available within the first phase.

Areas within the Planning Area that are not required to accommodate projected development through 2015 are designated as Residential Reserve. The reserve designations indicate an overall intent that these areas would eventually develop with residential uses. These areas are generally located in the southwest and western parts of the City's Planning Area. Substantial urban development cannot occur within the Reserve Areas without a General Plan Amendment.

The Specific Plan area is divided among the three areas as follows and as shown in Figure 5.1:

- Phase 1 Area<sup>1</sup> - Land west of the Union Pacific Railroad to Crows Landing Road, approximately 1/3 of the Specific Plan area.
- Phase 2 Area - Land west of Crows Landing Road to Knox Road, representing approximately the next 1/3 of the Specific Plan area.
- Reserve Area - Land from Knox Road to Ustick Road, representing approximately the final 1/3 of the Specific Plan area.

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<sup>1</sup> Phase 1 Area, Phase 2 Area and Reserve Area are terms designated in the General Plan. These terms refer to specific geographical locations within the City of Ceres rather than a progression or stage of growth.

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## **Land Use Designation**

The General Plan land use designations for the WCSP area are as follows, and as shown on Figure 5.1.

### ***Office (O)***

This land use designation provides for medical, professional, administrative, general office, and limited commercial service uses such as restaurants, dry cleaners, and other similar uses that are intended to serve employees and clientele of the office uses and the immediate surrounding areas. Residential development at 5-25 dwelling units per acre is permitted when found to be compatible with existing and future uses. Development in this designation shall not exceed an FAR of 1.0.

### ***Community Commercial (CC)***

This land use designation provides for a full range of retail and service uses, including retail stores, food and drug stores, apparel stores, specialty shops, motor vehicle sales and service, home furnishings, durable goods, real estate offices, restaurants, entertainment uses, florists, hotels/motels, and other similar uses that serve a community wide market. Development in this designation shall not exceed an FAR of 0.5.

In newly developing areas, many of the uses in the category tend to locate in freestanding, integrated shopping centers that can be distinguished by the scale and scope of their development.

### ***Light Industrial (LI)***

This land use designation provides for light industrial and heavy commercial uses, including light manufacturing and fabricating, contractor yards and offices, motor vehicle service and repair, wholesale uses, lumber yards, hardware stores, other similar industrial and heavy commercial uses, offices and recreational uses. Incidental employee-serving retail and services may also be permitted. Development in this designation shall not exceed an FAR of 0.5.

### ***General Industrial (GI)***

This land use designation provides for large-scale, extensive types of industrial/manufacturing uses, including manufacturing, food processing, motor vehicle service and repair, contractors yards, fuel and fuel facilities, truck yards and terminals, warehousing and storage uses, wholesale uses, solid waste management and recycling facilities, construction supplies and building material facilities, office, and recreational uses. Although the uses in this designation are oriented to industrial activities and uses, incidental employee-serving retail/service and on-site specialty retail uses may also be permitted. Sites adjacent to rail lines, major streets, and good freeway access are desirable for most of the uses in this designation. Development in this designation shall not exceed an FAR of 0.65.

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### ***Community Facilities (CF)***

This land use designation is applied to the City’s major public and private facilities and institutional uses. Most common are public safety facilities (i.e. fire stations), which are labeled Community Facility-Public Safety Facility for clarity (CF-PSF). The predominant land use designation surrounding any property designated for a future community facilities use shall be used to determine the potential use of the property prior to its acquisition by a governmental agency or private institution.

### ***Residential Reserve (RR)***

This land use designation is applied to those properties within the Planning Area to be considered for development with residential land uses beyond the time frame of the General Plan (2015). This land is intended to generally remain in agricultural, open space, or existing rural residential uses through the time frame of this General Plan. Limited unincorporated development consistent with County zoning of these areas is permissible; however, no substantial urban development or annexation may occur on lands designated as Residential Reserve before the General Plan is amended to specify a primary land use designation for the property. Allowable uses prior to a General Plan amendment shall include those uses specified under the Agriculture (A) designation, underlying County zoning, and existing rural residential uses.

## **B. OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTS WITHIN THE GENERAL PLAN AS THEY RELATED TO THE WCSP**

### **Urban Form**

#### ***Community Character and Identity***

Goals and policies within the General Plan identify the need to preserve the City’s small town character. In addition, the City desires to create a unique identity, striving to differentiate itself from the nearby City of Modesto and the community of Keyes.

Goal 1.A - To maintain Ceres’ small-town character and to create a distinctive city identity as the city grows.

Policy 1.A.2 - The City shall strive to maintain and enhance a unique community identity. To this end, where possible, the City shall maintain physical separation from nearby communities and provide a visual distinction where Ceres abuts Modesto.

Policy 1.A.5 – The City shall seek to provide visual distinction between Ceres and Modesto where the two cities abut. To this end, the City shall use signs and landscaping at entrances on Mitchell Road and along major corridors where the two communities meet.

Policy 1.A.6 – The City shall create gateways to provide distinctive entrances to Ceres, particularly at key access points along SR 99 Corridor, at major entrances on Mitchell Road, and at transitions from Modesto and Ceres on Crows Landing Road.

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Policy 1.A.7 – The City shall seek to enhance the appearance of its major corridors as important structural elements in Ceres’ physical identity, and as a feature to improve Ceres’ image in attracting economic development.

### ***Major Corridors***

The City has identified five major transportation corridors as critical components of the City’s image and character. Three corridors are located within the Specific Plan area, they are Whitmore Avenue, Crow’s Landing Road and Service Road.

Goal 1.J – To maximize and balance the transportation function and aesthetic image of the city’s major corridors.

Policy 1.J.1 – The City shall promote improvements to its major corridors to make them distinctive and inviting. The City shall pay special attention to entrances to the city along major corridors.

Policy 1.J.2 – The City shall promote a unified system of street tree plantings along its major corridors. Street tree plantings should be coordinated along major commercial corridors, differentiated from residential corridors.

Policy 1.J.13 – The City shall limit commercial development along Service Road to major intersections and neighborhoods commercial uses. Access will be limited to right-turn only on an interim or long-term basis depending on the location and design of development.

### ***Residential Development***

The character and form of the City of Ceres is largely represented by the character of its neighborhoods. As such, policies within the General Plan encourage pedestrian friendly and accessible neighborhoods that feature a mix of housing types and sizes and are physically and socially integrated with existing communities.

General Plan policies also emphasize neighborhood character and creating a sense of place by measures such as orienting neighborhoods around a community focal element, providing internal and external linkages that support various modes of transportation and the providing quality architecture and landscaping.

Goal 1.C – To provide adequate land in a range of residential densities to accommodate the housing needs of all income groups as expected to reside in Ceres, while ensuring a high quality of residential development.

Policy 1.C.2 – In reviewing and approving area wide plans for residential development, the City shall ensure that an adequate supply and densities of residential land are available.

Policy 1.C.3 – New residential developments should be physically and socially integrated with the community. In considering proposed gated or walled residential development,

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the City shall review the need for these features in terms of whether they detract from the sense of integration of such development in the community.

Policy 1.C.5 – The City shall encourage multi-family housing to be located throughout the community, especially near transportation corridors, downtown, major commercial areas and neighborhood commercial centers.

Goal 1.D – To provide for development of new residential areas in planned neighborhoods to be developed at an orderly pace and designed to promote transit, walking and bicycling.

Policy 1.D.1 – The City shall encourage the creation of well-defined residential neighborhoods throughout the City, including in newly-developing areas. Each neighborhood should have a clear focal point, such as a park, school, or other open space and community facility, and shall be designed to promote pedestrian convenience...

Policy 1.D.2 – Consistent with the City’s annexation policy, new residential development shall occur after adoption of area wide plans (i.e. master plans or specific plans). Area wide plans shall indicate the locations of various residential land uses, parks, schools, neighborhood commercial, streets, bikeways, walkways and other infrastructure. Area wide plans shall include a mix of residential densities...

Goal 1.E – To maintain and enhance the best qualities of existing residential neighborhoods as the city grows.

### ***Commercial Land Use***

Policies within the General Plan call for well-located and well-designed commercial development. Commercial land uses should be integrated within the fabric of the community by allowing for pedestrian access and supporting various modes of transportation. The design and development standards for commercial uses should promote vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes through the use of landscaping, outdoor furniture and signage.

Goal 1.F – To designate adequate commercial land for and promote development of commercial uses compatible with surrounding land uses to meet the present and future needs of Ceres residents and visitors and to maintain economic vitality.

Policy 1.F.1 – The City shall designate commercial land in appropriate locations and parcel sizes to provide for various kinds of commercial development to meet the present and future needs of Ceres residents and visitors. The City shall strive to avoid designating an oversupply of commercially-designated land to prevent the dilution or deterioration of currently viable commercial areas.

Policy 1.F.4 – The City shall require new commercial development to be designed to minimize the visual impact of parking areas on public roadways, particularly at major intersections.

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Policy 1.F.5 – The City shall encourage significant new office developments to locate near major transportation corridors and/or concentrations of residential uses. New office development may serve as buffers between residential uses and higher-intensity commercial uses.

### ***Industrial Development***

The City seeks to expand its industrial base in order to provide for greater economic development and employment opportunities to residents. Sufficient buffering should be provided for industrial development in close proximity to residential areas. The design and development standards for industrial uses should promote interesting and attractive building frontages, service areas that are not readily visible to the public, a series of smaller parking areas and a comprehensive landscaping program.

Existing and planned industrial development can be found within the Specific Plan area under General Industrial (GI) and Light Industrial (LI) designations.

Goal 1.G – To designate adequate land for and promote development of industrial uses to meet the present and future needs of Ceres residents for jobs and to maintain economic vitality.

Policy 1.G.2 - The City shall only approve new industrial development that has adequate infrastructure and services. Industrial development shall be required to provide sufficient buffering from residential areas to avoid impacts associate with noise, odors and the potential release of noxious and hazardous materials.

### **Growth and Development**

#### ***Citywide Growth and Development***

The City’s annexation policies allow for new residential development in connection with adoption of area wide plans such as specific plans or master plans.

Goal 1.B – To grow in an orderly pattern consistent with economic, social and environmental needs, maintaining Ceres’ small town character and preserving surrounding agricultural lands.

Policy 1.B.5 – Annexations to the city shall be approved only after City approval of an appropriate area wide plan (e.g. master plan, specific plan) that addresses land use, circulation, housing, infrastructure, and public facilities and services based on the annexation policy included as an appendix to the General Plan...

#### ***Economic Development***

General Plan policies seek to maintain and enhance the quality of life for its residents by retaining and encouraging expansion of existing industries and businesses, attracting new businesses that could help provide employment opportunities for residents, and maintaining a fiscally healthy City. Policies in the General Plan call for cooperation between the public and private sectors.

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Policies in the General Plan that address urban form; maintain a small town character; crafting a unique identity for the City; providing for meaningful, attractive and accessible residential, commercial and industrial development; providing adequate infrastructure and services; are all necessary components for economic development in the City.

Goal 1.I – To maintain a healthy and diverse local economy that meets the present and future employment, shopping, recreational, public safety, and services needs of Ceres residents and to expand the economic base to better serve the needs of residents.

Policy 1.I.1 – The City shall encourage the retention and expansion of existing industries and businesses in Ceres.

Policy 1.I.3 – The City shall seek development of new businesses, especially those that provide primary wage-earner jobs, by designating adequate land and providing infrastructure in areas where resources and public facilities and services can accommodate employment generators.

### ***Reserve Areas***

Areas designated as Reserve are residential and industrial areas designated for ultimate urban development after the year 2015, the current projection of the 1997 General Plan. General Plan policies ensure that no substantial urban development can occur within the Reserve Areas without a General Plan Amendment, except for limited unincorporated development consistent with the underlying Stanislaus County zoning.

Goal 1.N – To maintain land as Residential and Industrial Reserve within the Planning Area for consideration for accommodation of development projected to occur beyond 2015.

Goal 1.N.1 – Substantial development of reserve areas will not be permitted without a General Plan Amendment. Prior to any General Plan Amendment, the City will allow only uses consistent with the Agricultural designation and County zoning.

## **C. MARKET ASSESSMENT**

Economic & Planning Systems, as part of the Wood Rodgers team, was retained to prepare an assessment of market conditions in and around the City of Ceres. This assessment, along with technical analyses of site conditions, community input, City policy direction, and other considerations, will inform the balance of land uses which will be proposed for the West Ceres Specific Plan Area. This memorandum presents an economic and real estate market overview of the Ceres market area, focusing on current and historical market conditions within the residential, office, retail, and industrial development types.

Key findings of the preliminary market assessment are as follows:

1. *The national housing downturn has significantly affected home values as well as housing production throughout Stanislaus County.*

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Recent market data for Ceres homes indicates the median home price has continued to fall and is now at \$263,500 (January 2008). This median sale price is off by 32 percent from January 2007 (\$389,990), however, the County-wide median sales price for 2008 price is about 3 percent above the 2004 price. Absorption rates for eight residential communities in Ceres reviewed had annual absorption rates of approximately 30 units per quarter, between Q3 2006 and Q4 2007. Despite the bleak market conditions in recent quarters, which are characterized by depressed housing prices and a collapse in building permits issued the housing market, being cyclical, in all likelihood will rebound. Forecasts analyzing the prospects for a recovery in the residential real estate market generally project a turnaround towards the end of 2009, with the expectation that the market will recover and, with time, housing prices will again appreciate as the existing stock of new homes are absorbed..

2. *The West Ceres Specific Plan is well-located for expansion of the City's housing stock and a variety of housing types (style, size, and price) can be planned that match General Plan policies and market preferences.*

The West Ceres Specific Plan has the capacity to hold 4,000 residential units at densities consistent with the City's General Plan (assuming 60 percent of the project area is devoted to residential uses, at seven units to the acre). As such, the Specific Plan could expand the City's development capacity by 10 percent, allowing the City to realize regional growth forecasts.<sup>2</sup> The Specific Plan process should focus upon recommendations for housing types that while consistent with General Plan and Housing Element policies, also respond to emerging market conditions.

Although household increases will continue at a lower rate than was experienced in the City in recent years, sustained growth in the region will support additional development in the near future. Through 2025, Stanislaus County is expected to average annual population increases of 2.2 percent.<sup>3</sup> This project will serve as one part of fulfilling the City's growth forecast.

3. *Prospects for new commercial/industrial space within the West Ceres Specific Plan are mixed.*

The regional market for commercial and industrial space is expected to remain dominated by warehouse and distribution uses and service commercial uses. There is a relatively large supply of well-located sites for such development along State Route 99 corridor through Stanislaus County that is competitive with space

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<sup>2</sup> Calculated by dividing 60 percent of the site by the total number of acres in residential use in Ceres, according to an estimated based on the 2008 General Plan map.

<sup>3</sup> ABAG Inter-Regional Partnership.

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in Ceres. Currently, square footage of retail, office, and industrial space are leasing for \$2.00, \$1.50, and \$0.40 per square foot per month, respectively.

The values of commercial square footage in Ceres are estimated based on broker interviews and quarterly brokerage reports. Retail in the City has the strongest prospects of the three uses, based on population increases and increases in per capita expenditures on retail goods in the City. Employment which tends to support new office development has been growing only slightly in Ceres in recent years and has not yet rebounded to reach the number of jobs in these sectors in 2000.<sup>4</sup> Manufacturing jobs have decreased about 6 percent over the last decade, indicating erosion in demand for industrial-type space.

4. *The Specific Plan can complement the City's current land use pattern.*

The City of Ceres is presently dominated by residential uses, with about 60 percent of the City's land devoted to housing, with the remainder of the land is developed for commercial uses and public uses including schools, parks, and community facilities.<sup>5</sup> This balance of uses is similar to nearby suburban-type development patterns. Planning for the West Ceres Specific Plan will consider this existing context of land uses and general configuration as site opportunities and constraints are analyzed.

5. *The West Ceres Specific Plan area planned nonresidential development location along Crows Landing Road will be attractive to community-scale retailers.*

Any proposed neighborhood retail space at the site would be supported to the extent that it is in balance with demand generated by other components of the Project, primarily new households. Generally, between 4,000 and 5,000 households support a neighborhood shopping center. The degree to which other commercial components, e.g., regional commercial centers, would experience sufficient market support is more speculative. The project area's favorable location, which includes a site along a major thoroughfare as well as proximity to several thousand existing households, will likely appeal to prospective tenants.

## **Plans and Policies Opportunities and Constraints**

### **Opportunities**

- A Specific Plan allows for targeted regulations and policies to augment those in the General Plan and Municipal Code. This will allow for development in the

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<sup>4</sup> Jobs in the Information, Financial Services, and Business and Professional Services sectors totaled 24,400 in the Modesto MSA in 2000. As of 2006, they numbered 23,600.

<sup>5</sup> Includes land which is within the City's boundaries. Does not include agricultural land which is on the outskirts of the City.

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spirit of the General Plan while retaining unique characteristics and character in the Specific Plan area.

- Under the City's General Plan, the West Ceres Specific Plan area is within the City's Phase 1, Phase 2, and Reserve areas – a location where the City intended to direct its future growth through the year 2015 and beyond.
- The Specific Plan process provides an opportunity for comprehensive planning for the entire West Ceres Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan must meet the requirements of State law, and will provide the goals and policies that will guide future land use decisions, investment and development within the plan area. The Specific Plan will also include a detailed implementation plan that will identify responsibilities, financing requirements, and phasing/timing to ensure a plan that is able to be implemented.

### **Constraints**

- Under the currently applicable General Plan, the West Ceres Specific Plan project will require a General Plan amendment. This amendment would be needed to modify certain General Plan policies and to change the General Plan Land Use Diagram to the land uses that will be identified in the final West Ceres Specific Plan.
- The preliminary market assessment suggests there may not be demand for as much light industrial area as shown for the plan area in the current General Plan. This will need to be taken into account when determining how much light industrial is appropriate and in drafting the phasing plan.
- Completion and approval of a Specific Plan and associated General Plan Amendment, pre-zoning and annexation must occur prior to development of land within the plan area. It is anticipated these approvals could occur as early as September 2009.

# 6 **TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION**

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## **Introduction**

Dowling Associates have been contracted to conduct a traffic study for the West Ceres Specific Plan area. This chapter was based on their preliminary report documenting current local and regional policies and existing conditions relevant to the transportation analysis.

## **REGULATORY SETTING**

Existing transportation policies, plans, laws, and regulations that would apply to the project are summarized below.

### State

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is responsible for planning, design, construction, and maintenance of all state highways. Caltrans' jurisdictional interest extends to improvements to these roadways at the interchange ramps serving area freeways. Any federally funded transportation improvements are subject to review by Caltrans staff and the California Transportation Commission.

*The Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies* (Caltrans, 2002) provides consistent guidance for Caltrans staff who reviews local development and land use change proposals as well as inform local agencies of the information needed for Caltrans to analyze the traffic impacts to State highway facilities including freeway segments, on- or off-ramps, and signalized intersections.

### Regional

The Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) is the countywide transportation planning agency responsible for the preparation of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). RTP is a guiding document for future transportation improvements and investments based on specific goals, objectives, policies and strategies defined by the community and its elected officials. The project prioritization process is based on evaluating each project for need, feasibility, and adherence to federal and state transportation laws and policies requiring comprehensive, cooperative, and continuous transportation, safety and environmental planning. Some of the Plan's objectives include:

- Integrate transportation and land use planning with transportation system carrying-capacity
- Develop a roadway system that supports alternative transportation modes
- Develop a regional transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people and goods between cities and the State Highway System

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- Maintain an efficient, reliable and attractive public transit system for the region
  - Promote the development of a safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian network linking neighborhoods to the regional system

### Local

The City of Ceres General Plan contains the following goals and policies guiding the development of the City's transportation network.

### **Street and Roadway System**

#### **GOAL 2.A**

To provide for the long-range planning and development of the city's roadway system to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

#### **POLICIES**

- 2.A.1. The City shall plan, design, and regulate the development of the city's street system in accordance with the functional classification system described in this chapter and reflected in Circulation Diagram and with the City's street standards and specifications.
- 2.A.2. The City shall develop and manage its roadway system to maintain Level-of-Service of at least C on secondary collectors and local streets and Level-of-Service D on primary collectors, arterials, expressways, and freeways. Exceptions to these level of service standards may be allowed in infill areas where the City finds that the improvements or other measures required to achieve the LOS standards are unacceptable because of right-of-way limitations, physical impacts on surrounding properties, and/or the visual aesthetics of the required improvement and its impact on community identity and character.
- 2.A.3. The City shall strive to meet the level of service standards through a balanced transportation system that provides alternatives to the automobile.
- 2.A.4. The City shall require an analysis of the effects of traffic from major development projects (generally those that would generate 100 or more peak-hour trips per day). Each such project shall construct or fund improvements necessary to mitigate the effects of traffic from the project. Such improvements may include a fair share of improvements that provide benefits to others.
- 2.A.5. The City shall pursue financing in a timely manner for all components of the transportation system to achieve and maintain adopted level of service standards.
- 2.A.6. The City shall assess fees on new development sufficient to cover the fair share portion of that development's cumulative impacts on the local and regional transportation system. Exceptions may be made when new development generates significant public benefits (e.g., low income housing, primary wage earner employment) and alternative sources of funding for the improvements can be obtained to offset foregone revenues.

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- 2.A.7. The City shall continue to support development of an expressway system to handle regional traffic in the Modesto-Ceres urban area. In particular, the City will encourage the development of Faith Home Road and Service Road as expressways to relieve truck traffic and through-traffic on Mitchell Road.
  - 2.A.8. The City shall continue to participate in the countywide Congestion Management Plan.
  - 2.A.9. The City shall encourage the provision of capacity-enhancing improvements to SR 99 or improvements to other alternative routes or modes needed to accommodate increased local and regional traffic volumes and to relieve projected traffic congestion as identified in the Congestion Management Program analysis. To this end, the City will, together with the other affected and responsible agencies, participate in the planning, programming and identification of financing for these improvements.

### **Major Corridors**

#### **GOAL 2.B**

To maintain acceptable traffic flow along Ceres' major corridors

#### **POLICIES**

- 2.B.1. The City shall seek to maintain acceptable traffic flow conditions along Ceres' major corridors while allowing for new development along these corridors. To this end, the City shall require site plans for new development along Hatch Road, Mitchell Road, and Whitmore Avenue. To this end, the City shall:
  - a) Require consolidation of driveway access; if necessary, driveway improvements should include relocation of driveway access points on existing sites
  - b) Require combination of parking lots and access points with joint access and parking agreements where possible
  - c) Require medians where necessary to limit turning movements
  - d) Require site plans to facilitate entrance and exits to avoid cars queuing in street
  - e) Limit or prohibit drive-up windows where peak traffic queues cannot be accommodated on-site.
- 2.B.2. The City shall allow only limited direct access to industrial, commercial, and high density residential uses along Hatch Road, Service Road, and Faith Home Road as approved through site plan review.
- 2.B.3. The City shall restrict access from driveways, secondary collectors, and local streets onto Faith Home Road and Service Road and shall allow only right-turn in, right-turn out access movements at select locations.

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## **Residential Streets**

### **GOAL 2.C**

To protect residential areas from high-volume and high-speed traffic and its effects and promote bicycling and walking on residential streets.

### **POLICIES**

- 2.C.1. The City shall consider the effects of new development on local streets in residential areas and require new development to mitigate significant impacts on residential neighborhoods.
- 2.C.2. The City shall promote connectivity in its residential street patterns. Where cul-de-sacs are permitted, the City shall promote pedestrian and bicycle travel by including pathways as appropriate to connect cul-de-sacs to other streets or community facilities such as parks and schools.
- 2.C.3. The City shall require sidewalks for all streets in new residential areas.
- 2.C.4. The City shall promote street, alley, and sidewalk maintenance to encourage safe use for transportation purposes.
- 2.C.5. The City shall consider future needs for street and sidewalk maintenance in approving new development.

## **Transit Facilities and Services**

### **GOAL 2.E**

To promote provision of safe and efficient transit service to reduce congestion, improve the environment, and provide viable non-automotive means of transportation in and through Ceres.

### **POLICIES**

- 2.E.1. The City shall continue to plan and implement additional transit services that are timely, cost-effective, and responsive to growth patterns and existing and future transit demand. To this end, the City will coordinate with Stanislaus County and City of Modesto transit agencies in providing and expanding intercity transit services.
- 2.E.2. The City shall consider the need for future transit right-of-way in reviewing and approving plans for development. Rights-of-way may either be exclusive or shared with other vehicles.
- 2.E.3. The City shall consider the transit needs of senior, disabled, minority, low-income, and transit-dependent persons in making decisions regarding transit services and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- 2.E.4. The City shall continue to support efforts to provide demand-responsive service ("paratransit") and other transportation services for those unable to use conventional transit.

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- 2.E.5. The City shall require new development to reserve space for future public transit stops, with turnouts, where sufficient population or employment concentrations will warrant an existing or future route.
  - 2.E.6. The City shall strive to ensure that transit routes serve those areas with the greatest need and the largest number of potential users.
  - 2.E.7. The City shall investigate transit possibilities for the use of heavy rail right-of-way if railroads consider abandoning their rights-of-way.

### **Non-Motorized Transportation**

#### **GOAL 2.F**

To provide a safe, comprehensive, and integrated system of facilities for nonmotorized transportation.

#### **POLICIES**

- 2.F.1. The City shall promote the development of a comprehensive and safe system of recreational and commuter bicycle routes that provide connections between the city's major employment and housing areas and between its existing and planned bikeways.
- 2.F.2. The City shall promote bicycling and walking through appropriate facilities, programs, and information.
- 2.F.3. The City shall pursue alternative sources of funding for the development and improvement of bikeways and pedestrian pathways.
- 2.F.4. The City shall require developers to finance and install pedestrian pathways, bikeways, and multi-purpose paths within new development, as appropriate.
- 2.F.5. The City shall require new development to provide adequate rights-of-way to accommodate bikeways where needed on new collector, arterials, and expressway streets, and to contribute to the development of needed bikeways.
- 2.F.6. The City shall encourage the development of adequate, convenient, and secure bicycle parking at employment centers, schools, recreational facilities, transit terminals, commercial businesses, and in other locations where people congregate.
- 2.F.7. The City shall require new multi-family residential, commercial and industrial developments to include bicycle facilities.
- 2.F.8. The City shall promote bicycle safety education to children and adults.
- 2.F.9. The City shall regard commuter bicycle routes as higher priorities than recreational routes.
- 2.F.10. The City shall consider the needs of bicyclists when new roadways are constructed and existing roadways are upgraded.
- 2.F.11. The City shall develop safe and pleasant pedestrian ways. To this end, the City shall ensure adequately wide sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian movement.
- 2.F.12. The City shall encourage separation of sidewalks from streets on arterials and major collector streets.
- 2.F.13. The City shall ensure that pedestrian access continues to be provided when the Pine Street and Whitmore Avenue overpasses are improved, and shall encourage improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities with these improvements.

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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Roadway Network

Regional vehicular access to the project site is provided primarily by State Route 99 (SR 99), a north-south facility located approximately 3.4 miles east of the project site. Access to and from SR 99 from the Specific Plan Area is provided via Crows Landing Road, East Whitmore Avenue and Service Road via the Mitchell Road interchange. In the vicinity of the Plan Area, SR 99 is a six-lane freeway. According to the 2006 counts from the Caltrans website<sup>6</sup>, SR 99 carries an average daily traffic volume (AADT) of 118,000 vehicles per day north of Crows Landing Road and 109,000 vehicles per day south of Mitchell Road.

Local access within the region is provided by a network of expressways, arterial and collector streets and local roads. These roadways are described below.

**Service Road** is an east-west expressway that spans across Ceres, beginning from just west of Carpenter Road and continues east into Stanislaus County. Crows Landing Road divides the expressway into East Service Road and West Service Road. Service Road is classified as a Class C Expressway in the Stanislaus County General Plan and a Class B Expressway in the Ceres General Plan, where access is restricted from driveways and local streets. In the project vicinity, Service Road is primarily a two-lane road. Service Road serves as the southern boundary of the project site.

**Crows Landing Road** is four-lane, north-south arterial connecting the City of Modesto and northwest Ceres on the north with areas in the southern part of Stanislaus County. It is classified by the County as a Major roadway north of Service Road and as a Class C Expressway south of Service Road and by the City as an arterial. Crows Landing Road runs north south through the Specific Plan Area and provides access to SR 99 from the plan area.

**Whitmore Avenue** is a two-lane east-west arterial that runs from unincorporated Stanislaus County east to Montpellier Road through downtown Ceres. It is classified as an arterial in the General Plan from the eastern edge of the Urban Growth Area to Carpenter Road and as a Major roadway by the County and provides access to SR 99 from the Specific Plan Area

**Ustick Road** forms the western boundary of the Specific Plan Area. It is a two-lane north-south road that connects to Keyes Road on the south and Glenn Avenue on the north. Ustick Road is classified as an arterial in the General Plan.

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<sup>6</sup> California Department of Transportation, Traffic Data Branch. <<http://traffic-counts.dot.ca.gov/2006all.htm>> March 4, 2008.

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**Hackett Road** is a two-lane east-west local roadway that extends approximately one-half mile on either side of Crows Landing Road. It provides the main access for a large County complex on the east side of Crows Landing Road.

**Carpenter Road** is a two- to four-lane north-south road that runs from SR 99 on the north to Crow Landing Road on the south in Stanislaus County. At SR 99, it connects to Briggsmore Avenue. It has been classified in the County General Plan as a 6-lane expressway north of Service Road and a 4-lane Major road south of Service Road.

**Hatch Road** extends westward from Geer Road to just west of Carpenter Road. It is designated as an expressway between Faith Home Road and Carpenter Road in the City's General Plan. West of SR 99, it has two to four travel lanes.

**Morgan Road** is a two-lane north-south arterial that links Hatch Road south to Keyes Road in the unincorporated County.

**Blaker Road** is a two-lane primarily collector that extends from Whitmore Avenue south to Keyes Road.

**Central Avenue** is a two-lane road that extends south from Railroad Avenue to the west of Hwy 99 through Ceres and Stanislaus County to terminate at Turner Road just over the county line in Merced County. A high school is located at the southwest corner of its intersection with Service Road. It also provides a link across Hwy 99 to downtown Ceres via Pine Street.

**Mitchell Road** is a four lane roadway that extends from Hwy 99 north to the La Loma area of Stanislaus County.

**El Camino Avenue** runs parallel to SR 99 on the east side of the freeway. This frontage road runs from Whitmore Place on the north and East Service Road on the south. El Camino Avenue will be significantly altered as a part of the Whitmore Avenue Interchange Project.

### **Traffic Levels**

In consultation with City staff, Dowling Associates chose 18 study intersections and eight roadway segments most likely to be impacted by the proposed project and performed counts of existing traffic and analysis of their current levels of service (LOS).

Level of service is a qualitative indication of the level of delay and congestion experienced by motorists using an intersection. Level of service is designated by the letters A through F, with A being the best condition and F being the worst (high delay and congestion). Methodologies for calculating LOS vary depending on the type of intersection or roadway. Additional details can be found in the preliminary traffic study, included as Appendix A of this document.

### Intersection Operations

Some of the study intersections are unsignalized, with stop sign control on the minor street approaches. At these types of intersections, most of the main street traffic is undelayed, and by definition have acceptable condition. The main street left-turn movements and the minor street movements are all susceptible to delay of varying degrees. Generally, the higher the main street traffic volumes, the higher the delay for the minor movements.

Using the peak hour volumes, the existing levels of service were estimated. Table 6.1 presents the LOS results for the study intersections at the existing traffic volume levels.

The City of Ceres' General Plan has established a LOS D or better standard for its major roadways, i.e. expressway and arterial, and LOS C for secondary collector and local roadways. It has classified Service Road as a Class B Expressway, where access is restricted from driveways and local streets. Crows Landing Road is identified as an arterial by the City where individual lot access should be limited and the number of driveways minimized.

The analysis shows that all intersections operate within City standard.

**Table 6.1 Existing Peak Hour Intersection Level of Service**

	Intersection	Control	Peak Hour	Level of Service	Average Delay in seconds
1	Crows Landing Rd / SR 99 NB Ramps	Stop*	AM	A	0.8
			PM	A	1.3
2	Crows Landing Rd / Hatch Rd	Signal	AM	C	27.8
			PM	C	33.3
3	Carpenter Rd / Whitmore Ave	All-way Stop	AM	B	10
			PM	B	14.6
4	Ustick Ave / Whitmore Ave	Stop*	AM	A	1.9
			PM	A	2.3
5	Crows Landing Rd / Whitmore Ave	Signal	AM	C	29.8
			PM	D	42.8
			Sunday	D	35.9
6	Morgan Rd / Whitmore Ave	Signal	AM	C	23.6
			PM	C	29
7	Blaker Rd / Whitmore Ave	Signal	AM	B	18.6
			PM	C	27.3
8	Whitmore Place / El Camino Ave	All-way Stop	AM	C	19.1
			PM	C	23.6
9	Whitmore Place / Whitmore Ave	Stop*	AM	A	4.9
			PM	B	10.8
10	Crows Landing Rd / Hackett Rd	Signal	AM	C	24.5
			PM	C	25.9
			Sunday	C	28.1

	Intersection	Control	Peak Hour	Level of Service	Average Delay in seconds
11	Carpenter Rd / Service Rd	All-way Stop	AM	A	2.5
			PM	A	3.6
12	Crows Landing Rd / Service Rd	Signal	AM	C	27.6
			PM	C	26.7
13	Morgan Rd / Service Rd	All-way Stop	AM	A	9.6
			PM	B	11.1
14	Blaker Rd / Service Rd	All-way Stop	AM	B	10.1
			PM	C	15.8
15	Central Ave / Service Rd	Signal	AM	C	24.8
			PM	C	25.1
16	Mitchell Rd / Service Rd	Signal	AM	C	26
			PM	C	32.2
17	Carpenter Rd / Keyes Rd	All-way Stop	AM	A	8.3
			PM	A	9
18	Crows Landing Rd / Keyes Rd	All-way Stop	AM	A	9.2
			PM	B	10.8

\* For unsignalized 1-way and 2-way STOP intersections, the LOS and delay shown are for the worst minor street movement.

### Roadway Operations

Table 6.2 presents the level of service results of the analysis of the street segments and Table 6.3 presents the results of the analysis of the freeway segments.

The results indicate that the street segment on Whitmore Avenue east of Blaker Road operates at LOS F level during the PM peak hour and the freeway segment on northbound SR 99 north of Crows Landing Road operates at LOS E during the AM peak hour. All other roadway segments currently operate at acceptable levels.

**Table 6.2 Level of Service Criteria – Street Segments**

<b>Roadway Segment Operations - AM Peak Hour</b>			
<i>Street</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>LOS</i>	<i>V/C</i>
Crows Landing Rd	North of Hatch Road	C	0.64
Crows Landing Rd	North of Whitmore Av	C	0.47
Crows Landing Rd	South of Whitmore Av	C	0.39
Whitmore Av	East of Crows Landing Rd	C	0.42
Whitmore Av	East of Blaker Rd	D	0.78
Service Rd	East of Central Av	C	0.30

  

<b>Roadway Segment Operations - PM Peak Hour</b>			
<i>Street</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>LOS</i>	<i>V/C</i>
Crows Landing Rd	North of Hatch Road	D	0.90
Crows Landing Rd	North of Whitmore Av	C	0.59
Crows Landing Rd	South of Whitmore Av	C	0.45
Whitmore Av	East of Crows Landing Rd	C	0.67
Whitmore Av	East of Blaker Rd	<b>F</b>	<b>1.22</b>
Service Rd	East of Central Av	C	0.50

**Table 6.3 Freeway Segment Level of Service**

<b>Roadway Segment Operations - AM Peak Hour</b>			
<i>Freeway</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>LOS</i>	<i>Density</i>
SR 99 - northbound	North of Crows Landing Rd	<b>E</b>	<b>35.8</b>
SR 99 - southbound	North of Crows Landing Rd	C	21.2
SR 99 – northbound	South of Mitchell Rd	D	31.1
SR 99 - southbound	South of Mitchell Rd	C	19.6

  

<b>Roadway Segment Operations - PM Peak Hour</b>			
<i>Freeway</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>LOS</i>	<i>Density</i>
SR 99 - northbound	North of Crows Landing Rd	C	22.4
SR 99 - southbound	North of Crows Landing Rd	D	34.9
SR 99 – northbound	South of Mitchell Rd	C	20.6
SR 99 – southbound	South of Mitchell Rd	D	30.5

**Transit Services**

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Transit services in the project vicinity are provided by the City of Ceres and by Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT).

### **City of Ceres**

The City of Ceres operates a fixed-route bus service called the Ceres Area Transit (CAT) and the Ceres Dial-a-Ride service. CAT Route B runs between the Herndon Road and Hatch Road intersection and the Community Services Agency at Crows Landing Road and Hackett Road. The weekday, hourly service operates between 6 am and 7 pm.

Ceres Dial-a-Ride is an on-demand service available to both residents and visitors of the City and the immediate unincorporated area.

### **Stanislaus Regional Transit**

StaRT Route 40 is a fixed-route bus service that runs between the cities of Modesto and Patterson. In the project vicinity, it runs along Crows Landing Road. It operates five round trips on weekdays between 5:25 am and 8:22 pm and four round trips on Saturday between 6:40 am and 7:22 pm.

StaRT also operates a roundabout service that combines the convenience of fixed-route and dial-a-ride services. The project area is served by the Eastside Shuttle route which operates to Oakdale, Riverbank and Modesto between 6:55 am and 5:30 pm on Monday to Saturday.

Both CAT and StaRT provide connection services to other fixed routes on their systems as well as to the Modesto Area Express (MAX) network.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

Given the topography of Ceres, bicycling and walking are viable alternatives to auto use for both recreational and non-recreational trips. Bicycling and pedestrian facilities are an important component of the transportation network in the city.

Bicycle routes and paths are typical examples of bicycle transportation facilities. Bicycle facilities are defined as the following three classes according to Chapter 1000 of the Caltrans Highway Design Manual:

- *Class I* - Provides a completely separated facility designed for the exclusive use of bicyclists and pedestrians with crossing points minimized.
- *Class II* – Provides a restricted right-of-way designated lane for the exclusive or semi-exclusive use of bicycles with through travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians prohibited, but with vehicle parking and cross-flows by pedestrians and motorists permitted.
- *Class III*– Provides a right-of-way designated by signs or permanent markings and shared with pedestrians and motorists.

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According to the *StanCOG Regional Bicycle Action Plan* (adopted July 2001), there are no bicycle facilities in the project vicinity. However, Class II on-street bike lanes are proposed along Whitmore Avenue, Crows Landing Road and Service Road and Class II bike paths are proposed along Carpenter Road north of Whitmore Avenue and along Whitmore Avenue west of the Plan Area. The Ceres General Plan Transportation and Circulation Element also identified Whitmore Avenue, Crows Landing Road and Service Road, as well as Morgan Road, Blaker Road, Central Avenue in the project vicinity as Class II and Class III bikeways.

Sidewalks may be found intermittently in the project vicinity. In general, sidewalks are only provided on the north side of Whitmore Avenue along the frontage of newer residential developments and on the eastside of Crows Landing Road. No sidewalk exists on Ustick and Service Roads, or along the south side of Whitmore Avenue and the west side of Crows Landing Road immediate adjacent to the project site.

The General Plan explicitly stated a goal of providing a safe, comprehensive, and integrated system of facilities for non-motorized transportation. Specifically, it requires developers to install pedestrian pathways within new development, provide adequate right-of-way to accommodate bikeways, include bicycle facilities, and provide sufficient bicycle parking.

### **Future Roadway Improvements**

Various long range planning efforts have established a blueprint for a regional and local transportation circulation system that supports future development and growth in Ceres and neighboring region. The 2007 Regional Transportation Plan and the City of Ceres General Plan provides a framework for transportation improvements in the region. Reflecting the goals and policies of the planning efforts, future improvements to the roadway network have been identified in a number of sources such as the RTP and specific plans and traffic studies commissioned by the City. A summary of these improvements that may affect the project area is provided in this section.

### **StanCOG Regional Transportation Plan**

Based on need assessments for the region, StanCOG has identified lists of Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects in the 2007 RTP. Tier 1 projects are those that are fiscally constrained and target completion dates are provided. Tier 2 projects are non-fiscally constrained. RTP projects that will most likely affect the Plan Area are located in unincorporated County, Modesto, and Ceres. In addition, a list of locations where signage or striping may be added to improve bicycle and pedestrian access is also provided in the RTP. Key projects that might have significant impacts to the Specific Plan Area are listed in Table 6.4 and described below.

**Table 6. 4 Future Improvement Projects**

Roadway	Segment	Improvement	Tier	Target Date
SR 99	<b>Whitmore Ave</b>	<b>Reconstruct interchange at overpass</b>	1	2010
	<b>Mitchell Rd</b>	<b>Reconstruct interchange</b>	1	2015
	Hatch Rd	Reconstruct interchange	2	
Crows Landing Rd	Service Rd to W Main St	New 6-lane expressway	1 & 2	2010
	W Main St to I-5	Widen from 2 to 4/5 lane expwy	1 & 2	2011
	<b>Whitmore Ave to SR 99</b>	<b>Widen to 4/6 lanes</b>	1	2025
Carpenter Rd	<b>SR 132 to Service Rd</b>	<b>New 6-lane expressway</b>	1	2010
	Whitmore Ave to SR 99	Widen to 6-lane expressway	1	2025
	Service Rd to Whitmore Ave	Widen from 2 to 4 lane expressway	2	
	Service Rd to Hatch Rd	New 4-lane expressway	2	
Hatch Rd	Carpenter Rd to SR 99	New 4-lane expressway	2	
	Crows Landing Rd to SR 99	Widen to 4-lane expressway	1	2025
	SR 99 to Mitchell Rd	Widen from 4 to 6-lane expressway	2	
	Crows Landing Rd to Geer Rd	Widen to 6-lane road	2	
Service Rd	Carpenter Rd to Faith Home Rd	Widen to 4-lane road	2	
	Ustick Rd to Faith Home Rd	Widen from 2 to 4 lane expressway	2	
Whitmore Av	Ustick Rd to Central Rd	Widen from 2 to 4 lane road	2	
	Mitchell Rd to Faith Home Rd	Widen from 2 to 4 lane expressway	2	
Morgan Rd	7 <sup>th</sup> St to Grayson Rd	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes	2	

**Whitmore Avenue Interchange.** Caltrans is planning to reconfigure SR 99 interchange at Whitmore Avenue. The project would result in direct access to and from Whitmore Avenue from northbound SR 99. It would eliminate the Railroad Avenue underpass and the El Camino Avenue and Whitmore Avenue intersection, merge the two existing parallel Whitmore Avenues (two parallel roadways currently exist for a short length) and realign Herndon Road. Two travel lanes per direction would be provided on Whitmore Avenue between Blaker Road to Central Avenue. It is anticipated that the contract for this work will be awarded in August 2008.

**Mitchell Road Interchange.** The Mitchell Road interchange project is collaboration between Caltrans and the City of Ceres. As a part of the project, Mitchell Road would be widened and the Mitchell Road Interchange would be reconfigured.

**Crows Landing Road and Carpenter Road Widening.** Both projects have been identified in the Future Project/Master Planned category in the Stanislaus County Capital Improvement Plan 2007-2008. Inclusion in this category means that project specific plans have not been presented to the Board of Supervisors while master plans were adopted.

**Specific Plans and Traffic Studies**

Some of the Tier 2 projects identified in the RTP would gradually be implemented as properties develop in the region. The following area plans and traffic studies were reviewed for future transportation improvements that would likely affect the West Ceres Specific Plan area.

- Copper Trails Neighborhood Master Plan (Draft EIR) – May 2006
- Maple Glen Master Plan (Administrative Draft EIR) – November 2007
- Transportation Impact Analysis for Mitchell Ranch Center (Administrative Draft) – December 2007

Table 6.5 presents a list of improvements that were either included as a part of the above plans and studies or were recommended as mitigation measures. Only improvements that are considered relevant to the West Ceres Specific Plan study are provided. It should be noted that the plans and studies often only proposed half improvements to the roadway cross sections. For example, both the Copper Trails and the Maple Glen Master Plans proposed only improvements along the south side of Service Road. Funding for the north side, in order to fully upgrade the roadway to expressway standards, will be needed from other sources. The plans and studies also proposed fair share contributions to mitigate some of the impacts of the developments, such as signalization at Morgan Road and Blaker Road on Service Road. The source for the remainder of the improvement costs not covered by the fair share contributions may still need to be determined.

**Table 6.5 Future Improvement Projects**

Location	Improvement
<b>Intersection</b>	
Blaker Rd / Service Rd	Widen intersection
Central Ave / Service Rd	Provide northbound left-turn lane
Blaker Road / Service Rd*	Install traffic signals
Morgan Rd / Service Rd*	Install traffic signals
Moffett Rd / Service Rd	Install traffic signals and widen roadway
Central Ave / Service Rd	Widen intersection to provide one additional eastbound through and one westbound through lanes, and one southbound right-turn lane

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**Location****Improvement****Roadway**

South side of Service Rd from Blaker Rd to eastern property line of Central Valley High School	Widen to include bike lane, two travel lanes and landscaped median
West side of Central Ave from Central Valley High School to Redwood Road	Reconstruct to include two travel lanes, bike lane and landscaped median
South side of Service Rod from Central Ave to Moffett Rd	Upgrade to expressway standard

Source: *kdAnderson, Copper Trail Master Plan Draft EIR, May 2006*

*kdAnderson, Maple Glen Master Plan Administrative Draft EIR, November 2007*

*Fehr & Peers, Transportation Impact Analysis for Mitchell Ranch Center Administrative Draft as of December 2007 (This is not a finalized document)*

**Other Considerations**

A number of other planned developments may also impact the transportation network in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area.

**El Rematito Marketplace**

The planned expansion of the El Rematito Marketplace, also known as Crows Landing Flea Market, located at the northwestern corner of Crows Landing Road and Hackett Road, is scheduled to be complete by June 2008. Upon completion, the capacity of the market would increase from 240 vendors to 400 vendors. The main access driveways are located on Hackett Road just west of Crows Landing Road. As such, significant amount of traffic would utilize the Crows Landing Road and Hackett Road intersection particularly during the AM peak period on both weekdays and weekends. It should be noted that the market is not expected to operate at capacity at all times. The level of activities varies greatly between days of the week as well as months of the year. Mitigation measures proposed in the “*Traffic Impact Analysis for the El Romatito [sic] Market Place*” (kdAnderson, Mary 13, 2002) have already been implemented.

**Fairview Village Specific Plan**

The Fairview Village Specific Plan was adopted by the City of Modesto in 1995 and amended in 1997. The site is located on the east side of Carpenter Road between Hatch Road and Whitmore Avenue. At build-out, the Fairview Village community would contain approximately 2,250 dwelling units, one new and one existing elementary schools as well as neighborhood commercial uses and park areas. The Village may be

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divided into four quadrants around a proposed school and park area. To date, only the northeastern quadrant of about 550 single family homes is built. Once residences along the southern quadrants are built and occupied, the demand on both Whitmore Avenue and Carpenter Road would increase.

### **Crows Landing Naval Air Facility**

Redevelopment of the former Crows Landing Naval Air Base into a transportation and distribution facility is being contemplated. The facility is located about 17 miles south of the Specific Plan Area. The proposed project would create a short haul rail link between the Port of Oakland and the former air base, and establish an inland port at the Crows Landing facility and would create more traffic along that route, including along I-5 and SR 99. The project also includes development of 4,800 acres in and around the air facility into an industrial and business park. One potential impact to the West Ceres Specific Plan Area may be an increase in truck traffic along Crows Landing Road that links Modesto, Ceres, and SR 99 to the facility.

### **Traffic and Circulation Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities**

- Roadway and intersection improvement projects have been identified, planned and/or partially or fully funded which will improve traffic conditions for the plan area.
- Implementation of the StanCOG Plan in the West Ceres Specific Plan Area will contribute to creation of a countywide network of bikeways and connections to facilities, services and recreation areas.
- Cost for Class II and Class III bicycle programs (striping and signing, assuming no widening is required) are inexpensive.
- Class I bicycle programs can do much to encourage and support non-motorized transportation among residents, employees, and visitors to the future plan area community.
- Implementation of the StanCOG Plan will likely enhance the desirability of living in the new West Ceres Specific Plan Area neighborhoods and will provide future contiguous connections to existing and future lands to the north, west, south, and east.
- Bicycle systems and transit stops are not only mutually compatible, but mutually encouraging. A master planned non-motorized system could encourage transit connections as well.
- Federal, State, and regional funding sources are available for pedestrian and bicycle projects.

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## Constraints

- While a master plan has been adopted for the Crows Landing Road widening, no specific plan has been adopted. Some uncertainty as to the ultimate characteristics of Crows Landing and the phasing of its widening will need to be taken into consideration in the West Ceres Specific Plan.
- Some improvements will be necessary off-site to accommodate traffic generated in the plan area as well as existing and future traffic from surrounding areas. Development in the Specific Plan area may not be in control of when off-site improvements are made, which could result in temporary off-site traffic delays.
- There are currently no bicycle facilities in the project vicinity. While the Specific Plan will include on-site bicycle facilities, it is uncertain when connections to other areas will be completed.
- Three City-designated “Major Roadways” run through or adjacent to the plan area including Crows Landing Road, Whitmore Avenue and Service Road. Driveways on these roadways will be limited and residential uses may require a buffer if located adjacent to these roadways.

# 7 INFRASTRUCTURE

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## A. WATER

### Water Supply and Infrastructure Analysis

The City's water system is presently operated by the City of Ceres' Water Services Division, within the Municipal Utilities Department. The water system is intended to serve all areas within the City Limits, as well as other parcels outside the City Limits but within the Sphere of Influence (SOI) (Figure 7.1 and 7.2). The West Ceres Specific Plan (WCSP) is located within the Primary SOI south and west of State Route 99. The City of Ceres adopted its Urban Water Management Plan on November 28, 2005 and submitted to the California Department of Water Resources on December 16, 2005 in order to satisfy the California Water Code Division 6, Part 2.6 (Urban Water Management Planning).

Presently, the only source of potable water for the City of Ceres is groundwater from the Turlock Groundwater Basin. Currently the water quality from the aquifer meets State and Federal water quality requirements. Recently, the level of contaminants such as uranium, manganese, and nitrate has reduced the use of some existing wells. The City currently has nine wells in operation. An additional well is on standby for emergency use and peak water demands. Agricultural users within the City Limits and SOI obtain irrigation water from the Turlock Irrigation District (TID). Surface water from the Tuolumne River is the primary source for irrigation and farmland.

#### Existing Facilities

##### *Wells*

Three (3) City of Ceres wells exist east of the WCSP, west of State Route 99, Rockefeller Well #22, Kinser Well #20 and Blaker Well #29. The City's wells have a production capacity of approximately 11,500 gpm. Currently the City's well system has adequate pumping capacity, but requires a backup well during high water demands. The City has approved the construction of a new well in the WCSP west of Crows Landing Road and north of West Hackett Road (well #31). Data from completed well depths varies from 120 to 425 feet.

Presently, the city of Modesto has an existing Well site located south of Whitmore Avenue and east of Crows Landing Road (G3 Property). A number of existing property / parcels included in the WCSP area are currently being served by the city of Modesto. These existing properties are anticipated to remain "as-is" with no new domestic water service being provided to those properties. It is anticipated that future discussions with the City will occur to discuss ultimate water service.

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### *Storage*

The City has two water storage tanks that can supply additional water during high demand periods. The two tanks have a total storage capacity of 3.8 mg. The facility is located southeast of the WCSP at Blaker Road and West Service Road. The City has six booster pump facilities in operation rated at 1,500 gpm. The booster pumps have a total capacity of 7,500 gpm and is operated during high demand periods.

### *Distribution*

The existing facilities within the WCSP will need to be upgraded in order to meet the project needs. A looped system will be required between the trunk mains in Whitmore Avenue and Service Road. Any proposed well and tank sites within the WCSP project will also be interconnected with the City's transmission system providing additional pressures and capacity for the proposed project. The number of wells, tanks, and pumping facilities will be revised based on the final land use plan and incorporated into future landscape areas where possible.

### *Conservation*

The City currently regulates the use of landscaping water by allowing even numbered residences to water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, while odd numbered residences water on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. No watering is allowed on Mondays and between the hours of 12:00 PM and 7:00 PM during the week.

### Existing Facilities

#### *On-Site*

- An existing 10-inch water line exists in Crows Landing Road
- An existing 10-inch water line exists in East Hackett Road
- Existing 8-inch and 10-inch water lines exists in West Hackett Road

#### *Off-Site*

- An existing 10-inch water line exists in Crows Landing Road
- An existing 10, 12-inch water line exists in East Service Road
- An existing 12-inch water line exists in Whitmore Avenue
- An existing water tank, 10.8 mgd pump station and well at Blaker Road/ East Service Road

### Proposed Facilities

#### *On-Site*

- A proposed 12, 16-inch water line in Crows Landing Road
- A proposed 12-inch water line in West Hackett Road

- 
- A proposed well at Crows Landing Road/West Hackett Road (currently under construction)
  - A proposed water tank and 10 mgd pump station at Crows Landing Road/Whitmore Avenue

#### *Off-Site*

- A proposed 12-inch water line in Union Pacific Railroad
- A proposed 30 -inch TID irrigation line in Whitmore Avenue
- A proposed 12-inch water line in Whitmore Avenue

A water supply assessment will be needed for the WCSP as required by SB 610. The water assessment will analyze water supply, improvements to existing facilities and additional facilities to support the project needs.

The City is planning to transition to dual wells/surface supply and is currently negotiating the agreement. The City is negotiating an agreement with TID to supply 10 mgd or approximately 11,200 acre feet per year of treated surface water from Don Pedro Dam.

### **Water Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities:**

- *Transmission Main Improvements*

The Specific Plan area is located near the Blaker Road/East Service Road pumping facility. Also existing transmission mains within Crows Landing Road, Whitmore Avenue and Service Road provide adequate connection points for the project needs. TID is proposing a transmission main in the small vicinity of Whitmore Avenue, and Morgan Road, which will provide an additional water source close to the project.

The proposed onsite wells will provide water needs for the Project and adjacent property owners. The number of wells, tanks, and pumping facilities will be revised based on the final land use plan and incorporated into future landscape areas where possible.

- *Reservoir and Pump Station Improvements*

The Project will provide new storage reservoirs and booster pump facilities, which will maintain the pressure requirements for the area.

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- *Operational Improvements*

The addition of a new storage tank, booster pumps and wells will help facilitate existing offsite and new onsite facilities to convey any new development demands that may be needed.

**Constraints:**

- *Transmission Main Improvements*

Proposed transmission mains are sized to convey water only for the current General Plan build out. Any development outside the current City Limits/SOI would require new transmission mains to convey needed water. New/proposed transmission mains will be needed from the Blaker Road facility and existing City facilities to serve the Project site.

The majority of the Project is served by the City of Ceres and a small portion is served by the City of Modesto. Each purveyor, will be required to have their separate facilities within the project.

- *Reservoir and Pump Station Improvements*

Any new development within the Project site would be required to construct adequate storage required for the development to prevent any system wide storage deficit. Any new storage reservoirs will also have a booster pump station built which will maintain the pressure requirements for the area. Storage and pumping facilities will be sized based on the final land use plan.

- *Operational Improvements*

The Project will be required to add a new storage tank, booster pumps and wells. Existing facilities that are currently serving institutional facilities and light industrial businesses east of Crows Landing Road will need coordination in order to avoid service interruption during construction.

## **B. WASTEWATER**

### **Collection and Treatment**

The City of Ceres' Sanitary Services Division, within the Public Works Department maintains the sewage collection system, which serves all commercial, residential and industrial development within its city limits and SOI (See attached Figures 7.3 and 7.4). Areas east of Crows Landing are currently being serviced by the City of Modesto and portions of unincorporated acres within the City are using private septic systems. The sewer system is comprised of a series of gravity sewers, pump stations, lift stations and a forcemain network conveying wastewater flows to the City's wastewater treatment plant. The City's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located east of the WCSP on East

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Service Road and Morgan Road. The WWTP is approximately 200 acres, with facilities that include the headworks, aeration ponds and percolation ponds. The WWTP currently treats 2.9 mgd with a capacity of 4.6 mgd and a disposal capacity of 2.9 mgd. The WWTP treatment application includes primary and secondary treatment. The City does not discharge treated wastewater into a waterway, therefore full secondary or tertiary treatment is not currently being applied. The Average Wet Weather Flow (AWWF) is 3.3 mgd and the Peak Wet Weather Flow (PWWF) is 5.5 mgd which necessitates the WWTP to store the wastewater onsite until treated. In 2007 the City processed an average of 2.9 mgd. This results in approximately 1.3 mgd of excess treatment capacity and 1.0 mgd of excess disposal capacity. There is adequate capacity to accommodate future growth until 2015. The WWTP NPDES' permit is currently at 4.2 mgd, which meets the WWTP' designed capacity.

#### *Other Providers*

The City also has an agreement with the City of Turlock for additional disposal of 1.0 mgd via a 12" force main, and by the end of 2008 could be increased to 2 mgd. The City also has an agreement with the City of Modesto to treat 1.6 mgd from the North Ceres Sewer Area. There are also parcels within the City Limits and SOI that are currently using septic tanks. The septic tanks will have to be abandoned, should these properties decide to connect to the City's wastewater system.

#### Existing Facilities

##### *On-Site*

- An existing 10-inch FM sewer line exists in Crows Landing Road (Modesto flow)
- An existing 10-inch FM and 12-inch sewer line exists in East Hackett Road (Modesto flow)
- An existing 8-inch sewer line exists in West Hackett Road (Ceres flow)

##### *Off-Site*

- An existing 8, 21, 24 -inch sewer line exists in East Service Road
- An existing 10" or greater sewer line exists in Whitmore Avenue (Modesto flow)

#### Proposed Facilities

##### *On-Site*

- A proposed 12-inch sewer line in Crows Landing Road
- A proposed 8-inch sewer line in East Hackett Road
- A proposed 10-inch sewer line in West Hackett Road
- A proposed 8-inch sewer line exists in Knox Road

##### *Off-Site*

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- An expansion of WWTP to an ultimate capacity of 7.9 mgd
  - A proposed 36-inch, 42-inch sewer line in West Service Road

### **Future Service and Expansion**

The City's population growth for the General Plan build-out is expected to reach about 79,000. The WWTP has treatment capacity until 2015. Growth beyond 2015 will require the expansion of infrastructure conveyance and treatment. The City is required to plan for future service demands once the WWTP reaches 75 percent of its design flows. <sup>1</sup>All future development will be required to fund and construct the necessary infrastructure. The WWTP is planning an expansion to a capacity of 7.9 mgd. The City has also has an agreement with the City of Turlock to accommodate up to 7mgd of future flows.

### **Wastewater Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities:**

- Existing trunk mains in Service Road within a quarter of a mile to the project will provide the sewer connection for the project. The WWTP is located southeast of the project at the intersection of Service Road and Blaker Road.
- The Project sewer trunk facilities will provide stub connections for future projects.
- Project sewer facilities will replace and or upsize existing facilities.
- The Project will provide gravity sewer connections for existing residents using septic tanks on Carol Lane.

#### **Constraints:**

- The project will need to construct offsite sewer main from Crows Landing Road to Morgan Road. Sewer will need to bore and jack under Union Pacific Railroad.
- Lift stations /pumping facilities may be required in order to connect to trunk facilities in Service Road.
- Existing sewer facilities – City of Modesto and City of Ceres, will need to be replaced and or upsized
- Existing facilities that are currently serving institutional facilities and light industrial businesses east of Crows landing Road will need coordination in order to avoid service interruption during construction.
- The future capacity of the WWTP is projected to be 7.9 mgd.
- Convert existing septic residents on Carol Lane to connect to projects' sewer system
- Sewer system currently served by City of Ceres and City of Modesto – existing and proposed facilities will need to be accommodated within future right of way
- Right of way/easement acquisition for pump station facilities and sewer trunk lines will be needed.

Provide future stubs to accommodate SOI expansion south of the project.

<sup>1</sup>City of Ceres MSR, November 2007, pg 4.0-14

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## C. STORM DRAINAGE AND FLOOD PROTECTION

Storm drainage services to handle internal storm runoff and flood protection related to the WCSP are provided by the City of Ceres' Streets Division within the Community Development Department. Discharge (if any) to the TID facilities is permitted under a current agreement between the City and TID.

The City is responsible for the collection, operation and maintenance of the surface, and underground drainage facilities that discharge to localized and regional detention/retention facilities within the project (See Figures 7.5 and 7.6). The detention/retention basins drain to TID laterals, the Ceres Main Canal and ultimately to the Tuolumne river and San Joaquin River. Stormwater pumping stations are operated and maintained by the City. TID will be responsible for offsite facilities that the project will require for overland release and runoff during high storm events. Storm water is disposed of by percolation and discharge to TID Lateral #2 south of Service Road. Existing TID facilities within the project will need to be upgraded and relocated within the proposed right of way.

The City does not operate stormwater treatment detention facilities. Water quality treatment occurs within retention/detention basins with very little discharge to watersheds of the state. The City is exempt from the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements for stormwater discharges into public waterways. The City is also exempt from State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) industrial General Permit. The exemption for the City is based upon no drainage being directly discharged to the "Waters of the U.S."

A 1995 Storm Drain Master Plan was adopted to evaluate the future demands of the City's Primary SOI areas. New residential developments will be required to use the 10-year frequency design storm criteria. A 100-year storm must be accommodated within the basin and local streets. Basin pumps are designed to dispose of water from a 10 year storm within approximately a 24-hour period. Detention and retention facilities are designed for a 50-year 24-hour storm. The City's design standard is based on the Rational Method and the Stanislaus County 1976 Storm Drain Design Manual. All future development will be required to fund and construct the necessary infrastructure.

### Existing Facilities

#### *On-Site*

- An existing 24-inch, 30-inch storm drain line exists in Crows Landing Road
- An existing 36-inch storm drain line exists in East Hackett Road

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*Off-Site*

- TID Lateral #2 located between Service Road and Grayson Road will be the primary overland release conveyance for drainage
- Adjacent properties has self contained detention facilities within each developed parcel

### **Storm Drainage and Flood Protection Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities:**

- The Project will provide regional detention/retention facilities.
- Existing drainage lines and structures will be upgraded and upsized to accommodate future needs.
- Enhancement of drainage channels, detention/retention basins can serve aesthetic purposes such as open space, bike trails, wetland preserves and habitats.
- The Project will be providing additional improvements to existing pump stations and the construction of new discharge facilities.

Work within TID drainage channels will be filed under the TID permit.

#### **Constraints:**

- Onsite detention/retention facilities may need to be constructed to contain project flows. Offsite connection to TID facilities (TID Lat #2) for high flow events may be required.
- Existing drainage lines and structures may need to be relocated, and upsized to accommodate future right of way requirements and increased project needs.
- Additional improvements to existing pump stations and construction of new discharge facilities will be required.

## **D. TURLOCK IRRIGATION DISTRICT 8**

Turlock Irrigation District (TID) is responsible for providing electricity for the City of Ceres including future build-out, development, and urbanization within the proposed SOI (See Figure 7.7 and 7.8). TID is also responsible for the distribution of irrigation water for agricultural use, as well as providing future domestic water from the proposed water treatment facility near the City of Hughson along the Tuolumne River (See Figure 7.9 and 7.10).

### Irrigation

TID is proposing to construct major transmission pipelines from the water treatment plant to the City of Ceres by way of Hatch Road and Whitmore Ave for potable water. Two approximate locations for interconnection with the City's water system and placement of reservoirs have been identified near the intersections of Hatch Road/Faith Home Road and Whitmore Ave./Carpenter Ave. Under the terms of the agreement TID will be providing 11,500 acre feet per year of treated surface water to the City. The year round diversion of surface water under the proposed project would be for domestic purposes

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and would extend into the non-irrigation season from October to March. During the irrigation season approximately half of the water will be available for irrigation purposes. It is anticipated that the potable water will be available for use in 2011 for this project.

TID serves over 5,500 irrigation customers covering approximately 149,500 acres of farmland. All irrigation water is delivered by gravity through a series of canals and laterals. Irrigation season begins in mid March and continue through mid October. In drought years the District may supplement irrigation water from wells pumped directly into the canal system.

### Power

TID is the operating partner and majority owner of the Don Pedro Hydroelectric project with 68.46 percent ownership. Modesto Irrigation District owns the other 31.54 percent. The powerhouse can generate up to 203 megawatts of electric power from its four generators. TID also generates power from its irrigation canal system from small hydroelectric plants. These supplement the main hydroelectric facility during high season demands. TID currently operates two natural gas centers. The Walnut Energy Center is capable of providing 250-megawatts, while the Walnut and Almond power plants provide an additional 49.9 megawatts each. Conversations with TID suggests a substation will be required at the intersection of Ustick Road and Service Road. The substation will require 1acre to 1.5 acre site. Overhead transmission lines from point of connection to the substation, as well as substation facilities will be the responsibility of TID.

In December 2005, the District began operating its own electric service control area. TID assumed full responsibility for generating, securing, scheduling, balancing, and delivering power to it's customers on a 24-hour basis.

### Gas

PG&E is the current supplier of natural gas to the City of Ceres, as well as the future supplier for new developments within SOI areas.

## **Turlock Irrigation District 8 Opportunities and Constraints**

### **Opportunities:**

- The Project will be underground existing overhead electrical lines creating a more aesthetic project environment lines 64K and above are not anticipated to be underground.
- TID will receive new and improved facilities with the project development.
- Relocation of TID facilities dispersed throughout the project to within right of ways will facilitate access and maintenance.
- Removal and relocation of TID facilities to proposed right-of-ways reduces encumbrances on developable property.

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**Constraints:**

- Existing TID pipeline facilities within the WCSP will need to be relocated and improved.
- Existing wells will need to be abandoned.
- Existing overhead electrical lines will need to be under ground and/or relocated.
- Easements will need to be granted for pipelines and overhead electrical lines that can not be relocated within a right-of-way.
- Existing utility consultants (Pac Bell, Comcast, fiber optic etc.) connected to TID overhead lines will need coordination and permission prior to relocation or undergrounding.

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## 8 PUBLIC SERVICES

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### A. FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Currently, fire protection to the unincorporated West Ceres Specific Plan area and the surrounding areas is provided by the Westport Fire Protection District. As part of the annexation process, it is anticipated that Fire District boundaries will be reorganized so that the West Ceres Specific Plan area will fall within the fire protection service area of the City of Ceres Fire Department.

The Ceres Fire Department has four (4) fire stations, the closest being the satellite station at Boyle Drive and E. Service Road, just south of the southeastern corner of the plan area. This satellite station has limited fire-fighting capability but is backed-up by the main station at 2755 Third Street in downtown Ceres, approximately 3 to 4 miles from the West Ceres Specific Plan area. Ceres fire stations respond to not only structure fires, but also a number of medical aid, rescue, public assistance and mutual aid calls as well. Nearly 68 percent of all of calls are medical in nature and all firefighters are also trained Emergency Medical Technicians. The Ceres Fire Department maintains target response times of 3 to 5 minutes.

Per the 1994 agreement between the City of Ceres and the County, the Ceres Fire Department would continue to provide fire and life protection (emergency medical) services to the County facility in the Specific Plan area.

The West Ceres Specific Plan team has met with the Ceres Fire Department to discuss future needs for service. The Ceres Fire Department has indicated that they may not be able to provide adequate fire protection for the West Ceres Specific Plan area from their existing stations and with existing equipment. The station at Boyle Drive and Service Road is approximately 2.5 miles along the existing roadways from the far corner of the Specific Plan area. The Fire Department has requested digital maps for analysis of response times once potential future roadways are planned.

At this point, the Fire Department considers it likely that they will not be able to maintain adequate response times to serve the Specific Plan area from the existing stations and would need to pursue the possibility of a fifth station within the Specific Plan area. They have provided the following information in regard to a new station:

- While the roadway plan has not yet been proposed, the intersection of Hackett Road and Knox Road is likely to be the general area in which a new station would be most appropriate.
- For traffic reasons, the station should not be located too close to a school.
- A station would need to be approximately 7,000 square feet on 1 acre of land and would be staffed by an engine company of two fire fighters at all times.
- To give an idea of cost, the recently constructed station cost 3 million dollars, exclusive of land acquisition, but including an engine.

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- Service levels would need to be maintained at all times. This could mean that project sponsors will need to work with the Fire Department to identify available funding strategies to pay for needed improvements and staffing up front, before fees and taxes would otherwise be available to off-set these costs.

The Fire Department also voiced concerns over their current ability to provide fire coverage to the G3 facility. Coverage of this facility would require a truck with a ladder that could provide access to the multi-story facility in the event of a structure fire. The Fire Department's one existing truck is currently dedicated to a commercial district in a different area of the City. Depending on the specifics of what is proposed under the Specific Plan, other uses, such as multi-story light industrial or commercial/residential mixed use could require the truck for service as well. The Fire Department has provided the following information regarding a truck company:

- The G3 facility will need to be served by a truck company. This new truck company will need to be on-line as soon as the Ceres Fire Department assumes coverage of the Specific Plan area. This could mean that project sponsors will need to work with the Fire Department to identify available funding strategies to pay for a truck company up front, before fees and taxes would otherwise be available to off-set these costs.
- A truck costs approximately 1 million dollars and there is a lag of about 1 year from the time it is purchased to the delivery date.
- A truck company is a staff of four (4), as opposed to the two-man crew for an engine.

Another consideration is that the removal of the Specific Plan area, and specifically of the G3 facility, from the Westport Fire District could represent a significant loss of tax revenue for the District. Ultimately, as part of the review of the annexation application, the Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Committee (LAFCO) is obligated to evaluate the effects of any such reorganization on the affected agencies and make specific findings regarding any existing district's continuing feasibility and ability to provide services. The following considerations relate to this change in fire service:

- Mitigation for the loss of revenue to the Westport Fire District may be required. The Plan for Public Services will need to explore the need for mitigating the loss of revenue, possibly through tax-sharing or other agreements.
- It is presumed that the Westport Fire District would be unable to provide urban levels of fire protection and emergency medical response that will be appropriate for the West Ceres Specific Plan area as it develops under the Specific Plan. However, it may be mutually beneficial to allow a period of early transition in which the Westport Fire District retains coverage of all or a portion of the Specific Plan area prior to development under the Specific Plan. Such a transition period could be part of the plan to mitigate loss of revenue while also allowing a ramping-up period for Ceres Fire District to get any necessary fire service companies and/or facilities on-line. This will need to be explored further in the Plan for Public Services.

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## **B. POLICE**

Currently, law enforcement service to the unincorporated West Ceres Specific Plan area is provided by the County Sheriff's Office. Once annexed, the West Ceres Specific Plan area will fall within the service area of the City of Ceres Police Department. The Ceres Police Department has 51 sworn officers with a target ratio of 1 to 1.5 officers per 1,000 residents. The Ceres Police Department operates out of the 2727 Third Street station, about 3 to 4 miles from the West Ceres Specific Plan area.

The West Ceres Specific Plan team has met with the Ceres Police Department to discuss future needs for service. The Police Department has provided the following information:

- To serve the Specific Plan area, the Ceres Police Department would pursue a substation within the plan area. The Police and Fire Departments would support a combined new facility, of which the police substation would need approximately 800 square feet for the substation.

## **C. LIBRARIES**

The Stanislaus County Public Library has 13 branches, in Modesto, Denair, Empire, Hughson, Keyes, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Salida, Turlock, and Waterford, as well as in Ceres, plus a virtual library branch at [www.stanislauslibrary.org](http://www.stanislauslibrary.org).

In addition to providing access to library items and reference information, library services include weekly story times, teen and children's summer reading clubs, "Traveling Tales" storytelling kits and training for child care providers, home delivery service for homebound residents, the "Reading Works" adult literacy program in partnership with the Stanislaus Literacy Center, and computer literacy classes through "Bridges to Technology". The Stanislaus County Library Foundation raises funds, holds special events, and supports projects throughout the library system.

The Ceres Library is less than 3 miles from the West Ceres Specific Plan area, at 2250 Magnolia Street. The Modesto Library is the largest in the library system, circulating over one million items a year, and is also within 5 miles of the Specific Plan area.

Preliminary correspondence with County Library Personnel lead to a telephone conversation with Richard Jantz, a representative for capital improvements in the County library system. Mr. Jantz was able to provide the following information:

Approval is being sought to update the strategic library plan. It is expected this plan will include a new regional library. At this point, the City of Ceres is not being considered as a location for the regional library.

It can be anticipated that an additional library branch in the Specific Plan area would not be desirable. Some portion of Development Impact Fees generated in the West Ceres

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Specific Plan area will likely go toward maintaining and improving existing library property and services.

## **D. SCHOOL SERVICES**

The eastern portion of the West Ceres Specific Plan area, between the Union Pacific rail line and Crows Landing Road, is within the Ceres Unified School District. However, no students would be expected to be generated in this area as it includes only the County complex and the G3 industrial facility.

The western portion of the West Ceres Specific Plan area, from Crows Landing Road to Ustick Road, is located within the Modesto School District and this District will be responsible for education of West Ceres students from kindergarten through high school. Within this District, the schools are designed to serve kindergarten through 6th grade in elementary schools, 7th and 8th grades in junior high schools, and 9th to 12th grades in high schools.

The West Ceres Specific Plan team met with Modesto School District representatives to consider future school needs. Based on Modesto School District student generation rates and projected enrollment/capacity of existing schools, it is anticipated that capacity for West Ceres junior high and high school students can be met with existing facilities. High school students would be bussed to Thomas Downey High School, approximately 5 to 6 miles away at 1000 Coffee Road in Modesto.

Based on Modesto School District student generation rates and ball-park figures for potential residential development, the West Ceres Specific Plan area would be expected to generate approximately 400 elementary school students at build-out. Nearby elementary schools are at or above capacity. It is anticipated that one elementary school will need to be constructed in the Specific Plan area. The District provided the following guidelines with respect to a new elementary school:

- A “typical” new elementary school site is 12-14 acres (net) in size.
- Development of adjoining parks is allowed, but not mandatory, as far as the District is concerned. There is a potential for sharing of facilities by the general public and the students through a joint agreement with the City.
- Today’s schools are utilitarian in design, mostly “form follows function.”
- Potential school sites will be evaluated by virtue of the “best walking distance” to the facility for students.
- Constraints to school locations follow State standards: separation from railroads, transmission lines, high pressure pipelines, wastewater treatment plants, freeways, other undesirable elements.
- The school site may be located along arterials, collectors, or local roads, depending on what works best and is safe.

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## **E. PARKS**

Neighborhood parks should be centrally located and utilized as a focal point within the neighborhood. In addition to being accessible, it should provide for both active and passive recreational activities.

General Plan park policies call for the provision of neighborhood parks that range from 5 to 10 acres and community parks that range from 40 to 60 acres. The WCSP will need to provide parks and/or playfields associated with new residential development at a standard of 1.4-acres for every 1,000 residents.

### **Public Services Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities**

##### Schools

- There is an opportunity to locate a new Modesto School District elementary school in the WCSP area. The planning process can take into account the land requirements needed for this future school site and plan accordingly to make the new school a focal point for the community and ensure safe walking routes for students.
- There may be an opportunity to create a combined use park to serve both the school and community.
- The Modesto School District has capacity in its existing Junior High and High Schools to accommodate WCSP students.

##### Libraries

- The WCSP area would continue to be served by the Stanislaus County Library System, with is located within 5 miles of two branches of the Stanislaus County library, including the Ceres Library in nearby downtown Ceres.

##### Police and Fire Services

- The WCSP provides an opportunity to consider funding strategies to provide the necessary Fire Department facilities when they are needed.
- If both a new fire station and police station are determined to be necessary in the plan area, there is the opportunity to create a combined facility.
- It may be possible to negotiate a transition period before the Ceres Fire Department takes over coverage of the plan area that would allow time to bring necessary facilities, equipment, and staff on-line.

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**Constraints**

- As an unincorporated and mostly undeveloped area, the plan area is not currently served by City public services and facilities.
- Development under the Specific Plan would be expected to increase demand for parks, schools, fire protection and police services beyond what can be provided with existing facilities and staff.
- Mitigation for the loss of revenue to the Westport Fire District may be required, possibility through tax-sharing or other agreements.
- As a dead-end street, Carol Lane does not provide appropriate emergency access. A through connection, turn around, or gated connection with Knox box control should be considered.

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## 9 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

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### A. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Diane Moore, Principal Biologist with Moore Biological Consultants has been contracted to undertake a biological assessment of the West Ceres Specific Plan area. A field survey of the majority of the Plan Area was conducted on March 7, 2008. Areas excluded from the field survey included the County facilities in the southeast part of the plan area, and the cluster of small residential parcels along Carol Lane. Due to access limitations at a few properties, part of the survey was conducted from surrounding parcels using binoculars. The following is a summary of the conclusions reached by Moore Biological Consultants.

#### HABITAT FOR SPECIAL-STATUS PLANTS AND ANIMALS

The west part of the specific plan area consists primarily of almond orchards and fields farmed in hay crops. The east part of the plan area is already developed in industrial uses. Due to previous development, intensive agriculture, and associated lack of suitable habitat, the likelihood of occurrence of special-status plants within the West Ceres Specific Plan area is considered extremely low. The likelihood of occurrence of listed, candidate, and other special-status wildlife animal species within the plan area is generally considered low. Although no special-status wildlife species were observed, the site contains suitable foraging and nesting habitat for Swainson's hawk and burrowing owl; valley elderberry longhorn beetle could potentially inhabit a blue elderberry shrub along the west edge of Crows Landing Road (Figure 1).

Special-status that have potential to occur within the plan area on more than a transitory or very occasional basis include:

- *Swainson's Hawk*: forages in annual cropland and nests in relatively large trees. Swainson's hawks have nested within 3 miles of the plan area and could potentially nest and forage in the site.
- *Burrowing Owl*: forages in annual cropland and nests in ground squirrel burrow. There are no records of burrowing owl in or near the plan area, but on-site habitats are moderately suitable.
- *Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle*: lives in blue elderberry shrubs, primarily along riparian corridors. There was no clear indication of species occupancy on the shrubs, but occupancy is still possible.

Future urban development within the West Ceres Specific Plan will result in a loss of potential foraging and nesting habitat for Swainson's hawk and burrowing owl, and will contribute to a cumulative loss of open space and associated biological resource values. Additionally, removal or development in close proximity to the blue elderberry shrub would result in loss of potential habitat, and possibly take of any valley elderberry longhorn beetles that may inhabit the shrub.

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## WETLANDS

Historically, the entire West Ceres Specific Plan area was highly disturbed leveled farmland; some of the site is now developed and the remaining areas continue to be cultivated. No potentially jurisdictional wetlands or Waters of the U.S. were observed in or near the West Ceres Specific Plan area. Specifically, there are no streams, irrigation ditches, vernal pools, seasonal wetlands, marshes, ponds, or lakes of any type within the plan area.

### **Biological Resources Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities:**

- In 1994, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) published their Staff Report regarding Mitigation for Impacts to Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo Swainsoni*) in the Central Valley of California. The staff report provides a framework for assessing project impacts, guidance on habitat mitigation in the form of easements on off-site lands, and measures to minimize potential construction impacts to nesting hawks. Swainson's hawk mitigation is routine; in today's economy, mitigation usually ranges from \$5,000 to \$20,000 per acre of annual grassland and cropland. Orchards are not suitable foraging habitat for Swainson's hawks and development in orchards does not trigger compensatory habitat mitigation.
- In 1995, CDFG published their Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation. The staff report provides the framework for minimizing potential construction impacts to burrowing owls through setbacks from active nests and relocation of any non-nesting owls that move into construction areas. It is considered unlikely that compensatory habitat mitigation will be required of the West Ceres Specific Plan area, as burrowing owl as mitigation is usually only triggered by on-site presence.
- It is possible that the valley elderberry longhorn beetle may be de-listed prior to development near the blue elderberry shrub, as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has determined de-listing is warranted. Until the species is de-listed, or if it is not de-listed, the USFWS 1999 Conservation Guidelines for the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle provides mitigation standards for the removal of or work near blue elderberry shrubs that may support valley elderberry longhorn beetle. Mitigation is routinely accomplished through replacement plantings on off-site lands, payment of fees to in-lieu funds, or purchase of credits in a USFWS-approved mitigation bank.

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**Constraints:**

- The only challenging biological “constraint” in the West Ceres Specific Plan area is the lone blue elderberry shrub. Due to absence of a regional Habitat Conservation Plan or federal nexus (e.g. a Clean Water Act 404 permit) consultation with USFWS will need to be via the Section 10 consultation process, which routinely takes several years.

**B. CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Pacific Legacy has been contracted to conduct a preliminary cultural and historic analysis for the West Ceres Specific Plan area.

A records search of the Sacred Lands Inventory maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) identified no Native American cultural resources listed for the Specific Plan area. Correspondences with potentially interested Native American Tribes (per SB 18 requirements) have not yet yielded any responses.

A record and information search was requested for the project area and conducted in March 2008 by the Central California Information Center (CCIC). The record search revealed that no prehistoric or historic archaeological resources have been reported to the CCIC within the Specific Plan area or within the ½ mile surrounding areas. A portion of Specific Plan area (the northwestern corner of the plan area, east to Knox Road and south nearly to Hackett Road) has been previously surveyed, with no cultural resources identified as present.

In addition, historic maps were examined to identify structures that have existed in the plan area long enough to have the potential to qualify as historic structures (45 years or older). Two potentially historic structures were identified through this method as follows: a structure at the end of a driveway just south of Hackett Road and another structure southeast of the intersection of Hackett and Knox Roads. The locations of these potentially historic areas are illustrated on Figure 9.2. An architectural evaluation will need to be completed by an historic architect to determine the historic status of these structures. Carol Lane was excluded from the study area as it is not anticipated that the Specific Plan will propose changes to this neighborhood. However, it is important to note that many if not most of the houses along Carol Lane were built sufficiently long ago that they would be considered potential historic structures.

Additional details can be found in the preliminary historic and cultural resources study included as Appendix B in this report.

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## **Cultural and Historic Resources Opportunities and Constraints**

### **Opportunities:**

- If structures on site are determined to be historic, the plan can build in appropriate ways to address these resources through land use planning.
- Preliminary analysis suggests that the site is unlikely to contain other cultural or historic resources that may otherwise constrain development.

### **Constraints:**

- A portion of the study area has not been fully surveyed for the presence of historic or prehistoric resources. Such a study will need to be undertaken prior to development in these areas.
- Two structures in the study area have been identified as potentially historic. If these are found to be historic structures, avoidance of these structures could constrain development near those sites.

## **C. GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

### **Geology and Soils**

Information from the California Geological Survey, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the California Department of Water Resources, the California State Water Resources Control Board, and the City of Ceres was reviewed to provide a basis of feasibility for the development of the WCSP area and to provide some general perspectives on existing geological conditions as outlined below and how they relate to the overall feasibility of the proposed area. As development is approved, additional geotechnical surveys and reports will be required to obtain more specific data necessary to evaluate the suitability and limitation, if any, for the proposed land uses.

### **Geologic Setting**

The WCSP area is located within the San Joaquin Valley. According to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118 (1/2006), “The San Joaquin Valley is a structural trough up to 200 miles long and 70 miles wide. It is filled with up to 32,000 feet of marine and continental sediments deposited during periodic inundation by the Pacific Ocean and by erosion of the surrounding mountains.”

The WCSP area is approximately one (1) mile south of the Tuolumne River, which runs in a mostly east to west direction. Regional activity is dominated by agriculture with some existing commercial, light industrial, and community facilities in the eastern portion of the area east of Crows Landing Road.

### **Regional Faulting and Seismicity**

According to California Geological Survey Special Publication 42 *Fault-Rupture Hazard Zones in California* (Interim Revision 2007), the WCSP area is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. The only such zones in Stanislaus County are located in the southwest-most portion of the county, approximately 30 miles southwest of the WCSP area.

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The U.S. Geological Survey Earthquake Hazards Program Quaternary Fault and Fold Database<sup>7</sup> maps faults known to be the source of earthquakes with magnitude 6 or greater during the past 1,600,000 years. The nearest Quaternary fault to the WCSP area is the Ortigalita fault zone, Cottonwood Arm section, located approximately 27 miles southwest of the WCSP area. The Ortigalita fault zone, Cottonwood Arm section has been active within the last 15,000 years. The next nearest Quaternary fault that has been active within the last 15,000 years is the Greenville fault zone, Arroyo Mocho section, located approximately 30 miles west of the WCSP area.

### **Soils**

Soil classifications within the West Ceres Specific Plan area were obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database for the Eastern Stanislaus Area, California (12/2007). The SSURGO data is the most detailed soils data prepared under the National Comparative Soil Survey. The majority of the Specific Plan area is considered to be prime farmland if irrigated (Figure 9.4). A very small portion of the area (approximately 3,000 square feet) is considered farmland of statewide importance. Soils in the West Ceres Specific Plan area include varieties of Dinuba sandy loam, Hanford sandy loam, and Tujunga sandy loam (Figure 9.3). Natural topography generally drops in the southwest direction with the elevation differences varying from 0-4 feet across the site.

### **Groundwater**

The WCSP area is located within the Turlock Sub basin of the San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin (DWR Bulletin 118, 1/2006). According to Bulletin 118, “The primary hydrogeologic units in the Turlock Sub basin include both consolidated and unconsolidated sedimentary deposits. The consolidated deposits include the Ione Formation of Miocene age, the Valley Springs Formation of Eocene age, and the Mehrten Formation, which was deposited during the Miocene to Pliocene Epochs. The consolidated deposits lie in the eastern portion of the sub basin and generally yield small quantities of water to wells except for the Mehrten Formation, which is [...] composed of up to 800 feet of [deposits].

“Unconsolidated deposits include continental deposits, older alluvium, younger alluvium, and flood-basin deposits. [...] The continental deposits and older alluvium are the main water-yielding units in the unconsolidated deposits.”

Groundwater levels in the Modesto-Ceres area were generally declining until the Modesto Regional Water Treatment Plant began surface water deliveries in 1995. Groundwater levels appear to have stabilized and recovered somewhat since then, but would be expected to fluctuate in response to seasonal and long-term balances in pumping and recharge. Data from shallow monitoring wells located north of the WCSP area indicate that groundwater levels from 2002 through 2007 ranged from 30 to 45 feet below ground surface (State Water Resources Control Board). Static water levels measured in several City of Ceres wells in Spring 2008 ranged from 40 to 60 feet below ground surface. City wells generally produce 1,000 to 1,800 gallons per minute.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Geological Survey and California Geological Survey, 2006, Quaternary fault and fold database for the United States, accessed 4/1/2008, from USGS web site: <http://earthquakes.usgs.gov/regional/qfaults/>.

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Data from City of Ceres wells indicates that groundwater quality varies throughout the City and with depth. In many areas, water from shallow aquifers contains concentrations of nitrate and uranium that exceed the State of California Department of Public Health's primary (health-based) maximum contaminant level (MCL). Water from deeper aquifers may contain concentrations of arsenic that exceed the primary MCL, and concentrations of manganese and total dissolved solids that exceed the secondary (aesthetic) MCL.

### **Contamination**

A search of contamination records in and around the WCSP area was performed by Environmental Data Resources Inc. on March 4, 2008. Records were consistent with agricultural and industrial land uses, and included information on fuel storage, small-quantity hazardous materials generation, and other potentially contaminating activities. None of the identified records indicated the existence or threat of significant contamination within the WCSP area.

Within the WCSP, there are a number of records of historic and existing underground fuel storage tanks. In the Central Valley, it is common for farmers to have motor vehicle fuel tanks (typically several hundred gallons) on their property. Information on when and how historic tanks were removed is not available. If the tanks leaked at some point, contaminated soils may be present that will need to be removed during development of the WCSP area. The tanks are believed to have been relatively small, so the potential for significant contamination from the historic underground fuel storage tanks is limited.

Small-quantity hazardous materials generated within the WCSP area include solvents, photochemicals, and waste oil. Because of the small quantities, these are not considered to pose a significant risk of contamination.

### **Geology and Soils Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities:**

##### Faulting and Seismicity:

Since there are no known active faults crossing the WCSP area and since the planning area is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, fault ground rupture is unlikely at the site.

##### Soils:

The vast majority of the WCSP area is not considered farmland of Statewide Importance.

##### Groundwater:

Groundwater levels are deep enough to accommodate planned land uses.

##### Hazardous Materials:

Although no site-specific testing has been performed, a search of contaminant records within the WCSP area indicate that conditions should not impact the planned use of the planning area as a residential subdivision.

#### **Constraints:**

##### Faulting and Seismicity:

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An earthquake along a mapped active fault could cause ground shaking within the WCSP area.

If an earthquake occurred along a fault not mapped as active, but located closer to the WCSP area, impacts within the WCSP area could be greater.

Soils:

- A very small portion of the WCSP area is considered farmland of statewide importance.
- A majority of the acreage is considered “Prime Farmland” if irrigated.

Groundwater:

It may be difficult to obtain groundwater that is of acceptable quality for municipal use without treatment.

Hazardous Materials:

Industrial land uses and chemicals storage in and around the WCSP area present a risk of potential contamination.

## **D. HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

### **Regulatory Database**

A Site Report of regulatory data bases maintained by county, state, and federal agencies was prepared on the West Ceres Project area by EDR on March 6, 2008. The Project area includes institutional facilities, light industrial/manufacturing sites, agricultural farms, a small residential development and farm structures and buildings.

The site records review did not reveal evidence of environmental concerns including documentation or physical evidence of significant soil or groundwater impairments within the planning area. A review of regulatory databases found no documentation of hazardous materials violations or discharge on the planning area.

No surface soil sampling or air sampling program with laboratory testing was previously conducted on or adjacent to the planning area. The fields may contain trace concentrations of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer residues from historical agricultural practices.

Figure 9.5 shows a map of the sites within and adjacent to the Project area that were included for the Site Report performed by EDR.

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## **E. NOISE**

Sources of significant noise in the Specific Plan area include the roadways and rail line as well as the potential for industrial noise sources. A Union Pacific rail line runs along the area's eastern boundary, separated from the remainder of the Specific Plan area by the existing County facility and G3 facility. It is unlikely the noise and vibration effects of the rail line would extend beyond these existing uses to impact new development.

Roadways carrying high volumes of traffic will generate traffic-related noise. Roadways within or bordering the Plan area that currently or are planned to fit this category include Whitmore Avenue, Service Road, and Crows Landing Road. Additional high-volume collector or arterial roads may be proposed in the plan area. The following noise concerns should be taken into consideration related to high-volume roadways:

- High-volume roadways could generate noise levels with the potential to impact residential uses.
- Residential uses bordering high-volume roadways may require sound walls to reduce noise volumes.
- Non-residential uses, such as commercial or light industrial would be less sensitive to noise from roadways.

Additionally, industrial and light industrial uses have the potential to generate noise levels that would impact residential uses. Non-residential uses, such as commercial or other industrial uses would be less sensitive to noise from industrial uses. This would include the existing G3 facility as well as any new light industrial proposed in the plan area.

While generally not considered significant noise impacts from an environmental review perspective, commercial uses and rural ranchettes have the potential to generate noise complaints from new residential subdivisions if not properly planned. The rural ranchettes on Carol Lane currently allow the keeping of horses, chickens and other farm animals, the noise from which is sometimes considered a nuisance by suburban residential uses. Additionally, truck deliveries to commercial areas involve a certain amount of noise from idling trucks and metal rolling doors.

### **Noise Opportunities and Constraints**

#### **Opportunities:**

- Noise from existing traffic and planned increases in traffic can be taken into account up-front and mitigated to reduce or avoid impacting residential uses with high levels of traffic noise.
- Truck routes and loading areas can be considered and possibly regulated in the Specific Plan to avoid noise impacts to nearby residential.

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- The Specific Plan can go into the detail required to address boundaries and buffers between land uses with potentially conflicting noise levels and sensitivities.

**Constraints:**

- Boundaries between industrial uses and other uses, particularly residential, will need to be carefully considered, possibly with physical buffers and/or constrictive regulations in place to reduce the potential for noise impacts.
- Truck routes and the location of truck loading areas or other outdoor loading activities (such as the flea market) should be considered and potentially regulated and/or buffered to avoid noise complaints from adjacent residential uses.
- Uses surrounding Carol Lane will need to be carefully considered. If residential uses are proposed, these units may need to include CC&R's recognizing the existing noise environment.

**F. ODORS**

Both agricultural uses and industrial uses have the potential to create odors that could be considered objectionable to nearby sensitive uses such as residences, schools, and outdoor uses, such as parks or outdoor retail. While odors rarely have direct health impacts, they can be unpleasant and can lead to distress and complaints from those affected.

Existing agriculture on and adjacent to the site can emit chemical and organic odors when fertilizing and protecting crops. While most normal agriculture-related smells are generally accepted as part of life in a rural/suburban area, certain uses, such as chicken ranches, are linked to distress and complaints from nearby residents. The presence of chicken ranches along the adjacent agricultural area to the west of Ustick Road and the likelihood of odor impacts on the plan area will need to be further explored.

Light industrial uses are not generally associated with objectionable odors, but it is not unheard of. The Specific Plan will need to consider the relative location of light industrial and residential uses and possible odor regulations.

**Odor Opportunities and Constraints**

**Opportunities:**

- Existing agricultural odors can be considered up-front and adjacent land use patterns planned appropriately.
- The Specific Plan can include odor restrictions on new light industrial uses with the potential to impact sensitive uses.

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**Constraints:**

- Existing agricultural uses to the west of Ustick Road are likely to persist during and after development of the plan area. Existing or future chicken ranches in this area could emit objectionable odors noticeable to sensitive uses along Ustick Road in the plan area and will need to be considered.
- The interface between light industrial uses and odor sensitive uses will need to be considered from a land use planning and regulatory perspective to avoid potential odor impacts.