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Community Assessment – “Windshield Survey”

Boundaries:

- Merced’s northern boundaries extend furthest to pastures (some empty, some with cattle), and a newer subdivision with large homes which many are empty. This is often nicknamed “Foreclosurville”.
- Northeast of town is Lake Yosemite, a man-made lake, UC Merced, and pastures. Although pastures take up majority of the boundaries in this area, there are also some larger, nice homes.
- Boundaries leading out of town toward the east are orchards, farm homes, and pastures. Most of these homes are older, large homes that have been well maintained.
- Southern boundaries of town are surrounded by empty fields, a plethora of lower income housing, apartments and it also runs parallel with highway 59. This part of town is mostly filled with people of lower class and it shows; some of the houses are run down and look abandoned. This would part of town is considered to be “the ghetto”.
- The western part of town is considered the “industrial” part of Merced; Pepsi has a large plant there and the airport also is in this area. The homes located in this area are lower income as well but there aren’t as many homes here as there are in the southern boundaries.

Housing & Zoning/Signs of Decay:

- If you were to look on a map Merced is split up horizontally into four sections: the southern part of Merced is considered lower class, the middle portion of is split up horizontally into two: upper-lower class is in the lower (southern) part and the upper (northern) middle of Merced is considered middle class while the northern part of town is upper-middle class.
- Houses in the southern part are older homes (ranging probably from 30-90+years old) which are mostly made out of stucco and wood siding.
 - Some homes are square and small in size; in a few areas these homes are identical and close together in proximity.
 - There are many older apartment complexes that randomly pop up all over in the southern part of Merced.
 - Addition to single-family homes, there are also many apartments and duplexes.
 - Average square footage of homes in this area I would guess between 500-800 square feet.
 - Most homes in this area are showing signs of decay; broken windows, overgrown grasses, cracked sidewalks, water damage to sides of houses with moss and mold, some parts there are no sidewalks, litter visible while driving, some buildings/sheds with roofs completely caved in.
- The lower middle portion of the city contains a variety of different style of homes; colonial, Victorians, ranch style.

- These styles of homes are much different than what we found in the southern part of town, these have more character, architecture, and you can see that they once were really nice homes.
- Most of these homes range in ages from 70-100 years old.
- Mostly homes in this area but there are areas with apartments and many homes (most commonly the old Victorian homes) have been turned into duplexes.
- Most are made out of wood siding, stucco, and brick.
- Some houses are kept up with new windows, newer paint, and roofs but are mixed in with houses that are showing signs of decay; broken front steps, trash in some yards, overgrown yards and bushes, and roofs that are covered in moss.
- Many businesses and buildings on Martin Luther King Jr. Street have been closed down and boarded up and show signs of decay.
- The upper-middle portion of Merced is filled with mostly track homes and some ranch style homes.
 - The ranch style of homes range in age of about 30-50 years old where most the track homes are 15-30 years old.
 - Homes are mostly kept up, some newly remodeled, new paint, repairs have been made, yards are mowed and sidewalks and roads are in good conditions.
 - Some of the ranch style homes have lot sizes of .50 acres to a few acres.
 - These homes are probably 1,800+ square feet in size.
 - The tract homes are on small lots that are relatively close together but not as close as they are in southern Merced.
 - Homes seem to range in sizes from 1,000-1,800 square feet on average.
 - There are some apartments and duplexes in this part of town, most of which seem nicer and newer than those found in other parts of town.
- The northern part of Merced has mostly newer tract homes that are built mainly from stucco, some homes northeast of town are older farm style homes.
 - Newer tract homes in "Foreclosureville" are newer, vacant, beautiful, large homes. Ranging in ages 2-10 years old most seem to be two stories and well over 2,000 square feet with small lot sizes and houses closer together.
 - Some of the older tract homes are around 15-30 years old mostly made of wood siding and stucco (a combo of the two). These homes are well kept up for their age and seem to have nice yards for the most part.

Parks and Recreational Areas:

- There are many parks in all areas of Merced that are all open to the public – some include: Macready Park, Leonard Park, McNamara Park, Youth Sports Complex, Civic Ballpark, Joe Herb Park, Ada Givens Park, Burbank Park, Applegate Park, Black Rascal Creek Park, Santa Fe Park, Fahrens Park, Richard Bernasconi Neighborhood Park, Moraga Park, and Lake Yosemite Park and Recreations.

- Many types of people use these parks; depending on the location of park really deciphers who uses them. Applegate Park had people walking dogs and homeless people, where parks inside neighborhoods had young children with parents, and after school it's common to find teenagers hanging out in parks as well.
 - Lake Yosemite has areas of green grass, covered cabanas, restrooms, a small park area all surrounding the lake. This area is open to be used by the public; friends and families gather together for barbeques and swimming in the summertime.
 - Some parks were newer than others and the least amount of parks were found in the southern part of Merced. The parks that were here included little usable playground equipment and were older and run down. Newer, larger parks like Rahilly Park found in the middle class area of Merced actually had two large play areas with newer equipment, park benches, tables, covered area for parties, and restrooms.
 - Bear Creek Trail and Rascal Bike Path are both trails to walk or ride bikes on. People found here were bicycles, runners, and people walking their dogs.
- There's also one newer dog park located on Yosemite and R Street where we found a handful of people with their dogs there.

Commons:

- There are many shopping centers in central Merced, such as the Merced Mall located on Olive Street.
- Around this area there are many restaurants and eateries, as well as grocery stores that appear to be busy.
- There are many playgrounds and parks (as mentioned under parks and recreations), and many children were seen playing on school playgrounds.
- On Main Street, there is a sizeable movie theater, surrounded by many restaurants, Starbucks, ice-cream and yogurt places, billiards, and a few bars for night life hangouts. This seems to be a major hangout spot at night.
- The Colleges in the area appear to be crowded during the day. Merced Junior college was full of people, as was UC Merced.
- There are a few commercial gymnasiums that are active on G street and Yosemite (In-Shape and Millennium Sports Clubs).
- During the daytime, the commons seem to be focused on the schools and shopping centers, while the night hours focus mainly on bars, movies, ice-cream/yogurt parlors, and other forms of entertainment.
- It appears to be readily open to strangers, and should be stated that most of this is located in the central part of town.

Stores:

- The stores in Merced County are mainly located in the middle and upper class parts of town.
- There is the Merced mall located off of Olive Ave. between M and R Street.
- The Merced mall is a strip mall with the bigger stores consisting of Jc Penny, Sears, Kohl's, and CVS pharmacy.
- There are lots of business plazas, farmers markets and grocery stores in the upper and middle class parts of Merced.
- Grocery stores in the middle to upper class include Raley's and SaveMart and are centerally located
- In the western part of the city there's an older SaveMart and a Food-4-Less.
- In the upper-lower class parts of Merced there are only two grocery stores, Smart-n-Final and older SaveMart which are still far from the southern end of Merced.
- In the lower income (southern) part of Merced the stores mainly consist of small corner stores, lots of liquor stores and one grocery market called Altareb Market on 8th and M Street.
- When driving around lower Merced there are many yard sales set up, where as there were none spotted in the upper and middle parts of Merced.

Transportation:

- The only form of public transportation in Merced is the public bus system, with the majority of bus stops located in downtown Merced, along Loughborough and near the Merced fairgrounds in the lower parts of Merced.
- Cars are the main form of transportation for most people in the community.
- In the lower parts of Merced there were more people seen walking to get to their destination, as compared to the upper parts of Merced where there were only few people seen walking other than in business/shopping centers.

Schools:

- There are 14 elementary schools, 4 middle schools and 8 high schools in Merced County.
- Merced Junior College is located in the middle class, part of town on Yosemite between M and G Streets.
- UC Merced is located in the upper northeast part of Merced.
 - The location of UC Merced is very inconvenient for most people, due to being located in the upper corner of Merced county in the mainly under developed part of town. It is not at all walking distance for nearly all of Merced and can only be reached by motor vehicles.

- There was only one adult continuation school seen on G Street and it was located at the edge of the lower middle class and lower class part of town.

Street People:

- We began driving around Merced mid-morning, and we noticed that there were people waiting around the homeless center - approximately 10.
- There were always at least two to three people at each bus stop, and we saw a lot of Hispanic moms pushing their babies in strollers along the streets.
- We spotted a few elderly couples walking their dogs, but for the most part, most of the dogs we saw were strays (7).

Protective Services:

- There were three Fire Stations that we saw in Merced
 - They were spread fairly far apart, and were located on opposite sides of highway 99. One was also found on Loughborough behind the mall.
 - The police stations were fairly clustered together, and were located what seemed to be somewhat far from the poverty stricken areas of Merced.
 - While driving around town we spotted about four police cars driving.

Race/Ethnicity:

- Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian ethnicities were observed during our windshield survey.
- The Hispanic population appeared to be more active, as we saw several Hispanic mothers walking and exercising.
- Since we completed the survey during the day, working hours for most, it was difficult to see where the different types of ethnicities resided.

Churches/Religion:

- Churches were found in all areas of Merced, but most seemed to be more churches in the middle class and upper class neighborhoods.
- There are many churches on Yosemite in particular; most looked to be fairly new compared to other churches in town, approximately 15-25 years old.
 - During the early development of Merced, churches bought land on the outskirts of town due to cheaper prices.
 - As Merced grew into the city it is now, new housing developments were built around these churches.
- Most churches found in the southern part of Merced were older, smaller, run down churches.

- Older, larger churches with intricate architecture were found in the upper-lower class and middle class areas of town.

Health Services:

- There are two larger health care service facilities that we saw on our drive.
 - There is a Golden Valley clinic that cares for the underserved population in the lower income residential and industrial areas. It is a great way for uninsured and underserved residents to receive treatment for common problems.
 - Toward the direction of the middle and upper class neighborhoods nearby UC Merced there is Mercy Medical Center. This hospital is quite a drive from the lower income neighborhoods, but in case of an emergency, it is still nearby for an emergency service vehicle to reach this population.
- Other types of healthcare based places found mostly only in the lower-middle class and middle class areas were doctors' offices, dentists, small surgery center, eye doctors, and a handful of urgent cares.

Social Class:

- The social class seems to be divided by railroad tracks in the middle of Merced. On one side toward the southern end are the lower income residential areas. To the north of the railroad tracks there are middle-income residential areas as well as a denser area for shopping.
- Going farther north are large residential areas designed for middle and upper social classes.
- This area seems more like a ghost town because most of these houses are wither foreclosed or empty lots.
- Going farther north are ranch style areas with large plots of land for middle-upper class land owners.
- This judgment is based the physical aspect of the homes, shopping nearby, the looks of people seen outside, and cars parked out front of homes.

Politics:

- There were not any prominent campaigning posters in downtown Merced; however, on the outskirts of town and near some schools it was evident of some for local council and school boards.
- It was not possible to determine any specific political party that the county identified with.
- The city council building was readily visible on West 18th street in Merced.
- There were some cars with bumper-stickers that were anti-Obama administration, suggesting a possible Republican affiliation.

Safety Concerns/Health & Morbidity:

- In the northern part of the city, there weren't any health and morbidity problems that were able to be seen, other than some unfinished construction sites which could pose a possible safety risk.
- Upon venturing further south, there was more evidence of chronic diseases, as a few pedestrians were noticed in electric wheelchairs. This could suggest a problem with obesity, diabetes, or other chronic illnesses.
- In downtown Merced, it is apparent that many people struggle with being homeless.
- Mental illnesses were not able to be assessed.
- Drug abuse was not seen, however there is much talk and newspaper articles suggesting that Merced has a high crime and drug problem.

Service Centers:

- The nearest, and newest, hospital is north of town, closer to UC Merced.
- This could pose a possible safety risk, as it is furthest from the poorest part of town.
- There are schools scattered all over the area, Merced High, Golden Valley, Atwater High, Buhach High, which the MUHSD located on A Street in Atwater (a city of Merced County).
- The MCSD for K-8 schools is located on West 23rd street. There numerous schools under this district.
- Merced Junior College is located on Yosemite Avenue, just north of town.
- UC Merced is on the outskirts of town, just near the lake.
- There are many clinics, dentists, doctors' offices along M and G Street from 99 out towards the hospital.
- There are many services in the area, such as the Merced County Public Health Department, Wic, a few women's shelters, Goodwill, Salvation Army, welfare services, Planned Parenthood, etc.
- The further south, the less service centers are available, which is a problem as this is the area that needs them the most.

List of Potential Community Health Needs

- ❖ More stop signs in the lower and upper lower parts of town where we found many four way street junctions with no yields or stop signs on any of the corners
- ❖ More sidewalks and streetlights in the industrial part of town that also has neighbors and the lower income, southern part of towns where there was often no sidewalks at all, or broken up concrete for sidewalks.
- ❖ More grocery stores/farmer's markets in the lower income areas so that those without a car can walk to get healthier foods.