

## **8. GLOSSARY**

**A-weighted Sound Level** - The sound pressure level, in decibels, as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting filter network. The A-weighting filter de-emphasizes very low and very high frequency components of the sound in a manner similar to the response of the human ear, and it gives good correlation with subjective reactions to noise. Sound pressure levels weighted using this filter are labeled dBA.

**ADT** - Average Daily Traffic. The amount of traffic that passes any given point within a 24-hour period.

**Affordable Housing** - Housing with a cost (rent or mortgage plus tax and insurance) not exceeding 25 percent of the occupant's gross income.

**Air Pollutant Emission** - Discharges into the atmosphere, usually specified by weight per unit of time for a given pollutant from a given source.

**Air Pollution Control District (APCD)** - A single-county or multi-county agency with legislative authority to adopt and enforce all rules and regulations necessary to control non-vehicular sources of air pollutants in its area.

**Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC)** - A state-authorized body existing in each county, responsible for developing plans for achieving land use compatibility between airports and their environs.

**Alluvial** - A general term for sediments laid down during recent geologic times in riverbeds, floodplains, lakes, fans at the foot of mountain slopes, and estuaries.

**Alquist/Priolo Special Studies Zone** - An area 500 feet from a major active fault and 200-300 feet from a well defined minor fault, as designated by the State Geologist. These designations are required by the Alquist/Priolo Special Studies Zone Act, which took effect March 7, 1973. The purpose of the Act is to prohibit the location of most structures for human occupancy across the traces of active fault, thus reducing fault rupture hazards. The Act defines "active fault" as one that has had activity within the last 11,000 years.

**Ambient Noise** - The distinctive acoustical characteristics of a given area consisting of all noise sources audible at that location. In many cases, the term ambient is used to describe an existing or pre-project condition such as the setting in an environmental noise study.

**Annexation** - The addition of an area or territory to a city, town, special district, or other governmental entity.

**Aquatic** - Growing or living in or on water.

**Aquifer** - A geologic formation beneath the ground surface that contains water.

**Arterial** - A main highway that is a through street.

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**Attenuation** - The reduction of noise.

**Building Intensity Standards** - The bulk and concentration of physical development of uses permitted within a district. One example of a measure of building intensity is the floor-area ratio (FAR).

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)** - State law requiring the assessment of projects for environmental effects and establishing procedures for the preparation and processing of environmental documents.

**CDBG** - Community Development Block Grant, a federal program providing funds to states for community development projects.

**CEQA** - See California Environmental Quality Act.

**Clean Air Act** - A federal law, originally enacted in 1963 and subsequently amended in 1970 and 1990, that requires the development of air quality standards and the preparation of air quality plans by states. California has its own Clean Air Act which has a similar purpose.

**CNEL** - See Community Noise Equivalent Level.

**CO** - Carbon monoxide.

**Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL)** - The 24-hour average noise level, with noise occurring during evening hours (7 - 10 p.m.) weighted by a factor of 3 and nighttime hours weighted by a factor of 10 prior to averaging.

**Composting** - The conversion of organic materials, such as wood, yard wastes, and food, into a soil-like product.

**Concentration** - A measure of the average density of pollutants usually specified in terms of pollutant mass per unit volume of air (e.g., micrograms per cubic meter) or in terms of relative volume of pollutant per unit volume of air (e.g., parts per million).

**Contract Rent** - The monthly rent agreed to or contracted for, regardless of any furnishings, utilities, or services that may be included.

**Criteria Pollutant** - An air pollutant for which emission standards are developed by the EPA for the purpose of protecting human health. There are six criteria pollutants: ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, and particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>).

**Critical Facility** - A facility that provides emergency services, or houses or serves many people who would be injured or killed in case the facility is damaged by disaster.

**dB** - See Decibel.

**dBA** - See A-weighted Sound Level.

**Day-Night Average Level ( $L_{dn}$ )** - The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night after 10:00 p.m. and before 7:00 a.m. Similar to CNEL, but with no evening weighting.

**Decibel (dB)** - Fundamental unit of sound, defined as 10 times the logarithm of the ratio of the sound pressure squared over the reference pressure (20 micropascals) squared.

**Development Fee** - A fee assessed on residential, commercial, and/or industrial development, the proceeds of which are used to fund facilities needed to mitigate impacts expected to be generated by the development. Also called Impact Fee.

**Differential Settlement** - An occurrence in which two adjacent land areas settle by different amounts and/or at different rates.

**Discretionary Action** - An action that requires the judgment or deliberation of a public agency or body, deciding to approve or disapprove a particular activity.

**Domestic Water** - Water supplied to residences and other land uses which is suitable for drinking.

**Dwelling Unit** - Any building or portion thereof, including mobilehomes, which contains living facilities for not more than one family.

**Endangered** - A classification, under the federal Endangered Species Act, for a plant or animal species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The classification under the state Endangered Species Act has a similar meaning.

**Environmental Impact Report (EIR)** - A public document, required under CEQA, that is used by a state or local governmental agency to analyze the significant environmental effects of a proposed project, to identify alternatives, and to disclose possible ways to reduce or avoid possible environmental damage.

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** - A public document, required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), that is used by a federal governmental agency to analyze the significant environmental effects of a proposed project and identified alternatives.

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** - A federal agency, established by NEPA, that oversees and regulates various activities that affect the physical environment.

**Equivalent Energy Level ( $L_{eq}$ )** - The sound level corresponding to a steady-state A-weighted sound level containing the same total energy as a time-varying signal over a given sample period.  $L_{eq}$  represents the equivalent energy exposure for a shorter time period, and it is typically computed over sample periods of one, eight, and 24 hours.

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**Erosion** - A process by which earth or rock material is loosened or dissolved and removed from any part of the earth's surface.

**FAR** - See Floor-Area Ratio.

**Farmland of Local Importance** - Land of importance to the local agricultural economy and designated as such by the county's Board of Supervisors and local advisory committees. Also refers to land with the physical characteristics of Prime Farmland and Land of Statewide Importance except for lack of irrigation water.

**Farmland of Statewide Importance** - Land similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to hold and store moisture.

**Fault** - A fracture in the earth's crust forming a boundary between rock masses that have shifted.

**Fault Rupture** - Ground break along the fault line during an earthquake.

**Fault Trace** - The intersection of a fault and the earth's surface, often revealed by dislocation of fences and roads or by ridges and furrows in the ground.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** - A federal agency responsible for administering the National Flood Insurance Program.

**Fire Flow** - The required rate of flow times duration for fire protection. It varies according to type and density of development.

**Floodplain** - A relatively flat area or lowland adjoining the channel of a stream or watercourse and subject to overflow by floodwaters.

**Floor-Area Ratio (FAR)** - A measure of land use intensity, obtained by dividing the total floor area of a building by the area of the lot on which the building is located.

**General Plan** - A comprehensive, long-term policy document adopted by a city or county to guide land use and development. The general plan must include seven elements: land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, and noise.

**Grade Separation** - The physical separation of the surfaces on which roadways or railways set, typically accomplished with an overpass or underpass.

**Grade-Separated Crossing** - An overpass or underpass which physically separates the traffic flows on two transportation routes so that they do not intersect.

**Ground Rupture** - The movement of the ground along one side of a fault relative to the other side, caused by an earthquake.

**Groundwater** - Water beneath the earth's surface stored in aquifer, serving as the source of springs and wells.

**Groundwater Basin** - A groundwater reservoir, together with all the aquifers contributing water to the reservoir and the overlying land surface. In some cases, the boundaries of the successively deeper aquifers may differ and make it difficult to define the limits of the basin.

**Habitat** - The natural environment of a plant or animal.

**Hazardous Material** - A substance that causes injury, including pesticides, herbicides, toxic metals and chemicals, liquefied natural gas, explosives, volatile chemicals, and nuclear fuels.

**HHWE** - Household Hazardous Waste Element, a state-mandated document that describes objectives, policies, and programs for the management of household hazardous waste.

**Household** - Person or persons occupying a housing unit.

**Household Hazardous Waste** - Hazardous waste resulting from the use of household products, such as paint products, solvents, insecticides, oven cleaners, disinfectants, medications, and drugs. Generally, any products labeled poison, corrosive, flammable, or toxic belong in this category.

**Housing Unit** - A house, apartment, mobile home or trailer, group of rooms, or single room occupied or intended to be occupied as a separate living quarter. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall.

**Hydrocarbons** - A variety of substances containing only carbon and hydrogen, such as methane and benzene. An ingredient of smog. Also called volatile organic compounds.

**Hydrocompaction** - Settling and hardening of land due to application of large amounts of water for irrigation.

**Hydroelectric** - Pertaining to electricity produced by waterpower.

**Important Farmland** - Agricultural land classified by the state as being Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance. Does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

**Inert** - Deficient in active properties, lacking chemical or biological action.

**Infill** - Development of vacant or underutilized parcels within urban areas.

**Infiltration** - The leaking of water, by various means, into sewer lines from surrounding saturated ground.

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**Inflow** - Water channeled into the sewage collection system by storm water collection systems such as roof leaders, foundation drains, and storm sewers.

**Infrastructure** - The essential utilities and services necessary to support development, such as water, sewer, and roads.

**Installation Restoration Program (IRP)** - A U.S. Air Force program to identify, characterize, and remediate past environmental contamination on its installations.

**Inversion** - An atmospheric condition in which a warm air layer overlays a cool air layer. This condition strongly inhibits the mixing and dilution of air pollutants, since warm air is less dense than cool air.

**IRP** - See Installation Restoration Program.

**JPA** - Joint Powers Authority. In this document, it refers to the Castle Joint Powers Authority, an agency that oversees the conversion of the former Castle Air Force Base to civilian use. It has representatives from Merced County and the cities of Merced and Atwater.

**LAFCO** - See Local Agency Formation Commission.

**LAMBRA** - Local Agency Military Base Recovery Area.

**Land Capability Classification** - A system of classification developed by the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resource Conservation Service), in which soils are grouped into classes, subclasses, and units according to their suitability for agricultural use, based on soil characteristics and climatic conditions.

**Landfill** - A site where solid wastes are disposed. Wastes are deposited and compacted. At specific intervals, a layer of soil covers the waste, and the process of deposition and compaction is repeated.

**Landslide** - The downward and outward movement of earth material, usually in places with high slopes.

**L<sub>dn</sub>** - Day-night noise level, the average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day. It is obtained by adding 10 decibels to the hourly noise levels measured during the night (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.), thus taking into account the lower tolerance of people for noise during nighttime.

**Level of Service (LOS)** - A measure of the peak hour traffic conditions on a given street with the particular traffic-carrying capacity of the street and a given amount of traffic using the street. This is typically defined by a range of volume-to-capacity ratios, designated by the alphabetic characters A, B, C, D, E, and F. A is the best condition, while F is the worst.

**Liquefaction** - A process by which water-saturated soil loses strength when shaken by an earthquake, creating conditions similar to quicksand.

**L<sub>max</sub>** - The maximum A-weighted noise level recorded during a noise event over a given period of time.

**Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)** - A county-level agency with the responsibility and authority to approve or deny all proposals for the incorporation or dissolution of cities and special districts, and for annexations. The LAFCO also establishes spheres of influence for cities and special districts.

**MCAG** - See Merced County Association of Governments.

**Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG)** - An intergovernmental agency with representatives from Merced County and the incorporated cities within the county. Its main responsibility is countywide planning for transportation and housing issues.

**MID** - Merced Irrigation District.

**Mineral** - As defined by California Administrative Code Section 3502, which states in part, "Any naturally occurring chemical element or compound, or group of elements and compounds, formed from inorganic coal, peat, and bituminous rock, but excluding geothermal resources, natural gas, and petroleum."

**Ministerial** - A governmental action involving the application of existing laws, regulations or standards, and not requiring deliberation by government officials.

**Mitigation** - The reduction or elimination of the impacts of an action on the environment.

**Mobile Home** - A movable, factory-built home, built prior to the 1974 Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act.

**NAAQS** - National Ambient Air Quality Standards, air quality standards for criteria pollutants established by the EPA.

**Negative Declaration** - A document prepared under CEQA procedures that states that a project or action will have no significant impacts on the environment, after completion of an initial study of environmental impacts. A Mitigated Negative Declaration is prepared if a project or action will have no significant impacts on the environment when certain mitigation measures are incorporated.

**Noise Exposure Contours** - Lines drawn about a noise source indicating a constant noise level.

**NO<sub>x</sub>** - Nitrogen oxides.

**O<sub>3</sub>** - Ozone.

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**Other Lands** - Pertaining to farmland classification, generally includes the following types of lands:

- a) Rural development with a building density of less than 1 structure per 1.5 acres, but at least one structure per 10 acres.
- b) Brush, timber, wetlands, and other lands not suitable for livestock grazing.
- c) Government lands not available for agricultural use.
- d) Road systems for freeway interchanges outside of urban and built-up land areas.
- e) Vacant and nonagricultural land larger than 40 acres in size and surrounded on all sides by urban development.
- f) Confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities of 10 or more acres, not accounted for by the county's Farmland of Local Importance definition.
- g) Strip mines, borrow pits, gravel pits, ranch headquarters, or water bodies larger than 10 acres.
- h) A variety of other rural land uses not otherwise classified.

**Overdraft** - The condition of a groundwater basin in which the amount of water withdrawn by pumping exceeds the amount of water replenishing the basin, over a period of time.

**Peak Load Water Supply** - The total amount of the operational daily consumption of water, required fire flow and emergency storage.

**Perennial** - Present at all seasons of the year.

**Permeability** - A soil characteristic that describes the ability of water to penetrate the soil.

**Pleistocene** - A geologic epoch of the Quaternary Period of the Cenozoic Era, covering a time period from approximately 2 million years ago to 100,000 years ago.

**PM<sub>10</sub>** - Particulate matter (e.g., dust, ash, acid droplets) less than 10 microns in diameter.

**Population Density** - The number of people per given area.

**ppm** - Parts per million.

**Primary Treatment** - The settling of raw sewage, usually accompanied by the skimming of floating material and chlorination.

**Prime Farmland** - Land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics to produce sustained high yields of crops, when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Such characteristics include soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply.

**Quaternary** - The most recent geologic period of the Cenozoic Era, covering a time period from approximately 2 million years ago to the present.

**Raptor** - A bird of prey, e.g., eagle, hawk, falcon.

**Recharge** - The flow to groundwater basins or aquifers from precipitation, infiltration from streams, and other sources.

**Recharge Basin** - A man-made facility that collects runoff for the purpose of allowing the water to infiltrate to a groundwater basin or aquifer.

**Recycling** - The process by which saved materials become usable products. Also commonly refers to the collection of certain waste materials (e.g. aluminum cans, newspaper) for eventual reuse.

**Redevelopment** - Activity associated with the physical and/or economic revitalization of an already developed community or portion thereof in decline, in conformance with the California Community Redevelopment Law.

**Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)** - A state-established regional agency which sets legal treatment and discharge requirements for wastewater treatment plants.

**Right-of-Way** - The land area dedicated for streets, roads, railroad tracks, utility lines, and other public infrastructure.

**Riparian** - Related to or located on the bank of a natural watercourse.

**ROG** - Reactive organic gases.

**RRC** - See Rural Residential Center.

**Runoff** - Water from precipitation that remains on the surface, rather than being absorbed into the ground, and flows to a natural or manmade drainage system.

**Rural Residential Center (RRC)** - An area designation under the Merced County General Plan that provides for urban or suburban residential development in a predominantly rural area, along with accessory agricultural uses such as livestock pasturing, horse stables, and hobby farms.

**Safety Area** - The area in the vicinity of an airport in which land use restrictions are established to protect public safety.

**Secondary Treatment** - The biological process of reducing suspended, colloidal and dissolved organic matter in effluent from primary treatment of sewage. Secondary treatment is usually carried out through the use of trickling filters or by the activated sludge process.

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**SEL** - See Sound Exposure Level.

**Sludge** - A semi-liquid mass composed of solids removed from sewage during wastewater treatment.

**Soil Conservation Service** - An agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that studied and surveyed soil types and characteristics. Now the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

**Sound Exposure Level (SEL)** - The level of noise accumulated during a single noise event, such as aircraft overflight, during one second.

**Source Reduction** - The reduction of the amount of waste that needs to be recycled or disposed. Source reduction strategies include the reuse or repair of products, increasing product life and decreasing consumption.

**Source Reduction and Recycling Element (SRRE)** - A document, required by the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, that outlines a local government's plans to meet state-mandated objectives for the reduction in the amount of solid waste that is disposed of in landfills.

**Specific Plan** - A plan for a particular area within a local jurisdiction that contains the following:

- 1) The distribution, location, and extent of land uses.
- 2) The proposed distribution, location, extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation and other essential public facilities.
- 3) Development standards and criteria.
- 4) A program of implementation measures.

Specific plans must be consistent with the local jurisdiction's general plan.

**Specific Urban Development Plan (SUDP)** - An area designation under the Merced County General Plan where future urban development is planned to be accommodated. The SUDP designation is applied to both incorporated cities and to unincorporated communities with some degree of urbanization.

**Sphere of Influence** - An area representing the ultimate physical boundaries and service area of a city. It includes both the incorporated city and unincorporated territory adjacent to the city. The sphere of influence for a city is adopted by LAFCO.

**SRRE** - See Source Reduction and Recycling Element.

**Study Area** - For this General Plan, the study area is similar to the planning area for a general plan of a city. As defined in the state's General Plan Guidelines, a planning area "encompasses incorporated and unincorporated territory bearing a relation to the city's planning." The Study Area includes, but is not limited to, the city's sphere of influence.

**Subsidence** - The gradual settling or sinking of the earth's surface, with little or no horizontal motion. It is usually the result of gas, oil, or water extraction from underground supplies, compaction, or peat oxidation.

**SUDP** - See Specific Urban Development Plan.

**Taxable Sales** - Sales subject to the state sales tax.

**Tertiary Treatment** - Advanced wastewater treatment used to remove pollutants not removed by primary and secondary treatment, producing an effluent of high quality suitable for reuse other than for domestic consumption.

**Threatened** - A classification, under the federal Endangered Species Act, for a plant or animal species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The classification under the state Endangered Species Act has a similar meaning.

**Unique Farmland** - Land of lesser quality soils used for the production of specific crops of high economic value, as listed in *California Agriculture* produced by the state Department of Food and Agriculture.

**Vernal Pool** - A seasonal wetland found in shallow depressions of relatively flat terrain. Vernal pools fill with water during the rainy season, then usually dry up by late spring.

**Volume/Capacity Ratio** - A measurement of traffic flow on a road or street. It depicts the average traffic flow on a roadway over the maximum amount of traffic the roadway can carry.

**Wastewater** - Includes sewage and all other liquid waste substances associated with human habitation or from any producing, manufacturing or processing operations.

**Wetlands** - Areas that are permanently wet or periodically covered with shallow water, such as marshes, swamps, mudflats, fens, and pools.

**Williamson Act** - The 1965 California Land Conservation Act, a state law providing for the establishment of agricultural preserves by offering land owners tax benefits in exchange for keeping the land in agriculture for a certain period of time.

**Zoning** - A planning activity, enacted by local ordinance, in which a community is divided into districts and allowable land uses and development standards are established for each district. With limited exceptions, zoning must be consistent with the local government's general plan.