

April 25, 2013



Honorable Mayor Stan Thurston  
Honorable City of Merced Councilmembers  
678 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Merced, CA 95340

RE: City of Merced fiscal year 2013-14 budget

Honorable Mayor Thurston and Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Merced Organizing Project and the over forty Building Healthy Communities partner organizations, we thank you for making time for one-on-one meetings to help develop City of Merced budget and public policy which reflects the council's commitment to **Merced's 28,162 youth ages 5-24 who represent 36% of the population in our city.** It is important to note, according the same 2010 Census data, **10,475 or 13% of Merced's population are 18-24 voting age youth** seeking to make a successful stable life for themselves and their families while navigating acute poverty, environmental health hazards, youth rivalry and gang violence.

Based on our recent one-on-one conversations with the Mayor and City Council members, Merced residents, youth, and stakeholders advocating for the healthy development of all young people in Merced are making the following five requests of the City Council:

1. WE ARE ASKING THE CITY COUNCIL to approve a fiscal year 2013-14 budget that includes specific funding and resource allocations that directly reflect the Council's stated commitment to 'prioritize youth', which Merced residents, youth, and stakeholders have consistently communicated is the community's priority throughout the City's budget development process.
2. WE ARE ASKING THE CITY COUNCIL to establish a permanent policy that establishes within the City's annual budget a minimum allocation of 3% of all discretionary General Fund dollars to youth development services (not including salaries, wages, benefits, etc.), beginning with approval of the 2013-2014 budget that conforms to this policy.
3. WE ARE ASKING THE CITY COUNCIL to establish a permanent and formal City of Merced *Youth Commission* that will provide input to City Council decision-making on issues relevant to the city's youth, and provide optimal levels of funding to support the operation of this commission annually, beginning with an allocation of at least \$25,000.00 for this explicit purpose in the 2013 / 2014 fiscal year budget.
4. WE ARE ASKING THE CITY COUNCIL to establish and utilize a participatory budgeting process that gives the community, including youth, an opportunity to be directly involved in proposing ideas for, as well as selecting which services/projects that City funding will be allocated for, beginning with use of participatory budgeting for a minimum of \$100,000 to be allocated for youth development-related services in the FY 2013-14 budget.
5. WE ARE ASKING THE CITY COUNCIL to pursue establishment of a permanent funding source for youth services and programs through a public revenue stream that would augment current available funds for the optimal development of Merced youth.

The residents, youth, and youth serving organizations supportive of these requests look forward to continuing our partnership with the City in order to implement each of these items optimally by combining the passion and commitment of the City with that of the community.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Tsia Xiong  
Executive Director  
Merced Organizing Project