



# County of Monterey Planning Commission

## Item No.2

Board of Supervisors  
Chambers  
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

### Agenda Item No.2

Legistar File Number: PC 25-061

July 09, 2025

**Introduced:** 7/1/2025

**Current Status:** Agenda Ready

**Version:** 1

**Matter Type:** Planning Item

#### **PLN220169 - CARMEL VALLEY RANCH HSGE, LLC**

Public hearing to consider modifications to the Carmel Valley Ranch Lodge, including demolition of seven one-story buildings containing 29 visitor serving units, construction of seven replacement two-story buildings containing 56 visitor serving units, resulting in a net gain of 27 visitor serving units (208 total); construction of a one-story parking structure with 34 additional parking spaces; development on slopes over 25%; and the removal of seven Oak trees.

**Project Location:** 1 Old Ranch Road, Carmel Valley.

**Proposed CEQA action:** Consider a previously certified EIR for the Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan and find that no further environmental review is warranted pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15183(b).

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution to:

- 1) Find the project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per section 15183(b); and
- 2) Approve a Combined Development Permit consisting of: 1) Administrative Permit and Design Approval to allow demolition of seven buildings containing 29 visitor serving units, construction of seven replacement buildings containing 56 visitor serving units, resulting in a net gain of 27 visitor serving units (208 total), and construction of a one-story parking structure with 34 additional parking spaces; 2) Use Permit to allow development on slopes in excess of 25%; and 3) Use Permit for removal of seven Oak trees.

The attached draft resolution includes findings and evidence for consideration (**Exhibit B**). Staff recommends approval subject to 16 Conditions of Approval.

#### PROJECT INFORMATION

**Agent:** Sheryl Fox - Anthony Lombardo & Associates

**Property Owner:** CVR HSGE LLC

**APN:** 416-522-010-000

**Parcel Size:** 30.5 acres

**Zoning:** VO-D-S-RAZ (Visitor Serving/Professional Office - Design Control - Site Plan Review - Resource Allocation Zoning Districts)

**Plan Area:** Carmel Valley Master Plan

**Flagged and Staked:** Yes

**Project Planner:** Steve Mason, Associate Planner

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## HISTORY

Carmel Valley Ranch is a mixed-use development with residential units, visitor-serving accommodations, dining, a health spa, an 18-hole golf course, and other recreational amenities. The facilities are used to host weddings, conference meetings, and similar activities.

The site was part of the lands owned by the Carmel Mission, established in 1797, and was also the location of one of California's first dairies, established in the 1850s. The Snively, Ollason and Marble families were tenants of the property in the late 19th and early 20th century, when pear orchards were established to supplement ongoing dairy operations.

A General Plan for the Carmel Valley Ranch was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1966, outlining its allowed uses (resort, recreational, residential, etc.) and establishing areas of open space. In 1975, newly proposed development led to the drafting of the Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan to further regulate the development of the property and address sensitive conditions, namely steeper slopes. The Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan, and the accompanying Environmental Impact Report (EIR# 75-101 [available at 1441 Schilling Place, Salinas, CA]), were approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 7, 1976, and in 1986, the Specific Plan was incorporated into the Monterey County General Plan by reference. Full construction of the Carmel Valley Ranch facility commenced in 1977 with a golf course, clubhouse, residential lots, and a 100-unit resort lodge.

The Carmel Valley Master Plan (CVMP) is incorporated in the 2010 Monterey County General Plan, with the Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan, by reference, as one of its components identified as a Special Treatment Area:

- *CV-1.22 Special Treatment Area: Carmel Valley Ranch - The Carmel Valley Ranch (shall be designated as a "Special Treatment Area." The Amended Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan, dated 11/3/76, is incorporated by reference into this Plan and the provisions of this Specific Plan shall continue to apply. However, attainment of densities authorized by this Specific Plan is dependent upon conditions existing at the time each future increment of development is sought and is further dependent upon conformity with the Specific Plan Amended Conditions of Approval as well as the goals and policies of this General Plan, whichever is most restrictive. Any amendment of the Specific Plan must be consistent with the policies and provisions of this General Plan. (APNs 416-522-020-000 and 416-522-017-000)*

The Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan (CVRSP) has undergone a number of Board-approved revisions pertaining to the maximum number of visitor-serving/lodge and residential units:

- 1975 - The EIR for the CVRSP analyzed the impacts of 855 residential units and a 200-unit resort lodge (visitor-serving units).
- 1976 - The CVRSP is given an initial approval to allow 400 residential units and a 100-unit resort lodge (Planning Commission Resolution No. 76-514).
- 1995 - The CVRSP is amended to allow 375 residential units and a 144-unit resort lodge (Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 95-066 - **Exhibit G**).
- 1996 - Through a transfer of 64 of the 375 residential units toward the resort cap of 144, 208 visitor-serving units are allowed at the lodge, and the residential unit cap is reduced to 311 (Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 96-382 - **Exhibit H**).

The 1996 iteration of the CVRSP is still in effect. Thus, Carmel Valley Ranch may be developed with up to 208 visitor-serving lodge units and 311 residential units, subject to obtaining appropriate discretionary and ministerial permits. In 2014, a Combined Development Permit (PLN140130) was approved by the Planning Commission, which allowed construction of an additional 37 visitor-serving units, bringing the total to 181. These additional units were constructed at the Ranch's "Bluff Suites" (See CVR Map - **Exhibit J**). Twenty-eight additional parking spaces were also added at that time.

#### SUMMARY

The proposed project is for an additional 27 visitor-serving units, resulting in the maximum allowed lodge units (208). This increase in visitor-serving units (181 to 208) would be accomplished through the demolition of seven single-story buildings containing 29 lodge units and the construction of seven two-story buildings containing 56 lodge guest units. The seven replacement buildings would be located among similarly sized structures at the "Valley Suites" (See CVR Map - **Exhibit J**). There would be only a moderate increase in height from the old structures to the new, as the utilization of the understory (crawlpace) at the existing buildings will effectively account for the additional visitor-serving units (See sheet A3.2 of the plans attached as **Exhibit B2**). The new structures would be constructed almost entirely within the footprints of the structures being replaced. Thirty-four additional parking spaces would also be added through the construction of an elevated parking level above the existing parking lot (See sheet A 1.2 and A3.3 of **Exhibit B2**). Construction of the replacement visitor-serving buildings would impact slopes in excess of 25% and require the removal of seven Oak trees. California American Water (CalAm) will continue to serve potable water to the existing and proposed development, and an on-site wastewater treatment facility, owned and operated by CalAm, will continue to provide sewage treatment.

#### Site Development Standards

The site is zoned VO-D-S-RAZ ("Visitor Serving/Professional Office - Design Control - Site Plan Review - Resource Allocation Zoning Districts"). The maximum structure height is thirty-five (35) feet in the "VO" district. The proposed new structures will range in height from 26' to 28' in height above average natural grade. Maximum Building Site Coverage is fifty (50) percent, with coverage to remain relatively unchanged at well under 10 percent on the 30-acre parcel.

See **Exhibit A**, *Discussion*, for a detailed analysis of tree removal, development on steeper slopes, water usage, sewage treatment, traffic impacts, visual resources, inclusionary and employee housing, and other topics.

#### Public Comment

No public comment regarding the project has been received. In the event that comments are received subsequent to the distribution of this staff report, said comments will be presented and addressed at the project hearing.

#### OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended Conditions:

HCD - Environmental Services

HCD - Public Works  
County of Monterey Environmental Health  
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection Department

Land Use Advisory Committee

The project was referred to the Carmel Valley Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) for review at their May 5, 2025, meeting, which also included a visit to the project site. The LUAC voted 5-0, with 2 members absent, to support the project as proposed (**Exhibit D**). The topic of employee housing was discussed, with the applicant noting that no such housing is proposed as a part of this application, nor is it required according to County Code. The subject of inclusionary housing fees - although also not a requirement for the construction of commercial or visitor-serving projects - was also discussed.

CEQA

CEQA Guidelines section 15183(b) allows that projects which are consistent with the development density established by zoning, community plan, or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified shall not require additional environmental review unless there are project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the project or its site.

*15183 - Projects Consistent with a Community Plan, General Plan or Zoning*

*(b) In approving a project meeting the requirements of this section, a public agency shall limit its examination of environmental effects to those which the agency determines, in an initial study or other analysis:*

- (1) Are peculiar to the project or the parcel on which the project would be located,*
- (2) Were not analyzed as significant effects in a prior EIR on the zoning action, general plan or community plan with which the project is consistent,*
- (3) Are potentially significant off-site impacts and cumulative impacts which were not discussed in the prior EIR prepared for the general plan, community plan or zoning action, or*
- (4) Are previously identified significant effects which, as a result of substantial new information which was not known at the time the EIR was certified, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the prior EIR.*

Carmel Valley Ranch has been subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review numerous times over the past fifty years. The project site is within a Specific Plan area for which two EIRs and a Negative Declaration have been prepared and adopted. Specifically, an EIR was prepared and adopted for the Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan in 1975 (EIR# 75-100), and subsequently, a Negative Declaration was adopted in 1996 to consider increasing the number of visitor-serving units to 208 (Board Resolution 96-382 [**Exhibit H**] and 96-384 [**Exhibit I**]). Further, an EIR was prepared and adopted with the 2010 General Plan, which identified the CVRSP at full build-out as “existing development.”

The proposed project is consistent with CVRSP, CVMP, and the 2010 General Plan. While development on slopes and tree removal is required to accommodate the proposed development, impacts to these resources are not peculiar to this site, do not rise to a significant level, and will be addressed with adherence to applicable County Code and standard County conditions of approval.

The project's 27 additional visitor-serving units, not exceeding a total of 208 lodge units, were considered in the CVRSP and 2010 General Plan environmental documents (EIRs and Negative Declaration). The proposed parking structure does not substantially change the analysis contained in these environmental documents, and no evidence has been submitted within the project-specific reports demonstrating that this project element will result in any new environmental impacts. Therefore, there are no project-specific significant effects that are peculiar to the project or its site, there are no new environmental impacts that have not been addressed in a previously certified EIR, and the project will not increase the level of previously identified significant effects. Finally, the proposed project will not result in potentially significant off-site or cumulative impacts.

Prepared by: Steve Mason, Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner

Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

The following attachments are on file with the HCD:

Exhibit A - Discussion

Exhibit B - Draft Resolution including:

- Conditions of approval
- Site Plans

Exhibit C - Vicinity Map

Exhibit D - LUAC Minutes (May 5, 2025)

Exhibit E - Traffic Memorandums

Exhibit F - Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan

Exhibit G - Board Resolution 95-066

Exhibit H - Board Resolution 96-382 and Initial Study/Negative Declaration

Exhibit I - Board Resolution 96-384

Exhibit J - Carmel Valley Ranch Resort Map

Exhibit K - Project Area Aerial Photo - Focused View

Exhibit L - Project Area Aerial Photo - Wide View

Exhibit M - Cal-Am Will-Serve Letter (June 3, 2025)

Exhibit N - Arborist Report

\*REMINDER: The 1975 EIR for the Carmel Valley Ranch Specific Plan (EIR# 75-100) is available for review at the HCD Planning Department office, located at 1441 Schilling Place, Salinas, CA.

cc: Front Counter Copy; Planning Commission; Fionna Jensen, Supervising Planner; Craig Spencer, HCD Director; Monterey County regional Fire Protection District; HCD - Engineering Services; HCD - Environmental Health; HCD - Environmental Services; Anthony Lombardo & Associates, c/o Sheryl Fox, Agent; CVR HSGE LLC, c/o Brad Nichols, Owner; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); Carmel River Steelhead Association c/o Brian LeNeve; Christina McGinnis, Keep Big Sur Wild; Project File PLN220169.