



Monterey County Planning Commission

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

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PLN190026 - YUKI THOMAS M TR ET AL (EL RANCHO TORO FARMWORKER HOUSING)

Public hearing to consider adding 112 beds to an existing 200 bed agricultural employee housing facility (312 beds total), including constructing seven (7) new 2,000 square foot units (14,000 square feet total) and a 2,000 square foot activity and laundry unit.

Project Location: 252 Hitchcock Road, Salinas, Greater Salinas Area Plan

Proposed CEQA action: Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration;
2. Approve a General Development Plan, including a Use Permit, to add 112 beds to an existing 200-bed agricultural employee housing facility (312 beds total) including construction of seven (7) 2,000 square foot agricultural employee housing units (14,000 square feet total) and a 2,000 square foot activity and laundry unit on a 39.47 acre property within the Farmland [F] Zoning District; and
3. Adopt a Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program.

The attached draft resolution includes findings and evidence for consideration (**Exhibit C**). Staff recommends approval subject to 20 conditions of approval and one (1) mitigation measure.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Agent: Paul Davis

Applicant: Christopher Bunn

Owners: Thomas Yuki TR Et Al

APN: 207-031-002-000

Zoning: Farmlands with a minimum building site of 40 acres or "F/40"

Parcel Size: 39.47 acres

Plan Area: Greater Salinas Area Plan

Flagged and Staked: No

SUMMARY:

The site is 39.47-acre parcel, zoned Farmland (F), located on Hitchcock Road, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of mile northwest of the intersection of Davis and Hitchcock Road (see **Exhibit D**). There is an existing 200-bed agricultural employee housing development on the southern side of the parcel, fronting Hitchcock Road, and agricultural support facilities towards the northern side of the parcel, fronting Blanco Road. The site is located one mile southwest of the incorporated area of City of Salinas, and is surrounded by existing active agricultural lands and is located within the 100 year flood plain for the

Salinas River.

The El Rancho Toro Farmworker Housing project (“project”) is intended to provide housing for agricultural employees by adding 112 beds to an existing 200 bed facility including constructing seven (7) new 2,000 square foot agricultural employee housing units (14,000 square feet total) and a 2,000 square foot activity and laundry building. The new agricultural employee housing would be located between existing employee housing facilities on Hitchcock Road. The existing labor camp consists of five (5) housing units, two (2) storages, bathroom unit and a kitchen/dining hall. The existing housing currently serves 200 agricultural employees. This project includes construction of seven (7) 2,000 square foot housing units. Each housing unit will have two (2) bedrooms with the ability of accommodating eight (8) beds per room, resulting in 16 beds per unit and up to 112 beds in total. Combined with the existing labor camp, the project would have the capacity to accommodate up to 312 beds total. See Exhibit B for a more details.

Construction of the project would result in 5,400 cubic yards of fill to raise the elevation of the site one foot above the 100-year floodplain. The preliminary grading plan identifies an existing benchmark at 33.96 feet. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (see **Exhibit B**), the Base Flow Elevation (BFE) is 35 feet; therefore, the applicant is required to raise the elevation to a BFE of 36 feet, above the 100-year floodplain.

Staff evaluated the project for consistency with the 2010 Monterey County General Plan (General Plan), the Greater Salinas Area Plan (Area Plan), and the Monterey County Inland Zoning Regulations (Title 21). The project involves an allowed use under the Farmland zoning district and is consistent with the Agricultural Element and Housing Element of the 2010 General Plan which both encourage farmworker housing on agricultural land where impact to viable agricultural lands and production are minimal. Pursuant to Policy LU-1.19 (Development Evaluation System), staff has reviewed the project for site suitability, infrastructure, resource constraints, environmental impacts, transportation options and jobs/housing needs. The project will not impact viable agricultural land as it is located between two existing agricultural related developments. Adequate water exists for the project through three on-site wells that are located in Zone 2C (area of benefit from the Salinas Valley Groundwater Project) and have adequate water quantity and quality to serve the development. Policies within the General Plan, Public Services Element state new development shall prove long-term sustainable water supply. The project is located in Zone 2C where there is a rebuttable presumption that a Long Term Sustainable Water Supply exists. Needed affordable housing will be provided and buses for employees will be available for residents of the property.

An Initial Study has been prepared for the project that identified potential impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources. This impact has been reduced to a less than significant level with the implementation of a mitigation measure in the form of a tribal monitor, which was suggested by the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County (ETMC) to address potential impacts to tribal cultural resources during grading and site preparation due to proximity to the Salinas River. The applicant has agreed to the mitigation for a tribal monitor mitigation and with this mitigation impacts were found to be less than significant. See environmental discussion below and in **Exhibit B**.

The project was reviewed by the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC). At the AAC meeting, concerns were expressed about agricultural buffers between adjacent farmlands and the proposed housing. The site already contains employee housing and adjacent agricultural lands have been converted to organic farming. Given these circumstances, the AAC voted to unanimously recommend approval of the project with direction to work with the Agricultural Commissioner's Office for consideration of vegetative buffers or berms that would provide additional buffers from adjacent agricultural uses. The Agricultural Commissioner has reviewed the project and recommendations have been incorporated in the project to provide adequate agricultural buffers for the new development.

DISCUSSION:

See **Exhibit B** for detailed discussion.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

The project did not qualify for an exemption under CEQA and potential impacts were identified during environmental review. An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration or "IS/MND" (**Exhibit E**) was prepared and circulated for public review. The IS/MND identified potential impacts to aesthetics, agriculture and forest resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology/soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazard/hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use/planning, noise, population/housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, tribal cultural resources and utilities and service systems. These potential impacts were determined to be a less than significant impact or less than significant with mitigation measures as briefly discussed below and further discussed in **Exhibit B**.

Tribal Cultural Resources:

The subject property is located in the aboriginal territory of the Ohlone/Costanan-Esselen Nation (OCEN) and Esselen Tribe of Monterey County (ETMC). In accordance with Public Resource Code 21080.3.1, tribal consultation occurred between County staff and OCEN on November 19, 2019. During consultation, OCEN identified that the area of proposed development has the potential to contain cultural resources significant to the tribe due to the proximity to the Salinas River. After further discussing the project components with OCEN, OCEN did not recommend any mitigation measures but rather requested that, if at any time, potentially significant cultural resources, sacred places, or intact features are discovered, the contractor shall temporarily halt work until the find can be evaluated by a tribal monitor and archaeological monitor, see Conditions of Approval in **Exhibit C**. Further, County staff consulted with the ETMC on December 3, 2019. ETMC also expressed the cultural significance of the Salinas River and its proximity to the subject property, which is one mile north of the river. ETMC recommended a Phase 1 Archaeological Assessment be conducted by a County approved consultant in conjunction with a Native American tribal cultural representative. Depending upon the outcome of this assessment, ETMC would then determine if a tribal cultural resources monitor is warranted. Implementation of this recommended mitigation measure (**Exhibit C**) would reduce potential impacts to tribal cultural resources to a less than significant level.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

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

Resource Management Agency (RMA)-Public Works
Environmental Health Bureau
RMA-Environmental Services
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District
Agricultural Commissioner's Office
County Housing Office

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)

Pursuant to General Plan, Chapter 6.0 - Agricultural Element, Policy AG 1.8, the project was referred to the AAC on December 5, 2019. At the meeting there was discussion regarding a buffer between the proposed development and active agricultural fields. The Agricultural Commissioner expressed concern regarding pesticide drift impacting the agricultural employees within the proposed housing. The AAC considered these concerns and unanimously recommended approval with the direction to consult with the Agricultural Commissioner's Office regarding the existing agricultural buffer, potential vegetation screening, the adjacent organic fields. It was noted that General Plan Policy AG 1.2 gives authority to the AAC to review and make recommendations on establishment of, and changes to, buffer zones. As discussed and illustrated in **Exhibit B**, the subject property, near Hitchcock Road, has an existing 200-bed labor camp and residences 116 feet away from the west active agricultural lands and 57 feet away from the east active agricultural lands. General Plan Policy AG 1.2, states that the County shall require a well-defined buffer for new non-agricultural development adjacent to agricultural land uses on farmlands. The proposed project is considered an agricultural use within the farmland zoning district. Therefore, the required buffer would not be applicable. Staff and the applicant consulted with the Agricultural Commissioner's Office (Ag's Office). Concerns of pesticide drift have been addressed while still meeting the design goal of the applicants. The active agricultural fields to the west are organic fields, which is majority of where the prevailing winds are from. These organic fields have existed for over 20 years and due to this, a minimum agricultural buffer of 100 feet was agreed upon from the western property line. Additionally, the active agricultural fields to the east are conventional, and although, the winds typically come from the opposite direction, recommendations were made that have been incorporated into the project. A minimum agricultural buffer of 150 feet in addition to installation of a six (6) foot fence with vine screening would alleviate any concerns regarding pesticide drift from this direction. The attached plans reflect the buffer agreed upon in consultation with the Agricultural Commissioner.

LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LUAC)

Based on the LUAC procedure guidelines adopted by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, the project was not referred to a LUAC. The subject property is within the Greater Salinas Area Plan and currently, there is not a LUAC for this area of the County.

Prepared by: Jacquelyn M. Nickerson, Assistant Planner, Ext. 5240
Reviewed by: Craig Spencer, RMA Planning Services Manager
Approved by: John M. Dugan, FAICP, RMA Deputy Director of Land Use and
Development Services

The following attachments are on file with the RMA:

Exhibit A - Project Data Sheet

Exhibit B - Detailed Discussion

Exhibit C - Draft Resolution, including:

- Conditions of Approval;
- Site plans; and
- General Development Plan/Facility Plan

Exhibit D - Vicinity Map

Exhibit E - Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

cc: Front Counter Copy; Planning Commission; Brandon Swanson, Interim Chief of Planning, Craig Spencer, RMA Planning Services Manager; Paul Davis, Agent; Linda Rossi, Fresh Harvest Inc.; Christopher Bunn, Applicant; Thomas Yuki, Owner; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); Project File PLN190026