County of Monterey
Planning Commission

Agenda Item No.3

Legistar File Number: PC 25-039

Item No.3

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

April 30, 2025

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Current Status: Agenda Ready
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PLN240120 - VALLE DEL SOL PROPERTIES, LLC

Public hearing to consider a Minor Subdivision and Vesting Tentative Parcel Map to allow the division of a 151-acre parcel into two parcels containing approximately 83 acres and 68 acres. The 83-acre proposed parcel will be subject to an existing Conservation Easement and will undergo habitat restoration.

Project Location: Adjacent to Del Monte Boulevard, Lapis Road, and Highway 1, Marina

Proposed CEQA Action: Find the project Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15305 and 15325, and there are no exceptions pursuant to Section 15300.2.

RECOMMENDATION

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

1) Find the project categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to sections 15305 and 15325, and there are no exceptions pursuant to Section 15300.2; and,
2) Approve a Coastal Development Permit for a Minor Subdivision and Vesting Tentative Parcel Map to allow the division of a 151-acre parcel into two parcels containing approximately 83 acres and 68 acres.

The attached draft resolution **(Exhibit A)** includes findings and evidence for consideration. Staff recommends approval of this Coastal Development Permit for a Minor Subdivision and Vesting Tentative Parcel Map, subject to 7 conditions of approval.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Agent: Sheryl Fox - Anthony Lombardo & Associates, Inc.
Property Owner: Valle del Sol Properties, LLC
APN: 203-011-025-000
Location: No assigned address - Lapis Rd and Del Monte Blvd to the east and north, Highway 1 to the west, and the boundary of the City of Marina to the south
Parcel Size: 151 ac.
Zoning: LI (CZ) - "Light Industrial (Coastal Zone)"
Plan Area: North County Land Use Plan
Flagged and Staked: No
Project Planner: Steve Mason, Associate Planner
831-759-7375 / masons@countyofmonterey.gov

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION

Background

The Armstrong Sandhill Ranch minor subdivision (PLN160374) was approved by the Planning Commission in 2018, through Resolution 18-006. This subdivision established four contiguous lots: two lots of approximately 419 and 591 acres located within the unincorporated area of Monterey County, and two lots of approximately 242 and 74 acres within the City of Marina (See **Exhibit G)**. The 242-acre parcel in Marina is the site of the City's "Marina Station" mixed-use subdivision project. A fifth "remainder" lot of 151.02 acres - within unincorporated Monterey County - was also created through this prior subdivision. This remainder parcel is the subject of this subdivision application (PLN240120).

A "Remainder Parcel" is defined by California Government Code (Planning and Land Use - Subdivisions): *66424.6 (a) When a subdivision, as defined in Section 66424, is of a portion of any unit or units of improved or unimproved land, the subdivider may designate as a remainder that portion which is not divided for the purpose of sale, lease, or financing.* At the time of creation, the property owner had no intention to subdivide or sell this remainder parcel. However, circumstances have changed, as described below.

The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Marina Station Specific Plan led to litigation - between the property owner, developer, City of Marina, Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club (VCSC), and Save Our Peninsula Committee (SOPC) - resulting in an agreement that acreage in the project vicinity would be designated for environmental mitigation. To partly satisfy this, an 83-acre portion of the remainder parcel was placed under a deeded, perpetual, and highly restrictive Conservation Easement in 2024 (**Exhibit C**; Recording Document No. 2024022350). As proposed herein, this 83-acre easement area would be formally separated from adjacent agricultural uses (68 acres) by way of a minor subdivision. Ownership of the resultant 83-acre parcel (Parcel 2A) would be transferred to Marina Station LLC, with a requirement that they assume responsibility for all restoration and ongoing mitigation. The "Grantee's Duties," as described in the Easement Deed, include "Prepare written reports on the results of the compliance monitoring inspections, and provide these reports to the City on an annual basis." The second resulting parcel ("1A") is currently utilized for row-crop (strawberries) and will continue to be used for agricultural purposes. Parcel 1A is identified as "Grazing Land" and is not known to contain prime farmland. No development is proposed on either of the parcels. The proposed project is described in more detail below.

Proposed Project

The Project site is located in the Coastal Zone and is zoned Light Industrial (LI). The parcel is bordered by Lapis Rd and Del Monte Blvd to the east and north, Highway 1 to the west, and a vacant parcel within the City of Marina to the south (See Vicinity Map - **Exhibit B**). The project has been revised for consistency with Title 20 (Coastal Zone) and Title 19 (Coastal Subdivision Ordinance) requirements and found to meet all criteria and requirements. In addition, the City of Marina, the Monterey County LAFCO, Caltrans, and the California Coastal Commission have been notified of this application, and all have replied to Staff indicating that they have no objections or concerns.

Pursuant to the proposed Vesting Tentative Parcel Map (**Exhibit A.2**), the resultant parcels from this subdivision would be:

Proposed Parcel 1A - Approximately 68.015 acres - to remain in agricultural production; and

Proposed Parcel 2A - Approximately 83.005 acres - under Conservation Easement as of 2024.

The project site is shown in the attached satellite photo (**Exhibit H.1**) and site photo (**Exhibit H.2**). Note, as clearly evident in both images, the existing delineation between the agricultural area to the east (Proposed "Parcel 1A") and the conservation/restoration area to the west ("Parcel 2A").

Although the site has not been formally designated as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat, the area to be protected ("Parcel 2A") has been identified as potential Monterey spineflower habitat and is also the host to two vernal ponds. Protection of these habitats is supported by resource protection goals and policies of the North County Land Use Plan, including:

- Policy 2.2.4.4*: Highway 1 from Marina to the County line at the Pajaro River should be officially designated as a State Scenic Highway and the visual character of the adjacent scenic corridor should be preserved, and where feasible restored.*
- Policy 2.3.4.5*: The County should encourage the restoration of sensitive plant habitats on public and private lands...*

Should the proposed Minor Subdivision be approved, the new owner of Parcel 2A is required to restore it's sensitive habitat. The "*Marina Heights Restoration Area Alternatives Memo,"* (December 21, 2017 - Denise Duffy & Associates) describes preliminary plans for restoration and rehabilitation and is attached as **Exhibit F**. Further, the existing easement promotes preservation of Parcel 2A's visual character by prohibiting any structural development.

Monterey County Subdivision Ordinance (Coastal) Section 19.04.025 requires Minor Subdivision applications to be considered by the Planning Commission. The project is consistent with the policies of Title 19 of Monterey County Code (Subdivision Ordinance) and Title 20 (Coastal Zoning Ordinance) as outlined in Findings #5 and #1, respectively, in the draft resolution (**Exhibit A**). The project site is within a "Special Treatment Area", pursuant North County Local Coastal Plan Policies 4.3.2 and 4.3.*6.*F(5), which state: "*Special Treatment Areas are designated for the Dolan property and the Armstrong Ranch. Agriculture-related or coast-dependent industries are recommended for these light industrial special treatment areas."* and *"The Light Industrial Area north of the City of Marina is designated as a Special Treatment Area in order to encourage planned development of agricultural-related or coastal dependent industries. Development proposals for this area should emphasize protection of the site's vernal ponds and adjacent agricultural lands, and should be designed and landscaped to be aesthetically pleasing to travelers on Highway One."* The proposed subdivision is consistent with the description of the Special Treatment Area, and existing uses of the property are consistent. Further, the vernal ponds on Parcel 2A will be protected in perpetuity by the existing Conservation Easement. The proposed parcel

sizes will be 68.015 acres (Parcel 1A) and 83.005 acres (Parcel 2A). Although the property is currently designated and zoned for Light Industrial, agricultural uses of the property are encouraged by its Special Treatment Area (Policy 4.3.2, as described above). Parcel 1A is currently occupied by row-crop farming, while Parcel 2A is undeveloped and subject to a Conservation Easement (Document No. 2024022350). The resulting parcel sizes are consistent with the required minimum parcel size of 40 acres "*for land divisions for agricultural purposes*" pursuant to Policy 4.3.1.E (Land Use Categories - Agriculture Preservation) of the North County Coastal Land Use Plan. The Light Industrial zoning district does not establish a minimum lot size. Finally, proposed lot designs is consistent with the Lot Design Standards of Monterey County Code section 19.10.030.

Public Comment
No public comment has been received.

CEQA
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) section 15305 categorically exempts "*Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations,*" and section 15325 categorically exempts "*Transfers of Ownership in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources*." This project qualifies for both of these Exemptions as the project will not result in any changes in density or existing land use (Parcel 1A will be remain as agriculture and Parcel 2A will remain as open space), and the transfer of ownership from Valle del Sol Properties LLC to Marina Station LLC facilitates and/or triggers the restoration and rehabilitation activities outlined in the 2024 Conservation Easement.

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

County of Monterey Environmental Services
County of Monterey Engineering Services
County of Monterey Environmental Health Bureau
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection Department

LUAC
The project was referred to the North County Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) for review at their March 19, 2025, meeting. The LUAC voted 5-0, with 2 members absent, to support the project as proposed (**Exhibit D**).

Prepared by: Steve Mason, Associate Planner
Reviewed by: Fionna Jensen, Planning Manager
Approved by: Melanie Beretti, Chief of Planning

The following attachments are on file with the HCD:
Exhibit A - Draft Resolution including:

- Conditions of approval
- Preliminary Map

Exhibit B - Vicinity Map
Exhibit C - Conservation Easement Deed
Exhibit D - North County LUAC Minutes (March 19, 2025)
Exhibit E - Project Application
Exhibit F - Preliminary Restoration Plan Memo
Exhibit G - Armstrong Ranch Subdivision Map
Exhibit H - Satellite Photo and Site Photo

cc: Front Counter Copy; Planning Commission; Steve Mason, Associate Planner; Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner (WOC); Melanie Beretti, Chief of Planning; Sheryl Fox, Agent; Valle del Sol LLC, Applicant; Sierra Club - Ventana Chapter; Save Our Peninsula Committee (SOPC); City of Marina, Alyson Hunter (Planning Services Manager) ; California Coastal Commission; Katie Butler (District Supervisor); The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); Project File PLN240120.