



# County of Monterey Planning Commission

## Item No.5

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

### Agenda Item No.5

Legistar File Number: PC 26-046

April 29, 2026

**Introduced:** 4/17/2026

**Current Status:** Agenda Ready

**Version:** 1

**Matter Type:** Planning Item

#### **PLN240355 - BECK GARRETT ANDREW**

Public hearing to consider the construction of a 1,000 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 630 square foot lower-level garage, 592 square foot uncovered deck, 720 square foot covered balcony, and associated site improvements, including the removal of one Coast live oak and development on slopes in excess of 25%.

**Project Location:** 146 San Benancio Road, Salinas

**Proposed CEQA action:** Find that the project qualifies as a Class 3 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines and there are no exceptions pursuant to Section 15300.2.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- 1) Find that the construction of the first single-family dwelling on a lot which allows residential uses qualifies as a Class 3 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines and there are no exceptions pursuant to Section 15300.2; and
- 2) Approve a Design Approval to allow construction of a 1,000 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 630 square foot lower-level garage, 592 square foot uncovered deck, 720 square foot covered balcony, and associated site improvements, including the removal of one Coast live oak tree; and a Use Permit to allow development on slopes in excess of 25%.

The attached draft resolution includes findings and evidence for consideration (**Exhibit A**). Staff recommends approval subject to 13 conditions of approval.

#### PROJECT INFORMATION

**Agent:** Darren Davis

**Property Owner:** Garrett Beck

**APN:** 416-261-039-000

**Parcel Size:** 10-acres

**Zoning:** Resource Conservation with a 40-acre minimum and Design Control overlay or "RC/40-D"

**Plan Area:** Toro Area Plan

**Flagged and Staked:** Yes

**Planner:** Kayla Nelson, Associate Planner

nelsonk@countyofmonterey.gov (831796-6408)

#### SUMMARY

The subject property is approximately 10 acres located at 146 San Benancio Road in Salinas which is

guided by the Toro Area Plan. The project proposes the construction of a 1,000 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 630 square foot lower-level garage, a 592 square foot uncovered deck, and a 720 square foot cantilevered covered wraparound balcony. The project also involves a Use Permit to allow development of the residence on slopes in excess of 25%. Associated site improvements will include the removal of one 11-inch Coast live oak tree to accommodate driveway access to the main dwelling, 135 square feet of stairs, 130 linear feet of concrete site retaining walls ranging from 2 to 5 feet in height, a generator, installation of an on-site wastewater treatment system, and a treatment system for the existing shared two-connection water system. Grading consists of approximately 200 cubic yards of cut and 200 cubic yards of fill (see attached project plans in **Exhibit A**).

Based on staff analysis, the proposed project is consistent with all rules and regulations pertaining to zoning uses and any other applicable provisions of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan, Toro Area Plan, and Zoning Ordinance (Title 21).

## DISCUSSION

### *Development Standards*

The development standards for the RC zoning district are identified in Title 21 Section 21.36.060. Required setbacks for main dwellings are 30 foot (front), 20 foot (sides), and 20 foot (rear) and the minimum distance between accessory and main structures is 10 feet. The maximum allowed height is 30 feet. However, pursuant to Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.3, a special 100-foot setback from San Benancio Road is required for the Toro Scenic Highway Corridors and Visual Sensitivity Map. As proposed, the two-story single-family dwelling will have a 45 foot (front), 615 foot (right side), 104 foot (left side), and 347 foot (rear) setbacks. The proposed height is 25 feet above the average natural grade, which is below the maximum height allowance (30 feet). The applicant has complied with all setback and height requirements pursuant to the Monterey County Zoning Ordinance (Title 21).

Pursuant to Title 21 Section 21.36.060.E, the maximum allowed site coverage is 25%. As proposed, the project would have a total site coverage of 2,312 square feet, which equals 0.5% of the approximate 10-acre parcel. Therefore, as proposed, the project meets the required coverage limitations.

### *Design Review*

The proposed exterior colors and materials are consistent with the area's setting and surrounding residences. The single-family dwelling is designed to reflect a simple side-gabled Ranch-style architecture that blends with the surrounding neighborhood. Proposed colors and materials of the structure include olive green board and batten exterior siding with dark brown trim and fascia. Roofing material consists of brown Class "A" fire-rated composite shingles. The proposed deck will consist of redwood planks, posts, and a top rail with horizontal stainless steel cable side rails. Proposed exterior lighting includes black metal downlit wall-mounted fixtures. A lighting plan is required to be submitted prior to issuance of building permits to ensure the project complies with the Monterey County lighting guidelines and Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.5 (**Exhibit A**). The proposed exterior finishes will be fire-resistant, blend with the surrounding environment, are consistent with the surrounding residential neighborhood character, and other dwellings in the neighborhood.

Additionally, the property is located off San Benancio Road in a rural area. San Benancio is a known scenic public road pursuant to Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.3 and Toro Area Scenic Highway Corridors and Visual Sensitivity Map Figure 16. The proposed project is situated on a parcel over 700 feet from San Benancio Road. The property was staked and flagged, and staff performed the required visual impact analysis. The proposed site was found to be naturally screened from public view by existing development, steep slopes, and mature vegetation. Location of the development was chosen to avoid the greatest amount of tree removal and reduce impacts to steep slopes, as well as viewshed impacts. The project, as conditioned, will not result in adverse visual impacts to nearby scenic corridors. Further, the project is consistent with the applicable scenic resource policies of the 2010 General Plan and the Toro Area Plan. Therefore, the proposed development will not have a substantial adverse impact on a public viewshed. As proposed, the project assures protection of the public viewshed, is consistent with neighborhood character, and assures visual integrity.

#### *Health and Safety*

Necessary public facilities will serve the proposed single-family residence. The parcel is supplied by an existing on site domestic well associated with the inactive San Benancio San Benancio Water System #51, which serves Assessor's Parcel Numbers 416-261-038 and 416-261-039. Water quality testing by Monterey Bay Analytical Services identified arsenic at 22.2 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the Maximum Contaminant Level of 10 ppm. Reactivation of the permit requires installation of an approved arsenic treatment system. A conceptual treatment plan by Culligan Commercial Services was reviewed and accepted by the Environmental Health Bureau Drinking Water Protection Services. Additional sampling for required constituents was completed and accepted, with results dated October 1, 2025. Approval is conditioned on installation of the treatment system prior to permit reactivation (Condition No. 7).

The proposed on-site wastewater treatment system will serve a two-bedroom residence on an approximately 10-acre parcel. A feasibility study by Grice Engineering evaluated soil and percolation through seven borings. Borings B1 through B4 reached 4 feet with percolation rates from 1.30 to 3.00 minutes per inch, averaging 2.18 minutes per inch, supporting a soil application rate of 1.2 gallons per day per square foot under Monterey County Code Chapter 15.20. Subsurface conditions are suitable for dispersal, with no groundwater to 9 feet and an estimated depth exceeding 350 feet below the trench bottom, beyond the 20-foot requirement. The system is designed for 300 gallons per day and requires 250 square feet of infiltrative area, equivalent to 62.5 linear feet of trench. It includes conventional leach field trenches approximately 62.5 feet long, 2 feet deep, and 1.5 feet wide, a 1,000-gallon septic tank, and a 1,000-gallon pump tank with controlled dosing. The design complies with 30% slope limits, setback requirements, and Environmental Health Bureau standards for soil suitability, hydraulic loading, groundwater separation, and site constraints.

The subject parcel is located within a State Responsibility Area classified as having a high fire hazard. The construction of the new single-family dwelling will be required to meet current fire and building code standards prior to the issuance of construction permits. Additionally, the project includes a fire safety Fuel Management Plan and arborist recommendations for defensible space to ensure the development meets fire safety regulations. This management plan recommends compliance with California Public Resources Code section 4291 (Defensible Space), which establishes fuel reduction and vegetation management guidelines for areas within 100 feet of structures. On-going compliance

with fuel management practices will ensure that the property owner is adequately maintaining defensible space, as required by California Public Resources Code section 4291. The Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District reviewed the proposed project and made no comments. The project has been reviewed by the HCD-Planning Division and conditions have been recommended, where appropriate, to ensure that the project will not have an adverse effect on the health, safety, and welfare of persons either residing or working in the neighborhood.

#### *Development on Slopes*

The proposed project includes development on slopes in excess of 25%. Pursuant to Title 21 Section 21.64.230 and General Plan Policy OS-3.5, development on slopes exceeding 25% may be permitted through approval of a Use Permit where no feasible alternative exists on slopes less than 25%, or where the project better achieves General Plan and applicable area plan objectives. The subject parcel is predominantly characterized by slopes exceeding 25%, thereby limiting feasible alternative building locations. The proposed development has been sited to minimize grading and site disturbance while maintaining consistency with applicable land use policies. As such, the project satisfies the threshold criteria for consideration of development on slopes exceeding 25%.

The project site is constrained by topographic conditions, with the majority of the approximately 10-acre parcel exhibiting slopes in excess of 25%, as documented by County GIS mapping and site-specific analysis. The proposed development footprint, including the residence, driveway, and associated improvements totaling approximately 4,327 square feet, has been located in the most suitable and least impactful area of the site given these constraints.

Pursuant to Title 21 Section 21.64.230.E.1, the project meets the required finding that there are no feasible alternative development locations on slopes less than 25% within the parcel, and the proposed design minimizes environmental disturbance while maintaining the natural topographic character of the site. The proposed single-family dwelling utilizes a stacked design by building the livable space above the garage with simple and direct driveway access, which minimizes the development footprint. The building site was also placed on the lower elevations of the property rather than upslopes to further minimize development impacts. The OWTS was specifically designed to accommodate sloped terrain through the use of contour-aligned leach fields and controlled effluent distribution. Supporting technical studies confirm that site conditions, including favorable soil permeability, absence of shallow groundwater, and lack of concentrated drainage, are suitable for such installation. Therefore, the project will not result in significant adverse impacts to slope stability, drainage patterns, or water quality. Further, given the sloped nature of the parcel, there is no alternative building site on the subject property that better meets the goals, policies, and objectives of the 2010 Monterey County General Plan and Toro Area Plan.

#### *Tree Removal*

The proposed project includes the removal of a single-stemmed Coast live oak tree with a trunk diameter breast height (DBH) of 11 inches. Pursuant to Title 21 Section 21.64.260.D.2, the Director of Planning may approve the removal of no more than three protected trees per lot in one year without a Use Permit. Additionally, pursuant to Toro Area Plan Policy T-3.7, the removal of healthy, native oak trees in the Toro Planning Area shall be discouraged.

An Arborist Report was submitted with the project by qualified arborist Frank Ono, dated February

4, 2025 (**Exhibit D**). The initial report indicated the removal of two trees: an 11-inch (tree #398) and 20-inch (tree #399) Oak. Upon reviewing this report, staff contacted the arborist to verify the trees to be removed. On April 8, 2026, a revised report was submitted, which clarified that only the 11-inch oak would be removed. The 20-inch oak was found to be on the neighboring property and would not be removed for the proposed development. The 11-inch oak is located along the shared private road off San Benancio Road and is sited within the proposed driveway configuration. The driveway is short, simple, and direct, thereby limiting the need to remove additional trees. The location of the proposed single-family dwelling was chosen to avoid the amount of tree removal required for development.

The project is conditioned to require a building permit prior to tree removal and the applicant would need to abide by the 1:1 tree replacement for the removal of one oak. The arborist also addresses fuel management and defensible space best management practices to reduce wildfire risk. Measures for tree protection during construction have been incorporated as conditions of approval and include tree root protection and a raptor and migratory bird nest survey if tree removal were to take place during February 22 through August 1. The project has been designed and sited to minimize the removal of protected trees to the greatest extent feasible. The location of the tree to be removed is adjacent to the proposed driveway access. However, given the existing site constraints and need for a driveway to accommodate access to the primary residence, the one tree to be removed is the minimum amount necessary to achieve development standards. As demonstrated, the project meets the required findings to allow the removal of one oak tree (**Exhibit A**).

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15303 categorically exempts the development of the first single-family dwelling on a parcel that allows residential use. The project proposes the construction of a 1,000 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 630 square foot lower-level garage, 592 square foot uncovered deck, 720 square foot covered balcony, 135 square feet of stairs, 130 linear feet of site retaining walls, and associated site improvements, including the removal of one Coast live oak tree and development on slopes in excess of 25%. None of the exceptions under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to this project.

#### TORO LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LUAC).

Based on the LUAC procedure guidelines adopted by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 15-103, the project was referred to the Toro LUAC for review on March 23, 2026 (**Exhibit C**). Questions were raised regarding site suitability and the quantities of the proposed tree replacement. The applicant provided a full set of plans showing that the location of the proposed residence is sited in an area that minimizes development on slopes. To address tree replacement, staff reached out to the project arborist and confirmed that only one tree will be removed and replanted. All other comments were non-substantive and outside of the LUAC's purview. The LUAC unanimously recommended approval of the project as proposed by a vote of 5-0, with one member absent.

#### OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

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

HCD-Engineering Services

HCD-Environmental Services  
Environmental Health Bureau  
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District

Prepared by: Kayla Nelson, Associate Planner, x6408  
Reviewed by: Fiona Jensen, Principal Planner  
Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

The following attachments are on file with HCD:

Exhibit A - Draft Resolution, including:

- Recommended Conditions of Approval
- Site Plan, Floor Plans, and Elevations
- Colors and Materials

Exhibit B - Vicinity Map

Exhibit C - Toro LUAC Minutes, dated March 23, 2026

Exhibit D - Arborist Report (County of Monterey Library No. LIB250295), dated February 4, 2025; and April 8, 2026

cc: Front Counter Copy; Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District; HCD-Environmental Services; HCD-Engineering Services; Environmental Health Bureau; Kayla Nelson, Planner; Fiona Jensen, Principal Planner; Garrett Beck, Property Owner; Darren Davis, Agent; Monterey Land Group; The Open Monterey Project; LandWatch (Executive Director); Lozeau Drury LLP; Christina McGinnis, Keep Big Sur Wild; Planning File PLN240355.