



County of Monterey Planning Commission

Agenda Item No.3

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Item No.3

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

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PLN220348 - OMNI RESOURCES LLC

Public hearing to consider construction of a 12-pump fueling station, a 3,077 square foot convenience store, and associated on-site and off-site improvements, including a trash enclosure, fuel price sign, parking, three underground diesel and gasoline storage tanks, and restriping of turn lanes on Highway 68 and Corral de Tierra Road. The project involves a Variance to reduce the side and rear setbacks to 1 foot 4 inches (east) and 1 foot 11 inches (south), and 2,170 cubic yards of cut and 1,005 cubic yards of fill.

Project Location: 3 Corral de Tierra Road, Salinas.

Proposed CEQA Action: Find that the project qualifies for a Statutory Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15183, is consistent with the development density established by the general plan, and there are no project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the project or project site.

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Finding that the project qualifies for a Statutory Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15183, is consistent with the development density established by the general plan, and there are no project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the project or project site; and
2. Approving a Combined Development Permit consisting of:
 - a. Use Permit, Administrative Permit, and Design Approval to allow construction of a 12-pump gas service station, a 3,077 square-foot convenience store, and associated on- and off-site improvements; and
 - b. Variance to reduce the side and rear setbacks to 1 foot 4 inches (north) and 1 foot 11 inches (east).

A draft resolution, including findings and evidence, is attached for consideration (**Exhibit A**). Staff recommends approval subject to 20 conditions.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Property Owner: Omni Resources LLC

Agent: Eric Phelps

APN: 161-571-002-000

Zoning: Light Commercial, Design Control, B-8 Overlay

Parcel Size: 0.68 acres

Flagged and Staked: Yes

Project Planner: Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner

JensenF1@countyofmonterey.gov, 831-796-6407

SUMMARY

The project site, approximately 0.68 acres, is located at the corner of Highway 68 and Corral de Tierra, within the Toro Area Plan. The subject property is designated and zoned Light Commercial. Surrounding land uses include a fueling station and market to the west, Highway 68 and Public Quasi Public uses (Church) to the north, and an undeveloped Light Commercial property to the east and south. The vacant Light Commercial property that surrounds the subject property to the east and south (APNs: 161-571-003-000 & 161-581-007-000) is under common ownership (Omni Resources LLC). This adjacent vacant property is planned for development with a 99,970 square foot retail shopping center, known as the Corral de Tierra Retail Village (PLN020344 and PLN110077; see *Site Access and Circulation* discussion in **Exhibit A**); however, construction has yet to commence.

Site History

The subject property is currently vacant but was developed with a fueling station and convenience store in 1966, pursuant to a Use Permit granted by the County of Monterey Zoning Administrator (File No. ZA-74). In 1994, the Zoning Administrator granted a Combined Development Permit to allow for a real estate office and convenience market on the Property. (File No. ZA94005). Photos of the prior gas station (circa 2001) are attached as **Exhibit K**. In 2002, the fueling station operator was notified of the need to remediate the site's contaminated soils and replace the service station's underground storage tanks. Subsequently, operation of the gas station ceased, and the site's fuel pumps, and underground storage tanks were removed. Contaminated soil remediation was undertaken with the regulatory oversight of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The Central Coast RWQCB issued a case closure on March 24, 2020, indicating remediation and corrective action have been completed to the satisfaction of the Central Coast RWQCB and no further action is required (**Exhibit J**). In May 2002, the Property Owner informed the HCD-Planning that they intended to reconstruct the gas station, subject to approval of necessary permits from the County of Monterey. The Property Owner submitted application request forms in 2002 and 2018 for a proposed replacement fueling station and convenience store; however, these applications were never formally submitted and have since been voided.

Proposed Project

The Property Owner is requesting approval of a Combined Development Permit consisting of: 1) a Use Permit, Administrative Permit, and Design Approval to allow construction of a 4,860 square foot canopy covering a 12-pump fueling station, a 3,077 square-foot convenience store, and associated site improvements; and 2) a Variance to reduce the side and rear setbacks to 1 foot 4 inches (east) and 1 foot 11 inches (south). The proposed fueling station and convenience store would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with up to three employees working at the project site at any given time (see Attachment 3 [Draft Operations Plan] of **Exhibit B**). The interior layout of the convenience store would be determined once a tenant has been assigned to the space.

Associated site improvements of the proposed project (service station & convenience store) include a 265 square foot trash enclosure, trellis, 12 parking stalls, landscaping, fuel price sign, temporary

stormwater retention pods (ranging from 1,200 square feet to 4,000 square feet), parking lot light poles, and three underground diesel and gasoline storage tanks [20,000 gallons (regular unleaded), 10,000 gallons (premium unleaded), and 10,000 gallons (diesel); totaling 40,000 gallons]. The trash enclosure and temporary retention ponds will be sited on the adjacent parcel (APN:161-571-003-000). Additionally, the project proposes State Route 68 and Corral de Tierra Road improvements, limited to restriping of turn lanes and repaving impacted asphalt and sidewalks, which would occur within State and County rights-of-way, respectively. Besides the fuel price sign, no additional signage is proposed. Future signage is anticipated and is subject to separate discretionary permitting. A visual simulation of the proposed project is attached as **Exhibit M**.

The project would involve 2,170 cubic yards of cut and 1,005 cubic yards of fill, and 0.7 acres of on-site disturbance for the gas station and convenience store. The project site is currently served by an individual water well (Exxon Station Water System, a transient-non-community water system), which would be used for the proposed project's water supply. Water for fire suppression would be provided by California-American Water (Can and Will Serve letter dated July 12, 2023). Wastewater service would be provided by California Utilities Services (Can and Will Serve letter dated March 24, 2023).

Goods and Services

General Plan Policy LU-4.2 policy encourages that commercial activities support and serve the County's projected population while minimizing conflicts between commercial and other uses. Policy LU-4.8 requires that commercial areas be designated in locations that offer convenient access. Currently, there is no operational fueling station between the Del Rey Oaks Junction Center (intersection of Highway 68 and Canyon Del Rey Boulevard) and Serra Village (Toro). Consistent with this policy, the proposed gas station will serve the existing population of the County and especially nearby communities along Highway 68-including Corral de Tierra, San Benancio, Ambler Park, Pasadera, and Baronet Estates-by providing a convenient and reliable fueling option in an area that currently lacks one. It will improve access to fuel and convenience store goods (food, drink, basic groceries, personal care, etc.) for residents, commuters, and local businesses, reducing the need to travel longer distances for basic services.

Public Comment

Comment letters have been received in support of the proposed project, citing its design compatibility with the neighborhood and the introduction of a "much-needed amenity" for local residents and the traveling public. See Exhibit

DISCUSSION

Staff reviewed the application and found the project, as proposed and conditioned, to be consistent with the 2010 General Plan, Toro Area Plan and Zoning Ordinance. **Exhibit A, Discussion**, details the project's compliance with these documents and analyzes the project's potential impacts relative to visual resources, groundwater supply, transportation, planned Highway 68 improvements, hazardous materials, and cultural resources. **Exhibit A** also discusses the project's compliance with site development standards, as modified by the proposed reduction in setbacks, and the property's B-8 zoning overlay, which restricts development that is found to be detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the area [Toro Area Plan].

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

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

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

LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The project was referred to the Toro Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) for review. The LUAC, at a duly noticed public meeting on May 28, 2024, voted 5 - 1 to support the project with changes (**Exhibit D**). The LUAC recommended that the Applicant/Owner reduce the scope and scale and use earth-tone exterior colors rather than white. In response to these recommended changes, the Applicant/Owner reduced the height of the convenience store from 26 feet to 25 feet, and changed the front façade's exterior colors and materials from white board and batten with light tan stone to a green-brown board and batten with natural vertical wood siding. The side façade still includes an off-white board and batten, but that side is not the primary view of the proposed development from Highway 68 or Corral de Tierra Road. Members of the public commented on the size of the building, the number of gas pumps, and the height of the fueling station canopy versus the original gas station, and inquired as to whether there will be any public restrooms or the on-site sale of alcohol. Members of the LUAC raised concerns regarding the hours of operation, down-lit lighting for the canopy, and the use of earth-toned materials. The 18-foot high canopy is needed to allow for larger recreational vehicles and standard vehicles to use the fuel pumps. The site is not constrained to being developed to the same size, bulk, or mass as the original gas station, which was demolished in 2002. As designed, all exterior lighting will be downlit, and canopy lighting will be recessed and dimmed from dusk to dawn to ensure that the proposed development does not introduce a substantial new source of lighting to the area. The interior layout of the convenience store has yet to be finalized; however, at a minimum, a restroom will be provided to employees. The sale of alcohol is an allowed use in the underlying zoning district and would be subject to obtaining necessary licenses from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

CEQA Guidelines section 15183 provides a streamlined environmental review process for projects consistent with the development density established in a previously certified General Plan or community plan EIR. To meet the requirements of Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines, a public agency shall limit its examination of environmental effects to those 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
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

To determine the proposed project's eligibility for this streamlined environmental review project, HCD-Planning prepared a CEQA Guidelines section 15183 Consistency Checklist (**Exhibit C**). The purpose of this checklist was to assess consistency between the proposed project and the 2010 General Plan and to compare the project with the effects above to determine if additional environmental review is required under CEQA in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15183. This checklist concluded that the project is consistent with the development density of the Light Commercial Zoning District and B-8 Overlay, and the project would not result in any significant effects on the environment that either have not already been analyzed in 2010 General Plan EIR or are more significant than previously analyzed, or that uniformly applicable development policies would not substantially mitigate. Examples of uniformly applicable development policies that the proposed project must comply with include Condition No. 3 (cultural resources), Condition No. 11 (raptor and bird nesting survey), County Code Chapters 16.08 (Grading Ordinance), 16.12 (Erosion Control Ordinance), and 10.60 (Noise Ordinance), and 2010 General Plan and Toro Area Plan policies. Also, there are no previously identified significant effects which, as a result of substantial new information that was not known at the time of the previous environmental review, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the 2010 General Plan EIR. Accordingly, no additional environmental review is required. Therefore, the project qualifies for an exemption through CEQA Guidelines section 15183.

Prepared by: Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner x6407

Reviewed and Approved by: Jackie Nickerson, Principal Planner

The following attachments are on file with HCD:

Exhibit A - Discussion

Exhibit B - Draft Resolution, including:

- Conditions of Approval
- Project Plans
- Operations Plan

Exhibit C - CEQA Guidelines Consistency Checklist

Exhibit D - Toro LUAC Meeting Minutes

Exhibit E - Draft Construction Management Plan

Exhibit F - Proposed and Planned Roadway Improvements

Exhibit G - Applicant's Justification Letter

Exhibit H - Historical and Proposed Water Demand

Exhibit I - Traffic Assessment

Exhibit J - Soil Remediation Closure Letter

Exhibit K - 2001 Site Photos

Exhibit L - Public Comment

Exhibit M - Visual Simulations

Exhibit N - Vicinity Map

cc: Front Counter Copy; Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner; HCD-Engineering Services; Environmental Health Bureau; HCD-Environmental Services; Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District;

Eric Phelps, Owner; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch; Laborers International Union of North America (Lozeau Drury LLP), Christina McGinnis, Keep Big Sur Wild; Project File PLN220348.