



December 6, 2019

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

**DEC 06 2019**

**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

**VIA EMAIL: [EAHMAD@FRESNOCOUNTYCA.GOV](mailto:EAHMAD@FRESNOCOUNTYCA.GOV)**

Fresno County  
Department of Public Works and Planning  
Development Services and Capital Projects Division  
Attn: Ejaz Ahmad  
2220 Tulare Street, Suite A  
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Mr. Ahmad:

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR INITIAL STUDY APPLICATION NO. 7449  
SCH# 2019119035

The Department of Conservation's (Department) Division of Land Resource Protection (Division) has reviewed the Mitigated Negative Declaration for Initial Study Application No. 7449 (Project). The Division monitors farmland conversion on a statewide basis, provides technical assistance regarding the Williamson Act, and administers various agricultural land conservation programs. We offer the following comments and recommendations with respect to the proposed project's potential impacts on agricultural land and resources.

#### Project Description

The proposed project would allow the rezoning of a 42.6 acre parcel of land with split zoning; 40.1 acres from the AL-20 (Limited Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) zone district and 2.5 acres from the M-3(c) (Heavy Industrial, Conditional) zone district limited to a parking lot to the M-3(c) zone district to allow limited heavy industrial, general industrial, and light manufacturing uses as requested by the applicant.

The project site is located on the southeast corner of E. Central Avenue and S. Willow Avenue approximately 3,002 feet east of the nearest city limits of City of Fresno (4216 S. Willow Avenue, Fresno) (APN 331-090-96). The Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program<sup>1</sup> currently classifies the project site as 40.1 acres of Prime Farmland and 2.5 acres of Urban and Built-up Land.

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>

## Department Comments

In the County supplied Evaluation of Environmental Impacts, it states that, "no loss of Prime Farmland would result from the subject rezoning request, as the property has been designated for future industrial uses in the Roosevelt Community Plan."<sup>2</sup> The County also states that the project site is within the City of Fresno's urban boundary which the County has identified on its county adopted Roosevelt Community Plan as existing urban.

The County did not provide a copy of the Roosevelt Community Plan nor did it provide a map of the Community Plan boundaries. In the Department's attempts to identify the current Roosevelt Community Plan boundary it found multiple sources displaying contrasting boundary lines.

On the front cover of the Roosevelt Community Plan produced by the City of Fresno Development Department, Planning Division in April 1992, it roughly depicts the project area as within the boundaries of the Roosevelt Community Plan. However, pages -vi- (page 18 of the pdf), page 10 Figure 2-0 (page 29 of the pdf), and page A-1 Exhibit A (page 126 of the pdf), all clearly show the proposed project area outside of the boundaries of the Roosevelt Community Plan.<sup>3</sup> The City of Fresno has a more recent, 2007, Community Plan Boundary Map<sup>4</sup> which also clearly shows the proposed project area outside of the boundaries of the Roosevelt Community Plan.

The Department is concerned that the conflicting information regarding the boundaries of the Roosevelt Community Plan may lead to a misguided review of the project site, and more specifically the proposed projects impacts on Prime Farmland.

The conversion of agricultural land represents a permanent reduction and significant impact to California's agricultural land resources. Under CEQA, a lead agency should not approve a project if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available that would lessen the significant effects of the project. All mitigation measures that are potentially feasible should be included in the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). A measure brought to the attention of the lead agency should not be left out unless it is infeasible based on its elements.

Agricultural conservation easements on land of at least equal quality and size can mitigate the project impacts in accordance with CEQA Guideline § 15370. The Department highlights agricultural conservation easements because of their acceptance and use by lead agencies as an appropriate mitigation measure under CEQA. Agricultural conservation easements are an available mitigation tool and

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<sup>2</sup> County of Fresno, Evaluation of Environmental Impacts, Initial Study Application No. 7449 and Amendment Application No. 3829, Page 3

<sup>3</sup> City of Fresno, Roosevelt Community plan, <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/11/RooseveltCommunityPlan.pdf>


<sup>4</sup> City of Fresno, Community Plan Boundary Map, <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/10/planbnds1.pdf>

should always be considered; however, any other feasible mitigation measures should also be considered.

Conclusion

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Mitigated Negative Declaration for Initial Study Application No. 7449. Please provide this Department with notices of any future hearing dates as well as any staff reports pertaining to this project. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Farl Grundy, Environmental Planner at (916) 324-7347 or via email at [Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monique Wilber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Monique Wilber  
Conservation Program Support Supervisor

