



April 10, 2020

VIA EMAIL: MSUNDT@CI.GONZALES.CA.US

Matthew Sundt
City of Gonzales
Community Development Director
147 Fourth Street
Gonzales, CA 93926

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

APR 10 2020

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Dear Mr. Sundt:

CITY OF GONZALES, NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE PUENTE DEL MONTE ANNEXATION PROJECT, SCH#2020039055

The Department of Conservation's (Department) Division of Land Resource Protection (Division) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Puente del Monte Annexation (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

Jackson Family Investments has submitted an application to the City requesting annexation and pre-zoning approvals for the project site. Annexation requires approval from both the City Council and Monterey County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The proposed annexation and pre-zoning actions are intended to facilitate future development of the project site with a master planned urban community. The conceptual plan for the project site includes mixed-use development and residential, light industrial, and commercial uses.

The proposed project site is located on approximately 540 acres within the City of Gonzales's Sphere of Influence, generally bounded by Gloria Road to the south, Iverson Road on the east, active farmland within unincorporated Monterey County to the north and northeast, and Highway 101 on the west.

Department Comments

The City has outlined mitigating policies, actions, and goals in its 2010 General Plan. The Department thinks that the implementation of Conservation and Open Space

Policy 4.2 and implementing action 4.2.1, as well as, Conservation and Open Space Policy 4.3 and implementing action 4.3.3, would be beneficial to agricultural conservation.

Along with the implementation of these policies, actions, and goals, the Department also recommends the following discussion under the Agricultural Resources section of the EIR:

- Type, amount, and location of farmland conversion resulting directly and indirectly from implementation of the proposed project.
- Impacts on any current and future agricultural operations in the vicinity; e.g., land-use conflicts, increases in land values and taxes, loss of agricultural support infrastructure such as processing facilities, etc.
- Incremental impacts leading to cumulative impacts on agricultural land. This would include impacts from the proposed project, as well as impacts from past, current, and likely future projects.
- Implementation of the City's policies, actions, and goals as outlined in the Conservation and Open Space section of its 2010 General Plan.
- Proposed mitigation measure for all impacted agricultural lands within the proposed project area.

The project site also contains one or more active Williamson Act contracts; therefore, the EIR should also discuss the following Williamson Act related issues.

- Pursuant to Government Code §51243, if a city annexes land under Williamson Act contract, the city must succeed to all rights, duties and powers of the county under the contract unless conditions in §51243.5 apply to give the city the option to not succeed to the contract. A LAFCO must notify the Department within 10 days of a city's proposal to annex land under Williamson Act contract (Government Code §56753.5). A LAFCO must not approve annexation of contracted land to a city unless specified conditions apply (Government Code §§51296.3, 56749 and 56856.5).
- Non-Renewal is the preferred method of contract termination. It can be initiated by either party of the contract (Government Code §51245).
- If cancellation is proposed, notification must be submitted to the Department when the City accepts the application as complete (Government Code §51284.1). The council must consider the Department's comments prior to approving a tentative cancellation. Required findings must be made by the council in order to approve tentative cancellation.

Conclusion

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Puente del Monte Annexation project. 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, Associate Environmental Planner at (916) 324-7347 or via email at Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Monique Wilber

Monique Wilber
Conservation Program Support Supervisor