

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Project Title: Annexation No. 2024-05 and Blankenship Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5602

Project Description: Annexation No. 2024-05 is a request by San Joaquin Valley Homes to annex two parcels totaling approximately 62.53 acres into the City limits of Visalia. Upon annexation, approximately 55.49 acres of the site would be zoned R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and approximately 7.04 acres of the site will be zoned C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial), which is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designation. The project is supported by a Tentative Subdivision Map.

Blankenship Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5602 is a request by San Joaquin Valley Homes to subdivide two parcels totaling 62.96 acres into 203 lots for single-family residential use. Upon annexation, the site will be zoned R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial). Development of the single-family homes will be restricted to the R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) zone. Commercial development of the area zoned for commercial use is not part of this project and is a remainder that will be developed at a later time. The residential subdivision will meet the city's development standards for the zone. Additionally, the project will also include the construction of streets, extension of sewer lines and laterals, future connection to the storm drainage system and extension of utilities and services (electricity, gas, water). Frontage improvements along East Caldwell Avenue including curb, gutter and parkway landscape will also be installed per city standards. Development improvements will also be included along South Santa Fe Street.

Project Location: The site is located on the southeast corner of South Santa Fe Street and East Caldwell Ave (APNs: 123-400-005, 123-400-001).

Project Facts: Refer to Initial Study for project facts, plans and policies, and discussion of environmental effects.

Attachments:

Initial Study	(X)
Environmental Checklist	(X)
Maps	(X)
Mitigation Measures	(X)
Biological Evaluation	(X)

DECLARATION OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT:

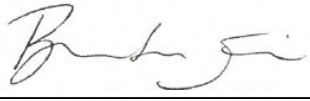
This project will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- (a) The project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.
- (b) The project does not have the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
- (c) The project does not have environmental effects which are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. Cumulatively considerable means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

- (d) The environmental effects of the project will not cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

This Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared by the City of Visalia Planning Division in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended. A copy may be obtained from the City of Visalia Planning Division Staff during normal business hours.

APPROVED
Brandon Smith, AICP
Environmental Coordinator

By:  _____

Date Approved: March 31, 2025

Review Period: 20 days

INITIAL STUDY

I. GENERAL

A. Annexation No. 2024-05 is a request by San Joaquin Valley Homes to annex two parcels totaling approximately 62.96 acres into the City limits of Visalia. Upon annexation, approximately 55.49 acres of the site would be zoned R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and approximately 7.04 acres of the site will be zoned C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial), which is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designation.

Blankenship Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5602 is a request by San Joaquin Valley Homes to subdivide two parcels totaling 62.53 acres into 203 lots for single-family residential use. Upon annexation, the site will be zoned R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial). Development of the single-family homes will be restricted to the R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) zone. Commercial development of the area zoned for commercial use is not part of this project and is a remainder that will be developed at a later time. The residential subdivision will meet the city's development standards for the zone. Additionally, the project will also include the construction of streets, extension of sewer lines and laterals, future connection to the storm drainage system and extension of utilities and services (electricity, gas, water). Frontage improvements along East Caldwell Avenue including curb, gutter and parkway landscape will also be installed per city standards. Development improvements will also be included along South Santa Fe Avenue.

B. Identification of the Environmental Setting:

The project is located south of Caldwell Avenue between South Santa Fe Street and South Burke Street. The parcels are currently undeveloped with one parcel having a vacant single-family dwelling on the southwest corner of East Caldwell Avenue and South Burke Street. Additionally, there are Valley Oak trees along the perimeter of the project site along South Burke Street and along the Tulare Irrigation Canal. The site is bounded by East Caldwell Avenue to the north, South Burke Street to the east, South Santa Fe Street to the west and the Tulare Irrigation District canal to the south. The project is supported by an Annexation to bring the property within city limits, it is within the Tier II Urban Growth Boundary.

The surrounding uses, Zoning, and General Plan for the project area are as follows:

	General Plan	Zoning	Existing uses
North:	Mixed Use Commercial / Residential High Density	C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial), R-M-3 (Multi-Family Residential, 1,200 sq. ft. minimum site area)	Vacant, undeveloped parcel
South:	Residential Low Density	X (outside of the city limits)	Vineyards / Agriculture Crops
East:	Residential Low Density, Residential Medium Density	R-1-5 (Single-family Residential), R-M-2 (Multi-Family Residential, 3,000 sq. ft. minimum site area)	Diamond Oaks Subdivision (Single-Family homes and duplex units)
West:	Mixed Use Commercial / Residential Low Density	C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial), R-1-5 (Single-family Residential)	Commercial business, mini storage, Salierno Estates subdivision (Single-Family Residential)

Fire and police protection services, street maintenance of public streets, refuse collection, and wastewater treatment will be provided by the City of Visalia upon annexation and the development of the project area.

C. Plans and Policies: The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates the site as Residential Low Density and Mixed Use Commercial. The site is zoned R-1-5 (Single-family residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial). The proposed project is consistent with the Land Use Element Land Use Element of the General Plan, and consistent with the standards for single-family residential development pursuant to the Visalia Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance) Chapter 17.12. No development is proposed at this time for the portion of project area zoned for Commercial Mixed Use, and there is no inconsistency with plans and policies related to this designation.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

No significant adverse environmental impacts have been identified for this project. The City of Visalia Land Use Element, Zoning Ordinance and Oak Tree Ordinance contain mitigation measures that are designed to reduce/eliminate impacts to a level of non-significance.

III. MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures, which are listed below under IV. Mitigation Monitoring Program, will reduce potential environmental impacts related to the biological resource impacts to a less than significant level as described below:

Biological Habitat Assessment of a species located on site, the Nuttall's Woodpecker (a species listed as a United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) Bird of Conservation Concern (BBC), due to declining population. This species was found during a site assessment of the project site nesting within the oak trees surrounding the perimeter of the project site and in utility poles and shrubs.

To ensure that there will not be significant impacts to the species, the project shall be developed with the Avoidance and Minimization Measures as stated on page 27, Recommendations (Section 8) of the Biological Habitat Assessment prepared by Soar Environmental Consulting as well as the City of Visalia Municipal Code Chapter 12.24 Oak Tree Preservation.

IV. MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM

<u>Mitigation Measure</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
Mitigation Measure 4a (Construction Timeline) – In order to avoid impacts to nesting migratory birds and raptors, construction will commence outside the nesting season, prior to February 15. If any special status species are observed during construction activities, work shall be stopped immediately, and CDFW shall be contacted.	Project Applicant	Mitigation shall be enforced by the City of Visalia and carried out by the project applicant during construction activity.
Mitigation Measure 4b (Pre-construction Survey). If it is not possible to initiate construction between September and February, a preconstruction survey for nesting birds shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to ensure that no active nests will be disturbed during the implementation of the Project. A Pre-construction survey shall be conducted no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of construction activities.	Project Applicant	Mitigation shall be enforced by the City of Visalia and the pre-construction survey shall be submitted to the City no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of construction activities.

Mitigation Measure 4c (Avoidance and minimization measures for woodpecker damage). If it doesn't cause structural damage, remove or fill in ledges, cracks, and crevices near the site of the inactive woodpecker holes with non-toxic substances. Cover inactive woodpecker holes with shiny aluminum flashing. Do not cover existing nest. Install statuette of their predators such as eagles or owls. Trees with woodpecker damage will be observed for woodpecker activity before each tree is removed.	Project Applicant	Mitigation shall be enforced by the City of Visalia and carried out by the project applicant during construction activity.
Mitigation Measure 4d (Avoidance measures for active woodpecker cavities). Observe from a distance periodically to check woodpecker activity near the cavity. Treat every cavity as if it is an active nest. Only a qualified biologist should be making the determination whether the cavity is inactive and if the area used by the woodpecker is a nest.	Project Applicant	Mitigation shall be enforced by the City of Visalia and carried out by the project applicant during construction activity.

V. PROJECT COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING ZONES AND PLANS

The project is compatible with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance as the project relates to surrounding properties.

VI. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

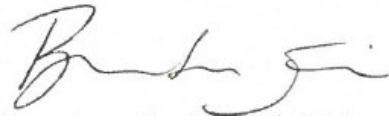
The following documents are hereby incorporated into this Negative Declaration and Initial Study by reference:

- Visalia General Plan Update. Dyett & Bhatia, October 2014.
- Visalia City Council Resolution No. 2014-38 (Certifying the Visalia General Plan Update) passed and adopted October 14, 2014.
- Visalia General Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2010041078). Dyett & Bhatia, June 2014.
- Visalia General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2010041078). Dyett & Bhatia, March 2014.
- Visalia City Council Resolution No. 2014-37 (Certifying the EIR for the Visalia General Plan Update) passed and adopted October 14, 2014.
- Visalia Municipal Code, including Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance).
- California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines.
- City of Visalia, California, Climate Action Plan, Draft Final. Strategic Energy Innovations, December 2013.
- Visalia City Council Resolution No. 2014-36 (Certifying the Visalia Climate Action Plan) passed and adopted October 14, 2014.
- City of Visalia Storm Water Master Plan. Boyle Engineering Corporation, September 1994.
- City of Visalia Sanitary Sewer Master Plan. City of Visalia, 1994.
- City of Visalia Zoning Ordinance Update. City of Visalia, March 2017.
- Tulare County Important Farmland 2018 Map. California Department of Conservation, 2018.
- City of Visalia VMT Thresholds and Implementation Guidelines. LSA, 2021. Together with City of Visalia VMT Screening Application. <https://gis1.lsa.net/visaliaVMT/>
- Blankenship Housing Subdivision Development Project, Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment. Soar Environmental Consulting, January 17, 2025.
- Blankenship Subdivision Development Project, Biological Habitat Assessment. Soar Environmental Consulting, January 20, 2025.

VII. NAME OF PERSON WHO PREPARED INITIAL STUDY



Colleen A. Moreno
Assistant Planner



Brandon Smith, AICP
Environmental Coordinator

**INITIAL STUDY
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST**

Name of Proposal	Annexation No. 2024-05 and Blankenship Tentative Subdivision No. 5602		
NAME OF PROPONENTS:	Steve Macias, San Joaquin Valley Homes	NAME OF AGENT:	None
Address of Proponents:	5607 Avenida de las Robles, Visalia CA	Address of Agent:	
Telephone Numbers:	559-786-0936	Telephone Number:	
Date of Review	February 13, 2025	Lead Agency:	City of Visalia

The following checklist is used to determine if the proposed project could potentially have a significant effect on the environment. Explanations and information regarding each question follow the checklist.

1 = No Impact 2 = Less Than Significant Impact
3 = Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated 4 = Potentially Significant Impact

I. AESTHETICS

Would the project:

- 2 a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- 1 b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
- 1 c) In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
- 2 d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

- 1 a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency to non-agricultural use?
- 1 b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?
- 1 c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?
- 1 d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

- 1 e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

III. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

- 2 a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?
- 2 b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?
- 2 c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?
- 1 d) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 3 a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
- 2 b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
- 1 c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?
- 1 d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?
- 2 e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

- 1 f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 1 a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Public Resources Code Section 15064.5?
- 1 b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 15064.5?
- 1 c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

- 2 a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?
- 1 b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
- 1 i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.
- 1 ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?
- 1 iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
- 1 iv) Landslides?
- 2 b) Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil?
- 1 c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?
- 1 d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?
- 1 e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?
- 1 f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- 2 a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?
- 2 b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

- 1 a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- 1 b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?
- 1 c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?
- 1 d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?
- 1 e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?
- 1 f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?
- 1 g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- 1 a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?
- 1 b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?
- 2 c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:
- 2 i) result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;
- 2 ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;
- 2 iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff;
- 2 iv) impede or redirect flood flows?
- 1 d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?
- 1 e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- 1 a) Physically divide an established community?
- 1 b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- 1 a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the state?
- 1 b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

XIII. NOISE

Would the project:

- 2 a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?
- 2 b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?
- 1 c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

- 1 a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?
- 1 b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- 1 a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:
 - 1 i) Fire protection?
 - 1 ii) Police protection?
 - 1 iii) Schools?
 - 1 iv) Parks?
 - 1 v) Other public facilities?

XVI. RECREATION

- 2 a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?
- 1 b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

XVII. TRANSPORTATION / TRAFFIC

Would the project:

- 1 a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?
- 1 b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?
- 1 c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?
- 1 d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

- 1 a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code § 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:
 - 1 i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or
 - 1 ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

- 2 a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?
- 1 b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?
- 1 c) Result in a determination by the waste water treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?
- 1 d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?
- 1 e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

XX. WILDFIRE

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

- 1 a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?
- 1 b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

- 2 c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?
- 2 d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 2 a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?
- 2 b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?
- 2 c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Note: Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21083.05, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 65088.4, Gov. Code; Sections 21080(c), 21080.1, 21080.3, 21083, 21083.05, 21083.3, 21093, 21094, 21095, and 21151, Public Resources Code; *Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino*, (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 296; *Leonoff v. Monterey Board of Supervisors*, (1990) 222 Cal.App.3d 1337; *Eureka Citizens for Responsible Govt. v. City of Eureka* (2007) 147 Cal.App.4th 357; *Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th at 1109; *San Franciscans Upholding the Downtown Plan v. City and County of San Francisco* (2002) 102 Cal.App.4th 656.

Revised 2019

Authority: Public Resources Code sections 21083 and 21083.09

Reference: Public Resources Code sections 21073, 21074, 21080.3.1, 21080.3.2, 21082.3/ 21084.2 and 21084.3

DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

I. AESTHETICS

- a. This proposed project is a new subdivided residential construction which will meet City standards for setbacks, landscaping, and height requirements. The project will not adversely affect the view of any scenic vistas. The Sierra Nevada Mountain range may be considered a scenic vista; however, the view will not be adversely impacted by the project.
- b. There are no scenic resources on the site. However, there are oak trees located along the perimeter of the project site. The City of Visalia has an Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance, which once the site is annexed into the City, the project shall comply with the ordinance and is part of the mitigation measures for the project.
- c. The project site is located within an urbanized area and the City has development standards related to landscaping and other amenities that will ensure that the visual character of the area is enhanced and not degraded upon any future development. Thus, the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings.
- d. The project will facilitate the construction of a new subdivision, as well as the required infrastructure and development such as streetlights, creating new sources of light that are typical of that use. The City has development standards that require light to be directed and/or shielded so it does not fall upon adjacent properties.

II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

- a. The project is located on property that is identified as Prime Farmland on maps prepared by the California Department of Conservation, and will involve the conversion of the property to non-agricultural use.

The City of Visalia 2030 General Plan has designated the Project site for urban uses under the Urban Growth Development Tier 2. The implementation of this Project will support the General Plan designation for future urban land use and Policy LU-P-21 for residential development. The General Plan established criteria, dependent upon land use type, for when development may advance from the first tier (Tier I) to subsequent tiers (Tiers 2 and 3), which are contained in Policy LU-P-21 of the General Plan. For residential uses, the threshold is the issuance of permits for 5,850 housing units within Tier 1 since April 1, 2010. The City met the residential permit threshold in July 2021 and now considers development located within Tiers 1 and/or 2 (City of Visalia, 2021).

General Plan Policy LU-P-34 contained a requirement for an Agricultural Mitigation Program to address the conversion of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance within the Tier 2 and Tier 3 growth boundaries. Policy LU-P-34 requires the adoption of this type of program notwithstanding that such a program would not reduce the environmental effects from the loss of such farmland to a level of less than significant. In order to meet the requirements of this policy, the City prepared an

Agricultural Preservation Ordinance applicable to properties within Tier 2 and Tier 3 that requires a 1:1 ratio of agricultural land preserved to agricultural land converted towards urban development. The Ordinance was adopted in May 2023 and is necessary for other pending entitlements submitted to the City of Visalia that are located within Tier 2 to be developed. The Ordinance requires that an equivalent amount of agricultural land converted be preserved outside the urban development boundary and within the southern San Joaquin Valley, or that a project comply with regulations within the Ordinance that will cause an equivalent amount of agriculture land to be preserved. Additionally, the preserved agricultural land must demonstrate adequate water supply and agricultural zoning. Policy LU-P-34 notes that such a program shall, to the extent feasible and practicable, be integrated with the agricultural easement programs adopted by Tulare County and nearby cities. The City of Visalia's program shall allow for compliance with the preservation ordinance to be completed by purchase of easements, and that such easements be held by a qualifying entity, such as a local land trust, and require the submission of annual monitoring reports to the City. Prior to the adoption of the Ordinance the Project proponent could mitigate for the loss of agricultural land and begin conversion of agricultural lands by providing verification to the City that it has preserved agricultural land at a 1:1 ratio using easements that meet the requirements identified in Policy LU-P-34 or participation in an agricultural preservation program adopted by another agency within the southern San Joaquin Valley that meet these requirements for preserving agricultural land.

As this is a requirement for consistency with the General Plan, the Project's compliance is mandatory. Therefore, compliance with the Agriculture Mitigation Ordinance will allow the Project to convert Prime Farmland and preserve offsite farmland outside of the urban development boundaries at an equivalent ratio and will result in a less-than-significant impact.

- b. The project is not located on property that is party to a Williamson Act contract. Existing Tulare County zoning for the area is AE-20 (Exclusive Agriculture Zone 20 Acre Minimum). Although the site is zoned for agriculture no nearby agriculture would be hindered and agriculture has ceased operations on the site.
- c. The City of Visalia does not have a zoning classification for forest land, additionally the site is not considered forest land and is currently vacant. Therefore, the site will not conflict with any forest land.
- d. There is no forest land currently located on the site.
- e. The project site is located directly south of East Caldwell Ave and is bounded by properties within City Limits on the north, east and west of the site. The surrounding area is primarily developed with Residential and commercial uses. The project will not result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

III. AIR QUALITY

- a. The project site is located in an area that is under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The project itself does not disrupt implementation of the San Joaquin Regional Air Quality Management Plan and will therefore not be a significant impact.
- b. Development of site under the Visalia General Plan may result in emissions that exceed thresholds established by the SJVAPCD for PM10 and PM2.5. The project is also supported by a request to annex 62.96 acres of County area into the City Limits. The annexation itself will not result in emissions that violate air quality standards or contribute substantially to existing or projected air quality violations as it is solely the changing of a boundary line.

The development of the project area for the residential subdivision is required to adhere to requirements administered by the SJVAPCD to reduce emissions to a level of compliance consistent with the District's regulations. Compliance with the SJVAPCD's rules and regulations will reduce potential impacts associated with air quality standard violations to a less than significant level.

In addition, the development of the project will be subject to the SJVAPCD Indirect Source Review (Rule 9510) procedures that became effective on March 1, 2006. The Applicant will be required to obtain permits demonstrating compliance with Rule 9510, or payment of mitigation fees to the SJVAPCD. Per the SJVAPCD, an Air Impact Assessment was completed for the project and the District has determined that the project is exempt from the requirements and as such the project complies with the emission reduction requirements of District Rule 9510 and is not subject to payment of off-site fees.

Tulare County is designated non-attainment for certain federal ozone and state ozone levels. The development of the subdivision on the project site, may result in a net increase of criteria pollutants.

- c. Uses located near the project area may be exposed to pollutant concentrations as a result of the construction activities. The project could result in short-term air quality impacts related to dust generation and exhaust due to construction activities. The project is required to adhere to requirements administered by SJVAPCD to reduce emissions to a level of compliance. Compliance with the SJVAPCD's rules and regulations will reduce potential impacts associated with air quality standard violations to a less than significant level.

In addition, development of the project will be subject to the SJVAPCD Indirect Source Review (Rule 9510) procedures that became effective on March 1, 2006. Per Rule 9510, any development project which requires discretionary approval and upon full build out will include 50 residential units is subject to the rule. The applicant will be required to submit an Air Impact Assessment (AIA) to the SJVAPCD obtain permits demonstrating compliance with Rule 9510, or payment of mitigation fees to the SJVAPCD. The impact is considered less than significant.

- d. The proposed project will not involve the generation of objectionable odors.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- a. City-wide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for conversion to urban use.

A Biological Habitat Assessment was submitted by Soar Environmental Consulting. Soar staff conducted a site visit in December 2024, to observe biological conditions, and during that assessment, one special-status wildlife species, Nuttall's woodpecker was observed near the property. This species is a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC).

Additionally, based on the site visit, it was concluded that there is no suitable nesting habitat within the project boundary, except for the valley oak trees around the perimeter, which are not required to be removed for the development of the project. Therefore, with mitigation, the project will not likely adversely impact native plant or wildlife species.

The following measures will be implemented for the protection of nesting birds including the Nuttall's woodpecker:

Mitigation Measure 4a (Construction Timeline): In order to avoid impacts to nesting migratory birds and raptors, construction will commence outside the nesting season, prior to February 15. If any special status species are observed during construction activities, work shall be stopped immediately, and CDFW shall be contacted.

Mitigation Measure 4b (Pre-construction Survey): If it is not possible to initiate construction between September and February, a preconstruction survey for nesting birds shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to ensure that no active nests will be disturbed during the implementation of the Project. A Pre-construction survey shall be conducted no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of construction activities.

Mitigation Measure 4c (Avoidance and minimization measures for woodpecker damage): If it doesn't cause structural damage, remove or fill in ledges, cracks, and crevices near the site of the inactive woodpecker holes with non-toxic substances. Cover inactive woodpecker holes with shiny aluminum flashing. Do not cover existing nest. Install statuette of their predators such as eagles or owls. Trees with woodpecker damage will be observed for woodpecker activity before each tree is removed.

Mitigation Measure 4d (Avoidance measures for active woodpecker cavities): Observe from a distance periodically to check woodpecker activity near the cavity. Treat every cavity as if it is an active nest. Only qualified biologist should be making the determination whether the cavity is inactive and if the area used by the woodpecker is a nest.

- b. The project is not located within an identified sensitive riparian habitat or other natural community. Cameron Creek is located approximately 1,000 feet to the south of the project site and will not be affected by the proposed development.

In addition, City-wide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR concluded that certain sensitive natural communities may be directly or indirectly affected

by future development within the General Plan Planning Area, particularly valley oak woodlands and valley oak riparian woodlands. Such effects would be considered significant. However, the General Plan contains multiple policies, identified under Impact 3.8-2 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts on woodlands located within in the Planning Area. With implementation of these policies and being that the project is not located within or adjacent to an identified sensitive riparian habitat or other natural communities, including woodlands, impacts on woodlands will be less than significant.

- c. The project is located adjacent to the Tulare Irrigation Canal which is identified as a riverine feature in the National Wetland Inventory (NWI). At the site visit, it was observed that the irrigation canal has a bare-ground bottom substrate and would not provide suitable habitat for any special-status aquatic species.

The project is not located within or adjacent to federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. City-wide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR concluded that certain protected wetlands and other waters may be directly or indirectly affected by future development within the General Plan Planning Area. Such effects would be considered significant. However, the General Plan contains multiple policies, identified under Impact 3.8-3 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts on wetlands and other waters located within the Planning Area. With implementation of these policies, impacts on wetlands will be less than significant.

- d. This development would not interfere with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Citywide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR concluded that the movement of wildlife species may be directly or indirectly affected by future development within the General Plan Planning Area. Such effects would be considered significant. However, the General Plan contains multiple policies, identified under Impact 3.8-4 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts on wildlife movement corridors located within the Planning Area. With implementation of these policies, impacts on wildlife movement corridors will be less than significant.

- e. The project will not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. The City has a municipal ordinance in place to protect valley oak trees. All existing valley oak trees which are located on the permitter of the project site will be under the jurisdiction of this ordinance. Any oak trees to be removed from the site are subject to the jurisdiction of the municipal ordinance.
- f. There are no local, regional or state habitat conservation plans for the area.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

- a. Based on the submitted Cultural Resources Assessment conducted by Heather Froshour, M.A., R.P.A., Senior Archaeologist with Soar Environmental Consulting on

January 17, 2025 there are no known historical resources located within the project area. If some potentially historical or cultural resource is unearthed during development all work should cease until a qualified professional archaeologist can evaluate the finding and make necessary recommendations.

- b. Based on the submitted Cultural Resources Assessment, there are no known archaeological resources located within the project area. If some archaeological resource is unearthed during development all work should cease until a qualified professional archaeologist can evaluate the finding and make necessary recommendations.
- c. There are no known human remains buried in the project vicinity. If human remains are unearthed during development all work should cease until the proper authorities are notified and a qualified professional archaeologist can evaluate the finding and make any necessary recommendations.

VI. ENERGY

- a. Development of the site includes construction of 201-unit single-family subdivision, as well as the required infrastructure such as the construction of streets, extension of sewer lines and laterals, future connection to storm drainage system and extension of other utilities and services (gas, electricity, water) and improvements such as curb and gutter, sidewalks, streetlights. This development may increase the energy consumption related to worker trips and operation of construction equipment. This increase would be temporary and limited through the compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. Once the subdivision is complete, the energy consumption would be typical of a single family home subdivision, similar to what is located directly east of the site.
- b. The project will not conflict with or obstruct any state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency. The proposed project will comply with all state and local policies related to energy efficiency.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

- a. The State Geologist has not issued an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Map for Tulare County. The project area is not located on or near any known earthquake fault lines or areas prone to seismic activity or landslides. Therefore, the project will not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse impacts involving earthquakes.
- b. Development of this site will require movement of topsoil. Existing City Engineering Division standards require that a grading and drainage plan be submitted for review to the City to ensure that on- and off-site improvements will be designed to meet City standards.
- c. The project area is relatively flat and the underlying soil is not known to be unstable and have a low capacity for landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. Soils in the Visalia area have few limitations with regard to development. Due to low clay content and limited topographic relief, soils in the Visalia area have low expansion characteristics.
- d. Due to low clay content, soils in the Visalia area have an expansion index of 0-20, which is defined as very low potential expansion.

- e. The project site area is currently vacant and future development will not include any development that would utilize the need of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems since sanitary sewer lines will be installed and utilized for the disposal of wastewater at this site.
- f. There are no unique geological features and no known paleontological resources located within the project area. If some potentially unique paleontological or unique geological resources are unearthed during development all work should cease until a qualified professional paleontologist can evaluate the finding and make necessary mitigation recommendations.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

- a. The project is expected to generate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the short-term as a result of the construction of residences within the subdivision map and in the long-term as a result of day-to-day operations of the proposed residences.

The City has prepared and adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP), which includes baseline GHG emissions inventories, reduction measures, and reduction targets consistent with local and State goals. The CAP was prepared concurrently with the proposed General Plan and its impacts are also evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update EIR.

The Visalia General Plan and the CAP both include policies that aim to reduce the level of GHG emissions emitted in association with buildout conditions under the General Plan. Although emissions will be generated as a result of the project, implementation of the General Plan and CAP policies will result in fewer emissions than would be associated with a continuation of baseline conditions. Thus, the impact to GHG emissions will be less than significant.

- b. The State of California has enacted the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), which included provisions for reducing the GHG emission levels to 1990 "baseline" levels by 2020 and to a level 80% below 1990 baseline levels by 2050. In addition, the State has enacted SB 32 which included provisions for reducing the GHG emission levels to a level 40% below 1990 baseline levels by 2030.

The proposed project will not impede the State's ability to meet the GHG emission reduction targets under AB 32. Current and probable future state and local GHG reduction measures will continue to reduce the project's contribution to climate change. As a result, the project will not contribute significantly, either individually or cumulatively, to GAG emissions.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- a. No hazardous materials are anticipated with the project.
- b. Construction activities associated with development of the subdivision may include maintenance of on-site construction equipment, which could lead to minor fuel and oil spills. The use and handling of any hazardous materials during construction activities would occur in accordance with applicable federal, state, regional, and local laws. Therefore, impacts are considered to be less than significant.

- c. There are no schools located within one-quarter of a mile of the project site and therefore, there is no reasonably foreseeable condition or incident involving the project that could affect existing or proposed school sites or areas within one-quarter mile of school sites.
- d. The project area does not include any sites listed as hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65692.5.
- e. The Tulare County Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan shows the project area is located outside the Airport Influence Area and the Airport Safety Zones. Therefore, the project will not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.
- f. The project will not interfere with the implementation of any adopted emergency response plan or evacuation plan.
- g. There are no wildlands within or near the project area.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

- a. The project will not violate any water quality standards of waste discharge requirements. Future development of the project site of the single-family subdivision would be required to meet the City's improvement standards for directing storm water runoff to the existing City storm water drainage system, consistent with the City's adopted City Storm Drain Master Plan.
- b. The project will not substantially deplete groundwater supplies in the project vicinity. The project site will be served by a water lateral for domestic, irrigation, and fire protection use.

The project area overlies the southern portion of the San Joaquin unit of the Central Valley groundwater aquifer. Development within the project area will result in an increase of impervious surfaces, which might affect the amount of precipitation that is recharged to the aquifer. As the City of Visalia is already largely developed and covered by impervious surfaces, the increase of impervious surfaces through this project will be small by comparison. The project therefore might affect the amount of precipitation that is recharged to the aquifer. The City of Visalia's water conservation measures and explorations for surface water use over groundwater extraction will assist in offsetting the loss in groundwater recharge.

- c. The project will not result in substantial erosion on- or off-site. Development of the site will not alter the course of any rivers or streams as neither are located near the site.

Development of the site has the potential to affect drainage patterns in the short term due to erosion and sedimentation during construction activities and in the long term through the expansion of impervious surfaces. The City's existing standards may require the preparation and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in accordance with the SWRCB's General Construction Permit process, which would address erosion control measures.

The project will not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site. The development of the site will also not impede or redirect flood flows.

Development of the site will create additional impervious surfaces, such as streets. However, existing and planned improvements to storm water drainage facilities as required through the Visalia General Plan policies will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

The project will not create or contribute runoff water, which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. The development will be required to meet the City's improvement standards for directing storm water runoff to the existing City storm water drainage system; consistent with the City's adopted City Storm Drain Master Plan.

- d. The project area is partially located within Zone AE, which indicates an area that is within a high-risk flood hazard area. This is due to the proximity to Tulare Irrigation Canal. The project area is located adjacent to the Tulare Irrigation Canal; however, it is outside potentially hazardous areas for seiches and tsunamis. Due to the site's proximity to Tulare Irrigation Canal there is the potential for mudflow occurrence, however these impacts are less than significant.

The project area along with the entirety of the City of Visalia lies within the dam inundation area of Terminus Dam, located approximately 35 miles to the east from the project site. In the case of dam failure, people and structures would be exposed to flooding risk and potentially pollutants. This impact is considered significant and unavoidable.

- e. The project will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. The Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has already considered the environmental impacts of the placement of people and structures to an area at risk of dam failure. The General Plan contains multiple policies that address the issue, and the County of Tulare maintains the Tulare County Hazard Mitigation Plan and a Mass Evacuation Plan that will help to reduce the impact.

Because there is still a significant impact, a Statement of Overriding Considerations was previously adopted with the Visalia General Plan Update EIR.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

- a. The project will not physically divide an established community. Upon annexation, the project will be zoned R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential, 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial), which is consistent with the surrounding land use designations and the future use of the site. The project site is bordered by Caldwell Avenue, a Minor Arterial, to the north, Santa Fe Street, a Collector, to the west, and will share the Local road Burke Street to the east.
- b. The project does not conflict with any land use plan, policy or regulation of the City of Visalia. The proposed project is to be developed on land designated for RLD (Low Density Residential) and CMU (Commercial Mixed Use) which is consistent with the surrounding land use designations as identified in Table 9-1 "*Consistency between the Plan and Zoning*" of the General Plan.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

- a. No mineral areas of regional or statewide importance exist within the Visalia area.
- b. There are no mineral resource recovery sites delineated in the Visalia area.

XIII. NOISE

- a. The project will not result in noise generation typical of urban development. Future development of the subdivision will result in noise generation typical of urban development, but not in excess of standards established in the City of Visalia's General Plan or Noise Ordinance. Noise levels will increase temporarily during the construction of these facilities but shall remain within noise limits and will be restricted to the allowed hours of construction defined by the City of Visalia Noise Ordinance. Temporary increase in ambient noise levels is considered to be less than significant.

Furthermore, the Visalia General Plan contains multiple policies, identified under Impact N-P-3 through N-P-5, that work to reduce the potential for noise impacts to sensitive land uses. With implementation of Noise Impact Policies and existing City Standards, noise impacts to new noise sensitive land uses would be less than significant.

- b. Ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels may occur as a result of construction activities associated with development of the subdivision. Any construction activities will be temporary and will not expose persons to such vibration or noise levels for an extended period of time; thus the impacts will be less than significant. There are no existing uses near the project area that create ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels.
- c. The project site is not located within the Airport Influence Area nor within the Airport Safety Zones nor near a private airstrip and therefore will not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

- a. The project will not directly induce substantial population growth that is in excess of that planned in the General Plan.
- b. Development of the subdivision will not displace any housing or people as the proposed site is currently vacant.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

- a.
 - i. Current fire protection facilities are located at Visalia Station 56 and can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration. Impact fees will be paid to mitigate the project's proportionate impact on these facilities.
 - ii. Current police protection facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration. Impact fees will be paid to mitigate the project's proportionate impact on these facilities.
 - iii. The project will generate new students for which existing schools in the area would need to accommodate. In addition, to address direct impacts, the project will be required to pay residential impact fees. These fees are considered to be conclusive mitigation for direct impacts.

- iv. Current Park facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration. Impact fees will be paid upon development to mitigate the project's proportionate impact on these facilities.
- v. Other public facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration.

XVI. RECREATION

- a. The project will directly generate new residents and will therefore directly increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. Residential developments will pay impact fees to mitigate impacts.
- b. The proposed project includes a small pocket park but does not include recreational facilities or requires the construction or expansion of recreational facilities within the area that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

- a. The project will not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities. Future development will result in an increase to traffic levels on arterial and collector roadways, although the City of Visalia's Circulation Element has been prepared to address this increase in traffic.
- b. Development of the site will result in increased traffic in the area, but will not cause a substantial increase in traffic on the city's existing circulation pattern. This site was evaluated in the EIR for the City of Visalia Land Use Element Update for urban use. Additionally, a Traffic Impact Analysis was not required for the project.

The City of Visalia, in determining the significance of transportation impacts for land use projects, recognizes the adopted City of Visalia Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) Thresholds and Implementation Guidelines (LSA, 2021, herein referred to as "Guidelines") recommended threshold as the basis for what constitutes a significant or less than significant transportation impact. The Guidelines recommend a 16% reduction target based on the Greenhouse Gas emission reduction target for 2035 for the Tulare County region set by the SB 375 Regional Plan Climate Target. Therefore, residential projects exceeding 16% below the existing VMT per capita is indicative of a significant environmental impact.

For the metric measuring VMT per trip distance, a map of the City of Visalia, produced by Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG), provides areas with 84% or less average VMT per trip distance, or 16% below the regional average. The areas with 84% or less average VMT per trip distance, and are consistent with the City's General Plan, are presumed to have similar low VMT profiles and could be screened out from further VMT analysis. The map was initially included in the Guidelines as Figure 6 and is updated online with the most recent data from the Tulare County Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan Travel Demand Model.

In the subject site's traffic analysis zone (TAZ), there is no established average trip distance based on no population.

However, in all TAZs immediately surrounding this TAZ, the current average trip distance experienced measures less than 84% of the average VMT per trip distance for the region, and no adjacent TAZ experienced measures above 84% of the average VMT per trip distance. Thus, although there is currently no population in this TAZ, it can be deducted that the proposal would likewise be screened out of performing a VMT analysis and the project will have a less than significant impact with regards to compliance with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)

- c. Development of the site will not cause any hazards due to geometric design feature or incompatible uses. There are no planned designs that are considered hazardous.
- e. The project will not result in inadequate emergency access.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Tribal notification was circulated in accordance with Senate Bill 52. No response was received pertaining to the project. The proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe.

- a. The site is not listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k).
- b. The site has been determined to not be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, because it is an isolated infill site surrounded by existing urban development.

Pre-consultation letters were sent to local tribes in accordance with AB 52, providing tribes with a 30-day early review period. Staff did not receive correspondence in return from any of the tribes which were noticed.

Further, the EIR (SCH 2010041078) for the 2014 General Plan update included a thorough review of sacred lands files through the California Native American Heritage Commission. The sacred lands file did not contain any known cultural resources information for the Visalia Planning Area.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

- a. The project will be connecting to existing City sanitary sewer lines, consistent with the City Master Plan and will not result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities. The Visalia wastewater treatment plant has a current rated capacity of 22 million gallons per day but currently treats an average daily maximum month flow of 12.5 million gallons per day. With the completed project, the plant has more than sufficient capacity to accommodate impacts associated with the project. The proposed project will therefore not cause significant environmental impacts.

The development onsite will be required to install City storm water drainage lines that handle on-site and street runoff. Usage of these lines is consistent with the City Storm Drain Master Plan. These improvements will not

cause significant environmental impacts. The project also does not require the relocation or construction of new or expanded electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications.

- b. California Water Service Company has determined that there are sufficient water supplies to support the site, and that service can be extended to the site.
- c. The City has determined that there is adequate capacity existing to serve the site's projected wastewater treatment demands at the City wastewater treatment plant upon development of the project.
- d. Current solid waste disposal facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration.
- e. The project will be able to meet the applicable regulations for solid waste. Removal of debris from future construction will be subject to the City's waste disposal requirements.

XX. WILDFIRE

- a. The project will not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.
- b. The project site is located on a flat area of agriculture and urban land which is considered to be at little risk of fire.
- c. The development of the site will include the development of infrastructure such as roads, sewer lines, power lines and utilities, however all improvements would be subject to City standards and Fire Marshal approval. The

proposed project would not exacerbate fire risk.

- d. The project site is flat and therefore is not susceptible to downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of post-fire instability, or drainage changes.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- a. The Biological Resources Assessment found the project is not likely to have any permanent impact on the special status species or associated habitats through the implementation of appropriate avoidance and minimization measures. The proposed project will not impact the Valley Oak woodland habitat surrounding the property and the associated nesting birds and special-status species may occur.
- b. This site was evaluated in the Program EIR (SCH No. 2010041078) for the City of Visalia General Plan Update for the area's conversion to urban use. The City adopted mitigation measures for conversion to urban development. Where effects were still determined to be significant a statement of overriding considerations was made.
- c. This site was evaluated in the Program EIR (SCH No. 2010041078) for the City of Visalia General Plan Update for conversion to urban use. The City adopted mitigation measures for conversion to urban development. Where effects were still determined to be significant a statement of overriding considerations was made.

DETERMINATION OF REQUIRED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- ☐ I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment. **A NEGATIVE DECLARATION WILL BE PREPARED.**
- ☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measures described on the attached sheet have been added to the project. **A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION WILL BE PREPARED.**
- ☐ I find the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment, and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required.
- ☐ I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- ☐ I find that as a result of the proposed project no new effects could occur, or new mitigation measures would be required that have not been addressed within the scope of the Program Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2010041078). The Environmental Impact Report prepared for the City of Visalia General Plan was certified by Resolution No. 2014-37 adopted on October 14, 2014. **THE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT WILL BE UTILIZED.**



Brandon Smith, AICP
Environmental Coordinator

March 26, 2025
Date



Yana Garcia
Secretary for
Environmental Protection



Department of Toxic Substances Control

Katherine M. Butler, MPH, Director
8800 Cal Center Drive
Sacramento, California 95826-3200
dtsc.ca.gov



Gavin Newsom
Governor

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

April 9, 2025

Colleen A. Moreno
Assistant Planner
City of Visalia
315 E. Acequia Ave
Visalia, CA 93291
colleen.moreno@visalia.city

RE: MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR ANNEXATION NO. 2024-05 &
BLANKENSHIP TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP NO. 5602 DATED APRIL 1, 2025,
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NUMBER [2025040063](#)

Dear Colleen A. Moreno,

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) reviewed the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for Annexation No. 2024-05 & Blankenship Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5602. Annexation No. 2024-05 is a request by San Joaquin Valley Homes to annex two parcels totaling approximately 62.53 acres into the City limits of Visalia. Upon annexation, approximately 55.49 acres of the site would be zoned R-1-5 (Single-Family Residential 5,000 square foot minimum site area) and approximately 7.04 acres of the site will be zoned C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial), which is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designation. The project is supported by the Blankenship Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5602, which is a request by San Joaquin Valley Homes to subdivide two parcels totaling 62.96 acres into 203 lots for single-family residential use. Upon annexation, the site will be zoned R-1-5 and C-MU. Development of single-family homes will be restricted to the R-1-5 zone. Commercial development of the area zoned for commercial use is not part of this project and the remainder will be developed later. The residential subdivision will meet the City's development standards for the zone.

DTSC recommends and requests consideration of the following comments:

1. When agricultural crops and/or land uses are proposed or rezoned for residential use, a number of contaminants of concern (COCs) can be present. The Lead Agency shall identify the amounts of Pesticides and Organochlorine Pesticides (OCPs) historically used on the property. If present, OCPs requiring further analysis are dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, toxaphene, and dieldrin. Additionally, any level of arsenic present would require further analysis and sampling and must meet [HHRA NOTE NUMBER 3, DTSC-SLs](#) approved local area baselines or thresholds. If they do not, remedial action must take place to mitigate them below those thresholds. Additional COCs may be found in mixing/loading/storage areas, drainage ditches, farmhouses, or any other outbuildings and should be sampled and analyzed. If smudge pots had been routinely utilized, additional sampling for Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons and/or Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons may be required.
2. DTSC recommends that all imported soil and fill material should be tested to assess any contaminants of concern meet screening levels as outlined in [DTSC's Preliminary Endangerment Assessment Guidance Manual](#). Additionally, DTSC advises referencing the [DTSC Information Advisory Clean Imported Fill Material Fact Sheet](#) if importing fill is necessary. To minimize the possibility of introducing contaminated soil and fill material there should be documentation of the origins of the soil or fill material and, if applicable, sampling be conducted to ensure that the imported soil and fill material are suitable for the intended land use. The soil sampling should include analysis based on the source of the fill and knowledge of prior land use. Additional information can be found by visiting [DTSC's Human and Ecological Risk Office \(HERO\) webpage](#).

DTSC would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the MND for Annexation No. 2024-05 & Blankenship Tentative Subdivision Map No. 5602. Thank you for your assistance in protecting California's people and environment from the harmful effects of toxic substances. If you have any questions or would like clarification on

Colleen A. Moreno

April 9, 2025

Page 3

DTSC's comments, please respond to this letter or via our [CEQA Review email](#) for additional guidance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Kereazis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Kereazis

Associate Environmental Planner

HWMP - Permitting Division – CEQA Unit

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Dave.Kereazis@dtsc.ca.gov

cc: (via email)

Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

State Clearinghouse

State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

Tamara Purvis

Associate Environmental Planner

HWMP-Permitting Division – CEQA Unit

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Tamara.Purvis@dtsc.ca.gov

Scott Wiley

Associate Governmental Program Analyst

HWMP - Permitting Division – CEQA Unit

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Scott.Wiley@dtsc.ca.gov