



KINGS COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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PLANNING DIVISION

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Web Site: <http://www.countyofkings.com/departments/community-development-agency>

Notice of Availability

TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

FROM: Kings County
1400 W. Lacey Boulevard, Building #6
Hanford, CA 93230
Contact: Chuck Kinney, Deputy Director of Planning

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Jackson Ranch Specific Plan (State Clearinghouse No. 2019080497)

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21165 and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15050, Kings County (County) is the lead agency responsible for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addressing potential impacts associated with the project described below. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Sections 21091 and 21092, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) State Guidelines Sections 15105 and 15087, notice is hereby given that a Draft EIR (DEIR) for the project described below is available for public review during the public comment period outlined below. The County has prepared the DEIR to analyze environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project; discuss alternatives to the project; and to propose mitigation measures for identified potentially significant impacts that will minimize, offset, or otherwise reduce or avoid those environmental impacts.

PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY: The purpose of this notice is to: (1) serve as a Notice of Availability (NOA) of a DEIR pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15087 and (2) advise and solicit comments regarding the content of the DEIR.

PROJECT TITLE: Jackson Ranch Specific Plan

PROJECT LOCATION: The area covered by the Jackson Ranch Specific Plan (Plan Area) is in an unincorporated area of the County, consisting of 415 acres adjacent to and west of Interstate 5 (I-5) at the Utica Avenue off-ramp. The Plan Area is approximately 70 miles northwest of the City of Bakersfield and 70 miles southwest of the City of Fresno. The nearest urbanized area to the Plan Area is Kettleman City, an unincorporated community of the County approximately 7 miles to the northwest. Utica Avenue forms the northern Plan Area boundary, the southbound I-5 on-ramp forms the northeastern boundary, and I-5 forms the eastern boundary. A portion of the western Plan Area boundary abuts the California Aqueduct, and 25th Avenue bisects it from north to south.

EXISTING AND SURROUNDING LAND USES: Onsite land uses primarily consist of active and fallow agricultural land or rangeland. The agricultural production consists mainly of irrigated crops such as almonds pistachios, and stone fruits (apricots and plums); dry land grazing also occurs onsite. The Plan Area has historically been used for farming, and portions presently contain an orchard of almond trees near the end of their productive life expectancy. Other crops include pistachios, apricots, and plums. A portion of the Plan Area consists of disked lands formerly planted as orchards.

Surrounding land uses primarily consist of active and fallow agricultural land or grazing lands. Major infrastructure surrounding the Plan Area includes I-5 to the east and the California Aqueduct to the west. Beyond the aqueduct are the Kettleman Hills.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Jackson Ranch Specific Plan (Specific Plan or Jackson Ranch) is intended to shape development within the Plan Area over the next 20 years in accordance with the vision and guiding principles of the Specific Plan. The Specific Plan provides for three primary land use designations, and one overlay designation: Innovation Center (IC-JR), Commercial Thoroughfare (CT-JR), Specialty Agriculture (A-JR), and Specialty Agriculture with Air Strip Overlay (A-JR).

Under the Specific Plan, just under 2.4 million square feet of commercial space is planned for Jackson Ranch. This designation allows for a range of uses including light industrial, research and development, medical offices, hospitals, office, hospitality, retail, and entertainment. The area encompassing the Commercial Thoroughfare designation is envisioned as a sophisticated transportation plaza, delivering food, lodging, amenities, and entertainment to both professional and leisure travelers along I-5. The Specific Plan intends to create a fully amenitized rest stop and commercial hub along I-5 that would serve travelers, encourage new employment across a variety of industries and attract a range of complementary commercial uses. Implementation of the Specific Plan would also provide the necessary infrastructure improvements and facilities (e.g., water, wastewater, drainage, roadway) needed to serve development accommodated by the Specific Plan.

In order to implement the Specific Plan, a General Plan Amendment to change the General Plan land use designation of the Plan Area from General Agriculture-40 Acre (current General Plan land use designation) to Jackson Ranch Specific Plan is required. Under the Specific Plan, approximately 141 acres, or 34 percent of the Plan Area, would be designated as Innovation Center and Commercial Thoroughfare, which would allow a range of commercial, retail, light industrial, research and development, office, and hospitality uses. Approximately 268 acres, or 65 percent of the Plan Area, would be designated as Specialty Agriculture. The remaining 6 acres would be dedicated to streets. It is anticipated that existing active agriculture will continue in the Specialty Agriculture-designated areas of the Plan Area during and after the development of Jackson Ranch.

Additionally, implementation of the Specific Plan would require an amendment to the Kings County Development Code and Zoning District Map. Specifically, the Development Code Amendment is needed to add the Jackson Ranch Specific Plan by reference and the Zoning District Map Amendment is needed to change the zoning district from AG-40 to Jackson Ranch Specific Plan. The existing zoning district of the Plan Area would also be replaced with the new Specific Plan land use designations. Additionally, the Development Code Amendment would state that the regulating code contained in the Specific Plan would serve as the regulatory plan (zoning, development, and design standards and guidelines) for all development projects and improvements in the Plan Area. Pursuant to the provisions of the California Government Code (Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8, Sections 65450–65457 [Specific Plans]), the Specific Plan would be adopted by the Kings County Board of Supervisors as ordinance and function as the regulatory plan that serves as the implementing zoning for the Plan Area, thereby, ensuring the orderly and systematic implementation of the Kings County General Plan, as well as the orderly and systematic development of the Plan Area. The Specific Plan would act as a bridge between the Kings County General Plan and development that would occur throughout the Plan Area. Finally, to allow development of the Plan Area pursuant to the Specific Plan, County approval of subdivision map is required.

For purposes of the DEIR, the impact analysis considers two development phases: the first phase (Phase One) consists of buildout of the portion of the Plan Area designated as Commercial Thoroughfare and the second phase (Phase Two) consists of buildout of the portion of the Plan Area designated as Innovation Center (IC-JR). Additionally, for purposes of the environmental analysis, to analyze worst case conditions, buildout of Phase One is anticipated to occur in 2023 and buildout of Phase Two (full buildout) is anticipated to occur in 2040.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The County has completed a DEIR for the Specific Plan. The DEIR analyzed impacts to 13 environmental topical areas: Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Public Services, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, and Utilities and Service Systems. The environmental impact areas of Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Public Services, and Utilities and Service Systems were determined to be less than significant. The DEIR determined that, without implementation of mitigation measures, the Specific Plan would result in significant environmental impacts in the areas of Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Transportation, and Tribal Cultural Resources. Environmental impact areas that would be less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures include Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, and Tribal Cultural Resources. However, even with implementation of mitigation measures, the Specific Plan would result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts in the areas Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Transportation.

Refer to Section 3.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, of the Initial Study (Appendix A of the DEIR) for information on hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD AND DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The County welcomes input and comments regarding the DEIR, which is available for a 45-day public review period beginning **July 30, 2020**, and ending **August 14, 2020**. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15105, responsible and trustee agencies and other interested parties, including members of the public, must submit any comments in response to this notice **no later than 45 days** after receipt of the notice.

The NOA and DEIR are available for public review on the Office of Planning and Research's CEQAnet web portal at <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/>. To search for the NOA and DEIR, in the search box simply type in Jackson Ranch Specific Plan or State Clearinghouse No. 2019080497.

Additionally, pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order N-54-20, the NOA and DEIR are available for public review on the following websites:

- DEIR (Volume I): http://placeworks.com!/Jackson_Ranch_SP_EIR_Final_Public_Draft.pdf
- DEIR Appendices (Volume II): http://placeworks.com!/Jackson_Ranch_SP_EIR_Final_Public_Draft_Appendices.pdf

Individuals interested in a digital copy of the DEIR may also request one by emailing Chuck Kinney with the Kings County Community Development Agency at Chuck.Kinney@co.kings.ca.us.

RESPONDING TO THIS NOTICE: The County will accept written comments regarding this notice through the close of business on **August 14, 2020**. Please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization and send your written comments to Chuck Kinney, Deputy Director of Planning, of the County at the above address or by e-mail at chuck.kinney@co.kings.ca.us.