PUBLIC DRAFT
INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

CITY OF CHOWCHILLA

AMENDMENTS TO THE RANCHO CALERA SPECIFIC PLAN & ASSOCIATED ENTITLEMENTS

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OCTOBER 2021

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AMENDMENTS TO THE RANCHO CALERA SPECIFIC PLAN & ASSOCIATED ENTITLEMENTS

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October 2021

Project #200064

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHM	acutely hazardous materials
ALUCP	Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan
APS	Alternative Planning Strategy
AQIA	Air Quality Impact Assessment
AQP	air quality plans
BAU	business as usual
BMPs	best management practices
BPS	best performance standards
BSA	Biological Survey Area
CalEEMod	California Emissions Estimator Model
Cal Fire	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CalGEM	California Geothermal Energy Management Division
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CATX	Chowchilla Area Transit
CBC	California Building Code
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CESD	Chowchilla Elementary School District
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CHRIS	California Historical Resource Inventory System
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Data Base
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CVFD	Chowchilla Volunteer Fire Department
CWA	Clean Water Act
CWD	Chowchilla Water District
DA	Development Agreement
DTSC	Department of Toxic Substances Control
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EVAE	emergency vehicle access easement
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GAMAQI	Guide for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts
GHGs	greenhouse gases
I	Interstate
ICE	Intersection Control Evaluation
IS	Initial Study
ISR	Indirect Source Review
ITP	Incidental Take Permit
LOS	level of service
LRA	Local Responsibility Area
LUST	leaking underground storage tank
MCC	Madera County Connection

MCTC	Madera County Transportation Commission
MM	Modified Mercalli
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
mph	miles per hour
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MRZ	Mineral Resources Zone
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NHD	National Hydrography database
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric Company
PM	Particulate Matter
PM_{10}	Particulate Matter 10 Microns or Smaller
$PM_{2.5}$	Particulate Matter 2.5 Microns or Smaller
PRC	Public Resources Code
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SCS	Sustainable Communities Strategy
SJVAB	San Joaquin Valley Air Basin
SJVAPCD	San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
SMGB	State Mining & Geology Board
SR	State Route
SSJVIC	Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TIA	Traffic Impact Analysis
TSM	Tentative Subdivision Map
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
WDRs	waste discharge requirements

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

As Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City of Chowchilla (City) reviewed the Project described below to determine whether it could have a significant effect on the environment because of its development. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, "[s]ignificant effect on the environment" means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the Project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.

Project Name

Amendments to the Rancho Calera Specific Plan

Project Location

Rancho Calera is located east of SR 99 and north of Robertson Boulevard within the City of Chowchilla.

Project Description

Rancho Calera is a 561-acre master planned community east of SR 99 within the City of Chowchilla. The Rancho Calera Specific Plan was originally adopted by the City in May 2011 and assessed as a component of the 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Applicants have submitted the following applications for processing, which will be covered in this environmental analysis:

- Specific Plan Amendment/Overlay
- General Plan Amendment
- Zoning Map Amendment, including the addition of the Specific Plan overlay designation
- Tentative Map 21-0010 – 141 Lots
- Development Agreement

See *Section 2 – Project Description* for further information.

Mailing Address and Phone Number of Contact Person

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Findings

As Lead Agency, the City finds that the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment. The Initial Study (IS) (see *Section 3 - Environmental Checklist*) identified one or more potentially significant effects on the environment, but revisions to the Project have been made before the release of this Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) or mitigation measures would be implemented that reduce all potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels. The City further finds that there is no substantial evidence that this Project would have a significant effect on the environment.

Mitigation Measures Included in the Project to Avoid Potentially Significant Effects

MM BIO-1 (General Wildlife Surveys): Prior to ground-disturbing activities, a qualified wildlife biologist shall conduct a general biological clearance survey of the area being disturbed, including any off-site impact areas, between 14 and 30 calendar days prior to the onset of ground disturbance. The general wildlife clearance survey shall include walking transects to identify the presence of special status animals that may occur on the project site (i.e., western spadefoot toad, western burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, American badger, and San Joaquin kit fox) as well as other special-status species or signs of, and sensitive natural communities. The preconstruction survey shall be completed in a way that allows for 100 percent coverage of the portion(s) of the Project site being disturbed and a 50-foot buffer, where feasible. A report outlining the results of the survey shall be submitted to the Lead Agency. Should any of these species be observed, an appropriate construction-free buffer will be established by the qualified biologist onsite. Additional species-specific preconstruction survey requirements and mitigation measures for western spadefoot, nesting birds, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, roosting bats, American badger, and San Joaquin kit fox are included below.

MM BIO-2 (Worker Education): Prior to ground-disturbance activities, or within one week of being deployed at the Project site for newly hired workers, all construction workers at the Project site shall attend a Construction Worker Environmental Awareness Training and Education Program, developed and presented by a qualified biologist.

The Construction Worker Environmental Awareness Training and Education Program shall be presented by the biologist and shall include information on the life history of wildlife and plant species that may be encountered during construction activities, their legal protections, the definition of "take" under the Endangered Species Act, measures the Project operator is implementing to protect the species, reporting requirements, specific measures that each worker must employ to avoid take of the species, and penalties for violation of the Act. Identification and information regarding special-status or other sensitive species with the potential to occur on the Project site shall also be provided to construction personnel. The program shall include:

- An acknowledgement form signed by each worker indicating that environmental training has been completed; and

- A copy of the training transcript and/or training video/CD, as well as a list of the names of all personnel who attended the training, and copies of the signed acknowledgement forms shall be maintained onsite for the duration of construction activities.

MM BIO-3 (Western Spadefoot): If western spadefoot is identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), for each of the pools, basins, or other aquatic features in which spadefoot occurs, the pools, their banks, and other areas with small mammal burrows shall be avoided. If possible, the project should be designed to avoid breeding pools/basins where spadefoot are located as well as a buffer of burrows within 860 feet (262 meters) from those breeding pools (Baumberger et. al. 2019).

Should avoidance not be possible, impacts to the occupied pools or basins, their banks, and other areas with small mammal burrows within 860 feet of the basins shall be compensated for. The ratio of compensation should be calculated by using *Calculating Biological Accurate Mitigation Credits: Insights from the California Tiger Salamander* (Searcy and Shaffer 2009). Compensation should occur on habitat that is in kind or higher quality habitat than that being impacted by the Project. Because mitigation banks do not currently offer spadefoot credits, and because California tiger salamanders typically occur within the same habitat, compensatory mitigation can occur by acquiring credits at an approved mitigation bank that also supports spadefoot on the property or by acquiring off-site land that supports spadefoot and protecting that land in perpetuity via a conservation easement.

MM BIO-4 (Nesting Birds): If construction is planned outside the nesting period for raptors (other than the western burrowing owl; see MM BIO-6 for measures specific to BUOW) and migratory birds (the nesting period is generally accepted to be February 15 to August 31), no mitigation shall be required. If construction is planned during the nesting season for migratory birds and raptors, a preconstruction survey to identify active bird nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to evaluate the site being disturbed and a 50-foot buffer for migratory birds and a 250-foot buffer for raptors. If nesting birds are identified during the survey, active raptor nests shall be avoided by 250 feet and all other migratory bird nests shall be avoided by 25-50 feet based on the species, sensitivity of the individuals, and type of construction occurring or planned to occur nearby. The size of the avoidance buffer may be reduced if a qualified onsite monitor determines that encroachment into the buffer area is not affecting nest building, the rearing of young, or other breeding behaviors of the resident birds. Conversely, the avoidance buffer size may be increased if it is found that the nest is being impacted under the current buffer distance. Because nesting birds can establish new nests or produce a second or even third clutch at any time during the nesting season, the construction monitor will monitor for new nest starts throughout the nesting season.

No construction or earth-moving activity shall occur within a non-disturbance buffer until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have fledged (i.e., left the nest) and have attained sufficient flight skills to avoid Project construction areas. Once the migratory birds

or raptors have completed nesting and young have fledged, disturbance buffers will no longer be needed and can be removed, and monitoring can cease.

MM BIO-5 (Swainson's Hawks): The following measures shall be implemented to reduce potential impacts to Swainson's hawk: Nesting surveys for the Swainson's hawks shall be conducted in accordance with the protocol outlined in the *Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley* (Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, 2000). The protocol recommends that the following visits be made to each nest or nesting site: one visit during January 1–March 20 to identify potential nest sites, three visits during March 20–April 5, three visits during April 5–April 20, and three visits during June 10–July 30. To meet the minimum level of protection for the species, the protocol requires surveys shall be completed for at least the two survey periods immediately prior to Project-related ground-disturbance activities. If Swainson's hawks are not found to nest within the survey area, then no further action is warranted.

If Swainson's hawks are found to nest within the 0.5-mile radius survey area, a qualified biologist must conduct construction monitoring on a daily basis, inspect the nest on a daily basis, and ensure that construction activities do not disrupt breeding behaviors during the nesting period until the chicks have fledged and are no longer reliant on the adults to survive. The construction monitor shall be a qualified biologist with expertise in Swainson's hawk nesting behavior. A construction-free buffer will be established around the nest. The size of the buffer shall be determined by a qualified biologist and may range between 250 feet and a half-mile based on observations of nesting behavior, which may change in response to a change in construction activity; this buffer may be adjusted based on the qualified monitoring biologist's observations of the nesting activity. Any reduction of buffer size must occur after the qualified biologist has observed the nesting activity enough to establish a baseline of regular activity. If a construction area falls within this construction-free buffer, construction must be delayed until the young have fledged.

If a Swainson's hawk nest that is deemed to be an active nest needs to be removed, an Incidental Take Permit (ITP), pursuant to Section 2081(b) of the California Fish and Game Code, would be required. Compensation for the removal of the nest tree and loss of an active nest would require compensation. Minimum compensation would be to provide breeding habitat at a ratio of not less than 1:1 and foraging habitat at a ratio of not less than 2:1.

MM BIO-6 (Burrowing Owl): A qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey on the Project site area being disturbed as well as any off-site impact areas and within 250 feet of its perimeter, where feasible, to identify the presence of the western burrowing owl. Preconstruction surveys shall be consistent with the take avoidance measures within the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG, 2012) which consists of two separate surveys, the first being within 14 days prior to the start of construction and the second being within 24 hours prior to the start of construction. If any burrowing owl burrows are observed during the preconstruction survey, avoidance measures shall be consistent with those included in the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG, 2012).

If burrowing owls are found to occupy the Project site, any off-site impact areas, or within 250 feet of proposed construction activities and avoidance is not possible, burrow exclusion and passive relocation may be conducted by qualified biologists only during the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), before breeding behavior is exhibited, and after the burrow is confirmed empty through non-invasive methods (i.e., surveillance). Passive relocation efforts shall be carried out in accordance with the guidelines established by the California Burrowing Owl Consortium (1993) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (2012). Replacement or occupied burrows shall consist of artificial burrows at a ratio of 1 burrow collapsed to 1 artificial burrow constructed (1:1). Ongoing surveillance of the Project site during construction activities shall occur at a rate sufficient to detect Burrowing owl, if they return.

During the breeding season (February 1 through August 31), a construction-free buffer zone consistent with the table below, which is taken from the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG 2012) shall be established and maintained; the distance of the buffer zone shall be determined based on the season and level of disturbance. This construction-free buffer should be maintained unless a qualified biologist verifies through non-invasive methods that either the birds have not begun egg laying and incubation or that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.

Location	Time of Year	Level of Disturbance		
		Low	Med	High
Nesting sites	April 1-Aug 15	200 m*	500 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Aug 16-Oct 15	200 m	200 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Oct 16-Mar 31	50 m	100 m	500 m

MM BIO-7 (Roosting Bats): A bat habitat assessment shall be conducted prior to removal of trees and structures; this can be conducted at any point prior to removal of trees and structures and may be conducted concurrently with the general wildlife survey (MM BIO-1) by a qualified biologist. The assessment shall identify which trees or structures support potential roosting habitat and outline recommendations moving forward.

Potential habitat trees or structures shall be surveyed by a qualified biologist prior to their removal. For trees that cannot be seen into (i.e. trees with cavities, crevices, etc.), two-step removal may occur only during the volant seasons and outside of the maternity season (March 1-April 15 and September 1-October 15) with fair weather nights forecasted. Two-step removal shall occur over two consecutive days. On Day 1, a qualified biologist will direct trimming of potential habitat trees or modifications/selective deconstruction of structures in order to reduce their habitat suitability. On Day 2, the tree or structure will be removed. Nighttime emergence surveys shall not be conducted during the overwintering season

(October 15-February 29). If a maternity colony (April 15-August 15) is observed during the survey, a construction-free buffer of 300 feet shall be established until the young have fledged.

MM BIO-8 (American Badgers): If an active badger den is identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), a construction-free buffer of up to 300 feet shall be established around the den. Once the biologist has determined that the badger has vacated the burrow, the burrow can be collapsed or excavated, and ground disturbance can proceed. Should the burrow be determined to be a natal or reproductive den, and because badgers are known to use multiple burrows in a breeding burrow complex, a biological monitor shall be present onsite during construction activities in the vicinity of the burrows to ensure the buffer is adequate to avoid direct impact to individuals or natal/reproductive den abandonment. The monitor will be required to be present until it is determined that young are of an independent age and construction activities would not harm individual badgers.

Unoccupied badger dens may be excavated provided that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the den has been monitored for at least five consecutive days and is deemed unoccupied by a qualified biologist; (2) the excavation is conducted by or under the direct supervision of a qualified biologist. Because badger dens can double as potential kit fox dens, badger den monitoring and excavation should be conducted in accordance with the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011).

MM BIO-9 (San Joaquin Kit Fox): If potential kit fox dens are identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), a construction-free buffer of 300 feet will be established until the qualified biologist is able to determine if the den is active per the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). If the den is active, the USFWS and CDFW shall be notified immediately to determine a course of action.

Unoccupied potential kit fox dens may be excavated provided that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the den has been monitored for at least five consecutive days and is deemed unoccupied by a qualified biologist; (2) the excavation is conducted by or under the direct supervision of a qualified biologist. Den monitoring and excavation should be conducted in accordance with the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011).

Additionally, the following BMPs relating to the San Joaquin kit fox shall be adhered to:

a. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of kit fox or other animals during construction, the contractor shall cover all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than two-feet deep at the close of each workday with plywood or similar materials. If holes or trenches cannot be covered, one or more escape ramps constructed of earthen fill or wooden planks shall be installed in the trench. Before such holes or trenches are filled, the contractor shall thoroughly inspect them for entrapped animals. All

construction-related pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of four inches or greater that are stored on the Project site shall be thoroughly inspected for wildlife before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If at any time an entrapped or injured kit fox is discovered, work in the immediate area shall be temporarily halted and USFWS and CDFW shall be consulted.

b. Kit foxes are attracted to den-like structures, such as pipes, and may enter stored pipes and become trapped or injured. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of four inches or greater that are stored at a construction site for one or more overnight periods shall be thoroughly inspected for kit foxes before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If a kit fox is discovered inside a pipe, that section of pipe shall not be moved until the USFWS and CDFW has been consulted. If necessary, and under the direct supervision of the biologist, the pipe may be moved only once to remove it from the path of construction activity, until the fox has escaped.
c. A representative shall be appointed by the Project Proponent who will be the contact source for any employee or contractor who might inadvertently kill or injure a kit fox or who finds a dead, injured or entrapped kit fox. The representative shall be identified during the employee education program and their name and telephone number shall be provided to the USFWS.
d. The Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office of USFWS and CDFW shall be notified in writing within three working days of the accidental death or injury to a San Joaquin kit fox during Project-related activities. Notification must include the date, time, and location of the incident or of the finding of a dead or injured animal and any other pertinent information. The USFWS contact is the Chief of the Division of Endangered Species, at the addresses and telephone numbers below. The CDFW contact can be reached at (559) 243-4014 and R4CESA@wildlifeca.gov.
e. All sightings of the San Joaquin kit fox shall be reported to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). A copy of the reporting form and a topographic map clearly marked with the location of where the kit fox was observed shall also be provided to the Service at the address below.

MM BIO-10 (General BMPs): During all construction-related activities, the following mitigation shall apply:

a. All food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps shall be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed at least once a week from the construction or Project site.
b. Construction-related vehicle traffic shall be restricted to established roads and predetermined ingress and egress corridors, staging, and parking areas. Vehicle speeds should not exceed 20 miles per hour (mph) within the Project site.
c. No pets, such as dogs or cats, shall be permitted on the Project sites to prevent harassment, mortality of kit foxes, or destruction of dens.
d. Use of anti-coagulant rodenticides and herbicides in Project areas shall be restricted. This is necessary to prevent primary or secondary poisoning of kit foxes and the depletion of prey populations on which they depend. All uses of such compounds shall

observe label and other restrictions mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and other State and federal legislation, as well as additional Project-related restrictions deemed necessary by the USFWS and CDFW. If rodent control must be conducted, zinc phosphide shall be used because of the proven lower risk to kit foxes.

e. Any Project-related information required by the USFWS or questions concerning the above conditions, or their implementation may be directed in writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at: Endangered Species Division, 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W 2605, Sacramento, California 95825-1846, phone (916) 414-6620 or (916) 414-6600.

MM CUL-1: If historic-era cultural resources or archeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, all work within 100 feet of the find shall halt until a qualified and independent archeologist can evaluate the find and make recommendations for treatment of these resources, if found to be significant, in consultation with the City, the Applicant, and the appropriate Native American groups. If the qualified archaeologist determines that the resource is not significant, grading and construction activities may continue. If the archeologist determines that the discovery represents a potentially significant find, the archeologist shall work with the City and the Applicant in developing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from Project implementation. Additional mitigation may include avoidance, testing, and evaluation or data recovery excavation. Construction in the area of the find shall not commence until appropriate mitigation is implemented.

MM CUL-2: If human remains are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, further evacuation or disturbance in the area of the discovery shall be prohibited until those activities required by Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code are completed. The specific protocol, guidelines, and channels of communication outlined by the Native American Heritage Commission, in accordance with Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code (Chapter 1492, Statues of 1982, Senate Bill 297), and Senate Bill 447 (Chapter 44, Statutes of 1987) shall be followed. Section 7050.5(c) shall guide the potential Native American involvement, in the event of discovery of human remains, at the direction of the County Coroner.

MM GEO-1: Prior to ground-disturbing activities, the Applicant shall prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that specifies best management practices (BMP), with the intent of keeping all products of erosion from moving offsite. The SWPPP shall include a site map that shows the construction site perimeter, existing and proposed manmade facilities, stormwater collection and discharge points, general topography both before and after construction, and drainage patterns across the Project site. Additionally, the SWPPP shall contain a visual monitoring program and a chemical monitoring program for non-visible pollutants to be implemented (if there is a failure of best management practices). The requirements of the SWPPP and BMPs shall be incorporated into design specifications and construction contracts. Recommended best management practices for the construction phase may include the following:

- Stockpiling and disposing of demolition debris, concrete, and soil properly,
- Protecting any existing storm drain inlets and stabilizing disturbed areas,
- Implementing erosion controls,
- Properly managing construction materials, and
- Managing waste, aggressively controlling litter, and implementing sediment controls.

MM GEO-2: During any ground disturbing activities, if paleontological resources are encountered, all work within 25 feet of the find shall halt until a qualified and independent paleontologist can evaluate the find and make recommendations regarding treatment of these resources if found to be significant, in consultation with the County and the Applicant. Paleontological resources materials may include resources such as fossils, plant impressions, or animal tracks preserved in rock. If the paleontologist determines that the discovery represents a potentially significant resource, the paleontologist shall work with the City and the Applicant in developing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from project implementation. Construction in the area of the resource may not resume until appropriate mitigation is implemented. If the resources are not significant, avoidance is not necessary, and grading and construction activities may continue.

MM HAZ-1: Prior to issuance of any Building Permits, the Applicant shall submit a Hazardous Materials Business/Response Plan. The Hazardous Materials Business/Response Plan will be in accordance with Madera County and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control policy and guidelines. The Materials Business/Response Plan will contain any acutely hazardous materials (AHM) that handles a minimum of 55 gallons of liquid, 500 pounds of solid, or 200 cubic feet of compressed gas, or any AHM that must be included in a business plan that requires an emergency response to a possible release of hazardous materials. The Project shall comply with proper handling, labeling, accumulation, and disposal of waste.

MM NSE-1: Construction shall be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. No construction shall occur on Sundays or national holidays without prior approval from the City.

MM TRA-1: Prior to Certificate of Occupancy being issued, the Project Proponent shall pay its fair share to the cost of intersection improvements by paying adopted City of Chowchilla development impact fees or those development impact fees identified in the Development Agreement for that portion of the Project being developed.

MM TRA-2: Prior to Certificate of Occupancy being issued, the Project Proponent shall contribute its fair share to the cost of traffic control changes and median medication to lengthen the westbound left turn lane at the SR 233 (East Robertson Boulevard)/Chowchilla Boulevard intersection by paying adopted City of Chowchilla development impact fees or those development impact fees identified in the Development Agreement for that portion of the Project being developed.

MM TRA-3: Prior to recordation of the first Final Map, the Applicant shall submit a Safe Route to School Plan, which shall be created for the overall Project and implemented in

consultation with CESD site representatives and City staff. The plan shall designate applicable routes and incorporate traffic control devices or adult crossing guards as needed. The Project Proponent shall be responsible for creating and implementing the Safe Routes to School Plan.

MM TRA-4: In consultation with MMC and City of Chowchilla, the Project Proponent is responsible of constructing transit stops at key locations in and adjoining the Project as the community is built out, and transit routes/facilities shall be contemplated as the Project's commercial residential, and open space areas are developed.

MM TRI-1: Prior to the start of ground-disturbing activities, the Applicant shall retain the services of a qualified and independent archeologist who shall conduct cultural resources sensitivity training for all construction personnel. Construction personnel shall be informed of the types of prehistoric, historic-era cultural, and archeological resources that may be encountered, the proper procedures to be enacted in the event of an inadvertent discovery of prehistoric, historic-era cultural, or archeological resources of human remains, and safety precautions to be taken when working with archeological monitors. Construction personnel shall also be trained to identify Ash tree roots and proper protocol for preserving those roots. The Applicant shall ensure that construction personnel are made available for and attend the training and retain documentation demonstrating attendance.

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Overview

Rancho Calera is a 561-acre master planned community east of SR 99 within the City of Chowchilla. The Rancho Calera Specific Plan was originally adopted by the City in May 2011 and assessed as a component of the 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Applicants have submitted the following applications for processing, which will be covered in this environmental analysis:

- Specific Plan Amendment/Overlay
- General Plan Amendment
- Zoning Map Amendment, including the addition of the Specific Plan overlay designation
- Tentative Map 21-0010 – 141 Lots
- Development Agreement

See *Section 2 – Project Description* for further information.

1.2 - California Environmental Quality Act

The City is the Lead Agency for this Project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 15000 *et seq.*). The Initial Study (IS) (see *Section 3 – Environmental Checklist*) provides analysis that examines the potential environmental effects of the construction and operation of the Project. Section 15063 of the CEQA Guidelines requires the Lead Agency to prepare an IS to determine whether a discretionary project will have a significant effect on the environment. A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is appropriate when an IS has been prepared and a determination can be made that no significant environmental effects will occur because revisions to the project have been made, or mitigation measures will be implemented that reduce all potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels. The content of an MND is the same as a Negative Declaration, with the addition of identified mitigation measures and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) (see Appendix A – Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program).

Based on the IS, the City has determined that the environmental review for the proposed application can be completed with an MND.

1.3 - Impact Terminology

The following terminology is used to describe the level of significance of impacts.

- A finding of "no impact" is appropriate if the analysis concludes that the project would not affect a topic area in any way.
- An impact is considered "less than significant" if the analysis concludes that it would cause no substantial adverse change to the environment and requires no mitigation.

- An impact is considered "less than significant with mitigation incorporated" if the analysis concludes that it would cause no substantial adverse change to the environment with the inclusion of environmental commitments that have been agreed to by the proponent.
- An impact is considered "potentially significant" if the analysis concludes that it could have a substantial adverse effect on the environment.

1.4 - Document Organization and Contents

The content and format of this IS/MND is designed to meet the requirements of CEQA. The report contains the following sections:

- *Section 1 – Introduction*: This section provides an overview of CEQA requirements, intended uses of the IS/MND, document organization, and a list of regulations that have been incorporated by reference.
- *Section 2 – Project Description*: This section describes the Project and provides data on the site's location.
- *Section 3 – Environmental Checklist*: This section contains the evaluation of 21 different environmental resource factors contained in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Each environmental resource factor is analyzed to determine whether the proposed Project would have an impact. One of four findings is made, which includes no impact, less than significant impact, less than significant with mitigation, or significant and unavoidable. If the evaluation results in a finding of significant and unavoidable for any of the 21 environmental resource factors, then an Environmental Impact Report will be required.
- *Section 4 – List of Preparers*: This section identifies the individuals who prepared the IS/MND.
- *Section 5 – Bibliography*: This section contains a full list of references that were used in the preparation of this IS/MND.

SECTION 2 - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 - Introduction

Rancho Calera is a 561-acre adopted master planned community east of SR 99 within the City of Chowchilla. The Rancho Calera Specific Plan was originally adopted by the City in May 2011 and assessed as a component of the 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Applicant is proposing changes to the adopted plan as detailed below.

2.2 - Project Location

Rancho Calera is located in the City of Chowchilla in Madera County (Figure 2-1). The Project site lies approximately one-half mile east of Chowchilla's City Center, a mile northeast of the Chowchilla Municipal Airport, and immediately northeast of the East Robertson Boulevard and Highway 99 interchange (Figure 2-2).

2.3 - Surrounding Land Uses

The property is directly south of Ash Slough, north of which there are agricultural operations. Agricultural operations are also active to the east of the Rancho Calera Project boundary, but are separated from the Project area by the Chowchilla Water District irrigation canal. Neither the property to the north of Ash Slough nor east of the Chowchilla Water District irrigation canal are within city limits. Rancho Calera is bordered on the south by East Robertson Boulevard, south of which is the Greenhills Estates residential community and Pheasant Run Golf Course, as well as what is commonly referred to as the Montgomery Farms mixed-use development. A limited number of residential lots remain undeveloped within the Greenhills Estates residential community. The Montgomery Farms mixed-use development offers both commercial and residential development opportunities (up to 310,350 square feet of commercial space and up to 221 single-family dwelling units).

2.4 - Existing Conditions

The 561-acre site is predominantly vacant, with the exception of Ronald Reagan Elementary School located along South Lake Tahoe off of Robertson Boulevard. The vacant areas of the Project site are disked once a year during weed abatement season. The Project site was historically used for agricultural purposes. Ash Slough meanders from east to west along, but outside of, the northern border of the Project. Numerous willows, poplars, and native sycamore trees grow along both sides of the slough. The Chowchilla Water District irrigation canal feeds water into Ash Slough.

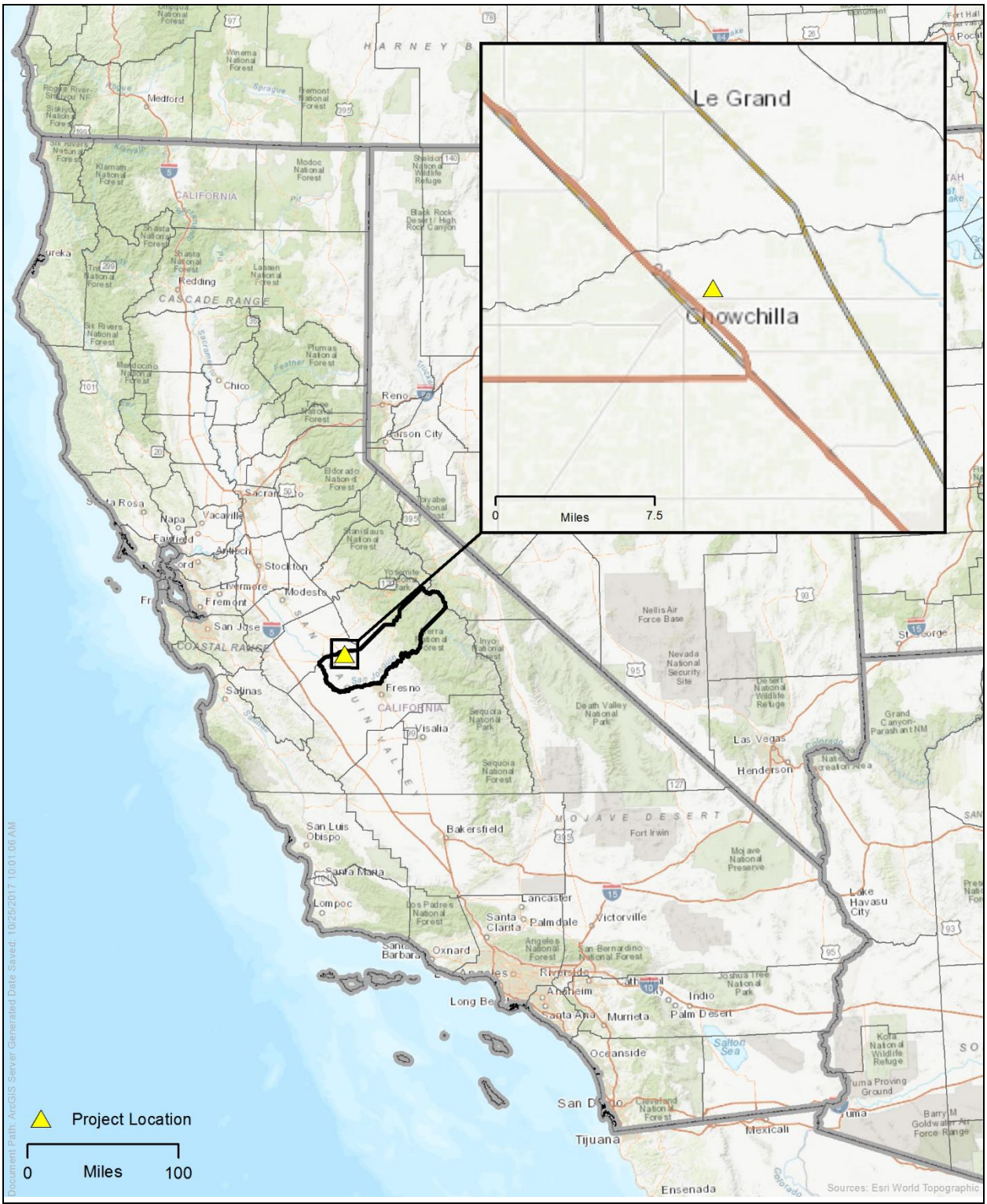

Figure 2-1
Regional Vicinity

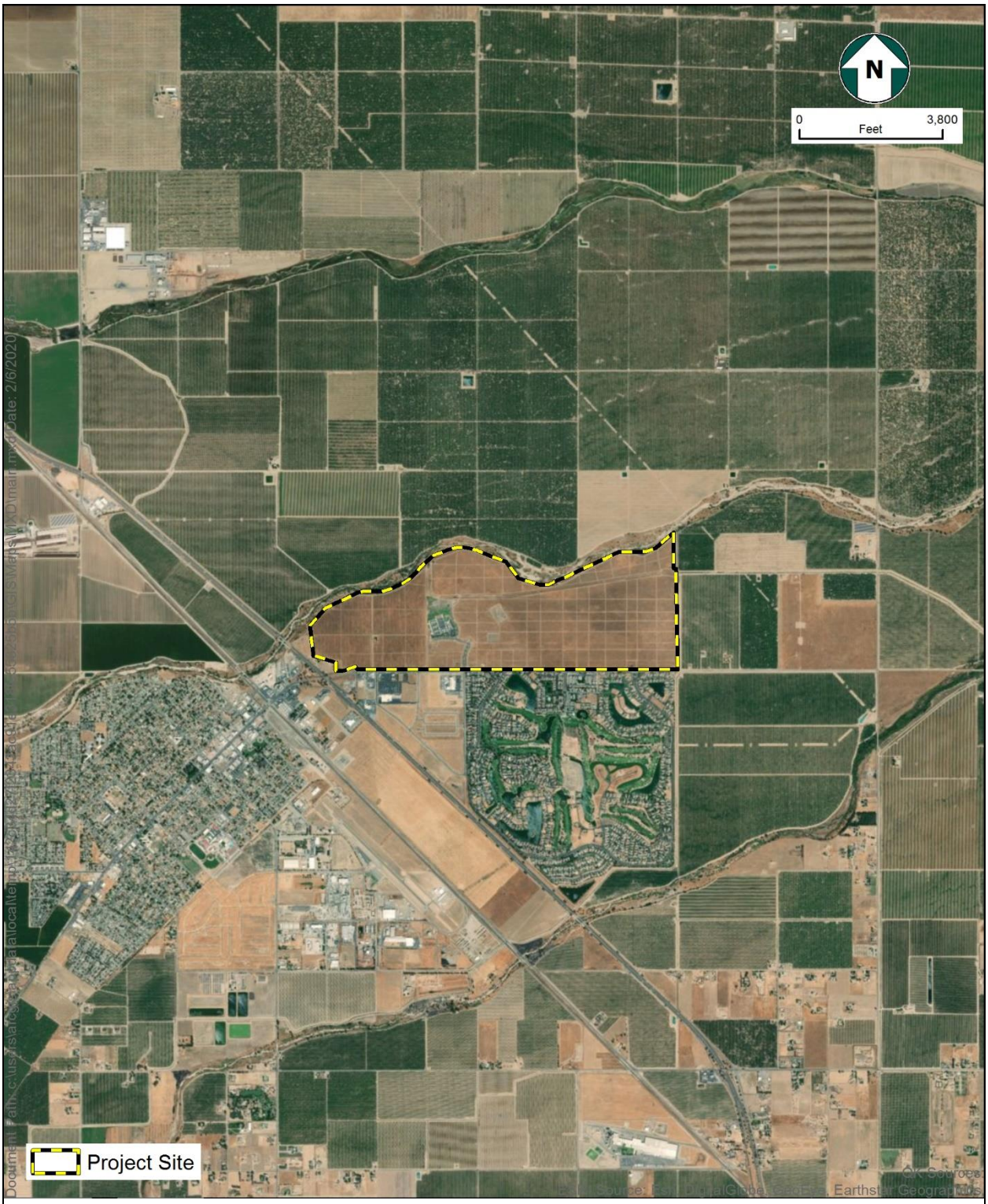

Figure 2-2
Project Location

2.5 - Proposed Project

2.5.1 - *BACKGROUND*

The Rancho Calera Specific Plan, an Environmental Impact Report, a Statement of Overriding Consideration, and a Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program for the Rancho Calera Project were approved by the Chowchilla City Council on May 2, 2011. The approved Rancho Calera Project is a planned residential community, consisting of a mixture of residential, commercial, and civic land uses with a projected build-out population of approximately 6,000 residents. The approved Project contains 576 acres with 2,042 residential units and approximately 495,000 square feet of commercial space. The Specific Plan includes a community park, school facilities, the Rancho Calera Riverwalk, and promenades.

2.5.2 - *PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SPECIFIC PLAN*

Rancho Calera, LLC, the property owner and Applicant, has requested amendments to the approved Rancho Calera Specific Plan. The maximum number of residential units, which could be constructed within the Project area, remains at 2,042 dwelling units, but the maximum commercial space has been decreased to 308,405 square feet, down from 495,000 square feet. The total acreage dedicated to parks and open space has been decreased from 77.4 acres to 66 acres, but an additional approximately 7 acres of storm drain basins and approximately 9 acres of greenways, multi-use paths, and open space corridors have been added, consistent with shifting the focus more to a walkable community with more open space and promenades to provide a flexible means of traversing throughout the Project area. Additionally, the public facilities land use designation has been modified to include two water retention basins, resulting from the decision not to send water offsite via Ash Slough, but rather to allow onsite percolation into the City's groundwater system. Finally, the total acreage of the Project area has been decreased from 576 acres to 561 acres to reflect a donation of 15 acres to the Chowchilla School District for construction of Ronald Reagan Elementary School.

There will be minor adjustments to the alignment of streets and to the configuration of land uses. Figures 2-3 and 2-4, below, show the Existing Specific Plan Land Use Map, and the Proposed Specific Plan Land Use Map. Figures 2-5 and 2-6 show the Existing Zoning and the Proposed Zoning for the Specific Plan area.

The approved Specific Plan included 25.2 acres for future schools, which included the existing Ronald Reagan Elementary School parcel, totaling 15 acres. Because this property has been conveyed to Chowchilla Elementary School District and is not part of the proposed Specific Plan, it has been taken out of the total acreage allocated to elementary schools in the approved Specific Plan.

Additionally, the approved Specific Plan did not have any storm drain basins (stormwater was originally going to be conveyed into Ash Slough), the proposal now includes on-site basins. The Arterial Street Dedication also increased by several acres as a result of adding promenades.

Figure 2-3
Adopted (Existing) Specific Plan Land Use Map

Figure 2-4
Proposed Specific Plan Land Use Map

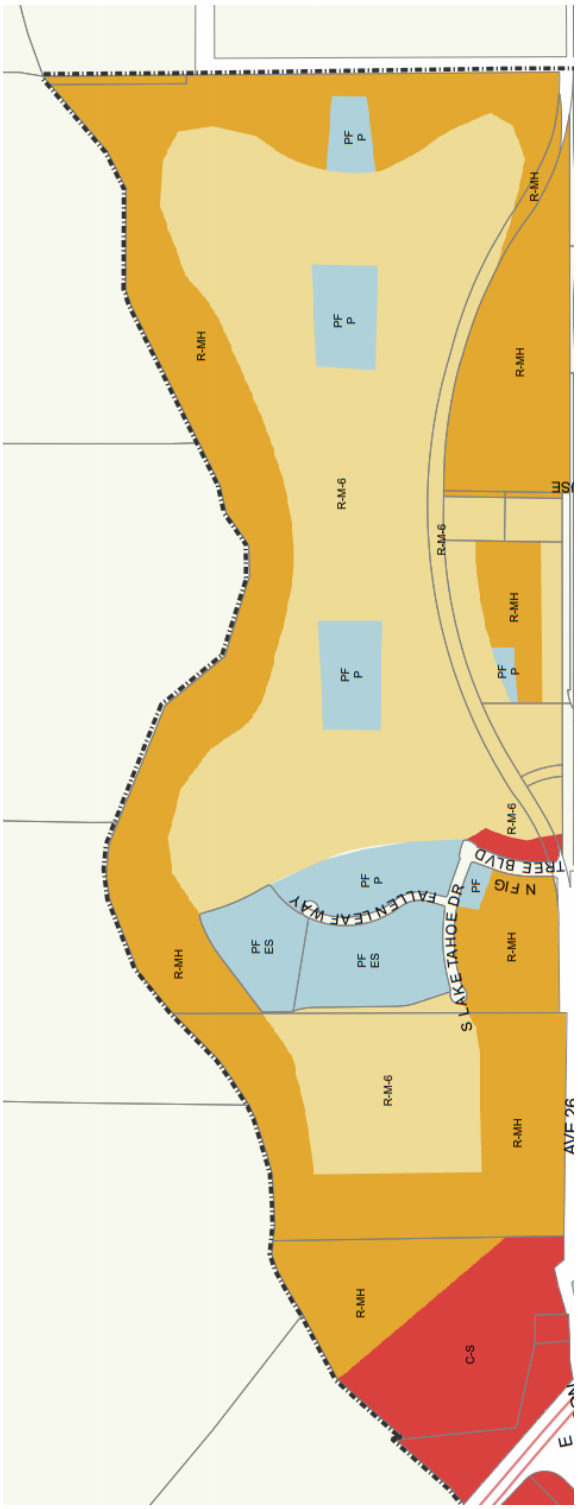

Figure 2-5
Existing Zoning Map

Figure 2-6
Proposed Specific Plan Zoning Map

Following is a comparison of the currently adopted Specific Plan land use summary and the proposed modifications (Table 2-1).

Table 2-1
Land Use Summary (Adopted vs Proposed)

Land Use Designation	Approved Acreage	Proposed Approx. Acres	Approved Maximum DU	Proposed Maximum DU	Approved Maximum SF	Proposed Maximum SF
Residential	**366.7**	**378**	**2,042**	**2,042**		
Low Density Residential (RC-LDR)		203		1,008		
Medium Density Residential (RC-MDR)		166		814		
High Density Residential (RC-HDR)		9		200		
Commercial	**38.9**	**23**			**495,000**	**308,405**
Mixed Use (RC-MU)		3		20		47,045
Service Commercial (RC-CS)		20				261,360
Public/Quasi-Public						
Park and Open Space (RC-P/OS)	**77.4**	**66**				
Minor Community Park		13				
Neighborhood Parks		23				
Riverwalk		25				
Promenades		5				
Public Facilities (School and Public Safety Facility)	**11.2**	**18**				
Street Dedication (as shown on TM 16-0124) and other uses	**66.8**	**76**				
Total	**576**	**561***	**2,042**	**2,042**	**495,000**	**308,405**

*Notes: The 15-acre decrease in total acreage takes into account the 15 acres for Ronald Reagan Elementary School that has already been built out.

Table 2-2 shows a summary of the proposed land use differences compared to what's currently adopted.

Table 2-2
Land Use Difference Summary

Land Use Designation	Difference
Residential	Same
Commercial	Decrease of 186,595 SF
Park/Open Space	Decrease of 11.4 acres
School/Public Safety (Public Facilities)	Increase in 6.8 acres
Street Dedication	Increase of 9.2 acres

Notes: The additional Public Facilities acreage is for the storm drain basins which have been added to the Project and the additional Street Dedication is for the greenways, sidewalks, and open space corridors associated with the Promenades which have been added to the Project.

A mixed-use commercial center will be located east of North Fig Tree Boulevard at the intersection with East Robertson Boulevard to provide community commercial services. To the southeast corner of the Millerton Way and South Lake Tahoe Drive intersection, is a one-acre parcel, which will be dedicated to the City of Chowchilla for the construction of a public safety station; the only public safety station that will be east of the BNSF railroad tracks, which has the potential of delaying response times to development east of Highway 99. A larger commercial area, allowing large-scale retail and service centers, is located in the south-western corner of the site along East Robertson Boulevard near Highway 99. The proposed roundabout located at the intersection of Highway 99 and East Robertson Boulevard will allow direct access into the larger commercial area.

Land will be dedicated to the City for the 12.9-acre minor community park, neighborhood parks, the Rancho Calera Riverwalk, promenades, and the public safety facility. The City will construct the minor community park and public safety facility. The community park may include such amenities as picnic area, playgrounds, sports courts or fields, an amphitheater, and a community center. The Applicant or builders will construct the neighborhood parks, the Rancho Calera Riverwalk, and the promenades. The promenades are special Project-defining features comprised of wide greenbelt medians designed to encourage walkability between the parks, schools, shopping area, neighborhoods, and community features.

Utility and roadway infrastructure improvements necessary for development of the Project will be constructed by the Applicant or builders, including those East Robertson Boulevard improvements necessary to mitigate impacts resulting from development within the general area of the Project. It is anticipated that the East Robertson Boulevard improvements would be constructed in four phases; each phase of construction will be completed prior to any East Robertson Boulevard intersection exceeding the City's level of service standards. For the purpose of determining when each phase needs to be constructed, certain development assumptions have been agreed upon between the property owner and the City as set forth in the Traffic Impact Study Trigger Analysis.

The Applicant has entered into agreements with the elementary school district and the high school district, both of which include payment of development fees as required under Government Code Section 65995 and California Education Code Section 17620 to assist the school districts in accommodating the children who will reside in Rancho Calera. The Chowchilla Elementary School District has constructed one elementary school in the Planning Area and may construct an additional elementary school in the Planning Area, on property which would be donated by the property owner, if needed.

The Project includes design guidelines for residential and commercial development, as well as landscape design guidelines.

Concurrent with the Applicant's request to amend the Specific Plan to reflect the changes set forth above and more specifically, in the amended Rancho Calera Specific Plan document, the property owner has requested that the City: (1) adopt the Rancho Calera Specific Plan Overlay District pursuant to Chapter 18.42 of the Chowchilla Municipal Code, (2) a General Plan Amendment to ensure consistency, (3) one Tentative Subdivision Map, and (4) a

Development Agreement, establishing certain terms and conditions for development of the Project area only. Below is a summary list of the proposed changes within the Specific Plan document.

Proposed Policy and Plan Changes

- Addition of two retention basins;
- Addition of several larger neighborhood parks with greenbelt corridors and promenades;
- Downsizing the service commercial area;
- Addition of a combined pedestrian and bike all-weather trail;
- Four major points of access instead of five (Montgomery Lake Way was removed at request of Caltrans);
- School bus route added;
- Residential districts revised to permit density range of 5 to 16 du/ac rather than 7 to 16/ac;
- Use regulation tables modified to improve readability;
- No HVAC units permitted on roofs in low- and medium-density zoning districts;
- Restrictions on RV parking removed;
- A master sign program requirement added;
- Long, straight streets discouraged, cul-de-sacs and curvilinear streets promoted;
- Remove from the Specific Plan the proposed East Robertson Boulevard pedestrian bridge;
- Landscaping and water conservation requirements added; and
- Re-location of the public facility designated land for the future City fire station.

2.6 - Required Entitlements

The Applicants have submitted the following applications for processing:

- Specific Plan Amendment;
- General Plan Amendment;
- Zoning Map Amendment, including the addition of the Specific Plan overlay designation;
- Tentative Subdivision Map 21-0010 – 141 Lots;
- Development Agreement.

2.7 - Tentative Subdivision Map 21-0010

Tentative Subdivision Map 21-0010 (Figure 2-7) consists of 140 residential subdivision lots and 1 mixed-use commercial lot on approximately 23 acres (Lot 12: ±12.08 acres; Lot 13: ±10.71 acres). This TSM would be considered Phase 1 of construction for the Rancho Calera Specific Plan. The site is located along Robertson Boulevard, east of Fig Tree Boulevard. Ronald Reagan Elementary School is located northwest of the site. The lots range in size from approximately 5,854 square feet to approximately 12,480 square feet.

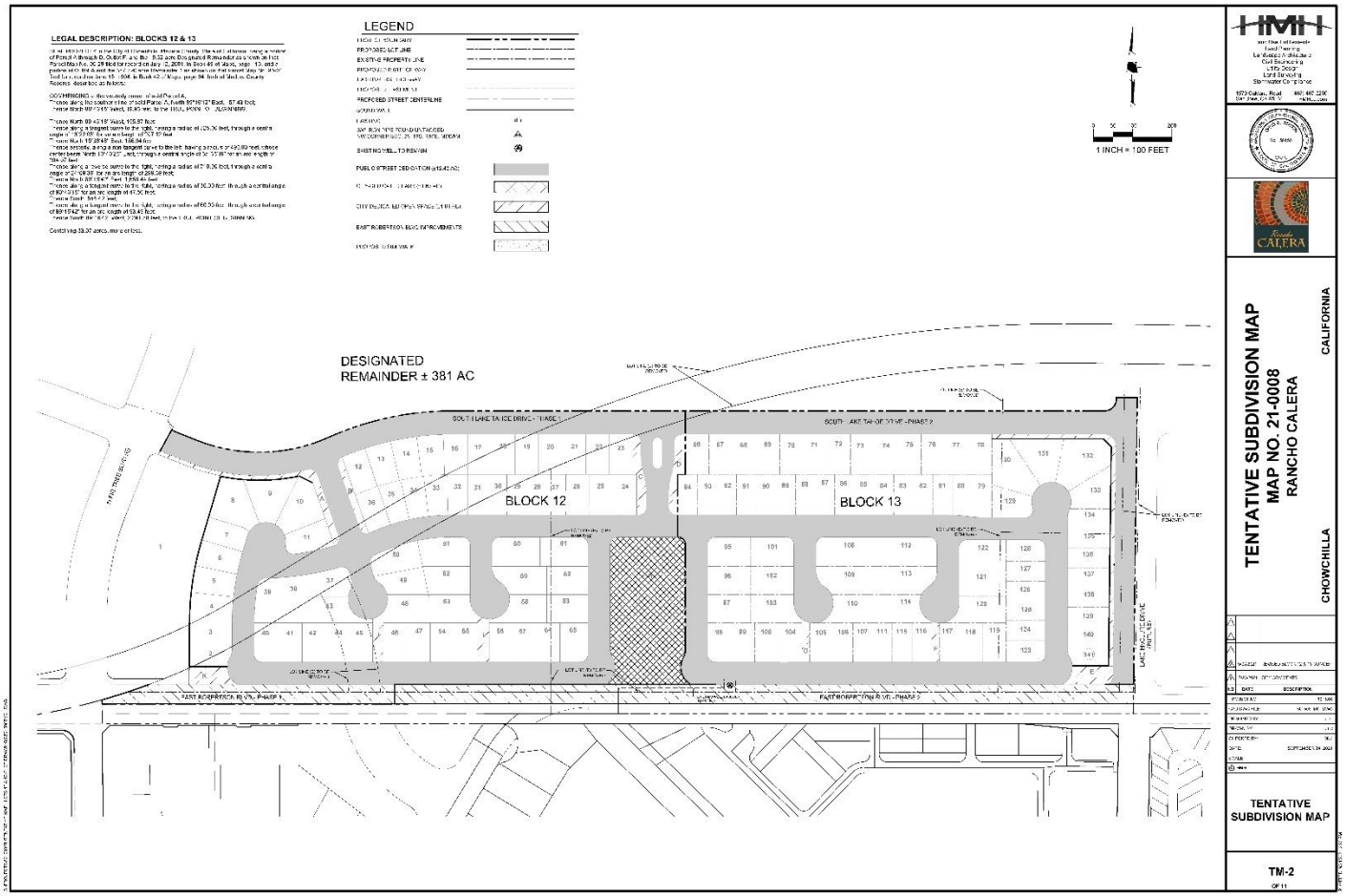

Figure 2-7
Proposed Tentative Subdivision Map 21-0010

2.8 - Development Agreement

The key concepts of the Development Agreement (DA) are:

- A term of 20 years, subject to two extensions of five years each;
- The right to develop the Project as set forth in the Specific Plan;
- An agreement to pay the development impact fees as set forth in the Development Agreement;
- Construction by developer of the East Robertson Boulevard improvements in multiple phases prior to triggering certain level of service impacts, the costs of which shall be paid per the terms of the Development Agreement;
- Dedication of certain land and/or improvements to the City; and
- Financing provisions for the funding of public improvements.

SECTION 3 - INITIAL STUDY

3.1 - Environmental Checklist

1. **Project Title:**

   Amendments to the Rancho Calera Specific Plan & Associated Entitlements

2. **Lead Agency Name and Address:**

   City of Chowchilla
   130 South Second Street
   Chowchilla, CA 93610

3. **Contact Person and Phone Number:**

   Mark Hamilton, Director of Community & Economic Development - (559) 665-8615

4. **Project Location:**

   Please see *Section 2 – Project Description*.

5. **Project Sponsor's Name:**

   Rancho Calera, LLC

6. **Description of Project (Describe the Whole Action Involved, Including but Not Limited to Later Phases of the Project, and any Secondary, Support, or Offsite Features Necessary for its Implementation. Attach Additional Sheets, if Necessary.):**

   Please see *Section 2 – Project Description*.

7. **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:**

   Please see *Section 2 – Project Description*.

8. **Other Public Agencies Whose Approval may be Required (e.g., Permits, Financing Approval, or Participation Agreement):**

   - San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD)
   - Regional Water Quality Control Board- Central Region (RWQCB)
   - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
   - State Water Resource Control Board
   - California Department of Transportation, District 6
   - California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
   - Chowchilla Water District

9. **Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the Project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1? If so, has consultation begun?**

A tribal consultation list request was sent to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) on March 6, 2020. The City received a response back on March 25, 2020 from the NAHC indicating that Dumna Wo-Wah Tribal Government, North Fork Mono Tribe, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Valley Yokuts Tribe, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, and Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band are the applicable tribes in the area that have requested Project consultation. Consultation letters were sent to these tribes on March 25, 2020 and follow-up reminders were sent to the tribes on April 10, 2020. The City received one response back during the 30-day consultation period under AB 52 from the California Valley Miwok Tribe indicating that they had no comment.

Per SB 18, the City received one response from the Dumna Wo-Wah Tribe indicating that they were interested in having further conversation with the City to determine if any mitigation would be appropriate. The City engaged in negotiations with the tribe to determine how to best mitigate any potential impacts to resources. Those mitigation measures are listed in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

3.2 - Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this Project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Agriculture and Forestry Resources	☐ Air Quality
☐ Biological Resources	☐ Cultural Resources	☐ Energy
☐ Geology and Soils	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
☐ Hydrology and Water Quality	☐ Land Use and Planning	☐ Mineral Resources
☐ Noise	☐ Population and Housing	☐ Public Services
☐ Recreation	☐ Transportation	☐ Tribal Cultural Resources
☐ Utilities and Service Systems	☐ Wildfire	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance

3.3 - Determination

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed Project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and 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 revisions in the Project have been made by or agreed to by the Project Proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that 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 (a) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (b) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENT IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed Project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed Project, nothing further is required.

Signature

10/19/2021
Date

Mark Hamilton
Director of Community & Economic Development

3.4 - Evaluation of Environmental Impacts

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the Project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the Project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including offsite as well as onsite, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.

3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.

4. "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from "Earlier Analyses," as described in (5) below, may be cross-referenced).

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

    a. Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review;
    b. Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis; and
    c. Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the Project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a

previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.

9. The explanation of each issue should identify:

    a. The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
    b. The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significant.

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.1 - *AESTHETICS*					
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the Project:					
a.	Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b.	Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c.	In non-urbanized 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d.	Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.1a – Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

The Project site is located within the city limits of Chowchilla in Madera County. As seen in Figure 2-3, the Project site is bordered by the Berenda Slough to the north, agricultural production to the east, existing urban uses to the south, and is bordered by SR 99 to the west. The Chowchilla General Plan identifies West Robertson Boulevard as a historical resource within the City and is listed as a California Historical Landmark (Office of Historic Preservation, 2017). Another historical landmark is located at the intersection of Chowchilla and West Robertson Boulevard denoting the site of the original Chowchilla Arch (City of Chowchilla, 2014). West Robertson and Chowchilla Boulevard are located more than 2,500 feet west of the Project site. The Project site is not located in an area known to consist of scenic vistas, therefore, the Project would not result in substantial adverse effects on any scenic vistas.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.1b - Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the Project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?

The nearest listed State scenic highways are portions of Interstate (I) 5 and State Route (SR) 152 near San Luis Reservoir over 50 miles to the west of the Project site (California Department of Transportation, 2017). The Project site does not contain any scenic resources that would be visible from these roadways. Therefore, the Project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.1c - Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the Project in non-urbanized 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?

The proposed Project may be visible to motorists driving along Robertson Boulevard and passing vehicles along SR 99. The proposed Project being analyzed in this MND consists of just the net differences of what's being proposed compared to what's already been approved in the original Rancho Calera Specific Plan. The maximum number of residential units that could be constructed within the Project area remains at 2,042 dwelling units. Additionally, the maximum commercial space has been decreased to 308,405 square feet. The total acreage dedicated to parks has been increased from 57.4 acres of park space to 66 acres of park space, consistent with shifting the focus more to a walkable community with more open space and promenades to provide more flexible means of transportation throughout the Project area. Additionally, the public facilities land use designation has been modified to include two water retention basins, resulting from the decision not to send water offsite via Ash Slough, but rather to allow onsite percolation into the City's groundwater system. Finally, the total acreage of the Project area has been decreased from 576 acres to 561 acres to reflect 15 acres, which were donated to the Chowchilla School District for construction of

Ronald Reagan Elementary School. Aside from the existing school, the remainder of the Project site consists of vacant disked land.

As such, the proposed Project would not substantially change the visual character of the Project area beyond what has already been planned for in the approved Specific Plan. The proposed amendments to the Specific Plan could be considered a benefit to the overall visual character by increasing the acreage of parks space to focus on creating a more walkable community with an increase to open space and promenades. Therefore, this Project would not result in a substantial impact to the visual quality of the area.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.1d - Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the Project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Construction of the proposed Project would generally occur during daytime hours but could occur as late as 7:00 p.m. in order to meet the construction schedule. No overnight construction would occur. In the event that work is performed between dusk and 7:00 p.m., construction crews would use minimal illumination in order to perform the work safely. All lighting would be directed downward and shielded to focus illumination on the desired work areas only, and to prevent light spillage onto adjacent properties.

The changes proposed to the adopted Specific Plan would not result in a new source of light or glare beyond what has already been approved.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact

3.4.2 - *AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY 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 Department 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:

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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b.	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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])?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d.	Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e.	Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.2a – Would the Project 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?

The Project site is designated as a combination of unique farmland, urban/built-up land, and grazing land (Figure 3.4.2-1) by the Important Farmland Map as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance (Department of Conservation, 2016). In some cases, the City's General Plan contains policies that support the conversion of land from agricultural uses to urban uses. For example, in the Conservation and Open Space Element, Policy OS 8.1 states that "Existing agricultural areas in the Planning Area shall be retained in agricultural use until the time that such areas are needed for logical urban expansion." Additionally, Policy OS 8.3 states that "Land designated Agricultural in the Planning Area may be converted to urban uses if the following findings are made:

1. Conversion to urban use will not be detrimental to the long-term agricultural use of neighboring properties;
2. No other land within the Planning Area is readily available for urban development of the quality and intensity proposed by a development proposal;
3. The extension of major infrastructure through the land is necessary for the efficient cost-effective implementation of the City's General Plan; and
4. That the proposal is consistent with Land Use policies regarding conversion of Agricultural lands."

There is currently no active agricultural operations taking place on the Project site. The Project would not be detrimental to the long-term agricultural use of neighboring properties. The City's 2040 General Plan determined that within this planning period, approximately 5,926 acres of agricultural Farmland of Statewide Importance and Prime Farmland could be converted to urban built-up land. According to General Plan Policy LU-17.5, the City prefers contiguous urban development within the General Plan Planning Area. The Project site is located within the city limits and is contiguous to existing built-up development, therefore, the Project could easily be served by an extension of existing City infrastructure. The proposed changes within the Specific Plan would not be considered an increase beyond what has already been analyzed.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a ***less than significant impact***.

Impact #3.4.2b – Would the Project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?

According to the City of Chowchilla's General Plan (City of Chowchilla, 2014), the Project site is not under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not conflict with any existing zoning for agriculture or with an existing Williamson Act contract and therefore would have no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.2c – Would the Project 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])?

The Project site is not identified as forest land. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not conflict with any existing zoning for forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.2d – Would the Project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The Project would not result in the loss of forest land.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.2e – Would the Project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

The Project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, would result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be ***no impact***.

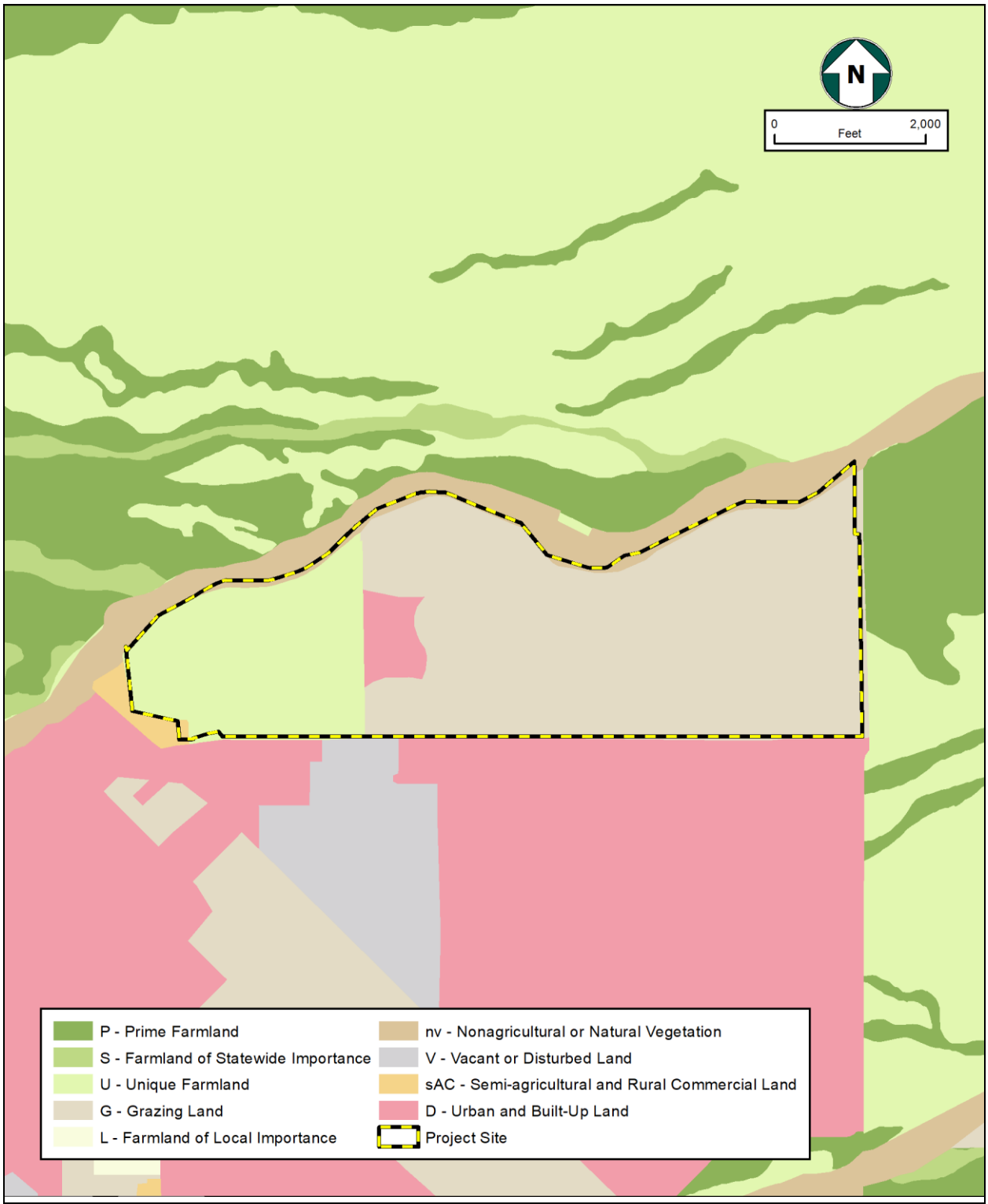

Figure 3.4.2-1
Farmland Monitoring and Mapping Program

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact

3.4.3 - *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:

a.	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c.	Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d.	Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The analysis presented is based on an Air Quality Impact Assessment & Greenhouse Gases Analysis (AQIA), dated March 2021, prepared by VRPA for this Project (see Appendix B). The proposed Project is located within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB) and within the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD).

According to the AQIA, the Project would be subject to SJVAPCD rules and regulations, including, but not necessarily limited to, Regulation VIII Fugitive PM_{10} prohibitions, Rule 8021 Construction, Demolition, Excavation, and Other Earthmoving Activities, Rule 4641 – Cutback, Slow Cure, and Emulsified Asphalt, Paving and Maintenance Operations, and Rule 9510 – Indirect Source Review (ISR). The Applicant is required to consult with the SJVAPCD directly to determent the complete list of applicable rules and regulations that would apply to this Project.

Impact #3.4.3a – Would the Project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

The primary way of determining consistency with the air quality plan's (AQP) assumptions is determining consistency with the applicable General Plan to ensure that the Project's population density and land use are consistent with the growth assumptions used in the AQPs for the air basin.

As required by California law, city and county general plans contain a land use element that details the types and quantities of land uses that the city or county estimates will be needed for future growth and that designate locations for land uses to regulate growth. Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) uses the growth projections and land use information in adopted general plans to estimate future average daily trips and then VMT, which are then provided to SJVAPCD to estimate future emissions in the AQPs. Existing and future pollutant emissions computed in the AQP are based on land uses from area general plans. AQPs detail the control measures and emission reductions required for reaching attainment of the air standards.

The applicable general plan for the Project is the City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan, which was adopted in 2011. The Rancho Calera Specific Plan was originally adopted by the City in May 2011 and assessed as a component of the 2040 General Plan EIR. The Project is consistent with the currently adopted General Plan for the City of Chowchilla and is therefore consistent with the population growth and VMT applied in the plan. Therefore, the Project is consistent with the growth assumptions used in the applicable AQPs. As a result, the Project will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of any air quality plans. Therefore, no mitigation is needed.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.3b – Would the Project 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?

The Madera County area is non-attainment for federal and State air quality standards for ozone, in attainment of federal standards and non-attainment for State standards for PM_{10}, and non-attainment for federal and State standards for $PM_{2.5}$. The SJVAPCD has prepared the 2016 and 2013 Ozone Plans, 2007 PM_{10} Maintenance Plan, and 2012 $PM_{2.5}$ Plan to achieve federal and State standards for improved air quality in the SJVAB regarding ozone and PM. Inconsistency with any of the plans would be considered a cumulatively adverse air quality impact. The Project is consistent with the currently adopted General Plan for the City of Chowchilla and is therefore consistent with the population growth and VMT applied in the plan. Therefore, the Project is consistent with the growth assumptions used in the 2016 and 2013 Ozone Plan, 2007 PM_{10} Maintenance Plan, and 2012 $PM_{2.5}$ Plan.

Project specific emissions that exceed the thresholds of significance for criteria pollutants would be expected to result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the County is in non-attainment under applicable federal or State ambient air quality standards. It should be noted that a project isn't characterized as

cumulatively insignificant when project emissions fall below thresholds of significance. The SJVAPCD has established thresholds of significance for determining environmental significance, which are provided in Table 6 of the AQIA.

Results of the analysis show that emissions generated from construction and operation of the Project would be less than the applicable SJVAPCD emission thresholds for criteria pollutants. Therefore, no mitigation is needed.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.3c – Would the Project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Sensitive receptors refer to those segments of the population most susceptible to poor air quality (i.e., children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing serious health problems affected by air quality). Land uses that have the greatest potential to attract these types of sensitive receptors include schools, parks, playgrounds, daycare centers, nursing homes, hospitals, and residential communities. From a health risk perspective, the proposed Project is a Type B project in that it may potentially place sensitive receptors in the vicinity of existing sources.

The first step in evaluating the potential for impacts to sensitive receptors for TACs from the Project is to perform a screening level analysis. For Type B projects, one type of screening tool is found in the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Handbook: Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Perspective. This handbook includes a table (depicted in Table 4) with recommended buffer distances associated with various types of common sources. The screening level analysis for the Project shows that TACs are not a concern based upon the recommendations provided in Table 4 of the AQIA. An evaluation of nearby land uses considering CARB's Pollution Mapping Tool shows that the Project will not place sensitive receptors in the vicinity of existing toxic sources. Table 4 indicates that new sensitive land uses should not be sited within 500 feet of a freeway/urban roads with 100,000 vehicles/day, or rural roads with 50,000 vehicles/day. The Project is located more than 2,500 feet from the SR 99 freeway. Therefore, TAC's from sources in the study area will not significantly impact the Project. In addition, the Project will not generate TAC's that would have a significant impact on the environment or adjacent sensitive receptors. Therefore, no mitigation is needed.

Short-Term Impacts

The annual emissions from the construction phase of the Project will be less than the applicable SJVAPCD emission thresholds for criteria pollutants as shown in Table 7 of the

AQIA (see Appendix B). Therefore, construction emissions associated with the Project are considered less than significant.

Long-Term Impacts

Long-term emissions from the Project are generated primarily by mobile source (vehicle) emissions from the Project site and area sources such as lawn maintenance equipment. Emissions from long-term operations generally represent a project's most substantial air quality impact. Table 8 of the AQIA (see Appendix B) summarizes the Project's operational impacts by pollutant. Results indicate that the annual operational emissions from the Project will be less than the SJVAPCD emission thresholds for criteria pollutants. Therefore, operational emissions associated with the Project are considered less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.3d – Would the Project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

The SJVAPCD requires that an analysis of potential odor impacts be conducted for the following two situations:

- Generators – projects that would potentially generate odorous emissions proposed to be located near existing sensitive receptors or other land uses where people may congregate, and
- Receivers – residential or other sensitive receptor projects or other projects built for the intent of attracting people located near existing odor sources.

The Project will not generate odorous emissions given the nature or characteristics of residential developments. The intensity of an odor source's operations and its proximity to sensitive receptors influences the potential significance of odor emissions. The SJVAPCD has identified some common types of facilities that have been known to produce odors in the SJV Air Basin. The types of facilities that are known to produce odors are shown in Table 5 of the AQIA along with a reasonable distance from the source within which the degree of odors could possibly be significant. None of the facilities shown in Table 5 are located within two miles of the Project. Therefore, no mitigation is needed.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.4 - *BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES*				
Would the Project:				
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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

A biological reconnaissance survey was conducted to determine whether there are sensitive biological resources that might be adversely affected by the proposed Project. The evaluation is based upon existing site conditions, the potential for sensitive biological resources to occur on and in the vicinity of the Project site, and any impacts that could potentially occur from

the Project. The Project is defined as an amendment to an existing Specific Plan. Impacts that would occur from that amendment to sensitive biological resources would not occur from the action of amending the plan, but sensitive biological recourses were found within the Specific Plan area and could be impacted at the time of development of the area if still present at that time.

A literature review of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2020) California Native Plant Society (CNPS) (California Native Plant Society, 2020), and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Endangered Species List (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2020) was conducted to identify special-status plant and wildlife species with potential to occur within the Project site and vicinity (the surrounding 12 quads and a 10-mile radius). Information on the potential presence of wetlands and waters was obtained from the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), National Hydrography database (NHD) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Information regarding the presence of critical habitat in the Project vicinity was obtained from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's critical habitat mapper database. The results of the database inquiries were reviewed to evaluate the potential for occurrence of special-status species and other sensitive biological resources known to occur on or near the Project site prior to conducting a biological reconnaissance survey on the Project site.

On June 12, 2020, a QK biologist conducted a biological survey of the entire Project site and a 500-foot buffer area (Biological Survey Area [BSA]), where feasible. The purpose of the survey was to determine the locations and extent of potential plant communities and sensitive habitats, determine the potential for occurrence of special-status plant and animal species, and identify other sensitive biological resources within the BSA and on the Project site. Survey methodologies included walking meandering pedestrian transects through all habitat types that were present. Protocol surveys for specific special-status wildlife species were not conducted because it was determined by the consulting biologist that such surveys were not warranted due to existing conditions of the Project site. Photographs were taken to document existing landscapes of the Project site and adjacent land uses; detailed notes on observed plant and wildlife species and site conditions were taken while conducting the survey.

General Site Conditions

The entire Project site has experienced significant historical as well as ongoing ground disturbance from agricultural practices. The wildlife species inhabiting the BSA include those typically found in moderately- to heavily-disturbed habitats commonly found throughout Madera County and the San Joaquin Valley. The Project site had been previously planted with grapes on the east side but is currently partially disked and partially overgrown with ruderal species. Several California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) and other small mammal burrows were observed on the Project site, primarily along the banks of an abandoned canal that crosses through the middle of the site and at the large water basins in the center of the site. The agricultural abandoned canal crosses the northern portion of the site and was previously connected to Ash Slough. Another canal with flowing water was

present along the eastern portion of the site. Water in that canal flows north into Ash Slough. A small ditch was present near the southern border of the site that crosses the entrance to the elementary school that is in the middle of the site at Fig Tree Boulevard. There were no wetlands present on the site. Some of the riparian habitat that occurs along the northern boundary of the site crosses onto the site in small patches.

There were 37 plant species and 13 wildlife species identified during the survey, either through direct observation or by the presence of diagnostic signs (Table 3.4.4-1).

Table 3.4.4-1
List of Plant and Wildlife Species Observed within the Survey Area

Scientific name	Common name
Plants	
Acmispon americanus var. americanus	Spanish lotus
Asclepias syriaca	common milkweed
Ambrosia psilostachya	ragweed
Amsinckia menziesii	fiddleneck
Avena fatua	wild oat
Brassica nigra	black mustard
Bromus diandrus	ripgut brome
Bromus madritensis ssp. rubens	red brome
Centaurea solstitialis	yellow star thistle
Centromadia pungens ssp. pungens	common tarweed
Conium maculatum	poison hemlock
Convolvulus arvensis	field bindweed
Croton setiger	turkey mullein
Cynodon dactylon	Bermuda grass
Datura stramonium	Jimson weed
Erigeron canadensis	Canada horseweed
Festuca bromoides	brome fescue
Helianthus annuus	common sunflower
Hordeum murinum	foxtail barley
Juglans nigra	black walnut
Lactuca serriola	prickly lettuce
Phalaris paradoxa	hood canarygrass
Phoradendron leucarpum ssp. tomentosum	mistletoe
Populus fremontii	cottonwood
Prunus dulcis	almond
Rubus armeniacus	Himalayan blackberry
Rumex crispus	curly dock
Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea	blue edlerberry
Salix gooddingii	black willow
Salix laevigata	red willow
Salsola tragus	Russian thistle

Scientific name	Common name
Schsimus arabicus	Mediterranean grass
Sisymbrium irio	London rocket
Trichostema lanceolatum	vinegar weed
Trifolium aureum	hop clover
Urtica dioica	stinging nettle
Washingtonia filifera	California fan palm
Wildlife	
Aphelocoma californica	California scrub jay
Buteo jamaicensis	red-tailed hawk
Buteo swainsoni	Swainson's hawk
Corvus brachyrhynchos	American crow
Haemorhous mexicanus	house finch
Otospermophilus beecheyi	California ground squirrel
Passer domesticus	house sparrow
Sayornis nigricans	black Phoebe
Sturnus vulgaris	European starling
Sylvilagus audubonii	cotton tail rabbit
Tyrannus verticalis	western kingbird
Zenaida macroura	mourning dove
Zonotrichia leucophrys	white-crowned sparrow

This section describes the results of the database searches, and using conditions present on the Project site as determined by the onsite examination, provides an analysis of Project impacts on each of six biological evaluation criteria. Each of the evaluation criteria are discussed below and mitigation measures are provided as warranted. When implemented, the measures would reduce impacts to below significant levels.

Impact #3.4.4a – Would the Project 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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The literature search indicated that there is a potential for several sensitive natural communities and special-status species to be present on the Project site. An evaluation of each of the potentially occurring sensitive natural communities and special-status species, which included habitat requirements, likelihood of required habitat to occur within the Project area, and a comparison to the CNDDB records was conducted. The results of this evaluation concluded that no sensitive natural community or special-status plant species are anticipated to occur on or near the Project site, and that four wildlife species have a reasonable potential to occur on or near the Project site.

Sensitive Natural Communities and Special-Status Species

SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND SPECIAL-STATUS PLANTS

Based on the database query, there were four sensitive natural communities and 17 special-status plant species having potential to occur within the subject quadrangle and eight surrounding quadrangles. According to CNNDB recorded occurrences, there are four sensitive natural communities and 17 plant species found within a 10-mile buffer of the Project site. However, the Project site and vicinity has been highly disturbed for years due to ongoing agriculture production and nearby residential development, and it does not provide suitable conditions for any of these sensitive natural communities or special-status plant species to exist. No special-status plant species were identified during the biological reconnaissance survey. Although protocol-level botanical surveys were not conducted and the reconnaissance survey did not coincide with optimum blooming periods for all plant species, it is not anticipated that special-status plant species occur on the Project site because of the past disturbance and current conditions.

SPECIAL-STATUS WILDLIFE

Based on the database query, there were 27 special-status wildlife species that were identified as having potential to occur within subject quadrangle and eight surrounding quadrangles. According to CNDDB recorded occurrences there are 21 special-status wildlife species found within a 10-mile buffer of the Project site. Of the 27 species, 20 were eliminated from consideration due to the lack of habitat within the Project site that could support these species. The remaining seven species have a low, moderate, or high potential to occur within the Project site and vicinity. There is one species with a high potential (Swainson's hawk [*Buteo swainsoni*]) to occur on or near the Project site, two species with a moderate potential (San Joaquin kit fox [*Vulpes macrotis mutica*], and American badger [*Taxidea taxus*]), and four species with a low potential (western burrowing owl [*Athene cunicularia*], western spadefoot toad [*Spea hammondii*], hoary bat [*Lasiurus cinereus*], and Yuma myotis [*Myotis yumanensis])*. Protocol surveys for specific special-status wildlife species were not conducted for this report because it was determined that such surveys were not warranted due to the conditions present on the Project site.

Swainson's Hawk

There are five CNDDB records of Swainson's hawk within three miles of the Project site recorded in 2012 (EONDX 91148, 91144, 91063, 91062, and 91055). These sightings were along the Chowchilla River and at Ash Slough and Highway 99. The most recent CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 105173) of Swainson's hawk was approximately 5.2 miles northwest of the Project site. Swainson's hawks are known to forage in open agricultural fields such as hay and alfalfa fields, and they typically nest along rivers and highways. The surrounding area has been historically used for agricultural production, mostly grapes and almond orchards that are not ideal but potentially provide foraging habitat for the Swainson's hawk.

One Swainson's hawk was observed sitting in a nest at the top of a dead cottonwood tree south of Ash Slough, approximately 43 feet from the northeast edge of the Project site, within the Project footprint (Figure 3.4.4-1). The hawk was observed flying out and soaring in the vicinity. It is likely that this nest was active and occupied during the 2020 breeding season. At least four other Swainson's hawks were flying within the Project boundaries during the survey. There is a substantial number of small mammal burrows and sign that would provide a suitable prey base for this species and there is suitable nesting habitat on the Project site and in the immediate vicinity along Ash Slough.

San Joaquin Kit Fox

The San Joaquin kit fox has a moderate potential to occur within the Project site and immediate surrounding area. The most recent and nearest CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 45340) of a San Joaquin kit fox is approximately seven miles north of the Project site. There is a moderate potential for the San Joaquin kit fox to reside or forage on the Project site and in open fields in the vicinity of the Project site. Potential San Joaquin kit fox dens of suitable size are present along the sides of a large water basin near the center of the Project site and along the berms of the canals that cut through the Project site. However, there was no other evidence or diagnostic sign (e.g., tracks, scat, fur, prey remains) suggesting that this species inhabits the BSA. The San Joaquin kit fox is known to occur in the vicinity of the Project site and could potentially inhabit the site at any time, or individuals could be present from time to time as transient foragers.

American Badger

The American badger has a moderate potential to reside or forage on the Project site and immediate surrounding area. There were multiple burrows within the basin walls in the center of the Project site that showed potential sign, such as claw marks around the entrance of the dens. The American badger is known to occur in the vicinity of the Project site and could potentially be present from time to time as a transient forager or temporary resident. The most recent CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 106688) was within the Dutchman Creek Vernal Pool Conservation Bank in 2016 and 2017.

Western Burrowing Owl

The western burrowing owl has a low potential to occur within the Project site and immediate surrounding area. Historically, burrowing owls have been recorded within four miles of the Project site. No burrowing owl or sign were observed during the survey, but small mammal burrows are present along the sides of a large water basin within the center of the Project site and along the berms of the canals that cut through the Project site (Figure 3.4.4-1). The small mammals residing in these burrows would provide suitable prey for this species and the burrows could be enlarged by owls to provide shelter. The most recent CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 101265) of a burrowing owl was 4.2 miles northwest of the Project site.

Western Spadefoot

The western spadefoot has a low potential to reside or breed within the Project site and immediate surrounding area. No western spadefoot or diagnostic sign of this species was observed and vernal pools and other wetlands which could support this species are absent. Historically, the western spadefoot has been recorded within four miles of the Project site. The nearest CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 114036) of a western spadefoot toad is 3.3 miles northeast of the Project site within a vernal pool complex.

Hoary Bat

The hoary bat has a low potential to occur within the Project site and immediate surrounding area. No hoary bats or sign were observed during the survey, but potential roosting sites are present in the trees along the northern perimeter of the site. It is possible that this species could occur as a transient forager on the Project site. There is a low potential for the hoary bat to reside or forage within the riparian area along the slough north of the Project site. Historically, hoary bats have been recorded within one mile of the Project site. The most recent and nearest CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 68822) of a hoary bat is 993 feet southwest of the Project site. This occurrence was recorded in 1921. No other occurrences have been recorded within 10 miles of the site.

Yuma Myotis

The Yuma myotis has a low potential to reside or forage within the Project site and immediate surrounding area. No Yuma myotis or sign were observed within the Project limits during the survey, but potential roosting locations are present at the bridge approximately 640 feet west of the Project. Historically, Yuma myotis have been recorded within three miles of the Project site. The most recent and nearest CNDDB recorded occurrence (EONDX 46839) of a Yuma myotis is 2.5 miles northwest of the Project site.

CONCLUSION

The Project site and most of the surrounding area has been disturbed for years by ongoing agriculture crop cultivation and residential development. The Project site and vicinity does not provide suitable habitat for any special-status plant species and no mitigation measures to protect, avoid, or minimize impacts to special-status plant species are warranted.

There is the potential for several special-status or protected wildlife species to occur. Although no impacts to those species would occur from amending the Specific Plan, development of the site would have potential impacts to those species, if present at the time of development. Compliance with recommended Mitigation Measures MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6 would protect, avoid, and minimize impacts to special-status wildlife species. When implemented, these measures would reduce impacts to these species to below significant levels.

MITIGATION MEASURES

MM BIO-1 (General Wildlife Surveys): Prior to ground-disturbing activities, a qualified wildlife biologist shall conduct a general biological clearance survey of the area being disturbed, including any off-site impact areas, between 14 and 30 calendar days prior to the onset of ground disturbance. The general wildlife clearance survey shall include walking transects to identify the presence of special status animals that may occur on the project site (i.e., western spadefoot toad, western burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, American badger, and San Joaquin kit fox) as well as other special-status species or signs of, and sensitive natural communities. The preconstruction survey shall be completed in a way that allows for 100 percent coverage of the portion(s) of the Project site being disturbed and a 50-foot buffer, where feasible. A report outlining the results of the survey shall be submitted to the Lead Agency. Should any of these species be observed, an appropriate construction-free buffer will be established by the qualified biologist onsite. Additional species-specific preconstruction survey requirements and mitigation measures for western spadefoot, nesting birds, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, roosting bats, American badger, and San Joaquin kit fox are included below.

MM BIO-2 (Worker Education): Prior to ground-disturbance activities, or within one week of being deployed at the Project site for newly hired workers, all construction workers at the Project site shall attend a Construction Worker Environmental Awareness Training and Education Program, developed and presented by a qualified biologist.

The Construction Worker Environmental Awareness Training and Education Program shall be presented by the biologist and shall include information on the life history of wildlife and plant species that may be encountered during construction activities, their legal protections, the definition of "take" under the Endangered Species Act, measures the Project operator is implementing to protect the species, reporting requirements, specific measures that each worker must employ to avoid take of the species, and penalties for violation of the Act. Identification and information regarding special-status or other sensitive species with the potential to occur on the Project site shall also be provided to construction personnel. The program shall include:

- An acknowledgement form signed by each worker indicating that environmental training has been completed; and
- A copy of the training transcript and/or training video/CD, as well as a list of the names of all personnel who attended the training, and copies of the signed acknowledgement forms shall be maintained onsite for the duration of construction activities.

MM BIO-3 (Western Spadefoot): If western spadefoot is identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), for each of the pools, basins, or other aquatic features in which spadefoot occurs, the pools, their banks, and other areas with small mammal burrows shall be avoided. If possible, the project should be designed to avoid breeding pools/basins where spadefoot are located as well as a buffer of burrows within 860 feet (262 meters) from those breeding pools (Baumberger et. al. 2019).

Should avoidance not be possible, impacts to the occupied pools or basins, their banks, and other areas with small mammal burrows within 860 feet of the basins shall be compensated for. The ratio of compensation should be calculated by using *Calculating Biological Accurate Mitigation Credits: Insights from the California Tiger Salamander* (Searcy and Shaffer 2009). Compensation should occur on habitat that is in kind or higher quality habitat than that being impacted by the Project. Because mitigation banks do not currently offer spadefoot credits, and because California tiger salamanders typically occur within the same habitat, compensatory mitigation can occur by acquiring credits at an approved mitigation bank that also supports spadefoot on the property or by acquiring off-site land that supports spadefoot and protecting that land in perpetuity via a conservation easement.

MM BIO-4 (Nesting Birds): If construction is planned outside the nesting period for raptors (other than the western burrowing owl; see MM BIO-6 for measures specific to BUOW) and migratory birds (the nesting period is generally accepted to be February 15 to August 31), no mitigation shall be required. If construction is planned during the nesting season for migratory birds and raptors, a preconstruction survey to identify active bird nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to evaluate the site being disturbed and a 50-foot buffer for migratory birds and a 250-foot buffer for raptors. If nesting birds are identified during the survey, active raptor nests shall be avoided by 250 feet and all other migratory bird nests shall be avoided by 25-50 feet based on the species, sensitivity of the individuals, and type of construction occurring or planned to occur nearby. The size of the avoidance buffer may be reduced if a qualified onsite monitor determines that encroachment into the buffer area is not affecting nest building, the rearing of young, or other breeding behaviors of the resident birds. Conversely, the avoidance buffer size may be increased if it is found that the nest is being impacted under the current buffer distance. Because nesting birds can establish new nests or produce a second or even third clutch at any time during the nesting season, the construction monitor will monitor for new nest starts throughout the nesting season.

No construction or earth-moving activity shall occur within a non-disturbance buffer until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have fledged (i.e., left the nest) and have attained sufficient flight skills to avoid Project construction areas. Once the migratory birds or raptors have completed nesting and young have fledged, disturbance buffers will no longer be needed and can be removed, and monitoring can cease.

MM BIO-5 (Swainson's Hawks): The following measures shall be implemented to reduce potential impacts to Swainson's hawk: Nesting surveys for the Swainson's hawks shall be conducted in accordance with the protocol outlined in the *Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley* (Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, 2000). The protocol recommends that the following visits be made to each nest or nesting site: one visit during January 1–March 20 to identify potential nest sites, three visits during March 20–April 5, three visits during April 5–April 20, and three visits during June 10–July 30. To meet the minimum level of protection for the species, the protocol requires surveys shall be completed for at least the two survey periods

immediately prior to Project-related ground-disturbance activities. If Swainson's hawks are not found to nest within the survey area, then no further action is warranted.

If Swainson's hawks are found to nest within the 0.5-mile radius survey area, a qualified biologist must conduct construction monitoring on a daily basis, inspect the nest on a daily basis, and ensure that construction activities do not disrupt breeding behaviors during the nesting period until the chicks have fledged and are no longer reliant on the adults to survive. The construction monitor shall be a qualified biologist with expertise in Swainson's hawk nesting behavior. A construction-free buffer will be established around the nest. The size of the buffer shall be determined by a qualified biologist and may range between 250 feet and a half-mile based on observations of nesting behavior, which may change in response to a change in construction activity; this buffer may be adjusted based on the qualified monitoring biologist's observations of the nesting activity. Any reduction of buffer size must occur after the qualified biologist has observed the nesting activity enough to establish a baseline of regular activity. If a construction area falls within this construction-free buffer, construction must be delayed until the young have fledged.

If a Swainson's hawk nest that is deemed to be an active nest needs to be removed, an Incidental Take Permit (ITP), pursuant to Section 2081(b) of the California Fish and Game Code, would be required. Compensation for the removal of the nest tree and loss of an active nest would require compensation. Minimum compensation would be to provide breeding habitat at a ratio of not less than 1:1 and foraging habitat at a ratio of not less than 2:1.

MM BIO-6 (Burrowing Owl): A qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey on the Project site area being disturbed as well as any off-site impact areas and within 250 feet of its perimeter, where feasible, to identify the presence of the western burrowing owl. Preconstruction surveys shall be consistent with the take avoidance measures within the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG, 2012) which consists of two separate surveys, the first being within 14 days prior to the start of construction and the second being within 24 hours prior to the start of construction. If any burrowing owl burrows are observed during the preconstruction survey, avoidance measures shall be consistent with those included in the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG, 2012).

If burrowing owls are found to occupy the Project site, any off-site impact areas, or within 250 feet of proposed construction activities and avoidance is not possible, burrow exclusion and passive relocation may be conducted by qualified biologists only during the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), before breeding behavior is exhibited, and after the burrow is confirmed empty through non-invasive methods (i.e., surveillance). Passive relocation efforts shall be carried out in accordance with the guidelines established by the California Burrowing Owl Consortium (1993) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (2012). Replacement or occupied burrows shall consist of artificial burrows at a ratio of 1 burrow collapsed to 1 artificial burrow constructed (1:1). Ongoing surveillance of the Project site during construction activities shall occur at a rate sufficient to detect Burrowing owl, if they return.

During the breeding season (February 1 through August 31), a construction-free buffer zone consistent with the table below, which is taken from the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG 2012) shall be established and maintained; the distance of the buffer zone shall be determined based on the season and level of disturbance. This construction-free buffer should be maintained unless a qualified biologist verifies through non-invasive methods that either the birds have not begun egg laying and incubation or that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.

Location	Time of Year	Level of Disturbance		
		Low	Med	High
Nesting sites	April 1-Aug 15	200 m*	500 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Aug 16-Oct 15	200 m	200 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Oct 16-Mar 31	50 m	100 m	500 m

MM BIO-7 (Roosting Bats): A bat habitat assessment shall be conducted prior to removal of trees and structures; this can be conducted at any point prior to removal of trees and structures and may be conducted concurrently with the general wildlife survey (MM BIO-1) by a qualified biologist. The assessment shall identify which trees or structures support potential roosting habitat and outline recommendations moving forward.

Potential habitat trees or structures shall be surveyed by a qualified biologist prior to their removal. For trees that cannot be seen into (i.e. trees with cavities, crevices, etc.), two-step removal may occur only during the volant seasons and outside of the maternity season (March 1-April 15 and September 1-October 15) with fair weather nights forecasted. Two-step removal shall occur over two consecutive days. On Day 1, a qualified biologist will direct trimming of potential habitat trees or modifications/selective deconstruction of structures in order to reduce their habitat suitability. On Day 2, the tree or structure will be removed. Nighttime emergence surveys shall not be conducted during the overwintering season (October 15-February 29). If a maternity colony (April 15-August 15) is observed during the survey, a construction-free buffer of 300 feet shall be established until the young have fledged.

MM BIO-8 (American Badgers): If an active badger den is identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), a construction-free buffer of up to 300 feet shall be established around the den. Once the biologist has determined that the badger has vacated the burrow, the burrow can be collapsed or excavated, and ground disturbance can proceed. Should the burrow be determined to be a natal or reproductive den, and because badgers are known to use multiple burrows in a breeding burrow complex, a biological monitor shall be present onsite during construction activities in the vicinity of the burrows to ensure the buffer is adequate to avoid direct impact to individuals or natal/reproductive den abandonment. The

monitor will be required to be present until it is determined that young are of an independent age and construction activities would not harm individual badgers.

Unoccupied badger dens may be excavated provided that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the den has been monitored for at least five consecutive days and is deemed unoccupied by a qualified biologist; (2) the excavation is conducted by or under the direct supervision of a qualified biologist. Because badger dens can double as potential kit fox dens, badger den monitoring and excavation should be conducted in accordance with the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011).

MM BIO-9 (San Joaquin Kit Fox): If potential kit fox dens are identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), a construction-free buffer of 300 feet will be established until the qualified biologist is able to determine if the den is active per the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). If the den is active, the USFWS and CDFW shall be notified immediately to determine a course of action.

Unoccupied potential kit fox dens may be excavated provided that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the den has been monitored for at least five consecutive days and is deemed unoccupied by a qualified biologist; (2) the excavation is conducted by or under the direct supervision of a qualified biologist. Den monitoring and excavation should be conducted in accordance with the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011).

Additionally, the following BMPs relating to the San Joaquin kit fox shall be adhered to:

f. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of kit fox or other animals during construction, the contractor shall cover all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than two-feet deep at the close of each workday with plywood or similar materials. If holes or trenches cannot be covered, one or more escape ramps constructed of earthen fill or wooden planks shall be installed in the trench. Before such holes or trenches are filled, the contractor shall thoroughly inspect them for entrapped animals. All construction-related pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of four inches or greater that are stored on the Project site shall be thoroughly inspected for wildlife before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If at any time an entrapped or injured kit fox is discovered, work in the immediate area shall be temporarily halted and USFWS and CDFW shall be consulted.
g. Kit foxes are attracted to den-like structures, such as pipes, and may enter stored pipes and become trapped or injured. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of four inches or greater that are stored at a construction site for one or more overnight periods shall be thoroughly inspected for kit foxes before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If a kit fox is discovered inside a pipe, that section of pipe shall not be moved until the USFWS and CDFW has been consulted. If necessary, and under the direct

supervision of the biologist, the pipe may be moved only once to remove it from the path of construction activity, until the fox has escaped.

h. A representative shall be appointed by the Project Proponent who will be the contact source for any employee or contractor who might inadvertently kill or injure a kit fox or who finds a dead, injured or entrapped kit fox. The representative shall be identified during the employee education program and their name and telephone number shall be provided to the USFWS.
i. The Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office of USFWS and CDFW shall be notified in writing within three working days of the accidental death or injury to a San Joaquin kit fox during Project-related activities. Notification must include the date, time, and location of the incident or of the finding of a dead or injured animal and any other pertinent information. The USFWS contact is the Chief of the Division of Endangered Species, at the addresses and telephone numbers below. The CDFW contact can be reached at (559) 243-4014 and R4CESA@wildlifeca.gov.
j. All sightings of the San Joaquin kit fox shall be reported to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). A copy of the reporting form and a topographic map clearly marked with the location of where the kit fox was observed shall also be provided to the Service at the address below.

MM BIO-10 (General BMPs): During all construction-related activities, the following mitigation shall apply:

f. All food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps shall be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed at least once a week from the construction or Project site.
g. Construction-related vehicle traffic shall be restricted to established roads and predetermined ingress and egress corridors, staging, and parking areas. Vehicle speeds should not exceed 20 miles per hour (mph) within the Project site.
h. No pets, such as dogs or cats, shall be permitted on the Project sites to prevent harassment, mortality of kit foxes, or destruction of dens.
i. Use of anti-coagulant rodenticides and herbicides in Project areas shall be restricted. This is necessary to prevent primary or secondary poisoning of kit foxes and the depletion of prey populations on which they depend. All uses of such compounds shall observe label and other restrictions mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and other State and federal legislation, as well as additional Project-related restrictions deemed necessary by the USFWS and CDFW. If rodent control must be conducted, zinc phosphide shall be used because of the proven lower risk to kit foxes.
j. Any Project-related information required by the USFWS or questions concerning the above conditions, or their implementation may be directed in writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at: Endangered Species Division, 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W 2605, Sacramento, California 95825-1846, phone (916) 414-6620 or (916) 414-6600.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project (amendment to the Specific Plan) would result in no impacts. Development of the site would result in *less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated.*

Impact #3.4.4b – Would the Project 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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

According to CNDDB there is one sensitive natural community (Northern Hardpan Vernal Pool) that occurs within 10 miles of the Project site (California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2020). The Project site is highly disturbed and does not provide habitat to maintain this community. No sensitive natural communities were identified within the Project site or buffer area during the biological reconnaissance survey. There are no anticipated impacts to sensitive natural communities as a result of the proposed Project. The Project site covers an area of 561 acres and consists of recently disked or fallow and abandoned grape field clusters. The Project site is surrounded by disturbed cultivated land, non-native habitat, and residential and commercial development.

Riparian habitat is defined as lands that are influenced by a river, specifically the land area that encompasses the river channel and its current or potential floodplain. The Project is not located within a river or an area that encompasses a river or potential floodplain. Although the proposed Project borders the riparian area of Ash Slough, it would not have any adverse effect to riparian habitat since no activities are planned to occur in that area.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.4c – Would the Project 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?

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has regulatory authority over the Clean Water Act (CWA), as provided for by the EPA. The USACE has established specific criteria for the determination of wetlands based upon the presence of wetland hydrology, hydric soils, and hydrophilic vegetation. There are no federally protected wetlands or vernal pools that occur within the Project site.

Wetlands, streams, reservoirs, sloughs, and ponds typically meet the criteria for federal jurisdiction under Section 404 of the CWA and State regulatory authority under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. Streams and ponds typically meet the criteria for State

regulatory authority under Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code. There are no features on the Project site that would meet the criteria for either federal jurisdiction or State regulatory authority. The basins are not wetlands and are not considered State waters. There would be no impact to federally protected wetlands or waterways or State wetlands or waters.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be ***no impact.***

Impact #3.4.4d – Would the Project 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?

Wildlife migratory corridors are described as a linear stretch of land that connects two open pieces of habitat that would otherwise be unconnected. These routes provide shelter and sufficient food resources to support wildlife species during migratory movements. Movement corridors generally consist of riparian, woodlands, or forested habitats that span contiguous acres of undisturbed habitat and are important elements of resident species' home ranges.

The proposed Project and surrounding area occur near but outside of the essential connectivity area identified by the Essential Habitat Connectivity Project (Spencer, W.D., et al, 2010). The site is also near the San Joaquin Valley wildlife corridor but is also outside of that area. Additionally, due to the existing disturbed condition of the Project site and the urbanized character of the surrounding area, primarily consisting of residential development and agriculture production, there is no impact to the corridors. The proposed Project does not occur within terrestrial migration route, significant wildlife corridor, or wildlife linkage area as identified in the *Recovery Plan for Upland Species in the San Joaquin Valley* (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 1998). The survey conducted for the Project did not provide evidence of a wildlife nursery or important migratory habitat being present on the Project site. Migratory birds and raptors could use habitat on or near the Project for foraging and/or as stopover sites during migrations or movement between local areas.

The Project would not substantially affect migrating birds or other wildlife. The Project will not restrict, eliminate, or significantly alter a wildlife movement corridor, wildlife core area, or Essential Habitat Connectivity area, either during construction or after the Project has been constructed. Project construction will not substantially interfere with wildlife movements or reduce breeding opportunities. The proposed Project 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. Therefore, there would be no impacts to wildlife movements, would not affect movement corridors, or impede a nursery site.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project (amending the Specific Plan) would have *no impact* to movements of fish or wildlife or affect any migratory corridor. Development of the site would have a *less than significant impact.*

Impact #3.4.4e – Would the Project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

There are no adopted local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources that would apply to this Project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would have no conflict related to adopted local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.4f – Would the Project conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan?

The Project site is not located within any natural community conservation plan area or any other local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

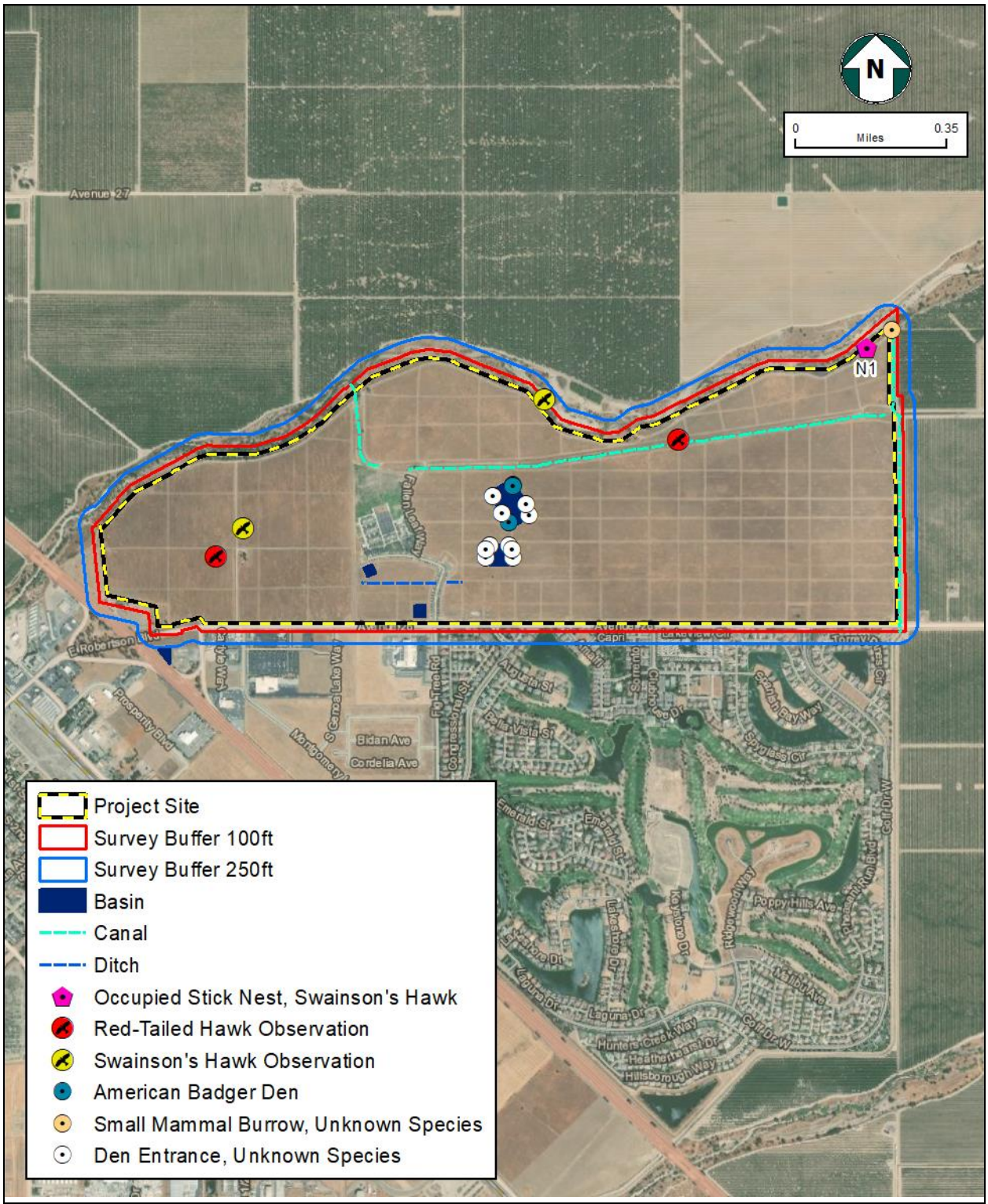

Figure 3.4.4-2
Biological Resources Map

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.5 - *CULTURAL RESOURCES*				
Would the Project:				
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

The analysis presented in this section is based on a review of the City's 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Review (EIR).

Impact #3.4.5a – Would the Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?

The proposed Project is situated on 561 acres located north of Avenue 26 within the City of Chowchilla. The Rancho Calera Specific Plan was initially approved in 2011. It was in support of a 576-acre master-planned community that would include residential, commercial, and land set aside for trails and other green areas. The proposed Project has been reduced by 15 acres due to donating land for Ronald Reagan Elementary School. The changes to the proposed Project also include adding two large retention basins, increasing the acreage dedicated to residential use; however, it will not be increasing residential units. The changes also include increasing the area of park space and decreasing square footage dedicated to commercial use.

The Chowchilla General Plan states that the City's Heritage Preservation Commission completed a Historical Resources Reconnaissance Survey in April 2007, which identified 71 historical resources that have been evaluated as potentially eligible for listing in the City's Local Register of Historical Resources. The City does not have historic sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A search for archaeological and historical records was conducted using the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC) of the California State University, Bakersfield. The records search indicated that there are no previously recorded cultural resources

located within the proposed Project boundaries. However, there are three historic linear built environment resources, which are located within a half-mile or less of the Project area.

There is low potential for ground-disturbing activities to expose and affect previously unknown significant cultural resources, including historical or prehistorical resources at the proposed Project site. However, there is still a possibility that historical materials may be exposed during construction. Grading and trenching, as well as other ground-disturbing actions, can potentially damage or destroy these previously unidentified and potentially significant cultural resources within the proposed Project area, including historical resources. Disturbance of any deposits that can provide significant cultural data would be considered a significant impact under CEQA. Implementation of MM CUL-1 would reduce potential impacts on cultural resources, including historical resources associated with the proposed Project, to less than significant levels.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM CUL-1: If historic-era cultural resources or archeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, all work within 100 feet of the find shall halt until a qualified and independent archeologist can evaluate the find and make recommendations for treatment of these resources, if found to be significant, in consultation with the City, the Applicant, and the appropriate Native American groups. If the qualified archaeologist determines that the resource is not significant, grading and construction activities may continue. If the archeologist determines that the discovery represents a potentially significant find, the archeologist shall work with the City and the Applicant in developing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from Project implementation. Additional mitigation may include avoidance, testing, and evaluation or data recovery excavation. Construction in the area of the find shall not commence until appropriate mitigation is implemented.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.4.5b – Would the Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?

See also discussion for Impact #3.4.5a, above.

Although considered unlikely since there is no indication of any archaeological resources on or in the vicinity of the Project site, subsurface construction activities associated with the proposed Project could potentially damage or destroy previously undiscovered archaeological resources. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Mitigation is proposed requiring implementation of standard inadvertent discovery procedures to reduce potential impacts to previously undiscovered subsurface historic and archaeological resources.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implementation of MM CUL-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.4.5c – Would the Project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Human remains, including known cemeteries, are not known to exist within the Project area. However, construction would involve earth-disturbing activities, and it is still possible that human remains may be discovered, possibly in association with archaeological sites. Mitigation Measure MM CUL-2 has been included in the unlikely event that human remains are found during ground-disturbing activities. Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of mitigation.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM CUL-2: If human remains are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, further evacuation or disturbance in the area of the discovery shall be prohibited until those activities required by Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code are completed. The specific protocol, guidelines, and channels of communication outlined by the Native American Heritage Commission, in accordance with Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code (Chapter 1492, Statues of 1982, Senate Bill 297), and Senate Bill 447 (Chapter 44, Statutes of 1987) shall be followed. Section 7050.5(c) shall guide the potential Native American involvement, in the event of discovery of human remains, at the direction of the County Coroner.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.6 - *ENERGY*				
Would the Project:				
a. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during Project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b. Conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.6a – Would the Project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during Project construction or operation?

This analysis is based on an energy assessment report completed by VRPA on March 11, 2021 (Appendix B).

Short-Term (Construction)

Short-term impacts are mainly related to the construction phase of a project and are recognized to be short in duration. Energy impacts from construction are generally attributable to the manufacture and transportation of building materials, preparation of the site for grading activities, utility installation, paving, and building construction and architectural coating. It should be noted that the Project is subject to California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24 Building Standards. The Title 24 California Building Standards Code is a wide-ranging set of requirements for energy conservation and green design that apply to the structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems in a building.

The operation of off-road equipment, trucks, and worker traffic would be the primary source of energy consumption during the construction of the Project. Energy consumption generated during the construction phase was estimated using the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) defaults for construction equipment since the specific mix of construction equipment is not presently known for this Project. It should be noted that energy usage from construction of the Project would be temporary in nature and would cease upon completion of the Project.

The estimated consumption of diesel fuel, considering the construction schedule and hours of use determined by CalEEMod, is 2,181 gallons for the development/construction of the Project.

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) estimates during the construction of the Project were also determined by data points in the CalEEMod program. Worker, vendor, and haul trips would result in 10,986 VMT for the duration of construction activities. As noted in Table 2 of the energy memo, construction trips would account for approximately 508 gallons of motor vehicle fuel.

Long-Term

As noted previously, the Project includes the initial development of 140 single-family dwelling units and 1 commercial mixed-use lot. Electricity and natural gas would be used for residential heating and cooling, lighting, appliances, and water heating. Table 3 from the energy memo provides an estimate of energy use for the proposed Project. Estimated electricity, natural gas, and motor vehicle gasoline consumption were derived from estimates included in the CalEEMod program. As shown below, the Project would consume approximately 1,318,400 kWh of electricity, 4,494,780 Btu of natural gas, and 145,260 gallons of gasoline per year.

Operation of the Project would include the use of electricity and natural gas for residential heating and cooling, lighting, appliances, and water heating. As discussed above, the Title 24 California Building Standards Code is a wide-ranging set of requirements for energy conservation and green design that apply to the structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems in a building. As a result, the electricity and natural gas use will not result in potentially significant environmental impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during Project construction or operation.

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 sought to ensure that all vehicles sold in the U.S. would meet certain fuel economy goals. Through this Act, Congress established the first fuel economy standards for on-road motor vehicles in the U.S. Pursuant to the Act, the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, which is part of the USDOT, is responsible for establishing additional vehicle standards and for revising existing standards. Since 1990, the fuel economy standard for new passenger cars has been 27.5 mpg. Since 1996, the fuel economy standard for new light trucks (gross vehicle weight of 8,500 pounds or less) has been 20.7 mpg. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 seeks to achieve energy security in the United States by increasing renewable fuel production, improving energy efficiency and performance, protecting consumers, improving vehicle fuel economy, and promoting research on greenhouse gas capture and storage. The average fuel economy for light-duty vehicles (autos, pickups, vans, and SUVs) in the United States has gradually increased from about 14.9 mpg in 1980 to 22.3 mpg in 2017 based on data provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Fleet Fuel Economy Performance Report, available at https://one.nhtsa.gov/cafe_pic/CAFE_PIC_fleet_LIVE.html.

The Project will result in an annual VMT increase of 3,737,525 considering CalEEMod calculations, which results in 145,260 gallons of gasoline per year as noted in Table 3 of the energy memo (assuming 25.73 mpg). However, new vehicles accessing the Project site would be in compliance with the federal fuel economy standards described above. As a result, fuel efficiency from vehicles accessing the site would increase over the life of the Project. Therefore, energy impacts related to fuel consumption during Project operations would be less than significant.

Based on the assessment above, the Project will not result in potentially significant environmental impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during Project construction or operation. Therefore, any impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact.***

Impact #3.4.6b – Would the Project conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

As discussed above in Impact #3.4.6a, the Project is subject to CCR, Title 24 Building Standards. Compliance with Title 24 of the CCR would improve energy efficiency and consumption. Therefore, the Project would be consistent with applicable plans related to renewable energy and energy efficiency. As a result, the Project will not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact.***

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.7 - *GEOLOGY AND SOILS*				
Would the Project:				
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
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.	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv. Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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 offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in areas where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.7a(i) – Would the Project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving 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?

The Project site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone. According to the Department of Conservation, California Geologic Survey Regulatory Maps (Department of Conservation, 2015), the nearest fault lies in the San Luis Dam 7.5-minute quadrangle, approximately 50 miles west of Madera County. According to the Madera County General Plan Background Report, the two significant faults within the larger region outside of the County have been and will continue to be, the principal sources of potential seismic activity within Madera County include the San Andreas Fault and the Owens Valley Fault Group (Madera County, 1995). The San Andreas Fault lies approximately 45 miles west of the county line, and the Owens Valley Fault Group lies approximately 80 miles east of the County line. Additionally, the City of Chowchilla's General Plan Public Safety Element identifies two additional faults that are active in the area, the Ortigalita Fault and the White Wolf Fault. The Ortigalita Fault is approximately 42 miles northwest, and the White Wolf fault is approximately 141 miles southeast of the City. The distance from the nearest active faults reduces the possibility of fault rupture on the Project site. Therefore, impacts would be considered less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact.***

Impact #3.4.7a(ii) – Would the Project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving strong seismic ground shaking?

The City of Chowchilla, in its entirety, could experience minor ground shaking during an earthquake due to its proximity to nearby active or potentially active faults. The National Geophysical Data Center lists the results of ground-shaking events, and the City of Chowchilla's maximum ground-shaking intensities, with Modified Mercalli (MM), range from minor (MM III) to moderate (MM VI) since 1926. MM VI is associated with damage from the movement of heavy objects and fallen plaster with only slight damage. Currently, in the City of Chowchilla, several different structures have been built before the current standards for mitigating seismic ground shaking and would not be able to withstand strong seismic ground shaking from a major earthquake causing a risk of loss, injury, or death (City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan). Although the Project area could potentially experience ground shaking,

the magnitude of the hazard would not be anticipated to be severe or cause. All Project infrastructure would be subject to applicable requirements of the City of Chowchilla Building Standards and Specifications, as well as the current California Building Standards Code (CCR Title 24), and to be built to withstand seismic ground shaking causing minimum to no risk of loss, injury, or death. Therefore, impacts are considered to be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.7a(iii) – Would the Project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

The City of Chowchilla's General Plan states that the potential for liquefaction in the area is limited to the Ash and Berenda Sloughs located outside the City. Liquefaction could result in local areas during a strong earthquake or seismic ground shaking where unconsolidated sediments and a high-water table coincide. However, all new construction will conform to current earthquake construction standards. Furthermore, the closest active faults are more than 50 miles away (Department of Conservation, 2015), and the Project area is relatively flat, minimizing the potential for risk of loss, injury, or death involving seismic-related ground failure. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.7a(iv) – Would the Project expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides?

The Project site is relatively flat topography and is predominantly vacant, with the exception of Ronald Reagan Elementary School located along South Lake Tahoe off Robertson Boulevard. The vacant areas of the Project site are disked once a year during the weed abatement season. The site's topography would not change substantially as a result of Project development. The Project site is classified by the California Geologic Survey Landslide database as an area that does not experience landslides (Department of Conservation, 2015). Since the site is substantially flat in nature with no surrounding slopes and it is not considered to be prone to landslides, the Project would not expose people or

structures to potential substantial adverse effects from landslides. Therefore, there would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have ***no impact***.

Impact #3.4.7b – Would the Project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

There are seven types of soils found within the Project site (Figure 3.4.7-1). The seven soils include Atwater loamy, Pachappa sandy loam, Pachappa fine sandy loam, Alamo clay, Borden fine sandy loam, Delhi sand, and San Joaquin sandy loam. The Atwater loamy sand is well-drained, sandy alluvium derived from granite with a zero to three percent slope and a runoff classification of negligible. The Pachappa style sand is well-drained and is from moderately coarse-textured alluvium. Pachappa style sand is located on sloping alluvial fans and flood plains under annual grass-herb vegetation with zero to one percent slopes. Alamo clay is poorly drained, formed in alluvium from mixed sources. Alamo clay is found in basins, drainage ways, floodplains, and fan remnants with zero to two percent slopes. Borden fine sandy loam is well-drained and will be found below 1,000 feet elevations on older alluvial fans and basin rim positions with zero to one percent slopes. Delhi sand is somewhat excessively drained, comprised of weathered granitic rock surfaces, found on floodplains, alluvial fans, and terraces with zero to three percent slopes. San Joaquin sandy loam is moderately well-drained and is from alluvium derived from granite and has a zero to three percent slope with a runoff classification of very high. Refer to Table 3.4.7-1 for the soil erosion factors and classifications provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil survey for the Madera area.

Table 3.4.7-1
Soil Erosion Factors

Map symbol and soil name	Depths (in.)	Erosion Hazard	Land Capability classification	
			Non-irrigated	Irrigated
AtA–Atwater loamy sand	0–24	Slight	4s	2s
AsA–Alamo clay	0–11	Slight	4w	3w
BfA–Borden fine sandy loam	0–16	Slight	4s	2s
DeA–Delhi sand	0–7	Slight	4e	3s
PaA–Pachappa sandy loam	0–14	Slight	4c	1
PaA–Pachappa fine sandy loam	0–14	Slight	4c	1
SaA–San Joaquin sandy loam	0–9	Slight	4s	4s

Source: (United States Department of Agriculture, 1962)
Note: A detailed description of land capability classifications can be found at http://soils.usda.gov/technical/handbook

The Project Proponents would be required to request coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit, Order No. 2009-0009-DWQ, because the Project would result in one or more acres of land disturbance. To conform to the requirements of the NPDES General Permit, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would need to be prepared (see also MM GEO-1). This would specify best management practices (BMP) to prevent construction pollutants, including eroded soils (such as topsoil), from moving offsite. Implementation of the SWPPP and BMP requirements would mitigate erosion of soils during construction activities (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM GEO-1: Prior to ground-disturbing activities, the City shall prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that specifies best management practices (BMP), with the intent of keeping all products of erosion from moving offsite. The SWPPP shall include a site map that shows the construction site perimeter, existing and proposed manmade facilities, stormwater collection and discharge points, general topography both before and after construction, and drainage patterns across the Project site. Additionally, the SWPPP shall contain a visual monitoring program and a chemical monitoring program for non-visible pollutants to be implemented (if there is a failure of best management practices). The requirements of the SWPPP and BMPs shall be incorporated into design specifications and construction contracts. Recommended best management practices for the construction phase may include the following:

- Stockpiling and disposing of demolition debris, concrete, and soil properly,
- Protecting any existing storm drain inlets and stabilizing disturbed areas,
- Implementing erosion controls,
- Properly managing construction materials, and
- Managing waste, aggressively controlling litter, and implementing sediment controls.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.***

Impact #3.4.7c – Would the Project 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 offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

As previously discussed in Impact #3.4.7a(i)–(iv), the site soils are considered stable in that there is not a potential of on or offsite landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. The Project is not located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the Project; therefore, the impacts are considered less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.7d – Would the Project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

As shown in Figure 3.4.7-1, the Project site is comprised of seven different soil types: Atwater loamy sand, Alamo clay, Borden fine sandy loam, Delhi sand, Pachappa sandy loan, Pachappa fine sandy loam, and San Joaquin sandy loam. The City of Chowchilla adopted the Uniform Building Code and the California Code of Regulation (CCR) Title 24, also known as the California Building Standards Code or California Building Code (CBC). The CBC includes standard engineering practices requiring special design and construction methods that reduce or eliminate potential expansive soil-related impacts. Compliance with CBC regulations ensures the adequate design and construction of building foundations to resist soil movement. In addition, the CBC also contains drainage-related requirements to control surface drainage and reduce seasonal fluctuations in soil moisture content.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.7e – Would the Project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in areas where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

A communitywide wastewater system will be used for collecting wastewater and carried using pipes to the City's wastewater treatment plant. The City will own and operate the wastewater collection and treatment system. The installation of a septic tank or alternative wastewater disposal system is not proposed; therefore, there would be no impact (Rancho Calera, 2019).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.7f – Would the Project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

This analysis is based on the Cultural and Paleontological Resources Assessment Report completed for the proposed Project. The report was completed in July 2020 by Cogstone.

There are no unique geological features in the vicinity of the proposed Project site. However, the proposed Project area is mapped as Holocene alluvium less than 11,700 years old, plate Pleistocene Modesto Formation deposited between 9,000 and 45,000 years ago, and middle Pleistocene Riverbank Formation deposited between 130,000 and 450,000 years ago.

The paleontological records search revealed no fossils from the Holocene alluvium, however these deposits overlie sensitive sediments at variable depths. Numerous fossils are known from the Modesto Formation within 10 miles of the Project with one locality recovered from one-quarter mile north of the proposed Project. Fossils of extinct late Pleistocene animals from the Modesto Formation nearby include giant ground sloth, dire wolf, Columbian mammoth, two types of horse, yesterday's camel, llama, and ancient bison. Additional fossils of coyote, cougar, mule deer, and three types of rabbit, as well as multiple species of rodent, bird, reptile, and amphibian, were also recovered. With one exception, all local fossils from the Modesto Formation were recovered from depths of more than five feet below the historic ground surface.

The nearest fossil confirmed from the Riverbank Formation was a horse from Fresno County. Fossils of extinct Pleistocene animals from the Riverbank Formation in Sacramento include Harlan's ground sloth, dire wolf, Columbian mammoth, horse, yesterday's camel, and ancient bison. Additional fossils of coyote, antelope, deer, rabbit, garter snake, Sacramento blackfish, and multiple species of rodent, were also recovered.

Holocene sediments are too young to contain fossils and are assigned a low potential for fossils. The Riverbank Formation is assigned a low potential for fossils due to the lack of fossils recovered from it locally. Given the depths at which fossils have been previously found in the Modesto Formation, sediments less than five feet below the historic ground surface are assigned low potential, while everything deeper is assigned a moderate but patchy potential.

Therefore, this would be a potentially significant impact. Mitigation measure procedures are to be implemented to reduce this impact to a level of less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM GEO-2: During any ground disturbing activities, if paleontological resources are encountered, all work within 25 feet of the find shall halt until a qualified and independent paleontologist can evaluate the find and make recommendations regarding treatment of these resources if found to be significant, in consultation with the County and the Applicant. Paleontological resources materials may include resources such as fossils, plant impressions, or animal tracks preserved in rock. If the paleontologist determines that the discovery represents a potentially significant resource, the paleontologist shall work with the City and the Applicant in developing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from project implementation. Construction in the area of the resource may not resume until

appropriate mitigation is implemented. If the resources are not significant, avoidance is not necessary, and grading and construction activities may continue.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated***.

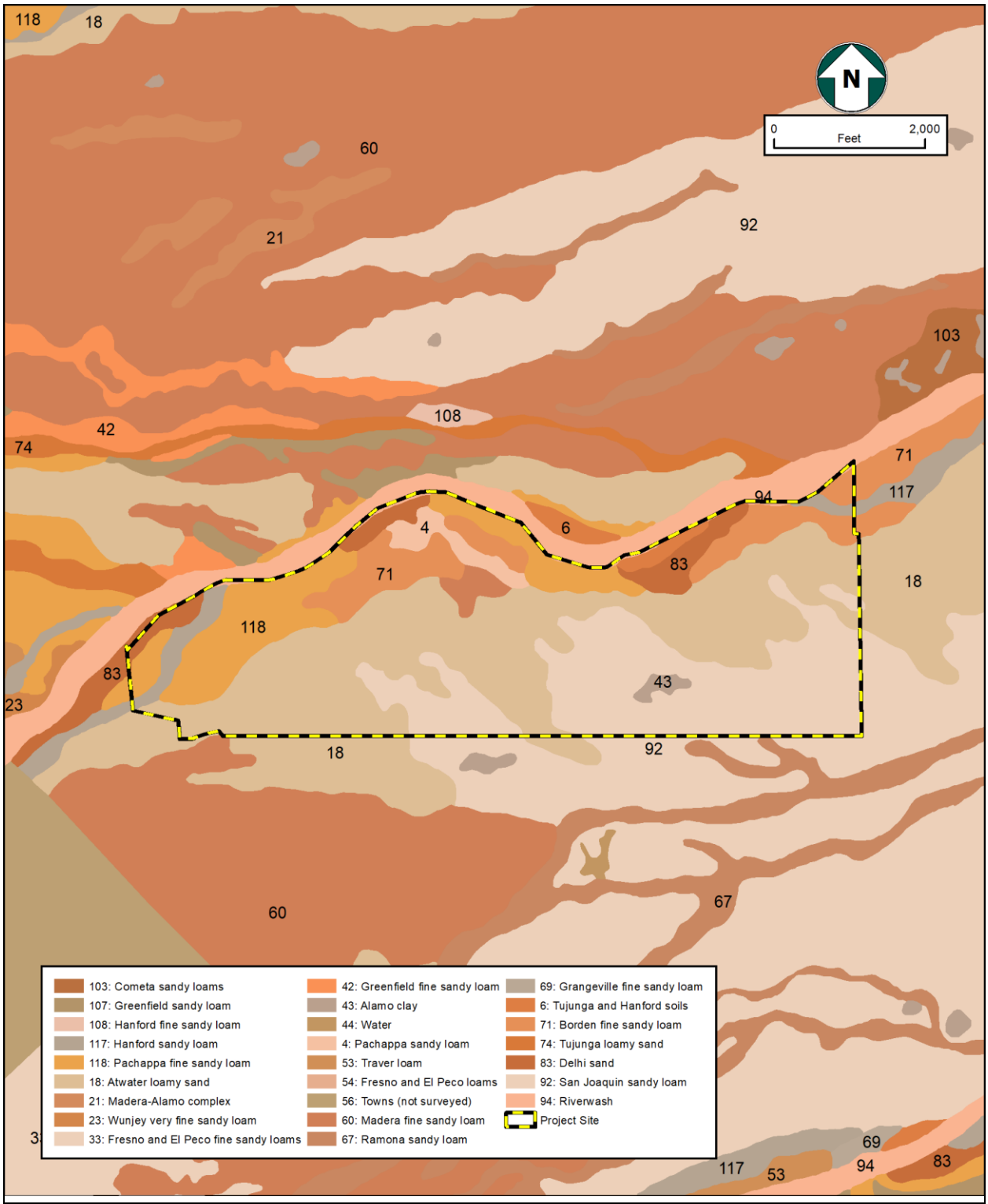

Figure 3.4.7-3
Soil Types

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.8 - *GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS*				
Would the Project:				
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b. Conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.8a – Would the Project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

The SJVAPCD acknowledges the current absence of numerical thresholds and recommends a tiered approach to establish the significance of the GHG impacts on the environment:

i. If a project complies with an approved GHG emission reduction plan or GHG mitigation program, which avoids or substantially reduces GHG emissions within the geographic area in which the project is located, then the project would be determined to have a less than significant individual and cumulative impact for GHG emissions;
ii. If a project does not comply with an approved GHG emission reduction plan or mitigation program, then it would be required to implement best performance standards (BPS); and
iii. If a project is not implementing BPS, then it should demonstrate that its GHG emissions would be reduced or mitigated by at least 29 percent compared to business as usual (BAU).

The City of Chowchilla's General Plan indicated that the City would develop a greenhouse gas inventory and subsequent Climate Action Plan (CAP) that identifies desired goals for reducing manmade greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, establishes resiliency and adaptation programs to prepare for potential impacts of climate change, and provides a phased implementation plan to achieve these goals. At the time of this report, the City of Chowchilla is still in the process of developing the GHG Inventory and CAP.

As noted previously, the maximum amount of commercial space for the Rancho Calera Specific Plan was reduced from 495,000 square feet to 308,405 square feet while the total acreage dedicated to parks has been increased from 57.4 acres of park space to 66 acres of park space. The traffic analysis prepared for the Project demonstrates that the reduction of

commercial space and increase in park space will result in 2,630 fewer daily trips. The total GHG emissions would be less than the approved Rancho Calera Specific Plan since the proposed land use changes would result in fewer trips.

The SCAQMD guidance identifies a threshold of 10,000 $MTCO_2eq./year$ for GHG for construction emissions amortized over a 30-year project lifetime, plus annual operation emissions. Though the Project is under SJVAPCD jurisdiction, the SCAQMD GHG threshold provides some perspective on the GHG emissions generated by the Project. Table 9 shows the yearly GHG emissions generated by the Project as determined by the CalEEMod model, which is approximately 82 percent less than the threshold identified by the SCAQMD.

The resulting permanent greenhouse gas increases related to Project operations would be within the greenhouse gas increases analyzed in the General Plan EIR, so there would be no increase in severity to the previously-identified greenhouse gas impacts, and implementation of the Project will not result in Project-specific or site-specific significant adverse impacts from greenhouse gas emissions within the Project study area. Therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a ***less than significant impact***.

Impact #3.4.8b – Would the Project conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

California passed the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. AB 32 requires that statewide GHG emissions be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020. Under AB 32, CARB must adopt regulations by January 1, 2011 to achieve reductions in GHGs to meet the 1990 emission cap by 2020. On December 11, 2008, CARB adopted its initial Scoping Plan, which functions as a roadmap of CARB's plans to achieve GHG reductions in California required by AB 32 through subsequently enacted regulations. CARB's 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan builds on the efforts and plans encompassed in the initial Scoping Plan.

SB 375 requires Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPOs) to adopt a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or Alternative Planning Strategy (APS) that will prescribe land use allocation in MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). CARB, in consultation with MPOs, has provided each affected region with reduction targets for GHGs emitted by passenger cars and light trucks in the region for the years 2020 and 2035. For the MCTC region, CARB set targets at five percent per capita decrease in 2020 and a 10 percent per capita decrease in 2035 from a base year of 2005. MCTC's 2018 RTP/SCS, which was adopted in July 2018, projects that the Madera County region would achieve the prescribed emissions targets. Executive Order B-30-15 establishes a California greenhouse gas reduction target of

40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 to ensure California meets its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Executive Order B-30-15 requires MPOs to implement measures that will achieve reductions of greenhouse gas emissions to meet the 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets.

As required by California law, city and county general plans contain a land use element that details the types and quantities of land uses that the city or county estimates will be needed for future growth and that designate locations for land uses to regulate growth. MCTC uses the growth projections and land use information in adopted general plans to estimate future average daily trips and then VMT, which are then provided to SJVAPCD to estimate future emissions in the AQPs. The applicable General Plan for the Project is the City of Chowchilla's 2040 General Plan, which was adopted in 2011.

The Project is consistent with the currently adopted General Plan for the City of Chowchilla and the adopted 2018 RTP/SCS and is therefore consistent with the population growth and VMT applied in those plan documents. Therefore, the Project is consistent with the growth assumptions used in the applicable AQP. It should also be noted that yearly GHG emissions generated by the Project (Table 9 of the AQIA) are approximately 82 percent less than the threshold identified by the SCAQMD.

CARB's 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan builds on the efforts and plans encompassed in the initial Scoping Plan. The current plan has identified new policies and actions to accomplish the State's 2030 GHG limit. Below is a list of applicable strategies in the Scoping Plan and the Project's consistency with those strategies.

- California Light-Duty Vehicle GHG Standards – Implement adopted standards and planned second phase of the program. Align zero-emission vehicle, alternative and renewable fuel and vehicle technology programs for long-term climate change goals.
    - The Project is consistent with this reduction measure. This measure cannot be implemented by a particular project or lead agency since it is a statewide measure. When this measure is implemented, standards would be applicable to light-duty vehicles that would access the residential development. The Project would not conflict or obstruct this reduction measure.
- Energy Efficiency – Pursuit of comparable investment in energy efficiency from all retail providers of electricity in California. Maximize energy efficiency building and appliance standards.
    - The Project is consistent with this reduction measure. Though this measure applies to the State to increase its energy standards, the Project would comply with this measure through existing regulation. The Project would not conflict or obstruct this reduction measure.
- Low Carbon Fuel – Development and adoption of the low carbon fuel standard.
    - The Project is consistent with this reduction measure. This measure cannot be implemented by a particular project or lead agency since it is a statewide measure. When this measure is implemented, standards would be applicable to the fuel used by vehicles that would access the residential development. The Project would not conflict or obstruct this reduction measure.

Based on the assessment above, the Project will not conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. The Project furthers the achievement of the County's greenhouse gas reduction goals. Therefore, any impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a ***less than significant impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.9 - *HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS*				
Would the Project:				
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c. Emit hazardous emissions or involve handling hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d. Be located on a site that 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f. Impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.9a – Would the Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

A "hazardous material" is any item or agent, which has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors (Institute of Hazardous Materials Management, 2015). The Project was originally approved for a density of 7–16 du/ac and 495,000 square feet of commercial space. The proposed density change of 7–16 du/ac to 5–16 du/ac and commercial space from 495,000 square feet to 308,405 square feet may involve the use of hazardous materials. These materials might include fuels, oils, mechanical fluids, and other chemicals used during construction. The use of such materials would be considered minimal and would not require these materials to be stored in large quantities. As such, the Project would not create a significant hazard to the public through the routine use, transport, or disposal of hazardous materials. Since large quantities of hazardous materials would not be stored on the Project site, it is anticipated that impacts would be considered less than significant regarding potential upset and accidental conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Transportation, storage, use, and disposal of hazardous materials during construction activities would be required to comply with applicable federal, State, and local statutes and regulations. Compliance would ensure that humans and the environment are not exposed to hazardous materials

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.9b – Would the Project 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?

As previously mentioned, Project construction activities may involve the use of hazardous materials. However, the use of such materials would be considered minimal and would not require these materials to be stored in large quantities. As such, the Project would not 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.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.9c – Would the Project emit hazardous emissions or involve handling hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

Fifteen acres of land within the Project site was donated for the construction of Ronald Reagan Elementary School, which would result in construction activity occurring within a quarter mile of a school. Emissions emitted would be from the result of vehicles transporting materials in support of the Project or from construction equipment, which would only be temporary. Project construction may involve the use of fuels, oils, mechanical fluids, and other chemicals used during construction; however, the use of such materials would be considered minimal. If any handling of acutely hazardous materials or hazardous substances is required, the Project will ensure to be in strict adherence to local, State and federal guidelines, and therefore, would have a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM HAZ-1: Prior to issuance of any Building Permits, the Applicant shall submit a Hazardous Materials Business/Response Plan. The Hazardous Materials Business/Response Plan will be in accordance with Madera County and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control policy and guidelines. The Materials Business/Response Plan will contain any acutely hazardous materials (AHM) that handles a minimum of 55 gallons of liquid, 500 pounds of solid, or 200 cubic feet of compressed gas, or any AHM that must be included in a business plan that requires an emergency response to a possible release of hazardous materials. The Project shall comply with proper handling, labeling, accumulation, and disposal of waste.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated***.

Impact #3.4.9d – Would the Project be located on a site that 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?

Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the State Department of Health Services, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and the California Integrated Waste Management Board to compile and annually update lists of hazardous waste sites and land designated as hazardous waste property throughout the State. Per the Cortese List, there are no hazardous waste and substances sites in Chowchilla (Cal EPA, n.d.). Additionally, the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker compiles a list of leaking underground storage tank (LUST) sites. There are no LUST cleanup sites within the Project site boundaries (California Water Resources Board, n.d.). The proposed Project site is not located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and would therefore not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. There would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.9e – 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?

The County of Madera adopted a 2015 Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) that covers the Chowchilla Municipal Airport. The Chowchilla Municipal Airport is located southwest of the proposed Project site. The Chowchilla Municipal Airport's primary traffic pattern zone includes the southwest portion of the Project area. According to the Madera countywide Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, the noise impact is designated as low to moderate. Noise is often generated from aircraft at an altitude of 1,000 feet or below. The risk level is also identified as low to moderate. The primary traffic pattern zone encompasses a large area where 18 percent of off-runway crashes occur. Due to the size of the primary traffic pattern zone, it is unlikely of a crash occurring in any given location (City of Chowchilla, 2011). Therefore, the Project would not result in a safety hazard for people working in the Project area, and there would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have *no impact*.

Impact #3.4.9f – Would the Project impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The City of Chowchilla has adopted an emergency response plan, located in Section 2.28 of the Chowchilla Municipal Code. The emergency response plan is to provide protection to residences and assist with coordination in the event of a disaster within the City. The proposed Project does not include any characteristics (e.g., permanent road closures) that would physically impair or otherwise interfere with emergency response or evacuation in the Project vicinity. Construction and operation of the proposed Project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. There would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have ***no impact***.

Impact #3.4.9g – Would the Project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?

The proposed Project site is in an incorporated Local Responsibility Area (LRA) of the Madera County Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map. Additionally, there are no wildland areas within the City of Chowchilla or the vicinity of the Project site. The Project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. Therefore, there would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have ***no impact***.

3.4.10 - *HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY*

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the Project:					
a.	Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b.	Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the Project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?				
	i. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on or offsite;	☐	☒	☐	☐
	ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or offsite;	☐	☒	☐	☐
	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; or	☐	☒	☐	☐
	iv. Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d.	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to Project inundation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e.	Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.10a – Would the Project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Project construction would cause ground disturbance that could result in soil erosion or siltation and subsequent water quality degradation offsite, which is a potentially significant impact. Construction-related activities would also involve the use of materials such as vehicle fuels, lubricating fluids, solvents, and other materials that could result in polluted runoff, which is also a potentially significant impact. However, the potential consequences of any spill or release of these types of materials from construction are generally small due to the localized, short-term nature of such releases.

As required by the NPDES General Permit (No. 2012-0006-DWQ) for stormwater discharges associated with construction and land disturbance activities, the Project Proponent must develop and implement a SWPPP that specifies BMPs to prevent construction pollutants from contacting stormwater, with the intent of keeping all products of erosion from moving offsite. The Project Proponent is required to comply with the Construction General Permit because Project-related construction activities result in soil disturbances of at least one acre of total land area. Mitigation Measure MM GEO-1 requires the preparation and implementation of a SWPPP to comply with the Construction General Permit requirements.

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure MM GEO-1, the Project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements (WDRs) during the construction period, and impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measure MM GEO-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.4.10b – Would the Project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the Project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

To conserve water, the Project will implement several different methods. Some of the methods include constructing two drainage basins (Outlots B and E) to facilitate runoff to percolate and recharge the aquifer, promote drought-resistant landscaping, the use of high-efficiency irrigation systems, and install low-flow appliances (Rancho Calera, 2019). Additionally, a temporary offsite stormwater retention basin will be utilized. As the Project continues to buildout, the stormwater will be directed to the larger water basins. Water quality control measures such as the NPDES and municipal storm drain systems require safeguards to protect groundwater.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact.*

Impact #3.4.10c(i) – Would the Project 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 result in substantial erosion or siltation on or offsite?

The Project site does not contain any blue-line water features, including streams or rivers. The Project would be required to conform to the requirements of the NPDES General Permit, and a SWPPP would need to be prepared for construction activities. This would specify BMPs to prevent stormwater and eroded soils (such as topsoil), from moving offsite. Therefore, the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or offsite. Impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measure MM GEO-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.*

Impact #3.4.10c(ii) – Would the Project 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 substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or offsite?

The site does not contain any blue-line water features, including streams or rivers. The Project would be required to conform to the requirements of the NPDES General Permit, and a SWPPP would need to be prepared for construction activities. The Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on or offsite. With implementation of Mitigation Measure MM GEO-1, impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.*

Impact #3.4.10c(iii) – Would the Project 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 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?

Please see response to Impact #3.4.10a, above. Therefore, the Project would not create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. With implementation of Mitigation Measure MM GEO-1, impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.*

Impact #3.4.10c(iv) – Would the Project 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 impede or redirect flood flows?

Please see response Impact #3.4.10a, above. The Project is located near Ash Slough. Ash Slough runs east to west on the outside of the Project's northern border; the Rancho Calera Riverwalk will act as a buffer between Ash Slough and the Project site to minimize potential impacts. The Project would not 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 impede or redirect flood flows. Therefore, the Project would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.*

Impact #3.4.10d – Would the Project in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to Project inundation?

As stated earlier, the Project is not located in a 100 year-flood plan (refer to Figure 3.4.10-1), or near an ocean. The Project will have two water retention basins. Therefore, there is the potential for inundation of the Project site by seiche during a significant seismic event due to its proximity to these water retention basins. However, the development of the Project would not contribute to a seiche event beyond what is possible as part of the baseline condition. If a seiche were to inundate the Project site as the result of a seismic event, this event would be temporary in nature, and the Project would not intensify the event in comparison to the baseline. Therefore, any impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact.***

Impact #3.4.10e – Would the Project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

The City of Chowchilla does not have a Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan. However, the Chowchilla Water District (CWD) does have a Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan and is responsible for managing the City's groundwater supplies (City of Chowchilla, 2011). The CWD currently has two projects being implemented and plans to implement four more in the future. The first project consists of a 56-acre parcel being for groundwater recharge with an additional 65 acres in the processes of being purchased. The second program (Flood-MAR program), which consists of providing participating landowners surplus flows of water. The three remaining projects are with the intent to increase surface water availability, which is slated to begin in 2035 (Madera County Water & Natural Resources, 2020). The Project will not conflict with or obstruct the implementation of a quality control plan or Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan; therefore, there would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have ***no impact.***

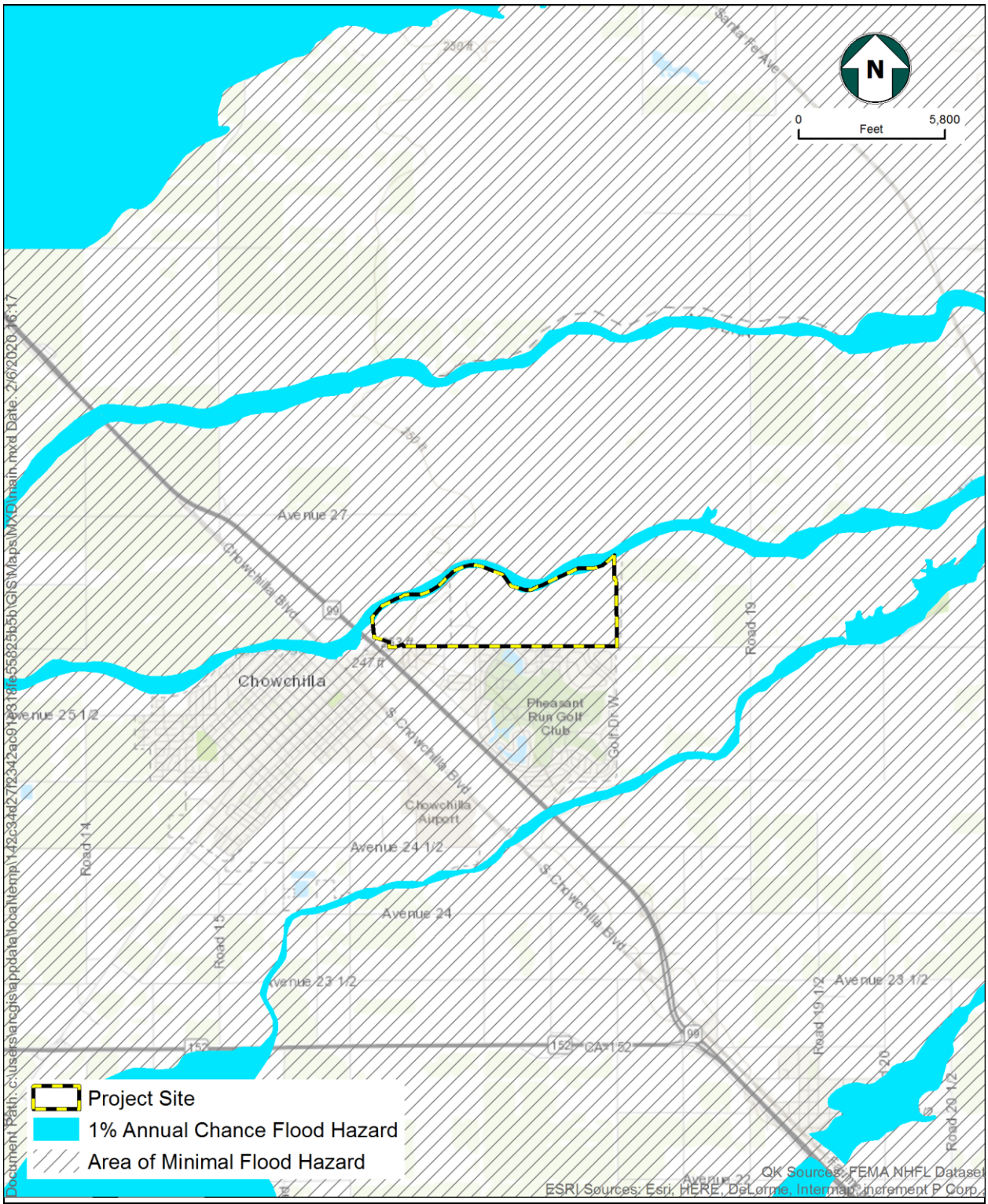

Figure 3.4.10-4
FEMA Flood Zone Map

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.11 - *LAND USE AND PLANNING*				
Would the Project:				
a. Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.11a – Would the Project physically divide an established community?

The Project is located one-half mile east of Chowchilla's City Center and immediately northeast of the East Robertson Boulevard and Highway 99 interchange. Aside from Ronald Reagan Elementary School, the Project site is completely undeveloped. The Project will not be physically dividing an established community; therefore, there is no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be ***no impact***.

Impact #3.4.11b – Would the Project 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?

The Project is a planned residential community that has been approved for a mixture of residential, commercial, and civic land uses. The proposed density changes and policy changes are minimal. The proposed 140-lot single-family residential subdivision, 1 commercial mixed-use lot, and proposed net differences in the Specific Plan amendments is consistent with the intent of the adopted Specific Plan and proposed amendments. The Project will not cause a significant impact due to a conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation. Therefore, there would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.12 - *MINERAL RESOURCES*					
Would the Project:					
a.	Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.12a – Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State?

The City of Chowchilla and surrounding area is designated as a Mineral Resources Zone 1 (MRZ-1) by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB). MRZ-1 are areas where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence (City of Chowchilla, 2014). Additionally, per the California Geothermal Energy Management Division (CalGEM), there are no active, inactive, or capped oil wells located within the Project site, and it is not in the vicinity of an oilfield (California Department of Conservation, 2019). Since no appreciable mineral resources occur at or below the Project site, the proposed Project would not preclude access to the subterranean mineral resources that would result in the loss of availability to mineral resources. The Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State and would therefore be considered less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.12b – Would the Project 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?

According to the Chowchilla General Plan, the City or surrounding area does not contain commercial mining or mineral extraction activities. Additionally, the General Plan does not designate the site for mineral and petroleum resources activities. The Project site and surrounding lands are zoned for residential and commercial land uses. No mining occurs in the Project area or in the nearby vicinity, and there are no anticipated mineral extraction activities to be conducted in the future as a result of the Project. The Project would not 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 and would therefore have no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.13 - *NOISE*				
Would the Project result in:				
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.13a – Would the Project result in 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?

Project construction would generate temporary increases in noise levels during the construction period. The City currently does not have a Noise Ordinance that regulates construction activities or establishes thresholds of construction noise. However, the City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan Update (City of Chowchilla, 2011) Policy N 1.13 requires "all development projects to mitigate noise impacts associated with construction activities," and Policy N 4.6 limits construction to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Furthermore, the Noise Element of the General Plan contains measures to minimize noise levels during construction and operation.

Project construction would adhere to measures within the Noise Element to minimize the effects of construction noise on nearby sensitive receptors. Operational noise of the proposed Project would be similar in nature to the surrounding existing residential uses. Project operational noise would not be greater than the baseline condition and would follow the objectives of the Noise Element to minimize noise levels.

The Project was previously approved for 2,042 residential units and approximately 495,000 square feet of commercial space. With the proposed changes to the Specific Plan Map, the number of residential units would remain the same, however, the square footage of commercial space would decrease from 495,000 sq. ft. to 308,405 sq. ft.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM NSE-1: Construction shall be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. No construction shall occur on Sundays or national holidays without prior approval from the City.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.4.13b – Would the Project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Construction of the Project could generate temporary groundborne vibrations. However, like construction noise, such vibrations would be attenuated over distance to the point where they would not be felt by the nearest sensitive receptors. Operation of the Project would not result in perceptible groundborne vibrations. Therefore, the Project would not result in the exposure of persons to or generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.13c – 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?

The Project site is one mile north of the Chowchilla Municipal Airport. According to the Madera countywide Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, some of the western portions of the Project falls under Compatibility Zone C2. This zone has a noise impact of low to moderate; Single-family residential is considered normally compatible with this zone (Madera County, 2015). The Project would not expose people residing or working within the Project area to excessive noise levels. Therefore, any impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.14 - *POPULATION AND HOUSING*				
Would the Project:				
a. Induce substantial population unplanned 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)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.14a – Would the Project induce substantial population unplanned 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)?

The Project was initially approved to build 2,042 residential units, 495,000 square feet of commercial space, 57.4 acres of park space and consisted of a total Project area of 576 acres. The Project Proponent is seeking an amendment to decrease the square footage of commercial space from 490,000 square feet to 308,405 square feet, increase park space from 57.4 acres to 66 acres, and the Project area went from 576 acres to 561 acres as a result of 15 acres donated to the Chowchilla School District. The residential units remain at 2,042. As part of this Project, the Applicant has also submitted a 140-lot single-family residence Tentative Subdivision Map (TSM) application which includes 1 commercial mixed-use lot. According to the City of Chowchilla's 2040 General Plan, the population is projected to grow from 14,909 to 24,518 by 2030, and as of 2020, according to the American Community Survey, the City population was at 18,533 residents, which includes the Chowchilla Prison population. The proposed amendments do not include increasing the number of residential units; therefore, the proposed Project would not increase population projections beyond what was already analyzed and approved in the 2040 General Plan.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.14b – Would the Project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The Project site is located on a site that is disked once a year for weed abatement, and the only structure on the site is Ronald Reagan Elementary School. Therefore, the Project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have *no impact*.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.15 - *PUBLIC SERVICES*				
Would the Project:				
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 to other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
i. Fire protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii. Police protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii. Schools?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv. Parks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
v. Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

City Council approved the Rancho Calera Specific Plan, EIR, Statement of Overriding Consideration, and a Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program for the Rancho Calera Project on May 2, 2011. The Project Proponent seeks to amend the approved Rancho Calera Specific Plan, which will include a 140-lot single-family residence Tentative Subdivision Map as part of Phase 1 build out, including 1 commercial mixed-use lot. However, this will not increase the 2,042 residential units that were approved in the originally approved Ranch Calera Specific Plan.

Impact #3.4.15a(i) – Would the Project 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 to other performance objectives for any of the public services - Fire Protection?

Fire suppression support is provided by the City of Chowchilla Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD). The CVFD has one station located on the south portion of the Chowchilla

Corporation Yard site, approximately 1.7 miles away. In addition to the police station, a public safety facility, located near the intersection of Millerton Way and Lake Tahoe Drive will provide a substation for onsite fire protection services and ambulance services. Construction and operational activities would be in accordance with City and State fire codes. Any increase in population was approved and accounted for in the passage of the original Specific Plan for Rancho Calera in 2011. Therefore, any impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Impact #3.4.15a(ii) – Would the Project 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 to other performance objectives for any of the public services – Police Protection?

Law enforcement and public protection are provided by the City of Chowchilla Police Department. The City's police station is located on Trinity Avenue between South 2nd Street and South 1st Street. The station is located approximately 1.5 miles to the west of the Project site. In addition to the police station, a public safety facility, located near the intersection of Millerton Way and Lake Tahoe Drive, may provide a substation for onsite police protection services. Any increase in population was approved and accounted for in the passage of the original Specific Plan for Rancho Calera in 2011. Therefore, any impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Impact #3.4.15a(iii) – Would the Project 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 to other performance objectives for any of the public services – Schools?

The Project is composed of residential, commercial, and public/quasi-public facility land uses. Implementation of the 2040 Chowchilla General Plan will increase demand for public

school facilities and services. The approved Specific Plan showed 25.2 acres for schools, which included the existing Ronald Reagan Elementary School parcel, which totals 15 acres. Because this property has been conveyed to Chowchilla Elementary School District and is not part of the proposed Specific Plan, it has been taken out of the total acreage allocated to elementary schools in the approved Specific Plan.

The Applicant has entered into agreements with the elementary school district and the high school district, both of which include payment of development fees as required under Government Code Section 65995 and California Education Code Section 17620 to assist the school districts in accommodating the children who will reside in Rancho Calera. The Chowchilla Elementary School District has constructed one elementary school in the Planning Area and may construct an additional elementary school in the Planning Area, on property which would be donated by the property owner, if needed.

Additionally, the Superintendents from the Chowchilla Elementary School District and the Chowchilla High School District have no objections to the proposed changes to the Project in its impact to school capacity and funding (Seals, 2020).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a ***less than significant impact***.

Impact #3.4.15a(iv) – Would the Project 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 to other performance objectives for any of the public services – Parks?

The Project was previously approved for 77.4 acres of Park and Open Space land uses. The new proposed Park and Open Space land use is 66 acres, with an additional approximately 7 acres of storm drain basins and approximately 9 acres of greenways, multi-use paths, and open space corridors.

Land will be dedicated to the City for the 12.9-acre minor community park, neighborhood parks, the Rancho Calera Riverwalk, promenades, and the public safety facility. The City will construct the minor community park and public safety facility. The community park may include such amenities as picnic area, playgrounds, sports courts or fields, and amphitheater, and a community center. The Applicant or builders will construct the neighborhood parks, the Rancho Calera Riverwalk, and promenades. The promenades are special Project-defining features comprised of wide greenbelt medians designed to encourage walkability between the parks, schools, shopping area, neighborhoods, and community features. The Project will

not result in substantial adverse physical impacts to existing parks. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.15a(v) – Would the Project 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 to other performance objectives for any of the public services – Other Public Facilities?

The Project would not induce the use of other public facilities such as libraries, courts, and other Madera County services.

The proposed Project would not 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 a significant environmental impact, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios for any of the public services beyond what was previously approved. Therefore, the Project would have a less than significant impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *less than significant impact*.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.16 - *RECREATION*				
Would the Project:				
a. 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.16a – 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?

The Project site is not located adjacent to any existing parks or recreational facilities. The Project was previously approved for 77.4 acres of Park and Open Space land uses, but proposed changes have now decreased the amount of proposed Park and Open Space land uses to 66 acres, but an additional approximately 7 acres of storm drain basins and approximately 9 acres of greenways, multi-use paths, and open space corridors have been added to the Project. Thus, overall, the Project will be creating more Park and Open Space within the City, preventing substantial physical deterioration from occurring to the existing neighborhood and regional parks. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.16b – Would the Project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

As previously mentioned, the Project was approved for 77.4 acres of Park and Open Space land uses. Proposed changes to the Project have resulted in 66 acres of Park and Open Space land use being proposed. The proposed changes would not have an adverse effect on the environment.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be a ***less than significant impact***.

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.17 - *TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC*					
Would the Project:					
a.	Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b.	Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c.	Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d.	Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.17a – Would the Project conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

The operation of streets in Chowchilla is governed by the City of Chowchilla and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). In 2017, the City of Chowchilla adopted a Master Fee Schedule to implement the policies and goals of the General Plan, including fees for various infrastructure elements, including roads and signalization.

Caltrans policies are applicable to impacts along SR-233, and endeavor to maintain a target service level of LOS C on State highway facilities. However, this may not always be feasible and a lower service level may be acceptable. Specific guidance for SR 233 is provided in the Transportation Concept Report for State Route 233 (6/2012). The SR 233 TCR notes that the concept for this route is expected to remain unchanged with minor improvements. Concept level of service for this route is LOS D.

Caltrans policy regarding applicable traffic controls has recently been expanded based on Traffic Operations Policy Directive 13-02. This directive requires that Caltrans consider the relative merits of alternative traffic controls when it becomes necessary to stop traffic on State highways, and all-way stops, traffic signals and roundabouts are to be considered. The

policy directive requires preparation of an Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) to determine the preferred traffic control.

A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was prepared for the proposed Project by KD Anderson & Associates, Inc. (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021) and is attached (Appendix D). The TIA evaluated existing conditions plus the approved plan Phase 1, existing conditions with buildout of the amended plan, and short-term future conditions with other approved projects. East Robertson Boulevard improvements, proposed with the amended plan, are assumed to be in place under each project build-out scenario.

Existing Transportation Setting

Regionally, the Project site is served by Robertson Boulevard (SR 233), which links eastern Chowchilla with the balance of the community, with State Route 152 to the west and State Route 99 to the north and south. Locally, the Project takes access to East Robertson Boulevard at four intersections that are or will be controlled by traffic signals, stop signs or roundabout. A description for each study area roadway can be found on the attached TIA prepared for the Project.

TRANSIT

Fixed-route public transit service is provided by Madera County Connection (MCC). MCC's Chowchilla – Fairmead route makes five runs on weekdays and links the community to the downtown Madera intermodal terminal with a stop at Save Mart Supermarket at 1225 East Robertson Boulevard across from the Project site.

The City of Chowchilla operates a local curb-to-curb, demand-response dial-a-ride bus transit service commonly called "The City BUS" in the city limits of Chowchilla through Chowchilla Area Transit (CATX). Depending on scheduling, service is available for work, medical appointments, school, meetings, senior services, shopping and more. CATX buses are wheelchair-lift equipped. The service operates weekdays except on official holidays (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

BIKE

There are various bicycle facilities in the Project area, these facilities are classified as Class I (Share-Use Path), Class II (Bike Lane) and Class II (Bike Route) and are located at the following location:

Class I Bike Path is available along:

- Chowchilla Boulevard
- North side of Ash Slough from Chowchilla Boulevard easterly

Class II Bike Lanes are present on:

- East Robertson Boulevard from SR 99 to Fig Tree Boulevard

- Montgomery Lake Way from East Robertson Boulevard to Fig Tree Boulevard
- Fig Tree Boulevard from East Robertson Boulevard to Montgomery Lake Way
- South Lake Tahoe Drive from Fallen Leaf Way to Fig Tree Boulevard

Class III Bike Routes exist on:

- SR 33 west of Front Street

PEDESTRIAN

Facilities dedicated to pedestrians have been provided in the Project area as development has occurred. West of the SR 99 interchange, there are sidewalks on both sides of SR 233 (East Robertson Boulevard) in downtown Chowchilla that end about 150 feet from the SR 99 SB ramps intersection. From that point easterly pedestrians use the paved shoulder along the State highway. A sidewalk exists on the north side of SR 233 on the SR 99 crossing itself. The paved shoulder is again available from the crossing easterly to the SR 99 NB ramps intersection where sidewalk begins on the southeast corner and continues easterly. Sidewalks exist on the streets south of East Robertson Boulevard, on Fig Tree Boulevard and on the streets adjoining Ronald Reagan Elementary School. Additionally, the pending SR 99/SR 233 interchange reconstruction Project will include sidewalks (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Existing Traffic Conditions

Current background traffic conditions based on recent traffic volume counts indicate that with one exception all intersections in the study area operating with peak-hour LOS that satisfy the City of Chowchilla's minimum LOS D standard. The exception is the SR 233 (East Robertson Boulevard/SR 99 SB ramps intersection, which operates at LOS F during the a.m. and p.m. peak hour. The peak-hour 95th percentile queue in the westbound left turn lane at the East Robertson Boulevard/Chowchilla Boulevard intersection exceeds available turn lane storage. Peak-hour traffic signal warrants are satisfied at both East Robertson Boulevard/SR 99 ramps intersections, at the East Robertson Boulevard/Montgomery Lake Way intersection (p.m. peak hour only) and at the East Robertson Boulevard/Fig Tree Boulevard intersection (a.m. peak hour only). The pending reconstruction of the SR 99/SR 233 interchange will address these issues at that location, but other improvements are not immediately planned (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Facilities for alternative transportation modes have been identified. Sidewalks exist on the south side of East Robertson Boulevard and north of East Robertson Boulevard on the existing segments of South Lake Tahoe Drive and Fig Tree Boulevard. Crosswalks are striped at the East Robertson Boulevard/Fig Tree Boulevard intersection. While sidewalks are limited at the SR 99/SR 233 interchange, the pending reconstruction Project will include sidewalks. Class 2 bike lanes exist on the south side of East Robertson Boulevard east of Montgomery Lake Way. The Madera County Connection (MCC)'s Chowchilla – Fairmead route makes five runs on weekdays and links the community to the downtown Madera Intermodal terminal with a stop at Save Mart Supermarket at 1225 East Robertson

Boulevard across from the Project site. The City of Chowchilla operates a local curb-to-curb, demand-response dial-a-ride bus transit service commonly called "The City BUS" in the city limits of Chowchilla through Chowchilla Area Transit (CATX) weekdays except on official holidays (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Existing Plus Phase I Impacts

The initial Phase 1 would develop 140 residences and 1 commercial mixed-use lot at a site on the northeast corner of the East Robertson Boulevard/Fig Tree Boulevard intersection and extend easterly. Phase 1 is projected to generate 1,322 daily vehicle trips (one-half inbound and one-half outbound), with 104 trips in the a.m. peak hour and 139 trips in the p.m. peak hour. Access would occur at Fig Tree Boulevard and Lake McClure Drive via South Lake Tahoe Drive.

Phase 1 may exacerbate current deficiencies at the SR 99/SR 233 interchange on an interim basis if Phase 1 is occupied before completion of the pending interchange reconstruction Project. Phase 1 is projected to cause the a.m. peak-hour LOS to deteriorate to LOS E at the East Robertson Boulevard/Montgomery Lake Way, but this short-term condition can be accepted under the General Plan. Phase 1 does not result in any appreciable change to queueing at signalized intersections, nor does Phase 1 result in additional locations where peak-hour traffic signal warrants may be satisfied (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021). Therefore, no mitigation measures are required, and impacts are less than significant. Additionally, impacts to Project area bicyclists and transit users are less than significant.

While not an impact that requires improvements based on LOS, peak-period traffic conditions near Ronald Reagan Elementary School could become more congested with Phase 1. These conditions could be improved by creating additional vehicular access to the school. At buildout the Project circulation system provides additional access through the northerly extension of Fallen Leaf Way to Fig Tree Boulevard, the construction of Kinney Lake Drive north to North Lake Tahoe Drive, and the extension of South Lake Tahoe Drive to Genoa Lake Way. In the near term, South Lake Tahoe Drive and Genoa Lake Way could be completed, either as partial or full streets, to provide a second route to and from the school and reduce congestion and increase safety (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Existing Plus Amended Project Conditions

Buildout of the amended Project involves occupancy of 2,042 residences and development of 308.4 ksf of commercial uses. A site for a second Chowchilla Unified School District school, that would otherwise be occupied by 50 residences, has been identified. Without the school, the amended Rancho Calera Specific Plan generates a gross total of 31,114 daily trips beyond those currently generated by Ronald Reagan Elementary School. Of that total, 1,787 trips occur in the a.m. peak hour and 3,113 are generated in the p.m. peak hour. Not all of that traffic would be external to the Planning Area due to interaction between commercial, residential and educational uses. With the addition of the second Chowchilla Unified School District school, the gross total increases to 32,163 daily, 2,186 a.m. peak hour and 3,191 p.m. peak hour trips.

The analysis of Project buildout conditions assumes implementation of the pending SR 99/ SR 233 interchange reconstruction Project as well as completion of planned improvements to East Robertson Boulevard. Those improvements would be installed incrementally in response to the results of the Triggers Analysis, which matches residential and commercial development levels to incremental improvements, as discussed below (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

The Project does not result in significant impacts under CEQA based on VMT and has no significant traffic operational effects under City of Chowchilla guidelines in terms of operating LOS on roadway segments. Impacts to Project bicyclists and transit users are less than significant.

Under existing plus amended Project conditions, buildout is not projected to result in any intersection operating with LOS that exceed the City's minimum LOS D standard, and the Project is consistent with General Plan policies. Projected traffic volumes at the East Robertson Boulevard/Clubhouse Drive/McClure Lake Drive intersection would satisfy peak-hour signal warrants during the a.m. and p.m. peak hour. The volumes at the East Robertson Boulevard/Golf Drive/Millerton Way intersection would satisfy peak-hour warrants during the p.m. peak hour. However, because the majority of minor approach traffic simply turns right onto East Robertson Boulevard, traffic signals are not needed to meet minimum City LOS standards, and traffic signals are not recommended (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Project traffic can be accommodated by the turn lane storage available at all locations with one exception. The available storage in the Chowchilla Boulevard left turn lanes on East Robertson Boulevard is relatively short, and in the a.m. and p.m. peak hour, the 95th percentile queues in the westbound left turn lane exceeds the storage length by 190 and 120 feet, respectively. This is a significant safety issue. However, the presence of the new roundabout at the SR 99 SB ramps intersection, as being pursued by Caltrans and the City, creates the opportunity to address this issue by closing the eastbound left turn lane at the commercial driveway and requiring those left turns to instead continue to the roundabout and make a U-turn back to the driveway. With this change the westbound left turn lane at Chowchilla Boulevard can be lengthened (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Additionally, buildout of the Project can be expected to result in regular pedestrian activity than will be accommodated by proposed onsite facilities, by sidewalks included in Project improvements to East Robertson Boulevard, and by facilities incorporated into the SR 99/SR 233 interchange reconstruction Project. School age pedestrians will walk to and from Ronald Reagan Elementary School and the possible future Chowchilla Unified School District school. During the periods before and after school, uncontrolled pedestrian activity at the intersections near area schools could create conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. To resolve this issue, a Safe Routes to School Plan for the overall Rancho Calera Specific Plan area will need to be identified and implemented in consultation with Chowchilla Elementary School District (CESD) site representatives and City staff. The plan will designate routes to direct students to preferred crossings and could be accompanied by traffic control devices or adult crossing guards as needed, as required by MM TRA-3.

Implementation of the Project may result in residents who elect to use MCC's services, and transit routes and stops specific to the Project may eventually be needed. This would be addressed with incorporation of MM TRA-4.

Existing Plus Other Approved Projects with Amended Project Conditions

The TIA analyzed the Project along with seven additional approved projects in the area, to accurately determine the short-term impacts. A complete list of these projects is provided in Table 11 of the attached TIA. The TIA identified one intersection, South Lake Tahoe Drive and Fallen Leaf Way, that would be significantly impacted based on the additional trips generated by the Project and the existing approved Project. The LOS for this intersection would be degraded from D to F, for the a.m. peak hour. Mitigation measures are necessary to ensure the LOS for this intersection does not exceed the City standard of LOS D.

MM TRA-1 and MM TRA-2 require the Project Proponent to complete the Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) analysis to determine the preferred traffic control and to pay the fair share contribution for intersection improvements. This mitigation was supported by both Caltrans and the City Engineer as being necessary to address the impacted LOS. The Project would not affect pedestrian and bicycle paths and mass transit. Therefore, with implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the Project would not conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance, or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system. Impacts would be less than significant.

Therefore, the Project would 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. There would be no impact.

Improvements Triggers Analysis

The objective of the Triggers Analysis is to identify specific circulation improvements that can be matched to the amended Project residential development levels while providing reasonable assurance that resulting traffic operations will satisfy City of Chowchilla's General Plan minimum LOS D standards. Because future traffic conditions in Chowchilla will be affected by development outside of the Project area itself, the analysis also considers the effects of other possible development in the area of the City east of SR 99. The technical approach taken has been to incrementally identify the traffic contribution of the Project and other eastside projects, evaluate resulting peak-hour traffic conditions, and identify the combination of the amended Project development and other eastside project levels that can be served adequately by identified improvements (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Based on the analysis conducted, three stages of improvements were identified for East Robertson Boulevard, as shown in Figure 14A, B and C, of the attached TIA. These stages are as follow:

Stage 1: From SR 99 right of way through the Fig Tree Boulevard intersection, including traffic signals at the Fig Tree Boulevard intersection. Two through travel lanes would be provided in each direction on East Robertson Boulevard.

Stage 2: From east of Fig Tree Boulevard through the Lake McClure Drive intersection, including an all-way stop at Lake McClure Boulevard.

Stage 3: from east of Lake McClure Drive through the Millerton Drive intersection, including an all-way stop at Lake Millerton Drive.

Additionally, a traffic signal will be needed at the Fig Tree Boulevard/South Lake Tahoe Drive intersection, and the development level expected to cause the need for that traffic signal has also been identified. Table 32 of the attached TIA summarizes the results of the Triggers Analysis and identifies the number of the Project dwellings that can be accommodated by identified improvements (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

The TIA identified traffic operating condition at full buildout of the proposed Project assuming implementation of planned improvements and occupancy of other projects identified by the City of Chowchilla. The Triggers Analysis concluded the following assumption:

Schedule and Location for Amended Project Occupancy. The amended Project offers locations for a variety of residential housing products, with the intention of allowing builders to select a village with attributes best addressing their view of the housing market at that time. As a result, no "phasing map" is available that might prescribe the order of occupancy of individual Rancho Calera Specific Plan villages. However, because development of traffic volume forecasts remains sensitive to land use and circulation system locations, the following assumptions have been made regarding Project occupancy.

Location of Initial Amended Rancho Calera Specific Plan Residences. A "worst case" approach has been taken to maximize the potential of new Project traffic at those locations where improvements are not planned initially. The attached TIA identifies a development Phase 1 of 140 units and 1 commercial mixed-use lot just east of Fig Tree Boulevard. The "worst case" approach assumes that subsequent development would continue with residences east of Fig Tree Boulevard and north of East Robertson Boulevard as development in this area would create higher traffic volumes in that area of Stage 2 and Stage 3 improvements than would development west of Fig Tree Boulevard. It is important to note that there are roughly 1,200 residential units planned in the amended Project in the area east of Fig Tree Boulevard, and the development trigger levels noted herein are in reference to those 1,200 units (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Second CESD School. The Project plan includes a site for a second school north of Ronald Reagan Elementary School. Under an agreement between the Project Proponents and the CESD, a decision regarding site acquisition is to be made after occupancy of 400 project residences. This Triggers Analysis makes a "worst case" assumption that CESD will acquire the site and construct a new school after 400 residences are occupied. New school enrollment would be divided between children residing in the Project area and in other areas of the community, with that split between the two areas changing as the Project is occupied (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Project Non-Residential Uses. Development of any new non-residential development will be linked to market conditions, and community serving mixed retail would follow occupancy of new supporting residences. In this case the amended Project includes a neighborhood supporting mixed-use area at the East Robertson Boulevard/Fig Tree Boulevard intersection as well as an additional mixed-use retail near SR 99. Because this neighborhood supporting uses is located in the area of Stage 2 improvements, the Triggers Analysis makes the assumption that this use will be occupied once Stage 1 improvements are made. The Project's other non-residential uses adjoining the SR 99 interchange are expected to be developed later, and this analysis tests the effects of developing 50 percent and 100 percent of that area after Stage 1 improvements have been made (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Additionally, the analysis concludes that the following improvements are to take place as development proceeds:

- Project development would proceed with access to East Robertson Boulevard via the closest planner intersection;
- The balance of the internal Project circulation system would be constructed as fronting development proceeds unless specific roadways are found to be needed based on the results of the Triggers Analysis; and,
- The second CESD school is assumed to be accompanied by construction of Fig Tree Boulevard north to an extension of Fallen Leaf Way north from Ronald Reagan Elementary School (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Other circulation system improvements would be required on East Robertson Boulevard, these improvements are as follows:

- **East Robertson Boulevard/Montgomery Lake Way Intersection.** While the amended Rancho Calera Specific Plan will widen East Robertson Boulevard as has been described herein, the traffic signal would be installed when additional development south of East Robertson Boulevard proceeds. This location is not addressed by the Triggers Analysis; and,
- **East Robertson Boulevard/Genoa Lake Way intersection.** The need for a traffic signal at this location is linked to the northly extension of Genoa Lake Way and would be installed at that time.

Table 34 of the attached TIA introduces the combinations of amended Project development, other Chowchilla Growth and E. Robertson Blvd circulation system staged improvement that would yield LOS satisfying the City's minimum LOS D policy.

Amended Project Residential Development without Improvements. As noted above, the Project's initial Phase 1 of 140 dwellings and 1 commercial mixed-use lot can be developed without exceeding the City's minimum LOS D standard. Within the area of the East Robertson Boulevard improvements, the worst LOS is projected to occur at the all-way stop controlled East Robertson Boulevard/ Fig Tree Boulevard intersection. The occupancy of the 140 dwellings units in Phase 1 yields LOS D in the a.m. peak hour. A total of 215 dwellings could be occupied before reaching the LOS D-E threshold. Stage 1 improvements would be

needed to occupy any additional residences or non-residential development (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Amended Project Development Permitted with Stage 1 Improvements. Once Stage 1 improvements are made, the trigger location based on LOS on East Robertson Boulevard move easterly from Fig Tree Boulevard, and the p.m. peak hour becomes the critical time period. The presence of the second CESD no longer has an effect on the outcome of the Triggers Analysis during the p.m. peak hour. As noted in Table 34 of the attached TIA, the number of developable units varies based on the extent of approved development occurring elsewhere. If all approved residential units and half of the identified retail uses were developed, then the total number of dwellings to be occupied in the Project would increase to 1,110, or 895 units above the level permitted without improvements. At that point, the LOS at the East Robertson Boulevard/Lake McClure Drive intersection would exceed LOS D in the p.m. peak hour, and Stage 2 improvements would be required. If all of the identified non-residential development occurred, then the permissible development level would be 1,050 dwellings or 835 residences beyond the level that is permitted without improvements (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Amended Project Development Permitted with Stage 2 Improvements. Once Stage 2 improvement are made and East Robertson Boulevard is improved through the McClure Lake Drive intersection, then the LOS at the East Robertson Boulevard/Millerton Way intersection becomes the final critical location. The number of permissible east area dwelling units is again dependent on assumptions for development of the balance of the area east of SR 99. If half of the retail areas are developed, then a total of 1,225 dwellings can be occupied or 115 units beyond the level permitted before Stage 2 improvements. If all the eastside retail is occupied, then a total of 1,210 residences could be occupied, or 160 units beyond the Stage 1 improvements with that level of retail development (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Amended Project Development Permitted with Stage 3 improvements. Once Stage 3 improvements are made, all of the amended Project residences east of Fig Tree Boulevard could be installed, regardless of the amount of east side area retail. This analysis assumes that 1,274 residences could be develop in the area east of Fig Tree Boulevard (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

Trigger for Fig Tree Boulevard / So Lake Tahoe Drive traffic signal. As noted in Table 34 of the attached TIA, the level of service at the Fig Tree Boulevard/South Lake Tahoe Drive intersection did not exceed the minimum LOS D standard with development of the Project's eastside residential areas, even if the CESD 2nd school is assumed to be built. This LOS within the minimum LOS D standard generally results from the absence of South Lake Tahoe Drive west of Fig Tree Boulevard. Extending South Lake Tahoe Drive westerly could increase traffic volumes at the intersection by providing an alternative route for the Project residents to the commercial areas near SR 99. Similarly, extending South Lake Tahoe Drive to Genoa Lake Way and to East Robertson Boulevard could reduce traffic by diverting school traffic that could otherwise only use Fig Tree Boulevard. Therefore, the following are recommended:

Install the Fig Tree Boulevard/South Lake Tahoe Drive traffic signal when:

- The CESD's second school is in operation, and 900 Rancho Calera Specific Plan dwellings are constructed east of Fig Tree Boulevard; or,
- Determined to be needed by the City of Chowchilla based on the actual schedule for construction of the CESD 2nd school and based on the results of an updated local traffic operations analysis to be funded by the Project Proponents addressing development levels and background traffic conditions at that time (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

MM TRA-1: Prior to Certificate of Occupancy being issued, the Project Proponent shall pay its fair share to the cost of intersection improvements by paying adopted City of Chowchilla development impact fees or those development impact fees identified in the Development Agreement for that portion of the Project being developed.

MM TRA-2: Prior to Certificate of Occupancy being issued, the Project Proponent shall contribute its fair share to the cost of traffic control changes and median medication to lengthen the westbound left turn lane at the SR 233 (East Robertson Boulevard)/Chowchilla Boulevard intersection by paying adopted City of Chowchilla development impact fees or those development impact fees identified in the Development Agreement for that portion of the Project being developed.

MM TRA-3: Prior to recordation of the first Final Map, the Applicant shall submit a Safe Route to School Plan, which shall be created for the overall Project and implemented in consultation with CESD site representatives and City staff. The plan shall designate applicable routes and incorporate traffic control devices or adult crossing guards as needed. The Project Proponent shall be responsible for creating and implementing the Safe Routes to School Plan.

MM TRA-4: In consultation with MMC and City of Chowchilla, the Project Proponent is responsible of constructing transit stops at key locations in and adjoining the Project as the community is built out, and transit routes/facilities shall be contemplated as the Project's commercial, residential, and open space areas are developed.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

Impact #3.4.17b – Would the Project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

An evaluation of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for Project traffic was conducted based on applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. Madera County and the City of Chowchilla have not adopted methods for estimating regional VMT or significance

criteria for evaluating impacts based on VMT. However, the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) regional travel demand forecasting model is the best available tool for estimating VMT in Madera County. The MCTC Year 2020 and Year 2042 traffic models have been employed to analyze VMTs for the Project.

Based on the analysis conducted, it was determined that the Project would have a significant impact on VMT if:

- A retail project results in an appreciable increase in total citywide VMT, or
- A residential project results in average per capita VMT that does not satisfy the OPR 15 percent reduction goal as compared to current conditions or results in the City of Chowchilla filing to satisfy the overall 15 percent reduction goal.

For residential development, the amendments to the Project maintains the same number of residences as the approved plan, the amount of non-residential uses is reduced. Development of new residences in Chowchilla will increase regional VMT. However, as noted in Table 14 of the attached TIA, the residences within the amended Project will exhibit average per capita VMT rates that are 19 percent lower than the current rate in Chowchilla, primarily due to its location near to non-residential uses. In addition, because the amended Project provides non-residential uses in close proximity to existing residences in Chowchilla, the Project will result in an overall average per capita VMT for all residences in Chowchilla that is 15.1 percent of the current rate. Because the Project's average per capita VMT rate is more than 15 percent below the current rate for residences in Chowchilla, the Project's residential units satisfy OPR's 15 percent reduction goal, and the impact on VMT is not significant (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

While the Project's non-residential retail uses will contribute to an overall increase in total VMT compared to existing conditions, by providing destinations that are relatively close, these uses will reduce the length of trips made by other existing residences in Chowchilla. As a result, the Project's non-residential uses are the cause of a reduction in overall per capita VMT in Chowchilla (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

The Project will reduce the total amount of non-residential uses in the Rancho Calera Specific Plan in comparison to the adopted plan. This change is evaluated for CEQA significance in comparison to its net effect on overall regional VMT in Chowchilla when both the approved and amended plan are fully occupied in 2042. As noted in Table 14 of the attached TIA, the Project will reduce the total regional VMT attributable to Chowchilla by 1.4 percent compared to conditions with the adopted plan. Because the proposed Project does not have a net increase in the City's regional VMT in comparison to implementation of the adopted plan, the impact of the Project's change in non-residential uses is not significant (KD Anderson & Associates, 2021).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.17c – Would the Project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

The Project itself would not affect or alter existing roadways or develop new ones that could include hazardous design features. All new roadways or expanded roadways will be constructed to meet the minimum design standards of the City and Caltrans. The Project would not substantially increase hazards due to a design feature or incompatible uses. Impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact #3.4.17d – Would the Project result in inadequate emergency access?

The Project would not block existing roads or impede the movement of emergency response vehicles. Construction of the Project would generate temporary increases in the daily traffic volumes on local roadways and intersections but is not anticipated to cause roadway lane closures. All construction-related parking and staging areas would occur onsite. Therefore, the Project would not result in inadequate emergency access. There would be no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

There would be *no impact*.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact

3.4.18 - *TRIBAL RESOURCES*

Would the Project:

a. 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, and that is:				
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	☐	☒	☐	☐
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 Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.3.18a(i) – Would the Project 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, and that is 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)?

The Project 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). A tribal consultation list request was sent to the Native American Heritage

Commission (NAHC) on March 6, 2020. The City received a response back on March 25, 2020, from the NAHC indicating that Dumna Wo-Wah Tribal Government, North Fork Mono Tribe, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Valley Yokuts Tribe, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, and Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band are the applicable tribes in the area that have requested Project consultation. Consultation letters were sent to these tribes on March 25, 2020 and follow-up reminders were sent to the tribes on April 10, 2020. The City received one response back during the 30-day consultation period under AB 52 from the California Valley Miwok Tribe indicating that they had no comment.

Per SB 18, the City received one response from the Dumna Wo-Wah Tribe indicating that they were interested in having further conversation with the City to determine if any mitigation would be appropriate. The City engaged in negotiations with the tribe to determine how to best mitigate any potential impacts to resources.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

TRI-1: Prior to the start of ground-disturbing activities within each tentative map area, the Applicant shall retain the services of a qualified and independent archeologist who shall conduct cultural resources sensitivity training for all construction personnel. Construction personnel shall be informed of the types of prehistoric, historic-era cultural, and archeological resources that may be encountered, the proper procedures to be enacted in the event of an inadvertent discovery of prehistoric, historic-era cultural, or archeological resources of human remains, and safety precautions to be taken when working with archeological monitors. Construction personnel shall also be trained to identify Ash tree roots and proper protocol for preserving those roots. The City and the Applicant shall ensure that construction personnel are made available for and attend the training and retain documentation demonstrating attendance.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.3.13a(ii) – Would the Project 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, and that is 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 Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

A search was conducted for historical records on April 17, 2020, at the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC) of the California Historical Resource Inventory System (CHRIS) located on the campus of California State University, Bakersfield. The Project area is located within the Le Grand USGS 7.5-minute topographic map. The record search results

indicated that six cultural resource investigations had been completed previously within the Project area, and six cultural resource investigations have been completed previously within a half-mile radius of the Project area. The record search indicated that there are no previously recorded cultural resources within the Project area. In addition to the SSJVIC, a Sacred Land Files search was requested from the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) on April 17, 2020. The NAHC stated that the proposed Project does not have any known tribal cultural resources onsite. Although there is nothing on record, there is an unlikely possibility of a potentially sensitive resource being discovered during ground-disturbance activity. Mitigation Measure to be implemented to reduce this impact to a level of less than significant are listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implementation of MM CUL-1, MM CUL-2, MM GEO-2, and TRI-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.19 - *UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS*				
Would the Project:				
a. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which would cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the Project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e. Comply with federal, State, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Impact #3.4.19a – Would the Project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which would cause significant environmental effects?

According to the Rancho Calera Specific Plan, municipal wells and the City water system will provide water to Rancho Calera. The construction of increased supply from a well at a mutually agreed location, or water mains, shall not be required unless and until, in the opinion of the City Engineer, the supply of water will not be adequate to serve the residents. To serve the needs of the Project, and more generally the residents of the City, a well and

water tank may be located within the Project at a mutually agreeable location. Land for the well and/or water tank will be donated to the City by the Master Developer upon request of the City. The wastewater generated from the Project will be collected in a communitywide wastewater system and transported to the wastewater collection and treatment system. It will not require relocation or new construction (Rancho Calera, 2019).

Surface water will be captured through newly constructed drain inlets and be used to help recharge the groundwater table. The Project has added the construction of two water retention basins, allowing onsite percolation into the City's groundwater system instead of sending water offsite via Ash Slough. A temporary offsite stormwater retention basin will be utilized to handle both the subdivision and Ronald Reagan Elementary School as the Project continues to buildout, the stormwater will be directed to the larger water basins. The City's 2040 General Plan prepared for population growth and land annexations, and used the City's water, sewer, and stormwater master plans while developing the Urban Water Management Plan (City of Chowchilla 2040 General Plan). Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) will be responsible for providing electric and gas services to the Project, and AT&T will provide telecommunication services to the Project. PG&E and AT&T will not require the construction of new facilities to provide these services. Therefore, the Project will have a less than significant impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a ***less than significant impact.***

Impact #3.4.19b – Would the Project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the Project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

The City of Chowchilla gets its water supply from groundwater aquifers. According to the City's 2040 General Plan, the Project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve the Project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal and multiple dry years. In addition, based on correspondence received on June 7, 2021, from the Director of Public Works of the City of Chowchilla, the City has sufficient potable water to supply and serve the proposed Project (Rogers, 2020). Therefore, the impact would have no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have ***no impact.***

Impact #3.4.19c – Would the Project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that 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?

The Project was initially approved for 2,042 residential dwelling units and 495,000 square feet of commercial space. The Project Proponent is amending the Project and reducing the commercial space to 308,405 square feet. The number of residential dwelling units is not proposed to change. The Project also includes a Tentative Subdivision Map that consists of 140 residential subdivision lots and 1 commercial lot which will be constructed as part of Phase 1.

According to the Director of Public Works, the City of Chowchilla is capable of providing sewer service to the proposed Project. As previously stated, wastewater generated from the Project will be collected in a communitywide wastewater system and transported to the wastewater collection and treatment system and will not require relocation or new construction (Rancho Calera, 2019). A decrease of square feet in commercial space would result in less wastewater treatment than what was initially approved; the impact would be less than significant (City of Chowchilla, 2011).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.19d – Would the Project 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?

The solid waste generated from the Project will be transported to the Fairmead Sanitary Landfill, located at 21739 Road 19 in Chowchilla. The Fairmead Sanitary Landfill has a capacity of 9,400,000 cubic yards available to serve the County of Madera, including the City of Chowchilla. Out of the 9,400,000 cubic yards, approximately 5,552,894 cubic yards (59.1 percent +/-) remain to serve Madera County and the City of Chowchilla. The Project would be required to comply with all federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to the handling and disposal of solid waste. Therefore, the implementation of the Project would result in a less than significant impact (City of Madera, 2009).

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.19e – Would the Project comply with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

As previously stated, the Project would be required to comply with all federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Therefore, the Project would have no impact.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.20 - *WILDFIRE*				
Would the Project:				
a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.20a – Would the Project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The Project would be required to meet all applicable local and State regulatory standards for providing accurate emergency access. As a result, emergency vehicles would have adequate access to all the populated areas within the Project area. Therefore, any impacts associated with emergency response or an evacuation plan during construction and the build-out of the Project would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.20b – Would the Project 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?

According to the Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map of Madera County, provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), the Project area is not in a high fire hazard severity zone (Cal Fire, 2007). All construction under the proposed Project shall comply with current California Fire Code, County standards, and City policies and implementation measures to minimize potential risks to wildfire exposure. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.20c – Would the Project 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?

The Project will establish four major points of access instead of the previously approved five points of access. Given that five were approved, the proposed four major points of access as well as any power lines or other utilities have been accounted for in the approved Specific Plan from 2011. The Project will have a less than significant impact on the exacerbation of fire risk.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

No mitigation is required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact*.

Impact #3.4.20d – Would the Project 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?

See discussion of Impact #3.4.10c(i) related to erosion impacts due to drainage changes. Due to the low risk of fire in the Project area, the nature of this Project, and the relatively flat topography of the Project site, downslope or downstream flooding impacts due to runoff, post-fire slope instability, and/or drainage changes would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implementation of Mitigation Measures MM GEO-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would have a *less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated*.

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
3.4.21 - *MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE*					
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b.	Does the Project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	☐	☒	☐	☐
c.	Does the Project have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Impact #3.4.21a – Does the Project 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, 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?

As evaluated in this IS/MND, the proposed Project would not 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; reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species; or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. Mitigation measures have been included to lessen the significance of potential impacts. Similar mitigation measures would be expected of other projects in the

surrounding area, most of which share similar cultural paleontological and biological resources. Consequently, the incremental effects of the proposed Project, after mitigation, would not contribute to an adverse cumulative impact on these resources. Therefore, the Project would have a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measures MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CUL-1 through MM CUL-2, and TRI-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.4.21b - Does the Project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)

As described in the analyses of Impacts #3.4.1 through 3.3.20 of this IS/MND, any potentially significant impacts of the proposed Project would be reduced to a less than significant level following incorporation of the mitigation measures listed in Appendix A – Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. All planned projects in the vicinity of the proposed Project would be subject to review in separate environmental documents and required to conform to the City of Chowchilla's General Plan, zoning, mitigate for Project-specific impacts, and provide appropriate engineering to ensure the development meets are applicable federal, State and local regulations and codes. As currently designed, and with compliance of the recommended mitigation measures, the proposed Project would not contribute to a cumulative impact. Thus, the cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects would be less than cumulatively considerable with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measures MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CUL-1 through MM CUL-2, MM GEO-1, and MM HAZ-1, MM NSE-1, TRA-1 through TRA-5, and TRI-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation incorporated*.

Impact #3.4.21c - Does the Project have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

All of the Project's impacts, both direct and indirect, that are attributable to the Project were identified and mitigated to a less than significant level. As shown in Appendix A- Mitigation

Monitoring and Reporting Program, the Project Proponent has agreed to implement mitigation substantially reducing or eliminating impacts of the Project.

All planned projects in the vicinity of the proposed Project would be subject to review in separate environmental documents and be required to conform to the City of Chowchilla's General Plan, zoning, mitigate for Project-specific impacts, and provide appropriate engineering to ensure the development meets are applicable federal, State and local regulations and codes. Thus, the cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects would be less than cumulatively considerable. The proposed Project would not either directly or indirectly cause substantial adverse effects on human beings because all potentially adverse direct impacts of the proposed Project are identified as having no impact, less than significant impact, or less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

MITIGATION MEASURE(S)

Implement Mitigation Measures MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-6, MM CUL-1 through MM CUL-2, MM GEO-1, and MM HAZ-1, MM NSE-1, TRA-1 through TRA-4, and TRI-1.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

Impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

SECTION 4 - LIST OF PREPARERS

4.1 - City of Chowchilla

- Mark Hamilton, Director of Community and Economic Development
- Jason Rogers, Public Works Director
- Jerry Jones, PE, City Contract Engineer, with direction to KD Anderson & Associates, Inc. (Traffic Impact Analysis)
- Annalisa Perea, AICP, Contract City Planner

4.2 - QK Inc.

- Steve Brandt, AICP, Senior Planner – Project Manager
- Sam Rashe, Associate Planner, Author
- Kris Law, GIS Analyst

4.3 - Subconsultants

- Jason Ellard, VRPA Technologies, Inc., Air Quality Impact Assessment/Greenhouse Gases Analysis/Energy Analysis Memo
- Molly Valasic, Cogstone
- Ken Anderson, KD Anderson Traffic Engineer

SECTION 5 - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX A

MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
MM BIO-1 (General Wildlife Surveys): Prior to ground-disturbing activities, a qualified wildlife biologist shall conduct a general biological clearance survey of the area being disturbed, including any off-site impact areas, between 14 and 30 calendar days prior to the onset of ground disturbance. The general wildlife clearance survey shall include walking transects to identify the presence of special status animals that may occur on the project site (i.e., western spadefoot toad, western burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, American badger, and San Joaquin kit fox) as well as other special-status species or signs of, and sensitive natural communities. The preconstruction survey shall be completed in a way that allows for 100 percent coverage of the portion(s) of the Project site being disturbed and a 50-foot buffer, where feasible. A report outlining the results of the survey shall be submitted to the Lead Agency. Should any of these species be observed, an appropriate construction-free buffer will be established by the qualified biologist onsite. Additional species-specific preconstruction survey requirements and mitigation measures for western spadefoot, nesting birds, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, roosting bats, American badger, and San Joaquin kit fox are included below.	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM BIO-2 (Worker Education): Prior to ground-disturbance activities, or within one week of being deployed at the Project site for newly hired workers, all construction workers at the Project site shall attend a Construction Worker Environmental Awareness Training and Education Program, developed and presented by a qualified biologist. The Construction Worker Environmental Awareness Training and Education Program shall be presented by the biologist and shall include information on the life history of wildlife and plant species that may be encountered during construction activities, their legal protections, the definition of "take" under the Endangered Species Act, measures the Project operator is implementing to protect the species, reporting requirements, specific measures that each worker must employ to avoid take of the species, and penalties for violation of the Act. Identification and information regarding special-status or other sensitive species with the potential to occur on the Project site shall also be provided to construction personnel. The program shall include: • An acknowledgement form signed by each worker indicating that environmental training has been completed; and • A copy of the training transcript and/or training video/CD, as well as a list of the names of all personnel who attended the training, and copies of the signed acknowledgement forms shall be maintained onsite for the duration of construction activities.	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM BIO-3 (Western Spadefoot): If western spadefoot is identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), for each of the pools, basins, or other aquatic features in which spadefoot occurs, the pools, their banks, and other areas with small mammal burrows shall be avoided. If possible, the project should be designed to avoid breeding pools/basins where spadefoot are located as well as a buffer of burrows within 860 feet (262 meters) from those breeding pools (Baumberger et. al. 2019).	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
Should avoidance not be possible, impacts to the occupied pools or basins, their banks, and other areas with small mammal burrows within 860 feet of the basins shall be compensated for. The ratio of compensation should be calculated by using *Calculating Biological Accurate Mitigation Credits: Insights from the California Tiger Salamander* (Searcy and Shaffer 2009). Compensation should occur on habitat that is in kind or higher quality habitat than that being impacted by the Project. Because mitigation banks do not currently offer spadefoot credits, and because California tiger salamanders typically occur within the same habitat, compensatory mitigation can occur by acquiring credits at an approved mitigation bank that also supports spadefoot on the property or by acquiring off-site land that supports spadefoot and protecting that land in perpetuity via a conservation easement.				
MM BIO-4 (Nesting Birds): If construction is planned outside the nesting period for raptors (other than the western burrowing owl; see MM BIO-6 for measures specific to BUOW) and migratory birds (the nesting period is generally accepted to be February 15 to August 31), no mitigation shall be required. If construction is planned during the nesting season for migratory birds and raptors, a preconstruction survey to identify active bird nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to evaluate the site being disturbed and a 50-foot buffer for migratory birds and a 250-foot buffer for raptors. If nesting birds are identified during the survey, active raptor nests shall be avoided by 250 feet and all other migratory bird nests shall be avoided by 25-50 feet based on the species, sensitivity of the individuals, and type of construction occurring or planned to occur nearby. The size of the avoidance buffer may be reduced if a qualified onsite monitor determines that encroachment into the buffer area is not affecting nest building, the rearing of young, or other breeding behaviors of the resident birds. Conversely, the avoidance buffer size may be increased if it is found that the nest is being impacted under the current buffer distance. Because nesting birds can establish new nests or produce a second or even third clutch at any time during the nesting season, the construction monitor will monitor for new nest starts throughout the nesting season. No construction or earth-moving activity shall occur within a non-disturbance buffer until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have fledged (i.e., left the nest) and have attained sufficient flight skills to avoid Project construction areas. Once the migratory birds or raptors have completed nesting and young have fledged, disturbance buffers will no longer be needed and can be removed, and monitoring can cease.	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM BIO-5 (Swainson's Hawks): The following measures shall be implemented to reduce potential impacts to Swainson's hawk: Nesting surveys for the Swainson's hawks shall be conducted in accordance with the protocol outlined in the *Recommended Timing and Methodology for Swainson's Hawk Nesting Surveys in California's Central Valley* (Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, 2000). The protocol recommends that the following visits be made to each nest or nesting site: one visit during January 1–March 20 to identify potential nest sites, three visits during March 20–April 5, three visits during April 5–April 20, and three visits during June 10–July 30. To meet the minimum level of protection for the species, the protocol requires surveys shall be completed for at least the two survey periods	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
immediately prior to Project-related ground-disturbance activities. If Swainson's hawks are not found to nest within the survey area, then no further action is warranted. If Swainson's hawks are found to nest within the 0.5-mile radius survey area, a qualified biologist must conduct construction monitoring on a daily basis, inspect the nest on a daily basis, and ensure that construction activities do not disrupt breeding behaviors during the nesting period until the chicks have fledged and are no longer reliant on the adults to survive. The construction monitor shall be a qualified biologist with expertise in Swainson's hawk nesting behavior. A construction-free buffer will be established around the nest. The size of the buffer shall be determined by a qualified biologist and may range between 250 feet and a half-mile based on observations of nesting behavior, which may change in response to a change in construction activity; this buffer may be adjusted based on the qualified monitoring biologist's observations of the nesting activity. Any reduction of buffer size must occur after the qualified biologist has observed the nesting activity enough to establish a baseline of regular activity. If a construction area falls within this construction-free buffer, construction must be delayed until the young have fledged. If a Swainson's hawk nest that is deemed to be an active nest needs to be removed, an Incidental Take Permit (ITP), pursuant to Section 2081(b) of the California Fish and Game Code, would be required. Compensation for the removal of the nest tree and loss of an active nest would require compensation. Minimum compensation would be to provide breeding habitat at a ratio of not less than 1:1 and foraging habitat at a ratio of not less than 2:1.				
MM BIO-6 (Burrowing Owl): A qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey on the Project site area being disturbed as well as any off-site impact areas and within 250 feet of its perimeter, where feasible, to identify the presence of the western burrowing owl. Preconstruction surveys shall be consistent with the take avoidance measures within the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG, 2012) which consists of two separate surveys, the first being within 14 days prior to the start of construction and the second being within 24 hours prior to the start of construction. If any burrowing owl burrows are observed during the preconstruction survey, avoidance measures shall be consistent with those included in the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG, 2012). If burrowing owls are found to occupy the Project site, any off-site impact areas, or within 250 feet of proposed construction activities and avoidance is not possible, burrow exclusion and passive relocation may be conducted by qualified biologists only during the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), before breeding behavior is exhibited, and after the burrow is confirmed empty through non-invasive methods (i.e., surveillance). Passive relocation efforts shall be carried out in accordance with the guidelines established by the California Burrowing Owl Consortium (1993) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (2012). Replacement or occupied burrows shall consist of artificial burrows at a ratio of 1 burrow collapsed to 1 artificial burrow constructed (1:1). Ongoing surveillance of the Project site during construction activities shall occur at a rate sufficient to detect Burrowing owl, if they return.	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
During the breeding season (February 1 through August 31), a construction-free buffer zone consistent with the table below, which is taken from the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG 2012) shall be established and maintained; the distance of the buffer zone shall be determined based on the season and level of disturbance. This construction-free buffer should be maintained unless a qualified biologist verifies through non-invasive methods that either the birds have not begun egg laying and incubation or that juveniles from the occupied burrows are foraging independently and are capable of independent survival.				

Location	Time of Year	Level of Disturbance		
		Low	Med	High
Nesting sites	April 1-Aug 15	200 m*	500 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Aug 16-Oct 15	200 m	200 m	500 m
Nesting sites	Oct 16-Mar 31	50 m	100 m	500 m

MM BIO-7 (Roosting Bats): A bat habitat assessment shall be conducted prior to removal of trees and structures; this can be conducted at any point prior to removal of trees and structures and may be conducted concurrently with the general wildlife survey (MM BIO-1) by a qualified biologist. The assessment shall identify which trees or structures support potential roosting habitat and outline recommendations moving forward. Potential habitat trees or structures shall be surveyed by a qualified biologist prior to their removal. For trees that cannot be seen into (i.e. trees with cavities, crevices, etc.), two-step removal may occur only during the volant seasons and outside of the maternity season (March 1-April 15 and September 1-October 15) with fair weather nights forecasted. Two-step removal shall occur over two consecutive days. On Day 1, a qualified biologist will direct trimming of potential habitat trees or modifications/selective deconstruction of structures in order to reduce their habitat suitability. On Day 2, the tree or structure will be removed. Nighttime emergence surveys shall not be conducted during the overwintering season (October 15-February 29). If a maternity colony (April 15-August 15) is observed during the survey, a construction-free buffer of 300 feet shall be established until the young have fledged.	Prior to Construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM BIO-8 (American Badgers): If an active badger den is identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), a construction-free buffer of up to 300 feet shall be established around the den. Once the biologist has determined that the badger has vacated the burrow, the burrow can be collapsed or excavated, and ground disturbance can proceed. Should the burrow be determined to be a natal or reproductive den, and because badgers are known to use multiple burrows in a breeding burrow complex, a biological monitor shall be present onsite during construction activities in the vicinity of the burrows to ensure the buffer is adequate to avoid direct impact to individuals or natal/reproductive den abandonment. The monitor will be required to be present until it is determined that young are of an independent age and construction activities would not harm individual badgers.	Prior to Construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
Unoccupied badger dens may be excavated provided that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the den has been monitored for at least five consecutive days and is deemed unoccupied by a qualified biologist; (2) the excavation is conducted by or under the direct supervision of a qualified biologist. Because badger dens can double as potential kit fox dens, badger den monitoring and excavation should be conducted in accordance with the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011).				
MM BIO-9 (San Joaquin Kit Fox): If potential kit fox dens are identified during the general wildlife surveys (MM BIO-1), a construction-free buffer of 300 feet will be established until the qualified biologist is able to determine if the den is active per the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). If the den is active, the USFWS and CDFW shall be notified immediately to determine a course of action. Unoccupied potential kit fox dens may be excavated provided that the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the den has been monitored for at least five consecutive days and is deemed unoccupied by a qualified biologist; (2) the excavation is conducted by or under the direct supervision of a qualified biologist. Den monitoring and excavation should be conducted in accordance with the *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance* (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). Additionally, the following BMPs relating to the San Joaquin kit fox shall be adhered to: a. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of kit fox or other animals during construction, the contractor shall cover all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than two-feet deep at the close of each workday with plywood or similar materials. If holes or trenches cannot be covered, one or more escape ramps constructed of earthen fill or wooden planks shall be installed in the trench. Before such holes or trenches are filled, the contractor shall thoroughly inspect them for entrapped animals. All construction-related pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of four inches or greater that are stored on the Project site shall be thoroughly inspected for wildlife before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If at any time an entrapped or injured kit fox is discovered, work in the immediate area shall be temporarily halted and USFWS and CDFW shall be consulted. b. Kit foxes are attracted to den-like structures, such as pipes, and may enter stored pipes and become trapped or injured. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of four inches or greater that are stored at a construction site for one or more overnight periods shall be thoroughly inspected for kit foxes before the pipe is subsequently buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If a kit fox is discovered inside a pipe, that section of pipe shall not be moved until the USFWS and CDFW has been consulted. If necessary, and under the direct supervision of the biologist, the pipe may be moved only once to remove it from the path of construction activity, until the fox has escaped. c. A representative shall be appointed by the Project Proponent who will be the contact source for any employee or contractor who might inadvertently kill or injure a kit fox or who finds a dead,	Prior to Construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
injured or entrapped kit fox. The representative shall be identified during the employee education program and their name and telephone number shall be provided to the USFWS. d. The Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office of USFWS and CDFW shall be notified in writing within three working days of the accidental death or injury to a San Joaquin kit fox during Project-related activities. Notification must include the date, time, and location of the incident or of the finding of a dead or injured animal and any other pertinent information. The USFWS contact is the Chief of the Division of Endangered Species, at the addresses and telephone numbers below. The CDFW contact can be reached at (559) 243-4014 and R4CESA@wildlifeca.gov. e. All sightings of the San Joaquin kit fox shall be reported to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). A copy of the reporting form and a topographic map clearly marked with the location of where the kit fox was observed shall also be provided to the Service at the address below.				
MM BIO-10 (General BMPs): During all construction-related activities, the following mitigation shall apply: a. All food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps shall be disposed of in securely closed containers and removed at least once a week from the construction or Project site. b. Construction-related vehicle traffic shall be restricted to established roads and predetermined ingress and egress corridors, staging, and parking areas. Vehicle speeds should not exceed 20 miles per hour (mph) within the Project site. c. No pets, such as dogs or cats, shall be permitted on the Project sites to prevent harassment, mortality of kit foxes, or destruction of dens. d. Use of anti-coagulant rodenticides and herbicides in Project areas shall be restricted. This is necessary to prevent primary or secondary poisoning of kit foxes and the depletion of prey populations on which they depend. All uses of such compounds shall observe label and other restrictions mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and other State and federal legislation, as well as additional Project-related restrictions deemed necessary by the USFWS and CDFW. If rodent control must be conducted, zinc phosphide shall be used because of the proven lower risk to kit foxes. e. Any Project-related information required by the USFWS or questions concerning the above conditions, or their implementation may be directed in writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at: Endangered Species Division, 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W 2605, Sacramento, California 95825-1846, phone (916) 414-6620 or (916) 414-6600.	Prior to Construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM CUL-1: If historic-era cultural resources or archeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, all work within 100 feet of the find shall halt until a qualified and independent archeologist can evaluate the find and make recommendations for treatment of these resources, if found to be significant, in consultation with the City, the Applicant, and the appropriate Native American groups. If the qualified archaeologist determines that the resource is not significant, grading and construction activities may continue. If the archeologist determines that the discovery represents a potentially significant find, the archeologist shall work with the City and the Applicant in developing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from Project implementation. Additional	During construction phase	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
mitigation may include avoidance, testing, and evaluation or data recovery excavation. Construction in the area of the find shall not commence until appropriate mitigation is implemented.				
MM CUL-2: If human remains are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, further evacuation or disturbance in the area of the discovery shall be prohibited until those activities required by Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code are completed. The specific protocol, guidelines, and channels of communication outlined by the Native American Heritage Commission, in accordance with Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code (Chapter 1492, Statues of 1982, Senate Bill 297), and Senate Bill 447 (Chapter 44, Statutes of 1987) shall be followed. Section 7050.5(c) shall guide the potential Native American involvement, in the event of discovery of human remains, at the direction of the County Coroner.	During construction phase	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM GEO-1: Prior to ground-disturbing activities, the Applicant shall prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that specifies best management practices (BMP), with the intent of keeping all products of erosion from moving offsite. The SWPPP shall include a site map that shows the construction site perimeter, existing and proposed manmade facilities, stormwater collection and discharge points, general topography both before and after construction, and drainage patterns across the Project site. Additionally, the SWPPP shall contain a visual monitoring program and a chemical monitoring program for non-visible pollutants to be implemented (if there is a failure of best management practices). The requirements of the SWPPP and BMPs shall be incorporated into design specifications and construction contracts. Recommended best management practices for the construction phase may include the following: • Stockpiling and disposing of demolition debris, concrete, and soil properly, • Protecting any existing storm drain inlets and stabilizing disturbed areas, • Implementing erosion controls, • Properly managing construction materials, and • Managing waste, aggressively controlling litter, and implementing sediment controls.	Prior to construction	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM GEO-2: During any ground disturbing activities, if paleontological resources are encountered, all work within 25 feet of the find shall halt until a qualified and independent paleontologist can evaluate the find and make recommendations regarding treatment of these resources if found to be significant, in consultation with the County and the Applicant. Paleontological resources materials may include resources such as fossils, plant impressions, or animal tracks preserved in rock. If the paleontologist determines that the discovery represents a potentially significant resource, the paleontologist shall work with the City and the Applicant in developing appropriate mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from project implementation. Construction in the area of the resource may not resume until appropriate mitigation is implemented. If the resources are not significant, avoidance is not necessary, and grading and construction activities may continue.	Prior to issuance of grading permits	Project Applicant/Lead Agency		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
MM HAZ-1: Prior to issuance of any Building Permits, the Applicant shall submit a Hazardous Materials Business/Response Plan. The Hazardous Materials Business/Response Plan will be in accordance with Madera County and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control policy and guidelines. The Materials Business/Response Plan will contain any acutely hazardous materials (AHM) that handles a minimum of 55 gallons of liquid, 500 pounds of solid, or 200 cubic feet of compressed gas, or any AHM that must be included in a business plan that requires an emergency response to a possible release of hazardous materials. The Project shall comply with proper handling, labeling, accumulation, and disposal of waste.	Prior to issuance of any building permits	Project Applicant/Lead Agency		
MM NSE-1: Construction shall be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. No construction shall occur on Sundays or national holidays without prior approval from the City.	During construction phase	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM TRA-1: Prior to Certificate of Occupancy being issued, the Project Proponent shall pay its fair share to the cost of intersection improvements by paying adopted City of Chowchilla development impact fees or those development impact fees identified in the Development Agreement for that portion of the Project being developed.	Prior to Certificate of Occupancy	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM TRA-2: Prior to Certificate of Occupancy being issued, the Project Proponent shall contribute its fair share to the cost of traffic control changes and median medication to lengthen the westbound left turn lane at the SR 233 (East Robertson Boulevard)/Chowchilla Boulevard intersection by paying adopted City of Chowchilla development impact fees or those development impact fees identified in the Development Agreement for that portion of the Project being developed.	Prior to Certificate of Occupancy	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		
MM TRA-3: Prior to recordation of the first Final Map, the Applicant shall submit a Safe Route to School Plan, which shall be created for the overall Project and implemented in consultation with CESD site representatives and City staff. The plan shall designate applicable routes and incorporate traffic control devices or adult crossing guards as needed. The Project Proponent shall be responsible for creating and implementing the Safe Routes to School Plan.	Prior to recordation of the first Final Map	Project Contractor/Lead Agency/CUSD		
MM TRA-4: In consultation with MMC and City of Chowchilla, the Project Proponent is responsible of constructing transit stops at key locations in and adjoining the Project as the community is built out, and transit routes/facilities shall be contemplated as the Project's commercial residential, and open space areas are developed.	During construction phase	Project Contractor/Lead Agency/MMC		

Mitigation Measure	Timeframe	Responsible Monitoring Agency	Date	Initial
MM TRI-1: Prior to the start of ground-disturbing activities, the Applicant shall retain the services of a qualified and independent archeologist who shall conduct cultural resources sensitivity training for all construction personnel. Construction personnel shall be informed of the types of prehistoric, historic-era cultural, and archeological resources that may be encountered, the proper procedures to be enacted in the event of an inadvertent discovery of prehistoric, historic-era cultural, or archeological resources of human remains, and safety precautions to be taken when working with archeological monitors. Construction personnel shall also be trained to identify Ash tree roots and proper protocol for preserving those roots. The Applicant shall ensure that construction personnel are made available for and attend the training and retain documentation demonstrating attendance.	During construction phase	Project Contractor/Lead Agency		

APPENDIX B

AIR QUALITY/GREENHOUSE GASES ASSESSMENT & ENERGY ANALYSIS MEMO

APPENDIX C

CULTURAL & PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX D

TRAFFIC IMPACT ANALYSIS