

## MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

**Project Title:** Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-20

**Project Description:** A request by Robert Gaalswyk to construct a new 22,500 square foot building for use as a retail gun store and indoor shooting range facility within the Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan, located in the C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial) zone.

**Project Location:** The property is located on the south side of West Flagstaff Avenue between North Demaree Street and North Leila Street. (Address: not yet assigned) (APN: 078-210-023).

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

**Attachments:**

Initial Study	(X)
Environmental Checklist	(X)
Maps	(X)
Noise Study	(X)
Mitigation Measures	(X)

**DECLARATION OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT:**


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

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

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

APPROVED

Brandon Smith, AICP  
Environmental Coordinator

By: 

Date Approved: June 28, 2023

Review Period: 21 days

## INITIAL STUDY

### I. GENERAL

**A. Description of the Project:** Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-20: A request by Robert Gaalswyk to construct a new 22,500 square foot building for use as a retail gun store and indoor shooting range facility within the Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan, located in the C-MU (Mixed Use Commercial) zone. The property is located on the south side of West Flagstaff Avenue between North Demaree Street and North Leila Street. (Address: not yet assigned) (APN: 078-210-023).

**B. Identification of the Environmental Setting:** The site is currently vacant and was previously graded as a part of The Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan development, which conceptually identified a grocery store for the pad site that never materialized. The shopping center is located at the northeast corner of North Demaree Street and West Riggan Avenue, which are existing four-lane streets adjacent to the west and south sides of the site. However, the project site within the shopping center directly abuts West Flagstaff Avenue to the north. The Visalia Circulation Element designates Demaree Street and Riggan Avenue both as Minor Arterial roadways, but Flagstaff Avenue as a local roadway.

The surrounding uses, Zoning, and General Plan are as follows:

	<u>General Plan</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Existing uses</u>
North:	Residential Medium Density	R-M-2 (Multi-Family Residential, 3,000 square foot minimum lot size)	W. Flagstaff Ave., Senior Housing Facility
South:	Commercial Mixed-use	Mixed-Use Commercial	Lowes Hardware Store
East:	Commercial Mixed-use	Mixed-Use Commercial	Vacant lot (part of the shopping center), N. Leila St.
West:	Commercial Mixed-use	Mixed-Use Commercial	Various commercial uses, (restaurant, applicant's existing gun shop, credit union).

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

**C. Plans and Policies:** The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates the site as Commercial Mixed-use and the Zoning Map designates the site as C-MU (Mixed-Use Commercial) which is consistent with the Land Use Element of the General Plan, and consistent with the standards for commercial zones development pursuant to the Visalia Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance) Chapter 17.18.

### II. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

No significant adverse environmental impacts have been identified for this project that cannot be mitigated to a *less than significant impact*. The City of Visalia Land Use Element and Zoning Ordinance contain policies and regulations that are designed to mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance.

### III. MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures, which are listed below, will reduce potential environmental impacts related to Noise to a less than significant level:

**Noise** – An Acoustical Analysis was prepared for the proposed project [ref.: Acoustical Analysis, Smokin' Barrel Indoor Shooting Range, W. Flagstaff Ave., WJV Acoustics, March 24, 2023]. The purpose of the study is to determine if noise levels associated with the proposed indoor shooting range will comply with the City's applicable noise level standards upon the existing residential uses to the north and east. The analysis concluded that noise levels associated with the proposed indoor shooting range operations are expected to exceed the City's exterior noise

level standards by up to 10dB. To ensure that community noise standards are met, based upon this analysis, proposed project construction will consist of 8-inch concrete-grouted CMU block walls at all exterior wall locations. Additionally, the project proposes the inclusion of a double-walled (secondary) 8-inch concrete-grouted CMU block walls along all exterior facades adjacent to the proposed firing range areas. Additionally, the ceiling would be constructed with hanging steel baffles, 5/8" gypsum board attached to isolation clips and other specific materials which provide added noise attenuation).

Therefore, to ensure that community noise standards are met for the proposed project, the project site shall be developed in substantial compliance with the mitigation contained in the "Conclusions and Recommendations" section of the above-referenced Acoustical Analysis. As described in the analysis, the following measures shall contain the following:

- 1) Exterior wall/façade construction to consist of 8-inch concrete-grouted CMU block walls at all exterior wall locations. Additionally, the project proposes the inclusion of a double walled (secondary) 8-inch concrete-grouted CMU block walls along all exterior facades facing sensitive receptor locations (north-facing and east-facing) and adjacent to the proposed firing range areas. The double-walled areas will include linear storage areas between the two CMU wall assemblies.
- 2) Ceiling to be constructed with hanging steel baffles, 5/8" gypsum board attached to isolation clips on 1-1/2" hat track, attached to a second layer of 5/8" gypsum board, attached to the ceiling framing of approximately 2-foot roof framing with 4-5" of open cell spray foam insulation, 1/2" plywood and 60-mil. TPO roofing.

Staff has incorporated these recommendations as required mitigation measures. Therefore, to ensure that noise requirements are met for the proposed project, the project shall be developed and shall operate in substantial compliance with the Mitigation Measures 1.1 and 1.2. These mitigation measures are included in Section IV below as part of this Initial Study.

The City of Visalia Zoning Ordinance also contains guidelines, criteria, and requirements for the mitigation of potential impacts related to light/glare, visibility screening, noise, and traffic/parking to eliminate and/or reduce potential impacts to a level of non-significance.

**IV. MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM**

<b><u>Mitigation Measure</u></b>	<b><u>Responsible Party</u></b>	<b><u>Timeline</u></b>
<b>Noise Impact Mitigation Measure 1.1:</b> The building shall be constructed with a double walled design with walls measuring 8-inch and made of concrete-grouted CMU block walls along the north and east facing facades.	Project Applicant	Building Plans shall demonstrate that the building is incorporating these design measures. The walls shall be constructed with the development of the shooting range and shall be completed prior to operation.
<b>Noise Impact Mitigation Measure 1.2:</b> The ceiling shall be built with hanging steel baffles, 5/8" gypsum board attached to isolation clips on 1-1/2" hat track, attached to a second layer of 5/8" gypsum board, attached to the ceiling framing of approximately 2-foot roof framing with 4-5" of open cell spray foam insulation, 1/2" plywood and 60-mil. TPO roofing	Project Applicant	Building Plans shall demonstrate that the building is incorporating these design measures. The ceiling shall be constructed with the development of the shooting range and shall be completed prior to operation.

## **V. PROJECT COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING ZONES AND PLANS**

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

## **VI. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

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

- Visalia General Plan Update. Dyett & Bhatia, October 2014.
- Visalia City Council Resolution No. 2014-38 (Certifying the Visalia General Plan Update), passed and adopted October 14, 2014.
- Visalia General Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2010041078). Dyett & Bhatia, June 2014.
- Visalia General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2010041078). Dyett & Bhatia, March 2014.
- Visalia City Council Resolution No. 2014-37 (Certifying the EIR for the Visalia General Plan Update), passed and adopted October 14, 2014.
- Visalia Municipal Code, including Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance).
- California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines.
- City of Visalia, California, Climate Action Plan, Draft Final. Strategic Energy Innovations, December 2013.
- Visalia City Council Resolution No. 2014-36 (Certifying the Visalia Climate Action Plan), passed and adopted October 14, 2014.
- City of Visalia Storm Water Master Plan. Boyle Engineering Corporation, September 1994.
- City of Visalia Sanitary Sewer Master Plan. City of Visalia, 1994.
- Tulare County Important Farmland 2014 Map. California Department of Conservation, 2014.
- Acoustical Analysis, Smokin' Barrel Indoor Shooting Range. WJV Acoustics, March 24, 2023.

## **VII. NAME OF PERSON WHO PREPARED INITIAL STUDY**

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Josh Dan  
Senior Planner



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Brandon Smith  
Environmental Coordinator

**INITIAL STUDY  
 ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST**

<b>Name of Proposal</b>	Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-20		
<b>NAME OF PROPONENT:</b>	Robert Gaalswyk, Smokin' Barrel Firearms	<b>NAME OF AGENT:</b>	Eric McConnaughey, EBM Design Group, Inc.
<b>Address of Proponent:</b>	4412 W. Ferguson Ave. Visalia, CA 93291	<b>Address of Agent:</b>	4412 W. Ferguson Ave. Visalia, CA 93291
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	559-732-9236	<b>Telephone Number:</b>	559-732-9236
<b>Date of Review</b>	June 20, 2023	<b>Lead Agency:</b>	City of Visalia

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

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

**I. AESTHETICS**

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

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

**II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

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

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

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

**III. AIR QUALITY**

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

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

**IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Would the project:

- 2 a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
- 1 b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
- 1 c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?
- 2 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?

- 1 e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?
- 1 f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

#### V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

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

#### VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

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

#### VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

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

#### VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- 2 a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

- 2 b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

#### IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

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

#### X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

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

#### XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- 1 a) Physically divide an established community?

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

#### XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

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

#### XIII. NOISE

Would the project result in:

- 3 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?
- 1 b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?
- 1 c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

#### XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

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

#### XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- 1 a) 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 other performance objectives for any of the public services:
- 1 i) Fire protection?
- 1 ii) Police protection?
- 1 iii) Schools?
- 1 iv) Parks?
- 1 v) Other public facilities?

#### XVI. RECREATION

Would the project:

- 1 a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

- 1 b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

#### XVII. TRANSPORTATION / TRAFFIC

Would the project:

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

#### XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

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:

- 1 a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or
- 1 b) 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 Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

#### XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

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

#### XX. WILDFIRE

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

- 1 a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

- 1 b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?
- 1 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?
- 1 d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

**XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Would the project:

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

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

*Revised 2019*

*Authority: Public Resources Code sections 21083 and 21083.09*

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



## DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

### I. AESTHETICS

- a. The proposed project is new commercial construction which will meet City standards for setbacks, landscaping and height restrictions.

This project will not adversely affect the view of any scenic vistas. The Sierra Nevada mountain range may be considered a scenic vista and the view will not be adversely impacted by the project.

- b. There are no scenic resources on the site.
- c. The proposed project includes commercial development that will be aesthetically consistent with surrounding development and with policies in the General Plan. Furthermore, the City has development standards related to landscaping and other amenities that will ensure that the visual character of the area is enhanced and not degraded. Thus, the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings.
- d. The project will create new sources of light that are typical of commercial development. The City has development standards that require that light be directed and/or shielded so it does not fall upon adjacent properties.

A conceptual photometric plan for the proposed development has been provided, demonstrating the lighting fixtures installed throughout and directed toward the interior of the site. The on-site lighting for the commercial facility is directed and focused so as to avoid direct illumination spilling beyond the site boundaries into the adjacent residential uses, as required under Section 17.30.015.H of the Zoning Ordinance. The conceptual photometric plan demonstrate that lighting for the proposed uses along the respective property lines primarily do not exceed 0.5 lumens. A condition will be included with the Conditional Use Permit requiring compliance with the 0.5 lumen standard at property line, in particular to the south where scattered residential uses are located.

### II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

- a. The project is located on property that is identified as Urban and Built Up Land based on maps prepared by the California Department of Conservation and contained within the Visalia General Plan, Figure 6-4.

The Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has already considered the environmental impacts of the conversion of properties within the Planning Area into non-agriculture uses. Overall, the General Plan results in the conversion of over 14,000 acres of Important Farmland to urban uses, which is considered significant and unavoidable. Aside from preventing development altogether the conversion of Important Farmland to urban uses cannot be directly mitigated, through the use of agricultural conservation easements or by other means. However, the General Plan contains multiple policies that together work to limit conversion only to the extent needed

to accommodate long-term growth. The General Plan policies identified under Impact 3.5-1 of the EIR serve as the mitigation that assists in reducing the severity of the impact to the extent possible while still achieving the General Plan's goals of accommodating a certain amount of growth to occur within the Planning Area. These policies include the implementation of a three-tier growth boundary system that assists in protecting open space around the City fringe and maintaining compact development within the City limits.

- b. The project site is not zoned for agricultural use. The project is bordered by urban development or non-producing vacant land on all sides. There are no known Williamson Act contracts on any properties within the project area.
- c. There is no forest or timber land currently located on the site.
- d. There is no forest or timber land currently located on the site.
- e. The project will not involve any changes that would promote or result in the conversion of farmland to non-agriculture use. The subject property is currently designated for an urban rather than agricultural land use. Properties that are vacant may develop in a way that is consistent with their zoning and land use designated at any time. The adopted Visalia General Plan's implementation of a three-tier growth boundary system further assists in protecting open space around the City fringe to ensure that premature conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses does not occur.

### III. AIR QUALITY

- a. The project site is located in an area that is under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The project in itself does not disrupt implementation of the San Joaquin Regional Air Quality Management Plan, and will therefore be a less than significant impact.
- b. Development under the Visalia General Plan will result in emissions that will exceed thresholds established by the SJVAPCD for PM10 and PM2.5. The project will contribute to a net increase of criteria pollutants and will therefore contribute to exceeding the thresholds. Also the project could result in short-term air quality impacts related to dust generation and exhaust due to construction and grading activities. This site was evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update EIR for conversion into urban development. Development under the General Plan will result in increases of construction and operation-related criteria pollutant impacts, which are considered significant and unavoidable. General Plan policies identified under Impacts 3.3-1 and 3.3-2 serve as the mitigation which assists in reducing the severity of the impact to the extent possible while still achieving the General Plan's goals of accommodating a certain amount of growth to occur within the Planning Area.

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

In addition, development of the project will be subject to the SJVAPCD Indirect Source Review (Rule 9510) procedures that became effective on March 1, 2006. The Applicant will be required to obtain permits demonstrating compliance with Rule 9510, or payment of mitigation fees to the SJVAPCD.

- c. Tulare County is designated non-attainment for certain federal ozone and state ozone levels. The project will result in a net increase of criteria pollutants. This site was evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update EIR for conversion into urban development. Development under the General Plan will result in increases of construction and operation-related criteria pollutant impacts, which are considered significant and unavoidable. General Plan policies identified under Impacts 3.3-1, 3.3-2, and 3.3-3 serve as the mitigation which assists in reducing the severity of the impact to the extent possible while still achieving the General Plan's goals of accommodating a certain amount of growth to occur within the Planning Area.

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

In addition, development of the project will be subject to the SJVAPCD Indirect Source Review (Rule 9510) procedures that became effective on March 1, 2006. The Applicant will be required to obtain permits demonstrating compliance with Rule 9510, or payment of mitigation fees to the SJVAPCD.

- d. The proposed project will not involve the generation of objectionable odors that would affect a substantial number of people.

#### **IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

- a. The site has no known species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project would therefore not have a substantial adverse effect on a sensitive, candidate, or special species.

In addition, staff had conducted an on-site visit to the site in June 2023 to observe biological conditions and did not observe any evidence or symptoms that would suggest the presence of a sensitive, candidate, or special species.

City-wide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR concluded that certain special-status species or their habitats may be directly or indirectly affected by future development within the General Plan Planning Area. This may be through the removal of or

disturbance to habitat. Such effects would be considered significant. However, the General Plan contains multiple polices, identified under Impact 3.8-1 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts on special-status species likely to occur in the Planning Area. With implementation of these policies, impacts on special-status species will be less than significant.

- b. The project is not located within or adjacent to an identified sensitive riparian habitat or other natural community.

City-wide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR concluded that certain sensitive natural communities may be directly or indirectly affected by future development within the General Plan Planning Area, particularly valley oak woodlands and valley oak riparian woodlands. Such effects would be considered significant. However, the General Plan contains multiple polices, identified under Impact 3.8-2 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts on woodlands located within in the Planning Area. With implementation of these policies, impacts on woodlands will be less than significant.

- c. The project is not located within or adjacent to federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

City-wide biological resources were evaluated in the Visalia General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR concluded that certain protected wetlands and other waters may be directly or indirectly affected by future development within the General Plan Planning Area. Such effects would be considered significant. However, the General Plan contains multiple polices, identified under Impact 3.8-3 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts on wetlands and other waters located within in the Planning Area. With implementation of these policies, impacts on wetlands will be less than significant.

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

- e. The project will not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. The City has a municipal ordinance in place to protect valley oak trees; however no oak trees exist on the site.

- f. There are no local or regional habitat conservation plans for the area.

#### **V. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

- a. There are no known historical resources located within the project area. If some potentially historical or cultural resource is unearthed during development all work should cease until a qualified professional archaeologist can

evaluate the finding and make necessary mitigation recommendations.

- b. There are no known archaeological resources located within the project area. If some archaeological resource is unearthed during development all work should cease until a qualified professional archaeologist can evaluate the finding and make necessary mitigation recommendations.
- c. There are no known human remains buried in the project vicinity. If human remains are unearthed during development all work should cease until the proper authorities are notified and a qualified professional archaeologist can evaluate the finding and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. In the event that potentially significant cultural resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities associated with project preparation, construction, or completion, work shall halt in that area until a qualified Native American tribal observer, archeologist, or paleontologist can assess the significance of the find, and, if necessary, develop appropriate treatment measures in consultation with Tulare County Museum, Coroner, and other appropriate agencies and interested parties.

#### **VI. ENERGY**

- a. Development of the site will require the use of energy supply and infrastructure. However, the use of energy will be typical of that associated with commercial development associated with the underlying zoning. Furthermore, the use is not considered the type of use or intensity that would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during construction or operation. The project will be required to comply with California Building Code Title 24 standards for energy efficiency.

Policies identified under Impacts 3.4-1 and 3.4-2 of the EIR will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level. With implementation of these policies and the existing City standards, impacts to energy will be less than significant.

- b. The project will not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency, based on the discussion above.

#### **VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

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

- d. Due to low clay content, soils in the Visalia area have an expansion index of 0-20, which is defined as very low potential expansion.
- e. The project does not involve the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems since sanitary sewer lines are used for the disposal of waste water at this location.
- f. There are no known unique paleontological resources or geologic features located within the project area. In the event that potentially significant cultural resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities associated with project preparation, construction, or completion, work shall halt in that area until a qualified Native American tribal observer, archeologist, or paleontologist can assess the significance of the find, and, if necessary, develop appropriate treatment measures in consultation with Tulare County Museum, Coroner, and other appropriate agencies and interested parties.

#### **VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**

- a. The project is expected to generate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the short-term as a result of the construction of commercial development and long-term as a result of day-to-day operation of the proposed business.

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

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

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

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

#### **IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

- a. No hazardous materials are anticipated with the project.
- b. Construction activities associated with development of the project may include maintenance of on-site construction equipment which could lead to minor fuel and oil spills. The use and handling of any hazardous materials during construction activities would occur in accordance with

applicable federal, state, regional, and local laws. Therefore, impacts are considered to be less than significant.

- c. There is one school located within 0.45 miles of the project site. The school is located 2,387-feet northeast of the project site (Shannon Ranch Elementary School). Notwithstanding, there is no reasonably foreseeable condition or incident involving the project that could affect the site.
- d. The project area does not include any sites listed as hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65692.5.
- e. The Airport Master Plans adopted by City of Visalia and County of Tulare show the project area is located outside of any Airport Zones. There are no restrictions for the proposed project related to Airport Zone requirements.

The project area is not located within two miles of a public airport.

- f. The project will not interfere with the implementation of any adopted emergency response plan or evacuation plan.
- g. There are no wild lands within or near the project area.

**X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY**

- a. Development projects associated with buildout under the Visalia General Plan are subject to regulations which serve to ensure that such projects do not violate water quality standards of waste discharge requirements. These regulations include the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. State regulations include the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and more specifically the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), of which the project site area falls within the jurisdiction of.

Adherence to these regulations results in projects incorporating measures that reduce pollutants. The project will be required to adhere to municipal waste water requirements set by the Central Valley RWQCB and any permits issued by the agency.

Furthermore, there are no reasonably foreseeable reasons why the project would result in the degradation of water quality.

The Visalia General Plan contains multiple polices, identified under Impact 3.6-2 and 3.9-3 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts to water quality. With implementation of these polices and the existing City standards, impacts to water quality will be less than significant.

- b. The project area overlies the southern portion of the San Joaquin unit of the Central Valley groundwater aquifer. The project will result in an increase of impervious surfaces on the project site, which might affect the amount of precipitation that is recharged to the aquifer. However, as the City of Visalia is already largely developed and covered by impervious surfaces, the increase of impervious surfaces through this project will be small by comparison. The project therefore might affect the amount of precipitation that is recharged to the aquifer. The City of Visalia's water conservation measures and explorations

for surface water use over groundwater extraction will assist in offsetting the loss in groundwater recharge.

c.

- i. The development of this site will require movement of topsoil. Existing City Engineering Division standards require that a grading and drainage plan be submitted for review to the City to ensure that off- and on-site improvements will be designed to meet City standards.
- ii. Development of the site will create additional impervious surfaces. However, connection of the site to storm water drainage facilities that already exist in adjacent roadways will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

Polices identified under Impact 3.6-2 of the EIR will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level. With implementation of these polices and the existing City standards, impacts to groundwater supplies will be less than significant.

- iii. Development of the site will create additional impervious surfaces. However, connection of the site to storm water drainage facilities that already exist in adjacent roadways will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

Polices identified under Impact 3.6-2 of the EIR will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level. With implementation of these polices and the existing City standards, impacts to groundwater supplies will be less than significant.

Existing storm water mains are on site and the applicant will be connecting to service. Furthermore, the project will be required to meet the City's improvement standards for directing storm water runoff to the City's storm water drainage system consistent with the City's adopted City Storm Drain Master Plan. These improvements will not cause significant environmental impacts.

- d. The project area is located sufficiently inland and distant from bodies of water, and outside potentially hazardous areas for seiches and tsunamis. The site is also relatively flat, which will contribute to the lack of impacts by mudflow occurrence. Therefore, there will be no impact related to these hazards.
- e. Development of the site has the potential to affect drainage patterns in the short term due to erosion and sedimentation during construction activities and in the long term through the expansion of impervious surfaces. Impaired storm water runoff may then be intercepted and directed to a storm drain or water body, unless allowed to stand in a detention area. The City's existing standards may require the preparation and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in accordance with the SWRCB's General Construction Permit process, which would address erosion control measures.

The Visalia General Plan contains multiple polices, identified under Impact 3.6-1 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for erosion. With implementation of these polices and the existing City standards, impacts to erosion will be less than significant.

**XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING**

- a. The project will not physically divide an established community. The proposed project is to be developed on a 3.98-acre site and on land designated for commercial development. The project site is surrounded by urban development and is located within the Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan, bordered by the W. Flagstaff Avenue roadway to the north. Half of the parcel is already improved with a parking field lot, landscaping, and trellis features over pedestrian pathways.
- b. The project site is within the City of Visalia's Tier I Urban Development Boundary as implemented by the City General Plan. Development of lands in Tier I may occur at any time.

The proposed project is consistent with Land Use Policy LU-P-19 of the General Plan. Policy LU-P-19 states: "Ensure that growth occurs in a compact and concentric fashion by implementing the General Plan's phased growth strategy."

The proposed project will be consistent with the Land Use Element of the General Plan, and consistent with the standards for neighborhood commercial development pursuant to the Visalia Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance) Chapter 17.18.

The project as a whole does not conflict with any land use plan, policy or regulation of the City of Visalia. The site contains a General Plan Land Use Designation of Neighborhood Commercial and a Zoning Designation of C-MU (Mixed-Use Commercial). The City of Visalia's Zoning Ordinance conditionally permits indoor rifle and pistol ranges.

The Visalia General Plan contains multiple policies, identified under Impact 3.1-2 of the EIR, that together work to reduce the potential for impacts to the development of land as designated by the General Plan. With implementation of these policies and the existing City standards, impacts to land use development consistent with the General Plan will be less than significant.

The project does not conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan as it is located on a vacant dirt lot with no significant natural habitat present.

**XII. MINERAL RESOURCES**

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

**XIII. NOISE**

- a. The project will result in noise generation typical of urban development. The Visalia Noise Element and City Ordinance contain criterion for acceptable noise levels inside and outside residential living spaces. This standard is 65 dB DNL for outdoor activity areas associated with residences and 45 dB DNL for indoor areas.

An Acoustical Analysis was prepared for the proposed project, Acoustical Analysis, Smokin' Barrel Indoor Shooting Range W. Flagstaff Avenue, prepared by WJV Acoustics, Inc., March 24, 2023. The purpose of the study

was to determine if noise levels associated with the project will comply with the City's applicable noise level standards, particularly upon the existing senior-care facility to the north and single family residential to the east. The acoustical analysis is intended to determine project-related noise levels for all aspects of the proposed project.

The analysis concluded that noise levels associated with the proposed indoor shooting range operations would be expected to exceed the City's exterior noise level standard of 65dB. To ensure that community noise standards are met, the project shall construct an 8-inch concrete grouted CMU block walls at all exterior wall locations and include secondary interior 8-inch concrete grouted CMU block walls along interior portions where firearms will be discharged. The acoustical analysis has concluded that the placement of the interior wall and method for ceiling construction will allow for the shooting range to comply with City's Noise Element and Ordinance during business hours, describing that noise levels exterior to the would generally not be audible or measurable from a distance greater than 10-20 feet from the building facades.

Therefore, with firing range activities not expected to be audible at distances of greater than approximately twenty feet from the exterior facades, and would not be expected to be audible over existing ambient noise levels at any existing sensitive receptor location in the vicinity of the project site. The project site shall be developed in substantial compliance with the mitigation contained in the "Conclusions and Recommendations" section of the above-referenced Acoustical Analysis. As described in the analysis, the following measures shall contain the following:

- 1) Exterior wall/façade construction to consist of 8-inch concrete-grouted CMU block walls at all exterior wall locations. Additionally, the project proposes the inclusion of a double walled (secondary) 8-inch concrete-grouted CMU block walls along all exterior facades facing sensitive receptor locations (north-facing and east-facing) and adjacent to the proposed firing range areas. The double-walled areas will include linear storage areas between the two CMU wall assemblies.
- 2) Ceiling to be constructed with hanging steel baffles, 5/8" gypsum board attached to isolation clips on 1-1/2" hat track, attached to a second layer of 5/8" gypsum board, attached to the ceiling framing of approximately 2-foot roof framing with 4-5" of open cell spray foam insulation, 1/2" plywood and 60-mil. TPO roofing

Staff has incorporated these recommendations as required mitigation measures. Therefore, to ensure that noise requirements are met for the proposed project, the project shall be developed and shall operate in substantial compliance with the Mitigation Measures 1.1 and 1.2. These mitigation measures are included as part of this Initial Study.

Noise levels will increase temporarily during the construction of the project but shall remain within the limits defined by the City of Visalia Noise Ordinance. Temporary increase in ambient noise levels is considered to be less than significant.

- b. Ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels may occur as part of construction activities associated with the project. Construction activities will be temporary and will not expose persons to such vibration or noise levels for an extended period of time; thus the impacts will be less than significant. There are no existing uses near the project area that create ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels.
- c. The project area is located in excess of two miles from a public airport. The project will not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels resulting from aircraft operations.

**XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING**

- a. The project will not directly induce substantial unplanned population growth that is in excess of that planned in the General Plan.
- b. Development of the site will not displace any housing or people on the site. The area being developed is currently vacant land.

**XV. PUBLIC SERVICES**

- a.
  - i. Current fire protection facilities are located at the Visalia Station 54, located approximately 2.0-mile east of the property, and can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration. Impact fees will be paid to mitigate the project's proportionate impact on these facilities.
  - ii. Current police protection facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration. Impact fees will be paid to mitigate the project's proportionate impact on these facilities.
  - iii. The project will not generate new students for which existing schools in the area may accommodate.
  - iv. Current park facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration. Impact fees will be paid to mitigate the project's proportionate impact on these facilities.
  - v. Other public facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration.

**XVI. RECREATION**

- a. The proposed project does not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities within the area that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. The project will not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks as no residential uses are proposed.
- b. The proposed project does not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities within the area that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

**XVII. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC**

- a. Development and operation of the project is not anticipated to conflict with applicable plans, ordinances, or policies establishing measures of effectiveness of the City's circulation system. The project will result in an increase in traffic levels on arterial and collector roadways, although the City of Visalia's Circulation Element has been prepared to address this increase in traffic.

- b. Development of the site will result in increased traffic in the area, but will not cause a substantial increase in traffic on the city's existing circulation pattern.

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

For the metric measuring VMT per trip distance, a map of the City of Visalia, produced by Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG), provides areas with 84% or less average VMT per trip distance, or 16% below the regional average. In the subject site's TAZ, the current average trip distance experienced is 14.7537 miles, which is above the average county-wide trip distance of 11.9 miles and the 16% target reduction of 9.76 miles. However, the project site was established with the Village at Willow Creek Specific Plan and this specific pad site was assessed for a grocery store. The proposed shooting range is expected to be a lesser trip generator than the initially accounted for grocery by having only 12 employees (eight fulltime and 4 part-time) and 27 shooting lanes. Based on operational descriptions provided by the applicant, the use is not expected to generate more than 350 trips daily compared to 4,567 trips daily (87.82 per 1,000 sq. ft. ref. Land Use 850) if the site were developed with a grocery store use. Under the Guidelines, the project is screened out from creating a significant impact since the project will generate less than 1,000 trips daily and is consistent with the City's General Plan and current zoning. As proposed, the project is consistent with the General Plan and will comply with Chapter 17.19 Mixed Use Zone development standards, and the development standards of the Specific Plan. Hence, the proposal is screened out of performing a VMT analysis and the project will have a less than significant impact with regards to compliance with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b). The Technical Advisory further states that lead agencies may screen out VMT impacts using maps created with VMT data from a traffic demand model.

- c. There are no planned geometric designs associated with the project that are considered hazardous.
- d. The project will not result in inadequate emergency access.

**XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe.

- a. The site is not listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of

historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k).

- b. The site has been determined to not be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Pre-consultations letters were sent to local tribes in accordance with AB 52, providing tribes a 30-day early review period. Staff did receive correspondence from the Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi-Yokut Tribe requesting monitors on site for all round disturbance, which has been forwarded to the applicant.

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

**XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS**

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

Existing sanitary sewer and storm water mains are on site and the applicant will be connecting to services. Usage of these lines is consistent with the City Sewer System Master Plan and Storm Water Master Plan. These improvements will not cause significant environmental impacts.

- b. The project will not result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.
- c. The City has determined that there is adequate capacity existing to serve the site's projected wastewater treatment demands at the City wastewater treatment plant.
- d. Current solid waste disposal facilities can adequately serve the site without a need for alteration.

- e. The project will be able to meet the applicable regulations for solid waste. Removal of debris from construction will be subject to the City's waste disposal requirements.

**XX. WILDFIRE**

- a. The project is located on a site that is adjacent on multiple sides by existing development. The site will be further served by multiple points of access. In the event of an emergency response, coordination would be made with the City's Engineering, Police, and Fire Divisions to ensure that adequate access to and from the site is maintained.
- b. The project area is relatively flat and the underlying soil is not known to be unstable. Therefore, the site is not in a location that is likely to exacerbate wildfire risks.
- c. The project is located on a site that is adjacent on multiple sides by existing development. New project development will require the installation and maintenance of associated infrastructure extending from adjacent off-site locations to the project site; however the infrastructure would be typical of commercial development and would be developed to the standards of the underlying responsible agencies.
- d. The project area is relatively flat and the underlying soil is not known to be unstable. Therefore, the site is not in a location that would expose persons or structures to significant risks of flooding or landslides.

**XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

- a. The project will not affect the habitat of a fish or wildlife species or a plant or animal community. This site was evaluated in the Program EIR (SCH No. 2010041078) for the City of Visalia's General Plan Update for conversion to urban use. The City adopted mitigation measures for conversion to urban development. Where effects were still determined to be significant a statement of overriding considerations was made.
- b. This site was evaluated in the Program EIR (SCH No. 2010041078) for the City of Visalia General Plan Update for the area's conversion to urban use. The City adopted mitigation measures for conversion to urban development. Where effects were still determined to be significant a statement of overriding considerations was made.
- c. This site was evaluated in the Program EIR (SCH No. 2010041078) for the City of Visalia General Plan Update for conversion to urban use. The City adopted mitigation measures for conversion to urban development. Where effects were still determined to be significant a statement of overriding considerations was made.

## DETERMINATION OF REQUIRED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

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



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Brandon Smith, AICP  
Environmental Coordinator

June 28, 2023

Date



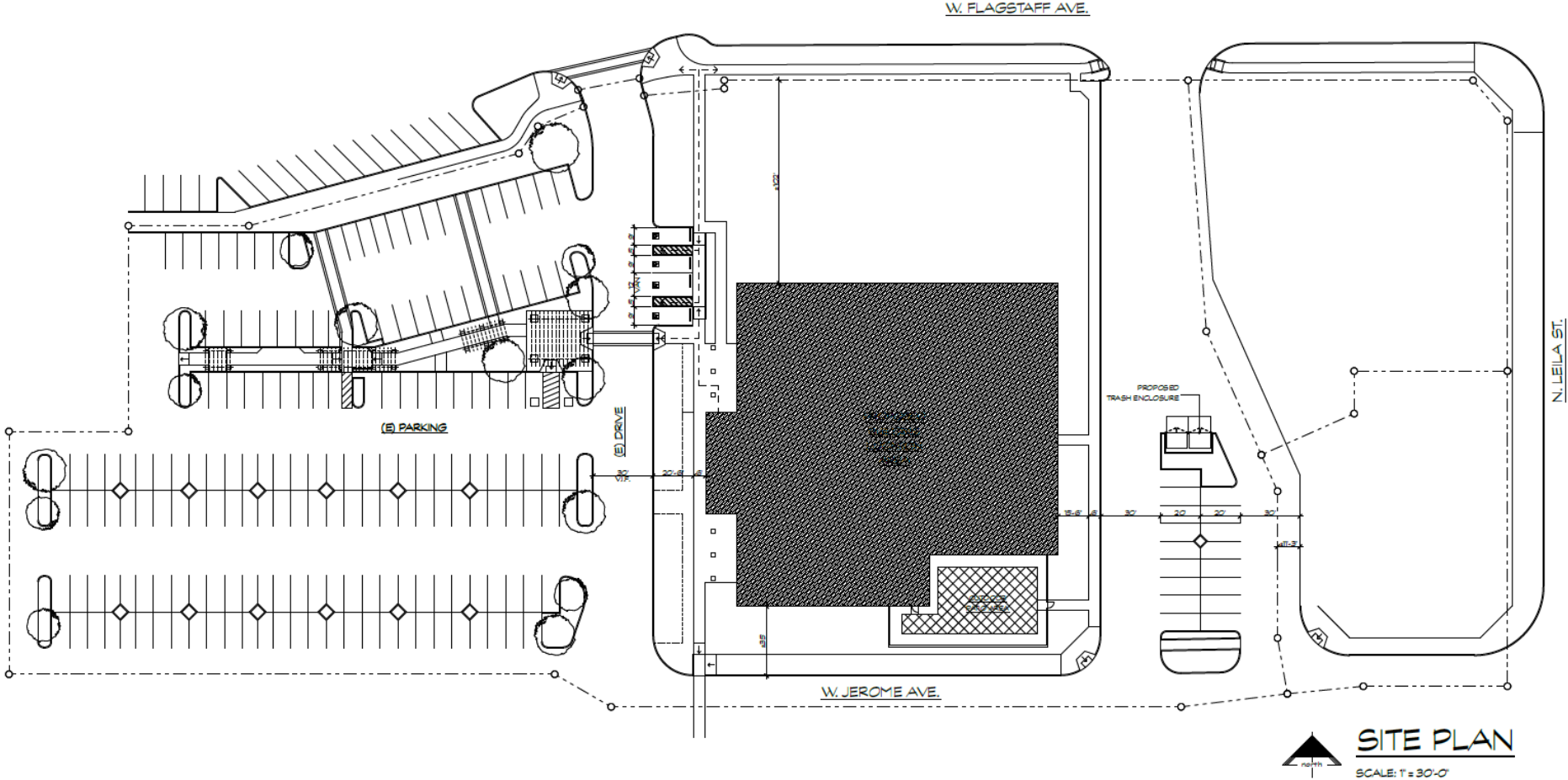


Figure No. 1

