

NOTICE OF INTENT
ATWATER BELLEVUE ROAD RECONSTRUCTION/REALIGNMENT PROJECT – MITIGATED NEGATIVE
DECLARATION

LEAD AGENCY:

Atwater Community Development Dept., Planning Division
750 Bellevue Road
Atwater, CA 95301
(209) 357-6340

IS/MND CONSULTANT:

De Novo Planning Group
1020 Suncast Lane, Suite 106
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
(916) 580-9818

Pursuant to the State of California Public Resources Code and the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this notice is to advise you that the City of Atwater intends to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the proposed project described below.

PROJECT TITLE: Atwater Bellevue Road Reconstruction/Realignment Project

PROJECT LOCATION: The proposed Project would begin on existing Bellevue Road between Olive Avenue and Grove Avenue to the west and end at the intersection of Parade Street and Bellevue Road to the east. The proposed Project would restore Bellevue Road as a major entry to the northern portion of the City of Atwater (City), providing a direct route between SR-99, the City of Atwater and the Castle Commerce Center to the east, and would reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The Project site is generally flat and traverses mostly orchards and open fields.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The City of Atwater, in partnership with the County of Merced (County), initiated a Project Study Report-Project Development Support (PSR-PDS) to evaluate improvements to a major collector road alignment that would help relieve congestion and improve traffic flow through the City along Bellevue Road. The City now proposes to move forward with right-of-way acquisition, improvement plan design, and construction of an approximately 1.6-mile-long, 4-lane arterial road in Merced County. The proposed road would begin between Olive Avenue and Grove Avenue, east of State Route 99. Bellevue Road would be realigned south of the existing Bellevue Road, then conform near the intersection of Parade Street and Bellevue Road. New intersection connections would be required at Vine Avenue and Orchard Park Avenue. The proposed Project would also include Class IV bike lanes. All improvements would be designed to the City of Atwater Standards.

The proposed Project would provide connectivity between State Route 99 and the heart of Atwater, as well as the Castle Commerce Center located near the east side of the City. Currently, Bellevue Road is a public road, closed to the public (between Vine Avenue and Orchard Park) under a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) #3721 approved for Dole Packaged Foods between Vine Avenue and Orchard Park Avenue. This causes an additional 2.5 miles of travel to navigate to the State Route 99/West Side interchange from the City. The road realignment would provide a direct route and reduce VMT.

For more details regarding the project background, project characteristics, objectives, entitlements, circulation improvements, and utilities improvements, please see the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration available at: <https://www.atwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Atwater-Bellevue-Rd-IS-MND-final-7-2-24submittal.pdf>

FINDINGS/DETERMINATION: The City of Atwater has reviewed and considered the proposed Project and has determined that the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment, based on substantial supporting evidence provided in the Initial Study. The City proposes to adopt an MND for this Project in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: A 30-day public review period for the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration will commence on July 15, 2024 and will end on August 14, 2024 for interested individuals and public agencies to submit written comments on the document. Written comments concerning the Initial Study/Mitigated

Negative Declaration are due by 5:00 p.m. on August 14, 2024 and should be submitted to the attention of Greg Thompson, Deputy City Manager/Community Development Director at the City of Atwater, 750 Bellevue Road, Atwater, CA 95301; or by e-mail to gthompson@atwater.org.

If we do not receive a response from your agency/organization, we will presume that your agency/organization has no response to make. Copies of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration can be reviewed at the City of Atwater, located at the address above, during normal business hours, and online at: <https://www.atwater.org/community-development/>

QUESTIONS: Questions regarding the City of Atwater's review of the Project or MND may be directed to Greg Thompson, Deputy City Manager/Community Development Director, at the address above or at (209) 357-6300 or gthompson@atwater.org.