Council Agenda Report

Item 7b

Department: Community Development
Cost Center: 4003
For Agenda of: 9/7/2021
Placement: Public Hearing
Estimated Time: 90 Minutes

FROM: Michael Codron, Community Development Director
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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF A TENTATIVE TRACT MAP (TRACT 3157) TO CREATE 23 RESIDENTIAL LOTS ON A 4.98-ACRE SITE WITHIN THE LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (R-1) ZONE (500 WESTMONT DRIVE)

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution entitled, "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo, California, approving Tentative Tract Map No. 3157 to create twenty-three (23) residential lots in the Low-Density (R-1) Zone and adopting the Associated Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as represented in the staff report and attachments dated September 7, 2021 (SBDV-0169-2020/EID-0170-2020, 500 Westmont Drive)."

REPORT-IN-BRIEF

The Planning Commission has recommended approval of the proposed project, which is a Tentative Tract Map (Attachment B) that would subdivide a 4.98-acre parcel into 23 residential lots. As conditioned, the proposed subdivision is consistent with Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, and applicable engineering standards. No residential development is proposed at this time; however, recordation of the map would require the installation of public improvements, including new roads, water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure (Attachment C, Tentative Tract Map & Phasing Plan). The Planning Commission has also recommended adoption of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, fulfilling requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Attachment D).

DISCUSSION

Background

The project proposes 23 residential lots on a 4.98-acre site zoned for residential use (R-1). The proposed lots are consistent with the Subdivision Regulations standards for lot size and dimensions and the proposed streets and other improvements are consistent with current engineering standards. No exceptions to the subdivision regulations are proposed. The project site has a creek that crosses the western portion of the site.

Lots have been proposed in an arrangement that allows for minimum 20-foot creek setbacks to be applied to those lots adjacent to the creek (Lots 1-7) and allow for an adequate buildable area outside those applied setbacks (Figure 1, Subdivision Design, below). To accommodate the onsite improvements, 86 native and non-native trees would be removed, 51 of which are subject compensatory planting requirements in the R-1 zone.

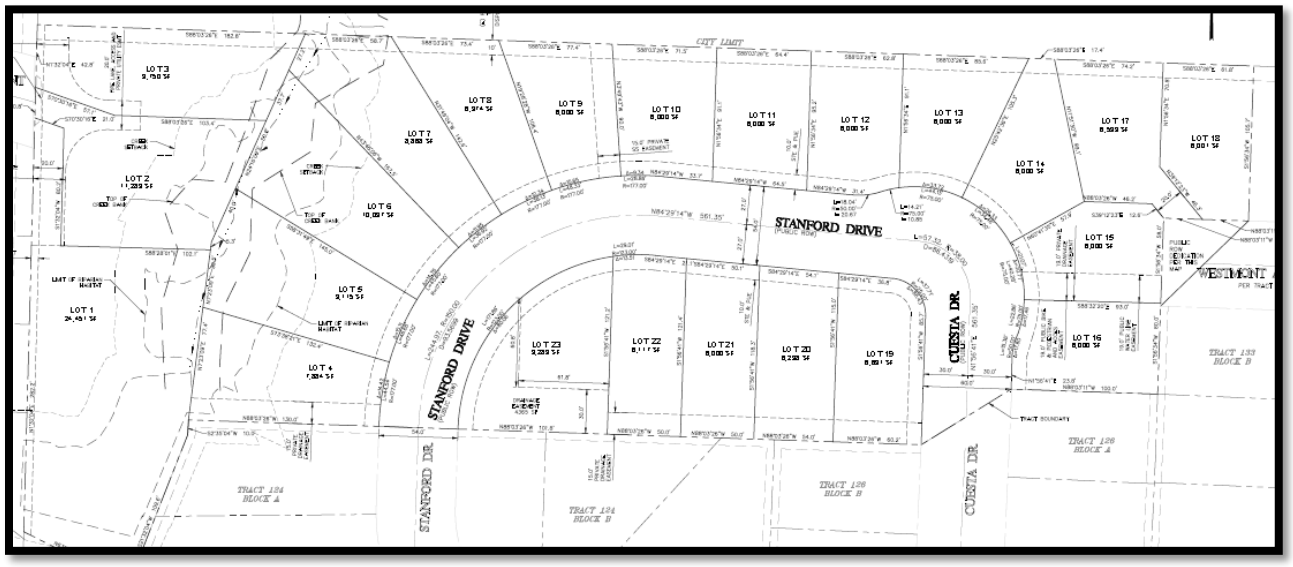

Figure 1: Subdivision Design

The project site is located adjacent to the northern city limit line just west of Highway 1. The 4.98-acre site is located at the terminus of the east and west portions of Westmont Avenue and the northern terminus of Cuesta Drive and Stanford Drive. Existing development on the project site includes two residential structures and associated accessory structures, a pool, and other site improvements. Vegetation on the property includes a vegetated creek with associated riparian habitat that extends through the western portion of the site. The site is generally comprised of developed land, riparian habitat, and annual grassland. There are 177 ornamental and native trees throughout the project site.

Surrounding land and Zoning are as follows:

West: Single-family homes, zoned Low-Density Residential (R-1).
North: Cal Fire San Luis Obispo Unit Headquarters (Fire Station #12), outside city limits, zoned for Agricultural or Public Facility use.
East: Single- & multi-family homes, zoned Low-Density (R-1) and Medium-Density (R-2).
South: Single-family homes, zoned Low-Density Residential (R-1).

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action
On July 28, 2021, the Planning Commission (PC) recommended approval of the TTM to the City Council (Attachment E, Planning Commission Staff Report and Meeting Minutes, 7-28-21). The PC had previously reviewed the project on May 26, 2021. The result of the May 26th hearing was a motion to continue the item to allow for the completion of the 30-day public comment period on the draft environmental document, and to allow additional information and clarifications to be incorporated that address public comments (Attachment F, Planning Commission Staff Report and Meeting Minutes, 5-26-21). As a part of the PC's recommendation to approve the project, the commission added one additional condition requiring the applicant to prepare and implement a Construction Communication Plan. The PC also asked City staff to provide the City Council with its analysis of alternative traffic and circulation options, which is included in this report.

The Planning Commission's recommendation incorporated the recommendations of the City's Tree Committee, which reviewed the project on May 17, 2021, for consistency with the Tree Regulations. The Tree Committee recommended the PC find the proposed tree removals consistent with the City's Tree Regulations, with the inclusion of the recommended condition of approval (COA #5) for compensatory planting (Attachment E, Tree Committee Staff Report and Meeting Minutes).

Policy Context
The project is evaluated against the standards and limitations of the Subdivision Regulations and General Plan policies. The project aligns with the housing production Major City Goal because it will result in 23 lots for single-family residential development from one existing property.

1. **Consistency with the General Plan**
   The General Plan Land Use Element (LUE), Circulation Element (CE), and Housing Element (HE) provide policies for the conservation and development of residential neighborhoods. The Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) also provides policies to preserve and protect natural resources on the project site. The project is consistent with these policies in several aspects.

   LUE Policy 2.2.3 Neighborhood Traffic: *Neighborhoods should be protected from intrusive traffic. All neighborhood street and circulation improvements should favor pedestrians, bicyclists, and local traffic. Vehicle traffic on residential streets should be slow. To foster suitable traffic speed, street design should include measures such as narrow lanes, landscaped parkways, traffic circles, textured crosswalks, and, if necessary, stop signs, speed humps, bollards, and on-street parking and sidewalks.*

LUE Policy 2.2.4 Neighborhood Connections: *The City shall provide all areas with a pattern of streets, pedestrian network, and bicycle facilities that promote neighborhood and community cohesiveness. There should be continuous sidewalks or paths of adequate width, connecting neighborhoods with each other and with public and commercial services and public open space to provide continuous pedestrian paths throughout the city. Connectivity to nearby community facilities (such as parks and schools), open space, and supporting commercial areas shall also be enhanced, but shall not be done in a method that would increase cut-through traffic.*

CE Policy 4.1.4 New Development: *The City shall require that new development provide bikeways, secure bicycle storage, parking facilities and showers consistent with City plans and development standards. When evaluating transportation impacts, the City shall use a Multimodal Level of Service analysis.*

CE Policy 5.1.3 New Development: *New development shall provide sidewalks and pedestrian paths consistent with City policies, plans, programs, and standards. When evaluating transportation impact, the City shall use a Multimodal Level of Service analysis.*

HE Policy 7.3: *New residential developments should incorporate pedestrian and bicycle linkages that provide direct, convenient and safe access to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, parks, and shopping areas.*

The design of the subdivision protects the existing neighborhood from intrusive traffic by only connecting the two existing streets to the south, avoiding any increase in cut-through traffic between other existing neighborhoods and Highway 1. The subdivision design also incorporates a potential bicycle and pedestrian connection to the east, as well as parkways, on-street parking, and sidewalks (Figure 2, Subdivision Design Circulation Connections).

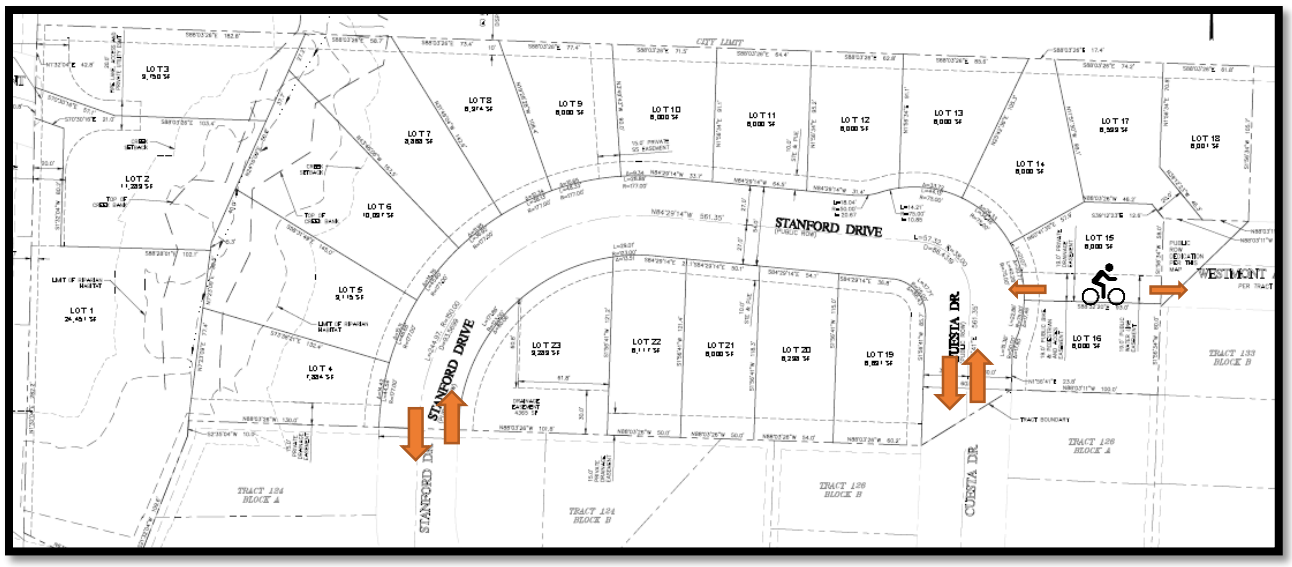

Figure 2: Subdivision Design Circulation Connections

LUE Policy 2.3.5. Neighborhood Pattern: *The City shall require that all new residential development be integrated with existing neighborhoods. Where physical features make this impossible, the new development should create new neighborhoods.*

The design of the subdivision integrates with the existing neighborhood by continuing the street layout of Stanford and Cuesta Drive, including street width, sidewalks, and parkways (see Figure 3 as example).

Figure 3: Cuesta Drive Street Design Connection to Existing

LUE Policy 2.3.7. Natural Features: *The City shall require residential developments to preserve and incorporate as amenities natural site features, such as landforms, views, creeks, wetlands, wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, and plants.*

LUE Policy 2.3.10 Site Constraints: *The City shall require new residential developments to respect site constraints such as property size and shape, ground slope, access, creeks and wetlands, wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, native vegetation, and significant trees.*

COSE Policy 7.7.9 Creek Setback
A. *The following items should be no closer to the wetland or creek than the setback line: buildings, streets, driveways, parking lots, above-ground utilities, and outdoor commercial storage or work areas.*
B. *Development approvals should respect the separation from creek banks and protection of floodways and natural features identified in part A above (buildings, streets, driveways, etc.), whether or not the setback line has been established.*

The TTM identifies the dimensions of the creek and existing riparian area. The lots proposed adjacent to the creek are a larger size (7,884 to 24,451 sf where 6,000 sf is the standard minimum lot size in the R-1 zone) so that creek protection measures, such as compliance with the applied 20-foot creek setback requirements, can be met and still allow development of the created parcel. The TTM also proposes no development or grading activities in the southwest corner of the site, where the creek and associated vegetation is most prominent and established. In all, over 60 coast live oaks, will be retained within the protected creek corridor area, as well as other native species.

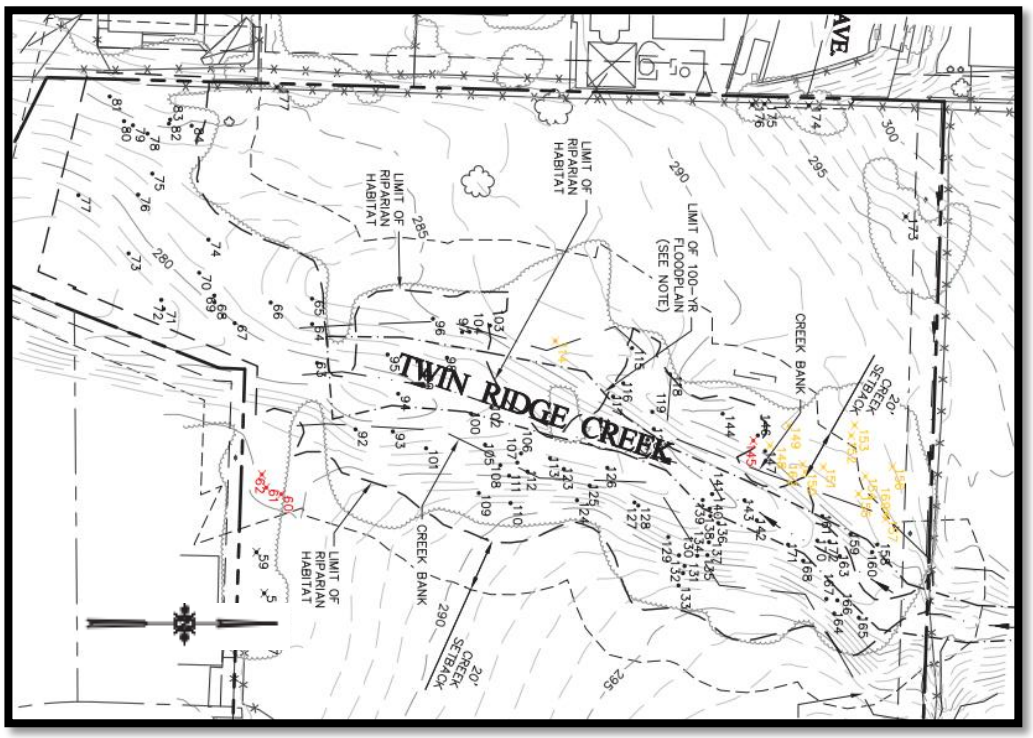

Figure 4: Creek Corridor, tree #s in black within setbacks are retained

2. Consistency with Subdivision Regulations

Lots Size and Dimensions

The Subdivision Regulations regulates minimum lot sizes in the R-1 zone and sets specific development standards. The minimum lot size allowed in the R-1 zone is 6,000 square feet with a minimum width of 50 feet and a minimum depth of 90 feet. Lots are also required to have a minimum street frontage of 20 feet. All the lots within the proposed subdivision meet these base requirements for size and dimension. Additionally, the Subdivision Regulations states that any area between creek banks shall be excluded from the calculation of minimum lot area. The TTM has also demonstrated compliance with this requirement. The Subdivision Regulations also call for natural contours of the site to be preserved to the greatest extent possible in new subdivisions and for lot lines to be generally perpendicular to the street (§16.18). The design of the subdivision is consistent with these standards.

Corner Lots

Lot 19 of the TTM is the only “corner lot” included in the proposed subdivision. Per Table 3 of the Subdivision Regulations, corner lots in residential subdivisions shall have a minimum area of 15% greater than otherwise required and shall be ten feet wider that otherwise required. Lot 19 does provide a width of no less than 60 feet, consistent with this standard, but is less than 15% larger than the minimum lot area.

Staff has included in the proposed resolution condition #3 which requires the area of lot 19 to be increased to no less than 6,900 square feet for final map recordation, consistent with regulations standards for corner lots. This can be achieved by moving the lot line between Lot 19 and lot 20 approximately 2 feet, without compromising Lot 20's compliance with minimum lot size or dimension standards. Only minor changes in site grading will be needed with this adjustment of lot lines.

3. Response to Planning Commission Direction

Traffic/Circulation

The Planning Commission directed staff to provide additional analysis of traffic and circulation options for the project site. Four streets terminate into the project site, including Westmont Avenue to the east and west, and Stanford and Cuesta Drives to the south of the site. The project proposes to connect Stanford and Cuesta Drives, which the City Transportation Division supports as the preferred option for this project because it (a) funnels auto trips to Highland Drive where drivers can access Santa Rosa Street (Highway 1) via the existing traffic signal, (b) minimizes potential for cut-through traffic from Santa Rosa Street using existing local residential streets, (c) improves emergency access for the proposed residences and existing homes on Stanford and Cuesta (the existing dead-end streets make it difficult for SLO Fire to access and turn around), and (d) this option is expected to maintain volumes and speeds along Stanford and Cuesta that are within the neighborhood traffic thresholds adopted in the General Plan Circulation Element for residential local streets.

Other circulation options considered, but not recommended due to policy inconsistency, grading challenges, and property ownership limitations include:

Extend Westmont Ave East: Extend Westmont Avenue east of the project to provide direct access to the new development, with no direct street connection to Stanford or Cuesta

- Connecting the new proposed lots to Westmont Avenue to the east would increase the number of vehicles performing left-turn movements at the unsignalized intersection of Santa Rosa (Highway 1)/Westmont Avenue. Uncontrolled left-turns on high-speed roadways, such as Highway 1 (55 mph at Westmont), create higher potential for severe traffic collisions. The City's annual Traffic Safety Reports have documented this, where a higher concentration of injury collisions for all users (autos, bikes, pedestrians) tend to occur at locations on higher-speed streets without dedicated left turn signals. Pursuant to the City's adopted Vision Zero Policy, Transportation staff would prefer to manage vehicular access for new development in a manner that minimizes additional left turns at uncontrolled, high-speed intersections.

- Additionally, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) maintains jurisdiction of Santa Rosa (Highway 1) within the vicinity of the project. Caltrans would need to approve any proposals to modify the intersection of Westmont/Highway 1 and should have the opportunity to formally review any potential development proposals that would add more auto trips to this intersection. While not related to this specific development proposal, Caltrans submitted formal comments in February of 2020 as part of the Cal Poly Master Plan Update EIR expressing concerns about a proposal that would have increased auto traffic at a similar unsignalized intersection to the north (Stenner Creek Road/Highway 1)—in these comments, Caltrans specifically noted that they were not supportive of installing a traffic signal or roundabout at that intersection. While a more detailed warrant analysis would be required if considering signalizing the Westmont/Highway 1 intersection, upon initial review by transportation staff this intersection does not appear to meet warrants with or without the additional traffic contemplated by this development if connected to Westmont Ave to the east.
- If Westmont Avenue (east) was extended to connect with the proposed project and with the existing segments of Cuesta and/or Stanford Drive, this could increase potential for cut-through traffic from Santa Rosa St. (Highway 1) through the existing neighborhood. This would not only worsen the potential issue of left-hand movements stated above but would also create a new vehicle route that many of the residential lots to the northeast of the site could utilize. This would conflict with Land Use Element Policy 2.2.4 sited above, which states that connections to existing streets should not be done in a method that would increase cut-through traffic.

Extend Westmont Avenue West: Extend Westmont Avenue west of the project to provide direct access to the new development, with no direct street connection to Stanford or Cuesta

- If Westmont Avenue to the west were extended to provide access to the newly proposed lots, construction of a bridge crossing would be required, which would impact the on-site creek. This conflicts with many General Plan goals and policies to preserve creeks[1].

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[1] **Land Use Element:**
Community Goal #4. *Protect, sustain, and where it has been degraded, enhance wildlife habitat on land surrounding the city, at Laguna Lake, along creeks and other wetlands, and on open hills and ridges within the city, so that diverse, native plants, fish, and animals can continue to live within the area.*
Community Goal #7. *Protect and restore natural landforms and features in and near the city, such as the volcanic morros, hillsides, marshes, and creeks.*
Policy 2.3.10. Site Constraints. *The City shall require new residential developments to respect site constraints such as property size and shape, ground slope, access, creeks and wetlands, wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, native vegetation, and significant trees.*

- If Westmont Avenue to the west were extended to provide access to the newly proposed lots and connected to any of the other streets (i.e., Jeffrey Drive), a "cut-through" route for traffic would also be provided to the existing residential lots to the northwest. This would conflict with Land Use Element Policy 2.2.4 sited above, which states that connections to existing streets should not be done in a method that would increase cut-through traffic.

Connecting Stanford and Cuesta Drives is seen as the best option for the project for the following reasons:

1. The existing street widths on Cuesta and Stanford Drive, as well as the proposed new connection between the two, are consistent with City Engineering Standards for local residential streets.
2. The connection of the two streets improves access for emergency services and larger commercial vehicles (i.e., garbage trucks, delivery trucks, etc.), where there is currently no appropriate turnaround where Cuesta and Stanford dead end (there is a small cul-de-sac near the end of Stanford Drive, but it does not meet the minimum width needed per current SLO Fire and City Engineering Standards). With the two streets connected, residents in the area will have a second means of evacuation, and emergency vehicle response is improved.
3. The connection of Cuesta Drive or Stanford Drives does not create a new "cut-through" route for other existing residential areas looking to access to or from Highway 1.
4. Stanford and Cuesta Drive each carry approximately 200-300 vehicles per day currently and have prevailing auto speeds of under 25 mph. The maximum neighborhood traffic thresholds for a residential local street per the General Plan Circulation Element are 1,500 vehicles per day and speeds of 25 mph or less. The proposed development is anticipated to generate approximately 220 new daily auto trips. Even under a worst-case assumption where 100% of the newly created auto traffic used only Cuesta Drive or Stanford Drive, the resulting worst-case daily traffic volumes would still be well under the max threshold established for residential local streets in the Circulation Element. The worst-case result would be approximately 520 vehicle trips per day, where the max threshold for the street is 1,500 vehicle trips per day.

The evaluation of the proposed street patterns for the project included analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), consistency with the Circulation Element, potential hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses, and emergency access. This analysis by City Planning and Public Works/Transportation concludes that there are no significant impacts related to transportation and traffic pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Attachment D, Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration) and no inconsistencies with the City's Circulation Element. For these reasons, staff does not recommend modifications to the project's current street design and connections to existing streets.

Public Engagement
Consistent with the City's Public Engagement and Noticing (PEN) Manual and the City's Municipal Code, the project was noticed per the City's notification requirements for Development Projects including Tentative Tract Maps for each public hearing associated with the project. Newspaper legal advertisements were posted in the New Times ten days prior to the hearing. While post card noticing was sent late for the Planning Commission hearing on May 26th, the postcards for the second de novo Planning Commission hearing and the September 7, 2021, City Council meeting were sent to both tenants and owners of properties located within 300 feet of the project site ten days before the hearing. Email notifications to individuals that provided digital correspondence has also been provided.

CONCURRENCE

The proposed project has been reviewed by the Community Development Department (Planning, Building, and Engineering), Public Works Department (Transportation), Utilities Department, Fire Department, and the City's Sustainability and Natural Resource Officer and Biologist. Staff comments provided during review of the proposed project are incorporated into the presented evaluation and conditions of approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project has been analyzed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study -Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was prepared and circulated from April 29, 2021, through June 29, 2021 (Attachment D, Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration). The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration has been updated in certain areas in connection and in response to public comments received prior to the July 28, 2021, Planning Commission hearing. These areas of evaluation, such as Biological Resources and Hydrology and Water Quality, are further discussed in Attachment E (Planning Commission Staff Repot and Minutes, July 28, 2021). These modifications do not require recirculation of the IS/MND because the edits constitute minor modifications and clarifications to an adequate MND and do not include significant new information that would result in a new significant environmental impact or a substantial increase in the severity of a significant environmental impact.

Within the Initial Study document all new text is indicated by ***underlined, bold, and italicized text***. Deleted text is indicated by ~~strike-through~~ (Attachment D). The applicant has agreed to all mitigation measures proposed specific to this project, which would reduce all identified significant impacts to less than significant, and these measures are incorporated into the Draft Resolution (Attachment A).

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: Yes/No Budget Year: 2021-2022
Funding Identified: Yes/No

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Total Budget Available	Current Funding Request	Remaining Balance	Annual Ongoing Cost
General Fund	N/A	$	$	$
State				
Federal				
Fees				
Total	N/A	**$**	**$**	**$**

When the General Plan was prepared, it was accompanied by a fiscal impact analysis, which found that overall, the General Plan was fiscally balanced. Since the project does not propose to change the General Plan designation of the site, it has a neutral fiscal impact.

ALTERNATIVES

1. ***Deny the Tentative Tract Map # 3157.*** Staff does not recommend this alternative, because the project complies with the City' s Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Regulations and would help meet the City' s housing objectives. An action denying the application should include findings that cite the basis for denial and should reference inconsistency with the General Plan, Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Regulations or other policy documents, and make findings required by the Housing Accountability Act (California Government Code Section 65589.5(j)(1)) that the project either results in a “specific, adverse impact” and “there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the adverse impact.”
2. ***Continue the item.*** The Council may continue its review of the project if additional information is needed to make a decision. If additional information is needed, direction should be provided to staff so that it can be presented at that subsequent hearing. The Council may direct staff and the applicant to make specific changes to the project. The Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (California Government Code Section 95905.5(a)) limits the number of public hearings a city can conduct if a housing development project complies with the applicable, objective general plan and zoning standards. A motion to continue this item would allow for one additional hearing by The Council, and only one additional hearing, before the limit of five hearings is reached.

ATTACHMENTS

A – Draft Resolution approving Tentative Tract Map 3157 and Mitigated Negative Declaration
B – Planning Commission Resolution PC-1042-21 (SBDV-0169-2020, EID-0170-2020)
C – Tentative Tract Map 3157 and Phasing Plan
D – Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration of impacts of TTM 3157
E – Planning Commission Staff Report and Draft Meeting Minutes, 7-28-21
F – Planning Commission Staff Report and Meeting Minutes, 5-26-21
G – Tree Committee Staff Report and Meeting Minutes, 7-17-21