

**CITY OF MERCED**  
**Planning Commission**

**Resolution #4134**

**WHEREAS**, the Merced City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of May 8, 2024, held a public hearing and considered **Tentative Subdivision Map #1330 (“Bellevue Ranch West, Village 18-22”)**, initiated by Benchmark Engineering, applicant for Baxter Ranches, LLC, and Stonefield Home, Inc., property owners. This application involves a request to subdivide approximately 35 acres into 215 single-family lots ranging in size from approximately 2,250 square feet to approximately 13,000 square feet. The subject site is generally located at the southwest corner of M Street and Bellevue Road, within Planned Development (P-D) #42, with a General Plan designation of Low to Medium Density Residential (LMD); also known as Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) 224-300-005, 224-300-010, 224-300-011, and 224-300-012; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Merced City Planning Commission concurs with Findings A through L of Staff Report #24-349; and,

**NOW THEREFORE**, after reviewing the City’s Initial Study and Draft Environmental Determination, and fully discussing all the issues, the Merced City Planning Commission does resolve to hereby find that the previous environmental review [Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan (SCH #9212055)] remains sufficient and no further documentation is required (CEQA Section 15162 Findings) along with a CEQA Section 15183 Exemption, and approve Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1330, subject to the Conditions set forth in Exhibit A attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

Upon motion by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, and carried by the following vote:

AYES:        Commissioner(s)

NOES:        Commissioner(s)

ABSENT:    Commissioner(s)

ABSTAIN:   Commissioner(s)

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION #4134

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May 8, 2024

Adopted this 8<sup>th</sup> day of May 2024

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Chairperson, Planning Commission of  
the City of Merced, California

ATTEST:

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Secretary

Attachment:

Exhibit A – Conditions of Approval

Exhibit B – Findings

**Conditions of Approval**  
**Planning Commission Resolution #4134**  
**Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map # 1330**

1. The proposed project shall be constructed/designed as shown on Exhibit 1 (Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map for Bellevue Ranch Village 18-22).
2. All conditions contained in Resolution #1175-Amended ("Standard Tentative Subdivision Map Conditions") shall apply.
3. The proposed project shall comply with all standard Municipal Code and Subdivision Map Act requirements as applied by the City Engineering Department.
4. All other applicable codes, ordinances, policies, etc., adopted by the City of Merced shall apply.
5. All previously adopted conditions, mitigation measures, and guiding principles contained in Appendices D, E, and F of the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan (BRMDP) adopted by the Merced City Council on May 15, 1995, and as amended, which are applicable to this project, shall apply to this tentative map and all subsequent final maps, improvement plans, building permits, and discretionary approvals.
6. The developer/applicant shall indemnify, protect, defend (with counsel selected by the City), and hold harmless the City, and any agency or instrumentality thereof, and any officers, officials, employees, or agents thereof, from any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, or judgments against the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, and any officers, officials, employees, or agents thereof to attack, set aside, void, or annul, an approval of the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, advisory agency, appeal board, or legislative body, including actions approved by the voters of the City, concerning the project and the approvals granted herein. Furthermore, developer/applicant shall indemnify, protect, defend, and hold harmless the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, against any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, or judgments against any governmental entity in which developer/applicant's project is subject to that other governmental entity's approval and a condition of such approval is that the City indemnify and defend (with counsel selected by the City) such governmental entity. City shall promptly notify the developer/applicant

of any claim, action, suits, or proceeding. Developer/applicant shall be responsible to immediately prefund the litigation cost of the City including, but not limited to, City's attorney's fees and costs. If any claim, action, suits, or proceeding is filed challenging this approval, the developer/applicant shall be required to execute a separate and formal defense, indemnification, and deposit agreement that meets the approval of the City Attorney and to provide all required deposits to fully fund the City's defense immediately but in no event later than five (5) days from that date of a demand to do so from City. In addition, the developer/applicant shall be required to satisfy any monetary obligations imposed on City by any order or judgment.

7. The developer/applicant shall construct and operate the project in strict compliance with the approvals granted herein, City standards, laws, and ordinances, and in compliance with all State and Federal laws, regulations, and standards. In the event of a conflict between City laws and standards and a State or Federal law, regulation, or standard, the stricter or higher standard shall control.
8. Should any conflicts arise between the tentative map conditions contained herein and those conditions, mitigation measures, and guiding principles contained in the BRMDP, Appendices D, E, and F, or any other pertinent Sections/Appendices of the BRMDP, said conditions, mitigation measures, guiding principles, and sections/appendices shall take precedence.
9. Community Facilities District (CFD) formation is required for annual operating costs for police and fire services as well as storm drainage, public landscaping, street trees, street lights, parks and open space. CFD procedures shall be initiated before Final Map approval. Developer/Owner shall submit a request agreeing to such a procedure, waiving right to protest and post deposit as determined by the Development Services Director to be sufficient to cover procedure costs and maintenance costs expected prior to first assessments being received.
10. All dwellings shall be designed to include fire sprinklers as required by the California Fire Code.
11. Fire hydrants shall be installed along street frontages to provide fire protection to the area. The hydrants shall meet all City of Merced standards and shall comply with all requirements of the City of Merced

Fire Department. Final location of the fire hydrants shall be determined by the Fire Department.

12. Plans shall meet current codes at the time of building permit application submittal. Building permit applications shall comply with the newest enacted California Building Codes. Plans shall be drawn by a licensed California design professional.
13. At the building permit stage, the site plans for each lot shall include a minimum 3-foot by 6-foot concrete pad located in the side yard or backyard for the storage of 3 refuse containers.
14. The developer shall use proper dust control procedures during site development in accordance with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District rules.
15. The 60 small lots located within the northwest portion of the subdivision (along Bellevue Road) shall comply with the development standards and elevations shown at Attachment F of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349.
16. The non-small lots shall comply with the development standards for “Patios Homes” (Attachment E of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349) described in the BRMDP.
17. Per the BRMDP, all exterior building materials shall consist of stucco, masonry, or architectural grade wood siding, and roofing materials shall consist of tile, wood shake (with acceptable fire rating), and architectural composition shingles. A variety of colors, textures, and materials shall be offered by the builder for the front elevations of the homes, including at least one option that is not stucco. Elevations shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Division during the building permit stage.
18. Each lot shall provide a parking garage for a minimum of one vehicle.
19. All mechanical equipment shall be screened from public view.
20. Each lot within the subdivision shall be provided with one driveway. No residential driveways shall front on any arterial or collector street.
21. The project shall comply with all requirements of the California Building Code and all flood requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as the requirements for the California Urban Level of Flood Protection (CA 200-year flood).

22. The project shall comply with all the Post Construction Standards required to comply with state requirements for the City's Phase II MS-4 Permit (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System).
23. The applicant shall provide a minimum 36 inches of coverage between the top of the sewer line and the surface of the street, or as otherwise required by the City Engineer.
24. All landscaping within the public right-of-way shall comply with state and local requirements for water conservation. All irrigation provided to street trees or other landscaping shall be provided with a drip irrigation or micro-spray system and shall comply with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MMC Section 20.36.030).
25. All undeveloped areas shall be maintained free of weeds and debris.
26. Prior to final inspection of any home, all front yards and side yards exposed to public view shall be provided with landscaping to include ground cover, trees, shrubs, and irrigation in accordance with Merced Municipal Code Section 20.36.050. Irrigation for all on-site landscaping shall be provided by a drip system or micro-spray system in accordance with the State's Emergency Regulation for Statewide Urban Water Conservation or any other state or City mandated water regulations dealing with the current drought conditions. All landscaping shall comply with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MMC Section 20.36.030).
27. A 7-foot-tall masonry wall shall be installed along M Street/M Circle, Freemark Avenue, Stephanie Drive, and Street G (to be officially named at Final Map stage). The wall shall include anti-graffiti coating. Graffiti shall be removed within 7 days or as determined to be a reasonable timeframe by the Director of Development Services.
28. Landscaping shall be provided between the block wall and the sidewalk along M Street/M Circle, Freemark Avenue, Stephanie Drive, and Street G (to be named at Final Map stage). This strip of land shall be dedicated to the City and maintained through the Community Facilities District during the Final Map stage, as required by the City Engineer.
29. Sewer manholes shall be installed as required by the Engineering Department (if needed).

30. The applicant shall dedicate all necessary street right-of-way and easements as needed for irrigation, utilities, drainage, landscaping, and open space during the Final Map stage as required by the City Engineer.
31. Additional right-of-way improvements on non-arterial streets, such as road widening beyond the City standard, would not be eligible for Public Facilities Impact Fee reimbursement.
32. Dedication of all necessary easements will be made as shown on Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1330 and as needed for irrigation, utilities, drainage, landscaping, open space, and access.
33. The developer shall provide all utility services to each lot, including sanitary sewer, water, electric power, gas, telephone, and cable television. All new utilities are to be undergrounded.
34. All cul-de-sac bulbs shall have a minimum diameter of 96 feet and shall be posted as “no parking” in compliance with Fire Department Standards adopted by Merced Municipal Code Section 17.32.
35. The developer shall install appropriate street name signs and traffic control signs with locations, names, and types approved by the City Engineer.
36. Full public improvements shall be installed/repared if the permit value of the project exceeds \$100,000.00. Public improvements may include, but not be limited to, repairing/replacing the sidewalk, curb, gutter, and street corner ramp(s), so that they comply with ADA standards and other relevant City of Merced/State/Federal standards and regulations.
37. All public improvements shall be provided as required by the City Engineer. All improvements shall meet City Standards.
38. The developer shall provide construction plans and calculations for all landscaping and public maintenance improvements. All such plans shall conform to City standards and meet approval of the City Engineer.
39. All entryway and subdivision signs shall be administratively approved by Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a building permit.
40. The Caltrans corner vision triangle standards may be used over the City’s standard found under MMC 20.30.030 – Corner Vision Triangles, for the lots determined appropriate by the Director of Development Services.

41. Minor modifications to the development standards or elevations (as determined by the Director of Development Services), may be reviewed and approved through a Minor Use Permit.



**Findings and Considerations  
Planning Commission Resolution #4134  
Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1330**

**FINDINGS/CONSIDERATIONS:**

**General Plan Compliance and Policies Related to This Application**

- A) The proposed project complies with the General Plan designation of Low to Medium Density Residential (LMD) and the Zoning classification of Planned Development (P-D) #42.

The proposed subdivision would be constructed on approximately 35 acres of vacant land. The gross density for the site would be approximately 6.14 units/acre. The Low to Medium Density Residential (LMD) land use designation in the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan area allows a density between 5.5 and 12 dwelling units per acre. This proposal is within the allowable density range.

The proposed subdivision would achieve the following General Plan Land Use Policies:

*L-1.2 Encourage a diversity of building types, ownership, prices, designs, and site plans for residential areas throughout the City.*

*L-1.3 Encourage a diversity of lot sizes in residential subdivisions.*

*L-1.6 Continue to pursue quality single-family and higher density residential development.*

*L-1.8 Create livable and identifiable residential neighborhoods.*

**Traffic/Circulation**

- B) It is anticipated that the proposal would generate approximately 2,058. Average Daily Trips (ADT) based on an average daily rate of 9.57 trips per dwelling unit. The primary access points into the subdivision would be from Stephanie Drive (2 access points) and Freemark Avenue (2 access points). Stephanie Drive and Freemark Avenue are classified as collector roads. All streets interior to the subdivision would be local roads. The traffic generated by this subdivision should not exceed the current and projected capacity for the surrounding street system as the area was designed to accommodate a higher density of residential units. The proposal has a density of 6.14 dwelling units per acre, which is less than the maximum 12 dwelling units per acre

allowed within a Low to Medium Density Residential (LMD) General Plan designation.

The interior roads within the subdivision include four east/west roads and two north/south roads. As shown at Attachment C of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349, the six streets shown as Streets A, B, C, D, E, and F would be designed to Local Street standards with 59 feet of right-of-way, which includes street, curb, gutter, park strip, sidewalk, and a public utility easement. Stephanie Drive and Freemark Avenue would have 89 feet of right-of-way and have the same right-of-way components mentioned above and include a masonry block wall. Street G would be a collector street with 74 feet of right-of-way.

### **Parking**

- C) The proposal would satisfy the City's standard parking requirements for single-family homes. The standard parking requirement for single-family homes is one parking space per unit. The development would include a minimum of one parking space per unit (Condition #18). Half of the small lot homes (30 homes near Bellevue Road) would have a 1-car garage. The remainder of the lots within the subdivision (185 lots) would have a 2-car garage.

### **Public Improvements/City Services**

- D) The developer would be required to install all streets, utilities, and other improvements within the subdivision and around the subdivision to be up to City Standards (Condition #32 and #33).

Each lot would be required to pay fees for sewer and water connections at the building permit stage. In addition, each lot within the subdivision would be required to meet the City's storm drainage and run-off requirements for the City's MS-IV permit (Condition #22).

### **Building Design**

- E) Small Lots

Development standards and elevations have been submitted for the 60 small lots within the northwest portion of the subdivision along Bellevue Road (see Attachment F of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349 and Condition #15). These 60 lots range in size between 2,200 square feet and 4,255 square feet and include a zero-lot line development component.

The homes on these lots would look like a 2-story “quad-plex” with each unit on its own lot. Each unit would have a private back yard, with the units on the ends of the “quadplex” having some side yard. The two interior units would have a single-car garage and the outer units would have a two-car garage. The inner units would generally be smaller in square footage compared to the outer units.

The exterior of the “quadplex” would include finishes that add architectural interest such as stucco, horizontal siding, board and batten, stone veneers, and possibly vibrant colored entry doors that help differentiate between each unit.

#### Standard Lots

The developer has yet to submit building designs for the standard sized lots (155 lots). Because this site has a zoning classification of Planned Development, the building design/elevations shall be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff prior to issuance of a building permit for this subdivision. The homes shall be required to comply with the City’s minimum design standards for single-family homes as required under Merced Municipal Code Section 20.46.020 - Design Standards for Single-Family Dwellings and Mobile Homes (see Attachment G of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349 and Condition #16) as well as the design standards for “Patio Homes” as shown on Attachment E of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349.

#### Affordable Units

- F) As part of General Plan Amendment #17-02 (approved by the City Council in January 2024), the 60 small lots within this subdivision are going to be designated as affordable units to help meet the BRMDP housing affordability requirements for lower income demographics. These income levels are based on the Average Median Income for Merced County as set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The details for affordability terms and conditions can be found within the approval for General Plan Amendment #17-02.

## **Site Design**

- G) As shown on the Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map (Attachment C of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349), the proposed design of the subdivision includes 3 interior east/west streets, and 4 interior north/south streets (2 of which turn into cul-de-sacs on the southern portion of the subdivision). There would be a masonry block wall around the perimeter of most of the subdivision on the back of the lots along Bellevue Road, M Street/M Circle, Stephanie Drive, Freemark Avenue, “Street G,” and along the northwest portion of the subdivision near Fahrens Creek.

A future bike path would be installed adjacent to the northwestern edge of the subdivision between Fahrens Creek and the subdivision. This area would have two open cul-de-sacs that provide direct access to the bike path making it more accessible to the neighborhood. This bike path is part of a larger master bike plan with a path that would meander and split throughout different portions of the Bellevue Ranch Master Plan Development area and intersect with different parks.

Lot sizes for this subdivision range from 2,250 square feet to approximately 13,250 square feet, with the majority of the lots being between 5,000 square feet and 6,200 square feet.

The table below shows the mixture of lot sizes in the subdivision.

Number of Lots	Lot Size (S.F)
60 (small lots – affordable units)	2,200 to 4,255
155 (standard lots for “patio homes”)	4,256 to 13,000

The interior local streets would have 59 feet of right-of-way that includes a 34-foot-wide road, and on both sides of the street contain a 7-foot-wide park strip, 5-foot-wide sidewalk, and 10-foot-wide public utility easement. Portions of the perimeter of the subdivision would be surrounded by a masonry block wall along Bellevue Road, M Street/M Circle, Freemark Avenue, Stephanie Drive, “Street G” (to be officially named at final map stage), and the northwest portion of the subdivision near Fahrens Creek.

## **Landscaping**

- H) Each lot within the subdivision shall be provided with front yard landscaping in compliance with Merced Municipal Code Section 20.36.050 (Landscaping) that requires all exterior setback areas, excluding areas required for access to the property to be landscaped (Condition #24).

For landscaping within public right-of-way, the developer shall install landscaping in front of the block walls along Bellevue Road, M Street/M Circle, Freemark Avenue, Stephanie Drive, “Street G,” and the northwest portion of the subdivision near Fahrens Creek. Landscaping in this area would be reviewed by the City prior to installation. The landscaping within this area would be maintained by the Community Facilities District (Condition #28).

## **Neighborhood Impact/Interface**

- I) The proposed subdivision would add additional homes to the area, but the use is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning classification. There is undeveloped land to the west and north subject site (across Fahrens Creek and Bellevue Road respectively).

Southwest of the Stephanie Drive and “Street G” are single-family homes (Villages 18-A and 17-A), with a park and school planned for this area. The land southeast of Freemark Avenue and M Circle has a General Plan designation for High to Medium Density (HMD) Residential (Village 22B), which would allow the development of multi-family housing projects such as apartments. East of the subdivision is ( within M Circle Drive) Lot – Z, which has a land use designation for a neighborhood park/transit station. The transit station was developed recently, and it provides a large parking lot for residents to park their vehicles (or bicycle) to take The Bus or CatTracks bus systems.

The proposed subdivision of 215 lots would have a density of 6.14 units per acre, which is less than the maximum allowed for the Low to Medium Density Residential (LMD) of up to 12 units per acre.

## **Land Use/Density Issues**

- J) The proposed subdivision would provide a density of 6.14 units per acre based on the gross acreage of the site. This density is well within the allowable density for the Low to Medium Density (LMD) Residential General Plan designation that allows between 5.5 and 12 units per acre in the BRMDP area.

### **Tentative Subdivision Map Requirements/Public Comments Received**

- K) Per Merced Municipal Code (MMC) Section 18.16.080 – Information Required, a tentative subdivision map shall include all of the requirements shown at Attachment H of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349. Said requirements include stating the location of the subject site, the name of the subdivision, and showing the layout of the proposed lots. MMC 18.16.090 – Required Statement requires the applicant to provide a statement that explicitly states any deviations from tentative subdivision map requirements, standard drawings, or Zoning laws. MMC 18.16.100 - Public Hearing – Generally, requires a public hearing to review and approve a tentative subdivision map in conformance with the Subdivision Map Act.

Per the California Environmental Quality Act, a public hearing notice was mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the subject site and published in a qualifying newspaper, Merced County Times, three weeks prior to this meeting. In addition, staff reached out to local utility companies, local school districts, and other relevant government agencies to solicit comments. At the time this report was prepared, staff had received comments from utility companies. Their comments are provided at Attachment J of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349.

### **Environmental Clearance**

- L) Planning staff conducted an environmental review of the project in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and concluded that Environmental Review #24-08 is a second tier environmental document, based upon the City's determination that the proposed development remains consistent with the current General Plan and provisions of CEQA Guidelines, Section 15162 [Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Bellevue Ranch Master Development Plan (SCH #9212055)]. A copy of the Section 15162 Findings can be found at Attachment K of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349. In addition, staff determined that the project qualifies for a CEQA Section 15183 Exemption for projects which are consistent with the development density established by a Community Plan, General Plan, or Zoning for which an EIR has been certified, as shown at Attachment L of Planning Commission Staff Report #24-349.