

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

**Resolution #4145**

**WHEREAS**, the Merced City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of May 7, 2025, held a public hearing and considered **Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1329 (“Paulson Ranch”)**, initiated by Stonefield Home, Inc., property owner. This application involves a request to subdivide approximately 39.12 acres into 104 single-family lots ranging in size between 6,000 square feet and 14,250 square feet. The subject site is generally located on the south side of E. Cardella Road, approximately 1,900 feet east of G Street at 800 E. Cardella Road; also known as Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) 231-010-021; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Merced City Planning Commission concurs with Findings A through L of Staff Report #25-338; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Merced City Planning Commission concurs with the Findings for Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map Requirements in Merced Municipal Code Section 18.16.80, 18.16.90, and 18.16.100 as outlined in Exhibit B; 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 adopt a Negative Declaration regarding Environmental Review #24-07, and approve Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1329, 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 #4145

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May 7, 2025

Adopted this 7<sup>th</sup> day of May 2025

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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 #4145**  
**Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map # 1329**

1. The proposed project shall be constructed/designed as shown on Attachment D (Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map for Paulson Ranch).
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. 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.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. All dwellings shall be designed to include fire sprinklers as required by the California Fire Code.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. The developer shall use proper dust control procedures during site development in accordance with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District rules.

13. The single-family lots shall comply with the design standards found under MMC Section 20.46.020 - Design Standards for Single-Family Dwellings and Mobile Homes (Attachment E of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338).
14. Each lot shall provide a parking garage for a minimum of one vehicle.
15. All mechanical equipment shall be screened from public view.
16. Each lot within the subdivision shall be provided with one driveway. No residential driveways shall front on any arterial or collector street.
17. 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).
18. The project shall comply with all the Post Construction Standards required to comply with state requirements for the City's Phase II MS-IV Permit (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System).
19. 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.
20. 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).
21. All undeveloped areas shall be maintained free of weeds and debris.
22. 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).

23. A minimum 6-foot-tall masonry wall shall be installed along Cardella Road and Paulson Road. 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.
24. Landscaping shall be provided between the block wall and the sidewalk along Cardella Road and Paulson Road. 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.
25. Sewer manholes shall be installed as required by the Engineering Department (if needed).
26. 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.
27. 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.
28. Dedication of all necessary easements will be made as shown on Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1329 and as needed for irrigation, utilities, drainage, landscaping, open space, and access.
29. 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.
30. The turning radii for the access roads are 33 feet inside, and 47 feet outside. The 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.
31. The developer shall install appropriate street name signs and traffic control signs with locations, names, and types approved by the City Engineer.
32. As required by Merced Municipal Code Section 17.04.050 and 17.04.060, 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.

33. All public improvements shall be provided as required by the City Engineer. All improvements shall meet City Standards.
34. 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.
35. All entryway and subdivision signs shall be administratively approved by Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a building permit.
36. 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.
37. Development is not allowed within the wetland areas identified in Attachment I of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338. Should development be proposed within this area in the future, the developer shall provide studies concluding that wetlands no longer existing in this area.
38. The approval of VTSM #1329 is contingent upon City Council approving General Plan Amendment #24-01 and Northeast Yosemite Specific Plan Amendment #6.

**Findings and Considerations**  
**Planning Commission Resolution #4145**  
**Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map #1329**

**FINDINGS/CONSIDERATIONS:**

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

- A) The General Plan Amendment portion of this application would amend the General Plan's Circulation Element (Figure 4.1) to eliminate Destiny Drive (a collector road) from the project site as this road would not be able to extend through the site eastward to Paulson Road due to wetland constraints within the subject site (see Finding B). The General Plan Amendment portion of this application would not amend any of the General Plan land use designations within the project site.

The proposed subdivision (Paulson Ranch) would create 104 single-family homes on 39.12 acres (Attachment D of Planning Commission Staff Report 25-338). This subdivision complies with the General Plan designations of Low Density Residential (LD) and High to Medium Density Residential (HMD) for this site. The maximum number of units allowed for this site would be approximately 655, the proposed 104 units is below the maximum allowed for this site.

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-1.8 Create livable and identifiable residential neighborhoods.*

**Wetlands**

- B) Gallaway Enterprises conducted a field survey and identified areas where historical flooding from adjacent waterways created wetlands. The map at Attachment I identifies the wetland areas. The proposed subdivision (Paulson Ranch) is designed to avoid these areas, which requires modifying the circulation in this area by eliminating the portion of Destiny Drive planned to go through this site, and modifying the circulation previously approved through the Northeast Yosemite Specific plan (Attachment J).



## **Traffic/Circulation**

- C) The project site consists of an undeveloped lot totaling approximately 39.12 acres. The project site fronts an arterial road (E. Cardella Road), with the nearest north-south road being Paulson Road (collector road) currently terminating south of the project site, but would be extended through the subject site up to Cardella Road and down to Yosemite Avenue with this development. Yosemite Avenue and Cardella Road are both designed to carry large volumes of traffic going through a large portion of the community. The subject site is half a mile east of G Street, which provides access to Highway 99 that connects Merced with other regional communities throughout the State.

The interior roads within the subdivision include two east/west roads, six cul-de-sacs, and two north/south roads. As shown at Attachment D of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338 the Streets/Courts A through J (except for Street D) 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. Street D would have 100 feet of right-of-way. Paulson Road and Cardella Road would respectively have 84 feet and 148 feet of right-of-way respectively, and include a masonry block wall.

The General Plan would allow a maximum of 655 units within the subject site. The proposed 104 units would generate less vehicle traffic compared to the maximum density allowed. According to Trip Generation (ITE Report), the average daily trips per unit is 6.59. The proposed project at 104 units would generate approximately 16% of the average daily trips compared to the maximum density allowed by the General Plan. The existing and proposed street network could adequately serve this proposal.

In addition, there are several walkable locations within a ¼ mile of the subject site, which include Davenport Park, Cruickshank Middle School, Dignity Health Hospital, Merced College, and the Yosemite & G Crossing Shopping Center (under construction in phases). The existing street network could adequately serve this proposal as it was designed to accommodate a much larger maximum number of units. In addition, the extension of Paulson Road to Cardella Road would provide direct access to existing residents in the neighborhood wanting to travel north, improving the street network in the area.

### **Parking**

- D) 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. Each single-family would have a 2-car garage.

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

- E) 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 #27 and #30). This includes connecting roads to the subdivision such as Paulson Road and Dunn Road.

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 #18).

### **Building Elevations**

- F) The developer has yet to submit building designs for the single-family homes (104 lots). These 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 E of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338 and Condition #13 of Planning Commission Resolution #4145).

### **Affordability Requirements**

- G) In 2023, the City Council updated the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation Unit Production Plan. A housing affordability requirement is triggered by two qualifiers that need to be met: entitlement type and number of units created. For single-family residential developments, the affordability requirement is triggered by a legislative action agreement (through annexations, general plan amendments, site utilization plan revisions, or zone changes) for projects with over 60 single-family homes (multi-family residential projects are exempt).

In this case the developer is requesting an entitlement that triggers a legislative action agreement--a general plan amendment. As shown under Finding A, General Plan Amendment #24-01 is to amend the City's Circulation Element only (not a land use change request). The land use aspect of the project (104

units on approximately 39 acres) would comply with the Zoning classifications for this site.

Based on this request, the developer is not required to provide affordable housing units (or an in-lieu fee) because the general plan amendment is to amend the City's Circulation Element (not land use)

### **Site Design**

- H) As shown on the Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map (Attachment D of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338), the proposed design of the subdivision includes 2 interior east/west streets, 6 cul-de-sacs, and 2 north/south streets. There would be a masonry block wall around the northern and eastern portions of the subdivision on the back of the lots along Paulson Road and Cardella Road. Paulson Road would provide access to other arterial streets such as Cardella Road (north) and Yosemite Avenue (south).

The Cotton Wood Bike Path Easement (25 feet wide) would be located on the south side of Cotton Wood Creek. On the north side of the creek would be a storm basin shown as Lot B (approximately 0.85 acres). Lot A (approximately 5.18 acres) would be located within northeast portion of the subject site and would be remain undeveloped, as a field survey by Gallaway Enterprise found this area to contain wetlands to be avoided (see Condition #37).

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 Paulson Road and Cardella Road.

### **Landscaping**

- I) 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 #22).

For landscaping within public right-of-way, the developer shall install landscaping in front of the block walls along Paulson Road and Cardella Road. 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.

### **Neighborhood Impact/Interface**

- J) The subject site is surrounded by a variety of uses which includes to the west by Cruickshank Middle School/agricultural land, to the south by single-family homes, to the east by undeveloped land, and to the north (across from E. Cardella Road) by agricultural land. The subject site's current land use designation is residential and would allow a maximum of 655 residential units. The proposed Paulson Ranch subdivision is consistent with the current land use designation, and at 104 single-family homes would be below the maximum number of residential units allowed for this site. There are several existing residential subdivisions to the south. This development is not expected to alter the character of the neighborhood or introduce uses that don't already exist in the neighborhood.

Public hearing notices were sent to all property owners within 300 feet of the project site. At the time that this report was prepared, the City had not received any comments regarding this project.

### **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 F of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338. 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 not received comments from utility companies.

## **Environmental Clearance**

- L) Most Infill projects over 5 acres or projects that don't comply with Zoning/General Plan designations require an Initial Study, per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In this case, the proposed land use is consistent with the General Plan land uses, and a General Plan Amendment is being requested to amend the Circulation Element by eliminating a collector road from going through the project site – thus an Initial Study was required. An Initial Study includes a wide range of analysis required by the State covering an array of subjects including, but not limited to, impacts on vehicle miles traveled, air quality, biological resource, public services, cultural resources, and City utilities. Planning staff has conducted an environmental review of the project in accordance with the requirements of CEQA, and concluded that Environmental Review #24-07 results in a Negative Declaration as the proposal would not have a significant effect on the environment and does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. A copy of the Initial Study with a Negative Declaration can be found at Attachment K of Planning Commission Staff Report #25-338.