



County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

Planning Commission Staff Report Agenda Item No. 4 May 18, 2023

SUBJECT: General Plan Conformity – Fresno Unified School District Proposed Sunnyside High School Agricultural Education Center

Determine General Plan Conformity of Fresno Unified School District's proposal to acquire property comprised of three parcels totaling approximately 17.75 acres, for construction of agricultural education facilities for Sunnyside High School in the AL-20 (Limited Agriculture, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District, and the R-1-B(nb)(Single Family Residential, 12,500 square-foot minimum parcel size, Neighborhood Beautification Overlay) Zone District.

LOCATION: The proposed agricultural education center site is located on three adjacent APN's, located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Kings Canyon Road and S. Minnewawa Avenue, and southerly adjacent, on the west side of S. Minnewawa Avenue between E. Montecito Avenue and E. Lane Avenue, approximately 0.75 miles southeast of the nearest city limits of the City of Fresno, and easterly adjacent to the nearest city limits and within the Sphere of Influence of the City of Fresno (APNs: 472-022-12, 13, 05) (748 S. Minnewawa Ave., 810 S. Minnewawa Ave., and 1010 S. Minnewawa Ave. (Sup. Dist. 3).

OWNERS: Mochizuki Bypass Trust (APNs 472-022-05 & 12)
Paul Atmajian (APN 472-022-13)

APPLICANT: Fresno Unified School District/Paul Idsvoog, Chief Operations Officer

STAFF CONTACT: Jeremy Shaw, Planner
(559) 600-4207

David Randall, Senior Planner
(559) 600-4052

RECOMMENDATION:

- Determine that the proposed site acquisition is in conformance with the County General Plan and its policies relating to city fringe areas; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

EXHIBITS:

1. Location Map
2. Existing Zoning Map
3. Existing Land Use Map
4. Conformity Finding request
5. Acquisition area (aerial map)

PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Public Resources Code Section 21151.2 requires a school district to notify the local Planning Agency having jurisdiction of its intention to acquire title to property for use as a school site. The Code requires the Planning Agency to investigate and evaluate the proposed acquisition and submit a written report of the investigation, together with recommendations to the Governing Board of the school district within thirty (30) days of the request. If the report does not favor the acquisition of the property for a school site, or for an addition to a present school site, the Governing Board of the school district shall not acquire title to the property until thirty (30) days after the Commission's report has been received.

State Government Code Section 65402 requires a school district, prior to authorizing construction of a public building, disposing of any real property, or acquiring property, to submit the location, purpose, and extent of such acquisition, disposition, or public building to the Planning Agency having jurisdiction for its review as to conformity with the local General Plan. Section 65402 further states that the Planning Agency shall render its report as to conformity with said adopted General Plan or part thereof within forty (40) days after the matter was submitted to it, or such longer period of time as may be designated by the legislative body.

Staff notes that school sites are exempt from the County's Zoning Code per State Government Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) has issued notice of its intention to acquire 17.75 acres of land for construction of a new agricultural educational facility which will be an extension of Sunnyside High School. The proposed agricultural education complex is located on the west side of S. Minnewawa Avenue between E. Montecito Avenue and E. Lane Avenue, within the Sphere of Influence and easterly adjacent to the city limits of the City of Fresno. Sunnyside High School is located approximately 300 feet to the west of the proposed agricultural education center.

The proposed facility will provide practical experience in the production of agricultural goods and services, hosting farmers markets, and community gardens. The facility would include the construction of a new agricultural building to alleviate limited space available at the existing Sunnyside High School site. The project will also include a show arena for livestock, and area for row crops to create a sustainable agricultural farm. The project will include various street, water, sewer, and storm drainage improvements necessary to serve the site and eventual annexation into the City of Fresno. There is no formal application for annexation at this time.

EXISTING LAND USE/SITE CONDITIONS:

The subject parcels are currently vacant of any development. Two of the parcels are Zoned AL-20, and one is zoned R-1-B, and all are designated as low-density residential in the County Adopted

Roosevelt Community Plan. The City of Fresno General Plan Land Use and Circulation Map shows the northern parcels designated as a Community Park, and the southerly parcel is designated as Medium Low Density Residential. The parcels are located immediately adjacent to the east and south of the nearest city limits of the City of Fresno, and within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI). While two of the three parcels are Zoned Limited Agricultural they are mostly isolated from any other agricultural land with the exception of a few other isolated parcels in the vicinity. The predominate zoning in the unincorporated County areas in the vicinity is single-family residential, R-1-B, R-1-AH, R-1 and R-2.

Moreover, in accordance with Section 817 of the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance, the Limited Agricultural (AL) Zone District is intended to protect the welfare of the agricultural community by limiting intensive uses in agricultural areas where such uses may be incompatible with or injurious to, other less intensive agricultural operations.

The AL Zone District is also intended to reserve and hold certain lands for future urban use by permitting limited agriculture and by regulating those more intensive agricultural uses which, by their nature, may be injurious to non-agricultural uses in the vicinity or inconsistent with the express purpose of the reservation for future urban use.

According to Section 7.00.D of the County Adopted Roosevelt Community Plan (Plan), each school district with the Plan area has responsibility for development of appropriate school facilities. The district boundaries have no relationship to City of Fresno corporate limits. School sites not yet acquired are only approximate locations and may locate on a site different than shown on the Plan Map.

While the proposed use of the site is appurtenant to an existing High School, the specific uses proposed are more consistent with agricultural land, than with urban uses, based upon the description provided in the Conformity Finding request.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

A fundamental policy directive of the County's General Plan is to direct urban growth to the cities and unincorporated communities. County General Plan Policy LU-G.1, related to city fringe areas, states that cities have primary responsibility for planning within their LAFCo-adopted Spheres of Influence and they are responsible for urban development and the provision of urban services within those Spheres.

Fresno County General Plan Policy PF-I.1, related to the locating of school facilities, states that the County shall encourage school districts to provide quality educational facilities to accommodate projected student growth in locations consistent with Land Use Policies in the General Plan.

Policy PF-I.7 states that the County shall include schools among those public facilities and services that are considered an essential part of the development service facilities that should be in place as development occurs, and shall work with residential developers and school districts to ensure that needed school facilities are available to serve new residential development. This proposal is consistent with this policy.

CONCLUSION:

County staff finds the proposed acquisition of the subject property for an agricultural education center site conforms with the County's General Plan, based on the analysis provided in this report.

PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:

Recommended Motion (Finding of Consistency)

- Move to determine that the proposed acquisition of 17.75 acres for a new agricultural education center conforms with the General Plan (state the basis for making the General Plan Consistency Finding); and
- Direct the secretary to prepare a resolution documenting the Commission’s action.

Alternative Motion (Finding of Non-Consistency)

- Find that the proposed acquisition of 17.75 acres for a new agricultural education center does not conform to the General Plan’s Agriculture land use designation, and would be better sited within the city limits where urban level services are available; and
- Direct the secretary to prepare a resolution documenting the Commission’s action.

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EXHIBIT 1

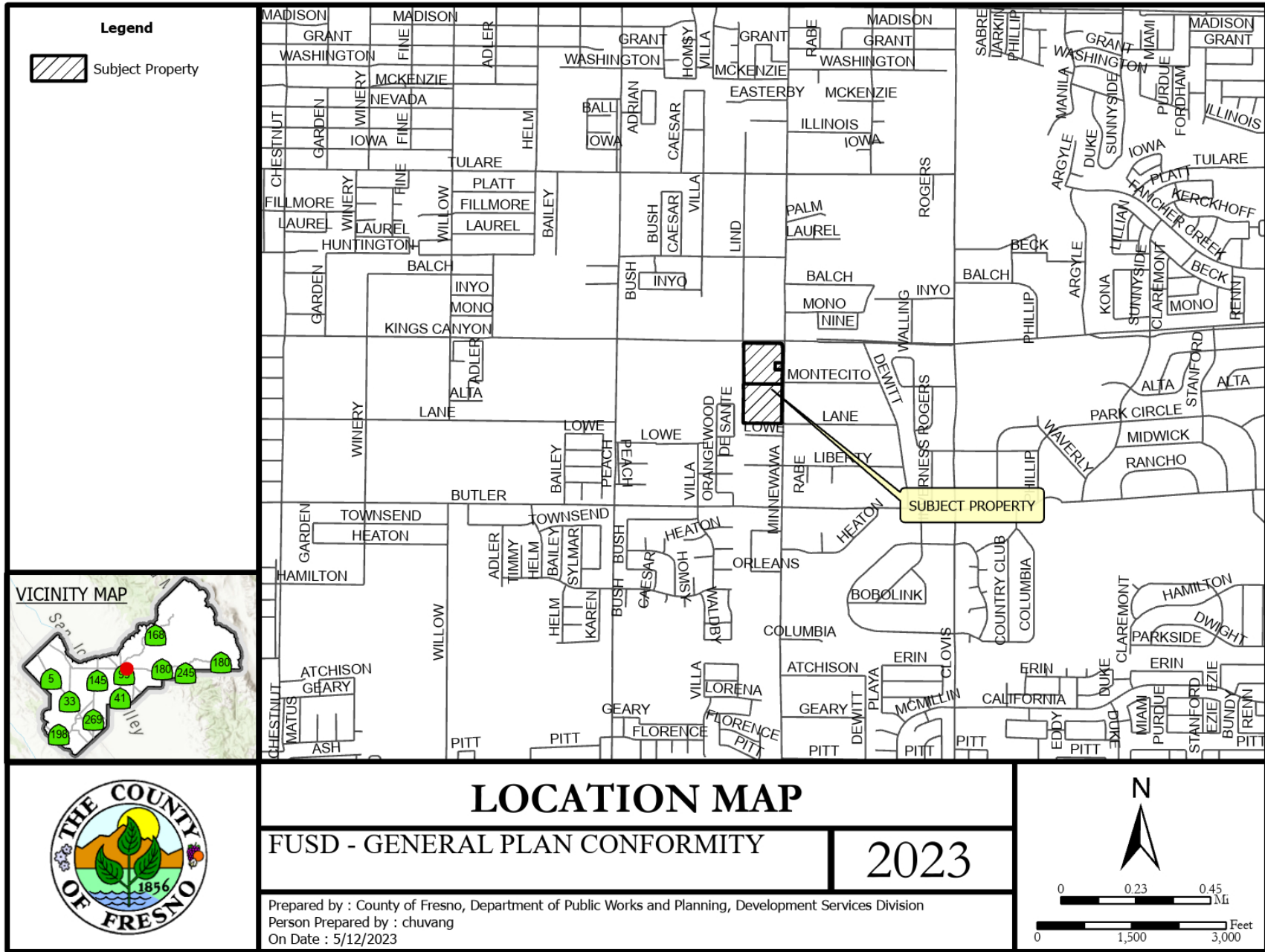


EXHIBIT 1

EXHIBIT 2

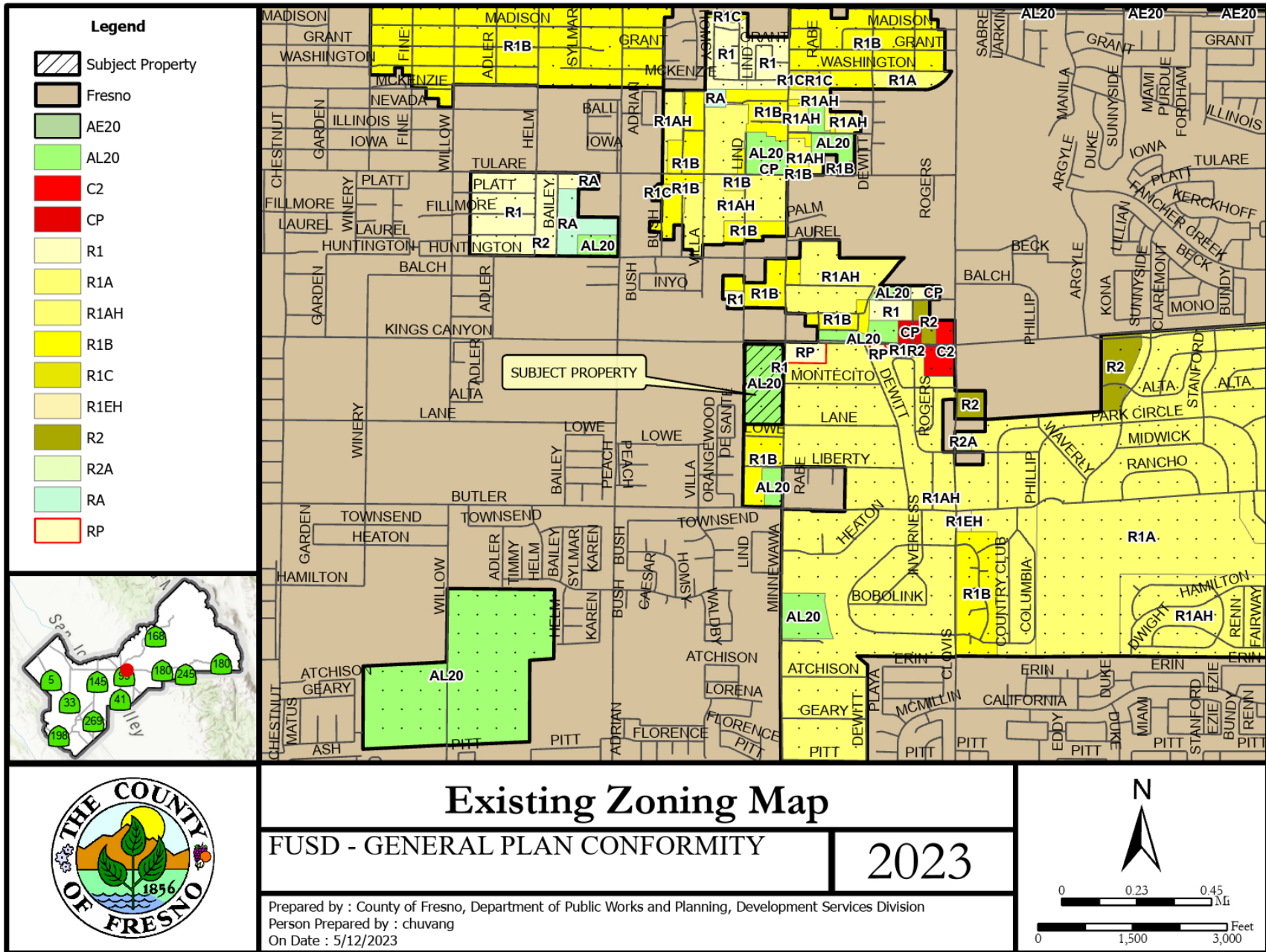


EXHIBIT 2

EXHIBIT 3

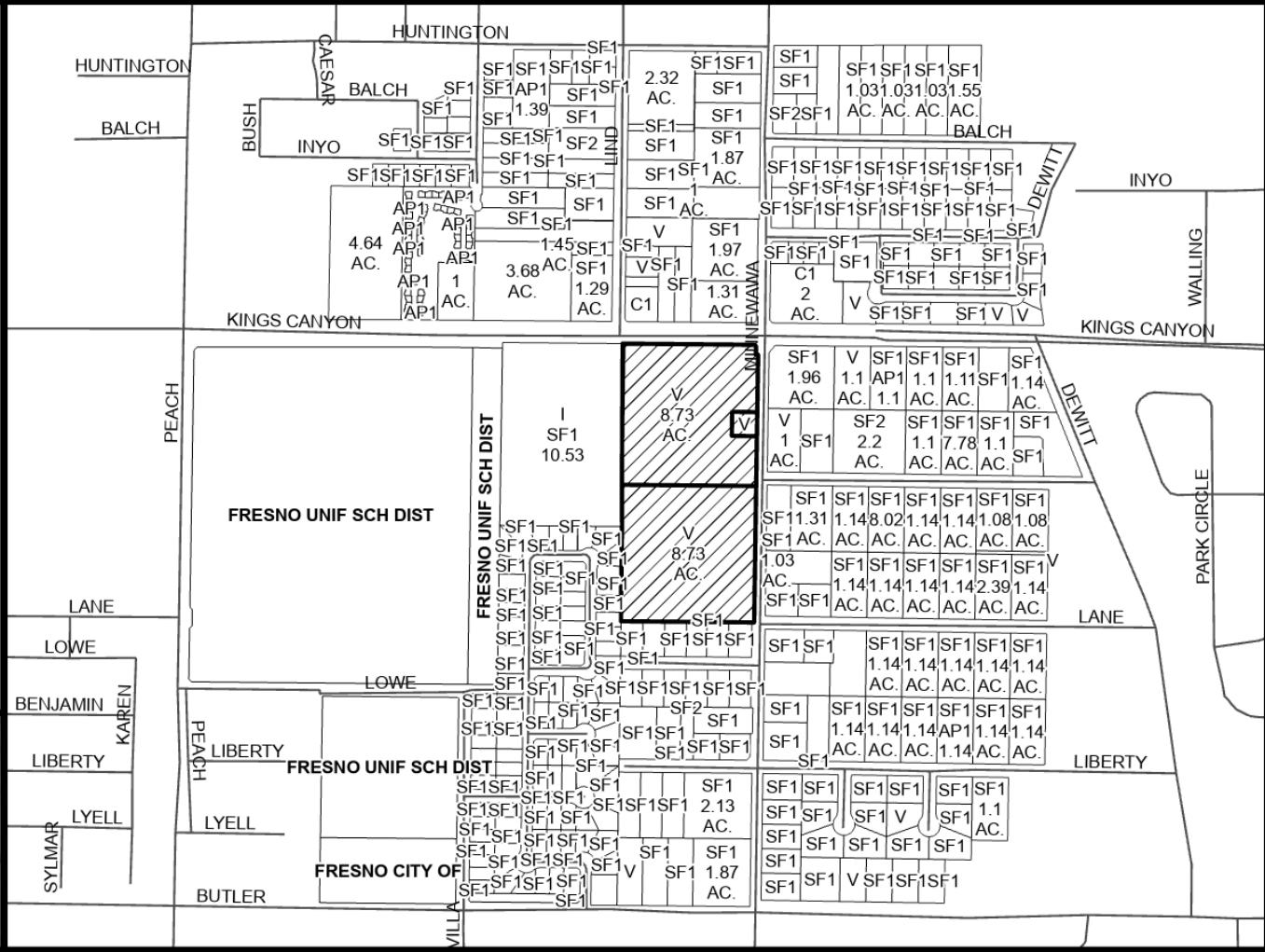
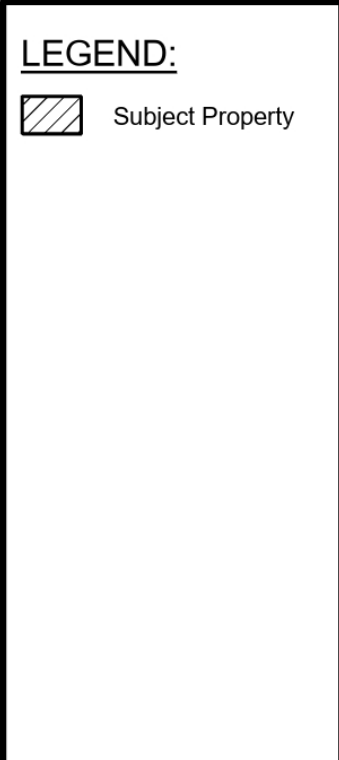


EXHIBIT 3

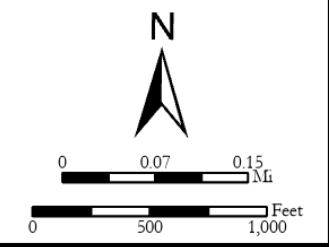


Existing Land Use Map

FUSD - GENERAL PLAN CONFORMITY

2023

Prepared by : County of Fresno, Department of Public Works and Planning, Development Services Division
Person Prepared by : chuang
On Date : 5/12/2023



Attachment to General Plan Conformity Review Application
for
Fresno Unified School District
Acquisition and Development of Land for Sunnyside High School
Agricultural Education Facilities

Fresno Unified School District is proposing to purchase approximately 17.75 acres at the southwest corner of Kings Canyon Road and Minnewawa Avenue for the purpose of providing agricultural education facilities for Sunnyside High School and the District. The property consists of three parcels. APNs 472-022-05 & 12 (9.02 acres) are vacant parcels that comprise the northern approximately one-half of the site. APN 472-022-13 (8.73 acres) comprises the southern one-half of the site and is fenced horse pasture that contains an irrigation well in the southeast corner of the parcel.

Plans for the site are conceptual at this time. Potential facilities on the site could include:

- Agricultural Education Building (including instructional spaces, labs, a teaching kitchen and community collaboration spaces)
- Learning gardens, greenhouse, compost processing and hydroponic/aquaponic systems
- Community farmers market, community gardens and fresh food bank
- Animal barns and pens
- Show arena
- Areas for growing row crops and orchard crops
- Service animal housing and exercise arena
- Mechanized agricultural education

Prior to any facilities being constructed on the site, the District will have to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, test the site for toxic/hazardous substances under the oversight of the Department of Toxic Substances Control, and obtain approval of the site by the California Department of Education.

The proposal to utilize the property at Kings Canyon and Minnewawa has been developed with the following focus areas:

Focus 1: Increase relevant, hands-on experiences by creating year-round opportunities in agriculture education for students from PK-12th grade

Currently in Fresno Unified, there are CTE Pathways at Hoover (Eco-Technology: Agriculture Science/Natural Resources), Phoenix Secondary High School (Sustainable Agriculture), Sunnyside (Agriscience and Technology/Agricultural Mechanics) and Baird Middle School. Fresno Unified launched its FFA Chapter in the 2022/2023 school year and will continue to expand opportunities for students in agriculture-related fields.

Sunnyside is also working on their expansion plan for the Agriscience and Technology Pathway Farm, which would be shared with nearby Phoenix Ag students. Key aspects of the plan include the following:

- ❖ Ag Mechanic students will be involved in all aspects, including building and farm repairs
- ❖ Collaboration with Special Education students to ensure access to agricultural experiences
- ❖ Students will learn how to prune/propagate from fruit trees
- ❖ Compete in CSU-Fresno, Reedley Community College, and other FFA local and state competitions
- ❖ Create more dual enrollment opportunities for students enrolled in Ag Pathway
- ❖ Grow crops from seeds/prepare them for hydroponic systems
- ❖ Raise fish and grow seedlings in the aquaponic system
- ❖ Use garden beds to grow cool and warm season crops
- ❖ Use extra fruits & vegetables grown to donate to community organizations
- ❖ Learn about healthy compost balancing
- ❖ Engage in animal science through poultry projects
- ❖ Earn Egg Handler Certification from Department of Food and Agriculture
- ❖ Creating outside learning events with middle and elementary schools

Use of the roughly 18-acre property at Kings Canyon and Minnewawa will allow students to gain practical experience and serve the community by producing agricultural goods and services. If Fresno Unified had the opportunity to purchase this land the District would have the capacity for further reach into the community – host local farmer’s markets and community gardens, build an agricultural building (that would help alleviate limited space at Sunnyside); create a show arena, allow for additional animal husbandry opportunities, and add additional crop options to create a sustainable agricultural farm, creating more local farm to table options (addressing one of the top LCAP issues), to name but a few.

Focus 2: Establish Future Farmers of America (FFA) membership and engagement

The National FFA is one of the largest youth-led organizations in the United States. In 1988 “National” was added to the name of the association to represent the large number of participants that have swelled the ranks of FFA members to 653,359, representing 8,568 local chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. FFA develops members’ potential and helps them discover their talent through hands-on experiences, which give members the tools to achieve real-world success. Through agricultural education, students are provided opportunities for leadership development, personal growth and career success. Agricultural education instruction is delivered through three major components:

- Classroom/Laboratory instruction (contextual learning)
- Supervised Agricultural Experience programs (work-based learning)
- Student leadership organizations (National FFA Organization and National Post-secondary Agricultural Student Organization).

Upkeep of animals and gardens, coordinating tours, leading tours of gardens and other Ag areas for local elementary and middle school tours, organizing semester crop competitions and other FFA events, organizing and running Farmers Markets, and coordinating crops to be used by Culinary students. Special Education students would work alongside Senior student interns to help with animal upkeep and gardens. Animal Service Pathway option could also be explored.

Ideas for partnering with Fresno State, Reedley Community College, the Fresno FARMS Bureau, and other local Industry Partners have fallen into two broad categories:

1. How to increase Ag experiences and knowledge of CTE pathways for TK-12th graders
2. Facility and partnership that would benefit Fresno Unified students and families, Reedley College, Fresno State, and the larger Fresno Community

Focus 3: Serve the community by producing agricultural goods and services and engaging in community-wide farmer's markets and Sunnyside regional gardens

To help students better recognize all aspects of the diverse and growing agricultural industry (ag business, environmental natural resources, ag communications, veterinary science, plant science, floriculture, horticulture, nursery and landscaping, entomology, careers, leadership, food science, education, and ag law), College and Career Readiness staff (Extended Learning, CTE, and Counseling Departments) would create a series of field trips and lessons aligned with each topic. Each year all K-8 students in Fresno Unified would take at least one field trip to Fresno State, Reedley, or this new Fresno Unified farm (students will learn about aspects of the industry such as Beef, Creamery, Dairy, Equine, Field Crops, Farmers Markets, Horticulture Nurseries, Meat Science, Orchards, Poultry, Sheep, and Swine). High school students in these pathways would develop leadership skills at this farm through supporting these K-8 experiences. District, college, and community staff would work in tandem to offer students opportunities that expand diverse, challenging, student-centered, hands-on, real-world learning experiences that would span both after school and year-round opportunities for students. With these partnerships in place, many other pathway trips and experiences could be developed and expanded with other community and educational partners. For example, this facility allows for Fresno Unified to host crop competitions and other FFA Events for local high schools and colleges. A weekly community wide Farmers Market could be hosted on site or Sunnyside Regional Garden Partnerships could be developed.

Focus 4: Develop and expand partnerships to expand Agricultural opportunities

This partnership would increase opportunities for career exploration, work-based learning, college credit opportunities, internships, and/or industry-recognized certifications, such as implementation and expansion of ACRS 21 to connect K-16 and create a long-term development of soft skills and career readiness training. Our partners at the FARMS Bureau, GAR Tootelian, Wonderful, Valley Children's Hospital, Chukchansi, Belmont Nursery, UC Extension Center, Fresno State, Reedley College, and other local industry are onboard to work together to create opportunities for expanding Agricultural opportunities throughout our schools and our community.

EXHIBIT 5



EXHIBIT 5