



County of Fresno

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

Planning Commission Staff Report Agenda Item No. 6 May 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Initial Study No. 8133 and Classified Conditional Use Permit
Application No. 3720

Allow the development and operation of an almond hulling/shelling facility within existing buildings previously used as part of a cotton gin operation, on a 21.41-acre parcel, along with an adjacent 43.83-acre and 94.40-acre parcel for temporary product storage, in the AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District.

LOCATION: The project site is located on the south side of W. Clayton Avenue 1,000 feet west of S. Tuolumne Avenue, and approximately 2.30 miles west-southwest of the unincorporated community of Tranquillity (APNs: 028-041-16S, 028-041-62S, 028-081-53S) (28285 W. Clayton Avenue) (Sup. Dist. 1).

**OWNER/
APPLICANT:** Westside Farmers Cooperative Gins, Inc.

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

David Randall, Senior Planner
(559) 600-4052

RECOMMENDATION:

- Adopt the Mitigated Negative/Negative Declaration prepared for Initial Study (IS) No. 8133; and
- Approve Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720 with recommended Findings and Conditions; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

EXHIBITS:

1. Mitigation Monitoring; Conditions of Approval and Project Notes
2. Location Map
3. Zoning Map
4. Land Use Map
5. Site Plan and Floor Plan
6. Applicant’s Operational Statement
7. Summary of Initial Study No. 8133
8. Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration

SITE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION:

Criteria	Existing	Proposed
General Plan Designation	Agriculture	No change
Zoning	AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District.	No change
Parcel Size	APN 028-041-16S: 21.41 acres APN 028-041-62S: 43.83 acres APN 028-081-53S: 94.40 acres	No change
Project Site	APN 028-041-16S occupied by former cotton gin	Operation of the former cotton gin as an almond hulling/shelling facility with minor modification to indoor processing equipment, and the interior remodel of an existing building to an office
Structural Improvements	150-foot by 500-foot covered metal storage structure 205-foot by 144-foot covered metal storage structure 200-foot by 104-foot building 235-foot by 50-foot building	Product storage Product storage 200-foot X 104-foot building to contain the hulling/shelling operation Portion of 235-foot X 50-foot building to be remodeled into an office

Criteria	Existing	Proposed
Nearest Residence	700 feet east	No changes
Surrounding Development	Agricultural/Very low density residential	No changes
Operational Features	Existing buildings and structures associated with former cotton ginning operation	1,500 square-foot portion of existing building converted to office use
Employees	N/A	25 including 6 full time employees during the non-operational period
Customers	N/A	1-10 per day between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
Traffic Trips	N/A	See discussion in the Table under Finding 2 on Page 6
Lighting	Existing building mounted lighting	No changes
Hours of Operation	N/A	24 hour per day (2, 12 hour shifts during the operating season (August 1-December 31) ; and, one 8-hour shift during the non-operating season (January 1-July 31)

EXISTING VIOLATION (Y/N) AND NATURE OF VIOLATION: N

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

An Initial Study has been prepared for this project in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Based upon the Initial Study, staff has determined that a Mitigated Negative Declaration is appropriate. A summary of the Initial Study is included as Exhibit 7.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Notices were sent to 15 property owners within 1,320 feet of the subject parcel, exceeding the minimum notification requirements prescribed by the California Government Code and County Zoning Ordinance.

PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A Classified Conditional Use Permit Application may be approved only if five Findings specified in the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance, Section 873-F are made by the Planning Commission.

The decision of the Planning Commission on a Classified CUP Application is final, unless appealed to the Board of Supervisors within 15 days of the Commission's action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The project proposes the operation of an almond hulling and shelling facility which will receive raw harvested almonds from surrounding growers and process them for market. The processes will include fumigation, hulling and shelling and separation of resulting product. The project site located on APN 028-041-16S is comprised of existing facilities formerly operated as a cotton gin. The current proposal will also involve the interior remodel of a 1,500 square-foot portion of an existing building to an office. The project involves two additional parcels which may be used for temporary product storage, and which are currently unimproved.

Finding 1: That the site of the proposed use is adequate in size and shape to accommodate said use and all yards, spaces, walls and fences, parking, loading, landscaping, and other features required by this Division, to adjust said use with land and uses in the neighborhood.

	Current Standard: AE-20	Proposed Operation:	Is Standard Met (y/n)
Setbacks	Front: 35 feet Side: 20 feet Rear: 20 feet	Front (north): 40 feet Side (east): 20 feet Side (west): 20 feet Rear (south): 158 feet	Yes
Parking	One (1) parking space for every two (2) employees, one for every salesperson, and adequate parking area for trucks operated by the facility Parking spaces shall be a minimum of 9 feet by 18 feet with 29 feet of clear backing space	No changes	Yes
Lot Coverage	No requirements	N/A	N/A
Space Between Buildings	No animal or fowl pen, coop, stable, barn or corral shall be located within forty (40) feet on any dwelling or other building used for human habitation	No change	Yes
Wall Requirements	No applicable requirements	N/A	N/A
Septic Replacement Area	100 percent	No change	Yes
Water Well Separation	Building sewer: 50 feet	Building sewer: N/A	Yes

	Current Standard: AE-20	Proposed Operation:	Is Standard Met (y/n)
	Septic tank: 100 feet	Septic tank: 100 feet	Yes
	Disposal field: 100 feet;	Disposal field: 135 feet	Yes
	Seepage pit/cesspool: 150 feet	Seepage pit/cesspool: N/A	N/A

Reviewing Agency/Department Comments Regarding Site Adequacy:

Development Engineering Section of the Department of Public Works and Planning, Development Services and Capital Projects Division: According to FEMA FIRM Panel 2024 H, the southwestern portion of the subject property is under Flood Zone A, subject to flooding from the 100-year storm. Any development within the Special Flood Hazard Area shall conform to the provisions of Title 15 of the Fresno County Ordinance Code, Chapter 15.48 – Flood Hazard Areas.

According to the U.S.G.S Quad Map, an irrigation canal is located near the eastern boundary of the subject parcel. Any improvements constructed within or near the canal should be coordinated with the owner(s) of the canal.

No other comments specific to the adequacy of the site were expressed by reviewing Agencies or Departments.

Finding 1 Analysis:

The project site has been improved with buildings and structures utilized in the previous cotton ginning operation, which buildings and structures are easily convertible to the proposed new use as an almond processing facility.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None

Finding 1 Conclusion:

Finding 1 can be made, as the already developed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the proposed almond hulling/shelling operation.

Finding 2: *That the site for the proposed use relates to streets and highways adequate in width and pavement type to carry the quantity and kind of traffic generated by the proposed use.*

		Existing Conditions	Proposed Operation
Private Road	No	N/A	N/A
Public Road Frontage	Yes	W. Clayton Avenue	No change
Direct Access to Public Road	Yes	W. Clayton Avenue	No change
Road ADT		W. Clayton Avenue: 500 Vehicles per day (VPD)	No change
Road Classification		Clayton Avenue: Local Road	No changes
Road Width		Clayton Avenue: 60-foot right-of-way/Paved width 25 feet	No changes
Road Surface		Asphalt	No changes
Traffic Trips		Clayton Ave: 500 Vehicles Per day, ADT (Average Annual Daily Traffic).	<p>Based on an operating season schedule of 7 days per week/24 hours per day; the Project will add approximately 76 trips per day during the operating season, as follows:</p> <p>Customer and visitors: up to approximately 10 trips per day during the operating season, and 5 trips per day during non-operating season.</p> <p>35 inbound field run almond delivery trips per day during the operating season; plus, approximately 1 empty bin delivery trip per day during the operating season; and approximately 30 outbound trips per day during operating season, carrying shell, hulls, inshell, kernels, hash, and foreign material.</p>
Traffic Impact Study (TIS) Prepared	No	No Traffic Impact Analysis was required for this project.	A Traffic Management Plan was made a

		Existing Conditions	Proposed Operation
			requirement during construction activities.
Road Improvements Required		N/A	No roadway improvements were made requirement of this project

Reviewing Agency/Department Comments Regarding Adequacy of Streets and Highways:

Road Maintenance and Operations Division of the Department of Public Works and Planning: Clayton Avenue is a County maintained road, classified as a local road with an existing and ultimate right-of-way of 60 feet, as per the Fresno County General Plan.

Design Division of the Department of Public Works and Planning: Project related traffic is expected to be minimal and does not warrant the need for a Traffic Impact Study. A Traffic Management Plan (TMP) will be required to address potential impacts during construction of the project, and also to address dust mitigation. This requirement has been included as a Mitigation Measure.

No other comments specific to the adequacy of streets and highways were expressed by reviewing Agencies or Departments.

Finding 2 Analysis:

The project will generate approximately 75-80 trips per day during the five-month long production season, and as such will not create a substantial increase in the baseline traffic on W. Clayton Avenue.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

See recommended Conditions of Approval attached as Exhibit 1.

Finding 2 Conclusion:

Finding 2 can be made based on the above information and staff analysis, it has been concluded that Clayton Avenue is adequate to accommodate any traffic generated by the proposed use.

Finding 3: *That the proposed use will have no adverse effect on abutting property and surrounding neighborhood or the permitted use thereof.*

Surrounding Parcels:

	Size:	Use:	Zoning:	Nearest Residence:
North	72.59 acres	Field Crops/Single-Family Residential	AE-20	None
South	54.19 acres	Vineyard	AE-20	1,300 feet

East	54.19 acres 2.56 acres	Vineyard Single Family Residential	AE-20 AE-20	None 730 feet
West	43.83 acres	Field crops	AE-20	None

Reviewing Agency/Department Comments:

Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division: The project has the potential to result in water quality degradation, generation of odors, noise and vectors.

No other comments specific to land use compatibility were expressed by reviewing Agencies or Departments.

Finding 3 Analysis:

The proposed use is considered appertains to commercial production agriculture. The project site has been historically utilized for value-added agricultural purposes, and it is located in a productive agricultural area proximate to where the product to be processed is grown and harvested. Additionally, the fact that the facility is existing and only minimal new construction is necessary, supports the selection of the site for this project. Comments from the County Health Department noted the potential for adverse impacts caused by this project, resulting from but not limited to; water quality degradation, odors, noise and vectors. However, staff has determined that adherence to the following regulations, standards, and policies would reduce those potential adverse impacts to a less than significant level:

- Water Quality Degradation: The project will be subject to applicable State and County waste discharge regulations, septic requirements, and plumbing code.
- Noise: The project will be subject to the applicable provisions of the County Noise Ordinance, Fresno County Noise Ordinance Code.
- Odor Generation: The project will be subject to all applicable San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Rules and must obtain any required permits prior to construction and operation.
- No concerns were expressed by any reviewing agencies with regard to pest vectors.

Based on the analysis, staff concluded that the proposed operation is well suited to its location in this rural area due to the nature of the operation and its direct association with agriculture. Therefore the project is not anticipated to have any adverse effects on surrounding property.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None.

Finding 3 Conclusion:

Finding 3 can be made based on the above information, staff believes the proposal will not have an adverse effect upon surrounding properties

Finding 4: That the proposed development is consistent with the General Plan.

Relevant Policies:	Consistency/Considerations:
<p>General Plan Policy LU-A.3: <i>The County May allow by discretionary permit in areas designated Agriculture, special agricultural uses and agriculturally related activities, including value-added processing facilities and certain non-agricultural uses listed in Table LU-3. Approval of these and similar uses in areas designated Agriculture shall be subject to the following criteria:</i></p> <p><i>a. The use shall provide a needed service to the surrounding agricultural area which cannot be provided more efficiently within urban areas, or which requires location in a non-urban area because of unusual site requirements or operational characteristics.</i></p>	<p>The proposed almond hulling/shelling operation is considered a value-added agricultural operation and is situated in the vicinity of the agricultural production operations which is designed to service. The project site was formerly operated as a cotton gin and the site, existing buildings and structures, are suitable for the proposed use, which would not be appropriate for a more urban environment due to the potential for increased truck traffic, noise and dust generated by the operation.</p>
<p>General Plan Policy PF-C.12: <i>The County shall approve new development only if an adequate sustainable water supply to serve such development is demonstrated.</i></p>	<p>The project will receive water supplied by the Tranquillity Irrigation District. The almond hulling/shelling process itself does not entail any water use; however, project construction, and operation will involve some domestic and dust palliative use, which is not anticipated to be a substantial quantity.</p>
<p>General Plan Policy PF-C.17: <i>The County shall, prior to consideration of any discretionary project related to land use, undertake a water supply evaluation. Subject to certain criteria.</i></p>	<p>The project was reviewed by the County Water and Natural Resources Division which determined that the water supplied by the Tranquillity Irrigation District is an adequate source for the project; additionally, the Central Delta Mendota Groundwater Sustainability Agency, which expressed any concerns with water supply or groundwater sustainability related to this project.</p>

Reviewing Agency Comments:

Policy Planning Unit, Development Services and Capital Projects Division: Pursuant to Fresno County Williamson Act program guidelines adopted by the Board of Supervisors, parcels that are enrolled in the program are required to have an active agricultural operation to be eligible to remain enrolled in the program. Review of the aerial photo of the subject parcels did not show any active agricultural operation conducted on the 43.83-acre parcel or the 94.40-acre parcel for the last ten (10) years. Additionally, Fresno County Williamson Act program guidelines limit the

use of land enrolled in the program to commercial agricultural operations and other uses that are considered compatible uses on land restricted by Williamson Act contract. The storage and sale of food products could be considered a compatible use on land enrolled in the Williamson Act program if the parcel is utilized to store products that are grown and processed on the premises and is secondary to an onsite bona fide agricultural operation and meets the principals of compatibility listed under Government Code Section 51238.7(a). Therefore, in order to utilize the two aforementioned parcels, both must be removed from the Williamson Act program through recordation of notices of non-renewal.

Note: Notices of Partial Nonrenewal of the Land Conservation Contracts were recorded on December 3, 2021 for APN's 028-041-62S and 028-081-53S.

No other comments specific to General Plan Policy were expressed by reviewing Agencies or Departments.

Finding 4 Analysis:

The proposed use is considered a Value-Added Agricultural processing facility, which is an allowed use with discretionary approval in agricultural area. Such agriculturally related uses are subject to certain criteria specified in the General Plan. The proposed almond hulling/shelling operation is consistent with those applicable criteria listed in General Plan Policy LU-A.3 due to the suitability of the project site, which is also supported by its location within a productive agricultural area, proximate to where the product to be processed is grown and harvested.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None

Finding 4 Conclusion:

Finding 4 can be made based on the discussion of consistency with General Plan Policies described above.

Finding 5: ***That the conditions stated in the resolution are deemed necessary to protect the public health, safety and general welfare.***

Finding 5 Analysis:

The proposed mitigation measures and conditions of approval were developed based on studies and consultation with specifically qualified staff, consultants, and outside agencies. They were developed to address the specific impacts of the proposed project and were designed to address the public health, safety, and welfare. Additional comments and project notes have been included to assist in identifying existing non-discretionary regulations that also apply to the project. The Applicant has signed an acknowledgement agreeing to the proposed mitigation measures and has not advised staff of any specific objection to the proposed conditions of approval.

Finding 5 Conclusion:

Finding 5 can be made based on staff's analysis. The conditions of approval for this project are deemed necessary to protect the public health safety and general welfare.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION:

Based on the factors cited in the analysis, staff believes the required Findings for granting the Classified Conditional Use Permit can be made. Staff therefore recommends approval of Classified Conditional Use Permit No. 3720, subject to the recommended Conditions.

PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:

Recommended Motion (Approval Action)

- Move to adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared for Initial Study No. 8133; and
- Move to determine the required Findings can be made as discussed in the Staff Report and move to approve Classified Conditional Use Permit No. 3720, subject to the Mitigation Measures, Conditions of Approval and Project Notes listed in Exhibit 1; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

Alternative Motion (Denial Action)

- Move to determine that the required Findings cannot be made (state basis for not making the Findings) and move to deny Classified Conditional Use Permit No. 3720; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

Mitigation Measures, Recommended Conditions of Approval and Project Notes:

See attached Exhibit 1.

JS:jp

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EXHIBIT 1

**Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
Initial Study No. 8133/Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720
(Including Conditions of Approval and Project Notes)**

Mitigation Measures					
Mitigation Measure No.*	Impact	Mitigation Measure Language	Implementation Responsibility	Monitoring Responsibility	Time Span
*1.	Aesthetics	All outdoor lighting shall be hooded and directed downward and away from adjacent properties and public streets.	Applicant	Applicant/PW&P	Prior to occupancy
*2.	Cultural Resources/Tribal Cultural Resources	In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures should be followed by photos, reports, video, etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.	Applicant	Applicant/Qualified Archaeologist	During ground-disturbing activities
*3.	Geology and Soils	If a paleontological resource is found, regardless of depth or setting, the Project contractor shall cease ground-disturbing activities within 50 feet of the find and contact a qualified paleontologist. The qualified paleontologist shall evaluate the significance of the resources and recommend appropriate treatment measures.	Applicant	Applicant/Qualified Paleontologist	During ground-disturbing activities
*4.	Transportation	Prior to issuance of development permits, a Traffic Management Plan, prepared by a licensed Traffic Engineer, shall be submitted to the Design Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning (Design Division), for review and approval. Construction of the proposed new Almond Hulling/Shelling facility shall be in substantial conformance with the Traffic Management Plan, as approved by the Design Division	Applicant	Applicant/Road Maintenance and Operations Division, PW&P	Prior to occupancy

EXHIBIT 1

Conditions of Approval

1.	The project shall be developed in substantial conformance with the operational statement, site plan, and floor plan, as presented to and approved by the Planning Commission.
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*MITIGATION MEASURE – Measure specifically applied to the project to mitigate potential adverse environmental effects identified in the environmental document. Conditions of Approval reference required Conditions for the project.

Notes

The following Notes reference mandatory requirements of Fresno County or other Agencies and are provided as information to the project Applicant.

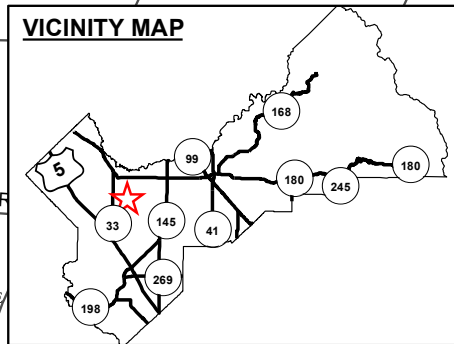
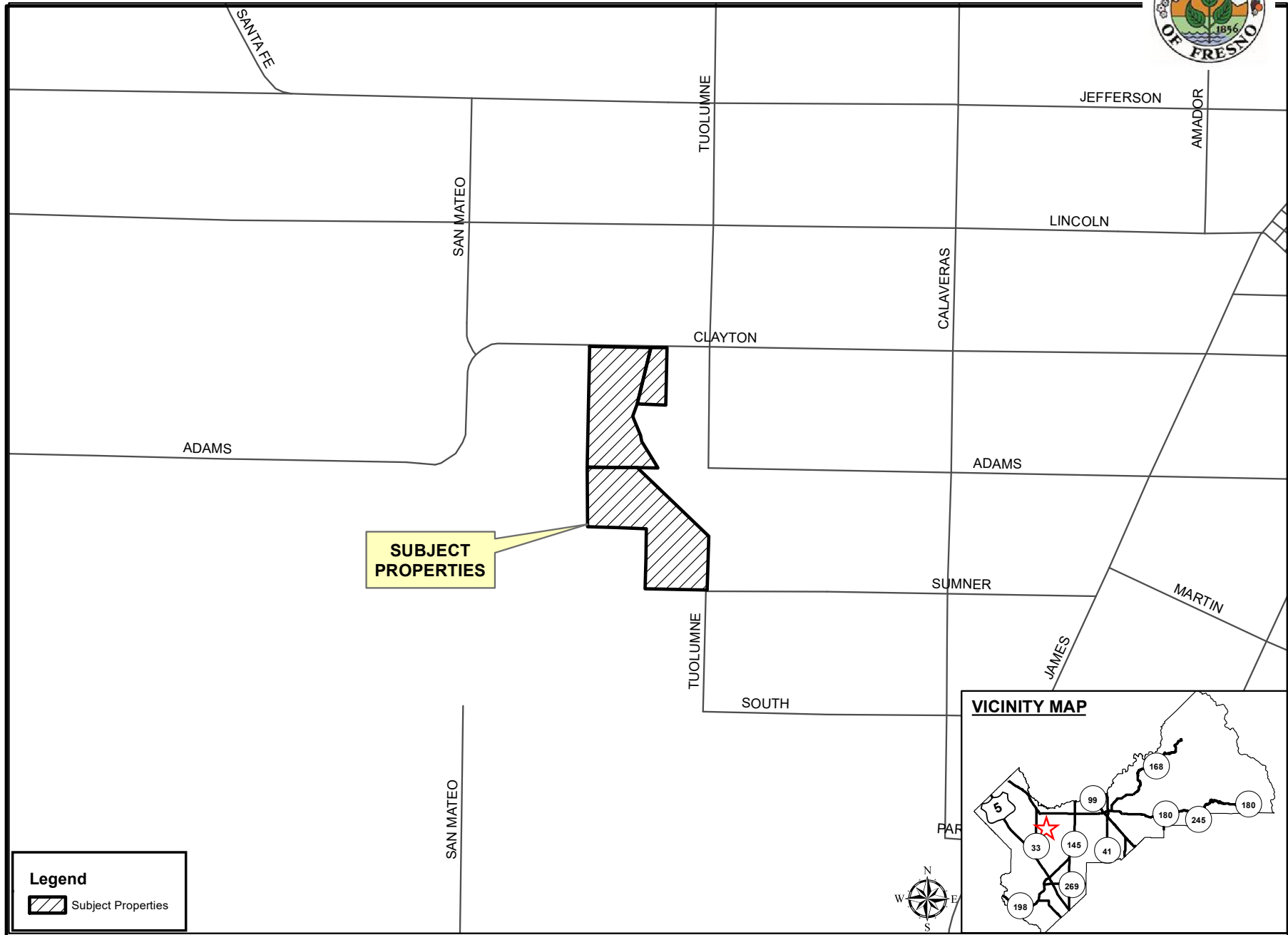
1.	Classified Conditional Use Permit No. 3720 shall become void unless there has been substantial development within two years of the effective date of approval of said Conditional Use Permit; or, there is a cessation of occupancy or use of land or structures authorized by said Conditional Use Permit for a period in excess of two-years; except where the structure or land is limited to a single purpose use.
2.	Plans, permits and inspections shall be required for all on-site improvements. Buildings and facilities providing a public use must comply with the accessibility requirements of chapter 11B of the California Building Code.
3.	The proposed almond hulling/shelling operation partially lies within the Westlands Water District (WWD) boundary, with APN No. 028-081-53S. The land currently receives an allocation of water from the WWD agricultural service contract; however, once the land use changes to non-agricultural, the land will no longer be eligible to receive an allocation of water from WWD. Additionally, based on the submitted site location map, the project site is near the District's Lateral 7L. Prior to construction, please contact Underground Service Alert (811).
4.	Any proposed driveway shall be a minimum of 24 feet or a maximum of 35 feet in width. If only the driveway is to be paved, the first 100 feet off of the edge of the ultimate right-of-way shall be concrete or asphalt.
5.	A dust palliative shall be required on all parking and circulation areas that are not paved.
6.	This project will be subject to the requirements of the current Fire Code and Building Code when a building permit or certificate of occupancy is sought.
7.	No building or structure erected in this District shall exceed 35 feet in height per Section 816.5.D of the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance.
8.	An additional storm water runoff generated by the proposed development cannot be drained across property boundaries or into the public right-of-way and must be retained or disposed of on site as per County standards.
9.	Parking areas shall be constructed in accordance with Fresno County Parking Standards, and applicable State standards.
10.	Facilities proposing to use and/or store hazardous materials and/or hazardous wastes shall meet the requirements set forth in the California Health and Safety Code (HSC), Division 20, Chapter 6.95, and the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 22, Division

Notes


	<p>4.5. Any business that handles a hazardous material or hazardous waste may be required to submit a Hazardous Materials Business Plan electronically pursuant to the HSC, Division 20, Chapter 6.95 (http://cers.calepa.ca.gov/). All hazardous waste shall be handled in accordance with requirements set forth in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 22, Division 4.5. This Division discusses proper labeling, storage and handling of hazardous wastes.</p>
11.	<p>Should any underground storage tank(s) be found on the project site, the applicant shall apply for and secure an Underground Storage Tank Removal Permit from the Fresno County Department of Public Health Environmental Health Division.</p>
12.	<p>An engineered grading and drainage plan is required to demonstrate how additional storm water runoff generated by the proposed development will be handled without adversely impacting adjacent property. The grading and drainage plan shall provide calculations of the required basin storage capacity and the basin design storage capacity.</p>
13.	<p>As a measure to protect ground water, any water wells or septic systems that exist or that have been abandoned within the project area, not intended for future use and/or use by the project, shall be properly destroyed. For those wells located in the unincorporated area of Fresno County, the applicant shall apply for and obtain a permit(s) to destroy water well(s) from the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division prior to commencement of work. The destruction and construction of wells can only be completed by a licensed C-57 contractor.</p>
14.	<p>At such time the applicant or property owner(s) decides to construct a water well, (following approval of the engineered design septic system for the parcel) the water well contractor selected by the applicant will be required to apply for and obtain a Permit to Construct a Water Well from the Fresno County Department of Community Health, Environmental Health Division. Please be advised that only those persons with a valid C-57 contractor's license may construct wells.</p>
15.	<p>Any new sewage disposal system shall be installed under permit and inspection by the Department of Public Works and Planning Building and Safety Section.</p>
16.	<p>It is recommended that the applicant consider having the existing septic tanks pumped and have the tank and leach lines evaluated by an appropriately licensed contractor if it has not been serviced and/or maintained within the last 5 years. The evaluation may indicate possible repairs, additions, or require the proper destruction of the system.</p>

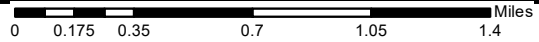
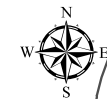
LOCATION MAP

CUP 3720



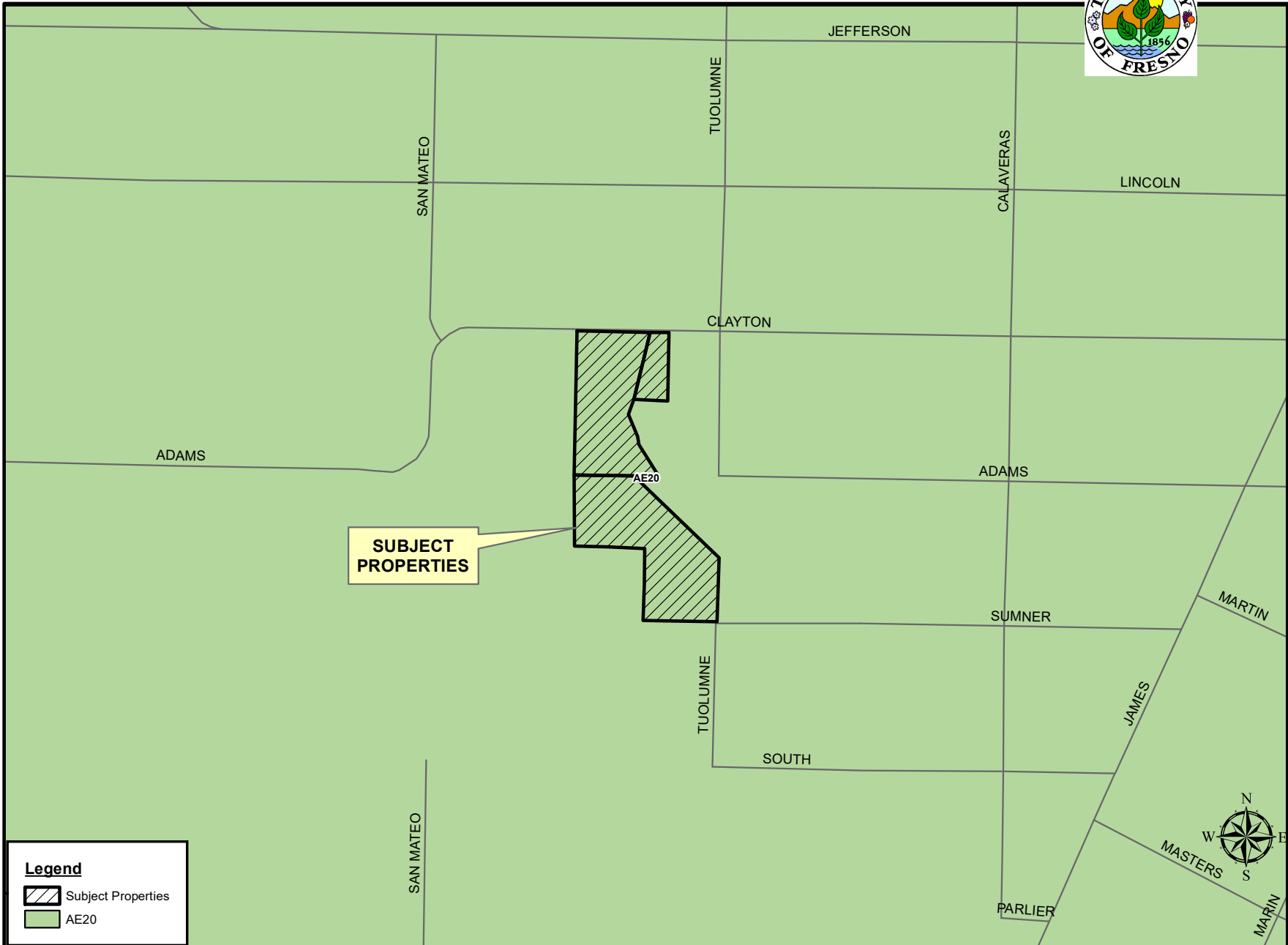
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 Subject Properties





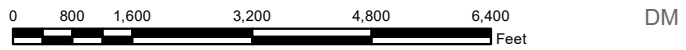
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EXISTING ZONING MAP



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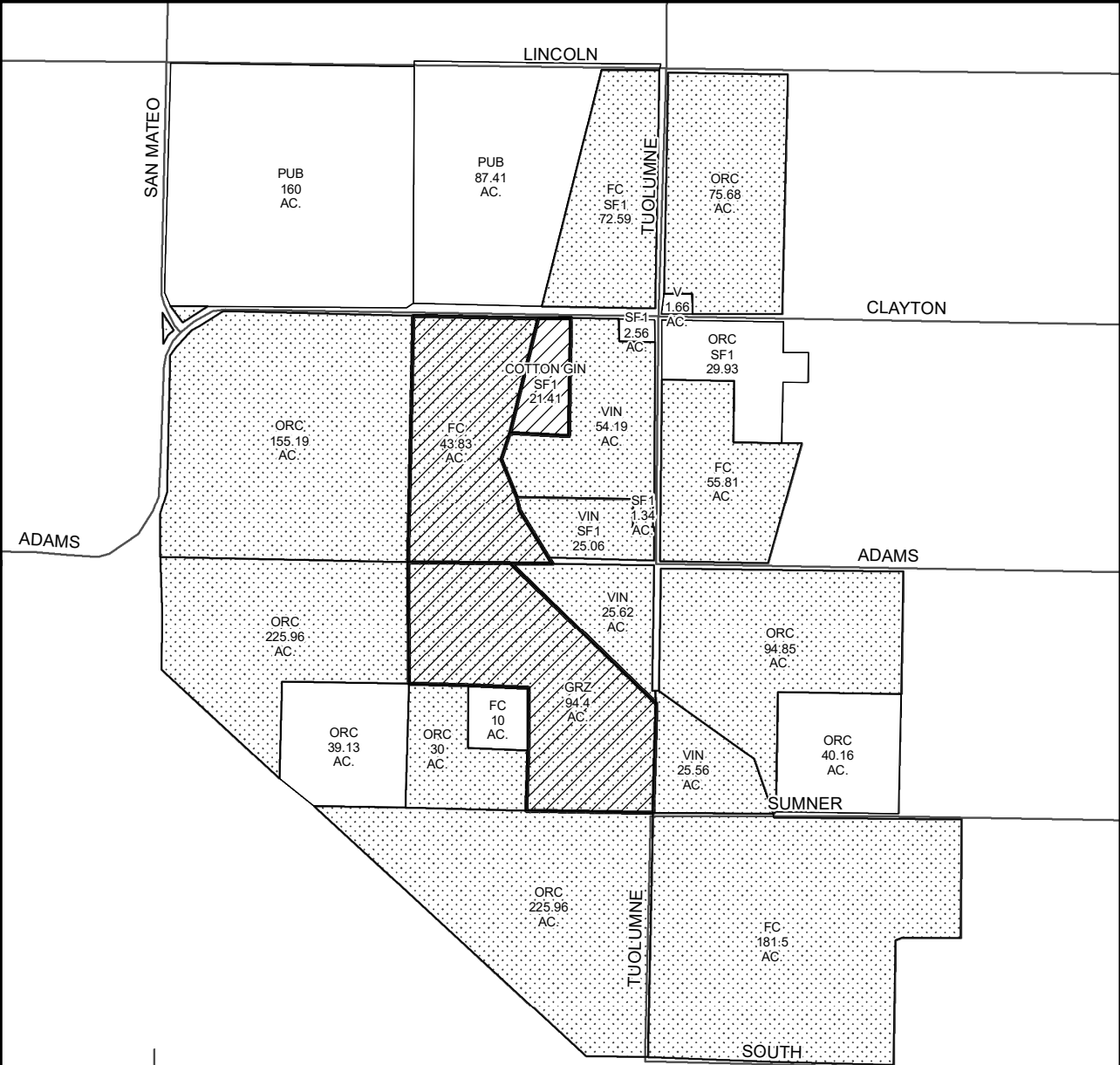
-  Subject Properties
-  AE20



EXISTING LAND USE MAP



CUP 3720



LEGEND

- FC - FIELD CROP
- GRZ - GRAZING
- ORC - ORCHARD
- PUB - PUBLICLY OWNED
- SF# - SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE
- V - VACANT
- VIN - VINEYARD

LEGEND:

- Subject Property
- Ag Contract Land



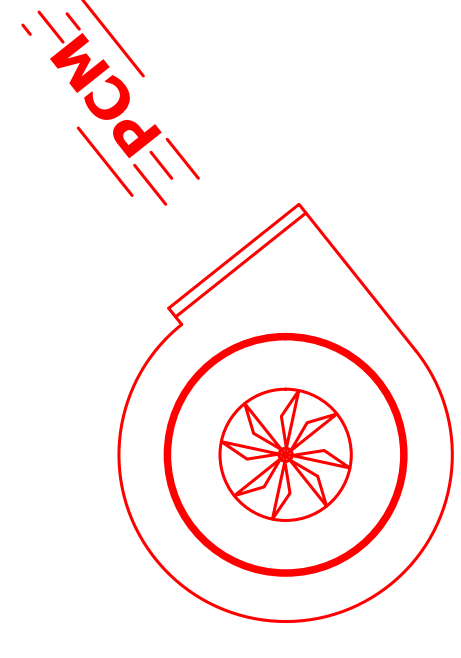
0 425 850 1,700 2,550 3,400 Feet

Department of Public Works and Planning
Development Services Division

Map Prepared by: DM
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EXHIBIT 4

PNEUMATIC CONVEYING & MFG.
Serving Agriculture and Industry

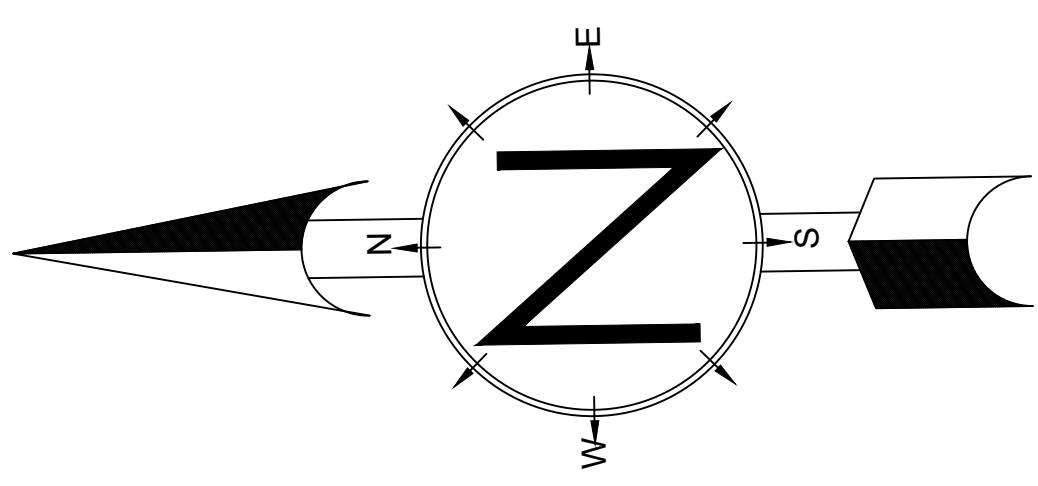
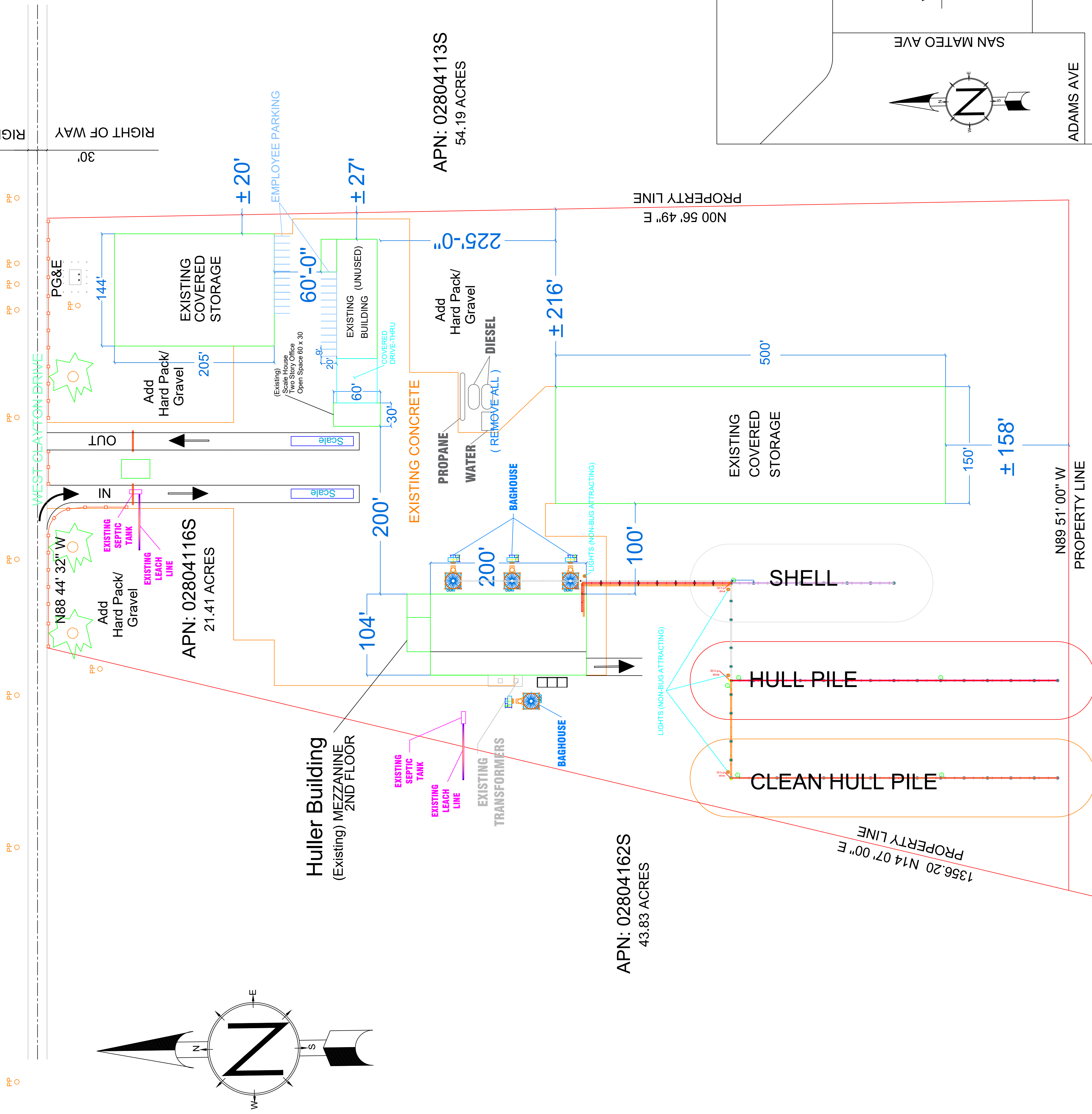
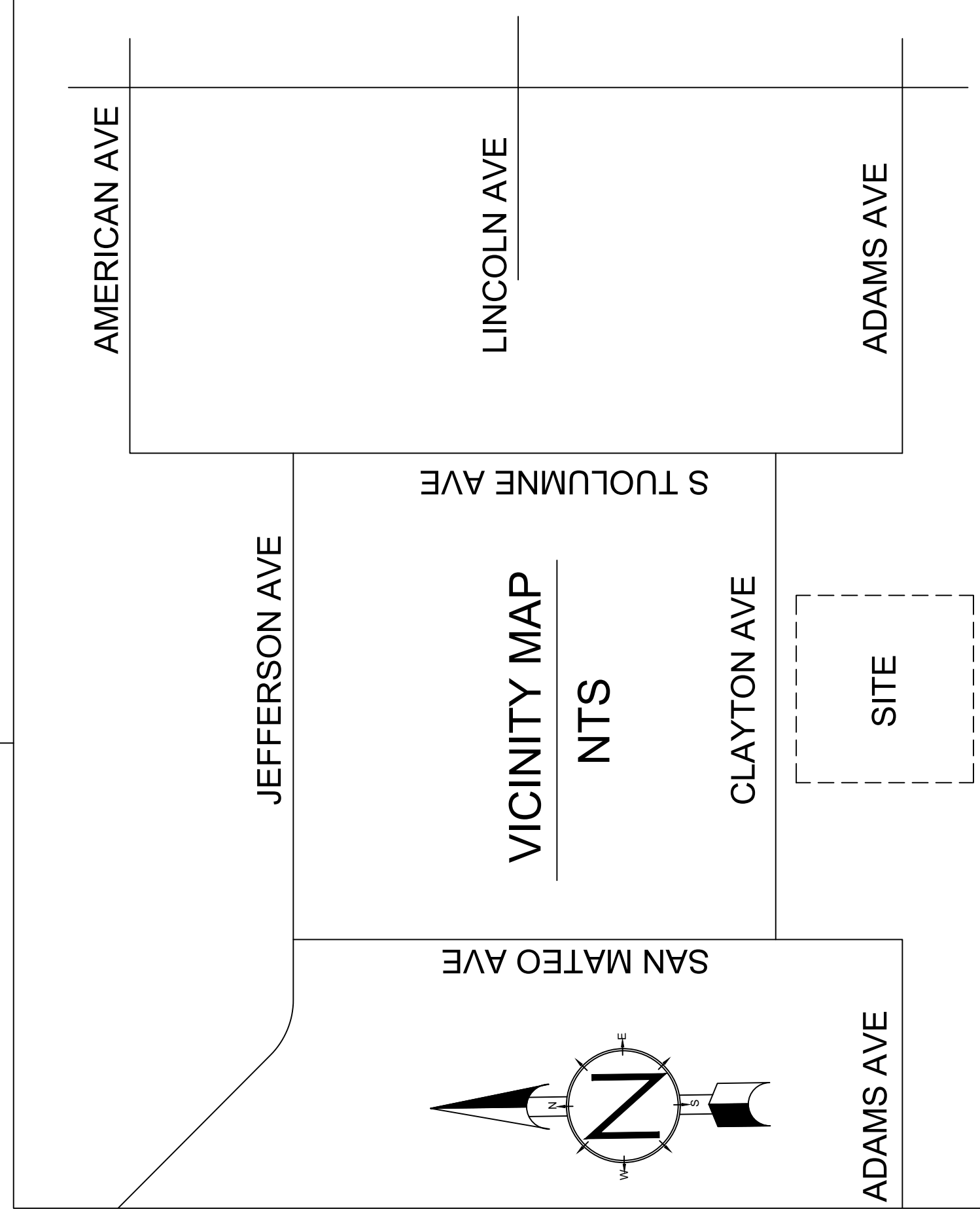


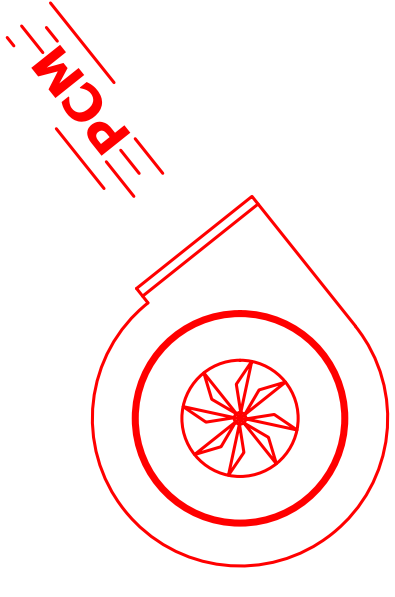
205 Kimball Rd.
P.O. Box 1068
Red Bluff, CA 96080
Cont. Lic.# 535072
Ph. (530) 529-1212
Fax (530) 529-1784

**WESTSIDE FARMERS CO-OP
PLOT PLAN**

JCN:	
DATE:	8/11/21
PAINT:	
DRAWN BY:	TE/BS
DRAWN #:	
REQUESTED BY:	
THIS DOCUMENT IS CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY, AND DUPLICATION OR TRANSFER, AND COMMUNICATION TO OTHERS IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT WRITTEN CONSENT OF PNEUMATIC CONVEYING & MFG 2021	

SCALE : 1" = 3'





205 Kimball Rd.
P.O. Box 1068
Red Bluff, CA 96080
Cont. Lic. # 535072
Ph. (530) 529-1212
Fax (530) 529-1784

Westside Farmers Co-op
Almond Hulling & Shelling Facility

JCN:

DATE: 7-23-21

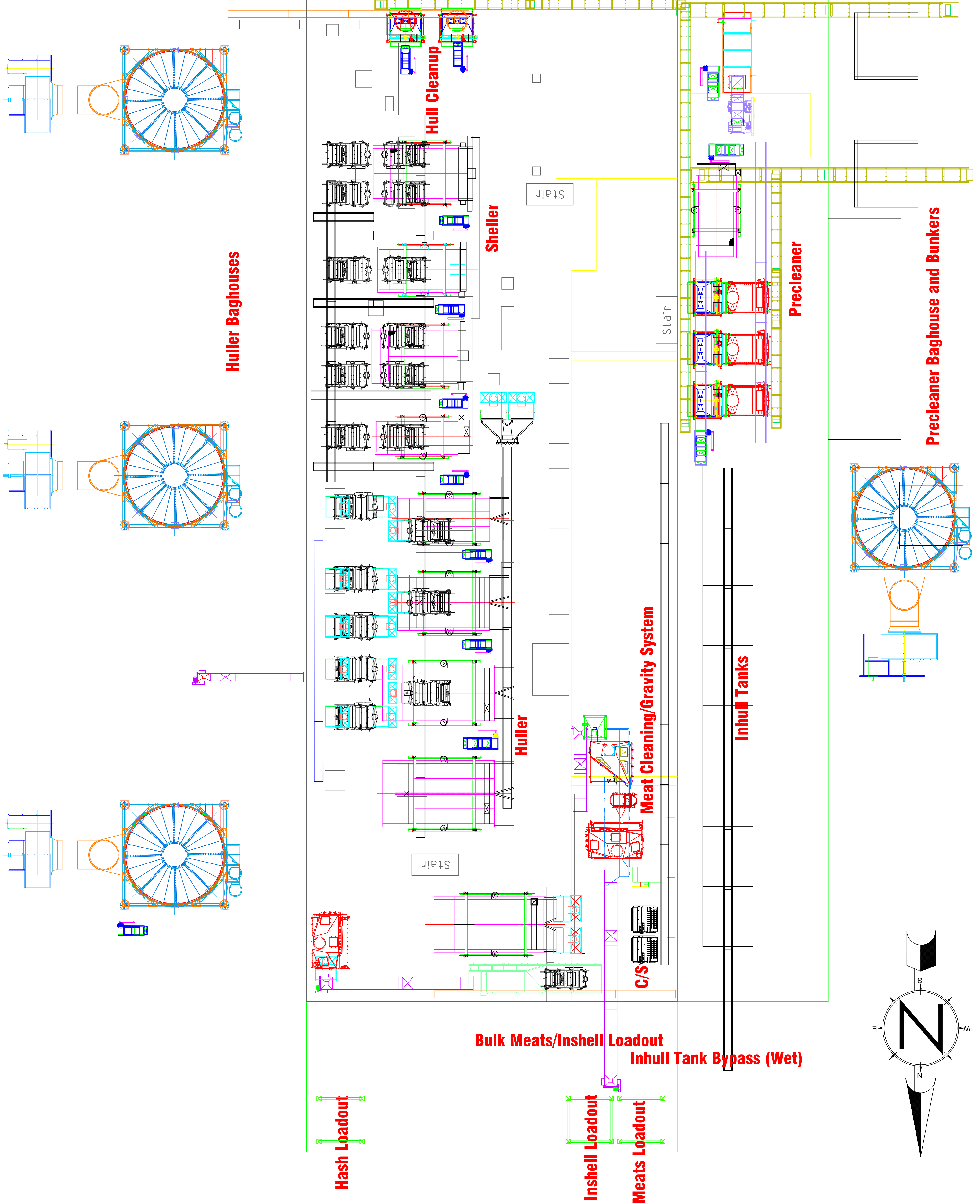
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DRAWN BY: BS

FILE NAME: Westside Farmers Coop 7-23-21

REQUESTED BY:

THIS DOCUMENT IS CONSIDERED
CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY,
DUPLICATION OR TRANSFER, AND
COMMUNICATION TO OTHERS IS
PROHIBITED WITHOUT WRITTEN
CONSENT OF PNEUMATIC CONVEYING &
MFG 2021



AUG 19 2021

Operational Statement Checklist (Revised 8/1/21)

1 – Nature of the Operation:

Proposal: Westside Cooperative Gins Inc. proposes to erect/install an almond Hulling/Shelling facility on the existing cotton gin site at 28285 W. Clayton Ave., Tranquility, CA. Almond hulling and shelling is a process of cleaning field run product, separating foreign material; separating hulls from kernel and shell, and separating shell from kernel. The end product may be kernels or “inshell” which is the kernel encased in the shell - similar to peanuts in the shell. The by-products of the operation, hull, shell, bits and pieces of split or broken kernel, (hash), all have a marketable value and will be transported and sold off site. Kernels and inshell will be transported to an Almond Processor for further grading, cleaning, sizing, and packaging.

The existing infrastructure of the site will accommodate an almond hulling/shelling facility within the existing footprint of the ginning facility. Almond product storage prior to, and after processing will be handled on site with temporary field run almond storage prior to the process and temporary hull and shell storage after the process. The existing electrical service, water service, ingress and egress will be unchanged from the previous ginning operations. The conversion of the facility will require new office construction (1500 sq. ft.), but it will be constructed within the footprint of an existing building. A reconfiguration of the hulling/shelling equipment will not require a main building expansion of 10,000 +/- square feet as previously proposed.

2 – Operational Time Limits:

The Almond Huller/Sheller will be operated on a seasonal basis beginning with the start of annual almond harvest and continue until all field run product received at the facility has been processed. Normal start date will be on or around August 1st of each year, and depending on crop yield, percentage of crop processed, and operational efficiencies, the conclusion of the seasonal process is expected to be on or around December 31st of each year, for a period of five months. The facility will be operated on a 24/7 basis, (24 hours per day; 7 days per week) for the majority of the processing season, with a lead-in

period at the start of the season, (approximately 7 – 10 days), and a lead-out period at The end of the season, (approximately 7 – 10 days), operating 12 hours per day. All of the actual processing will occur indoors, with outdoor activities being regulated to storage of incoming field run product in stockpiles, fumigation of stockpiles, loading of stockpiles into trailers for processing, and storage and out handling of by-products to be transported off site. Activities on site, based on employee count will be conducted at 60% indoors and 40% outdoors during the operation season; and 80% indoors and 20% outdoors during the non operating season.

3 – Number of Customers or visitors: Seasonal averages will be 1 customer/visitor per day, with a peak of 10 in any single day. Visiting hours will be from 8:00 am to 5: 00 pm.

4 – Number of employees: Seasonal employees will number approximately 25 employees annually which include 6 full time employees during the non-operational period. Work shifts will be 12 hours per shift; two shifts per day, during the operating season and one shift; 8 hours per day, during the non- operating season.

5 – Service and delivery vehicles: Seasonal trips by customers, and/or visitors is estimated at 210 trips and non-seasonal is estimated at 50 trips. These include customers, vendors, mechanics, sales and service, and fuel trucks. Field run product (inbound loads), will be received at the site by truck and trailer rigs. Based on estimated volume to be processed, approximately 5,200 loads will be delivered. Additionally, approximately 100 loads of empty bins, also by truck and trailer, will be delivered during the course of the season. Outbound truck and trailer loads of shell, hulls, inshell, kernels, hash, and foreign material are estimated at 4,500 loads.

6 – Access to site: All vehicular traffic, entering and exiting the site will be from paved public road, via Clayton Ave. This is a paved approach to the site and is wide enough to accommodate both ingress and egress at the same time.

7 – Parking: Spaces will be provided for employees and customers. Parking will accommodate 10 parking spaces at the office area on concrete parking surfaces and 30

parking spaces near the office for the processing facility on compacted base-rock or asphalt surfaces.

8 – Goods Sold on site: All by- products of the field run commodity delivered to the huller/sheller will be transported and sold off site. Hash is a marketable product containing a saleable amount of edible pieces of broken or split kernels that will be processed further at an offsite facility. The kernels and inshell, the primary marketable products of the process will be transported to an Almond Processor for further cleaning, sorting, sizing, packaging and sale.

9 – Equipment used in process: Product handing and processing equipment is composed of elevators, vibratory conveyors, gravity shakers, de-twiggers, de-stoners, shear rolls, color sorters, aspirators, augers and conveyor belts. (For additional information, please see Process Description at conclusion of checklist).

10 – Supplies or materials used: Supplies required for the processing of the kernel or inshell is normal to other agricultural processing operations. Diesel for loaders and propane for forklifts are consistent with other agricultural commodity processes; as are the normal machine lubricants such as oil and sanitation supplies. Diesel fuel will be stored onsite in aboveground storage tanks with containment basins. Propane will be stored in approved storage tanks. All other lubricants and supplies will be properly stored inside buildings, within labeled containers according to OSHA and FSMA guidelines. A major supply item used in the storage and fumigation of field run product is 6 mil polyethylene plastic sheeting. This product is a “one time use” supply item and is recycled to various vendors after use. The plastic sheeting is used to cover the “inhull” stock piles while in storage prior to processing. Approximately 75 % of the inbound field run “inhull” product will be covered with plastic sheeting. This “supply item” will provide a protective cover for the field run while in storage and also provide a sealant barrier to allow for fumigation of the field run while covered and in storage. Annual use of this supply item is estimated at 2 million square feet. Storage of the plastic sheeting prior to use is on wooden pallets, in rolls, and it is re-rolled or baled prior to re-cycling after use.

11 - The use of the site as an Almond Hulling/Shelling operation will not cause an unsightly appearance. No odors are produced by the process; there will be no stationary reflective surfaces to cause glare, and noise levels are less than 85 decibels at 200 feet from the building, (as tested at other sites). Fugitive dust due to on site traffic will be handled according to SJVAPCD guidelines.

12 – List of solid or liquid wastes: All sewer wastes will be handled by the septic systems. By-products are hull, shell, hash, and foreign material are not considered waste products. All by products will be transported off site in an orderly delivery schedule beginning in September of each year and extending through June of the following year. The hulls are used exclusively for dairy feed. The shell can be used for dairy bedding or mixed in small ratios to enhance fiber in dairy rations. The foreign material; sticks, plant residue, and organic matter, is returned to alkaline soils to be incorporated into the native soil as an amendment.

13 - Water supply at the site is from the Tranquility Irrigation District. Operating season annual domestic use, (toilets, hand wash stations, cleaning), is estimated at 350,000 gallons, (2,300 gallons per day); non operating season domestic use, is estimated at 150,000 gallons, (700 gallons per day). Total domestic use is estimated at 500,000 gallons annually. The Almond Hulling/Shelling process uses no process water. Water used for fugitive dust control for on-site dust generated by operational vehicles is estimated at 5000 gallons per day for the operating season and 500 gallons per day for the non operating season. Annual fugitive dust control water use is estimated at 735,000 per year.

14 – Proposed advertising and signage: Signage for Westside Cooperative Huller will be displayed at the entrance to the property prior to entering the truck scales and on the northern exposure of the main huller building. No advertising will be displayed. The entrance sign will approximate an 8' x 16' size. The sign on the building will approximate an 8'x16' size. Both signs will be in non-obtrusive colors.

15/16 – Existing buildings to be used: The main building (100' x 200') will be used to separate the hull, shell and kernel; (the Huller/Sheller). The 2 existing metal frame buildings (previously cottonseed storage) will be used for dry hull storage and/or empty bin storage. The existing scale office will be used as a guard house. The older gin building will be used as a maintenance shop, and the module bay of the older gin building will house a new 1500 ft. sq. office within the existing footprint.

17 - Outdoor lighting will be installed on all four sides of the main building and on the hull and shell lines for nighttime operations and security. No sound amplification systems are required or will be installed.

18 - Landscaping will be confined to the office area and entrance, shrubbery and landscape bark, while perimeter chain link fencing will be installed along the Clayton Ave. road frontage.

19 – Please see Overview and Narrative attached.

20 – Identify all owners: Contained in cover letter

Overview and Narrative

Almond hulling and shelling is a process of cleaning field run product, separating foreign material; separating hulls from kernel and shell, and separating shell from kernel. The end product may be kernels or “inshell” which is the kernel encased in the shell - similar to peanuts in the shell. The by-products of the operation, hull, shell, bits and pieces of split or broken kernel, (hash), all have a marketable value and will be transported and sold off site. Kernels and inshell will be transported to an Almond Processor for further grading, cleaning, sizing, and packaging.

The proposed project will be designed for 60,000,000 (sixty million) kernel pounds annually. The initial few years will not process that amount but - will build to – that goal. The field harvested volume for 60,000,000 kernel pounds will approximate 240,000,000 “field pounds” (120,000 tons), transported to the huller annually by various growers. 60,000,000 kernel pounds will generate 12,000 tons of shell; 54,000 tons of hull; 1200 tons of hash; and 18,000 tons of foreign material.

Definitions:

The nature of the hulling/shelling operations follows many agriculture operations and the “nomenclature” or commonly used terms, may be confusing to someone unaccustomed to the common terms used to describe the product and/or processes. The following terms are listed for clarification:

Field Run Almonds = Harvested product from the field containing almond kernels in the shell covered by a hull, and a small percentage of foreign material, (sticks twigs, etc.)

Stock-Piling Yard = Designated areas on site to store field run product prior to processing.

Hulling/ Shelling = Separation of the hull and/or shell from the almond kernel.

Meats = Kernels

In hull = Hull, shell, and kernel still attached together

Inshell = Kernel encased in a shell

Plant Operation

- **Systems;**
 - Receiving and Precleaning
 - Hulling/Shelling
 - Meat Cleanup
 - Gravity Circuit
 - Pee-Wee Circuit
 - By-Product Storage

Process Description

- **Receiving and Precleaning;** Field run almonds are delivered to the facility in belly-dump style trailers where they drive onto a truck scale to be weighed and documented according to grower name, ranch location, and variety into the cooperative's manifest. The trailers will either be sent over to be unloaded in stock-piling yard or directly into the precleaner. The precleaner will be equipment with an unloading conveyor to feed the precleaner. The precleaning of the almond prior to hulling and shelling is extremely critical for increased efficiency. Four (4) key machines are used in the precleaning process; Stick reel (long sticks), sand screen (dirt/sand), detwigger (small sticks/twigs), and destoner (rocks/stones).
- **Hulling/Shelling;** after the almonds have passed through the precleaning process, they will be stored into large scale bins until further processing. The bins will be tagged according to the grower, ranch location and variety. If the hulling/shelling line is designed without sufficient equipment to shell the proper ranges of almond sizes or varieties excessive meats will be damaged. This plant is designed with eleven (11) stages shell all almond varieties and conditions at high quality. Stage shelling is continuous which allows for increased capacity with less equipment. Incoming inhull/inshell almonds are introduced to the first stage of hard-shell crackers and shear roll units with a clearance setting to gently shell or 'crack' the

largest size almonds of that run with a minimum of meat damage. Hard-shell crackers and shear rolls are used in tandem by the operators to efficiently condition the almond meat from the shell or hull. The shelled product (meats) and unshelled product (inhull/inshell) will discharge from the cracker/shear roll unit onto a sizing screen. The screen is sized to let meats and small foreign material (half-hulls, shell) fall through.

The product that carries over the sizing screen is either inhull or inshell almonds which go automatically to the next stage, #2. The second stage of hard-shell crackers and shear roll units will be adjusted with a clearance setting of the largest almonds that were not shelled in the first stage. The above procedure is continued repeatedly at each stage until every meat is shelled out in that run. The unique feature of the hulling/shelling process is that the operator(s) can control the percentage of meats generated at each stage which determines the processing rate of the line based on the quality of meats produced at each stage.

- **Meat Cleanup;** All of the meats (kernels), accumulated from the hulling and shelling process pass onto scalping screens to remove that 'half-hull' sized pieces of foreign material from meats before they go onto the meat separator decks. The next screen is the meat separator deck, which has two (2) levels of screening each level is designed to scalp and sift foreign material from meats. The meat product will then go into airlegs as the final step of cleanup before the gravity circuit to reduce foreign material content to 5-8%, depending on variety/condition. The airleg uses a blower fan and top-air aspiration to suspend the meat product in a column of air while lighter product like hull and shell blow out and into the off-fall tank.
- **Gravity Circuit;** the gravity circuit consists of a gravity table(s) that uses a vibrating deck and top air aspiration to make 4-5 sizes of product. A constant flow of incoming product, from the meat cleanup line, onto the gravity table is important for operators to make an effective separation. The first size the gravity table will make is the "rock" cut which includes larger almonds of that run and small stones/pebbles. This specific cut will go directly onto a small destoner to remove those stones/pebbles from large almonds before going into a finishing bin. The second size is good product which will go directly into the finishing bin.

- The third size the 'middling' cut which is determined by the operator to go back onto a secondary gravity table, the pee-wee circuit, or into the finishing bin. The fourth size of product from the gravity table is the pee-wee cut which goes directly to the pee-wee circuit. The fifth and final size is typically foreign material that the operator can send to the floor auger or to the pee-wee circuit.
- **Pee-Wee Circuit;** this circuit is designed only to shell out small (pee-wee) inshell almonds. The pee-wee circuit uses a small cracker and shear roll unit with minimal clearance setting to ensure that all pee-wee inshell will be shelled out. This eliminates the risk of recirculation and makes this huller/sheller plant a complete system.
- All circuits requiring air movement to facilitate the operation of specific equipment within the circuit will be serviced by two or three bag houses designed to handle the air required for operation.
- **By-Product Auger Storage;** All foreign material separated during the hulling, shelling, meat cleanup, gravity and pee-wee circuit will get conveyed out of the plant and put into 40'-0" high x 460'-0" long auger storage lines. Multiple storage lines will be installed to separate shell, hull, and hull/shell mix. These by-products will be used as bedding and feed for dairies.



County of Fresno

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

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- APPLICANT:** Westside Farmers Cooperative Gins, Inc.
- APPLICATION NOS.:** Initial Study No. 8133 and Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720
- DESCRIPTION:** Allow the development and operation of an almond hulling/shelling facility within existing buildings previously used as part of a cotton gin operation, on a 21.41-acre parcel, along with an adjacent 43.83-acre and 94.40-acre parcel for temporary product storage, in the AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District
- LOCATION:** The project site is located on the south side of W. Clayton Avenue 1,000 feet west of S. Tuolumne Avenue, and approximately 2.30 miles west-southwest of the unincorporated community of Tranquillity (APNs 028-041-16S, 028-041-62S, 028-081-53S) (28285 W. Clayton Avenue) (Sup. Dist. 1).

I. AESTHETICS

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- B. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes to use existing buildings, no new construction is proposed that would affect viewsheds from surrounding property. No scenic vistas or other scenic resources were identified in the analysis. The project site is not located in the vicinity of a designated State scenic highway.

- C. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are

experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There are no identifiable, publicly accessible viewpoints. The visual character of the area will be unchanged by the proposed project, as the project entails the use of existing buildings and structures associated with the former cotton ginning operation.

- D. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

The project does include the installation of new outdoor lighting on all sides of the main office building and on the huller building; the new lighting is not anticipated to have an adverse effect on adjacent property; however, the following Mitigation Measure has been included to reduce any impacts from new or existing outdoor lighting to a less than significant level.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *All outdoor lighting shall be hooded and directed away from adjacent properties and public streets.*

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

- A. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Of the three parcels associated with this project, the 21.41-acre parcel, APN No. 028-041-16S is improved with several buildings and structures which were formerly used as part of a cotton ginning operation, and which will be converted to use as an almond

hulling and processing facility. The property contains land designated as Urban and Built-Up, according to the 2016 Fresno County Important Farmlands Map. Urban and Built-Up Land is defined as being occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. In this case APN 028-041-16S The other two parcels contain agricultural land designated as predominately Vacant, Disturbed land, or Grazing land. There is no land contained by any of the three subject parcels which is designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland contained within the subject parcels, thus no land so designated will be converted because of the project.

B. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Two the three parcels associated with the project, APN 028-041-62S (43.83-acres), and 028-081-53S (94.40) which may also be used for almond hulling/shelling product storage are both enrolled in the Williamson Act Program under Contract No. 2597 and Contract No. 169 respectively . As the two parcels do not contain an active agricultural operation, they no longer qualify to remain in contract and were required to record Notices of Non-Renewal of their respective contracts. Those notices were recorded on December 3, 2021. As no development is proposed for these two parcels of land, and in consideration of the Williamson Act contracts being non-renewed, there will not be conflicts with the Williamson Act. The land will remain available for agricultural operations. There are no changes proposed to the zoning or land use designation of the parcels.

C. Conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Timberland Production?

D. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The land associated with the project does not contain forest land, timberland or land zoned for Timberland Production, nor will it result in the loss or conversion of forest land.

E. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The subject parcels do not contain any Farmland of the classification listed under subsection A above, or forestland. Therefore, the project will not result in the conversion of either Farmland or forestland.

III. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

- A. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable Air Quality Plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project was reviewed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The Air District did not express any concerns that the project would result in adverse impacts to air quality. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) adopted a Scoping Plan, most recently updated in December 2017, to achieve the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals set by California Assembly Bill (AB 32) and Senate Bill (SB 32). Based on the results of An Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Analysis (Air Quality Analysis) prepared for the project by Trinity Consultants, dated June 23, 2021, the project will not conflict or obstruct implementation of any applicable air quality plan.

- B. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's, Guidance for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts (GAMAQI), dated March 19, 2015; Criteria pollutants as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are reactive organic gases (ROG), ozone, particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and lead. These criteria pollutants are regulated by the EPA guidelines which set permissible levels. According to the conclusions of the Air Quality Analysis by Trinity Consultants, neither short term project construction nor project operation would result in exceedance of any Air District established thresholds of significance for Criterial Pollutants.

- C. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; or
- D. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

According to publicly available internet based aerial imagery, there are approximately eight (8) residential dwellings within three-quarter miles of the project site, three of which are located within 750 feet of the project site, and one of those is a caretakers residence located approximately 375 feet ,on one of the subject parcels 028-041-62S, westerly adjacent to where the proposed hulling and shelling operations will take place.

Sensitive receptors are defined by in the GAMAQI as people that have an increased sensitivity to air pollution or environmental contaminants. Residential dwellings, along with schools, parks and playgrounds, day care centers, nursing homes. Hospitals, and other similar facilities are considered potential sensitive receptor locations. Because the project is located in an area of generally sparse residential development and large farming operations, consisting of vineyards, field crops and confined animal feedlot operations, where airborne fugitive dust, and application of agricultural chemicals are anticipated to occur regularly. However, according to the applicant's submitted operational statement the majority of the proposed operation will take place indoors therefore airborne dust generated by that part of the project would be minimal, fugitive dust will mostly be limited to that which is generated by truck traffic to and from the site and from the use of vehicles and non-road equipment on the site. General Plan Policy OS-G.14 requires that all access roads, driveways, and parking areas serving new commercial and industrial development to be constructed with materials that minimize particulate emissions and are appropriate to the scale and intensity of the use. The project site in this case is comprised of several buildings which were part of a former cotton ginning operation, and most of the area surrounding the buildings is concrete paved including the driveway on to Clayton Avenue.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

A portion of the 21.41-acre parcel was formerly operated as a cotton gin, and is predominately surrounded by agricultural land. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) there were recorded occurrences of the burrowing owl in 2006 approximately three-quarter miles southwest of the project site, and occurrences of the state threatened Swainson's hawk approximately 3.5 miles northeast of the project site in 2011. The burrowing owl is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The project site itself is within the range and predicted habitat area of the Burrowing Owl with a high habitat suitability rating based on the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) information system and predictive model for California's Wildlife. The project site is also within the range and predicted habitat area of the state threatened Swainson's Hawk, with a medium to high habitat suitability rating. Since the project does not propose any extensive ground disturbance or construction of any new buildings, only the interior remodel of a portion of an existing building to be converted to office use, and the potential storage of agricultural product separated during the hulling/shelling operation, the project is unlikely to result in adverse effects to any identified candidate, sensitive or special status species due to habitat modification.

- B. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

A search of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Natural Diversity Database, BIOS mapping application indicated that the project site is within the predicted habitat area of the mountain plover, and the burrowing owl, both of which are designated and species of special concern and are also protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Additionally, the CNNDDDB indicated that there have been recorded occurrences of both the mountain plover and burrowing owl within three quarter miles of the project site. However, the project does not propose any ground disturbance which would inadvertently cause impacts to the mountain plover or burrowing owl habitat.

- C. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No federally protected wetlands were identified in the analysis. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) there may be an intermittent stream running through the project site, however no wetland features were identified by the NWI mapper, on any of the three subject parcels.

- D. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose the construction of any new buildings or other structures that would physically interfere with the movement of any native wildlife species. No established wildlife corridors or nursery sites were identified in the vicinity of the project site.

- E. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or
- F. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state Habitat Conservation Plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No adopted habitat conservation plans, or natural community conservation plans applicable to the area of the project were identified in the analysis.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- B. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- C. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

This proposal was routed to the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC) for a historical and archaeological records search. The SSJVIC noted that there were no available records indicating that the project area had been surveyed by a qualified cultural resources consultant, and that given the known archaeological sensitivity of the region, prehistoric or historic cultural resources may be present within the project site; and, that current site conditions would appear to allow for adequate survey of potential surface or sub-surface cultural resources. No recommendation was made for an archaeological survey to be undertaken, only that the age of the existing cotton gin structures be evaluated by an architectural historian to determine historical significance if any. Because the project does not propose any new ground disturbance or construction of new buildings, no additional historical or archaeological studies were required. However, to address the possibility of the discovery of previously unknown surface or subsurface cultural/historical resources, the following Mitigation Measure has been included.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. All normal evidence procedures shall be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.*

VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

- A. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation; or

- B. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Construction and operation of the proposed project will commit nonrenewable resources in the form of fossil fuels, including liquified petroleum (LP) gas and single use plastics, also oil based, in the form of polyethylene plastic sheeting needed for covering field run product, and to act as a sealant barrier during fumigation, as part of the operation. The project will use approximately two-million square feet of 6-millimeter polyethylene sheeting. The proposed operation is anticipated to generate a relatively low number of new traffic trips during the approximately five month long almond processing season, including truck trips, and during construction of the office. The consumption of diesel fuel and gasoline is not anticipated to be wasteful, inefficient or unnecessary. According to the applicant's submitted operational statement, the polyethylene plastic sheeting will be recycled after use.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- A. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
1. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault?
 2. Strong seismic ground shaking?
 3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
 4. Landslides?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

According to Figure 9-5 (Probabilistic Seismic Hazards (10% probability in 50 years) of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR) is in an area of the County designated as having a 20-40 percent peak horizontal ground acceleration (PGA) uniform soft-rock site condition, given a 10 percent probability in 50 years of strong seismic activity. All buildings and structures proposed for use with the project are existing and must meet all applicable requirements of the current California building standards code which include seismic design requirements based on particular seismic zones, as identified on Figure 9-4 (California Building Code Seismic Zones) FCGPBR. The project site is located in seismic zone 3 Uniform Building Code. According to Chapter 9 of the FCGPBR, liquefaction can occur during seismic activity when ground acceleration approaches 0.3g or 30 percent of the force of gravity, in sandy soil with relative densities typical of the San Joaquin alluvial deposits. Liquefaction occurs when soil is temporarily transformed to a fluid form during intense and prolonged ground

shaking. Areas most prone to liquefaction are those which are water saturated, where the water table is less than 30 feet below ground, and where the soil is sandy with low to medium density. Most of Fresno County is in an area of relatively low seismic activity, certain fault systems near the eastern and western boundaries of the County have the potential to produce high magnitude earthquakes in other parts of the County, which could cause moderate intensity ground shaking, especially in valley areas.

- B. Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil; or
- C. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not in area identified as being at increased risk of erosion, according to Figure 7-4 (Erosion Hazards in Western Fresno County) of the FCGPBR. According to Figure 9-6 (Landslide Hazards and Areas of Subsidence) of the FCGPBR, the project site is not in an area identified as being at increased risk from landslide, however it is in an area of deep subsidence. Subsidence occurs when a large portion of land is displaced vertically, usually due to the withdrawal of groundwater, oil or natural gas. Although subsidence can affect large areas, especially when caused by groundwater withdrawal, certain areas of Fresno County have experienced substantial subsidence in the past half century, including in Western Fresno County where the project is located. However, subsidence is not anticipated to occur as a result of the project causing ground instability at the project site.

- D. Be located on expansive soil as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to Figure 7-1 (Expansive Soils) of the FCGPBR, the project site is not in an area identified as having soils exhibiting moderately high to high expansion potential, general shown as being along the eastern side of the Fresno Slough, in Western Fresno County. The project site is located approximately 3.6 miles west southwest of the Fresno Slough.

- E. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will utilize the existing septic system to serve domestic uses for the proposed almond hulling operation.

- F. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No paleontological resources were identified in the analysis. Because there is little to no ground disturbance proposed, no impacts to any previously unknown paleontological resources or unique geologic resources is anticipated.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- A. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; or
- B. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The conclusions of the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Analysis discussed under Section III A. and B, are based in part on information derived from the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) version 2016.3.2, using a default construction equipment list for the proposed project type and development intensity; and on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's (SJVAPCD) Guidance for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts (GAMAQI, 2015). The Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas analysis completed by Trinity Consultants, dated June 23, 2021, concluded that construction related GHG emissions would total approximately 157.67 metric tons of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) during the anticipated 18-month construction schedule; and operational GHG emissions, mostly from mobile sources, would total approximately 500.37 metric tons of CO₂e per year for the life of the project. The potential impacts of GHG emissions generated by a project were evaluated in terms of whether the addition of project GHG emissions is consistent with the State's GHG reduction goals of achieving 1990 emissions levels by 2020 established by Assembly Bill (AB) 32, and on an individual project level, a 29 percent reduction from baseline GHG emissions, or what would otherwise occur as a result of the project in 2020 given 2005 standards and technology; which goal was further refined to 21.7 percent, established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Scoping Plan. Senate Bill (SB32) established GHG reduction goal of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The project's GHG emissions were determined to be approximately 29.4 percent below 2005 baseline emissions, therefore impacts from the project on GHG emissions were determined to be less than significant.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Would the project:

- A. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- B. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose the routine transport, or disposal of hazardous materials, therefore no significant risk to the public would occur due to an accidental release of such materials. The site will have two above ground diesel fuel storage tanks with containment basins, and a propane storage tank to supply diesel powered loading equipment and propane powered forklifts. Other materials such as lubricants will be stored inside. Because the project will store hazardous materials on site, it is subject to compliance with California Health and Safety Code, and the applicant/operator will be required to submit a Hazardous Materials Business Plan to the Fresno County Department of Public Health.

- C. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. The nearest existing schools to the project site are Tranquillity Elementary and Tranquillity High School located approximately 2.5 miles east northeast.

- D. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to a review of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NEPAassist mapping tool, the project site is not located on or in the vicinity of a site, included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTC). A search of the DTC EnviroStor database indicated that there are no hazardous materials sites located within one mile of the project.

- E. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located with an airport land use plan area or within two miles of a public or private airport.

- F. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site has paved access from a public road, and the project does not propose any alteration of the access such that it would interfere emergency equipment or apparatus access to the site.

- G. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located in an area of the County at increased risk from wildland fire.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- A. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose any waste or wastewater discharge, and is not anticipated to violate any water quality standards, or waste discharge requirements. The project will be subject to all applicable regulatory waste discharge requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

- B. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project proposes to consume approximately 350,000 gallons of surface water for domestic use during the operating season August 1 to December 31, or 2,300 gallons per day for the five-month period; and 150,000 gallons or 700 gallons per day during the non-operating season January 1 to July 31, for a total domestic use of 500,000 gallons annually, which will be provided by the Tranquillity Irrigation District. The project was reviewed by the Central Delta-Mendota Groundwater Sustainability Agency, and the Water and Natural Resources Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning, which did not express any concerns about the project resulting in any adverse impacts to groundwater sustainability in the basin. Water use for fugitive dust control is estimated to be approximately 5,000 gallons per day for the operating

season, and 500 gallons per day for the non-operating season, for a total of 735,000 gallons annually. The almond hulling and shelling operation uses no process water.

C. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

1. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?
2. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or off site?
3. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
4. Impede or redirect flood flows?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose a substantial amount of grading or addition of impervious surface, that would alter the existing drainage pattern of the subject parcels, resulting in substantial erosion, increased runoff, or alteration of flood flows.

D. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The subject parcels are not located within a flood hazard area as identified by FEMA FIRM Panel 2025H, the project is located within Zone X, which is an area of minimal flood hazard. Additionally, the subject parcels are not located in a coastal area where the risk of tsunami and seiche exist. The project is located in a Dam Failure Flood Inundation Area, according to Figure 9-8 (Dam Failure Flood Inundation Areas) of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR)

E. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is located within the Central Delta-Mendota Subbasin, and under the jurisdiction of the Central Delta-Mendota Region Multi-Agency Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). The agency reviewed the proposal and did not express any concerns related to adverse impacts to groundwater sustainability because of the project.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- A. Physically divide an established community; or
- B. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project has no features which would physically divide an established community, or conflict with any land use plan.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or
- B. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local General Plan, Specific Plan or other land use plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not located within any of the areas of mineral resources identified by Figures 7-7(Mineral Resource Locations), 7-8 (Principal Mineral Producing Locations 1997-1998), or 7-9 (Generalized Mineral Resource Zone Classifications), of the Fresno County General Plan Background Report (FCGPBR).

XIII. NOISE

Would the project result in:

- A. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies; or
- B. Generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Project operations, including truck and vehicle traffic, and operation of on-site equipment has the potential to generate an increase in ambient noise levels, and ground borne vibration in the immediate area of the proposed operation. The applicant's submitted operational statement indicates that the almond hulling/shelling operation

produce approximately 85 decibels at 200 feet from the hulling/shelling building based on noise level testing at other sites. The Fresno County Ordinance Code, Chapter 8.40 – Noise Ordinance provides that the daytime noise level as measured from any affected single-family or multi-family residence, school, hospital, church or public library shall not exceed 70 decibels or 65 decibels at night; however, there are no sensitive receptors within 200 feet of the project site therefore, noise generated by project operation is unlikely to result in adverse impacts to receptors in the vicinity.

- C. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels; or

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip, within two miles of a public airport, or within the boundary of an Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The nearest airport to the project site is San Joaquin Airport, located approximately 5.0 miles southeast of the project site.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

- A. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?; or
- B. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not anticipated to induce substantial population growth in the area, and no new homes or other related businesses are proposed. The project will use existing roads and other infrastructure. No displacement of existing housing or people is anticipated.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- A. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the following public services:

1. Fire protection;
2. Police protection;
2. Schools;
4. Parks; or
5. Other public facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose and will not require the provision of any new or physically altered government facilities.

XVI. RECREATION

Would the project:

- A. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
- B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No increased use of existing parks in the area of the project is anticipated with this proposal.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION

Would the project:

- A. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will result in an increase in traffic trips in the vicinity of the project site, however, such increase is not anticipated to result in substantial adverse impacts to County roads, or conflict with any General Plan Transportation policies. According to information provided in the applicant's submitted operational statement and a Vehicle Miles Travelled Memorandum (VMT) prepared for the project by QK, dated January 4, 2022, the majority (approximately 70 percent) of new trips added by the project will consist of truck trips involving the movement of agricultural products, and byproducts.

Both seasonal and nonseasonal employee trips are anticipated to add approximately 11 daily trips, and less than one average daily customer trip during the year.

- B. Be in conflict or be inconsistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the State of California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA (2018), the California Natural Resources Agency certified the OPR's proposal that Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) be adopted as the most appropriate metric for evaluating a project's transportation impacts. The object of evaluating VMT is to further the goal of reducing per capita VMT statewide. The OPR in its guidance, provides that a project which generates fewer than 110 trips per day, and absent any evidence indicating that a project would generate a potentially significant level of VMT, or would be inconsistent with a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), can be presumed to cause a less than significant transportation impact.

According to the VMT memorandum prepared for the project by QK, dated January 4, 2022, the proposed operation will add approximately 70 average daily trips, including employee and customer vehicle trips during the operating season, between approximately August 1 – December 31. No inconsistencies with the Technical Evaluation of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Quantification for the Fresno Council Of Government's SB 375 Sustainable Communities Strategy (January 2015) were identified; therefore, the project will not conflict with this plan, and given the number of average daily trips projected, the project will have a less than significant impact on vehicle miles travelled.

- C. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION
INCORPORATED:

The project does not propose any changes to the existing access to County roads. Access to the almond processing site will be via an existing paved driveway off W. Clayton Avenue. No new points of access are proposed, and any work proposed within the County right-of-way will require an encroachment permit from the County. Additionally, construction activities for the project will be subject to review and approval of a Traffic Management Plan by the Department of Public Works and Planning.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *Prior to issuance of development permits, a Traffic Management Plan, prepared by a licensed Traffic Engineer, shall be submitted to the Design Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning (Design Division), for review and approval. Construction of the proposed new Almond Hulling/Shelling*

facility shall be in substantial conformance with the Traffic Management Plan, as approved by the Design Division.

D. Result in inadequate emergency access?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site takes access via an existing approximately 85-foot-wide asphalt paved driveway off of W. Clayton Avenue; no changes to existing site access are proposed therefore no impacts to emergency access are anticipated.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

A. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

1. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k); or
2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1? (In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.)

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED:

No evidence of the existence of Tribal Cultural Resources was identified in the analysis, and none of the Tribes who had previously requested notification of projects in the area, under the provisions of AB 52 expressed interest in consultation on the project; however, the following Mitigation Measure has been included to address the potential for discovery of previously unknown Tribal Cultural Resources during project related ground disturbing activity.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *In the event that cultural resources are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, all work shall be halted in the area of the find. An Archeologist shall be called to evaluate the findings and make any necessary mitigation recommendations. If human remains are unearthed during ground disturbing activities, no further disturbance is to occur until the Fresno County Sheriff-Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and*

disposition. All normal evidence procedures shall be followed by photos, reports, video, and etc. If such remains are determined to be Native American, the Sheriff-Coroner must notify the Native American Commission within 24 hours.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

- A. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose any new construction of stormwater drainage facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, water supply, or other utilities. The project was reviewed by the State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water, which commented that the proposed facility would be served by an existing permitted water system, and that the project does not meet the definition of a new public water system, and would not require a permit.

- B. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will receive surface water from the Tranquillity Irrigation District which is a permitted public water system. The Irrigation District reviewed the project and did not express any concerns with the project's proposed water use. The project was also reviewed by the Water and Natural Resources Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning, which did not express a water supply concerns with the project.

- C. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will utilize the two existing on-site septic systems. No concerns related to septic capacity were expressed by any reviewing agencies or departments.

- D. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals; or

- E. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not anticipated to produce solid waste quantities in excess of State or local standards, or which would exceed the capacity of local infrastructure, or impair attainment of any solid waste reduction goals. The project will be required to comply with all applicable solid waste regulations, and management and reduction statutes.

XX. WILDFIRE

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

- A. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects; or
- B. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; or
- C. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment; or
- D. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not located in an area at increased risk from wildfire, nor in a State Responsibility Area. The project will be required to comply with all applicable requirements of the current Fire Code and Building Code.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project:

- A. Have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION
INCORPORATED:

The project would not have significant impacts on fish or wildlife, or any plant community. Although no historic, cultural or tribal cultural resources were identified on or in the vicinity of the project site, mitigation has been included to address the possibility of previously unknown historical, cultural or tribal cultural resources being unearthed by project related ground disturbance.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *See Mitigation Measures under Sections V and XVIII.*

- B. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable (“cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

No cumulatively considerable impacts were identified in the analysis. The project proposed a value-added agricultural operation on a site historically used for a similar purpose, in an area characterized by large commercial agricultural operations.

- C. Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings either directly or indirectly?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION
INCORPORATED:

No environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings. Impacts to air quality, water quality, noise, and hazards and hazardous materials were found to be less than significant or have no impact. However, to address the potential for traffic hazards created by construction traffic to and from the project site, and from the introduction of new outdoor lighting sources, mitigation has been included requiring the project proponent to submit for approval and adhere to a traffic management plan, and that all outdoor lighting at the project site be hooded and direct away from adjacent property and the public road right-of-way.

* **Mitigation Measure(s)**

1. *See Mitigation Measures under Section I and Section XVII.*

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Based upon the Initial Study prepared for Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720 , staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, and Wildfire.

Potential impacts related to Air Quality, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Energy, Biological Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Utilities and Service Systems, have been determined to be less than significant.

Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Transportation and Tribal Cultural Resources have determined to be less than significant with compliance with the included Mitigation Measures.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration is recommended and is subject to approval by the decision-making body. The Initial Study is available for review upon request, at 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, street level, located on the southwest corner of Tulare and "M" Street, Fresno, California.

JS

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EXHIBIT 8

File original and one copy with: Fresno County Clerk 2221 Kern Street Fresno, California 93721		Space Below For County Clerk Only. CLK-2046.00 E04-73 R00-00	
Agency File No: IS 8133	LOCAL AGENCY PROPOSED DRAFT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION	County Clerk File No: E-	
Responsible Agency (Name): Fresno County	Address (Street and P.O. Box): 2220 Tulare St. Sixth Floor	City: Fresno	Zip Code: 93721
Agency Contact Person (Name and Title): Jeremy Shaw, Planner	Area Code: 559	Telephone Number: 600-4207	Extension: N/A
Project Applicant/Sponsor (Name): Westside Farmers Cooperative Gins, Inc.	Project Title: CUP 3720/ IS 8133		
Project Description: Allow the development and operation of an almond hulling/shelling facility within existing buildings previously used as part of a cotton gin operation, on a 21.41-acre parcel, along with an adjacent 43.83-acre, and 94.40-acre parcel, for temporary product storage, in the AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District			
Justification for Negative Declaration: Based upon the Initial Study prepared for Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3720 , staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, and Wildfire. Potential impacts related to Air Quality, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Energy, Biological Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Utilities and Service Systems, have been determined to be less than significant. Potential impacts relating to Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Transportation and Tribal Cultural Resources have determined to be less than significant with compliance with the included Mitigation Measures.			
FINDING: The proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment.			
Newspaper and Date of Publication: Fresno Business Journal – March 14, 2022		Review Date Deadline: Planning Commission – May 19, 2022	
Date:	Type or Print Signature: David Randall Senior Planner	Submitted by (Signature): Jeremy Shaw Planner	

State 15083, 15085

County Clerk File No.: _____

**LOCAL AGENCY
DRAFT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**