6.1 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

CEQA REQUIREMENT

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2)(B) requires an environmental impact report to include a detailed statement setting forth any significant effects on the environment that would be irreversible if a project is implemented. Examples of significant irreversible environmental changes, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c), include the following:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources during construction or long-term operation such that removal or nonuse thereafter is unlikely;
- The primary and secondary impacts of a project would generally commit future generations to similar uses (e.g., a highway providing access to a previously inaccessible area);
- The project involves uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project; or
- The phasing of the proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy).

A proposed project would result in significant irreversible effects if it is determined that key resources would be degraded or destroyed to the extent that there is little possibility of restoring them. Irreversible environmental changes should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c)).

ANALYSIS

The proposed project would result in increased intensity of development in a rural area by subdividing existing grazing land to allow future development of low density residential uses and agricultural industrial uses, and related infrastructure improvements. The development of these land uses would commit a variety of nonrenewable and limited resources to the project's construction and maintenance. These nonrenewable and limited resources include, but are not limited to, oil, natural gas, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, steel, water, land, energy, construction materials, and human resources. Although these resources will be permanently committed to the project, this commitment will not limit access and use of these and similar resources for other existing and/or proposed projects in the foreseeable future.

The proposed roadways and infrastructure development on the project site would generally commit future generations to similar residential and agricultural industrial uses on the project site. In addition, the trips generated by the proposed project would contribute to unacceptable levels of service on the local roadway system, which would commit future

generations to unacceptable levels of service along the State Route 68 corridor until such time as corridor-wide improvements are implemented. However, these unacceptable levels of service would occur into the foreseeable future with or without the proposed project.

Development of the project site to support residential uses and agricultural industrial uses may be regarded as a permanent and irreversible change. The project site has historically consisted of vacant undeveloped land primarily utilized for grazing. Grading, utility extensions, drainage improvements, new and improved roadways, and construction of buildings would permanently alter the character of the site to one that is more urbanized. However, the County of Monterey also recognizes that the land use designations in the *Toro Area Plan* allow development of approximately 58 to 331 residential units on project site, which could result in higher density development, compared to the proposed project, and would also result in a permanent and irreversible change. The project site is planned for this type of development and is not changing a more protective land use designation.

An increase in the intensity of land uses at the project site would result in an increase in regional electric energy consumption to satisfy additional electricity demands from the proposed project. These energy resource demands relate to initial project construction, transport of people and goods, and lighting, heating, and cooling of buildings. Section 19.10.080 of the *Monterey County Municipal Code* requires that the design of a subdivision shall provide, to the extent feasible, for future passive or natural heating or cooling opportunities in the subdivision. Passive or natural heating opportunities in subdivision design include design of lot size and configuration to permit orientation of a structure in east–west alignment for southern exposure and to take advantage of shade or prevailing breezes. In providing for future passive or natural heating and cooling opportunities in the design of a subdivision, consideration is given to local climate, to contour, to configuration of the parcel to be divided, and to other design improvement requirements. The proposed project would be conditioned to comply with Section 19.10.080 of the *Monterey County Municipal Code*. In addition, the project would be conditioned to comply with mitigation measure **MM 3.13-1**, which requires future development on the project site to meet Title 24 California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) as adopted by Monterey County. Effective measures that can be incorporated into building designs to help reduce energy consumption may include, but are not limited to, the following: increased building insulation; the use of Low-E windows and doors and Energy-Star rated roofing materials; installation of energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems, appliances, and equipment; installation of light colored "cool" roofs (i.e., high reflectance, high emittance roof surfaces) on non-residential structures; and use daylight as an integral part of lighting systems in buildings.

6.2 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

CEQA REQUIREMENT

Public Resources Code Section 21100(a)(5) requires that the growth-inducing impacts of a project be addressed in the EIR. A project may be growth-inducing if it directly or indirectly fosters economic or population growth or additional housing, removes obstacles to growth, taxes community services facilities, or encourages or facilitates other activities that cause significant environmental effects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d)). Direct growth-inducing impacts result when the development associated with a project directly induces population growth or the construction of additional developments in the same geographic area. These impacts may impose burdens on a community or encourage new local development, thereby triggering subsequent growth-related impacts.

The analysis of potential growth-inducing impacts includes a determination of whether a project would remove physical obstacles to population growth. This often occurs with the extension of infrastructure facilities that can provide services to new development. Indirect growth-inducing impacts result from projects that serve as catalysts for future unrelated development in an area. Development of public institutions, such as colleges, and the introduction of employment opportunities in an area are examples of projects that may result in direct growth-inducing impacts.

CEQA provides no criteria for determining if induced growth is detrimental or beneficial. Induced growth is considered a significant impact only if it directly or indirectly affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth could significantly affect the environment in some other way.

The proposed project includes developing Ferrini Ranch Road from the existing Toro Regional Park entrance, developing an unnamed road, referred to as "Road D," from San Benancio Road, and developing River Terrace Drive from River Road. In addition, there would be numerous unnamed roadways (referred to as "Road A" through "Road K") constructed within the project site and an alternative entrance may be constructed from State Route 68 between the existing Torero Drive and Portola Drive.

The existing wastewater main would be extended to the wastewater collection system on the project site. Existing water mains would also extend to the project site. The extended roadway and sewer and water mains would only serve the proposed project and are not designed with excess capacity. Although infrastructure would be extended to the project site, the vacant land surrounding the project site is either already developed, previously approved for development, or has a general plan designation that limits development (e.g., Resource Conservation or Public/Quasi Public). No additional growth within the project site is anticipated beyond the proposed project. The project site, which under the *1982 Monterey County General Plan* would have a maximum allowable buildout of 447 units (or 1.9 acres per unit), would be developed with a maximum of 212 units (or 4.1 acres per unit).

The infrastructure improvements associated with the proposed project would dead end within the project site and would not connect to neighboring residential developments, except near the Toro County Park entrance where 66 residential units are proposed adjacent to an existing residential neighborhood. Approximately 600 acres of the 870-acre project site will be designated as open space. The project proposed would result in the development of approximately 387 residential units fewer than what was originally approved in the *Toro Vista Specific Plan* (adopted in 1980, rescinded in 1993), which allowed for the development of 599 units at an average density of 2.1 dwelling units per acre (du/acre); and approximately 235 fewer units than 447 units allowed under the *1982 Monterey County General Plan*. Furthermore, the proposed project would result in approximately 136 fewer residential units than 348 residential units allowed under the *2010 Monterey County General Plan,* which designated the entire project site as Residential - Low Density 2.5 acres per unit. Since the proposed project would terminate infrastructure on-site and proposed development is less than allowed under either the 1982 or 2010 General Plan, the growth associated with the proposed project would not be considered substantial.

6.3 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2)(A) requires an EIR to include a detailed statement setting forth any significant effects on the environment that cannot be avoided if a project is implemented. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) states that such impacts include those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine if the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. Monterey County can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a Statement of Overriding Considerations setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment.

Based upon the environmental analysis provided in **Section 3.0**, **Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**, most of the potential impacts associated with the proposed project can be avoided or reduced to a less than significant level through the application of mitigation measures that would be implemented in conjunction with the proposed project. However, there are several significant impacts that cannot be feasibly mitigated to a less than significant level. These significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed project are listed below:

- **Development Within Critical Viewsheds and Areas of Visual Sensitivity**
- **Impact to State Route 68 Scenic Corridor and Scenic Roads**
- **Conflict with the Performance of the Circulation System (specific locations)**

6.4 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

A significant effect on the environment is generally defined as a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in the physical environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15358). The term "environment," as used in this definition, means the physical conditions that exist in the area that will be affected by a proposed project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. The area involved is the area in which significant effects would occur either directly or indirectly as a result of the project. The environment includes both natural and man-made conditions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15360).

Detailed analyses and discussion of environmental topics found to have a less than significant impact are provided in **Section 3.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**, of this Draft EIR. Listed below are those environmental issues found to have absolutely no impact as a result of the project. This determination is based on the standards of significance contained in the CEQA Guidelines and the Notice of Preparation process for the proposed project. The completed NOP and responses from the public and affected agencies and organizations are included in **Appendix A**.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

There is an abundance of prime and non-prime agricultural resources within Monterey County, including within the *Toro Area Plan* planning area. Although the project site has historically been used for grazing, the project site is zoned unclassified and Low Density Residential with Visual Sensitivity Zoning District and Design Control District overlays. The site does not contain land designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance and is not under a Williamson Act contract (DOC 2006a, 2006b). According to the *Monterey County Farmland Map 2006*, the project site is designated as grazing land (DOC 2006b).

Based on the standards of significance of the EIR and CEQA Guidelines, impacts to non-prime agricultural land are not considered significant. Implementation of the proposed project would preserve approximately 600 acres as open space. One of the project objectives is to "continue the history of cattle-grazing upon a significant portion of the areas designated as "open space" on the plan." The proposed project was designed to preserve grazing land located primarily in the flatland areas that are visible from State Route 68 and focus development in the hills. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act

contract, or result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. Therefore, there would be **no impact** to protected or significant agricultural resources.

MINERAL RESOURCES

According to the *Monterey County General Plan*, the geologic formations in the county contain useful minerals; however, the complex geology, due to extensive faulting and deformation, makes locating minerals difficult and limits the size and extent of many of the deposits. Mineral extraction is mainly limited to oil, near San Ardo; dolomite, at Natividad; sand and gravel, at locations throughout the county; and limestone, at Pico Blanco. The *Toro Area Plan* identifies sand and gravel operations from stream channels in the El Toro Creek area and the Salinas River, a decomposed granite quarry operation in Pine Canyon which operated during the mid-1950s, and a former lime quarry. The decomposed granite quarry in Pine Canyon, which is operated by Granite Construction, is the only mineral resource currently mined in the vicinity of the project site. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and residents of the state or that is delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. Therefore, there is **no impact** to mineral resources**.**

ENERGY

Energy demands for the proposed project will be serviced by Pacific Gas & Electric. All roadway improvements will include utility easements within the right-of-way. Existing overhead lines will remain and all new lines extended to the project site will be placed underground in accordance with Monterey County policy and located in a common trench located in the right-of-way of the roads, easements, and driveways wherever feasible. The demand on energy resources is not anticipated to impact the current utilities' level of service.

PG&E has builder incentive programs to encourage energy-efficient construction for new single- and multi-family housing; however, due to the success of the programs, funding has been completely depleted. Therefore, both programs have been closed and PG&E is no longer accepting applications. However, energy-efficient construction reduces the demand on energy source and promotes a healthier environment. Some simple design features that can be incorporated in the specifications may include tight construction and sealed ducts, energy-saving windows, improved insulation, and super-efficient heating and air conditioning systems**.** The proposed project would be conditioned to comply with mitigation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which would also encourage the incorporation of energy efficient equipment and design techniques into future development on the project site.

REFERENCES/DOCUMENTATION

Monterey, County of (Monterey County).

1982. *Monterey County General Plan*. August 1982, as amended through November 5, 1996.

1983. *Toro Area Plan*. December 1983, as amended through 1998.

2010a. *2010 Monterey County General Plan. Land Use Element* (p. LU-22). Certified October 26, 2010.

California Department of Conservation (DOC).

2006a. *Monterey County Williamson Act Land 2007*. Under Contract as of January 1, 2007

2006b. *Monterey County Important Farmland 2006,* Sheet 1 of 2.

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