

4.0 MASTER RESPONSE 1 – NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACTS

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Several comment letters have expressed concern regarding a range of impacts to the Toro Park Estates neighborhood, primarily associated with the widening of Highway 68 and Alternative 3B. The following master response has been drafted in response to this range of shared issues, generated primarily by Toro Park Estates residents.

Impact of New (Alternative) Intersection, State Route 68 Corridor Operations, and Widening. The potential impact to the performance of the circulation network, including State Route 68, is addressed under Impact 3.12-1 starting on page 3.12-30 of the DEIR, which is identified as a significant and unavoidable impact at five intersections and five roadway segments even with implementation of mitigation measures MM 3.12-1a, MM 3.12-1b, MM 3.12-1c, and MM 3.12-5.

Alternative 3B—analyzed in Section 4.0 of the DEIR—is an alternative proposing an alternate project access located at a new State Route 68 intersection with a realigned Torero Drive. It should be noted that the State Route 68 widening required for Alternative 3B would also occur with the project entrance as currently proposed at Toro Park. This widening is a planned improvement included in the Transportation Agency of Monterey County's (TAMC) Regional Development Impact Fee (RDIF) program, identified as the "Highway 68 Commuter Improvements Project." These improvements are programmed to be implemented over time with or without the Ferrini Ranch project. Ferrini Ranch may serve, however, to accelerate this planned improvement—or a portion of it—to address project-specific impacts of the subdivision at several local intersections.

Alternative 5, analyzed within the RDEIR, also assumes a project entrance at the realigned Torero Drive location.

With respect to a potential new intersection, Caltrans District 5 has commented and conceptually agrees with Alternative 3B that includes a new signalized intersection on State Route 68 at the realigned Torero Drive/Ferrini Ranch Road. This conceptual support is based on a series of design conditions, including widening of a portion of State Route 68. A more detailed analysis of this alternative (Wood Rodgers, February 2012) has been reviewed by the County of Monterey and is included as an attachment to the RDEIR. The Wood Rodgers analysis validates findings of the EIR, concluding that a combination of the new intersection and widening of State Route 68 to four lanes to the western edge of the BLM parking area, together with planned or completed intersection improvements at Laureles Grade, Corral de Tierra, and San Benancio Road, would result in the following:

- Reduce total travel time on State Route 68 between Salinas and Monterey by 2.3 minutes
- Improve safety and reduce delays for motorists on southbound Torero Drive at State Route 68
- Reduce cut-through traffic on Portola Drive/Torero Drive through the existing Toro Park Estates residential area
- Reduce potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.

Caltrans and TAMC would require that the State Route 68 widening be implemented concurrent with the proposed intersection improvements included in Alternative 3B or 5 and prior to construction of development on the project site that would directly access the highway. The State Route 68 Commuter Improvements would occur within existing Caltrans right-of-way that was designed to accommodate the original buildout of State Route 68, which included a

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minimum configuration of four lanes. All of the roadway improvements along State Route 68 would be subject to Caltrans' design review and approval process and would be required to be in accordance with Caltrans' Highway Design Manual and Scenic Highway Guidelines.

Please also see Alternative 5 of the RDEIR, which provides greater specificity regarding these improvements.

Project Access and Related Park Impacts. Project access is addressed under Impact 3.12-2 starting on page 3.12-41 of the DEIR, which is identified as less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures MM 3.12-2a and MM 3.12-2-b. In addition, Section 4.0 of the DEIR addresses alternative access options. It should be noted that the project as proposed has three access points, with the majority of lots utilizing the main "Ferrini Ranch Road" entrance through Toro County Park. All roadway distances, emergency access points, and other design requirements must meet County and/or Caltrans design and safety standards for private roadways. Emergency access is addressed under Impact 3.12-3 starting on page 3.12-47 of the DEIR, which is identified as a less than significant impact as a result of standard performance conditions that must be met for the subdivision.

Providing a main entrance off of San Benancio Road, as suggested by some comments, would result in a range of additional environmental impacts. Existing congestion at the San Benancio intersection would be exacerbated, and the route required for a main roadway through the western portion of the project site contains sensitive biological and cultural resources, as well as steep topography.

The Portola Drive interchange is currently proposed and analyzed as the main project entrance. As identified in Section 4.0 of the DEIR and acknowledged in public comments, access through Toro County Park may not be feasible. The take of parkland associated with the proposed Ferrini Ranch Road access is addressed under Impact 3.10-5 starting on page 3.10-17 of the DEIR. This impact is identified as a less than significant impact with implementation of mitigation measures MM 3.10-5a and MM 3.10-5-b, which ensure that the take of parkland is accommodated by a land swap of equal or greater value, that the necessary physical alterations of the existing park facilities are incorporated into a final improvement package, and that the dedication of additional improved trail facilities does not result in an undue financial burden to the Parks Department.

As shown in Figure 2-5e, the bull field area will be placed within a conservation easement and remain as open space. Since grazing will continue to occur at the bull field, public access would not be appropriate; however, a public recreation trail is proposed at the base of the hillside around the field.

Noise and Air Quality Effects of Alternative 3B. The DEIR analyzes the project as originally proposed and described in the Project Description. The impacts of Alternative 3B are analyzed consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, which acknowledges that feasible alternatives to a project must be given a meaningful evaluation, but significant impacts of alternatives are analyzed in less detail than the proposed project. Regardless of these standards of review for alternatives in an EIR, the project—as mitigated by the widening of State Route 68—would be expected to result in secondary effects as identified in DEIR Section 4.0.

To further document the potential effects of these improvements, including noise and air quality impacts, DEIR Sections 3.2 (Air Quality), and 3.13 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions), and 4.0 (Alternatives to the Project) have been modified and recirculated in the RDEIR. The updated and recirculated Alternatives section in the RDEIR contains analysis of a new alternative,

Alternative 5. Alternative 5 assumes the new intersection would be located along Highway 68 similar to Alternative 3B, but provides additional information regarding potential impacts and changes to air quality and noise conditions for both of these alternatives. As explained on page 3.2-24 of the RDEIR, no mobile or stationary sources of toxic air contaminants (TACs) have been identified within the vicinity of the project. TACs are typically the source of health risks to sensitive receptors. While residential uses would be located within 500 feet of Highway 68, predicted traffic volumes along this segment average approximately 26,400 vehicles per day, which is substantially less than the minimum criterion established by the ARB for evaluation of TACs along major roadways (i.e. facilities with more than 50,000 vehicles per day). Impacts from TACs from the project or alternatives 3 or 5 would remain less than significant. Also, as stated previously, the widening of Highway 68 in this location is planned, regardless of the Ferrini Ranch project.

As described on pages 4.0-31 and 4.0-32 of the RDEIR, the widened highway would result in potentially significant increases in noise levels, depending upon the final median width. The increase in highway noise, however, could be effectively be mitigated with a landscaped berm on the north side of the highway, which would reduce noise levels along the Toro Park neighborhood to less than significant levels. With respect to impacts and changes to noise conditions, Please refer to this additional material in the RDEIR.

Home Values Relative to Alternative 3B. Home values are understood to be a neighborhood-level concern. Commenting on potential changes to values would be speculative, and such issues are not environmental impacts or appropriate for consideration in an EIR.

Impact on Roads/Trails Fronting Toro Park Estates. The walking/jogging paths along State Route 68 in the vicinity of Toro Park Estates are located within the State Route 68 Official Plan Line (refer to Figure 4-1c) and are not official public recreation facilities. Conceptual designs for the State Route 68 improvements, prepared for the project alternatives (DEIR Figure 4.1-D) show that trails can be located between existing homes and the new roadway alignment. The project also proposes additional recreation trails on the project site, which could be accessed via Portola Drive, San Benancio Road, and River Road.

For air quality, biological, and noise impacts associated with the widening of State Route 68 to accommodate an alternative project access, please see Section 4.0, Alternative 5, of the RDEIR.

Aesthetics, Views and Viewshed Impacts. The proposed project's potential impact to critical viewsheds and areas of visual sensitivity is addressed under Impact 3.1-1, beginning on page 3.1-18 of the DEIR. This impact is identified as significant and unavoidable even with mitigation measures MM 3.1-1a through MM 3.1-1c, due to the visual impact of the proposed Ferrini Ranch Road through the park and immediately adjacent to Highway 68.

The potential impact to scenic vistas and views from several public viewpoints is addressed under Impact 3.1-2 starting on page 3.1-22 of the DEIR. This impact is identified as less than significant based on viewshed characteristics, location of viewing areas, and distances between the project and the viewing areas. The potential impacts to the visual character and slopes greater than 30 percent are addressed under Impact 3.1-5 starting on page 3.1-47 of the DEIR, which are identified as less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures MM 3.1-1a through MM 3.1-1c, MM 3.5-2a and MM 3.5-2b, and MM 3.5-5a through MM 3.5-5c.

In response to comments concerning views and viewsheds, impacts to visually sensitive areas, visual character, and scenic views; these impacts are analyzed based on changes caused by the project as viewed from a "common public viewing area." Private views, such as those from individual homes, are not considered significant based on Monterey County and commonly

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accepted CEQA thresholds of significance. According to Section 21.06.195 of the County Code, “common public viewing area” means a public area such as a public street, road, designated vista point, or public park from which the general public ordinarily views the surrounding viewshed.

A majority of the proposed residential development within Ferrini Ranch would not be visible from common public viewing areas, being located behind ridgelines and only visible from higher elevations. Due to the relative elevation, limited exposure from public viewpoints, and existing homes and vegetation, visual sensitivity along roadways and public parks within the Toro Park Estates neighborhood would be considered low. The majority of the proposed development would not be visible from the common public viewing areas within the neighborhood. Some of the roadways located at higher elevations within Toro Park Estates may be more sensitive to the changes in visual character; however, the small number of viewers exposed from these areas, duration of exposure, and limited visibility of the proposed development due to distance, topography, existing vegetation—combined with project mitigation—support the DEIR’s findings that the changes in visual character and impacts to views and viewsheds would remain less than significant. Figure 3.1-11 of the DEIR (Viewpoint #9) provides a simulation of the post-project environment just above Toro Park Estates. Page 3.1-43 identifies that lots #66 through #144 will be subject to the D and VS zoning districts, and all development is subject to County standards for visually sensitive areas, including, but not limited to, requiring flagging and staking, screening with topography and/or vegetation, clustering development, and undergrounding utilities.

The County acknowledges that there are a countless number of angles and viewpoints toward Ferrini Ranch from the surrounding areas, including Toro Park Estates. It should be noted, however, that the project’s visibility from any one vantage point is not the sole criteria for assessing impact significance. As established on page 3.1-18 of the DEIR, an impact is significant not simply if the project is seen, but if it has an adverse negative visual effect from a common (public) viewpoint or vista. The DEIR concludes that although portions of the project will be seen, the change in appearance does not rise to an adverse negative effect.