

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/ 1400 Tenth St
Sacramento CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia CA 93277

Date: October 28, 2016

Subject: **Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)**

Project Title: Three Rivers Hotel Project (PSR 16-006)

Project Applicant: Hitesh J. Patel

Project Location: The project is located on the west side of State Highway 198, between Old Three Rivers Drive and South Fork Drive, in Three Rivers, Tulare County. The project site is adjacent to the U.S. Post Office located at 40857 Sierra Drive. The 8.66-acre project site is within the Kaweah USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle and is on Tulare County APNs 068-070-021 and a portion of 068-070-024. The site is within the NE ¼ portion of the NW ¼ of Section 26, Township 17 South, Range 28 East M.D.B. &M.

Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. The NOP is available for review on the Tulare County website at: <http://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/index.cfm/documents-and-forms/planning-documents/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/three-rivers-hotel-project/>

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

A scoping meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, November 10, 2016 at 1:30 p.m.** in Conference Room "L" of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at the address shown above.

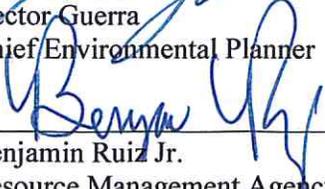
Please direct your response to Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at the address shown above. He may be contacted by e-mail at hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Please provide us with the name of a contact person in your agency.

Signature 

Hector Guerra
Chief Environmental Planner

Date: 10/26/16

Signature 

Benjamin Ruiz Jr.
Resource Management Agency Director/Environmental Assessment Officer

Date: 10/27/16

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The proposed Project will be located on the west side of State Highway 198, between Old Three Rivers Drive and South Fork Drive, in Three Rivers, Tulare County. The Project site is adjacent to the U.S. Post Office located at 40857 Sierra Drive. The 8.66-acre project site is within the Kaweah USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle and is on Tulare County APN 068-070-021 and a portion of 068-070-024. The site is within the NE ¼ portion of the NW ¼ of Section 26, Township 17 South, Range 28 East M.D.B. &M. The site is currently zoned O (Recreation) and F-1 (Primary Flood Plain).

The Kaweah River and undeveloped grassland are located west of the Project site. A single family home is located immediately south of the project site. The Three Rivers Golf Course, a shopping center, and rural residential units are located north of the Project site. Commercial uses, including banks, fast food restaurants, and motel, are located east of the Project site, east of State Route 198.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.), the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR or EIR) to evaluate the environmental effects associated with the proposed Three Rivers Hotel (Project).

The Project consists of a three-story hotel on a currently vacant 8.66-acre site comprised of two parcels (APNs 068-070-021 & 024) in the “O” (Recreation) and “F-1” (Primary Flood Plain) Zones. The hotel would consist of 110 rooms, one 500 sq. ft. conference room, one 700 sq. ft. breakfast area, a swimming pool, fifteen (15) tiny homes for extended stay patrons, and two tiny homes for staff dwellings, one domestic well and an on-site septic system. Prior to constructing the project, the applicant must receive approval of a lot line adjustment and a site plan review.

If you require additional information related to this notice, please contact:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or at (559) 624-7121

Potential Approvals Required:

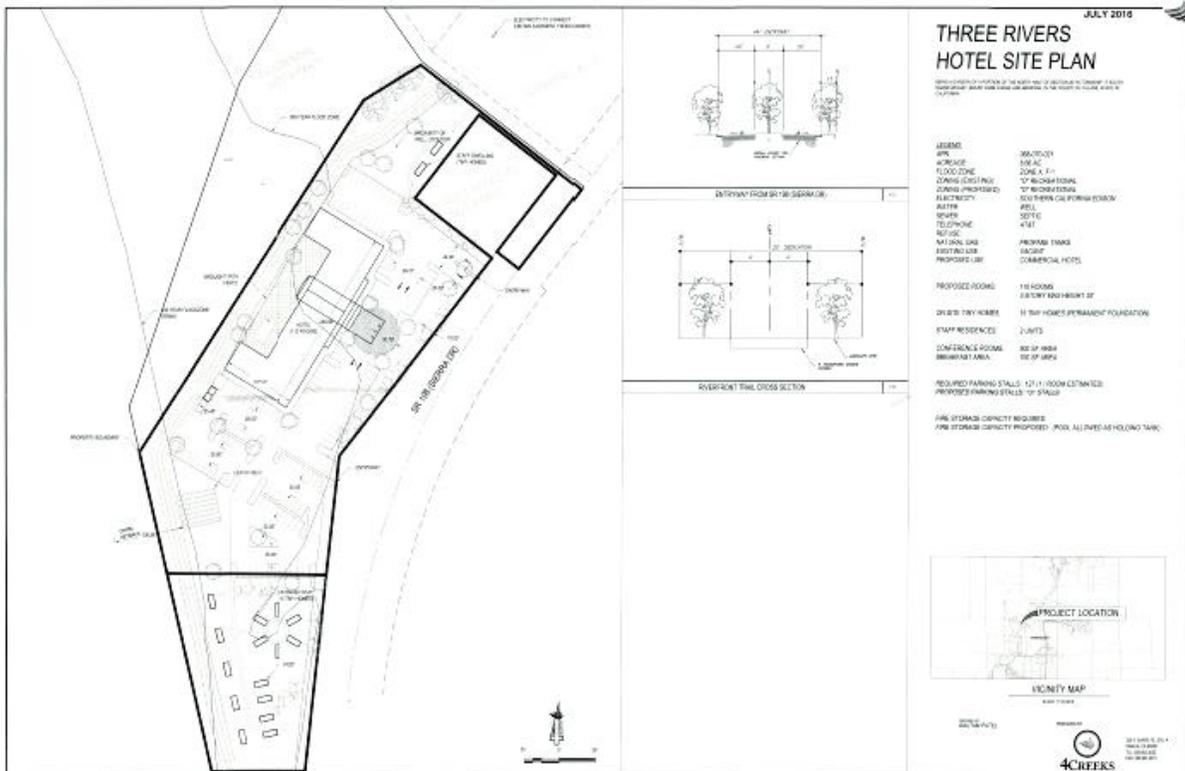
The following agencies may have jurisdiction over elements of the proposed Project:

County of Tulare Resource Management Agencies (Fire, Flood Control, Planning Branch, Public Works)
County of Tulare Health and Human Services Agency (Environmental Health)
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Department of Transportation
Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Vicinity Map for the Three Rivers Hotel Project



Proposed Site Plan for the Three Rivers Hotel Project



SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will address all checklist items contained in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The analysis will address the probable direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the Three Rivers Hotel Project. The following is a discussion of the environmental topics to be covered in the EIR:

Aesthetic/ Visual Resources

The Project site can be characterized as vacant land in the “O” (Recreation) and “F-1” (Primary Flood Plain) Zones. The Kaweah River borders the site to the west and State Route 198 borders the site to the east. Surrounding areas consist of foothill grassland to the west, a golf course and commercial uses to the north, commercial uses to the south and east, and rural residences to the south. The EIR will provide an assessment of Project related impacts to visual resources, as well as lighting and glare impacts.

Agriculture Resources

The proposed Project site is mapped by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as Grazing Land, Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation, and Urban and Built-up Land. The Project site is currently vacant and is adjacent to urban and built up land to the north and east. The EIR will provide an assessment of potential Project related impacts to agricultural resources.

Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The EIR will describe regional and local air quality in the vicinity of the proposed Project site and evaluate impacts to air quality associated with Project construction and operation. An air quality study will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts. The proposed Project’s estimated air emissions will be compared to emissions thresholds of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin and will evaluate the proposed Project’s potential air quality impacts. Potential air quality emissions impacts include odor, dust, pathogens, and construction and operations related activities. The EIR will also include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project’s contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate.

Biological Resources

The proposed Project site has been previously disturbed. The proposed Project site is bounded to the west by the Kaweah River and trees are located on the Project site, which may provide habitat and foraging ground for sensitive animal and plant species. A biological evaluation of the proposed Project site will be conducted and the proposed Project’s potential to affect biological resources will be analyzed in the EIR.

Cultural Resources/Tribal Cultural Resources

There are no visibly identifiable or recognizable cultural resources within the proposed Project site. Although the proposed Project will be constructed on previously disturbed land, it cannot be definitively concluded that cultural resources are absent. A search of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center California Historical Resources Information System will be conducted. Although the Project is within the area evaluated in the cultural resources study prepared for the Three Rivers Community Plan Update, a cultural resources evaluation will also be prepared for this Project. Pursuant to the requirements of AB 52, the County mailed twenty-one (21) tribal consultation requests, representing nineteen (18) tribes, on October 7, 2016. A Sacred Land File (SLF) Search was submitted to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) on October 7, 2016. The NAHC responded on October 10, 2016, stating that the SLF search was completed with “negative” results, but that the area is sensitive for potential tribal cultural resources. The NAHC provided a list of fifteen (15) tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the Project area. In response to the list provided by the NAHC, on October 10, 2016, the County mailed a tribal consultation request to the one (1) tribe not previously notified of the Project. As such, the EIR will examine the proposed Project’s potential to affect cultural resources and Tribal cultural resources.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources,

Initial construction, buildout, and operation of the proposed Project on the project site could result in impacts related to geotechnical hazards, including seismicity of the area, potential for liquefaction and subsidence, potential for soil erosion, soil stability characteristics, and shrink/swell potential of site soils, as applicable. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Resource Web Soil Survey, the site primarily contains Tujunga sand, with Honcut sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes along the northern boundary. Tujunga sand is considered somewhat excessively drained soil, while Honcut sandy loam is considered to be well drained soil. According to the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update EIR, there are no known potential mineral resources. It is currently unknown whether the proposed Project site soils have the potential to contain paleontological resources. If such resources exist on the site, construction, expansion, and continued operational activities could result in potentially significant impacts. The EIR for the proposed Project will evaluate potential site-specific impacts related to geology, soils, mineral resources, and paleontological resources.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

There are no known hazards or hazardous materials located within the proposed Project site, nor is the proposed Project site located on a Cortese List site. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the proposed Project to result in, or be affected by, impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Water Supply

The Project site is zoned “F-1” (Primary Flood Plain Zone) and the Project area is within the 100-Year Flood Zone. The proposed Project is within the Southern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management planning area, in the Kaweah River and Local Watersheds. Water for the proposed Project will be supplied through an on-site domestic well and sewage will be treated with an on-site engineered septic system. The EIR will describe the proposed Project’s effect, both directly and cumulatively on the hydrology, water quality, and water supply resources. A water supply/quality evaluation will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts.

Land Use and Planning

The EIR will describe the proposed Project’s potential effects on existing and planned land uses. The proposed Project lies within the Three Rivers Urban Development Boundary and is currently zoned “O” (Recreation) and “F-1” (Primary Flood Plain). The Project is an allowed use “by right” under the current zoning “O” zoning; however, when the “F-1” zone is combined with other zones, allowed uses in the underlying or base zone are allowed if the project is approved in accordance with the procedures referred to in Chapter 8 of Part VII of the Ordinance Code of Tulare County. As such, the EIR will provide a discussion of relevant local plans and policies because conflicts could potentially result in environmental impacts.

Noise

The EIR will describe the noise levels associated with proposed Project construction and operation and will compare these levels to applicable noise thresholds to determine whether the proposed Project would result in a significant noise impact.

Population and Housing

The EIR will evaluate the Project’s effect on population and housing in the local area based on estimations of Project employment and distribution of the employees by place of residence.

Public Services and Recreation

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project’s potential to create an adverse impact to schools, and will also evaluate effects on local police and fire services along with parks and regional recreational facilities.

Transportation/Traffic

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project’s impact on regional and local transportation facilities based on a transportation analysis that will assess both construction-related impacts (heavy truck trips and construction worker trips), as well as operational impacts (visitor trips). The proposed Project will have one point of entrance and exit on State Route 198. State Route 198 is a County-designated Minor Arterial street and the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update DEIR considers

LOS D as the minimum acceptable LOS standard during peak hours for arterial roadways and intersections. Traffic will be analyzed to establish a baseline, and to evaluate project and cumulative impacts for the proposed Project in consultation with the County of Tulare, the Tulare County Association of Governments, and Caltrans. Similarly, the EIR will examine alternative traffic distribution.

Utilities

The proposed Project site can be characterized as vacant land in the “O” (Recreation) and “F-1” (Primary Flood Plain) Zones. To accommodate the hotel and extended stay tiny home units associated with the proposed Project, electricity would be provided by Southern California Edison, natural gas would be delivered by a private supplier and stored in on-site tanks, and an on-site domestic well would provide water. Wastewater services would be provided by an on-site engineered septic system. The EIR will analyze the current capacity of the above-mentioned services, as well as the proposed Project’s impact on these systems and the capacity available to support the proposed Project. The EIR will also describe the solid waste facilities that would serve the proposed site.

The applicant would be required to construct infrastructure to urban development standards set forth by Tulare County, including the construction of appropriate Caltrans road improvements to State Route 198 to the extent that an appropriate nexus to the proposed Project is established. The EIR prepared for the Project will analyze the adequacy of infrastructure services for the Project including road, water and wastewater services, and if appropriate, may require mitigation measures.

Growth Inducement

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential for growth inducement resulting from the establishment of a new source of employment, as well as new demand for housing, and goods and services. The effect of primary and secondary increases in employment and economic activity will be discussed.

Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will discuss the incremental contribution of the proposed Project to cumulative effects of other past, current, and planned and reasonably foreseeable Projects in the vicinity. The summary of projects method will be used where applicable. Also, to the extent feasible, the Cumulative Impacts section will quantify the degree of severity of any cumulative impact.

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed Project’s objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by

the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will also provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide to the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency, Planning Branch, written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed Project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than **5:00 p.m. November 28, 2016**. Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed Project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

**Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Economic Development and Planning Branch
5961 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277-9394
or via e-mail at: HGuerra@co.tulare.ca.us
or via facsimile: 559-730-2653
or via phone: 559-624-7121**