DRAFT
INITIAL STUDY/
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

for the

FIRECLAY TILE FACTORY EXPANSION PROJECT

Prepared for the County of San Benito, California
Resource Management Agency

June 2020

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Project Data

1. **Project Title:** Fireclay Tile Factory Expansion Project

2. **Lead Agency & Lead Agency Contact:** Taven Kinison Brown, Principal Planner, (831) 637-5313, tkinisonbrown@cosb.us; San Benito County Resource Management Agency, 2301 Technology Parkway, Hollister CA 95023

3. **Applicant Contact Information:** Eric Edelson, Fireclay Tile Inc., (800) 773-2226, 521 Quarry Road, Aromas, CA 95004

4. **Project Location**: The proposed project is located at 521 Quarry Road, Aromas CA, 95004, within San Benito County, California. The project site is made up of a 4.89-acre parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number ["APN"] 011-390-006) and would include access and drainage improvements on two adjacent parcels (APNs 011-390-040 and 011-309-050). Local access to the project site is provided by State Route ("SR") 129, which is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the project site by way of street; regional access to the site is provided by Highway ("Hwy") 101. The property is located in a rural location and is surrounded by heavy industrial and mineral resource uses.

5. **Project Description**: The proposed project consists of the expansion of the existing Fireclay Tile Factory at an industrial site. The proposed expansion includes construction of two new production and storage buildings, and an office building. The proposed storage building (Building X) would be approximately 29,100 square feet ("SF"), the proposed production building (Building Z) would be approximately 22,680 SF, and the proposed office (Building Y) would be approximately 11,900 SF. The project would also include access and drainage improvements on two adjacent parcels.

6. **Acreage of Project Site**: The existing Fireclay Tile Factory parcel is 4.89 acres and the two adjacent parcels are approximately 30.18 acres (APN 011-390-040) and 25.63 acres (APN 011-309-050).

7. **Land Use Designations**: The San Benito County General Plan designates the existing Fireclay Tile Factory parcel as Industrial Heavy ("IH") and is zoned Heavy Industrial ("M2"). The adjacent parcel to the west and north (APN 011-309-050) is designated as Industrial Heavy ("IH") and zoned Heavy Industrial ("M2"). The adjacent parcel to the south (APN 011-390-040) is designated as Rural ("R") and zoned Heavy Industrial ("M2").

8. **Date Prepared**: June 2020

9. **Prepared By**: Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc.

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Chapter 1. Introduction and Project Description

1.1 Introduction

This Initial Study has been prepared to evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with the Fireclay Tile Factory Expansion Project ("project" or "proposed project"), located in the community of Aromas ("Aromas"), within San Benito County, California ("County"). This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code §21000 et. seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations ("CCR") §15000 et. seq.

An Initial Study is an informational document prepared by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment (CEQA Guidelines §15063, subd. (a)). If there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") must be prepared, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064(a). However, if the lead agency determines that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant mitigate the potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level, an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration ("IS/MND") may be prepared instead of an EIR (CEQA Guidelines §15070, subd. (b)). In this instance, the lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, why an EIR need not be prepared. This IS/MND conforms to the content requirements under CEQA Guidelines §15071.

The San Benito County Resource Management Agency ("County RMA") is acting as the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15050(a). As the Lead Agency, the County RMA oversaw preparation of this Initial Study pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15063, §15070, and §15152. This Initial Study will be circulated for agency and public review during a 20-day public review period pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15073. Comments received by the County RMA on this IS/MND will be reviewed and considered as part of the deliberative process in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15074.

The following section is consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines §15124 to the extent that it is applicable to the project. This section contains a detailed description of the project location, existing setting, project components and relevant project characteristics, and applicable regulatory requirements.

1.2 Project Location

The proposed project is located at 521 Quarry Road, Aromas, California, 95004, in San Benito County ("County") (**Figure 1**). The project site is comprised of a 4.89-acre parcel (APN 011-390-006) that contains the existing Fireclay Tile Factory (or "existing industrial site"), and also includes portions of two adjacent parcels (APN 011-390-040, or "Driscoll property," and 011-309-050, or "Granite Rock property"). The project site is located in a rural, industrial area (**Figure 2**). Local access to the project site is provided by SR 129, which is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the project site by way of street; regional access to the site is provided by Hwy 101. There is a single driveway entrance to the project site that crosses over Union Pacific Rail Road ("UPRR") tracks located along the easterly side of the project site. The western border of the project parcel borders Santa Cruz County.

The project site consists of primarily industrial and agricultural land uses, and mineral sourcing (i.e., Granite Rock – A.R. Wilson Quarry) is conducted approximately 1,000 feet northeast of the project site (**Figure 3**). To the east of the project site, the surrounding lands are rural and consist of primarily agricultural uses. The project site is relatively flat with minimal sloping to the southeast. Additionally, the Pajaro River runs west of the parcel.


Sacramento
San Francisco
California
Fresno
Proposed Project Site
Aromas
San Juan Bautista
Gilroy
Hollister
Watsonville
Pajaro
Freedom
Corralitos
Moss Landing
Castroville
Marina
Salinas
Marina Municipal Airport
California State Univ-Monterey Bay
MOUNT MADONNA
Mt Madonna County Park
CARLYLE HILLS
SARGENT HILLS
LOMERIAS MUERTAS
FLINT HILLS
MOUNT HARLAN
Hecker Pass Rd
Leavesley Rd
Ferguson Rd
Monterey Rd
Hollister Rd
Shore Rd
Broadway
Riverside Rd
San Juan Rd
Chittenden Rd
Bolsa Rd
Hall Rd
San Juan Hwy
San Juan Rd
Union Rd
Salinas Rd
Cabrillo Hwy
San Miguel Canyon Rd
El Camino Real
Dolan Rd
Castroville Blvd
South Valley Fwy
Watsonville Rd
Merrill Rd
Espinosa Rd
Russell Rd
San Juan Grade Rd
Hebert Rd
Nashua Rd
Castroville Rd
Monte Rd
Del Monte Blvd
Cooper Rd
Natividad Rd
Old Stage Rd
Williams Rd
Blanco Rd
Reservation Rd
S Davis Rd
Foster Rd
Alisal Rd
Airport Blvd
Freedom Blvd
Holohan Rd
Main St
Beach Rd
W Beach St
W Riverside Dr
Stoloski Rd
E Lake Ave
Buena Vista Dr
San Andreas Rd
Harris Rd
Molera Rd
Del Rey Oaks
Seaside
Monterey
Pacific Grove
Carmel
Carmel Valley
Big Sur
Soledad
King City
Greenfield
Gonzales
Chualar
Prunedale
Aromas
Tres Pinos
Paicines
Hollister
San Benito St
Fallon Rd
Broadway
Eagle Way
Hollister Rd
Shore Rd
Bolsa Rd
Union Rd
San Juan Rd
San Juan Hwy
1st St
2nd St
Hollister Rd
Chittenden Rd
Riverside Rd
San Juan Rd
Hall



Document Path: D:\GIS\GIS_Projects\2020-10 Fireclay\Final\Project Location.mxd

Title:

Proposed Project Location

Date: 3/9/2020

Scale: 1 inch = 0.1 miles

Project: 2020-10

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(831) 373-4341

Figure

2



View to the west from the property toward the Pajaro River.



View of project site facing northwest.



View of the parking lot facing northeast.



Entrance to the property showing at-grade railroad crossing facing east.

Title: # Site Photos

Date 3/17/2020
Scale N/A
Project 2020.10

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Figure 3

The San Benito County General Plan designates the project site as Industrial Heavy ("IH") and is zoned Heavy Industrial District ("M2") and Rural ("R"). Allowed uses within the Industrial Heavy designation include heavy industrial activities that are not suitable for urban areas due to their size, noise, dust, traffic, or safety concerns. Specifically, the Industrial Heavy designation allows large-scale manufacturing, operations, mining and aggregate production facilities, recycling transfer centers, chemical and explosives manufacturing, or other similar uses.

1.3 Project Description

The proposed project consists of the expansion of the Fireclay Tile Factory at an existing industrial site and within portions of two adjacent parcels (**Figure 4**). Fireclay Tile would be consolidating their existing facility in Gilroy, CA, into the existing facility in Aromas. The existing facility in Aromas consists of eight buildings totaling approximately 31,501 SF, of which, four buildings totaling approximately 18,069 SF would be demolished (**Figure 5**). The proposed expansion includes construction of two new production and storage buildings and an office building. The proposed project would consist of the construction of approximately 63,680 SF of new production, storage, and office space to replace the existing facility in Gilroy. The specific dimensions of each building are as follows:

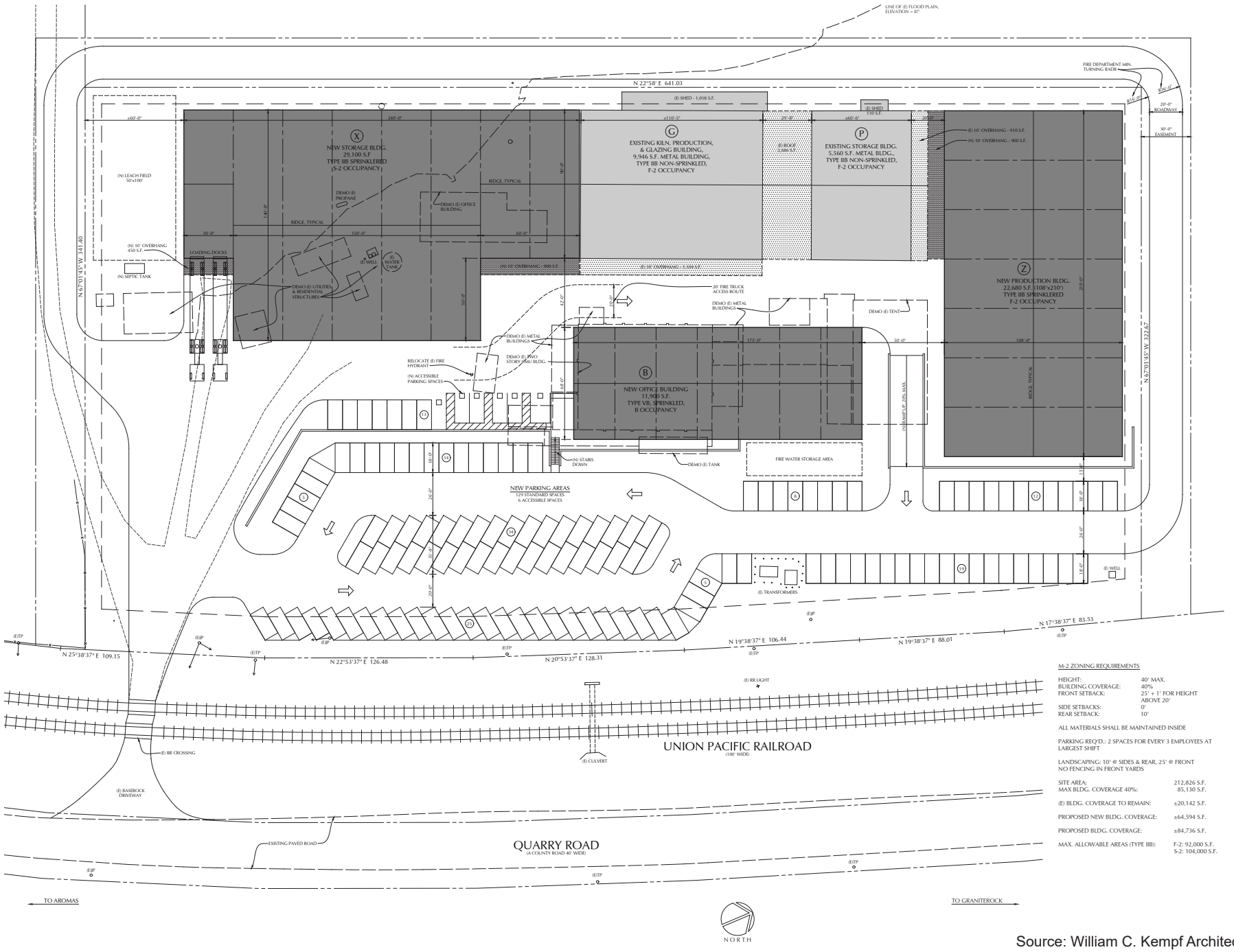
- One 29,100 SF storage building;
- One 22,680 SF production building; and
- One 11,900 SF office building.

The existing facilities remaining after demolition (15,506 SF) and the proposed improvements (63,680 SF) would total approximately 79,186 SF. In addition, the project proposes site improvements include drainage and septic infrastructure, signage, parking, and emergency vehicle access. The access and drainage improvements proposed on the two adjacent parcels would be facilitated by long-term leases with the two property owners. The proposed project would have the same operating hours, and would have an increase of seven employees from the Gilroy facility (please refer to *Operations* discussion below).

The following discussion provides a more detailed description of key proposed project elements, including construction, grading, security, site fencing, lighting, access and parking, water supply, septic, drainage, and operation.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction activities for the proposed project would consist of constructing the proposed storage, production, and office buildings shown in **Figure 4**. Construction activities would be limited to weekdays between the hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the weekends, and no nighttime construction is proposed. Minimal paving would be required for access and parking areas. Construction activities would include site preparation, grading, paving, building construction, and architectural coating. Construction equipment would include, but would not be limited to, graders, tractors/loaders/backhoes, rollers, and dozers. The extent of demolition activities would include the demolition of asphalt, concrete and structures. Construction staging areas would occur on-site. Construction employees at the construction site would range between one and 10 employees per day. Parking would be provided on-site, and no separate construction access roads would be needed. Access to the project site during construction activities would be provided via the baserock driveway at the front of the property. The baserock driveway would include a ruble pad to remove mud and dirt and reduce tracking offsite.



M-2 ZONING REQUIREMENTS

HEIGHT:	40' MAX.
BUILDING COVERAGE:	40%
FRONT SETBACK:	25' + 1' FOR HEIGHT ABOVE 20'
SIDE SETBACKS:	0'
REAR SETBACK:	10'

ALL MATERIALS SHALL BE MAINTAINED INSIDE

PARKING REQ'D.: 2 SPACES FOR EVERY 3 EMPLOYEES AT LARGEST SHIFT

LANDSCAPING: 10' @ SIDES & REAR, 25' @ FRONT
NO FENCING IN FRONT YARDS

SITE AREA:	212,826 S.F.
MAX BLDG. COVERAGE 40%:	85,130 S.F.
(E) BLDG. COVERAGE TO REMAIN:	±20,142 S.F.
PROPOSED NEW BLDG. COVERAGE:	±64,594 S.F.
PROPOSED BLDG. COVERAGE:	±84,736 S.F.
MAX. ALLOWABLE AREAS (TYPE IIB):	F-2: 92,000 S.F. S-2: 104,000 S.F.

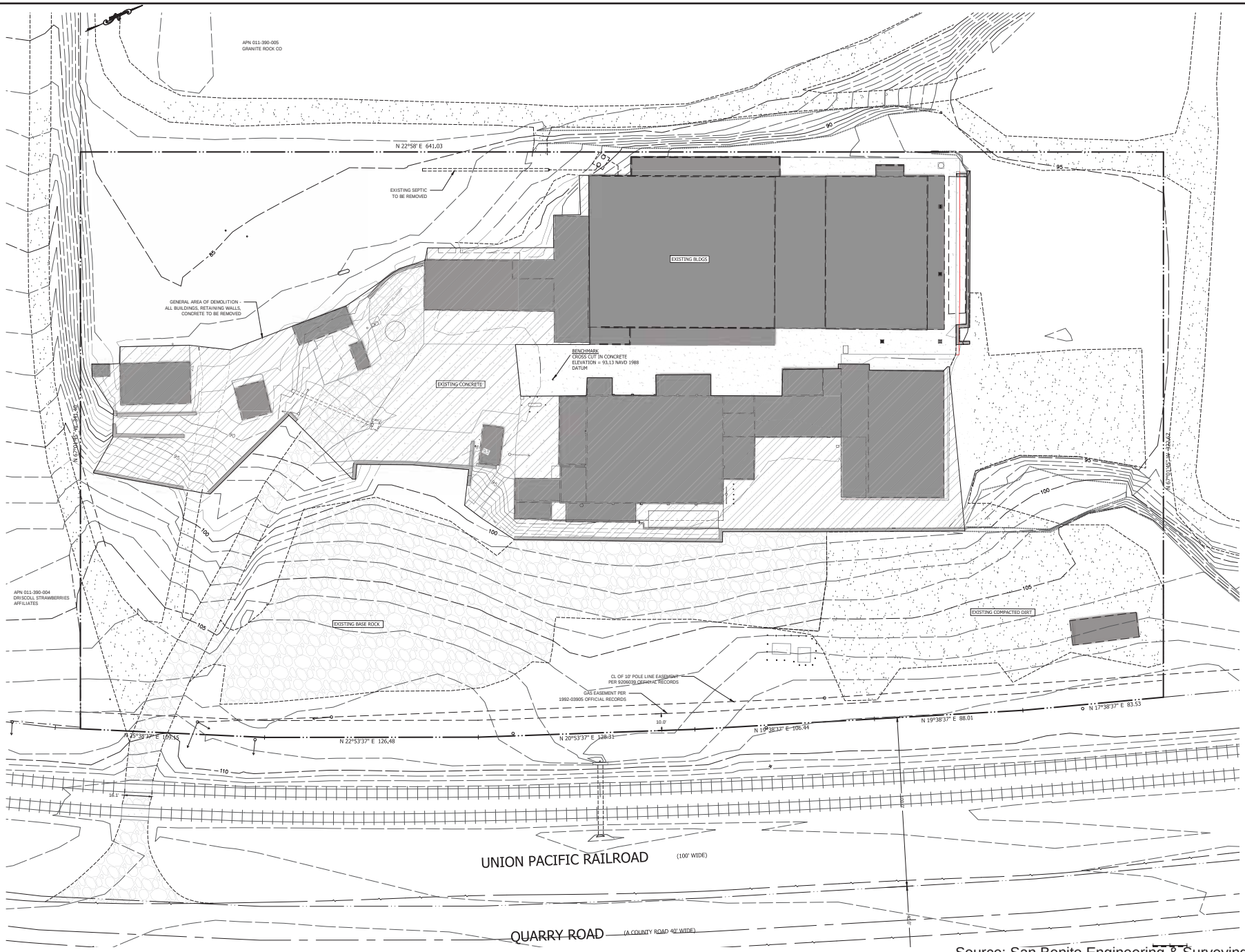
Source: William C. Kempf Architect, May 2020

Title: **Proposed Site Plan**

Date 5/12/2020
Scale 1"=30'
Project 2020.10

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Figure 4



Source: San Benito Engineering & Surveying, May 2020

Title: **Existing Site/Easements/ Demolition Plan**

Date 5/22/20
Scale 1"=30"
Project 2020.10

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Figure 5

Construction would take place over approximately 240 calendar days beginning on or around July 1, 2020, depending on weather and local permitting processes, and would be completed as early as February 2021. Construction would begin with earthmoving, which would take place of the course of 20 days, and 10 days for fine grading.

WATER SUPPLY

Potable water would be supplied by an on-site well at the northeast corner of the property site. A reverse-osmosis ("RO") system would be installed. Within the vicinity of the on-site well, there would be water storage for fire sprinklers with the capacity to hold 100,000 gallons of water.

SEPTIC

The existing septic system would be expanded and relocated to the southern side of the site to maintain the required 100 feet from site drainage (**Figure 6**).

DRAINAGE

A 0.4-acre detention pond is proposed on the western side of the new buildings on the adjacent parcel to the west (i.e., Granite Rock property), and is designed to detain the difference between a 10-year pre and 100-year post development, in accordance with County standards (**Figures 6** and **7**).

GRADING

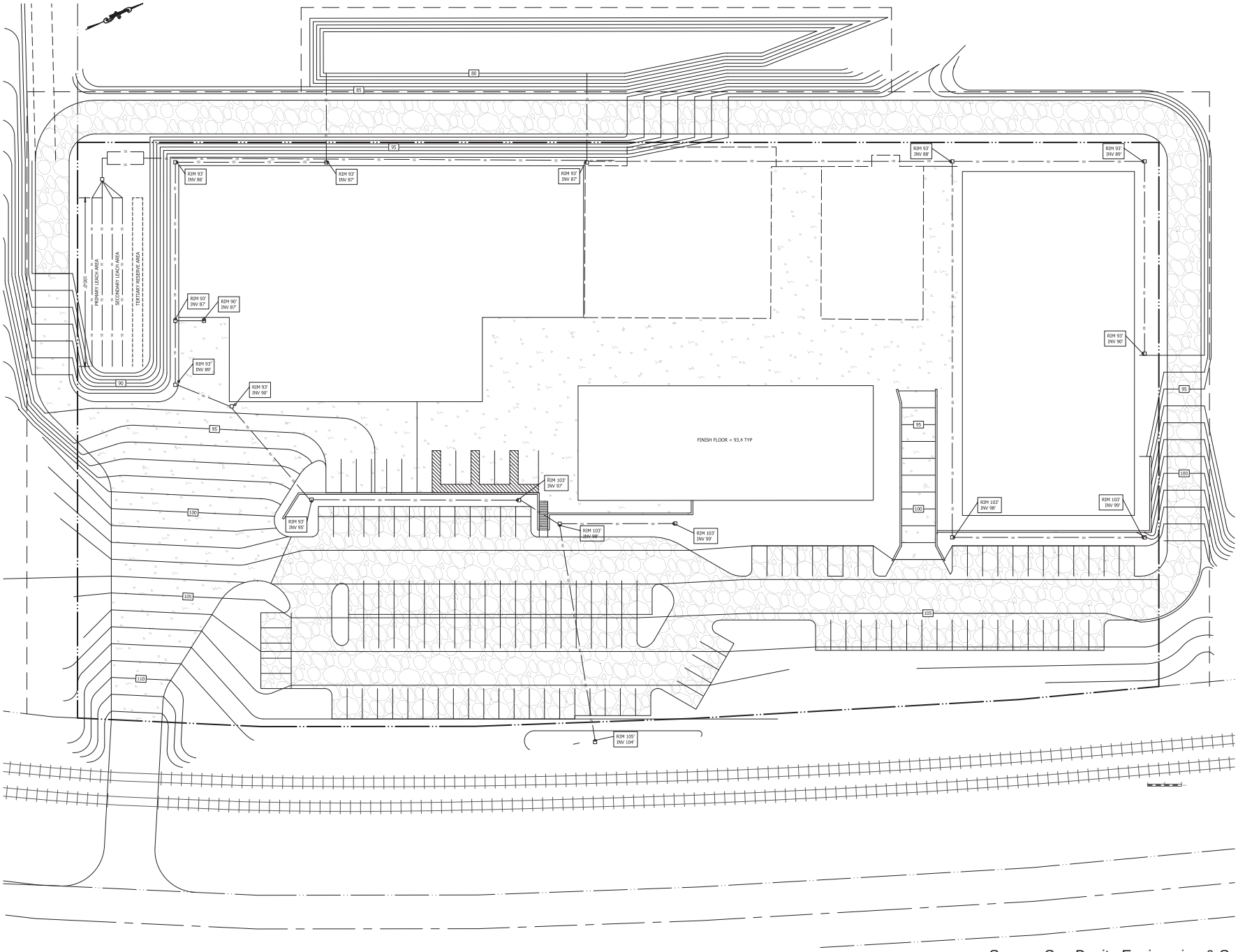
The project would require minimal grading to facilitate construction of the proposed buildings. The site is generally flat. Construction would result in approximately 9,202 cubic yards ("CY") of cut and 10,325 CY of fill, a total of 1,123 CY of earthmoving (**Figure 7**). Imported fill would be required and would be sourced by the Granite Rock – A.R. Wilson Quarry approximately 1,000 feet to the northeast of the project site. The project would require disturbance of approximately 4.89 acres of the existing industrial site, 1.1 acres of the Granite Rock property to the west and north, and 0.14 acres of the Driscoll property to the south.

LIGHTING

The proposed expansion project would require additional exterior lighting. As lighting would be used for security purposes, nighttime lighting is proposed; however, all lighting will be downward facing and employ shades and other measures to protect surrounding parcels.

ACCESS AND PARKING

During construction and operation, the project site would be accessed via a private base rock driveway that runs through the property, which is accessible via Quarry Road. Parking would be available on-site for construction and operation (**Figure 8**). The project site consists of an existing parking lot along the front of the property; however, the proposed project proposes improvements to include 129 standard parking spaces and six accessible spaces. Additionally, a 20-foot wide access driveway would be constructed along the perimeter of the property within the existing industrial and two adjacent parcels for semi-truck and emergency vehicle access, requiring approximately 0.8 acres of disturbance on the adjacent parcels (i.e., approximately 0.1 acres on the Driscoll property and 0.7 acres on the Granite Rock property). The width of the access driveway could potentially be expanded to 30 ft if required for adequate semi-truck access.



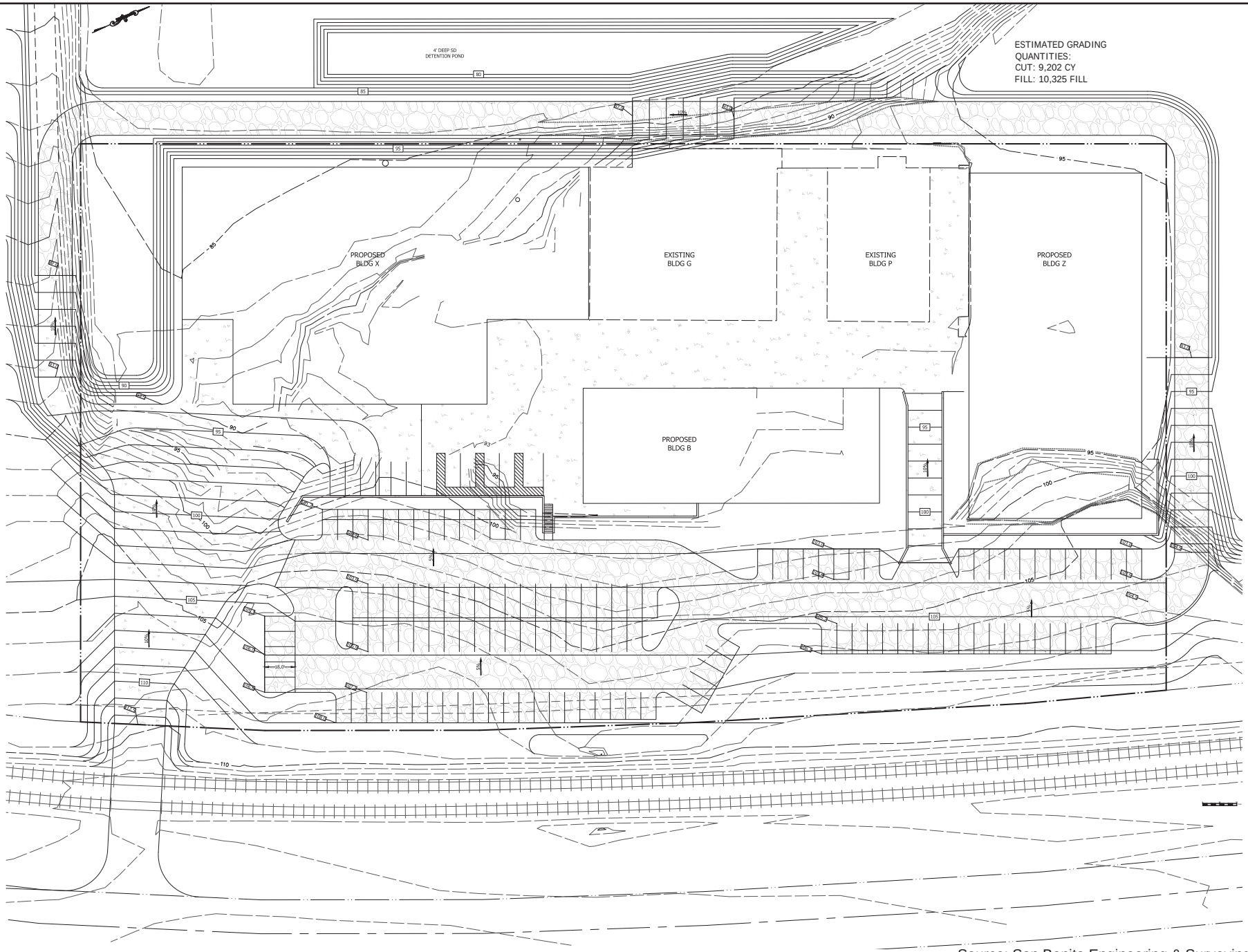
Source: San Benito Engineering & Surveying, May 2020

Title: # Preliminary Utility Plan

Date	5/22/20
Scale	1"=30"
Project	2020.10

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Figure 6



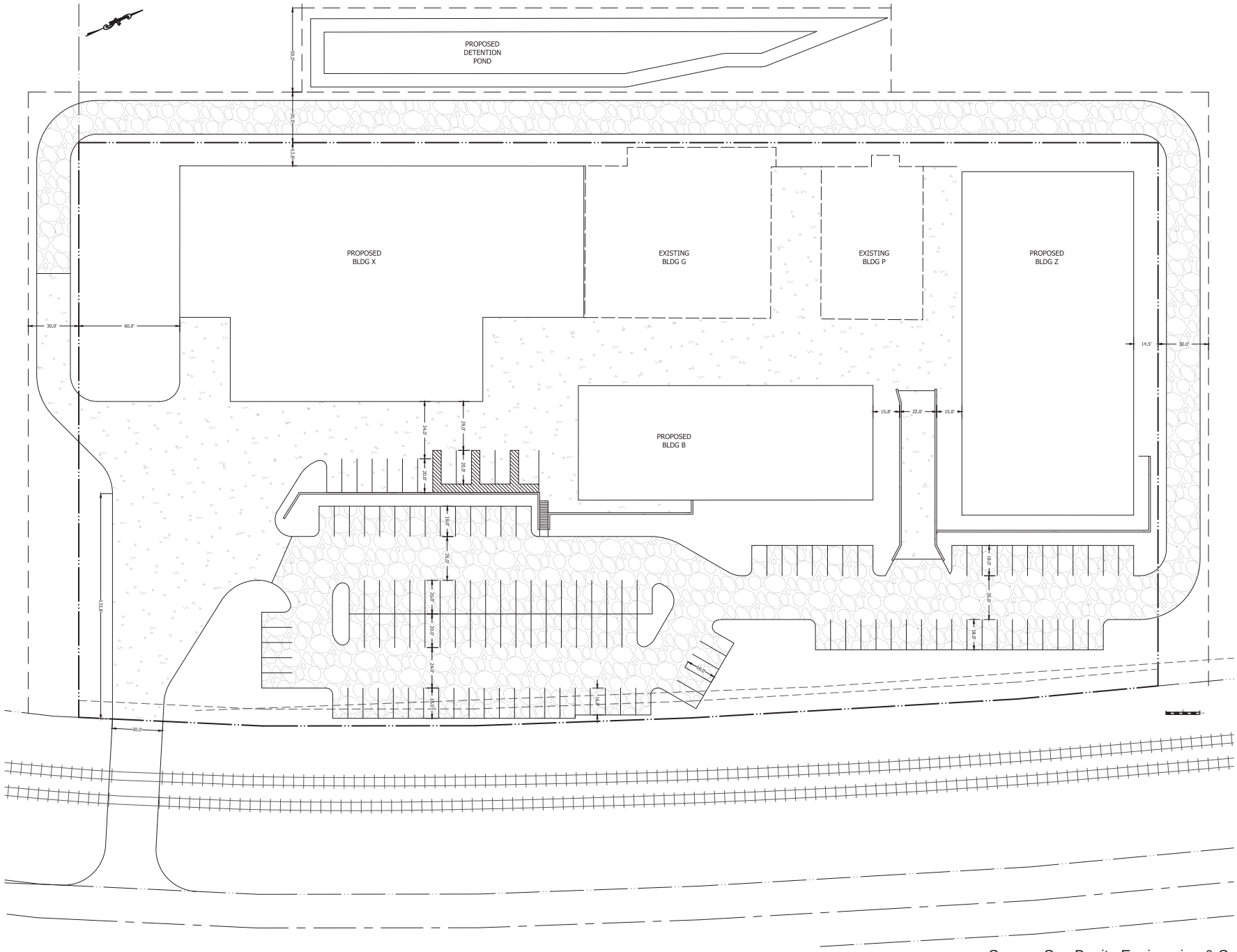
Source: San Benito Engineering & Surveying, May 2020

Title: # Preliminary Grading Plan

Date 5/22/20
Scale 1"=30"
Project 2020.10

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Figure 7



Source: San Benito Engineering & Surveying, May 2020

Title: Preliminary Improvement Plan

Date	5/22/20
Scale	1"=30"
Project	2020.10

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Figure 8

OPERATIONS

The proposed project operations would remain unchanged: all months of the year with the hours of operation 24 hours of the day Monday through Friday, including some weekends. The intake of the Gilroy employees would result in a total of seven employees, resulting in a total of 114 employees.[1] Pick-up and delivery truck trips would be approximately two daily pickups and one daily drop off per day. In addition, visitors and other suppliers and partners would be in and out throughout the day, representing on average three more truck trips per day.

1.4 Required Permits

This IS/MND is an informational document for both agency decision-makers and the public. The County RMA is the Lead Agency responsible for adoption of this IS/MND. It is anticipated that the proposed project would require permits and approvals from the following agencies.[2]

LOCAL AGENCIES

A list of the anticipated discretionary permits and approvals required by the County of San Benito is provided below:

- Adoption of IS/MND and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program ("MMRP")
- Approval of Proposed Project
- Approval of a Conditional Use Permit
- Building Permit
- Grading Permit
- Well Permit from San Benito County Water District and Water System Permit from San Benito County Department of Environmental Health
- Sewage Disposal Permit from San Benito County Department of Environmental Health

REGIONAL AND STATE AGENCIES

- Regional Water Quality Control Board ("RWQCB") – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("NPDES") General Storm Water Permit and Storm Water Pollution Protection Plan ("SWPPP")
- Approval from the State Office of Drinking Water, State Water Resources Control Board ("SWRCB") for potable wells, if required
- Approval from the Monterey Bay Air Resources District ("MBARD") for demolition activities.

1.5 Project Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the proposed project is to consolidate and expand existing facilities to increase efficiency and production. The project's key objectives from the project applicant are as follows:

[1] Currently, 13 employees are working from home due to coronavirus pandemic.
[2] This list is not considered exhaustive and additional agencies and/or jurisdictions may have permitting authority.

- To terminate the temporary lease for the warehouse in Gilroy and expand the existing site in Aromas and consolidate facilities and operation.
- To provide the employees a layout which would lead to enhanced efficiencies for both labor and utilities.
- To build a more efficient and productive operation to accommodate the company's growth.
- To continue to provide competitive wages and benefits for its team members.

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Chapter 2. Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The environmental factors identified below are discussed within **Chapter 4. Initial Study Environmental Checklist** Sources used for analysis of environmental effects are cited in parenthesis after each discussion, and are listed in **Chapter 5. References.**

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Agricultural and Forest Resources	☐ Air Quality
☒ Biological Resources	☒ Cultural Resources	☐ Energy
☒ Geology/Soils	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Hazards/Hazardous Materials
☒ Hydrology/Water Quality	☐ Land Use/Planning	☐ Mineral Resources
☐ Noise	☐ Population/Housing	☐ Public Services
☐ Recreation	☒ Transportation/Traffic	☒ Tribal Cultural Resources
☒ Utilities/Service Systems	☐ Wildfire	☒ Mandatory Findings of Significance

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Chapter 3. Determination

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Taven M Kinisen Brown
Signature

JUNE 3, 2020
Date

TAVEN M. KINISON BROWN
Printed Name

SBC RMA PLANNING
For

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Chapter 4. Initial Study Environmental Checklist

The following chapter assesses the environmental consequences associated with the proposed project. Mitigation measures, where appropriate, are identified to address potential impacts.

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must take into account the whole action involved, including offsite as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.

3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.

4. "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level.

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration (Section 15063(c)(3)(D)). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures, which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances) into the checklist references. Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.

9. The explanation of each issue should identify:

a) The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
b) The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.

4.1 Aesthetics

4.1.1 Environmental Setting

The 2035 County General Plan Update Recirculated Draft EIR ("RDEIR") notes that the County's most striking features are the Diablo and Gabilan Mountain Ranges and the San Benito Valley between them. There are no State designated scenic highways located in the County. However, three highways are County designated scenic highways, including Highway 101, located approximately four miles east of the project site; State Route ("SR") 156, located over four miles southeast of the project site; and SR 129, located approximately 0.5 miles north of the project site.

According to the 2035 County General Plan RDEIR, important vistas within San Benito County that define its visual character include agricultural croplands, rangelands, rolling hills, open spaces, historic towns and mining sites, and views of the Diablo and Gabilan ranges. These agricultural and rangeland areas constitute more than 75 percent of the County's total land area. Also, the County's topography includes valleys and rolling hills, particularly in the northern portion of the County near the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, where most of the County's population dwells.

The existing industrial site is currently developed, and the adjacent parcels currently consist of agricultural uses. Surrounding lands are rural and currently consist primarily of agricultural uses, but are zoned Heavy Industrial to the west and north, and Rural Transitional to the south and east. The proposed project would result in the expansion of existing structures as well as associated infrastructure, including lighting, parking and loading areas, water supply and septic improvements, and a detention basin. Construction of the proposed project would not require any nighttime construction, and, therefore, construction activities would not result in any new nighttime lighting or glare. New exterior lighting would be required. All exterior lighting would be downward facing and consistent with the County lighting ordinances. The project site consists of primarily industrial land uses, and mineral sourcing (i.e., Granite Rock – A.R. Wilson Quarry) is conducted approximately 1,000 feet northeast of the project site. To the south and east of the project site, the surrounding lands are rural and currently consist of primarily agricultural uses, which produce varying degrees of nighttime lighting.

Section 19.31.005 of the San Benito County Code establishes three lighting zones, with Zone I having the strictest regulations and Zone III imposing the least restrictive. The project site is located in Zone II. General requirements are applicable to all zones, under Section 19.31.006, and the special requirements applicable to project set forth in Section 19.31.008 are listed below.

(A) (1) Total outdoor light output (excluding streetlights used for illumination of county roadways or private roadways related to any development project in Zone II) shall not exceed 50,000 initial raw lamp lumens per net acre, averaged over the entire project.

(2) Furthermore, no more than 5,500 initial raw lamp lumens per net acre may be accounted for by lamps in unshielded fixtures permitted in Table 19.31.006(1) of this chapter.

(D) Class 3 lighting must be extinguished at 11:00 p.m. or when the business closes, whichever is later, except that low-wattage holiday decorations may remain on all night from November 15 to January 15.

4.1.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
AESTHETICS. Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a 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 point.) If the project is in an urbanized area would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.1.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact.** As described in the County's General Plan, most of the County consists of agricultural and rangeland uses, many of the County's scenic vistas consist of views of these areas. The project would consist of the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility consistent with the parcels' zoning as well as adjacent land use and zoning designations. The project is not visible from existing scenic roads. In addition, the project would not exceed the 40-foot building height threshold and would not block any neighboring views of distant mountain ranges. The proposed project would not impair County scenic vistas within the agricultural and rangeland uses. Therefore, the impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2, 3)

b) **No Impact.** As discussed above, there are many scenic resources in the County. However, the project site is not located on a County designated scenic roadway. There are also no officially designated State Scenic Highways in the project vicinity. Therefore, the project is not visible from an officially designated scenic highway or County designated scenic roadway. As a result, the project would have no impact on scenic resources such as rock outcroppings, trees, or historic buildings within view from a scenic highway. (1, 2, 3)

c) **Less than Significant Impact.** The project site is currently developed or in agricultural use in a non-urbanized area. Surrounding lands are rural and currently consist primarily of agricultural uses, but are zoned Heavy Industrial to the west and north, and Rural Transitional to the south and east. Therefore, while located in a non-urbanized area, the visual character of the site is not considered scenic. The proposed project would consist of the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility on a developed parcel and adjacent agricultural lands. The proposed expansion is consistent with Heavy Industrial Zoning and Rural Zoning of the site, and zoning in the project vicinity.

New structures associated with the project must comply with the County's design standards contained in Chapter 25.17 of the Code of Ordinances, along with the County's General Plan Land Use goals and policies related to visual character. Additionally, prior to issuance of a building permit, the project design plans must be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission for review of design standards including building elevations, materials, colors, textures, light fixtures, and perimeter fencing. The project site is not located in an urbanized area. As a result, compliance with existing County policies and regulations, including standard conditions of approval, would ensure that the project would have a less-than-significant impact on the existing visual character or quality of public views pf the site and its surroundings. (1, 2, 3)

d) **Less than Significant Impact.** Construction activities would occur during daytime hours. Nighttime lighting for construction activities would not be required. Lighting associated with the project would primarily consist of additional exterior lighting for security purposes. Overall, nighttime lighting would be minimal and would only include that which is necessary for safety for vehicular movement and security.

The increased lighting into a minimally lit area would increase the extent of lighting as compared to existing conditions. This would result in a corresponding increase in the extent of potential light glow in the nighttime sky. However, the proposed project would be required to conform with applicable provisions of the County "Dark Skies" Ordinance (Chapter 19.31), which requires the use of outdoor lighting systems and practices designed to reduce light pollution and glare, and to protect the nighttime visual environment by regulating outdoor lighting that interferes with astronomical observations and enjoyment of the night sky. Compliance with the County's "Dark Skies" Ordinance would ensure that potential adverse effects associated with site lighting would be less than significant.

Additionally, as part of the County application process, the proposed project would go through design review and approval in order to confirm consistency with applicable standards, requirements and design guidelines. As a result, potential impacts from lighting and glare would be less than significant. (1, 2, 3)

4.2 Agricultural and Forest Resources

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program ("FMMP"), established by the State Legislature in 1982, assesses the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands. In addition, the FMMP monitors the conversion of these lands over time. The FMMP is a non-regulatory program contained in Section 612 of the Public Resources Code. The Program contains five farmland categories (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing) with a purpose of providing consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land use and land use changes throughout California. The five farmland categories consist of the following:

- Prime Farmland ("P") comprises the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Irrigated agricultural production is a necessary land use four years prior to the mapping date to qualify as Prime Farmland. The land must be able to store moisture and produce high yields.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance ("S") possesses similar characteristics to Prime Farmland with minor shortcomings, such as less ability to hold and store moisture and more pronounced slopes.
- Unique Farmland ("U") has a production history of propagating crops with high-economic value.

- Farmland of Local Importance ("L") is important to the local agricultural economy. Local advisory committees and a county specific Board of Supervisors determine this status.
- Grazing Land ("G") is suitable for browsing or grazing of livestock.

The existing industrial site consists of primarily "Other Land" in the FMMP. Other Land consists of vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres. The adjacent parcels contain lands designated as Prime Farmland.

The Williamson Act, codified in 1965 as the California Land Conservation Act, allows local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners, offering tax incentives in exchange for an agreement that the land will remain as agricultural or related open space use for a period of 10 years. The project site is not under a Williamson Act contract.

According to the California Public Resources Code §4526, the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection defines "Timberland" as land not owned by the federal government, nor designated as experimental forest land, which is capable and available for growing any commercial tree species. The board defines commercial trees on a district basis following consultation with district committees and other necessary parties. There are no forest land, timberland, or timberland production areas, as zoned by applicable state and local regulations located within the County.

4.2.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST 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 provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest uses?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

a-b) **Less than Significant Impact.** As noted above, the FMMP of the California Resources Agency classifies the majority of the project site as "Other Land." In addition, the project site is not within a Williamson Act contract. The adjacent parcels are designated as Prime Farmland, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the FMMP. The proposed improvements to the existing access roads and construction of the detention pond on the adjacent parcels are consistent with agricultural uses. Therefore, the proposed project would not convert these farmland designations to non-agricultural use. Furthermore, the proposed use for the project is consistent with the zoning designation, Heavy Industrial, and general plan designation, Industrial Heavy, of the existing industrial site and adjacent parcels. The project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to a non-agricultural use; would not conflict with a Williamson Act contract; and would not involve other changes in the existing environment which could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

c-e) **No Impact.** As noted above, there are no forest land, timberland, or timberland production areas, as zoned by applicable state and local laws and regulations located within the County, or otherwise present on-site. As the project is not designated as forest land, the proposed project would not convert these lands to a non-forest use. Furthermore, the proposed use for the project is consistent with the zoning designation, Heavy Industrial, and general plan designation, Industrial Heavy, of the existing industrial site and adjacent parcels. The project would not conflict with or cause rezoning of forest land or timberland; would not result in the loss or conservation of forest land; and would not involve other changes in the existing environment which could result in conversion of forest land to non-forest land; there is no impact. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

4.3 Air Quality

4.3.1 Environmental Setting

The federal Clean Air Act and the California Clean Air Act mandate the control and reduction of certain air pollutants. Under these Acts, the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("U.S. EPA") and the California Air Resources Board ("CARB") have established ambient air quality standards for specific "criteria" pollutants. These pollutants are carbon monoxide ("CO"), ozone ("O_3"), sulfur dioxide ("SO_2"), nitrogen oxides ("NO_X"), particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter ("PM_{10}"), lead, and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter ("$PM_{2.5}$").

The project site is located within the North Central Coast Air Basin ("NCCAB"), which is comprised of Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties, and is regulated by the Monterey Bay Air Resources District ("MBARD," formally known as Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District).

The U.S. EPA administers the National Ambient Air Quality Standards ("NAAQS") under the Federal Clean Air Act. The U.S. EPA sets the NAAQS and determines if areas meet those standards. Violations of ambient air quality standards are based on air pollutant monitoring data and evaluated for each air pollutant. Areas that

do not violate ambient air quality standards are considered to have attained the standard. The NCCAB is in attainment for all NAAQS and for all California Ambient Air Quality Standards ("CAAQS") except O_3 and PM_{10}. The primary sources of O_3 and PM_{10} in the NCAAB are from automobile engine combustion. To address exceedance of these CAAQS, the MBARD has developed and implemented several plans including the 2005 Particulate Matter Plan, the 2007 Federal Maintenance Plan, and the 2012-2015 Air Quality Management Plan ("AQMP"), a revision to the 2012 Triennial Plan. NCCAB Attainment Status to National and California Ambient Air Quality can be found in **Table 1** below.

Table 1.
North Central Coast Air Basin Attainment Status – January 2015

Pollutant	State Standards[1]	National Standards
Ozone (O_3)	**Nonattainment[2]**	Attainment/Unclassified[3]
Inhalable Particulates (PM_{10})	**Nonattainment**	Attainment
Fine Particulates ($PM_{2.5}$)	Attainment	Attainment/Unclassified[4]
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Monterey Co. – Attainment San Benito Co. – Unclassified Santa Cruz Co. – Unclassified	Attainment/Unclassified
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	Attainment	Attainment/Unclassified[5]
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	Attainment	Attainment[6]
Lead	Attainment	Attainment/Unclassified[7]

Notes:
1) State designations based on 2010 to 2012 air monitoring data.
2) Effective July 26, 2007, the CARB designated the NCCAB a nonattainment area for the State ozone standard, which was revised in 2006 to include an 8-hour standard of 0.070 ppm.
3) On March 12, 2008, EPA adopted a new 8-hour ozone standard of 0.075 ppm. In April 2012, EPA designated the NCCAB attainment/unclassified based on 2009-2011 data.
4) This includes the 2006 24-hour standard of 35 $\mu g/m^3$ and the 2012 annual standard of 12 $\mu g/m^3$.
5) In 2012, EPA designated the entire state as attainment/unclassified for the 2010 NO2 standard.
6) In June 2011, the CARB recommended to EPA that the entire state be designated as attainment for the 2010 primary SO_2 standard. Final designations to be addressed in future EPA actions.
7) On October 15, 2008 EPA substantially strengthened the national ambient air quality standard for lead by lowering the level of the primary standard from 1.5 $\mu g/m^3$ to 0.15 $\mu g/m^3$. Final designations were made by EPA in November 2011.
8) Nonattainment designations are highlighted in **Bold**.
Source: CARB Area Designation Maps website http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm/adm.htm and EPA Green Book Nonattainment Areas for Criteria Pollutants http://www.epa.gov/air/oaqps/greenbk/index.html .

Plans to attain these standards already accommodate the future growth projections available at the time these plans were prepared. Any development project capable of generating air pollutant emissions exceeding regionally-established criteria is considered significant for purposes of CEQA, whether or not such emissions have been accounted for in regional air planning. Any project that would directly cause or substantially contribute to a localized violation of an air quality standard would generate substantial air pollution impacts. The same is true for a project that generates a substantial increase in health risks from toxic air contaminants.

Sensitive receptors are more susceptible to the effects of air pollution than the general population. Land uses that are considered sensitive receptors include residences, schools, and health care facilities. There are no sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project site.

4.3.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
AIR QUALITY. Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Violate any air quality standard or result in a cumulatively considerable net increase in an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Result in substantial emissions (such as odors or rust) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.3.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact.** CEQA Guidelines §15125(b) requires an evaluation of project consistency with applicable regional plans, including the AQMP. As stated above, the MBARD has developed and implemented several plans to address exceedance of State air quality standards, including the MBARD 2012-2015 AQMP. The MBARD is required to update their AQMP once every three years; the most recent update (MBARD, 2017) was approved in March of 2017. This plan addresses attainment of the State ozone standard and federal air quality standard. The AQMP accommodates growth by projecting growth in emissions based on population forecasts prepared by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments ("AMBAG") and other indicators.

The proposed project would not result in a substantial increase in employment, nor would the proposed project result in increased population growth. The proposed project would be consistent with the MBARD 2012-2015 AQMP. In addition, as noted in Response b, below, the proposed project would not result in a significant increase in emissions. For these reasons, implementation of the proposed project is not anticipated to result in a substantial increase in either direct or indirect emissions that would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the AQMP. This impact is considered less than significant. (1, 2, 6, 7)

b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Grading and filling during construction could result in impacts to air quality. Site disturbance activities could result in short-term, localized decrease in air quality due to the generation of particulate emissions ("PM_{10}"). The MBARD 2008 CEQA Air Quality Guidelines contains standards of significance for evaluating potential air quality effects of projects subject to the requirements of CEQA (see Table 5-1, pg. 5-14, of the MBARD 2008 CEQA Guidelines). According to MBARD, a project would violate an air quality standard and/or contribute to an existing or projected violation if it would:

- Emit 137 or more of volatile organic compounds ("VOC") or NO_x;
- Directly emit 550 pounds per day ("lbs/day") of CO;

- Generate traffic that significantly affects levels of service;
- Directly emit 82 lb/day or more of PM_{10} on site during operation or construction;
- Generate traffic on unpaved roads of 82 lb/day or more of PM_{10}; or
- Directly emit 150 lb/day or more of oxides of Sulfur ("SO_x").

Construction. According to the MBARD's criteria for determining construction impacts (as updated February 2008), a project would result in a potentially significant impact if it would result in 8.1 acres of minimal earthmoving per day or 2.2 acres per day with major grading and excavation. As the entire area of disturbance for the proposed project is approximately six acres, daily grading is expected to be under this, the project is below the threshold. In addition, the project would also implement standard construction Best Management Practices ("BMPs") related to dust suppression, which would include: 1) watering active construction areas; 2) prohibiting grading activities during periods of high wind (over 15 mph); 3) covering trucks hauling soil; and, 4) covering exposed stockpiles. The implementation of BMPs would further ensure that potential construction-related emissions would be minimized. Since the project is under the threshold for construction air quality impacts, this impact is considered to be less than significant.

Operational. Based on preliminary modeling, the MBARD establishes screening criteria for development projects which provide conservative indication of whether a development could result in a potentially significant impact on ozone. These are levels at which indirect sources and area sources could potentially emit 137 lb/day or more of VOC or NO_X. Per Table 5-4 of the air district 2012 CEQA Guidelines, industrial developments of 1,040,000 sq. ft. or more in size would create indirect emission sources with potentially significant impacts related to ozone and ozone precursors. The project would result in the construction of 63,680 sq. ft. The existing facilities remaining after demolition (15,506 sq. ft.) and the proposed improvements (63,680 sq. ft.) would total approximately 79,186 sq. f.t, and, thus, would not exceed this threshold. The proposed project is substantially below the screening criteria.

Potential operational air quality emissions associated with project traffic would also be below applicable MBARD thresholds of significance. The proposed project would result in an increase of seven employees and operations would remain unchanged from existing. Therefore, the proposed project would generate only 21 daily trips (see **Section 4.17, Transportation/Traffic**). This amount of traffic is not anticipated to affect current level of service in the area or exceed the 550 pound per day threshold of CO (e.g. industrial operations). There are only minimal truck trips associated with operations of the proposed project and would not significantly increase from current truck trips, nor are unpaved roads proposed, and, therefore, the project is not anticipated to generate in excess of 82 lbs/day of PM_{10} at the project site. As a result, the proposed project is not anticipated to result in cumulatively considerable net increase in an existing or projected operational air quality violation, this is considered a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 6, 7)

c) **Less than Significant Impact**. A "sensitive receptor" is generally defined as any residence including private homes, condominiums, apartments, or living quarters; education resources such as preschools and kindergarten through grade twelve ("k-12") schools; daycare centers; and health care facilities such as hospitals or retirement and nursing homes. There are no sensitive receptors within 1,000 feet of the project site. The MBARD's 2008 CEQA Air Quality Guidelines state that a project would have a significant impact to sensitive receptors if it would cause a violation of any CO, PM_{10} or toxic air contaminant standards at an existing or reasonably foreseeable sensitive receptor.

As stated above, the project would implement standard air quality BMPs and emissions of CO resulting from construction of the proposed project are below applicable MBARD thresholds of significance.

As discussed in Response b, above, the proposed project would not exceed any MBARD thresholds, including CO and PM_{10}. Compliance with applicable MBARD regulations would also include, but is not limited to, Rule 402.[3] In addition, there are no sensitive receptors within 1,000 feet of the project site. For these reasons, construction activities would be considered to have a less-than-significant impact to sensitive receptors. Additionally, implementation of the proposed project would not result in the installation of any new major stationary or mobile sources of emissions. Operational activities of the project would have a less-than-significant impact to sensitive receptors as they are consistent with surrounding land uses and current zoning of the property and the nearest sensitive receptors are approximately 1,000 feet away. (1, 2, 6, 7)

d) **Less than Significant Impact**. Pollutants associated with substantial emissions, such as odors, include sulfur compounds and methane. Typical sources of odors include landfills, rendering plants, chemical plants, agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, and refineries (MBARD, 2008).

While the tile manufacturing facility uses chemicals (please refer to **Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials**) and involves stationary and/or mobile sources of emissions, the activities do not produce significant odors and any odors would not be an issue due to the lack of proximity to any sensitive receptors. Therefore, odor impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2, 6)

4.4 Biological Resources

4.4.1 Environmental Setting

This section describes existing biological resources within and surrounding the project site, identifies any special-status species and sensitive habitats within and adjacent to the project site, assess potential impacts that may occur to biological resources, and recommends appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures necessary to reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level.

A reconnaissance survey was conducted at the site on March 4, 2020, by DD&A Senior Environmental Scientist Erin Harwayne to characterize habitats present within the site and to identify any special-status plant or wildlife species or suitable habitat for these species within and adjacent to the project site. Available reference materials were reviewed prior to conducting the field survey. The primary literature and data sources reviewed to determine the occurrence or potential for occurrence of special-status species at the site are as follows: California Natural Diversity Database ("CNDDB") occurrence reports from the United States Geological Survey ("USGS") Prunedale and San Juan Bautista quadrangles and ten surrounding quadrangles (Chittenden, Hollister, Marina, Moss Landing, Mt. Harlan, Natividad, Salinas, San Felipe, Watsonville East, and Watsonville West) (CDFW, 2020); current agency status information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("USFWS") and California Department of Fish and Wildlife ("CDFW") for species listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as Threatened or Endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act ("ESA") or the California Endangered Species Act ("CESA"); and those considered CDFW "species of special concern"; and the California Native Plant Society ("CNPS") *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California* (CNPS, 2020). Data collected during the survey was used to assess the environmental conditions of the site and its surroundings, and provide a basis for recommendations to minimize and avoid impacts.

[3] MBARD Rule 402 "Nuisance" states, "A person shall not discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health or safety of any such persons or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property. The provisions of this rule shall not apply to odors emanating from agricultural operations necessary for the growing of crops or the raising of fowl or animals."

The majority of the project site is developed or in agricultural use. Where development does not occur or is in agricultural use, the site contains ruderal/landscaped vegetation. Ruderal areas are those areas which have been disturbed by human activities and are dominated by non-native annual grasses and other "weedy" species. Landscaped areas are also included within this vegetation type. Ruderal areas within the project site include vegetation dominated by ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), slender oat (*Aventa barbata*), Bermuda buttercup (*Oxalis pes-capre*), summer mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), and telegraphweed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*). The site contains a number of non-native, horticultural tree species, including pine (*Pinus* sp.), ficus (*Ficus* sp.), and olive (*Olea* sp.) trees, occur on the site. The Pajaro River is located approximately 660 feet west of the project site.

This vegetation type is considered to have low biological value as it is generally dominated by non-native plant species and consists of relatively low-quality habitat from a wildlife perspective. However, common wildlife species which do well in urbanized and disturbed areas, such as the American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), western scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), coast range fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis bocourtii*), and rock pigeon (*Columba livia*), may forage within this vegetation type.

No special-status plants were observed on the site and none are expected to occur due to lack of suitable habitat. Although ruderal areas represent relatively low-quality wildlife habitat, the trees within and adjacent to the project site could provide suitable habitat for nesting raptors and other protected avian species. Raptors, their nests, and other nesting birds are protected under California Fish and Game Code. While the life histories of these species vary, overlapping nesting (approximately February through August) and foraging similarities allow for their concurrent discussion. Most raptors are breeding residents throughout most of the wooded portions of the state. Stands of live oak, riparian deciduous, or other forest habitats, as well as open grasslands, are used most frequently for nesting. Breeding occurs February through August, with peak activity May through July. Prey for these species includes small birds, small mammals, and some reptiles and amphibians. Many raptor species hunt in open woodland and habitat edges.

4.4.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.4.3 Explanation

a) **Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** The existing industrial site is currently developed and consists of an existing tile manufacturing facility. The adjacent parcels are currently in agricultural use. The proposed project would result in the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility, which would result in improvements to the existing industrial site and adjacent parcels. According to the San Benito County Online GIS system, there are no sensitive habitats or special-status species within the project site. However, the trees within and adjacent to the existing industrial site could provide nesting habitat for raptors and other protected avian species. Construction and construction-related disturbance during the avian nesting season could result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings, or otherwise lead to nest abandonment within the site and immediately adjacent areas.

In order to minimize potential impacts, mitigation is necessary. The implementation of the following mitigation measures would avoid or reduce impacts to special-status species, ensuring that potential impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2)

Mitigation

BIO 4.4-1 Activities that may directly affect (e.g. tree removal) or indirectly affect (e.g. noise/ground disturbance) raptors or other nesting birds shall be timed to avoid the breeding and nesting seasons. Specifically, grading with heavy machinery and tree removal shall be scheduled after September 16 and before January 31.

Prior to issuance of permits for grading or prior to ground disturbing activities, the project applicant shall retain a qualified biologist defined as professional biologists with a bachelor's degree or above in a biological science field and demonstrated field experience of three years or more. Biologist duties shall include pre-construction surveys as follows

which shall be provided in a scope of work submitted to the County RMA. The project applicant shall be responsible for retaining the qualified biologist.

Pre-Construction Surveys: If activities must occur during the breeding and nesting season (February 1 through September 15), a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting raptors and other protected nesting bird species within 300 feet of the proposed construction activities. Pre-construction surveys should be conducted no more than seven days prior to the start of the construction activities during the early part of the breeding season (February through April) and no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of these activities during the late part of the breeding season (May through August).

If raptor or other bird nests are identified within or immediately adjacent to the project site during the pre-construction surveys, the qualified biologist shall notify the proponent and an appropriate no-disturbance buffer shall be imposed within which no construction activities or disturbance shall take place (generally 300 feet in all directions for raptors; other avian species may have species-specific requirements) until the young of the year have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival, as determined by a qualified biologist.

A note shall be placed on Final Grading Plan that the project shall adhere to the above requirements and a copy of said standards, components, and materials shall be submitted with grading and building plans prior to issuance of building permit(s) for project development.

b) **No Impact**. The project site does not contain any riparian or other sensitive natural communities. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in impacts to sensitive habitats. (1, 2)

c) **No Impact**. The project site does not contain any federally protected wetlands. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in impacts to federally protected wetlands. (1, 2)

d) **No Impact**. The project site is primarily developed or in agricultural use and does not provide valuable migratory wildlife corridors or native wildlife nursery sites for native fish or wildlife species. The proposed project would not impede the use of any wildlife corridors or interfere with wildlife movement. (1, 2)

e) **No Impact.** The proposed project would require the removal of three (3) pine and nine (9) ficus trees. The proposed tree removal is not in conflict with San Benito County Code and does not require a tree removal permit. (1, 2, 8)

f) **No Impact**. There are no adopted habitat conservation plans associated with the project site. (1, 2)

4.5 Cultural Resources

4.5.1 Environmental Setting

The County of San Benito General Plan notes that only three percent of the land area of San Benito County has been surveyed for cultural resources, yet over 1,300 cultural sites have been documented, including over 500 prehistoric and historic archaeological sites and over 850 historic buildings. The 2035 County General Plan RDEIR identified that the majority of historic properties in the County are in the incorporated cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, with the exception of two small historic communities, Paicines and Tres Pinos.

4.5.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
CULTURAL RESOURCES. Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

4.5.3 Explanation

a) **No Impact**. CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 describes a historical resources as: 1) any resource that is listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources; 2) a resource included in a local register of historical resources; and, 3) any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant based on substantial evidence in light of the whole record. A substantial change includes the physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of a resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance would be materially impaired (CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(b)).

The proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. The project site does not contain any historic resources listed in the California Inventory of Historical Resources, California Historical Landmarks, or the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed project consists of the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility, and implementation of the project would not have an impact on a historical resource as defined in accordance with the requirements of CEQA. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 3)

b) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** Public Resources Code §21083.2 requires that lead agencies evaluate potential impacts to archaeological resources. Specifically, lead agencies must determine whether a project may have a significant effect or cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource. While no archaeological resources have been documented on-site, previously unknown or buried archaeological resources could, nevertheless, be present. The project could impact potentially unknown or buried resources during construction. In order to minimize potential impacts to a less-than-significant level, mitigation is necessary. The implementation of the following mitigation measure would ensure that potential impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2, 3)

Mitigation

CUL 4.5-1 If archaeological resources or human remains are accidentally discovered on the project site during construction, work shall be halted by the construction manager within 50 meters (150 feet) of the find until it can be evaluated by a qualified professional archaeologist. If the find is determined to be significant, appropriate mitigation measures shall be formulated and implemented. Materials of particular concern would be concentrations of marine shell, burned animal bones, charcoal, and flaked or ground stone fragments. (Ref: Health and Safety Code 7050.5)

c) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** No known human remains, including those interred outsides of formal cemeteries, are known to occur within the project site. While the likelihood of human remains, including those interred outsides of a formal cemetery, with the project site is low, it is possible that previously unknown human remains may be present. Previously unknown human remains could be impacted during construction. In order to minimize potential impacts to a less-than-significant level, mitigation is necessary. The implementation of the following mitigation measure identified below would ensure that potential adverse impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. (1, 2, 3)

Mitigation

CUL 4.5-2 If human remains are found at any time on the project site, work must be stopped by the construction manager, and the County Coroner must be notified immediately. If the Coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission will be notified as required by law. The Commission will designate a Most Likely Descendant who will be authorized to provide recommendations for management of the Native American human remains. (Ref: California Public Resources Code Section 5097.98; and Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5)

Specific County of San Benito provisions and further measures shall be required as follows if human remains are found:

If, at any time in the preparation for, or process of, excavation or otherwise disturbing the ground, discovery occurs of any human remains of any age, or any significant artifact or other evidence of an archeological site, the applicant or builder shall:

a. Cease and desist from further excavation and disturbances within two hundred feet of the discovery or in any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains.

b. Arrange for staking completely around the area of discovery by visible stakes no more than ten feet apart, forming a circle having a radius of not less than one hundred feet from the point of discovery; provided, however, that such staking need not take place on adjoining property unless the owner of the adjoining property authorizes such staking. Said staking shall not include flags or other devices which may attract vandals.

c. Notify Resource Management Agency Director shall also be notified within 24 hours if human and/or questionable remains have been discovered. The Sheriff–Coroner shall be notified immediately of the discovery as noted above.

Subject to the legal process, grant all duly authorized representatives of the Coroner and the Resource Management Agency Director permission to enter onto the property and to

take all actions consistent with Chapter 19.05 of the San Benito County Code and consistent with §7050.5 of the Health and Human Safety Code and Chapter 10 (commencing with §27460) of Part 3 of Division 2 of Title 3 of the Government Code. [Planning]

4.6 Energy

4.6.1 Environmental Setting

Starting in 2018, all Pacific Gas & Electric ("PG&E") customers within Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties were automatically enrolled in Monterey Bay Community Power ("MBCP"). MBCP is a locally-controlled public agency providing carbon-free electricity to residents and businesses. Formed in February 2017, MBCP is a joint powers authority, and is based on a local energy model called community choice energy. MBCP partners with PG&E, which continues to provide billing, power transmission and distribution, customer service, grid maintenance services and natural gas services to San Benito County. MBCP's standard electricity offering, is carbon free and is classified as 30 percent renewable. Of the electricity provided by MBCP in 2018, 40 percent was hydroelectric, and 30 percent was solar and wind (eligible renewables) (MBCP, 2019).

4.6.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
ENERGY. Would the project:				
a) Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy, or wasteful use of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.6.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact.** Construction of the proposed project would consist of the construction of two new production and storage buildings and an office building, and demolition of existing structures. The anticipated construction schedule assumes that the project would be built out over a period of approximately eight months. The construction phase would require energy for the manufacture and transportation of building materials, preparation of the site (e.g., excavation, and grading), and the actual construction of the structures. Petroleum-based fuels such as diesel fuel and gasoline would be the primary sources of energy for these tasks. The construction energy use has not been determined at this time. However, the project would not cause inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy as the construction schedule and process is already designed to be efficient in order to avoid excess monetary costs. Energy used required to complete construction would be limited and short-term.

Operation of the proposed project would consume energy primarily for the operation of the tile manufacturing facility. The proposed project does not anticipate a significant increase in energy use.

As a result, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a substantial environmental impact on energy resources.

Based on the discussion above, the proposed project would not result in potentially significant environmental impact, during operation or construction, due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy, or wasteful use or energy resources during project operation or construction. This results in less-than-significant impact. (1, 2)

b) **Less than Significant Impact.** As stated above, the construction and operation of the proposed project would have a less-than-significant impact due to energy usage and efficiency and, thus would not conflict with local or state plans for energy efficiency. The proposed project would also be required to build to California Building Code standards, Title 24 energy efficiency standards (or subsequently adopted standards during the construction term), and CALGreen code, which includes design provisions to minimize wasteful energy consumption, thereby improving the efficiency of the overall project. As a result the project would comply with existing State energy standards and would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. (1, 2)

4.7 Geology and Soils

4.7.1 Environmental Setting

A Geotechnical Investigation Report was prepared for the proposed project by Haro, Kasunich and Associates, Inc. (April 2020) (**Appendix A**). The purpose of the investigation was to explore the surface and subsurface conditions at the project site and develop geotechnical criteria and recommendations for design and construction of the proposed project.

The investigation included a site reconnaissance and review of available data, field investigation consisting of logging and interval sampling of soil in boring and cone penetration tests, laboratory testing and classification of samples, and engineering analysis and evaluation of data, including liquefaction analysis. Based on the findings, geotechnical design criteria and recommendations were developed for site grading, mat slab building foundations, retaining walls, concrete slabs-on-grade, site drainage, pavement recommendations and erosion control. Seismic design criteria based on the 2019 California Building Code was also presented.

Site Conditions. The site slopes gently upward via graded terraces and natural slopes from the lowest elevations in the southwest corner of the property. The low corner of the existing industrial site is near level with the adjacent agricultural fields at an elevation about 20 feet above the Pajaro River. There is about 25 feet of elevation gain from the southwest corner to the northeast corner of the property. The existing industrial site is currently improved with four main buildings, auxiliary structures, concrete slabs, storage areas, and parking lots. The site also contains a few residential buildings (not inhabited), which would be demolished prior to construction. The site is minimally vegetated.

General Subsurface Conditions. The soil profiles encountered in the borings at the site varied, but, generally, the soils encountered consisted of interbedded native fluvial sands, silts, and clays. Density and stiffness ranged from loose to stiff. Moisture levels ranged from damp to moist. Surficial artificial fill was encountered from the ground surface to a depth of 10 feet in some borings. The fill material around the site was most likely placed during historic grading operations to stockpile excavated soil and/or level areas for storage and other uses. The site is mapped as Qa: Alluvial pebble gravel, sand, and clay of valley areas. Borings encountered similar materials consistent with the mapped deposit.

No groundwater was encountered during the field exploration. It can be anticipated groundwater levels will fluctuate based on seasonal weather conditions, variation in rainfall, or other factors not evident during the investigation.

Geologic and Geotechnical Feasibility. Based on the report, the proposed project is feasible from a geotechnical standpoint. Some of the geologic and geotechnical issues include:

Expansive Soils

Expansive soils tend to swell with increases in soil moisture and shrink as the soil moisture decreases. The volume changes that the soils undergo in this cyclical pattern can stress and damage slabs and foundations if precautionary measures are not incorporated into the construction procedure. Test results found the silt-sand layer in the upper soil matrix as having a low potential to exhibit expansive characteristics. The test results for the lean clay layer in the deeper soil matrix indicate a high potential for the material to exhibit expansive characteristics.

Faulting and Ground Shaking

Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zones are regulatory zones surrounding the surface traces of active faults in California. The project site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zone.

The project site is located in the seismically active Monterey Bay region. Earthquake faults in the vicinity of the proposed project include: the San Andreas Fault (of the Santa Cruz Mountains), located 1.6 kilometers (km) (1.0 mile) north of the site; Zayante-Vergeles Upper 2011 Fault, located 4.13 km (2.57 miles) south of the site; and the Sargent Fault, located about 6.94 km (4.31 miles) north of the site.

On the basis of current technology, it is reasonable to assume that the proposed development would be subject to at least one moderate to severe earthquake during the 50-year period following construction. Potential seismic hazards include surface ground rupture, strong seismic shaking and potential liquefaction, and dynamic settlement. Since fault traces do not cross the property, the potential for surface ground rupture at the site is low. However, due to the proximity of the referenced nearby faults, there is potential for strong seismic shaking at the site during the structures' design life

Liquefaction, Lateral Spreading, and Seismic Induced Settlement

The term liquefaction refers to the liquefied condition and subsequent softening that can occur in soils when they are subject to cyclic strains, such as those generated during a seismic event. Studies of area where liquefaction has occurred have led to the conclusions that saturated soil conditions, low soil density, grain sizes within a certain range, and a sufficiently strong earthquake, in combination, create a potential for liquefaction. The effects of liquefaction can include ground settlement, lateral soil spreading, and localized loss of foundation support. The project site is mapped in a zone of high liquefaction potential. The map is intended to be used as a general indicator of liquefaction potential and is acknowledged to be limited. Therefore, a detailed liquefaction analysis was performed to determine the potential at the specific project site. Based on the analysis, there is a potential for liquefaction at the site given the design earthquake event and low water table condition.

Lateral Spreading

Lateral spreading is horizontal/lateral ground movement of relatively flat-lying soil deposits towards a free face such as the banks of the Pajaro River during a seismic event. Typically, lateral spreading is associated with liquefaction of one or more subsurface layers near the bottom of the exposed edge. Given the property is 660

feet from the Pajaro River, the potential for lateral spreading of the site is considered low. The potential for localized lateral spreading nearer the river is considered higher.

Slope Stability

According to the Landslide Identification Map, the site is in an area deemed to have a low susceptibility to landslides.

4.7.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
GEOLOGY AND SOILS. Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) 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? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☒	☐	☐
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☒	☐	☐
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.7.3 Explanation

a.i) **Less than Significant Impact**. The potential for surface rapture is low as no active faults cross the property and the project site is located outside Alquist-Priolo Earthquake zones. Potential effects associated with the rupture of known faults are discussed separately below; please refer to Response a.ii for more information. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 9)

a.ii) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** Although the project site is located outside Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Zones, the site is located approximately 1.0 miles from the San Andres Fault, and as a result in considered to be within a seismically active area. Due to the site's location in a seismically active region, the proposed project could be subject to strong seismic ground shaking during its design life. In order to ensure that potential impacts are less than significant, mitigation is necessary. The implementation of the following mitigation measure below, as well as compliance with all applicable building requirements related to seismic safety, including applicable provisions of the California Building Code and Title 24 of the California Administrative Code, would ensure that potential seismic-related hazards would be less than significant. (1, 2, 9)

Mitigation

GEO 4.7-1 Prior to the issuance of any grading or building permit, the applicant shall submit a detailed design-level geotechnical analysis to the County for review and approval. The design-level geotechnical analysis shall incorporate the recommendations of Geotechnical Investigation Report prepared by Haro, Kasunich and Associates, Inc. The design-level geotechnical analysis shall identify recommendations for the design and construction of project improvements.

a.iii) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated**. Based on the results of the Geotechnical Investigation Report, there is a potential for liquefaction at the site given the design earthquake event and low water table condition. This represents a potentially significant impact. The implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1** identified above would ensure that potential adverse impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level. (1, 2, 9)

a.iv) **Less than Significant Impact**. According to the County Online GIS system, the project site is not located within an area at risk for landslides. As a result, this represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 4, 9)

b) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated**. Grading associated with site preparation and construction activities on the project site would disturb soil and increase its susceptibility to erosion. Grading would occur throughout the site and involve approximately 9,202 cubic yards of cut and 10,325 cubic yards of fill. The on-site soil is primarily classified as having a moderate to severe erosion potential. As a result, the project has the potential to result in substantial erosion or the loss of topsoil. In order to ensure that potential impacts are less than significant, the final design and construction of the project would be required to comply with the requirements of a design-level geotechnical analysis (see **Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1**).

In addition to the recommendations of the Geotechnical Investigation Report and design-level geotechnical analysis, all ground disturbing activities would be subject to the requirements of Chapter 19.17 of the San Benito County Code which regulates excavation, grading, drainage and erosion control measures and activities. The purpose of these regulations is to minimize erosion, protect fish and wildlife, and to otherwise protect public health, property, and the environment. A grading permit is required for all activities that would exceed 50 cubic yards of grading. Grading activity is prohibited

within 50 feet from the top of the bank of a stream, creek, or river, or within 50 feet of a wetland or body of water in order to protect riparian areas. All proposed developments are required to submit an erosion control plan and drainage plan prior to issuance of a grading permit.

Furthermore, the proposed project will also be subject to the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System ("NPDES") Program General Storm Water Permit, which includes the preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan ("SWPPP") for construction activities disturbing one acre or more. Any temporary erosion related to construction would be minimized through the implementation of standard construction phase BMPs related to erosion. Erosion control measures and associated BMPs would be consistent with the recommended measures contained in the California Stormwater Best Management Practices Handbooks. Applicable measures may include the following:

- Stockpiling and disposing of demolition debris, concrete, and soil.
- Protecting existing storm drain inlets and stabilizing disturbed areas.
- Hydroseeding/re-vegetating disturbed areas.
- Minimizing areas of impervious surfaces.
- Implementing runoff controls (e.g., percolation basins and drainage facilities).
- Properly managing construction materials.
- Managing waste, aggressively controlling litter, and implementing sediment controls.
- Limiting grading to the minimum area necessary for construction and operation of the project.

Compliance with the **Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1**, County and State requirements, and the above BMPs would ensure that construction activities associated with the project would not cause substantial soil erosion under CEQA and potential erosion related impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level. (1, 2, 3, 4, 9)

c) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated**. As stated above, the results of the Geotechnical Investigation Report indicated site soils as being susceptible to liquefaction and lateral spreading. Potential hazards due to liquefaction and lateral spreading would be addressed through implementation of **Mitigation Measures GEO 4.7-1**, identified above. Potential adverse effects would be minimized to a less-than-significant level by adhering to the requirements of a design-level geotechnical analysis. (1, 2, 9)

d) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated**. As stated above, the results of the Geotechnical Investigation Report indicated site soils as being susceptible to expansion. Potential hazards due to expansion would be addressed through implementation of **Mitigation Measures GEO 4.7-1**, identified above. Potential adverse effects would be minimized to a less-than-significant level by adhering to the requirements of a design-level geotechnical analysis. (1, 2, 9)

e) **Less than Significant Impact.** The project site consists of an existing septic system with the capacity to support the facility expansion and suitable soils. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 9)

f) **No Impact**. Significant paleontological specimens have been found throughout the County, specifically fossils have been found in the Cantua Canyon, Los Gatos Creek Canyon, Coalinga and Pleasant Valley areas, Tumey Gulch, Griswold Hills, Lariaus Creek, San Carlos Creek, the Bolsa Valley,

Tres Pinos Creek, and the San Benito River valley. There are no known paleontological resources or unique geologic features on the project site. The project site is not listed within an area identified as containing paleontological resources nor is it located in close proximity to any known paleontological resources. In addition, the project site is currently developed and there are no records of paleontological resources found on the site. The project would not impact any paleontological resources as none are known in the project area. (1, 2, 3)

4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

4.8.1 Environmental Setting

Various gases in the earth's atmosphere, classified as atmospheric greenhouse gases ("GHGs"), play a critical role in determining the earth's surface temperature. Solar radiation enters the atmosphere from space and a portion of the radiation is absorbed by the earth's surface. The earth emits this radiation back toward space, but the properties of the radiation change from high-frequency solar radiation to lower-frequency infrared radiation. Greenhouse gases, which are transparent to solar radiation, are effective in absorbing infrared radiation. As a result, the radiation that otherwise would have escaped back into space is retained, resulting in a warming of the atmosphere known as the greenhouse effect. Among the prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect, or climate change, are carbon dioxide ("CO_2"), methane ("CH_4"), O_3, water vapor, nitrous oxide ("N_2O"), and chlorofluorocarbons ("CFCs"). Human-caused emissions of these GHGs in excess of natural ambient concentrations are responsible for enhancing the greenhouse effect. In California, the transportation sector is the largest emitter of GHGs.

4.8.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS. Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.8.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact**. The project is located in the NCCAB, where air quality is regulated by MBARD. Neither the State, MBARD, nor San Benito County have adopted GHG emissions thresholds or a GHG emissions reduction plan that would apply to the project. However, it is important to note, that other air districts within the State of California have recently adopted recommended CEQA significance thresholds for GHG emissions. For instance, on March 28, 2012 the San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District ("SLOAPCD") approved thresholds of significance for the evaluation of project-related increases of GHG emissions. The SLOAPCD's significance thresholds include both qualitative and quantitative threshold options, which include a qualitative threshold that is consistent with the AB 32 scoping plan measures and goals and a quantitative bright-line threshold of 1,150 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent ("$MTCO_2e$")/year. The GHG

significance thresholds are based on AB 32 GHG emission reduction goals, which take into consideration the emission reduction strategies outlined in the CARB's Scoping Plan. Development projects located within these jurisdictions that would exceed these thresholds would be considered to have a potentially significant impact on the environment which could conflict with applicable GHG-reduction plans, policies, and regulations. Projects with GHG emissions that do not exceed the applicable threshold would be considered to have a less-than-significant impact on the environment and would not be anticipated to conflict with AB 32 GHG emission reduction goals. Given that the MBARD has not yet adopted recommended GHG significance thresholds, the above thresholds were relied upon for evaluation of the proposed project.

Implementation of the proposed project would contribute GHG emissions that are associated with global climate change. GHG emissions attributable to future development would be primarily associated with increases of CO_2 and, to a lesser extent, other GHG pollutants, such as CH_4 and N_2O. Greenhouse gas emissions would be generated by the proposed project from sources that include vehicle trips, on-site electricity consumption, on-site natural gas combustion, water use (electricity consumption from pumping and treatment), wastewater generation (electricity consumption from pumping and treatment), and solid waste disposal (decomposition of solid waste disposed in a landfill).

The project would generate temporary construction-related GHG emissions, with most of the emissions generated during the grading phase of construction, which would be minimal and is not anticipated to generate GHG emissions in access of the above thresholds. Mobile sources are anticipated to generate the majority of GHG emissions during project operation. However, since the proposed project is estimated to only generate 21 additional trips and six daily truck trips (see **Section 4.17, Transportation/Traffic**), this is not considered a significant impact. Any potential impacts from GHG generation during construction would be short-term and temporary. The proposed project would be consistent with the surrounding land use as well as current zoning for the property. As a result, the project is not anticipated to generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment. (1, 2, 6, 7)

b) **Less than Significant Impact**. Neither the State, MBARD, nor San Benito County have adopted GHG emissions thresholds or a GHG emissions reduction plan that would apply to the project. As described above, the project would not exceed acceptable thresholds. Also, consistent with the General Plan Goals and Policies, the project would be required to include energy and water-efficient appliances, fixtures, lighting, and windows that meet applicable State energy performance standards. The proposed project would not conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases as described above. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 6, 7)

4.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

4.9.1 Environmental Setting

Hazardous materials, as defined by the California Code of Regulations, are substances with certain physical properties that could pose a substantial present or future hazard to human health or the environment when improperly handled, disposed, or otherwise managed. A hazardous waste is any hazardous material that is discarded, abandoned, or slated to be recycled. Hazardous materials and waste can result in public health hazards if improperly handled, released into the soil or groundwater, or through airborne releases in vapors, fumes, or dust. Soil and groundwater having concentrations of hazardous constituents higher than specific regulatory levels must be handled and disposed of as hazardous waste when excavated or pumped from an aquifer. **Table 2** includes a list of the hazardous materials used on-site.

Table 2. Hazardous Materials Used On-Site		
Chemical Name	Trade Secret?	Common Name
Lincoln Fireclay	N	Lincoln Fireclay
Lubriplate No. 1552	N	Lubriplate No. 1552
Granite Fines	N	Granite Fines
No. 6 Tile	N	No. 6 Tile
Old Hickory Ball Clay	N	Old Hickory Ball Clay
Misc. Oil and Lubricating Fluids	N	Misc. Oil and Lubricating Fluids
Mulcoa35-47	N	Kaolin/Mullite aggregate
Silica Sand and Ground Silica	N	Silica Sand and Ground Silica
Silres BS 16	N	Silres BS 16
Diesel Fuel #2	N	Diesel Fuel #2
Tile Glazes	N	Tile Glazes
ECR00441-P	N	ECR00441-P
Pigments	N	Pigments
Glaze Frits	N	Glaze Frits
Argon, mixt. with carbon dioxide	N	Argon/Carbon Dioxide Mixture
Zircopax Plus	N	Zircopax Plus
Waste Oil	N	Waste Mixed Oils
Glaze Sludge	N	Glaze Sludge
Propane	N	Liquefied Petroleum Gas (lpg)
Propane	N	Liquefied Petroleum Gas (lpg)
Acetylene	N	Acetylene
Oxygen	N	Oxygen
Barium Carbonate	N	Barium Carbonate
Kaolin	N	Kaolin

The State of California uses databases such as EnviroStor GeoTracker, and Cortese to map the location of hazardous waste sites including sites that have been remediated, sites currently undergoing remediation, and sites that require cleanup. Based on a search of the above databases, a Notice of Intent ("NOI") was filed by Lakeside Organic Garden, located west of the project site. The NOI was filed for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, and indicates that pesticides were used on the property; however, the program has since been terminated.

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment ("ESA") was performed by Roux in 2019 (available upon request) to identify recognized environmental conditions ("RECs") and controlled and/or historic recognized environmental conditions ("CRECs/HRECs") at the site, indicating past, current, or material threats of the release of hazardous materials or petroleum hydrocarbons to the site's soil, soil vapor, groundwater, or surface water. The Phase I ESA was conducted by investigating past property uses, reviewing the results of a search of environmental databases, reviewing records at relevant government agencies, reviewing historical documents, and performing a reconnaissance of the site. The Phase I ESA did not reveal evidence of RECs, HRECs, or CRECs in connection with the site or adjacent facilities.

To address airport safety hazards, San Benito County created an Airport Land Use Commission to provide orderly growth of San Benito's two public airports. The Commission ensures compatible land uses around the Hollister Municipal Airport and the Frazier Lake Airpark through the implementation of their respective Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The project site is not in the immediate vicinity of any airport (i.e., two miles) and is not located within an airport land use plan. The nearest airport to the project site is the Hollister Municipal Airport, located approximately 13 miles east of the project site.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection ("CalFire") prepares maps of Fire Hazard Severity Zones ("FHSZ"), which are used to develop recommendations for local land use agencies and for general planning purposes. The project site is not located in a moderate, high, or very high fire hazard severity zones, as delineated by CalFire.

4.9.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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	☐	☐	☐	☒
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, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.9.3 Explanation

a-b) **Less than Significant Impact**. Construction and operation of the project would not create a significant impact due to routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Construction activities would, however, require the temporary use of hazardous substances, such as fuel for construction equipment, oil, solvents, or paints. Removal and disposal of hazardous materials from the project site would be conducted by an appropriately licensed contractor. Any handling,

transporting, use, or disposal would comply with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and programs set forth by various federal, state, and local agencies. Required compliance with applicable hazardous material laws and regulations would ensure that construction-related hazardous material use would not result in significant impacts. These impacts would be temporary in nature and would be a less-than-significant impact.

The proposed project consists of the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility. Hazard materials currently used on-site during operations are listed in the *Environmental Setting* above. Since these hazardous materials are currently being used and the project site is within the Heavy Industrial land use designation, the continued use of these materials would not create a new significant hazard to the public or environment. Transportation, storage, use and disposal of hazardous materials during operation would be required to comply with applicable federal, state, and local statutes and regulations, which would ensure impacts would be less than significant.

Hazardous materials would be stored properly, in accordance with BMPs and applicable regulations. Runoff controls would be implemented to prevent water quality impacts, and a spill plan would be developed to address any accidental spills. In addition, any handling of potential hazardous materials would be required to comply with all existing laws pertaining to the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials. Any waste products resulting from construction and operations would be stored, handled, and recycled or disposed of in accordance with federal, State, and local laws. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2)

c) **No Impact**. There are no schools within one-quarter mile radius of the project boundaries. As a result, the project would not result in the generation of a hazardous emission within a one-quarter mile radius of a school. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 4)

d) **No Impact**. The project is not located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 10)

e) **No Impact**. As stated above, the project site is not located within two (2) miles of any airports or private airstrips and would not create a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing in the project area. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 3, 4)

f) **No Impact**. San Benito County has prepared a Multi-Jurisdiction Local Hazard Mitigation Plan ("LHMP") with the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, and with two water agencies. The LHMP designates certain roadways in the County for primary evacuation routes. Panoche Road is the primary evacuation roadway for the County. The project site, located on Quarry Road, would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with designated evacuation routes or otherwise conflict with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. The proposed project would comply with the Municipal Code and Fire Department standards for emergency vehicle access and would not conflict with the approved LHMP. The project would not interfere with any emergency response or evacuation plans. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 3, 4)

g) **Less than Significant Impact**. The CalFire prepares maps of FHSZs, which are used to develop recommendations for local land use agencies and for general planning purposes. The project site is not located within a fire hazard severity zone as delineated by CalFire. While the project is located in a rural area and wildfire could expose people or structures directly or indirectly, the proposed project would comply with the applicable fire safety provisions of the California Building Code as well as

standard conditions of approval, thereby reducing the risk of damage from fire to the maximum extent practicable. This is a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 10)

4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

San Benito County has a moderate California coastal climate with a hot and dry summer season lasting May through October. Average annual rainfall ranges from seven inches in the drier eastern portion of the County, to 27 inches per year in high elevations to the south. Most of the annual rainfall occurs in the fall, winter, and to a lesser extent, spring, generally between November and April (San Benito County, 2015).

The Pajaro River runs west of the site; however, no development is proposed in the riverbed or near the river. The river is dry most of the year, flowing mainly during wet winter conditions. The drainage for the river is over 600 square miles. Local surface water from the San Benito River is captured and stored in two reservoirs. These reservoirs are operated by San Benito County Water District ("SBCWD") for flood control and to recharge downstream areas (San Benito County, 2015). The project site is located three miles south of the Hernandez Reservoir.

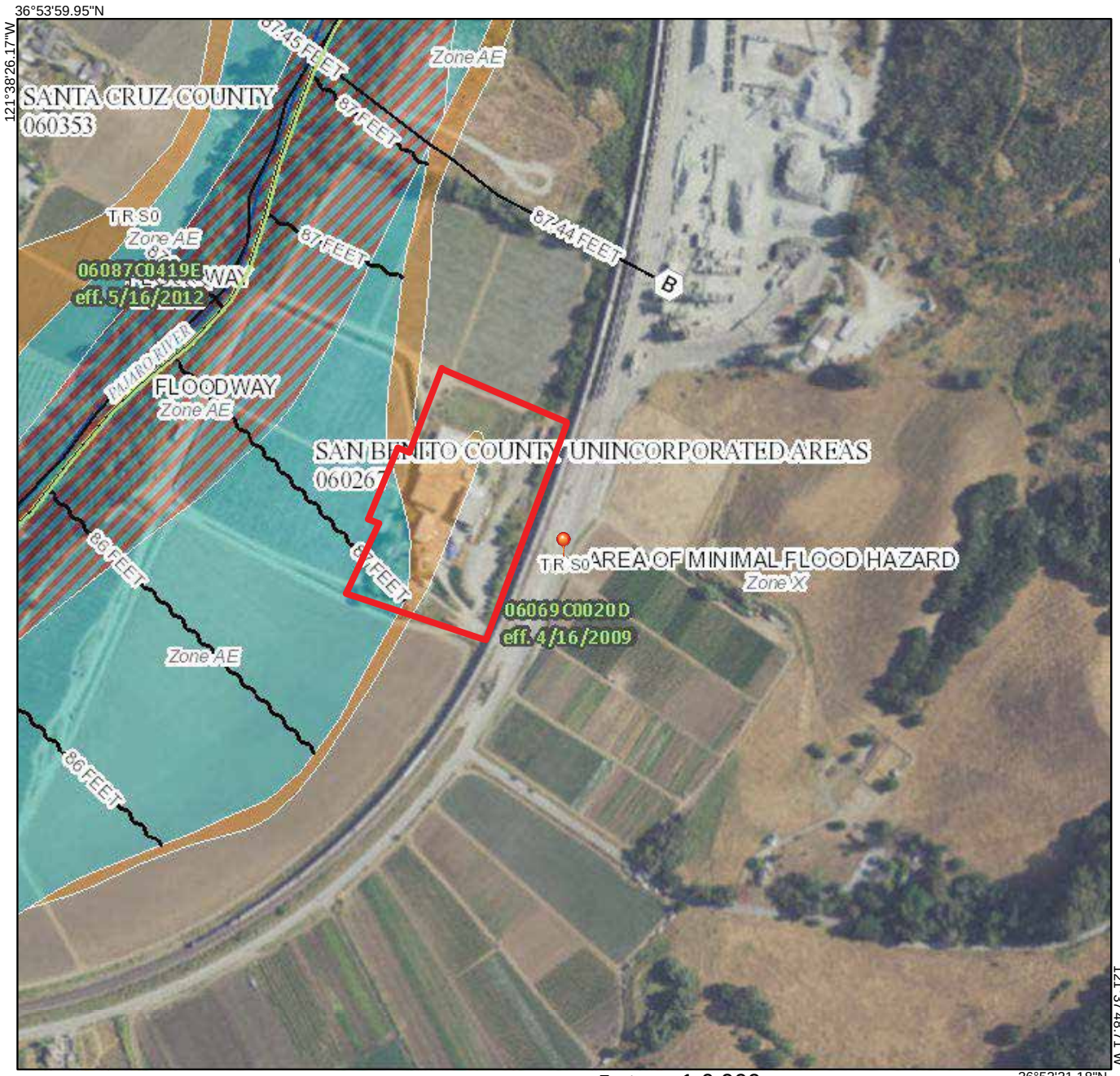
Groundwater is the major source of water supply in the County. Groundwater is generally available throughout the County. The project is located on the Hernandez Valley Groundwater Basin, which is not critically over-drafted as defined by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act ("SGMA") and has been marked as very low priority.

The existing industrial site is currently and has historically been used for industrial uses. The site drains to the southwest corner of the property. Runoff from the existing and new impervious surfaces would be routed through a detention pond on the Granite Rock property to the west to mitigate the runoff from the proposed project. The pond is designed to detain the difference between a 10-year pre and 100-year post development flows, in accordance with County standards.

Through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's ("FEMA's") flood hazard mapping program, FEMA identifies flood hazards, assesses flood risks, and partners with states and communities to provide accurate flood hazard and risk data to guide them to mitigation actions. Flood hazard mapping is an important part of the National Flood Insurance Program ("NFIP"). The NFIP consist of three components: flood insurance, floodplain management, and flood hazard mapping. FEMA maintains and updates data through Flood Insurance Rate Maps ("FIRMs"), which are used in the NFIP. These maps identify the locations of special flood hazard areas, including the 100-year flood zone.

Flood hazard areas identified on the FIRMs are identified as a Special Flood Hazard Area ("SFHA"). SFHA are defined as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1% chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood. SFHAs are labeled as Zone A, Zone AO, Zone AH, Zones A1-A30, Zone AE, Zone A99, Zone AR, Zone AR/AE, Zone AR/AO, Zone AR/A1-A30, Zone AR/A, Zone V, Zone VE, and Zones V1-V30. Moderate flood zone hazard areas, labeled Zone B or Zone X (shaded) are also shown on the FIRM, and are the areas between the limits of base flood and the 0.2% annual chance (or 500-year) flood. The areas of minimal flood hazard, which are the areas outside the SFHA and higher than the elevation of the 0.2% annual chance flood, are labeled Zone C or Zone X (unshaded).

Per the FEMA FIRM for the project site, the southwestern corner of site is located in Flood Zone AE, or an area with a 1% annual chance of flooding (**Figure 9**). To the east of Zone AE, the project site is located in Zone X (shaded), which is an area of moderate flood hazard with 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood.



Legend

SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS
- Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE) *Zone A, V, A99*
- With BFE or Depth *Zone AE, AO, AH, VE, AR*
- Regulatory Floodway

OTHER AREAS OF FLOOD HAZARD
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard, Areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile *Zone X*
- Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard *Zone X*
- Area with Reduced Flood Risk due to Levee. See Notes. *Zone X*
- Area with Flood Risk due to Levee *Zone D*

OTHER AREAS
- NO SCREEN — Area of Minimal Flood Hazard *Zone X*
- Effective LOMRs
- Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard *Zone D*

GENERAL STRUCTURES
- Channel, Culvert, or Storm Sewer
- Levee, Dike, or Floodwall

OTHER FEATURES
- 20.2 / 17.5 — Cross Sections with 1% Annual Chance Water Surface Elevation
- Coastal Transect
- Base Flood Elevation Line (BFE)
- Limit of Study
- Jurisdiction Boundary
- Coastal Transect Baseline
- Profile Baseline
- Hydrographic Feature
- Proposed Project Site

The pin displayed on the map is an approximate point selected by the user and does not represent an authoritative property location.

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, April 2019

Title: **FEMA Flood Map**

Date 5/26/20
Scale 1=6,000
Project 2020.10

Monterey | San Jose
Denise Duffy and Associates, Inc.
Environmental Consultants Resource Planners
947 Cass Street, Suite 5
Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 373-4341

Figure 9

The northern and eastern portions of the site are located in Zone X (unshaded), which is outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain.

Tsunamis or "tidal waves" are seismic waves created when displacement of a large volume of seawater occurs as a result of movement on seafloor faults. A seiche is a standing wave in an enclosed or partially enclosed body of water. Seiches are triggered by earthquake waves and have been observed on lakes, reservoirs, swimming pools, bays, harbors, and seas. A mudflow is a form of mass wasting involving very rapid to extremely rapid surging flow of debris that has become partially or fully liquified by the addition of significant amounts of water.

4.10.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY. Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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:	☐	☐	☒	☐
i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

a) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated**. Temporary soil disturbance would occur during construction of the proposed project as a result of earth-moving activities, such as excavation and trenching for utilities, soil compaction and moving, cut and fill activities, and grading. If not managed properly, disturbed soils would be susceptible to high rates of erosion from wind and rain, resulting in sediment transport via stormwater runoff from the project site. Moreover, the project would increase the extent of impervious surfaces on the site thereby potentially generating additional sources of polluted runoff. The types of pollutants contained in runoff would be typical of urban areas, and may include sediments and contaminants such as oils, fuels, paints, and solvents. Additionally, other pollutants, such as nutrients, trace metals, and hydrocarbons, can attach to sediment and be transported to downstream drainages and ultimately into collecting waterways, contributing to degradation of water quality.

As stated above in **Section 4.7, Geology and Soils**, the proposed project would disturb more than one acre of soil. As a result, the project would be required to obtain coverage under the RWQCB NPDES General Storm Water Permit. The permit would require a SWPPP, which contains BMPs for construction and post construction runoff. BMPs that are typically specified within the SWPPP may include, but would not be limited to the following:

- The use of sandbags, straw bales, and temporary de-silting basins during project grading and construction during the rainy season to prevent discharge of sediment-laden runoff into storm water facilities.
- Revegetation as soon as practicable after completion of grading to reduce sediment transport during storms.
- Installation of straw bales, wattles, or silt fencing at the base of bare slopes before the onset of the rainy season (October 15th through April 15th).
- Installation of straw bales, wattles, or silt fencing at the project perimeter and in front of storm drains before the onset of the rainy season (October 15th through April 15th).

In addition, Chapter 19.17 of the San Benito County Code regulates grading, drainage and erosion, and contains requirements regarding discharge and construction site stormwater runoff control. Compliance with existing laws and regulations would limit erosion, which would reduce temporary impacts to surface water quality. As such, construction of the proposed project would not violate water quality standards or contribute additional sources of polluted runoff. Construction impacts to water quality would be less than significant.

Project operation could result in similar water quality effects (e.g. temporary erosion, hazardous material leakages, etc.). Potential water quality effects could occur in connection with on-going operations, including the operation of mechanized equipment, maintenance activities, and increased vehicle access within the site. These activities could cause localized increases in erosion and sedimentation, as well as the accidental release of hazardous materials and chemicals used in facility operation. This represents a potentially significant impact. Mitigation identified in **Section 4.7, Geology and Soils** (**Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1**) and compliance with the BMPs and applicable regulations discussed in **Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials** would minimize potential impacts to a less-than-significant level. Potential water quality impacts from operations would, therefore, be less-than-significant. (1, 2, 8)

b) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interference substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table. The project would be served by an

existing on-site well that would be improved to address existing water quality concerns. The well's yield of 96,480 gallons per minute over a 24-hour period would serve the connections with the required minimum of three gallons per minute and will comply with current standards. Furthermore, the project would be required to adhere to San Benito County Code Article I. Groundwater Aquifer Protection, which limits extraction of groundwater.

The project would potentially affect groundwater recharge by increasing impervious surface. The existing industrial site is 4.89 acres and primarily developed, but the proposed project would result in approximately 63,680 sq. ft. of new buildings and other improvements (net increase of 2.34 acres of impervious surface).

The proposed project would include drainage infrastructure including construction of a detention pond on the Granite Rock property to the west, immediately adjacent to the existing industrial site. The detention pond would be designed to manage on-site drainage and would be sized in accordance with applicable standards and requirements of the County ordinances and permit requirements. Stormwater would be collected in the detention pond, which may allow some collected drainage water to infiltrate into the groundwater.

The proposed project would not significantly decrease groundwater and would adhere to San Benito County Code Article I. Groundwater Aquifer Protections, which limits extraction of groundwater. Stormwater runoff from the site would be captured in a detention pond, which would allow for some groundwater recharge. The proposed project would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or lowering of the local groundwater table level at the site. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2, 8)

ci-ciii) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area that would result in substantial erosion or siltation or flooding on- or off-site. As described in Responses a) and b) above, the proposed project would include stormwater improvements and retain stormwater runoff in accordance with applicable standards and requirements of the County ordinances and permit requirements. The proposed project would not alter the course of a stream or river. No construction or operation activities are proposed within or adjacent to the Pajaro River. The project would be required to comply with standard BMPs, including standard County requirements related to erosion control. More specifically, the applicant would be required to submit detailed grading plans to the County prior to issuance of any grading permit, demonstrating compliance with applicable County requirements to manage on-site drainage and erosion. As a result, the project would have a less-than-significant impact to drainage and erosion potential. (1, 2)

The proposed project could create or contribute runoff water during construction and operation of the project. The project proposes to route all runoff from the site to a detention pond on an adjacent parcel. This pond is designed to detain the difference between a 10-year pre and 100-year post development, in accordance with County standards, and detain flows in excess of this to release post-development flows at pre-development levels, satisfying Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's ("RWQCB") post construction requirements, LID requirements, and County stormwater management requirements. The project would include various stormwater management BMPs to control runoff in accordance with applicable standards and requirements including RWQCB's post construction requirements, LID requirements, and County storm water management requirements. Therefore, compliance with applicable regulations and implementation of the proposed project features would reduce impacts to due to runoff and water quality to a less-than-significant level. (1, 2, 9)

civ) **Less than Significant Impact.** The project proposed to construct structures within a FEMA designated 100-year flood hazard area. However, these structures would not be located in the floodway and would be placed above the baseline flood elevation (BFE) of 87 feet, which would not change the volume of the flood hazard area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2, 4, 12)

d) **Less than Significant Impact.** The project is not located in an area subject to seiche or tsunami. The project site is located three miles south of the Hernandez Reservoir, an above ground reservoir used to manage water releases to downstream surface and groundwater recharge areas. In addition, the project site is not located within a tsunami inundation zone. The risk associated with tsunamis is, therefore, not considered a potential hazard or a potentially significant impact. (1, 2, 4)

e) **No Impact**. The project site is not located on the coast or near an enclosed or partially enclosed body of water, and has an elevation of approximately 100 feet above mean sea level (msl). The proposed project site is not located in an area subject to significant seiche, tsunami, or mudflow risk. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 3, 4)

f) **No Impact.** The project site is not subject to any water quality control plans or sustainable groundwater management Plan. The project is located on the Hernandez Valley Groundwater Basin, which is not critically over-drafted as defined by the SGMA and has been marked as very low priority. (1, 2, 3, 4)

4.11 Land Use and Planning

4.11.1 Environmental Setting

The project site is located in an industrial area of unincorporated San Benito County, California. The project site consists of an existing tile manufacturing facility and agricultural uses on the two adjacent parcels. The existing industrial site is currently developed and includes existing production, storage, and office buildings.

The San Benito County 2035 General Plan is the planning document that guides development within the County. Surrounding lands are rural and currently consist primarily of agricultural uses, but are zoned Heavy Industrial to the west and north, and Rural Transitional to the south and east. The existing industrial site is within the General Plan Industrial Heavy ("IH") designation and Heavy Industrial ("M2") Zoning District. The purpose of the IH land use designation is to provide areas for heavy industrial activities that are not suitable for urban areas because of their size, noise, dust, traffic, or safety concerns. This could include large-scale manufacturing operations, mining and aggregate production facilities, recycling transfer centers, chemical and explosives manufacturing, and other similar uses. The adjacent parcel to the west and north (APN 011-309-050) is designated as Industrial Heavy (IH) and zoned Heavy Industrial (M2). The adjacent parcel to the south (APN 011-390-040) is designated as Rural (R) and zoned Heavy Industrial (M2).

4.11.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
LAND USE AND PLANNING. Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.11.3 Explanation

a) **No Impact**. The project would not physically divide an established community, as the proposed project would be the expansion of a tile manufacturing facility in an industrial area. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2)

b) **Less than Significant Impact**. A significant impact would occur if the project would conflict with "any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect." The applicable County's General Plan and Code provisions, including the Zoning Ordinance, were reviewed to determine if there are any conflicts with any of these measures/plans which were adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

The proposed project is consistent with the site's existing General Plan policies and also consistent with the Industrial Heavy land use designation. Pursuant to Article II of the County's Code of Ordinances, the proposed project's use is consistent with the County's Heavy Industrial (M2) zoning designation. The project would not conflict with applicable land use plans and regulations, and associated impacts would be less than significant (1, 2, 3)

4.12 Mineral Resources

4.12.1 Environmental Impacts

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 ("SMARA") is the primary state law concerning mineral resources. Mineral resources including sand, gravel, and building stone are important for commercial purposes. Because of the economic importance of mineral resources, SMARA limits new development in areas with significant mineral deposits. SMARA also requires state geologists to classify specified areas into Mineral Resource Zones ("MRZs").

The project site is located within an unincorporated area of the County and this area has not been designated by the California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology. Furthermore, the project site is not within an area designated by the County General Plan as a mineral resource.

4.12.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.12.3 Explanation

a, b) **Less than Significant Impact**. As stated above, the site has not been mapped for mineral resources. Furthermore, the project site and adjacent properties have been designated by the County 2035 General Plan for industrial and rural uses and would not, therefore, involve mineral extraction operations. There are no locally important mineral resource recovery sites described in the County 2035 General Plan. The General Plan does not include the project site as a zone for mineral extraction. However, the Granite Rock – A.R. Wilson Quarry is located approximately 1,000 feet northeast of the project site. The proposed project would not impede or prevent the removal of mineral resources at the Granite Rock quarry site. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 3)

4.13 Noise

4.13.1 Environmental Setting

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sounds that is disturbing or annoying. The policies in the County 2035 General Plan identify noise standards to avoid conflicts between noise-sensitive uses and noise source contributors. The project site is located in an industrial area and no residences surround the site. The primary source of noise in the project vicinity is noise associated with surrounding industrial activities and traffic and railroad noise in the vicinity. Noise-sensitive land uses are generally defined as locations where people reside, or where the presence of unwanted sound could adversely affect the primary intended use of the land. Places where people live, sleep, recreate, worship, and study are generally considered to be sensitive to noise because intrusive noise can disrupt these activities. There are no sensitive noise receptors in the vicinity of the project site.

Health and Safety Policies under Goal HS-8 of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan identify noise and land use compatibility guidelines. San Benito County Code, Title 19, Chapter 19.39, Article IV, Sound Level Restrictions, limits received noise generated by any sources at any property line. Hourly average noise level limits at the property line for industrial uses are 60 dBA interior during the nighttime hours and 70 dBA interior during the daytime hours. Existing noise levels on the site were not measured, but given the site's location in a rural area and industrial activities, they are expected to be low to high, in the range of 45 – 70 Ldn (day/night

level).[4] Construction may be conducted between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM on weekdays, and 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM on Saturdays.

4.13.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
NOISE. Would the project:				
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.13.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project is located in an industrial area with existing industrial operations and is consistent with the surrounding rural uses surrounding the project site. The project would not expose people to noise in excess of established levels due to industrial and agricultural activity in the surrounding area and no sensitive receptors in the vicinity. Therefore, long term operational impacts would be less than significant.

Construction of the project would result in short-term noise increases in the project vicinity. Noise impacts from construction activities depend on the type of construction equipment used, the timing and length of activities, the distance between the noise generating construction activities and receptors and shielding. Construction activities would include site preparation, grading, construction, paving, and architectural coating. Construction equipment would include, but would not be limited to, graders, tractors/loaders/backhoes, cement and mortar mixers, pavers, rollers, saws, dozers, cranes, forklifts, and air compressors. Typical hourly average construction noise levels could be as loud as 75 - 80 decibels at a distance of $\pm$100 feet from the construction area during active construction periods.

However, noise from construction would be temporary and intermittent. Construction activities would be limited to weekdays between the hours of 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM and no nighttime construction is required, which would limit noise impacts. In addition, there are no sensitive receptors within 500 feet of the project site.

[4] The Ldn represents the average sound level over a 24-hour period, accounting for greater noise sensitivity during night hours by adding five (5) decibels to noise between 7-10 p.m, and 10 decibels to noise between 10 p.m.-7 a.m.

The proposed project would not generate substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the General Plan. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 3, 8)

b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Construction of the project would generate temporary groundborne vibration. A vibration impact could occur where noise-sensitive land uses are exposed to excessive vibration levels. There are no noise-sensitive land uses within 1,000 feet of the project site.

Vibratory compactors or rollers and pavement breakers can generate perceptible vibration. Heavy trucks can also generate groundborne vibration, which varies depending on vehicle type, weight, and pavement conditions. The Federal Transit Authority has published standard vibration levels and peak particle velocities for construction equipment. Construction vibration impacts on building structure are generally assessed in terms of peak particle velocity ("PPV") or root mean square ("RMS") velocity. The RMS velocity level and PPV for typical construction equipment at a distance of 25 feet[5] are listed in **Table 3** below.

Table 3.
Vibration Source Amplitudes for Construction Equipment

Equipment	Approximate Peak Particle Velocity at 25 Feet (inches/second)	RMS Velocity in Decibels (VdB) at 25 Feet
Vibratory roller	0.210	94
Large Bulldozers	0.089	87
Small Bulldozer	0.003	58
Loaded Trucks	0.076	86
Jackhammer	0.035	79

Source: California Department of Transportation, Transportation and Construction Vibration Guidance Manual, September 2013.

Of the variety of equipment used during construction, the vibratory rollers that are anticipated to be used in the site preparation phase of construction would produce the greatest groundborne vibration levels. Impact equipment such as pile drivers is not expected to be used during construction of this project. Large vibratory rollers produce groundborne vibration levels ranging up to 0.210 inch per second (in/sec) PPV at 25 feet from the operating equipment. Vibration levels from construction equipment attenuate as they radiate from the source. Sensitive receptors could be exposed to groundborne vibrations of varying magnitudes depending on the type of equipment and proximity to construction activities, as shown in **Table 3**. Ground disturbing activities associated with project grading could also involve the operation of large and small bulldozers and loaded trucks. However, typical construction activities would be restricted to daytime hours with the least potential to affect nearby properties. The closest sensitive receptor is located 1,000 feet away from the project site, and, therefore, project-related groundborne vibration during construction would result in a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 3, 8)

c) **No Impact.** The project site is not located within two miles of a private airstrip or public airport; therefore, the proposed project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels. This results in no impact. (1, 2, 4)

[5] Vibration amplitudes are usually expressed as peak particle velocity or the velocity of a parcel (real or imaged) in a medium as it transmits a wave.

4.14 Population and Housing

4.14.1 Environmental Setting

The most recent estimates from the Department of Finance ("DOF") for the County are from January 1, 2020, with an estimated 62,353 residents living in the County and a total amount of 19,913 homes in the County.[6]

The County 2035 General Plan RDEIR notes that employment for 2010 in unincorporated areas of the County was approximately 4,530 jobs. The County 2035 General Plan RDEIR notes that there will be an increase at an estimated 6.44 percentage per year, and an estimated 94,731 total residents living in the County between 2010 and 2035. Concerning employment, a large number of San Benito County residents commute to other counties for work. Employment in the unincorporated areas of the County are projected to increase approximately 10 percent per year to an estimated 12,030 and 13,130 total jobs between 2010 and 2035. It is anticipated that there will be approximately 14,844 dwelling units located in unincorporated areas of the County, and 5,425 located within the City of Hollister's sphere of influence, for a total of 20,269 homes. There is an estimated ratio of 2.85 persons per household in the unincorporated County, reflecting the past 50 years of declining persons per dwelling with a 2-percent decline from the 2010 ratio of persons per dwelling.

The County anticipates in the 2035 General Plan RDEIR that it would provide 182 new residential units for very low-income households, 282 residential units for low-income households, 331 new residential units for moderate income households, and 678 new residential units for above moderate households for a total of 1,655 new residential units located in the unincorporated County by the year 2035. Various General Plan goals and policies and the County Code reflect the County's planning vision to accommodate the future growth projections.

4.14.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.14.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The project consists of the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility and would not include new housing. The intake of the Gilroy employees would add a total of seven employees to the site. As such, the proposed project would not induce substantial population growth, resulting in a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2)

[6] United States Census Bureau Website: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sanbenitocountycalifornia#viewtop. Accessed September 6, 2018.

b) **Less than Significant Impact.** The project consists of the expansion of the existing tile manufacturing facility and would involve the demolition of a residential structure on-site. However, the residence is not occupied. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the displacement of people or housing. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2)

4.15 Public Services

4.15.1 Environmental Setting

Fire Protection: Fire protection services are provided to the project site by the Aromas Tri-County Fire District ("ATCFPD"). The closest fire station located at 492 Carpenteria Road, Aromas, which is located approximately 1.5 miles from the project site. The ATCFPD provides fire protection services within its service area in San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties, and operates under a Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement with CalFire.

Police Protection: Police protection services are provided to the project site by the San Benito County Sheriff's Office. The County operates one Sheriff's Office located at 2301 Technology Pkwy in the City of Hollister, which is located approximately 21.7 miles from of the project site.

Schools: The project is located within the San Benito Unified School District. The closest school to the proposed project is Aromas School, which is located approximately 0.8 miles from the project site.

Parks: The closest park to the proposed project includes Aromas Sports Park, which is located approximately 0.8 miles from the project site.

4.15.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
PUBLIC SERVICES. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities or 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 public services:				
a) Fire protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Police protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.15.3 Explanation

a-b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Construction and implementation of the proposed project would require fire and police protection services. This increase in service would not require additional police staff and vehicles such that new or expanded fire or police facilities would need to be constructed. Construction of the proposed project would not result in new residents. The ATCFPD and San Benito County Sheriff already serve adjacent properties, including the project site. The proposed project

would not trigger the need to construct new stations or expand existing services. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 3, 4)

c-e) **No Impact.** The proposed project would not require any additional public services, such as schools, parks, or other public services. The project does not include new or physically altered schools, parks or other public services or facilities. In addition, the proposed project would not require new schools, parks or other facilities, as the population would not increase as a result of the project. No impact would occur. (1, 2)

4.16 Recreation

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

Please refer to the discussion under **Section 4.15.1, Public Services**, above.

4.16.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
RECREATION. Would the project:				
a) Would the project 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Does the project include recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.16.2 Explanation

a, b) **No Impact.** The project consists of the expansion of an existing tile manufacturing facility and would not result in population increase, and, therefore, the project would not result in the increase use of existing parks and recreational facilities, or include plans for the construction of recreational facilities. This results in no impact. (1, 2)

4.17 Transportation/Traffic

4.17.1 Environmental Setting

A Traffic Impact Analysis ("TIA") was completed for the proposed project by Keith Higgins, Traffic Engineer (May 2020) (**Appendix B**). This section summarizes the results of the analysis.

Traffic Operation Evaluation Methodologies. The AM and PM peak periods were analyzed at the Carpenteria Road/Quarry Road intersection. Intersection traffic operations were evaluated based upon the level of service ("LOS") concept. LOS is a qualitative description of an intersection's operations, ranging from LOS A to LOS F. Level of Service "A" represents free flow uncongested traffic conditions. Level of Service "F" represents highly congested traffic conditions with unacceptable delay to vehicles at intersections. The intermediate levels of service represent incremental levels of congestion and delay between these two extremes. The analysis was

performed using the *2010* and *2000 Highway Capacity Manual* methodologies. LOS descriptions for each type of traffic control (i.e., signal and one-way stop) are included as Appendix A to the TIA.

Intersection traffic operations were evaluated using the Synchro© traffic analysis software (Version 10). The average delay is then correlated to a level of service. For the Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road two-way stop-controlled intersection, only the vehicle delay for side street traffic is analyzed. LOS for each side street movement is based on the distribution of gaps in the major street traffic stream and driver judgment in selecting gaps.

The study intersections are under the jurisdictions of San Benito County and Monterey County. San Benito County has jurisdiction over the Quarry Road/Project Driveway intersection. Both San Benito County and Monterey County have jurisdiction over the Carpenteria Road/Quarry Road – Aromas Road intersection.

The overall standard for congestion levels in San Benito County is LOS D. LOS D is also considered the maximum acceptable level of service for side-street operations at one- and two-way stop-controlled intersections. The overall standard for congestion levels in the County of Monterey is also LOS D. As noted above, the Highway Capacity Manual does not provide overall levels of service for side-street stop-controlled intersections; rather, it only provides side-street LOS. For the purposes of this analysis, a standard of LOS E is applied to side-street operations at these intersections, given that intersection improvements such as signalization are generally not warranted until the side street LOS is F. Also, side street traffic volumes are typically much lower than volumes on the major street and only represent a small portion of the overall intersection operations. The higher volume main street movements proceed through the intersection with little or no delay.

Existing Traffic Network and Road Segment Traffic Operations. The project is located on the northwest (or north) side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks about one-half mile northeast of the Carpenteria Road/Quarry Road intersection. Its only access is via Quarry Road. Sidewalks are not currently provided on either side of Enterprise Road along the project frontage, nor to the west of the project site. However, a sidewalk exists on the south side of Enterprise Road between the eastern boundary of the project site and Airline Highway (SR 25). No designated bicycle facilities are located on the study road network. Bus service is not provided to the project site.

Aromas Road is a two-lane east-west roadway in Monterey County. It has an unposted (prima facie) speed limit of 55 miles per hour ("mph"). According to the Monterey County Public Work Annual Average Daily Traffic – 2019, Aromas Road carries about 1,300 ADT in 2019, which is LOS A.

Carpenteria Road is a two-lane, north-south roadway in San Benito County, that bisects the unincorporated town of Aromas. South of the Pajaro River, the centerline of Carpenteria Road is the County line of Monterey County on the west and San Benito County on the east. Carpenteria Road is in Santa Cruz County north of the Pajaro River. The speed limit on Enterprise Road is 25 mph in the town of Aromas. The unposted (prima facie) speed limit is 55 mph north of Aromas, which includes its intersection with Aromas Road-Quarry Road. According to the Monterey County Public Work Annual Average Daily Traffic – 2019, Carpenteria Road carries 3,600 ADT north and 2,900 ADT south of Aromas Road, respectively. Both segments operate at LOS A.

Quarry Road is a two-lane east-west roadway in San Benito County. It has an unposted (prima facie) speed limit of 55 mph. It is the primary project access route. It is also the access route to the Granite Rock A.R. Wilson Quarry, for which the road is named. Based on intersection count data described below, Quarry Road currently carries about 1,300 ADT, which is LOS A.

Existing Traffic Operations. This traffic study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with substantial shelter-in-place and social distancing orders greatly reducing normal travel patterns. Traffic volumes have been

developed using Streetlight Data software, which processes anonymized location records from smart phones and navigation devices in cars and trucks. Raw data is further adjusted to account for percentage of vehicles with devices of total vehicles from numerous other sources like parcel data and digital road network data. The resulting intersection turning movement volumes for the Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road intersection are derived from midweek data in early October, 2019 during the AM (7:00 – 9:00 AM) and PM (4:00 – 6:00) peak hours. From these counts, the AM and PM peak hour volumes were derived.

Exhibit 4 of the TIA depicts the AM and PM peak hour turning movement volumes for the study intersections under Existing Conditions. Existing levels of service at the study intersections are summarized on Exhibit 5 of the TIA. Recommended intersection improvements are also summarized on Exhibit 5 of the TIA. The LOS calculation sheets for Existing conditions can be found in Appendix B of the TIA.

There is minimal pedestrian activity in most of the study area and only incidental bicycle traffic was observed at the study intersection during either of the peak periods.

4.17.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with a plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle lanes and pedestrian paths?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) For a land use project, would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)(1)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) For a transportation project, would the project conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)(2)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (for example, sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (for example, farm equipment)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.17.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact.**

Existing Plus Project Conditions.

Trip generation for the project was estimated using trip rates for both the number of employees and building square footage published in *Trip Generation Manual,* Institute of Transportation Engineers ("ITE"), 10th Edition, 2017. Exhibit 6 of the TIA summarizes the project trip generation. Based on the number of employees, the project currently generates about 326 daily trips, with 56 trips (46 in, 10 out) during the AM peak hour and 52 trips (11 in, 41 out) during the PM peak hour. With the proposed expansion, the project would generate an estimated 347 daily trips, with 60 trips (49 in, 11 out) during the AM peak hour and 55 trips (12 in, 43 out) during the PM peak hour. This is an increase of only 21 daily trips, with four additional trips (three in, one out) during the AM peak hour and three additional trips (one in, two out) during the PM peak hour. The traffic increase based on the number of employees is almost imperceptible. Based on the San Benito County criteria of analyzing any intersection that is expected to experience an increase of five peak hour trips on any turning movement, no intersections would be required to be studied.

Based on the building floor area, the project current generates about 156 daily trips, with 22 trips (19 in, three out) during the AM peak hour and 20 trips (three in, 17 out) during the PM peak hour. With the proposed expansion, the project would generate an estimated 393 daily trips, with 55 trips (48 in, seven out) during the AM peak hour and 50 trips (seven in, 43 out) during the PM peak hour. This is an increase of 237 daily trips, with 33 additional trips (29 in, four out) during the AM peak hour and 30 additional trips (four in, 26 out) during the PM peak hour.

The total project trip generation estimate at buildout is very similar whether based on the number of employees or the building square footage. A review of the ITE trip generation data indicates that the measure of size that is most closely correlated with the amount of traffic is the number of employees, rather than the size of the building. Clearly, the addition of only seven employees will generate a relatively small increase in traffic. The large increase in building area relative to the very small increase in number of employees is because the facility floor area currently is very limited compared to the number of current employees. This is evidenced by the much higher trip generation estimate (over two times as much) for the number of existing employees as the trip generation based on existing floor area. The project currently has a very high density of 3.3 employees per 1,000 square feet for general light industrial. With the expansion, there will be 1.4 employees per 1,000 square feet of floor area, which will be very close to industry averages according to the ITE database.

Nevertheless, in order to be conservative, the net increase based on square footage is used in this traffic operations analysis. This provides an allowance for future employment growth, although that is not planned at the present time.

The project trip assignment was added to the existing traffic volumes to estimate Existing Plus Project volumes, which are depicted on Exhibit 4 of the TIA. Existing Plus Project intersection levels of service are summarized on Exhibit 5 of the TIA. No change from the acceptable LOS B is expected at the Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road intersection. No improvements will be required to accommodate project traffic as indicated on Exhibit 5 of the TIA.

Based on existing trip characteristics, there will be virtually no pedestrian traffic generated from the project site. Therefore, the project would not represent a significant impact to pedestrian circulation. The project is not anticipated to generate bicycle traffic. Therefore, the project would not represent a

significant impact to bicycle circulation. The project would not increase transit usage, because there is no bus service in the vicinity of the project. Therefore, the project would not represent a significant impact to transit service.

The project would be responsible for payment of the San Benito County Regional Transportation Impact Mitigation Fee ("TIMF"), which would represent the project's fair share contribution towards countywide roadway improvements funded by the fee program. San Benito County will determine the project's TIMF fee.

Background Conditions.

The following discussion describes Background Conditions, which represents traffic conditions with the additional traffic from land development that is approved but not yet built. This scenario does not include trips from the proposed project.

Background development includes about 2,600 dwelling units, which will take approximately 10 years to be completed and occupied, or about the Year 2030. It will be noted that none of these projects are along or west of the US 101 corridor and will not impact the study intersection. Similarly, no major development is anticipated in or near the town of Aromas or elsewhere in North Monterey County that will impact the study road network.

Applying the Background traffic growth to the existing study intersection volumes results in the Background road segment daily volumes on Exhibit 3 of the TIA and intersection volumes on Exhibit 4 of the TIA. Background intersection levels of service are summarized on Exhibit 5 of the TIA. Recommended intersection improvements are summarized on Exhibit 5 of the TIA. Appendix B of the TIA contains the level of service calculations for Background conditions. The Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road intersection would continue to operate at or better than its LOS D/E level of service standards. No improvements will be required.

Background pedestrian and bicycle volumes are anticipated to be similar to existing conditions near the project site. Background pedestrian traffic increases will not represent a significant impact to pedestrian or bicycle. Transit demand under Background conditions is expected to be similar to existing conditions. Due to the low demand, no transit service will be provided to the project vicinity. Background projects would not represent a significant demand for, or impact to, transit service.

Background Plus Project Conditions.

Project trips described in the Existing Plus Project development scenario were added to the Background volumes. This results in the estimate of Background Plus Project road segment daily volumes on Exhibit 3 and intersection volumes on Exhibit 4 of the TIA. The Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road intersection would continue to operate at or better than its D/E level of service standards under Background Plus Project conditions. No improvements will be required.

Pedestrian and bicycle traffic under Background Plus Project conditions is not anticipated to significantly increase over Existing Plus Project conditions. Therefore, the project would not represent a significant impact to pedestrian and bicycle circulation under Background Plus Project conditions. Transit demand under Background Plus Project conditions is not anticipated to significantly increase over Existing Plus Project conditions. Therefore, the project would not represent a significant impact to transit circulation under Background Plus Project conditions.

Cumulative Without Project Conditions.

Cumulative traffic volumes on the study street network are tabulated on Exhibit 3 of the TIA. Based on traffic growth over the past 10 years of less than 2% per year, it will take approximately 40 years to reach Cumulative forecast traffic volumes.

The Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road intersection would operate at LOS E on the Aromas Road approach and LOS D on the Quarry Road approach. These will be at the respective LOS E and LOS D thresholds for Monterey and San Benito Counties, respectively. No improvements will be required.

Cumulative pedestrian and bicycle volumes are anticipated to be similar to existing conditions near the project site. Cumulative pedestrian traffic increases will not represent a significant impact to pedestrian or bicycle circulation. Transit demand under Cumulative conditions is expected to be similar to existing conditions. Due to the low demand, no transit service will be provided to the Project vicinity. Cumulative growth would not represent a significant demand for, or impact to, transit service.

Cumulative Plus Project Conditions.

The following describes anticipated traffic conditions with the addition of Project traffic to Cumulative Without Project traffic volumes.

The Carpenteria Road/Aromas Road-Quarry Road intersection would operate at LOS E on the Aromas Road approach and LOS D on the Quarry Road approach. These will be at the respective LOS E and LOS D thresholds for Monterey and San Benito Counties, respectively. No improvements will be required.

The project will not noticeably increase pedestrian and bicycle activity above levels expected under Cumulative Without Project conditions. Therefore, the project would not represent a significant contribution to Cumulative Plus Project impacts to pedestrian or bicycle circulation. The project will not noticeably increase transit demand above levels expected under Cumulative Plus Project conditions. The project would therefore not represent a significant contribution to Cumulative Plus Project transit demand.

b) **Less than Significant Impact**.

Project Vehicles Miles Traveled.

SB 743, which was signed into law by Governor Brown in 2013 and codified in Public Resources Code 21099, tasked the State Office of Planning and Research ("OPR") with establishing new criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts under CEQA. SB 743 requires the new criteria to "promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses." SB 743 changes the way that public agencies evaluate the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA, recognizing that roadway congestion, while an inconvenience to drivers, is not itself an environmental impact (see Pub. Resource Code, § 21099, subdivision (b)(2)).

SB 743 is changing the CEQA Guidelines statewide beginning on July 1, 2020. The changes to CEQA guidelines will replace congestion-based metrics, such as auto delay and level of service, with Vehicle Miles Traveled ("VMT") as the basis for determining significant impacts, unless the guidelines provide specific exceptions.

Page 12 of the OPR VMT Technical Advisory provides "screening thresholds" for the project description that indicate whether a project may have a significant impact. It states that "Screening thresholds such as project size, maps, transit availability, and provision of affordable housing, quickly identify when a project is expected to cause a less-than-significant impact without conducting a detailed study. Absent substantial evidence indicating that a project would generate a potentially significant level of VMT, or inconsistency with a Sustainable Communities Strategy ("SCS") or general plan, projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day generally may be assumed to cause a less-than-significant transportation impact."

As described above, project trip generation was estimated using trip rates for both the number of employees as well as building square footage. Exhibit 5 of the TIA summarizes the project trip generation estimate.

Based on the building floor area, the project could represent an increase of 231 daily trips, which is above the 110 vehicles per day significance threshold. However, this does not account for the fact that 7 employees will vacate a warehouse in Gilroy, which is planned to reduce employee trips and truck shuttles between the Gilroy warehouse and the project site. The 7 employees generate about 21 vehicle trips per day. A total of 8 daily truck shuttle trips between the project and the existing Gilroy warehouse will also be eliminated. Finally, warehouse trips from the Gilroy warehouse to customers will be included in the project trip generation. This is estimated to total an additional 8 trips per day. This will result in a total increase of about 194 daily trips, as indicated on Table 1 of the TIA. On this basis the project could have a significant VMT impact, depending on the average trip length.

However, based on the number of employees, the project trip generation would only increase by 21 daily trips. This is the actual employment estimate for the project and is the most accurate basis for estimating project trips. The traffic increase based on the number of employees is almost imperceptible and below the 110 trips per day threshold suggested in the OPR VMT Technical Advisory. This also does not account for regional trip reduction by eliminating shuttles or accounting for the fact that some project trips such as employee home-to-work trips and deliveries from the Gilroy warehouse already impact the regional street and highway network. On this basis, the project could reduce regional travel and, thus, would have a beneficial VMT impact and no further analysis is required.

Table 1 of the TIA provides an estimate of Project trip generation based on an average of the two methods. This results in the project having an estimated trip generation of about 90 daily trips, which would be below the significance threshold suggested in the OPR VMT Technical Advisory.

The proposed project would not conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)(2). This is a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2, 3, 13)

c) **No Impact**. The proposed project is not a transportation project, and, therefore, no conflict with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)(2) would occur. (1, 2, 3)

d) **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.**

Site Access and Internal Circulation

Quarry Road/Project Driveway Intersection Operations. The project proposes to continue to utilize the existing driveway that intersects Quarry Road about one-half mile east of Carpenteria Road and about 300 feet east of Aromitas Road. Quarry Road only serves the Granite Road Wilson Quarry east of the project. Quarry Road carries about 126 AM peak hour and 91 PM peak hour trips on its approach to Carpenteria Road. About 80% reaches the project driveway, which is a total of about 100 AM peak

hour trips and 70 PM peak hour trips. This is about 2 vehicles per minute in the AM peak hour and just over one vehicle per minute in the PM peak hour. Of these, about half are to and from Fireclay Tile and half are to and from the Wilson Quarry. This is a low volume driveway intersection with adequate approach widths to accommodate the high volume of trucks to and from the Quarry as well as trucks entering and exiting Fireclay Tile.

There are also no sight distance deficiencies at the project driveway intersection with Quarry Road.

Traffic operations are acceptable at the Quarry Road/Project Driveway intersection for existing conditions as well as future conditions with the proposed expansion.

Project Driveway Railroad Grade Crossing Operations. The project driveway crosses the Union Pacific Railroad ("UPRR") mainline that connects the San Francisco Bay Area with Southern California. The grade crossing is a private crossing. The "Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook," 3rd Edition, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Railroad Administration, July 2019, (Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook), states, "Private grade crossings on high-speed rail corridors are considered separately. Such crossings may be located along non-public roads within industrial, residential, or agricultural lands. Private crossings generally exist because of an agreement between a railroad and a landowner. Therefore, in most cases those parties determine the appropriate treatment for the crossing. Where private crossings are open to public travel, consideration should be given to providing similar treatment to that which would be provided at a public crossing." This crossing is noticed that it is private and crossing it is considered trespassing. Indiscriminate public access is not allowed. However, the crossing serves two parcels in active agricultural cultivation in addition to the Fireclay Tile project. Currently, the crossing carries over 300 inbound and outbound trips per day from Fireclay Tile plus agricultural traffic from the adjoining farmlands. For the purposes of this analysis, the fact that it is a private crossing is not considered in the recommendations.

Ultimately, according to the "California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices ("MUTCD"), Section 8A.01, paragraph 5 and Section 8A.02, paragraph 6a, the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") has regulatory authority over this crossing. The following discussion is therefore subject not only to the County of San Benito but ultimately to the CPUC.

The following are existing features of this railroad grade crossing related to traffic operations.

1. There are two railroad tracks at this crossing. One track is the mainline and one is a siding that serves a railroad car storage yard for the Wilson Quarry immediately northeast of the crossing. The tracks are essentially flat in the vicinity of the crossing.

2. Based on measurements from Google Earth, the crossing is located on a horizontal curve with an approximate radius of about 1,900 feet on the west and a straight section on the east. This will accommodate a train speed of 50 miles per hour (mph).

3. The speed limit on the mainline is 50 mph. Sight distance is unlimited in both directions on northbound entrance lane (south side of the tracks). Sight distance is approximately 1,000 feet based on field measurements. According to the Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook, Table C-1, page 221, sight distance is required to be 1,273 feet for a train speed of 50 mph. This allows a vehicle exiting the Project at a stopped position 15 feet clear on the north side of the mainline track to clear the mainline track by 15 feet clear on the south side of the track. This is a travel distance of about 108.5 feet for a design vehicle (semi-trailer truck) that is 73.5 feet long with slow acceleration. The existing sight distance would allow a total travel distance of about 60 feet, which would be adequate for a passenger car that is about 20 feet long. Sight distance appears to be

impeded by trees and shrubs along the north side of UPRR tracks approximately 600 to 1,000 feet east of the railroad crossing. This represents a potentially significant impact that can be reduce to a less-than-significant impact with implementation of the mitigation identified below.

Mitigation

TRA-4.17-1 Prior to the County's issuance of a certificate of occupancy, the applicant shall trim or remove existing vegetation along the north side of the UPRR tracks between about 600 feet and 1,000 feet east of the project driveway to provide adequate sight distance for semi-trailer trucks.

4. The railroad tracks are about 55 feet from the nearest edge of Quarry Road to the south side. This is adequate clearance for the semitrailer trucks that arrive at the site. This is mitigated because all vehicles entering and exiting the site travel to and from the west on Quarry Road. Trucks entering the project can approach the crossing after making a left turn from Quarry Road on a diagonal, which continues to allow exiting traffic which all turn right onto westbound Quarry Road. A total of two cars can queue as they approach the crossing from Quarry Road. The existing condition is acceptable.

5. The railroad tracks are about 75 feet from the nearest Fireclay Tile parking lot entrance to the north. This is adequate to accommodate a semi-trailer truck or two cars assuming a 15-foot setback to the limit line at the crossing.

6. The crossing approaches currently have gravel pavement, which makes ingress and egress on the uphill driveway difficult. This represents a potentially significant impact that can be reduce to a less-than-significant impact with implementation of the mitigation identified below.

Mitigation

TRA-4.17-2 The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct crossing improvements within the railroad right-of-way, which may include, but are not limited to, regrading with asphalt concrete. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary.

7. The south approach grade is relatively flat between Quarry Road and the railroad track. No change is recommended on the Quarry Road side of the crossing. However, the north crossing approach on the project side of the crossing has an uphill gradient. The Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook indicates that the crossing must be traversable by a wide range of vehicles including those with long wheelbases and/or low ground clearance (this standard is also provided by the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association ("AREMA")). The guideline recommends that the crossing surface be in the same plane as the top of rails for a distance of two feet outside of the rails, and that the surface of the highway be not more than three inches higher or lower than the top of the nearest rail at a point 30 feet from the rail for new construction. This represents a potentially significant impact that can be reduce to a less-than-significant impact with implementation of the mitigation identified below.

Mitigation

TRA-4.17-3 The approach should be regraded to reduce the north approach gradient, which will improve the ability of vehicles, especially trucks, to accelerate from a stopped position. The Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook provides guidance on appropriate grades. The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct crossing improvements within the railroad right-of-way, which may include, but are not limited to, regrading. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary.

8. The crossing currently has a 16-foot wide precast concrete panel on each railroad track that are offset from each other by about three feet. This results in an effective width of about 13 feet, which is one travel lane. Observations of traffic during shift changes at Fireclay Tile indicate that queuing occurs as opposing drivers must yield to oncoming traffic. This can also be a distraction from drivers observing oncoming trains as they focus on whether to proceed across the tracks when facing an opposing vehicle. This represents a potentially significant impact that can be reduce to a less-than-significant impact with implementation of the mitigation identified below.

Mitigation

TRA-4.17-4 The existing crossing should be two lanes wide. The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct crossing improvements within the railroad right-of-way, which may include, but are not limited to, widening. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary.

9. The crossing is controlled by permanent stop signs with one on the right side of each driveway approach. Currently, a "Private RR Xing-No Trespassing" sign is located below the permanent stop sign in compliance with UPRR Private Roadway Crossing Sign Standard Drawing 0531F. Temporary stop signs are also currently in place on both sides of each crossing approach. These are supplemental and are not part of any standard sign package. This represents a potentially significant impact that can be reduce to a less-than-significant impact with implementation of the mitigation identified below

Mitigation

TRA-4.17-5 The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct traffic control improvements at the railroad crossing, which may include, but are not limited to:

a. Minimum traffic control - At a minimum, the signing be upgraded to comply with public crossing stop sign control with standard crossbucks per MUTCD Figure 8B-2. This should include a stop sign (R1-1), crossbucks (Sign R15-1) and Number of Tracks Plaque (R15-2P).

b. Enhanced traffic control - The CPUC may require flashing-light signals with or without automatic gate assemblies. This will be determined by a more detailed engineering study approved by the CPUC.

Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary.

10. No street lighting is in place at the present time. Fireclay Tile operates 24 hours per day and has shift changes that occur in hours of darkness. Street illumination lighting would improve the visibility of traffic control devices at the crossing, provide illumination for pedestrian activity and improve security at the project entrance. This represents a potentially significant impact that can be reduce to a less-than-significant impact with implementation of the mitigation identified below.

Mitigation

TRA-4.17-6 Prior to the County's issuance of a certificate of occupancy, the applicant shall install street illumination lighting luminaires, preferably on the existing utility poles immediately across Quarry Road from the driveway and on the existing utility pole on the east side of the project entrance, about 35 feet north of the UPRR tracks. The applicant shall coordinate with CPUC and obtain any required approvals, if necessary.

The above mitigations assume that the existing crossing remains in place. The preferred alternative is to close the crossing, which is described in detail in Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook, pages 12-18. However, the crossing is currently used by three commercial properties. The first closure alternative would be to reroute the property access along the north side of the UPRR tracks to Carpenteria Road. This would require obtaining access easements through the private agricultural land between the existing crossing and Carpenteria Road. The second closure alternative is to construct a grade separation near the existing crossing. Due to the short clearance between the UPRR tracks and Quarry Road, Quarry Road would have to be reconstructed to achieve acceptable vertical alignment to cross under the railroad tracks with a road surface about 20 feet below the existing grade. Access roads and parking lot on the north side of the UPRR tracks would also need to be depressed to connect at acceptable road gradients. A bridge would be needed under the railroad tracks which would require a temporary realignment of the tracks on a "shoofly." This would be prohibitively expensive and disruptive. Given that the identified mitigation measures would reduce potentially significant impacts associated with the railroad crossing to a less-than-significant level, it is anticipated that closing the crossing would not be required.

Internal Circulation

Internal circulation within the proposed project parking lot appears to be adequate as proposed. (1, 2, 3, 4, 13)

e) **Less than Significant.** San Benito County has prepared a Multi-Jurisdiction Local Hazard Mitigation Plan ("LHMP") with the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, and with two water agencies. The LHMP designates certain roadways in the County for primary evacuation routes. Panoche Road is the primary evacuation roadway for the County. The project site, located on Quarry Road, would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with designated evacuation routes or otherwise conflict with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. The proposed project would comply with the Municipal Code and Fire Department standards for emergency vehicle

access and would not conflict with the approved LHMP. The project would not interfere with any emergency response or evacuation plans. Additionally, a 20-foot wide access driveway would be constructed along the perimeter the property on adjacent parcels for semi-truck and emergency vehicle access. There would be no impact in connection with the proposed project. (1, 2, 3, 4)

4.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

4.18.1 Environmental Settings

California Assembly Bill ("AB") 52, in effect since July 2015, provides CEQA protections for tribal cultural resources. All lead agencies approving projects under CEQA are required, if formally requested by a culturally affiliated California Native American Tribe, to consult with such tribe regarding the potential impact of a project on tribal cultural resources before releasing an environmental document. Under California Public Resources Code §21074, tribal cultural resources include site features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, or objects that are of cultural value to a tribe and that are eligible for or listed on the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) or a local historic register, or that the lead agency has determined to be of significant tribal cultural value.

In compliance with AB 52, the County RMA sent notices to California Native American Tribes on March 17, 2020, notifying the tribes of the proposed project and soliciting requests for consultation (**Appendix C**). One comment was received from the Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, which requested to be notified in the event cultural resources material(s) are discovered in the development of the parcel (**Appendix C**).

4.18.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES. Would the project 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:				
a) 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	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) 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 Resources Code Section5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native America Tribe.	☐	☒	☐	☐

4.18.3 Explanation

a) **No Impact.** As described above in **Section 4.5 Cultural Resources,** the project site does not contain any resources that are 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). There are no historical resources within the project area, and, as a result, there is no impact. (1, 2, 3)

b) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** No tribal cultural resources or Native American resources have been documented on the project site. However, as described above in **Section 4.5 Cultural Resources**, previously unknown or buried resources could be present. In addition, the Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band requested to be notified in the event cultural resources material(s) are discovered in the development of the parcel. The implementation of **Mitigation Measure CUL 4.5-1** would ensure that potential impacts would be less than significant. (1, 2, 3)

4.19 Utilities and Service Systems

4.19.1 Environmental Setting

Water Supply and Delivery. The primary sources of water supply in the County include water purchased and imported from the Central Valley Project ("CVP") by the San Benito County Water District ("SBCWD"). While the SBCWD is the CVP wholesaler for municipal and industrial use and has jurisdiction over water management throughout the County, much of the population is served by other water purveyors, including the City of Hollister, Sunnyslope County Water District ("SSCWD"), and other small local purveyors. Some communities within the County are not served by water districts or do not have water systems that provide water service. These communities and rural residents rely on private wells and groundwater, including the project site. For the last decade (2000-2010) total water use, including CVP water and groundwater, has ranged from between 35,000 and 47,000-acre feet per year ("AFY") in the CVP delivery area (termed Zone 6), depending on weather conditions, the economy, and water conservation measures. Total water use in Zone 6 generally declined over the period from 2000 to 2010, with year-to-year fluctuations most likely caused by variable weather conditions. Long term trends may be due to the economy and water conservation. Agricultural, municipal, and industrial use has generally declined during this same time frame, mostly due to conservation and the economic downturn.

Wastewater System. Most of the unincorporated areas of San Benito County lack public sewer infrastructure and instead are serviced by either community septic systems or individual septic systems and leachfield disposal. The incorporated areas, including Hollister and San Juan Bautista, are serviced by each city's wastewater and sewer services. Unincorporated areas in the County that have public wastewater service are served by the SSCWD, the Tres Pinos Water and Sewer District, or by one of the four County Service Areas ("CSAs"). The four CSAs with sewer collection and treatment facilities in the County include: CSA #22 Cielo Vista, CSA #51 Comstock Estates, CSA #54 Pacheco Creek Estates, and CSA #45 Rancho Larios. The majority of the sewer districts that provide wastewater service in the unincorporated County have service areas that also cover the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, and planned developments within several subdivisions outside city limits. Most communities south of Hollister, near Tres Pinos and in the far western and southern portion of the County, are on septic systems, including the project site.

Storm Drainage. The San Benito River, Pajaro River, and the Santa Ana Creek tributary (north of the project site) are the three natural channels that receive storm water from the County. Stormwater drainage systems serve very few areas of the County. Water and/or wastewater service are provided by five service providers and several CSAs. Most residents and businesses in the unincorporated County rely on individual drainage solutions or small-scale drainage systems. Stormwater quality measures are advocated and required by the County as part of the development review process. Because of the low intensity of development in unincorporated areas, the construction of large stormwater drainage systems is not necessary. A preferred method to decrease stormwater runoff volumes water and quality is the use of Low Impact Development

("LID") techniques. The purpose of LID is to reduce impervious surfaces and provide more opportunities for runoff to soak into the ground on-site or to unlined ditches and swales or to be used for irrigation and other uses.

The project proposes to route all runoff from the site to a detention pond. This pond is designed to detain the difference between a 10-year pre and 100-year post development, in accordance with County standards, and detain flows in excess of this to release post-development flows at pre-development levels, satisfying RWQCB post construction requirements, LID requirements, and County stormwater management requirements.

Solid Waste. The current solid waste disposal and recycling service provider for the City of Hollister, the City of San Juan Bautista, and most parts of unincorporated San Benito County is Recology. Recology transports solid waste to the John Smith Road Landfill ("JSRL"), which is owned by the San Benito County Integrated Waste Management Department ("IWMD") and operated by Waste Connections, Inc. The JSRL is the only operating active solid waste landfill in the County.

The JSRL is located at 2650 John Smith Road, approximately five miles southeast of downtown Hollister, in the unincorporated County. It has a maximum permitted throughput of 1,000 tons per day. As of March 31, 2018 the JSRL has a remaining capacity of approximately 3,499,000 cubic yards (CalRecycle, 2018). According to available information from the Central Coast RWQCB regarding the JSRL, based on current waste disposal rates, the estimated closure date (when capacity is expected to be reached) is 2032 (CalRecycle, 2018).

Electric and Gas. Starting in 2018, all PG&E customers within Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties were automatically enrolled in MBCP. MBCP is a locally-controlled public agency providing carbon-free electricity to residents and businesses. MBCP partners with PG&E, which continues to provide billing, power transmission and distribution, customer service, grid maintenance services and natural gas services to San Benito County. MBCP's standard electricity offering, is carbon free and is classified as 30 percent renewable. Of the electricity provided by MBCP in 2018, 40 percent was hydroelectric, and 30 percent was solar and wind (eligible renewables) (MBCP, 2019).

4.19.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 would cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS. Would 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statuses and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.19.3 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated**. The proposed project would 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 of the proposed project, including these facilities, could result in the potentially significant impacts described in this IS/MND. Mitigation has been identified in this IS/MND to reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level, including **Mitigation Measures BIO 4.4-1, CUL 4.5-1, CUL 4.5-2, GEO 4.7-1**, and **TRA 4.17-1** through **TRA 4.17-6**. (1, 2)

b) **Less than Significant Impact**. The proposed project is not anticipated to have a substantial increase in water supply. The project is located on the Hernandez Valley Groundwater Basin, which is not critically over-drafted as defined by the SGMA, and has been marked as very low priority. The project would be served by an existing on-site well that would be improved to address existing water quality concerns. The well's yield of 96,480 gallons per minute over a 24-hour period would serve the connections with the required minimum of three gallons per minute and will comply with current standards. Furthermore, the project would be required to adhere to San Benito County Code Article I. Groundwater Aquifer Protection, which limits extraction of groundwater. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2)

c) **Less than Significant Impact**. The proposed project would involve expanding the existing septic system, and, therefore, the project would not affect existing treatment capacity. This represents a less-than-significant impact. (1, 2)

d-e) **Less Than Significant Impact**. The project would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, negatively impact solid waste services, impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals. Additionally, the project would comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statues and regulations related to solid waste. General trash and recycling would be transported to the John Smith Road Landfill in Hollister, CA. There would be less-than-significant impact associated with solid waste generation. (1, 2)

4.20 Wildfire

4.20.1 Environmental Setting

The project site is not located within moderate, high, or very high FHSZ, as designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire, Fire Hazard Severity Maps, 2007).

4.20.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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 impact to the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.20.3 Explanation

a-d) **No Impact.** The project site is not located within or near a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones for wildfires; therefore, the proposed project would not expose project occupants to a significant wildfire. The proposed project would comply with the applicable fire safety provisions of the California Building Code, as well as standard conditions of approval, thereby reducing the risk of damage from fire. As a result, no impact would occur. (1, 2, 3, 4, 11)

4.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

4.21.1 Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE. Does the project:				
a) Have the potential to 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, 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?	☐	☒	☐	☐
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)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☒	☐

4.21.2 Explanation

a) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** The proposed project would not 1) degrade the quality of environment, 2) substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, 3) cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, 4) threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, 5) reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or 6) eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory. The proposed project would result in temporary and permanent impacts that would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through the incorporation of mitigation measures identified in this IS/MND. Compliance with the mitigation measures contained in this document would ensure that all impacts are less than significant. Moreover, the proposed project would not adversely impact a cultural or historic resource that is an important example of a major period in California history with mitigation proposed in this IS/MND. Mitigation would reduce potential impacts to cultural resources resulting from ground disturbing construction activity. With implementation of these measures, as described in this IS/MND and summarized in **Table 4**, the project would not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment and, overall, impacts would be less-than-significant impact. No additional mitigation is necessary beyond mitigation identified in each of the respective topical CEQA sections contained in this IS/MND.

Table 4. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures	
Environmental Impact	**Mitigation Measure**
4.4 Biological Resources	
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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	**Mitigation Measure BIO 4.4-1:** Activities that may directly affect (e.g. tree removal) or indirectly affect (e.g. noise/ground disturbance) raptors or other nesting birds shall be timed to avoid the breeding and nesting seasons. Specifically, grading with heavy machinery and tree removal shall be scheduled after September 16 and before January 31. Prior to issuance of permits for grading or prior to ground disturbing activities, the project applicant shall retain a qualified biologist defined as professional biologists with a bachelor's degree or above in a biological science field and demonstrated field experience of three years or more. Biologist duties shall include pre-construction surveys as follows which shall be provided in a scope of work submitted to the County RMA. The project applicant shall be responsible for retaining the qualified biologist. Pre-Construction Surveys: If activities must occur during the breeding and nesting season (February 1 through September 15), a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting raptors and other protected nesting bird species within 300 feet of the proposed construction activities. Pre-construction surveys should be conducted no more than seven days prior to the start of the construction activities during the early part of the breeding season (February through April) and no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of these activities during the late part of the breeding season (May through August). If raptor or other bird nests are identified within or immediately adjacent to the project site during the pre-construction surveys, the qualified biologist shall notify the proponent and an appropriate no-disturbance buffer shall be imposed within which no construction activities or disturbance shall take place (generally 300 feet in all directions for raptors; other avian species may have species-specific requirements) until the young of the year have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or parental care for survival, as determined by a qualified biologist. A note shall be placed on Final Grading Plan that the project shall adhere to the above requirements and a copy of said standards, components, and materials shall be submitted with grading and building plans prior to issuance of building permit(s) for project development.
4.5 Cultural Resources	
Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to 15064.5	**Mitigation Measure CUL 4.5-1:** If archaeological resources or human remains are accidentally discovered on the project site during construction, work shall be halted by the construction manager within 50 meters (150 feet) of the find until it can be evaluated by a qualified professional archaeologist. If the find is determined to be significant, appropriate mitigation measures shall be formulated and implemented. Materials of particular concern would be concentrations of marine shell, burned animal bones, charcoal, and flaked or ground stone fragments. (Ref: Health and Safety Code 7050.5)

Table 4. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures	
Environmental Impact	**Mitigation Measure**
Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries	**Mitigation Measure CUL 4.5-2:** If human remains are found at any time on the project site, work must be stopped by the construction manager, and the County Coroner must be notified immediately. If the Coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission will be notified as required by law. The Commission will designate a Most Likely Descendant who will be authorized to provide recommendations for management of the Native American human remains. (Ref: California Public Resources Code Section 5097.98; and Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5) Specific County of San Benito provisions and further measures shall be required as follows if human remains are found: If, at any time in the preparation for, or process of, excavation or otherwise disturbing the ground, discovery occurs of any human remains of any age, or any significant artifact or other evidence of an archeological site, the applicant or builder shall: a. Cease and desist from further excavation and disturbances within two hundred feet of the discovery or in any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains. b. Arrange for staking completely around the area of discovery by visible stakes no more than ten feet apart, forming a circle having a radius of not less than one hundred feet from the point of discovery; provided, however, that such staking need not take place on adjoining property unless the owner of the adjoining property authorizes such staking. Said staking shall not include flags or other devices which may attract vandals. c. Notify Resource Management Agency Director shall also be notified within 24 hours if human and/or questionable remains have been discovered. The Sheriff–Coroner shall be notified immediately of the discovery as noted above. Subject to the legal process, grant all duly authorized representatives of the Coroner and the Resource Management Agency Director permission to enter onto the property and to take all actions consistent with Chapter 19.05 of the San Benito County Code and consistent with §7050.5 of the Health and Human Safety Code and Chapter 10 (commencing with §27460) of Part 3 of Division 2 of Title 3 of the Government Code. [Planning]
4.7 Geology and Soils	
Seismic-related ground shaking	**Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1:** Prior to the issuance of any grading or building permit, the Applicant shall submit a detailed design-level geotechnical analysis to the County for review and approval. The design-level geotechnical analysis shall incorporate the recommendations of Geotechnical Investigation Report prepared by Haro, Kasunich and Associates, Inc. The design-level geotechnical analysis shall

Table 4. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures	
Environmental Impact	**Mitigation Measure**
	identify recommendations for the design and construction of project improvements.
Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction	**Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1**
Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil	**Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1**
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	**Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1**
4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality	
Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality	**See Mitigation Measure GEO 4.7-1.**
4.17 Transportation	
Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (for example, sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (for example, farm equipment)	**Mitigation Measure TRA 4.17-1:** Prior to the County's issuance of a certificate of occupancy, the applicant shall trim or remove existing vegetation along the north side of the UPRR tracks between about 600 feet and 1,000 feet east of the project driveway to provide adequate sight distance for semi-trailer trucks. **Mitigation Measure TRA 4.17-2:** The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct crossing improvements within the railroad right-of-way, which may include, but are not limited to, regrading with asphalt concrete. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary. **Mitigation Measure TRA 4.17-3:** The approach should be regraded to reduce the north approach gradient, which will improve the ability of vehicles, especially trucks, to accelerate from a stopped position. The Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook provides guidance on appropriate grades. The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct crossing improvements within the railroad right-of-way, which may include, but are not limited to, regrading. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County

Table 4. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures	
Environmental Impact	**Mitigation Measure**
	RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary. **Mitigation Measure TRA 4.17-4:** The existing crossing should be two lanes wide. The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct crossing improvements within the railroad right-of-way, which may include, but are not limited to, widening. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary. **Mitigation Measure TRA 4.17-5:** The applicant shall coordinate with the CPUC, UPRR, and County to design and construct traffic control improvements at the railroad crossing, which may include, but are not limited to: a. Minimum traffic control - At a minimum, the signing be upgraded to comply with public crossing stop sign control with standard crossbucks per MUTCD Figure 8B-2. This should include a stop sign (R1-1), crossbucks (Sign R15-1) and Number of Tracks Plaque (R15-2P). b. Enhanced traffic control - The CPUC may require flashing-light signals with or without automatic gate assemblies. This will be determined by a more detailed engineering study approved by the CPUC. Prior to the issuance of occupancy permits by the County, the applicant shall submit to the County RMA evidence that they are coordinating with the CPUC and UPRR to construct the crossing improvements and provide a schedule for completion. The crossing improvements shall be approved by the UPRR and CPUC, as necessary. **Mitigation Measure TRA 4.17-6:** Prior to the County's issuance of a certificate of occupancy, the applicant shall install street illumination lighting luminaires, preferably on the existing utility poles immediately across Quarry Road from the driveway and on the existing utility pole on the east side of the project entrance, about 35 feet north of the UPRR tracks. The applicant shall coordinate with CPUC and obtain any required approvals, if necessary.
4.18 Tribal Cultural Resources	
A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant	**Mitigation Measure CUL 4.5-1**

Table 4. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures	
Environmental Impact	**Mitigation Measure**
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 Resources Code Section5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native America Tribe.	
4.19 Utilities & Services Systems	
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 would cause significant environmental effects	**Mitigation Measures BIO 4.4-1, CUL 4.5-1, CUL 4.5-2, GEO 4.7-1, and TRA 4.17-1 through TRA 4.17-6.**

b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Under CEQA "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. The proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable adverse environmental effect. This IS/MND contains mitigation to ensure that all impacts would be minimized to a less-than-significant level. The project would have temporary air quality impacts, and GHG emissions that would contribute to the overall regional and global GHG emissions. However, air quality impacts and GHG emissions would not exceed the MBARD's thresholds of significance. In addition, the proposed project would not induce potential population growth beyond existing levels; therefore, the project would not conflict with and/or obstruct the implementation of the MBARD 2012-2015 AQMP, or any other plans to address exceedance of State air quality standards. For these reasons, the project would have a less-than-significant cumulative impact on the air quality and GHG. Overall, the project would have a less-than-significant cumulative impact.

Additionally, the RDEIR prepared for the County's 2035 General Plan identified several significant unavoidable impacts that would potentially occur with buildout of the General Plan, including loss of prime farmland, light and glare, effects to sensitive species and habitats, exposure to flood hazards, noise, population growth, and transportation level of service impacts. This project is consistent with the General Plan land use designation; thus, the effects of the project were already considered programmatically as part of the General Plan RDEIR. As stated above and in topical sections of this IS/MND, in many cases, this project would have no effect on impacts cited. Overall, the project would not result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable.

c) **Less than Significant Impact**. The proposed project would not cause any adverse effects on human beings. Construction impacts would be temporary in nature and mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Operational of the proposed project would be required to comply with all federal, state, regional, and local regulations and all potentially significant impacts associated with project operations are

mitigated to a less-than-significant level. In addition, no sensitive receptors are located within 1,000 feet of the project site. The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

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Chapter 5. References

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