



**CITY OF SALINAS  
COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 29, 2020  
**DEPARTMENT:** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
**FROM:** MEGAN HUNTER, DIRECTOR  
**BY:** JILL MILLER, SENIOR PLANNER  
**THROUGH:** COURTNEY GROSSMAN, PLANNING MANAGER  
**TITLE:** STUDY SESSION FOR THE CENTRAL AREA SPECIFIC PLAN

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

No motion is required. This Study Session Report is provided as an informational item.

RECOMMENDATION:

This Study Session Report for the Central Area Specific Plan is provided for information only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The application for the Central Area Specific Plan Project (“Project”) is comprised of the following: Specific Plan (SPEC 2013-001), Rezone (RZ 2020-002), and Development Agreement (DA 2020-001). The Central Area Specific Plan (also referred herein as the “Central Area” or “Project”), encompasses approximately 760 acres of land located in the North of Boronda Future Growth Area, bound by Natividad Road on the west, East Boronda Road (also referred to as “Boronda Road”) on the south, Old Stage Road and the future extension of Constitution Boulevard on the east, and the future extension of Russell Road on the north. The applications would authorize a maximum of 3,911 dwelling units, up to approximately 489,700 square feet of mixed-use commercial uses, up to three schools, seventeen parks, and other supporting uses. The Project site is currently zoned New Urbanism Interim (NI) with a Specific Plan Overlay District. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) has been prepared for the Project.

BACKGROUND:

*Existing Setting*

The Central Area Specific Plan is located in the northern portion of the City within the North of Boronda Future Growth Area (FGA), which was annexed to the City in 2008. As previously indicated, the site is bounded by Natividad Road on the west, East Boronda Road (also referred to

as “Boronda Road”) on the south, Old Stage Road and the future extension of Constitution Boulevard on the east, and the future extension of Russell Road on the north (see Attachment 1).

The approximately 760-acre project site is currently utilized primarily for row-crop farming and contains limited existing development. A few residential structures with accessory buildings are disbursed through the plan area. Additionally, a new middle school facility (Salinas Union School District) is beginning construction in the central portion of the site plan area, accessed off Boronda Road.

The topography of the site generally slopes from a northerly to southerly direction towards Boronda Road. The overall topographic relief is approximately 76 feet, with a maximum elevation of approximately 146 feet above sea level at the northeast corner on Old Stage Road, and a minimum elevation of approximately 70 feet above sea level in Natividad Creek at the Boronda Road crossing.

Existing infrastructure is currently located along East Boronda Road including water, sewer, electricity, storm drainage and dry utilities and will be extended into the Specific Plan boundaries. Monterey Salinas Transit (MST) currently provides transit access to the site from existing bus stops located along East Boronda Road.

The Central Area includes multiple parcels of various sizes and several property owners (see Attachment 2). Two of the parcels are owned by school districts (the Alisal Union School District and Salinas Union High School District). The remaining parcels are owned by private parties. The project applicants which includes the participating property owners (and their representative) own approximately 639.49 of the 760-acre site. “Participating property owners” refers to those property owners who have been funding the cost of the preparation of the Central Area Specific Plan, DEIR, and related entitlements to date.

### ***Surrounding Land Uses***

West: Row-crop farming and other agricultural related uses. The approved West Area Specific Plan is located directly to the west of the project area.

North: Row-crop farming and other agricultural related uses within unincorporated Monterey County.

East: Row-crop farming and other agricultural related uses on land located within both unincorporated Monterey County and City limits. The lands to the east are currently zoned New Urbanism Interim with a Specific Plan Overlay District.

South: Everett Alvarez High School and single-family dwellings (including but not limited to those located in the Creekbridge development) are located south of Boronda Road.

### ***Existing Salinas General Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning District***

The General Plan Land Use Designations for the project site are Residential Low, Residential Medium and Residential High Density, Mixed Use, Park, Public/Semipublic and Open Space. Upon annexation in 2008, the North of Boronda FGA (including the Project site) was zoned New Urbanism Interim (NI) with a Specific Plan Overlay District. This District was intended to serve as an interim holding zone for land located in the North of Boronda FGA until such time future

Specific Plans were approved and the new zoning district designations established for the area.

The applicants are requesting to rezone the project site from the existing NI zoning district to the new zoning districts proposed in the Central Area Specific Plan (see below for further discussion of the requested rezone).

### ***Project Milestones***

The following is a list of Project milestones:

- September 9, 2008, the North of Boronda FGA consisting of approximately 2,400 acres (including the project site) was annexed into the City of Salinas.
- August 12, 2013, the applicants submitted applications to the City for the purpose of developing the Central Area Specific Plan.
- September 8, 2017, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed in accordance with Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. Seven comment letters were received: 1) Alisal Water Corporation (ALCO), 2) California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 3) Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), 4) Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), 5) Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) 6) Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC) and 7) Ohlone Coastanoan Nation.
- September 27, 2017, a Scoping Meeting for the DEIR was held.
- June 3, 2020, the Planning Commission held a study session regarding the proposed Project. Staff provided a general overview of the project in preparation for the release of the documents for the required public review period.
- June 27, 2020, the DEIR was circulated for a 45-day public review period, and the Notice of Completion (NOC) and Notice of Availability (NOA) prepared in accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines was filed.
- June 27, 2020, the Draft Specific Plan was circulated for a 45-day public review period in accordance with California Government Code Section 65453.
- July 9, 2020, staff presented the project to the Traffic and Transportation Commission. The Commission voted 6-0 to recommend approval based on the Traffic Impact Analysis to the City Council.
- August 11, 2020, staff presented the project to the Housing and Land Use Committee providing a project overview with emphasis on the housing components of the project.
- August 11, 2020, the comment period for the Central Area Specific Plan and the DEIR documents closed. Comment letters were received from: 1) Association of Monterey Bay Governments 2) California Department of Conservation, 3) Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC) , 4) California State University, Monterey Bay, 5) LandWatch,

6) California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 7) Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP), 8) California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 9) Alisal Union School District 10) Salinas Union High School District, 11) Santa Rita Union School District, 12) Monterey Bay Air Resources District, 13) Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) (see Attachment 5).

- September 2, 2020, the Planning Commission held a study session regarding the Project. Issues raised during that meeting were: water supply, loss of agricultural land, endangered species, street widths, parking, residential density, and affordability.
- September 9, 2020, staff presented the Project to the Library and Community Services Commission. The Commission voted 5-0 to recommend approval of the park plan to the City Council.

### DISCUSSION:

The requested entitlements (for the Project) include a Specific Plan, Rezone, and Development Agreement. These entitlements and other project-related issues are further discussed below.

#### *Central Area Specific Plan*

The Salinas General Plan requires that Specific Plans be approved by the City Council prior to any development in the FGA. Subsequent to the adoption of the Salinas General Plan in 2002, the North of Boronda FGA was generally divided by the City (for planning purposes) into three proposed specific plan areas (the West Area, the Central Area, and the East Area). As such, the development of the North of Boronda FGA (including the proposed Project) has been anticipated by the City as part of a long-term coordinated planning and development process for this area. The Central Area Specific Plan is the second of these proposed specific plans to move forward into the entitlement phase. The West Area was approved by the Council in December 2019. It is anticipated that the proposed Central Area Specific Plan will be considered by the Council later this year. The East Area Specific Plan has not been submitted to the City at this time. It should be noted in 2011, the City Council approved a fourth specific plan (Gateway Center) to accommodate the development of the Lowe's Home Improvement store in advance of the West Area Specific Plan. This approximate 20-acre specific plan was originally within the boundaries West Area Specific Plan. The Salinas General Plan also requires that the Specific Plans incorporate New Urbanism Design Principles including but not limited to:

- Distinct identifiable neighborhoods that are pedestrian-oriented and promote a safe environment.
- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity.
- Narrow streets and traffic calming devices.
- Mix of housing, workplaces, retail, parks, schools, and other uses.
- Various housing types, higher densities, and affordability levels.

Additionally, it requires that residential development in the Specific Plans achieve a minimum average density of 9 dwelling units per net residential acre and that 35% to 45% of the residential dwellings be in the density range of 7 to 14 dwelling units per net residential acre and 15% to 25% be within the 16 to 24 dwelling units per net residential acre.

The Central Area Specific Plan serves as an implementation tool to realize the General Plan vision for the central portion of the North of Boronda FGA. In addition to the New Urbanism Design Principles noted above, other principles such as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), Health in All Polices, Green Streets and Smart Growth have also been incorporated into the Specific Plan. The Specific Plan also addresses the distribution and locations of land uses, the transportation, stormwater, and infrastructure improvements necessary to support the project, development regulations and design standards governing the built environment, public facility financing, project implementation and administration of the plan. The content of the Specific Plan is consistent with Government Code Section 65451 and Article VI, Division 15 of the Salinas Zoning Code.

At build-out (estimated to occur over 20 to 30 years), the project will include approximately 3,911 dwelling units (provided as a mix of low, medium and high densities in conformance with the General Plan), a Village Center with up to 489,700 square feet of mixed use commercial floor area, seventeen parks, three schools (one middle school and two elementary schools), a fire station site, a library site and other associated uses supporting the development including but not limited to open space (creek corridors) and utility-sites. These land uses are further summarized below:

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Approximate Acreage</b>	<b>Projected Dwelling Units/Mixed Use Commercial Square Feet</b>
NE-A	108.59	652
NE-B	89.33	715
NG-A	56.94	512
NG-B	31.46	315
NG-C	33.23	532 du/99,900 sq.ft.
VC-A and B	44.43	1,185 du/389,800 sq.ft.
Residential and Village Center Subtotal of Acreage.	363.98	Maximum - 3,911 du/489,700 sq.ft.
Elementary School #1	18.00	
Elementary School #2	12.00	
Middle School	18.00	
Neighborhood and Small Parks	44.06	
Open Space	104.29	
Public Facilities/Utilities	18.65	
Circulation/Roadways	181.46	
<b>Total</b>	<b>760.44</b>	

Key features of the Central Area Specific Plan include:

- A Village Center with a main street, town square and a mix of high-density housing and commercial uses easily accessible to residents of the Specific Plan and surrounding areas.
- Transect Planning: A clear, gradual transition, block by block, between the high density, active Village Center, and the lower density edges of the plan area.
- A mix of housing types and residential densities in conformance with General Plan requirements for medium and high densities.

- A centrally located community core of public facilities and services (comprised of the Village Center, library site, middle school, and park).
- Seven neighborhood parks and ten small parks conveniently located within a 5 to 10-minute walk of residences.
- Three school sites distributed throughout the Specific Plan.
- A vehicular circulation system that fosters the efficient and safe distribution of traffic trips incorporating traffic calming at key intersections and other locations nears schools, parks, and other areas to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- A network of paths, bike lanes/routes, transit stops and pedestrian-friendly streets connecting the schools, parks, the Village Center, and the project's residential neighborhoods.
- Two greenway streets and paths that will extend through the entire length of the Specific Plan and into the greater North of Boronda FGA. The southerly greenway street includes a 12-foot wide shared-use off-street path to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists. These paths/streets will connect to other paths and bike lanes/routes located both in the Central Area and to existing developed areas located to the north, south and west.
- Decorative street lighting and pedestrian amenities are incorporated throughout the Project.
- Low Impact Development (LID) features have been incorporated throughout the Project to ensure conformance with the City's stormwater requirements.

### ***Rezone***

The existing Zoning for the project site is New Urbanism Interim (NI) with a Specific Plan Overlay. Upon approval of the Rezone (and related entitlements), the project site will be rezoned to seven New Urbanism (NU) Zoning Districts: Neighborhood Edge A and B (NE-A and NE-B)/Low Density Residential, Neighborhood General A, B and C (NG-A, NG-B, and MG-C)/Medium Density Residential, Village Center A (VC-A) High Density Residential, and Village Center B (VC-B) as well as the Park (P), Open Space (OS) and Public/Semipublic Districts, as applicable (see Attachment 3, Zoning Map Upon Adoption of Specific Plan). These Zoning Districts generally align with the corresponding General Plan Land Use Designations for the project site. A Specific Plan Overlay will also be applicable to each district.

### ***Development Agreement***

A Development Agreement is currently being prepared pursuant to Government Code Section 65864. The Development Agreement will allow the applicants to proceed with the Project in accordance with existing policies, rules, and regulations, subject to the conditions of approval, thus vesting certain development rights in the property. As previously indicated, the participating property owners control approximately 639.49 acres of the 760-acre site. The proposed Development Agreement would be applicable to only these properties.

## CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The environmental impacts of this Project have been analyzed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study was prepared to evaluate the potential impacts associated with the Project. Based on the findings of the Initial Study, the City determined that the project would have the potential for significant impact on the environment and require preparation of an EIR. Upon this determination, DeNovo Planning Group, the City's consultant, initiated work on the DEIR. Several technical reports were prepared by the City's consultant to assess the potential impacts related to the Project. The areas of potential environmental effects analyzed in the Central Area Specific Plan DEIR include air quality, biological resources, cultural and tribal resources, greenhouse gasses, climate change and energy, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, noise, population and housing, public services, transportation and circulation, and utilities.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15128, the DEIR includes a statement indicating reasons that various possible significant effects of the Project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail. Moreover, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15183, the findings of the initial study on environmental topics that were either found to have no impact or be less than significant, or would be found to be sufficiently addressed in the General Plan FEIR (Cotton Bridges Associates 2002), and subsequent Final Supplement for the Salinas General Plan Final Program EIR (EDAW/AECOM 2007), are not included within individual sections of the DEIR. These areas include aesthetics, agricultural and forest resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, recreation, transportation, and circulation.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) (as well as the Draft Central Area Specific Plan) was circulated for the required 45-day public comment period from June 27, 2020 through August 11, 2020 in accordance with State law and concurrent with the State Clearinghouse review as provided in CEQA Guidelines Section 15105(c). The DEIR (including the technical studies) were made available to the public on the City website at: <https://www.cityofsalinas.org/our-city-services/community-development/documents-public-review>

## STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The Central Area Specific Plan aligns closely with the City Council's Vision (2020-2023) of Investment Strategies/Risk Management because it would provide housing across a variety of densities and income levels including Inclusionary Housing. Additionally, and as discussed further below, the project is expected to have an annual surplus for the City's General Fund. A Landscape Lighting and Maintenance District (LLMD) is proposed for certain maintenance responsibilities in the plan areas, supporting Council Goal of Operational efficiencies.

## DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Community Development Department staff is the lead on this Project in coordination with the Public Works Department regarding infrastructure, traffic, and stormwater-related issues. Coordination also occurred with the Police, Fire, Legal, and Library and Community Services Departments.

## FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

There is no fiscal or sustainability impact associated with the receipt of this report.

A fiscal impact analysis (Attachment 4) has been prepared for the Project to assess its net economic effects. The report considers the fiscal impact of both the West Area Project and the Central Area Project. At build out, the report indicates that the Project (plus the Central Area) is projected to generate an approximate annual surplus of between \$2,422,000 and \$5,872,000 for the City's General Fund based on three scenarios (conservative, baseline, and optimistic). Of this total amount, the Central Area Specific Plan is projected to generate an annual surplus of between approximately \$881,128 to \$2,496,714.

## ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Existing Conditions and Property Ownership Map

Attachment 2: Project Vicinity Site Map

Attachment 3: Zoning District Map Upon Adoption of Specific Plan

Attachment 4: Fiscal Impact Analysis

Attachment 5: DEIR Comment Letters:

- a) Association of Monterey Bay Governments received July 13, 2020
- b) California Department of Conservation received July 30, 2020
- c) Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC) received August 4, 2020
- d) California State University, Monterey Bay received August 10, 2020
- e) LandWatch received August 10, 2020
- f) California Department of Fish and Wildlife received August 11, 2020
- g) Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) received August 11, 2020
- h) California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) received August 11, 2020
- i) Alisal Union School District received August 11, 2020
- j) Salinas Union High School District received August 11, 2020
- k) Santa Rita Union School District received August 11, 2020
- l) Monterey Bay Air Resources District received August 11, 2020
- m) Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) received August 11, 2020