

**CITY OF FRESNO
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

THE PROJECT DESCRIBED HEREIN IS DETERMINED TO BE
CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM THE PREPARATION
OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PURSUANT TO
ARTICLE 19 OF THE STATE CEQA GUIDELINES.

APPLICANT: City of Fresno
Planning and Development Department
2600 Fresno Street, 3rd Floor
Fresno, CA 93721

PROJECT LOCATION: 1444 W. White Avenue, Fresno, CA 93728
(APN: 449-343-07T, 1.55 acres)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project pertains to 1.55 acres (67,518 sq ft) of City-owned property located at 1444 W. White Avenue (APN: 449-343-07T) and consists of the predevelopment and construction of the Travel Inn Affordable Rental Housing Development. The project proposes that the City of Fresno provide a conditional commitment for a contribution of City-owned property to the Cesar Chavez Foundation to assist with the conversion of the former Travel Inn motel site, located along the Parkway Drive Corridor, to be used for 118 units of permanent affordable housing reserved for households with an average income at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI).

This project site is exempt under Section 15332/Class 32 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines as follows:

Under Section 15332/Class 32, the proposed project site is exempt from CEQA requirements when the project site is characterized as in-fill development meeting the following conditions:

- a) The project site is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.

The project site development requests to predevelop and construct 118 newly constructed affordable rental housing units reserved for households whose income is at or below 80% AMI.

The project site is consistent with the following Fresno General Plan goals,

objectives and policies related to residential land use and the urban form:

Goals

Goal 7: Provide for a diversity of districts, neighborhoods, housing types (including affordable housing), residential densities, job opportunities, recreation, open space, and educational venues that appeal to a broad range of people throughout the city.

Goal 8: Develop Complete Neighborhoods and districts with an efficient and diverse mix of residential densities, building types, and affordability which are designed to be healthy, attractive, and centered by schools, parks, and public and commercial services to provide a sense of place and that provide as many services as possible within walking distance. The site is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations

Goal 11: Emphasize and plan for all modes of travel on local and Major Streets in Fresno. Facilitate travel by walking, biking, transit, and motor vehicle with interconnected and linked neighborhoods, districts, major campuses and public facilities, shopping centers and other service centers, and regional transportation such as air, rail, bus and highways

Objectives

Objective LU-1 establishes a comprehensive citywide land use planning strategy to meet economic development objectives, achieve efficient and equitable use of resources and infrastructure, and create an attractive living environment.

Objective LU-2 plans for infill development that includes a range of housing types, building forms, and land uses to meet the needs of both current and future residents.

Objective D-4 preserves and strengthens Fresno's overall image through design review and creates a safe, walkable and attractive urban environment for the current and future generations of residents.

Policies

Policy LU-1-a promotes new development, infill, and rehabilitation of existing building stock in the Downtown Planning Area, along BRT corridors, in established neighborhoods generally south of Herndon Avenue, and on other infill sites and vacant land within the City.

Policy LU-6-a fosters high quality design, diversity, and a mix of amenities in new development with uses through the consideration of guidelines, regulations and design review procedures.

Development Code

Multi-Unit Residential Housing uses are permitted uses in NMX Zone District in accordance with Fresno Municipal Code (FMC) Table 15-1102.

- a) Project Description: Cesar Chavez Foundation (Developer) is proposing to develop the Travel Inn Affordable Housing Development, which will consist of a 118-unit affordable rental housing complex (Project). On June 20, 2024, City Council adopted Resolution 2024-133 in support of a conditional commitment of City funds in the amount of \$6,000,000 to the Project for rehabilitation expenses associated with the conversion of the existing motel into affordable housing. To further assist with the Project, the City owns and intends to contribute the Property to the Developer through a long-term ground lease of \$1 per year for a term of 57 years. The City is also supportive of the Developer's funding application to the State of California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (CTCAC) for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program. The City's commitment of the Property is contingent upon the Developer's receipt of a full award from CTCAC for its funding application, sufficient evidence that the Project is fully funded, and approval of the disposition terms by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the City Council. Once approval from HCD and City Council has been obtained, and full funding for the Project has been secured, the City and Cesar Chavez Foundation will execute a ground lease of \$1 per year for a term of 57 years. The City's contribution of the Property and the Resolution will expire on December 31, 2024. Therefore, it is staff's opinion that the proposed project is consistent with respective general and community plan objectives and policies, and the applicable zoning designation and regulations of the Development Code and will not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of the City of Fresno.
- b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses. The proposed project site is located within the city limits, occurs on a site of approximately 1.55 acres total (less than the five-acre maximum), and is substantially surrounded by urban uses (Neighborhood Mixed Use to the North and South, Highway CA-99 to the East).
- c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species. The project site is a former motel and is currently a low-barrier emergency shelter for unhoused individuals, and substantially surrounded by urban uses such as motels and retail developments. Therefore, the site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species.
- d) Approval of the project site would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

Traffic

The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds adopted a screening standard and criteria that can be used to screen out qualified project sites that meet the adopted criteria from needing to prepare a detailed VMT analysis. As explained below, staff believes this project site will have a less than significant impact on traffic because of the site location within 0.5 mile of a Transit Priority Area as well as the high level of affordable housing units

The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds Section 3.0 regarding Project Screening discusses a variety of projects that may be screened out of a VMT analysis including specific development and transportation projects. For development projects, conditions may exist that would presume that a development project has a less than significant impact. These may be size, location, proximity to transit, or trip-making potential. For transportation projects, the primary attribute to consider is the potential to increase vehicle travel, sometimes referred to as “induced travel.”

The proposed project site is eligible to screen out pursuant to the City of Fresno VMT Thresholds Section 3.0 (Project Screening). Using the Fresno COG VMT Calculator Tool, it indicated the Transportation Analysis Zone in which the subject property is located would generate 10.97 VMT per capita. As the City’s established VMT threshold is 13.10 VMT per capita, the Project’s impact to VMT is less than the 13 percent minimum threshold, resulting in a less than significant impact.

In summary, this project site will not result in any significant traffic impacts or will have a less than significant impact on Regional VMT.

Noise

The project site development requests to predevelop and construct 118 newly constructed rental housing units reserved for households whose income is at or below 80% AMI. The project site is surrounded by commercial/retail uses.

Housing developments typically generate low noise levels due to limited automotive speeds within the complex and limited use of open space areas. Furthermore, noise from the existing adjacent major freeway (Highway CA-99) would exceed the noise levels produced within the multi-family development, assuring the proposed development would not cause a nuisance in exceeding noise decibel standard of the Fresno Municipal Code.

In any case, the project site is conditioned to comply with all applicable noise standards of the Citywide Development Code,

Air Quality

The project site is conditioned to comply with any applicable regulations and conditions from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the project site is subject to review by the agency regarding air quality during construction and operation. The project site, as described, will not occur at a scale or scope with potential to contribute substantially or cumulatively to existing or projected air quality violations or impacts.

Water Quality

The project site is conditioned to comply with any applicable regulations and conditions from the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District and the project site is subject to review by the agency regarding water quality during construction and operation. The project site, as described, will not occur at a scale or scope with potential to contribute substantially or cumulatively to existing or projected water quality violations or impacts.

The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The surrounding properties and neighborhood have been substantially developed and utilities and public services already exist in the area and the site can be adequately served by all required utilities, including sewer, water, and solid waste, as well as public services.

None of the exceptions to Categorical Exemptions set forth in the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15300.2, apply to the project site. Furthermore, the proposed project site is not expected to have a significant effect on the environment. A categorical exemption, as noted above, has been prepared for the project site and the area is not environmentally sensitive.

Date: July 30, 2024

Submitted by: Philip Skei
Assistant Director
City of Fresno
Planning and Development Department