

**Exhibit J –
Environmental
Assessment**

**CITY OF FRESNO
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR
DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. P25-01440**

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.

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PROJECT LOCATION: 6710 North Fresno Street; located on the south side of Herndon Avenue between North Fresno Street and North First Street in Fresno, California. (APN: 408-070-47)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Development Permit Application P25-01440 was submitted by David Crawford of RMW Architecture and Interiors on behalf of the California Teachers Associations and pertains to ±2.00 acres located at 6710 North Fresno Street.

The applicant proposes to construct an ±8,000 square foot office building which consists of training rooms. Training sessions will be held twice a month during business hours, and once a month the facility will be used for monthly CTA evening meetings held from 5 P.M. to 9 P.M. Occasional special training sessions will be held on the weekends from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. four times a year. In addition, the project consists of on and off-site improvements to be provided including landscaping and trees, one trash enclosures, one drive approach, and curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The parcel is zoned O/EA/cz (*Office, Expressway Area/conditions of zoning*).

This project 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 is exempt from CEQA requirements when the project is characterized as in-fill development meeting the following conditions:

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

The Fresno General Plan designates the subject site for Employment - Office planned land uses and provides objectives to guide in the development of these projects. Employment – Office districts are intended to provide sites for administrative, financial, business, professional, medical, and public offices, as identified by the General Plan. Retail uses would be limited to business services and food services and convenience goods for those who work in the area. This district is intended for locations where the noise or traffic generated by retail sales, restaurants, and service commercial may be incompatible with surrounding residential

neighborhoods. The proposed project meets all policies and objectives of the Fresno General Plan. The following are excerpts of such objectives.

Goal 1 - Increase opportunity, economic development, business, and job creation. Use urban form, land use, and Development Code policies to streamline permit approval, promote local educational excellence and workforce relevance, significantly increase business development and expansion, retain, and attract talented people, create jobs and sustained economic growth, strategically locate employment lands and facilities, and avoid over-saturation of a single type of housing, retail, or employment.

Goal 9 - Promote a city of healthy communities and improve quality of life in established neighborhoods.

Objective LU-1 - Establish 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.

- Policy LU-1-a - Promote 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.

Objective LU-2 - Plan 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.

- Policy LU-2-a - Promote development of vacant, underdeveloped, and re-developable land within the City Limits where urban services are available by considering the establishment and implementation of supportive regulations and programs.

Objective LU-6 - Retain and enhance existing commercial areas to strengthen Fresno's economic base and site new office, retail, and lodging use districts to serve neighborhoods and regional visitors.

- Policy LU-6-c - Promote the establishment of development standards for new offices, addressing location, size, and intensity necessary to meet the City's needs. Integrate and support employment in adjacent and proximate neighborhoods.
- Policy LU-6-d - Plan for neighborhood mixed use and community commercial uses to implement the Urban Form concepts of this Plan, promote the stability and identity of neighborhoods and community shopping areas, and allow efficient access without compromising the operational effectiveness of the street system.

The proposed Project is an office structure to be built with training rooms for the California Teacher's Association on the southeast corner of Herndon Avenue and Fresno Street within the City of Fresno. Training sessions will be held regularly at this location. Therefore, this is a business structure which will help to promote local educational excellence, will be located on a vacant infill site south of Herndon Avenue where there is existing infrastructure, and will enhance an existing commercial area surrounded by other commercial and business uses to create an attractive living environment.

Furthermore, the proposed project (Business and Professional Office) will meet all provisions of the Fresno Municipal Code. Thus, the project is consistent with the Fresno General Plan designation, policies, and zoning. The project does not propose any changes to the current land use designation and zoning, and further anticipates Office uses, all which are permitted uses within the existing Employment – Office zone district.

- 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 (Business and Professional Office) is located within the city limits, occurs on a vacant site of approximately ±2.00 acres, which is less than the five-acre maximum, and is bordered by general retail such as a CVS drug store to the north, single family residential to the south, medical and dental offices to the east and west.

- c) The project has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species*

The project site is currently vacant and contains previously disturbed land, and surrounding developments consists of General Retail such as a CVS Drug Store, Springhill Suites by Marriott, Medical and Dental offices, and single family residential; therefore, the site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species.

- d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.*

Traffic

Senate Bill (SB) 743 requires that relevant CEQA analysis of transportation impacts be conducted using a metric known as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) instead of Level of Service (LOS). VMT measures how much actual auto travel (additional miles driven) a proposed project would create on California roads. If the project adds excessive car travel onto our roads, the project may cause a significant transportation impact.

The State CEQA Guidelines were amended to implement SB 743, by adding Section 15064.3. Among its provisions, Section 15064.3 confirms that, except with respect to transportation projects, a project's effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact. Therefore, LOS measures of impacts on traffic facilities is no longer a relevant CEQA criteria for transportation impacts.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b)(4) states that “[a] lead agency has discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to evaluate a project's vehicle miles traveled, including whether to express the change in absolute terms, per capita, per household or in any other measure. A lead agency may use models to estimate a project's vehicle miles traveled and may revise those estimates to reflect professional judgment based on substantial evidence. Any assumptions used to estimate vehicle miles traveled and any revision to model outputs should be documented and explained in the environmental document prepared for the project. The standard of adequacy in Section 15151 shall apply to the analysis described in this section.”

On June 25, 2020, the City of Fresno adopted CEQA Guidelines for Vehicle Miles Traveled Thresholds, dated June 25, 2020, pursuant to Senate Bill 743 to be effective of July 1, 2020. The thresholds described therein are referred to herein as the City of Fresno VMT Thresholds. The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds document was prepared and adopted consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15064.3 and 15064.7. The December 2018

Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA (Technical Advisory) published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), was utilized as a reference and guidance document in the preparation of the Fresno VMT Thresholds.

The City of Fresno VMT Thresholds adopted a screening standard and criteria that can be used to screen out qualified projects that meet the adopted criteria from needing to prepare a detailed VMT analysis.

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 with transportation projects is the potential to increase vehicle travel, sometimes referred to as "induced travel."

Staff conducted research using the Fresno Council of Governments (COG) Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Screening Tool to determine the VMT for the proposed project. To meet its required VMT goals, the City of Fresno must reduce its VMT by 13%, which means that projects that generate VMT in excess of 13% or more than the existing regional VMT per capita would have a significant environmental impact. Projects that meet the threshold of a reduction in VMT are determined to have a less than significant effect on regional VMT. Using the COG tool, the proposed office project is located within a Medium-VMT zone and is estimated to generate 16.8 VMT which is lower than the 18.23 VMT Project area, but exceeds the (13%) threshold.

Based upon the City of Fresno's adopted VMT thresholds and guidelines, screening of projects is permitted if a project qualifies as a low trip generator (less than 500 average daily trips generated). The proposed Business and Professional Office project consists of approximately $\pm 8,000$ square feet of building area. The ITE Trip Generation Rates 9th Edition, using ITE Code Single Tenant Office Bldg 715, estimates the project will generate approximately 93 Average Daily Trips with 14 trips during the morning peak hours and 14 daily trips during the afternoon peak hours which is less than the established threshold. Projects generating fewer than 500 Average Daily Trips (ADT) are generally considered to result in a less-than-significant transportation impact and may be screen out from further VMT analysis due to their low trip generation. As the proposed project is expected to generate fewer than 500 daily trips, it qualifies as a low trip generator and meets the criteria for screening out under the City of Fresno's VMT Guidelines.

In summary, the VMT analysis demonstrates that the project will not adversely affect VMT and is projected to result in less-than-significant traffic impacts on regional VMT.

Noise

The project site is an infill site located within an urban neighborhood surrounded by existing urban uses including existing General Retail such as a CVS Drug Store, Springhill Suites by Marriott, Medical and Dental offices, and single family residential, and is located on the southeast corner of Herndon Avenue and Fresno Street. Herndon Avenue is designated as an expressway by the Fresno General Plan. As such, there are existing ambient noise levels at the Project site that are typical of these types of developments including traffic. Development of the site for a Business and Professional office would not generate a new, noise generating source that would not otherwise occur in the Project vicinity (i.e., 0.25-mile radius). The nearest sensitive land uses are single-family residences within ± 0.01 miles south of the site. Additionally,

while the project would require construction which would generate a higher DBA than the existing ambient noise levels, construction-related noise standards would be temporary, short-term, and subject to compliance with FMC Section 10-109, which limits construction hours. Operational uses would not create significant noise impacts since no amplifying system is proposed. While noise would mainly be generated for traffic, traffic generation would be limited as analyzed above. For these reasons, the project would not result in any significant effects relating to noise.

Air Quality

The proposed project is conditioned to comply with all applicable regulations and requirements from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) and the project is subject to review by the agency in regard to air quality during construction and operation.

Per the SJVAPCD's review, the project's estimated annual emissions from construction and operation are below the significance thresholds outlined in the District's *Guidance for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts* (GAMAQI). Specifically, emissions are expected to remain under two tons per year for both NO_x and PM₁₀. Consequently, under District Rule 9510 Section 2.1, the project is exempt from the rule's mitigation requirements and off-site emission reduction fee obligations. The district concluded that the project complies with the emission reduction requirements of District Rule 9510 and does not result in significant air quality impacts.

Additionally, the project qualifies for the SJVAPCD's Small Project Analysis Level (SPAL), which establishes screening criteria based on land use type, project size, and vehicle trip generation. The project's land use characteristics, classified under General Office Building, fall below SPAL thresholds, generating fewer than 1,000 Average Daily Trips (ADT). As such, the project is considered to have a less-than-significant impact on air quality under CEQA and is exempt from further quantification of criteria pollutant emissions.

Water Quality

The project is further conditioned to comply with any applicable conditions from Public Works or Utilities Department to ensure the project won't have an effect on water quality.

The site has been reviewed and conditioned by the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District (FMFCD), Fresno County Public Health, and the City of Fresno Department of Public Utilities in regard to water quality. On July 7, 2025, FMFCD issued a formal Notice of Requirements, outlining specific conditions for the project's stormwater management infrastructure. These include the construction and dedication of storm drainage facilities in accordance with the FMFCD's Flood Control Master Plan and City of Fresno standards.

To further protect water quality, FMFCD has established requirements that outdoor storage areas be designed and maintained to prevent potential pollutants from coming into contact with rainfall or runoff. Where feasible, roof drainage from non-residential buildings should be routed through landscaped grassy swale area to enhance pollutant removal. Runoff from areas where industrial activities occur, or where products and materials may contact stormwater, must be treated prior to discharging it off-site or entering the storm drainage system. Cleaning of such areas by sweeping instead of washing is to be required unless such wash water can be directed to the sanitary sewer system. Additionally, storm drains collecting untreated industrial runoff must not be connected to the FMFCD system. The project site is not located within a designated

flood prone area, further reducing the risk of stormwater-related water quality impacts.

To protect groundwater quality, Fresno County Environmental Health and the City of Fresno Department of Public Utilities have conditioned the applicant to properly destroy any existing or abandoned on-site water wells and septic systems in accordance with California Department of Water Resources Bulletins 74-81 and 74-90, Fresno County standards, and Fresno Municipal Code Section 6-518. These requirements ensure that the project will operate with all applicable water quality, stormwater, and groundwater protection standards, reducing the risk of contamination. Based on agency review and the implementation of the above conditions and infrastructure requirements, the project will conform to all applicable stormwater, water quality, and water service standards. Therefore, no significant water quality impacts were identified.

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

Given the surrounding properties and neighborhoods have been substantially developed and utilities and public services already exist in the area, 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. Furthermore, the proposed project is not expected to have a significant or cumulative effect on the environment. The project is not located on a hazardous waste site, a historical resource, or adjacent to a scenic highway. A categorical exemption, as noted above, has been prepared for the project and the area is not environmentally sensitive.

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