

**Department of Regional Planning
Department Statement**

Board of Supervisors Meeting: March 12, 2024

This item is a hearing on the appeal of Project No. R2014-02690-(3), Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”) No. 201400127 and the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program associated with Environmental Assessment No. 201400127, to authorize the conversion of an existing 4,042-square-foot single-family residence into a guest ranch with accessory special events on a 38-acre parcel located at **340 Kanan Road** in the A-1-20 (Light Agricultural – 20 Acre Minimum Required Lot Area) Zone within the **Santa Monica Mountains Planning Area**, applied for by Howard Leight.

This item appeals the Regional Planning Commission's (“RPC's”) decision to approve a CUP to authorize the conversion of an existing 4,042-square-foot single-family residence into a guest ranch with accessory special events (“Project”). The Project is located at 340 Kanan Road in the Santa Monica Mountains Planning Area (“Project Site”). The RPC approved the CUP on August 23, 2023. An appeal of the RPC’s decision was filed by the Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation on August 31, 2023. On September 6, 2023, the Applicant appealed two conditions of Project approval. Both appeals were timely filed.

The conversion would include adding an approximately 420-square-foot Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible restroom to the existing single-family residence. Three parking areas with permeable pavement—5,634 square feet, 10,924 square feet, and 9,280 square feet, respectively—would be placed at three previously graded locations along the existing 1,900-foot-long driveway. These parking areas would hold a total of 67 off-street parking spaces. An ADA-accessible parking lot shuttle would be available whenever guests are present. An existing unpermitted circular observation pad to the north of the single-family residence would be restored and revegetated with native plants. An existing vineyard would also be made to comply with current best management practices. A total of 350 cubic yards of grading is proposed (200 cubic yards cut and 150 cubic yards fill).

The facility would host a maximum of eight overnight guests and six employees. A total of one exterior special event with a capacity of up to 200 people would be allowed at the facility per calendar month, along with six interior special events of less than 100 people and six interior special events with 100 to 200 people per year. Special events would have alcohol service

only as part of catered events and alcohol service will be provided by licensed and certified servers.

A complete application for the Project was filed prior to the implementation of the current Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan in 2021, so the Project was evaluated for compliance with the previous version of the plan, which was adopted in the year 2000. The Project is consistent with the applicable policies of the 2000 Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan's Land Use Plan ("LUP").

The Project is consistent with LUP Policies IV-9, IV-13, IV-14, and IV-32, which refer to limiting landform alteration and preserving hillside topography. This is because all development would be located on areas that are already graded or developed with structures or landscaping. This will avoid the need to disturb natural vegetation or grade large amounts of earth to construct other improvements on steep slopes. No new fuel modification is proposed.

The Project is consistent with LUP Policies IV-47 and IV-52, which pertain to allowing appropriate recreational and boarding facilities. The Project will provide a recreational and conference facility on a developed Project Site that will require minimal additional development. Conditions of Project approval limiting exterior events to once a month, limiting the capacity of interior events, limiting hours of exterior activities, and requiring the installation of acoustic glass barriers will result in operations that are compatible with the surrounding rural setting.

The Project Site is consistent with LUP Policies V-26, V-28, and V-31, which pertain to limiting noise impacts. Conditions of Project approval limiting exterior events to once a month, limiting the capacity of interior events, limiting exterior amplified sound to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., limiting all exterior sound to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and requiring the installation of acoustic glass barriers around exterior event areas will result in operations that are compatible with the surrounding rural setting and unlikely to increase the ambient noise level. Conditions of Project approval requiring prior community notification of all events and requiring a noise control program will help ensure this compatibility.

The Project is consistent with LUP Policy VI-26, which discourages exterior lighting except when needed for safety. All lighting is required to comply with the Rural Outdoor Lighting District requirements in County Code Sections 22.44.500 through 22.44.590. In addition, several conditions of Project approval related to lighting requirements will ensure compatibility with rural surroundings. The Project will not include any lighting directed upward or offsite, including but not limited to DJ lighting, motion lights, or other special effects lighting of the site or event. All parking lot and other exterior lighting will be hooded and directed down and away from neighboring residences to prevent direct illumination and glare and will be turned off within thirty minutes after conclusion of activities, except for sensor-activated security lights and/or

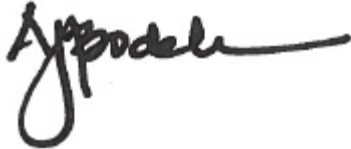
low-level lighting along all pedestrian walkways leading to and from the parking lot. In-ground well lights will be angled or shielded to direct light towards landscaping or structures and will not be directed towards the sky or off-site. String lights are also required to have warm tones of low Kelvin color temperature.

The RPC found that a Mitigated Negative Declaration (“MND”) is the appropriate environmental documentation under CEQA and the County environmental guidelines. The Initial Study concluded that there are certain potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the Project that can be reduced to less than significant with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, as delineated in the- Project’s Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. The areas of environmental impact found to be less than significant with mitigation measures incorporated include the following:

- **Biological Resources.** Potential for construction-related activities occurring during the breeding season could result in disturbance of active bird nests. Mitigation measures include avoiding construction during the avian breeding season, or if not feasible, hiring a qualified biologist to conduct weekly bird surveys leading up to construction to detect protected native birds. Project activities will be delayed as needed to accommodate nesting. Potential for fuel modification activities could result in impacts to sensitive plants. Mitigation measures include the hiring of a biological monitor to prepare a habitat restoration plan, as well as annual sensitive plant surveys. Potential for operational activities could result in noise and light disturbance of wildlife. Mitigation measures include the installation of acoustic glass sound barriers and preparation of a rural outdoor lighting plan.

As identified in the MND, after implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the Project would result in no significant and unavoidable impacts to the environment. Staff recommends that the Board deny the appeal and uphold the RPC's approval of the Project.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy J. Bodek', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

AMY J. BODEK, AICP
Director of Regional Planning