

STAFF REPORT

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Application:	Tanimura & Antle Use Permit
Date of Hearing:	January 16, 2019
Applicant/Owner:	Tanimura & Antle / Avila Construction
File Number:	PLN 180013
Location:	1298 Orchard Road, Hollister
APN:	016-090-018-0
General Plan:	A Agriculture
Zoning:	AP Agricultural Productive
Project Planner:	Richard Felsing

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant proposes to construct a vegetable transplant nursery, in six separate phases over six years, consisting of greenhouses and related facilities with about 100,000 square feet of office, storage & maintenance areas, 700,000 square feet of greenhouses, and 500,000 square feet of outdoor growing and work area. The proposed project site is a 96.52-acre parcel that hosted greenhouses for several decades during the 1970s and 1980s, and was intensively cultivated as early as the 1930s. The facility will use a mechanized transplanting method known as ‘planttape’ technology to reduce time, labor, and costs from germination to field.

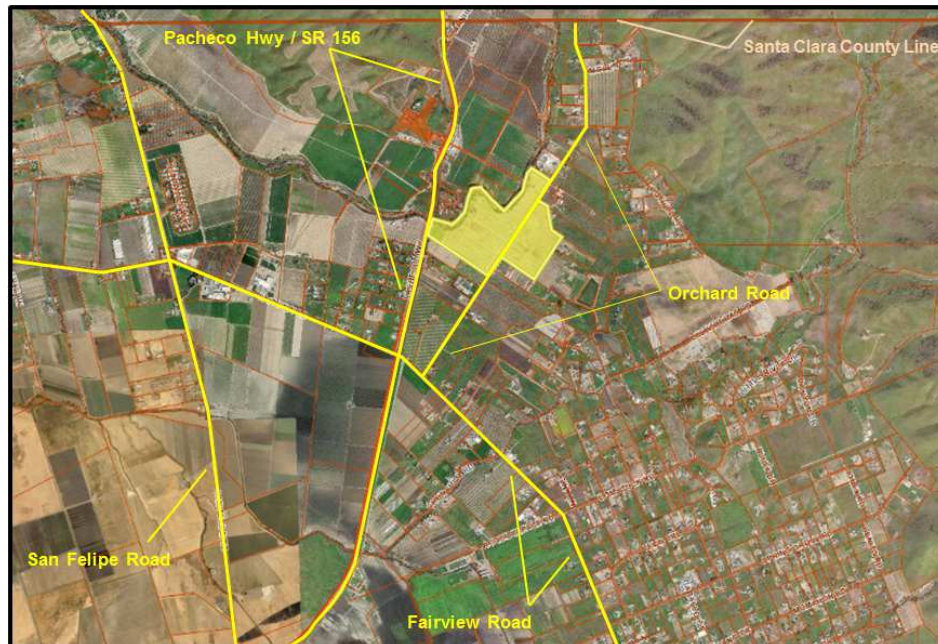


Figure 1. Project Site and Vicinity, with Road Network

SITE CONTEXT: The 96.52-acre Tanimura & Antle property is bounded by Pacheco Creek to the north and west, and by Orchard Road to the southeast. South of the parcel are orchards and cultivated fields, while a light industrial facility is adjacent to the north. Pacheco Highway/SR 156 runs along a small segment on the west side of the property.

The proposed project is situated in an area of mixed agricultural and residential land uses characteristic of the Agriculture (A) land use designation outlined in the General Plan (*See*

Table 3-1, page 3-4), consistent with Agricultural Productive (AP) zoning. This balance has favored agriculture on large lots to the northwest and across SR156, tending toward rangeland in the northeast foothills. To the southeast, in general, a higher density of single-family residences on smaller lots includes less-intensive agricultural activity, especially on the south end of Los Viboras Road, south to Comstock Road, and beyond. This distinction is becoming less pronounced as new homes and subdivisions are completed near SR156 and across Pacheco Creek from the proposed greenhouses (*See Figure 1, previous page*).

<u>Scenic Highway:</u>	No
<u>Seismic Hazards:</u>	No. The Quien Sabe Fault is about 2,410 feet from Orchard Road and the proposed project.
<u>Fire Hazard:</u>	Non-Wildland/Non-Urban.
<u>Floodplain:</u>	Not in a Floodplain. Zone X: Areas determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain, according to FEMA FIRM Panel: 06069C0075I, effective April 15, 2009.
<u>Archaeological Areas:</u>	High Sensitivity confined to one location.
<u>Habitat:</u>	Within impact fee area
<u>Soils:</u>	Grade 1 Soils
<u>Williamson Act:</u>	Not under a Williamson Act contract.

The project is not in a seismic fault zone; the parcel and Orchard Road are approximately 2,410 feet from the Quien Sabe Fault. The Non-Wildland/Non-Urban designation indicates a low severity fire risk. The parcel is not in a floodplain. Although it does consist almost entirely of Grade 1 soils, the entire parcel will remain in agriculture and agricultural support uses.

THE PROJECT

The transplant nursery proposes to use ‘planttape’ technology, an automated transplant system involving a tape or belt with evenly-spaced ‘belt loops’ for seedling plugs. The tape with seedlings is rapidly folded and packed for transport and unspooled in the planting process, thereby controlling the distance between plants, standardizing the process, and reducing time and labor costs. The central building would be constructed first, and is to consist of 100,000sf of administration, storage, receiving and shipping, and germination space, as well as the planttape transplant system. Seedlings are transferred from the main building to greenhouses on belts and workbenches, and then to outdoor growing areas, at each successive stage of growth.



Figure 2. The planttape transplant system

Development of the site will be paced in response to favorable market conditions. While development is envisioned as occurring in six phases over six years, with an eventual build-out of 700,000sf of greenhouses, and 500,000sf of outdoor growing areas, these stages will be undertaken when the owner-operators determine that the next step is warranted by operational need and favorable outlook.

An updated Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment was requested, in conformance to ASTM Practice E 1527-13 requirements; the initial Phase 1 Environmental Assessment. The updated Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Report (CapRock Geology) recommends that a limited Phase II Environmental Site Assessment be conducted and reviewed prior to any project approvals. The Phase II Assessment will consist of sampling of shallow soil in the vicinity of the ASTs for hydrocarbons and shallow soil sampling near the discharge pipe to Pacheco Creek for pesticides, herbicides and heavy metals.

Prior to commencing with any Phase 1 construction activity, the entire site will be graded; involving roughly 82,000cy/82,000cy cut and fill. The owners/applicants shall (are conditioned to) submit a Final Site Grading Plan to Public Works for review and approval. The Final Site Plans will include Landscape Plans, and architectural plans inclusive of Lighting Design Plans. Twenty-two trees will be removed, in conformance to the County tree protection ordinance, and adhering to the recommendations of the Tree Report prepared by Certified Arborist Jeff Ono. Site design uses natural nonpoint drainage patterns to direct runoff southwest into the proposed bioswale running along the south property boundary, where it would move westward into the proposed detentions basins. The required 50' riparian buffer is incorporated into the site design, running along the west and north property boundaries.

Water and Septic Service. The parcel contains two existing water wells (one potable), and has access to blue valve water service ('San Felipe water'). The blue valve water and existing wells would be used for irrigation and for operations, as both qualify as agricultural purposes. To supply drinking water, a second well would be drilled in close proximity to the existing well, near Pacheco Creek and within the riparian buffer.

On-site septic would provide treatment for the 54-person occupant load, plus visitors. Applicants have worked with County Department of Environmental Health to configure the site so that truck traffic and employee parking will not impact, travel over, or park on the leach field.

PLANNING AND ZONING

The property is designated as Agriculture (A) by the General Plan and Agricultural Productive (AP) under the Zoning Ordinance. The Agriculture land use category is designed "to maintain productive agricultural lands" across a wide range of agricultural activities and land uses. Agricultural support uses such as processing facilities and greenhouses are allowed under this designation, subject to issuance of a use permit.

The proposed transplant nursery would maintain productive agricultural lands in the County of San Benito by increasing farm operation efficiency from-germination-to-seedling-to-field by utilizing an automated 'planttape' technology. This would also keep outlying fields in

continuous cultivation, maximizing output and maintaining the farm operator's ability to thrive in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

The proposed facility is an agricultural use that enables the farm operator to "manage their land and operations in an efficient, economically viable manner," fulfilling General Plan policy objectives in several ways (Goal LU-3, long term preservation of the agricultural industry; LU-3.2, Agricultural Integrity and Flexibility). It also qualifies as an "agriculture support use" that enables the farm operator to make more effective use of other agricultural lands, and maintaining the economic viability of the farm operation in the process.

Under Agricultural Productive (AP) zoning commercial greenhouses are allowed but require a conditional use permit (§25.07.005(B) Commercial greenhouses and mushroom growing facilities). Agriculture is a permitted use; approval of commercial-scale operations require approval by the Planning Commission (§25.07.004, §25.07.005).

The proposed facility is consistent with the applicable Agricultural Productive (AP) zoning provisions, subject to conditional approval by the Planning Commission.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Intensifying and automating the nursery transplant process enhances the reliability and efficiency of a core agricultural process and provides a critical competitive edge to the applicant/farm operator.

Returning the 91 vacant, underutilized acres to active use by reestablishing a greenhouse complex on the site would reverse the condition of the property, taking it all the way from a degraded, neglected, and dis-used parcel to a property developed to the highest and best use.

Hosting the intensive, mechanized transplant process on this parcel would be a highly efficient land use. By siting the proposed greenhouse complex on a parcel that had already been heavily impacted by extensive greenhouse complex, the owner is able to confine major environmental impacts to the already heavily-impacted parcel, while developing a facility that would contribute to the competitiveness and continued viability of the local agricultural economy.

Siting the facility on the vacant, unused parcel provides ready access to Fairview Road and SR156, and from there to the region's transportation backbone, allowing effective, easy access to row-cropped agricultural fields, county-wide. The project is suitably located in relation to public infrastructure, and within emergency service areas with adequate response times.

While the facility's function fits the mixed agricultural-residential landscape context, the project is not likely to adversely affect other properties. Standard and special conditions of approval and mitigation measures developed during the review process would reduce the potential for the project to cause damage, hazards, or nuisance conditions to persons or property.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION: An Initial Study was prepared by Denise Duffy & Associates and managed and reviewed by County staff. The document was circulated from November 21, 2018 to December 20, 2018. Comments were received from the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) to ensure government-to-government consultation occurred under AB-52, and from the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) to verify greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) calculations. Documentation of the work conducted was provided to the inquiring agencies, resolving the inquiries. *See Attachment 3 of Exhibit B: Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration(IS/MND).* All concerns have been addressed and no outstanding issues remain. The document represents the independent determinations of staff. Mitigation measures have been prepared for potential impacts on aesthetic, biological, cultural, land use, and transportation resources. Implementation of mitigation measures and standard and custom conditions of approval will assure a less than significant impact on the environment. Therefore staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider the study with the draft mitigation measures and that a determination be made to prepare and adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the attached Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and act on the draft resolution that includes findings and standard and special conditions of approval, consistent with the County of San Benito General Plan and Zoning Ordinances, to approve Use Permit PLN 180013

EXHIBITS

- A. Project Data Sheet
- B. Draft Resolution approving PLN 180013; with:
 - Attachment 1: Site Plan Set
 - Attachment 2: Project Description and Environmental Setting
 - Attachment 3: Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)
 - Attachment 4: MBARD Comment Letter





Exhibit A: Project Data Sheet PLN 180013
Tanimura & Antle / Avila Construction / 1298 Orchard Road, Hollister

Project proposal: To construct a vegetable transplant nursery on the 96.52-acre parcel west of Orchard Road, to consist at full build-out of 100,000sf main building for operations, 700,00sf of greenhouses, and 500,000sf of outdoor growing areas

Assessor Parcel Number: 016-090-018-000

Legal Lot of Record: The 129.34 acre parcel appears as Parcel 2 on Book 3 of Parcel Maps at Page 15, County of San Benito, or 3 PM 15, with a recordation date of June 4, 1976. The property was conveyed from Peter N. Groot, Trustee of the P & E Groot Family Trust to the Tanimura & Antle Land Company, LLC, by grant deed recorded on June 11, 2015 as Rec File No. 2015-0005577. The grant deed was re-recorded

Permit Requirement: Use Permit

Zoning: AP Agricultural Productive

General Plan: A Agriculture

Land Use: Not currently in use; dormant.

Minimum Building Site Allowed: 5 Acres

Lot Sizes:	Parcel	141.86 acres total
	West of Orchard	96.52 acres
	East of Orchard	45.34

Sewage Disposal: On-site Septic

Water: An existing well is situated on the bank of Pacheco Creek. A second well will be sited nearby to supply drinking water to employees and visitors.

CEQA Determination: An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) were prepared, and mitigation measures were developed that would reduce potential project impacts to a level that would have a less than significant effect on the environment.

FEMA Flood Zone: Not in Floodplain. Zone X, areas determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain, according to FEMA FIRM 06069C0090D, effective April 15, 2009.

Fire Severity: Non-Wildland/Non-Urban

Within earthquake fault zone: No. Orchard Road is approximately 2,410 feet from the Quien Sabe Fault. The project site is west of Orchard Road. The entire parcel, on both sides of Orchard, is well outside the seismic study zone.

Williamson Act Contract Area: No

Is the proposal consistent with the General Plan Designation and Zoning? Yes. The proposed vegetable transplant nursery is an agricultural activity as defined by Agricultural Productive (AP) zoning, requiring a conditional use permit (§25.07.005(B) Commercial greenhouses and mushroom growing facilities). The Agriculture (A) land use designation allows agricultural support uses in order to maintain the productivity of agricultural land. The proposed transplant nursery intensifies the process in a way that will increase agricultural productivity in the fields receiving the seedlings, and increase operational efficiency on the subject parcel.