

STAFF REPORT

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Application: The Bluffs at Ridgemark Tentative Subdivision Map
County File # TSM 15-94

Date of Hearing: March 21, 2018

Applicant: Bates Stringer Hollister LLC

Property Owner: Roy and Rita Lompa

Location: The project site is bordered on the west by Southside Road, on the south by agriculture, and on the north and east by the Ridgemark Country Club development.

APN: 025-420-005, 025-420-006, 025-420-019

General Plan Designation: RM Residential Mixed

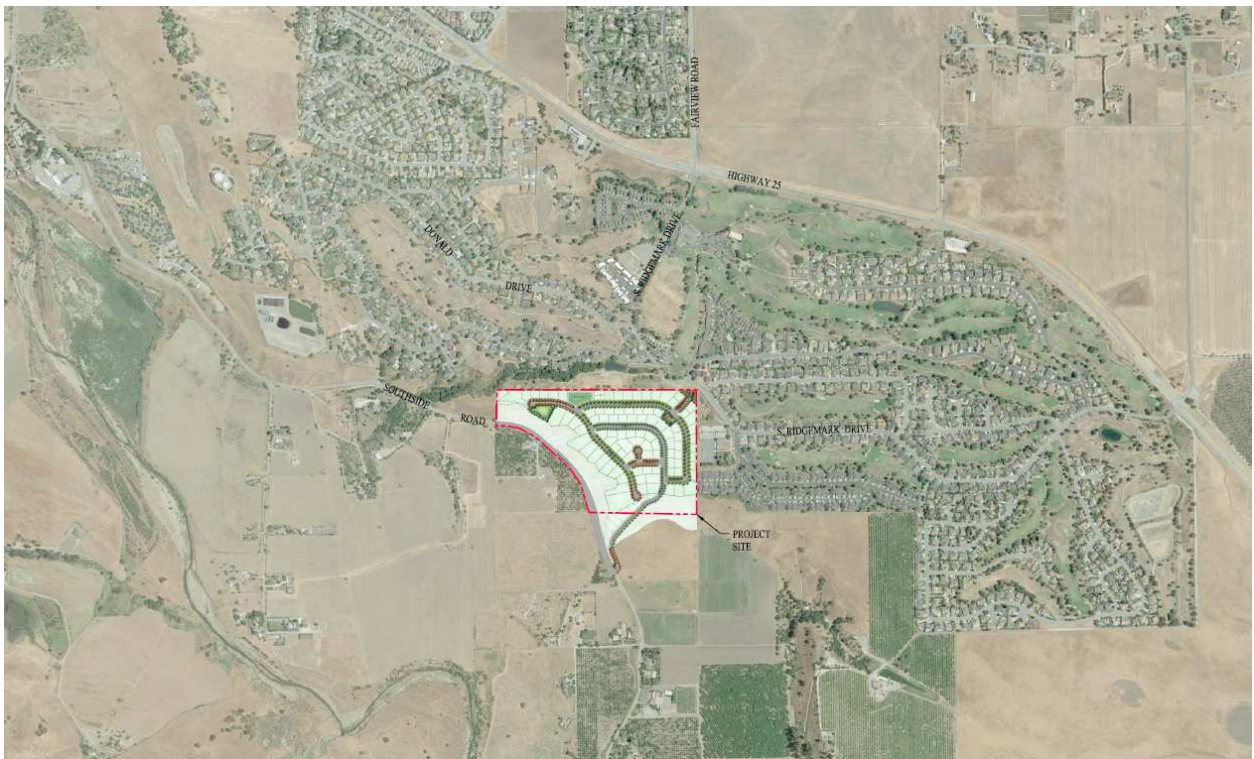
Zoning District: R-1 Single Family Residential

CEQA: An Environmental Impact Report has been prepared

Project Planner: Taven M. Kinison Brown

BACKGROUND

The project site is located in unincorporated San Benito County, California, approximately 0.7 mile south of the city of Hollister (outside the City's sphere of influence) and approximately 0.4 mile south of State Route (SR) 25 ("project site"). The project site is generally bordered on the west by Southside Road, on the south by agriculture, and on the north and east by the Ridgemark Country Club development.



SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site includes an approximate 49.2-acre blufftop site adjacent to the existing Ridgemark Country Club development and approximately 0.3 acre within an adjacent parcel to the south that would be developed with a street down to Southside Road.

Approximately 12.1 acres on the western and southern edge of the blufftop site are comprised of steep slopes and Southside Road (which currently runs through a portion of the southwestern edge of the blufftop site). The remaining 37.1 acres of the blufftop site are currently used for agricultural production. The adjacent area to the south contains a steep slope that is not currently farmed; the project site in this area is currently used as a dirt access road. There are no residences on the project site. Existing improvements are limited to a Sunnyslope County Water District (SSCWD) well and related structures, located near the center of the northern boundary of the project site. Access to the area with the existing well is provided via a dirt access road from Ridgemark Drive to the east, along the northern boundary of the project site.

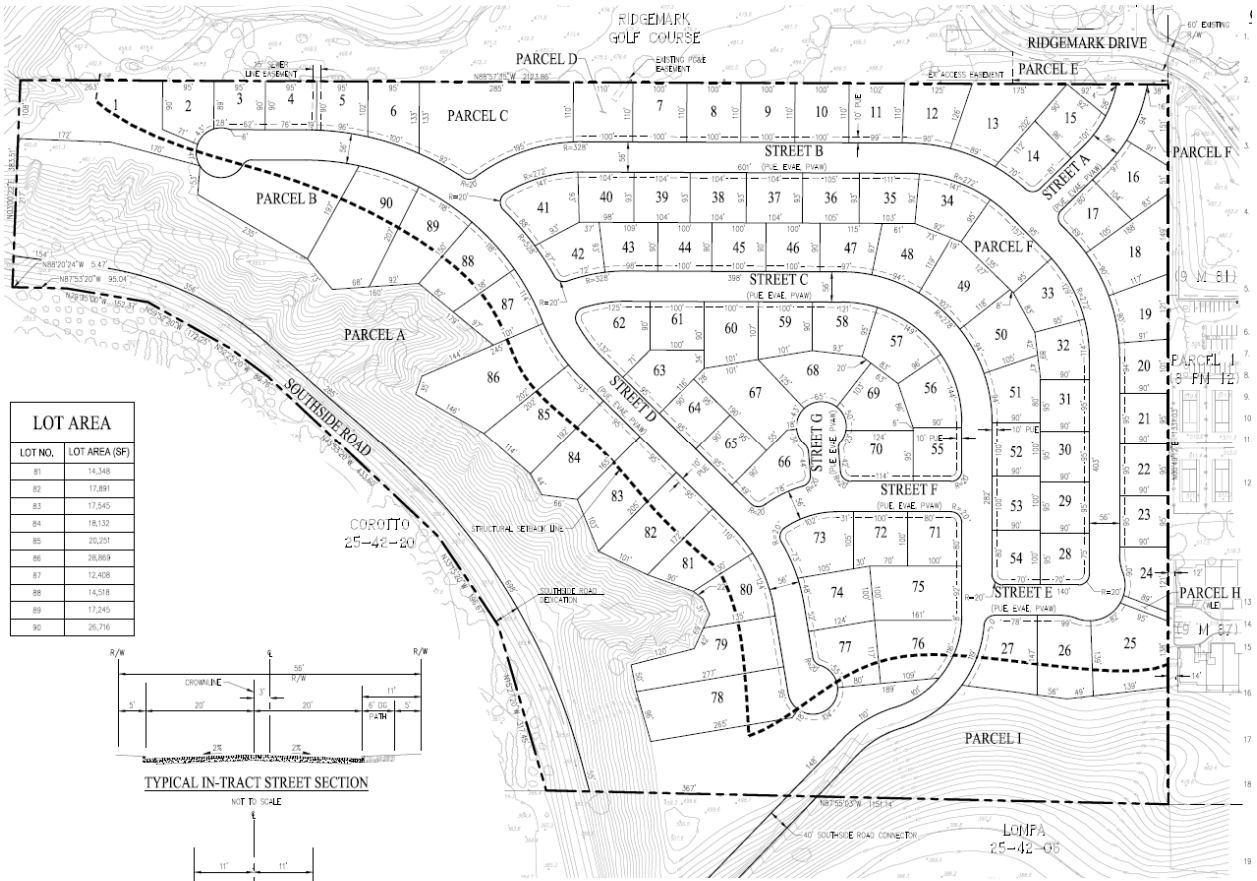


PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project involves a vesting tentative tract map and other discretionary approvals that would allow for the development of 90 single-family residences, three parks, and on-site and off-site improvements necessary to serve the residential uses (See **EXHIBIT A**).

It is anticipated the lots would range in size between 8,464 square feet square feet to 33,769 square feet. The proposed density is 1.8 dwelling units per gross acre. Approximately 12.1 acres of the western and southern portions of the blufftop site are undevelopable due to steep slopes and required setbacks from the slope. Thus, the residential development would occur away from these slopes, on approximately 37.1 acres of the blufftop site. An emergency vehicle access road was proposed to be developed on a 0.3-acre adjacent area, yet this proposal has recently matured to a full-street access to Southside Road following environmental review

and review by public safety officials. The project would be composed of one-story and two-story dwellings. The maximum height of the proposed residences would not exceed 33 feet.

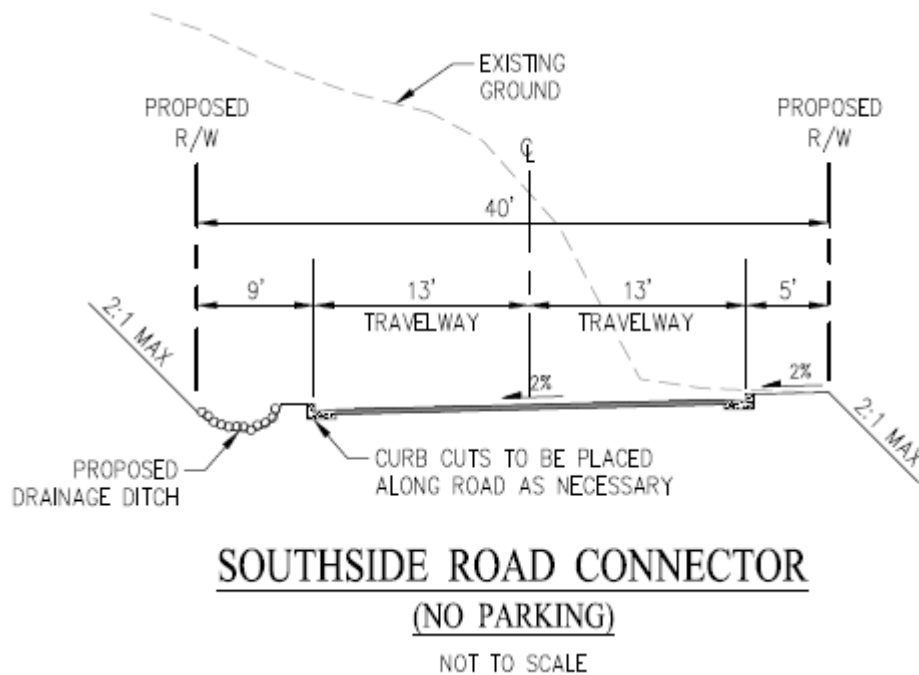


Plan sets dated March 6, 2018 represent the latest iteration of the proposed Vesting Tentative Map 15-94. This plan set also introduces the new branding for “The Bluffs at Ridgemark,” to now be marketed as, “The Promontory at Ridgemark.” The plan set includes four sheets: The Lotting Plan, Grading and Drainage Plan, Utility Plan, and Preliminary Erosion Control Plan. An additional late arrival (March 1, 2018) is a 21-page colorful information package that includes Regional and Local Photos, Landscape Plans and the 4 Civil drawings for VTM 15-94.

- Lotting Plan. Sheet 1 of 4, includes a table of the proposed residential lot sizes numerically keyed to a site plan and shows the adjacency and connection point to the Ridgemark Community. General Notes are included on this sheet as well as interim street names A- F, and lettered Parcels A – I noting open spaces and utility spaces. Also notable to this sheet are the detailed sectional drawings for a typical 56-foot wide internal right of way with curb to curb pavement of 40 feet, a 6-foot wide decomposed granite pathway, and two 5-foot wide strips, for street trees and landscaping.

The other notable detail On Sheet 1 of 4 is the Southside Road Connector; the southward extension of C Street. Forty feet of right of way will be recorded that

includes 26 feet for the vehicle travel way, and another 9 and 5 feet on both side for drainage and curbs and a raised pedestrian/bicycle apron.



Notes on the Lotting Plan sheet indicate that all streets within the subdivision will be private streets maintained by the Ridgemark Homes Association, and that the project may be built in phases and multiple Final Maps may be filed.

- Grading and Drainage Plan. Sheet 2 of 4. Several items to note here are the Rough Earthwork Summary table and the delineation between the bluff protection of Parcel A and the proposed property lines.
 - The earthwork is anticipated to balance out on the site with ~67,400 cubic yards of cut and ~67,400 cubic yards of fill after considering shrinkage and compaction. This means that large trucks hauling numerous loads of soil to or from the site will not be required. An additional note also indicates that the site was designed to have no retaining walls, while acknowledging that small 3' tall walls may be considered for leveling individual lots.
 - An inspection of Parcel A clearly shows the trace of the Southside Road-facing bluffs between the dark tight topographical lines and the more spaced topographical lines indicating flatter/less steep areas. While property lines may begin at the top of these slopes, the dashed line indicates an area of structural exclusion. This has been incorporated into the map for geologic and stability concerns, as well as for aesthetic considerations to move the visibility of new structures back from the bluff.
- Utility Plan. Sheet 3 of 4. Cross sections show storm drains, sanitary sewer and water pipe locations in a typical private street layout. Also detailed are the routes of the off-site sanitary sewer force main, 90 lineal feet of pipe bridge and the sewer connection point to Marks Drive in the Ridgemark Community above the northwest corner of the subdivision. Parcel C is noted as a retention basin, and Parcel D is noted as an existing

well site. Parcel H that connects to Helen Court will include an 8” water line connection. Another note indicates that an existing 12” water line laid within the Ridgemark Golf Course adjacent to the northern property line of the subject property will be relocated to Street B within the new subdivision.

- Preliminary Erosion Control Plan. Sheet 4 of 4. Mainly shows that a silt fence will be placed at the top of bluff slope during the construction period, and that the balance of the site will be hydro-seeded following installation of utilities and other components of site preparation. Straw wattles will be placed along the streets in front of most home sites, and inlet protection will be provided at storms.

Please refer to the applicant’s 21-page colored information package for supplemental regional and local photos, conceptual landscape plans and the civil drawings for VTM 15-94 **(EXHIBIT B)**.

ANALYSIS

Gen Plan and Zoning Consistency

The Project is drawn with lots ranging from 8,464 square feet to 33,769 square feet. While the General Plan calls for the project to have 30% of the project be more dense at an average of 8 units an acre (average lot size of 5,445 square feet for 27 lots), it has never been the intent of the applicant to create such sized lots. Looking back in the planning record, the applicant’s project submittal was made August 18, 2015, only one month after the County adopted the new (July 21, 2015) General Plan with the 30% higher density requirement. This also means that the applicant must have been in discussion with the County prior to the new General Plan adoption and may have designed to earlier General Plan provisions. Additionally, staff cannot find in the record any discussion by staff with the applicant about the density of subdivision design and needing to meet such a density requirement. As the project has at least three years of history in development review at the RMA, and has experienced a changed general plan, complete change-over of County project planners, and the environmental documents have been under preparation for nearly 2 years and are now completed, staff cannot recommend that the PC hold the line on this density requirement and the need for the applicant to redraw his map.

Through the applicant, staff has heard that the Ridgemark Home Association (RHA) was reported to have desired lots averaging 10,000 square feet or better, in keeping with the lotting pattern and development history of that community. The applicants have had to work closely with and consult with the RHA to get this far, and have more negotiations ahead, should the project be approved.

The General Plan’s Public Facilities Element, Policies 1.1 through 1.13 describe improvement design standards for infrastructure and public services. Staff has determined the subdivision design and improvements described in TSM 15-94 and the subsequent full extension of Street C southward to Southside Road, establishing a full-use secondary access point for the subdivision, are consistent with the above mentioned policies.

While not subject to a specific plan, the proposed project’s is consistent with the uses allowed in the County’s Single-Family Residential R1-District zoning designation. Permitted uses in the R1 zone include single-family dwellings with a minimum building site area of 5,000 square

feet (where a public sewer and public water supply are available). The Project proposes to be served by nearby roadways and to connect to the Sunnyslope County Water District (SSCWD) for sewer service and for water service, (subject to any required approvals from other public agencies, e.g., LAFCO). All home sites would be on lots greater than 5,000 square feet, and would therefore be consistent with this requirement.

Improvement Standards and Design

Parkland Dedication. On October 11, 2017 the Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the applicant's proposal for providing park space into the design of the subdivision. The applicant has proposed 3.2 acres of parks on-site, yet is also required by Code to pay a fee in lieu to meet the requirements of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As the on-site park space will be enjoyed in a gated community and not for the general public, such an amenity does not count towards providing public park space. Payment of an in-lieu fee was determined sufficient. Per Code, fair market value of the in lieu fee is to be determined by the County Assessor (Section 23.15.008(F) (1)).

Affordable Housing. While no affordable housing has been proposed within the design and improvements of the subdivision, the applicant has offered to pay a \$4,500 fee to the County per unit at the time of building permit issuance to compensate the County for the project's share of affordable housing. Over time as building permits are issued for the 90 homes to be constructed, \$405,000 will be collected. This has been included as a Condition of Approval.

Water and Sewer. Subject to obtaining basic sewer and water utility services from the Sunnyslope County Water District, the project will be required to design and install improvements (such as a potential sewer lift station, pipes and connection points) appropriate to the needs of the SSCWD). Systems may need to be sized in a manner that will allow for future connections and service capacities. A condition of approval has been added to the project requiring proof of these services and written contractual agreements for these services, prior to ground disturbance and preparation of the property for infrastructure or residential development.

Access. The Project proposes road right-of-way, drainage improvements, water piping, and other infrastructure to serve the Project. These have been reviewed by the appropriate County departments and have been determined to be consistent with the design standards set forth in the San Benito County Code. The General Plan's Circulation Element, Policies 1.2 through 2.6 describe improvement design standards for road improvements and requirements for new development within the County; the improvements set forth in the proposed map have been determined to be consistent with all of the above mentioned policies.

Staff has evaluated the proposed vesting tentative subdivision map and all associated materials provided in connection with the application for TSM 15-94, and has determined that any easements for public access or use have been identified (Southside Road) on the tentative map and shall be maintained. Easements and access through or use of the property within the subdivision, will be subject to private agreements and negotiation.

It is staff’s understanding from the applicant and comment letters received on the environmental evaluation that HOA members do not care for the bicycle/pedestrian paths, nor the park location at entrance Parcel F. The bicycle/pedestrian paths proposed by the applicant appear to staff to be a supportable amenity in keeping with the General Plan, sound planning principles for connectedness between neighborhoods, and for providing recreational opportunities for the public and private members of the Ridgemark Community.

Prior to Final Map approval, the applicant will need to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the County Engineer that the design of the subdivision includes appropriate physical access and the rights and privileges to that access. Potential environmental issues and community concerns related to access and connection points are addressed in the DEIR and FEIRs prepared for the project, and as discussed ahead.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

On October 7, 2016, the County of San Benito circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a 30-day period to help identify the types of impacts that could result from the proposed project, as well as potential areas of controversy. As discussed in Section 1.3 of the Draft EIR, the NOP was mailed to public agencies (including the State Clearinghouse), organizations, and individuals considered likely to be interested in the proposed project and its potential impacts. Comments received by the County of San Benito on the NOP are summarized in Table 2 of the Draft EIR and were taken into account during the preparation of the Draft EIR. (Follow the internet links provided in **EXHIBIT C** of this report.)

The Draft EIR was made available for public review on September 15, 2017, and was distributed to local and State responsible and trustee agencies. Copies of the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR were mailed to a list of interested parties, groups and public agencies, as well as property owners and occupants of neighboring and nearby properties. The Draft EIR and an announcement of its availability were posted electronically on the County’s website, and a paper copy was available for public review at the County’s Planning Department building.

The 45-day CEQA public comment period began on September 15, 2017, and formally ended on October 30, 2017. However, the County extended the public review period by 15 days to November 14, 2017, for a total of 60 days. The County of San Benito received 18 comment letters on the Draft EIR. Copies of all written comments on the Draft EIR received during the comment period are included in Section 3 of that document.

From the Introduction of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Bluffs at Ridgemark Subdivision proposal, “The EIR addresses the issues determined to be potentially significant from responses to the Notice of Preparation in addition to the other environmental topic areas required under CEQA. Environmental topic areas that are addressed in the EIR include:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Resources • Geology and Soils • Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change • Hazards and Hazardous Materials • Hydrology and Water Quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Services • Recreation • Transportation and Circulation • Tribal Cultural Resources • Utilities and Service Systems
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The EIR addresses the issues referenced above and identifies potentially significant environmental impacts of the project, including in combination with cumulative development in the County, in accordance with provisions set forth in the State CEQA Guidelines. The EIR also recommends mitigation measures, where needed and feasible, that would reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects. In preparing the EIR, pertinent County policies and guidelines, existing EIRs, and other background documents were used, as appropriate. A full reference list is contained in Section 7.0, References and Preparers of the DEIR. Please refer to **EXHIBIT D** for a full disclosure of potential impacts and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

Alternatives to the Proposed Project. The Alternatives Section of the EIR (Section 6.0) was prepared in accordance with section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines and focuses on alternatives that are capable of eliminating or reducing significant adverse effects associated with the project while feasibly attaining most of the basic project objectives.

The alternatives evaluated include the "No Project" Alternative (required by CEQA law) and two other alternative development scenarios for the project site:

- **Alternative 1: No Project/No Development.** The No Project/No Development Alternative assumes that the proposed project is not implemented, and that the project site remains in its current state of open space and agricultural use.
- **Alternative 2: Full Secondary Access to Southside Road.** This alternative would have the same project description as the proposed project. However, the emergency vehicle access road to Southside Road from the southwest corner of the project site would be a full access road.
- **Alternative 3: Clustered Development.** This alternative would cluster the proposed residential development eastward, towards the existing Ridgemark development, in order to decrease the visual impact of the project from Southside Road.

While not initially proposed by the applicant, the full secondary access to Southside Road was directed by previous staff to be studied as a project alternative to be considered under the California Environmental Quality Act. This was fortunate for the applicant in that there is a recent growing awareness of the County’s own General Plan policies to provide secondary access and “non-cul-de-sac/one-way-in/one-way-out” road and subdivision designs for new development. Additionally, the tragedies of recent fires in Northern and Southern California have reemphasized to public safety officials and the public how important it is for people to be

able to move to points of safety. Appropriate through-roads built to full standards and specifications are material to public safety.

Staff and the environmental consultant conclude in the EIR Alternatives Section 6.3.2 P, that:

The Full Secondary Access to Southside Road Alternative would result in the same level of development as the proposed project within the same overall development footprint. Therefore, it would result in similar impacts to the proposed project for most environmental issue areas, including: aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use, noise, public services and recreation, transportation and circulation, tribal cultural resources, and utilities and service systems.

A comparative summary of the environmental impacts associated with the Full Secondary Access to Southside Road Alternative with the environmental impacts anticipated under the proposed project is provided in Table 52 (of the EIR).

Because this alternative would result in the same level and type of development on the same site, it would meet all proposed project objectives. This alternative would provide a new full access to Southside Road, and will do more to meet the project objective of providing safe and efficient site access than the proposed project.

In Conclusion: Staff believes the Project is supportable under the provisions of the San Benito County General Plan, Zoning Code and Subdivision Development Standards. The CEQA review and especially the Alternatives Analysis have had the applicant reconsider and then incorporate into the project design the full extension of Street C and its connection down to Southside Road. The environmental ramifications of that full secondary access to Southside Road alternative were evaluated sufficiently in the CEQA document.

While the connection to Southside Road may be a matter of concern for the character of the region by many persons, it does not appear to be a significant issue under CEQA. With Project approval, there will now be three access points to the Ridgemark Community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider the staff report and presentation, the applicant's presentation and take public testimony regarding the Bluffs at Ridgemark subdivision and:

1. Adopt Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2018-0__ (EXHIBIT D). A Resolution of the San Benito County Planning Commission Certifying the Environmental Impact Report prepared for The Bluffs at Ridgemark Subdivision Proposal TSM-15-94, and
2. Adopt Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2018-0__ (EXHIBIT E). A Resolution of the San Benito County Planning Commission Approving The Bluffs at Ridgemark Subdivision Proposal TSM 15-94.

EXHIBITS

Hard copies of the following attachments have been provided at the Public RMA Counter, Administration Building, and the San Benito County Library. A full electronic copy of this has been posted to the County Website Agenda Calendar for the Planning Commission meeting of March 21, 2018.

- A. Applicant's Proposed Vesting Tentative Map TSM 15-94, Up-dated March 6, 2018
- B. Applicant's supplemental information submitted March 13, 2018
- C. Environmental Documents Draft and Final EIRs
- D. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2018 -0X CEQA
- E. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2018 -0X Project