RECEIVED
CLERK OF THE BOARD
JUL 15 2026
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ

Notice of Exemption

065-26

To: ☑ Clerk of the Board
County of Santa Cruz
Governmental Center
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

☑ Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

44-07152026-086

THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN POSTED AT THE CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OFFICE FOR A PERIOD COMMENCING 7/15/2026 AND ENDING 8/20/2026

From: City of Santa Cruz, Planning and Community Development Department
809 Center Street, Room 101, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Project Title: Natural Bridges Farm Project

Project Address: 2394 Delaware Avenue

Assessor's Parcel No.: 003-061-09

Project Location: City of: Santa Cruz – see Figure 1. **County of:** Santa Cruz

Project Description: The project consists of a Minor Land Division, Variance, Coastal Permit, Administrative Use Permit, Design Permit, and Sign Permit to divide a 10.3 acre site into two parcels and construct five structures containing an office with attached farmstand, a barn with a kitchen, storage building, and two greenhouses on the northern proposed new parcel. The existing parcel would be divided into two new lots. The southern lot, Lot A, which fronts Delaware Avenue, would consist of 6.3 acres. The northern lot, Lot B, which fronts Shaffer Road, would consist of 4 acres. Lot B would continue to be used by the Homeless Garden Project (HGP) on which three new buildings, totaling 6,668 square feet, would be constructed as part of the Natural Bridges Farm (NBF) operated by the HGP. The buildings include: a 1,541-square-foot farm office building that is attached to a 370-square-foot farm stand; a 3,258-square-foot barn with kitchen; and a 384-square-foot storage building. A total of 1,115 square feet of porch area is included for the proposed office, barn and farm stand. Two 1,800-square-foot greenhouse structures also are proposed. All structures are sited on the southernmost portion of Lot B in order to maintain the majority of the lot in agricultural production. No development is proposed for Lot A.

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Ronald B. Swenson, 147 South River Street, suite 207, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 | Homeless Garden Project, P.O. Box 617, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Santa Cruz

Exempt Status: (check one)

- ______ Ministerial Project (Section 21080(b)(1); 15268).
- __✓__ Statutory Exemption (Code/Section 21083.3).
- ______ Categorically Exempt (Section 15305 and Section 15332).
- ______ Declared Emergency (Section 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)).
- ______ Emergency Project (Section 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c)).
- ______ The project clearly will not have a significant effect on the environment (15061(b)(3)).

Reasons why project is exempt: The project has been determined to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under a Statutory Exemption pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21083.3 and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 (Projects Consistent with General Plan, Community Plan or Zoning) as explained below.

CEQA allows a lead agency to avoid repeating analyses that were already provided in a certified General Plan EIR for a development project that is consistent with the General Plan. Public Resources Code section 21083.3 and its parallel CEQA Guidelines provision, section 15183, provide for streamlined environmental review or exemption for projects consistent with the General Plan for which an EIR was certified. Pursuant to section 21083.3, subdivision (b), if a development project is consistent with the general plan for which an environmental impact report was certified, the application of CEQA shall be limited to effects on the environment which are "peculiar to the parcel or to the project" and which were not addressed as significant effects in the prior environmental impact report, or which substantial new information shows will be more significant than described in the prior environmental impact report. Subdivision (d) further indicates that an effect of a project upon the environment shall not be considered "peculiar to the parcel or to the project," "if uniformly applied development policies or standards" have been previously adopted by the city or county, with a finding based upon substantial evidence, that the development policies or standards will substantially mitigate that environmental effect when applied to future projects, unless substantial new information shows that the policies or standards would not substantially mitigate the environmental effect. CEQA Guidelines section 15183, subdivision (f), adds that "[w]here a city or county, in previously adopting uniformly applied development policies or standards for imposition on future projects, failed to make a finding as to whether such policies or standards would substantially mitigate the effects of future projects, the decision-making body of the city or county, prior to approving such a future project pursuant to this section, may hold a public hearing for the purpose of considering whether, as applied to the project, such standards or policies would substantially mitigate the effects of the project."

Under these provisions of CEQA, a project that is consistent with a General Plan that was adopted pursuant to a certified EIR, could be potentially partially or wholly exempt from CEQA.

Section 15183 of the State CEQA Guidelines provides further guidance related to Public Resources Code section 21083. Specifically, if a project is consistent with an agency's General Plan for which an EIR has been certified, the agency shall limit its examination of environmental effects to those which the agency determines, in an initial study or other analysis:

(1) Are peculiar to the project or the parcel on which the project would be located,

(2) Were not analyzed as significant effects in a prior EIR on the zoning action, general plan, or community plan, with which the project is consistent,

(3) Are potentially significant off-site impacts and cumulative impacts which were not discussed in the prior EIR prepared for the general plan, community plan or zoning action, or

(4) Are previously identified significant effects which, as a result of substantial new information which was not known at the time the EIR was certified, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the prior EIR. (State CEQA Guidelines section 15183(b).)

CEQA Guidelines section 15183, subdivision (c) further provides that "if an impact is not peculiar to the parcel or to the project, has been addressed as a significant effect in the prior EIR, or can be substantially mitigated by the imposition of uniformly applied development policies or standards..., then an additional EIR need not be prepared for the project solely on the basis of that impact."

On June 26, 2012, the Santa Cruz City Council adopted the *General Plan 2030* after certifying an EIR for the plan. The General Plan 2030 EIR (April 2012) includes the Draft EIR volume (September 2011) and the Final EIR volume (April 2012). The General Plan EIR reviewed all of the topics included on the Appendix G Environmental Checklist in the State CEQA Guidelines. As indicated above, pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3, certain (or potentially all) aspects of a development project that are consistent with a General Plan for which an EIR was certified may be exempt from additional CEQA analyses (i.e., negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or EIR) of issues that were adequately covered in the General Plan EIR.

The City's General Plan, as amended in 2025, designates Lot B as Agriculture/Grazing (AG) and Low Density Residential (L) (1.1-10 DU/AC) on Lot A. The minor land division is consistent with the General Plan land use designations and underlying zone district designation as it would create parcels that match the existing General Plan land use designations and zone districts as amended in 2025. The AG designation "applies to grazing land on the western edge of the city," and this designation "is generally applied to areas that are used predominantly for large-scale agriculture or grazing." The General Plan, as amended, indicates that the AG designation "is not typically applied to community gardens or other small-scale agricultural uses unless the site is intended to remain in long-term agricultural use." The HGP has been operating at Lot B for 30 years since 1995 and intends to remain permanently at this site. Thus, the project is consistent with the General Plan land use designation for the proposed northern lot on which the farm-related structures are proposed. As previously indicated, no development is proposed on Lot A. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designation, and the project uses are consistent with the *General Plan 2030* for which an EIR was prepared and certified in June 2012, and as amended in 2025, meets the provisions of CEQA section 21083.3(b) with regards to project consistency with the City's adopted General Plan.

While the General Plan 2030 EIR considered the impacts of repurposing, intensifying, and redeveloping existing developed parcels in the City as a whole, specific future development of the project site was not specifically evaluated in the General Plan 2030 EIR. However, the adopted *General Plan 2030* includes Action LU1.1.4, which provides guidance regarding future development of the project site. As amended in 2025, LU1.1.4 indicates that the land use designation for the project site would be Agriculture/Grazing and a mix of Low Medium Density Residential/Neighborhood Commercial/Office. The proposed project is consistent with the measures in this action to retain agricultural use on the northern 4 acres (Lot B).

The General Plan 2030 EIR considered construction of new housing units and non-residential uses throughout the City. The proposed NBF project on Lot B would result in a non-residential use substantially less intensive use than the residential use that was considered for the property in the *General Plan 2030* and EIR. The EIR evaluated potential impacts resulting from an estimated buildout of approximately 1,088,000 and 1,273,910 square feet of commercial and office uses, respectively, throughout the City by the year 2030. The project would result in construction of approximately 6,700 square feet of non-residential space, including office space. Since adoption of the General Plan, approximately 462,000 and 45,000 square feet of commercial and office uses, respectively, have been approved throughout the City. Thus, the proposed farm structures, which include office space as well as other non-residential farm-related structures, when added to constructed and approved project residential projects, would be within the remaining non-residential buildout estimates that were considered in the city-wide General Plan EIR impact analyses.

An "Environmental Checklist Review" was prepared and is on file with the City of Santa Cruz Community Development Department. The purpose of the checklist was to evaluate the impact categories covered in the City's certified General Plan 2030 EIR, as amended in 2025, to determine whether the project's impacts have been adequately analyzed in that EIR or whether any new significant impacts peculiar to the project or project site would result. Where an impact resulting from the project was adequately analyzed previously, the review provides a cross-reference to the pages in the General Plan 2030 EIR where information and analysis may be found relative to the environmental issue listed under each topic. The Environmental Checklist also identifies whether the project involves new significant impacts or substantially more severe impacts than analyzed in the General Plan 2030 EIR or new significant impacts not peculiar to the site or project. As indicated above, an impact would not be considered "peculiar" to the project or project site if uniformly applied development policies or standards will substantially mitigate an environmental effect. Therefore, the review includes mitigation measures identified in the General Plan EIR that would be applicable to the site or project and/or relevant uniformly applicable development policies or standards that will be applied to the project.

Based on the following review, it has been determined that the City's General Plan 2030 EIR has adequately addressed the following issues, and no further environmental review is required pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3: aesthetics (scenic views, scenic resources); agricultural and forest resources; air quality (conflicts with Air Quality Management Plan, odors); biological resources (riparian, wetland or other sensitive habitat, conflicts with habitat plans); cultural resources (historical resources); energy; geology and soils (fault rupture, expansive soils, use of septic systems); greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (GHG emissions, conflict with plans); hazards/hazardous materials (use/disposal of hazardous materials, creation of hazard, exposure to hazardous materials, airport safety, emergency response, wildfire hazards); hydrology-water quality (groundwater, flood risk, conflicts with plans); land use; mineral resources; noise (vibration); population and housing; public services; recreation; transportation (conflicts with program or policy, hazardous design, emergency access); and utilities (infrastructure, wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal).

The following site-specific impacts have been analyzed and determined to be less than significant due to substantial mitigation resulting from General Plan policies, zoning regulations and/or development standards that are uniformly applied to development projects throughout the City: aesthetics (visual character, light and glare); air quality (project emissions, sensitive receptors); biological resources (special status species, wildlife movement, nesting birds, conflicts with local tree ordinance); cultural resources (archaeological resources, human burials); geology and soils (seismic and geologic hazards, erosion, paleontological resources); hydrology-water quality (water quality, drainage); noise (noise increases); transportation (conflict with CEQA Guidelines); tribal cultural resources; utilities (water supply); wildfire; and cumulative impacts. Thus, pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3 and State CEQA Guidelines section 15183, no further environmental analysis is required.

For reasons explained in the Environmental Checklist Review prepared for the project, the Zoning Administrator Commission agreed with City staff's conclusion that the Project is wholly exempt from CEQA under section 21083.3 and CEQA Guidelines section 15183. The Environmental Checklist Review explained why the project does not create any impacts that are peculiar to the project or parcel. The document identifies numerous impacts that were sufficiently addressed in the General Plan 2030 EIR. The remaining impacts can be substantially mitigated by the uniformly applied development policies and standards identified in the Checklist. The Zoning Administrator found that these policies and standards, as applied to the project, were effective in substantially mitigating these impacts.

Thus, pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3 and State CEQA Guidelines section 15183, no further environmental analysis is required.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Rina Zhou

Phone: (831) 420-5104

Department: Community Development

Address: 809 Center Street, Room 101
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Signature: Rina Zhou

Date: July 15, 2026

☑ Signed by Lead Agency

☐ Signed by Applicant

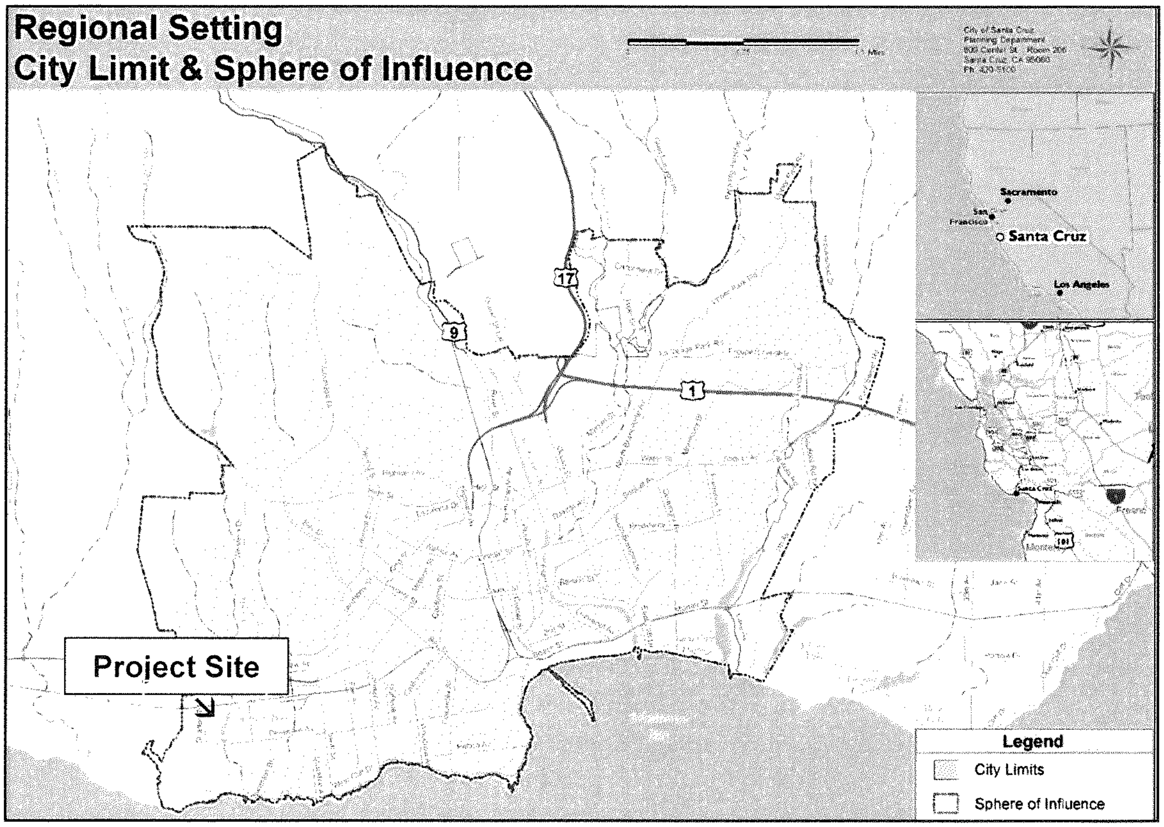
Title: Senior Planner

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Date Received for filing at County Clerk: ____________________

Date Received for filing at OPR:


Regional Setting
City Limit & Sphere of Influence
Sacramento
San Francisco
Santa Cruz
Los Angeles
Project Site
Legend
City Limits
Sphere of Influence