



Folsom City Council Staff Report



MEETING DATE:	9/23/2025
AGENDA SECTION:	Public Hearing
SUBJECT:	<p>Veranda at Folsom Heights Project – East Side of Empire Ranch Road, North and South of Summit Street, in the Folsom Plan Area (MSTR25-00025)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution No. 11461 – A Resolution of the City Council Determining that the Veranda at Folsom Heights Project is Exempt from CEQA and Approving a Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Planned Development Permit, and Design Review
FROM:	Community Development Department

RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION

Staff forwards the Planning Commission’s recommendation that the City Council take the following action:

1. Approve Resolution No 11461 - A Resolution of the City Council Determining that the Veranda at Folsom Heights Project is Exempt from CEQA and Approving a Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Planned Development Permit, and Design Review

BACKGROUND / ISSUE

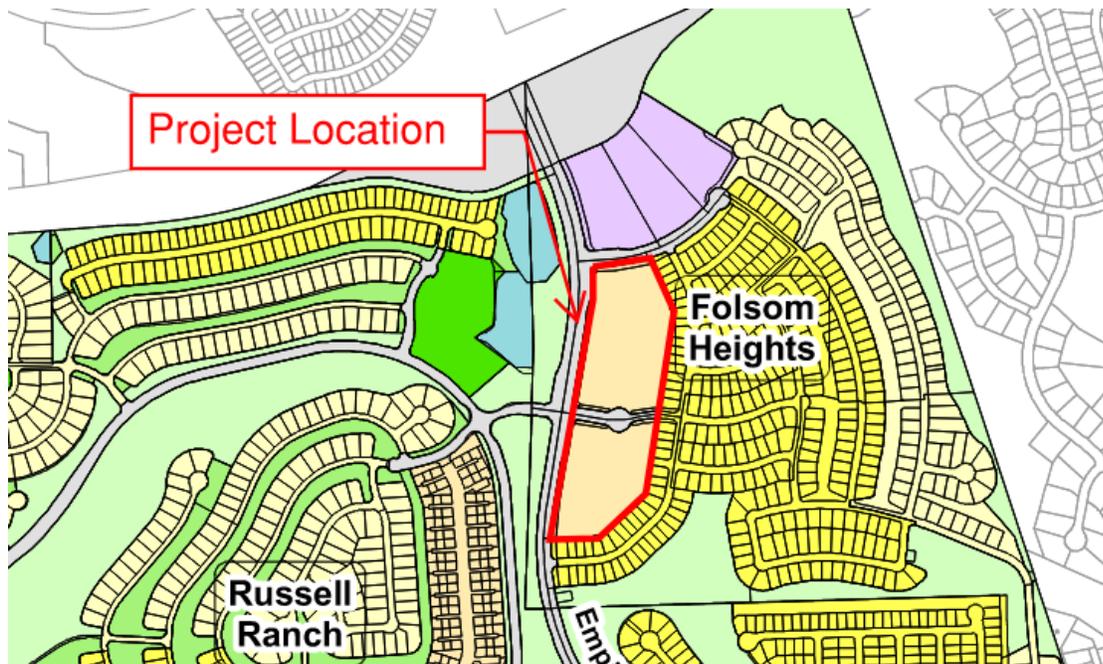
Project Description and Context

The proposed project is a request for approval of a Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to subdivide an approximately 14.9-acre site located on the east side of Empire Ranch Road, north and south of Summit Street, in the Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan (FPASP) into a 125-lot residential subdivision. The project site has General Plan and FPASP Land Use Designations of MLD (Multifamily Low-Density) which provide for development at 7.0 to 12.0 units per acre. A Planned Development Permit is also requested to comply with the Planned Development (PD) District overlay and to allow for greater flexibility in site design. Finally, a Design Review is requested to approve architecture and design for 125 proposed single-family residential units.

The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed project on August 20, 2025, and recommended approval by the City Council.

The project site is surrounded by the Folsom Heights project on the north, east, and south, and Russell Ranch project to the west. The subject properties have significant elevation changes and are devoid of vegetation. As of the preparation of this report, the properties are part of the overall mass grading for the Folsom Heights project.

FIGURE 1: PROJECT LOCATION



On July 11, 2017, the City Council approved a Large-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Project Design Guidelines, and an Inclusionary Housing Plan for the development of a 530-unit residential and commercial development (Folsom Heights) on a 189.7-acre site located in the northeast corner of the Folsom Plan Area. The Tentative Subdivision Maps received two extension approvals, with the Large-Lot Vesting Map being recorded in 2021 and the Small-Lot Final Map in the process of being finalized as of the time of this report. The Folsom Heights project included an allocation of 123 multifamily residential units to two of the Large Lots. However, these lots were not included in the Small-Lot Map. Thus, they are the subject of this subsequent entitlement request.

Overall Project Concept

The Veranda at Folsom Heights project seeks to create a development plan consistent with the overall Folsom Heights project and FPASP policies. Specifically, the project proposes a for sale “detached townhome” project of 125 small lots with detached single-family residential units,

common private drives, open spaces, and guest parking areas. The residential units will be clustered around pedestrian paseos with alley loaded garages.

The site design also includes a central promenade street lined with additional parking spaces, trees, and landscaping. The main project access to both the northern and southern halves of the site is from a traffic circle on Summit Street, with secondary access for both areas from Iron Horse Drive, which curves around the site's southern and eastern boundaries. The plan includes gated entry, two private pocket parks, and 20 landscape lots that provide frontage landscaping along public and private roadways. The following Figures provide images of the proposed site design and architecture.

FIGURE 2: PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN



FIGURE 3: CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE PROPOSAL



FIGURE 4: PLAN ELEVATION PROPOSALS



POLICY / RULE

The Folsom Municipal Code (FMC) requires that applications for Tentative Subdivision Maps be forwarded to the City Council for final action. City Council actions regarding Tentative Subdivision Maps are covered under Section 16.16.080 of the FMC.

The project site is in a Planned Development (PD) Overlay District. Pursuant to FMC Chapter 17.38, the PD Overlay District requires development to request a PD Permit. The PD Overlay District allows greater flexibility in the design of integrated developments than possible through strict application of land use regulations and encourages the creative and efficient use of land.

FPASP Chapter 13 – Implementation requires that all projects include project-level design review as outlined in FMC Chapter 17.06. The purpose of the Design Review process is to review the project site design and evaluate the architectural design of the residential buildings.

ANALYSIS

General Plan and Specific Plan Consistency

The 14.9-acre project site has a General Plan land use designation of MLD (Multifamily Low Density, 7-12 du/acre). In addition, the project site has a Specific Plan designation of MLD-PD (Multifamily Low Density - Planned Development). The General Plan and Specific Plan land use designations are consistent with each other and are not proposed to change as part of this project. The Specific Plan MLD land use designation is intended to promote a variety of housing types that

will result in diverse residential neighborhoods. Residential uses allowed in the SP-MLD land use designation include, but are not limited to, single-family dwellings (small-lot detached, zero-lot-line and patio homes), two-family dwellings and multi-family dwellings. The applicant proposes a small-lot detached product, which is consistent with the site's land use designation. City staff also reviewed relevant General Plan and Specific Plan policies and found the project consistent in all cases. More analysis can be found in the Planning Commission Staff Report (Attachment 2).

Small-Lot Tentative Subdivision Map

The proposed subdivision features interior lots with minimum lot sizes of 2,700 square feet. Corner lots are proposed with a minimum size of 2,900 square feet, which deviates from the MLD Development Standards (see discussion below regarding the Planned Development Permit). The proposed Small-Lot Tentative Subdivision Map creates the necessary easements to allow for roads and utilities to facilitate development of the small-lot parcels, as well as parcels providing shared parking, access, and open space that will be owned and maintained by a Homeowners Association (HOA). It is important to note that the proposed subdivision will be a private gated community; as a result, all drives (delineated as Ways and Places) within the subdivision are proposed to be private. Staff included a condition (Condition No. 22) that requires the applicant to dedicate easements for stormwater drainage, water, and sewer within the private streets, as well as public utility easements for underground facilities on properties adjacent to the streets.

The applicant requests that the map be vesting, and has provided preliminary grading, drainage, and utility plans to support that request. Utilities to the site are provided by both the City of Folsom and the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID). Water service is provided by EID, but sewer services are split between the City of Folsom and EID, via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two parties. On June 11, 2025, the City and EID entered into an amended MOU to specify that certain lots within the Veranda at Folsom Heights project would receive sewer service from the City, rather than EID, as originally proposed. The Preliminary Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map includes notes indicating service providers for the proposed lots.

The Folsom Heights project allocated 123 units to the Veranda site. However, the applicant is requesting a 125-unit map as they lost two units elsewhere in the larger development. This maintains the overall unit count of the Folsom Heights project at 530, which is consistent with and does not substantially change the overall intent of the Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan (FPASP). The shift in units will be memorialized through an administrative Minor Administrative Modification approval.

Staff has determined that the proposed Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, if approved concurrently with the PD Permit request and as conditioned, complies with all City requirements (FMC Chapter 16.16), as well as with the requirements of the State Subdivision Map Act (Government Code Sections 66410 et seq.).

Planned Development Permit

The applicant is proposing deviations from development standards as part of the requested Planned Development (PD) Permit. They state that the project’s innovative housing typology drives the request for modified development standards. Specifically, the project is designed to provide housing choice in the Folsom Plan Area by reducing private open space (such as front and back yards) to allow higher density for sale single-family product, which is in demand. The project will include shared outdoor spaces in the form of paseos and pocket parks. The applicant states that these spaces will incorporate abundant landscaping and trees and provide significant shade coverage. Finally, the project is located within walking distance of future mixed-use to the north, and future park and school sites to the south, providing further recreation and services to residents.

In reviewing the applicant’s request for approval of a PD Permit, staff considered a variety of factors including existing and proposed development standards, traffic/access/circulation, parking requirements, noise impacts, walls/fencing, site lighting, site landscaping, trash/recycling, grading/drainage, and architecture/design. Details of this review are included in the Planning Commission staff report (Attachment 2).

Staff believe that the PD Permit review criteria of FMC Section 17.38.100 are met by the proposed project. The project is consistent with the purpose of the SP-MLD land use designation in that it proposes residential “townhome” ownership units with a higher density than that of more traditional single-family homes. The site design provides a well-designed community within its own boundaries, with adequate access, services, and open space to serve residents and provide emergency public safety services. Finally, staff have not identified any deviations requested under the PD Permit that would be detrimental to health, safety, or the general welfare of persons or property within the vicinity of the project. Therefore, staff is supportive of the PD Permit request.

Design Review

The Veranda at Folsom Heights project is subject to the *Folsom Heights Design Guidelines*, dated June 2017 and adopted by the City Council on July 11, 2017. Relevant to the Veranda at Folsom Heights project are the architectural design requirements, and particularly the Architectural Collections.

The applicable Design Guidelines requirements and the project’s compliance are outlined below.

TABLE 1: DESIGN GUIDELINES COMPLIANCE

Design Guidelines	Requirement	Proposed Project
Master Home Plan Requirements	Four or more Floor Plans Three or more Elevations	Four Floor Plans Three Elevations
Visually Distinct Roof Form	One out of Every Three Homes	Site Development Plan and Condition No. 46 will ensure compliance with this requirement
Porch Depth	Minimum Six Feet	Minimum Six Feet

Floor Plan/Elevation Repetition	Same floor plans with same elevations shall be no less than three lots away	Site Development Plan and Condition No. 46 will ensure compliance with this requirement
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The applicant also provided an architectural narrative that details how the proposed elevations (Early California, Spanish, and California Cottage) are consistent with two of the Architectural Collections: The California Collection and The Picturesque Collection:

- The Early California and Spanish styles are consistent with the intent of The California Collection, which features two-story rectangular forms, varied roof forms featuring gables, gables enhanced with a tile vent element or another type of embellishment, “s” or flat tile roofing, stucco as the dominant exterior finish, a variety of shutter styles, decorative wood elements (corbels), and brick or masonry at the first floor, all consistent with the California Collection architectural style.
- The California Cottage style is designed to reflect The Picturesque Collection, with full two-story massing, asymmetrical massing and proportions, and a gable roof form with concrete tile roof. The body is a combination of stucco and stone with siding in the gable ends. Vertically proportioned windows with full window surrounds or head and sill trim with shutters complete the picturesque expression.

Staff reviewed the materials provided and can confirm that the proposed site and architectural designs comply with applicable Design Guidelines and therefore recommend approval of the requested Design Review.

Inclusionary Housing Plan

As permitted by the City’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, the Folsom Heights project received approval to meet their inclusionary housing requirement by providing an in-lieu fee payment. The Veranda at Folsom Heights project is included in this approval and so is subject to the requirement that the related Inclusionary Housing Agreement be approved by the City Council in a form acceptable to the City Attorney and executed prior to final map recordation for either this map or another map under the Folsom Heights project. Condition No. 27 is included to reflect these requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No financial impact is anticipated with the approval of the Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Planned Development Permit, or Design Review as the project will not result in any changes to the total number of residential units within the FPASP.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Certain residential, commercial and mixed-use projects that are consistent with a specific plan adopted pursuant to Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8 of the California Government Code are exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provided they qualify under CEQA Guidelines §15182. One of the project types described in that Section is a residential project undertaken pursuant to and in conformity with a specific plan for which a public

agency has prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) after January 1, 1980. This exemption is limited to situations where after the adoption of the specific plan, no circumstances described in CEQA Guidelines § 15162(a) have occurred.

§15162. Subsequent EIRs and Negative Declarations

- (a) When an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in the light of the whole record, one or more of the following:
 - (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
 - (2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
 - (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
 - (A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;
 - (B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
 - (C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
 - (D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

On June 28, 2011, the Folsom City Council approved the Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan (FPASP) for development of up to 10,210 residential dwelling units with a range of housing types and densities, along with commercial, industrial/office park, and mixed-use land uses, open space, public schools, parks, and supporting infrastructure. The development would be located on approximately 3,514 acres. The City and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prepared a joint Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the FPASP that evaluated the environmental impacts associated with development of the entire plan area based on the land use designations identified in the specific plan. The Folsom City Council has approved several amendments to the FPASP since 2011, the most recent as part of the City of Folsom General Plan Amendments for Increased Residential Capacity project, which was approved on

August 27, 2024, with a Subsequent EIR that considered development of up to 13,343 residential dwelling units.

Environmental Checklists and Addendums to the 2011 FPASP EIR/EIS were prepared for both phases of the Folsom Heights project (General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan Amendment, and Development Agreement Amendment request approved in 2016 and Large Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Development Agreement Amendment, Inclusionary Housing Plan, and Minor Administrative Modification request approved in 2017). The subject property was included in the analyses for both phases. The Addendums concluded that the project would not result in new or substantially more significant environmental impacts compared to the analysis presented in the FPASP EIR/EIS and that no changes in circumstances were present that necessitated further environmental review.

The City, as lead agency, has reviewed the Veranda at Folsom Heights project against the FPASP and has determined that the proposed project as conditioned is entirely consistent with the FPASP.

- The project does not propose changes to land use designations, permitted density, infrastructure, or any other component of the specific plan that were evaluated through the FPASP EIR/EIS and subsequent environmental documents.
- The Planned Development Permit and Minor Administrative Modification requests would result in minor modifications to the allocation of residential units in the FPASP and development standards permitted in the project area. However, neither results in increased densities, impacts to infrastructure, or impacts to any other component of the FPASP beyond those evaluated in the FPASP EIR/EIS. Further, the City has not identified any substantial changes that have occurred with respect to the project's circumstances which would require major revisions of the FPASP EIR/EIS or subsequent environmental documents due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.
- The FPASP, and specifically the Folsom Heights project area, is being developed out as planned for in the FPASP, with all significant environmental effects being addressed through existing Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting programs already in place (Condition of Approval No 11).
- No new information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete, shows that the project will have significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR, significant effects previously examined will be more severe than shown in the previous EIR, or that mitigation measures considered infeasible are now feasible or alternative mitigation measures have been identified to reduce significant effects shown in the previous EIR. As stated above, the most recent environmental document prepared for amendments to the FPASP was approved in 2024, which would have identified such new information as would be critical to ensure appropriate CEQA review of the project.

The City has determined that the proposed project is consistent with the Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan and that it would not result in any of the circumstances listed in CEQA Guidelines §15162.

Because the proposed project is subject to a statutory exemption, rather than a categorical exemption, the typical exceptions to CEQA exemptions do not apply. Therefore, the Veranda at Folsom Heights project qualifies for the special situation exemption of CEQA Guidelines § 15182 – Projects Pursuant to a Specific Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution No. 11461 – A Resolution of the City Council Determining that the Veranda at Folsom Heights Project is Exempt from CEQA and Approving a Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, Planned Development Permit, and Design Review
2. Planning Commission Staff Report, dated August 20, 2025
3. Vicinity Map
4. Project Narrative
5. Project Exhibits - Preliminary Small-Lot Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map, dated July 9, 2025, Preliminary Grading Plan, dated January 2025, Preliminary Utility Plan, dated January 2025, Preliminary Landscaping Plan, Parklet Concept, Walls and Fences, dated July 22, 2025, Veranda at Folsom Heights Site Development Plan, dated July 23, 2025, Circulation Plan, dated July 9, 2025, Refuse Cart Plan, dated July 9, 2025, Veranda at Folsom Heights Elevations, Floor Plans, and Materials, dated July 10, 2025, Veranda at Folsom Heights Development Standards Table, Example Elevation Imagery, dated April 4, 2025
6. Folsom Heights Inclusionary Housing Compliance Letter, dated September 18, 2015

Submitted,



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