

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO  
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

**DATE:** August 11, 2021

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Planning Staff

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of a request by San Mateo County Real Property to determine if acquisition of an approximately 5.28-acre parcel adjacent to the Pillar Point Bluff and Pillar Point Marsh conforms to the County General Plan.

County File Number: PLN 2021-00276 (Real Property)

**PROPOSAL**

Consideration of a request by San Mateo County Real Property, pursuant to Government Code Section 65402, that the County Planning Commission determine whether the proposed acquisition of a 5.28-acre parcel owned by Big Wave Group, APN 047-312-040, commonly referred to as the "Big Wave South Parcel", conforms to the County General Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Planning Commission find that the proposed acquisition by the County of San Mateo of a 5.28-acre parcel, APN 047-312-040, conforms to the County General Plan.

**BACKGROUND**

Report Prepared By: Camille Leung, Project Planner

Applicant: San Mateo County Real Property

Owner: Big Wave Group

Location: Airport Street, unincorporated Princeton area of San Mateo County

APN: 047-312-040

Size: 5.28 acres

Existing Zoning:

- Waterfront/Design Review/Coastal Development District (W/DR/CD)
- Waterfront/Airport Overlay/Design Review/Coastal Development District (W/AO/DR/CD)
- Resource Management-Coastal Zone/Design Review/Coastal Development District (RM-CZ/DR/CD)

General Plan Designation: General Industrial and General Open Space

Existing Land Use: Agriculture

Sphere-of-Influence: City of Half Moon Bay

Flood Zone: Flood Zone: Zone X (Area of Minimal Flood Hazard).

Environmental Evaluation: A determination that the proposed acquisition of property conforms to the County General Plan is exempt from environmental review under the “common sense exemption” that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).) Any future action on the subject property would be subject to applicable CEQA requirements.

Setting: The Half Moon Bay Airport is located to the east, the Big Wave North Parcel is located to the north, the Pillar Point Headlands and Pillar Point Marsh to the west, and industrial/commercial/recreational development within the Princeton and Pillar Point Harbor is located to the south. Pillar Point Ridge, west of the project site, lies between the marsh and the coastline and offers recreational hiking trails. Beach access to Pillar Point is provided south of the project site from the Mavericks parking area at the west terminus of West Point Avenue and at the eastern terminus of West Point Avenue at Princeton Avenue.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **A. KEY ISSUES**

#### **1. Project Description**

The County of San Mateo proposes to acquire the subject property for the following purposes:

- Expand the boundaries of the lands adjacent to Pillar Point Marsh currently owned by the County;

- Provide long-term protection of the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources on the site;
- Explore the possibility of constructing a Community Center and/or Nature Center

Any specific developments proposed on the property would require appropriate permits and would be reviewed by the County at the time of project submittal.

Per California Government Code Section 65402, prior to acquisition of property, the County must request an analysis of the proposed acquisition's conformity with the County General Plan.

## 2. Analysis

The County's General Plan, revised in January 2013, designates the subject parcel for urban land use, specifically for General Industrial and General Open Space (limited to portions in delineated wetland areas and wetland buffer zones) land uses. The General Industrial land use designation is described as "Manufacturing and processing uses including but not limited to fabricating, assembling, and storing products."

The County's Waterfront (W) Zoning District Regulations applicable to the parcel allow for marine-related assembly and educational uses (Marine-Related Clubs, Schools), such as a community center, as principally permitted uses, and allow for park use, such as a nature center, with a Use Permit. In its implementation of the General Plan, the Zoning Regulations define the specific type of land uses that are consistent and compatible with the General Plan. Therefore, in complying with the permitted uses of the zoning district, the potential nature center and/or community center use complies with the General Industrial land use designation for the site.

The General Open Space land use designation is described as "Resource management and production uses including but not limited to agriculture, oil and gas exploration. Recreation uses including but not limited to stables and riding academies; and residential uses including but not limited to non-transient housing. Service uses including but not limited to hotels and motels." The County's acquisition of the property is compatible with the General Open Space land use designation as the County would protect natural resources on the property and the potential nature center and/or community center are recreational in purpose and use.

The proposed acquisition potentially implicates the following General Plan policies:

a. Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies

- (1) Policy 1.23.a of the County General Plan requires that the County regulate land uses and development activities to prevent and, if infeasible, mitigate to the extent possible, significant adverse impacts on vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) Policy 1.23.b places a priority on the managed use and protection of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources in rural areas of the County.
- (3) Policy 1.24 requires the County to regulate the location, density and design of development to minimize significant adverse impacts and encourage enhancement of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (4) Policy 1.25 requires that the County ensure that development will (1) minimize the removal of vegetative resources; and/or (2) protect vegetation which enhances microclimate, stabilizes slopes or reduces surface water runoff, erosion or sedimentation; and/or (3) protect historic and scenic trees.

Discussion: As discussed in the Biological Resources Chapter of the Certified Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Addendum to the 2010 EIR for the Big Wave North Parcel Alternative Project (Big Wave NPA Project), the majority of the project site has been disturbed by agricultural activities and, therefore, the extent of natural vegetation communities and wildlife habitats on the site are limited to those that are contiguous to habitats in and around Pillar Point Marsh. Based on the foregoing, on-site sensitive habitat is limited to the areas of the riparian corridor (along the drainage swale) and delineated wetlands. However, development on the project site has the potential to indirectly impact special-status wildlife species (such as western pond turtle, San Francisco garter snake, and California red-legged frog) and bird species, due to the availability of suitable habitat in the immediate vicinity of the project, as well as documented occurrences of the species in the project vicinity. The proposed acquisition itself conforms to the General Plan Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies, because a purpose of the acquisition is the long-term protection of natural resources on the property, specifically the riparian corridor and delineated wetland areas of the property.

The County has not proposed any specific development on the property proposed for acquisition, or any changes to the conditions or uses of the property at this time. The proposal is limited to acquisition

of the property, and any subsequent development proposals would be subject to Coastal Development Permit requirements, including compliance with the County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) at the time of project submittal.

a. Visual Quality Policies

The property is located within the Cabrillo Highway (Highway 1) County Scenic Corridor. Policy 4.22 calls for the County to protect the visual quality of scenic corridors by managing the location and appearance of structural development. The proposed acquisition, in itself, does not impact the visual quality of the property, and conforms to the General Plan Visual Quality Policies. Any future improvements, if proposed, would be subject to review by the County at time of application and would be regulated through the cited policies and Section 6325.1 of the Zoning Regulations, "Primary Scenic Resources Areas Criteria", as required by LCP Policy 8.31.

b. Historical and Archeological Resources Policies

Policy 5.3 (*Protection of Archaeological/Paleontological Sites*) requires protection of archaeological/paleontological sites from destruction in order to preserve and interpret them for future scientific research, and public educational programs. A cultural site has been identified on the property. A purpose of the acquisition is the long-term protection of cultural resources on the property.

c. Park and Recreation Resource Policies

- (1) Policy 6.9 generally encourages park providers to locate active park and recreation facilities in urban areas, taking advantage of existing service infrastructure systems and maximizing the recreational use of limited available land.

Discussion: The County has not determined the precise recreational improvements that may be made to the property. However, the potential nature center and/or community center would comply with this policy.

- (2) Policy 6.12 (*Minimize Agricultural Land Use Conflicts*) calls for the County to preserve the best agricultural land for agricultural uses. On other lands capable of supporting agriculture, the policy calls for permitting the location of park and recreation facilities when efforts are made to

lease land not needed for recreational purposes to farm operations.

Discussion: Project site contains prime soils and is currently farmed. However, the parcels are designated for urban land uses. The County intends to continue the farming use of the land until the property is developed.

d. Urban Land Use Policies

Policy 8.1 (*Urban Land Use Planning*) calls for the County to plan for a compatible and harmonious arrangement of land uses in urban areas by providing a type and mix of functionally well-integrated land uses which meets general social and economic needs. The property is adjacent to the Big Wave North Parcel, which is being developed with a Wellness Center to house and employ developmentally-disabled adults, as well as adjacent to the natural resources of Pillar Point March, and the developed Princeton area, making the location a good candidate for a conveniently located community and visitor-serving use that highlights the natural resources of the area.

e. Transportation Policies

Policy 12.21 (*Local Circulation Policies*) calls for the County to plan for maximum freedom of movement and adequate access to various land uses; improved streets, sidewalks, and bikeways in developed areas; and minimal through traffic in residential areas, among other features. The location is conveniently located near developed marine-industrial, residential, and commercial areas. The proposed acquisition, in itself, does not impact traffic or transportation facilities in the area. Any future improvements, if proposed, would be subject to review by the County at time of application and would be regulated through the cited policy and applicable Shoreline Access and Public Works policies of the Local Coastal Program.

f. Natural Hazards Policies

(1) Policy 15.5 (*Definition of Geotechnical Hazards*) defines geotechnical hazards as: (1) seismic events, including but not limited to earthquakes, earthquake-induced landslides, liquefaction, subsidence, and tidal flooding damage from earthquake-induced tsunamis and seiches; (2) non-seismic unstable conditions, including but not limited to landsliding, cliff retrenchment, erosion, subsidence, soil

creep and shrink/swell conditions; and (3) debris flows and debris avalanches.

- (2) Policy 15.20 (*Review Criteria for Locating Development in Geotechnical Hazard Areas*) calls to avoid the siting of structures in areas where they are jeopardized by geotechnical hazards, where their location could potentially increase the geotechnical hazard, or where they could increase the geotechnical hazard to neighboring properties.

Discussion: The proposed acquisition, in itself, does not result in the placement of structures within an area with identified geotechnical hazard(s). Any future improvements, if proposed, would be regulated through the cited policies and subject to Section 6326.2 (Tsunami Inundation Area Criteria) of the Zoning Regulations, as required by LCP Policy 9.3. Section 6326.2 states “(a) The following uses, structures, and development shall not be permitted: publicly-owned buildings intended for human occupancy *other than park and recreational facilities*”.

g. Man-Made Hazards Policies

The project site is located across Airport Street from the Half Moon Bay Airport, a general aviation, single runway airport, owned and operated by the County of San Mateo. The airport is administered by the County Department of Public Works.

*Noise Policies:*

- (1) Policy 16.2 (*Reduce Noise Impacts Through Noise/Land Use Compatibility and Noise Mitigation*) calls for the reduction of noise impacts through measures that promote noise/land use compatibility and noise mitigation.
- (2) Policies 16.5 (*Noise Reduction Along the Path and at the Receiver*) and Policy 16.15 (*Architectural Design Noise Control*) promote noise reduction along the path and at the receiver through techniques which can be incorporated into the design and construction of new development, including, but not limited to, site planning, noise barriers, architectural design, and construction techniques, including (1) grouping noise sensitive rooms together separated from noise sources, (2) placing windows, vents

and other openings away from noise sources, and (3) avoidance of structural features which direct noise toward interior spaces.

Discussion: The proposed acquisition will not result in the placement of structures within an area with an identified man-made hazard. Any future improvements, if proposed, would be regulated through the cited policies.

### *Airport Safety Policies*

- (1) Policy 16.42 (*Limit Land Uses at Ends of Runways*) limits land uses in approach zones, clear zones and other areas of high accident potential at ends of airport runways to low intensity, non-structural uses, including, but not limited to, agriculture, open space, and storage.

Discussion: Per the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for the Environs of the Half Moon Bay Airport, the property is located within Runway Safety Zone 2, the Inner Approach/ Departure Zone (IADZ), for the Half Moon Bay Airport. The proposed acquisition will not result in the placement of structures within the Inner Approach/ Departure Zone. Any future improvements, if proposed, would be regulated through the cited policy and the policies of the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

The ALUCP's IADZ sets a maximum non-residential intensity of 60 persons per acre and prohibits "recreational uses, athletic fields, playgrounds, and riding stables" as well as assembly uses such as "theaters, auditoriums, and stadiums". However, the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) can grant an exception to prohibited uses under Section 4.2.2.5 (*Other Special Conditions*), for specific situations where a normally incompatible use can be considered compatible because of terrain, specific location, or other extraordinary factors or circumstances related to the site. To grant the exception, the Airport Land Use Commission must make findings, including that "the land use will not create a safety hazard to people on the ground or aircraft in flight nor result in excessive noise exposure for the proposed use" and as to the "nature of the extraordinary circumstances that warrant the policy exception". The potential nature center and/or community center would be an intermittent use (people coming and



going on their own schedule) with no significant congregation of people at any one time.

The front 125 feet of the parcel is located in the Airport Overlay (AO) Zoning District, which limits occupancy in the area to 3 persons per site (site is interpreted by the County as 5,000 sq. ft.). The intent of the Airport Overlay (AO) Zoning District is to provide a margin of safety at the ends of airport runways by limiting the concentration of people where hazards from aircraft are considered to be greatest. The proposed acquisition will not result in the placement of any use within the AO Zoning District. Any future improvements, if proposed, would comply with the requirements of the AO Zoning District.

**B. ALTERNATIVES**

The alternative to a finding of conformity with the General Plan is for the Planning Commission to find that the proposed acquisition does not conform to the policies of the County General Plan.

**C. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

A determination that the proposed acquisition of property conforms to the County General Plan is exempt from environmental review under the “common sense exemption” that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).) Any future action on the subject property would be subject to applicable CEQA requirements.

**D. REVIEWING AGENCIES**

County Counsel

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Recommended Finding
- B. Location and Site Maps

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**County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department**

# **ATTACHMENT A**

County of San Mateo  
Planning and Building Department

**RECOMMENDED FINDING**

Permit or Project File Number: PLN 2021-00276      Hearing Date: August 11, 2021

Prepared By: Camille Leung      For Adoption By: Planning Commission  
Project Planner

**RECOMMENDED FINDING**

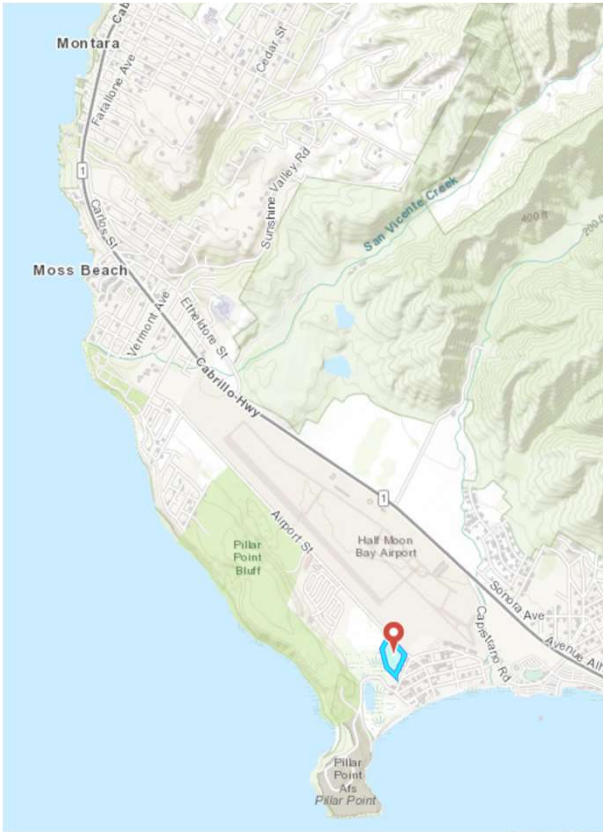
That the Planning Commission find that the proposed acquisition by the County of San Mateo of a 5.28-acre parcel, APN 047-312-040 conforms to the County General Plan for the reasons detailed by staff report.

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**County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department**

# **ATTACHMENT B**



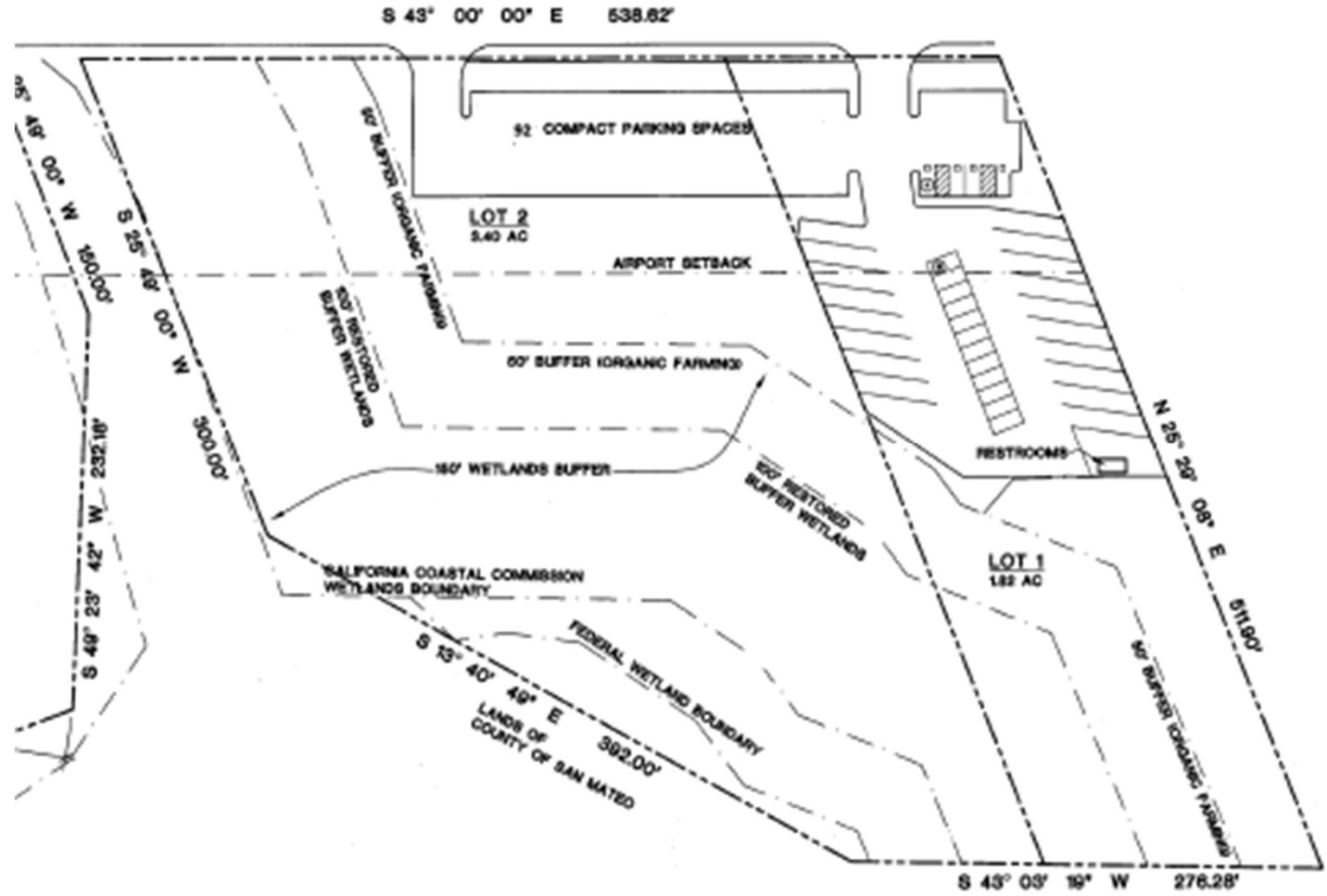
**Big Wave  
North Parcel**

**South Parcel**

**ATTACHMENT B**



South Parcel



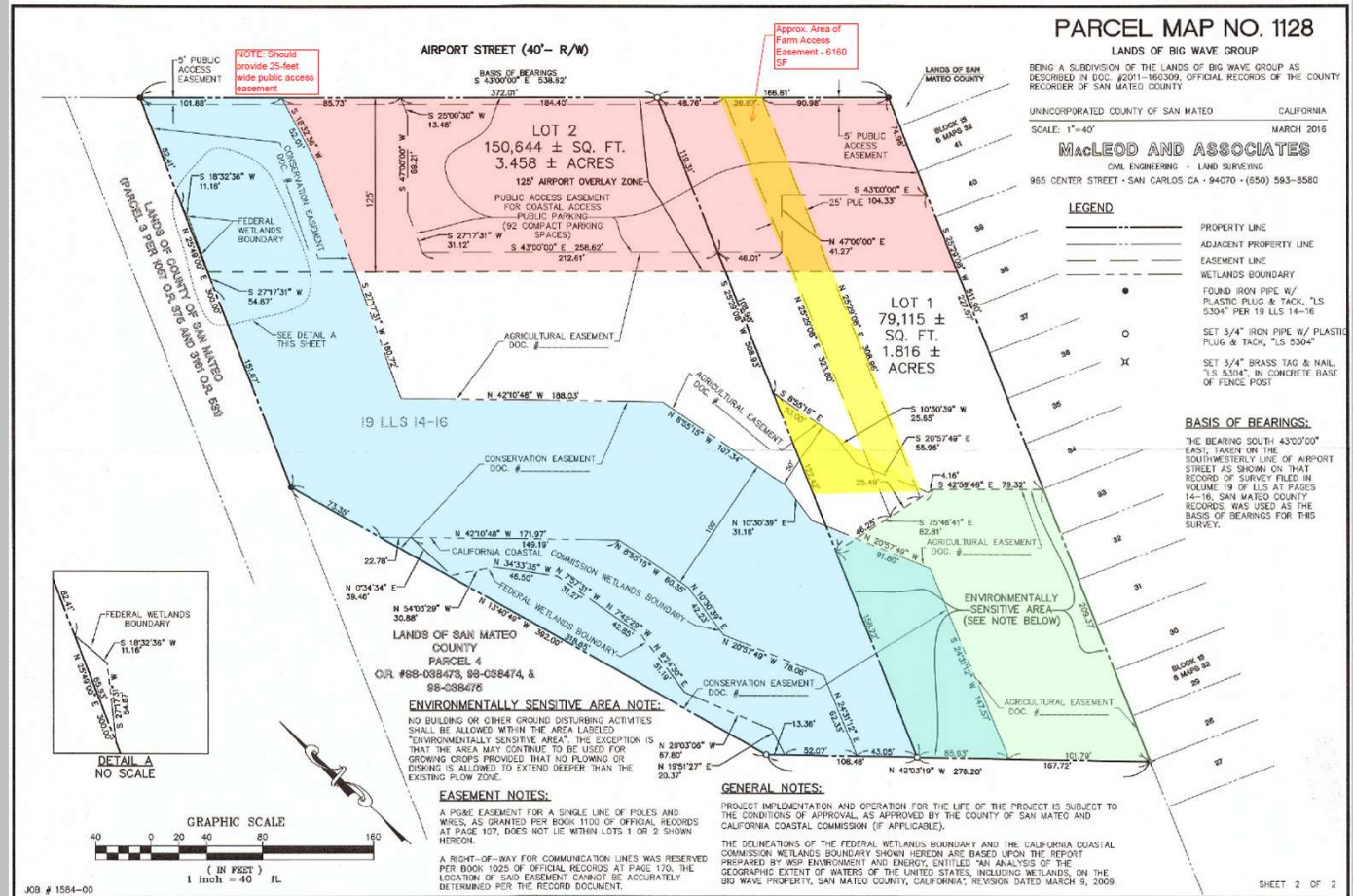
Approved Site Plan





South Parcel

Total Parcel Size  
= 5.27 acres



Draft Parcel Map