

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/ 1400 Tenth St
Sacramento CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia CA 93277

Date: April 9, 2021

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and
Scoping Meeting

Project Title: Cutler-Orosi Community Plan (GPA 18-003, PZC 18-009, PZC 18-010, PZC 18-011)
Project Applicant: Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Project Location: Cutler/Orosi are located in northern Tulare County approximately 16 miles east of State Route (SR) 99 and approximately 15 miles north of Visalia, the county seat. Both communities are located along State Route (SR) 63 about on -half mile apart near the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountain foothills.

Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Cutler-Orosi Community Plan. The County requests your agency's views as to the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will be able to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering permits and other approvals for the project. In addition, please provide us with contact information of the person(s) in your agency that we may contact during the CEQA process.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. Technical studies/memoranda will be prepared for the following environmental resources: Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Greenhouse Gases, Noise, and Transportation/Traffic.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

A Scoping Meeting is scheduled: April 29, 2020 at 1:30 P.M in the Main Conference Room of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at the address shown above. All interested parties are invited to attend and be heard in person or via online participation. Due to COVID-19, seating will be limited to 10 total persons and COVID compliance measures will be strictly observed; **in person participants will be required to check in with the lobby desk prior to entering.** The NOP can be viewed at: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/index.cfm/planning-building/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/cutler-orosi-community-plan-2021-update/>. The draft Plan is available for review at the following website link: <https://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/index.cfm/planning-building/community-plans/draft-community-plans/cutler-orosi-community-plan-2019-update/>

The meeting can also be attended online via telephone at: 1-669-900-9128, then enter 97867578291# **OR** via Zoom at: <https://tularecounty-ca.zoom.us/j/97867578291?pwd=REpVSUhFeG8xY1lrcGc1NU9Md3RHdz09>. Meeting ID: 978 6757 8291; Passcode: 079175.

Please direct your response to Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at the address shown above, by e-mail at hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us, or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Please provide us with the name of a contact person in your agency.

4/9/21
Date
Signature
Name: Hector Guerra
Title: Chief Environmental Planner

4/9/21
Date
Signature
for Reed Schenke, P.E.
Title: RMA Director/Environmental Assessment Officer

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Project Description:

On September 30, 2014, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved the Planning Branch proposal to update the Cutler/Orosi Community Plan. The project Study Area Boundary will assess the potential project impacts from the proposed land use changes, generally south of Avenue 424, east of Road 116, west of Road 134, and north of Avenue 400 as shown in Attachment "Figure 2." The project EIR is based on a projected annual population growth rate of 1.3%. Additional growth beyond the 1.3% annual growth rate will require further growth analysis pursuant to CEQA. The Cutler/Orosi Community Plan Update components are described later in this section will become consistent with the General Plan 2030 Update, and will include the following primary goals and objectives.

- 1) Land Use and Environmental Planning - Promote development within planning areas next to the Regional State Route 63 Corridor in order to implement the following General Plan goals:
 - a) Ensure that the text and mapping of the Community Plan Designations and Zoning Reclassifications address various development matters such as encouraging Agricultural Adaptive Reuse activities, recognizing Non-Conforming Use activities, and facilitating Ministerial Permit approvals;
 - b) Encourage infill development within Urban Development Boundaries, thereby discouraging leapfrog development within Tulare County;
 - c) Reduce development pressure on agriculturally-designated lands within the Valley Floor, thereby encouraging agricultural production to flourish;
 - d) Reduce vehicle miles travelled throughout the County, thereby positively affecting air quality and greenhouse gas reduction; and
 - e) Help to improve the circulation, transit and railroad transportation system within this community, including, but not limited to, laying the groundwork for the construction of key projects such as Safe Routes to Schools, Complete Streets, and Bike Lanes/Pedestrian Paths.
- 2) Improvements for a "disadvantaged community" - It is expected that the community planning areas will be improved for the following reasons:
 - a) With faster project processing resulting from an updated community plan, increased employment opportunities are more likely to be provided by the private sector as proposed project developments can be approved as expeditiously as possible;
 - b) Increased housing grant awards are more likely to occur based on updated community plans that are consistent with the policies of the recently adopted (August 2013) General Plan Update and Housing Element; and
 - c) With updated community plans, enhanced infrastructure grant awards are more likely, thereby providing access to funding to install or upgrade road, water, wastewater, and storm water facilities.
- 3) Strengthening Relationship with TCAG - An important benefit of this expedited community plan process will be the opportunity for RMA to strengthen the County's relationship with the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) in that this and other community plans will help to facilitate the funding and implementation of several key transportation programs such as Safe Routes to Schools, Complete Streets, and Bike/Pedestrian Projects.

By pursuing these transportation programs through a heightened collaborative process, the likelihood of getting actual projects in the ground will be realized faster than historically achieved. In doing so, these communities and others can become safer and healthier by providing a more efficient transportation network.

Location(s): Cutler is generally bound by Avenue 402 in the south, Avenue 408 in the north, Road 120 in the west, and the Bowhay Ditch in the east and encompasses approximately 0.8 square miles in area. Cutler is located south of and adjacent to the community of Orosi. Cutler is an agriculturally oriented service community surrounded on the south, west and east by lands in agricultural production, vacant lands, and scattered residential homes.

Orosi is generally bound by Avenue 402 in the south, Avenue 408 in the north, Road 120 in the west, and the Bowhay Ditch and Sand Creek in the east and encompasses approximately 2.4 square miles in area. It has direct access to/from State Route (SR) 63. Orosi is located north of and adjacent to the community of Cutler. Orosi is an agriculturally oriented service community surrounded on the north, west and east by lands in agricultural

production, vacant lands, and scattered residential homes. The community of East Orosi is located to the northeast and is not a part of this Project.

Maps: See Attachment “Figure 1” and “Figure 2” for the Vicinity Map and Proposed Urban Development Boundary for Cutler-Orosi.

Land Uses: One of the most important purposes of the Cutler/Orosi Community Plan is to establish land use patterns and development policies and standards for the community for the planning period, through the year 2030. The general intent of the land use plan for Cutler/Orosi is to identify the most appropriate types and distribution of land uses for the community, based on environmental, circulation, infrastructure, services, opportunities and constraints, urban development boundary suitability analysis and other economic capacities and concerns discussed in some chapters of the Community Plan.

Residential: To provide for a variety of living environments and opportunities for affordable housing, the Cutler/Orosi Community Plan establishes three residential densities: low, medium, and high. Low density residential allows six units or less per acre; medium density allows 4 to 14 units per acre and high density allows 15 to 29 units per acre.

Residential Reserve: Land designated for future residential use, should remain in accordance with Policy 5.1. It should be noted that a general plan amendment is not agricultural use until it is determined that conditions warrant conversion to residential use, needed to develop land in a reserve classification.

General Commercial: Commercial development first appeared near the intersection of SR 63 and Avenue 416, and have since spread in strip fashion along these routes.

Service Commercial: Orosi contains one area approximately 12 acres of service commercial, located south of Avenue 416. Cutler contains two areas (approximately 68 acres and approximately 11 acres of Service Commercial) along the railbed footprint.

Professional Office: Family Healthcare Network. Two one acre parcels.

Industrial: Currently, industry in the Cutler/Orosi area is concentrated along the railbed. Included in this area are packing houses, cold storage facilities, a box manufacturing plant, and an agricultural chemical company. Orosi has a five (5) acre parcel south of Avenue 416. Cutler is along the railbed and on east side of SR63

Industrial Reserve: Land within the Plan Area which is recognized as suitable for industrial uses or agriculturally-related industries and is designated for eventual conversion to commercial use, but which is expected to be left in exclusive agricultural zoning until it is determined that conditions warrant conversion to industrial use, in accordance with Policy 5.1.

Agriculture: Agriculture is the foundation of Tulare County’s economy. For this reason, it is important that agricultural lands be preserved and that agricultural operations remain free of adjacent incompatible land uses, which may hamper the operation. The Cutler/Orosi Community Plan takes into consideration surrounding agricultural operations and their needs to be free of intruding urban uses. Where possible, the UDB follows a road, railroad, or creek so that there is some spatial distance between future urban uses and agriculture.

Park: Ledbetter Park is approximately 11 acres in size and is located one mile northwest of Cutler on Road 124/SR 63.

Potential Environmental Impacts: It is anticipated that potential environmental impacts may include, but are not limited to: biological resources, cultural resources, air quality, green house gases, hydrology, water supply and water quality, land use and planning, noise, and traffic.

Reviewing Agencies:

1) State and Federal:

- a) California Air Resources Board
- b) California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, CA Geological Survey
- c) California Department of Fish and Wildlife Region #4
- d) California Department of Food & Agriculture
- e) California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection
- f) California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)
- g) California Department of Toxic Substance Control
- h) California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District #6
- i) California Department of Transportation Planning
- j) California Highway Patrol
- k) Native American Heritage Commission
- l) Natural Resources Agency
- m) Office of Historic Preservation
- n) Public Utilities Commission
- o) State Water Resources Control Board (Water Quality)
- p) United States Army Corps of Engineers
- q) United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
- r) United States Fish and Wildlife Service

2) Local and Regional:

- a) Alta Irrigation District
- b) City of Dinuba
- c) Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Region - Fresno
- d) Pacific Gas & Electric Company
- e) San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (Air District)
- f) Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner
- g) Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG)
- h) Tulare County Farm Bureau
- i) Tulare County Fire Warden
- j) Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, Environmental Health Services Division
- k) Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission
- l) Tulare County Office of Emergency Services
- m) Tulare County Resource Conservation District
- n) Tulare County Resource Management Agency:
 - i) Economic Development and Planning Branch: Project Review, Environmental Planning, and Building and Housing Divisions
 - ii) Fire
 - iii) Flood Control
 - iv) Public Works Branch
- o) Tulare County Sheriff's Office
- p) Tulare County UC Cooperative Extension

Fresno County

Tulare County

Dinuba

Sultana

East Orosi

Cutler-Orosi

Monson

Yettem

Legend

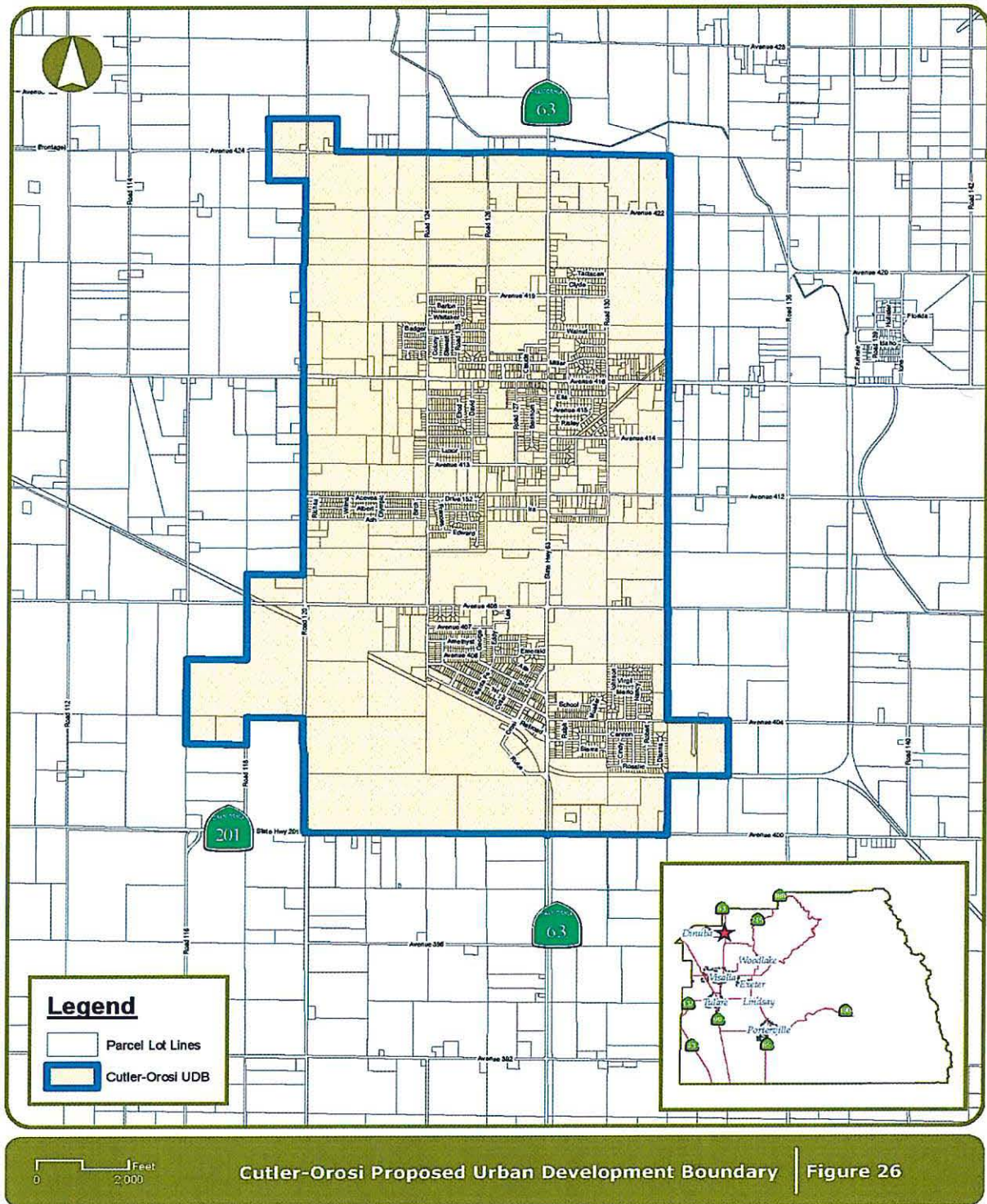
- Cutler-Orosi UDB
- County Boundary
- Supervisorial Districts

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Figure 1

Cutler-Orosi Vicinity Map Figure 1

Attachment "Figure 2" – Aerial Map (Proposed Urban Development Boundary)



Cutler-Orosi Proposed Urban Development Boundary | Figure 26