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CEQA
Exemption Memorandum



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MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Administrator	From: Enrique Torres, Planner II
Date: April 29, 2026	Re: P25-00015-VIEW Yount Mill Road Residence Viewshed Protection Program Categorical Exemption Determination Yount Mill Road, Napa APN: 031-120-042

Background

On January 17, 2025, the Applicant submitted a Viewshed application to allow for the construction of a 7,450 square-foot main residence, an underground pool, 814 square-foot detached garage, and an 816 square-foot accessory dwelling unit. The project site is currently vacant and undeveloped. With the project site being located on slopes over 15%, located 206 feet below a minor ridgeline, located near a county viewshed road Highway 29, and the main residence exceeding 4,000 sqft, the proposed residential project is subject to review and approval by the zoning administrator.

Existing Setting

The approximately 14.4-acre parcel is to the east of Highway 29 and is an undeveloped property. The subject property is located on Yount Mill Road, Napa, CA 94558, 0.3 miles from the intersection of Highway 29 and Yount Mill Road. The property is zoned Agricultural Preserve (AP) and is designated Agriculture Resources (AR) by the Napa County General Plan. Access to the site is provided by an existing agricultural driveway connection from Yount Mill Road. The project site contains slopes ranging between 6 and over 70 percent.

Within the property, the lower slopes on the property are vegetated with grasslands, and the higher slopes are currently vegetated with oak woodlands, along with minimal douglas fir trees. There are two prominent soils on the subject property, boomer-forward-felta complex is found predominantly in the area of disturbance and forward silt loam within the higher slopes. A creep-prone soil was observed uphill of the planned development area, it is anticipated for past landsliding and erosion, to have occurred further uphill to the west and the materials transported downhill as intermittent debris flows. Lincoln Creek is an identified significant stream near the projects existing parcel serving well, at approximately 1,345 feet. The existing well will not contribute to streamflow depletion in the nearby Lincoln Creek. The property is bordered on the north, west, and south by vineyards, single family residences, and one winery (Piazza Del Dotto Winery & Caves), to the east is undeveloped land, vegetated with oak woodlands and douglas fir forest.

CEQA Categorically Exempt Criteria and Analysis

Article 19 of the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes a list of classes of projects that are categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA. The proposed project would be considered exempt under CCR 15303 (Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) and CCR 15304 (Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land).

Class 3: New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures [California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15303] Consists of the construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. The applicable examples are listed below:

- i. (a) One single-family residence, or a second dwelling unit in a residential zone. In urbanized areas, up to three single-family residences may be constructed or converted under this exemption.
- ii. (e) Accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences.

Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land [California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15304] Consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The applicable examples are listed below;

- i. (b) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water-efficient or fire-resistant landscaping.
- ii. (f) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored.

The proposed project scope is categorically exempt from CEQA under Section 15303 and Section 15304. The main dwelling and accessory dwelling unit are exempt from CEQA through Section 15303(a), the pool and detached garage are exempt through section 15303(e). The landscape plan is exempt from CEQA through section 15304(b) and associated road improvements is exempt through Section 15304(f).

15300.2. EXCEPTIONS [to Exemption from CEQA]

Included in the State Guidelines for Implementation of the CEQA is a list exceptions to the CEQA exemptions. A project cannot be considered exempt from CEQA if any of the following criteria are met.

(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

According to the Napa County GIS Map (Hazards, Hydrology Layer), the project site is located in an area with an identified landslide creep, otherwise referred to as a creep-prone soil by Bauer Associates, Inc. in the project specific Geotechnical Investigation. A creep-prone soil was observed uphill of the planned development area, it is anticipated for past landsliding and erosion, to have occurred further uphill to the west and the materials transported downhill as intermittent debris flows. It is planned to excavate foundations through natural soils and/or engineered fill to bear into bedrock per the recommendations of the report in order to prevent adverse effects on the proposed project. Lincoln Creek is an identified significant stream near the projects existing parcel serving well, at approximately 1,345 feet. The existing well will not contribute to streamflow depletion in the nearby Lincoln Creek. Napa County GIS Map (Aesthetic Layer) does show the property being found near a minor ridge line and county designated viewshed road, along with the building site being found slopes of 22.3%. The Viewshed Protection Program which sets forth criteria to be met in order to not affect any viewshed resources, shall be followed during the construction through conditions of approval, which the proposed project is required to follow prior to the issuance of any associated development permits.

Napa County GIS Map (Biological, Vegetation Layer), additionally provided that the project site is located in an area that does not have potential impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern in regard to the selected layers. The biological layer illustrates the lack of presence, of any special-species habitat within the area of disturbance, with the exception of the parcel having the potential to Northern Spotted Owl Habitat. The Northern Spotted Owl habitat can confidently be ruled out as the mature forests are not found within the proposed area of disturbance.

(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

The applicant proposes to construct a single-family residence, accessory dwelling unit, underground pool, and detached garage. As discussed above, the existing conditions of the project site are undeveloped, which would result in new construction, and that this application would not contribute to cumulative impacts in the area, the nature of the proposed project is consistent with the existing character and zoning code. Additionally, the uses requested through this application are typically carried out through ministerial review, which all together would not increase activities in the project area enough to result in significant cumulative impacts to the area.

(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

There are no proposed activities on the subject property that would result in a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Development of the proposed project would occur within the building envelope which has been located to minimize any potential to affect the environment. The Napa County GIS Map was utilized to eliminate reasonable possibility that the activity pertaining to biological, traffic, hydrology, air quality, cultural resources, and transportation will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The Napa County GIS Map showed the lack of presence, of any special-species habitat within the area of disturbance, the proposed project will not produce a vehicle miles travelled (VMT) & greenhouse gasses (GHG) inconsistent with the existing

residential character of the area, no streams were effected, and there are no archeological/cultural resources located on site. As such, there are no unusual circumstances on the subject property that could be subject to impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

The subject property is accessed through Yount Mill Road, which is not designated as state scenic highways. No rock outcroppings or historical structures exist on the project site. In order to minimize the effect to the environment, seven oak trees are proposed for removal, and while not required by county code or general plan policy, the project is proposing to replace all individual oak trees at a 2:1 ratio, while not applicable, the applicant is satisfying the minimum 2:1 replacement ratio set forth in Conservation Policy 24(c) of the Napa County General Plan. As such, the project would not result in damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

The project is not on any lists of hazardous waste sites pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

There are no known historical resources on the subject property.

Conclusion

Therefore, based upon the analysis above, the proposed project meets the criteria for a categorical exemption under State Guideline Sections §15303 and Section §15304 of California Code of Regulations for implementing CEQA, Class 3 (New Construction) and Class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land).