



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

ITEM NO. 6.2

DATE: November 3, 2026

TO: Chairperson and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Steve Riley, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Consideration of General Plan Consistency Determination (CD) 26-003 for the acquisition and disposition of real property for open space conservation and non-motorized recreation purposes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommend the Planning Commission adopt resolutions:

1. Finding the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, acquisition of land for conservation purposes and CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, existing facilities and Direct the Planning Manager to file a Notice of Exemption with the Alameda County Clerk and State Clearinghouse in accordance with the provisions of CEQA;
2. Approving Consistency Determination (CD) 26-003, finding the City's acquisition (and ultimate disposition to Livermore Area Park and Recreation District) of the Property for open space, non-motorized recreation, and conservation is consistent with Livermore General Plan 2045.

SUMMARY

Government Code Section 65402(a) requires that if a General Plan has been adopted, no real property shall be acquired (or disposed of) by dedication or otherwise for public purposes until the location, purpose, and extent of such acquisition has been reported upon by the planning agency as to conformity with its adopted General Plan. The City Council authorized the negotiations with the property owner, the Wentz Family, to purchase property with the objective to protect natural resources and wildlife habitat, expand the regional park system to improve public access, recreation, and regional trail connectivity between Sycamore Grove, Holdener, and Del Valle regional recreation areas, and create new recreational amenities that complement South Livermore's visitor economy. In accordance with Government Section 65402(a), staff recommends the Livermore Planning Commission find the City's proposed acquisition conforms to goals and policies of the Livermore General Plan.

DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

The City of Livermore actively engages in acquiring land for open space conservation using a variety of dedicated open space acquisition funding sources. Staff negotiate with willing property sellers on the open market to purchase land and secure it as open space in perpetuity. These transactions occur in partnership with conservation organizations such as Livermore Area Recreation and Park District (LARPD) and the Tri-Valley Conservancy (Conservancy), who have extensive expertise in natural resource management and recreational programming. The City has acquired or helped to acquire and protect over 1,000 acres of land surrounding the City to achieve a variety of strategic goals:

- Maintain and enhance biological diversity
- Secure land for agricultural conservation
- Support climate resilience and mitigation programs
- Provide non-motorized recreational opportunities
- Preserve scenic value
- Manage watershed and address flood control

The property owner, the Wente Family, (doing business as Wente Land and Cattle and Wente Bros) is a willing seller. The Wente Family approached City and LARPD staff to explore opportunities to support broader wine country revitalization efforts. This collaboration led to property sales that would advance shared goals for recreation, tourism, and economic vitality while preserving the area's unique character and identity.

In July and September 2026, the City Council authorized staff to enter negotiations with the property owner to acquire the property specifically for open space conservation purposes including non-motorized passive recreation to achieve the following objectives:

- Expand public open space through strategic land acquisition and partnerships to increase public access to natural and recreational resources.
- Support the vitality of South Livermore's wine country by creating new recreational opportunities that enhance visitor experiences and encourage longer stays and repeat visitation.
- Establish a contiguous publicly accessible connection between Sycamore Grove Park, Holdener Park, and Del Valle Regional Park, creating an integrated network of parks, trails, and open space.
- Expand regional trail connectivity by linking the trail system to recreation destinations.
- Enhance natural resources and wildlife habitat through long-term stewardship and habitat and land management.

The Planning Commission's role is to determine whether the acquisition is consistent with General Plan Policy. The City Council is responsible for authorizing the Purchase and Sale Agreement, appropriation of funds, and other related actions to facilitate the transaction.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project is the acquisition of the Wente Property (Property). The Property is approximately 1,300 acres and includes the following Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 099-0625-002-02, 099-0850-005-05, 099-0625-002-01, 099-0600-001-08, 099-060-0001-07, 099A-2300-003-03, 099A-2310-003-01, 099A-2310-002-00, and, 099A-2300-004-06 (See Attachment 1).

PROJECT SITE CONTEXT

The Property is in unincorporated Alameda County located between Arroyo Road and Mines Road, in the rangelands and scenic hills that frame the South Livermore Valley. The property is strategically positioned within the existing regional open space and recreation network adjacent to Sycamore Grove Park, Holdener Park, and Del Valle Regional Recreation Areas.

Although the Property is located outside the City's Municipal and Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), its acquisition and permanent conversation as park land would reinforce the UGB by helping limit future development in these areas.

PROJECT SITE ATTRIBUTES

Topography and Terrain

The Property is characterized by rolling hills, rangelands, ridgelines, and notable geological formations that contribute to the scenic landscape of South Livermore Valley. Nearly the entire Property is within the Dry Creek Watershed, which contains old-growth sycamore groves, multiple oak woodland communities, and seasonal drainages that flow towards the Arroyo del Valle. These landscape features provide important ecological connectivity between existing open space areas.

Biological Habitat and Natural Resources

The Property's long-standing history as a working cattle ranch has provided management activities that support diverse natural areas, including grasslands, oak woodlands and riparian corridors as well as several ponds and wetland areas. A biological assessment conducted for the Property identified potential breeding habitat for California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog and grasslands and drainage habitats essential for their movement and various lifecycles (See Attachment 2). The Property is also within a key regional wildlife movement corridor identified by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), linking the Del Valle and Ohlone hills and the Livermore Valley floor.

Recreation Opportunities and Regional Connectivity

Due to the size and adjacency to three major regional recreation areas, the Property offers opportunities to expand the regional park and trail system. Acquisition would accommodate future trail connections consistent with the General Plan, Active Transportation Plan, and LARPD's master plan. Most notably, the Property provides potential to complete the Dry Creek Trail, which would link Arroyo Road, Holdener Park, and the Del Valle trail network.

Further, the Property's existing ranch roads provide an immediate opportunity for low impact, non motorized recreation such as hiking, cycling, equestrian use, and environmental education. Future recreational planning would balance public access with the protection of sensitive natural and agricultural resources.

ACQUISITION AND LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The proposed acquisition would conserve the Property and ensure coordinated long-term management and public access. Pending City Council and LARPD Board approval, the intent of the acquisition is to

subsequently transfer ownership to LARPD to assume land stewardship and the Property's integration into the regional park system. Over time, portions of the property would be placed under conservation easement with the Conservancy, similar to Holdener and Sycamore Grove Parks.

The partnership among the City, LARPD, the Wente Family (and the Conservancy) would support natural resource protection, preserve the area's agricultural character, and expand appropriate public recreation and access. In addition, the acquisition would strengthen South Livermore's visitor economy through improved trail connectivity and enhance the visitor experience while maintaining the agricultural identity of South Livermore.

Overall, the acquisition would help create a more connected regional system of parks, trails, and public open space that support the Valley's working landscape, agricultural and wine-growing traditions, and hospitality industry.

GENERAL PLAN POLICY CONSISTENCY

Because of the Property's strategic location, natural features, and recreation opportunities, Staff recommend the Planning Commission find the proposed acquisition and ultimate disposition to LARPD consistent with Livermore General Plan 2045 as outlined below:

Community Identity

Policy CI-9.1 Natural Features. Leverage Livermore's existing natural features, such as the arroyos and open spaces to strengthen community identity and connections.

Open Space

Policy OS-1.1 Diverse Open Space System. Foster an open space system that supports the natural function of the land, protects sensitive wildlife and plant species, preserves important views, and creates opportunities for recreation.

Policy OS-1.2 Greenbelts. Secure and maintain a greenbelt of nonurbanized land surrounding Livermore to serve as a buffer between communities and to preserve, enhance, and expand an integrated network of open space

Policy OS-1.4 Open Space Acquisition and Connection. Prioritize land acquisition efforts that would result in the creation and expansion of permanent open spaces or corridors that link existing or create new protected natural resource areas.

Policy OS-1.5 Open Space Public Access. Maintain existing and establish new public access to public open space lands as appropriate, while also preserving the character and conservation value of the open space.

Policy OS-1.8 Open Space Preservation Agency Coordination. Coordinate with the County of Alameda, East Bay Regional Park District, Livermore Area Recreation and Park District, Tri-Valley Conservancy, and other partner organizations to preserve and protect important resources inside and outside the urban growth boundary.

Policy OS-1.10 Preservation of Natural Amenities. Preserve and enhance, or work with other

agencies, as appropriate (e.g., with joint grant applications, sharing of staff resources and legal services), to preserve and enhance the following natural amenities:

- a. Ridgelines
- b. Oak Woodlands and Grasslands
- c. Grasslands
- d. Riparian Woodland
- e. Arroyos and Creeks
- f. Knolls
- g. Doolan Canyon
- h. Arroyo Mocho/Cedar Mountain
- i. Corral Hollow
- j. Sycamore Grove
- k. Hilltops (North Livermore Urban Growth Boundary Initiative)
- l. Slopes (North Livermore Urban Growth Boundary Initiative)
- m. Viewscapes (North Livermore Urban Growth Boundary Initiative)
- n. Frick Lake
- o. Springtown Alkali Sink

Policy OS-5.4 Regional Park Development Coordination. Coordinate with the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District and the East Bay Regional Park District in developing adequate regional park space around Livermore to serve the existing community and foreseeable population increases in Livermore and its environs.

Economic Development

Policy ED-1.2 Cultural Assets and Economic Infrastructure. Invest in parks and natural open space restoration, downtown, the wine region, and cultural arts facilities that serve both residents and visitors, prioritizing improvements that enhance Livermore's identity and support economic vitality.

Policy ED-1.3 Tourism Development and Visitor Experience. Invest in a range of visitor-serving attractions, amenities, and overnight accommodations, particularly in the wine country and downtown, that enhance the visitor experience, encourage multi-day visits, and celebrate Livermore's unique attributes.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff recommend the Planning Commission find the Property acquisition is categorically exempt from CEQA in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, which exempts acquisitions of lands for wildlife conservation purposes including where the purpose of the acquisition is to preserve the land in its natural condition. Further, staff recommend the Planning Commission find the Property acquisition is categorically exempt from CEQA in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, which exempts existing facilities. The existing infrastructure and network of existing roadways and trails would be used to facilitate non-motorized outdoor recreational opportunities programed, managed, and maintained by LARPD.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Wente Park Location Map
2. Wente Conservation Values Assessment
3. Wente Project Resolution
4. Wente CEQA Resolution

Prepared by: Andy Ross
Principal Planner