

# County of Santa Clara

## Department of Planning and Development

*"People Centered Services"*

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## NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE BAY AREA VIPASSANA CENTER

**Project Applicant:** Bay Area Vipassana Center

**File Number:** PLN20-003

**Application For:** Use permit, Architecture and Site Approval, and Grading Approval

The County of Santa Clara ("County") will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Bay Area Vipassana Center project (B AVC or "Project"). The County requests your input on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the DEIR for the Project. A brief description of the Project, its location, and a summary of the potential environmental effects are provided below. Approval of the Project will require actions by the County of Santa Clara, including the preparation and certification of a Final EIR and Use Permit, Architecture and Site Approval, and Grading Approval. The Final EIR may also be used by responsible agencies as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15381 when considering approvals for the Project.

The Notice of Preparation of the DEIR will occur from June 30, 2025 to July 30, 2025. Comments are due on July 30, at 5:00 p.m.; however, an early response would be appreciated. Please send your response to:

County of Santa Clara Department of Planning and Development

**Attention: Lara Tran**

County Government Center

70 W. Hedding Street, 7th Floor, East Wing, San Jose, CA 95110

Email: [lara.tran@pln.sccgov.org](mailto:lara.tran@pln.sccgov.org)

DocuSigned by:

*Lara Tran*

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Lara Tran, Senior Planner

6/26/2025

Date

DocuSigned by:

*Robert Salisbury*

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Robert Salisbury, Principal Planner

6/26/2025

Date

As the lead agency, the County plans to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with a Use Permit, Architecture and Site Approval, and Grading Approval application submitted by Brian McNamara for the BAVC pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and its implementing regulations, the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. Section 15000 et seq.). The BAVC is a proposed retreat center for teaching and practicing Vipassana meditation. The County published a Notice of Intent to Adopt an Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) on March 1, 2024. In response to the comments received on the IS/MND for the Project, the County has decided to prepare an EIR. The entirety of the Project will be evaluated in the EIR.

Project Location

The Project area is in a rural portion of unincorporated Santa Clara County, west of the City of Gilroy (Figure 1), and the Project site is a 54.59-acre parcel (A.P.N. 756-30-024) located at 9210 El Matador Drive (Figure 2). The General Plan designation of this parcel is Hillside, and the zoning is Hillside with a Scenic Road combining zoning district (HS-SR). The Project site is accessed from Redwood Retreat Road and is surrounded by single family residences to the northeast, southeast, south and west. An open field is across Redwood Retreat Road east of the Project site. The Project site is on relatively flat ground within the eastern half, then inclines steeply towards the west.

Project Description

The Project is a retreat center for teaching and practicing Vipassana meditation. The Project proposes to construct 18 structures totaling 53,260 square feet, demolish an accessory structure (barn), and install on-site improvements including a new 97,000-gallon water tank, driveway, access road, parking lot, new landscaping, sewage collection lines, septic tanks, effluent collection lines, wastewater treatment system (circulating textile filter system), pressure delivery effluent pipelines, pump stations, and subsurface drip irrigation. The total footprint of the Project would be approximately 10 acres in clusters, mostly along the eastern half of the 54.59-acre site. Project construction would take 5 years (60 months) and would occur over five phases.

Required Project Approvals

In addition to County certification of a Final EIR and issuance of Use Permit, Architecture and Site Approval, and Grading Approval, additional permits and approvals would be required to implement the Project, potentially including those identified in **Table 1, Summary of Permits and Approvals**.

TABLE 1  
SUMMARY OF PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Agency	Permit/Approval
Local	
County of Santa Clara Department of Planning and Development	Certification of the environmental impact report, issuance of a UP, ASA and grading permit.

Agency	Permit/Approval
State	
State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water	Clearance to develop a Public Water System
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board	Approval of on-site wastewater treatment system
SOURCE: Data compiled by Environmental Science Associates in 2025	

**Potential Environmental Effects of the Project**

The County released an IS/MND (State Clearinghouse Number 2024030083) for this project with a public review period of March 1, 2024, through April 1, 2024. County Planning received hundreds of comment letters on the IS/MND mainly in support of the project. At least four comment letters were in opposition, including a letter from Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, a law firm representing the neighboring Happy Acres residential community. The County determined that an EIR would be needed which will build upon the analytical work previously completed for the IS/MND as appropriate under CEQA.

The EIR will describe the reasonably foreseeable and potentially significant adverse effects of the proposed project (both direct and indirect). The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The EIR will evaluate potentially significant impacts associated with Project implementation including resource areas such as hydrology and water quality, utilities and service systems, public safety, and wildfire.

The County welcomes all input on the scope and content of the DEIR in response to this Notice of Preparation, and especially welcomes responses that will assist the County in:

- 1) Identifying potentially significant environmental impacts raised by the proposed project;
- 2) Identifying and evaluating potential alternatives to the proposed project and mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce potentially significant impacts associated with the project; and
- 3) Confirming which agencies will be a responsible and/or trustee agency for this project and providing information germane to these agencies’ statutory responsibilities as they relate to the County’s analysis of potential effects of the project.