Visual Impact Analysis

Independent Energy Solutions, Inc.

San Diego Gas & Electric

Solar Energy Project - Ramona

Record ID: MUP-14-013

Environmental Log Number: PDS2014-ER-14-09-003

Prepared by:

KTU+A
Planning + Landscape Architecture

Under Contract With:

Merkel & Associates, Inc.
- Biological Consulting
- Environmental Permitting
- Habitat Restoration
- Ecological Management

Final Submittal:

May 15, 2015

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Prepared for:
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San Diego, CA 92123

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_____
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CERTIFICATION:

Michael Singleton, ASLA, AICP – Principal Planner/Landscape Architect; B.S. Landscape Architecture; 31 years experience; California registered Landscape Architect #2386; registered on the County-approved Consultants List to prepare Visual Analyses (updated August 1, 2007)

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary iii
1.0 INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Purpose of the Visual Resources Report 1
1.2 Key Issues 1
1.3 Principal Viewpoints to be Covered 1
2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION 2
2.1 Project Location 2
2.2 Proposed Project Features 2
2.3 Land Use Designations 13
2.4 Regulatory Framework 13
2.5 Design Policies and Guidance 14
3.0 VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT 19
3.1 Project Setting 19
3.2 Landscape Character Units 26
3.3 Project Viewshed 30
4.0 EXISTING VISUAL RESOURCES AND VIEWER RESPONSE 33
4.1 Existing Visual Resources 33
4.2 Viewer Response 36
5.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT 39
5.1 Definition of Visual Impact Levels 39
5.2 Guidelines for Determining Significance 39
5.3 Analysis of Project Effects and Significance Determination 40
5.4 Determination of Significance 81
5.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis 82
5.6 Summary of Project Impacts and Significance and Conclusions 86
6.0 VISUAL MITIGATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS 87
7.0 REFERENCES 88
8.0 REPORT PREPARERS 89

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Regional Vicinity Map 3
Figure 2 - Local Vicinity Map 4
Figure 3a - Project Plot Plan 5
Figure 3b - Project Conceptual Landscape Plan Sheet 1 9
Figure 3c - Project Conceptual Landscape Plan Sheet 2 10
Figure 3d - Project Grading Plan 11
Figure 4 - Photograph Location Map 21
Figure 5 - Typical Views A-F 23
Figure 6 - Typical Views G-L 25
Figure 7 - Landscape Character Units 27
Figure 8 - Typical Views M-P 29
Figure 9 - Project Viewshed 31
Figure 10 - Key View Location Map 43
Figure 11 - Candidate Key Views 1-2 45
Figure 12 - Candidate Key View 3-4 46
Figure 13 - Candidate Key View 5-6 47
Figure 14 - Candidate Key Views 7-8 48
Figure 15 - Candidate Key View 9 49
Figure 16a - Photo Simulation Key View 1
At Construction 51
Figure 16b - Photo Simulation Key View 1
5 Years Post Construction 53
Figure 16c - Photo Simulation Key View 1
10 Years Post Construction 55
Figure 17a - Photo Simulation Key View 3
At Construction 57
Figure 17b - Photo Simulation Key View 3
5 Years Post Construction 59
Figure 17c - Photo Simulation Key View 3
10 Years Post Construction 61
Figure 18a - Photo Simulation Key View 6
At Construction 63
Figure 18b - Photo Simulation Key View 6
5 Years Post Construction 65
Figure 18c - Photo Simulation Key View 6
10 Years Post Construction 67
Figure 19a - Photo Simulation Key View 7
At Construction 69
Figure 19b - Photo Simulation Key View 7
5 Years Post Construction 71
Figure 19c - Photo Simulation Key View 7
10 Years Post Construction 73
Figure 20 - Glare Analysis Summary 79
Figure 21 - Cumulative Projects 83
Project Conceptual Landscape Plan Sheets L-01 through L-04 (Oversize) ..... Attached Pocket

Executive Summary

This visual analysis for the proposed Independent Energy Solutions, Inc./San Diego Gas & Electric Solar Energy Project in Ramona, CA (proposed project) is an evaluation of potential project impacts on existing visual resources of the surrounding community of Ramona, California.

The proposed project would change the visual elements of the project site, but the contrast created by the project would be minimal, and the project features would not detract from the existing visual character and quality of the area. Additionally, the proposed project would be consistent and would comply with the Ramona Community Design Guidelines.

The project would not remove or change a feature that contributes to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, such as designated landmarks, historic resources, trees, or rock outcroppings.

The project would construct a segment of one community pathway and accommodate another future pathway ("trails" within the adopted *Ramona Community Trails and Pathways Plan*). The proposed project features, however, would not obstruct, interrupt, or detract from views from these pathways, and the visible features of the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on views from these areas. Additionally, the project would have a less than significant impact on views where it is visible from scenic routes located on San Vicente Road. The project would not impact on any other scenic highways because it would not visible from other scenic roadways in the area. The proposed project also would have a less than significant impact on any panoramic vistas seen from recreational area such as Simon Preserve, which is located approximately one mile east of the site. The project landscaping would include berms, trees, and a variety of native and low-water use plants similar to those existing in the immediately surrounding area. The plants would be installed as a mix of container sizes. The proposed project landscaping would be visually similar to the surrounding area, and the visual impact to community character would be less than significant.

Furthermore, the project would conform with San Diego County and Ramona Community Design Policies and Guidance, and would have a less than significant impact due to ambient light. The applicant conducted a glare analysis using the Solar Glare and Flux Mapping tools available onine from Sandia National Laboratories. After review, it was determined that the project would have a less than signficant impact due to glare based on the proposed anti-reflective coating, intervening landscaping, and proposed landscaping along Creelman Lane. Refer to Section 5.3.5 for further discussion.

The cumulative effect between the proposed project and the cumulative projects would be less than significant due to the distance and local screening vegetation between other permit projects in the area and the proposed project that limit inclusive views of more than one proposed development within one scene at a time. Construction period impacts would be less than significant due to the brief construction period and fabric screening provided on the project perimeter fence.

It has been determined that the proposed project would not result in significant impacts on visual resources within the Ramona community. As such, no mitigation measures are required or proposed.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Visual Resources Report

The purpose of this study is to assess the visual impacts of the proposed project on the surrounding visual environment, determine the significance of the impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and to propose measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse visual impacts associated with the construction of the Independent Energy Solutions, Inc. (IES)/San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) Solar Energy Project in Ramona, CA (proposed project).

1.2 Key Issues

This analysis addresses the potential of the proposed project to adversely affect scenic vistas, damage scenic resources, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. It includes an assessment of the proposed project in comparison to the existing visual resources of the project setting, and the potential viewer response to the proposed changes. This analysis also includes a discussion of potential cumulative visual impacts.

1.3 Principal Viewpoints to be Covered

The visibility of the project site is evaluated and discussed below. Key Views within the viewshed are analyzed based on the number of viewers and location of the project site within the view. Three key views are selected as representative views and are analyzed with a full simulation. These principal viewpoints include:

- A southward view from Ashley Road at the northeastern corner of the project site
- An eastward view from Creelman Lane at Casteel Lane and the southwestern corner of the project site
- A westward view from Creelman Lane at approximately 0.25 mile east of the project site.

This report also includes a discussion of the project viewshed, views, and Landscape character units that represent the visual character of the study area.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Project Location

The proposed project site is located just south of the community of Ramona, California, within north-central San Diego County. The site is bordered by Creelman Lane on the south, and Ashley Road on the east. A private road known as Casteel Lane borders the western site boundary, and two private lots south of Hanson Lane border the northern site boundary. Refer to Figure 1, Regional Location Map, and Figure 2, Local Vicinity Map.

The site is contained within one parcel owned by SDG&E (County Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 284-340-35). The southern, western, and eastern portions of the SDG&E parcel are currently leased by a private company for use as an active palm tree nursery. The remaining land within the parcel is undeveloped and supports dense non-native grassland with drainage features meandering in a northwesterly direction. The site is surrounded by the County land use designation of Semi-Rural Residential to the north, east, and south, and Village Residential designations to the west.

2.2 Proposed Project Features

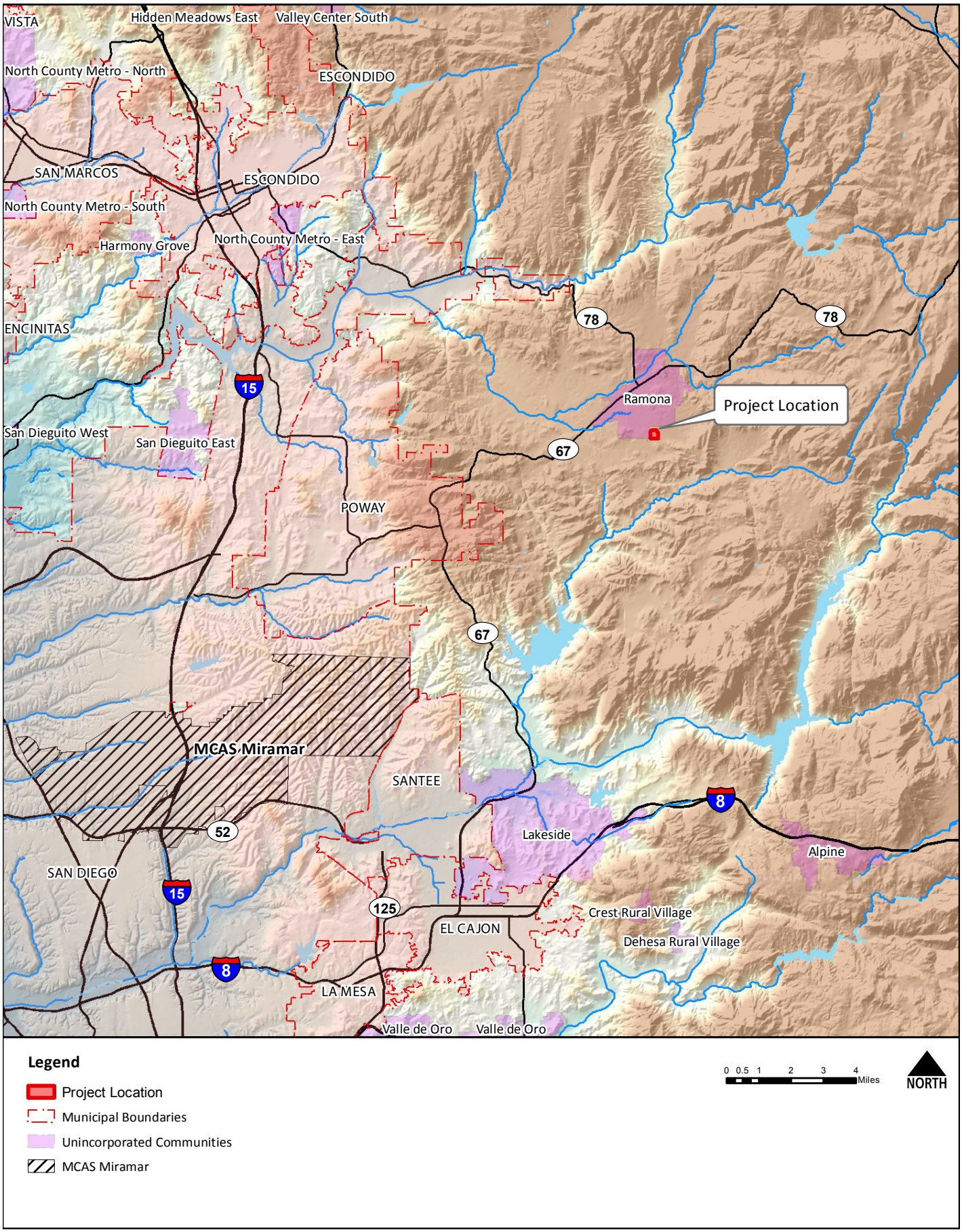
IES, the Project applicant, is preparing a Major Use Permit (MUP) application for development and operation of a photovoltaic (PV) solar facility to be located on the SDG&E owned property. IES has been contracted to engineer and obtain permits for the Solar Energy Project (SEP) facility, which will be owned and operated by SDG&E. The proposed project would require approval of an MUP by the County of San Diego to allow for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the facilities for the long-term generation of solar energy. The proposed facility would have an overall production capacity of approximately 4.0 Megawatts (MW) of alternating current (AC). Power produced at the site would be directed into the power grid.

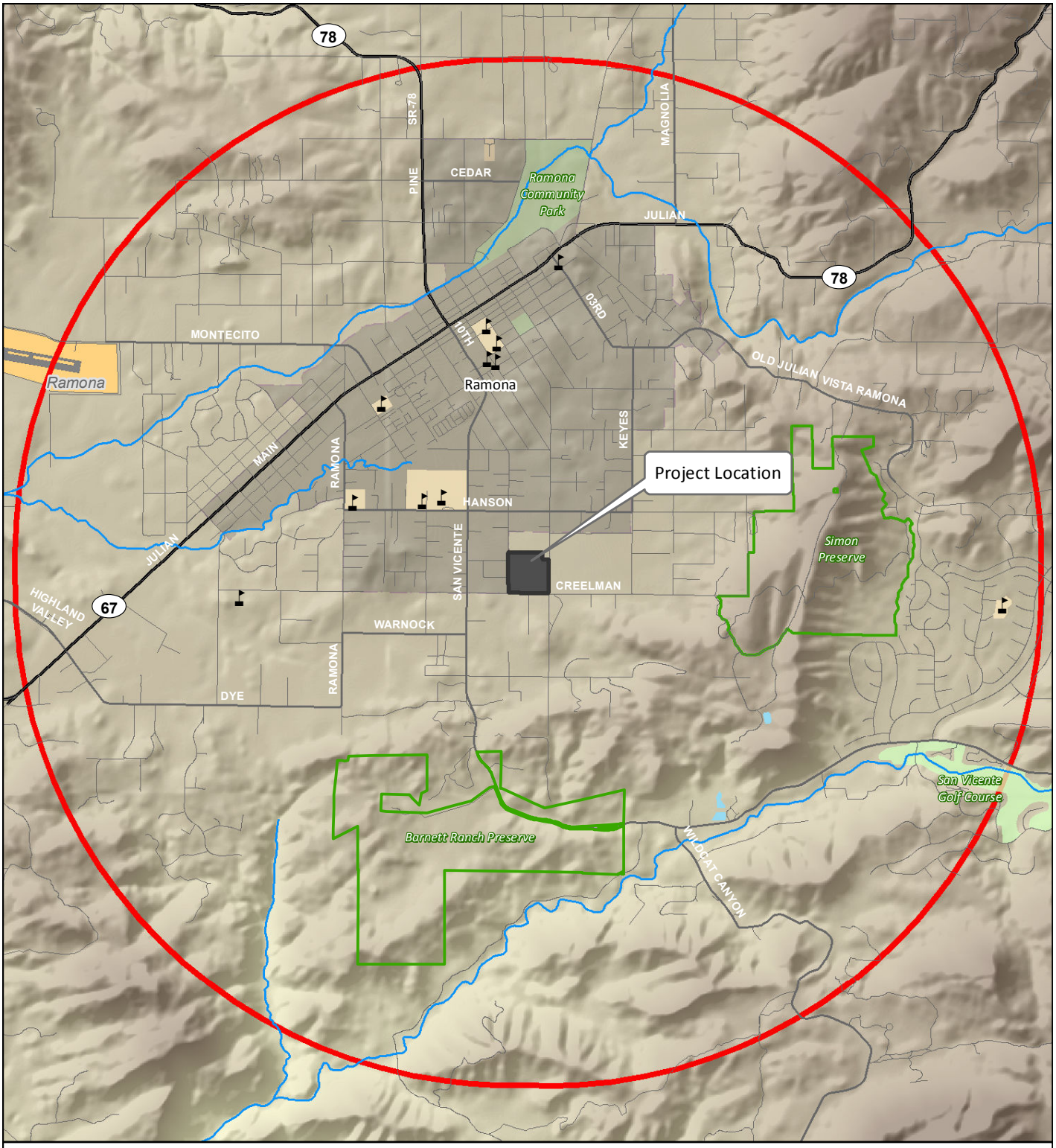
The proposed PV solar facility would be constructed on approximately 18.3 acres of the 37.2 acre parcel. The panels would be grouped together on these southern portion of the parcel, approximately 70 to 75 feet north of Creelman Lane, 50 to 55 feet west of Casteel Lane, 50 to 300 feet east of Ashley Road, and between approximately 300 and 750 feet south of the northern property line. The remaining acreage would remain in its present undeveloped state. Refer to the Project Plot Plan in Figure 3a. The proposed project would consist of PV solar modules mounted on fixed tilt ground-mounted racks. Racks would measure approximately13 feet wide by 13.5 feet deep, and up to 45 feet long. The maximum height of the proposed PV solar modules would range from 8 feet to 11.5 feet as measured from ground surface. The minimum height of the PV solar modules would be approximately four feet above the ground. The racks would be installed in parallel rows facing southward. Inverters, AC switchgear, medium voltage transformers, and associated equipment would be sited on two pads within the module array as shown on Figure 3a. The equipment would be shaded with permanent shade canopies that would be approximately 10.5 feet tall at the tallest and 18 feet wide.

Electrical power from the proposed project would be routed to a 12 kilovolt (kV) pad-mounted switchgear located adjacent to the fire access road on the west side of the solar array. The 12kV switchgear would be connected by underground cables to an interconnect pole next to existing Casteel Lane and within an existing utility easement adjacent to the west boundary of the project site. The existing 45-foot tall pole would be replaced with a similar pole that would be 50 feet high.

An internal 24-foot wide fire access road would surround the solar module arrays. The road would be paved with four inches of decomposed granite, and would have a three foot wide soft shoulder on each side (for a total width of 30 feet). The perimeter access road would facilitate onsite circulation for emergency and maintenance vehicles and provide a fire buffer. Permanent access into the site would be via a driveway off Creelman Lane, approximately 200 feet east of Casteel Lane. A double gate would be located in the fence at the driveway for access. An eight-foot-high chain link fence would be installed around the perimeter of the solar panel arrays. Temporary, green privacy screen fabric would be installed on the outside of the fence that would surround the PV arrays and project roads. The fabric would be removed at the end of the five year landscape establishment period. The northern portion of the perimeter fence would include integrated permanent green slats to shield the project.

Figure 1 - Regional Vicinity Map





Legend

- Ramona Community Village
- Creelman Parcel
- Project 3 Mile Buffer
- Open Space Preserve
- School

Airports (Local)

- Runway
- Airport Area

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

NORTH

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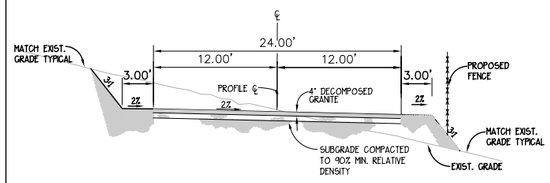
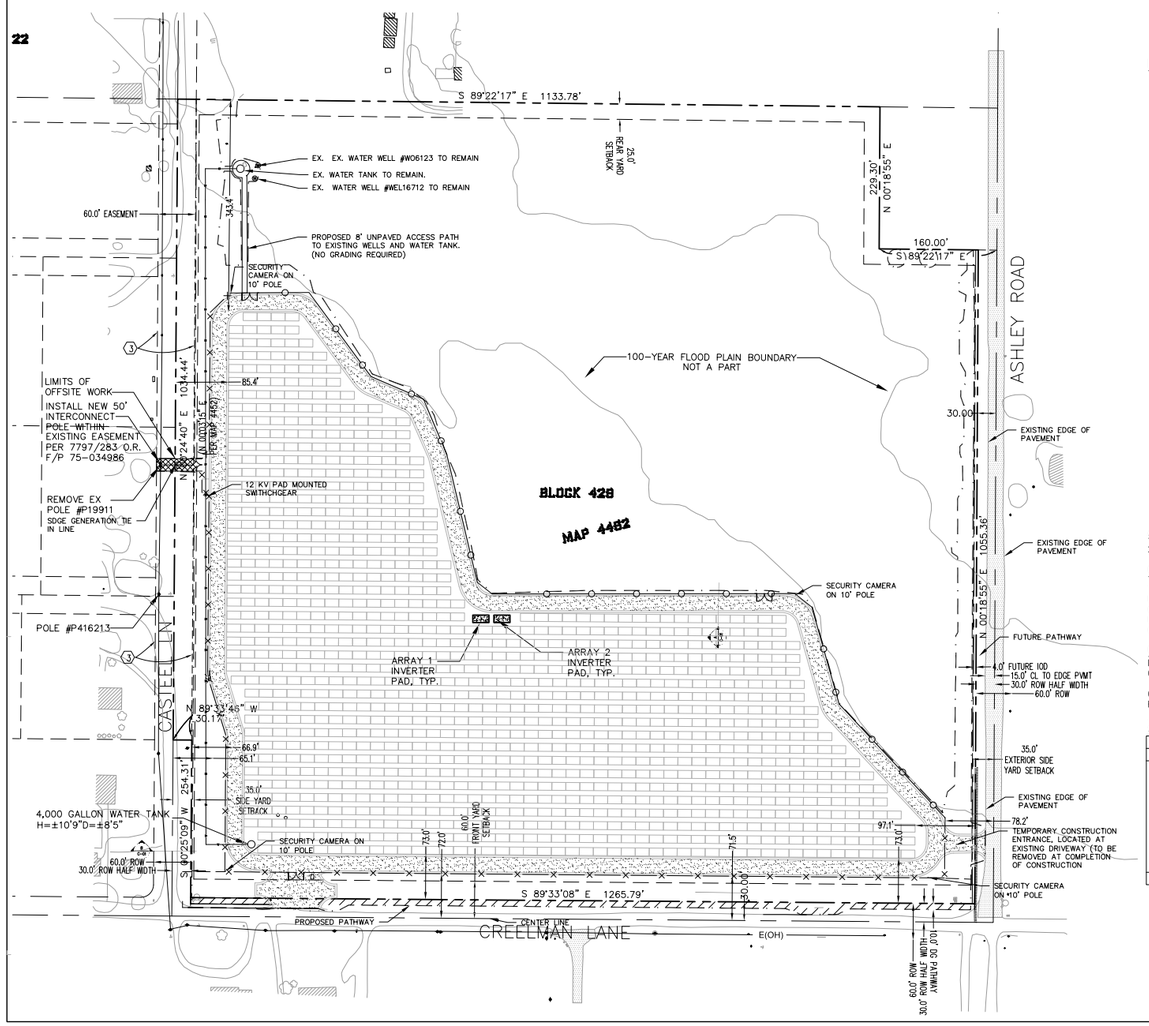
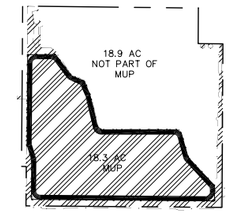


A TYPICAL SECTION - PERIMETER FIRE ACCESS ROAD
NTS





MAJOR USE AREA
30' FUEL MODIFICATION ZONE

LIMITS OF MAJOR USE PERMIT AREA & FUEL MODIFICATION ZONE
NOT TO SCALE

NOTES

1. GROSS AREA: 37.2 ACRES
2. MUP AREA: 18.3 ACRES
3. LOT COVERAGE: 19.5%; FAR: 0.005
4. TOPOGRAPHIC SOURCE: SIERRA SURVEYING, 2013
5. ASSOCIATED REQUESTS: NONE
6. THE APPROVAL OF THIS MAJOR USE PERMIT (MUP) AUTHORIZES THE FOLLOWING: CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF UNMANNED PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR FACILITY PURSUANT TO SECTION 6952, OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE.
7. PRELIMINARY GRADING PROPOSED. SEE PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN. THIS PLAN IS PROVIDED TO ALLOW FULL AND ADEQUATE DISCRETIONARY REVIEW OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. THE PROPERTY OWNER ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ACCEPTANCE OR APPROVAL OF THIS PLAN DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN APPROVAL TO PERFORM ANY GRADING SHOWN THEREON, AND AGREES TO OBTAIN VALID GRADING PERMIT BEFORE COMMENCING SUCH ACTIVITY, IF REQUIRED.
8. ALL PROPOSED STRUCTURES TO BE CONSTRUCTED OF NON-COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS (CONCRETE, BLOCK, METAL) OR SIMILAR.
9. LIGHTING FOR MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY PROPOSES ONLY. SHIELDED AND MOTION SENSOR LIGHTING LOCATED AT GATES AND SHALL CONFORM TO COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO OUTDOOR LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS.
10. PHASING – THE PROJECT WILL BE CONSTRUCTED IN ONE PHASE.
11. ALL DISTURBED AREAS WOULD BE COVERED WITH PERMEABLE DUST / EROSION CONTROL AGENT.
12. NO PUBLIC SIGNAGE PROPOSED, ONLY SMALL DIRECTIONAL AND SAFETY SIGNAGE ARE PROPOSED ONSITE.
13. ALL EXISTING STRUCTURES TO REMAIN.
14. THE SOLAR RELATED FACILITIES (PANELS, RACKING, ELECTRICAL CONNECTIONS, INVERTER STRUCTURES, FENCING AND INTERNAL ACCESS, ETC.) SHOWN ON THIS PLOT PLAN MAY BE RELOCATED. RECONFIGURED, AND / OR RESIZED WITHIN THE SOLAR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT AREA WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR OF PDS WHEN FOUND IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE INTENT AND CONDITIONS OF PERMIT'S APPROVAL.
15. WATER DISTRICT: RAMONA MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
16. FIRE DISTRICT: RAMONA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
17. GENERAL PLAN: PUBLIC SEMI-PUBLIC LANDS
18. POINT OF INTERCONNECT – CASTEEL LANE ROW/ROAD PURPOSES AND UTILITY LINE EASEMENT
19. SEE PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN SHEET C-02 FOR STREET SECTIONS
20. THE TEMPORARY PRIVACY SCREEN LANDSCAPE FABRIC WILL BE PLACED ALONG THE OUTSIDE PERIMETER OF THE CHAIN LINK FENCE AND WILL BE REMOVED AFTER THE 5 YEAR LANDSCAPE ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD.
21. COLOR OF INVERTER WILL BE NON-REFLECTIVE FLAT WHITE, SWITCHGEAR WILL BE A LIGHT EARTH TONE AND THE WATER TANK WILL BE DARK GREEN.
22. SECURITY CAMERAS WILL BE SHIELDED FROM VIEW AND WILL BE ANGLED TO ONLY MONITOR THE PROPERTY TO THE SITE BOUNDARY
23. ALL EXISTING PALMS ON PROPERTY WILL BE REMOVED.
24. SLATS (GREEN PLASTIC) WILL BE PLACED ALONG THE NORTHERN CHAIN-LINK FENCE AND WILL REMAIN FOR THE LIFE OF THE FACILITY.
25. SOLAR PANELS WILL HAVE AN ANTI-REFLECTIVE COATING.
26. BERMS HAVE BEEN ADDED ALONG CREELMAN LANE FOR ADDITIONAL SCREENING OF THE PROPERTY. REFER TO SHEET C-02 PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN FOR BERM PLACEMENT.

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER

284-340-35 = 37.2 GROSS ACRES

GENERAL NOTES

THE CONTRACTOR SHALL ARRANGE FOR A PRIVATE UNDERGROUND UTILITY LOCATOR PRIOR TO EXCAVATION AND SHALL ARRANGE FOR AND COORDINATE SHUT DOWN, DISCONNECTION AND CAPPING OF EXISTING UTILITIES WITH THE APPROPRIATE UTILITY OWNERS PRIOR TO COMMENCING THE WORK.

GRADING QUANTITIES

INCLUDES ONSITE AND OFFSITE WORK
CUT 2608 CY FILL 2608 CY IMPORT 0 CY

OFFSITE WORK ONLY CUT 0 CY FILL 210 CY IMPORT FROM MUP AREA 210 CY

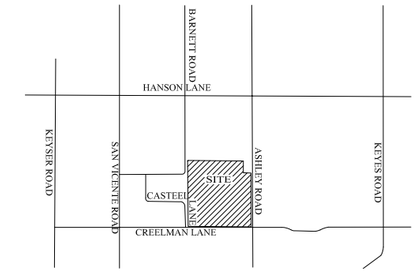
ZONING

USE REGULATIONS		A70
NEIGHBORHOOD REGULATIONS		M
DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS	DENSITY	–
	LOT SIZE	4AC
	BUILDING TYPE	C
	MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA	–
	FLOOR AREA RATIO	–
	HEIGHT	G
	LOT COVERAGE	–
	SETBACK	C
	OPEN SPACE	–
SPECIAL AREA AND REGULATIONS		D2.POR F

EXISTING EASEMENTS*

(#)	DESCRIPTION	DISPOSITION
(3)	ROAD PURPOSES AND UTILITY LINES	TO REMAIN

* BASED ON DATA FROM PRELIMINARY TITLE REPORT BY CHICAGO TITLE COMPANY DATED APRIL 18, 2013.



VICINITY MAP

(T.B. 1172-H2)
N.T.S.

LEGEND

DESCRIPTION	SYMBOL
EXISTING ASPHALT ROAD	
PROPOSED CONCRETE INVERTER PAD	
PROPOSED 24' DG FIRE ACCESS ROAD ALL WEATHER	
PROPOSED PATHWAY	
PROPOSED 8' CHAIN LINK FENCE WITH TEMP. PRIVACY SCREEN LANDSCAPE FABRIC	— x —
PROPOSED 8' CHAIN LINK FENCE WITH PERMANENT GREEN PLASTIC SLATS	
EXISTING FENCE	
16 MODULE SUB ARRAY PANEL SHADE STRUCTURE	
EXISTING POWER POLE	
EXISTING FIRE HYDRANT	
EXISTING WELL (2)	
EXISTING PROPERTY LINE	
EXISTING EASEMENT	
MUP LIMITS	
BUILDING SET BACK LINE	
EXISTING OVERHEAD POWER	—E(OH)—
PROPOSED UNDRGROUND INTERCONNECT LINE	—E—
PROPOSED 3' FIELD FENCE	
DOUBLE ACCESS GATE	
PROPROSED WATER LINE	—W—
EXISTING WATER LINE (APPROX. LOCATION)	—W—
RELINQUISH ACCESS RIGHTS	

APPLICANT

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1090 JOSHUA WAY
VISTA, CA 92081
CONTACT: ERIC JOHNSTON
760-752-9706

OWNER

SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC
8315 CENTURY PARK COURT
SAN DIEGO, CA 92123
CONTACT: JOE FRANI
858-654-8731

SHEET INDEX

C-01 – TITLE SHEET/PLOT PLAN
C-02 – PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN
C-03 – COUNTY CONDITION NOTES
C-04 – ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS
C-05 – ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS

1" = 100' 100 0 100 200 scale feet

BergerABAM
10525 Vista Sorrento Parkway, Suite 350
San Diego, California 92121-2745
(858) 500-4500 Fax: (858) 500-4501

COUNTY PROJECT NUMBER: PDS2014-MUP-14-013

Drawn by ES
Checked by MM
Date 03/07/14
Commission No.

No.	DATE	BY	REMARKS
1	08/18/14	MM	COUNTY COMMENTS
2	03/13/15	MM	COUNTY COMMENTS
3	05/15/15	MM	COUNTY COMMENTS
4			

IES/SDG&E SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT - RAMONA

TITLE SHEET/PLOT PLAN

Sheet Number C-01
1 of 5

Last Saved by: Millie.magee on: May 11, 2015 11:37 AM File: Q:\SanDiego\2013\A13.0324\CADD\Dwgs\A13.0324.00 Plot Plan - CREELMAN\A13.0324.00 C.01 Plot Plan - CREELMAN.dwg

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Temporary access for construction of the project would be via a widened existing driveway off Ashley Road, approximately 125 feet north of Creelman Lane. The construction access driveway would be closed and landscaped at the end of the construction period.

No offsite roadway improvements are proposed along Creelman Lane to accommodate the Project, with the exception of minor improvements to construct the driveway entrance. The project plans note the future Collier Park/Ashley Road community pathway within the right-of-way along Ashley Road; however, the Proposed Project does not propose to construct this pathway. The project will be responsible for the construction of a pathway along Creelman Lane, which would become part of the Dye Road Pathway (#12 in the *Ramona Community Trails and Pathways Plan*). The pathway would be 10 feet wide, covered with 4 inches of decomposed granite, have a maximum slope of 15%, and maximum cross-slope of 2%, per the County of San Diego *Pathways Design and Construction Guidelines* trail standards. The pathway would make use of existing topography and would be located directly abutting the project site property where possible. However, due to existing slopes near the Ashley Road and Creelman Lane intersection near an existing culvert and headwall, the pathway would be located approximately two feet from Creelman Lane for a portion of its length. The County will be responsible for maintenance of the pathway once constructed. Potential views from the pathway locations were considered in this visual analysis.

Landscape shrubs are proposed to be installed along the eastern, southern, and portions of the western site perimeter to screen the proposed fence and views of the project features. Proposed species include large native shrubs such as Laurel Sumac (*Malosma laurina*), Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), as well as smaller native shrubs with seasonal flowers, such as varieties of Sage (*Salvia* sp.), Ceanothus, and Deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*). Some non-native, low-water use plants that are not invasive would be included in the landscape to provide some varieties of vegetation that grow more quickly, including Pittosporum and Lantana. Additionally, two types of small trees (African Suman [*Rhus lancea*] and Bottlebrush [*Callistemon citrinus*]) would be placed along the southern edge of the property at Creelman Lane, next to the pathway. Two varieties of taller trees (Stone Pine [*Pinus pinea*] and Hollywood Juniper [*Juniperus chinensis* 'Torulosa']) would be planted along the eastern edge of the property next to Ashley Road, north of the proposed array.

All of the plants would be irrigated to ensure establishment via a permanent irrigation system. The system would rely on groundwater, which would be stored in a proposed 4,000 gallon tank located at the southwestern corner of the solar array. The tank, which also would be used for fire safety, would be 10.75' tall and 8.5' diameter. The landscape plants would be irrigated for three years to ensure establishment. After three years, the irrigation would be turned off and water would only be provided if needed to ensure continued plant survival. It is anticipated that the landscape would be established and performing screening requirements by year five after construction. The proposed plants would be considered to be fully mature by year ten. The landscape plan also requires a variety of container sizes as well as long-term monitoring and maintenance requirements (such as weed removal, irrigation repair, and replacement planting requirements) to ensure continued screening of the project perimeter fence and panels over the projected life of the project. All landscape plants would be located outside the project fence, and all landscape areas would be covered with two inches of organic mulch for erosion control.

Additionally, small mounds, or "berms," would be created in the space between the proposed pathway and the project perimeter fence. The berms would vary in height from two to five feet higher than the adjacent pathway, and would not be continuous, so that stormwater will continue to flow naturally to the north. The proposed landscape plants would be placed on top of the berms, which would elevate the young plants so that as the landscape becomes established, the plants would more quickly screen the proposed project features. The berms also would be hyrdoseeded with a native erosion control seed mix for erosion control purposes.

Refer to Figures 3b and 3c for an overview of the Project Conceptual Landscape Plan. All four sheets of the Project Conceptual Landscape Plan are attached as oversize sheets L-01 through L-04 at the back of this report. These include section/elevation figures detailing the progression of the landscape plants from planting to 10 years post construction, and the position of the landscape plants and berms in relation to

the project site, the abutting roadway, and the pathway. Also refer to Sheet L-04 for details of the long-term monitoring and maintenance program.

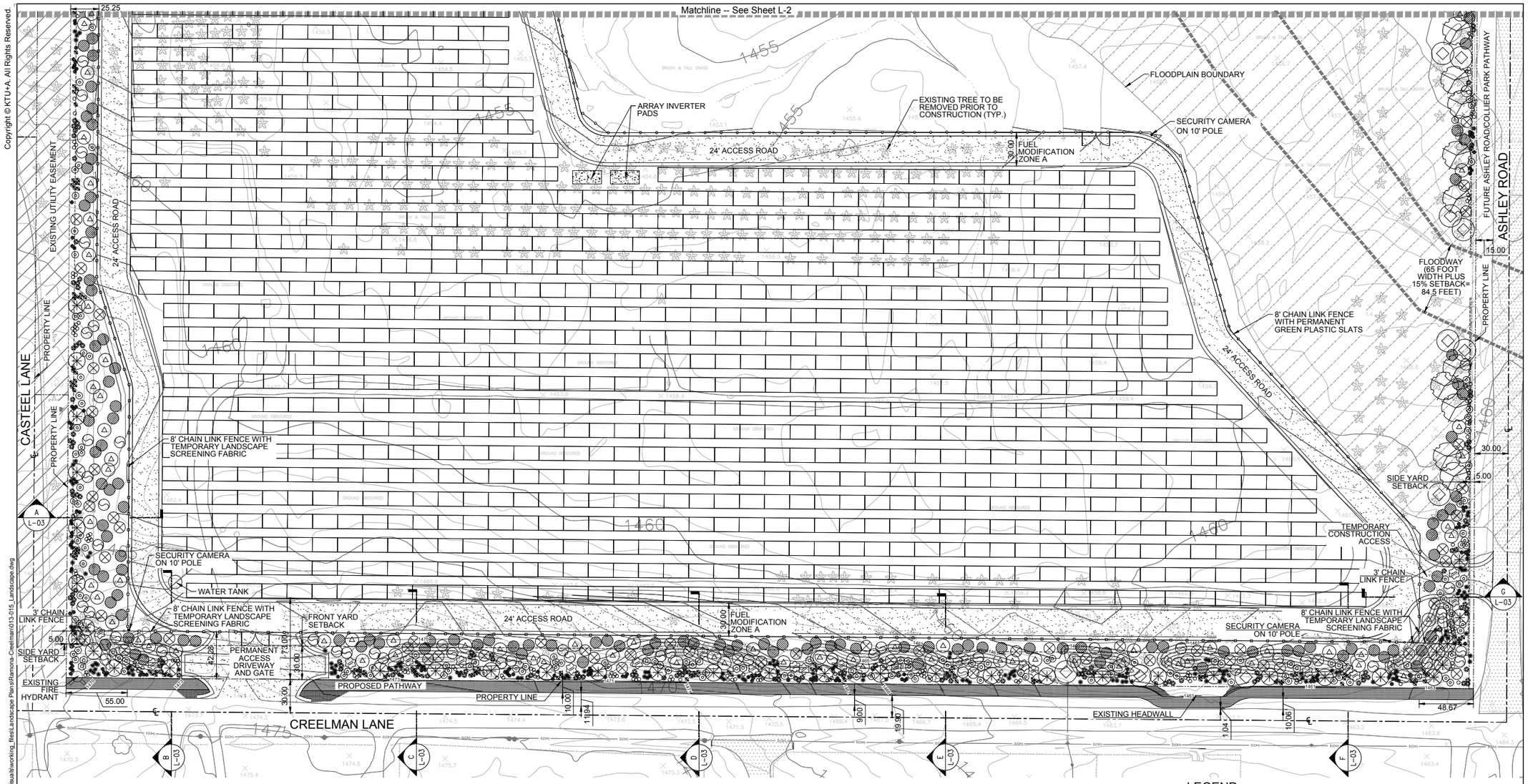
Low-level lighting would be installed at the main entry gate. All lighting would be operated manually or activated via motion sensors, and would be shielded and directed downward to minimize the potential for glare or spillover onto adjacent properties. All lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements.

Although the majority of project site is relatively flat, the areas within the proposed project footprint would be cleared and grubbed, and minor grading would be required for construction of the perimeter access road, driveway, berms, and the pads for switchgear, inverters, transformers, as well as the pathway along Creelman Lane. Refer to the Project Grading Plan shown in Figure 3d. Grading for the project would total approximately 2,608 CY of balanced cut and fill. Soil for the proposed berms would come from the top six inches of soil in the west portion of the site; the change in elevation due to this minor amount of grading would not be noticeable.

In order to control dust during the life of the proposed project, a non-toxic, biodegradable, permeable soil-binding agent or permeable rock material would be applied to all non-vegetated areas within the project footprint.

After an anticipated construction period of 120 days, the facilities would be operated and monitored remotely by SDG&E. Maintenance inspections and minor repairs would occur as needed, and the panels would be washed up to four times per year. The Project is expected to operate a minimum of 25 years. It is likely the Project would continue to be upgraded and used to generate solar energy for a longer period of time. If the Project were to be decommissioned, the modules, support structures, and electrical equipment would be removed from the site.

Figure 3b - Project Conceptual Landscape Plan Sheet 1



CONTAINER STOCK (1, 5, and 15 GALLON SHRUBS)

SEE SHEET L-04 FOR DETAILED PALETTE

- Ceanothus 'Concha' - California Mountain Lilac
- Encelia californica - California Sunflower
- Heteromeles arbutifolia - Toyon
- Lantana camara - Common Lantana
- Malosma laurina - Laurel Sumac
- Muhlenbergia rigens - Deergrass
- Penstemon spectabilis - Showy Penstemon
- Pittosporum tobira 'Variegatum' - Mock Orange
- Rhamnus californica - Coffeeberry
- Rhus integrifolia - Lemonadeberry
- Salvia apiana - White Sage
- Salvia clevelanii - Cleveland Sage
- Sambucus (mexicana) nigra ssp. Caerulea - Mexican Elderberry

24" BOX TREES:

SMALL TREE (15 FOOT TALL) SUCH AS:

Callistemon citrinus - Lemon Bottlebrush
Rhus lancea - African Sumac

LARGE TREE SUCH AS:

Pinus pinea - Stone Pine
Juniperus chinensis 'Torulosa' - Hollywood Juniper

Final plant species selections are subject to availability. Any substitutions shall be made in consultation with the project biologist and approved by the project landscape architect.

EROSION CONTROL SEED MIX:

To be applied to all graded berms and any areas between the pathway and the existing road that are impacted by construction activities.

S&S Seeds "Basic Native Erosion Control Mix".
See Sheet L-04 for detailed seed list

Section / Sheet # — A / L-3

DIRECTION

LEGEND

DESCRIPTION	SYMBOL
Proposed Solar Array Panel	
Proposed 24' DG Fire Access Road All Weather	
Proposed 10' DG Pathway	
Proposed 8' Chain Link Fence	
Proposed 3' Field Fence	
Site Property Line	
Building Setback	
Index Contour	1455
Inter Contour	
Spot Elevation	1458.5
Proposed Interconnect Pole	

DESCRIPTION	SYMBOL
Floodplain	
Existing Asphalt Road	
Existing Road Center Line	
Existing Edge of Unpaved Road	
Existing Fence	
Existing Fire Hydrant	
Existing Well (2)	W
Existing Power Pole	
Existing Overhead Power Line	EOH
Existing Palm Tree To Be Removed Prior To Construction	
Existing Utility Easement	
Existing Drainage Flow	

COUNTY PROJECT NUMBER: PDS2014-AD-14-025

Drawn by	AH	No.	DATE	BY	REMARKS
Checked by	MC	1	04/09/14	KTU+A	SUBMITTAL
Date	03/13/15	2	09/19/14	KTU+A	SECOND SUBMITTAL
Commission No.	013-015	3	03/13/15	KTU+A	THIRD SUBMITTAL
		4			

APPLICANT
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CONTACT: ERIC JOHNSTON
760-752-9706

OWNER
SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC
8315 CENTURY PARK COURT
SAN DIEGO, CA 92123
CONTACT: JOE FRANI
858-654-8731

NORTH

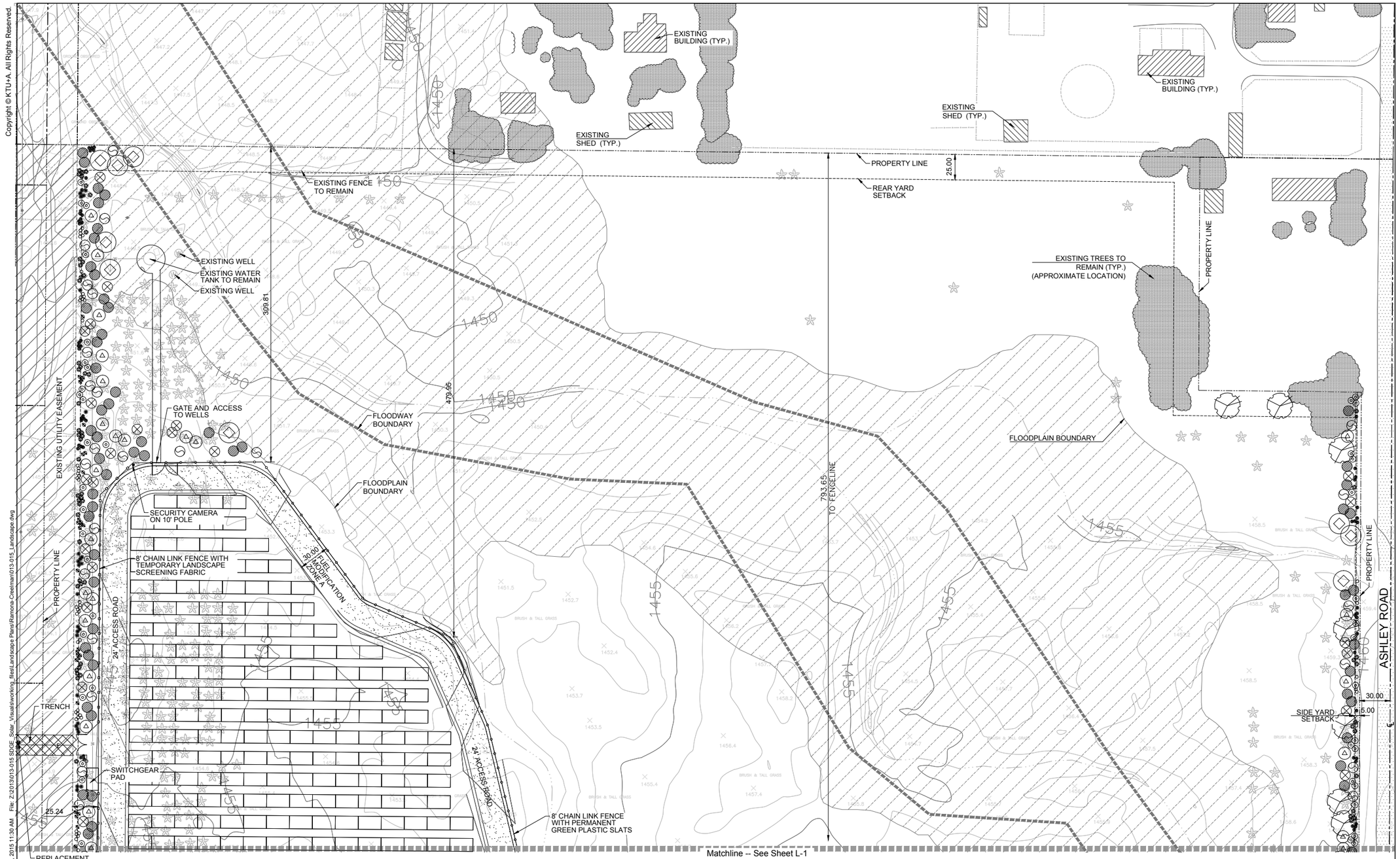
0 20 40 80 120
SCALE: 1"= 40'

IES/SDG&E SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT - RAMONA
LANDSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN

KTU+A Planning + Landscape Architecture
10916 Normal Street
San Diego, CA 92131
(858)314-4377
Fax: (858)314-9905

Sheet Number
L-01
1 of 4

Figure 3c - Project Conceptual Landscape Plan Sheet 2



FOR NOTES, PALETTE, AND LEGEND, SEE SHEET L-1

COUNTY PROJECT NUMBER: PDS2014-AD-14-025

Drawn by	AH
Checked by	MC
Date	03/13/15
Commission No.	013–015

No.	DATE	BY	REMARKS
1	04/09/14	KTU+A	SUBMITTAL
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NORTH

0 20 40 80 120
SCALE: 1"= 40'

IES/SDG&E SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT - RAMONA
LANDSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN

KTU+A
Planning • Landscape Architecture
3916 Normal Street
San Diego, CA 92103
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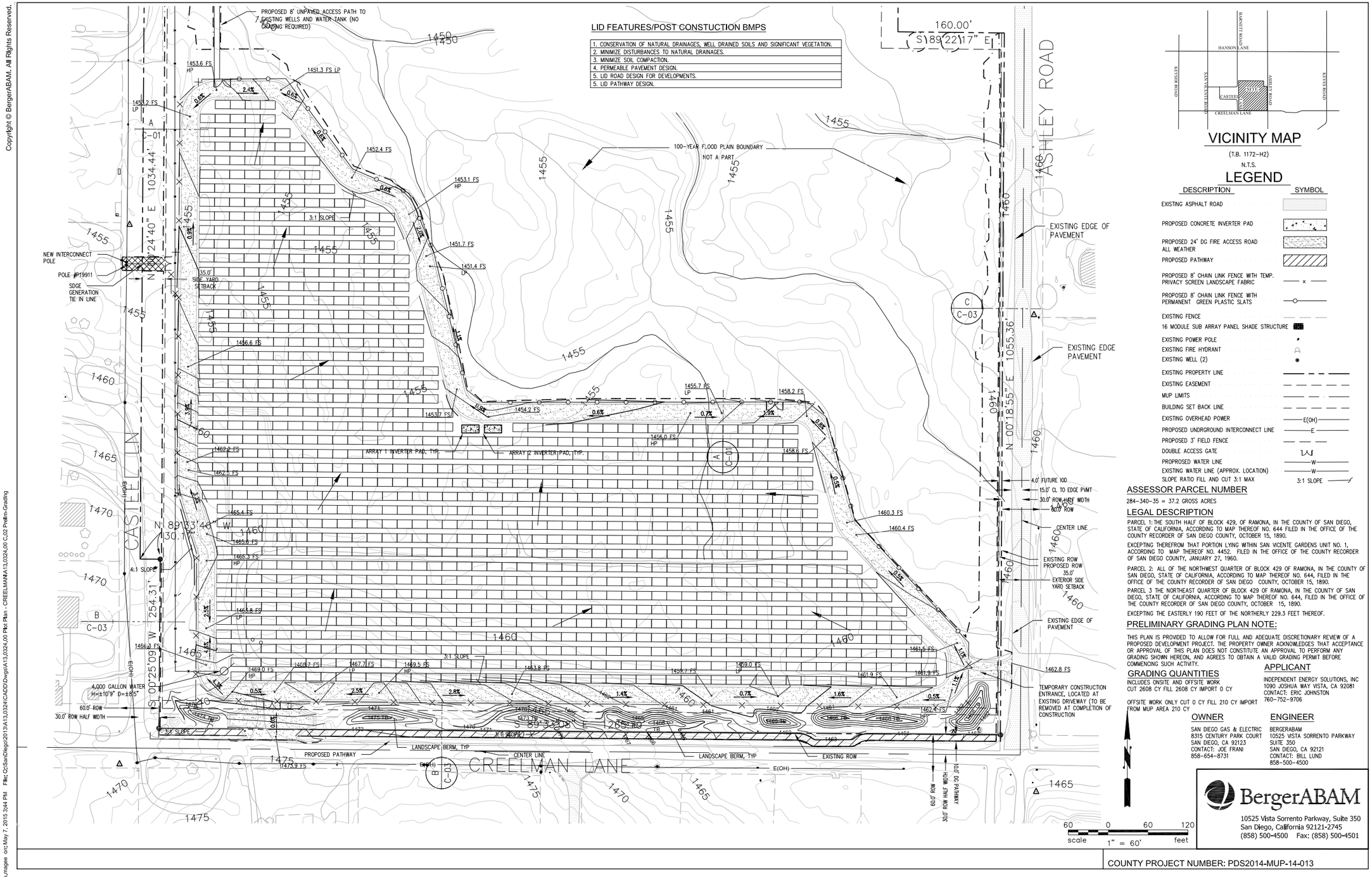
Sheet Number
L-02
2 of 4

Last Saved by: Amy on: Mar 12, 2015 11:30 AM File: Z:\2013\013-015 SDGE_Solar_Visuals\working_files\Landscape Plans\Ramona-Creelman\013-015_Landscape.dwg


LID FEATURES/POST CONSTUCTION BMPS
1. CONSERVATION OF NATURAL DRAINAGES, WELL DRAINED SOILS AND SIGNIFICANT VEGETATION.
2. MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO NATURAL DRAINAGES.
3. MINIMIZE SOIL COMPACTION.
4. PERMEABLE PAVEMENT DESIGN.
5. LID ROAD DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENTS.
5. LID PATHWAY DESIGN.
PROPOSED 8' UNPAVED ACCESS PATH TO EXISTING WELLS AND WATER TANK (NO GRADING REQUIRED)
100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN BOUNDARY
NOT A PART
ARRAY 1 INVERTER PAD, TYP.
ARRAY 2 INVERTER PAD, TYP.
NEW INTERCONNECT POLE
POLE #P19911
SDGE GENERATION TIE IN LINE
4,000 GALLON WATER H=±10'9" D=±8'5"
PROPOSED PATHWAY
LANDSCAPE BERM, TYP
CENTER LINE
EXISTING ROW
CREELMAN LANE
CASTELLIN
ASHLEY ROAD
EXISTING EDGE OF PAVEMENT
EXISTING EDGE PAVEMENT
4.0' FUTURE IOD
15.0' CL TO EDGE PVMT
30.0' ROW HALF WIDTH
60.0' ROW
CENTER LINE
EXISTING ROW
PROPOSED ROW 35.0'
EXTERIOR SIDE YARD SETBACK
TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION ENTRANCE, LOCATED AT EXISTING DRIVEWAY (TO BE REMOVED AT COMPLETION OF CONSTRUCTION
VICINITY MAP
(T.B. 1172-H2)
N.T.S.
LEGEND
DESCRIPTION
SYMBOL
EXISTING ASPHALT ROAD
PROPOSED CONCRETE INVERTER PAD
PROPOSED 24' DG FIRE ACCESS ROAD ALL WEATHER
PROPOSED PATHWAY
PROPOSED 8' CHAIN LINK FENCE WITH TEMP. PRIVACY SCREEN LANDSCAPE FABRIC
PROPOSED 8' CHAIN LINK FENCE WITH PERMANENT GREEN PLASTIC SLATS
EXISTING FENCE
16 MODULE SUB ARRAY PANEL SHADE STRUCTURE
EXISTING POWER POLE
EXISTING FIRE HYDRANT
EXISTING WELL (2)
EXISTING PROPERTY LINE
EXISTING EASEMENT
MUP LIMITS
BUILDING SET BACK LINE
EXISTING OVERHEAD POWER
PROPOSED UNDRGROUND INTERCONNECT LINE
PROPOSED 3' FIELD FENCE
DOUBLE ACCESS GATE
PROPOSED WATER LINE
EXISTING WATER LINE (APPROX. LOCATION)
SLOPE RATIO FILL AND CUT 3:1 MAX
3:1 SLOPE
ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER
284-340-35 = 37.2 GROSS ACRES
LEGAL DESCRIPTION
PARCEL 1: THE SOUTH HALF OF BLOCK 429, OF RAMONA, IN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ACCORDING TO MAP THEREOF NO. 644 FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY, OCTOBER 15, 1890.
EXCEPTING THEREFROM THAT PORTION LYING WITHIN SAN VICENTE GARDENS UNIT NO. 1, ACCORDING TO MAP THEREOF NO. 4452. FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY, JANUARY 27, 1960.
PARCEL 2: ALL OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF BLOCK 429 OF RAMONA, IN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ACCORDING TO MAP THEREOF NO. 644, FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY, OCTOBER 15, 1890.
PARCEL 3 THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF BLOCK 429 OF RAMONA, IN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ACCORDING TO MAP THEREOF NO. 644, FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY, OCTOBER 15, 1890.
EXCEPTING THE EASTERLY 190 FEET OF THE NORTHERLY 229.3 FEET THEREOF.
PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN NOTE:
THIS PLAN IS PROVIDED TO ALLOW FOR FULL AND ADEQUATE DISCRETIONARY REVIEW OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. THE PROPERTY OWNER ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ACCEPTANCE OR APPROVAL OF THIS PLAN DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN APPROVAL TO PERFORM ANY GRADING SHOWN HEREON, AND AGREES TO OBTAIN A VALID GRADING PERMIT BEFORE COMMENCING SUCH ACTIVITY.
GRADING QUANTITIES
INCLUDES ONSITE AND OFFSITE WORK
CUT 2608 CY FILL 2608 CY IMPORT 0 CY
OFFSITE WORK ONLY CUT 0 CY FILL 210 CY IMPORT FROM MUP AREA 210 CY
APPLICANT
INDEPENDENT ENERGY SOLUTIONS, INC
1090 JOSHUA WAY VISTA, CA 92081
CONTACT: ERIC JOHNSTON
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OWNER
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ENGINEER
BERGERABAM
10525 VISTA SORRENTO PARKWAY
SUITE 350
SAN DIEGO, CA 92121
CONTACT: BILL LUND
858-500-4500
BergerABAM
10525 Vista Sorrento Parkway, Suite 350
San Diego, California 92121-2745
(858) 500-4500 Fax: (858) 500-4501
scale 1" = 60' feet
COUNTY PROJECT NUMBER: PDS2014-MUP-14-013
Drawn by ES
Checked by MM
Date 03/07/14
Commission No.
No. DATE BY REMARKS
1 08/18/14 MM COUNTY COMMENTS
2 03/13/15 MM COUNTY COMMENTS
3 05/15/15 MM COUNTY COMMENTS
IES/SDG&E SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT - RAMONA
PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN
Sheet Number
C-02
2 of 5
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2.3 Land Use Designations

The project site has a land use designation of Public/Semi-Public Facilities, and is located just outside the Ramona Village Boundary. The lots directly south of the project site, south of Creelman Lane, are designated Semi-Rural Residential (SR-4). The lots directly west of the site, west of Casteel Lane, and north of Pearman Lane are within the Ramona Village Boundary, and designated Village Residential (VR-2). Property abutting the site on the north, between the site and Pearman Lane, and lots east of the site and Ashley Road are not within the Ramona Village Boundary. These are designated Semi-Rural Residential (SR-2).

2.4 Regulatory Framework

The project is subject to technical and environmental review pursuant to CEQA, in conformance with applicable regulatory guidelines established by the County of San Diego.

2.4.1 State of California Guidelines

Appendix G of the CEQA guidelines states that a project has the potential for significant impact if it will:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

2.4.2 Applicable County Plans and Policies

Visual and aesthetic assessments need to identify not only impacts to current conditions, but also effects on future aesthetic plans and goals. Adopted policies are also an indication of the sensitivity that a particular community may have toward aesthetic issues. Some of the most relevant policies include the following:

San Diego County General Plan; Conservation and Open Space Element Chapter 5, Scenic Corridors

The County of San Diego General Plan includes a Scenic Corridor subchapter within the Conservation and Open Space Element. This element is intended to protect scenic corridors (and dark skies) and enhance community character. The San Diego County Scenic Highway system includes highways and roadways both eligible and designated as State of California Scenic Highways. Goals within the Conservation and Open Space Element include the protection and connection of Scenic Resources, and careful planning in areas visible from scenic corridors.

There are three roadways that are part of the County Scenic Highway System within two miles of the project site:

- State Route (SR) 78 [Main Street] from Via Rancho Parkway to SR 79 (excluding portion within City of San Diego). This road is located approximately 1.5 miles to the north of the project site.
- Highland Valley Road from City of San Diego limits to SR 67. This road is located approximately 2 miles to the west of the site.
- San Vicente Road (and Ramona Oaks Road) from SR 78 to Cleveland National Forest. San Vicente Road is located approximately 0.5 miles to the west of the project site. (Ramona Oaks Road is a continuation of San Vicente Road located approximately 4.5 miles southeast of the project site.)

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

The project site currently is Zoned A70 – Limited Agricultural Use Regulations, with a Neighborhood Use Regulation M. The site currently supports a palm tree nursery that grows multiple species of palm trees for wholesale distribution. The proposed project includes a Major Use Permit (MUP) for Civic Uses: Major Impact Services and Utilities.

The lots immediately surrounding the site are also zoned A70. Rural Residential (RR) zoned lots are located north of Hanson Lane, approximately 0.5 miles from the project site.

The project site is subject to the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance D2 Special Area Regulation adopted by Ordinance 8021. Under this regulation, a Site Plan Permit showing that the project is compatible with the architectural theme and character of the adjacent developed parcels and existing neighborhood is required before development. The proposed MUP Plot Plan (site plan), and the compatibility of the project as detailed in the plot plan with the character of the surrounding area, is discussed in this report.

San Diego County Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO)

This policy encourages the preservation of existing natural terrain, established vegetation, and visually significant geologic displays. If the RPO study identifies the presence of environmentally sensitive lands (wetlands, wetland buffer areas, floodways, floodplain fringe, steep slopes, sensitive habitat lands, or significant prehistoric or historic sites), one or more of the following actions may be required as a condition of approval:

- Apply open space easements to portions of the project site that contain sensitive lands;
- Rezone the entire project site through the application of a special area designator for sensitive lands; or
- Other actions as determined by the decision-making body.

2.5 Design Policies and Guidance

The following outlines the applicable San Diego County and Ramona Community policies and guidance applicable to the proposed project, and the project's conformance to those policies and guidance:

Element	Policy	Project conformance	Conforms?
San Diego County General Plan			
Land Use Element LU 6.6 Integration of Natural Features into Project Design	Requires incorporation of natural features (including mature oaks, indigenous trees, and rock formations) into proposed development and requires avoidance of sensitive environmental resources.	The proposed project conforms with the site topography with minimal grading. No steep slopes or oak trees exist on the site, and any rock formations will not be disturbed.	Yes
Land Use Element LU-6.9 Development Conformance with Topography	Requires developments to conform to the natural topography to limit grading; incorporate and not significantly alter the dominant physical characteristics of a site; and to utilize natural drainage and topography in conveying stormwater to the maximum extent practicable.	The proposed project limits grading to the creation of fire access roads and community pathway. The majority of the site will not alter the existing topography.	Yes
Land Use Element LU-10.2 Development—Environmental Resource Relationship	Requires developments in Semi-Rural and Rural areas to respect and conserve the unique natural features and rural character, and avoid sensitive or intact environmental resources and hazard areas.	The project compatibility with local character as discussed in sections 5.3.5 and 5.4 below. The proposed project conserves the natural topography of the project site. No sensitive or intact environmental resource or hazard areas exist on the project site.	Yes
Land Use Element LU-11.2 Compatibility with Community Character	Requires that commercial, office, and industrial development be located, scaled, and designed to be compatible with the unique character of the community.	The proposed project elements would be laid out in linear, gridded alignments, in the same location as the existing row of palm trees. The propose panels also would be similar in height to the existing palm trees. The project will introduce more geometric black and gray structures in a large-scale collection, but the proposed landscaping will screen and soften views of the solar panels. The use of berms, native and non-native vegetation, and screening fabric on the project perimeter fence would all help the project fit into the character of the area. The change to the visual character of the area will be less than significant.	Yes
Land Use Element LU-12.4 Planning for Compatibility	Plan and site infrastructure for public utilities and public facilities must be done in a manner compatible with community character, and must minimize visual and environmental impacts. Whenever feasible, facilities and supporting infrastructure should be located outside preserve areas. This guideline also requires context sensitive road design that is compatible with community character and minimizes visual and environmental impacts.	The proposed project provides public utility infrastructure outside of preserve areas, and minimizes visual impacts as detailed in Section 5.5 below. The proposed project does not include road modification.	Yes

Element	Policy	Project conformance	Conforms?
Conservation and Open Space Element COS-11.7 Underground Utilities	Requires new developments to place utilities underground and encourage "undergrounding" in existing developments to maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.	The nature of the proposed project precludes the production of electrical power underground, but does include undergrounding of interconnect lines where feasible. One 50-foot power pole (to replace an existing 45-foot pole) would be included with the proposed project. The project would connect to the pole via an underground line. The new pole would be visually comparable to the power poles and lines that are currently surrounding the project site.	Yes
Conservation and Open Space Element COS-13.1 Restrict Light and Glare	Restricts outdoor light and glare from development projects in Semi-Rural and Rural Lands and designated rural communities to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.	Low level lighting would be installed at the main entry gate. The lighting would be shielded and directed downward to restrict glare or spillover. All lighting would conform to San Diego County outdoor lighting design guidelines. Although the project has the potential to produce a temporary after-image due to glare during the late evening or morning as viewed from some points near the project site, glare would be limited due to the absorptive properties of the proposed panels and their anti-reflective coatings. Impacts from glare would be less than significant, as detailed in the analysis in Section 5.4 below.	Yes
Mobility Element Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trail Facilities	Requires dedicated ROWs for pathways within the Community Trails and Pathways Plan, and construction of the pathways if other frontage improvements are required. Planned pathways applicable to the proposed project include the Dye Road pathway on Creelman Lane and Collier Park/ Ashley Road pathway.	The proposed project accommodates space for the future Collier Park/ Ashley Road community pathway, but does not proposed to construct it. The proposed project would construct a portion of the Dye Road pathway along Creelman Lane.	Yes
Ramona Community Plan			
Resource Conservation and Management Policy LU 5.1.2	Requires developments to provide natural landscaping and/or other appropriate screening around structures.	The proposed project includes native and low water use plants along the site perimeters to screen the solar panels from views along public roads.	Yes
Resource Conservation and Management Policy COS 1.1.7	Encourages access along major creek drainages for riding and hiking trails, whenever possible.	No major creek drainages exist on or adjacent to the project site. The proposed project would not preclude the future community pathway along the eastern perimeter, and would construct a portion of a future community pathway along the southern perimeter.	Yes

Element	Policy	Project conformance	Conforms?
Resource Conservation and Management Policy COS 1.2.1	Promotes and preserves viable agricultural land uses and provides an attractive agricultural industry atmosphere within the Ramona Planning Area.	Most of the project site currently is used as a palm tree nursery, and development of the proposed project would remove these trees. The proposed solar arrays would have a more structural and geometric character than the existing agriculture. The project landscaping, once mature, will screen the proposed project features. The linear, gridded nature of the arrays would have some visual similarities with traditional agricultural visual characteristics. The northern portion of the project site would remain as undeveloped non-native grasslands, with similar visual characteristics as livestock pastures. Additionally, the project site is surrounded by Semi-Rural land uses that permit agricultural uses, but the project parcel has a land use designation of Public/Semi-Public Facilities. The project site is zoned A70, which permits Civic Uses with an MUP, which the project proposes. The proposed project would not visually or physically disrupt adjacent agricultural uses.	Yes
Resource Conservation and Management Policy COS 1.2.3	Encourages the protection of areas designated for agricultural activities from scattered and incompatible urban intrusions. Greenbelt buffers are also encouraged in special cases between incompatible uses and high-intensity agricultural zoning.	The project site has a Public/Semi-Public Facilities land use designation and includes an MUP for allowable Civic Uses under the A70 zone. The proposed landscaping would provide a buffer between the project and the surrounding area. In addition, the project's Agricultural Analysis has concluded that the project will not be incompatible with the surrounding agricultural uses.	Yes
Ramona Design Guidelines			
Community Design Objectives	5. Preserve and enhance the quality of scenic roads throughout the Community Planning Area	Where views of the project site are available from San Vicente Road, they would be minor and proposed project changes would be less than significant, particularly after proposed project landscaping matures. The other scenic roadways in the Community Planning Area do not have views of the project site and the proposed project would not be visible from or disrupt the visual quality of views from the scenic roads.	Yes

Element	Policy	Project conformance	Conforms?
A. General Design Guidelines Applicable to All Development Projects A3. Landscape Character Guidelines A6. Signage A7. Lighting A8. Building Equipment and Services	Where solar panels are attached to buildings they should be integrated into the architectural design of the building. Solar panels which are not attached to buildings should be integrated into the landscape design by using berms, natural slopes, or similar devices. Where solar panels cannot be integrated into the landscape design they should be screened from view with fences and/or planting. All plumbing and storage tanks associated with solar panels should be concealed from view.	The proposed project does not include solar panels attached to buildings, but does includes solar panel arrays that are integrated into the landscape through the use of minimal grading and a layout that conforms to the existing topography of the site. Berms would be created along the southern edge of the project to enhance the effectiveness of the proposed vegetative screening. The proposed landscape plants would screen the panels from views from public roadways. The irrigation water tank would similarly be screened from views.	Yes
F. Guidelines for Areas with Special Environmental Considerations F3. Development in Flood Plains	The Flood Plain should be kept as close to possible to its natural state. The large open spaces and indigenous riparian vegetation such as live oaks, sycamores and scrub should be preserved and emphasized in new plantings. Ornamental plantings and the introduction of non-native species should be avoided.	A flood plain overlay exists in the northern portion of the project site. The proposed project includes no structures or roadways within the flood plain areas. Beside the removal of existing (non-native, fire-hazard, potentially invasive) palm trees, the remainder of the flood plain will be kept in its natural state. No riparian vegetation, oaks, sycamore, or scrub currently exists on the project site, or in the flood plain that overlays the project site. The proposed conceptual landscape plan includes native species and the proposed plants are minimized in the flood plain, and setback from the floodway by the width of the floodway plus 15%.	Yes

3.0 VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT

Figure 4 shows the locations from which the photographs discussed in this section were taken.

3.1 Project Setting

The project site is an approximately 37 acre site located in the Santa Maria valley, approximately 1.5 miles south of the center of the town of Ramona. The site is roughly square (0.25 mile, or 1,300 feet to a side), except a small privately owned lot cuts out approximately 250 feet by 250 feet of the northeastern corner of the property.

The site is owned by SDG&E, are currently leased by a private company that uses mostly the southern, western, and eastern areas of the site as an active palm tree nursery. The palm trees are generally arranged in a grid pattern, and the majority of the trees are in large nursery boxes. The density of the trees varies with nursery operations, but there is usually a large concentration of palms in the center of the southern half of the site. Sparsely spaced, in-ground Canary Island Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) trees are growing along most of the eastern, southern, and western site boundaries. A large, gray water tank is located near the northwestern corner of the site, and the nursery uses an additional, small, white tank near the southwestern corner of the site. Several small storage structures are visible along the western edge of the nursery, among the palm trees. Most of the structures are located in the southeastern half of the property within 100 to 400 feet of Creelman Lane. Typical Views A and B, Figure 5, illustrate the palm tree nursery operation on site and the various elements within the project site.

The northern portion of the project site includes undeveloped land covered with non-native grasses and weed species (such as wild mustard). The site is crisscrossed with informal pedestrian and vehicular paths and is surrounded by a four to five foot high chain link fence. Two driveways with locked gates provide access to the property, one from Ashley Road and one from Creelman Lane.

The site slopes gently down from the southern edge to the north. Elevations range from approximately 1,475 feet above mean sea level (amsl) at Creelman Lane to 1,448 feet amsl in the northwestern corner of the property. A seasonal floodway and an associated flood plain extend from approximately halfway along the eastern boundary of the property to the northwestern corner of the site. The lower, wetter areas are generally undetectable except when seasonal rain causes a more lush growth of vegetation in low lying areas than in the surrounding area.

Typical View C, Figure 5 is an overview of the project site from Ashley Road approximately 0.2 miles south of Creelman Lane. Ashley Road extends along the right side of the photograph, and Creelman Lane is visible as a horizontal line through the center of the picture. Property south of Creelman Lane, consisting of horse pastures and a private road, is visible in the foreground. The site is visible in the middleground, directly beyond Creelman Lane. The palm trees are massed along the southern portion of the property. The undeveloped, grassy/weedy portion of the site is visible as a gray-brown swath behind the palm trees, backed by mature trees on neighboring properties. The power lines and poles extending along the southern edge of Creelman Lane and the eastern side of Ashley Road are also prominent in this photograph.

Creelman Lane extends eastward from San Vicente Road and borders the southern edge of the project site. The only portion of Creelman Lane that is paved is the portion that rises in elevation as it approaches private property and preserved open space approximately one mile east of the project site. Three types of power poles—two wooden poles of differing height, and some taller metal poles—support multiple power lines along the south side of Creelman Lane. Typical View D, Figure 5, shows the Creelman Lane/Ashley Road intersection at the southeastern corner of the project site. The existing palm tree nursery is visible on the right side of the photograph, and the power lines and poles on the south side of Creelman Lane are visible just left of the center of the photograph. The semi-rural residential/agricultural property with equestrian facilities located south of Creelman Lane from the project site (the lot that comprises the foreground of Typical View C) is visible on the left side of the photograph. Trees on properties west of the site comprise the background of the photograph, and a small portion of Mt. Woodson (located approximate 6.6 miles west of the project site), is visible behind the trees and powerlines on the left side of the photograph.

Ashley Road extends southward from the residential areas south of the Ramona town center. South of Creelman Lane it becomes an unpaved track more like a utility access road than a public roadway. North of Creelman Lane, Ashley Road is paved but it is not marked with lane lines, and has soft shoulders of decomposed granite and/or native soil that are used as pedestrian and equestrian pathways. There are no paved sidewalks in the immediate vicinity. Power lines supported by wooden poles extend along the east side of Ashley Road. Typical View E, Figure 5, is a view looking southward along Ashley Road from the northeastern corner of the project site. The trees in the foreground are eucalyptus trees near the northeastern corner of the property. The project site is delineated by the chain link fence extending alongside the roadway and behind the eucalyptus trees. The palms trees on the project site are visible behind the eucalyptus and the fence. The paved portion of Ashley Road extends along the left portion of the photograph. The unpaved portion of Ashley Road south of Creelman Lane is visible in the background of the left side of the photograph. Some of the power lines that extend along the east side of Ashley Road are visible in this view, mostly alongside the unpaved portion of the road.

The lots bordering the north and west edge of the property are smaller in size than those that border the site on the south and east. Most of the neighboring lots are private, semi-rural residential/agricultural lots containing single-story houses (a few have a second story or higher addition), ornamental vegetation, and small-scale agricultural operations such as equestrian or other animal (e.g. llamas) facilities with stables and pastures. Buildings and vegetation generally are densely massed within these lots. The lot immediately east of the southern half of the site, across Ashley Road, has no structures except for a small shed on the northeastern corner of the lot. This is typical of the massing or openness of lots within the Semi-Rural areas south and east of the project site.

Some of the lots in the area are surrounded by mature trees and vegetation, while others are sparsely planted. Structures of various types and sizes (houses, sheds, barns, stables, etc.) and vehicles (including cars, trucks, boats, and tractors) are scattered across these properties, creating a haphazard collection of visual elements that reinforce the semi-rural residential/agricultural visual character of the area.

Private Casteel Lane borders a portion of the western site boundary. Casteel Lane is not paved. Casteel Lane and many of the roads near the project site are private roads. Private property signs or locked gates restrict access to these roads. Typical View F, Figure 5, shows Casteel Lane as it extends northward from Creelman Lane along the western edge of the project site. The palm trees grown on the project site are visible on the right side of the photograph, and the Village Residential lot neighboring the project site to the west is visible on the left side of the photograph.

Typical View G, Figure 6 is a view looking eastward along Jaybird Lane, east of San Vicente Road. Jaybird Lane extends from San Vicente Road eastward to the western project site boundary near the project site's northwestern corner. The Road Closed sign to the right of the center of the photograph indicates the private nature of the roadway past that point. The project site is located at the end of this lane, and the palm trees growing at the northwestern corner of the site are visible in the center of the photograph. Jaybird Lane is bordered by Village Residential lots that still support some agricultural uses, such as the vineyard that is visible on the left side of the photograph. Mature vegetation and chain link fences characteristic of the lots in this area are also visible. The hillsides at the eastern edge of the valley on which Simon Preserve is located make up the background of this photograph.

Private Road Jean Ann Lane extends southward from Creelman Lane near the center of the project site. Jean Ann Lane is paved with asphalt and is bordered on both sides by private property supporting equestrian uses. The pastures east of Jean Ann Place are fenced with four foot high chain link and the pastures west of Jean Ann Lane are surrounded with a white vinyl post and rail fence. The lots are mostly covered with low-growing grasses or pastures. Some one-story structures are visible on these lots from Creelman Lane, as is mature, dense ornamental vegetation on the lot east of Jean Ann Lane. The residences west of Jean Ann Lane have a few large trees on the property.

Buildings along the north side of Creelman Lane are typically set back from the road 20 to 60 feet. Buildings along the south side of Creelman Lane are typically set back 45 to 100 feet or more from the roadway. Along Ashley Road, the buildings on the west side are set back 20 to 45', and on the east are set back 20

Figure 4 - Photograph Location Map

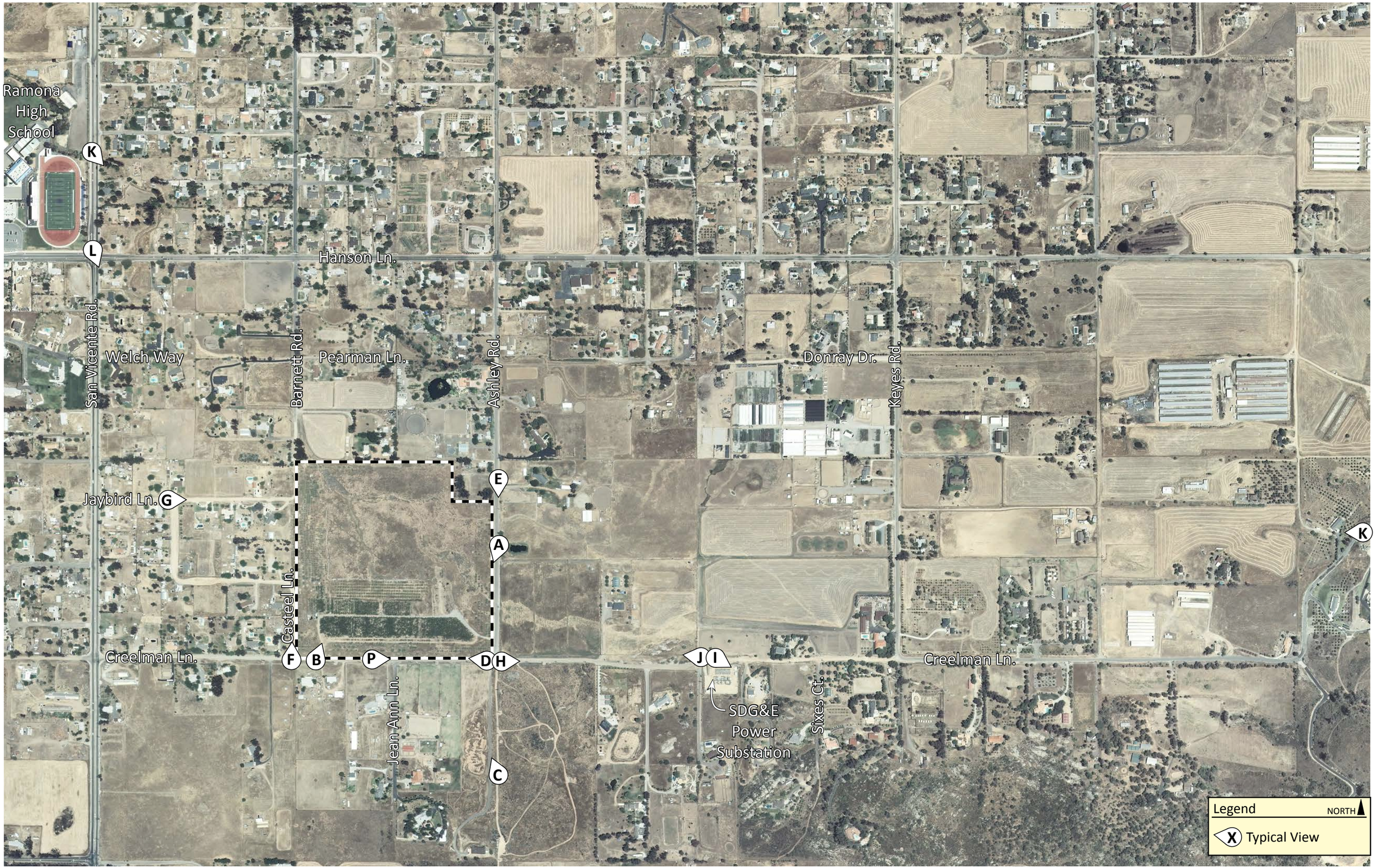

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Figure 5 - Typical Views A-F

Typical View A
On site palm tree nursery

Typical View B
On site palm tree nursery

Typical View C
Overview of Project Site from Ashley Road south of Creelman Lane

Typical View D
Creelman Lane at Ashley Road

Typical View E
View southward from Ashley Road

Typical View F
Casteel Lane at Creelman Lane

to 200 feet. The building setbacks in the area generally reflect the zoning and land designations; those in the Ramona Village area designation are closer to streets, while structures on lots in the Semi-Rural areas generally are setback farther from the roads.

An SDG&E electrical substation is located abutting the south side of Creelman Lane, approximately 0.25 mile east of the site. The substation is located between two unnamed lanes halfway between Sixes Court and Ashley Road. The substation is an unusual visual element within the viewshed. The lot is mostly paved and supports minimal vegetation. Several metal shed structures are located on the lot, alongside the open-framed metal switching equipment. Most of the substation elements sit approximately four or five feet above the adjacent Creelman Lane. The substation lot is surrounded by two fences: a short mesh fence along the road, and another chain link fence six to seven feet tall and topped with a coil of barbed wire. The second fence is located at the top of an approximately five-foot-high slope, approximately five feet inside the mesh fence. The equipment within the substation is setback approximately 25 feet from Creelman Lane.

Typical View H, Figure 6 is a picture taken from Ashley Road along the south edge of Creelman Lane next to the southeastern corner of the project site, looking eastward. This photograph shows Creelman Lane extending eastward. The jog in the roadway alignment is visible in the center of the photograph. The substation is located to the right of this curve in the roadway. The substation is not visually distinct from this viewpoint; it is mostly visible as a gray or white open-framework structure. Pastures and large residential lots border the roadway on each side, and residential lots abutting Simon Preserve are located at the end of Creelman Lane in the background of the photograph. The hills of Simon Preserve comprise the background. Power lines and poles are prominent features in this photograph, extending along the southern edge of Creelman Lane. A power pole is also visible at the top of the hill in the background.

Typical View I, Figure 6, is a picture of the substation taken from Creelman Lane looking southeast at the substation. The stabilized slope supporting the equipment and the fences surrounding the substation lot are visible in the foreground. Substation equipment comprises most of the photograph. Typical View J, Figure 6, is a picture taken from Creelman Lane next to the substation, looking westward toward the area of the project site. This photograph shows that it is very hard to see the project site and the substation in the same view. The photograph shows Creelman Lane in the center of the picture. Several power poles are visible. The fence is topped with a barbed wire coil at the left edge of the photograph in the northwestern corner. The project site is located just outside the right edge of the photograph. Mt. Woodson and other peaks are visible in the background.

San Vicente Road, one of the designated scenic routes in the area, is a major road in the community. San Vicente Road extends generally south from downtown Ramona 0.5 miles west of the project site, and is connected to Main Street via 10th Street. Rural-residential, mobile homes, undeveloped lots, and institutional uses (churches and schools) are located along either side of San Vincent Road; a high school is located at the northwestern corner of San Vicente Road and Hanson Lane, approximately 0.75 miles northwest of the project site. San Vicente Road is paved, with one lane in each direction, a wide median/turning lane, and paved shoulders. Some portions of San Vicente Road, particularly near the school, have paved sidewalks on both sides. Other portions support only informal pathways just outside the curb. Unpaved and paved private and public residential access roads extend east and west from San Vicente Road.

Typical View K, Figure 6, was taken from San Vicente Road approximately 0.12 miles north of Hanson Lane. Typical View L, Figure 6 was taken at the corner of San Vicente Road and Hanson Lane, at the southeastern corner of Ramona High School. Both of these views look southeastward, and illustrate the structures and ornamental vegetation that typically block views of the project site from this portion of San Vicente Road that is delineated on the viewshed as having the potential to view the project site. The viewshed is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 below.

Typical View G
Eastward view from Jaybird Lane, east of San Vincente Road

Typical View H
Eastward view from Ashley Road at Creelman Lane

Typical View I
Substation south of Creelman Lane

Typical View J
Westward view from Creelman Lane at Substation

Typical View K
Southeastern view from San Vicente Road

Typical View L
Southeastern view from San Vicente Road at Hanson Lane

3.2 Landscape Character Units

Landscape Character Units can be thought of as outdoor rooms within which the visual elements—such as underlying topography, vegetative cover, the extent and type of development—are similar and combine to create a distinctive unit.

The project site is located within a Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit. The project viewshed (discussed below) also overlays a small portion of the Village Center Landscape Character Unit and a larger proportion of the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit. The general extents of the Landscape Character Units within the Santa Maria Valley are delineated on Figure 7.

Semi-Rural/Agricultural

The Semi-Rural/Agricultural areas in the Santa Maria Valley generally are located on the relatively flat and low lying valley floor, and partway up the hillsides surrounding the valley. The lots within the Landscape Character Unit contain a variety of visual elements, including residential structures and ornamental gardens as well as livestock facilities (e.g. pastures, stables, barns), plant nurseries (such as the palm tree nursery on the project site, greenhouses, or flower crops), and accessory structures such as water tanks, storage silos, sheds, etc. Paved and unpaved roads and driveways extend throughout the Landscape Character Unit, usually oriented on a regularly-spaced north-south grid pattern. Grassy, open pastures alternate with large, mature stands of vegetation. Power poles and lines extend along at least one side of most of the roads in the Landscape Character Unit. Most lots are surrounded by a fence.

Typical View M, Figure 8 illustrates an overview of the Landscape Character Unit surrounding the project site. This photograph was taken from the eastern edge of the Landscape Character Unit, from Big Sky Road at the eastern end of Creelman Lane, approximately one mile from the project site.

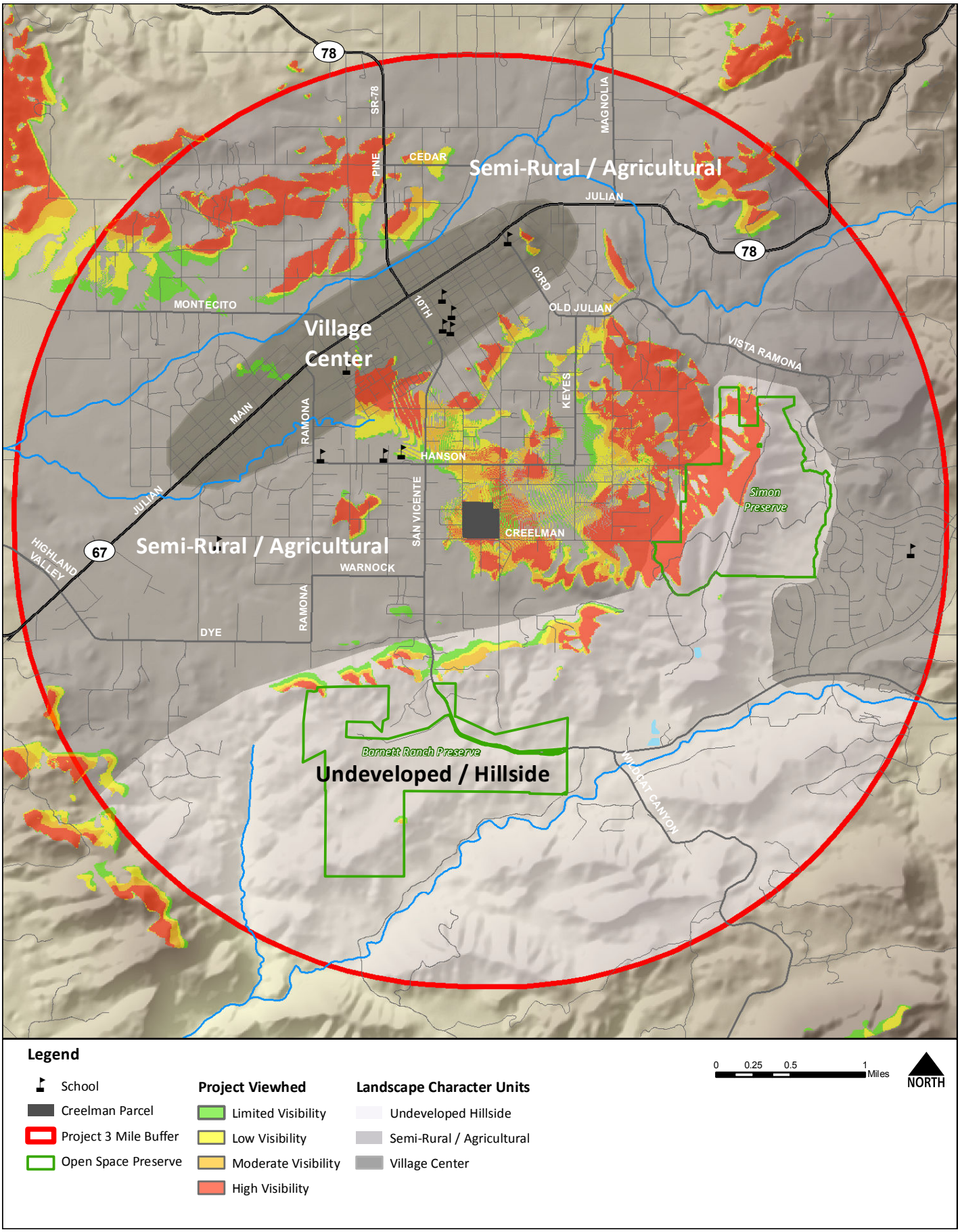
The Village Residential zoned lots west and north of the project site are grouped into this Landscape Character Unit because, despite being slightly smaller lots, their visual character and quality is similar to the visual character and quality of the larger lots south and east of the project site. The Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit surrounds the Village Center Landscape Character Unit and is confined on the south and east sides by the Undeveloped/Hillside slopes that define the Santa Maria Valley. The Village Center is distinguishable from the Semi-Rural/Agricultural areas by denser, more suburban development on an off-set street grid.

Village Center

The Ramona Village Center and surrounding residential areas are clustered around Main Street, which extends southwest-northeast through the Santa Maria Valley. Main Street supports commercial development, large parking lots, and a wider street that accommodates most of the vehicular traffic through the valley. The streets 0.25 to 0.5 miles on either side of Main Street create a grid offset from the cardinal axis. These lots support single- and multi-family residential uses, parks, churches, and schools in a denser pattern than the semi-rural/agricultural areas in the larger portion of the valley.

The main town center, approximately 1.5 miles north of the site, maintains a rustic visual aesthetic, enforced by the local Community Plan requirements which encourage the preservation of the historic character, pedestrian scale, and traditional “Main Street” building pattern of Ramona’s Old Town. Main Street becomes Julian Road northeast of the town center. The road also is overlaid by State Route designation SR 67, which becomes SR 78 in the center of town. The Old Town portion of Main Street (generally located between 10th Street and 3rd Street) is characterized by antique stores, feed stores, and restaurants with rural façades set at the front property line, with parking located at the back of the lots. Outside of the Old Town core, newer, more conventional chain or big-box stores are usually set back from the main roadway by large parking lots. Main Street is lined with eucalyptus trees of varying age and size, from newly planted replacement trees to existing, long-established, large trees originally planted when the town was founded.

Figure 7 - Landscape Character Units



Typical View N, and Typical View O, Figure 8 are views of Main Street. These pictures were taken approximately 1.5 to 2 miles north and northwest of the project site. Traffic, commercial signs, and large eucalyptus trees are prominent visual elements within this Landscape Character Unit. The community encourages rustic and old-fashioned visual decorations and façade elements along Main Street in an effort to set Ramona apart as a unique town center.

Residential uses cluster around the town center, mostly south and east of Main Street. The further from the town center one travels into the Semi-rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit, the larger the lots and sparser the homes are until one reaches the slopes of the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit surrounding the valley floor. Few agricultural uses are included in the lots nearest the town center, but they become more common as lots get bigger farther away from the commercial areas.

Undeveloped/ Hillside

The Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit extends beyond the three-mile radius shown on Figure 7 to encompass the slopes that define the Santa Maria Valley and encircle the Semi-Rural/ Agricultural and Village Center Landscape Character Units. The Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit is characterized by slopes covered with natural vegetation. Access roads, trails, and electric power lines and poles transect the Landscape Character Unit. Several areas of the undeveloped hillsides have been designated as county parks, preserves, reserves, or forest lands with the intention of keeping them undeveloped in perpetuity. Simon Preserve, which encompasses Simon Peak, Spangler Peak, and the ridgeline that comprises the eastern horizon in views near the project site, is located approximately 1.25 miles east of the project site.

Barnett Ranch Preserve is located approximately 1.25 miles south of the project site; most of the preserve lies outside the project viewshed, however. The Preserve overlays mostly southward facing slopes of the southern hills that define the Santa Maria Valley. The slopes of Simon Preserve can be seen from the project site and a small portion of slopes on the northern edge of the Barnett Ranch Preserve are located within the project study area as well.

Typical View O, Figure 8 illustrates the Undeveloped/Hillside areas east of the project site.

Typical View M
Overview of Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit

Typical View N
Village Center Landscape Character Unit

Typical View O
Village Center Landscape Character Unit

Typical View P
Eastward view of Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit

3.3 Project Viewshed

In establishing visual impacts for the Project, the team conducted a viewshed analysis to determine which areas in the vicinity would have a view of the project site. Figure 9 shows the extents of the theoretical project viewshed.

3.3.1 Theoretical Viewshed Limits

A viewshed is defined as the geographical area or areas from which at least some components or elements of the proposed project are visible. The viewshed for the project site was analyzed using aerial photographs, USGS topographic maps, and computer viewshed methodologies.

A theoretical model was developed utilizing Digital Elevation Models (DEM). These DEM files consist of x, y, and z data (east-west, north-south, and elevational data) representing an area of 10 meters by 10 meters for each data point. The topography of the project site and height of project features was analyzed alongside the topographical data in the surrounding area. Observation points were placed at the corners of the parcel boundary and in the center of the site at the elevation of the potentially highest element of the proposed project (14 feet at the point nearest the proposed water storage tank location), and the viewshed was limited to a three-mile radius from the site.

The results of this analysis are considered theoretical, since they only take into account the position of the viewer, the location of the element being viewed, and the intervening topography, but do not analyze the effects of buildings, trees, and other structures that can severely limit the visibility of elements. In reality, intervening uses, structures and plant materials, as well as distance, substantially reduce the overall visual impacts. It does, however, represent the worst-case visibility of the Project's elements.

3.3.2 Viewing Conditions

Viewing conditions can be limited by physical conditions including topography, temporary and permanent obstructions, and atmospheric conditions.

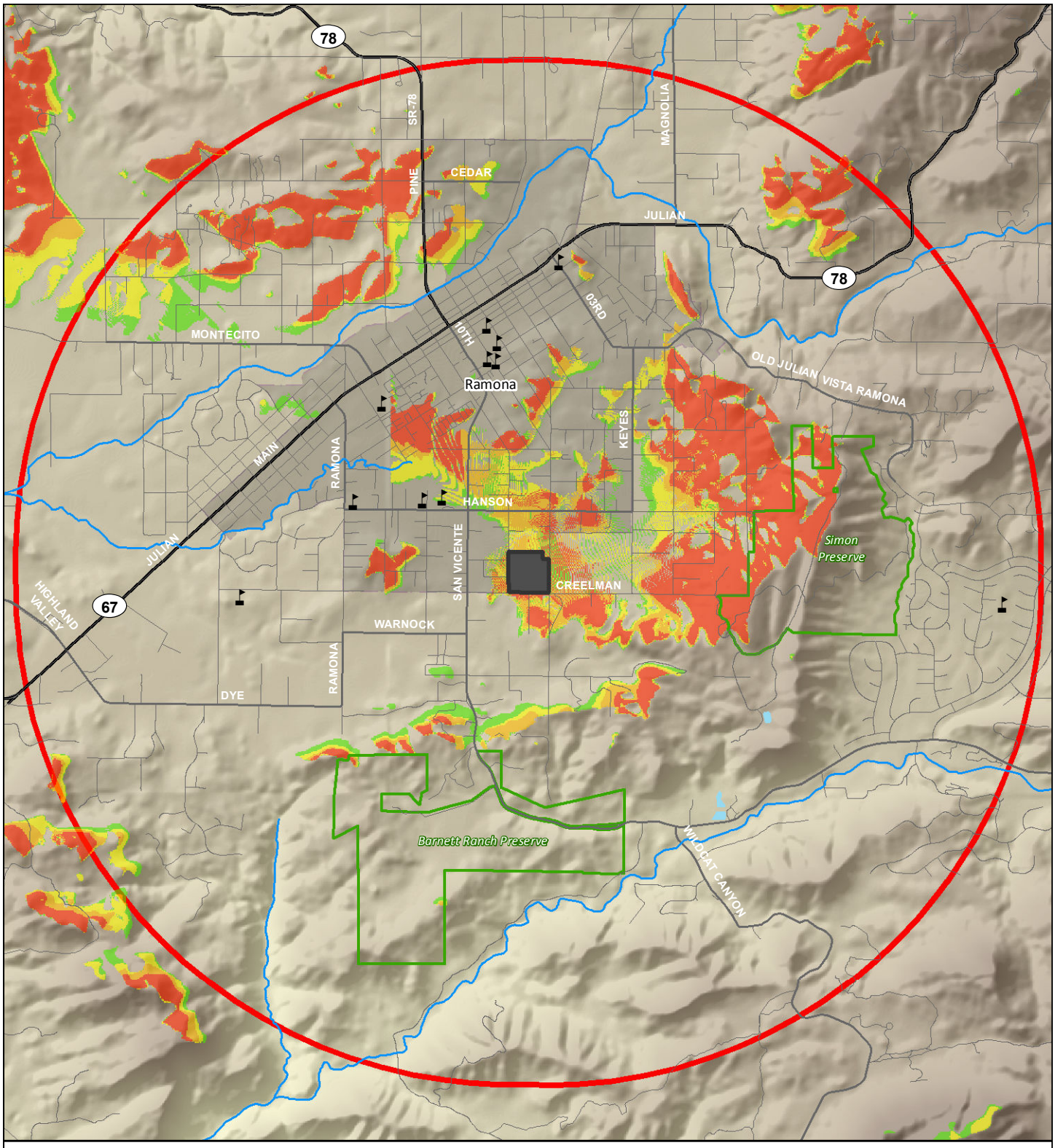
Lighting also can have a significant effect on views. Clouds and fog can also change viewing conditions by increasing or decreasing contrast. Atmospheric conditions in San Diego County tend to be hazy a large percentage of the time. A combination of fog, mist, haze, and smog combine to decrease visibility. Often, details of visual features are not discernible when more than three miles away. A three-mile buffer has been marked on the project viewshed map. Based on typical viewing conditions in this area, objects more than two miles away generally will not be considered visually prominent, even if these objects are large enough to be visible; the distance decreases scale and contrast that is normally perceived by changes in texture, color, and pattern. Since the Viewshed map works on a reverse visibility basis—a point in the distance from which the project can be seen is a point that is visible from the project site—the Viewshed map is a good indicator of what can be seen from the site as well. As such, hillsides and mountains can easily be seen from the site because of the overall size and silhouette nature of these views, but since the project site is relatively small and is found within the context of the valley, the project site is not visually distinct in views from these distant locations.

3.3.3 Views of the Site

The theoretical viewshed indicates that the project site is potentially visible mostly from areas to the east of the project site, as well as some to the north and northeast. A few areas west and south of the site are highlighted as having potential views as well, mostly where northern-facing slopes provide views over the Santa Maria Valley.

Refer to the Typical Views discussed above for photographs taken from areas of the Santa Maria Valley that fall within this viewshed. From most points within the highlighted viewshed area, vegetation and structures between the viewer and the project site block views of the site. The clearest views of the site are from public roadways that align the viewer directly with the site, are fairly close to the site (usually within 0.25 mile), and are at a higher elevation than most of the project site, such as from Creelman Lane and Ashley Road

Figure 9 - Project Viewshed



Legend

- School
- Ramona Community Village
- Creelman Parcel
- Project 3 Mile Buffer
- Open Space Preserve

Project Viewshed

- Limited Visibility
- Low Visibility
- Moderate Visibility
- High Visibility

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

NORTH

(as shown in the Typical Views). Points with the greatest potential to view the site have been selected as Candidate Key Views, and are discussed and analyzed for potential changes due to project development, in section 5.3.1 below. Additionally, the roads shown on the viewshed map include unpaved and private roads, as well as private roads and property inaccessible by the general public. This report, however, considers only public views.

The viewshed includes residential units and multiple public and private roads, and overlays Landscape Character Units discussed above. The viewshed includes a small portion of the Village Center Landscape Character Unit north of the project site, and some of the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit, including a portion of Simon Preserve, south and east of the project site. No other park or reserve areas are highlighted as being within the project viewshed, excepting a tiny portion of the northwestern edge of Barnett Ranch Preserve that is not accessible via any public roads.

4.0 EXISTING VISUAL RESOURCES AND VIEWER RESPONSE

4.1 Existing Visual Resources

The quality of a landscape area is based on the aesthetic character of the area, defined by physical and perceptual quality factors. Physical character factors are the physical element of which the Landscape Character Unit is built. It is the combination of these elements that construct the visual framework of a particular view. Physical character factors include: landform, vegetation, water, color, and diversity, as well as themes, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architectural styles, and building materials that make up the elements both individually and within the Landscape Character Unit as a whole.

Perceptual quality factors are the viewer's perception of landscape quality. These perceptions are based upon a viewer's cognitive assimilation of landscape elements into a memorable landscape image, distinguishable from other landscapes within the region. Perceptual quality factors include: harmony, vividness, adjacent scenery, unity, and scarcity.

4.1.1 Visual Character

Semi-Rural/Agricultural

The Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit, as illustrated in Typical View M, Figure 8 (above), has a diverse visual character. Lots in this Landscape Character Unit vary in size from several per acre to one every several acres. Where the lots are smaller west and north of the site, houses are more densely spaced, and thus are closer to the roadways. Agricultural uses are less visible, though still present (such as the small vineyard visible in Typical View J, Figure 6 above). The larger lots south and east of the project site have houses more sparsely spaced and set well back from roadways, with agricultural uses, such as animal pastures, taking up most of the lot. The project site and the substation 0.25 miles east of the site are unique in the area, in that neither supports a residential unit.

Agricultural uses are decided by each individual lot owner and vary substantially. Among the uses in the Landscape Character Unit are livestock pastures (and associated stables and fences), nursery operations (palm trees, ornamental bedding plants, greenhouses), and fowl barns (chicken or turkey raising in long barn-like structure).

There is no single architectural style within the Landscape Character Unit, but most of the buildings within the area are low-lying one or two story structures with white or pale colored walls, and gray or red roofs. White, wooden, or metal structures such as greenhouses, stables and barns, sheds and animal shelters are common. Some lots are filled with long, covered greenhouses or poultry barns, while others are almost entirely open pastures, and the only structure visible is a small animal shed or shelter. Most lots are surrounded by four to six foot high fences made of wood, white vinyl, or chain link. Other visual elements within the Landscape Character Unit include ornamental vegetation, animals (such as dogs, horses, birds, llamas), vehicles of all kinds (from automobiles to farm equipment), houses, dumpsters, streets (both paved and unpaved), and power poles and lines.This Landscape Character Unit is located on relatively flat topography with no visually outstanding landforms or steep slopes. Some boulders and rock formations are present in the area, but generally are not very tall, and therefore not visible from far distances.

Enough diverse elements exist in the area that none is visually dominant, and the viewer has no large scale features to focus on. Overall, there is little visual continuity within the highly varied Landscape Character Unit. The colors of the vegetation provide a common visual aspect to the Landscape Character Unit—with green, brown, and gray as the most common. Ornamental shrubs and trees at the edges of many lots provide some variety, being green most of the year when crops and pastures become brown, Flowers, shrubs, and nursery plant operations occasionally add several bright flower colors to the mix.

Village Center

The Village Center Landscape Character Unit, as illustrated in Typical Views N and O, Figure 8 (above), is also comprised of varied and diverse visual elements. This Landscape Character Unit has more continuity

that the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit, however, because the elements are more easily recognizable as contributing to the distinct Village character of the area. The topography within the Village Center generally is flat, with no prominent variations. The vegetation (mainly ornamental vegetation) is diverse in age, size, and variety—from newly planted hedges at commercial centers to historic mature eucalyptus trees. There is little water visible within the Landscape Character Unit, and no prominent water features. The local creek is not visually prominent, and is not noticeable from most of Main Street. Swimming pools and ornamental water features may be present in the residential areas abutting the commercial uses, but none are dominant or readily visible from most public viewpoints. The variety of color and diversity of visual elements within the Landscape Character Unit is high, and creates a busy visual environment with few central focus points.

Undeveloped/Hillside

The Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit, illustrated in Typical View P, Figure 8 (above) has much less visual diversity than the other Landscape Character Units, and more visual continuity. The Landscape Character Unit contains few visual elements, the most dominant being the undulating horizon line created by the landform, and the native vegetation covering the slopes. The ridgelines that surround the valley within which the Semi-Rural/Agricultural and Village Center Landscape Character Units are contained have few sharp or precipitous peaks (Mount Woodson, Iron Mountain, and Starvation Mountain in the west are higher and steeper, but more distant). The hills generally create the high horizon lines in views across the other Landscape Character Units. While the hillsides provide the backdrop of many views across the valley, there are many points where the local vegetation or structures block views of the hillsides horizons.

From a distance, the vegetation covering the hillsides is dull and dark, and up close is seasonally green or brown; the vegetation, which is mostly low-growing grasses and small to medium-sized shrubs, has little diversity of color or size. Pedestrian and equestrian trails and power lines crisscross the Landscape Character Unit. Power line support structures and poles are visually dominant when viewers are next to each on, but are small-scale elements in the overall viewshed, and don't detract from the visual continuity of this Landscape Character Unit.

The Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit defines the regionally distinct Santa Maria Valley in which the other Landscape Character Units and the project site are located. It is a distinct setting for all of the Landscape Character Units.

Project Site

The Project Site overlays a large lot within the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit. It is one of the few lots in the area that does not include a residential structure. There are not very many palm trees in the area, so the palm tree nursery that covers approximately the southern half of the site is unique in the area. The mass of palm trees in the center of the lot and the shorter, wider in-ground palm trees growing near the edges of the lot are dominant visual element on the project site. The palms are greener and taller than the non-native grasses on the site and the neighboring pastures, but not as tall as the eucalyptus and ornamental trees and shrubs on lots to the north and west of the site. Although the palm trees are unique elements, the arrangement of the trees in grids and rows is common to the area, and the four to five foot high chain link fence surrounding the site is similar to fences on nearby lots. The low-growing grasses/weeds that cover the northern area are similar in size and color to the pastures south and east of the project site, which provides some visual continuity between the site and its neighbors. As on neighboring lots, other small visual elements are scattered across the site, such as power poles, dirt roads, sheds, and water tanks. Most of these are not visually dominant, because they are set back away from the abutting roads, and the palm trees screen them from most points.

Like most of the valley floor in which the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit is located, the site has mostly flat topography, with variations in elevation not easily discernible. No RPO steep slopes or rock outcroppings are present. Less than 1% of the site has slopes over 15%, and none is taller than a foot or two high.

4.1.2 Visual Quality

Visual quality is comprised of the characteristics discussed above, and can be described in terms of vividness, intactness, and unity. **Vividness** is defined as the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns. **Intactness** is the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. Intactness can be present in developed urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings. **Unity** is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. Unity frequently attests to the careful design of individual built components in the landscape.

Areas with **high visual quality** may include physical characteristics such as landforms with high vertical relief; a variety of vegetative types with complementary forms, colors, textures, and patterns; the presence of clear or cascading water; compatible colors in the soil, rock, vegetation, or water; and many visually unified elements. A high perceptual quality would include a balanced composition of line, form, color, and texture; striking visual patterns or the presence of distinct focal points; enhancement from the adjacent scenery; the absence of cultural modifications, or, if present, compatibility with the character of the landscape setting; and a unique or visually scarce setting within the region.

Moderate visual quality is based on interesting, but not dominant or exceptional landforms; one or two major types of vegetation; the presence, but not dominance of water; limited but complementary colors in the landscape; and limited but unified visual elements. The perceptual quality factors would include a varied, but unbalanced composition; perceivable, but not striking patterns created by the landscape elements; moderate enhancement from the adjacent scenery; the presence of cultural modifications which do not detract from the landscape setting; and a setting that is distinct but similar to others within the region.

Areas with a **low visual quality** may have the following physical characteristics: few or no interesting landforms; too few or too many vegetation types; the absence of water; monotonous colors; and few undifferentiated elements within the setting. Low perceptual quality may have the following factors: a varied, but chaotic appearance; elements that appear random with no perceivable patterns; adjacent scenery that detracts or has little influence on the scenic quality; cultural modifications that detract from the setting; and an interesting setting that is common within the region.

Semi-Rural/Agriculture

The Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit has a moderate visual quality. The Landscape Character Unit is made up of a high variety of diverse elements, among which are limited colors and varied elements, but no overriding visual composition. Agricultural uses are opportunistic, and encompass an assortment of pursuits, that take place on both small and large lots—from a vineyard or horse pasture surrounded by residences, to residential structures surrounded by llama pastures. Overall, views of the Landscape Character Unit are moderately vivid; while some individual elements of agricultural operations are repeated within the Landscape Character Unit, providing some continuity, there is no perceivable or striking pattern within the area. The mix of uses creates a visual environment that is not highly intact, comprised of elements that are not very memorable combined in indistinct visual patterns. Additionally, the components of the Landscape Character Unit generally are not carefully designed individually or as a group, which results in low visual unity.

Village Center

The Village Center Landscape Character Unit also has moderately high visual quality. The diverse visual elements are not compositionally balanced, nor do they combine to form distinctive visual patterns. The effort of the community to include old-fashioned, rural and rustic decorative elements within the town center slightly increases the vividness of the Landscape Character Unit by making it a unique area within the County. However, these elements are not yet uniformly present, and conventional commercial development, parking lots, and streets without the rustic elements encroach into the area, reducing the intactness of the Landscape Character Unit to moderately low. Similarly, since only some of the town center is carefully designed to include the rustic design elements, the visual unity of the Landscape Character Unit is moderate.

Undeveloped/Hillside

The undeveloped hillsides surrounding the Santa Maria Valley have high visual quality. The varied lines, forms, textures, and slope colors are unified and create somewhat memorable and unique compositions resulting in moderately high vivid background to views of and within the Landscape Character Units of the Santa Maria Valley. These views contribute to the visual identity of the area. The trails and power lines extending across the hillsides encroach into the native vegetation, reducing the intactness of the Landscape Character Unit, which results in moderate intactness. While the hillsides and trails are not carefully designed to be visually pleasing or memorable, the designation of these spaces as perpetual open space and the harmony of the Landscape as a whole ensures high visual unity.

Project Site

The project site has low visual quality. Although the mass of green palm trees is unique to the area, the trees and other site elements do not combine to create distinctive or memorable visual patterns, either when viewed from afar or from close by, and the vividness is low. The sheds and water tanks and other components of the nursery operation on the site are not carefully sited or designed. The intactness of the palm nursery is low, as the trees are scattered around the site and massed in a somewhat haphazard collection. Similarly, the visual unity of the site is low, due to the lack of visual coherence or compositional harmony.

4.2 Viewer Response

Viewer response can be predicted by a combination of viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure for each group of people who have the potential to see the proposed project.

4.2.1 Viewer Groups

The viewer groups present in the area include residents, workers, drivers and passengers, and recreational trail users (bikers, hikers, equestrians). An individual might belong to one or several of these viewer groups in the course of a day. However, the sensitivity and exposure of each group varies due to the amount of time a view is available to a viewer (duration of view) and the viewer's awareness at the time the view is available.

4.2.2 Viewer Sensitivity

Residents of any area are presumably highly sensitive to changes within the visual environment of their area. The views from their homes are stationary and familiar, and they usually are concerned about proposed changes to the area. This is especially true of those who own and live on nearby properties. Similar projects proposed in the Santa Maria Valley have in the past been vigorously opposed by local residents, who have used local press sources to protest the change of land use from agricultural to solar production. They are highly aware and proud of the character of the valley, and highly sensitive to anything that would change it.

Workers at local agricultural businesses and other commercial or institutional locations within the Semi-Rural/Agricultural or Village Center Landscape Character Units would perhaps be familiar with the visual environment surrounding their place of business. Many of the workers are likely to be residents who also live in the area, but while at work they presumably would be focused on other activities more than studying a view. They would have moderate sensitivity.

Drivers and passengers on roadways within the viewshed have mixed sensitivities depending on their location and purpose. Those who live in the area would have a high sensitivity to changes to the visual environment, while those heading to recreational areas would be aware of views of the area, but may not know the visual environment as intimately as residents do. Most roads in the viewshed are small, slow-speed roads through the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit, which allows drivers and passengers time to study the visual environment. Overall, drivers and passengers on area roadways have moderate to moderately high sensitivity to views while passing through the viewshed. Drivers and passengers on scenic roads are presumed to have high sensitivity to views of the surrounding area.

Recreational trail users would be those hiking or riding in Simon Preserve, on the streets within the viewshed, or along the future pathway along Creelman Lane south of the site (a portion of which would be constructed with the proposed project), or the future pathway abutting the project site along Ashley Road. They would be highly sensitive to the visual environment in the viewshed. From higher elevations, they have more extensive views of the valley, and from the roadways and (future) pathways in the viewshed, middleground and some foreground views of the project site are (and will be) available. Recreational trail users presumably would be seeking a scenic experience, and would therefore be sensitive to the scenic qualities of the surrounding area.

4.2.3 Viewer Exposure

Very few of the residential lots in the project viewshed have direct views of the project site due to intervening structures and vegetation. Approximately 12 private lots are next to the project site on the west, north, and east are at the same or lower elevations than the project site. Depending on the intervening vegetation (which varies among the lots), these residential areas have direct views of the project site. Another 12 are located within approximately 0.25 miles south and southeast of the project site, with structures that are located at higher elevations (and thus have the potential for more comprehensive views of the project site). Few lots southwest of the project site are identified as within the project viewshed.

Where views are available of the project site from residential lots, the views may be of a long duration for stationary viewers. Due to the limited number of residential lots with extensive views of the project site, however, the overall exposure for residential viewers is moderate.

The number of workers in the viewshed is low. The viewshed overlays none of the commercial areas along Main Street. While the agricultural operations within the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit may employ potential viewers, most are small scale operations that would not require many workers. Additionally, workers presumably would be focused activities other than studying the surrounding visual environment. Their exposure would be low.

The residents and workers in the residential Semi-Rural/Agricultural and Village Center areas presumably would be at some point drivers and/or passengers on the roadways within the viewshed. The number of drivers/passengers, therefore, is likely to approximate the total number of residents and workers. As a result, the number found in this viewer group is higher than for either of the other groups.

Roadways tend to have more direct, longer views, without interruption by vegetation screening along their length. Depending on their alignment, some of these roadways may provide direct views of the project site. See for example the Typical and Candidate Key Views, most of which were taken from public roadways. Most of the roads within the viewshed are small, low speed roadways and approximately half are unpaved. Due to the low travel speed, drivers and passengers, where they have views of the site, would pass through the viewshed in several minutes, and their view duration would therefore be shorter than from residences in the area, though longer than pedestrians, bicyclists, or horseback riders on the same streets. Drivers and passengers would have moderate view exposure.

Drivers and passengers on scenic roadways near the project site generally do not have views of the project site, and therefore no exposure. A brief view of the project site is available from San Vicente Road at Warnock Drive, just over 0.5 miles southwest of the project site.

There are fewer recreational trail users in the area than residents, but possibly more than there are workers. Hikers and equestrians in Simon Preserve have extensive views westward over the valley in which the project site is located. The project site at the closest is 1.5 to 2 miles distant from trails in the preserve. The low number of viewers and the distance from the project site results in low exposure for recreational trail users in Simon Preserve.

Recreational trail users near the project site would increase with development of the pathway along the Creelman Lane edge of the project, and when more segments of the pathway along Creelman Lane are constructed in the future, as well as when the future community pathway is developed along the easement at Ashley Road. Trail users' views of the project site would be much closer than trail users in Simon

Preserve, and closer than drivers, since trail users would be traveling on the project site side of the road(s). Additionally, trail users travel at slower speeds and therefore have a longer time to view the surrounding than drivers. Their exposure, a combination of their long view duration, close viewing angles, and low numbers, would be moderately high.

4.2.4 Viewer Awareness

Residents, and those familiar with the area, tend to have a high awareness of the visual environment near their homes, and of any proposed or executed changes to the area. Workers are likely to have less awareness, because their attention would be focused on other activities.

Drivers and passengers while on the roadways in the viewshed would be traveling at slow speeds. Their awareness is hard to predict because it would vary based on their destination. Residents or workers going about their daily business may be familiar with the visual environment of the area, and thus both more and less aware than visitors. Those highly familiar with the area may not focus on specific details of the area every day, but would be very aware of any changes that may occur.

Recreational trail users are presumably in the area in order to enjoy a scenic experience. They would be highly aware of their visual environment in areas both far from and close to the project site.

Drivers on scenic San Vicente Road are presumed to be highly sensitive to views available from the highway.

5.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The visual impacts of the proposed project are determined by assessing the visual resource change due to the project and predicting viewer response to that change. Visual resource change is the sum of the changes in visual character and changes in visual quality.

The first step in determining visual resource change is to assess the compatibility of the proposed project with the visual character of the existing landscape.

The second step is to compare the visual quality of the existing resources with the projected visual quality after the project is constructed.

The viewer response to project changes is determined by viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity to the project. The resulting visual impact is determined by combining the severity of resource change with the degree to which people are likely to oppose or be disturbed by the change.

5.1 Definition of Visual Impact Levels

The following definitions will be used in subsequent sections of this document:

No impact: No visual impact would occur as a result of construction of the project. Actual improvements to the visual environment may also occur in this category.

Less than significant impact: Adverse changes to the existing visual resources will not be perceived negatively by viewers, or the contrast is too small and occurs in an area with low visual quality and low sensitivity to visual changes, or the proposed project incorporates features that reduce the potential contrast of the overall project to less than significant levels. A less than significant impact normally does not require mitigation measures unless the project falls under National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) guidelines.

Less than significant impact with mitigation: A moderate or high level of contrast to the visual resource is expected with a moderate or high level of viewer negative response. Mitigation will be required to reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

Significant impact: A moderate or high level of contrast to the visual resource is expected with a moderate or high level of viewer negative response. Mitigation would be required to reduce the impact to a less than significant level. If after mitigation, the project is still considered to be significant, then it would be considered an unmitigable significant impact.

5.2 Guidelines for Determining Significance

The visual impact assessment will be based on an evaluation of the project impacts on several categories, including: visual quality, landform quality, view quality, and community character.

A project will generally be considered to have a significant effect if it proposes any of the following changes. Conversely, if a project does not propose any of the following, it will generally not be considered to have a significant effect on visual resources:

Visual Quality

1. The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.

Community Character

2. The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.

View Quality

3. The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:
   - A public road,
   - A trail within an adopted County or State trail system,
   - A scenic vista or highway, or
   - A recreational area.

Goals and Policies

4. The project would not comply with adopted plans and policies at the state and local level, including the San Diego County General Plan, the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, the San Diego County Resource Protection Ordinance, the Ramona Community Plan, or the Ramona Community Design Guidelines.

In addition, the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance for Dark Skies and Glare contains the following Guideline for determining significance as a guide to evaluate whether a significant impact from glare will occur as a result of project implementation:

> The project will install highly reflective building materials, including but not limited to, reflective glass and high-gloss surface color that will create daytime glare and be visible from roadways, pedestrian walkways, or areas used frequently for outdoor activities on adjacent properties.

5.3 Analysis of Project Effects and Significance Determination

The first three guidelines are analyzed through the key views and computer simulations and discussed below. The fourth category is discussed in **Section 2.5 Policies and Guidance**, which showed that the project would conform with all the applicable policies and guidance and no visual impact due to non-compliance is expected for this project. A less than significant impact would result due to the potential for daytime glare, as discussed in more detail below.

5.3.1 Key Views

It is not possible to analyze every point in the viewshed, therefore representative or “key views” with the highest degree of visibility and the greatest number of viewers have been chosen to illustrate the potential project impacts. A total of nine “Candidate Key Views,” were selected. The location of each is shown on Figure 10, and the Candidate Key Views are illustrated in Figures 11 through 15. The potential impact of the proposed project on the key views is discussed in Section 5.3: Assessment of Visual Character and Quality.

Candidate Key View #	Existing Visual Quality			Viewer Groups	Viewer Sensitivity	Viewer Exposure	Distance from Viewer to Proposed Project	Notes	Recommended for Simulation?
	Vividness	Unity	Intactness						
1	Low	Moderately Low	Low	Residents; Drivers; Recreational Trail Users	High, Moderate, High	Moderate	Foreground to middleground	Most visible angle of the project	***Yes***
2	Low	Low	Low	Residents; Drivers; Recreational Trail Users	High, Moderate, High	Moderate	Foreground	Highly visible angle of the project	***No; Key View 6 is more encompassing***
3	Moderately Low	Low	Moderately Low	Residents, Drivers, Recreational Trail Users	High, Moderate, High	Moderate	Foreground to middleground	Most visible angle of the project	***Yes***
4	Moderately Low	Moderately Low	Low	Residents	High	Low	Middleground	Limited public access	***No***
5	Moderately Low	Moderately Low	Low	Residents	High	Low	Middleground	Limited public access; proposed project areas hidden by existing structures and vegetation	***No***
6	Moderately Low	Moderately Low	Low	Residents; Drivers; Recreational Trail Users	High, Moderate, High	Low	Middleground	Limited public access; encompasses most of the proposed project features	***Yes***
7	Moderate	Moderately Low	Moderately Low	Residents; Drivers; Recreational Trail Users	High, Moderate, High	Low	Far middleground	Limited public access	***Yes***
8	Moderate	Moderate	Moderately High	Residents; School Patron	High	High	Far middleground	Project site and features are hidden by existing vegetation and structures	***No***
9	Moderate	Low	Low	Residents; Drivers	High	Moderate	Far middleground	Most of the project site and features are hidden by existing vegetation and structures	***No***
10	Moderate	Moderate	Moderately High	Residents; Drivers	High	Moderate	Far middleground	Most of the project site and features are hidden by existing vegetation, topography, and structures	***No***

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Figure 10 - Key View Location Map

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Figure 11 - Candidate Key Views 1-2

Candidate Key View 1

Southward view from Ashley Road at eastern Project Site boundary

Candidate Key View 2

Westward view from Creelman Lane and Ashley Road

Candidate Key View 3

Eastward view from Creelman Lane at Casteel Lane

Candidate Key View 4

Southward view from Barnett Road at northwestern Project Site boundary

Figure 13 - Candidate Key View 5-6

Candidate Key View 5
Eastward view from Jaybird Lane

Candidate Key View 6
Westward view from Creelman Lane

Candidate Key View 7

Westward view from Creelman Lane

Candidate Key View 8

Southeastern view Ramona High School field bleachers

Candidate Key View 9
Eastward view from Vixon Drive and Hanson Way

Candidate Key View 10
Northeastward view from Warnock Drive and San Vicente Road

Of the ten candidate key views, four were selected for full simulations and in-depth analysis. The selected views for simulation include: Key Views 1, 3, 6, and 7. **5.3.2 Review of Photo Simulations from Selected Key Views**

Figures 16 through 19 represent photo-realistic computer simulations of the proposed project. The simulations were developed through the use of three-dimensional computer modeling of the existing site topography and the proposed project elements. The model was then transposed over the top of the photographs of the site. Additional texture, color, details, and shadows were added to increase the realistic look of the simulations. Each view is shown as currently exists, and is simulated to represent the project after construction. Each is followed by simulations of the same view showing the landscape plants at approximately five years after construction (when fully established) and ten years after construction (when mature). The proposed plants would be considered to be fully mature by year ten, but performing screening requirements by year five. Additionally the cross-sections provided with the landscape concept plan in the back pocket of this report illustrate the proposed project elements in relation to the immediate surroundings. They also show landscape plants at construction, five years after construction, and ten years after construction.

Orientation:

Key View 1

Key View 1 was taken from Ashley Road near the northeastern project site boundary, in the approximate location of the future Collier Park/Ashley Road community pathway (trail). This view would be available to drivers and passengers traveling south on Ashley Road, and to the recreational trail users on the future pathway. This view also represents views available to residents on the private lots located north and east of the project site.

Key View 3

Key View 3 is a view northeastward from the intersection of Creelman Lane and Casteel Lane. The project site and immediately surrounding parcels lie within the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit. The Undeveloped/Hillside slopes within Simon's Preserve as well as more distant hillsides also are visible in the background. This view would be available to drivers and passengers traveling east on Creelman Lane, and to recreational trail users on the Dye Road pathway, a segment of which would be constructed along Creelman Lane with the proposed project. This view also represents views available to residents on private lots south and west of the project site.

Key View 6

Key View 6 was taken from Creelman Lane approximately 0.25 miles east of the project site, next to the SDG&E Power Substation. This westward view encompasses the project site behind two foreground undeveloped/open pasture lots. The small hill in the western portion of the viewshed and more distant Mt. Woodson (4.5 miles to the west of the site) and Starvation Mt. (7.75 miles northwest of the project site) create the horizon line of this view. This view would be available to drivers and passengers traveling west on Creelman Lane, and to recreational trail users on the future Dye Road pathway. This view also represents views available to residents on private lots east of the project site, and to recreational trail users within Simon Preserve.

Key View 7

Key View 7 was taken from Creelman Lane approximately one mile east of the project site. The project site is located in the far middle ground of this westward view, with pastures, trees, and agricultural buildings in the foreground. Mt. Woodson and Starvation Mt. create the horizon line of this view, and local hills approximately 0.5 miles west of the project site are visible behind the site as well. This view would be available to local residents and agricultural workers accessing the agricultural lots off Creelman Lane east of the project site, and to recreational trail users within Simon Preserve.

Figure 16a - Photo Simulation Key View 1
At Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions At Construction

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Figure 16b - Photo Simulation Key View 1
5 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 5 Years Post Construction

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Figure 16c - Photo Simulation Key View 1
10 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 10 Years Post Construction

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Figure 17a - Photo Simulation Key View 3
At Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions At Construction

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Figure 17b - Photo Simulation Key View 3
5 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 5 Years Post Construction

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Figure 17c - Photo Simulation Key View 3
10 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 10 Years Post Construction

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Figure 18a - Photo Simulation Key View 6
At Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions At Construction

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Figure 18b - Photo Simulation Key View 6
5 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 5 Years Post Construction

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Figure 18c - Photo Simulation Key View 6
10 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 10 Years Post Construction

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Figure 19a - Photo Simulation Key View 7
At Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions At Construction

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Figure 19b - Photo Simulation Key View 7
5 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 5 Years Post Construction

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Figure 19c - Photo Simulation Key View 7
10 Years Post Construction

Existing conditions

Simulated Conditions 10 Years Post Construction

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5.3.3 Existing Visual Character and Quality

The project site fills most of each of Key View 1 and 3, with elements of the surrounding Semi-Rural/ Agricultural Landscape Character Unit visible in each. The project site is a smaller element in Key Views 6 and 7, and the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Unit comprises most of the view. As discussed above, the visual quality of the project site is low. The surrounding Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit has moderate visual quality, with moderate vividness, moderately low intactness, and low unity.

The Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit surrounds the project site, and the Key Views illustrate the diverse visual elements within it, including vegetation and roadways, power poles and power lines, fences, and occasional boulders. Within each of these views, structures such as houses and power poles and residences are small scale elements that are not highly distinct.

The Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit areas comprise the background of Key View 3. Key Views 6 and 7 include more distant mountains as well. The Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit has moderately high vividness, moderate intactness, and high unity.

5.3.4 Proposed Project Features

The proposed solar panel arrays, represented in each of the Key View Photo Simulations, would be placed along the southwestern half of the project site. The existing palm trees on the property would be removed, berms would be created along Creelman Lane, and new shrubs would be planted along Creelman Lane, Ashley Road, and Casteel Lane. The proposed panels would be densely arranged in rows that would take up the area where most of the palm trees are currently massed. The panels would be placed approximately 70 to 75 feet north of Creelman Lane, 50 to 55 feet west of Casteel Lane, 50 to 300 feet east of Ashley Road, and between approximately 300 and 750 feet south of the northern property line. This setback is less than buildings within the Semi-Rural lots near the site, which have buildings up to 200 feet from the roadway, but is greater than the typical building setback along the north side of Creelman Lane and the west side of Ashley Road, where the residences are typically 20 to 60 feet from the nearest roadway. It is greater than the setback of the nearby substation, which has equipement approximately 25 feet south of Creelman Lane. The proposed project features would be grouped within the approximate southern half of the site, with the proposed landscape features placed along the western, southern, and eastern edges. This would result in a similar massing as many lots in the area that have dense perimeter planting, a building or group of buildings on one portion of the lot, and open space or agricultural uses on the remainder of the lot.

At 11.5 feet tall, the height of the panels would be much shorter than the typical single-story residential buildings in the surrounding area. The equipment shade structures would be shorter than the proposed panels, and thus not highly noticeable. Similarly, the project's water tank, which would be 10.75' tall, would be taller than the proposed fence, but shorter than the proposed panels. The perimeter fence, at eight feet tall, would be taller than most of the fences in the surrounding area that are four to five feet tall, with the exception of the substation, that has minimum of eight-foot-tall fences. The project's perimeter fence, however, would not be highly visible due to the proposed project landscaping that is designed to screen the fence within three to five years.

From Ashley Road, as shown in Photo Simulation Key View 1, viewers would see the back of the panels, and the structural frames supporting them before the landscape plants have matured. The details of the panels and frames would not be visually distinct. From the location of Key View 1, the panels would be more than 800 feet south of the viewer. As drivers and trail users travel southward on Ashley Road and approach Creelman Lane, the closest panels would be 90 feet south and east of the viewer. The proposed landscape plants, including the trees proposed to be planted along Ashley Road, would be the most visible elements. These would be placed just inside the existing fence (which would remain in place), and thus would not screen the existing fence in this location.

The proposed shrubs and trees along the perimeter of the project site, once mature, would screen views of the solar panel arrays and the proposed project fence from views that are generally at the same elevation as the site, such as Key Views 1 and 3. Until the plants are mature, the east, west, and southern sides of the

project would use green privacy screen landscape fabric hung on the perimeter fence to screen views of the solar panels. The fabric would be removed when the plants are established and sufficiently screen most of the fence, at approximately five years after project construction, at the end of the landscape establishment period. The northern project perimeter fence would use slats inserted into the chain link fencing to permanently block views of the project. The proposed landscaping includes a variety of shrubs that would provide more variety of texture and sizes within the views than currently exists. The plants also would be spaced closer together than the existing palm trees, and provide more color (blue, white, yellow, and red) when blooming or in fruit. Additionally, the proposed berms would elevate the new plants by a few feet, so that as the landscape becomes established, the plants would more quickly screen the proposed project features.

The proposed panels would be located approximately 75 feet north of Creelman Lane, and approximately 200 feet from the viewer at Key View 3. The panels therefore would be more prominent in Key View 3 than within the other Photo Simulations. The pathway between the project site and Creelman Lane and the proposed berms would be visible in Key View 3 as well. Before the proposed shrubs mature, the project access road and perimeter fence with the privacy screen fabric would be prominent elements in this view as well.

Each of these simulations is followed by two photo simulations showing the proposed project and landscaping at year five and year ten after construction. These show the progression of the landscape as it matures, and begins to screen the other proposed project features. The landscape plants, as shown in the Year 5 simulation, would screen at least half of the features once fully established (would be approximately half as tall as the perimeter fence, or taller because of the berms), and when mature, the plants would screen the visibility of most of the project features.

Key Views 6 and 7 are more comprehensive views, and as such most of the proposed project layout would be visible from these points, including the panel arrays and the proposed shrubs along the perimeter of the site. The most visible aspect of the proposed project from Key Views 6 and 7 is the mass of solar panels in the southern half of the site, which would replace the green of the trees the gray of the structures. As shown in these simulations, the proposed landscaping would not be completely effective at screening views of the panels from points at higher elevations. However, in addition to the filter provided by the distance from the site, local plants frequently screen views from viewshed areas of higher elevation (see for example Candidate Key View 9).

5.3.5 Project Effects

The proposed project would change the visual character of the area to include more geometric, structural elements. Though the panels would be similar in height or a bit shorter than most of the existing palm trees, and positioned in rows similar to the grids in which the palm trees are arranged, the mass of panels would be comprised of strong horizontal lines whereas the palms are a mass of natural, green, organic shapes and lines. The proposed project also would remove the spiky Canary Island palm trees around the perimeter of the site, and replace them with more rounded native plants and ornamental trees that would be taller, denser, and provide more seasonal color variation.

Immediately after the project is constructed, the removal of the palm trees would reveal more background elements. In Key View 3, this would reveal more of the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit; in Key Views 1, 6, and 7, more structures and ornamental vegetation at the edges of the Semi-Rural/ Agricultural Landscape Character Unit would be visible. The proposed mature shrubs would be tall enough to screen background elements from some viewpoints (such as from points directly next to the project site), and would break the horizon line in a manner similar to the existing palm trees.

The proposed project elements would not change the immediate foreground elements in any of the key views, except where the portion of the Dye Road pathway would extend along Creelman Lane beside the project site. The pathway would be generally flat, smoother than the existing non-native grasses growing between Creelman Lane and the site, and would be similar in color to the existing natural surfaces and dirt road abutting it.

The new pathway segment would be visible in the foreground of Key View 3, and may be visible in Key Views 6 and 7. In these more distant views, the pathway would be a small-scale element that is similar in appearance to the existing unpaved road, and thus the pathway would not be highly discernible from farther distances. A portion of Creelman Lane that would be paved in conjunction with development of the proposed project would be visible in the foreground of Key View 3 as well, but would not be visible from any of the other views. The roadways, fences, vegetation, power poles, and power lines visible in each key view would not be changed, with the exception of Key View 3, wherein the fence along the southern project site edge would be replaced with a taller fence located farther from the roadway. The proposed project also would replace an existing 45-foot tall power pole on the western side of Casteel Lane with a 50-foot tall pole. The pole at this location is not visible in the Candidate Key Views, and the new pole would be similar in appearance to the existing pole and other power poles in the area (which range in size from 45 feet tall to 100 feet tall). The five foot difference of height would not be noticeable, and the new power pole would not create and visible changes to views of area.

Change to Visual Quality: Although the proposed project elements would be different from the existing visual features, the proposed project would not substantially change the visual quality of the Landscape Character Unit in which it would be located. The horizontal lines and strong geometry of the proposed solar arrays would be a new visually dominant element concentrated in the southern portion of the site, and until the proposed landscaping matures, would present different, more structural components than currently exist in most views of the area. The panels would be arranged in a grid pattern similar to the existing palm trees and other agricultural features in the area, such as greenhouses or nurseries. When the proposed landscape matures, the plants would provide more naturalistic colors and textures, and from close viewpoints, would screen the fences and solar arrays, reducing the visibility of the gray and black geometric characteristics.

The northern portion of the site would remain undeveloped, and would continue to support the existing non-native grassland, which has similar visual characteristics as the pastures east and south of the project site. This would provide continuity between views of the area that include the project site and the neighboring properties.

There are no distinct visual patterns or highly memorable landscape components in the area. The introduction of the project elements would neither increase nor decrease the vividness of the visual environment of the area. Similarly, while the new project elements would be different from the existing view components and would not increase the visual integrity of the areas, neither would the project elements encroach into the visual environment, and the moderately low intactness of the area would not change. The unity of the visual environment surrounding the project site is currently low, and the new project elements, while they would be carefully laid out for functional purposes, would not increase the coherence or compositional harmony of the landscape as a whole. As with the other visual quality elements, the unity of the views would remain low.

Change to Community Character: No designated landmarks, historic resources, or rock outcroppings exist on the site. No trees on the project site are considered to be significant visual resources. The palm trees would be removed, and new geometric solar panels would be installed, along with a variety of landscaping shrubs and trees, which would, when mature, screen views of the fence and proposed solar arrays from close views, and provide a perimeter of natural colors around the site within distant views. This change would be noticeable, but, as mentioned, would not change the visual quality of the site or surrounding area. Small boulders visible in Key Views 3 and 6 would be affected. Additionally, the proposed trees have been selected from the Ramona Design Guidelines Street Tree planting guide and are similar to trees on lots in the immediately surrounding area. The proposed trees would provide a visual connection and increase the continuity between the project and the landscaping on neighboring lots.

The project viewshed (Figure 9, above) shows that the project site is not visible from two of the scenic roadways in the area: SR 78 or Highland Valley Road, due to topography between the site and the road, as well as intervening development and existing vegetation. The project therefore would have no impact on scenic resources associated with views seen from Scenic Routes SR 78 or Highland Valley Road.

A 0.5 mile portion of San Vicente Road is identified as within the project viewshed (Figure 9, above). However, intervening development, and existing vegetation between San Vicente Road and the project site block views from the roadway in this area to the site (refer to Typical Views K and L, Figure 6, above). Candidate Key View 10, above, shows that a small portion of the project site is visible from San Vicente Road at Warnock Drive, approximately 0.5 miles southwest of the project site. Thus some of the project features would be visible from this point as well. The distance, prominent foreground and the taller middle ground features in this photograph also ensure that the project site is a minor element within the view. The panels may be new, dark gray and black features where mostly green vegetation is visible in this view, but as the project landscaping matures, the shrubs would screen the geometric panels and provide more green and natural colors.

The rest of San Vicente Road is not within the project viewshed due to topography between the site and the road. The proposed project therefore would have no impact on scenic resources associated with views seen from any other areas of San Vicente Road.

Change to View Quality: The proposed project elements would be visible from public roads, the Dye Road Pathway—a portion of which would be developed along Creelman Lane in conjunction with the proposed project—and the future Ashley Road/Collier Park pathway. These pathways are listed in the adopted County of San Diego *Ramona Community Trails and Pathways Plan*. Views from the pathway alignments are represented by the Key Views and Photo Simulations. The visible changes the proposed project would introduce in these views is discussed above.

The views available from Creelman Lane and Ashley Road encompass most of the elements of the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit, and some of the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit areas as well. The proposed project would change elements within the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit, but those elements would not change the visual quality of the area, nor obstruct or interrupt views of the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit areas that comprise the distinct horizon line that surrounds the area and define the Santa Maria Valley. The new project features, while introducing new visual elements, would not encroach into the visual environment that currently is composed of a high diversity of components, and none of the proposed features would be tall enough to encroach on views of the surrounding Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit. When proposed shrubs mature, they may be taller as seen from some viewpoints than the horizon line, but they would not fully obstruct or detract from views of the hillsides in the background any more so than the existing trees on the project site.

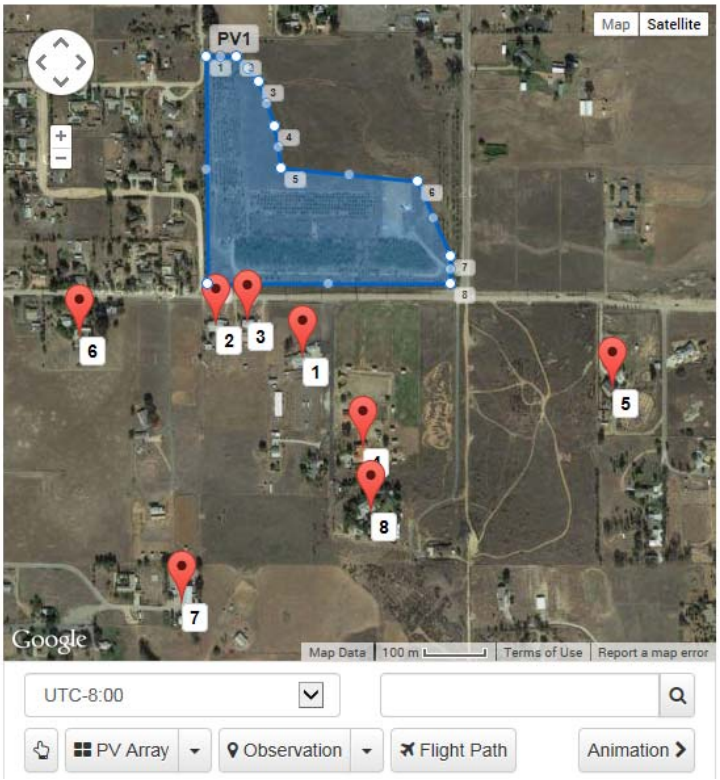
Conformance with Goals and Policies: Refer to the matrix in Section 2.5 for a summary of the project's conformance with goals and policies.

Light and Glare: The proposed project includes low levels of lighting near the access gate, and the lights would be shielded and directed downward to minimize the potential for light spillover. The lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements.

The project team conducted a glare analysis using the Solar Glare and Flux Mapping Tools available online from Sandia National Laboratories at https://share.sandia.gov/phlux. Neighboring residents' potential exposure to glare was analyzed though the selection of representative points, shown in Figure 20. The analysis tool analyzes the glare potential of panels with a reflectivity of window glass, and considers the height of the panels and the elevation at which they would be placed, and assumes that each exposure point is at the same elevation as the panels, thus representing a worst-case scenario.

The analysis tool shows that Points 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 have the potential to receive enough reflected light to produce a temporary after-image. An after-image is where the light reflectance is intense enough that it can leave a temporary bright spot in a portion of a person's view. An after-image makes it difficult for a person look in the direction of the reflection as long as the reflectance point remains. Slight movements of the viewer often allow this after-image to go away quickly or the movement of the sun will also redirect the location of the reflectance to a slightly changed perspective.

Figure 20 - Glare Analysis Summary



Results for PV array 1

Summary | OP: 1 | OP: 2 | OP: 3 | OP: 4 | OP: 5 | OP: 6 | OP: 7 | OP: 8

Observation	status
OP: 1	glare
OP: 2	glare
OP: 3	glare
OP: 4	No glare
OP: 5	glare
OP: 6	glare
OP: 7	No glare
OP: 8	No glare

Energy Max produced annually, assuming sunny skies every day

1.180E+07 kWh

Point 1 has the potential to receive an after-image in early mornings (between approximately 6:00 and 6:30 AM) in late June, while Points 2, 3, and 6 have the potential in early mornings (between approximately 6:00 and 6:30 AM) between April and September. Point 5 has the potential for temporary after-images in the evenings (between approximately 5:15 and 5:45 PM) from April to September. While the analysis was performed for lots with residential structures, motorists, pedestrians, and riders on portion of Creelman Lane between Point 6 (the westernmost point) and Point 5 (the easternmost point) may see similar after-images, and at similar times (i.e. in the morning for eastbound motorist near Points 1, 2, 3, and 6, and in the evening for westbound motorists near Point 5).

The potential for the panels to produce an after-image for Points 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, and for motorists, pedestrians, and riders on Creelman Lane would be reduced by the integral anti-reflective coating of the panel glass. Studies show that solar panels made with anti-reflective coatings and designed to absorb as much sunlight as possible are less reflective than standard glass surfaces, water, surrounding natural surfaces (Good Company, 2011). The Sandia tool anticipates a worst case scenario of reflectivity similar to window glass. Reflections from the panels are anticipated to be much less than the glare analysis anticipated by Sandia, as a result of the anti-reflective coating, and therefore the after-image would not adversely affect observers at Points 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, or motorists, pedestrians, and riders on Creelman Lane.

Each panel would have a thin frame of brushed aluminum, which may reflect more light than the faces of the panels. However, the frames would be only a few inches wide, and any reflections from the frames would be minimal.

Existing and proposed vegetation would further reduce the visibility of sunlight reflecting from the proposed panels, a feature that the Sandia tool cannot take into consideration. Point 5 represents a lot with trees planted around the entire perimeter and the lot represented by Point 6 also includes extensive vegetation. The trees and shrubs on these lots therefore would aid in reducing the visibility of reflections from the proposed panels. Additionally, the proposed project landscaping along the frontage of Creelman Lane would reduce visibility, and also would block some of the reflections for viewers on Creelman Lane.

Based on the above discussion, sunlight reflections from the panels, while potentially visible from some residential lots and from Creelman Lane south of the project site, would be reduced from the anti-reflective coating and landscaping, would be less reflective than the surrounding natural surfaces, and would not adversely affect views in the area. In addition, the proposed project would not install highly reflective building materials such as reflective glass or high-gloss surface color that would create daytime glare or be visible from roadways, pedestrian walkways, or areas used frequently for outdoor activities on adjacent properties. No significant impacts from glare would occur as a result of this project and the project would be in conformance with the County's Guidelines for Determining Significance for Lighting/Glare.

5.3.6 Viewer Response

Each Key View was taken from public roadways, and thus represents views available to drivers and passengers on those roadways. They also represent views available from nearby residential lots, and views that would be available to recreational trail users on the future community pathways along Ashley Road and Creelman Lane, including the portion that would be installed by the proposed project. Key Views 6 and 7 (Figures 18 and 19) also represent views available from trails within Simon Preserve, which is located approximately one mile east of the project site. These trail users are the smallest viewer group, and have shorter view duration than residents, but longer than motorists. Their response is expected to be moderately high.

Residents have a high awareness and long view duration, but the number of residents is low. Their response is expected to be moderately high to changes in the visual environment.

Drivers and passengers have a moderate view exposure and short view duration. Their numbers are slightly higher than residents, and their response is expected to be moderate.

5.3.7 Construction Period

The proposed project would be constructed in approximately 120 calendar days. The current tenant is responsible for the removal of the existing palm trees, sheds, and all other site nursery elements prior to commencement of the construction period. During the four months of the construction period, equipment for clearing and grubbing the MUP area, grading the fire access perimeter road, the site entrance driveway, and the community pathway segment along Creelman Lane would be visible. After clearing, grubbing, and grading, the panels and equipment would be installed, the fence constructed, and the proposed landscape would be planted. The equipment for clearing and grading would be the most visible aspect of the construction period, but no large piles of soil are expected to be visible on site due to the minor amount of grading proposed. Typical site management (trash removal, site cleanups, storm water management practices) also would help minimize any negative visual effects.

5.3.8 Post Construction Period

The visual simulations shown in for the Key Views in Figures 16 through 19 illustrate the proposed project features after construction of the project and installation of the proposed landscaping, and at five and ten years of landscape growth. As shown in these simulations, the proposed landscape screening fabric on the perimeter fence would screen the project features, particularly the panel support structures, from direct views until the proposed landscaping matures. During the first several years after the project has been completed, the proposed perimeter fence with the landscape screening fabric would be highly visible.

The project landscape plan includes measures to ensure as much vegetation screening as possible in the least amount of time. For example, the initial planting installation would include a variety of container sizes, close plant spacing, and berms to ensure a minimum 30% screening of the fence lines along Creelman Lane and Ashley Road within three years, and 50% screening in five years. The project also includes a five year establishment period (which specifies weed removal, irrigation system maintenance, and the replacement of dead plants), permanent irrigation, and a long-term monitoring and maintenance for the landscape areas (such as weed removal, irrigation repair, and replacement shrub planting) to ensure continued screening of the proposed fence and panels over the lifetime of the project. This can be seen in the simulations showing the proposed project features 10 years after construction.

5.4 Determination of Significance

Visual Quality Impacts: Some of the viewers who would see the proposed project elements are expected to have moderately high responses to changes in the visual environment. However, the proposed project features, that are somewhat different in visual character from what exists on the site, would not detract from or highly contrast with the existing visual character and quality of the neighborhood, community, or localized area. Further, the proposed landscaping and design measures (such as the berms) would provide additional screening of the features from public viewpoints, and help reduce the highly geometric nature of the panel arrays. The proposed project also would be consistent with applicable design guidelines, as detailed in Section 2.5 above. The resulting impact to the visual quality of the immediate neighborhood, overall community, and localized area would be **less than significant**.

Community Character Impacts: No trees or rock outcroppings on the project site are scenic resources, and there are no historic buildings on the site or in the immediately surrounding area. Additionally, the proposed project would not remove or substantially change features that contribute to the valued visual character of the area, obstruct, interrupt, or detract from focal or panoramic vistas from public roads or recreational areas. The project incorporates landscape plants that are listed in the Ramona Design Guidelines and are present on many lots in the immediately surrounding area, ensuring that the project landscaping is visually similar to the surrounding area. The resulting visual impact to community character would be **less than significant**.

View Quality Impacts: Panoramic scenic vistas are not readily available in the immediate project vicinity or within the Semi-Rural/Agricultural Landscape Character Unit. The hillsides and distant mountains that comprise the horizon line of the valley within which the project site is located would not be substantially

obstructed by proposed project elements. Views of the project site from the Undeveloped/Hillside Landscape Character Unit that include the project site are at the closest approximately 0.75 to 1 mile from the project site. The distance of the viewer from the proposed project elements would render them indistinct. The project components would become minor pieces of the overall view to or from the Hillside/ Undeveloped Landscape Character Unit, and the proposed project impacts to the character and quality of the visual environment of the area would be **less than significant**.

The proposed project would have a **less than significant** impact on the few views available from San Vicente Road. The project site is not visible from any other scenic highways or portions of San Vicente Road, and thus the proposed changes to the site would have **no impact** on parts of the sub-regionally significant viewing scenes as seen from these scenic highways.

Goals and Policies Related Impacts: The proposed project would be consistent with adopted plans, policies, and guidance, as detailed in the table in Section 2.5 above.

The proposed project would have a **less than significant** impact on the ambient light levels of the area.

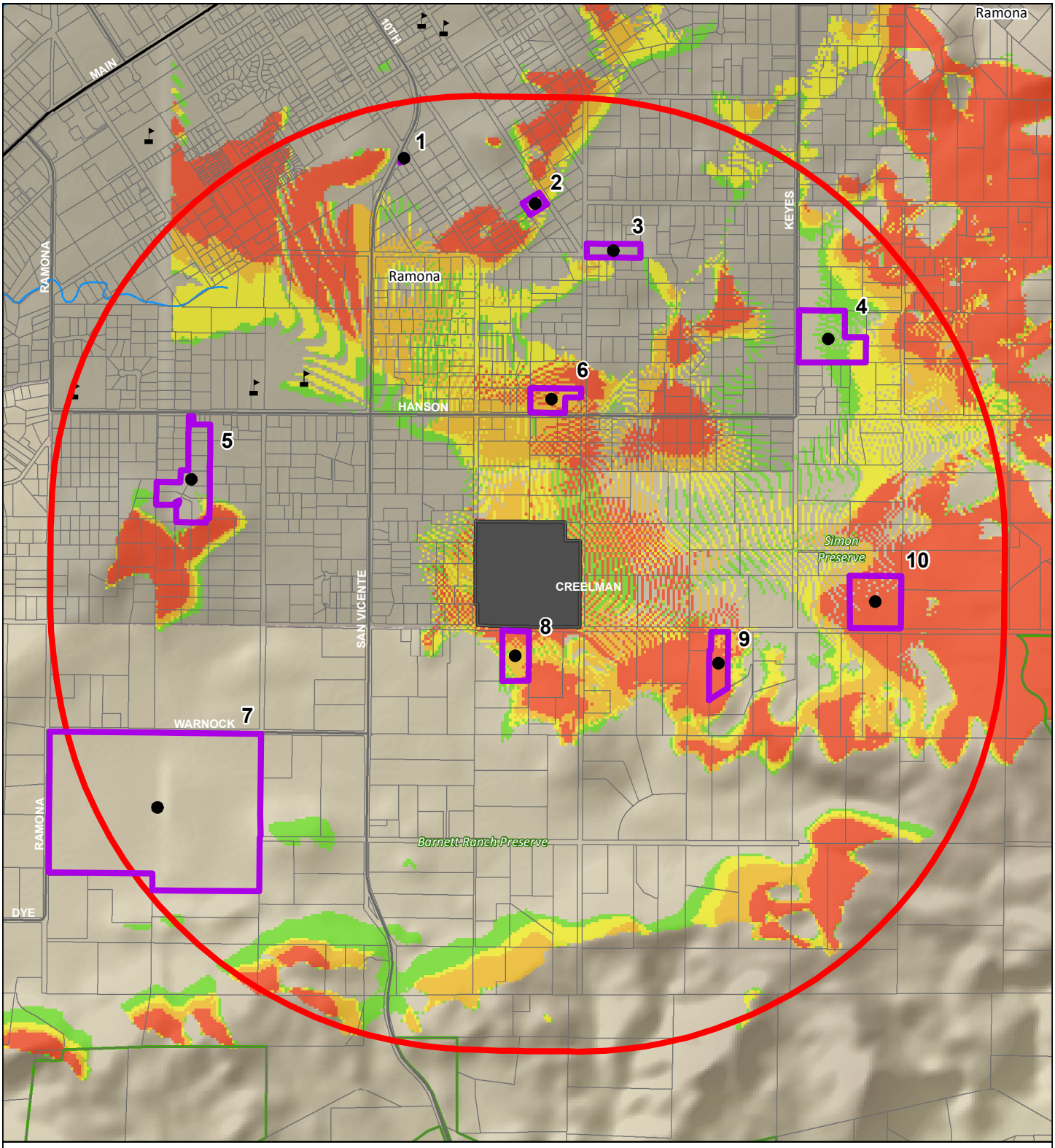
The potential for light reflectance to be noticeable, cause after-images, or result in glare visible from nearby residential lots and Creelman Lane is reduced by the anti-reflective coating on the proposed panels. No significant impacts from glare would occur as a result of this project and the project would be in conformance with the County's Guidelines for Determining Significance for Lighting/Glare. Therefore, potential impacts from reflection and glare created by the proposed project would be **less than significant**, and no additional mitigation for glare is required.

Construction Period Impacts: Due to the minimal construction period time frame, visual changes caused by the visible removal of palm trees, presence of construction equipment, and installation of the project features would be less than significant. Additionally, the proposed project includes landscape fabric on the project perimeter fence that would screen the newly installed project until the landscaping matures. As the plants mature, any remaining temporary negative visual effects of the unscreened project features would further decrease. The construction period impacts, therefore, would be less than significant.

5.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Public record databases were searched for active permits within one mile of the project site, and found the following ten permits being considered for projects within the 1 mile of the project and the project's Viewshed. Figure 21 illustrates these lots overlaid on the viewshed map. As can be seen from this map, not all projects can be seen from the project site. However, intervisibility is not a requirement for a project to have a cumulative affect when combined with the proposed project, rather, cumulative effects would occur if the proposed project and the cumulative project are visible at the same time from a public viewing point. It is possible that some portion of all of the projects may be visible from a location, but this would occur in a scene visible from a great distance, and the visible changes therefore would not represent a large enough change in the broader view scene to have any potential of significant impact.

Figure 21 - Cumulative Projects



Legend

- School
- Ramona Community Village
- Creelman Parcel
- Open Space Preserve
- Project 1 Mile Buffer
- Permits

Project Viewhed

- Limited Visibility
- Low Visibility
- Moderate Visibility
- High Visibility

NORTH

Map Ref.	Name	APN	County Record ID#	Site Address	Permit Area	Type of project/ notes
1	Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, CA: St. Mary's In The Valley	284-201-18-00	PDS2011-3381-85-048 / PDS2005-2540-4639	1010 12th St, Ramona CA, 92065	0.08 acre	Public Improvement Plan/Major Use Permit Minor Deviation
2	Agha Coussaie	284-244-05-00	PDS2009-2220-21043 / PDS2006-3200-21043	1219 09th St, Ramona, CA 92065	1 acre	Two parcel subdivision
3	Herold Trust	284-031-01-00	PDS2006-2240-2073 / PDS2006-2220-20703	1292 Ashley Rd, Ramona, CA 92065	2.6 acre	Minor Subdivision Improvement
4	Gregorie and Gloria McCandless	284-051-44-00	PDS2014-LDMAP-00035 / PDS2014-LDMJIP-00010	1550 Keyes Road, Ramona, CA 92065	10.38 acre	Tenative Map; subdivide to 5 lots; existing house to remain
5	Glae and Jean McDonald	282-341-02-00 (e.g.)	PDS2006-3710-06-0110	Glae Jean Court, Ramona, CA 92065	11.17 acre	Major Subdivision Improvement Plan
6	Joseph Zenovic	284-320-81-00	PDS2014-ER-14-09-004 / PDS2014-TPM-21212	Hanson Lane and Ashley Rd, Ramona, CA 92065	3.55 acre	TPM 4 lots and residential detached accessory structure
7	Sol Orchard	283-083-07-00	PDS2014-COMACC-000012 / PDS2014-MUP-11-029M2	1650 Warnock Dr, Ramona, CA 92065	111.80 acre	Major Use Permit: Solar Array Field
8	Glenn and Paula Johnson	284-101-14-00	PDS2014-RESACC-000436 / PDS2014-RESALT-002831	1012 Creelman Ln, Ramona, CA 92065	4.71 acre	New residential detached structure ~1,500sf
9	Geoffrey and Sharon Torpin	284-110-47-00	PDS2013-RESALT-007717 / PDS2013-RESALT-007714	638 Creelman Ln, Ramona, CA 92065	4.04 acre	Residential addition: Solar on roof
10	Joe and Charott Johnson	284-090-16-00	PDS2012-2240-21160 / PDS2012-2700-15666	385 Creelman Ln, Ramona, CA 92065	9.50 acre	Minor Subdivision Improvement

Project #4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are likely to be visible within a viewing scene less than one mile from the projects. Project #1, 2, 3, and 7 are either very small or are too far away from the site to be cumulatively contrasting.

Projects #6, 8, and 9 are minor changes to existing residential lots, and would not have a visible impact on the character or quality of the visual environment of the area, while Projects 4, 5, 7, and 10 are larger projects that would result in more visible changes.

Projects #4, 5 and 10 are the only projects that are large enough to have the ability to dominate visual character changes in the area while as the same time be within a viewing scene with the proposed project. Projects 4, 5, and 10 are proposed subdivisions that would introduce more houses into the area. These projects are located on points at higher elevations within the valley; Project 10 is located next to Key View 7. As discussed above, the relatively small-scale change to the project site in views encompassing the overall valley, as well as the filtering effects of distance and foreground elements reduce the visible details of the proposed project features from points at higher elevations.

While projects #4, 5 and 10 may be visible from many points at lower elevations, they would not obstruct, interrupt, or detract from valued vistas. While they would be visible from public roadways and, potentially, from pathways or recreational areas, they would be similar in scale, density, theme, architectural style, and building material to the existing neighboring residential lots. To be a significant contrast to the existing character of the valley floor or adjacent hillside scene, a consistent, dominant visual character in the viewing scene must be present, and the proposed projects would need to highly contrast with this dominant character. However, the existing visual character within the area is not diverse, without a high degree of consistency. The proposed elements of the cumulative projects would have a similarly diverse visual character. Therefore they will not create a high degree of visual contrast in the area, and the cumulative effect between the proposed project and the cumulative projects would be less than significant.

Buildout of these cumulative projects is not anticipated to result in adverse effects on the public viewshed because these projects would be reviewed for conformance with applicable General Plan land use and zoning regulations regulating allowable uses and development character, and as such would reflect existing development patterns. Each would also have to comply with applicable goals and policies of the Ramona Community Plan and Ramona Design Guidelines.

The proposed project and the Sol Orchard site (Project 7) at Warnock Road west of San Vicente Road have similar viewsheds, and thus the potential to be viewed at the same time from several points, particularly from higher elevations near the western edge of Simon Preserve and residential areas east of Keyes Road. Several factors limit these potential views, however. First, the distance between the slopes of Simon Preserve and the Sol Orchard site is farther than to the proposed project, and the distance renders proposed features indistinct. Additionally, a large amount of vegetation exists between potential viewers and the project sites, such as ornamental vegetation lining residential development (for example along Steffy Road and Griffith Road). The vegetation screens and even blocks views of both projects from many of these points. In particular, the eucalyptus orchard existing east of the Sol Orchard site further block views of the Sol Orchard from many areas east of the Sol Orchard project, both close to and far from the site.

Small portions of the project's viewshed south of the project site near Barnett Ranch Preserve may also have the potential to view both the Sol Orchard and the proposed project. Most of these areas are inaccessible via public road, however. Where views of both projects may be available east of San Vicente Road, the existing eucalyptus trees block view of the Sol Orchard Site. Where views of both sites may be available west of San Vicente Road and south of the Sol Orchard site, the same eucalyptus trees block views of the proposed project. Similarly, the common viewshed points north of the Sol Orchard site and west of San Vicente Road (such as Candidate Key View 9), do not encompass both sites at the same time; a viewer would have to turn his/her head to see one or the other, if any views are available at all between existing vegetation and structures. Therefore, though both projects have some similar viewshed points, both projects are not visible at the same time.

A substation is located approximately 0.25 miles east of the project site, and is surrounded by two fences, and no landscaping. Drivers on Creelman Lane would see an existing substation shortly after traveling past the proposed project, but due to the alignment of Creelman Lane, the proposed project would not be visible at the same time as the existing substation, as illustrated in Typical View J and Candidate Key View 6, above. Additionally, the proposed project landscape plants, when mature, would screen views of the proposed fence and solar panel arrays, reducing its visibility from Creelman Lane.

Cumulative Visual Quality Impacts: If solar array facilities were to be installed on a large number of lots in the vicinity of the project site, the visual character and quality of the area would change from an eclectic collection of semi-rural residential and agricultural elements and features to a visual environment comprised of mainly geometric structures with few open pastures and much less vegetation. As it is, the proposed project would instead contribute to the eclectic nature of the area, wherein the uses of each parcel is decided by individual owners resulting in a high degree of variation in the visual environment. No one land use and its associated visual character, dominates another. However, if a substantial number of properties changed to solar production only, then a shift in overall visual character and quality could be considered a negative change and a significant impact to the community character and quality resulting from a large number of cumulative projects assumed under this scenario.

The cumulative projects within the viewshed and one mile of the project site would be consistent with the diverse visual character of the area, would conform with applicable General Plan land use and zoning regulations as well as local design guidelines, and would not create a high level of visual contrast. Additionally, existing vegetation near the other recent solar development in the areas ensures that both the proposed project and the other solar project are not visible in the same views. The proposed project's contribution to cumulative effects on the visual quality of the area would be **less than significant**.

Cumulative Community Character Impacts: Because no designated landmarks, historic resources, or rock outcroppings exist on the site, proposed project changes would not affect such features, and would not contribute to incremental changes to the same caused by other projects in the area. The project's changes to community character due to the removal or substantial adverse changes to features that contribute to the valued visual character of the neighborhood, community, and area would be minor, and the project's cumulative contribution would be **less than significant**.

Cumulative View Quality Impacts: The nearest proposed solar facility is the Sol Orchard Project at Warnock Road, which is approximately one mile southwest of the site. The Sol Orchard Project site is not within the proposed project viewshed and the two share minimal viewshed points, and are not visible at the same time. The projects are potentially each visible from eastern hillsides, but existing vegetation would screen the Sol Orchard project and the distance from those hillsides to both sites would render the project features indistinct. The development of the proposed project in conjunction with the Sol Orchard project would have a **less than significant** cumulative impact.

5.6 Summary of Project Impacts and Significance and Conclusions

The proposed project would change the visual elements of the project site, but the contrast created by the project would be minimal. The proposed project changes would have **less than significant impacts** due to changes in visual character and quality. The project would have **less than significant** and **no impact** on views from scenic highways or scenic resources in the neighborhood, community, or area. The project would conform with San Diego County and Ramona Community Design Policies and Guidance and would have a **less than significant** impact due to light or glare.

6.0 VISUAL MITIGATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed project would result in less than significant impacts to the visual environment of the area, and therefore, no mitigation measures are required or proposed.

Integral into the proposed project is the inclusion of a landscape plan that avoids long term visual impacts to the quality and community character of the area. The plan includes berms, a variety of plants and container sizes, trees, and landscape screening fabric that avoids short term impacts until the landscape plants mature. Since the landscape plan is part of the project, it is not considered to be mitigation. It should be noted that if the landscape plan were not implemented for any reason, the project features may create a substantial visual impact to the visual quality and community character of the area, and the project would need to be reevaluated for significance.

7.0 REFERENCES

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