

**VISUAL RESOURCES ANALYSIS
GRANGER SOLAR
PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR FARM
VALLEY CENTER, CALIFORNIA**

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Executive Summary

The Granger Solar Project (“Project”) Visual/Aesthetics Analysis provides an evaluation of potential Project impacts on existing visual resources and character of the surrounding community of Valley Center, California, in northeastern San Diego County.

The Project proponent is preparing an application for the development and operation of a photovoltaic (PV) solar farm to be located on privately-held lands near Valley Center. The Project requires approval from the County of San Diego for a Major Use Permit (MUP) to allow for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a solar energy generation facility.

The proposed PV solar facilities would be installed on a portion of the approximately 40-acre Project site, under the ownership of the Project applicant. The Project design consists of PV solar panels mounted on a collection of single-axis tracking (SAT) systems supported by machine-driven metal “H” beam or round pipe rack pilings; refer to Figures 3A and 3B, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. The maximum height of the top of panel would measure an average of seven feet at full tilt. In certain cases where the ground surface undulates underneath the panels, the height of the top of panel could reach a maximum of approximately 12 feet (as measured from the ground surface); however, when viewed, the top of the panels would appear to the viewer to generally maintain a consistent height across the horizon. Two small-scale building pads supporting the inverters/transformers and switchgear equipment would also be constructed within the panel fields.

With regard to visual resources, the Project would not result in the introduction of features that would significantly detract from or contrast with the visual character of the surrounding community by conflicting with visual elements or quality of an existing area (i.e., through conflicting style, size, coverage, scale, building materials, etc.). The Project would not result in the removal of or substantial adverse change to one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the Project area, including but not limited to designated landmarks, historic resources, trees, or rock outcroppings. Furthermore, the Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, trails within an adopted County or State trail system, scenic vista or highway, or recreational area. Additionally, the Project as designed would also not result in an inconsistency with any goals, standards, or policies related to visual resources as given in the County General Plan.

For the above reasons, it was determined that the Project would not result in potentially significant impacts on visual resources in the Valley Center community. No significant impacts on visual resources would occur with Project implementation, and no mitigation measures are required or proposed.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Visual Resources/Aesthetics Analysis is to assess the potential visual impacts of the Project, determine the significance of the impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and to propose measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse visual impacts associated with construction of the proposed Granger Solar Project on the surrounding visual environment.

The proposed Project is for the installation and operation of a photovoltaic (PV) electrical generation facility near the community of Valley Center in north-central San Diego County; refer to Figure 1, Regional Location Map; Figure 2A, Local Vicinity Map; and, Figure 2B, USGS Quad Map: Valley Center Quadrangle. The Project represents an opportunity to provide the residents of Valley Center and the greater surrounding area with a source of clean energy from renewable sources.

As future population growth continues within San Diego County, the demand for electrical service will continue to increase accordingly. During the October 2007 wildfires, as well as other recent wildfire events, many residents within San Diego County experienced temporary shortages in available electrical power, due to the direct and/or indirect result of such fires. The Project represents an additional clean source of electrical power that would supplement energy currently supplied by the existing power grid, thereby reducing the potential for power shortages to occur and decreasing demands on the capabilities of the existing distribution system.

1.2 Key Issues

Key issues to be evaluated in this analysis are whether the Project has the potential to adversely impact the existing visual character or quality of the affected properties and/or the physical or natural surroundings. Potential visual effects are considered from public roadways and other public vantage points in and around the Valley Center community. Project design attributes; the potential to remove, change, or add features that contribute to the existing quality of the visual landscape; and, potential conflicts with applicable plans or policies relating to visual resources are considered.

1.3 Principal Viewpoints to be Covered

The proposed development area and associated offsite lands where improvements would occur for access purposes would be potentially visible from several principal viewpoints within the Valley Center area, as follows:

- ☞ Views from Lilac Road Looking Northeast
- ☞ Views from Old Castle Road Looking East/Northeast

Due to area topography, views to the site are generally restricted. Limited views may occur from surrounding residential and/or agricultural uses on private lands but would generally be visually reduced due to intervening vegetation, development, and/or elevational differences, in addition to distance from the Project site. The key views identified above are considered herein, and the Project's potential to alter or affect existing views from these public vantage points within the viewshed are analyzed in greater depth.

2.0 Project Description

2.0.1 Project Location

The proposed Granger Solar Project (proposed “Project”) site is located in the community of Valley Center, California in north-central San Diego County. The subject site is located adjacent to Mesa Crest Road and is bordered by Avenida Annalie to the south. The property is comprised of a single parcel, County Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 129-162-07, totaling approximately 40 acres. Refer to Figure 1, Regional Location Map; Figure 2A, Local Vicinity Map; and, Figure 2B, USGS Quad Map: Pala Quadrangle.

2.0.2 Project Description

The Project proponent is preparing an application for the development and operation of a photovoltaic (PV) solar farm to be located on privately-held lands near Valley Center. The Project requires approval from the County of San Diego for a Major Use Permit (MUP) to allow for the construction, operation, and maintenance of such facilities for a solar energy generation facility.

The proposed PV solar facilities would be installed on a 27-acre portion of the larger 40-acre property, under the ownership of the Project applicant. The unaffected (undeveloped) acreage onsite would generally remain in its present state upon implementation of the proposed Project as currently designed; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan.

The Project design consists of PV solar panels mounted on a collection of single-axis tracking (SAT) systems supported by machine-driven metal “H” beam or round pipe rack pilings; refer to Figure 3B, Major Use Permit Plot Plan (Details). The PV solar panels would be manufactured at an offsite location and transported to the Project site. The solar panels would be installed in rows that rotate to face east in the morning and west in the afternoon hours, tracking the sun about a north/south axis to maximize solar absorption.

The point of interconnection (POI) for transmission purposes will occur at an existing utility pole adjacent to the Project boundary along Mesa Crest Road. Project access to the site will be from Mesa Crest Road. No offsite roadway or gen-tie improvements are required.

The PV panels would be mounted on a single-axis tracker, which contains approximately 38 panels per tracker row. The center axis of the single-axis trackers would have a nominal height of four feet above grade; refer to Figure 3B, Major Use Permit Plot Plan (Details). The PV panels would rotate through a 90 degree arc during the day. In certain cases where the ground surface undulates underneath the panels, the height of the top of panel could reach a maximum of approximately 12 feet (as measured from the ground surface); however, when viewed, the top

of the panels would appear to the viewer to generally maintain a consistent height across the horizon. The panels themselves would be approximately 39 inches long by 77 inches long.

The direct current (DC) power generated by the PV panels would be transmitted via underground cable to one proposed inverter/transformer pad and/or one proposed switchgear pad located within the proposed onsite development area where the DC power would be converted to alternating current (AC) power. The inverter/transformer equipment pad would be approximately 16 feet wide by 33 feet long; the switchgear pad would be approximately 7.5 feet wide by 8.5 feet long. The equipment installed on the pads would measure a maximum of 10 feet in height (above pad elevation). The pad would support two 1,500 kilowatt (kW) inverters and one three (3) megavolt ampere (MVA) transformer. All inverter/transformer and switchgear structures would be constructed of non-flammable materials (e.g. steel). The AC power from the inverter stations would be transmitted via underground AC cable to the switchgear. The switchgear would contain breakers, relays, and monitoring and metering equipment necessary to provide for the safe and efficient transfer of power to SDG&E. The arrangement/number of solar panels, equipment pads and structures, and internal access roads are shown on the MUP Plot Plan; refer to Figures 3A and 3B, Major Use Permit Plot Plan, and Figure 3C, Preliminary Grading Plan.

2.0.3 System Interconnection Points

The POI for transmission purposes would occur at an existing utility pole within the Mesa Crest Road right-of-way (ROW), adjacent to the western Project boundary, just north of the proposed Project entry drive. As designed, the Project would underground the utility lines between the solar panels within the interior of the site. These lines would extend to the switchgear pad; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. From the switchgear pad, the line would be undergrounded to the existing SDG&E utility pole which supports a 12 kV (overhead) distribution line. Where the line meets the existing utility pole, the line would be extended aboveground to connect to the existing SDG&E distribution line. Energy generated by the Project would then be ultimately delivered to the existing San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) 12 kilovolt (kV) distribution line from the Project site via overhead connection, with ultimate connection to the Lilac Substation (69/12kV), located approximately 1.8 miles to the southwest of the property along Gabler Drive. No offsite improvements to either the existing transmission lines or substation are required or proposed.

2.0.4 Inverter/Transformer/Breaker Equipment

A total of two equipment pads would be constructed within the solar panel fields to support the inverters/transformers; one of the two equipment pads would support the switchgear. The

equipment would be approximately ten feet in height when measured from the top of pad. The equipment would be constructed of non-flammable materials (i.e., steel).

2.0.5 Grading

The PV solar panels would be installed in parallel rows running north/south; refer to Figures 3A and 3B, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. Portions of the proposed MUP development area would require grading and/or would be cleared and grubbed to allow for installation of the panels and associated facilities. The Project as proposed would require an estimated 24,000 cubic yards (c.y.) of balanced cut and fill. Offsite grading is required to provide an asphaltic concrete (AC) taper along Mesa Crest Road for adequate access into the Project site; refer to Figure 3C, Preliminary Grading Plan.

2.0.6 Lighting and Glare

Limited Project lighting would be installed to allow for security. At a minimum, permanent lighting would be provided for the enclosure interiors; outdoor equipment access areas, such as at the inverters and switchgear; and, at the site entrance. Low-level lighting would be installed at the main entry gates to facilitate access.

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 ownerships. All lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements. All outdoor lighting controls would incorporate dusk-to-dawn photocell controllers, occupancy sensors, and/or switches as appropriate. Lighting levels shall be as recommended in Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) standards. Suitable fixtures would be specified and installed according to the hazardous area classification, if applicable.

2.0.7 Signage

Minimal Project signage is proposed to allow for the identification of the Project owner and for safety and security purposes. Minimal Project signage is proposed to allow for the identification of the Project owner and for safety and security purposes. Signage would be installed include system identification, safety, and warning signs. Signage would be located throughout the development area in accordance with applicable Occupational and Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements and as required by the Authority Having Jurisdiction. Illuminated signage at the Project entrance and each inverter station that notes the location and identification number of each electrical grid disconnect and circuit breaker would also be installed.

2.0.8 Access / Circulation

Construction Access

All materials for Project construction would be delivered to the site by truck. The majority of truck traffic would occur on designated truck routes and/or major streets (e.g., Mesa Crest Road). Traffic resulting from construction activities would be temporary and may occur along area roadways as workers and materials are transported to and from the Project area. If directed by the County, and prior to the issuance of a grading/building permit, the Project applicant would prepare a Traffic Construction Mitigation Plan to ensure that circulation on the affected roadways is not adversely affected and that public safety is maintained.

Long-Term Access and Onsite Circulation

The provision of road access would include, at minimum, access from Mesa Crest Road, a site perimeter loop road, and the area immediately around transformers, inverters, and other similar structures.

Permanent access to the site would occur from Mesa Crest Road. No offsite roadway improvements are required along Mesa Verde Drive or Mesa Crest Road. The Project applicant has secured agreements to utilize access from Mesa Verde Drive and Mesa Crest Road, as they are currently under private ownership.

Additionally, minor improvements are required to improve the entrance drive into the site at Mesa Crest Road to 24 feet in width. An AC taper would be constructed to provide adequate access to/from the site; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan.

Interior access would be provided by a system of wide all-weather access drives that would allow for adequate emergency access to all PV panel blocks and inverter stations. Access roads would be a minimum of 20 feet wide and crowned or have a consistent side slope (between 0.5% and 2%, maximum) to provide proper drainage. All access road sections would be designed per the recommendation of the site-specific Soils Report (SCST Engineering, July 2015) and per governing County standard design specifications. All fire access roads would be designed with an all-weather surface (decomposed granite or gravel) and capable of supporting a minimum 75,000-pound fire apparatus bearing load. These drives would also be used for purposes of Project maintenance. A series of smaller 10-foot wide roadways would be provided within the solar PV field to provide access for maintenance vehicles.

With regard for the perimeter road and module row spacing, a minimum of 12 feet would be provided between the security fence and next nearest obstruction (e.g., solar array frame). Additionally, a minimum of seven feet between PV module rows would be provided to allow access for panel cleaning and maintenance. Consistent with County of San Diego requirements,

a 30-foot wide fuel management zone (FMZ) (brush clearing) would be provided around the perimeter of the onsite development area to reduce the potential for the spread of wildfire.

Fencing/Gates/Landscaping

The perimeter of the MUP area would be fenced with an (up to) 8-foot high chain link fence for security purposes to prevent public access. The gates would meet the requirements of San Diego County Fire Code Section 96.1.503.6 for automatic operation with battery back-up. The gates would open immediately upon emergency vehicle strobe light activation from either direction of approach and would include a Knox Box key-operation switch.

Four video cameras (one at each corner of the property) would be strategically installed on the security fence for surveillance of the majority of the development area. The video cameras would utilize an internet-based communications system via a phone line or cellular system.

Landscaping is proposed along the northern, western, and southern boundaries adjacent to the fence to screen views into the site from adjacent uses and/or roadways; refer also to Figure 3D, Conceptual Landscape Plan. Additionally, the Project site previously supported a commercial orchard/nursery onsite. As part of the orchard/nursery operation, the oaks were planted in the ground and then placed into boxes for commercial sale. The trees were abandoned when the orchard/nursery ceased operation and are in various degrees of health. Because the trees were commercially grown and not natural-occurring, they are not considered a sensitive biological resource that would require mitigation as the result of their removal; however, as a Project design measure, a number of these oaks (to the extent possible) would be utilized in the proposed landscape palette for vegetative screening along the Project perimeter. To the extent possible, the oaks would be relocated from the interior of the property and replanted to visually blend them into the other landscape plantings proposed. The Conditions of Approval for the Project will require that all Project landscaping be installed consistent with that shown on the Conceptual Landscape Plan, as adopted. Additionally, wooden slats or plastic strips would be inserted along the northern, western, and southern portions of the chain link fence along the MUP boundary to further screen the development from offsite views.

2.0.9 Project Schedule / Phasing

It is anticipated that overall construction of the Project would take approximately four months to complete, with crews working five days per week, eight hours per day. Weekend and/or holiday work is not anticipated to be required. Construction of the Project would occur at one time, and phasing is not proposed.

2.0.10 Trails

Consistent with requirements of the Valley Center Community Trails and Pathways Plan, the construction or dedication of trails or pathways is not required or proposed

2.1 General Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning

General Plan land use designations and zoning for the affected parcels are given in Table 1, below. No changes to either the existing General Plan land use or zoning are proposed with the Project. Existing General Plan land use designations and zoning for the affected parcel are given in Table 1, below, and shown in Figure 5A, Existing General Plan Land Use, and Figure 5B, Existing Zoning. No changes to either the existing General Plan land use or zoning are proposed by the Project. The proposed Project would be an allowable use with County approval of an MUP.

**TABLE 1
EXISTING GENERAL PLAN LAND USE / REGIONAL CATEGORY / ZONING**

Assessor Parcel Number	Approximate Acreage	General Plan Land Use Designation	Regional Category	Zoning
129-162-07	40.1*	Semi-Rural Residential (SR-2) 1 DU/2AC	Semi-Rural Lands	General Agriculture (A72)

*Acreage taken from Assessor Parcel Sheets

2.1.1 Anticipated Permits and Agency Approvals Required

The County of San Diego will act as the Lead Agency under the requirements of CEQA. Approval from the County of San Diego would be required for grading and construction permits, prior to commencement of ground-disturbing activities. The anticipated permits and approvals required are listed in Table 2 in the general order in which they would be obtained.

**TABLE 2
APPROVALS AND PERMITS ANTICIPATED**

Permit/Approval	Approving Agency
Major Use Permit	County of San Diego – Department of Planning & Development Services
Air Quality Permit to Construct	Air Pollution Control District (APCD)
National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
General Construction Storm Water Permit	RWQCB

2.1.2 Decommissioning Plan

Once built, the Project would operate at a minimum for the 20-year life of its Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). It is likely, because much of the needed electrical infrastructure will have been developed, that the Project would continue to be upgraded and used to generate solar energy beyond the term of the initial PPA. Therefore, it is possible that the site would remain in solar energy production for the foreseeable future.

Prior to issuance of a grading permit, the applicant will be required to prepare a Decommissioning Plan to govern future decommissioning of the site at the time when appropriate. If the Project were ever to be decommissioned, the panels, support structures, and electrical equipment would be removed from the site and it would be returned to a use consistent with the current zoning of the site (Rural Residential).

As appropriate, the Decommissioning Plan would identify such actions as removal of all above-grade structures from the site and any non-shared transmission facilities; associated decompaction activities; recontouring; application of hydroseeding; and/or, installation of permanent best management practices (BMPs) if needed. The Project shall comply with all requirements of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) General Construction Permit for Notice of Termination filing associated with site stabilization.

Financially, the Project and site owner would assume responsibility for decommissioning. The cost of decommissioning would be relatively low, as no earthwork would be necessary, and the panels, support structures, and electrical equipment would be salvaged and recycled. Implementation of the Decommissioning Plan would also ensure that, if operation of the PV solar facility were to cease, adverse visual effects would not occur as a result and that the land would be returned to a generally disturbed state, consistent with the visual setting prior to Project development. Removal of all onsite Project components as part of the Decommissioning Plan would also ensure that the setting does not degrade visually from any such elements falling into disrepair over the long-term, due to non-operation.

2.2 Regulatory Framework

2.2.1 State of California Guidelines

The Project is subject to technical and environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), in conformance with applicable regulatory guidelines established by the County of San Diego.

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines states that a project has the potential for a 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 route;
- 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 of the area.

In addition, CEQA Section 15064 (b) states "...the significance of an activity may vary with the setting ... an activity which may not be significant in an urban area may be significant in a rural area." This statement is applicable to the determination of the significance of a visual effect for the Project.

2.2.2 San Diego County Plans and Policies

San Diego County General Plan

The County of San Diego General Plan (General Plan) was adopted August 3, 2011 by the County Board of Supervisors. The General Plan is intended to provide guidance for the long-term development of San Diego County and includes various Elements that provide guidance for accommodating future growth while retaining or enhancing the County's rural character, its economy, its environmental resources, and its unique communities. Goals, policies and objectives are provided within each of the Elements to guide future land development and ensure consistency with the County's intended vision for the future of San Diego County. The applicable goals, objectives, and policies are identified below, and a discussion of Project consistency with such measures is included in Appendix A of this document.

The Guiding Principles of the General Plan are to:

- ☞ Support a reasonable share of projected regional population growth;
- ☞ Promote health and sustainability by locating new growth near existing and planned infrastructure, services, and jobs in a compact pattern of development;
- ☞ Reinforce the vitality, local economy, and individual character of existing communities when planning new housing, employment, and recreational opportunities;
- ☞ Promote environmental stewardship that protects the range of natural resources and habitats that uniquely define the County's character and ecological importance;

- ∞ Ensure that development accounts for physical constraints and the natural hazards of the land;
- ∞ Provide and support a multi-modal transportation network that enhances connectivity and supports community development patterns and, when appropriate, plan for development which supports public transportation;
- ∞ Maintain environmentally sustainable communities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change;
- ∞ Preserve agriculture as an integral component of the region's economy, character, and open space network;
- ∞ Minimize public costs of infrastructure and services and correlate their timing with new development; and,
- ∞ Recognize community and stakeholder interests while striving for consensus.

Chapter 3 - Land Use Element

Planning for Sustainability

Policies

- ∞ **LU-6.9 Development Conformance with Topography.** Require development 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 storm water to the maximum extent practicable.

Semi-Rural/Rural Lands

Policies

- ∞ **LU-10.2 Development - Environmental Resource Relationship.** Require development 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.

GOAL LU-12

Infrastructure and Services Supporting Development

Policies

- ∞ **LU-12.4 Planning for Compatibility.** Plan and site infrastructure for public utilities and public facilities in a manner compatible with community character,

minimize visual and environmental impacts, and whenever feasible, locate any facilities and supporting infrastructure outside preserve areas. Require context sensitive Mobility Element road design that is compatible with community character and minimizes visual and environmental impacts; for Mobility Element roads identified in Table M-4, an LOS D or better may not be achieved.

Chapter 5 – Conservation and Open Space Element

Visual Resources

According to the Conservation and Open Space Element, a highway corridor generally includes the land adjacent to and visible from the vehicular right-of-way. A “scenic highway” may include “any freeway, highway, road, or other vehicular right-of-way along a corridor with considerable natural or otherwise scenic landscape.” A highway may be designated as “scenic” depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the aesthetic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view.

The Conservation and Open Space Element designates several roads as County Scenic Roads within the Project vicinity. Table 3, below, identifies the distance to the Project site and the potential visibility of the site from the roadway. Refer also to Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Units Map, which shows the visibility of the Project site from these roadways (areas shaded in green would have views to the Project site).

**TABLE 3
COUNTY DESIGNATED SCENIC ROADWAYS**

Roadway	Distance from Project Site (at Closest Point)	Visibility of Project Site
State Highway 76 - from the City of Oceanside east to State Highway 79 (Eligible State Scenic Highway / County Scenic Highway)	Approximately 5.1 miles northeast of Project site	Project site not visible due to distance and intervening topography which obscure the site from view.
Lilac Road/Valley Center Road (S6) – from State Highway 76 to State Highway 76 (County Scenic Highway)	Approximately 1.1 miles east/southeast of Project site	Project site not visible due to distance and intervening topography which obscure the site from view.
Vista Way, Gopher Canyon, and Old Castle Roads - from Vista city limits north and east to Lilac Road (County Scenic Highway)	Approximately 1.1 miles west of Project site	Project site not visible due to distance and intervening topography which obscure the site from view.

TABLE 3, CONTINUED

Roadway	Distance from Project Site (at Closest Point)	Visibility of Project Site
Lake Wohlford Road from Valley Center Road east (Escondido City limits) to Valley Center Road (excluding portion within City of Escondido)	Approximately 5.5 miles southeast of Project site	Project site not visible due to distance and intervening topography which obscure the site from view.

Goal COS-11

- ∞ **Preservation of Scenic Resources.** Preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features, where visual impacts of development are minimized.

Policies

- ∞ **COS-11.1 Protection of Scenic Resources.** Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.
- ∞ **COS-11.2 Scenic Resource Connections.** Promote the connection of regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, and points of regional historic, visual, and cultural interest via designated scenic corridors, such as scenic highways and regional trails.
- ∞ **COS-11.3 Development Siting and Design.** Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:
 - Creative site planning;
 - Integration of natural features into the project;
 - Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape;
 - Minimal disturbance of topography;
 - Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character; and,
 - Creation of contiguous open space networks.
- ∞ **COS-11.5 Collaboration with Private and Public Agencies.** Coordinate with the California Public Utilities Commission, power companies, and other public agencies to avoid siting energy generation, transmission facilities, and other public improvements in locations that impact visually sensitive areas, whenever feasible.

Require the design of public improvements within visually sensitive areas to blend into the landscape.

- ∞ **COS-11.7 Underground Utilities.** Require new development to place utilities underground and encourage “undergrounding” in existing development to maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.

GOAL COS-13

- ∞ **Dark Skies.** Preserved dark skies that contribute to rural character and are necessary for the local observatories.

Policies

- ∞ **COS-13.1 Restrict Light and Glare.** Restrict 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.
- ∞ **COS-13.2 Palomar and Mount Laguna.** Minimize, to the maximum extent feasible, the impact of development on the dark skies surrounding Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories to maintain dark skies which are vital to these two world-class observatories by restricting exterior light sources within the impact areas of the observatories.
- ∞ **COS-13.3 Collaboration to Retain Night Skies.** Coordinate with adjacent Federal and State agencies, local jurisdictions, and tribal governments to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.

Air Quality, Climate Change, and Energy

GOAL COS-14 – Sustainable Land Development

Policies

- ∞ **COS-14.4 Sustainable Technology and Projects.** Require technologies and projects that contribute to the conservation of resources in a sustainable manner, that are compatible with community character, and that increase the self-sufficiency of individual communities, residents, and businesses.

Valley Center Community Plan

The Valley Center Community Plan is supplemental to the County General Plan and provides goals and policies to guide development of the Valley Center area of north-central San Diego County, which includes the Project site.

1. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

GOALS

- ☞ 1. Preserve and enhance the rural character of Valley Center by maintaining a pattern of land use consistent with the following regional categories.

B. SEMI-RURAL LANDS

- ☞ Preserve and maintain the overall rural and agricultural character of the semi-rural areas.

2. LAND USE

GENERAL GOALS

- ☞ A pattern of development that conserves Valley Center's natural beauty and resources, and retains Valley Center's rural character.
- ☞ Development that maintains Valley Center's rural character through appropriate location and suitable site design.

COMMERCIAL GOAL

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☞ 6. Commercial/civic uses shall not interfere either functionally or visually with adjacent land uses or the rural atmosphere of the community.
- ☞ 7. Commercial/civic uses shall be periodically reviewed to ensure that the standards for noise, light, traffic, odors and all other conditions of approval are continuing to be met.
- ☞ 8. Discourage commercial and civic uses outside of the Villages and limit all such uses to those that are clearly demonstrated as needed and which are compatible with the rural lifestyle of the Valley Center Community Plan.

4. MOBILITY

GOAL

- ☞ A circulation system that achieves the combined objectives of connectivity and safety for all users (automobiles, bicyclists, equestrians and pedestrians), and also preserves the rural character of the community.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☞ 6. Existing trees and vegetation located within the "Right-of-Way" of all public roads, and determined to be of significant visual benefit shall be transplanted or replaced consistent with the Valley Center Design Guidelines.

6. CONSERVATION

GENERAL GOALS

- ☞ Provide for a "dark sky" which would retain the rural setting and not detract from astronomical research at Palomar Mountain.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☞ 17. During the discretionary permit process, encourage the dedication of trails to form a local trail network with a central unifying hub near Cole Grade and Valley Center Roads.
- ☞ 18. Use low sodium lights and light shielding for new subdivisions and use permits as required by the "Dark Sky" Ordinance for those properties within a specified radius of the observatory at Palomar Mountain.

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

Portions of the County Zoning Ordinance that may affect the assessment of visual impacts are generally zoning overlay designators. Relevant Special Area Regulations Designators include:

- ☞ B – Community Design Review Area
- ☞ D – Design Review Area
- ☞ G – Sensitive Resource
- ☞ H – Historic/Archaeological Landmark or District
- ☞ J – Specific Historic District
- ☞ S – Scenic Area

The Project site is subject to the "G" Designator for building. No other Designators, including the Special Area Regulations Designators apply to the Project or other associated lands affected by Project-related infrastructure improvements.

2.2.3 Design Policies and Guidances

Valley Center Design Guidelines

PART III. THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Site Design Process

B. Site Design Concept

1. Relationship to the Community and Neighboring Properties

- ⌘ Does the site plan respect the existing views, privacy, quiet, sun and light exposure of neighboring properties?

2. Relationship to Existing Natural Features

- ⌘ Has the project made a sufficient effort to minimize grading and alteration of natural landforms?
- ⌘ Does the project retain important vegetation, rock outcroppings, and other natural features?

2. Protection of Natural Features

Guidelines:

A. Hierarchy of Importance.

- ⌘ Development on all sites will require judgment about which natural features are most important to preserve. Although a consistent rule is not possible, the general order of importance in retention shall be:
 - (1) Natural contours and landforms;
 - (2) Large rock outcroppings;
 - (3) Natural drainage courses;
 - (4) Oak and sycamore trees;
 - (5) Other mature specimen trees; and,
 - (6) Views.

C. *Other mature trees should be retained where feasible.*

- ⌘ This will require careful judgment weighing the value and hierarchy of all natural features, the size and species of the tree, and the developer's program for the site. This should not preclude removal of noxious or undesirable trees.

D. *Topography.*

- ⌘ Building pads are to be sited within the zoned setbacks and are to disturb the natural contours as little as possible. Balancing of cut and fill areas is encouraged. See "Save the Oaks and Sycamores" (Guideline 3) for grading techniques necessary for the preservation of existing oaks.

E. *Views.*

- ⌘ Existing views important to neighboring properties shall be studied and preserved where feasible. New site plans for housing should take advantage of potential views from the site. Two types of views are important:
 - ⌘ Views from adjoining roads and lots through the site; and,
 - ⌘ Views from within the site.
- ⌘ Natural features worth "viewing" include mountains, valley views, open spaces of existing flood plains, streams, lakes, tree stands, and western horizons.

F. *Walls, Fences and Accessory Structures*

1. *Fences and Walls*

- ⌘ Fences and walls are used to provide security, visual privacy, and/or define a space. The impact of a fence or wall on the surrounding neighborhood is determined by its size, type, layout, and character. Fences and walls should be minimized along public streets.
- ⌘ Walls and fences should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding landscape and architectural concept.
- ⌘ The following is a list of wall and fence materials whose use is not acceptable:
 - ⌘ Chain link or open wire, except in landscape-screened service or security areas.
 - ⌘ Corrugated metal
 - ⌘ Bright colored plastic
 - ⌘ Reed material

8. Visual Linkages Between Planting, Buildings, and Open Spaces

Guidelines:

- ☞ Tree masses are a valuable means of defining outdoor spaces and visually linking a site development to the larger community landscape.
- ☞ Trees planted in rows along roads, site boundaries and in orchards are common in rural areas and may be used in similar patterns where site conditions suggest.

9. Planting Design and Plant Lists

Guidelines:

A. Planting Design Principles

- ☞ Valley Center is a rural community. To protect its rural atmosphere, new plantings must be compatible with the existing natural landscape and desired community character, both in form and arrangement.
 1. Roadway and road edge planting on private property should reflect:
 - a. The natural grouping of trees in clusters, as opposed to traditional rigid alignment in urban areas.
 - b. Limited use of shrubs in plantings with trees and ground covers. Arid plant communities do not naturally support a great number of plants.
 - c. Naturalized plant arrangements as opposed to stylized.

11. Site Lighting

A. General Requirements

- ☞ Site lighting shall be limited to that necessary for security, safety, and identification. Other uses of site lighting for accent or decorative purposes is discouraged, except when provided by low-level fixtures and done in a careful manner. The Design Review Board will not recommend lighting plans that conflict with community character of provide excessive levels of lighting.

D. Site Lighting Fixtures

- ☞ Fixtures should be compatible with the architectural character of the buildings served.

3.0 Visual Environment of the Project

3.1 Project Setting

3.1.1 Surrounding Land Uses

The Project area is located within the community of Valley Center in north-central San Diego County. The region is generally defined by Pala Mountain and Pauma Valley to the north and east, Bear Ridge and the Burnt Mountain Range to the south, and the Merriam Mountains and Interstate 15 to the west. Several Native American Tribal Lands occur in the region, none of which occur in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. No National Forest Lands, or Bureau of Land Management lands occur in the immediate area.

The “Town Center” of the Valley Center community generally tends to be more urban in nature, represented by a range of residential, commercial, and industrial-type uses occurring at a higher density. Land uses become more rural as one travels into the surrounding lands where larger-acre, lower-density single-family residential uses mixed with large- and small-scale agricultural and equestrian uses become more common.

Single-family residential development combined with small-scale agricultural uses, generally in the form of citrus orchards, are generally present on lands to the north, south, east, and west of the Project site. Mesa Crest Road (private) borders the site to the west; refer also to Figure 2, Local Vicinity Map/Surrounding Land Uses.

Undeveloped and disturbed lands are interspersed with rural-type development throughout the valley floor. Land uses along the hillsides are generally represented by single-family rural-residential uses.

Palomar Observatory lies approximately 14.5 miles to the northeast of the Project site. The Laguna Mountain Observatory lies approximately 48 miles to the southeast.

3.1.2 Project Site

The site is presently undeveloped, and no physical structures are present onsite with exception of one small-scale, abandoned structure (agricultural shed) associated with former use of the site as a commercial orchard/nursery.

Onsite habitat within the MUP area includes ornamental vegetation, California buckwheat scrub, coast live oak woodland (disturbed), coastal sage scrub, coastal sage scrub (disturbed), disturbed, non-native grassland, agriculture, and southern mixed chaparral.

Onsite elevations within the proposed MUP footprint range from approximately 1,365 feet above mean sea level (amsl) in the northwestern portion of the site to approximately 1,422 feet amsl near the southeast corner of the MUP area. Of the 27-acre MUP area, approximately 91 percent of lands (or 25 acres) have a slope of zero to 15 percent; seven percent (1.54 acres) of lands have a slope of 15-25 percent; and, two percent (0.56 acre) have slopes of greater than 25 percent within the MUP footprint. Steep slopes (rise greater than 25% over a 50-foot run, as defined by the County's Resource Protection Ordinance) are present in the eastern portion of the property, outside of the MUP area. The proposed development would not encroach into any steep slope areas.

The Project site is located in southern California, which is a known seismically-active area. No known existing fault lines or other conditions resulting in potential geologic instability occur onsite or on adjacent lands.

**TABLE 4
LANDS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED BY THE PROJECT**

APNs Affected	Approx. Acreage (in acres)	General Location	Current Onsite Land Use / Characteristics	Surrounding Land Uses	Future Facilities Considered
129-162-07	40.1*	East of Mesa Grande Road/Southeast of mesa Crest Road	Vacant / Former Agricultural Use (Orchard/Nursery)	North: Single-Family Residential/Agricultural East: Vacant Land; South: Single-Family Residential; West: Single-Family Residential/Agricultural	Solar Panels / Associated Transmission Facilities

* The Project would be limited to approximately 27 acres of the affected parcel which totals approximately 40.1 acres.

3.1.3 Visual Quality Definitions

Visual quality is affected by the aesthetic characteristics of a particular area. Such aesthetic elements may include physical characteristics, as well as the perception of the viewer. Physical characteristics influencing the visual quality of an area may include such features as topography, landform, natural vegetation, water bodies, visual diversity, and visible coloring. Viewer perception is generally influenced by vividness, intactness, harmony, visual integrity, adjacent scenery, and/or visual unity. These elements all influence the overall evaluation of the quality of a particular view.

High Visual Quality

Areas with high visual quality may offer physical characteristics such as varying vertical relief; established natural vegetation with visually pleasing form, color, texture or pattern; water

features; or, other elements that create a visually unified landscape. Particular views with high visual quality may include those with distinct focal points or patterns; enhanced or existing natural scenery; compatibility with the character of the surrounding landscape; and/or, a unique visual setting within the surrounding area.

Moderate Visual Quality

Moderate visual quality is generally considered to be represented by views that are interesting, but not visually exceptional with regard to landforms or other physical characteristics. Such views may consist of dominant types of vegetation; water features; colors within the landscape; or, other elements that visually unify a particular view or landscape. Contributing factors may include a varied composition that includes visual patterns created by landscape elements; enhancement of views from adjacent scenery; and/or, a visual setting that is distinguishable from, as well as visually similar to, views within the surrounding area.

Low Visual Quality

Low visual quality may be represented by areas with limited or no existing landforms or changes in topography; sparse or indiscernible vegetation types, due to density; absence of water features; monotonous color palettes; or, limited visual elements of varying visual interest. Visual quality may be considered to be low if views are varied, but visually disconnected; lack perceivable visual patterns; are adjacent to views that devalue the existing scenic quality; or, do not generally represent a visual setting that is common and/or valued within the surrounding area.

3.2 Project Viewshed

The viewshed is generally the area that is visible from an observer's viewpoint and includes the screening effects of intervening vegetation and/or physical structures. Viewsheds may occur from designated scenic viewpoints or from singular vantage points where an unobstructed view of visual components within the landscape exists. The viewshed is composed of such elements as topography and natural land features (i.e., hillsides, mountains) and other physical features within the landscape, such as buildings, vegetation, water features. Potential visual impacts within the viewshed may be affected by distance of the viewer from a site, the frequency and length of views, the personal perception of the viewer, and physical and/or atmospheric conditions at the time viewing occurs.

The Project site is located in an area of varied topography which somewhat limits the number of surrounding public vantage points. The viewshed is generally defined by the surrounding mountainous topography that would limit views to the site. Although this area is expansive, consideration of this viewshed provides the most comprehensive (largest) and conservative (worst-case) estimate of the area that could potentially be affected by the proposed Project. Refer

to Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Units Map, which shows the viewshed in the area surrounding the Project. An approximate five-mile radius from the Project site was considered; however, as shown on Figure 6, views of the Project site would only occur from limited vantage points within this area (shown as shaded in green), due to area topography.

Within the viewshed, varied views of the valley largely occur from vehicles as they descend (or ascend and look back to the valley) and passengers in vehicles traveling within the valley. Due to existing topography, the viewshed includes the surrounding, low-density development and undeveloped lands along the valley floor, generally bounded by the surrounding hillsides. Due to the generally flat topography of the valley floor and the limited, low-lying vegetation typical of the environment, views across the expansive valley from surrounding vantage points within the viewshed do occur; however, distance from the object being viewed and intervening development and geological features have the potential to reduce or restrict views.

Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Unit Map, shows the general limits of the viewshed and the landscape units considered within the viewshed as part of this analysis. To characterize the visual pattern elements that occur within the Project viewshed, a number of key view locations were identified and representative photographs taken. Key viewpoints are described in detail in Section 5.2, Key Views. Due to the surrounding topography, views of the site from within the valley are generally obstructed by surrounding development and/or vegetation, and therefore, are highly restricted.

Additionally, several roadways officially designated as scenic roads occur within the Project viewshed. State Scenic Highways are highways that are either officially designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) or are eligible for designation. This statewide system of scenic highways is part of the Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official State Designation as Scenic Highways. Designation of a highway as “scenic” is dependent upon the visibility of the natural landscape to travelers, the aesthetic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view. A highway’s designation may change from “eligible” to “officially designated” if a local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and Caltrans subsequently designates the road as an official State Scenic Highway.

With regard to the Project, no designated scenic roadways are located directly adjacent to the site; however, State Highway 76 is designated as an eligible State Scenic Highway, but it is not officially designated as such. The Project site would not be visible from State Highway 76 due to distance as well as intervening topography and development.

Within the study area, the County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element identifies several roads as County Scenic Roadways within the vicinity of the Project site (refer also to Table 3, County Scenic Roadways, above):

- ☞ State Highway 76 - from the City of Oceanside east to State Highway 79;

- ∞ Lilac Road and Valley Center Road (S6) – from State Highway 76 to State Highway 76;
- ∞ Lake Wohlford Road - from Valley Center Road east (Escondido City limits) to Valley Center Road (excluding portion within City of Escondido);
- ∞ Vista Way, Gopher Canyon, and Old Castle Roads - from Vista City limits north and east to Lilac Road.

Although the Project site may potentially be visible from certain locations along these roadways, distance from the site, combined with intervening development and vegetation, topography, and (limited) difference in elevation between the viewing location and the Project site located along the valley floor, it is not anticipated that views of the Project site from these roadways would be substantially changed with Project implementation.

3.3 Landscape Units

A landscape unit is an area that can generally be defined by visual and physical characteristics and may be composed of a limited area (i.e., meadow) or a larger area (i.e., portion of a mountain range). The overall boundaries of a landscape unit may generally be defined by topography, natural vegetation, architectural design, landforms, or similar types of land uses. Each landscape unit can be described individually and as varying from other adjacent landscape units. Each landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape that often corresponds to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers.

Several landscape units that may potentially be affected by construction of the proposed facilities have been identified. These landscape units are shown in Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Units Map, and are further described below.

3.3.1 Landscape Unit #1

Landscape Unit #1 consists of the SR 76 and Lilac Road/Valley Center Road (County Highway S6) corridors located to the east/northeast of the Project site. The SR 76 corridor generally runs east from I-15 and is located approximately five miles to the north/northeast of the site at its closest point. Although the character of the corridor changes along its length, the corridor is generally defined by the mountains that rise along its alignment, with the roadway running along the flatter portions of the valley floor. Additionally, S6 trends southward from SR 76 just to the east/northeast of the Project site. This roadway also runs along the valley floor, with mountains rising to either side; refer to Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Unit Map.

Within the study area, this Landscape Unit is generally bounded to the north, east/southeast, and west by the mountains that rise from the valley floor. This Landscape Unit supports a variety of natural vegetation typical of the environment, including low-lying scrub, groundcover, and

annual grasses, as well as a mixture of established oaks and agricultural crops. As much of the vegetation and topography are similar throughout this area, landscape components do not generally offer strong, visually distinctive patterns to viewers, particularly when viewed at a distance.

3.3.2 Landscape Unit #2

Landscape Unit #2 consists of the mountains that generally encircle the valley in which the community of Valley Center and the Project site are located. This Landscape Unit includes mountains of varied terrain and elevation. The mountains are readily visible within the landscape and support visual components that combine in distinctive visual patterns; refer to Figure 6. These mountains serve as a dominant feature within the landscape and define the valley; however, due to their height and distance from the valley below, details within this landscape unit are generally diminished when viewed from public vantage points along the slopes and/or ridgelines.

3.3.3 Landscape Unit #3

Landscape Unit #3 consists of the developed areas along the valley floor which comprise the unincorporated community of Valley Center. This Landscape Unit is generally defined by the surrounding mountains that rise from the valley floor to the north, east, south, and west.

Within the Valley Center community, the valley floor is generally characterized by undeveloped lands, lands utilized for agricultural purposes, and lands with low-density rural-residential development, with higher densities occurring within the town “core.” This Landscape Unit also supports a mixture of single-family residential uses interspersed with relatively small-scale agricultural operations (typically citrus groves). Uses are generally one-two stories in height and low-lying within the landscape. Vegetation largely consists of a mixture of ornamental landscaping combined with natural vegetation, as well as small-scale agricultural uses such as orchards and row crops. This Landscape Unit offers somewhat varied topographical differences as compared to adjacent lands as the hillsides rise from the valley floor; refer also to Figure 2A, Local Vicinity Map.

3.3.4 Landscape Unit #4

Landscape Unit #4 consists of the alignment of Lilac Creek. As identified in the Valley Center Community Plan, this resource is identified as a County Resource Conservation Area (RCA) which is made up of Lancaster Mountain, Keys Canyon, and Lilac Creek. This long, narrow alignment supports important riparian and oak woodland habitat along the stream.

3.3.5 Landscape Unit #5

Landscape Unit #5 consists of the alignment of Keys Creek, which is also identified in the Valley Center Community Plan as a County RCA. The alignment follows a long, narrow stream bottom trending generally from north to south, then east, and provides high-quality wildlife habitat including riparian and oak woodland habitat. Further, Keys Creek is considered to be a scenic community resource; refer to Figure 6.

4.0 Existing Visual Resources and Viewer Response

4.1 Existing Visual Resources

Land affected by the proposed Project is generally lacking in significant visual resources. Of the 27-acre MUP area, approximately 91 percent of lands (or 25 acres) have a slope of zero to 15 percent; seven percent (1.54 acres) of lands have a slope of 15-25 percent; and, two percent (0.56 acre) have slopes of greater than 25 percent within the MUP footprint. Steep slopes (rise greater than 25% over a 50-foot run, as defined by the County's Resource Protection Ordinance) are present in the eastern portion of the property, outside of the MUP area. Topography of the Project area (and adjacent lands) is generally flat. Refer to Figure 2A, Local Vicinity Map; and, Figure 2B, USGS Quad Map. No rock outcroppings are present onsite within the proposed development area.

The site is presently undeveloped, and no physical structures are present onsite with exception of one small-scale, abandoned structure (agricultural shed) associated with former use of the site as a commercial orchard/nursery.

Onsite habitat within the MUP area includes ornamental vegetation, California buckwheat scrub, coast live oak woodland (disturbed), coastal sage scrub, coastal sage scrub (disturbed), disturbed, non-native grassland, agriculture, and southern mixed chaparral.

4.1.1 Visual Character/Visual Quality

The dominant visual character of the Project site is that of generally varied topography supporting varied vegetation [i.e. former agricultural uses (commercial orchard/nursery) and some scattered oaks]. Several dirt roads traverse the property. One abandoned storage shed is present onsite. As such, existing visual elements onsite do not contribute to a high visual quality or character.

Landscape Unit #1

Landscape Unit #1 consists of the SR 76 and Lilac Road/Valley Center Road (County Highway S6) corridors located to the east/northeast of the Project site. The SR 76 corridor is generally defined by the mountains that rise along its alignment, with the roadway running along the flatter portions of the valley floor. Additionally, S6 trends southward from SR 76 just to the east/northeast of the Project site. This roadway also runs along the valley floor, with mountains rising to either side.

Topography within this Landscape Unit is visually flat along the valley floor, with the mountains rising up to define the travel “corridors.” This Landscape Unit supports a variety of natural vegetation typical of the environment, including low-lying scrub, groundcover, and annual grasses, as well as a mixture of established oaks and agricultural crops. As much of the vegetation and topography are similar throughout this area, landscape components do not generally offer strong, visually distinctive patterns to viewers, particularly when viewed at a distance. Limited elements of visual bulk, dominance, or scale occur within this Landscape Unit.

The components within this Landscape Unit do not offer a high degree of visual contrast, due to the nature of lands along the roadway alignments, and therefore, do not combine to create distinctive visual patterns. The landscape has a moderate degree of intactness, as it is generally free from competing visual elements.

Landscape Unit #2

Landscape Unit #2 consists of the mountains that generally encircle the valley in which the community of Valley Center and the Project site are located. The mountains are readily visible within the landscape and support visual components that combine in distinctive visual patterns.

The topography of this Landscape Unit offers visual forms with varied visual bulk, mass, and shape. Colors are also varied, based upon viewing distance to the forms, sunlight and time of day, and texture of the surfaces. This Landscape Unit offers a sense of vividness and creates a memorable visual impression through varied geologic forms, particularly when influenced by sunlight.

The mountains create a sense of visual dominance within the valley and offer a visually diverse pattern of elements within the landscape. This Landscape Unit supports landscape components that combine in distinctive visual patterns and provide visual contrast to other surrounding lands and the valley floor. The mountains offer a unified and generally coherent visual pattern with few encroaching elements as they rise from the valley floor.

Landscape Unit #3

Landscape Unit #3 consists of the developed areas along the valley floor which comprise the unincorporated community of Valley Center. Within the Valley Center community, the valley floor is generally characterized by undeveloped lands, lands utilized for agricultural purposes, and lands with low-density development.

This Landscape Unit supports expanses of natural vegetation typical of the environment, including ornamental landscaping, low-lying scrub, sparse groundcover, and annual grasses, as well as a mixture of agricultural crops. Topography within this Landscape Unit is visually flat

along the valley floor, creating a pattern with limited variation. Limited elements with visual bulk, dominance, or scale occur within this landscape.

This Landscape Unit does not offer strongly contrasting landscape components that combine to form striking or distinctive visual patterns, and therefore, a memorable visual impression is generally not created. The landscape is largely free from encroachment of competing visual elements, due to the nature of the topography and existing vegetation, and is therefore visually intact. A sense of visual unity is achieved, as components combine to form a generally visually coherent pattern. Few built components within this Landscape Unit contribute to a sense of bulk or mass; refer to Figure 6.

Landscape Unit #4

Landscape Unit #4 consists of the alignment of Lilac Creek. This resource is largely defined by the flatter portions of the valley floor through which the creek flows.

As a natural resource, no structures are present (e.g. residential units). Varied vegetation, including riparian and oak woodland habitat is present along the stream, and such natural habitat visible along the length of the alignment creates a recognizable element within the surrounding landscape setting of the valley floor.

No visual elements of significant mass, bulk, or scale are present within the landscape. Colors are generally of natural hues, with elements offering varied visual diversity and textures. The components within this Landscape Unit do not offer a high degree of visual contrast. The landscape has a moderate degree of intactness, as it is generally free from competing visual elements.

Landscape Unit #5

Landscape Unit #5 consists of the alignment of Keys Creek. The alignment follows a long, narrow stream bottom trending generally from north to south, then east, and provides high-quality wildlife habitat including riparian and oak woodland habitat. Keys Creek is considered to be a scenic community resource.

Although much of the vegetation is similar throughout this Landscape Unit, landscape components within certain areas offer visually distinctive patterns to viewers. Limited elements of visual bulk, dominance, or scale are present within this landscape. Lands within this Landscape Unit are generally similar with regard to color, due to vegetation along the alignment and the ground surface.

The landscape has a moderate degree of intactness, as it is generally free from competing visual elements. In addition, a sense of visual unity is evident, as the landscape components join together to form a coherent visual pattern.

4.2 Viewer Response

Viewer response is based on both viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements influence how a viewer may potentially respond to a change in the visual landscape, particularly with regard to development of a site from a generally undeveloped condition. Viewer response varies based upon the type of viewer and the characteristics of the visual environment that would ultimately be affected (i.e., urban versus rural environment, established large-scale commercial area versus low density residential uses, etc.). Viewer response is largely influenced by viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure, as described in greater detail below.

4.2.1 Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity to a change in the visual environment can be influenced by a number of factors, including the awareness of the viewer, personal interest in a particular visual resource, and/or viewer activity during the time that views of a resource occur (i.e., vehicle driver versus passenger, active versus passive viewing). In addition, the particular goals or values of a community can influence the sensitivity of viewers to a particular site, land area, or viewshed. Viewer sensitivity may vary between those with a vested interest in a community (i.e., residents) versus those traveling through an area with little or no knowledge of the community or existing visual landscape. Based on these conditions, viewer sensitivity can be assigned a value of low, medium, or high.

It is likely that community members would be more sensitive to the Project than would those who experienced Valley Center as a visitor. In addition, viewer sensitivity may be higher among those who would experience views of the site more frequently, such as area residents to the north/south/or southwest of the site. As views of the Project components would also vary due to distance from the site, as well as travel speed along area roadways and the degree to which one chooses to make an effort to view the site (e.g. turning of one's head), viewer sensitivity to a visual change within the landscape occurring as a result of the Project would further be influenced.

4.2.2 Viewer Groups

Viewer groups would mainly consist of those individuals traveling along Mesa Crest Road in the proximity of the Project site, due to the location of the site at a higher elevation than the valley below, topography in the Project vicinity, and intervening vegetation. Additional viewer groups may include travelers along other public roadways in the surrounding area where views occur at a similar or higher elevation than the Project site; however, such views would be distanced from the Project site.

Additional viewer groups may include residents and/or occupants viewing the Project site from surrounding residential uses (particularly at a higher elevation than the site) to the north, south, southwest, and west, particularly properties directly adjacent to the Project site; however, such views of the Project from these vantage points would occur from privately-owned properties and not public viewpoints. With exception of those properties immediately adjacent to the site, views from these private ownerships would generally be decreased due to distance and intervening vegetation and development.

4.2.3 Viewer Exposure

A limited number of public roadways are present in the area surrounding the Project site, and only private roads are located immediately adjacent to the site. Potential views into the Project site from vehicles traveling along public roadways would therefore be limited, due to distance to the proposed development area, height of the Project components, travel speeds, and the angle of the view with respect to the viewer (i.e., forward-looking versus turning one’s head and looking back towards the subject property).

In determining the potential exposure of each viewer group, several factors are considered. These include the overall number of viewers experiencing visual changes to the resource as the result of the proposed development; how long views would last; the anticipated speed at which viewers would be traveling; and, the relation and distance of the viewer to the object being viewed.

Table 5, Viewer Groups and Anticipated Exposure, summarizes the anticipated viewer groups and the potential viewing experience of each.

**TABLE 5
VIEWER GROUPS AND ANTICIPATED EXPOSURE**

Anticipated Viewer Group	Number of Anticipated Viewers	Key Views	Approximate Distance to the Project Site	Anticipated Views with Project Implementation	Sensitivity	Duration of View
Drivers along Mesa Crest Road and Mesa Verde Road (Private)	Estimated 200-300 people per day	N/A	Adjacent	Views of solar panels and associated infrastructure	Medium	Varies / 0-10 seconds
Drivers along Mesa Verde Drive	Estimated 200-300 people per day	N/A	Northwest of Project site	No views to Project site	Low	N/A
Surrounding Private Residential Uses	Varied	N/A	Adjacent / Varied	Screened views of Project site / Intermittent views of solar panels and associated infrastructure	High to Low	Varied

4.2.4 Viewer Awareness

Viewer response is affected by the degree to which a viewer is receptive to visual details, character and quality of the surrounding landscape. A viewer's perception is affected by his/her activity and the degree to which he/she actively participates in noticing a change in the visual environment.

Viewer awareness to potential visual changes in the setting that may occur with the Project would be varied. A viewer would first need to be in a location within the surrounding area where the Project site was visible (e.g. from a higher elevation), then actively notice that a change in the visual landscape has occurred. Viewer awareness would also vary between local residents and those who are experiencing the area as a visitor, wherein the local residents would likely be more aware of a change in the visual environment. In addition, viewer awareness would also vary due to distance from the proposed solar facilities, as views occurring at a greater distance would diminish the visibility of the Project components within the visual landscape.

5.0 Visual Impact Assessment

5.1 Guidelines for Determining Significance

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines define “environment” to include “objects of...aesthetic significance (Section 15360).” As such, the County of San Diego has identified thresholds of significance to assess potential impacts resulting from proposed development.

The following significance guidelines are intended to provide guidance in the evaluation of whether a significant impact to visual resources would occur as a result of project implementation. A project will generally be considered to have a significant effect if it proposes any of the following:

- ∞ Introduction of 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;
- ∞ 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;
- ∞ 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; or,
- ∞ The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District’s zoning.

5.2 Key Views

The site is not within proximity to any public roadways; however, several key views were identified from surrounding public vantage points in the area. Refer to Figures 7A to 7C which illustrate existing views potentially affected by the Project.

As the Project site is located at a higher elevation along a hillside, views to the site from surrounding locations along the valley floor would not generally occur or would be highly restricted due to area topography. As one begins to ascend the surrounding hillsides, the potential for the Project site to become more visible would increase; however, as the hillsides are generally

distanced from the Project site, views of the Project elements would decrease due to distance, intervening development, topography, and established vegetation.

As such, the key views considered in this analysis are those that may occur to travelers along area roadways designated by the County as Scenic Roadways. These roads include SR 76, Lilac Road/Valley Center Road (S6), Lake Wohlford Road, and Old Castle Road. As described below, views of the Project from these public vantage points would be limited by distance from the site, travel speeds, area topography, angle of the view (i.e., looking directly to the site or turning one's head to look back to the site), and intervening vegetation or development. Due to distance from the site and intervening topography, views to the site from SR 76 and Lake Wohlford Road would not occur. As such, views of the site from these roadways is not evaluated herein; refer also to Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Units Map, which illustrates that views to the site would not be afforded from these locations.

5.2.1 Key View #1 – View from Lilac Road

Lilac Road trends north-south through the Valley Center community to the south/west of the Project site. Travelers along this roadway would have views across the valley at intermittent locations along the roadway; refer to Figures 7A to 7C, which show existing views from this location. Viewers from this vantage point would mainly be passengers in vehicles traveling in either direction along the road.

Views from this vantage point are varied and consist of the roadway alignment, rolling hillsides, established vegetation, and a mixture of residential and commercial uses, generally occurring at low densities. Undeveloped, vacant land is interspersed with such development. Vegetation along the roadway corridor generally consists largely of natural vegetation on undeveloped lands; however, ornamental landscaping is generally visible on developed parcels. The existing visual landscape offers somewhat memorable landscape components and distinctive visual patterns, and therefore, visual quality and character are considered to be medium.

From this vantage point, existing vegetation both adjacent to the road and within the valley would limit views to looking to the northeast to the general vicinity of the Project site. Additionally, as can be seen in Figures 7B and 7C, intervening topography would obscure views to the site. As views to the site would be obscured, such views would not be substantially changed by the proposed development, and viewer response would be low.

5.2.2 Key View #2 – View from Old Castle Road

Old Castle Road trends east-west to the southwest of the Project site within the Valley Center community. Travelers along this roadway would have intermittent and brief views across the valley as one moves closer to the intersection with Lilac Road; refer to Figures 7A and 7C, which

show existing views from this roadway. Viewers from this vantage point would mainly be passengers in vehicles traveling in either direction along the road.

Views from Old Castle Road are varied as one travels eastward and consist of the roadway alignment and established vegetation in the foreground, combined with single-family rural residential development. Undeveloped, vacant land is visible within the distant valley. Undulating hillsides rise from the valley floor in the background.

Views from this vantage point are generally considered to be of medium visual quality and character. The existing visual landscape offers memorable landscape components and distinctive visual patterns. Unique features within the landscape are visible, and an established visual pattern and compositional harmony is created by such elements within the background.

Similar to views from Lilac Road, existing vegetation and area topography would obscure views of the Project site; refer to Figures 7A and 7C. As views to the site would be obscured, such views would not be substantially changed by the proposed development, and viewer response would be low.

5.3 Assessment of Visual Character and Visual Quality

5.3.1 Assessment of Visual Character

Natural landforms, natural vegetation, and a mixture of agricultural and single-family residential uses, as well as large parcels of undeveloped land, exist in the area surrounding the Project; however, such visual components would generally not be adversely affected by the proposed development. The Project has been designed to minimize grading requirements, thereby leaving the topography of the site largely in its existing condition.

Construction would occur on the site and would generally be limited in visibility to surrounding parcels, and with restricted views from Mesa Crest Road. The Project would change the composition of the visual pattern in the existing onsite setting. The onsite physical character (existing vegetation, undeveloped/vacant land, and one abandoned storage structure) would be altered with installation of the solar panels and associated facilities; however, with consideration of varied views to the site from offsite (private) properties and travelers along nearby (private) roadways, the visual changes resulting from the Project would not dominate or substantially change the existing visual pattern of the area, nor would the Project incorporate elements that would substantially obstruct or diminish existing views from offsite public vantage points; refer to Figures 7A to 7E.

Similar industrial and agricultural type elements exist within the surrounding area and support structural elements of similar or greater size, height, and/or appearance. Such elements may include barns, storage sheds, facilities for animal keeping/raising, grain silos, and other similar structures. As visibility of the site would be reduced with the proposed perimeter landscape screening (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area), an adverse change to the overall character of the existing visual pattern through the introduction of elements that would create visual dominance or scale is not anticipated with the Project. The Project would not significantly change the visual character of the landscape, as the proposed structural elements would be of limited bulk, mass, and scale, and views would generally occur from a distance. As such, the Project design would not substantially change the visual character of the landscape.

5.3.2 Assessment of Visual Quality

The visual quality of a view is partially influenced by the viewing location from which public views occur. The viewing location can allow for views that are generally either expansive in nature or focused on a specific view of a site or particular feature within the landscape. In addition, visual quality is influenced by the particular characteristics of the viewing corridor within which a view occurs. Visual quality is also affected by the quality of the overall viewshed area being viewed. Areas identified as having high visual quality are those which are identified as being sub-regionally important and possessing high scenic value.

The visual quality of the Project site would be potentially affected during the construction phase of the Project. Views of the site may include grading and construction activities, presence of construction vehicles and workers, and storage of building materials. Existing onsite vegetation would provide some visual screening of the site from offsite public viewing locations; however, construction impacts on visual quality would be temporary and short-term, and would ultimately be reduced when construction is complete. Once the construction phase ceases, no other changes to the visual landscape would occur, as no other development or improvements are proposed; however, the proposed landscape screening along the northern, western, and southern MUP boundaries (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) would continue to mature over upcoming years, thereby resulting in minor changes to the visual setting.

As described above, views of the property from Mesa Crest are afforded, as the roadway runs adjacent to the Project frontage. From this location, the Project site presents a landscape that is somewhat visually intact, in particular due to the existing onsite vegetation, including a number of oak trees. Due to the nature of the onsite vegetation and the visual character (developed) of adjoining lands, the site is generally considered to have a limited sense of visual harmony with adjacent properties. Visual diversity is generally low, as views largely consist of the existing varied vegetation, with limited elements or features that disrupt the visual landscape, and no visually

significant natural or topographical features. As such, the affected lands onsite are generally considered to have a low visual quality and are not considered to be subregionally important or possess a high scenic value.

No development is proposed in the eastern portion of the site. Therefore, the proposed improvements in would not significantly affect the existing visual quality of this area.

Additionally, landscaping for screening purposes (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) is proposed along the northern, western and southern portions of the MUP boundary to enhance the visual quality in areas where the site may otherwise be visible; refer to Figure 3D, Conceptual Landscape Plan. As such, the visual quality of the site would be further enhanced following completion of the construction phase through the maturing of the proposed landscape screening; however, as the existing visual quality of the affected parcel (or views from Mesa Crest Road) is not considered to be high, installation of the PV solar panels would not significantly reduce the overall existing visual quality of the Project site. It is therefore not anticipated that the Project would significantly degrade the existing visual quality of the lands affected by the Project or of surrounding lands.

5.4 Assessment of Viewer Response

Viewer response to visual changes on the Project site with development of the PV solar facilities is anticipated to be varied, dependent upon the Project facilities being viewed and the location of the public vantage point. Viewer response during the construction phase may be greater because grading activities, construction equipment, and varying stages of panel installation may be visible from public roads within the Project vicinity. Once construction is completed, no other changes to the visual landscape would occur, as no other development or physical improvements are proposed; however, the proposed landscaping for screening purposes would continue to mature over time.

The Project proposes installation of a 7-foot high chain-link fence (8-foot high maximum) around the perimeter of the MUP area. Wooden slats or plastic strips would be inserted in the fence running along the northern, western, and southern MUP boundary, in combination with proposed landscaping to further screen the development from view, thereby reducing views of the Project components from adjacent private) roads, as well as surrounding residences. As a result, views into the site would be minimized and intermittently experienced by travelers along Mesa Crest Road. Viewer response to views of the Project would be low to medium, due to distance from the Project elements (i.e. set back from roadway) intervening vegetation, and travel speeds; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. Additionally, due to the proposed height of the Project components, such components would not exceed the height of the proposed

landscaping (mature) when viewed from the (private) road, thereby minimizing their visibility within the landscape.

Views to the Project site from offsite public vantage points within the community would generally be reduced or blocked due to intervening development and established vegetation and differences in elevation, and therefore, viewer response would be low. Viewer response from more distant locations would also be low, even at higher elevations, such as from the mountains located to the north and east of the site, as the Project would not represent a significant visual feature within the visual landscape due to viewing distance and existing vegetation and other development along the hillsides.

As designed, the Project would underground the utility lines between the solar panels within the interior of the site. These lines would extend to the switchgear pad; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. From the switchgear pad, the line would be undergrounded to the existing SDG&E utility pole which supports a 12 kV (overhead) distribution line. Where the line meets the existing utility pole, the line would be extended aboveground to connect to the existing utility adjacent to Mesa Crest Road; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. As such, utility poles are already present within the visual landscape, and the Project would not result in the installation of new elements within the existing utility easement that would contrast with current views or increase viewer response to such changes in the visual setting.

Overall, installation of the proposed improvements would mainly be visible from certain locations along Mesa Crest Road, with limited views occurring from public vantage points from other public roads within the surrounding landscape or possible from the valley below. As such, viewer exposure would be limited. Viewer sensitivity to the change in the visual setting would likely be low due to the limited number of viewers (adjacent private roadway), the height of the Project components, and distance from surrounding public vantage points to the Project site. As a result, viewer response to the proposed facilities would be lessened, as a substantial change in the existing visual landscape would not occur.

5.5 Determination of Significance

- 1) Introduction of 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.

As a discretionary project, the proposed Project is subject to the adopted Valley Center Design Guidelines. Figures 3A to 3D show the proposed development and associated landscaping enhancements. All proposed development has been designed consistent with the Design Guidelines and subject to community design review to ensure Project conformance.

Location / Lot Size

In the Project vicinity, parcels are generally large-acre parcels with low-density uses. A number of smaller parcels are located immediately to the south, southwest, north and northwest of the Project site. Smaller lot sizes are also evident within the more developed areas of Valley Center. The Project does not propose to subdivide or change the existing size of any of the parcels affected by the proposed improvements, and therefore, would not create lot sizes that were inconsistent with the existing visual character of lands in the surrounding area.

Architectural Design / Theme

Architectural design of structures on parcels surrounding the Project is varied, due to a mixture of use types. Residential uses in the area typically exhibit ranch-style features with wooden exteriors and roofing, and generally non-decorative elements. A number of visible residential uses are constructed in the Spanish style, with stucco exteriors, tile roofing, and arched features. Surrounding agricultural-type uses generally exhibit more utilitarian features with minimal architectural design.

The Project would involve installation of the solar panels on the subject parcel, with supporting infrastructure that includes small-scale structures to house the inverters/transformers and switchgear equipment. As the Project represents a utility use, Project components would be utilitarian in nature and would not represent structural features such as residential or commercial buildings that would require detailed architectural design or design features intended for visual enhancement. Architectural design of the proposed facilities is not anticipated to significantly contrast with the visual character of other uses found in the surrounding area. The architectural design of Project elements would not result in features that are visually dominant within the visual landscape, or that represent a scale that would significantly contrast with the existing visual character or disrupt the visual intactness or unity of the landscape.

Materials and Colors

Development on lands within the surrounding area generally exhibit a range of materials and colors, depending on the land use considered. Materials generally range from metal, wood, stucco, and concrete block for the limited residential and commercial uses. Metal and/or stucco structures are typical of area industrial- and agricultural-type uses. Exterior colors of area structures are typically earthtoned in nature.

Solar Panels

The solar panels would generally range from black to gray in color and would be highly absorptive. The materials used to construct the panels are designed to minimize the potential for reflection and retain as much of the solar spectrum as possible, thereby reducing glare. Metal

piers (or other support structures) used for installation of the solar panels would be galvanized or painted to minimize reflection of light from the surface and to respect the natural setting. Additionally, the potential for glare effects from the Project would be further minimized, as all solar panels would be coated with a non-reflective coating.

Inverter/Transformer/Breaker Equipment

Equipment pads would be constructed within the solar panel field to house the inverters/transformers and switchgear. The structures would be constructed of non-flammable materials (i.e., steel) coated with a non-reflective earthtone finish. Roofing for these structures would also be metal and of a non-reflective earthtone finish to reflect the visual character of the surrounding natural environment. To ensure that the potential for glare effects to occur as a result of the Project, such measures would be made a condition of approval with adoption of the MUP Plot Plan.

Overall, the Project would result in the construction of elements within the landscape that would be respective of the existing visual character and visual quality with regard to materials and color. No Project design features are proposed that would sharply visually contrast with surrounding elements, or that would create a visually dominant feature within the landscape.

Height / Square Footage

A limited number of small-scale, single-family rural residential uses and several commercial uses are present within the immediate Project vicinity. Such structures are generally one to two stories in height. Limited agricultural uses on surrounding lands support structural elements that generally range from 7 to 12 feet in height, with various elements of greater height, depending on their function.

Square footage of buildings in the area varies, due to the type of use, with residential uses generally of smaller scale (one to two stories) and commercial and agricultural-type uses supporting structures of greater square footage.

Solar Panels

Due to the limited height of the solar panels and the relatively flat topography of the affected lands, the visibility of the panels within the landscape would be reduced. Although sensitive land uses (e.g., residential uses) are located within the immediate area surrounding the affected parcels to the north, southwest, south, and northwest, in general, views to the site from developed properties and/or (private) roadways would be distanced from the Project components, thereby limiting views of the panels.

Inverter/Transformer Equipment

A total of two equipment pads would be constructed within the solar panel fields to support the inverters/transformer; one of the two equipment pads would support the switchgear. The equipment would be approximately 10 feet in height when measured from the top of pad. The equipment would be constructed of non-flammable materials (i.e., steel, concrete).

Transmission Facilities

The Project proposes to connect to an existing aboveground utility line to the west of the site adjacent to Mesa Crest Road. The Project does not propose the replacement or increase in height of any existing utility poles that would be affected by the Project. Therefore, no change in the visual landscape would occur in this regard.

Bulk and Scale

An evaluation of bulk and scale includes an analysis of the visual appearance of structures, relative to other existing development in the surrounding area. Visual bulk and scale of surrounding structures varies depending on the type of use. Residential uses tend to be of smaller scale (generally one to two stories in height) and visually horizontal in nature. Many of the residential uses in the Project area are single-family homes of average square footage, and therefore, are of limited scale and bulk. Agricultural, service-type, and industrial-type uses generally support structural elements of greater bulk and scale within the visual landscape (e.g. storage facilities, sheds, barns, churches, schools, community facilities) that are generally of a greater square footage and height than a single-family home.

It is anticipated that the apparent visual bulk and scale of the proposed Project facilities would generally be consistent with that of surrounding uses, due to the design requirements of the solar facilities and associated infrastructure and the structural/equipment heights.

The PV panels would be mounted on a single-axis tracker. The center axis of the single-axis trackers would have a nominal height of three feet above grade; refer to Figure 3B, Major Use Permit Plot Plan (Details). The PV panels would rotate through a 90 degree arc during the day. The maximum height of the top of panel would measure an average of seven feet at full tilt. In certain cases where the ground surface undulates underneath the panels, the height of the top of panel could reach a maximum of approximately 12 feet (as measured from the ground surface); however, when viewed the top of the panels would appear to the viewer to generally maintain a consistent height across the horizon. The panels themselves would be approximately 39 inches long by 77 inches long.

The direct current (DC) power generated by the PV panels would be transmitted via underground cable to the inverter/transformer pad and one switchgear pad located within the proposed onsite development area, where the DC power would be converted to alternating

current (AC) power. The inverter/transformer equipment pad would be approximately 16 feet wide by 33 feet long; the switchgear pad would be approximately 7.5 feet wide by 8.5 feet long. The equipment installed on the pads would measure a maximum of approximately 10 feet in height (above pad elevation), or 12 feet in height as measured from the ground surface.

As such, the solar panels and equipment would be generally low-lying within the landscape and would not be of significant scale. Further, as compared to other elements within the surrounding visual landscape (e.g. residential units or support structures for agricultural-related uses), the panels would not represent elements of significant bulk. The panels themselves would be of a minimal thickness and would support the mechanisms required for collection of energy from the sun.

In addition, the inverter/transformer equipment would be dispersed within the overall acreage of the parcels. The Project would range between approximately seven feet (PV panels) to twelve feet (inverters/transformers mounted on building pad) in height. As these facilities would be relatively low-lying within the landscape and limited in height, they are not considered to be of significant scale that would be inconsistent with surrounding land uses or community character.

The proposed Project components would not represent elements that would detract from the existing visual character or quality of the site or that would significantly dominate or differ in size from existing components within the landscape. Furthermore, the visibility of the Project components would be reduced due to existing vegetation along the valley floor, area topography, and distance of the site from potential public vantage points in the surrounding area.

Building Coverage

To demonstrate the proposed Project's compatibility with existing development in the surrounding area, an analysis of lot coverage for the proposed site and for existing development in the area was conducted. The *building footprint* is the amount of structural development (in square feet) at ground level. *Lot coverage* is generally expressed as a percentage and represents the area of land covered by the building footprint (building area divided by total lot area). The building footprint does not include paved areas, such as driveways or parking areas, nor walkways around the proposed structures, as defined by Section 1110 of the County Zoning Ordinance.

The majority of lands in the Project vicinity support rural-residential land uses, some with small-scale agricultural or equestrian uses; refer to Figure 5D, Surrounding Land Uses. Other lands are undeveloped and therefore, do not support built elements. On the surrounding parcels where development has occurred, the majority of such lands are large-acre parcels with structures of varied square footage, depending on the use (i.e., single-family residential versus agricultural). As lot sizes generally decrease in the vicinity of the Valley Center "commercial core," building coverage increases.

With Project implementation, the Project design would include construction of two equipment pads. One pad would support the inverters/transformer (approximately 16 feet by 33 feet = 528 s.f. x 2 = 1,056 s.f.) and one pad would support the switchgear (approximately 8.5 feet by 7.5 feet, or 64 s.f.) for a total of approximately 1,120 s.f. The Project would also result in installation of the PV solar panels mounted on a collection of SAT systems supported by machine-driven metal “H” beam or round pipe rack pilings (nominal). The estimated footprint of each beam/piling would be approximately 0.02 s.f., with 1,764 beams/pilings being installed. Therefore, the footprint of the beams/pilings would total approximately 35 s.f. (0.02 s.f. x 1,764 beams/pilings = 35 s.f.).

Overall, the land area covered by the proposed development would be approximately 1,155 s.f. (1,056 s.f. plus 64 s.f. plus 35 s.f.) of the total 27-acre MUP area, overall lot coverage within the MUP area would be less than one percent (0.098 percent).¹ As such, Project building coverage would represent only a fractional portion of the affected parcel, consistent with the generally rural character of surrounding lands. Therefore, lot coverage for the Project would be similar in comparison to (or lesser than) other properties in the surrounding area.

As noted previously, the solar panels would be installed in rows that rotate to face east in the morning and west in the afternoon hours, tracking the sun about a north/south axis to maximize solar absorption. Therefore, as the panels rotate and near a flatter position during the midpoint of the day, the panels would appear to cover a more substantial land surface area at this time when viewed from vantage points at a higher elevation; however, the panels would be mounted on poles and/or in combination with a concrete foundation, thereby minimizing the footprint, or coverage, of each panel row within the array. Taking this into account, the Project coverage represents a very small percentage of the affected parcels, thereby further enhancing Project consistency with lot coverage typical of other developed properties within the area. Additionally, when standing onsite within the panel field, views at eye level would include the poles and the spacing between the poles (16.9 feet on center on average), visibly reinforcing that only a very limited area of land would be covered by the Project elements. No improvements are proposed on the remaining 13 acres of the property, further contributing to the condition that only a limited portion of the site would be covered by the Project components. For the above reasons, the Project is considered to be consistent with this finding with regard to lot coverage.

Lighting and Glare Effects

Viewers looking to the site from public or private roads or private residential uses would have the potential to experience panoramic views of the onsite solar panels. As such, the potential for

¹ One acre = 43,560 s.f.; 27 x 43,560 = 1,176,120 s.f.; 1,155 s.f. / 1,176,120 s.f. = 0.00098, or 0.098 percent.

the proposed Project to result in glare effects that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual quality of the area would occur.

In addition to numerous other technical investigations, in order to evaluate the potential glare/glint effects of solar panels, an investigation was previously conducted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for the installation of a 4-megawatt PV solar power generation array adjacent to Denver International Airport (DIA) in Colorado in 2006. A number of tests were performed to analyze potential glare effects on the airport (a land use that is highly sensitive to the effects of glint and/or glare) such as placing sample PV solar panels at different installation locations and at variable angles. No glare was noted by observers in any of the panel orientations. An aerial observation was also conducted. Reflectivity of the panels was measured four times per day, concluding that 96 percent of the sun's light was absorbed by the panels, and that the light reflected was dispersed. Since the panels were installed in August 2008, no complaints have been filed with DIA with regard to glare effects from the panels. A similar PV solar panel project was installed on the Express Hub at the Fresno Airport in Fresno, California. The project involved installation of flat plate PV modules and PV modules that capture and concentrate sunlight onto a solar cell which allow only reflected light from heat.

Other similar solar panel projects throughout the U.S. and globally have been installed near airports with no impacts on flight operations with regard to glare. Such locations include the Munich Airport in Germany; the Love Field Airport in Prescott, Arizona; and, the San Francisco, California Airport. Additional PV solar studies considered in this visual analysis for the proposed Project included the Panoche Valley Solar Farm Project Glint and Glare Study (Panoche Report)² and a Technical Memorandum provided by SunPower Corporation, (SunPower Report)³, both of which concluded findings of no significant adverse effects with regard to glare generated by PV solar panels.

Based on the above discussion and findings for glare effects of similar solar PV panel installations, potential Project-related glare effects experienced by viewers from area roadways, pedestrian walkways, or other areas frequently used for outdoor activities on surrounding properties are anticipated to be none to minimal, and no significant glare impacts would occur. Based on available technical evidence evaluating the reflectivity of the solar PV solar panels, the proposed Project would not install highly reflective building materials that would result in a substantial increase in light or glare that would affect the surrounding area or that would produce reflective light that would create adverse disability or discomfort glare. The proposed Project would be in conformance with the County's Guidelines of Determining Significance for Lighting and Glare.

2 Panoche Valley Solar Farm Project Glint and Glare Report, prepared by Power Engineers, May 10, 2010.

3 SunPower Corporation Technical Notification #T09014, Solar Module Glare and Reflectance, dated September 29, 2009.

As mentioned previously, all inverters/transformers and switchgear would be constructed of non-flammable materials (i.e., steel) painted with a non-reflective earthtone (i.e. gray or dark green) finish to blend the components into the visual landscape. Roofing for these structures would also be metal and painted with a non-reflective, earthtone finish to reflect the visual character of the surrounding natural environment. To ensure that the potential for glare effects to occur as a result of the Project, such design measures would be made a condition of approval with adoption of the MUP Plot Plan.

The appearance of the above-described Project elements within the landscape is not anticipated to significantly detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of the surrounding neighborhood, community, or localized area. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed use would be compatible with adjacent uses, residents, buildings, and structures with consideration given to harmony in scale, bulk, and coverage.

The potential for glare effects from the Project would be further minimized, as all solar panels would be coated with a non-reflective coating. Uncoated clear glass has a typical reflection rate of approximately eight percent;^{4,5} however, the majority of windows today have coatings that increase reflectivity in order to reduce the amount of heat gain within a building or occupied space. For solar PV applications, the more light that is reflected away from the glass surface becomes lost energy for power conversion, and therefore, anti-reflective coatings are utilized to ensure that the maximum amount of sunlight strikes the solar cells beneath the glass. The typical PV solar modules in use today have an anti-reflective coating with a reflection rate of less than six percent. The anti-reflective coating would be applied by the manufacturer at the manufacturing plant at the time when the panels are constructed. Additionally, the metal piers (or other support structures) used for installation of the solar panels would be galvanized or painted to minimize reflection of light from the surface and to respect the natural setting. This design measure would be made a condition of approval with adoption of the MUP Plot Plan.

Limited Project lighting would be installed to allow for security. At a minimum, permanent lighting would be provided for the enclosure interiors; outdoor equipment access areas, such as at the inverters and switchgear; and, at the site entrance. Low-level lighting would be installed at the main entry gates to facilitate access.

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 ownerships. All lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements. All outdoor lighting controls would incorporate dusk-to-dawn photocell controllers, occupancy sensors,

4 Commercial Windows – Windows for High-Performance Commercial Buildings. URL Online: <http://www.commercialwindows.org/reflectance.php>. Accessed September 24, 2013.

5 PGO-Online: Anti-Reflective Coatings ARC Series. URL Online: <http://www.pgo-online.com/intl/katalog/antireflection.html>. Accessed September 24, 2013.

and/or switches as appropriate. Lighting levels shall be as recommended in Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) standards. Suitable fixtures would be specified and installed according to the hazardous area classification, if applicable.

The appearance of the above-described Project elements within the landscape is not anticipated to significantly detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of the surrounding neighborhood, community, or localized area. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed use would be compatible with adjacent uses, residents, buildings, and structures with consideration given to harmony in scale, bulk, and coverage. Based on the above analysis, Project impacts with regard to lighting and glare would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are required.

- 2) 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.

Neither the subject parcel nor adjacent offsite lands in the Project vicinity support designated landmarks, federally-, State-, or locally-designated historic resources, or significant trees. Some rock outcroppings are present on lands within the surrounding area; however, the Project would have no effect on such resources. A number of onsite trees of a disturbed nature would be removed to allow for installation of the solar panels and associated facilities; however, as a design feature, a number of these oaks would be relocated and replanted (to the extent possible) along the perimeter as part of the proposed landscaping for screening purposes. . Although the Project would result in the installation of the solar panels and associated facilities within the existing landscape, no significant visual resources either onsite or offsite would be removed, substantially altered, or otherwise affected as the result of Project construction.

The Project site is designated as a civic use type. The proposed use is allowed under the existing General Plan land use and zoning designations with County approval of a MUP, and is therefore consistent with the land use intended for the property by the County. Although development of the site with the proposed PV solar facilities would change the onsite use from agriculture (former container nursery) to a utility use, design measures are proposed [landscape screening including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing onsite oaks (to the extent possible), Project elements of nominal height and scale, etc.], to ensure that the Project does not result in a significant effect on the existing visual setting, and that the rural character or image of the neighborhood is not adversely altered with Project implementation.

As such, the Project as proposed would not 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. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

- 3) 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.

Project construction activities (i.e., construction vehicles, equipment to be installed, etc.) would be temporarily visible on the Project site; however, the site is located within a rural environment with limited visual resources of significant value. Construction activities may be somewhat visible from area roadways and adjoining properties; however, such effects would be temporary and would cease upon completion of construction.

The proposed facilities would be constructed on disturbed/developed lands that formerly supported agricultural uses in the form of a commercial orchard/nursery. Land uses within the surrounding area generally include rural residential and agricultural-type uses. As stated above, the site is located at a high elevation than the valley below and is surrounded by varied topography which generally blocks views to the site from surrounding public roadways. As one moves further from the site on public or private roadways or private residences located at a higher elevation than the site along the surrounding hillsides, views to the site may occur; however, such views would be distanced from the Project site, and the visibility of the proposed facilities would be diminished within the surrounding landscape. Additionally, existing development and established vegetation would further reduce or restrict views to the site. The proposed perimeter landscaping (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) would further blend the development into the surrounding natural setting and reflect the character of other developed parcels within the visual setting floor, thereby reducing the visibility of the Project. Therefore, views from private residences or private or public roadways within the surrounding area are not anticipated to be substantially obstructed, interrupted, or detracted from as a result of Project implementation.

As designed, the Project would underground the utility lines between the solar panels within the interior of the site. These lines would extend to the switchgear pad; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. From the switchgear pad, the line would be undergrounded to an existing SDG&E utility pole supporting a 12 kV (overhead) distribution line within the Mesa Crest Road right-of-way. Where the line meets the existing utility pole, the line would extend upwards to connect to the existing aboveground SDG&E distribution line. No new aboveground utilities are therefore proposed or required with the Project (other than the limited portion required for connection to the existing aboveground distribution line, which would occur in conformance with SDG&E system design requirements. The Project does not propose to underground any existing offsite utility lines, such existing lines are already present within the visual setting, and no offsite improvements to or expansion of existing SDG&E facilities to serve the site are required or proposed. Therefore, the Project would be consistent with the San Diego General Plan requirement for new development to place underground utilities to “maintain viewsheds, reduce

hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.”

As identified previously, several County-designated Scenic Highways are located within the vicinity of the Project site which include: State Highway 76 - from the City of Oceanside east to State Highway 79 (Eligible State Scenic Highway/County Scenic Highway); Lilac Road/Valley Center Road (S6) – from State Highway 76 to State Highway 76 (County Scenic Highway); Vista Way, Gopher Canyon, and Old Castle Roads - from Vista City limits north and east to Lilac Road (County Scenic Highway); and, Lake Wohlford Road - from Valley Center Road east (Escondido City limits) to Valley Center Road (excluding portion within City of Escondido); refer to Table 3, County Designated Scenic Roadways, above. These roads are located at various distances from the Project site with the closest vantage points occurring at approximately 1.3 miles (Old Castle Road. Due to the elevation of these roadways relative to the Project site; topography, development, and/or existing vegetation; and, distance to the Project site, the proposed development would not be visible from varying locations along the majority of these roadway segments. As shown in Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Unit Map, only two of these roadways would have potential views to the site; however, due to the distance from the site and intervening vegetation and topography, such views would be highly restricted and intermittent if experienced. It is not anticipated that views from these roadways would be diminished, and therefore, the Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from existing views from a scenic roadway.

Additionally, views may occur from public trails within the Hell Hole Canyon County Preserve located to the east or other such trails that occur along the various mountain ranges that rise from the valley floor; however, such views would be intermittent and would vary due to the viewer’s location. As the Preserve is located approximately 7.4 miles to the east of the Project site, the proposed facilities are not anticipated to significantly detract from or interrupt existing views from any public trails within the Preserve. Any potential views of the Project site from such trails would occur at a distance, thereby reducing the visibility of the proposed facilities. In addition, views to the site from such trails would likely be intermittent due to topography as well as intervening vegetation along the trails. With consideration for distance to the Project site and the limited size (height) of the panels, along with other built elements visible within the existing visual landscape, the visual effect of the Project would be minimal, and views would not be significantly changed with Project implementation. Additionally, the Valley Center Community Trails and Pathways Plan of the County’s Community Trails Master Plan does not identify any existing or proposed regional trails or community trails or pathways within the vicinity of the Project site.

With consideration for the limited size (height) of the panels and other proposed structural elements in combination with other built elements visible within the landscape of the valley floor, the visual effect of the Project would be minimal and views would not be significantly changed

with Project implementation. As such, it is not anticipated that the Project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road or a scenic vista or highway. In addition, views from established public recreational areas or trails would not be substantially obstructed or interrupted with development of the site as proposed. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

The construction of trails or pathways is not proposed or required as part of the proposed improvements, and therefore, no views from adjacent trails to the site would occur in the future. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the Project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from an adopted (future) trail within the County's trail system.

As such, it is not anticipated that the Project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road or a scenic vista or highway. In addition, views from established recreational areas would not be obstructed or interrupted with development of the site as proposed. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

- 4) The project would comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's zoning.

The Project as proposed has been designed to conform to the requirements of applicable goals, policies and requirements of the County General Plan, Valley Center Community Plan, Valley Center Design Guidelines, and the County Zoning Ordinance; refer to Appendix A, Project Conformance with Applicable Plans, which provides a discussion of Project conformance with these documents, as appropriate.

Consistent with applicable design guidelines, Project components would be placed behind a 7-foot high chain link fence (maximum of 8 feet) running along the MUP boundary in order to minimize potential visual impacts on the community, as well as to provide security. Wooden slats or plastic strips would be inserted along the northern, western, and southern portions of the fence along the MUP boundary to further screen the development from offsite views. Landscaping is also proposed along the northern, western, and southern boundaries adjacent to the fence (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) to screen views into the site from adjacent uses and/or roadways; refer also to Figure 3D, Conceptual Landscape Plan. As such, views of the chain link fence (and the Project components) from the adjoining (private) roadways and adjacent private properties in these areas would be greatly reduced and/or obscured and are not anticipated to be adversely affected by Project implementation.

The Project is not within the boundaries of a Historic District or a Subregional Plan, and is therefore, not affected by such a plan. As such, Project impacts with regard to the significance criteria would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

5.6 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Figure 8, Cumulative Projects Map, identifies the projects considered for the cumulative analysis. The study area selected for the Project generally includes those projects within a five-mile radius of the site. A list of projects considered for the cumulative analysis is included in Table 6, Cumulative Projects, below.

The cumulative study area was determined based upon the surrounding topography and potential views to the site from offsite public locations. The study area limits generally encompass the surrounding ridgelines with consideration for distance from the Project site. Viewers located on any downslopes away from the Project site would not have views of the Project. Additionally, locations within the valley on the lower slopes may have views to the site, but such views would be decreased by distance and intervening topographic conditions, as well as existing development and established vegetation. Locations at or below the elevation of the Project site (e.g. within the flatter lands of the valley floor) would not have views to the Project site. Table 6 provides a list of discretionary projects that were approved within the last five years or that are currently being processed by the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Development Services (DPS) that are considered to have a potential to contribute to cumulative impacts on visual resources within the Valley Center area.

**TABLE 6
CUMULATIVE PROJECTS**

Project Number*	Permit Type	Project Reference
1	Administrative Permit	Honey Bee Ranch Accidental Winery
2	Grading Permit Maj	Brook Forest Grading Plans
3	Major Pre-Application	Lilac Plaza MPA
4	Tentative Parcel Map	Hatfield Place
5	Major Use Permit	NLP Valley Center Solar
6	Major Use Permit	Verizon Aguacate Major Use Permit
7	Major Use Permit	Valley Center Cemetery District Major Use Permit
8	Site Plan	Weston Towne Center
9	Grading Permit Major	HTW Tasting & Wine Making
10	Major Pre-Application	Granger Solar Project

*Project numbers correspond to locations identified on Figure 8, Discretionary Projects Map.

It is anticipated that future construction activities within the cumulative study area would occur on various sites and at varied times, when an application for development is made. Such construction-related impacts would be short-term and would cease upon completion. In addition, all new discretionary projects within the cumulative study area would be subject to environmental and design review on a site-specific, project-by-project basis to ensure visual aesthetic impacts are limited to the extent possible during the construction process. All future construction activities would also be required to be consistent with the County's regulatory requirements and applicable conditions of approval to reduce potential cumulative effects of construction to less than significant.

In addition, future development of the cumulative projects in the Project vicinity could permanently convert existing offsite open space or undeveloped/vacant lands to a developed condition, potentially resulting in the incremental loss of such lands within the Valley Center community. Such future development could also contribute to the alteration of views to designated visual resources. Future development within the surrounding area would be subject to an evaluation of the significance of potential cumulative visual and aesthetic changes on a site-specific, project-by-project basis, with consideration for project scope and contribution to a change in the overall visual pattern or character within the community.

The cumulative projects considered for the Visual Analysis are located throughout the Valley Center area; refer to Figure 8, Cumulative Projects Map. The projects considered represent a range of use types including solar energy generation, residential, and commercial uses.

As shown on Figure 8, the locations shaded in green (within the five-mile radius study area) would have views to the Project site. Such views would likely occur due to area topography that allows for unobstructed views and viewing locations at a higher elevation than that of the Project site. Those cumulative projects identified within the study area would have views of the Project components and would therefore have the potential to be viewed in combination with the proposed Project.

It should be noted that the Project is proposed within the study area and is currently being reviewed by County staff. The project is distanced from the Project site to the southeast.

As the Valley Center area offers abundant sunshine, combined with available undeveloped lands that are generally flat, the area represents optimal conditions for the sighting of solar energy facilities in the future. If proposed, it is anticipated that any future installation of solar panels along the valley floor would occur sporadically on available parcels as independent development applications, rather than concentrated in one large area of the valley. Thus, the cumulative visual effects of such installations would be reduced, as a range of small-scale to larger-scale projects would likely be proposed, depending on available land, appropriate zoning, and the nature of the development application.

In addition, as evaluated for the proposed Project, potential glare impacts on a cumulative level as the result of additional solar energy facilities locating within the Valley Center community or surrounding area would be less than significant. As all solar panels are designed to absorb sunlight, potential glare effects from future additional solar installations would not create significant glare or reflective surfaces that would create adverse effects on surrounding land uses or on views from surrounding vantage points.

If proposed, future solar installations would have a similar visual effect as other types of development would have in that they would generally change undeveloped land to developed land. Over time, it is anticipated that development within the Valley Center community and surrounding areas will continue to occur. As the valley floor is extensive, and the proposed Project site represents a minimal overall percentage of lands within the community, the proposed development is not expected to result in a significant visual change in the appearance within the community. In addition, due to the limited height and scale of the proposed Project elements, the Project is not anticipated to contribute to a significant cumulative impact on existing views from locations within the valley, as such views would be restricted by relatively level topography, and intervening development and vegetation.

Assuming a complete buildout of all the projects considered for the cumulative analysis, potential aesthetic cumulative impacts are considered to be less than significant for the following reasons:

It is not anticipated that the projects considered would not result in the introduction of features that would detract from or contrast with existing visual features found in the surrounding area. Existing development in the Valley Center area largely consists of a range of uses that include limited single-family residential and commercial uses, mobile home parks, agricultural uses, and public recreational areas. The inclusion of the proposed Project in the land use mix would not conflict with the visual quality of the area because the Project is generally distanced from the other projects considered and would be installed on lands generally surrounded by vacant or undeveloped lands; refer to Figure 6, Viewshed/Landscape Units Map. Additionally, the proposed Project would not disrupt the pattern of development adjacent to existing homes or businesses or substantially conflict with any adopted design guidelines or thematic development requirements in the area.

The addition of the cumulative projects would not remove or create a substantial adverse change to the features that represent a valued visual resource in the area. The hillsides, as well as the valley floor, would continue to appear to have a scattered development pattern once the cumulative projects are constructed. None of the projects would significantly alter the views from the valley floor from places where they are currently observed. It is not anticipated that any of the cumulative projects would remove or replace any local or State designated landmarks.

The proposed Project would not substantially obstruct or detract from valued lookouts or panoramic views from public roads, scenic highways, or recreational areas. Buildout of the

cumulative projects would not have an adverse effect on these public viewsheds because the projects are anticipated to match the existing development pattern present in the valley. From a vantage point where all such development would be visible, it would appear as the continuation of the existing development pattern in the area. In order to see all of the proposed projects, the viewpoint would need to be located at a higher elevation than the valley floor, and would be distanced from the proposed Project site. As such, the cumulative visual effect of the projects considered would not substantially obstruct views from scenic vistas or public roads.

Moreover, the cumulative projects would be required to comply with applicable goals and policies of the County General Plan, Valley Center Community Plan, Valley Center Design Guidelines, and County Zoning Ordinance, as applicable. If deviations from existing or allowed conditions or land uses are proposed with future projects, project-specific analysis would be required to justify such changes, prior to approval by the County.

In addition, all lighting proposed with future development within the cumulative study area, such as street lighting, security lighting, or exterior illumination, would potentially result in increased lighting and/or glare impacts within the Valley Center community. Projects within the cumulative study area would be evaluated by the County on a project-by-project basis, as appropriate, to determine the extent of such lighting necessary and to identify site-specific measures to reduce potential impacts on surrounding areas (i.e., shielding, use of low-level lighting, directing lighting away from adjacent properties and open space areas). As such, it is anticipated that the cumulative effects of increased lighting and/or glare associated with future development in the cumulative study area would be reduced to less than significant levels. As the Project would require minimal lighting for the purposes of security and maintenance, the Project would not contribute to significant cumulative impacts relative to light and/or glare. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Future development within the Valley Center community would be subject to an evaluation of the significance of potential cumulative visual and aesthetic changes on a site-specific, project-by-project basis, with consideration for its scope and contribution to a change in the overall visual pattern or character within the community. Adherence to applicable General Plan policies and goals and Valley Center Design Guidelines, as applicable, would further reduce potential cumulative impacts relative to the long-term alteration of views to designated scenic resources. Although the proposed Project would result in a permanent visual change in the existing landscape with development of the proposed PV solar farm, the Project is not considered to contribute to a significant cumulative effect with regard to the loss of views to scenic resources.

5.7 Summary of Project Impacts and Significance and Conclusions

The Visual Analysis was prepared to provide an evaluation of potential Project impacts on existing visual resources and character of the surrounding community of Valley Center, California. With regard to visual resources, the Project would not result in the introduction of features that would significantly detract from or contrast with the visual character of the surrounding community by conflicting with visual elements or quality of an existing area (i.e., through conflicting style, size, coverage, scale, building materials, etc.). The Project would not result in the removal of or substantial adverse change to one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the Project area, including but not limited to designated landmarks, historic resources, or rock outcroppings. Furthermore, the Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, trails within an adopted County or State trail system, scenic vista or highway, or recreational area. The Project as designed would also not result in an inconsistency with any goals, standards, or policies related to visual resources as given in the County General Plan or Valley Center Community Plan. Although direct views to the site would be limited to private roadways (and not from public roads), design measures such as perimeter fencing and planting additional landscaping for screening purposes (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) are proposed to minimize views of the Project components from the adjacent private roadways and private properties in the surrounding area.

For the above reasons, it was determined that the Project would not result in potentially significant impacts on visual resources in the Valley Center community. As such, no mitigation measures are required or proposed.

6.0 Visual Mitigation Measures / Design Considerations

6.1 Visual Impact Analysis

The Project would not result in the introduction of features that would significantly detract from or contrast with the visual character of the Valley Center community by conflicting with visual elements or quality of an existing area. In addition, the Project would not result in the removal of or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the Project area, including but not limited to designated landmarks, historic resources, trees, or rock outcroppings. Furthermore, the Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, trails within an adopted County or State trail system, scenic vista or highway, or recreational area. The Project as designed would also not result in an inconsistency with any goals, standards, or policies related to visual resources as given in the County General Plan or Valley Center Community Plan. Additionally, panel strings would be electrically connected to each other via underground wiring. As designed, the Project would underground the utility lines between the solar panels within the interior of the site. These lines would extend to the switchgear pad. From the switchgear pad, the line would be undergrounded to an existing SDG&E utility pole supporting a 12 kV (overhead) distribution line within the Mesa Crest Road ROW. Where the line meets the existing utility pole, the line would extend upwards to connect to the existing aboveground SGD&E distribution line. No new aboveground utilities are therefore proposed or required with the Project (other than the limited portion required for connection to the existing aboveground distribution line, which would occur in conformance with SDG&E system design requirements. Therefore, the Project would be consistent with the San Diego General Plan requirement for new development to place underground utilities to “maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.”

The Project would implement a number of design measures that would reduce visibility of the Project components within the visual landscape while enhancing the existing setting. The proposed Project design includes landscape screening along the MUP boundary (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) where adjacent to residential or other potentially sensitive uses. Access to the parcel would be provided through a secured gate and identified by minimal signage, rather than decorative or otherwise highly visible design features. Access to the parcels would be provided through a secured gate and identified by minimal signage, rather than decorative or otherwise highly visible design features. All inverters/transformers and switchgear

would be constructed of non-flammable materials (i.e., steel) painted with a non-reflective earthtone finish to blend the components into the visual landscape. Roofing for these structures would also be metal and painted with a non-reflective, earthtone finish to reflect the visual character of the surrounding natural environment. To ensure that the potential for glare effects to occur as a result of the Project, such design measures would be made a condition of approval with adoption of the MUP Plot Plan. Additionally, the metal piers (or other support structures) used for installation of the solar panels would be galvanized or painted to minimize reflection of light from the surface and to respect the natural setting. This design measure would also be made a condition of approval with adoption of the MUP Plot Plan.

Although the Project would change the visual character of the affected parcels, the proposed facilities would be consistent with development intended for the properties as indicated by the existing General Plan land use designations, and would be visually compatible with other existing uses in the surrounding area which support structural elements or design characteristics (i.e. materials, colors, scale, mass, height, etc.) greater than or similar to that associated with the Project.

Through this Visual Resources/Aesthetics Analysis, potential effects of the Project were evaluated against the thresholds of significance developed by the County of San Diego. The Project is considered to be compatible with the existing character of the surrounding Valley Center community and would be consistent with applicable County and community land use and design regulations with regard to visual and aesthetic resources.

No significant impacts were identified with regard to visual/aesthetic resources. As such, Project impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are required or proposed.

7.0 References

County of San Diego General Plan. Adopted August 3, 2011.

County of San Diego General Plan – Valley Center Community Plan. Adopted August 3, 2011.

County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content Requirements – Visual Resources. July 30, 2007.

County of San Diego - Valley Center Design Guidelines. Approved May 7, 1986. Revisions adopted November 1990.

County of San Diego Wildland Urban Interface Ordinance. Ordinance No. 9670.

County of San Diego Zoning Ordinance. Updated with Ordinance Update No. 80, October 2009.

Panoche Valley Solar Farm Project Glint and Glare Report, prepared by Power Engineers, May 10, 2010.

SunPower Corporation Technical Notification #T09014, Solar Module Glare and Reflectance, dated September 29, 2009.

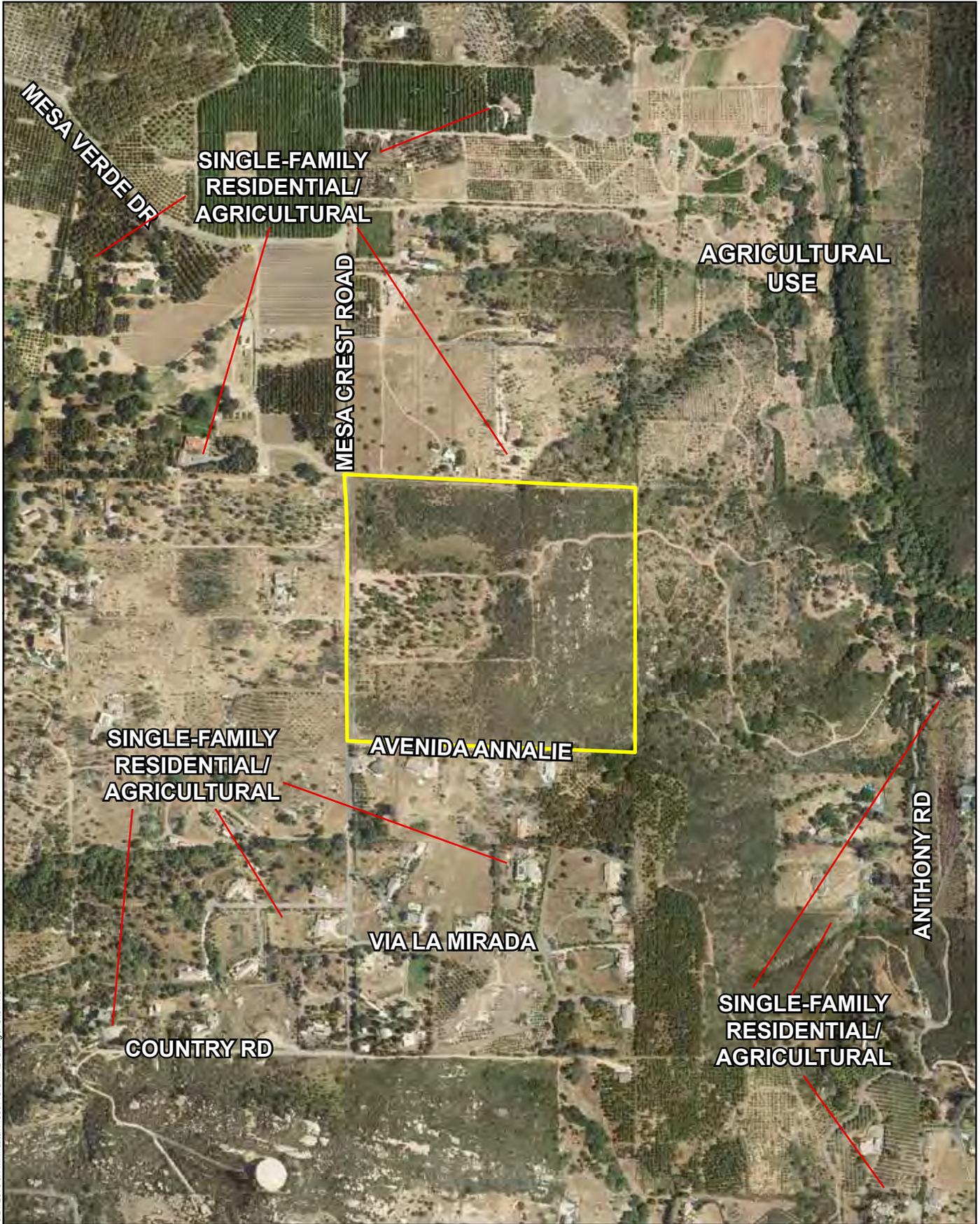
8.0 Report Preparers

Michael Baker International

Nicole Marotz, AICP, LEED AP
Environmental Planner
County Certified CEQA Consultant for Visual Impact Analyses
Primary Author of the Visual Impact Analysis

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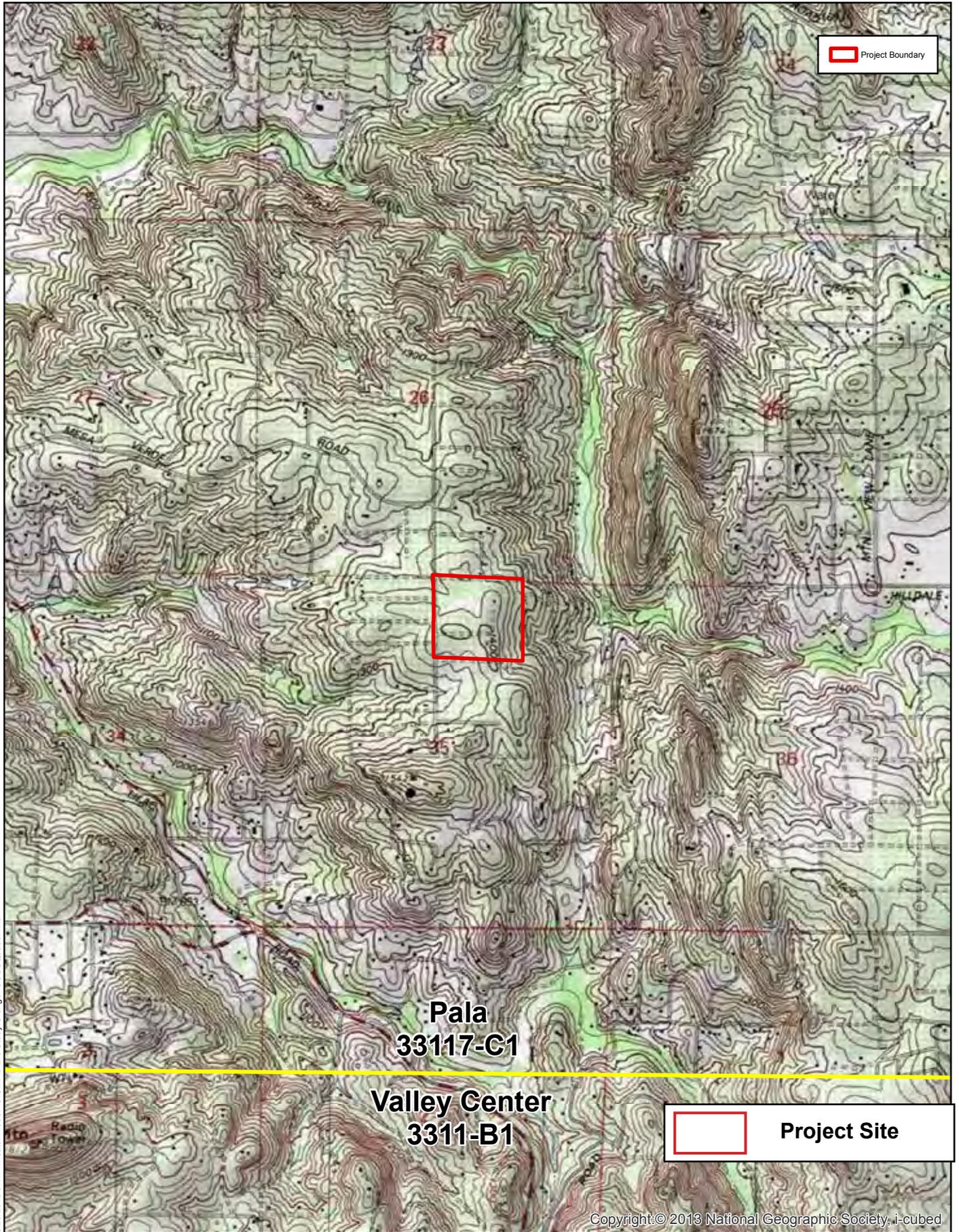
Project Site

LOCAL VICINITY MAP/SURROUNDING LAND USES

Granger Solar

Source:

Figure 2A



Project Boundary

Pala
33117-C1

Valley Center
3311-B1

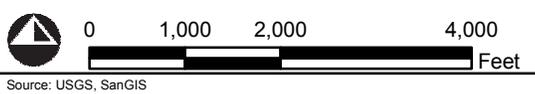
Project Site

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Granger Solar

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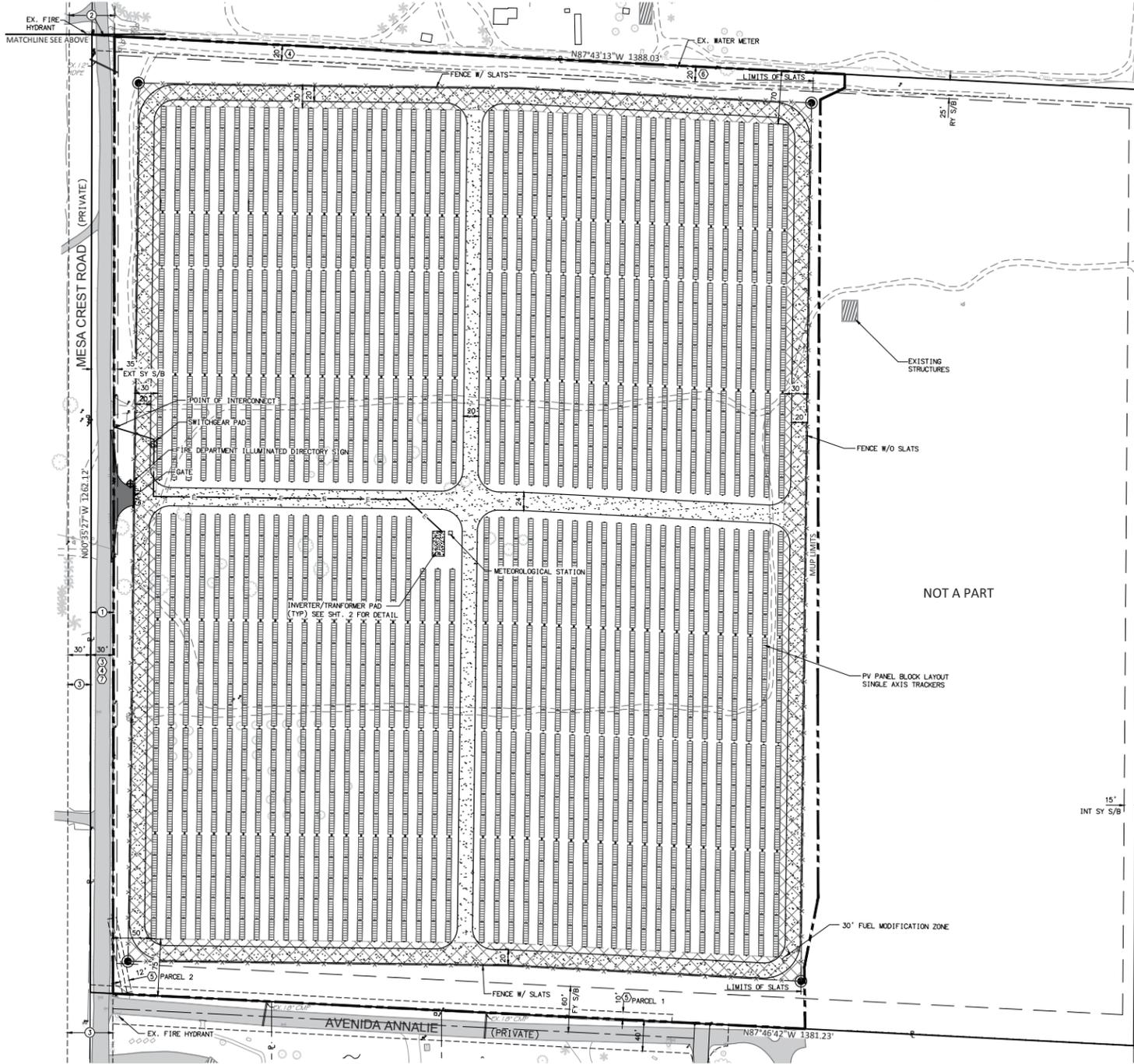
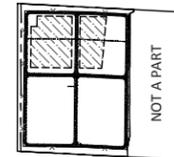
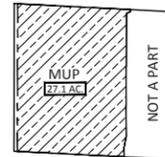
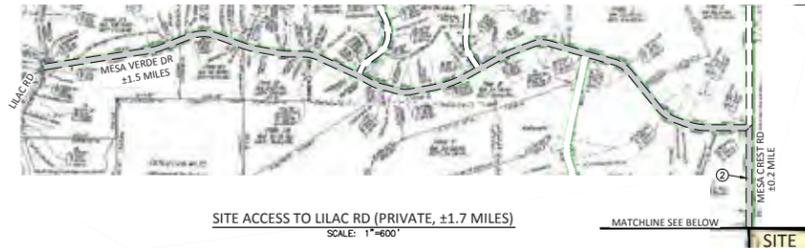
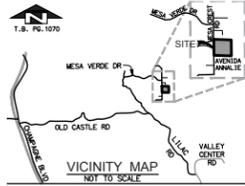
Michael Baker
INTERNATIONAL



Source: USGS, SanGIS

USGS QUAD MAP: PALA QUADRANGLE

Figure 2B



NOTES

- GROSS AREA: 40.1 ACRES
- NET AREA: 39.2 ACRES (MESA CREST ROAD EASEMENT = 0.9 AC)
- MUP BOUNDARY AREA: 27.1 AC
- GENERAL PLAN SEMI-RURAL RESIDENTIAL (SR-2)
- REGIONAL CATEGORY: SEMI-RURAL LANDS
- TOPOGRAPHIC SOURCE: AEROTECH MAPPING INC, FLOWN 3/10/2015
- ASSOCIATED REQUESTS: NONE
- WATER DISTRICT: VALLEY CENTER MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
- FIRE DISTRICT: VALLEY CENTER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
- THE APPROVAL OF THIS MAJOR USE PERMIT (MUP) AUTHORIZES THE FOLLOWING: CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF A PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR FARM PURSUANT TO SECTION 6952 OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE.
- 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 VALID GRADING PERMITS BEFORE COMMENCING SUCH ACTIVITY.
- ALL SOLAR EQUIPMENT STRUCTURES TO BE CONSTRUCTED OF NON-COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS (CONCRETE, BLOCK, METAL) OR SIMILAR AND PAINTED EARTH-TONE COLORS.
- LIGHTING FOR MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY PROPOSES ONLY. SHIELDED LIGHTING LOCATED AT ENTRANCE GATES AND INVERTER/TRANSFORMER PADS & SHALL CONFORM TO COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO OUTDOOR LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS. SEE DETAIL ON SHEET 2.
- PHASING - PROJECT MAY BE IMPLEMENTED IN SEVERAL PHASES WITHOUT REGARD TO SEQUENCE.
- ALL DISTURBED AREAS WOULD BE COVERED WITH GRAVEL OR A BINDING AGENT TO REDUCE DUST.
- SEE PRELIMINARY GRADING PLAN FOR PROPOSED GRADING.
- SITE ACCESS GATE(S) TO BE EQUIPPED WITH FIRE DEPARTMENT APPROVED STROBE LIGHT ACTIVATION AND KNOX KEY-OPERATED SWITCH.
- SOLAR RELATED FACILITIES (PANELS, RACKING, ELECTRICAL CONNECTIONS, INVERTER/TRANSFORMER PADS, SWITCHGEAR, MET STATION, FENCING, AND INTERNAL ACCESS, ETC.) SHOWN ON THE 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. INVERTER/TRANSFORMER LOCATIONS CAN BE RELOCATED/RECONFIGURED WITHOUT REQUIREMENT OF MINOR DEVIATION. THE INVERTER/TRANSFORMER MUST COMPLY WITH THE NOISE ORDINANCE AND MUST BE ELEVATED 1' ABOVE FLOOD ELEVATION. THE 24" FIRE ACCESS ROAD WIDTHS MAY BE REDUCED ADMINISTRATIVELY WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE COUNTY AND FIRE AUTHORITY HAVING JURISDICTION OVER THE PROJECT.
- A SYSTEM IDENTIFICATION SIGN SHALL BE LOCATED AT THE GATE ENTRANCE. SIGN SHALL BE 12"X18". SIGN SHALL LIST NAME OF SITE AND CONTACT INFORMATION AS PROVIDED BY SDGE.
- PRIVATE PROPERTY AND TRESPASSING AND HIGH VOLTAGE SIGNS SHALL BE LOCATED AT THE GATE ENTRANCE AND EVERY 100' MINIMUM ON FENCE. THE SIGN SHALL BE 10"X14". MISCELLANEOUS INTERIOR DIRECTIONAL AND SAFETY SIGNAGE ARE PERMITTED.
- OUTDOOR LIGHTING CIRCUITS SHALL INCORPORATE DUSK-TO-DAWN PHOTOCELL CONTROLLERS, OCCUPANCY SENSORS, AND/OR SWITCHES AS APPROPRIATE.
- A METEOROLOGICAL (MET) STATION SHALL BE LOCATED ADJACENT TO THE INVERTER/EQUIPMENT PAD.

LEGEND

- PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- EXISTING EASEMENT
- RIGHT-OF-WAY
- MUP BOUNDARY (27.1 AC)
- SETBACK LINE
- PROPOSED 7" CHAINLINK FENCE W/ SLATS (8" MAX.)
- PROPOSED ACCESS GATE
- EXISTING AC PAVEMENT
- PROPOSED AC PAVEMENT
- PROPOSED FIRE ACCESS ROAD-ALL WEATHER (WIDTH PER PLAN)
- EXISTING OVERHEAD POWERLINE
- EXISTING POWER POLE
- PROPOSED UNDERGROUND INTERCONNECTION
- PROPOSED PV PANEL
- PROPOSED INVERTER/TRANSFORMER PAD (1)
- 30' FUEL MODIFICATION ZONE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED
- VIDEO CAMERA ON 10' POLE (4)
- FRONT YARD SETBACK
- REAR YARD SETBACK
- EXTERNAL SIDE YARD SETBACK
- INTERNAL SIDE YARD SETBACK
- AGRICULTURAL MITIGATION (0.51 AC)

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER

129-162-07

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

ALL THOSE PORTIONS OF THE WEST HALF OF THE NE QUARTER SECTION 35, TOWNSHIP 10 SOUTH, RANGE 2 WEST, SAN BERNARDINO BASE AND MERIDIAN, IN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

BASIS OF BEARINGS

THE BASIS OF BEARINGS FOR THIS SURVEY IS THE CALIFORNIA COORDINATE SYSTEM OF 1983 (CCS83), EPOCH: NRS 2007, CSRS 2011), ZONE 6, BASED LOCALLY UPON CONTROL STATIONS P478 & PM08, PUBLISHED BY THE CALIFORNIA SPATIAL REFERENCE CENTER (CSRC) WITH A BEARING OF S 50°43'25" E.

BENCHMARK

STATION NAME: 13525 PER RECORD OF SURVEY 17997, FOUND 2" BRASS DISK STAMPED 51-61-XP30 FLUSH IN BOULDER. ELEVATION = 1679.00 DATUM: NAVD88

SITE ADDRESS:

THE NE CORNER OF MESA CREST RD AND AVENIDA ANNALIE VALLEY CENTER, CA 92082

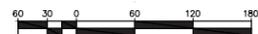
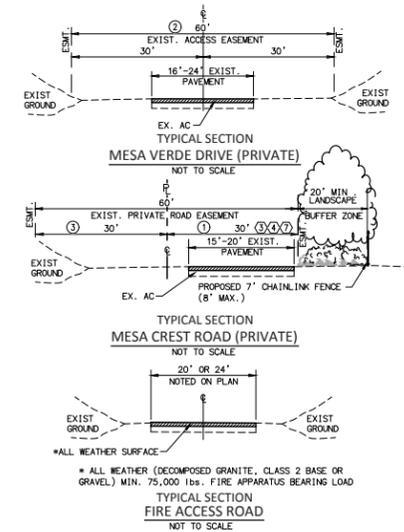
EXISTING EASEMENTS (TO REMAIN)

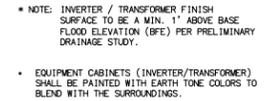
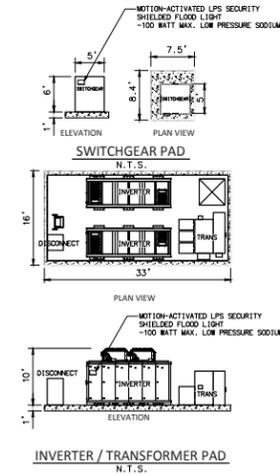
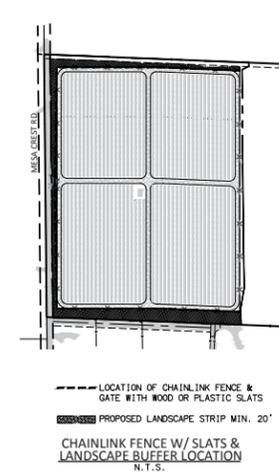
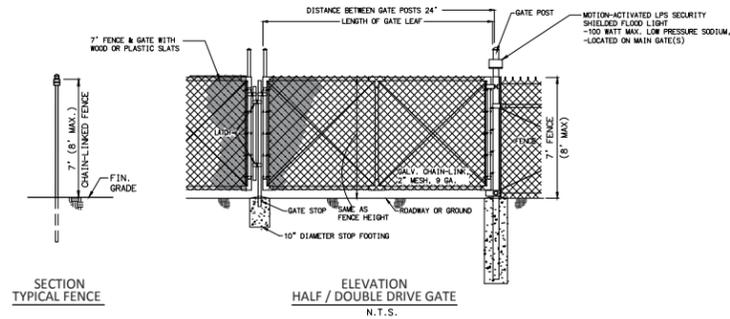
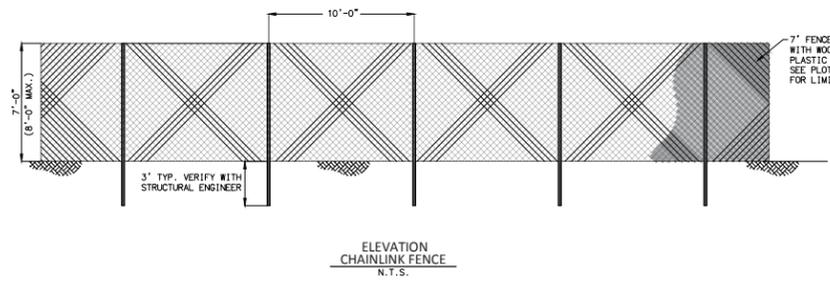
DESCRIPTION	DOC. #
PRIVATE ROAD & PUBLIC UTILITY POLY	BK. 7165, PG. 594, 7/15/58
PUBLIC UTILITIES	INSTR. 9178, 1/18/65
SDGE PUBLIC UTILITIES	INSTR. 82-395792, 12/28/82
SDGE PUBLIC UTILITIES	INSTR. 83-119656, 4/14/83
PRIVATE ROAD AND PUBLIC UTILITY	INSTR. 85-167501, 5/13/85

STEWART TITLE COMPANY PRELIMINARY REPORT ORDER NUMBER 011800-162713, DATED 4/29/2015 PARCEL ①②③

ZONING

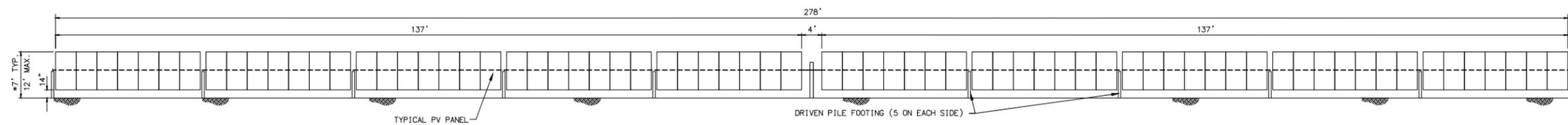
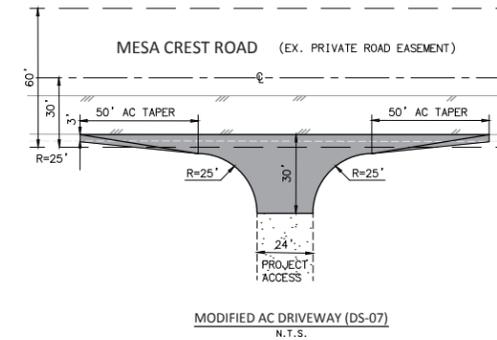
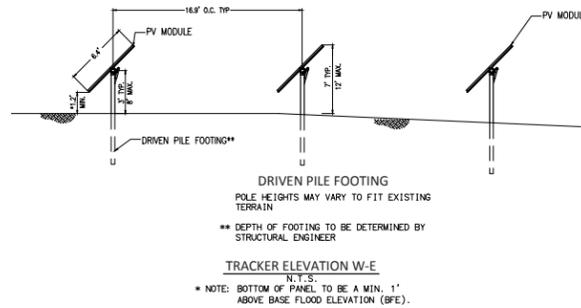
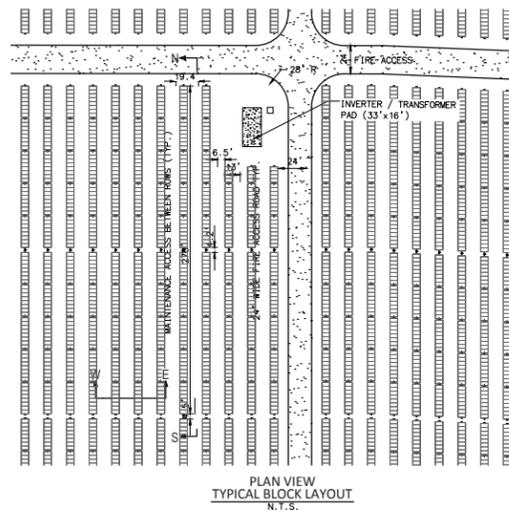
ZONE	A72
USE REGULATIONS	N
ANIMAL REGULATIONS	N
DENSITY	---
LOT SIZE	2 AC
BUILDING TYPE	C
MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA	---
FLOOR AREA RATIO	---
HEIGHT	G
LOT COVERAGE	---
SETBACK	C
OPEN SPACE	---
SPECIAL AREA REGULATIONS	A





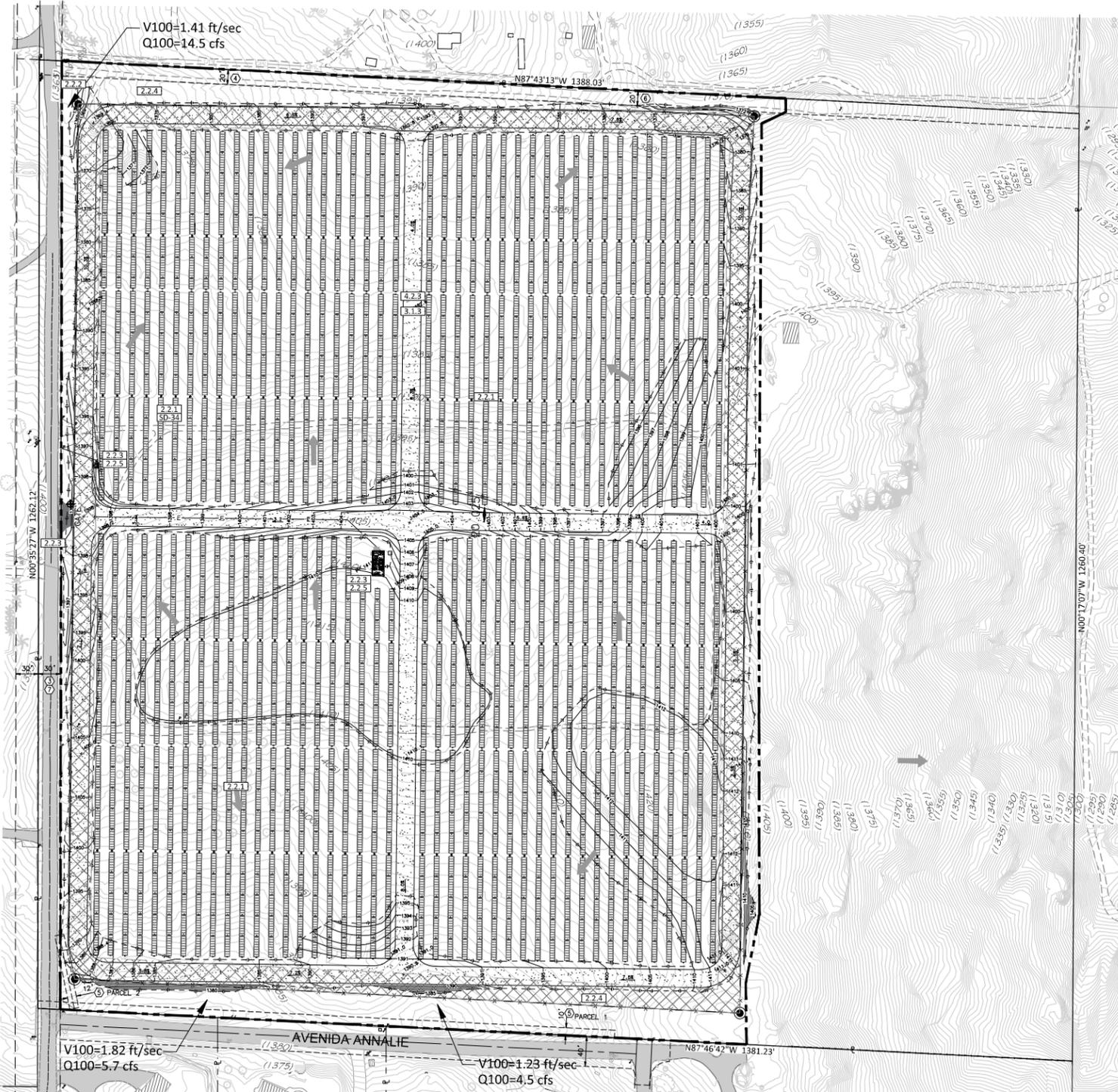
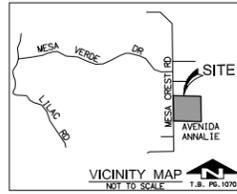
* NOTE: INVERTER / TRANSFORMER FINISH SURFACE TO BE A MIN. 1' ABOVE BASE FLOOD ELEVATION (BFE) PER PRELIMINARY DRAINAGE STUDY.

* EQUIPMENT CABINETS (INVERTER/TRANSFORMER) SHALL BE PAINTED WITH EARTH TONE COLORS TO BLEND WITH THE SURROUNDINGS.



* SOIL UNDER PV ARRAY MAY UNDULATE WHICH MAY RESULT IN A MAXIMUM PANEL HEIGHT OF 12'.

- DRIVEN PILE FOOTING MAY BE H-PILES OR PIPE COLUMNS
- DEPTH / TYPE OF FOOTING TO BE DETERMINED BY STRUCTURAL ENGINEER.
- ALL SOLAR PANELS (AT MAXIMUM TILT) SHALL BE ELEVATED SO THAT THE LOWEST HORIZONTAL STRUCTURAL MEMBER IS AT LEAST ONE FOOT ABOVE THE BASE FLOOD ELEVATION (BFE) PER PRELIMINARY DRAINAGE STUDY.



NOTES

- GROSS AREA: 40.1 ACRES
- NET AREA: 39.2 ACRES (MESA CREST ROAD EASEMENT=0.9 AC)
- M.P. BOUNDARY AREA: 27.1 ACRES
- TOPOGRAPHIC SOURCE: AEROTECH MAPPING INC, 3/10/2015
- 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 VALID GRADING PERMITS BEFORE COMMENCING SUCH ACTIVITY.
- ALL DISTURBED AREAS WILL BE SURFACED WITH GRAVEL OR A BINDING AGENT TO REDUCE DUST.
- PILE DRIVING OPERATIONS IN ORDER TO LIMIT TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION NOISE, ALL PILE DRIVING OPERATIONS SHALL BE LOCATED A MINIMUM SETBACK OF 215 FEET FROM ANY OCCUPIED RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY LINE. IF PILE DRIVING OPERATIONS ARE TO OCCUR WITHIN 215 FEET, THEN THESE OPERATIONS SHALL BE LIMITED TO OPERATE 20% OF THE HOURLY OR DAILY DURATION.

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER
129-162-07

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

ALL THOSE PORTIONS OF THE WEST HALF OF THE NE QUARTER SECTION 35, TOWNSHIP 10 SOUTH, RANGE 2 WEST, SAN BERNARDINO BASE AND MERIDIAN, IN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

BASIS OF BEARINGS

THE BASIS OF BEARINGS FOR THIS SURVEY IS THE CALIFORNIA COORDINATE SYSTEM OF 1983 (CCS83, EPOCH: NSRS 2007, CSRS 2011), ZONE 6, BASED LOCALLY UPON CONTROL STATIONS P478 & P485, PUBLISHED BY THE CALIFORNIA SPATIAL REFERENCE CENTER (CSRC) WITH A BEARING OF S 50°43'25" E.

BENCHMARK

STATION NAME: 13525 PER RECORD OF SURVEY 17997. FOUND 2" BRASS DISK STAMPED 51-61-XP30 FLUSH IN BOULDER.
ELEVATION = 1679.00 DATUM: NAVD88

SITE ADDRESS:

THE NE CORNER OF MESA CREST RD AND AVENIDA ANNALIE VALLEY CENTER, CA 92082

OWNER/APPLICANT:

NLP GRANGER 482, LLC
17001 VAN KAMMAN AVENUE, SUITE 1050
IRVINE, CA 92614
CONTACT: PATRICK BROWN
PHONE: (919) 733-2649

TOPOGRAPHY AND GRADING

VOLUME OF CUT: 24,000 CY
VOLUME OF FILL: 24,000 CY
EXPORT/IMPORT: 0 CY

MAXIMUM SITE RETAINING WALL HEIGHT: N/A

TOTAL DISTURBED AREA BEFORE PROJECT: 0.8 AC

TOTAL DISTURBED AREA AFTER PROJECT: 25.1 AC

TOTAL IMPERVIOUS AREA BEFORE PROJECT: 0.6 AC

TOTAL IMPERVIOUS AREA AFTER PROJECT: 0.7 AC

IMPERVIOUS SURFACES TABLE

ITEM DESCRIPTION	TOTAL AREA	UNIT
INVERTER / TRANSFORMER PAD	0.02	AC
FOOTING FOUNDATION	0.09	AC
TOTAL	0.11	AC

SUMMARY OF LID/SITE DESIGN BMPs

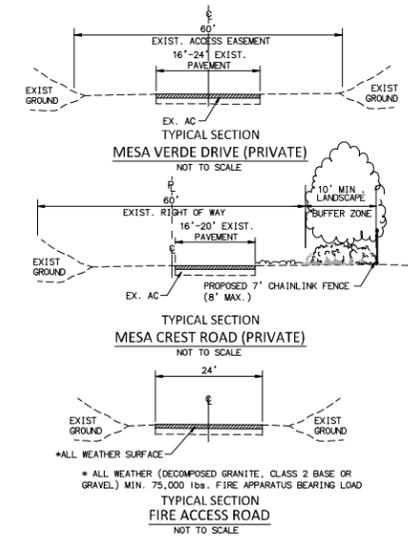
- 2.2.1 CONSERVATION OF NATURAL DRAINAGES AND SIGNIFICANT VEGETATION
- 2.2.2 MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO NATURAL DRAINAGES
- 2.2.3 MINIMIZE IMPERVIOUS SURFACES
- 2.2.3.1 DISCONNECT IMPERVIOUS SURFACES
- 2.2.4 MINIMIZE SOIL COMPACTION
- 2.2.5 DRAIN RUNOFF FROM IMPERVIOUS SURFACES TO PERVIOUS AREAS
- 3.2.3 PERMEABLE PAVEMENT DESIGN
- 3.3.3 LID DRIVEWAY/ACCESS ROADS

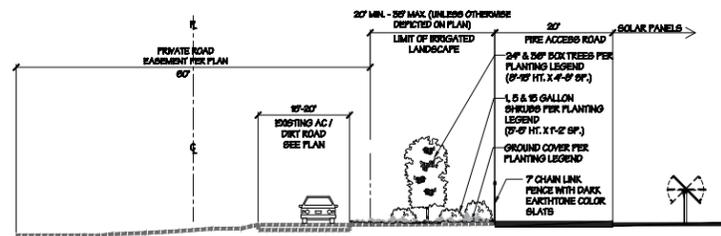
SUMMARY OF SOURCE CONTROL BMPs

- 5D-3A PROPER DESIGN OF OUTDOOR MATERIAL STORAGE AREAS

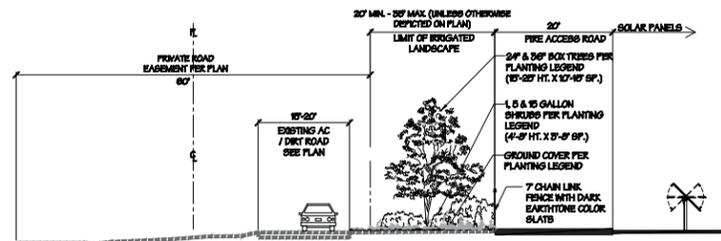
LEGEND

- PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- EXISTING EASEMENT
- ULTIMATE RIGHT-OF-WAY
- M.P. BOUNDARY (27.1 AC)
- EXISTING CONTOUR
- PROPOSED GRADING
- PROPOSED DAYLIGHT LINE
- PROPOSED SPOT GRADE
- PROPOSED PAD ELEVATION
- PROPOSED 7' CHAINLINK FENCE W/ SLATS (8' MAX.)
- PROPOSED ACCESS GATE
- DIRECTION OF FLOW / SLOPE
- EXISTING DIRT ROAD
- EXISTING AC PAVEMENT
- PROPOSED AC PAVEMENT
- PROPOSED FIRE ACCESS ROAD-ALL WEATHER (WIDTH PER PLAN)
- EXISTING BUILDING
- EXISTING POWER POLE
- EXISTING WATER WELL
- PROPOSED PV PANEL
- PROPOSED INVERTER/TRANSFORMER PAD (1)

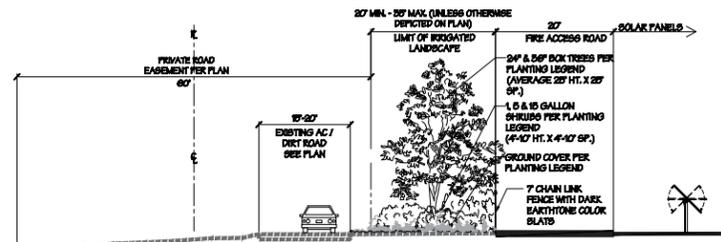




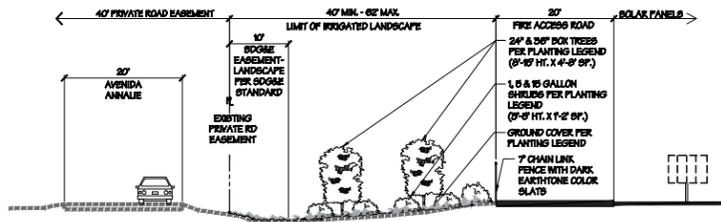
SECTION A-A (AT PLANTING)
NOT TO SCALE



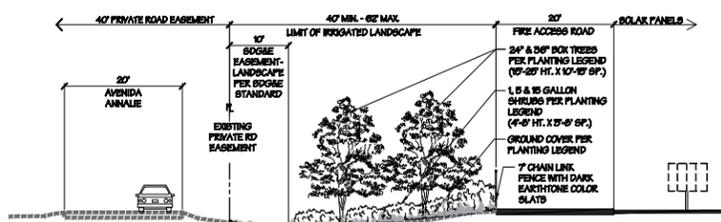
SECTION A-A (AT APPROXIMATELY 5 YEARS FROM PLANTING)
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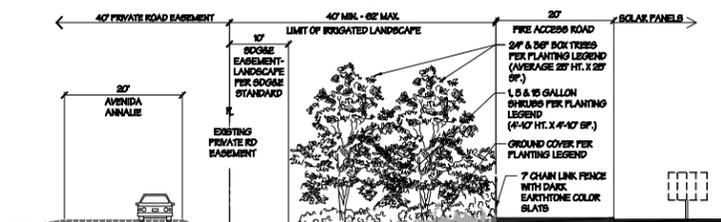
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NOT TO SCALE



SECTION B-B (AT PLANTING)
NOT TO SCALE



SECTION B-B (AT APPROXIMATELY 5 YEARS FROM PLANTING)
NOT TO SCALE



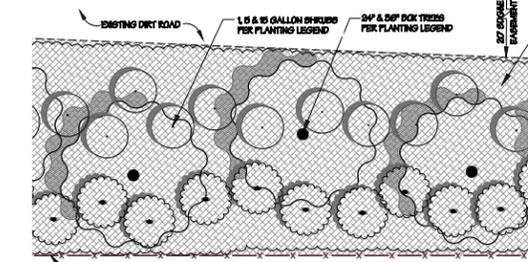
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NOT TO SCALE

PLANT LEGEND

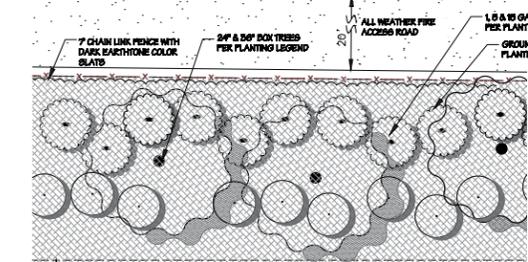
TREES	BOTANICAL NAME / COMMON NAME	SIZE	SPACING	WATER USE
	CERODIUM FLORIDUM / BLUE PALO VERDE	24" BOX	25' AVERAGE	L
	CUPRESSUS FORBESII / TECATE CYPRESS	24" BOX	25' AVERAGE	L
	OLEA EUROPAEA / OLIVE	24" BOX	25' AVERAGE	M
	PLATANUS RACEMOSA / CALIFORNIA SYCAMORE	24" BOX	25' AVERAGE	M
	QUERCUS AGRIFOLIA / COAST LIVE OAK	24" & 36" BOX	25' AVERAGE	L
	QUERCUS CHRYSOLEPIS / CANYON LIVE OAK	24" & 36" BOX	25' AVERAGE	L
	QUERCUS ENGELMANNII / ENGELMANN OAK	24" & 36" BOX	25' AVERAGE	L
	UMBELLULARIA CALIFORNICA / CALIFORNIA BAY LAUREL	24" BOX	25' AVERAGE	M

SHRUBS	BOTANICAL NAME / COMMON NAME	SIZE	SPACING	WATER USE
	ATRIPLEX LENTIFORMIS SPP. BREWERII / QUAIL BUSH	1 & 5 GALLON	VARIES 6'-8"	L
	GALVEZIA SPECIOSA / ISLAND BUSH SNAPDRAGON	1 & 5 GALLON	VARIES 4'-10"	L
	HETEROMELES ARBUTIFOLIA / TOYON	5 & 15 GALLON	VARIES 6'-10"	L
	RHUS OVATA / SUGAR BUSH	5 & 15 GALLON	VARIES 6'-10"	L
	RHAMNUS CALIFORNICA / COFFEE BERRY	1 & 5 GALLON	VARIES 6'-10"	L
	RHUS LAURINA / LAUREL SUMAC	1 & 5 GALLON	VARIES 6'-10"	L
	ROMNEYA COULTERI / MATILIA POPPY	1 & 5 GALLON	VARIES 6'-10"	L
	SALVIA CLEVELANDII / CLEVELAND SAGE	1 & 5 GALLON	VARIES 4'-8"	L

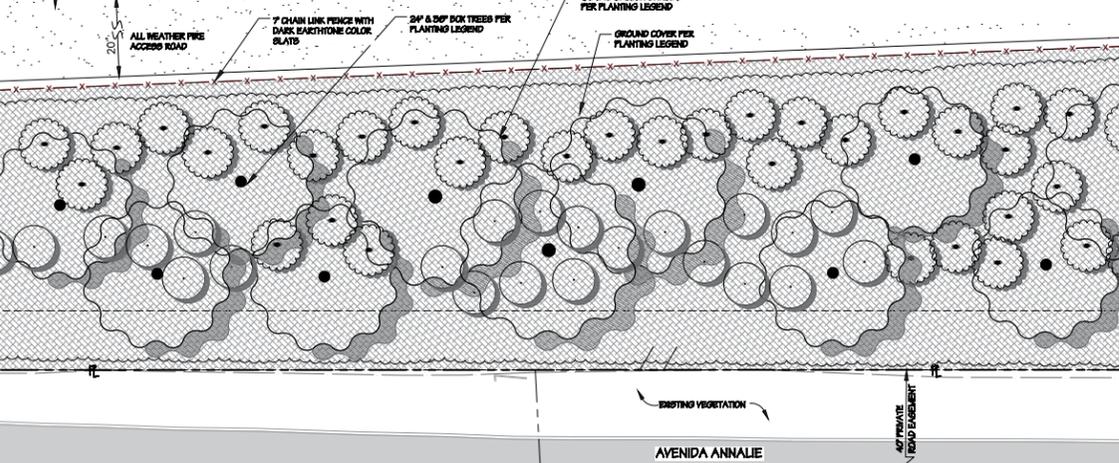
GROUND COVERS	BOTANICAL NAME / COMMON NAME	SIZE	SPACING	WATER USE
	BACCHARIS PILULARIS / COYOTE BRUSH	1 GALLON	6"	L
	CEANOTHUS GRISSEUS HORIZONTALIS / CARMEL CREEPER	1 GALLON	8"	L
	IVA HAYESIANA / POVERTY WEED	1 GALLON	6"	L
	MUELENBERGIA RIGENS / DEER GRASS	1 GALLON	6"	M



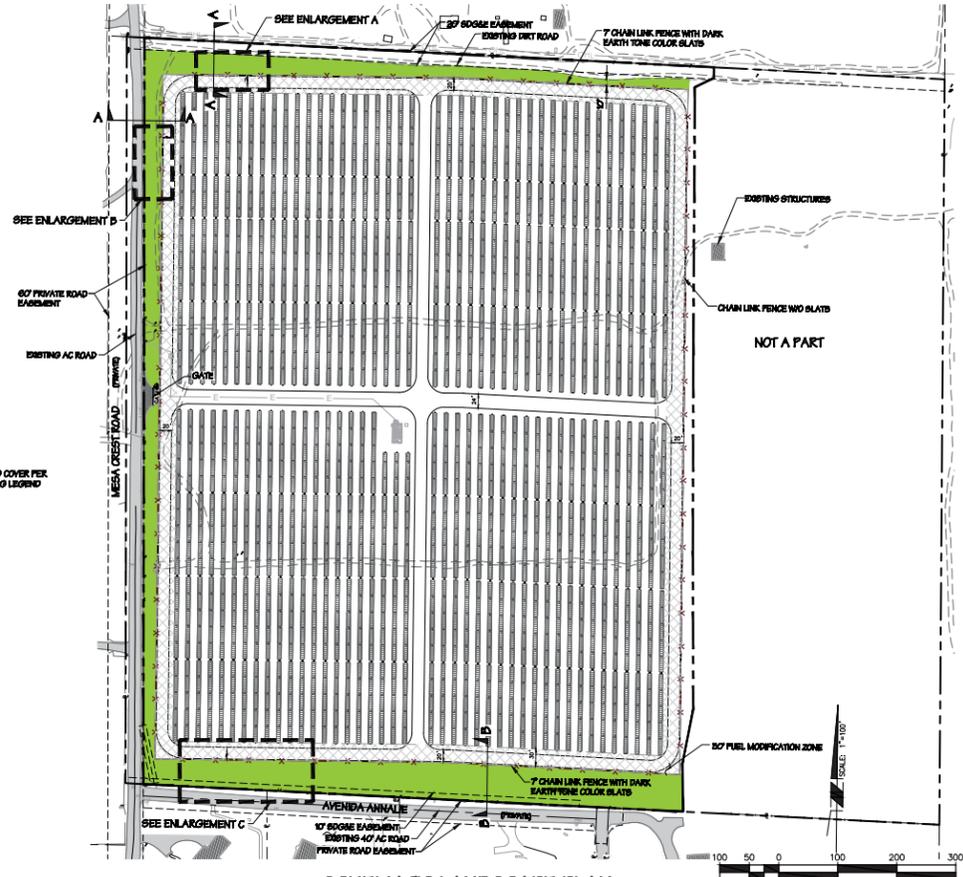
ENLARGEMENT A
NOT TO SCALE



ENLARGEMENT B
NOT TO SCALE



ENLARGEMENT C
NOT TO SCALE



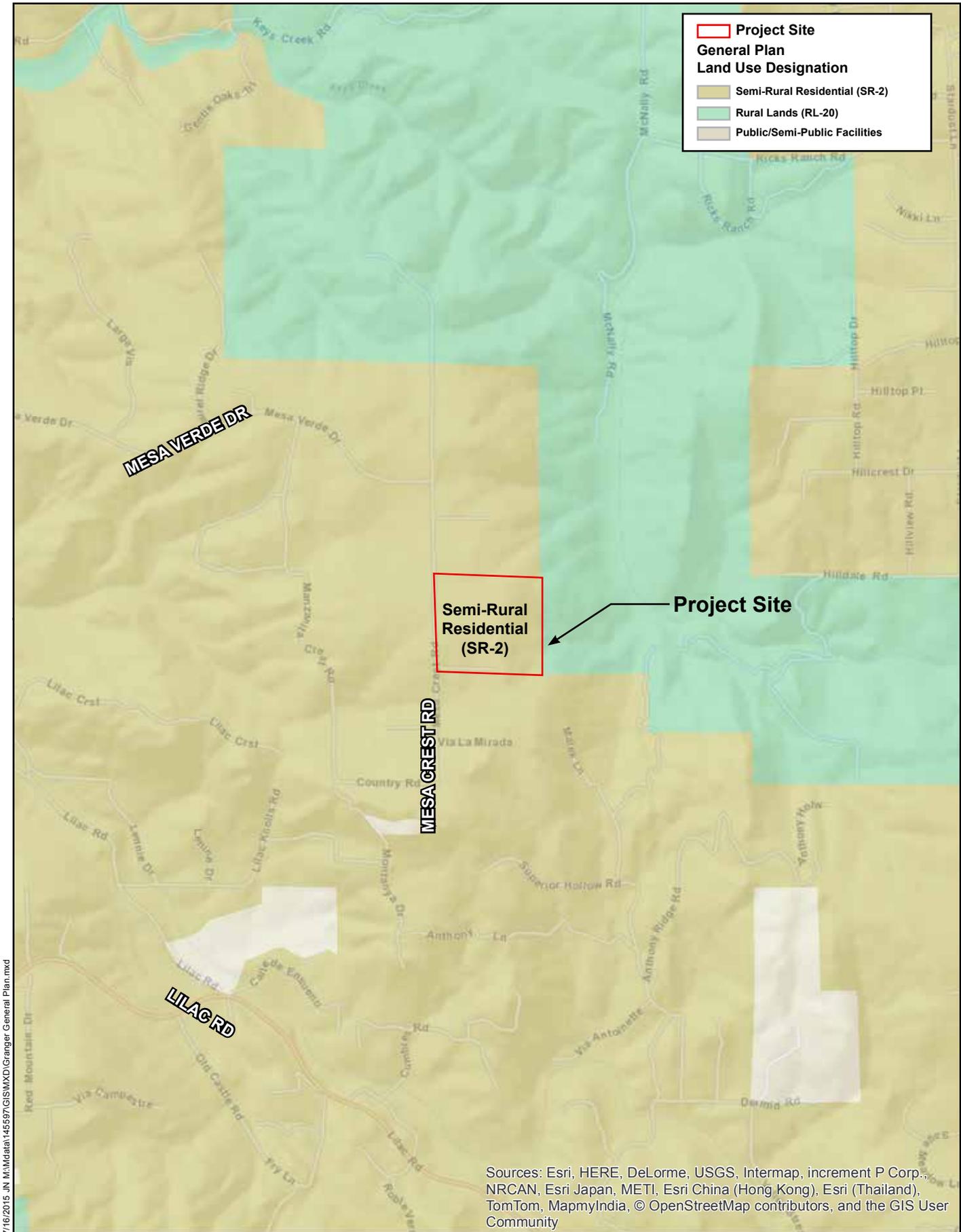
SCHEMATIC LANDSCAPE PLAN
SCALE 1/4"

LANDSCAPE SCREEN / BUFFER

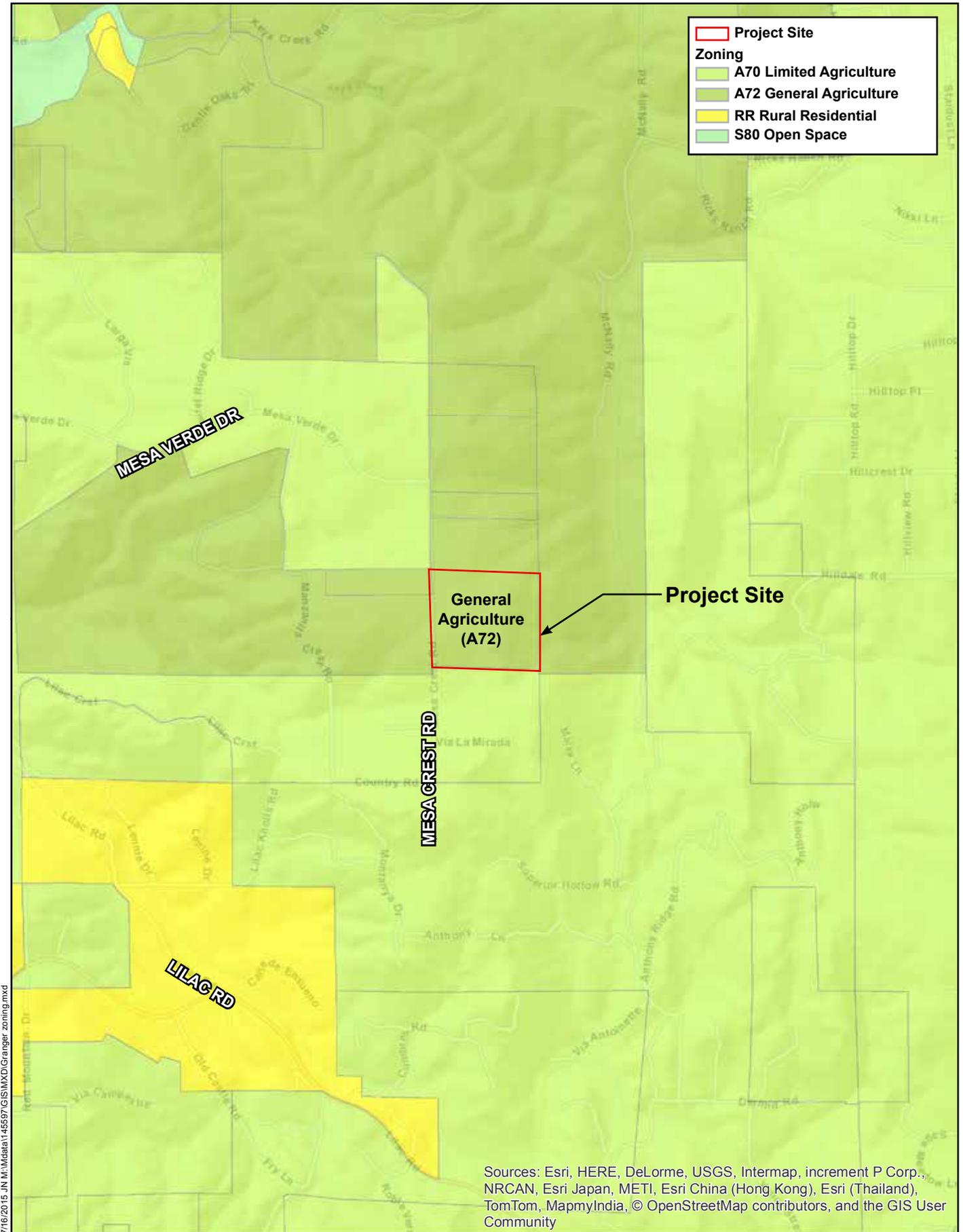
LANDSCAPE SCREENING: PLANT DENSE, NATURAL GROVES OF NATIVE AND DROUGHT TOLERANT TREES AND INCORPORATE MASSES OF NATIVE AND OR DROUGHT TOLERANT SHRUBS AND GROUND COVERS BETWEEN THE FENCE LINE AND THE EXISTING ROAD AND UTILITY EASEMENTS. PLACE TREES AND THE TALLER SPECIES OF SHRUBS NEAREST TO THE FENCE AS NECESSARY TO SCREEN AND SOFTEN THE FENCE AND NEW SITE IMPROVEMENTS. ADD PROGRESSIVELY LOWER SPECIES OF SHRUBS AND GROUND COVERS BETWEEN LARGE SHRUBS AND PAVEMENT EDGE TO EFFECTIVELY TRANSITION THE PLANT MATERIAL FROM HIGHEST AT THE FENCE TO LOWEST AT THE ROADWAY AND MAINTAIN DRIVER VISIBILITY.

NOTES

1. ALL LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS SHALL BE DESIGNED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO LANDSCAPE STANDARDS, VALLEY CENTER DESIGN GUIDELINES AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH AS 1809 - 81% WATER CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS.
2. NATIVE AND DROUGHT TOLERANT PLANTS THAT MINIMIZE WATER USE AND MAINTENANCE WILL BE UTILIZED. ALL PLANT MATERIALS WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE CLIMATE OF VALLEY CENTER AND FIT IN WITH THE ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOOD.
3. ALL LANDSCAPED AREAS SHALL BE IRRIGATED WITH AUTOMATIC Drip IRRIGATION SYSTEM. IRRIGATION WATER TO BE PROVIDED VIA EXISTING DOMESTIC WATER METER.
4. OWNER SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE VEGETATION DURING THE LIFE OF THE PERMIT. ALL DEAD, DYING, OR DAMAGED PLANTS WILL BE REPLACED IN KIND.
5. PLASTIC SLATS SHALL BE REPLACED IF DAMAGED DURING THE LIFE OF THE PERMIT.
6. THE LANDSCAPE DESIGN WILL INCORPORATE 24\"/>



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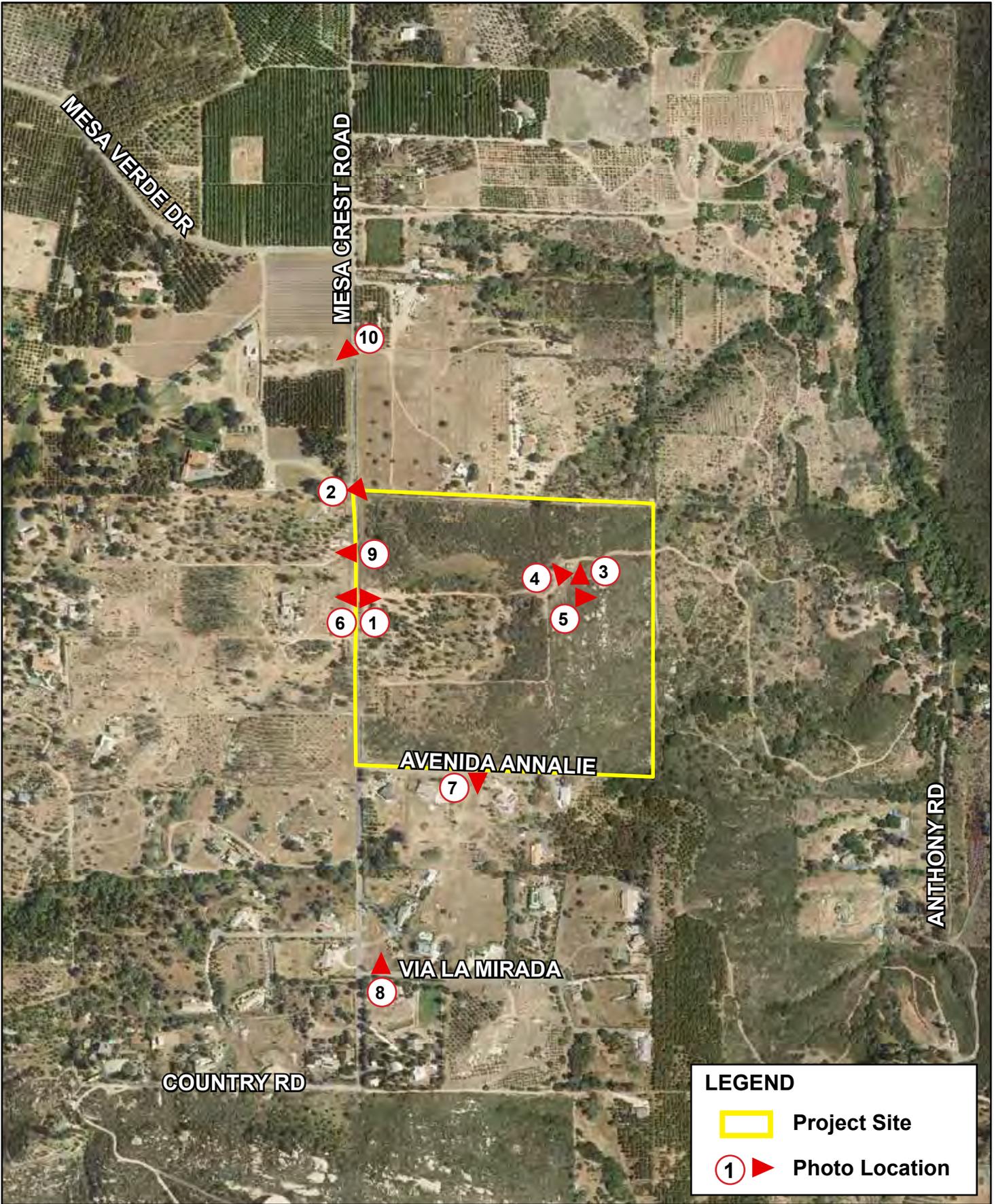




Photo 1: View looking east from existing gated Project entrance along Mesa Crest Road.



Photo 2: View looking east/southeast from northwestern property boundary along Mesa Crest Road.



Photo 3: View looking north/northwest from near the existing abandoned storage shed.



Photo 4: View looking northwest from near the existing abandoned storage shed.



Photo 5: View looking east from near the existing onsite abandoned storage shed.



Photo 6: View looking west from gated Project entrance to existing residential use.



Photo 7: View looking south from Avenida Annalie to existing residential uses.



Photo 8: View looking north from Via la Mirada, just south of the Project site.

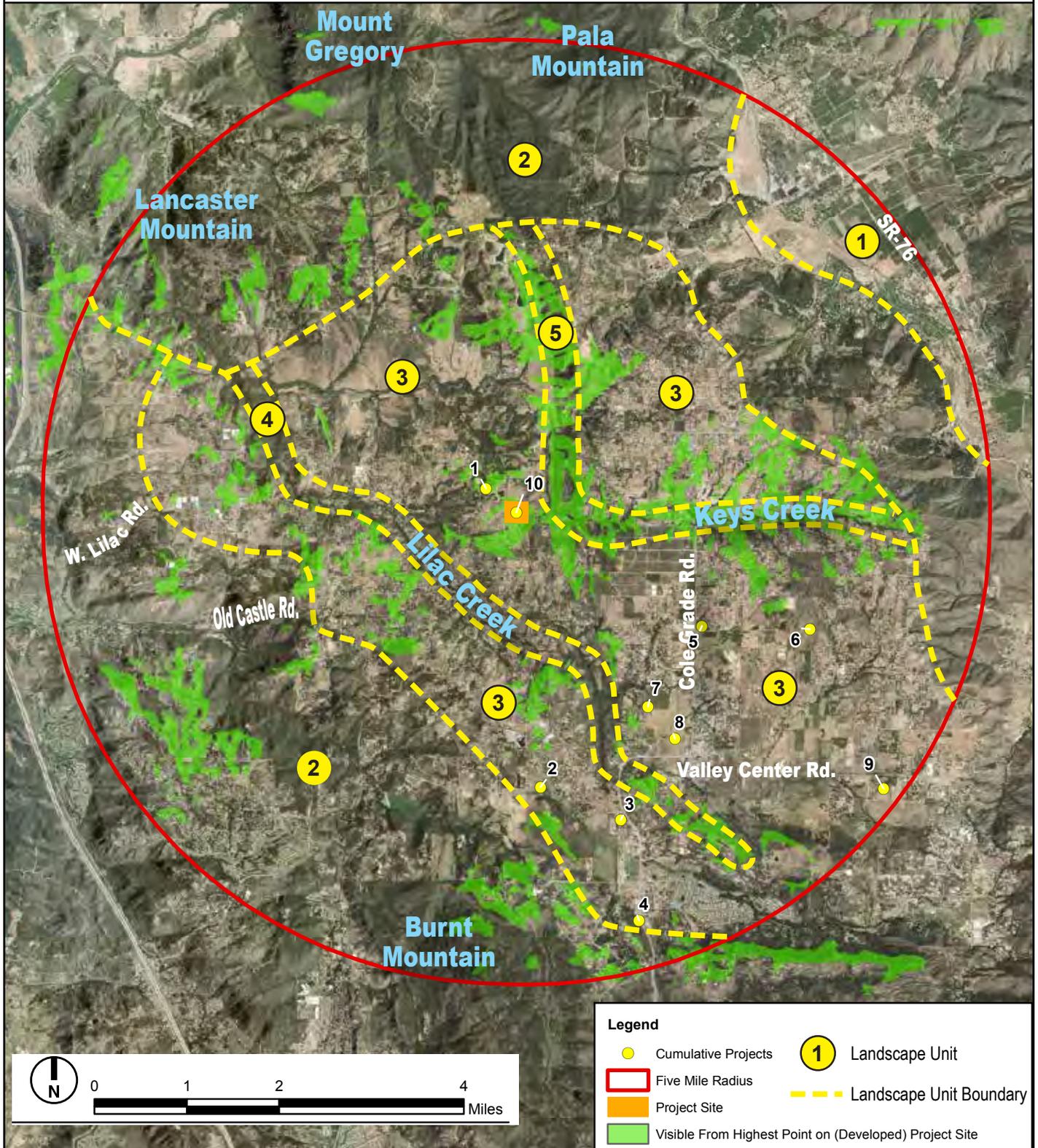


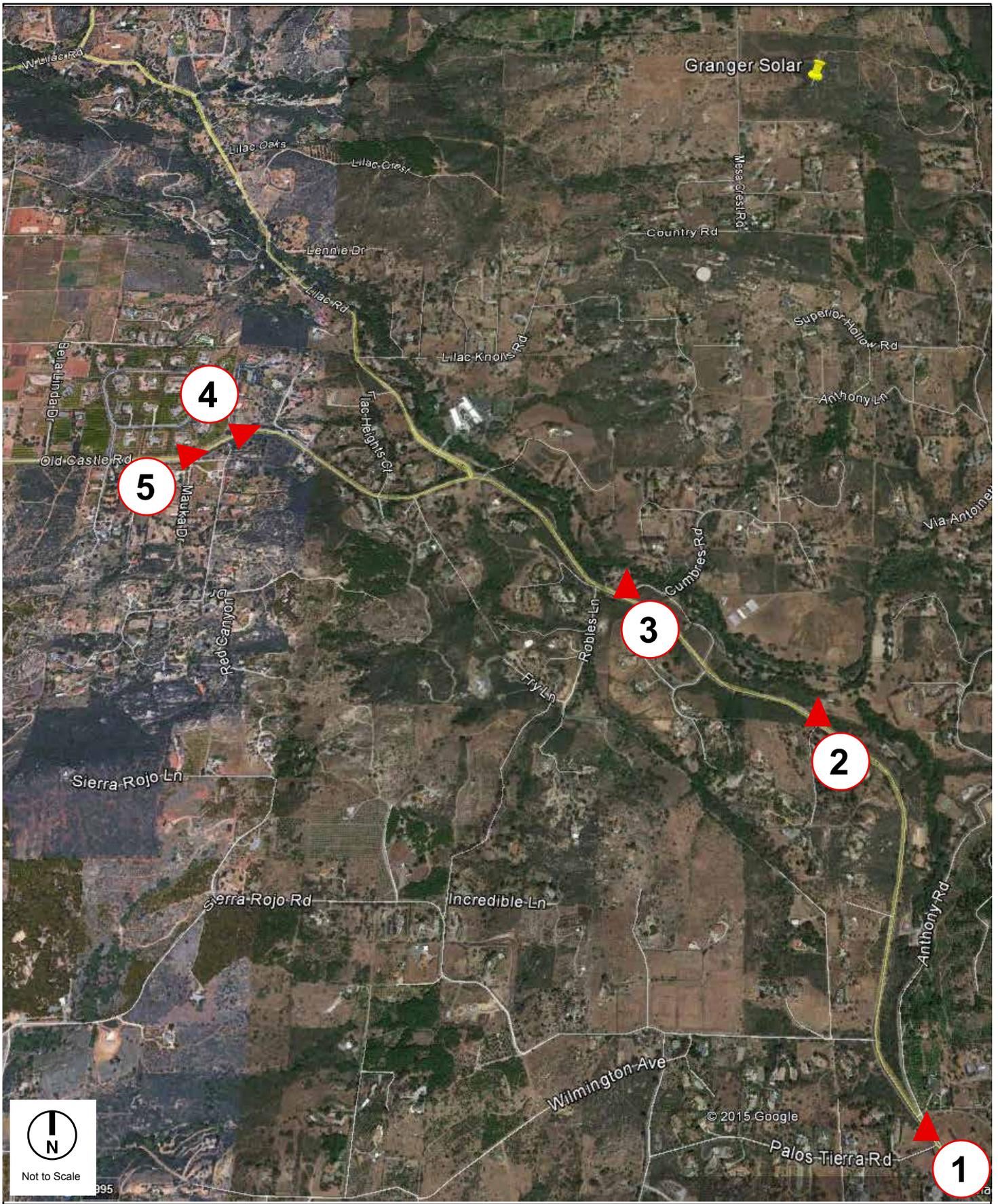
Photo 9: View looking west to adjacent residential uses from just north of gate entrance to Project site.



Photo 10: View looking southwest to existing vineyards/winery near intersection of Mesa Crest Road/Mesa Verde Drive.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Honey Bee Ranch Accidental Winery | 5. NLP Valley Center Solar | 9. HTW Tasting & Wine Making |
| 2. Brook Forest Grading Plans | 6. Verizon Aguacate Major Use Permit | 10. Granger Solar (Project) |
| 3. Lilac Plaza MPA | 7. Valley Center Cemetery District MUP | |
| 4. Hatfield Place | 8. Weston Towne Center | |







Key View 1: View looking north/northwest from Lilac Road/Anthony Road.



Key View 2: View looking north from Lilac Road/Private Road, south of Roble Verde.



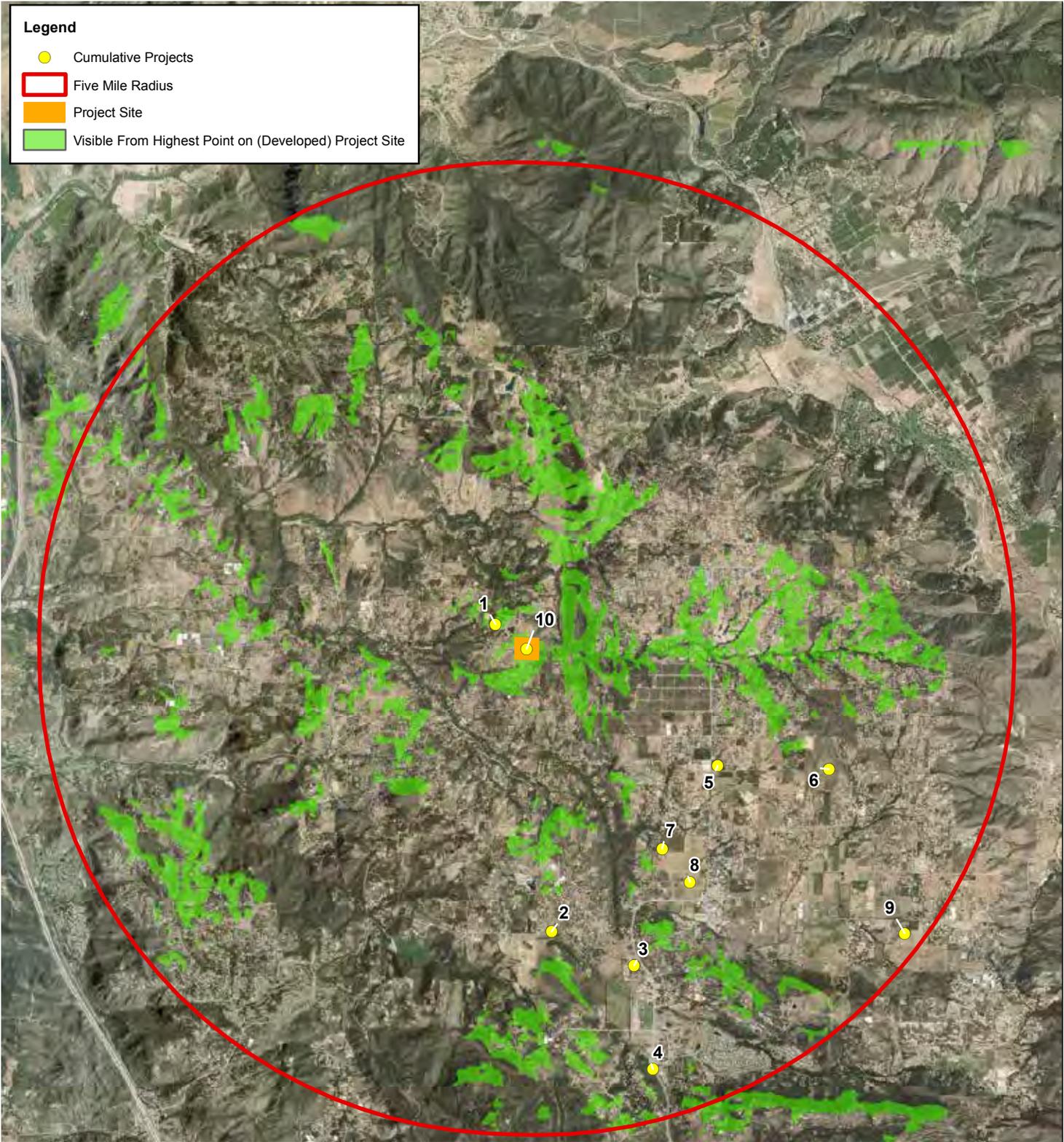
Key View 3: View looking north from Lilac Road/Cumbres Road.



Key View 4: View looking east from Old Castle Road/Grandview Heights.



Key View 5: View looking east from Old Castle Road/Mauka Drive.



- 1. Honey Bee Ranch Accidental Winery
- 2. Brook Forest Grading Plans
- 3. Lilac Plaza MPA
- 4. Hatfield Place

- 5. NLP Valley Center Solar
- 6. Verizon Aguacate Major Use Permit
- 7. Valley Center Cemetery District MUP
- 8. Weston Towne Center

- 9. HTW Tasting & Wine Making
- 10. Granger Solar (Project)



APPENDIX A

Project Conformance with Applicable Plans

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NLP Granger A82, LLC Photovoltaic Solar Farm Project Conformance with Applicable Plans

County of San Diego General Plan

The County of San Diego General Plan (adopted August 3, 2011) is intended to provide guidance for the long-term development of San Diego County. The General Plan includes various Elements that provide guidance for accommodating future growth while retaining or enhancing the County's rural character, its economy, its environmental resources, and its unique communities. Goals, policies and objectives are provided within each of the Elements to guide future land development and ensure consistency with the County's intended vision for the future of San Diego County. The Guiding Principles of the General Plan are to:

- ∞ Support a reasonable share of projected regional population growth;
- ∞ Promote health and sustainability by locating new growth near existing and planned infrastructure, services, and jobs in a compact pattern of development;
- ∞ Reinforce the vitality, local economy, and individual character of existing communities when planning new housing, employment, and recreational opportunities;
- ∞ Promote environmental stewardship that protects the range of natural resources and habitats that uniquely define the County's character and ecological importance;
- ∞ Ensure that development accounts for physical constraints and the natural hazards of the land;
- ∞ Provide and support a multi-modal transportation network that enhances connectivity and supports community development patterns and, when appropriate, plan for development which supports public transportation;
- ∞ Maintain environmentally sustainable communities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change;
- ∞ Preserve agriculture as an integral component of the region's economy, character, and open space network;
- ∞ Minimize public costs of infrastructure and services and correlate their timing with new development; and,
- ∞ Recognize community and stakeholder interests while striving for consensus.

Chapter 3 - Land Use Element

Planning for Sustainability

Policies

- ∞ **LU-6.9 Development Conformance with Topography.** Require development 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 storm water to the maximum extent practicable.

The majority of land surface within the MUP boundary is generally flat with some undulating slopes. Portions of the site would be graded to allow for installation of the panels and associated facilities. Grading would require approximately 24,000 cubic yards c.y. of balanced cut and fill.

A significant increase in storm water runoff or treatment needs from the areas affected by the Project is not anticipated to occur. The solar panels and supporting structures would occupy a minimal building footprint on the affected property and would not require or result in a significant change in existing conditions with regard to storm water runoff or treatment needs. As applicable, storm water runoff and treatment would be adequately handled through the implementation of onsite best management practices (BMPs) and/or other design measures and would not result in or require significant changes to existing offsite storm drain facilities.

Semi-Rural/Rural Lands

Policies

- ∞ **LU-10.2 Development - Environmental Resource Relationship.** Require development 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 site has a County Regional Category designation of Semi-Rural Lands. The General Plan Land Use designation is Semi-Rural Residential (SR-2). The Project has been designed to avoid or minimize potential impacts to natural resources. Project components have been designed to minimize potential effects on the existing visual landscape with regard to height and scale, as well as overall visibility, as the Project proposes vegetative screening to reduce views into the site and reflect the rural character of the area. No hazardous areas have been identified on the site that would interfere with the proposed development.

GOAL LU-12

Infrastructure and Services Supporting Development.

Policies

- ∞ **LU-12.4 Planning for Compatibility.** Plan and site infrastructure for public utilities and public facilities in a manner compatible with community character, minimize visual and environmental impacts, and whenever feasible, locate any facilities and supporting infrastructure outside preserve areas. Require context sensitive Mobility Element road design that is compatible with community character and minimizes visual and environmental impacts; for Mobility Element roads identified in Table M-4, an LOS D or better may not be achieved.

The proposed PV solar facility would be allowed under the existing General Plan and zoning designations with County approval of a MUP. The Project has been designed to minimize environmental impacts through site design measures, and all impacts identified can be reduced to less than significant through the implementation of mitigation measures (i.e. biological resources). Additionally, the Project is not located within a preserve area. The Project has also been designed to minimize potential visual effects with regard to height and scale, and vegetative screening is proposed along portions of the MUP perimeter fencing where appropriate to reduce public views into the site.

Chapter 5 – Conservation and Open Space Element

Visual Resources

Goal COS-11

- ∞ **Preservation of Scenic Resources.** Preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features, where visual impacts of development are minimized.

No designated County Scenic Highways are located adjacent to the Project site, and the site does not support any designated scenic vistas. No other natural or unique features of scenic value are found onsite, and the affected lands have not been in use as agricultural lands (former commercial orchard/nursery).

As identified in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the County General Plan, several County designated Scenic Roadways are located within the Project area and include State Route 76 (SR 76), Lilac Road, Old Castle Road, and Lake Wohlford Road. It is not anticipated that views of the site from these roadways would occur due to distance from the site and

intervening topography and vegetation. Further, due to the limited height and scale of the structural elements proposed onsite, views of the Project from these roadways would be minimized. Therefore, the Project would not adversely interfere with the preservation of such scenic resources, including vistas of important natural or unique features from these roadways.

Additionally, a landscaped buffer would be provided along the northern, western, and southern portions of the MUP boundary to screen views into the site from adjacent roadways and to maintain and enhance the rural character of the site within the visual landscape. The visibility of the Project components would also be reduced through Project design to minimize the height and scale of the Project components. Such design measures are intended to minimize potential adverse effects on existing views within the valley setting.

Policies

- ⌘ **COS-11.1 Protection of Scenic Resources.** Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.
- ⌘ **COS-11.2 Scenic Resource Connections.** Promote the connection of regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, and points of regional historic, visual, and cultural interest via designated scenic corridors, such as scenic highways and regional trails.

Refer to the above response. No regionally significant vistas, prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, or reservoirs are present on the Project site. No regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, or points of regional historic or cultural interest occur onsite or in the Project vicinity.

No County designated Scenic Roadways, as identified in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan, are located adjacent to the Project site. The Project has been designed to minimize visual impacts on area public roadways by distancing the development from adjacent (private) roads and providing landscape screening to reduce views into the site, consistent with the Valley Center Design Guidelines and applicable County roadway design measures.

The Project is not adjacent to any designated open space areas. The construction or dedication of public trails is not required or proposed with the Project, consistent with the Center Community Trails and Pathways Plan.

COS-11.3 Development Siting and Design. Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:

- Creative site planning;
- Integration of natural features into the project;

- Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape;
- Minimal disturbance of topography;
- Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character; and,
- Creation of contiguous open space networks.

Implementation of the proposed Project avoids the steep slopes onsite thereby minimizing potential impacts to the natural onsite topography and largely maintaining the natural character of the physical underlying ground surface.

As stated previously, the Project components as proposed are of relatively limited height and scale in order to minimize the visibility of such elements within the visual landscape. Installation of perimeter landscaping is proposed along portions of the MUP boundary, in combination with the incorporation of plastic or wooden slats within the fencing to screen views into the site and blend the Project components into the visual landscape, while respecting the rural character of the surrounding natural landscape.

The Project is not adjacent to any designated open space areas. The Project is not required to include the construction of trails or pathways or the dedication of easements for such recreational amenities and is therefore consistent with the Valley Center Community Trails and Pathways Plan.

☞ **COS-11.5 Collaboration with Private and Public Agencies.** Coordinate with the California Public Utilities Commission, power companies, and other public agencies to avoid siting energy generation, transmission facilities, and other public improvements in locations that impact visually sensitive areas, whenever feasible. Require the design of public improvements within visually sensitive areas to blend into the landscape.

The Project site is not within the immediate vicinity of any County-designated Scenic Roadways, as identified in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan. The Project has been designed to minimize the potential visual effects of the Project components with regard to height and scale, and would be consistent with applicable requirements of the Valley Center Design Guidelines. Vegetated screening is proposed along the northern, western, and southern perimeter of the proposed MUP area in order to screen public views into the site and to blend the development into the surrounding landscape.

☞ **COS-11.7 Underground Utilities.** Require new development to place utilities underground and encourage “undergrounding” in existing development to maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.

Within the Project boundaries, panel arrays would be electrically connected into panel strings using wiring attached to the racking. Panel strings would be electrically connected to each other via underground wiring. Gathering lines would connect individual panel array strings to

one or more inverters/transformers and combiner boxes. Wiring from the panel strings would be connected to combiner boxes. Electrical current would then be transferred to the inverters which would convert the Direct Current (DC) produced by the PV solar panels into Alternating Current (AC). The undergrounding of any Project-associated electrical lines within the Project boundaries would be consistent with the San Diego General Plan requirement for new development to place underground utilities to “maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.”

The point of interconnection (POI) for transmission purposes would occur at an existing utility pole within the Mesa Crest Road right-of-way, adjacent to the western Project boundary, just north of the proposed Project entry drive. The utility lines between the solar panels within the interior of the site would extend to the switchgear pad; refer to Figure 3A, Major Use Permit Plot Plan. From the switchgear pad, the line would be undergrounded to the existing SDG&E utility pole which supports a 12 kV (overhead) distribution line. Where the line meets the existing utility pole, the line would be extended aboveground to connect to the existing SDG&E distribution line. Energy generated by the Project would then ultimately be delivered to the existing Lilac Substation (69/120kV), located approximately 1.9 miles to the southwest of the property along Gabler Drive. As such overhead utility lines already exist in the Project vicinity, the Project would not result in a change to the existing visual appearance of the utility infrastructure in the area.

GOAL COS-13

Dark Skies

- ∞ Preserved dark skies that contribute to rural character and are necessary for the local observatories.

Policies

- ∞ **COS-13.1 Restrict Light and Glare.** Restrict 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.
- ∞ **COS-13.2 Palomar and Mount Laguna.** Minimize, to the maximum extent feasible, the impact of development on the dark skies surrounding Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories to maintain dark skies which are vital to these two world-class observatories by restricting exterior light sources within the impact areas of the observatories.
- ∞ **COS-13.3 Collaboration to Retain Night Skies.** Coordinate with adjacent Federal and State agencies, local jurisdictions, and tribal governments to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.

It is anticipated that the PV solar panels would be black in color and highly absorptive. As constructed, each panel would be coated with an anti-glare film to further minimize the potential for reflection and retain as much of the solar spectrum as possible, thereby reducing glare. Additionally, based on technical evidence evaluating the reflectivity of the PV solar panels, the proposed Project would not install highly reflective building materials that would result in a substantial increase in light or glare that would affect the surrounding area or that would produce reflective light that would create adverse disability or discomfort glare. All onsite equipment would be painted in an earthtoned color to further reduce the potential for glare to occur.

Limited Project lighting would be installed to allow for security. Low-level lighting would be installed at the main entry gates to facilitate access. Lighting would also be located at each inverter station and at the switchgear. 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 ownerships. All lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements.

Air Quality, Climate Change, and Energy

GOAL COS-14 – Sustainable Land Development

Policies

- ☞ **COS-14.4 Sustainable Technology and Projects.** Require technologies and projects that contribute to the conservation of resources in a sustainable manner, that are compatible with community character, and that increase the self-sufficiency of individual communities, residents, and businesses.

The Project is intended to allow for the installation and operation of a PV electrical generation facility and represents an opportunity to provide residents of Valley Center and the greater surrounding area with clean source of electrical power from renewable sources. As future population growth continues within San Diego County, the demand for electrical service will continue to increase accordingly. The Project represents an additional clean source of electrical power that would supplement energy currently supplied by the existing power grid, thereby reducing the potential for power shortages to occur and decreasing demands on the capabilities of the existing distribution system.

The Project has been designed to respect the existing rural character of the Valley Center community with regard to scale, bulk, height, materials and color, and light and glare effects. Furthermore, design measures are proposed to require installation of landscape screening to minimize potential effects on the existing visual setting and adjacent lands.

Valley Center Community Plan

1. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

GOALS

- 1. Preserve and enhance the rural character of Valley Center by maintaining a pattern of land use consistent with the following regional categories.

B. SEMI-RURAL LANDS

- Preserve and maintain the overall rural and agricultural character of the semi-rural areas.

The Project site has a County Regional Category Designation of Semi-Rural Lands and the proposed use is allowed under the existing General Plan and Zoning Regulations with County approval of a MUP. The proposed use is therefore consistent with the land use intended by the County for the property. Additionally, the Project has been designed to be compatible with the rural character of the Valley Center community with regard to scale, height, materials, and visual character. Vegetative screening is also proposed along portions of the perimeter of the proposed MUP area in locations where views from adjacent private land ownerships may occur. Steep slopes located on the subject parcel are avoided allowing topography of the majority of the property to largely remain in its present state.

2. LAND USE

GENERAL GOALS

- A pattern of development that conserves Valley Center's natural beauty and resources, and retains Valley Center's rural character.
- Development that maintains Valley Center's rural character through appropriate location and suitable site design.

Refer to the response under COMMUNITY CHARACTER, B. SEMI-RURAL LANDS, above.

COMMERCIAL GOAL

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6. Commercial/civic uses shall not interfere either functionally or visually with adjacent land uses or the rural atmosphere of the community. [PP]

The proposed Project is considered a civic use. The applicable General Plan Land Use Designation for the site is SR-2 (Semi-Rural Residential) with a Zoning Regulation of A72 (General Agriculture). Due to the operational nature of the proposed PV solar facilities, and that the proposed use is allowed under the existing General Plan Land Use Designation and the Zoning Regulation with approval of a MUP, the Project is not anticipated to interfere functionally with adjacent land uses. Additionally, the Project has been designed to minimize potential effects on visual resources of the surrounding Valley Center community (e.g. proposed landscape screening) and minimizing the height and scale of the Project components within the landscape) and all such effects have been determined to be less than significant.

8. Commercial/civic uses shall be periodically reviewed to ensure that the standards for noise, light, traffic, odors and all other conditions of approval are continuing to be met.

See response to Policy 6, above. Noise levels may be temporarily increased during the construction phase; however, such effects would cease once installation of the Project components was completed; refer also to the Noise Assessment (Ldn Consulting, Inc., September 2015) prepared for the Project (available under separate cover). In addition, the project will comply with the County Noise Ordinance. No significant noise impacts were identified during the construction or operational stages, and no mitigation measures are required.

Project lighting would be minimal and would conform to applicable County outdoor lighting standards and Valley Center Design Guidelines to avoid potential impacts on dark skies. Traffic generated by the Project would be limited to (short-term) construction traffic required for installation of the Project components and vehicle uses required for (long-term) operational and maintenance activities and would therefore not result in significant impacts on local roadways or existing circulation patterns.

Limited odors may be generated during the construction phase due to the use of equipment and vehicles (e.g. diesel fumes); however, it is anticipated that such odors would largely dissipate onsite and would cease upon completion of the construction phase. Due to the operational characteristics of the Project, the Project components would not generate odors that would affect adjacent properties.

8. Discourage commercial and civic uses outside of the Villages and limit all such uses to those that are clearly demonstrated as needed and which are compatible with the rural lifestyle of the Valley Center Community Plan.

As stated above, the Project is a civic use. The Project would result in construction of a PV solar facility for the generation of clean energy. The use is allowed under the existing General Plan Land Use Designation and Zoning Regulation with approval of an MUP, and is therefore consistent with uses intended by the County. Additionally, the Project has been designed to be compatible with the rural character of the Valley Center community with regard to scale, height, materials, and visual character. Vegetative screening is also proposed along portions of

the perimeter of the Project development area where views from private residences on adjacent lands may occur.

4. MOBILITY

GOAL

- ☞ A circulation system that achieves the combined objectives of connectivity and safety for all users (automobiles, bicyclists, equestrians and pedestrians), and also preserves the rural character of the community.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☞ 6. Existing trees and vegetation located within the "Right-of-Way" of all public roads, and determined to be of significant visual benefit shall be transplanted or replaced consistent with the Valley Center Design Guidelines.

A number of existing trees onsite would be removed to accommodate the proposed development. Mitigation is proposed to ensure that impacts resulting with removal of any sensitive resources onsite are reduced to a level of less than significant.

As previously stated, the site previously supported a commercial orchard/nursery onsite. As part of the orchard/nursery operation, the oaks were planted in the ground and then placed into boxes for commercial sale. The trees were abandoned when the orchard/nursery ceased operation and are in various degrees of health. Because the trees were commercially grown and not natural-occurring, they are not considered a sensitive biological resource that would require mitigation as the result of their removal; however, as a Project design measure, a number of these oaks (to the extent possible) would be utilized in the proposed landscape palette for vegetative screening along the Project perimeter. To the extent possible, the oaks would be relocated from the interior of the property and replanted to visually blend them into the other landscape plantings proposed and to further enhance the natural appearance of the visual setting, following Project implementation. The Conditions of Approval for the Project will require that all Project landscaping be installed consistent with that shown on the Conceptual Landscape Plan, as adopted.

6. CONSERVATION

GENERAL GOALS

- ☞ Provide for a "dark sky" which would retain the rural setting and not detract from astronomical research at Palomar Mountain.

Limited Project lighting would be installed to allow for security. Low-level lighting would be installed at the main entry gates to facilitate access. Lighting would also be located at each inverter station and at the switchgear. 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 ownerships. All lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ∞ 18. Use low sodium lights and light shielding for new subdivisions and use permits as required by the "Dark Sky" Ordinance for those properties within a specified radius of the observatory at Palomar Mountain.

Refer to response to 6. CONSERVATION, General Goals, above.

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

Portions of the County Zoning Ordinance that may affect the assessment of visual impacts are generally zoning overlay designators. Relevant designators include:

- ∞ B – Community Design Review Area
- ∞ D – Design Review Area
- ∞ G – Sensitive Resource
- ∞ H – Historic/Archaeological Landmark or District
- ∞ J – Special Historic District
- ∞ S – Scenic Area

None of the above designators apply to the Project site, with exception of the G designator relative to structure height which is not applicable for the proposed Project.

Valley Center Design Guidelines

PART I. COMMUNITY DESIGN OBJECTIVES

PART III. THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Site Design Process

B. Site Design Concept

1. Relationship to the Community and Neighboring Properties

- ⌘ Does the site plan respect the existing views, privacy, quiet, sun and light exposure of neighboring properties?

The proposed Project components have been designed to minimize potential impacts on visual resources and to ensure that the Project does not conflict with the rural character of the surrounding Valley Center Community. Project design measures that limit the height and scale of Project components, as well as vegetative landscape screening (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) along portions of the Project perimeter where public and/or private views into the site would potentially occur are proposed to reduce potential impacts on neighboring properties. Due to the limited height and scale of the Project components the Project would not block access to sunlight on neighboring properties, and due to the operational character of the proposed PV solar facilities, impacts on surrounding land uses with regard to noise would be less than significant.

2. Relationship to Existing Natural Features

- ⌘ Has the project made a sufficient effort to minimize grading and alteration of natural landforms?

Although the majority of land surface in the MUP area is generally flat, limited portions of the site would require grading to allow for installation of the panels and associated facilities. Therefore, the existing topography of the site would largely remain in its natural state.

- ⌘ Does the project retain important vegetation, rock outcroppings, and other natural features?

No rock outcroppings or other significant natural features are present within the existing natural onsite landscape. Grading would be required to allow for installation of the PV solar panels and associated facilities. Topography of the site would largely remain in its natural state, in particular, the area to the east of the proposed MUP development area.

2. Protection of Natural Features

Guidelines

A. Hierarchy of Importance.

- ∞ Development on all sites will require judgment about which natural features are most important to preserve. Although a consistent rule is not possible, the general order of importance in retention shall be:
 - (1) Natural contours and landforms;
 - (2) Large rock outcroppings;
 - (3) Natural drainage courses;
 - (4) Oak and sycamore trees;
 - (5) Other mature specimen trees; and,
 - (6) Views.

C. Other mature trees should be retained where feasible.

- ∞ This will require careful judgment weighing the value and hierarchy of all natural features, the size and species of the tree, and the developer's program for the site. This should not preclude removal of noxious or undesirable trees.

Refer to response to “2. Relationship to Existing Natural Features,” above.

The Biological Constraints Report (Michael Baker International, September 2015) prepared for the Project identifies the following habitats on and adjacent to the subject property (includes a 100-foot wide buffer from property boundary): southern mixed chaparral; coastal sage scrub; coast live oak woodland; flat-topped buckwheat scrub; native grassland; non-native grassland; extensive agriculture; extensive agriculture; disturbed habitat and developed lands. Overall, the Project as designed would impact sensitive onsite habitat (within the MUP footprint). Mitigation would be required, likely in the form of offsite purchase of credits in a County-approved mitigation bank, to ensure that Project impacts on biological resources are reduced to less than significant; refer also to the Biological Constraints Report, available under separate cover.

Potential impacts on visual resources resulting with implementation of the proposed Project would be reduced through design measures which include minimizing height and scale of the Project components within the landscape, distancing the Project components from adjacent roadways, and providing landscape screening along portions of the MUP boundary (including the relocation and replanting of a number of existing oaks, to the extent possible, currently present within the interior of the development area) to reduce potential (private) views into the development area.

D. Topography

- ⌘ Building pads are to be sited within the zoned setbacks and are to disturb the natural contours as little as possible. Balancing of cut and fill areas is encouraged. See "Save the Oaks and Sycamores" (Guideline 3) for grading techniques necessary for the preservation of existing oaks.

Refer to response to "C. Other Mature Trees Should be Retained Where Feasible," above.

F. Views

- ⌘ Existing views important to neighboring properties shall be studied and preserved where feasible. New site plans for housing should take advantage of potential views from the site. Two types of views are important:
 - Views from adjoining roads and lots through the site; and,
 - Views from within the site.
- ⌘ Natural features worth "viewing" include mountains, valley views, open spaces of existing flood plains, streams, lakes, tree stands, and western horizons.

No mountains, designated open space, flood plains, streams or lakes occur on the Project site. Views to the western horizon would generally be obscured, due to existing development and vegetation on adjacent lands, as well as the generally unvaried elevational differences of the Project site and surrounding lands. Design measures (e.g. landscape screening) are proposed to reduce the visibility of the site within the existing landscape and ensure that impacts to views of the valley within the surrounding viewshed are not significantly altered or disrupted with implementation of the proposed Project.

5. Architectural Character

E. *Walls, Fences and Accessory Structures*

1. Fences and Walls

- ⌘ Fences and walls are used to provide security, visual privacy, and/or define a space. The impact of a fence or wall on the surrounding neighborhood is determined by its size, type, layout, and character. Fences and walls should be minimized along public streets.
- ⌘ Walls and fences should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding landscape and architectural concept.
- ⌘ The following is a list of wall and fence materials whose use is not acceptable:
 - Chain link or open wire, except in landscape-screened service or security areas.
 - Corrugated metal
 - Bright colored plastic

- Reed material

The Project design would utilize low-profile panels, trackers, and inverters. All Project components would be placed behind a 7-foot high chain link fence (maximum of 8 feet) running along the MUP boundary in order to minimize potential visual impacts on the community, as well as to provide security. Wooden slats or plastic strips would be inserted along the northern, western, and southern portions of the fence to further screen the development from offsite views. Landscaping is proposed along the northern, western, and southern MUP boundaries adjacent to the fence to screen views into the site from adjacent uses and/or roadways.

8. Visual Linkages between Planting, Buildings, and Open Spaces

Guidelines

- ⌘ Tree masses are a valuable means of defining outdoor spaces and visually linking a site development to the larger community landscape.
- ⌘ Trees planted in rows along roads, site boundaries and in orchards are common in rural areas and may be used in similar patterns where site conditions suggest.

Refer to the above Response.

9. Planting Design and Plant Lists

Guidelines

A. Planting Design Principles

- ⌘ Valley Center is a rural community. To protect its rural atmosphere, new plantings must be compatible with the existing natural landscape and desired community character, both in form and arrangement.
 1. Roadway and road edge planting on private property should reflect:
 - a. The natural grouping of trees in clusters, as opposed to traditional rigid alignment in urban areas.
 - b. Limited use of shrubs in plantings with trees and ground covers. Arid plant communities do not naturally support a great number of plants.
 - c. Naturalized plant arrangements as opposed to stylized.

Refer to response to “8. Visual Linkages between Planting, Buildings, and Open Spaces,” above. All proposed landscape screening would be provided consistent with the Valley Center Design Guidelines and County landscape design requirements, as applicable.

11. Site Lighting

A. General Requirements

- ∞ Site lighting shall be limited to that necessary for security, safety, and identification. Other uses of site lighting for accent or decorative purposes is discouraged, except when provided by low-level fixtures and done in a careful manner. The Design Review Board will not recommend lighting plans that conflict with community character or provide excessive levels of lighting.

D. Site Lighting Fixtures

- ∞ Fixtures should be compatible with the architectural character of the buildings served.

Limited Project lighting would be installed to allow for security. Low-level lighting would be installed at the main entry gates to facilitate access. Lighting would also be located at each inverter station and at the switchgear. 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 ownerships. All lighting would conform to County of San Diego outdoor lighting requirements.