

CHAPTER 1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION, LOCATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1.1 Project Objectives

This chapter describes the proposed Newland Sierra Project (referred to herein as “project,” “proposed project,” or “Community”). The project is located in the community of Twin Oaks within the unincorporated portion of San Diego County, with the cities of Escondido and San Marcos to the south, the cities of Vista and Oceanside to the west, the unincorporated communities of Hidden Meadows and Valley Center to the east, and unincorporated Bonsall to the north. This chapter also includes a statement of project objectives, a general description of project characteristics and the environmental setting, the precise location and boundaries of the proposed project, and a statement briefly describing the intended uses of this environmental impact report (EIR).

Section 15124 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires an EIR to include a statement of objectives sought by the proposed project. The objectives assist the County of San Diego (County), as lead agency, in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR. The project objectives also aide decision makers in preparing findings or, if necessary, a statement of overriding considerations. The statement of objectives also includes the underlying purpose of the project.

The underlying purpose of the proposed project is to implement a new mixed-use community near existing and planned infrastructure, services, and jobs within the North County Interstate (I) 15 corridor, guided by the following project objectives:

1. Preserve substantial open space and thereby enhance native habitat conservation and natural community conservation planning in north San Diego County through the permanent dedication and management of open space to protect multiple special-status species and their habitats and provide connectivity to existing designated open space and preserve areas in areas surrounding the project.
2. Create compact, sustainable interrelated neighborhoods, consistent with the County’s Community Development Model and “Village” designation in the General Plan, and facilitate a multi-modal transportation network linked to regional transportation mobility options.
3. Construct public facilities phased concurrent with demand and support public services within existing service areas without burden or cost to existing residents, visitors, or North County unincorporated communities.
4. Provide a range of recreational amenities and facilities that are accessible to residents of both the Community and the surrounding area.

5. Integrate, maintain, and preserve unique landscape features and distinct landforms along the I-15 corridor.
6. Accommodate existing, planned, and future growth in north San Diego County by providing a diverse range of housing opportunities in conjunction with a Town Center that supports a mix of uses for the benefit of the new Community and surrounding areas.

1.2 Project Description

The project is a proposed planned community of residential, commercial, educational, park, and open space uses on 1,985 acres with associated improvements to infrastructure and public facilities within the unincorporated area of North San Diego County. The project has been designed in accordance with the County General Plan Community Development Model. The majority of the project Site is within the community of Twin Oaks, which is part of the larger North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area, and a portion is within the Bonsall Community Plan area. The project would include a residential component consisting of 2,135 single-family and multi-family dwelling units, which equates to an overall density of 1.08 dwelling units per acre over the entire 1,985 acres (see Figure 1-1, Specific Plan Map). The County General Plan Community Development Model guided the design and development pattern of the seven interrelated neighborhoods (also referred to as “planning areas”), with the highest densities and greatest diversity of land uses located in the project’s Town Center neighborhood and the lowest densities located in the project’s Summit neighborhood. The Town Center includes a maximum of 81,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving commercial uses, 95 multi-family housing units, a 6-acre school site, and park uses. The Community’s remaining six neighborhoods include the balance of the project’s housing units along with Community open space, parks, scenic overlooks, bike lanes, community gardens and vineyards, and walkable trails and pathways.

1.2.1 Project’s Component Parts

This section provides a breakdown of the proposed project’s open space, parks and trails, conceptual landscaping, sustainability features, planning areas, mobility, and other amenities in relation to the County’s General Plan.

1.2.1.1 *Conservation and Open Space*

Fundamental to its land use strategy, the project strikes a balance by protecting the region’s native habitats and landscapes while accommodating the region’s need for housing to support the region’s job growth. The proposed open space design would consist of two large, continuous blocks of open space habitat situated within the northern half and along the eastern boundary of the project Site, as well as a large third block of open space in the center of the project Site,

connecting all of the open space acreage to the open space located south and east of the project Site (see Figure 1-2a, Biological Open Space, and Figure 1-2b, Biological Open Space Regional Context). The project would dedicate and permanently preserve approximately 1,209 acres of on-site open space, and an additional 212 acres of off-site open space for a total preserve acreage of 1,421 acres (72 percent of the project Site acreage).

The majority of the proposed open space is located within the northern half of the project, which has the greatest potential to support wildlife due to the east/west connection with the San Marcos Mountains. In addition, the northern half is positioned to take maximum advantage of interconnected blocks of habitat. The northern portion provides a diverse representation of the natural and environmental conditions that occur within the larger project area. Open space is also provided along the eastern boundary of the project, adjacent to I-15, which serves as important habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*) and other wildlife species.

The proposed open space design includes a diverse array of natural resources and environmental features, including sensitive habitat, ridgetops, hill tops, and rocky outcrops. Although the majority of this area consists of dense chaparral, it also includes a diverse representation of the vegetation communities that occur on the project Site and in the vicinity, including riparian forest and scrub, coastal sage scrub, non-native grassland, and oak woodland. The two largest riparian areas located within the open space portion of the project Site are the south fork of Gopher Canyon Creek and the south fork of Moosa Canyon Creek. The south fork of Gopher Canyon Creek, which is located along Twin Oaks Valley Road, holds water part of the year. The topography within the proposed open space areas is highly diverse, and includes elevations from approximately 700 feet above mean sea level to 1,750 feet above mean sea level. The South Fork of Moosa Canyon is primarily located parallel to I-15 on the eastern side of the freeway. The South Fork of Moosa Canyon is disrupted by development before it crosses over I-15 north of the project Site and connects to the San Luis Rey River. An unnamed tributary to the South Fork on Moosa Canyon occurs within the proposed open space adjacent to I-15. This tributary runs in east/west and connects to Moosa Canyon through a culvert located under I-15.

The open space area contains a diversity of environmental characteristics, including representative populations of special-status plant and animal species; existing dirt trails and canyon bottoms currently used by wildlife for movement across the Site; and the north/south-trending tributary to Gopher Canyon Creek along Twin Oaks Valley Road, which provides linkage opportunities to the San Marcos Mountains.

In addition to the on-site open space dedication, the project would preserve approximately 212 acres of Pre-Approved Mitigation Area (PAMA) land within the draft North County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) area as part of the project's overall conservation strategy. The project includes a variety of upland and wetland vegetation communities, and is

situated in a key natural gap in the adjacent agricultural landscape amid cattle ranch lands and open space. All types of topographic relief are present, from steep scrub and chaparral-covered slopes, to low-sloped Engelmann oak savannah grasslands, to sycamore riparian woodland drainages. Granitic boulder outcrops occur throughout the project.

1.2.1.2 Parks and Trails

Park amenities are placed to serve each neighborhood, the Community, and the public at large. The proposed project would include approximately 36 gross acres of parks throughout the project Site. Open space for active recreation would be included at each Community park and at the joint-use school field. Several neighborhood-scale parks and pocket parks, including both public and private, are proposed and would include amenities such as open lawn areas, multi-use courts, picnic areas, children's play areas, pools, community gardens, a dog park, and an equestrian staging area. Proposed details for the parks are outlined in Table 1-1 and identified in Figure 1-3, Parks and Trails Plan. In addition, Figures 1-4 through 1-17 illustrate each of the proposed parks. Refer to Table 1-1 for more information regarding the acreages and public/private designations for the proposed parks.

A Community-wide trail network would act as the connective thread to unite the various neighborhood parks, creating a link to open space trails and walkability throughout the Community, as shown in Figure 1-3. The project includes bike lanes, an extensive trail system consisting of roadside pathways within the linear greenbelts, and multi-use trails. This network of trails and pathways would extend throughout the neighborhoods and the open space preserve. Multi-use pathways along the loop road would contain creeks or swales to provide water quality treatment and aesthetic appeal. Along Community trails and within parks and open space, key landforms and boulders would be identified at scenic vistas and trail rest points to increase the public's connection to the natural features found throughout the project Site.

1.2.1.3 Landscape

The landscape character of the proposed project is informed by the natural terrain. Five landscaping features are proposed:

1. **Parkways and Streetscapes:** The overall landscape theme would include preservation and re-use of natural Site boulders paired with oak trees and native and adapted low-water-use plants.
2. **Basins and Swales:** Riparian plantings within roadside swales and in water-quality basins would mimic the natural Site hydrology and create a consistent visual character throughout the Community.

3. **Vineyards:** Vineyard plantings located on slopes in key areas along the loop road would create a unique visual identity, establish a connection to the region's agrarian history, and provide a productive landscape.
4. **Enhanced Landscape Areas:** These high-visibility areas would combine the native character with more visually dynamic low-water-use Mediterranean plants.
5. **Fuel Modification Zones:** Perimeter slopes would be planted with drought-tolerant, fire-resistive plants that are informal in structure with the intent of mimicking the natural character of the native hillsides throughout the project Site. The fuel modification zones would consist of two zones. Zone 1 would consist of irrigated and maintained landscapes, and Zone 2 would be a thinned native fuel zone.

The landscape plan is shown in Figure 1-18, Landscape Concept Plan, and the landscape features are identified in Figures 1-19 through 1-23. Numerous boulders would be reused to provide visual identity within the Community's landscaping. Low-water-use, native, and naturalizing plant materials would make up the Community plant palette for each landscaping feature. Low-fuel-volume plant materials would be used in compliance with the Fire Protection Plan. In addition, to provide a productive component to the landscape, vineyards would be planted on selective high-visibility slopes. The vineyards would be planted with several varieties of wine grapes suitable to the microclimate. Boulders would be used to build a distinctive landscape identity throughout the Community, reflecting the surrounding landscape character.

Drought-tolerant plant species would be selected to create a distinctly native character. This allows a softer visual blend with the surrounding landscape while serving the fire protection needs of the project. Street trees would be required along all internal neighborhood streets.

Water conservation is a primary focus of the landscape design. All common area landscapes would meet an evapotranspiration adjustment factor of 0.55 within residential neighborhoods and 0.45 within non-residential areas. An evapotranspiration adjustment factor of 1.0 is allowed for special landscape areas (i.e., recreational and Community garden areas), as noted in County Ordinance No. 10032. All irrigation would be designed to meet or exceed an average irrigation efficiency rating of 0.75 for spray/rotor irrigation and 0.81 for drip irrigation, per the County's Water Efficient Landscape Worksheet. Certain species would be regulated, and some species, such as turf grass, would be prohibited from use in any front yard landscaping. Turf grass would only be used in park areas for functional active and passive use and would not be specified for any other Community landscape treatments. In addition, certain species would be prohibited from use on the project Site, including species that have invasive characteristics.

Community agriculture would be promoted through the creation of community gardens. Garden plots would be rented or reserved by the public, with first priority given to residents. This would promote

locally grown food sources for residents and provide a link to the region's agricultural heritage. Additionally, vineyards would be planted and maintained throughout the project Site, primarily on high-visibility slopes. These productive landscapes would be professionally maintained.

1.2.1.4 Sustainable Planning and Design

The proposed project would promote sustainability through Site design that would conserve energy, water, open space, and other natural resources (see Figure 1-24, Sustainability Features). The project would offer defining attributes, including a commitment to carbon neutrality by offsetting 100 percent of the project's construction and operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through the life of the project. As part of this commitment, the project would implement core sustainable development features, including solar on all residential units and a network of solar-powered street lights; low-water-use landscaping throughout the Community, with restrictions on the use of turf; possible indoor pre-plumbing for grey water systems in single-family residential dwelling units, if feasible; electric vehicle chargers in single-family garages and electric vehicle charging stations in commercial areas; and integration of community gardens and vineyards throughout the Community. The project would also implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to reduce automobile trips, both internal and external to the Community. The project's carbon neutrality and energy-, water-, and transportation-efficient requirements, combined with its balance of interrelated land uses, high level of preservation, and high-quality neighborhood design, make the project the first large-scale planned community in San Diego County to achieve a 100 percent reduction in the project's construction and operational GHG emissions.

1.2.1.5 Land Use Plan

The project's Specific Plan Map (Figure 1-1) identifies the Community's seven planning areas.

Town Center

The Town Center would be located off Deer Springs Road, east of the primary access road (Mesa Rock Road) in the southernmost portion of the Site. The Town Center would be compact and walkable, include commercial retail space, townhomes, and a school site, and provide employment opportunities for future residents and the surrounding area. The Town Center would include 95 residential dwelling units, 81,000 square feet of commercial space, a 6-acre school site, and 5.73 gross acres of parks. The Town Center would be designated Village Core Mixed Use (C-5) on the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan Community Plan and zoned with the General Commercial/Residential (C34) Use Regulation. Table 1-2 outlines the proposed land uses for the Town Center.

The Town Center is designed to provide shopping for convenience goods and personal services for day-to-day needs in the immediate neighborhood and surrounding community within an approximately 3-mile radius of the project. Neighborhood centers have on average, 10 to 15 smaller retailers and food establishments. They are typically anchored by a supermarket or grocery store and provide for the sale of convenience goods such as food and sundries, personal services such as laundry and dry cleaning, mail center, or shoe repair, limited medical services such as a quick care or dentist's office or eyewear retailer, financial services such as ATM's, and food establishments such as bagel shops, ice cream or yogurt stores, sandwich shops, and coffee shops, and one or two full-service restaurants.

Terraces Neighborhood

The Terraces neighborhood would be located directly northwest of the Town Center on the west side of the loop road in the southern portion of the project Site. It would include 446 residential dwelling units. The mix of residential units in this neighborhood would consist of two- and three-story townhomes and three-story townhomes with tandem garages. The Terraces neighborhood would also include an area set aside for environmentally sensitive resources. Table 1-3 outlines the proposed land uses for the Terraces planning area.

Hillside Neighborhood

The Hillside neighborhood would be located north of the Terraces planning area and on the east side of the loop road in the southeastern portion of the project Site. The Hillside planning area would include 241 residential dwelling units and 2.29 gross acres of parks. It would be composed of single-family detached homes with lots ranging in size from 4,500 square feet to 5,000 square feet, as well as age-targeted lots. Age-targeted lots are intended in neighborhoods that cater to, but are not restricted to, adults 55 years and older. Table 1-4 outlines the proposed land uses for the Hillside planning area.

Mesa Neighborhood

The Mesa neighborhood would be located north of Hillside, east of the Knoll, and southeast of the Summit neighborhoods. This planning area would be entirely composed of age-qualified single-family lots and age-qualified single-family clusters on lots ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 square feet centered around a park. The Mesa neighborhood would include 325 residential units and 4.10 gross acres of parks.

Age-qualified lots are intended in neighborhoods that offer homes and Community amenities specifically for adults 55 years and older, where housing must include at least one person who is 55 years or older as a permanent resident. Residents typically lead an independent, active lifestyle in a setting with private amenities such as a clubhouse and private recreational spaces.

The term “cluster” is used to describe a neighborhood in which housing is clustered on relatively small lots with a larger amount of common area shared by the homeowners, and sharing of common areas such as a courtyard, motor court, or open space. Table 1-5 outlines the proposed land uses for the Mesa planning area.

Summit Neighborhood

The Summit neighborhood would be the northernmost area of development located just north of the Knoll and northwest of the Mesa neighborhoods. This planning area would be composed of the largest lots on the project Site, with homes on lots ranging from 6,000 to 7,500 square feet. The Summit neighborhood would include 151 residential dwelling units and 1.98 gross acres of parks (including an equestrian staging area). A trail would lead to the highest point in the planning area where a lookout would be located. The Summit planning area would contain grade-adaptive large lots, family lots, and clusters designed to maximize views. Table 1-6 outlines the proposed land uses for the Sierra Summit planning area.

Knoll Neighborhood

The Knoll neighborhood would be located south of the Summit, southwest of the Mesa, and north of the Valley neighborhoods. This planning area would be composed of single-family homes with lots ranging from 4,500 to 5,000 square feet, in addition to family clusters. The Knoll would include 372 residential units and 9.51 gross acres of parks. The residential units in this neighborhood would consist of single-family lots and clusters. The Knoll design would preserve the primary knolls in the area. Table 1-7 outlines the proposed land uses for the Knoll planning area.

Valley Neighborhood

The Valley neighborhood would be located northwest of the Terraces and south of the Knoll neighborhoods. This planning area would be composed of clusters, townhomes, and single-family homes with lots ranging from 3,500 to 4,000 square feet. It would include 505 residential units and 12.26 gross acres of parks. Table 1-8 outlines the proposed land uses for the Valley planning area.

1.2.1.6 Mobility and Utilities

Access Points and Internal Circulation

The project’s multimodal transportation network would support pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, shuttle service, and vehicular use throughout the Community, with connections to off-site roads supporting the same. The project Site would have two primary access roads along Deer Springs

Road at Mesa Rock Road and Sarver Lane, with an additional access point at Camino Mayor off North Twin Oaks Valley Road. The Mesa Rock Road access would be built as a six-lane entry road with a median that transitions into a four-lane divided road farther into the Site, and then into a two-lane undivided roadway until it reaches the Sarver Lane access where it would transition into a three-lane undivided roadway. The loop road is primarily designed with a width of 32 feet and would include striped bike lanes and a 10-foot-wide multi-use pathway along its entire length. The bike lanes and multi-use pathway would connect to bike routes and a 10-foot-wide multi-use pathway along Deer Springs Road.

An electric bike share program would be included to further link the neighborhoods to one another and reduce internal vehicle trips. The electric bike share program would include the placement of a kiosk in close proximity to each planning area to allow electric bikes to be taken from one kiosk and left at another, encouraging sustainable transportation between planning areas within the project (see Figure 1-24 for proposed locations). The program includes the placement of eight kiosks throughout the Community, with 10 to 20 electric bikes at each kiosk. Additionally, the project would include bike lanes, an extensive trail system consisting of roadside pathways within the linear greenbelts, and pathways. With incorporation of these internal circulation features, the project would provide residents the opportunity to access employment, education, and recreational and commercial uses via multiple modes of transportation.

Mesa Rock Road

The Mesa Rock Road intersection at Deer Springs Road would be signalized and widened to 102 feet north of its intersection with Deer Springs Road within the project Site to provide two northbound lanes and four southbound lanes, transitioning to a width of 58 feet and then to a width of 32 feet farther into the project Site as the road traverses through the project's Town Center and through the Terraces and Hillside neighborhoods. There would be no parking along Mesa Rock Road. All of Mesa Rock Road would include an enhanced parkway with a multi-use pathway (see Figure 1-25, Mesa Rock Road).

Sarver Lane

The Sarver Lane intersection at Deer Springs Road would be signalized. Sarver Lane would be widened to 52 feet at the intersection to provide one northbound lane and two southbound lanes, transitioning to a width of 38 feet of pavement, then transitioning to a width of 32 feet within the project Site. There would be no parking along Sarver Lane. All of Sarver Lane would include an enhanced parkway with a vegetated swale and multi-use pathway. Existing pavement widths on Sarver Lane vary from 28 feet along the Catholic Church frontage (2557 Sarver Lane at the southern portion of Sarver Lane) to 16 feet north of the church (see Figure 1-26, Sarver Lane).

Camino Mayor

The Camino Mayor intersection at Twin Oaks Valley Road would not be signalized. Camino Mayor would be widened to 28 feet wide at the intersection of Twin Oaks Valley Road to provide one travel lane in each direction. There would be no parking along Camino Mayor. The off-site portion of the road would be designated as a private street. The on-site portion of Camino Mayor would include a pathway to Saddleback Park, but the portion between Saddleback Park to Twin Oaks Valley Road would not include a pathway (see Figure 1-27, Camino Mayor). The project would also include two Camino Mayor Alternative Alignments, the first of which would shift the alignment of the off-site portion of Camino Mayor slightly north, and the second of which would improve Camino Mayor within the existing easement (see Appendix D for full analysis of this alternative alignment). All other design aspects of the road would remain the same under these alternative alignments.

On-Site Residential Streets

The project's other residential streets would be 32 to 40 feet wide and traverse within planning areas. Private paseo roads would typically end at smaller clusters of residential dwelling units within a planning area. Street sections would include features such as landscaped parkways, vegetated swales, sidewalks, and pathways. With the incorporation of vegetated swales and landscape buffers between pathways and sidewalks along much of the roadways, street character would be semi-rural, while addressing fire and traffic safety. In addition, on-street parking would be provided in the Town Center to enhance traffic-calming and pedestrian safety. On-street parking would also be provided on residential streets, but would not be allowed on the loop road.

Off-Site Mitigation Requirements

In addition to the improvements described above, traffic impacts to off-site roadways would necessitate various off-site improvements. These improvements are identified as mitigation measures to reduce traffic impacts, and are described in greater detail in Section 2.13, Transportation and Traffic. They include improvements to the Deer Springs Road/I-15 Interchange, Deer Springs Road, Twin Oaks Valley Road, Buena Creek Road, Monte Vista Drive, S. Santa Fe Avenue, and various intersections, and they are necessary to improve the capacity and operations of these roadways. Several of these roadway improvements are located within the jurisdiction of another lead agency. Because these additional off-site improvements are identified as mitigation measures, this EIR discusses the environmental effects of the improvements to the extent known at this time, and as required by CEQA, in less detail than the significant effects of the proposed project (See CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(D)).

Deer Springs Road

Of the off-site mitigation requirements identified in Section 2.13 of this EIR, the improvements to Deer Springs Road (mitigation measures M-TR-8 through M-TR-10) would involve two options (see Figures 1-28 and 1-29, Deer Springs Road). Option A would improve an approximately 6,600-foot-long section of the segment of Deer Springs Road between Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road to a 2.1B Community Collector (two lanes of travel with a continuous center turn lane). The balance of the road southwest into the city of San Marcos and east to I-15, including its intersections with Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road, would be improved to a 4.1A Major Road (a four-lane road with a raised median). Consistent with these sets of improvements, Option A would reclassify Deer Springs Road in the Mobility Element of the County's General Plan (County of San Diego 2011a) from a 6.2 Prime Arterial (six-lane) to a 4.1A Major Road with Raised Median and a 2.1B Community Collector with Continuous Turn Lane classifications. The centerline of Deer Springs Road would be realigned to ensure a minimum 750-foot turning radii along the entire alignment.

Option B would construct the entire length of the road from the I-15 interchange to its intersection with Twin Oaks Valley Road as a four-lane road, with an approximately 7,600-foot-long section of the road between Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road as a 4.1B Major Road (four lanes of travel with a ~~continuous~~-intermittent center turn lane), and the balance of the road, including its intersections with Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road, as a 4.1A Major Road. Option B would not reclassify Deer Springs Road; the roadway would remain as a 6.2 Prime Arterial (six-lane) in the Mobility Element of the General Plan (County of San Diego 2011a). The centerline of Deer Springs Road would be realigned to ensure a minimum 750-foot turning radii along the entire alignment.

Both Option A and Option B would provide increased capacity on Deer Springs Road relative to existing conditions, although when considering level of service, only Option B would meet the County's level-of-service standards at project buildout. As is standard, the ultimate design of the road would be subject to County final engineering review and approval, whereby the County may require minor adjustments to the design details described herein.

Off-Site Utilities Improvements

Off-site sewer and water improvements would be completed in accordance with the approved water and sewer master plans prepared for the project. These improvements would be made in conjunction with surface improvements to Sarver Lane, Deer Springs Road, and Twin Oaks Valley Road. Additional segments of sewer would be improved in Twin Oaks Valley Road to Del Roy Avenue and East of Twin Oaks Valley Road within an existing Vallecitos Water District easement. Additionally, an 800-foot-long pipeline segment would require upsizing from the existing 18-inch-diameter line to a 21-inch-diameter line. This segment is located

north of East Mission Road between Twin Oaks Valley Road and Vineyard Road within the City of San Marcos. The existing sewer is located behind a commercial/retail development. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the entire 30-foot-wide easement would be impacted to upsize the existing sewer line.

1.2.1.7 Transportation Demand Management

The project would include a TDM Program that would reduce the project's impacts on the surrounding street network while striving to achieve countywide air quality/GHG reduction goals. The TDM Program is organized into three main types of strategies, as outlined below. The strategies developed as part of the TDM Program have been incorporated into the project as Project Design Features (PDFs).

Land Use Strategies

Land use strategies consist of land use diversity (mixed-use) and supporting design features that encourage residents/employees to walk, bike, or take transit within the project:

- PDF-1** Provide a mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, educational, and parks, so that residents of the project have access to basic shopping, school, and recreation opportunities without having to travel outside of the project Site. This would lower vehicle miles traveled because residents can use alternative transportation modes to reach the various land uses available within the Site.

Commute/Travel Services for Residents

Commute and travel strategies would provide residents with travel options other than private automobile trips to destinations inside and outside of the project Site:

- PDF-2** Develop a comprehensive trail network designed to provide multi-use trails between the various project components, land uses, parks/open spaces, school, and the Town Center. The trails network would provide connections to the various recreational trails and multi-modal facilities accessing the project Site. Additionally, the loop road includes 5-foot-wide bike lanes on both sides of the roadway.
- PDF-3** Provide bicycle racks along main travel corridors, adjacent to commercial developments, at public parks and open spaces, and at retail and multi-family buildings within the project Site.
- PDF-4** Implement an electric bike-share program to further link the project neighborhoods to one another and to reduce motorized vehicle trips. The bike share program includes the placement of eight kiosks throughout the Community.

Electric bikes can be taken from one kiosk and left at another to promote sustainable transportation between planning areas. It is anticipated that each kiosk will contain 10 to 20 electric bikes.

- PDF-5** Coordinate with a car-share organization to install three car-share stations with one car each (for a total of three cars) in the commercial area of the project Site, available to residents on an on-demand basis.
- PDF-6** Coordinate a ride share or shuttle system that connects the various project neighborhoods to the Town Center and to external transit facilities and resources such as the park-and-ride lots and the Escondido Transit Center.
- PDF-7** Coordinate with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) iCommute program for carpool, vanpool, and rideshare programs that are specific to the project's residents.
- PDF-8** Promote the adjacent park-and-ride lots at the northeast quadrant of the Deer Springs Road/Mesa Rock Road intersection and at the northwest quadrant of the Deer Springs Road/Old Highway 395 intersection to residents to encourage carpooling.
- PDF-9** Provide transit subsidies for residents.
- PDF-10** Promote available websites providing transportation options for residents.
- PDF-11** Create and distribute a "new resident" information packet addressing alternative modes of transportation.
- PDF-12** Promote a transportation option app for use on mobile devices.
- PDF-13** Coordinate with NCTD and SANDAG about future siting of transit stops/stations at the adjacent park-and-ride lots.

Commute Services for Employees

Commute strategies would allow employees at the Town Center and other employers within the project Site to travel to work by means other than private auto:

- PDF-14** Provide transit subsidies for employees of the project's Town Center.
- PDF-15** Promote available websites providing transportation options for businesses in the Town Center.
- PDF-16** Promote the adjacent park-and-ride lots to employees to support carpooling.
- PDF-17** Implement a demand-responsive shuttle service that provides access throughout the project Site, to the park-and-ride lots, and to the Escondido Transit Center.

PDF-18 Coordinate with SANDAG's iCommute program for carpool, vanpool, and rideshare programs that are specific to the project's employees.

PDF-19 Coordinate with NCTD and SANDAG on the future siting of transit stops/stations at the adjacent park-and-ride lots.

Transportation Coordinator

PDF-20 To ensure that the TDM Program strategies are implemented and effective, a transportation coordinator (likely as part of a homeowner's association (HOA)) would be established to monitor the TDM Program, and would be responsible for developing, marketing, implementing, and evaluating the TDM Program.

1.2.1.8 Sustainability Features

In addition to the TDM Program outlined above, the following sustainability features would be implemented to reduce GHG emissions and improve energy and water conservation. These strategies have been incorporated into the project as PDFs.

PDF-21 Landform alteration shall be minimized by clustering development and preserving natural topography, open spaces, and view corridors. Community open space areas shall be integrated into Site design and building layout.

PDF-22 Solar panels shall be required on all residential units. Where feasible, roof-integrated solar panels should be considered to minimize visual impacts. All light fixtures along public roads shall be solar powered. The project can use centralized solar arrays (e.g., a solar array on top of a shade structure in a parking lot) to implement this requirement.

PDF-23 ~~The All private residential garages of all single family homes shall include an electric vehicle charger in the garage, and in all public parking areas with ten or more spaces (i.e., commercial parking lots and at community and public parks).~~ electric vehicle charging stations shall be installed in 3 percent of the Town Center's commercial core parking spaces.

PDF-24 All common area landscapes shall meet an evapotranspiration adjustment factor of 0.55 within residential neighborhoods and 0.45 within non-residential areas. An evapotranspiration adjustment factor of 1.0 is allowed for special landscape areas (i.e., recreational and community garden areas), as noted in County Ordinance Number 10032. All irrigation shall be designed to meet or exceed an average irrigation efficiency rating of 0.75 for spray/rotor irrigation and 0.81 for drip irrigation.

- PDF-25** Turf grass shall be prohibited in residential front yards and within street rights-of-way. Turf in rear or side yards of single-family homes shall be warm-season turf or shall have a plant species factor of 0.6 or lower.
- PDF-26** All single-family homes shall be plumbed for greywater systems for use in private yards.
- PDF-27** The amount of stormwater run-off and pollutant discharge shall be minimized through the use of open vegetated swales along roadways and within neighborhoods; water quality and detention basins; permeable paving, where feasible; and other similar low-impact-development techniques.
- PDF-28** An area within the maintenance yard of the Sierra Farms Park shall be designated for collection of common area landscape trimmings. These landscape trimmings shall be chipped and ground into either mulch or compost and used to return organic matter and nutrients to the project's landscaped areas. The green waste collection area shall be designed to collect approximately 30 to 40 yards of material at a time (approximately three open stalls 10 feet wide by 10 feet long by 6 feet tall). A buffer of screening shrubs shall be planted between the collection area and the street. The green waste area shall be maintained by the HOA.
- PDF-29** Vineyards and community gardens shall be incorporated to connect the Community to the region's agrarian history and provide productive landscapes.
- PDF-30** ~~Where feasible, commercial structures would use cool roof technologies and light-colored paving.~~ Residential structures will have solar photovoltaic panels installed on rooftops. Non-residential structures will comply with the 2016 Title 24 requirements for cool roofs. Outdoor pavement, such as walkways and patios, will use paving materials with three-year SRI of 0.28 or initial SRI of 0.33.
- PDF-31** Builders would offer residents their choice of energy-efficient appliances (including washer/dryers, refrigerators), and appliances (including dishwashers) installed by builders would be Energy Star rated or equivalent.
- PDF-32** The project would not install wood-burning fireplaces for heating purposes. All fireplaces would be natural-gas-fired.

1.2.1.9 Other Project Design Features

Other PDFs incorporated into the project include noise reduction measures and a traffic control plan, as indicated below.

- PDF 33** The project applicant, or its designee, shall take those steps necessary to require that all construction equipment shall be properly maintained and equipped with

noise-reduction intake, exhaust mufflers, and engine shrouds, in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations. Equipment engine shrouds shall be closed during equipment operation.

- PDF 34** The project applicant, or its designee, shall take those steps necessary to require that whenever feasible, electrical power shall be used to run air compressors and similar power tools.
- PDF 35** The project applicant, or its designee, shall take those steps necessary to require that equipment staging areas are located as far as feasible from occupied residences or schools.
- PDF 36** The project applicant, or its designee, shall take those steps necessary to require that for all construction activity (on-site and off-site improvement work), noise attenuation techniques shall be employed, as needed, to ensure that noise levels remain below 75 dBA L_{eq} at existing residences. Such techniques may include, but are not limited to, the use of sound blankets on noise-generating equipment and the construction of temporary sound barriers adjacent to construction sites between affected uses.
- PDF 37** The project applicant, or its designee, shall take those steps necessary to ensure that on-site rock crushing equipment is located a minimum of 600 feet from the property line of existing residences and future on-site residences.
- PDF 38** Maximum noise levels resulting from pile driving operations shall be limited to 20 percent of every hour.
- PDF 39** The project would be required to prepare Construction Traffic Control Plans (TCPs) to manage construction-related traffic, for County approval prior to issuance of the first grading permit and as required for individual grading and construction permits associated with off-Site improvements.

1.2.1.10 Fire Safety

The project Site is located within the Deer Springs Fire Protection District (DSFPD) and is designed to provide wildfire defensibility and minimize the risk of structural loss. Due to the terrain and topography on the project Site, special attention was paid to locate neighborhoods and structures to minimize the likelihood of wildfire spread and encroachment. An additional access road (Camino Mayor) would provide residents and emergency access vehicles access to the project Site. DSFPD travel times to the project Site meet the County General Plan standard of 5 minutes or less for all structures (County of San Diego 2011b). Fuel modification zones are conservatively sized at 250 feet on either side of development, almost 4 times the modeled flame length and 2.5 times the standard 100-foot fuel modification zone requirement.

A Fire Protection Plan (FPP) was prepared for the project (Appendix N of the EIR) to evaluate and identify the potential fire risk associated with the project's land uses, and identify requirements for water supply, fuel modification and defensible space, emergency access, building ignition and fire resistance, fire protection systems, and wildfire emergency pre-planning, among other pertinent fire protection criteria. The FPP generates and memorializes the fire safety requirements of the DSFPD and the San Diego County Fire Authority, along with project-specific measures based on the Site, its intended use, and its fire environment. The proposed project will pre-pay the County Fire Mitigation Fee pursuant to a Fire Fee Payment Agreement with the DSFPD which would also provide funding beyond the required County Fire Mitigation Fee to augment the DSFPD's capabilities for continued provision of timely service to its primary jurisdictional area, including the project Site.

The project meets or exceeds all applicable codes and regulations, with the exception of a minor fuel modification area adjacent to three lots in the Summit neighborhood where an equivalent form of protection determined to provide the same fire protection level as fuel modification is required.

As determined during the analysis of this Site and its fire environment, the Site has characteristics that, under certain conditions, have the potential to facilitate fire spread. Under extreme conditions, wildfires on the Site would burn erratically and aggressively and result in significant ember production. Once the project is built, the on-site fire potential would be lower than its current condition due to conversion of wildland fuels to managed landscapes, extensive fuel modification areas, improved accessibility to fire personnel, and construction of structures built to the latest ignition-resistant building codes.

The project was designed with fire protection as a key objective. The project's road improvements were designed to facilitate access for emergency apparatus and personnel throughout the Site. Water availability and flow are consistent with DSFPD requirements, including fire flow and hydrant distribution. These features, along with the ignition resistance of all buildings; interior sprinklers; and pre-planning, training, and awareness, would assist responding firefighters through prevention, protection, and suppression capabilities.

Additionally, as required by the project's FPP, an evacuation plan has been prepared for the project (Appendix N) that indicates how the project would evacuate during a wildfire emergency. The evacuation plan has been prepared in coordination with DSFPD and San Diego County such that it does not conflict with existing evacuation and pre-plans. Early evacuation for any type of wildfire emergency is the preferred method of providing for resident safety, consistent with the DSFPD's current approach. As such, the project's HOA would formally adopt, practice, and implement a "Ready, Set, Go!" approach to Site evacuation. The "Ready, Set, Go!" concept is widely known and encouraged by the State of California and most fire agencies. Pre-planning for emergencies, including wildfire emergencies, focuses on being prepared, having a well-defined

plan, minimizing potential for errors, maintaining a site's fire protection systems, and implementing a conservative (evacuate as early as possible) approach to evacuation and site uses during periods of fire weather extremes.

A separate FPP was prepared for the portion of the project that occurs within the San Marcos Fire Protection District (SMFPD) jurisdiction (Sierra Farms; see Figures 1-3 and 1-17). This FPP considers the proposed Site plan and land use, the potential impact from the land use on the SMFPD and the potential impact from wildfire on the project. The FPP for Sierra Farms provides for fire safety that is consistent with the code or provides the same practical effect by requiring additional measures. The FPP for Sierra Farms was reviewed and approved by the SMFPD.

These two FPPs prepared for DSFPD and SMFPD are collectively referred to as "the project's FPP" throughout this EIR.

1.2.1.11 Utilities

Water Service

The project Site is located within the San Diego County Water Authority's (Water Authority) wholesale service area, and is served by the Vallecitos Water District (VWD), the retail water purveyor. The Water Authority manages supply relationships with the Metropolitan Water District. The retailer water districts within the Water Authority's service area then deliver water to local homes, businesses, and agricultural users. VWD also operates the Meadowlark Water Reclamation Facility and sells recycled water to large agricultural users and businesses in Carlsbad.

An extensive network of water mains exists within the project Site, ranging from 8 to 16 inches in diameter. There is one existing 1.3-million-gallon water tank within the project Site that serves the Site and provides service to adjacent properties. The existing and proposed water infrastructure is shown in Figure 1-30, Water Supply.

The project's demand for water would require the relocation of some existing water mains, construction of new water mains, and construction of two new water tanks, one to serve the project and one for VWD's larger water supply system. The existing Coggan water tank adjacent to the Summit neighborhood would remain, subject to future VWD replacement, and a new water tank would be built immediately west of it to serve the project. An additional water tank in the southern portion of the Terraces neighborhood would serve the larger VWD service area. Establishment of this water supply would occur through the expansion/extension of existing supply pipelines and water tanks located within and adjacent to the project Site. The precise alignment and sizing of the project's water facilities would be determined by VWD during final design.

Wastewater Service

The project Site is located within the VWD sewer service area. The majority of the project Site would require annexation into a Sewer Improvement District prior to sewer service being available. This is an internal process for VWD and does not require Local Agency Formation Commission approval. An existing 8-inch-diameter public sewer main owned by VWD is located approximately 0.25 mile south of the project Site in Sarver Lane. The project would increase demand for sewer treatment. On-site improvements would include 8-inch-diameter to 12-inch-diameter gravity sewers (see Figure 1-31, Sewer Collection System). The precise alignment and sizing of the project's wastewater facilities would be determined by VWD during final design.

Stormwater Facilities

The project Site is not developed and does not have any significant existing stormwater drainage facilities. In compliance with the County's stormwater design manual and the County's hydrology design manual, the project would incorporate stormwater facilities to manage stormwater quality, hydromodification impacts, and peak flow attenuation. Stormwater quality and hydromodification impacts would be addressed through a Community-wide network of vegetated swales and bioretention basins integrated into the design of the project's street system and neighborhoods. These features would provide high-quality stormwater treatment and reduce flows to pre-development levels for storm events that contribute to the hydromodification of receiving channels. Stormwater detention would be provided in flood control basins prior to runoff exiting the project Site.

In addition to on-site facilities, drainage and water quality improvements would be constructed for off-site road improvements where those facilities are substandard or do not exist today. Such off-site improvements would correct existing off-site drainage issues such as overtopping and flooding, and would address the water quality treatment requirements for existing road surfaces and all of the new or expanded road surfaces where none exist today, resulting in elimination of existing flooding conditions and a net improvement in the water quality of stormwater runoff leaving these roads.

Natural Gas and Electricity

Natural gas and electricity in the project area are provided by San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). The project Site is currently served by electric lines and gas lines. Overhead electric lines and an underground gas line that feed the local businesses and residences in the project area are located along Deer Springs Road and Mesa Rock Road. The project would increase demand for natural gas and electricity, and would require the extension of those utilities to the project

Site to provide service for the project. The project would include utility easements for power and natural gas services to be located within roadways. All on-site gas and electric distribution lines would be undergrounded. Above-ground/pad-mounted equipment would be required as part of the electric distribution system. The precise alignment and sizing of the project's natural gas and electric facilities would be determined by SDG&E during final design.

1.2.1.12 Construction

Build out of the Community is anticipated to occur in two phases over approximately 10 years in response to market demands and in accordance with a logical and orderly expansion of roadways, public utilities, and infrastructure. Figure 1-32, Phasing Plan, illustrates the anticipated sequence of planning area development, although sub-areas may not develop in that order. Backbone infrastructure and roadway improvements would be constructed in phases, as needed, to ensure that improvements are in place at the time of need.

All cut and fill quantities would be balanced within the boundaries of the project Site and the improvements to Deer Springs Road and Sarver Lane immediately off Site, and no soil export would be required. Approximately 9.4 million cubic yards of cut and fill would occur during Phase 1, and approximately 1.3 million cubic yards of cut and fill would occur during Phase 2 (see Section 2.3, Air Quality, for more information). Additional details of the construction schedule including heavy construction equipment hours of operation and duration; worker, vendor, and hauling trips; and equipment mix are discussed in Section 2.3, Air Quality.

Blasting would occur during the grading phase in the central portion of the project Site and along roads within the project Site, including some off-site portions along Deer Springs Road. Blasting has the potential to result in air quality and noise impacts, as discussed in Section 2.3, Air Quality, and Section 2.10, Noise. Excavated rock would be crushed and screened to produce capping material to be used in the construction of the proposed project. Much of this capping material may be produced in the field using special attachments installed on off-road equipment used to excavate the rock. Alternatively, rock-crushing equipment may be installed to process the excavated rock and produce capping material. Processing equipment would be the primary source of particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) emissions. The processing equipment would consist of a crusher, screen, and conveyor, and the crushed rock would be stockpiled. A single, primary crusher and screen may be all that is required, but use of a secondary crusher and additional screen would expedite this process. The rock-crushing equipment could process up to 2,500 cubic yards per day, and this was assumed as a conservative estimate of the maximum potential throughput. The rock-crushing equipment would be powered by a diesel-engine generator. It is assumed that each generator would be approximately 1,000 horsepower. Each generator would operate up to 8 hours per day.

All grading activities, blasting, and rock-crushing operations are anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022 when major earthwork activity would be completed for both phases. Individual blasting or rock-crushing activities during Phases 1 and 2 would occur sequentially and would not overlap.

1.2.2 Technical, Economic, and Environmental Characteristics

Environmental characteristics considered in the design of the project include those discussed below.

Biological Resources

As discussed in Section 1.2.1.1 and Section 2.4, Biological Resources, the project proposes to permanently preserve approximately 1,209 acres of on-site biological open space, as well as 212 acres of off-site habitat preservation, for a total preserve acreage of 1,421 acres (72 percent of the project Site acreage). In addition to supporting native plants and animals and their habitats, the project's preserve areas would include a range of environmental features such as ridgetops, hill tops, chaparral-covered hills, and rocky outcrops. The majority of the project's preserve areas would consist of dense chaparral, riparian and oak woodland, and non-native grasslands, as well as a limited amount of coastal sage scrub, all habitat types supporting a wide range of native vegetation communities and species. No motorized vehicles would be permitted in the preserve. Design principles were defined at the project onset to reinforce the function and value of the preserve area. Design principles include conserving target species; creating contiguous habitat (with connections to adjacent PAMA areas); and creating larger, more diverse preserves.

The County's Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) identifies environmental resources present within the County, including wetlands, and provides measures to preserve these resources (County of San Diego 2011c). The project is not strictly in conformance with the RPO because of its potential impacts to steep slopes, wetlands, and cultural resources; therefore, the project includes a proposed amendment to the RPO that would exempt the project from the requirements of the RPO with implementation of equivalent regional resource protection. The Resource Protection Plan (see Appendix H) would serve as the functional equivalent of the County's RPO for the proposed project.

The proposed project has been identified as a proposed hardline area in the draft North County Plan (see Figure 2.4-4, Regional Context), which means that the proposed development areas and proposed biological open space areas have been incorporated into the overall conservation strategy of the County's draft North County Plan. In order for the proposed project to obtain approval for the loss of coastal sage scrub and any associated incidental take of California gnatcatcher through the County's Section 4(d) habitat loss permit (HLP) process, the proposed project must demonstrate conformance with overall programmatic goals and policies established

for the San Diego County Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) subregion and make the specific findings applicable to issuance an HLP. A Draft HLP including 4(d) findings is included in Appendix H of this EIR. The proposed project may also obtain take authorization through Section 7 consultation with the USFWS.

Cultural Resources

As indicated in Section 2.5, Cultural Resources (and Appendix I), the proposed project would protect and preserve the County's important cultural resources from loss or destruction, and require development-appropriate mitigation to protect the quality and integrity of these resources. Potential impacts to cultural resources would be minimized and/or mitigated in accordance with the project's cultural resource mitigation requirements. The proposed project's impacts to significant cultural resources would be reduced to less than significant through mitigation measures that include the placement of significant sites within an avoidance area (open space), reburial of cultural resources at an agreed-upon reinternment area on the project site, data recovery of archaeological and cultural resources, curation of archaeological and cultural artifacts (unless identified for reburial), and archaeological monitoring programs. The mitigation measures, including establishment of the reinternment area, will be set forth in a Tribal Treatment Plan developed through the County's consultation with the applicant and the affected Tribes. In addition, the cultural resources monitoring program would include avoidance or data recovery at any new discoveries of cultural resources.

Additionally, as stated in the Resource Protection Plan, Sites CA-SDI-4558, CA-SDI-5951, and CA-SDI-9822 are located within an off-site improvement area (Deer Springs Road improvements) that is proposed to include public projects (roadway improvement and utilities), and, as such, complete avoidance of these sites would not be possible. These types of public projects are considered essential and include public use, and, therefore, are considered exempt under Article V of the RPO. The County has determined that the Deer Springs Road improvement is an essential public facility (as determined in the General Plan Update) and that sites CA-SDI-4558, CA-SDI-5951, and CA-SDI-9822 are exempt from RPO compliance. Preservation-in-place at these locations is likewise infeasible. Note, however, that the County, in consultation with the applicant and the affected Tribes, has determined that the three sites in question, along with the roadbed soils that connect them, may be treated as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) for purposes of this EIR. As such, impacts to the TCP will be considered significant, requiring mitigation. The primary mitigation for this impact is the reinternment area that will be established on site, per the Tribal Treatment Plan.

Agricultural Resources

As discussed in Section 2.2, Agricultural Resources, the region surrounding the project Site historically has been used for agriculture, including orchards and vineyards; however, the project Site does not currently contain any active agricultural operations due to the steep slopes and substantial rock outcroppings found throughout the project Site. Agricultural uses in the immediate area mainly consist of small-scale semi-rural residential uses; however, some commercial nurseries and mid-size commercial operations exist in the project vicinity. The project Site does contain 31.7 acres of Farmland of Local Importance and 3.4 acres of Unique Farmland, as identified by the California Department of Conservation. The Site does not currently contain any Williamson Act Contract lands, County agricultural preserves, lands designated Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, or any active irrigated croplands or other crop production (see Appendix F).

Mineral Resources

The project Site includes areas designated as Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ) 2, which means adequate information indicates significant mineral deposits are present in the area, or a high likelihood exists for their presence. Approximately 650 acres of the project Site are classified as MRZ-2. The remainder of the Site is classified as MRZ-3, which means the area's potential to contain mineral deposits cannot be evaluated from available data. These resource designations result from the presence of crystalline and metavolcanic rocks that, when crushed to appropriate sizes, could be considered as aggregate suitable for construction material (see Appendix P).

Although portions of the Site have been categorized as containing MRZ-2 resources, the property is not currently being used for mineral extraction, and previous attempts to re-initiate extraction operations at the abandoned quarry have been unsuccessful. In addition, no mining activities have taken place within the Sycamore Ridge area (Appendix P).

Section 2762(d) of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) has specific lead agency noticing requirements prior to permitting a use which would preclude future extraction of identified mineral resources. The County will process a statement specifying the County's reasons for permitting a proposed use in an area that contains mineral resource deposits of regional or statewide significance. The Statement of Reasons will be circulated for a 60-day public review and provided to the State Geologist and the State Mining and Geology Board for review and comment.

Schools

The project's proposed neighborhoods are within the service boundaries of three public school districts: San Marcos Unified School District, Escondido Union School District, and Escondido

Union High School District (see Figure 1-33, School District Boundaries). The project has reserved a 6-acre site for a school, which could serve students from the San Marcos Unified School District and Escondido Union School District. If students do not attend a school within the project Site, the project's future students who live in the San Marcos Unified School District boundary are expected to attend Twin Oaks Elementary School, San Marcos Middle School, or Woodland Park Middle School. The project's future students living within Escondido Union School District are expected to attend North Broadway School, Rock Springs Elementary School, or Rincon Middle School. The project's future high school students are expected to attend Mission Hills High School, San Marcos High School, or Escondido High School. The school districts ultimately decide student attendance at the various schools.

Housing

The project includes seven planning areas, each representing a unique neighborhood consisting of a variety of housing types, lot sizes, and suitable amenities to provide housing for a broad range of age groups, family formations, and income levels.

A consumer survey completed by the applicant vetted buyer preferences and demand by consumer life stage to inform the mix of residential offerings proposed in each neighborhood. An average of 80 percent of consumers surveyed in each life stage indicated a preference for a traditional detached single-family home.¹ However, there was a wide range of home sizes preferred, dependent on family make-up and income levels, and a wide range of lot sizes preferred depending on preferences related to yard sizes, outdoor space, and price range. Although a traditional detached single-family home appealed to most consumers, 37 percent of those surveyed indicated that they would consider an attached home, preferring multi-story townhomes to traditional condominiums.

In addition, there was a strong demand for age-qualified living, especially for those buyers older than 55 who indicated that, given the choice, they would prefer to live in an age-qualified Community with dedicated amenities and access to recreation and programs. Being close to everyday services like grocery stores was important to these buyers, as was living in a Community with ample natural open space; walking, hiking, and biking trails; and other recreational opportunities.

The results from the buyer survey informed the project applicant's land planning for the neighborhoods, resulting in a mix of housing types, as outlined in Tables 1-2 through 1-8. The broad range of lot sizes and housing types would provide significant options for home buyers. Additionally, the project is located at the Deer Springs Road interchange with direct access to I-

¹ The Consumer Survey is incorporated by reference and is available for public inspection and review upon request to the County of San Diego, Department of Planning and Development Services.

15, providing regional access to existing job centers in San Marcos, Vista, Rancho Bernardo, Escondido, and Poway. The Site is also located near Cal State San Marcos and Palomar College, and three Sprinter stations are within 6 miles of the project Site: the San Marcos Civic Center Sprinter Station, the Buena Creek Station, and the Palomar College Station, as shown in Figure 1-34, Proximity to Major Employment Centers.

Furthermore, the project would include commercial retail opportunities within the 58.3-acre Town Center located in the southeastern portion of the Community near the I-15 and Deer Springs Road interchange. Within the Town Center, the Community would provide 81,000 square feet of commercial space in addition to the residential and other civic uses.

In the context of the project's placement within the North San Diego County subregion and centers of employment, the project Site is connected via freeways, arterials, and local roads to several neighboring cities, making it less than 3 miles to the cities of Escondido, San Marcos, and Vista, and approximately 10 miles to the cities of Carlsbad and Oceanside, all North County cities serving as major centers of employment and regional shopping for North San Diego County. A jobs/housing market analysis prepared for the project by MarketPointe Realty Advisors² shows that 124,251 jobs exist within the State Route (SR) 78 Corridor Submarket, encompassing the cities of Escondido, San Marcos, and Vista, and certain portions of the unincorporated County. The MarketPointe Study shows that 63 percent of these jobs are commuting into these cities from outside the SR-78 Corridor Submarket. Of these jobs commuting into the Submarket, 58 percent are coming from other parts of San Diego County and the balance (42 percent) are coming primarily from the Riverside, Orange, and Los Angeles counties. Riverside County, the closest neighboring county and where more than 8 percent of the workers in the SR-78 Corridor Submarket live, is at least 25 miles to the north of the project Site, more than 30 miles from the center of the SR-78 Corridor Submarket, and accessible via I-15. By comparison, the project would offer a range of housing options much closer to these North County regional employment and shopping centers within the SR-78 Corridor Submarket.

1.3 Project Location

The project Site is directly west of I-15, north of SR-78, and south of SR-76, and falls predominantly within the larger North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan (North County Metro) area. The North County Metro area is composed of non-contiguous unincorporated areas interspersed among the cities of Escondido, San Diego, San Marcos, Vista, and Oceanside, with the most easterly portion adjacent to the unincorporated community of Valley Center. Within the vicinity of the project Site, the North County Metro area includes the communities of Hidden

² The Market Analysis is incorporated by reference and is available for public inspection and review upon request to the County of San Diego, Department of Planning and Development Services.

Meadows and Twin Oaks. Most of the project Site is located in the community of Twin Oaks, with a portion located in the Bonsall Community Plan area.

Located within the inland area of North San Diego County, the project Site is close to several North County cities. The cities of Escondido and San Marcos are approximately 1 mile south of the project Site, the city of Vista is approximately 3 miles west of the project Site, the city of Oceanside is approximately 5 miles northwest of the project Site, and the city of Carlsbad is approximately 7 miles southwest of the project Site, as shown in Figure 1-35, Regional Location Map. The project Site is bound by I-15 on the east, Deer Springs Road on the south, and Twin Oaks Valley Road on the west, with a small portion of the northwestern edge of the Site traversed by Twin Oaks Valley Road. Gopher Canyon Road is approximately 1.5 miles north of the Site's northern boundary and approximately 2.5 miles north of the development area, as shown in Figure 1-36, Vicinity Map.

1.4 Environmental Setting

The project Site is located within the northern portion of the Merriam Mountains, an approximately 8.5-mile-long narrow chain of low mountains generally running north/south, with a variety of east/west-trending ridgelines and scattered peaks. These mountains originate near the northern end of the city of Escondido and are bordered by Gopher Canyon Road to the north, I-15 to the east, and Twin Oaks Valley Road to the west. The project Site is situated on approximately 3 miles of the northern portion of the Merriam Mountains.

The project Site is located within the draft North County Subarea Plan area of the County's MSCP area. The draft North County MSCP regional habitat evaluation model categorizes the project Site as having mostly moderate value habitats with smaller areas of high-value and very-high-value habitats.

Vegetation on the Site consists of large blocks of densely vegetated, senescent southern mixed chaparral with limited patches of Diegan coastal sage scrub, live oak woodlands, and southern willow scrub. Due to the dense nature of the chaparral covering most of the Site, wildlife movement generally is confined to existing dirt roads.

Large granitic outcroppings and pinnacles commonly occur throughout this region and are a common occurrence on Site. The project contains undeveloped steep slopes and rock outcroppings that are visually prominent from the I-15 corridor. The south fork of Moosa Canyon Creek runs from the northern to northeastern vicinity of the Site. In addition, the area is a tributary to the San Luis Rey River (to the north) through the south fork of Gopher Canyon Creek. The San Luis Rey River is a riparian corridor containing woodland vegetation and rare

and protected species. Tributaries to San Marcos Creek are also located in the vicinity and flow southwest toward Batiquitos Lagoon.

The project Site is located in two watersheds: the San Luis Rey and Carlsbad watersheds. The eastern and northern portions of the Site are located within the San Luis Rey watershed. The southern portion is located in the Carlsbad watershed. The project Site lies in the Moosa Hydrologic, Bonsall Hydrologic, and Twin Oaks Hydrologic Subareas. Natural topography of the Site is composed of hills and valleys dominated by rock outcroppings and moderate to steeply sloping terrain. Elevation ranges from approximately 660 feet above mean sea level near the northwestern limits at Twin Oaks Valley Road to approximately 1,750 feet above mean sea level in the west-central portion of the Site.

Approximately 55 percent of the Site contains RPO-defined steep slope lands. Prominent, generally east/west-trending ridgelines divide the Site into five drainage basins, which are tributaries to Moosa Canyon, Gopher Canyon, and San Marcos Creeks. Gopher Canyon Creek is located north of the project Site, and a small portion of the south fork of Gopher Canyon Creek runs southeast to northwest through the northwestern area, eventually meeting the San Luis Rey River. Both Gopher Canyon Creek and the San Marcos Mountains show favorable attributes as habitat and corridors for larger wildlife.

Existing Land Uses

The project Site is primarily undeveloped. A number of dirt roads and trails provide access to existing parcels, including VWD service roads that provide access to existing potable water facilities (e.g., water transmission lines and tanks) found on and near the Site. In the northwest portion of the Site is the Water Authority's aqueduct, which is part of a regional system of water transmission pipelines the Water Authority uses to transfer water to its member agencies and between various reservoirs around the County.

Portions of the Site have been and continue to be used for various unauthorized uses, including horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, off-roading, motorcycling, shooting, and illegal dumping. The northwest portion of the Site contains an abandoned quarry, fronting Twin Oaks Valley Road, and an abandoned private landing strip in the north-central portion of the Site.

Surrounding land uses north, west, and south of the Site include single-family and semi-rural residential development, including small farms and ranches. Many of the prominent ridges and valleys surrounding the Site are developed with existing homes. Lawrence Welk Village, Champagne Village, and the community of Hidden Meadows are located to the east of the project Site, across I-15. South of the Site is the Deer Springs Oak Mobile Home Estates, Golden Door Luxury Resort and Spa (owned and operated by Golden Door Properties LLC), and residential

development along the border of the city of San Marcos and the unincorporated portion of the County of San Diego, as shown in Figure 1-37, Aerial Map and Surrounding Land Uses.

1.5 Intended Uses of the EIR

This EIR is an informational document that will inform public agency decision makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of the proposed project, identify possible ways to minimize those significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. This EIR was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the County of San Diego Environmental Impact Report Format and General Content Requirements (County of San Diego 2006), CEQA (California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), and the CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15000 et seq.).

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) released for public review on February 12, 2015, and associated comment letters received during the public review period are included as Appendix A to this EIR. The Initial Study prepared for the proposed project is included as Appendix B. This EIR addresses issues identified in the Initial Study and comments received on the NOP.

This EIR will be made available for review by members of the public and public agencies for 60 days to provide comments “on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated,” as stated in CEQA Guidelines, Section 15204.

As the designated lead agency, the County is responsible for preparing this document. The decision to approve the proposed project is within the purview of the County Board of Supervisors. When deciding whether to approve the project, the County will use the information included in this EIR to consider potential impacts on the physical environment associated with the project.

The County will consider written comments received on the EIR in making its decision whether to certify the EIR as complete and in compliance with CEQA, and also whether to approve or deny the project. Environmental considerations and economic and social factors may be weighed to determine the most appropriate course of action. If the EIR is certified and the project approved, agencies with permitting authority over all or portions of the project may use the EIR as the basis for their evaluation of environmental effects of the project and approval or denial of applicable permits.

1.5.1 Matrix of Project Approvals/Permits

Table 1-9 includes discretionary approvals/permits that may be obtained during the decision-making process. The table is organized by agency/jurisdiction. In the case where multiple

discretionary approvals/permits are necessary from a single agency, the approvals are listed in the order they are believed to occur. The EIR is intended to apply to all listed project approvals as well as to any other approvals necessary or desirable to implement the project.

1.5.2 Related Environmental Review and Consultation Requirements

Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Sections 15375 and 15082, the County prepared an NOP for this EIR. The NOP was publicly circulated for 30 days beginning on February 12, 2015. The County held a public scoping meeting on March 4, 2015, to provide responsible agencies and the public with information about the CEQA process and to provide further opportunities to identify environmental issues and alternatives for consideration in the EIR. Public comments received during the NOP scoping process are provided in Appendix A.

1.6 Project Inconsistencies with Applicable Regional and General Plans

Planning documents reviewed for the proposed project include the County's General Plan and North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan. Other planning documents reviewed for the proposed project include the Scenic Preservation Guidelines I-15 Corridor Design Review Board, Regional Comprehensive Plan, Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and County of San Diego Draft North County Multiple Species Conservation Program. Project inconsistencies with these documents are discussed and analyzed in Section 3.3, Land Use and Planning, of this EIR.

1.6.1 General Plan and Zoning Amendment

Existing Land Use Element Regional Category

The project Site lies within the North County Metropolitan Plan area and Bonsall Community Plan area, as shown in Figure 1-38, Existing Regional Land Use Categories. The existing General Plan Regional Category for the Site is Village, Semi-Rural, and Rural Lands. The project Site includes 1,888 acres in the North Country Metropolitan Plan area and 97 acres in the Bonsall Community Plan area.

Proposed Land Use Element Regional Category

The General Plan Amendment proposes to amend the Regional Land Use Element Map to change a portion of the Rural Lands in the North County Metropolitan Plan area to Semi-Rural (see Figure 1-39, Proposed Regional Land Use Categories). The Village regional category designation would remain unchanged from its existing configuration. The Rural Lands regional category in the Bonsall Community Plan area would be retained.

Existing Community Plan Land Use Designations

The 1,888 acres within the North County Metropolitan Plan area currently has four land use designations: General Commercial (4.6 acres), Office Professional (53.6 acres), Semi-Rural 10 (19.6 acres), and Rural Land 20 (1,810.8 acres) (County of San Diego 2011d). The 97 acres in the Bonsall Community Plan area are entirely designated with the Rural Lands 20 land use designation (County of San Diego 2011b), as shown in Figure 1-40, Existing Community Plan Land Use Designations.

Proposed Community Plan Land Use Designations

The General Plan Amendment proposes to amend the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan map to change the General Commercial, Office Professional, Semi-Rural 10, and Rural Land 20 designations. These designations would be changed to Village Core Mixed Use (C-5), Semi-Rural 1 (SR-1) (1 unit per 1, 2, or 4 gross acres, depending on slope), and Open Space – Conservation (OS-C) (Figure 1-41, Proposed Community Plan Land Use Designations). A portion of the Site (Sierra Farms) located along Sarver Lane would remain under its current designation of Semi-Rural 10 (SR-10) (1 unit per 10 or 20 gross acres depending on slope). The General Plan Amendment would add language into the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan describing the Specific Plan. The General Plan Amendment would designate all on-site land within the Bonsall Community Plan as Open Space – Conservation (OS-C).

Existing Zoning

The 1,888 acres within the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area is zoned General Commercial (C36), Office Professional (C30), Rural Residential (RR), Limited Agricultural (A70), Extractive (S82), and General Rural (S92). The 97 acres within the Bonsall Community Plan area are currently zoned Rural Residential (RR). These zoning designations are shown in Figure 1-42, Existing Zoning.

Proposed Zoning

To implement the proposed changes resulting from the General Plan Amendment, the zoning would be changed to General Commercial/Residential (C34), Single Family Residential (RS), and Open Space (S80), as shown in Figure 1-43, Proposed Zoning. The portion of the project Site immediately adjacent to Sarver Lane would retain the Limited Agriculture (A70) zoning.

Existing I-15 Design Corridor Map

The I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan is Appendix C of the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan and it contains the goals and policies related to scenic preservation, land use, public services

and facilities, circulation, conservation, coordination (with adjacent jurisdictions), and plan implementation within the I-15 corridor. Attached to the I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan are the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines, which establish Site Design and Architectural Design standards that apply to the I-15 Design Corridor as depicted in the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines (I-15 Design Corridor Map) (County of San Diego 2011d).

The I-15 corridor extends approximately 20 miles from the Escondido city limits north to the Riverside County line. It contains the 0.5 acre to 2-mile viewshed area on either side of I-15, which generally is seen while driving along I-15. The “B” Design Review Area Special Designator is applied to properties within the I-15 Design Corridor, as shown in the I-15 Design Corridor Map. The eastern portion of the project Site has an existing “B” Special Area Designator, as shown in Figure 1-44, Existing North County Metropolitan I-15 Design Corridor. The “B” designator requires preparation of a Site Plan for any type of development permit, including building permits for single-family dwellings, in accordance with the Scenic Preservation Guidelines (County of San Diego 2011d). These Site Plans are reviewed by the I-15 Corridor Design Review Board for consistency with the Scenic Preservation Guidelines.

Proposed I-15 Design Corridor Map

As part of the General Plan Amendment, the North County Metro I-15 Design Corridor Map would be amended to include only the areas of the project visible from I-15, as shown in Figure 1-45, Proposed North County Metropolitan I-15 Design Corridor.

1.6.2 Development Approvals Required

The project application consists of the following components:

1. **General Plan Land Use Element Amendment:** revisions to Figure LU-1, General Plan Regional Categories Map (see Figures 1-38 and 1-39 of this EIR).
2. **General Plan Land Use Map Appendix Changes:** revisions to Figure LU-A-2, Bonsall Land Use Map, Figure LU-A-12, North County Metro Land Use Map, and Figure LU-A-12.1, Twin Oaks Land Use Map (see Figures 1-40 and 1-41 of this EIR).
3. **General Plan Mobility Element Amendment (Deer Springs Road Option A Only):** revisions to Table M-4 (“Road Segments Where Adding Travel Lanes is Not Justified”) to add the segment of Deer Springs Road between Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road.
4. **General Plan Mobility Element Appendix Changes (Deer Springs Road Option A Only):**
 - a. Revisions to Figure M-A-12 to change the bicycle classification of Deer Springs Road from a Class III Bike Route to a Class II Bike Lane and to change the road