



**Agricultural Resources Report
for the Ramona 9th Street Project
San Diego County, California
Project # PDS2025-TM-5665**

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1:	LARA Model Instructions
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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

APN	Assessor Parcel Number
CDC	California Department of Conservation
County	County of San Diego
County Guidelines	County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance - Agricultural Resources
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
General Plan	County of San Diego General Plan
GIS	Geographic Information System
LARA	Local Area Resources Assessment
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
project	Ramona 9 th Street Project
SDCWA	San Diego County Water Authority
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
ZOI	Zone of Influence

Summary

This technical report evaluates the potential for the Ramona 9th Street Project (project) to result in adverse impacts on agricultural resources. Consistent with the County of San Diego (County) Guidelines for Determining Significance - Agricultural Resources (County Guidelines), a Local Agricultural Resources Assessment Model was prepared for the project. The Local Agricultural Resources Assessment Model determined that although the project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, the project site does not qualify as an important agricultural resource (refer to Section 2.1). Furthermore, review of records during completion of the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, including aerial photographs, determined there is no historical evidence that the project site was ever used for agricultural production (Stantec 2024). Therefore, the project would not impact an important agricultural resource, and impacts would be less than significant.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This technical report evaluates the potential for implementation of the Ramona 9th Street Project (project) to result in a potentially significant impact on agricultural resources. The analysis and findings in this report are based on guidance and thresholds presented in the County of San Diego (County) Guidelines for Determining Significance – Agricultural Resources (County Guidelines). The report provides analysis as follows:

- To determine the importance of on-site agricultural resources and assess the potential impacts to those resources.
- To determine potential impacts to surrounding active off-site agricultural operations and/or lands under a Williamson Act Contract.
- To address potential land use conflicts related to the proposed battery energy storage facility in relation to surrounding agricultural operations.
- To address consistency with the County General Plan (General Plan) policies pertaining to agriculture.
- To determine the significance of cumulative impacts to agricultural resources.
- To identify project design elements and/or mitigation measures, if needed, that would minimize significant adverse effects.

1.2 Project Location and Description

1.2.1 Project Description

The project site consists of four parcels (Assessor Parcel Numbers [APNs] 284-202-21, 284-203-08, 284-205-01, and 284-244-01). The project proposes a residential subdivision consisting of 88 single-family residential lots and 12 lettered lots for private streets, open space, drainage, water quality, utility, and related infrastructure purposes. Development is proposed on APNs 284-202-21, 284-203-08, and 284-244-01. APN 284-205-01 is not proposed for physical development and would remain as a remainder parcel; however, its allowable residential density is proposed to be transferred to the project. The project also includes the proposed vacation of the segment of 10th Street traversing the project site and installation of a gated Emergency Vehicle Access connection. The project is located within the Ramona Community Plan and includes development within the Village Residential 7.3 (VR-7.3) and Village Residential 2 (VR-2) General Plan land use designations. Water and sewer service would be provided by the Ramona Municipal Water District.

The project is primarily vacant, with the exception of an existing single-family residence and aging barn in the northeastern segment of the property. The project includes a boundary line adjustment

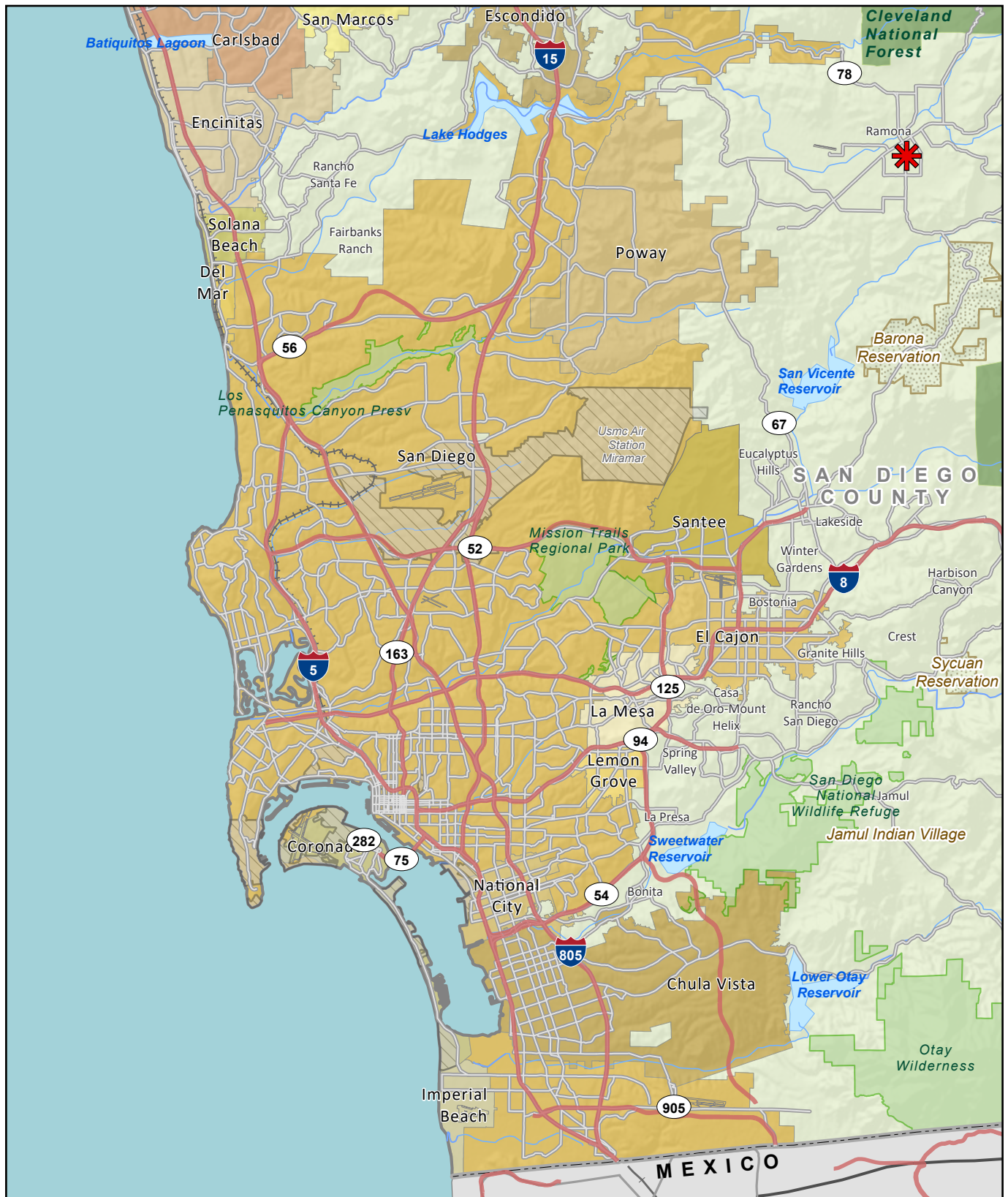
to create a separate parcel preserving the existing single-family residence. The aging barn would be demolished to allow for development of the project. The preserved single-family residential parcel would total 0.38 acres. The remaining development footprint for the residential units would total 18.24 acres. The project would also introduce curb and gutters, sidewalks, and make half-width improvements on the existing segments of 9th Street and 10th Street fronting the project site. These off-site improvements would total 1.73 acres, increasing the total development footprint to 19.97 acres. Because the street improvements are immediately adjacent to the project site, the development footprint and off-site improvements are evaluated together in the analysis. The 0.38-acre parcel to be created for preservation of the existing single-family residence has been excluded from the analysis, because it would remain unchanged.

1.2.2 Project Location and Access

The project is located at 915 9th Street, in the Ramona Community Plan area, within unincorporated San Diego County. Access would be provided via two new driveway connections to 9th Street and internal roadways into the project site. The project would also introduce an internal loop driveway connecting to the southern driveway connection to 9th Street. The project would vacate the segment of 10th Street traversing the project site. Following the roadway vacation, access at 10th Street would be restricted through the installation of a gated Emergency Vehicle Access connection limited to emergency access only. The project would also extend an internal roadway west of the vacated segment of 10th Street terminating as a cul-de-sac. Figure 1 presents the regional location. Figure 2 presents the project site on a U.S. Geological Survey Map, and Figure 3 presents the project site on an aerial photograph. Figure 4 presents the proposed grading plan.

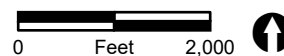
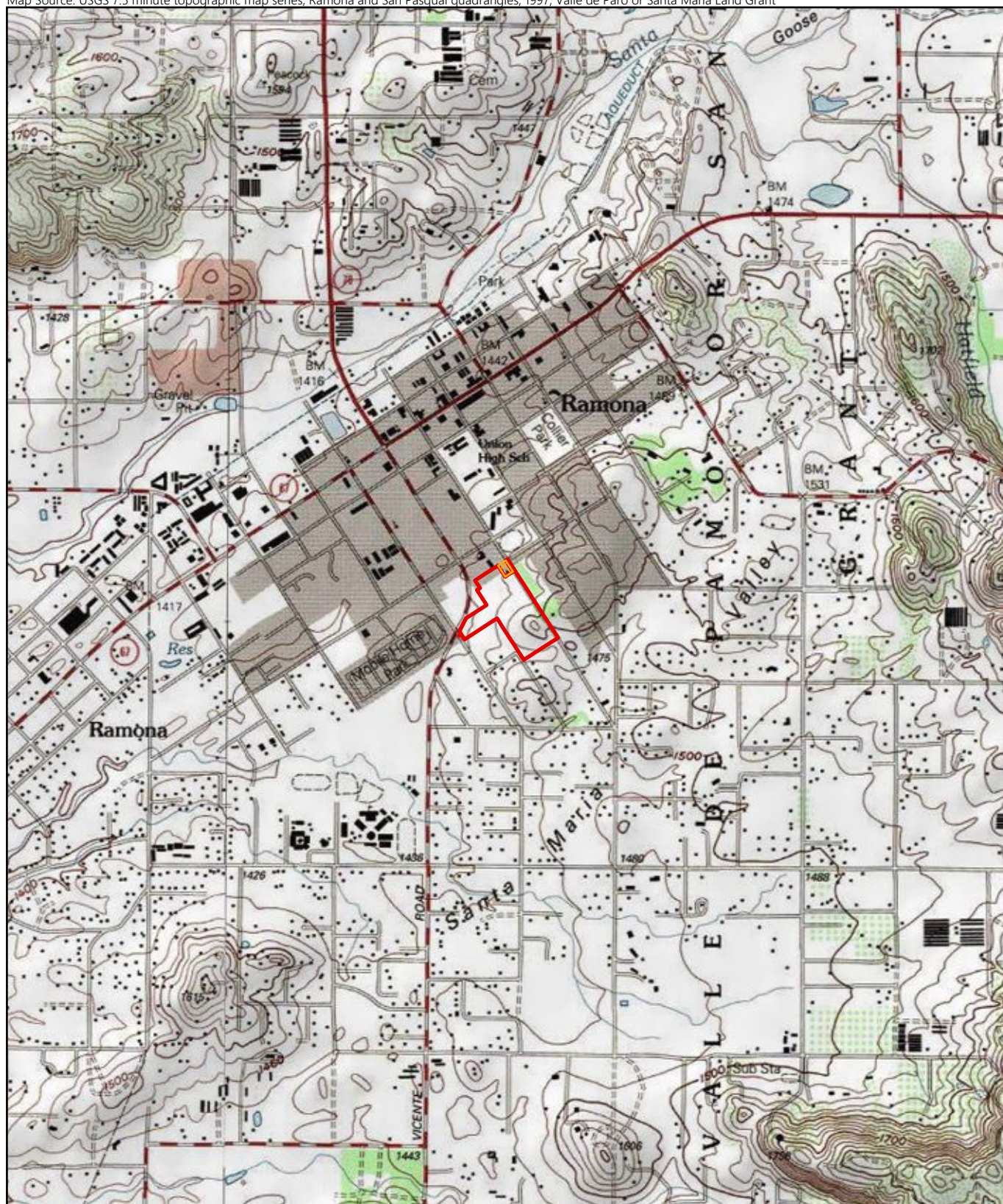
1.2.3 Construction

The project would be constructed in a single phase that would occur Monday through Saturday, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Proposed grading activities would require approximately 176,831 cubic yards of cut and 60,900 cubic yards of fill, resulting in a net export of approximately 115,931 cubic yards of soil. Project construction would disturb an approximately 19.97-acre project footprint that is not currently in agricultural production.

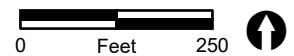


 Project Location

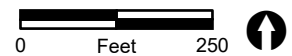
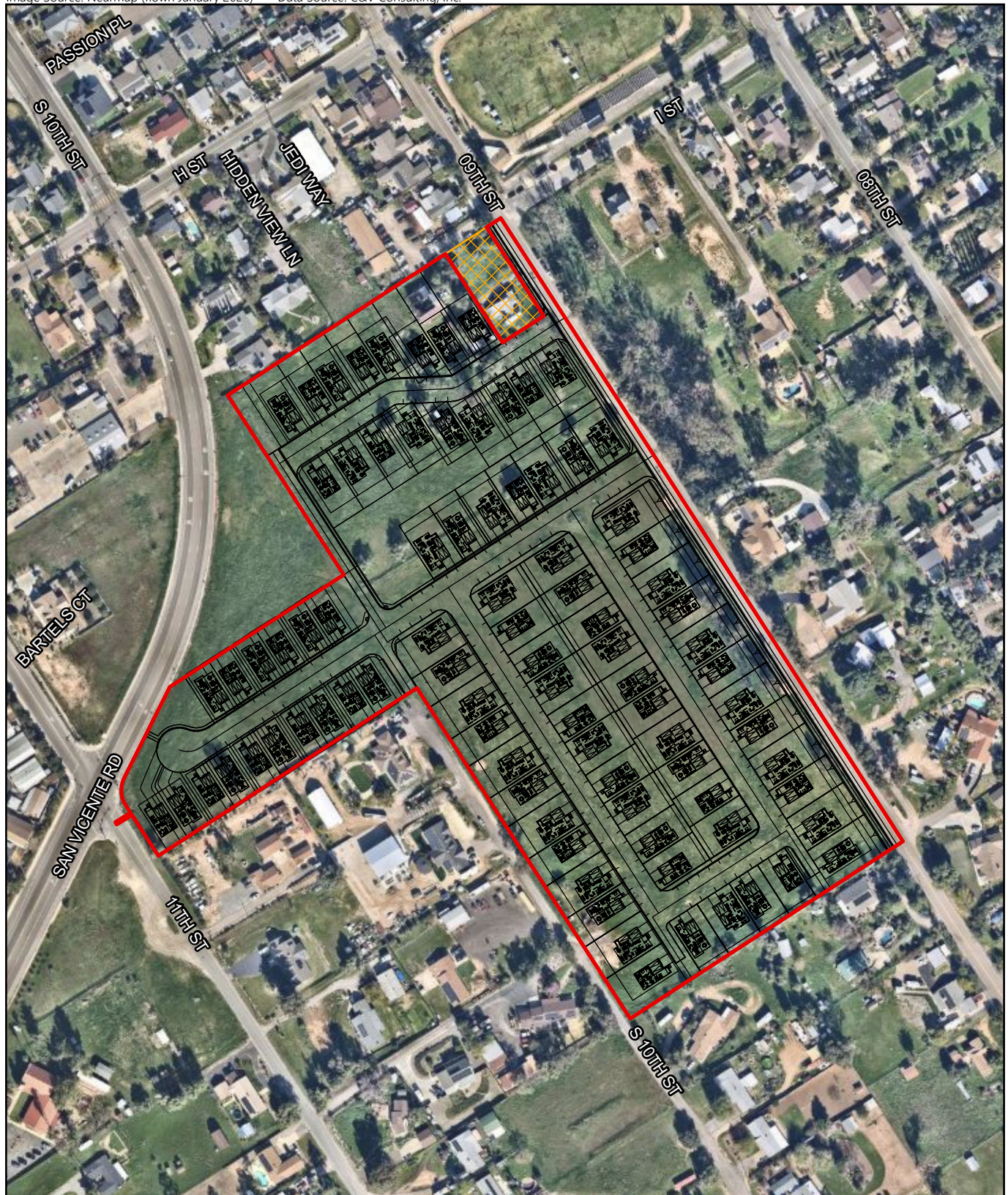
FIGURE 1
Regional Location



- Project Boundary
- Preserved Area



-  Project Site
-  Preserved Area



- Project Site
- Preserved Area
- Site Plan

1.3 Analysis Methods

The methodology in this analysis includes the following steps:

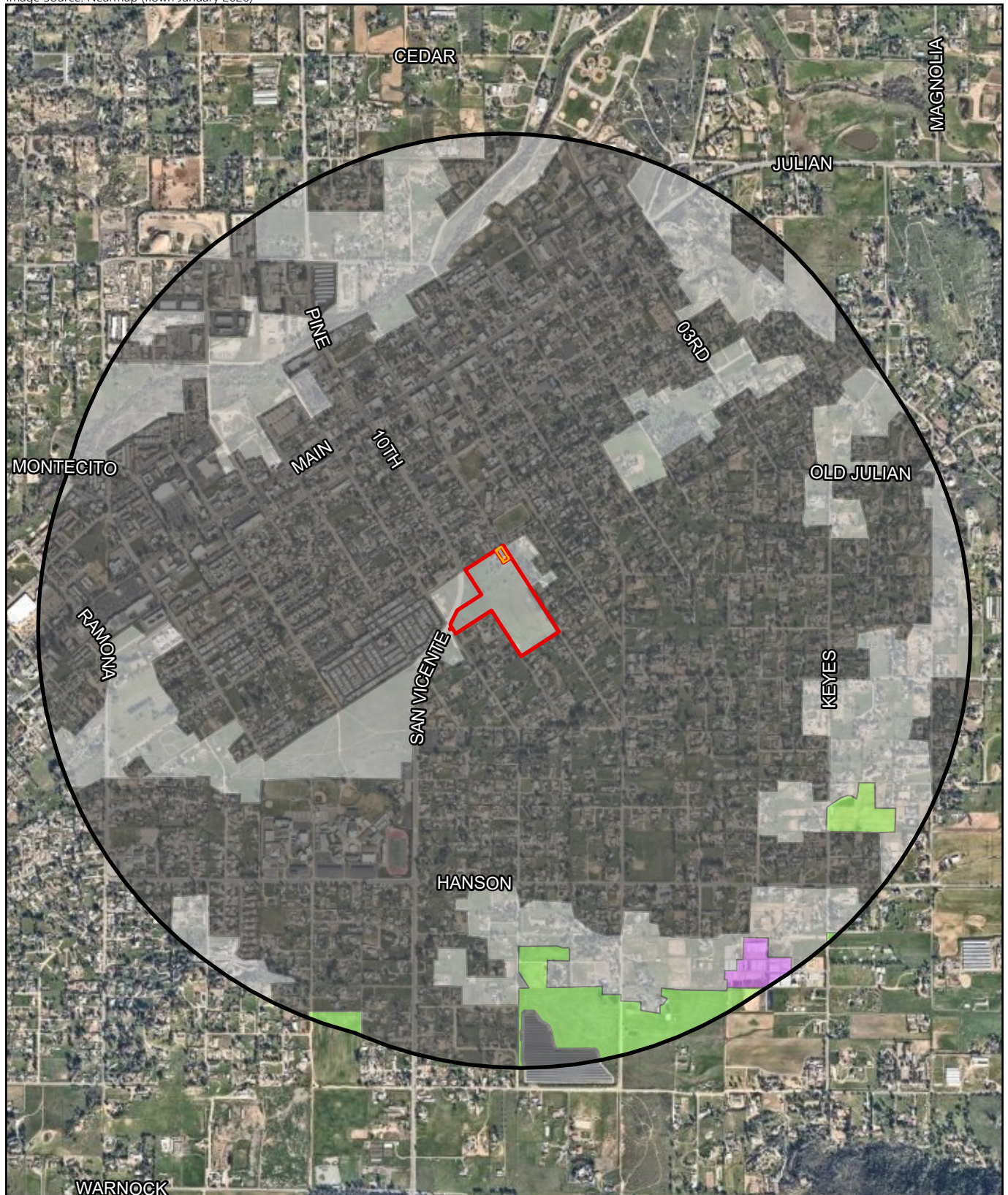
- Review or use of the following informational sources or documents: (1) California Department of Conservation (CDC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) data bases; (2) Williamson Act contract records; (3) soil data bases; and (4) the General Plan, Ramona Community Plan, and Zoning Ordinance documents.
- Utilize the Local Agricultural Resources Assessment (LARA), to assess the relative value of the agricultural resources within the project footprint.
- Identify whether impacts to important agricultural resources, as determined by the LARA Model, would substantially impair the ongoing viability of the site for agricultural use.
- Evaluate Williamson Act contract, agricultural preserve, or agricultural zoning consistency or conflicts.
- Evaluate indirect impacts on- and off-site, as a result of project implementation, and determine whether agricultural conversion will occur indirectly.
- Discuss potential land use conflicts between the project and ongoing agriculture in the surrounding area.
- Evaluate potential cumulative impacts to agricultural resources.

1.4 Environmental Setting

1.4.1 Regional Context

The project is located at 915 9th Street, in the Ramona Community Plan area, within unincorporated San Diego County. The project site is surrounded to the north, east, and south by rural residential uses and to the west by a retirement community consisting of manufactured homes. Figure 5 presents the distribution of FMMP resources within the project site and surrounding one-mile buffer. According to the Important Farmlands Inventory Map, the project footprint consists entirely of Other Land and Urban and Built-Up Land. Land within the surrounding one-mile buffer consists primarily of Other Land and Urban and Built-Up Land, as well as small amounts of Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance. Table 1 presents the acreage of each agricultural resource category within the project site and surrounding one-mile buffer.

Table 1 Acres of FMMP Farmland within One Mile of the Project Footprint	
Category	Total Acres
Unique Farmland	8.05
Farmland of Local Importance	56.39
Other Land	668.01
Urban and Built-up Land	1,817.16
TOTAL	2,549.60
NOTE: Totals may vary due to independent rounding.	



-  Project Site
-  Preserved Area
-  One Mile Radius

FMMP Resources

-  Farmland of Local Importance
-  Unique Farmland
-  Other Land
-  Urban and Built-Up Land

0 Feet 1,800



The project site is not subject to a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve. Similarly, none of the properties surrounding the project site are subject to a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve. See Section 1.4.2.5 below for additional detail.

1.4.2 On-site Agricultural Resources

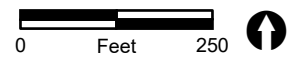
The project site is not currently used for agricultural production. Furthermore, review of records during completion of the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, including aerial photographs, determined there is no historical evidence that the project site was ever used for agricultural production (Stantec 2024). A review of County mapping data determined there are no active agricultural uses within the project site or immediately surrounding area (Figure 6). Therefore, there are no current active agricultural resources on-site.

1.4.2.1 Soils

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service, replaced by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1994, developed a system to generally classify soil types. The land capability classification describes soil types, their physical characteristics and limitations, and their suitability for agriculture and other uses. The Soil Conservation Service grouped soils according to their general suitability for most kinds of field crops. The capability system groups all soils into three levels: the capability class, subclass, and unit. The capability class is designated by Roman numerals I through VIII. The numbers indicate progressively greater limitations and narrower choices for practical use. Soils with few limitations that restrict their use for agriculture are placed in Capability Class I. Soils with very severe agricultural limitations, and which would affect management or choice of crop, are placed in Capability Class IV. Some soils have limitations that render them agriculturally impractical and are placed in Classes V through VIII.

Capability subclasses, of which there are four, are soil groups within one class. Adding a small letter (e, w, s, or c), to the class numeral (for example, I-e) designates them. The letter "e" shows that the main hazard is the risk of erosion; "w" shows that water in or on the soil interferes with plant growth or cultivation; "s" shows that the soil is limited mainly because it is shallow, droughty, or stony; and "c," used in only some parts of the United States, shows that climate, either very cold or very dry, is a limiting factor.

Capability units are soil groups within a subclass which further define soil characteristics and/or limitations to their use. Adding an Arabic numeral to the subclass symbol, for example, IIe-4 and IIIe-6, generally designates capability units. Thus, the Roman numeral designates the capability class, or degree of limitation; the small letter indicates the subclass, or kind of limitation; and the Arabic numeral specifically identifies the capability unit within each subclass, as follows: (0) sand and gravel in the substratum; (1) erosion hazard; (2) wetness caused by poor drainage or flooding; (3) slow or very slow permeability; (4) coarse texture or excessive gravel; (5) fine or very fine textured soil; (6) salts or alkali; (7) cobblestones, stones or rocks; (8) nearly impervious bedrock or hardpan; and (9) toxicity or low fertility. These units are not given in all soil surveys.



-  Project Site
-  Preserved Area

The Storie Index provides another way to classify the value of agricultural soils. The Storie Index expresses numerically the relative degree of suitability and grade of a soil for intensive agriculture based on soil characteristics. Soils of grade 1 (i.e., index rating of 80 to 100) have few or no limitations restricting their use for crops, whereas at the other end of the scale, grade 6 (i.e., index rating of less than 10) consists of soils that generally are not suited to farming.

Figure 7 presents the distribution of soil types within the project footprint. The on-site soils and their associated acreages, capability units, and Storie Index ratings within the project site are presented in Table 2. Their characteristics are taken from the USDA Soil Surveys for San Diego County (1973).

Soil series within the project site include Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes and Fallbrook sandy loam, 9 to 15 percent slopes, eroded (USDA 1973). Crop suitability for each soil type is listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Soil Types			
Soil Map Unit	Project Acres	Land Compatibility Classification	Storie Index
Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes	12.26	IVe	Grade 1
Fallbrook sandy loam, 9 to 15 percent slopes, eroded	7.71	IVe	Grade 2
GRAND TOTAL	19.97		
SOURCE: USDA 1973.			

The CDC publishes a list of soils that meet the soil quality criteria to be classified as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. The soil criteria are defined by the NRCS and are unique to each county. These soil criteria include a much broader range of soils than the Prime Agricultural Land definition in Government Code section 51201(c). Within the project site, the Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes is listed as soil candidates for the FMMP Prime or Statewide Importance Farmland Categories.

1.4.2.2 FMMP Farmland Designations

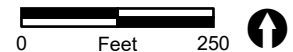
The FMMP is implemented by the CDC, Division of Land Resource Protection, and recognizes the suitability of land for agricultural production. The FMMP is non-regulatory and was developed to inventory land and provide categorical definitions of important farmlands and consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources. The program does not necessarily reflect local General Plan actions, urban needs, changing economic conditions, proximity to market, and other factors, which may be taken into consideration when government considers agricultural land use policies. *Important Farmland Maps*, which are a hybrid of resource quality (soils) and land use information, are produced by the FMMP. In addition, data is released in statistical formats, principally the biennial *California Farmland Conversion Report* (CDC 2010).



- Project Site
- Preserved Area
- Unavailable for Agricultural Use

Soil Type

- Fallbrook sandy loam, 9 to 15 percent slopes, eroded
- Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes, warm MAAT, MLRA 19



The last update for San Diego County was completed in 2024 and reflects land use changes to agriculture, through the year 2022. Figure 5 above presents the distribution of FMMP resources within the project site and surrounding one-mile buffer. Figure 8 presents the distribution of FMMP mapping within the project site, which consists entirely of Other Land and Urban and Built-up Land (CDC 2010). Farmland categories are based on soil types, current use of the land, and availability of irrigation water. The Important Farmland Map Categories and the acreage of the FMMP categories within the project site are described below.

a. Prime Farmland

Prime Farmland has the most favorable combination of physical and chemical features, enabling it to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land possesses the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. In order to qualify for this classification, the land must have produced irrigated crops at some point during the two update cycles prior to NRCS mapping.

b. Farmland of Statewide Importance

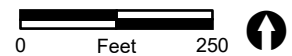
Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland; however, it possesses minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes and/or less ability to store moisture. In order to qualify for this classification, the land must have produced irrigated crops at some point during the two update cycles prior to NRCS mapping.

c. Unique Farmland

Unique Farmland is of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. Unique Farmland includes areas that do not meet the above stated criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but that have been used for the production of specific high economic value crops during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality and/or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

d. Farmland of Local Importance

Farmland of Local Importance is important to the local agricultural economy, as determined by the County Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee. The County defines Farmland of Local Importance as land with the same characteristics as Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance with the exception of irrigation.



- | | |
|--|---|
|  Project Site | FMMP Resources |
|  Preserved Area |  Other Land |
| |  Urban and Built-Up Land |

e. Grazing Land

Grazing Land is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres

f. Urban and Built Up Land

Urban and Built Up Land consists of land occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad, and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

g. Other Land

Other Land consists of land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines and borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides, by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

Table 3 presents the approximate acreage of each FMMP category within the project footprint. The area within the project footprint is mapped as Other Land and Urban and Built-up Land.

Table 3 Acres of FMMP Farmland within the Project Site		
Category	Total Acres	Total Percent of Project Footprint
Other Land	0.50	97.5%
Urban and Built-Up Land	19.47	2.5%
TOTAL	19.97	100.0%

1.4.2.3 Climate

San Diego County is divided into a series of "plantclimates," which are defined as areas "[i]n which specific plants, groups or associations are evident and will grow satisfactorily, assuming water and soil are favorable." Plantclimates in San Diego County occur as a series of five generally north-south trending linear zones, including the Maritime, Coastal, Transitional, Interior and Desert zones. These areas are influenced by factors including topography and proximity to the ocean, and are generally gradational inland, with the project site located in the Transitional Zone (County of San Diego 2007).

Localized climate zones were adapted from the described plantclimates, and are termed Generalized Plantclimate Zones, or Sunset Zones. Sunset Zones differentiate local microclimates, freeze/frost

potential, and air/water drainage, based on conditions, such as latitude, elevation, topography, and the influence of oceanic and/or continental air masses. Sunset Zones were not developed as a tool to determine the suitability for commercial agricultural production; therefore, their use is not intended to determine suitability for specific crops. They are a measure of overall climate suitability for the typical agricultural commodities produced in San Diego County (County of San Diego 2007).

The project site is located within Sunset Zone 21, which is rated high because of the mild year-round temperatures and lack of freezing temperatures that allow year-round production of high value crops. The importance of this zone is also related to the conversion pressure that exists due to urban encroachment. Preserving agriculture in Zone 21 is essential to maintain the high returns per acre that are common in this county.

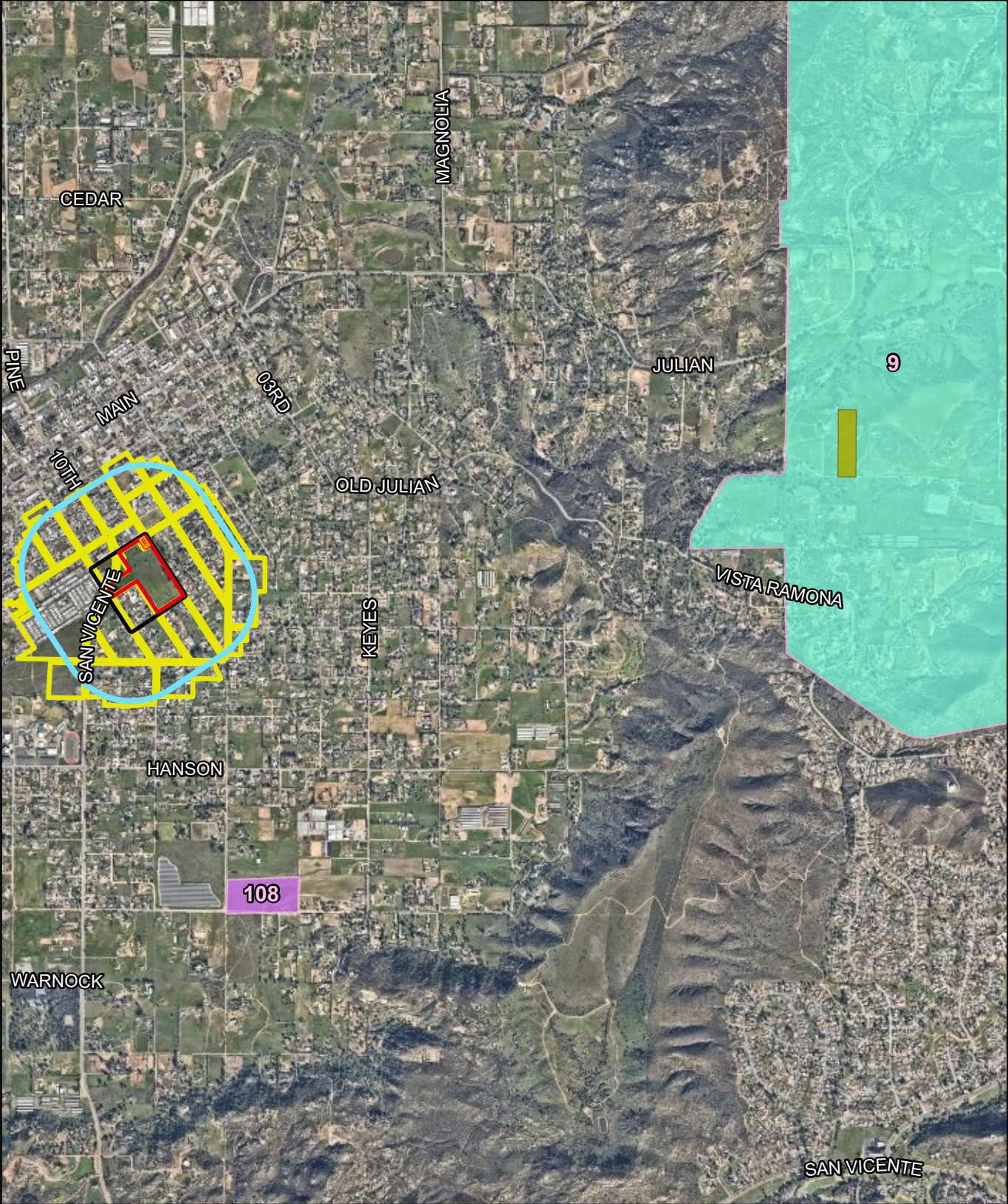
1.4.2.4 Water Resources

The project site and all surrounding properties are located within the service boundaries of the Ramona Municipal Water District. The project site is currently configured with a connection to the Ramona Municipal Water District for potable water. There are no groundwater wells located on the project site. Water service for the project would be provided by the Ramona Municipal Water District.

1.4.2.5 Williamson Act Contracts and Agricultural Preserves

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, better known as the Williamson Act (California Administrative Code §51200 et. seq.), creates an arrangement; whereby, private landowners contract with local governments to voluntarily restrict land, to agricultural and open space uses. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes, at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value, which saves landowners from 20 percent to 75 percent in property tax liability each year. Agricultural preserves are areas that are eligible for Williamson Act Contracts; the boundaries of the preserve areas are drawn by the County and are adopted by resolution of the Board of Supervisors (U.S. Department of Conservation 2005). In San Diego County, the zoning designation for properties within Agricultural Preserves is supplemented with a special designator pursuant to County Zoning Ordinance section 5102. Pursuant to Zoning Ordinance 5015 and 5110, special findings must be made for uses subject to a Minor Use Permit or a Major Use Permit on lands within an Agricultural Preserve but not under a Land Conservation Contract.

Figure 9 presents the locations of Williamson Act Contracts and Agricultural Preserves in relation to the project site. The project site is not subject to a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve. Similarly, there are no properties protected by a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve surrounding the project footprint.



- Project Site
- Preserved Area
- Envelope
- 0.25 mile Envelope Buffer
- Zone of Influence

- Agricultural Preserve**
- 108 | Brouwer
 - 9 | Ramona
- Williamson Act Enrollment 2023**
- Nonprime Agriculture Land

0 Miles 0.5

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FIGURE 9
Williamson Act and Agricultural Preserves

1.4.3 Off-site Agricultural Resources

1.4.3.1 Active Agricultural Operations

Figure 10 presents the distribution of off-site agricultural resources surrounding the project site. The majority of the land surrounding the project site is not in agricultural production and consists of rural residential development and undeveloped land. However, a small vineyard is located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the project site.

1.4.3.2 Williamson Act Contract Lands/Agricultural Preserves

There are no properties surrounding the project site that are protected by a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve. The nearest property protected by a County Agricultural Preserve is located 1.0 mile southeast of the project and the nearest property protected by an active Williamson Act Contract is located 2.3 miles northeast of the project site (see Figure 9).

1.4.3.3 FMMP Important Farmland Designations

Figure 5 above presents the location of FMMP resources within one mile of the project site, and Table 1 above presents the acreage of each FMMP category within one mile of the project site (see Section 1.4.1 above). Land within the surrounding one-mile buffer consists primarily of Other Land and Urban and Built-Up Land, as well as small amounts of Unique Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance. These categories are defined in Section 1.4.2.2 above, and the acreage of FMMP mapping designations found within the project site is presented in Table 3 above.

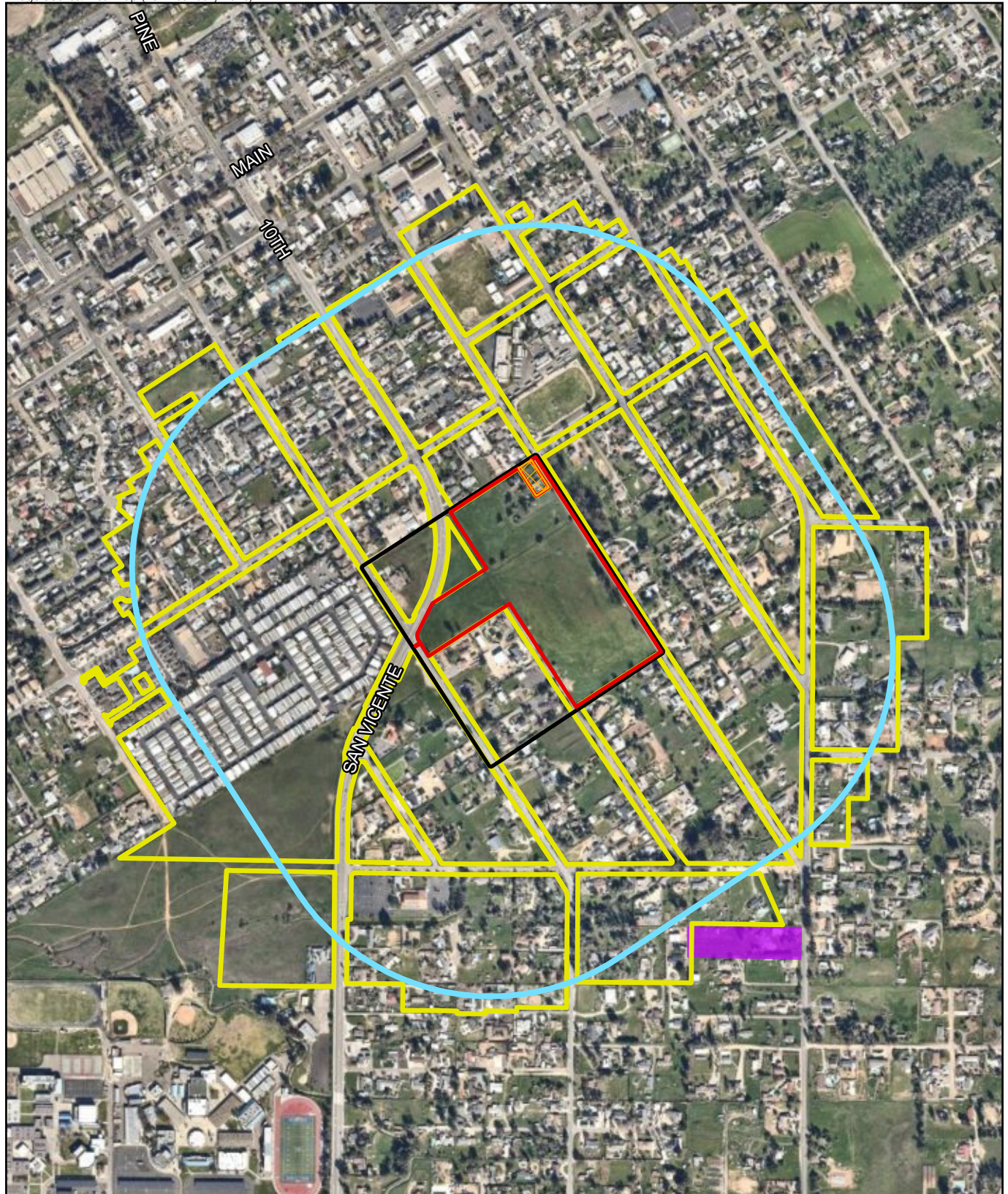
1.4.4 Zoning and General Plan Designation

The General Plan Regional Category for the project site is Village (VR-2) and Village Residential (VR-7.3). The Zoning Designation is Rural Residential (RR) and Variable Family Residential (RV). The project would develop 88 single-family residential units consistent with the property's general plan and zoning designations and use of the State Density Bonus Law and Assembly Bill 1287. The project site is not subject to a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve.

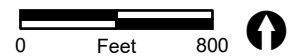
2.0 On-site Agricultural Resources

2.1 Local Agricultural Resource Assessment Model (LARA)

The County has approved a local methodology that is used to determine the importance of agricultural resources, in the unincorporated area of San Diego County, known as the LARA Model. The LARA Model takes into account three Required Factors, including water, climate, soil quality and three Complementary Factors including surrounding land uses, land use consistency, and slope, in determining the importance of agricultural resources.



- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Project Site | Zone of Influence |
| Preserved Area | Agricultural Resource |
| Envelope | Grape (Wine) |
| 0.25 mile Envelope Buffer | |



The following subheadings include a description of the project footprint's rating for each LARA Model factor, including justification for the factor ratings assigned to the project footprint. Each factor receives a rating of high, moderate, or low importance, based on site-specific information as detailed, in the LARA Model Instructions (Attachment 1).

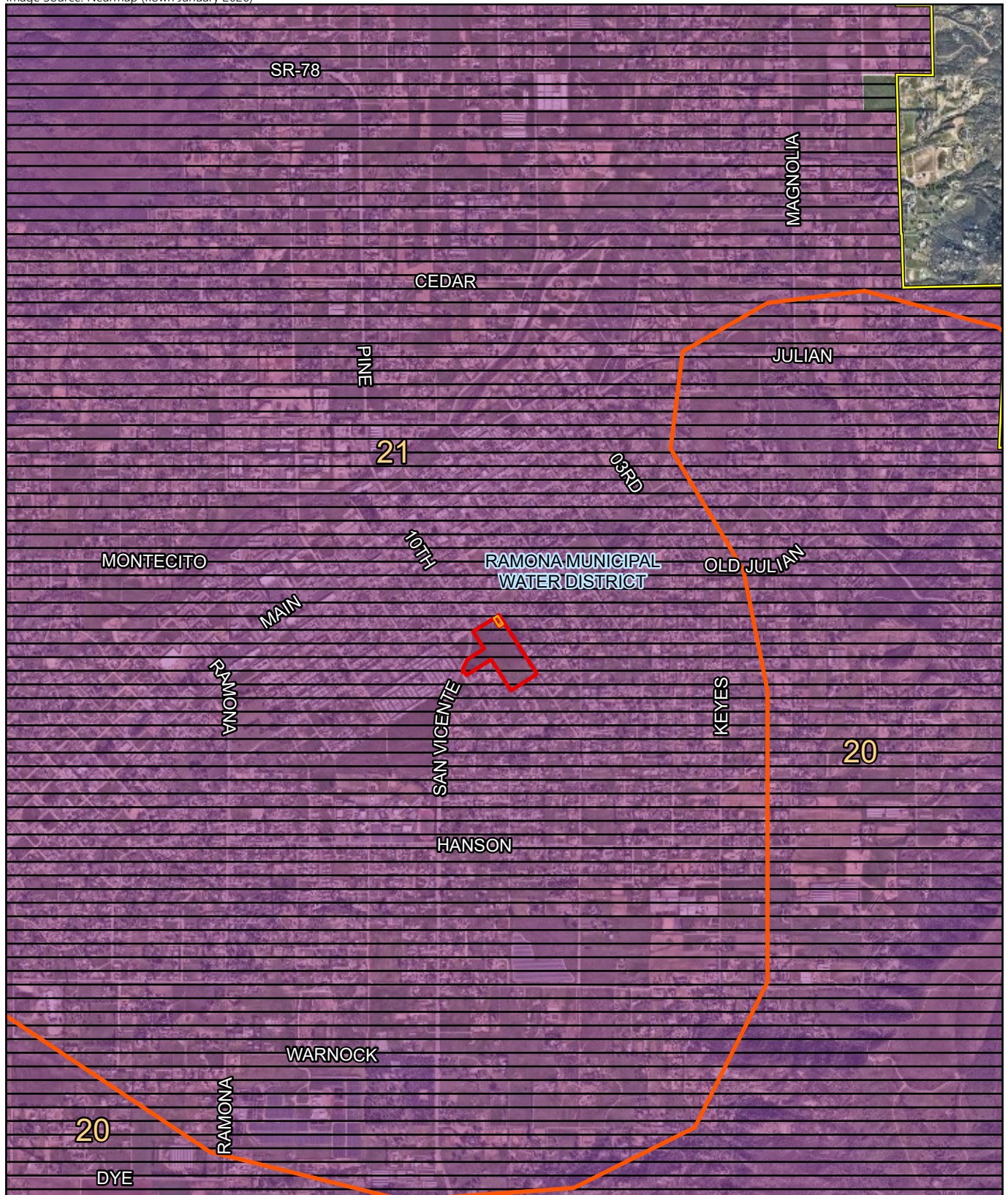
2.1.1 LARA Model Required Factors

The following sections describe the site-specific conditions for each LARA Model Required Factor rating.

2.1.1.1 Water

As shown in Figure 11, the project site and all surrounding properties are located within the service boundaries of the Ramona Municipal Water District. The existing single-family residence is currently configured with a connection to the Ramona Municipal Water District for potable water. However, the project includes a boundary line adjustment to create a separate parcel preserving the existing single-family residence and it would not be included as part of the project. The remainder of the project site that would be developed for residential uses does not have a metered connection to the Ramona Municipal Water District, nor are there any existing groundwater wells on the property. Review of the County Water Authority Boundary and Groundwater Aquifer Types map provided in the County's Guidelines for Determining Significance – Agricultural Resources, determined that the project is located within an Alluvial and Sedimentary Aquifer (County of San Diego 2007). Therefore, pursuant to LARA Model Table 4, the project receives a **Moderate** rating.

Table 4 Water Rating		
SDCWA Service Status	Groundwater Aquifer Type	Rating
Inside SDCWA Service area with existing water infrastructure connections and a meter	Any groundwater aquifer type	High
Inside SDCWA Service area with infrastructure connections to the site, but no meter has been installed	The site is located in Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer and has an existing well	High
	The site is located in Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer and has no existing well	Moderate
	The site is located in Fractured Crystalline Rock and has an existing well	Moderate
	The site is located in Fractured Crystalline Rock and has no existing well	Low
Outside SDCWA or inside SDCWA but infrastructure connections are not available at the site and no meter is installed	The site is located in Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer and has well	Moderate
	The site is located in Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer and has no existing well	Low
	The site is located in Fractured Crystalline Rock (with or without a well)	Low
	The site is located in a Desert Basin (with or without a well)	Low
SDCWA = San Diego County Water Authority		



- Project Site
- SDCWA Service Boundary
- Preserved Area
- Ramona Municipal Water District
- Sunset Zone

2.1.1.2 Climate

The project site is located within Zone 21 of the Sunset Zone plant climates. Sunset Zone 21 is rated high because of the mild year-round temperatures and lack of freezing temperatures that allow year-round production of high value crops. The importance of this zone is also related to the conversion pressure that exists due to urban encroachment. Preserving agriculture in Zone 21 is essential to maintain the high returns per acre that are common in this county. Climate is the essential factor that allows high value production. The loss of significant agricultural lands in Zone 21 would eventually relegate agriculture to areas further east where most of the county's high value crops cannot be viably produced. Zone 21 is also favorable due to its location close to urban areas and transportation infrastructure which facilitates product delivery to market. Therefore, pursuant to LARA Model Table 5, the project receives a **High** rating.

Table 5 Western Plantclimate Zones	
Sunset Zone	Rating
23	High
21	High
20	High
19	High
18	Moderate
13	Moderate
11	Low
3	Low

2.1.1.3 Soil Quality

The LARA Model rating for soil quality is based on the presence of soil candidates for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance as identified by the FMMP. County Guidelines Section 3.1.3 Soil Quality states, "The project's soil quality rating is based on the presence of Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide Significance (Attachment C [as defined in of the County Guidelines for Determining Significance]) that are available for agricultural use and that have been previously used for agriculture." All lands that have been previously used for agriculture are available for agricultural use and are considered in this rating consistent with County Guidelines. In determining the soil quality rating, Step 3 of the guidelines under Section 3.1.3 Soil Quality requires applicants to "Calculate the acreage of each soil type that is unavailable for agricultural use."

As detailed in Footnote 9 of the County Guidelines, soils unavailable for agricultural use include the following:

- (1) lands with existing structures (paved roads, homes, etc.) that preclude the use of the soil for agriculture,
- (2) lands that have been disturbed by activities such as legal grading, compaction, and/or placement of fill such that soil structure and quality have likely been compromised (e.g., unpaved roads and parking areas),
- (3) lands that are primarily a biological habitat type that have never been used for agriculture, and

- (4) lands constrained by biological conservation easements, biological preserve, or similar regulatory or legal exclusion that prohibits agricultural use.

Figure 7 above presents the distribution of soil types within the project site. To determine the areas of the project footprint that are “available for agriculture,” aerial photos of the project footprint were examined to identify areas that appeared to have a history of agricultural production. Additionally, areas that are flat and contain relatively high-quality soils but that are currently vegetated or possess moderately disturbed habitat were included. Areas of the site that contain structures (e.g., residences, outbuildings, paved roads), have been compacted (e.g., unpaved roads), or that consist of biological habitat never used for agriculture were not included.

Table 6 presents the information regarding soil quality within the project site. As shown on Table 6, 18.20 acres were identified as available for agricultural use, while the remaining 1.77 acres of the project site are considered unavailable for agricultural use. The soil quality rating is obtained by determining the proportion of the “available for agriculture” soils that are Prime Farmland soils or soils of Statewide Importance. After subtracting the 1.77 acres of non-agricultural areas as shown in Figure 7 above, the project would impact 10.74 acres of Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes that meet the criteria for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. An additional 7.45 acres of Fallbrook sandy loam, 9 to 15 percent slopes, eroded are available for agricultural use. However, this soil type does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance.

As detailed in Table 6, the project received a 0.590 rating out of a possible 1.0 maximum, which represents the proportion of the project site available for agricultural use that consists of Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes soils that meet the criteria for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Soil quality matrix scores ranging from 0.33 to 0.66, or that has a minimum of 10 acres of contiguous Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance Soils receive a **Moderate** rating pursuant to the LARA Model. The project’s soil rating of 0.590 falls within the range that qualifies for a **Moderate** rating. Therefore, pursuant to the LARA Model, the soil quality on the project footprint receives a **Moderate** rating (Table 7).

Table 6 Soil Quality								
Soil Map Unit	Project Acres	LCC	Storie Index	Available for Ag Use	Unavailable for Ag Use	Proportion of Site Available	Prime or Statewide 1 for Yes; 0 for No	Matrix Score
Placentia sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes	12.26	IVe	Grade 1	10.74	1.52	0.590	1	0.590
Fallbrook sandy loam, 9 to 15 percent slopes, eroded	7.71	IVe	Grade 2	7.45	0.26	0.410	0	0.00
GRAND TOTAL	19.97			18.20	1.77	1.000		0.590
NOTE: Total varies due to independent rounding. LCC = Land Compatibility Classification; Ag = agricultural								

Table 7 Soil Quality Matrix Interpretation	
Soil Quality Matrix Score	Soil Quality Rating
Site has a Soil Quality Matrix score ranging from 0.66 to 1.0 and at least 10 acres of contiguous Prime or Statewide Importance Soils	High
Site has a Soil Quality Matrix score ranging from 0.33 to 0.66 or has a minimum of 10 acres of contiguous Prime or Statewide Importance Soils	Moderate
Site has a Soil Quality Matrix less than 0.33 and does not have at least 10 acres of contiguous Prime or Statewide Importance Soils	Low

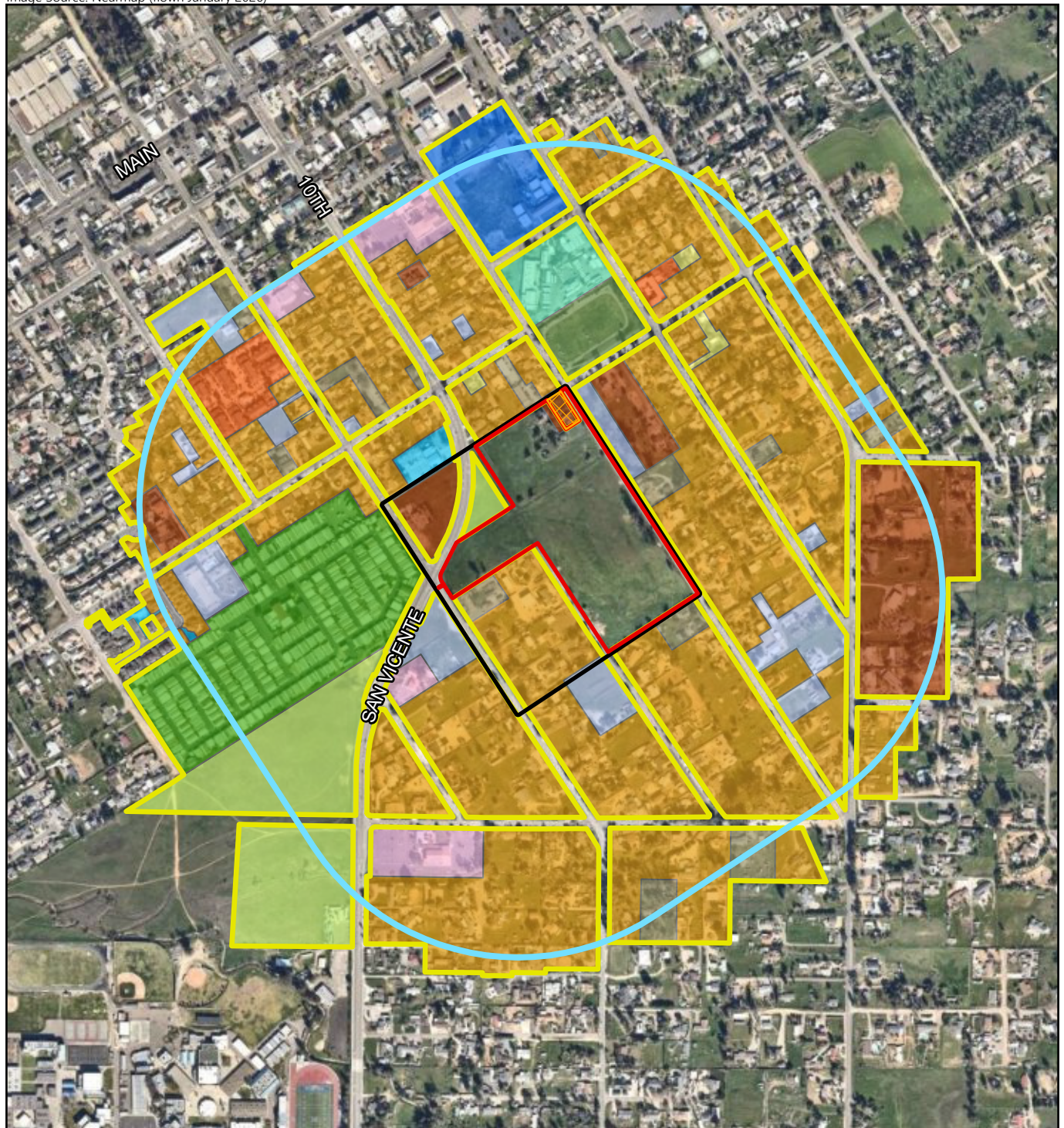
2.1.2 LARA Model Complementary Factors

Because all the LARA Model Required Factors were moderate or higher, the Complementary Factors must also be analyzed (refer to Table 2 of the County Guidelines). The sections below describe the analysis that results in each of the three LARA Model Complementary Factor ratings.

Analysis of the Complementary Factors requires consideration of factors within a Zone of Influence (ZOI) surrounding the project site. The County Guidelines (page 33) provide the methodology for calculating the ZOI. In summary, the process generally consists of drawing (using Geographic Information System [GIS]) a one-quarter-mile buffer around the entire project site and then including all parcels in the ZOI that are within or intersect with the one-quarter-mile buffer line (excluding the parcels the comprise the project site itself). The ZOI for the project was calculated to be 390.28 acres. The project boundary was used to represent the project site boundaries.

2.1.2.1 Surrounding Land Use

The more compatible a site is with the surrounding land uses, the more likely it is to avoid nuisance complaints and other issues from non-farm neighbors. This factor accounts for the degree to which the vicinity is compatible with agriculture and assigns a higher rating to a site which is within an agriculture-dominated area. Based on the County Guidelines (page 33), the uses considered "compatible with agriculture" include existing agricultural lands, protected resource lands, and rural residential lands. The rural residential lands must be two-acre parcel sizes or greater and must include elements of the rural residential lifestyle such as equestrian or animal raising, hobby agriculture, or vacant lands. Parcels with children's play areas, swimming pools, or secondary housing units would not meet this definition. The LARA Model recognizes that agriculture can be viable amongst urban uses, but that its long-term viability is generally less because of increased economic pressures to convert to urban uses. Figure 12 presents the surrounding land uses that fall within the project's ZOI. Based on review of aerial mapping, none of these surrounding land uses include elements of the rural residential lifestyle such as equestrian or animal raising, hobby agriculture. Although some vacant lands exist, only 21 of the 446 parcels within the ZOI are two acres in size or greater. Overall, the small lot residential nature of the ZOI is not conducive to agricultural production. Therefore, the project receives a **Low** rating for the Surrounding Land Use Complementary Factor (Table 8).



- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Project Site | Fire/Police Station | School District Office |
| Preserved Area | Landscape Open Space | Senior High School |
| Envelope | Mobile Home Park | Single Family Detached |
| 0.25 mile Envelope Buffer | Multi-Family Residential | Single Family Multiple-Units |
| Zone of Influence | Park - Active | Single Family Residential Without Units |
| Land Use | Religious Facility | Spaced Rural Residential |
| Field Crops | Road Right of Way | Vacant and Undeveloped Land |

0 Feet 800

Table 8 Surrounding Land Use Rating	
Percentage of Land within ZOI that is Compatible with Agriculture	Surrounding Land Use Rating
50% or greater	High
Greater than 25% but less than 50%	Moderate
25% or less	Low

2.1.2.2 Land Use Consistency

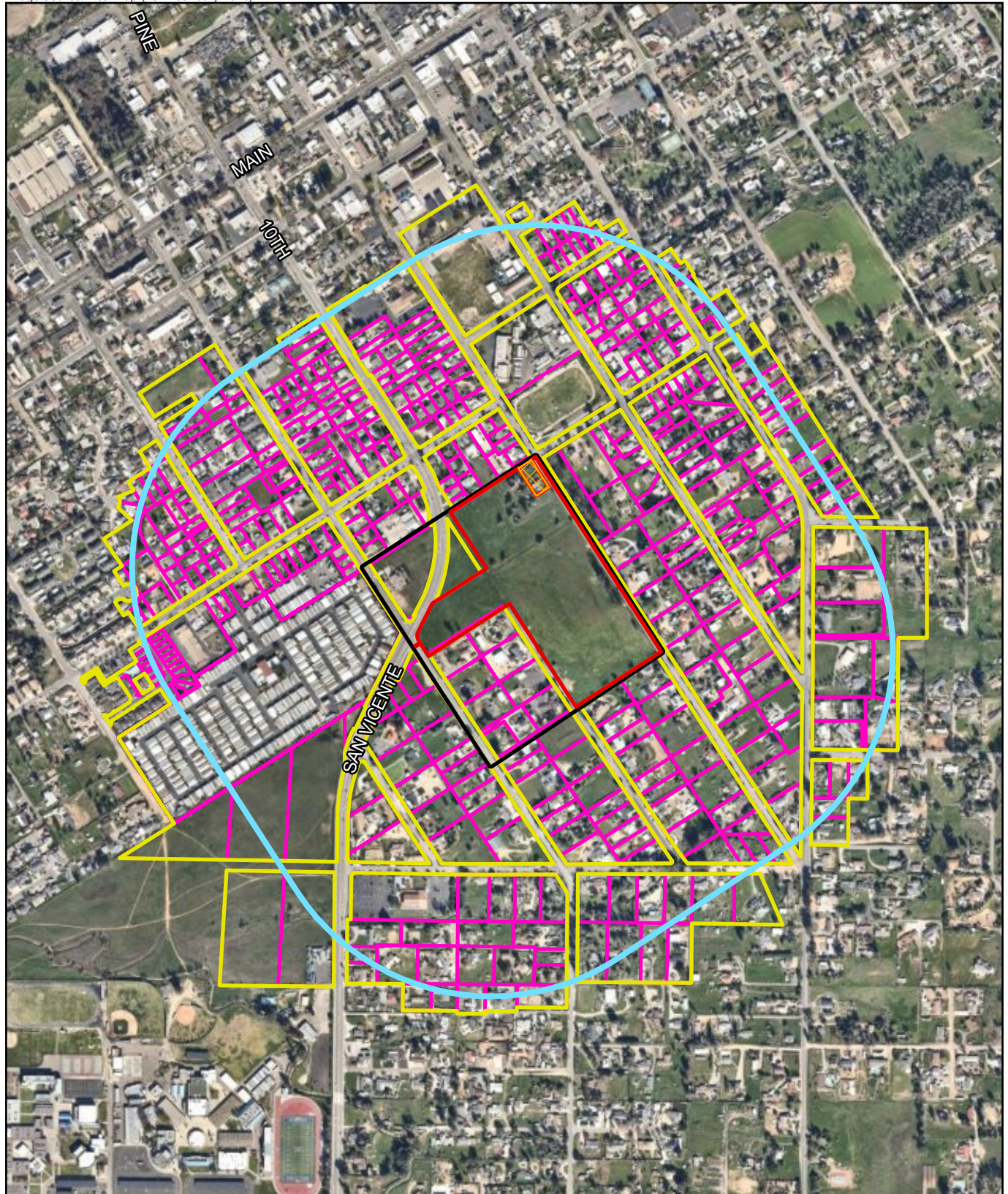
The Land Use Consistency analysis consists of comparing the project parcel's size with the median parcel size of all the parcels within the ZOI. The reason for this methodology is that the County recognizes that a site surrounded by larger parcels indicates the site is located in an area that has not already been significantly urbanized, whereas a site surrounded by smaller parcels would likely experience incompatibilities and the corresponding reduction in economic viability when considering foregone opportunity costs.

Figure 13 presents the project site and ZOI in relation to parcel boundaries. The project site consists of three parcels ranging in size between 2.94 and 8.26 acres, while the median parcel size of all the parcels within the ZOI is 0.36 acres. Therefore, pursuant to LARA Model, the project receives a **Low** rating for Land Use Consistency (Table 9).

Table 9 Land Use Consistency Rating	
Project's Median Parcel Size Compared to ZOI Median Parcel Size	Land Use Consistency Rating
The project parcel's size is smaller than the median parcel size within the project's ZOI	High
The project parcel's size is up to 10 acres larger than the median parcel size within the project's ZOI	Moderate
The project parcel's size is larger than the median parcel size within the project's ZOI by ten acres or more	Low

2.1.2.3 Slope

Slope is a Complementary Factor in the LARA Model to account for the role that topography plays in the viability of a parcel for agricultural production. While certain crops (e.g., avocados) can thrive on steeply sloped land, gentle topography allows for a wider range of potential uses and is easier for the operator to manage with regard to runoff and soil erosion. The average slope of land within the project site that is available for agricultural production is 7.08 degrees. Therefore, the project receives a **High** rating for Slope (Table 10).



- | | |
|--|---|
|  Project Site |  0.25 mile Envelope Buffer |
|  Preserved Area |  Zone of Influence |
|  Envelope |  Parcels |

0 Feet 800 

Table 10 Slope Rating	
Average Slope	Topography Rating
Less than 15% slope	High
15% up to 25% slope	Moderate
25% slope and higher	Low

2.1.3 LARA Model Result

Based on the results of the LARA Model, the site is not considered an important agricultural resource. The results of the model analysis, which are discussed above, are summarized in Table 11. The project site received a high rating for Climate factor and a moderate rating for the Water and Soil Quality factors. These three criteria are Required Factors, pursuant to the LARA Model. Since all three Required Factors were rated high or moderate, the Complementary Factors were also analyzed pursuant to the LARA Model requirements. The project site received a low rating for the Surrounding Land Use and Land Use Consistency factors, and a high rating for the Slope factor. Therefore, the results of the LARA Model meet the criteria of Scenario 6 (Table 12) and the project does not qualify as an **important agricultural resource**.

Table 11 LARA Model Results			
	LARA Model Rating		
	High	Moderate	Low
Required Factors			
Climate		✓	
Water	✓		
Soil Quality		✓	
Complementary Factors			
Surrounding Land Uses			✓
Land Use Consistency			✓
Slope	✓		

Table 12 Interpretation of LARA Model Results			
Scenario	Required Factors	Complementary Factors	LARA Interpretation
Scenario 1	All three factors rated high	At least one factor rated high or moderate	The site is an important agricultural resource
Scenario 2	Two factors rated high, one factor rated moderate	At least two factors rated high or moderate	
Scenario 3	One factor rated high, two factors rated moderate	At least two factors rated high	
Scenario 4	All factors rated moderate	All factors rated high	
Scenario 5	At least one factor rated low importance	Not Applicable	The site is not an important agricultural resource
Scenario 6	All other model results		

2.2 Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The following significance guideline is the basis for determining the significance of impacts to important on-site agricultural resources, as defined by the LARA Model, in San Diego County. Direct impacts to agricultural resources would be potentially significant when the following occurs:

- The project site has important agricultural resources as defined by the LARA Model, and the project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the FMMP; as a result, the project would substantially impair the ongoing viability of the site for agricultural use.

2.3 Analysis of Project Effects

2.3.1 On-site Agricultural Resources

As described in Section 2.1.3 above, the project does not meet this standard. Therefore, the project would not impact an important agricultural resource, and impacts would be less than significant.

2.3.2 Off-site Improvement Impacts

As described in Section 1.2.1 above, because the street improvements are immediately adjacent to the project site, the development footprint and offsite improvements are evaluated together in the analysis. Therefore, all off-site improvements were included in the analysis above, and no additional analysis is required.

2.4 Mitigation Measures and Design Considerations

Impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

2.5 Conclusions

Although the project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the FMMP, the LARA Model completed for the project determined that the project site does not qualify as an important agricultural resource. Furthermore, review of records during completion of the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, including aerial photographs, determined there is no historical evidence that the project site was ever used for agricultural production (Stantec 2024). Therefore, the project would not impact an important agricultural resource, and impacts would be less than significant.

3.0 Off-site Agricultural Resources

3.1 Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The County Guidelines (Section 4.2.2, page 41) identify the following significance guidelines for determining the significance of indirect impacts to off-site agricultural operations and Williamson Act Contract lands:

- 3.1.a The project proposes a non-agricultural land use within one-quarter mile of an active agricultural operation or land under a Williamson Act Contract (Contract) and as a result of the project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or Contract land and the project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.
- 3.1.b The project proposes a school, church, day care or other use that involves a concentration of people at certain times within one mile of an agricultural operation or land under Contract and as a result of the project, land use conflicts between the agricultural operation or Contract land and the project would likely occur and could result in conversion of agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use.
- 3.1.c The project would involve other changes to the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of off-site agricultural resources to a non-agricultural use or could adversely impact the viability of agriculture on land under a Contract.

3.2 Analysis of Project Effects

The County Guidelines state that the extent to which a project proposes a use that is similar to those already present in the surrounding area is an important factor in considering the significance of the placement of a non-agricultural use in proximity to an agricultural operation. A project proposed contiguous to an agricultural operation or and under a Williamson Act Contract would require greater scrutiny than a project separated from the agricultural operation or Williamson Act Contract by other land uses. Where incompatible land uses are located near existing agricultural operations, adverse indirect impacts may include (but are not limited to) liability concerns, trespass, vandalism, theft, pesticide or farm practice complaints, pollutants, erosion, importation of pests, pathogens, and weeds, and increased traffic. Conflicts at the agriculture-urban interface flow in two directions: from existing agricultural use to a newly established non-agricultural use and vice versa (County of San Diego 2007).

3.2.1 Indirect Impacts – Williamson Act Lands and Agricultural Preserves

As described in Section 1.4.3.2, there are no properties surrounding the project site that are protected by a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve. The nearest property protected by a County Agricultural Preserve is located 1.0 mile southeast of the project and the nearest property protected by an active Williamson Act Contract is located 2.3 miles northeast of the project site (see Figure 9). Therefore, the project would not introduce any activities that would preclude future agricultural cultivation on properties protected by a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve in the surrounding area due to the presence of intervening development and open space between the project site and these agricultural uses. No impact would occur.

3.2.2 Indirect Impacts – Land Use Conflicts

Urban/agricultural indirect effects or compatibility issues arise when development is placed adjacent to existing agriculture include pesticide applications, dust generation, and noise that originate from the farming activities, causing complaints by the surrounding new land uses. These types of complaints can create pressures resulting in the conversion of adjacent agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.

As shown in Figure 10 above, the project is not located adjacent to any properties that are currently used for agricultural production. Furthermore, the project would not include any features that would affect the existing vineyard located approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the project site due to the presence of intervening development between the project site and the vineyard. Therefore, the project would not introduce any activities that would conflict with agricultural cultivation on any other properties in the surrounding area. No impact would occur.

3.2.3 Indirect Impacts – Changes to the Existing Environment

As described under Section 3.2.2 above, the project would not introduce any activities that would conflict with agricultural cultivation on any other properties in the surrounding area. Furthermore, future development on the project would be consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designations of Village (VR-2) and Village Residential (VR-7.3) and Zoning Designations of Rural Residential (RR) and Variable Family Residential (RV). This would allow for development of uses similar to what is present in the surrounding community and would not affect agricultural production. Therefore, the project would not create significant changes to the environment that would encourage conversion of agriculture to a non-agricultural use or create land use conflicts, and impacts would be less than significant.

3.3 Mitigation Measure and Project Design Considerations

Impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

3.4 Conclusions

The project would not adversely affect existing agricultural uses in the surrounding area. The proposed use would not create significant changes to the environment that would encourage conversion of agriculture to a non-agricultural use. Therefore, the project would not adversely affect adjacent agricultural land uses or create land use conflicts, and impacts would be less than significant.

4.0 Conformance with Agricultural Policies

No key policies were identified in the General Plan or Ramona Community Plan that would create a potential conflict with the proposed use. Although the project possesses soils that meet the criteria for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, there are no active agricultural operations on the property. As described in Section 3.0 above, the project would not conflict with the continuation of agricultural uses within the surrounding area. This would support and be consistent with conservation goals for agriculture contained within the Ramona Community Plan and the Conservation Element of the General Plan.

4.1 Consistency with Agricultural Preserve

The project site is not subject to a Williamson Act Contract or a County Agricultural Preserve. The project would not preclude future agricultural cultivation on the nearest property protected by a County Agricultural Preserve located 1.0 mile southeast of the project and the nearest property protected by an active Williamson Act Contract located 2.3 miles northeast of the project site (see Figure 9).

4.2 Conclusions

The project would not conflict with any applicable goals or policies of the General Plan or Ramona Community Plan related to agriculture, nor would the project conflict with the Zoning Ordinance, Agricultural Preserve Special Area Regulations, and impacts would be less than significant.

5.0 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are those caused by the additive effects of other impacts to agricultural resources over time. A project's impact may not be individually significant, but the additive effect when viewed in connection with the impacts of past projects, present projects, and probable future projects may cause the significant loss or degradation of agricultural resources.

5.1 Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The guidelines for determining the significance of cumulative impacts are based on the same guidelines used to determine the significance of direct and indirect impacts, with the exception that the analysis considers the significance of the cumulative impact of the individual project impact in

combination with the impacts caused, by the projects in the cumulative study area that would also impact important agricultural resources.

5.2 Analysis of Project Effects

The project is located within the Ramona Community Plan, which is an area rich in agricultural resources. Important commercial agricultural activities in Ramona include egg ranching, dairy ranching, vineyards, ornamental production, and avocado farming. Smaller commercial agricultural activities include beef and other livestock production, horse ranching, hay, kiwis, subtropical fruit, and nuts. Additionally, domestic agriculture is an important element of the Ramona rural lifestyle. Therefore, an appropriate cumulative study area would be focused within the active agricultural areas within the Ramona Community Plan. Review of Table 2.2-3 of the County General Plan Environmental Impact Report determined that there are 28,716 acres of existing agricultural resources within the Ramona Community Plan. Similarly, review of Table 2.2-10 of the County General Plan Environmental Impact Report determined that 26,114 acres of land within the Ramona Community Plan are subject to County Agricultural Preserves and 5,401 acres within the Ramona Community Plan are subject to Williamson Act Contracts. Based on the large amount of existing agricultural resources, the large acreage of land protected by County Agricultural Preserves and Williamson Act Contracts, and the role that agriculture plays in the economy and rural lifestyle, there is no evidence that a potentially significant cumulative impact to agriculture would occur in this area. Therefore, cumulative impacts to agriculture would be less than significant.

5.3 Mitigation Measures and Design Considerations

Impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

5.4 Conclusions

Cumulative Impacts on agricultural resources would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

6.0 Summary of Project Impacts and Mitigation

6.1 Project Impacts

Although the project would result in the conversion of agricultural resources that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as defined by the FMMP, the LARA Model completed for the project determined that the project site does not qualify as an important agricultural resource. Furthermore, review of records during completion of the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, including aerial photographs, determined there is no historical evidence that the project site was ever used for agricultural production (Stantec 2024). Therefore, the project would not impact an important agricultural resource, and impacts would be less than significant.

6.2 Mitigation Measures and Project Design Considerations for Indirect Impacts

Impacts would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

7.0 References

California Department of Conservation (CDC)

2010 Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP).

San Diego, County

2007 Guidelines for Determining Significance – Agricultural Resources, March 19.

Stantec

2024 Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, 915 9th Street Ramona, California 92065.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

1973 *Soil Candidate Listing for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance San Diego County.*

U.S. Department of Conservation

2005 *Williamson Act Fact Sheet.* Division of Land Resource Protection.

8.0 List of Preparers and Persons and Organizations Contacted

8.1 Preparers

Nick Larkin, Environmental Program Manager

Leah Boyer, Associate Project Manager

Lori Spar, CEQA Project Director

Mauro Guevara, GIS Specialist

Stacey Higgins, Senior Production Specialist

Steven Gaughran, Production Specialist

8.2 Persons and Organizations Contacted

Matthew Esquivel, Project Proponent

ATTACHMENT 1

LARA Model Instructions

3.1 LARA Model Instructions⁶

Application of the LARA model is intended for use in evaluating the importance of agricultural resources when it is determined that a discretionary project could adversely impact agricultural resources located onsite. The LARA model takes into account the following factors in determining importance of the agricultural resource:

Required Factors:

Water
Climate
Soil Quality

Complementary Factors:

Surrounding Land Uses
Land Use Consistency
Topography

Directions for determining the rating for each LARA model factor are provided in sections 3.1.1 through 3.1.6 of this document. Upon rating each factor, it is necessary to refer to Table 2, Interpretation of LARA Model Results, to determine the agricultural importance of the site.

Table 2. Interpretation of LARA Model Results

LARA Model Results			LARA Model Interpretation
Possible Scenarios	Required Factors	Complementary Factors	
Scenario 1	All three factors rated high	At least one factor rated high or moderate	The site is an important agricultural resource
Scenario 2	Two factors rated high, one factor rated moderate	At least two factors rated high or moderate	
Scenario 3	One factor rated high, two factors rated moderate	At least two factors rated high	
Scenario 4	All factors rated moderate	All factors rated high	
Scenario 5	At least one factor rated low importance	N/A	The site is <i>not</i> an important agricultural resource
Scenario 6	All other model results		

Data Availability

To complete the LARA model, various data sources are needed. The most efficient approach to completing the model is through analysis within a Geographic Information System (GIS). To facilitate this approach, the GIS data layers required to complete the LARA model are available upon request from PDS. Available data sources include: groundwater aquifer type, Generalized Western Plantclimate Zones or “Sunset Zones”,

⁶ Various data sources referenced in this document are available from PDS in hard copy format (maps) or in digital format for use within a Geographic Information System (GIS). Obtaining various data sources will be required to determine the importance of the resource.

and Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance soil candidates. Other data sources are available from the SANGIS webpage at <http://www.sangis.org/>.

3.1.1 Water

The water rating is based on a combination of a site's CWA service status, the underlying groundwater aquifer type and the presence of a groundwater well (Table 3). Due to the variability of well yields and the potential for groundwater quality problems to adversely impact the viability of the well for agricultural purposes, the water factor allows for a reduction in the water rating based on site specific well yield and quality data, if that data is available (Table 4).

Table 3. Water Rating ⁷

County Water Authority (CWA) Service Status	Groundwater Aquifer Type and Well Presence	Rating
Inside CWA service area with existing water infrastructure connections and a meter	Any groundwater aquifer type	High
Inside CWA service area with infrastructure connections to the site, but no meter has been installed	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer <i>and</i> has an existing well	High*
	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer, but has no existing well	Moderate*
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock and has an existing well	Moderate*
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock, but has no existing well	Low*
Outside CWA or inside CWA but infrastructure connections are not available at the site and no meter is installed	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer <i>and</i> has an existing well	Moderate*
	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer, but has no existing well	Low*
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock (with or without a well)	Low*
	The site is located in a Desert Basin (with or without a well)	Low*

*These water ratings may be reduced based on available groundwater quantity and quality information, in accordance with Table 4. If no additional groundwater quantity or quality data is available, the ratings above shall apply.

⁷ If more than one underlying groundwater aquifer type exists at a site, usually the aquifer type that could produce the most water should be used to obtain the water rating. If it would be more reasonable to apply the rating based on the aquifer that would produce less water, a clear justification and reason for doing so must be provided.

Water Quality and Quantity Limitations

Site specific limitations to groundwater availability and quality exist and can lower the overall water rating of a site when data is available to support the limitation. Sites with imported water availability may not receive a lower water rating based on groundwater quality or yield data. Table 4 outlines potential water availability and quality limitations and the associated effect on the LARA model water rating.

Table 4. Groundwater Availability and Quality Effects on Water Rating

Groundwater Availability and Quality	Effect on Water Rating
The site has inadequate cumulative well yield (<1.9 GPM per acre of irrigated crops); TDS levels above 600 mg/L; or another documented agricultural water quality or quantity limitation exists	Reduces water rating by one level (i.e. from high to moderate or from moderate to low)

A determination of inadequate cumulative well yield as stated in Table 4 means that a site's well cannot produce at least enough water for each acre of irrigated crops at the site. At least 1.9 GPM is required per acre of irrigated crops, equating to production of 3 Acre Feet/Year (AFY) based on the following conversion factor: $1 \text{ AFY} = 325,851 \text{ Gallons per Year} / 365 \text{ days} / 1440 \text{ minutes} = 0.62 \text{ GPM}$. Cumulative well yield means that the combined yield of all wells on site may be summed to meet the required groundwater yield. As an example, if a site has 5 acres of irrigated crops, then production would need to be at least 9.5 GPM to produce enough water to irrigate the 5 acres, equating to approximately 15 AFY. If residence(s) exist on the project site, the groundwater analysis must demonstrate that an additional supply of 0.5 AFY can be achieved to account for residential water use associated with each existing onsite residence. To allow a reduction in the water quality score, TDS levels above 600 mg/L must be documented. If other documented water quality limitations exist that are not captured in the water quality measure of TDS, the water quality data must be provided and an associated water rating reduction justified. Although these requirements assume that water needs are consistent for a crop throughout the year while water requirements are typically higher in the dryer months, average annual required yield is used as the best available general measure of the adequacy of groundwater yields.

The quality and availability of imported water is not included as a factor to allow a reduction in the water rating due to an assumption that the MWD will continue to deliver water with the 500 mg/L TDS objective. However, it should be recognized that the degradation of the quality of Colorado River water is a known issue that could preclude the production of certain crops in the future. If in the future, the MWD is unable to meet their adopted water quality objectives, a similar reduction for imported water quality may need to be developed for consideration in the water score. Similarly, there is uncertainty regarding the continued future reliability of agricultural water deliveries based on various external issues that may affect local imported water supply such as protection of the Salton Sea and the stability of the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta. As the impacts from external sources to local agricultural water deliveries become realized, the treatment of the water score in this document may need to be reevaluated.

Water Rating Explanation

Sites with availability of imported water always receive the highest water rating regardless of groundwater availability because the availability of imported water is essential for the long term viability of agriculture due to the limited natural rainfall and limited availability of groundwater resources in the County. Sites within the CWA service area that have no existing water meter, but that have water infrastructure connections to a site (in or near an adjacent street), are assigned a higher water rating than sites without existing water infrastructure connections. This is because the cost of extending off-site water infrastructure and obtaining a water meter is much higher than only obtaining a water meter and constructing onsite infrastructure connections to existing adjacent imported water infrastructure. Furthermore, the presence of existing imported water infrastructure adjacent to a site is a good indication that imported water is likely to become available to the site in the future (more likely than for a site far from infrastructure for imported water).

The underlying groundwater aquifer type and the presence of a well are two additional factors that affect the water rating. In general, sites underlain by an alluvial or sedimentary aquifer receive the highest ratings because these substrates have a much greater capacity to hold water than fractured crystalline rock. A site underlain by an alluvial or sedimentary aquifer with an existing well receives a higher rating than a site underlain by these geologic formations but having no existing well because of the cost associated with well installation. Well installation costs are added to the initial capital outlay required to begin an agricultural operation, thereby reducing the water rating if no well is present. The availability of groundwater in fractured crystalline rock is highly uncertain. However, a site underlain by fractured crystalline rock that has an existing well and is located adjacent to imported water infrastructure receives a moderate rating to take into account the cost of well installation, and the increased likelihood that imported water may become available at the site in the near future. Additionally, while groundwater yield in fractured crystalline rock is generally limited compared to other aquifer types, it can provide a good source of groundwater, especially in valley areas where there may be saturated residuum overlying the fractured crystalline rock. Sites with a well located on fractured crystalline rock, but without imported water infrastructure connections to the site, always receive a low rating because such sites would likely be reliant on a limited groundwater resource for the foreseeable future.

Nearly all agriculture in the desert basins is located in Borrego Valley, where documented groundwater overdraft conditions limit the long-term sustainability of agricultural use. A site located in a desert basin receives a low water rating due to the absence of imported water, and low groundwater recharge rates, which can easily result in groundwater overdraft conditions as documented in Borrego Valley, where extraction rates far exceed natural recharge. The Borrego Municipal Water District is taking measures to reduce water use in the basin through encouraging the fallowing of agricultural land. In addition, the County of San Diego requires proposed projects to mitigate for significant impacts to groundwater supply in accordance with CEQA. Mitigation may be achieved through the fallowing of agricultural land. These factors make preservation of agriculture in Borrego Valley infeasible in the long term when

considering the need to reduce overall groundwater use to protect the public health and the sustainability of the community.

Groundwater Quantity and Quality Explanation

The following discussion explains the reasoning behind the water rating reductions detailed in Table 4, Groundwater Availability and Quality Effects on Water Rating. The lack of a well with adequate yield (1.9 GPM for each acre of irrigated crops) reduces the water rating by one factor. This standard is based on the well yield needed to achieve production of 3 AFY per acre, an average crop irrigation requirement for crops produced locally (Table 5).

Table 5. Crop Water Use Averages

Crop	Typical Water Usage Per Acre (AFY)
Indoor Flowering and Foliage Plants	3-4
Ornamental Shrubs and Trees	3
Avocados	3
Bedding Plants	3
Cut Flowers	2-3
Tomatoes	2
Citrus	2.5-3
Poinsettias	3-4
Strawberries	3
Average	3

Source: UC Cooperative Extension, County of San Diego

A well with poor water quality (as measured by TDS levels above 600 mg/L or another documented water quality limitation) may reduce the water rating by one factor to account for agricultural limitations associated with using poor quality water for crop production. Groundwater with TDS concentrations above 600 mg/L is the guideline for allowing a reduction in the water factor based on available research on the effects of TDS on crop production, with specific focus on the effects on crops important to the San Diego region. In general, as TDS levels rise, water has diminishing value for agricultural use as it can restrict the range of crops that can be irrigated with the water and increases the cost of irrigation system maintenance.

According to the San Diego County Water Authority Agricultural Irrigation Water Management Plan, TDS levels above 500 mg/L are problematic for many of the subtropical crops produced in San Diego County, and TDS levels over 1,000 mg/l are virtually unusable for many of the subtropical crops grown here (2001). While TDS concentrations above 500 mg/L can be problematic for many subtropical crops, concentrations above 600 mg/L was selected as the guideline to take into account the already elevated TDS concentrations in imported water sources. Another study (Peterson, 1999) identified the TDS tolerance of selected crops. Field crops such as oat hay, wheat hay and barley were found to tolerate water with TDS levels up to 2,500

mg/L, but these are among the lowest value crops produced in the County. Strawberries were found to be intolerant to TDS levels greater than 500 mg/L; apples, grapes, potato, onion, and peppers slightly tolerant to TDS levels up to 800 mg/L; and cucumbers, tomatoes, and squash moderately tolerant to TDS levels up to 1,500 mg/L. The Florida Container Nursery BMP Guide prepared by the University of Florida Agricultural Extension (2006) identified TDS levels and the associated degree of problem that will be experienced for microirrigated container nursery production at different TDS levels. TDS of 525 mg/L or less was identified as producing no problems, TDS from 525 to 2100 mg/L having increasing problems, and TDS greater than 2100 mg/L having severe problems. High levels of TDS can be overcome through planting more salt resistant crops; however salt resistant crops are typically lower in value and would not produce the economic returns necessary to sustain a viable farming industry in San Diego County (high cost of production and land generally require production of high value crops). In general as TDS levels rise, crop yields decline, maintenance of irrigation systems becomes more difficult, and the range of crops (particularly high value crops) that can be supported is reduced.

In summary, TDS levels in groundwater above 600 mg/L substantially impair the water as a source of irrigation for agriculture, justifying a reduction in the water rating by one factor to account for the potential for reduced yields, increased difficulty in maintaining irrigation systems, and reduction in the range of crops that can be produced.

It is important to note that TDS is only one measure of water quality and does not differentiate between the various types of dissolved solids or contaminants that may be present in water. High levels of certain constituents can cause severe problems for agricultural production. For example, high chloride content can damage certain crops, while nitrates can cause problems for livestock. If specific documented limitations exist that reduce the viability of the water supply for agriculture, the water rating should be reduced. The quality of imported water is not considered because it is assumed that the MWD will deliver water with a maximum TDS of 500 mg/L, their adopted TDS objective for imported water deliveries.

3.1.2 Climate

Ratings associated with each Generalized Western Plantclimate Zone or “Sunset Zone” are included in Table 6, Climate Rating. The table identifies and describes each zone and justification for the associated rating.⁸ Detailed descriptions of the Sunset Zones in San Diego County are included in Attachment B.

⁸ All Sunset Zones in the County are not included in the table. Zone 22 is a small area that occurs entirely within Camp Pendleton, therefore no rating is assigned to this zone. Zone 24 is the maritime influenced zone. Only limited portions of unincorporated communities exist in this zone (County Islands in National City and the west Sweetwater area). Although this zone is valuable for certain high value crops, it is not assigned any importance rating due to the very small area of unincorporated land that occurs in this zone and the fact that the land is fully urbanized.

Table 6. Climate Rating

Climate (Sunset Zone) Description	Rating	Justification
Zone 23 represents thermal belts of the Coastal Area climate and is one of the most favorable for growing subtropical plants and most favorable for growing avocados. Zone 23 occurs in coastal incorporated cities and also occurs in the unincorporated communities of Fallbrook, Rainbow, Bonsall, San Dieguito, Lakeside, western portions of Crest and Valle De Oro, Spring Valley, Otay, and western portion of Jamul-Dulzura.	High	Zone 23 is rated high because this climate zone is the most favorable for growing some of the County's most productive crops. Year round mild temperatures allow year round production and the proximity to urban areas and infrastructure facilitates efficient delivery to market.
Zone 21 is an air drained thermal belt that is good for citrus and is the mildest zone that gets adequate winter chilling for some plants. Low temperatures range from 23 to 36 degrees F, with temperatures rarely dropping far below 30 degrees.	High	Zone 21 is rated high because of the mild year round temperatures and lack of freezing temperatures that allow year round production of high value crops. The importance of this zone is also related to the conversion pressure that exists due to urban encroachment. Preserving agriculture in Zone 21 is essential to maintain the high returns per acre that are common in this County. Climate is the essential factor that allows high value production. The loss of significant agricultural lands in Zone 21 would eventually relegate agriculture to areas further east where most of the County's high value crops cannot be viably produced. Zone 21 is also favorable due to its location close to urban areas and transportation infrastructure which facilitates product delivery to market.
Zone 20 is a cold air basin that may be dominated by coastal influence for a day, week or month and then may be dominated for similar periods of time by continental air. Over a 20 year period, winter lows in Zone 20 ranged from 28 to 23 degrees F.	High	Zone 20 occurs the Ramona area. Citrus groves are common in Zone 20 in addition to a concentration of animal agriculture operations and vineyards. Most of Zone 20 falls within the 89,000-acre Ramona Valley viticultural area which was designated as its own appellation in 2006 and contains 17 vineyards currently cultivating an estimated 45 acres of wine grapes. The distinguishing factors of the Ramona Valley viticultural area include its elevation, which contrasts with the surrounding areas, and climatic factors related to its elevation and inland location. Due to the favorable climate, proximity to urban areas, and its potential to become a more widely recognized viticultural area, Zone 20 is rated as a climate of high importance.
Zone 19 is prime for citrus, and most avocados and macadamia nuts can also be grown here.	High	Zone 19 is rated high due to the suitability for growing the County's high value crops and its location close to urban areas.

Zone 18 is a mountainous zone subject to frosts. Citrus can be grown in Zone 18, but frosts require the heating of orchards to reduce fruit loss. Zone 18 is the home of Julian's apple orchards.	Moderate	Zone 18 is assigned a medium rating due to its frost susceptibility, reducing its potential for supporting year round production and frost sensitive crops. However, the ability to produce crops that require winter chilling makes it a climate zone of moderate importance.
Zone 13 covers low elevation desert areas (considered subtropical) and is the most extensive of the County's desert Plantclimate zones. Zone 13 includes the extensive agricultural uses in the Borrego Valley.	Moderate	Zone 13 is assigned a moderate rating due to the temperature extremes characteristic of this zone. These temperature extremes exclude some of the subtropicals grown in Zones 22 to 24, however numerous subtropicals with high heat requirements thrive in this climate such as dates, grapefruit, and beaumontia and thevetia (ornamentals).
Zone 11 is located below the high elevation Zone 3 and above the subtropical desert Zone 13.	Low	Zone 11 is assigned a low climate rating due the agricultural hazards of the climate including late spring frosts and desert winds.
Zone 3 occurs in the high elevation Palomar Mountains in addition to high elevation areas east of the Tecate Divide. These are locations where snow can fall and wide swings in temperature occur.	Low	Most of these lands are public lands, reducing their potential for commercial agriculture. The wide swings in temperature, including freezing temperatures in winter make this zone of low importance agriculturally. This zone is also far from transportation infrastructure; an important consideration for crop delivery to market.

While it is anticipated that the climate ratings would normally not be modified, it is important to acknowledge that microclimate conditions do exist that cannot be captured in the Sunset Zone definitions. For example, topography can create certain microclimate conditions such as frost susceptibility that could downgrade the climate importance of a site to marginal if frost tolerant crops cannot be grown at the site. Any downgrading or upgrading of a climate rating must be accompanied by site specific climate data to support the modification, and any identified climate limitations must be based on the range of crops that could be viable at the site. For example, if frost sensitive crops are the only crop identified to be viable at the site and the site would be subject to frequent frosts, this should be documented and a lower rating may be applied. It is not anticipated that climate modifications would be commonly used given the diversity of crops that a site would usually be able to support.

Sunset Zones are used as a standard measure of climate suitability due to the variability of microclimate conditions that the Sunset zones take into account. Recognizing that the Sunset Zones were not developed as a tool to determine the suitability for commercial agricultural production, their use is not intended to determine suitability for specific crops, rather they are a measure of overall climate suitability for the typical agricultural commodities produced in San Diego County. For example, the Sunset Zone designations take into account the USDA hardiness rating which identifies the lowest temperature at which a plant will thrive. Sunset Zones start with the USDA hardiness zones and add the effects of summer heat in ranking plant suitability for an area. The American Horticulture Society (AHS) heat zone map ranks plants for suitability to heat, humidity and dryness. The AHS heat zone map was developed under the direction of

Dr. H. Marc Cathey, who was instrumental in the organization of the USDA Plant Hardiness Map. Each AHS heat zone has “heat days,” those days with temperatures of 86° F or above. 86° F is the point at which some plants suffer damage to cellular proteins. The USDA plant hardiness zone maps and/or the AHS heat zone map may be used to supplement the Sunset Zone information if the Sunset Zone descriptions are not accurate.

3.1.3 Soil Quality

The project’s soil quality rating is based on the presence of Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide Significance (Attachment C) that are available for agricultural use and that have been previously used for agriculture. Land covered by structures, roads, or other uses that would preclude the use of the land for agriculture, are not typically considered in the soil quality rating. To determine the soil quality rating, the soil types on the project site must be identified. The soils data for the project site must be entered into Table 7, Soil Quality Matrix as detailed in the steps below:

Step 1.

Identify the soil types that are on the project site. Enter each soil type in Rows 1 through 13 of Column A. If the site has more soil types than available rows, add additional rows as needed.

Step 2.

Calculate the acreage of each soil type that occurs on the project site and enter the acreage of each in Column B. Enter the total acreage in Row 14, Column B. This number should equal the total acreage of the project site.

Step 3.

Calculate the acreage of each soil type that is unavailable for agricultural use⁹ and enter the total in the corresponding rows of Column C.

Step 4.

Subtract the values in Column C from the acreages of each soil type identified in Column B. Enter the result in Column D.

⁹ Soils unavailable for agricultural use include: 1) lands with existing structures (paved roads, homes, etc.) that preclude the use of the soil for agriculture, 2) lands that have been disturbed by activities such as legal grading, compaction and/or placement of fill such that soil structure and quality have likely been compromised (e.g., unpaved roads and parking areas), 3) lands that are primarily a biological habitat type that have never been used for agriculture, and 4) lands constrained by biological conservation easements, biological preserve, or similar regulatory or legal exclusion that prohibits agricultural use. The distinction between agriculture and biological resources is not always clear because agricultural lands commonly support sensitive biological species. Agricultural lands that incidentally support sensitive species should still be considered an agricultural resource; however, biological habitats that have never been used for agriculture should not be considered an agricultural resource. It is possible that non-native grasslands will be classified as both a biological resource and an agricultural resource since many non-native grasslands have been established based on a history of agricultural use.

Step 5.

Sum the acreage values in Column D and enter the total in Column D, Row 14.

Step 6.

Divide the acres of each soil type in Column D by the total acreage available for agricultural use (Column D, Row 14) to determine the proportion of each soil type available for agricultural use on the project site. Enter the proportion of each soil type in the corresponding row of Column E.

Step 7.

Determine whether each soil type is a soil candidate for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. If yes, enter 1 in the corresponding row of Column F. If no, enter zero in the corresponding row of Column F.

Step 8.

Multiply Column E x Column F. Enter the result in the corresponding row of Column G.

Step 9.

Sum the values in Column G and enter the result in Column G, Row 15 to obtain the total soil quality matrix score.

Step 10.

Based on the total soil quality matrix score from Table 7, identify the corresponding soil quality rating using Table 8 Soil Quality Matrix Interpretation

Table 7. Soil Quality Matrix

	Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G
	Soil Type	Size of project site (acreage)	Unavailable for agricultural use	Available for agricultural use	Proportion of project site	Is soil candidate for prime farmland or farmland of statewide significance? (Yes = 1, No = 0)	Multiply Column E x Column F
Row 1							
Row 2							
Row 3							
Row 4							
Row 5							
Row 6							
Row 7							
Row 8							
Row 9							
Row 10							
Row 11							
Row 12							
Row 13							
Row 14	Total		Total				
Row 15	Soil Quality Matrix Score						

Table 8. Soil Quality Matrix Interpretation

Soil Quality Matrix Score	Soil Quality Rating
The site has a Soil Quality Matrix score ranging from 0.66 to 1.0 and has a minimum of 10 acres of contiguous Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance Soils	High
The site has a Soil Quality Matrix score ranging from 0.33 to 0.66 or the site has a minimum of 10 acres of contiguous Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance Soils	Moderate
The site has a Soil Quality Matrix score less than 0.33 and does not have 10 acres or more of contiguous Prime Farmland or Statewide Importance Soils	Low

Soil Quality Rating Justification

The presence of Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide Significance is used as the measure of quality soil in the LARA soil quality rating based on their use in defining soil candidates for the FMMP Farmland categories of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Soil candidates for the FMMP Prime Farmland designation are soils with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. Soil candidates for the FMMP Farmland of Statewide Importance designation are similar to the soil criteria for Prime Farmland, but include minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Soil candidates for Farmland of Statewide Importance do not have any restrictions regarding permeability or rooting depth. Soil candidates for Farmland of Statewide Significance are included in this rating to capture quality soils with minor shortcomings that may not have been included, if the typical definition of Prime Agricultural Land as stated in Government Code Section 51201(c) was used. Soil criteria used in Government Code Section 51201(c) identifies any land with a LCC rating of I or II or a Storie Index Rating from 80 to 100 as land that meets the definition of prime agricultural land. Because San Diego County has limited quantities of soils that meet these criteria, locally defined NRCS soil candidates for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance are included to define quality soils in this locale given that 70% of these soils have LCC higher than I or II and 88% have SI ratings below 80. Details regarding the soil criteria that determine the applicability of a soil for the respective Farmland designation is included in Attachment C, Soil Candidate Criteria and Candidate Listing for Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance.

Table 8, Soil Quality Matrix Interpretation, identifies high, moderate, or low importance ratings based on the soil quality matrix score from Table 7. The maximum possible soil quality matrix score is one and the minimum is zero because the score is based on the amount of the agricultural resources onsite that are Prime and Statewide Importance soil candidates. A site with a soil quality matrix score of 0.66 or higher means that two-thirds of the agricultural resources onsite have soils that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. A minimum of 10 contiguous acres is required for a site to be assigned the highest soil quality rating to reflect the need for high quality soils to be contiguous in order for them to be considered useful

agriculturally. If the site has a soil quality score from 0.33 to 0.66 or has 10 acres or more of contiguous soils that meet the soil quality criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, the site is assigned the moderate importance rating. If less than one-third of the site or less than 10 contiguous acres of the agricultural resources onsite have soils that meet the Prime or Statewide Importance soil criteria, the site is assigned the low importance rating for soil quality. A ten acre threshold is included in the ratings to capture the potential for a large project site to have a substantial quantity of high quality soils and still receive a low importance rating due to the project's size in relation to the acreage of quality soils. Ten acres is an appropriate acreage to use in this context because ten acres would typically be able to support a wide range of agricultural uses in San Diego County. Furthermore, to be eligible for a Williamson Act Contract in an Agricultural Preserve, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisor's Policy I-38 (Agricultural Preserves) recommends various minimum ownership sizes, with ten acres being the minimum, to be eligible for a contract. Ten acres is listed as the minimum size for various agricultural activities including poultry, tree crops, truck crops, and flowers. The requirement that the land be contiguous recognizes that small, scattered pockets of high quality soils are less valuable for agricultural use than an area of contiguous high quality soils.

3.1.4 Surrounding Land Use

Surrounding land use is a factor in determining the importance of an agricultural resource because surrounding land uses that are compatible with agriculture make a site more attractive for agricultural use due to lower expectations of nuisance issues and other potential impacts from non-farm neighbors. This factor also accounts for the degree to which an area is primarily agricultural, assigning a higher rating to areas dominated by agricultural uses than an area dominated by higher density, urban development. Surrounding land use is a complementary factor in the LARA model because the presence of compatible surrounding land uses can support the viability of an agricultural operation; however a lack of compatible surrounding land uses would not usually prohibit productive agriculture from taking place (depending on the type of production). Similarly, agriculture can be viable among urban uses, but its long term viability would generally be less than an agricultural operation conducting operations in an area dominated by agricultural uses because of lesser economic pressures to convert to urban uses. To determine the surrounding land use rating, the following information must be determined:

Step 1.

Calculate the total acreage of lands compatible with agricultural use¹⁰ within the defined Zone of Influence (ZOI).¹¹ The location of agricultural lands can be determined using information from the DOC's Important Farmland Map Series, agricultural land use data available from the PDS, aerial photography, and/or direct site inspection. Land within a ZOI that is observed to be fallow or with a history of agricultural use will usually be considered agricultural land, unless there is evidence that it has been committed to a non-agricultural use (such as having an approved subdivision map). Planning & Development Services may consult the Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures if there are disputed interpretations.

Step 2.

Calculate the percentage of the acreage within the project's ZOI that is compatible with agricultural use.

Step 3.

Based on the proportion of lands within the ZOI that are compatible with agricultural use, identify the appropriate surrounding land use rating in accordance with Table 9, Surrounding Land Use Rating.

Table 9. Surrounding Land Use Rating

Percentage of Land within ZOI that is Compatible with Agriculture	Surrounding Land Use Rating
50% or greater	High
Greater than 25% but less than 50%	Moderate
25% or less	Low

Considering surrounding land uses within the ZOI is intended to provide a measurement of the long term sustainability of agriculture at the project site. Agriculture is generally

¹⁰ Lands compatible with agricultural uses include existing agricultural lands, protected resource lands, and lands that are primarily rural residential. Protected resource lands are those lands with long-term use restrictions that are compatible with or supportive of agricultural uses including but not limited to Williamson Act contracted lands; publicly owned lands maintained as park, forest, open space, or watershed resources; and lands with agricultural, wildlife habitat, open space, or other natural resource easements that restrict the conversion of such land to urban or industrial uses. For the purposes of this factor rating, rural residential lands include any residential development with parcel sizes of two acres or greater and that contain elements of a rural lifestyle such as equestrian uses, animal raising, small hobby type agricultural uses, or vacant lands. Residential parcels with swimming pools, children's play areas, second dwelling units, or other accessory uses that occupy a majority of the usable space of a residential parcel should not be identified as land compatible with agriculture.

¹¹ Attachment F details the steps required to determine the Zone of Influence (ZOI). The ZOI methodology is taken from the Department of Conservation's Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) model and includes a minimum area of ¼ mile beyond project boundaries and includes the entire area of all parcels that intersect the ¼ mile boundary. The ZOI developed by the Department of Conservation is the result of several iterations during development of the LESA model for assessing an area that would generally be a representative sample of surrounding land use. For example, a 160 acre project site would have a ZOI that is a minimum of eight times greater (1280 acres) than the project itself.

compatible with other agricultural land uses because they are more likely be tolerant of the typical activities and nuisances associated with agricultural operations than urban land uses would be. Primarily rural residential lands are included as a land use compatible with agriculture because rural residential lands are already common among agricultural uses and most active farms also have residences on the site. Although not all types of agriculture are compatible with rural residential land uses (i.e. confined animal facilities); many typical San Diego County farming operations are compatible with rural residential land uses as is evidenced by the existing viability of agricultural operations that are located among rural residential land uses. For example, in many North County communities, small parcels (two acres, for example) with a single family residence and a small orchard or other farming or equestrian use are common. These residential uses, due to their direct involvement in agriculture or a rural lifestyle, would tend to be more compatible with agriculture than a high density development where homeowners would be less likely to be directly involved in rural lifestyle activities (e.g. agriculture, equestrian, animal raising, etc.). Occupants of higher density residential uses are more likely to be disturbed by noise, dust, pesticides or other nuisances that do not fit with the peaceful perceptions of living in the countryside.

3.1.5 Land Use Consistency

The median parcel size associated with the project site compared to the median parcel size of parcels located within the ZOI is a complementary factor used in the LARA model. In order to determine the land use consistency rating for the project, the following information must be determined:

Step 1.

Identify the median parcel size associated with the proposed project if the proposed project consists of at least three parcels. If the proposed project consists of two parcels, use an average. If the proposed project consists of only one parcel, then no median or average is needed.

Step 2.

Identify the median parcel size of the parcels located within the project's ZOI.

Step 3.

Considering the project's median parcel size and the ZOI median parcel size, identify the land use consistency rating in accordance with Table 10.

Table 10. Land Use Consistency Rating

Project's median parcel size compared to ZOI median parcel size	Land Use Consistency Rating
The project's median parcel size is smaller than the median parcel size within the project's ZOI	High
The project's median parcel size is up to ten acres larger than the median parcel size within the project's ZOI	Moderate
The project's median parcel size is larger than the median parcel size within the project's ZOI by ten acres or more	Low

Land use consistency is used as a measure of importance to recognize the effect that surrounding urbanization has on the viability of ongoing agricultural uses and to recognize that as urbanization surrounds agricultural lands, opportunity costs¹² for agricultural operators increase, thus reducing the viability of an agricultural operation. A site surrounded by larger parcels indicates that the site is located in an area that has not already been significantly urbanized and the area is more likely to continue to support viable agricultural uses. On the other hand, a site surrounded by smaller parcels indicates a lower likelihood of ongoing commercial agriculture viability considering the greater expectations of land use incompatibilities that the site is likely to experience and the reduction in economic viability when considering forgone opportunity costs. The median parcel size is used instead of an average to account for the potential for a very large or very small parcel to exist that would skew the result if using an average.

3.1.6 Slope

To determine the Slope Rating for the site, the average slope for the area of the site that is available for agricultural use must be determined. Refer to Column D of Table 7, Soil Quality Rating Matrix, for the areas of the site considered available for agricultural use. When the average slope of the areas of the site that is available for agricultural use is determined, identify the corresponding topography rating as outlined in Table 11, below.

Table 11. Slope Rating

Average Slope	Topography Rating
Less than 15% slope	High
15% up to 25% slope	Moderate
25% slope and higher	Low Importance

¹² Opportunity cost is an economic term. It means the cost of something in terms of an opportunity foregone (and the benefits that could be received from that opportunity), or the most valuable foregone alternative. For example, if a land owner decides to farm his land, the opportunity cost is the value of one or more alternative uses of that land, such as a residential subdivision. If he continues to farm the land, the opportunity cost is the revenue that he does not receive from building houses. Thus, as opportunity costs rise, the viability of continuing the current action (i.e. agricultural use) decreases. This conclusion is based on the fact that agricultural use of land is primarily an economic decision. When factors, such as increased opportunity costs, make use of the land for agriculture less profitable than other uses, the long term viability of agriculture decreases.