

**VISUAL RESOURCES REPORT
LILAC HILLS RANCH
SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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Executive Summary

The following visual impacts are anticipated as a result of implementation of the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan project:

1. **The project would change the composition of the visual environment in terms of dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity.** The project as viewed from West Lilac Road and surrounding residential areas would be inconsistent with the existing visual character of the area. As a result, **the visual environment would be adversely affected and the visual impacts would be significant and unmitigable.**

2. **The project would not result in physical changes that would substantially degrade the quality of an identified visual resource.**

The property contains steep slopes, ridgelines, and undisturbed native vegetation. Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO)-classified steep slopes (i.e., slopes with a 25 percent or greater slope gradient and with a 50-foot rise in elevation) are located in the west, southwest, and eastern middle portion of the project. The project would preserve the surrounding ridgelines, and disturbance would be within the 10 percent allowance allowed by RPO. **The elimination of a relatively small area of steep slopes would not degrade the visual quality of that resource.**

3. **The project would not change the visual environment of a designated scenic Highway, scenic Vista, or the I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan Area.**

4. **Light and glare impacts associated with the project are not considered to be significant.** Because all outdoor light fixtures would conform to the San Diego Light Pollution Code, introduced night lighting, including sports field lighting, would not become a dominant element in the nighttime views of the valley. In addition, because highly reflective building materials would not be installed, the project would not result in significant visual impacts due to glare. **Light and glare impacts are not anticipated to substantially contrast with existing conditions and, therefore, would not result in a significant adverse visual effect.**

5. **The project would be consistent with applicable policies and planning documents.** The existing community character of the project site would not be significantly changed due to the following project design elements: The preservation of steep slopes; sensitive hillsides and existing landforms; the use of contour grading techniques; stepped building pads; setback buffers; and an architectural palette that has been designed to be sensitive to the project's rural setting. **No impact to visual character, as expressed by applicable planning documents, is anticipated as a result of this project.**

6. Short-term visible construction activities would contrast with existing conditions due to removal of existing vegetation and the introduction of new, visually dominant elements. **While temporary in nature, adverse visual impacts associated with construction activities would be significant and unmitigable.**
7. **The composition of the project viewshed would be adversely affected by physical changes introduced by cumulative projects.** These changes would be incompatible with the existing visual character of the area as it transitions from primarily agriculture and rural residential land uses to a more suburban pattern of development. Therefore, **visual impacts associated with cumulatively considerable projects would be significant and unmitigable.**

1.0 Introduction

The following Visual Impact Assessment was prepared for the proposed Lilac Hills Ranch Project. This report provides the basis for the analysis summarized in Chapter 2.1 of the project Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

1.1 Purpose of the Visual Resources Report

The purpose of this study is to assess the visual impacts of the proposed project, determine the significance of the impact under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and to propose measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse visual impacts associated with the construction of the proposed project on the surrounding visual environment.

1.2 Key Issues

The three key issues to be examined in this report are identified in the County's Guidelines for Determining Significance for Visual Resources. The issues are whether the proposed project would result in a significant impact in regard to a scenic vista, or scenic resources (such as trees and rock outcroppings), or whether it would substantially degrade the existing visual quality of the site.

1.3 Principal Viewpoints to be Covered

Key Observation Points (KOPs), consisting of photographs taken from public viewpoints, are identified based on the number and frequency of views, the potential sensitivity of viewers, and the types of project-related features that would be visible. Locations for KOPs were selected using the following criteria:

- Type of viewers/viewpoint (public views are considered more sensitive than private views)
- Breadth of the view (views taking in a number of elements rely less on any one element than those focusing on a specific criterion)
- Depth of the view (increased distance from the observed element makes it appear smaller, less detail is registered, and visibility may be affected by atmospheric conditions such as fog, smog, etc.)
- The amount of time (duration) and/or number of times each observer is exposed to the view

- Number of viewers exposed to the view (a greater number of viewers makes the view more sensitive)
- Designated scenic viewpoints and scenic highways are considered sensitive viewpoints.

The Visual Analysis analyzes changes in the visual environment associated with the proposed project from the following general locations: Interstate 15 (I-15) (northbound and southbound lanes) looking east toward the site; Old Highway 395, both east and west of I-15 (northbound and southbound) also looking east; West Lilac Road, looking south toward the site; West Lilac Road and Covey Lane, looking west toward the site; and the approximate intersection of West Lilac Road and Circle R Drive, looking north into the site. These KOPs include views from public roads and freeways, along with surrounding rural residential areas (Figure 25, Key Observation Points—*Please refer to Attachment 1 for all figures.*).

2.0 Project Description

The proposed Lilac Hills Ranch project site is approximately 608 acres, comprised of 59 contiguous properties and is located in northern unincorporated San Diego County a quarter mile from the I-15 corridor on the east side with freeway access off the Old Highway 395 Interchange. The project site is located to the south and west of West Lilac Road with State Route 76 (SR-76) to the north, downtown Valley Center 11 miles to the east, downtown Escondido 16 miles to the south, and I-15 and Old Highway 395 to the west (Figure 1).

The Lilac Hills Ranch project site is located within the westernmost portion of the Valley Center Community Plan area, and the eastern most portion of the Bonsall Community Plan area. From the northwest corner, West Lilac Road serves as the northern and eastern boundary of the project site, while Circle R Drive is less than a half mile south of the project boundary. From the southwest corner, the western boundary of the project site runs along Shirey Road and extends to Standel Lane, which serves as the northwestern project boundary. The project site is within Township 10 South, Range 3 West, Section 24, and Township 10 South, Range 2 West, Sections 19 and 30, on the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute Pala and Bonsall quadrangles (Figure 21).

Fallbrook and Camp Pendleton lie to the northwest and Bonsall and Oceanside are to the west; the incorporated cities of Escondido, San Marcos, and Vista lie to the south and southwest and downtown Valley Center is about 11 miles to the southeast (or a 22-minute drive). The Pala-Pauma Subregional Plan area lies to both the north and east; and the North County Metro Subregional Plan area to the south.

Several hundred homes of varying types exist in the project area ranging from small lot townhomes to farm homes on large parcels with mostly citrus and avocado groves. Single-family residential homes are located on parcels ranging from less than 5,000 square feet to

20 acres (Table 1). Homes within three miles of the site are primarily on lots from 1 to 10 acres (1,093 of 1,935 homes; or 56.5 percent), while homes within five miles of the site that are under one acre total 18,066 of 39,622 homes; or 45.6 percent. The residential developments near the site are located off West Lilac Road, Covey Lane, Mountain Ridge Road, and Rocking Horse Road via Old Highway 395. Typical architectural styles in the area are Mission or Ranch style, and homes are mostly one to two stories. The land uses within closer proximity (within an area roughly bounded by West Lilac Road to the east and north; Circle R Drive to the south; and I-15/Old Highway 395 to the west) are comprised of agriculture (primarily orchards and nurseries, but also row crops); low-density rural residential; undeveloped land (much of which consists of chaparral); commercial and office buildings; a trailer park and storage; and an industrial rock manufacturing and concrete batch plant. To the southwest of the project site is an area containing the Castle Creek Inn and Resort as well as single-family residential and a golf course.

**TABLE 1
RESIDENTIAL LOT SIZES**

Residence Location from Project	Lot Sizes						Total Number of Lots
	Up to 1 Acre	Percent	1–10 Acres	Percent	10–20 Acres	Percent	
0-1 mile	27	8.8%	235	76.5%	45	14.7%	307
0-2 miles	94	10.8%	641	73.8%	133	15.3%	868
0-3 miles	608	31.4%	1,093	56.5%	234	12.1%	1,935
0-4 miles	17,389	88.9%	1,821	9.3%	349	1.8%	19,559
0-5 miles	18,066	45.6%	2,949	52.8%	619	1.6%	39,662

The larger constructed and approved developments in the immediate area include: Welk Resort, Castle Creek Country Club, Champagne Village, Circle R Ranch, Champagne Lakes RV Park, Vista Valley Country Club, Hidden Meadows, Pala Mesa Resort, Meadowood Specific Plan (recently approved), the Campus Park (recently approved) and Campus Park West (in process) projects.

The project would be a mixed-use, master-planned community that would include a maximum of 1,746 dwelling units with varying lot sizes, a neighborhood-serving commercial town center, an active park/village green, retail uses, civic facilities that would include a fire station and a school (K-8), public and private neighborhood parks, a private recreational facility, and other recreational amenities. Also proposed on-site are a recycling facility; a water reclamation facility; active orchards, and other supporting infrastructure.

Open space is proposed to retain some of the existing citrus and avocado groves, included within 104.1 acres of sensitive resources and biological/wetland habitat. Additional open space could be provided off-site to mitigate impacts and contribute to a regional preserve system. Primary access to the project site would be provided via Main Street, an internal

private road off of West Lilac Road, which connects to Old Highway 395 to the west of the project site.

The proposed circulation plan for the project includes both on- and off-site road improvements. These improvements consist of widening and minor grading associated with; West Lilac Road along the northern project boundary and from project entrance west to the intersection of Old Highway 395; the Lilac Hills Ranch road connection between Phases 3 and 4; Covey Lane from project west to West Lilac Road; fire apparatus access from project to Rodriguez Road; Mountain Ridge Road from project to Circle R Drive; and traffic light signalization at Gopher Canyon Rd/I-15 and Old Highway 395/West Lilac Road interchanges.

The project proposes residential land uses with an overall density less than 2.9 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and a maximum of 1,746 units. The residential areas span multiple planning areas. Development within Lilac Hills Ranch would be subject to the "B" and "D" designators Design Review Guidelines, in accordance with the Valley Center Community Plan.

The project includes an on-site water reclamation facility that would provide treatment of effluent generated within the project site. A recycling facility is also proposed on-site. The purpose of the recycling facility is to supplement recycling opportunities for project residents in addition to the weekly collection of waste, recycling material, and green waste provided by franchised waste haulers as required by the County of San Diego solid waste management ordinance and state law.

The project design would be in accordance with the County Guidelines, as detailed in the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan. Project design features include landscaping throughout the project site, screening of the water reclamation facility and recycling facility and lighting restrictions. The project would include the use of existing water wells and the construction of on-site drainage facilities, including water quality treatment and hydromodification basins, to protect against sedimentation resulting from storm water runoff. The system would include site design, source control and treatment best management practices, as well as low impact development measures. All development would comply with the County's Dark Sky Ordinance.

The project would be implemented in phases dependent on market conditions. Grading is expected to take place in five phases over a period of 10 years. The Specific Plan text includes a phasing plan for the development of the project's component parts which would be coordinated with the level of available services, including roads, water, wastewater, school and park services.

2.1 Land Use Designations and Zoning

Currently, approximately 393.5 acres, 64.4 percent of the approximately 608-acre project site, is in active agricultural use, primarily with citrus and avocado groves. Annual grasslands and native vegetation surround the agricultural areas, primarily in the northern and eastern portions of the project site. Land to the north and east of the project site is undeveloped and consists of citrus and avocado orchards, pasture land, and natural open space (primarily chaparral).

The project site lies a quarter mile from I-15 and is within both the Bonsall and Valley Center Community Plan areas. The General Plan Land Use Element regional category for the project site and surroundings areas is Semi-Rural. The Valley Center Community Plan land use designations are Semi-Rural SR-10 and Semi-Rural SR-4 (1 unit per 4, 8, or 16 gross acres, depending on slope), and the Bonsall Community Plan land use designation, for a portion of the site, is Semi-Rural SR-10. The majority of the project site, which lies within the Valley Center Community Plan Area (CPA), is zoned Limited Agriculture (A70); the portion of the site, which lies within the Bonsall CPA, is zoned Rural Residential (RR). The primary land uses found in the project area are agricultural related, with the project site currently supporting several different types of crops, including citrus, row crops, and avocados. Agricultural lands cover the majority of the southeastern, east-central, and northern portions of the project area. The northern and central agricultural areas consist of orchard crops (thought to be primarily citrus and avocado) with some small areas of vineyard and nursery; while the southern concentrations of existing agricultural uses are primarily labor intensive row crops (vegetables and strawberries). The small area of mapped vineyard supports varieties of grape. An area used to produce stock for the commercial nursery business is located near the northwest part of the site.

Discretionary approvals required for the project include a Specific Plan (SP12-001) and a General Plan Amendment (GPA 12-001). A Rezone is proposed to implement the Specific Plan by changing the existing Rural Residential (RR) and Limited Agriculture (A70) Use and Development Regulations with two new Use Regulations, defined within the Specific Plan. The project also includes a Master Tentative Map, Implementing Tentative Map, and Major Use Permit.

2.2 Regulatory Framework

Visual resources may be subject to plans and policies developed to ensure adequate consideration is given to preserving and/or enhancing the visual qualities of an area. The proposed project is subject to the following guidelines and policies.

2.2.1 State of California

California adopted a Scenic Highway Program (Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq.) in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the visual quality of areas that are adjacent to highways. The scenic designation is based on the amount of natural landscape visible by motorists, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the motorist's enjoyment of the view. I-15 is classified as an "Eligible" California Scenic Highway from SR-76 north to SR-91 near the city of Corona. Although the project site is 1,600 feet east of I-15, it is approximately two miles south of SR-76, and therefore, is not located within the Scenic Highway corridor.

2.2.2 County of San Diego

2.2.2.1 San Diego County General Plan

The San Diego County General Plan is a broad-based planning document that contains text, maps, and diagrams explaining the County's long-range growth and development goals and policies. The adopted General Plan consists of six countywide elements: Land Use, Circulation (Mobility), Conservation and Open Space, Housing, Safety, and Noise.

The Land Use Element includes three regional categories: Village, Semi-Rural, and Rural Lands. Regional categories are intended to provide a framework for the regional distribution of uses that serves as the foundation for the land use map designations, goals, policies, and regulations that guide future development. The regional category applicable to the project site is "Semi-Rural." The General Plan designates "Semi-Rural" lands as "appropriate for lower-density residential neighborhoods, recreation areas, agricultural operations, and related commercial uses that support rural communities."

The County's land use designations are defined by the land use type—residential, commercial or industrial—and the maximum allowable residential density or nonresidential building intensity. The designations are applied throughout the County and are illustrated on the community-specific land use maps within the General Plan. More specific standards may be established for each land use designation to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan, through such tools as the Zoning Ordinance, to address impacts related to specific land uses or the needs of an individual community. Within the VCCP area, the project is designated "Semi-Rural (SR-4)", which permits one housing unit per 4, 8, or 16 gross acres, depending on slope; and Semi-Rural 10 (SR-10), which permits one unit per 10 or 20 gross acres, dependent on slope within the BCP area.

A major component guiding the physical planning of the County is the Community Development Model. The Community Development Model is implemented by three regional categories – Village, Semi-Rural, and Rural Lands – that broadly reflect the different

character and land use development goals of the County's developed areas, its lower-density residential and agricultural areas, and its very low-density or undeveloped rural lands. The Community Development Model directs the highest intensities and greatest mix of uses to Village areas, while directing lower-intensity uses, such as estate-style residential lots and agricultural operations, to Semi-Rural areas. The Semi-Rural category may effectively serve as an edge to the Village, as well as a transition to the lowest-density category, Rural Lands, which represents large open space areas where only limited development may occur. The intent of the Community Development Model is to guide new development into more compact development as a means to reduce associated impacts. Generally, locating housing closer to retail, services, schools, and jobs and on smaller lots within communities can reduce the size of required infrastructure improvements and number and length of automobile trips, while increasing the efficiency of delivering police, fire, and other public services and enhancing community livability. This model of development likewise allows an increase in the amount of open space, natural habitat, and agriculture that can be preserved.

Consistent with Community Development Model, the project's Town and Neighborhood Centers contain the densest neighborhoods and a broad range of commercial and civic uses that are supported by a network of local roads containing bicycle lanes and walkways linking the central neighborhoods with parks, schools, and public areas. Outside of the Town and Neighborhood Centers, the project proposes areas of lower density.

The project's core area, the Town Center, is designated with the Village Core/Mixed Use land use designation which allows for the highest density attached residential uses with a variety of office-commercial uses sized to serve the project. This area is centered on the Village Green and south of N. Main Street includes five subareas on the Specific Plan Map (Figure 1-4). The three commercial subareas, identified as C-1, C-2 and C-3, are planned to include attached residential development with densities of 11.9, 20 and 22 dwelling units per acre. The two attached single family subareas, identified as SFA-1 and SFA-2, allow for densities of 15.6 and 20 dwelling units per acre. Structures in the Town Center could be up to three stories, with a 35 foot height limit.

The area surrounding the Town Center is designated as VR 2.9 Land Use designation. Open space is planned immediately to the west and south of the Town Center. On the other side of this open space are four single family detached subareas with densities of 10.7, 5.5, 5.9 and 4.7 dwelling units per acre. The subarea with the 10.7 du/acre density has one other subarea between it and the project boundary with a density of 6 dwelling units per acre. The other three subareas extend to the project boundary. The residential development in the areas designated for detached single family development and single family in the outside are limited to the standard two stories with a maximum of the 35 feet in height.

In a similar manner the Neighborhood Center (North) includes an attached single family subarea with a density of 24.4 dwelling units per acre, and also includes a commercial

subarea and private recreation subarea which do not allow for residential development. There are two detached single family subareas adjacent to the Neighborhood Center (North), one allows for 4.7 dwelling unit per acre, and the other 5.9 dwelling unit per acre. Also adjacent to this Neighborhood Center is a school site and a large public park.

Conservation and Open Space Element

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the San Diego County General Plan provides direction to future growth and development of the conservation, management, and utilization of natural and cultural resources, the protection and preservation of open space, and the provision of park and recreation resources.

In addition, the Conservation and Open Space Element includes a Scenic Corridors section, which establishes a County Scenic Highway System. The goal of the County Scenic Highway System is to protect and enhance the aesthetic quality of the natural landscape within the viewshed of all scenic highway corridors. Two officially designated state scenic highways exist in the County, but are not in proximity to the project site.

County Scenic Highway System roads near the project site include I-15 (Escondido city limits to Riverside County line), and SR-76, Lilac Road and Valley Center Road (State Route 76 to State Route 76), Camino Del Rey, Gird Road/Reche Road/Live Oak Park Road/Mission Road, and Old Castle Road/Gopher Canyon Road. Due to distance and topography, the site is not visible from any of these roadways except I-15. I-15 is located approximately a quarter of a mile from the site and northbound motorists have a distant view of the site for approximately 1,600 feet or 16 seconds. The Goals and Policies of this element include the following:

COS-11.1 Protection of Scenic Resources. Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.

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

- Creative site planning
- Integration of natural features into the project
- Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape
- Minimal disturbance of topography

- Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character
- Creation of contiguous open space networks.

2.2.2.2 Zoning Ordinance

The San Diego County Zoning Ordinance provides detailed regulatory provisions for development of all unincorporated lands within the county. County zoning is used to implement the goals and objectives of the adopted General Plan in accordance with state law, which requires that the General Plan and corresponding zoning be consistent with one another. The existing zoning for the project site is A70 (Limited Agricultural), which is intended for crop or animal agriculture, and RR.

Scenic Area Regulations

The Scenic Area Regulations of the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance (Sections 5900–5910) serve to regulate development in areas of high scenic value, to exclude incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance the scenic resources present in adjacent areas. The regulations apply to areas of unique scenic value including, but not limited to, scenic highway corridors designated by the San Diego County General Plan and areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic, or scenic resources, including, but not limited to, federal and state parks. The designation for scenic areas is identified on a parcel-by-parcel basis by the special area designator “S”.

Community Design Review Area Regulations

The County's Zoning Ordinance establishes regulations pertaining to community design review. Site plans are required for designated areas subject to the Community Design Review Area regulations of Section 5750 through 5799 of the Zoning Ordinance. Site plans concerning property within designated Design Review Areas shall be referred to the Community's Design Review Board for recommendation (refer to the design review process under Section 2.3, below).

2.2.2.3 Subdivision Ordinance

Pursuant to the State of California's Subdivision Map Act, the County's Subdivision Ordinance regulates the division of property in the county. The ordinance addresses design, standards, and required improvements for approval of proposed subdivisions and tentative maps; and requires minimum lot sizes, setback designators, and lot configurations appropriate to support specific land uses.

2.2.2.4 Grading, Clearing and Watercourses Ordinance

Section 87.417 of the County's grading ordinance, the face of all cut and fill slopes, in excess of 3 feet in vertical height, but only final slopes of any borrow pit, shall be planted and maintained with a ground cover or other planting to protect the slopes against erosion and instability. Planting shall commence as soon as slopes are completed on any portion of the site and shall be established upon all slopes prior to the final approval of the grading. In order to minimize the period during which a cut or filled surface remains exposed, such planting shall provide for rapid short term coverage of the slope as well as long term permanent coverage.

Additionally, all slopes to be constructed shall be provided with an irrigation system which shall be used to promote the growth of the slope plantings to protect the slopes against erosion (Section 87.418).

2.2.2.5 Light Pollution Code

The San Diego County Light Pollution Code (sections 51.201-51.209 of the San Diego County Code) seeks to control undesirable light rays emitted into the night sky in order to allow citizens of the County to view and enjoy the night environment and to reduce detrimental effects on astronomical research. The Ordinance designates the unincorporated portions of the County into two zones based on distances from both the Palomar Observatory and the Mount Laguna Observatory. Areas within 15 miles of either observatory are designated Zone A, while the remaining areas are designated Zone B. The project site is located more than 15 miles from Mts. Palomar and Laguna and is, therefore, within the Zone B.

2.2.2.6 Resource Protection Ordinance

The project site contains wetlands, sensitive biological habitat, steep slopes, floodplains, and historic and prehistoric resources. The Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) establishes special controls on certain discretionary projects for the protection of environmentally sensitive resources, including wetlands, steep slopes, sensitive biological habitats, floodplains, and prehistoric and historic sites. The RPO allows development on sensitive lands:

. . . only when all feasible mitigation measures to protect the habitat are required as a condition of approval and mitigation provides an equal or greater benefit to the affected species. Where the proposed project has been modified to the greatest extent possible to preserve sensitive habitat, on-site or off-site mitigation may be allowed.

The purpose of the RPO is to protect a variety of resources, including steep slopes and cultural resources. The RPO limits development on steep slopes through density restrictions

on steep slope lands and through requirements for preservation of steep slope areas in dedicated open space easements. A total of 20.0 acres of the project site contains steep slopes (25 percent or greater grade for 50 or more contiguous feet). The project has been designed such that development encroachment into these slopes would be confined to a 1.6-acre area (or 8.0 percent), which is consistent with RPO 10 percent encroachment allowance. The project would preserve approximately 18.4 acres with slopes of 25 percent or greater grade that meet the definition of RPO steep slopes. The development footprint containing RPO steep slopes is 0.3 percent of the project site.

The Hillside Development Policy (described below) preceded the RPO; however, the intent of both is the same. Because the RPO is stricter in its requirements for preservation of steep slopes, it has become the main planning tool for preservation of this resource.

2.2.2.7 Natural Community Conservation Plan

The County participates in the Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) planning process and is committed to the development of Multi-Species Conservation Plans (MSCPs). The first MSCP was adopted in 1997 and covers the southwestern portion of the county. The second is underway and will cover the northern portion of the county, including the area of the project site. The third will cover the eastern portion of the county. Until an MSCP is adopted, sensitive species and habitat resource documentation, impact assessment, and mitigation fall under the guidelines set forth by the County of San Diego's RPO, the NCCP guidelines, and the California Environmental Quality Act. The project site lies completely outside of the North County MSCP Pre-approved Mitigation Area (PAMA).

2.2.2.8 San Diego County Board of Supervisors Policy I-73, Hillside Development Policy

The Hillside Development policy was adopted by the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors in 1979 to minimize the effects of disturbing natural terrain and provides for creative design of hillside developments. The Hillside Development Policy provides flexible guidelines for reducing the effects of disturbance of steep slopes. Specifically, the guidelines aim to "preserve, enhance, or improve the physical features of the area consistent with providing building sites while at the same time optimizing the aesthetic quality of the final product." However, this policy is duplicative with the goals and policies of the General Plan Update and County of San Diego Code of Regulatory Ordinances Sections 86.601-86.608, the RPO.

2.3 Design Policies and Guidance

The County regulations applicable to the use and development of the proposed project are briefly described below.

2.3.1 Valley Center Community Plan

The Valley Center Community Plan provides more-refined policies and recommendations applicable to development within the community of Valley Center. The Valley Center Community Plan was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 1979 and updated in 2011, in conjunction with the General Plan Update. The following Valley Center Community Plan element goals and policies apply to the proposed project:

Community Character Goal

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

Village: Enhance the rural village character of Valley Center's north and south villages defined by the current nodes of industrial, commercial and higher density village residential land use designations.

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

Rural lands: Preserve and maintain the overall rural and agricultural character of the rural lands area outside the semi-rural area.

Policies and Recommendations

1. Require that future projects are consistent with the goals, policies, and recommendations contained in the Valley Center Community Plan.
2. Maintain the existing rural character of Valley Center in future developments by prohibiting monotonous tract developments. Require site design that is consistent with the rural community character.

2.3.2 I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan and Scenic Preservation Guidelines

The Valley Center Community Plan includes the I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan (Corridor Plan) and Scenic Preservation Guidelines. The I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines apply to the unincorporated portions of the I-15 corridor extending from the northern Escondido city limits to the Riverside County line. The purpose of the Guidelines is to: (1) protect and enhance scenic resources, (2) establish standards to regulate visual quality, and (3) encourage scenic preservation consistent with the standards. The standards address site design measures and include site planning, parking and circulation design, site lighting, landscape design, public utilities and safety, development standards for steep topography and natural features, and architectural design standards.

Common visual elements along this corridor consist of foreground manufactured slopes that are planted with native and/or naturalizing plant material and open expansive middle and background views consisting of rolling topography primarily covered with a mix of natural, domestic, and grove type vegetation, and rural and estate residences.

The project site is located outside of the I-15 Subregional Plan and Design Review Corridor, and therefore, is not subject to the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines.

2.3.3 Valley Center Design Guidelines

The Valley Center Design Guidelines were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1986 and amended once in 1990. Design review is administered by the County's Department of Planning and Development Services as part of the development review process. Projects are evaluated by the Valley Center Design Review Board, a five-person panel of citizens appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Design review is a required step in the development review and approval process for the following types of projects: all commercial development, industrial development, multi-family residential development, along with various types of Major Use Permits, which also require the issuance of building permits for new or alterations to existing structures. The Design Guidelines include three parts: (1) Community Design Objectives; (2) the design review process; how the process works; and (3) the Design Guidelines. Several design objectives are relevant to the Lilac Hills Ranch project:

Preservation of Natural Features and Open Spaces

- Clustering of higher density residential development to preserve the valley's open spaces and meadows.
- Guidelines to incorporate existing natural features into new site development.
- Hillside protection to reduce grading, large building pads and retaining walls.

Architectural Character

- Architectural continuity based on the elements of and character of early California buildings. Guidelines identifying the elements, but allowing sufficient design flexibility to achieve variety. Buildings sensitive to the natural landscape.

Streetlight, Roadway and Sidewalk Standards

- County engineering standards should be modified when feasible to reinforce Valley Center's rural residential character. The following should be considered:
 - o A Special streetlight standard

- o Rolled concrete curbs in road construction, except in the town center and industrial area
- o In areas where sidewalks are required, separate the sidewalk from the curb by a planting strip

2.3.4 Bonsall Community Plan

Like the Valley Center Community Plan, the Bonsall Community Plan also provides more-refined policies and recommendations relevant to the community. The Bonsall Community Plan was updated in 2011, in conjunction with the County's General Plan Update. The following Bonsall Community Plan element goals and policies apply to the proposed project:

Community Character Goals and Policies

Goal LU-1.1: A unique balance of Bonsall's rural agriculture, estate lots, ridgelines, equestrian uses, and open space land uses within the community, including open space and low density buffers that separate the community from adjacent cities and unincorporated community and new development that conserves natural resources and topography.

Policy LU-1.1.1: Require development in the community to preserve the rural qualities of the area, minimize traffic congestion, and to not adversely affect the natural environment.

Policy LU-1.1.2: Maintain the existing rural lifestyle by continuing the existing pattern of residential, equestrian, and agricultural uses within the Bonsall Community Plan area.

Policy LU-1.1.3: Require development to be sensitive to the topography, physical context, and community character of Bonsall.

Goal LU-1.2: Continued development that is appropriately designed to match the rural character of the Bonsall community.

Policy LU-1.2.1: Require development that is designed to be consistent with the rural character of the Bonsall community.

2.3.5 Bonsall Design Guidelines

The Bonsall Design Guidelines were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1991. The design review process within the community of Bonsall is generally the same as within the community of Valley Center as described above. The Design Guidelines include three parts: (1) the design review process; (2) Bonsall Community Design Objectives; and (3) the Guidelines for Community Design Review. Several design objectives are relevant to the Lilac Hills Ranch project:

Preserve the Rural Bonsall Landscape

- Protect the undeveloped character of Bonsall's hillsides.

Residential Development

- Design residential developments to protect existing topography and other natural features in layout of streets, lots, and grading patterns.

Scenic Roads

- Minimize road realignments and widenings, consistent with public safety considerations to West Lilac Road.
- Create a "road edge zone" of consistent design to emphasize the natural rural character.
- Preserve existing natural landforms, rock outcroppings, and mature trees along these routes
- Encourage wooden equestrian and agricultural fencing along these roads.

Site Planning Principles

- Integrate new development within the landscape of valleys and canyons.
- Create wide, landscaped building setbacks along public roads.
- Minimize the visual impact of parking lots by dense perimeter edge planting and internal tree canopies.

Architectural Character

- Encourage architectural character that is sensitive to Bonsall's rural setting.
- Encourage exterior spaces, such as courtyards, verandas, arcades and balconies.

3.0 Visual Environment of the Project

This section addresses the existing setting and visual conditions in the area, and includes photographs of the site. This section also includes a discussion of the project viewshed. The existing visual and landform setting is based on an analysis of photographs, topographic mapping, aerial photographs, reference document reviews, and documented on- and off-site land uses, as well as site reconnaissance.

3.1 Project Vicinity

The project site lies within the unincorporated area of northern San Diego County, within both the Bonsall and Valley Center Community Plan areas. The Valley Center Community Plan area is characterized by its unique topographic features, its agricultural activities, and its predominance of estate residential development.

Communities adjacent to the Valley Center Community Plan area are Fallbrook, Bonsall, and Hidden Meadows to the west; the Pala-Pauma Subregional Plan area to both the north and east; and the North County Metro Subregional Plan area and the City of Escondido to the south. Several hundred homes of varying types exist in the area surrounding the project site, including farm homes on large parcels with citrus and avocado groves and detached single-family homes.

The topography is characterized by the east-west San Luis Rey river valley along the SR-76 corridor and the north-south I-15 corridor. Both the San Luis Rey River floodplain and the I-15 corridor are flanked by rolling hills which have historically been used for citrus and avocado groves, estate residences, and open space, with cattle grazing also occurring in the more rugged terrain. The primary land uses found in the project area are agricultural related (i.e., orchards, vineyards, row crops, and nursery operations).

3.2 Project Setting

Approximately half of the project site exists in a largely natural state, supporting a thick growth of chaparral, and a majority of the project site is used for agricultural activities such as citrus orchards, avocado orchards, flowers, and cactus (Figure 2). Numerous structures including residences, outbuildings, and partially improved and unimproved roads exist across the project site. A large water main exists along Rodriguez Road and a trailer park with several small, human-made lakes exists in the southwest portion of the project site. Numerous other utilities and irrigation lines also traverse the project site.

3.2.1 Topography

The Lilac Hills Ranch project area is part of the inland foothills and valleys of San Diego County. The project area includes topography consisting of a series of rolling hills dissected by drainage courses and valley bottoms that drain primarily to the south and southwest (see Figure 21). The drainage courses on the project site convey storm water and urban/agricultural runoff. Both intermittent and ephemeral drainages occur in the project site. To the west, the project is defined by a north/south trending ridgeline and localized peaks that rise to approximately 950 feet MSL at their highest in the northwest and 883 feet MSL in the southwest. To the east the viewshed is defined by localized peaks and a series

of northeast/southwest trending ridgelines. These landforms rise to approximately 996 feet MSL in the northeast and approximately 1,072 feet in the southeast.

To the south the project is primarily defined by a series of east/west trending ridgelines rising to 945 feet MSL.

To the north the project is largely defined by the topography underlying West Lilac Road which follows along a series of saddle ridges and drainages associated with Lancaster Mountain (elevation. 1,485 feet MSL).

Elevations across the project site range from 958 feet MSL at the highest to 574 feet MSL at the lowest (see Figures 5 & 6).

3.2.2 Site Land Uses

Historically, the site has been used for citrus and avocado groves, estate residences, and open space. The primary land uses found in the project area are agricultural related (i.e., orchards, vineyards, row crops, and nursery operations). These existing land uses contribute to valued visual character.

3.2.3 Vegetation

The site consists of a mosaic of native habitat patches and agricultural uses as described in the Biological Resources Report prepared for the project. Over 75% of the site consists of agriculture uses such as row crops, nursery production, vineyards, orchards, development, and/or disturbed habitat. Coastal sage scrub and chaparral dominate the native vegetation that occurs in various sized patches throughout the project area. These existing vegetation types contribute to valued visual character.

3.2.4 Outdoor Lighting

The project site currently has low levels of exterior lighting, due to the existence of approximately 22 residences and buildings scattered throughout the property. Minimal lighting exists and is limited to that needed for safety. This lighting is visible from West Lilac Road, the surrounding hillsides, and ridgelines that define the project viewshed.

3.3 Existing Visual Resources and Viewer Response

3.3.1 Visual Character

Our understanding or cognition of the visual environment is based on the visual character of objects and the relationships between them. Descriptions of visual character can distinguish at least two levels of attributes: pattern elements and pattern character.

Visual pattern elements include an object's form, line, color, and texture. Our awareness of these pattern elements varies with distance, for example individual details are lost and colors are muted as distances increase.

Pattern character refers to the visual relationships between these elements. Differences in visual character are generally traced to four aspects of pattern character: dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity. For example, there is a great difference between the visual character of SR-76 and I-15, although both may exhibit similar line, color, and texture.

The four aspects of pattern character are defined as follows:

- Dominance: Specific components in a landscape may be visually dominant because of position, extent, or contrast of basic pattern elements.
- Scale is the apparent size relationship between a landscape component and its surroundings; an object can be made to look smaller or larger in scale by manipulating its visual pattern elements.
- Visual diversity is a function of the number, variety, and intermixing of visual pattern elements.
- Continuity is the uninterrupted flow of pattern elements in a landscape and the maintenance of visual relationships between immediately connected or related landscape components.

The project and the project setting are assessed according to these attributes; if their visual character is similar, the visual compatibility of the project will be high. If the visual character of the project contrasts strongly with the visual character of its setting, its visual compatibility will generally be low.

3.3.2 Visual Quality

Aesthetics is not only concerned with the character of the visual experience, but also with its quality. The perception of quality is based upon a viewer's response to vividness,

intactness, and unity occurring within the visual environment. These factors affect perceptual quality and are defined as follows:

- Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns.
- Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and man-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements.
- Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole.

Areas with high visual quality are those where all three of these factors are high. Areas with Moderate Visual Quality are those where one of these factors is low. Areas with low visual quality are those where two or more of these factors are low.

3.3.3 Sensitivity to Change

Visual sensitivity is based on an area's ability to absorb changes in character and quality. Areas with a high sensitivity to change are those that are visually prominent, distinctive, contain a dominant visual character element, and have high visual quality. These are areas that would contrast to a great degree with a proposed improvement.

An area with moderate sensitivity to change would contain a several visual character elements that vary in form, line, color, and texture, and that is of moderate visual quality. An area with low sensitivity to change are those that have many visual character elements that vary in form, line, color and texture, and is of low visual quality.

3.3.4 Landscape Units

The regional landscape helps us establish a frame of reference for comparing the visual effects of a project and determining the significance of the affects. We can't assess visual effects of a project unless we understand how a project's immediate visual environment is related to the visual environment of the geographic region. Characteristic combinations of landscape components distinguish one regional landscape from the next. To provide a framework for comparison, the regional landscape is divided into distinct landscape units which can be thought of as "outdoor rooms," each defined by similar visual properties. These serve to define the baseline visual environment so that it may be compared to the construction and post-construction conditions.

Areas of the site that share similar visual characteristics are called visual character units (VCUs). Each VCU is described below and evaluated in terms of visual quality and sensitivity to change to determine whether a project will result in physical changes that are incompatible with visual character or degrade the visual quality within the project viewshed.

Visual character units (VC-1 through VC-18) are depicted on Figure 16 (and described in the subsection that follows. Photographs providing a visual depiction of these character units are provided as Figures 17 through 20.

VC-1, Photo A, Figure 17, depicts the **Water Tank Knoll** area which consists of existing water tanks and grove plantings of varying sizes. The area is given a **low visual quality rating** due to its lack of intactness and unity. It is considered **moderately sensitive to change** due to its relative prominence in the viewshed.

VC-2, Photo B, Figure 17, depicts the north to south oriented **Riparian Corridor**, located in the northern half of the project. This area consists of drainages that dissect the rolling topography of the site and is characterized by dense intact stands of riparian woodland that is visually distinctive and striking in comparison to the lighter colored, disturbed portions of the site. It is considered to be of **high visual quality and highly sensitive to change**.

VC-3, Photo C, Figure 17, depicts the **Mature Groves** located in the northern central portion of the site. These areas are characterized by rolling topography and dominant patterns of mature tree plantings interspersed with areas that are cleared and/or contain newly planted trees and access roads. These areas are not visually distinctive, not visually intact, and are not visually harmonious and therefore considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-4, Photo D, Figure 17 depicts **Northern Natural Hillside**s. This area is characterized by somewhat intact areas of grey green native vegetation atop rolling hillsides that contrast with the adjacent agricultural areas. Because this area is not vivid in the landscape, only moderately intact, and moderately unified, this area is considered to be of **moderate visual quality** and **moderately sensitive to change**.

VC-5, Photo E, Figure 17, depicts the **Young Groves**. This area is characterized by barren hillsides, newly planted trees, surface irrigation and dirt access roads. It is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-6, Photo F, Figure 17, depicts the **Retired Groves**. This area is characterized by bare stumps, pockets of poorly maintained mature groves, above ground irrigation equipment and outbuildings. It is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-7, Photo G, Figure 18, depicts the **Palm Knoll** located in the northern portion of the project. This area contains several residences, outbuildings, and a distinctive silhouette of palm trees set above a localized knoll. Given its relative visual prominence, but lack of intactness, and unity, this area is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **moderate sensitivity to change**.

VC-8, Photo H, Figure 18, depicts the Upper Grove II area. This area is characterized by rolling hillsides, an older grove dotted with large specimen oaks and other ornamental trees. This area is indistinct and similar to other areas in the viewshed. Considering the lack of intactness and lack of unity this area is considered to be of **low visual quality** and has a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-9, Photo I, Figure 18, depicts the Lower Riparian/Natural Area. This area is characterized by dense intact stands of riparian woodland that is visually distinctive and striking in comparison to the lighter colored, disturbed portions of the site. It is moderately distinctive in the landscape, intact, and visually harmonious in the landscape. It is therefore considered to be of **moderate visual quality and moderately sensitive to change**.

VC-10, Photo J, Figure 18, depicts the Eastern Grove Area. This area is characterized by an older grove of trees interspersed with cut stumps that is similar in appearance to other older groves in the viewshed. This area is considered to be of **low visual quality and have a low sensitivity to change**.

VC-11, Photos K and L, Figure 18, depict the Active Farming area which is characterized by rolling topography, high intensity row crop production, agriculture buildings, residential structures, graded driveways dirt access roads, and non-native vegetation. The area is not memorable, intact, or visually unified in its appearance. It is visually similar to other active agricultural settings in the area and is considered to be of **low visual quality and have a low sensitivity to change**.

VC-12, Photo L, Figure 18, depicts the Oak Woodland Zone, a moderately distinctive band of riparian woodland running essentially east to west at the southern end of the Eastern Grove area. Given its lack of intactness and lack of unity, it is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-13, Photo N, Figure 19, depicts the Southern Riparian Zone, an area characterized by a band of riparian woodland that is verdant and densely vegetated in comparison to the adjacent agricultural area located at the southern end of the project. This area is not distinctive in comparison to the hillside backdrop but does contract to a moderate degree with the adjacent row crops and greenhouses. It is an area that is not very intact or unified. It is therefore considered to be of **low visual quality and have a low sensitivity to change**.

VC-14, Photo O, Figure 19 depicts the Northern Open Space. This area is characterized by moderately intact areas of grey green native vegetation atop rolling hillsides that contrast with the adjacent agricultural areas and graded access roads. This area is not memorable in the landscape, only moderately intact, and does not contain elements that join to form a visually coherent visual pattern in the landscape. It is therefore considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitive to change**.

VC-15, Photo P, Figure 19, depicts the Upper Pasture area. This area is located south of West Lilac and is characterized by mowed fields, overhead utilities, and access roads. This area is considered to be of **low visual quality** and to have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-16, Photo Q & R, Figure 19, depicts the Upper Residential area which is characterized by residential structures, graded driveways, and non-native vegetation. The area is not memorable, intact, or visually unified in its appearance. It is visually similar to other rural/estate residential settings in the area and is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-17, Photo S, Figure 20, depicts the Zosa Estate area which is characterized by the Zosa estate and adjoining residences, paved driveways, and non-native vegetation. The area is not vivid, nor intact, but is moderately unified in its appearance. It is visually similar to other rural/estate residential settings in the area and is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

VC-18, Photo T, Figure 20, depicts the Upper Grove/Nursery Area, which is characterized by groves, animal keeping areas, several residences, agricultural outbuildings, a nursery, graded and paved access drives, and non-native vegetation. The area is not memorable, intact, or visually unified in its appearance. It is visually similar to other rural residential settings in the area and is considered to be of **low visual quality** and have a **low sensitivity to change**.

4.0 Project Site Visibility

4.1 Project Viewshed

A “viewshed” is an analytical tool used to aid in the identification of views that could be affected by a potential project. The viewshed is defined as the surrounding geographic area from which the project is likely to be seen.

The viewshed boundary shown for the project was determined through an analysis of aerial photographs, and topographic data produced and distributed by the USGS. This data is based on the National Elevation Dataset (NED) and uses 1/3 arc second data (approximate 10 meter accuracy). The viewshed was then field verified by the project analyst. Variations between potential visibility to the site and actual possible views are discussed in the text below. The viewshed boundary, shown on the Composite Viewshed exhibit, represents the geographic limits for this visual assessment, and illustrates the generalized project viewshed on a topographic base. The project viewshed is generally confined to the areas located within the intermediate ridgelines and hillsides that surround the project. The northern viewshed boundaries are defined primarily by the West Lilac corridor, with a slight extension

to the north along Mesa Lilac Road. The southern viewshed is defined by the east/west trending ridgeline along Nelson Way and the western viewshed limits are defined by the north/south trending ridgelines, peaks, and ridgelines along Old Highway 395. To the east, views are largely limited by the northeast/southwest trending ridgelines located north and south of Covey Lane. Surrounding structures and mature vegetation further limit views towards the project and are described in greater detail below.

Portions of the southern part of the existing topography are east facing. In these areas the project viewshed extends to the southwest (Figure 21, Composite Viewshed).

4.2 Viewer Responses

Viewer response is composed of two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements combine to form a method of predicting how the viewers might react to visual changes brought about by a project.

4.2.1 Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity varies among the viewer groups described below. A motorist' sensitivity traveling on I-15, and Old Highway 395, in the vicinity of the project, will be low due to the distance these corridors lie from the project and due to their differences in topographic elevation relative to the site. Furthermore, given the design speeds along these corridors, existing view-blocking topography, and foreground vegetation and structures, views are oriented primarily forward for the majority of viewers. Where travel speeds are slower such as along West Lilac Road, but similar view-blocking foreground elements exist, viewer sensitivity will be slightly higher.

Where views toward the project are stationary and broader in view, such as those from elevated neighboring residents, viewer sensitivity is anticipated to be high due to the heightened awareness of existing visual resources and their characteristics.

The sensitivity of recreational users within the project viewshed is anticipated to be moderate given their slower travel speeds, transitory nature of their views, and their increased awareness of the visual resources and characteristics that surround them.

4.2.2 Viewer Groups

Primary viewer groups exposed to the project consist of motorists, surrounding residents, and recreational users.

4.2.3 Viewer Exposure

The number of viewers and the duration of view are also important to analyzing impacts.

The number of viewers in nearby residences (stationary view), and the duration of their view of a project would be very different than the number of people who see a project from a highway or roadway (moving view). Whether the viewers on the highway are residents of the local community or visitors may also affect their responses to a viewshed.

Viewer exposure is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, duration of their view, speed at which the viewer moves, and position of the viewer. Viewer exposure is described in greater detail in Chapter 5, Visual Impact Assessment.

4.2.4 Viewer Awareness

A viewer's response is also affected by the degree to which he/she is receptive to the visual details, character, and quality of the surround landscape. A viewer's ability to perceive the landscape is affected by his/her activity. A viewer on vacation in San Diego County would probably take pleasure in looking at the landscape, and an individual may be strongly attached to the view from his home, but a local County resident commuting to work may not "register" those same visual resources on a daily basis. Viewer exposure is described in greater detail in Chapter 5, Visual Impact Assessment.

5.0 Visual Impact Assessment

5.1 Thresholds of Significance

The project will result in a significant impact if it would:

5.1.1 Visual Resources

1. Change the composition of visual patterns in the visual environment whereby the change would be incompatible with the existing visual character in terms of dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity.
2. Result in physical changes that would substantially degrade the quality of an identified visual resource, including but not limited to, unique topographic features, steep slope lands (as defined in the County's RPO), ridgelines, undisturbed native vegetation, surface waters and major drainages, public parks, or recreational areas.

3. Result in physical changes (i.e., land disturbing activities) to the visual environment that would demonstrably and adversely affect the viewshed of a designated scenic highway, scenic vista.

5.1.2 Dark Skies and Glare

4. Install outdoor light fixtures that do not conform to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code (Sections 59.108-59.110) lamp type and shielding requirements and County Zoning Ordinance.
5. Install highly reflective building materials including, but not limited to, reflective glass and high-gloss surface color in areas that will be visible along roadways, pedestrian walkways or in the line of sight of adjacent properties.

5.1.3 Consistency with Policy and Planning Documents

6. The project would not comply with applicable state or local goals, policies or requirements related to visual resources, including but not limited to the California Scenic Highway Program, San Diego County Scenic Highway Program, San Diego County General Plan (Conservation and Open Space Element), the Natural Community Conservation Plan, Bonsall and Valley Center Community Plans and Design Guidelines including the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance (Scenic Area, Subdivision, and Design Review Area regulations), and the RPO and Hillside Development Policy, as applicable.

5.2 Guideline Sources

Guideline Nos. 1 and 2 are derived from the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form and are intended to support definition of whether the proposed project will have a significant impact on visual character and quality. Due to this circumstance, these two significance guidelines are based on established principles from the most widely used and accepted visual resource assessment methodologies, including the U.S. Department of Transportation, *Federal Highway Administration's Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects*; the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Visual Management System; and the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) modified Visual Management System. The concepts contained in these assessment approaches provide accepted practices for evaluating visual resources both objectively (visual character) and subjectively (visual quality). This is accomplished by comparing the existing visual environment to the construction and post-construction visual environment; and subsequently, determining whether the project will result in physical changes that are deemed to be incompatible with visual character or degrade visual quality, as outlined in Guideline Nos. 1 and 2.

Guideline No. 3 is based in part on the principles discussed above as well as the Valley Center and Bonsall community plans. Any impacts to visual quality and character of scenic highways, vistas, and I-15 Corridor will be evaluated in terms of visual quality and character. In addition, the project is required to be in conformance with applicable County standards related to aesthetics, including the General Plan goals and policies.

Guideline Nos. 4 and 5 rely on the lamp and shielding requirements established in the San Diego County Light Pollution Code (Sections 59.108-59.110) that have been determined to effectively reduce impacts on dark skies. The standards are the result of a collaborative effort between technical lighting experts, astronomers, and County staff to effectively address and minimize the impact of light pollution on dark skies. The standards were developed in cooperation with lighting engineers, astronomers, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories, San Diego County Department of Planning and Land Use and Department of Public Works, and local community planning and sponsor groups. As outlined under the Legislative Intent of the LPC (Section 59.101), "The intent of the Division is to restrict the permitted use of outdoor light fixtures emitting undesirable light rays into the night sky which have a detrimental effect on astronomical research." The Code was written specifically to ensure that new outdoor lighting would have minimal impacts on astronomical observatories. Therefore, compliance with the ordinance is, by definition, assurance of no significant impact. The corollary to this is that non-compliance results in possible significant impacts. Therefore, a project that exceeds these significance guidelines would represent a potentially significant impact on dark skies.

Guideline 6 is taken from the San Diego Guidelines of Significance, Visual Resources, approved July 30, 2007 and is intended to assure that the visual character and quality of communities are developed consistently with all applicable regulations..

5.3 Analysis Methodology

In compliance with the thresholds of significance and analysis methodologies determined for the proposed project, this analysis includes the following elements and considerations:

- Cross-sections of major areas of grading and comparison of the existing condition and visual prominence of the project on finished grade.
- A map of the viewshed and a discussion of communities and roads from which it may be viewed as a prominent feature.
- A discussion of the compatibility of the scale and mass of the proposed project with the surrounding area using square footage, heights, and lot sizes of other uses in the vicinity of the proposed project.

- A discussion of the architectural style of the structures and their site utilization related to the manner in which surrounding properties have developed.
- A discussion of the proposed landscape plan in light of the ability of the plantings to soften the exterior appearance and relative massiveness of the proposed structures.
- Photo simulations and analysis comparing project to existing setting.

5.4 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination of Significance

5.4.1 Change in the Composition of the Visual Environment (Guideline No. 1)

The following describes changes in the visual environment that would result from project development.

5.4.1.1 Interstate 15

As discussed above, the project site is not located within the I-15 Subregional Plan or Design Review Corridor. The project site is, however, visible from a portion of the segment of I-15 located 1.25 miles southwest of the project that is a County-designated scenic highway. Distant views of the project from this corridor would be available to motorists travelling northbound on I-15 for approximately 1,600 feet; 16 seconds when traveling at 70 miles per hour (see KOP-1, Figure 26). Views toward the project would not be available to southbound travelers from I-15 due to view blocking topography and vegetation (KOP-2, Figure 27). Common visual elements along this corridor consist of foreground manufactured slopes that are planted with native and/or naturalizing plant material and open expansive middle and background views consisting of rolling topography covered with a mix of natural, domestic, and grove type vegetation, rural and estate residences, and an industrial land use area.

Portions of the project that are visible to viewers from this corridor consist of natural hillsides and riparian open space, manufactured slopes in excess of 30-feet, and single-family residences on lots ranging in size from 5,500 to 6,000 s.f. with structures to 35-feet (see Conceptual Lotting Study). Nighttime lighting associated with the joint-use park sports fields will be visible and will contrast moderately with the otherwise low levels of lighting within the viewshed. At distances beyond a mile, it should be noted, individual project features are not readily discernible.

Project elements will be consistent with the Development Standards and Regulations section of the Lilac Hills Specific Plan, which contains policies and guidelines for preserving

visually dominant ridgelines, scenic high quality open space resources, and incorporating “best practice” guidelines to site design, lighting, landscaping, and architecture. This will minimize visual impacts and improve visual compatibility with the surrounding area.

Architecture, according to the Specific Plan, shall be designed to vary massing, encourage shadow patterns, and relate in color to elements in the natural surroundings.

The Community landscaping utilizes native and low water plant materials that are similar in color and texture to the surrounding natural hillsides. Manufactured slopes will contain masses of plant materials of varying heights to undulate the surface to make them appear more natural in form and also relating in texture and pattern with those visible on the steep natural slopes surrounding the Community. This will soften their appearance and serve as transitional elements between natural open space and the developed portions of the site. Slope landscaping will visual buffer and screen portions of the project from view and add visual breaks to rows of structures enabling the project to further relate to surrounding development patterns.

Additionally, trees will be planted along streets, and within HOA open space areas to visually buffer the Community from view. Native trees and shrubs such as Sycamores, Oaks, Madrone, Currant and Toyon as well as local Apricot, Lemon, Orange, Guava, and Avocado may be planted along parkways and in other common areas. Natural materials, rural styled fencing, and grove-like plantings of trees will be utilized throughout the Community to relate to and enhance the rural visual setting.

Grading guidelines strive to “minimize grading” and create visually pleasing landforms that “strive for a balance between cut and fill.” As such, project grading will appear to follow the sites natural topography.

Visual contrast of the project with its surroundings will therefore be minimized in accordance with policies and guidelines described above such that its contrast with the existing visual setting will be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

As a result, **a minor change in the visual environment is anticipated and as such will not substantially change the composition of the existing visual environment resulting in a significant visual impact to viewers traveling along the I-15 corridor.**

5.4.1.2 Old Highway 395

Old Highway 395 near the limits of project's western viewshed. Key Observation Points (KOPs) 3, 4, and 5 (Figures 28 and 29) illustrate typical views looking southeast and northeast toward the site from Old Highway 395. Views of the project will be available to southbound travelers beginning from approximately KOP-3 and will extend for approximately 1,600 feet to KOP-4. A motorist traveling along this corridor at 55 miles per hour will be exposed to views of the project for approximately 20 seconds.

These short duration views, along Old Highway 395, are available beyond a foreground of natural and non-native vegetation, structures, fencing and steep slopes. Common visual elements on the land adjacent to Old Highway 395 are varied and consist of traffic and directional signs, overhead utilities, temporary signs, a nursery, trailer park, buildings, undeveloped lots and a mix of vegetation types. Background elements include two existing water tanks and view blocking ridgeline (KOP 3, & 4).

Visible portions of the project would consist of a line of single-family residences, and manufactured slopes approximately 30 feet in height, located north of the existing water tanks (see Figure 28, Proposed Condition, KOP-3).

The project as viewed from this area would not be visually prominent due to the presence of the other man-made elements, i.e., water tanks and overhead utilities, foreground signs, view blocking vegetation and landforms. While the upper residential development and graded slopes will be partially visible, the contrast of this area with the existing visual environment will be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Planted slopes will relate visually to existing slope plantings and surrounding natural hillsides, building colors will be earth toned and relate to other natural colors in view. As a result, a minor change in the visual environment is anticipated and as such will not result in a significant visual impact to viewers located along the Old Highway 395 corridor.

Views toward the project from this corridor will not substantially change the composition of the existing visual environment.

5.4.1.3 West Lilac Road

Key Observation Points 6 through 10 are taken from locations north of the project along West Lilac Road, a two-lane, curvilinear, community collector. The curving nature of this roadway causes a frequent shifting of the viewers' focus, and therefore limits views toward the project. Expansive views of the site are available along brief segments of West Lilac Road (KOPs 6 and 7) through gaps in foreground vegetation and structures. These areas offer fairly broad views of the valley floor beyond a foreground of mature orchards and roadside vegetation. In the middle ground, views toward dense riparian vegetation, rolling hillsides covered with orchards or disturbed soil, and rural and estate residences, dominate. Background views consist primary of rural and estate residential land uses, active row crops, agricultural structures, and prominent peaks and ridgelines.

Post construction, the existing view-blocking domestic and grove vegetation along approximately 0.6 miles of West Lilac Road that lies north of the site will be removed, leaving perimeter portions of the project visible. West Lilac Road will be widened with medians added within a portion of roadway west of the western project entrance. Distant views of the project will be available between view blocking foreground structures. Cross sections B-B' and H-H', provided on Figures 30 and 31, show the site generally drops in elevation, north to south. As a result, views of the project, beyond foreground development,

are generally not available from the West Lilac Road corridor except between building setbacks and at project entries.

Visible portions of the project along West Lilac Road, east of the western entrance consist of single-family detached homes on large lots on 100-foot minimum width lots that range in size from .2- to .4-acres. These larger lots serve as a transitional feature, consistent with the Community Development Model, allowing a logical transition from surrounding land uses to the developed portions of the site (see Figure 32, KOP 9). Visible portions of the project along West Lilac Road, west of the western entrance consist primarily of single-family detached homes on lots ranging in size from .1 acre to .3 acres (see Figure 30, KOP 6). Both these areas will introduce patterns of development at a scale and density that will potentially contrast to a high degree with the composition of the existing visual environment. However, consistent with Section III, D-4 of the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan, single-family residential design guidelines would be implemented to assure variability in design, use of wider and/or larger lots along roads and construction of walls. Section III also identifies specific requirements for landscaping along West Lilac Road to further reduce visual effects. These include the requirements that parkways and adjoining slopes of West Lilac Road reflect the agricultural history of the project site and California Foothills landscape theme. Formal groves trees, with informal accent groupings of Oak and Sycamores, would form the primary landscape of West Lilac Road and adjoining slopes would additionally be planted with native and drought tolerant species. Details such as rural themed rail fences vine arbors, low stone walls, and decomposed granite trails would be used to further reinforce the design theme along this corridor.

The parkway widths (distance measured from the curb face to the property line of a road right-of-way) along West Lilac Road range in size from 12- to 15-feet. Within this area lies an ~~meandering~~ 8-foot multipurpose trail. This leaves approximately 4- to 7-feet available for landscaping. In accordance with the West Lilac Road Corridor Landscape Concept Plan (Figure 13), the ~~meandering~~ multi-purpose trail may leave planting areas unsuitable in size to support mature tree growth.

At project entries, more expansive, short duration views of the project will be available between proposed streetscape plantings and structures. Where broader views are available at the western entrance, the project's single-family detached houses, preserved riparian open space, and manufactured slopes (greater than 30-feet) will be visible. Where views are available from the eastern entrance, off West Lilac Road, single-family attached and single-family detached residential areas, park site, and town center will be visible buffered by planted streetscapes, and landscaped slopes. Background ridgelines and peaks will remain intact as dominant visual elements.

While additional project features such as landscaping, building setbacks, and architectural details will help reduce the visual impacts associated with the project, its construction will still change the composition of the visual environment in terms of dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity as it proposes a large scale suburban pattern of development in an

area consisting primarily of agricultural and rural residential land uses. This will contrast with the existing visual environment and result in physical changes that will adversely affect the viewshed. .

The project therefore, as seen from the West Lilac Road corridor, **would significantly alter the composition of the visual environment and would result in significant adverse visual impacts that are unmitigable.**

5.4.1.4 Other Area Roadways

Several local area private roads provide motorists and pedestrians with restricted views of the project, depending on viewing location and the viewer activity. Motorists traveling along these roadways have brief views toward the project between existing view-blocking vegetation, structures and topography that confines views to the immediate vicinity. The curving nature and narrow widths of these private roads limits available views toward the project however some of these locations offer expansive views towards the project. Key Observation Points 11 through 13, and 16 through 19 show views toward the project from these locations (see Figures 34–37 and 39–42).

Views from Covey Lane and Nelson Way, which are private roads (refer to KOP 11 & KOP 16, Figures 34, 35, and 39), offer the most expansive views toward the site. In the views from Covey Lane the project will be visible beyond a foreground of estate residences and agricultural land uses.. Views from Nelson Way are more expansive but further away from project. Views toward the site from these locations would encompass wetlands, natural hillsides, estate and rural residences, agricultural activities, graded slopes, domestic and transitional landscaping, along with the project's proposed single-family detached structures.

The visual portions of the project will be at a relative scale and density that will contrast moderately with the composition of the existing visual environment. Policies and guidelines required by implementation of the Specific Plan, described earlier, will minimize the contrast of the project with its surroundings to the greatest extent possible. Landscaping on slopes, along streets, and within HOA open space areas, will visually buffer and screen portions of the project from view while providing visual context by relating to foreground and background plantings. As the project vegetation matures it will increasingly screen and buffer the project from view, enabling it, over time, to be integrated into the existing visual environment to the greatest extent possible.

Because private views are not considered as sensitive under CEQA guidelines; and, implementation of the project would not change the visually prominent peaks, ridgelines, and habitat areas; and, project design measures will help reduce the contrast of the project with the existing visual environment; and, views along local roadways would be brief and highly constrained by intervening structures, vegetation, and topography, **there would not be a significant adverse impact to views from surrounding private roadways.**

The project therefore, as seen from other area roadways, **would not significantly alter the composition of the visual environment and would therefore not result in significant adverse visual impacts to views.**

5.4.1.5 Area Residences

Several hundred homes are located within the project viewshed. Most residences in this area are situated at a higher elevation than the project which provides the potential for expansive views of the site (KOP-12, 18, and 21, as shown on Figures 36, 41, and 43); however, not every home would have views of the project due to intervening landscaping, structures, and foreground and middle ground topography. Where views of the project are available they would be stationary and long term. It should be noted that private views are not considered as sensitive under CEQA guidelines but are however considered in this analysis.

Views toward the project from area residences surrounding the site would encompass large expanses of disturbed soil, active and abandoned orchards, wetlands and natural hillsides, row crops, residential structures and outbuildings, and distant peaks and ridgelines.

Post construction, these areas will view preserved natural open space and agricultural areas, a mix of residential product types, town center consisting of commercial and high density residential land uses, 60 foot clock tower and park. These elements combine to form patterns of development at a scale and density that will contrast to a high degree with the composition of the existing visual setting. Guidelines and policies of the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan will ensure that the project's contrast is minimized and enable it to relate to the surrounding visual environment to the greatest extent possible. For example, grading and roadways would be designed to follow the natural topography, and preserved riparian and agricultural open space will provide visual buffers and screening, serving as transitional elements between the project and surrounding areas while providing breaks in patterns of development.

Residential and commercial areas will have use architectural treatments to enable them to better relate to other elements in the project viewshed.

Tall manufactured slopes will be softened with natural appearing plantings that relate to the surrounding hillsides while visually screening project elements from view. Informal patterns of medium-sized street trees with broad canopies will provide additional screening of project elements and offer visual context by relating to tree patterns in the surrounding area. Additionally, verdant pockets of domestic landscaping will visually buffer and screen project elements from view and provide additional visual context by relating to surrounding residential landscapes.

Fuel-modification/fire safety zones are located between the outer edge of houses and the surrounding natural hillsides and riparian areas in accordance with the project's Fire

Protection Plan (Figure 9). These areas would be pruned and thinned to remove combustible material. Tree spacing is controlled within these areas such that dense tree groupings are not permitted and therefore screening opportunities are limited. .

As the planted slopes, street trees, and internal project landscaping mature, they will increasingly buffer and screen project elements from view, and enable the project to relate in color, form, texture and line with the visible foreground and background elements in view, further reducing the visual contrast between the project and the existing visual environment. Therefore, over time, the project will be integrated into the existing visual environment to the greatest extent possible through implementation of the policies and guidelines contained in the Lilac Hills Specific Plan. The background of prominent peaks, hillsides and ridgelines, residential development and agricultural areas would be retained.

Still, the project will change the composition of the visual environment in terms of dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity as the area transitions from primarily agriculture and rural residential land uses to a more suburban pattern of development (refer to KOP-11c, 16, 17a; Figures 35, 39, and 40). This will contrast with the existing visual environment and will result in physical changes that would adversely affect the viewshed.

The project therefore, as seen from surrounding residences, **would significantly alter the composition of the visual environment and would therefore result in significant adverse visual impacts to these views that are unmitigable.**

5.4.1.6 Off-Site Improvements

Several off-site improvements would be required in conjunction with build-out of the project. Off-site improvements would consist mainly of improvements to surrounding area roadways as described below.

One option for the project would be the expansion of the existing Miller Station (also known as DSFPD Station 15) or co-location of a second station on the Miller Station site. Miller Station is located midway along the project's northern boundary on West Lilac Road. Design of the station would be dependent on a final agreement, but anticipated construction could include an expansion of the existing station or construction of a new building at a maximum of 7,000 sf (2,500 sf engine room and 4,500 sf living quarters).

Additional off-site improvements include several roadway segments and intersections in the vicinity that would be widened, repaved, and restriped. The project would also include the installation of traffic lights at the following existing intersections: Gopher Canyon Road and I-15 ramps; Highway 395 and Circle R; and Highway 395 and West Lilac Road. As discussed in the Wastewater Alternative Report prepared for the Lilac Hills Ranch project, multiple options for the placement of sewer/water line extensions could be constructed connecting the project site to the Lower Moosa Canyon Water Reclamation Facility. The initial development of the project would be provided wastewater service by the transfer of

wastewater from a collection point on-site, to the Lower Moosa Canyon WRF up to a maximum of 250,000 gallons of wastewater. Thereafter, one of four wastewater treatment options would be selected by the VCMWD, including construction of the on-site WRF, as detailed previously in subsection 1.2.1.7. The initial transfer of waste, and construction of facilities, would be covered within the capacity allowance of the existing MUP Modification issued to the Lower Moosa Canyon WRF in 1996. The project applicant would be responsible for the cost of upgrading and installing the equipment required for the additional treatment processes to accommodate the project's waste. No expansion beyond the Lower Moosa Canyon WRF footprint, as covered in the existing MUP Modification, would be required. No visual impacts would occur as a result of the utilization of the Lower Moosa Canyon facility.

Off-site road improvements include both private and public roadways. Sight distance is adequate, except for the intersection of Covey Lane and West Lilac Road. Because this location is within the future mapped ROW for West Lilac Road, sight distance was studied in the County's General Plan Update (GPU) EIR and clearing for sight distance is part of the County Transportation Impact Fee (TIF) improvements. This area is comprised of ornamental trees and a number of coast live oaks. The bank could require shaving and the oaks would need to be trimmed back. The project proponent would request a Clear Space Easement from the property owners. As discussed in Attachment 3 of the Biological Resources Report for Lilac Hills Ranch (RECON 2014), no biological impacts would occur as a result of the Clear Space Easement.

All other off-site road improvements are to public roads, and would be constructed to public road standards, except as modified and accepted by the County. Covey Lane off-site would be graded to a width of 40 feet, with 28 feet of paving for a distance of approximately 600 feet.

Off-site improvements to West Lilac Road would include minimal grading from Old Highway 395 to the I-15 bridge, and would be done within the existing right-of-way. Over the I-15 bridge, improvements would consist of adding a curb and sidewalk to the south side. Additional minor improvements would be made to several intersections as noted in the Traffic Impact Study. These would consist of striping and the installation of traffic signals.

Overall, impacts to the visual character of the viewshed associated with off-site improvements would be **less than significant**.

5.4.2 Degrade the Quality of an Identified Visual Resource (Guideline No. 2)

The property contains steep slopes (Figure 6), ridgelines and undisturbed native vegetation. RPO-classified steep slopes (i.e., slopes with a 25 percent or greater slope gradient and with a 50-foot rise in elevation) are located in the west, and portion of the project. The

project will preserve the surrounding ridgelines and is within the 10% allowance allowed by RPO. **The elimination of a relatively small area of steep slopes would not degrade the visual quality of that resource.**

5.4.3 Change the Visual Environment of a Designated Scenic Highway, Scenic Vista, or the I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan Area (Guideline No. 3)

As mentioned above, the project site is not visible from a designated State Scenic Highway or, Scenic Vista and is not located within the I-15 Corridor Subregional Plan/Design Review area. The site is visible from a portion of the segment of I-15 that is a County Designated Scenic Highway. As discussed above, in Section 5.4.1, the project impact to views from I-15 would be less than significant.

5.4.4 Outdoor Light Fixtures Do Not Conform to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code (Guideline No. 4)

Section III, D, 10 of the Specific Plan identifies lighting concepts, describing how lighting throughout the project would be done in a manner that minimizes light intrusion onto adjacent properties through the use of fixtures that are compatible with the design of each planning area and that light be shielded and directed downward. Park P-10 would be designed per County Park Standards and could have pole mounted lighting installed to light sports fields per County standards.

A photometric design concept was created for the project in order to assure compliance with both the San Diego Light Pollution Code (Sections 59.108-59.110) and County Zoning Ordinance outdoor lighting ordinances. The project would use the latest technology LED light sources to offer preferred color temperature of 4500° Kelvin. This color temperature is most energy efficient and is of a color temperature that is closer to daylight so colors render more accurately. Fixtures would have full cut-off with no lighting generated past the 90° nadir to meet all requirements of the Light Pollution Code Zone B requirements. For street lighting, single pole arm mounted fixtures with a type III distribution would be used. These fixtures, in general, throw light ahead and in front of the fixture head and to each side, with minimal back lighting. Along the main entry road where a center median occurs, double armed pole mounted fixtures would be used, with a pole-to-pole spacing of 120'-0".

All project lighting would be designed to minimize new sources of substantial light and would conform to the San Diego Light Pollution Code (51.201-51.209), the purpose of which is to minimize light pollution to allow citizens of the County to view and enjoy the night environment. Therefore, **the proposed project would not result in significant lighting impacts that would conflict with the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.**

5.4.5 Highly Reflective Building Materials Visible Along Roadways, Pedestrian Walkways, or in the Line of Sight of Adjacent Properties (Guideline No. 5)

Based on the Design Guidelines in the Specific Plan, no highly reflective materials are proposed in conjunction with any permitted on-site use. Solar panels would be allowed on all buildings. Solar panels currently in use are not made of reflective materials. Such installations throughout the project would be per County regulations.

Also based on the Design Guidelines in the Specific Plan, the exterior surfaces of buildings within the proposed project generally would be covered stucco or concrete, and may include stone architectural accents. Within the non-residential portions of the project, the main color of all buildings would be earth tones, such as warm gray, off-white, or beige. Vegetation would also block some of the potential glare, particularly along roadways, pedestrian walkways, or where visible from neighboring properties. No highly reflective materials are proposed in conjunction with any permitted on-site use. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in significant visual impacts due to the glare from highly reflective building materials.

5.4.6 Consistency with Applicable Policies and Planning Documents (Guideline No. 6)

5.4.6.1 State of California

As mentioned above, the project site is not visible from a designated Scenic Highway.

5.4.6.2 County of San Diego General Plan – Conservation and Open Space Element

As mentioned above, the project site is visible from one County Designated Scenic Highway. I-15 is located approximately a quarter of a mile from the site and northbound motorists have a distant view of the site for approximately 1,600 feet or 16 seconds. As discussed above, in Section 5.4.1, the project impact to views from I-15 would be less than significant. Thus, the project would be consistent with County Policies COS-11.1 (Protection of Scenic Resources) and COS-11.3 (Development Siting and Design.)

5.4.6.3 Valley Center Community Plan

The Valley Center Community Plan outlines goals and policies that seek to preserve the current community character.

5.4.6.4 Valley Center Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines include three parts: (1) Community Design Objectives; (2) the design review process; how the process works; and (3) the Design Guidelines. Several design objectives relevant to the Lilac Hills Ranch project are listed below.

Preservation of Natural Features and Open Spaces

- Clustering of higher density residential development to preserve the valley's open spaces and meadows.
- Guidelines to incorporate existing natural features into new site development.
- Hillside protection to reduce grading, large building pads and retaining walls.

Specific Plan Policy 8, Open Space/Conservation Policies addresses the project's sensitivity to the preservation of sensitive resources and open space. The project, as proposed, clusters higher density residential development to preserve the valley's open spaces and meadows. Over 102.7 acres of natural open space, including sensitive wetlands and biological open space will be preserved as permanent open space throughout the development. Sensitive hillsides have been protected from development and grading has been minimized through the implementation of Grading Plan Development Standards, as set forth in Section III, F of the Specific Plan. These guidelines require landform grading techniques including the blending and rounding of slopes, roadways, and building pads to reflect the existing surrounding contours by undulating slopes, replicating the natural terrain.

Architectural Character

- Architectural continuity based on the elements of and character of early California buildings. Guidelines identifying the elements, but allowing sufficient design flexibility to achieve variety. Buildings sensitive to the natural landscape.

Specific Plan Policy 2, Community Design and Operation Policies addresses the project's dedication to the development of an architectural palate that establishes a theme and character reminiscent of the diverse architecture present in many early California villages and towns. A variety of architectural styles are proposed for the project that relate to the styles and character of early California buildings. As detailed in Section III, E of the Specific Plan, each type of development proposed is required to adhere to specific architectural, site planning, and landscape requirements appropriate for the type of use. Implementation of these requirements would provide a framework for implementing the Valley Center Design Guidelines.

Streetlight, Roadway and Sidewalk Standards

Specific Plan Policy 10, Circulation Policies address the creation of an integrated circulation system that serves convenient and safe vehicular traffic, as well as providing alternative modes of circulation, such as transit, bikeways and pedestrian paths and trails.

- County engineering standards should be modified when feasible to reinforce Valley Center's rural residential character. The following should be considered:
 - o A Special streetlight standard
 - o Rolled concrete curbs in road construction, except in the town center and industrial area
 - o In areas where sidewalks are required, separate the sidewalk from the curb by a planting strip

Where feasible, County engineering standards are being modified to reinforce the rural residential character. Section II, D of the Specific Plan discusses the various types of roads, sidewalks and trails to be included in the project. These are further illustrated in the "Typical Street Sections", Specific Plan Figures 25 through 51. The circulation system provides a variety of routes through the project site, including meandering sidewalks. Sidewalks along roads are separated from curbs with a planting strips and rural fencing is proposed along soft surface trails in accordance with County standards. Special pedestrian lighting is proposed for common areas throughout the project.

5.4.6.5 Bonsall Community Plan

Like the Valley Center Community Plan, the Bonsall Community Plan also provides policies and recommendations relevant to the community. The following Bonsall Community Plan element goals and policies apply to the project:

Community Character Goals and Policies

GOAL LU-1.1

Balanced Land Use. A unique balance of Bonsall's rural agriculture, estate lots, ridgelines, equestrian uses, and open space land uses within the community, including open space and low density buffers that separate the community from adjacent cities and unincorporated community and new development that conserves natural resources and topography.

Policies

LU-1.1.1 Preserving Rural Qualities. Require development in the community to preserve the rural qualities of the area, minimize traffic congestion, and to not adversely affect the natural environment.

LU-1.1.2 Maintaining Rural Lifestyle. Maintain the existing rural lifestyle by continuing the existing pattern of residential, equestrian, and agricultural uses within the Bonsall Community Plan area.

LU-1.1.3 Sensitivity to Topography & Character. Require development to be sensitive to the topography, physical context, and community character of Bonsall.

GOAL LU-1.2

Appropriately Designed Development. Continued development that is appropriately designed to match the rural character of the Bonsall community.

Policy

LU-1.2.1 Consistency with Existing Rural Character. Require development that is designed to be consistent with the rural character of the Bonsall community.

The project proposes a village, with clustered residential housing, neighborhood-serving commercial and institutional uses, along with biological open space, public parks and trails. Lower density development and open space buffers are proposed along perimeter portions of the project in order to be sensitive to existing surrounding land uses. Grove plantings are proposed as accents throughout the project's common areas, which will relate to Bonsall's rural agricultural aesthetic. The project conserves natural resources on-site and is also planned as an eco-friendly community that will use sustainable materials where feasible, has its own recycling and green waste collection facility and wastewater treatment and reclamation facility. The project would use primarily reclaimed water and well water to irrigate common area landscapes. The project has been designed as a pedestrian friendly community to encourage walkability, and has been designed to reflect the existing topography with roads and neighborhood that follow the natural lay of the land. Contour grading techniques and landscaping will soften transitions between development and natural open space. Multi-purpose pathways have been incorporated into the project's design. In addition, the project will include sensitive transitions to the existing natural environment through the use of naturalized and native plant material. A community trail network will minimize traffic congestion and encourage open space exploration and alternative forms of travel, and community design elements such as neighborhood-serving commercial and farmers market will help to preserve the rural qualities of the area, encourage interaction among people and help promote a sense of community.

5.4.6.6 Bonsall Design Guidelines

Preserve the Rural Bonsall Landscape

- Protect the undeveloped character of Bonsall's hillsides.

Residential Development

- Design residential developments to protect existing topography and other natural features in layout of streets, lots, and grading patterns.

Scenic Roads

- Minimize road realignments and widenings, consistent with public safety considerations to West Lilac Road.
- Create a “road edge zone” of consistent design to emphasize the natural rural character.
- Preserve existing natural landforms, rock outcroppings, and mature trees along these routes
- Encourage wooden equestrian and agricultural fencing along these roads.

Site Planning Principles

- Integrate new development within the landscape of valleys and canyons.
- Create wide, landscaped building setbacks along public roads.
- Minimize the visual impact of parking lots by dense perimeter edge planting and internal tree canopies.

Architectural Character

- Encourage architectural character that is sensitive to Bonsall’s rural setting.
- Encourage exterior spaces, such as courtyards, verandas, arcades and balconies.

Hillsides/Topography

Steep slopes are preserved and contour grading techniques utilized to protect the undeveloped character of Bonsall’s hillsides. The project has been designed to reflect the existing topography with streets and neighborhoods following the natural layout of the land.

Scenic Roads

The realignment of West Lilac Road has been minimized and a “road edge zone” has been created along West Lilac Road, consistent with these guidelines. Significant existing landforms are preserved and wooden fencing and multi-use community pathway is proposed along the West Lilac Road corridor.

Site Planning Principles

New development is integrated with existing natural resources preserved on-site. Development adjacent to wetlands and natural hillsides provide setback buffers and

transitional plantings to respect these natural edge conditions. Expanded, landscaped parkways are proposed along primary public roadways.

The visual impact of parking lots is minimized through the use of dense perimeter edge plantings and internal tree canopies in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan.

Architectural Character

The architecture proposed for the project has been designed to capture the design of California's early days and be sensitive to Bonsall's rural setting. Architectural design guidelines, required through implementation of the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan, encourage the provision of exterior spaces such as courtyards, verandas, arcades and balconies.

5.4.7 Short-term Construction-related Visual Effects (Guideline Nos. 1 and 3)

The proposed project may be graded and constructed in several different phases dependent on market conditions. Grading is anticipated to be done in phases per the Phasing Plan found within the Lilac Hills Ranch Specific Plan. Grading operations may be performed in individual phases or occur simultaneously on more than one phase at any given time. As required by the County Grading, Clearing and Watercourses Ordinance, as grading is completed on each phase, ground cover would be planted and, if required, temporary irrigation installed. This would protect against erosion and instability while also providing a visual softening to the appearance of the graded areas until construction of homes and associated facilities are complete. As discussed above, views into the project site along West Lilac Road would be immediate and seen by all who use that roadway. These views will be obscured by the construction of a noise wall as soon as grading would allow, blocking the view of construction along that road.

Visible construction activities during project build-out would contrast with existing conditions due to removal of existing vegetation and the introduction of new, visually dominant elements, including raw soil, newly cut or filled slopes, construction fencing, construction equipment, and construction materials stockpiling and storage. These views would be visible from each Key Observation Point, from which the project would be visible, as discussed above. Construction activities would disrupt the existing visual character of the

project site for several years. Landscaping, installed subsequent to each construction phase, would help lessen adverse visual effects of grading activities and building construction. Immediately following project construction and sale, safety and other resulting lighting effects would result in increased glow over existing conditions. While street trees and internal landscaping, when mature, would help buffer the homes from views to the

proposed project from off-site areas, softening sharp edges, unifying the project, and diminishing project lighting and glare, this would not be the case in the short-term.

While “temporary” in nature and addressed through project design landscaping over the long-term, **the construction-period visual impacts would be significant and adverse, but short term.**

5.5 Cumulative Visual Impacts

As noted in CEQA Guidelines Definitions and Section 15130, cumulative impacts are those resulting from the combination of two or more individual effects; either (1) within a single project or (2) from a combination of multiple projects. Projects contributing to cumulative visual effects (including the proposed project) include those within the project viewshed. The viewshed encompasses the area within which the viewer is most likely to observe both the project and surrounding community uses. The project viewshed is generally confined to the areas located within the ridgelines that surround the I-15 corridor and the project site. From the northwest project corner, West Lilac Road serves as the northern boundary of the project site, while Rodriguez Road serves generally as the project boundary to the south and east. From the southwest project corner, the western boundary of the project runs along Old Highway 395 and extends to Palimo Drive. From there, the project site extends back to Shirey Road, which serves as the northwestern project boundary. There are approximately eight development projects within the project viewshed (Figure 45; Table 2). Ranging in size from approximately 5 to 40 acres and 2 to 9 dwelling units, implementation of all the cumulative projects would result in 34 additional residences, and associated infrastructure, being built. One of the cumulative projects involves modifications to an existing recreational vehicle (RV) park. Additionally, a number of properties in the vicinity of the project site are to be included as Property Specific Requests in a Countywide GPA. These properties are seeking to increase allowable density through a General Plan Amendment. Of the five Property Specific Requests within closest proximity to the project, two are located adjacent to the Project Site- VC54 to the east and VC11 just south of Covey Lane. The remaining three are located just south of the project site. Each of these project sites have General Plan designations of SR4 and have been referred to a General Plan Amendment to change their designation to SR-2. Approval of the requests would result in an increase in allowable dwelling units within the 339 acres. Like the project, the Property Specific Requests illustrate an intention of the surrounding property owners to pursue residential opportunities.

TABLE 2
CUMULATIVE PROJECT LIST

Map ID#	Project Name	Description
1	Rockefeller (TPM 20596)	Subdivide 5 acres into 2 lots.
2	Champagne Lakes, MUP, Mod (06-0055819)	Modification for the relocation of 51 RV spaces and one mobile home space to include full hookups to 20 RV spaces, a new restroom, and an area screened by landscaping for vehicle storage.
3	Robinson TPM (07-0087850)	Subdivide into 4 single-family residential lots
4	Marquart Ranch (TM 5410)	Subdivide into 9 single-family lots. Also includes improvements to West Lilac Road and Mesa Lilac Road, and drainage improvements.
5	Mustafa TPM (04-11418)	Tentative Parcel Map to subdivide 16.4 acres into 4 parcels and a remainder.
6	Nichols Whitman TPM (05-0045920)	Subdivide into 4 lots
7	Goodnight Ranchos (06-0058961)	The project proposes to divide 5.0 acres into 2 parcels that will be 2.45 acres net each. The proposed parcels will have frontage upon Circle R Lane.
8	Dabbs TM (04-11658)	The project proposes to subdivide 38.4 acres into 9 lots. Each proposed lot will be 4 acres in size (net acres).

A cumulative aesthetic impact would result if the project, along with projects within the cumulative study area, would result in an overall change in the visual character of the viewshed. Of the projects analyzed, seven are minor residential subdivisions, proposing between one to nine new single-family residences. These residential subdivisions would be located within existing agricultural and rural residential areas. The Property Specific request projects, if approved, would likewise construct residential subdivisions.

These projects will combine with the proposed project and change the composition of the visual environment as the area transitions from primarily agriculture and rural residential land uses to a more suburban pattern of development. This will result in physical changes that would adversely affect the viewshed.

The project therefore, in conjunction with cumulatively considerable projects, **would significantly alter the composition of the visual environment and would therefore result in cumulatively significant adverse visual impacts that are unmitigable.** (Guideline No. 1)

5.6 Summary of Project Impacts and Significance Conclusions

The proposed project would change the composition of the visual environment in terms of dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity. This would create major physical changes in the composition of the visual environment, as viewed from West Lilac Road and surrounding residential areas that would be inconsistent with the existing visual character of the area. As a result, the visual environment would be adversely affected and the visual impacts would be significant and unmitigable.

Several project design features such as landscaping, building setbacks, and architectural details, all included in the project's Specific Plan, would help to reduce the visual impacts created by the proposed project by screening parking lots, buildings, and lighting. These features would not affect the dominance of the proposed project features and would not reduce the significant visual impacts created by the proposed project to less than significant levels. Impacts to visual resources associated with construction and operation of the proposed project would be significant and unmitigable (Guideline No. 1).

The project would not result in physical changes that would substantially degrade the quality of an identified visual resource (Guideline No. 2).

All outdoor light fixtures, including sports field lighting, would conform to the San Diego Light Pollution Code (Guideline No. 4), and highly reflective building materials would not be installed (Guideline No. 5).

Additionally, the project would meet all applicable policies and be consistent with relevant planning documents (Guideline No. 6).

Short-term visible construction activities, typical of projects of this nature, would contrast with existing conditions due to removal of existing vegetation and the introduction of new, visually dominant elements, including raw soil, newly cut or filled slopes, construction period fencing, construction equipment, and construction materials stockpiling and storage. While temporary in nature, short-term adverse visual impacts would be significant and unmitigable (Guidelines No. 1 and 3).

The composition of the project viewshed will be adversely affected by physical changes introduced by cumulatively considerable projects. These changes will not be compatible with the existing visual character of the area and therefore would be significant and unmitigable (Guidelines No. 1 and 3).

6.0 Visual Mitigation and Design Considerations

Mitigation Measure (MM) 1. Street trees shall be planted at close intervals to assure the overlapping foliage would provide adequate screening of the project site from view along West Lilac Road.

Mitigation Measure (MM) 2. The commencement of construction of each subsequent phase will be lengthened to accommodate mature growth of landscaping of the previous phase.

Implementation of MM 1 would serve to assist the landscaping requirements found in the Specific Plan. This mitigation measure requires street trees planted at close intervals to assure that overlapping foliage would provide adequate screening of the project site from view along West Lilac Road. While implementation of this measure would assist in reducing this impact, the mitigation measure is infeasible due to the creation of potential fire hazards. Due to the proximity of the landscaped area to residential uses, brush management requirements including the provision of horizontal and vertical clearances, and shaping of trees greater than four feet in height. Conformance with fire regulations would negate the functional effect of the mitigation measure. Therefore, the measure is infeasible.

Implementation of MM 2 would lengthen time between construction phases to allow landscaping of the previous phase to grow maturity prior to commencement of the next phase. While this measure would serve to reduce the views of raw soil and construction activities during the interim period it is infeasible because of the extreme economic hardship it would present.

7.0 References

County of San Diego

2011 Bonsall Community Plan.

1991 Bonsall Design Guidelines.

2011 Valley Center Community Plan.

1990 Valley Center Design Guidelines.

n.d. Interstate-15 Corridor Subregional Plan.

1986 San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances. Light Pollution Code. Section 59.101 et seq. Chapter 9.

2008 Visual Impact Analysis for Meadowood Project, October 2, 2008 / ER 04-02-004.

2007 Resource Protection Ordinance of San Diego County. October 10.

RECON

2014 Biological Resources Report Lilac Hills Ranch, San Diego County, California. May.

8.0 List of Preparers

This report was prepared by Adam Gevanthor at Development Design Services & GraphicAccess, Inc. in conjunction with RECON Environmental, Inc.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Figures

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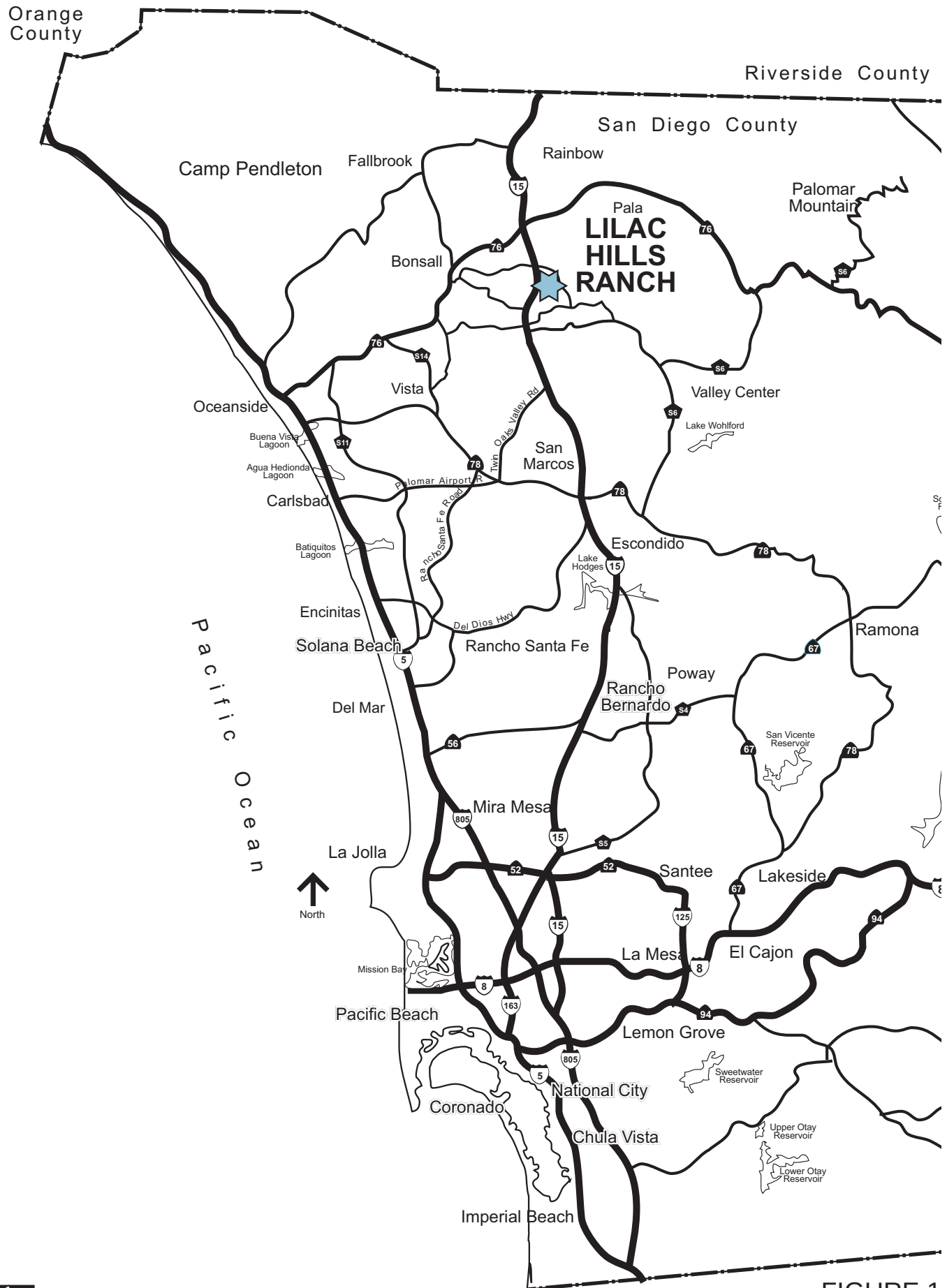


FIGURE 1
Regional Location

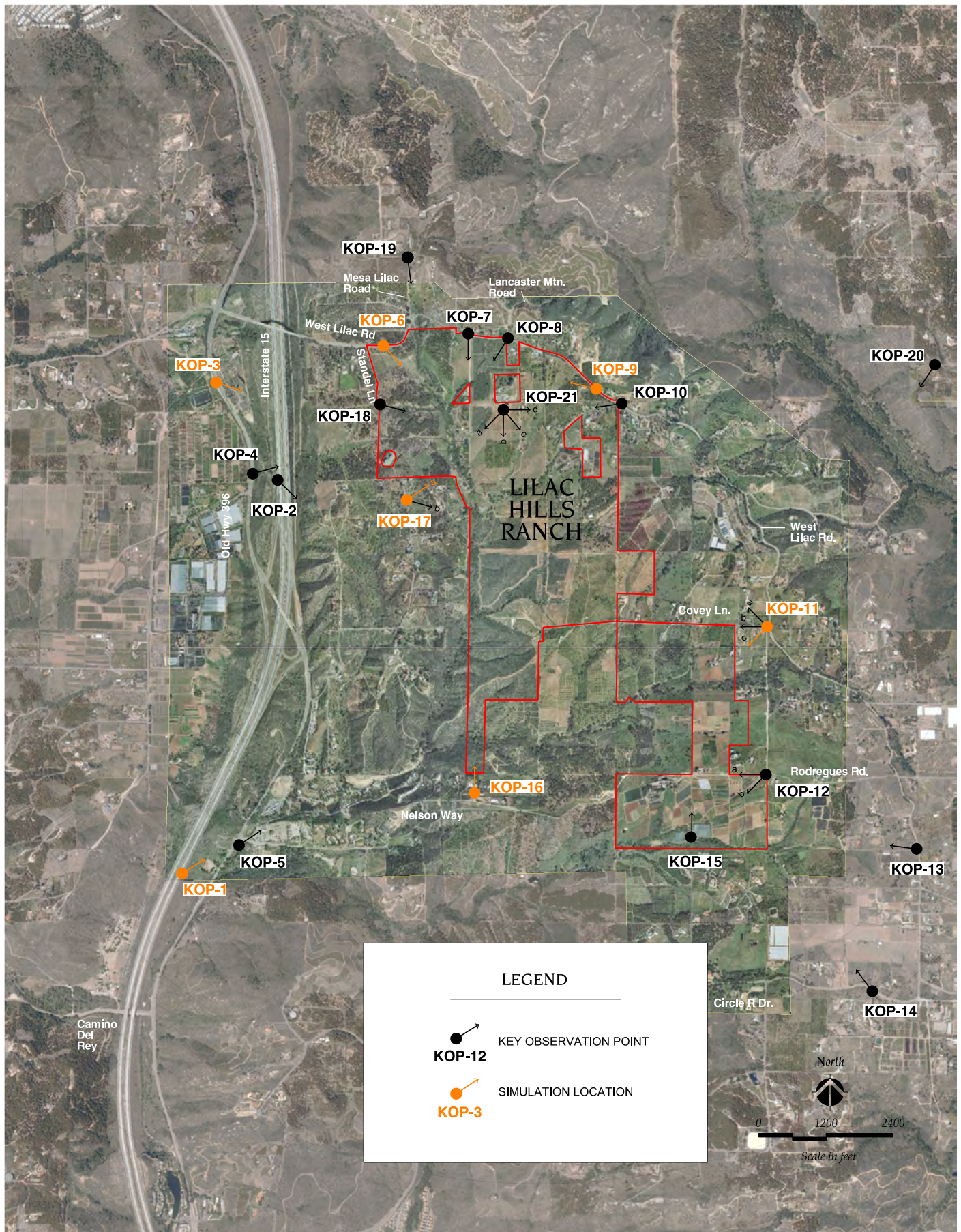


FIGURE 2
Aerial Photograph of Project Location

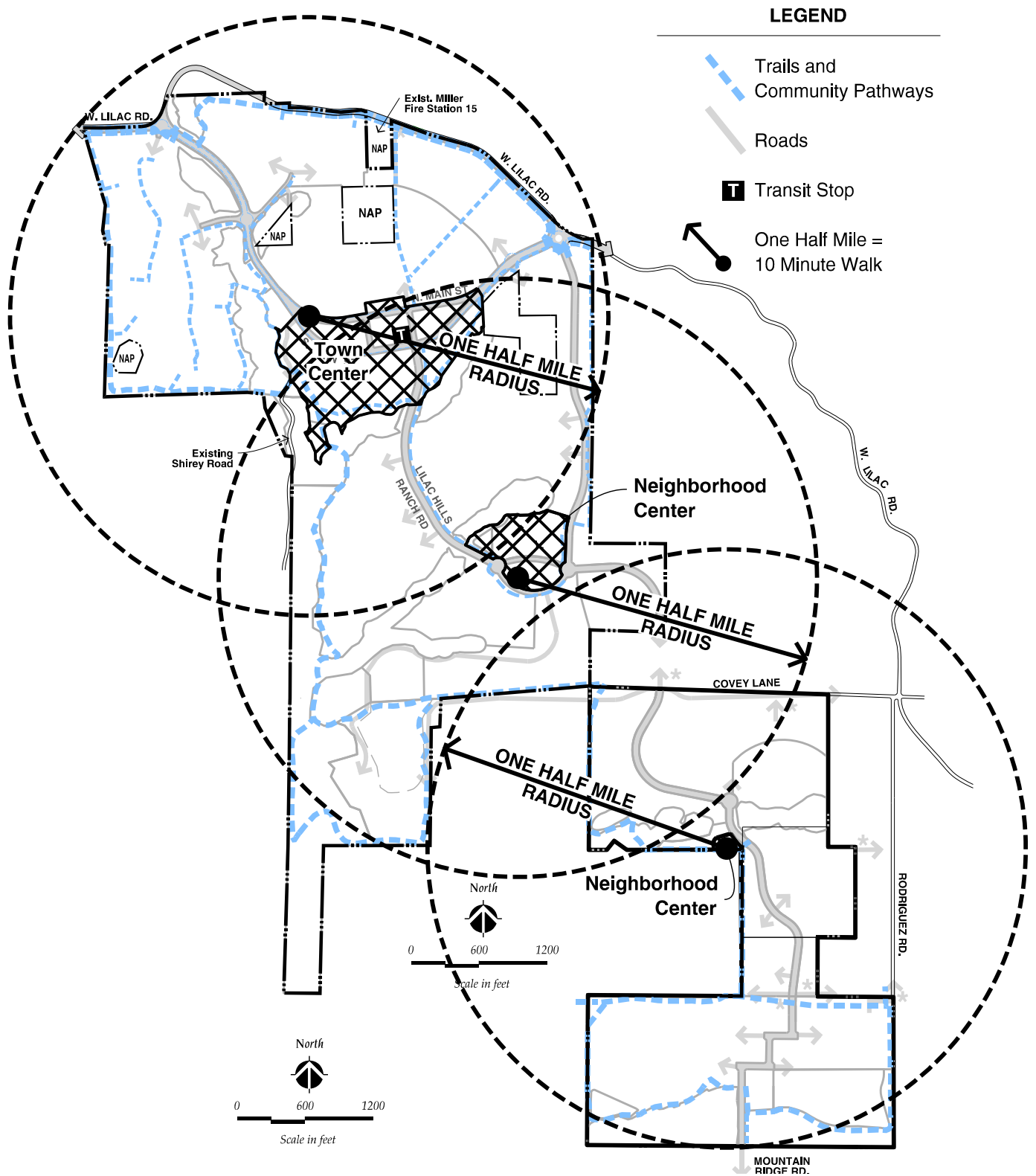


FIGURE 3
Multi-Modal Concept Plan

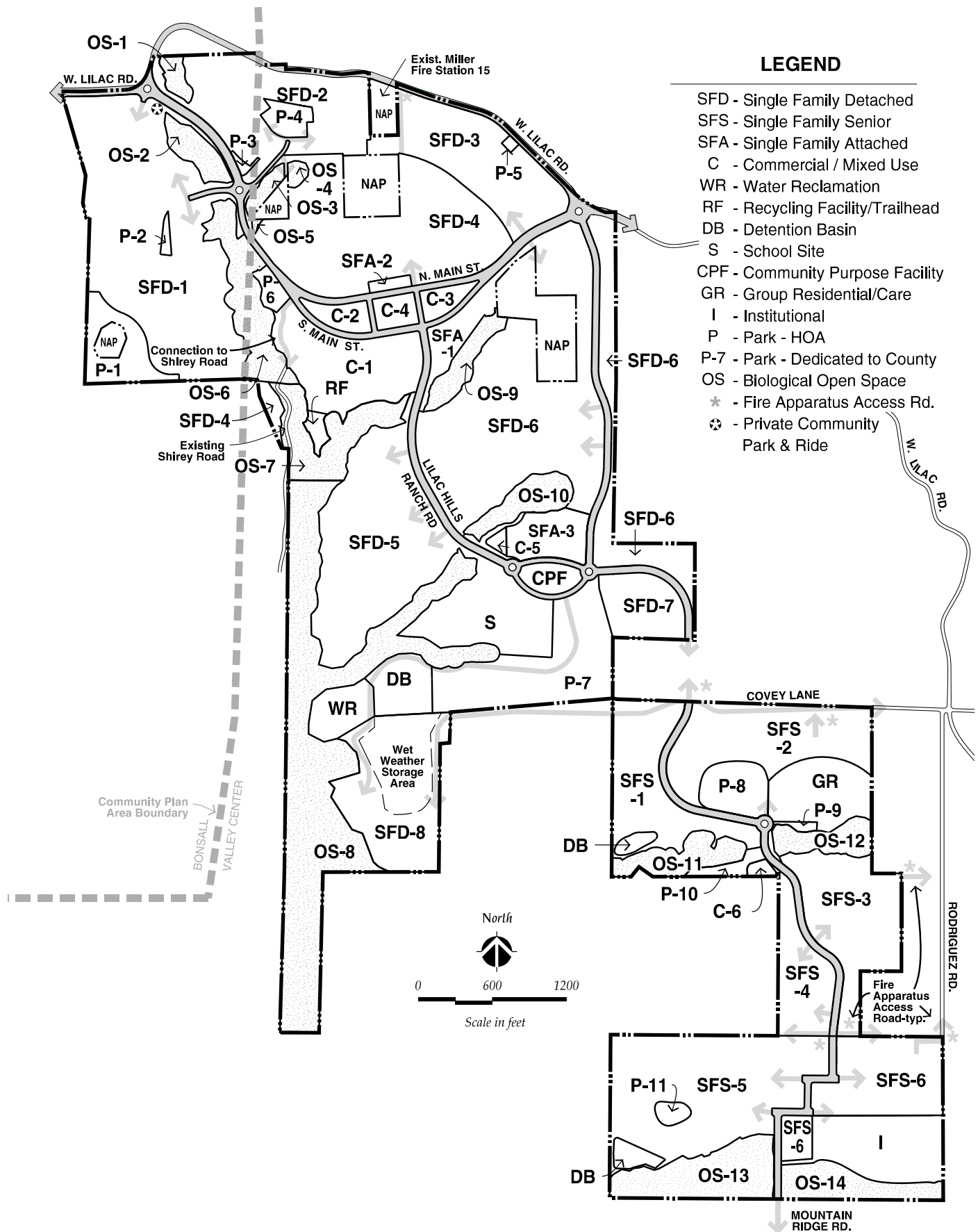


FIGURE 4
Land Use Plan

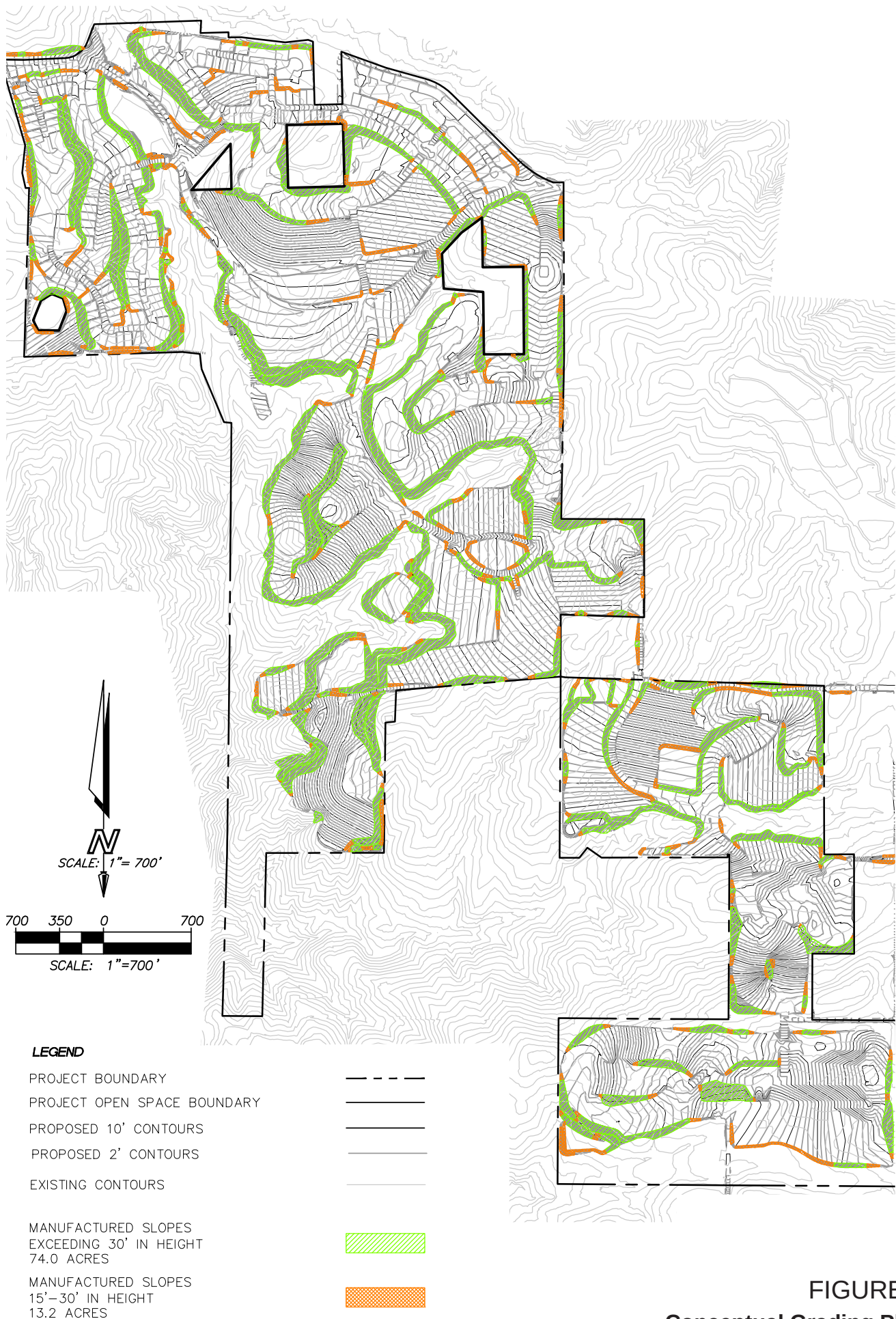
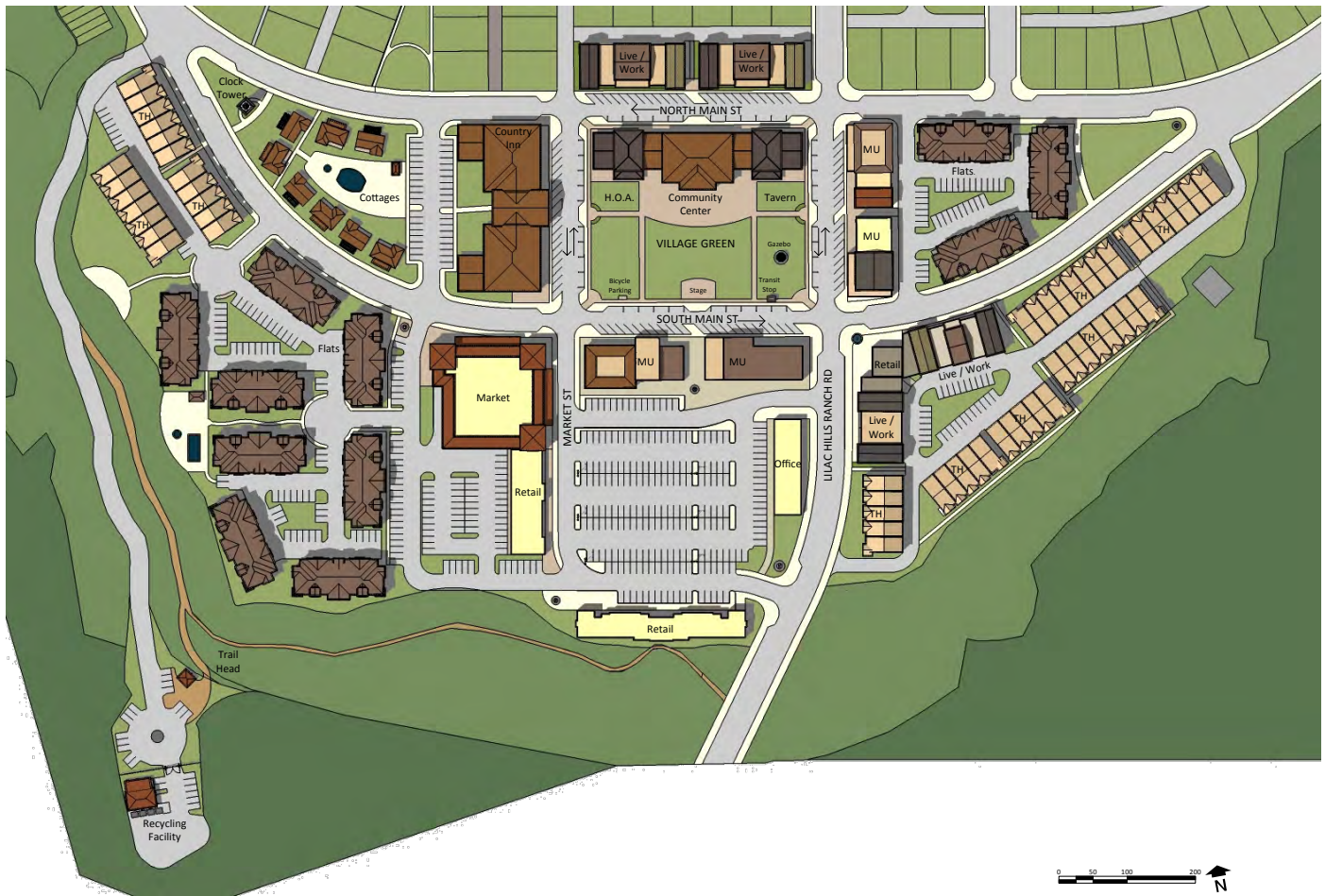


FIGURE 5
Conceptual Grading Plan



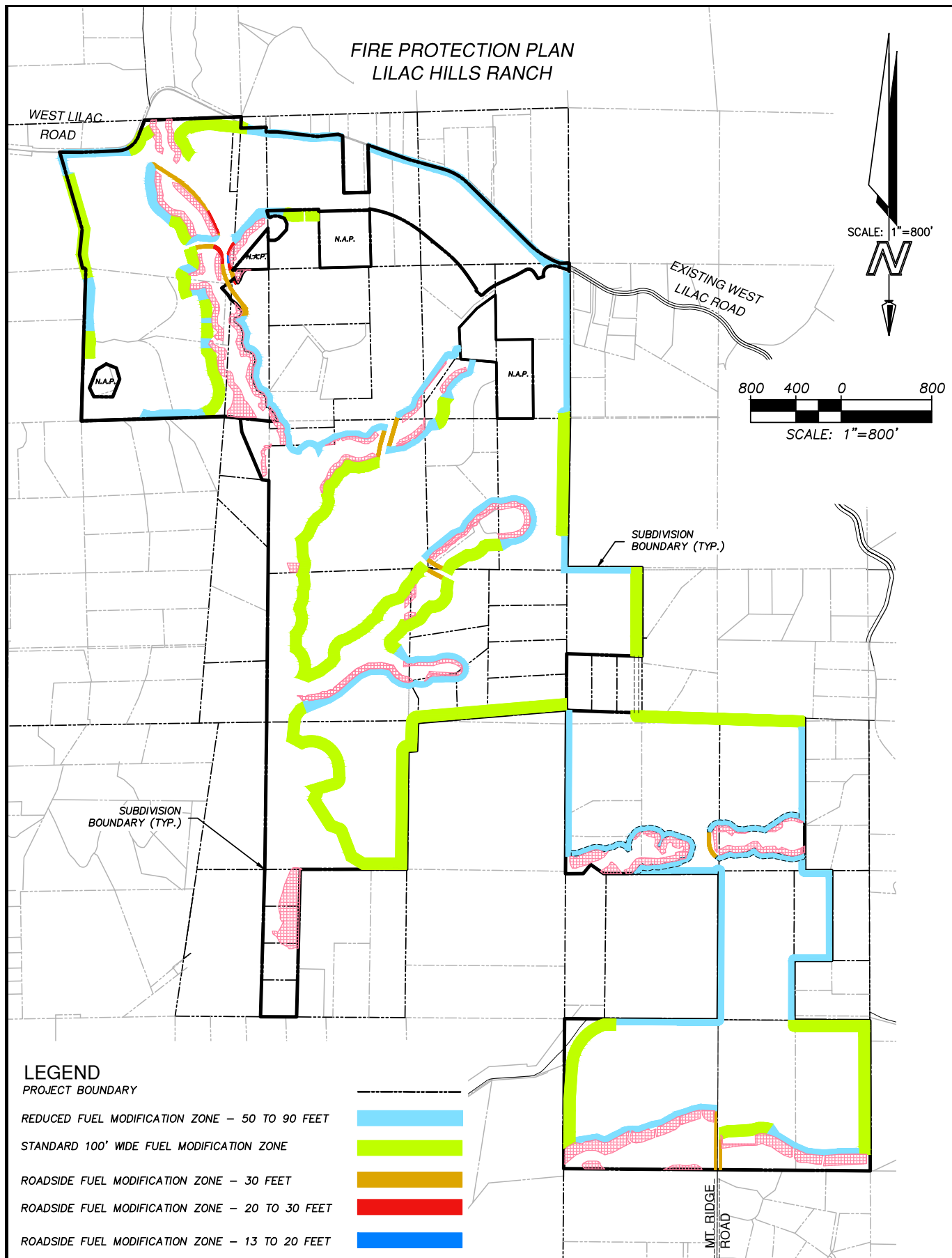
FIGURE 7
Conceptual Lotting Study

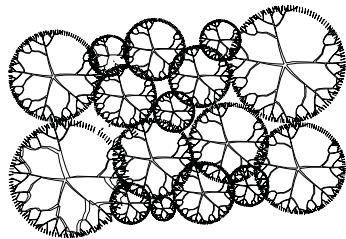


LILAC HILLS RANCH
TOWN CENTER

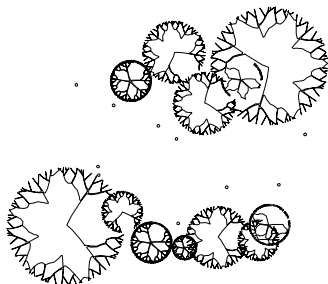
CONCEPT SITE PLAN

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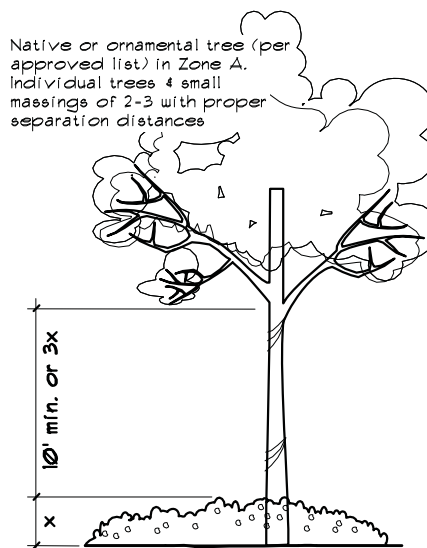


100% Canopy Coverage: solid foliage mass with no spaces between plants

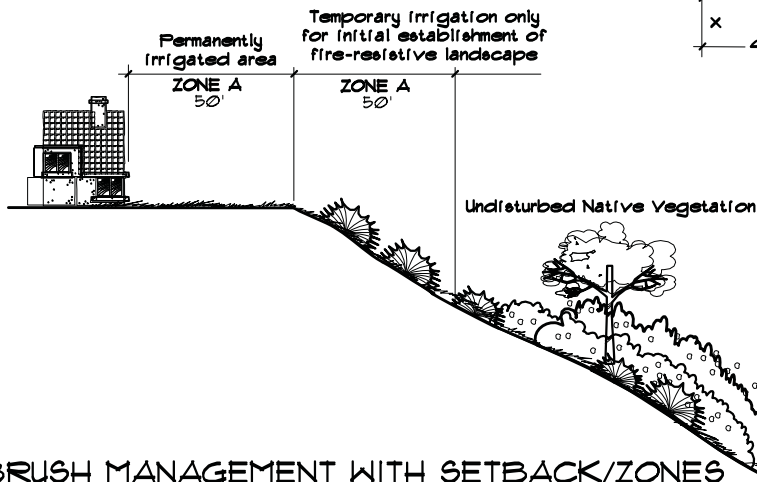


Reduced to 50% by combination of clearing and thinning canopy coverage, including removal of undesirable species.

PRUNING AND THINNING



PRUNING AND THINNING



BRUSH MANAGEMENT WITH SETBACK/ZONES

MAINTENANCE

Year-round maintenance will be done yearlong and include the following:

- Prune and thin trees around structures to a min. of 20' canopy separation.
- Branches overhanging roofs will be removed.
- Trash and combustible debris will be cleared from gutters, roofs, and around structures.
- Irrigation systems will be maintained in full working condition.