

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION, LOCATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1.1 Project Objectives

Pursuant to Section 15124(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, the Project’s statement of objectives is provided below. The objectives are intended to assist the County in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate in the EIR and aid the decision makers in preparing findings or a statement of overriding considerations.

The Project seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To efficiently develop an underutilized property with residential uses consistent with the site’s General Plan land use designation.
- To establish a residential development in the unincorporated community of San Dieguito, San Diego County in a manner that is sensitive to the environment and complementary of surrounding land uses.
- To develop a residential community with a design that takes topographic, geologic, hydrologic, and environmental opportunities and constraints into consideration to minimize alterations to natural landforms where practical.
- To increase and diversify the available housing supply in unincorporated San Diego County by providing residential homes that will be marketable within the evolving economic profiles of nearby communities.
- To provide on-site park space for use by Project residents and trail access for use by Project residents and residents of surrounding communities.
- To ensure compatibility of design between on-site land uses and surrounding properties.
- To establish development phasing that results in a logical, coordinated buildout of a new residential community.

1.2 Project Description

1.2.1 Project Components

The Project consists of entitlement applications for a Tentative Map (PDS-2020-TM-5643), Density Bonus Permit PDS2021-DB-21-001, Site Plan Review (PDS2022-STP-22-018) and an Administrative Permit (PDS2020-AD-20-011). Descriptions of the Project’s application components, physical design, and anticipated expected operating characteristics are provided in the following subsections. Copies of the entitlement applications for the Project are available for review at the County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services (PDS), 5510 Overland Avenue, 3rd Floor, San Diego, CA, 92123.

Approval of the Tentative Map, Density Bonus Permit, Site Plan Review, and Administrative Permit (herein, the “Project”) would allow for ultimate development of the 89.23-acre Project site with 76

single-family residential homes (69 market rate homes and seven low-income affordable homes), a recreational park, water quality detention basins, and open space. The Project Applicant’s marketing name for the Project is “Questhaven.”

The Project is a Senate Bill 330 (SB 330) housing development project. Under SB 330, submittal of a Preliminary Application for a residential development project provides that the project is only subject to the ordinances, policies, and standards adopted and in effect when the Preliminary Application is submitted. An SB 330 Preliminary Application was filed with the County of San Diego on January 19, 2023, and the County of San Diego confirmed acceptance of the application on May 9, 2023.

Administrative Permit

The Project site’s zoning classifications are Rural Residential (RR) in the northern portions of the Project site and Open Space (S80) in the southern portion of the Project site. The RR zoning classification has a minimum lot size requirement of 1.0 acre. An Administrative Permit (PDS2020-AD-20-011) is proposed to allow for residential lot size averaging. This will allow the proposed residential development to be clustered in the northernmost portion of the Project site, while reserving other portions of the RR zoned area that contain sensitive habitats for open space preservation and wildlife movement.

Density Bonus Permit

The Density Bonus Permit PDS2021-DB-21-001 is proposed pursuant to State Assembly Bill 2345 (Government Code Section 65915 et seq.) to allow for a 20% increase in the maximum allowable number of residential dwelling units in exchange for reserving 5% of the dwelling units on-site for “Low” Income Affordable Housing (defined as 50% to 80% of the Area Median Income [AMI]). Approval of the Density Bonus Permit would allow for an increase in the maximum allowable dwelling units from 64 dwelling units to 76 single-family dwelling units in exchange for reserving seven units restricted for “Low” Income Affordable Housing.

Site Plan Review

A Site Plan Review (PDS2022-STP-22-018) is required due to the S80 (Open Space) zoning designation that applies to a portion of the Project site. The Site Plan is shown in Figure 1-1, *Site Plan No. PDS2022-STP-22-018*. The Site Plan provides the potential location, size, and use of the future proposed residential dwelling units and their relationship to the significant physical features located on the Project site. The currently proposed entitlement applications do not include any site-specific building footprints; however, the Site Plan provides the conceptual location of the future homes within the proposed Tentative Map lots. The Site Plan also identifies the location of the on-site Affordable Housing dwelling units.

Tentative Map (TM 5643)

The proposed Tentative Map (TM) (PDS-2020-TM-5643) is shown in Figure 1-2, *Tentative Map No. 5643*. A summary of the development lots proposed as part of TM 5643 is presented at the end of this section in Table 1-1, *Tentative Map No. 5643 Lot Summary*. As shown in Table 1-1, the TM would subdivide the 89.23-acre site to allow for the development of 76 single-family residential homes on 76

lots collectively totaling 18.27 acres, recreation uses on 0.31-acre, water bioretention basins on 2.4 acres, with the remaining area reserved for open space on 63.9 acres that would provide for biological open space and a local wildlife corridor connecting to adjacent open space lands south and west of the Project site. Proposed residential lot sizes on the site would range from $\pm 7,899$ square feet (s.f.) to $\pm 21,440$ s.f. The TM depicts the location of each lot, the location and alignment of on-site roadways, and the location of public water, sewer and drainage infrastructure improvements.

- **Single-Family Residential.** TM 5643 proposes to subdivide the property to provide a total of 76 single-family residential lots on 18.27 acres, which would range in size from 7,899 s.f. to 21,440 s.f. Lots 1-76 are designated to implement the single-family residential uses.
- **Park.** TM 5643 proposes one lot for recreation purposes on 0.31 acre located in the center of the site, south of proposed Street C. Lot A, adjacent to Lot 66, would implement the recreation uses.
- **Bioretention Basins.** TM 5643 proposes four lots for bioretention basins on a total of 2.4 acres. Lots F, J, K, and L would implement the open space water uses.
- **On-Site Roadways.** TM 5643 proposes private streets and internal roadways on approximately 4.34 acres, including proposed Streets A, B, C, and E. Lots B, C, D, and E would implement the on-site roadways.
- **Open Space.** TM 5643 proposes nine lots as open space, totaling 63.9 acres. Lots G, H, and N through T U designate the open space. Of these lots, 53.13 acres (Lot S) is designated as biological open space, while the other lots accommodate SDG&E easements, fire management buffers, manufactured slopes, and one lot (Lot G) for passive recreational open space that is designed to accommodate a public parking lot and a 10-foot-wide decomposed granite trail segment that would connect to the existing, off-site Copper Creek Trail.

1.2.2 Technical, Economic, and Environmental Considerations

The following section provides a general description of the Project's technical, economic, and environmental characteristics, as required by §15124(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Technical Characteristics

Landscape Concept Plan

The Project's landscaping plan is depicted in Figure 1-3, *Landscape Concept Plan*. Landscaping is proposed within rights-of-way along street frontages, on manufactured slopes, and in and around the bioretention basins. Landscaping would be ornamental in nature, except on manufactured slopes, vegetated swales, and bioretention basins where plant materials would be selected to serve environmental functions (e.g., water quality). The landscaping plan also shows the design of the on-

site park, which is designed to include a dog park, seating area with shade cover, tot lot with play equipment, and ornamental landscaping.

As part of site plan applications for the development of individual lots, future development proposals will be required to submit planting and irrigation plans to the San Diego County PDS for approval. Implementing landscaping plans are required to be reviewed and approved by Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District (RSFFPD), and as condition of approval, a bond would be required during construction that would not be released until RSFFPD has inspected the installed landscaping and provided final approval.

SDG&E Easement

The project site is bisected by a 150' wide SDG&E easement shown on proposed TM 5643 as Lots P, Q, and S. The SDG&E easement corridor is improved with 230 kV overhead electric transmission lines supported by steel towers accessed by dirt roads and work pads maintained by SDG&E. The proposed project includes grading, private street crossings, landscaping, and erosion control measures within the SDG&E easement corridor. Prior to grading or construction of improvements within the SDG&E easement corridor, project grading and improvement plans must pass a conflict check by SDG&E to ensure the improvements are compatible with SDG&E facilities and operations. Moreover, these improvements must first be approved by the California Public Utilities Commission through an advice letter process pursuant to Section 851 of the California Public Utilities Code. The SDG&E easement contains large high voltage power lines that would remain in place with implementation of the Project. The easement area is identified as an SDG&E easement and fire buffer open space on TM 5643. Maintenance of the SDG&E easement would be the responsibility of the homeowners association (HOA). Maintenance of the SDG&E easement would be the responsibility of the HOA. The

Fire Management Features

Fire management zones (FMZs) are shown on proposed TM 5643 and the landscape concept plan. FMZ easements are accommodated along the Project's western boundary and in other areas, within which fuel would be thinned for wildfire management. Also assisting in wildfire protection is a cut slope that is planned to occur along the southern edge of Lot R, and the planned construction of 6-foot-high heat-deflecting fencing along the lot lines of Lots 19-24 and atop the manufactured slope behind Lots 25-45. Requirements to adhere to FMZ requirements will be made a responsibility of the HOA and imposed on homeowners through the HOA's CC&Rs.

Project Access and Roadway Improvements

As shown in Figure 1-4, *Site Access*, access to the Project site would be provided by two new private roadway connections (Street B and Street E) at San Elijo Road. San Elijo Road abuts the northern boundary of the Project site and would provide access to the site via proposed Street "B" and Street "E." Primary access to the western portion of the site would be provided via Street "B" at San Elijo Road. Primary access to the eastern portion of the site would be from Street "E" which is proposed as the southern leg of an existing San Elijo Road intersection that currently serves the Loma San Marcos

recreational facility located east of the Project site. As part of the Project, a traffic signal is proposed at this existing intersection. San Elijo Road is not designated as a County Mobility Element roadway.

The new on-site private streets are designed to be 39.75 feet wide, with one 12-foot vehicular travel lane in each direction. In addition to private roadways, the Project's design also provides for a privately maintained parking lot that would be open for public use at the terminus of Street "E." The parking lot would provide public parking access to existing trail systems located south of the Project site.

Drainage and Runoff

In conformance with County requirements for tentative map applications, a hydrology study was prepared for the Project to ensure that development of the site as proposed does not result in erosion or flood hazards to downstream properties. The Project's drainage plan is depicted on Figure 1-5, *Preliminary Drainage Plan*. The Project-specific hydrology study, titled, "Hydrology/Hydraulics Study" dated August 4, 2021, and included as *Appendix J* to this EIR provides a comparison of pre- and post-development drainage conditions on the site.

Under existing conditions, the Project site is composed of undeveloped natural terrain. The site is tributary to two distinct hydrologic subareas of the Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit. The average slope of the pre-development conditions is determined by following the County Standard S-1 and is calculated as 18% for the Project overall.

Drainage from approximately 34 acres of the site discharges from the southern portion of the site, which starts near the southern limits of the drainage basin and flows mainly in a northeasterly direction. As the northeasterly flows meet the eastern limits of the property, the water discharge from the site enters an unnamed tributary of the Escondido Creek flowing in a southerly direction along the eastern property line. The point where the discharge leaves the site is identified as POC-1 in the Project's hydrology study.

Drainage from the remaining 45 acres of the southern tributary area flows in a northerly direction where it meets a natural channel flowing in a north westerly direction to a point where it leaves the site along the western boundary. This point is identified as POC-2 in the Project's hydrology study. After reaching POC-2, the flows continue along their existing offsite flow path in a natural channel until they meet San Elijo Road and continue to San Marcos Creek.

Drainage from approximately 3.0 acres in the northeastern portion of the site flow into an existing brow ditch that carries the water in an easterly direction along the property line and discharge directly to the public storm drain system along San Elijo Road. This point of discharge is identified as POC-3 in the Project's hydrology study. Drainage from the remaining approximately 1.0 acre of the northwestern frontage of the site along San Elijo Road flows into two brow ditches that flow westerly and enter the public storm drain system along San Elijo Road tributary to San Marcos Creek. This point is identified as POC-4 in the Project's hydrology study.

As part of the Project's design, bioretention basins are proposed be constructed within Lots F and J through L of TM 5643. Project compliance with the Project-specific hydrology study would be assured through a condition of approval requiring future review of proposed grading plans by the County of San Diego PDS; (refer to EIR Section 7.0, *List of Mitigation Measures and Environmental Design Considerations*). The Project's hydrology study is included as *Appendix J* to this EIR.

Construction Activities

Construction of the Project is expected to occur over approximately 27 months (2.25 years), commencing as early as January 2026 and completing in March 2028. All of the residential homes on the Project site are expected to be occupied by 2029. These activities would generally include clearing, grading and blasting, installation of infrastructure, building construction and painting, paving, and landscaping,

A preliminary grading plan is a component of proposed TM 5643 and is depicted on Figure 1-6, *Preliminary Grading Plan*. TM 5643 is designed to comply with the San Diego County Grading, Clearing, and Watercourses Ordinance (San Diego Municipal Code Sections 87.701 et seq.). Grading associated with the Project would occur in one phase and result in physical disturbance to 31.35 acres of the Project site including all disturbances for residential lots and the proposed park, trail, trail parking lot, internal roads, utility improvements, and the proposed bioretention basins. The remainder of the site would not be graded or otherwise physically disturbed by the Project and would remain as open space. An additional ~~1.2~~ 1.3 acres of off-site disturbance would occur, including ~~1.1~~ 1.2 acres off-site and 0.1 acre within a Project easement west of the Project boundary to implement the Project's infrastructure connections outside of the Project site boundary.

Natural slopes on the Project site range from a 9% to 23% grade, however, the steeper slopes are located primarily within the areas proposed to be designated as permanent open space and would not be developed. In the areas that would be physically disturbed by the Project's grading, approximately 167,100 cubic yards (c.y.) of cut and fill would occur, with no net import or export of earthwork materials. Several manufactured slopes would be created adjacent to proposed on-site roadways. Proposed grading would create manufactured slopes up to 50 feet in height and constructed at a gradient no steeper than 2:1.

As part of the Project's grading operation, blasting would be required in several areas of the Project site consisting of shallow blasting (<30 feet below existing grade) and moderate depth blasting (30–40 feet below existing grade). The exact locations for blasting are not known at this time although reasonable forecasts and assumptions have been made for analytical purposes in this EIR. Blasting locations would be determined following geotechnical investigations regarding rock locations prior to the issuance of grading permits.

Prior to blasting, small holes would be drilled into the rock in a pattern that allows each hole to remove a small amount of rock. In order to comply with the County Fire Code, the blasting contractor would calculate and use only the amount of explosive in each of the small holes necessary to break the rock around each hole while crushing the rock for removal. The explosive would be detonated at each hole

in a sequence with at least 8 milliseconds delay between charges. For blasting, it is estimated that drilling would occur in grids of 4 feet by 4 feet to 6 feet by 6 feet. The drill holes would be extended to a depth of approximately 18 to 24 inches below the proposed subgrade. Additionally, a five-foot-thick blanket of soil would be applied before drilling to reduce noise. Assuming the use of a single drill rig, it is estimated that the drilling, blasting, and excavation would be coordinated such that the duration of drilling and blasting combined would require approximately two weeks to complete, followed by an additional up to two weeks to excavate and stockpile the fractured rock for use as part of the overall Project's grading operation. (Urban Crossroads, 2021, p. 45)

Water, Sewer, and Dry Utilities Service

Sewer Service

Sanitary sewer service to the Project would be provided by the Vallecitos Water District. The Project would be required to be annexed into the Vallecitos Water District through a future annexation process that would be reviewed and approved by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The Project's sewer collection system would consist of 8-inch gravity sewer lines that would connect to an existing sewer main within San Elijo Drive, as depicted on Figure 1-7, *Sewer Plan*. Gravity sewer mains are proposed on-site within the right of ways of proposed Street "B" and a portion of Street "C". Sewer flows would be conveyed off-site to a Vallecitos Water District sewer pump station.

Water Service

Water service to the Project would be provided by the Olivenhain Municipal Water District (OMWD). The Project's proposed water service system would consist of 8-inch water lines that would be looped to connect to an existing 10-inch water main installed within Street E and a 18-inch water main 300 feet west of the Street B connection to San Elijo Road and maintained by OMWD. As depicted on Figure 1-8, *Water Plan*, 8-inch water mains would be installed within proposed Streets "A", "B", and "C". All proposed water facilities are required to be designed in accordance with the OMWD Standards and would require review and approval by OMWD prior to implementation.

Dry Utility Services

Dry utility connections (i.e., telephone, cable) would be provided from existing facilities within San Elijo Road. As with water and sewer improvements, all dry utility improvements would occur within the rights-of-way of planned on-site roadways.

Long-Term Operational Characteristics

Upon the completion of construction, the Project would operate as a single-family residential community. Using an average population factor of 2.8 persons per home, the Project's proposed 76 homes would house approximately 213 persons. Operational characteristics would include those typical of a residential community, including residents and visitors using vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle forms of travel to traverse internally and to and from the site via roadway connections with San Elijo Road. A 10-space parking lot located near the terminus of Street "E" would provide public

parking for access to a trail segment that would connect to the Copper Creek Trail off-site. Activities in the parking lot are expected to be limited to parking and walking to and from the trailhead.

The Project would be constructed to meet 2022 Title 24 Part 6 energy efficiency standards and Part 11, CALGreen standards (or subsequent standards in effect at the time construction plans are submitted for future development). Specifically, as construction of the Project would commence on or after January 1, 2026, the Project would be subject to the 2025 Title 24 energy efficiency standards. The 2025 Title 24 Part 6 energy efficiency standards would be presumably more efficient than the 2022 Title 24 Part 6 energy efficiency standards analyzed herein. CALGreen includes a requirement for on-site photovoltaic (PV; solar) energy generation for new residential buildings three or fewer stories high and cool/green roofs. Therefore, operation of the residential homes is assured to be energy efficient. Additionally, the Project is designed to include all electric appliances and end uses. Installing PV energy systems and using electric instead of natural gas-powered appliances and end uses assures the reduction of long-term fossil fuel use and the use of electricity from the grid that is increasingly transitioning to renewable sources.

A HOA would be formed and be responsible for oversight of the community, maintenance of common areas, and needed homeowner education. Among other responsibilities, the HOA would be responsible for providing residents a copy of the Project's Conceptual Wildfire Evacuation Plan (CWEP), contained as *Appendix M2* to this EIR, and providing ongoing education about responsible wildfire suppression and evacuation practices. The HOA also would be responsible for assuring adherence to FMZ requirements some of which would be imposed on homeowners through the HOA's CC&Rs.

1.2.3 Environmental Characteristics

Resource Protection Ordinance

The County's Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) (as most recently amended on October 25, 2012) protects prehistoric and historic sites and sensitive natural resources including wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and biological habitats. A focused biological survey of the Project site determined that the Project site contains RPO resources. Although there are no RPO jurisdictional wetlands on the site, the property contains sensitive habitat communities that are regulated by the RPO. Please refer to EIR Section 2.1, *Biological Resources*, and Section 2.2, *Cultural Resources*, for an analysis of the Project's consistency with the RPO, as well as a discussion of potential impacts to biological and cultural resources and mitigation measures to reduce impacts to below a level of significance.

Biological Mitigation Ordinance

The County's Biological Mitigation Ordinance (BMO) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on October 22, 1997, and was most recently amended on March 24, 2004. The BMO is the mechanism used by the County to implement the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) at the project level to attain the goals set forth in the County's MSCP Subarea Plan. The BMO contains design criteria and mitigation standards which are applied to discretionary projects to ensure that a project does not preclude the viability of the MSCP Preserve System. As documented in a Project-specific biological technical report (attached as *Appendix B* to this EIR), implementation of the Project would

directly impact sensitive biological habitat and sensitive plant and animal species that are regulated by the BMO. Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Project to lessen impacts to sensitive biological resources consistent with the applicable policies of the BMO. The Project is located outside of an adopted MSCP subarea; however, the Project lies within the boundaries of the Draft NCMSCP. The currently adopted BMO applies to the adopted South County MSCP Subarea Plan area and a revised BMO to cover the Draft NCMSCP Subarea Plan area has not been adopted at this time. The Habitat Loss Permit (HLP) Ordinance was adopted in March 1994 and, pursuant to the Special 4(d) Rule under the Federal ESA, the County is authorized to issue “take permits” (in the form of HLPs) in lieu of Section 7 or 10(a) permits typically required from the USFWS. Although issued by the County, the USFWS and CDFW must concur with the issuance of an HLP for it to become valid as take authorization under the Federal ESA. An HLP application must be filed with the County if the draft NCMSCP has not been adopted at the time of its environmental review. At the time this EIR was circulated for public review (June 2024), the NCMSCP was not adopted; thus the HLP application is required for the Project. No aspect of the Project was designed to avoid impacts to areas regulated by the BMO, as it was determined in coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFW) that on-site preservation of such resources is not necessary to achieve the goals of the Draft NCMSCP. By contrast, it was determined that off-site mitigation for Project-related impacts would result in a contiguous assemblage of habitat that would promote the long-term survival of the species covered by the MSCP and/or regulated by the BMO. Please refer to EIR Section 2.1, *Biological Resources*, for a more detailed discussion of the Project’s consistency with the BMO and the HLP requirement, including analysis of potential impacts and presentation of mitigation measures to reduce impacts to below a level of significance.

Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management and Discharge Control Ordinance

The County’s Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management and Discharge Control Ordinance (WPO) contains discharge prohibitions and other requirements that vary depending on type of land use activity and location in the County to protect water resources and to improve water quality. Appendix A of the WPO contains the Stormwater Standards Manual (SSM) that sets out in detail, by project category, what dischargers must do to comply with the WPO and to receive permits for projects and activities that are subject to the WPO. Best management practices (BMPs) are incorporated into the Project to address runoff associated with near-term construction, while runoff from long-term operation of the proposed Project would be addressed with the incorporation of extended/dry detention basins with grass/vegetated lining, vegetated swales, and hydrodynamic separator systems (cyclone separators). Refer to EIR Section 3.7, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, for a more detailed discussion of the Project’s compliance with the WPO.

1.3 Project Location

The Project site is located in the western portion of unincorporated San Diego County within the San Dieguito Community Plan Area. From a regional perspective, the Project site is located immediately south and west of the City of San Marcos and east of the City of Carlsbad. Interstate 5 (I-5) is located approximately 5.3 miles west of the Project site. Specifically, the Project site is located south of San Elijo Road and east of Denning Drive. Figure 1-9, *Regional Map*, depicts the boundaries of the Project

site in a regional context and Figure 1-10, *Aerial Map*, provides an aerial view of the Project site and surrounding area.

1.4 Environmental Setting

1.4.1 Existing Physical Site Conditions

The Project site is undeveloped and includes several unimproved dirt roads and trails. The northern portion of the site was subject to prior disturbance and was used as a laydown yard for construction equipment associated with a former recycling facilities use on an adjacent property. Additionally, a portion of the western area of the site was formerly used for agricultural uses.

The topography of the Project site ranges from gently to steeply sloping. The site is characterized by a topographic saddle in the northerly/northeasterly portion of the property with relatively broad, low-relief drainages flowing to the northwest and southeast. A gently to moderately sloping hillside flanks the saddle to the south and north. Elevations within the Project site range from a low elevation of 490 above mean sea level (amsl) in the southeastern portion of the site where there is a drainage to a high of 930 amsl near the southwestern property boundary. Natural slopes on the Project site range from a 9% to 23% grade. The existing topography of the Project site is depicted on Figure 1-11, *Topographic Map*.

Based on the results of a geotechnical investigation appended to this EIR as *Appendix F1*, the Project site is underlain by metamorphic Santiago Peak Volcanics and a sedimentary unit likely associated with the Santiago Formation. These units are mantled by relatively thin veneers of surficial soils including undocumented artificial fill, colluvium and residual soil. Refer to EIR Section 3.5, *Geology and Soils*, for a detailed description of each of the geologic units and soils that underlie the surface of the Project site. There is a low potential for discovery of paleontological resources (fossils) in the sedimentary unit and no potential for discovery in the volcanic rock. No significant historic, archaeological, or tribal cultural resources are known to occur on the site, but there is a potential for unknown significant archaeological and tribal cultural resources to be located subsurface.

Based on local topography and typical groundwater flows in this area of San Diego County it is believed that the regional groundwater gradient is southwesterly toward the Tijuana River and ultimately to the Pacific Ocean. No groundwater extraction wells are known to exist on-site or within the Project site's immediate vicinity. Groundwater was not encountered on-site during geotechnical investigations. The ~~former~~ closed San Marcos Landfill is located off-site to the east and is subject to groundwater monitoring as part of its post closure requirements. Two of the groundwater monitoring wells associated with the ~~former~~ closed landfill are located on the Project site. The wells are identified as SMGW-36 and SMGW-40.

Regarding biological resources, the Project site is predominately composed of non-native grassland (20.9 acres), Mafic southern mixed chaparral (25.7 acres), and Diegan coastal sage scrub (9.8 acres). The Project site also contains Diegan coastal sage scrub-disturbed, scrub oak chapparal, mafic chamise chaparral, eucalyptus woodland, disturbed habitat, and developed/ornamental vegetation communities. Of these, the sensitive vegetation communities/habitat types on the Project site include Diegan coastal

sage scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub-disturbed, scrub oak chaparral, mafic chamise chaparral, mafic southern mixed chaparral, and non-native grassland. Four sensitive plant species were identified on the Project site, including: Orcutt's brodiaea, southwestern spiny rush, Nuttall's scrub oak, and ashy spike-moss. Four special-status animal species were observed on the Project site including: western spadefoot toad, Cooper's hawk, southern California rufous-crowed sparrow, and coastal California gnatcatcher. Refer to EIR Section 2.1, *Biological Resources*, for a more detailed description of biological conditions on the site.

The Project lies within an area designated a State Responsibility Area (SRA) "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). Additionally, the Project site is located within a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), as mapped by CALFIRE.

1.4.2 Surrounding Land Use and Development

The Project site is located within unincorporated San Diego County, while the properties to the north, east and west generally are located in the City of San Marcos. The Project site is within the City of San Marcos Sphere of Influence. The undeveloped parcel located adjacent to the northwest of the Project site is also within the unincorporated county.

The Project site is designated by the County of San Diego General Plan for Semi-Rural land uses (SR-1 and SR-10). Additionally, a small portion of the site has a "No Jurisdiction" land use designation. The "No Jurisdiction" designation is the result of a mapping error and would be resolved with implementation of the Project. The Project site is zoned Rural Residential (RR) and Open Space (S80).

To the west of the Project site is open space associated with the Rancho La Costa Habitat Conservation Area, beyond which is residential development. North of the Project site is land designated for open space, beyond which are residential uses. East of the Project site is a former recycling facility that is currently used as an indoor sports complex, Loma San Marcos. Also to the east is the former location of the San Marcos Landfill and the San Elijo Hills residential development in the City of San Marcos. To the south of the Project site is open space associated with the Rancho La Costa Habitat Conservation Area. The Copper Creek Trail system also traverses through this area.

All off-site noise sensitive land uses (NSLUs) assessed herein consist of residential uses located within the City of San Marcos. In addition to the NSLUs, there is a non-residential sports facility, adjacent to and east of the Project site. (Urban Crossroads, 2021, p. 6)

The San Diego County General Plan designates lands to the south and a majority of the west of the Project site for "Open Space - Conservation" land uses, which includes part of the Rancho La Costa Reserve. A portion of the land to the west is designated for "Rural Lands (RL-40)". Lands to the north and east of the Project site are located within the City of San Marcos.

1.4.3 Access and Circulation

Regional access to the Project site is provided by State Route 78 (SR-78), located approximately 3.5 miles north of the Project site. North/south access is provided by Interstate 15 (I-15) located

approximately 6.1 miles east of the Project site. Additionally, north/south access is provided by Interstate 5 (I-5) located approximately 5.3 miles west of the Project site.

Local access to the Project site is provided by San Elijo Road, located immediately north of the Project site. San Elijo Road is not designated as a County Mobility Element roadway.

1.5 Intended Uses of the EIR

This EIR is an informational document that will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of significant environmental effects of the Project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the Project, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15121(a).

This document was prepared pursuant to the guidelines for the preparation of EIRs issued by the County of San Diego and in compliance with all criteria, standards, and procedures of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 as amended (PRC 21000 et seq). Per §21067 of CEQA and §15367 and §15050 through §15053 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the County of San Diego PDS is the Lead Agency under whose authority this document has been prepared.

1.5.1 EIR Scope

The County filed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) with the State Clearinghouse of the California Office of Planning and Research. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the Lead Agency must send a copy of a NOP to the SCH and State Responsible and Trustee agencies; the SCH has responsibility for ensuring that the State Responsible and Trustee agencies reply to the Lead Agency within the required time. The NOP was filed with the SCH and distributed to potential Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and other interested parties on September 1, 2022, for a 30-day public review period. The NOP was distributed for public review to solicit responses that would help the County identify the full scope and range of potential environmental concerns associated with the Project so that these issues could be fully examined in this EIR.

In addition, a publicly noticed EIR Scoping Meeting was held on virtually on September 20, 2022. The EIR Scoping Meeting provided public agencies, interested parties, and members of the general public an additional opportunity to learn about the Project, the CEQA review process, and how to submit comments on the scope and range of potential environmental concerns be addressed in this SEIR.

The NOP and written comments received by the County during the NOP public review period are provided in *Appendix A* to this EIR. A summary of environmental issues raised in response to the NOP are summarized the Summary Section of this EIR and in the introductory paragraph in the subsections in EIR Chapters 2.0 and 3.0. Regardless of whether or not an environmental or CEQA-related comment is listed in EIR Chapters 2.0 and 3.0, all relevant comments received in response to the NOP are addressed in this EIR.

EIR Chapters 2.0 and 3.0, provide an analysis of the Project’s potential to cause adverse effects under the following topic areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

1.5.2 EIR Format and Content

This EIR contains the information required to be included in an EIR as specified CEQA (California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et. seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 5). CEQA requires that an EIR contain, at a minimum, certain specified content. Table 1-2, *Location of CEQA Required Topics*, provides a quick reference guide for locating the CEQA-required sections within this document.

In summary, the content and format of this EIR are as follows:

- **Summary** provides an overview of the EIR and CEQA process and provides a brief Project Description, the location and regional setting of the Project site, and potential alternatives to the Project as required by CEQA. The Summary also provides a summary of the Project’s significant impacts, mitigation measures, and conclusions, in a table that forms the basis of the Project’s MMRP.
- **Chapter 1.0, Project Description, Location, and Environmental Setting**, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, includes a detailed Project Description that identifies the precise location and boundaries of the Project, a map showing the Project’s location in a regional perspective, a statement of the Project’s objectives, a general description of the Project’s technical, economic, and environmental characteristics, and a statement describing the intended uses of the EIR, including a list of agencies expected to use the EIR, and a list of approvals for which the EIR will be used. The purpose of the detailed Project Description is to identify the Project’s main features and other information needed for an assessment of the Project’s environmental impacts. Additionally, this section describes the environmental setting, including descriptions of the Project site’s physical conditions and surrounding context used as the baseline for analysis in the EIR and provides introductory information about the CEQA process and the responsibilities of the County in its role as Lead Agency, the type and purpose of the EIR, information regarding the scope of the EIR, and an overview of the EIR’s format.

- **Chapter 2.0, Environmental Effects Found to be Significant and Chapter 3.0, Environmental Effects Found Not to be Significant** includes an analysis of potential impacts that may occur with implementation of the Project. A determination concerning the significance of each impact is addressed and mitigation measures are presented when warranted. The environmental changes identified in Chapter 2.0 and Chapter 3.0 and throughout this EIR are referred to as “effects” or “impacts” interchangeably. CEQA Guidelines Section 15358 describe the terms “effects” and “impacts” as being synonymous.

In each subsection of Chapter 2.0 and Chapter 3.0, the existing conditions pertaining to the subject area being analyzed are discussed accompanied by a specific analysis of physical impacts that may be caused by implementing the Project. Impacts are evaluated on a direct, indirect, and cumulative basis. Direct impacts are those that would occur directly as a result of the Project. Indirect impacts represent secondary effects that would result from Project implementation. Cumulative effects are defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 as “...two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.”

The analyses in Chapter 2.0 and Chapter 3.0 are based in part upon technical reports that are included in this EIR. Information also is drawn from other sources of analytical materials that directly or indirectly relate to the Project and are cited in the references section of each subsection in Chapter 2.0 and Chapter 3.0.

Where the analysis identifies a potentially significant environmental effect feasible mitigation measures are recommended. Pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must propose and describe mitigation measures to minimize the significant environmental effects identified in the EIR. The identified mitigation measures are analyzed to determine whether they would effectively reduce or avoid any significant environmental effects. In most cases, implementation of the mitigation measures would reduce an identified significant environmental effect to below a level of significance. If mitigation measures are not available or feasible to reduce an identified impact to below a level of significance, the environmental effect is identified as a significant and unavoidable adverse impact, for which a Statement of Overriding Considerations would need to be adopted by the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15093.

- **Chapter 4.0, Other CEQA Considerations** includes specific topics that are required by CEQA. These include a summary of the Project’s significant and unavoidable environmental effects, a discussion of the significant and irreversible environmental changes that would occur should the Project be implemented, as well as potential growth-inducing impacts of the Project. Chapter 4.0 also includes a discussion of the potential environmental effects that were found not to be significant during preparation of this EIR.
- **Chapter 5.0, Alternatives** describes and evaluates alternatives to the Project that could reduce or avoid the Project’s adverse environmental effects. CEQA does not require an EIR to consider every conceivable alternative to the Project but rather to consider a reasonable range of alternatives, including a “No Project” alternative, that will foster informed decision making and public participation.

- **Chapter 6.0, List of EIR Preparers** lists the persons who authored or participated in preparing this EIR.
- **Chapter 7.0, List of Mitigation Measures** lists the Project's mitigation measures.

1.5.3 Matrix of Project Approvals and Permits

Proposed discretionary actions that are analyzed by this EIR are addressed below in Table 1-3, *Matrix of Project Approvals*. This EIR covers federal, State, and local government and quasi-governmental approvals which may be needed to construct and implement the Project, whether or not they are explicitly listed in Table 1-3 (CEQA Guidelines § 15124(d)).

1.5.4 Related Environmental Review and Consultation Requirements

State law requires that all EIRs be reviewed by trustee and responsible agencies. A Trustee Agency is defined in §15386 of the State CEQA Guidelines as “a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project which are held in trust for the people of the State of California.” Per §15381 of the State CEQA Guidelines, “the term ‘Responsible Agency’ includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency which have discretionary approval power over the project.”

For the proposed Project, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) are Trustee Agencies.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is identified as a Trustee Agency that is responsible for the protection of fish and wildlife resources, and has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. The CDFW would be responsible for issuing a Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) pursuant to Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code.

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) is identified as a Trustee Agency that is responsible for the protection of California's water resources and water quality. The San Diego RWQCB is responsible for issuance of a Construction Activity General Construction Permit and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit to ensure that on-site water flows do not result in siltation, other erosional effects, or degradation of surface or subsurface water quality. The San Diego RWQCB also would be responsible for issuing a Waste Discharge Permit for Project impacts to RWQCB jurisdictional areas pursuant to the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act.

Responsible agencies may include but are not limited to SDG&E, OMWD, and the Vallecitos Water District pertaining to approvals and permits for utility infrastructure installation and connections.

Subsequent discretionary actions associated with Project implementation include but are not limited to issuance of Grading Permits by the County of San Diego, to permit implementation of the Project's proposed subdivision map, TM 5643.

1.6 Project Inconsistencies with Applicable Regional and General Plans

State CEQA Guidelines §15125(d) requires that several types of regional plans be assessed for potential Project inconsistency. Pursuant to the *Environmental Impact Report Format and General Content Requirements* (County of San Diego, 2006), this subchapter should focus on:

“...the project’s inconsistencies with regional and/or general plans. The inclusion of a discussion on the project’s consistency with regional and general plans is not necessary. If no inconsistencies are found, the plans that were reviewed must simply be listed accompanied by a statement that no inconsistencies were found.”

In EIR Section 2.4, *Land Use and Planning*, Table 3.8-1, *Consistency with Applicable Regional and General Plans*, lists the regional plans that were reviewed, provides summary findings and, where necessary due to inconsistencies or public controversy, references the EIR Section in which a comprehensive discussion occurs. See Section 2.4 for more information regarding Project consistency with applicable plans, policies, and regulations that apply to the Project site.

1.7 List of Past, Present, and Reasonably Anticipated Future Projects in the Project Area

The State CEQA Guidelines define cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15335). The guidelines further state that the individual effects may be the various changes resulting from a single project or the changes resulting from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Cumulative impacts may result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that the EIR include either (a) a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; or (b) a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area-wide conditions contributing to a cumulative impact.

For purposes of this EIR, the geographic scope of the cumulative analysis for each environmental topic in Chapters 2.0 and 3.0 includes a combination of growth projections and a project list. Population and employment data used for this analysis was developed for the San Diego County region by SANDAG for year 2050 (SANDAG 2021). As stated in Section 2.6.4 of this EIR, the traffic impact analysis used the SANDAG Series 13 Year 2035 Transportation Model for analysis of near-term impacts. The cumulative impact analysis for other environmental issues used the SANDAG 2050 Regional Growth Projections because it describes the impacts of growth from a long-term perspective based on adopted land use plans and is less subject to short-term fluctuations in economic conditions and land development cycles (SANDAG 2021). For long-term traffic impacts, the SANDAG Year 2035 Transportation Model was used. In addition to being used for assessing traffic impacts, the SANDAG model incorporates other projects including growth projections that are analyzed as part of EIR Section 2.4, *Land Use and Planning*, and Section 3.9, *Population and Housing*. Table 1-4, *Cumulative*

Developments, identifies the list of approved/pending projects that were used for the near-term cumulative traffic impact analysis.

A detailed discussion of potential cumulative impacts also is included for each environmental issue in Chapters 2.0 and 3.0 of this EIR.

1.8 Growth Inducing Impacts

CEQA requires that a discussion be prepared in environmental documents regarding the ways in which a Project could be growth inducing. The State CEQA Guidelines identify a project as growth-inducing if it would foster economic growth or population growth, or results in the construction of new housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2(d)). New employees from commercial or industrial development, schools, golf courses, and new population from residential development represent direct forms of growth. Indirect forms of growth include the demand for additional goods and services associated with the increase in project population that would reduce or remove barriers to growth in other nearby locations.

Under CEQA, growth inducement is not necessarily considered detrimental, beneficial, or of little significance to the environment. The growth inducing potential of a project could be considered significant if it fosters growth or results in a concentration of population in excess of what is assumed in adopted master plans, land use plans, or projections made by regional planning agencies, such as the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). Additionally, a project could be considered growth inducing if a project provides infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth beyond the levels currently permitted by local or regional plans or policies.

The Project is located within the San Dieguito Community Plan area. The Project site has a Semi-Rural General Plan Regional category and is designated for Semi-Rural (SR-1 and SR-10) land uses. The Semi-Rural land use designation allows for development of residential uses, limited by the slopes located on-site. The Project site is allowed a maximum of 64 dwelling units. Pursuant to State law, the Project includes a Density Bonus Permit to allow for a 20% increase in the maximum allowable number of residential dwelling units in exchange for reserving 5% of the dwelling units on-site for “Low” Income Affordable Housing (defined as 50% to 80% of the Area Median Income [AMI]). Approval of the Density Bonus Permit would allow for an increase in the maximum allowable dwelling units from 64 dwelling units to 76 single-family dwelling units in exchange for reserving seven units restricted for “Low” Income Affordable Housing. Pursuant to California Government Code Sections 65915 through 65918, any increases in density under the State Density Bonus Law are consistent with the General Plan. Thus, although the Project proposes 76 dwelling units, the Project is considered consistent with the land use designations applied to the site by the County of San Diego General Plan.

While the Project would increase the number of residential dwelling units in the County, this change would generally be in response to population growth forecasts and the resulting County-wide demand for housing. For the San Dieguito Community Planning Area, where the Project is located, forecasts by SANDAG show an increase of 1,379 single-family dwelling units from 2020 to 2035 and an additional 504 single-family dwelling units from 2035 to 2050 (SANDAG 2013). The 76 single-family dwelling units proposed by the Project would be consistent with this population forecast. Because the

Project is consistent with the existing land use designation and would not generate population growth beyond the levels assumed for the region, the Project would not conflict with any population projections for the region and would, therefore, also be consistent with the Regional Plan. (Helix, 2023c)

Therefore, because the intensity proposed for the Project would be consistent with the County General Plan, and because the Project would not include infrastructure sized only for this Project and would not provide infrastructure improvements which could lead to growth beyond what is currently allowed for by the existing County General Plan, no significant growth would be induced as a result of the Project. Accordingly, the Project is not considered to be growth inducing pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d).

Table 1-1 Tentative Map No. 5643 Lot Summary

Land Use	Lot Numbers	Acreage
Single Family Residential	1-76	18.27
Park	A	0.31
Open Space	G-H, N-T	63.90
Detention Basins	F, J-L	2.40
Roadways	B-E	4.34
Totals	--	89.23

Table 1-2 Location of CEQA Required Topics

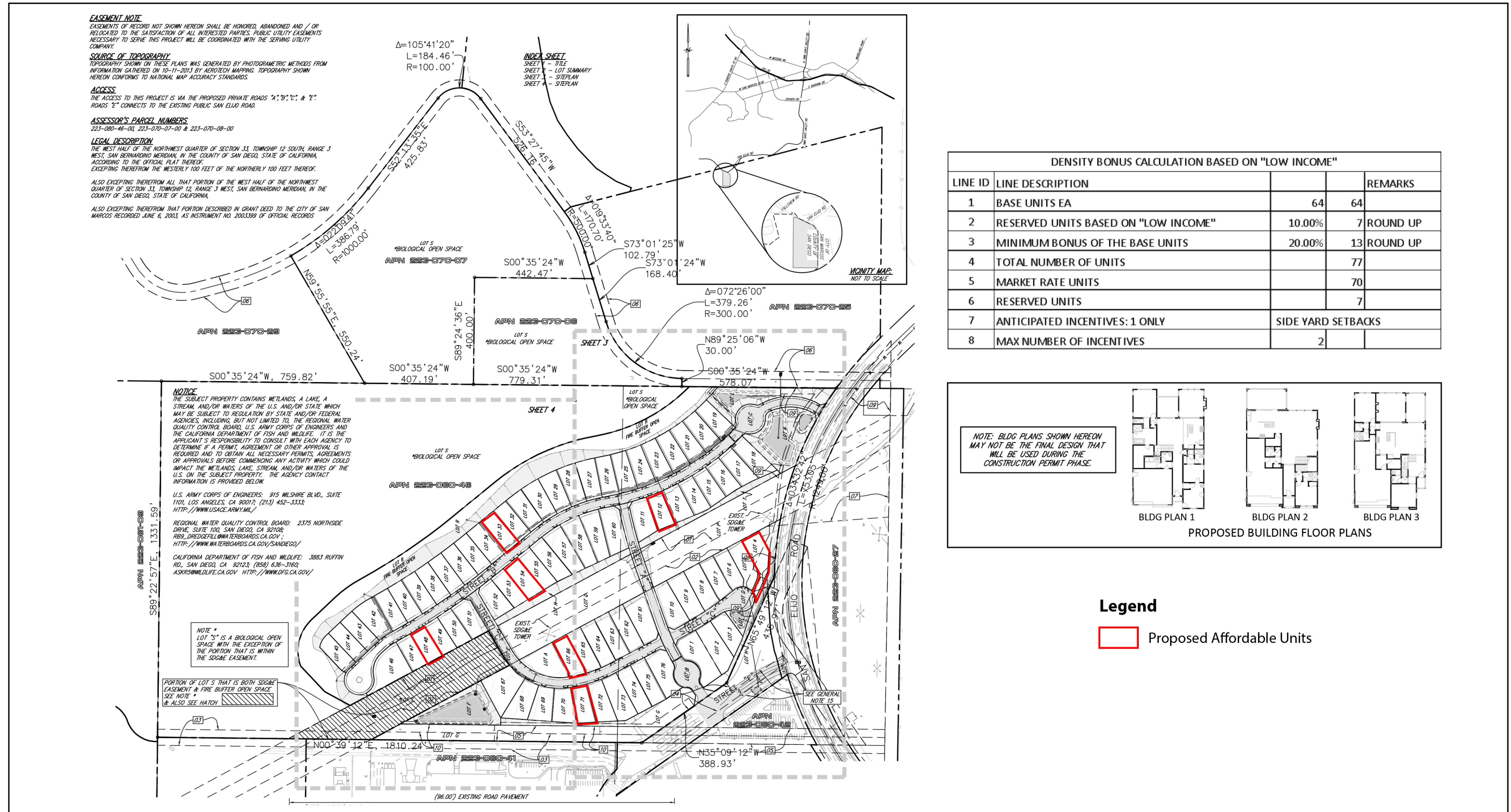
CEQA Required Topic	CEQA Guidelines Section Reference	Location in this SEIR
Table of Contents	15122	Table of Contents
Summary	15123	Section 1.0
Environmental Setting	15125	Section 4.0
Project Description	15124	Section 3.0
Significant Environmental Effects of the Project	15126.2(a)	Section 5.0
Energy Impacts	15126.2(b) & Appendix F	Subsection 5.6
Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot be Avoided if the Project is Implemented	15126.2(c)	Section 5.0 & Section 6.2
Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes Which Would be Caused by the Project Should it be Implemented	15126.2(d)	Section 6.3
Growth-Inducing Impact of the Project	15126.2(e)	Section 6.4
Consideration and Discussion of Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize Significant Effects	15126.4	Section 5.0 & Table 1-1
Consideration and Discussion of Alternatives to the Project	15126.6	Section 7.0
Effects Not Found to be Significant	15128	Section 6.1
Organizations and Persons Consulted	15129	Section 8.0 & Technical Appendices
Discussion of Cumulative Impacts	15130	Section 5.0

Table 1-3 Matrix of Project Approvals

Approvals	Agency/Agencies
Tentative Map No. 5643	County of San Diego
Density Bonus Permit PDS2021-DB-21-001	
Site Plan Review (PDS2022-STP-22-018)	
Administrative Permit (PDS2020-AD-20-011)	
Grading Permit	
Section 1600 – Streambed Alteration Agreement	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Waste Discharge Permit	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

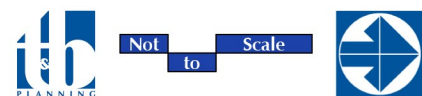
Table 1-4 Cumulative Developments

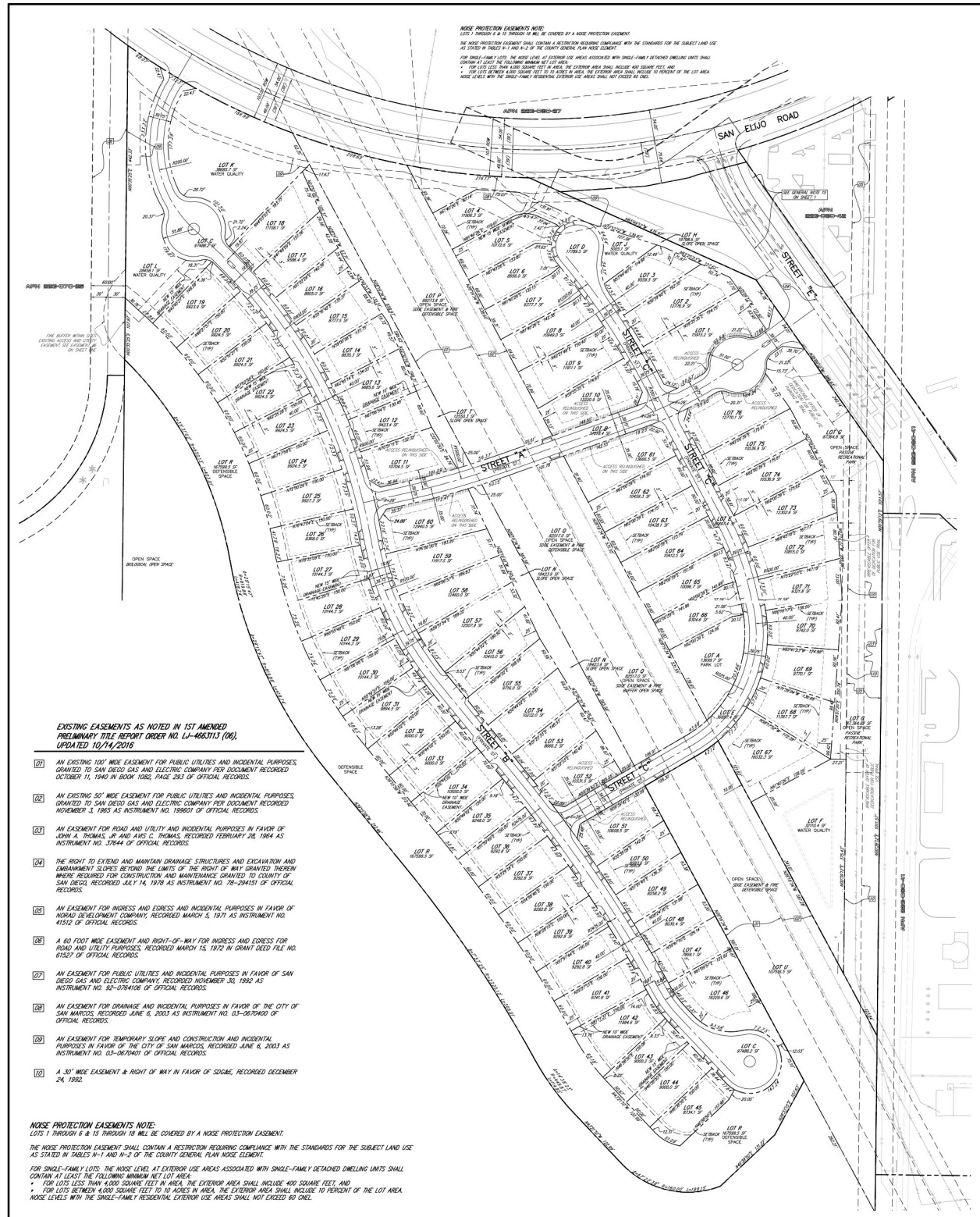
Cumulative Project	Land Use
Corner @ 2 Oaks	This project is located at the southwest corner of Twins Oaks Valley Road and San Marcos Boulevard intersection. This project proposes to construct a 13,499 square foot building for office and commercial use as well as 118 multi-family dwelling units.
Kaiser Permanente	This project is located at 400 Craven Road. This project proposes to construct a 428,500 square foot building for medical office space and accommodate 206 hospital beds. This project would be an extension of the already existing Kaiser Permanente located at same location.
Brookfield Residential (multi-family)	This project is located at the southwest corner of Twin Oaks Valley Road and South Village Drive. This project proposes to develop 220 multi-family dwelling units.
Fenton South (Discovery Village South)	This project is located at future extension of Discovery Street. This project proposes to develop 230 single family dwelling units.
Mesa Rim Climbing Gym	This project is located at 285 Industrial Street. This project proposes to construct 28,000 square foot building for indoor recreation climbing gym
Artis Senior Living	This project is located at the northeast corner of Rancho Santa Fe Road and San Elijo Road intersection. This project proposes to construct a congregate care facility accommodating 64 beds.
Block 3 Housing	This project is located at the northeast corner of June Way and Barham Drive intersection. This project proposes to develop a student housing facility accommodating 342 beds.
Loma San Marcos Specific Plan Phase 2	This project is located on San Elijo Road. This project proposes to construct 213,621 SF of Movie Production space and a 6-story office building measuring 120,000 SF.



Source(s): Excel Engineering (11-06-2024)

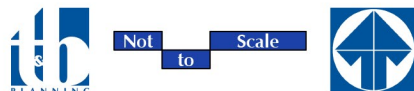
Figure 1-1



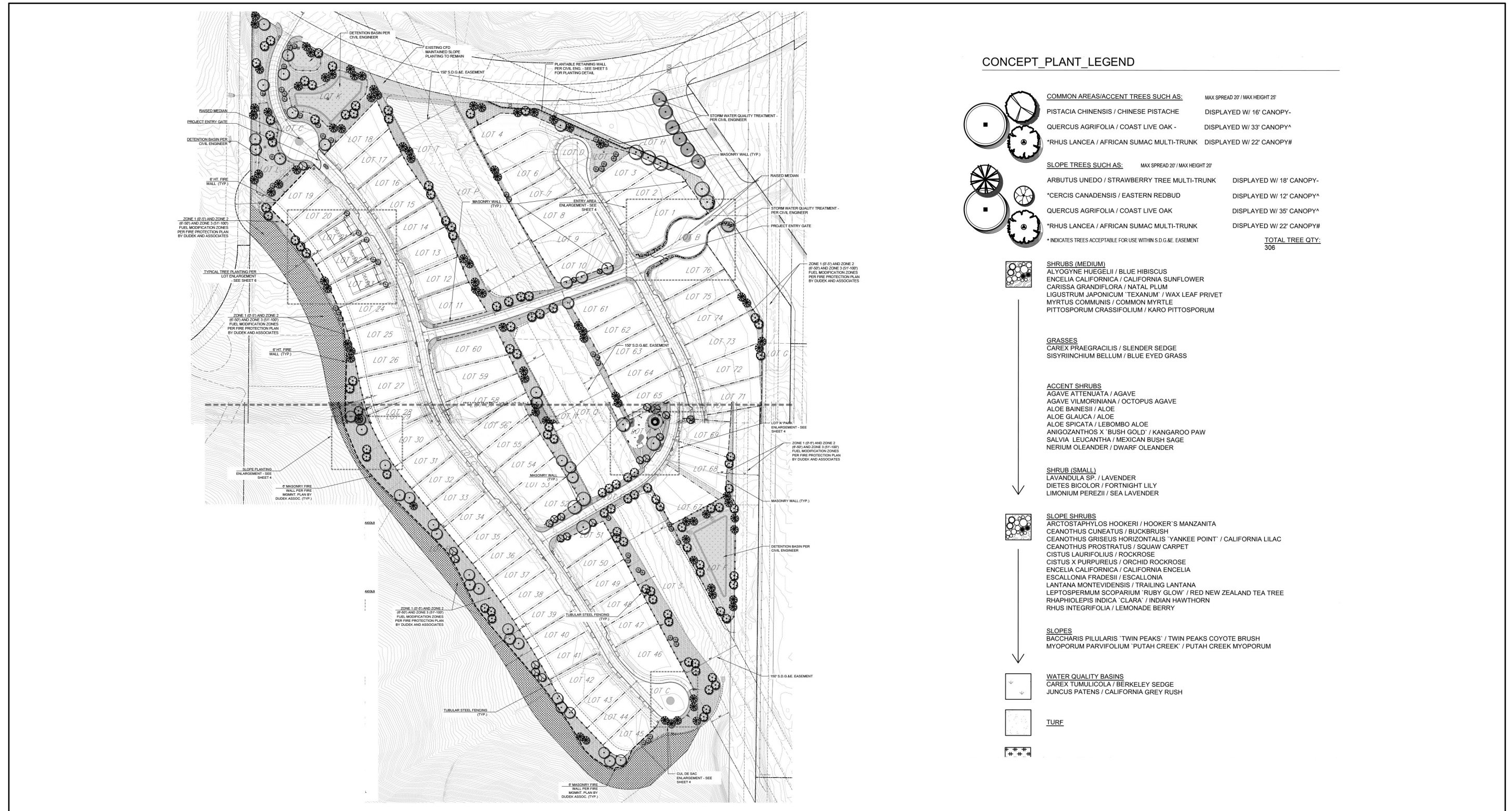


Source(s): Excel Engineering (11-06-2024)

Figure 1-2

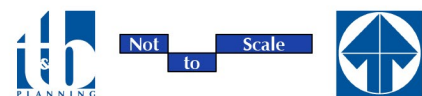


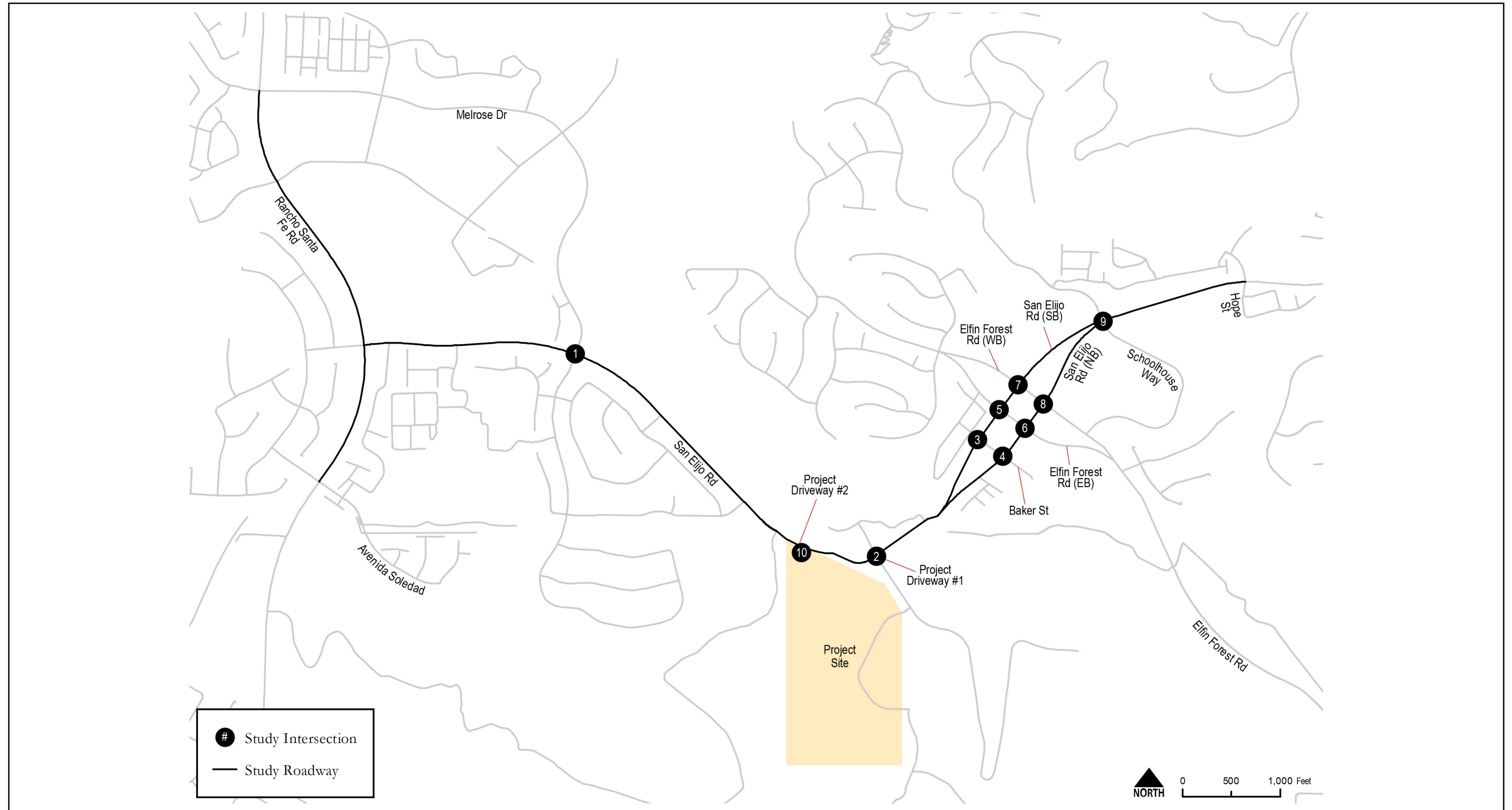
Tentative Map No. 5643



Source(s): Gillespie Moody Patterson, Inc. (08-12-2021)

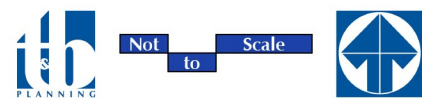
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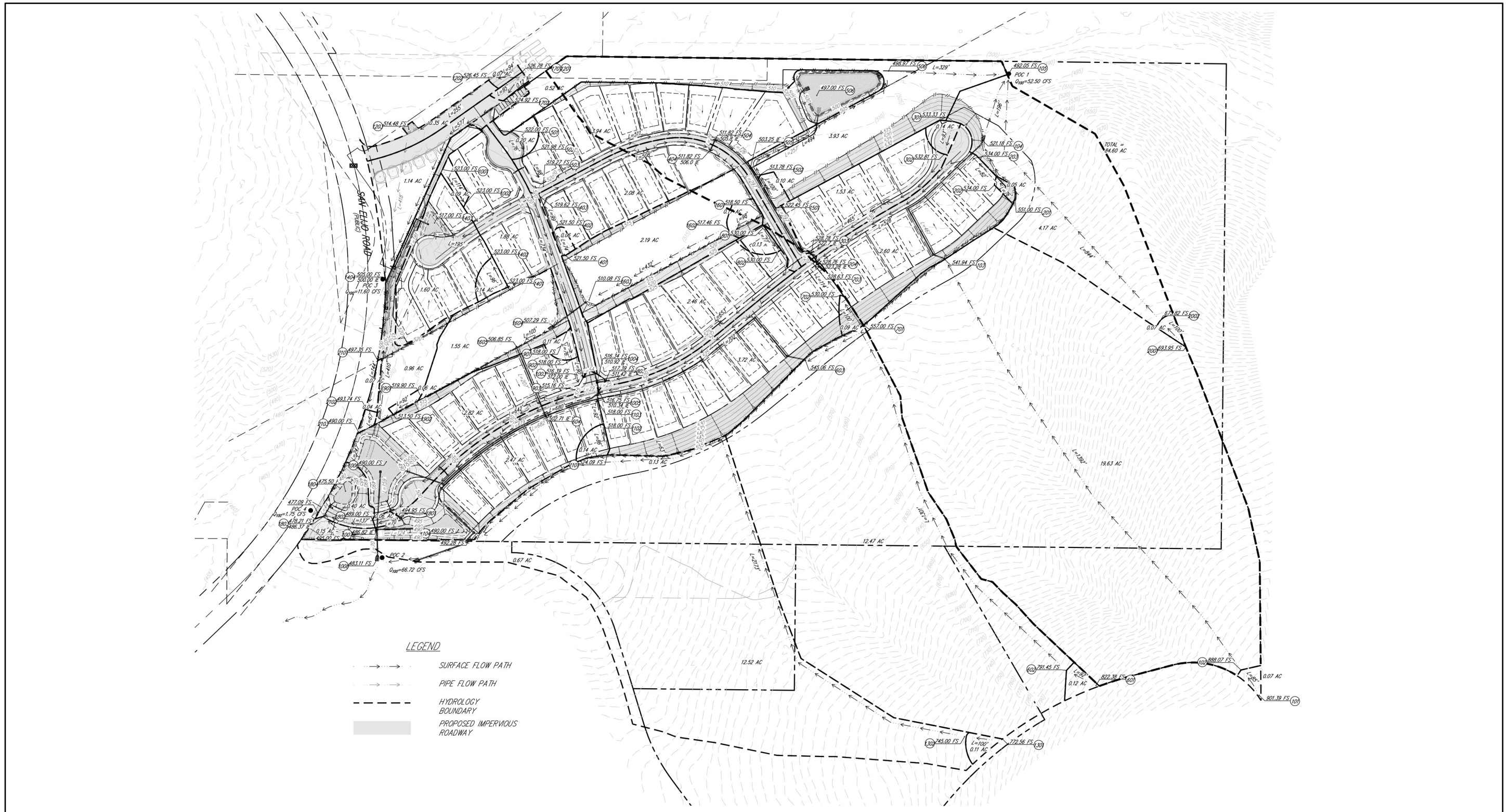




Source(s): Chen Ryan (05-30-2023)

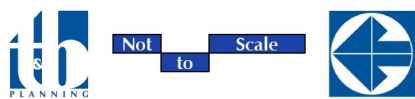
Figure 1-4

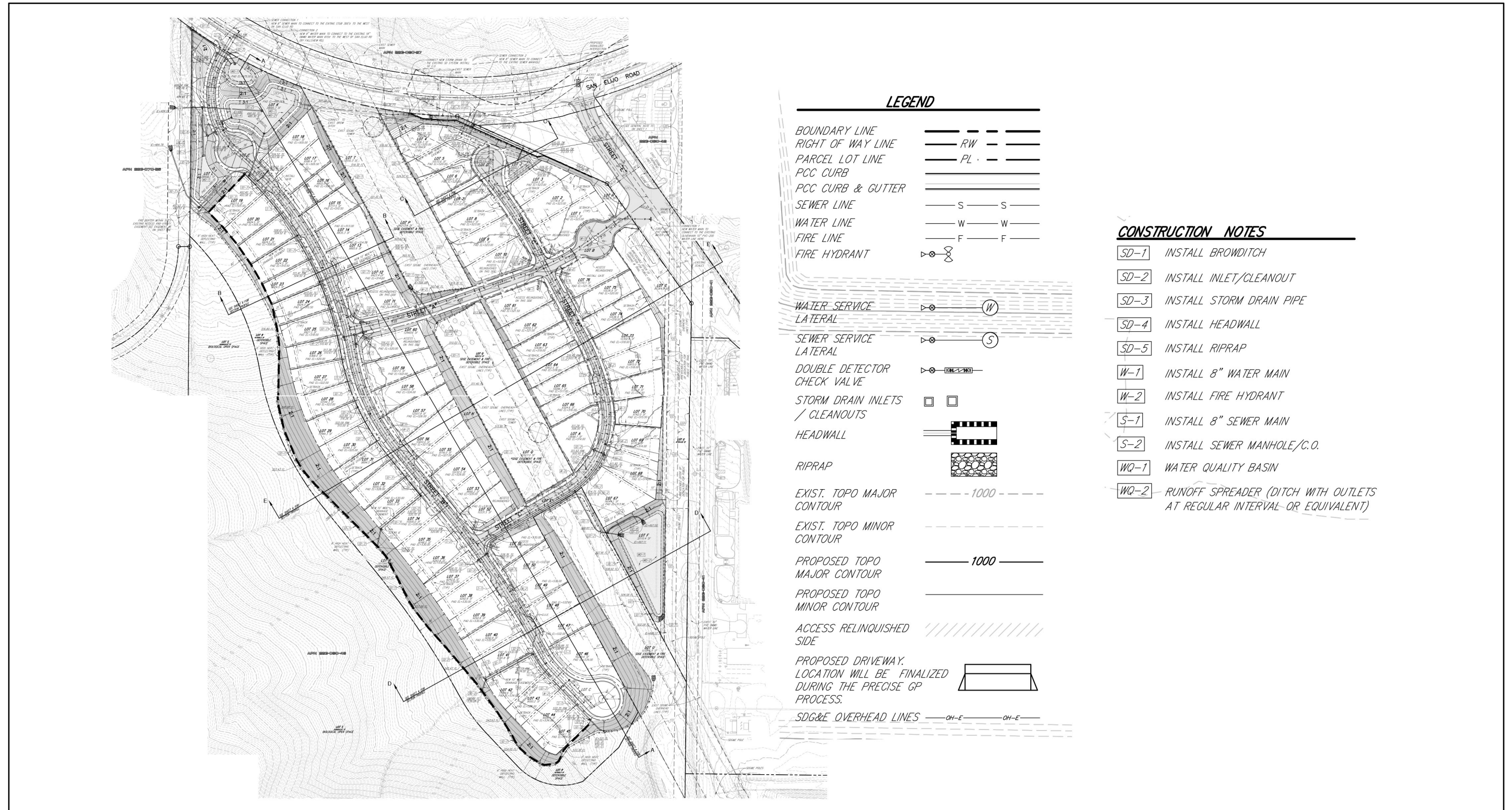




Source(s): Excel Engineering (04-01-2021)

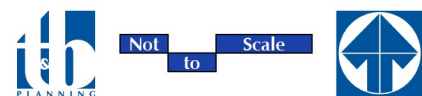
Figure 1-5

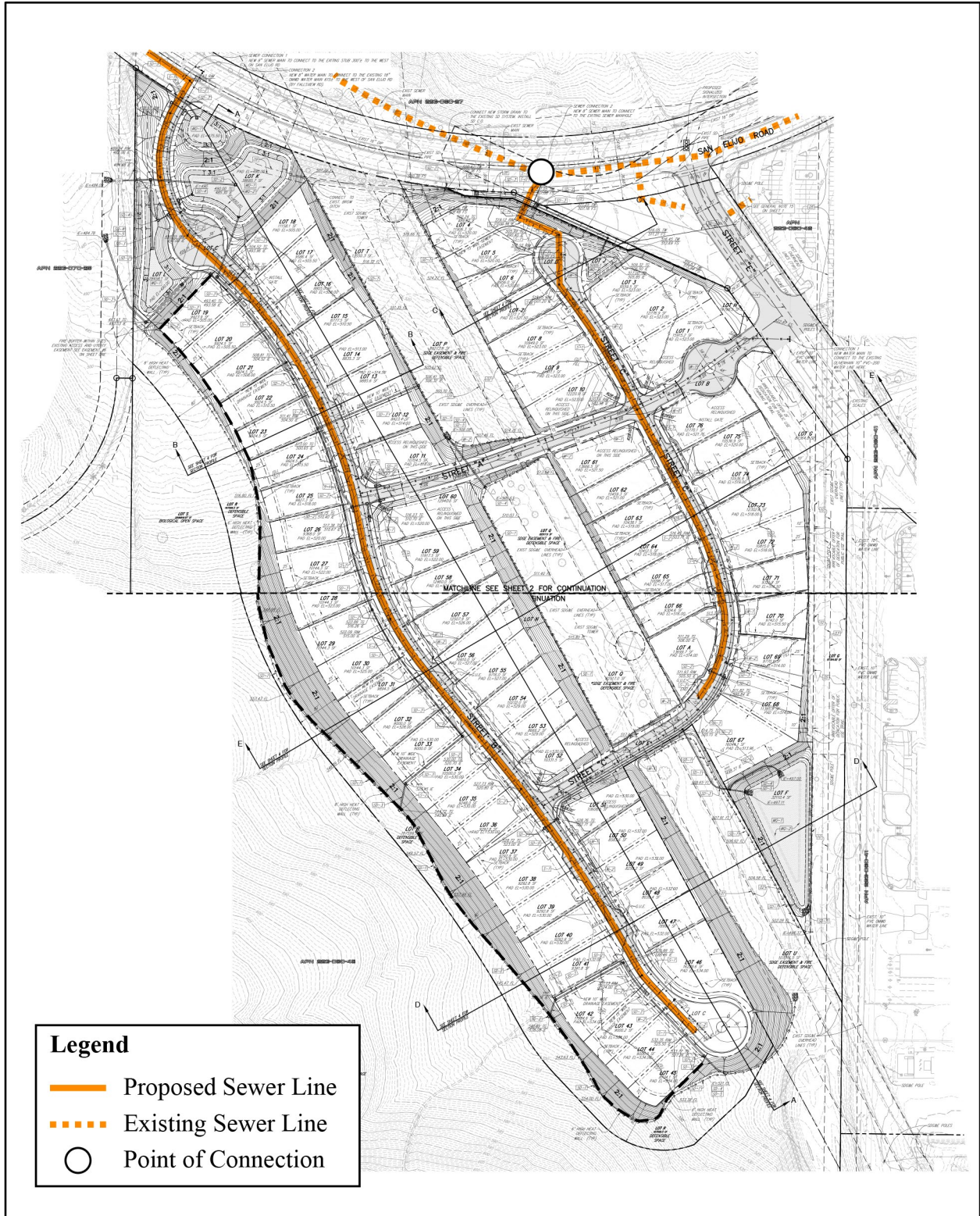




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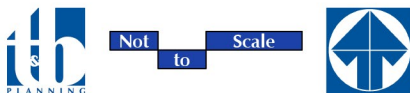
Figure 1-6



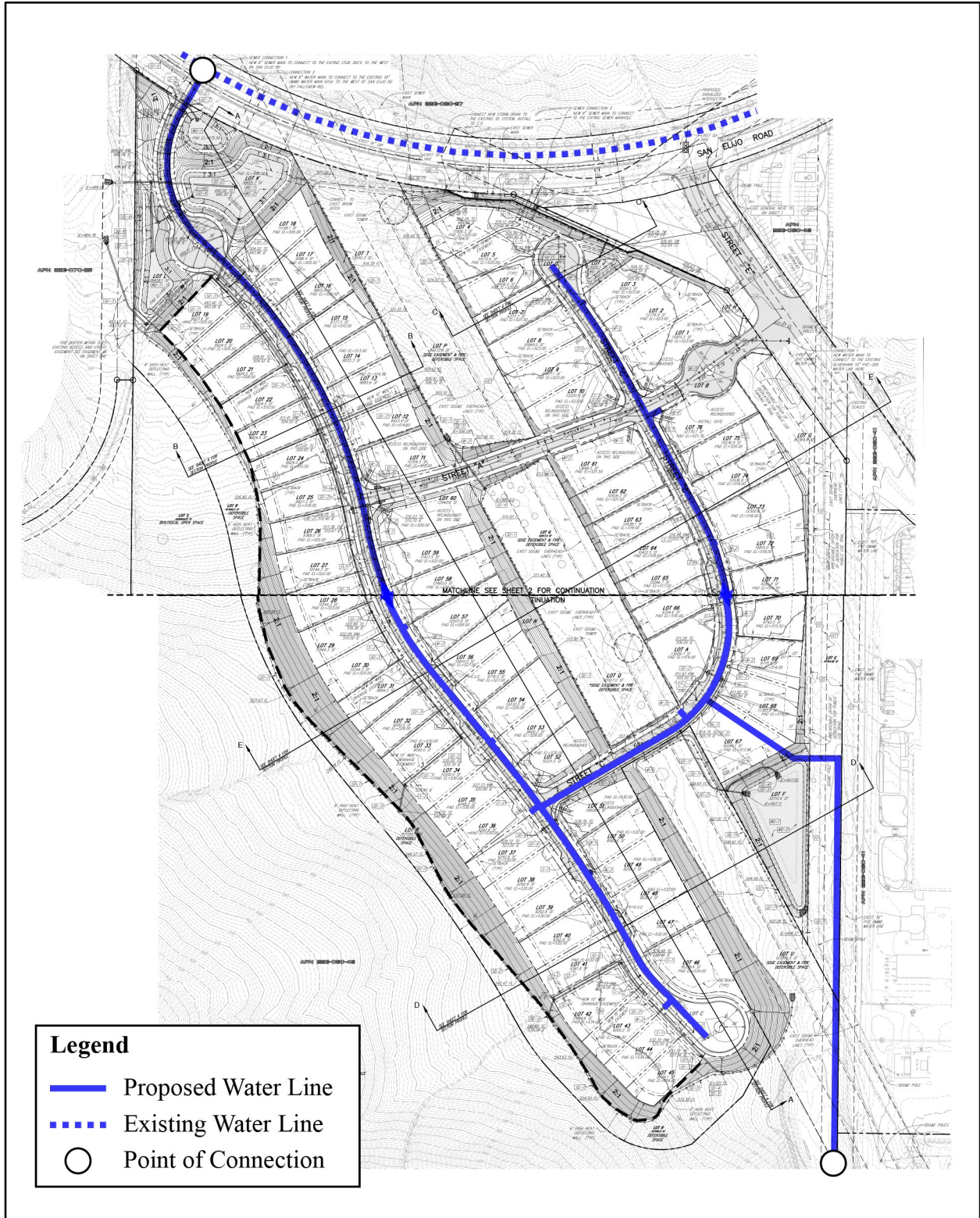


Source(s): San Diego County (March 2023)

Figure 1-7

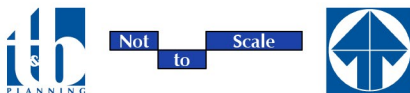


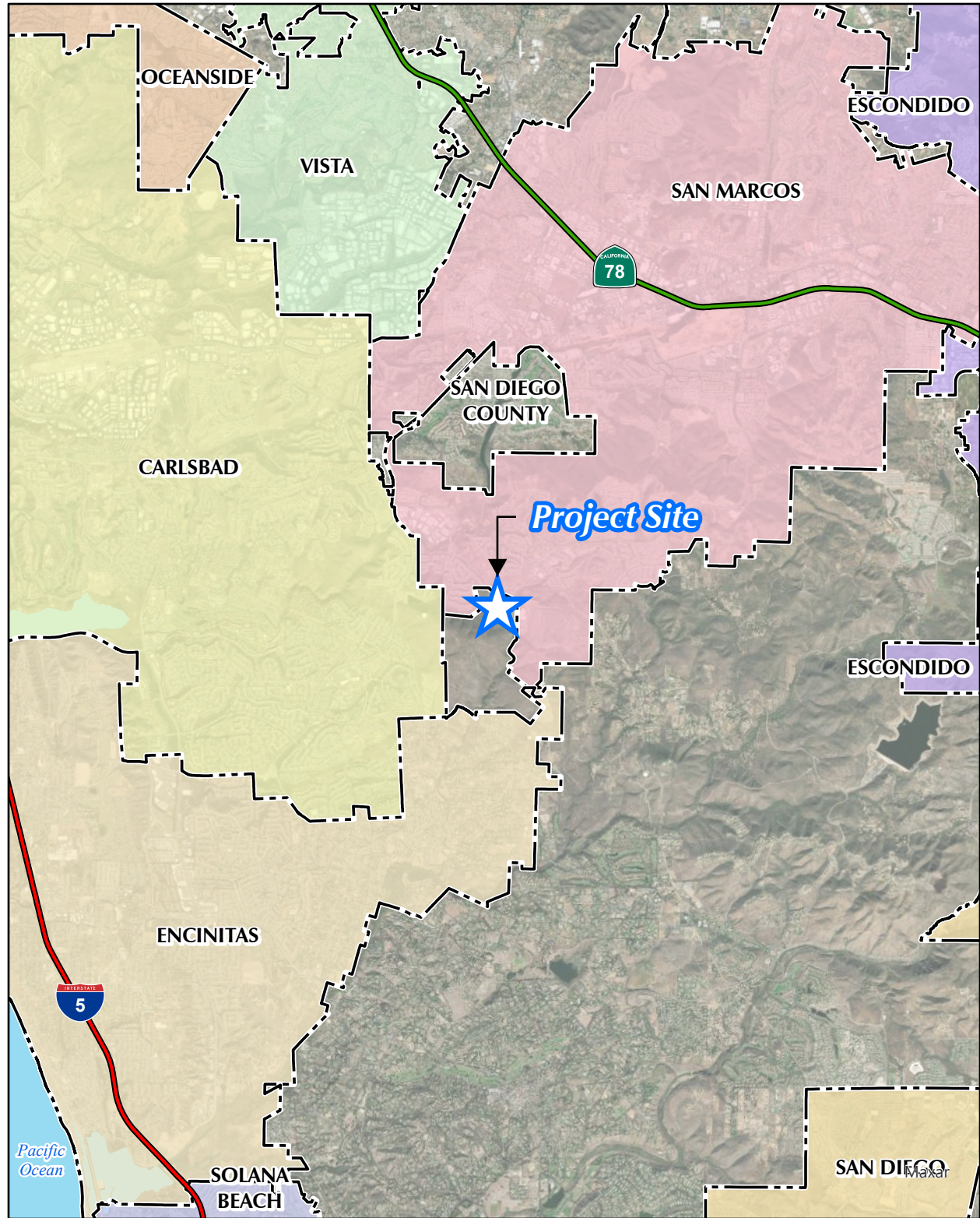
Sewer Plan



Source(s): San Diego County (March 2023)

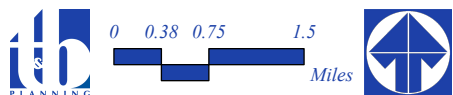
Figure 1-8





Source(s): Esri, SANGIS (2023)

Figure 1-9

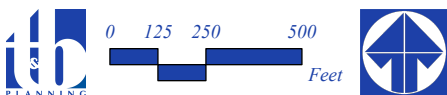


Regional Location Map

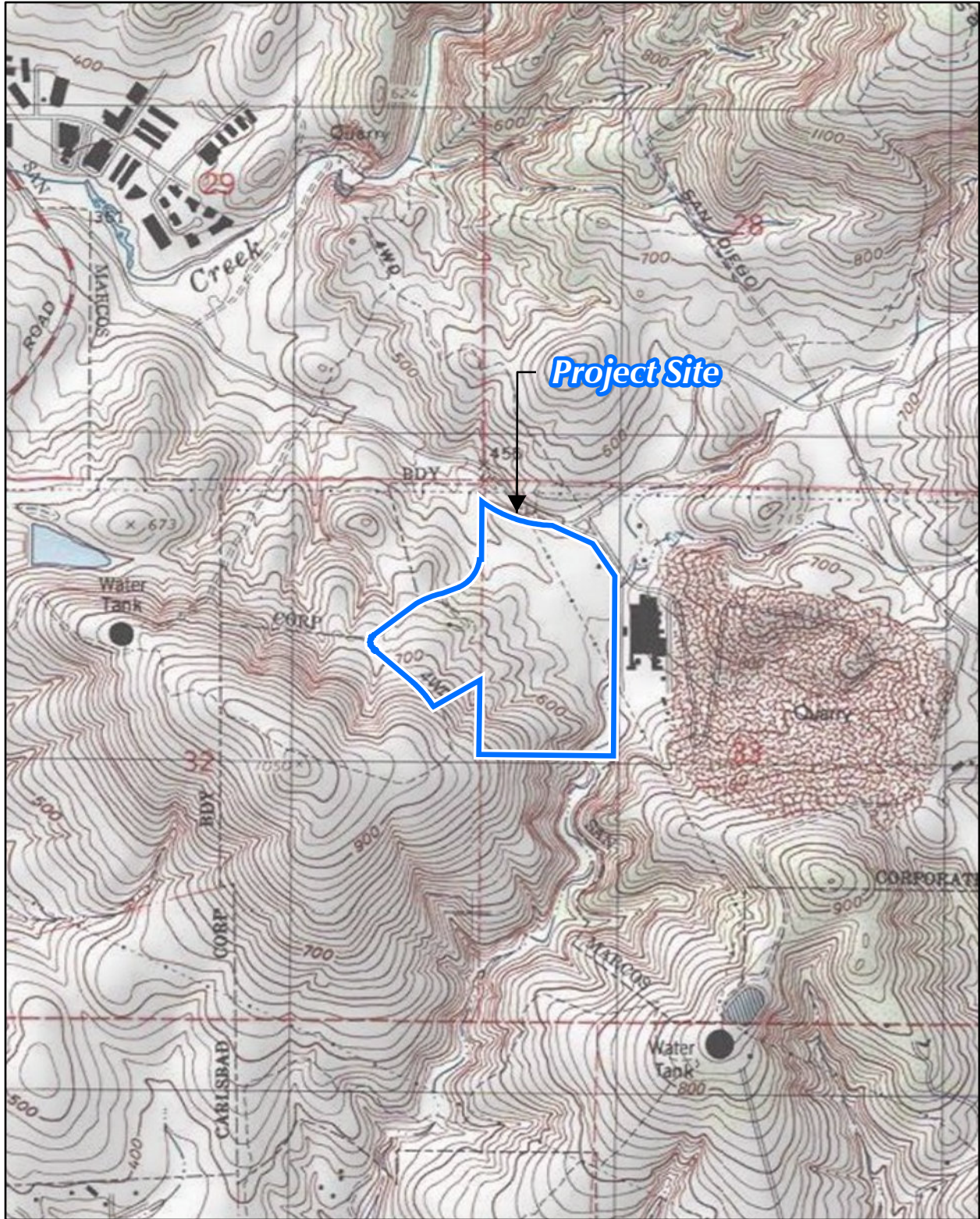


Source(s): Esri, Nearmap Imagery (September 2022)

Figure 1-10

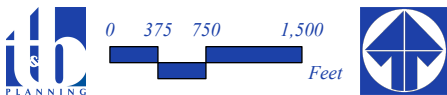


Aerial Photograph



Source(s): Esri, USGS (2022)

Figure 1-11



Topographic Map