
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLANNING AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

1.1.1 Planning Authority

The Pacific Highlands Ranch Subarea Plan (Plan) has been prepared in accordance with adopted City of San Diego policies and regulations. The City Council, in the fall of 1992, adopted the North City Future Urbanizing Area (NCFUA) Framework Plan (**Exhibit 1-1**) as an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan (General Plan) with reference to the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) recommendations. The Framework Plan recommendations for Pacific Highlands Ranch include up to 5,470 residential units, a mixed-use community core with 400,000 square feet of commercial and office uses, multifamily housing, and public and semi-public uses, and schools and parks. The CAC recommendations included the provision of up to 6,500 residential units and 400,000 square feet of commercial and office uses. Council adoption of the Framework Plan allowed for the preparation and approval of subarea plans.

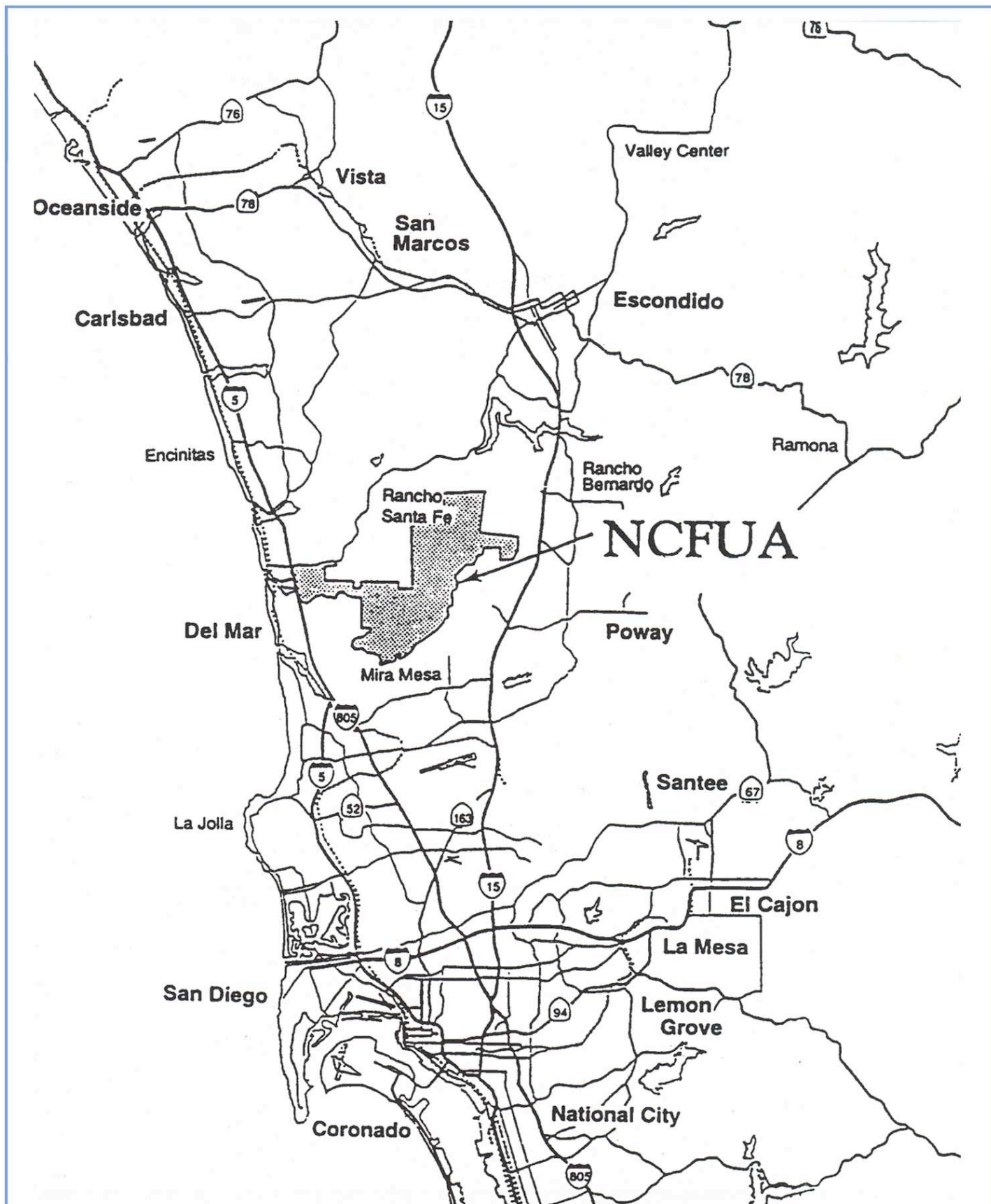
1.1.2 Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Plan is to refine and augment the NCFUA Framework Plan as it relates to Subarea III, while remaining consistent with its goals and objectives. The Plan also provides guidance for future ministerial and discretionary permit review and approval. These actions may include subdivision maps, planned development permits, and other permitting actions. Future permitting actions within Pacific Highlands Ranch are required to be consistent with the policies of this Plan. Adoption of this Plan constitutes an amendment to the General Plan and the NCFUA Framework Plan.

1.2 PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for the NCFUA is dictated by the adopted Framework Plan. The Framework Plan anticipated the preparation and adoption of subarea plans within the NCFUA. This Plan is the planning document which must be approved prior to the processing of discretionary and ministerial permits within Subarea III at densities greater than allowed by the underlying zoning.

A unique element of the planning process in the NCFUA is the voter-adopted Managed Growth Initiative (Proposition A). This legislation, adopted in 1985, requires a majority vote of the electorate before property can be shifted from the Future Urbanizing tier to the Planned Urbanizing tier within the City. Once the phase shift has been approved by the voters, the City Council-adopted Subarea Plan becomes effective. Previously approved projects are included within the Plan, but are not subject to the phase shift vote (**Exhibit 1-2**).



NCFUA Location Map
Pacific Highlands Ranch Subarea Plan

1-1

EXHIBIT

Until the voters determine that it is appropriate to shift the property to the Planned Urbanizing tier, development may proceed within Pacific Highlands Ranch without a phase shift consistent with the underlying A-1-10 zoning. Development consistent with A-1-10 zoning could result in a buildout of up to 666 residential units, not including previously approved projects in the subarea. The Plan avoids the negative aspects of unplanned development by providing a comprehensive framework for balanced development.

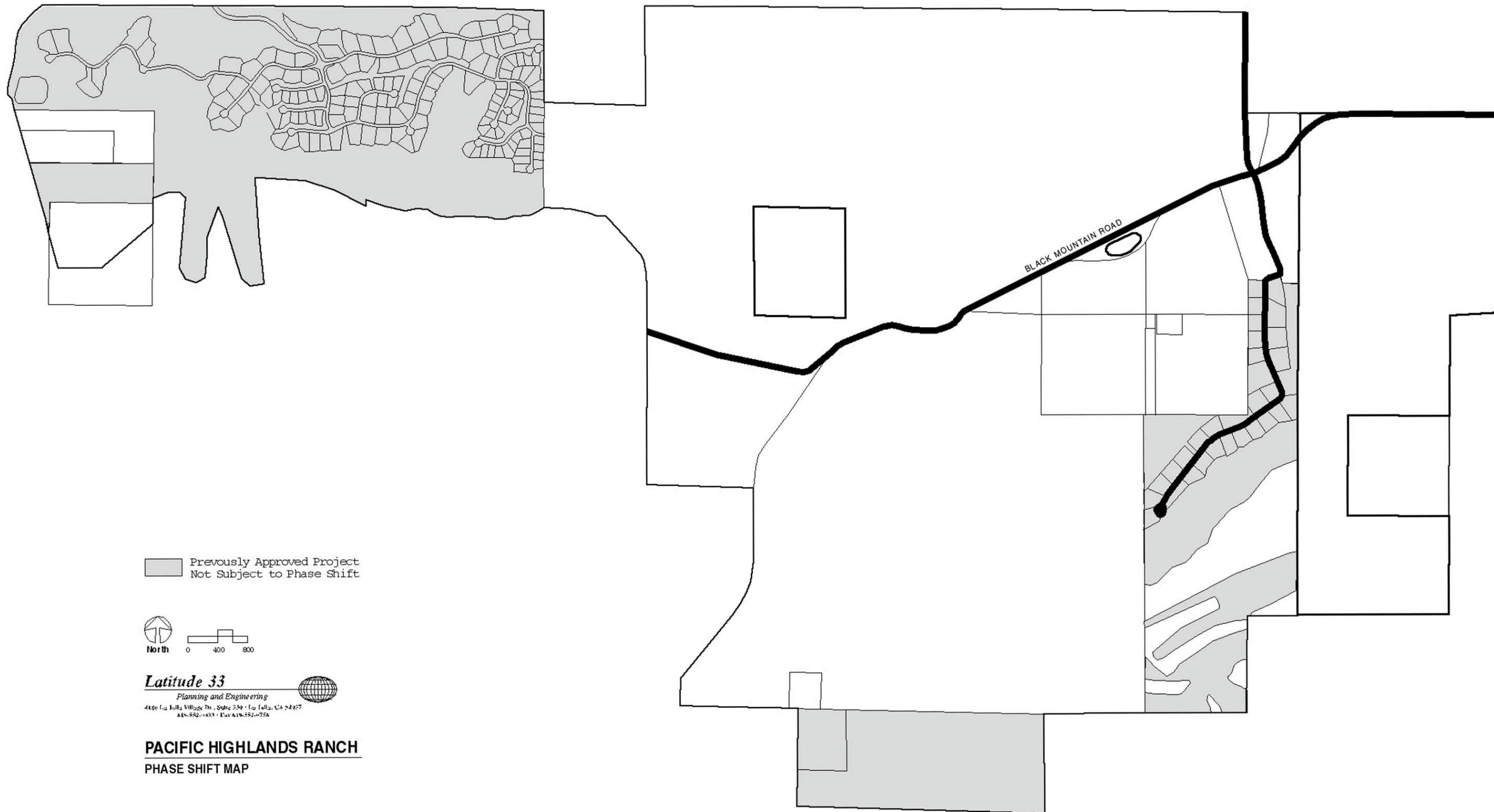
The planning process for Pacific Highlands Ranch has followed a series of steps that began with the adoption of the Framework Plan. Subsequent steps included identification of sensitive resource areas and developable lands, delineation of required public facilities and services, and the continued involvement of property owners, City and agency staff, and the general public. Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is assured through certification of the attendant Master Environmental Impact Report (MEIR).

1.3 SUMMARY OF PLANNING PRINCIPLES

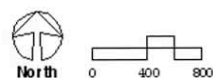
This Plan has been prepared with the following planning principles providing direction and a sense of purpose:

1. Conservation of the Multiple Habitat Preservation Area (MHPA) Plan is the foundation for the overall planning of Pacific Highlands Ranch. The community is characterized by the concentration of residential development in specific areas to preserve valuable open spaces and encourage wildlife movement.
2. Pacific Highlands Ranch is envisioned as a new form of residential community that utilizes pedestrian-oriented development principles as its basis for development forms. A pedestrian-oriented development pattern is characterized by the provision of a wide range of housing, along with retail, commercial and public uses within a mixed-use development strategically located along the regional transit system. This community includes a variety of housing types and affordability ranges which are supported by a mixture of commercial and employment uses that are accessible by transit, bicycle and foot.
3. Pacific Highlands Ranch is organized in a manner that emphasizes a hierarchy of “fine grain” uses while concurrently maintaining interrelated neighborhoods and functions. This organization creates a distinct sense of place for the residents of Pacific Highlands Ranch.
4. Pacific Highlands Ranch is defined by its open spaces, streets and neighborhoods that give it form and contribute to the quality of life for its residents. This organizational structure creates a cohesive sense of community identity that can contribute to the overall quality of life for residents and visitors.

In addition to these subarea planning principles, the Framework Plan provides principles that have been incorporated in the Plan text and map.



Previously Approved Project
Not Subject to Phase Shift



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PACIFIC HIGHLANDS RANCH
PHASE SHIFT MAP



1.4 PROJECT SETTING

The NCFUA contains approximately 12,000 acres and is located in the northwestern portion of the City of San Diego. The NCFUA is surrounded by several existing communities that lie within the County of San Diego, and the Cities of San Diego, Solana Beach, and Del Mar.

Pacific Highlands Ranch is generally located in the northwestern portion of the NCFUA, and encompasses approximately 2,652 acres of predominantly undeveloped land. Pacific Highlands Ranch is bounded by the community of Fairbanks Ranch on the north, Torrey Highlands (Subarea IV) to the east, Del Mar Mesa (Subarea V) to the south, and the community of Carmel Valley to the west (**Exhibit 1-3**).

1.5 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Pacific Highlands Ranch Subarea is topographically diverse (**Exhibit 1-4**). General physical features include:

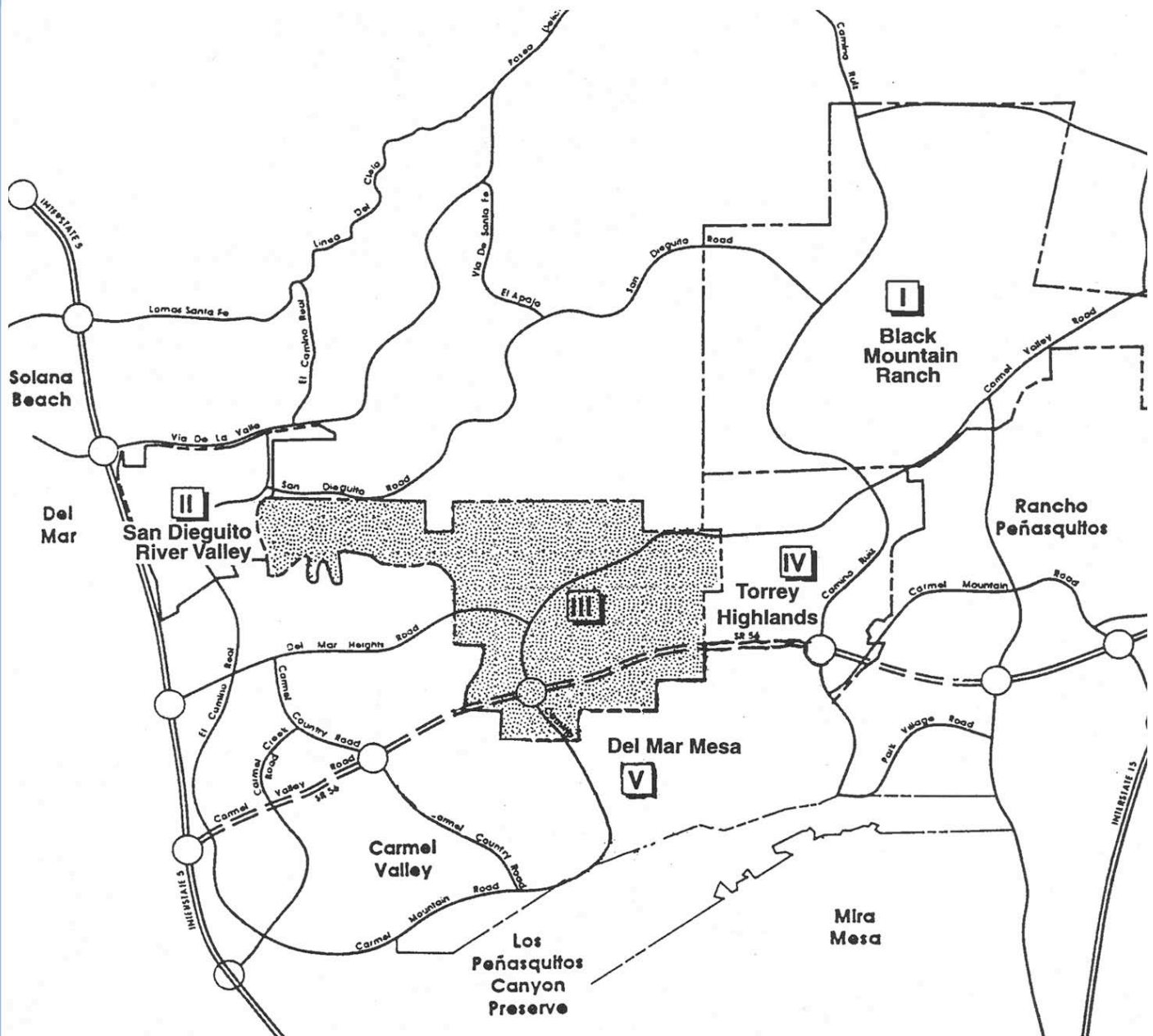
- San Dieguito River Valley in the northwest portion of the site
- Gonzales Canyon which trends in an east-west direction from the San Dieguito River Valley across the northern portion of the community
- McGonigle Canyon which generally forms the southern boundary of the subarea

Pacific Highlands Ranch land uses currently include large nurseries, commercial agriculture, grazing operations, estate-lot single-family housing and equestrian centers.

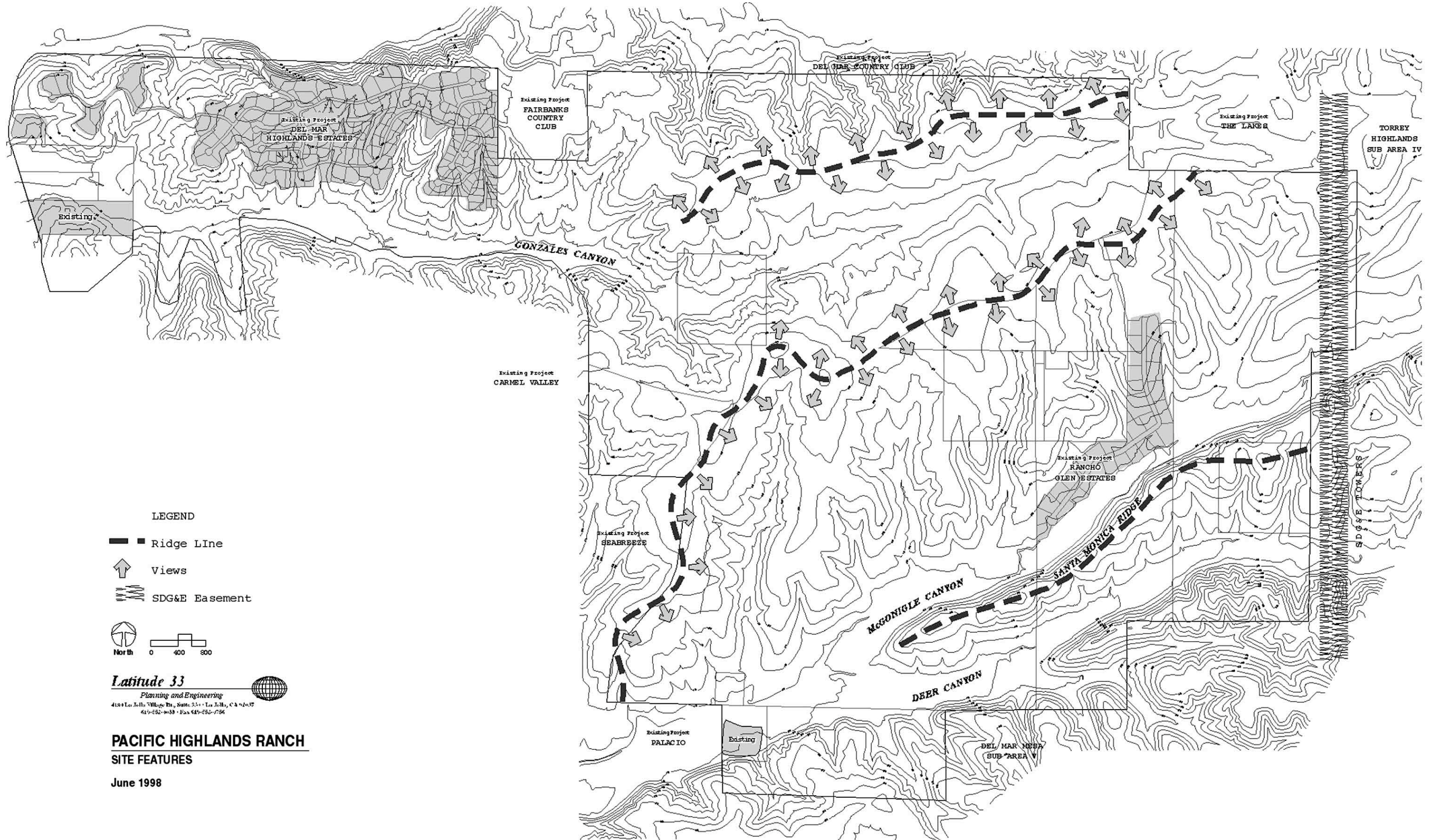
Except for Old El Camino Real, Carmel Valley Road and Black Mountain Road, existing roads within the subarea are primarily unimproved. Black Mountain Road is the primary road within Pacific Highlands Ranch and the NCFUA. The existing road system reflects the subarea's relatively undeveloped condition; the roads tend to solely serve the existing uses. There is a well-developed system of roads in the adjoining Planned Urbanizing and unincorporated communities.

1.5.1 NCFUA Framework Plan

The Framework Plan was adopted by the City in the late Fall of 1992 as an amendment to the General Plan. The Framework Plan provides a blueprint, or vision, for development of the NCFUA. This vision includes the provision of pedestrian-oriented developments which encourage human interaction and lessen dependence on the automobile.



Subarea III Location Map **1-3** **Pacific Highlands Ranch Subarea Plan** **EXHIBIT**



LEGEND

- Ridge Line
- Views
- SDG&E Easement
- North
- 0 400 800

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PACIFIC HIGHLANDS RANCH
SITE FEATURES
 June 1998



1.5.2 Zoning

The existing zoning for the subarea is an agricultural zone, A-1-10, which permits agricultural use and residential development at an overall density of one dwelling unit per ten acres. An exception is planned residential developments, where a density of one unit per four acres is permitted, if the units are clustered and findings related to the provision of open space and affordable housing can be made. Certain non-urban uses are permitted upon approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Portions of Pacific Highlands Ranch are within the Hillside Review (HR) Overlay Zone. Portions of Pacific Highlands Ranch are also within the Coastal Zone, and are subject to the policies and ordinances that comprise the North City Local Coastal Program.

Included within this Plan are recommendations for a master rezoning for Pacific Highlands Ranch. The zones are intended to implement the land-use designations and community design principles for the Plan.

1.5.3 Relationship to Surrounding Land Uses

Land uses to the north and west are developed or in the process of developing. Pacific Highlands Ranch is bordered by other primarily undeveloped subareas of the NCFUA on the east and south. Torrey Highlands (already phase-shifted to Planned Urbanizing status) is immediately to the east and Del Mar Mesa (with an approved Specific Plan) is directly to the south. The existing community of Fairbanks Ranch forms the subarea's northern border, while Carmel Valley (formerly North City West) constitutes the western boundary. These communities and their plans are summarized below.

Fairbanks Ranch: In March, 1982, the City Council adopted the Fairbanks Ranch Specific Plan. The bulk of the 785-acre community is designated as open space, with the remaining land developed with 345 single-family residences, a Country Club, and a golf course.

Carmel Valley: This community plan was originally adopted by the City Council in 1975. Carmel Valley consists of 4,359 acres and is planned to contain about 15,595 residential units. According to the adopted community plan, residential uses will absorb less than half of the community's acreage. Open space and parklands will make up approximately a third of the land area. The majority of the open space is located at the perimeter of the planning area, to provide an open area buffer between Carmel Valley and Pacific Highlands Ranch and also community and regional trails.

Subarea II: Subarea II lies to the northwest of Pacific Highlands Ranch within the NCFUA. Pursuant to the Framework Plan, this area is designated for a total of 230 single-family detached dwelling units and open space.

Torrey Highlands: A Subarea Plan and phase shift have been approved for Subarea IV (Torrey Highlands). The plan includes 2,693 residential dwellings, 35 acres of commercial space, 45-acre local mixed-use center, improved and unimproved trails, a neighborhood park, and elementary, middle, and high schools.

Del Mar Mesa: In lieu of a phase shift, a specific plan has been approved for the entire area consistent with the underlying A-1-10 zoning. The area is designated for very low-density development and extensive open space. Development is proceeding pursuant to the specific plan. The plan includes 685 residential dwellings, a hotel and golf course, an elementary school, and a multi-use trail system.

1.5.4 Circulation

The existing roadway network within the NCFUA is a result of the low-intensity development that characterizes the area. There is a well-developed system of roads surrounding the NCFUA. This system is described below.

Interstates 5 (I-5) and 15 (I-15) lie to the west and east of the NCFUA, respectively. I-5 is the main coastal connection for all of San Diego County, connecting central San Diego with Mexico, the north county coastal communities, Orange County, Los Angeles, and points north. The inland freeway, I-15, connects San Diego with the northern inland communities of San Diego and Riverside Counties.

State Route 56 (SR-56) is a planned freeway which will pass through the NCFUA and connect I-5 and I-15. It is completed at the eastern (I-15) and western (I-5) ends of its alignment. The three-mile center segment of SR-56 is not constructed. Four alignments for the central segment are currently under consideration by the City of San Diego and Caltrans. Upon adoption, the land use plan associated with the adopted alignment shall become effective.

1.5.5 Natural Resources

The MHPA was developed as an amendment to the City's General Plan. The MHPA has identified land within the NCFUA and Pacific Highlands Ranch that is of citywide interest as it relates to conservation. The MHPA is based on the known locations of significant natural resources, including biological resources, habitats, and movement corridors.

Pacific Highlands Ranch contains several of the major vegetation communities and sensitive species known to exist in the coastal areas of San Diego County. While the bulk of Pacific Highlands Ranch has been utilized for agriculture or nursery operations, some of the remaining areas of natural vegetation retain high biodiversity and are considered sensitive.