
CHAPTER 2. PLANNING CONTEXT

A number of considerations were taken into account in the preparation of the Sabre Springs Community Plan. These included the historical and planning background for the area, the public policies pertinent to planning new communities and a number of site and market factors relevant to Plan formulation. These considerations are summarized below.

2.1 Historical Background

Archaeological surveys of the Sabre Springs vicinity indicate that Native Americans have occupied the planning area. Three cultural groups are represented in the area, dating from different periods: San Dieguito (12,000 to 8,000 years ago), La Jolla (8,000 to 3,000 years ago) and Northern Diegueno (2,500 years ago to Spanish period). The use of the planning area by several cultural groups probably reflects an abundance of plant and animal life (for food, medicines, construction materials, clothing and fuel); the proximity to water and the availability of outcroppings and quarriable rock suitable for tools.

Site surveys indicate there were two villages, or so called “maintenance camps,” where a variety of activities ranging from food processing to habitation to ceremonial activities was conducted. One village site is located along Chicarita Creek in the northern portion of the planning area, while the second smaller site is situated south of Peñasquitos Creek. The other archaeological sites in the planning area were “extractive camps,” relatively small areas where environmental resources were extracted and processed. These camps are situated at scattered locations in the planning area. The majority of archaeological sites in Sabre Springs show evidence of the Northern Diegueno culture and are probably related to the village of Pawaii, located near Rattlesnake Creek in present-day Poway.

When the Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived in the Poway area they found a considerable population of Native Americans. Early Spanish and Mexican documents mention the large native village, or “rancheria,” of Paguay (Pawaii). The missionaries of Mission San Diego de Alcala were not successful in converting the natives at Paguay. European ranchers grazed livestock on the grasses and native vegetation utilized by the natives for food. This led to a series of native uprisings in the latter part of the 1700s and first half of the 1800s in various parts of present-day San Diego County. Sabre Springs is located near what were two large ranches, Rancho Peñasquitos to the west and Rancho San Bernardo to the north. These tracts were operated variously as cattle and sheep ranches by a series of owners in the 1800s and 1900s.

A considerable portion of what is the present Sabre Springs planning area was owned by the Florence Chadwick family, and subsequently, the Sabre Petroleum Corporation. The Plan area remains basically undeveloped, except for a few structures along Poway Road and a decommissioned sewage treatment plant near Peñasquitos Creek.



LEGEND:

Very Low Residential 0-5 du/ac	Neighborhood Commercial	Neighborhood Park
Low Residential 5-10 du/ac	Community Commercial	Community Park
Low-Medium Residential 10-15 du/ac	Commercial Recreational	Regional Park
Medium Residential 15-45 du/ac	Elementary School	Open Space
Mobile Home Park 8-9 du/ac	Junior High School	
	Senior High School	



1971 Chicarita Creek Plan
Sabre Springs Community Plan

3
FIGURE

2.2 Planning History

In 1970, Kenneth Mitchell and Associates prepared a draft land use plan entitled “Sabre Springs Area Plan” for the Sabre Capital Corporation. This plan encompassed 1,028 acres of the Sabre Corporation’s property north and south of Poway Road, as well as an additional 1,214 acres in surrounding ownerships. The latter included a large southwest extension along I-15 which is now a part of the 1980 Miramar Ranch North Community Plan. Residential uses were proposed along Peñasquitos Creek, and residential and industrial uses along Chicarita Creek, with the creeks and lakes preserved as park and open space. Near the Poway Road interchange with I-15, a resort, shopping center and equestrian headquarters were featured, along with an extension of Peñasquitos Regional Park. The southwest leg was designated for residential uses.

In 1971, the City of San Diego approved the Chicarita Creek Development Plan, which was largely based on the 1970 Mitchell Plan. The plan provided for 1,552 acres of residential at a variety of densities, 100 acres of community and commercial recreation, and no industrial park acreage. Of the total 2,228 acres, 13 percent was designated for open space, including areas along Peñasquitos and Chicarita Creeks. Steep hillsides were utilized for very low-density residential. Approximately 8,470 dwelling units were planned in total, for a projected population of about 23,400 persons. This plan was never implemented. **Figure 3** depicts the adopted development plan for the portion lying within the Sabre Springs community planning area. This portion includes about 5,800 dwelling units and 100 acres of commercial development.

In 1978, E. F. Cook and Associates prepared a development plan for the property originally within the Sabre Capital Corporation ownership. South of Poway Road, this proposal called for an equestrian-oriented residential area of lots in excess of one acre. Medium-density residential development was proposed north of Poway Road; the area planned for industrial development in the Mitchell Plan was not within the project boundary. A total of 1,159 dwelling units plus support uses were proposed on about 1,055 acres. This development plan was not implemented.

2.3 Current Planning Status

In the latter half of the 1970s, the City of San Diego undertook formulation of a growth management policy to guide development and urbanization within its jurisdiction. This effort culminated in the 1979 General Plan, which sets out guidelines for future development in San Diego. Under the General Plan, Sabre Springs lies within the “planned urbanizing area.” Urbanization in this area must occur in a staged, orderly fashion under a development plan or community plan, as represented by this document. The specific requirements of the General Plan are addressed in each element of this Plan. In addition, the City Council policies which reinforce the General Plan are summarized in **Section 2.4**, and are discussed where applicable in the Plan.

Under the 1979 General Plan, Sabre Springs is designated for residential development, with community commercial and commercial recreation shown on the north side of Poway Road. Large open space areas are called for, generally along the creeks. These land use designations and configurations are based on the Chicarita Creek Development Plan, and are subject to revision when this community plan is adopted.

Most of the planning area is presently zoned A-1-10, an agricultural zone which permits residential development on ten-acre parcels. This zone is used by the City as a holding zone for future development. Following adoption of the community plan, a master rezoning of the entire community planning area may be approved. Rezoning is subject to public hearings and the final decision on the appropriate zones may differ from the densities shown in this Plan. A small portion of the planning area in the southwest corner was rezoned in 1981 in conjunction with the master rezoning of Miramar Ranch North.

In the southernmost portion of the property, some of the steep areas lie within the Hillside Review (HR) overlay zone. The overlay zone is generally applied by the City to areas with slopes exceeding 25 percent. The City may apply the overlay zone to other steep areas in the community, based on proposals contained in this Plan.

2.4 Pertinent Public Policy

The community planning process is guided by a number of laws and policies promulgated by various levels of government. The following briefly summarizes the most pertinent legislation:

- State Planning and Zoning Act: Specifies the nature and content of elements which must be included in general plans for localities in California and provides that specific plans may be utilized to further refine general plans. The Sabre Springs Community Plan is a specific plan further detailing a subarea of the San Diego General Plan .
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Requires consideration of environmental impacts for public and private projects having significant effect on the environment. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be certified in conjunction with adoption of the this Plan.
- City of San Diego Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances: Regulate the use of land, including permitted uses, development controls and project requirements within San Diego. Projects implementing this Plan are subject to City and public review for conformance to these regulations.
- Regional Air Quality Standards (RAQS): Provides strategies for improvement of air quality, as prepared by the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) in cooperation with the San Diego Association of Governments. Self-contained communities and alternatives to private automobile travel are encouraged in planning, such as for Sabre Springs.

- General Plan, City of San Diego: Sets out goals, guidelines and recommendations for the overall development of the City. As stated previously, the *Sabre Springs Community Plan* is required to conform to the policies outlined in the General Plan, and also further detail goals and proposals specifically for the planning area.
- CPO Transportation Plan for the San Diego Region: Outlines existing and proposed regional circulation systems. The Plan takes this transportation plan into account in its transportation proposals.
- Council Policy 600-10: Requires private developers to demonstrate that all necessary public facilities will be furnished at the time of need before a development project may be approved. This policy also specifies that development within “Lago Dorado” and “Chicarita Creek” should be conditioned on the full upgrading of I-15 between Pomerado/Miramar Road and Poway Road interchanges. The Plan must condition development on availability of public facilities as required by this policy.
- Council Policy 600-19: Requires balanced communities with housing accessible to all economic, racial and ethnic groups. The Plan is required to provide for a variety of housing types satisfying a range of housing needs.
- Council Policy 600-23: Describes the preservation methods and maintenance responsibilities for natural open space. The Plan is required to delineate “designated open space” to be incorporated into the General Plan.
- Council Policy 600-28: Sets out requirements for development approval in planned urbanizing areas including a public facilities financing program, a school facilities plan and a development phasing program for new communities. The Plan is mandated to incorporate these requirements in its implementation program.

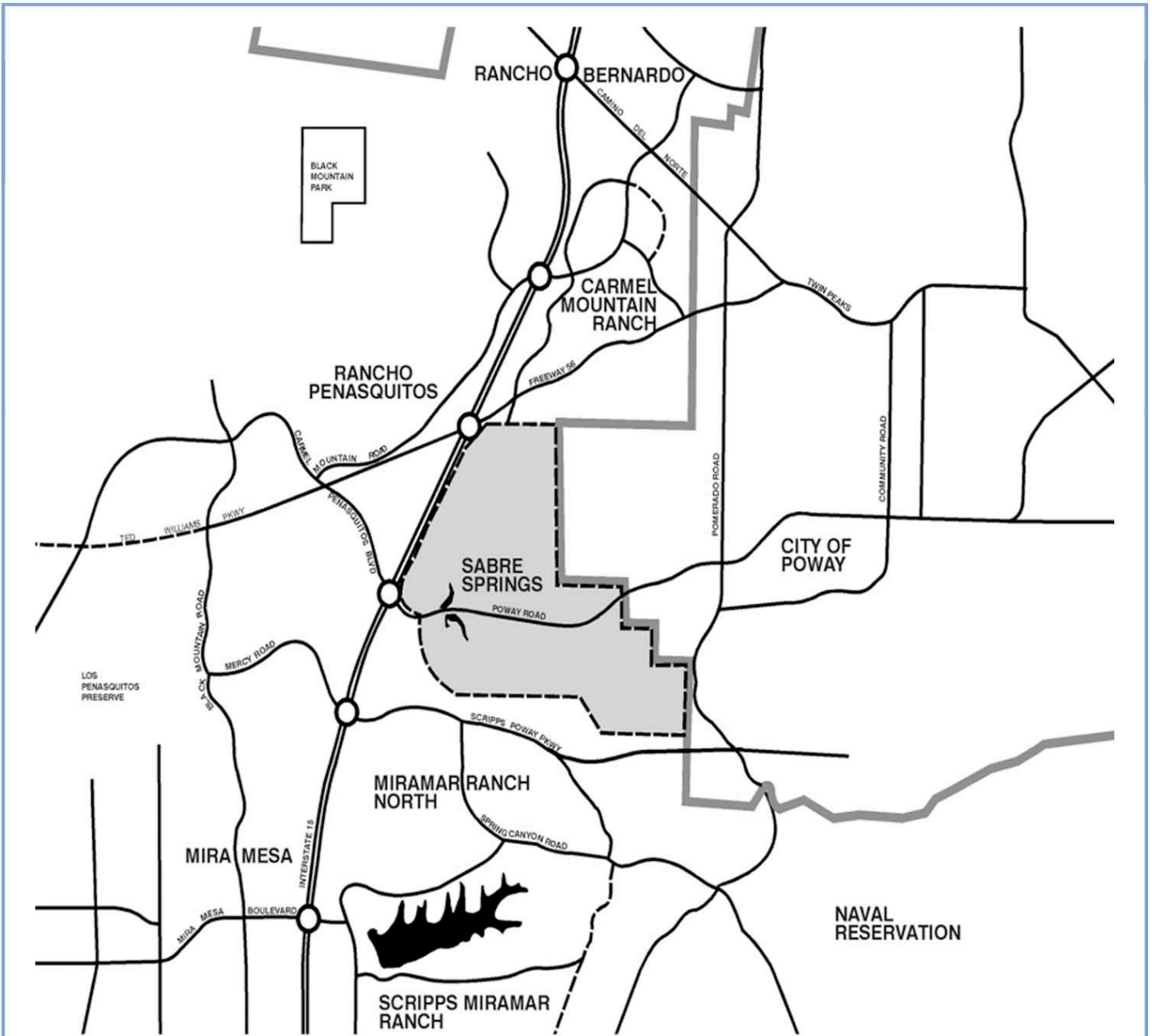
2.5 Planning Factors

A number of factors specific to the location and nature of the planning area were analyzed in formulating the Plan. The key factors are summarized below:

A. Transportation

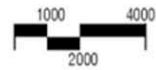
Development of Sabre Springs requires an internal transportation system tying where necessary into the existing and proposed street systems of surrounding communities and into the North City area and San Diego region as a whole. This transportation system should provide for a number of transport modes, ensure safe and efficient circulation and minimize harmful noise and air quality impacts. **Figure 4** illustrates the subregional transportation system in the Sabre Spring area.

A primary factor in planning for Sabre Springs is the community's relationship to I-15. The I-15 corridor provides the major access to the subregion and the San Diego metropolitan area. This corridor will require increased traffic capacity as adjacent



LEGEND:

-  Planning Area Boundary
-  City of San Diego Boundary
-  Existing Roadway
-  Proposed Roadway
-  Freeway Interchange



**Subregional Transportation
Sabre Springs Community Plan**

4
FIGURE

communities develop and are currently being upgraded. Also, the only existing access to I-15 from the planning area is via Poway Road and the Poway Road interchange. The Poway Road/I-15 interchange operates near design capacity during the morning peak hour due to traffic from Poway. This effectively limits the traffic generated by Sabre Springs which may access the freeway during morning rush hour. A number of approaches or combination approaches are possible to minimize traffic difficulties:

- Complete scheduled CALTRANS improvements of the I-15 roadway and interchanges from the planning area south to Interstate 8 (I-8).
- Provide freeway-related park-and-ride facilities and other incentives to encourage transit and paratransit usage in order to reduce traffic on I-15.
- Construct a road in the State Route 56 (SR-56) corridor from Poway to an upgraded Black Mountain Road to provide Poway traffic an alternate access to I-15 and channel some local north-south traffic to Black Mountain Road.
- Construct high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes for buses and carpool vehicles in the median of I-15 with an appropriately designed interchange north of the planning area.
- Operate I-15 transit and paratransit service for commuters and for intercommunity travelers, such as the existing express bus service along I-15, in order to reduce I-15 roadway and interchange traffic loads.
- Plan a balance of industrial and residential land uses in the planning area to induce a counterflow of traffic on the freeway and at the interchanges during peak hours and to maximize intracommunity trips. This includes the provision of job opportunities for Sabre Springs residents within the industrial, commercial, office and service areas of the community.
- Limit the intensity of residential, industrial and commercial development in order to reduce the traffic generated.
- Phase community development in tandem with the provision of adequate corridor capacity and access improvements.
- Provide for bicycle circulation for short-distance commuters to park-and-ride facilities, and for intra-community travel.

The Plan proposals utilizing several of these approaches are presented in **Chapter 11** and **Section 14.2**.



LEGEND:

-  Creek-Related Area/
Habitat Area
-  Important
Archeological Site
-  Steep or Unstable Area-
Not For Development
-  Developable
Area



Natural Features
Sabre Springs Community Plan

5
FIGURE

B. Natural Features

The natural features of the planning area are an important consideration in planning circulation and land uses in the community, as well as in subsequent project engineering and design. Natural features of particular importance in Sabre Springs include the creeks and lakes, the topography and the geological conditions as summarized in **Figure 5**.

Chicarita and Peñasquitos Creeks bisect the northern and southern halves of the planning area, respectively. Each feeds a manmade lake situated in the west-central portion of the Plan area. The creeks and lakes should be viewed as major resources to be preserved and enhanced during the community development process for the following reasons:

- The creeks support considerable vegetation including most of the trees in the planning area. Peñasquitos Creek, in particular, is a valuable wildlife habitat area.
- The creeks and lakes represent potential visual foci for adjacent projects and circulation routes.
- The creeks and lakes constitute a recreational resource which may be selectively opened up for public enjoyment.
- The creeks create a 100-year floodplain area which should not be developed.
- The natural streambeds constitute aquatic habitat and should be preserved to the extent possible.
- Archaeological sites with creekside locations should be preserved or significant impacts mitigated.

The topography operates as both a constraint and asset in planning the community. About 37 percent of the planning area consists of slopes in excess of 25 percent. Most of these areas are difficult to develop and can be preserved as open space, acting as visual and physical buffers to adjacent communities and as preserve areas for biological resources. The more modestly sloped areas may be sensitively designed to preserve and create views and to separate land use types, such as through terracing or variations in large pad elevations. The relatively level areas may be utilized for land uses requiring large, flatter areas.

Geological conditions in Sabre Springs are a consideration in determining developable areas. Rock outcroppings in the northern half of the planning area should be avoided in laying out projects. The planning area south of Peñasquitos Creek is riddled with potential slide areas. Safe development sites may be created in some areas through selective grading and special engineering and drainage techniques, while the remainder should be preserved as undisturbed open space.

C. Housing Needs

While the demand for housing in San Diego is expected to remain strong, changes in the type of housing required by the public are anticipated. Because of rising housing costs combined with a shrinking household size, the market trend is toward smaller units. Smaller, affordable housing units are usually planned as part of attached residential projects with collective open space areas and recreational amenities. These units tend to be developed at greater densities and at less cost than conventional single-family detached housing.

Planning for the Sabre Springs community should take into account the emerging market trends and incorporate a high proportion of smaller, affordable units. This is a reasonable approach because of the following:

- Small, affordable units are the primary means by which young singles and couples can establish home ownership.
- The small unit is appropriately sized for seniors, singles and couples.
- Attached units represent an opportunity for rental projects and rental units within condominium projects.
- Intermediate density residential development can be land-conserving.
- A mix of attached units in a range of prices, sizes, locations and ownership patterns will help provide a balanced residential community.
- Attached units may be more appropriately financed or operated under government assistance programs to provide non-market rate housing.
- Denser residential development better supports transit and paratransit usage than a detached housing pattern.

Inclusion of a relatively high proportion of smaller, affordable units in Sabre Springs has impacts on the nature and number of community facilities and services. The requirement for schools and childrens' recreational areas can be less than in communities characterized by single-family detached development. Recreational and commercial facilities should be designed to meet the needs and interests of a population different than conventional family households.

D. Surrounding Communities

As shown in **Figure 6**, Sabre Springs is surrounded by a number of communities, all of which are experiencing development under approved community plans. Planning and subsequent design and engineering in Sabre Springs should take into account functional and aesthetic relationships with adjacent communities.

- Carmel Mountain Ranch: Carmel Mountain Ranch is a 1,500-acre new community immediately to the north of Sabre Springs. The 1984 Carmel Mountain Ranch Community Plan calls for 5,600 housing units generating an estimated population of about 12,600 persons. In addition, a total of approximately 345 acres is designated for commercial, office and industrial use, projecting employment for 11,700 persons. The Plan emphasizes creation of self-contained, community-balancing, employment opportunities and residential development.

At the boundary between Carmel Mountain Ranch and Sabre Springs there is the opportunity to provide a smooth transition between the communities and in relation to the HOV Access Road. The creek and hillside open spaces, roadways, power easement and land uses should be properly integrated along the shared planning area boundary.

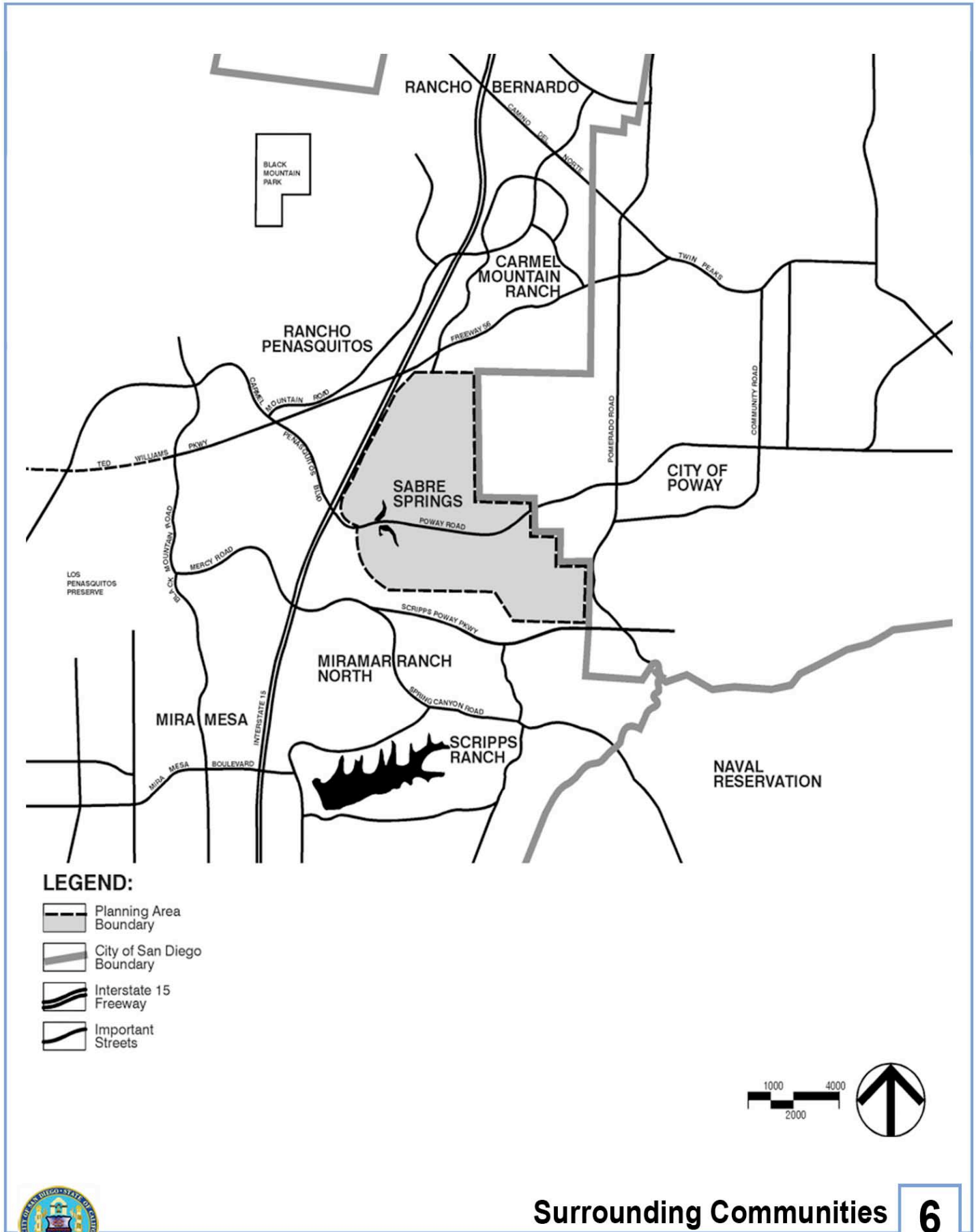
- Poway: The residential community of Poway is located to the east of Sabre Springs, outside the City of San Diego. In the latter half of the 1970s, the community experienced considerable growth, bringing its population to 42,300 persons at the beginning of 1980. Adopted in 1978 as part of the San Diego County General Plan, the Poway Community Plan projects a population of 48,000 to 52,000 persons residing in 17,000 housing units by 1995. The plan designates certain areas for urban development while preserving the remaining areas for agricultural uses. Poway was incorporated in 1980.

Sabre Springs is separated from Poway on the east by rugged terrain, providing the opportunity to create open space buffers between the two communities. In relation to I-15, Sabre Springs constitutes a gateway and transition to and from Poway for persons traveling Poway Road.

There is the possibility of Poway residents utilizing Sabre Springs industrial, commercial and school facilities which are accessible from Poway Road and the proposed HOV Access Road.

- Peñasquitos East: Situated on the west side of I-15, Rancho Peñasquitos is a developing community of 5,000 acres and a population at the beginning of 1980 of 16,100 persons. The 1978 Peñasquitos East Community Plan calls for a residential community of about 12,550 dwelling units housing almost 35,000 residents. The community is expected to be single-family oriented. A 78-acre town center is under development, including key subregional facilities—post office, library, police substation and fire station. Two large regional parks abut the community, Los Peñasquitos Preserve to the south and Black Mountain Park to the north.

Peñasquitos East and Sabre Springs are mutually visible across their shared boundary of I-15. Poway Road, extending into Rancho Peñasquitos Boulevard and the proposed road in the SR-56 corridor give the opportunity to cross-access facilities and services.



Surrounding Communities
Sabre Springs Community Plan

6
FIGURE

- Miramar Ranch North: Encompassing approximately 1,950 acres, Miramar Ranch North is a new community situated to the south of Sabre Springs. The 1980 Miramar Ranch North Community Plan provides for approximately 4,100 dwelling units housing an estimated 10,600 residents. Also, about 125 acres of industrial/business park plus commercial and public support facilities are proposed, generating a total of 2,650 employment positions. The plan treats Miramar Ranch North as the twin community to Scripps Miramar Ranch, the community located south of Miramar Lake.

The boundary shared by Sabre Springs and Miramar Ranch North is characterized by rugged and sometimes unstable terrain. Because the southern portion of Sabre Springs is oriented toward the Peñasquitos Creek bed, with Miramar Ranch North situated on the ridges above, there is an opportunity to design for views to and from each community. Functional ties require coordination, such as an equestrian trail along Peñasquitos Creek traversing both planning areas, an interconnecting north-south road to provide fire access and expansion of the North Ridge industrial area from Miramar Ranch North into Sabre Springs.

- Other Communities: Other neighboring communities include Rancho Bernardo, Mira Mesa and Scripps Ranch, all developing communities within the City of San Diego. Up to the beginning of 1980, these communities totaled 71,200 in population and continue to grow under approved community plans. All accommodate growing industrial/business parks within their planning areas. These communities, together with Sabre Springs and its adjacent communities described above, constitute the I-15 corridor urbanizing area.

2.6 Summary of Planning Concerns

As described in **Section 2.2**, the Sabre Springs area has undergone a series of planning efforts. These efforts responded to the concerns and public policies of their respective time periods. This Plan similarly reflects the present-day public policies and planning factors outlined in **Sections 2.4** and **2.5**. These considerations as applied to Sabre Springs are summarized below, and in many cases differ from those of previous plans:

- Land Use Mix: A balance of residential and industrial park uses. Sufficient community-related and specialized commercial in terms of projected markets. Adequate community facilities and utilities.
- Transportation: Multi-modal approach. Community street system and parking to meet City standards. Adequate corridor and interchange capacity on I-15.
- Housing: A range of housing types to ensure housing opportunities for all people. Effort to meet housing needs for smaller, affordable units.
- Employment Center: Industrial park complex to provide commercial employment opportunities in proximity to residential development. Also, commercial employment.

- Environment: Preservation of overall landform, including creeks and lakes and steep hillsides as open space. Proposals for mitigating significant environmental impacts.
- Phasing: Assurance of adequate capacity of transportation facilities, public services and utilities to accommodate development.
- Financing: Provision of public facilities through a developer financing plan. Analysis of cost-benefits to ensure community pays for its own public facility operations.
- Design Guidelines: Promotion of high design quality in community projects, including sensitivity to environmental concerns, crime and fire preventive design, view preservation and enhancement and other design considerations.

With these concerns in mind, a number of plan schemes were developed and analyzed during the planning process. The final scheme set out in this Plan was selected on the basis of best meeting the above concerns.