

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

2.1 Location

The Grantville Redevelopment Project Area (Project Area) is located in San Diego County, in the City of San Diego. The Redevelopment Project Area is approximately 970 acres in size. A majority of the Project Area is located within the Navajo Community Planning Area, and generally includes the existing industrial and commercial areas along Friars Road, Mission Gorge Road, Fairmount Avenue and Waring Road. The Project Area consists of three non-contiguous subareas, referred to as Subarea A, Subarea B and Subarea C (See Figure 3-2 in Section 3.0, Project Description). The three subareas are described as follows:

- **Subarea A** – Subarea A is comprised of commercial, office, industrial, public facility, park and open space uses immediately north of I-8 and located along both sides of Fairmount Avenue, Friars Road and Mission Gorge Road north to Zion Avenue (and including several parcels north of Zion Avenue). The southeast portion of Subarea A also includes the first seven parcels on the southern side of Adobe Falls Road (starting at Waring Road). Subarea A comprises approximately 400 acres.
- **Subarea B** – Subarea B consists of the commercial, office, industrial, sand and gravel, and open space uses located along Mission Gorge Road from Zion Avenue, northeast to Margerum Avenue. Within this subarea, sand and gravel processing operations take place on both sides of the San Diego River. The western boundary is defined by the residential neighborhood along Colina Dorada Drive. Subarea B comprises approximately 505 acres.
- **Subarea C** – Subarea C includes a shopping center, retail uses and community facilities at, and adjacent to, the intersection of Zion Avenue and Waring Road. The Allied Gardens Community Park and other community services such as the Edwin A. Benjamin Library, Lewis Middle School, and two churches are included as the community facilities in this subarea. Subarea C comprises approximately 65 acres.

2.2 Existing Conditions

A majority of the Project Area is developed. Existing development includes mostly older commercial and industrial uses, with a smaller mix of office/professional, public/institutional uses, sand and gravel operations and parks. The Project Area is generally characterized as consisting of underutilized land and buildings, incompatible land uses, parcels of irregular size and form which hinder development, insufficient parking, and inadequate vehicle access.

The following provides a brief description of the environmental setting of the Project Area. A more detailed description of the setting as it relates to each environmental issue is provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this EIR.

2.2.1 Land Use

There is a mixture of urban land uses in the Project Area, a majority of the uses comprise commercial, industrial, and office/professional uses located along Mission Gorge Road, Friars Road, and Fairmont Avenue and Waring Road. Other urban uses include sand and gravel operations located within the area of the San Diego River, and institutional uses, including Allied Gardens Community Park, Lewis Middle School, and Kaiser Permanente hospital and medical office facilities. Open space areas include portions of the San Diego River and river valley.

2.2.2 Transportation/Circulation

Major roadways within the Project Area include Mission Gorge Road, Waring Road, Friars Road, and Fairmont Avenue. The Project Area is located in proximity to Interstate 15 (I-15) located to the west, and Interstate 8 (I-8) located to the south. The existing average daily traffic on the major roadways within the Project Area ranges between approximately 18,000 to 42,000 along Mission Gorge Road, 16,000 to 18,000 along Waring Road, 46,000 to 59,000 along Friars Road, and 48,000 along Fairmont Avenue. Bus service is provided along certain portions of these roadways, including bus routes 40 and 13 along Waring Road. An existing Class III bikeway is located on portions of Zion Avenue, Twain Avenue, and Waring Road, and Class I/III bikeway facilities are proposed along Mission Gorge Road, the San Diego River, and Del Cerro Boulevard. The Metropolitan Transit Development Board is currently constructing a trolley line that traverses a portion of the Project Area, and will connect Mission Valley to San Diego State University. This trolley line will include a trolley stop within the southern portion of the Project Area near I-8.

2.2.3 Air Quality

The Project Area is located within the San Diego Air Basin. The area experiences a Mediterranean-type climate and is characterized by cool summers, mild winters, occasional rainfall confined primarily to winter months, and fresh onshore breezes. Average seasonal temperatures range from the upper 70s in the summer with an average daily maximum of 65° F in the winter. The overall average temperature is 61° F. An average of 10 inches of rainfall occurs annually between November and April.

The San Diego Air Basin is classified as a “non-attainment area” as it does not meet federal and state air quality standards for ozone and state standards for particulate matter less than ten microns in diameter (PM₁₀). Air pollutants transported into the basin from the adjacent South Coast Air Basin (e.g., Los Angeles, Orange County) substantially contribute to the non-attainment conditions in the San Diego Air Basin.

2.2.4 Noise

A majority of the Project Area fronts major roadways including the I-8 Freeway. As a result, the primary source of noise in the Project Area is generated from vehicular traffic traveling along these roadways. There are also stationary noise sources in the Project Area. These include noise generated by industrial activities (e.g., manufacturing and aggregate processing) and commercial operations (e.g., auto repair).

2.2.5 Cultural Resources

No prehistoric resources have been identified in the Project Area. However, there are two known important cultural resources sites located in close proximity to the Project Area. These include the Kumeyaay village of *Nipaguay* and the Mission San Diego Alcalá, located on the west side of the San Diego River. Therefore, there remains a high potential for previously undiscovered prehistoric and historical sites to be located along and adjacent to the San Diego River. There are no designated historic structures located within the Project Area. However, several structures may be of historical significance based on their age and unique architectural characteristics.

2.2.6 Biological Resources

A majority of the Project Area is developed and devoid of sensitive or native biological resources. However, the Project Area includes portions of the San Diego River, a regionally significant biological resource. A total of 11 vegetation communities have been delineated within the Project Area, with most of the native communities occurring within the San Diego River area. Vegetation communities include diegan coastal sage scrub, disturbed habitat, eucalyptus, freshwater marsh, giant reed, non-native grassland, open water, ornamental, riparian forest, southern riparian scrub, and urban/developed. Approximately 283 acres of the Project Area are located within the boundaries of the City of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Conservation Area. The riparian habitat and sage habitat located along the San Diego River in the Project Area is located within the MSCP's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (90-100% conserved) and serves as part of a local wildlife corridor.

2.2.7 Geology/Soils

The Project Area is not traversed by any known active geologic faults. The Rose Canyon fault, located approximately five miles west of the Project Area is classified as "active" by the State of California. Therefore, the Project Area is subject to strong ground motion during a seismic event as is most of the Southern California region. Portions of the Project Area may also be subject to liquefaction in the event of a strong seismic event.

2.2.8 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Properties within the Project Area are developed with a variety of uses. These include offices, medical facilities, stores, restaurants, dry cleaning, gasoline service stations, automobile repair facilities, a sand and gravel operation, and public services buildings (e.g., hospital, school). Hazardous materials issues associated with various properties and businesses in the Project Area include eighteen open Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) cases, located at 14 facilities, and 13 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Generator facilities. There is a possibility of soil and/or groundwater contamination at some of these facilities.

2.2.9 Paleontological Resources

The Project Area is underlain by the Lindavista Formation, Stadium Conglomerate, Friars Formation, and the Santiago Peak Volcanics. The Lindavista Formation and the Stadium Conglomerate have moderate

paleontological resources sensitivity. The Friars Formation has a high resources sensitivity and the Santiago Peak Volcanics, within the Project Area, has a marginal resource sensitivity.

2.2.10 Aesthetics

Portions of Project Area have public views to the relatively natural landscape of the San Diego River and Mission Trails Regional Park to the north and northeast. However, a majority of the Project Area is urban and characterized by older development and blighted conditions.

2.2.11 Water Quality/Hydrology

The San Diego River is the primary hydrologic feature within the Project Area. The San Diego River bisects the northwestern portion of Subarea B and generally forms the western boundary of the Project Area as it flows from the southwest through the Navajo Community into Mission Valley. The San Diego River originates in the mountains northwest of the historic town of Julian and runs southwestward through an unincorporated, largely uninhabited area of San Diego County before entering El Capitan Reservoir. Downstream of El Capitan Reservoir, the river flows westward through the Cities of Santee and San Diego and past Famosa Slough to the San Diego River Estuary. The river discharges into the Pacific Ocean just south of the jettied entrance of Mission Bay in the community of Ocean Beach. The majority of the runoff from the Project Area flows into the San Diego River. Alvarado Canyon Creek traverses the southern portion of the Project Area, and is a tributary to the San Diego River.

2.2.12 Population/Housing

There are no residential units located within the Project Area, although the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plan areas are comprised primarily of residential land uses. The redevelopment area encompasses primarily non-residential uses.

2.2.13 Public Services

Much of the infrastructure in the Redevelopment Project Area is deficient and in need of improvement. Transportation and flood control infrastructure are the most notable deficiencies with respect to public services and utilities in the Project Area.

2.2.14 Mineral Resources

A 200-acre portion of a sand and gravel processing facility is located within Subarea B in the northern portion of the Project Area. The facility operates on both sides of the San Diego River and comprises a total of 250 acres.

2.3 Planning Context

As a basis for the redevelopment of the project, the project will be consistent with the City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan, community plans, and the Land Development Code (Zoning Ordinance) of the City of San Diego, as amended from time to time, and all other applicable state and local codes and guidelines.

2.3.1 Land Uses

In the City of San Diego, land use development is guided by the General Plan and the Land Development Code. The General Plan is implemented through community plans adopted for specific areas within the city. Existing community plan land uses within the Project Area include residential, commercial, industrial, sand and gravel, office/professional, public/institutional, recreational, and open space.

2.3.2 Progress Guide and General Plan

The Redevelopment Project Area is located entirely within San Diego city limits. Land use and development within the City is governed by the City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan, adopted by the City in 1979. The Progress Guide and General Plan provide the City's development policies in the form of findings, goals, guidelines, standards, and recommendations. The *Guidelines for Future Development*, Amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan (October 1, 1992), includes a Development Program that establishes goals, guidelines, and standards for redevelopment within the City of San Diego.

The Progress Guide and General Plan also establishes numerous community planning areas throughout the City. The proposed Redevelopment Project Area is located within portions of three such community plans; the Navajo Community Plan, the Tierrasanta Community Plan, and the College Area Community Plan. The following describes the general character of each of these communities as described in the adopted community plans.

2.3.3.1 *The Navajo Community Plan*

The Navajo Community is located in the easterly portion of the City of San Diego and encompasses approximately 8,000 acres of land. The community lies generally north of Interstate 8, northwest of the city of La Mesa, west of the cities of El Cajon and Santee, and southeast of the San Diego River. The community is located among some prominent and attractive geographic features, including the San Diego River, Lake Murray, Cowles Mountain, and Mission Gorge areas of Mission Trails Regional Park.

A wide variety of land uses are represented in the western portion of the Navajo community, including detached and attached residential uses in Allied Gardens, and some significant commercial and light industrial centers in Grantville, situated along both sides of Mission Gorge Road. The central and eastern portions of the community are primarily residential neighborhoods. Pockets of neighborhood- and community-serving commercial uses are situated at the intersections of major transportation corridors, such as Navajo Road at the intersections of Jackson Drive and Lake Murray Boulevard.

The primary goal of the Navajo community plan is to retain the residential character of the area while providing basic services, which enhance the day-to-day lives of its residents, such as police and fire protection and open space amenities.

An issue discussed in the Community Plan relevant to the proposed project is that the visual clutter created by numerous curb cuts, unscreened parking areas, excessive sign and billboards, and above ground utilities, as well as much of the development along Mission Gorge Road does not project a positive

impression of the community. In addition, neighborhood centers along Mission Gorge Road have developed without regard to other development, resulting in a lack of coordinated design. This portion of the Navajo Community is a part of the Grantville Redevelopment Project Area. An objective of the Community Plan is to improve the appearance of the existing strip commercial development on Mission Gorge Road between Interstate 8 and Zion Avenue by reducing signs, improving landscaping and architectural design, providing consistent building setbacks and providing adequate off-street parking. The majority of the Redevelopment Project Area, approximately 82 percent, is located within the Navajo Community Plan Area.

2.3.3.2 *The Tierrasanta Community Plan*

The Tierrasanta Community is centrally located within the greater San Diego metropolitan area. The planning area is approximately 6,700 acres in size, of which about 42 percent is within the Mission Trails Regional Park. The Tierrasanta Community Plan characterizes Tierrasanta as “a high quality, planned residential community.” It includes diverse housing types, ranging from private and Naval apartment units to luxurious, custom built homes, all interspersed with open space canyons. The relative isolation of Tierrasanta from surrounding communities has enhanced the sense of community felt by its residents. Commercial areas are limited to those needed to support the community, and there is only one small, isolated industrial site within the community.

Approximately 18 percent of the Redevelopment Project Area is located within the Tierrasanta Community Plan Area. The portion of the Tierrasanta Community within the Project Area is designated as sand and gravel and open space.

2.3.3.3 *The College Area Community Plan*

The College Area Community is located in the eastern part of the City of San Diego, along the southern rim of Mission Valley and approximately eight miles northeast of the downtown area. The plan area consists of approximately 1,950 acres and is developed primarily as a single-family community with approximately 56 percent of the developable land devoted to that use. The area has been impacted by San Diego State University (SDSU), located on its northern edge and a deteriorating commercial corridor on its southern edge. Traffic congestion is also an issue confronting the community and is related to the large university-orientated population and through-traffic traveling to and from adjacent communities.

The College Area Community presents a dual visual image. Entrances to the community are along heavily traveled streets leading to the high activity area surrounding SDSU. Development along El Cajon Boulevard is auto oriented and visually fragmented, resulting in a busy and confusing image along the length of the southern boundary of the community. However, within one block of the main arteries of the community and within just a few blocks of SDSU, the character of the community changes. Here the streets are lightly traveled, tree-lined and curving, some ending in cul-de-sacs. Canyons and hillsides are visible. Houses in these neighborhoods exhibit architectural styles spanning five decades, but mature landscaping and similar scale of development give coherence to these neighborhoods.

Less than one percent of the Redevelopment Project Area is located within the College Area Community Plan Area. This small portion is comprised only of transportation related land associated with the I-8 Freeway.

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