

Notice of Preparation - REVISED

To: Interested Parties, Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Lead Agency:

County of San Benito
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Hollister, CA 95023
Contact: Lissette Knight,
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Consulting Firm:

PMC
585 Cannery Row, Suite 304
Monterey, CA 93940
Contact: Patrick Kelly, AICP
Project Manager

Project Title: Santana Ranch Specific Plan

Project Applicant: Jim Weaver, Pacific Rim Planning Group

Notice is hereby given that the County of San Benito will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a project-level Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Santana Ranch Specific Plan project ("Project"). The County of San Benito is interested to know your views regarding the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering any permits, entitlements or approvals for the Project.

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a proposed project. The EIR process is intended to provide environmental information sufficient to evaluate a proposed project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment, establish methods for reducing adverse environmental impacts, and identify and consider alternatives to a project.

The EIR for the Project will be prepared and processed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended. In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, the EIR will include:

- A summary of the EIR
- A project description
- A description of the existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and mitigation measures
- Alternatives to the project as proposed
- Environmental consequences, including: (a) any significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources; (c) the growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project, (d) effects found not to be significant, and (e) cumulative impacts.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent ***no later than 30 days*** after receipt of this notice.

Notice of Scoping Meeting: The County will conduct a public scoping meeting to solicit comments from adjacent jurisdictions, interested parties requesting notice, responsible agencies, and trustee agencies as to the proper scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on December 16, 2009 at 6:30pm at the following location:

Veterans Memorial Building
Room 204
649 San Benito Street
Hollister Ca, 95023

Please send your agency's comments, as well as relevant contact information, to Lissette Knight, Senior Planner, at the address shown above.

Date: _____

Signature: _____
Title: Lissette Knight, Senior Planner
Phone: (831) 637-5313
Fax: (831) 637-5334
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Notice of Preparation - REVISED

Project Title: Santana Ranch Specific Plan

Project Applicant: Jim Weaver, Pacific Rim Planning Group

Property Owners: Guerra Nut Shelling
Larry W. & Georgeann M. Anderson
Tom King
Richard Hall

Project Location: The property upon which the applicant seeks to develop the Santana Ranch Specific Plan project ("Project") is located in the northern portion of San Benito County, adjacent to the eastern edge of the City of Hollister ("Plan Area"). The Plan Area is located along the east side of Fairview Road, generally between Hillcrest Road and Sunnyslope Road. The Plan Area consists of an approximately 292-acre rectangular property that is generally undeveloped and consists primarily of vacant land. The Plan Area includes two residences, an orchard and various outbuildings associated with agricultural activities.

In addition to the Plan Area, additional property will be evaluated in this EIR as part of the Project being studied. First, an approximately 26-acre area immediately adjacent to the northeast corner of the Plan Area is included in this environmental review because the applicant proposes to potentially develop this area as a wastewater treatment plant serving the Project in the event the City of Hollister's Domestic Wastewater Treatment Plant is not able to provide wastewater capacity for the Project. Second, two parcels of land located on the east side of Fairview Road immediately adjacent to the Plan Area (California Department of Forestry fire station, approximately 5 acres; and LESSALT water treatment plant, approximately 1.7 acres), are being included in this environmental review because the applicant proposes that these parcels, along with portions of the Plan Area, be annexed into Sunnyslope County Water District (SSCWD). For purposes of this EIR, the 292-acre Plan Area, the 26-acre potential wastewater treatment site (including irrigation areas), the 5-acre CDF site, and the 1.7-acre LESSALT site shall be referred to collectively as the "Project Site."

In addition to the CDF Fire Station and the LESSALT plant, other surrounding uses include ranching uses to the east, north and south; and single-family residential uses located to the west on Fairview Road within the City of Hollister. The regional location is shown in **Figure 1** and the project vicinity is shown in **Figure 2**.

Project Background

The original NOP for the proposed project was issued by the County of San Benito in March, 2008 (SCH#2008031019). The NOP indicated the environmental document would be prepared as a supplemental environmental impact report. After further review, the County determined that a project-level EIR, rather than a Supplemental EIR pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21166, will be prepared in connection with the Project. The project description was also modified to include the potential annexation of the CDF and LESSALT water treatment plant parcels. This revised NOP incorporates these changes.

Project Description

The Project proposes development of up to 1,092 dwelling units (including both single-family and multiple-family units, with a variety of housing types), with some opportunities for mixed uses in areas designated as multiple residential (SR-RM), as well as approximately 65,000 square feet of neighborhood commercial and offices uses. The project is also proposed to include an elementary school with capacity to serve up to 700 students, and a network of parks, recreational facilities, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. **Figure 3** reflects the proposed Land Use Map for the Plan Area, and sets forth the proposed land use designations for the Plan Area. The Project is anticipated to be built out in approximately four phases over a period of approximately 10 years.

The domestic water for the Project is proposed to be supplied by Sunnyslope County Water District (SSCWD). The project applicant is exploring two options for wastewater treatment. The preferred treatment option would be for the Project to connect to the City of Hollister's Domestic Wastewater Treatment Plant. In the event the preferred option is not available, the applicant would propose to construct a package wastewater treatment facility on a 26-acre area immediately adjacent to the Plan Area. The Project also includes construction of an upgraded stormwater discharge outfall into Santa Ana Creek, approximately 3,500 feet north of the Plan Area adjacent to Fairview Road.

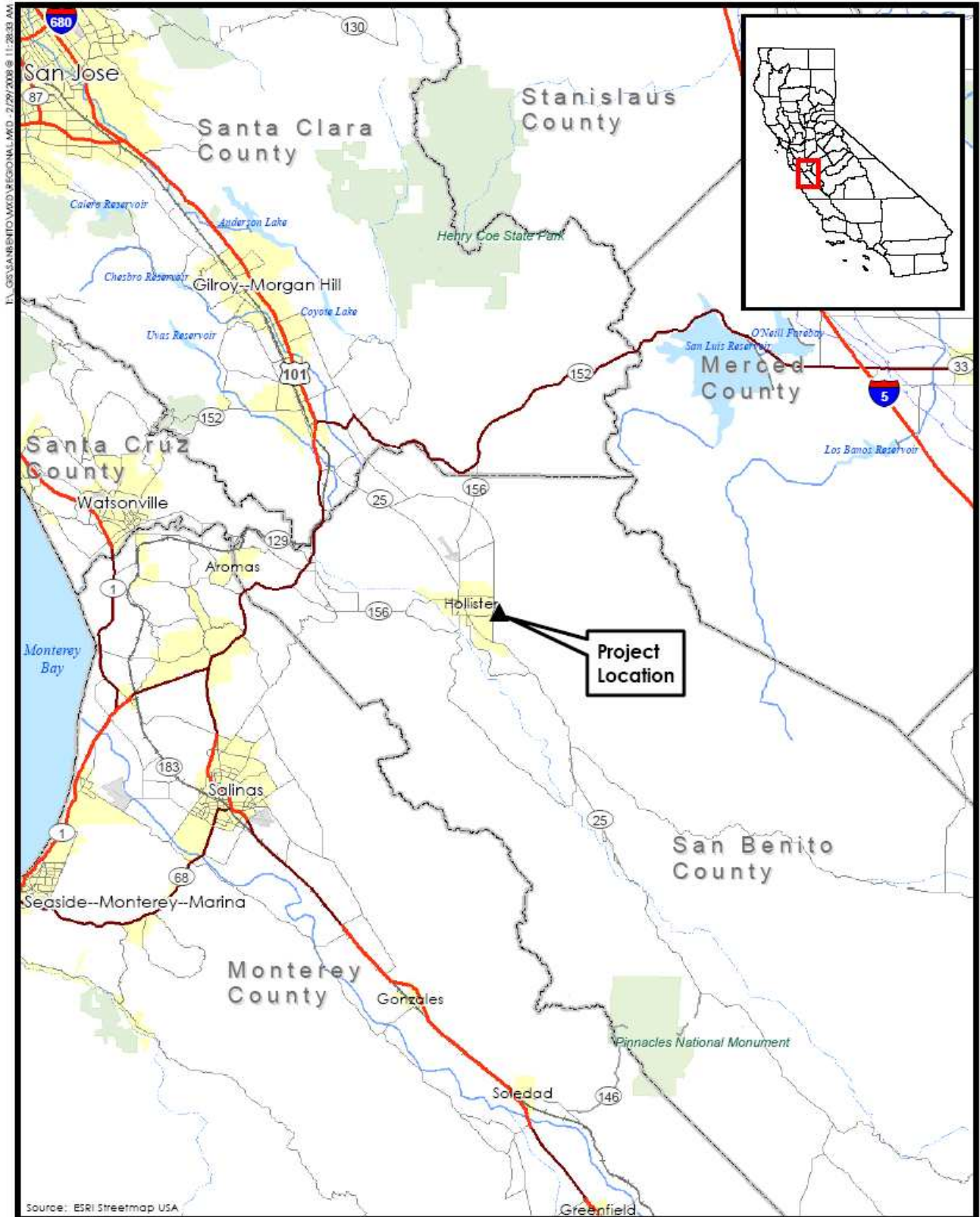
The Project would require the following discretionary approvals from San Benito County:

- Approval of San Benito County General Plan amendments to change the General Plan Diagram to show the Plan Area as "Santana Ranch-Specific Plan (SR-SP)"; and make other specified conforming amendments to the General Plan to ensure consistency between the General Plan and the Project.
- Adoption of the Santana Ranch Specific Plan.
- Approval of amendments to the San Benito County Code to change the text to reflect the new zoning designation of "Santana Ranch-Specific Plan (SR-SP)"; to change the County's Zoning Map to show the Plan Area as zoned "SR-SP"; and to make other specific conforming amendments to ensure consistency between the County Code and the Project.
- Approval of the Santana Ranch Specific Plan as the applicable zoning for the Plan Area.
- Approval of a Development Agreement between the County and the Property Owners.
- Approval of parcel, tentative, and/or final subdivision maps for specific areas of development within the Plan Area.

- Approval of grading permits.
- Approval of design review consistent with the process set forth in the Santana Ranch Specific Plan.

The Project also could require discretionary approvals from other federal, state and regional agencies including:

- Approval of permits from federal regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over the project (such as United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers) in connection with biological impacts.
- Approval by the San Benito County LAFCO for changes of organization or reorganization or to otherwise approve the proposed annexation of a portion of the Plan Area, the LESSALT treatment plant parcel and the CDF station parcel into the SSCWD service area, as well as other potential LAFCO actions required for the proposed water and wastewater service provision to the Project.
- Approval of permits from other state and regional agencies such as California Department of Fish and Game, State Water Resources Control Board, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Transportation, California Department of Health Services, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District in connection with air quality, biological, public services, transportation and utilities impacts.



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Figure 1
Regional Location



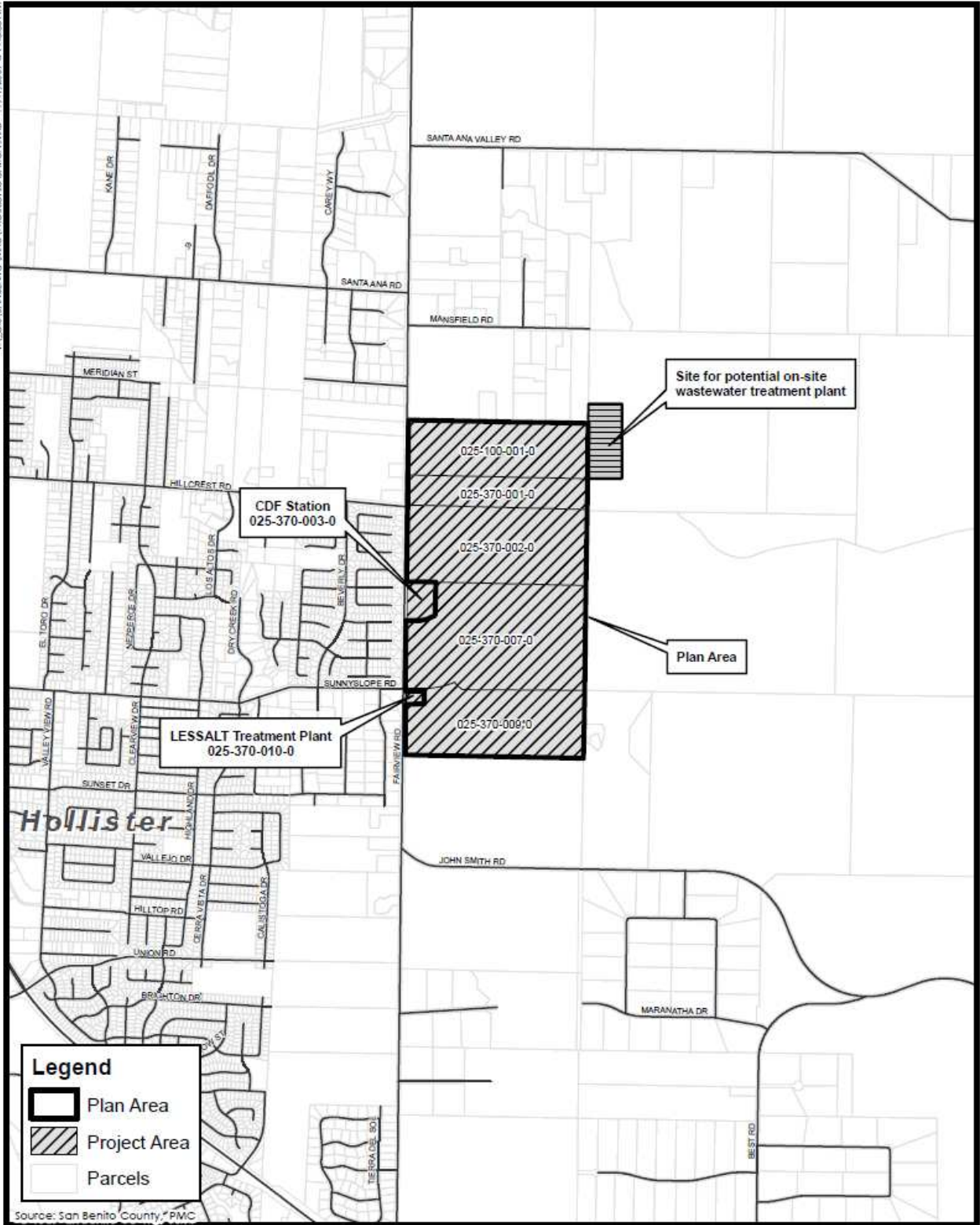
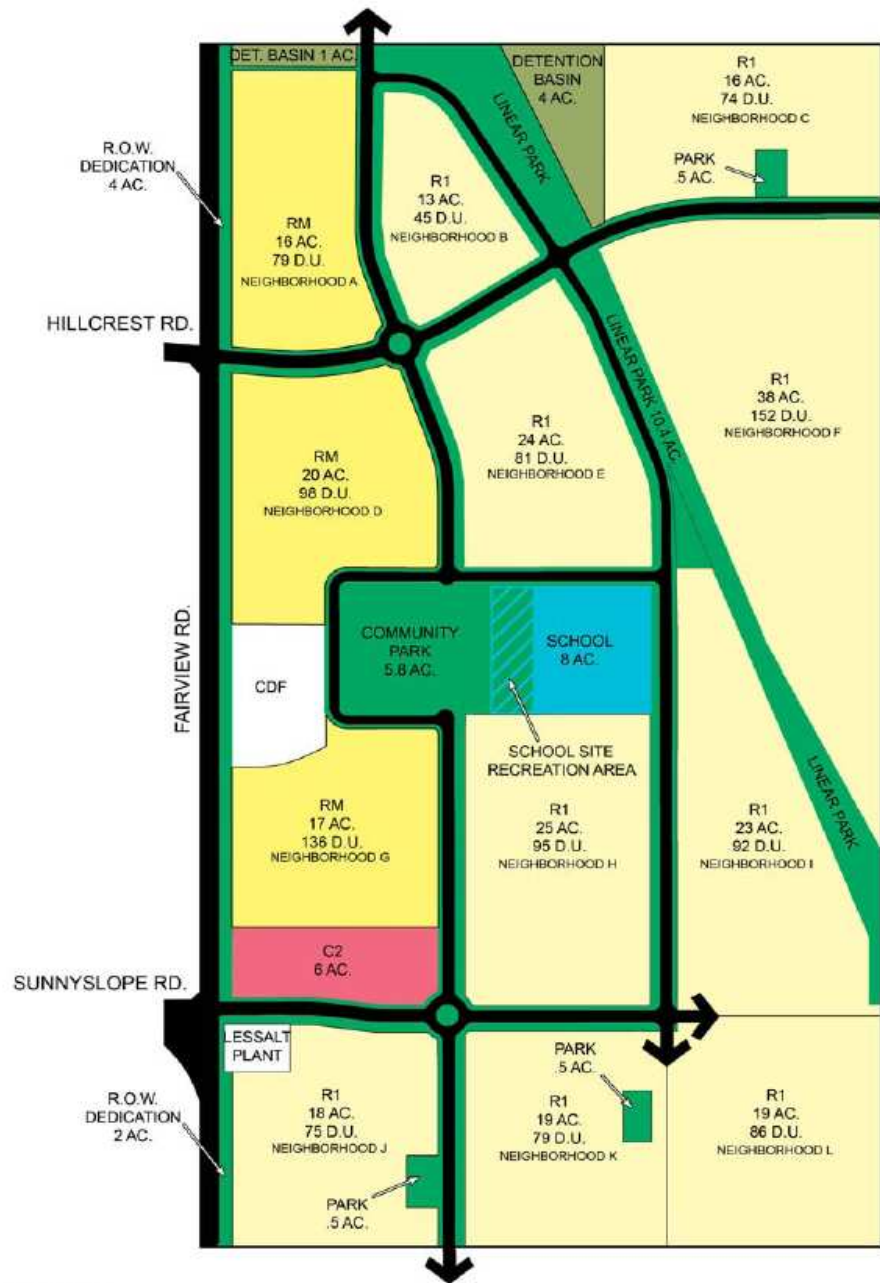


Figure 2
Project Location



LEGEND

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| R1 - SR SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL | SCHOOL SITE RECREATION AREA |
| RM - SR RESIDENTIAL MULTIPLE | SCHOOL |
| C2 - SR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL | DETENTION BASIN |
| P - SR PARKS | STREETS |



Figure 3
Specific Plan Land Use Map

Potential Areas of Concern

All CEQA environmental topic areas will be addressed in the EIR. However, based on the information set forth below, the following issue areas and potential environmental effects of the <Project may> be of particular relevance, although the level and scope of analysis will be refined based on responses to this Notice of Preparation (NOP).

1. Aesthetics
2. Agricultural Resources
3. Air Quality
4. Biological Resources
5. Cultural Resources
6. Noise
7. Traffic and Circulation
8. Wet and Dry Utilities

Aesthetics

The Project will result in the suburban development of land that is currently used for hay farming and a walnut orchard. The change in character of the site resulting from the Project, as well as potential view impacts from nearby public viewing areas will be analyzed. Potential light and glare impacts will also be addressed. It is not anticipated that significant visual impacts will result from the Project, due to the proposed design and glare reduction features incorporated into the Specific Plan.

Agricultural Resources

The change in use on the site from hay farming and walnut harvesting to suburban uses will be analyzed in the context of applicable County policies and CEQA standards of significance for the preservation of farmland. Based on the sub-prime farmland classification of the site, it is not anticipated that significant impacts to agricultural resources will occur.

Air Quality

It is anticipated that primary air quality issues associated with the Project would be impacts to air quality from long-term indirect mobile sources (i.e. traffic generation) and the emission of dust during grading activities and diesel exhaust from equipment during construction activities at the Project Site. The air quality analysis will assess short-term (i.e., construction and demolition) and long-term (i.e., operational) regional air pollutant emissions associated with the Project. Regional mobile-source emissions will be estimated based on trip generation data to be obtained from the traffic analysis prepared for the Project.

The air quality impact analysis will include an assessment of localized air quality and odor impacts associated with the potential new wastewater treatment facility that would be located east of the Plan Area. This assessment will include an evaluation of the Project's contribution to localized mobile-source carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations at nearby roadway intersections. Localized concentrations of CO at adversely affected intersections will be quantified in accordance with Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD) recommended methodologies.

Greenhouse Gas emissions of the Project will also be quantified and analyzed for potentially significant impacts to global warming and climate change.

Biological Resources

The biological resources section of the EIR will identify and describe existing and updated information regarding the Project Site; analyze the potential impacts of the Project to biotic resources; and recommend feasible mitigation measures to reduce any significant impacts to biological resources to a less than significant level. At this time, the primary biological resource issue anticipated to be associated with the Project relates to the California tiger salamander critical habitat designation of the Project Site.

Cultural Resources

The cultural resources section of the EIR will include a records search at the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources File System at Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park; a sacred lands search conducted by the Native American Heritage Commission; consultation, as appropriate, with Native Americans and other interested parties (e.g., local historical societies); and a search of the University of California, Berkeley Museum of Paleontology collections database to determine the sensitivity of the area for the presence of paleontological resources. An archaeological survey of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) will be conducted. A report documenting the results of the archaeological investigation will be incorporated into the cultural resources section of the EIR.

Noise

The noise analysis will include a description of the existing noise environment, based on existing environmental documentation and onsite reconnaissance data. The noise analysis will identify noise from traffic generation along roadways where residential or other noise-sensitive receptors are located, stationary noise sources from project operations and construction noise impacts. Future noise levels generated by the construction and operation of the Project will be projected to the nearest noise-sensitive receivers and placed into context within the future noise environment. The incremental increase in noise from Project-generated traffic will be assessed. On-site noise sources (e.g., loading docks, mechanical equipment) and the effect on adjacent noise sensitive receptors will also be addressed. Short-term construction noise impacts will be assessed by estimating construction-related noise and projecting the noise levels to the nearest noise-sensitive receptors. This section will recommend feasible mitigation measures to reduce any significant noise impacts and potential changes to the Project, if warranted, to reduce significant noise impacts to less than significant levels.

Traffic and Circulation

The Traffic and Circulation impact analysis will be based on an independent peer review of the traffic impact report, conducted by the County's consultant, PMC. The impact analysis will discuss existing traffic volume data; trip generation, distribution, and assignment assumptions. The levels of service (LOS) at key study intersections and roadway segments within the study area will be identified under existing, background, project, and general plan conditions with implementation of the Project. Recommended mitigation measures will be developed addressing identified traffic and circulation impacts resulting from the Project. The discussion will also address public and alternative transportation facilities potentially impacted by the Project, as well as any new and upgraded facilities proposed with the Project.

Wet and Dry Utilities

Water Supply: An SB-610 water supply assessment (WSA) will be prepared on behalf of the Sunnyslope County Water District for the Project to address sufficiency of water supply for the Project over a 20-year timeframe, within the context of existing, approved, and planned uses drawing from

the common groundwater basin. The results of the water supply assessment will be incorporated into the Wet and Dry Utility chapter of the Draft EIR.

Wastewater Treatment : The wastewater treatment analysis will describe existing conditions and will include an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the preferred wastewater treatment option of obtaining capacity for the Project from the City Of Hollister's Domestic Wastewater Treatment Plant. It also will include an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of constructing a package wastewater treatment facility to serve the Project in the event the needed capacity from the City of Hollister's wastewater treatment plant is not available.

This analysis will include an Energy Assessment, in accordance with CEQA Appendix F, to address potential energy efficiency impacts and issues of the Project.