

1.1 INTENT AND PURPOSE OF SPECIFIC PLAN

The MetroWalk Specific Plan (Specific Plan) contains the development plans, infrastructure development plans, development regulations, design guidelines, and implementation program necessary to achieve the orderly and compatible development of MetroWalk, a new transit-oriented residential community directly south of the Vista Canyon Specific Plan that was approved by the City of Santa Clarita (City) in 2011. The Specific Plan facilitates additional high-quality, attainably priced, multi-family residential apartments and townhomes in proximity to the new City/Metrolink Station, Bus Transfer Station and Vista Canyon Town Center amenities and services. While separate and standalone, this Specific Plan serves as a natural extension of the Vista Canyon Specific Plan and is consistent and compatible with the provisions contained in the Vista Canyon Specific Plan, as well as the goals and policies of the City of Santa Clarita General Plan (General Plan). The MetroWalk Specific Plan has been prepared in conjunction with a zone change request to change the zoning of the site from Business Park (BP) to Specific Plan (SP). The City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code (SCMC), Section 17.37.030 (Specific Plan (SP) Zone), establishes the Specific Plan zoning designation, and indicates that specific allowable uses, maximum intensity standards, and development standards shall be determined by the adopted specific plan. Therefore, this Specific Plan will achieve the purposes of the City's SP Zone, and will serve as the zoning code for the Specific Plan site (described more fully in **Section 2.0, Development Plan**).

In April 2020, the applicant filed a development application (Master Case No. 20-045) with the City. As required by the City, the applicant is requesting the following discretionary land use entitlement approvals to facilitate adoption of the Specific Plan:

- (a) **General Plan Amendment and Zone Change (GPA/ZC).** The property is currently zoned and designated Business Park (BP) in both the City's Zoning Code and General Plan. To accommodate the project, the applicant requests that the City approve a Zone Change and General Plan Land Use Element Amendment to revise the land use zone/designation for the property from Business Park (BP) to Specific Plan (SP). A new SP land use zone/designation for the property will ensure that the development of the site is consistent and compatible with the Vista Canyon Specific Plan to the north.
- (b) **Metro Walk Specific Plan.** The applicant is proposing the adoption of this Specific Plan, which would establish the zoning, development plans, regulations, guidelines, and implementation provisions governing development within the Specific Plan site. The Specific Plan serves as a guide to implementation of the City's General Plan goals, policies, and objectives. Key components of the proposed Specific Plan include the land use plan, permitted use chart, development standards, circulation plan, conceptual landscape plan, pedestrian plan, trails plan, and sustainability plan.

- (c) **Tentative Tract Map No. 83087.** The applicant is proposing to organize the property into four Planning Areas (PA), one for each residential product type, and subdivide the property to facilitate construction of up to 498 residential units (including 179 market-rate apartments, 119 age-qualified apartments, 50 affordable senior apartments, inclusive of one manager unit, and 150 townhomes). Other components of the Specific Plan include parking, courtyards, community rooms, parks and playground, landscape/open space, club houses, trails, paths and private drives.
- (d) **Development Review and Architectural Design Review.** The applicant is proposing development plans for a new multi-family residential apartment and townhome development. As such, a development review and architectural design review are proposed by the applicant in accordance with the provisions of SCMC Chapter 17.23, Sections 17.23.110 and 17.23.120, in order to safeguard and enhance the appearance and quality of development in the City.

1.2 ORGANIZATION OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN

The Specific Plan is divided into six sections. The content of each section is described below.

Section 1.0, Introduction, describes the intent, purpose, structure, and organization of the Specific Plan. The section also describes the Specific Plan location, surrounding land uses, and site characteristics, including existing and planned land use designations. In addition, the section describes the site's characteristics and existing conditions, and discusses the Specific Plan authorization. The section also addresses the relationship between the Specific Plan and the Santa Clarita General Plan, SCMC, and other laws and regulations.

Section 2.0, Development Plan, identifies the Specific Plan objectives and development plans, including the land use plan, land use plan statistics, mobility plan, sustainability plan, landscape plan, parks and recreation plan, and phasing plan. Each plan is described in detail in this section.

Section 3.0, Infrastructure Development Plan, describes the infrastructure and utilities needed to serve the Specific Plan site. Specifically, the section describes the backbone infrastructure systems (sewer, water, recycled water, water quality, and storm drainage), and utilities (e.g., gas, electricity), needed to support the Specific Plan site.

Sections 4.0, Development Regulations, sets forth the land use designations, site development standards, allowed land uses and permit requirements, permitted accessory uses, parking, and signage restrictions, and other regulations.

Section 5.0, Design Guidelines, address design themes, site planning, and architectural themes for each of the major land use designations within the Specific Plan.

Section 6.0, Specific Plan Implementation, describes the Specific Plan implementation procedures. The Specific Plan, Volume II, includes appendices supporting the Specific Plan, including a legal description of the property (Appendix 1.0-1); General Plan Consistency Analysis (Appendix 1.0-2); Tentative Tract Map No. 83087 (Appendix 1.0-3); and Renderings of the development contemplated by the Specific Plan (Appendix 5.0-1).

1.3 PROJECT LOCATION

1.3.1 Location

The Specific Plan site consists of approximately 20.4 gross acres located in the northeastern portion of the Santa Clarita Valley within the City of Santa Clarita. The City, located in the center of the Santa Clarita Valley, is approximately 35 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The City generally is bound by Interstate 5 (I-5) and State Route 14 (SR-14) to the east, west, and south, and is about 1 mile from the Angeles National Forest boundary to the north and east. The Santa Clarita Valley planning area encompasses several distinct communities both within the City limits and in the surrounding unincorporated areas. The existing communities within the City include most of Newhall, Valencia, Saugus, and Canyon Country, with sub-communities of Sand Canyon and Placerita Canyon. The communities within the unincorporated areas are Stevenson Ranch, Castaic Junction, Val Verde, Hasley Canyon, and Castaic. The Specific Plan site is located within the Canyon Country community of the Santa Clarita Valley planning area.

Figure 1.0-1, Regional Location, depicts the Specific Plan site in relation to the region. **Figure 1.0-2, Vicinity Map**, illustrates the Specific Plan vicinity. **Figure 1.0-3, Plan Area Aerial**, illustrates the physical characteristics of the Specific Plan site and vicinity.

1.3.2 Surrounding Uses

The Specific Plan site is located immediately south of the Vista Canyon Specific Plan area, which is approved for residential and mixed-use transit-oriented development and is currently under construction. Colony Townhomes, a multi-family residential community, is directly west of the Specific Plan site. To the south is the existing Metrolink rail line and the Fair Oaks Ranch/West Sand Canyon Annexation area, which consists of single-family and multi-family residential units, an elementary school, community park, and vacant land. A commercial horse breeding facility with accessory residential and barn structures are located to the east of the Specific Plan site. Additionally, the eastern half of the Specific Plan site is within the Significant Ecological Area Overlay Zone (SEA). **Figure 1.0-4, Development Surrounding Specific Plan**, depicts the surrounding development in relation to the Specific Plan site.

1.3.3 *Site Characteristics*

The Specific Plan site is a 20.4-acre vacant infill site directly accessible by one existing roadway, Lost Canyon Road, which borders the site to the west. Regional access to and from the MetroWalk Specific Plan site will also be made possible through the Vista Canyon Specific Plan area to the north. Vista Canyon Road Bridge, currently under construction in the Vista Canyon Specific Plan site as of the date of this Specific Plan, will connect the Vista Canyon Plan Area with Soledad Canyon Road and Antelope Valley Highway. The Specific Plan site is bordered by the Metrolink rail to the south, which is held by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) for Los Angeles County. This rail corridor includes the Metrolink Santa Clarita/Antelope Valley commuter line and freight service.

Figure 1.0-5, Site Photographs, illustrates the existing conditions within the Specific Plan site. The site is irregularly shaped and generally flat. From the rail corridor the site drains northwest toward the Santa Clara River. With the exception of various utility easements on site, there are no other natural or historic conditions of significance. Existing site elevations range from a high of 1,505 elevation in the central southeast portion of the Specific Plan site to a low of 1,481 elevation in the northwest portion of the site.

1.4 **AUTHORITY**

The Specific Plan has been prepared pursuant to the provisions of the California Government Code, Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8, Sections 65450 through 65457. The California Government Code authorizes jurisdictions to adopt specific plans by resolution as policy documents or by ordinance as regulatory documents. The law allows preparation of specific plans, as may be required for the systematic execution of the General Plan and further allows for their adoption and amendment. The Specific Plan is regulatory in nature and will serve as the zoning code for the Specific Plan site. The Specific Plan is prepared in accordance with SCMC, Section 17.37.030 (Specific Plan (SP) Zone), which establishes the specific plan zoning designation and indicates that specific allowable uses, maximum intensity standards, and development standards shall be determined by the adopted specific plan. Development plans, tract maps, parcel maps and other entitlement requests processed in conjunction with the Specific Plan must be consistent with both the Specific Plan and the City's General Plan.

1.5 **THE SPECIFIC PLAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN AND SANTA CLARITA MUNICIPAL CODE**

1.5.1 *Relationship to the General Plan*

The Specific Plan implements the goals and policies of the City's General Plan. **Appendix 1.0-2, General Plan Consistency Analysis**, contains an analysis of the Specific Plan's consistency with the City's General Plan.

1.5.2 Relationship to the Santa Clarita Municipal Code

The Specific Plan will be incorporated into the SCMC and provide the allowable land uses, development regulations, design guidelines, and implementation procedures for the property within the boundary of the Specific Plan. The regulations contained within the Specific Plan are in addition to those set forth in the planning, zoning, and subdivision provisions of the SCMC, and do not convey any rights not otherwise granted under the provisions and procedures contained in the SCMC or other ordinances, except as specifically provided for herein. Whenever the Specific Plan contains provisions that establish regulations, including, but not limited to, uses, densities, intensities, heights, parking, signage, open space, and landscaping requirements, which are different from, or more restrictive or permissive than would be allowed pursuant to the provisions of the SCMC, the Specific Plan shall prevail and supersede the applicable provisions of the SCMC.

1.6 COMPLIANCE WITH CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The MetroWalk Specific Plan project qualifies as a Transit Priority Project per Senate Bill (SB) 375's CEQA reform provisions and is consistent with Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and its associated climate goals. As such, the MetroWalk Specific Plan project will use a streamlined review and analysis of the project consistent with the SCS. As part of this modified environmental review and analysis, an expedited Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment for Transit Priority Projects, consistent with the SCS, will be prepared. Under SB 375's streamlined review and analysis, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/SCS Environmental Impact Report serves as a first-tier environmental document under CEQA.

1.6.1 Senate Bill 226 CEQA Streamlining

In 2011, Governor Jerry Brown signed into legislation SB 226, which became effective in 2013. SB 226 streamlined the environmental review process for eligible infill projects by limiting the topics subject to review at the project level where the effects of infill development have been addressed in a planning level decision or by uniformly applicable development policies.

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.3, a project may be eligible for streamlining if it does the following:

- Is located in an urban area on a previously developed site or surrounded by urban uses (75% of perimeter);
- Satisfies performance standards in CEQA Guidelines Appendix M; and
- Is consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies in SCAG's SCS.

1.6.2 *Senate Bill 743 (Steinberg, 2013)*

SB 743 made several changes to CEQA for projects located in areas served by transit. SB 743 proposes to eliminate auto delay, level of services, and other similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as a basis for determining significant impacts. It also creates a new exemption for certain projects that are consistent with a Specific Plan, and eliminates the need to evaluate aesthetic and parking impacts of a project in some circumstances.

1.7 **COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

1.7.1 *Global Warming Solutions Act*

The Global Warming Solutions Act (Assembly Bill [AB] 32) of 2006 established a comprehensive program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change. AB 32 requires the California Air Resources Board to develop regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. As of January 1, 2012, the greenhouse gas rules and market mechanisms adopted by the California Air Resources Board took effect and are legally enforceable. The reduction goal for 2020 is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% of the current rate to meet the 1990 level, and a reduction of 80% of current rates by 2050. The AB 32 Scoping Plan contains the main strategies California will use to reduce greenhouse gases. The Scoping Plan has a range of greenhouse gas reduction actions that include direct regulations, alternative compliance mechanisms, monetary and nonmonetary incentives, voluntary actions, market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade system, and an AB 32 program implementation regulation to fund the program.

1.7.2 *The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act*

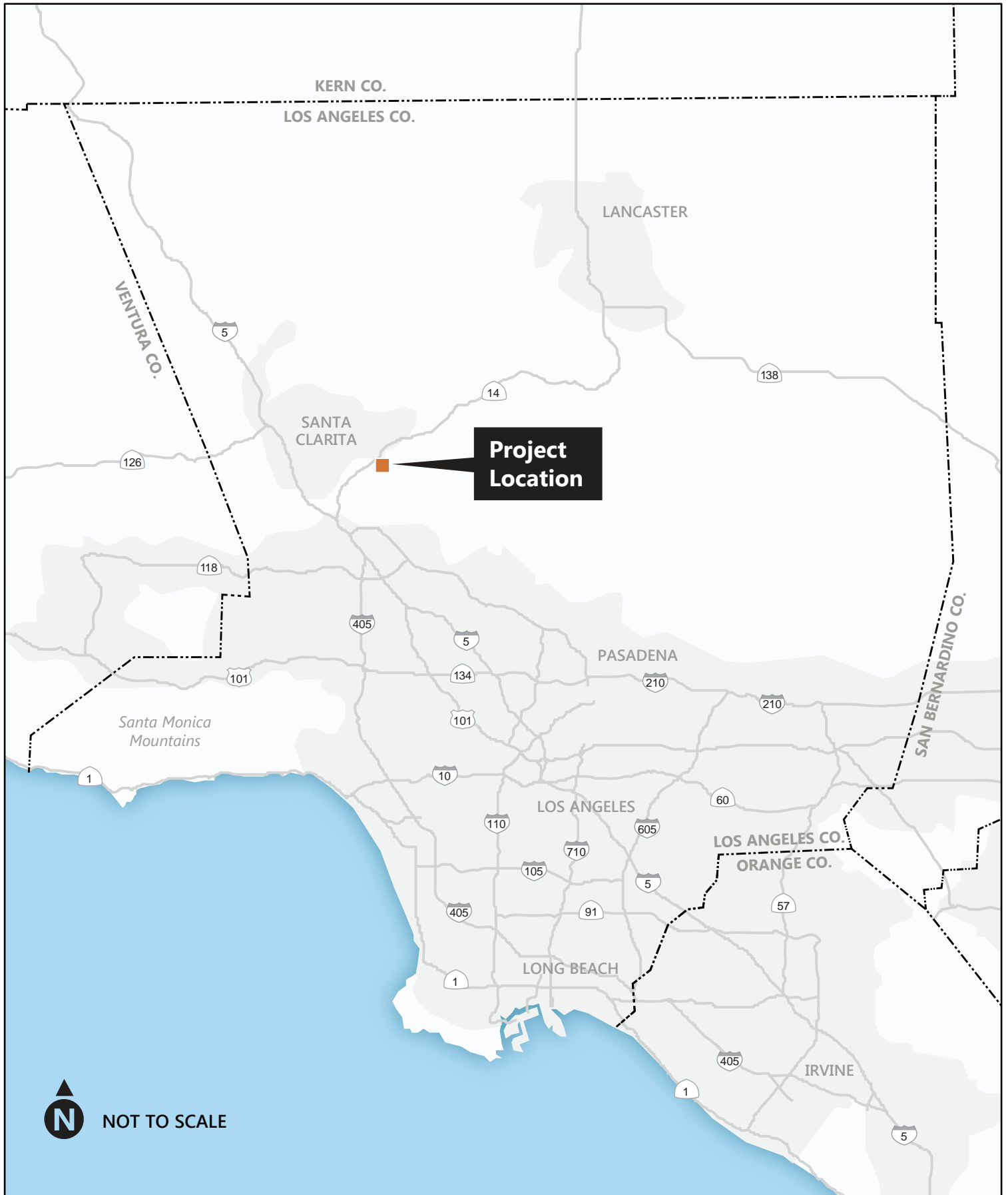
The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375) of 2008 provides incentives for cities and developers to bring housing and jobs closer together and improve public transit. The goal behind SB 375 is to reduce automobile commuting trips and thus help meet the statewide targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions set by AB 32. This mandate requires the California Air Resources Board to determine per capita GHG emission-reduction targets for each metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in the state at two points in the future—2020 and 2035. In turn, each MPO must prepare an SCS that demonstrates how the region will meet its GHG reduction target through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning.

1.7.3 Southern California Association of Governments

The Southern California Association of Governments’ Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal, the 2020–2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. Connect SoCal is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental, and public health goals. Connect SoCal charts a course for closely integrating land use and transportation so that the region can grow smartly and sustainably. What is at the heart of Connect SoCal are over 4,000 transportation projects—ranging from highway improvements, railroad grade separations, bicycle lanes, new transit hubs and replacement bridges. In addition, Connect SoCal is supported by a combination of transportation and land use strategies that help the region achieve state greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and federal Clean Air Act requirements, preserve open space areas, improve public health and roadway safety, support our vital goods movement industry and use resources more efficiently.

The Specific Plan is consistent with the Connect SoCal in that it also embodies the vision of integrating land use with planned mobility improvements by creating a transit-oriented residential community that connects residents to the new City/MetroLink transit center and new Bus Transfer Station. The Specific Plan also provides open space and recreational resources and accessibility to employment and day-to-day services that support a healthy and balanced quality of life.

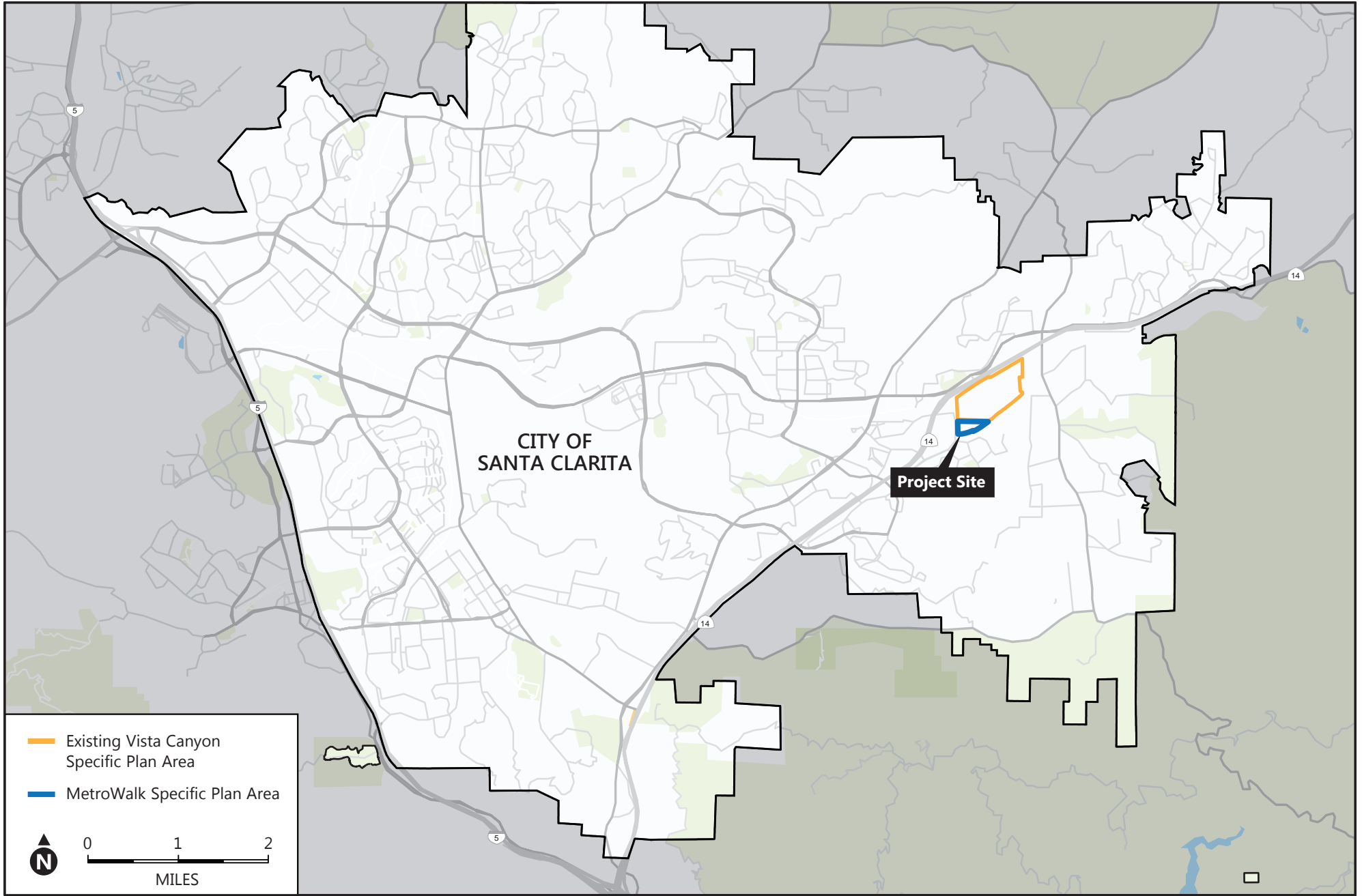
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New Urban West

FIGURE 1.0-1
Regional Location

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FIGURE 1.0-2
Site Vicinity

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FIGURE 1.0-3
Plan Area

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SOURCE:
New Urban West

FIGURE 1.0-4
Development Surrounding Specific Plan Area

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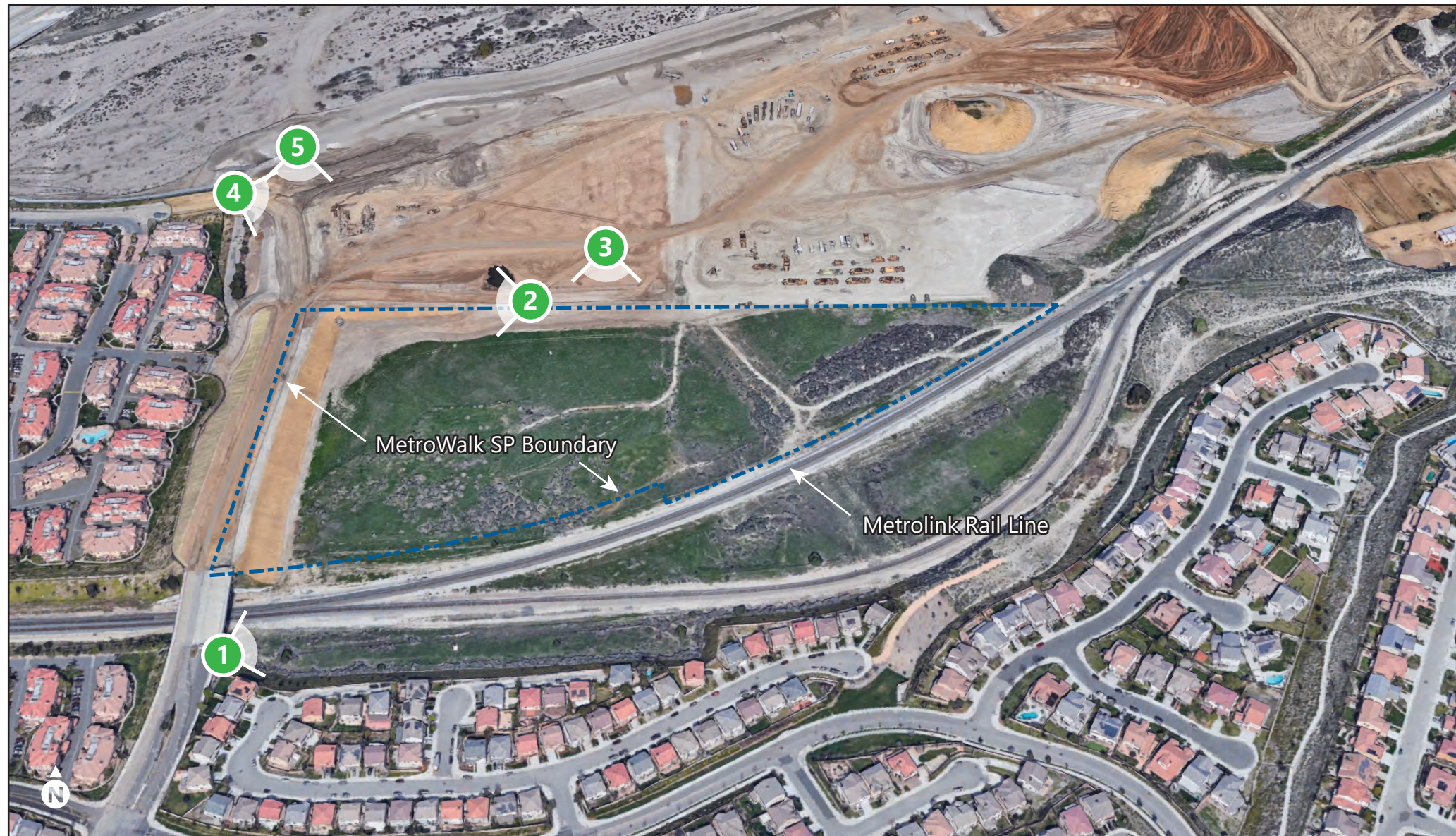
View: Site from newly constructed Lost Canyon Rd. bridge, looking Northeast



View: New streetscape bordering site to the North, looking West



View: Site, looking South. Metrolink train passing by.



MetroWalk SP Boundary

Metrolink Rail Line



View: New streetscape bordering site to the North of Vista Canyon, looking East



View: New streetscape looking South toward site and Vista Canyon

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