



CITY OF SANTA CLARITA  
STAFF REPORT  
VISTA CANYON/ANCILLARY ANNEXATION AREA  
MASTER CASE NO. 07-127: ANNEXATION 07-002A & B (INCLUDES AMENDMENTS  
TO THE CITY'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE), PRE-ZONE 07-001A & B, GENERAL PLAN  
AMENDMENT 07-001A & B,  
SPECIFIC PLAN 07-001, TENTATIVE TRACT MAP 69164, CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT  
07-009, OAK TREE PERMIT 07-019  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT SCH NO. 2007071039

DATE: November 2, 2010

TO: Chairperson Burkhart and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Paul D. Brotzman, Director of Community Development  
Lisa M. Webber, AICP, Planning Manager

CASE PLANNER: Jeff Hogan, AICP, Senior Planner  
Patrick Leclair, Associate Planner

APPLICANT: Vista Canyon, LLC (Vista Canyon Project)

LOCATION: The 185-acre Vista Canyon site is located at the southwest intersection of Sand Canyon Road and State Route 14 (SR-14) in the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County.

The 3,065-acre ancillary annexation area (AAA), which is comprised of the existing Fair Oaks Ranch (approximately 1,082 acres), Jakes Way (approximately 260 acres) and Sand Canyon communities (approximately 1,723 acres), also is located in the unincorporated County area.

REQUESTS: Annexation of the Vista Canyon site and AAA, which are located adjacent to the City boundary, including an amendment to the City's Sphere of Influence.

A Pre-zone to amend the City Zoning Map by pre-zoning the Vista Canyon site to Specific Plan (SP) and adoption of a Specific Plan Document that includes entitlements for 1,117 dwelling units (96 single-family detached, 1,021 multi-family attached), 646,000 square feet of commercial office, 164,000 square feet of retail, and a 200-room hotel. A residential overlay within the SP would permit the conversion of up to 250,000 square feet of the commercial office area to 233 additional multi-family attached dwelling units, permitting development of the project site with up to 1,350 dwelling units and 700,000 square feet of commercial area.

A pre-zone also would be required for the AAA.

An amendment to the General Plan Land Use Map and Circulation Element designating the Vista Canyon site as SP, revising the Significant Ecological Area (SEA) overlay to correspond to the area proposed as Specific Plan-Open Space (SP-OS), and establishing the alignment and roadway classification for Lost Canyon Road and Vista Canyon Road.

A general plan amendment also would be required for the AAA.

Vesting Tentative Tract Map 69164 to subdivide 185 acres into 162 lots. In addition, each individual dwelling or commercial unit will have the ability to be subdivided.

A Conditional Use Permit to allow for the import of up to 500,000 cubic yards of dirt to accommodate the development within the Vista Canyon site.

An Oak Tree Permit to allow for the removal of 10, four of which are heritage size, of the 41 oak trees located within the Specific Plan area and to encroach into the protected zone of 10 oak trees. The request would also permit the encroachment into the protected zone of 10 oak trees. Pruning or trimming of seven of these 10 oak trees would also be permitted. Implementation of three of the four Lost Canyon Road/Sand Canyon intersection options could require an additional oak tree removal and/or up to two additional oak tree encroachments.

Review and certification of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the Vista Canyon project and AAA.

## **PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

The purpose of this meeting is to answer questions raised by the Commission at the last meeting and to provide the Commission with information on the following sections of the Draft EIR (DEIR): Flood, Traffic and Access, Air Quality, Noise, Biological Resources, Water Services, Water Quality, Parks and Recreation, Visual Resources, River Corridor, Wastewater Disposal, Global Climate Change, and Project Alternatives. City staff and relevant technical consultants will be in attendance and available to answer Commission questions.

### *Future Planning Commission Meetings*

Tuesday, December 21, 2010      Response to Planning Commission and public issues/questions, DEIR discussion

Tuesday, January 18, 2011      Response to Planning Commission and public issues/questions, Final Project Issues and Recommendation

to Council

March, 2011 – August, 2011

City Council Public Hearings

### **OCTOBER 19 PLANNING COMMISSION QUESTIONS**

At the October 19 Commission meeting, Commission members raised several questions regarding the project. Several of these questions (floodplain, biology, etc.) are addressed in more detail in the EIR summaries provided in this staff report. Other questions raised by the Commission at the October 19, 2010 meeting are listed below with corresponding responses:

1. Where is proposed import of up to 500,000 cubic yards of earth coming from?

Import materials for Vista Canyon are proposed to be received from one or both of the following approved borrow sites: (a) the George Carvalho Santa Clarita Sports Complex Expansion, and (b) the Center Pointe Business Park. Development on both of the borrow sites has been previously approved by the City.

2. Where is the funding coming from for the Vista Canyon Road Bridge?

The Vista Canyon Road Bridge will be constructed by the project applicant. The Vista Canyon Road Bridge will be constructed and operational prior to the 150th occupancy within Planning Area 3.

3. Will there be new on/off ramps for the 14 Freeway as mitigation for the Vista Canyon project?

The applicant's traffic consultant investigated the feasibility of a new interchange (with SB freeway on- and off-ramps) on SR 14 between Via Princessa and Sand Canyon Road. Two potential locations were identified (Lost Canyon Road/Vista Canyon Road existing undercrossing and a location south of the existing undercrossing).

The first location evaluated for a new interchange would be at the Lost Canyon Road (i.e., Vista Canyon Road) undercrossing, which is approximately 0.9 miles south of the SR 14/Sand Canyon Road interchange. However, this spacing distance (the distance from the potential interchange to the Sand Canyon interchange) would not meet Caltrans' minimum interchange spacing standards. Furthermore, the southbound on- and off-ramps would intersect Lost Canyon Road (Vista Canyon Road) within 250 feet of the existing Soledad Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road intersection. This intersection spacing would lead to operational problems on both Soledad Canyon Road and Lost Canyon Road (Vista Canyon Road). These technical reasons would preclude a new interchange at this location.

A second potential location for a new interchange was also investigated at a location south of the Lost Canyon Road undercrossing and north of the Santa Clara River. Given the close spacing of Soledad Canyon Road and Vista Canyon Road to SR 14, the on- and off-ramps would need to

connect directly with these roadways. This would likely pose significant operational and geometric constraints, and would likely result in a design that is not supported by Caltrans (e.g., insufficient acceleration/deceleration length, nonstandard curve radius, potential for wrong-way travel).

It is important to note that the Vista Canyon project will be participating in improvements to the SR 14/Sand Canyon Road and Via Princessa interchanges to improve their operations to acceptable levels of service. The Vista Canyon applicant has also negotiated a mutually acceptable fair share mitigation agreement with Caltrans to address its impacts on SR 14. Therefore, given the above operational challenges with a new interchange and the mitigation measures already required of the Vista Canyon project, a new interchange on SR 14 was determined to not be warranted.

#### 4. Why is Solid Waste an unavoidable significant impact?

A combination of compliance with the City of Santa Clarita's diversion ordinances and specific solid waste mitigation measures identified for Vista Canyon will significantly reduce the collection and hauling of solid waste to the Chiquita Canyon Landfill in the County of Los Angeles which has the capacity and approval to accommodate the solid waste demands for the next nine years. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that the solid waste or trash fees collected from residents will be used by the solid waste companies to obtain approvals to expand existing landfills, to identify/entitle new landfills and to construct new recycling facilities to accommodate the existing and future solid waste demands in the City. In fact, as identified in the Draft EIR, there are four major landfill expansion plans in the County, including Chiquita Canyon Landfill, currently being proposed that would continue to meet the solid waste demands of the City. However, at this time it is also too speculative to assume that there is unlimited space for landfills for the next 100 years, thus City staff is taking the conservative approach and acknowledging that landfill space is finite thereby resulting in a conservative conclusion that solid waste is an unavoidable significant impact.

#### 5. How is the Vista Canyon project mitigating their impacts to the junior and high schools within the William S. Hart Union High School District?

The applicant and the Hart District have entered into a Mitigation Agreement that was finalized on October 6, 2010. The Mitigation Agreement requires the applicant to provide funding to the Hart District for additional facilities, such as additional classrooms, ensuring that adequate school capacity would be available to serve the students generated by Vista Canyon. The Mitigation Agreement satisfies all State requirements.

#### 6. How is the City addressing concerns cited by property owners in Sand Canyon related to the annexation of properties surrounding Vista Canyon?

City staff is in contact with these property owners and are working towards addressing their concerns associated with the annexation of their properties into the City.

## **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

### Draft Environmental Impact Report Sections

Below are summaries of the thirteen DEIR sections being presented to the Commission at tonight's meeting.

#### Flood

This section of the DEIR (beginning on pg. 4.2-1) discusses and analyzes the project's potential hydrologic, or "flood," impacts, flood control improvements, and, additional mitigation measures recommended to reduce the project's potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. The section summarizes and is based upon information presented in: (i) the "Vista Canyon VTTM #69164 Santa Clara River Bank Protection Draft EIR Flood Technical Report" (Flood Technical Report), prepared by Pacific Advanced Civil Engineering Inc. (PACE); and (ii) the "Drainage Concept/SUSMP Vista Canyon," prepared by Alliance Land Planning and Engineering, Inc. Both reports are included in Appendix 4.2 of the DEIR (Volume II). (The project's impacts to biological resources within and adjacent to the Santa Clara River and water quality are discussed and analyzed in DEIR Sections 4.20 and 4.8.1, respectively.)

#### *Background*

The project site is located within a contributing drainage of 191 acres of the 1,624 square mile Santa Clara River watershed basin. This area represents less than a 0.02 percent of the basin. Portions of the project site lie within the County's Capital Floodplain and the Federal Emergency Management Administration's (FEMA) 100-year floodplain (i.e. portions of the project site are located at an elevation at or below the County's Capital Floodplain elevation and the FEMA 100-year floodplain elevation)

The proposed project's flood protection facilities include the construction of approximately 7,500 linear feet of buried soil cement bank protection, outlet structures, and the Vista Canyon Road Bridge. The project also proposes to build a drainage system to contain storm water runoff from the site and from areas upstream of the site, and elevate the development area above FEMA's 100-year floodplain.

#### *Methodology*

The section begins by summarizing the hydrologic (relating to the amount of water) and hydraulic (relating to the size of pipes and channels) methodologies used to calculate the pre- and post-development runoff quantities, capacities of proposed improvements, and effects of development on the Santa Clara River.

#### *Hydraulic and Hydrologic Analyses Methodology*

As the DEIR explains, project pipes and channels are sized based on hydraulic analysis, which is based on assumptions regarding rainfall quantities, rainstorm frequencies, and the amount and type of development that would occur in the drainage basin. Once a site has been developed, the water that would normally infiltrate into the ground may run off at higher than normal flow rates,

referred to as “Q.” Pipes and channels are designed according to calculations of the expected rate of flow, measured in cubic feet per second (cfs).

The County of Los Angeles (County) requires all flood control facilities to be designed to collect and convey flood flows based on what the County’s Department of Public Works (DPW) has termed the “capital flood” (Qcap). The City of Santa Clarita has adopted the County’s requirements. These design parameters are intended to reduce damage due to high canyon flows, convey large volumes of water in a major storm, and meet future flood control needs.

The Qcap is a hypothetical scenario that is based on a theoretical rainstorm patterned after actual major extra-tropical storms observed in the Los Angeles region. The Qcap scenario assumes an amount of rainfall generated by a 50-year frequency storm that lasts four days, and that delivers the maximum amount of rainfall during the fourth day, when the ground is already saturated. The Qcap further assumes that the rain falls on severe ground conditions, such that the natural portions of the watershed are assumed to have been burned by a recent fire. (Fire not only removes the natural erosion control provided by the vegetation, but also reduces soil infiltration (the ability of the soil to absorb the water).) Additionally, the Qcap assumes that the storm runoff contains a large layer of eroded topsoil (sediment), as well as burned trees and bushes, all of which is referred to as “debris.” To take the debris flow into account, the Qcap design flow rate is artificially increased using a prescribed “bulking factor,” which is a function of soil type, steepness of the terrain and the size of the drainage basin.

These assumptions cumulatively result in a theoretical peak flow rate that is 20 to 50 percent higher than a 50-year storm falling on an unburned/unbulked drainage basin. The likelihood that all of the theoretical assumptions identified in the County’s Qcap would happen simultaneously is extremely small, and the scenario assumes greater runoff flows than does the Federal Insurance Administration’s (FIA) methodology for calculating the 100-year and 500-year floods. As a result, the County’s Qcap methodology is more conservative than that of the FIA.

#### *Santa Clara River Hydraulics*

The pre- and post-development and cumulative floodplain conditions of the Santa Clara River were modeled using the River Analysis System software developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ (ACOE) Hydrologic Engineering Center. Using this computer modeling, the hydraulic effects of the project’s proposed bank stabilization, erosion protection, and Vista Canyon Road Bridge were calculated; for the cumulative scenario, the hydraulic effects of the future Santa Clarita Parkway bridge were also calculated and added to the project modeling. Existing Santa Clara River discharge rates for the 2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, 50- and 100-year rainstorms were obtained from a 1994 ACOE Study. The details of this modeling can be found in the Flood Technical Report in DEIR Appendix 4.2.

#### *Regulatory Agencies*

There are seven minor drainage areas within the project site, but only the Santa Clara River is considered to be a “water of the U.S.” within the jurisdiction of the ACOE and Regional Water Quality Control Board for the Los Angeles Region (LARWQCB) pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). The CWA prohibits the discharge of pollutants into “waters of the U.S.”

unless the discharge complies with a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The CWA also regulates activities that result in the location of a structure, excavation, or discharge of dredged or fill material into “waters of the U.S.” In addition, the Santa Clara River through the project site is also under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).

The County’s DPW also regulates storm water runoff by requiring that all facilities that intercept flood waters from natural drainage courses, areas mapped as floodways, facilities draining natural depressions or sumps, and culverts under highways and that are not under state jurisdiction be designed for the Qcap. All facilities not covered by Qcap requirements must be designed for the “Urban Flood,” or runoff from a 25-year frequency storm. In addition, all development within the Santa Clara River watershed must meet the standards adopted by DPW for the River in the County’s Sedimentation Manual.

#### *Existing Conditions*

As mentioned above, the project site is located within a contributing drainage of 191 acres of the 1,624 square mile Santa Clara River watershed basin, which represents less than 0.02 percent of the basin. The site consists primarily of vacant land.

Annual rainfall in the tributary area is typically low (an annual average of 17 inches) and generally occurs in the winter months. Runoff flows to and through seven minor drainage areas on the site via sheet flows and naturally concentrated flows, which eventually discharge to the Santa Clara River. The reach of the River within and adjacent to the site has multiple channels (braided), and is characterized by high sediment loads, bank erodibility, and intense and intermittent runoff conditions. Combined with the relatively flat gradient of the River in the project area, the River has a potential to aggrade (deposit sediment) at low flow velocities and degrade (remove sediment) with high velocity flows

Based on the calculated capital flood runoff quantities for each of the project site’s seven minor drainage areas, which are separated into two sub-basins (see Table 4.2-3), the DEIR concludes that, under existing conditions, peak flows (burned and bulked) are approximately 43.6 cfs from the north bank basins and 594.0 cfs from south bank basins for a total of 637.6 cfs. The DEIR also calculated existing flow rates in the Santa Clara River at the upstream limit of project site during 2-, 5-, 10-, 20-, 50-, 100-year and “capital flood” storm events (see Table 4.2-2). Table 4.2-4 lists the acreages of each existing floodplain and stream for the seven storm events (2-, 5-, 10-, 20-, 50-, 100- year, and Qcap), and Figures 4.2-3 through 4.2-9 show the existing floodplains graphically.

#### *Proposed Project Improvements*

Once the project is built, runoff from the site’s drainage areas would continue to flow through the site, but would be channeled through a storm drain system that would be constructed the entire length of the site, from the developed areas down to the Santa Clara River. As required by the DPW and City, all on-site drainage systems carrying runoff from developed areas would be designed for the 25-year “Urban Flood,” while storm drains under major/secondary highways, open channels (main channels), debris carrying systems, and sumps would be designed for the



50-year Qcap. Runoff through the site would be controlled through a combination of grading, storm drain pipes, vegetated swales, catch basins, retention/detention basins, water quality bio-retention facilities, outlet structures, and bank stabilization along the river. The proposed drainage improvements are described further in the DEIR, and their locations are illustrated in Figure 4.2-11.

#### *Project Impacts - Construction*

The primary concern during construction is the potential for erosion and sedimentation impacts during site clearing, grading (including the import of up to 500,000 cubic yards of fill on the site), and excavation along and within the River Corridor before the impervious surfaces and non-erodible surfaces are installed. Erosion and sedimentation caused by construction activities are dependent upon on climatic and site conditions, as well as the degree of soil disturbance during construction. Site clearing and grading operations, in particular, would have the greatest potential for discharging sediment downstream during storm events. Unless mitigated through erosion control, increases in sedimentation and debris production on the site during construction, although temporary, would result in a significant impact.

Construction-related activities must conform to the General Construction Activity Storm Water Permit and the General MS4 Permit, both of which require, at a minimum that: (1) sediments be retained using adequate treatment control or structural control best management practices (BMPs); (2) construction-related materials, wastes, spills, or residues be retained to avoid discharge to streets, drainage facilities, receiving waters, or adjacent properties by wind or runoff; (3) non-storm water runoff from equipment and vehicle washing and any other activity be contained at the project site; and (4) erosion from slopes and channels is controlled by implementing an effective combination of BMPs, such as inspecting graded areas during rain events, planting and maintenance of vegetation on slopes, and covering erosion susceptible slopes.

In addition, a local Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be prepared and submitted for approval prior to issuance of a grading permit for project construction. The SWPPP must be designed and implemented to address site-specific conditions related to project construction. Measures contained within the SWPPP are consistent with requirements set forth in the General Construction Activity Storm Water Permit.

The DEIR concludes that, with implementation of the construction mitigation measures, the project's construction-related impacts would be less than significant.

#### *Project Impacts – Post-Development*

##### Criterion 1: Alteration of an Existing Drainage Pattern.

Portions of the River Corridor would be encroached upon with the proposed buried soil cement, storm drain outlets/energy dissipaters, and Vista Canyon Road Bridge. However, as shown in Table 4.2-5, the improvements would result in a net zero change because no discharge would be diverted to or from the River. Therefore, impacts would not be significant.

The project's potential impacts also are evaluated as a function of in-stream velocities, which are indicators for potential riverbed scouring. If a significant amount of the floodplain area were experiencing in-stream velocities within the range of 0 to 4 feet per second (fps) under existing conditions, and project development would cause those areas to experience velocities greater than 4 fps, then project development would cause potentially significant impacts. The DEIR's analysis demonstrates that there would actually be decreases in those areas during the 25-, 50-, 100-year and Qcap storm events; only the smallest storms (the 2-, 5-, 10- year storms) would experience a slight increase. These minor increases would be mitigated by installation of buried soil cement along the River Corridor; therefore, no significant impacts to the River's fluvial or vegetated area would occur as a result of the proposed project. (See DEIR Table 4.2-6 .)

The DEIR's analysis of water surface elevation projections demonstrates that most of the project-related changes to water surface elevation during the Qcap event would be minor - 1 foot or less. In a few areas, changes in water surface elevation would exceed 1 foot; however, these changes would be infrequent, localized, and not significant. Similarly, the fluvial mechanics of the River would remain essentially the same after construction.

#### Criterion 2: Structures and Housing within a 100-Year Flood Hazard Area.

Portions of the project site are presently at elevations below the FEMA 100-year floodplain elevation. In accordance with FEMA requirements, the project site would be raised and elevated so that the developed elevation would be above the FEMA 100-year elevation. Table 4.2-9 details the area change between each flood events' existing and post-project condition. The River Corridor would be modified by the project, resulting in localized changes in velocity and water surface elevation. Flooding up to and including the 100-year and Qcap events would be contained within the buried soil cement bank protection on the north and south side of the River Corridor, thereby preventing erosion.

Because portions of the project site are below the FEMA 100-year floodplain elevation, adjustments to FEMA's published maps are required. These adjustments are administered by FEMA, and revisions to the mapping are made by applying for a Conditional Letter of Map Revision/Letter of Map Revisions (CLOMR/LOMR). LOMRs are documents issued by FEMA that remove property and/or structures from special flood hazard areas. The issuance of a LOMR would eliminate the property and/or structures from the applicable FEMA 100-year map. Any property and/or structures that are elevated above the FEMA 100-year floodplain zone are considered reasonably safe and free from flood hazard. FEMA has approved the CLOMR for the proposed project (see Appendix 4.2 [letter from FEMA dated, November 13, 2009]).

#### Criterion 3: Changes in Runoff Volume That Would Exceed Existing or Planned Systems.

Although project development would increase the amount of clear runoff from the impervious portions of the site, the burned/bulked runoff and debris volumes, both of which are considered in the Qcap scenario, would be reduced. The post-development runoff quantities show that the discharge is predicted to total 542.0 cfs for the project site during a 50-year storm, which is a 95.6 cfs reduction in when compared to pre-development conditions. This reduction in the

discharge is largely due to project water quality/debris basins that would capture upstream bulk flows and allow debris to settle out from the runoff before entering the storm system through the developed portion of the site. Therefore, the project would not result in a significant increase in on-site or downstream flooding impacts.

Criterion 4: Exposure to Significant Risk of Loss, Injury or Death.

As designed, the proposed buried soil cement bank protection and Vista Canyon Road Bridge would increase the water surface elevation of the River at several locations. However, all of the proposed increases would be minor, localized and would be accommodated by the project's flood protection improvements. All increases in water levels would dissipate, returning to a pre-project condition, at both the upstream and downstream project site boundaries. Therefore, the project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding and impacts would be less than significant.

Criterion 5: Substantial Alteration of an Existing Drainage Pattern That Would Result in Substantial Erosion or Siltation and Harmful Increases in Erosion.

The potential for erosion within the River Corridor by the proposed improvements can be evaluated by reviewing changes to hydraulic shear stress or flow velocities, in conjunction with potentially erodible materials. In Los Angeles County, velocities are the preferred indicator for potential streambed erosion. Because the riverbed is composed of alluvial materials, the non-erodible velocities range from 2.5 to 5.0 fps. Based upon on-site soils conditions within the project site, a representative velocity of 4.0 fps was determined to be the appropriate indicator for potential erosion. As shown in Figure 4.2-20, in all but one storm event, the areas subjected to velocities greater than 4.0 fps remain essentially the same or are reduced. In the 5-year storm event, there is a slight increase of 1.3 acres, however this increase is not significant and only represents an increase of about three percent.

*Cumulative Impacts*

All development within the portion of the Santa Clara River watershed located in the County, including that within the City, is required to comply with the Qcap requirements to ensure that upstream and downstream flooding does not occur. Pursuant to DPW requirements, all drainage systems in developments that carry runoff from developed areas must be designed for the 25-year Urban Flood, while storm drains under major and secondary highways, open channels (main channels), debris carrying systems, and sumps must be designed for the 50-year Qcap event. The DPW also prohibits increases in off-site post-development storm flows and storm flow velocities. Development in the County portion of the watershed also must comply with the DPW's design criteria. As a result of this regulatory compliance program, overall storm runoff discharge quantities from the watershed under post-development runoff conditions would be less than or equal to existing conditions largely because the runoff would be free of the debris that is typical of undeveloped watersheds and flow velocities would not increase significantly. Because on-site facilities already would have been built for burned/bulked flows from undeveloped areas, they would have more than adequate capacity to accommodate off-site flows as the off-site portions of the drainage areas develop.

As demonstrated in the DEIR, future development within the County portions of the watershed would result in a decrease in burned/bulked runoff. Discharge quantities into the River from these future projects under post-development conditions would be less than under existing conditions because the runoff would be free of the debris that is typical of undeveloped watersheds. As a policy, both the City and DPW prohibit increases or decreases in flow velocity from a project site to an off-site property; therefore, adherence to these existing requirements would ensure cumulative increases are not significant.

Other projects within the City and County would be subject not only to the same general requirements as the proposed project, but also to such other requirements as the City and DPW would specifically identify for other projects based on their unique topographic and geologic characteristics. Compliance with the applicable regulations results in less discharge from the project post-development as compared to pre-development levels; and thus, runoff from the project causes no incremental increase in the cumulative impact of watershed-wide development.

### Traffic and Access

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.3-1) discusses the traffic study conducted by Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants, which identifies potential traffic-related impacts of the project and specifies mitigation measures that will reduce such impacts to the maximum extent feasible. This section also discusses the project's Parking Demand Analysis, which identifies and establishes parking requirements through the shared parking program in Planning Areas (PAs) 1 and 2.

#### *Background*

The project is located within the Eastside Bridge and Thoroughfare (B&T) District. Within the Santa Clarita Valley, the County and City have established bridge and thoroughfare districts to fund and manage many significant transportation improvements planned to accommodate projected growth. The Eastside B&T is a full mitigation district, meaning that the fee represents a project's fair share allocation of the required infrastructure within the District.

Vehicular access to the site would be from four existing roadways. Primary access to the site would be from: (a) Soledad Canyon Road, via the proposed Vista Canyon Road Bridge; (b) Lost Canyon Road within Fair Oaks Ranch, which would be extended to the site and connect with (c) Jakes Way at a roundabout. Secondary access to and from the site would be from the easterly terminus of Lost Canyon Road near existing La Veda Avenue; this access is designed with a roundabout, an internal traffic loop, and other traffic calming features to minimize "cut through" traffic. Of the four access roads, Lost Canyon Road (to/from Via Princessa) and Vista Canyon Road (to/from Soledad Canyon Road) are each expected to be used by 37 and 38 percent of project trips, respectively. Jakes Way and Lost Canyon Road (to/from Sand Canyon Road) would each serve 12 and 13 percent of project trips, respectively.

There will also be direct access to the project site via the proposed Metrolink Station and Bus Transfer Station located at the southern portion of the site. All on-site public roadways and

intersections would be constructed to the City's standards. A combination of full access and limited access entrances/exits to and from the residential and commercial areas would also be constructed in conjunction with the project.

Taking into account the mix of land uses and transit components, the proposed project would generate the following number of external daily vehicle trips:

- Residential: 6,100 daily trips
- Non-Residential: 15,300 daily trips
- Metrolink Station: 1,430 daily trips
- Bus Transfer Station: 50 daily trips

About two-thirds of trips to the proposed office, retail, and entertainment uses are expected to come from locations within a 6-mile drive (i.e., from residences in the east side of the Valley). Many of these would be "replacement trips" otherwise made to other destinations in the west Valley or to the south. Additionally, the proposed project would alter travel patterns within the study area by virtue of adding new land uses, relocating the Metrolink Station from the Via Princessa site to the project site, and creating several new roadway connections.

### *Impacts*

Impacts associated with the proposed project were analyzed under three different scenarios: Phase 1 (2012), Project Buildout (2015), and Long-Range Cumulative (2030). Impacts under each of these scenarios are summarized below.

### *Phase 1*

Phase 1 of the project would cause significant impacts at the following five study intersections in 2012:

- Soledad Canyon Road/SR-14 SB Ramps
- Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road
- Via Princessa/SR-14 SB Ramps
- Via Princessa/SR-14 NB Ramps
- Via Princessa/Lost Canyon Road

Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce impacts to the above intersections to less-than-significant levels at four of the five impacted intersections. Recommended improvements at one of the intersections (Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road) would not be completed until after Phase 1, as a connection to Lost Canyon Road at La Veda Avenue is not proposed with Phase 1 and, therefore, the project would have a temporary significant and unavoidable impact. However, implementation of identified mitigation at this intersection as part of project buildout would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

### *Project Buildout*

Full buildout of the project in 2015 would cause significant impacts at the following eight study intersections (inclusive of the five intersections impacted by Phase 1):

- Sand Canyon Road/Soledad Canyon Road
- Soledad Canyon Road/SR-14 SB Ramps

- Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road
- Soledad Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road
- Sierra Highway/Soledad Canyon Road
- Via Princessa/SR-14 SB Ramps
- Via Princessa/SR-14 NB Ramps
- Via Princessa/Lost Canyon Road

Implementation of recommended mitigation measures at these intersections would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels.

One of the intersections significantly impacted under the Project Buildout scenario would be the Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road intersection. The proposed mitigation is to implement one of the three mitigation design options for the intersection, all of which are analyzed in this section. Another design option would leave the intersection in its present condition – a four way stop, which would not mitigate project or cumulative impacts.

The four options are:

1. Option 1 (Four-Way Stop) – This design option is presently in place at the intersection. The intersection is presently congested in the morning and afternoon (drop off/pick up) when Pinecrest School and Sulphur Springs Elementary School are in session. Under this design option, the operation of this intersection would worsen to a Level of Service (LOS) F with or without the proposed project. If this option is selected, the project would result in a significant unavoidable impact at the intersection.
2. Option 2 (Signalized Intersection “Look Ahead Signal”) – This design option would result in a signalized intersection, with a “look ahead” signal at the southwest corner to address northbound “line of sight” requirements. Option 2 would result in the improved operation of the intersection in the future (LOS D) even with future growth (including Vista Canyon), as compared to the existing four-way stop design. This option would not meet all of the City’s signalized intersection design criteria.
3. Option 3 (Roundabout) – This design option would include the installation of a “roundabout” or traffic circle at the intersection. From a traffic operational standpoint, this design option would be the best of the four, improving the future LOS F under the existing design to an LOS C in the a.m. peak hour and LOS B in the p.m. peak hour even with future growth (including the Vista Canyon project).
4. Option 4 (Signalized Intersection - Standard Configuration) – This design option improves the intersection of Lost Canyon Road/Sand Canyon Road with a fully signalized intersection complying with all of the City’s standard intersection design criteria. Similar to the “Look Ahead Signal” design option, this option would result in the improved operation of the intersection (LOS D), as compared to the existing design, even with future growth (including the Vista Canyon project).

Based on community comments to date, the signalized intersection design options seem to be preferred primarily due to concerns with pedestrian and equestrian safety with the roundabout design.

Buildout of the proposed project also would provide improvements to the segment of Lost Canyon Road between the project site and Sand Canyon Road. This segment presently has one lane in each direction with a posted speed limit of 30 mph (25 mph when children are present). A continuous sidewalk is provided on the south side of the street, from the project site to Sand Canyon Road. Sulphur Springs Elementary School and Pinecrest School both take vehicular access from this segment of Lost Canyon Road. Presently, this segment of Lost Canyon Road is congested when school is in session during the morning when students are being dropped off and in the afternoon when students are being picked up. The proposed improvements to this segment of Lost Canyon Road include:

- Pavement widening and striping to accommodate one travel lane in each direction with a median turn lane, a trail along the north side of the roadway, a roundabout at the intersection of La Veda Avenue and Lost Canyon Road, and parallel parking on the south side of Lost Canyon Road (these improvements would be completed within the existing right-of-way);
- Restricting the outbound-only driveways at each school to right-turns to minimize conflicting turning movements (provided that a roundabout is installed at the Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road intersection); and
- Construction of a narrow raised median at the easterly Pinecrest School driveway, including a sign prohibiting u-turns.

With respect to SR-14, project buildout also would increase traffic on SR-14 resulting in significant impacts to one segment of SR-14 (the northbound and southbound segment north of Sand Canyon Road). It should be noted that this segment would operate at an unacceptable level of service even without the project as most of the additional vehicle trips would be generated by future growth occurring north and east of the Valley, primarily within the Antelope Valley.

There presently are no improvements for the SR-14 planned and programmed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) that would mitigate the identified impacts, nor is there an established funding program in place to collect developer fees to implement any such improvements. Notwithstanding, the project applicant and Caltrans have negotiated a Traffic Mitigation Agreement (see Appendix 4.3) that requires the applicant to pay an in-lieu fee to Caltrans for future improvements to SR-14 based upon the project's fair share. Consistent with Caltrans policy, the Traffic Mitigation Agreement would be signed by both parties upon project approval. However, because there are presently no planned and programmed improvements for SR-14, nor is there an established funding program, the project's payment of an in-lieu fee would not fully mitigate the identified significant impacts. Therefore, mitigation is considered infeasible and the identified impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

#### *Long-Range Cumulative*

Under cumulative conditions, the project would cause significant impacts along Soledad Canyon Road between Sierra Highway and Golden Valley Road. No feasible improvements are available

as this arterial is already constructed to its ultimate width; the City's General Plan Circulation Element recognizes that, in some cases, street improvements to accommodate additional traffic are not capable of being implemented due to right-of-way limitations and existing development. Therefore, these impacts would be significant and unavoidable. However, it is worth noting that the project is a transit-oriented development and, as such, would generate fewer vehicle trips and miles of travel than traditional developments. The project will also be paying Eastside B&T District fees or constructing eligible improvements that serve to mitigate impacts within the District boundaries.

Project buildout also would increase traffic on SR-14 resulting in significant cumulative impacts on one segment indicated previously. It should be noted that a majority of the future traffic growth on SR-14 comes from areas east and north of the Santa Clarita Valley.

As is the case with respect to SR-14 impacts under the Project Buildout 2015 scenario, there presently are no improvements for the SR-14 planned and programmed by Caltrans that would mitigate the identified impacts, nor is there an established funding program in place to collect developer fees to implement any such improvements. Notwithstanding, the project applicant and Caltrans have negotiated a Traffic Mitigation Agreement (see Appendix 4.3) that requires the applicant to pay an in-lieu fee to Caltrans for future improvements to SR-14 based upon the project's fair share. The Traffic Mitigation Agreement would be signed by both parties upon project approval. However, because there are presently no planned and programmed improvements for SR-14, nor is there an established funding program, the project's payment of an in-lieu fee would not fully mitigate the identified significant impacts. Therefore, mitigation is considered infeasible and the identified impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

#### *Parking*

The proposed project would not result in significant impacts to parking. The Parking Demand Analysis for PAs 1 and 2 (see Appendix 4.3) analyzes parking demand and establishes parking requirements for both planning areas that take into account the availability of shared parking and the transit-oriented nature of the proposed project. PAs 3 and 4 of the Vista Canyon project would comply with existing City of Santa Clarita Unified Development Code (UDC) parking requirements, which have been included in the Vista Canyon Specific Plan.

#### *Transit and Pedestrian Impacts*

The proposed project would not result in significant impacts related to transit and the pedestrian/bicycle system as the project would replace a temporary Metrolink Station with a new permanent station, add a Bus Transfer Station, and add new bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

#### *Vehicle Miles Traveled*

The proposed project is estimated to generate an average of 58 Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) per household per day. This is within the lower range of the estimated statewide average of 55 to 65 daily VMT per household and likely much less than the VMT for most Valley households.

#### Air Quality



In this DEIR section (beginning on page 4.4-1), the potential air quality impacts associated with the proposed project are discussed and analyzed.

#### *Background*

The project lies within the South Coast Air Basin (Basin), which falls within the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). SCAQMD is responsible for bringing air quality in the Basin into attainment with federal and state air quality standards. In fulfilling this duty, SCAQMD has adopted a series of air quality management plans (AQMPs). SCAQMD also has adopted a series of rules and regulations to limit emissions of criteria pollutants and toxic air contaminants (TACs) from various stationary, area and mobile sources. The DEIR's air quality analysis follows SCAQMD's recommendations contained in its CEQA Air Quality Handbook (Handbook), as well as more current recommendations for air quality modeling.

The DEIR first describes the existing regional climate and air quality. In discussing the regional climate, the DEIR describes weather patterns that particularly affect air quality, including, without limitation, the formation of smog. In the regional air quality discussion, the DEIR reports on the overall air quality within the Basin, the applicable federal and state ambient air quality standards, the effect of criteria pollutants and TACs on human health, and summarizes SCAQMD's emissions inventories. The DEIR also reports data from the air quality monitoring station nearest the project site, and local vicinity emissions.

The DEIR then analyzes the project's potential construction and operational air quality impacts. It concludes that implementation of the proposed project would generate both significant construction-related and operational-related pollutant emissions.

#### *Project Impacts - Construction*

Construction-related activities would result in the emission of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), particulate matter 10 microns or less in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>), and particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). Emissions of VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> would exceed SCAQMD's thresholds. Although the recommended mitigation measures would reduce the magnitude of construction-related emissions, no feasible mitigation exists that would reduce the emissions to below the SCAQMD's recommended thresholds of significance for VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub>. The project's construction-related emissions of VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub> are considered significant and unavoidable. The project would also exceed the localized significant thresholds for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

#### *Project Impacts - Operational*

Operational emissions would be generated by both stationary and mobile sources as a result of normal day-to-day activity on the project site. Stationary emissions would be generated by the consumption of natural gas for space and water heating devices, the operation of landscape maintenance equipment, and from the use of consumer products. Mobile emissions would be generated by motor vehicles (e.g., passenger vehicles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, etc.) traveling

to and from the project site, including motor vehicles traveling to the Metrolink Station and Bus Transfer Station. Emissions from the new water reclamation plant (WRP) would be generated from the periodic operation of standby generators, fugitive emissions from treatment process, worker commutes, and natural gas combustion for building and water heating. Operational emissions would exceed SCAQMD's thresholds for VOC, NOX, CO, and PM10; these impacts are significant and unavoidable even with the recommended mitigation measures.

#### *Cumulative Impacts*

Although the proposed project is consistent with regional growth projections and SCAQMD's 2007 AQMP, the mitigated construction-related VOCs and NOX emissions exceed the SCAQMD's threshold. Additionally, the project's operational-related VOCs, NOX, CO, and PM10 emissions exceed the SCAQMD's threshold. As the Basin is already designated as nonattainment for ozone (VOCs and NOX are ozone precursors) and PM10, project emissions that exceed SCAQMD's thresholds during construction and operation are cumulatively considerable. Thus, the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable cumulative air quality impacts.

#### Noise

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.5-1) discusses and analyzes the proposed project's potential impacts during its construction and operational phases on both on-site and surrounding land uses.

#### *Background*

This section first defines noise, explains how it is perceived, the two general sources from which it emanates (point or line sources), how it is measured, and how its levels can be reduced. The primary concern regarding on-site noise is the potential for proposed on-site land uses to be exposed to noise levels that exceed adopted or recommended thresholds. Potential noise increases at off-site locations due to future on-site activities (both point and mobile sources) and the addition of project-related traffic along roadway segments adjoining noise sensitive uses also were studied.

The noise section also discusses the plans and policies that pertain to the noise conditions affecting and affected by the proposed project, including: (1) the State of California, Department of Health Services, Environmental Health Division Guidelines for Noise and Land Use Compatibility (State Guidelines), and (2) the City's Noise Element and Noise Ordinance. The City's Noise Element has incorporated a slightly modified version of the State Guidelines, referred to as "Noise and Land Use Compatibility Guidelines" (City Guidelines), as well as noise level control standards that directly affect the proposed project.

The City Guidelines identify an exterior (outdoor) noise level of 60 dB(A) CNEL to be an acceptable level for single family, duplex, and mobile homes, multi-family units, transient lodging, and schools. Exterior noise levels up to 70 dB(A) CNEL/Ldn are considered conditionally acceptable for these land uses without any special noise insulation requirements because interior noise levels will typically be reduced to acceptable levels (to at least 45 dB(A) CNEL/Ldn) through conventional construction, closed windows, and fresh air supply systems or

air conditioning. Exterior noise levels from 70 dB(A) to 75 dB(A) CNEL are considered acceptable only if the buildings provide noise insulation features, such as sound walls, window upgrades, and other design modifications to achieve a 45 dB(A) CNEL interior noise level. Noise levels up to 75 dB(A) CNEL may be considered conditionally acceptable for office and commercial uses. Noise levels up to 80 dB(A) CNEL may be considered conditionally acceptable for industrial uses.

#### *On- and Off-Site Measured Ambient Noise Levels*

24-hour (long-term) weekday sound level measurements were taken at seven locations on and near the project site in order to characterize the ambient noise environment. DEIR Figures 4.5-7a and 4.5-7b depict the seven noise monitoring locations. The seventh long-term monitoring location highlights the environment next to train tracks/station. The proposed Metrolink Station would be similar in design to the existing Jan Heidt Newhall Metrolink Station (JHNMS). Consequently, it was determined noise monitoring at this station (the monitoring station was located approximately 60 feet from the railroad tracks and approximately 100 feet from the station platforms) would be helpful in analyzing potential noise impacts from the proposed project.

The dominant source of noise at the seven monitoring locations is traffic along SR-14 and Metrolink commuter rail and freight trains along the Union Pacific Railroad/Metrolink tracks. Point sources of noise in the project area include people talking, doors slamming, truck deliveries, parking lot cleaning, lawn care equipment operation, stereos, domestic animals, etc. As depicted in DEIR Table 4.5-3, ambient noise levels monitored at the seven locations were less than 70 dB(A) CNEL. (Noise monitoring at the JHNMS location measured at 69 db(A) CNEL.)

Short-term weekday noise monitoring was also completed at five locations both on and off the project site. Noise generators evaluated by the short-term samples consist of activities associated with roadway, drop off/pick-up of students from the neighboring schools and residential construction in the Fair Oaks neighborhood. The resulting short-term noise levels ranged from 48.5 to 76.3 dB(A) CNEL, as provided in DEIR Table 4.5-4.

In order to characterize the ambient roadway noise environment in the study area, noise prediction modeling was conducted based on vehicular traffic volumes along nearby roadway segments. As shown in DEIR Table 4.5-5, the roadway segments near the project site range from a low of 56.2 dB(A) CNEL to a high of 66.0 dB(A) at a distance of 75 feet from the roadway centerline.

In order to characterize the ambient roadway noise environment along SR-14, noise prediction modeling was conducted based on vehicular traffic volumes along segments near to the project site. DEIR Table 4.5-6 presents the roadway segments, average daily traffic (ADT) volume, and noise levels. The noise levels near the project site range from a low of 69.8 dB(A) CNEL to a high of 70.7 dB(A) 100 feet from the roadway centerline.

#### *Construction Impacts*

Project development activities would occur over approximately four years and would primarily include site preparation (grading and excavation), and the construction of a bridge, internal roadways, driveways, and structures. The proposed project also would require the import of up to 500,000 cubic yards of dirt to accommodate development within the project site.

Noise levels generated during these general construction phases would affect occupants of existing on-site uses and uses constructed in the project's early development phases, as well as off-site nearby residences. As described in the DEIR, the highest noise levels would occur during the grading phase, with a peak noise level of 91 dB(A). The City's Noise Ordinance prohibits construction work requiring a building permit on sites within 300 feet of a residentially zoned property from operating except between the hours of 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM Monday through Friday, and between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM on Saturday. Construction work is prohibited on Sundays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, Memorial Day, and Labor Day. Compliance with the permitted construction hours within the City's Noise Ordinance is required and part of the mitigation measures. Nonetheless, project construction noise would intermittently exceed the City Guidelines, thereby resulting in temporary but unavoidably significant noise impacts at nearby residences.

Ground vibrations from construction activities rarely reach levels that can damage structures, but they can achieve the audible range and could be felt in buildings very close to the project site. The primary and most intensive vibration source associated with development of the proposed project would be the use of pile drivers. Pile driving may occur during construction of the Vista Canyon Road Bridge, and with construction of the parking structures and other multi-story buildings.

The bridge, parking structures and other buildings referenced are located approximately 2,000 feet from the nearest existing residence east of the project site, approximately 300 feet to the nearest residence west of the project site and approximately 500 feet to the nearest residence south of the project site. Consequently, no significant impacts to off-site sensitive uses would occur from potential pile driving, due to the distance from potential pile driving activities to these sensitive uses. However, temporary, but significant and unavoidable, vibration-related impacts to on-site sensitive uses are anticipated during the phased build-out of the project.

#### *Operational Impacts*

After the project is built out, future traffic on the proposed roadway extensions through the site and on existing local roadways would generate noise in the region. However, the incremental traffic increase due to the proposed project during the interim (2015) year would have a less-than-significant impact on noise-sensitive receptors located adjacent to or near to the affected roadways.

The project also would result in the generation of stationary point noise sources. The new retail, restaurant, office, and residential uses, as well as the Metrolink station, on the proposed project site could introduce various stationary noise sources, including electrical and mechanical air conditioning. These same noise sources currently occur near the project site and contribute to the ambient noise levels that are experienced in all similarly developed areas in the vicinity. Noise

levels generated by these sources would not exceed the City's Noise Ordinance or the normally acceptable noise levels identified in the City Guidelines due to their intermittent nature. Impacts from point noise sources would be less than significant.

The project would not cause an increase in railroad noise as commuter rail and freight trains already utilize the tracks adjacent to the project site and traverse the project area. Therefore, because the project would not result in an increase in noise levels associated with the railroad, impacts would be less than significant to on- and off-site noise-sensitive land uses.

Off-site residential uses (including homes in Fair Oaks Ranch) and the project's proposed residential and non-residential uses are located at a sufficient distance from the railroad tracks and Metrolink Station to ensure that residential units would not be located in areas with exterior noise levels in excess of 70 dB(A), and non-residential units would not be located in areas with exterior noise levels in excess of 75 dB(A) CNEL. Therefore, based on noise measurements conducted on and off site along the railroad tracks as part of this DEIR, noise impacts from the railroad tracks to these uses would be less than significant.

#### *Cumulative Impacts*

Traffic associated with the proposed project would contribute to cumulative noise increases in the region. Future traffic on the proposed roadway extensions through the site and on existing local roadways would generate noise in the region. The cumulative traffic increase during the cumulative (2030) year would have a less-than-significant impact on noise-sensitive receptors located adjacent to or near the affected roadways. However, the cumulative traffic increases on SR-14 would result in a significant and unavoidable impact at adjacent off-site sensitive uses along the SR-14 corridor.

#### Biological Resources

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.6-1) analyzes the project's impacts on the site's biological resources. Direct impacts of a proposed project on biological resources can take several forms, but typically involve the loss, modification or disturbance of natural habitat.

#### *Field Surveys*

Biological field surveys were conducted for four years by qualified biologists on the project site beginning in October 2005 and continuing until to July 2009 (see Table 4.6-1). The surveys were to inventory observable plant and animal species, map and characterize on-site habitats, and evaluate the potential of the site to support special-status species. Presence/absence surveys were conducted, including surveys for special-status plants, arroyo toad, western spadefoot, silvery legless lizard, coast horned lizard, burrowing owl, coastal California gnatcatcher, small mammals, and bats. Most of the surveys referenced above are summarized in the Vista Canyon Biological Assessment (August 2008) prepared by Forde Biological Consultants and Dr. Edith Read, with review, critique, and contribution by Daniel S. Cooper (Cooper Ecological Monitoring), Dave Crawford (Compliance Biology), Ian Patrick Swift (Placerita Nature Center), and Ron Francis, Jr. (Environmental Biology).

### *Vegetation Communities*

Most of the project site lies primarily on flat terraces above the active channel of the Santa Clara River. Historical impacts, along with the cumulative effects of more recent activities, including illegal dumping, off-road vehicle activity not sanctioned by the current owners, and utility construction/maintenance, have significantly disturbed the remaining vegetation communities, and have resulted in a complex mix of native and non-native vegetation types on the project site.

Vegetation across the project site is classified under tree, shrub, and herbaceous types. Tree-dominated types consist of cottonwood and cottonwood-willow associations and coast live oak associations. Shrub-dominated types consist of a mosaic of riparian and alluvial scrub, big sagebrush, California sagebrush, chamise, blue elderberry, mixed sagebrush, mulefat, saltbush and yerba santa. Herbaceous types include six types of mostly non-native species.

### *Fish, Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds, Mammals*

No common fish species have been observed in the Santa Clara River or immediately adjacent to the project site as the River within the project site is dry most of the year with surface flows typically lasting a few days following large storm events during winter months. Common amphibian and reptile species were observed on the site. The native and non-native vegetation provides forage and cover; and road puddles, the seasonal infrequent, low-flow channel and irrigation run-off emanating from La Veda Avenue provide a water source, making the project site attractive for resident, winter, and migrant birds. Most birds observed were flying over the project site or moving through the area during spring and fall migration. Common mammals observed or otherwise detected on the project site included the ground squirrel, gopher, opossum, coyote, bobcat, raccoon and bats.

### *Wildlife Corridor*

Forde Biological Consultants prepared a Species Movement Report for the proposed project (see Appendix 4.6), which evaluated the need for movement corridors through the project site.

Based on the Species Movement Report, wildlife movement within the project reach of the River Corridor can occur east or west along the river, and the value of the river is clear; species can move the entire length of the river and some terrestrial species would only be precluded from doing so during infrequent major storm events. The project proposes to maintain, restore, and enhance the River Corridor within through the project site; and, therefore, the existing east-west River Corridor wildlife movement area would not be significantly impacted due to project implementation.

The Species Movement Report also evaluated the need for a north-south species movement corridor through the site. Based on that evaluation, from the project site, species are not expected to move north because the Lost Canyon Road SR-14 Underpass is a significant constraint. If open space is to be set aside for north-south movement between the Santa Clara River and the Angeles Forest within the project site, the open space should be located on the east side of the project site, east of the commercial horse ranch. This area is wider and has more cover than the west side of the commercial horse ranch; it is currently utilized by certain common species.

The proposed project includes the Oak Park, which is to be located near the east side of the

project site. This proposed park could accommodate north/south animal movement if designed appropriately. The Oak Park should be aligned with the open area between the horse ranch and Sand Canyon; with a minimum corridor width of approximately 300 to 400 feet that would accommodate movement of common, expected species documented on site. While the preclusion of a north/south movement corridor within the project is not considered a significant impact, primarily due to constraints associated with the project site being surrounding by existing and potential future development, the Species Movement Report indicates that an approximate 300 to 400-foot-wide north/south movement corridor along the east side of the project site could provide for movement of species. It should be noted that inclusion of this movement corridor would require changes to the proposed project, primarily the elimination of 26 single family lots located adjacent to the La Veda Avenue community.

#### *Special-Status Plants*

Slender mariposa lily (a Special-status plant) was detected on the project site. Also, plants appearing to be an intermediate between Pierson's morning glory and south coast morning glory were detected on-site. Conservatively, the Draft EIR presumes these plants to be the Pearson's morning glory. The Draft EIR also indicates there is a high probability that Plummer's mariposa lily could be present as a result of suitable on-site habitat that is associated with the species (this species has not been detected on-site in surveys conducted since 2005).

#### *Special Status Wildlife*

Arroyo chub, Santa Ana sucker, and unarmored threespinesickleback, are each known to be present in Soledad Canyon, upstream of the project site, and also have been found at downstream locations and tributaries, including Bouquet Canyon, San Francisquito Canyon, and Castaic Creek. However, the project reach of the Santa Clara River is dry throughout most of the year, including during times of nest construction and spawning, such that reproduction is not possible. In addition, the arroyo chub, Santa Ana sucker, and the unarmored threespine stickleback were not detected on the project site and have a low potential for occurring due to the dry condition of the river; thus, on-site habitat is not considered suitable, nor is it considered suitable breeding habitat because these species require perennial streams or creeks and the river reach through the project site rarely supports surface flows. Nevertheless, it is generally presumed that dispersing individuals of each of these fish species could be present on the project site during times of surface flows in the Santa Clara River following larger infrequent winter storms. Implementation of project development is unlikely to affect these special-status fish species. As discussed earlier in this staff report, there would be no significant increase in water surface elevation, velocity, or sedimentation of the river as a result of project development.

Day and night surveys for western spadefoot. Eight puddles were investigated in and adjacent to the roads in the central portion of the property south of the river. An adult was observed immediately adjacent to a large puddle located in the middle of a dirt road. Additionally, egg clusters and tadpoles of western spadefoot were observed in the same puddle during future surveys. Biologists did not observe adult spadefoot, egg clusters or tadpoles in any other puddle investigated.

The coast horned lizard, a species of special concern, also was detected on the project site during project surveys. Though not detected on-site during surveys, silvery legless lizard also has a moderate to high potential to occur on-site per the DEIR.

Special-status birds that were detected on-site during surveys included the cooper's hawk, Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, Oak titmouse, Lawrence's goldfinch, Yellow warbler, California horned lark, Summer tanager, and Allen's humming bird. Per the DEIR, no other special status birds had a high potential to occur on-site.

Special-status mammals detected on-site consisted of the San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit, though only one was detected in on-site surveys indicating that numbers on-site are low. Per the DEIR, no other special status mammals have a high potential to occur on-site.

#### *Sensitive Vegetation Communities*

A total of 18 plant communities were identified and characterized as occurring on the project site during field investigations. Of these vegetation communities, the big sagebrush, ryegrass grassland, southern cottonwood-willow riparian association are considered sensitive vegetation communities by CDFG.

#### *Jurisdictional Waters, Streambeds and Riparian Resources*

The Santa Clara River flows through the project site. On December 29, 2005 and January 7, 2006, Forde Biological Consultants delineated ACOE jurisdiction and determined the ordinary high water mark using drift lines, watermarks, sediment deposits, and shelving as indicators. Forde Biological Consultants also delineated CDFG jurisdiction using the tops of each bank and contiguous riparian vegetation.

#### *Project Impacts and Mitigation*

Direct impacts of a proposed project on biological resources can take several forms, but typically involve the loss, modification, or disturbance of natural habitat (i.e., plant communities or other naturally occurring areas), which, in turn, directly affects plant and wildlife species dependent on that habitat. To determine areas of expected impact on biological resources, proposed grading plans were evaluated and compared with vegetation and wildlife maps. The level of significance of potential impacts on habitat areas is determined by an evaluation of the overall biological value of a habitat area with respect to significance threshold criteria. The relative value of each of the plant communities present on site is measured by such factors as its disturbance history, biological diversity, importance to particular plant and wildlife species, uniqueness or sensitivity status, as well as the surrounding environment and the presence of special-status resources. The significance of impacts with respect to direct impacts on individuals or populations of plant and animal species takes into consideration the number of individual plants or animals potentially affected, how common or uncommon the species is both on the project site and from a regional perspective, and the sensitivity status if the species is considered of special-status by resource agencies. These factors are evaluated based on the results of on-site biological surveys and studies, results of literature and database reviews, discussions with biological experts, and established and recognized ecological and biodiversity theory and assumptions. This section of the EIR addresses the direct and indirect biological impacts of the proposed project resulting



from the conversion of land to development-related land uses.

#### *Common Wildlife*

The principal direct impact of implementation of the proposed project is to convert approximately 117 acres of the project site (64%) from an undeveloped to a developed condition. Impacts to each of the vegetation types described above either would be not significant or less than significant with mitigation. No significant impacts to common wildlife reptiles, amphibians, or mammal species are expected to occur as a result of project implementation as these species would not decline below self-sustaining levels.

#### *Special-Status Plants*

A population of at least 150 individuals of slender mariposa lily (CNPS List 1B.2) would be impacted on-site. However, with implementation of the Lily Plan, 2009 (Mitigation Measure 4.6-1), which ensures salvaging and re-establishment of the population within a mitigation site located on the project site, impacts to the lily would be reduced to less-than-significant levels.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the loss of all of the Pierson's morning glory on-site. However, the City does not consider CNPS List 4 plants to be sensitive or "rare" pursuant to CEQA. Furthermore, the plant is considered common in the region.

The project would result in the removal of 10 (four of which are heritage size) of the 41 oak trees located on the project site. One of the non-heritage trees proposed for removal would be relocated within the project site. The request would also permit the encroachment into the protected zone of 10 oak trees. Pruning or trimming of seven of these 10 oak trees would also be permitted under the oak tree permit. A total of 31 oak trees located on the project site, including 17 heritage-sized oak trees, would not be removed by the project.

Impacts to the two oak trees located off-site would differ depending upon the intersection design option selected for Lost Canyon Road/Sand Canyon Road. Under the Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road intersection design options 1-3, the requested oak tree permit would allow for encroachment into the protected zone of two oak trees. Encroachment for one tree is needed for the construction of a trail along Lost Canyon Road, east of the project site, and encroachment for the Sand Canyon Road tree is required by improvements to the intersection of Lost Canyon Road and Sand Canyon Road. Trimming or pruning would also be permitted on the tree along Lost Canyon Road to provide for trail clearance requirements. Under the fourth intersection design option (standard signalized intersection), the heritage oak tree located along Sand Canyon Road would be removed. Removal of the tree would permit the construction of a signalized intersection conforming to all of the City's standard design criteria. Trimming of the oak tree along Lost Canyon Road would be permitted under this design option as well.

In total, the project's oak tree permit could permit the removal of up to 11 oak trees (five of which are heritage), the encroachment into the protected zone of up to 12 oak trees, including the trimming or pruning of up to eight of the 12 oak trees. (That being said, the applicant intends to relocate one tree that is proposed for removal.) Because of the sensitivity status of oak trees in the City, the removal of up to 11 oak trees, and potential adverse impacts within the protected

zone of 12 oak trees is considered a significant impact. With implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, the impact would be reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation for the oak tree impacts referenced above shall include dedication to the City of Santa Clarita of the 2-acre oak tree preserve located adjacent to the Oak Park. Dedication of this 2-acre property to the City shall occur in conjunction with dedication of the Oak Park. A deed restriction shall be recorded over this 2-acre preserve restricting its use to open space only and prohibiting any future development or grading. Signage shall be posted along the trail adjacent to the preserve indicating that this area is an oak tree preserve/mitigation area.

Additionally, the applicant shall be required to plant mitigation oak trees on this 2-acre parcel as well as a portion of the Town Green parcel to the satisfaction of the Director of Community Development. The oak preserve and Town Green shall be the primary oak mitigation areas for the project. Secondary oak tree mitigation or planting areas shall include trail corridors throughout the project site. Group plantings of native oaks are encouraged in areas that will accommodate the trees for future growth. Examples are passive parks, break areas, open landscape areas, new trails, and the entrance to commercial and residential portions of the project.

The planting of on-site mitigation oak trees referenced above shall be equal to or exceed the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) dollar value of all oak trees proposed for removal, presently estimated at \$404,990 (includes the 10 oak trees on-site and the one potential oak tree off-site).

#### *Special-Status Wildlife*

Though unlikely due to their infrequent presence in the project reach (due to lack of surface flows most of the time) of the Santa Clara River, potential significant impacts to special status fish species would be mitigated (see Mitigation Measures 4.6-3 and 4.6-4) to a less than significant level.

Potential significant impacts to western spadefoot would be mitigated through implementation of the *Spadefoot Plan, 2009* (Mitigation Measure 4.6-5), which requires the creation of habitat and relocation of on-site individuals.

Potential significant impacts to other special status reptiles and mammals would be mitigated through the implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.6-6 which requires pre-construction surveys to capture and relocate silvery legless lizard, coastal western whiptail, rosy boa, San Diego banded gecko, San Bernardino ringneck snake, coast horned lizard, coast patch-nosed snake, and San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit in order to avoid or minimize take of these sensitive species.

Potential significant impacts to common and special status bird species would be mitigated through implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.6-7 which requires pre-construction surveys to detect bird species in the habitats to be removed, and any other such habitat within 300 feet of the construction work areas. The surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist using CDFG or USFWS survey protocols.

### *Sensitive Vegetation Communities*

Potential significant impacts to sensitive vegetation communities would be mitigated through implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.6-1 and 4.6-2 which requires on-site creation, restoration or enhancement of the impacted sensitive communities.

### Water Services

In this DEIR section (beginning on page 4.8-1), the potential water service impacts associated with the project are discussed and analyzed.

For most residents in the Santa Clarita Valley, domestic water service is provided by one of four retail water purveyors: Los Angeles County Waterworks District 36, Newhall County Water District, Santa Clarita Water Division (SCWD), or the Valencia Water Company. However, these four retail water purveyors actually obtain all or a portion of their water supplies from the Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA). CLWA was formed in 1962 as a wholesale water agency for the purpose of contracting with the California Department of Water Resources to provide a supplemental supply of imported water from the State Water Project (SWP) to serve retail water purveyors in the Santa Clarita Valley. CLWA is one of the 29 agencies with the long-term water supply contracts with DWR for SWP water. Most of the water supply in the Santa Clarita Valley comes from two sources: local groundwater and imported water.

The project site is located within the service area of SCWD. Based upon the Vista Canyon Water Supply Assessment (2010) prepared by SCWD, the proposed project would generate a total water demand of approximately 497 acre feet per year (afy), 303 afy of potable water demand and 194 afy of non-potable demand. Potable water demand would be met by SCWD through the use of its groundwater wells in the Alluvial aquifer and SWP water delivered by CLWA. The non-potable water demand would be met through the use of recycled water from the proposed project's WRP. The project applicant proposes to use recycled water for landscape irrigation purposes and other allowable uses, such as public restroom facilities for office and commercial uses. As proposed, the water factory would treat up to approximately 395,411 gallons per day (gpd) and would be owned and operated by the City. The WRP would treat the wastewater generated by the project uses along with a portion of non-project flows from a City sewer line crossing the project site. Recycled water would then be delivered to CLWA as the wholesale water agency for the Santa Clarita Valley. This water would be distributed by CLWA through its reclaimed water distribution system both within and ultimately outside of the project boundary, thereby minimizing the use of potable water for irrigation purposes.

Accordingly, the proposed project's water demand would be met by relying on three primary sources of water supply, namely, groundwater from the Alluvial aquifer, SWP water, and recycled water from the proposed WRP. The "Engineering Report for the Vista Canyon Water Factory" (April 2010), prepared by Dexter Wilson Engineering, Inc. provides a refined assessment of the proposed project's water demand. In arriving at the water demand used in the Engineering Report, Dexter Wilson Engineering used water factors based on actual water use consumption data from Valencia Water Company and SCWD for residential and commercial product type that is similar to that proposed by the project. The Engineering Report relies on

such data because the product type contemplated by the proposed project is not typical of the product type located in the area served by SCWD. Additionally, the Engineering Report relies on the proposed project's conceptual landscape plan. The project's water demand pursuant to the Engineering Report is 334 afy as compared to the SCWD estimate of 497 afy (529 afy under the residential overlay). Using the Engineering Report's projected water demand for the project, the WRP would create a water supply of 443 afy which would exceed the project's projected demand under the Engineering Report.

Importantly, however, as SCWD found it has adequate supplies to service the proposed project using a water demand of 529 afy. Therefore, under either the SCWD Water Supply Assessment or the Engineering Report, an adequate water supply exists and impacts would be less than significant at the project and cumulative level.

### Water Quality

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.8.1-1) discusses and analyzes the proposed project's potential water quality impacts. The information presented in this section is based on Geosyntec Consultants' Vista Canyon Water Quality Technical Report (see Appendix 4.8.1).

Storm water discharges consist of surface runoff generated from various land uses in the hydrologic drainage basins that discharge into water bodies. The quality of these discharges varies considerably and is affected by the hydrology, geology, land use, season, and sequence and duration of hydrologic events. Absent special measures, development and urbanization typically increase pollutant loads for certain pollutants in storm water runoff, as well as the volume and discharge velocity of the runoff.

This section projects and evaluates potential changes in water quality for several pollutants of concern based on runoff water quality modeling, literature information, and/or qualitative assessment, depending on the data available for assessing each constituent. The project would generate pollutants typical of urban residential and commercial areas during construction, and after the site is built out and occupied. Primary pollutants of concern include total suspended solids, nutrients, trace metals, chloride, pathogens, petroleum hydrocarbons, pesticides, trash and debris, methylene blue activated substances, cyanide, and bioaccumulation. Constituents for which sufficient data was available were analyzed quantitatively using a water quality model created to address the project's features. After taking into account the project's non-structural and structural (treatment) project design features (PDFs), the section concluded that project impacts would be less than significant. Project PDFs include, but are not limited to, bioretention, planter boxes, vegetated swales, bioretention swales, and permeable pavement. Also of note, the project would meet all applicable regional and local water quality requirements of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), LARWQCB, NPDES program, County, and City during both construction and operation of the project. Further, future development in the Santa Clarita Valley would be required to meet all of those same requirements in order to control stormwater discharges of pollutants of concern. Consequently, no unavoidable significant project or cumulative project water quality impacts would occur.

The proposed WRP's treatment processes would incorporate best practicable treatment and control measures. A comparison of predicted groundwater quality at the critical downgradient production well to the water quality objectives for water supply showed that the WRP would not adversely impact the water quality of downstream water supply wells. The expected nitrate-nitrogen plus nitrite-nitrogen concentration in combined percolated recycled water and stormwater is less than the Basin Plan standard, thus would not result in a violation of the groundwater quality standards for nitrate-nitrogen plus nitrite-nitrogen. With mitigation, percolation of recycled water from the project also would not result in a violation of the groundwater quality standards for minerals (TDS, chloride, sulfate, and boron). Impacts to all other groundwater pollutants of concern would be prevented by the incorporation of best practicable treatment and control measures in the WRP treatment processes. Based on the analysis for the pollutants of concern in groundwater, the project would not result in a violation of any groundwater quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade water quality. On this basis, the WRP's impact on groundwater quality is considered less than significant.

### Parks and Recreation

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.12-1) analyzes the project's impacts to parks, open space, trail systems, and other recreation related opportunities.

The City's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services (City Department of Parks) provides local park and recreation facilities and services for the City. The City Department of Parks has determined that there is a citywide shortage of active parkland; specifically, there is a deficit of 285 acres of parkland per the minimal State Quimby Act standard of 3 acres per 1,000 residents. Under the City's General Plan and Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan standard of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, the City is short 639 acres of parkland.

The proposed project incorporates approximately 18 acres of formal active/passive park or recreational uses, including the approximately 7-acre Oak Park and 1-acre River Education Center, both of which are proposed for dedication to the City (see DEIR Figure 4.12-3). Other recreational facilities include the Community Garden, Town Green, up to six private recreational facilities and project trails. The project trails extend over 4 miles both on and off the project site, including significant extensions of the Santa Clara River Trail. The project's trail system would provide: (i) access to the regional trail network and open areas; and (ii) connections between living areas, shopping, work, entertainment, schools, and civic and recreational facilities. The proposed project satisfies the City's parkland standards through the provision of a combination of parkland, private recreation facilities and payment of fees; therefore, the project would not result in significant unavoidable impacts to local parks and recreation facilities.

Implementation of cumulative projects would incrementally increase the demand for local active park facilities in an area where such facilities are already below locally adopted standards. However, the proposed project would meet the City parkland requirements; therefore, the proposed project would not contribute cumulative park impacts within the City. Furthermore,

other future development projects would be subject to the City and Quimby Act requirements, which would reduce the demands associated with each future project. Accordingly, no significant cumulative parkland impacts are expected to occur with approval of the proposed project.

#### *Parks Commission Presentation*

The Vista Canyon project will be presented to the City's Parks and Recreation Commission on November 4, 2010, as it relates to the project's park and trails amenities. City staff will forward the Parks and Recreation Commission's feedback to the Planning Commission at their December 21, 2010 meeting.

#### Visual Resources

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.16-1) characterizes and illustrates the existing visual character of the project site and surrounding area, and evaluates the project's potential to alter the existing visual character through the introduction of contrasts in development density, building height and bulk, the removal or introduction of open space and vegetation, and other changes.

#### *Background*

Although the project site is visible from many locations, the most significant views occur in close proximity to the site. Ten viewing locations, which are identified in Figure 4.16-2, represent views of the project site from areas with a sizable existing or future viewing audience, such as residents of adjacent neighborhoods, users of recreational trails and SR-14. A view analysis was conducted for each of these viewsheds to determine the significance of the proposed project's effects on the visual resources in the project area.

#### *Project Impacts*

The proposed project would alter the present visual character of the project site, which is mostly undeveloped, as described below.

PA-1 would be located adjacent to existing multi-story attached residential development to the west. Building heights in PA-1 would not exceed 60 feet and the proposed buildings would be compatible in size and scale with the existing multi-family buildings located along Jakes Way.

PA-2 is the "town center" for the proposed project and would include office, retail, hospitality and recreation uses. The tallest buildings in the proposed project are located in PA-2, more specifically in an area adjacent to the Vista Canyon Road Bridge or in the center of the 185-acre project site. The two office buildings located north of "C" Street would have a maximum height of 114 feet and the office buildings south of "C" Drive would have a maximum height of 72 feet. The corporate office buildings would be located approximately 2,000 feet from existing residents within the La Veda Drive neighborhood east of the project site, approximately 1,100 feet to residents within Fair Oaks Ranch to the south of the project site, approximately 2,000 feet to existing residents within the Colony Townhomes west of the project site, and approximately 1,100 feet to travelers on SR-14. All of the remaining buildings in PA-2 would not exceed 66 feet in height, including those buildings closest to Fair Oaks Ranch (approximately 500 feet away).

PA-3 is located adjacent to the La Veda Avenue residential neighborhood and other single-family homes located along Lost Canyon Road. All of the proposed residential buildings in PA-3 would not exceed 35 feet in height, consistent with adjacent off-site residential buildings.

PA-4 is located north of the River Corridor adjacent to SR-14. There is no existing residential or commercial development adjacent to PA-4. Building heights within PA-4 would not exceed 42 feet.

In summary, the Draft EIR concludes that the project would be visually consistent with surrounding urban uses. Views of the Santa Clara River, which is considered a scenic resource, also would be retained. The proposed project would not be visible from a designated scenic highway; and, with mitigation, the project's sources of light or glare would not be significant. In addition, the proposed project would not result in substantial damage to scenic resources, including designated ridgelines, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. For these reasons, the proposed project would not result in any significant visual resource impacts.

### River Corridor

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.20-1) contains a thorough analysis of the project's impacts to biological resources within the City's existing SEA, and evaluates the impacts associated with the project's proposal to modify the SEA boundary.

#### *Introduction*

The existing SEA overlay corresponds to the limits of FEMA's 100-year floodplain elevation. Approximately 96 acres of the 185-acre project site are located within the existing SEA/FEMA overlay. After evaluating those portions of the project site that are currently located within the existing SEA/FEMA overlay, it was determined that the actual site conditions render it appropriate to adjust the existing SEA overlay boundary on-site to correspond to the sensitive resources present as documented by the extensive biota reports prepared for the project. As described in greater detail below, portions of the existing SEA/FEMA overlay contain areas not characteristic of the sensitive biological resources for which the SEA was established. For example, developed land, disturbed land (ruderal), and non-native grasslands (herbaceous series) represent over 33% (or over 32 acres) of the 96 acres within the existing SEA/FEMA overlay area on the project site.

#### *Regulatory Setting – SEA/FEMA*

There are no applicable federal or state regulations governing SEAs; however, the 100-year floodplain is governed by FEMA and other federal regulations. There also are County and City regulations relative to SEAs. In addition, there is an extensive federal and state regulatory process associated with development in jurisdictional areas on site.

#### *SEA*

The Santa Clara River SEA is the largest in the Santa Clarita Valley. Both the both the County and City have compatibility criteria for development proposed within an SEA. The SEA

designation generally identifies lands potentially containing important biological resources. The project applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment to adjust the SEA overlay boundary within the project site to better correspond to the jurisdictional and sensitive riparian-associated resources present on the project site; therefore, if approved, the project would not propose development in the SEA. The County and City local regulatory processes for development proposed in an SEA provide criteria to assist in evaluating both the merits of the applicant's General Plan Amendment request, and the significance of impacts to sensitive resources present on-site.

Any development proposal in an SEA is required to include a biological study evaluating impacts on biological resources from the proposed development, and appropriate mitigation measures. In addition, the City's Development Code requires that any such project be designed to be highly compatible with the biological resources present, including: (1) setting aside of appropriate and sufficient undisturbed areas; (2) maintaining watercourses and water bodies in a natural state; (3) maintaining wildlife movement corridors; (4) retaining natural vegetative cover and/or open space to buffer critical resource areas from the requested development; (5) providing fencing, where necessary, to buffer important habitat areas; and (6) ensuring that roads and utilities serving the development are designed so as not to conflict with critical resources, habitat areas, or wildlife movement corridors. As with the County, under the City's compatibility criteria, SEAs are not preserves, and development is allowed within these designated areas provided the development satisfies the City's six compatibility criteria. These requirements ensure that development is designed to be highly compatible with the biological resources present in a manner that is consistent with the overall intent of the SEA program and that the impacts of development are balanced with the conservation of important natural resources.

#### *FEMA*

Portions of the project site are within the 100-year floodplain identified by FEMA or at an elevation below the 100-year flood elevation. The FEMA 100-year floodplain boundary is based on historical runoff records as measured with stream gauges. Mapping of the 100-year floodplain is important because FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) use it to establish standards for flood insurance. Under NFIP criteria, the 100-year flood elevation is the "base flood" and any land that is outside of this 100-year, or base flood, elevation, is considered reasonably safe and free from flood hazard.

The project applicant has submitted an application to FEMA to determine if the proposed project meets the floodplain management criteria of the NFIP regulations, and FEMA has granted the applicant a CLOMR determining that the proposed project design meets such criteria. If the proposed project is approved as designed, FEMA has preliminarily determined that a revision to the effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) would be warranted.

#### *Existing Conditions*

The reach of the River encompassed by the project site is dry except after periods of heavy rainfall, generally occurring during the winter months. As a result, the portion of the river within the project site is not suitable habitat for the stickleback or other aquatic or semi-aquatic species.



Historical and recent activities, including dumping, off-road vehicle activity, and utility construction/maintenance, have significantly disturbed remaining vegetation communities on-site and have resulted in a complex mix of native and non-native vegetation types or disturbed land. The on-site jurisdictional vegetation communities include riparian scrub (active floodplain) and alluvial scrub (terrace). The active floodplain is composed of multiple braided channels and alluvial deposits consisting of a relatively low cover of herbaceous annual vegetation with occasional, sparsely spaced emergent shrubs and trees. The floodplain terraces also are composed of relatively sparse vegetation.

Due to substantial site disturbance, the existing functions and values for wildlife are somewhat diminished. However, these vegetation communities still provide nesting, feeding, and breeding opportunities for various aquatic, terrestrial, and avian animals. These areas would function to maintain the use of the River as a major east-west open space/wildlife movement corridor.

The active channel of the Santa Clara River varies based on various hydraulic and hydrologic parameters. Based on modeling, the width of flow in the active channel of the river varies between 20 and 60 feet, which generally corresponds to a 2-year storm event. In contrast, the Santa Clara River Corridor encompasses the active channel and extends north and south to include jurisdictional areas located beyond, and elevated above, the active channel. The width of the River Corridor on the project site has increased considerably over the years, from an average width of 456 feet in 1929 to an average width of 624 feet in 2008, likely due to changes in adjacent historical land use. The post-project condition would retain an average width of approximately 775 feet.

### *Project Impacts*

In order to determine if the project proposal would result in significant impacts to jurisdictional and sensitive riparian-associated resources within the SEA/FEMA overlay area, a two-part impact assessment was conducted. The first assessment evaluated whether the project is consistent with the City's compatibility criteria related to development in an SEA. The second part of the assessment analyzed whether the project's proposed development would result in substantial adverse effects on either federally-protected wetlands, riparian habitat or other sensitive natural habitat identified by CDFG or ACOE, or interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors.

### *SEA Development Compatibility Criteria*

*(1) The Development is Designed to be Highly Compatible with the Biotic Resources Present, Including the Setting Aside of Appropriate and Sufficient Undisturbed Areas*

The project's proposed design includes an analysis of the functions and values of the jurisdictional areas to be impacted by the project. The goals of this analysis were to:

- (a) Satisfy the mitigation requirements of local, state, and federal agencies for wetland and riparian habitat;

- (b) Create or restore riparian and riverine vegetation communities suitable for nesting, foraging, and breeding by native animal species;
- (c) Create or restore vegetation communities to be compatible with the fluvial morphology and hydrology of the stream channel corridor;
- (d) Create or restore vegetation communities to be consistent with adjacent, existing riparian vegetation communities; and
- (e) Create or restore vegetation communities to be self-sustaining and functional beyond the maintenance and monitoring period.

To implement these goals, an assessment was conducted using the most recent version of the California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) for wetlands. Based on the overall analysis, the project proposes to restore and enhance existing jurisdictional areas on site. Specifically, the riparian vegetation communities proposed to be restored and enhanced are alluvial scrub and riparian scrub in temporary impact areas within the active river channel, and Great Basin sage scrub on the channel banks of the River Corridor. Those functions and values to be established include suitable breeding, foraging, and nesting habitat for avian, aquatic, and terrestrial animal species. Also, the areas would function to promote nutrient cycling, nutrient and compound uptake, organic carbon export, and to be hydraulically compatible with the surrounding stream system. Further, the areas would function to maintain the use of the Santa Clara River as a major east-west open space/wildlife movement corridor.

There are 41.5 acres of ACOE jurisdictional area and 86.8 acres of CDFG jurisdictional area within the project site. The proposed project's permanent impacts to ACOE jurisdiction are 0.520 acre and 17.168 acres to CDFG jurisdiction.

The proposed project's Wetlands Plan addresses the on-site restoration and enhancement of both ACOE and CDFG jurisdictional riparian/riverine vegetation communities as mitigation. Riparian scrub and alluvial scrub are proposed in the channel bottom and Great Basin sage scrub is proposed on the buried bank slopes. The mitigation areas include 59.1 acres proposed for enhancement and 16 acres proposed for restoration. The enhancement area is very sparsely vegetated, and presence of invasive plant species is relatively low. The Wetlands Plan proposes to also enhance the active channel by removing the existing old rail and wire revetment structures. To ensure that the restoration and enhancement areas within the project site develop as intended and meet the success criteria required by ACOE and CDFG, the 5-year maintenance and monitoring program also would be implemented. The maintenance would include best management, trash removal, and irrigation maintenance. The monitoring would include construction/installation monitoring, plant establishment, performance standards, and success criteria.

The Wetlands Plan also contains provisions to avoid impacts to existing nesting birds and special-status reptiles (e.g., coast horned lizard). Specifically, this plan requires that pre-construction nesting bird surveys be conducted by qualified biologists and that nest sites be flagged/fenced and a buffer zone established. In addition, construction activities would be

postponed in the buffer zone around the nest site until the young have fledged. Depending on proposed activities, the monitoring biologists also may establish additional setbacks and exclusionary fencing to ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed. In addition, the plan requires that the qualified biologist relocate any special-status reptiles that may be present in the project work area to areas outside the area of impact. No public access would be provided to the mitigation areas, which would be fenced and posted.

In addition to the above, the DEIR evaluated potential impacts due to bank hardening. The analysis evaluated whether the project features along and within the River Corridor would potentially modify the fluvial mechanics of the River and subsequently impact the biota habitat within the River Corridor through modifications to the riverbed. This analysis concluded that there is no apparent change in trend between the pre- and post-project condition to the fluvial mechanics of this reach of the River Corridor and, consequently, there would be no significant impacts. In summary, the project would not result in a new significant pattern or trend related to aggradation or degradation in the River Corridor that could substantially change or alter the habitat characteristics of the River Corridor.

Additionally, as indicated in the Flood Section of the EIR, no significant increases in velocity, erosion, or water surface elevation would occur in the River Corridor post-project; and, therefore, within the SEA boundary, the riparian/riverine vegetation communities and any aquatic or semi-aquatic species that may be present during infrequent winter storms would not be significantly impacted.

In summary, the project's proposed development design is considered highly compatible with the sensitive biotic resources present within the existing boundary of the Santa Clara River SEA for the following reasons: (a) the project proposes to set aside appropriate and sufficient undisturbed jurisdictional habitat areas within the existing boundary of the SEA; (b) the project proposes to retain the active river channel portion of the SEA in a largely natural state; (c) a relatively small amount of jurisdictional habitat would be impacted by the project within the SEA, and the impacted acreage areas would be mitigated; (d) the River Corridor would still be sufficiently wide to accommodate the County's Capital Flood and still retain jurisdictional habitat (approximately 775 feet in width); and (e) winter storm runoff would still continue to open its own channels through the riverine vegetation, flowing in a natural manner and preserving the meandering characteristics of the streambed.

*(2) The Development is Designed to Maintain Waterbodies, Watercourses, and their Tributaries in a Natural State*

The proposed project would maintain the Santa Clara River Corridor, an area that encompasses ACOE's jurisdictional limits in its entirety. The River Corridor in most areas also generally corresponds to the CDFG jurisdictional limits. Post-project, the River Corridor would average 775 feet in width and be maintained in a largely natural state. In addition, aside from the Santa Clara River, there are no drainages within the project site under the jurisdiction of ACOE or CDFG.

The on-site vegetation communities have been subject to repeated disturbance from utility construction and maintenance, illegal dumping, unauthorized off-road vehicle activity, flood management activities, and natural fluvial processes characteristic of the Santa Clara River floodplain. Consequently, vegetation communities throughout the majority of the project site, including the River Corridor, are either disturbed or in an early successional state.

As stated previously, the CRAM Report prepared for the project evaluated existing functions and values of the on-site jurisdictional areas, using a wetland functional assessment for the proposed project. The CRAM Report found that the post-project habitat values and functions would exceed the existing functions and values upon completion of restoration and enhancement activities.

The results of this CRAM Report also provided guidance for the project's Wetlands Plan (also referenced above). In conclusion, the DEIR concludes that implementation of the Wetlands Plan would maintain the Santa Clara River in a natural state, and enhance its function and biological value.

*(3) The Development is Designed so that Wildlife Movement Corridors are Left in a Natural and Undisturbed State*

As indicated above, after project implementation, the River Corridor would continue to function as an east-west wildlife movement corridor, in part, because it would preserve and enhance a River Corridor. In addition, based on the Species Movement Report species presently can and would post-project be able to negotiate the length of the River, moving east or west, and eventually reach the Angeles National Forest and other open space surrounding the City. Further, the proposed Vista Canyon Road Bridge would be sufficiently high so as to allow the continued use of the Santa Clara River for wildlife movement east-west along and within the River Corridor, and lighting controls on the proposed bridge would be implemented to ensure that the SEA would continue to function as a wildlife movement corridor.

A north/south animal movement corridor is presently shown as part of a proposed SEA 23 expansion associated with the City and County's General Plan Updates (One Valley One Vision). Therefore, the Species Movement Report also evaluated the need for a north/south species movement area through a portion of the proposed project. This north/south animal movement corridor is discussed in more detail on pages 21 and 22 of this staff report.

*(4) The Development Retains Sufficient Natural Vegetative Cover and/or Open Spaces to Buffer Critical Resources from the Proposed Uses*

Species that utilize the River Corridor are typically found in the riverine/riparian habitats found in or adjacent to the active channel. As discussed under the first compatibility criterion, above, approximately 39.5 acres of undisturbed ACOE jurisdiction, and about 57.6 acres of CDFG jurisdiction, would be preserved as part of the proposed project. In addition, with project implementation, the quality of habitat in the SEA would increase due to project restoration and enhancement efforts. The increased habitat value created by the restoration and enhancement

efforts would restore a presently disturbed River Corridor, and provide sufficient habitat and open areas to buffer critical resources and special-status species within the SEA. In addition to the amount of land that would be permanently preserved within the SEA, as stated above, the project design would incorporate a setback between project structures and the Santa Clara River Corridor. This setback area would consist of the Santa Clara River Trail and revegetated upland areas located adjacent to the trail and above the bank stabilization.

The proposed project also would utilize innovative buried bank stabilization techniques to meet the requirements of flood control while maintaining the natural resources within the Santa Clara River. Traditional flood control techniques in use within the County rely upon reinforced concrete or grouted rock rip-rap to minimize erosion while maximizing the volume of flood flows carried by the drainage. While exceedingly efficient as a flood control technique, this approach retains none of the natural resource value. In contrast, the drainage plan for the proposed project provides drainage and flood control protection while preserving the River Corridor as a natural resource.

*(5) Where Necessary, Fences or Walls are Provided to Buffer Important Habitat Areas from Development*

Based on the Wetlands Plan, no public access would be provided to the restoration and enhancement areas within the River Corridor. These mitigation areas would be fenced (ranch rail) and posted with signage at the top of the bank indicating the presence of sensitive resource areas. In addition, orange construction fencing and erosion control silt-fence would identify the limits of restoration within the River Corridor. This fencing would remain in place and be maintained by the restoration contractor through the first growing season within the mitigation areas. As designed, such fencing would act as a buffer to important habitat areas from the project's proposed land uses.

*(6) Roads and Utilities Serving the Proposed Development are Located and Designed so as not to Conflict with Critical Resources, Habitat Areas, or Migratory Paths*

The project design proposes the construction of the Vista Canyon Road Bridge (which would contain various utilities) across the Santa Clara River, within the existing SEA overlay. A sewer siphon is proposed for construction upstream of the bridge; however this siphon would not result in any surface impacts to the River Corridor as it would be constructed below ground. Utilities serving the proposed project, where feasible, would be incorporated within the bridge design. The construction disturbance zone for the proposed bridge is estimated at 100 feet wide on each side of the bridge, but may vary depending upon the actual design and construction methods employed. (The final design and construction zone would be approved as part of the federal and state permitting process.) This construction zone would be revegetated with appropriate native and upland species upon completion of the construction, consistent with the federal and state permitting process. As stated above, the proposed bridge would be sufficiently high so as to allow the continued use of the Santa Clara River for wildlife movement east-west along and within the River Corridor. Lighting controls on the proposed bridge would be implemented to ensure that the SEA would continue to function as a wildlife movement corridor. Localized

impacts from proposed bridge piers and bank stabilization would occur; however, the impacts would not be significant. It was determined that the project's proposed development would not change the fluvial mechanics of the Santa Clara River and, therefore, would not create any significant impact to the River Corridor. As a result, potential bridge impacts would be minimized and movement paths would be unimpeded.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the DEIR concludes with implementation of the mitigation measures set forth in this section, that the proposed project would not result in significant impacts to jurisdictional and sensitive riparian-associated resources located within the project's SP-OS designation.

### Wastewater Disposal

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.21-1) discusses impacts to the existing wastewater treatment facilities and wastewater collection system.

The proposed Water Reclamation Plant (WRP), which would be owned and operated by the City, would recycle up to 395,411 gpd of wastewater, including the project's estimated 214,265 gpd of wastewater. It is likely that the City would contract for the operation of the WRP. All costs associated with the ongoing operation and maintenance of the WRP would be paid for by future residents and property owners within the project site. The proposed WRP would be designed as a scalping plant and would not treat solids; any solids generated by the proposed project would be discharged to the existing sewer and treated at the existing Valencia WRP. The proposed WRP would be operational prior to or concurrent with occupancy of the project's uses.

Based on the Vista Canyon Water Factory Technical Report, the project's on-site non-potable or recycled water demand is anticipated to be 117,922 gpd. The WRP would recycle the project's wastewater for on-site irrigation purposes and for public restroom facilities in proposed commercial buildings. The remaining recycled water (277,489 gpd) from the project's WRP is anticipated to be acquired by CLWA to incorporate into their recycled water system. Until CLWA's recycled water system is operational, the proposed WRP would discharge excess recycled water into adjacent percolation ponds.

Construction-related impacts to wastewater disposal would not be significant as portable, on-site sanitation facilities would be utilized during construction. At buildout, the proposed project would generate a worst-case, average total of 214,265 gpd of wastewater that would be treated by the proposed WRP and Valencia WRP (solids only). These two WRPs have adequate capacity to accommodate the proposed project's anticipated wastewater generation. Wastewater collection will be accomplished through proposed sewer lines that would extend to uses through the project's street system. The smaller lines would connect to larger sewer lines, which would then direct flows to the project's WRP. Therefore, wastewater disposal impacts would not be significant on a project-specific or cumulative level.

### Global Climate Change

This DEIR section (beginning on page 4.22-1) evaluates the proposed project's emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs). This section discusses the scientific and regulatory developments surrounding global climate change and provides a quantitative inventory for the emissions that would result from project approval. In the absence of adopted regulatory criteria, a significance criterion also was developed to assess the impact of the project's GHG emissions. Both project and cumulative impacts were assessed against the identified significance criterion.

This section also addresses the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) conclusion that there is a general scientific consensus that global climate change is occurring, and that the frequency of heat extremes, heat waves, and heavy precipitation events likely will increase. Currently accepted models predict that continued GHG emissions at or above current rates will produce more extreme global climate changes during the 21st century than were observed during the 20th century. Related to this, the section also addresses the IPCC's conclusion that human activities (i.e., anthropogenic sources) have increased atmospheric concentrations of GHGs.

Nonetheless, there are uncertainties. The uncertainties relate to predicting: the actual climate change experienced by various areas of the world; the rate at which air and water temperatures will rise; whether the consequences of global climate change will be sudden or gradual; whether the consequences will be catastrophic or manageable; and whether international, national, state, and local measures will effectively reduce GHG emissions.

The emissions inventory for the proposed project considers numerous categories of GHG emission sources that would result from project approval: (1) emissions due to land use/vegetation changes; (2) emissions from construction activities; (3) emissions associated with residential building use; (4) emissions associated with nonresidential building use; (5) mobile source emissions; (6) transit center-related emissions; (7) emissions associated with swimming pools; (8) municipal source emissions; and (9) area emissions. The emissions from land use/vegetation changes and construction activities are one-time emissions event, whereas emissions from the other sources would occur annually, throughout the life of the project. The inventory identified approximately 21,292 metric tons (tonnes) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) one-time emissions, and 15,360 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e annual emissions. Of this annual amount, about 49 percent is attributable to vehicular emissions associated with residential and commercial activities, and about 48 percent is attributable to the energy use associated with residential and nonresidential buildings. If the one-time emissions are annualized, assuming a 40-year development life (which likely is low), then the annualized emissions total is 15,892 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.

These emission levels were analyzed to determine whether project approval would impede compliance with the GHG emissions reduction mandate established by the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill [AB] 32), which requires that California's GHG emissions be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020. The proposed project's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all annual sources and with PDFs are 28.8 percent below the level that would be expected if the proposed project were constructed consistent with the assumptions in the California Air Resources Board's projections for 2020 if "no actions are taken" (California Air Resources Board

[CARB] 2020 NAT scenario). Based on CARB's projections, a reduction of 28.5 percent below the CARB 2020 NAT scenario is required to meet the goals of AB 32. Therefore, the proposed project would not impede implementation of AB 32 as its reduction below the CARB 2020 NAT scenario is greater than that required, and project and cumulative impacts are less than significant.

As identified in the DEIR, numerous PDFs lessen the proposed project's estimated emissions total. These PDFs will be incorporated into the DEIR as mitigation measures to ensure they are implemented. The highlighted PDFs/mitigation measures that will reduce the project's emissions by 28.8% include, but are not limited to, ensuring all residential, commercial, and public buildings operate 20% better than the standard required by the 2008 version of Title 24; producing or purchasing renewable electricity equivalent to the installation of an 80,000 square-foot photovoltaic rooftop power system on residential or non-residential buildings; offering a solar energy system to all residential homeowners; using solar water heating for all pools located on the project site; and, providing Energy Star major appliances.

### Project Alternatives

The DEIR discusses six alternatives to the proposed project, which were selected in order to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts created by the proposed project. Specific alternatives include: Alternative 1, the No Project Alternative; Alternative 2, Proposed County Land Use Designation (OVOV); Alternative 3, Existing City of Santa Clarita General Plan Designation; Alternative 4, Reduced Development Footprint Alternative; Alternative 5, Open Space Corridor Alternative; and Alternative 6, Lost Canyon Road Alignment Alternative.

#### *Alternative 1, No Project*

The proposed project under this alternative would not be constructed and the site would remain largely undeveloped, with the exception of the existing residential unit and equipment storage yard and the Mitchell family cemetery. With this alternative, the banks of the Santa Clara River may be subject to erosion, but with that said, the potential project-related impacts would not occur. More specifically, because there would be no grading, construction or operational activities associated with the alternative, there would be no impacts related to geotechnical hazards, biological resources, cultural resources, or the River Corridor. This alternative would also eliminate the demand for public services and utilities. Project viewsheds also would remain the same as the existing condition. Further, the alternative would not generate the traffic, air emissions, and noise associated with the proposed project. On balance, this alternative is considered to be the environmentally superior alternative since most of the environmental effects of the project would not occur. However, because the proposed project would not be constructed under this alternative, none of the land use planning and economic project objectives would be attained. That said, some of the resource conservation project objectives would be satisfied through the complete avoidance of direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with buildout of the proposed project.



### *Alternative 2, County Land Use Designation*

Alternative 2 would develop predominately single-family residential uses on the project site. The applicant's approximately 140 acres could be developed with up to 700 residential units under the County's proposed land use designation of Urban Residential-2 (UR-2), which allows for five dwelling units per acre. For purposes of this analysis, the residential units would consist of 200 multi-family attached units and 500 single-family detached units with varying lot sizes. Therefore, in comparison to the proposed project, the total number of residential units would be reduced from a maximum of 1,350 to 700.

This alternative would not include the on-site water reclamation plant, Vista Canyon Road Bridge, Metrolink Station, Bus Transfer Station, or any commercial land use. In addition, no development would occur in PA-4 (Mitchell Hill). Lost Canyon Road would be extended from Fair Oaks Ranch to Jakes Way as a major highway, and from Jakes Way to La Veda Avenue as a secondary highway. The horizontal location of the buried bank stabilization and Santa Clara River trail improvements would be similar to the proposed project. Recreation facilities would include a 5-acre park, and up to two private recreational facilities. The alternative would preserve portions of the small knoll located in the south central portion of the project site, and would reduce the number of oak trees to be removed from 10 to five.

There would be less environmental impacts with this alternative, thus it is considered environmentally superior to the proposed project. However, Alternative 2 does not fully meet all of the project objectives.

### *Alternative 3, Existing City General Plan Designation*

The project site is included in the Planning Area of the City of Santa Clarita General Plan. The City's adopted Land Use Map designates the property as BP (Business Park), with portions of the site covered by a SEA overlay. The City's General Plan Land Use Concept also identifies the project as a major sub-center with Business Park/Office Uses. This alternative would develop business park use on the project site in accordance with the existing City General Plan land use designation.

Under Alternative 3 the proposed project could be developed exclusively with business park uses; there would be no residential or commercial uses. The floor area ratio of the BP designation is 1:1, which would result in the development of the site with approximately 6.1 million square feet of building area. However, taking into account parking, landscaping and setback requirements (all of which would reduce building area); this alternative would include development of the site with approximately 4.35 million square feet of business park floor area. Alternative 3 would not include development in PA-4 (Mitchell Hill). Similar to the proposed project, however, the alternative would include the Metrolink Station and Bus Transfer Station. Further, consistent with the City's General Plan, Lost Canyon Road would be extended from Fair Oaks to La Veda Avenue as a major highway. Installation of the buried bank stabilization and Santa Clara River Trail improvements would be in the same horizontal location as the proposed project. This alternative would not include the Vista Canyon Road Bridge or the WRP. This

alternative would replace the public park or private recreational facilities, with open space. This alternative would result in the removal of approximately the same amount of oak tree removals as the proposed project.

This alternative is not considered environmentally superior to the proposed project, and would not satisfy several of the project objectives.

#### *Alternative 4, Reduced Development Footprint*

This alternative would move the horizontal location of the bank stabilization on the south side of the River Corridor back (or south) by an average of 100 feet in comparison to the proposed project. The Vista Canyon Road Bridge length would be extended from 650 feet to 800 feet. The residential overlay would be eliminated and the number of residential units would be reduced from a maximum of 1,350 to 1,100. Similar to the proposed project, the alternative would develop 950,000 square feet of commercial building area. All other components of the project would remain the same, including development in PA-4 (Mitchell Hill) and construction of the WRP, Metrolink Station, and Bus Transfer Station. The recreational facilities, including Oak Park, would also remain the same as the proposed project.

Alternative 4 would reduce several of the environmental impacts and is considered environmentally superior to the proposed project. This alternative would mostly satisfy the primary project objective of developing an environmentally sensitive, transit-oriented, mixed-use development on the project site.

#### *Alternative 5, Open Space Corridor*

This alternative would create a north/south open space corridor from and through the project site to undeveloped properties to the south. The alternative would increase the area of the Oak Park from seven to approximately 10 acres, and would reduce the number of on-site oak tree removals from 10 to 9. Under this alternative, 32 single-family homes, adjacent to the existing La Veda Avenue neighborhood, would be eliminated from the project; the residential units under this alternative would total 1,085. The alternative also would reduce commercial space by 50,000 square feet for a total of 900,000 square feet of commercial floor area. Alternative 5 also differs from the proposed project in that PA-4 would remain undeveloped and Lost Canyon Road would terminate in the project site. The extension of Lost Canyon Road to La Veda Avenue would be eliminated; however, the planned improvements along this segment would still be completed including trail improvements. Similar to the proposed project, Alternative 5 would construct the Vista Canyon Road Bridge, Metrolink Station, Bus Transfer Station, and WRP. The bank stabilization and trail improvements would be implemented in the same location as the proposed project.

Alternative 5 would reduce several of the environmental impacts and is considered environmentally superior to the proposed project. This alternative would mostly satisfy the primary project objective of developing an environmentally sensitive, transit-oriented, mixed-use development on the project site.

### *Alternative 6, Lost Canyon Road Alignment*

The Lost Canyon Road Alignment Alternative would extend Lost Canyon Road through the project site from Fair Oaks Ranch to La Veda Avenue in an alignment running parallel and adjacent to the southerly bank stabilization. Lost Canyon Road would be constructed as a secondary highway until the Vista Canyon Road Bridge, and thereafter would be constructed as a residential collector until its connection at La Veda Avenue. All other components of the project site would remain the same as the proposed project. This alignment would provide a more direct travel route between Fair Oaks Ranch and Sand Canyon Road, which would result in an increase in vehicle trips along the Sand Canyon Road and Vista Canyon Road Bridge segments.

This alternative's environmental impacts would be similar to the impacts under the proposed project with the exception of traffic/circulation, which would result in a slightly greater impact as compared to the proposed project. This alternative is not considered to be environmentally superior to the proposed project. Alternative 6 would mostly, though not completely, satisfy the project objectives.

### *Alternative Sites*

Alternative sites of generally the same size within or directly adjacent to the City in the eastern Santa Clarita Valley do not exist, are presently being utilized for other purposes, or are the subject of other development proposals. The proposed project involves development of a transit-oriented, mixed-use community in an infill site, generally surrounded on all sides by development with the necessary infrastructure adjacent to the project site. A multi-modal transit station (Metrolink Station and Bus Transfer Station) would be developed as part of the project. There are no potential alternative project sites in the local vicinity that are similar in acreage, are close to existing or planned infrastructure improvements, and are adjacent to the Metrolink rail line. Potential alternative sites that provide access to similar infrastructure and alternative transit are located beyond existing urbanized areas and, therefore, would induce growth in these non-urban areas. For the reasons cited above, no alternative sites were analyzed for this project

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

- 1) Receive the staff presentation;
- 2) Provide direction to staff on project issues;
- 3) Receive testimony from the public; and
- 4) Continue the public hearing to December 21, 2010.