



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
DRAFT SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

AUGUST 3, 2016

To: (Please see attached list of Responsible, Trustee, Federal, and Local Agencies, and adjacent property owners)

From: City of Hemet Community Development Department
445 East Florida Avenue
Hemet, CA 92543

CEQA Lead Agency

Staff Contact: Deanna Elliano, Director
City of Hemet Community Development Department
445 East Florida Avenue
Hemet, CA 92543
Email: delliano@cityofhemet.org
Fax: (951) 765 2359
Phone: (951) 765-2393

SUBJECT: Rancho Diamante Phase II Specific Plan Amendment (SPA 15-001) – Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report

The City of Hemet (City) is commencing preparation of a Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Draft Subsequent EIR) for the Rancho Diamante Phase II Specific Plan Amendment (Project), and has released this Notice of Preparation (NOP) per the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Project site is located in the Page Ranch Planned Community Development Plan Area that was most recently amended as part of Specific Plan Amendment SPA 06-004 (SCH#2007091039). Therefore, the City is conducting environmental review of the Project as a Subsequent EIR in accordance with CEQA Guidelines 150162.

The City wants to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities. As a responsible or trustee agency, your agency may need to use the Subsequent EIR prepared by the City when considering issuance of a permit or other approval for the Project. Information gathered during the NOP comment period will be used to shape and focus future analyses of environmental impacts.

NOP COMMENT PERIOD

The City invites you to submit written comments describing your specific environmental concerns, and if representing a public agency, please identify your specific areas of statutory responsibility, if applicable. Written comments are desired at the earliest possible date, but due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. **The NOP public comment period begins on August 4, 2016 and ends on September 3, 2016. A public scoping meeting is scheduled for August 22, 2016 at 10:00 am at the Mountain View Lodge, 1645 Paseo Diamante, Hemet, CA 92545.** Please send your written comments to the City staff contact identified above, and please include your name, address, and contact information in your correspondence.

The Project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. An Initial Study was not prepared for the Project.

Project Title: Rancho Diamante Phase II Specific Plan Amendment (SPA 15-001)

Project Applicant: Rancho Diamante Investments, LLC
c/o Benchmark Pacific
550 Laguna Drive, Suite B
Carlsbad, California 92008
Contact: Richard Robotta
(760) 450-0444

Date: August 3, 2016

Signature:

Carole Kendrick for
Deanna Elliano, Community Development Director

I. Project Location

The 245.07-acre Project site is located in the west/southwest portion of the City (Figures 1 and 2). The Project site comprises Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 465-100-016, 465-100-022, 465-110-020, 465-110-021, 465-110-022, 465-110-023, and 465-110-027. The City of San Jacinto is to the north and unincorporated Riverside County territory surrounds Hemet on the south, west, and east. Diamond Valley Lake and the Santa Rosa Hills lie south of the City. State Route (SR) 74 and SR 79 provide regional access to the Project vicinity. The Project site is in the Page Ranch Planned Community Development Plan (PCD 79-93) located in the southwest portion of the City. Specifically, the Project site is located between: Warren Road to the east; the Second San Diego Aqueduct to the west; and the future Stetson Road alignment, the Hemet Channel, and the BNSF railroad tracks to the south. The Project site is approximately one-quarter mile southwest of the Hemet-Ryan Airport (Figure 3).

Project Site Conditions

The Project site is undeveloped and highly disturbed with ruderal vegetation. The site has been regularly disked for the purposes of weed abatement for at least the past twenty years. Historically, the majority of the site has been used for growing crops, primarily dry farming. A grouping of approximately ten eucalyptus trees stands in the eastern portion of the site just north of the Warren Road/Mustang Way intersection. The Second San Diego Aqueduct traverses the western boundary of the site as a canal in a north to south direction. The First San Diego Aqueduct traverses the site in northeasterly to southwesterly direction within a 150-foot-wide easement adjacent and parallel to two Eastern Municipal Water District easements (20-foot and 40-foot) for public utilities. The First and Second San Diego Aqueducts are owned and operated by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Two drainage channels and a detention basin are located along the southern border of the project site. The drainage channels and basin were constructed for water quality and detention purposes as part of the Tracts 31807 and 31808 located on the east side of Warren Road. A portion of the northeast corner of the Project site contains two vernal pools.

The Project site is generally flat and ranges in elevation from approximately 1,510 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) in the northeastern corner of the site to approximately 1,490 feet AMSL in the drainage basin located in the southwestern portion of the site. Eight exploratory borings were conducted at the Project site. The soil encountered was categorized as artificial fills, topsoils, young alluvial-valley deposits, and older alluvium. The artificial fill soils were encountered where construction work has been performed on the site in the past associated with the nearby flood control channel, old Warren Road, and the storm water basin. Undocumented fill was not found in any of the exploratory borings.

The General Plan land use designation for the Project site is Low Density Residential [2.1 - 5.0 dwelling units/acre (du/ac)] (see Figure 3). The existing zoning of the Project site is Planned Community Development. Existing land use regulations for the Project site are governed by the Page Ranch Planned Community Development, which is equivalent to a Specific Plan. The existing land use designations for the Project site as identified in the Planned Community Development are Low Density Residential R-1 (one du/2.5 acres) and Low-Medium Density R-5 (5 du/1 acre) (see Figure 4).

Surrounding Land Uses

The Project site is surrounded by primarily undeveloped land to the north, south, and west. Two rural residences are located to the west across the Second San Diego Aqueduct canal, and another rural residence is located near the Project site to the south. A residential subdivision, Solera Diamond Valley, is located across Warren Road to the east.

The General Plan designates the areas directly north of the Project site across the railroad tracks for Industrial uses, to the east and west for Low Density Residential (LDR) uses, and to the south for LDR and Mixed Use uses. The zoning of properties surrounding the Project site include Industrial across the railroad track to the north; Heavy Agricultural and Specific Plan to the east; and Specific Plan-Mixed Use to the south; and Heavy Agricultural, and Single-Family Residential (R-1-7.2) to the west.

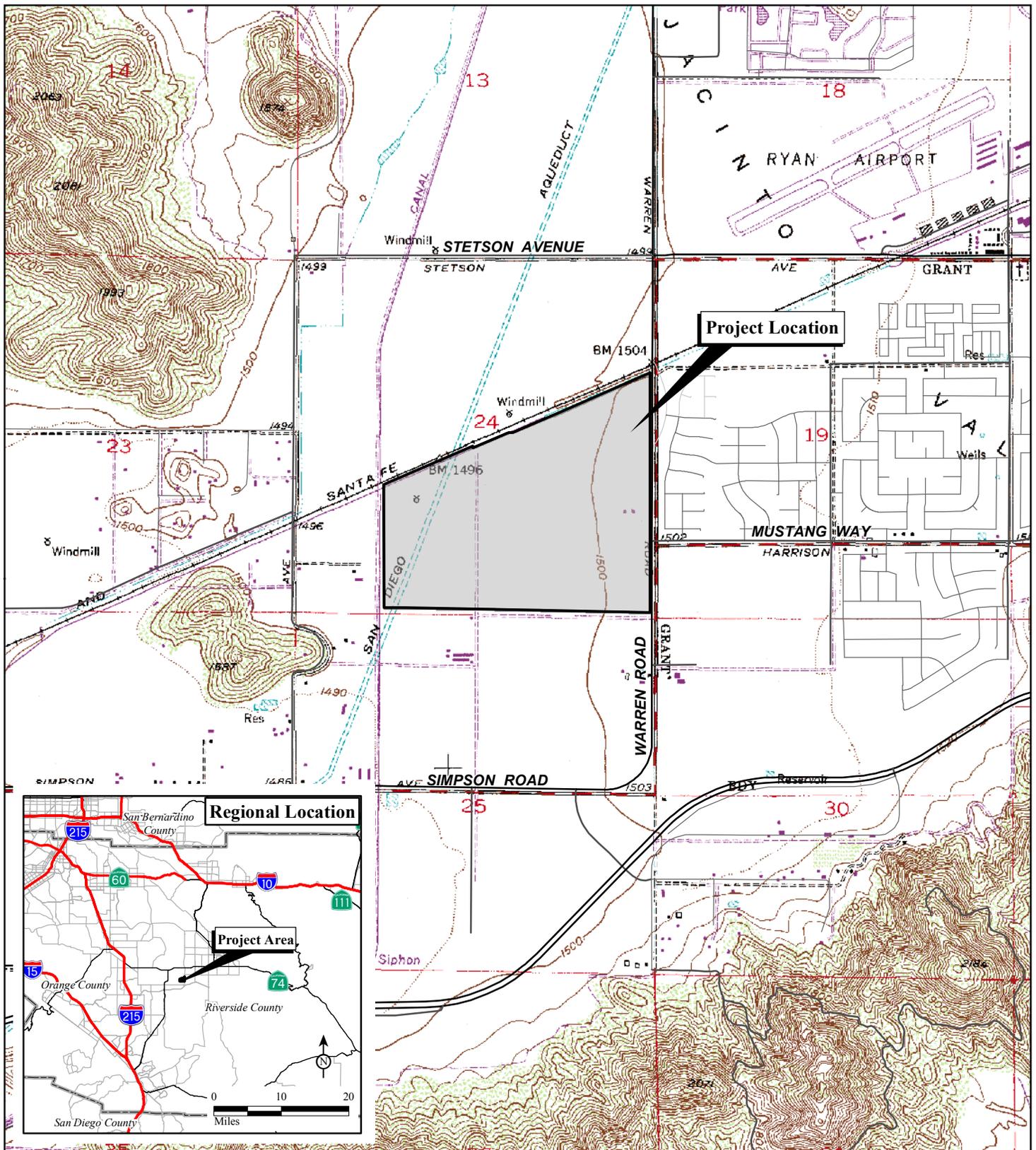


FIGURE 1

LSA



0 1000 2000
FEET

SOURCE: USGS 7.5' Quad: Winchester (79), CA; Riverside County, 2015.

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Rancho Diamante Project
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Regional and Project Location



FIGURE 1

LSA



 Project Boundary

0 300 600
FEET

SOURCE: Google Earth, 2016

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Aerial View

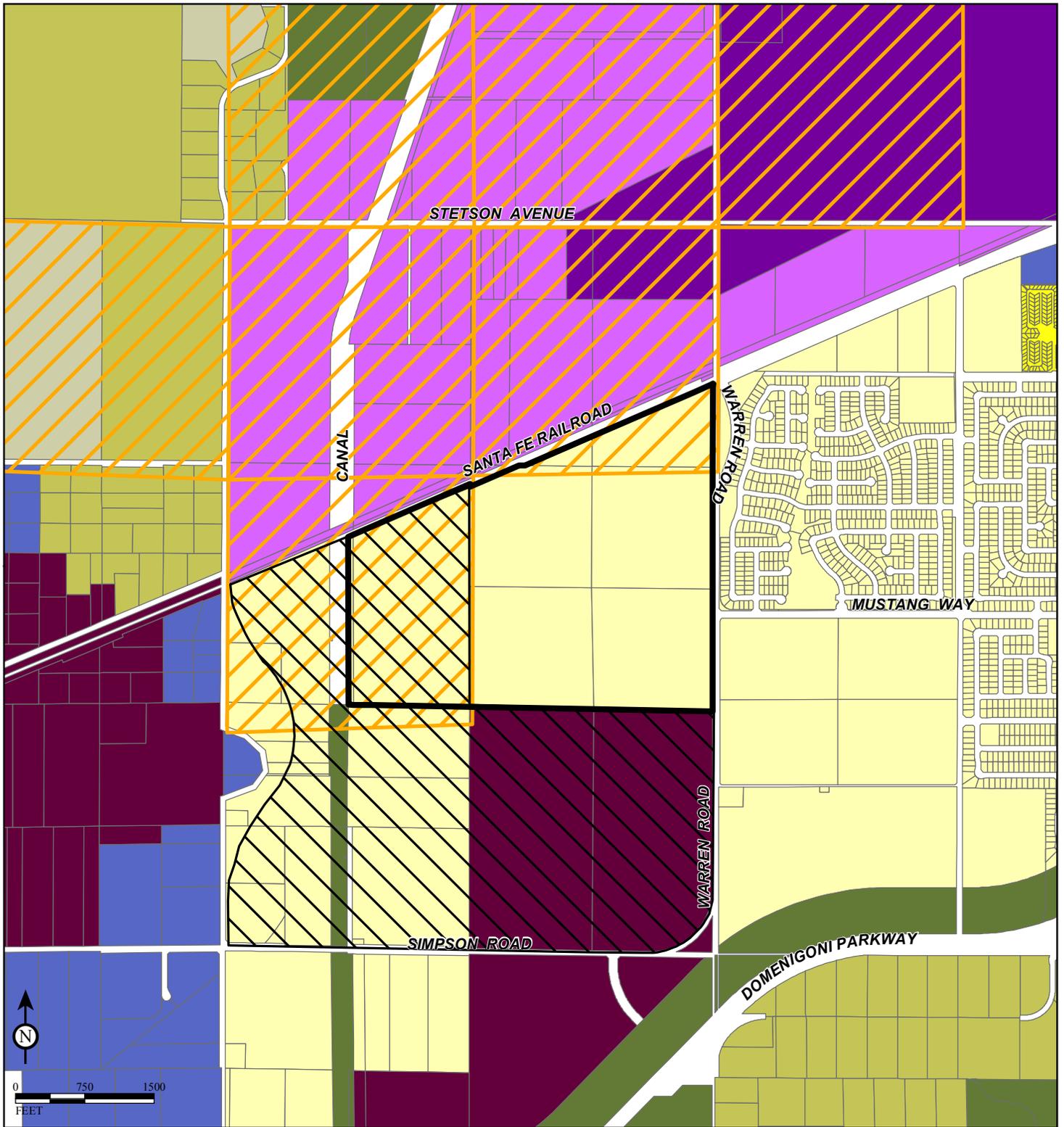


FIGURE 1

LSA

-  Project Boundary
-  MSHCP Criteria Cells
-  Interim Airport Overlay Zone
- General Plan Land Use**
-  ARPT: Airport
-  BP: Business Park (FAR 0.60)
-  HR: Hillside Residential (0.0 - 0.5 du/ac)
-  I: Industrial (FAR 0.45)
-  LDR: Low Density Residential (2.1 - 5.0 du/ac)
-  LMDR: Low Medium Density Residential (5.1 - 8.0 du/ac)
-  MU: Mixed Use (Varies)
-  OS: Open Space
-  RR: Rural Residential (0.0 - 2.0 du/ac)

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General Plan Existing Land Use Designation

SOURCE: City of Hemet General Plan, 2014

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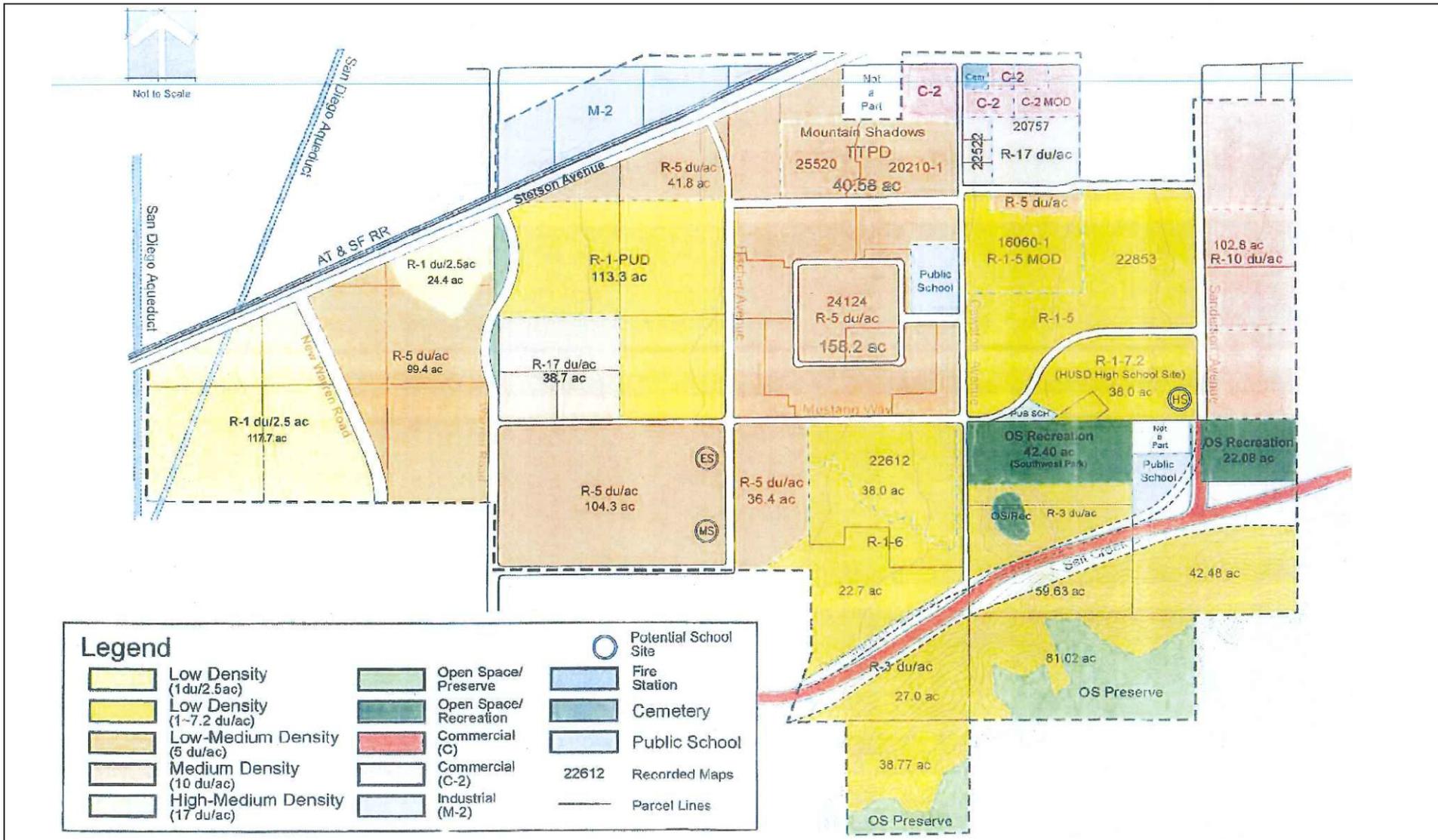


FIGURE 4

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II. Project Description

The Rancho Diamante Phase II Project proposes a Specific Plan Amendment (SPA) to the Page Ranch Planned Community Development (PCD) originally approved as PCD 79-93. The PCD was originally adopted in 1980 and functions as an SP, and has been amended several times including the last amendment in 2009 (SPA 06-004).

The Page Ranch PCD/SP regulates land uses within the PCD/SP Planning Area. These regulations specify a variety of land uses governed by a supporting master plan and development standards. The PCD/SP also provides flexibility in terms of both land use and development standards so that a high quality development product is achieved. The PCD/SP land uses include residential uses ranging from Low Density (1 dwelling unit per 2.5 acres) up to High Medium Density (17 dwelling units per acre), Open Space Preserve, Open Space Recreation, Commercial, Industrial, Fire Station, and Public School. The existing Land Use Plan and Planning Areas for Page Ranch are shown in previously referenced Figure 4.

In addition to the SPA, the Project includes a General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Tentative Tract Map (MAP) applications from the project proponent Rancho Diamante Investments, LLC. The three discretionary actions (SPA, GPA, and MAP) are described below.

Specific Plan Amendment (SPA 15-001). The proposed SPA (SPA 15-001) would amend the adopted Page Ranch PCD 79-93/SP. The proposed SPA would revise land use boundaries and planning areas, extend Mustang Way from its current terminus at Stetson Way westward through the Project site to the future alignment of Stetson Avenue (on the south side and parallel to the railroad tracks), delete the alignment of (new) Warren Road through the property, reduce the residential density resulting in a corresponding reduction in the dwelling unit count from 744 to 635 units. Planning Areas VI and X are currently separated by the location of New Warren Road. The SPA will result in the separation of these Planning Areas due to the deletion of new Warren Road and the extension of Mustang Way. Lastly, the SPA will modify the land use designations from Low Density Residential to Low Medium Density Residential and Open Space Recreation. The SPA also includes associated text changes. Figure 5 presents the proposed land use plan associated with the SPA.

General Plan Amendment (GPA 15-002). The proposed GPA (GPA 15-002) would amend the City's General Plan Circulation Element to include the extension of Mustang Way from Warren Road westward to the future realignment of (new) Stetson Avenue, and to change the classification of Warren Road from a 6-lane arterial to a 4-lane arterial between Simpson Road and Whittier Avenue.

Tentative Tract Map No. 36841 (MAP 15-008). The proposed Tentative Tract Map No. 36841 (MAP 15-008) would subdivide the 245.07 acre project site into 635 single family residential lots with an average lot size of 6,200 square feet and 60.63 acres of park and open space area. The proposed tentative tract map will replace and expand a previously approved Tentative Tract Map No. 35394.

Offsite improvements to be implemented by the Project include construction of water and reclaimed water pipelines, realignment of Warren Road, and drainage conveyance features. The offsite water pipelines will be located within the area of the new Warren Road construction north of new Stetson Avenue. The offsite reclaimed water pipelines will be located along the new Stetson Avenue alignment from California Street to the northwest corner of the Project site. Warren Road will be realigned north of its intersection with new Stetson Avenue, Hemet Channel, and the railroad tracks. Offsite drainage improvements include a drainage channel outlet from the drainage basin in the southwest corner of the Project site to the existing drainage channel at Simpson Road.

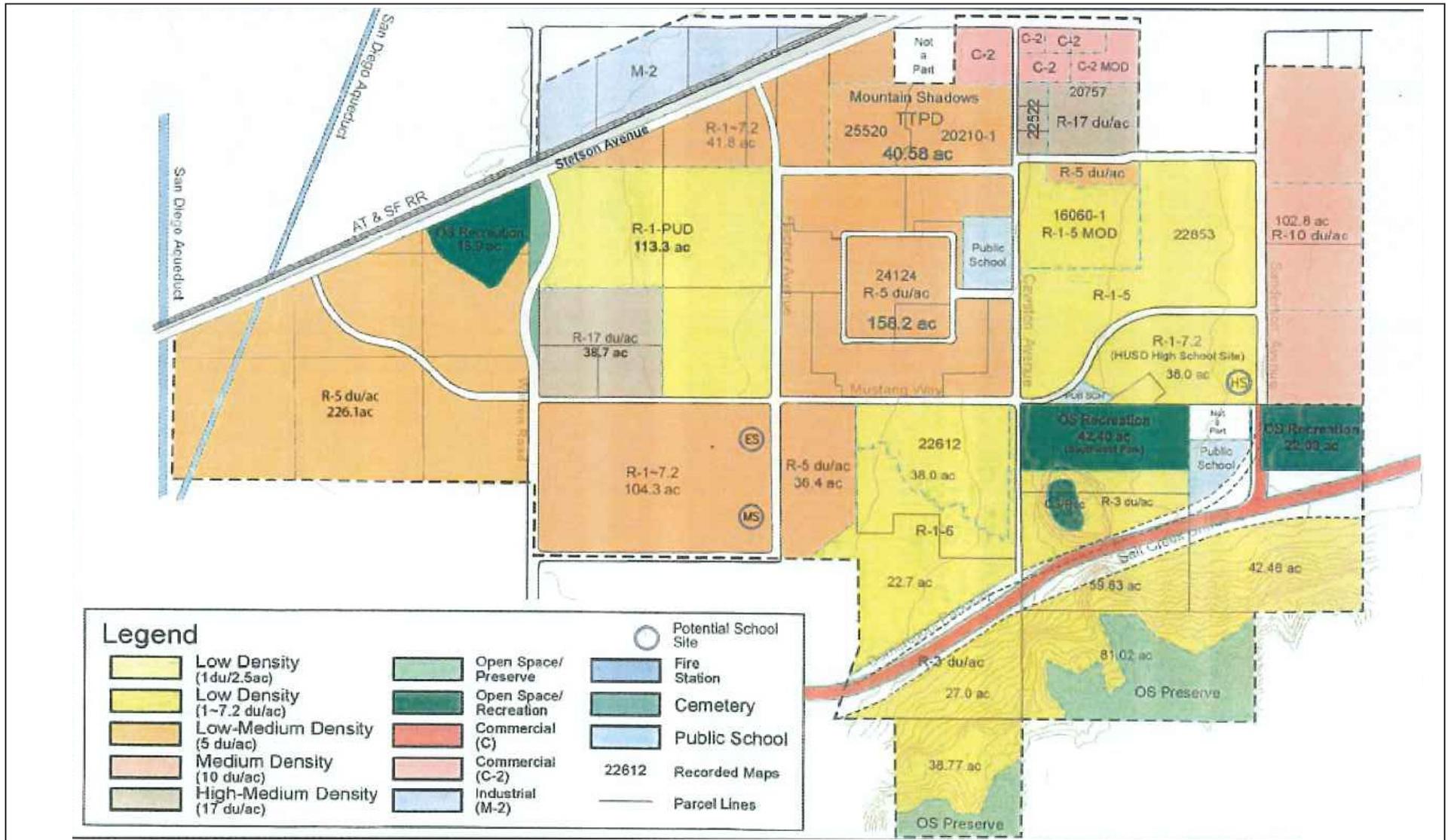


FIGURE 5

LSA

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III. Required Actions/Permits

To allow for development of the Project, the following discretionary actions are required from the City:

- Specific Plan Amendment (SPA 15-001) to revise the Page Ranch PCD/SP land use boundaries and planning areas, extend Mustang Way to (new) Stetson Avenue, delete the alignment of (new) Warren Road through the property, reduce the residential density resulting in a corresponding reduction in the unit count from 744 to 635 units.
- General Plan Amendment (GPA 15-002) to amend the City's General Plan Circulation Element to include the extension of Mustang Way from Warren Road westward to the future realignment of (new) Stetson Avenue, and to change the classification of Warren Road from a 6-lane arterial to a 4-lane arterial between Simpson Road and Whittier Avenue.
- Approval of a Tentative Tract Map No. 36841, which would subdivide the 245.07 acre Project site into 635 residential lots and 60.63 acres of park and open space area. for conveyance purposes and future Subdivision Map approvals to implement the Project (e.g., tentative and final maps).
- Encroachment permits.
- Any other discretionary approvals required by applicable laws or regulations to implement to the Project.

Other non-discretionary actions anticipated to be taken by the City at the staff level as part of the Project include:

- Review and approval of all on and off-site grading and infrastructure plans, including street and utility improvements pursuant to the conditions of approval.
- Approval of a Preliminary Water Quality Management Plan to mitigate post-construction run-off flows pursuant to the conditions of approval.
- Building permits pursuant to the conditions of approval.
- Any other non-discretionary actions consistent with the conditions of approval to implement the Project.

Other City, regional, and state departments/agencies also may use the Subsequent EIR in conjunction with other required permits and approvals, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
- Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority.
- Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission.
- Metropolitan Water District Southern California.
- Eastern Municipal Water District.
- Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.
- Valley-Wide Recreation & Park District.

IV. Probable Environmental Effects of the Project

The Subsequent EIR shall contain a detailed Project Description, a map identifying the location of the Project site and surrounding land uses, a description of the existing environmental setting, Project-specific impacts, cumulative impacts, mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts, and an alternatives analysis. It is anticipated that the Subsequent EIR will focus on the following environmental issues:

- A. Aesthetics.**
- B. Agriculture and Forestry Resources.**
- C. Air Quality.**
- D. Biological Resources.**
- E. Cultural Resources.**
- F. Geology and Soils.**
- G. Greenhouse Gas Emissions.**
- H. Hazards and Hazardous Materials.**
- I. Hydrology and Water Quality.**
- J. Land Use and Planning.**
- K. Mineral Resources.**
- L. Noise.**
- M. Population and Housing.**
- N. Public Services.**
- O. Recreation.**
- P. Transportation/Traffic.**
- Q. Utilities and Service Systems.**

V. Future Public Meetings

As noted previously, the City will conduct an environmental scoping meeting August 22, 2016. At the meeting, the City will provide background information on environmental impact reports, respond to questions, and solicit public input to focus the Subsequent EIR on CEQA-related items of public concern. CEQA-related issues identified during the scoping meeting will be addressed in the Subsequent EIR.

VI. RESPONSE TO THIS NOP

Please provide written comments to the City no later than 30 days from receipt of this NOP. According to Section 15082(b) of the *CEQA Statute and Guidelines*, your comments should address the scope and content of environmental information related to your agency's area of statutory responsibility. More specifically, your response should identify the significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that your agency will need to have explored in the Subsequent EIR, and whether your agency will be a responsible agency or trustee agency, as defined by Sections 15381 and 15386 of the *CEQA Statute and Guidelines*, respectively. Please return all comments to the following address:

Deanna Elliano, Director
City of Hemet Community Development Department
445 East Florida Avenue
Hemet, CA 92543
Email: delliano@cityofhemet.org
Fax: (951) 765 2359

The City appreciates your conscientious attention to this NOP.