



## City of Chico Community Development Department

# NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING

August 14, 2019

### **PROJECT TITLE: Valley's Edge Specific Plan**

The City of Chico (City) is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Valley's Edge Specific Plan project (proposed project or Specific Plan) and is preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) to evaluate the potential effects of implementing the proposed Specific Plan. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) initiates the environmental review process in accordance with CEQA. The purpose of an NOP is to provide sufficient information about the proposed project and its potential environmental impacts to allow agencies and interested parties to provide a meaningful response regarding the scope and contents of the EIR, including potential impacts and alternatives that should be considered. The City would like to know the views of your agency or organization concerning the scope and content of the EIR that are germane to the statutory responsibilities of your agency or organization. If you do not belong to an agency or organization, this notice invites you to submit comments on the scope of the environmental review and to identify important issues you believe should be evaluated in the EIR. The EIR will evaluate the project-specific and cumulative impacts, identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce or avoid significant project impacts, and identify a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives to the proposed project and describe their comparative environmental effects.

**NOP COMMENT PERIOD: August 14, 2019 through September 13, 2019**

### **PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING**

A public scoping meeting will be held by the City to inform agencies and interested parties about the proposed project, and to provide an opportunity to learn more about the project and to submit written comments on the scope of the environmental analysis. Following a brief presentation of the proposed project and an overview of the CEQA process, City staff, representatives from the project applicant team and the EIR team will be available in an "open house" format to answer questions to assist in identifying issues regarding the scope of the EIR. Comment cards will be available at the meeting to provide written comments on the scope of the EIR. Comments will be accepted through the end of the 30-day NOP comment period.

The scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, August 29, 2019, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Marsh Junior High School, in the Student Union, 2253 Humboldt Road, Chico, CA 95928. There will be a brief project overview between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. for anyone interested in attending. Otherwise, the format of the meeting will be an open house setting where City staff and City consultants will be available to discuss specific aspects of the project and receive comments on the scope of analysis. The project applicant will also be available to provide more detailed project information.

## **PROJECT LOCATION**

The Specific Plan area (plan area) is located within Butte County and the City's Sphere of Influence, adjacent to the southeast quadrant of the City at the transition of the valley floor and lower foothill region (see Figure 1, Vicinity Map). The plan area consists of approximately 1,448 acres and is located roughly 1.25 miles east of State Route 99. Access to the plan area is currently from the Skyway and East 20th Street, as shown on Figure 2, Project Location.

The northern portion of the plan area is characterized by gradual slopes atop an elevated plateau overlooking rural Stilson Canyon, a developed area in the unincorporated county of estate lot single-family homes. The northwest portion of the plan area abuts existing single-family development within city limits. The western boundary is adjacent to the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Trail (also known as Potter Road). The southern boundary is adjacent to Skyway Road and Honey Run Road.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The City of Chico 2030 General Plan, adopted in April of 2011 and last updated in March 2017, outlines community priorities for growth and preservation of the City and provides a comprehensive policy framework for decisions about how the City will change over time. The General Plan's Land Use Element designates five Special Planning Areas (SPA's) based on criteria such as proximity to services, land use compatibility and geologic features. These planned growth areas are to be developed as complete neighborhoods with a mix of housing, services, employment, parks, and open space. The plan area, referred to as the 'Doe Mill/Honey Run SPA' in the General Plan, is part of the City's growth plan to meet the City's future housing and employment needs. The Specific Plan will be designed consistent with the City's vision for future development of this area as a mixed-use community.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Specific Plan will be the blueprint for a mixed-use community that includes a range of housing types, commercial uses, parks, trails and recreation and open space areas, as shown on Figure 3, Conceptual Land Use Plan. A circulation plan and an infrastructure and public facilities plan will also be included. The Specific Plan will include goals and policies for development along with Design Guidelines that establish architectural, streetscape, landscaping, and lighting standards. A description of the proposed land use designations is provided below, and shown in Table 1.

### ***Residential***

The residential component would consist of approximately 670 acres, and provide for approximately 1,392 market rate residential units and 1,385 age-restricted (55+) residential units. The market rate units would include a range of single-family detached or attached homes, apartments, and estate lots for custom homes. The market-rate units would occupy approximately 400-acres generally in the northern portion of the plan area with an average density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre (du/ac).

The age-restricted or senior housing component would include a combination of attached and detached for sale and rental units. These units would primarily be located in the central/southern portion of the plan area and would occupy approximately 270 acres. There would also be an area designated for independent senior housing with small units grouped around common amenities. The average density of the age-restricted housing would be 5.1 du/ac.

Residential land uses would include VLDR, LDR, Medium Density Residential (MDR), and Medium High Density Residential (MHDR). The project’s overall residential density would be approximately 4.1 du/ac.

**Table 1 Land Use Summary Table**

Land Use	Applied Zoning Districts	Acres	Approximate Density/Comm SF	Approximate Dwelling Units
<b>Residential</b>				
VLDR – Very Low Density Residential	RS-VE	234.7	1.6	368
LDR – Low Density Residential	R1-VE	333.6	4.1	1,371
MDR – Medium Density Residential	R2-VE	91.2	9.6	876
MHDR – Medium-High Density Residential	R3-VE	9.0	18.0	162
<b>SUBTOTAL/AVG.</b>		<b>668.5</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>2,777</b>
<b>Commercial and Office</b>				
V-CORE – Village Core	CN-VE	12.6	77,000	
V-COMM – Village Commercial	CC-VE	43.7	370,155	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>56.3</b>	<b>447,155</b>	
<b>Special Purpose</b>				
V-PG – Public Quasi Public	PQ-VE	18.8		
V-OS1 – Primary Open Space	OS1-VE	46.3		
V-OS2 – Valley Open Space	OS2-VE	246.7		
R-OS – Regional Open Space	OS2-VE	371.2		
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>683</b>		
<b>Roads</b>				
Project Roadways (Right-of-Way)		40.4		
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>40.4</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,448.3</b>	<b>447,155</b>	<b>2,777</b>

Source: Draft Valley’s Edge Specific Plan, June 2019.

**Commercial**

The commercial portion of the plan area would consist of roughly 60 acres, divided into two land uses Village Core (V-CORE) and Village Commercial (V-COMM). Approximately 13 acres in two areas would be designated Village Core in the southwest portion of the plan area. It is anticipated that these areas would include uses such as professional and medical offices, neighborhood retail shops and services, and a community clubhouse to serve project residents. An outdoor amphitheater is also envisioned in the Village Core to serve as a gathering place for events including a farmers market, art exhibits, and dance and music events. Build-out of the Village Core is anticipated to be less than 77,000 sf. Approximately 44 acres would be designated Village Commercial, and could include such uses as medical and professional office, multi-family apartments, day care, hospitality uses and limited retail establishments.

## ***Parks, Open Space, and Public Uses***

Approximately 675 acres would be designated as parks, trails, open space and preservation, including a large regional park, a community park, neighborhood parks, mini parks and tot lots, and an active adult park. The largest park would be a Regional Park of over 370 acres surrounding the northern, eastern, and southern perimeter of the plan area. This park would provide for lower impact recreational uses, such as hiking and running trails, disc golf, horseback riding, and mountain biking, as well as preservation of upper Comanche Creek and surrounding woodlands. It would also serve as a buffer between residential development and adjoining areas of the county. An approximately 35-acre Community Park would provide active park uses (e.g., multi-use fields, stadium, sports/tennis courts, child's spray park, restrooms). There would be three Neighborhood parks ranging from 1.1-acre to 7-acres, which would provide a range of recreation amenities including play areas, trails, a fitness circuit, and picnic areas. Parks designated for seniors and active adults would also be provided.

Approximately 175 acres of linear parks, creeks, and open space corridors would be provided, along with over 15 miles in trails that would range from paved, Class I multipurpose trails to single-track dirt trails. In addition, approximately 46 acres would be set aside in open space designated for the protection of wetland resources and protected plant species.

An approximately 19-acre site would be dedicated for an elementary school. This site would be adjacent to the Community Park and it is anticipated that a portion of the school site could provide active park uses and be managed as a joint use facility between the Chico Unified School District and the Chico Area Recreation District. Middle and high school age students would attend schools off-site in the city.

Throughout the plan area there are historic-era rock walls that date back to the mid and late 1800s when the land was actively used for ranching. The proposed project anticipates that large segments of the rock walls would be preserved or incorporated into parks or open space. There are also distinctive bands of oak woodlands that traverse east-west through the plan area. Preparation of an Oak Woodland Mitigation and Management Plan is proposed to provide goals and implementation measures designed to protect oak woodlands to the extent possible.

## ***Circulation and Site Access***

The circulation system consists of a network of connected streets, paths, and trails for both vehicle and pedestrian transit. Skyway Road would serve as the primary access to the plan area, and the extension of East 20th Street would serve as a secondary entry. Both Skyway Road and 20th Street have full freeway interchanges at State Route 99, approximately 1.5 miles to the west. Collector roads would typically have two vehicle lanes, Class II bike/Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) lanes, sidewalks and, in some case, landscape medians.

## ***Utilities and Service Systems***

The City of Chico would provide sanitary sewer disposal services for the plan area, and the California Water Service Company (Cal Water) would provide water service. Water infrastructure components include conventional underground piping and underground wells, as well as a permanent water storage tank. Natural gas and electricity for the proposed project would be provided by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E). The plan area would be served by an extension of the City's existing facilities and services, including police and fire protection, and solid waste disposal. As stated above, one

elementary school site would be provided within the plan area, and middle and high school students would attend schools outside of the plan area.

### ***Wildland/Urban Interface***

To address concerns related to wildfire and the wildland/urban interface, the proposed project includes fire protection standards and vegetation management requirements. The fire protection standards and vegetation management guidelines include requirements for ensuring defensible space is maintained in residential areas adjacent to open space areas or are in areas designated VLDR. The proposed project includes Design Guidelines that specify planting of fire-resistant species and use of building materials that are fire-resistant (e.g., asphalt, tile, concrete, metal roofs; stucco, brick, fiber-cement siding material; dual pane/tempered glass windows; attic fire sprinklers). In addition, a Fire Management and Response Plan would be prepared that addresses evacuation procedures, and, possibly sheltering in place, in the event of a wildfire.

## **POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR**

### ***Environmental Topics that will not be Evaluated in the EIR***

Pursuant to CEQA and California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 15064, the discussion of potential effects on the environment in the EIR will be focused on those impacts that the City has determined may be potentially significant. Additionally, CEQA allows a lead agency to limit the detail of discussion of the environmental effects that are not considered potentially significant. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21100; CCR §§ 15126.2(a), 15128.) CEQA requires that the discussion of any significant effect on the environment be limited to substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse changes in physical conditions that exist within the affected area, as defined in Public Resources Code section 21060.5.

The City has determined that the project would result in either no impact or a less-than-significant impact on agriculture and forestry resources, mineral resources, and population and housing, as explained below. These issue areas will not be further evaluated in the EIR.

### **Agriculture and Forestry Resources**

Butte County and the City of Chico contain land designated by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and grazing land. Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique farmland are considered “Important Farmland” under CEQA. Areas of Prime Farmland are primarily located in Butte County with only a few areas of Prime Farmland located in the City itself. Land within the boundaries of the plan area is designated grazing land by the DOC. The plan area does not include any land under a Williamson Act contract, but is located adjacent to parcels under active Williamson Act contracts. The City’s 2030 General Plan Policy LU-2.6 (Agricultural Buffers) requires buffering for new urban uses along the City’s Sphere of Influence adjacent to commercial crop production. The plan area is not located in or near an area that supports crop production

The proposed project would not convert any Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland to developed uses, and would not encroach on any other protected resource lands such as those under Williamson Act contracts. Thus, the proposed project would not result in a potentially significant impact on agricultural resources, and this topic will not be addressed in the EIR.

The City of Chico Zoning Map does not contain zoning districts designated for forest or timberland, and the project site does not contain forest lands or timberland. The trees on the project site do not meet the definition of forestland<sup>1</sup>, Timber, Timberland, or a Timberland Production Zone<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with forestland zoning or result in the loss or conversion of forestland to non-forest uses and would result in no impacts to these resources. This topic will not be addressed in the EIR.

### **Mineral Resources**

There are two designated mineral resource zones within Butte County. The Green Rock Quarries Oroville Plant No.1, located about 7 miles north of the City of Oroville, has been classified as MRZ-2a for railroad ballast for part of the property, and either MRZ-2b or MRZ-1 for railroad ballast for the remainder. The Power House Aggregate project site, located about 7 miles southwest of the City of Oroville, has been classified as MRZ-2 for construction aggregate. There are no active mines or known mineral resource zones occurring within the city limits or within the plan area. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the loss or availability of a known mineral resource or mineral resource recovery site and would result in no impacts to these resources. This topic will not be addressed in the EIR.

### **Population and Housing**

The proposed project would not induce any unplanned population growth, as the area is included in the City's Sphere of Influence and was planned for and identified as an SPA in the City's 2030 General Plan. These planned growth areas are to be developed with a mix of housing, services, employment, parks, and open space. The proposed project would be consistent with the City's plans for development and growth in the SPA. Additionally, the proposed project would not displace any people or housing, as the area is currently undeveloped with the exception of an old farmstead that has previously been abandoned. Therefore, the proposed project would not have any potentially significant impacts related to Population and Housing and this topic will not be addressed in the EIR.

### ***Environmental Topics to be Addressed in the EIR***

The Draft EIR will address the following environmental topics:

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<sup>1</sup> PRC Section 12220(g) defines "forest land" for the purposes of CEQA as land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.

<sup>2</sup> California Government Code Section 51104(g) defines "Timber," "Timberland," and "Timberland Production Zone" for the purposes of CEQA as either trees of any species maintained for eventual harvest for forest production purposes ("Timber"); privately owned land, or land acquired for State forest purposes, used for growing and harvesting timber ("Timberland"); or "Timberland Production Zone" which means an area zoned and used for growing and harvesting timber.

- ▶ Aesthetics
- ▶ Air Quality
- ▶ Biological Resources
- ▶ Cultural Resources
- ▶ Energy
- ▶ Geology and Soils
- ▶ Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- ▶ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ▶ Hydrology, Water Quality, Drainage
- ▶ Noise and Vibration
- ▶ Public Services and Recreation
- ▶ Public Utilities and Service Systems
- ▶ Transportation and Circulation
- ▶ Wildfire
- ▶ Tribal Cultural Resources

In addition, the Draft EIR will include a chapter that addresses consistency with applicable plans, policies or regulations adopted to avoid or mitigate an environmental effect.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS**

Comments as to the appropriate scope of analysis to be evaluated in the EIR are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the scope of the EIR for the proposed Valley's Edge Specific Plan should be directed to the contact listed below no later than 5:00 p.m. on September 13, 2019.

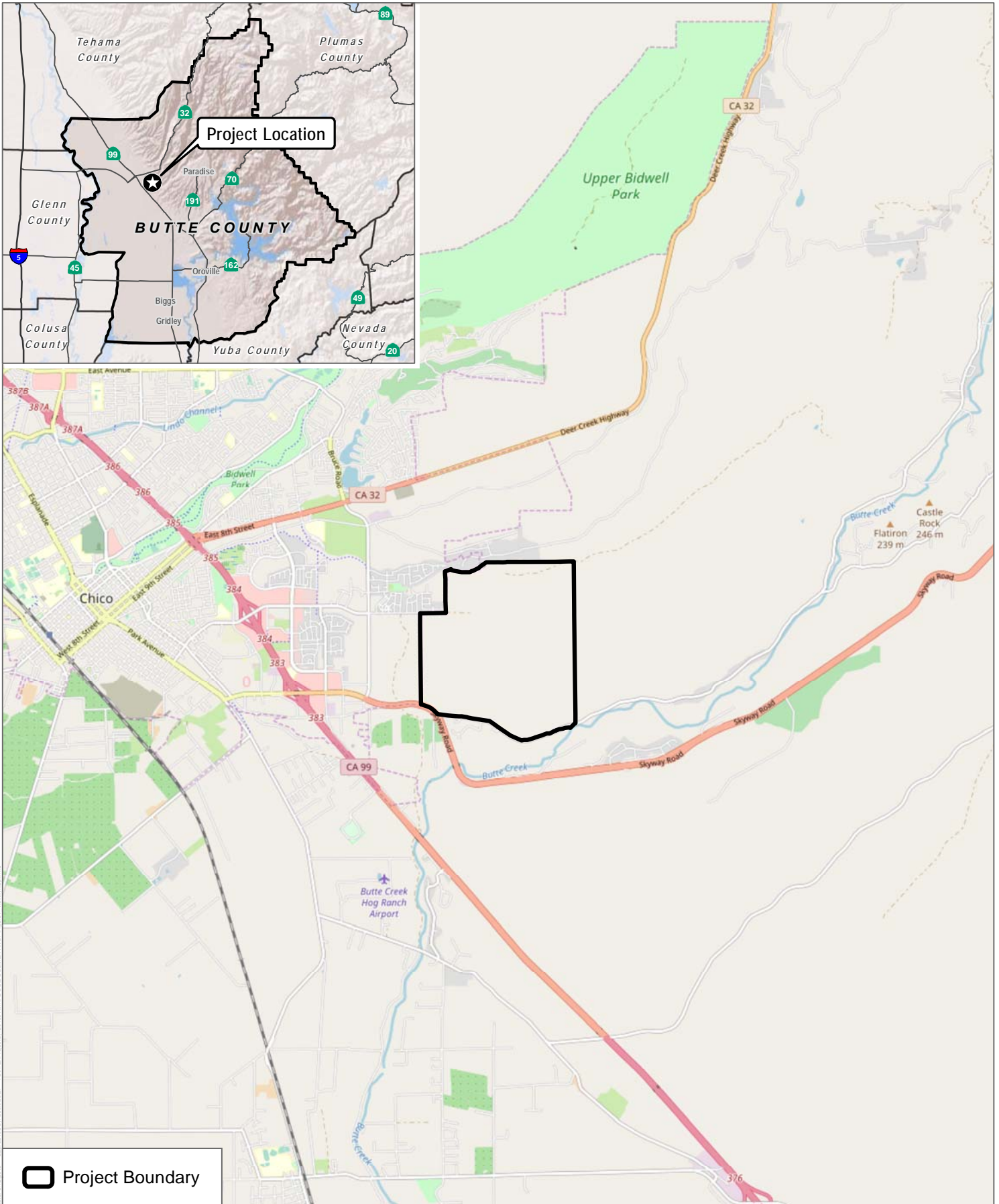
Please address comments, questions, and responses to the contact listed below:

City of Chico Community Development Department  
 Mike Sawley, Senior Planner  
 411 Main Street, P.O. Box 3420  
 Chico, CA 95927  
 mike.sawley@chicoca.gov  
 (530) 879-6812

Once completed, the Draft EIR will be made available for a 45-day public review and comment period in accordance with CEQA. Responses will be prepared for all substantial comments on the Draft EIR. These comments and responses, along with revisions made to the Draft EIR, if any, will be included in the Final EIR to be presented to the City for review and certification prior to consideration of the approval of the Specific Plan.

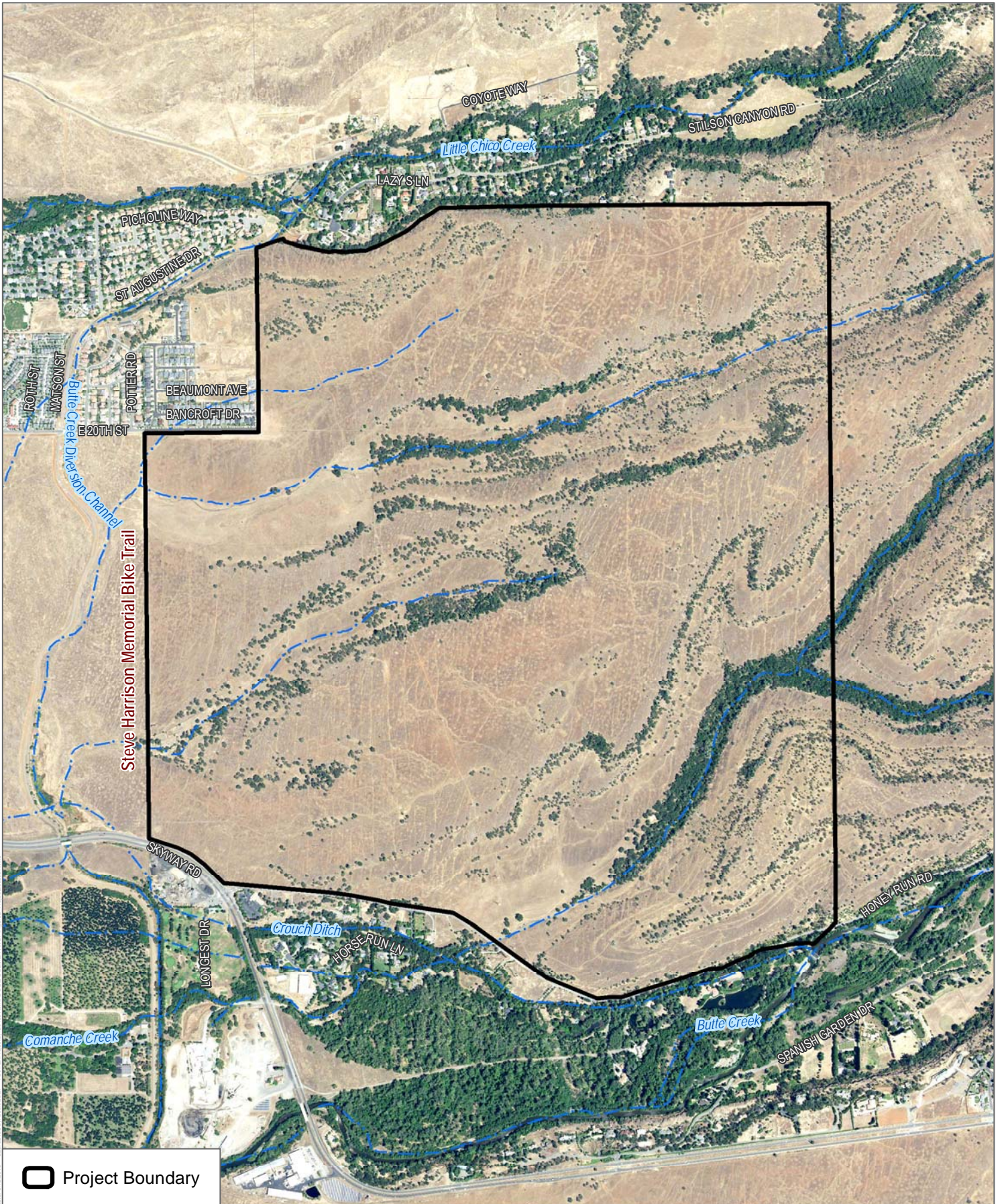
Notices associated with the project's CEQA review are available at:

[http://www.chico.ca.us/planning\\_services/OtherPlanningDocumentsandReports.asp](http://www.chico.ca.us/planning_services/OtherPlanningDocumentsandReports.asp)



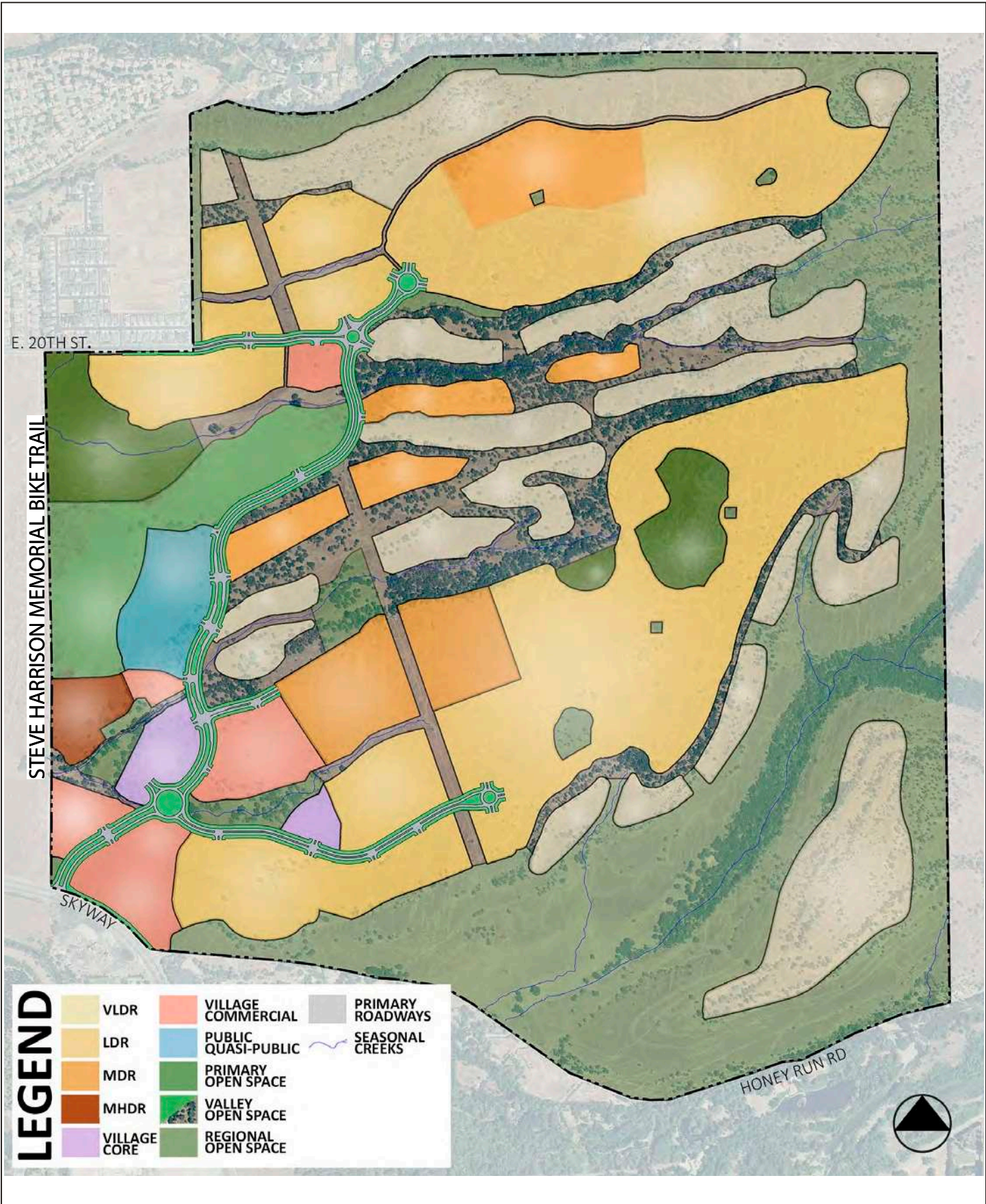
SOURCE: ESRI/OpenStreetMap 2019





SOURCE: USDA 2016, USGS NHD 2018

**FIGURE 2**  
**Project Location**  
 Valley's Edge Specific Plan Project



SOURCE: City of Chico, 2019

**FIGURE 3**

**Land Use Plan**

Valley's Edge Specific Plan Project