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November 20, 2020

State of California  
Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

**Project Title:** La Jolla Innovation Center

**Lead Agency:** University of California

**Project Location:** City of San Diego

**County:** San Diego

**Project Description:** The proposed La Jolla Innovation Center Project (Project) would develop a new building comprised of five levels of office and educational uses, two levels of above grade parking, and two levels of subterranean parking at 8980 Villa La Jolla Drive, San Diego, California (Figure 1, Project Vicinity, and Figure 2, Project Site and Surroundings). The Project site is located within an existing commercial center; limits of work would occur within an approximately 1.2-acre area of the commercial center, and include a 0.9-acre Project parcel that would be developed and sold to the University of California (UC) Regents, as well as an additional 0.3 acre of surface parking, landscaping, and hardscape immediately surrounding the parcel that would be improved as part of the Project and would not be sold to UC Regents (Figure 3, Limits of Work). The Project would provide leasable space for UC San Diego Health Sciences programs (including tenants such as Family and Preventative Medicine, Department of Neurosciences, Department of Psychiatry, and Department of Pediatrics) and UC San Diego Extension programs, both of which would serve the UC San Diego campus and the community at large.

The Project site is located within an existing 7-acre developed commercial center comprised of five existing buildings located west of Interstate 5 (I-5), at the southwestern corner of the intersection of La Jolla Village Drive and Villa La Jolla Drive. The Project site is surrounded by mixed uses consisting of the UC San Diego campus, a gas station, medical office buildings, a commercial center with shops and eateries, a hotel, and residences. The Project site is bounded by La Jolla Village Drive to the north, Villa La Jolla Drive to the east, the UC San Diego Health Urgent Care to the south, and three multi-story

buildings occupied by medical and commercial offices to the west. The Project site is also located within 0.33-mile of two future UC San Diego Blue Line Light Rail Trolley (LRT) stations, which are expected to begin service in late 2021. The area is designated as a Transit Priority Area (TPA) in the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Regional Transportation Plan, which encourages greater development density in such areas. As such, the Project would redevelop the site at a greater density in an effort to tap into the synergy of the surrounding area, consolidate UC San Diego programs into one strategic location that would maximize programmatic efficiencies, and encourage the use of alternative transportation options in the Project vicinity.

The Project site is currently developed with the two-story, 13,213-square-foot (SF) restaurant building, as well as additional surface parking, landscaping, and hardscape. The site is currently within the jurisdiction of the City of San Diego and is zoned as Commercial (CO-1-2). The site is also within the City's Coastal Height Limit Overlay Zone, Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone, and the Parking Impact Overlay Zone. Upon acquisition of the property, the Project site would be under the ownership of the UC Regents, subject to UC land management policies. The University would occupy the proposed office and instructional space and would include programs associated with UC San Diego Health Sciences and UC San Diego Extension; an ancillary retail amenity would be occupied by a retail operator.

The Project would demolish an existing restaurant building formerly occupied by the Rock Bottom Restaurant and Brewery; the remaining four buildings, which include the UC San Diego Health Urgent Care and three multi-story buildings occupied by medical and commercial offices, would be retained and are not included in the proposed Project. The 7-acre commercial center property is proposed to be subdivided and the 0.9-acre Project parcel would be sold to the UC Regents and leased to an affiliate of GPI Companies, the current landowner, to develop the Project.

The Project proposes a seven-story building above-grade that would include five levels of UC San Diego Health Sciences and UC San Diego Extension uses and two levels of above-grade parking, as well as two subterranean parking levels (four parking levels total). The building would be a maximum of 100 feet in height from the existing ground level. The building would include approximately 6,000 gross square feet (GSF) of meeting space; 24,210 GSF of classroom space; 62,510 GSF of office, support, and circulation; and 10,594 GSF of core, for a total of 103,314 GSF associated with office and educational uses. Approximately 1,420 GSF of ground-floor retail space (such as a café) would be provided within Parking Level P3 at the southeastern corner of the building. The Project would provide approximately 275 parking spaces spread between a four-level, 95,500-GSF parking garage and surface parking. Vehicular access to the Project site would be provided by the two existing driveways to the commercial center from Villa La Jolla Drive and the Villa Norte cul-de-sac. Pedestrian access to the Project site would be provided via a new sidewalk connection to La Jolla Village Drive and via an existing City owned pedestrian bridge that crosses La Jolla Village Drive and provides direct access to the Health Sciences portion of the UC San Diego campus. Utility connections would be required to provide potable water, sanitary sewer, storm drains, and electrical power to the Project site. The proposed Project would establish connections to these existing utilities located in the Project area.

The Project would implement the requirements within the UC Sustainable Practices Policy, oriented toward energy efficient and "green building" standards established by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The Project would seek to achieve a Leadership in Energy Efficient Design (LEED) Silver

rating from USGBC through implementation of a variety of sustainability features focused on efficiency in mechanical applications, energy and water use, and building and site design.

Demolition, grading and excavation, site improvements, and building construction are anticipated to begin in mid-2021, shortly after all applicable approvals and permits are obtained from the required permitting agencies. Construction of the Project is anticipated to take approximately 18 months, with initial occupancy by the University anticipated in 2023. Demolition of the site would require removal of the existing vacant restaurant building (13,213 square feet); 51 existing surface parking spaces; the median located at the entrance to the commercial center, off of Villa La Jolla Drive; and all on-site paving, landscaping, and hardscape. Construction staging is proposed to occur entirely within the 1.2-acre limits of work.

**Potential Environmental Effects of the Project:** An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared to address environmental issues associated with the construction and operation of the proposed Project. Potential key environmental considerations anticipated to be addressed in the EIR include: aesthetics, air quality, energy, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology/water quality, land use and planning, noise, and transportation; these issues are described briefly below.

Aesthetics. The Project site is currently located within the Coastal Height Limit Overlay Zone under the jurisdiction of the City of San Diego. Upon acquisition of the property, the Project site would be under the ownership of the UC Regents subject to UC land management policies, including those related to building height limits, setbacks, and design. The EIR will analyze the compatibility of the Project with the visual environment of the coastal overlay zone, campus, and surrounding area, and evaluate the potential for the Project to conflict with applicable land use and other regulations governing scenic quality. This section will also address the degree to which the Project may result in adverse effects to scenic vistas or scenic resources within a state scenic highway or create a new source of light or glare. The analysis will include a description of the existing visual setting of the site and surrounding area, identification of key viewpoints and unique geographic or topographic features, and a discussion of the regulatory framework of the Project.

Air Quality. The Project has the potential to contribute criteria air pollutant emissions to the San Diego Air Basin. The EIR will include a project-specific analysis of potential impacts from air pollutant emissions estimated to be generated during Project construction and operation. Mobile source emissions related to vehicle trips based on the transportation impact analysis prepared for the Project will be evaluated in the EIR. An analysis of toxic air pollutant impacts, such as those from construction equipment diesel particulate emissions, and potential objectionable odors will be analyzed. The EIR also will evaluate the Project's consistency with regional air quality management plans.

Energy. The EIR will provide estimates of the energy consumed during construction and operation of the Project, including electrical energy demand, vehicular energy demand, and water- and solid waste-related energy demand. The EIR will address whether the Project would result in the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Consistency with applicable state and/or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency (e.g., UC Sustainable Practices Policy, UC San Diego Climate Action Plan, etc.), also will be evaluated.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The EIR will include a Project-specific analysis of direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with Project construction and operation. Greenhouse gas emissions from construction sources will be amortized over the anticipated life of the Project and added to annual operational emissions. Operational emissions will be based on traffic data provided by the project-specific transportation impact analysis and incorporation of sustainability features that are consistent with the UC Sustainable Practices Policy. The EIR will assess the Project's consistency with the UC Sustainable Practices Policy as well as the goals of Assembly Bill 32 and Senate Bill 32 with respect to achieving statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Hydrology/Water Quality. Construction and operation of the Project has the potential to result in short- and long-term impacts, respectively, to on- and off-campus downstream surface water quality and flows (capacity and velocity). A Project-specific drainage design and hydrology study will be prepared to evaluate the existing and proposed drainage conditions of the Project site and provide recommendations on storm drain improvements, water quality treatment devices, and storm water storage necessary to convey storm water flows in the proposed condition. Low impact development and source control storm water management strategies aimed at reducing project-related water quality impacts would be integrated into the Project design and addressed in the EIR as best management practices (BMPs), in accordance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System regulations. The EIR will describe the existing hydrology and water quality conditions for the Project site and vicinity, identify plans and policies applicable to the discussion of hydrology and water quality issues, and evaluate potential project-related impacts. The EIR will also evaluate compliance with UC San Diego's Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Phase II permit requirements for flow volume and water quality.

Land Use and Planning. As noted above, the Project site is currently within the jurisdiction of the City of San Diego, is zoned as Commercial (CO-1-2) and is within the Coastal Height Limit Overlay Zone, Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone, and the Parking Impact Overlay Zone. The 7-acre commercial center property is proposed to be subdivided and the 0.9-acre Project parcel would be sold to UC San Diego and leased to an affiliate of GPI Companies to develop the proposed Project. Upon acquisition of the property, the Project site would be under the ownership of the UC Regents and subject to UC land management policies. As a constitutionally created State entity, the UC is not subject to municipal regulations of surrounding local governments, such as the City of San Diego General Plan or land use ordinances or initiatives, for uses on property owned or controlled by the UC that are in furtherance of the UC's academic and research mission. The EIR will describe the existing land uses within the Project site and surrounding area, as well as local land use plans, policies, and regulations applicable to the Project. Although UC is not subject to local land use and zoning requirements, consistency of the Project with UC policies as well as applicable policies of the City of San Diego will be discussed. The EIR will also evaluate the potential for the Project to physically divide an established community or cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Noise. The proposed Project has the potential to result in noise impacts to nearby noise-sensitive land uses, such as residences located approximately 400 feet to the south of the Project site. The EIR will describe the existing noise conditions for the Project site and vicinity, identify plans and policies applicable to the discussion of noise issues, and address potential impacts related to the effect of Project-generated construction noise (e.g., worker and equipment noise) and operational noise

(e.g., from the parking garage, ventilation equipment, and/or project-added traffic) on nearby noise-sensitive land uses.

**Transportation.** The EIR will describe the existing transportation conditions for the Project site and vicinity, identify plans and policies applicable to the discussion of transportation issues, and evaluate potential project-related traffic impacts. Potential impacts will be evaluated in a Project-specific transportation impact analysis. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) impacts associated with the proposed Project will be evaluated pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, which utilize VMT as the measure of effectiveness pursuant to Senate Bill 743.

**Alternatives.** The EIR will also include a discussion of reasonable alternatives to the proposed Project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, alternatives will be developed that would avoid or lessen identified significant impacts of the proposed Project, while feasibly attaining most of the basic objectives of the Project.

The EIR will also include an analysis of cumulative effects, as well as other required CEQA sections.

**CEQA Compliance:** The University of California is the Lead Agency for the Project and UC San Diego will prepare a focused EIR to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposed Project. In compliance with the State and UC guidelines for implementation of CEQA, this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is hereby sent to inform you that UC San Diego is preparing a Draft EIR on the Project. As Lead Agency, we need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed Project.

We appreciate your prompt acknowledgement and review of this NOP. As required by time limits mandated by state law, the 30-day scoping period will extend from **November 20** through **December 21, 2020**. Your comments on the proposed scope of the EIR must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 5:00 PM on December 21, 2020.

Email comments to [LJICcomment@helixepi.com](mailto:LJICcomment@helixepi.com)

or

Mail comments to:

HELIX Environmental Planning  
Attn: Joanne Dramko  
7578 El Cajon Boulevard  
La Mesa, California 91942

**Informational EIR Scoping Meeting:** As a result of the expanding outbreak of COVID-19 and restrictions placed on in-person gatherings throughout California, an online public session to receive public comments on the scope of the EIR in response to the NOP will be held, rather than holding an in-person event. The meeting will be in a webinar format with a presentation by representatives from UC San Diego and HELIX Environmental Planning.

The online public session will be hosted on the evening of Monday, December 7, 2020, from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM (Pacific Time) and conducted via a live video feed in a webinar format; there will not be an in-person scoping meeting session. There are several ways to join the meeting:

- 1) Register in advance for the scoping meeting webinar using the link below:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_NNQBQXtVTKORoUVS7BxVBg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_NNQBQXtVTKORoUVS7BxVBg)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing additional information about joining the webinar.

- 2) Go to [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us), Select “Join a Meeting,” and enter the following:  
Webinar ID: 882 1825 1165, Passcode: 283636

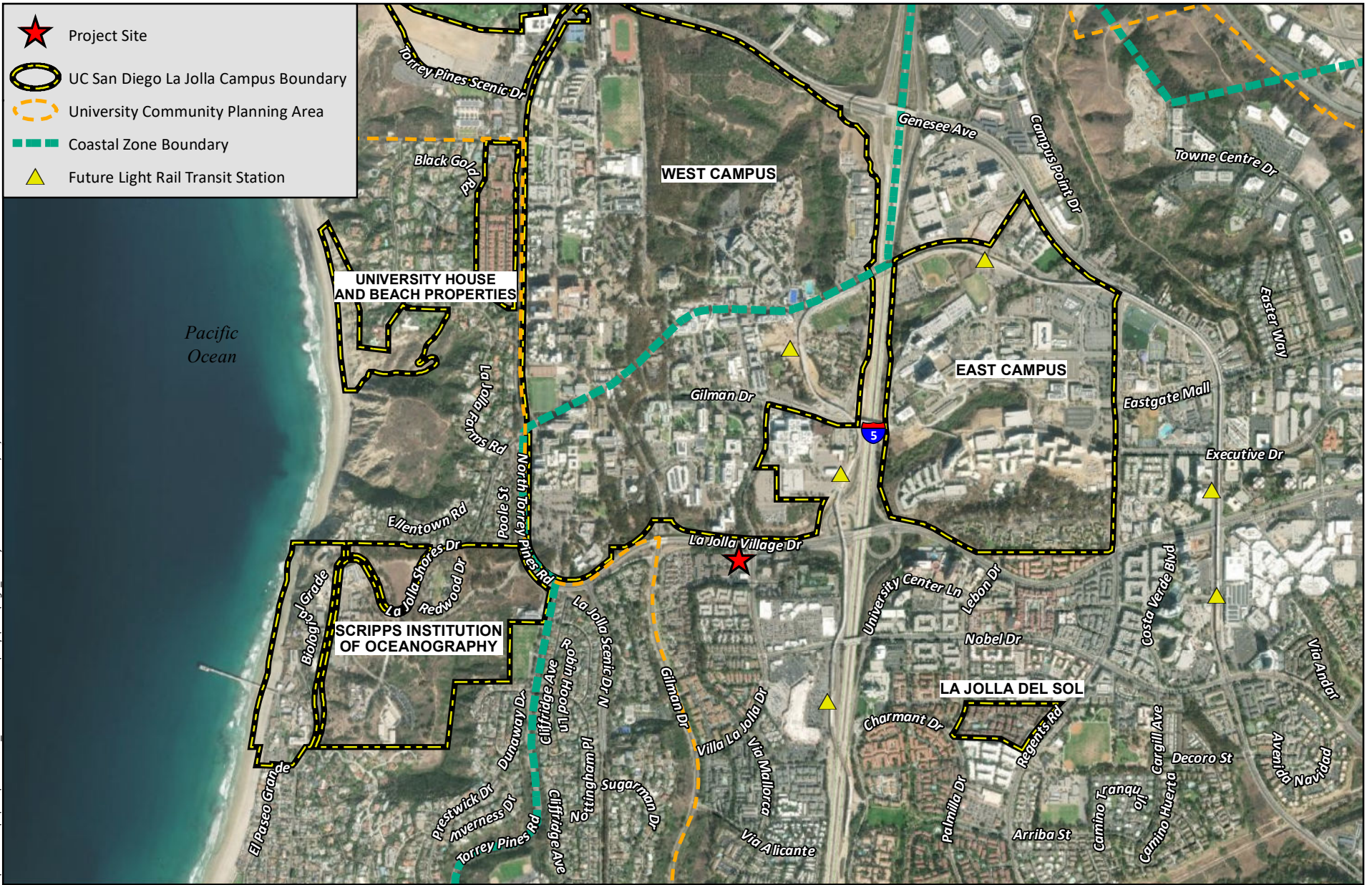
- 3) Call into the meeting via telephone:  
+1 669 900 6833 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 876 9923 or +1 301 715 8592  
Webinar ID: 882 1825 1165






If you are unable to join the online public session, a recording will be provided on the project website linked below. The scoping meeting will also be advertised in the San Diego Union Tribune and by direct mailing to notify interested individuals, organizations, and associations on UC San Diego’s mailing list. In addition, this NOP and additional project information is available on the project-specific website at <https://blink.ucsd.edu/facilities/real-estate/ljic.html>.

If you have any questions about the Project, please contact Julie Kilpatrick, Director: Real Estate, P3 Development, at (858) 534-7475.

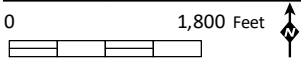
Enclosures: Environmental Document Transmittal Form  
Figure 1, Project Vicinity  
Figure 2, Project Site and Surroundings  
Figure 3, Limits of Work








-  Project Site
-  UC San Diego La Jolla Campus Boundary
-  University Community Planning Area
-  Coastal Zone Boundary
-  Future Light Rail Transit Station

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Source: Aerial (Maxar, 2019)



-  Project Site
-  UC San Diego La Jolla Campus Boundary
-  Privately-owned Parcel to be Subdivided






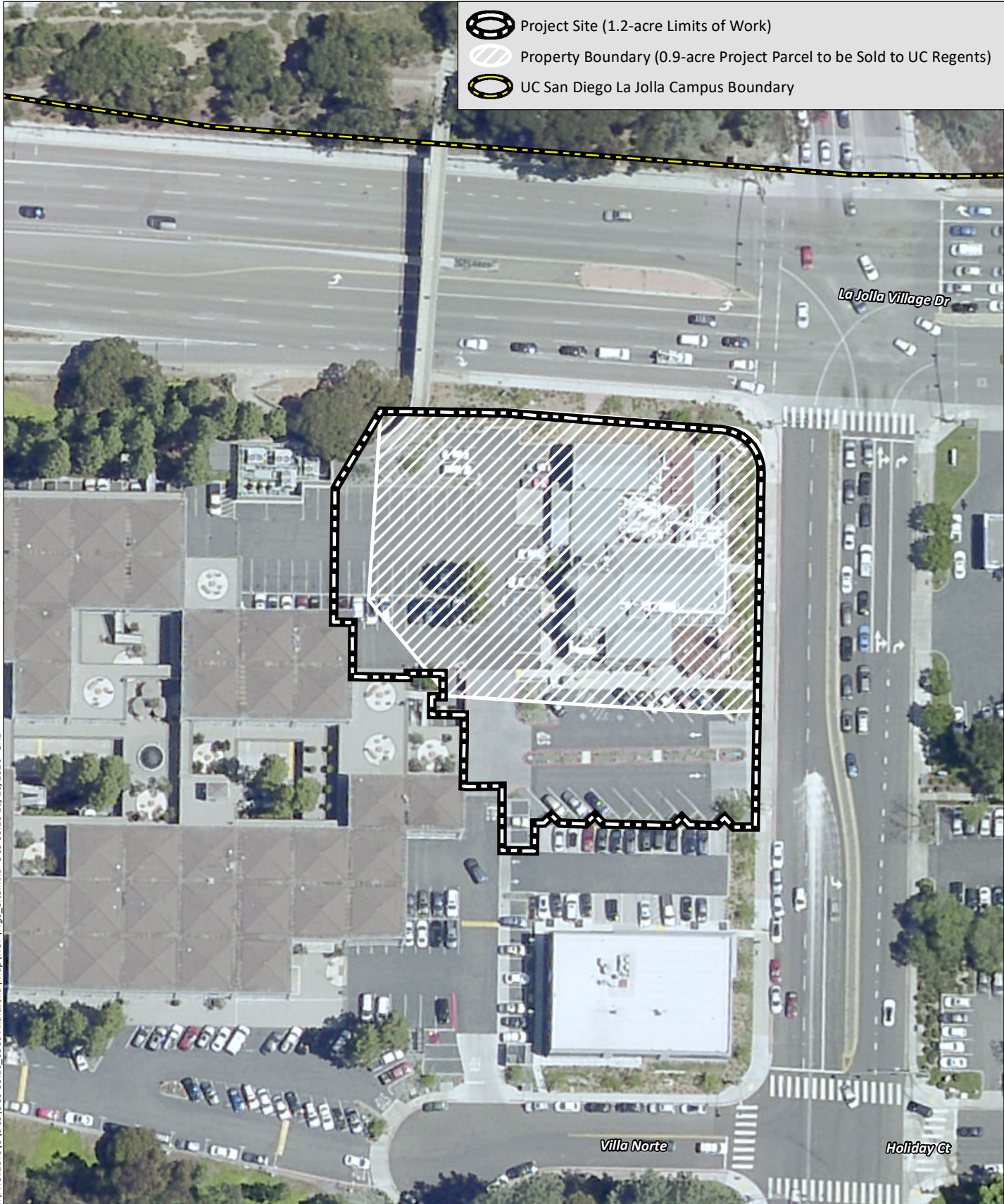
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Source: Aerial (SanGIS, 2017)



-  Project Site (1.2-acre Limits of Work)
-  Property Boundary (0.9-acre Project Parcel to be Sold to UC Regents)
-  UC San Diego La Jolla Campus Boundary



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Source: Aerial (SanGIS, 2017)

