BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR PALMDALE TERRACE AFFORDABLE MULTI-FAMILY PROJECT

APNs: 128-067-020, 021, 022, 023

ELEVATED
ENTITLEMENTS

Lead Agency:
City of Palmdale

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1.0 SUMMARY

Palmdale Terrace Apartments, L.P. is proposing to build a 151-unit three-story multi-family residential project with a 100 percent affordability on an approximately 8.93-acre lot, which is currently vacant. The proposed project plans include construction of three buildings with 151 dwelling units reserved as Low-Income Housing, and onsite parking spaces. The site consists of four (4) parcels with the following Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs): 128-067-020, 021, 022, 023.The project site is situated in the Palmdale Quadrangle.

A biological survey conducted on March 7, 2021 at the vacant project site, revealed that the habitat occurring on the site is disturbed and predominantly consists of non-native grassland and scattered Desert Scrub vegetation. Several "tracks" crisscross the site, indicating constant human presence and traffic. Trash and refuse litter the site. No special-status plants or animal species were identified during the survey. Although, species occurrence records indicate potential for several special-status plants and wildlife species to occur in the project area. Despite the disturbed nature of the site, the project site provides a low to moderate potential for special-status wildlife species such as Mohave Ground Squirrel (MGS), Coast Horned Lizard, and Burrowing Owls, to occur on the project site. The vegetation on the project site could also support nesting birds, although the habitat quality for nesting is low.

Numerous burrows, likely that of the common California Ground Squirrel were detected throughout the project site. The presence of these burrows is also an indication that the MGS could be potentially present. Therefore, a focused habitat assessment and a presence/absence survey for MGS is recommended as a mitigation. In addition to the MGS surveys, a pre-construction survey for Burrowing Owls is recommended.

The extent of the site has the potential to host protected native breeding bird species. Therefore, a qualified biologist should conduct a pre-construction nesting bird survey no more than three days prior to the commencement of ground disturbing activities on the site.

There are no hydrological or drainage features on the site that qualify as "waters of the United States," and/or "state waters" subject to jurisdictional authority of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), respectively.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The approximately 8.39 -acre project site (APN numbers: 128-067-020, 021, 022, 023) is located in the southwest corner of 25th Street East and East Avenue Q-12, with an existing single-family residential development to the north and west, vacant property to the east with existing single-family residential to the south. The project site is located less than a mile south of the East Palmdale

Boulevard (Hwy 138) and approximately 2.7 miles east of the Antelope Valley Freeway (Hwy. 14) (Figures 1 and 2).

The proposed development plan for this site entails the construction of a three-story 151-unit multi-family residential project with 100 percent affordability. The proposed project would consist of three buildings with 151 dwelling units reserved for Low Income Households. Onsite amenities include shared laundry facilities, passive landscape areas with barbeque stations, tot-lots with play equipment and shade structures. Figure 3 is an overlay of the proposed project design plans on an aerial base map of the project site.

On March 7, 2021, Elevated Entitlements (EE) staff conducted a general, reconnaissance-level biological assessment of the site. The site survey and this report are intended to: a) characterize the existing biological conditions at the site, b) to evaluate and discuss the potential for special status plants and wildlife species to occur on the site, c) to identify those biological resources that may pose a constraint to the development of the site and d) to recommend general resource management measures to facilitate the Applicant to avoid or minimize impacts, if feasible.

EE staff evaluated the potential for on-site and adjacent habitats to support special-status plant and/or animal species. In addition, biologists identified whether the site could serve as an important regional wildlife movement corridor or habitat linkage to other open space areas, and whether any potential jurisdictional resources under the protection of the ACOE, the CDFW, and/or the RWQCB potentially occur on the site. Because the purpose of this evaluation was to identify potential biological constraints to development, focused/protocol-level surveys for plant or animal species were not conducted.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

On March 7, 2021, a Reconnaissance-level survey of the project site was conducted by EE staff. In support of a general Habitat Assessment of the site, the entire site within the proposed development footprint and immediate adjacent areas was traversed on foot to assess site characteristics and dominant habitat areas on the site. Prior to visiting the site, a query of the California Department of Fish and Game's California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (CDFW 2021) and California Native Plant Society database (CNPS 2021) was conducted to identify special-status plant or animal species previously recorded in the area. The CNDDB lists historical and recently recorded occurrences of both special-status plant and animal species, and the CNPS database lists historical and recent occurrences of special-status plant species. The areas searched included 9 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle around the project site, located in the Palmdale Quadrangle. The 9 Quadrangles searched were: Palmdale, Lancaster West, Lancaster East, Alpine Butte, Ritter Ridge, Littlerock, Acton, Pacifico Mountain, and Juniper Hills. A list of plants and wildlife observed on the property was created. Plant taxonomy follows the Holland (1986) and Sawyer et al. (2009). Other standard references used for the survey include Sibley (2003), Stebbins (2003), Jameson and Peeters (2004).

Prior to conducting the field survey of the project site, Elevated Entitlements staff also reviewed aerial photography of the Study Area (Google Earth Maps, 2019), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat Online Mapper (http://criticalhabitat,fws.gov/), and reviewed other biological assessment reports prepared in the region, including a Biological Assessment Report for the Juniper Grove Apartments Project (TERACOR Resource Management, 2019).

The potential for special-status species to occur on the project site is based on the proximity of the site to recorded occurrences listed in the CNDDB and CNPS databases, on-site vegetation and habitat quality, topography, elevation, soils, surrounding land uses, habitat preferences, and geographic ranges of special-status plant and animal species known to occur in the region.

4.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

4.1 GENERAL

The subject property is roughly rectangular in shape, the site occupies approximately 8.39 acres of vacant property. The project area is relatively flat, sloping slightly to the east at an approximate one to two percent gradient. The average elevation across the site is approximately 2, 620 feet. There is a shallow "swale-line" depression in the western portion of the site, oriented in a northwest to southwest alignment. The site is surrounded by residential development to the north, west, south with a vacant lot to the immediate east. Adjacent the vacant lot to the east is development. The project site shows evidence of frequent use by humans, with tracks evident. Trash and litter are present on the project site.

The USDA's online Web Soil Mapper (www.websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov) was reviewed to obtain information about the soils on the project site. The soils on the project site are predominantly typically characterized by sandy loam, with 0-2 percent slopes. Majority of the project site is comprised of Greenfield Sandy Loam and Hanford Coarse Sandy Loam soils.

4.2 VEGETATION

The vegetation of the project site within the proposed footprint is disturbed, with evidence of human-disturbances of varying degrees, including, evidence of human-made tracks, soils, small piling of soils and litter. The ground cover on the project site is primarily composed of non-native grasses of Mediterranean origin. This community is dominated by non-native species characteristic of disturbed areas, including cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), Ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*). The dominant native groundcover occurring in patches throughout the site include Turkey-mullein or "Dove weed" (*Croton setiger*). The vegetation occurring on the project site is shown in Figure 4, Vegetation Communities Map. The shrub layer on the project site is a mixture of native and non-native plants. Small isolated patches of non-native Russian Thistle (*Salsola australis*) and short-pod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*) and) occur scattered on the site. These non-native plants could be characterized as Annual Non-native Grassland Community. Native shrub community consists of patches of Mormon Tea (*Ephedra nevadensis*), Rubber

Rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseaosa*), Narrow-scaled Felthorn (*Teteradymia stenolepis*) and Flat-topped buckwheat (*Eriogonum deflexum*). A single native Silver cholla (*Cylindropuntia echinocarpa*) was detected towards the eastern portion of the site and two individual native Winter fat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*) were detected on the site. Together, these native shrubs can be generally characterized as disturbed Desert Scrub Community, on the project site. No specific alliances within the native desert scrub community were discernable, as these species do not occur in numbers substantial enough to identify any significant stands of native habitat. No native grasses or trees were detected within the survey area. Figure 5 contains representative photographs of the site that depict the vegetation and site conditions.

4.3 WILDLIFE

Numerous burrows were detected throughout the site (See Figure 5, Site Photographs). These burrows were likely created by California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*). Several California ground squirrels were detected foraging and resting at their burrows. The following avian species were observed on site: Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), White-crowned Sparrow, (*Zonothrichia luecophrys*) house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) and Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). No nests of birds were detected. A single Audubon's cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) was seen bounding away during the survey.

4.4 JURISDICTIONAL WATERS

The project site is an open field, as seen in Figure 5, containing representative photos of the project site. The field reconnaissance survey did not detect any indication of the drainages or inundations that could potentially be under the jurisdictional authority of the California Department of Fish and Game, United States Army Corps of Engineers, or the Regional Water Quality Control Board. There is a shallow 'swale-like' depression which is oriented in a northwest-southeast alignment. This swale likely conveys storm water across the site but the flow likely is restricted to just onsite flow as there is no discrete connectivity of this swale, offsite.

4.5 HABITAT CONNECTIVITY AND WILDLIFE MOVEMENTS

The project site is not located within any Significant Ecological Area (SEA) recognized by Los Angeles County. The SEA program was developed by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning to identify ecologically important landscapes within the county. While the project site does support some foraging habitat for wildlife species, it does not represent a linkage between significant natural habitats. Common urban wildlife such as coyotes and rabbits could utilize the project site for temporary resting and foraging and use as transients. The highly urbanized setting surrounding the project site on all sides; and the presence of roadways surrounding the site and the project area; presents a severe constraint for wildlife movement.

5.0 BIOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

No special-status plant or animal species were observed during the site visit. Based on a 9-Quadrangle query of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), a list of special-status plant and animal species that have the potential to occur on site is provided in Table 1, Special-Status Plant or Animal Species with Potential to Occur on the Site. The table also provides the general habitat preference of each species and discusses the potential for the species to occur on the site, based on habitat and other characteristics.

Table 1 Special-Status Plant/Animal Species with Potential to Occur on Project Site

Common Name *Scientific Name*	Status			General Habitat Description	Occurrence Potential on Project Site
	State	Federal	CNPS		
Plants					
Alkali mariposa lily (*Calochortus striatus*)			CNPS 1B.2	Alkaline, mesic chaparral, chenopod scrub, Mohave desert scrub, meadows, seeps. Perennial bulbiferous herb that blooms April to June.	**Low**. Potential habitat on the project site is limited.
Davidson's Globe Mallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*)			CNPS 1B.2	Slopes, washes. A dicot, that blooms June-January,	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
Greata's aster *(Symphyotrichum greatae)*			CNPS 1B.3	Damp places in canyons	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
Horn's milk vetch (*Astragalus hornii* var. *hornii*)			CNPS 1B.1	Annual herb, occurs in lake margins, alkaline habitats, meadows & seeps, and in playas. Blooms May to October.	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
Mason's nestsraw (*Stylocline masonii*)			CNPS 1.B1	Various types of sandy habitat. Annual herb, uncommon, blooms March to May	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
Mt. Gleason paintbrush (*Castilleja gleasoni*)			CNPS 1B.2	Cliffs, rocky slopes in open, yellow-pine forests, prefers elevation between 1100-2,200 meters. Blooms May-Jun	**None**. No suitable habitat on site. Project site not within preferred elevation.
Palmer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri)*			CNPS 1B.2	Wetlands, meadows, Yellow Pine Forest, Chaparral, wetland-riparian. Perennial herb, blooms April-July	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
San Gabriel manzanita (*Arctostaphylos gabrielensis)*			CNPS 1B.2	California chaparral and woodlands. Endemic to one small area in the San Gabriel Mountains.	**None**. No suitable habitat on site. Project site below the preferred elevation range.
Lancaster milk-vetch (*Astagalus preussii*)			CNPS 1B.1	Perennial herb, prefers chenopod scrub habitat, slaine	**None**. No suitable habitat or preferred alkaline soils on site. Project site below

				or alkaline soils, blooms March-May	the preferred elevation range. A perennial herb that would have been observed if present,
Lemon lily (*Lilium parryi*)			CNPS 1B.2	Moist areas in mountain habitats Perennial herb. Prefers elevation range between 1,360 to 2,450 meters.	**None**. No suitable habitat on site. Project site below the preferred elevation range.
Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi*)			CNPS D 1B.1	Annual herb, sandy or rocky openings in chaparral, cismontane woodlands, coastal scrub and valley and foothill grasslands. Blooms April-June.	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
Peirson's lupine *(Lupinus peirsonii)*			CNPS 1B.3	Perennial herb, endemic to San Gabriel Mountains prefers alpine woodlands and forest habitat. Blooms April-June	**None**. No suitable habitat on site. Project site below the preferred elevation range. Perennial herb that would have been observed if present,
Rosamond eriastrum (*Eriastrum rosamondense)*			CNPS 1B.1	Annual herb, occurs in alkaline hummocks, often sandy, in chenopod scrub openings and vernal pools. Blooms April-May	**None**. No suitable habitat on site.
Sagebrush loeflingia (*Loeflingia squarrosa* var. *artemisiarum*)			CNPS 2B.2	Annual herb, occurs in sand dunes and sandy flats around clay slicks within Great Basin scrub and Sonoran Desert scrub at elevations below 1,615 meters.	**Low**. Potential habitat on site is very limited.
Short-joint beavertail *(Opuntia basilaris var. brachyclad)*			CNPS 1.B2	Chaparral, Joshua tree woodland, Mojave desert scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland. Perennial stem succulent that blooms April to August.	**None**. A perennial stem succulent that would have been observed if present.
Woolly mountain-parsley (*Oreonana vestita*)			CNPS 1B.3	Perennial herb, dry exposed gravel slopes and talus along ridge tops, 7,500-11,000 feet	**None**. No suitable habitat on site. Project site below the preferred elevation range.
White pygmy-poppy (*Canbya candida*)			CNPS 4.2	Gravelly, sandy, granitic soils in Joshua tree woodland, Mojave Desert scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland. Annual herb that blooms March to June.	**Low**. Potential habitat on site is very limited.
Animals					
Invertebrates					
Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*)	This species has no formal listing			This bumble bee is known to occur from coastal California east to the Sierra-Cascade	**Not Expected to Occur**. As depicted by the attached *Exhibit 7 – CNDDB Occurrences*, this species was detected in

				Crest and south into Mexico. Its' known food plant genera include *Antirrhinum*, *Phacelia*, *Clarkia*, *Dendromecon*, *Eschscholzia*, and *Eriogonum*.	the vicinity of Palmdale in 1931. None of the above-listed plant genera were detected on-site; therefore, habitat on-site is unsuitable for the crotch bumble bee.
California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*)				This species occurs in sandy or loose loamy soils under sparse vegetation.	**Low**. his burrowing species feeds upon small, soft-bodied arthropods. California legless lizard has been detected in several locations within the vicinity of the subject property. The nearest occurrence to the project site was a 2005 detection located northwest of the site across the Division Street / Avenue R intersection, east of State Route 14. Habitat on- site is structurally suitable, although this species' presence is likely precluded on-site from human disturbance and adjacent development.
California glossy snake (*Arizona elegans occidentalis*)	SSC			California glossy snake is patchily distributed from the eastern portion of San Francisco Bay, southern San Joaquin Valley, and the Coast, Transverse, and Peninsular Ranges, and south to Baja California. This subspecies is a habitat generalist that utilizes scrub and grassland habitats, often with loose or sandy soils.	**Not Expected to Occur**. The CNDDB reports a 1937 detection in the vicinity of Vincent near the Antelope Valley Freeway (State Route 14). Marginally suitable habitat is present on-site, although sustained presence is unlikely due to human disturbance on the subject property.
Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata)*	SSC			The western pond turtle is an aquatic turtle of ponds, marshes, rivers, streams and irrigation ditches usually with aquatic vegetation. It requires basking sites and sandy banks or grassy open fields up to 0.5 kilometer from water for egg-laying.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Two (2) CNDDB detections have been reported; the nearest being in 1995 in Amargosa Creek, south of Ritter Ridge, approximately 7.2 miles west-northwest from the subject property. Suitable aquatic habitat is not present on-site; therefore, this species would not occur on the project site.
Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*)	ST	FT			**Low.** Desert tortoise typically requires firm ground for constructing burrows in banks, washes, compacted sand, rock shelters and exposed, eroded caliche layers in walls of washes. It frequently resides in desert oases, riverbanks, washes, dunes, and rocky slopes. In the United States, the desert tortoise utilizes creosote bush flats and hillsides as well as blackbrush and juniper woodland. No suitable habitat on site. No burrows suitable for use by this species were observed on-site. Human disturbance would likely preclude prolonged occurrence of desert tortoise on the subject property.

Coast horned lizard *Phynosoma coronatum* (Blainvillii population)	SSC			Species occurs in a wide variety of habitat, including: grasslands, coastal scrub and woodland. Open areas for sunning and bushes for cover. Loose soils for burial, and an abundant supply of ants and other insects.	**Low**. According to the CNDDB, several detections of coast horned lizard have occurred within the general vicinity of the subject property. The nearest detection to the project site occurred in 1964 just west of Sierra Highway, approximately 3.5 miles northwest of the subject site. Disturbances on-site likely preclude this organism from occurring on the subject property.
Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*)	SSC			This species is highly aquatic, and occurs in or near permanent fresh water.	**Not Expected to Occur**. There is no suitable aquatic habitat present on-site. This species is not expected to occur. According to the CNDDB, this species was detected in Amargosa Creek in 1995 and 1999, approximately 8 miles west-northwest from the subject property,
Mojave fringe-toed lizard (*Uma scoparius*)	SSC			This species inhabits areas of the western Mojave Desert that are comprised of wind-blown sand (sand dunes). It feeds on small invertebrates primarily, but will also consume vegetative material such as blossoms and leaves.	**Not Expected to Occur**. The project site lacks suitable habitat and therefore the species is not likely to occur on-site.
Birds					
Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)	SSC (Burrow sites and some wintering sites)			This species of owl is unique in that it utilizes the burrows of large, fossorial mammals (i.e., California ground squirrel) for both wintering and nesting. This owl inhabits Grasslands; nests in burrows. This species also inhabits man-made structures such as culverts and pipes.	**Low**. Although ground squirrel burrows were detected on site, no signs of owls were observed. According to the CNDDB, several detections of burrowing owl have occurred within the vicinity of the subject property. A burrowing owl was detected north of Avenue Q and east of 10th Street, approximately 1.70 miles northwest of the project site, in 2006. The burrow complexes (i.e., ground squirrel burrows) detected on site are suitable for burrowing owl; however, these complexes lacked any sign of burrowing owl use or occupation (i.e., feathers, pellets, and/or wash). The project site is also too open with frequent human disturbances all around, which greatly precludes this species from being present on site.

Cooper's hawk (nesting) *Accipiter cooperi*	WL (Nesting)			Forages and nests in open woodlands, woodland margins and riparian forests. The Cooper's hawk typically nests within riparian growths of deciduous trees in canyon bottoms on river floodplains, and also within live oaks (*Quercus* spp.).	**Not Expected to Occur**. Cooper's hawk was observed in the vicinity of Palmdale in 1921. No suitable habitat present on-site, therefore, this species is not expected to occur on site.
Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)	WL (Nesting)			Sharp-shinned Hawks are birds of the forest and forest edge, and are not found where trees are scarce or scattered, except on migration. They require dense forest, ideally with a closed canopy, for breeding.	**Low.** This species of raptor does not occur in southern California, except for high elevation mountainous areas, during the nesting season. It could potentially, however, utilize the subject property for wintering or as a migratory stopover. The sharp-shinned hawk will seldom occur in desert areas in winter. This species was not detected on-site.
Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*)	SSC (Nesting colony)			The tricolored blackbird requires open water, protected nesting substrate, and foraging area with insect prey within a few kilometers of its colony.	**Low**. This highly colonial species is largely endemic to California and is most numerous in the vicinity of the Central Valley. CNDDB records indicate that in 2011 detection in Lake Palmdale, approximately 2.38 miles southwest of the subject property. Suitable habitat is not present, and this species was not detected on-site.
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysuetos*)	WL, FP			Nests on cliffs and rocks and forages in open country, grasslands. Golden Eagles live in open and semi open country featuring native vegetation. They avoid developed areas and uninterrupted stretches of forest. They are found primarily in mountains up to 12,000 feet, canyonlands, rimrock terrain, and riverside cliffs and bluffs.	**Not Expected to Occur**. No suitable habitat present on-site. These large birds of prey could occasionally forage above the subject property, but would not nest anywhere near the project site due to a lack of preferred nesting habitat (i.e., cliffs).
Southen California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps cabescens*)	WL			Slopes of Transverse and Coastal ranges from Los Angeles County to Baja California; resident; prefers open shrubby habitat on rocky, xeric slopes. This species is a resident of coastal sage scrub and sparse mixed chaparral. This sparrow frequents relatively steep, often rocky hillsides with grass and forb patches.	**Not expected to Occur**. No suitable habitat present on-site. CNDDB records indicate, one (1) detection observed in the northern foothills of the Sierra Pelona Mountains, southwest of the Anaverde Valley, approximately 9 miles west-southwest of the subject property. Desert habitat on-site is marginally suitable for this subspecies; however, it would not be expected to occur on the project site due to disturbance levels.

Tricvolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor)*	CSC			Freshwater habitats where it nests in emergent freshwater or riparian vegetation; feeds in grasslands and croplands near nesting areas.	**Not Expect to Occur**. There is not freshwater habitat on-site. This species is not expected to occur.
Bell's sage sparrow (*Artemisiospiza bellii bellii*)	WL			Bell's Sparrows breed in coastal sagebrush, chaparral, and other open, scrubby habitats. In chaparral, they tend toward younger, less dense stands that are growing back from recent fires; they are less common in older, taller stands that have remained unburned. In mountains of Southern California, they also occur in big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). In the Mojave, Bell's Sparrows use low scrub including big sagebrush, saltbush, bitterbrush, shadscale, and creosote bush.	**Moderately Low.** CNDDB records indicate that this subspecies was detected just east of Ritter Canyon and south-southeast of Messer Ranch at the southeast end of Leona Valley in 2005, just over ten (10) miles west-northwest of the subject property. Bell's sage sparrow was also detected on a property just south of Rayburn road, approximately 2.42 miles southwest of the project site.
Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*)	SSC (Nesting)			Short-eared Owls live in large, open areas with low vegetation, including prairie and coastal grasslands, heathlands, meadows, shrubs, steppe, savanna, tundra, marshes, dunes, and agricultural areas.	**Not Expected to Occur.** Although not commonly known from this area, this diurnal/crepuscular (active dusk and dawn) owl frequents grasslands, marshes and deserts. It would not be expected to nest on-site, as this owl's breeding range extends from northern California north into Canada.
Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*)	SSC (Nesting)			Long-eared Owls roost in dense vegetation and forage in open grasslands or shrublands; also, open coniferous or deciduous woodlands. They occur at elevations ranging from near sea level to above 6,500 feet.	**Not Expected To Occur**. This species does not nest within the general region of the subject property, and would not be expected to occur on-site.
Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*)	SWL (Wintering)			The ferruginous hawk utilizes open grasslands, sagebrush flats, and desert scrub on low foothills and fringes of pinyon and juniper woodlands. This hawk eats mostly lagomorphs (rabbits), ground squirrels, and mice.	**Low.** According to the CNDDB, this species was detected in two (2) locations at the northwest end of Anaverde Valley in 2011, approximately 6.80 miles west of the subject property. Habitat on-site is structurally suitable, although sustained presence is unlikely due to the site's disturbance levels.
Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)	ST (Nesting)			Swainson's Hawks favor open habitats for foraging. They breed in prairie and grassland habitat. They rely on scattered stands of trees near agricultural fields and grasslands for nesting sites.	**Low.** CNDDB records show a detection of Swainson's hawk in the vicinity of Palmdale in 1927. Marginally suitable habitat is present, although this species would not be expected to occur on-site due to the level of disturbance on the property.

				This raptor requires adjacent suitable foraging habitat such as grasslands, or alfalfa or grain fields supporting rodent populations.	
Mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*)	SSC (Wintering)			The mountain plover occurs in short grasslands, freshly plowed fields, newly sprouting grain fields, and sometimes sod farms. This species prefers short vegetation, bare ground, flat topography, and grazed areas with burrowing rodents.	**Low.** CNDDB records indicate that the mountain plover was detected at A&G Sod Farms southwest of the intersection of 50th Street East and Avenue N, just east of Palmdale Airport, approximately 4.5 miles northeast of the subject property. Habitat on-site is marginally suitable, although this species was not detected on the project site.
Northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*)	SSC (Nesting)			The northern harrier breeds in large, undisturbed wetlands, grasslands with low, thick vegetation, freshwater and brackish marshes, lightly grazed meadows, old fields, tundra, dry upland prairies, drained marshlands, high-desert shrubsteppe and riverine woodlands across Canada and the northern U.S. During winter this species utilizes a range of habitats with low vegetation, including deserts, coastal sand dunes, pasturelands, croplands, dry plains, grasslands, old fields, estuaries, open floodplains and marshes.	**Not Expected to Occur.** The project site supports very low-quality wintering habitat for this species. Because of the open nature of the site and lack of adequate cover, this species is not expected to nest on site.
California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*)	WL			The California horned lark is common throughout the state; however, numbers have been recently declining in urbanized areas of southern California. This bird favors bare, dry ground and areas of short, sparse vegetation; and avoids places where grasses grow more than a couple of inches high. Common habitats include prairies, deserts, tundra, beaches, dunes, and heavily grazed pastures. Horned larks also frequent human-cleared areas, such as plowed fields and mowed expanses around airstrips.	**Moderately Low.** The scrub habitat on site, even though disturb, could offer a foraging habitat for this species, although not expected to nest on site due to frequent human disturbances. This species was not detected on the site.

Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)	WL (Nesting)			This raptor breeds in open country with bluffs and cliffs to nest on. Breeding habitats include grasslands, shrubsteppe desert, areas of mixed shrubs and grasslands, or alpine tundra that supports abundant ground squirrel or pika populations.	**Not Expected to Occur.** This species would not nest on-site due to the lack of cliffs on the subject property, but could potentially forage on-site, although, the foraging habitat quality is also low.
Loggerhead shrike *(Lanius ludovicianus)*	SSC (Nesting)			The loggerhead shrike occurs in the western Mojave Desert year-round. This species occurs in a variety of habitats, but in the western Mojave Desert it occurs in Mojavean desert scrub habitats and Joshua tree woodland. The loggerhead shrike, often referred to as the "butcher bird" because of how it will often impale its prey on thorns or other sharp objects to be consumed later, preys on arthropods, amphibians, small reptiles, small birds, and small mammals.	**Moderately Low.** According to the CNDDB, the nearest detection of loggerhead shrike occurred in the Sierra Pelona Mountains, approximately seven (7) miles southwest of the project site. Although this species was not detected on the subject property, it could potentially occur due to structurally suitable habitats being present. Sustained presence, however, would likely be precluded due to the level of disturbance on-site. This species was not detected on the subject property.
Black-tailed gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*)	WL			This species is a leaf-gleaning insectivore. This bird occurs in the western Mojave Desert, and prefers to nest and forage along desert washes and arroyos with dense creosote bush and/or saltbush (*Atriplex* spp.) along the edge. The black-tailed gnatcatcher; however, will also occur in desert scrub habitats.	**Moderately Low.** This species of leaf-gleaning insectivore occurs in the western Mojave Desert, and prefers to nest and forage along desert washes and arroyos with dense creosote bush and/or saltbush (*Atriplex* spp.) along the edge. The black-tailed gnatcatcher; however, will also occur in desert scrub habitats. This species was not detected on the subject property. However, the site supports a moderately low probability of occurrence for this species.
Crissal thrasher (*Toxostoma crissale*)	SSC			This species occurs primarily at the upper reaches of arroyos in the western Mojave Desert. These areas are often comprised of dense or even closed-canopy habitats.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Habitat on the subject property is not suitable, and Crissal thrasher was not detected on-site.
Le Conte's Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*)	SSC			his species occurs primarily at the upper reaches of arroyos in the western Mojave Desert. These areas are often comprised of dense or even closed-canopy habitats.	**Not Expected to Occur.** Habitat on the subject property is not suitable, and Le Conte's thrasher was not detected on-site.
Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*)	SE (Nesting)	FE		Least Bell's vireo is a summer resident of southern California and occurs in low riparian areas in the vicinity	**Not Expected to Occur.** Least Bell's vireo was detected on the margin of Una Lake, approximately three (3) miles southwest of the project site, in 2005.

				of water or in dry river bottoms. This vireo nests along margins of shrubs or on twigs projecting into pathways, usually on willow (*Salix* spp.), *Baccharis* spp. or mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.).	Suitable habitat is not present on-site, and this species would not be expected to occur on the subject property.
Mammals					
Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*)	SSC			This species of bat, similar to that of the California leaf-nosed bat, is a "gleaning" bat in which it forages on the ground for insects; however, it detects its prey through sound. The pallid bat roosts in rock crevices, mines, and hollow trees.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Suitable roosting habitat is not present on-site, and this bat was not detected on the subject property.
Pallid San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax pallidus*)	SSC			This subspecies occurs primarily in open desert scrub habitats. Detailed life history information is lacking on this subspecies; however, Hall (1981) depicts this subspecies' range which includes the subject property.	**Moderately Low.** Desert scrub habitat is present on site, but due to the low quality and disturbed nature, there is a very low probability of occurrence of this species on site. This bat was not detected on the subject property.
Townsend's big- eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)	SSC			The Townsend's big-eared bat is a highly versatile flier, and primarily preys upon moths. This species roosts in caves, mines, and buildings.	**Not Expected to Occur.** No suitable roost sites were detected on the subject property; however, it could occasionally utilize the site to forage.
Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*)	SSC			This species occurs in a wide array of habitats. The spotted bat may travel as much as 50 miles to foraging areas. This species roosts in rock crevices on cliff faces and within caves.	**Low**. This species roosts in rock crevices on cliff faces and within caves. No suitable roost sites are present within the project site; however, it could occasionally utilize the site to forage. The foraging habitat quality on site is low,
Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*)	SSC			This species prefers rocky canyons. It requires adequate space beneath its roost in order to take flight because the western mastiff bat cannot achieve flight from the surface. This species roosts in rock crevices on cliff faces and occasionally buildings.	**Low.** No suitable roost sites are present within the site; however, it could occasionally utilize the site to forage.
Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*)	SA			This species occurs primarily within or near forested areas, usually near a water source. It roosts in loose bark, secondary cavities (i.e.,	**Not Expected to Occur**. No suitable habitat present on site or in the project vicinity.

				unused woodpecker holes), and hollow trees.	
Western red bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii)*	SSC			Lasurine bats are generally solitary. This species prefers riparian areas, and often roosts in cottonwood (*Populus* spp.) and willow (*Salix* spp.) trees. Moths are the preferred food item; however, other species of flying insects will be consumed.	**Not Expected to Occur**. No suitable habitat present on site or in the project vicinity.
Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)	SA			This species prefers deciduous and coniferous forests, and often those types of trees to roost. Moths are the preferred food item; however, other species of flying insects and occasionally small bat species will be consumed.	**Not Expected to Occur**. No suitable habitat present on site or in the project vicinity.
California leaf- nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*)	SSC			This species of bat is a "gleaning" bat in which it forages on the ground for insects utilizing primarily sight. It uses a specialized hovering flight to capture prey. This bat roosts by day in caves and mines, and often in buildings and below bridges by night.	**Low.** No suitable roost sites are present on-site; however, it could occasionally utilize the site to forage. Foraging habitat quality on site is poor.
Western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)	SA			The western small-footed myotis roosts singly or in small communal groups in rock crevices, mines, caves, under exfoliating bark, or in buildings. This species consumes a wide variety of flying insects which include moths and beetles.	**Low.** Suitable roost sites are not present on- site, although this species may occasionally forage above the property. Foraging habitat quality on site is poor.
Long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*)	SA			The long-eared myotis occurs primarily in forested areas. This species gleans moths and beetles from vegetation. Researchers believe that this species may rely more upon hearing to locate prey, rather than echolocation. The long-eared myotis roosts in a variety of areas.	**Not Expected to Occur**. No suitable habitat present on site or in the project vicinity.

Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*)				This species occurs in oak, pinyon pine, ponderosa pine, and desert scrub habitats. It often occurs at high elevations 1,220 meters to 3,050 meters (4,000 feet to 10,000 feet). The fringed myotis hunts prey (i.e., moths, beetles, and other insects) on the wing, but may occasionally glean from vegetation.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Although desert scrub is present on-site, elevations on the site are lower than those typical of where this species occurs.
Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*)	SA			This species occurs in coniferous forests at high elevations. It forages for flying insects, typically moths, on the wing within forest openings. The long-legged myotis roosts in snags (i.e., dead trees), crevices, caves, and buildings.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Habitats on the subject property are not suitable for this species.
Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*)	SA			The Yuma myotis roosts in large groups in vertical cracks in cliff faces, buildings, and under bridges. This species' distribution is closely tied to bodies of water.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Habitats on the subject property are not suitable for this species. There are no bodies of water on the project site or immediate vicinity.
Pocketed free- tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*)	SSC			Free-tailed bats are swift fliers, and often pursue small flying insects, such as small moths, on the wing. This species prefers habitats close to riparian areas, and often roosts in caves, rock crevices, and buildings.	**Not Expected to Occur**. Habitats on the subject property are not suitable for this species. There are no bodies of water on the project site or immediate vicinity.
San Joaquin pocket mouse (*Perognathus inornatus*)	SA			San Joaquin pocket mouse is associated with fine- textured, sandy, and friable soils in grassland, oak savanna and arid scrubland in the southern Sacramento Valley, Salinas Valley, San Joaquin Valley and adjacent foothills, and south to the Mojave Desert.	**Moderately Low.** This pocket mouse was detected in the vicinity of Palmdale in 1931. Mammal burrows were detected on-site, and because trapping was not conducted to conclusively rule out the presence of San Joaquin pocket mouse, a moderately low potential for occurrence is designated for this species on site.
American badger (*Taxidea taxus)*	CSC			The American badger is a secretive organism in open grassland and disturbed habitats, but has become rare in areas of human activity. It prefers friable soils and open uncultivated ground. Preys on burrowing rodents.	**Low**. Although there is prey base on-site in the form of ground squirrels, the site is very open and subjected to human disturbance and access. This species May forage onsite as a transient. Database records do not indicate presence of species within 1mile.

Plant Communities	
Southern Riparian Scrub	Not Present
Southern Sycamnore Alder Riparian Woodland	Not Present
Southern Cottonwood Willow Riparian Forest	Not present

Status Key:
Federal:FE = Federal Endangered; FT = Federal Threatened; FSC = Federal Species of Concern
State: CE= California Endangered; CSC = California Species of Concern; CR = California Rare, WL= Watch List, FP= Fully Protected
CNPS: Rare Plant Rank 1B = Rare, Threatened or Endangered in California and elsewhere
2 = Rare, Threatened or Endangered in California, but more common elsewhere
3 = Plants about which we need more information – a review list
4 = Plants of limited distribution - a watch list
.1 = seriously threatened in California
.2 = fairly threatened in California
.3 = not very threatened in California

5.1 SPECIAL STATUS PLANTS AND ANIMALS

No special-status plant or animal species were observed during the site visit. As previously described, the site visit was a "reconnaissance-level" survey and therefore did not include focused surveys for such species. A complete list of special-status plant and animal species that have the potential to occur on site is provided in Table 1, Special-Status Plant or Animal Species with Potential to Occur on the Site.

Seventeen (17) special status plant species were evaluated for potential to occur on the project site. Out of the 17 plants, only two species have a very low potential to occur on the site. The project site is highly disturbed and shows evidence of ongoing impacts by human and human traffic. Trash and litter are strewn across the site and evidence of stockpiles of soils were found in various locations. All these factors greatly limit the suitability of the site for plant species. In addition, the specific habitat conditions required by these specialized species does not occur on site.

Of the forty-six (46) special status animal species that could potentially occur on the project site, the Burrowing Owl, Mohave Ground Squirrel (MGS) and nesting birds are likely to be impacted by proposed project development, as there is a low to moderate potential for these species to occur on site. Project construction activities may result in direct injury or mortality to special status bird species such as Loggerhead shrike or California horned lark, if they are present. In addition, grading, earthmoving, burrow blockage, and heavy equipment or vehicles compacting and crushing burrow tunnels could have a potentially significant impact on Burrowing Owls, its nests or eggs; if present; or the MGS. MGS spend most of their time is near burrows. Their cryptic coloration

offers them another option when danger is perceived. MGS remain still and blend into the environment instead of fleeing, which may make them susceptible during construction. Therefore, Mitigation Measures are proposed, to either avoid impacts or confirm the potential presence of such special status biological resources through focused surveys, as part of the pre-construction measures. If focused surveys confirm presence of species on the site, then the Applicant may be required to take further actions, which could include consultation with resource agencies, procurement of permits and compensatory mitigation.

5.2 NATIVE VEGETATION

As indicated in Section 4.2, the vegetation occurring on the project site is characterized as Disturbed Desert Scrub community and Annual Grassland community. Native vegetation does not occur as a distinct, contiguous habitat, but rather as individual plants interspersed with the disturbed annual grassland. Project development would result in approximately 4.45 acres of impacts to disturbed desert scrub vegetation, which does not provide a high-quality habitat for wildlife. The project site does not support any trees, therefore, there would be no impacts to trees.

5.3 NATIVE BIRD NESTS

The extent of the site has a limited to moderate potential to host native bird species throughout their nesting period. There is suitable habitat on the site for several shrub, and ground nesting bird species.

Development Constraint: Native breeding birds, their active nests, eggs and young are protected under the Fish and Game Code of California and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Therefore, impacts on bird nests from grading and/or construction-related activities should be avoided.

Recommended Mitigation: Most birds breed between the months of February and September. Therefore, scheduling construction and vegetation removal outside of this time period is the most effective way to avoid impacts to nesting birds, eggs and their young. If avoidance of construction and vegetation removal activities during this bird breeding period is not feasible, then a qualified biologist should conduct a pre-construction breeding bird survey of the site and identify any nests that should be protected from such proposed project activities.

5.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

Mohave Ground Squirrel Assessment Surveys/Incidental Take Permit

Prior to project grading/construction activities, a focused habitat assessment & presence/absence surveys for MGS shall be conducted by a qualified biologist, to assess the potential for MGS to occur on the project site. These surveys shall be conducted in accordance with California Department of Fish and Game's (CDFW's) Mohave Ground Squirrel Survey Guidelines (CDFW, 2003). The surveys shall entail visual assessment of the project site to determine if (a) there are MGS on the site or if there are signs of potential MGS presence within the site, and (b) if there are any suitable MGS habitat on site.

If surveys reveal the presence of MGS or suitable habitat for MGS on site, then the Applicant shall either a) apply for Incidental Take Permit (2081 permit) from the CDFW and provide suitable mitigation fees for the purchase of compensatory mitigation or b) in lieu of the Incidental Take Permit shall conduct a live-trapping survey to definitely determine the presence or absence of the

species on site. If the live trapping yields the presence of MGS, then the Applicant shall procure an Incidental Take Permit.

Nesting Bird Surveys

If Project grading/construction activities are scheduled to occur during the nesting season for breeding birds (typically January 15th through September 30th), the following measures shall be implemented:

Within seven days prior to commencement of grading/construction activities, a qualified biologist shall perform a pre-construction survey of all proposed work limits and within 500 feet of the proposed work limits.

If active avian nest(s) of non-special-status species are discovered within or 500 feet from the work limits, a buffer shall be delineated around the active nest(s) measuring 300 feet for passerines and 500 feet for raptors. A qualified biologist shall monitor the nest(s) weekly after commencement of grading/construction to ensure that nesting behavior is not adversely affected by such activities.

If the qualified biologist determines that nesting behavior of non-special-status species is adversely affected by grading/construction activities, then a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey to determine the presence or absence of nesting birds on the proposed area of disturbance. If nesting birds are detected, the biologist shall prepare a letter report and mitigation plan in conformance with applicable federal and State laws (e.g., appropriate follow-up surveys, monitoring schedules, construction and noise barriers/buffers) to ensure that take of birds or eggs or disturbance of breeding activities is avoided. The report/mitigation plan shall be submitted to the City for review/approval and implemented to the satisfaction of the City of Palmdale and the biologist shall verify in a report to the City that all measures identified in the mitigation plan are in place prior to and/or during construction] shall be implemented in consultation with CDFW, to allow such activities to proceed. Once the young have fledged and left the nest(s), then grading/construction activities shall proceed within 300 feet (500 feet for raptor species) of the fledged nest(s).

Burrowing Owl Surveys

A burrowing owl survey shall be accomplished within 30 days prior to any ground disturbing activities to ensure the absence of burrowing owl within the boundaries of disturbance. If the presence of burrowing owls is discovered, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife shall be consulted, and standard protocols shall be adhered to, prior to the occurrence of any ground disturbance.

With the implementation of these measures, the project development is expected to have a less than significant impact on these biological resources.

6.0 REFERENCES

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Appendix A PROJECT FIGURES

Map not to scale

Project Vicinity Map, Figure 1

Palmdale Terrace 151 Residential Apartment Units

APN #'s: 3018027036 and 9.65 Acres

ELEVATED ENTITLEMENTS

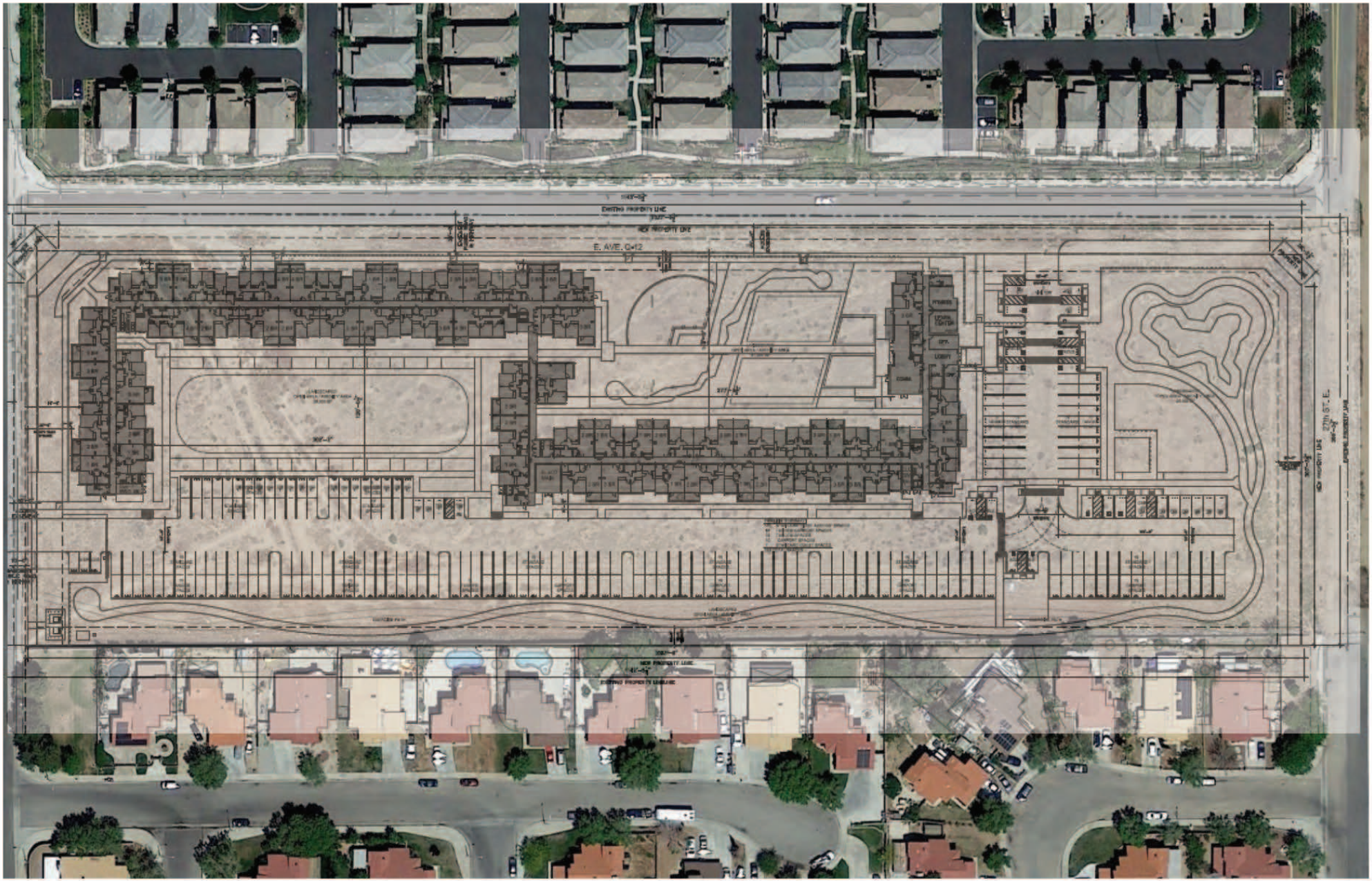
Map not to scale

Project Location Map, Figure 2

Palmdale Terrace 151 Residential Apartment Units

APN #'s: 3018027036 and 9.65 Acres

ELEVATED ENTITLEMENTS



Map not to scale

Project Design Overlay Map, Figure 3

Palmdale Terrace 151 Residential Apartment Units

APN #'s: 3018027036 and 9.65 Acres

ELEVATED ENTITLEMENTS

0 100 200 ft

Vegetation Communities Map, Figure 4

Palmdale Terrace Residential Apartment

APN #: 3018027036 and 9.65 Acres

DDS/AG = Disturbed Desert Scrub/Annual Grassland

Disturbed

Project Boundary

ELEVATED ENTITLEMENTS

Figure 5 Project Site Photograph 1

Photo 1. View of project site, looking east from 25th St. E. View shows groundcover predominantly consisting of non-native grasses of Mediterranean origins, and some native native Ephedra shrubs in the background. A dirt tract is seen to the right of the photo view, with adjacent housing development to the South.

Figure 6 Project Site Photograph 2

Photo 2. View looking east from 25th Street East. View shows scattered native Doveweed as groundcover with clumps of non-native Bromus grass and native Ephedra shrubs. Housing development is seen to the left of the photo view.

Figure 7 Project Site Photograph 3

Photo 3. View of a burrow of an unidentified fossorial (burrowing) animal. Burrow may likely be made by common California ground squirrels, which were observed on the site.

Figure 8 Project Site Photograph 4

Photo 4. Another photograph of an unidentified burrow of a fossorial (burrowing) animal. Such burrows were detected throughout the site.

Figure 9 Project Site Photograph 5

Photo 5. Photograph of a Silver Cholla in the foreground. Clumps of native Ephedra can be seen in the foreground.

Figure 10 Project Site Photograph 6

Photo 6. Photograph shows a shallow "swale" across the project site. This swale appears to be man-made. Litter and trash strewn the property, as seen in this view.

Figure 11 Project Site Photograph 7

Photo 7. Photograph shows a stockpile with debris. Evidence of such disturbances were evident throughout the site.