

City of Chico Community Development Department
NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND
NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING

Date: March 24, 2023
To: Public Agencies and Interested Parties
From: Mike Sawley, Principal Planner, City of Chico
Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Public Scoping Meeting

PROJECT TITLE: Barber Yard Specific Plan (SP 21-01, GPA 22-05, RZ 22-03)

The City of Chico (City) is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed Barber Yard Specific Plan project (proposed project) and is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) to evaluate the potential effects of implementing the proposed project. The Barber Yard Specific Plan is available at: <https://chico.ca.us/barber-yard>.

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 environment impacts to allow agencies and interested parties to provide a meaningful response regarding the scope and contents of the Draft EIR including potential impacts and alternatives that should be considered. The City would like to know the view of your agency or organization concerning the scope and content of the Draft 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 that you believe should be evaluated in the Draft EIR. The Draft 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 effect.

NOP COMMENT PERIOD: March 25, 2023 through April 24, 2023

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

A public scoping meeting will be held to inform agencies and interested parties about the proposed project, to provide an opportunity to learn more about the project, and to **submit written comments on the scope of the environmental analysis**. There will be a brief presentation of the proposed project and an overview of the CEQA process, followed by a question and answer session. City staff, as well as representatives from the project applicant team and EIR team, will be available to answer **questions regarding the scope of the Draft EIR**. The project applicant will also be available to provide more detailed project information. Comment cards will be available at the meeting to provide **written comments on the scope of the Draft EIR**. Written comments will be accepted through the end of the 30-day NOP comment period.

The scoping meeting will be held April 6, 2023, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Chico Country Day Middle School, 1056 Broadway Street, Chico, CA 95928.

Project Location

The proposed project consists of an approximately 133-acre Barber Yard Specific Plan Area (BYSP Area) as well as an approximately 13.5-acre off-site improvement area directly south of the BYSP Area (Exhibits 1 and 2). The BYSP Area is located within the City of Chico and the 13.5-acre off-site improvement area is located directly south of the BYSP Area, within unincorporated Butte County.

The BYSP Area is comprised of eight Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs): 039-400-016 (partial), 039-400-024, 039-400-025, 039-400-026, 039-400-050, 039-400-051, 039-400-052, and 039-400-053. The BYSP Area is bounded by various individual properties to the northwest, Chestnut Street and Normal Avenue to the northeast, Estes Road to the east, and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) to the southwest. To the south, the BYSP Area is bounded by a portion of Butte County that is unincorporated, including a decommissioned UPRR spur. Agricultural and rural residential areas lie to the south and west across the UPRR.

The approximately 13.5-acre off-site improvement area is located directly south of the BYSP Area on APN 039-410-025 (Exhibits 2 and 3). The off-site improvement area is bounded by a Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) parcel to the north, rural residential and agricultural land uses to the east, agricultural land and Comanche Creek to the south, and the UPRR as well as more rural residential and agricultural land uses to the west.

Project Background

Among other things, the BYSP defines parameters for the future development of the project site. Work on the BYSP began in the spring of 2021, with the City, the Barber Neighborhood Association, the property owner, and other key stakeholders invited to participate in community meetings. Four community meetings were held throughout 2021 to receive early input on the BYSP. The preliminary draft BYSP was submitted to the City in November 2021 for initial feedback. The Public Draft Specific Plan was published in February 2023, and made available for review and comment, and serves as the basis for the Draft EIR Project Description.

Existing Setting

The BYSP Area was the home of a factory operated by the Diamond Match Company in the early twentieth century. The factory closed in 1975. The Louisiana-Pacific Corporation purchased the BYSP Area in 1984 and operated its Finished Wood Product Division and a remanufacturing facility until 1989. The BYSP Area was used by other owners for various industrial uses until all such uses terminated in 2004.

Three main buildings remain within the BYSP Area: the Engineering Building (approximately 17,200 square feet), the Shop (approximately 2,800 square feet), and the Warehouse (approximately 130,000 square feet) (Exhibit 4). The Engineering Building and the Shop were constructed and used during the Diamond Match Factory Era. The Warehouse was constructed by Louisiana-Pacific in the late 1980s and remains in good condition and currently functions as RV storage. Three additional, accessory buildings are also still present at the site: an approximately 2,700-square-foot storage

building adjacent to the Warehouse, an approximately 800-square-foot storage building located near the project site entrance on the south side of West 16th Street, and an approximately 600-square-foot storage building located between the Engineering Building and Shop.

Currently, vehicular access is from West 16th Street, which runs northeast to southwest from the adjacent Barber Neighborhood to the BYSP Area. A network of streets in various states of disrepair are present on-site. Large palm trees line the former factory entrance road (an extension of 16th Street), and a small orchard of large palm trees is located near the end of the 16th Street extension. Significant areas of former orchards are evident on-site, located north, west and south of the Warehouse, along the project's eastern border south of West 16th Street, and in the southern corner of the BYSP Area, bounded by Estes Road and the decommissioned UPRR spur. Landscaping and orchards have not been maintained for at least two decades. Weedy vegetation, aged orchards, and various trees persist throughout the BYSP Area. The BYSP Area is generally flat and is fenced to prevent public access.

Approximately 3 acres of asphalt at the southwestern-most corner of the BYSP Area is known locally as the "asphalt cap." Remediated materials, including arsenic, are entombed under the asphalt cap, which is monitored by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). South of the BYSP Area, the off-site improvement area is largely cleared and undeveloped, within areas of a former almond orchard.

The Chico 2030 General Plan Land Use Element designates the BYSP Area as a "Special Planning Area" (SPA), specifically "SPA-2–Barber Yard." The General Plan Land Use Diagram (Figure LU-1 of the 2030 General Plan Land Use Element) conceptually identifies a mix of desired land uses within the SPA-2–Barber Yard, including "Low Density Residential," "Medium Density Residential," "Medium-High Density Residential," "High Density Residential," "Residential Mixed Use," "Office Mixed Use," "Industrial/Office Mixed Use," and "Secondary Open Space." The off-site improvement area is located within the jurisdiction of Butte County on parcels designated by the Butte County General Plan as Agriculture (AG).

The BYSP Area is zoned SPA by the Chico Zoning Ordinance. Within Butte County, the off-site improvement area and surrounding areas are zoned as AG-40.

The BYSP Land Use Designation Map (Exhibit 5) illustrates the location of proposed land use designations and primary roadway alignments.

Project Description

The proposed project consists of the full buildout of the BYSP, including off-site improvements, resulting in a mixed-use community accommodating a diverse range of housing opportunities with a mix of commercial, recreational and office uses located throughout. The proposed project land use designations and associated zoning are shown in Table 1 along with the total proposed acreage and the estimated units and/or square footage per land use/zone taking into consideration reasonable development assumptions and the residential unit/commercial caps set forth in the BYSP.

Table 1: Proposed Land Uses/Zoning

Land Use	Zoning	Approximate Gross Acres	Permitted Density Units/Gross Acre	Dwelling Units Assumed	Max Nonresidential Square Feet Allowed
Mixed-Use Land Uses					
Residential Mixed Use (RMU)	RMU	15	10-20	180 units	80,000 square feet ¹
<i>Mixed-Use Land Uses Total</i>	–	15	–	–	–
Residential Land Uses					
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	R2	79	4-14	632 units	0
Medium-High Density Residential (MHDR)	R3	26	14.1-35	438 units	130,000 square feet ²
<i>Residential Land Uses Total</i>	–	105	–	–	–
Open Space Land Uses					
Primary Open Space (POS)	OS1	3	N/A	0	0
Secondary Open Space (SOS)	OS2	10	N/A	0	0
<i>Open Space Land Uses Total</i>	–	13	–	–	–
Total–BYSP Area	–	133	N/A	1,250 Unit Cap	210,000 square feet Cap
Notes:					
¹ Adaptive reuse of 17,200-square-foot Engineering Building and 2,800-square-foot Shop.					
² Adaptive reuse of 130,000-square-foot Warehouse.					

The following sections summarize the main components of the BYSP:

Residential Use

A maximum of 1,250 dwelling units is evaluated in this Draft EIR, in accordance with the residential unit cap set forth in the Specific Plan. Depending on the location within the BYSP Area, residential density would range from 4 to 35 units per gross acre. Housing types would include market rate for-rent and for-sale units, non-deed-restricted accessory dwelling units, and potentially deed-restricted affordable units.¹ The types of housing products envisioned include single-family detached, pocket neighborhoods, bungalow courts, duplexes, townhouses, garden apartments, and apartments over commercial, as detailed more fully in the Specific Plan.

Commercial Uses

A total of approximately 210,000 square feet of commercial space is envisioned upon buildout. The three existing on-site buildings (Warehouse, Engineering Building, and Shop), totaling approximately

¹ Any specific affordable housing obligations would be set forth in a Development Agreement between the BYSP property owner and the City.

150,000 square feet, would be available for adaptive reuse (based on market and other conditions) for commercial uses including a “Social Hub” centered around the existing Engineering Building. In addition, the proposed project involves an additional approximately 60,000 square feet of commercial uses, within a combination of new buildings incorporating residential uses above commercial/retail (mixed-use), as well as freestanding commercial/retail buildings. Overall, commercial uses would consist of 130,000 square feet of health/fitness club use, 40,000 square feet of retail plaza use, 22,800 square feet of restaurant use, and 17,200 square feet of event center use.

Parks, Open Space, and Public Uses

The BYSP contemplates a variety of potential future park, recreational and open space amenities, totaling approximately 16 acres (Exhibit 6). Proposed parks include approximately 4.7 acres of public parks, 4.8 acres of private open space parks and approximately 6.3 acres of private recreational amenities. Additional information on parks, open space, and public uses can be found within the BYSP.

The open space network within the BYSP is designed to provide, at full buildout, opportunities for a wide array of active and passive recreation uses to help meet the range of needs within the proposed project and broader community. In addition, the BYSP would preserve in perpetuity the approximately 3-acre asphalt cap area which would remain as open space, with the only additional permitted uses being ancillary surface parking and those other uses allowed by the DTSC.

Circulation and Site Access

The BYSP contemplates an organized, connective network of streets that adequately services the BYSP Area (see Exhibit 7). The proposed extensions of Ivy Street and West 16th Street would serve as primary access points to the active areas of the BYSP Area. It is anticipated that on-site, major streets, designated in the BYSP, would have either bicycle lanes or separated bicycle/pedestrian paths that separate bicyclists and pedestrians from adjacent vehicle traffic. The proposed project’s on-site bicycle network would include interconnected multiuse paths, lanes, and trails comprised of Bike Paths (Class I) and Bike Routes (Class III). Multiuse paths, sidewalks, and paseos would be utilized as primary pedestrian paths throughout the BYSP Area. Extensions of West 14th, West 18th, West 20th, and West 22nd Streets would also be constructed to continue the existing street network into the site.

Utilities and Service Systems

The City would provide wastewater collection and treatment services for the BYSP Area and the California Water Service (Cal Water) would provide water service. Stormwater runoff from the BYSP Area would be collected and directed to a combination water quality and retention/detention basin (stormwater basin) to be located within the off-site improvement area (Exhibits 2 and 3).

Off-site Improvements

Located within the off-site improvement area (Exhibits 2 and 3), a combination water quality retention/detention basin (stormwater basin), access drive from Estes Road, and an associated storm drain alignment would be constructed to connect the BYSP Area and stormwater basin to a new outfall to Comanche Creek. At this time, two potential storm drain alignment options are being considered, as shown on Exhibit 3, and both alignment options are evaluated in the Draft EIR, although only one would ultimately be developed. Alignment Option 1 would travel directly

southeast from the stormwater basin to Comanche Creek through a proposed new easement within APN 039-410-039. Alignment Option 2 would traverse eastward from the stormwater basin to Estes Road where it would then turn south down an existing right-of-way to Comanche Creek.

POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE DRAFT EIR

Environmental Topics that will not be Evaluated in the Draft EIR

Pursuant to CEQA and California Code of Regulations Section 15064, the discussion of potential effects on the environment in the Draft 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 to be potentially significant. (Public Resources Code [CCR] § 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 proposed project would result in either no impact or a less than significant impact on mineral resources as explained below. This issue area will not be further evaluated in the Draft EIR.

Mineral Resources

Neither the State nor the City of Chico designates the project site as a location of known mineral deposits. 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 Draft EIR.

Environmental Topics to be Addressed in the Draft EIR

The Draft EIR will address the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics, Light, and Glare
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

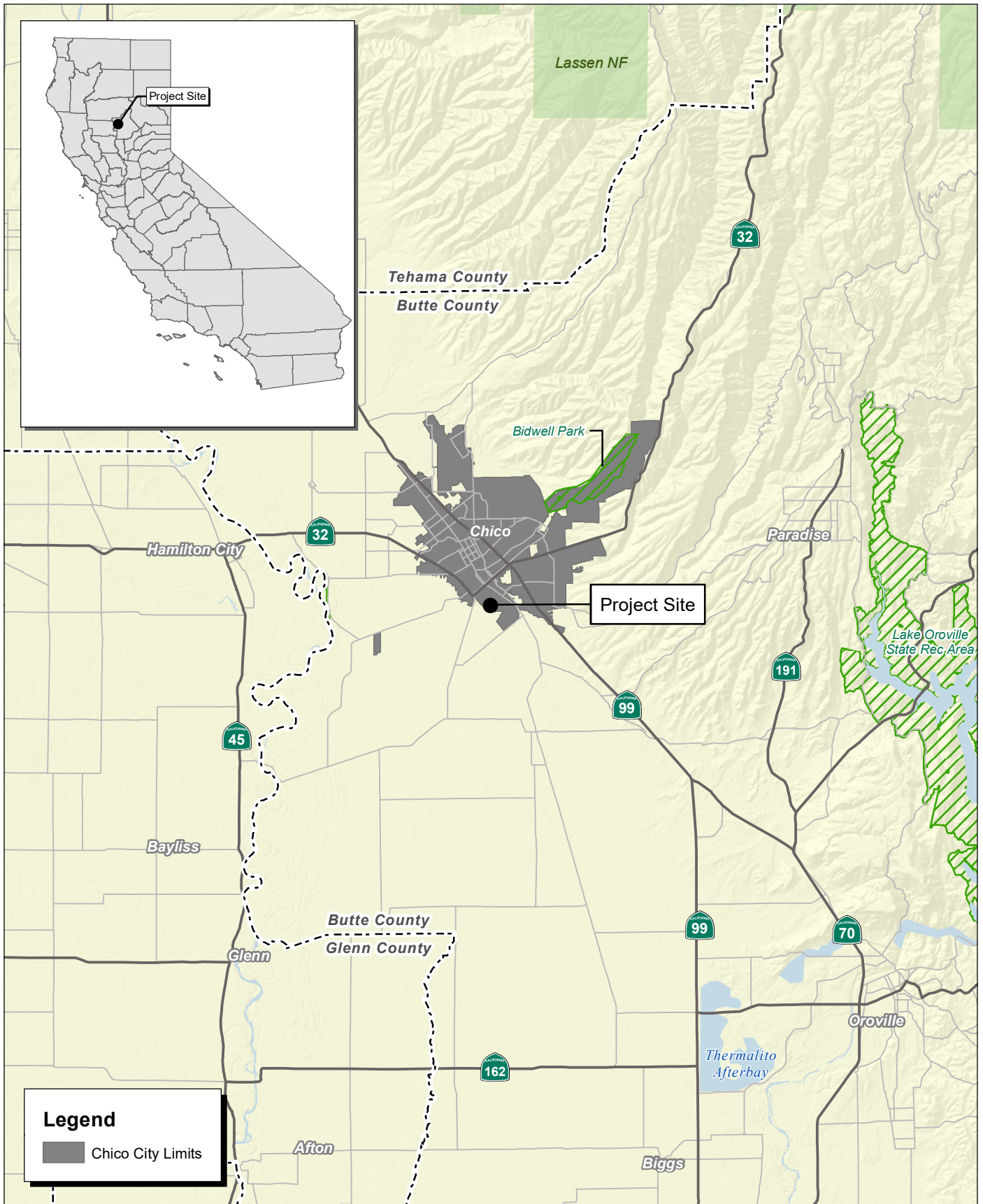
Comments as to the appropriate scope of analysis to be evaluated in the Draft EIR are invited from all interested parties. **Written comments or questions concerning the scope of the Draft EIR** for the proposed Barber Yard Specific Plan should be directed to the contact listed below no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 24, 2023. Please address comments, questions, and responses to the contact listed below:

City of Chico Community Development Department
Mr. Mike Sawley, Principal Planner
City of Chico
411 Main Street, 2nd Floor
PO Box 3420
Chico, CA 95927
Phone: 530.879.6812
Email: mike.sawley@chicoca.gov

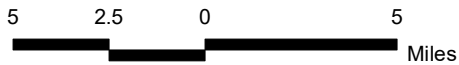
Once completed, the Draft EIR will be made available for a 45-day public review and comment period in accordance with CEQA. Responses will be prepared for all substantial comments on the Draft EIR. These comments and responses, along with revisions made to the Draft EIR, if any, will be included in the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

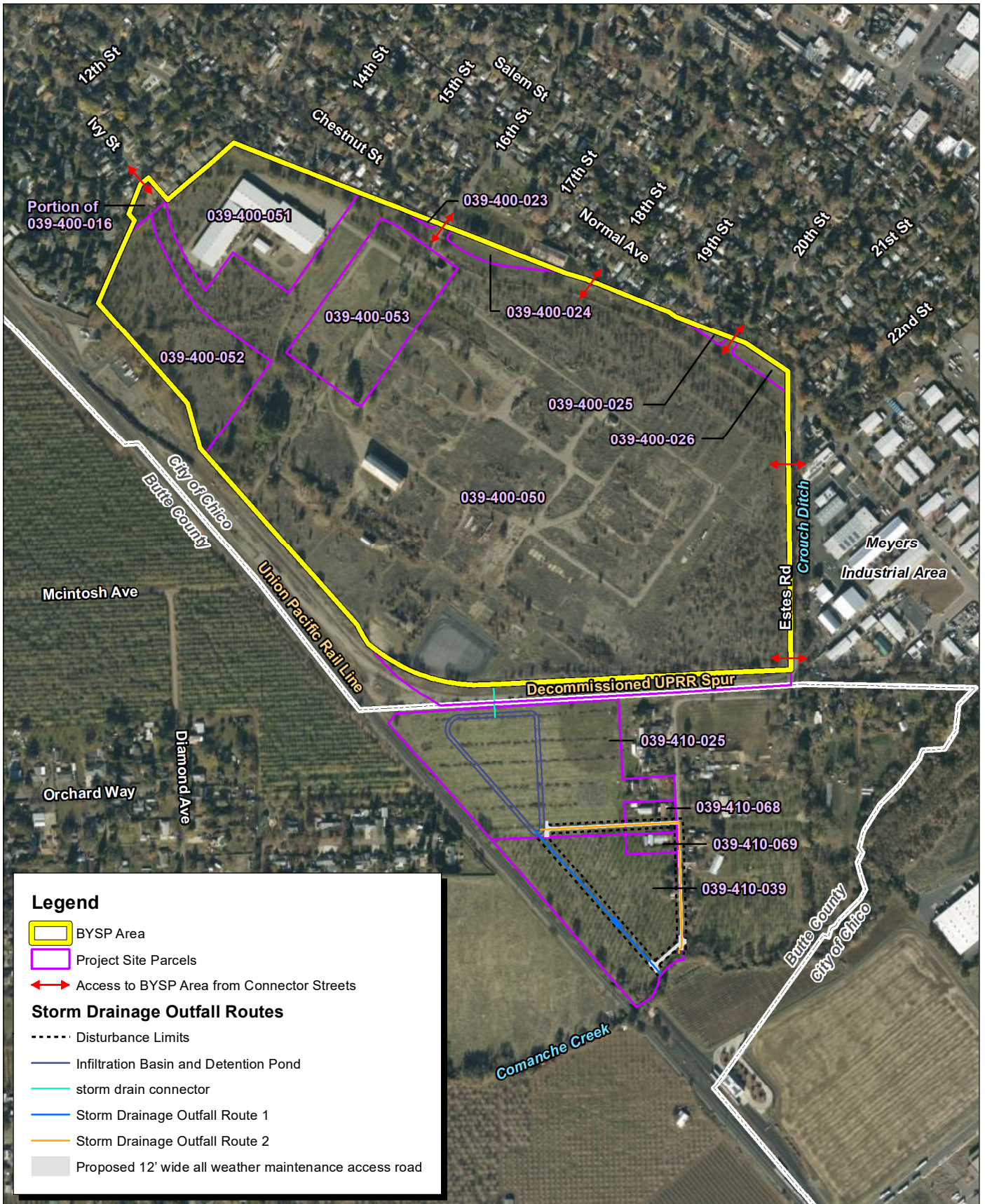
Notices associated with the project's CEQA review are available at:

<https://chico.ca.us/public-review-documents-current-projects>



Source: Census 2000 Data, The California Spatial Information Library (CaSIL).

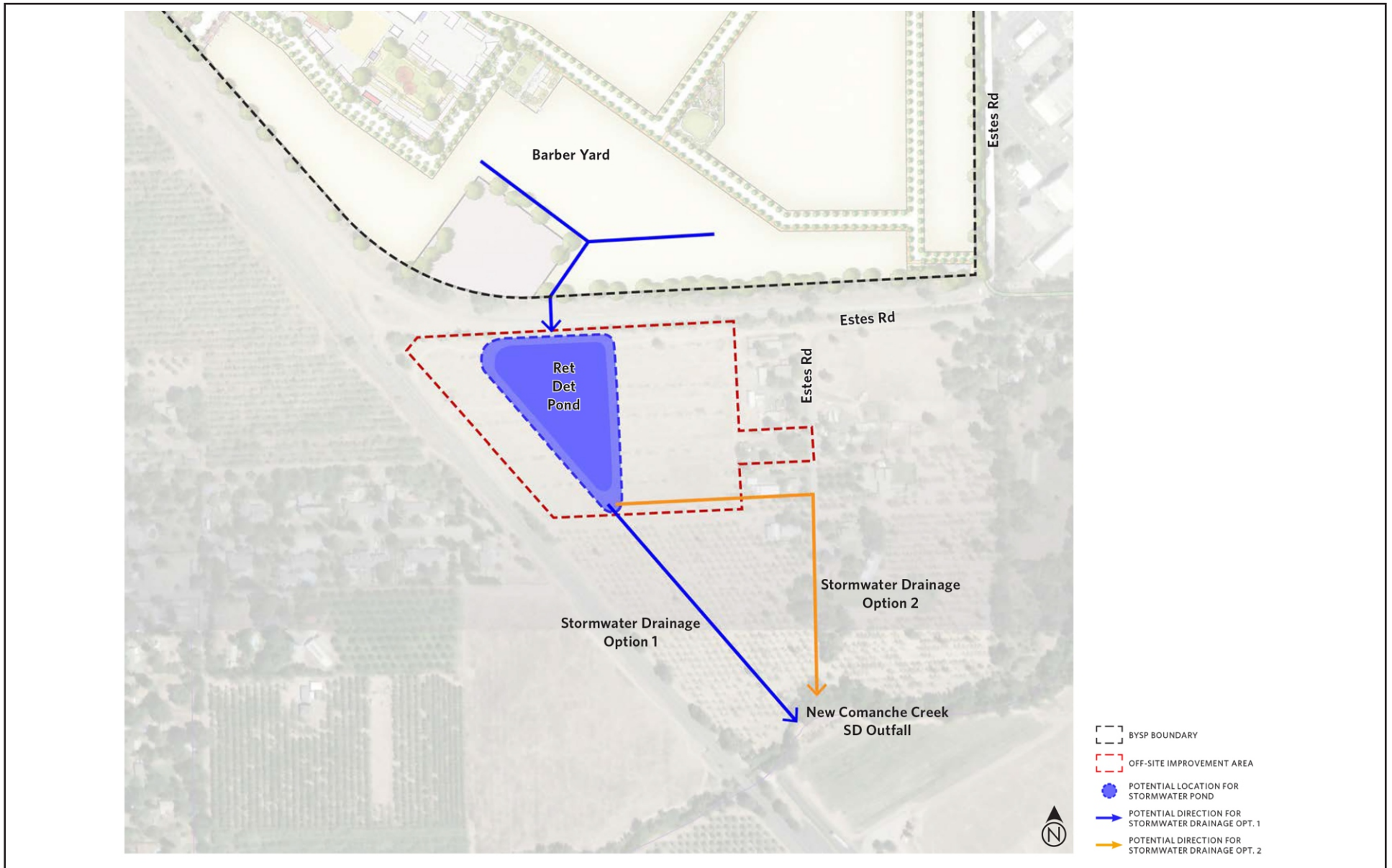




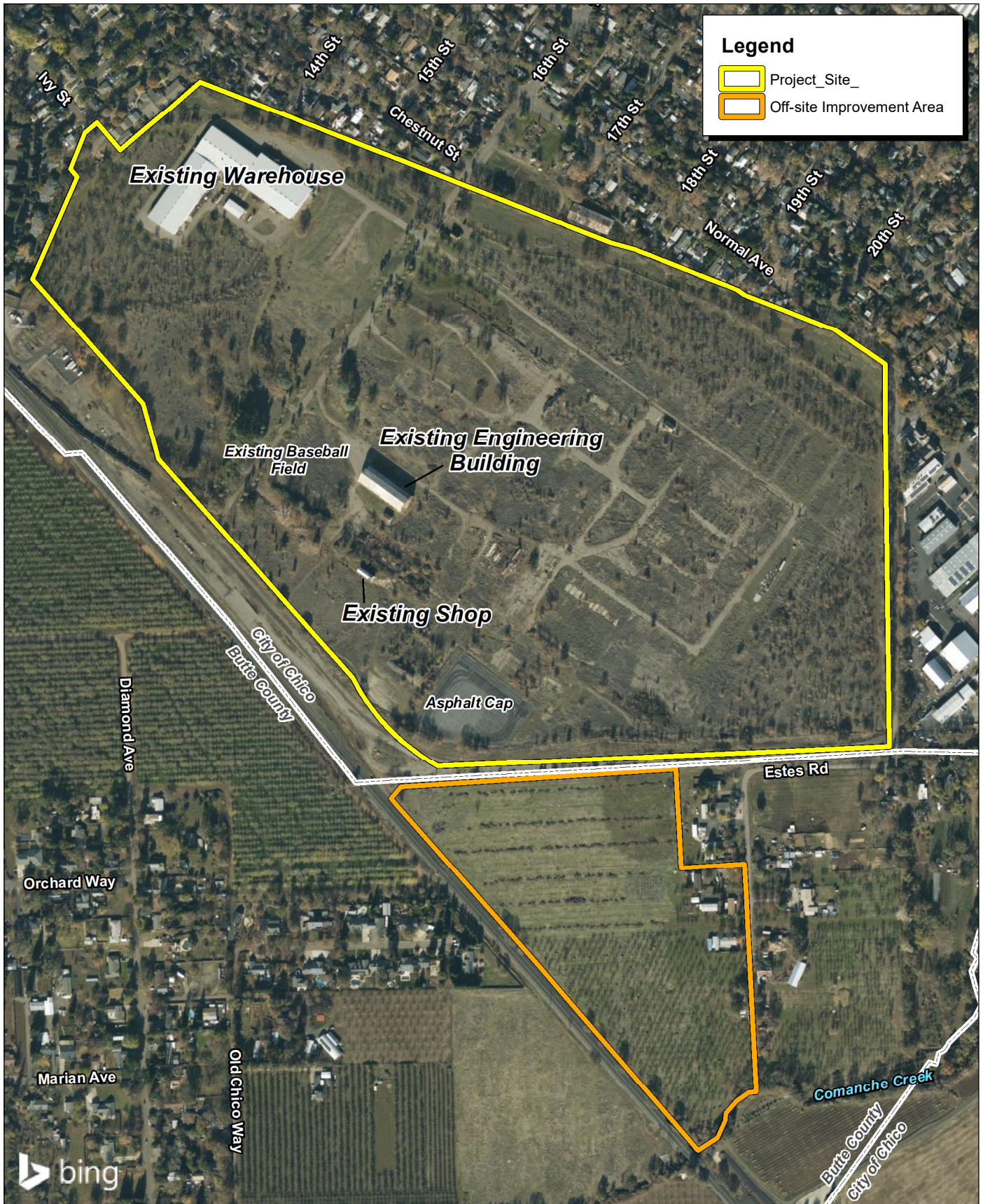
Source: Bing Aerial Imagery. Butte County Association of Governments; and NorthStar, 02/2023.



Exhibit 2 Project Site Map



Source: Urban Design Associates, 02/01/2023.



Source: Bing Aerial Imagery.

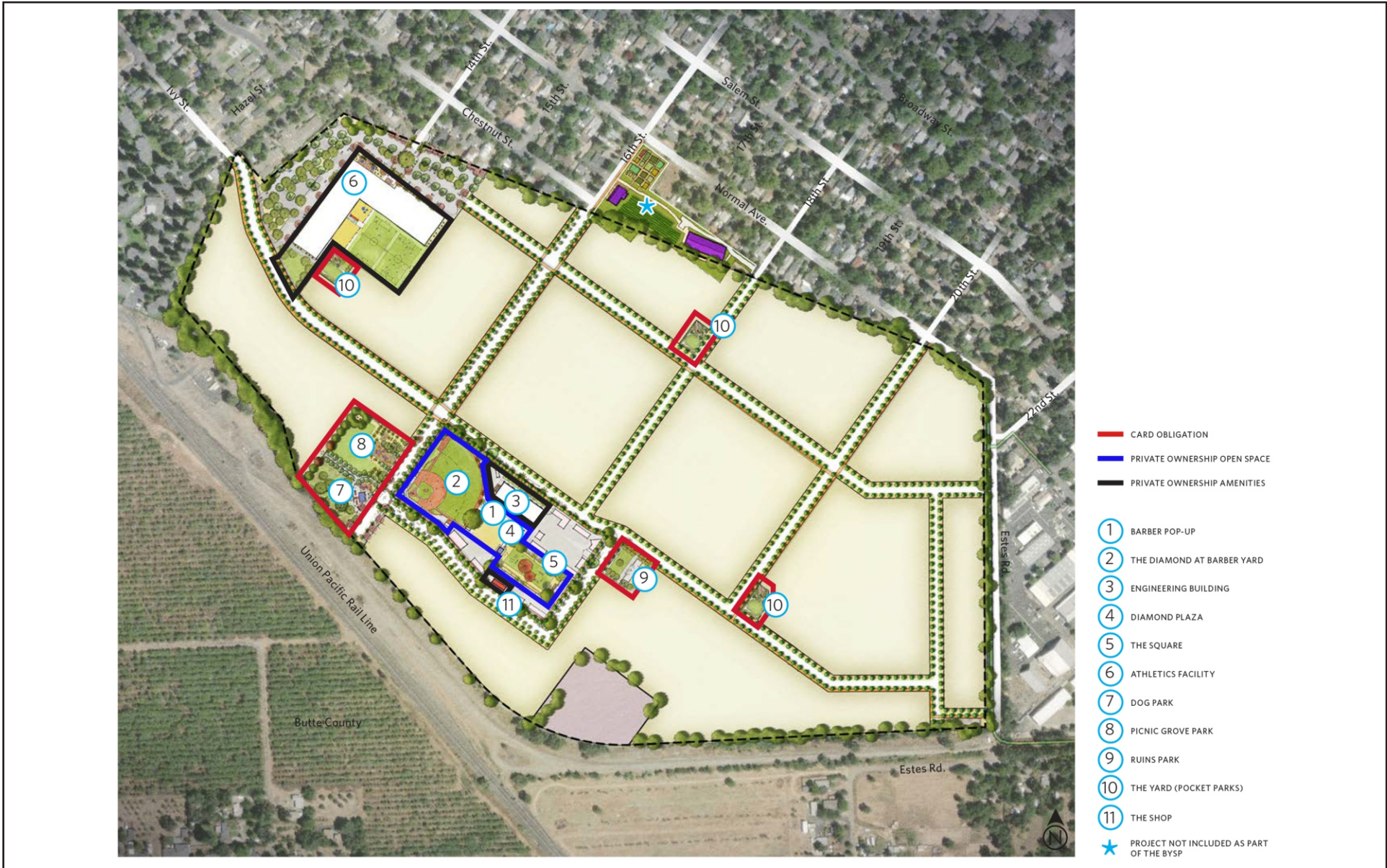




Source: Urban Design Associates, 02/01/2023.



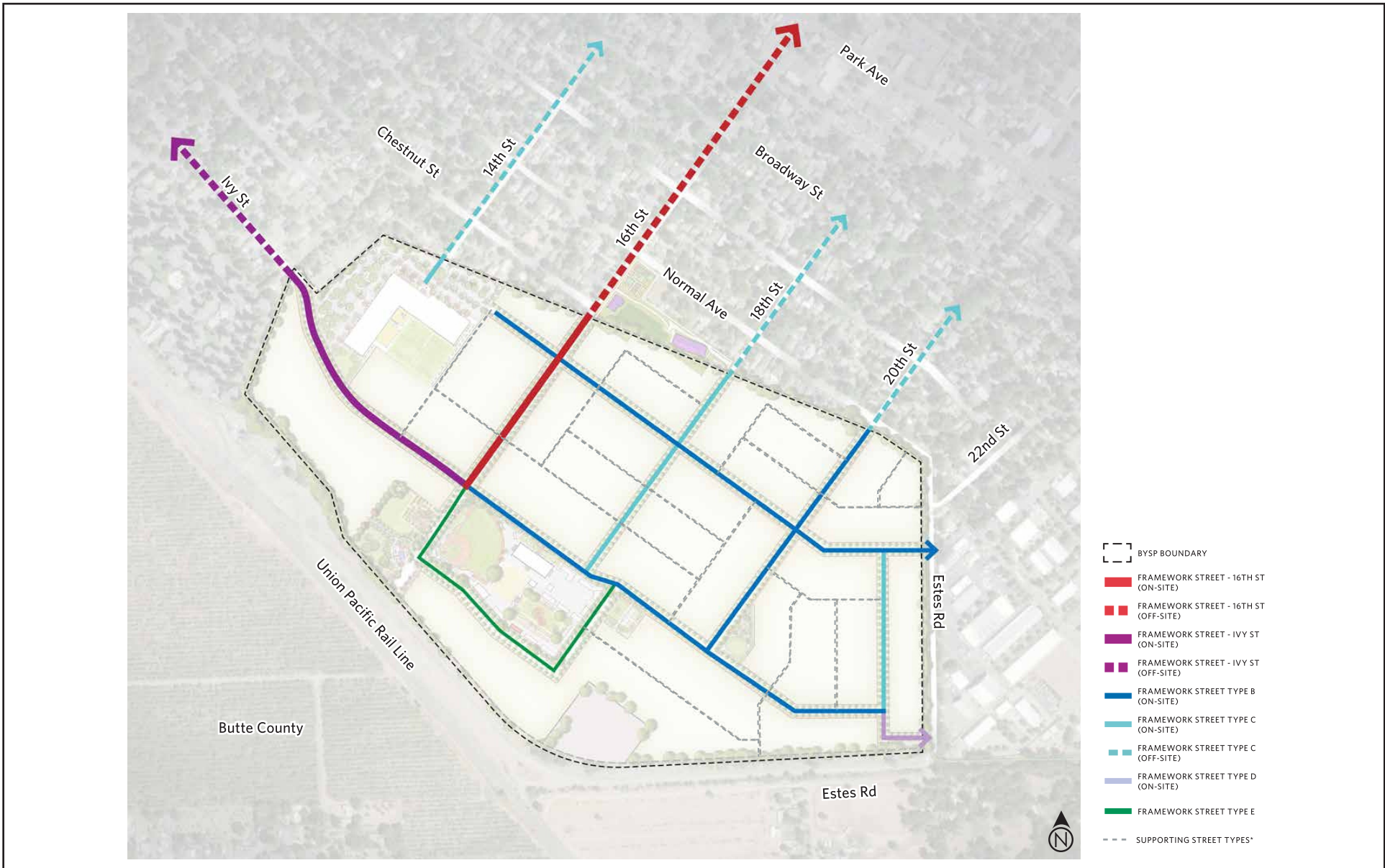
Exhibit 5 Land Use Map



Source: Urban Design Associates, 02/01/2023.



Exhibit 6 Parks and Amenities



Source: Urban Design Associates, 11/11/2022.



Exhibit 7 Street Framework