

Santa Clarita Community College District
Categorical Exemption Evaluation Report
College of the Canyons: New Driveway at the
Valencia Boulevard at Tourney Road Intersection

November 2023

The Santa Clarita Community College District (District) proposes the construction of a new driveway (Project). This Categorical Exemption Evaluation Report documents the eligibility of the Project to be exempt from expanded environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as provided under Public Resources Code Section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14 (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15061(b)(2) and 15300 et seq.

1. Project Location

The Project is proposed on Los Angeles County Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 2861-001-900 and 2861-004-900, which is part of the College of the Canyons, Valencia Campus (COC) at 26455 Rockwell Canyon Road, in the City of Santa Clarita. The Project site is south of Valencia Boulevard, between W Road (also known as Stadium Way) on the east and APN 2861-004-075 on the west (Main Development Area). The Project also affects a small area of APN 2861-004-075, which has an address of 25048 Valencia Boulevard and operates a gas station, convenience store, and fast-food restaurant (collectively, Gas Station); the Valencia Boulevard right-of-way, generally between the Tourney Road and W Road intersections; and planters in Parking Lot 14 of the COC within APN 2861-004-902. Tourney Road intersects Valencia Boulevard near the middle of the Main Development Area. Regional access is via Interstate 5 (I-5), approximately 240 feet west of the Main Development Area. Farther south and east is State Route (SR) 14 and farther north is SR 126/Newhall Ranch Road. Figure 1, *Local Vicinity Map*, shows the Project areas.

2. Existing Setting

The Project would affect a total area of approximately 1.5 acres in an urbanized setting with a mix of institutional, office, commercial, and residential uses:

- » The Main Development Area is roughly 1.1 acres and owned by the District. As shown in Figure 2, *Site Photographs – Main Development Area*, it comprises the northern end of W Road, which is developed with roadway improvements maintained by the COC and a steep, north-facing slope with 2:1 and 3:1, horizontal to vertical gradient cuts that descend north toward Valencia Boulevard. The lowest elevation of the Main Development Area is 1,176 feet in the northeast corner, and the highest elevation is approximately 1,260 feet in the south-central portion at the top of the slope. A mixture of ornamental and natural vegetation covers the slope, including 29 oak trees: 27 coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and 2 valley oaks (*Q. lobata*). Concrete drainage swales and catch basins on the slope collect stormwater runoff to a reinforced concrete pipe drain near W Road at Valencia Boulevard. A utility box is also located near this intersection. Area light poles and a wayfinding sign for the COC are along the west side of W Road. A white wooden fence separates the Main Development Area from Valencia Boulevard.

The Main Development Area is northwest of the COC campus. Parking Lot 8 is immediately east of W Road. To the south is the remainder of APN 2861-004-900, which is part of the COC campus and includes a cross-country running course, small vineyard, fire access road, and an oak tree conservation easement. Northwest of the Main Development Area is a business park, to the northeast are single-family residences, and to the west is the Gas Station.

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Valencia Boulevard is an east–west arterial highway with access to I-5. Near the Main Development Area, it is divided with a raised center median and has three eastbound through lanes and four westbound through lanes. The three-leg intersection at Tourney Road is signalized; U-turns are not permitted. Due to the raised median, vehicles exiting the Gas Station, W Road, as well as driveways from Lot 8 of the COC campus must turn right on Valencia Boulevard. Those who wish to travel westbound (i.e., turn left, toward I-5) must drive approximately 0.5 miles eastward on Valencia Boulevard before making a legal U-turn at Goldcrest Drive.

- » An approximately 600-square-foot area of the Gas Station is part of the Project site. It is developed with a small area of the abovementioned slope, an area light pole, and curb. The I-5 northbound off-ramp is immediately west of the Gas Station.
- » Approximately 0.25 acres of City right-of-way along Valencia Boulevard and near the intersections of Tourney Road and W Road, near the Main Development Area, is part of the Project site. These areas are developed with roads; sidewalks; raised center medians, some with ornamental vegetation; crosswalks; traffic and pedestrian controls; and street lighting.
- » The Project would also affect about 500 square feet (0.01 acres) of two small planters of COC Lot 14, which is approximately 0.5 miles south-southwest of the Main Development Area. As shown in Figure 3, *Site Photographs – Planters*, these areas contain ornamental vegetation, including buckwheat and deceased oak trees, surrounded by the asphalt parking lot.

3. Project Description

Project Objectives

The objectives for the Project are to

- » Allow full vehicle access movement into and out of the northwest portion of the COC campus and the Gas Station to/from Valencia Boulevard.
- » Enhance public safety along Valencia Boulevard.
- » Replace oak trees displaced by the Project, in accordance with Santa Clarita Municipal Code Section 17.17.090, Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance.

Project Characteristics

On-site Improvements. The Project proposes a new “T” shape driveway at the Valencia Boulevard at Tourney Road intersection. As shown in Figure 4, *Site Plan*, the proposed driveway would provide the fourth, southern leg of the intersection and connect to an east–west driveway with access to W Road and the Gas Station. The driveway would consist of asphalt concrete pavements with curbs on both sides and a gutter on the north side; no sidewalks are proposed along the driveway. The elevation of the driveway would be level with Valencia Boulevard, W Road, and the Gas Station.

The slope south of the east–west driveway would be engineered with 2.5:1 horizontal-to-vertical gradient cuts. To limit the Project’s impact on oak trees, the areas east and west of the north–south driveway, facing Valencia Boulevard, would remain as-is and not graded. They would appear as earthen berms, up to 14 feet in height, above the finished elevation of the proposed driveway. The southern side of the berms facing the east–west driveway would be engineered with 2:1 cuts.

A new 8-foot-wide, east–west concrete terrace drain would be constructed across the center of the engineered hillside. Collected stormwater in the drain would be directed to a new 36-inch-wide, east–west concrete swale, east of the engineered hillside, before accessing an existing 5-foot-wide, north–south swale that would direct the

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stormwater into a new inlet, which would then connect to a new 24-inch reinforced concrete pipe installed below the engineered hillside, under the new driveway and northeast berm, and then to an existing storm drain under W Road. The proposed demolition, grading, and improvements plans for the proposed driveway are provided in Attachment A.

Twelve oak trees would be displaced by the Project and would be replaced, consistent with the methodologies provided in the Santa Clarita Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance.¹ An Oak Tree Report, included as Attachment B, was prepared for the Project. It evaluated the health of the 29 oak trees on the Project Site, determined the value of the 12 oaks that would be removed, and identified potential replacement trees valued at or above those displaced. As a project design feature, the below mix of 40 replacement oak trees would be planted within the Main Development Area, two earthen berms, areas south of and adjacent to the proposed engineered hillside, and irrigated landscape planters in COC Parking Lot 14 (see Figures 5 and 6, *Tree Plans*).

- » Four 36-inch box valley oak (*Quercus Lobata*)
- » Three 15-gallon coast live oak (*Quercus Agrifolia*)
- » Ten 15-gallon valley oak (*Quercus Lobata*)
- » Twenty-three 24-inch box coast live oak (*Quercus Agrifolia*)

Once the oak trees are planted, the engineered hillside would be sprayed with a hydroseed mix that is natural to the Santa Clarita community. An aboveground irrigation system would be installed on the hillside and would operate until the trees can survive on natural rainfall. The proposed vegetation would control soil erosion and stabilize the hillside while the new trees establish.

The District would maintain the new landscape, including the proposed oak trees. To ensure the success of the replacement trees, each replacement oak tree would be monitored for up to five years to ensure it is established. The five-year monitoring plan would restart for each failed replacement tree.

Off-site Improvements. The Project would require off-site improvements. As shown in Figure 4, the Project would modify the lane configurations at the Valencia Boulevard and Tourney Road intersection as follows:

- » Eastbound Valencia Boulevard would be restriped to offer a new exclusive right-turn lane into the proposed driveway.
- » Westbound Valencia Boulevard would be modified to offer a new exclusive left-turn lane into the proposed driveway; the existing raised median with ornamental vegetation would be modified to provide the new turning lane.
- » Southbound Tourney Road's existing three lanes would be restriped to provide exclusive right- and left-turn lanes; the center lane would be restriped to provide through and left turns.
- » The new southern driveway at Tourney Road would be striped to include two southbound lanes: an exclusive right-turn lane for access to the Gas Station and an exclusive left-turn lane for access to W Road/COC. Three northbound lanes would be provided: exclusive left- and right-turn lanes; the center lane would allow through and left-turn traffic. The left-turn lanes would improve traffic circulation by allowing vehicles from the Gas Station and COC to have direct westbound access on Valencia Boulevard and to I-5.

¹ City of Santa Clarita, Development Standards, Section 17.51.040.

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A new traffic signal would be installed on the north leg of the intersection, and the existing traffic signal at the proposed south leg would be relocated westward to accommodate the new driveway. The existing signals at the intersection would be reconfigured to accommodate the new four-leg intersection. Similar to existing conditions, vehicles would not be allowed to make U-turns at the Valencia Boulevard and Tourney Road intersection.

W Road at Valencia Boulevard would be closed for through traffic. A raised sidewalk would be constructed across W Road to connect the two existing sidewalks. The center median along Valencia between W Road and Tourney Road would be modified. The existing left-turn pocket to W Road on westbound Valencia Boulevard would be removed, and a new left-turn pocket would be created to provide access onto the proposed driveway.

All roadway, grading, and drainage improvements would be reviewed by the City of Santa Clarita, as a responsible agency for the Project. The sidewalks and crosswalks at the new driveway would also be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Construction. Project construction would commence the fourth quarter of 2023 and last approximately six months. Construction would be conducted in a manner that would limit impacts to Valencia Boulevard and COC operations. The Project would require an export of 23,140 cubic yards (cy) of soil, including 9,705 cy of soil associated with development of the portion of the driveway to the Gas Station.

Construction activities would include grading and site preparation. The Main Development Area would be cleared, grubbed, and graded to establish an overall drainage pattern, as described above. The construction area would be fenced and blocked off to limit trespassing and vandalism, and the following best management practices (BMPs) and regulatory requirements would be implemented during construction:

- » As the Main Development Area is more than an acre, the Project would be required to comply with the State Water Resources Control Board's Construction General Permit (Order No. 2012-0006-DWQ). The permit requires the District and/or its construction contractor to prepare a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, which requires identification of potential construction-related pollutants and the implementation of BMPs to control and reduce pollutants from discharging into waterways. The BMPs would address erosion control, perimeter control, wind erosion control, storm drain inlet protection, tracking control, and general site management. Disturbed areas left inactive for seven or more days would be seeded to minimize erosion.

The construction staging and laydown area would be on W Road. The perimeter of the construction area would be fenced with green screening to limit trespassing, vandalism, and potential views from Valencia Boulevard, the Gas Station, and COC. Fiber rolls would be placed along the interior perimeters of the fenced areas. A stabilized construction entrance and concrete wash-out area would be installed on the east side of W Road, near Valencia Boulevard. Rows of sandbags, two bags high, would be strategically placed throughout the hillside/construction area to minimize stormwater flowing into existing drains. Storm drain inlets, including the one on W Road near Valencia Boulevard, would be protected pursuant to the California Stormwater Quality Association's BMPs. The east side of W Road would be used for enclosed storage bins for paints and solvents, covered trash, and the placement of the office trailer and a porta-potty.

- » The Project would comply with City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code Chapter 11.44, *Noise Limits*. Construction would occur between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., from Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., on Saturday. No construction would occur on Sundays and federal holidays.
- » The Project would be required to comply with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Fish and Game Code (CFGC), which protect active bird nests and nesting birds. The Project would conduct preconstruction clearance surveys prior to ground disturbance and vegetation removal activities, as follows:

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- **MBTA and CFGC (Migratory and Nesting Birds).** In compliance with the MBTA and CFGC, if Project-related activities are to be initiated during bird nesting season (January 1 to September 15), the District and/or its construction contractor shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a preconstruction nesting bird clearance survey no more than three days prior to the start of any vegetation removal or ground-disturbing activities at the Main Development Area and planters in the center median of Valencia Boulevard and COC Parking Lot 14.

The qualified biologist shall survey all suitable nesting habitat within the Project areas. If no active bird nests are detected during the clearance survey, Project construction activities may begin, and no additional avoidance and minimization measures shall be required. If an active bird nest is found, the species shall be identified, and a “no-disturbance” buffer shall be established around the active nest. The size of the “no-disturbance” buffer shall be increased or decreased based upon the judgment of the qualified biologist and level of activity and sensitivity of the species. The qualified biologist shall periodically monitor any active bird nests identified to determine if Project-related activities occurring outside the no-disturbance buffer disturb the birds and if the buffer needs to be increased. Once the young have fledged and left the nest, or the nest otherwise becomes inactive under natural conditions, Project activities within the no-disturbance buffer may occur following an additional survey by the qualified biologist to search for any new bird nests in the restricted area.

- » The Project would be subject to rules and regulations enforced by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the air quality management district with purview of the Project region, which would limit the release of construction-related pollution into the air and waterways.
 - **Rule 402 (Nuisance).** This rule prohibits the discharge “from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property.” This rule does not apply to odors emanating from agricultural operations necessary for the growing of crops or the raising of fowl or animals.
 - **Rule 403 (Fugitive Dust).** This rule requires fugitive dust sources to implement best available control measures for all sources and prohibits all forms of visible particulate matter (PM) from crossing any property line. This rule is intended to reduce PM₁₀ emissions from any transportation, handling, construction, or storage activity that has the potential to generate fugitive dust. PM₁₀ suppression techniques are summarized below.
 - Portions of a construction site to remain inactive longer than a period of three months will be seeded and watered until grass cover is grown or otherwise stabilized.
 - All on-site roads will be paved as soon as feasible or watered periodically or chemically stabilized.
 - All material transported off-site will be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent excessive amounts of dust.
 - The area disturbed by clearing, grading, earthmoving, or excavation operations will be minimized at all times.
 - Where vehicles leave a construction site and enter adjacent public streets, the streets will be swept daily or washed down at the end of the workday to remove soil tracked onto the paved surface.
 - **Rule 1113 (Architectural Coatings).** This rule requires manufacturers, distributors, and end users of architectural and industrial maintenance coatings to reduce reactive organic gases (ROG) emissions from the use of these coatings, primarily by placing limits on the ROG content of various coating categories.

4. Categorical Exemption

CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines require the preparation of environmental documents to assess and report the environmental impacts of projects that could result in adverse effects on the environment. Public Resources Code Section 21084 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15300 et seq. also list classes of projects that are found by the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency to not have a significant effect on the environment and thus are declared categorically exempt from extended environmental documentation, provided that none of the exceptions to the use of the categorical exemption apply (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2).

The Project can be categorically exempt from CEQA under Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15332). Class 32 projects consist of those characterized as infill development meeting the following conditions:

- a) the project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations;
- b) the proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses;
- c) the project site has no habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species;
- d) approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; and
- e) the site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The below sections document how the Project is consistent with the requirements of Categorical Exemption Class 32 and whether exceptions apply to the use of the exemption.

Applicability of Class 32, Infill Development Project, Categorical Exemption

a) Consistency with General Plan and Zoning Designations and Regulations

The Main Development Area is designated and zoned PI (Public/Institution).² According to the Santa Clarita General Plan and Development Code, the PI land use designation and zoning district allow for the development of various public and community-serving facilities owned and operated by public agencies. Allowable uses include civic and governmental offices and facilities. Building height and coverage is determined by the lead agency, based upon the type and intensity of use.

The Land Use Element of the City of Santa Clarita General Plan defines the PI land use category as follows:³

Public and Institutional – The public and institutional category includes government buildings, hospitals, libraries, schools, colleges, fire and police stations, solid waste facilities, museums, cultural and community centers, and other similar public uses. In addition, private schools, churches, convalescent care and other social care facilities, day care services, private meeting and convention facilities, and similar uses may be included. Special uses in this category include correctional facilities. It also includes the transportation and communication uses including freeways and major arterials, bikeways, railroads, park and ride lots, truck terminals, airports, train stations, multimodal transit stations, communication facilities, and similar uses.

² City of Santa Clarita, Mapping Portal, accessed March 15, 2022, <https://maps.santa-clarita.com>.

³ City of Santa Clarita, General Plan Land Use Element, June 2011, <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/SantaClarita/html/SantaClaritaGP/2%20-%20Land%20Use%20Element.pdf>.

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Section 17.37.020 of the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code defines the PI zone as follows:⁴

The public/institutional (PI) zoning designation identifies lands that are used for various types of public or/and community serving facilities owned and operated by public agencies, special districts, nonprofit organizations and other entities. Allowable uses include civic and governmental offices, public works yards, public or private schools, libraries, day care centers, airports, hospitals and supporting medical facilities, museums, fire stations, police stations, landfills, and prisons. Building height and coverage will be determined by the lead agency for each project, based upon the type and intensity of use.

The Main Development Area is owned and maintained by the District, a public agency. No buildings or vertical structures would be constructed. The proposed driveway would support existing COC operations in the northern portion of the campus. It is a type of “transportation use” allowed under the PI land use designation. The Project would also improve traffic circulation at the adjacent Gas Station and public safety on Valencia Boulevard. The Project is consistent with the PI land use designation and permitted in the PI zoning district.

It is also noted that the component of the Project associated with the portion of the driveway accessing the Gas Station would adhere to City development standards. The proposed development of this segment of the driveway would require the export of 9,705 cy of soils, out of the Project’s total soil export of 23,140 cy. This amount of soil removal is less than the City’s threshold of 10,000 cy for which the City would require a grading permit, should the Gas Station be required to submit a development application for this component of the Project. Moreover, the Project includes a tree plan that is compliant with the City’s Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance. While the District may render the City’s zoning requirements inapplicable to the Project under Government Code Section 53094, the Project is nevertheless consistent with all aspects of City zoning, including requirements related to grading, drainage, and roadway improvements. Therefore, the Project is consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15332(a), which requires the Project to be consistent with the City General Plan designation and policies, and zoning regulations.

b) Project Site within City Limits on a Site No More than Five Acres

The Project areas are within the limits of the City of Santa Clarita and in an urban setting, as described above in Existing Setting. As shown in Figure 2, the combined areas affected by the Project would be approximately 1.5 acres. As the Project is within the city limits of the City of Santa Clarita and the proposed improvements would be implemented in an area less than 5 acres, the Project would be consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15332(b).

c) Habitat for Endangered, Rare, or Threatened Species

A Biological Resources Assessment and Rare Plant Survey (Attachment C) were conducted for the Main Development Area and areas adjacent to the proposed engineered hillside to determine whether they contain habitat for endangered, rare, and/or threatened species.⁵ Three natural vegetation communities (California buckwheat scrub, fiddleneck – phacelia fields, and wild oats and annual brome grasslands) were observed and mapped. Based on the California Natural Diversity Database and California Natural Communities List, it was determined that these communities are not considered sensitive. Three separate field surveys further determined that the Main Development Area and adjacent areas of the engineered hillside are void of special-status plant and rare plant species. Birds were observed; however, no special-status wildlife species were observed.

The planters in the center median of Valencia Boulevard and within COC Parking Lot 14, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, are maintained by the City and District, respectively, and consist of ornamental vegetation, including buckwheat and deceased oak trees. These areas are disturbed with daily vehicle operations along the roadway and in the parking lot

⁴ City of Santa Clarita, Municipal Code, accessed July 21, 2022, <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/SantaClarita/html/SantaClarita17/SantaClarita1737.html#17.37>.

⁵ Michael Baker International, *Results of a Biological Resources Assessment for the Proposed New Driveway on Valencia Boulevard at Tourney Road – City of Santa Clarita, Los Angeles County, California*, July 11, 2022.

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and by landscape maintenance activities. Due to the heavy disturbance, neither the planters along the roadway nor in the parking lot contain suitable habitat for endangered, rare, and threatened species.

Nevertheless, as discussed above, Project implementation includes a BMP to conduct nesting bird clearance surveys no more than three days prior to the start of any vegetation removal or ground-disturbing activities at the Main Development Area and at planters in the center median along Valencia Boulevard and COC Parking Lot 14. As the Project areas have no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species, Project implementation would be consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15332(c).

d) Effects Relating to Traffic, Noise, Air Quality, and Water Quality

i. Traffic

A focused traffic analysis was prepared for the Project by a licensed traffic engineer (Attachment D). The analysis was reviewed and approved by the City of Santa Clarita on August 25, 2022. The study evaluated whether diverted traffic from the Gas Station and COC caused by Project implementation would create new significant intersection impacts at the Valencia Boulevard at Tourney Road intersection. The analysis assumed that some of the existing COC traffic at the Rockwell Canyon Road/Valencia Boulevard intersection would also shift to the proposed driveway at Tourney Road/Valencia Boulevard. The traffic analysis found that the reassigned trips to the proposed south leg of the Tourney Road/Valencia Boulevard intersection would result in an acceptable level of service during both the morning and evening peak hours. The Project would comply with ADA requirements, and Project implementation would not affect existing bicycle and transit facilities. The Project would not conflict with existing City programs, plans, ordinances, or policies concerning transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.

The Project would reduce vehicle miles traveled. Vehicles exiting the northwest portion of the COC campus and from the Gas Station desiring to drive westbound on Valencia Boulevard would no longer be required to turn right and drive 0.5 miles eastward on Valencia Boulevard before making a legal U-turn at Goldcrest Drive.

Moreover, the Project would improve public safety. The proposed driveway and roadway geometrics along Valencia Boulevard at Tourney Avenue and W Road have been approved by the City of Santa Clarita. The proposed south leg of the Valencia Boulevard/Tourney Road intersection would meet the California Department of Transportation's sight distance requirements and accommodate the turning movements of fire trucks and other large vehicles. The Project would reduce existing circulation hazards, related to the existing vehicle miles traveled and U-turns. The Project would also improve emergency response times to the COC and the Gas Station, and along Valencia Boulevard. The Project would have an overall beneficial effect on transportation and public safety.

ii. Noise/Vibration

A noise analysis was conducted for the Project; see Attachment E. The nearest noise-sensitive receptor is a residence approximately 145 feet northeast of the Main Development Area. The Project would generate construction-related noise and vibration and would comply with City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code Section 11.44, which allows construction work between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. Construction noise would primarily be associated with the operation of off-road equipment and construction vehicle traffic on area roadways. Construction noise typically occurs intermittently and varies depending on the nature or phase of construction (e.g., site preparation, excavation, paving).

On-site and off-site construction noise was analyzed. The estimated exterior construction noise, associated with grading and excavation activities at the closest residence, would be 72.7 dBA, which would not exceed the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health construction noise level threshold of 85 dBA. The increase in construction-related traffic noise was also evaluated and determined to not exceed the 3 dBA threshold change, which is the industry standard as it is considered a just-perceivable difference, outside of the laboratory. Therefore, construction noise impacts are less than significant.

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Construction-related ground vibration is normally associated with the operation of impact equipment such as pile drivers, jackhammers, dozers, and trucks. Pile drivers would not be used during Project construction. Furthermore, vibration decreases rapidly with distance, and it is acknowledged that construction activities would occur throughout the Main Development Area and would not be concentrated at the point closest to sensitive receptors. Based on representative vibration levels for various construction equipment types, the analysis shows that construction vibration levels at 145 feet—the distance between the Main Development Area and the nearest structure—would be below California Department of Transportation’s 2020 threshold of 0.2 inches per second peak particle velocity. Therefore, construction-related vibration would be less than significant.

The Project would not generate new vehicle trips. In fact, the Project would permit left-turn movements to westbound Valencia Boulevard from uses in the northwest portion of COC and the Gas Station and therefore would result in fewer vehicles and related traffic noise on Valencia Boulevard, east of W Road. Therefore, the Project’s contribution and proposed changes to existing traffic noise would not be perceptible. The Project would have an overall beneficial impact on operational noise effects.

iii. Air Quality

Modeling was conducted to determine if Project construction would create significant impacts to regional and localized air quality and generate greenhouse gas emissions that would significantly contribute to climate change (Attachment F). The modeling accounts for the total export of 23,140 cy of soil, conservatively occurring 39 days out of the 46 total workdays, as well as a conservative haul trip distance at 20 miles one way. The analysis assumed a total of 2,893 one-way trips and concluded that Project construction activities would not exceed regional and localized emissions thresholds established by the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The Project would not conflict with the 2022 Air Quality Management Plan, result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutant for which the Project region is non-attainment, or expose sensitive receptors (the nearest being 145 feet to the northeast) to substantial pollutant concentrations. Construction-related air quality impacts are less than significant. The Project would have an overall beneficial impact on operational air quality, as the Project would allow direct left-turn movements to westbound Valencia Boulevard and beneficially reduce vehicle miles traveled and associated vehicle emissions as compared to existing conditions. Therefore, operational air quality modeling is not required.

iv. Water Quality

A Hydrology Report and erosion control plan were prepared for the Project. The Hydrology Report, included as Attachment G, complies with the Los Angeles Department of Public Works’ Hydrology Manual. It compares the hydrologic conditions before and after Project implementation and concludes that the proposed drainage system would be able to handle runoff from a 50-year storm. Impacts would be less than significant.

Construction activities would include various BMPs implemented in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act to limit water quality impacts. A stabilized construction entrance and concrete wash-out area would be installed on the east side of W Road, near Valencia Boulevard. Rows of sandbags (two bags high) would be strategically placed throughout the hillside/construction area to minimize stormwater flowing into existing drains. The storm drain inlet on W Road near Valencia Boulevard would be protected pursuant to the California Stormwater Quality Association’s BMPs. The east side of W Road would be used for enclosed storage bins for paints and solvents, covered trash, and the placement of the office trailer and a porta-potty.

The Project is relatively minor in nature and would not violate water quality standards, degrade surface and groundwater quality, deplete groundwater supplies, alter the course of a stream or river that would result in erosion or siltation, substantially increase the rates or amount of surface runoff, or create or contribute to runoff that could exceed the capacity of existing planned systems. Water quality impacts would be less than significant.

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Summary

As described above, the Project would not result in significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. The Project meets the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15332(d).

e) Public Utilities and Services

The site is in an urban area and adjacent to Valencia Boulevard and W Road, which have access to water, sewer, electric power, natural gas, and telecommunication systems. The Project proposes drainage improvements that would collect stormwater to the existing storm drain systems, which would be able to accommodate runoff similar to existing conditions. Project implementation would not require new public services, such as law enforcement or fire services. In fact, as discussed above, the Project would have beneficial effects to emergency access along Valencia Boulevard. Existing area light poles on W Road and at the Gas Station located within the proposed driveway development footprint would be relocated to provide light on the east and west ends of the driveway. Project implementation would not require new public utilities or public services. Therefore, no impact would occur, and the Project meets the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15332(e).

Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, Exceptions, lists conditions under which categorical exemptions are inapplicable:

- a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located—a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.
- b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.
- c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.
- d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.
- e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

The Project is reviewed below for characteristics or circumstances that may invalidate the potential to exempt the Project from further environmental evaluation.

a) Location

Section 15300.2(a) of the CEQA Guidelines states that classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of whether the project is in a uniquely sensitive environment, such that it impacts an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern that has been designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

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The Project would be exempt under Class 32, and is not Class 3, 4, 5, 6, or 11. Nevertheless, the Project is not proposed in a uniquely sensitive environment. None of the Project areas are within a designated, mapped, or officially adopted area with environmental resources of hazardous or critical concern by federal, state, or local agencies. According to the Biological Resources Assessment (see Section C above and Attachments C and D), the Main Development Area is not within a mapped area with sensitive species and habitat. Moreover, as documented in the geotechnical report (Attachment H), the Main Development Area is not within an Alquist-Priolo Zone or a mapped liquefaction and landslide hazards area. The Project areas are not designated hazardous waste sites; see Section E, below. Moreover, a review of the City of Santa Clarita General Plan did not identify any of the Project areas as being within a uniquely sensitive area with environmental resources of hazardous or critical concern.⁶ CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) does not apply to the Project.

b) Cumulative Impact

Exemptions are inapplicable when there is a significant cumulative impact of “successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time” (§ 15300.2[b]). Other than the improvements identified in the Project description of this document, there are no other known successive projects proposed at the Project areas. The District, however, proposes improvements elsewhere on the COC campus. The District proposes a new satellite campus at 26650 Valley Center Drive, approximately 4.5 miles east of the COC campus; a new affordable student housing complex at the northeast portion of the COC campus in 2025; modernization of the Student Center in 2024 and Towsley Hall in 2028; and reconstruction of the Student Support building in 2026. As the proposed Project would be constructed in 2023 and 2024 over the course of about six months, the Project’s environmental impacts would not overlap with those of any of these related projects. Therefore, Project implementation would not cause cumulatively considerable effects, and CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) does not apply to the Project.

c) Significant Effects

A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The determination whether this exception applies involves two distinct questions: (1) whether the project presents unusual circumstances, and (2) whether there is a reasonable possibility that a significant environmental impact will result from the unusual circumstances. The lead agency is required to consider the second question only if it finds that some circumstance of the project is unusual (*Berkeley Hillside Preservation v City of Berkeley* (2015) 60 C4th 1086, 1104).

Unusual circumstances generally refer to uncommon, rare, and unforeseeable events over which an entity has no control, and which directly results in the failure to act. The District has been in coordination with the City of Santa Clarita regarding the Project; neither agency is aware of unusual circumstances associated with Project implementation. The Project would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Project construction would be consistent with methods typical for roadway improvements. Additionally, Project plans would be reviewed and checked by the City to ensure that the proposed design and construction comply with City ordinances regulating drainage, roadway, and grading activities.

As the Project presents no unusual circumstances or special environmental constraints that might have a reasonable possibility to create significant environmental impact, this exception concerning significant environmental impacts, under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c), would not apply.

d) Scenic Highways

A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project that may damage scenic resources—including but not limited to trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources—within an officially designated state scenic highway. I-5, approximately 240 feet west of the Project, is eligible for designation as a scenic highway; however, it is

⁶ City of Santa Clarita, General Plan, June 2011,
<https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/SantaClarita/html/SantaClaritaGP/SantaClaritaGP.html>.

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not an officially designated highway. The closest officially designated scenic highway is SR 2, approximately 23 miles southeast of the Site.⁷ Due to the distance, Project implementation would not have the ability to impact the officially designated highway. This exception concerning effects on officially designated scenic highways, under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d), does not apply to the Project.

e) Hazardous Waste Sites

Subsection 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines states that a categorical exemption shall not be used for a project on a site that is on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code. Section 65962.5 specifies lists of hazardous materials sites—hazardous waste facilities; hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Resources Control Board has issued certain types of orders; public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases; and solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

To determine if the Project areas are on a list compiled by Section 65962.5, a review of the following data resources, also known as the Cortese list, was conducted:

- California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) online EnviroStor database⁸
- California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) online GeoTracker database⁹
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA):¹⁰
 - Sites identified by the SWRBC with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit
 - List of “active” Cleanup and Abatement Orders and Cease and Desist Orders from the SWRBC
 - List of hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action pursuant to Section 25187.5 of the Health and Safety Code (which concerns the enforcement of correction actions by the DTSC)¹¹

A computer search of these databases determined that the Project areas are not on a list of hazardous waste facilities compiled by Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code. Therefore, this exception concerning exposure of hazardous waste under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(e) does not apply to the Project.

f) Historic Resources

A categorical exemption cannot be used for a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, as specified in Public Resources Code Section 21084.1, which defines a resource as one listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and local register of historical resources.

The Main Development Area is undeveloped and not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, California Historic Resources, California Historic Landmarks, or California Office of Historic Preservation’s Built Environment Resource Directory.¹² It should be noted that the Boykin Hall | James D. Boykin Laboratory Center—located in the

⁷ California State Scenic Highway System Map, accessed September 22, 2022, <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>.

⁸ Department of Toxic Substances Control, EnviroStor, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/>.

⁹ California State Water Resources Control Board, GeoTracker, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/>.

¹⁰ California Environmental Protection Agency, Cortese List Data Resources, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/>.

¹¹ Department of Toxic Substances Control, EnviroStor, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov>

¹² National Park Services, National Register of Historic Places, accessed September 22, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm#table>; Office of Preservation, California

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center of the COC campus and approximately 0.3 miles southeast of the Main Development Area—is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and California Historical Landmark program. Project implementation would not impact this building. The Project areas are also not on the City of Santa Clarita’s list of adopted historical resources.¹³ Therefore, Project implementation would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource, and this exception concerning historic resources, under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(f), does not apply to the Project.

5. Conclusion

As documented herein, the proposed Project meets the requirements of the Class 32, Infill Development Project Categorical Exemption, and none of the conditions in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, Exceptions, apply. Accordingly, the Project can be exempt from extended environmental review in conformance with the provisions of CEQA.

Historical Resources, accessed September 22, 2022, <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=county&criteria=19>; Office of Preservation, California Historical Landmarks, accessed September 22, 2022, https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21427; Office of Preservation, Built Environment Resource Directory, accessed September 22, 2022, https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30338.
¹³ City of Santa Clarita, General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, May 2011, <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/SantaClarita/html/SantaClaritaGP/6%20-%20Conservation%20and%20Open%20Space%20Element.pdf>.



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Local Vicinity Map





View of northwest corner of the Site from Valencia Boulevard. Note the T-intersection at Tourney Avenue on the left side of the photo.



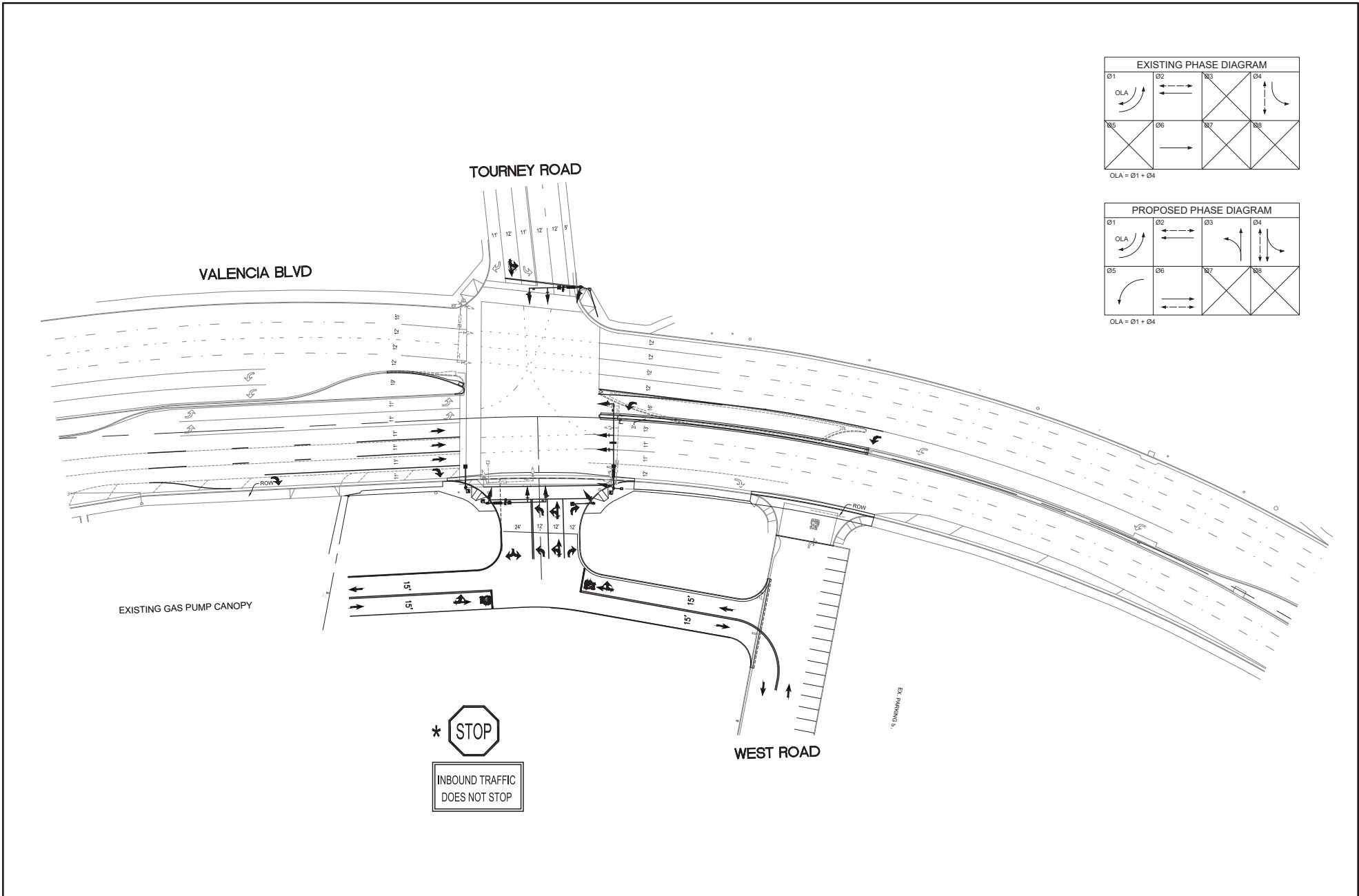
View of northeast corner of the Site and westbound turn lane to W Road.



Facing north with a view of the planter in the center of Parking Lot 14.



Facing southwest of the landscaped area in Parking Lot 14 where one replacement oak tree would be planted in the general area of the deceased tree.

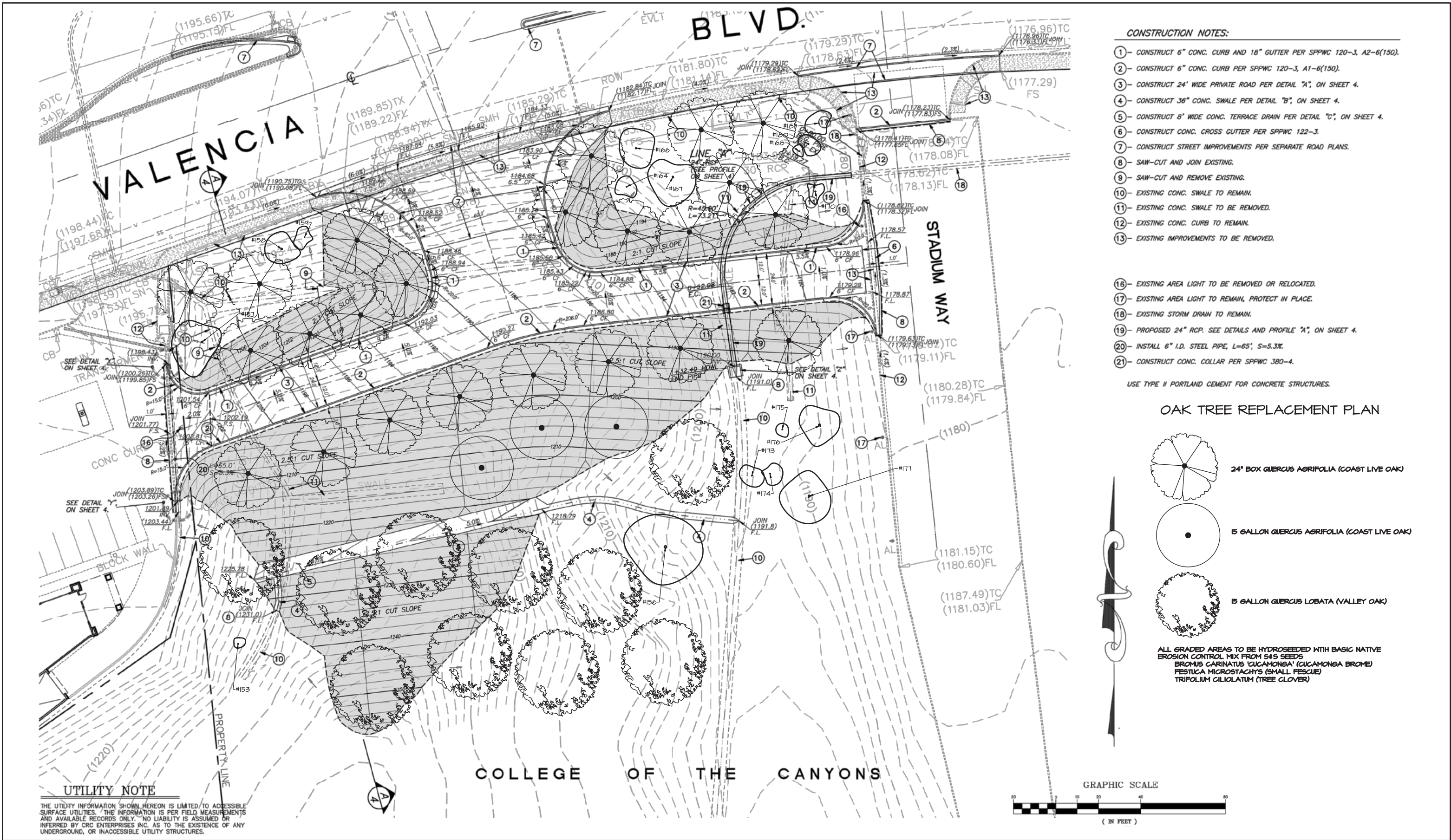


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 NEW ACCESS DRIVEWAY NEAR VALENCIA BOULEVARD AT TOURNEY ROAD

Site Plan

Figure 4





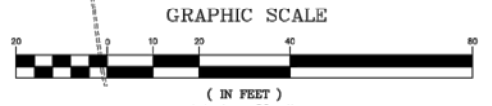
- CONSTRUCTION NOTES:**
- ① - CONSTRUCT 6" CONC. CURB AND 18" GUTTER PER SPPWC 120-3, A2-6(150).
 - ② - CONSTRUCT 6" CONC. CURB PER SPPWC 120-3, A1-6(150).
 - ③ - CONSTRUCT 24" WIDE PRIVATE ROAD PER DETAIL "A", ON SHEET 4.
 - ④ - CONSTRUCT 36" CONC. SWALE PER DETAIL "B", ON SHEET 4.
 - ⑤ - CONSTRUCT 8" WIDE CONC. TERRACE DRAIN PER DETAIL "C", ON SHEET 4.
 - ⑥ - CONSTRUCT CONC. CROSS GUTTER PER SPPWC 122-3.
 - ⑦ - CONSTRUCT STREET IMPROVEMENTS PER SEPARATE ROAD PLANS.
 - ⑧ - SAW-CUT AND JOIN EXISTING.
 - ⑨ - SAW-CUT AND REMOVE EXISTING.
 - ⑩ - EXISTING CONC. SWALE TO REMAIN.
 - ⑪ - EXISTING CONC. SWALE TO BE REMOVED.
 - ⑫ - EXISTING CONC. CURB TO REMAIN.
 - ⑬ - EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS TO BE REMOVED.
 - ⑭ - EXISTING AREA LIGHT TO BE REMOVED OR RELOCATED.
 - ⑮ - EXISTING AREA LIGHT TO REMAIN, PROTECT IN PLACE.
 - ⑯ - EXISTING STORM DRAIN TO REMAIN.
 - ⑰ - PROPOSED 24" RCP. SEE DETAILS AND PROFILE "A", ON SHEET 4.
 - ⑱ - INSTALL 6" I.D. STEEL PIPE, L=65', S=5.3%.
 - ⑲ - CONSTRUCT CONC. COLLAR PER SPPWC 380-4.
- USE TYPE II PORTLAND CEMENT FOR CONCRETE STRUCTURES.

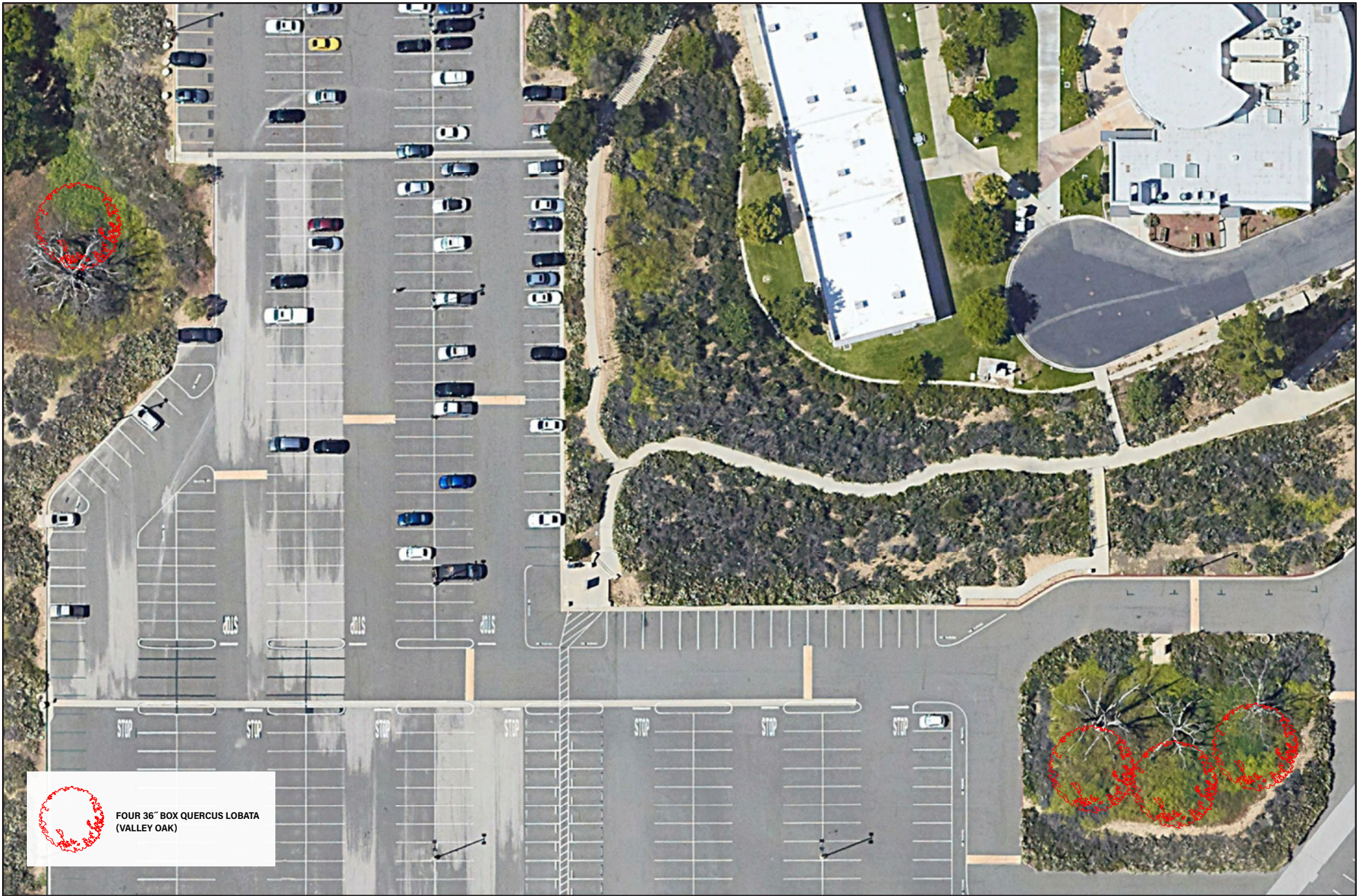
OAK TREE REPLACEMENT PLAN

- 24" BOX QUERCUS AGRIFOLIA (COAST LIVE OAK)
- 15 GALLON QUERCUS AGRIFOLIA (COAST LIVE OAK)
- 15 GALLON QUERCUS LOBATA (VALLEY OAK)

ALL GRADED AREAS TO BE HYDROSEEDING WITH BASIC NATIVE EROSION CONTROL MIX FROM 5:5 SEEDS
 BROMUS CARINATUS 'CUCAMONSA' (CUCAMONSA BROME)
 FESTUCA MICROSTACHYS (SMALL FESCUE)
 TRIFOLIUM GILIOLATUM (TREE CLOVER)

UTILITY NOTE
 THE UTILITY INFORMATION SHOWN HEREON IS LIMITED TO ACCESSIBLE SURFACE UTILITIES. THE INFORMATION IS PER FIELD MEASUREMENTS AND AVAILABLE RECORDS ONLY. NO LIABILITY IS ASSUMED OR INFERRED BY CRC ENTERPRISES INC. AS TO THE EXISTENCE OF ANY UNDERGROUND, OR INACCESSIBLE UTILITY STRUCTURES.





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Tree Plan – COC Parking Lot 14

Figure 6