



CARLSBAD
CLOVIS
IRVINE
LOS ANGELES
PALM SPRINGS
POINT RICHMOND
RIVERSIDE
ROSEVILLE
SAN LUIS OBISPO

September 29, 2022

Mr. Brett Hamilton, AICP, Senior Planner
City of Menifee
Community Development Department-Planning Division
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Menifee, California 92586
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Subject: Results of a Burrowing Owl Survey for the Caliber Collision Paint and Auto Body Repair Shop Project in the City of Menifee, Riverside County, California (LSA Project No CIM2201).

Dear Mr. Hamilton:

This report documents the results of a burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) survey for the Caliber Collision Paint and Auto Body Repair Shop Project (project). The 2.33-acre project is located north of Keller Road, south of Scott Road, east of Howard Way, and west of Zeiders Road in the City of Menifee (City), Riverside County, California, within Assessor's Parcel Number 384-130-028 (see Figure 1; all figures attached).

The survey results were negative for the detection of burrowing owl since no owls, or their sign were observed during the 2022 survey efforts. However, several ground squirrel burrows were observed on site and have the potential to house burrowing owl.

BACKGROUND

Burrowing owls are found in open, dry grasslands; agricultural and range lands; desert habitats; and grass, forb, and shrub stages of pinyon and ponderosa pine habitats. They nest in abandoned burrows of ground squirrels or other animals, in pipes, rock and debris piles, and in other similar features.

Burrowing owls, their nests, and eggs are protected from "take" under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3800 of the California Fish and Game Code. Activities that cause destruction of active nests, or that cause nest abandonment and subsequent death of eggs or young, may constitute violations of these laws.

Burrowing owl is a species of special concern as determined by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and is a covered species under the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). In addition, the MSHCP has established survey areas for burrowing owl where focused surveys are required if suitable habitat is determined to be present.

SURVEY AREA

The area surveyed with transects (Figure 2) is 2.33 acres and includes the entire project site, which is potentially suitable for burrowing owl. The entire project site is within the MSHCP burrowing owl survey area. The topography of this area is a mix of moderately disturbed, low-lying vegetation and slopes southeast to northwest, providing a suitable habitat for burrowing owl.

Vegetation within the project site is moderately disturbed due to regular discing. Based on aerial imagery, the site has never been developed, and non-native grasslands dominate the site. The project site is bounded by undeveloped land and a commercial storage yard to the north, Zeiders Road and undeveloped land to the east, a single-family residence and commercial operations to the south, and a commercial storage yard to the west. The site elevation ranges from 1,530 to 1,545 feet (ft) above mean sea level (amsl).

Vegetation and land cover present on site consist of non-native grasslands, ruderal vegetation, and a developed gravel driveway (Figure 2). One native tree, a blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *Caerulea*), was observed on the central portion of the site. Dominant species within non-native grasslands include ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), paniculate tarplant (*Deinandra paniculate*), redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), and common Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia intermedia*). Dominant species within ruderal areas are limited to non-native species and include shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), stinknet (*Oncosiphon pilulifer*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*), foxtail brome (*Bromus madritensis*), rattail sixweeks grass (*Festuca myuros*), and redstem filaree. There are no other plant communities on the site. Areas mapped as “developed” in Figure 2 consist of gravel driveways that prohibit the growth of vegetation; these areas are located on the northern part of the site. Figure 3 shows representative photographs of the on-site conditions.

The area surrounding the project site consists of a mix of developed and undeveloped lands with Interstate 15 (I-15) passing approximately 0.25 mile from the eastern boundary of the project site. Surrounding developed areas consist primarily of residential and commercial uses.

METHODS

The surveys were conducted by LSA biologist Jeremy Rosenthal according to the *County of Riverside Guidelines for Burrowing Owl Surveys* (revised March 29, 2006). A total of four surveys were conducted on March 25, May 10, June 30, and August 17, 2022. The surveys were conducted by walking transects approximately 30 meters apart throughout areas of suitable habitat to look for burrowing owls, potential burrows (burrows greater than 11 centimeters [cm] in diameter and 150 cm deep), and burrowing owl sign. Burrowing owl sign consists of feathers, pellets, whitewash, and prey remnants). Burrows with burrowing owl sign present and/or burrowing owls were recorded using a handheld global positioning system (GPS) unit and mapped onto an aerial photograph. Privately owned parcels located outside of the project site were surveyed using binoculars from public rights-of-way and advantageous viewpoints as well as through aerial imagery. Potential habitat within 500 ft and visible from the site was surveyed using binoculars.

Table A provides dates, times, and weather conditions of site visits. Surveys were conducted during weather conducive to observing owls outside their burrows and to detecting burrowing owl sign. No rain had occurred within five days prior to each of the site visits.

Table A: Focused Survey Dates, Times, and Weather Conditions

Survey	Personnel	Date (2022)	Time (24-Hour) (start/finish)	Temp. (°F) (start/finish)	Wind (mph)	Sky
Burrow Survey, Burrowing Owl Survey 1	Jeremy Rosenthal	March 25	0645/0715	64/65	<12	0% cloud cover
Burrowing Owl Survey 2	Jeremy Rosenthal	May 10	0600/0700	47/48	<2	10% cloud cover
Burrowing Owl Survey 3	Jeremy Rosenthal	June 30	0600/0700	66/67	<2	10% cloud cover
Burrowing Owl Survey 4	Jeremy Rosenthal	August 17	0630/0730	74/75	<1	0% cloud cover

Source: Compiled by LSA (2022).
 °F = degrees Fahrenheit
 mph = miles per hour

RESULTS

No burrowing owls or burrowing owl sign were found to be present within the survey area (including the 500 ft buffer). Four burrows suitable for burrowing owl were observed within the survey area but showed no sign of burrowing owl use. Suitable habitat is present throughout the project site and portions of the 500 ft buffer consisting of ruderal and non-native grassland as both vegetation communities contain low-growing plant species. Areas mapped as developed lacked suitable habitat since they consist of a gravel driveway maintained vegetation free since 2021. These developed areas preclude the construction of any burrows and vegetation growth.

Areas within 500 ft of the project site generally lack suitable habitat for burrowing owl as over half of the surrounding land consists of developed land cover for residences and/or commercial businesses. The remaining undeveloped land to the north, south-west, south-east, and east is considered suitable habitat for burrowing owl, consisting primarily of similar ruderal and non-native grassland vegetation. However, based on historic aerial imagery, vegetation within those areas appears to be regularly disced/mowed since at least 2003. No burrowing owls, their sign, or suitable burrows were observed within the 500 ft buffer.

Wildlife species detected during the survey included mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), Anna’s hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), white-crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), California scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), Bewick’s wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), California towhee (*Melospiza crissalis*), Nuttall’s woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*), northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Cassin’s kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*), hooded oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*), red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), common yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), western tanager

(*Piranga ludoviciana*), house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), Eurasian collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), rock pigeon (*Columba livia*), chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*), checkered white (*Pontia protodice*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), and Audubon's cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*).

DISCUSSION

Four suitable burrows were observed within the project site; however, they lacked sign of burrowing owl use during the focused burrowing owl surveys. The project site contains suitable habitat in the form of non-native grassland and ruderal areas. Since portions of the project site are suitable for burrowing owl and burrowing owl could occupy these areas prior to construction, a preconstruction burrowing owl survey will be required within 30 days prior to ground disturbance, consistent with the *County of Riverside Guidelines for Burrowing Owl Surveys* (revised March 29, 2006). If burrowing owl is found during the preconstruction survey, the project proponent will need to inform the CDFW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and prepare a Burrowing Owl Protection and Relocation Plan for approval by these agencies prior to initiating ground disturbance.

If you have any questions concerning the report, I can be contacted at (626) 257-0215 or ryan.villanueva@lsa.net.

Sincerely,

LSA ASSOCIATES, INC.



Ryan Villanueva
Senior Biologist

Attachments: Figure 1: Project Location and Vicinity
Figure 2: Survey Results
Figure 3: Site Photographs

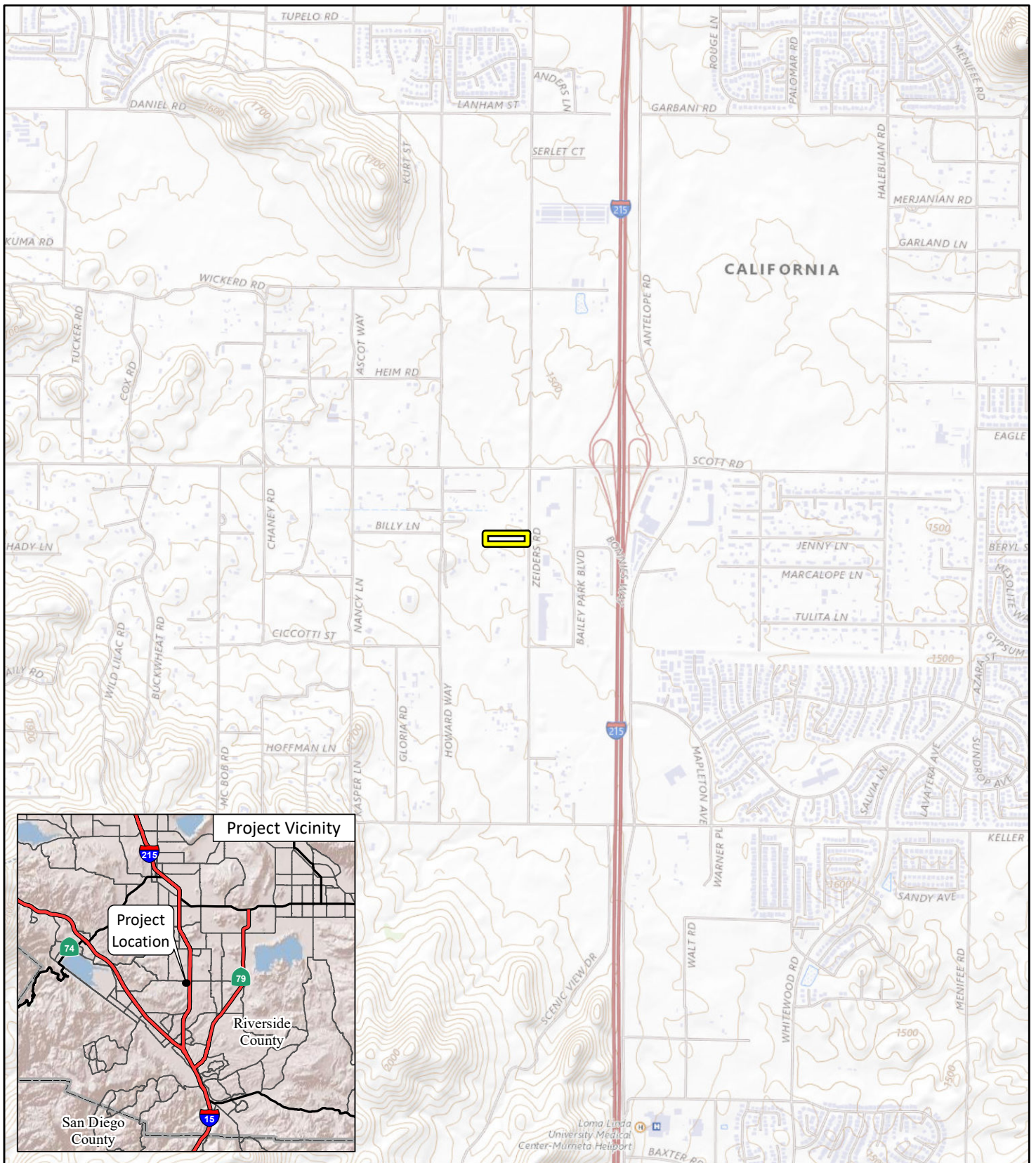
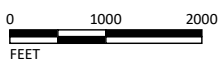


FIGURE 1

LSA

LEGEND

 Project Location



SOURCE: USGS The National Map (2018)

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Caliber Collision Paint and Auto Body
Repair Shop Project
Project Location and Vicinity

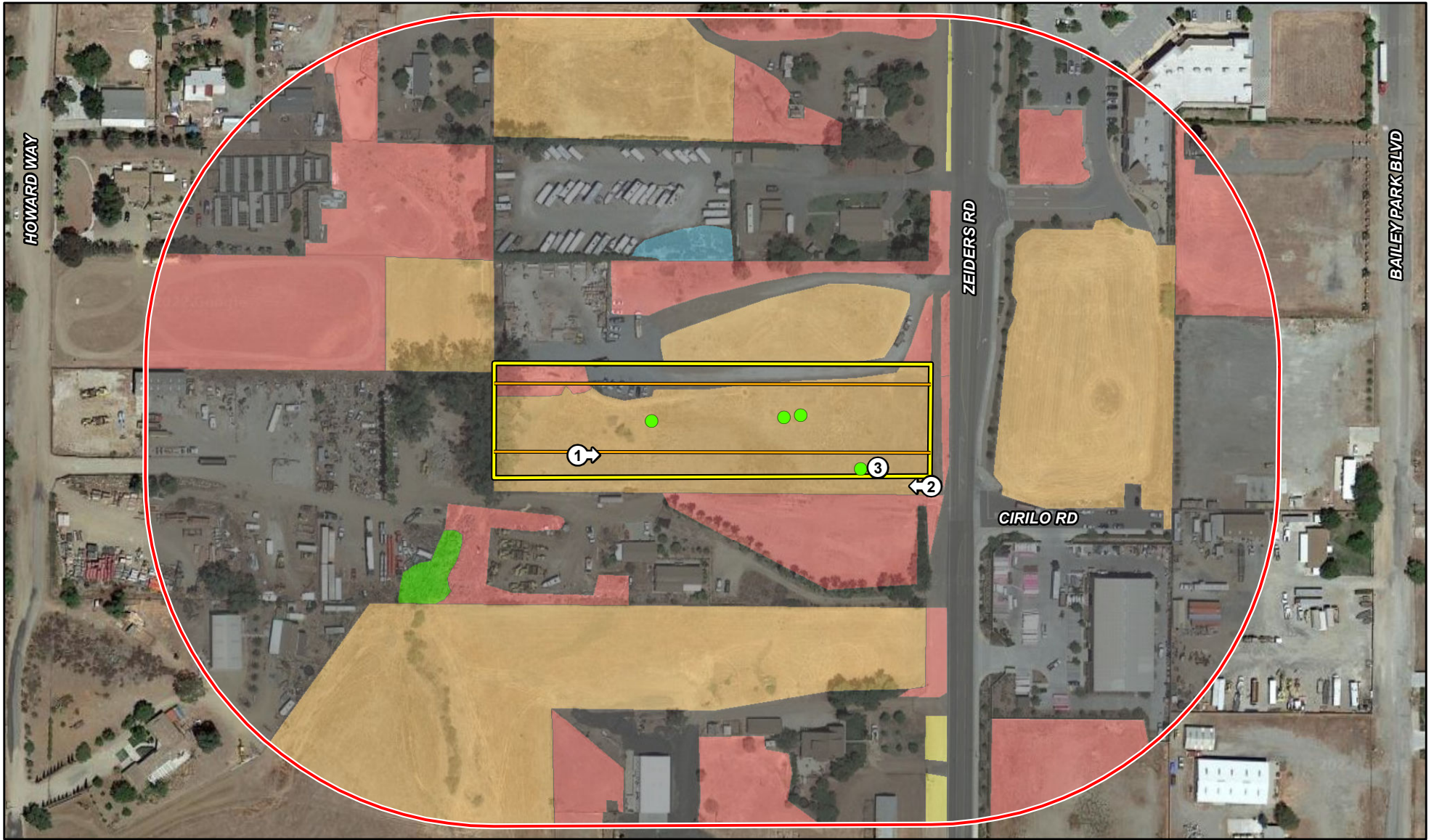
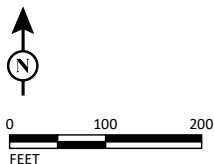


FIGURE 2

LSA



SOURCE: Google Imagery (2022)
 I:\CIM2201\GIS\MXD\Bio\Survey_Results.mxd (9/19/2022)

LEGEND

- | | | |
|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| Survey Area – 500-foot Buffer | Bare Ground | Ruderal |
| Project Location | Arundo Patches | Non-native Grassland |
| Transects (30-meter) | Coastal Sage Scrub | Developed |
| Potential Burrowing Owl Burrow (no sign) | | |
| Photo Locations | | |

Caliber Collision Paint and Auto Body
 Repair Shop Project
 Survey Results



Photo 1: View of the project site facing east. Taken on August 17, 2022.



Photo 2: View of the project site facing west. Taken on March 25, 2022.



Photo 3: California ground squirrel burrow. Taken on May 10, 2020.