

**FINDINGS OF FACTS  
STERLING RANCH RESIDENTIAL PROJECT  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
(STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NUMBER 2019080092)**

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction.....	1.0-2
2. Project Summary .....	1.0-9
3. Environmental Review and Public Participation .....	1.0-17
4. Findings Regarding Project Environmental Effects Determined to Have No Effect on the Environment, or Have a Less Than Significant impact on the Environment .....	1.0-18
5. Findings Regarding Project Impacts Determined to be Less Than Significant with Mitigation.....	1.0-67
6. Findings Regarding Project Impacts Determined to be Significant and Unavoidable.....	1.0-150
7. Findings Regarding Alternatives.....	1.0-153
8. Findings Regarding Growth Inducing Impacts.....	1.0-163

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code Section 21081, and the Guidelines for Implementation for the California Environmental Quality Act, Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15091 ("State CEQA Guidelines"), require that a public agency consider the environmental impacts of a project before a project is approved and make specific findings. Public Resources Code Section 21002 provides that "public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of such projects[.]" The same statute provides that the procedures required by CEQA "are intended to assist public agencies in systematically identifying both the significant effects of projects and the feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures which will avoid or substantially lessen such significant effects." Public Resources Code Section 21002 goes on to provide that "in the event [that] specific economic, social, or other conditions make infeasible such project alternatives or such mitigation measures, individual projects may be approved in spite of one or more significant effects thereof."

The mandate and principles announced in Public Resources Code Section 21002 are implemented, in part, through the requirement that agencies must adopt findings before approving projects for which EIRs are required. For each significant environmental effect identified in an EIR for a project, the approving agency must issue a written finding reaching one or more of three permissible conclusions. The State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, Findings, specifically provides as follows:

- (a) No public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been certified which identifies one or more significant environmental effects of the project unless the public agency makes one or more written findings for each of those significant effects, accompanied by a brief explanation of the rationale for each finding. The possible findings are:
  - 1. Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the EIR.
  - 2. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can or should be adopted by such other agency.
  - 3. Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the final EIR.

- (b) The findings required by subdivision (a) shall be supported by substantial evidence in the record.
- (c) The finding in subdivision (a)(2) shall not be made if the agency making the finding has concurrent jurisdiction with another agency to deal with identified feasible mitigation measures or alternatives. The finding in subsection (a)(3) shall describe the specific reasons for rejecting identified mitigation measures and project alternatives.
- (d) When making the findings required in subdivision (a)(1), the agency shall also adopt a program for reporting on or monitoring the changes which it has either required in the project or made a condition of approval to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental effects. These measures must be fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other measures.
- (e) The public agency shall specify the location and custodian of the documents or other materials which constitute the record of the proceedings upon which its decision is based.
- (f) A statement made pursuant to Section 15093 does not substitute for the findings required by this Section.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093, Statement of Overriding Considerations, further provides as follows:

- (a) CEQA requires the decision-making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve the project. If the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposal project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse environmental effects may be considered "acceptable."
- (b) Where the lead agency approves a project which will result in the occurrence of significant effects which are identified in the final EIR but are not avoided or substantially lessened, the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons to support its action based on the final EIR and/or other information in the record. This statement of overriding considerations shall be supported by substantial evidence in the record.
- (c) If an agency makes a statement of overriding considerations, the statement should be included in the record of the project approval and should be mentioned in the notice of determination. This statement does not substitute for, and shall be in addition to, the findings required pursuant to Section 15091.

Public Resources Code Section 21061.1 defines "feasible" to mean "capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, legal, and technological factors." CEQA Guidelines Section 15364 adds another factor: "legal" considerations. (See also *Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Bd. of Supervisors* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 553, 565 (Goleta II).) The concept of "feasibility" also encompasses the question of whether a particular alternative or mitigation measure promotes the underlying goals and objectives of a project. (*City of Del Mar v. City of San Diego* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 410; 417 (*City of Del Mar*); *Sierra Club v. County of Napa* (2004) 121 Cal.App.4th 1490, 1506-1509 [court upholds CEQA findings rejecting alternatives in reliance on applicant's project objectives]; see also *California Native Plant Society v. City of Santa Cruz* (2009) 177 Cal.App.4th 957, 1001 (CNPSJ ["an alternative 'may be found infeasible on the ground it is inconsistent with the project objectives as long as the finding is supported by substantial evidence in the record'"] (quoting Kostka & Zischke, *Practice Under the Cal. Environmental Quality Act* [Cont.Ed.Bar 2d ed. 2009] (Kostka), § 17.39, p. 825); *In re Bay-Delta Programmatic Environmental Impact Report Coordinated Proceedings* (2008) 43 Cal.4th 1143, 1165, 1166 (*Bay-Delta*) ["[i]n the CALFED program, feasibility is strongly linked to achievement of each of the primary project objectives"; "a lead agency may structure its EIR alternative analysis around a reasonable definition of underlying purpose and need not study alternatives that cannot achieve that basic goal"].) Moreover, "'feasibility' under CEQA encompasses 'desirability' to the extent that desirability is based on a reasonable balancing of the relevant economic, environmental, social, legal, and technological factors." (*City of Del Mar, supra*, 133 Cal.App.3d at p. 417; see also *CNPS, supra*, 177 Cal.App.4th at p. 1001 ["an alternative that 'is impractical or undesirable from a policy standpoint' may be rejected as infeasible"] [quoting *Kostka, supra*, § 17.29, p. 824]; *San Diego Citizenry Group v. County of San Diego* (2013) 219 Cal.App.4th 1, 17.)

For purposes of these findings (including the table described below), the term "avoid" refers to the effectiveness of one or more mitigation measures to reduce an otherwise significant effect to a less than significant level. Although CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 requires only that approving agencies specify that a particular significant effect is "avoid[ed] or substantially lessen[ed]," these findings, for purposes of clarity, in each case will specify whether the effect in question has been "avoided" (i.e., reduced to a less than significant level).

CEQA requires that the lead agency adopt mitigation measures or alternatives, where feasible, to substantially lessen or avoid significant environmental impacts that would otherwise occur. Project modification or alternatives are not required, however, where such changes are infeasible or where the responsibility for modifying the project lies with some other agency. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15091, subd. (a), (b).)

With respect to a project for which significant impacts are not avoided or substantially lessened, a public agency, after adopting proper findings, may nevertheless approve the project if the agency first adopts a statement of overriding considerations setting forth the specific reasons why the agency found that the project's "benefits" rendered "acceptable" its "unavoidable adverse environmental effects." (CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15093, 15043, subd. (b); see also Pub. Resources Code, § 21081, subd. (b).) The California Supreme Court has stated, "[t]he wisdom of approving ... any development project, a delicate task which requires a balancing of interests, is necessarily left to the sound discretion of the local officials and their constituents who are responsible for such decisions. The law as we interpret and apply it simply requires that those decisions be informed, and therefore balanced." (Goleta II, supra, 52 Cal.3d at p. 576.) The EIR for the Sterling Ranch Residential Estates Project (Project) concluded the Project will create any significant and unavoidable impacts; thus, a Statement of Overriding Considerations is required.

These findings constitute the County of Los Angeles' (County's) best efforts to set forth the evidentiary and policy bases for its decision to approve the Project in a manner consistent with the requirements of CEQA. To the extent that these findings conclude that various mitigation measures outlined in the Final EIR are feasible and have not been modified, superseded, or withdrawn, the County hereby binds itself to implement these measures. These findings, in other words, are not merely informational, but rather constitute a binding set of obligations that will come into effect when the County adopts a resolution approving the Project.

In addition, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) has been prepared for the Project and is being approved by the Board of Supervisors by the same Resolution that has adopted these findings. The County will use the MMRP to track compliance with Project mitigation measures. The MMRP will remain available for public review during the compliance period. The Final MMRP is attached to and incorporated into the environmental document approval resolution and is approved in conjunction with certification of the EIR and adoption of these Findings of Fact.

Having received, reviewed, and considered the Draft Environmental Impact Report ("Draft EIR") and the Final Environmental Impact Report ("Final EIR") for the Sterling Ranch Residential Project Environmental Impact Report for County Project No. Project No. 03-250-(5) (SCH No. 2019080092), as well as other information in the record of proceedings on this matter, the Regional Planning Commission of the County of Los Angeles ("County") in its capacity as the CEQA Lead Agency hereby finds, determines, and declares the following Findings and Facts, in accordance with Section 21081 of the Public Resources Code.

These Findings set forth the environmental basis for the discretionary actions to be undertaken by the County for the development of the Project. These actions include the approval of the following for the Sterling Ranch Residential Project:

- Vesting Tentative Parcel Map No. 060257 to create 247 lots on approximately 113.9 acres;
- Conditional Use Permit No. 03-250 to authorize on-site and off-site grading in excess of 100,000 cubic yards, conformance with Hillside Management Design Review Criteria, retaining walls, and off-site water/wastewater infrastructure;
- Oak Tree Permit No. 200700007 for the removal of 14 oak trees and encroachment into the protected zone of 11 oak trees;
- Highway Realignment for the realignment of Del Valle Road to a Limited Secondary Highway; and
- All other demolition, building and construction permits granted under the authority of the Department of Public Works Building and Safety.

Additional agency actions which require other permits and approvals known to be needed, or which may be needed, in order to implement various components of the Project, include the following:

- Regional Water Quality Control Board for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit, Section 401 permit under the federal Clean Water Act, and waste discharge certification;
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife for a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement pursuant to Fish & Game Code 1602; and

These actions are collectively referred to herein as the Project.

## **A. Document Format**

These Findings have been organized into the following Sections:

- (1) Section 1 provides an introduction to these Findings.
- (2) Section 2 provides a summary of the Project, overview of the discretionary actions required for approval of the Project, and a statement of the Project's objectives.
- (3) Section 3 provides a summary of environmental review related to the Project and a summary of public participation in the environmental review for the Project.

- (4) Section 4 sets forth findings regarding the potential impact areas identified in the EIR for which the County has determined that there is no impact or the impact is less than significant. Because there is either no or a less than significant impact, no mitigation is required.
- (5) Section 5 sets forth findings regarding potentially significant environmental impacts identified in the EIR that the County has determined can be feasibly mitigated to a less than significant level through the imposition of mitigation measures. In order to ensure compliance and implementation, all of the mitigation measures will be included in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program ("MMRP") for the Project and adopted as conditions of the Project by the Lead Agency. Where potentially significant impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level through mitigation, these findings specify how those impacts would be reduced to an acceptable level.
- (6) Section 6 sets forth findings regarding those significant or potentially significant environmental impacts identified in the EIR that will or may result from the Project and which the County has determined will remain significant and unavoidable, despite the identification and incorporation of all feasible mitigation measures.
- (7) Section 7 sets forth findings regarding alternatives to the Project.
- (8) Section 8 contains findings regarding growth-inducing impacts.
- (9) Section 9 contains the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

## **B. Custodian and Location of Records**

The Sterling Ranch Residential Project Environmental Impact Report for County Project No. Project No. 03-250-(5) (SCH No. 2019080092) consists of:

1. Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) and Appendices A through P, dated November, 2021; and
2. Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) dated April 2023.

The following findings of fact are based in part on the information contained in the Draft EIR and Final EIR, (together, the EIR) for the Project, as well as additional facts found in the complete record of proceedings. The EIR is hereby incorporated by reference and is available for review during normal business hours at the County of Los Angeles, Land Divisions Section, Department of Regional Planning, 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California 90012.





## **2. PROJECT SUMMARY**

### **A. Project Location**

The main component of the Sterling Ranch Estates Residential Project (Project) is a 113.9-acre area proposed as Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 60257 (the VTTM site) located at 29053 Coolidge Avenue, within the Val Verde community of the Castaic Community Area of the Santa Clarita Valley in the County of Los Angeles (County), approximately 35 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and two miles west of the City of Santa Clarita. The VTTM site lies on both sides of Del Valle Road, southwest of Hasley Canyon Road.

The Project site also includes off-site components proposed within areas referred to herein as the Off-Site Improvement Area and Open Space Dedication Area. The Off-Site Improvement Area totals 12.6 acres and consists of areas herein referred to as the Water Tank Area, the Water Line Improvement Area, the Sewer Line Improvement Area, and the Roadway Improvement Area. The Open Space Dedication Area totals 37.9 acres. Collectively, the VTTM site, the Off-Site Improvement Area and the Open Space Dedication Area make up the Project site and totals approximately 164.4 acres.

The community of Val Verde lies south and west of the VTTM site. The Valencia Commerce Center, containing commercial and industrial uses, lies east of the VTTM site. Residential uses border the VTTM site on the west and south. Largely undeveloped land lies north of the VTTM site. Surrounding land uses designations include H5—Residential 5 (0-5 dwelling units per acre [du/ac]) to the south and west, RL2—Rural Land 5 (1 du/2 ac) to the north, and IO—Industrial Office to the east. Surrounding zoning includes R-1 (Single-family residence) to the south and west, A2-2 (Light and Heavy Agriculture) to the north, and MPD-DP (Manufacturing industrial planned development) to the east.

The Chiquita Canyon Sanitary Landfill is located approximately one mile southeast of the Project site beyond the residential uses. Val Verde Community Regional Park, which is a 58-acre community regional facility, is located approximately 0.25 miles southwest of the Project site.

Interstate 5 (I-5) is located approximately two miles east of the Project site and State Route (SR) 126 is located approximately two miles south of the Project site. Chiquito Canyon Road via SR 126 and Del Valle Road via I-5 provide access to the Project site.

### **B. Project Description**

Sterling Gateway, LP (the Applicant) proposes the Project, consisting of a 113.9-gross acre VTTM site that would be subdivided into 247 lots, of which 222 lots would be for detached single-family residential lots,

and approximately 50.5 acres of related off-site components within a total of approximately 164.4 acres. These off-site components include:

- Construction of a one-million-gallon water tank;
- Upsizing of the existing water line within Hasley Canyon Road;
- Construction of a sewer line within Del Valle Road to Hasley Canyon Road;
- Improvements of Del Valle Road;
- Dedication of an off-site trail easement; and
- Dedication of an off-site permanent open space easement.

The “VTTM site” refers to the location of the proposed vesting tentative tract map for the Sterling Ranch residential community; and “Project site” includes the VTTM site, the Off-Site Improvement Areas (which consists of the one-million-gallon water tank [Off-Site Water Tank Area]), the water line and sewer line utility improvements (the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area and Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area, respectively), the improvements along Del Valle Road and the off-site trail easement (Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area), and the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area.

Grading associated with the VTTM site would require 3,278,250 cubic yards of earthwork to be balanced between the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. Grading associated with the Off-Site Water Tank Area would consist of approximately 132,000 cubic yards of earthwork. Trenching of the off-site utility improvements would also require approximately 171,100 cubic yards of earthwork.

### ***a. Single-Family Residential Component***

The Project includes 222 single-family residential lots. Of the proposed 222 residential lots, 91 residential lots would range from 7,000 to 10,000 square feet (sq. ft.) in size and 131 residential lots would be greater than 10,000 sq. ft. in size, for an average lot size of 11,364 sq. ft., consistent with Castaic Area Community Standards District (CSD) development standards. The average net dwelling unit per acre would be approximately 3.83. The lots are proposed to be located along public streets which would connect to Sterling Parkway and Del Valle Road. All single-family lots would be served by separate sewer laterals for each individual lot.

### ***b. Commercial Component***

Approximately 21,000 sq. ft. of neighborhood commercial uses are planned on approximately 2.5 acres within the southwestern-most lot within the VTTM site. The commercial lot is planned to front along Sterling Parkway and Hunstock Street. The commercial area would be accessible by vehicular and transit

service, as well as an area approximately 450 linear feet, eight to 17 feet wide, accessible by pedestrians along Hunstock Street.

### ***c. Recreational Components***

Two parks for residents would be provided within the VTTM site. An approximately 3.4-acre private recreation lot would be located at the corner of Sterling Parkway and Del Valle Road in the southwestern portion of the VTTM site. This private recreation lot is proposed to be developed with a passive park that would include a tot lot, shade structure and tables. An approximately 0.2-acre private recreation pocket park would be provided within the northeast portion of the VTTM site along the proposed “M” Street.

The Project would include a private multi-use trail, the Sterling Horn Memorial Trail, ten feet in width along the southern portion of the VTTM site. The multi-use trail would begin near the eastern corner of Sterling Parkway and Del Valle Road and extend approximately 2,000 linear feet to the eastern VTTM site boundary. The private multi-use trail would connect with the County’s Del Valle Trail, identified in the County’s Master Plan of Trails, within the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area outside the VTTM site. Pursuant to the County’s Master Plan of Trails, the Project would improve Del Valle Road, which would facilitate in the implementation of the planned Class III bike route.

As part of the Project, the Applicant also would dedicate a twenty-foot wide, multi-use trail easement to the County for the Del Valle Trail, located off-site to the east within the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. The off-site multi-use trail would extend from the eastern VTTM site boundary approximately 1,275 feet to the north to Del Valle Road and then east along the southern side of Del Valle Road to the easternmost boundary of the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. The multi-use trail would be a variable-width (five-foot to eight-foot wide), natural soil surface trail within a twenty-foot dedication. Rural style fencing would be required along each side of the trail to delineate the trail and keep trail users within the trail alignment. An easement for the off-site grading from the adjacent owner has been obtained for this work, including the agreement to dedicate easements to the County upon request.

### ***d. Open Space and Landscaping***

The VTTM site contains approximately 12.6 acres of natural, undisturbed open space. Additional open space proposed within the VTTM site includes the approximately 9.9 acres of manufactured open space, the approximately 3.6 acres of passive park areas developed on private recreation lots, the private Sterling Horn Memorial multi-use trail, approximately 19.8 acres associated with the fuel modification area, and six landscaped open space lots on 0.1-acres. Total open space (natural and manufactured) provided within the VTTM site would be approximately 46.0 acres. The area surrounding the residential lots would include

drought-tolerant ornamental and native shrubs and/or trees with rock and wood bark mulch. More distant areas would include native vegetation and/or trees with temporary irrigation. The native, drought-tolerant landscaped areas would use temporary above-ground irrigation systems to establish the vegetation.

Additionally, approximately 37.9 acres of natural, undisturbed open space would be preserved in perpetuity in an off-site easement area located southeast of the VTTM site, herein referred to as the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area.

Approximately 2.4 acres of manufactured open space would be provided around the water tank within the Off-Site Water Tank Area. All manufactured slopes would be revegetated with native and drought-tolerant landscaping consistent with the VTTM site manufactured open space areas.

The Project includes the proposed removal of fourteen protected oak trees and the encroachment upon eleven protected oak trees. Of this total, two oak trees would be impacted by development of the proposed improvements along Hunstock Street and twelve oak trees would be removed and eleven oak trees would be encroached upon by construction in the Off-Site Water Tank Area. No heritage oak trees (trees with a trunk diameter of 36 inches or larger) would be removed or encroached upon by the Project. The Project would be required to obtain an oak tree permit and would be required to pay in-lieu fees or plant 28 new 15-gallon oak trees and ensure the survival of these trees. Fuel Modification Plan Zone C is sufficient in size to accommodate the replacement trees. Furthermore, the Project would result in the removal of 0.61 acres of oak woodland within the Off-Site Water Tank Area. A minimum of 1.22 acres of replacement oak woodland habitat would be provided.

#### ***e. Access and Circulation***

Sterling Parkway (a new roadway) would provide one lane in each direction, would extend from Hunstock Street to Del Valle Road, and would be a designated limited secondary highway within approximately 80-feet of right-of-way. Improvements along Del Valle Road would continue north from approximately 422 feet northeasterly of Hunstock Street to the VTTM site boundary. Del Valle Road would continue to provide one lane in each direction; however, Del Valle Road would be widened to approximately 64 feet within approximately 80 feet of right-of-way, increasing the safety of this public road. Upon completion, the additional right-of-way would provide for increased vehicular movement during an emergency and would provide for additional surface area to potentially incorporate drainage control features. Internal roadways would be designed for one lane in each direction within approximately 58 feet of right-of-way. The Project would include graded shoulders ranging from nine to twelve feet separated from the roadways by a 4-foot wide concrete gutter with rolled curb. Consistent with the local Community

Standards District regulations, no public sidewalks would be provided. Consistent with County Code, parallel parking would be allowed on internal streets. A bus stop would be relocated but continue to be provided along Del Valle Road.

Through access would be provided between Lexington Drive and the VTTM site via an approximately 26-foot wide roadway. Two linear access lots would be approximately 20 feet in width and would be provided to connect the VTTM site to Trevylon Street and Rainbow Drive to the west for additional emergency access for the VTTM site and surrounding neighborhood.

#### ***f. Drainage/Flood Control***

Runoff from surrounding natural areas, primarily located on the northern and eastern areas surrounding the VTTM site, would be collected in three debris basins, two debris/infiltration basins, and a single infiltration basin before entering the proposed storm drain system. Additionally, all developed area flows would be collected within the storm drain system, downstream of the drainage basin locations. A series of infiltration basins would be provided to reduce the peak flow and run-off volume for the VTTM site. Ultimately, the remaining stormwater would be conveyed within the system and would discharge to a percolation basin along Hunstock Street, where stormwater would be discharged to match existing drainage conditions. The infiltration basins would have the capacity for 17.3 acre-feet (af) and would be located in the northern and southern portions of the VTTM site.

#### ***g. Fire Safety***

The Project's conceptual landscape plan would comply with County Fire Department Fuel Modification Plan requirements (e.g., requirements for Zones A, B, and C) and would create a buffer area of 200 feet between open space and structures to provide a defensible space for fire suppression forces, slow the rate of spread, and reduce flame lengths and intensities of fires prior to reaching irrigated Zone A areas, as shown in the Project's approved fuel modification plan. All proposed plant species, densities, and spacing would comply with Fire Department requirements.

#### ***h. Off-Site Improvement Areas***

The off-site improvements consist of the following: a one million-gallon water tank; the upsizing of the existing water line within Hasley Canyon Road; the off-site construction of a mainline sewer from the eastern boundary of the VTTM site to Hasley Canyon Road within Del Valle Road; and the improvement of a portion of Del Valle Road from the easterly VTTM boundary to approximately 772-feet east of the VTTM boundary within the adjacent property.

### ***i. Project Development and Time Frame***

Development of the Project would occur through 2028. The timing of construction would respond to market conditions. Construction activities would include demolition of existing uses, grading and excavation, and construction of new structures and related infrastructure. Infrastructure improvements would be phased with each component of the Project.

The VTTM site would have one mass grading plan and storm drain plan. The grading phase for the VTTM site and adjacent Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would include excavation and lot grading and would occur over approximately seven months. The VTTM site would require approximately 3,278,250 cubic yards of grading with approximately 3,056,100 cubic yards of that grading to be balanced on the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. Grading of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be balanced on-site and result in the cut/fill of approximately 1,610,000 cubic yards of soil. In addition, there would be approximately 1,446,100 cubic yards of removals and recompaction of unsuitable soil reused as certified fill. Organic materials would be exported from the Project site. Subsequent to the grading operations, graded slopes would be landscaped and irrigated pursuant to County grading and erosion control requirements. Upon completion of the grading operations, additional work would be needed for fine grading for the development pads and roadway infrastructure. Approximately 211,500 cubic yards would be used for lot and street over-excavation and approximately 11,000 cubic yards would occur to stabilize landslide areas. Grading amounts forecast for trenching of the off-site improvements would be approximately 171,100 cubic yards of cut and fill. Import or export of soil is not expected for this type of earthwork. Grading of the Off-Site Water Tank Area would consist of approximately 132,000 cubic yards of cut and approximately 1,600 cubic yards of fill.

### **C. Discretionary Actions**

Discretionary approvals required for implementation of the Project would include, but are not limited to, the following approvals from the County:

- Vesting Tentative Parcel Map No. 060257 to create 247 lots on approximately 113.9 acres;
- Conditional Use Permit No. 03-250 to authorize on-site and off-site grading in excess of 100,000 cubic yards, conformance with Hillside Management Design Review Criteria, retaining walls, and off-site water/wastewater infrastructure;
- Oak Tree Permit No. 200700007 for the removal of 14 oak trees and encroachment into the protected zone of 11 oak trees;
- Highway Realignment for the realignment of Del Valle Road to a Limited Secondary Highway; and
- All other demolition, building and construction permits granted under the authority of the Department of Public Works Building and Safety.

Additional agency actions which require other permits and approvals known to be needed, or which may be needed, in order to implement various components of the Project include the following:

- Regional Water Quality Control Board for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit, Section 401 permit under the federal Clean Water Act, and waste discharge certification;
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife for a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement pursuant to Fish & Game Code 1602; and

#### **D. Statement of Project Objectives**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b) requires the Project Description contain “a statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project,” which “should include the underlying purpose of the project and may discuss project benefits.” The underlying purpose of the Project is to provide a single-family residential project with neighborhood commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District and One Valley One Vision Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan to help accommodate the need for housing in the County.

The objectives of the Project are:

1. Consistent with the One Valley One Vision Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the Castaic Area Community Standards District, accommodate projected regional growth in a location that is designated and zoned for residential growth and adjacent to existing and planned infrastructure, urban services, transportation corridors, and major employment centers.
2. Provide economically viable new housing in the Val Verde community of the County, an area designated by the County for urban development, which will meaningfully contribute to addressing the housing needs for the Santa Clarita Valley and provide housing for residents working in the nearby employment centers.
3. Develop a single-family, residential neighborhood with neighborhood-supporting commercial development consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District development standards, including the regulations regarding lot sizes.
4. Provide an area for permanent conservation between existing and proposed development and other existing conservation areas to preserve regionally significant natural resource areas, flora, fauna, wildlife corridors, and open space areas.

5. Enhance the image of the community through visually attractive and high-quality development that is in scale, complements, and blends with the Val Verde community and surrounding open space.
6. Improve Del Valle Road from its substandard design to current County standards to improve safety and to provide a more efficient and aesthetically attractive street circulation system with convenient connections to adjoining regional transportation routes while minimizing impacts on the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
7. Provide a range of recreational opportunities, including neighborhood parks, multi-use pedestrian and bicycle trails separated from vehicle traffic, which connects with supporting commercial, recreational, and other public facilities, to serve as an alternative to the automobile for surrounding residential neighborhoods and to meet the recreational needs of local residents.
8. Implement sustainable development principles in compliance with County plans, objectives, and regulations, particularly regarding energy efficiency, drought tolerant landscaping, water conservation, and waste reduction to support the County's greenhouse gas emission goals.
9. Balance grading on the Project site to minimize the need to import or export soil for development.
10. Accommodate and enhance fire protection facilities, including a new water tank and site access points, consistent with requests from the County Fire Department.
11. Provide a project that will invigorate the local economy, employment, and business opportunities through project construction and through the expenditures of its future residents.



### **3. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Final EIR dated April 2023 includes the Draft EIR dated November 2021, all written comments on the Draft EIR received during the public review period, written responses to these comments, clarifications/changes to the Draft EIR, and the MMRP. In conformance with CEQA, the County conducted an extensive environmental review of the Project.

As defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15050, the County is the Lead Agency responsible for preparing the EIR for the Project. The County determined that preparation of an EIR was required for the Project after conducting preliminary review and preparing an Initial Study for the Project, dated August 5, 2019, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060 and 15063. In compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was issued on August 5, 2019, to the State Clearinghouse, various public agencies, and other interested parties for the required 30-day review and comment period.

Additionally, a virtual Scoping Meeting was held on December 14, 2021 to facilitate public review and comment on the Project. All NOP comments relating to the EIR were reviewed and the issues raised in those comments were considered in the preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP, including the Initial Study, the NOP comments received by the County, and the Scoping Meeting comments, are contained in Appendix A of the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR was circulated for a 60-day public review period, which is 15 days longer than required by CEQA, from November 11, 2021, to January 10, 2022. During that review period, a virtual public hearing was held by a County of Los Angeles Hearing Examiner on December 14, 2021 to accept comments on the Draft EIR.

#### **4. FINDINGS REGARDING PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS DETERMINED TO HAVE NO IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT, OR HAVE A LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

The County hereby finds that the following potential environmental impacts of the Project have no impact or are less than significant, and therefore, do not require the imposition of Mitigation Measures. The County's findings are referred to herein as "Finding".

##### **A. Aesthetics**

###### **1. Visual Resources**

**Threshold:** Would the Project be visible from or obstruct views from a regional riding or hiking trail? (Threshold 5.1-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The nearest trail to the Project site is the Hasley Canyon Trail, an approximately two mile hiking, bicycling, and horseback-riding trail located approximately 0.50 miles northeast of the VTTM site. Views of the VTTM site would not be available from the Hasley Canyon Trail because it is at a lower topographical elevation than the Project site and is visually separated by ridgelines to the north and east. The existing visual quality of the VTTM site is undeveloped with native grasses, graded dirt access roads, an existing single-family structure, and a pad associated with past oil drilling and operations. The VTTM site does not currently offer expansive views from trails of high aesthetic value. The Project would incorporate two additional multi-use trails, an on-site multi-use trail and off-site multi-use trail easement. While the VTTM site may be visible from an existing regional riding, hiking, or multi-use trail upon final Project buildout, by creating a finished, visually appealing appearance that would be consistent with community character and suburban development, views would not be obstructed.

The water tank would be painted a neutral color to blend in with the adjacent water tanks and the area surrounding the water tank would be revegetated with native plants. Publicly available views of the water tank site are obstructed by the surrounding ridgelines and the topographical elevation of the site below these ridgelines. The placement of a new water tank within the existing Cuyama water tank site would not obstruct views from public trails or planned public trails. The water and sewer line infrastructure within the Off-Site Water Line Improvement and Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area would be located below the paved roadway right-of-way along Del Valle Road and Hasley Canyon Road, no views would be impacted. Impacts to views would be less than significant.

## **B. Air Quality**

### **1. Objectionable Odors**

**Threshold:** Would the Project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people? (Threshold 5.2-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The proposed residential and commercial uses on the site would not generate objectionable odors. Within the commercial uses, airborne odors associated would result primarily from cooking activities within any food services and eating establishments that may occur in this area. Food-related odors would be typical of food service businesses and are not considered objectionable by most individuals. Food wastes can, however, putrefy if left on site in dumpsters for long periods of time without frequent disposal and can generate objectionable odors. In each case, such odors would be controlled in accordance with County Department of Public Health, South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) permit requirements for proper air filtration and food storage and disposal, and SCAQMD Rule 402. Any unforeseen odors generated by the Project would be controlled in accordance with SCAQMD Rule 402 which prohibits the discharge of air contaminants that harm, endanger, or annoy individuals or the public; endanger the comfort, health or safety of individuals or the public; or cause injury or damage to business or property. Failure to comply with Rule 402 could subject the offending facility to possible fines and/or operational limitations in an approved odor control or odor abatement plan.

One additional potential source of odors is the Chiquita Canyon Landfill located to the southeast of the VTTM boundary. Odor intensities typically are diluted with distance as odoriferous substances mix with air, and as a result, receptors further downwind would be less subject to odor impacts than those closer to the Chiquita Canyon Landfill, located 0.7 miles south of the Project site. Given the operational techniques employed as part of a sanitary landfill operation and the use of the gas collection and flaring system, no significant impacts from such odors are expected. Impacts associated with objectionable odors would be less than significant.

## **C. Biological Resources**

### **1. Habitat Conservation Plans**

**Threshold:** Would the Project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved state, regional, or local habitat conservation plan? (Threshold 5.3-7)

**Finding:** No Impact.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** There are no Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved state, regional, or local habitat conservation plans that apply to the Project site or the areas around the site. For this reason, the Project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted State, regional, or local habitat conservation plan; therefore, there would be no impacts.

## **D. Cultural Resources**

### ***1. Human Remains***

**Threshold:** Would the Project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries? (Threshold 5.4-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Although no known burial areas are located near the Project site, any potential impacts associated with the Project construction would be reduced to a level of less than significant through compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and all relevant regulatory requirements. Furthermore, if human remains were uncovered during subsurface excavation activities, implementation of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 would reduce potential impacts to a level of less than significant.

Operational activities that may involve ground disturbing activities include landscape maintenance and fuel modification activities within the VTTM site and Off-Site Improvement Areas. Human remains would likely have been encountered in these areas during construction. Therefore, the limited operational ground-disturbing activities would not result in the discovery of any unknown human remains. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **E. Energy**

### ***1. Wasteful Use of Energy***

**Threshold:** Would the Project result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation? (Threshold 5.5-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would consume energy during construction and operational activities. Sources of energy for these activities include electricity usage, natural gas consumption, and transportation fuels such as diesel and gasoline. The analysis below includes the Project's energy requirements and energy use efficiencies by fuel type for Project construction and operations.

During construction, energy would be consumed in the form of electricity associated with the conveyance of water used for dust control, and on a limited basis, powering lights, electronic equipment, or other construction activities necessitating electrical power. As discussed below, construction activities, including the construction of new buildings and facilities, typically do not involve the consumption of natural gas. Construction would also consume energy in the form of petroleum-based fuels associated with the use of off-road construction vehicles and equipment within the Project site, travel by construction workers to and from the Project site, and delivery trips. A total of 40,979 kWh of electricity, 709,863 gallons of diesel fuel, and 305,861 gallons of gasoline is estimated to be consumed during construction. Project construction would occur over four to six years and is expected to be completed by 2028.

With regards to transportation fuels, trucks and equipment used during proposed construction activities, the Project would comply with CARB's anti-idling regulations, as well as the In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets regulation. Although these regulations are focused on reducing criteria pollutant emissions, compliance with these regulations would also result in a more efficient use of construction-related fuel consumption.

During operation, the Project's new energy demand would be approximately 2,414,093 kWh of electricity per year and 5,770,690 thousand BTU (kBtu) of natural gas per year or 15,246 cf (0.02 MMcf) per day. Further, the proposed residential and commercial uses would consume 89,623 gallons of diesel fuel per year and 414,178 gallons of gasoline per year prior to any reduction in VMT and 76,560 gallons of diesel fuel and 353,811 gallons of gasoline per year with reduction in VMT. These calculations incorporate regulatory requirements established by the California Building Code related to water and energy conservation and green building practices. Further, the Project's landscape plan would incorporate sustainable site design practices and emphasize the use of native species and replenishment of groundwater.

Vehicles traveling to and from the Project site would comply with Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) fuel economy standards as well as with Pavley standards and Low Carbon Fuel Standards (LCFS), which are designed to reduce vehicle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but would also result in fuel savings in

addition to CAFE standards. Therefore, Project construction and operational activities would comply with existing energy standards with regards to transportation fuel consumption.

Energy consumption during Project construction and operations in the context of regional supplies would be relatively negligible and energy requirements are within Southern California Edison's (SCE) and Southern California Gas Company's (SoCalGas) forecasted supply delivery capacity. Electricity demand during construction and operation of the Project would have a negligible effect on the overall capacity of SCE's power grid base peak demand conditions and SoCalGas' forecasted demand. The Project's gas and diesel fuel demand related to vehicle travel and on-site operations would account for a small percentage of the County's forecasted gas and diesel consumption.

These forecasts of energy consumption are likely to overstate actual Project consumption as it is anticipated that the recent trend of stricter regulatory requirements with regard to energy efficiency that have occurred over the last twenty years would continue through buildout of the Project, such as more energy efficient Title 24 requirements as well as energy efficiency requirements related to achieving the SB 350 goals to double energy efficiency standards by the year 2030, that would occur throughout the construction and operation of the Project. As electricity and natural gas usage at the Project site would comply with Title 24 standards as well as CalGreen and Los Angeles Green Building Code requirements, Project construction and operations would comply with applicable energy standards with regards to electricity and natural gas usage.

The Project would be consistent with the energy efficiency policies emphasized by the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS. The Project would provide housing in close proximity to the Valencia Commerce Center, a regional employment center, thereby reducing vehicle trips. The Project would result in fewer vehicle trips by providing supporting commercial and recreational uses with increased employment opportunities in proximity to the Val Verde community, other residential areas, and other neighborhood services. The Project is also located in an area served by existing public transit. These features would serve to reduce VMT and associated transportation fuel consumption. Fuel consumption is anticipated to decrease each year through implementation of regulations that require higher energy efficiencies and higher efficient and alternative fueled vehicles.

The Project is consistent with the County's Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (SCVAP) 2012 land use and zoning designations, and also in proximity to bus and rail transit opportunities as well as being located in proximity to a wide variety of commercial services. The Project's pedestrian and bicycle improvements as well as the proposed transportation features that would reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled.

These reductions in vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled would also reduce the Project's gas and diesel fuel consumption.

The Project would not cause wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy during construction or operation. Impacts would be less than significant.

## ***2. Renewable Energy and Efficiency Plans***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewal energy or energy efficiency? (Threshold 5.5-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would be consistent with the Los Angeles County Green Building Standards Code and Green Building Program, the Los Angeles County General Plan, the SCVAP 2012, and with the Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG) 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) and 2020-2045 RTP/SCS.

The Project would comply with applicable regulatory requirements for the design of new buildings, including the provisions set forth in the CALGreen Code and California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which have been incorporated into the County Green Building Code. The Project will comply with the County Green Building Program, which consists of the County's Green Building Standards Code and third-party certifications including the Low Impact Development Ordinance, Drought Tolerant and Native Landscaping Ordinances, and the California Green Building Standards Code. Project landscaping would comply with the County Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Ordinance as well as with Title 31 of the County Green Building Standard.

The Project would incorporate energy and water efficiency design features to enhance efficiency in all aspects of a building's life cycle. These designs would increase the energy and water efficiency, and overall sustainability, of all buildings on the site. The Project would also meet Title 24 energy requirements consistent with the County's Green Building Ordinance. Project landscaping would comply with the County Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Ordinance as well as with Title 31 of the County Green Building Standard, which establishes sustainability and minimum standards for the design and installation of landscaping using drought-tolerant and native plants. Specifically, at least 75 percent of the landscaped areas would consist of plants identified on the County's Drought-Tolerant Approved Plant List, with groupings of plants with similar soil, sun, and water requirements, and a maximum of 25 percent of the

total landscaped area would consist of turf. Locally indigenous plant species such as native shrub species and low water-use turf would be incorporated into the landscape design.

Consistent with the SCVAP 2012 policy to reduce the heat island effect, the Project's Fuel Modification Plan includes planting 810 new trees within the VTTM site which would reduce the heat island effect. The Project would comply with Title 24 and the energy efficiency measures in the County's Green Building Ordinance which requires the Project's residential buildings to be solar ready, residential buildings to have the capability for EV charging, and the installation of EV charging stations for the commercial use. The Project would also include energy efficient appliances per the 2019 California Building Standards Code.

The Project would be consistent with the County's existing residential and commercial land use designations and zoning for the County and the 2012 SCVAP. Moreover, the Project site is surrounded by existing electrical and gas infrastructure which serves the existing adjacent residential uses. As such, the Project would not necessitate the expansion of electric or gas infrastructure beyond what is required for the Project site itself. The Project would comply with the County's building code for utility expansion and connection which would also reduce potential environmental impacts from utilities.

The Project would be consistent with the energy efficiency policies emphasized by both the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS and 2020-2045 RTP/SCS. The Project includes the development of residential and commercial uses in an area already served by transit. Additionally, the Project would provide housing in close proximity to the Valencia Commerce Center, a regional employment center, thereby reducing vehicle trips. The Project's design would result in fewer vehicle trips by providing increased employment opportunities in proximity to the Val Verde community, other residential areas, and other neighborhood services. The Project would provide approximately 2,000 linear feet of private multi-use trail and approximately 1,275 linear feet for an off-site trail easement separated from vehicle traffic that links pedestrians with supporting commercial, recreational, and other public facilities, to serve as an alternative to the automobile for surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The Project would not conflict with adopted energy conservation plans or violate federal or State energy standards. The Project would be consistent with adopted energy conservation plans. Impacts would be less than significant.



## **F. Geology and Soils**

### **1. Strong Seismic Ground Shaking, Ground Failure, and Landslides**

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: ii) Strong seismic ground shaking? iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction and lateral spreading? iv) Landslides? (Threshold 5.6-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Like most of Southern California, the Project site is in a seismically active area and is subject to some level of ground shaking as a result of movement along the major active fault zones that characterize this region. There are no active faults known to exist on the Project site. The nearest active fault is the San Gabriel Fault located approximately 3.9 miles northeast of the Project site. The surface trace of the Holser fault (southern branch) traverses the very southern edge of the VTTM site and is located approximately 0.5 miles south of the Off-Site Water Tank Area. The northern branch has been mapped approximately 0.3 miles to the east of the VTTM site; however, this fault is not considered active. Due to the proximity of other faults located around the Project site, such as the Santa Susana fault, the Sierra Madre Fault Zone, the San Gabriel Fault Zone, and the San Andreas Fault, there is the potential for strong seismic ground shaking within the Project site. Geologic investigations performed on the VTTM site, the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and the Off-Site Water Tank Area have not documented any evidence of recent activity along the Holser Fault, but the other nearby faults are considered active. It is likely that strong seismic ground shaking would occur over the course of the Project's lifetime. The Project would be required to comply with the latest version of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances, Building Code (LACBC), which has adopted by reference the California Building Code (CBC), as well as recommended stabilization measures set forth in the Final Geotechnical Study that would minimize adverse impacts on structures due to seismic ground motions. Prior to the issuance of grading or building permits, the applicant shall comply with the conditions contained within the Department of Public Works' Geology and Soils Report Approval Letter for the Project, and as it may be subsequently amended or modified by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW). The final geotechnical investigation report would be based on the final Project design and would require approval by the LACDPW prior to issuance of a grading permit to address the specific foundation design. Furthermore, the Final grading, drainage, and erosion control plans must be reviewed and approved by the LACDPW before the County issues a grading permit. Impacts at the VTTM site, Off-Site Water Tank Area, and the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be reduced to less than significant with compliance with these documents and implementation of County regulations. The development of the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area and the Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area would involve trenching a water

pipeline and sewer pipeline below ground and would not expose people to risks from earthquakes because work would be entirely within the roadway right-of-way. Strong seismic ground shaking impacts would be less than significant.

The potential for liquefaction is present within the alluvial portions of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area and that liquefaction-induced ground surface settlement up to about 7.1 inches (prior to implementation of geotechnical measures recommended in the Geotechnical Study) could occur if site soils were to liquefy. Recommendations identified in the Project's Geotechnical Study would reduce the potential for liquefaction and associated liquefaction-induced ground failures and may include overexcavation and recompaction of potentially liquefiable soils. Implementation of the County Building Code requirements and the recommendations contained in the approved Geotechnical Study during design and construction would be ensured through implementation of the required geotechnical report and final grading, drainage, and erosion control plans. The Project's VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area liquefaction impacts would be less than significant with compliance to the County Building Code. The Off-Site Water Tank Area is not located in a zone of required liquefaction investigation. The pipelines within the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area and the Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area would be covered and surrounded by certified base and fill. The design and construction of the proposed pipelines would be required to adhere to the Greenbook and CBC, which contain provisions for soil preparation to minimize hazards from liquefaction and other seismic-related ground failures. Liquefaction impacts would be less than significant.

Potential for lateral spreading could be moderate to significant within the canyon areas within the VTTM site and the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. As discussed in the Geotechnical Study the corresponding differential ground settlement would be up to about 3.5 inches which would exceed the maximum potential differential settlement considered to be tolerable by the County (i.e., 1 inch). Recommended removal of in-situ site soils and replacement with compacted fill would reduce the potential for liquefaction-induced lateral spreading. Recommendations identified in the Geotechnical Study, would be implemented within the laterally continuous soil layers to alleviate the potential lateral spread hazard. The Project would be designed consistent with the latest County Building Codes. The pipelines within the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area and the Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area would be covered and surrounded by certified base and fill. The design and construction of the proposed pipelines would be required to adhere to the Greenbook and CBC, which contain provisions for soil preparation to minimize hazards from lateral spreading. Lateral spreading hazard impacts would be less than significant.

Portions of the Project site are located within areas that could be subject to earthquake-induced landslides. The Project's Geotechnical Study recommendations include avoidance or removal of existing landslides, and recommendations for slope modifications in other areas such that appropriate slope stability factors of safety are achieved that are in accordance with CBC and the County of Los Angeles Building Code requirements. To mitigate seismic settlement potential, remedial measures include widespread removal of alluvial soils to depths up to 30 feet and replacement as a compacted fill. To mitigate potential lateral spread displacements, remedial measures include complete removal of alluvium down to bedrock at specific, critical locations across canyon drainages and replacement as compacted fill shear keys. Final grading, drainage, and erosion control plans must be reviewed and approved by the LACDPW before the County issues a grading permit. This would ensure that the Project would implement the recommendations contained within the geotechnical and soils investigations to minimize the potential for landslides. The pipelines within the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area and the Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area would be covered and surrounded by certified base and fill. The design and construction of the proposed pipelines would be required to adhere to the Greenbook and CBC, which contain provisions for soil preparation to minimize potential impacts from landslides. The Off-Site Water Tank Area is located in a hillside area with steep slopes with the potential for earthquake-induced landslides. The design of the constructed slopes and recommendations for slope modifications in the Off-Site Water Tank Area would be such that appropriate slope stability factors of safety are achieved that are in accordance with CBC and the County Los Angeles Building Code requirements. Compliance with the County Building Code will reduce potential landslide impacts to less than significant.

## ***2. Soil Erosion***

**Threshold:** Would the Project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil? (Threshold 5.6-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The existing soils on the Project site are susceptible to erosion. Construction activities would potentially result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil. As part of the plan checking process, the County would require submittal of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required to be submitted to the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB) prior to construction, in adherence to the conditions set forth under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The SWPPP would incorporate best management practices (BMPs) to ensure that potential water quality impacts during construction from erosion would be reduced to less than significant. The Project would be required to comply with all applicable County grading permit regulations, plans, and inspections to reduce sedimentation and erosion. Through compliance with the County's construction requirements, implementation of BMPs, compliance with applicable County grading permit regulations, and requirements of the statewide general construction stormwater permit, the Project construction activities would not result in substantial erosion or loss of topsoil.

During operations, the Project could result in a limited degree of soil erosion from vegetated areas, the Project would be required to have a Standard Urban Storm Water Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) in place during the operational life of the Project that would include BMPs, developed in accordance with the County's Low Impact Development (LID) Ordinance. Implementation of a debris removal plan submitted for review and approval to the LACDPW, would be required to remove collected debris from the debris basins, debris/infiltration basins, and infiltration basin. Impacts associated with sedimentation and erosion would be less than significant.

### ***3. Unstable Soil***

**Threshold:** Would the Project be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse? (Threshold 5.6-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The existing soils within the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, including but not limited to organic materials, uncertified fill, colluvium, alluvium, landslide debris, and weathered bedrock, are not considered suitable for the support of structures. To minimize significant settlements, it is recommended that the unsuitable soils in areas to receive fills be removed and replaced with compacted fill. The Project would require site grading for building pads, roadways, landslide removal, and soil stabilization. Approximately 87 percent of the VTTM site would be graded and altered, leaving approximately 13 percent remaining in a natural state. Graded slopes would be landscaped and irrigated pursuant to County grading and erosion control requirements. With the removal of alluvial soils from the

VTTM site and the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and with the excavation/recompaction of older alluvium, alluvium, residual soils, landslide debris, and weathered bedrock within proposed structural areas, ground settlement would be reduced to levels that can be accommodated by conventional foundation designs. Impacts due to landslides would be less than significant.

The Project would be designed to contain structural fill and/or place the proposed structures in competent bedrock. With compliance with regulatory requirements and implementation of the recommendations set forth in the Geotechnical Study. Impacts due to subsidence would be less than significant.

The potential for liquefaction is present within the alluvial portions of the VTTM site and the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. Site characteristics indicate the potential for lateral spreading within the liquefiable soils. Recommendations identified in the Project's Geotechnical Study would reduce the potential for liquefaction. Implementation of the County Building Code requirements and the appropriate geotechnical recommendations during design and construction would be ensured through implementation of the required geotechnical report and final grading, drainage, and erosion control plans. Liquefaction impacts would be less than significant.

The Off-Site Water Tank is located within an area that is potentially subject to debris flow. The design of the constructed slopes and recommendations for slope modifications in the Off-Site Water Tank Area would be such that appropriate slope stability factors of safety are achieved that are in accordance with CBC and the County Los Angeles Building Code requirements. Final grading, drainage, and erosion control plans must be reviewed and approved by the LACDPW before the County issues a grading permit. This would ensure that the Off-Site Water Tank Area would implement the recommendations contained within the geotechnical and soils investigations. Impacts from debris flow would be less than significant.

Potential unstable soil conditions would be less than significant.

#### ***4. Expansive Soil***

**Threshold:** Would the Project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property? (Threshold 5.6-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** According to the Geotechnical Study performed for the Project site, the soils are generally classified as having a low expansion potential, with medium to locally high expansion potential in fine-grained bedrock units. Recommendations for foundations placed on these materials, unless replaced by non to low-expansive soils, are included in the Project Geotechnical Study and will be

adhered to during construction in accordance with the Geotechnical Study. Over-excavation would provide attenuation of potential differential heave due to expansive soils and provide a uniform base for structural support of buildings. Results of soil testing indicate that expansion potential of future fill materials derived from a mixture of alluvial and bedrock soils would be very low to low. With compliance with the recommendations for footing depths and reinforcement in the Geotechnical Study and the County Building Code specific to expansive soils, potential expansive soils impact on future residents would be less than significant.

### **5. Hillside Management Area Ordinance**

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project conflict with the Hillside Management Area Ordinance (L.A. County Code, Title 22, § 22.56.217)? (Threshold 5.6-6)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project is subject to the County's hillside management criteria for urban hillside management areas applicable to the Project at the time the County deemed the application for the Project complete. Standards for hillside development are intended to ensure that development in hillside areas maintains the natural topography, resources, and amenities of these areas. The Project would incorporate some sensitive hillside design techniques, such as contour grading, retention of natural vegetation, and undulating slopes. The Project site does not contain primary or secondary ridgelines. The Project preserves some of the highest points within the VTTM site. Most of the grading, approximately 81.3 percent, would be conducted in areas containing slopes of less than 50 percent. Areas containing slopes greater than 50 percent in the northeast area and other parts of the VTTM site would be graded to balance the dirt of the VTTM site and accommodate required debris, debris/infiltration, and infiltration basins. Approximately 87 percent of the VTTM site would be graded and altered, leaving approximately 13 percent remaining in a natural state. The slopes having maximum scenic value, particularly the highest points within the VTTM site, would be retained as part of the Project. The Project would comply with all required County standards and requirements related to grading and construction within hillsides and would ensure consistency with policies related to slope stability and soils. The placement of Project features would protect the scenic hillside views, consisting of slopes, hilltop summits, and ridgelines, and conserve natural hillside character. Impacts of the Project with respect to the pre-2015 Hillside Management Ordinance would be less than significant.

## **G. Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

### **1. Emissions Generation**

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project generate greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment? (Threshold 5.7-1)

**Finding 1:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction activity impacts are relatively short in duration, so they contribute a relatively small portion of the total lifetime GHG emissions of a project. Construction assumptions used in the analysis of GHG emissions conservatively assume that the Project would be constructed with the most intensive activities occurring on a daily basis. As recommended by SCAQMD, the total GHG construction emissions were amortized over the 30-year lifetime of the Project (i.e., total construction GHG emissions were divided by 30 to determine annual construction emissions estimate that can be added to the Project's operational emissions) in order to determine the Project's annual GHG emissions inventory. Total GHG emissions from the construction activities are forecast to be 7,603 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e. The total GHG emissions were amortized over a 30-year project lifetime and forecast to be 253 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year.

Operation of the Project would generate GHG emissions associated with area sources (e.g., landscape maintenance), energy and water usage, vehicle trips, and wastewater and solid waste generation. The Project is forecasted, using CalEEMod, to generate a total of 1,580 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year. The Project would incorporate energy and water efficiency design features to enhance efficiency in all aspects of the buildings' life cycle based on the latest CALGreen and Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency standards, as amended by the County, for new residential construction and commercial uses. In the absence of any adopted, numeric threshold, the County evaluates the significance of a project by considering whether the project conflicts with applicable land use designations and regulations and actions identified in the adopted 2015 Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP). The transportation-related GHG emissions of the Project are not required to be referenced, described, or discussed pursuant to Public Resources Section 21159.28(a) and the Project would not result in significant impacts when considered against this threshold. The Project would be consistent with existing land use and zoning designations and development of the Project is included in regional growth forecasts. Impacts related to direct and indirect emissions of greenhouse gas emissions would be less than significant.

## **2. Emissions Reduction Plans**

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? (Threshold 5.7-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(h)(3) provides that the County, as lead agency, consider the Project's consistency with applicable regulatory plans and policies to reduce GHG emissions. The Project is consistent with the County's adopted CCAP, draft (Climate Action Plan) CAP, and State and local policies that address GHG emissions including SB 375 and Public Resources Code Section 21159.28.

The Project would be consistent with the County's adopted CCAP. The County's adopted CCAP establishes a GHG reduction target that is consistent with AB 32 and the draft CAP provides further actions consistent with SB 32 and EO B-55-18. The Project's significance with respect to GHG emissions is evaluated based on its consistency with applicable GHG reduction actions in the County's adopted CCAP and draft CAP. Table 5.7-11 of the Draft EIR, demonstrates that the Project is consistent with the applicable actions in the CCAP as it would implement many of the actions and policies the County has outlined as important to reducing GHG emissions in the unincorporated areas. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5, which specifies that CEQA project evaluation of GHG emissions can "tier off" a programmatic analysis of GHG emissions, such as the adopted CCAP and draft CAP, the Project would result in less than significant GHG emissions.

The Project would be consistent with the County's draft CAP. The County draft CAP is an update to the adopted CCAP and sets new reduction targets beyond the 2020 timeframe that are consistent with State goals. The draft CAP builds upon the County's previous efforts and aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The Project is subject to special streamlining rules regarding the analysis of GHG emissions, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21159.28(a). The Project would be consistent with the County's draft CAP strategies through compliance and adherence to local regulations.

The Project would be consistent with the Los Angeles County General Plan. The Project would comply with Title 24 and the energy efficiency measures in the County's Green Building Ordinance which requires the Project's proposed residential buildings to have solar and the commercial buildings to be solar ready. The Project would also include the dedication of a 37.9-acre undisturbed Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area; approximately 12.6 acres of natural, undisturbed open space within the VTTM site; and would include a landscape plan that provides drought-tolerant ornamental and native shrubs and/or trees throughout the



VTTM site. These standards would serve to reduce energy and water consumption during Project operation.

The Project would be consistent with the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan. The Project has been designed consistent with the R-1 Residential Zone and C-2 Commercial Zones. The location of the Project site and the proposed mix of residential and commercial uses, with adjacency to services and jobs within the Valencia Commerce Center, would result in a reduction in VMT and reduced mobile emissions. The Project would provide a private pedestrian trail and an off-site trail easement that connect with supporting commercial, recreational, and other public facilities, to serve as an alternative to the automobile for surrounding residential neighborhoods. The Project would adhere to any zoning requirements regarding installation of EV charging stations. The proposed commercial uses would be required to provide EV charging facilities per CALGreen requirements, and all residential units would include solar and have capability for EV charging. Project growth would be within the projections of SCAG's RTP/SCS which was adopted per SB 375 requirements. The Project would also comply with the applicable green building standards including the Los Angeles County Green Building Program, which consists of the County's Green Building Standards Code and third-party certifications including the Low Impact Development Ordinance, Drought Tolerant and Native Landscaping Ordinances, and the California Green Building Standards Code.

The Project would be consistent with the Los Angeles County Green Building Standards Code and Green Building Program. The Project would incorporate sustainability features that are consistent with the Los Angeles County Green Building Program goals by increasing energy efficiency, conserving water, and reducing solid waste. Operational recycling requires local jurisdiction to divert 65 percent of all solid waste through source reduction, recycling, and composting. The Project would incorporate energy and water efficiency design features to enhance efficiency in all aspects of a building's life cycle. These designs would increase the energy and water efficiency, and overall sustainability of all new buildings on the site. The Project would also meet Title 24 energy requirements consistent with the County's Green Building Ordinance. Project landscaping would comply with the County of Los Angeles Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Ordinance as well as with Title 31 of County Green Building Standard, which establishes sustainability and minimum standards for the design and installation of landscaping using drought-tolerant and native plants. The use of drought tolerant plants is an effective way to conserve water, reduce pesticide use, lower maintenance cost, save valuable landfill space, and help support the local ecology.

The Project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 21159.28. The Project would be consistent with the use designation, density, and intensity levels that have been established for the Project site. The Project would be consistent with the applicable policies set forth in the 2016—2040 RTP/SCS and the strategies set forth in the 2020—2045 RTP/SCS. The Project is consistent with the applicable mitigation

measures set forth in the Program EIR for the 2016—2040 RTP/SCS, 2020—2045 RTP/SCS, and the SCVAP 2012. As such, all of the SB 375 CEQA streamlining requirements have been met, additional CEQA analysis of GHG impacts from cars and light-duty trucks is not required pursuant to the provisions set forth in SB 375 and Public Resources Code Section 21159.28.

## **H. Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

### ***1. Routine Transport, Storage, Production, Use, or Disposal of Hazardous Materials***

**Threshold:** Would the Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, storage, production, use, or disposal of hazardous materials? (Threshold 5.8-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction activities may require the use of hazardous substances. The Project would involve the demolition of the existing single-family residence within the VTTM site; construction of new physical structures and buildings; and the installation of public spaces, utilities, and landscapes. Construction activities are anticipated to use typical, although potentially hazardous, construction materials, including vehicle fuels, paints, mastics, solvents, and other acidic or alkaline solutions that would require special handling, transport, and disposal. In accordance with local, State, and federal regulations, an evaluation of hazardous building materials would be performed prior to the start of demolition is required. Hazardous waste and debris encountered/generated during demolition activities would be disposed of in accordance with applicable local, State, and federal regulations.

The former oil well on the VTTM site would be remediated and re-abandoned in accordance with current CalGEM requirements and County requirements. All potentially hazardous materials used during construction would be used and stored in compliance with applicable federal, State, and local regulations. The use and transport of these hazardous materials would be limited, in terms of volume and duration. Any spills or leakages encountered during construction would be required to be remediated in accordance with the State and local regulations for hazardous waste cleanup. The potential for construction materials to cause contamination would be reduced through the implementation of a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP)

During operation, hazardous chemicals would be used and disposed of in compliance with existing regulations and guidelines of OSHA, Cal/OSHA, NIOSH, USDOT, the USEPA, the California Department of Public Health, and LACoFD. Potable water would comply with Title 17 regulations of the California Water Code, which protects drinking water supplies through control of cross-connections with potential

containments. The LACoFD has the authority to inspect on-site uses and to enforce State and federal laws governing the storage, use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes. Through compliance with applicable local, State and federal regulations, the Project impacts related to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be less than significant.

## ***2. Release of Hazardous Materials***

**Threshold:** Would the Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials or waste into the environment? (Threshold 5.8-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** All hazardous materials would be properly handled and stored per manufacturer instructions and subject to applicable health and safety requirements. The Project could be expected to use/store quantities of hazardous materials such as fuel, paints, and other chemicals that would have the potential to be released into the environment if not properly handled and stored. The handling of small amounts of hazardous materials, such as cleaning solutions, solvents, pesticides for landscaping, painting supplies, and petroleum products would also occur within the VTTM site, Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and Off-Site Water Tank Area.

The former oil well would be remediated and re-abandoned in accordance with current CalGEM requirements and County requirements. Several of the proposed residential lots would be within 300 feet of the former oil well. Accordingly, a methane report would be required prior to the issuance of building permits in accordance with Los Angeles Building Code Section 110.4. In accordance with County Building Code requirements, the methane report would identify site specific gas protection system requirements, general construction requirements, gas mitigation requirements, monitoring requirements, and submittal requirements. Potable water would comply with Title 17 regulations and the design of the pipeline and water tank would be consistent with the latest Greenbook and CBC standards.

Compliance with existing laws, regulations, plans, and programs would reduce the potential for foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Impacts would be less than significant.

## ***3. Sensitive Land Uses***

**Threshold:** Would the Project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of sensitive land uses? (Threshold 5.8-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Preschools, schools, and daycare centers are considered sensitive receptors because children are more susceptible than adults to the effect of many hazardous materials. There are no schools or daycare centers within one-quarter mile of the Project site. Project buildout would result in increased usage and storage of hazardous materials on site and increased transportation of hazardous materials to and from the site. Project construction could subject people on and near the site to increased hazards from hazardous materials. However, federal, State, and local regulations identify extensive policies, programs, and procedures to ensure the safe handling of hazardous materials. Compliance with these regulations and guidelines would reduce hazards from hazardous materials to the public and the environment during construction and operation to less than significant levels.

#### ***4. Hazardous Materials Sites***

**Threshold:** Would the Project be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment? (Threshold 5.8-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project site is not located on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. As previously discussed, six sites were identified on various government databases within the VTTM site or within a one mile of the VTTM site. Of the six sites listed, one is located on the VTTM site and has been deemed remediated in accordance with the regulatory agencies. The other recorded sites have been deemed remediated or are located upgradient, or moves away, from the VTTM site. Based on the status of the recorded sites within one mile of the VTTM site, these properties are not anticipated to pose a significant impact. Impacts would be less than significant.

#### ***5. Emergency Plans***

**Threshold:** Would the Project Impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? (Threshold 5.8-6)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Although routes to be used for an evacuation would depend on the location of an incident, generally evacuation routes would include major arterials and regional routes. The Primary

Disaster Routes are I-5 located east of the Project site and SR 126 located south of the Project site. There are no other evacuation routes located near the Project site. During construction of the Project, including infrastructure improvements, temporary road closures, blockages, or detours may be necessary; however, access would be maintained to surrounding roadways through flagmen and other means and closure of the Primary Disaster Routes would not occur. Operation of the Project of the project would not involve infrastructure improvements, temporary road closures, blockages, or detours. As such, operation of the Project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **6. Wildland Fires**

**Threshold:** Would the Project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, because the project is located: i) within a high fire hazard area with inadequate access. ii) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. iii) within proximity to land uses that have the potential for dangerous fire hazard. (Threshold 5.8-7)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project site and Chiquito Canyon and Del Valle Roads are located within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The intersection of Hasley Canyon Road and Commerce Center Drive and the surrounding homes and commercial areas are not located in a fire severity zone. The VTTM site and Val Verde community depend on Del Valle Road and Chiquito Canyon Road, which are fully paved public roads, for access. These two roadways are separated by the community and some wildland areas. For a fire to impact both access roadways simultaneously, the fire would have to burn in a certain direction and could only originate in the upwind area of both roadways. The Fire Behavior Report models are based on entry and exit scenarios constructed that impact both Chiquito Canyon Road and Del Valle Road, during a single fire event. The Fire Behavior Report found that even if a single fire were to impact both roads, the distance between the two roads, the orientation of the winds, and the nature of the vegetation at the roadside would not result in an event that would close both of the roadways at the same time. In the fast moving scenario, fire travels the distance between the two roads in less than one hour when oriented in the perfect location. In most cases, there are two or more hours between the impacts of the alternative roads. With the limited number of homes in the Project area, even with the new homes from the VTTM site, there is time and space to protect the residents within the Project area until safe passage is ensured. Development of the Project would be required to comply with the California Building Code Chapter 7A requiring new buildings in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to use ignition-resistant construction

methods and materials. The Project would be constructed in compliance with the most recently adopted fire and building codes.

The approved fuel modification zones have been designed to address potential fire hazards with designated landscaping and fuel modification areas. Fuel modification zones are areas where combustible vegetation has been removed and/or modified and partially or totally replaced with more adequately spaced, drought-tolerant, fire-resistant plants in order to provide a reasonable level of protection to structures from wildland and vegetation fires. This plan complies with County Fire Department Fuel Modification Plan requirements and would create a buffer area of 200 feet between open space and structures to provide a defensible space for fire suppression forces, slow the rate of spread, and reduce flame lengths and intensities of fires prior to reaching irrigated areas. A landscape plan that utilizes a plant palette consisting of fire-resistant plants, native and appropriate non-native drought tolerant species in accordance with Los Angeles County Fire Department guidelines will be implemented within the fuel modification zones. Based on the scientific fire behavior analysis, the exterior portions of structures within the Sterling Ranch would not ignite from the exposure to a wildland vegetation fire with implementation of the approved fuel modification plan. This is primarily because the greatest fire energy is too far away from the structures due to lack of wildland fuels and fire intensity as it approaches the community from the easterly direction. All edges of the Project site are developed with residential uses.

The community of Val Verde lies south and west of the VTTM site and east of the Off-Site Water Tank Area. The Valencia Commerce Center, containing commercial and industrial uses, lies east of the VTTM site and northeast of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area. Residential uses border the VTTM site on the west and south. Largely undeveloped land lies north of the VTTM site. The VTTM site is located approximately 0.25-miles west of the Valencia Commerce Center and separated by a ridgeline. The area within the western most portion of the Valencia Commerce Center is designated for Industrial Office land uses and zoned for Manufacturing – Industrial Planned Development (MPD). Permitted uses within this zone could include the use and/or storage of bulk quantities of hazardous materials such as fuel, paints, and other chemicals or explosives that would have the potential to be released into the environment if not properly handled and stored. However, operations associated with the uses within the Valencia Commerce Center would be required to comply with existing regulations governing the storage and handling of such chemicals as well as any accidental releases.

The Project would not expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **7. Fire Hazard**

**Potential Impact:** Does the proposed use constitute a potentially dangerous fire hazard? (Threshold 5.8-8)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project site is located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and would be required to comply with all applicable Fire Code and County ordinance requirements for development in a fire hazard zone regarding construction, access, water mains, fire hydrants, fire flows, and brush clearance. All commercial uses that could potentially contain fire hazards would be subject to, and required to comply with, a variety of State and federal laws that govern the fire hazards.

The Project has been designed to include a fuel modification plan that complies with County Fire Department Fuel Modification Plan requirements. A buffer area of 200 feet between open space and structures would be provided as defensible space for fire suppression forces, slow the rate of spread, and reduce flame lengths and intensities of fires prior to reaching irrigated areas. All proposed plant species, densities, and spacing would comply with Fire Department requirements. The Approved Fuel Modification Plan meets or exceeds the accepted fuel modification criteria in response to the prescriptive fuel modification distances and configuration.

The improved roadway system would provide an alternative means of egress for residents to the east and north of the Project site, increasing accessibility and emergency routes for residents and emergency vehicles in those areas. Road improvements will include the widening of and softening of the existing curve of Del Valle Road for additional visibility. The internal circulation system for the Project site would be consistent with County standards and requirements, including by the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD), regarding access. The Project's roadway improvements (the two roadway extensions) would improve access and traffic flows throughout the vicinity.

A one million gallon-water tank would be located near the Project site which would support the Val Verde community. The proposed water system for the Project would provide water supplies to support fire suppression activity in the event of wildland or structural fires and would include water mains, fire hydrants, and fire flows that meet County standards. Fire protection services would be provided by the closest available district response units. The Project would be required to meet County codes and requirements relative to providing adequate fire protection services to the Project site during both the construction and operational stages of the Project. With implementation of compliance with applicable jurisdictional requirements, the Project would not increase potential wildland fire hazards. Therefore,

through compliance with applicable County Fire Code and LACoFD requirements, including implementation of the Project's approved fuel modification plan, impacts relative to the potentially dangerous fire hazards would be less than significant.

## **I. Hydrology and Water Quality**

### **1. Water Quality**

**Threshold:** Would the Project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality? (Threshold 5.9-1)

**Finding 1:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:**

Construction activities disturbing more than 1 acre of soil would be required to obtain coverage under the NPDES General Construction Activity Permit (SWRCB Order No. 2012-0006-DWQ). In accordance with the NPDES General Construction Activity Permit and County requirements, the Project Applicant or its designee would prepare and implement a site-specific SWPPP and Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) that meets the regulatory requirements. A variety of construction related BMPs would be implemented as part of Project regulatory compliance, including measures to address erosion control, sediment control, waste and materials management, nonstormwater management, training, and education, and maintenance, monitoring, and inspections into each SWPPP and ESCP prepared in support of Project development. The Project would reduce or prevent erosion and sediment transport and transport of other potential pollutants from the Project site during the construction phase through implementation of BMPs and compliance with other applicable County requirements to prevent or minimize environmental impacts. During Project construction all activities that relate to existing on-site environmental conditions would be subject to all applicable federal, State, and local regulations concerning the handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials which appropriately and adequately address all of the environmental conditions that are present at the Project site.

The County's LID Ordinance requires stormwater mitigation for all development projects that equal to one acre or greater of disturbed area and adding more than 10,000 sq. ft. of impervious surface area. The VTTM site and Off-Site Improvement Area would be required to meet the LID Ordinance to minimize the impacts from stormwater pollution and meet the State's RWQCB's water quality standards. Applicable postconstruction BMPs have been incorporated into the design of the Project. Incorporation of the BMPs anticipated to be implemented as part of Project development would result in an improved quality of runoff flows from the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area compared to existing



conditions. The final selection of BMPs would be completed through coordination with the County as part of the normal building permit process for Project development. Through this process, compliance with the County's LID Ordinance would also occur. With compliance with NPDES and County requirements, and with implementation of the Project BMPs, impacts associated with surface water quality would be beneficial. For these reasons, the impact of the Project on surface water quality would be less than significant.

## **2. Groundwater**

**Threshold:** Would the Project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin? (Threshold 5.9-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** There are currently no existing wells within the VTTM site nor the Off-Site Improvement Areas and Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area used to pump groundwater for potable uses or any other use. Groundwater was encountered within the alluvium at depths as shallow as 20 feet during the subsurface exploration of the site in 2006, and the mapped historic high ground water level is at a depth of 10 feet; therefore, groundwater has the potential to impede the grading operations where deep removals are needed. During Project construction, BMPs would be implemented in compliance with the State's Construction General Permit and the RWQCB's General Dewatering Permit (General NPDES Permit No. CAG994004). Any construction dewatering that may occur due to Project development is not anticipated to change potable water levels sufficiently enough to reduce the ability of water utilities to use the groundwater basin for public water supplies or to reduce yields of nearby well fields.

Project development would not involve the permanent extraction of groundwater from the Project site or otherwise utilize groundwater. Groundwater recharge may be reduced if areas currently available for the infiltration of rainfall runoff are reduced and permeable areas located above groundwater basins are replaced by impermeable surfaces, such as buildings, concrete hardscape areas, driveways, and access roads. Project implementation would involve the creation of new impervious surfaces, which would result in a reduction in the amount of surface water that would infiltrate the soil to the groundwater table. The Project would be served by the SCVWA which utilizes both groundwater and imported water to meet demands. The SCVWA is responsible for the long-term planning of water supplies for the area, including groundwater resources. The Project's open space areas would continue to promote infiltration of surface water into the local groundwater basin.

The infiltration basins would have the capacity for 17.3 acre-feet (af) and would be located in both the northern and southern portion of the VTTM site. A series of infiltration basins would be provided to reduce the peak flow and run-off volume for the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. The pretreatment and infiltration of stormwater within the basins would also contain potential containments within the basin. All required debris and infiltration basins will be built and maintained to meet storm water regulations from the County and the RWQCB for new development projects. The debris and infiltration basins promote the infiltration of surface water into the groundwater. Impacts associated with groundwater supply and recharge would be less than significant.

### ***3. Drainage Pattern: Erosion or Siltation***

**Threshold:** Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site? (Threshold 5.9-3(i))

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction associated with the Project would be subject to the requirements of the LA County MS4 Permit. the LA County MS4 Permit, Development Construction Program, requires permittees to enforce implementation of BMPs, including, but not limited to, approval of an ESCP for all construction activities within their jurisdiction. ESCPs are required to include the elements of a SWPPP. Accordingly, the construction contractor for the Project would be required to implement BMPs that would meet or exceed local, State, and federal mandated guidelines for stormwater treatment to control erosion and to protect the quality of surface water runoff during the construction period. The ESCP would prevent construction activities from adversely affecting surface water flows. The Project would be required to comply with the Statewide General Permit which requires that a SWPPP identify potential sources of pollution and specify runoff controls, or BMPs during construction for the purpose of minimizing the discharge of pollutants in stormwater. The Project would be required to comply with all applicable County grading permit regulations, plans, and inspections to reduce sedimentation and erosion. Project construction activities would not substantially alter the existing drainage patterns of the site or area in a manner that would result in substantial erosion, or in on- or off-site flooding.

All natural areas are primarily located on the northern and eastern areas surrounding the VTTM site. Surface water, and ultimately soils, would be collected in debris basins before entering the proposed storm drain system. All developed area flows would be collected within the storm drain system. Given that the Project would be designed to accommodate pre-development debris and surface water runoff, there would ultimately be a decrease in the volume of runoff off-site and a decrease in containments. A

series of debris and infiltration basins would be provided to reduce the peak flow and volume for the VTTM site and OffSite Improvement Areas below existing conditions. Operation of the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage patterns of the Project site or area such that substantial erosion or siltation would occur in a manner that would result in on- or off-site flooding. Impacts would be less than significant.

#### **4. Drainage Pattern: Flooding**

**Threshold:** Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site? (Threshold 5.9-3(ii))

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction activities associated with the Project would be subject to the County's Development Construction Program and compliance with applicable County grading regulations. The ESCP includes the preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of BMPs. These BMPs would keep all runoff water on site during construction and would not exceed the existing storm drainage system. All BMPs during the construction phase would be enforced by the site SWPPP and ESCP. A project Qualified SWPPP Practitioner/Developer (QSP/D) is assigned responsibility to ensure implementation of all elements of the SWPPP and ESCP. Per LACDPW requirements, existing drainage patterns would be altered by the Project through landform modifications. However, these modifications would be temporary and only during construction. Site grading during construction activities would be to the standards set forth by the LACDPW, and all slopes would be graded, compacted, and stabilized such that they would not be subject to mudflow hazard. Adherence to standard compliance measures in construction activities would not cause flooding; substantially increase or decrease the amount of surface water flow from the Project site into a water body; or result in a permanent, adverse change to the movement of surface water. Project construction activities would not substantially alter the existing drainage patterns of the Project site or area such that a substantial increase in the rate of surface runoff would occur in a manner that would result in on- or off-site flooding.

During operation, the Project would comply with the County's LID Ordinance, BMP requirements. The Project's LID components would increase the time of concentration for runoff leaving the VTTM and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, which would result in a reduction of peak flow leaving the VTTM and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area and would result in a decrease in flow traveling off site. The design of the Project's drainage infrastructure would reduce runoff that would enter existing or planned drainage

systems and thus, not exceeding existing capacity; directly require construction of new stormwater drainage facilities or the expansion of existing facilities; substantially reduce or increase the amount of surface water in a water body; or result in a permanent adverse change to the movement of surface water. Thus, operation of the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage patterns of the site or area which such a substantial increase in the rate or amount of surface runoff would occur in a manner that would result in on- or off-site flooding. Therefore, Project impacts associated with flooding on- or off-site of the VTTM site, Off-Site Water Tank Area, Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and Off-Site Water Line and Sewer Line Areas would be less than significant.

### ***5. Drainage Pattern: Runoff***

**Threshold:** Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff? (Threshold 5.9-3(iii))

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would be required to comply with the County's MS4 permit, which requires the amount of runoff from the site to be the same before and after construction of a project. The Project also includes improvements to stormwater runoff, such as incorporating six infiltration basins throughout the Project site. Because the Project would be required to include site drainage systems according to standards and provisions set forth by the County, impacts related to water quality would be less than significant.

### ***6. Drainage Pattern: Impede or Redirect Flows***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would impede or redirect flows? (Threshold 5.9-3(iv))

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction activities associated with the Project would be subject to the County's Development Construction Program and compliance with applicable County grading regulations. The ESCP includes the preparation of a SWPPP and implementation of BMPs. The Project would be required to comply with the statewide General Permit which requires that a SWPPP identify potential

sources of pollution and specify runoff controls, or BMPs during construction for the purpose of minimizing the discharge of pollutants in stormwater. The Project would comply with applicable County grading and building permit regulations. This would ensure that the Project would not substantially alter the Project site drainage patterns in a manner that would result in substantial flooding on or off site. Adherence to standard compliance measures in construction activities would not cause flooding; substantially increase or decrease the amount of surface water flow from the Project site into a water body; or result in a permanent, adverse change to the movement of surface water.

LID implementation for the Project site follows the criteria and guidelines provided in the LID Standards Manual. The VTTM stormwater quality control measures have been incorporated into the site design to provide the required infiltration for the LID storm event. The infiltration facilities have been designed to infiltrate the Stormwater Quality Design Volume and to contain potential contaminants within the CDS units on-site. The remaining stormwater would be conveyed within the system and discharged to a percolation basin along Hunstock Street, where stormwater would be discharged in reduced amounts when compared to existing drainage conditions. The Project's LID components would increase the time of concentration for runoff leaving the VTTM and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, which would result in a reduction of peak flow leaving the VTTM and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area and would result in a decrease in flow traveling off site. The decreased off-site flows would not reduce the design capacities of the County's off-site storm drains, especially during localized flooding during larger rainstorm events south of the VTTM site. Impacts would be less than significant.

## ***7. Los Angeles County Low Impact Development Ordinance***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project conflict with the Los Angeles County Low Impact Development Ordinance (L.A. County Code, Title 12, Ch. 12.84)? (Threshold 5.9-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction associated with the Project would comply with the requirements of the LA County MS4 Permit. The LA County MS4 Permit, Development Construction Program, requires permittees to enforce implementation of BMPs, including, but not limited to, approval of an ESCP for all construction activities within their jurisdiction. ESCPs are required to include the elements of a SWPPP. The construction contractor for the Project would be required to implement BMPs that would meet or exceed local, State, and federal mandated guidelines for stormwater treatment to control erosion and to protect the quality of surface water runoff during the construction period.

The Project would include a series of infiltration basins to reduce the peak flow and run-off volume for the VTTM site below existing conditions. The addition of these infiltration basins would conform with the County's LID Standards Manual as they would be designed to infiltrate the Stormwater Quality Design Volume for the Project. Remaining stormwater would be conveyed within the system and discharged to a percolation basin along Hunstock Street, where stormwater would be discharged in reduced amounts when compared to existing drainage conditions. Source control measures, including the installation of CDS units that pretreat discharges prior to entering the infiltration basins and the design of the infiltration basins to infiltrate storm flows, would be implemented to the maximum extent practicable to mitigate pollutant mobilization from the Project site in stormwater and non-stormwater runoff. These source control measures would be designed using the criteria established by LACDPW to ensure effective implementation. The Project would be consistent with the County's LID standards. Impacts would be less than significant.

### **8. Flood Hazard, Tsunami, or Seiche**

**Potential Impact:** In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the Project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation? (Threshold 5.9-6)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project site is not within a coastal area. Therefore, tsunamis are not considered a significant hazard at the site. The Project site is not located downslope of any large bodies of water that could adversely affect the site in the event of earthquake-induced seiches. The Project would implement a SWPPP that specifies BMPs to be implemented during construction to manage runoff flows and avoid on- or off-site flooding. The Project would be required to comply with the Statewide General Permit which requires that a SWPPP identify potential sources of pollution and specify runoff controls, or BMPs during construction for the purpose of minimizing the discharge of pollutants in stormwater. The Project would be required to comply with all applicable County grading permit regulations that require necessary measures, plans, and inspections to control runoff from the construction site and avoid on- and off-site flooding during the construction period. The Project would include a series of infiltration basins to reduce the peak flow and run-off volume for the VTTM site below existing conditions. The CDS units would be designed to contain pollutants within the basin. The remaining stormwater would be conveyed within the system and discharged to a percolation basin along Hunstock Street, where stormwater would be discharged in reduced amounts when compared to existing drainage conditions. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **9. Conflict With or Obstruct Implementation of a Water Quality Control Plan or Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan**

**Threshold:** Would the Project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan? (Threshold 5.9-7)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project is subject to the LARWQCB Basin Plan which is designed to preserve and enhance water quality and protect the beneficial uses of all regional waters. Construction associated with the Project would be subject to the requirements of the County MS4 Permit. The Project would be required to comply with the statewide General Permit which requires that a SWPPP identify potential sources of pollution and specify runoff controls, or BMPs during construction for the purpose of minimizing the discharge of pollutants in stormwater. The Project ESCP would include BMPs designed to meet the Best Available Technology economically achievable (for toxics and non-conventional pollutants) and Best Conventional Pollutant Control Technology standards and to ensure that runoff does not cause or contribute to exceedances of water quality standards in receiving water bodies. Construction watering activities would be temporary, and runoff discharges would be controlled. In addition, the construction activities associated with the Project would be required to comply with all applicable County grading permit regulations, plans, and inspections to reduce sedimentation and erosion.

In accordance with the County Hydrology Manual, stormwater would be required to be retained on site, with the volume of water managed in accordance with the County's LID Ordinance. During Project operation, surface water and debris (including suspended solids (such as sediment), would be collected in debris basins before entering the proposed storm drain system. A series of debris and infiltration basins would be provided to reduce the peak flow and volume for the VTTM site and Off-Site Improvement Areas below existing conditions. Ultimately, the remaining stormwater would be conveyed within the system and discharge to a percolation basin along Hunstock Street, where stormwater would be discharged in reduced amounts when compared to existing drainage conditions. The SCVWA is responsible for the long-term planning of water supplies for the area, including groundwater resources. The SCVWA assesses current and future water supplies over a span of 35 years through their UWMP. The Project does not include any land uses such as industrial uses or manufacturing plants, which would produce materials which may adversely impact the quality of the storm water that would enter the groundwater basin through infiltration. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **J. Land Use and Planning**

### **1. Physically Divide an Established Community**

**Threshold:** Would the Project physically divide an established community? (Threshold 5.10-1)

**Finding 1:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would develop 222 single-family homes and 21,000 sq. ft. of commercial uses along the edge of the existing Val Verde community. This is fewer than the 253 maximum residential lots permitted under the SCAVAP 2012; provide approximately 41 percent of the lots greater than 7,000 sq. ft. with an average lot size of 11,634 sq. ft. consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District (CSD) standards for lot sizes; provide the minimum lot setbacks as discussed under Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance above; maintain both residential and commercial structures height below 35 feet above grade; provide two private recreation lots consistent with the Castaic Area CSD; and provide supporting off-site improvements consistent with County Code. The Project has been designed to be consistent with the H2, H5, and CG land use designations and would not result in adverse geologic effects.

The Project would preserve in perpetuity a 37.9-acre undeveloped parcel in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area. All Off-Site Improvement Areas would provide infrastructure that would support the Project and the surrounding community. The Off-Site Improvement Areas would not conflict with the existing land use and zone designations nor would these improvements conflict with the existing community. The extension of Chiquito Canyon Road, renamed Sterling Parkway, would also provide access to the VTTM site, and would include four new intersections with local roadways constructed within the VTTM site. The extension of Chiquito Canyon Road, renamed Sterling Parkway, would also provide access to the VTTM site, and would include four new intersections with local roadways constructed within the VTTM site.

The Project would develop the Project site to be consistent with the surrounding area by adding housing, open space areas, and a neighborhood-serving commercial component to serve daily needs of the community. The Project would improve circulation by providing new connections to existing roadways, approximately 3,275 linear feet of trails (as a private trail and off-site trail easement) and include Off-Site Improvement Areas. Implementation of the Project would not physically divide the established community of Val Verde. Impacts would be less than significant.



## ***2. Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans***

**Threshold:** Would the Project be inconsistent with the applicable County plans for the subject property including, but not limited to, the General Plan, specific plans, local coastal plans, area plans, and community/neighborhood plans? (Threshold 5.10-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would subdivide the VTTM site into a total of 222 detached, single-family residential lots on 57.9 acres; a private recreation pocket park on 0.2 acres; a private recreation lot on 3.4 acres; 21,000 sq. ft. of commercial uses on commercial lot on 2.5 acres; seven open space lots on approximately 22.5 acres; six landscaped homeowner association (HOA) lots on 0.1 acres; two access road lots on 0.1 acres; three debris basin lots on 1.0 acre, two debris/infiltration basin lots on 3.5 acres, and one infiltration basin on 3.0 acres; a pump station on a 0.1 acre lot; and 19.6 acres of public right-of-way within Zone R-1 on 113.9 acres. Further, graded shoulders between nine and twelve feet separated from the roadways by a 4-foot wide concrete gutter with rolled curb.

The Project proposes no changes to existing land use designations or zoning. The Project site can accommodate the proposed development of 222 single-family residential lots consistent with Title 21 and Title 22 of the Los Angeles County Code. Under the SCVAP 2012, approximately 253 single-family residential units would be the maximum permitted number of lots on the VTTM site. As discussed in Table 5.10-1 through Table 5.10-4 of the Draft EIR, the Project would be consistent with the applicable County plans, ordinances, and SCAG policies, and thus land use and planning impacts would be less than significant.

## ***3. Consistency with General Plan Goals and Policies related to Hillside Management Areas or Significant Ecological Areas***

**Threshold:** Would the Project conflict with the goals and policies of the General Plan related to Hillside Management Areas or Significant Ecological Areas? (Threshold 5.10-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would involve grading of slopes greater than 25 percent with surrounding ridgelines,<sup>9</sup> and would be required to conform to the requirements of the Hillside Management Regulations/Guidelines applicable to the Project at the time the County deemed the application for the Project complete. The Project would preserve 12.6 acres of the 52.6 acres of the VTTM site designated Hillside Management Area and has been designed to minimize impacts on the steeper

slopes (greater than 50 percent) on the VTTM site. The Project would avoid approximately 28.9 percent of the 27.0 acres with slopes of greater than 50 percent and approximately 14.8 percent of the 25.6 acres with slopes between 25 and 49.99 percent. The Project would locate over 75 percent of development on the portions of the VTTM site with slopes less than 50 percent. The Project would provide 46.0 acres of open space area (natural and manufactured open space) which includes 12.6 acres preserved as natural open space, focused on the steep slopes in the northwest and southeast portions of the Project site. The Project would preserve in perpetuity a 37.9-acre undeveloped parcel in a Hillside Management Area just south of VTTM No. 60257. Accordingly, the Project would preserve 50.5 acres of natural open space.

The Project also would incorporate some sensitive hillside design techniques, such as contour grading, retention of natural vegetation, and undulating slopes. The Project preserves some of the highest points within the Project site. Overall, approximately 87 percent of the VTTM site would be graded and altered, leaving approximately 13 percent remaining in a natural state. Though smaller hillside slopes on the VTTM site have minimal scenic value from a regulatory/regional standpoint, they have local scenic value, as they consist of the foreground of the existing landscape that includes the larger slopes and ridges in the background, further away from Del Valle Road. The slopes having maximum scenic value, particularly the highest points within the Project site, would be retained as part of the Project. The Project site does not contain primary or secondary ridgelines. The Project would maintain off-site scenic views and would not impact scenic views of the major ridgelines and slopes surrounding the Project site. The Project is not located within a Significant Ecological Area. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **K. Noise**

### ***1. Groundbourne Vibration or Noise***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project result in the generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels? (Threshold 5.11-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The forecasted vibration levels due to on-site construction activities would not exceed the building damage significance threshold of 0.2 particle velocity (PPV) inches per second (ips) at any of the identified surrounding residential uses during operation of any of the construction equipment, as shown in Table 5.11-2 of the Draft EIR. Construction-related vibration levels associated with the Off-Site Improvement Areas would be similar to those activities associated with the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. the vibration levels associated with construction activities

within the Off-Site Improvement Areas would fall below the 0.2 PPV ips threshold at nearby sensitive receptors. Construction-related vibration impacts would be less than significant.

Operational sources of vibration include heavy-duty vehicle travel along area roadways. According to the FTA's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual, it is unusual for vibration from vehicular sources (including buses and trucks) operating on smooth road or surface to be perceptible, even in locations close to major roads. As such, no sources of "excessive" groundborne vibration or noise levels are anticipated during operation of the Project. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **L. Population and Housing**

### ***1. Population Growth***

**Threshold:** Would the Project induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)? (Threshold 5.12-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction of the Project would not induce substantial population growth in the area either directly or indirectly. It is anticipated construction workers would travel to the work site from their own personal homes located outside the Project area. The Project would include the development of 222 single-family lots and approximately 21,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, consistent with existing land use and zoning designations.

Operation of the Project would result in an increase of 686 persons and nine employment opportunities to the greater Santa Clarita Valley area, including the SFVCOG subregion area. The Project would represent approximately 1.6, 5.5, and 0.08 percent of SCAG 2040 projections for population, housing, and employment, respectively. Such levels of growth are consistent with the population forecasts for the subregion as adopted by SCAG. The Project is also consistent with the types, intensity, and patterns of land use envisioned for this region.

### ***2. Substantial Displacement of People***

**Threshold:** Would the Project displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? (Threshold 5.12-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** There is one existing single-family home located on the Project site that would be demolished as part of the Project. Therefore, the construction of the Project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing. the Project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing which would necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Additionally, the Project would result in a net increase of 221 single-family housing units in the area. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **M. Public Services**

### **3. Fire Protection**

**Threshold:** Would the Project create capacity or service level problems, or result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered government facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire protection? (Threshold 5.13.1-1)

**Finding 1:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction managers and supervisory personnel would be trained in emergency response and fire safety operations, as stipulated by OSHA and County Fire Code requirements. Such practices include monitoring and managing fire suppression equipment including fire extinguishers and potable water tanks on site. In association with the wood framing operations, electrical, plumbing, communications, and ventilation systems would be installed in each structure. Although fires do occur on construction sites, the risk of fire can be minimized by following proper installation procedures for electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems and by the proper management of equipment. To reduce fire risk following building framing, installation of utilities within homes during the construction period would be subject to County codes and inspection by County personnel prior to dry walling. Hydrants shall be in conformance with County Fire and Building Codes. Construction activities adjacent to the VTTM site and within the Off-Site Water Line Improvement and Sewer Line Improvement Areas may involve temporary lane closures for utility improvements. Other implications of construction-related traffic may include increased travel time due to flagging or stopping of traffic to accommodate trucks entering and exiting the Project site during construction. Temporary construction activities could potentially increase response times for emergency vehicles traveling to the Project site and nearby uses along surrounding streets. Construction activities associated with the Project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with the County's emergency evacuation.

The Project site would be served by the LACoFD. The LACoFD's maximum response times for urban areas are five minutes for first responders and eight minutes for second responders, while response times for suburban areas are eight minutes for first responders and twelve minutes for second responders. Implementation of the Project would increase the permanent residential population and create a corresponding increase in demand for fire protection and emergency medical services. Fire Station 143, which is equipped with an engine and three-person fire crew, is located approximately 1.1 miles from the VTTM site. The Project's building design measures that are in accordance with the LACoFD requirements and the approved fuel modification plan would reduce the potential for calls on the VTTM site, thereby reducing the need for fire protection services. In accordance with LACoFD requirements, the Project would provide approved street signs, building access numbers, and all-weather emergency access to and within the VTTM site. Road improvements would include the widening of Del Valle Road for additional visibility and safety. This improved roadway system would also provide an alternative means of egress for residents to the east and north of the Project Site, increasing accessibility and emergency routes for residents and emergency vehicles in those areas.

Fire water improvements necessary to provide fire flows of 1,250 gallons per minute (gpm) and 2,000 gpm, would include the construction and installation of public fire hydrants in compliance with the applicable County fire flow requirements. District No. 36 determined that in order to provide minimum fire-flow requirements for the Project, a 700,000-gallon water tank would be needed at the District No. 36 Cuyama site, approximately 2.2 miles westerly of the VTTM site. A one million gallon-water tank would be constructed as part of the Project to provide additional fire suppression capability for the community. The Project would provide adequate fire water infrastructure to serve the Project site. Impacts would be less than significant.

#### ***4. Libraries***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project create capacity or service level problems, or result in substantial adverse physical impact associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for library services? (Threshold 5.13.3-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Development of the Project would increase population on the Project site and, as a result, the demand placed on library services at the County Library facilities. Based on the Project's projected population of approximately 686 persons, the Project would require a minimum of approximately 343 gross sq. ft. of library facility space, and approximately 1,887 library material items,

and one additional public computer to meet the County Library's planning guidelines. Residents of the Project would generate new tax revenues, contribute to the library's special parcel tax, and be responsible for any fines and fees accrued from overdue materials. The County has established a library facilities mitigation fee program to account for library-related construction and acquisition costs. Based on the County's current library facilities mitigation fee of \$969.00 per single-family unit, the estimated fees that would be collected from the Project to pay for new library construction and item purchases would be approximately \$215,118.00. Payment of the library facilities mitigation fee would be required prior to the issuance of building permits. The library facilities fee is used to finance land acquisition, design, construction, equipping and related capital costs for local library facilities. Payment of these fees would ensure that library services would be maintained to an adequate level within the Planning Area. Therefore, with payment of applicable development impact fees, the impact of the Project on library facilities would be less than significant.

## **5. Schools**

**Threshold:** Would the Project create capacity or service levels problems, or result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities or physically altered government facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for schools? (Threshold 5.13.4-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would generate a total of approximately 111 elementary school students (K–6) and approximately 28 middle school students (7–8) within Castaic School District boundaries. The Project would generate approximately 37 high school students (9–12) within Hart School District boundaries, which would provide schooling for high school students only. Students generated by the Project would be expected to attend elementary and middle schools within the Castaic School District and high school in the Hart School District.

Based on the student generation rates provided by the Castaic School District, the Project at buildout is estimated to generate a total of approximately 139 K-8 students, of which approximately 111 students would attend elementary schools and approximately 28 would attend middle schools. Pursuant to SB 50, the Project Applicant would be required to pay development fees to the Castaic School District prior to the issuance of building permits. In the Castaic School District, the current amount of education facility fees for new residential construction is \$2.65 per square foot and for new commercial construction is \$0.43 per square foot. The square footage of the 222 single-family homes has not been calculated, but the total fee will ultimately be based on the square footage of the single-family residences. Pursuant to

Section 65995 of the California Government Code, the payment of these fees is considered mitigation of Project-related school impacts. The payment of these fees is intended for the general purpose of addressing the construction of new school facilities, whether schools serving the Project site in question are at capacity or not.

Based on the student generation rates provided by the Hart School District, the Project at buildout is expected to generate approximately 37 high school students who would attend Castaic High School.<sup>36</sup> As previously discussed, current enrollment is 313 students, and the additional 37 students would account for a total of 350 students. The school is currently designed to accept an additional 2,287 students and the 37 students would represent approximately 0.02 percent of the remaining capacity. Castaic High School operates below design capacity and therefore would have more than enough capacity to accommodate the projected number of high school students associated with the Project. Pursuant to SB 50, the Project Applicant would be required to pay development fees to the Hart School District prior to the issuance of building permits. In the Hart School District, the current amount of education facility fees for new residential construction is \$1.43 per square foot and for new commercial construction is \$0.231 per square foot. Pursuant to Section 65995 of the California Government Code, the payment of these fees is considered mitigation of Project-related school impacts. The payment of these fees is intended for the general purpose of addressing the construction of new school facilities, whether schools serving the Project site in question are at capacity or not. Therefore, the impact of the Project on schools would be less than significant.

## **N. Recreation**

### ***1. Substantial Physical Deterioration of Park and Recreational Facilities***

**Threshold:** Would the Project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated? (Threshold 5.14-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would result in a temporary increase in population during construction due to the influx of construction workers. Some of these construction workers are expected to currently reside in the area and, therefore, would not place additional use pressure on these parks.

The Project includes the following recreational features: a 3.4-acre private recreation lot with a tot and a shade area with tables; a 0.2-acre private recreation pocket park; a private multi-use trail; and an off-site

multi-use trail easement that would connect to the County's Del Valle trail, which would allow for greater access to and from the Project site. Pursuant to the County's Master Plan of Trails, the Project would improve Del Valle Road, which would facilitate in the implementation of the planned Class III bike route. The two on-site parks and private multi-use trail would allow for residents of the Project to have access to multiple recreational areas. The anticipated resident use of local parks would not overburden regional parks and hiking trails in the region, as the Project would provide significant open space, trails, and neighborhood recreation facilities to meet the needs of residents and others in the community. It is not anticipated that residents of the Project would cause significant impacts to regional parks and recreation facilities resulting in substantial physical deterioration to existing recreational facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

## ***2. Construction or Expansion of Park Facilities***

**Potential Impact:** Does the Project include neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of such facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment? (Threshold 5.14-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would include two local parks, a private multi-use trail, and dedication of an off-site multi-use trail easement. The Project would provide approximately 3.6-acres of private recreation parkland available to the public, thus satisfying the parkland obligation for the Project. Consistent with the County Department of Parks and Recreation, 90 percent of all residential lots within the VTTM site are within one-half mile of a neighborhood park, including the proposed 3.4-acre private recreation lot and 0.2-acre private recreation pocket park. Thus, the Project's Quimby obligation would be satisfied with the construction of the on-site parks and the existing 4.1 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents planning standard would remain consistent with the County's planning standards. Therefore, the Project would not require the construction or expansion of new parks or recreational facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

## ***3. Regional Open Space Connectivity***

**Threshold:** Would the Project interfere with regional open space connectivity? (Threshold 5.14-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.



**Facts in Support of Finding:** The pre-2015 Hillside Management Regulations of the County Code require that open space shall comprise not less than 25 percent, or 28.5 acres of the net area when applied to the Project, of a residential development included within the urban classification of the general development policy map of the 1980 General Plan. Overall, the Project would provide 50.5 acres of natural undisturbed open space, which is greater than the minimum requirement of the County's pre-2015 Hillside Management Ordinance. Development of the Project would not disturb any preexisting recreational facilities and would seek to provide recreation opportunities to the residents through outdoor recreational amenities. The Project also would provide additional park space, increased connectivity through the expansion of trails, and the preservation of protected open space. Overall, the parkland, trails, open space, and fuel modification zone would allow for open space connectivity within the Val Verde community of the greater Castaic area. Therefore, the impact of the Project on regional open space connectivity would be less than significant.

## **O. Utilities and Service Systems**

### ***1. Water Supply: Relocation or Construction of New or Expanded Facilities***

**Threshold:** Would the Project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects? (Threshold 5.17.1-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Off-Site Improvement Area includes the 2.8-acre Water Tank Area and the 2.4-acre Water Line Improvement Area. The Project would be served by Los Angeles County Waterworks District No. 36, which has determined an upgrade to its off-site facilities would be required to supplement existing capacity to deliver water to the Project site and other portions of District No. 36's service area. As part of the Water Line Improvement Area, the existing water line within Hasley Canyon Road would be upgraded to 16 and 20 inches in diameter to meet the demand of the proposed 222 residential lots within the VTTM site. Approximately 10,600 linear feet would be upgraded along Hasley Canyon Road within approximately 2.4 acres. The proposed uses for the Project would be consistent with the growth projections outlined in the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan which was used to calculate water demand projections in the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (SCVWA) and District No. 36's existing and planned water supplies would meet demands for a 35-year

forecast during normal, dry, and multiple dry periods with surpluses ranging from 19,341 acre-feet per year (AFY) to 50,354 AFY, through 2050.

Fire water improvements necessary to provide fire flows of 1,250 gpm and 2,000 gpm, would include the construction and installation of public fire hydrants in compliance with the applicable County fire flow requirements. District No. 36 determined that in order to provide minimum fire-flow requirements for the Project, a 700,000-gallon water tank would be needed at the District No. 36 Cuyama site, approximately 2.2 miles westerly of the VTTM site. A one million gallon-water tank would be constructed as part of the Project to provide additional fire suppression capability for the community.

## ***2. Water Supplies: Availability***

**Threshold:** Would the Project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years? (Threshold 5.17.1-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Off-Site Improvement Area includes the 2.8-acre Water Tank Area and the 2.4-acre Water Line Improvement Area. The Project would be served by Los Angeles County Waterworks District No. 36, which has determined an upgrade to its off-site facilities would be required to supplement existing capacity to deliver water to the Project site and other portions of District No. 36's service area. As part of the Water Line Improvement Area, the existing water line within Hasley Canyon Road would be upgraded to 16 and 20 inches in diameter to meet the demand of the proposed 222 residential lots within the VTTM site. Approximately 10,600 linear feet would be upgraded along Hasley Canyon Road within approximately 2.4 acres. The proposed uses for the Project would be consistent with the growth projections outlined in the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan which was used to calculate water demand projections in the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (SCVWA) and District No. 36's existing and planned water supplies would meet demands for a 35-year forecast during normal, dry, and multiple dry periods with surpluses ranging from 19,341 acre-feet per year (AFY) to 50,354 AFY, through 2050.

## ***3. Wastewater: Relocation or Construction of New or Expanded Facilities***

**Threshold:** Would the Project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects? (Threshold 5.17.2-1)

**Finding 3:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Sewer Line Improvement Area includes a proposed 4-inch ductile iron pipe sewer force main that would be constructed from the easterly VTTM site boundary within Del Valle Road approximately 3,425 feet to the point of connection with the existing 15-inch sewer line in Hasley Canyon Road to the north. As part of the 0.8-acre Sewer Line Improvement Area, approximately 0.8 acres of existing roadway right-of-way would be disturbed within Del Valle Road during construction of the sewer mainline. Development of these uses would occur in conjunction with the construction of the Project and in accordance with LACDPW guidelines. The Project's sewer flows, when combined with other anticipated downstream sewer flows, would be 85.4 percent of designed pipeline capacity for sewer mainlines greater than 15 inches. Based on the analysis presented in the Sewer Study, no replacement of downstream sewers would be required with implementation of the Project. The Project would increase daily treatment by approximately 0.06 MGD to 18.46 MGD, or approximately 0.6 percent of the remaining 9.7 MGD daily treatment capacity. As such, adequate treatment capacity would be available during Project operation. The current combined capacity of the Santa Clarita Valley Sanitation District (SCVSD) system is 28.1 MGD (31,470 AFY). An adequate treatment capacity would be available during Project operation. A Sewer Area Study was approved by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Land Development Division on April 2, 2020, and is included as Appendix O.2 of the Draft EIR. Impacts associated with wastewater conveyance and wastewater treatment systems would be less than significant.

#### ***4. Wastewater: Capacity***

**Threshold:** Would the Project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments? (Threshold 5.17.2-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Sewer Line Improvement Area includes a proposed 4-inch ductile iron pipe sewer force main that would be constructed from the easterly VTTM site boundary within Del Valle Road approximately 3,425 feet to the point of connection with the existing 15-inch sewer line in Hasley Canyon Road to the north. As part of the 0.8-acre Sewer Line Improvement Area, approximately 0.8 acres of existing roadway right-of-way would be disturbed within Del Valle Road during construction of the sewer mainline. Development of these uses would occur in conjunction with the construction of the Project and in accordance with LACDPW guidelines. The Project's sewer flows, when combined with other anticipated downstream sewer flows, would be 85.4 percent of designed pipeline capacity for sewer

mainlines greater than 15 inches. Based on the analysis presented in the Sewer Study, no replacement of downstream sewers would be required with implementation of the Project. The Project would increase daily treatment by approximately 0.06 MGD to 18.46 MGD, or approximately 0.6 percent of the remaining 9.7 MGD daily treatment capacity. As such, adequate treatment capacity would be available during Project operation. The current combined capacity of the Santa Clarita Valley Sanitation District (SCVSD) system is 28.1 MGD (31,470 AFY). An adequate treatment capacity would be available during Project operation. A Sewer Area Study was approved by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Land Development Division on April 2, 2020, and is included as Appendix O.2 of the Draft EIR. Impacts associated with wastewater conveyance and wastewater treatment systems would be less than significant.

### **5. Solid Waste: Generation**

**Threshold:** Would the Project generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals? (Threshold 5.17.3-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction of the Project is anticipated to occur over a period of approximately four to six years. Waste generated during the construction period would result in an incremental and intermittent increase in solid waste disposal at landfills generally in the surrounding area. Construction waste materials are expected to be typical construction debris, including wood, paper, glass, plastic, metals, cardboard, and green wastes. No soil from the VTTM site or Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be transported to a landfill site. It is anticipated that construction of the Project, prior to any diversion from recycling, would generate approximately 76.2 tons of demolition debris and 5,351.4 tons of construction debris, for a combined total of 5,427.6 tons of construction-related waste generation. The demolition and construction debris generated during construction, prior to any diversion from recycling, would account for approximately 0.0008 percent of the estimated remaining capacity at the Lancaster Landfill and 0.0001 percent of the Azusa Land Reclamation landfill. It was conservatively estimated 50 percent of nonhazardous demolition and construction debris generated by the Project would be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse per the requirements of the County's C&D Recycling and Reuse Ordinance. Therefore, it is estimated that after diversion, a total of approximately 2,713.8 tons of construction-related waste would be disposed of at the County's unclassified landfill through construction of the Project. This represents approximately 0.0004 percent of the estimated remaining disposal capacity at the Lancaster Landfill and a negligible percent increase of the estimated remaining disposal capacity at

the Azusa Land Reclamation facility. The County's inert fill landfills would therefore have adequate capacity to accommodate Project-generated inert construction waste.

The County is currently diverting solid waste from landfills by approximately 65 percent. During operation, the Project would generate approximately 477.9 tons per year in solid waste with no recycling activities in place, or approximately 1.84 tons per day. The two nearest landfills likely to receive solid waste from the Project include the Chiquita Canyon Landfill and the Sunshine Canyon Landfill. The Project would generate approximately 1.84 tpd, prior to any recycling, which would account for approximately 0.02 percent and 0.03 percent between 2017 and 2024 and 0.05 percent between 2025 and 2047 of the remaining daily permitted capacity of the Chiquita Canyon Landfill and the Sunshine Canyon Landfill, respectively. Under the 65 percent reduction, the Project would divert 310.6 tons of solid waste per year; thus, 167.3 tons of solid waste per year would be disposed of at County landfills. With recycling, the Project would generate approximately 0.64 tpd which would account for approximately 0.01 percent and 0.02 percent of the remaining daily permitted capacity of the Chiquita Canyon Landfill and the Sunshine Canyon Landfill, respectively. The Project will meet the County's current and future recycling goals and, in actuality, generate approximately 167.3 tons per year and meet the County's waste management ordinance to divert at least 65 percent of potential waste disposal. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **6. Solid Waste: Statutes and Regulations**

**Threshold:** Would the Project comply with federal, State, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste? (Threshold 5.17.3-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would comply with applicable statutes and regulations related to solid waste, including those pertaining to waste reduction and recycling, as summarized above in the Regulatory Framework subsection. Additionally, the Project's construction contractor would deliver all construction and demolition waste generated by the Project to a certified Construction and Demolition Waste Processing Facility in accordance with AB 939 Compliance Permit requirements. Thus, the Project would promote source reduction and recycling, consistent with the applicable federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Construction of the Project would not conflict with applicable solid waste statutes and regulations.

Project impacts associated with construction solid waste policies and objectives would be less than significant. The Project would provide adequate recycling area or room for the collection and removal of recyclable materials in accordance with AB 1327 requirements for the commercial lot. Development

associated with the Project would adhere to the County's Green Building Code for new building construction. As such, the Project would be operated in a manner that would be consistent with all source reduction and recycling goals set forth by the County to achieve compliance with the applicable regulatory plans consistent with the County's obligations under AB 939, including, but not limited to, the requirements listed in the County's General Plan and the SCVAP 2012. The Project would not have a significant impact on County waste diversion policies and would continue to comply with applicable County waste diversion programs. Operation of the Project would not conflict with these solid waste policies and objectives. Impacts would be less than significant.

### **7. Electric Power, Natural Gas or Telecommunications**

**Threshold:** Would the Project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded electric power, natural gas or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects? (Threshold 5.17.4-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** During construction of the Project, electricity would be required to serve construction trailers, power tools, tool sheds, work and storage areas, and other facilities associated with development activities. Existing off-site infrastructure would not need to expand or be developed to provide electrical service to the Project during construction. Overall, electricity consumption required during construction would be limited and temporary. To meet the operational requirements of the Project, installation, and extension of additional electricity lines would be required in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. Electrical lines would be underground and would connect to existing electrical facilities along Del Valle Road. While the Project would require the extension of existing electrical lines from streets surrounding the Project site. Design and sizing of all electrical infrastructure would meet all relevant engineering requirements to the satisfaction of SCE and the County. Extending electrical infrastructure to the Project site would not result in system capacity problems or result in the construction of new energy facilities or the major expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.

Natural gas is not expected to be used on the Project site during the construction as construction equipment is generally powered by gasoline, diesel, or electricity. Natural gas used on-site would therefore be limited to the minor amounts of natural gas released during the installation and upgrade of natural gas facilities. To meet the operational requirements of the Project, installation and extension of additional natural gas lines would be required in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. While the Project would require the extension of the natural gas existing facilities, construction would be minimal

and finite, and would be conducted primarily by extending the existing path of natural gas lines. Design and sizing of all-natural gas infrastructures would support the Project and meet all relevant engineering requirements to the satisfaction of SoCalGas and the County. SoCalGas' long-term infrastructure planning accounts for the growth allowed by local and regional general plans to plan for new development. Extending natural gas infrastructure to the Project site would not result in system capacity problems, or result in the construction of new energy facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.

AT&T and Verizon provide telecommunication and internet services to the area of the Project site and have existing infrastructure surrounding the Project site that would provide accessible points of connection for development within the VTTM site. As previously discussed for electricity and natural gas infrastructure, the construction within the Project site for telecommunications facilities has been analyzed throughout the Draft EIR. Telecommunications infrastructure is typically expanded in response to increasing demand and system expansion and improvements by AT&T or Verizon occur as needed. Impacts would be less than significant.

## **P. Wildfire**

### **1. Emergency Plans**

**Threshold:** Would the Project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? (Threshold 5.18-1)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** To minimize impediments to emergency access, all on-site roadways have been designed in compliance with the Fire Code and County standards and requirements. The Project includes a comprehensive circulation plan that provides access to the VTTM site and facilitates vehicular circulation throughout the Project site in accordance with County standards. At the request of the Fire Department, through access would be provided between Lexington Drive and the VTTM site via an approximately 26-foot-wide roadway. Two linear access lots would be approximately 20 feet in width and would be provided to connect the VTTM site to Trevylon Street and Rainbow Drive to the west for additional emergency access for the VTTM site and surrounding neighborhoods.

Fire behavior computer modeling was completed for fire events that could impact both Chiquito Canyon Road and Del Valle Road. The results of this modeling indicated that even when a single fire event was modeled to impact both roads, because of the distance between the two roads, the orientation of the winds, and the nature of the vegetation along both roads, both roads would not be impacted at the same

time. A fast-moving fire could travel the distance between the two roads in less than an hour. However, at the speed a fire would move, it would be past one road before it reached the other road, which means one of these roads would be available for evacuation. In most cases, there would likely be two or more hours between a fire impacting one of these roads and then impacting the other road. With the limited number of existing homes in Val Verde, even with the addition of the new homes in the Project, there would be sufficient time for all residents to be safely evacuated if needed. In addition, there is also adequate space within the existing community and Project for residents to safely remain until safe passage is available.

The Project would not substantially impair any adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan or the ability of residents of the existing community of Val Verde or the Project to safely evacuate in the event of a fire in the area. Impacts would be less than significant.

## ***2. Exacerbate Wildfire Risks***

**Potential Impact:** Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, would the Project exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire? (Threshold 5.18-2)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** At the Project site, most of the vegetation that could provide fuel for a fire is not located in areas aligned with the slope and wind and the vegetation along the edges of the VTTM site is not continuous. In most of the areas adjacent to the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area fuel modification zones in the upslope condition, the areas are significantly wind sheltered. The Fuel Modification Plan has been designed to protect all structures regardless of specific location adjacent to the native vegetation on the edges of the VTTM site. Where the modeling indicated possible flame lengths under fifty feet, under perfect fire conditions, the worst case scenario risk is at the edge of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. The structures within the VTTM site would be designed and constructed in compliance with California Residential Code Section R337, which applies to building materials, systems and/or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings located within a High Fire Hazard Areas. The Project would not expose Project occupants to pollutant concentrations from wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire by exacerbating wildfire risks. Impacts would be less than significant.



### **3. Infrastructure**

**Threshold:** Would the Project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment? (Threshold 5.18-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project site is in the VHFHSZ, and is served by roads, power lines, water sources, and other utilities and would have access to neighborhood commercial uses once completed. To provide increased supply for the surrounding community, the Project would include the installation of a one million-gallon water tank, which would provide minimum fire-flow requirements for the Project. The Project also would improve and increase the safety of Del Valle Road. The fire behavior modeling concludes the performance-based design incorporated into the Approved Fuel Modification Plan provides the protection necessary to keep the structures safe during a wildland fire incident within the adjacent native vegetation and that providing additional distance would not necessarily increase the safety of these structures beyond what is already provided by the approved Fuel Modification Plan. Impacts would be less than significant.

### **4. Flooding and Landslides**

**Threshold:** Would the Project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes? (Threshold 5.18-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Landslide recommendations include avoidance or removal of existing landslides, and recommendations for slope modifications in other areas such that appropriate slope stability factors of safety are achieved that are in accordance with CBSC and the County Building Code requirements. Final grading, drainage, and erosion control plans must be reviewed and approved by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) before the County issues a grading permit. This would ensure that the Project would implement the recommendations contained within the geotechnical and soils investigations to minimize the potential for landslides.

The design of the Project's drainage infrastructure was in accordance with County standards and the debris basins have been sized to capture post-fire soil and surface water flows. Thus, the Project would reduce runoff and debris flows that would enter existing or planned drainage systems and not exceed

existing capacity. The operation of the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage patterns of the site or area which such a substantial increase in the rate or amount of surface runoff would occur in a manner that would result in on- or off-site flooding. The Project would not cause or risk of exacerbating the existing off-site flooding conditions. Impacts would be less than significant.

### ***5. Risk of Loss, Injury or Death***

**Threshold:** Would the Project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires? (Threshold 5.18-5)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The approved fuel modification zones have been designed to address potential fire hazards with designated landscaping and fuel modification areas. In accordance with the fuel modification plan, a landscape plan that utilizes a plant palette consisting of fire-resistant plants, native and appropriate non-native drought tolerant species in accordance with LACoFD guidelines has been designed and will be implemented within the fuel modification zones.

The Project site would be protected from this threat by compliance with California Residential Code Section R337, which applies to building materials, systems and/or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings located within a High Fire Hazard Areas. This Section addresses: Roofing, Exterior Covering, Roof Eaves, Floor/Underfloor Protection, Decking, Venting and Exterior Windows/Doors. Regardless, the Approved Fuel Modification Plan meets or exceeds the accepted fuel modification criteria in response to the prescriptive fuel modification distances and configuration.

The Behave modeling scenario in the Fire Behavior Analysis and Report concluded that the maximum expected flame length at the edge of the VTTM site is 49.1 feet. Therefore, any structure at least 50 feet away would not be directly impacted by wildland vegetation fire flames. Based on the scientific fire behavior analysis, the exterior portions of structures within the VTTM site would not ignite from the exposure to a wildland vegetation fire with the approved fuel modification plan. This is primarily because the greatest fire energy is too far away from the structures due to lack of wildland fuels and fire intensity as it approaches the community from the easterly direction. All of the other edges of the VTTM site are developed with residential uses. Moreover, the Project would be constructed in compliance with the LACoFD Fuel Modification Plan requirements that would keep residents safe from an adjacent wildland fire.

## **5. FINDINGS REGARDING PROJECT IMPACTS DETERMINED TO BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED**

The following potentially significant impacts were analyzed in the EIR, and the effects of the Project were considered. Because of the environmental analysis of the Project and identification of project design features, compliance with existing laws, codes, and statutes, and the identification and incorporation of feasible mitigation measures, the following potentially significant impacts have been determined by the County to be reduced to a level of less than significant; and the County has found - in accordance with CEQA Section 21081(a)(1) and the State Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1) - that "Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which mitigate or avoid the significant effects on the environment". The County has determined - pursuant to CEQA Section 21081(a)(2) and State Guidelines Section 15091(a)(2) - that "Those changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and have been, or can and should be, adopted by that other agency." The County's findings are referred to herein as "Finding."

### **A. Aesthetics**

#### **1. Scenic Vista**

**Threshold:** Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? (Threshold 5.1-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Grading of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be balanced on-site and result in the cut/fill of approximately 1,610,000 cubic yards of soil. The soil removed for leveling of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area (1,446,100 cubic yards of cut) would be used as fill material within the VTTM site. Upon completion of VTTM site clearing and grading, fine grading for the residential lots and roadway infrastructure improvements along Del Valle Road would occur. The remaining 211,500 cubic yards of cut soil would be used for lot and street over-excavation and approximately 11,000 cubic yards would stabilize landslide areas. Earthwork would occur over a period of approximately seven months. Equipment staging and construction worker parking would be provided on-site.

During VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area grading, the disturbed earth would stand out in contrast to the vegetated areas left untouched by such activity. Heavy trucks and other construction equipment (e.g., small trucks, scrapers) would be visible moving to and from the grading areas. During grading operations, heavy equipment would be visible on the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. The views of heavy trucks would be limited to working hours and equipment would

remain on site until grading is complete. As such, visual impacts during construction of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure MM 5.1-1** would require installation of visual screening. Any roadway views of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be brief due to travel speeds. The site would potentially be visible from longer range viewpoints higher in elevation to the southwest and north. Due to the limited height of the construction screening, visual impacts would still stand out in contrast to the open area characteristics of the surrounding area from viewpoints higher in elevation from publicly accessible areas to the north. As such, views of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be altered, short-term, and temporary in nature and would not result in an adverse effect on the aesthetic character of the site during construction and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Publicly available short-range views of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area are available from segments of nearby roadways including Del Valle Road and Hunstock Street with intermittent obstruction due to intervening topography and vegetation. Nonetheless, views of and across the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would be expected to change with the implementation of the Project. The Project would not substantially alter views of the surrounding ridgelines to the north and west. Public views would continue to consist of the surrounding ridgelines within a suburban setting.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.1-1:** Where construction is visible from publicly available locations adjacent to the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, temporary construction fencing shall be placed along Del Valle Road and the periphery of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area to screen construction activity from view at the street level from off-site locations. In addition, the Project Developer shall ensure through appropriate postings and daily visual inspections that no unauthorized materials are posted on any temporary construction barriers visible to the public, and that such temporary barriers are maintained in a visually attractive manner throughout the construction period.

## **2. Visual Character**

**Threshold:** Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings because of height, bulk, pattern, scale, character, or other features, or conflict with applicable zoning and

other regulations governing scenic quality? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point?) (Threshold 5.1-4)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Development of the Project would involve a total of approximately three million cubic yards of combined cut and fill. Approximately 87 percent of the VTTM site would be graded and altered, leaving approximately 13 percent remaining in a natural state. Although the visual character of the VTTM site will be altered from its current condition during construction, this impact is not considered significant due to the progressive and temporary nature of mass grading and backbone infrastructure constructive activities and the fact that there are already similar residential and commercial uses surrounding the VTTM site. Temporary public views of the Offsite Water Tank Area would be obstructed by intervening topography and ridgelines.

Once the Project is completed and fully occupied, the VTTM site would be substantially different from the existing condition. The VTTM site currently contains an existing single-family residence, various dirt roadways, and undeveloped open space areas. Approximately 37.9 acres of natural, undisturbed open space would be preserved in an off-site easement area located southeast of the VTTM site. The finished condition would include 222 homes, a neighborhood-serving commercial component, landscaping, and off-site amenities. While this would represent a visual change, it would not be out of character with the surrounding area. The Project is located in a suburban area with single-family homes located to the south and west and the open space and rural uses located to the far west and north, with commercial and industrial uses to the east, respectively. Once developed, the Project would be consistent in visual character with surrounding development. Once completed, the new water tank at the Off-Site Water Tank Area would be screened in accordance with the Castaic CSD and would not be visible from publicly available areas due to the intervening topography and ridgelines. No views would be impacted by the water and sewer line infrastructure within the Off-Site Water Line Improvement and Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area. Impacts to visual character would be less than significant with incorporation of project design features and implementation of mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.1-2:** Prior to final map recordation, the Project Developer shall incorporate streetscape landscaping along the primary street network including Sterling Parkway and Del Valle Road. Landscaping shall comply with the

County's Drought Tolerant Landscaping Ordinance and shall be approved by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.

**Mitigation Measure 5.1-3:** Prior to final map recordation, commercial (nonresidential) buildings shall be designed to front Sterling Parkway, with the main pedestrian entrances accessing publicly available pedestrian access located on Sterling Parkway with any off-street parking located in the rear of the buildings(s) and shall be approved by Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.

**Mitigation Measure 5.1-4:** Prior to map recordation, the eight to 17-foot wide paver area along Hunstock Street between Del Valle Road and Coolidge Avenue shall include landscaping improvements in the form of a "paseo," and shall be approved by Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.

**Mitigation Measure 5.1-5:** Prior to map recordation, all single-family homes shall incorporate aesthetically attractive fenestration (door and window treatments) on elevations fronting the streets and shall be approved by Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. In instances where fenestration cannot be provided in the sides and rear, decorative split-face walls shall be included in the design.

**Project Design Feature 5.1-1:** The Project will include features surrounding the infiltration basin south of the private park such as decorative fencing around the site; drought-tolerant grasses on the basin floor and side-slopes; and trees and shrubs along Sterling Parkway and around the basin edge consistent with the County's Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Ordinance.

**Project Design Feature 5.1-2:** The pump station proposed between Sterling Parkway and the infiltration basin will be enclosed and would be designed to have Spanish, Southwestern, or Mediterranean architecture with a tile decorated roof.

## **B. Air Quality**

### ***1. Air Quality Plans***

**Threshold:** Would the Project conflict with or obstruct implementation of applicable air quality plans of either the South Coast AQMD (SCAQMD) or the Antelope Valley AQMD (AVAQMD)? (Threshold 5.2-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Ambient pollutant concentrations standards are forecasted for all criteria pollutants during Project construction. These impacts would be temporary in nature, lasting only for the construction period, and would not have a long-term impact on the region's ability to meet State and federal air quality standards. The daily maximum regional construction emissions would not exceed the SCAQMD daily significance thresholds for CO, SO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> prior to mitigation. However, maximum daily construction emissions would exceed the SCAQMD daily regional thresholds for NO<sub>x</sub> during the first two years of construction. Regional construction emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> would result in potentially significant short-term air quality impacts without with implementation of **Mitigation Measure MM 5.2- 1**. The construction emissions would not exceed SCAQMD thresholds for TACs. With implementation of **MM 5.2-2** and **MM 5.2-3**, the exposure of construction workers to potential Valley Fever spores would be less than significant.

The Project would include the development of 222 single-family homes consistent with existing land use and zoning designations. Thus, the population, housing, and employment growth assumptions were considered in the regional projections. The Project would represent approximately 1.6, 5.5, and 0.08 percent of SCAG 2040 projections for population, housing, and employment, respectively. On-road mobile vehicles, electricity, natural gas, water, landscape equipment, solid waste, and wastewater would generate the majority of emissions on-site during Project operation. The primary source of long-term criteria air pollutant emissions would be from Project-generated vehicle trips. Operational emission levels would not exceed the SCAQMD daily regional thresholds. The daily maximum localized operational emissions would not exceed the SCAQMD daily significance thresholds for all criteria pollutants, and thus would not constitute a significant human health effect at off-site sensitive receptors. The peak daily operational regional emissions for the Project would not result in exceedance over the SCAQMD's significance thresholds. To provide additional context to the Project emissions, SCAQMD's 2016 AQMP provides 162.4 tons per day (324,800 pounds) of VOCs, and 293.1 tons per day (586,200 pounds) of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions basin-wide for the baseline year of 2012. The Project would result in less than 0.01 percent of the emissions modeled in the AQMP. The Project would be consistent with the SCAQMD's AQMP. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

## Mitigation Measures

### **Mitigation Measure 5.2-1:** Construction Emissions

- During construction, the Project shall use 2010 and newer diesel haul trucks (e.g., material delivery trucks) and, if the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning determines 2010 model year or newer diesel trucks cannot be obtained, the Project shall use trucks that meet EPA 2007 model year NOx emissions requirements.
- During construction, 25 percent of the on-site construction equipment shall meet EPA Tier 4 Final standards and the remaining 75 percent shall meet Tier 3/Tier 4 Interim emission standards for all offroad diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 hp. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with best available control technology (BACT) devices certified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).
- The Project Developer shall provide to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning a copy of each unit's certified tier specification, BACT documentation, and CARB or South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) operating permit at the time of mobilization of each applicable unit of equipment.
- The Project Developer shall provide incentives to encourage construction contractors to apply for SCAQMD "SOON" funds, which provides funds to accelerate cleanup of off-road diesel vehicles, such as heavy-duty construction equipment.

**Mitigation Measure 5.2-2:** The Project Developer shall implement additional dust suppression measures during project construction, in the form of more frequent water dust suppression and other control measures that are beyond the SCAQMD Dust Control Plan requirements. These additional dust suppression measures shall be implemented prior to, during, and immediately following ground-disturbing activities and shall be incorporated into the SCAQMD's Dust Control Plan. These additional measures shall, at a minimum, include, the following:



- Increased frequency of watering, above and beyond SCAQMD Dust Control Plan requirements, of on-site unpaved roads, off-site unpaved roads used for site access, and active construction areas if wind speeds exceed 25 mph or if temperatures exceed 95 degrees Fahrenheit for three consecutive days. The additional dust suppression shall continue until winds are 15 mph or lower and ambient air temperatures are below 90 degrees for at least two consecutive days;
- Paved streets adjacent to the Project site shall be swept as needed to remove silt that may have accumulated from construction activities so as to prevent excessive amounts of dust;
- All material excavated or graded shall be sufficiently watered to prevent excessive amounts of dust. Watering shall occur at least twice daily with complete coverage, preferably in the late morning and after work is done for the day;
- All trucks hauling excavated or graded material onsite shall comply with State Vehicle Code Section 23114 regarding the prevention of such material spilling onto public streets by use of shed boards, truck covers, and other protective measures; and
- A copy of the SCAQMD approved Dust Control Plan shall be submitted to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning prior to the issuance of construction related permits.

**Mitigation Measure 5.2-3:**

Prior to the issuance of any construction related permits, the Project Developer shall prepare and implement a worker training program that describes the potential health hazards associated with Valley Fever, common symptoms, proper safety procedures to minimize health hazards, and notification procedures if suspected work-related symptoms are identified during construction. Additionally, this training program shall include worker training on the implementation requirements in the SCAQMD approved Dust Control Plan. Copies of the training program shall be provided to the County of Los Angeles

Department of Regional Planning. The worker training program shall identify safety measures to be implemented by construction contractors during construction. These measures shall include the following:

- HEPA-filtered, air-conditioned enclosed cabs shall be provided on heavy equipment when available. Workers shall be trained on the proper use of cabs, such as turning on air conditioning prior to using the equipment;
- Communication methods, such as two-way radios, shall be provided for use by workers in enclosed cabs;
- Personal protective equipment (PPE), such as half-mask and/or full-mask respirators equipped with particulate filtration, shall be provided to workers active in dusty work areas upon request;
- Separate, clean eating areas with hand-washing facilities shall be provided for construction workers; and
- Equipment, vehicles, and other items shall be cleaned before they are moved off-site to other work locations.

## ***2. Air Quality Standard***

**Threshold:** Would the Project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard? (Threshold 5.2-2)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Construction-related regional daily emissions at the Project site would exceed the SCAQMD's regional significance threshold for NO<sub>x</sub> without mitigation. In terms of localized air quality impacts, construction of the Project would have a significant cumulative impact with regard to particulate matter emissions. With implementation of **MM 5.2-1**, these impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. Operational emissions from Project buildout would not exceed SCAQMD's threshold for all criteria pollutants, nor would the Project exceed State and federal ambient air quality standards. Therefore, criteria pollutant air emissions would not be cumulatively considerable. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation.

## Mitigation Measures

### **Mitigation Measure 5.2-1: Construction Emissions**

- During construction, the Project shall use 2010 and newer diesel haul trucks (e.g., material delivery trucks) and, if the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning determines 2010 model year or newer diesel trucks cannot be obtained, the Project shall use trucks that meet EPA 2007 model year NOx emissions requirements.
- During construction, 25 percent of the on-site construction equipment shall meet EPA Tier 4 Final standards and the remaining 75 percent shall meet Tier 3/Tier 4 Interim emission standards for all offroad diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 hp. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with best available control technology (BACT) devices certified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).
- The Project Developer shall provide to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning a copy of each unit's certified tier specification, BACT documentation, and CARB or South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) operating permit at the time of mobilization of each applicable unit of equipment.
- The Project Developer shall provide incentives to encourage construction contractors to apply for SCAQMD "SOON" funds, which provides funds to accelerate cleanup of off-road diesel vehicles, such as heavy-duty construction equipment.

## ***3. Sensitive Receptors***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations? (Threshold 5.2-3)

**Finding 3:** Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project would constitute a new emission source of DPM and other air toxics due to its construction activities. The Project-related annual concentration of DPM cannot exceed

5.0  $\mu\text{m}^3$ ; resulting in a chronic health impact of greater than 1.0, the SCAQMD thresholds of significance. With implementation of MM 5.2-1, the maximum cancer risk from Project construction emissions would be 5.5 in 10 million (5.5E-07). The maximum cancer risks would occur at residential receptors (also known as the maximum exposed individual or MEI) along the southern and southwestern VTTM site boundary. The chronic and acute health impact would be  $<0.0001$ , based on a maximum annual TAC concentration, which primarily consists of DPM. Further, nearby residents, as well as construction workers within the Project site, could be exposed to Valley Fever from fugitive dust generated during construction. Implementation of **MM 5.2-2** and **MM 5.2-3** would provide personal protective respiratory equipment to construction workers and provide information to all construction personnel about Valley Fever. Accordingly, potential unknown exposure to Valley Fever would be reduced.

Project operations would generate only minor amounts of diesel emissions from residential and commercial delivery trucks and incidental maintenance activities. Trucks would comply with the applicable provisions of the CARB Truck and Bus regulation to minimize and reduce emission from existing diesel trucks. Potential localized CO concentrations from induced traffic at nearby intersections are addressed consistent with the methodologies and assumptions used in the consistency analysis provided in the SCAQMD 2003 AQMP. The Project would add 3,309 daily trips to the area with a maximum of 204 AM peak hour trips and 326 PM peak hour trips. As such, it would not produce the volume of traffic required to generate a CO hotspot. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation.

Based on the uses expected on the Project site, potential long-term operational impacts associated with the release of TACs would be minimal and would not be expected to exceed the SCAQMD thresholds of significance. The Project is not anticipated to use hazardous materials in appreciable quantities. TAC emissions are not expected to occur in conjunction with operation of the proposed development and compliance with the permit would reduce TACs. The Chiquita Canyon Sanitary Landfill uses flaring operations to control methane gas emissions and the project site could be exposed to toxic emissions generated by these operations, which emit minor amounts of TACs, such as benzene, carbon tetrachloride, chloroform, dichlorobenzene, ethylene dichloride, perchloroethylene, and vinyl chloride. The maximum combined construction and operational impact cancer risk would be 9.3 in one million, which is less than the SCAQMD's acceptable risk level of ten in one million. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

## Mitigation Measures

### **Mitigation Measure 5.2-1:** Construction Emissions

- During construction, the Project shall use 2010 and newer diesel haul trucks (e.g., material delivery trucks) and, if the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning determines 2010 model year or newer diesel trucks cannot be obtained, the Project shall use trucks that meet EPA 2007 model year NOx emissions requirements.
- During construction, 25 percent of the on-site construction equipment shall meet EPA Tier 4 Final standards and the remaining 75 percent shall meet Tier 3/Tier 4 Interim emission standards for all offroad diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 hp. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with best available control technology (BACT) devices certified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).
- The Project Developer shall provide to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning a copy of each unit's certified tier specification, BACT documentation, and CARB or South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) operating permit at the time of mobilization of each applicable unit of equipment.
- The Project Developer shall provide incentives to encourage construction contractors to apply for SCAQMD "SOON" funds, which provides funds to accelerate cleanup of off-road diesel vehicles, such as heavy-duty construction equipment.

**Mitigation Measure 5.2-2:** The Project Developer shall implement additional dust suppression measures during project construction, in the form of more frequent water dust suppression and other control measures that are beyond the SCAQMD Dust Control Plan requirements. These additional dust suppression measures shall be implemented prior to, during, and immediately following ground-disturbing activities and shall be incorporated into the SCAQMD's Dust Control Plan. These additional measures shall, at a minimum, include, the following:

- Increased frequency of watering, above and beyond SCAQMD Dust Control Plan requirements, of on-site unpaved roads, off-site unpaved roads used for site access, and active construction areas if wind speeds exceed 25 mph or if temperatures exceed 95 degrees Fahrenheit for three consecutive days. The additional dust suppression shall continue until winds are 15 mph or lower and ambient air temperatures are below 90 degrees for at least two consecutive days;
- Paved streets adjacent to the Project site shall be swept as needed to remove silt that may have accumulated from construction activities so as to prevent excessive amounts of dust;
- All material excavated or graded shall be sufficiently watered to prevent excessive amounts of dust. Watering shall occur at least twice daily with complete coverage, preferably in the late morning and after work is done for the day;
- All trucks hauling excavated or graded material onsite shall comply with State Vehicle Code Section 23114 regarding the prevention of such material spilling onto public streets by use of shed boards, truck covers, and other protective measures; and
- A copy of the SCAQMD approved Dust Control Plan shall be submitted to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning prior to the issuance of construction related permits.

**Mitigation Measure 5.2-3:**

Prior to the issuance of any construction related permits, the Project Developer shall prepare and implement a worker training program that describes the potential health hazards associated with Valley Fever, common symptoms, proper safety procedures to minimize health hazards, and notification procedures if suspected work-related symptoms are identified during construction. Additionally, this training program shall include worker training on the implementation requirements in the SCAQMD approved Dust Control Plan. Copies of the training program shall be provided to the County of Los Angeles

Department of Regional Planning. The worker training program shall identify safety measures to be implemented by construction contractors during construction. These measures shall include the following:

- HEPA-filtered, air-conditioned enclosed cabs shall be provided on heavy equipment when available. Workers shall be trained on the proper use of cabs, such as turning on air conditioning prior to using the equipment;
- Communication methods, such as two-way radios, shall be provided for use by workers in enclosed cabs;
- Personal protective equipment (PPE), such as half-mask and/or full-mask respirators equipped with particulate filtration, shall be provided to workers active in dusty work areas upon request;
- Separate, clean eating areas with hand-washing facilities shall be provided for construction workers; and
- Equipment, vehicles, and other items shall be cleaned before they are moved off-site to other work locations.

## **C. Biological Resources**

### ***1. Habitat Modification***

**Threshold:** Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)? (Threshold 5.3-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Direct permanent and temporary impacts to vegetation communities within the Project site are summarized in Table 5.3-10 of the Draft EIR. Excluding disturbed and developed land covers, the Project would result in the potential permanent loss of approximately 98.9 acres from Project-related grading activities and approximately 6.7 acres from fuel modification zone maintenance activities after Project construction, or a total of approximately 105.6 acres which account for approximately 65 percent of the Project site.

The Project site contains approximately 57.64 acres of suitable habitat for the slender mariposa lily. Habitat supporting documented slender mariposa lily occupies a cumulative footprint of 0.092 acre based on a 3-foot buffer radius applied to each point and polygon of slender mariposa lily mapped. This 0.092 acre is composed of 0.044 acre of the VTTM site, 0.017 acre of the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, 0.004 acre of the Off-Site Water Tank Area, and 0.028 acre of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area. Of the 0.092 acres of occupied slender mariposa lily habitat, 0.064 acre would be impacted. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure MM 5.3-1** includes the preparation of a Conservation Easement and Conservation Management Plan that provides for the off-site preservation and the translocation of impacted slender mariposa lily individuals through a Slender Mariposa Lily Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, would reduce potentially significant impacts to slender mariposa lily to less than significant.

Peirson's morning-glory was detected within the VTTM site, the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area. Approximately 145.0 acres of suitable habitat exists within the Project site for Pierson's morning-glory. Implementation of **MM 5.3-1**, which includes the preparation of a Conservation Easement and Conservation Management Plan, would preserve in perpetuity approximately 37.9 acres of Pierson's morning-glory habitat and identifies management practices that would reduce potential impacts to Peirson's morning-glory to less than significant.

A single Southern California black walnut tree documented at the VTTM site was adjacent to an existing residence surrounded by ornamental vegetation and non-native grasslands, including annual brome grassland. This tree will be removed during Project construction. There are no native woodlands or native tree stands documented near the Southern California black walnut tree to indicate a natural occurrence of this individual. Due to the low sensitivity status of this species, the observations being within the known geographic range of this species, the tree not being recorded in native habitat or other native woodlands nearby, potential impacts to the Southern California black walnut tree would be less than significant.

California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and San Diegan tiger whiptail generally inhabit grassland, coastal scrub, chaparral, riparian, and woodland communities, which total approximately 147.4 acres within the Project site when excluding disturbed and developed land. The Project would result in permanent direct impacts to 98.9 acres from grading operations of suitable on-site habitat. **MM 5.3-2, MM 5.3-3, MM 5.3-7, and MM 5.3-8** would include: (1) A Worker Education and Awareness Program; (2) Construction Fencing; (3) Biological Monitoring; and (4) Reptile Pre-construction Survey and Relocation. With implementation, Project impacts during construction activities on California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and San Diegan tiger whiptail would be less than significant.



Project construction would potentially result in direct impacts to nesting and foraging habitat for nesting birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and/or the CFGC, including special-status species Cooper's hawk, loggerhead shrike, oak titmouse, southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, and burrowing owl and could directly affect individuals, including nests, eggs, and young. Project construction activities would potentially impact approximately 98.9 acres of suitable nesting and foraging habitat for these bird species on site. The Project would include the implementation of **MM 5.3-2** (worker education and awareness training), **MM 5.3-3** (installation of construction fencing), **MM 5.3-4** (implementation of a weed control plan during construction), **MM 5.3-7** (biological monitoring), and **MM 5.3-9**, which includes a Pre-construction Nesting Bird Survey during construction. Potential impacts would be further reduced by implementation of **MM 5.3-14**, **MM 5.3-15**, and **MM 5.3-16**. Accordingly, construction-related impacts to nesting birds would be less than significant.

No burrowing owls were recorded during protocol surveys within the Project site, as such burrowing owls are not expected to occur on a regular basis. However, if a burrowing owl individual were present at the time of construction it could potentially be killed or injured during ground-disturbing activities. To reduce impacts to burrowing owl individuals, implementation of recommended measure **MM 5.3-10**, which requires a pre-construction burrowing owl survey, would reduce impacts to less than significant.

The Project would result in permanent, direct impacts to 105.7 acres of suitable habitat for American badger, San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit, and San Diego desert woodrat. While American badger and San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit adults are highly mobile and can usually escape human disturbances, young dependent on the nest would be highly vulnerable to injury and mortality during construction. San Diego desert woodrats are reliant on their middens. Based on the analysis, the Project has the potential to cause significant direct impacts to San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit, American badger, and San Diego desert woodrat. However, the Project would implement **MM 5.3-2** (Worker Education and Awareness Program), **MM 5.3-3** (Construction Fencing), and **MM 5.3-7** (Biological Monitoring), as described above. **MM 5.3-26** (Sensitive Species Protection Plan) would require preparation of a Sensitive Species Protection Plan by a qualified biologist prior to issuance of grading permits and at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of vegetation removal or grading activities. Additionally, recommended mitigation **MM 5.3-11** through **MM 5.3-13** would be implemented during Project construction activities, including: conducting (1) preconstruction surveys for San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit; (2) pre-construction surveys for American Badger; and (3) pre-construction surveys for San Diego desert woodrat. Finally, implementation of **MM 5.3-1** would preserve approximately 37.9 acres, in perpetuity, of potential habitat for wildlife species. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Mountain lions are large predatory mammals that prefer areas with dense undergrowth and cover in deserts, humid coast forests, arid hillsides, and scrub and oak woodlands. Species-specific surveys and wildlife camera surveys were not conducted; however, there is high potential to move through the Project site based on presence of suitable habitat and presence of their primary prey item, the mule deer. Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) was occasionally observed foraging and moving through the Project site, specifically within the VTTM site on three occasions (5/20/2020, 6/22/2020, and 6/22/2020). However, mountain lions or their sign (i.e., scat and/or tracks) were not observed on the Project site during 2016, 2017, 2018 or 2020 surveys conducted by biologists which consisted of over 248 person hours. **Mitigation Measure MM 5.3-25** and **MM 5.3-28** will be implemented to avoid any potential impacts to mountain lions. Due to temporary presence of mountain lions, their mobile nature, and abundant suitable habitat present in the Los Angeles County Santa Clara River SEA and Santa Felicia SEA, the South Coast Missing Linkages Sierra Madre – Castaic Connection and Santa Monica – Sierra Madre Connection, and the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project Essential Connectivity Areas to the northwest, west, and southwest of the Project site, direct impacts to mountain lions and suitable habitat would be less than significant.

Trash generated by construction personnel, such as food packaging and cigarette butts, also can be dispersed by wind and water into natural areas. Pest and predatory species, such as American crows, common ravens, coyotes, striped skunks, and northern raccoons may be attracted to discarded food. Increased human activity over the long term is also expected to increase the amount of trash and garbage in open space areas. Implementation of **MM 5.3-14** requires trash and garbage receptacles in common areas/parks to be designed to discourage wildlife foraging.

Common, not sensitive, vegetation communities provide suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species that have potential to occur within the Project site. Potential impacts to special-status wildlife species are addressed by species with appropriate mitigation and the loss of suitable habitat would not result in significant impacts to these wildlife species. The establishment of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area, as indicated in **MM 5.3-1** (Conservation Easement), preserves adjacent natural habitats which can be utilized by special-status wildlife species. Additionally, implementation of recommended **MM 5.3-14** (Homeowner Association Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions), **MM 5.3-15** (Trash Receptacles), and **MM 5.3-16** (Lighting), **MM 5.3-23** (Pet Signage), and **MM 5.3-24** (Wildlife Signage) would reduce impacts to special-status wildlife species. Additionally, to minimize invasive, non-native plant species, implementation of recommended **MM 5.3-4** (Weed Control Plan) would ensure weed control treatments are utilized during both construction activities and post construction through a homeowner association; implementation of **MM 5.3-5** (Landscaping Plan) would require a landscaping plan for the HOA-

maintained areas be prepared and submitted to the County Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-1: Conservation Easement.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits for the Project, to address impacts to habitat for slender mariposa lily, Peirson's morning glory, and sensitive vegetation communities (Rhus trilobata association [S3, riparian], and Palmer's goldenbush scrub [S3?<sup>1</sup>]), the Project Developer shall record a conservation easement, after review, input, and approval by the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, over the 37.9-acre Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area.

There shall be no grading or other construction activities allowed within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement boundaries. The conservation easement shall prohibit entry into the preserved area with the installation and maintenance of protective measures such as fencing and signage, and trash removal. Controlled entry shall be allowed for approved work, including monitoring and maintenance efforts, implementation of the Slender Mariposa Lily Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (SMLMMP), or for other activities associated with preserve management. The conservation easement shall prohibit development of any kind within the preserved area in perpetuity. The conservation easement shall also specify allowable uses in the preserved area, if any. Signage shall include information on the organization that holds the conservation easement, descriptions of the restoration activities, protection of biological resources, and restrictions to human access. Signage shall designate if permitted access is allowed within the conservation easement and if so, shall designate that humans and domesticated pets shall remain within designated areas, all domesticated pets shall be on leashes, owners shall clean up after domesticated pets, and that smoking is prohibited. If access is permitted

---

<sup>1</sup> A question mark (?) denotes an inexact numeric rank due to insufficient samples over the full expected range of the type, but existing information points to this rank (CDFW 2019a).

in designated areas, dog waste bag dispensers and wildlife-proof receptacles for trash shall be provided. The conservation easement holder shall be an entity which has as part of its mission the protection of the environment, including lands, plant species, and/ or wildlife species, and is expected by its organization and history to remain in existence for the foreseeable future.

As part of recording the conservation easement, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) shall be prepared that specifically identifies the required resource management activities and the entities that shall be responsible for managing those activities in perpetuity. The CMP shall include a SMLMMP to be approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the County of Los Angeles. The SMLMMP shall provide guidance and methods to preserve the slender mariposa lily individuals known to occur within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, along with a program of slender mariposa lily seed collection and dispersal within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. The SMLMMP shall also include methods and approach to translocating slender mariposa lily individuals proposed for impact into the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. The SMLMMP shall be developed and implemented with a program that does not conflict with other conservation easement resource management objectives. The SMLMMP shall include, at minimum 5:1, mitigation for impacts to 171 slender mariposa lily individuals, as well as preservation of the existing population of slender mariposa lily individuals already documented within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. The 5:1 mitigation ratio for planted mariposa lilies shall be affected through overplanting at 10:1 (mitigation plantings: impacted individuals), in order to accommodate potential mortality of slender mariposa lily individuals and the difficulty of censusing populations due to low frequency of flowering.

The Slender Mariposa Lily Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (SMLMMP) shall include annual pre-construction surveys of the Project impact areas, Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, and open space

areas within the VTTM site to map and flag slender mariposa lily individuals recording the location and quantities of slender mariposa lily for seed collection (Project impact area, Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, and open space areas within the VTTM site) and translocation (from the Project impact area to the Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement). Seed collection shall occur for a minimum of two years. If Project construction is delayed additional annual surveys and seed collection may occur. Seeds shall be collected once the seed has matured, but prior to the seed capsules opening to disperse the seed. Seeds shall be stored in breathable paper bags in a cool, dry, and dark place until they can be planted within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. Upon establishment of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, seed shall be sowed within appropriate habitat in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement.

During pre-construction surveys, slender mariposa lily individual locations will be marked with a high-accuracy GPS unit and a permanent marker established in the field to locate the individuals for bulb collection. Bulbs shall remain in the ground until project development. Prior to Project development, the bulbs and adjacent topsoil (including associated microorganisms and mycorrhizal fungi) shall be translocated within appropriate habitat in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement as directed by the SMLMMP.

The SMLMMP shall provide details on site preparation measures, as well as specific methods for the pre-construction collection of slender mariposa lily seeds and the harvest of bulbs from impacted populations. The SMLMMP shall also provide detailed methods for the dispersal of that seed, and the translocation of the harvested bulbs, into the conservation easement areas. Finally, the SMLMMP shall provide a schedule and action plan for the maintenance and monitoring programs, including success criteria, and remedial contingency measures to be implemented if efforts are not successful. During slender mariposa lily monitoring, the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation

easement shall be surveyed for slender mariposa lilies including the translocated bulb and seed locations recorded with a high-accuracy GPS unit and permanent field markers. Slender mariposa lily monitoring data shall include data on both blooming and vegetative slender mariposa lily individuals to track the success of establishment.

The CMP and the SMLMMP shall identify the frequency of weed management and monitoring activities to document on-site special-status plant population dynamics, and general vegetation community composition and status. In addition to routine and as needed weed management, the CMP shall include an eradication program specific to the non-native tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) individuals, along with a program to replace those nonnative trees with native trees appropriate to the habitat.

Monitoring shall take place annually and in perpetuity from the time of establishment of the conservation easement. If it appears that the population of any special-status plant species or the vegetation community composition and status are on the decline or have been degraded, remedial activities shall be implemented according to the CMP and the SMLMMP. These activities may include weed control, additional seeding, native plant establishment, or other activities where appropriate. If slender mariposa lily seeding and translocation at the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement results in failure of progressing towards a self-sustaining population, understanding that populations vary greatly annually due to environmental conditions, achieving the 5:1 (mitigation plantings: impacted individuals) mitigation ratio for planted mariposa lilies. However, growth and development of SML can vary greatly with seasonal (i.e., winter/spring) environmental conditions. Therefore, the need for remedial action will be assessed in consideration of growth and development of the mitigation population relative to nearby reference populations, and remedial actions will be triggered when the mitigation population is observed to trend negatively in direct comparison to other SML reference populations. To supplement the shortfalls of slender mariposa lily mitigation at the Off-Site Open

Space Dedication Area conservation easement, a contingency measure including additional off-site, in-kind preservation of slender mariposa lilies within the County shall be implemented at 10:1 (mitigation plantings: impacted individuals) to cumulatively achieve the 5:1 mitigation ratio.

Annual monitoring reports shall be submitted by August 31 of each year and shall include: an evaluation of current monitoring data in relation to previous population observations (during previous monitoring years) and native enhancement efforts. These reports shall also include any recommendations for remedial management measures and shall discuss other issues that need to be addressed, such as trespassing or vandalism.

Prior to Project construction, a Property Analysis Record (PAR) or alternatively approved costing evaluation shall be conducted to determine two cost components (1) initial and capital costs and (2) perpetual costs (endowment). Funding, as a condition of obtaining the conservation easement, shall be contributed in an amount sufficient to pay all costs for overseeing the conservation easement in perpetuity. This funding requirement includes, but is not limited to, staff time, biological survey costs, monitoring and reporting, conducting weed removal, and other management activities required under the terms of the conservation easement, the CMP and the SMLMMP. The funding amount shall be subject to approval of the conservation easement holder. A separate endowment fund shall also be created by the owner/developer that shall be held by the conservation easement holder. This endowment fund shall be established in an amount that is calculated to provide, in ten years, the conservation easement holder with sufficient funds for ongoing monitoring and management of the conservation easement in perpetuity.

The intent of the conservation easement shall be to protect, in perpetuity, viable native habitat that can support not just the known populations of slender mariposa lily and Peirson's morning-glory, but also the translocated slender mariposa lily populations, along with the other

native plant and wildlife species that occur in the conserved coastal sage scrub habitat.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-2:**

**Worker Education and Awareness Program.** Prior to issuance of grading permits for the Project, the Project Developer shall fund the development of a worker education awareness program (WEAP) by a County-approved biologist for the Project and submit the WEAP to the County of the Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The WEAP shall be attended by all individuals involved in construction of the Project prior to working on the Project and shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Natural history and photographs of special-status plant species and special-status wildlife species, current sensitivity status, reasons for decline, and protective measures relevant to the species and habitats;
- Description of sensitive vegetation communities and jurisdictional resources and associated construction-limit staking, and biological monitoring during vegetation clearing and grading activities;
- Active nesting birds and associated set-back work buffers in accordance with federal and state regulations;
- Litter guidelines including direction not to litter and to pick up and store all trash and litter securely at the construction site at the end of each day; and
- Avoidance of driving over or otherwise disturbing areas outside the designated construction areas.
- The WEAP shall be submitted to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval 30 days prior to implementation. Prior to entering the Project site for construction work, all workers shall attend the WEAP. Upon completion of the WEAP, attendees shall sign training attendance sheets.



**Mitigation Measure 5.3-3:**      **Construction Fencing.** Prior to commencement of any ground-disturbing activities, construction fencing shall be installed to identify the limits of grading/disturbance as well as buffer areas, which would reduce potential human trampling outside of the construction limits and minimize the potential spread of non-native weeds or invasive plants. A County-approved biologist shall inspect construction fencing once installation is complete.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-4:**      **Weed Control Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall retain a County-approved, qualified restoration ecologist or biologist to prepare a comprehensive adaptive Weed Control Plan (WCP) to be implemented during the construction and operation of the Project and submit the WCP to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The Project's homeowner's association shall implement the WCP within the landscaped areas of the Project to minimize weed invasion into open space areas. The WCP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Weed control treatments shall include legally permitted herbicide, manual, and mechanical methods approved for application. The application of herbicides shall comply with state and federal laws and regulations under the prescription of a Pest Control Advisor, with the concurrence of the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning and shall be implemented by a Licensed Qualified Applicator. Herbicides shall not be applied during or within 72 hours of a forecasted measurable rain event or during high wind conditions that could cause spray drift onto native vegetation. Where manual or mechanical methods are used, plant debris shall be disposed of at an appropriate off-site location. The timing of the weed control treatment shall be determined for each plant species with the goal of controlling populations before they start producing seeds. Consultation with a County-approved, qualified wildlife biologist or botanist shall be required prior to weed control treatments to develop strategies to avoid any adverse impacts to plants and wildlife in the area;

- Invasive plant species (designated by California Invasive Plant Council) shall not be included in the landscaping plan as they could establish off-site and have negative impacts to the adjacent habitats;
- All seeds and straw materials used during Project construction and operation shall be weed-free rice straw or other weed-free product, and all gravel and fill material shall be weed free. If straw wattles are used, they shall not be encased in plastic mesh. All plant materials used during restoration shall be native, certified weed-free, and approved by the County Department of Regional Planning; and
- Prior to entry to the Project area for the first time, equipment must be free of soil and debris on tires, wheel wells, vehicle undercarriages, and other surfaces (a high-pressure washer and/or compressed air may be used to ensure that soil and debris are completely removed). Compliance with the provision is achieved by on-site inspection and verification or by demonstrating that the vehicle or equipment has been cleaned at a commercial vehicle or appropriate truck washing facility. In addition, the interior of equipment (cabs, etc.) must be free of mud, soil, gravel and other debris (interiors may be vacuumed or washed).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-5:**

**Landscaping Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall prepare a Landscaping Plan for the homeowner association (HOA)-maintained areas and submit the Landscaping Plan to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The Landscaping Plan for the HOA-maintained areas shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Plant species list including scientific name, common name, plant container size, and quantities;
- Plantings shall be in accordance with the County of Los Angeles Fire Department Fuel Modification Guidelines (Los Angeles County Fire Department 2011);

- Invasive plant species (designated by California Invasive Plant Council) shall not be included in the Landscaping Plan as they could establish off-site and have negative impacts to the adjacent habitats;
- Plant layout indicating the location of the plant species;
- Planting notes to include plant installation requirements such as mulch requirements; and
- Where native species are required, the species shall be indigenous native species of the region (locally indigenous native species).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-6:**      **Fire Protection Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall prepare a Fire Protection Plan (FPP) that meets County Fire Department requirements and submit the FPP to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The FPP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- All construction equipment shall be equipped with appropriate spark arrestors and carry fire extinguishers;
- Provisions for fire/emergency services access if roadway blockage occurs due to large loads during construction; and
- Cleared, maintained parking areas shall be designated; no parking shall be allowed in non-designated areas.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-7:**      **Biological Monitoring.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The Project Developer shall fund a County-approved Biological Monitor during Project construction to monitor construction activities and to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures. The Biological Monitor shall be present on site during all vegetation removal and during all of the initial ground disturbance activities for all aspects of the Project and shall regularly inspect the Project site as needed after the initial ground disturbances to ensure that all mitigation measures are being

implemented. The Biological Monitor shall ensure that wildlife do not become entrapped in excavations. Safeguards shall be implemented during daytime periods of non-activity and overnight, such as placing a platform over the entire excavation site, flush with the ground surface, installing escape ramps in trenches, or exclusionary fencing. Shall relocation be required; construction shall be halted until the Biological Monitor arrives on site and clears the work area (in compliance with all applicable permits and authorizations).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-8:**

**Reptile Pre-construction Survey and Relocation.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. Within thirty days prior to ground-disturbance activities associated with construction or grading activities for the Project, suitable habitat shall be surveyed to capture and relocate California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and San Diegan tiger whiptail individuals. A qualified biologist in possession of a valid California Scientific Collecting Permit shall conduct the survey. The survey shall be timed to maximize capture of individual lizards and include a spring survey if construction is planned to begin in the spring or a late summer or fall survey if construction is planned to begin in the winter. Additional pre-construction clearance surveys shall be conducted such that no more than fourteen days have elapsed between conclusion of the survey and the commencement of construction activities. Any California legless lizard, Blainville's horned lizard, and/or San Diegan tiger whiptail observed within the grading area shall be relocated to a suitable area within the preservation area and outside of the construction zone.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-9:**

**Pre-construction Nesting Bird Survey.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning (LACDRP) for review and approval. Within thirty days of ground-disturbing activities associated with construction or grading for the Project that would occur during the nesting/breeding season of native bird species potentially nesting on the site (typically February 15 but as early as

January 1 for some raptors through September 15 in the Project region, or as determined by a County-approved biologist), suitable habitat shall be surveyed within seven days prior to initiation of disturbance work by a County-approved biologist to determine if active nests (actively breeding or nesting) of bird species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and/or the CFGC are present in the disturbance zone or within 300 feet (500 feet for raptors) of the disturbance zone. If initiation of ground-disturbing activities is delayed, then additional pre-disturbance surveys shall be conducted such that no more than seven days will have elapsed between the survey and ground-disturbing activities.

If active nests are found, clearing and construction within 300 feet of the nest (500 feet for raptors) shall be postponed or halted. At the discretion of the County-approved biologist, a no work buffer zone shall be established suitable to the particular bird species and location of the nest until the nest is vacated and juveniles have fledged, as determined by the County-approved biologist, and there is no evidence of a second attempt at nesting. Limits of construction to avoid an active nest shall be established in the field with flagging, fencing, or other appropriate barriers, and construction personnel shall be instructed on the sensitivity of nest areas. The County-approved biologist shall serve as a construction monitor during those periods when construction activities will occur near active nest areas to ensure that no inadvertent impacts to these nests occur. The results of the surveys, showing the locations of any active nests detected, and documentation of any avoidance measures taken, shall be submitted to the County Department of Regional Planning to document compliance with applicable State and federal laws.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-10: Pre-construction Burrowing Owl Survey.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. Not less than 14 days prior to construction ground-disturbing activities, a survey for burrowing owls shall be conducted by a County-approved biologist within appropriate habitat, and in accordance with approved methodologies (CDFG 2012). If

burrowing owls are found on the Project site, and pursuant to agency guidelines, a protective buffer shall be established around the occupied burrow(s) and no ground-disturbing activities shall be permitted within the buffer area (CDFG 2012). The size of the buffer shall be determined as set forth in the Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012), based on the disturbance level of construction activities, whether the owl(s) are present during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31) or nonbreeding season (September 1 through January 31), and as determined by the County-approved biologist. The protective buffer around active burrows shall be maintained until the County approved biologist verifies that the birds have vacated the burrow(s) and left the site.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-11: Pre-construction Surveys for San Diego Black-Tailed Jackrabbit.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. Within thirty days prior to construction activities in grassland, scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, or other suitable habitat, a County-approved biologist shall conduct a survey within the proposed construction disturbance zone and within 200 feet of the disturbance zone, within the limits of the Project site, for San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit.

If San Diego black-tailed jackrabbits are present, non-breeding rabbits shall be flushed from areas to be disturbed. Dens, depressions, nests, or burrows occupied by pups shall be flagged and ground-disturbing activities shall avoid the area within 200 feet of these occupied areas during the pup-rearing season (February 15 through July 1). This buffer may be reduced based on the location of the den upon consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Occupied maternity dens, depressions, nests, or burrows shall be flagged for avoidance, and a biological monitor shall be present during construction. If unattended young are discovered, they shall be relocated to suitable habitat by a County-approved biologist. The Project Developer shall document all San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit identified, avoided, or

moved and provide a written report to CDFW within 72 hours of identification, avoidance, or movement.

Collection and relocation of animals shall only occur with the proper scientific collection and handling permits.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-12: Pre-construction Surveys for American Badger.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. Within thirty days prior to construction activities in grassland, scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, or other suitable habitat, a County approved biologist shall conduct a survey within the proposed construction disturbance zone and within 200 feet of the disturbance zone, within the limits of the Project site, for American badger.

If American badgers are present, occupied habitat shall be flagged and ground-disturbing activities shall avoid the area within 50 feet of the occupied den. Maternity dens shall be avoided during the pup-rearing season (February 15 through July 1) and a minimum 200-foot buffer established. This buffer may be reduced based on the location of the den upon consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Maternity dens shall be flagged for avoidance, identified on construction maps, and a County-approved biologist shall be present during construction. If avoidance of a non-maternity den is not feasible, badgers shall be relocated either by trapping or by slowly excavating the burrow (either by hand or mechanized equipment under the direct supervision of the biologist, removing no more than four inches at a time) before or after the rearing season (February 15 through July 1). Any relocation of badgers shall occur only after consultation with CDFW. A written report documenting the badger removal shall be provided to CDFW within 30 days of relocation.

Collection and relocation of animals shall only occur with the proper scientific collection and handling permits.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-13: Pre-construction Surveys for San Diego Desert Woodrat.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. Within thirty days prior to construction activities in grassland, scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, or other suitable habitat, a County-approved biologist shall conduct a survey within the proposed construction disturbance zone and within 200 feet of the disturbance zone, within the limits of the Project site, for San Diego desert woodrat.

If active San Diego desert woodrat nests (stick houses) are identified within the disturbance zone or within 100 feet of the disturbance zone, a fence shall be erected around the nest site adequate to provide the woodrat sufficient foraging habitat at the discretion of the County-approved biologist in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Clearing and construction within the fenced area shall be postponed or halted until young have left the nest. The biologist shall serve as a construction monitor during those periods when disturbance activities occur near active nest areas to ensure that no inadvertent impacts to these nests occur. If avoidance is not possible, the Project Developer shall take the following sequential steps: (1) all understory vegetation shall be cleared in the area immediately surrounding active nests followed by a period of one night without further disturbance to allow woodrats to vacate the nest, (2) each occupied nest shall then be disturbed by a County-approved biologist until all woodrats leave the nest and seek refuge off site, and (3) the nest sticks shall be removed from the Project site and piled at the base of a nearby hardwood tree (preferably a coast live oak or Southern California black walnut). Relocated nests shall not be spaced closer than 100 feet apart, unless a County-approved biologist has determined that a specific habitat can support a higher density of nests. The Project Developer shall document all woodrat nests moved and provide a written report to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).



All woodrat relocation shall be conducted by a County-approved biologist in possession of a scientific collecting permit.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-14: Homeowner Association Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the homeowner association Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The homeowner association Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions shall include the following requirements to reduce potential human impacts on adjacent habitats and wildlife species:

- All dogs and cats shall be in compliance with requirements found in Sections 10.20.150 through 10.20.350 of the Los Angeles County Code related to appropriate licensing and tagging, leashed animals when appropriate, ensuring that all dogs and cats are neutered or spayed (or an unaltered license in accordance with Los Angeles County Code), and that all dogs and cats have a microchip.
- Smoking shall be prohibited in open space areas.
- Speed limits shall be posted, and the Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions shall require residents to comply with the posted speed limits.
- Balloons shall not be utilized by the homeowner association for any community events and the use of balloons by individual homeowners shall be discouraged.
- Homeowner reprisals against native wildlife species (i.e., killing or harming native wildlife species in any way) if homeowner pets are killed or harmed by wildlife shall be prohibited.
- Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide use shall be prohibited.
- Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide use shall be prohibited.

- Mitigation Measure 5.3-15:**     **Trash Receptacles.** Trash and garbage shall be controlled in areas adjacent to development with waste and recycling receptacles that discourage wildlife foraging in common areas and parks.
- Mitigation Measure 5.3-16:**     **Lighting.** All lighting along the perimeter of natural areas shall be downcast luminaries with light patterns directed away from natural areas.
- Mitigation Measure 5.3-23:**     **Pet Signage.** Prior to Project completion, the Project Applicant shall install signage requiring pets be kept on leash and on trails at all times. Signage shall also include information signage for hikers encouraging clean-up after pets and discourage animal waste.
- Mitigation Measure 5.3-24:**     **Wildlife Signage.** Prior to Project completion, the Project Applicant shall install appropriate public information signage in the residential area and along the trail to 1) educate and inform the public about wildlife, especially mountain lions, present in the area; 2) advise on proper avoidance measures to reduce human-wildlife conflicts; 3) advise on proper use of open space trails in a manner respectful to wildlife; and 4) provide local contact information to report injured or dead wildlife. Signage shall be written in the language(s) understandable to all those likely to recreate and use the trails. Signage shall not be made of materials harmful to wildlife such as spikes or glass. In addition, the Project Application shall prepare a long-term maintenance plan to repair and replace the signs.
- Mitigation Measure 5.3-25:**     **Mountain Lion Avoidance.** Within one year prior to Project implementation, including site preparation, equipment staging, and mobilization, strategically placed, non-invasive remote wildlife cameras shall be deployed within the VTTM Site to detect the presence/absence of mountain lions. A report documenting the results of the camera survey, including negative findings, shall be submitted to the County and CDFW prior to initiation of Project activities. The survey report shall include measures to avoid impacts on any mountain lions that may be in the area, and also to any dens and cubs that may be in the area, if needed, depending on the results of the camera survey. If a pregnant or lactating (i.e., engorged teats) female mountain lion's images were recorded

regularly by a wildlife camera, a 2,000-foot buffer would be applied from the location of the camera station, which would be assumed to be near the natal den.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-26: Sensitive Species Protection Plan.** Prior to issuance of grading permits and at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of vegetation removal or grading activities, a qualified biologist shall prepare a Sensitive Species Protection Plan (SSPP) for species identified in the DEIR as being potentially present on the project site, including, but not limited to San Diego desert woodrat, San Diegan whiptail, sharp-shinned hawk, oak titmouse, Costa's hummingbird, and Vaux swift. This plan shall be provided to CDFW for their review and comment and shall be approved by LACDRP prior to the issuance of grading permits. For any measures involving proposed species relocations, the SSPP shall identify handling and relocation protocols and a minimum of two relocation sites with suitable, species-specific habitat within 0.25 miles away from the Project site, including a map of suitable relocation locations. The SSPP shall include avoidance and minimization measures as well as mitigation measures to offsite impacts to a specific species and/or its habitat. Written approval from CDFW shall be obtained when the SSPP is finalized. The SSPP shall be amended for any new species observed within or adjacent to the Project area or that CDFW determines may be impacted by Project activities. Species included in the SSPP shall include, but not be limited to, San Diego desert woodrat, San Diegan whiptail, sharp-shinned hawk, oak titmouse, Costa's hummingbird, and Vaux swift.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-28:** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, to mitigate the contribution of the Project to a regional cumulative impact on mountain lion movement: (1) the subdivider shall establish a Conservation Easement over the 37.9-acre Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area and a Conservation Plan prepared and implemented to preserve coastal scrub habitat in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area and a 0.36-acre public trail as illustrated on Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 60257 shall be maintained in perpetuity to maintain movement opportunities for mountain lions between Chiquita Canyon and the Los Padres National Forest (please refer to MM 5.3-1);

and (2) subdivider shall purchase an off-site conservation easement, to be held by a public agency or non-profit conservation planning organization, (a) covering at least 50 acres of equivalent habitat or (b) a smaller area if the following can be demonstrated: (i) within a known mountain lion corridor, or (ii) containing a riparian habitat and adjacent to a known mountain lion corridor, or (iii) within a known or modeled mountain lion movement corridor located in western Los Angeles County or eastern Ventura County, north of State Route-126 and south of the Los Padres National Forest. The conservation easement shall be recorded prior to grading permit issuance. The final size and location of the conservation easement shall be to the satisfaction of the director.

## ***2. Sensitive Natural Communities***

**Threshold:** Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on any sensitive natural communities (e.g., riparian habitat, coastal sage scrub, oak woodlands, non-jurisdictional wetlands) identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by CDFW or USFWS? (Threshold 5.3-2)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The vegetation types within the Project site that are considered sensitive by CDFW and/or the County, as well as under CEQA, include coast live oak woodlands (County sensitive), arroyo willow thickets (riparian), mulefat thickets (riparian), *Rhus trilobata* association (S3, riparian), and Palmer's goldenbush scrub provisional alliance (S3?). Project construction activities within the VTTM site would potentially result in impacts to riparian vegetation communities, including 0.1 acres of arroyo willow thickets and 0.1 acres of mulefat thickets, which represents 100 percent of each of these vegetation communities within the Project site. Approximately 0.8 acres of *Rhus trilobata* association (S3, of which 0.5 acres are riparian) would be potentially affected by Project-related construction activities within the VTTM site, which is approximately 89 percent of the total acreage of this vegetation community within the Project site. Finally, approximately 6.7 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub provisional alliance (S3?) would be potentially affected by Project-related construction activities within the VTTM site, which represent approximately 82 percent of the total acreage of this vegetation community within the Project site.

The Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area would be preserved in perpetuity; thus, preserving known habitat for special status species. Containing 33.3 acres of coastal sage scrub and suitable habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher. Additionally, the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area includes

approximately 5.7 acres of California sagebrush – California buckwheat scrub alliance, approximately 23.9 acres of California sagebrush scrub alliance, approximately 1.4 acres of Palmer’s goldenbush scrub provisional alliance, and approximately 2.3 acres of purple sage scrub alliance. The following mitigation measures would be implemented to reduce potential direct impacts to Palmer’s goldenbush scrub: **MM 5.3-1** (Conservation Easement), **MM 5.3-2** (Worker Education and Awareness Program), **MM 5.3-3** (Construction Fencing), and shall include one of the options in **MM 5.3-17** Palmer’s Goldenbush Scrub Mitigation. Impacts to Palmer’s goldenbush scrub would be less than significant with mitigation. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM 5.3-1** (Conservation Easement), **MM 5.3-2** (Worker Education and Awareness Program), **MM 5.3-3** (Construction Fencing), and **MM 5.3-17** would reduce potential direct impacts to sensitive vegetation communities to less than significant.

Indirect short-term construction effects to vegetation communities may include fugitive dust; runoff, sedimentation, erosion, and chemical pollution; and accidental clearing, grading, and trampling. Compliance with standard regulatory requirements for implementation of BMPs associated with an ESCP and SWPPP and implementation of **MM 5.3-2** (Worker Education and Awareness Program), **MM 5.3-3** (Construction fencing), **MM 5.3-4** (Weed Control Plan), **MM 5.3-5** (Landscaping Plan), **MM 5.3-6** (Fire Protection Plan), and **MM 5.3-7** (Biological Monitoring), would ensure that indirect impacts during construction would be less than significant.

Operational impacts associated with fuel modification would occur as a result of the Project. Impacts within Fuel Modification Zone A and Zone B, which occurs between 0 and 100 feet from future structures, and within Fuel Modification Zone C, which occurs between 100 and 200 feet from future structures, were quantified to account for impacts to preserved habitats from vegetation management activities. In total, fuel modification activities in Zone A and Zone B would result in the disturbance of 2.1 acres of preserved habitat. Fuel modification in Zone C would result in the disturbance of 4.6 acres of preserved habitat. These impacts are not anticipated to remove the preserved habitat, however, and wildlife are expected to continue to utilize these habitats. The Project would implement construction-related regulations and mitigation that would minimize short term effects to sensitive vegetation communities. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-1: Conservation Easement.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits for the Project, to address impacts to habitat for slender mariposa lily, Peirson’s morning glory, and sensitive vegetation communities (Rhus trilobata association [S3, riparian], and Palmer’s goldenbush scrub [S3?]), the

Project Developer shall record a conservation easement, after review, input, and approval by the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, over the 37.9-acre Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area.

There shall be no grading or other construction activities allowed within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement boundaries. The conservation easement shall prohibit entry into the preserved area with the installation and maintenance of protective measures such as fencing and signage, and trash removal. Controlled entry shall be allowed for approved work, including monitoring and maintenance efforts, implementation of the Slender Mariposa Lily Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (SMLMMP), or for other activities associated with preserve management. The conservation easement shall prohibit development of any kind within the preserved area in perpetuity. The conservation easement shall also specify allowable uses in the preserved area, if any. Signage shall include information on the organization that holds the conservation easement, descriptions of the restoration activities, protection of biological resources, and restrictions to human access. Signage shall designate if permitted access is allowed within the conservation easement and if so, shall designate that humans and domesticated pets shall remain within designated areas, all domesticated pets shall be on leashes, owners shall clean up after domesticated pets, and that smoking is prohibited. If access is permitted in designated areas, dog waste bag dispensers and wildlife-proof receptacles for trash shall be provided. The conservation easement holder shall be an entity which has as part of its mission the protection of the environment, including lands, plant species, and/ or wildlife species, and is expected by its organization and history to remain in existence for the foreseeable future.

As part of recording the conservation easement, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) shall be prepared that specifically identifies the required resource management activities and the entities that shall be responsible for managing those activities in perpetuity. The CMP shall

include a SMLMMP to be approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the County of Los Angeles. The SMLMMP shall provide guidance and methods to preserve the slender mariposa lily individuals known to occur within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, along with a program of slender mariposa lily seed collection and dispersal within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. The SMLMMP shall also include methods and approach to translocating slender mariposa lily individuals proposed for impact into the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. The SMLMMP shall be developed and implemented with a program that does not conflict with other conservation easement resource management objectives. The SMLMMP shall include, at minimum 5:1, mitigation for impacts to 171 slender mariposa lily individuals, as well as preservation of the existing population of slender mariposa lily individuals already documented within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement. The 5:1 mitigation ratio for planted mariposa lilies shall be affected through overplanting at 10:1 (mitigation plantings: impacted individuals), in order to accommodate potential mortality of slender mariposa lily individuals and the difficulty of censusing populations due to low frequency of flowering.

The Slender Mariposa Lily Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (SMLMMP) shall include annual pre-construction surveys of the Project impact areas, Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, and open space areas within the VTTM site to map and flag slender mariposa lily individuals recording the location and quantities of slender mariposa lily for seed collection (Project impact area, Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, and open space areas within the VTTM site) and translocation (from the Project impact area to the Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement). Seed collection shall occur for a minimum of two years. If Project construction is delayed additional annual surveys and seed collection may occur. Seeds shall be collected once the seed has matured, but prior to the seed capsules opening to disperse the seed. Seeds shall be stored in breathable paper bags in a cool, dry, and dark place until they can be planted within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication

Area conservation easement. Upon establishment of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, seed shall be sowed within appropriate habitat in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement.

During pre-construction surveys, slender mariposa lily individual locations will be marked with a high-accuracy GPS unit and a permanent marker established in the field to locate the individuals for bulb collection. Bulbs shall remain in the ground until project development. Prior to Project development, the bulbs and adjacent topsoil (including associated microorganisms and mycorrhizal fungi) shall be translocated within appropriate habitat in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement as directed by the SMLMMP.

The SMLMMP shall provide details on site preparation measures, as well as specific methods for the pre-construction collection of slender mariposa lily seeds and the harvest of bulbs from impacted populations. The SMLMMP shall also provide detailed methods for the dispersal of that seed, and the translocation of the harvested bulbs, into the conservation easement areas. Finally, the SMLMMP shall provide a schedule and action plan for the maintenance and monitoring programs, including success criteria, and remedial contingency measures to be implemented if efforts are not successful. During slender mariposa lily monitoring, the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement shall be surveyed for slender mariposa lilies including the translocated bulb and seed locations recorded with a high-accuracy GPS unit and permanent field markers. Slender mariposa lily monitoring data shall include data on both blooming and vegetative slender mariposa lily individuals to track the success of establishment.

The CMP and the SMLMMP shall identify the frequency of weed management and monitoring activities to document on-site special-status plant population dynamics, and general vegetation community composition and status. In addition to routine and as needed weed management, the CMP shall include an eradication program specific to the non-native tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) individuals, along with



a program to replace those nonnative trees with native trees appropriate to the habitat.

Monitoring shall take place annually and in perpetuity from the time of establishment of the conservation easement. If it appears that the population of any special-status plant species or the vegetation community composition and status are on the decline or have been degraded, remedial activities shall be implemented according to the CMP and the SMLMMP. These activities may include weed control, additional seeding, native plant establishment, or other activities where appropriate. If slender mariposa lily seeding and translocation at the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement results in failure of progressing towards a self-sustaining population, understanding that populations vary greatly annually due to environmental conditions, achieving the 5:1 (mitigation plantings: impacted individuals) mitigation ratio for planted mariposa lilies. To prevent a net loss of slender mariposa lily individuals during long-term monitoring a contingency measure shall be implemented. To supplement the shortfalls of slender mariposa lily mitigation at the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, a contingency measure including additional off-site, in-kind preservation of slender mariposa lilies within the County shall be implemented at 10:1 (mitigation plantings: impacted individuals) to cumulatively achieve the 5:1 mitigation ratio.

Annual monitoring reports shall be submitted by August 31 of each year and shall include: an evaluation of current monitoring data in relation to previous population observations (during previous monitoring years) and native enhancement efforts. These reports shall also include any recommendations for remedial management measures and shall discuss other issues that need to be addressed, such as trespassing or vandalism.

Prior to Project construction, a Property Analysis Record (PAR) or alternatively approved costing evaluation shall be conducted to determine two cost components (1) initial and capital costs and (2) perpetual costs (endowment). Funding, as a condition of obtaining the conservation easement, shall be contributed to an amount sufficient to

pay all costs for overseeing the conservation easement in perpetuity. This funding requirement includes, but is not limited to, staff time, biological survey costs, monitoring and reporting, conducting weed removal, and other management activities required under the terms of the conservation easement, the CMP and the SMLMMP. The funding amount shall be subject to approval of the conservation easement holder. A separate endowment fund shall also be created by the owner/developer that shall be held by the conservation easement holder. This endowment fund shall be established in an amount that is calculated to provide, in ten years, the conservation easement holder with sufficient funds for ongoing monitoring and management of the conservation easement in perpetuity.

The intent of the conservation easement shall be to protect, in perpetuity, viable native habitat that can support not just the known populations of slender mariposa lily and Peirson's morning-glory, but also the translocated slender mariposa lily populations, along with the other native plant and wildlife species that occur in the conserved coastal sage scrub habitat.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-2:**

**Worker Education and Awareness Program.** Prior to issuance of grading permits for the Project, the Project Developer shall fund the development of a worker education awareness program (WEAP) by a County-approved biologist for the Project and submit the WEAP to the County of the Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The WEAP shall be attended by all individuals involved in construction of the Project prior to working on the Project and shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Natural history and photographs of special-status plant species and special-status wildlife species, current sensitivity status, reasons for decline, and protective measures relevant to the species and habitats;

- Description of sensitive vegetation communities and jurisdictional resources and associated construction-limit staking, and biological monitoring during vegetation clearing and grading activities;
- Active nesting birds and associated set-back work buffers in accordance with federal and state regulations;
- Litter guidelines including direction not to litter and to pick up and store all trash and litter securely at the construction site at the end of each day; and
- Avoidance of driving over or otherwise disturbing areas outside the designated construction areas.
- The WEAP shall be submitted to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval 30 days prior to implementation. Prior to entering the Project site for construction work, all workers shall attend the WEAP. Upon completion of the WEAP, attendees shall sign training attendance sheets.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-3:**      **Construction Fencing.** Prior to commencement of any ground-disturbing activities, construction fencing shall be installed to identify the limits of grading/disturbance as well as buffer areas, which would reduce potential human trampling outside of the construction limits and minimize the potential spread of non-native weeds or invasive plants. A County-approved biologist shall inspect construction fencing once installation is complete.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-4:**      **Weed Control Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall retain a County-approved, qualified restoration ecologist or biologist to prepare a comprehensive adaptive Weed Control Plan (WCP) to be implemented during the construction and operation of the Project and submit the WCP to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The Project's homeowner's association shall implement the WCP within the landscaped areas of the

Project to minimize weed invasion into open space areas. The WCP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Weed control treatments shall include legally permitted herbicide, manual, and mechanical methods approved for application. The application of herbicides shall comply with state and federal laws and regulations under the prescription of a Pest Control Advisor, with the concurrence of the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning and shall be implemented by a Licensed Qualified Applicator. Herbicides shall not be applied during or within 72 hours of a forecasted measurable rain event or during high wind conditions that could cause spray drift onto native vegetation. Where manual or mechanical methods are used, plant debris shall be disposed of at an appropriate off-site location. The timing of the weed control treatment shall be determined for each plant species with the goal of controlling populations before they start producing seeds. Consultation with a County-approved, qualified wildlife biologist or botanist shall be required prior to weed control treatments to develop strategies to avoid any adverse impacts to plants and wildlife in the area;
- Invasive plant species (designated by California Invasive Plant Council) shall not be included in the landscaping plan as they could establish off-site and have negative impacts to the adjacent habitats;
- All seeds and straw materials used during Project construction and operation shall be weed-free rice straw or other weed-free product, and all gravel and fill material shall be weed free. If straw wattles are used, they shall not be encased in plastic mesh. All plant materials used during restoration shall be native, certified weed-free, and approved by the County Department of Regional Planning; and
- Prior to entry to the Project area for the first time, equipment must be free of soil and debris on tires, wheel wells, vehicle undercarriages, and other surfaces (a high-pressure washer and/or compressed air may be used to ensure that soil and debris are

completely removed). Compliance with the provision is achieved by on-site inspection and verification or by demonstrating that the vehicle or equipment has been cleaned at a commercial vehicle or appropriate truck washing facility. In addition, the interior of equipment (cabs, etc.) must be free of mud, soil, gravel and other debris (interiors may be vacuumed or washed).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-5:**      **Landscaping Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall prepare a Landscaping Plan for the homeowner association (HOA)-maintained areas and submit the Landscaping Plan to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The Landscaping Plan for the HOA-maintained areas shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Plant species list including scientific name, common name, plant container size, and quantities;
- Plantings shall be in accordance with the County of Los Angeles Fire Department Fuel Modification Guidelines (Los Angeles County Fire Department 2011);
- Invasive plant species (designated by California Invasive Plant Council) shall not be included in the Landscaping Plan as they could establish off-site and have negative impacts to the adjacent habitats;
- Plant layout indicating the location of the plant species;
- Planting notes to include plant installation requirements such as mulch requirements; and
- Where native species are required, the species shall be indigenous native species of the region (locally indigenous native species).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-6:**      **Fire Protection Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall prepare a Fire Protection Plan (FPP) that meets County Fire Department requirements and submit the FPP to the County of Los

Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The FPP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- All construction equipment shall be equipped with appropriate spark arrestors and carry fire extinguishers;
- Provisions for fire/emergency services access if roadway blockage occurs due to large loads during construction; and
- Cleared, maintained parking areas shall be designated; no parking shall be allowed in non-designated areas.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-7:**

**Biological Monitoring.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the qualifications of the biologists to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for review and approval. The Project Developer shall fund a County-approved Biological Monitor during Project construction to monitor construction activities and to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures. The Biological Monitor shall be present on site during all vegetation removal and during all of the initial ground disturbance activities for all aspects of the Project and shall regularly inspect the Project site as needed after the initial ground disturbances to ensure that all mitigation measures are being implemented. The Biological Monitor shall ensure that wildlife do not become entrapped in excavations. Safeguards shall be implemented during daytime periods of non-activity and overnight, such as placing a platform over the entire excavation site, flush with the ground surface, installing escape ramps in trenches, or exclusionary fencing. Shall relocation be required; construction shall be halted until the Biological Monitor arrives on site and clears the work area (in compliance with all applicable permits and authorizations).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-17:**

**Palmer's Goldenbush Scrub Mitigation.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, to offset the Project's 6.7 acres of direct impacts to Palmer's goldenbush scrub, compensatory mitigation is required. Subject to County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning approval, there shall be a no net loss of Palmer's goldenbush scrub (1:1) shall include one

of the following measures (Note that #1 below is the preferred mitigation option. #2, #3, #4, or #5 will be implemented if #1 is not feasible).:

**1. On-site in-kind preservation (0.2:1), on-site out-of-kind preservation (5:1), and off-site in-kind creation/enhancement (1:1):**

In addition to the on-site preservation of existing 1.4 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub and on-site habitat preservation of existing 31.9 acres of native scrub (not including Palmer's goldenbush scrub) through establishment of a conservation easement of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area through **MM 5.3-1 Conservation Easement**, the Project Developer shall implement the following:

- Off-site in-kind creation/enhancement of Palmer's goldenbush scrub at a property with suitable Palmer's goldenbush scrub habitat, such as the Land Veritas Curtis Property. A conservation easement will be recorded over the property and a total of 6.7 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub shall be created/enhanced. As part of the recording of the conservation easement, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) shall be prepared that specifically identifies the required resource management activities and the entities that shall be responsible for managing those activities in perpetuity. The CMP shall identify Palmer's goldenbush scrub creation/enhancement methods, maintenance frequency, monitoring methods and frequency, success criteria, and reporting requirements.

**Alternative Palmer's Goldenbush Scrub Mitigation if Preferred Palmer's Goldenbush Scrub Mitigation #1 is not feasible.**

**2. On-site in-kind preservation (0.2:1), on-site out-of-kind preservation (5:1), and off-site out-of-kind preservation (5:1):**

In addition to the on-site preservation of existing 1.4 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub and on-site habitat preservation of existing 31.9 acres of native scrub (not including Palmer's goldenbush scrub) through establishment of a conservation easement of the Off-Site

Open Space Dedication Area through **MM 5.3-1 Conservation Easement**, the Project Developer shall implement the following:

- Purchase of out-of-kind native scrub mitigation credits at an off-site mitigation bank, such as the Land Veritas Petersen Ranch, for the preservation of 33.5 acres of out-of-kind native scrub habitat, effectively mitigating for impacts to 6.7 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub through off-site out-of-kind preservation of native scrub at 5:1. Or, establishment of a deed restriction at an off-site property in Los Angeles County for the preservation of 33.5 acres of out-of-kind native scrub habitat, effectively mitigating for impacts to 6.7 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub through off-site out-of-kind preservation of native scrub at 5:1.
3. **On-site in-kind creation (1:1) and in-kind and out-of-kind preservation (0.2:1 and 5:1) (Total > 5.2:1):** In addition to the on-site habitat preservation of existing 1.4 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement, the Project Developer shall implement the following:
- Creation of 6.7 acres of Palmer's goldenbush in the open space areas within the VTTM site (1:1).
  - Establishment of a conservation easement where 31.9 acres of native scrub (a minimum of 0.2:1 in-kind and up to 5:1 out-of-kind) will be preserved in perpetuity.
4. **On-site in-kind creation/enhancement and/or preservation (1:1) and in-kind and out-of-kind preservation (0.2:1 and 5:1) (Total > 5.2:1):** In addition to the on-site habitat preservation of existing 1.4 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub, the Project Developer will commit to the following:
- Creation/enhancement of Palmer's goldenbush within portions of the proposed Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement and/or open space areas within the VTTM site and/or preservation of existing native scrub alliance(s)



with Palmer's goldenbush scrub association within portions of the proposed Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement to total 6.7 acres (1:1).

- Establishment of a conservation easement where 31.9 acres of native scrub (a minimum of 0.2:1 in-kind and up to 5:1 out-of-kind\*) will be preserved in perpetuity. \*The acreage of Palmer's goldenbush scrub association(s) would count towards in-kind preservation.

5. **On-site in-kind creation/enhancement and/or preservation (1:1) and in-kind and out-of-kind preservation (0.2:1 and 5:1), plus off-site in-kind creation/enhancement:** In addition to the on-site habitat preservation of existing 1.4 acres of Palmer's goldenbush scrub, the Project Developer will commit to the following:

- Creation/enhancement of Palmer's goldenbush within portions of the proposed Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement and/or open space areas within the VTTM site and/or preservation of existing native scrub alliance(s) with Palmer's goldenbush scrub association within portions of the proposed Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area conservation easement to total 6.7 acres (1:1).
- Establishment of a conservation easement where 31.9 acres of native scrub (a minimum of 0.2:1 in-kind and up to 5:1 out-of-kind\*) will be preserved in perpetuity. \*The acreage of Palmer's goldenbush scrub association(s) would count towards in-kind preservation.
- If on-site in-kind creation/enhancement and/or preservation and in-kind and out-of-kind preservation do not achieve a total of 3:1, off-site in-kind habitat creation/enhancement will be incorporated to achieve at total of 3:1. Off-site in-kind creation/enhancement of Palmer's goldenbush scrub at a mitigation bank, such as Land Veritas Curtis Property, Los Angeles

County, Upper Santa Clara River Mitigation Site, will be established with an acreage appropriate to achieve a total of 3:1 mitigation.

### **3. Wetlands**

**Threshold:** Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marshes, vernal pools, coastal wetlands, and drainages) or waters of the United States or California, as defined by § 404 of the federal Clean Water Act or California Fish and Game code § 1600, et seq., through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means? (Threshold 5.3-3)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Approximately 0.13 acres of non-wetland waters of the U.S. subject to potential regulation by the USACE and approximately 1.1.17 acres of streambed and associated riparian vegetation and swale subject to regulation by CDFW are located within the VTTM site. Project-related construction activities within the VTTM site would remove these areas and thereby result in potentially significant direct impacts to potential jurisdictional water resources. To mitigate potentially significant impacts to jurisdictional waters, prior to construction, the Project Developer would implement **MM 5.3-18** and **MM 5.3-19**, which would require obtaining permits from the ACOE and CDFW and the development of an Aquatic Resource Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP). Potential impacts to waters of the U.S, and waters of the State would be mitigated to less than significant. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-18: Agency Permit Applications.** Prior to construction work in jurisdictional waters, applications for Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 and California Fish and Game Code (CFGF) 1602 permits shall be prepared and submitted to the regulatory agencies and the permits shall be obtained by the Project Developer. The compensatory mitigation requirements of the resource agencies shall be incorporated into the Aquatic Resource Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (refer to **MM 5.3-16**). Mitigation shall be proposed at a minimum 1:1 ratio, or as required by the permitting agencies, to preserve, enhance, or restore similar ephemeral,

streambed and associated riparian, and swales for no net loss of jurisdictional aquatic resources.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-19: Aquatic Resource Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, an Aquatic Resource Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) shall be developed in coordination with preparation of the agency permit applications and shall be approved by the regulatory agencies and County of Los Angeles. The Aquatic Resource HMMP shall provide details on the proposed mitigation for impacts to jurisdictional resources present within the Project site including a minimum 1:1 mitigation ratio, or as required by the permitting agencies, to preserve similar ephemeral, streambed and associated riparian, and swales for no net loss of jurisdictional aquatic resources. The Aquatic Resource HMMP shall include an overview of the mitigation strategy for impacts to sensitive vegetation as well as specific mitigation locations proposed within off-site areas, including mitigation banks credits (i.e., Santa Paula Creek Mitigation Bank) and conservation lands, if applicable.

The Aquatic Resource HMMP shall include maintenance and monitoring requirements, performance standards, success criteria, and contingency measures, which shall guide the management of the mitigation program and provide the metrics for the determination of success of the Project mitigation.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and County shall review and approve the Aquatic Resource HMMP prior to implementation, ensuring the requirements of these agencies are met and that the Project is consistent with agency policy, permit requirements, and conditions of approval.

## **2. Wildlife Movement**

**Threshold:** Would the Project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites? (Threshold 5.3-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The Project site is situated between an industrial park to the east, community of Val Verde (single-family homes) to the south and southwest, and the larger community of Castaic and Hasley Canyon community to the north with portions of mostly undeveloped surrounding lands to the northwest and west. Overall wildlife movement is regionally and locally constrained through the Project site from existing and approved developments including Interstate 5, community of Castaic, community of Hasley Canyon, community of Val Verde, the industrial park, the landfill, State Route 126, and Newhall Ranch development. The Project is located outside of Los Angeles County designated SEAs, South Coast Wildlands designed landscape linkages, and Essential Connectivity Areas identified in the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project: A Strategy for Conserving a Connected California. However, the Santa Felicia SEA, Santa Clara River SEAs, Sierra Madre – Castaic Connection, and Santa Monica – Sierra Madre Connection further to the west of existing and approved developments provide largely undeveloped intact habitat for wildlife movement corridors and habitat linkages.

While the VTTM site is bordered by residential development to the south and southwest which limits wildlife movement in the area, the Project would potentially interfere with wildlife movement across the VTTM site by removing access to suitable habitat patches and established native wildlife nursery sites. Project development would occur within approximately 144.3 acres of the site located immediately north, east, and northwest of established residential development. The habitats preserved within the Project site, including the 37.9 acres within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area, are contiguous with the open space environment north of the Project and would continue to allow movement to continue in an east–west and north–south direction to connective open space elements in the region.

Approximately 12.6 acres of the VTTM site and the manufactured open space around the perimeter of the VTTM site would continue to facilitate wildlife movement for a variety of wildlife species for the foreseeable future.

The Applicant proposes to dedicate 37.9 acres as permanent open space within a portion of APN 3271-005- 032. This portion of the parcel contains 79.2 acres of contiguous habitat of natural vegetation and is divided into three portions. The 41.3-acre conservation easement held by the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority, the 37.9 acres of open space within the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area, the 16.1 acres of Tentative Tract No. 62000 just north of the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area, approximately 12.6 acres of the VTTM site that would remain as natural undisturbed open space, and the manufactured open space around the perimeter of the VTTM site would continue to facilitate wildlife movement for a variety wildlife species for the foreseeable future. While Tentative Tract No. 62000 is

currently proposed for residential development, entitlements for Tentative Tract No. 62000 are not being pursued actively at this time. Accordingly, wildlife movement would continue to occur across the open space areas within the Project area.

Although it is unknown when development of Tentative Tract No. 62000 would occur, several standard development features would continue to permit wildlife movement throughout the Project area. Consistent with County requirements, natural and undisturbed open space, manufactured open space, and a 20-foot-wide multiuse trail easement would be included as part of the development. The natural undisturbed open space and manufactured open space would provide wildlife movement opportunities across the site. Additionally, the 20-foot-wide multiuse trail easement would include a natural multiuse trail surface, approximately five to eight feet in width, which would traverse north-south through the site as identified in the County's Master Plan of Trails. When Tentative Tract No. 62000 is developed, the open space areas and natural multiuse trail would continue to provide north-south wildlife movement opportunities for wildlife in the Project area.

While the Project will not result in a direct significant on wildlife movement, the Project will contribute to a significant cumulative impact on mountain lion movement in the area the Project site is located in. The Project will impact 101.3 acres of poor quality mountain lion movement habitat. The majority of the Project site contains low-quality suitability mountain lion habitat. Nevertheless, a mountain lion may venture onto the site in pursuit of its primary prey, mule deer, given the ample amount of moderate-quality habitat present on the Project site. However, the small size of the Project site and the surrounding development and land uses greatly reduce the potential that a mountain lion would establish a territory, part of a territory, or a movement corridor on or through the Project site.

Cumulatively, development of this residential project near I-5, the Cities of Santa Clarita and Castaic, and the communities of Val Verde and Hasley Canyon, would reduce the amount of poor-quality habitat in an urban landscape not suited for mountain lion home range establishment or safe movement. However, due to the size and location of the Project site, the Project would have a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact on mountain lion movement in the region. Since 12.6 acres of Natural Open Space along the boundary of the development will remain on the Project site, 37.9 acres of off-site land of similar habitat and movement potential will be placed in a Conservation Easement, and a 0.36-acre public trail will help retain a north-south connection for mountain lion movement through Chiquita Canyon, 50.4 acres of Project impacts would require mitigation for the Project's contribution to the cumulative impact. **Mitigation Measure MM 5.3-28** will be implemented to avoid any potential cumulative impacts to mountain lion movement. Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of this mitigation measure.

## Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-28:** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, to mitigate the contribution of the Project to a regional cumulative impact on mountain lion movement: (1) the subdivider shall establish a Conservation Easement over the 37.9-acre Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area and a Conservation Plan prepared and implemented to preserve coastal scrub habitat in the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area and a 0.36-acre public trail as illustrated on Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 60257 shall be maintained in perpetuity to maintain movement opportunities for mountain lions between Chiquita Canyon and the Los Padres National Forest (please refer to MM 5.3-1); and (2) subdivider shall purchase an off-site conservation easement, to be held by a public agency or non-profit conservation planning organization, (a) covering at least 50 acres of equivalent habitat or (b) a smaller area if the following can be demonstrated: (i) within a known mountain lion corridor, or (ii) containing a riparian habitat and adjacent to a known mountain lion corridor, or (iii) within a known or modeled mountain lion movement corridor located in western Los Angeles County or eastern Ventura County, north of State Route-126 and south of the Los Padres National Forest. The conservation easement shall be recorded prior to grading permit issuance. The final size and location of the conservation easement shall be to the satisfaction of the director.

## ***4. Oak Woodlands***

**Threshold:** Would the Project convert oak woodlands (as defined by the state, oak woodlands are oak stands with greater than 10% canopy cover with oaks at least 5 inch in diameter measured at 4.5 feet above mean natural grade) or other unique native woodlands (Juniper, Joshua, Southern California Black Walnut, etc.)? (Threshold 5.3-5)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

### **Facts in Support of Finding**

A total of 0.38 acres of canopy area/understory habitat and 1.69 acres of buffer area of County defined oak woodland were recorded on the Project site within the Off-Site Water Tank Area. It is anticipated that development of the Project would result in the removal of approximately 0.09 acres of canopy

area/understory habitat and removal of approximately 0.56 acres of buffer habitat. The Project design allows for approximately 1.42 acres of the existing 2.07- acre oak woodland canopy area (all on-site oak woodland canopy combined) to remain undisturbed during and after project construction and operations. Pursuant to the County Oak Woodlands Plan, a determination must be made regarding whether the Project would have a substantial adverse effect on oak woodlands and/or result in the conversion of existing oak woodlands. Off-Site Water Tank Area contains three oak woodlands, a determination of the impact severity anticipated.

For (Oak Woodland 1) OW1, excavation and grading activities associated with construction of the new water tank within the Off-Site Water Tank Area would require the removal of approximately 0.04 acres of the total 0.26-acre woodland canopy and understory habitat allowing for approximately 84.5 percent of the total canopy area associated with OW1 to be retained. Project impacts within the moderately degraded woodland would have an impact severity ranking of low based on the retention of 84.5 percent of oak woodland canopy associated with OW1 and the assumptions that the current regeneration potential of the subject woodland would be maintained, and the current understory vegetation community would persist.

For (Oak Woodland 2) OW2, excavation and grading activities associated with the new water tank would require the removal of approximately 0.41 acres of the total 1.32-acre woodland canopy and understory habitat associated with OW2, allowing for approximately 69.3 percent of the total canopy area associated with OW2 to be retained.

For (Oak Woodland 3) OW3, excavation and grading activities associated with the new water tank would require the removal of approximately 0.20 acres of the total 0.49-acre woodland canopy and understory habitat associated with OW3, allowing for approximately 59.5 percent of the total canopy area associated with OW3 to be retained. Pursuant to the County Oak Woodlands Plan, these activities within the intact woodland would have an impact severity ranking of high based on the assumption that the impact would result in the net loss of oak woodland acreage and the loss of habitat and understory.

A total of 0.61 acres of oak woodland canopy within OW2 and OW3 would be potentially impacted during Project construction. Implementation of recommended **MM 5.3-20** would ensure purchase of mitigation credits for 1.22 acres of oak woodlands from an off-site oak woodland habitat preservation area owned by a third party, or an in-lieu fee shall be paid to the County's Oak Forests Special Fund. Implementation of recommended **MM 5.3-27** would require a pre-construction tree pest and disease survey prior to tree removal to evaluate trees for infectious tree diseases. Implementation of recommended **MM 5.3-20** and

**MM 5.3-27** would ensure that the Project's impacts on OW2 and OW3 would be less than significant. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-20: Off-Site Water Tank Area Oak Woodland Mitigation and Oak Tree Mitigation.** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, in accordance with the Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan Guide (County 2011, 2014), to offset the Project's total combined significant impact of 0.61 acres of oak woodland canopy in OW2 and OW3 and, in accordance with the County Oak Tree Ordinance to offset the Project's impacts to 12 protected oak trees at the Off-Site Water Tank Area, one of the following mitigation measures shall be implemented, subject to County approval:

1. Purchase mitigation credits for 1.22 acres of oak woodlands from an off-site oak woodland habitat preservation area owned by a third party; or
2. Contribute to the Los Angeles County's Oak Forests Special Fund in an amount of \$97,040 (two times the canopy cover area value).

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-27: Pre-construction Tree Pest and Disease Survey.**

1) Prior to tree removal, a certified arborist should evaluate trees for infectious tree diseases including but not limited to sudden oak death (*Phytophthora ramorum*), thousand canker fungus (*Geosmithia morbida*), polyphagous shot hole borer (*Euwallacea* spp.), and goldspotted oak borer (*Agrilus auroguttatus*) (TCD 2021; UCANR 2021; Phytosphere Research 2012; UCIPM 2013).

2) If a certified arborist determines trees are impacted by infectious pests or diseases, the certified arborist should prepare an Infectious Tree Disease Management Plan or develop a detailed, robust, enforceable, and feasible list of preventative measures. A plan/list should provide measures relevant for each tree pest or disease observed. To avoid the spread of infectious tree pests and diseases, infected trees should not be transported from a Project site without first being treated using best



available management practices described Infectious Tree Disease Management Plan or list of preventative measures.

3) If possible, all tree material, especially infected tree material, should be left on site. The material could be chipped for use as ground cover or mulch. Pruning and power tools should be cleaned and disinfected before use to prevent introducing pathogens from known infested areas, and after use to prevent spread of pathogens to new areas.

## **5. Local Policies or Ordinances**

**Threshold:** Would the Project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, including Wildflower Reserve Areas (L.A. County Code, Title 12, Ch. 12.36), the Los Angeles County Oak Tree Ordinance (L.A. County Code, Title 22, Ch. 22.174), the Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) (L.A. County Code, Title 22, Ch. 102), and Sensitive Environmental Resource Areas (SERAs) (L.A. County Code, Title 22, Ch. 22.44)? (Threshold 5.3-6)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

### **Facts in Support of Finding:**

Development within the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would potentially impact two protected oak trees including two removals. A total of two protected oak trees would not be disturbed by active construction-related activities or grading; therefore, these trees would be preserved in place. Pursuant to the County Oak Tree Ordinance, the Project would be required to either replace the removed trees per County standards or pay in-lieu fees at the appraised cost for all proposed protected tree removals. The Project would implement recommended **MM 5.3-21** (Oak Plantings in VTTM site Fuel Modification Zone C) and **MM 5.3-22** (Tree Protection Measures) to ensure that potential impacts to protected oak trees would be less than significant. Additionally, the Project would implement recommended **MM 5.3-27** (Pre-construction Tree Pest and Disease Survey) prior to tree removal to evaluate impacted oak trees for infectious tree diseases, and if trees are impacted by infectious pests or diseases, prepare an Infectious Tree Disease Management Plan or develop a detailed, robust, enforceable, and feasible list of preventative measures to avoid the spread of infectious tree pests and diseases. There would be no indirect tree impacts for trees within 25 feet of the Project's limits of grading.

Development within the Off-Site Water Tank Area would potentially impact 23 protected oak trees including 12 removals and 11 encroachments. Pursuant to the County Oak Tree Ordinance, the Project

would be required to either replace the removed trees per County standards by planting 24 oak trees or pay in-lieu fees at the appraised cost for all proposed protected tree removals. The Project would implement recommended **MM 5.3-20** (Off-Site Water Tank Area Oak Woodland and Oak Tree Mitigation). Compliance with the County Oak Tree Ordinance, and implementation of mitigation would reduce construction impacts to protected oak trees to less than significant. Additionally, the Project would implement recommended **MM 5.3-27** (Pre-construction Tree Pest and Disease Survey) prior to tree removal to evaluate impacted oak trees for infectious tree diseases, and if trees are impacted by infectious pests or diseases, prepare an Infectious Tree Disease Management Plan or develop a detailed, robust, enforceable, and feasible list of preventative measures to avoid the spread of infectious tree pests and diseases.

Construction activities would have the potential to indirectly affect protected oak trees. Approximately 31 indirect tree impacts would occur for trees within 25 feet of the Project's development footprint. Of the 31 indirect trees, 13 trees are protected trees, and 18 trees are non-protected trees. As such, the Project would implement **MM 5.3-22**, which includes maintenance measures to sustain and enhance the remaining oak trees existing during Project construction activities.

Increased human activity at the Project site may impact oak trees within the Project site and its vicinity. As such, the Project would implement **MM 5.3-22**, which includes maintenance measures to sustain and enhance the remaining and possibly new oak trees existing during Project operation. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-21:**     **Oak Plantings in VTTM site Fuel Modification Zone C.** A total of 12 coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees shall be planted, maintained, monitored, and reported on within the VTTM site. The 12 coast live oak trees shall be locally sourced (from nursery stock grown from locally sourced acorns, or from acorns gathered locally, preferably from the same watershed in which they were planted) 1-gallon oak trees planted on preferably north-facing slopes within the northwest corner of the VTTM site in Fuel Modification Zone C on non-graded slopes within natural open space, avoiding native habitat disturbance. The planted trees shall be subject to a 7-year monitoring period by an independent third-party certified arborist. This monitoring effort shall consider growth, health, and condition of the subject trees to evaluate success.

The monitoring efforts shall result in recommendations of remedial actions should any of the tree plantings exhibit poor or declining health.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-22:** **Tree Protection Measures.** To prevent damage to any protected trees that would be avoided during Project construction, the following measures shall be implemented by the Project Developer for any such trees within 20 feet of an active construction area:

**Pre-Construction**

**Fencing:** Chain-link fencing, no less than 4 feet high, with tree protection signs shall be erected around all undisturbed trees (or tree groups). The protective fence shall be installed at the protected zone boundary of each tree (or tree group), which is defined as 5 feet beyond the tree canopy dripline, or 1.5 feet per inch of trunk diameter, whichever is greater. The intent of protection fencing is to prevent root damage and/or compaction by grading equipment. An ISA-certified arborist may be required on site if grading activities occur within the tree's protected zone. The fencing shall be secured to 6-foot, heavy-gauge T-bar line posts, pounded in the ground a minimum of 18 inches and spaced a minimum of 8 feet on-center. Fencing shall be attached to T-bar posts with minimum 14-gauge wire fastened to the top, middle, and bottom of each post. Tree protection signs shall be attached to every fourth post. The contractor shall maintain the fence to keep it upright, taut, and aligned at all times. Fencing shall be removed only after all construction activities in the vicinity of the affected tree(s) are complete.

**Pre-construction Meeting:** A pre-construction meeting shall be held between all contractors (including grading, tree removal/pruning, and builders) and an ISA-certified arborist. The meeting shall focus on instructing the contractors on tree protection practices and answering any questions. All equipment operators and spotters, assistants, or those directing operators from the ground shall provide written acknowledgement of receiving tree protection training. This training shall include information on the location and marking of protected trees, the

necessity of preventing damage, and the discussion of work practices that shall accomplish these tasks.

### **During Construction**

Once construction activities have begun, the following protection measures shall be followed.

**Equipment Operation and Storage:** Contractors shall avoid heavy equipment operation around the protected trees. Operating heavy machinery around the root zones of trees will increase soil compaction, which decreases soil aeration and subsequently reduces water penetration into the soil. All heavy equipment and vehicles shall, at minimum, stay out of the fenced protected tree zone unless where specifically approved in writing and under the supervision of an ISA-certified arborist or their representative.

**Materials Storage and Disposal:** Contractors shall not store or discard any supplies or materials, including paint, lumber, and concrete overflow, within the protected zone and shall remove all foreign debris within the protected zone. However, the contractors shall leave the duff, mulch, chips, and leaves around the retained trees for water retention and nutrient supply. In addition, the contractors shall avoid draining or leakage of equipment fluids near retained trees. Fluids such as gasoline, diesel, oils, hydraulics, brake and transmission fluids, paint, paint thinners, and glycol (anti-freeze) shall be disposed of properly. The contractors shall ensure that equipment be parked at least 50 feet from the protected zone to avoid the possibility of leakage of equipment fluids into the soil. The effect of toxic equipment fluids on the retained trees could result in tree decline and/or mortality.

**Grade Changes:** Contractors shall ensure that grade changes, including adding fill, shall not be permitted within the protected zone without special written authorization and under supervision by an ISA-certified arborist or their representative. Lowering the grade within the protected zone would necessitate cutting main support and feeder roots,

jeopardizing the health and structural integrity of the trees. Adding soil, even temporarily, on top of the existing grade would compact the soil further and decrease water and air availability to the tree roots. Contractors shall ensure that grade changes made outside of the protected tree zone shall not create conditions that allow water to pond at the base of the tree. Water trapped at the base of a tree could lead to root rot and other detrimental tree impacts.

**Moving Construction Materials:** Contractors shall ensure that care be exercised when moving construction equipment or supplies near the undisturbed oak trees, especially overhead. Contractors shall ensure that damage to the trees shall be avoided when transporting or moving construction materials and working around the tree (even outside of the fenced protected zone). Contractors shall flag aboveground tree parts that could be damaged (e.g., low limbs, scaffold branches, and trunks) with high-visibility flagging, such as florescent red or orange. If contact with the tree crown is unavoidable, conflicting branches may be pruned by an ISA-certified tree worker under supervision by an ISA-certified arborist or their representative and shall adhere to ISA standards.

**Trenching:** Except where specifically approved in writing beforehand, all trenching shall be outside of the fenced protected zone. Roots primarily extend in a horizontal direction, forming a support base to the tree similar to the base of a wine glass. Where trenching is necessary in areas that contain roots from retained trees, contractors shall use trenching techniques that include the use of either a root pruner (Dosko root pruner or equivalent) or an Air-Spade to limit root impacts. An ISA certified arborist or their representative shall ensure that all pruning cuts be clean and sharp to minimize ripping, tearing, and fracturing of the root system. Root damage caused by backhoes, earthmovers, dozers, or graders is severe and may result in tree mortality. Use of both root-pruning and Air-Spade equipment shall be accompanied only by hand tools to remove soil from trench locations. The trench shall be made no deeper than necessary.

**Irrigation:** Irrigation of native protected trees retained on site shall seek to mimic natural rainfall patterns in Southern California. Supplemental irrigation for trees adjacent to construction activity may be necessary during winter or spring months. Summer and fall irrigation may be necessary based on variable climatic and site conditions but should be conducted judiciously to avoid overwatering. One irrigation cycle shall thoroughly soak the root zones of the trees to a depth of 3 feet. The soil should be allowed to dry out between watering to avoid the soil being consistently wet. The contractor shall be responsible for irrigating (deep watering) the trees. Soil moisture shall be checked with a soil probe before irrigating. Irrigation is best accomplished by installing a temporary aboveground microspray system that would distribute water slowly (to avoid runoff) and evenly throughout the fenced protection zone. Overwatering of native oaks may promote the growth of tree damaging agents, such as oak root fungus, so proper soil moisture monitoring is critical to prolonged tree health. For any trees that have been substantially root pruned (30% or more of their root zone), irrigation shall be required for the first 12 months. The first irrigation shall occur within 48 hours of root pruning. The tree(s) should be deep watered every 2 weeks during the summer and once a month during the winter (adjust accordingly with rainfall).

**Canopy Pruning:** The contractor shall not prune trees until all construction is completed unless standard pruning would reduce conflict between canopy and equipment. This will help protect the tree canopies from damage. All pruning shall be conducted by an ISA-certified tree worker under supervision by an ISA certified arborist or their representative and shall adhere to ISA pruning standards.

**Canopy Washing:** During construction, the contractor shall wash the foliage of trees adjacent to construction activity with a strong water stream every 2 weeks before 10:00 a.m. to control mite and insect populations.

**Inspection:** An ISA-certified arborist or their representative shall inspect the preserved trees adjacent to grading and construction activity on a

monthly basis for the duration of the proposed project's construction period. A report summarizing site conditions, observations, tree health, and recommendations for minimizing tree damage shall be submitted by the ISA-certified arborist or their representative following each inspection.

### **Post Construction**

Following the completion of the construction activity within 20 feet of the protected zones of undisturbed oaks, the tree protection fencing may be removed, and the following measures may be performed to sustain and enhance the vigor of the trees:

**Mulch:** The contractors shall ensure that the natural duff layer under all trees is maintained. This would stabilize soil temperatures in root zones, conserve soil moisture, and reduce erosion. The contractors shall ensure that the mulch is kept clear of the trunk base to avoid creating conditions favorable to the establishment and growth of decay-causing fungal pathogens. Should it be necessary to add organic mulch under retained protected trees, packaged or commercial mulch shall not be used because it may contain oak root fungus. Also, the use of redwood chips shall be avoided because certain inhibitive chemicals may be present in the wood. Other wood chips and crushed walnut shells can be used, but the best mulch that provides a source of nutrients for the tree is its own leaf litter. Any organic mulch added by the contractor shall be applied to a maximum depth of 4 inches where possible.

**Pruning:** Regular pruning of the trees is not required. An ISA certified tree worker, under the supervision of an ISA-certified arborist or their representative, shall only prune trees to maintain clearance and remove broken, dead, or diseased branches. No more than 15% of the canopy shall be removed at one time. All pruning shall conform to ISA standards.

**Watering:** The trees should not require regular irrigation, other than the 12 months following substantial root pruning, if applicable. However, soil probing shall be necessary to accurately monitor moisture levels.

Supplemental irrigation for the trees that sustained root pruning and any newly planted trees may be necessary, especially in years with low winter rainfall.

**Watering Adjacent Plant Material:** All plants near the trees shall require moderate to low levels of water. The contractor shall infrequently water surrounding plants with deep soaks, rather than frequent light irrigation, and allow them to dry out between watering. The soil shall not be allowed to become saturated or stay continually wet, and drainage should not allow ponding of water beneath the canopy of the oak trees. Irrigation spray shall not hit the trunk of any tree. The contractor shall maintain a 30- inch dry zone around all tree trunks. An aboveground microspray irrigation system shall be used in lieu of typical underground pop-up sprays.

**Chemical Applications:** If the trees are maintained in a healthy state, regular spraying for insect or disease control would not be necessary. If a problem does develop, an ISA-certified arborist/licensed PCA or their representative shall be consulted since the trees may require application of insecticides to prevent the intrusion of bark-boring beetles and other invasive pests. All chemical spraying shall be performed by a licensed applicator under the direction of a licensed PCA.

**Monitoring:** An ISA-certified arborist or their representative should inspect the trees retained on site for a period of 5 years following the completion of construction activity. Monitoring visits should be completed quarterly, totaling 20 visits. Following each monitoring visit, a report summarizing site conditions, observations, tree health, and recommendations for promoting tree health shall be submitted. Additionally, any tree mortality shall be noted, and any tree dying during the monitoring period shall be replaced with the same species as specified for minimum replacement standards in this oak tree report.

**Mitigation Measure 5.3-27: Pre-construction Tree Pest and Disease Survey.**



1) Prior to tree removal, a certified arborist should evaluate trees for infectious tree diseases including but not limited to sudden oak death (*Phytophthora ramorum*), thousand canker fungus (*Geosmithia morbida*), polyphagous shot hole borer (*Euwallacea* spp.), and goldspotted oak borer (*Agrilus auroguttatus*) (TCD 2021; UCANR 2021; Phytosphere Research 2012; UCIPM 2013).

2) If a certified arborist determines trees are impacted by infectious pests or diseases, the certified arborist should prepare an Infectious Tree Disease Management Plan or develop a detailed, robust, enforceable, and feasible list of preventative measures. A plan/list should provide measures relevant for each tree pest or disease observed. To avoid the spread of infectious tree pests and diseases, infected trees should not be transported from a Project site without first being treated using best available management practices described Infectious Tree Disease Management Plan or list of preventative measures.

3) If possible, all tree material, especially infected tree material, should be left on site. The material could be chipped for use as ground cover or mulch. Pruning and power tools should be cleaned and disinfected before use to prevent introducing pathogens from known infested areas, and after use to prevent spread of pathogens to new areas.

## **D. Cultural Resources**

### ***1. Archaeological Resources***

**Threshold:** Would the Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5? (Threshold 5.4-2)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Both record searches and field surveys of the Project site show that there is no record of human remains in any archaeological record within the Project area or known sites containing human remains. Project construction would require ground-disturbing activities, including grading and excavation, which could result in the discovery of previously unrecorded human remains, including Native American burials. If human remains are uncovered during subsurface excavation activities, California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 would be

implemented. Operational activities that may involve ground disturbing activities include landscape maintenance and fuel modification activities within the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. These ground-disturbing activities during operation would not likely encounter or disturb unknown archaeological resources or human remains, whereas subsurface construction activities (e.g., grading) could potentially impact unknown archaeological resources or human remains. If encountered at all, archeological resources likely would have been encountered in these areas during construction. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.4-1:** Prior to the initiation of Project-related earthmoving activities and excavation associated with each component of the Project, the Project Developer project manager or their designee shall retain a County-certified qualified archaeologist to prepare a cultural resource monitoring plan. The qualified archaeologist shall meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (48 Federal Register 44738–39). The archaeologist must have knowledge of both prehistoric and historical archaeology.

The cultural resource monitoring plan shall outline when and for how long monitoring shall occur, where on the site monitoring of vegetation clearing and earthmoving activities shall be required, methods of monitoring, types of artifacts anticipated, procedures for temporary stop and redirection of work to permit sampling, identification and evaluation of possible resources, procedures for additional analysis, and accommodation and procedures for Native American monitors, if any.

**Mitigation Measure 5.4-2:** Prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities associated with each component of the Project, a Worker Education Training and Awareness Program shall be developed to discuss the Project's potential for impacting cultural resources. The training shall be presented by the qualified archaeologist in conjunction with representatives from the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. This education/training program shall discuss the cultural resource monitoring plan including the types of artifacts and features that may be encountered, the procedures to be followed if cultural materials are unearthed at the Project site,

contact information for Lead Agency and Tribal personnel, and the regulatory requirements for the protection of cultural resources. This education program shall be provided to all construction personnel (e.g., contractors, earthmoving personnel, etc.) prior to any work being done on the Project site.

**Mitigation Measure 5.4-3:**

During Project-related earthmoving activities and excavation within the VTTM site, the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and the Off-Site Water Tank Area, the construction manager shall adhere to the stipulations of the cultural resource monitoring plan. The archaeologist shall have the authority to halt any project-related activities adversely impacting potentially significant resources.

During project-related construction and excavation activities within the VTTM site, the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and the Off-Site Water Tank Area, should subsurface archaeological resources be discovered, all activity within 25 feet of the find shall stop and a qualified archaeologist shall be contacted to assess the significance of the find according to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. If any find is determined to be significant, the archaeologist shall determine, in consultation with County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning and the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians representatives, appropriate avoidance measures or other appropriate mitigation. Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(3), preservation in place shall be the preferred means to avoid impacts to archaeological resources qualifying as historical resources. Methods of avoidance may include, but shall not be limited to, rerouting or redesign, cancellation, or identification of protection measures such as capping or fencing. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(3)(C), if it is demonstrated that resources cannot be avoided, the qualified archaeologist shall develop additional treatment measures, such as data recovery or other appropriate measures, in consultation with County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning and Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians representatives. If an archaeological site does not qualify as a historical resource but meets the criteria for a unique archaeological resource as

defined in Public Resources Code Section 21083.2, then the site shall be treated in accordance with the provisions of Public Resources Code Section 21083.2

## **2. Paleontological Resources**

**Threshold:** Would the Project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature? (Threshold 5.4-3)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Archival records search for paleontological resources from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County yielded no results indicating paleontological resources are known to be on the Project site. No paleontological resources were observed during the site surveys. The paleontological records search and research into the geological setting of the area indicate that it is an area of high paleontological sensitivity. The Project's shallow excavations into Quaternary alluvium likely will not impact sediments old enough to contain significant paleontological resources; however, the Saugus and Pico formations have yielded significant paleontological resources in Los Angeles County.

**Mitigation Measure MM 5.4-4** is proposed to require a qualified paleontologist to monitor excavation and earthmoving activities on the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area within the Saugus and Pico formations of 15 feet or greater. Operational activities in the Project site that may involve ground-disturbing activities include landscape maintenance and fuel modification activities, and do not typically occur to a depth to discover paleontological resources. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation.

### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.4-4:** A qualified paleontologist shall be retained by the Project Developer prior to construction activities to develop and execute a paleontological monitoring plan (PMP) for the grading activities planned for the VTTM site, Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and Off-Site Water Tank Area within the Saugus and Pico Formations. The qualified paleontologist shall meet the qualifications established by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP). The PMP shall include a construction monitoring schedule to be maintained when earthmoving occurs within Saugus and Pico Formations so that the paleontologist may identify and evaluate fossil resources in the VTTM site, Off Site Roadway Improvement Area,

and Off-Site Water Tank Area. The paleontologist shall become familiar with the proposed depths and patterns of grading for grading activities planned in the VTTM site, Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, and Off-Site Water Tank Area within the Saugus and Pico Formations to provide basis to the development of a monitoring program. The PMP shall be reviewed and approved by the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning prior to the commencement of construction.

The qualified paleontologist shall present the elements of the approved PMP to County staff and construction supervisors in a pre-construction meeting. The PMP shall present the fossil sensitivity of the geologic formation, the nature of the resources that have been or may be encountered within the formation and steps to be undertaken to mitigate impacts to these resources to a level of less than significant.

A qualified paleontologist shall be retained to monitor grading and excavation activities within paleontologically sensitive areas as determined necessary by the qualified paleontologist and stated in the PMP. Recommended hours for monitoring activities shall be established by the qualified paleontologist and shall be outlined in the monitoring plan. Frequency and location of monitoring may be increased, decreased, or curtailed as determined by the qualified paleontologist in consultation with the County.

If fossils are found during earthmoving activities, the paleontologist shall be authorized to halt the ground-disturbing activities within the prescribed distance in the PMP to allow evaluation of the find and determination of appropriate treatment in accordance with SVP guidelines for identification, evaluation, disclosure, avoidance or recovery, and curation, as appropriate. The paleontologist shall prepare a final report on the monitoring. If fossils are identified, then the report shall contain an appropriate description of the fossils, treatment, and curation. A copy of the report shall be filed with the Project Developer, the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles.

## **E. Noise**

### **1. Ambient Noise**

**Threshold:** Would the Project result in the generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the County General Plan or noise ordinance (Los Angeles County Code, Title 12, Chapter 12.08), or applicable standards of other agencies? (Threshold 5.11-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Noise from Project construction activities would be affected by the amount of construction equipment, the location of this equipment, the timing and duration of construction activities, and the relative distance to noise-sensitive receptors. As required by the County Noise Ordinance, the operation of Project-related construction equipment would be prohibited between hours of 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM and anytime on Sundays or legal holidays. Individual pieces of construction equipment that would be used during construction produce maximum noise levels of 73 dBA to 85 dBA at a reference distance of 50 feet from the noise source. Construction noise levels during grading activities would range from 65.9 to 92.0 dBA, resulting in a maximum increase of 5.9 dBA to 32.0 dBA. These noise levels would exceed the County's maximum mobile construction noise threshold of 75 dBA prior to implementation of regulatory compliance measures. regulatory compliance which requires optimal muffler systems for all equipment, the construction noise levels would be reduced by approximately 10 dBA at nearby sensitive receptors. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure (MM) 5.11-1** would reduce potential construction-related noise.

The Project's roadway related noise increases would be less than 3 dBA and would fall within the normally acceptable and conditionally acceptable State Land Use Compatibility criteria for single-family uses. Noise levels for residential areas are typically between 48 to 52 dBA CNEL. Overall, the noise generated by the Project's residential uses would be consistent with the ambient noise levels in the Project area, which range from a low of 48.1 dBA to a high of 67.6 dBA. The Project would include surface-level parking in the commercial lot for guests and residents. The regular and intermittent noise from the parking would not exceed the duration-based noise standards for single-family residences codified in County Code Sections 12.08.390 and 12.08.440. The proposed reservoir activities would generate noise of 65 dBA, below the standards established by the County for residences. As such, the Project is also consistent with applicable Los Angeles County General Plan and SCVAP 2012 policies.

Operational sources of vibration include heavy-duty vehicle travel along area roadways. According to the FTA's *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual*, it is unusual for vibration from vehicular sources (including buses and trucks) operating on smooth road or surface to be perceptible, even in locations close to major roads. No sources of "excessive" groundborne vibration or noise levels are anticipated during operation of the Project. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation.

### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.11-1:** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer or their designee shall develop a Construction Noise Reduction Plan to minimize construction noise at nearby noise sensitive receptors. The Construction Noise Reduction Plan shall be developed in coordination with a certified acoustical consultant and the Project construction contractors and shall be approved by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works and the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning. The Construction Noise Reduction Plan shall outline and identify noise complaint measures, best management construction practices, and equipment noise reduction measures. The Construction Noise Reduction Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Construction equipment shall be properly maintained per manufacturers' specifications and fitted with the best available noise suppression devices (i.e., mufflers, silencers, wraps, etc.).
- Noise construction activities whose specific location on the Project site may be flexible (e.g., operation of compressors and generators, cement mixing, general truck idling) shall be conducted as far as feasibly possible from the nearest noise-sensitive land uses.
- If feasible, grading activities shall be scheduled so as to avoid operating numerous pieces of heavy-duty off-road construction equipment (e.g., backhoes, dozers, excavators, loaders, rollers, etc.) simultaneously in close proximity to the boundary of properties of off-site noise-sensitive receptors surrounding the Project site to reduce construction noise levels by approximately 5 to 10 dB.

- Shroud or shield all impact tools, and muffle or shield all intake and exhaust port on power equipment to reduce construction noise by 10 dB or more.
- Where feasible, temporary barriers, including but not limited to, sound blankets on existing fences and walls, or freestanding portable sound walls, shall be placed as close to the noise source or as close to the receptor as possible and break the line of sight between the source and receptor where modeled levels exceed applicable standards. Noise barriers may include, but not be limited to, using appropriately thick wooden panel walls (at least 0.5-inches thick). Such barriers shall reduce construction noise by 5 to 10 dB at nearby noise-sensitive receptor locations. Alternatively, field-erected noise curtain assemblies could be installed around specific equipment sites or zones of anticipated mobile or stationary activity. The barrier material shall be solid and dense enough to demonstrate acoustical transmission loss that is at least 10 dB or greater than the estimated noise reduction effect. These suggested barrier types do not represent the only ways to achieve the indicated noise reduction in dB; they represent examples of how such noise attenuation might be attained by this measure.
- Implement noise complaint reporting. A sign, legible at a distance of 50 feet, shall be posted at the Project construction site, providing a contact name and a telephone number through which residents can inquire about the construction process and register complaints. This sign shall indicate the dates and duration of construction activities. In conjunction with this required posting, a noise disturbance coordinator shall be identified to address construction noise concerns received. The contact name and the telephone number for the noise disturbance coordinator shall be posted on the sign. The coordinator shall be responsible for responding to any local complaints about construction noise and shall notify the County Department of Public Works to determine the cause and implement reasonable measures



to the complaint, as deemed acceptable by the County Department of Public Works.

## **F. Public Services**

### ***1. Sheriff Protection***

**Threshold:** Would the Project create capacity or service level problems, or result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered government facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives Sheriff protection services? (Threshold 5.13.2-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:**

Project construction would not normally require services from the Sheriff's Department, except in the case of trespassing, theft, or vandalism. During construction, any active construction areas would be fenced for security. Construction would occur Monday through Friday between 7:00 AM and 3:00 PM. The number of vehicles forecast to be generated during construction activities would be below 50 peak trips during the AM peak hour due to the limited time periods for each of these phases of construction and the number of workers associated with each phase. In addition, heavy construction equipment and vehicles would be kept on the VTTM site or Off-Site Water Tank Area during the duration of the construction period, reducing the number of trucks travelling on local streets and minimizing the potential for construction vehicles and local vehicle incidents. Construction activities may involve temporary lane closures for utility improvements (generally one-lane closures to maintain through access on all roadways). Other implications of construction-related traffic may include increased travel time due to flagging or stopping of traffic to accommodate trucks entering and exiting the Project site during construction. As such, construction activities could potentially increase response times for emergency vehicles, including Sheriff deputies or CHP officers, traveling to the Project site and nearby uses along surrounding streets. With implementation of **MM 5.1-1** and **MM 5.15-1**, construction activities associated with the Project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, the County's Sheriff activities.

During operation, the Sheriff's Department would have the responsibility to provide general law enforcement services to the Project site. With the addition of the Project, the existing officer-to-residents ratio would result in a negligible decrease of the current service ratio by 0.001 sworn officers per 10,000 residents, or from 1,340 residents per officer to approximately 1,343 residents per officer, an increase of

approximately 0.1 percent. A new Station located at 26201 Golden Valley Road in the City, approximately nine 14.6 miles southeast of the Project site, opened in November 2021. The Santa Clarita Valley Station currently maintains a staff of 209 sworn deputies and serves an area of 649 656 square miles. Equipment and services provided through the station include 24-hour designated County squad cars, helicopters, search and rescue, mounted posse, and emergency operation centers. The incorporation of these measures included in **MM 5.13.2-1**, would result in a reduction in the need for service calls on the Project site by creating a safer environment on the site. In addition, prior to the issuance of building permits, payment of the appropriate law enforcement facilities fees to the County would be required.

Vehicular access to and from the Project site is currently provided from Hasley Canyon Road. During the construction phase of the Project, improvements will be made to Del Valle Road. Road improvements will include the widening of and softening of the existing curve of Del Valle Road for additional visibility and public safety. This improved roadway system would also provide an alternative means of egress for residents to the east and north of the Project site, increasing accessibility and emergency routes for residents and emergency vehicles in those areas. Given these evacuation routes, the design of the Project would not preclude an evacuation plan, and rather, would provide alternate ingress/egress routes in the event of an emergency. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.13.2-1:** Prior to the issuance of building permits and approval of the final Project design, lighting, and landscape plans, the Project Developer shall provide to the Sheriff's Department final design plans incorporating the Sheriff's Department design requirements, including Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, that could reduce demands for service and ensure adequate public safety shall be incorporated into the building, lighting, and landscape designs. The design requirements for this project shall include:

- Security lighting in open areas and parking lots in compliance with the requirements of the County's Rural Outdoor Lighting District (Dark Skies) Ordinance;

- Street lighting for the Project's streets in compliance with the requirements of the County's Rural Outdoor Lighting District (Dark Skies) Ordinance;
- Good visibility of doors and windows from the streets and between buildings on the Project site;
- Building address numbers on both residential and commercial uses that are lighted and readily apparent from the streets for emergency response agencies;
- Use of low-growing groundcover and shade trees, where feasible, rather than a predominance of high-growing shrubs that could conceal potential criminal activity around buildings and parking areas.

## **G. Transportation**

### ***1. Plan Consistency***

**Threshold:** Would the Project conflict with a program plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities? (Threshold 5.15-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts less than significant.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Access to the VTTM site for construction trucks and construction workers would be provided from SR-126 to Commerce Center Drive to Hasley Canyon Road to Del Valle Road or from the I-5 Freeway to Hasley Canyon Road and Del Valle Road. Access to the Off-Site Water Tank Area for construction trucks and construction workers would be provided from SR-126 to Chiquito Canyon Road to San Martinez Road or from the I-5 Freeway to Hasley Canyon Road to Del Valle Road to San Martinez Road. Construction personnel would park at the Project site. Each phase of Project construction would result in varying levels of intensity and number of construction personnel. Construction would occur Monday through Friday between 7:00 AM and 3:00 PM. The number of daily delivery and haul trucks would be between eight to fifteen roundtrips during the utilities phase, approximately twenty roundtrips during the concrete and paving phase, and twenty round-trips during the building phase. Construction activities may involve temporary lane closures for utility improvements. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure MM 5.15-1**, which requires a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), would ensure emergency vehicle access during all aspects of Project construction. The plan would be submitted

to the LACDPW for review and approval and would help to alleviate traffic impacts, providing for temporary traffic controls to improve traffic flow on public roadways during construction. The traffic impacts of construction activity would be temporary and minor.

Public transit in the Santa Clarita Valley includes both bus and commuter rail service. SCT provides bus route services to the entire City as well as connections to Amtrak and Metrolink. The buildout of the Project is forecast to generate approximately 3,309 total (Average Daily Trips) ADT. The Project is anticipated to generate approximately 162 daily transit trips with 10 transit trips in the AM and 16 transit trips in the PM Peak Hours. The current SCT bus transit arrangement is anticipated to continue to serve local residents of the area, connecting residential areas with employment and commercial centers. Metrolink, governed by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRAA), provides commuter rail service between the Antelope Valley and Downtown Los Angeles, and also links Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego counties with transfer service between the bus and rail systems. The Metrolink station closest to the Project site is located along Soledad Canyon Road east of Bouquet Canyon Road.

All studied intersections would be projected to operate at Level of Service C or better during the morning and evening with the addition of traffic from the Project. There is no significant change in AM Peak-Hour or PM Peak-Hour conditions. The Project is expected to generate a total of 204 trips during the AM peak hour and 326 trips during the PM peak hour. Given the distribution of Project traffic on roadways in the area, the Project would not result in 50 peak-hour trips at any CMP monitoring intersection or 150 peak-hour trips at any freeway-monitoring segment. As the Project would not meet the volume contribution thresholds at any CMP monitoring locations.

The Project provides a highly livable, outdoor, pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages alternative means of transportation to the automobile by incorporating enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access via a private multi-use trail and off-site trail easement. The Project would not be inconsistent with the applicable County plans including the General Plan and SCVAP 2012, regulations including the Castaic Area CSD, and Caltrans regulations. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of project design features and mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-1:** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, a Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) for approval. The Construction

Traffic Management Plan shall identify street closure information, a detour plan, haul routes, construction parking, and staging areas. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall formalize how construction shall be carried out and identify specific actions that shall be required to reduce effects on the surrounding community and shall include the following elements as appropriate:

- Hours of construction and hours for deliveries;
- Identification of haul routes, limits on the length of open trench, work area delineation, traffic control, and flagmen;
- Access and parking restrictions, pavement markings, and signage requirements (e.g., speed limit, temporary loading zones);
- A plan for notification to affected residents and businesses prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification will include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which lanes and access point/driveways would be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;
- Coordination with emergency service providers in the area at least one month in advance. Emergency service providers shall be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads shall remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times;
- Require all open trenches to be covered with metal plates at the end of each workday to accommodate traffic and access;
- Restore all streets pursuant to agreements with the local jurisdictions.

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-7:** Intersection No. 4: Del Valle Road & Hasley Canyon Road (Project Traffic Share Percentage: 18.6 %).

- Install traffic signal;
- Intersection modification to provide one northbound left-turn lane, one northbound free-flow right-turn lane, and one westbound left-turn lane.

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-8:** Intersection No. 5: Commerce Center & Hasley Canyon Road (Project Traffic Share Percentage: 10.3%).

- Intersection modification to restripe the eastbound shared left and through lane to a shared left, through and right lane (for 1 EB Left, 1 shared EB Left/Through/Right and 1 EB Right)

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-9:** Intersection No. 1: Chiquito Canyon Road & SR-126 (Project Traffic Share Percentage: 1.2 %).

- Intersection modification to provide two southbound left turn lanes, three southbound through lanes, one southbound right-turn lane (for 2 SB Left, 3 SB Through and 1 SB Right), two westbound left-turn lanes, three westbound through lanes, one westbound right-turn lane (for 2 WB Left, 3 WB Through and 1 WB Right), two northbound left-turn lanes, two northbound through lanes, two northbound right turn lanes (for 2 NB Left, 2 NB Through and 2 NB Right), two eastbound left-turn lanes, three eastbound through lanes, one eastbound right-turn lane (for 2 EB Left, 3 EB Through and 1 EB Right). Install traffic signal. [Improvements are identified in Caltrans SR-126 PSR.];
- Receive additional Project traffic fair-share percentage (0.9%) intended for Wolcott Way & SR 126 impact mitigation.

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-10:** Intersection No. 6: The Old Road & I-5 SB Ramps (at Sedona Way) (Project Traffic Share Percentage: 0.6 %).

- Intersection modification to provide signage on The Old Road that directs freeway on-ramp traffic to the Hasley Canyon on-ramp as an alternate freeway access point. Signage to be maintained by the County and installed within the County right-of-way.

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-11:** Intersection No. 14: Wolcott Way & SR-126 (Project Traffic Share Percentage: 0.9 % - to be applied to Chiquito Canyon Road Improvements).

- In lieu of improvements to this location, transfer Project's traffic fair-share percentage towards mitigating Chiquito Canyon Road & SR 126 impacts.

## **2. Hazards**

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)? (Threshold 5.15-3)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

### **Facts in Support of Finding**

Construction of the VTTM site, Off-Site Improvement Areas, Off-Site Water Tank Area, and Off-Site trail easement, would temporarily affect transportation and traffic on roadways in the Project vicinity. With implementation of **MM 5.15-1**, which requires a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan, would help to alleviate potential safety and traffic conflicts during construction.

During operation, primary access to the VTTM site is provided via Del Valle Road. The current design of Del Valle Road includes sharp increases in topographical elevation and limited visibility along the VTTM site. Del Valle Road would require roadway improvements to ensure user safety and would be widened and improved to 64 feet within approximately 80 feet of public right-of-way, increasing roadway safety for all users. Sterling Parkway would provide one lane in each direction and would extend north from Hunstock Street to Del Valle Road as a designated limited secondary highway within 80 feet of public right-of-way. Upon completion, the additional public right-of-way along the entirety of Del Valle Road would provide for increased vehicular movement around existing topography, improved sight distances for users, and would provide for additional surface area to potentially incorporate drainage control features. The Project roadways would be designed consistent with the Castaic Area CSD but in such a way to reduce motor vehicle speeds with traffic-calming features such as pedestrian crossing signage, crosswalks at

commercial and park areas, and feedback signs indicating speed of vehicles along Del Valle Road throughout the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area (as recommended in **MM 5.15-3**). Pedestrian safety related improvements include the separation of the private multi-use trail from vehicle traffic in a manner consistent with the County's Healthy Design Guidelines and the Castaic Area CSD. The VTTM site would be developed to be consistent with the surrounding area by adding housing, open space areas, recreational areas, and a commercial component to serve the daily needs of the community. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measures:

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-1:** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, a Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) for approval. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall identify street closure information, a detour plan, haul routes, construction parking, and staging areas. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall formalize how construction shall be carried out and identify specific actions that shall be required to reduce effects on the surrounding community and shall include the following elements as appropriate:

- Hours of construction and hours for deliveries;
- Identification of haul routes, limits on the length of open trench, work area delineation, traffic control, and flagmen;
- Access and parking restrictions, pavement markings, and signage requirements (e.g., speed limit, temporary loading zones);
- A plan for notification to affected residents and businesses prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification will include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which lanes and access point/driveways would be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;



- Coordination with emergency service providers in the area at least one month in advance. Emergency service providers shall be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads shall remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times;
- Require all open trenches to be covered with metal plates at the end of each workday to accommodate traffic and access;
- Restore all streets pursuant to agreements with the local jurisdictions.

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-3:** Prior to the issuance of building permits and final Project design, the Project Developer shall incorporate the location of traffic calming measures, such as marked crosswalks at appropriate locations, for on-site streets and intersections. Specific measures shall comply with the Castaic Area Community Standards District (CSD) and shall be approved by LACDPW.

### ***1. Emergency Access***

**Potential Impact:** Would the Project result in inadequate emergency access? (Threshold 5.15-4)

**Finding:** Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

**Facts in Support of Finding:**

Construction of the VTTM site, Off-Site Improvement Areas, Off-Site Water Tank Area, and Off-Site trail easement, would temporarily affect emergency access in the Project vicinity. With implementation of **MM 5.15-1**, which requires a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan, would help to alleviate potential safety and traffic conflicts during construction.

The existing substandard Del Valle Road would be improved to meet current County standards with implementation of the Project. Upon completion, the additional right-of-way would provide for increased vehicular movement during an emergency. Additionally, secondary emergency through access would be provided between Lexington Drive and the VTTM site via an approximately 26-foot wide roadway. Internal roadways would be designed for one lane in each direction within approximately 58 feet of right-of-way. Two linear access lots would be approximately 20 feet in width and would be provided to connect the

VTTM site to Trevylon Street and Rainbow Drive to the west for additional emergency access for the VTTM site and surrounding neighborhood. During certain high-intensity storm events, access to and from the Project site via the intersection of Del Valle Road and Hasley Canyon Road may be limited or blocked due to flooding. This is an existing condition, which the Project will not exacerbate. The Project would provide adequate means of emergency access to the VTTM site, commercial component, private trail, and Off-Site trail easement. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measures:

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-1:** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, a Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) for approval. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall identify street closure information, a detour plan, haul routes, construction parking, and staging areas. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall formalize how construction shall be carried out and identify specific actions that shall be required to reduce effects on the surrounding community and shall include the following elements as appropriate:

- Hours of construction and hours for deliveries;
- Identification of haul routes, limits on the length of open trench, work area delineation, traffic control, and flagmen;
- Access and parking restrictions, pavement markings, and signage requirements (e.g., speed limit, temporary loading zones);
- A plan for notification to affected residents and businesses prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification will include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which lanes and access point/driveways would be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;

- Coordination with emergency service providers in the area at least one month in advance. Emergency service providers shall be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads shall remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times;
- Require all open trenches to be covered with metal plates at the end of each workday to accommodate traffic and access;
- Restore all streets pursuant to agreements with the local jurisdictions.

## **H. Tribal Cultural Resources**

**Threshold:** Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code §21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. (Threshold 5.16-1)

**Finding:** Mitigation measures will reduce impacts to a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code §21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe to less than significant levels. The County hereby makes Finding 1 and determines this impact to be less than significant.

### **Facts in Support of Finding**

The County has complied with AB 52 regarding Native American consultation. Based on the cultural resources reports and the responses from the tribes, the County has determined there are no known tribal cultural resources within the Project site. There is the potential that ground-disturbing activities could reveal the presence of previously unknown resources, including those of historical value to the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. **Mitigation Measure MM 5.16-1** requires an agreement

between the Project Developer and the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians to allow the tribe to monitor the grading of native, undisturbed soils for tribal cultural resources on the Project site. **MMs 5.4-1** through **MM 5.4-3** outline the protocols to be followed in the event resources are unearthed during excavation and grading activities. Operational activities that may involve ground disturbing activities include landscape maintenance and fuel modification activities. These ground-disturbing activities during operation would not likely encounter or disturb unknown Native American archaeological resources or human remains. Impacts would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

#### Mitigation Measures

**Measure 5.4-1:** Prior to the initiation of Project-related earthmoving activities and excavation associated with each component of the Project, the Project Developer project manager or their designee shall retain a County-certified qualified archaeologist to prepare a cultural resource monitoring plan. The qualified archaeologist shall meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (48 Federal Register 44738–39). The archaeologist must have knowledge of both prehistoric and historical archaeology.

The cultural resource monitoring plan shall outline when and for how long monitoring shall occur, where on the site monitoring of vegetation clearing and earthmoving activities shall be required, methods of monitoring, types of artifacts anticipated, procedures for temporary stop and redirection of work to permit sampling, identification and evaluation of possible resources, procedures for additional analysis, and accommodation and procedures for Native American monitors, if any.

**Mitigation Measure 5.4-2:** Prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities associated with each component of the Project, a Worker Education Training and Awareness Program shall be developed to discuss the Project's potential for impacting cultural resources. The training shall be presented by the qualified archaeologist in conjunction with representatives from the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. This education/training program shall discuss the cultural resource monitoring plan including the types of artifacts and features that may be encountered, the procedures to be followed if cultural materials are unearthed at the Project site,

contact information for Lead Agency and Tribal personnel, and the regulatory requirements for the protection of cultural resources. This education program shall be provided to all construction personnel (e.g., contractors, earthmoving personnel, etc.) prior to any work being done on the Project site.

**Mitigation Measure 5.16-1:** Prior to the commencement of grading, the Project Developer shall enter into an agreement with the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians to allow representatives of the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians to monitor the grading of native, undisturbed soils for tribal cultural resources on the Project site.

## **6. FINDINGS REGARDING PROJECT IMPACTS DETERMINED TO BE SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE**

Where, as a result of the environmental analysis of the Project, the County has determined that either (1) even with the identification of project design features, compliance with existing laws, codes and statutes, and/or the identification of feasible mitigation measures, potentially significant impacts cannot be reduced to a level of less than significant, or (2) no feasible mitigation measures or alternatives are available to mitigate the potentially significant impact, the County has found in accordance with CEQA Section 21081(a)(3) and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(3) that "Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including considerations for the provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the environmental impact report." This is referred to herein as "Finding 3."

### **A. Transportation**

**Threshold:** Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)? (Threshold 5.15-2)

**Finding:** Impact would be significant and unavoidable with imposition of all feasible mitigation.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** The vehicle miles travelled (VMT) that would be induced by the Project would be significant in relation to the County's VMT Threshold. To address VMT impacts, the County has established baseline VMT metrics for the "North County" and "South County". The Project site is located within North County. The regional threshold for the North County area is 18.6 residential home-based (HB) VMT per capita. The adjusted residential HB VMT per capita for the Project site and Val Verde community area is 34.2 residential HB VMT per capita under one of two methods to calculate Project VMT and 24.4 HB VMT per capita under the second method to calculate Project VMT, while the Santa Clarita Planning Area is 24.1 residential HB VMT per capita. With the implementation of project design features PDF 5.15-1 through PDF 5.15-5 and **Mitigation Measure MM 5.15-2 through MM 5.15-6**, the residential portion of the Project would generate approximately 30.1 residential HB VMT per capita under the first method and 21.4 HB VMT per capita under the second method. Thus, the Project's residential HB VMT per capita would be above the regional threshold even with implementation of project design features and mitigation measures. Fifteen percent reduction is generally considered the maximum VMT reduction for a project in a suburban setting. As such, the residential portion of the Project would have a significant and unavoidable impact on VMT even with implementation of proposed mitigation. All other transportation related impacts would be reduced to less than significant with implementation of **MM 5.15-1**, and **MM 5.15-7 through MM 5.15-11**. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

**Project Design Feature: 5.15-1:** The Project would increase diversity and include a mix of uses.

**Project Design Feature: 5.15-2:** The Project's retail and park uses would serve the existing residential communities resulting in a reduction in the number and length of vehicle trips associated with existing residential uses in the area near the project site.

**Project Design Feature: 5.15-3:** The Project would provide pedestrian connectivity and improvements by linking pedestrians external to the Project site where there are currently gaps in the existing pedestrian network.

**Project Design Feature: 5.15-4:** The Project would provide a private trail.

**Project Design Feature: 5.15-5:** The Project would dedicate a multiuse trail easement to the County.

**Mitigation Measure 5.15-2:** Prior to final map recordation, the Project Developer shall provide to the LACDPW the location and function of a community wireless internet (Wi-Fi) connection for review and approval, such as at the commercial retail and park sites, to promote telecommuting (tele-work). Additionally, the Project Applicant shall provide a Covenant and Agreement to LACDPW for maintaining the community Wi-Fi connection prior to final map recordation. Purchasers of homes shall be informed of the location and relevant information to access the community Wi-Fi connection prior to the close of escrow.

Prior to the issuance of an occupancy permit for the 116th residential unit, the 3.4-acre neighborhood park shall be rough graded and constructed. The community Wi-Fi shall be installed at the 3.4-acre neighborhood park upon completion of construction.

Prior to the issuance of an occupancy permit for the 194th residential unit, the commercial retail center shall be graded. The community Wi-Fi shall be installed at the commercial retail center upon completion of construction.

- Mitigation Measure 5.15-3:** Prior to the issuance of building permits and final Project design, the Project Developer shall incorporate the location of traffic calming measures, such as marked crosswalks at appropriate locations, for on-site streets and intersections. Specific measures shall comply with the Castaic Area Community Standards District (CSD) and shall be approved by LACDPW.
- Mitigation Measure 5.15-4:** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall submit the Project's final design drawings, including the location of the future planned Class III bicycle facility on Del Valle Road as identified on Figure A-3: Los Angeles County Existing and Proposed Regional Trail Network, of the County of Los Angeles Trails Manual, to the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning for approval.
- Mitigation Measure 5.15-5:** Prior to the issuance of building permits, the Project Developer shall submit a final plan that indicates the location of neighborhood electric vehicles (NEV) amenities, such as NEV parking, charging stations, signage, and educational materials, at community locations (i.e., the commercial lot and parks) to LACDPW for approval. All NEV amenities shall comply with LADPW requirements.
- Mitigation Measure 5.15-6:** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the Project Developer shall consult with the Santa Clarita Transit (SCT) regarding the relocation of the existing bus stop on Del Valle Road to the proposed Sterling Ranch Parkway at a location in direct proximity to the proposed commercial retail and park uses. The new bus stop location shall be approved by LACDPW and shall be constructed by the Project Developer. The new bus stop shall be constructed with amenities to facilitate transit use such as shade structures, benches, and bike racks in accordance with SCT requirements.



## **7. FINDINGS REGARDING ALTERNATIVES**

The identification and analysis of alternatives to a proposed project is a fundamental aspect of the environmental review process under CEQA. Public Resources Code Section 21002 states, in part: “it is the policy of the state that public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of such projects.” In addition, Public Resources Code Section 21002.1(a) states: “The purpose of an environmental impact report is to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided.”

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(b) emphasizes the selection of project alternatives should be based primarily on the ability to avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts attributable to a proposed project, “even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives or would be more costly.” CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f) further directs that the range of alternatives be guided by a “rule of reason,” such that only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice are addressed. In selecting project alternatives for analysis, potential alternatives must be feasible.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) requires the analysis of a “no project” alternative and CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f)(2) requires the evaluation of alternative location(s) for a proposed project, if feasible. Based on the alternatives analysis, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires an EIR to designate an environmentally superior alternative. If the environmentally superior alternative is the No Project Alternative, then the EIR must identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

The underlying purpose of the Project is to provide a single-family residential project with neighborhood-serving commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District and One Valley One Vision Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan to help accommodate the need for housing in the County. As required by the CEQA Guidelines, the list of objectives that the Applicant seeks to achieve for the Project is provided below.

The objectives of the Project are:

1. Consistent with the One Valley One Vision Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the Castaic Area Community Standards District, accommodate projected regional growth in a location that is designated and zoned for residential growth and adjacent to existing and planned infrastructure, urban services, transportation corridors, and major employment centers.

2. Provide economically viable new housing in the Val Verde community of the County, an area designated by the County for urban development, which will meaningfully contribute to addressing the housing needs for the Santa Clarita Valley and provide housing for residents working in the nearby employment centers.
3. Develop a single-family, residential neighborhood with neighborhood-supporting commercial development consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District development standards, including the regulations regarding lot sizes.
4. Provide an area for permanent conservation between existing and proposed development and other existing conservation areas to preserve regionally significant natural resource areas, flora, fauna, wildlife corridors, and open space areas.
5. Enhance the image of the community through visually attractive and high-quality development that is in scale, complements, and blends with the Val Verde community and surrounding open space.
6. Improve Del Valle Road from its substandard design to current County standards to improve safety and to provide a more efficient and aesthetically attractive street circulation system with convenient connections to adjoining regional transportation routes while minimizing impacts on the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
7. Provide a range of recreational opportunities, including neighborhood parks, multi-use pedestrian and bicycle trails separated from vehicle traffic, which connects with supporting commercial, recreational, and other public facilities, to serve as an alternative to the automobile for surrounding residential neighborhoods and to meet the recreational needs of local residents.
8. Implement sustainable development principles in compliance with County plans, objectives, and regulations, particularly regarding energy efficiency, drought tolerant landscaping, water conservation, and waste reduction to support the County's greenhouse gas emission goals.
9. Balance grading on the Project site to minimize the need to import or export soil for development.
10. Accommodate and enhance fire protection facilities, including a new water tank and site access points, consistent with requests from the County Fire Department.
11. Provide a project that will invigorate the local economy, employment, and business opportunities through project construction and through the expenditures of its future residents.

The consideration of alternatives is an integral component of the CEQA process. The selection and evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives provides the public and decision-makers with information on ways to avoid or lessen environmental impacts created by a proposed project. When selecting alternatives for evaluation, CEQA requires alternatives that meet most of the basic objectives of the Project, while avoiding or substantially lessening the Project's significant effects.

Three alternatives to the Project were defined and analyzed:

### **A. Alternative 1: No Project/No Development**

**Finding:** No new development or land uses would be introduced on the Project site under Alternative 1, and the existing uses on the Project site would continue to operate as they do currently. Implementation of the No Project/No Development Alternative would not avoid the Project's significant and unavoidable VMT impacts. Alternative 1 would eliminate the Project's less than significant with mitigation impacts associated with: aesthetics; air quality and health impacts; biological resources; cultural resources; construction-related noise impacts; sheriff protection services; construction traffic impacts; transportation delay on local and area roadways; and tribal cultural resources. Impacts associated with the remaining environmental issue areas would be reduced when compared to those impacts of the Project. While impacts would be reduced under Alternative 1, this Alternative would not provide new homes planned for this area of the County and economic output within the County when compared to the Project. Accordingly, Alternative 1 is hereby rejected by the County as it would not achieve most of the Project objectives.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e), the no project alternative for a development project on an identifiable property consists of the circumstance under which a proposed project does not proceed. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(3)(B) states "in certain instances, the no project alternative means 'no build' wherein the existing environmental setting is maintained." Accordingly, for purposes of this analysis, Alternative 1, the No Project/No Development alternative, assumes the Project would not be approved, no new permanent development or land uses would be introduced within the Project site, and the existing environment would be maintained. The VTTM site is largely undeveloped except for roads, a single residential structure, and pads associated with past oil well drilling and operations, including a 75-foot-by-100-foot concrete pad/slab located on the southern portion of the VTTM site. Under Alternative 1, the potential Project-related impacts associated with development of the Project site and described in the Draft EIR would not occur.

Under Alternative 1, the Off-Site Improvement Areas, including the Off-Site Water Tank Area, Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area, Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area, and Off-Site Sewer Line

Improvement Area, also would remain in their current conditions and the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area would not be preserved in perpetuity.

Alternative 1 would not accommodate projected residential growth adjacent to existing and planned infrastructure. Alternative 1 would not provide viable new housing for residents working in nearby employment centers. This Alternative would not provide an area for permanent conservation. New and enhanced fire protection facilities would not be provided, nor would Del Valle Road be improved to meet current County standards to improve safety and provide more efficient transportation routes under this Alternative. In summary, Alternative 1: No Project/No Development would not meet any of the Project objectives or the Project's underlying purpose to provide a single-family residential project with neighborhood-serving commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area CSD and SCVAP 2012 to help accommodate the need for housing in the County.

## **B. Alternative 2: Clustered Development—Smaller Lot Sizes**

**Finding:** Alternative 2, Clustered Development—Smaller Lot Sizes, would reduce the environmental impacts associated with the Project. Specifically, the reduction in single-family lots, clustering of lots, and reduced grading footprint under this Alternative would reduce the following of the Project's less than significant, with or without mitigation: aesthetic impacts during construction; air quality post-construction; biological resources during construction; cultural resources; hydrology and water quality during construction; operational vehicle-related noise; elementary and middle school capacity; vehicle delay along local and area roadways; water supply, and wastewater impacts. However, Alternative 2 would not fully eliminate the Project's significant VMT impact. For this reason, the County hereby rejects Alternative 2, the Environmentally Superior Alternative, as infeasible on the basis of such considerations.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Alternative 2, Clustered Development-Smaller Lot Sizes, would reduce grading, cluster single-family lots which would be smaller than those proposed by the Project, and provide multi-family housing. Alternative 2 includes 172 single-family residential lots and 50 condominiums, one commercial lot, two parking lots, one open space lot, eight debris basin lots, pump station, and public right-of-way with sidewalks on 113.9 gross acres. Under Alternative 2, the total amount of units (222) would be similar to the proposed units (222 units) for the site under the Project. For purposes of this analysis, the average lot size would be 5,682 square feet (sq. ft.), or half the average lot size of the Project.<sup>3</sup> The single-family residential lots would be located on the north side of Del Valle Road and would be accessed by a new system of public streets, while the multi-family units would be located on the south side of the road and accessed by private driveways. Through access and additional emergency access for the VTTM site and surrounding neighborhood also would be provided.

This alternative would include a fuel modification zone where high fire-risk vegetation would be thinned and removed. Open space within the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would total approximately 59.8 acres. As with the Project, Alternative 2 would remove two oak trees by development of the proposed improvements along Hunstock Street and would remove twelve oak trees by construction in the Off-Site Water Tank Area. Landscaping would consist of ornamental landscaping with noninvasive species. This alternative would install a combination of native drought tolerant shrubs and trees. The native, drought-tolerant landscaped areas would use temporary above-ground irrigation systems to establish the plants. Lastly, Alternative 2 would integrate similar sustainability characteristics with energy efficiency and water conservation strategies as required by County plans, objectives, and regulations.

Similar to those for the Project, this alternative would include several other site improvements, such as the Off-Site Improvement Areas including the Off-Site Water Tank Area containing the 1,000,000-gallon water tank, the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area including the off-site trail easement, the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area, and the Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area.

As is the case with the Project, Alternative 2 would be completed by 2028 with the timing of development responding to market conditions. The total amount of grading for Alternative 2 construction would be approximately 2,294,775 cubic yards. Grading would result in the balance of cut and fill across the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. Alternative 2 also would require the same permits and approvals as the Project (e.g., Vesting Tentative Tract Map, Conditional Use Permit, and Oak Tree Permit).

Implementation of Alternative 2, the Clustered Development—Smaller Lot Sizes Alternative, would represent an overall reduction of 30 percent in the amount of grading activities. Additionally, Alternative 2 would include the development of fewer single-family lots and new multi-family units that would generate a similar number of residents as the Project. VMT is based upon the residential home-based trips on a per capita basis. Accordingly, the reduction in single-family lots and the inclusion of condominiums under Alternative 2 would generate similar per capita residential VMT as that of the Project. Hence, the Project's significant and unavoidable VMT impact would be similar under Alternative 2. As such, Alternative 2, as is the case with the Project, would continue to result in a significant and unavoidable VMT impact. As many of the Project's potential environmental impacts are directly related to the development footprint and use, Alternative 2 would reduce these types of impacts. Additionally, the mix of development under this Alternative would directly increase, remain similar to, or reduce potentially significant impacts that are population driven. In addition, Alternative 2 would reduce impacts related to: aesthetic impacts during construction; air quality during operation; biological resources during construction; cultural resources; hydrology and water quality during construction; operational vehicle noise; elementary and middle school capacity; vehicle delay along local and area roadways; water supply;

and wastewater. Alternative 2 would result in similar less than significant impacts as those for the Project as follows: aesthetic impacts post-construction; construction related air quality emissions; biological resources post-construction; energy resources; geology and soils; GHG emissions; hazards and hazardous materials; post-construction hydrology and water quality; land use and planning; construction noise and vibration; population and housing; fire protection; sheriff protection; libraries; recreation; transportation effects during construction; tribal cultural resources; dry utilities; and wildfire. The mix of development under this Alternative would result in greater impacts on high school capacity and solid waste. Alternative 2 would not introduce additional significant environmental impacts, not fully eliminate the Project's significant impacts, and in many cases, would reduce impacts or have similar impacts to the Project.

### **C. Alternative 3: Mixed-Use Development Alternative**

**Finding:** Alternative 3 would reduce the Project's impacts related to operational vehicle related noise and vibration. However, Alternative 3, in comparison to the Project, would result in greater impacts with regard to post-construction air quality emissions; energy consumption during operation; greenhouse gas emissions during operation; population and housing; fire protection; sheriff protection; schools; libraries; recreation; water supply; wastewater; and solid waste. Further, Alternative 3, as is the case with the Project, would result in significant and unavoidable VMT impacts. For these reasons, the County hereby rejects Alternative 3 as infeasible on the basis of such considerations.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** Alternative 3, Mixed-Use Development Alternative, would introduce multi-family residential uses within the commercial lot located at the southwest corner of the VTTM site. Alternative 3 is included to evaluate the inclusion of multi-family housing on the VTTM site. Specifically, Alternative 3 would introduce 21,000 sq. ft. of vertical commercial space, a 2,250 sq. ft. community center, and 21 multi-family residential units and associated amenities including outdoor recreational features. Similar to the Project, Alternative 3 would result in the construction of 222 residential lots within the 113.9-acre VTTM site. Of the 222 residential lots, 91 residential lots would range from 7,000 to 10,000 sq. ft. in size and 131 residential lots would be greater than 10,000 sq. ft. in size, for an average lot size of 11,364 sq. ft., consistent with Castaic Area CSD development standards. Under Alternative 3, the total number of units (243) would be greater than the proposed units (222 units) for the site under the Project.

Similar to the Project, the private recreation parks, open space lots, homeowner association lots, two access road lots, three debris basin lots, two debris/infiltration basin lots, one infiltration basin lot, pump station, and public right-of-way would be developed to support the residential and commercial lots. Del Valle Road would continue to provide one lane in each direction; however, Del Valle Road would be widened to approximately 64 feet within approximately 80 feet of right-of-way, increasing the safety of

this public road. Through access and additional emergency access for the VTTM site and surrounding neighborhood would also be provided.

This alternative would include a fuel modification zone where high fire-risk vegetation would be thinned and removed. Open space within the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area would total approximately 46.0 acres. As with the Project, Alternative 3 would remove two oak trees by development of the proposed improvements along Hunstock Street and would remove twelve oak trees by construction in the Off-Site Water Tank Area. Landscaping would consist of ornamental landscaping with noninvasive species. This alternative would install a combination of native drought tolerant shrubs and trees. The native, drought-tolerant landscaped areas would use temporary above-ground irrigation systems to establish the plants. Lastly, Alternative 3 would integrate similar sustainability characteristics with energy efficiency and water conservation strategies as required by County plans, objectives, and regulations.

Similar to those for the Project, this alternative would include several other site improvements, such as the Off-Site Improvement Areas including the Off-Site Water Tank Area containing the 1,000,000-gallon water tank, the Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area including the off-site trail easement, the Off-Site Water Line Improvement Area, and the Off-Site Sewer Line Improvement Area. Additionally, Alternative 3 would include the Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area.

As is the case with the Project, Alternative 3 would be completed by 2028 with the timing of development responding to market conditions. Similar to the Project, the total amount of grading for Alternative 3 construction would be approximately 3,278,250 cubic yards. Grading would result in the balance of cut and fill across the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. Alternative 3 also would require the same permits and approvals as the Project (e.g., Vesting Tentative Tract Map, Conditional Use Permit, Oak Tree Permit, and Highway Realignment).

Implementation of Alternative 3, the Mixed-Use Development Alternative, would represent a slight increase in the level of residential development including 21 new multi-family residential units within the commercial lot, while maintaining 222 single-family lots and approximately 21,000 square feet of commercial space. Alternative 3, as is the case with the Project, would result in significant and unavoidable VMT impacts; however, VMT impacts would be similar under Alternative 3 due to the similar per capita residential VMT as that of the Project. Alternative 3, in comparison to the Project, would result in greater impacts with regard to post-construction air quality emissions; energy consumption during operation; greenhouse gas emissions during operation; population and housing; fire protection; sheriff protection; schools; libraries; recreation; water supply; wastewater; and solid waste. Alternative 3 would result in similar impacts as those of the Project as follows: aesthetics during construction and post-construction;

construction-related air quality emissions; biological resources; cultural resources; energy consumption during construction; geology and soils; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; land use and planning; construction-related noise and vibration; construction-related traffic, vehicle delay, and roadway levels of service; tribal cultural resources; dry utilities; and wildfire. In addition, Alternative 3 would reduce the Project's impacts related to operational vehicle related noise and vibration. Alternative 3 would not introduce additional significant environmental impacts, not fully eliminate the Project's significant impacts, and in many cases, impacts would be similar to the Project's overall impacts, including those that are both adverse and beneficial.

#### **D. Environmental Superior Alternative**

**Finding:** Alternative 2 would be considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative. Alternative 2 would overall meet the Project objective to develop a single-family, residential neighborhood with neighborhood-supporting commercial development consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District development standards, including the regulations regarding lot sizes. Overall, Alternative 2 would meet the underlying purpose of the Project which is to provide a single-family residential project with neighborhood-supporting commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area CSD and SCVAP 2012. However, Alternative 2 would not fully eliminate the Project's significant VMT impact. For this reason, the County hereby rejects Alternative 2, the Environmentally Superior Alternative, as infeasible on the basis of such considerations.

**Facts in Support of Finding:** CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires that an EIR identify an environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives evaluated. If the "no project" alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR must identify another environmentally superior alternative among the remaining alternatives.

Alternative 1: No Project/No Development, would eliminate the Project's significant Project-level VMT impact. In comparison, all other alternatives would not eliminate the Project's significant VMT impact. As such, Alternative 1 would be the environmentally superior alternative. However, as previously discussed, Alternative 1 would not meet any of the Project objectives or the Project's underlying purpose to provide a single-family residential project with neighborhood-supporting commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area CSD and SCVAP 2012 to help accommodate the need for housing in the County. As Alternative 1 has been determined to be the environmentally superior alternative, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) requires the identification of another Environmentally Superior Alternative.



As such, Alternative 2, Clustered Development—Smaller Lot Sizes, would reduce the environmental impacts associated with the Project to a greater degree than Alternative 3. Specifically, the reduction in single-family lots, clustering of lots, and reduced grading footprint under this Alternative would reduce the Project's less than significant, with or without mitigation, aesthetic impacts during construction; air quality post-construction; biological resources during construction; cultural resources; hydrology and water quality during construction; operational vehicle-related noise; elementary and middle school capacity; vehicle delay along local and area roadways; water supply, and wastewater impacts. While Alternative 2 would not fully eliminate the Project's significant VMT impact, the increase in multi-family units and reduction of single-family lots on-site would provide a modestly denser and clustered community compared to the existing the Val Verde community. With regard to the remaining environmental impacts, Alternative 2 would result in similar less than significant impacts as the Project as identified in Table 6.0-2 of the Draft EIR.

## **E. Alternatives That Were Considered But Rejected**

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c), an EIR should identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines(c), the following factors may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in an EIR: (i) the alternative's failure to meet most of the basic project objectives; (ii) the alternative's infeasibility; or (iii) the alternative's inability to avoid significant environmental impacts.

**Alternative Site:** Under an Alternative Site Alternative, the Project would be constructed on a site other than the Project site. The Project Applicant currently owns the Project site and has no other land under ownership in the Santa Clarita Valley, and therefore could not construct the Project at an alternative site. Moreover, the results of a search to find an alternative site on which the Project could be built revealed that no suitable, similar locations are available to the Applicant to meet the Project's underlying purpose of providing a single-family residential project with neighborhood-serving commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District (CSD) and One Valley One Vision Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (SCVAP 2012) to help accommodate the need for housing in the County. In addition, an alternative site location would not meet the specific Project Objectives. Development at an alternative site would not avoid the Project's significant and unavoidable impact regarding VMT.

Under the SCVAP 2012, numerous sites throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, including the Project site, have been designated for residential uses to meet anticipated growth in the region. Because the Project

is consistent with the County's existing plans, policies and zoning for the Project site, consideration of an alternative site would suggest a need to reconsider the existing planning policies in the SCVAP 2012, which is not required by CEQA. Finally, due to the location of the Project site and the land use designation and zoning applicable to the Project site, it is likely that the Project site will be developed at some point in the future and, therefore, development of an alternative site would not avoid future development at the Project site. Therefore, this alternative was eliminated from further detailed consideration.

**All Commercial Development:** This Alternative involving the development of the Project site with all commercial and/or industrial land uses was dismissed as being infeasible because the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area are not zoned for such uses on most of the Project site. Although commercial use could be consistent with the industrial uses to the east, it would not be consistent with existing residential land uses immediately adjacent to the Project site to the south and west. In addition, such uses would not meet any of the Project Objectives including addressing housing needs for the Santa Clarita Valley and providing housing for residents working in the nearby employment centers. An all commercial alternative also would be inconsistent with the SCVAP 2012 residential designation of the VTTM site and Off-Site Roadway Improvement Area. Further, to create a viable commercial development, much of the Project site would need to be developed with commercial uses. However, to develop the Project site with the large buildings typically associated with commercial development, the Project site would need to be generally flat requiring grading similar to or greater than the Project. As a result, this alternative would not be expected to reduce potential air quality impacts or noise impacts during construction. Therefore, this alternative has been eliminated from further, detailed consideration.

## **8. FINDINGS REGARDING GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT**

Under the provisions of Senate Bill (SB) 375, an EIR prepared for a residential or mixed-use residential project that is consistent with the general land use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) is not required to reference, describe, or discuss growth inducing impacts. As discussed in Section 2.0: Introduction of the Draft EIR, and as presented in Section 5.7: Greenhouse Gas Emissions of the Draft EIR, the Project qualifies for CEQA streamlining pursuant to SB 375 and Public Resources Code Section 21159.28, which specifically states that the EIR shall not be required to discuss “growth inducing impacts.” Accordingly, this Section does not include a discussion on the Project’s potential growth inducing impacts.