1.1 INTENT AND PURPOSE OF SPECIFIC PLAN

The Vista Canyon Specific Plan (Specific Plan) contains the development plans, infrastructure development plans, development regulations, design guidelines, and implementation program necessary to achieve the orderly and compatible development of Vista Canyon, a proposed new annexation area for the City of Santa Clarita (City). The Specific Plan facilitates quality residential, mixed-use, and non-residential transit-oriented development within the City, consistent with the goals and policies of the City's General Plan and draft General Plan Update (One Valley One Vision), by retaining or enhancing important River Corridor resources and other environmental amenities and concurrently establishing a community that is superior to the development otherwise allowable under conventional zoning regulations. The Specific Plan site, uniquely situated in proximity to the Metrolink rail line, also affords the opportunity to plan a new City/Metrolink transit center and accessory improvements to facilitate transit, reduce automobile trips, and create a place to live, work, play, and shop.¹ The applicant for this Specific Plan is Vista Canyon Ranch, LLC.

The Specific Plan has been prepared in conjunction with a pre-zone/zone change request to designate the area as Specific Plan (SP). The City of Santa Clarita Municipal and Unified Development Code (SCMC), section 17.16.030, establishes provisions for the SP Zone. The SP Zone is intended to achieve the following purposes:

- (a) Promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare;
- (b) Implement objectives and policies of the General Plan;
- (c) Safeguard and enhance environmental amenities and enhance the quality of development;
- (d) Attain the physical, social, and economic advantages resulting from the comprehensive and orderly planned use of land resources;
- (e) Lessen congestion and assure convenience of access; secure safety from fire, flood, and other dangers; provide for adequate light, air, sunlight, and open space; promote and encourage conservation of scarce resources; facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive, and harmonious community; attain a desirable balance of residential and employment opportunities; and expedite the provision of adequate and essential public services;

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¹ The new transit center would replace the existing, temporary Via Princessa Metrolink Station, which was constructed after the 1994 Northridge Earthquake.

- (f) Facilitate development within the City in accordance with the General Plan by permitting greater flexibility and, consequently, more creative and imaginative designs for large-scale development projects than generally is possible under conventional zoning regulations;
- (g) Promote the more economical and efficient use of land while providing a harmonious variety of housing choices and retail/commercial activities, a high level of urban amenities, and preservation of natural and scenic qualities of open space; and
- (h) Provide a process for the initiation, review, and regulation of a large-scale, well-planned community that affords maximum flexibility within the context of an overall development program and specific, phased development plans coordinated with the provision of necessary public services and facilities.

This Specific Plan will achieve the purposes of the City's SP Zone, and will serve as the zoning code for the Specific Plan area (described more fully in **Section 2.0**).

In June 2007, the applicant filed a development application (Master Case No. 07-127) with the City. This application has since been revised by the Planning Commission and City Council at their hearings on the project. As revised, the following discretionary land use entitlement approvals will facilitate implementation of the Specific Plan:

- (a) Pre-Zone/Zone Change No. 07-127a. The property currently is zoned by the County of Los Angeles as M-1.5 (Light Industrial), A-1-1 (Light Agriculture 1 acre minimum lot size), R-A-8,000 (Residential Agriculture -- 8,000-square-foot minimum lot size), and A-1-10,000 (Light Agriculture -- 10,000-square-foot minimum lot size). The applicant is proposing to amend the City Zoning Map by pre-zoning the property to (SP). The City Council must approve the pre-zone/zone change prior to the Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO) consideration of the applicant's proposed annexation request. The SP zoning would take effect upon approval of the annexation by LAFCO.
- (b) Annexation No. 07-002a. The property currently is located in unincorporated Los Angeles County, directly adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita. The applicant is requesting annexation of the site into the City, which is not currently within the City's Sphere of Influence, as defined by LAFCO. (LAFCO will act as a responsible agency in considering the City's Sphere of Influence amendment, and the applicant's annexation request.)
- (c) **General Plan Amendment No. 07-001a.** The City's General Plan currently designates the property for "Business Park" uses, with a Significant Ecological Area (SEA) overlay over portions of the property. The City's General Plan Land Use Concept (Exhibit L-3 of the General Plan) also presently identifies the property as a "Major Regional Subcenter." The

applicant proposes to amend the City's Land Use and Circulation Elements of the General Plan.

Specifically, the applicant requests that the City approve a General Plan Land Use Element Amendment to revise the land use designation for the property from BP (Business Park) to SP (Specific Plan) and to revise the SEA overlay boundary to correspond to the area designated SP-OS (Santa Clara River Corridor). The applicant also requests a General Plan Circulation Element Amendment to: (i) establish the alignment for Lost Canyon Road/Vista Canyon Road; (ii) reduce Lost Canyon Road from a six-lane roadway (Major Highway) to a four-lane roadway (Secondary Highway) from its westerly terminus in Fair Oaks Ranch to the future intersection of Lost Canyon Road and Vista Canyon Road; (iii) designate the proposed Vista Canyon Road Bridge across the Santa Clara River as a limited secondary highway permitting a total of two travel lanes and one auxiliary lane with a sidewalk and a bike path on one side; and (iv) remove Lost Canyon Road from the City's General Plan Circulation Element as a Major Highway from Vista Canyon Road to Sand Canyon Road.

- (d) **Specific Plan No. 07-001.** The applicant is proposing the adoption of this Specific Plan, which would establish the zoning, development plans, regulations, guidelines, and implementation provisions governing development within the Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan serves as a guide to implementation of the City's General Plan goals, policies, and objectives. Key components of the proposed Specific Plan include the land use plan, permitted use chart, development standards, circulation plan, conceptual landscape plan, pedestrian plan, trails plan, and sustainability plan.
- (e) **Tentative Tract Map No. 69164.** The applicant is proposing to organize the property into three Planning Areas (PA) and subdivide the property to facilitate construction of up to 1,100 residential units (including single-family lots and condominiums (up to 700 of which may be rented or leased)); up to 950,000 square feet of commercial and office, retail, theater, restaurant, and hotel uses; and parks, landscape/open space, River Corridor, bank protection, parking structures, and private drives. The applicant's tract map application also includes a request for approval of a proposed large lot parcel map for conveyance purposes.
- (f) **Conditional Use Permit No. 07-009.** The applicant is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow for the import of up to 500,000 cubic yards of dirt to accommodate development within the Specific Plan site. Import materials are to be from one or both of the following borrow sites: (i) the George Caravalho Santa Clarita Sports Complex Expansion; and/or (ii) the Centre Pointe Business Park. Development on both of the borrow sites previously has been approved by the City.

(g) **Oak Tree Permit No. 07-002.** Buildout under the Specific Plan would impact oak trees on and off of the property. On-site, the applicant is requesting an oak tree permit to allow for removal of nine (9) of the 41 oak trees located on the project site, three of which are heritage size. One of the non-heritage trees proposed for removal would be relocated within the project site. The request also would permit the encroachment into the protected zone of nine (9) oak trees. Pruning or trimming of seven of these nine oak trees would be permitted under the oak tree permit. A total of 32 oak trees located on the project site, including 18 heritage-sized oak trees, would *not* be removed by the project.

For purposes of the "roundabout" at the Sand Canyon Road/Lost Canyon Road intersection, the requested permit would allow for encroachment into the protected zone of two oak trees. Encroachment for one tree is needed for the construction of a trail along Lost Canyon Road, east of the project site, and encroachment for the Sand Canyon Road tree is required by improvements to the intersection of Lost Canyon Road and Sand Canyon Road. Trimming or pruning also would be permitted on the tree along Lost Canyon Road to provide for trail clearance requirements.

In summary, the applicant is requesting an oak tree permit for the removal of up to nine (9) oak trees (three of which are heritage), encroachment into the protected zone of up to 11 oak trees, and trimming or pruning of up to 8 oak trees.

1.2 ORGANIZATION OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN

The Specific Plan is divided into six sections. The content of each section is described below.

Section 1.0, Introduction, describes the intent, purpose, structure, and organization of the Specific Plan. The section also describes the Specific Plan location, surrounding land uses, and site characteristics, including existing and planned land use designations. In addition, the section identifies special characteristics and existing conditions that make this Specific Plan area unique, and discusses the Specific Plan authorization. The section also addresses the relationship between the Specific Plan and the Santa Clarita General Plan, SCMC, and other laws and regulations.

Section 2.0, Development Plan, identifies the Specific Plan objectives and development plans, including the land use plan, land use plan statistics, mobility plan, Santa Clara River Corridor plan, sustainability plan, landscape plan, parks and recreation plan, and phasing plan. Each plan is described in detail in this section.

Section 3.0, Infrastructure Development Plan, describes the infrastructure and utilities needed to serve the Specific Plan area. Specifically, the section describes the backbone infrastructure systems (sewer, water, recycled water, water quality, and storm drainage), and utilities (gas, electricity, *etc.*), needed to support the Specific Plan. In addition, this section addresses the roadway design and transportation demand management program under the Specific Plan.

Sections 4.0, Development Regulations, sets forth the land use designations, site development standards, allowed land uses and permit requirements, permitted accessory uses, parking, and signage restrictions, and other regulations.

Section 5.0, Design Guidelines, address design themes, site planning, and architectural themes for each of the major land use designations within the Specific Plan.

Section 6.0, Specific Plan Implementation, describes the Specific Plan implementation procedures.

The Specific Plan, Volume II, includes appendices supporting the Specific Plan, including a legal description of the property (**Appendix 1.0-1**); General Plan Consistency Analysis (**Appendix 1.0-2**); Tentative Tract Map No. 69164 (**Appendix 1.0-3**); Parking Demand Analysis, Vista Canyon Transit-Oriented Development (Planning Areas 1 and 2) (**Appendix 2.0-1**); Vista Canyon Sustainability Plan (**Appendix 2.0-2**); and Renderings of the development contemplated by the Specific Plan (**Appendix 5.0-1**).

1.3 PROJECT LOCATION

1.3.1 LOCATION

The Specific Plan site consists of approximately 185 acres located in the northeastern portion of the Santa Clarita Valley within unincorporated Los Angeles County, directly adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita. The Specific Plan site includes a portion of the Santa Clara River Corridor. The City, located in the center of the Santa Clarita Valley, is approximately 35 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The City generally is bound by Interstate 5 (I-5) and State Route 14 (SR-14) to the east, west, and south, and is about 1 mile from the Angeles National Forest boundary to the north and east. The Santa Clarita Valley planning area encompasses several distinct communities both within the City limits and in the surrounding unincorporated areas. The existing communities within the City include most of Newhall, Valencia, Saugus, and Canyon Country, with sub-communities of Sand Canyon and Placerita Canyon. The communities within the unincorporated areas are Stevenson Ranch, Castaic Junction, Val Verde, Hasley Canyon, and Castaic. The Specific Plan site is located within the Canyon Country community of the Santa Clarita Valley planning area.

Figure 1.0-1, Regional Location, depicts the Specific Plan area in relation to the region. **Figure 1.0-2**, **Vicinity Map**, illustrates the Specific Plan vicinity. **Figure 1.0-3**, **Plan Area Aerial**, illustrates the physical characteristics of the Specific Plan area and vicinity.

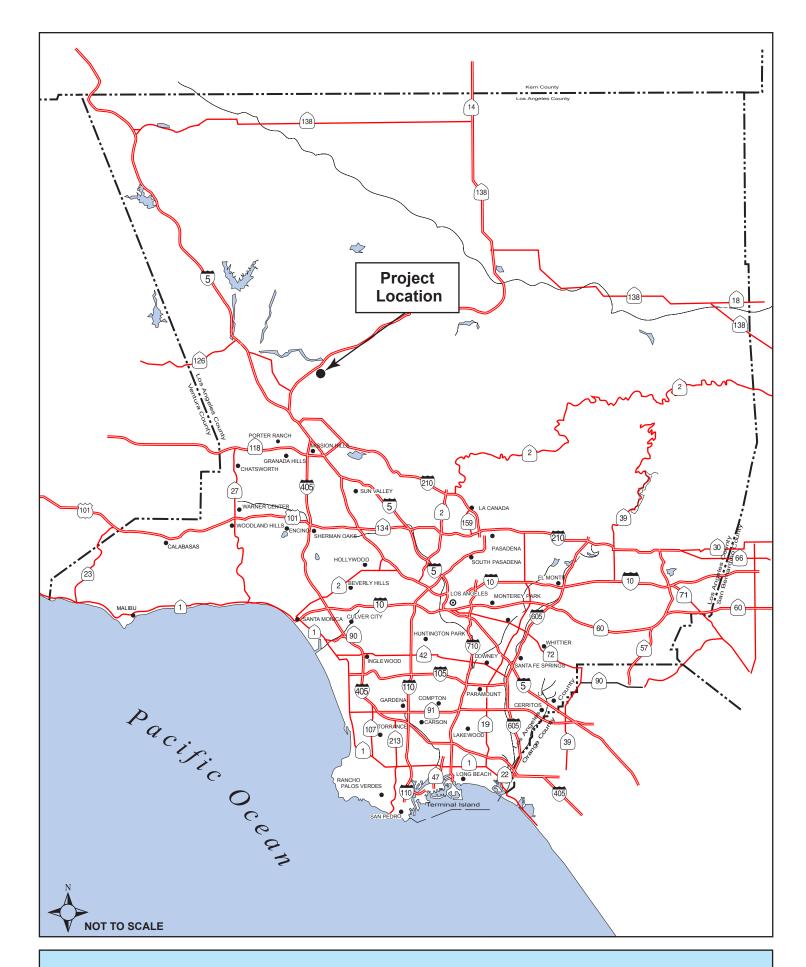
1.3.2 SURROUNDING USES

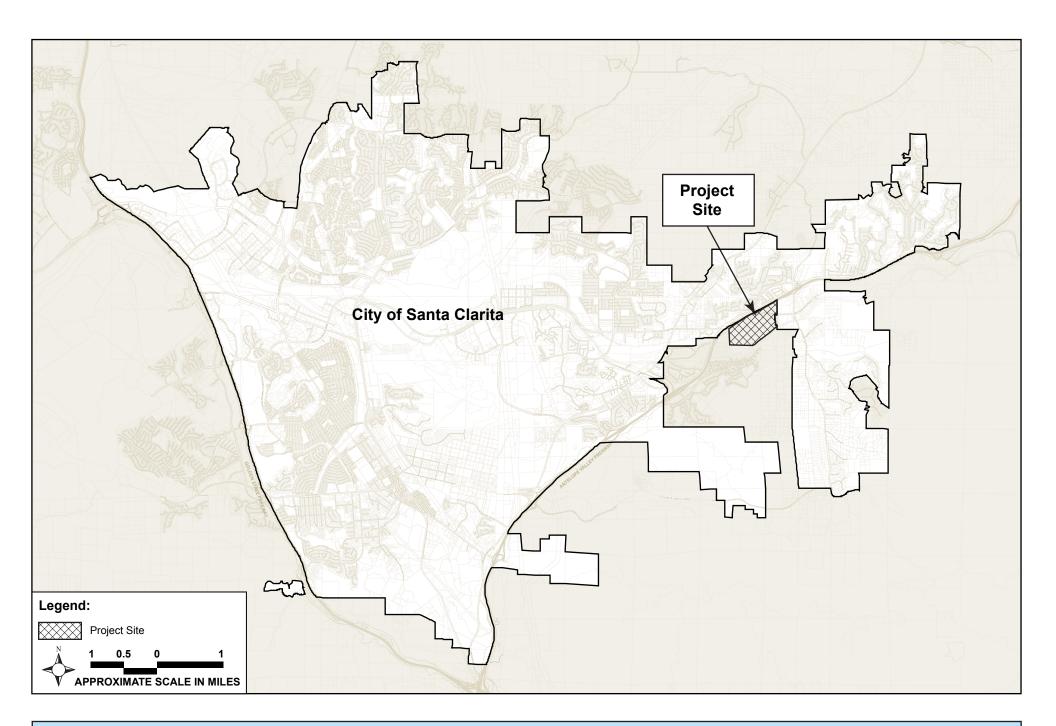
The Specific Plan site is surrounded by developed land uses, which are primarily residential. To the north of the Specific Plan site are SR-14 and residential and commercial development. The

Colony Townhomes, a multi-family residential community, is directly west of the Specific Plan site. The Fair Oaks Ranch community and an approximately 23-acre parcel located to the south and west of the site consist of single-family and multi-family residential units, an elementary school, community park, and vacant land. The existing Metrolink rail line and a commercial horse breeding facility with accessory residential and barn structures are located to the south of the Specific Plan site. The La Veda and Lost Canyon residential areas to the east consist of homes, a public elementary school, and a private school. **Figure 1.0-4**, **Development Surrounding Specific Plan**, depicts the surrounding development in relation to the Specific Plan site.

1.3.3 SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The Specific Plan area includes the site formerly occupied by the historic Mitchell Family home built in 1865 and the Mitchell Family cemetery. In 1860, Thomas Finley Mitchell became the first American resident of Soledad Canyon, settling to the west and south of Soledad Canyon and the Sand Canyon Road junction. Mitchell initially purchased 160 acres, and later acquired additional land that raised his land holdings to nearly 1,000 acres. The Sulphur Springs School District was started in 1879 with the use of a room in the Mitchell old adobe residence. This was the first schoolhouse in the now incorporated City of Santa Clarita. Sulphur Springs School District is the second oldest school district in Los Angeles County. Mitchell later donated the site of the present Sulphur Springs Elementary School, located east of the Specific Plan site. The Mitchell Family cemetery is located on an elevated portion of the Specific Plan site adjacent to SR-14, and is to be preserved and enhanced by the Specific Plan.





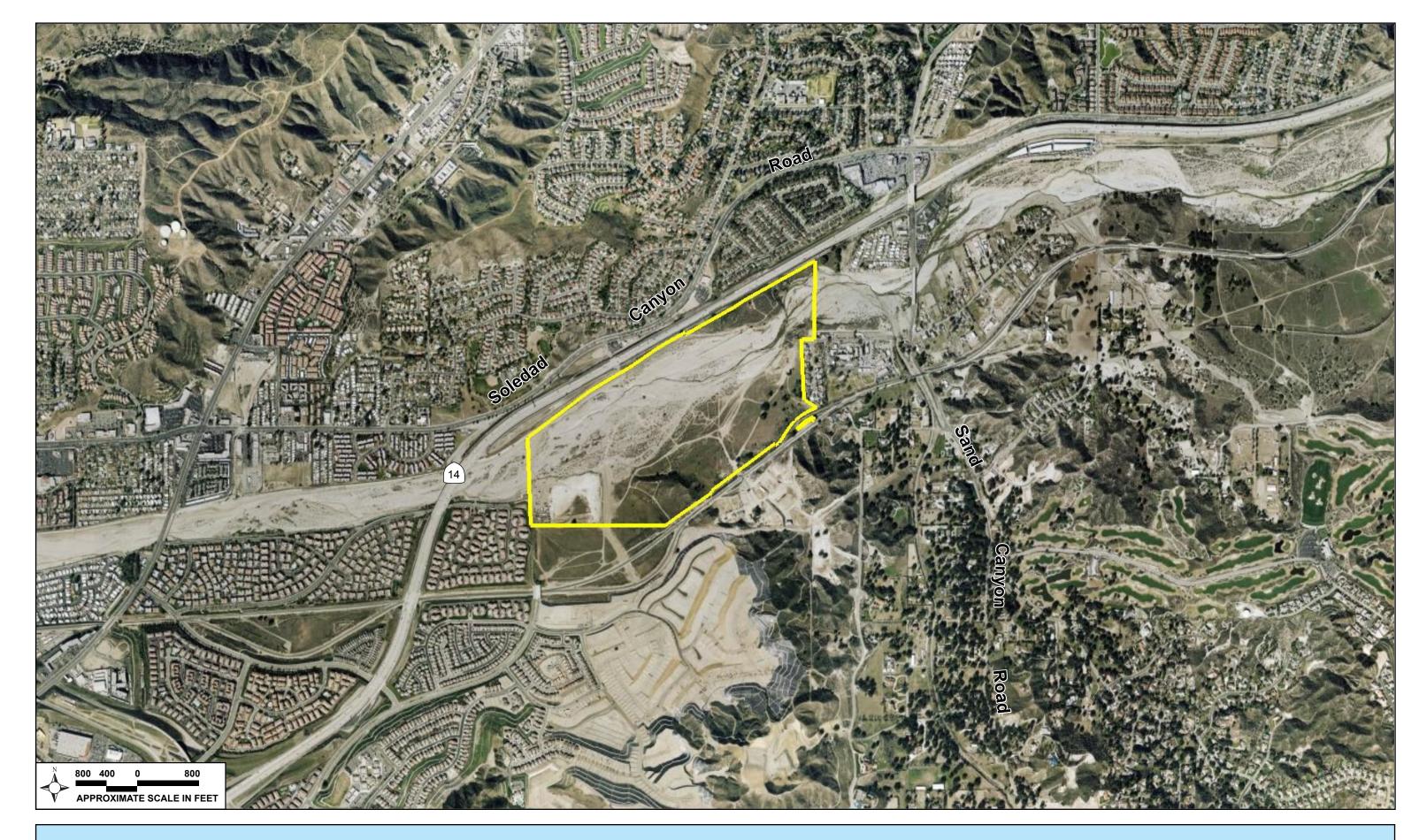
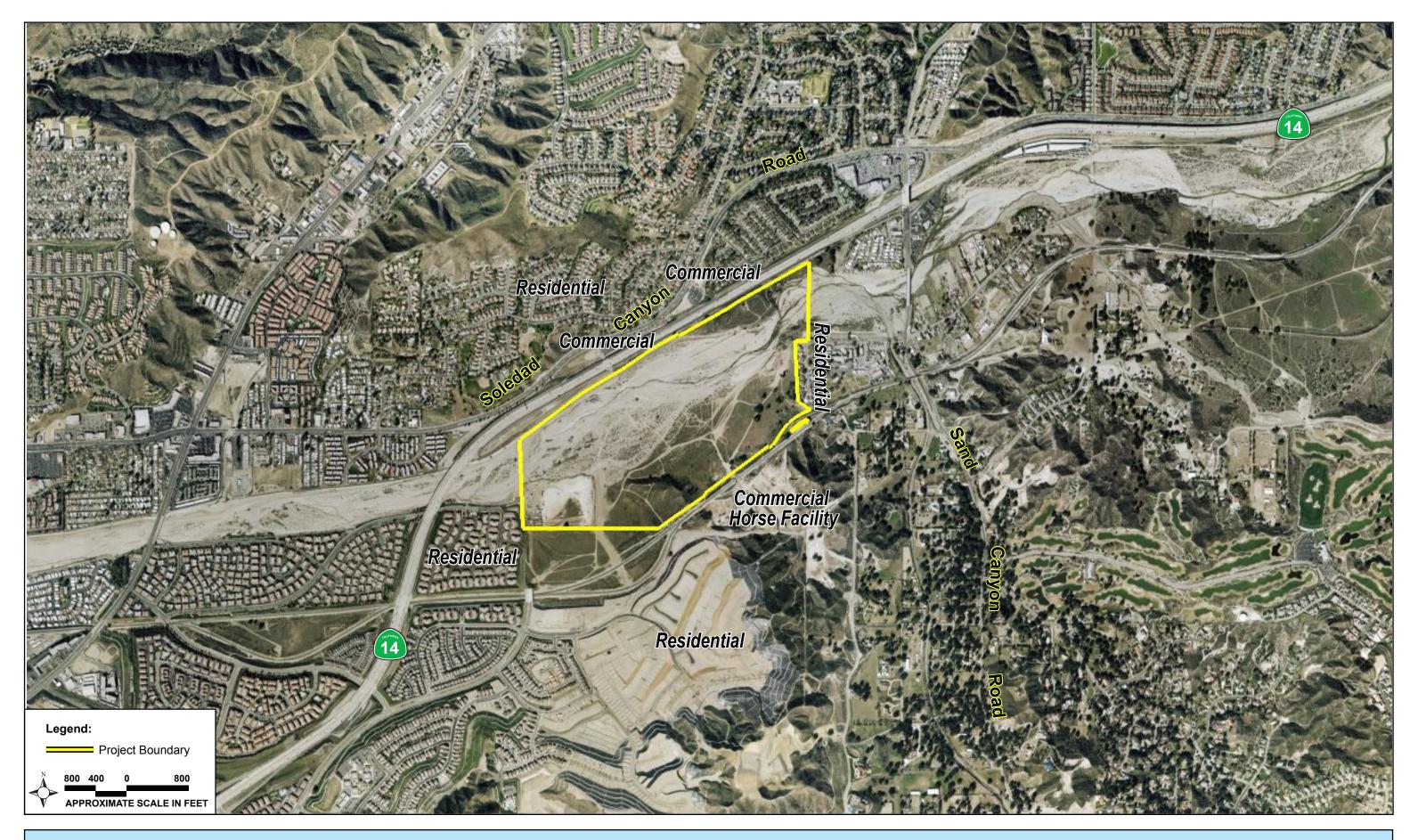


Figure 1.0-3



Vista Canyon Ranch, LLC, owns approximately 142 acres of the 185-acre site, with the City of Santa Clarita owning the remaining 43 acres. Most of the City's property is within the Santa Clara River Corridor. The project applicant would purchase a portion of the City's property (approximately four acres), based upon its appraised value. The City would also grant the applicant temporary and permanent easements within other portions of its land for the construction of buried bank stabilization, the Vista Canyon Road Bridge, and other project-related improvements. Additionally, remaining portions of the City property within the River Corridor would be enhanced by the Specific Plan. Upon completion of all improvements, the applicant shall dedicate, in fee and at no cost to the City, the applicant's River Corridor property (including the Mitchell Hill Open Space), which combined with the City's holdings will total approximately 87 acres.

The Specific Plan site also includes two Santa Clarita Water Division potable water wells located on a small parcel owned in fee by the Castaic Lake Water Agency, Santa Clarita Water Division. Implementation of the Specific Plan would result in the removal of one of the two wells.

Existing roadways provide access to the Specific Plan site. From the west is Lost Canyon Road, which presently terminates just beyond the Metrolink rail right-of-way. Access from the east also is provided by Lost Canyon Road, which presently terminates directly west of La Veda Avenue. The Specific Plan site is bordered by SR-14 to the north, and by the Metrolink rail right-of-way, a vacant 23-acre property, and the Fair Oaks Ranch community to the south.

The Specific Plan site is characterized by generally flat land on elevated terraces along both sides of the Santa Clara River, and a small knoll on the south side of the River. The site includes a reach of the Santa Clara River between Lost Canyon Road to the west and La Veda Avenue to the east, portions of which are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Surface flows within this portion of the Santa Clara River are seasonal, generally occurring during the winter months only after periods of heavy rainfall. Additionally, this portion of the River has been disturbed by various utility easements, which are maintained and operated across the River. Other activities have disturbed this portion of the River, including illegal dumping of trash and debris and unauthorized off-road vehicles. **Figure 1.0-5**, **Site Photographs**, illustrates the existing conditions within the Specific Plan area.

As noted above, the Specific Plan site is adjacent to the Metrolink rail right-of-way held by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) for Los Angeles County. This rail corridor includes the Metrolink Santa Clarita/Antelope Valley commuter line and freight service. Site constraints include the Santa Clara River Corridor and various utility easements. The site is irregularly shaped and includes elevated terraces along the Santa Clara River Corridor. These terraces drain towards the Santa Clara River. Existing site elevations range from a high of 1,555 elevation at the Mitchell Hill portion of the Specific Plan site to a low of 1,465 elevation in the middle of the Santa Clara River.

1.4 **AUTHORITY**

The Specific Plan has been prepared pursuant to the provisions of the California Government Code, Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8, sections 65450 through 65457. The California Government Code authorizes jurisdictions to adopt specific plans by resolution as policy documents or by ordinance as regulatory documents. The law allows preparation of specific plans, as may be required for the systematic execution of the General Plan and further allows for their adoption and amendment.

The Specific Plan is regulatory in nature and will serve as the zoning code for the Specific Plan site. The Specific Plan is prepared in accordance with SCMC, section 17.16.030, Specific Plan Zone. Section 17.16.030 includes adoption procedures, as well as requirements for Specific Plans to include use regulations, development regulations, performance standards, and amendment procedures. Development plans, tract maps, parcel maps and other entitlement requests processed in conjunction with the Specific Plan must be consistent with both the Specific Plan and the City's General Plan.

1.5 THE SPECIFIC PLAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN, SANTA CLARITA MUNICIPAL CODE, AND OTHER LAWS

1.5.1 RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The Specific Plan implements the goals and policies of the City's General Plan. **Appendix 1.0-2**, General Plan Consistency Analysis, contains an analysis of the Specific Plan's consistency with the City's General Plan. This analysis confirms that adoption of the Specific Plan is consistent with the General Plan. Additionally, an analysis was conducted relative to the Specific Plan's consistency with the City's proposed General Plan Update – One Valley One Vision (OVOV). This analysis confirms that adoption of the Specific Plan is also consistent with the proposed OVOV (see **Appendix 1.0-2**).

1.5.2 RELATIONSHIP TO THE SANTA CLARITA MUNICIPAL CODE

The Specific Plan will be incorporated into the SCMC and provide the allowable land uses, development regulations, design guidelines, and implementation procedures for the property within the boundary of the Specific Plan.

The regulations contained within the Specific Plan are in addition to those set forth in the planning, zoning, and subdivision provisions of the SCMC, and do not convey any rights not otherwise granted under the provisions and procedures contained in the SCMC or other ordinances, except as specifically provided for herein. Whenever the Specific Plan contains provisions that establish regulations, including, but not limited to, uses, densities, intensities, heights, parking, signage, open space, and landscaping requirements, which are different from, or more restrictive or permissive than would be allowed pursuant to the provisions of the SCMC, the Specific Plan shall prevail and supersede the applicable provisions of the SCMC.

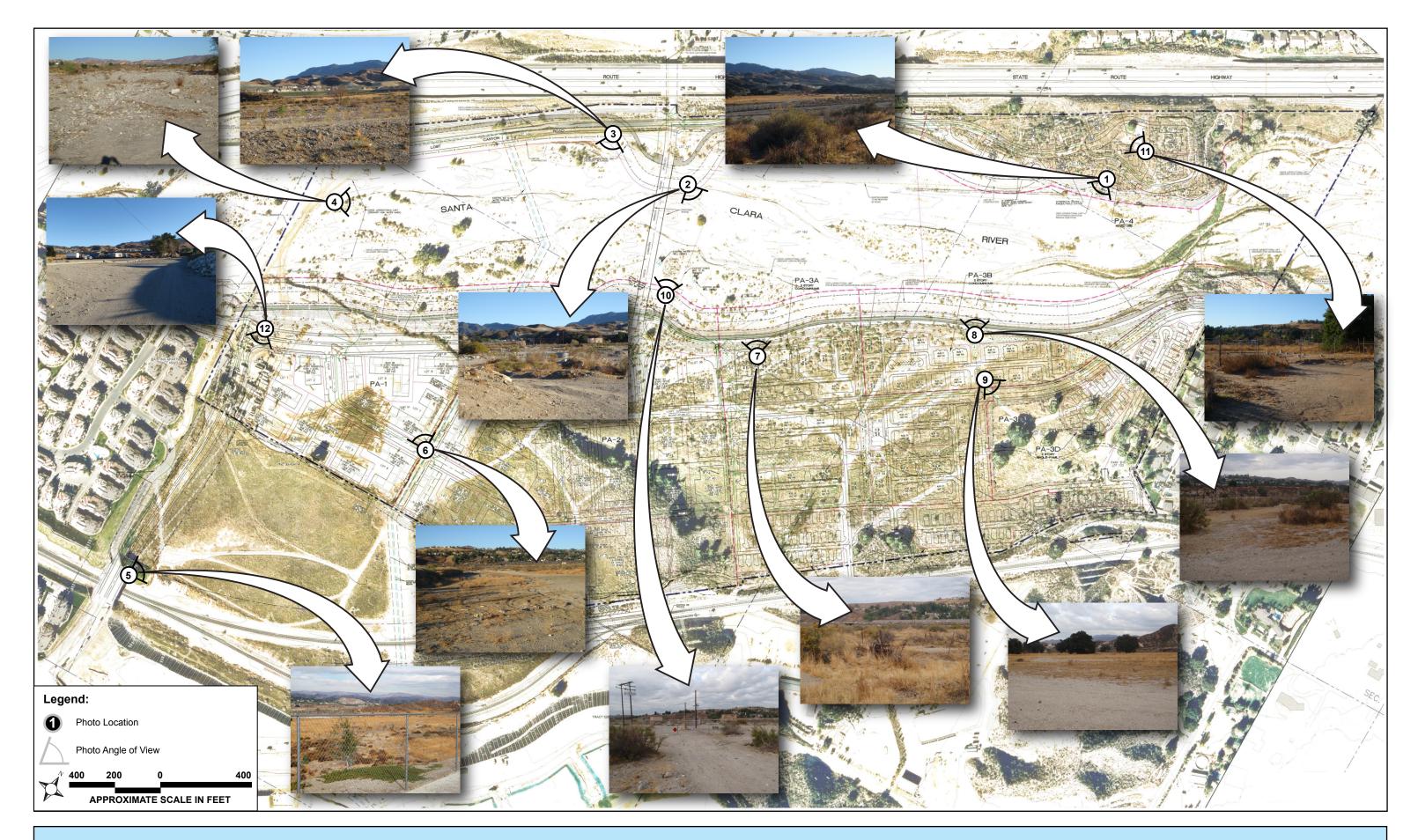


Figure 1.0-5

1.6 COMPLIANCE WITH CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The City has prepared, as part of a comprehensive and open planning and environmental review process, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR addresses the environmental implications of the Specific Plan and associated project approvals. The EIR also identifies feasible mitigation measures to reduce significant environmental impacts, and assesses a reasonable range of project alternatives.

1.7 COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

1.7.1 GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS ACT OF 2006 (AB 32)

In 2006, the California Legislature enacted the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. Also known as Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the new law designates the California Air Resources Board (CARB) as the state agency responsible for monitoring and regulating sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and for devising rules and regulations that will achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG emissions reductions. Specifically, the new law seeks to achieve a reduction in statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and sets forth a timeline for the adoption of measures to evaluate and reduce GHG emissions across all source categories. Significant among the actions included in the timeline are the requirements that CARB: (a) adopt regulations, to be enforced by January 1, 2010, to implement "early action measures" to reduce GHG emissions; and (b) adopt additional regulations, effective January 1, 2012, to achieve the GHG emissions reduction goals established by the new law.

The Specific Plan includes a sustainability plan that will achieve GHG emissions reductions resulting from implementation of the Specific Plan, consistent with this new law. The sustainability plan also includes energy, water, water quality, and landscaping components to improve overall efficiency and conservation.

1.7.2 Transportation Planning And Programming (SB 375)

The California Legislature passed Senate Bill 375 (SB 375) on September 1, 2008, and SB 375 was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger and chaptered into law on September 30, 2008. In order to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction goals set forth in AB 32, SB 375 focuses on reducing vehicle miles traveled and urban sprawl.

Accordingly, SB 375 requires CARB, working in consultation with the local metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), here, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), to set regional GHG emission reduction targets for the automobile and light truck sector for 2020 and 2035. Following state and local agency coordination efforts, CARB adopted reduction targets for each MPO on September 23, 2010. The target must now be incorporated by the MPO into that region's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which is used for long-term

transportation planning, through preparation of a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). Certain transportation planning and programming activities would need to be consistent with the SCS; however, SB 375 also provides that the SCS does not regulate the use of land, and further provides that local land use plans and policies (e.g., general plan) are not required to be consistent with either the RTP or SCS.

SB 375 includes CEQA streamlining and/or exemption provisions for "transit priority projects" and other mixed-use or residential projects, so long as the projects are consistent with the SCS. As defined in SB 375, a "transit priority project" must: (a) contain at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75; (b) provide a maximum net density of at least 20 dwelling units per acre; and (c) be within 0.5 mile of a major transit stop or high quality transit corridor. Inclusion of these CEQA streamlining and/or exemption provisions is intended to encourage the type of smart growth (e.g., infill; high density) that many believe is necessary to curb the growth of California's GHG emissions. While not a "transit priority project," as defined, the Specific Plan is considered a unique transit-orientated development due to its proximity to the existing Metrolink commuter rail line, site design, and commitment to development of a new Metrolink/City transit center and associated facilities.

1.7.3 ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS (TITLE 24)

The Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings (Title 24), found in the California Code of Regulations, originally were established in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to reduce California's energy consumption. Title 24 governs energy consumed by the built environment for commercial and residential buildings in California. This includes the HVAC system, water heating, and some fixed lighting. (Non-building energy use, or "plug-in" energy use, is not covered by Title 24.) The Title 24 standards are updated periodically to allow consideration and possible incorporation of new energy efficiency technologies and methods. The California Energy Commission (CEC) adopted a new set of standards on April 23, 2008, and the California Building Standards Commission approved them for publication on September 11, 2008. The 2008 standards went into effect on January 1, 2010, such that all applications for building permits submitted after that date will be subject to the 2008 standards.

Title 24 does not specify building dimensions (*e.g.*, size, height, or orientation) and provides significant flexibility for window types, window amounts, insulation choice, and other parameters. Software often is used to calculate whether a building is Title 24 compliant by quantifying the built-environment energy use per square foot per year and the Time Dependent Valuation (TDV) of the energy use per square foot per year.² Title 24 compliance is based on TDV and not on annual energy use.

TDV energy use is a parameter that speaks to the electricity burden that a building puts on the electric system. In general, there is a larger demand on the electricity supply system during the day (peak

As provided in the Vista Canyon Sustainability Plan, buildout of residential and non-residential uses under the Specific Plan would exceed the 2008 Title 24 standards by 20 percent, install Energy Star appliances (where available), and produce or purchase renewable electricity equivalent to the installation of an 80,000 square foot photovoltaic rooftop power system on residential or non-residential buildings.

Also of note, in early January 2010, the California Building Standards Commission unanimously adopted the first-in-the-nation mandatory statewide green building code - referred to as, CALGREEN. Effective January 1, 2011, these comprehensive regulations will achieve major reductions in GHG emissions, energy consumption, and water use to create a greener California. CALGREEN requires that every new building constructed in California reduce water consumption by 20 percent, divert 50 percent of construction waste from landfills, and install low pollutant-emitting materials. It also requires separate water meters for nonresidential buildings' indoor and outdoor water use, with a requirement for moisture-sensing irrigation systems for larger landscape projects and mandatory inspections of energy systems (e.g., heat furnace, air conditioner and mechanical equipment) for nonresidential buildings over 10,000 square feet to ensure that all are working at their maximum capacity and according to their design efficiencies.

times) than at night (off peak). This results in a higher stress on the electricity delivery system per marginal unit electricity delivered at peak times. Therefore, the calculation of TDV weights energy used at different times at different values. For instance, for the same annual electricity use, a building that uses more electricity during the peak mid-day electrical usage period will have a higher TDV value.