

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section of the EIR provides a general overview of the existing environmental setting of the Plan Area and surrounding area, and background information. Additional, more detailed descriptions of the environmental setting are provided in **Section 4.0: Environmental Impact Analysis** for each environmental topic evaluated.

Per Section 15125 (e) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, this EIR analyzes not only the project impacts to existing environment, but also considers changes between the existing and proposed plans. The State CEQA Guidelines specifically states the following:

Where a proposed project is compared with an adopted plan, the analysis shall examine the existing physical conditions at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced as well as the potential future conditions discussed in the plan.

This analysis is contained in **Section 5.0: Alternatives**, of this EIR, under the No Project Alternative. For the No Project Alternative, existing County zoning would shape future development within the annexation area and existing City zoning / Etiwanda North Specific Plan (ENSP) would shape future development within the small portions of the Plan Area currently within City limits.

REGIONAL LOCATION

The Plan Area is located within the City of Rancho Cucamonga (City), which is located in the southwest corner of San Bernardino County, along the southerly foot of the San Gabriel Mountains and the San Bernardino National Forest (refer to **Figure 2.0-1: Regional Location Map** in **Section 2.0: Project Description**). Surrounding communities include the Cities of Upland, Ontario, and Fontana and a large area of unincorporated San Bernardino County to the east and north.

Regional access to the City is provided by Interstate (I) 15, which runs in a general north-south direction and crosses the eastern portion of the City, and by State Route (SR) 210, an east-west freeway which passes through the center of the City. The I-10 freeway also provides regional access and is located approximately 0.75 mile south of the City boundary. The Metrolink San Bernardino Line running in the Santa Fe Railroad right of way also provides regional access.

REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for six counties: San Bernardino, Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, Ventura, and Imperial. The region encompasses a population of almost 19 million persons in an area that encompasses more than 38,000

square miles (SCAG 2019). As the designated MPO, the federal government mandates that SCAG research and prepare plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, and air quality. Additionally, SCAG reviews environmental documents of projects of regional significance for consistency with regional plans. SCAG cooperates with the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and other agencies in preparing the regional planning documents to achieve specific regional objectives.

The SCAG Regional Council adopted the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 RTP/SCS or Plan) in April 2016. The 2016 RTP/SCS includes goals and policies applicable to transportation and land use projects. The RTP/SCS and the consistency of the Etiwanda Heights Neighborhood and Conservation Plan (EHNCP) with the goals and policies of the 2016 RTP/SCS are discussed in **Section 4.10: Land Use and Planning**. The proposed Plan is considered a project of regional significance pursuant to Section 15206 of the State CEQA Guidelines, as it includes more than 500 residential units.

The City of Rancho Cucamonga is in the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), which is managed by the SCAQMD. The SoCAB includes parts of San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Riverside counties and all of Orange County. The SCAQMD is directly responsible for reducing emissions from stationary (area and point), mobile, and indirect sources. It has responded to this requirement by preparing a sequence of Air Quality Management Plans (AQMPs). An AQMP establishes a program of rules and regulations directed at attaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS). The regional plan applicable to the proposed Plan is the SCAQMD's 2016 AQMP, which is discussed in **Section 4.2: Air Quality**, of this Draft EIR.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Plan Area has been the northeasterly corner of the City's sphere of influence, and a large gap in the fabric of the City's foothill neighborhoods. Major north-south thoroughfares providing access to the area include Milliken Avenue, Day Creek Boulevard, Haven Avenue and Rochester Avenue. East-west access is provided by Banyan Street and Wilson Avenue, as shown in **Figure 2.0-2: City Boundaries and Sphere of Influence**.

The 4,393-acre Etiwanda Heights Neighborhood & Conservation Plan Area is located in the northeast corner of Rancho Cucamonga's planning area and, except for small areas that are already within the City's boundaries, is currently within the City's sphere of influence in unincorporated San Bernardino County. The area is bounded in the west by rural development in the City's sphere of influence, on the north by the San Bernardino National Forest, on the east by the City of Fontana, and to the south by Rancho Cucamonga's foothill neighborhoods. Just to the west side of the area and south of Wilson Ave is Chaffey

College. Los Osos High School is surrounded on three sides by the Plan Area, and on the south by Banyan Street.

As an undeveloped and rural area adjacent to the City of Rancho Cucamonga, the Plan Area currently has very little roadway network. Major roadways available to provide access to the Plan Area are Milliken Avenue, Wilson Avenue, Rochester Avenue, Banyan Street, Day Creek Avenue, and Etiwanda Avenue, as show in **Figure 2.0-1: Project Location** in the Project Description section of this EIR.

Existing roadways within the Plan Area also include Wardman Bullock Road and Dawnridge Drive that provide access to rural properties within the eastern portion of the area, Hanson Road that provided access to the now closed gravel mine, paved and unpaved service access roads related to flood control facilities and electrical transmission lines, and a few other unpaved private roads.

The plan for the foothill neighborhoods as presented in the General Plan and the Etiwanda North Specific Plan directs that Wilson Avenue and Rochester Avenue be connected through the Plan Area. In the absence of those connections, Banyan Street currently carries a significantly heavier traffic load than it was designed to accommodate.

Existing active transportation facilities within and adjacent to the Plan Area include the existing flood control and power line service roads which are currently designated and used as multi-purpose trails, multi-purpose trails along Wilson Avenue and Banyan Street, and a number of designated and undesignated trails within the Rural/Conservation area and the North Etiwanda Preserve.

LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Current General Plan designations within the Plan Area include conservation, open space, hillside residential, and flood control/ utility corridor as shown in **Figure 3.0-1: General Plan Land Use Map**. Except for Subarea 1, located south of Banyan Street and west of the Deer Creek flood control channel, the Neighborhood Area (NA) below the Day Creek Diversion Levee is currently designated flood control/ utility corridor. As seen on **Figure 4.10-2: Zoning Map**, in the **Land Use** section of this EIR, the eastern portion of the Plan Area is in the Etiwanda North Specific Plan Area. Also seen on **Figure 4.10-4: County General Plan Land Use Map**, the Plan Area has similar designations of conservation, open space, hillside residential, and flood control/ utility corridor.

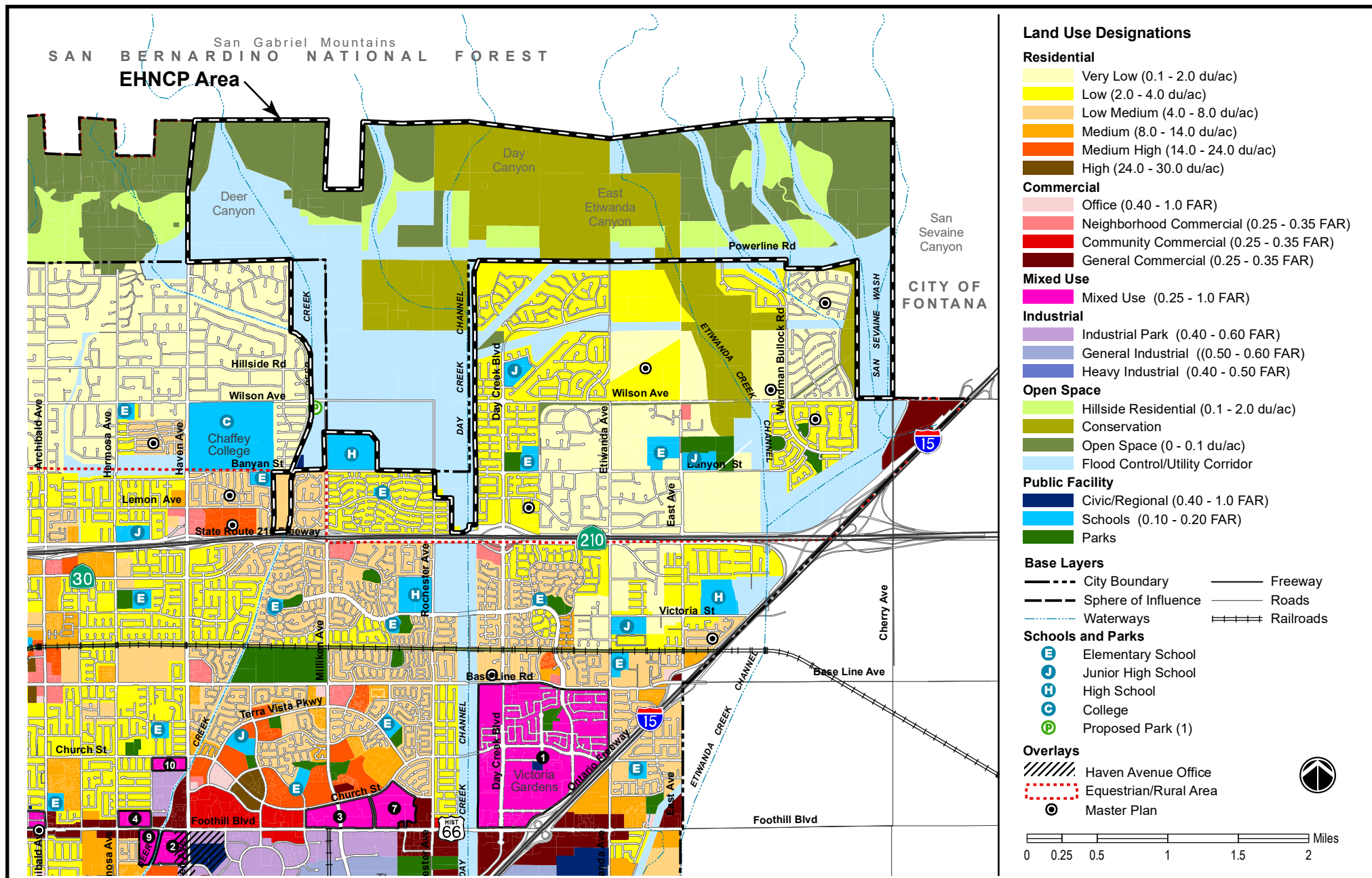
SURROUNDING LAND USES

Figure 2.0-2: Plan Context, in the **Project Description** section of this EIR illustrates the land use context for the Plan Area. As shown in this figure, the Plan Area is located south of the 800,000-acre San Bernardino National Forest and includes a majority of the existing 652-acre North Etiwanda Preserve. To

the east of the Preserve is a rural residential development and the Limei Fang-Ling Yen Mountain Temple. The Deer and Day Creek debris basins, channels, and levee and a closed sand and gravel mine are other major existing features in the Plan Area. As shown in **Figure 3.0-2: Property Ownership**, various parcels within the Resource Conservative Area (RCA) are a variety of publicly owned lands, privately owned lands and conservation lands. There are approximately four homes located in the RCA. Existing residential neighborhoods are located east, south, and west of the Plan Area. Los Osos High School is also located on the southern boundary of the Plan Area and Chaffey College is located southwest of the Plan Area. Two major north-south streets, Milliken Avenue and Rochester Avenue currently end at the southern edge of the Plan Area. One major east-west street, Wilson Avenue, currently ends at the border of the Plan Area. Banyan Avenue, another major east-west street passes through the southern portion of the Plan Area. Utility corridors containing electric transmission lines border the southern edge of the Conservation Area and the eastern edge of the NA.

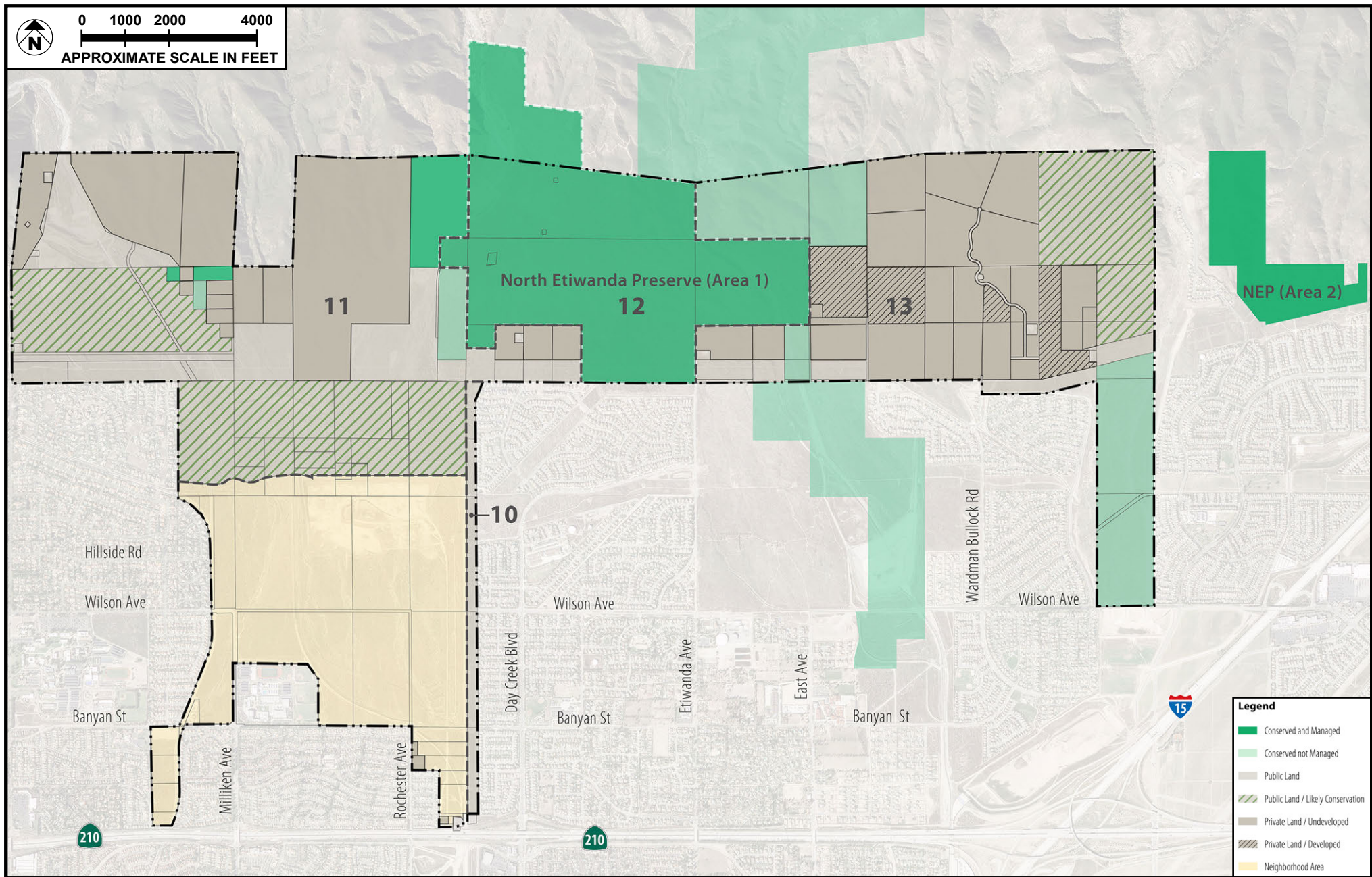
Portions of the NA are currently within the City's Etiwanda North Specific Plan Area. The Day Creek neighborhood, also referred to as Rancho Etiwanda, borders the Plan Area to the east; the Caryn neighborhood borders the Plan Area to the south; and the Deer Creek and Haven View Estates neighborhoods border the Plan Area to the west.

As shown in **Figure 2.0-2**, the Plan Area is located along the northeastern edge of the City at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. The site is located west of Interstate 15 (I-15), north of Interstate 210 (I-210), south of the San Gabriel Mountains, and north of existing residential neighborhoods in the City of Rancho Cucamonga. As shown in **Figure 3.0-1: Land Use Map**, the western edge and southeast and southwest corners of the Plan Area are currently within the City and the remainder consists of unincorporated area in the County of San Bernardino (County) within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI).



SOURCE: City of Rancho Cucamonga Land Use Plan

FIGURE 3.0-1



SOURCE: DUDEK - 2019; Sargent Town Planning - 2019

FIGURE 3.0-2

NATURAL SETTING

Like the rest of the foothill neighborhoods in Etiwanda, Alta Loma, Fontana to the east and Upland to the west, the Plan Area is characterized by alluvial fans from the San Gabriel Mountains. Within the Rural/Conservation Area the terrain slopes of 30% and more are typical within the foothills, with alluvial fans sloping from 20% to 10% to the south. In the NA, slopes range from 7% at the Diversion Levee down to about 5% at Banyan Street.

A number of canyons discharge storm water and debris into the alluvial fans, including Deer Creek Canyon to the west and Day Creek Canyon in the center of the Plan Area. Stormwater flows from these two canyons historically drained through the lower portion of the Plan Area and onward down into the area now occupied by the neighborhoods south of Banyan Street and onward into what is now the center of Rancho Cucamonga.

Starting in the early 20th century a series of flood control improvements were made to direct those stormwaters into manmade channels. With the completion of the Deer Creek and Day Creek debris basins and flood control channels and the completion of the Day Creek Diversion Levee, the area to the south of that levee is protected from storm flows and no longer needed for flood control purposes. San Bernardino County has declared that property surplus and is obliged to sell it.

Biology and Hydrology

The biology and topography of the Plan Area have been shaped over many thousands of years by the stormwater and debris flows from the San Gabriel Mountains. The annual rains bringing with them water, sediments and nutrients established the vegetation and animal communities that inhabited the alluvial fan, and the episodic large flows from major storm events shaped the terrain.

Major vegetation communities within the Plan Area include Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS) of various subtypes, Chaparral, Oak Woodland, and Grasslands. Fauna include a wide range of birds, herbivores and carnivores commonly found in Southern California foothills and mountains.

Of particular interest are two special status animal species – the San Bernardino kangaroo rat (SBKR) and the coastal California gnatcatcher (CCG) – and several special status plant species. Also, of concern are specific vegetation types associated with SBKR and CCG, RAFSS in particular.

Extensive vegetation mapping and focused small mammal trapping were conducted, as summarized in a Biological Existing Conditions Report and the EHNCP Environmental Impact Report, both on file with the Rancho Cucamonga Planning Department.

Small mammal trapping over hundreds of trap nights in the most likely areas for habitation were all negative for SBKR, leading to the conclusion that the area is no longer inhabited. Vegetation surveys found the quality of RAFSS below the Diversion Levee – the preferred habitat for SBKR – to be generally compromised and declining since the seasonal storm flows that fed it with sediments and nutrients have been cut off by past flood control projects.

The quality of the remaining natural habitats varies significantly, from virtually undisturbed in northerly portions of the Plan Area, to somewhat compromised by construction of flood control channels, power lines and roads, to significantly compromised by stormwater diversion, gravel mining, and human access in the lower area south of the Diversion Levee.

The areas north of the foothill neighborhoods are, with the exceptions of the debris basin areas at the canyon mouths, the concrete flood control channels, and the transmission line corridors – relatively undisturbed alluvial fan terrain, with generally intact vegetation communities. A few properties have already been developed with rural housing, the Limei Fang-Ling Yen Mountain Temple, and recreational access is minimally managed, resulting in additional habitat disturbance.

Within the existing foothill neighborhoods those natural habitats have been substantially removed. Human interventions outside those neighborhoods have included flood control improvements and associated roadways, regional electrical transmission lines and associated roadways, rural residences and associated roadways.

Mineral Resources

Based on the alluvial processes at work over many millennia, the foothill alluvial fans and riverbeds of the Inland Empire are a rich source of sand and gravel for the construction industry. The Deer and Day Creek Alluvial Fans were no exception, and Hanson Aggregates extracted sand and gravel from a large mine within the NA from 1992 to 2012, when they found it to no longer be economically viable, completing the closure process in 2014. However, the western portion of the RCA is in a mineral resource zone.

Fire Hazard

Wildfires pose a risk to all of California's cities, particularly their edges adjacent to wild open spaces. Based on its unmanaged, generally dry vegetative cover and adjacency to the San Bernardino National Forest, the entire Plan Area is currently designated Very High Fire Hazard by the General Plan. That designation also extends approximately 1,000 feet into most of the existing neighborhoods, based on the potential for wind-driven fire and embers to ignite buildings and landscape within those neighborhoods, as shown in **Figure 4.8-1: Wildfire Zones**.

Flood Hazard

Flood control improvements constructed over the past century have removed the portion of the Plan Area below the Day Creek Diversion Levee from the 100 Flood Plain, rendering it available for urban development.

Seismic Hazard

Seismic activity along the Cucamonga Fault defined the break between the San Gabriel Mountains to the north and the valley floor to the south. That fault and associated Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Zones traverse the portions Plan Area to the north of the existing neighborhoods. A second fault zone, trending southwest to northeast, runs through the southeast corner of the Plan Area, near the intersection of Banyan Street and Rochester Avenue, as shown on **Figure 4.6-1: Regional Fault Map**.

Geologic Hazard

The northern portions of the Rural/Conservation Area have the potential for seismically-induced rockfall based on slope steepness and the presence of granitic boulders. That hazard is not present in the lower portions of the Rural/Conservation Area, nor in the NA.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

In addition to Plan-specific impacts, the environmental analysis contained in this EIR examines the potential environmental effects associated with cumulative development. CEQA requires that EIRs discuss cumulative impacts in addition to project-specific impacts. In accordance with CEQA, the discussion of cumulative impacts must reflect the severity of the impacts and the likelihood of their occurrence; however, the discussion need not be as detailed as the discussion of environmental impacts attributable to a proposed project alone. According to Section 15355 of the State CEQA Guidelines:

“Cumulative impacts” refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts. The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment, which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.

Section 15130(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines further states that “a cumulative impact consists of an impact which is created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other projects causing related impacts.”

Section 15130(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines also requires that EIRs discuss the cumulative impacts of a project when the proposed Plan's incremental effect is "cumulatively considerable." When a lead agency is examining a proposed Plan with an incremental effect that is not cumulatively considerable, it need not consider the effect significant but must briefly describe the basis for its conclusion. If the combined cumulative impact associated with a project's incremental effect and the effects of other projects is not significant, Section 15130(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires a brief discussion in the EIR of why a cumulative impact is not significant and why it is not discussed in further detail. Section 15130(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires supporting analysis in the EIR if a determination is made that a project's contribution to a significant cumulative impact is rendered less than cumulatively considerable and, therefore, is not significant. CEQA recognizes that the analysis of cumulative impacts need not be as detailed as the analysis of project-related impacts, but instead should "be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness" (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)). The discussion of cumulative impacts in this Draft EIR focuses on whether the impacts of the proposed Plan are cumulatively considerable.

To support each significance conclusion, this Draft EIR provides a cumulative impact analysis. Where Project-specific impacts have been identified that, together with the effects of other related projects, could result in cumulatively significant impacts, these potential impacts are documented.

Section 15130(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines defines consideration of either of the following two elements as necessary to provide an adequate discussion of cumulative impacts: "(A) a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency, or (B) a summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect." In this Draft EIR, a combination of these two methods is used, depending upon the specific environmental issue area being analyzed.

Cumulative study areas are defined based on an analysis of the geographical scope relevant to each particular environmental issue. Therefore, the cumulative study area for each individual environmental impact issue may vary. For example, a cumulative land use impact may only affect the compatibility of uses within the vicinity of the Plan Area, while a cumulative air quality impact may affect the entire SoCAB. The specific boundaries and the projected growth within those boundaries for the cumulative study area of each environmental issue are identified in the applicable environmental issue section of this Draft EIR.

Related projects near the Plan Area are presented in **Table 3.0-1: Related Projects**, which includes those projects that are approved but not yet constructed, and those currently proposed and pending approval. This list of related projects describes proposed development within the City that could affect conditions

in the Plan Area and was prepared based on data obtained from the City. **Table 3.0-1** provides information on the description, location, size, and status of these related projects. This list of related projects was used to assess cumulative conditions where appropriate (e.g. air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, noise, traffic).

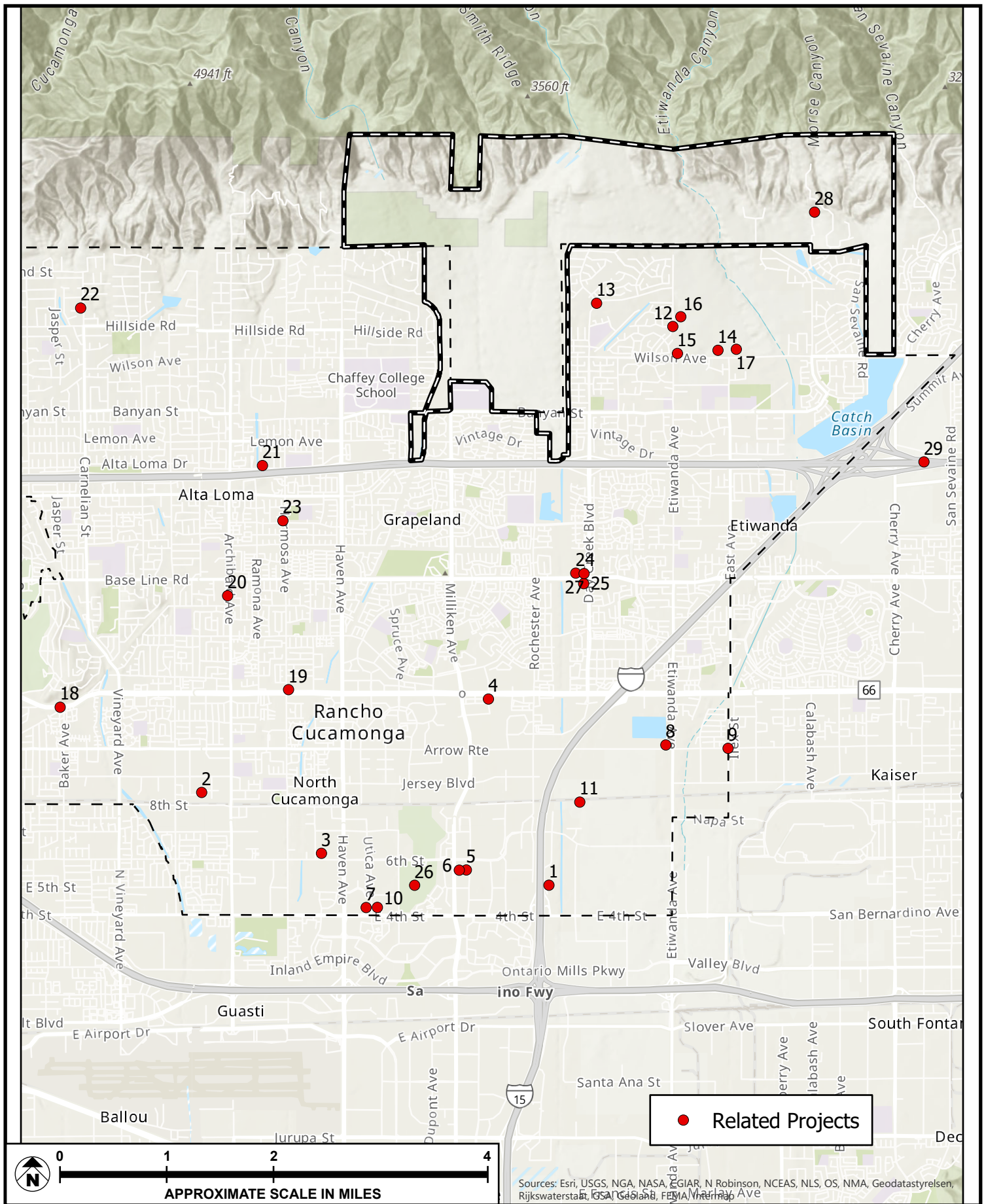
Figure 3.0-3: Related Projects Location Map illustrates the location of the related projects that have been identified in relation to the proposed Plan based on their proximity to the Plan Area.

**Table 3.0-1
Related Projects**

| Map No. | Description | Location | Status |
|---------|--|--|--------------------|
| 1. | 30,000 Warehouse & 4,667 square foot Office | 9455 Hyssop Drive | Approved |
| 2. | 59,509 and 80,494 square foot Warehouses, 5,000 square feet of Office each | 9500 & 9505 Feron Blvd | Pending Approval |
| 3. | Building 1: 59,215 sf / Building 2: 15,668 sf / Building 3: 12,761 sf | Northeast Corner of 6th and Center Drive | Approved |
| 4. | 6 Industrial Buildings, totaling 171,322 square feet | Mayten Avenue & South of Foothill | Approved |
| 5. | 44,336 square feet | 9370 Pittsburgh Avenue | Built |
| 6. | 45,797 square feet | West Side of Pittsburgh Avenue (opposite 9370 Pittsburgh Avenue) | Built |
| 7. | 293,283 sf | NWC of 4th and Utica | Pending Approval |
| 8. | 611,000 square feet | North of Arrow & West of Etiwanda | Pending Approval |
| 9. | 215,700 square feet | Hickory and Arrow | Approved |
| 10. | 232,058 sf | NEC 4th & Utica | Pending Approval |
| 11. | 339,000 sf | 8889 Santa Anita | Pending Approval |
| 12. | Single-Family Housing, 5 units | SWC Golden Prairie and Etiwanda | Built |
| 13. | Single-Family Housing, 95 units | Indian Wells North of Day Creek | Under Construction |
| 14. | Single-Family Housing, 30 units, TTM 18908 | NWC East Ave and Wilson | Approved |
| 15. | Richland Residential Subdivision. 369 units on Tract 16072 | Northeast Corner of Wilson Ave and Etiwanda Ave. | Approved |
| 16. | Tracy Residential Subdivision, 269 units on Tract 14749 | Northeast Corner of Etiwanda Ave and Lower Crest | Approved |
| 17. | Wilson Residential, 113 Single-Family units | northeast corner of East and Wilson | Pending Approval |
| 18. | Sycamore Heights, 175-unit condominiums | Foothill & P&E Trail | Approved |
| 19. | Vitner Apartments, 185-unit apartment | Vitner & Hermosa | Approved |

| Map No. | Description | Location | Status |
|---------|---|--|--------------------|
| 20. | Via Pacifica, 60 units condominium | Archibald & Baseline, 7418 Archibald Avenue | Approved |
| 21. | Meryl Gardens, 112 units condominium | Highland & Cambridge, 9942 Highland | Approved |
| 22. | Weaver Lane, 26 SFD Units | Northeast Corner of Carnelian & Cherry Lane | Approved |
| 23. | Victoria & Hermosa, 20 SFD Units | Victoria & Hermosa (Northwest Corner) | Pending Approval |
| 24. | Day Creek, 140 senior apartments | Northwest corner of Day Creek & Baseline | Approved |
| 25. | DR Horton's, 392 residential units, 71 hotel rooms, and 2 restaurants | Southwest corner of Day Creek & Baseline | Approved |
| 26. | Empire Lakes, 2650-3450 Units, Up to 220,000 non-residential areas | 4th St. and Milliken | Under Construction |
| 27. | Day Creek Marketplace | Day Creek and Baseline | Under Construction |
| 28. | Ling Yen Mountain Temple, expansion to accommodate 500 patrons | Ambleside Place north of Colonbero | Developed |
| 29. | Westgate Specific Plan, 880 SFH DU, 4,530 DU MFH. 57-acre park space, schools, office space | Juncture of Interstate 15/Devore Freeway and Interstate 210. North of Baseline Avenue, south and west of Lytle Creek Road in Fontana | Approved |

Source: Vincent Acuna, Associate Planner, City of Rancho Cucamonga, March 20, 2019.



SOURCE: City of Rancho Cucamonga - 2019

FIGURE 3.0-3