

# Appendix B.2

## LESA Report Update TRG Land, 2021

Travertine SPA  
Draft EIR  
SCH# 201811023  
Technical Appendices

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# Travertine Specific Plan Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)

Prepared for:

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## 1.0 Introduction

Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines identifies the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Due to a portion of area within the proposed Travertine Specific Plan project site being utilized for agricultural purposes, and as identified as unique agricultural land, therefore necessitated the need for the LESA Model to be prepared for the project site.

The LESA Model describes an approach for rating the relative quality of land resources using specific measurable features. The LESA system is a point-based method composed of six different factors: Land Capability Classification, Storie Index, Project Size, Water Resource Availability, Surrounding Agricultural Land, and Surrounding Protected Resource Land.

The two Land Evaluation factors (Land Use Capability Classification and Storie Index) are based on measures of soil resource quality. The four Site Assessment factors provide measures of a given project's size, water resource availability, surrounding agricultural lands, and surrounding protected resource lands.

For a given project, each of these factors is separately rated on a 100-point scale. The factors are then weighted relative to one another and combined, resulting in a single numeric score for a given project. The maximum attainable score is 100 points. This project score becomes the basis for making a determination of a project's potential significance, based upon a range of established scoring thresholds (Department of Conservation, 1997).

### 1.1 Project Description

### 1.2 Environmental Setting

The Applicant, The Hoffman Land Development Company, is proposing development of 878 acre Specific Plan in the southeastern portion of the City of La Quinta for a mix of uses including up to 1,200 dwelling units of varying residential product types, a resort facility with up to 100 rooms or villas, recreational uses such as a golf training/practice facility featuring a clubhouse and banquet facilities, a number of neighborhood parks, a public trail system and recreational open space, and natural open space for conservation (See Exhibit 1, *Regional Location*). The applicant is requesting approval of a Specific Plan Amendment; a General Plan Amendment to change the General Plan Land Use Map for the Specific Plan area to be consistent with the land uses proposed in the *Travertine Specific Plan* and revise the Circulation Map to remove portions of Jefferson Street, Avenue 62 and Madison Street from the Circulation Map in the local area; a



Zone Change to revise the City's Zoning Map to be consistent with the land uses proposed in the proposed *Travertine Specific Plan*; a Large Lot Tentative Tract Map; and a Development Agreement. In addition to these entitlements from the City of La Quinta, the Applicant is also requesting additional right-of-way along Jefferson Street and Avenue 62 from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) in order to widen and/or extend these roads into the project site. The Applicant must also receive approval from Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) for the Water Supply Assessment and Regional and Local Hydrology/Drainage Studies.

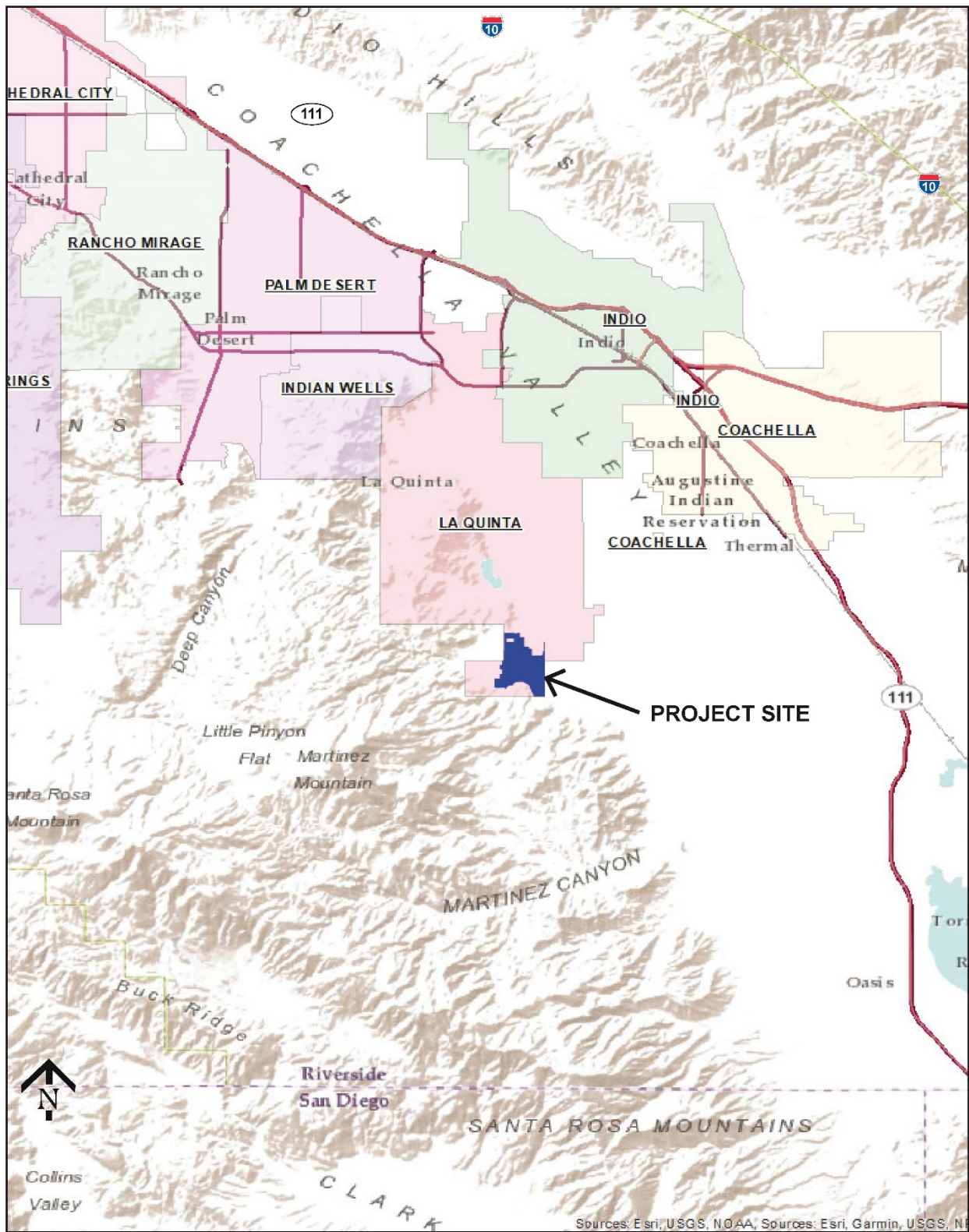
The project site is generally bounded by the future extension of Avenue 60 on the north (not part of the proposed project), the extension of Avenue 62 and the CVWD Dike No. 4 with related stormwater impoundments on the east, as well as the future extension of Madison Street (also not part of the proposed project), and the extension of Jefferson Street from the north (See Exhibit 2, *Project Vicinity*). The local area is characterized as an area developing with a number of golf course communities in a northerly to southerly direction toward the Santa Rosa Mountains. The Santa Rosa Mountains and their foothills and peaks are part of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument that will remain as open space in perpetuity, thus affording residents and visitors with permanent scenic vistas.

Further, the project site is located in Section 33, Township 6 South, Range 7 East, and Sections 3 through 5 in Township 7 South, Range 7 East, San Bernardino Base Line and Meridian, Martinez Mountain and Valerie 7.5 minute quadrangles, and at Latitude 33° 35' 53" N Longitude 116° 15' 33" W (approximate geographic center of the site).

The project site consists of the following Assessor Parcel Numbers: 766-110-003, -004, -005, -007, and -009; 766-120-001, -002, -003, -006, -015, -016, -018, -021, and -023 753-040-014, 016, and -017, 753-050-007, and -029; and 753-060-003.

An abandoned cultivated vineyard is situated on the northern half of the project site, adjacent to the extension of Avenue 62. The cultivated vineyard has not been in operation since 2007 and is equipped with inoperable irrigation equipment. Although the project site is not located within or near Williamson Act farmlands (See Exhibit 3, *Williamson Act Designated Farmlands*) the cultivated vineyard is however identified by the California Department of Conservation as being located within an area designated as Unique Farmland (See Exhibit 4, *Project Farmland Importance*).

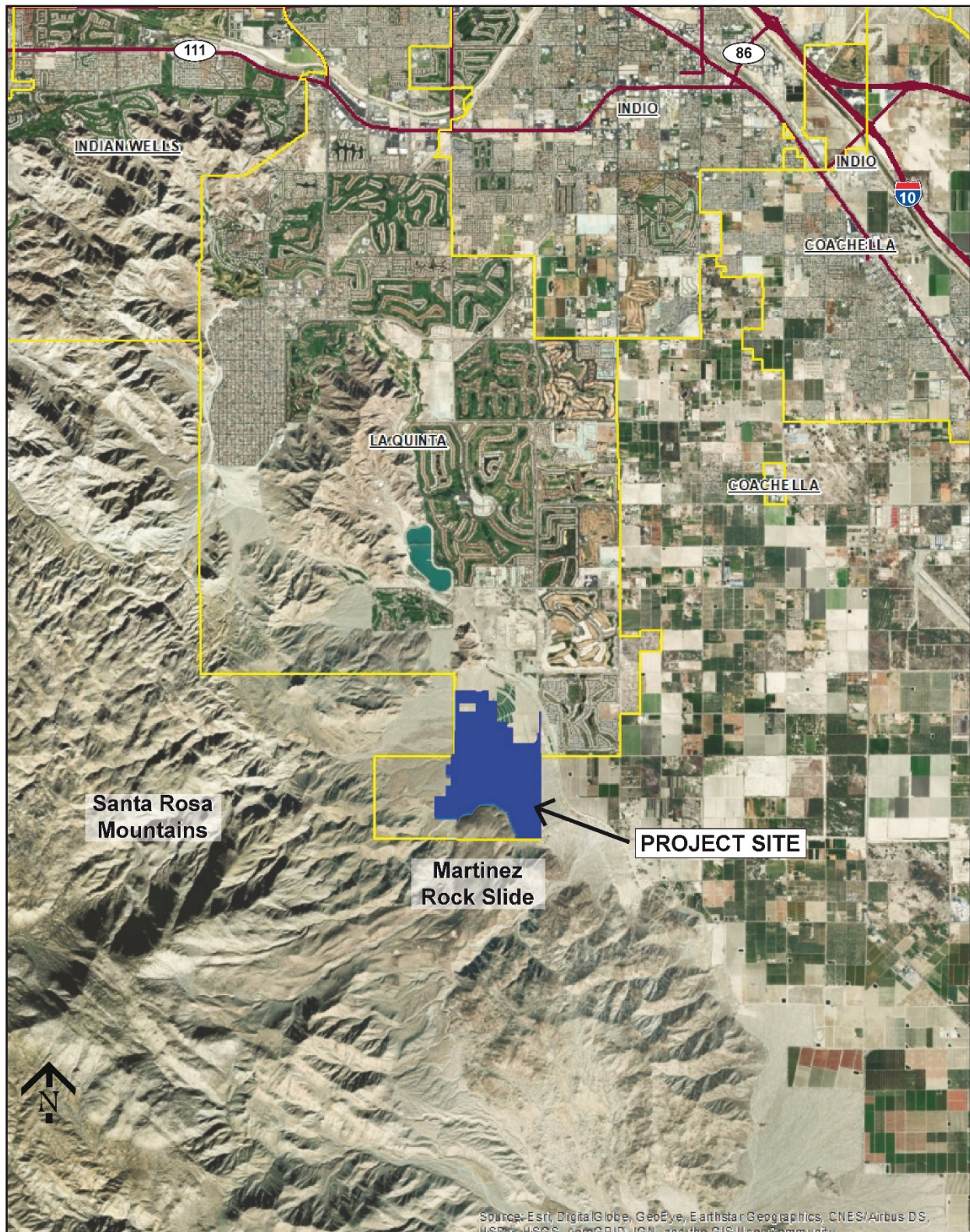
Exhibit 1 Regional Location



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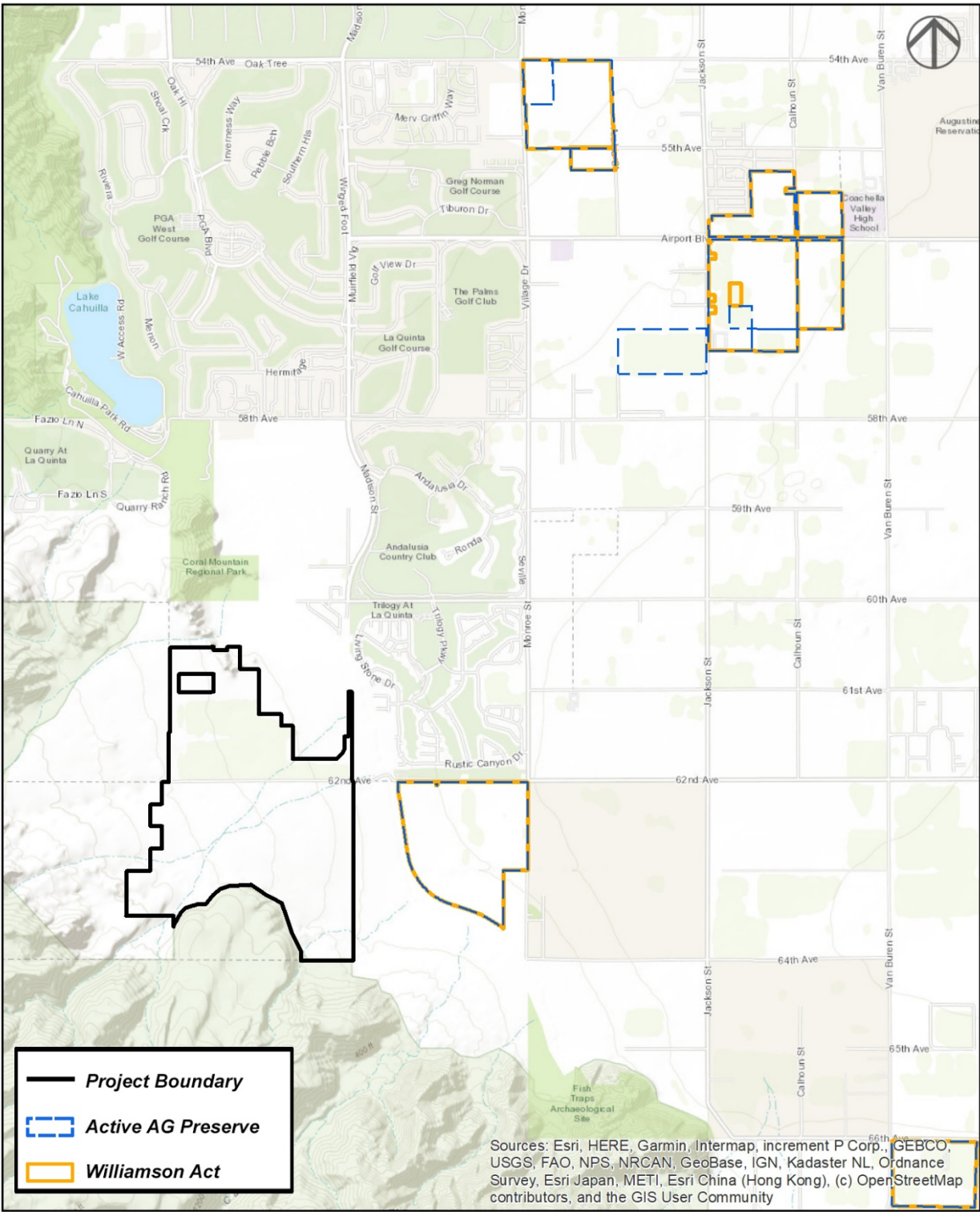
Exhibit 2 Project Vicinity



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Exhibit 3 Williamson Act Designated Farmlands



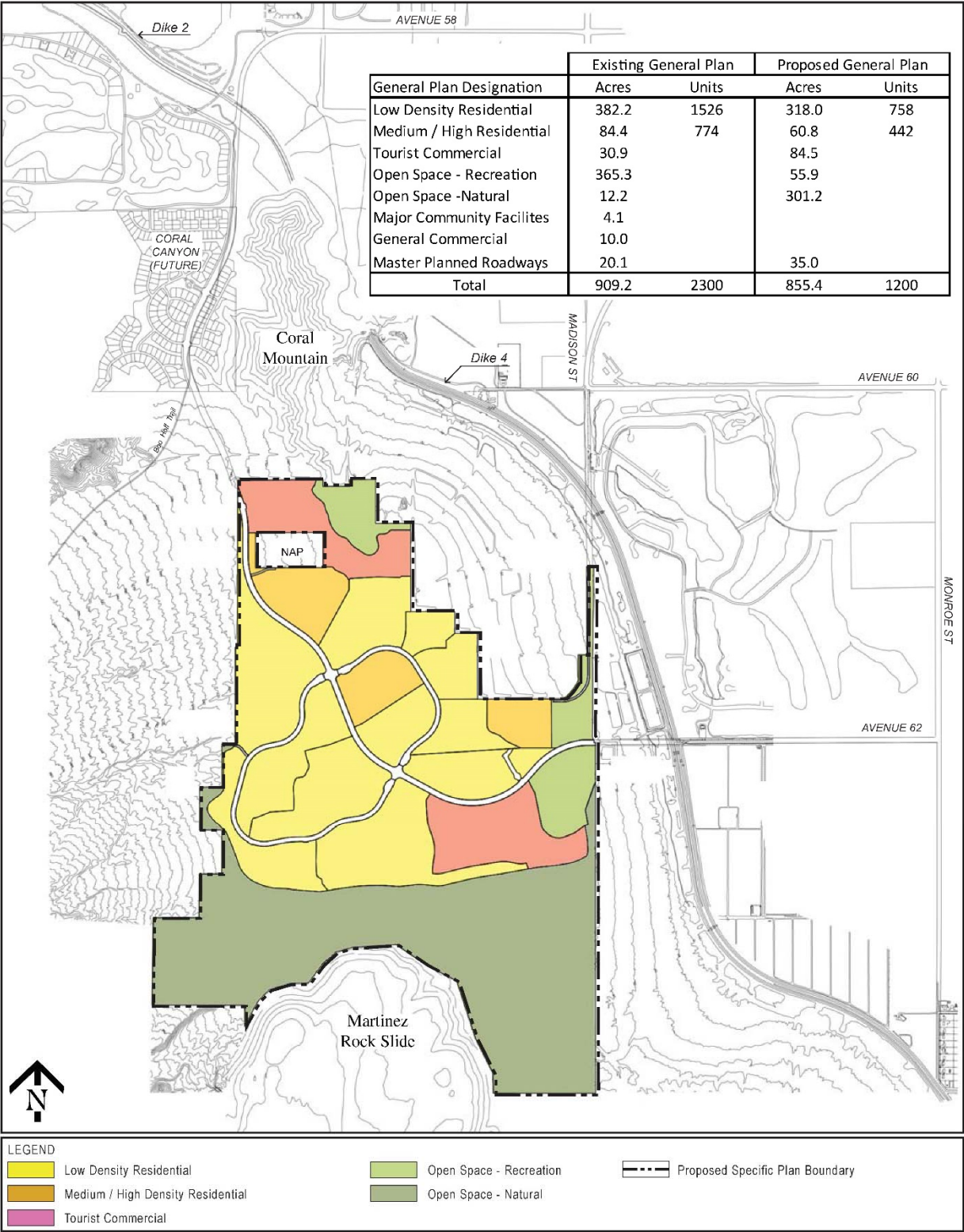
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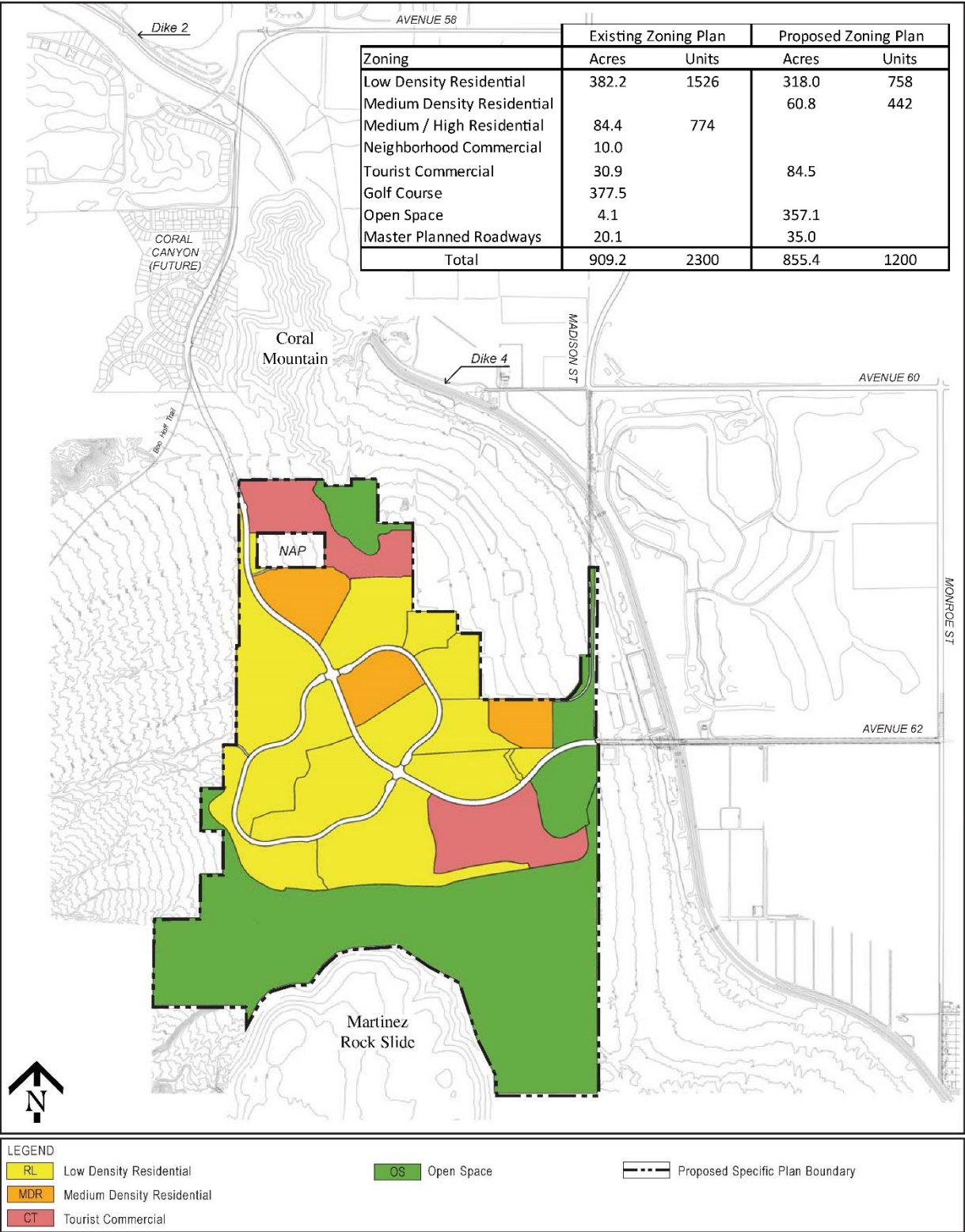
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Exhibit 5 Land Use



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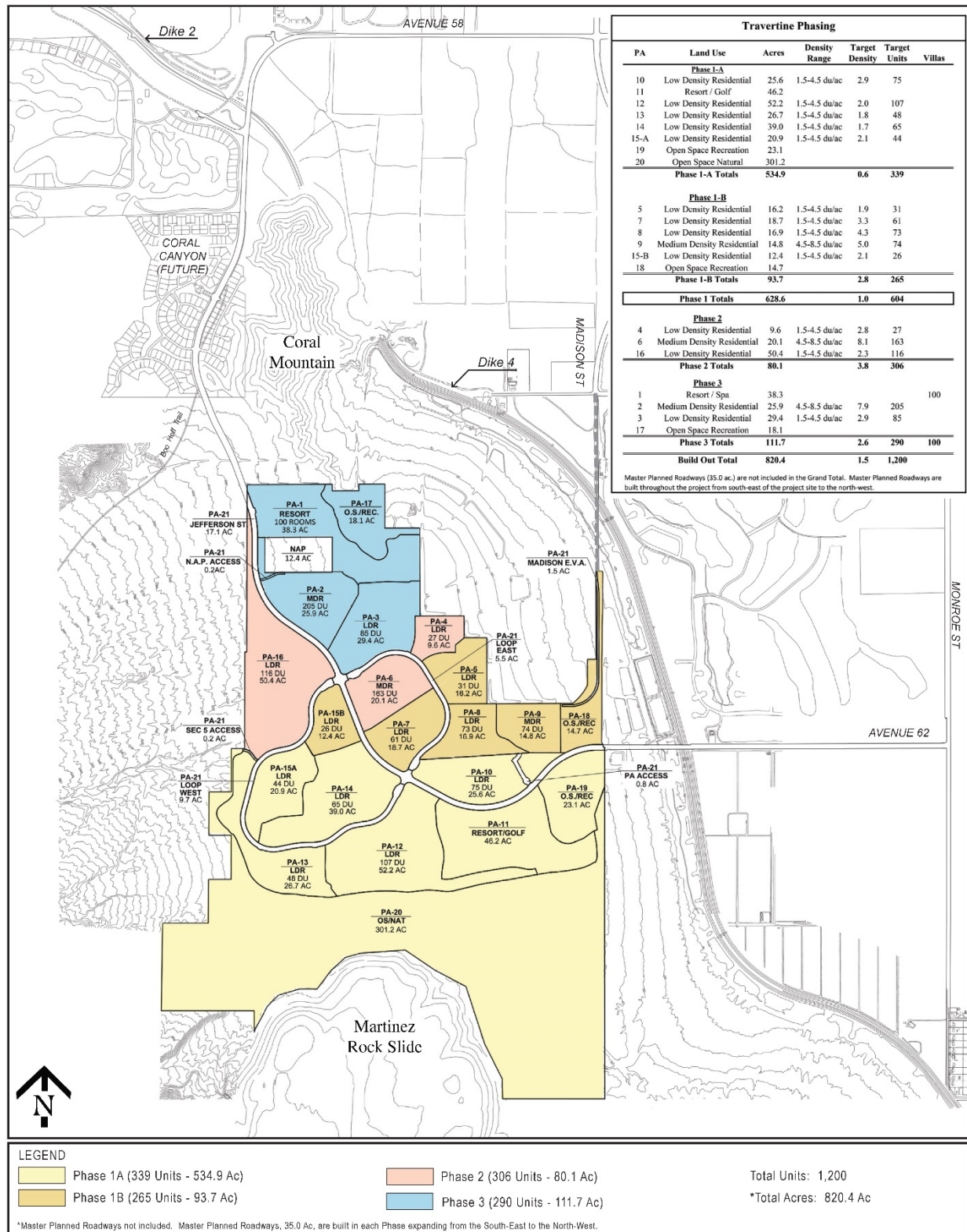
Exhibit 6      Zoning Designations



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# Exhibit 7 Project Site Phasing Plan



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Exhibit 8 Project Site Photos

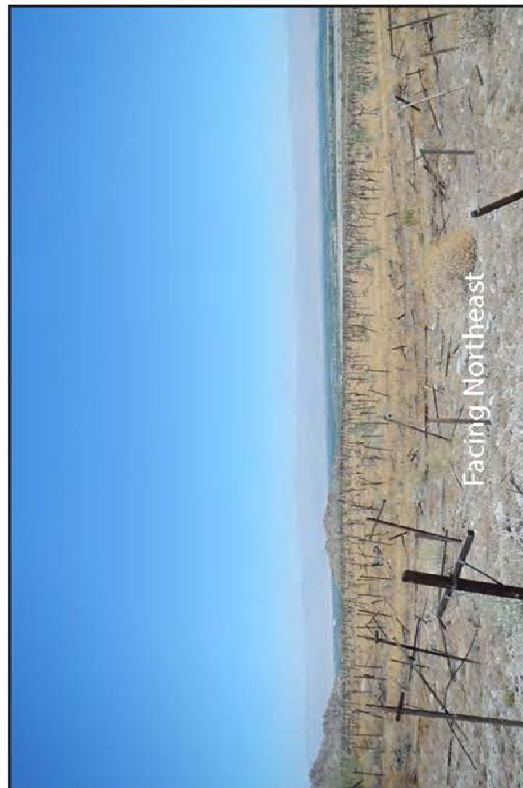
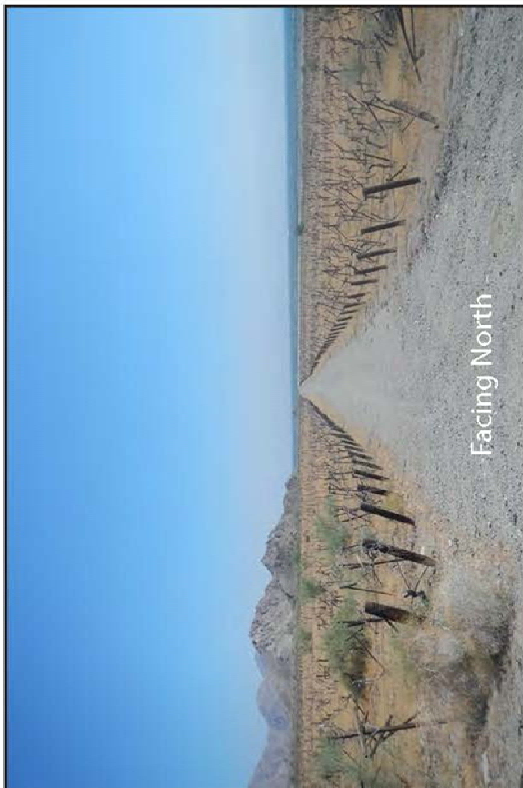
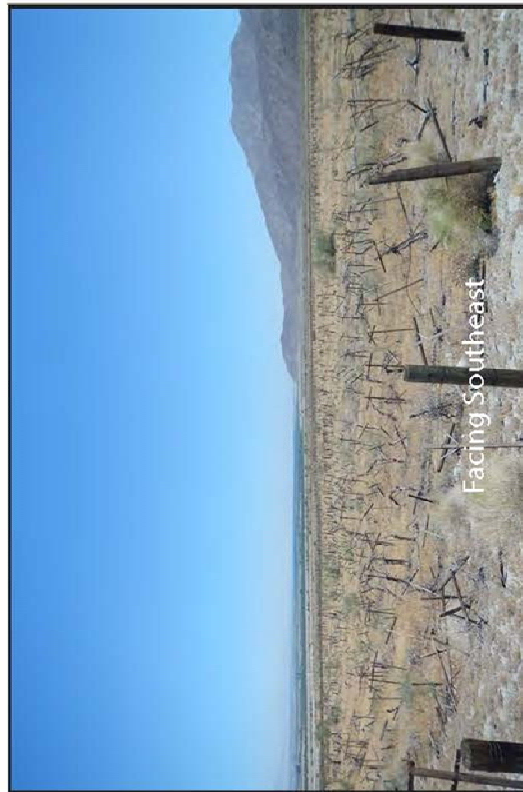
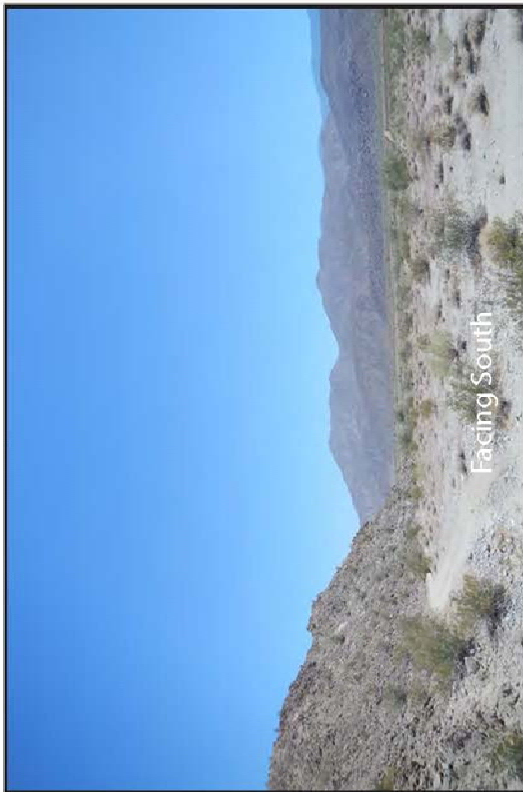




Exhibit 8 Cont.      Project Site Photos: Cont.



### 1.3 LESA Evaluation

The Land Evaluation portion of the LESA Model focuses on two main components that are separately rated:

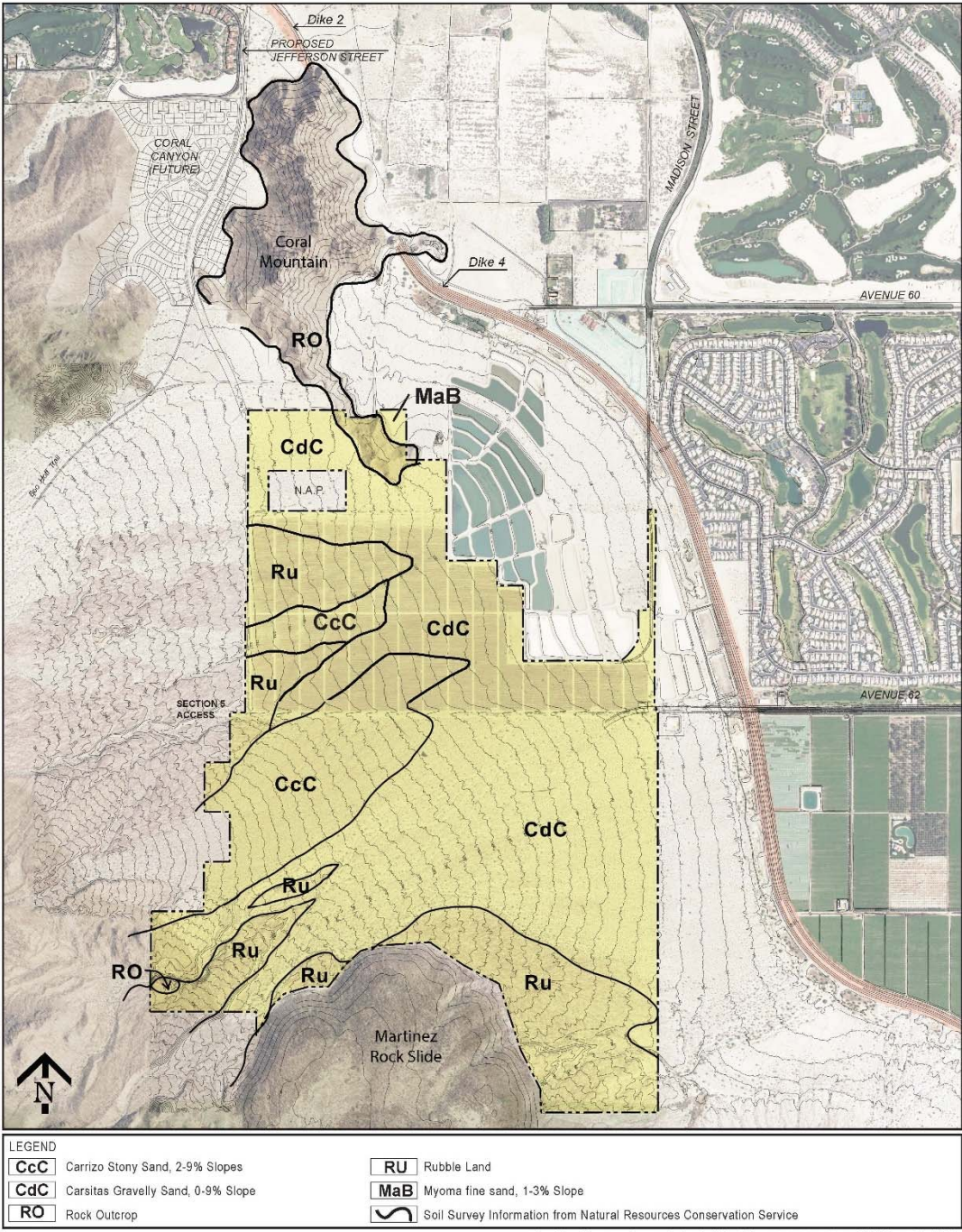
1. The Land Capability Classification (LCC) Rating: The LCC indicates the suitability of soils for most kinds of crops. Soils are rated on a scale from Class I to Class VIII. Soils having the fewest limitations receive the highest rating.
2. The Storie Index Rating: The Storie Index provides a numeric rating (based on a 100-point scale) of the relative degree of suitability or value of a given soil for intensive agriculture use. This rating is based on soil characteristics only.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) survey identified seven soil types on the project site. These include Carrizo stony sand (CcC), Carsitas gravelly sand (CdC), Carsitas cobbly sand (ChC), Indio fine sandy loam (Ip), Myoma fine sand (MaB), Rock Outcrop (RO), and Rubble land (RU). Exhibit 9, *Project Soils Type*, indicates the soils that are found on the Project site. Table 1, *Soil Suitability – Map Symbol Mapping Unit Capability*, details the types of soils found on the project site, along with their Capability Class and Storie Index Rating.

The project site soils identified within the USDA survey comprise of only 34.4 percent of the project site. The reason why the project soils survey does not completely encompass the project site is due to the absence of available soil data according to the USDA survey. However, the portion of the project site that is absent of soil survey data covers the entire southern half of the project site, which is outside of the area within the project designated as Unique Farmland by the California Department of Conservation.



Exhibit 9      Project Soils Type



**Table 1 Soil Suitability – Map Symbol Mapping Unit Capability**

Soil Map Unit	Soil Mapping Unit Name	Capability Class	Storie Index Rating
CcC	Carrizo stony sand	VII	44
CdC	Carsitas gravelly sand	VII	39
ChC	Carsitas cobbly sand	VII	33
Ip	Indio fine sandy loam	VII	98
MaB	Myoma fine sand	VII	52
RO	Rock Outcrop	VIII	N/A
RU	Rubble land	VIII	N/A

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, 1981.

Notes:

1. *Class VII (7)* – Soils that have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use mainly to rangeland, forestland, or wildlife habitat.
2. *Class VIII (8)* – Soils and miscellaneous areas have limitations that preclude commercial plant production and that restrict their use to recreational purposes, wildlife habitat, watershed, or esthetic purposes.

The LESA Model assigns ratings to each Land Capability Classification (LCC) and multiplies that number by the proportion of the project site that contains each soil class to find the LCC Score (Column C x Column E = Column F). A Storie Index score is calculated by multiplying the proportion of the project in each soil type by the soil type's Storie Index rating (Column C x Column G = Column H). Table 2, *Land Capability Classification (LCC) and Storie Index Score*, provides a summary of the Land Evaluation (LE) scores. (The final LE and Site Assessment (SA) scores are entered into the Final LESA Score Sheet as shown in Table 6, *Final LESA Score Summary*).

**Table 2 Land Capability Classification (LCC) and Storie Index Score**

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Map Symbol - Soil	Acres	Portion of the Project Area	LCC	LCC Rating	LCC Score	Storie Index	Storie Index Score
CcC	134.4	15.72%	VII	10	1.57	44	6.92
CdC	509	59.53%	VII	10	5.95	39	23.22
ChC	0	0.00%	VII	10	0.00	33	N/A
Ip	0	0.00%	VII	10	0.00	98	N/A
MaB	3.1	0.36%	VII	10	0.04	52	0.19

RO	12.2	1.43%	VIII	0	0.00	N/A	N/A
RU	196.3	22.96%	VIII	0	0.00	N/A	N/A
NOTCOM <sup>1</sup>	0	0.00%	N/A	-	-	-	-
<b>Subtotal for Soil Survey Area</b>	<b>855</b>	100.00%					
<b>Total</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	--	--	<b>7.56</b>	--	<b>30.32</b>

Source: The Altum Group, 2017/ TRG Land 2021.

Notes: See Table 1 Notes for a description of the soil's LCC rating.

1. NOTCOM indicates all land within the project site for which USDA soil data was not available

## 1.4 Site Assessment Factors

The LESA Model includes four Site Assessment factors that are separately rated: Project Size Rating, Water Resources Availability Rating, Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating, and Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating.

### Project Size Factors

The project size rating recognizes the role of farm size in determining the viability of commercial agricultural operations. Larger farming operations generally can provide greater flexibility in farm management and marketing decisions. In addition, larger operations tend to have greater impacts upon the local economy through direct employment, as well as impacts upon supporting industries and food processing industries (California Department of Conservation, 1997).

In regard to agricultural productivity, the size of the farming operation can be considered not just from its total acreage, but from the acreage of different quality lands that comprise the

operation. Lands with higher quality soils lend themselves to greater management and cropping flexibility and have the potential to provide greater economic return per acre unit. For a given project, instead of relying on a single acreage figure in the Project Size rating, the project is divided into three acreage groupings based upon the LCC ratings that were previously determined in the Land Evaluation analysis (see Table 2). Under the Project Size rating, relatively fewer acres of high-quality soils are required to achieve a maximum Project Size score. Alternatively, an abundance in acres of lesser quality soils could also achieve a high to maximum Project Size score. Table 3, *Project Size Score*, summarizes the Project Size score for the Travertine Specific Plan.

**Table 3 Project Size Score**

Map Symbol - Soil	Acres	LCC	LCC Class I or II	LCC Class II	LCC Class IV-VIII
CcC	134.4	VII	--	--	134.4
CdC	509.0	VII	--	--	509.0
ChC	0.0	VII	--	--	0.0
Ip	0.0	VII	--	--	0.0
MaB	3.1	VII	--	--	3.1
RO	12.2	VIII	--	--	12.2
RU	196.3	VIII			196.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>855.0</b>	--	--	--	<b>855.0</b>
<b>Project Size Scores</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Highest Score</b>			<b>80</b>		

Source: The Altum Group, 2017 / TRG Land 2021.

Notes: See Table 1 Notes for a description of the soil's LCC rating.

### Water Resources Availability Rating

The Water Resource Availability Rating is based on the various water sources that may supply a given property, and then determining whether different restrictions in supply are likely to take place in years that are characterized as drought and non-drought.

The proposed project's outdoor landscaping and indoor use of water demand will be provided via drilling and installation of new groundwater wells (to be located within the project boundary), which would obtain groundwater from the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin. The quantity of groundwater wells needed for the project is currently being determined by CVWD, which at this time, will formulate a decision upon review of the project's Water Supply Assessment and Water Supply Verification (WSA/WSV).

The majority of the project site (73.3 percent) is underlain on non-irrigated land that consists of alluvial sediments and rock outcrops and rubble. The remaining portion of the project site (26.7 percent) consists of an abandoned cultivated vineyard with an existing inoperable irrigation system that was last operated in 2007 and located on the northern half of the project site. In tandem with the existing vineyard, the existing water supply conditions of the project site consist of three groundwater wells that drew water from the groundwater basin and are located along the southern boundary of the vineyard. These three wells are currently out of commission and would require new equipment (i.e., generator, fertilizer tank, and pole-mounted transformers) to be installed to become operable again. Therefore, the project falls under two portions (categories) of water obtainability, groundwater well obtained areas encompassing the abandoned vineyard, and non-groundwater well obtained areas encompassed outside of the abandoned vineyard, meaning that the project's water supply sources are solely from groundwater.

As shown in Table 4, *Water Resource Availability*, the project received the following Water Resource Availability Rating of 24.0 due in part to only a quarter of the project site containing potentially irrigable lands, which in its current state of abandonment, would otherwise require new equipment to repair and reactivate onsite irrigation for the orchard. The irrigation equipment requirement poses as an economic restriction that may affect or alter water resource supply availability, either during drought, or during non-drought years, and as a result, affects (lowers) the project's water resource score. Additionally, the remainder of the project site is non-irrigated and is not suitable for dryland agriculture.

**Table 4                      Water Resource Availability**

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Project Portion</b>	<b>Water Source</b>	<b>Proportion of Project area</b>	<b>Water Availability Score</b>	<b>Weighted Availability Score</b>
1	Groundwater	26.7%	90	24.0
2	Not Irrigated	73.3%	0	0
Total Water Resource Score				24.0

Source: The Altum Group, 2017 / TRG Land 2021.

### **Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating**

The Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating is designed to provide a measurement of the level of agricultural land use for lands within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the project site. The "Zone of Influence" is the amount of surrounding lands that extend outward for up to a minimum of one-

quarter mile from the project site boundary. Parcels that are intersected by the quarter-mile buffer are included in their entirety. The LESA Model rates the potential significance of the conversion of an agricultural parcel in having a larger proportion of surrounding land in agricultural production (higher rating) as opposed to an agricultural parcel in having a smaller proportion of surrounding land in agricultural production (lower rating) (California Department of Conservation, 1997).

### **Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating**

The Surrounding Protected Resource Land Rating is essentially an extension of the Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating and is scored in a similar manner. Protected resource lands are those lands with long-term use restrictions that are compatible with or supportive of agricultural uses of land. Included among them are the following:

- Williamson Act contracted land;
- Publicly owned lands maintained as park, forest, or watershed resources; and,
- Lands with agricultural, wildlife habitat, open space, or other natural resource easements that restrict the conversion of such land to urban or industrial uses.

Exhibit 10, *Surrounding Agricultural and Protected Lands*, depicts the distribution and amount of land used for agricultural and protected land uses within a quarter-mile buffer of the proposed Project site. The Surrounding Agricultural and Protected Resource Land score for the proposed Project is provided in Table 5, *Surrounding Agricultural and Protected Lands*. Because agricultural land only occurs northeast of the project site and occupies less than 40 percent of the buffer area, the project site is therefore assigned a "Surrounding Agricultural Land Score" of zero. The project site is surrounded and encroaches upon the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, to the northwest, west, south, and southeast. The Conservation Area overlaps with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Peninsular Bighorn Sheep Critical Habitat designation. Therefore, because surrounding Protected Resource Lands were found within 73 percent of the project site buffer, the proposed project is assigned a "Surrounding Protected Resource Land" score of 70.



**Table 5 Surrounding Agricultural and Protected Lands.**

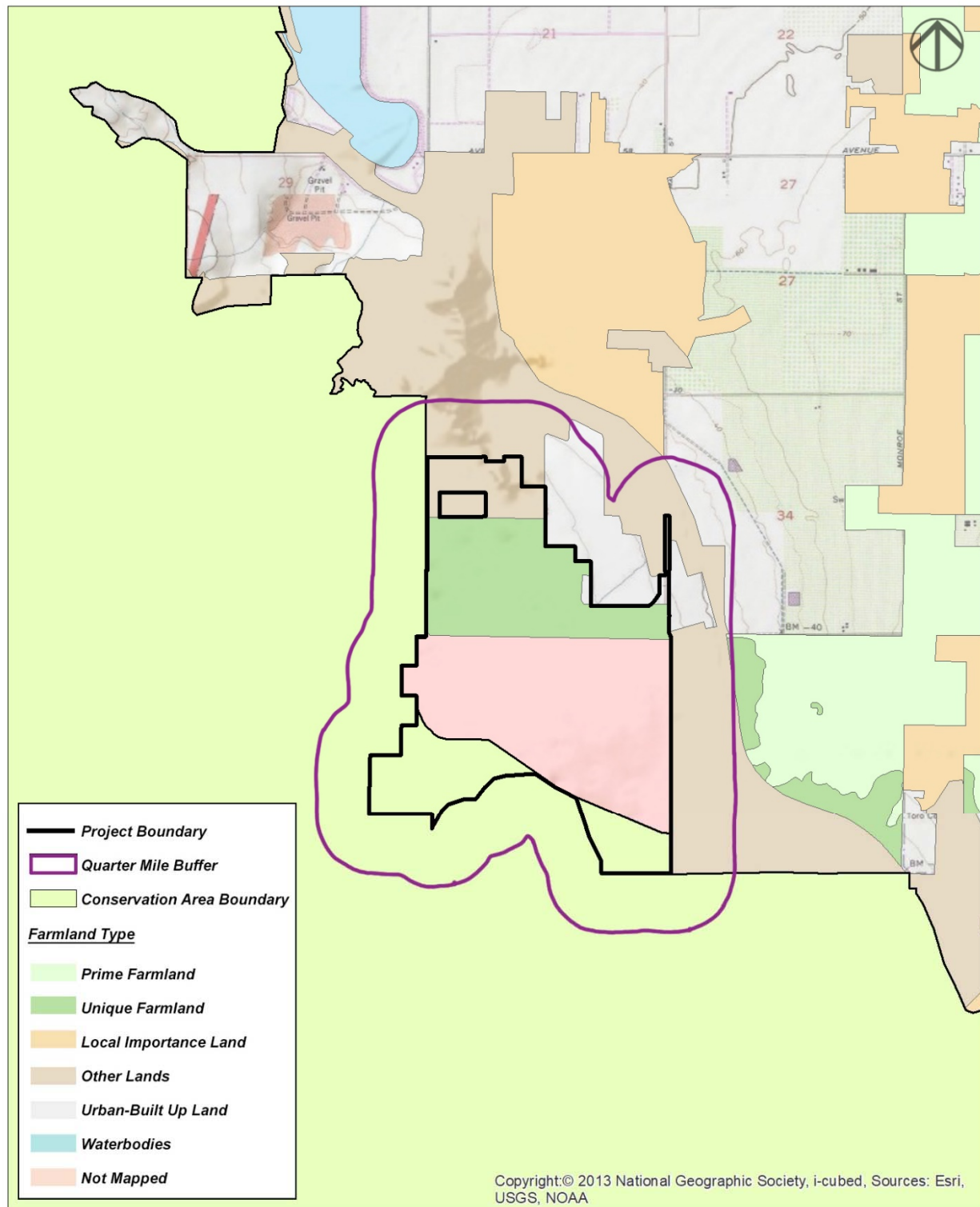
<b>Total Acres within "Zone of Influence"</b>	<b>Acres in Agricultural Production</b>	<b>Acres of Protected Resource Land</b>	<b>Percent in Agriculture</b>	<b>Percent Protected Resources Land</b>	<b>Surrounding Agricultural Land Score</b>	<b>Surrounding Protected Resource Land Score</b>
4,109.92	277	3,004.60	6.70%	73%	0	70

Source: The Altum Group, 2017 / TRG Land 2021

## 1.5 Summary

The LESA Model is weighted so that half of the total LESA score of a given project is derived from the Land Evaluation and half from the Site Assessment. As shown in Table 6, *Final LESA Score Sheet Summary*, the Land Evaluation sub score is 9.47, while the Site Assessment sub score is 19.01. The final LESA score is 28.48.

Exhibit 10 Surrounding Agricultural and Protected Lands



**Table 6 Final LESA Score Sheet Summary**

	Factor Rating (0-100 Points)	Factor Weighting (Total = 1.00)	Weighted Factor Rating
<b>Land Evaluation (LE)</b>			
1. Land Capability Classification (LCC Rating)	7.6	0.25	1.89
2. Storie Index Rating	30.3	0.25	7.58
<i>Land Evaluation Sub score</i>			9.47
<b>Site Assessment (SA)</b>			
1. Project Size Rating	80.0	0.15	12.00
2. Water Resource Availability Rating	24.0	0.15	3.60
3. Surrounding Agricultural Land Rating	0.0	0.15	0.00
4. Surrounding Protected Resource Lands Rating	70	0.05	3.50
<i>Site Assessment Sub score</i>			19.10
<b>Total</b>			<b>28.57</b>

Source: The Altum Group, 2016 / TRG Land 2021.

As shown in Table 7, *California LESA Model Scoring Threshold*, a final LESA score between 0 to 39 points is not considered significant. Therefore, with the final LESA score between 0 and 39, the Travertine Specific Plan is not considered to have a significant impact on agricultural resources.

**Table 7 California LESA Model Scoring Threshold**

Total LESA Score	Scoring Decision
0 to 39 Points	Not considered significant.
40 to 59 Points	Considered significant <u>only</u> . If Land Evaluation and Site Assessment sub scores are greater than or equal to 20 points.
60 to 79	Considered significant <u>unless</u> either Land Evaluation or Site Assessment sub score is <u>less</u> than 20 points.
80 to 100	Considered significant.

Source: Table 9 of California Department of Conservation, California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model.

### **LESA Conclusion**

As shown in Table 7, a final LESA score between 0 and 39 is not considered significant. The project site received a total overall score of 28.57, which places the project site in the “Not Significant” range.

According to the USDA soil survey, nearly all soils within the surveyed project site were identified as being of the lowest Land Capability Classification classes (Class 7 and 8). The identified capability classes indicates that the soils underlying the project site are the least suitable for cultivation of crops and therefore, face the greatest limitations to production of agricultural crops. In a similar fashion, the Storie Index Rating of the project site soils indicated a relatively low degree of suitability or value for intensive agriculture.

Due to the size in acreage and abundance of low quality soils of the project site, the project received a relatively high Project Size Score. The inclusion of the measure of a project's size is a recognition of the role that farm size plays in the viability of commercial agricultural operations, as larger farming operations can provide greater flexibility in farm management and economies of scale for equipment and infrastructure. However, the project size score is nullified due to the low Water Resources Availability Rating of 24.0. This low rating was assigned to the project site based on only a quarter of the surveyed project site containing irrigable lands (approximate acreage of abandoned cultivated vineyard) and the economic restriction of requiring purchase and installation of new irrigation equipment (generator, fertilizer tank, and pole-mounted transformers) in order for operable conditions.

Surrounding agricultural lands were minimal within the project site's ZOI. However, on the contrary, surrounding protected lands totaled over 70 percent of the project site's ZOI. According to the LESA Model, surrounding protected lands are considered as lands with long term use restrictions that are compatible with or supportive of agricultural uses of land. The surrounding protected lands comprised of protected wildlife habitat and open space, however due to the lack of agricultural land within the ZOI, for which the protected lands could be supportive of, the Surrounding Protected Lands Rating did not prove to be significant.

Therefore, the LESA Model has determined that potential for the project site to convert Unique Farmland to non-agriculture lands, and involvement of other changes in the existing environment that could result in conversion of farmland is not significant.

## References

California Department of Conservation, 1997. *California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model, Instruction Manual*. Prepared by the California Department of Conservation, Office of Land Conservation, 1997.