

4. Environmental Setting

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a “description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, ... from both a local and a regional perspective” (Guidelines § 15125[a]), pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The environmental setting provides the baseline physical conditions from which the lead agency will determine the significance of environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Project.

4.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.2.1 Regional Location

The City of San Juan Capistrano encompasses approximately 14 square miles of land (or 8,975 acres) and is located in southern Orange County. The community is in a coastal valley one mile from the ocean and is divided by the Interstate 5 (I-5) freeway, which runs north and south through the City. Regional access to the Project Site is provided via I-5, State Route 73 (SR-73), and SR-74. San Juan Capistrano is bordered by the cities of Laguna Niguel, Mission Viejo, Dana Point, and San Clemente and portions of unincorporated Orange County. See Figure 3-1, *Regional Location*.

The City’s Planning Area includes all of the incorporated City, unincorporated land within the City's sphere of influence (SOI), and a segment of unincorporated Orange County land to the east of the City. The SOI includes 93 acres of unincorporated land immediately north of the City.

4.2.2 Regional Planning Considerations

SCAG Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a council of governments representing Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. SCAG is the federally recognized metropolitan planning organization for this region, which encompasses over 38,000 square miles. SCAG is a regional planning agency and a forum for addressing regional issues concerning transportation, the economy, community development, and the environment. SCAG is also the regional clearinghouse for projects requiring environmental documentation under federal and state law. In this role, SCAG reviews proposed development and infrastructure projects to analyze their impacts on regional planning programs.

The 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) was adopted in April 2016 (SCAG 2016). Major themes in the 2016 RTP/SCS include integrating strategies for land use and transportation; striving for sustainability; protecting and preserving existing transportation infrastructure;

4. Environmental Setting

increasing capacity through improved systems managements; providing more transportation choices; leveraging technology; responding to demographic and housing market changes; supporting commerce, economic growth, and opportunity; promoting the links between public health, environmental protection, and economic opportunity; and incorporating the principles of social equity and environmental justice.

The SCS outlines a development pattern for the region, which, when integrated with the transportation network and other transportation measures and policies, would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation (excluding goods movement). The SCS is meant to provide growth strategies that will achieve the regional GHG emissions reduction targets identified by the California Air Resources Board. The SCS does not require that local general plans, specific plans, or zoning be consistent with the SCS, but provides incentives to governments and developers for consistency. The Proposed Project's consistency with the applicable 2016-2040 RTP/SCS policies is analyzed in detail in Section 5.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, and Section 5.8, *Land Use and Planning*. On May 7, 2020, SCAG's Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal (2020-2045 RTP/SCS for Federal Transportation conformity purposes only. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Council will consider approval of Connect SoCal in its entirety and for all other purposes within 120 days from May 7, 2020. For this reason, this DEIR relies on the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS.

South Coast Air Basin Air Quality Management Plan

The City of San Juan Capistrano is in the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), which is managed by the South Coast Air Quality Management District. Pollutants emitted into the ambient air by stationary and mobile sources are regulated by federal and state law and standards are detailed in the SoCAB Air Quality Management Plan. Air pollutants for which ambient air quality standards (AAQS) have been developed are known as criteria air pollutants—ozone (O₃), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur dioxide, coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM₁₀), fine inhalable particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), and lead. VOC and NO_x are criteria pollutant precursors and go on to form secondary criteria pollutants, such as O₃, through chemical and photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Air basins are classified as attainment/nonattainment areas for particular pollutants depending on whether they meet AAQS for that pollutant. Based on the SoCAB Air Quality Management Plan, the SoCAB is designated nonattainment for O₃ and PM_{2.5} for Orange County under the California and National AAQS and nonattainment for PM₁₀ under the California AAQS. The Proposed Project's consistency with the applicable AAQS is discussed in Section 5.2, *Air Quality*.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Legislation

Current State of California guidance and goals for reductions in GHG emissions are generally embodied in Executive Order S-03-05; Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the Global Warming Solutions Act (2006); Executive Order B-15-30 and Senate Bill 32 (SB 32); Senate Bill 375 (SB 375); and Executive Order B-55-18 and Senate Bill 100 (SB 100) .

Executive Order S-03-05, signed June 1, 2005, set the following GHG reduction goals for the State of California:

- 2000 levels by 2010

4. Environmental Setting

- 1990 levels by 2020
- 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050

AB 32 was passed by the state legislature on August 31, 2006, to place the state on a course toward reducing its contribution of GHG emissions. AB 32 established a legislative target for the year 2020 goal outlined in Executive Order S-03-05. The California Air Resources Board prepared its first Scoping Plan in 2008 outlining the State's plan for achieving the 2020 targets of AB 32.

In 2008, SB 375 was adopted to connect passenger vehicle GHG emissions reductions targets for the transportation sector to local land use decisions that affect travel behavior. Its intent is to reduce GHG emissions from light-duty trucks and automobiles by aligning regional long-range transportation plans, investments, and housing allocations to local land use planning to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle trips.

In September 2016, Governor Brown signed SB 32, making the Executive Order B-15-30 goal for year 2030 of a 40 percent reduction below 1990 levels by 2030 into a statewide mandated legislative target. CARB issued an update to its Scoping Plan in 2017, which sets forth programs for meeting the SB 32 reduction target.

Executive Order B-55-18 sets a goal for the state to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2045 and to achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter. SB 100 would help the state reach the goal set by Executive Order B-55-18 by requiring that the state's electricity suppliers have a source mix that consists of at least 60 percent renewable/zero carbon sources in 2030 and 100 percent renewable/zero carbon sources in 2045.

The project's ability to meet these regional GHG emissions reduction target goals is analyzed in Section 5.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

Senate Bill 743

On September 27, 2013, SB 743 was signed into law and started a process that could fundamentally change transportation impact analysis as part of CEQA compliance. The legislature found that with the adoption of SB 375, the state signaled its commitment to encourage land use and transportation planning decisions and investments that reduce VMT and thereby contribute to the reduction of GHG emissions, as required by the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32).

SB 743 eliminates auto delay, level of service, and other similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as the sole basis for determining significant impacts under CEQA. As part of the new CEQA Guidelines, the new criteria "shall promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses" (Public Resources Code Section 21099(b)(1)).

Pursuant to SB 743, on December 28, 2018, the Natural Resources Agency adopted revisions to the CEQA Guidelines to implement SB 743. The revised CEQA Guidelines establish new criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts. Under the new Guidelines, VMT-related metric(s) that evaluate the significance of transportation-related impacts under CEQA for development projects, land use plans, and transportation infrastructure projects are required beginning on July 1, 2020. The legislation does not preclude

4. Environmental Setting

the application of local general plan policies, zoning codes, conditions of approval, or any other planning requirements that require evaluation of level of service, but these metrics may no longer constitute the sole basis for determining transportation impacts under CEQA.

Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region, The Basin Plan

Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act, California's water quality control law, the State Water Resources Control Board has ultimate control over water quality policy and allocation of state water resources. The State Board, through its nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards, carries out the regulation, protection, and administration of water quality in each region. Each regional board is required to adopt a water quality control plan or basin plan. The City of San Juan Capistrano is in the San Diego Basin, Region 9.

The Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin designates beneficial uses for water bodies in the San Diego Region and establishes water quality objectives and implementation plans to protect those beneficial uses. The plan was prepared on September 8, 1994, and with amendments effective on or before May 17, 2016.

4.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.3.1 Location and Land Use

The 16.9-acre Project Site consists of a 15.3-acre parcel at 30700 Rancho Viejo Road (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 650-111-15) and the adjacent 1.6-acre parcel (APN 650-112-07) west of Rancho Viejo Road in the City of San Juan Capistrano, Orange County. See Figure 3-2, *Local Vicinity*. The Project Site is bordered by vacant area and I-5 freeway to the west, sloped open space to the east, Malaspina Road to the north, an existing industrial use (i.e., Fluidmaster) to the south. The off-site sloped open space area bordering the eastern property line is owned by the Marbella Homeowners Association (HOA), and is identified as the "extent of impact" area. A shared-driveway with Fluidmaster divides the Project Site and the industrial property. The Project Site is currently accessed via two driveways from Rancho Viejo Road and a driveway from Malaspina Road. (See Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*.)

The 15.3-acre portion of the Project Site is developed with a vacant, one-level, 123,000-square-foot industrial building and associated surface parking lot, driveways, and walkways. The building was previously used by the Endevco Corporation and later Meggitt Inc. for manufacturing measurement instruments. The building has been vacant since 2013 and has been an ongoing source of code enforcement issues related to graffiti, poorly maintained vegetation, illegal dumping, and unauthorized entry. The 1.6-acre portion of the Project Site is undeveloped with trees and shrubs, serving as a buffer between the I-5 freeway and Rancho Viejo Road. See Figures 4-1a and 4-1b *Site Photographs*.

Figure 4-1a - Site Photographs
4. Environmental Setting



Photo 1. Looking west along Malaspina Road from existing site entry on Malaspina Road.



Photo 2. Looking southeast at rear property line, behind existing building.



Photo 3. Looking west toward existing Rancho Viejo Road and the I-5 Freeway.



Photo 4. Looking west along southern property line.



Key Map

--- Project Boundary
0 760
Scale (Feet)



4. Environmental Setting

This page intentionally left blank.

Figure 4-1b - Site Photographs
4. Environmental Setting



Photo 5. Looking southeast along front of existing building.



Photo 6. Looking north along front of existing building.

4. Environmental Setting

This page intentionally left blank.

4. Environmental Setting

4.3.2 Surrounding Land Uses

The Project Site is surrounded by office/research park to the north and general open space to the north and northeast; industrial park to the north; single-family detached residential to the east and southeast with a medium density (LU 2.3 MD) and medium low density (LU 2.2 MLD); and office/industrial use to the south (i.e., Fluidmaster). The medium density residential area in the east is zoned PC (CDP86-4) with a density of 3.6 to 5.0 units per acre; the medium-low-density residential area in the southeast is also zoned PC (CDP86-4) with a density of 2.1 to 3.5 units per acre. Beyond the medium density and medium low-density residential uses is a golf course designated as open space recreation. Interstate 5 is west of Rancho Viejo Road. Beyond the open space area to the north and northeast is Malaspina Estates, a very low density residential (LU 2.0 VLD) area with a maximum density of 0.4 unit per acre and minimum lot size of 2.5 acres.

4.3.3 Public Services and Utilities

The Project Site is already developed and served by existing public services and utilities.

The following service providers serve the Project Site.

- Police: Orange County Sheriff's Department
- Fire: Orange County Fire Authority
- School: Capistrano Unified School District
- Electricity: San Diego Gas & Electric
- Natural Gas: San Diego Gas & Electric
- Stormwater: City of San Juan Capistrano Utilities Department
- Water: City of San Juan Capistrano Utilities Department (The City is in the process of selling its water and wastewater facilities to the Santa Margarita Water District.)
- Wastewater: City of San Juan Capistrano Utilities Department (The City is in the process of selling its water and wastewater facilities to the Santa Margarita Water District.)
- Solid Waste: CR&R Incorporated

4.3.4 General Plan and Zoning

The Project Site is designated Industrial Park by the City's General Plan land use plan and zoned IP (Industrial Park District) by the zoning map. See Figure 3-5, *Existing and Proposed General Plan Land Use Designations*, and Figure 3-6, *Existing and Proposed Zoning Designations*.

4. Environmental Setting

4.4 ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines states that cumulative impacts shall be discussed where the project's incremental effects are cumulatively considerable. It further states that this discussion shall reflect the level and severity of the impact and the likelihood of occurrence, but not in as great a level of detail as that necessary for the project alone. Section 15355 of the Guidelines defines cumulative impacts to be “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” Cumulative impacts represent the change caused by the incremental impact of a project when added to other proposed or committed projects in the vicinity.

Section 15130 [b][1] of the CEQA Guidelines states that the information utilized in an analysis of cumulative impacts should come from one of two sources:

- A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency.
- A summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

The cumulative impact analyses in this EIR uses a combination of method A and B; therefore the cumulative impacts analysis set forth in this EIR is highly conservative and would likely overstate as opposed to underestimate, cumulative impacts. Generally, the growth projections that are identified in City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan and related planning documents are used to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions. Table 4-1, *Cumulative Projects List*, provides a list of cumulative projects used in this EIR. The cumulative project list includes known and foreseeable projects that are anticipated to contribute traffic to the traffic study area intersections. Figure 4-2, *Cumulative Projects Location Map*, shows the locations of the cumulative projects.

Table 4-1 Cumulative Projects List

ID	Project/Location	Land Use	Quantity	Unit
SCJ1	The Oaks (31000 Avenida Siega)	SFDR	32	DU
SJC2	Hidden Creek Estates (29921 Camino Capistrano)	SFDR	8	DU
SJC3	Pacifica San Juan (26627-26673 Camino Las Rambles)	SFDR	416	DU
SJC4	Inn at the Mission (26871 Ortega Highway)	Hotel	124	RM
SJC5	Blenhelm Farm Stables (28801 San Juan Creek Rd.)	Barn with Stables	15,000	SF
SJC6	Ganahl-Lower Rosa (25865 Stonehill Dr.)	Car Storage Facility and Quick Serve Restaurant	15.0	AC
SJC7	Downtown Playhouse (31776 El Camino Real)	Performing Arts Center	~1	
SJC8	Church of Latter Day Saints (North side of Stallion Ridge)	Church	4.0	AC
SJC9	Distrito La Novia/San Juan Meadows (Northeast of La Novia Avenue)	SFDR	204	DU
SJC10	The Farms at Del Obispo (SEC of Del Obispo St. and Via Vermeulen)	SFDR	169	DU

4. Environmental Setting

Table 4-1 Cumulative Projects List

ID	Project/Location	Land Use	Quantity	Unit
SJC11	Tirador Residential Project (Terminus of Calle Arroyo)	SFDR	136	DU
SJC12	Chick-fil-A (31872 Del Obispo St.)	Fast-Food Restaurant with Drive-Thru	2,905	SF
SJC13	Protea Memory Care (31451 Avenida Los Cerritos)	Memory Care Facility	72	Beds
SJC14	The Groves Senior Apartments (30333 Camino Capistrano)	Senior Housing - Attached	75	DU
SJC15	Target (31874 Del Obispo St.)	Shopping Center	-- ²	
SJC16	Ecology Center (North side of Camino Del Avion)	Ecology Center	28.0	AC

SFDR = Single Family Detached Residential

RM = Room

AC = Acre

DU = Dwelling Unit

SF = Square foot

¹ Plans have not yet been submitted to the City.² Proposed use will be accommodated within the existing commercial building

The adopted General Plan designates the general distribution of land uses and intensities throughout the city and its SOI. The land use intensities allowed by the adopted General Plan are shown in Table 4-2, *General Plan Buildout Estimates*.

Table 4-2 General Plan Buildout Estimates

Land Use Designations ¹	Acres ²	Expected DU/AC or FAR	Dwelling Units	Square Feet
Open Space and Recreation				
General Open Space	1,552	0.0001:1 FAR	--	6,795
Open Space Recreation	648	0.005:1 FAR	--	14,1134
Neighborhood Park	29	0.005:1 FAR	--	6,316
Community Park	134	0.01:1 FAR	--	58,370
Special Park	3	0.05:1 FAR	--	6,534
Regional Park	579	0.001:1 FAR	--	25,221
Natural Open Space	449	0.0001:1 FAR	--	1,956
Recreation Commercial	10	0.1:1 FAR	--	43,560
Subtotal	3,404			289,886
Residential				
Very Low Density Residential	1488	1 du/ac	1,488	--
Low Density Residential	408	2 du/ac	816	--
Medium Low Density Residential	604	3.3 du/ac	1,993	--
Medium Density Residential	438	4.5 du/ac	1,971	--
Medium High Density Residential	528	7.5 du/ac	3,960	--
High Density Residential	107	17 du/ac	1,819	--
Affordable Family/Senior Housing	19	25 du/ac	475	--
Subtotal	3,592		12,522	

4. Environmental Setting

Table 4-2 General Plan Buildout Estimates

Land Use Designations ¹	Acres ²	Expected DU/AC or FAR	Dwelling Units	Square Feet
Nonresidential				
Neighborhood Commercial	33	0.20:1 FAR	--	287,496
General Commercial	115	0.30:1 FAR	--	1,502,820
Industrial Park	133	0.30:1 FAR	--	1,738,044
Quasi-Industrial	168	0.30:1 FAR	--	2,195,424
Agri-Business	74	0.05:1 FAR	--	152,460
Light Industrial	36	0.30:1 FAR	--	470,448
Office/Research Park	74	0.25:1 FAR	--	805,860
Public & Industrial	186	0.25:1 FAR	--	2,025,540
Existing Public Schools	49	0.25:1 FAR	--	533,610
Assisted Care Facilities	25	0.40:1 FAR	--	435,600
Subtotal	889			10,147,302
Special				
Special Study	7	Varies	--	--
Los Rios Specific Plan	31	Varies	--	--
Subtotal	38			
Roadways	787	--	--	--
Freeways	265	--	--	--
Total	8,975		12,522	10,437,188

Source: San Juan Capistrano General Plan, 2002.

FAR = Floor Area Ratio

du/ac = dwelling unit per acre

¹ Did not include the 93 acres located in the City's sphere of influence.

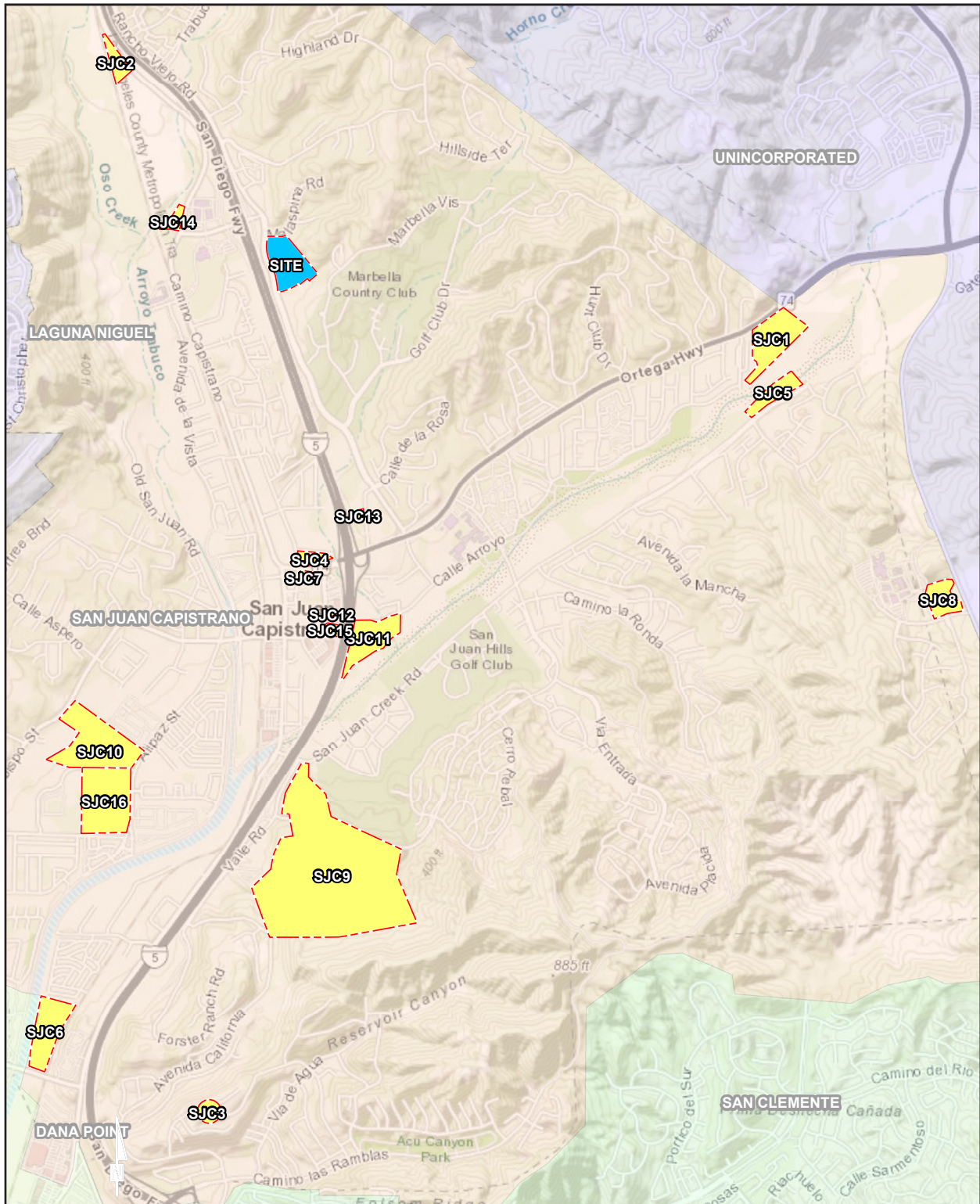
² A 10 percent reduction in acreage was made to account for undeveloped and recently subdivided areas at the time of the General Plan preparation, and areas served by private roads.

Depending on the environmental category, the cumulative impact analysis may use either source A or B. Some impacts are site specific, such as cultural resources, and others may have impacts outside the city boundaries, such as regional air quality. Please refer to Chapter 5, *Environmental Analysis*, of this DEIR for a discussion of the cumulative impacts associated with development and growth in the city and region for each environmental resource area.

Cumulative impact analyses are based on the most appropriate geographic boundaries. Several potential cumulative impacts that encompass regional boundaries (e.g., air quality and traffic) have been addressed in the context of regional plans and defined significance thresholds. Climate change is a global issue, and the cumulative impacts analysis has been addressed in the context of state regulations and regional plans designed to address the global cumulative impact. The following is a summary of the approach and extent of cumulative impacts, which are further detailed in each environmental topical section:

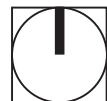
- **Aesthetics.** Aesthetic impacts are based on the immediate surrounding of the Project Site and its vicinity encompassing the cumulative project sites.

Figure 4-2 - Cumulative Projects Location Map
4. Environmental Setting



 Project Boundary

0 0.5
Scale (Miles)



Source: Urban Crossroads, 2020

PlaceWorks

4. Environmental Setting

This page intentionally left blank.

4. Environmental Setting

- **Air Quality.** Air quality impacts include regional (cumulative) impacts and localized impacts. For cumulative impacts, the analysis is based on the methodology set forth in the SCAQMD CEQA Handbook.
- **Cultural Resources.** Cumulative impacts consider the potential for the Proposed Project in conjunction with other cumulative development projects in the city for archaeological resources and for tribal cultural resources significant to local Native American tribes.
- **Energy.** Cumulative impacts are based on potential related development within each utility provider's service boundaries—San Diego Gas & Electric.
- **Geology and Soils.** Geology and soils impacts are site specific, and the cumulative impacts area considered for geology and soils impact is limited to the Project Site boundaries.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** GHG emissions impacts are not site-specific impacts but instead are cumulative impacts. Therefore, Section 5.6 provides the analysis to determine whether the project would make a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative GHG emissions impact.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Impacts are typically site specific and generally would not combine with impacts of other projects to result in cumulatively considerable impacts, but the cumulative impacts analysis in this EIR considers the combined effects of nearby past and reasonably foreseeable projects in conjunction with the project.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality.** The area considered for cumulative hydrology, drainage, and flood hazard impacts is the San Juan Creek Watershed.
- **Land Use and Planning.** Cumulative impacts are based on applicable jurisdictional boundaries and related plans, including the City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan and regional land use plans (e.g., SCAG's RTP/SCS).
- **Noise.** Cumulative traffic noise impacts are based on the traffic study, which considers the regional growth based on citywide and regional projections. Cumulative construction impacts are based on nearby projects that may have concurrent construction schedules. Cumulative operational impacts are based on existing development combined with the project and reasonably foreseeable nearby future development.
- **Population and Housing.** Cumulative impacts are based on demographic projections for the City of San Juan Capistrano.
- **Public Services.** Cumulative impacts are based on potential related development within each service provider's boundaries—OCFA, OCSD, Capistrano Unified School District, and Orange County Public Library.
- **Transportation.** The traffic study considers the project's cumulative contribution to traffic and transportation issues in the project vicinity. The cumulative traffic analysis is based on a regional transportation demand model and incorporates regional growth projections identified by Orange County

4. Environmental Setting

Transportation Authority using the OCTAM 4.0 Year 2040 Model. The cumulative analysis of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation impacts is based on City plans and policies.

- **Tribal Cultural Resources.** Cumulative impacts related to tribal cultural resources are based on the local Native American tribes' culturally significant areas and include, but are not limited to, cultural landscapes and regions, specific heritage sites, and other tribal cultural places.
- **Utilities and Service Systems.** Cumulative impacts are based on potential related development within each utility provider's boundaries—e.g., San Diego Gas & Electric, City of San Juan Capistrano Utilities Department or Santa Margarita Water District (City is in the process of selling its water and wastewater facilities to the Santa Margarita Water District), and CR&R Incorporated.
- **Wildfire.** Cumulative impact are based on land within the City of San Juan Capistrano that is categorized as high or VHFHSZ in local and state responsibility areas.