# Chapter 1 Project Description, Location, and Environmental Setting

This chapter describes The Villages – Escondido Country Club Project (Project). As required by Section 15124 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this chapter contains the precise location and boundaries of the Project; a statement of objectives sought by the Project; a general description of Project’s technical, economic, and environmental characteristics and its environmental setting; and a statement briefly describing the intended uses of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Consistent with Section 15124, this chapter also includes, to the extent known, a list of the agencies expected to use the EIR in their decision making, and a list of permits and other approvals required to implement the Project.

## 1.1 Project Objectives

Section 15124(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to include a statement of objectives sought by a project. The objectives assist the City of Escondido (City) as lead agency in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to the project to be evaluated in the EIR. The project objectives also assist the decision makers in preparing findings or, if necessary, a statement of overriding considerations. The statement of objectives should also include the underlying purpose of a project.

The Project includes the adoption of a new Specific Plan, the purpose of which is to establish a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area. As required by Government Code Section 65450 et seq., the Specific Plan contains detailed development standards, distribution of land uses, infrastructure requirements, and implementation measures for the development of a specific geographic area; in this instance, that area is the Project site. These provisions require that a specific plan be consistent with the adopted general plan. The City has responded to this mandate by adopting Specific Plan policies and objectives for the Project. The City will consider the Specific Plan policies and objectives when evaluating the alternatives presented in this EIR.

The underlying purpose of the Project is to revitalize an existing residential area surrounding the Escondido Country Club community, and to develop a new community with unique homes and interrelated open space and recreation amenities on approximately 109 acres near existing and planned infrastructure, services, and jobs in the vicinity of the North San Diego County Interstate 15 (I‑15) corridor. Project implementation is guided by the following statement of Project objectives:

1. Eliminate the blighted condition of the current Project site and abate hazards to public health and safety.
2. Assist the City in implementing the General Plan’s housing goals by increasing the City’s housing stock and diversifying the range of housing opportunities.
3. Provide a variety of housing types and designs within interrelated villages located adjacent to an existing, established residential community.
4. Create an interrelated open space system including a greenbelt with walking trails, pocket parks, and landscape areas, in addition to active recreation facilities, to facilitate an active and healthy lifestyle for residents, thereby assisting the City in implementing the General Plan’s community health and services goals.
5. Provide a place for the community to gather, socialize, dine, and recreate thereby assisting the City in implementing the General Plan’s community health and services goals.
6. Provide a Specific Alignment Plan as part of the Project that would provide a series of intersection improvements designed to calm traffic speeds and enhance pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
7. Protect privacy of existing residents by providing a landscaped buffer between all new and existing homes.
8. Implement sustainable design measures to enhance walkability, minimize water usage for both interior and exterior facilities, and maximize energy-saving features; and cluster residential within established single-family villages or neighborhoods to maintain site topography, protect natural resources, and avoid hazards consistent with the City’s land use goals.
9. Implement timely public facilities within existing service areas without burden or cost to existing residents, visitors, or North San Diego County incorporated and unincorporated communities.

## 1.2 Project Description

### 1.2.1 Project Components

The Project includes a total of 392 residential homes; approximately 48 acres of permanent open space with active greenbelts; parks; and recreational, social, and community amenities. The dedicated open space composes approximately 44% of the Project site. The residential component would be comprised of three interrelated residential villages (see Figure 1-1, Project Site Plan). The Project is located in the northwest part of the City, along both sides of West Country Club Lane, west of Nutmeg Street. The Project is approximately 0.5 miles to the west of I-15, and about 2 miles north of State Route 78 (SR-78).

The proposed interrelated residential villages are described as follows:

* **Village 1**, located north of West Country Club Lane, is generally bounded by Golden Circle Drive, Pamela Lane, David Drive, Gary Lane, and West Country Club Lane, and would provide approximately 155 homes. Primary access would be from West Country Club Lane at the location of the current clubhouse and from Gary Lane; see Figure 1-2, Village 1 Site Plan.
* **Village 2**, located north of West Country Club Lane, is generally bounded by Gary Lane, David Drive, Calle Redonda Lane, Wren Glen, Nutmeg Street, and West Country Club Lane and would provide approximately 91 homes in two neighborhoods. One of the two neighborhoods would have primary access from Gary Lane and from an extension of La Brea Street north of West Country Club Lane. The second neighborhood would have access from another point along West Country Club Lane; Figure 1-3, Village 2 Site Plan.
* **Village 3**, located south of West Country Club Lane, is generally bounded by Firestone Drive, Cortez Avenue, La Brea Street, La Mirada Avenue, and Nutmeg Avenue, and would provide approximately 146 homes in two neighborhoods. The two neighborhoods would have access from West Country Club Lane, Nutmeg Street, and La Brea Street; see Figure 1-4, Village 3 Site Plan.

Open Space System

The 48-acre Open Space System would consist of 29 acres of landscaped greenbelt and 19 acres of environmental channels and retention basins to convey stormwater from San Marcos Creek through the Project site and stormwater from the Project site. The proposed greenbelt would have a series of parks along an approximately 4-mile-long walking trail system; see Figure 1-5, Open Space, Trails, and Parks Plan.

Village Center

A new, rebuilt Clubhouse would replace the former clubhouse. Recreational amenities would include a swimming pool, gym facility, and tennis court/pickle ball courts.

The social and community amenities for the Project site are available to be patronized by nearby residents. This is at the heart of the revitalization of the broader community by providing the backdrop for the return of deep and strong social fabric that gave the Escondido Country Club area its identity. The Project amenities would include the following:

* **Administrative Offices:** The administrative operations for The Villages Homeowners Association that will be established to manage the residential units and associated resident amenities included as a part of the Village Center will be housed in this area.
* **Contemporary Restaurant and Bar:** This establishment will be open to village residents and the general public. Fresh produce from the professionally managed community farm will be a feature in the farm-to-table style cuisine offered by the professionally operated restaurant.
* **Community Farm:** A professionally managed community farm will supply fresh seasonal produce to the restaurant and to the convenience grocery store.
* **Banquet Facilities and Event Courtyard:** The banquet facilities and courtyard gathering area will be available for village residents and other Village Center members to reserve and rent for a fee. These facilities can be used for weddings, community events, and other types of celebrations.
* **Village Green:** A large Village Green with a small concert/performance facility will be located within the Village Center site. This area will function as an informal gathering area for all residents and visitors.
* **Convenience Grocery Store:** This store will feature locally grown produce from the on-site community farm.

Project Approvals

Approvals required to implement the Project include (1) a General Plan Amendment to the City’s General Plan Land Use Element, (2) a Zone Change to Specific Plan S-P Zone, (3) a Tentative Subdivision Map, and (4) a Specific Plan.

Project Infrastructure

The Project site is surrounded by existing development with existing infrastructure. Any proposed new infrastructure needed to serve the Project would be connected to existing infrastructure. No extensions or expansion of infrastructure systems would be required. Some existing infrastructure may need to be relocated or replaced. Existing infrastructure consists of vehicular access and circulation, water, sewer, drainage, and dry utilities such as gas, electricity, and telecommunications, which are further described below.

Project Circulation

The Project circulation system is designed to interconnect with the existing adjacent public street system. Vehicular access to the entrances of each village is from existing public streets. A majority of the interior streets within each village would be public streets, with the exception of private driveways sharing access to one of the housing types and within the common ownership lots. The Project will create three new connections with West Country Club Lane, with two connections converting T-intersections into four-way intersections at North Golden Circle Drive and La Brea Street and one connection creating a T-intersection on West Country Club Lane; see Figure 1-6, Circulation Plan. The new connection converting the existing T-intersection of North Golden Drive with West Country Club Lane into a four-way intersection will be signalized or developed into a roundabout.

A new four-way intersection will be created on Gary Lane that provides secondary access to both Villages 1 and 2. A public street for access to Village 3 will create one new T-intersection to La Brea Street south of West Country Club Lane, and a new T-intersection providing access to the small eastern portion of Village 2 will be created on Gary Lane near Nutmeg Street.

The traffic circulation system is predominantly composed of public streets within 56-foot-wide rights-of-way that provide access and on-street parking for the single-family residential units. The public street system provides access to the Village Center and the farm, as well as all three Villages. The public road that leads north from the North Golden Drive/West Country Club Lane intersection will transition from Major Road improvements standards to the typical 56-foot-wide right-of-way residential street standards beyond the access point for the Village Center and farm.

Several modifications are proposed, including the use of rolled curbs and slightly reduced curve radii on short cul-de-sac street segments. Several short 24-foot-wide, double-loaded private driveways extending from the new public streets will provide access to small clusters of single-family detached dwelling units on individual detached single-family lots. In some parts of Village 3, 24-foot-wide driveways will provide access to a private motor court on a commonly owned lot that accommodates access to garages for clustered dwelling units composed of two one-story detached units (only in six-dwelling-unit clusters) and two duplex dwelling units. Internal emergency fire access roads have been incorporated into the Open Space System in Villages 2 and 3. Alternative emergency-only access is provided for one of the neighborhoods in Village 3 to Nutmeg Street.

Project Water System

Portions of the Project area are located in the City of Escondido Water Service Area, the Rincon Del Diablo Municipal Water District (Rincon). A very small remnant of the Vallecitos Water District is also in the Project area. The new water services required by the Project will be provided by Rincon, the City of Escondido Water District, and Vallecitos Water District through an existing arrangement between the districts that use the most efficient existing water delivery infrastructure to deliver water regardless of in which district each water service is located. Payment for water usage is exchanged between the districts.

Potable water will be provided by the appropriate water district(s) via connections to the adjacent water infrastructure that currently provides water to the surrounding existing residential development. The connections to the water system will be to the 10-inch/12-inch water main in West Country Club Lane, the 10-inch water main in Gary Lane, the 8-inch water main in La Brea Street, and the 10-inch water main in Nutmeg Street. In addition, an existing Vista Irrigation District 18-inch waterline that traverses the Project from Country Club Lane at La Brea Street north across the existing golf course and ties into Gary Lane will need to be relocated into the new circulation street system.

Project Wastewater System

The Project will connect to the City of Escondido wastewater system. The City has existing sewer facilities in Country Club Lane, Gary Lane, La Brea Street, and Fire Fox Place. This 8‑inch gravity sewer system conveys wastewater, which ultimately flows to the Hale Avenue Resource Recovery Facility for processing.

Several existing underground sewer mains from adjacent developments traverse the Project site in public sewer easements. These facilities will be relocated and connected to the sewer system that will be constructed for the Project. These systems include the following:

* The existing 8-inch sewer from Jason Glen Street.
* The existing 8-inch sewer located in an easement from Gary Lane to Wren Ellen will be relocated into the new development.
* The existing 8-inch sewer main located in an easement from Mirada Avenue to Country Club Lane will be relocated into the development. To accommodate the new sewer alignment, the existing sewer in La Brea Street from Country Club Lane to Westwood Place will need to be reconstructed to adjust the vertical alignment.
* A portion of the existing 8-inch sewer in Gary Lane between David Drive and Country Club Lane will need to be reconstructed to adjust the vertical alignment.
* The existing 8-inch sewer located in an easement from Wren Glenn to Country Club Lane will be realigned to accommodate the Project design.
* The existing 8-inch sewer located in an easement from Corter Avenue to Fire Fox Place will need to be realigned to accommodate the Project.

There is existing recycled water in Country Club Lane serviced by the City of Escondido. This will provide the Project with recycled water for landscape and park irrigation.

New residences would be connected to the adjacent existing water distribution system and sewage collection systems owned and maintained by the City or Rincon. Existing drainage infrastructure would be redesigned and maintained to conform to current Regional Water Quality Control Board and City stormwater retention and treatment standards.

Project Drainage System

A major benefit of the Project is the removal of existing concrete drainage channels that currently convey drainage through the Project site and the construction of open vegetated drainage channels that provide a safe drainage course for the stormwater runoff from the Project site, the existing surrounding development, and the existing tributary drainage flowing through the Project site into San Marcos Creek.

The Project will also construct a number of biofiltration stormwater management basins distributed throughout the site to promote water quality treatment and hydromodification management of stormwater runoff from the project area. Hydromodification reduces the rate and duration of runoff from the Project site to predevelopment conditions in accordance with the requirements of the 2013 Regional Water Quality Permit R9-2013-001 and the 2016 *City of Escondido Storm Water Design Manual*. The biofiltration basins will have a typical section of 5 feet of depth, with 3:1 side slopes, and special surface materials to filter stormwater.

Project design to control stormwater runoff will be implemented throughout the Project to control and reduce the pollutant loading in stormwater runoff.

Project Dry Utilities

Energy in the form of natural gas and electricity is available from San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E). Electricity generated from solar equipment will be eligible to use the appropriate electrical generation credits from SDG&E authorized by State of California regulators. Telephone, cable TV, and internet service is available from a variety of providers

Off-Site Improvements

Minor off-site improvements are needed to connect new residential streets to the existing circulation system. Minor off-site utility improvements may consist of making connections to and minor relocation of the adjacent existing water, wastewater, drainage, natural gas, electric and telecommunication systems.

Traffic circulation improvements are anticipated for the intersections of West Country Club Lane and both Golden Circle Drive and El Norte Parkway. In addition, the lane striping along El Norte Parkway between Nutmeg Street/Nordahl Road and the southbound I-15 onramp will be enhanced to better serve the adjacent commercial uses, and installation of adaptive signalization along El Norte Parkway will be implemented to improve traffic flow. An additional single-occupancy-lane from El Norte Parkway to southbound I-15 will be added to the existing onramp.

West Country Club Lane traverses the Escondido Country Club community from east to west and provides the primary access to the existing circulation system for the new residential uses included in the Project. Additional traffic trips and several additional street connections needed to provide for access to the new residential dwellings will be added to West Country Club Lane. Traffic calming measures on West Country Club Lane will increase public safety and encourage pedestrian and bicycle use within the Escondido Country Club community.

Construction and Phasing

Chapter 5 of the *Villages Specific Plan* provides a development program, which details Project phasing. The Project would minimize impacts of new development on existing public facilities by constructing public improvements prior to or concurrent with issuance of residential building permits. These facilities would include the following:

* Drainage improvements
* Water pipelines
* Sewer pipelines
* Public park improvements
* Private road improvements
* Public road improvements
* Dry utilities including gas, electricity, and telecommunications

Issuance of building permits for the housing units would be market driven and generally phased along with the necessary public improvements. The key aspect of the Specific Plan phasing plan is the provision of water, sewer, and road improvements to support the land uses. Required improvements would include water and wastewater pipelines, public and private roadways, drainage improvements, public trails, public park facilities, and a Clubhouse facility and associated amenities. The majority of these facilities would be included in Phase I of the development for each respective residential village. The planned park facilities for each respective village would be constructed in phases concurrent with the issuance of building permits. More specifically, prior to issuance of building permits, the Clubhouse facility must be fully entitled with all necessary permits in place for construction and demolition. All public and private roadway improvements must be constructed prior to issuance of building permits to ensure adequate circulation to the satisfaction of the City of Escondido Engineering Department.

Prior to construction of the common areas and single-family residences, review procedures would include (1) subdivision maps, (2) use/site plan review, (3) architectural review, and/or (4) grading plan review by the City of Escondido, the California Department of Transportation, and other relevant agencies; see Table 1-1, Proposed Discretionary Approvals and Permits.

Demolition of the existing clubhouse building and associated structures would occur first. Following demolition, preparation of the Project site (i.e., grading, soil import, trenching for dry and wet utilities, and surface improvements) for vertical building construction would commence. It is assumed that site-preparation activities would occur in four phases.[[1]](#footnote-2) Three paving phases to represent off-site improvement areas on Country Club Lane, El Norte Parkway, and Nutmeg Street also were modeled. Rough grading is estimated to be completed in approximately 7 months. Finished grading is estimated to require approximately 2 months.

The SAP improvements would be phased alongside each village. The roundabout at Golden Circle and Country Club Lane (project entry) and improvements at Gary Lane will be constructed prior to the issuance of first certificate of occupancy for Village 1. The SAP improvements at Country Club Lane and Firestone, as well as Country Club Lane and La Brea will be constructed prior to issuance of first certificate of occupancy for Village 2. The SAP improvements at Country Club Lane and Nutmeg will be constructed prior to issuance of first certificate of occupancy for Village 3.

A detailed depiction of the construction schedule used for purposes of this EIR analysis—including information regarding subphases, demolition, and equipment used during each subphase—is included in Appendix 2.1-1, Air Quality Report, of this EIR.

### 1.2.2 General Plan Amendment

The Project site is currently designated in the *City of Escondido General Plan* (General Plan) as Residential Urban I, which allows for up to 5.5 dwelling units per acre (City of Escondido 2012). This land use designation would be amended to the Specific Plan Area #14 (SPA #14) land use designation to provide the flexibility to create a mix of open space uses, residential uses of varying densities, and social and recreational uses. The Project includes a total of 392 dwelling units on approximately 109.3 acres, which results in a density of 3.6 dwelling units per acre.

### 1.2.3 Specific Plan and Zone Reclassification

The Villages Specific Plan

The *Villages Specific Plan* (Specific Plan) will be prepared in conformance with Sections 65450–65457 of the California Government Code. These provisions require that the Specific Plan describe the land uses, infrastructure needed to support the land uses, development standards for the land uses, and the implementation measures necessary to carry out the Specific Plan.

The Specific Plan creates the regulatory framework for the implementation and development of the Project.

All development and improvements constructed within the Specific Plan Area must be consistent with the City’s General Plan, the Specific Plan, and the Tentative Map(s).

Zone Reclassification

The Project site is currently zoned R-1-7, which requires a residential lot to be a minimum of 7,000 square feet in size. The zoning of the entire 109.3-acre parcel would be changed to the Specific Plan (S-P) Zone to encourage a comprehensive approach to the use of land through the appropriate mix of several land uses, along with the infrastructure needed to support them on parcels sufficiently large to permit comprehensive site planning and regulatory administration. The zone reclassification does not change the density of the Project through an adopted specific plan.

### 1.2.4 Tentative Map

The Project includes a tentative subdivision map. The map depicts the grading and drainage, individual residential lots, common ownership lots, public streets, private driveways, and infrastructure improvements. The map would be submitted concurrently with the Specific Plan. One or more final subdivision map(s) would be recorded.

### 1.2.5 Specific Alignment Plan

The Project would develop a Specific Alignment Plan to improve Country Club Lane from Golden Circle Drive to the west to Nutmeg Street to the east with traffic calming features to reduce speeds along the corridor and improve the overall road user experience for all modes of transportation.

The Specific Alignment Plan is anchored by a proposed roundabout at the Country Club Lane/Golden Circle Drive intersection, the north leg of which would be the Village 1 driveway. A roundabout at this location would serve to improve circulation through the intersection as well as provide a unique and attractive entry statement for the Project.

The 64-foot-wide, two-lane segment from Golden Circle Drive east to Gary Lane would be improved with restriping to narrow the travel lanes to 12 feet, provide 6-foot-wide Class II bike lanes, and provide a 12-foot-wide, two-way left-turn lane as well as 8-foot wide parking along the curb in both directions. A traffic signal is proposed at Gary Lane and West Country Club Lane which also serves to mitigate the Project’s level of service impact.

East of Gary Lane, Country Club Lane transitions to a four-lane road. Reducing lane widths to 11 to 12 feet is also proposed. A 14-foot-wide buffered bike lane is proposed in the eastbound direction transitioning to two travel lanes at Firestone Drive. A standard Class II bike lane is proposed in the westbound direction, as is parking. An all-way stop with curb bulbouts and crosswalks is proposed at both Firestone Drive and La Brea Street. Buffered bike lanes are proposed from Firestone Drive east to Nutmeg Street. The all-way stop at Nutmeg Street is proposed to be replaced with a traffic signal (also providing level of service mitigation), along with curb bulbouts and full pedestrian crosswalks.

### 1.2.6 Project Design Features

The Project incorporates several project design features (PDFs) and sustainability strategies. New residences would be designed to minimize water usage for both interior and exterior facilities. Drought-tolerant plants and landscape design concepts that minimize the use of water also would be used. Maximum energy-saving features and solar energy-producing capabilities would be incorporated to the extent these items are financially feasible. The specific PDFs are addressed throughout Chapter 2, Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project, and Chapter 3, Effects Not Found to Be Significant, of this EIR. A complete list of PDFs is included in Table 1-2, Project Design Features, and in Chapter 7, List of Mitigation Measures and Project Design Features.

### 1.2.7 Development Agreement

Development Agreements are contracts negotiated between project developers and public agencies that typically vest the developer’s rights to develop in accordance with project approvals and existing laws. California Government Code Section 65864 et seq. and Article 58　of the Escondido Zoning Code authorizes the creation of Development Agreements, set minimum standards for what must be included in such agreements, and provide general procedural requirements for consideration and approval of Development Agreements.

A draft Development Agreement has been proposed as part of this Project, which results in the provision of overall benefits to the City and adequate development controls in exchange for vested rights in Project approvals. The terms of the draft Development Agreement include the following:

* full parkland development impact fee ("parks fee") credit;
* grant expedited post-entitlement plan check review and streamlining;
* a seven (7) year tentative map expiration period.

None of the terms listed above have any bearing on the physical environment. They have been included herein this section to provide a full representation of the Project request and to provide a complete list of all discretionary actions to be considered by the decision-making bodies. Through the decision-making process, the City of Escondido has not committed itself to the Project as a whole or to any particular features, so as it effectively preclude any alternatives or mitigation measures that CEQA would otherwise require to be considered.

## 1.3 Project Location

The Project site is located in the northwest portion of the City, along both sides of West Country Club Lane west of Nutmeg Street. The Project site currently has an address of 1800 West Country Club Lane and consists of approximately 109 acres. Figure 1-8, Regional Location Map, shows the project location within the County of San Diego and the City of Escondido. Regionally, the City is situated in northern San Diego County, about 30 miles north of downtown San Diego via I-15. The Project site is approximately 0.5 miles to the west of I-15, and about 2 miles north of SR-78 (Figure 1-9, Vicinity Map). The City of San Marcos boundary is approximately 0.2 miles to the southwest.

## 1.4 Environmental Setting

The general environmental setting for the Project area is provided in this section, in conformance with Section 15125 of the CEQA Guidelines. Currently, the Project site is a former 18-hole golf course surrounded by existing residential development. The country club and golf course are no longer active, and the site is currently characterized by disturbed, fallow land. Surrounding land uses include residential development in all directions (Figure 1-7, Surrounding Land Uses). As a result, the site is subject to a number of previous and ongoing anthropogenic disturbances that include pedestrian use, domestic pet use (i.e., dogs and cats), invasive species, and regular night lighting and noise. The hydrology and vegetation composition of the site has changed dramatically since the golf course operations have ceased. The man-made channels and basins/ponds that occur are no longer maintained and supported by irrigation water from the golf course, and as a result, most are in a dysfunctional state. The former golf course in its current state has resulted in code enforcement issues for the City. More detailed descriptions regarding specific environmental conditions are found at the beginning of each section in Chapters 2 and 3.

### 1.4.1 Regional Context

Regionally, the City is situated in North San Diego County, about 30 miles north of downtown San Diego via I-15. The Project is approximately 0.5 miles to the west of I-15, and about 2 miles north of SR-78. I-15 bisects Escondido in a north–south direction and provides connections to San Diego and Riverside County. Escondido’s geographic setting is characterized by hills and mountains surrounding an open valley bisected by Escondido Creek. In the outer area of Escondido, there are several large natural expanses of preserved open space that buffer Escondido from surrounding communities.

### 1.4.2 Surrounding Environment

The surrounding residential development consists of single-family detached residences on a variety of lot sizes, attached single-family residences (duplexes) of several different densities, and several common-interest developments; see Figure 1-7. A large mobile-home park is located to the south on El Norte Parkway within the City of San Marcos. The City of San Marcos boundary is approximately 0.2 miles to the southwest.

Planned development projects to the northwest of the Project site resulted in residential development of detached single-family homes on lots approximately 4,000 square feet to 6,000 square feet. Further north are detached single-family homes on approximately 5,000-square-foot lots that typically average from 40 to 45 feet in width. A smaller residential development that abuts the Project site to the north consists of duplex residential units on 2,000-square-foot lots ranging. Located central to and north of the Project site are detached single-family homes on approximately 7,000-square-foot lots, flanking Villages 1 and 2.

As the topography rises to the north of the Project site, another residential development project adjacent to the former golf course is comprised of duplex dwelling units on lots that are approximately 4,000 square feet. Another smaller residential development that protrudes into the Project site has duplex dwelling units on 2,000-square-foot lots. To the south of the Project site, several residential developments with both duplex units with 2,000-square-foot lots and detached single-family homes on lots ranging from 2,000 square feet to 7,000 square feet, which average about 40 feet in width (see Figure 1-7).

The location, density, and intensity of suburban-style development within the surrounding communities have mainly developed through planned residential development, and are generally characterized by low-density single-family neighborhoods with pockets of medium-density single-family development (duplex units and small detached homes).

## 1.5 Intended Uses of the EIR

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15124(d) and 15160–15170, the City of Escondido Planning Division prepared an Initial Study for the Villages Specific Plan Project (Appendix 1-1 of this EIR), which determined that an EIR would be required. The Initial Study was included with the Notice of Preparation circulated by the City for public review on January 25, 2017. The City also conducted a Public Scoping Meeting on February 13, 2017, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Mitchell Room, Escondido City Hall, 201 North Broadway, Escondido.

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), this EIR is an informational document that will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of the Project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the Project.

Matrix of Project Approvals/Permits

The City is the lead agency, defined in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15050 and 15367 as the “public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.” This EIR is intended to analyze the environmental impacts associated with the discretionary actions that require ultimate approval by the Escondido City Council.

Additionally, responsible agencies have discretionary approval over one or more actions involved with development of the Project, and responsible and trustee agencies are state agencies with discretionary approval or jurisdiction by law over natural resources, which may be impacted. Table 1-1 lists all approvals (e.g., permits, financing approvals, or participation agreements) that are expected to be required from the City and other public agencies.

## 1.6 Project Inconsistencies with Applicable Regional and General Plans

Adopted regional and general plans are applicable to the Project. The plans were reviewed and a consistency analysis was conducted to determine whether the Project is inconsistent with the applicable, adopted plans (see Appendix 3.1.5-1, City of Escondido General Plan Policy Consistency Analysis Table).

## 1.7 List of Past, Present, and Reasonably Anticipated Future Projects in the Project Area

The CEQA Guidelines define cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (14 CCR 15335). The CEQA Guidelines further state that the individual effects may be the various changes resulting from a single project or the changes resulting from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Cumulative impacts may result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (14 CCR 15355). CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that an EIR include either (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 general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area-wide conditions contributing to a cumulative impact.

For purposes of this EIR, the geographic scope of the cumulative analysis for each environmental topic in Chapters 2 and 3 includes a combination of growth projections and a project list; see Figure 1-10, Cumulative Projects, and Table 1-3, Cumulative Projects.

## 1.8 Growth-Inducing Impacts

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an EIR analyze ways in which projects may “foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment.” Examples of growth-inducing impacts may include the following:

* Extension of utility lines, construction of roads, or construction or expansion of water or wastewater facilities
* Encouragement of growth in surrounding areas through economic stimulus (e.g., construction of golf courses, shopping centers, industrial facilities, and residential Specific Plans)
* Revisions to land use policies, such as General Plan amendments, annexations, and rezones

It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily a beneficial or detrimental effect on, or of little significance to the environment.

### 1.8.1 Requiring Extension or Expansion of Utilities

Growth-inducing impacts may result from extension or expansion of public services to a project site. The Project site is already included in the Rincon service area for water. Potable water will be provided via connections to the adjacent water infrastructure that currently provides water to the surrounding existing residential development. Likewise, wastewater services for the Project area are already provided by the City of Escondido. The City has existing sewer facilities in Country Club Lane, Gary Lane, La Brea Street, and Fire Fox Place. This 8-inch gravity sewer system conveys wastewater, which ultimately flows to the Hale Avenue Resource Recovery Facility for processing. The Project will connect to these existing facilities. Therefore, the Project would not result in the expansion or extension of water or wastewater (other than the current Recycled Water Easterly Main Extension Project), facilities; see Section 3.1.9, Utilities and Service Systems, for further detail. Solid waste disposal for the Project would be provided by Escondido Disposal. Residents would be required to pay standard solid waste disposal fees for this service. Solid waste from the area is presently taken to either the Sycamore Landfill or the Otay Mesa Landfill, where there is sufficient capacity; see Section 3.1.9 for further detail. Additionally, the Project would not result in the need for new or physically altered facilities related to fire, police, schools, or libraries; see Section 3.1.7, Public Services, for further details.

### 1.8.2 Economic Stimulus (Construction of Golf Courses, Shopping Centers, Industrial Facilities, Residential Specific Plans)

One criterion by which growth inducement can be measured involves economic growth. Economic growth considerations range from a demand for temporary and permanent employees, to an increase in the overall revenue base for an area, to a new demand for supporting services such as retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses.

The Project would foster growth through three primary means: (1) the creation of new jobs, (2) an increase in business and tax revenues, and (3) an increase in the demand for supporting services, as further described below.

In the short term, the Project would induce economic growth by introducing temporary employment opportunities associated with construction of the Project. The Project would provide recurring revenues that would include property taxes and sales taxes. Consumer spending by new residents would also support the generation of new revenues from local restaurants, movie theaters, and other retail establishments throughout the City. This everyday spending would cause an increase in the volume of dollars flowing through the City economy, resulting in a multiplicative economic benefit. The Project would also introduce permanent jobs associated with ongoing maintenance and operations of the greenbelt area, Clubhouse, gym, community farm, convenience grocery store, and restaurant. As such, implementation of the Project would create new employment opportunities and ultimately would contribute to the economic growth of the City.

As such, Project implementation would result in an increase in business and local sales tax. This increase in yearly revenue could spur additional growth in other areas because it would provide the City with additional funds on a yearly basis. Therefore, the Project could potentially stimulate additional economic growth indirectly as a result of the increase in demand for related services. However, the economic growth attributable to the Project would not result in an indirect adverse environmental impact. Environmental impacts are evaluated in Chapters 2 and 3 of this EIR.

### 1.8.3 General Plan Amendment/Rezone

The Project site is currently designated in the City’s General Plan as Residential Urban I, and allows for up to 5.5 dwelling units per acre and is zoned R-1-7, which requires a minimum residential lot size of 7,000 square feet. The Project would require a General Plan Amendment to designate the site as Specific Plan Area, SPA #14, and rezone the site to Specific Plan (S-P). The Project includes a total of 392 dwelling units on approximately 109.3 acres, which results in a density of 3.6 dwelling units per acre. Therefore, the Project’s proposed density would be consistent with the surrounding area and the General Plan; see Section 3.1.5, Land Use, for further details. Additionally, consistency with applicable General Plan goals and policies is detailed in the General Plan Consistency Table (see Section 3.1.5 and Appendix 3.1.5-1). Based on the consistency analysis in Section 3.1.5 and Appendix 3.1.5-1, the Project would not result in a conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation.

| Table 1-1Proposed Discretionary Approvals and Permits |
| --- |
| Discretionary Approval/Permit | Agency Title | Agency Type |
| General Plan Amendment | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Rezone | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Specific Plan  | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Tentative Map | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Grading Permit(s) | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Site Plans | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Specific Alignment Plan  | City of Escondido  | Lead Agency |
| Development Agreement  | City of Escondido | Lead Agency |

| Table 1-2Project Design Features |
| --- |
| Topic | Description |
| Air Quality |
| **PDF-AQ-1** | The Project would include an on-site speed limit of 15 miles per hour to reduce fugitive dust emissions during construction. |
| **PDF-AQ-2** | Exceed 2016 Title 24 building energy efficiency standards by 15%. Additionally, the Project will include electricity-saving features, such as an increase in energy efficiency above the 2016 Title 24 standards and solar photovoltaic systems that satisfy 70% of the electricity demand for residential buildings and 50% of the electricity demand for the Village Center. |
| **PDF-AQ-3** | Traffic-calming measures for all new streets and existing affected streets and intersections. |
| **PDF-AQ-4** | Improve the pedestrian network of the community by constructing an integrated walking and bicycling trail that would connect the villages with the Village Center and adjacent community. |
| *Geology* |
| **PDF-GE-1** | The *Update Geotechnical Report and Recommended Grading Specifications* (Appendix 3.1.3-1, prepared by GEOCON Inc.), shall be adhered to for construction of the Project. The recommendations and site design features include but are not limited to the following:* All Project site slopes would be landscaped with drought-tolerant vegetation having variable root depths and requiring minimal landscape irrigation.
* All Project slopes would be drained and properly maintained to reduce erosion.
* Concrete cracking would be prevented by limiting the slump of the concrete, proper concrete placement and curing, and placement of crack control joints at periodic intervals, in particular, where re-entrant slab corners occur.
 |
| *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* |
| **PDF-HZ-1** | The Project would incorporate an agriculture operations plan as part of the Specific Plan. Performance standards for agricultural operations at the community farm would include the following:* All fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides shall be organic or non-toxic to humans.
* All mechanical equipment shall be either electrical (including storage battery) operated or muffled to the most practical extent possible if operated by internal combustion.
* No farming activity producing noise audible to adjacent residential uses shall be done before 7:00 a.m. on weekdays or 8:00 a.m. on weekend days or holidays, or after dusk.
* Composting facilities for organic material produced on site shall be located a minimum of 100 feet from and not produce odors detectable from adjacent residential uses. Only organic material produced on site shall be composted.
 |
| Hydrology and Water Quality |
| **PDF-HY-1**  | Low Impact Development (LID) strategies have been incorporated into the Project design, including :* Minimize impervious areas.
* Avoid compaction in planned landscape spaces.
* Till and amend soil for improved infiltration capacity.
* Drain rooftops, roads, or sidewalks into adjacent landscape areas.
* Drain impervious surfaces through pervious areas.
* Replace pervious drainage ditches with open, vegetated swales.
* Collect runoff.
* Landscape with native or drought tolerant species.
* Manage stormwater within proposed biofiltration BMPs.
 |
| **PDF-HY-2**  | The Project design includes 10 proposed biofiltration BMPs, which would discharge runoff into proposed vegetated channels that ultimately would convey stormwater off site. All of the proposed biofiltration BMPs would be designed for water quality and hydromodification management plan requirements, per County of San Diego Watershed Protection, Storm Water Management, and Discharge Control Ordinance (WPO) specifications. Eight of the 10 BMPs would be designed to provide 100-year detention in order to route post-Project peak discharges back to pre-Project conditions for the Project site as a whole. |
| **PDF-HY-3**  | The Project includes an area that, due to site constraints, cannot be conveyed into one of the 10 biofiltration BMPs; therefore, this area will include modular wetlands systems to treat stormwater.  |
| **PDF-HY-4**  | Anticipated frontage and off-site street improvements will be addressed using green street elements outlined in the City of Escondido BMP Design Manual. Green Street components will be addressed during final engineering.  |
| Greenhouse Gas Emissions |
| **PDF-GHG-1** | Use reclaimed water for park and greenbelt irrigation. |
| **PDF-GHG-2** | Use low-flow water fixtures. |
| **PDF-GHG-3** | The Project includes 10 publicly accessible electric-vehicle charging stations at the Village Center. |
| *Noise* |
| **PDF-N-1** | No outdoor amplified entertainment or announcements shall be allowed after 9 p.m. on weeknights or after 10 p.m. on weekend or holiday nights. |
| **PDF-N-2** | Maximum occupancy for special events at the meeting and banquet facilities and event courtyard shall be 300 people. |
| *Transportation and Traffic* |
| **PDF-TR-1** | The Project will include appropriate work zone traffic control plans to ensure efficient ingress/egress of vehicles, and to maintain access to the degree possible to Country Club Lane during construction. |

| Table 1-3Cumulative Projects |
| --- |
| Map Legend Number | Project | Project Description | Entitlement Status |
| 1 | ADM15-0106 – ERTC Medical Office (EAST) | 74,400 SF Medical Office | Approved 11-3-15. Extension of time for ERTC development agreement approved 11-4-15. |
| 2 | PHG14-0035 – Westminster Student Housing  | 72 student housing units on 18.07 ac. Campus | Approved 11-10-15. |
| 3 | ADM13-0127 – Centerpointe | 43,681 SF grocery store and 3,200 SF drive-through | Approved 12-9-15. |
| 4 | PHG14-0030 – Emmanuel Faith | Phased expansion of campus to add 191,813 SF on 17.6 ac. site | Approved. |
| 5 | SUB13-0008 – 15th  | 4 SFR lots on 0.95 ac. | Approved. |
| 6 | SUB15-0002 – Latitude II | 112 condominium units on 3.44 ac. | CC approved 8-19-15. |
| 7 | Tract 932 – Hidden Valley Ranch | 179 SFR lots on 111.54 ac. | Approved. |
| 8 | PHG15-0010 – EDI CUP  | Expansion of Materials Recovery Facility | Approved 8-25-15. |
| 9 | PHG14-0032 – Ford/Hyundai dealership | 2 new showrooms + wash/detail building | Approved. In Plan Check. |
| 10 | PHG14-0020 – Veterans Village | 48 new units (54 total) + 1,500 SF commercial on 1.8 ac. | Approved. In Plan Check. |
| 11 | SUB13-0002 – Oak Creek | 65 SFR lots on 41.39 ac. | Approved. LAFCO approved annexation 10/05/15. |
| 12 | SUB13-0007 – Amanda Estates | 21 SFR lots on 11.2 ac. | Approved. LAFCO approved annexation on 8/3/15. |
| 13 | SUB14-0002 – Zenner | 40 SFR lots on 13.97 ac. | Approved. In Plan Check. |
| 14 | PHG14-0022 – La Terraza Office Building/Parking Lot | 36,614 SF office | Approved. In Plan Check. |
| 15 | TPM 2006-08 – E. Mission | 3 SFR lots on 0.88 ac. | Approved. |
| 16 | Tract 877 – Bernardo | 13 SFR lots on 0.9 ac. | Revising map for stormwater. |
| 17 | Tract 848 – Idaho Ave | 9 SFR lots on 3.55 ac. | Approved |
| 18 | 2007-18-PD – Springhill Suites (La Terraza Hotel) | 105-room hotel | Approved. In Plan Check |
| 19 | SUB 08-0030 – Reed Rd | 4 SFR lots on 14.37 ac. | Approved – no recent action. |
| 20 | TPM 2004-16 – Tulip | 3 SFR on 1.03 ac. | Approved. |
| 21 | Tract 951 – Jacks Creek | 12 SFR lots on 3.31 ac. | Approved . |
| 22 | SUB13-0005 – El Norte (Tract 895) | 6 SFR lots on 1.15 ac. | Approved. |
| 23 | SUB09-0005 – 1221 N. Gamble St. | 3 SFR lots on 0.64 ac. | Approved. |
| 24 | Tract 934 – 1207 N. Gamble St. | 5 SFR lots on 1.19 ac. | Final Map to CC 11-18-15 to approve for recordation. |
| 25 | SUB15-0019 – Safari Highlands | Specific Plan for 550 SFR lots on 1,100 ac. | Submitted; under review. |
| 26 | PHG15-0026 – Westfield Theater | Multi-plex theater | BEZ- CC approved 11-4-15. |
| 27 | SUB15-0002 – Wohlford, 661 Bear Valley Pkwy | 55 SFR lots on 40.9 ac. | Submitted; under review. |
| 28 | SUB14-0018 – Kaen | 65 townhomes on 2.29 ac. | Incomplete; MND anticipated. Revised plans submitted 11-16-15. |
| 29 | PHG15-0009 – Solutions for Change Housing | 33 affordable units & 1,120 SF commercial | PC approved 10-13-15. |
| 30 | Tract 933/TM SUB14-0010 – Moser | 16 SFR lots on 6.4 ac. (revised submittal) | Submitted for Substantial Conformance review. |
| 31 | Tract 878 – Lion Valley | 11 SFR lots on 2.3 ac. | Unsubmitted substantial conformance. |
| 32 | Tract 890 – Midway Dr.  | 10 SFR lots on 2.3 ac. | Approved. Extension of time filed. |
| 33 | TM SUB13-0001 Cranston | 6 SFR lots on 7.41 ac. | Approved – pursue zone chg only. |
| 34 | Tract 929 – Hubbard | 12 SFR lots on 8.92 ac. | Approved. |
| 35 | Tract 895 – Boyle  | 8 SFR lots on 5.42 ac. | Approved. Extension of time filed. |
| 36 | PHG15-0016 Wismer – Felicita Hotels | 140-unit hotel, 80-unit extended stay hotel, 120-bed assisted living facility and gas station on 6.9 ac. | Incomplete; may require EIR. In redesign. |
| 37 | Pradera – Tracts 889 & 894, SUB13-0003, SUB13-0010, SUB13-0011  | 70 SFR lots on 21.3 ac. | Grading underway. |
| 38 | Tract 956 – Silva | 13 SFR lots on 4.19 ac. | Approved; development agreement expired. |
| 39 | SUB09-0002 Harmony Grove Specific Plan (Dentt/Ray) | Industrial subdivision | Incomplete. |
| 40 | ADM15-0123 ERTC Kidney Dialysis Center | 12,000 SF Medical office and dialysis center | Submitted; under review. |
| 41 | Del Prado- North & South (Woody's site); SUB 15-0023 & SUB15-0022 | Mixed-use residential – 113 units | Approved. |
| 42 | Hotel (Downtown) | Hotel | Submitted; under review |
| 43 | Integral Communities | Mixed-use residential – 126 units | Approved. 10-12-16. |
| 44 | ADM12-0014 – Stone Brewery Hotel | 99-room boutique hotel | On hold at applicant's request. |
| 45 | Self-storage facility (220 W. Mission) | Self Storage Units | Approved. |
| 46 | LaCaze (Grand Ave) | Mixed-use | Not yet submitted. |
| 47 | ADM15-0121 (Valley/Ivy) | Mixed-use 2,378 SF retail + 20 apartment units | Submitted; under review. |
| 48 | PHG12-0015 – Talk of the Town | 4,156 SF Restaurant and Carwash | Approved. Under construction. |
| 49 | 2007-11-SP/PD/DA – City Plaza | 9,356 SF commercial + 56 residential units | Foreclosure/under construction. |
| 50 | SUB13-0009 – Zak/2412 S. Escondido Blvd. | 76 condominium units on 2.53 ac. | Under construction. |
| 51 | Wismer TM, Johnston Rd. | Annexation and SFR subdivision | Preapplication meeting held; no submittal. |
| 52 | PHG15-0018 – HARRF Collections Facility | 3 new maintenance buildings (14,875 SF) | Approved. |
| 53 | ADM 14-0013 – Trafalgar Square | Shopping center renovation + new grocery store | Approved. |
| 54 | ADM13-0176 – Taco Bell | New regional office and restaurant renovation | Grading underway. |
| 55 | PHG15-0002 – Escondido Sports/Banquet Facility | Convert gym to banquet hall | Approved 10-27-15. |
| 56 | PHG14-0019 – Redwood Terrace | Convert daycare facility to 24-hour memory care center | Approved. |
| 57 | PHG13-0010 – Meadowbrook | 66 unit senior apartments | Approved; building permits issued. |
| 58 | PHG15-0011 – Champine Manor, Tobacco Rd. | Expand existing residential care facility from 6 to 12 beds | Under review for completeness. Denied non-conforming use request. OK for applicant to submit a CUP. |
| 59 | PHG15-0001 – Calvin Christian | New 15,515SF auditorium  | Approved. |
| 60 | PHG10-0023 – St. Mary's Parish Center | New 18,400 SF parish center | Approved – under construction. |
| 61 | ADM14-0043 – 130 N. Hale – Southland Paving | 3,509 SF office, 1,717 wash bay & 6,991 maintenance shop | Approved. |
| 62 | TPM 2003-07 – W. Lincoln  | 4 units on 0.45 ac. | Approved. |
| 63 | PHG14-0021 – United Reformed Church | New 12,243 SF sanctuary & 5,250 SF classroom building | Approved. |
| 64 | TPM 2006-06 Farr Ave | 4 SFR lots on0.93 ac. | Approved – no recent action. |
| 65 | SUB15-0005 – Birch | 3 SFR lots on 0.95 ac. | Submitted; under review. |
| 66 | Tract 900 – Self storage PD | 4 SFR lots on 1.38 ac. & 1 commercial lot on 1.82 ac. | TM approved. PD expired; not yet resubmitted. |
| 67 | Self Realization Fellowship Expansion |   | Submitted; under review. |
| 68 | ENV13-0005 – Lake Wohlford Dam Reconstruction | Dam reconstruction | DEIR underway. |
| 69 | Sav-A-Lot Food Market | Convert building to new grocery store (14,000 SF) | Approved. |
| 70 | PHG 16-0012 Innovative Industrial | 98,500 SF industrial | Approved. |
| 71 | PHG 15-0042 Victory Industrial | 91,000 SF Industrial | Approved. |
| 72 | ADM 16-0101 Office Condos |   | Approved. |
| 73 | PHG 15-0041 OAAI | Mini-Market expansion  | Submitted; under review. |
| 74 | PHG 16-0017 Starbucks | 2,200 SF drive through | Approved. |
| 75 | PHG15-0028 Home Depot | Clean Energy Saver | Submitted; under review. |
| 76 | ADM16-0138 – Apartments | 10 units above parking | Submitted; under review. |
| 77 | PHG 15-0013 | New MBH space @ Casa Grande | Submitted; under review. |
| 78 | PHG 15-0039 – Chalice Unitarian Universalist | Congregating expansion | Submitted; under review. |

Figure 1-1 Project Site Plan

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Figure 1-2 Village 1 Site Plan

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Figure 1-3 Village 2 Site Plan

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Figure 1-4 Village 3 Site Plan

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Figure 1-5 Open Space, Trails, and Parks Plan

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Figure 1-6 Circulation Plan

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Figure 1-7 Surrounding Land Uses

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Figure 1-10 Cumulative Projects

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1. Phase 1 would include Village 1 and the Village Center. Phase 2 would include Village 2. Phase 3 would include the northeast parcel of Village 3, bordered by Country Club Lane, La Brea Street, La Mirada Avenue, and Nutmeg Lane. Phase 4 would include the southwest portion of Village 3 bordered by La Brea Street, Country Club Lane, and Firestone Drive. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)