

2.9. Land Use and Planning

This section addresses potential land use and planning impacts that may result from construction and/or operation of the Safari Highlands Ranch (SHR) project. The following discussion addresses the existing land use and regulatory conditions of the affected environment, considers relevant land use policies and goals, identifies and analyzes environmental impacts, and recommends measures to reduce or avoid adverse impacts anticipated from implementation of the SHR project, as applicable. Refer also to **Appendix 1.1, Safari Highlands Ranch Specific Plan**, which includes an evaluation of project consistency with relevant goals and policies of the City of Escondido General Plan.

Impacts associated with the potential to conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan (e.g., the County of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea Plans for North and South San Diego County, the City of San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan (Land Use Adjacency Guidelines), and the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) – Escondido Subarea Plan) are addressed in **Section 2.3, Biological Resources**.

The table below summarizes the land use and planning impacts detailed in **Section 2.9.4**.

Summary of Land Use and Planning Impacts

Threshold Number	Issue	Determination	Mitigation Measures	Impact After Mitigation
1	Divide a Community	No Impact	None required	No Impact
2	Policy Conflict	Less than Significant Impact	None required	Less than Significant Impact

2.9.1. Existing Conditions

Existing Physical Conditions

The project site is currently undeveloped. Hills of coastal sage scrub and southern maritime chaparral, which are bisected by dry riparian drainages that support oaks, sycamores, and cottonwood, among other tree species, largely dominate the property. Similar to other surrounding lands in the project vicinity, large rock outcroppings are scattered throughout the site and contribute to its overall visual character. A number of existing dirt roadways and trails traverse the site, providing limited connection to adjacent off-site lands. However, people have historically taken informal access through the SHR property for purposes of both passive and active recreation.

Historically, the property has remained as undeveloped open space and has not supported agricultural use. The site does not contain any active farmland, Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Refer also to **Section 4.3.1, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**.

County of San Diego General Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning

The 1,098-acre SHR project site is located in the unincorporated area of San Diego County. The County's General Plan establishes a two-tier land use framework for unincorporated lands, consisting of Regional Categories that are based on the broader character, scale, and density/intensity of development, and Land Use Designations that provide more precise direction regarding allowable uses and density/intensity of development within the Regional Categories. The undeveloped SHR project site is categorized as Rural Lands and is designated Rural Lands (RL-40) in the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan of the County's General Plan. The RL-40 land use designation establishes a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 gross acres, which would allow for a theoretical buildout of 27 units. The site is zoned A72 – General Agriculture.

Current City of Escondido General Plan Land Use Designation and Zoning

The City of Escondido's General Plan area comprises approximately 80 square miles, of which 68 square miles are within the City's currently adopted Sphere of Influence (SOI) and 37.5 square miles are within the City's corporate boundaries. The SHR project site is not within the city's corporate boundaries or its SOI, but is in the City's adopted General Plan area. The General Plan designates the SHR project site as Specific Planning Area, Valley View SPA #4. Since 1990, the City's General Plan has included guidelines to develop SPA #4 as an upscale, large-lot single-family residential community, organized around a comprehensively planned open space system. Currently, there is no City of Escondido zoning designation on the property. However, the General Plan requires a Specific Plan to be prepared and adopted which would include a rezoning designation of "Specific Plan." The SHR project proposes updating the City's Sphere of Influence to include the SHR project site and annexing the site into the City. The SHR project proposes retaining the City's current General Plan land use designation for the site.

Adjacent Land Uses

Lands to the north and east of the SHR project site are in the unincorporated county. These lands contain scattered single-family homes and are categorized as Rural Lands and designated Rural Lands (RL-40) in the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan of the County's General Plan. Lands to the south are in the city of San Diego. These lands contain open space and the San Diego Zoo Safari Park and are designated Open Space and Zoological Park in the San Pasqual Community Plan of the City of San Diego General Plan.

Lands to the west are within the City of Escondido's corporate boundary. These lands contain the 580-unit Rancho San Pasqual residential development and Eagle Crest Golf Course and are designated Specific Planning Area, Rancho San Pasqual (Eagle Crest) SPA #3 in the Escondido General Plan. Lands to the southeast also are within Escondido's corporate boundary. These lands contain the 80-unit Rancho Vistamonte residential development and are designated Specific Planning Area, Valley View SPA #4.

Typical land use patterns surrounding the project site include suburban-style development that has mainly occurred through planned residential development. Such development is generally characterized by low-density, single-family neighborhoods.

2.9.2. Regulatory Framework

Federal

No federal regulations pertain to the project relative to land use and planning.

State

Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000

The San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) was established by state law in 1963 and is a regulatory agency with quasi-legislative authority. San Diego LAFCO has countywide jurisdiction but is independent of County government. LAFCOs are governed by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Government Code Section 56000, et seq.) and oversee jurisdictional boundary changes, including sphere of influence updates, municipal service reviews, and annexation and detachment of territory.

The goals of LAFCOs are to encourage orderly growth, promote logical and efficient public services for cities and special districts, streamline government structure, and discourage premature conversion of prime agricultural and open space lands to urban uses. LAFCOs also are obligated to develop and adopt spheres of influence for each city and special district within the county. The SOI is a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local government agency as determined by LAFCO and is intended to encourage efficient provision of organized community services and prevent duplication of service delivery.

Territory must be within a city's or district's SOI to be annexed. SOIs are required to be updated every five years. Government Code Section 56430 requires LAFCOs to conduct a Municipal Service Review (MSR) before or in conjunction with an action to establish or update the SOI, unless the SOI amendment is minor. The MSR provides LAFCO with the information necessary to comprehensively study existing and future public service conditions and to evaluate organization options for accommodating growth, preventing urban sprawl, and ensuring capacity and service potential for municipal services. See **Section 3.1, Sphere of Influence Update and Cumulative Impacts**, in this EIR for discussion of the MSR and SOI relative to the proposed project.

In updating a SOI, LAFCO is required to consider the present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands, as such lands may affect available resources and/or financial demands placed on the City for ongoing provision of services (e.g. water demand). Additionally, LAFCO is charged with the responsibility to discourage the premature conversion of agricultural and open space lands (Government Code §§56100, 56301, 56425, 56430, 56378). Per Government Code Section 56064, the LAFCO definition for prime agricultural land means an area of land, whether a single parcel or contiguous parcels, that has not been developed for a use other than an agricultural use and that meets specific qualifications (Escondido 2017). As indicated above, the SHR project site does not contain any active farmland, Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. As shown in the California Department of Conservation (2014) California Important Farmland Finder, the project site is designated as Other Land and Grazing Land. Refer also to **Section 4.3.1, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**. Therefore, the project would not result in the conversion or loss of any farmland or discontinuation of any agricultural production lands within the City or on SOI lands affected by the project.

Senate Bill 375

Senate Bill (SB) 375 (codified in the Government Code and the Public Resources Code) took effect in 2008 and provides a new planning process to coordinate land use planning, regional transportation plans, and funding priorities in order to help California meet the GHG reduction goals established in Assembly Bill (AB) 32. SB 375 requires metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to incorporate a Sustainable Communities Strategy in their Regional Transportation Plans that will achieve GHG emissions reduction targets by reducing vehicle miles traveled from light-duty vehicles through the development of more compact, complete, and efficient communities.

In 2010, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) adopted the SB 375 targets for the regional metropolitan planning organizations. The targets for the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) are a 7% reduction in emissions per capita by 2020 and a 13% reduction by 2035.

SANDAG completed and adopted its 2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2050 RTP/SCS; SANDAG 2011) in October 2011. In November 2011, CARB, by resolution, accepted SANDAG's GHG emissions quantification analysis and determination that, if implemented, the SCS would achieve CARB's 2020 and 2035 GHG emissions reduction targets for the region.

In October 2015, SANDAG adopted San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan (Regional Plan). Like the 2050 RTP/SCS, this planning document meets CARB's 2020 and 2035 reduction targets for the region (SANDAG 2015). In December 2015, CARB, by resolution, accepted SANDAG's GHG emissions quantification analysis and determination that, if implemented, the Regional Plan would achieve CARB's 2020 and 2035 GHG emissions reduction targets for the region.

The goals of the Regional Plan are to provide innovative mobility choices and planning to support a sustainable and healthy region, a vibrant economy, and an outstanding quality of life for all. These goals are outlined in policy objectives in the Regional Plan that include habitat and open space preservation, regional economic prosperity, environmental stewardship, mobility choices, partnerships/collaborations, and healthy and complete communities.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The California Environmental Quality Act and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines as amended contain analysis guidelines related to the assessment of land use and planning impacts. With regards to land use and planning, CEQA requires evaluation of potential effects of a project with regard to whether or not a project would physically divide an established community and/or conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Local

San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan was developed in close partnership with the region's 18 cities and the County of San Diego to guide the region through 2050. Adopted in 2015, the Regional Plan unites two major SANDAG planning efforts into one document: the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), adopted in 2004, and the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), adopted in 2011. It builds on local planning efforts by emphasizing the link between land use planning and transportation planning to create more compact and sustainable communities.

The Regional Plan is updated every four years, with the next update due in 2019. Its stated vision is to provide innovative mobility choices and planning to support a sustainable and healthy region, a vibrant economy, and an outstanding quality of life for all. The land use pattern and transportation investments included in the Regional Plan allow the region to meet and exceed greenhouse gas reduction targets established by the California Air Resources Board.

City of Escondido General Plan

The City's General Plan is a statement of long-range public policy to guide the use and development of private and public lands in the community. An update to the Escondido General Plan was adopted in 2012. The General Plan is an internally consistent document comprising both state-mandated and optional elements that establish goals, objectives, policies, principles, and standards, resulting in an overarching blueprint for a unified program of development. The Escondido General Plan elements relevant to the SHR project are summarized below, along with a reference as to where a discussion of the SHR project's relationship to these elements can be found in this EIR. The reader should note that the SHR project's relationship to the Land Use and Community Form Element is discussed later in this section.

Mobility and Infrastructure Element

Addresses the types, locations, and extent of existing and proposed transportation and utility facilities, and establishes framework goals and guiding policies for implementing improvements necessary to service existing and future residents. The SHR project's relationship to the Mobility and Infrastructure Element is further discussed in this EIR in **Section 2.12, Traffic and Circulation**.

Housing Element

Assesses the housing needs of all economic segments in Escondido and defines goals and policies to guide the City's approach in satisfying those needs. The SHR project's relationship to the Housing Element is further discussed in **Section 3.3, Growth Inducement**, of this EIR.

Community Health and Services Element

Establishes policies that influence good land use planning to enhance community health and welfare, including policies supporting access to healthy foods, availability of parks, recreational opportunities, libraries, and cultural services. The SHR project's relationship to the Community and Health Services Element is further discussed in this EIR in **Section 2.11, Public Services and Recreation**.

Community Protection Element

Identifies public safety issues affecting the city, including flood and fire hazards, geologic and seismic activity, hazardous materials, and noise, and establishes goals and policies to proactively address threats to life and property. The SHR project's relationship to the Community Protection Element is further discussed in this EIR in **Section 2.5, Geology and Soils; Section 2.7 Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Section 2.10, Noise; and Section 2.14, Wildfire Hazards**.

Resource Conservation Element

Establishes goals and policies for creating an aesthetically pleasing environment by conserving the city's natural and scenic resources, as well as conserving air and water quality, cultural, agricultural, mineral, and energy resources. The SHR project's relationship to the Resource Conservation Element is further discussed in **Section 2.2, Air Quality; Section 2.3, Biological Resources; Section 2.4, Cultural Resources; Section 2.6, Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Section 2.8, Hydrology and Water Quality; Section 4.3.1, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, and Section 4.3.2, Mineral Resources**.

Growth Management Element

Establishes policies for balancing the timing of infrastructure improvements with current and anticipated demands for service so that new development does not compound existing service shortfalls or create critical infrastructure deficiencies. The SHR project's relationship to the Growth Management Element is further discussed in this EIR in **Section 2.12, Traffic and Circulation, and Section 2.13, Utilities and Service Systems**.

Land Use and Community Form Element

Sets forth the desired pattern of growth, development, and change in the city to ensure that a balance of uses is provided at appropriate densities, locations, and combinations to enhance sustainability. In particular, the Land Use and Community Form Element identifies the SHR project site as within Specific Planning Area, Valley View SPA #4.

The Specific Planning Area designation is applied in areas where comprehensive planning is important to achieve a desired vision and is implemented through the Specific Plan process. Specific plans are authorized by California Government Code Section 65450. The Land Use and Community Form Element provides a narrative for each of the designated Specific Planning Areas, identifying the basic land use and character of development. All development in SPA #4 is premised upon a site-specific Specific Plan.

SPA #4 is envisioned as an upscale, large-lot single-family residential community, organized around a comprehensively planned open space system, which may include a golf course and

luxury resort in exchange for residential units determined to have the same impact. The Land Use and Community Form Element establishes guiding principles for SPA #4 that address land use, traffic circulation, public facilities, and site design considerations.

Relevant Land Use and Community Form Element goals and policies include:

GOAL 1: Community Character

A community composed of distinct residential neighborhoods, business districts, and employment centers, whose urban form reflects the natural environmental setting.

Community Character Policy 1.1

New development should serve to reinforce the city's present development pattern of higher-intensity development within the downtown area and lower-intensity development in outlying areas. As a guide toward accomplishing this objective, new development projects shall be at an appropriate density or clustered intensity based upon their compatibility with the majority of the existing surrounding land uses. This policy shall limit density transfers from constrained portions of a property as defined in the land use and open space goals.

Community Character Policy 1.3

Focus development into areas where land use changes achieve the community's long term goals. Facilitate development that is consistent with the build out vision for each area through incentive programs and efficient administrative and discretionary approval processed for plot plans, Planned Developments, Area Plans, Specific Plans, and Zoning Overlays.

Community Character Policy 1.12

No development shall be permitted on slopes greater than 35% or in natural 100-year floodways. If approved by the city and other appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, an environmental channel may be considered within the floodway. Adequate landscaping, revegetation, flood control measures and usable open space beyond the embankments of the environmental channel shall be provided as determined by the city.

GOAL 3: Residential Development

Neighborhoods that provide a variety of housing types, densities, and design, and a mix of uses and services that support resident needs.

Residential Development Policy 3.10

Encourage proportionate numbers of two-story dwelling units within single-family detached subdivisions to promote variety and avoid monotonous streetscapes and visual impacts.

GOAL 5: Residential Clustering

Clustering of single family residential units to maintain site topography, protect natural resources, and avoid hazards.

Residential Clustering Policy 5.8

The provisions for clustering units shall be utilized only within Planned Development Zones or Specific Planning Areas.

GOAL 11: Specific Plan Area Land Use

Large-scale, multi-use projects that create a sense of distinct identity, provide amenities, and are cohesively and comprehensively developed.

Specific Planning Area Land Use Policy 11.1

Establish the Specific Planning Area land use designation and require submittal of a Specific Plan application to manage the phased and cohesive development of large scale, multi-use projects (in compliance with California Government Code Sections 66540, et seq.) as described in [Escondido General Plan] Figure II-6.

Specific Planning Area Land Use Policy 11.7

Clustering residential units shall be permitted only in conjunction with a Planned Development or Specific Planning Area (SPA).

GOAL 15: Development Agreement Policies

Shared public and private commitments for large-scale, multi-year, and multi-use projects to assure conformance with community development objectives.

Development Agreement Policy 15.2

Approve a Development Agreement for increased residential density within Specific Planning Areas (SPA) #2 and #4 in excess of the basic entitlement, provided that community benefits exceed those normally required of comparable development projects. The yield/benefit determination shall be made by the City Council and shall not exceed the maximum stated in the SPA section.

GOAL 16: Annexation

Annexation of properties for the provision of municipal services where development shall complement and be compatible with adjoining areas without placing an undue burden on the city.

Annexation Policy 16.2

Promote the annexation of unincorporated lands where it is determined in the city's interest to promote orderly development, implement goals and objectives, and/or to expedite facilities and services.

Annexation Policy 16.8

Expand the Sphere of Influence to be coterminous with the Planning Area boundary where such expansion is deemed appropriate by the City and the Local Agency Formation Commission.

City of Escondido Municipal Code

Chapter 33 of the City's Municipal Code is known as the Escondido Zoning Code. The purpose of the Zoning Code is to serve the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general welfare by dividing the city into zones by, among other things, regulating land use and intensity, building location, height, and bulk, and establishing requirements for parking,

building setback lines, and landscape. The SHR project proposes a zone of Specific Plan (S-P), consistent with the Escondido General Plan designation of Specific Planning Area (SPA). No property zoned S-P can be developed without a specific plan, prepared and adopted pursuant to California Government Code Sections 65450–65457. Permitted uses and development standards for the property are established by the specific plan.

City of Escondido Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space

The City of Escondido Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space was adopted by the City of Escondido in 1994 (updated in 1999). The City General Plan establishes a maximum buildout population of 165,000 persons. In 1994, the General Plan parks standard was modified to require a standard of 2.25 acres of developed "neighborhood" and "community" park land per 1,000 residents.

At the time of adoption of the Master Plan, the City had 193 acres of developed neighborhood and community park land, as well as a credit of 62.5 acres of joint-use school playground areas totaling 255.5 acres. The Master Plan estimates that a total of 371 acres of park land will be required to meet current and future needs. To help meet this need, acquisition of new parks, improvements to Felicita County Park and joint use of 7.4 acres of school/park sites is proposed by the Master Plan. The Master Plan focuses on new park acreage in the form of "active" uses (e.g., ball fields, sport courts, playgrounds, etc.) in order to fulfill an identified need in the community.

Specifically, the Master Plan called for addition of 115.5 acres of "active" sports-oriented park land to the existing 255.5 acres involving purchase and/or development of approximately 88 additional acres of park land as well as improvements to existing and future school sites and/or City and/or county-owned park land. The City also owns approximately 12 acres at Mountain View Park and 10 acres at Jesmond Dene which are planned for "passive" recreational use (e.g., walking trails, picnic areas, etc.) and are intended to supplement the open space component of the Master Plan.

2.9.3. Thresholds for Determination of Significance

City of Escondido Environmental Quality Regulations (Escondido Zoning Code, Chapter 33, Article 47) and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines as amended contain analysis guidelines related to the assessment of land use and planning impacts. These guidelines have been utilized as thresholds of significance for this analysis. A project would result in a significant impact if it would:

1. Physically divide an established community.
2. Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

It should be noted that CEQA does not treat project consequences relating solely to land use, socioeconomic, or population, employment, or housing issues as direct physical impacts to the environment. An EIR may provide information regarding land use, planning, and

socioeconomic effects; however, CEQA does not recognize these types of project consequences as typical impacts on the physical environment. The impact assessment in this section focuses on changes in land use, use compatibility, and General Plan consistency to the extent that potential General Plan conflicts may lead to physical impacts on the environment. Physical effects on the environment that could result from implementation of the project are addressed in the appropriate technical sections (**Sections 2.1** through **2.14**) of this EIR.

2.9.4. Analysis of Project Effects and Determination of Significance

Threshold 1: Would the project physically divide an established community?

Division of an established community occurs as a result of physical features that create a barrier to easy and frequent travel between two or more constituent parts of a community, or block existing connections in an established community. New highways, major roadways, or utility corridors that bisect a neighborhood could result in physically dividing an existing community if design features do not promote connections between the bisected areas.

The SHR project does not contain any components that could result in dividing an established community. The SHR project site is a largely undeveloped area located contiguous to the City of Escondido's corporate boundary. To the north and east are scattered single-family homes, to the south are open space and the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, and to the west and southwest are the communities of Rancho San Pasqual and Rancho Vistamonte.

Proposed roadways would connect, rather than separate, the SHR project from the established communities in the vicinity. A proposed extension of Safari Highlands Road from Rockwood Road would connect the SHR project to the existing Rancho Vistamonte residential development to the southwest. Two emergency access connections are proposed to be created northwest and southeast of the SHR project site to integrate the new community into the existing emergency response network, providing the existing communities in these areas with additional evacuation options.

Additionally, people have historically taken informal access through the SHR property for purposes of both passive and active recreation. With the proposed development, key areas where such access has occurred would be formalized and made permanent for long-term public access. Overall, the SHR project proposes approximately 9.3 miles (7.3 acres) of on-site trails available to the public. An interconnected series of walkways and trails is proposed to provide connection between the residential neighborhoods, as well as to the Village Core, recreational amenities, and other areas of the development. Connection to a number of preexisting rural pathways, dirt roads, and utility easements would be constructed. The public trail system would include both a north/south and an east/west trail component that would follow the alignment of Safari Highlands Ranch Road from Rockwood Road in the southwest to neighborhood E-2 in the north. This walkway would be available for public use and would be available to connect to other off-site public trails (in the future). Thus, the proposed trail system would provide enhanced connectivity to existing trails in the project area.

For the reasons above, the SHR project would not physically divide an established community. Accordingly, **no impact** would occur.

Threshold 2: Would the project conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

The SHR project site currently is located in the unincorporated area of San Diego County. The project proposes updating the City's Sphere of Influence to include the SHR project site and annexing the site into the city. Although not within the city's corporate boundaries or its SOI, the SHR project site is included in the City's adopted General Plan area and designated Specific Planning Area, Valley View SPA #4. As discussed in the MSR/SOI study, the addition of the SHR project site represents a logical and orderly extension of municipal services provided by the City of Escondido, and it is therefore recommended that the project site be added to the SOI and annexed into the city's corporate boundaries.

The Escondido General Plan outlines guiding principles to develop SPA #4 as an upscale, large-lot single-family residential community, organized around a comprehensively planned open space system. Up to 800 dwelling units are allowed in SPA #4, provided a Development Agreement is approved by the City Council that will result in on- and/or off-site community benefits above and beyond the impacts of the project. Of the allowable 800 dwelling units in the Specific Planning Area, 80 have been developed as part of the Rancho Vistamonte project located in the southwest portion of SPA #4; 550 units are proposed at SHR for a total of 630; and the remaining 170 units could be proposed in the remaining SPA #4 properties to the south and the northeast of SHR. At the time of this EIR, there are no proposals for any other additional units within SPA #4.

Consistent with existing City land use plans, goals, and policies that have been in place for this site since 1990, the 1,098-acre SHR project is retaining the SPA #4 General Plan designation for the site and is proposing the Specific Plan (S-P) zone. The proposed Escondido SOI expansion and the SHR project site's annexation into the City are consistent with the Escondido General Plan policies of expanding the SOI to be coterminous with the City's Planning Area boundary and promoting annexation of unincorporated areas where development would complement and be compatible with adjoining areas. The SHR project would be consistent with the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance upon project approval. Further, the intended land use plan was ratified by residents with an affirmative vote occurring with the 2012 ballot. Refer also to **Appendix 1.1, Safari Highlands Ranch Specific Plan**, which includes an evaluation of project consistency with relevant goals and policies of the City of Escondido General Plan.

Specific policies identified for development of the Valley View SPA #4 require new development to minimize impacts to, significant visual resources through creative site planning; integration of natural features into the project; appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape; clustering of development to preserve open space vistas and natural features; minimal disturbance of topography; and creation of contiguous open space networks.

The SHR project proposes a Specific Plan, as required by the Escondido General Plan and the Escondido Zoning Code, which consists of a clustered development comprising seven residential neighborhoods with varying densities and lot sizes. The project's proposed densities

would vary and would be reflective of and compatible with existing residential development offered by adjacent communities. The project includes detailed zoning standards and design guidelines intended to facilitate the creation of new a neighborhood center, maintain a sustainable population density, and offer public and private parks and open space, while reducing dependency on automobile use by providing improvements to encourage pedestrian and bicycle movement throughout the development.

Additionally, the proposed residential development pattern incorporates a context-sensitive design that reflects the rural and open space elements found within adjacent communities. This design approach is consistent with Escondido General Plan goals and policies aimed at providing a variety of distinct residential neighborhoods in an urban form that reflects the natural setting. The clustered design provides for over 68 percent of the site to be preserved as environmental resource open space, including sensitive biology and steep slopes. Further, the proposed on-site preserve system coordinates with off-site open space and is consistent with adopted and planned conservation programs (see **Section 2.3, Biological Resources**, for further discussion of resource protection). Additionally, the SHR project proposes both private and public recreational facilities including a system of private and public trails. It also includes provisions for a new fire station and two improved emergency access routes to serve the new community and the neighboring established communities.

As indicated in the SHR Specific Plan, the project design would incorporate a variety of design techniques to achieve a visually cohesive design for the structural elements proposed, consisting of the use of natural materials (e.g., wood, stone, stucco, tile) with structures integrating a variety of articulation and roof lines. Additionally, the integration of key natural elements (e.g., rock outcroppings, drainages, steep slopes) of the site and its surroundings have been integrated into the overall project design. As allowed by the Specific Plan, a variety of housing types and architectural styles reflective of the varied history of the project area are proposed and will be offered to avoid a monotonous visual appearance in the overall development. Refer to **Appendix 1.1, Safari Highlands Ranch Specific Plan**, for specific project landscape and architectural design measures proposed.

Further, consistent with the City's General Plan, the Specific Plan calls for variation in structural scale and building heights, ranging from one to two stories, to promote variety and avoid monotonous streetscapes. The Specific Plan encourages use of varied roof forms, providing interest by jogging the roof lines, and varying visual plane lines and roof heights, including pop-outs and gabled roof forms. Use a variety of roof colors within each neighborhood is also proposed to further enhance visual variety. Refer to **Appendix 1.1** for a detailed description of the housing types and design details anticipated with future development of the project site to reinforce visual compatibility with surrounding residential land uses.

Additionally, as indicated in **Section 4.3.1, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**, the SHR project site does not contain any active farmland, Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. As shown in the California Department of Conservation (2014) California Important Farmland Finder, the project site is designated as Other Land and Grazing Land. As the project would not convert designated farmland, the proposed development would not conflict with intended land use of the site. Further, the project site

and surrounding land uses are not zoned for agricultural use, nor are they covered under a Williamson Act contract. The site is zoned Specific Plan (SP) and is located in Specific Plan Area #4. Therefore, the project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

As stated above, the SOI update does not necessarily authorize physical development until annexation, and therefore, would not result in direct physical changes to the environment that may lead to the conversion of farmland to a nonagricultural use, if such conditions are present on affected SOI lands.

A Development Agreement, as required by the Escondido General Plan to qualify the number of requested dwelling units, is being processed concurrently with the SHR Specific Plan, SOI expansion, and annexation. The Development Agreement will outline the public and financial benefits proposed by the SHR project in the areas of community safety, community health, resource preservation, community recreation, and sustainability. The SHR Specific Plan provides a comprehensive discussion of the private and public amenities offered by the proposed project which will include, but not be limited to, the public/private trail system, fire station, open space preservation, golf course improvements, and other off-site community improvements (see also **Appendix 1.1, Safari Highlands Ranch Specific Plan**). Such improvements are considered to provide on-site and off-site community benefits beyond the potential physical impacts of the project.

Based on the above, the proposed SHR project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. Impacts would be **less than significant**.

2.9.5. Sources Cited

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