

4. Environmental Setting

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to provide, pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, a “description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, from both a local and a regional perspective.” The environmental setting will provide a set of baseline physical conditions that will serve as a tool from which the lead agency will determine the significance of environmental impacts resulting from the proposed project. Subsections of Chapter 5, *Environmental Analysis*, provide more detailed descriptions of the local, regional, state, and federal regulatory and environmental settings for specific topical areas.

4.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.2.1 Regional Location

The City of Laguna Niguel (City) is in southern Orange County of Southern California. It is bordered by Laguna Hills and Aliso Viejo to the north, San Juan Capistrano and Mission Viejo to the east, Dana Point to the south, and Laguna Beach and unincorporated Orange County (Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park) to the west.

Figure 3-1, *Regional Location*, provides a visual of the regional access to the City from various freeways. Interstate 5 (I-5) runs north-southeast of Laguna Niguel, connecting the City to the majority of the southern California region. State Route 73 (San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor) runs along the northern boundary of the City and connects with I-5 in the northeastern portion of Laguna Niguel. Pacific Coast Highway (US-1) runs near the southern boundary of Laguna Niguel and connects the City to the Pacific coast.

4.2.2 Regional Planning Considerations

SCAG Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

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

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(South Coast AQMD), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and other agencies in preparing regional planning documents. SCAG has developed regional plans to achieve specific regional objectives, as discussed below.

Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

On September 13, 2020, SCAG adopted the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), also known as Connect SoCal. The RTP/SCS is a long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental and public health goals. This long-range plan, which is a requirement of the state of California and the federal government, is updated by SCAG every four years as demographic, economic, and policy circumstances change. Connect SoCal embodies a collective vision for the region's future and is developed with input from local governments, county transportation commissions, tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and local stakeholders. The 2020-2045 RTP/SCS includes growth forecasts that estimate employment, population, and housing growth. These estimates are used by SCAG, transportation agencies, and local agencies to anticipate and plan for growth. Connect SoCal works to address residents' challenges by promoting job accessibility, enabling shorter commutes, making communities safer and encouraging lower-cost housing developments. One of the key goals is to encourage development of diverse housing types in areas that are supported by multiple transportation options. The proposed project's consistency with the applicable 2020-2045 RTP/SCS policies is analyzed in detail in Section 5.10, *Land Use and Planning*.

South Coast Air Basin Air Quality Management Plan

The City is in the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), which is managed by South Coast AQMD. The air pollutants emitted into the ambient air by stationary and mobile sources are regulated by federal and state law. Air pollutants for which AAQS have been developed are known as criteria air pollutants and include ozone (O_3), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur dioxide, coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM_{10}), fine inhalable particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), and lead. VOC and NO_x are criteria pollutant precursors and go on to form secondary criteria pollutants, such as O_3 , through chemical and photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Air basins are classified as attainment/nonattainment areas for particular pollutants depending on whether they meet the AAQS for that pollutant. The SoCAB is a nonattainment area for $PM_{2.5}$ under California and National AAQS and a nonattainment area for PM_{10} under the California AAQS (CARB 2019). The SoCAB is designated extreme nonattainment for O_3 under the California AAQS (1-hour and 8-hour) and National AAQS (8-hour) (CARB 2019). The Los Angeles County portion of the SoCAB is designated nonattainment under the National AAQS for lead (South Coast AQMD 2012; CARB 2019). The proposed project's consistency with the applicable AAQS is discussed in Section 5.2, *Air Quality*.

Key Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Legislation

Current State of California guidance and goals for reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are generally embodied in Executive Order S-03-05; Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the Global Warming Solutions Act (2008); and Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act.

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Executive Order S-3-05, signed June 1, 2005, set the following GHG reduction targets for the state:

- 2000 levels by 2010
- 1990 levels by 2020
- 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050

AB 32 was passed by the California state legislature on August 31, 2006, to place the state on a course toward reducing its contribution of GHG emissions. AB 32 follows the 2020 tier of emissions reduction targets established in Executive Order S-3-05. Based on the GHG emissions inventory conducted for its 2008 Scoping Plan, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved a 2020 emissions limit of 427 million metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent (MMTCO₂e) for the state (CARB 2008). In 2015, the governor signed Executive Order B-30-15 into law, establishing a GHG reduction target for year 2030, which was later codified under Senate Bill 32 (SB 32) (2016). CARB is required to update the Scoping Plan every five years and completed the last update in 2017. CARB is currently working on an update to the 2017 Scoping Plan, which it anticipates adopting in 2022.

In 2008, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, SB 375, was adopted to connect the GHG emissions reductions targets established in the 2008 Scoping Plan for the transportation sector to local land use decisions that affect travel behavior. Its intent is to reduce GHG emissions from light-duty trucks and automobiles (excludes emissions associated with goods movement) by aligning regional long-range transportation plans, investments, and housing allocations to local land use planning to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle trips. Specifically, SB 375 required CARB to establish GHG emissions reduction targets for each of the 18 MPOs. SCAG is the MPO for the Southern California region.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, CARB adopted per capita reduction targets for each of the MPOs rather than a total magnitude reduction target. SCAG's targets are an 8 percent per capita reduction from 2005 GHG emission levels by 2020 and a 13 percent per capita reduction from 2005 GHG emission levels by 2035 (CARB 2010). The 2020 targets were smaller than the 2035 targets because a significant portion of the built environment in 2020 has been defined by decisions that have already been made. In general, the 2020 scenarios reflect that more time is needed for large land use and transportation infrastructure changes. Most of the reductions in the interim are anticipated to come from improving the efficiency of the region's transportation network. The targets would result in 3 MMTCO₂e of reductions by 2020 and 15 MMTCO₂e of reductions by 2035. Based on these reductions, the passenger vehicle target in CARB's Scoping Plan (for AB 32) would be met (CARB 2010).

2017 Update to the SB 375 Targets

CARB is required to update the targets for the MPOs every eight years. In June 2017, CARB released updated targets and technical methodology and released another update in February 2018. The updated targets consider the need to further reduce VMT, as identified in the 2017 Scoping Plan Update, while balancing the need for additional and more flexible revenue sources to incentivize positive planning and action toward sustainable communities. Like the 2010 targets, the updated SB 375 targets are in units of percent per capita reduction in GHG emissions from automobiles and light trucks compared to 2005. This excludes reductions anticipated from implementation of state technology and fuels strategies and any potential future state strategies such as

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statewide road user pricing. The proposed targets call for greater per capita GHG emission reductions from SB 375 than are currently in place, which for 2035, translates into proposed targets that either match or exceed the emission reduction levels in the MPOs' currently adopted sustainable communities strategies (SCS). As proposed, CARB staff's proposed targets would result in an additional reduction of over 8 MMTCO₂e in 2035 compared to the current targets. For the next round of SCS updates, CARB's updated targets for the SCAG region are an 8 percent per capita GHG reduction in 2020 from 2005 levels (unchanged from the 2010 target) and a 19 percent per capita GHG reduction in 2035 from 2005 levels (compared to the 2010 target of 13 percent) (CARB 2018). CARB adopted the updated targets and methodology on March 22, 2018. All SCSs adopted after October 1, 2018, are subject to these new targets.

4.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.3.1 Location and Land Use

Project Location

The 25-acre project site (Assessor's Parcel Number 656-242-18) is owned by the County of Orange and would be leased to Laguna Niguel Town Center Partners LLC to develop the proposed mixed-use project. The site is immediately adjacent to City Hall and Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) Station No. 5. It is generally bounded by Pacific Island Drive to the north, Alicia Parkway to the east, Crown Valley Parkway to the south, and multifamily residential communities to the west (e.g., Niguel Summit Apartments, El Niguel Terrace townhomes, and Charter Terrace single-family homes) (see Figures 3-2, *Local Vicinity*, and 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*).

Existing Land Uses

On-Site Uses

The project site encompasses the South County Justice Center (closed in 2008) in the eastern portion, the Orange County Library (Laguna Niguel Branch) in the southern portion, a county maintenance yard in the northwest corner, and mostly undeveloped land in the center of the site. Hardscape and landscaping improvements include parking lots, lawn areas, shrubs, and ornamental trees along the perimeters of the county maintenance yard, South County Justice Center, and Orange County Library.

Surrounding Uses

Surrounding land uses directly adjacent to the project site include the City Hall to the south; OCFA Fire Station No. 5 to the north; and Niguel Summit Apartments, El Niguel Terrace townhomes, and Charter Terrace single-family homes to the west. Directly across from Pacific Island Drive, Alicia Parkway, and Crown Valley Parkway are the Pacific Island shopping center, Town Center, and Crown Valley Mall, respectively (see Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*).

Site History

The South County Justice Center was closed on July 3, 2008, in preparation for the construction of a new facility. In 2008, an EIR was prepared for the proposed "South Court Facility." The purpose of the project was

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to provide a new 228,723-square-foot courthouse for the southern Orange County community, a 61,000-square-foot office building, a new 40,000-square-foot City Hall for Laguna Niguel, and a 3,050-square-foot expansion of the existing library on the site. The existing 33,300-square-foot courthouse was proposed to remain. As part of the 2008 EIR, a series of technical studies were conducted, including an air quality/greenhouse gas study, jurisdictional delineation, geotechnical report, asbestos survey, hydrology and hydraulics study, traffic impact analysis, and cultural resources study (Orange 2008). The County certified the South Court Facility EIR on April 29, 2008.

Of the proposed development analyzed in the 2008 EIR, only the new City Hall building and the library expansion were completed. The City Hall building at 30111 Crown Valley Parkway was completed on August 29, 2011. Construction of the library expansion began in October 2010 and was completed on August 19, 2012. The proposed courthouse facility was never constructed after the South County Justice Center was closed in 2008.

In 2015, a project named “AGORA” was proposed at the same site by LAB Holding, LLC. The proposal consisted of 280,000 square feet of commercial uses and up to 200 multifamily residential units. The project was abandoned prior to approval.

4.3.2 Aesthetics

The project site is in an urban area of Laguna Niguel and surrounded mostly by roadways and commercial and residential development. Residential properties to the north and west at higher elevations have views over the project site of the developed environment and landscaped hillsides.

The project site is partially improved with the existing South County Justice Center, Orange County Library, and county maintenance yard. The remaining area is undeveloped and vacant. There are no rock outcroppings or historic buildings on-site. There are some ornamental trees along the perimeter of the project site and scattered throughout the surface parking area, but these are not considered scenic resources. The trees are typical of landscaped ornamental trees in urban areas of southern California.

Refer to Section 5.1, *Aesthetics*, for additional information concerning existing scenic features, vistas, and resources, and an analysis of project-related impacts.

4.3.3 Biological Resources

The site is in an urban area of Laguna Niguel and is mostly surrounded by residential and commercial uses. Most of the undeveloped portion of the site is covered with nonnative grassland, landscaping, and ornamental vegetation associated with the on-site buildings. No sensitive plant species or sensitive habitat were documented on site during the 2016 and 2019 field surveys. Additionally, the project site is not within US Fish and Wildlife Service critical habitat for federally threatened and endangered species. One sensitive wildlife species was observed during the August 2019 field survey, the Cooper’s hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Watch List species when nesting. Additionally, there is foraging and nesting potential on-site for other avian species, including sensitive species such as the white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), which is

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California Fully Protected. The eucalyptus trees and other ornamental trees provide habitat for nesting, and the open space areas provide habitat for foraging.

The March 2016 and August 2019 biological surveys concluded that there are no jurisdictional waters present on-site.

Refer to Section 5.3, *Biological Resources*, for additional information on biological resources in the project area and an analysis of project-related impacts.

4.3.4 Climate and Air Quality

The annual average temperature varies little throughout the SoCAB, ranging from the low to middle 60s, measured in degrees Fahrenheit (°F). With a more pronounced oceanic influence, coastal areas show less variability in annual minimum and maximum temperatures than inland areas. The climatological station nearest to the project site that best represents the climatological conditions of the project area is the Laguna Beach, California Monitoring Station (ID 044647). The average low is reported at 43.0°F in January, and the average high is 78.1°F in August (WRCC 2021).

In contrast to a very steady pattern of temperature, rainfall is seasonally and annually highly variable. Almost all rain falls from November through May. Rainfall averages 12.52 inches per year in the vicinity of the project site (WRCC 2021). Annual average humidity is 70 percent along the coast and 57 percent in the eastern portions of the SoCAB. Since 2013, Southern California, including Laguna Niguel, has experienced prolonged drought conditions.

The SoCAB is a nonattainment area for PM_{2.5} under California and National AAQS and a nonattainment area for PM₁₀ under the California AAQS (CARB 2019). The SoCAB is designated extreme nonattainment for O₃ under the California AAQS (1-hour and 8-hour) and National AAQS (8-hour) (CARB 2019). The Los Angeles County portion of the SoCAB is designated nonattainment under the National AAQS for lead (South Coast AQMD 2012; CARB 2019). An air quality analysis was performed for the project and the results are discussed in Section 5.2, *Air Quality*. Additionally, project-related impacts from GHG emissions are discussed in Section 5.7, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

4.3.5 Cultural and Paleontological Resources

Laguna Niguel, including the project site, is situated in a region that was inhabited by the Luiseño and Gabrieleño Native American groups. The Luiseño occupied approximately 1,500 square miles of the southern California coast—from the Santiago Peak to the north, the Palomar Mountains to the east, and San Luis Rey River to the south.

The Luiseño and the Gabrieleño have a history of interaction and border one another's territories at Aliso Creek, just north of the project site. Gabrieleño territory also encompassed over 1,500 square miles and included the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, and Los Angeles-Santa Ana River Plain as well as the islands of Santa Catalina, San Clemente, and San Nicholas (Orange 2008).

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The records search results indicate that four cultural resources were previously recorded within one mile of the project site, and two are within the project boundaries. Resource CA-ORA-33 was recorded in 1960 as a prehistoric shell midden site with manos, metate fragments, a stone pendant, scrapers, and choppers present. Test excavations in 1960 concluded that the site was a seasonal camp. It is at the southern boundary of the site. Given the grading activities that occurred to build the existing parking lots, it is unlikely that any portion of the site has been preserved.

Resource CA-ORA-131 was recorded in 1963 as a prehistoric site. The site record contains minimal details but states that the resource CA-ORA-131 was destroyed in 1976. The cultural resource site was at the eastern boundary of the project site. Significant grading and filling have taken place in this area to level the land for the library and other development. The grading and filling in the location of CA-ORA-131 makes it improbable that any portion of the site is preserved. The locations of these two known sites are completely developed.

A Sacred Lands File search request was submitted to the NAHC to inquire about the presence/absence of sacred or religious sites in the vicinity of the project area. On January 28, 2016, the NAHC responded that there are no sacred lands within the project area or a half-mile radius.

No paleontological resources are known to exist within the project area. The Capistrano Formation underlies the project area. The closest vertebrate fossil locality is LACM 4166, found nearby in the Capistrano Formation, south of the project area along Crown Valley Parkway and north of the intersection with Paseo del Niguel. LACM 4166 included fossil specimens of bonito shark (*Isurus*), bull shark (*Carcharhinus*), undetermined bony fish (*Osteichthyes*), sea lion (*Otariidae*), and porpoise (*Phocoenidae*).

Farther from the project site, several fossil localities have been found in the Capistrano Formation north of the project area along Alicia Parkway. These included specimens of sea lions, whales (*Cetacea*), and sea cow (*Hydrodamalis cuestae*).

Refer to Sections 5.4, *Cultural Resources*, and 5.6, *Geology and Soils*, for additional information concerning historical, archaeological, and paleontological resources and an analysis of project impacts on such resources.

4.3.6 Geology and Landform

The project area is at the southern portion of the Los Angeles Basin, which is part of the Peninsular Range Geomorphic Province of California. The Peninsular Ranges are traversed by dominant northwest-trending faults, including the San Andreas Fault approximately 54 miles northeast of the project site; Whittier-Elsinore Fault, approximately 21 miles northeast of the site; and Newport-Inglewood Fault, approximately 18 miles west of the site. All three of these faults are classified active. They have had surface displacement within the last 11,000 years, and earthquakes have been recorded along all three faults in historic time. In addition to these active faults, blind thrust faults are thought to be present under the Los Angeles Basin. The Pelican Hills Fault passes approximately 0.5 mile north of the site and is classified potentially active (CGS 2010). There are no active or potentially active fault traces in the City.

The project site is at the bottom of a steep hillside that borders the site's western boundary. As shown in Figure 4-1, *Site Topography*, the terrain is varied throughout the project site. There is a net elevation of 50 feet from the

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low point of approximately 320 feet above mean sea level in the southern corner (site entrance at Crown Valley Parkway) to 370 feet above mean sea level at the top of a small knoll in the northern corner of the site (near Pacific Island Drive/Alicia Parkway intersection). Materials underlying the site are primarily artificial fill and bedrock; the soils of the site generally consist of alo clay and botella clay loam soil components. Bedrock throughout the project area consists of sedimentary deposits of the marine Late Miocene Capistrano Formation. (Orange 2008).

4.3.7 Hydrology

The project site is in the Aliso Creek Watershed, which spans 35 square miles within the South Orange County Water Management Area. The Aliso Creek Watershed is a long, narrow coastal canyon with headwaters in the Cleveland National Forest and encompasses portions of the cities of Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, and Mission Viejo. The creek ultimately discharges into the Pacific Ocean at Aliso Beach.

The west side of the site is bounded by existing 2:1 manufactured slopes, and there are manufactured 2:1 slopes on the easterly side dropping to Alicia Parkway.

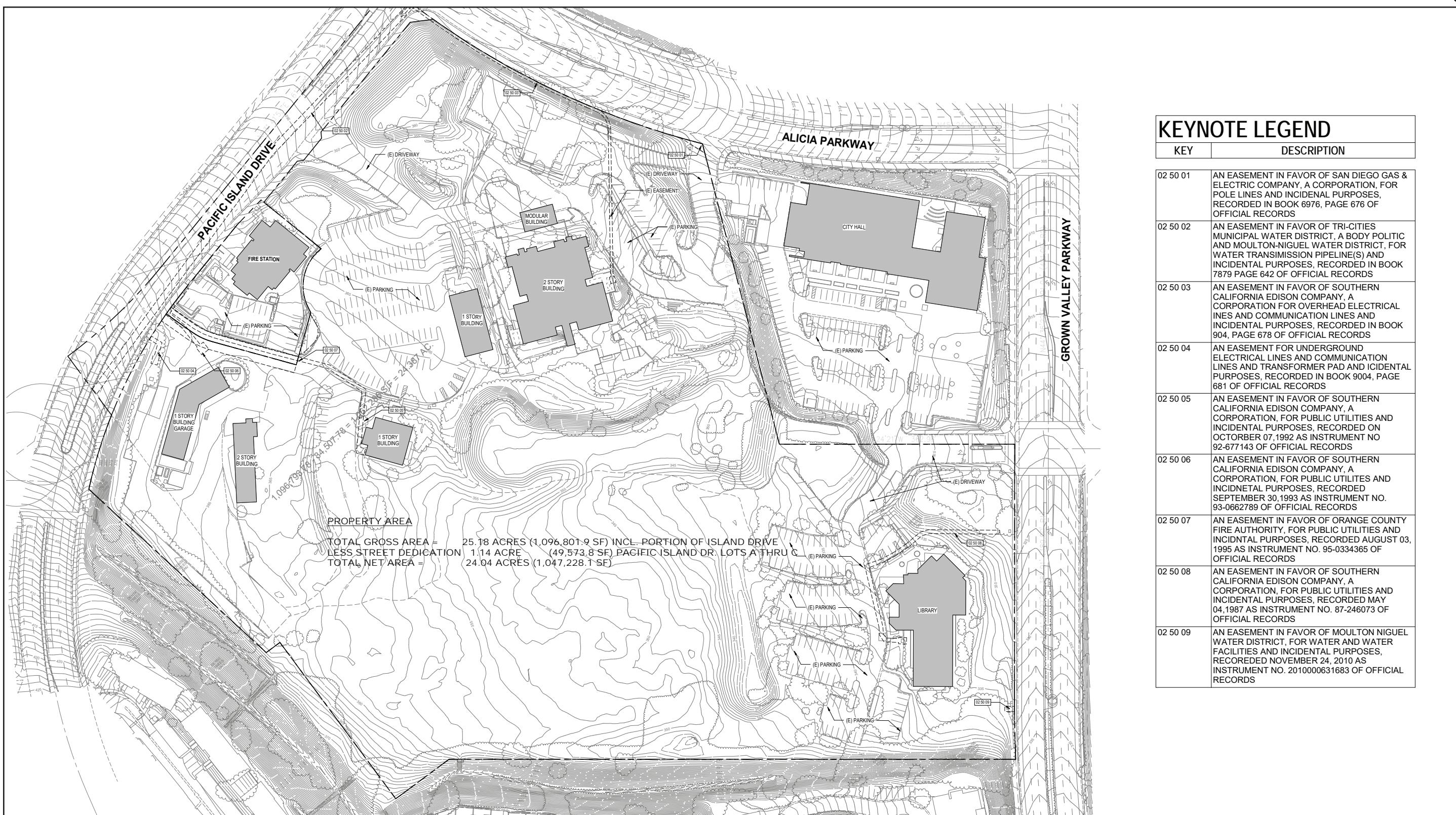
The majority of existing runoff is caught in above-grade drainage inlets throughout the project site and is diverted into the City's storm drain system southeast of the site in Crown Valley Parkway. Under existing conditions, runoff is discharged from the site at three places (see Figure 5.9-1, *Existing Conditions Hydrology Map*):

- Runoff from the bulk of the project site drains to the south. There are several drainage devices and catch basins on the southern portion of the project site that convey collected runoff to an existing 60-inch storm drain running through the property from Pacific Island Drive in the north to Crown Valley Parkway in the southwest. This storm drain is Orange County Flood Control District Facility No. J03P07 and connects off-site to a 96-inch storm drainpipe, which conveys runoff to Sulphur Creek Channel and Sulphur Creek Reservoir.
- Runoff drains via surface flow into Crown Valley Parkway at the drive entrance that serves both the Laguna Niguel Library and Laguna Niguel City Hall. Collected runoff then flows east along Crown Valley Parkway before entering the storm drain system discharging to Sulphur Creek Channel.

Surface runoff from the north end of the site flows north toward Pacific Island Drive. Runoff on Pacific Island Drive flows east toward the intersection with Alicia Parkway, then south along Alicia Parkway toward Crown Valley Parkway.

Historical groundwater depths at the project site range from 5 to 20 feet. During the geotechnical evaluation, groundwater was encountered at depths of approximately 14 to 24.5 feet below the existing site.

Figure 4-1 - Site Topography
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KEYNOTE LEGEND

| KEY | DESCRIPTION |
|----------|---|
| 02 50 01 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY, A CORPORATION, FOR POLE LINES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED IN BOOK 6976, PAGE 676 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 02 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF TRI-CITIES MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT, A BODY POLITIC AND MOULTON-NIGUEL WATER DISTRICT, FOR WATER TRANSMISSION PIPELINE(S) AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED IN BOOK 7879 PAGE 642 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 03 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY, A CORPORATION FOR OVERHEAD ELECTRICALINES AND COMMUNICATION LINES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED IN BOOK 904, PAGE 678 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 04 | AN EASEMENT FOR UNDERGROUND ELECTRICAL LINES AND COMMUNICATION LINES AND TRANSFORMER PAD AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED IN BOOK 9004, PAGE 681 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 05 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY, A CORPORATION, FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED ON OCTOBER 07, 1992 AS INSTRUMENT NO. 92-677143 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 06 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY, A CORPORATION, FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED SEPTEMBER 30, 1993 AS INSTRUMENT NO. 93-0662789 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 07 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY, FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED AUGUST 03, 1995 AS INSTRUMENT NO. 95-0334365 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 08 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY, A CORPORATION, FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED MAY 04, 1987 AS INSTRUMENT NO. 87-246073 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |
| 02 50 09 | AN EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF MOULTON NIGUEL WATER DISTRICT, FOR WATER AND WATER FACILITIES AND INCIDENTAL PURPOSES, RECORDED NOVEMBER 24, 2010 AS INSTRUMENT NO. 2010000631683 OF OFFICIAL RECORDS |

0 150
Scale (Feet)



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4.3.8 Noise

Community noise levels are measured in terms of the “A-weighted decibel” (dBA). A-weighting is a frequency correction that correlates overall sound pressure levels to the frequency response of the human ear. The noise rating scale used in California for land use compatibility assessment is the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL). The CNEL scale represents a time-weighted, 24-hour average noise level based on the A-weighted decibel.

In general, the City is subject to typical urban and suburban noise sources. Noise from traffic flows, commercial and retail centers, temporary construction, property maintenance activities, and day-to-day outdoor activities (e.g., periodic landscaping, children playing, animal sounds) characterizes the City’s noise environments. The City also has several transportation noise sources—the I-5 and SR-73 freeways as well as major arterials such as Crown Valley Parkway, Aliso Creek Road, Niguel Road, Cabot Road, Alicia Parkway, and La Paz Road. There are no notable noise sources related to railroads or aircraft facilities near the project site.

Certain land uses are particularly sensitive to noise and vibration, including schools, residences, hospital facilities, religious facilities, and open space/recreation areas where quiet environments are necessary for the enjoyment, public health, and safety of the community. Commercial and industrial uses are not considered noise- and/or vibration-sensitive uses.

The nearest sensitive uses to the project site include residential uses, a church, and a daycare facility. The nearest residential uses are adjacent to the southwest. The Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church is across the street from the project site, at the corner of Pacific Island Drive and Alicia Parkway. Additional residential uses are across Crown Valley Parkway and Pacific Island Drive.

Refer to Section 5.11, *Noise*, for additional information concerning the noise environment and an analysis of project-related noise impacts.

4.3.9 Transportation

CEQA no longer considers auto delay or traffic congestion a potentially significant environmental impact. The Laguna Niguel General Plan, however, does include level of service (LOS) standards for traffic. The traffic impact analysis (TIA) prepared for the Laguna Niguel City Center project therefore includes an analysis of the areawide roadway network and potential project-related and cumulative impacts of the proposed project on the network. The study determined the existing and projected LOS for 32 area intersections. Pursuant to SB 743 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, the reduction in LOS standards from a project is no longer defined as a valid CEQA impact and VMT is defined as the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. The Laguna Niguel Transportation Assessment Guidelines establish procedures, methodology, and thresholds of significance for assessing VMT impacts. The LOS analysis is presented in the TIA and this EIR for informational purposes.

The proposed project is not in a low VMT area or a transit priority area. Additionally, the proposed project is neither an affordable housing project nor could it be classified as a redevelopment. Most of the proposed project’s land uses do not fall under the locally serving land uses listed in the Transportation Assessment

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Guidelines, and the proposed project exceeds the screening threshold of 50,000 square feet. Thus, the proposed project could not be screened out as a local-serving land use project. Also, since the proposed project's estimated daily trip generation is greater than 500, it does not meet the City's screening criteria for Small Projects and cannot be screened out of VMT analysis. A VMT analysis was prepared for the proposed project. The proposed project's residential and nonresidential components of the project were analyzed separately to identify whether any of the project components would have a significant VMT impact.

The nearest freeways to the project site are SR-73 and I-5. The primary arterials bordering the project site are described below.

- **Crown Valley Parkway** is a six-lane Major Arterial with a speed limit of 45 miles per hour (mph), bike lanes in each direction, and sidewalks on both sides of the street near the study location. It provides access to the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor, or SR-73, via Greenfield Drive, and to the San Diego Freeway (I-5) approximately three miles north of the project site. It also connects to the Pacific Coast Highway (SR-1), approximately three miles south of the project site.
- **Alicia Parkway** is a six-lane Major Arterial with a speed limit of 40 mph, bike lanes in each direction, and sidewalks on both sides of the street near the study location. It provides access to SR-73 via Aliso Creek Road and to I-5 approximately three miles north of the project site. Alicia Parkway terminates at Crown Valley Parkway at the northeast corner of the project site.
- **Pacific Island Drive** is a four-lane Primary Arterial with a speed limit of 45 mph, bike lanes in each direction, and sidewalks on both sides of the street near the study location. North of Alicia Parkway it transitions to a two-lane collector with a center two-way left-turn lane and changes names to Ivy Glenn Drive. There are no bike lanes on Ivy Glenn Drive. To the south, Pacific Island Drive changes names to Camino Del Avion at Crown Valley Parkway, where it continues as a four-lane divided roadway without bike lanes.

Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) provides public transportation along Alicia Parkway and Crown Valley Parkway. The bus stops nearest to the project site are a sheltered bus stop along the east side of Crown Valley Parkway, just north of Alicia Parkway, and an unsheltered bus stop along the west side of Alicia parkway, just south of Pacific Island Drive. The bus routes are:

1. **OCTA Route 85** provides service from Mission Viejo to Laguna Niguel; via Marguerite Parkway to Medical Center Road to Crown Valley Parkway. This route operates from 5:35 am to 10:04 pm, Monday through Friday.
2. **OCTA Route 87:** provides service from Rancho Santa Margarita to Laguna Niguel; via Alicia Parkway. This route operates from 5:59 am to 7:43 pm, Monday through Friday.

There are Class II bike lanes along both sides of Crown Valley Parkway, Alicia Parkway, and Pacific Island Drive. There are also pedestrian sidewalks along both sides of all roadways surrounding the perimeter of the project site.

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Refer to Section 5.12, *Transportation*, for additional information concerning existing transportation facilities and traffic conditions and an analysis of project-related impacts.

4.3.10 Public Services and Utilities

Public Services

Fire Services

The City partners with the OCFA for fire and emergency medical services. Three OCFA fire stations are within the City limits. OCFA Station No. 5 at 23600 Pacific Island Drive is within the proposed project's boundary and provides fire and emergency services to the project site.

Police Services

The City contracts police services from the Orange County Sheriff's Department. The City operates a Sheriff's substation in City Hall, directly southeast of the project site.

School Services

The Capistrano Unified School District provides school services to residents of Laguna Niguel. Future students would attend Moulton Elementary School (K-5) at 29851 Highlands Avenue, Niguel Hills Middle School (6-8) at 29070 Paseo Escuela, and Dana Hills High School (9-12) at 33333 Golden Lantern in Dana Point.

Parks and Recreation Services

Park services are provided by the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Nearby parks to the project site include La Hermosa Park, Crown Valley Community Park, and Niguel Woods Park, approximately 0.8,- 0.7-, and 0.5-mile away, respectively. There are also two regional parks in Laguna Niguel near the project site. Laguna Niguel Regional Park is approximately 1.30 miles away from the project site, and Salt Creek Corridor Regional Park is approximately 1 mile away.

Library Services

The City is a member of the Orange County Public Libraries system, which is a network of community libraries throughout the county. The Laguna Niguel Library is on the project site at 30341 Crown Valley Parkway.

Utilities and Service Systems

Water

Domestic and recycled water services for the project site are provided by the Moulton Niguel Water District (MNWD). Potable water transmission mains are in Alicia Parkway and Crown Valley Parkway.

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Wastewater

MNWD provides sewer service to the City, including the project site. A main sewer line is in Crown Valley Parkway. Wastewater from the MNWD's service area is treated at three South Orange County Wastewater Authority treatment plants as well as the 3A Treatment Plant, which is jointly owned by Santa Margarita Water District and MNWD. Wastewater generated on the project site would be treated at the Regional Treatment Plant on La Paz Road in Laguna Niguel.

Solid Waste

CR&R Environmental Services provides solid waste collection services to the project area. Solid waste is hauled to and disposed at landfills operated by OC Waste and Recycling, primarily at the Prima Deshecha Sanitary Landfill in San Juan Capistrano and the Frank R. Bowerman Sanitary Landfill in Irvine.

Dry Utilities

Southern California Edison (SCE) provides electricity services to the project site, and Southern California Gas Company provides natural gas services to the site.

Sections 5.13, *Public Services*, 5.14, *Recreation*, and 5.17, *Utilities and Service Systems*, provide additional information regarding existing public service, recreation, and utilities conditions. An analysis of project-related impacts is also provided in each section.

4.3.11 General Plan and Zoning

Laguna Niguel General Plan

The Laguna Niguel General Plan land use designations for the site are Community Commercial, Professional Office, and Public/Institutional (see Figure 4-2, *Existing General Plan Land Use Designations*).

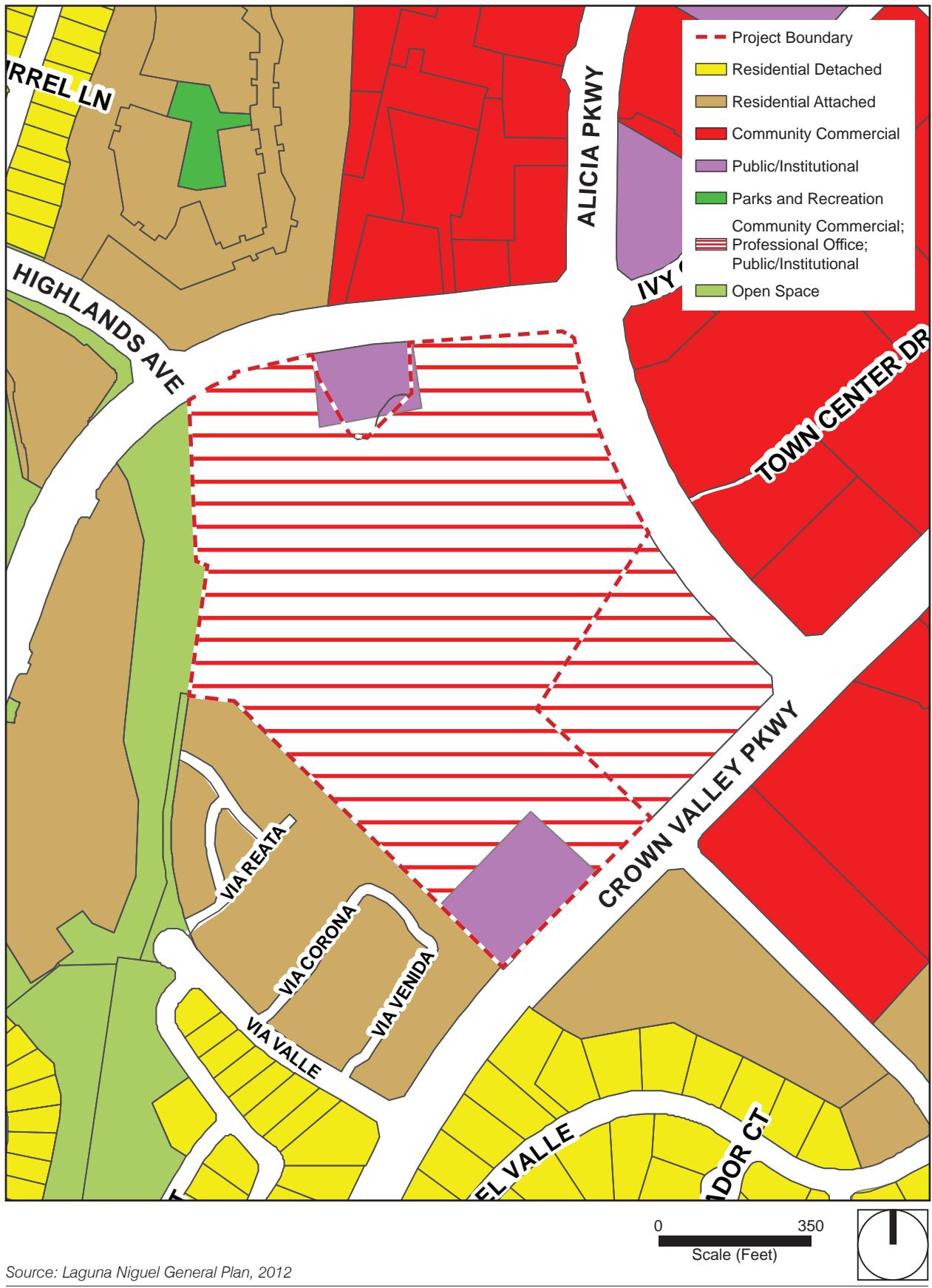
The Community Commercial land use designation encourages development of larger planned commercial centers and shopping complexes with broad ranges of goods and services intended to serve the entire community. The Professional Office designation provides for professional offices, corporate headquarters, research and development, and administrative offices. The Public Institutional designation allows a wide range of public, quasi-public, and special-purpose private facilities that provide a variety of governmental or social services to the community.

Laguna Niguel Zoning Code

The project site is zoned Community Commercial (CC) District. The CC District is intended for medium- and large-scale commercial areas near arterial highways and serving a greater trade area. Goods and services include retail, office, service, lodging, and entertainment uses.

OCFA Station No. 5 and the Orange County Library are located within the project boundary and are zoned Public/Institutional (PI) District. The PI District allows a wide range of public, semipublic, and special-purpose private facilities.

Figure 4-2 - Existing General Plan Land Use Designations
4. Environmental Setting



Source: Laguna Niguel General Plan, 2012

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4.4 ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

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

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

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

The cumulative impact analyses in Chapter 5, *Environmental Analysis*, of this DEIR primarily use Method A. The City compiled a list of cumulative projects for analysis under CEQA. These cumulative projects are listed and numbered in Table 4-1 and mapped on Figure 4-3, *Cumulative Projects Location Map*.

Table 4-1 Cumulative Projects

| No. | Project | Address | Land Use | Dwelling Units (DU) | Non-residential Area (SF) | Other |
|-----|----------------------------|---|--|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | The Cove at El Niguel | 30667 Crown Valley Parkway City of Laguna Niguel | Condominiums | 22 | - | - |
| 2 | Sunpointe | Southeast corner of Paseo De Colinas and Cabot Road City of Laguna Niguel | Single-Family | 53 | - | - |
| 3 | Senior Living Project | 27762 Forbes Road City of Laguna Niguel | Senior Adult Assisted Living Continuing Care | 35 44 32 | - | - |
| 4 | Picerne Apartments | Northeast corner of Crown Valley Parkway at Cabot Road City of Laguna Niguel | Apartments | 425 | - | - |
| 5 | Forbes Road Apartment | Northeast corner of Crown Valley Parkway at Forbes Road City of Laguna Niguel | Apartments Retail | 300 - | 8742 | - |
| 6 | River Street Development | Northeast corner of Paseo Adelanto and Del Obispo Street City of San Juan Capistrano | Commercial | - | 64,900 | - |
| 7 | San Juan Hills High School | West of La Pata Avenue City of San Juan Capistrano | Public High School | - | - | 2,200 Students |

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Table 4-1 Cumulative Projects

| No. | Project | Address | Land Use | Dwelling Units (DU) | Non-residential Area (SF) | Other |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 8 | J. Serra Catholic High School | North and South of J. Serra Road, west of I-5 City of San Juan Capistrano | Private high School | - | - | 2,000 Students |
| 9 | Pacifica San Juan | East of I-5 extending from McCracken Hill south to Camino Las Ramblas City of San Juan Capistrano | Estates Single-Family Condominiums | 23 311 82 | - | - |
| 10 | Plaza Banderas | Northeast corner of El Camino Real & State Route 74 City of San Juan Capistrano | Hotel Restaurant | - | 3,898 | 124 Rooms - |
| 11 | Distrito La Novia - San Juan Meadows | North and south sides of La Novia Avenue, east of Valle Road City of San Juan Capistrano | Retail General Office Building Condominiums Apartments Single-Family Horse Equestrian Center | - - 90 50 93 - | 75,100 16,000 - - - - | - - - - - 500 Horses |
| 12 | LDS Church | North side of Vista Montana, west of La Pata Avenue City of San Juan Capistrano | Church | - | 16,558 | - |
| 13 | The Farm Specific Plan | 32382 Del Obispo Street City of San Juan Capistrano | Single-Family | 180 | - | - |
| 14 | Tirador Residential Project | Terminus of Calle Arroyo City of San Juan Capistrano | Townhomes Single-Family | 89 47 | - | - |
| 15 | Proposed Drive Through Coffee Shop | 32291 Camino Capistrano City of San Juan Capistrano | Coffee Shop | - | 2,000 | - |
| 16 | Ganahl Lumber | North of Stonehill Drive, adjacent to San Juan Creek | Fast-Food Coffee Shop Car Storage | - | 5,040 1,710 | 622 Spaces |
| 17 | Downtown Playhouse | Southeast corner of Ortega Highway and El Camino Real City of San Juan Capistrano | Theater Commercial Office | - | 18,828 31,385 3,268 | - |
| 18 | Mission Grill | 31721 Camino Capistrano City of San Juan Capistrano | Restaurant Retail Office | - | 4,750 4,750 7,500 | - |
| 19 | St. Edwards Pastoral Center | 33926 Calle La Primavera City of Dana Point | Church Expansion | - | 11,463 | - |
| 20 | Headlands Specific Plan | Dana Point Marine Life Refuge City of Dana Point | Single-Family Hotel Commercial Hostel Conservation Park Open Space | 40 - - - - - | - - 35,000 - - - | 90 Rooms - 40 Beds 28 Acres 41 Acres |
| 21 | Dana Point Harbor Revitalization | Dana Point Harbor City of Dana Point | Retail/Restaurant Parking Deck | - | 25,000 - | 610 Spaces |
| 22 | Doheny Plaza | 34202 Del Obispo Street City of Dana Point | Condominiums Commercial | 169 - | 2,500 | - |

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Table 4-1 Cumulative Projects

| No. | Project | Address | Land Use | Dwelling Units (DU) | Non-residential Area (SF) | Other |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--|---|---------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| 23 | Dana Point Town Center | South side of Pacific Coast Highway, between Blue Lantern Street and Del Obispo Street City of Dana Point | Retail/Restaurant Office Institutional Residential | - - - 237 | 192,165 31,244 50,000 - | - |
| 24 | Orion Public Storage | 4 Orion City of Aliso Viejo | Storage Facility | - | 17,528 | - |
| 25 | The Ranch | 100 Park Avenue City of Aliso Viejo | Community Facility | - | 16,000 | - |
| 26 | Polaris Office Building | 6 Polaris City of Aliso Viejo | Office Parking Structure | - | 42,400 - | 423 Spaces |
| 27 | Soka University Residence Halls | Soka University City of Aliso Viejo | Student Dormitory | 102 | - | - |
| 28 | Oakbrook Village | Avenida de la Carlota, north of Los Alisos Boulevard City of Laguna Hills | Retail Multi-Family | - 289 | 139,000 - | - |
| 29 | Activcare | 24888 Alicia Parkway City of Laguna Hills | Elderly Care Housing | - | - | 72 Beds |
| 30 | MNWD Facility Expansion | 26161 Gordon Road City of Laguna Hills | Community/Private Institution | - | 64,000 | - |
| 31 | Five Laguna | Laguna Hills Mall City of Laguna Hills | Mall Medical Office Apartments | - - 988 | 843,706 45,890 - | - |
| Total | | | | 3,701 | 1,780,325 | - |

Source: LLG 2019.

Cumulative impact analyses for several topical sections are also based on the most appropriate geographic boundaries for the respective impact. For example, cumulative hydrological impacts are based on the area's watershed (Aliso Creek Watershed), and wastewater impacts are based on the Moulton Niguel Water District's service boundary, which includes other jurisdictions in addition to Laguna Niguel. Several potential cumulative impacts encompassing regional boundaries (e.g., traffic, air quality, greenhouse gases) are addressed in the context of the growth assumptions in various regional plans. Following is a summary of the approach and extent of cumulative impacts, which are further detailed in each topical environmental section.

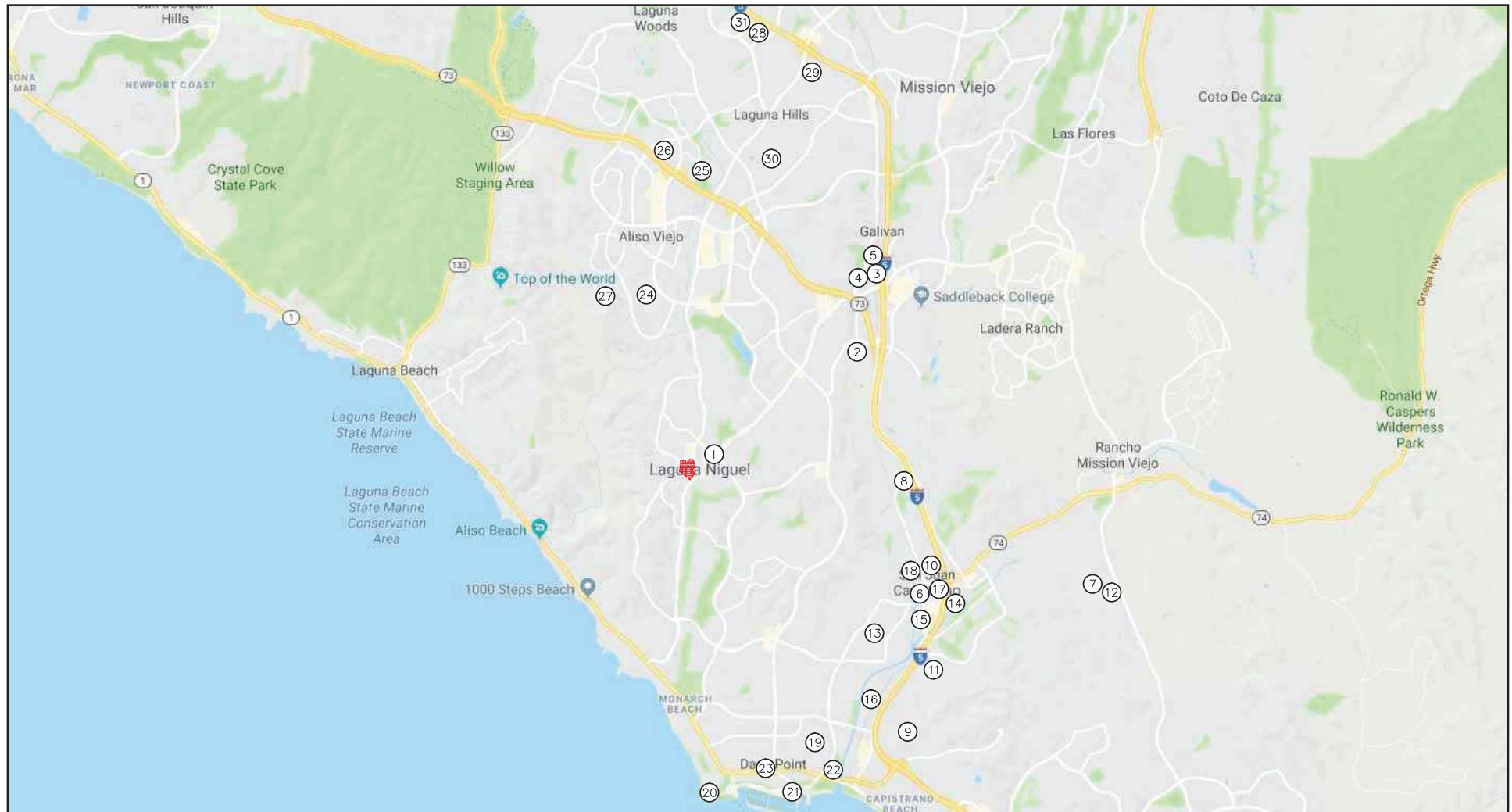
- **Aesthetics.** Cumulative impacts consider the potential for the project and related projects in the same visual area to impact scenic resources in the City, including scenic viewsheds and landforms, open space, assessment of area-wide vistas, and coastal view roads. The aesthetic analysis also considers cumulative compliance with City plans, programs, and regulations governing scenic resources.
- **Air Quality.** Air quality impacts are both regional impacts and localized impacts. For cumulative impacts, the analysis is based on the regional boundaries of the South Coast Air Basin.

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- **Biological Resources.** Cumulative impacts consider potential impacts to sensitive habitat, protected species, and jurisdictional resources on a regional scale.
- **Cultural Resources.** Cumulative impacts consider the potential for the proposed project in conjunction with other past, present, and foreseeable future development projects to result in cumulative impacts on cultural resources in the area within a one-half-mile radius from the project site boundaries for historical, archaeological, and paleontological resources, as well as the project's contribution to existing cumulative impacts to cultural resources in this area.
- **Energy.** The cumulative impact for electricity is based on the Southern California Edison service area. Cumulative impacts associated with the use of natural gas is based on the Southern California Gas Company service area. Cumulative impacts for fuel usage, gasoline and diesel fuels, are based on use within the County.
- **Geology and Soils.** Geologic and soils impacts are site specific and generally do not combine to result in cumulative impacts.
- **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions.** GHG emissions impacts are not site-specific impacts but cumulative global impacts. Therefore, the analysis in Section 5.5 is the project's cumulative contribution to global climate change.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** The cumulative impact for hazards and hazardous materials is based on the project site and immediate surrounding area. The Orange County's Environmental Health Division is the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for Laguna Niguel.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality.** Cumulative hydrological and water quality impacts are based on the boundaries of the Aliso Creek Watershed.
- **Land Use and Planning.** Cumulative impacts are based on applicable jurisdictional boundaries and related plans, including the Laguna Niguel General Plan and regional land use plans (e.g., SCAG's RTP/SCS).
- **Noise.** Cumulative noise impacts are based on the traffic study, which considers the regional growth based on citywide and regional projections.
- **Population and Housing.** Cumulative impacts are based on regional demographic patterns identified in regional plans (e.g., SCAG's RTP/SCS).
- **Public Services.** Cumulative impacts are based on potential related development within each service provider's boundaries—Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Sheriff's Department, Capistrano Unified School District, and Orange County Public Library.

Recreation. Cumulative impacts are assessed relative to the City standards and are based on impacts within the City's boundaries.

Figure 4-3 - Cumulative Projects Location Map
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KEY
= CUMULATIVE PROJECT LOCATION
= PROJECT SITE

0 2
Scale (Miles)



Source: Linscott, Law & Greenspan Engineers, 2019

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- **Transportation.** Cumulative VMT impacts consider the impacts of future growth and development in the City of Laguna Niguel and vicinity on the roadway system serving the area.
- **Tribal Cultural Resources.** Cumulative impacts related to tribal cultural resources are based on the local Native American tribes' culturally significant areas, which include, but are not limited to, cultural landscapes and regions to specific heritage sites and other tribal cultural places.
- **Utilities and Service Systems.** Water supply and distribution systems and wastewater treatment and conveyance system cumulative impacts would be contiguous with the Moulton Niguel Water District service area. Storm drainage systems would be contiguous with the Aliso Creek Watershed. Solid waste collection and disposal services would be contiguous with the OC Waste & Recycling service area. Natural gas and electricity services would be contiguous with the Southern California Gas Company and Southern California Edison service areas.
- **Wildfire.** Contiguous with the service area boundaries of the Orange County Fire Authority, CAL FIRE, and the US Forest Service.

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