

CEQA Process Overview

The Environmental Review Process

Cities and counties weigh a variety of factors when deciding whether to approve a proposed land use or other project. One such factor is what kind of effect a project would have on the environment. The term “environment” includes natural and man-made elements of our surroundings. This includes land, air, water, minerals, plants, animals and noise. It also includes things like historic buildings.

Determining the Level of Environmental Review

If a project is not exempt from environmental review, the next step is to prepare an initial study. If the initial study shows that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, the next step is to prepare the more extensive environmental impact report. For the Escondido Country Club – The Villages Project submittal, the report prepared can be referred to by the initials “EIR.”

“Environmental Impact Reports”

An EIR is a detailed analysis of a proposed project’s potentially significant effect on the environment. An EIR is an extensive environmental document, which contains a number of different items.

- It describes the proposed project. The EIR must include 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.
- All phases of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment: planning, acquisition, development, and operation.
- It identifies and analyzes each significant environmental impact expected to result from the proposed project. Direct and indirect significant effects of the project on the environment shall be clearly identified and described, giving due consideration to both the short-term and long-term effects.
- The report also recommends steps to avoid or minimize those impacts. These actions are called “mitigation measures.” Mitigation measures must be fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally binding instruments.
- The EIR must also identify all significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided with the proposed project.
- Alternative project options are considered in an EIR, including the option of “no project.”

The next series of board will help facilitate your understanding of the draft EIR’s findings for the Escondido Country Club – The Villages Project submittal.

Impact on the Decision-Making Process

EIRs DO NOT advocate either approval or denial of a project.

The information from the environmental review process helps decision-makers decide whether to approve a project. Public input is an important component to the decision-making process.

Evaluating Information in the CEQA Process

Decision-makers receive lots of information through the EIR process.

What EIRs do:

1. Enhances public participation and provides the public with more information about the project.
2. Helps decision-making bodies understand and consider all environmental factors.
3. Helps prevent or minimize environmental damage.

What EIRs do not do:

1. Allow decisions to be made “behind closed doors”
2. Makes public participation ineffective.
3. Disregards environmental factors.

Project Description

The proposed project consists of a General Plan Amendment to the Land Use Element, Zone Change, a Specific Plan, and Tentative Map for development of 392 single-family dwelling units, new clubhouse, community farm and open space system. The existing land use map and zoning designation for the 109-acre site allows for single-family development. A General Plan amendment and Zone change request supports the creation of a specific plan for this area which establishes detailed policies and tailored regulations that account for the unique nature of the site and surrounding community. The new land uses proposed for the Villages Specific Plan Area include three single-family residential villages; a 48-acre open space system; and a clubhouse area with recreational, social and farm amenities, described as follows:

Single-Family Residential Villages:

Village 1: located north of W. Country Club Lane, is generally bounded by Golden Circle Drive, Pamela Lane, David Drive, Gary Lane and W. Country Club Lane, will contain 155 homes. Primary access will be from W. Country Club Lane at the location of the current clubhouse and from Gary Lane.

Village 2: located north of W. Country Club Lane, is generally bounded by Gary Lane, David Drive, Calle Redonda Lane, Wren Glen, Nutmeg Street and W. Country Club Lane, will contain 91 homes. One of the two neighborhoods of Village 2 will have primary access from Gary Lane and from an extension of La Brea Street north of W. Country Club Lane; with the second neighborhood gaining access from another point along W. Country Club Lane.

Village 3: located south of W. Country Club Lane, is generally bounded by Firestone Drive, Cortez Avenue, La Brea Street, La Mirada Avenue and Nutmeg Avenue, will contain 146 homes. The two neighborhoods of Village 3 will have access from W. Country Club Lane and La Brea Street.

Open Space:

44% of the project site will be preserved as permanent open space. The 48-acre Open Space System will 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 clean stormwater from the project site. The Greenbelt will have a series of neighborhood parks along an approximately 4-mile long trail system.

Clubhouse Area and Amenities:

A new clubhouse will replace the former clubhouse. The Clubhouse area's recreational amenities will include a swimming pool and gym facility. Social amenities include restaurant and bar, banquet facilities and event courtyard, meeting room, and events lawn with a small concert/performance facility. Farm amenities include a professionally managed community Farm, which will supply produce to the restaurant and to the neighborhood market for sale to nearby residents. Access to the Clubhouse is from the W. Country Club Lane intersection with Golden Circle Drive.

Infrastructure:

The proposed new land uses are either replacing existing facilities with existing infrastructure or are surrounded by existing development with existing infrastructure. No extensions or expansion of infrastructure systems will need to be made, only connections to existing infrastructure systems.

Existing infrastructure consists of vehicular access and circulation, water, sewer, drainage and dry utilities that include gas, electricity and telecommunications. Vehicular access to the entrances to each Village is from existing public streets. A majority of the interior streets within each Village will be public streets, with the exception of private driveways sharing access to one of the housing types and within the common ownership lots. New residences will be connected to the adjacent existing water distribution system and sewage collection systems owned and maintained by the City of Escondido or Rincon Del Diablo Municipal Water District. Existing drainage infrastructure will be redesigned and maintained to conform to current Regional Water Quality Control Board and City of Escondido stormwater retention and treatment standards.

Off-site Improvements:

The following off-site improvements are included in the project:

Street improvements consisting of traffic calming on W. Country Club Lane, widening of N. Nutmeg St, widening of Country Club Lane at El Norte Parkway, installation of Adaptive Signalization along El Norte Parkway as well as adding an additional lane to the Southbound I-15 On-Ramp. These improvements are proposed to encourage and/or increase multi-modal activity, mitigate traffic impacts and enhance public safety.

Improvements to public streets to create street intersections will be made at the primary entrances to each Village.

Connections to existing public utilities and drainage courses may need to be constructed within public street rights-of-way or easements.

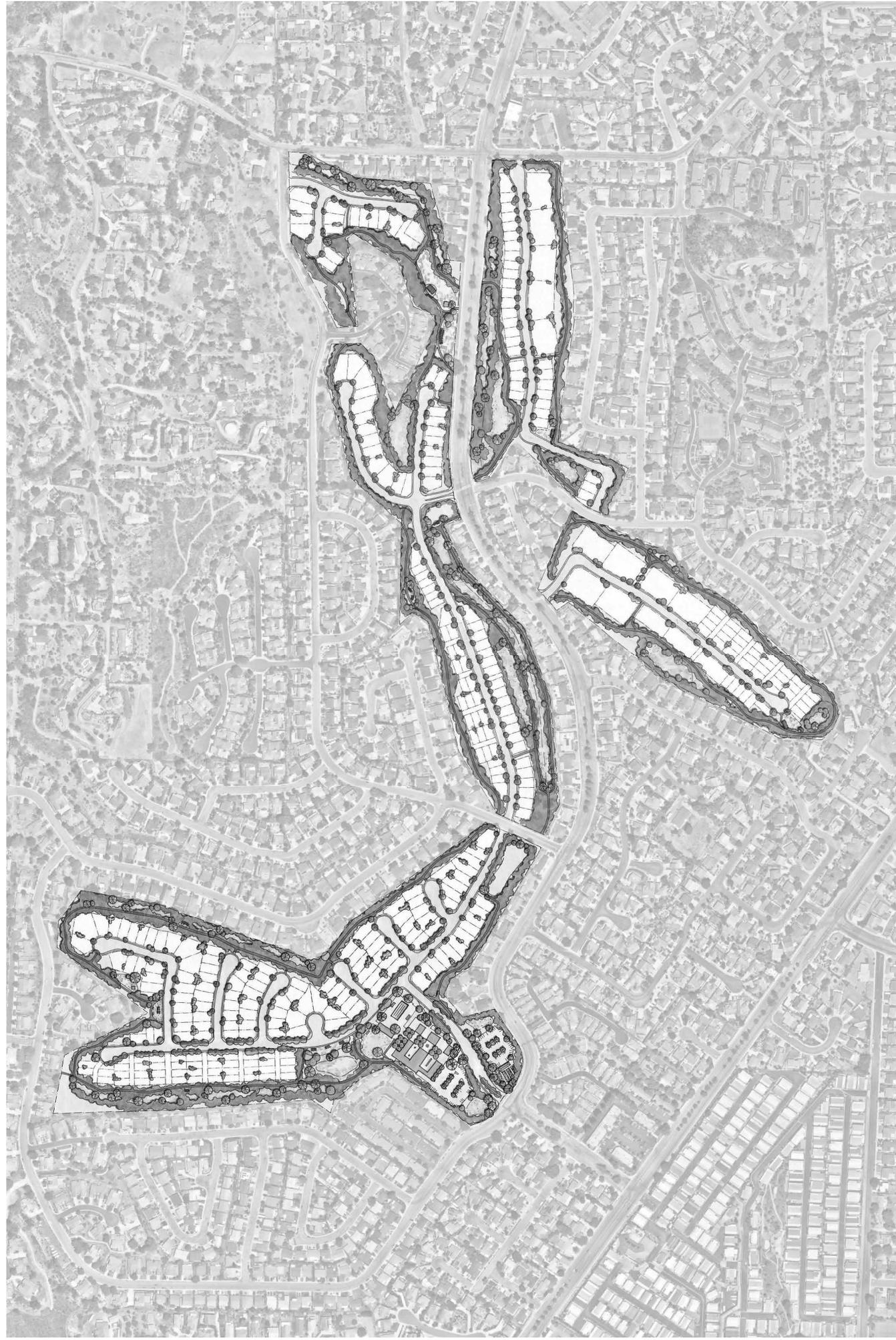
Project Objectives

The EIR provides a discussion of the Project purpose and objectives. The following objectives of the Project are identified in the EIR:

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.

These objectives helped the City in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to be evaluated

Overall Project Site Plan



Scoping Topics

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed on January 25, 2017, for public review and comment. Areas of controversy included the following:

- Aesthetic impacts of grading steep slopes
- Air quality
- Biological resources impacts
- Cultural resources impacts
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Potential of hazardous materials
- Land use—community character, inconsistency with the General Plan, inconsistency with
- LAFCO policies on open space and agriculture
- Noise generation
- Traffic on Country Club Lane and SR-78
- Wildfire—lack of fire and emergency services, and adequacy of evacuation

Project Impacts Summary

Less Than Significant- No Mitigation Required	Less Than Significant WITH Mitigation¹	Significant and Unavoidable²
Aesthetics	Air Quality	Transportation and Traffic
Agricultural Resources	Biological Resources	
Energy	Cultural Resources	
Geology and Soils	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	
Hydrology and Water Quality	Hazards and Hazardous Materials	
Land Use	Noise	
Mineral Resources		
Population and Housing		
Public Services		
Recreation		
Utilities		

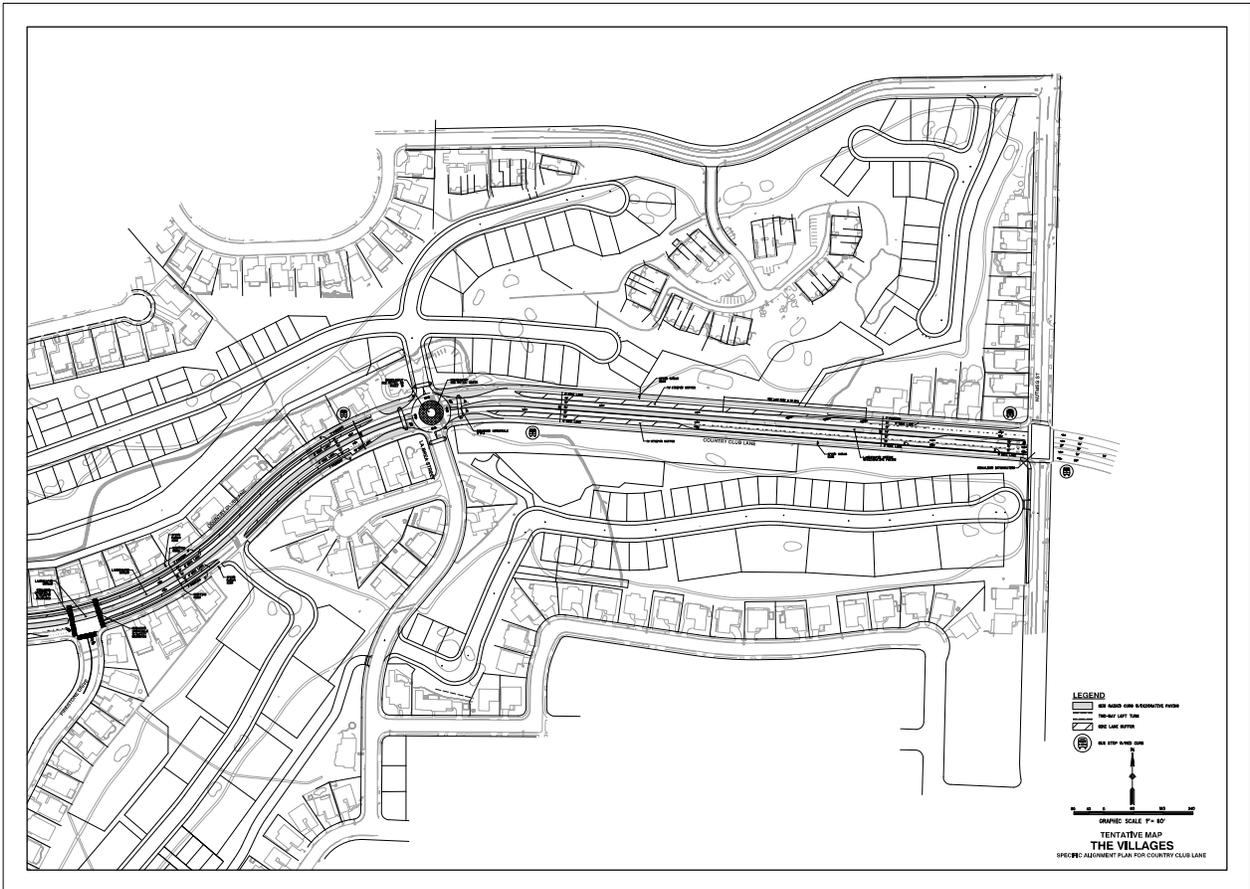
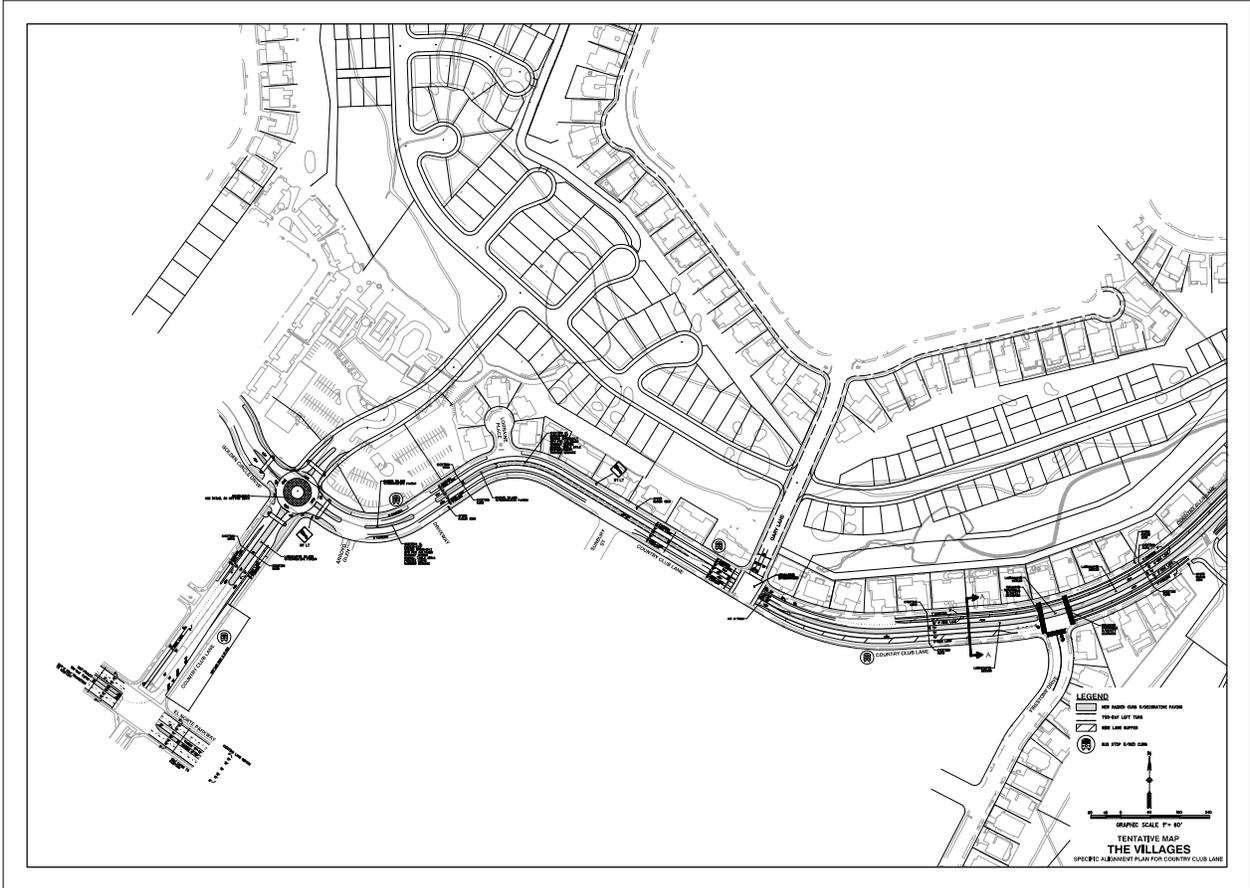
¹ This significance determination means that mitigation measures were applied in order to reduce the project's effect to less than significant.

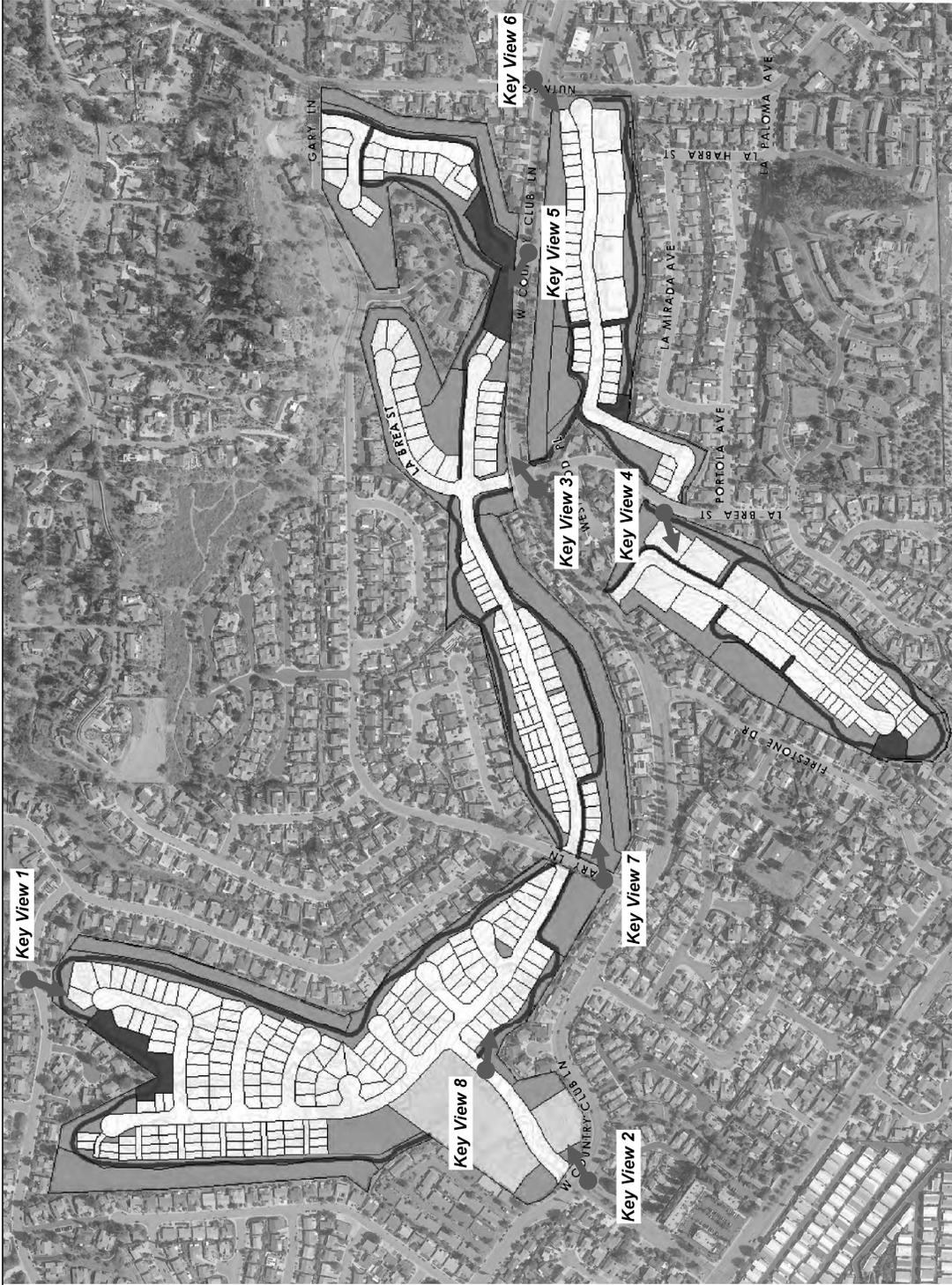
² This significance determination means that a potentially significant impact as result of the project could not be reduced even with the application of mitigation measures.

DEIR Environmental Analysis

A summary list of project impacts and mitigation measures is provided in Table S-1, Chapter S, Summary, of the Draft EIR. Most of the potentially significant effects identified can be eliminated or reduced with mitigation measures. As noted above one traffic impact was determined to be significant and unavoidable, which was the long-term cumulative impact at the El Norte Parkway/Nutmeg Street/Nordahl Road intersection (Intersection #12). Although there is feasible mitigation proposed, which is likely to be implemented, the mitigation is located within the jurisdiction of the State of California (Caltrans), and neither the applicant nor the City of Escondido can assure Caltrans approval at this time.

Details about these potentially significant effects and proposed mitigation measures to address these impacts can be found in Chapter 2.0, Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project, of the Draft EIR.





SOURCE: DUEK (2017)

The Villages - Escondido Country Club EIR

FIGURE 3.1.1-1
Key View Locations

Alternatives Considered in the Villages EIR:

1. No Project/No Development
2. Reduced Density Alternatives (138 and 159 Units)
3. Reduced Density Alternative (279 Units)

The Project is proposing a specific plan, which allows for tailored standards and criteria by which future development in the planning area will proceed. Therefore, the EIR also compares the Project (with specific Plan) with would happen if the City’s land use plans and rules did not change (i.e. no specific plan). The EIR provides important information to the public and decision-makers about project alternatives that will help in making decisions about this Project.

Alternatives Comparison Summary Table

Issue Areas with Potentially Significant Impacts	Project	Alternatives Considered		
		1	2	3
		No Project/ No Development	Reduced-Density Alternatives (158 and 138 Units)	Reduced-Density Alternative (279 Units)
Air Quality	LTS	▼	▼	▼
Biological Resources	LTS	▼	—	—
Cultural Resources	LTS	▼	—	—
Noise	LTS	▼	▼	▼
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	LTS	▼	—	—
Transportation and Traffic	SU	▼	▼	▼

▲ Alternative is likely to result in greater impacts to issue when compared to Project.

— Alternative is likely to result in similar impacts to issue when compared to Project.

▼ Alternative is likely to result in reduced impacts to issue when compared to Project.

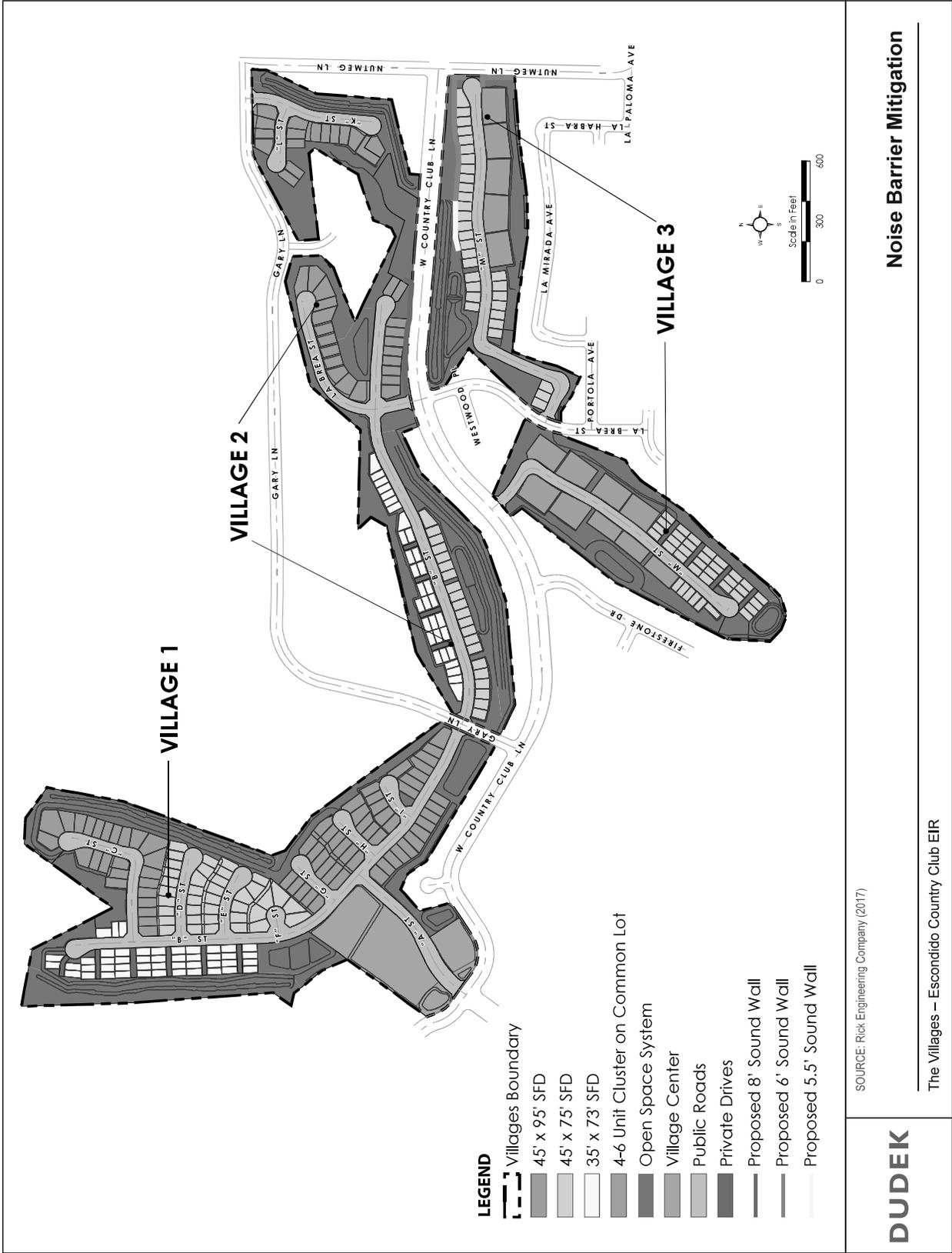
NS Not a potentially significant impact

LTS Less than Significant with mitigation measures

SU Potentially significant and unavoidable impact

Comparison of Alternatives Relative to Project Objectives

Objectives	No Project/No Development Alternative	Two Reduced-Density Alternatives (158/138 Units)	Reduced-Density Alternative (279 Units)
1. Eliminate the blighted condition of the current Project site and abate hazards to public health and safety.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current blighted condition.	YES: Redevelopment of the site would still occur under this alternative.	YES: Redevelopment of the site would still occur under this alternative.
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.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition; therefore, no housing would be built.	PARTIAL: This alternative would increase housing stock; however all residential lots would be a minimum of 7,000 sf in size, therefore, a range of housing types and densities would not be provided.	YES: Residential lots would range in size from 5,000 square feet to 7,000 square feet.
3. Provide a variety of housing types and designs within interrelated villages located adjacent to an existing, established residential community.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition and no housing would be provided.	NO: These alternatives would have one large lot size (7,000 square feet) across the entire Project site, and would not provide a wide range of lot sizes, clustered lots, or a diverse range of housing opportunities within interrelated villages similar to the Project.	NO: This alternative would only have three lot sizes across the entire Project site, and would not provide a wide range of lot sizes, clustered lots, or a diverse range of housing opportunities within interrelated villages similar to the Project.
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.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition; therefore, no open space system would be implemented.	PARTIAL: While some passive open space would be provided, it would not include active recreational facilities.	PARTIAL: While some passive open space would be provided, it would not include active recreational facilities.
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.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition; therefore, no community facilities and recreational facilities would be provided.	NO: These alternatives do not include a trail, recreation center, event law, community farm, restaurant, or banquet space.	NO: This alternative does not include a trail, recreation center, event law, community farm, restaurant, or banquet space.
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.	NO: This alternative would not include a SAP.	NO: This alternative would not include a SAP.	YES: Redevelopment of the site would still occur under this alternative.
7. Protect privacy of existing residents by providing a landscaped buffer between all new and existing homes.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition; therefore, no landscape buffer would be provided.	PARTIAL: Some passive open space would be provided, but the landscaping including trees and shrubs would not be to the level provided by the Project.	YES: Residential lots would range in size from 5,000 square feet to 7,000 square feet.
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 distinct single-family villages or neighborhoods to maintain site topography, protect natural resources, and avoid hazards consistent with the City's land use goals.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition; therefore no development would occur and no sustainable design measures would be implemented.	PARTIAL: Sustainable design measures would be included as part of these alternatives but not to the level provided by the Project. These alternatives would not cluster residential in villages or neighborhoods although they would maintain site topography and protect natural resources.	NO: This alternative would only have three lot sizes across the entire Project site, and would not provide a wide range of lot sizes, clustered lots, or a diverse range of housing opportunities within interrelated villages similar to the Project.
9. Implement timely public facilities within existing service areas without burden or cost to existing residents, visitors, or North County incorporated and unincorporated communities.	NO: The Project site would remain in its current condition and no public facilities would be needed or provided.	YES: Public facilities would be implemented in a timely manner without burden or cost to existing residences.	PARTIAL: While some passive open space would be provided, it would not include active recreational facilities.
Conclusion	This alternative would not meet any of the project objectives.	These alternatives would not meet Project objectives 3, 5, and 6 and would only partially achieve Project objectives 2, 4, 7, and 8.	NO: This alternative does not include a trail, recreation center, event law, community farm, restaurant, or banquet space.



SOURCE: Rick Engineering Company (2017)

DUDEK

Noise Barrier Mitigation

The Villages - Escondido Country Club EIR

Jurisdiction	Location	Mitigation Measure	Mitigated to Below a Level of Significance?
Intersections			
Escondido/ San Marcos	#8. El Norte Parkway/ Woodland Parkway (TRA-1/ TRA-8)	Restripe the WB approach to provide the following geometry: 1 left-turn lane, 2 through lanes, 1 right-turn lane & bike lane. Restripe eastbound departure lanes. Modify signal equipment.	Yes
Escondido	#9. El Norte Parkway / Country Club Lane (TRA-2/ TRA-9)	Restripe a second EB left-turn lane and reconstruct existing raised median to accommodate additional lane. Modify EB thru lane striping. Restripe eastbound departure lanes. Modify signal equipment. Provide corresponding receiving lanes on north leg of intersection.	Yes
Escondido	#12. El Norte Parkway / Nutmeg Street / Nordahl Road (TRA-6/ TRA-10)	Restripe the SB approach to provide the following geometry: 1 shared through/right-turn lane, 2 left-turn lanes & bike lane. Modify median striping and signal equipment.	Yes
Street Segments			
Escondido	10. El Norte Parkway: Nutmeg Street to I-15 SB Ramps (TRA-3)	Revise and enhance the right-turn/ right edgeline/turn-lane striping serving the commercial uses between Bourbon Road and the I-15 southbound ramps. Restrict NB left-turns from Bourbon Road with striping and signage. Permit EB to WB U-turns at the El Norte Parkway / I-15 NB ramps intersection. Additionally, construction of improvements to the El Norte Parkway/ Nutmeg Street/ Nordahl Road intersection and the I-15 SB on-ramp would improve operations on this segment.	Yes
Escondido	15. Nutmeg Street: Country Club Lane to Via Alexandra (TRA-4)	Widening of the southbound lane from La Paloma Avenue to Via Alexandra, along with the provision of curb, gutter and sidewalk improvements to the satisfaction of the City Engineer, will enhance the local segment and overall Nutmeg Street corridor operations. Additionally, improvements to the El Norte Parkway/ Nutmeg Street/ Nordahl Road intersection will also improve the overall corridor operations.	Yes
Escondido	17. Bennett Avenue: El Norte Parkway to Toyon Glen (TRA-7)	Remove intermittent left-turn pockets and restripe with a two-way left-turn lane between El Norte Parkway and Toyon Glen.	Yes
Ramp Meters			
Caltrans	El Norte Parkway to I-15 southbound on-ramp (TRA-5/ TRA-11)	Provide an additional SOV lane to the southbound on ramp	No ^a

a. This mitigation relies on the Caltrans allowing the proposed mitigation measure to be completed, which is not assured. In this case, the impact is not considered mitigated to below a level of significance.