CEQA FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN UPDATE (ONE VALLEY ONE VISION)

Los Angeles County Project No. R2007-01226-(5)
consisting of:
Plan Amendment No. 2009-00006-(5)
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County of Los Angeles, Regional Planning Commission

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CEQA FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN UPDATE (ONE VALLEY ONE VISION)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The Regional Planning Commission ("Commission") of the County of Los Angeles ("County") hereby certifies that the Commission has reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report ("EIR"), identified below, for the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan Update ("proposed Area Plan"). The Commission finds that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code §§21000 *et seq.*; the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, §§15000 *et seq*. ("CEQA Guidelines"); and, the County's Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines. The Commission also finds that the Final EIR reflects the independent judgment of the Commission. In finding the Final EIR as adequate under CEQA, the Commission hereby adopts these "CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan Update (One Valley One Vision)." The Commision recommends that the County Board of Supervisors (the "Board") certify the Final EIR pursuant to CEQA in its consideration of the proposed Area Plan. The Commission also recommends that the Board also adopt these "CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan Update (One Valley One Vision)."

The proposed Area Plan is a component of the County General Plan and is intended to provide focused goals, policies, and maps to guide the regulation of development within the unincorporated portions of the Santa Clarita Valley ("Valley"). This updated Area Plan replaces in its entirety the Area Plan adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on February 16, 1984, and subsequently updated on December 6, 1990, which had previously served as the basic planning tool for the unincorporated portions of the Valley. This Area Plan is intended to serve as a long-term blueprint for development over the next approximately 20-year planning period, except where specific policies set forth in the Plan address other target dates.

The proposed Area Plan's potentially significant environmental effects were identified and analyzed in the Draft EIR (September 2009), Revised Draft EIR (November 2010), and Final EIR (September 2011) (collectively, "Final EIR").

Public Resources Code Section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 require that a public agency prepare written findings for identified significant impacts, accompanied by a brief explanation of the rationale for each finding. Specifically, CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 states, in part, that:

(a) No public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been certified which identifies one or more significant environmental effects of the project unless the public agency makes one or more written findings for each of those significant effects accompanied by a brief explanation of the rationale for each finding. The possible findings are:

(1) Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects as identified in the final EIR.

(2) Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency.

(3) Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the final EIR.

If significant impacts cannot be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level, the decision-making agency is required to balance, as applicable, the benefits of the project against its significant unavoidable environmental impacts when determining whether to approve the project. (Pub. Resources Code, §21081; CEQA Guidelines, §15093.) If the benefits of a project outweigh the significant unavoidable adverse environmental impacts, the adverse effects may be considered "acceptable" with adoption of a statement of overriding considerations. (Pub. Resources Code, §21081, subd. (b); CEQA Guidelines, §15093.)

The Final EIR for the proposed Area Plan identified potentially significant effects. However, the Commission finds that the inclusion of certain specified mitigation measures as part of the adoption of the proposed Area Plan will reduce most, but not all, of those effects to less-than-significant levels. Those impacts, which are not reduced to less-than-significant levels, are identified and overridden due to specific benefits of the proposed Area Plan. (*See* **Section 8.0, Statement of Overriding Considerations**, below). Therefore, in accordance with CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, §21081; CEQA Guidelines, §§15091-15092), the Commission recommends that the County Board of Supervisors (the "Board") certify the Final EIR pursuant to CEQA in its consideration of the proposed Area Plan, and adopt these findings, the statement of overriding considerations, and the attached Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program ("MMRP"), and recommends that the Board adopt the proposed Area Plan.

1.2 Organization and Format of Findings

Section 1.0 contains a summary description of the proposed Area Plan and background facts relative to the environmental review process. **Section 2.0** identifies the significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level (even with all feasible mitigation measures having been identified and incorporated into the proposed Area Plan), while **Section 3.0** identifies the potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan that would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level with implementation of the identified mitigation measures. **Section 4.0** identifies the proposed Area Plan's potential environmental impacts that were determined not to be significant. **Section 5.0** discusses the feasibility of the proposed Area Plan alternatives, and **Section 6.0** presents the statement of overriding considerations.

1.3 SUMMARY OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Area Plan is part of One Valley One Vision ("OVOV"), a joint planning effort between the County, City of Santa Clarita ("City"), and Valley residents and businesses to create a single vision and set of guidelines for the future growth of the Valley and preservation of natural resources. The OVOV Planning Area combines two geographical areas, the unincorporated area of the County within the Valley and the City's corporate limits. The OVOV Planning Area includes the County communities of Agua Dulce, Castaic, Fair Oaks Ranch, San Francisquito Canyon, Sunset Pointe, Val Verde, and West Ranch, the future County community of Newhall Ranch, and the City communities of Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia. This proposed Area Plan focuses on the environment within the County's unincorporated limits and outside of the City's boundaries and adopted Sphere of Influence, but within the OVOV Planning Area. This area is referred to as the County's Planning Area as development within the unincorporated portions of the County will be directly guided by the maps and policies contained in the proposed Area Plan.

The proposed Area Plan has been prepared to ensure consistency with both the County's comprehensive General Plan and the City's General Plan. The proposed Area Plan does not include all of the mandatory General Plan elements, such as Housing, because the County's overall General Plan addresses all these mandatory issues on a County-wide basis. The proposed Area Plan does contain detailed background, maps, goals and policies regarding land use and circulation planning, and policy-level discussions of other issues relating to specific needs and characteristics of the Santa Clarita Valley, such as open space preservation, trail planning, hillside development, and historic preservation.

The proposed Area Plan serves as a foundation for making land use decisions based on policies related to land use, transportation, population growth and distribution, open space, resource preservation and utilization, air and water quality, noise impacts, public safety, infrastructure, and other related physical, social, and economic factors. In addition to serving as a basis for local decision making, the proposed Area Plan establishes a clear set of development guidelines for citizens, developers, neighboring jurisdictions and agencies, and provides the community with an opportunity to participate in the planning process. The purpose of the proposed Area Plan is to comply with state requirements and to provide the County with a comprehensive, long-range policy guideline for future development within the unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley.

In accordance with California Government Code Section 65302, the proposed Area Plan contains the following six elements:

- Land Use
- Conservation and Open Space (combined in one section in the proposed Area Plan)
- Safety
- Circulation

- Noise

1.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the proposed Area Plan is to provide policies incorporating the values and principles that will guide the County's land use decisions within the unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley. Therefore, the proposed Area Plan outlines 36 Guiding Principles described below, which were agreed upon by the County and City. The principles will be carried out with the application of common standards for land use development, infrastructure, and resource management, as appropriate or applicable. The principles implement the vision for the Santa Clarita Valley, which is intended to sustain and enhance environmental resources, economic vitality, and the social well-being of its residents. The following is the vision for the Santa Clarita Valley from the Vision and Guiding Principles statement prepared for the OVOV Planning Area:

1.4.1 Vision

The Santa Clarita Valley is a wonderful place to live, work, play, and raise a family. The Valley is a mosaic of unique villages with growing ethnic diversity, each with individual identities, surrounded by a greenbelt of forest lands and natural open spaces. These villages are unified by the Valley Center activity core, a beautiful environmental setting that includes the skyline and Santa Clara River, a vibrant growing economy, and a rich history of common social values. The Valley's network of roads, transit, and trails links these villages and provides access to a wide offering of quality education, cultural, recreation, and social services and facilities.

Life in the Santa Clarita Valley will continue to be exciting, enjoyable, and rewarding through a board range of housing types, an increase in quality jobs in close proximity to all neighborhoods, and transit-oriented villages complemented by excellent schools, attractive parks and other recreational amenities, expanded trail networks, and preserved natural resource areas. As the Valley moves forward, it is crucial that sound and sustainable planning principles shape new villages and enhance established neighborhoods. Implementing policies to increase mobility and accessibility, manage traffic congestion, improve air quality, and conserve water and energy resources throughout the Valley is essential to maintain the overall high quality of life.

1.4.2 Guiding Principles

Management of Growth

1. Growth in the Santa Clarita Valley shall account for the visions and objectives for each community and must be consistent with principles, as subsequently defined in this document [the proposed Area Plan], for the protection of the Valley's significant environmental resources. It must also be based on the availability of or ability to provide adequate infrastructure, schools, and public services, and must be carefully planned to benefit the community's economy, lifestyles, and needs.

2. Growth shall occur within and on the periphery of previously developed areas, rather than as "leapfrog" development or in areas of critical environmental habitat or natural hazards, and taking into consideration accessibility to infrastructure and public services.

3. Development shall be prioritized in areas for infill and redevelopment sites within currently developed areas consistent with community character objectives and those for which the City and County have approved entitlements. Commitments for new development outside of these areas shall be made in accordance with the other principles defined in this document [the proposed Area Plan].

4. Higher density development, including multi-family housing and mixed use projects that integrate housing with commercial uses, shall be targeted in areas adjacent to existing and planned transit corridors, stations, and key activity centers, such as the Valencia Town Center and portions of Newhall and Soledad Canyon Road.

Environmental Resources

5. The natural buffer area surrounding the entire Valley, which includes the Angeles National Forest, Santa Susana, San Gabriel, Sierra Pelona, and Del Sur mountains, shall be preserved as a regional recreational, ecological, and aesthetic resource.

6. The Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries shall be preserved as open space to accommodate storm water flows and protect critical plant and animal species (riparian vegetation, fish, etc.).

    a. Uses and improvements within the corridor shall be limited to those that benefit the community's use of the river in its natural state.

    b. Development on properties adjacent to, but outside of the defined primary river corridor, shall be located and designed to protect the river's water quality, plants, and animal habitats, controlling the type and density of uses, drainage runoff (water treatment), and other relevant elements; and designed to maximize the full range of river amenities, including views and recreational access, while minimizing adverse impacts to the river.

7. The Santa Clarita Valley's prominent ridgelines shall be preserved and hillside development shall be limited to protect their valuable aesthetic and visual qualities intrinsic to the Valley landscape.

8. Development shall be located and designed to minimize the impact on the Valley topography, emphasizing the use of grading techniques for development pads that mimic the natural topography in lieu of repetitive flat pads to the extent feasible and consistent with a community's open space objectives.

9. Development shall be located and designed to protect oak, sycamore, and other significant indigenous woodlands.

10. Biological resources in the designated Significant Ecological Areas ("SEAs") shall be protected through the siting and design of development to account for and be highly compatible with their resources. Specific development standards shall be identified to control the types of land use, density, building location and size, roadways and other infrastructure, landscape, drainage, and other elements to assure the protection of the critical and important plant and animal habitats of each SEA. In general, the principle shall be to minimize the

intrusion and impacts of development in these areas with sufficient setbacks, or buffers, to adequately protect the resources.

11. New development shall be designed to improve energy efficiency, reducing energy and natural resource consumption by such techniques as the use of solar generators, recycling of treated wastewater, capture of storm runoff on site, and use of recycled materials in building construction, native and drought-tolerant landscape, and energy and water efficient appliances and systems.

Land Uses

12. The Santa Clarita Valley shall contain a diversity of land uses that support the needs of current and future residents including housing, schools, libraries, parks, retail, business and industry, civic institutions, medical and social services, cultural, entertainment, open spaces, and comparable uses.

13. The type and density of land uses in the Santa Clarita Valley shall be varied to reflect the special characteristics, life styles, and opportunities that differentiate its communities. A choice of urban, suburban, and rural environments will be provided.

14. Valley communities shall contain a mix of uses that support the basic needs of residents—places to live, shop, recreate, meet/socialize, and enjoy the environmental setting—that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. Regionally oriented uses that serve residents of the entire Valley or export goods and services may be concentrated in key business centers rather than uniformly dispersed throughout the Valley communities.

15. Development in the Valley shall be guided by a common set of land use designations and standards for comparable uses in comparable locations. These standards, however, may be varied to reflect the unique intentions for the quality and character of the distinct communities that comprise the Valley.

Residential Neighborhoods

16. The Valley shall contain a mix of housing types that meet the diverse needs of residents, and offer choices for the Valley's population and lifestyles (ages, education, income, etc.) that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. This shall include a combination of single- and multi-family, owner occupied and rental units within *each* community, and mixed-use (i.e., integrated housing with commercial or office uses) development in key activity centers.

17. The Valley is committed to providing affordable work force housing to meet the needs of individuals employed in the Santa Clarita Valley.

18. Multi-family housing developments shall contain adequate recreational and open space amenities on-site and be designed to ensure a high quality living environment. Their architectural treatment and building massing shall complement the characteristics of surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods.

19. Neighborhood scale development shall be encouraged by promoting mixed density of housing units consistent with community character objectives and limiting the number and acreage of multi-family units that can be developed in any single location.

20. Housing developments located in the more urbanized communities of the Valley shall be designed to create a sense of neighborhood by

    a. promoting walkability and containing places that serve as centers of activity and identity (schools, multi-purpose facilities, parks, convenience services, neighborhood commercial centers, etc.);

    b. containing a mix of housing types, densities, and parcel sizes, avoiding large areas and an over-concentration of homogeneous density units;

    c. minimizing the dependence on, prominence, and area dedicated to the automobile;

    d. featuring architectural design treatments along all frontages of new housing to promote continuity of architectural scale and rhythm and avoid "blank walls;" and

    e. including pedestrian linkages, landscaped parkways and green corridors, and separated trails (pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian) where appropriate and feasible.

Vital Economy

21. Commercial and retail uses will be expanded and new centers developed to meet the needs of the Valley's residents, as supportable by the market, minimize the need to travel outside of the Valley, complement (and do not adversely compete with) existing uses, and contribute to a balanced Valley economy.

22. New "clean" industries and businesses that provide job opportunities for local residents and enhance the economy shall be encouraged within and adjacent to existing and planned business centers/parks, and adjacent to transportation corridors.

23. Older commercial areas and corridors that are economically and/or physically obsolete or deteriorated, such as portions of Castaic, Val Verde, Newhall, Lyons Avenue, Sierra Highway, Main Street, Newhall Avenue, and Soledad Canyon Road, shall be redeveloped for commercial, mixed use, residential or other appropriate uses that complement and serve adjoining land uses and can be adequately supported by the market. Where appropriate, redeveloped uses and buildings shall reflect the area’s important architectural and cultural history.

Mobility

24. A unified and well-maintained network of highways, streets, truck routes, bikeways, and pedestrian paths will provide access among Valley communities and to regional centers outside of the Valley.

25. Santa Clarita Valley's streets and highways shall be developed and maintained according to common standards for right-of-way, paving and other improvements, landscape, signage, lighting, and curb cuts for "like" street categories. These standards shall consider objectives for the character of the Valley's communities consistent with public health and safety.

26. A continuous bikeway network shall provide circulation within each community, connect the various Santa Clarita Valley communities, and provide access to surrounding open spaces.

27. An integrated transit system shall serve the Valley (rail, bus, shuttle, other) offering convenient alternatives to the automobile, minimizing congestion and providing access to regional transportation systems, such as Metrolink.

Infrastructure

28. The location and timing of development shall be coordinated with the provision of adequate water, wastewater treatment, storm drainage, telecommunications, energy, roads, and other infrastructure.

29. Public infrastructure shall be improved, maintained, and expanded as needed to meet the needs of projected population and employment growth and contribute to the Valley's quality of life.

30. Common standards for providing utility infrastructure (flood control channels, energy transmission, telecommunications, and so on) shall be developed and applied throughout the Valley, in consideration of the character of each community.

Schools and Public Services

31. The City and County shall work in partnership with the Santa Clarita Valley school districts and the State of California to ensure the development of adequate facilities and programs to serve the needs and achieve a high level of academic excellence for local students.

32. While the City and County do not have direct authority over the development of public schools, they shall continue to coordinate with the school districts on issues of mutual interest such as transportation services, shared facilities, and long range planning for Valley schools.

33. Public services (police, fire, health care, youth, seniors, homeless, and other) shall be expanded to support community needs and population growth.

Recreation

34. The City and County shall recognize that trails are an important recreational asset that, when integrated with transportation systems, contribute to mobility throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

35. A continuous and unified hiking and equestrian trail network for a variety of users and developed according to common standards shall connect and unify Santa Clarita Valley

communities and be interconnected with the regional and statewide system (e.g., Pacific Crest Trail).

36. New parklands will be developed throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, with priority on locations that are not now adequately served. These shall encompass a diversity of park types and functions, including passive and active areas, in consideration of the recreational needs of the residents to be served.

    a. Common park standards shall be developed and applied throughout the Valley, consistent with community character objectives.

    b. A range of parkland types, sizes and uses shall be provided to accommodate recreational and leisure activities.

1.5 Initial Study And Notice Of Preparation

To determine which environmental topics should be addressed in the Final EIR, the County prepared and circulated a Notice of Preparation ("NOP") from July 28, 2008 through December 31, 2008. In addition, the County held a scoping meeting on August 4, 2008 in the City of Santa Clarita at City Hall to solicit comments and to inform the public of the proposed Area Plan.

In response to the NOP and scoping meeting, comment letters and other input were received from interested agencies, organizations, and others. Based on the results of the County's NOP and scoping efforts, the following topics were evaluated in the Final EIR:

1. Aesthetics;
2. Agricultural Resources;
3. Air Quality;
4. Global Climate Change;
5. Biological Resources;
6. Community Services;
7. Cultural Resources;
8. Geology, Soils, Seismicity;
9. Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
10. Hydrology and Water Quality;
11. Land Use;
12. Mineral Resources;
13. Noise;
14. Population and Housing;
15. Public Services;
16. Parks and Recreation;
17. Water Services;
18. Transportation and Circulation; and,
19. Utilities and Infrastructure.

1.6 Environmental Impact Report

CEQA provides a lead agency with the flexibility to prepare different types of EIRs, and to employ different procedural means to focus environmental analysis on the issues appropriate for decision at each level of environmental review. (Pub. Resources Code, §21093, subd. (a).) The Final EIR for the proposed Area Plan can be classified as a "program EIR." A program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either geographically; as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; in connection with

issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or, as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways. A program EIR enables an agency to examine the overall effects of the proposed course of action and to take steps to avoid unnecessary adverse environmental effects.

According to Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines, a program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible. With a good and detailed analysis of the program, many subsequent activities could be found to be within the scope of the project described in a program EIR, and no further environmental documents would be required.

Here, the Final EIR evaluates the broad-scale impacts of the County's proposed Area Plan. The proposed Area Plan will be a component of the County's General Plan. Therefore, this Final EIR, which addresses the potential impacts of the County's goals, objectives, and policies for the unincorporated portions of the Valley, can be thought of as a "first tier" document. It evaluates the large-scale impacts on the environment that can be expected to result from the adoption of the proposed Area Plan, but does not necessarily address the site-specific impacts that may be caused by each of the individual development projects that may follow and be implemented under the proposed Area Plan. CEQA requires each of those subsequent development projects to be evaluated for their particular site-specific impacts. These site-specific analyses are typically encompassed in second-tier documents, such as project EIRs, focused EIRs, and mitigated negative declarations on individual development projects subject to the proposed Area Plan, which typically evaluate the impacts of a single activity undertaken to implement the overall plan. This Final EIR can and should be incorporated by reference into subsequent documents to focus on new or site-specific impacts.

The proposed Area Plan's Draft EIR was made available for public review and comment on September 4, 2009. The County initially provided a 60-day comment period for the Draft EIR, which was scheduled to conclude on November 2, 2009. However, the comment period subsequently was extended to 120 days in response to requests for additional time, and ultimately terminated on February 1, 2010. The proposed Area Plan's Revised Draft EIR was then released on November 23, 2010, and made available for public review and comment for a 60-day comment period that terminated on January 24, 2011. (Although the Revised Draft EIR was recirculated in its entirety, substantive changes were only made to the air quality, traffic and circulation, global climate change, and water supply sections.) The Draft EIR was made available on the County's website (http://planning.lacounty.gov/ovov), and at the following locations:

- County Department of Regional Planning, 320 West Temple Street, Room 1354, Los Angeles, CA 90012;
- Canyon Country Library, 18601 Soledad Canyon Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91351;
- Castaic Library, 27972 Sloan Canyon Road, Castaic, CA 91384;
- Newhall Library, 22704 West 9th Street, Newhall, CA 91321; and,

- Valencia Library, 23743 West Valencia Boulevard, Santa Clarita, CA 91355.

The Revised Draft EIR was made available on the County's website (http://planning.lacounty.gov/ovov), and at the following locations:

- County Department of Regional Planning, 320 West Temple Street, Room 1354, Los Angeles, CA 90012;
- Acton/Agua Dulce Library, 33792 Crown Valley Road, Acton, CA 93510;
- Castaic Library, 27972 Sloan Canyon Road, Castaic, CA 91384;
- Newhall Library, 22704 West 9th Street, Newhall, CA 91321; and,
- Valencia Library, 23743 West Valencia Boulevard, Santa Clarita, CA 91355.

Public hearings before the County's Regional Planning Commission on the proposed Area Plan and its environmental analysis were held on October 5, 2009; November 23, 2009; February 24, 2010; September 29, 2010[1]; December 8, 2010; March 23, 2011; May 25, 2011; and, September 28, 2011.

In September 2011, the Final EIR was completed. The Final EIR includes all comments and responses to comments received on the Revised Draft EIR and other information. County staff sent the Final EIR to the Commission for review and made it available to state and local agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. Following release of the Final EIR, the Commission conducted a public hearing on September 28, 2011 regarding the proposed Area Plan and associated Final EIR, as described above.

The custodian of the record of proceedings is the County's Department of Regional Planning, 320 West Temple Street, Room 1354, Los Angeles, California 90012, and the County's EIR consultant, Impact Sciences, Inc., 803 Camarillo Road, Suite A, Camarillo, California 93012. The project's record includes, but is not limited to:

- The Final EIR for the proposed Area Plan;
- All reports, memoranda, maps, letters, and other planning documents, including attachments, related documents, and all documents cited, incorporated by reference or relied on in those materials, prepared by the EIR consultant, the County, and Department of Regional Planning staff relating to the EIRs;
- Any minutes and transcripts of all public meetings and public hearings relating to the proposed Area Plan;
- All notices issued by the County to comply with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, or any other law governing the processing and approval of the proposed Area Plan;

[1] The project was not the subject of significant discussion at this hearing; rather, the hearing on the subject was simply continued.

- Matters of common knowledge to the County, which include, but are not limited to: (i) the Los Angeles County General Plan; (ii) the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan; and (iii) the Los Angeles County Subdivision and Planning and Zoning Codes, as amended; and,
- Any other written materials relevant to the County's compliance with CEQA, and its decision on the merits of the proposed Area Plan, including documents that have been released for public review, and copies of reports, studies or other documents relied on in any environmental documentation for the proposed Area Plan and either made available to the public during the public comment period or included in the County's files.

2.0 FINDINGS FOCUSING ON SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

This section identifies the significant unavoidable impacts that require a Statement of Overriding Considerations be issued by the County upon approval of the proposed Area Plan. Based on the analysis contained in the Final EIR, certain impacts to air quality, global climate change, agricultural resources, biological resources, water service, utilities and infrastructure, and noise have been determined to fall within this "significant unavoidable impact" category. In addition to the identification of significant unavoidable impacts, the discussion, below, identifies significant impacts resulting from the proposed Area Plan to air quality, global climate change, agricultural resources, biological resources, water service, utilities and infrastructure, and noise, which have been mitigated to less than significant based upon the identified mitigation measures.

2.1 AIR QUALITY

2.1.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

As discussed in **Section 3.3**, Air Quality, of the Final EIR, the estimated maximum construction emissions for build out of the proposed Area Plan would exceed the South Coast Air Quality Management District's ("SCAQMD") construction thresholds for VOCs, NOx, CO, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$. While implementation of the proposed Area Plan's policies would reduce air quality impacts, construction-related emissions attributable to individual development projects approved under the proposed Area Plan could potentially exceed the thresholds, which constitutes a significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels.

Similarly, operational emissions associated with the proposed Area Plan are anticipated to increase existing emissions of VOCs, SOx, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ by 12 to 105 percent, and would exceed SCAQMD's thresholds. While implementation of the proposed Area Plan's policies would reduce air quality impacts, operational-related emissions attributable to individual development projects approved under the proposed Area Plan could potentially exceed the thresholds, which constitutes a significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels.

Also, while the proposed Area Plan's policies are designed to reduce the emission of toxic air contaminants and the potential for CO hotspots, individual development projects approved under the proposed Area Plan could potentially exceed the applicable thresholds, which constitutes a significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels. Similarly, odors associated with individual development projects approved under the proposed Area Plan could result in nuisance

violations and affect a substantial number of people, which constitutes a significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels.

2.1.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that there are no feasible mitigation measures available to avoid or mitigate the significant air quality impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in **Section 2.1.1** above, to a less-than-significant level. However, the following feasible mitigation measures would substantially lessen the significant impacts identified in the Final EIR:

Construction

3.3-1: Prior to implementing project approval, applicants for implementing projects shall develop a Construction Traffic Emission Management Plan to minimize emissions from vehicles including, but not limited to, scheduling truck deliveries to avoid peak hour traffic conditions, consolidating truck deliveries, and prohibiting truck idling in excess of 5 minutes.

3.3-2: Prior to grading permit issuance, applicants for implementing projects shall develop a Construction Emission Management Plan to minimize construction-related emissions. The Construction Emission Management Plan shall require the use of Best Available Control Measures, as specified in Table 1 of SCAQMD's Rule 403. If potentially significant impacts are identified after the implementation of the SCAQMD recommended Best Available Control Measures, the Construction Emission Management Plan shall include the following additional elements:

- Use of water trucks or sprinkler systems in sufficient quantities to prevent airborne dust from leaving the site. When wind speeds exceed 15 miles per hour the operators shall increase watering frequency.
- Active sites shall be watered at least three times daily during dry weather.
- Increase watering frequency during construction or use non-toxic chemical stabilizers if it would provide higher control efficiencies.
- Suspend grading and excavation activities during windy periods (i.e., surface winds in excess of 25 miles per hour).
- Suspend the use of all construction equipment during first-stage smog alerts.Application of non-toxic chemical soil stabilizers or apply water to form and maintain a crust on inactive construction areas (disturbed lands within construction projects that are unused for at least four consecutive days).

- Application of non-toxic binders to exposed areas after cut and fill operations and hydroseeded areas.
- Cover or application of water or non-toxic chemical suppressants to form and maintain a crust on inactive storage piles.
- Planting of vegetative ground cover in disturbed areas as soon as possible and where feasible.
- Operate street sweepers that comply with SCAQMD Rules 1186 and 1186.1 on roads adjacent to the construction site so as to minimize dust emissions. Paved parking and staging areas shall be swept daily.
- Scheduling truck deliveries to avoid peak hour traffic conditions, consolidating truck deliveries, and prohibiting truck idling in excess of 5 minutes.
- Reduce traffic speeds on all unpaved roads to 15 miles per hour or less.
- Pave or apply gravel on roads used to access the construction sites when possible.
- Schedule construction activities that affect traffic flow to off-peak hours (e.g., between 7:00 PM and 6:00 AM, and between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM).
- Use of diesel-powered construction equipment shall use ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel.
- Use electric welders to avoid emissions from gas or diesel welders when such equipment is commercially available.
- Use electricity or alternate fuels for on-site mobile equipment instead of diesel equipment when such equipment is commercially available.
- Use on-site electricity or alternative fuels rather than diesel-powered or gasoline-powered generators when such equipment is commercially available.
- Maintain construction equipment by conducting regular tune-ups according to the manufacturers' recommendations.
- Minimize idling time either by shutting equipment when not in use or reducing the time of idling to 5 minutes as a maximum.

- Limit, to the extent feasible, the hours of operation of heavy duty equipment and/or the amount of equipment in use.

- Retrofit large off-road construction equipment that will be operating for significant periods. Retrofit technologies such as particulate traps, selective catalytic reduction, oxidation catalysts, air enhancement technologies, etc., shall be evaluated. These technologies will be required if they are certified by CARB and/or the U.S. EPA, and are commercially available and can feasibly be retrofitted onto construction equipment.

- The project applicant shall require all on-site construction equipment to meet U.S. EPA Tier 4 or higher emissions standards according to the following:

    - April 2010 through December 31, 2011: All off-road diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 horsepower (hp) shall meet Tier 2 off-road emissions standards. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with the BACT devices certified by CARB. Any emissions control device used by the contractor shall achieve emissions reductions that are no less than what could be achieved by a Level 2 or Level 3 diesel emissions control strategy for a similarly sized engine as defined by CARB regulations.

    - January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2014: All off-road diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 horsepower (hp) shall meet Tier 3 off-road emissions standards. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with the BACT devices certified by CARB. Any emissions control device used by the contractor shall achieve emissions reductions that are no less than what could be achieved by a Level 3 diesel emissions control strategy for a similarly sized engine as defined by CARB regulations.

    - Post-January 1, 2015: All off-road diesel-powered construction equipment greater than 50 hp shall meet the Tier 4 emission standards, where available. In addition, all construction equipment shall be outfitted with BACT devices certified by CARB. Any emissions control device used by the contractor shall achieve emissions reductions that are no less than what could be achieved by a Level 3 diesel emissions control strategy for a similarly sized engine as defined by CARB regulations. A copy of each unit's certified tier specification, BACT documentations, and CARB, SCAQMD, or ICAPCD operating permit shall be provided at the time of mobilization of each applicable unit of equipment.

- Designate personnel to monitor dust control measures to ensure effectiveness in minimizing fugitive dust emissions.

- An information sign shall be posted at the entrance to each construction site that identifies the permitted construction hours and provides a telephone number to call and receive information about the construction project or to report complaints regarding excessive fugitive dust generation. Any reasonable complaints shall be rectified within 24 hours of their receipt.

- The contractor shall utilize low-VOC content coatings and solvents that are consistent with applicable SCAQMD and ICAPCD rules and regulations.

- Consideration shall be given to use of other transportation methods to deliver materials to the construction sites (for example, trains or conveyors) if it would result in a reduction of criteria pollutant emissions.

3.3-3: Prior to implementing project approval, applicants for implementing projects shall be required to conduct an LST analysis.

Operation

3.3-4: Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall submit building plans to the County Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division to demonstrate that all residential buildings are designed to achieve energy efficiency in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards.

3.3-5: Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall submit building plans to the County Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division to demonstrate that all commercial buildings shall be designed to achieve energy efficiency in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards.

3.3-6: Prior to final building inspection, the applicant shall provide preferential parking spaces for carpools and vanpools at major commercial and office locations. The spaces shall be clearly identified on plot plans and may not be pooled in one location.

3.3-7: New residential developments shall allow only natural gas-fired hearths and shall prohibit the installation of wood-burning hearths and wood-burning stoves.

3.3-8: Prior to implementing project approval, tract maps and other sensitive uses located within 500 feet from the closest right of way of Interstate 5 and State Route 14 shall be required to conduct a health risk assessment.

3.3-9: Prior to implementing project approval, tract maps and other sensitive uses located within the screening level distances of potential sources of odors, or new sources of odors located within the screening level distances of existing or reasonably foreseeable sensitive uses, as defined by the SCAQMD, shall be required to conduct an odors assessment.

2.1.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and will substantially lessen the air quality impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan which would mitigate, in part, the significant air quality impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in the Final EIR. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce all the identified significant impacts to a level below significant. Therefore, these impacts must be considered unavoidably significant even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified air quality impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable air quality impacts of the proposed Area Plan.

2.2 Global Climate Change

2.2.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

Although consistent with relevant plans and reduction strategies, including those presented in the California Air Resources Board's December 2008 Scoping Plan and recommended by the Climate Action Team, Office of Planning and Research, California's Office of the Attorney General and California Air Pollution Controls Officers Association, the maximum build-out of the proposed Area Plan would increase greenhouse gas ("GHG") emission levels relative to existing concentrations by approximately 1,848,400 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents per year. **Section 3.4**, Global Climate Change, of the Final EIR concluded that this increase constitutes a significant environmental impact at the project- and cumulative-levels, which is a conservative finding given the unsettled state of science, absence of uniformly endorsed significance thresholds, evolving regulatory standards, and the County's existing green building and GHG-reducing programs and ordinances. Of note, project-specific analysis undertaken in

the future by individual development projects subject to the proposed Area Plan will study, in further detail, the feasibility of potential GHG emission reduction strategies.

2.2.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that there are no feasible mitigation measures available to avoid or mitigate all of the global climate change-related impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan to a level below significant. However, the following feasible mitigation measures would substantially lessen the significant impacts identified in the Final EIR:

3.4-1 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of green building practices and design elements that reduce GHG emissions, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards (See, e.g., California Department of Housing and Community Development's Green Building & Sustainability Resources handbook at www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/green_build.pdf; e.g., the American Institute of Architects at http://www.wiki.aia.org/Wiki%20Pages/Home.aspx). For discretionary projects, this evidence on greenhouse gas reduction measures shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-2 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of energy-efficient designs, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards, such as those found in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Ratings and/or comply with Title 24, Part 11, the California Green Building Standards Code. For discretionary projects, this evidence on energy efficient design shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-3 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems, appliances, equipment, and control systems, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (Information about ENERGY STAR-certified products are available at http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a _product; see also the California Energy Commission's database of appliances meeting federal or state energy standards at http://www.appliances.energy.ca.gov; see the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool for ranking of

energy efficient computer equipment at http://www.epeat.net/AboutEPEAT.aspx; see the Online Guide to Energy Efficient Commercial Equipment at http://www.aceee.org/ogeece/ch1_index.htm). For discretionary projects, this evidence on energy efficient systems shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-4 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of light colored "cool" roofs and cool pavements, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See Consumer Energy Center, Cool Roofs at http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/coolroof/). For discretionary projects, this evidence on cool roofs and pavements shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-5 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of efficient lighting (including LEDs) for traffic, street, and other outdoor lighting purposes, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://www.energy.ca.gov/efficiency/ partnership/case_studies/TechAsstCity.pdf). For discretionary projects, this evidence on efficient lighting shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-6 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of efficient pumps and motors for pools and spas, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/ home/outside/pools_spas.html). For discretionary projects, this evidence on pool and spa motors and pumps shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-7 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of the ability to install solar, and solar hot water heaters, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://www.gosolarcalifornia.org/builders/index.html; see

also the California Public Utility Commission's website for solar water heating incentives at http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/puc/energy /solar/swh.htm). For discretionary projects, this evidence on solar isues shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-8 Prior to the issuance of building permits for, the applicant shall provide evidence of water-efficient landscapes, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://www.water.ca.gov/ wateruseefficiency/landscapeordinance/technical.cfm; see also http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/organics/Xeriscaping). For discretionary projects, this evidence on water efficient landscaping shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-9 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of water efficient irrigation systems and devices, such as soil-based irrigation controls and use water-efficient irrigation methods, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/program/ waterefficiency_bmp5.html; see also http://www.water.ca.gov /wateruseefficiency/landscape/). For discretionary projects, this evidence on efficient irrigation methods shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-10 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant or their contractor shall submit a site construction management plan for the reuse and recycle construction and demolition waste (including soil, vegetation, concrete, lumber, metal, and cardboard) to the Department of Public Works for review and approval in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances developed pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/condemo/). For discretionary projects, this evidence on recycling construction materials shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-11 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of reuse and recycling receptacles in residential, industrial, and commercial projects, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances developed pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards. (See http://zerowaste.ca.gov; see also http://www.ca-ilg.org/wastereduction). For discretionary projects, this evidence on recycling receptacles shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-12 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall provide evidence of consistency with "smart growth" principles to reduce GHG emissions (i.e., ensure mixed-use, infill and higher density projects provide alternatives to individual vehicle travel and promote efficient delivery of goods and services). (See http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/index.htm). For discretionary projects, this evidence on "smart growth" consistency shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-13 Prior to implementing project approval, the applicant shall preserve existing trees, to the extent feasible and consistent with mitigation measures, encourage the planting of new trees consistent with the final landscape palettes, and create open space where feasible. (See http://www.epa.gov/dced/brownfields.htm). For discretionary projects, this evidence on tree preservation and planting shall be provided to the Regional Planning Commission or Hearing Officer concurrent with the planning and environmental review process for the applicant's proposed project.

3.4-14 All residential buildings shall be designed to provide improved insulation and ducting, low E glass, high efficiency air conditioning units, and radiant barriers in attic spaces, as needed, or equivalent to ensure that all residential buildings operate at levels 15 percent better than the standards required by Title 24, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards.

3.4-15 All commercial and public buildings shall be designed to provide improved insulation and ducting, low E glass, high efficiency HVAC equipment, and energy efficient lighting design with occupancy sensors or equivalent to ensure that all commercial and public buildings operate at levels 15 percent better than the standards required by Title 24, in accordance with the requirements of the ordinances adopted pursuant to the County's Green Building Program and other applicable State and County standards.

3.4-16 Consistent with the Governor's Million Solar Roofs Plan, the project applicant or designee, acting as the seller of any single-family residence constructed as part of the development of at least 50 homes that are intended or offered for sale, shall offer a solar energy system option to all customers that enter negotiations to purchase a new production home constructed within the OVOV planning area on land for which an application for a tentative subdivision map has been deemed complete. The seller shall disclose the total installed cost of the solar energy system option, and the estimated cost savings.

3.4-17 Fire stations and public libraries that contain more than 10,000 square feet of floor area within the OVOV planning area shall be designed and constructed so as to achieve LEED silver certification, in accordance with County policy.

2.2.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and will substantially lessen the proposed Area Plan's global climate change impacts. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan which would mitigate, in part, the significant global climate change impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in the Final EIR. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce all the identified significant impacts to a level below significant. Therefore, these impacts must be considered unavoidably significant even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified global climate change impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable global climate change impacts of the proposed Area Plan.

2.3 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

2.3.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

As discussed in **Section 3.5**, Agricultural Resources, of the Final EIR, the proposed Area Plan does not contain any policies that would protect against or reduce the exposure of (i) future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations, or (ii) farms to nuisances associated with urban uses. Therefore, such nuisance impacts would be significant at the project- and cumulative-levels.

2.3.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that there are no feasible mitigation measures available to avoid or mitigate the agricultural resource impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan to a level below significant.

2.3.3 Findings

The Commission finds that there are no feasible mitigation measures available to avoid or mitigate the agricultural resource impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan to a level below significant. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified agricultural resources impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable impacts of the proposed Area Plan to agricultural resources.

2.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

2.4.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

As analyzed in **Section 3.7**, Biological Resources, of the Final EIR, the proposed Area Plan's policies do not provide a mechanism for the compensation of lost habitats when avoidance or minimization of impacts is infeasible, nor do they mitigate for the direct mortality of listed, proposed or candidate species. The proposed Area Plan's policies also do not provide for the compensation of lost wildlife movement opportunities or nursery sites when avoidance or minimization of impacts is considered to be infeasible. These impacts are considered significant at the project- and cumulative-levels under CEQA and cannot be mitigated to a level below significant, with the exception of impacts related to the direct mortality of special-status species.

Although the proposed Area Plan would result in a potentially significant effect on riparian habitat or other sensitive natural communities identified in local or regional plans, policies or regulations, or identified by the California Department of Fish and Game ("CDFG") and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("USFWS"), Mitigation Measure 3.7-1 would prioritize the preservation of habitat types that are particularly at risk and thereby reduce impacts to a level below significant at the project- and cumulative-levels.

2.4.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that no feasible mitigation measures exist to avoid or mitigate below a level of significance the proposed Area Plan's identified impacts on significant biological resources. However, the following feasible mitigation measures would substantially lessen the significant impacts identified in the Final EIR:

3.7-1 Biological site survey reports shall include an analysis of the potential for a proposed project to result in direct mortality of individuals of listed, proposed, or candidate species, losses of habitats occupied by such species, and losses of opportunity for habitat connectivity.

- Reports must be prepared by qualified biological consultants.
- Reports must include specific information regarding site location, on-site and surrounding biological resources, observed and detected species,

site photographs, vegetation map, literature sources, timing of surveys, project footprint, anticipated project impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and additional recommended surveys.

3.7-2 If special-status species may potentially be subject to direct loss through implementation of construction activities, mitigation measures proposed as part of biological site survey reports shall include a requirement for preconstruction special-status species surveys, followed by measures to ensure avoidance, relocation or safe escape of special-status species from construction activity, whichever action is the most appropriate. If special-status species are found to be brooding, denning, nesting, etc. on site during the preconstruction survey, construction activity shall be halted until offspring are weaned, fledged, etc. and are able to escape the site or be safely relocated to appropriate off-site habitat areas. A qualified biologist shall be on site to conduct surveys, to perform or oversee implementation of protective measures, and to determine when construction activity may resume.

3.7-3 Impacts on sensitive habitats resulting from implementation of the Area Plan shall be compensated for through the acquisition of lands described in **Policies CO 10.1.3, CO 10.1.11** and **CO 10.1.12**. Said acquisition shall prioritize habitat types that are particularly at risk in the region. At risk habitats include but are not limited to waterways, wetlands and vernal pools; alluvial scrub; native grasslands; savannas, woodlands and forests; holly-leaf cherry and Great basin sagebrush associations; and rocklands.

2.4.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and will substantially lessen the proposed Area Plan's impacts to biological resources. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan which would mitigate, in part, the significant biological resources impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in the Final EIR. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce all the identified significant impacts to a level below significant. Therefore, these impacts must be considered unavoidably significant even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified biological resources-related impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable biological resources impacts of the proposed Area Plan.

2.5 WATER SERVICE

2.5.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

As discussed in **Section 3.13**, Water Service, of the Final EIR, adequate water supplies exist *within* the Castaic Lake Water Agency's ("CLWA") service area to accommodate build out of the proposed Area Plan, and impacts would not be significant. However, existing groundwater is not sufficient to provide a sustainable supply of water *outside* of CLWA's service area based on: (i) the experience of private well owners in areas located outside of CLWA's service area indicating that groundwater well levels are declining and, in some cases, running dry; and, (ii) the lack of available and responsive information (*e.g.*, no water supply studies are known to have been completed in this portion of the County's Planning Area). Therefore, water service impacts would be significant at the project- and cumulative-levels in that portion of the County's Planning Area.

2.5.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that no feasible mitigation measures exist to avoid or mitigate below a level of significance the proposed Area Plan's identified impacts on water service outside of CLWA's service area. However, the following feasible mitigation measures would substantially lessen the significant impacts identified in the Final EIR:

Within CLWA Service Area

Although there are no significant water service impacts within CLWA's service area, the following policies from the proposed Area Plan have been re-numbered and included as mitigation measures to ensure that impacts remain less than significant.

3.13-1 (Policy LU 4.5.2): Encourage the provision of usable open space that is accessible to employees and visitors, and discourage the provision of large areas of water-consuming landscaping that are not usable or accessible.

3.13-2 (Policy LU 4.5.3): Promote the inclusion of state-of-the-art technology within business complexes for telecommunications, heating and cooling, water and energy conservation, and other similar design features.

3.13-3 (Policy LU 7.2.1): Monitor growth, and coordinate with water districts as needed to ensure that long-range needs for potable and reclaimed water will be met.

3.13-4 (Policy LU 7.2.2): If water supplies are reduced from projected levels due to drought, emergency, or other unanticipated events, take appropriate steps to limit, reduce, or otherwise modify growth permitted by the Area Plan in consultation with water districts to ensure adequate long-term supply for existing businesses and residents.

3.13-5 (Policy LU 7.2.3): Require that all new development proposals demonstrate a sufficient and sustainable water supply prior to approval.

3.13-6 (Policy LU 7.4.1): Require the use of drought tolerant landscaping, native California plant materials, and evapotranspiration (smart) irrigation systems.

3.13-7 (Policy LU 7.4.2): Require the use of low-flow fixtures in all non-residential development and residential development with five or more dwelling units, which may include but are not limited to water conserving shower heads, toilets, waterless urinals and motion-sensor faucets, and encourage use of such fixtures in building retrofits as appropriate.

3.13-8 (Policy CO 1.1.1): In making land use decisions, consider the complex, dynamic, and interrelated ways that natural and human systems interact, such as the interactions between energy demand, water demand, air and water quality, and waste management.

3.13-9 (Policy CO 4.1.1): In coordination with applicable water suppliers, adopt and implement a water conservation strategy for public and private development.

3.13-10 (Policy CO 4.1.2): Provide examples of water conservation in landscaping through use of low water use landscaping in public spaces such as parks, landscaped medians and parkways, plazas, and around public buildings.

3.13-11 (Policy CO 4.1.3): Require low water use landscaping in new residential subdivisions and other private development projects, including a reduction in the amount of turf-grass.

3.13-12 (Policy CO 4.1.4): Provide informational materials to applicants and contractors on the Castaic Lake Water Agency's Landscape Education Program, and/or other information on xeriscape, native California plants, and water-conserving irrigation techniques as materials become available.

3.13-13 (Policy CO 4.1.5): Promote the use of low-flow and/or waterless plumbing fixtures and appliances in all new non-residential development and residential development of five or more dwelling units.

3.13-14 (Policy CO 4.1.6): Support amendments to the County Building Code that would promote upgrades to water and energy efficiency when issuing permits for renovations or additions to existing buildings.

3.13-15 (Policy CO 4.1.7): Apply water conservation policies to all pending development projects, including approved tentative subdivision maps to the extent permitted by law. Where precluded from adding requirements by

vested entitlements, encourage water conservation in construction and landscape design.

3.13-16 (Policy CO 4.1.8): Upon the availability of non-potable water services, discourage and consider restrictions on the use of potable water for washing outdoor surfaces.

3.13-17 (Policy CO 4.2.1): In cooperation with the Sanitation District and other affected agencies, expand opportunities for use of recycled water for the purposes of landscape maintenance, construction, water recharge, and other uses as appropriate.

3.13-18 (Policy CO 4.2.2): Require new development to provide the infrastructure needed for delivery of recycled water to the property for use in irrigation, even if the recycled water main delivery lines have not yet reached the site, where deemed appropriate by the reviewing authority.

3.13-19 (Policy CO 4.2.3): Promote the installation of rainwater capture and gray water systems in new development for irrigation, where feasible and practicable.

3.13-20 (Policy CO 4.2.5): Participate and cooperate with other agencies to complete, adopt, and implement an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan to build a diversified portfolio of water supply, water quality, and resource stewardship priorities for the Santa Clarita Valley.

3.13-21 (Policy CO 4.2.6): Require that all new development proposals demonstrate a sufficient and sustainable water supply prior to approval.

3.13-22 (Policy CO 8.3.3): Promote energy efficiency and water conservation upgrades to existing non-residential buildings at the time of major remodel or additions.

3.13-23 (Policy LU 7.3.1): Promote the use of permeable paving materials to allow **i**nfiltration of surface water into the water table.

3.13-24 (Policy LU 7.3.2): Maintain stormwater runoff on site by directing drainage into rain gardens, natural landscaped swales, rain barrels, permeable areas, and use of drainage areas as design elements, where feasible and reasonable.

3.13-25 (Policy LU 7.3.3): Seek methods to decrease impermeable site area where reasonable and feasible, in order to reduce stormwater runoff and increase groundwater infiltration, including use of shared parking and other means as appropriate.

3.13-26 (Policy CO 2.3.5): Promote remediation and restoration of mined land to a condition that supports beneficial uses, which may include but are not limited to recreational open space, habitat enhancement, groundwater recharge, or urban development.

3.13-27 (Policy CO 3.6.2): Reduce impervious surfaces and provide more natural vegetation to enhance microclimates and provide habitat. In implementing this policy, consider the following design concepts:

b. Increased use of vegetated areas around parking lot perimeters; such areas should be designed as bioswales or as otherwise determined appropriate to allow surface water infiltration;

c. Use of connected open space areas as drainage infiltration areas in lieu of curbed landscape islands, minimizing the separation of natural and landscaped areas into isolated "islands."

3.13-28 (Policy CO 4.2.4): Identify and protect areas with substantial potential for groundwater recharge, and promote recharge of groundwater basins throughout the watershed (excluding the river bed).

3.13-29 (Policy CO 4.3.1): On undeveloped sites proposed for development, promote on site stormwater infiltration through design techniques such as pervious paving, draining runoff into bioswales or properly designed landscaped areas, preservation of natural soils and vegetation, and limiting impervious surfaces.

3.13-30 (Policy CO 4.3.2): On previously developed sites proposed for major alteration, provide stormwater management improvements to restore natural infiltration, as required by the reviewing authority.

3.13-31 (Policy CO 4.3.3): Provide flexibility for design standards for street width, sidewalk width, parking, and other impervious surfaces when it can be shown that such reductions will not have negative impacts and will provide the benefits of stormwater retention, groundwater infiltration, reduction of heat islands, enhancement of habitat and biodiversity, saving of significant trees or planting of new trees, or other environmental benefit.

3.13-32 (Policy CO 4.3.4): Encourage and promote the use of new materials and technology for improved stormwater management, such as pervious paving, green roofs, rain gardens, and vegetated swales.

3.13-33 (Policy CO 4.3.5): Where detention and retention basins or ponds are required, seek methods to integrate these areas into the landscaping design of the site

as amenity areas, such as a network of small ephemeral swales treated with attractive planting.

3.13-34 (Policy CO 4.3.6): Discourage the use of mounded turf and lawn areas which drain onto adjacent sidewalks and parking lots, replacing these areas with landscape designs that retain runoff and allow infiltration.

3.13-35 (Policy CO 4.3.7): Reduce the amount of pollutants entering the Santa Clara River and its tributaries by capturing and treating stormwater runoff at the source, to the extent possible.

3.13-36 (Policy CO 8.3.1): Evaluate development proposals for consistency with the ordinances developed through the County's Green Building Program.

3.13-37 (Policy CO 10.1.9): Preserve forested areas, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors, wetlands, watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and other open space that provides nature carbon sequestration benefits.

3.13-38 (Policy S 2.1.2): Promote Low Impact Development standards on development sites, including but not limited to minimizing impervious surface area and promoting infiltration, in order to reduce the flow and velocity of stormwater runoff throughout the watershed.

3.13-39 (Policy CO 1.4.1): In cooperation with other appropriate agencies, identify pollution sources and adopt strategies to reduce emissions into air and water bodies.

3.13-40 (Policy CO 1.4.2): In cooperation with other appropriate agencies, abate or remediate known areas of contamination, and limit the effects of any such areas on public health.

3.13-41 (Policy CO 4.4.2): Support the cooperative efforts of property owners and appropriate agencies to eliminate perchlorate contamination on the Whittaker-Bermite property and eliminate the use of any industrial chemicals or wastes in a manner that threatens groundwater quality.

3.13-42 (Policy S 4.1.2): Coordinate with other agencies to address contamination of soil and groundwater from hazardous materials on various sites, and require that contamination be cleaned up to the satisfaction of the City and other responsible agencies prior to issuance of any permits for new development.

Outside CLWA Service Area

The following measures, which are fashioned as performance standards for various project types, are designed to lessen water service impacts, in conjunction with mitigation measures 3.13-1 and 3.13-2, outside of CLWA's service area:

3.13-43: Small Project (1 to 4 Dwelling Units), including Parcel Maps

Required Evidence

A. Piped Water:
   1. Will-serve letter from purveyor.
B. Well Water, On-Site (BOTH required):
   1. Well Capacity Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health
   2. Water Quality Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health
C. Well Water, Shared (ALL 3 required):
   1. Copy of valid Shared Water Well approval
   2. Well Capacity Test (as above)
   3. Water Quality Test (as above)

3.13-44: Multi-Unit Project (5 Dwelling Units or more), including Tract Maps

Required Evidence

A. Piped Water (BOTH required):
   1. Will-serve letter from purveyor
   2. Water Supply Assessment following SB610 requirements, where required by State law
B. Well, On-Site (BOTH required):
   1. Well Capacity Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health
   2. Water Quality Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health
C. Well, Shared (ALL 3 required):
   1. Copy of valid Shared Water Well approval
   2. Well Capacity Test (as above)
   3. Water Quality Test (as above)

3.13-45: Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Project (less than 3,000 square feet of floor area)

Required Evidence

A. Piped Water:
   1. Will-serve letter from purveyor

B. Well Water, On-Site (BOTH required):
   1. Well Capacity Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health
   2. Water Quality Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health

C. Well Water, Shared (ALL 3 required):
   1. Copy of valid Shared Water Well approval
   2. Well Capacity Test (as above)
   3. Water Quality Test (as above)

3.13-46: Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Project (3,000 square feet of floor area or more)

Required Evidence

A. Piped Water (BOTH required):
   1. Will-serve letter from purveyor
   2. Water Supply Assessment following SB610 requirements, where required by State law

B. Well, On-Site (BOTH required):
   1. Well Capacity Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health
   2. Water Quality Test, in accordance with the requirements of the County Department of Public Health

C. Well, Shared (ALL 3 required):
   1. Copy of valid Shared Water Well approval
   2. Well Capacity Test (as above)
   3. Water Quality Test (as above)

2.5.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and will substantially lessen the proposed Area Plan's water service-related impacts. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan which would mitigate, in part, the significant water service impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in the Final EIR. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce all the identified significant impacts to a level below significant. Therefore, these impacts (i.e., those associated with provision of water service outside of CLWA's service area) must be considered unavoidably significant even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified water

service-related impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable water service impacts of the proposed Area Plan.

2.6 Utilities And Infrastructure

2.6.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

As considered in **Section 3.17**, Utilities and Infrastructure, of the Final EIR, impacts to solid waste would be significant at the project- and cumulative-levels because the County's Planning Area is not served by existing landfills with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate solid waste disposal needs. More specifically, a disposal capacity shortfall is expected to occur beginning in 2014 at County landfills; the shortfall is estimated to begin at 1,172 tons per day in 2014 and increase to 11,665 tons per day by 2023.

With respect to electricity and natural gas, the proposed Area Plan would increase demand for both types of utilities, thereby creating a potentially significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels.

2.6.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that no feasible mitigation measures exist to avoid or mitigate below a level of significance the proposed Area Plan's identified impacts on utilities and infrastructure, and specifically solid waste. However, the following feasible mitigation measures would substantially lessen the significant impact identified in the Final EIR:

3.17-1 The County of Los Angeles shall follow state regulations in implementing the goals, policies, and programs identified in the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Plan in order to achieve and maintain a minimum of 50 percent reduction in solid waste disposal through source reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting.

3.17-2 The County shall require all future commercial, industrial and multifamily residential development to provide adequate areas for the collection and loading of recyclable materials (i.e., paper products, glass, and other recyclables) in compliance with the State Model Ordinance, implemented on September 1, 1994, in accordance with AB 1327, Chapter 18, California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act of 1991.

3.17-3 The County shall require all development projects to coordinate with appropriate County agencies to ensure that there is adequate waste disposal capacity to meet the waste disposal requirements of the County's Planning Area, and the County shall recommend that all development projects incorporate measures to promote waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting.

3.17-4 All new development in the County's Planning Area will be required to implement existing and future waste reduction programs in conformance with the County's Planning Area SRRE program.

3.17-5 Any hazardous waste that is generated on-site, or is found on site during demolition, rehabilitation, or new construction activities shall be remediated, stored, handled, and transported in compliance per appropriate local, state, and federal laws, as well as with the County's SRRE.

The Commission further finds that, based on substantial evidence in the record, potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan relative to electricity and natural gas are reduced to less-than-significant levels by implementation of the following mitigation measures:

3.17-6 The County shall review all development proposals to guarantee that sufficient energy resources and facilities are available to supply adequate energy to the proposed project and associated uses prior to approval.

3.17-7 The County shall review all development plans to guarantee that energy conservation and efficiency standards of Title 24 are met and are incorporated into the design of the proposed project prior to approval.

2.6.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and will substantially lessen the proposed Area Plan's impacts to utilities and infrastructure. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan which would mitigate, in part, the significant impacts to utilities and infrastructure attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in the Final EIR. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce the identified significant impacts to solid waste to a level below significant. Therefore, these impacts must be considered unavoidably significant even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified solid waste-related impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable impacts of the proposed Area Plan to solid waste.

2.7 NOISE

2.7.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

As considered in **Section 3.18**, Noise, of the Final EIR, the proposed Area Plan would result in potentially significant construction noise and vibration impacts at the project- and cumulative-levels during build out within the County's Planning Area, particularly as none of the proposed Area Plan's policies address vibration issues. Additionally, the proposed Area Plan would result

in potentially significant operational noise impacts at the project- and cumulative-levels. Motor vehicles currently comprise the predominant noise source in the OVOV Planning Area. As development occurs within the OVOV Planning Area, significant construction noise would occasionally occur. Policies within the proposed Area Plan would not reduce operational noise impacts to less than significant; additionally, it is not always possible to reduce construction noise impacts to below standards set forth in the County's Noise Ordinance. Mitigation is recommended to reduce construction vibration impacts during pile driving by using cast-in-drilled-hole piles. Cast-in-place pile driving generally produces noise levels approximately 10 to 15 dB lower than pile driving. Construction noise impacts would, nonetheless, remain significant. Therefore, short-term construction noise impacts would be unavoidably significant for the duration of the construction activities. Short-term noise and vibration impacts from the pile driving would be unavoidably significant for the duration of the pile driving. While the County proposes noise policies to reduce impacts, operational noise impacts would exceed noise standards and would also be significant and unavoidable.

2.7.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that no feasible mitigation measures exist to avoid or mitigate below a level of significance the proposed Area Plan's identified construction-related and operational noise impacts. However, the following feasible mitigation measures would substantially lessen the significant impacts identified in the Final EIR:

3.18-1 To reduce construction vibration impacts, to the extent feasible, cast-in-drilled-hole piles shall be used in lieu of pile driving.

Pile drilling is an alternate method of pile installation where a hole is drilled into the ground up to the required elevations and concrete is then cast into it. The estimated noise level of pile drilling at 50 feet is 80 to 95 dB(A) L_{eq} compared to 90 to 105 dB(A) L_{eq} of conventional pile driving.[2] Therefore, pile drilling generally produces noise levels approximately 10 to 15 dB lower than pile driving.

3.18-2 Maintain adequate buffer distances from nearby residences to freeways, high traffic volume roads, railroads, airports, mining centers and other existing processing plants where the public may be affected by noise and particle emissions.

[2] US Environmental Protection Agency, *Noise from Construction Equipment and Operations, Building Equipment, and Home Appliances*, December 1971.

3.18-3 The construction of residential developments should be limited to buildings with special filtration units or discouraged at distances of 1,500 feet or less from freeways, depending upon traffic volume.

3.18-4 Sound barriers should be required of the owners of the proposed sensitive land uses adjacent to high noise sources, to protect the public from significant noise impacts.

3.18-5 The California Department of Transportation should be contacted when residential projects, schools, hospitals, convalescent homes, and other sensitive land uses are to be built so that appropriate sound barriers or sound walls are constructed along Interstate 5 and State Route 14 regardless of setbacks or other sound attenuation.

3.18-6 The placement of telecommunication towers and antennas power boxes should comply with noise ordinances. All related equipment should be rated at 45 dB(A).

3.18-7 Consider engineering controls or better alternative fuels for the control of greenhouse gases, particle matter, carbon print, criteria air pollutants and non regulated emissions associated with the construction and operational phases of future projects.

2.7.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and will substantially lessen the proposed Area Plan's construction-related and operational noise impacts. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan which would mitigate, in part, the significant noise impacts attributable to the proposed Area Plan, as identified in the Final EIR. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce all the identified significant impacts to a level below significant. Therefore, these impacts must be considered unavoidably significant even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(3), as described in the Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Commission has determined that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the alternatives identified in the EIR, and the identified noise-related impacts are thereby acceptable because of specific overriding considerations (*see* **Section 6.0**, below), which outweigh the significant unavoidable noise impacts of the proposed Area Plan.

3.0 FINDINGS ON SIGNIFICANT BUT MITIGATED IMPACTS

This section identifies significant adverse impacts of the proposed Area Plan to transportation and circulation, cultural resources, geology, soils, seismicity, hydrology and water quality, and public services that require findings to be made under Public Resources Code Section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091. On the basis of information in the Final EIR, the Commission

finds that, based upon substantial evidence in the record, adoption of the mitigation measures set forth below will reduce the identified significant impacts to less-than-significant levels.

3.1 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

3.1.1 Potential Significant Impacts

As addressed in **Section 3.2**, Transportation and Circulation, of the Final EIR, adherence to the proposed Area Plan's policies would ensure that the planned improvements to Interstate 5 and State Route 14 would be implemented; with these roadway improvements, operating conditions along both freeways would improve. However, operating conditions along the Congestion Management Plan ("CMP") roadways only would improve with implementation of the necessary roadway improvements. Absent such improvements, the proposed Area Plan could exceed the levels of service standard established by the CMP, which is a potentially significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels.

3.1.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that, based on substantial evidence in the record, potentially significant transportation and circulation impacts of the proposed Area Plan are reduced to less-than-significant levels by implementation of the following mitigation measures:

3.2-1 Both the County of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Clarita shall work with Caltrans as they add additional lanes to the I-5 freeway between the SR-14 interchange and the Parker Road interchange. This improvement includes extending the existing HOV lanes from the SR-14 interchange to just south of the Parker Road interchange, incorporating truck climbing lanes from the Pico Canyon Road/Lyons Avenue interchange to the SR-14 interchange and constructing or extending auxiliary lanes between interchanges at six locations.

3.2-2 The County shall continue to participate in implementing short-term measures of the North County Combined Highway Corridors Study, including adding additional lanes to the SR-14 to create a minimum of three lanes in each direction. Participation for long-term measures includes the completion of SR-14 to four lanes in each direction between the Newhall Avenue interchange and the Sand Canyon Interchange and to add a dedicated truck lane between the I-5 freeway and the Placerita Canyon Road interchange.

3.2-3 The County shall continue to monitor potential impacts on roadway segments and intersections on a project-by-project basis as buildout occurs by requiring traffic studies for all projects that could significantly impact traffic and circulation patterns.

3.1.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and reduce the potentially significant transportation and circulation impacts of the proposed Area Plan to less-than-significant levels. Accordingly, the Commission finds that, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan, which mitigate or avoid all potentially significant transportation and circulation impacts impacts of the proposed Area Plan as identified in the Final EIR.

3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

3.2.1 Potential Significant Impacts

Although the proposed Area Plan's policies are designed to protect, preserve and enhance cultural resources, **Section 3.8**, Cultural Resources, of the Final EIR concluded that the proposed Area Plan would result in potentially substantial adverse changes in the significance of historical and archaeological resources at the project- and cumulative-levels. In addition, although the proposed Area Plan's policies would reduce impacts to paleontological and/or unique geologic resources, the policies do not identify general mitigation measures required if significant resources are found to by impacted by development allowed under the proposed Area Plan, because policies for archaeological impacts would need to be more definitive than a general policy; therefore, impacts would be potentially significant at the project- and cumulative-levels. Similarly, the proposed Area Plan may result in the potential disturbance of human remains, which is significant at the project- and cumulative-levels.

3.2.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that, based upon substantial evidence in the record, potentially significant cultural resource impacts of the proposed Area Plan are reduced to less-than-significant levels with implementation of the following mitigation measures:

3.8-1 Avoidance is the preferred treatment for cultural resources. Where feasible, project plans shall be developed to allow avoidance of cultural resources. Where avoidance of construction impacts is possible, covering of the cultural resource site with a layer of chemically stable soil and avoidance planting (e.g., planting of prickly pear cactus) shall be employed to ensure that indirect impacts from increased public availability to the site are avoided. Where avoidance is selected, cultural resource sites shall be deeded into permanent conservation easements or dedicated open space.

3.8-2 If avoidance and/or preservation of in place cultural resources is not possible, the following mitigation measures shall be initiated for each impacted site:

- A participant-observer as determined by the appropriate Indian Band or Tribe shall be used during archaeological testing or excavation in the project site.

- Prior to the issuance of a grading permit for the project, the project proponent shall develop a test level research design detailing how the cultural resource investigation shall be executed and providing specific research questions that shall be addressed through the excavation program. In particular, the testing program shall characterize the site constituents, horizontal and vertical extent, and, if possible, period of use. The testing program shall also address the California Register and National Register eligibility of the cultural resource and make recommendations as to the suitability of the resource for listing on either Register. The research design shall be submitted to the County of Los Angeles Regional Park and Open-Space District for review and comment. For sites determined, through the Testing Program, to be ineligible for listing on either the California or National Register, execution of the Testing Program will suffice as mitigation of project impacts to this resource.

3.8-3 In the unlikely event that artifacts are found during grading within the County's Planning Area or future roadway extensions, an archaeologist will be notified to stabilize, recover, and evaluate such finds.

3.8-4 Prior to grading, as part of an inspection testing program, a Los Angeles County Natural History Museum-approved inspector is to be on site to salvage scientifically significant fossil remains. The duration of these inspections depends on the potential for the discovery of fossils, the rate of excavation, and the abundance of fossils. Geological formations (like the Saugus Formation) with a high potential will initially require full time monitoring during grading activities. Geologic formations (like the Quaternary terrace deposits) with a moderate potential will initially require half-time monitoring. If fossil production is lower than expected, the duration of monitoring efforts should be reduced. Should the excavations yield significant paleontological resources, excavation is to be stopped or redirected until the extent of the find is established and the resources are salvaged. A report of the inspection testing program shall include an itemized inventory of the fossils, pertinent geologic and stratigraphic data, and field notes of the collectors and include recommendations for future monitoring efforts in the County's Planning Area. Prior to grading, an agreement shall be reached with a suitable public, non-profit scientific repository, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History or similar institution, regarding acceptance of fossil collections.

3.8-5 For archeological sites accidentally discovered during future construction, there shall be an immediate evaluation of the find by a qualified archeologist. If the find is determined to be a historical or unique archeological resource, as defined under CEQA, contingency funding and a time allotment sufficient to allow for implementation of avoidance measures or appropriate mitigation shall be provided. Construction work may continue on other parts of the construction site while historical/archeological mitigation takes place, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21083.2(i).

3.8-6 During grading activities, in the unlikely event that artifacts are found during grading within the planning area or future roadway extensions, a paleontologist will be notified to stabilize, recover and evaluate such finds.

3.8-7 If human remains are encountered during a public or private construction activity, other than at a cemetery, State Health and Safety Code 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the Los Angeles County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98. The Los Angeles County Coroner must be notified within 24 hours.

- If the coroner determines that the burial is not historic, but prehistoric, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) must be contacted to determine the most likely descendent (MLD) for this area. The MLD may become involved with the disposition of the burial following scientific analysis.

3.2.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and reduce the potentially significant cultural resource impacts of the proposed Area Plan to less-than-significant levels. Accordingly, the Commission finds that, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan, which mitigate or avoid potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan to cultural resources as identified in the Final EIR.

3.3 GEOLOGY, SOILS, SEISMICITY

3.3.1 Potential Significant Impacts

As evaluated in **Section 3.9**, Geology, Soils, Seismicity, of the Final EIR, the proposed Area Plan would result in potentially significant impacts attributable to the rupture of unidentified fault zones and the corresponding risk of loss, injury or death. Also, the County's Planning Area has experienced earthquakes, and contains areas susceptible to liquefaction and landslides. As a result, people or structures may be exposed to potentially substantial adverse effects involving strong seismic ground shaking, ground failure (including liquefaction), and landslides. The

proposed Area Plan also may result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil. These are potentially significant impacts at the project- and cumulative-levels.

3.3.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that, based on substantial evidence in the record, potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan to geology, soils and seismicity are reduced to less-than-significant levels by implementation of the following mitigation measures:

3.9-1 Before a project is approved or otherwise permitted within an Alquist-Priolo Zone within the County's Planning Area, or within 150 feet of any other active or potentially active fault mapped in a published United States Geologic Survey (USGS) or within other potential earthquake hazard area (as determined by the County Geologist), a site-specific geologic investigation shall be prepared to assess potential seismic hazards resulting from development of an individual project site within the County's Planning Area. Where and when required, the geotechnical investigation shall address the issue(s), hazard(s), and geographic area(s) determined by the County Geologist to be relevant to each individual development project under the proposed Area Plan. The site-specific geotechnical investigation shall incorporate up-to-date data from government and non-government sources.

Based on the site-specific geotechnical investigation, no structures intended for human occupancy shall be constructed across active faults. This site-specific evaluation and written report shall be prepared by a licensed geotechnical engineer and shall be submitted to the County Geologist for review and approval prior to the issuance of building occupancy permits. If an active fault is discovered, that has not previously been recorded, any structure intended for human occupancy shall be set back at least 50 feet from the fault. A larger or smaller setback may be established if such a setback is supported by adequate evidence as presented to and accepted by the County Geologist.

3.9-2 The design and construction of structures and facilities shall adhere to the standards and requirements detailed in the California Building Code (California Code of Regulations, Title 24), Los Angeles County Building Code, Title 26, and/or professional engineering standards appropriate for the seismic zone in which such construction within the County would occur. Conformance with these design standards shall be enforced through building plan review and approval by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Building and Safety Division prior to the issuance of building permits for any structure or facility.

3.9-3 As determined by the County Geologist, a site-specific assessment shall be prepared to ascertain ground shaking impacts resulting from development.

The site-specific ground shaking assessment shall incorporate up-to-date data regarding ground shaking probabilities and strengths from government and non-government sources and may be included as part of any site-specific geotechnical investigation as required in MM 3.9-1. The site-specific ground shaking assessment shall include specific measures to reduce the significance of potential ground shaking hazards to the individual development. The site-specific ground shaking assessment shall be prepared by a licensed geotechnical engineer and shall be submitted to the County Geologist for review and approval prior to the issuance of building permits.

3.9-4 The standards stated in MM 3.9.2 and MM 3.9.3 shall apply to any structure or facility that undergoes expansion, remodeling, renovation, refurbishment or other modification within the County's Planning Area.

3.9-5 As determined by the County Geologist, a site-specific assessment shall be prepared to ascertain potential liquefaction impacts resulting from development. The site-specific liquefaction assessment shall incorporate up-to-date data regarding liquefaction potential of site specific projects from government and non-government sources and may be included as part of any site-specific geotechnical investigation. This site-specific ground shaking assessment shall be prepared by a licensed geotechnical engineer and shall be submitted to the County Geologist for review and approval prior to the issuance of building occupancy permits.

3.9-6 Where development is proposed within an identified or potential liquefaction hazard area or as defined by the County Geologist, adequate and appropriate measures such as design foundations in a manner that limits the effects of liquefaction, the placement of an engineered fill with low liquefaction potential, and the alternative siting of structures in areas with a lower liquefaction risk, shall be implemented to reduce potential liquefaction hazards. Any and all such measures shall be submitted to the County Geologist and the County Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division, for review prior to the approval of the building permits.

3.9-7 All engineered slopes shall be designed to reduce seismically induced failure. For lower risk projects, (projects that are not located in areas of seismically induced ground failure), slope design shall be based on pseudo-static stability analysis (a test to determine the strength of horizontal movement of retaining walls during a seismic event) using soil engineering parameters established on a site-specific basis. For higher risk projects (projects located in areas of seismically induced ground failure), the stability analyses that will be required shall factor in the intensity of expected ground shaking, prior to the issuance of building occupancy permits for the proposed developments.

3.9-8 The County of Los Angeles, where required, and in accordance with issuance of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, shall require the construction and/or grading contractor for individual developments to establish and implement specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) at time of project implementation.

3.9-9 Prior to any development within the County's Planning Area, a Grading Plan shall be submitted to the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Building and Safety Division and/or the County Geologist for review and approval. As required by the County of Los Angeles, the grading plan shall include soil erosion and sediment control plans. Measures included in individual erosion control plans may include, but shall not be limited to the following:

a. Grading and development plans shall be designed in a manner which minimizes the amount of terrain modification.
b. Surface water shall be controlled and diverted around potential landslide areas to prevent erosion and saturation of slopes.
c. Structures shall not be sited on or below identified landslides unless slides are stabilized.
d. The extent and duration of ground disturbing activities during and immediately following periods of rain shall be limited, to avoid the potential for erosion which may be accelerated by rainfall on exposed soils.
e. To the extent possible, the amount of cut and fill shall be balanced.
f. The amount of water entering and exiting a graded site shall be limited though the placement of interceptor trenches or other erosion control devices.
g. Erosion and sediment control plans shall be submitted to the County for review and approval prior to the issuance of grading permits.

3.9-10 Where required, drainage design measures shall be incorporated into the final design of individual projects on site. These measures shall include, but will not be limited to:

a. Runoff entering developing areas shall be collected into surface and subsurface drains for removal to nearby drainages.
b. Runoff generated above steep slopes or poorly vegetated areas shall be captured and conveyed to nearby drainages.
c. Runoff generated on paved or covered areas shall be conveyed via swales and drains to natural drainage courses.
d. Disturbed areas that have been identified as highly erosive shall be (re)vegetated.
e. Irrigation systems shall be designed, installed, and maintained in a manner which minimizes runoff.
f. The landscape scheme for projects within the project site shall utilize drought-tolerant plants.
g. Erosion control devices such as rip-rap, gabions, small check dams, etc., may be utilized in gullies and active stream channels to reduce erosion.

3.3.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and reduce the identified potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan to geology, soils, and seismicity to less-than-significant levels. Accordingly, the Commission finds that, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan, which mitigate or avoid potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan to geology, soils, and seismicity as identified in the Final EIR.

3.4 Hydrology And Water Quality

3.4.1 Potential Significant Impacts

As explained in **Section 3.12**, Hydrology and Water Quality, of the Final EIR, the proposed Area Plan's policies promote the use of design and engineering techniques that promote infiltration, reduce the volume and rate of stormwater runoff, and reduce the pollutants in stormwater runoff. Nonetheless, the proposed Area Plan would result in a potentially significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels attributable to the creation or contribution of runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems, or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. The proposed Area Plan's policies also do not implement specific requirements to protect residential development within the 100-year floodplain, resulting in a potentially significant impact at the project- and cumulative-levels.

3.4.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that, based upon substantial evidence in the record, potentially significant hydrology and water quality-related impacts of the proposed Area Plan are reduced to less-than-significant levels with implementation of the following mitigation measures:

3.12-1 The County shall prohibit alteration of floodways and channelization unless alternative methods of flood control are found to be technically, economically, and practicably infeasible.

3.12-2 The County shall not require all land uses to withstand flooding. These may include land uses such as agricultural, golf courses, and trails. For these land uses, water flows shall not be obstructed, and upstream and downstream properties, shall not be adversely affected by increased velocities, erosion backwater effects, concentration of flows, and adverse impacts to water quality from point and nonpoint sources of pollution.

3.12-3 The County shall require that all structures (residential, commercial, and industrial) be flood-proofed from the 100-year storm flows. All buildings constructed within a riverine floodplain, (i.e., Flood Zones A, AO, AH, AE and A1 through A30 as delineated on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the City of Santa Clarita, Map revised September 29, 1989), must be elevated so that the lowest floor is at or above the Base Flood Elevation in accordance with the effective Flood Insurance Rate Map.

3.12-4 The County shall require that for agricultural, recreation, or other low-density uses, flows are not obstructed and that upstream and downstream properties are not adversely affected by increased velocities, erosion backwater effects, or concentration of flows.

3.12-5 Any development that is located within a Regulatory Floodway as delineated on the Flood Insurance Rate Map for the County's Planning Area must not increase base flood elevations. (Development means any man-made change improved or unimproved real estate, including but not limited to buildings, other structures, mining, dredging, filling, grading, paving, excavation or drilling operations, and storage of equipment or materials). A hydrologic and hydraulic analysis shall be performed prior to the start of development, and must demonstrate that the development would not cause any rise in base flood levels and additionally would not allow any rise within regulatory floodways.

3.4.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and reduce the identified potentially significant hydrology and water quality-related impacts of the proposed Area Plan to less-than-significant levels. Accordingly, the Commission finds that, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan, which mitigate or avoid potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan to hydrology and water quality as identified in the Final EIR.

3.5 PUBLIC SERVICES

3.5.1 Potential Significant Impacts

As addressed in **Section 3.15**, Public Services, of the Final EIR, the proposed Area Plan would increase the demand for library services beyond the existing capacities of libraries serving the County's Planning Area. Further, the proposed Area Plan would increase the demand for fire protection and law enforcement services from the Los Angeles County's Fire and Sheriff Departments beyond existing resource levels. These are potentially significant impacts at the project- and cumulative-levels.

3.5.2 Mitigation Measures

The Commission finds that, based upon substantial evidence in the record, potentially significant public service-related impacts of the proposed Area Plan are reduced to less-than-significant levels with implementation of the following mitigation measures:

3.15-1 Project developers shall pay the current library fee at the time of building permit issuance ($790.00 per residential unit as of August 2008) to the County of Los Angeles to offset the demand for library items and building square footage generated by the proposed project. The library mitigation payment shall be made on a building permit by building permit basis by the developer for residential projects.

3.15-2 Concurrent with the issuance of building permits, the project applicant shall participate in the Developer Fee Program to the satisfaction of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department.

3.15-3 Adequate water availability shall be provided to service construction activities of any project to the satisfaction of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department.

3.15-4 Development applicant(s) shall be required to pay the Los Angeles County Sheriff's established law enforcement facility fees for North Los Angeles County prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy on any structure. The fees are for the acquisition and construction of public facilities to provide adequate service to the residents of the County's Planning Area.

3.5.3 Findings

The Commission finds that the above mitigation measures are feasible, are adopted, and reduce the identified potentially significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan on public services to less-than-significant levels. Accordingly, the Commission finds that, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, subdivision (a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the proposed Area Plan,

which mitigate or avoid potentially significant public service-related impacts of the proposed Area Plan as identified in the Final EIR.

4.0 FINDINGS ON LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The Commission finds that, based on substantial evidence in the record, the following impacts associated with the proposed Area Plan are not significant at the project- and cumulative-levels. Accordingly, changes or alterations to the proposed Area Plan are neither required nor incorporated, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081, subdivision (a)(1), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, subdivision (a)(1). Similarly, no mitigation is required pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4, subdivision (a)(3).

Environmental Resource Category	***Environmental Impact***
Land Use	• No physical division of an established community due to future development; • No conflict with the Southern California Association of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan Goals and Policies and Compass/Growth Visioning Principles; • No conflict with an applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.
Transportation and Circulation	• No potentially significant increase in traffic; • No change in air traffic patterns; • No substantial increase in hazards due to a roadway design feature or the allowance of incompatible uses; • No inadequate emergency access; • No generation of a parking demand that exceeds municipal code-required parking capacity; • No conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation; • No creation of a hazard or barrier for pedestrians or bicyclists.
Air Quality	• No conflict with SCAQMD's 2007 Air Quality Management Plan.
Global Climate Change	• No conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions.
Agricultural Resources	• No conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use.
Aesthetics	• No potentially significant impacts to scenic vistas; • No potentially significant impacts to scenic resources within a locally designated scenic highway; • No potentially significant impact to the existing visual character or quality of the County's Planning Area; • No creation of a new source of substantial light or glare that would potentially affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Environmental Resource Category	***Environmental Impact***
Biological Resources	• No potentially significant effect on federally-protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; • No potentially significant conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources; • No potentially significant conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional or state Habitat Conservation Plan.
Geology, Soils, Seismicity	• No potentially significant subsidence impacts; • No potentially significant impacts attributable to expansive soils; • No potentially significant impacts attributable to the placement of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems on soils that cannot support such infrastructure.
Mineral Resources	• No potentially significant impact due to the loss of availability of mineral resources; • No potentially significant impact due to the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	• No potentially significant hazard to the public or environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials; • No potentially significant hazard to the public or environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials; • No potentially significant hazardous emissions or the handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school; • No potentially significant hazard to the public or environment attributable to a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5; • No potentially significant safety hazards for people residing or working in the vicinity of Agua Dulce Airpark; • No potentially significant safety hazards for people residing or working in the vicinity of private airstrips; • No potentially significant impairment of or interference with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; • No potentially significant exposure of people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.
Hydrology and Water Quality	• No potentially significant impact attributable to the exposure of people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam.
Water Service	• No substantial depletion of groundwater supplies or substantially interference with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater

Environmental Resource Category	***Environmental Impact***
	table level; • No potentially significant spreading of perchlorate in groundwater beyond the wells currently affected by perchlorate.
Community Services	• No potentially significant impact to the current assisted-living housing for seniors and the need for medical services; • No potentially significant impact to the availability of future childcare programs and programs for the youth; • No potentially significant impact on the access for locations of different cultural amenities; • No potentially significant impact on emergency shelters and the availability of affordable housing.
Public Services	• No potentially significant impact attributable to increased demand for health and social services beyond the capacities of those serving the County's Planning Area; • No potentially significant impact attributable to increased demand for school facilities and services beyond the enrollment capacities of school facilities serving the County's Planning Area.
Parks and Recreation	• No increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks, or other recreational facilities, resulting in substantial physical deterioration of the facilities; • No potentially adverse physical effects on the environment attributable to the construction of new or expansion of existing recreational facilities.
Utilities and Infrastructure	• No potential exceedance of wastewater treatment requirements of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board; • No construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities, or the expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could result in potentially significant environmental effects; • Not likely to result in a determination by a wastewater treatment provider serving the County's Planning Area that it has inadequate capacity to serve the project's anticipated demand; • No non-compliance with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste; • No potentially significant impact to telecommunications.
Population and Housing	• No potentially significant impact to population growth in the County's Planning Area; • No potentially significant impact due to the displacement of substantial numbers of existing housing, thereby necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere; • No potentially significant impact due to the displacement of substantial numbers of people, thereby necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Environmental Resource Category	***Environmental Impact***
Other Environmental Changes	• No significant irreversible commitment of resources, irreversible environmental changes, or environmental damage from accidents.
Growth-Inducing Impacts	• No significant impacts related to growth inducement.

5.0 FEASIBILITY OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The Final EIR concluded that the proposed Area Plan would result in significant unavoidable impacts relating to air quality, global climate change, agricultural resources, water supply, biological resources, utilities and infrastructure, and noise. Based on considerations of avoiding or substantially lessening these unavoidable significant impacts, as well as consideration of the basic proposed Area Plan objectives and public comments, the following alternatives to the proposed Area Plan were identified:

- Alternative 1: No Project/Existing SVC (Santa Clarita Valley) Area Plan;
- Alternative 2: Preservation Corridor Alternative;
- Alternative 3: Transit Corridor/Increased Employment Opportunity Alternative.

Based on the analysis presented in the EIR, the environmentally superior alternative is Alternative 2, which would avoid the proposed Area Plan's unavoidably significant impacts to biologically resources. However, this alternative does not meet as many of the objectives as the proposed Area Plan, as discussed further below.

7.1 ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO PROJECT/EXISTING SCV AREA PLAN

Under Alternative 1, the proposed Area Plan would not be adopted or implemented, and build out within the County's Planning Area would continue to occur under the existing Area Plan and adopted Specific Plans. Accordingly, this alternative does not represent a "no build" scenario in which no future development would occur.

The impacts associated with the continued use of the existing Area Plan under Alternative 1 would potentially result in comparable impacts as the proposed Area Plan and impacts could be potentially greater. Those impacts that were found to be similar to the proposed Area Plan are: agricultural resources, biological resources, water service, mineral resources, homelessness and emergency shelters, education, law enforcement, noise, and population and housing. With implementation of Alternative 1, the following impacts were found to be greater than those of the proposed Area Plan: cultural resources, soils, geology, and seismicity; traffic, hydrology hazards and hazardous materials, seniors and youth, cultural amenities, libraries, health services, fire protection, parks and recreation, and electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications. Impacts on air quality, water service, global climate change, biological resources, solid waste, and noise sources would remain significant and unavoidable.

Alternative 1 would not achieve the following objectives to the same degree as the proposed Area Plan:

4. Higher density development, including multi-family housing and mixed use projects that integrate housing with commercial uses, shall be targeted in areas adjacent to existing and planned transit corridors, stations, and key activity centers, such as the Valencia Town Center and portions of Newhall and Soledad Canyon Road.

8. Development shall be located and designed to minimize the impact on the Valley topography, emphasizing the use of grading techniques for development pads that mimic the natural topography in lieu of repetitive flat pads to the extent feasible and consistent with a community's open space objectives.

11. New development shall be designed to improve energy efficiency, reducing energy and natural resource consumption by such techniques as the use of solar generators, recycling of treated wastewater, capture of storm runoff on site, and use of recycled materials in building construction, native and drought-tolerant landscape, and energy and water efficient appliances and systems.

18. Multi-family housing developments shall contain adequate recreational and open space amenities on-site and be designed to ensure a high quality living environment. Their architectural treatment and building massing shall complement the characteristics of surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods.

20. Housing developments located in the more urbanized communities of the Valley shall be designed to create a sense of neighborhood by

    a. promoting walkability and containing places that serve as centers of activity and identity (schools, multi-purpose facilities, parks, convenience services, neighborhood commercial centers, etc.);
    b. containing a mix of housing types, densities, and parcel sizes, avoiding large areas and an over-concentration of homogeneous density units;
    c. minimizing the dependence on, prominence, and area dedicated to the automobile;
    d. featuring architectural design treatments along all frontages of new housing to promote continuity of architectural scale and rhythm and avoid "blank walls;" and
    e. including pedestrian linkages, landscaped parkways and green corridors, and separated trails (pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian) where appropriate and feasible.

23. Older commercial areas and corridors that are economically and/or physically obsolete or deteriorated, such as portions of Castaic, Val Verde, Newhall, Lyons Avenue, Sierra Highway, Main Street, Newhall Avenue, and Soledad Canyon Road, shall be redeveloped for commercial, mixed use, residential or other appropriate uses that complement and serve adjoining land uses and can be adequately supported by the market. Where appropriate, redeveloped uses and buildings shall reflect the area's important architectural and cultural history.

27. An integrated transit system shall serve the Valley (rail, bus, shuttle, other) offering convenient alternatives to the automobile, minimizing congestion and providing access to regional transportation systems, such as Metrolink.

7.2 ALTERNATIVE 2 - PRESERVATION CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 2 would support the South Coast Missing Linkages wildlife corridor and the proposed Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) by reducing maximum allowable residential densities relative to the proposed Area Plan. More specifically, a total of 597 dwelling units would be allowed on the 5,967.5 acres within the boundary of the proposed Preservation Corridor under Alternative 2, instead of the 2,761 dwelling units allowed in that area by the proposed Area Plan. This would be achieved by changing the proposed Area Plan's land use designations in the Preservation Corridor area from Rural Land 2 (RL2, with a maximum allowable residential density of one dwelling unit per two acres) and Rural Land 5 (RL5, with a maximum allowable residential density of one dwelling unit per five acres) to Rural Land 10 (RL10, with a maximum allowable residential density of one dwelling unit per 10 acres) under this alternative. As a result, this alternative would create more open space for wildlife movement. Potential environmental impacts would be reduced under Alternative 2 as compared to the proposed Area Plan. Those impacts would include: land use, traffic and circulation, air quality, global climate change, aesthetics, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, mineral resources, hydrology and water quality, water service, community and public services, parks and recreation, noise, and population and housing. The remaining resource areas would be comparable to the proposed Area Plan and include impacts on agricultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, scenic highways, federally protected wetlands, local biologically protective policies and ordinances pertaining to SEAs, biological conflicts with local, regional, or state conservation plans, private airstrip safety hazards, and school enrollment capacities. Impacts that would remain significant and unavoidable would include: water service, utilities and infrastructure – solid waste and noise generated sources.

Projections by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) for population growth in the unincorporated North County subregion, which includes portions of the Santa Clarita Valley as well as unincoporated areas of the Antelope Valley, reflect an increase by 137,797 people (in 2005) to more than 430,000 residents in 2035. The County must plan for this growth. In 2008, the population of the unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley was 75,000 residents. Under build out of the proposed Area Plan, that population would increase by 162,387 to 237,387 residents, reflecting about 54 percent of the population predicted by SCAG for the North County subregion.

Alternative 2's provision of 2,164 fewer dwelling units than the proposed Area Plan results in accomodating 7,055 fewer residents than the proposed Area Plan. These differences are not inconsequential in light of the County's need to accommodate long term growth projections within its jurisidictinal areas.As a result, Alternative 2's overall reduction in total dwelling units and resident population is inconsistent with the following objectives of the proposed Area Plan or would not achieve these objectives to the same degree as the proposed Area Plan:

14. Valley communities shall contain a mix of uses that support the basic needs of residents - places to live, shop, recreate, meet/socialize, and enjoy the environmental setting - that are appropriate and consistent with their community character. Regionally oriented uses that serve residents of the entire Valley or export goods and services may be concentrated in key business centers rather than uniformly dispersed throughout the Valley communities.

17. The Valley is committed to providing affordable work force housing to meet the needs of individuals employed in the Santa Clarita Valley.

29. Public infrastructure shall be improved, maintained, and expanded as needed to meet the needs of projected population and employment growth and contribute to the Valley's quality of life.

7.3 ALTERNATIVE 3 - TRANSIT CORRIDOR/INCREASED EMPLOYMENT ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 3 would create a mixed-use transit corridor near Lang Station, a former train depot that could be restored as a Metrolink station. High density residential land use designations located next to a major transportation/transit corridor would support policies in the County's adopted Housing Element and the vision created in the OVOV planning process. The types of development recommended for this area would be designed at an urban density and have a mix of commercial uses. The proposed Area Plan's land use designations within the boundaries of Alternative 3 are Residential 2 (H2, with a maximum allowable residential density of two dwelling units per one acre) and Rural Land 10 (RL10). Alternative 3 would change these land use designations to Residential 30 (H30, with a maximum allowable residential density of 30 dwelling units per one acre) and Industrial Office (IO), allowing for a total of 16,251 dwelling units and a business/office park. This would create an employment center near the medium to high density multi-family housing within the Transit Corridor and would give residents an opportunity to work and live in the Valley.

Under Alternative 3, impacts less than that of the proposed Area Plan would include: land use, agricultural resources, biological resources, hazards, and hazardous materials. Potential impacts determined to be greater under Alternative 3 compared to the proposed Area Plan include transportation and circulation, air quality, global climate change, hydrology and water quality, water service, community services (except homelessness and emergency shelters), public services, parks and recreation, utilities and infrastructure—wastewater, population and housing, cultural resources, libraries, health services, education, fire services, aesthetics, and mineral resources. Impacts on biological resources, water service solid waste, and noise would remain significant and unavoidable.

Alternative 3 would not achieve the following objectives to the same degree as the proposed Area Plan:

10. Biological resources in the designated [SEAs] shall be protected through the siting and design of development to account for and be highly compatible with their resources. Specific development standards shall be identified to control the types of land use, density, building location and size, roadways and other infrastructure, landscape, drainage, and other elements to assure the protection of the critical and important plant and animal habitats of each SEA. In general, the principle shall be to minimize the intrusion and impacts of development in these areas with sufficient setbacks, or buffers, to adequately protect the resources.

20. Housing developments located in the more urbanized communities of the Valley shall be designed to create a sense of neighborhood by

    b. containing a mix of housing types, densities, and parcel sizes, avoiding large areas and an overconcentration of homogeneous density units;

A summary comparison of impacts associated with the proposed Area Plan alternatives is provided in EIR **Table 6.0-4**, **Alternatives Analysis Comparison Summary**, reproduced below. The table lists each of the proposed Area Plan alternatives, each of the environmental impact categories, and notes whether the respective alternative's impacts are greater than, similar to, or less than those of the proposed Area Plan. Specifically, where the alternative would be environmentally superior (*i.e.*, result in fewer impacts) to the proposed Area Plan, a plus (+) sign is shown; where the alternative would result in impacts greater than those associated with the proposed Area Plan, a minus (-) sign is shown; and, when impacts are comparable (*i.e.*, similar), an equal (=) sign is shown.

Table 6.0-4
Alternatives Analysis Comparison Summary

Environmental Issue Area	Proposed Area Plan Impact (After Mitigation)	Alt. 1 – No Project	Alt. 2 – Preservation Corridor	Alt. 3 – Transit Corridor/ Increased Employment Opportunity
Land Use	Less than Significant	-	+	=
Transportation and Circulation	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Air Quality	Significant and Unavoidable	=	+	-
Global Climate Change	Significant and Unavoidable	+	+	-
Agricultural Resources	Significant and Unavoidable	=	=	=
Aesthetics	Less than Significant	-	+	=
Biological Resources	Significant and Unavoidable	-	+	-
Cultural Resources	Less than Significant	+	+	-
Geology and Soils	Less than Significant	+	+	-
Mineral Resources	Less than Significant	=	+	-
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Less than Significant	+	=	=
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less than Significant	+	+	-
Water Service	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Community Services – Seniors/Youth	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Community Services – Cultural Amenities	Less than Significant	-	+	-

Community Services – Homelessness/Emergency Shelters	Less than Significant	=	+	=
Public Services – Libraries	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Public Services – Health Services	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Public Services – Education	Less than Significant	=	+	-
Public Services - Fire Protection	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Public Services – Police Protection	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Parks and Recreation	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Utilities – Wastewater	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Utilities - Solid Waste	Significant and Unavoidable	-	+	-
Utilities – Energy/Natural Gas/Telecommunications	Less than Significant	-	+	-
Noise	Significant and Unavoidable	-	+	+
Population and Housing	Less than Significant	=	+	-

6.0 STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

CEQA requires the decision-making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits of the project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve a project. If the specific economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits of the project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, those effects may be considered "acceptable." (CEQA Guidelines, §15093, subd. (a).) CEQA requires the agency to support, in writing, the specific reasons for considering a project acceptable when significant impacts are not avoided or substantially lessened. Those reasons must be based on substantial evidence in the Final EIR or elsewhere in the administrative record. (CEQA Guidelines, §15093, subd. (b).)

In accordance with the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, the Commission finds that the mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR and MMRP, when implemented, will avoid or substantially lessen virtually all of the significant effects identified in the Final EIR for the proposed Area Plan. However, certain significant impacts of the proposed Area Plan are unavoidable even after incorporation of all feasible mitigation measures. These significant unavoidable impacts are related to air quality, global climate change, agricultural resources, biological resources, water service, utilities and infrastructure, and noise. (*See* **Section 2.0**, above.)

The Commission finds that all feasible mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR that are within the purview of the County will be implemented with the proposed Area Plan, and that the remaining significant unavoidable effects are outweighed and thus are found to be acceptable due to the following specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits, based upon the facts set forth above, the Final EIR, and the record, as follows:

1. The proposed Area Plan will provide the residents, landowners, businesses, staff and policy makers, and all stakeholders in the Santa Clarita Valley with a comprehensive, long-range policy guideline for future development that has been coordinated with the City of Santa Clarita to create a single vision for future growth and preservatuion of natural resources in the Valley.

2. This City/County integrated approach allows for the phasing of new development in a manner that provides adequate infrastructure that is otherwise required to serve such new development without impacting existing residents.

3. The proposed Area Plan provides for a choice of urban, suburban and rural environments, a critical factor identified by area residents during the County and City's coordinated outreach efforts. The Area Plan's inclusion of varying residential densities will allow housing alternatives for all income levels and age preferences in proximity to transit, jobs and services.

4. The proposed Area Plan will allow for the creation of jobs and economic benefits for current and future residents of the Santa Clarita Valley by designation of appropriate areas for commercial, industrial or institutional uses, the designation of which would allow for more than 59 million square feet of new commercial, industrial or institutional uses in the Valley that would allow for creation of jobs. The proposed Area Plan further assists job creation by allowing for better access and circulation within the Valley.

5. The proposed Area Plan provides residents with adequate sports, park and recreation facilities, including integrated trail systems, and other important public services.

6. The proposed Area Plan will serve as the foundation in making land use decisions based on goals and policies related to land use, transportation routes, population growth and distribution, development, open space, resource preservation and utilization, air and water quality, noise, safety, and other related physical, social, and economic development factors.

7. The proposed Area Plan will regulate land use development so that the density of residential development and the intensity of non-residential development are appropriate to the property and to surrounding properties and neighborhoods. Accordingly, the proposed Area Plan provides for a "Valley of Villages" and greenbelts; preserves and enhances the rural, suburban and urban lifestyles and characters within the diverse communities comprising the Santa Clarita Valley; maintains the rural character of portions of the Santa Clarita Valley, such as Agua Dulce and San Francisquito Canyon; strives to create a better jobs/housing balance and reduce commuting; and, imposes various environmental protection policies.

8. The proposed Area Plan will provide a level of comprehensive planning that is desirable and more environmentally sustainable than the existing Area Plan, approved more than 25 years ago in 1984 and amended in 1990, and meets state law requirements for the County to update its Area Plan, a component of the General Plan.

9. The proposed Area Plan includes updated policies that reflect current environmental and planning trends while balancing the rights of property owners to make economically viable use of their property.

10. The proposed Area Plan allows for an appropriate number of dwelling units to be built to insure that the regional housing needs allocated to the County by the Southern California Association of Governments ("SCAG") is met.

11. The proposed Area Plan establishes a policy framework for designation and long term preservation of open space, thereby providing a wide range of community benefits.

On balance, the Commission finds that these overriding considerations, as identified in conjunction with the environmental review of impacts stemming from the proposed Area Plan, are acceptable when measured against the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts identified in the Final EIR.