

## 3. Project Description

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### 3.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site covers approximately 831 acres—670 acres in the southern portion of the City of Banning and 161 acres in unincorporated Riverside County, California. The San Bernardino National Forest borders Banning to the north; the City of Palm Springs lies 17 miles to the east; the City of San Jacinto is 9 miles to the south; and the City of Beaumont borders Banning on the west (see Figure 3-1, *Regional Location*). The Morongo Indian Reservation is northeast of Banning, and areas of unincorporated Riverside County also border Banning on the north, east, and south.

As shown in Figure 3-2, *Local Vicinity*, the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan site is an irregularly shaped area on the southern edge of the City, about 0.4 mile south of Interstate 10 (I-10), which runs east–west through the City and provides regional access to the site.

The project site is bounded by Westward Avenue on the north, Sunset Avenue and Turtle Dove Lane on the west, San Gorgonio Avenue (State Route 243, SR-243) on the east, and Coyote Trail and Old Idyllwild Road on the south (see Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*). Access to the site from I-10 is via ramps at Sunset Avenue, 22nd Street, and 8th Street, from west to east. A portion of the site (approximately 161 acres) is in the City’s sphere of influence (SOI) and is anticipated to be annexed as part of the development process.

### 3.2 STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The vision for the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan is to create a new master planned community within the City of Banning. The Specific Plan is designed to ensure that development will occur in a manner responsive to site characteristics and community goals and objectives. The objectives of the proposed project include the following:

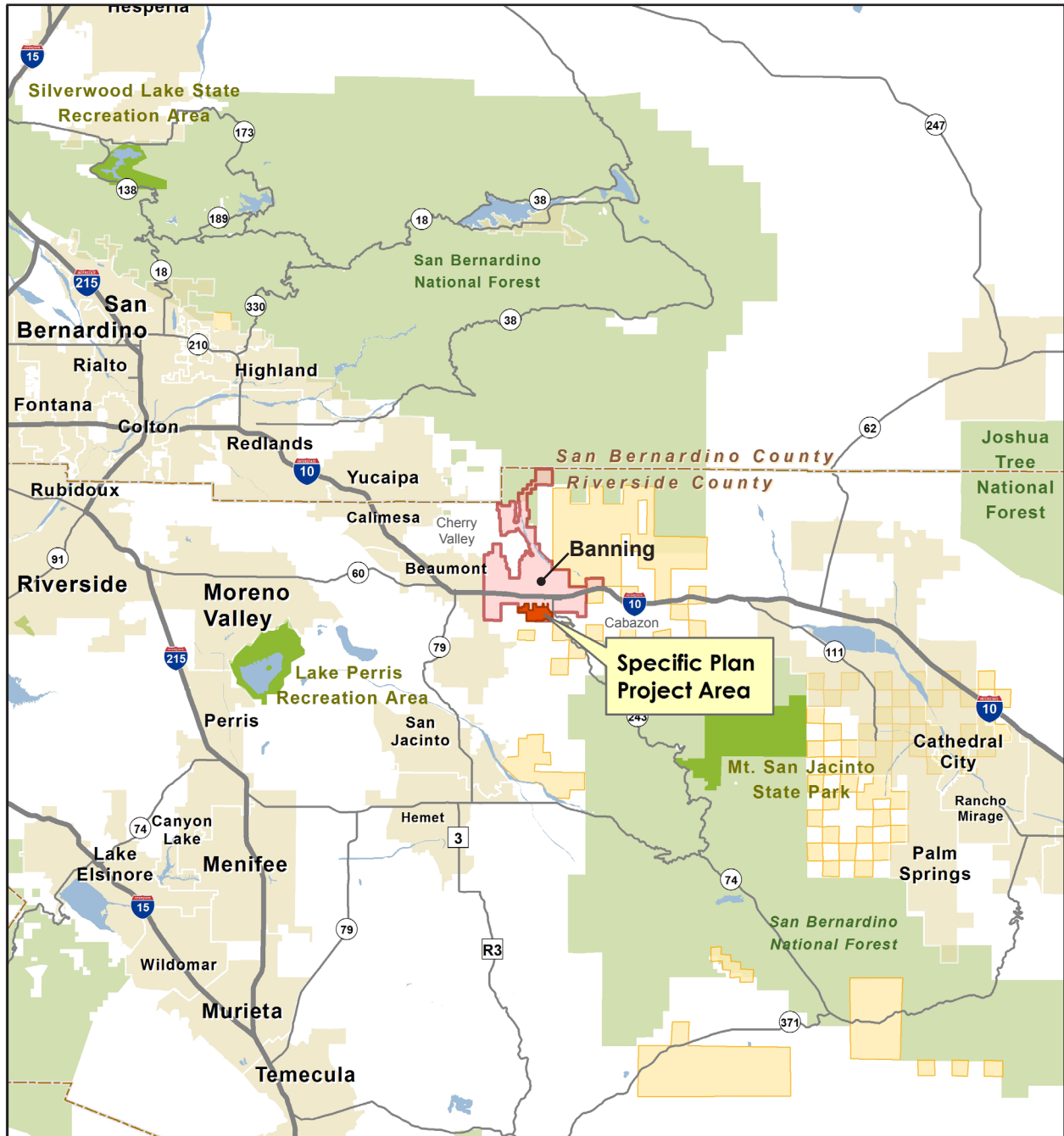
- **Master Planned Community:** Design and implement the development of a creatively designed master planned community that expresses and embodies the City’s vision of its future as articulated in the fundamental land use principles, policies, and objectives of the City’s General Plan.
- **Update the City of Banning’s General Plan:** as it relates to the project site based on current and projected market conditions while maintaining the underlying concept of comprehensive and cohesive development planning that allows for the appropriate physical and economic development of the property.
- **Provide a Quality, Livable Community:** Provide a quality, livable community through the implementation of a Specific Plan that will ensure a consistent quality of design; allow for the provision and maintenance of community amenities; and create a collection of cohesive, well-defined

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neighborhoods that provide residents with a clear sense of place and identity within the diverse fabric of the larger community.

- **Provide a Wide Range of Housing Opportunities:** Provide a range of high quality housing opportunities by developing a diverse range of housing types available at a variety of price points, responsive to market demand, and varying lifestyles.
- **Promote Sustainability:** Promote the concept of sustainable community development by implementing green building practices in the selection of construction materials, the recycling of construction waste, and the use of energy- and water-efficient building practices.
- **Incorporate Water and Energy Efficiency:** Incorporate energy and water efficient design and technology into the homes, commercial buildings, and landscape of the Specific Plan development.
- **Ease of Navigation:** Create a community that it easy to navigate through careful use of landscape, signage, and entry design based on the Specific Plan's design objectives.
- **Recreational Amenities:** Provide recreational amenities which will serve the needs of neighborhood residents and others in the City of Banning as well as nearby communities.
- **Safe and Efficient Circulation:** Provide a safe and efficient roadway network, linking all internal elements of the planned community with the rest of the City of Banning to the north, west, and east.
- **Address Drainage and Water Quality Issues:** Provide adequate drainage, flood control, and water quality improvements that satisfy applicable local, state and federal criteria while respecting and enhancing/preserving natural drainage functions and features.
- **Ensure Provision of Public Services:** Ensure provision of adequate public services, utilities, and infrastructure in a timely manner as development occurs.
- **Encourage Alternative Transportation:** Encourage alternative transportation through the creation of a walkable community with well-defined pedestrian linkages between neighborhoods, amenities, schools, and commercial uses; the provision of bike paths; the creation of Low Speed Vehicle or Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (electric carts) linkages; electric vehicle charging stations; transportation coordination with local transit services; and the development of multipurpose trails.
- **Promote Community Security:** Promote community security and safety through appropriate outdoor design, the incorporation of "defensible space" concepts in the design of residential developments, and by encouraging community involvement through the area's proposed homeowners associations.

Figure 3-1 - Regional Location  
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- |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Specific Plan Area       | Water Bodies               |
| Urban Areas              | National Parks and Forests |
| City of Banning Boundary | State Parks and Forests    |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs | County Boundary            |

0 10  
Scale (Miles)



Base Map Source: ESRI, 2016

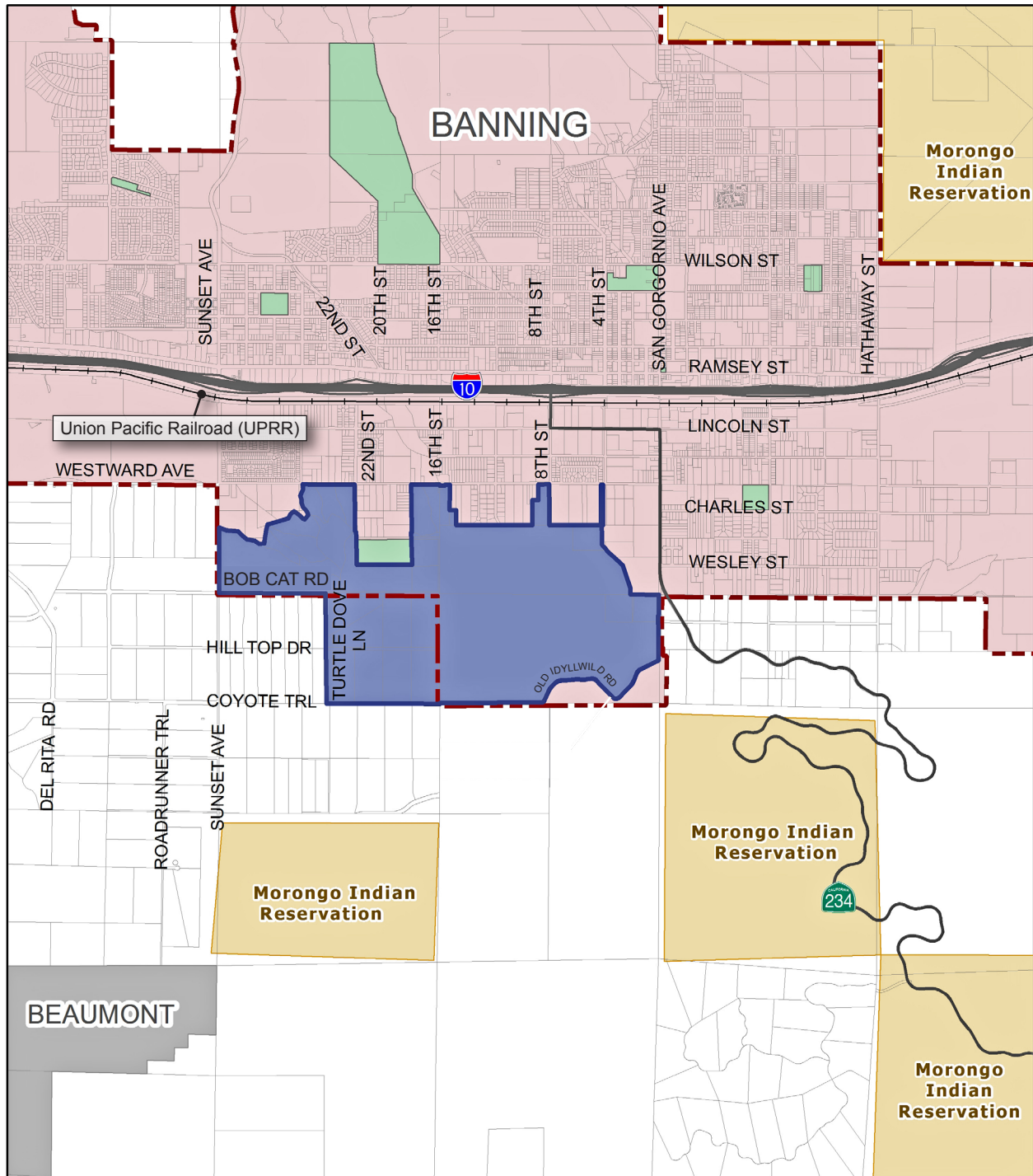
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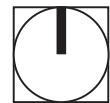
Figure 3-2 - Local Vicinity  
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- City of Banning Boundary
- Local Park
- Specific Plan Area
- Morongo Indian Reservation

Railroads

0 1  
Scale (Miles)

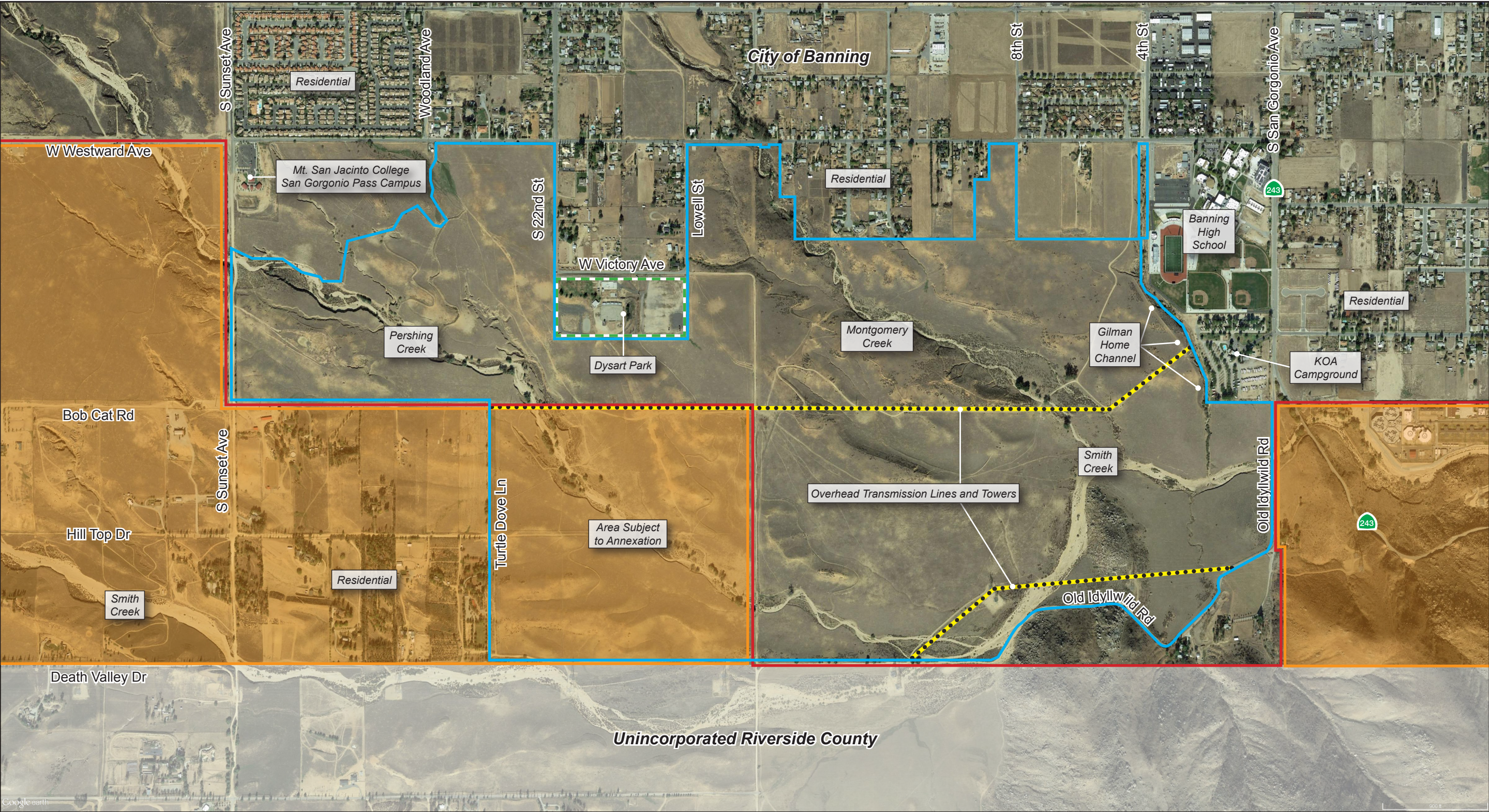


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Figure 3-3 - Aerial Photograph  
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City Boundary    Specific Plan Boundary    Sphere of Influence    Park Limits

0 900  
Scale (Feet)



Base Map Source: Google Earth Pro, 2014



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### 3.3 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

“Project,” as defined by the CEQA Guidelines, means “the whole of an action, which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is any of the following: (1)...enactment and amendment of zoning ordinances, and the adoption and amendment of local General Plans or elements thereof pursuant to Government Code Sections 65100–65700.” (14 Cal. Code of Reg. § 15378[a])

#### 3.3.1 Project Description

##### 3.3.1.1 EXISTING USES AND CURRENT LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

###### Onsite Land Uses

The entire project site is undeveloped and currently leased for cattle grazing. The site had been previously used for dry-land farming and grazing and as range land for cattle and horses. According to the City of Banning’s 2006 General Plan, the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan site is primarily designated Very Low Density Residential, with limited Medium Density Residential, Rural Residential, and Open Space-Resources. The 161-acre portion of the project site in unincorporated Riverside County (City’s SOI) is designated Ranch/Agriculture (see Figure 3-4, *Current Land Use Designations*).

As shown in Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*, four main creeks run through or adjacent to the project site. Pershing Creek runs northwest to southeast through the majority of the site; Montgomery Creek runs northwest to southeast through the eastern half of the site; Gilman Home Channel runs adjacent to the eastern boundary along Banning High School and the KOA Campground; and all three drainage channels are tributary to the larger drainage, Smith Creek, which flows southwest to northeast direction in the southeastern portion of the site. All creeks are unimproved and in their natural states within the boundaries of the project site.

###### Surrounding Land Uses

Depicted in Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*, surrounding land uses include residential properties to the north along Westward Avenue, a KOA Campground to the east, Banning High School to the northeast, and Mt. San Jacinto Community College San Gorgonio Pass campus to the northwest. Other surrounding land to the east, south, and west consists of rural residential, agricultural uses, and vacant land. The site is approximately one-half mile south of the Ramsey Street commercial corridor and Banning’s downtown area. Banning Municipal Airport is about 1.1 miles northeast of the site.

##### 3.3.1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The proposed project is an 831-acre master-planned community, and is organized into 44 planning areas (PAs)<sup>1</sup> that include a mixture of residential, commercial, open space, and recreational uses and up to 3,133

<sup>1</sup> The Specific Plan Planning Areas are numbered 1 through 18; however, some PAs include alpha character subsets of the same number. The total number of separate planning areas is therefore 44.

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residential units. Parks and paseos are incorporated to buffer the natural creeks onsite and to provide nonmotorized access throughout the planned community.

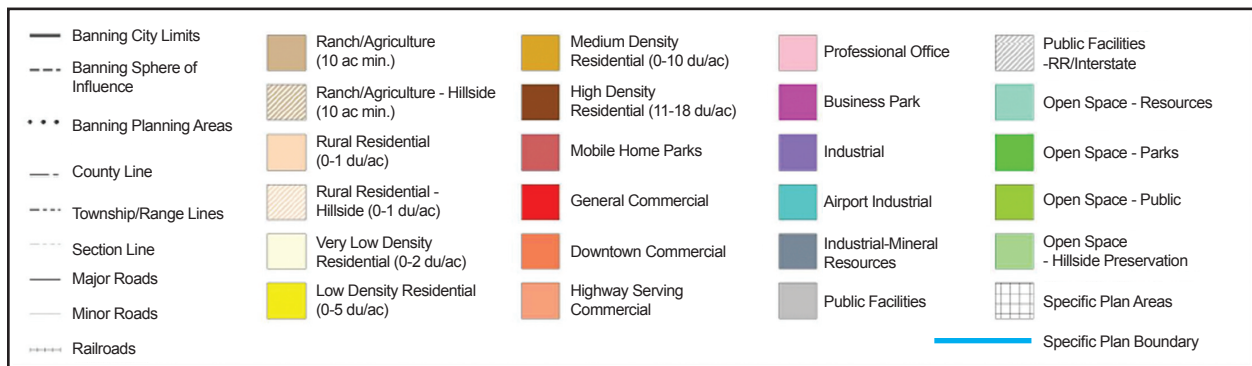
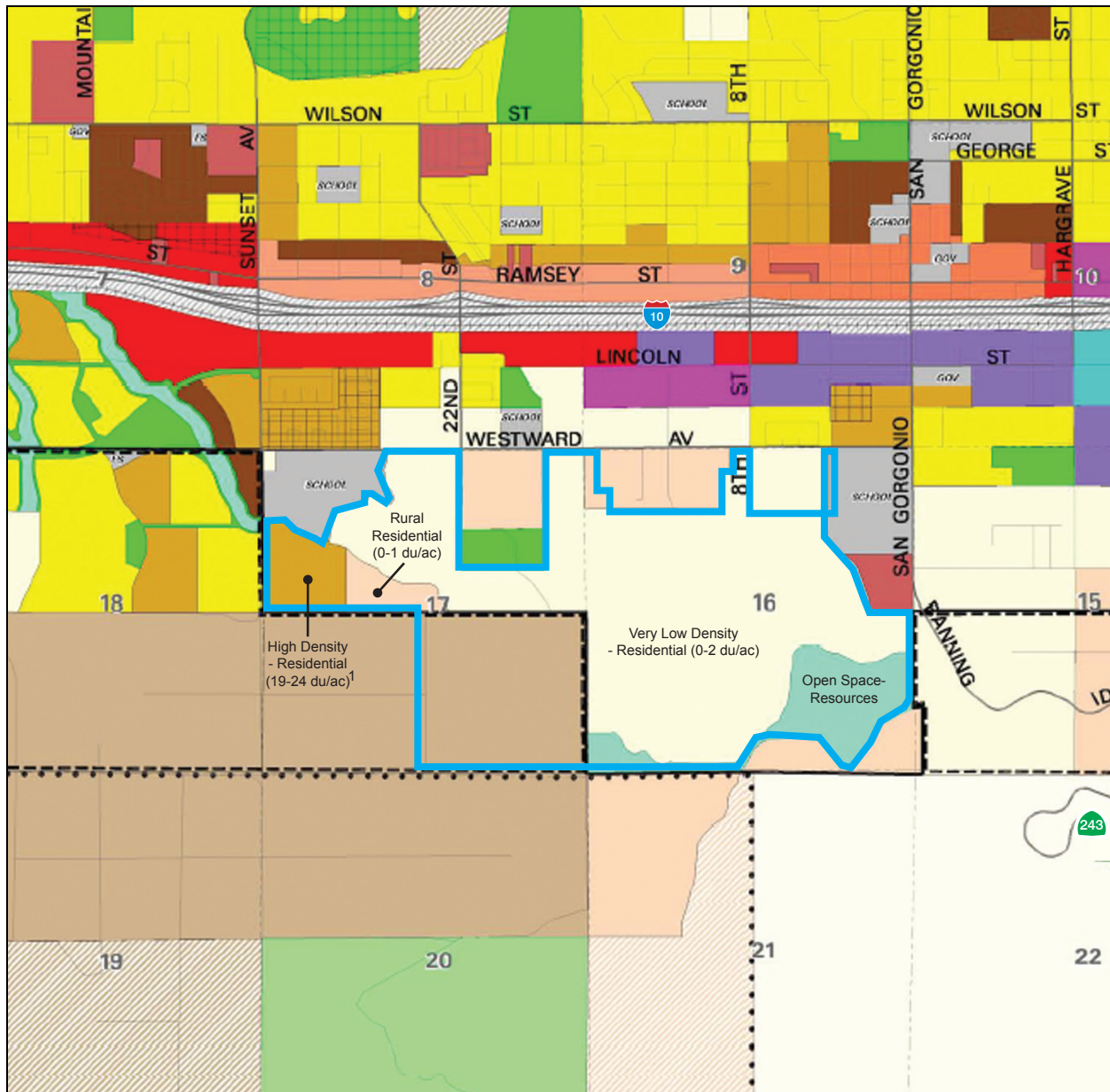
#### Proposed Land Uses

The following land uses are proposed for the project site:

- **Residential:** Encompasses 62.2 percent of the site and includes Very Low Density, Low Density, Medium Density – Age-Qualified, and Medium-High Density Residential. In total, 3,133 dwelling units would be allowed in the Specific Plan area, with an average density of 4.1 dwelling units per acre.
- **Parks/Open Space:** Encompasses 25.2 percent of the site and includes the RSG Community Park, Confluence Park, Neighborhood Park, Entry Park, Village Paseos, Creeks/Creek Edge Linear Parks, and Natural Open Space.
- **Other:** Encompasses 12.5 percent of the site and includes Neighborhood Commercial, Public Facility, School, Backbone Roadways Right-of-Way, and Storm Drain Easement. Development would allow up to 101,300 square feet of commercial use, an elementary school, and a wastewater treatment plant.

Table 3-1, *Proposed Land Uses*, provides a summary of land use categories proposed for the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan, and Figure 3-5, *Proposed Land Use Plan*, shows the location and distribution of the various land uses.

Figure 3-4 - Current Land Use Designations  
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1 Per Resolution No. 2013-75, the Banning City Council approved to amend Assessor Parcel 537-190-018 from Medium Density Residential to Very High Density Residential (HDR) with a density of 19-24 dwelling units per acre, which has not yet been reflected in the City's land use plan.

Base Map Source: Terra Nova, 2006

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Scale (Feet)



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Figure 3-5 - Proposed Land Use Plan  
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Base Map Source: Michael Baker International, 2015



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**Table 3-1 Proposed Land Uses**

Land Use	Gross Acres	% of Area	Dwelling Units (du)	Gross Density (du/ac)
<b>Residential</b>				
Very Low Density (VLDR) (0-2.5 du/ac)	47.1	5.7	94	2.0
Low Density (LDR) (2.6-6.0 du/ac)	301.8	36.3	1,355	4.5
Medium Density (MDR) Age Qualified (6.1-12.0 du/ac)	115.9	14	754	6.5
Medium-High Density (MHDR) (12.1-18.0 du/ac)	51.7	6.2	930	18.0
<b>Residential Totals</b>	<b>516.5 acres</b>	<b>62.2%</b>	<b>3,133 du</b>	<b>6.0 du/ac</b>
<b>Parks/Open Space</b>				
RSG Community Park	26	3.2		
Confluence Park	10.2	1.2		
Neighborhood Park	12.7	1.5		
Entry Park	1.1	0.1		
Village Paseos	12.6	1.5		
Creeks/Creek Edge Linear Parks	122	14.7		
Natural Open Space	25.7	3.1		
<b>Open Space Subtotals</b>	<b>210.3 acres</b>	<b>25.2%</b>		
<b>Other</b>				
Neighborhood Commercial	9.3	1.1	168*	18.0*
Public Facility	2.6	0.3		
School	14	1.7	84**	6.0**
Backbone Roadways Right-of-Way	77	9.3		
Storm Drain Easement	1.1	0.1		
<b>Other Subtotals</b>	<b>104 acres</b>	<b>12.5%</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>830.8</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,133 (3,385)***</b>	<b>4.0</b>

Notes:

\* A Residential Overlay alternative of Medium-High Density Residential (MHDR, 12.1–18.0 du/ac) is allowed on Planning Area 9 in lieu of the Neighborhood Commercial designation, if PA 9 does not develop as commercial.

\*\* A Residential Overlay alternative of Low Density Residential (LDR, 2.6–6.0 du/ac) is allowed on Planning Area 16-C in lieu of the School use designation, if the Banning Unified School District does not acquire PA 16-C and the site is not developed with a school use.

\*\*\* The maximum number of dwelling units to be allowed in the Specific Plan is 3,385 if PA 9 and PA 16-C are not developed as commercial or school uses, respectively, and instead are developed in accordance with their Residential Overlay Alternatives.

#### Residential Uses

Very low, low, medium, and medium-high density residential uses make up 62.2 percent of the project site. Very-Low-Density Residential (VLDR) is proposed in PA 1; Low-Density Residential (LDR) in PAs 2 through 6; Medium-Density Residential (MDR) in PA 7; and Medium-High-Density Residential (MHDR) in PAs 8 and 9 (as a Residential Overlay alternative).

VLDR dwelling units would consist of conventional single-family detached homes with private side and rear yards. Similarly, LDR uses would be developed as single-family detached homes as well as alley-loaded homes

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with rear-facing garages with access via a common private alley. MDR uses may include age-qualified housing, conventional single-family detached, single-family detached alley loaded, detached cluster, duplex, row townhome, and attached cluster housing. MHDR would allow for duplex, row townhome, attached cluster, and multifamily homes.

In total, a maximum of 3,133 dwelling units would be allowed in the Specific Plan area, with an average density of 4.1 dwelling units per acre. However, if commercial and school uses are not developed on PA 9 and PA 16-C, these areas could be developed in accordance with their Residential Overlay Alternative and increase the maximum residential units to 3,385.

#### *Parks and Open Space*

Approximately 210 acres of public park and open space would be developed in PAs 10 through 15, including a community park, confluence park, neighborhood park, entry park, creek linear parks, and village paseos. The community park is conceptually planned to include a community center, basketball courts, softball/baseball sports fields, picnic facilities, shelters, and tot lots. The creek linear park would be developed along Pershing and Smith creeks as a buffer from residential development, and the village paseos would run east-west through the Specific Plan area to connect the residential and park developments. Future park projects would provide detailed uses and amenities, and would be developed in accordance with the Rancho San Gorgonio development standards and design guidelines.

Both Pershing and Smith creeks are proposed to remain in their natural condition, with enhanced trail systems on either side of their full frontage through the community. In addition, natural open space is proposed in PA 17 in and around the small hill at the southeast corner of the site and would connect with the creek linear park near Smith Creek in PA 15-B.

#### *Other Uses*

##### ***Neighborhood Commercial***

The neighborhood commercial (NC) area is proposed in PA 9 on the northwestern corner of the project site. This area would provide locations for businesses that would serve the day-to-day shopping and service needs of the planned community's residential uses. NC uses are typically anchored by a grocery store, but may consist of a mix of retail and services, such as pharmacies, banks, cleaners, etc. If future market conditions indicate that the NC area is not needed, the proposed project allows for up to 168 units of MHDR residential use to be developed in its place.

##### ***Public Facilities***

PAs 16-A and 16-B is set aside and planned for Public Facility land uses. PA 16-A could include a potential potable well site or pump station site for potable water, recycled water, or wastewater, wastewater treatment and recycle facility, or similar public facility use. Planning Area 16-B is set aside and planned for a City electrical sub-station use. PA 10, which is designated for Park use as the Rancho San Gorgonio Community Park site, allows for a potential fire station facility on the east side of that site.

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#### *School*

PA 16-C has a public school use designation and an alternative overlay designation of Low Density Residential. Banning Unified School District (BUSD) is planning the Rancho San Gorgonio Elementary School at 778 Westward Avenue. The 85,000-square foot elementary school underwent separate environmental review from the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan, with BUSD as the lead agency. A mitigated negative declaration was prepared and certified in June 2015. The proposed school is anticipated to begin construction in May 2017 and open for the 2018–19 school year.

#### **Circulation**

The Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan would have pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems, including roadways, landscaping, street lighting, sidewalks, and pedestrian paths. The main objective of the circulation plan is to provide direct and convenient access throughout the project area and to substantially implement the circulation element of the City of Banning General Plan as it relates to the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan. Figure 3-6, *Vehicular Circulation Plan*, shows the proposed system of streets, categorized in Table 3-2 as Modified Arterial, Modified Major, Modified Divided Collector, and Modified Collector.

**Table 3-2 Proposed Roadway Categories**

Roadway Classification	Right-of-Way Width, feet	Lanes	Median	Bicycle Lanes <sup>1</sup>	Sidewalks <sup>2</sup>	Multipurpose Trails <sup>2</sup>	Landscaping
Modified Arterial	146/156	4	Raised	Both sides	Along one or both sides	Along one side	Along both sides, between sidewalks and/or multipurpose trail and roadway
Modified Major	116	4	Painted	Both sides	Along one side	Along one side	Along both sides, between sidewalks and/or multipurpose trail and roadway
Modified Divided Collector	80 to 116	2	Raised	Both sides	Along one side	Along one side (some roadway segments)	Along both sides, including between sidewalk and roadway
Modified Collector	80	2	None	Both sides	Along one side	Along one side	Along both sides, between sidewalks and/or multipurpose trail and roadway

Source: RBF 2015.

<sup>1</sup> Bicycle lanes on some roadways would be eight or more feet wide; such lanes may be designated as dual low-speed vehicle and bike lanes.

<sup>2</sup> All roadways would have pedestrian facilities—either sidewalks or multipurpose trails—on both sides of the street..

Figure 3-7, *Nonvehicular Circulation Plan*, illustrates the proposed pathways and multipurpose trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrian travel throughout the Specific Plan area.

Primary community access points would be at 22nd Street and 8th Street, south of Westward Avenue. A median-divided modified arterial named Rancho San Gorgonio Parkway is designed to connect 8th Street to 22nd Street, with an east-west connection to SR-243. Additional access will be provided via Sunset Avenue, with a proposed bridge crossing Pershing Creek.

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Public transit in Banning is provided by Banning Pass Transit System. Route 6 serves the southern portion of the City, which includes the project area, along Westward Avenue from Sunset Avenue to South San Gorgonio Avenue/SR-243. The proposed circulation plan includes bus turnouts to accommodate future transit use.

#### Infrastructure

Infrastructure extensions and improvements would be required to support the proposed project. Proposed onsite infrastructure includes storm drains, retention/detention basins, wastewater, water, recycled water, and dry utilities (i.e., electric, gas, telephone, and cable) that would connect to existing facilities adjacent to the project site. The proposed Specific Plan includes a Water Master Plan and a Sewer Master Plan outlining the sizes and locations of proposed water and sewer mains (see Figure 3-8, *Conceptual Potable Water Master Plan*, and Figure 3-9, *Sewer Master Plan*). The Specific Plan includes construction of several storm drains, one of which would convey Montgomery Creek underground through the site, and about 37 detention/retention basins, as shown in Figure 3-10, *Drainage Master Plan*. The other three streams in the project site would be left largely in their existing condition.

#### 3.4.1 Project Phasing

The proposed project would be phased to provide an orderly buildout of the community based on market demand and infrastructure availability. Figure 3-11, *Phasing Plan*, illustrates the proposed six phases. Buildout of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan is estimated to occur over a 20-year period. Assuming construction begins in 2017, the time frame for completion could be from 2017 through 2035. However, construction depends on market conditions, project financing, and development of final construction plans. Phases may also occur concurrently so long as adequate infrastructure is provided.

### 3.5 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This DEIR is a program EIR that examines the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. This DEIR is also being prepared to address various actions by the City and others to adopt and implement the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan. It is the intent of the DEIR to enable the City of Banning, other responsible agencies, and interested parties to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed project, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions with respect to the requested entitlements. The anticipated approvals required for this project are listed.

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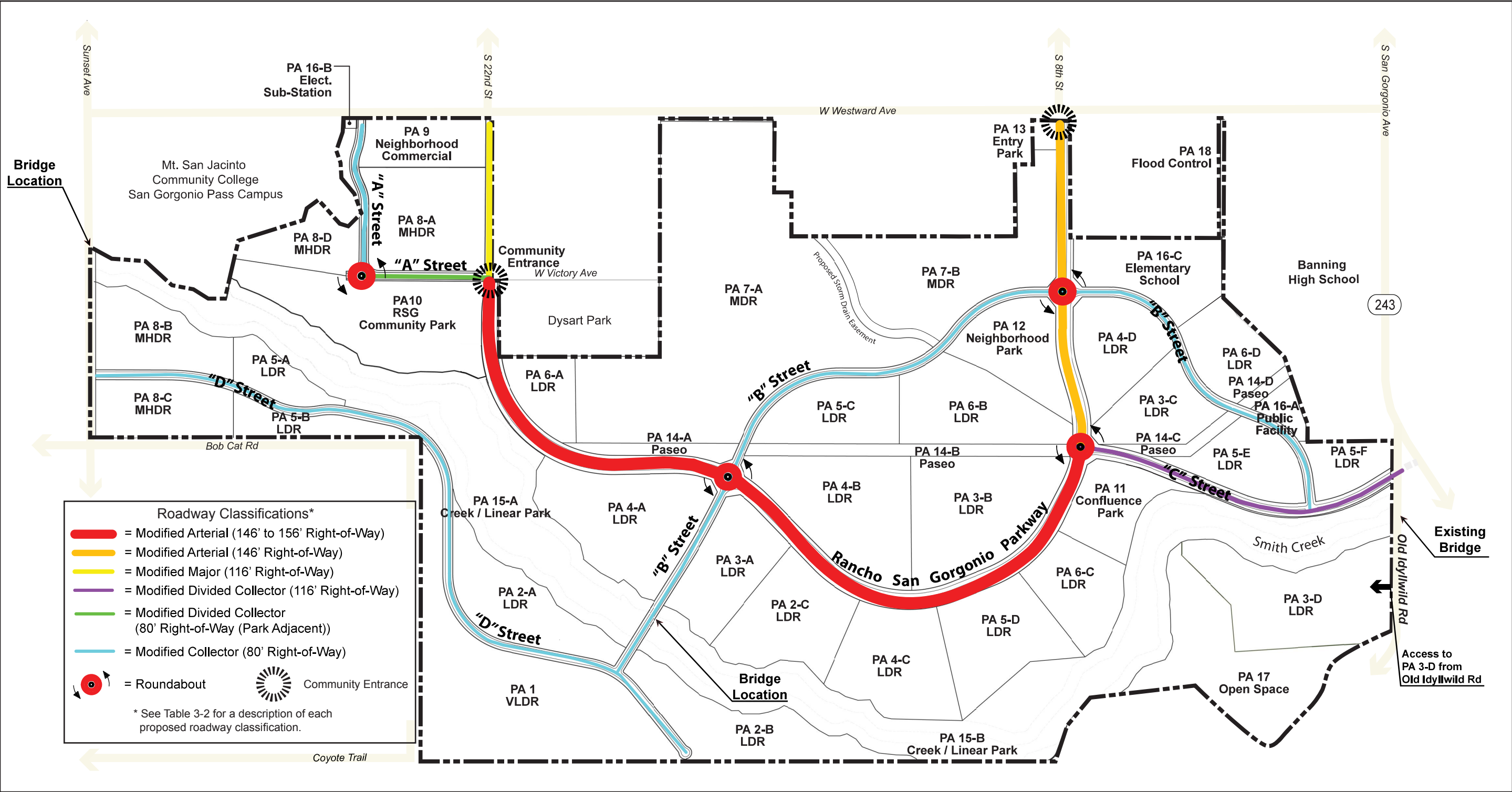
Lead Agency	Action
City of Banning City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of General Plan Amendment / Zone Change to reflect the proposed Specific Plan</li> <li>• Approval of Master Tentative Tract Map No. 36586 and Conditions of Approval</li> <li>• Approval of Development Agreement</li> <li>• Annexation of 161 acres in SOI into City limits</li> <li>• Adoption of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan</li> <li>• Certification of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan EIR</li> <li>• Adoption of the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations (if required)</li> <li>• Adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring Program</li> </ul>
Responsible Agencies	Action
Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of annexation of 161 acres from unincorporated Riverside County into City of Banning</li> </ul>
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of Section 1602 Permit</li> </ul>
US Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit</li> </ul>
Regional Water Quality Control Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification of Clean Water Act Section 401 Permit</li> </ul>
Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of Water Quality Management Plan</li> </ul>
South Coast Air Quality Management District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of construction permits and permits to operate new stationary sources of equipment that emit or control air contaminants (e.g., heating, ventilation, and air conditioning units)</li> </ul>

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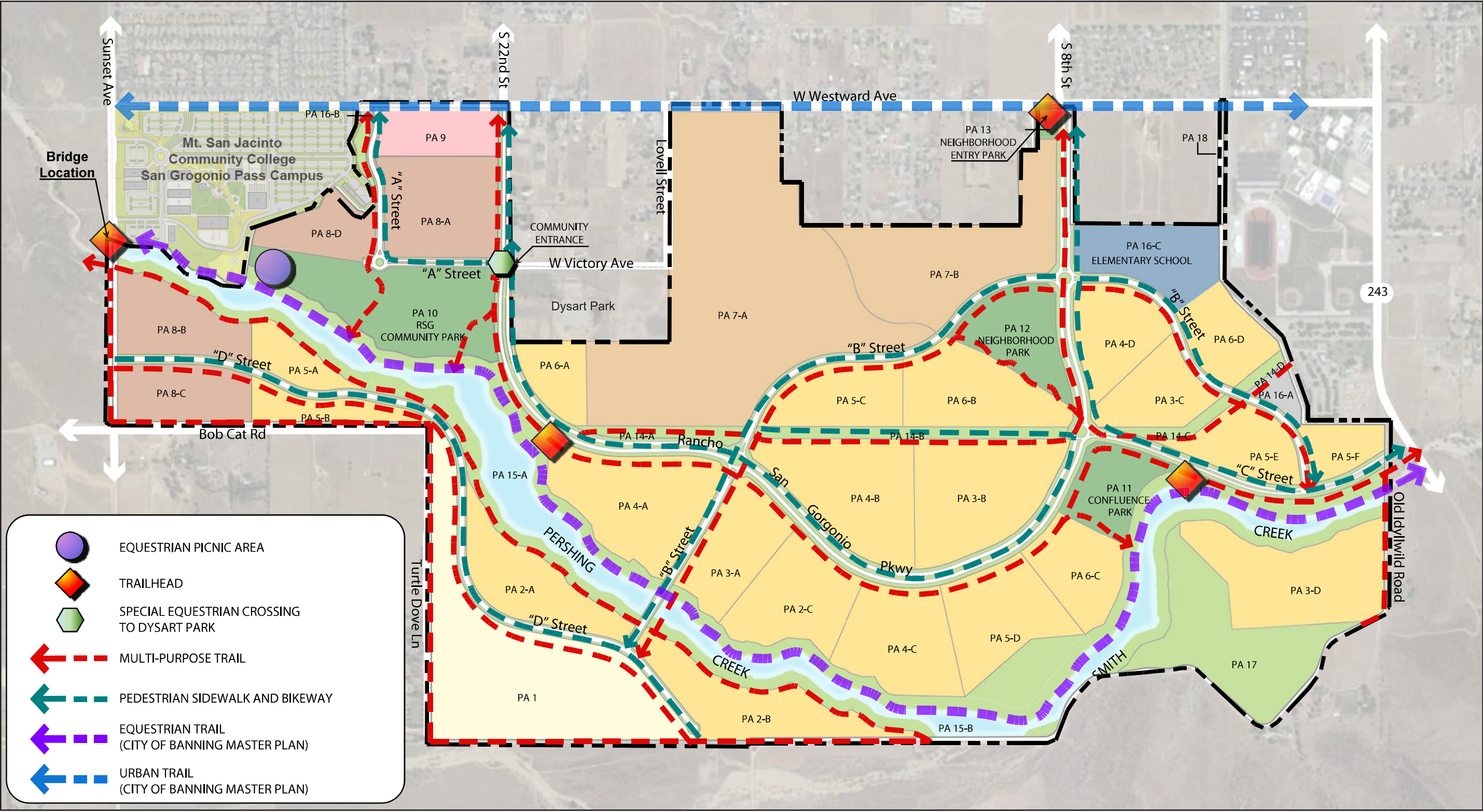
Figure 3-6 - Vehicular Circulation Plan  
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Figure 3-7 - Nonvehicular Circulation Plan  
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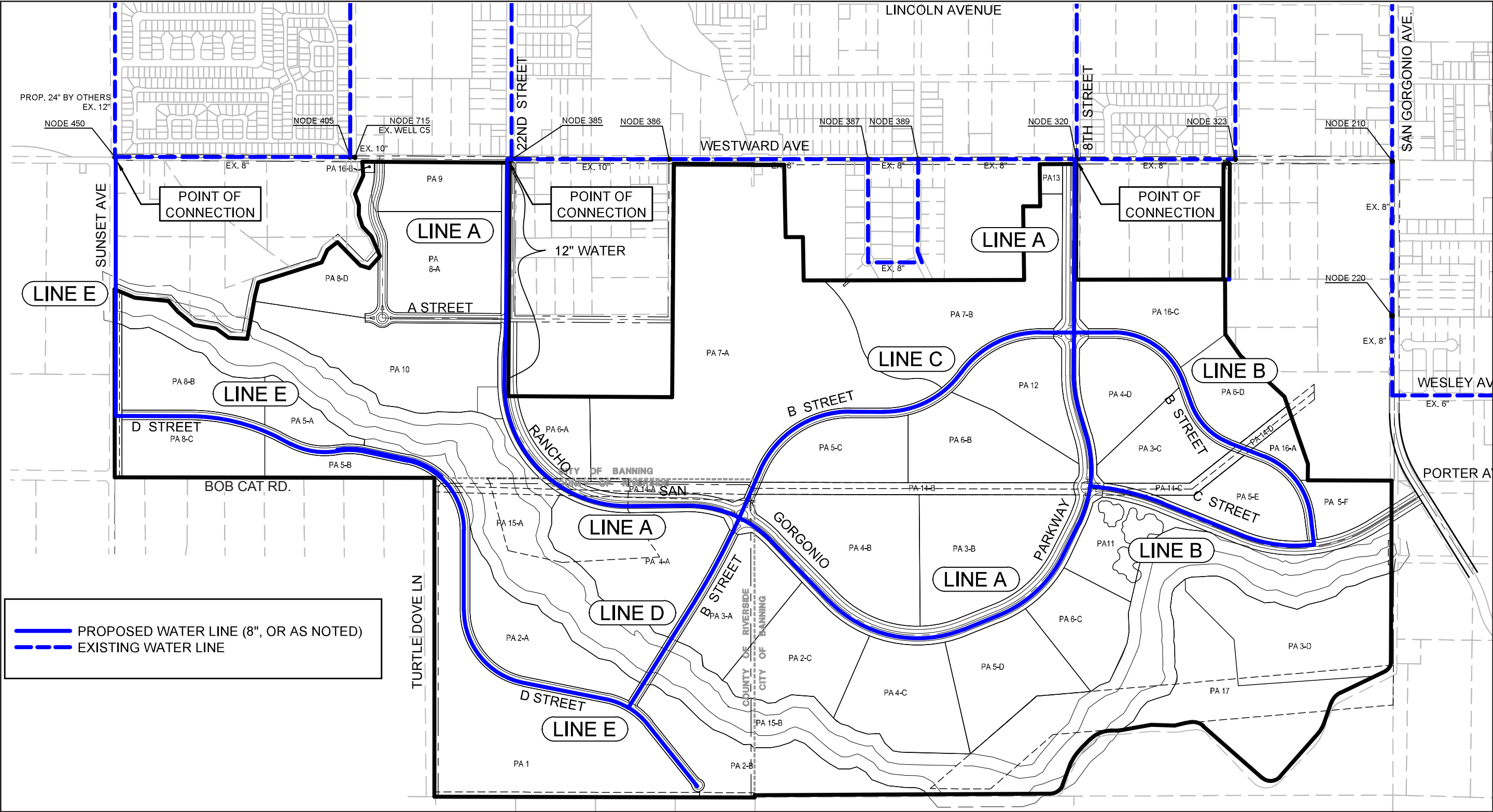


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Figure 3-8 - Conceptual Potable Water Master Plan  
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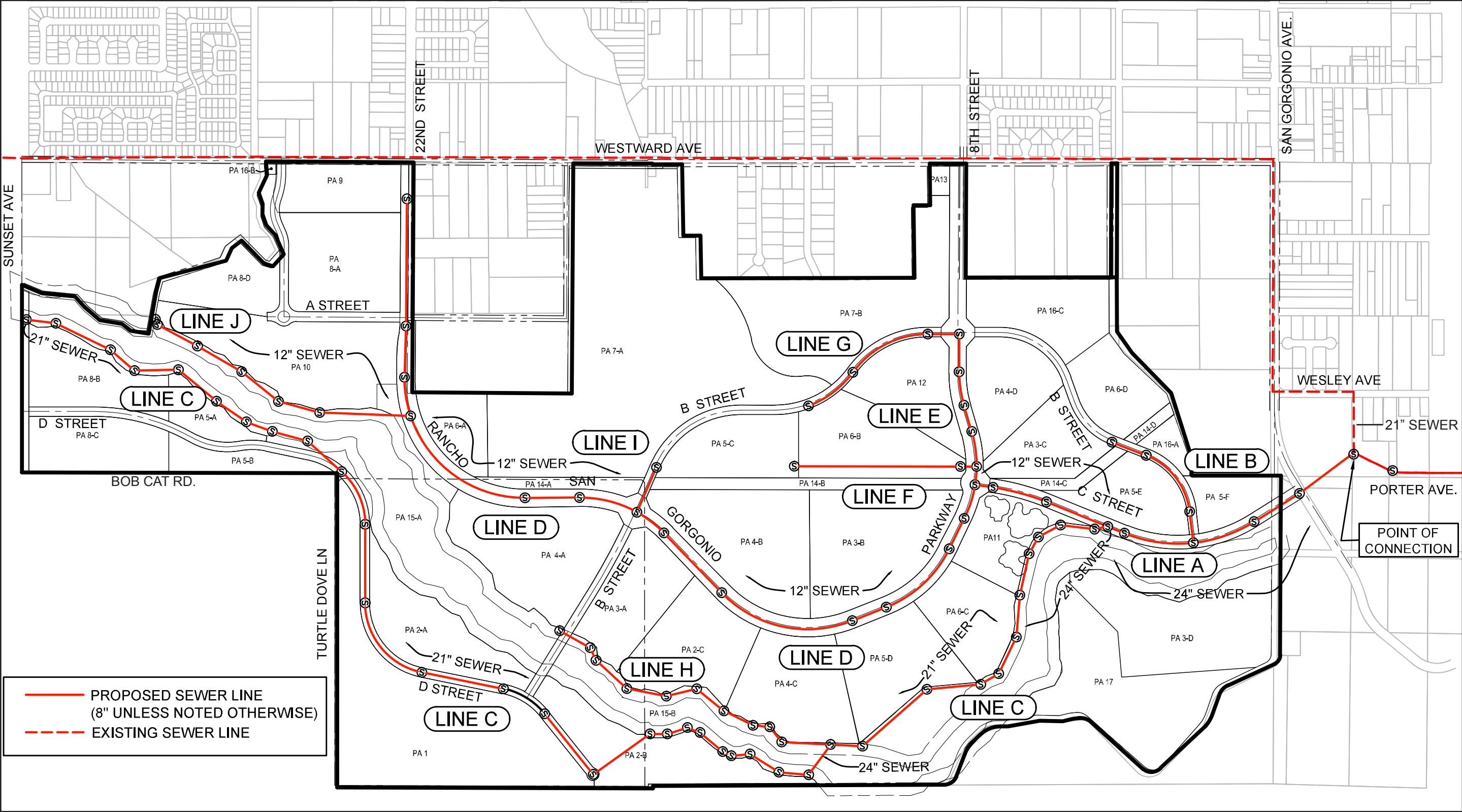


Base Map Source: Michael Baker International, 2015

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Figure 3-9 - Sewer Master Plan  
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Base Map Source: Michael Baker International, 2015

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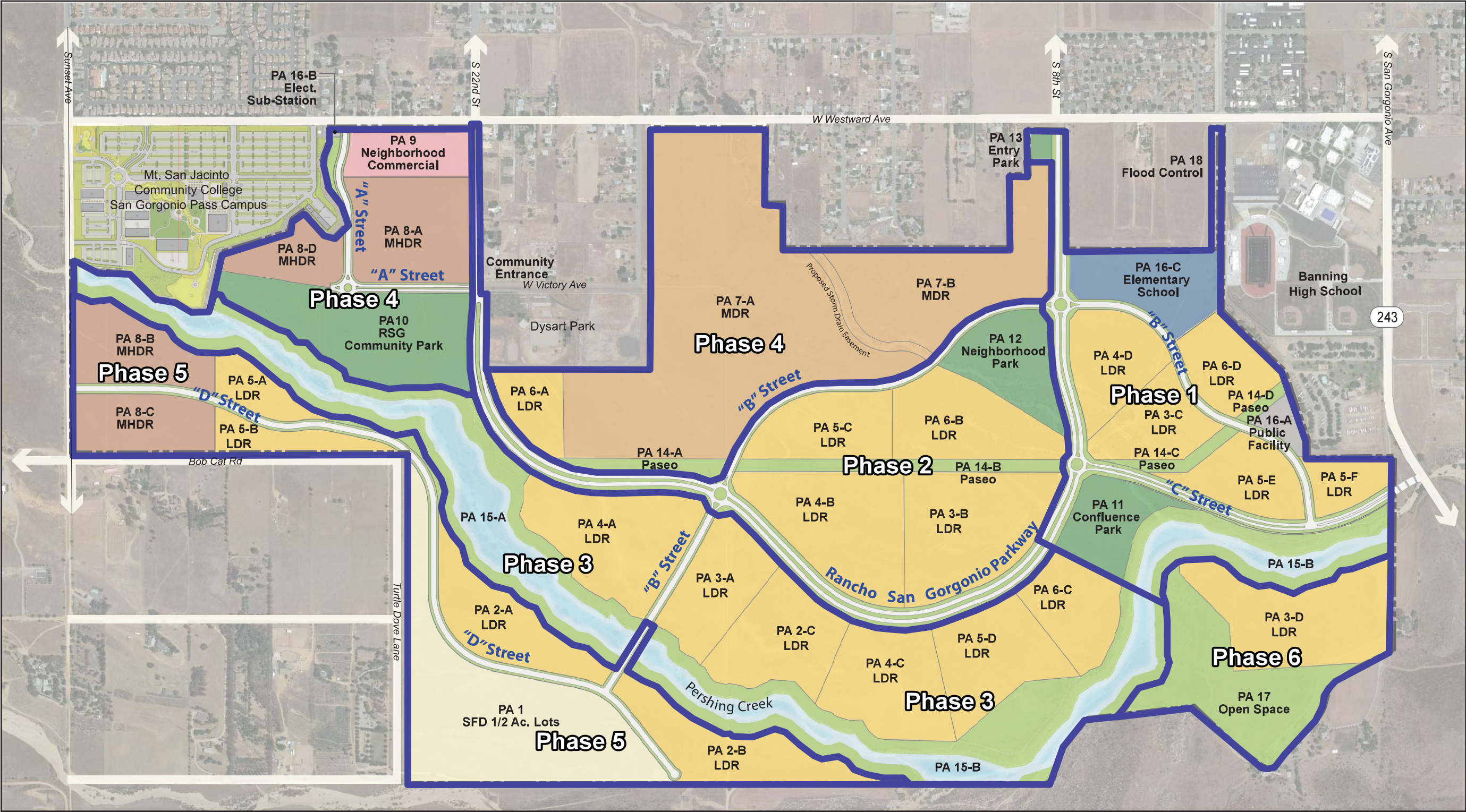


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Figure 3-11 - Phasing Plan  
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Base Map Source: Michael Baker International, 2015

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