

3. Environmental Setting

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide, pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, a “description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the Project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation is published, from both a local and a regional perspective.” The environmental setting will provide a general description of baseline physical conditions that will serve as a tool from which the lead agency will determine the significance of environmental impacts resulting from the proposed Project. Each topical section of the impact analysis also provides further, in depth description of existing conditions pertinent to specific issues.

3.2 Regional Environmental Setting

The Project sites lie in eastern Orange County in the City of Brea (Exhibit 3.2-1 – Regional Location). Orange County is bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Los Angeles County to the north and northwest, San Bernardino County to the northeast, Riverside County to the east, and San Diego County to the southeast. Orange County is comprised of approximately 798 square miles, while stretching approximately 40 miles along the coast and extending inland approximately 20 miles.

The natural setting of Orange County provides a combination of mountains, hills, flatlands, and shorelines. Orange County lies predominantly on an alluvial plain, which is generally less than 300 feet in elevation in the west and central section. The western portion of the County is made up of a series of broad sloping plains (Downey and Tustin Plains) formed from alluvium transported from the mountains by the Santa Ana River, Santiago Creek, and other local streams. Several low-lying mesas interrupt the plain along the northern coast. Orange County is semi-enclosed by the Puente and Chino Hills to the north, the San Joaquin Hills to the south, and the Santiago Foothills and the Santa Ana Mountains to the east. The Puente and Chino Hills, which identify the northern limit of the plain, extend for 22 miles and reach a peak height of 1,780 feet. To the east and southeast of the plain are the Santa Ana Mountains, which have a peak height of 5,691 feet.

The climate of Orange County is typified by warm temperatures and light winds. The average monthly temperatures range from about 52 degrees Fahrenheit in the coastal areas in January, to 72 degrees Fahrenheit in the inland areas of the coastal plain in August. The average annual rainfall across the County is 14 inches, typically occurring in

the winter months. The County's rainfall also exhibits characteristically wide variations annually, from a low 3.6 inches in 1961 to a high over 35 inches in 2004.

According to the State Department of Finance (DOF), in January 2006 Orange County had a total population of over 3 million residents and was comprised of 33 cities. An expanded description of the socioeconomic setting is provided in Section 5.10 of this EIR.

Orange County incorporates about 798 square miles and is comprised of approximately 50% residential, 9% commercial, 6% industrial, and 35% open space. The County has 42 miles of beaches, over 125 miles of bikeways and over 200 miles of riding and hiking trails. Regional attractions include Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Wild Rivers, Honda Center of Anaheim, Angel Stadium, and the Orange County Performing Arts Center.

3.3 Local Environmental Setting

The proposed Project sites are located in the City of Brea, in eastern Orange County, approximately 30 miles southeast of Downtown Los Angeles (Exhibit 3.2-1 – Regional Location). The La Floresta Village Site is located in the low foothills on the western edge of the Santa Ana Mountains, in proximity to the Carbon Canyon Dam and the Santa Ana River. The Birch Hills Site is located within the central developed portion of the City of Brea. John Wayne Airport is approximately 20 miles to the south of the project area and the Pacific Ocean is approximately 20 miles to the southwest. Riverside and San Bernardino Counties lie approximately 15 miles east of the project area, as illustrated in Exhibit 3-3.1 – Local Vicinity Map.

The City of Brea's land area is approximately 11.0 square miles with a "sphere of influence" of 9.25 square miles. Brea is bounded by the City of Yorba Linda and the Chino Hills State Park in an easterly direction, the unincorporated Chino Hills area to the north, the City of Placentia to the south, and the Cities of Fullerton and La Habra toward the west. The Orange Freeway (SR-57) and the Imperial Highway (SR-90) transect the City. These major roadways and freeways link the city to other Southern California cities in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

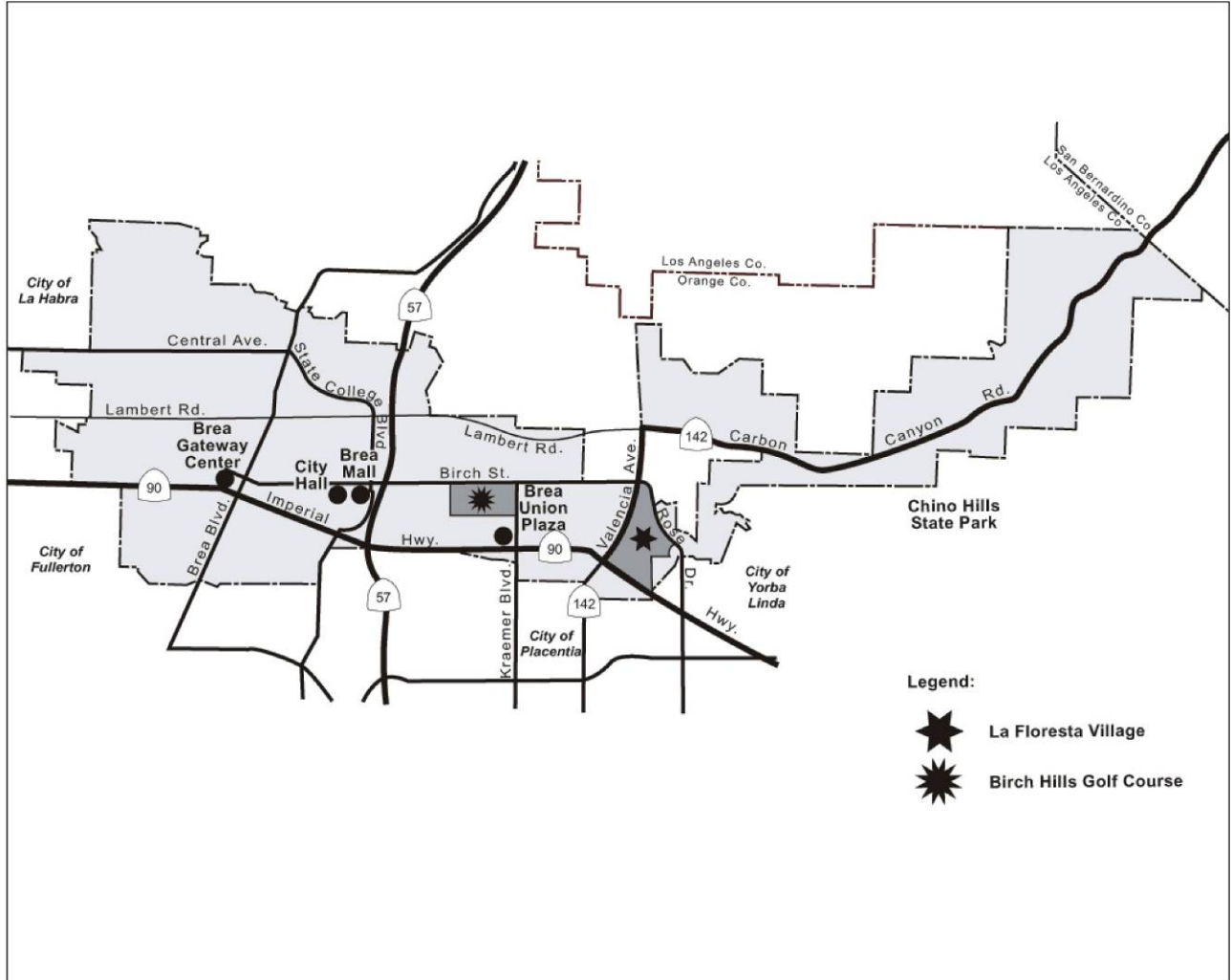
Regional Location



Source: EDAW, December 2005

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Local Vicinity Map



Source: EDAW, December 2005

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3.4 Project Setting

3.4.1 La Floresta Village Site

The proposed La Floresta Village site is approximately 119 acres in size and is bounded by Imperial Highway (State Route 90) on the south, Valencia Avenue (State Route 142) on the west, and Rose Drive on the east, and is the former location of the UNOCAL Hartley Research Center, as illustrated in Exhibit 3.4-1 – La Floresta Village: Existing On-site and Surrounding Land Uses. The structures and improvements on the La Floresta site were removed under a ministerial permit issued by the City of Brea in March 2005. Demolition was completed in April 2006.

The northern portion of the La Floresta site has been undeveloped and is characterized by rolling topography. As illustrated in Exhibit 3.4-2 – La Floresta Village: Existing On-Site Planning Considerations, the site contains two easements of the Metropolitan Water District (40 feet and 50 feet in size) as well as the Southern California Gas Company (16.5 feet and 10 feet in size) and Southern California Edison easements (15 feet and 25 feet in size). Three regional trail connections are located on the site, two on Valencia Avenue, and one on Rose Drive. The southern portion of the La Floresta site has been previously developed as noted, and has relatively flat topography. A 21-acre strawberry field also remains on the eastern portion of the La Floresta site, and is considered an interim use.

Single-family residential areas, agricultural and industrial uses adjoin the La Floresta site to the south, north, and east. Commercial and office uses are located along the westerly boundary across Valencia Avenue. The La Floresta Village site is situated approximately 1 mile downstream of the Carbon Canyon Dam and the Carbon Canyon Regional Park, which links to the Chino Hills State Park. The Brea–Olinda Landfill is located approximately 1.8 miles to the north of the site. A 40-acre site planned for a new K-6 elementary school and active sports park is located immediately to the northwest of the La Floresta site at the intersection of Valencia Avenue and Birch Street.

3.4.2 Birch Hills Site

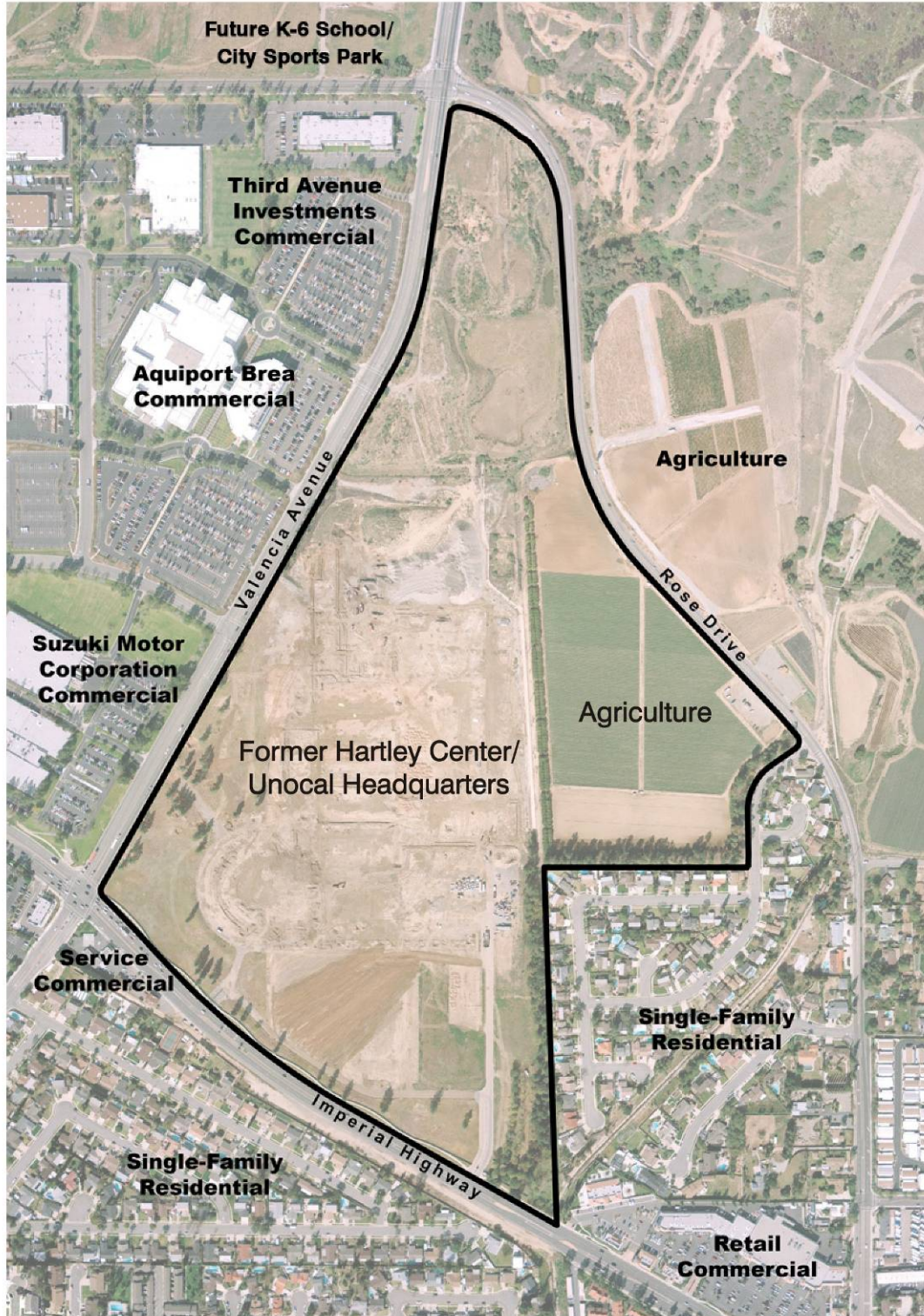
The Birch Hills site is approximately 91.3 acres in size and is located on Birch Street at the intersection of Kraemer Boulevard. It is presently occupied by the Birch Hills Golf Course, owned by the Birch/Kraemer LLC, which contains 18 holes on rolling topography and is leased to the Imperial Golf Course. Single-family and multi-family residential neighborhoods abut the Birch Hills site to the west and north, as illustrated on Exhibit 3.4-3 – Birch Hills: Existing On-Site and Surrounding Land Uses. A 40.0-acre retail commercial center (Brea Union Plaza) abuts the Birch Hills site to the south, and light industrial uses are located east of the site.

The southern portion of the Birch Hills Golf Course was a part of the former Collier Chemical Plant site, which operated for 37 years between 1954 and 1991. The Loftus Flood Control Channel (110 feet in width), owned and operated by the Orange County Flood Control District traverses the site in a west to east direction. Two Southern California Gas Company easements (15 to 16.5 feet, and 25 feet in width) are also located on the Birch Hills site. A 50-foot wide recreational trail and pipeline easement runs along the west

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site boundary. Two regional trail connections are located on-site, at the northwest corner of the site on Birch Street and at the southeast corner on Kraemer Boulevard as shown on Exhibit 3.4-4 – Birch Hills: Existing On-Site Planning Considerations.

La Floresta Village: Existing On-site and Surrounding Land Uses



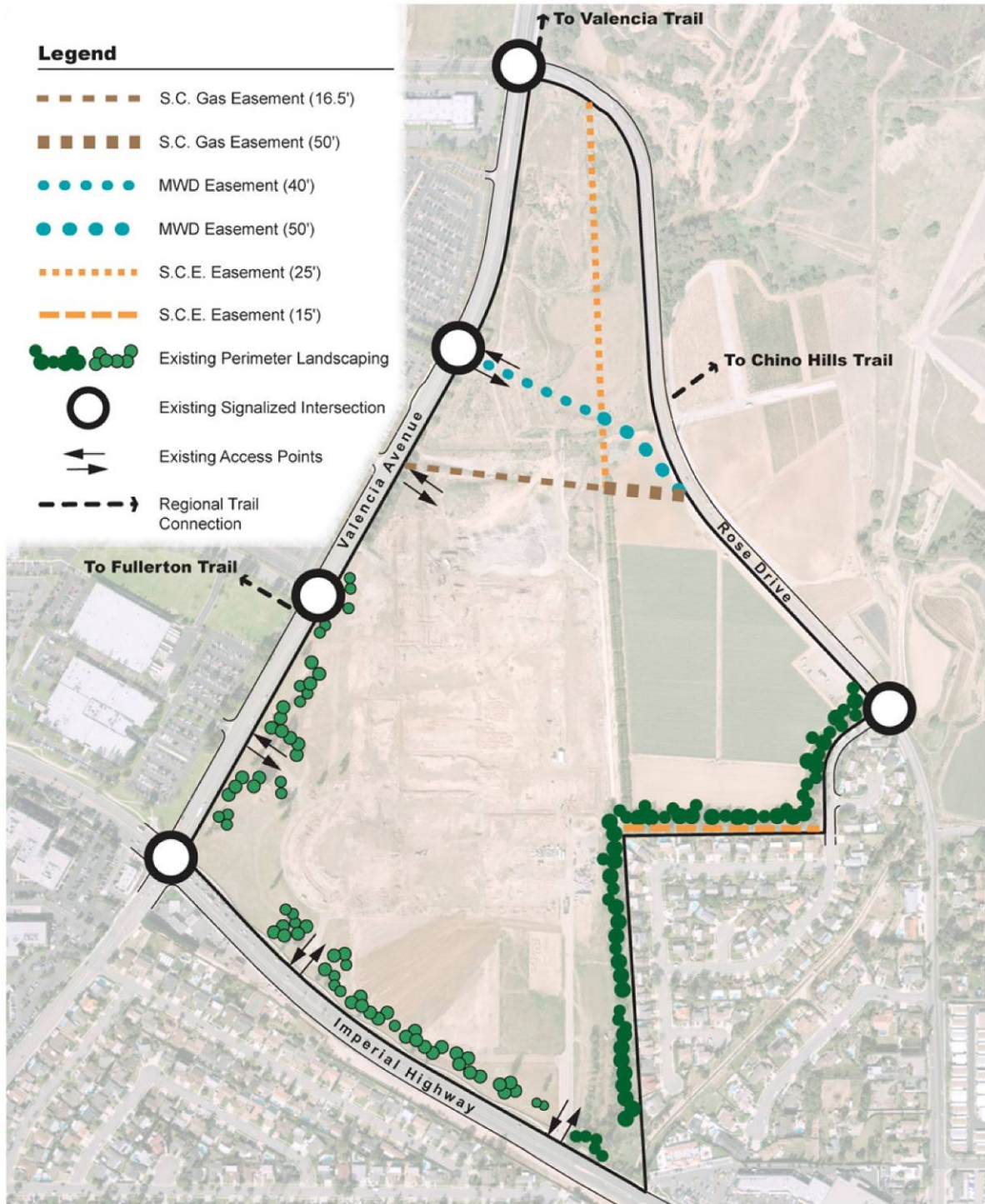
Source: EDAW, February 2006

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Exhibit 3.4-1



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La Floresta Village: On-site Planning Considerations



Source: EDAW, October 2006

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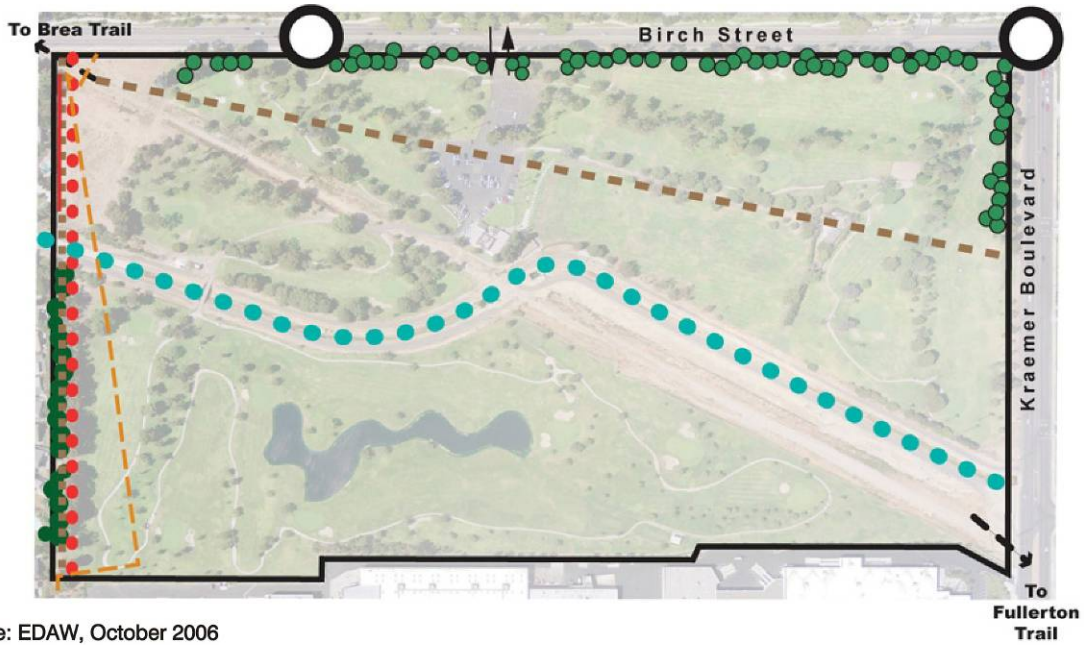
Birch Hills: Existing On-site and Surrounding Land Uses



Source: EDAW, October 2006

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Birch Hills: On-site Planning Considerations



Source: EDAW, October 2006

Legend

- S.C. Gas Easement (5'-16.5')
- Recreational Trail & Pipeline Easement (50')
- OC Flood Control District - Loftus Channel (110')
- S.C. Gas Easement (25')
- ConocoPhillips 6" Pipeline
- Black Sands Energy 6" Pipeline
- Existing Perimeter Landscaping
- Existing Signalized Intersection
- Existing Access Points
- Regional Trail Connection

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 Exhibit 3.4-4



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3.5 Project History

3.5.1 La Floresta Village Site

The site is currently owned by the La Floresta LLC, a partnership between Standard Pacific of Orange County and the Union Oil Company of California. The La Floresta Village site has historically been used as Unocal's Fred L. Hartley Research Center, which was constructed during the 1950s. Prior to the research center's construction, the land was primarily undeveloped. Subsequent actions on the site include approval of a cogeneration facility in 1999 to produce electricity for on-site use. Later, Unocal intended to redevelop the Hartley Center site under a Specific Plan they developed for the property; however, on March 14, 2005 Unocal officially withdrew this application. Subsequent to this action, Unocal authorized a demolition contractor to submit the required application to obtain a City of Brea permit to demolish all structures located on the Hartley Center site, including the Hartley building, auditorium, cafeteria, and other ancillary structures on site. A Demolition Permit was approved by the City in March 2005, and demolition activities were completed in April 2006.

On August 18, 2005, La Floresta LLC completed a formal application for the La Floresta Development. In October 2005, the City retained an environmental consultant (CONEXUS) to prepare the environmental clearance documents in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act for the Project. An Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed on December 19, 2005, which started the mandatory 30-day NOP public review period, ending January 19, 2006. The City of Brea held a public scoping meeting for the EIR on December 19, 2006. The applicant's representatives have also held numerous community meetings about the Project over the last year.

3.5.2 Birch Hills Site

The site is currently owned by the Birch/Kraemer LLC and is occupied by the Birch Hills Golf Course. The Birch Hills site has historically been undeveloped land except for a portion which was used as the former Collier Chemical Corporation plant. Collier Chemical plant was constructed in the early 1950s and was operated until December 1991. At the time of the plant's construction, adjacent properties were primarily undeveloped land.

Although no oil production was conducted on this site, it is located between two major oil fields (Brea Olinda and East Coyote). Historical maps indicate that several oil company pipelines once crossed the Birch Hills site. Two pipelines remain on-site, but are not located in areas planned for development. On April 13, 1993, Unocal submitted an application for the Birch Hills Specific Plan. The Birch Hills site was approved for low density residential (363 dwelling units) and a 7.5-acre park. To date, the final phase of the previously approved Birch Hills Specific Plan has not been constructed. On August 18, 2005, the Birch/Kraemer LLC submitted a formal application for the La Floresta Development Proposal. The applicant's representatives have held numerous community meetings prior to submittal of the Project.

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