

**City Hall**

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San Carlos, CA 94070-3085



**Planning Division**

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**NOTICE OF PREPARATION and  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING**

**Date** July 1, 2024

**To:** State Clearinghouse  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
San Mateo County Clerk  
Responsible and Trustee Agencies  
Interested Individuals and Organizations

**From:** Lisa Porras  
Planning Manager  
City of San Carlos  
600 Elm Street  
San Carlos, CA 94070-3085  
Email: [lporras@cityofsancarlos.org](mailto:lporras@cityofsancarlos.org)

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan (NEASP)

**Lead Agency:** City of San Carlos

**Project Title:** San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan (project)

**Project Location:** Northeast Plan Area of San Carlos (north of Holly Street, to the San Carlos city limits at Belmont Creek, and between U.S. Highway 101 and Old Country Road)

**Call for Comments:**

The City of San Carlos (City) is requesting written comments from responsible agencies and the public regarding the scope and content of the San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan (NEASP) Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The program-level EIR will evaluate the environmental impacts associated with the likely type and amount of development projected under the 2045 horizon year. This EIR will not evaluate detailed, site-specific activities and future development projects under the NEASP. The City requests your written comments as to the scope of the EIR, including mitigation measures and/or project alternatives to reduce potential environmental impacts from the proposed project.

**Preparing an Environmental Impact Report:**

Notice is hereby given that the City will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR for the project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15060(d) as identified above and described in the attached materials.

**Comment Submittal:**

Written comments on the NOP are due no later than the close of the 36-day NOP review period at 5:00 p.m. on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Please send your written comments to Lisa Porras, Planning Manager, at the address or email address shown below with “San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan EIR” as the subject. Public agencies providing comments are asked to include a contact person for the agency.

City of San Carlos Planning Division  
Attention: Lisa Porras, Planning Manager  
600 Elm Street, San Carlos California 94070-3085  
[AdvancePlanning@cityofsancarlos.org](mailto:AdvancePlanning@cityofsancarlos.org)

**Scoping Meeting:**

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15082(c), notice is hereby given that the City will conduct a public Scoping Meeting on August 5, 2024 at 7:00 PM. This meeting will be conducted both in person at City Hall and virtually via Zoom.

*In-Person Participation*

The meeting will be held at the Planning and Transportation Commission regular meeting location in the City Hall Council Chambers, 600 Elm Street.

To address the Commission on any item on the posted agenda, fill out a Request to Speak Form located in the back of the Council Chambers and submit it to staff; or you may raise your hand when the Chair calls for public comments.

Masks are no longer required, but are still recommended by the California Department of Health. To maintain public health and safety, please do not attend in person if you are experiencing respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, runny nose, and/or sore throat).

*Remote Participation*

This meeting may also be attended remotely via the following options:

- Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88635467439>; or call 1-669-900-9128 and enter the Meeting ID #: 886 3546 7439
- Meeting Webportal: [www.cityofsancarlos.org/agenda](http://www.cityofsancarlos.org/agenda)
- Local TV: Comcast Channel 27 and AT&T Uverse Channel 99

If you are participating remotely and plan to make a public comment on any item on the posted agenda, please observe the meeting via Zoom (see above access information), and, during the public comment period for the agenda item you wish to address, use the “raise hand” feature. If joining Zoom by phone, press \*9 to “raise hand”.

# Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report for the City of San Carlos Northeast Area Specific Plan

Date of Distribution: July 1, 2024

## Introduction

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental impacts of a proposed project that an agency (in this case, the City of San Carlos) may implement or approve. The EIR process is intended to: (1) provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment; (2) examine methods (e.g., project-specific mitigations, uniformly applied development regulations) for avoiding or reducing significant impacts; and (3) consider alternatives to the proposed project.

In accordance with CEQA, the Draft EIR will include the following:

- A summary of the project, its potential significant environmental impacts, and mitigations required to avoid or reduce those significant impacts;
- A project description;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and mitigations for the project;
- Alternatives to the proposed project; and
- Other environmental consequences of the project, including
  - (1) growth-inducing effects
  - (2) significant unavoidable impacts
  - (3) irreversible environmental changes
  - (4) cumulative impacts, and
  - (5) effects found not to be significant.

## Project Location:

The Northeast Area Specific Plan (NEASP) area consists of approximately 145 acres, roughly bound by Belmont Creek, U.S Highway 101 (U.S. 101), the western property lines of the residential parcels along Northwood Drive, the northeastern property lines of the residential parcels along Fairfield Drive, and the southeast property line of the Palo Alto Medical Facilities (PAMF) and Old County Road. For the purposes of this analysis, Belmont Creek will be considered north, U.S. 101 will be considered east, the residential parcels along Northwood Drive and Fairfield Drive and the southeast property line of PAMF will be considered south, and Old County Road will be considered west. Please refer to Figures 1 through 3 for maps showing the project location and surrounding context.

## Project Description

The purpose of the NEASP is to create a vision, policies, and standards to guide new development within the Plan area in a way that supports existing and new businesses, residents, and the overall community. The NEASP will manage and direct changes in the development patterns within the Plan area and guide present and future land uses, zoning changes, economic development, urban design, infrastructure, transportation circulation management and mobility, service provisions, and community benefits.

The NEASP would be built out over an approximate 20-year period and would allow for a net increase of 1,890 residential units (no residential units exist within the Plan area currently), as well as an increase in the net square footage of existing non-residential land uses within the Plan area, as summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 NEASP Development Projections**

Land Use	Allowable Square Footage Net Increase
Non Residential Development	4,508,000
Residential Development	1,890,000 (1,890 Units)

Maximum building heights within the NEASP area would range from a minimum of 75 to 100 feet and a maximum of 90 to 155 feet, depending on the land use designation. Additional height increases for specific land uses would be permitted by the City should bonus conditions determined by the City be met, as shown in Table 2 below. The Comprehensive Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for the Environs of San Carlos Airport (ALUCP) dictates the maximum height permitted within the NEASP to protect navigable airspace around the airport.

**Table 2 Maximum Height Allowances**

Land Use	Base Height Assumption	Bonus Height Permitted
Light Industrial Sub Area 1	100	155
Light Industrial Sub Area 2	75	155
Light Industrial Sub Area 3	75	75
Residential Mixed Use Sub Area 1	90	N/A
Residential Mixed Use Sub Area 2	75	N/A

The land use categories identified in Table 2 include Sub-Areas, which would be facets of zoning districts that include a base height allowance as well as a bonus maximum height allowance and floor area. These height and density standards will vary depending on location within the Plan area. The NEASP is proposing a step down of building heights for properties directly abutting the Greater East San Carlos Neighborhood.

A new street segment from Quarry Road to Bragato Road would be implemented as part of the NEASP. Additionally, the NEASP would include improvements to the existing transportation network, such as a pedestrian/bicycle connection to Belmont Creek from Quarry Road and the redesign of Industrial Road as a multi-modal district boulevard. The NEASP would increase the setback from Belmont Creek for properties adjacent to Belmont Creek.

A General Plan Amendment and rezoning are proposed to allow for the addition of residential land uses to the Plan area. Please see Figure 4 for a map of the proposed land uses within the NEASP.

**Potential Environmental Impacts of the Project**

The EIR will identify the significant environmental effects anticipated to result from development and operation of the project as proposed. The EIR will include the following specific environmental categories as related to the proposed project:

1. *Aesthetics*

The EIR will describe the existing visual setting of the NEASP area and the visual changes that are anticipated to occur as a result of the NEASP. Aesthetic impacts will be evaluated pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21099. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

2. *Agricultural and Forestry Resources*

The EIR will describe the NEASP's impact (if any) on existing farmland, forest land, and timberland. According to the San Mateo County Important Farmland 2018 Map, properties within the Plan area are designated as Urban and Built-Up Land and therefore the Plan area does not include land mapped as farmland.

3. *Air Quality*

The EIR will describe the regional air quality conditions in the San Francisco Bay Area and evaluate the air quality impacts from implementation of the NEASP in conformance with the criteria identified by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). Given the timing and nature of individual construction projects are unknown, construction air quality impacts and health risk impacts would be addressed qualitatively. Operational emissions of criteria air pollutants from buildout of the Plan would be computed using the CalEEMod model supplemented with the most recently available on-road mobile emission factors, and compared to relevant BAAQMD thresholds. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

4. *Biological Resources*

The NEASP area is mostly developed and consists of four habitat types/land uses: developed/landscaped (143.2 acres), riparian (1.2 acres), freshwater marsh (0.6 acre), and aquatic riverine (0.4 acre). There are also a variety of trees present throughout the Plan area, on private properties and within the public right-of-way. The EIR will evaluate the NEASP's impact on biological resources within and near the Plan area, including sensitive habitats and special-status species. The NEASP's consistency with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources will also be discussed. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

5. *Cultural Resources*

There are numerous existing buildings within the Plan area, many of which are older than 50 years and may be historic resources. Additionally, the area is adjacent to Belmont Creek, and may be sensitive for archaeological resources. The EIR will include a discussion of potential impacts to cultural and archaeological resources that could result from implementation of the NEASP. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

## 6. *Energy*

The EIR will examine the potential for the NEASP to result in excessive or inefficient use of energy and discuss the energy conservation measures to be included in future development implementing the NEASP. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

## 7. *Geology and Soils*

The project site is in one of the most seismically active regions in the United States. The EIR will describe the general geologic and soil conditions within the NEASP area and discuss possible geological impacts associated with seismic activity and the existing soil conditions. The potential for future development construction activity to encounter paleontological resources (i.e. fossils) will also be assessed. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

## 8. *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

The EIR will qualitatively discuss the NEASP's consistency and conformance with applicable plans, policies, and/or regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

## 9. *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*

There are sites within the NEASP area with reported spill incidents impacting soil, soil vapor, and/or groundwater. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the NEASP to result in a hazard to the public or environment from the transport, use, disposal, or upset of hazardous materials. The Plan area is located within the San Carlos Airport Influence Area. The EIR will discuss the NEASP's conformance with applicable Airport Land Use Commission polices governing development near the San Carlos Airport, located to the southeast of the Plan area. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

## 10. *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The NEASP area is bounded by Belmont Creek to the north, and the area has experienced localized flooding. The EIR will describe the general hydrologic and drainage conditions of the NEASP area and any changes in site drainage and hydrological conditions resulting from implementation of the proposed NEASP. The EIR will also describe impacts on stormwater runoff quantity/quality and groundwater resources. Impacts related to inundation and the potential for subsidence will also be discussed. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

## 11. *Land Use*

The EIR will evaluate if the NEASP would physically divide an established community or cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with relevant land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. Land use impacts that would

occur as a result of the proposed project will be analyzed, including the consistency of the project with the City's General Plan and zoning code and compatibility of the proposed and existing land uses in the project area. The effect of the project on the City's jobs/housing balance will also be analyzed. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

#### *12. Noise and Vibration*

The existing, predominate noise sources in the NEASP area include vehicular traffic along roadways (including US 101, Industrial Road, and Old Country Road), trains along Caltrain's tracks, and aircraft operations associated with the San Carlos Airport. The EIR will evaluate noise and vibration impacts from buildout of the NEASP with respect to existing standards. The EIR will also discuss the NEASP's consistency with the San Carlos Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, particularly its potential to expose people residing or working in the NEASP area to excessive aircraft noise levels. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

#### *13. Mineral Resources*

The EIR will describe whether the NEASP would result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource or locally-important mineral resource recovery site.

#### *14. Population and Housing*

Currently, there are no residential uses within the NEASP area. For this reason, the NEASP would not displace existing housing or residents. The NEASP proposes 1,890 new housing units, which would house a population of approximately 3,700 residents. The EIR will discuss if the NEASP would induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area, beyond what is proposed as part of the NEASP, either directly or indirectly. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

#### *15. Public Services*

The EIR will describe the available public services (e.g., fire and police protection, schools, libraries, and parks) in the NEASP area and the potential for the NEASP to require the expansion or construction of additional facilities. The EIR discussion will focus on whether the expansion or construction of additional facilities would result in significant environmental impacts. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

#### *16. Recreation*

The EIR will describe the available recreational facilities in the NEASP area and the potential for the NEASP to substantially accelerate the deterioration of those facilities or require the expansion or construction of additional facilities, and whether the expansion or new construction of additional facilities would result in significant environmental impacts.

### 17. *Transportation*

The EIR will evaluate possible transportation impacts from implementation of the NEASP using the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) metric. The EIR will discuss the NEASP's consistency with programs, plans, ordinances, and policies addressing the circulation system (including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities). Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

### 18. *Tribal Cultural Resources*

The EIR will identify whether tribal cultural resources have been identified in the area, including through consultation with a tribe(s) culturally affiliated with the area, per Assembly Bill 52. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

### 19. *Utilities*

The EIR will describe the existing sanitary sewer, storm drain, water, and solid waste services for the NEASP area. The EIR will discuss the adequacy of the existing utilities and service systems to accommodate the demand from the proposed NEASP and identify necessary improvements. Pursuant to SB 610, a Water Supply Assessment for the NEASP will be completed by the local water retailer serving the area and included in the EIR. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as necessary.

### 20. *Wildfire*

The proposed project is located within an urbanized area of the City of San Carlos and is not within a State Responsibility Area or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones according to CalFire. The EIR will discuss whether the NEASP would impact or exacerbate wildfire risk and/or impair emergency response.

### 21. *Alternatives*

The EIR will examine alternatives to the NEASP including a "No Project" alternative and one or more alternative development scenarios depending on the impacts identified. Alternatives discussed will be chosen based on their ability to reduce or avoid identified significant impacts of the proposed project while achieving most of the identified objectives of the project.

### 22. *Significant Unavoidable Impacts*

The EIR will identify those significant impacts that cannot be avoided, if the project is implemented as proposed.

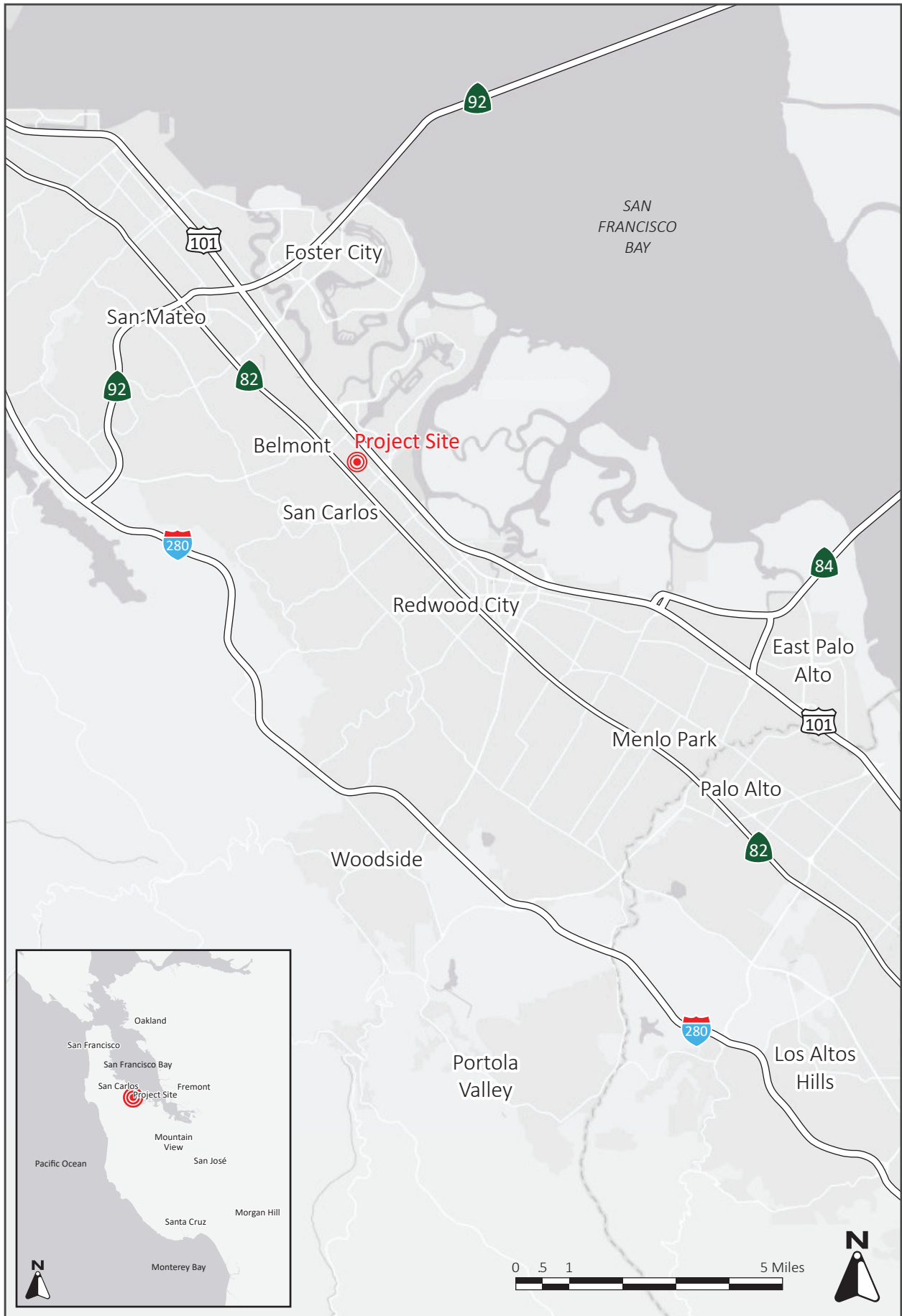


23. *Cumulative Impacts*

The EIR will include an analysis of potentially significant cumulative impacts of the project when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the development area.

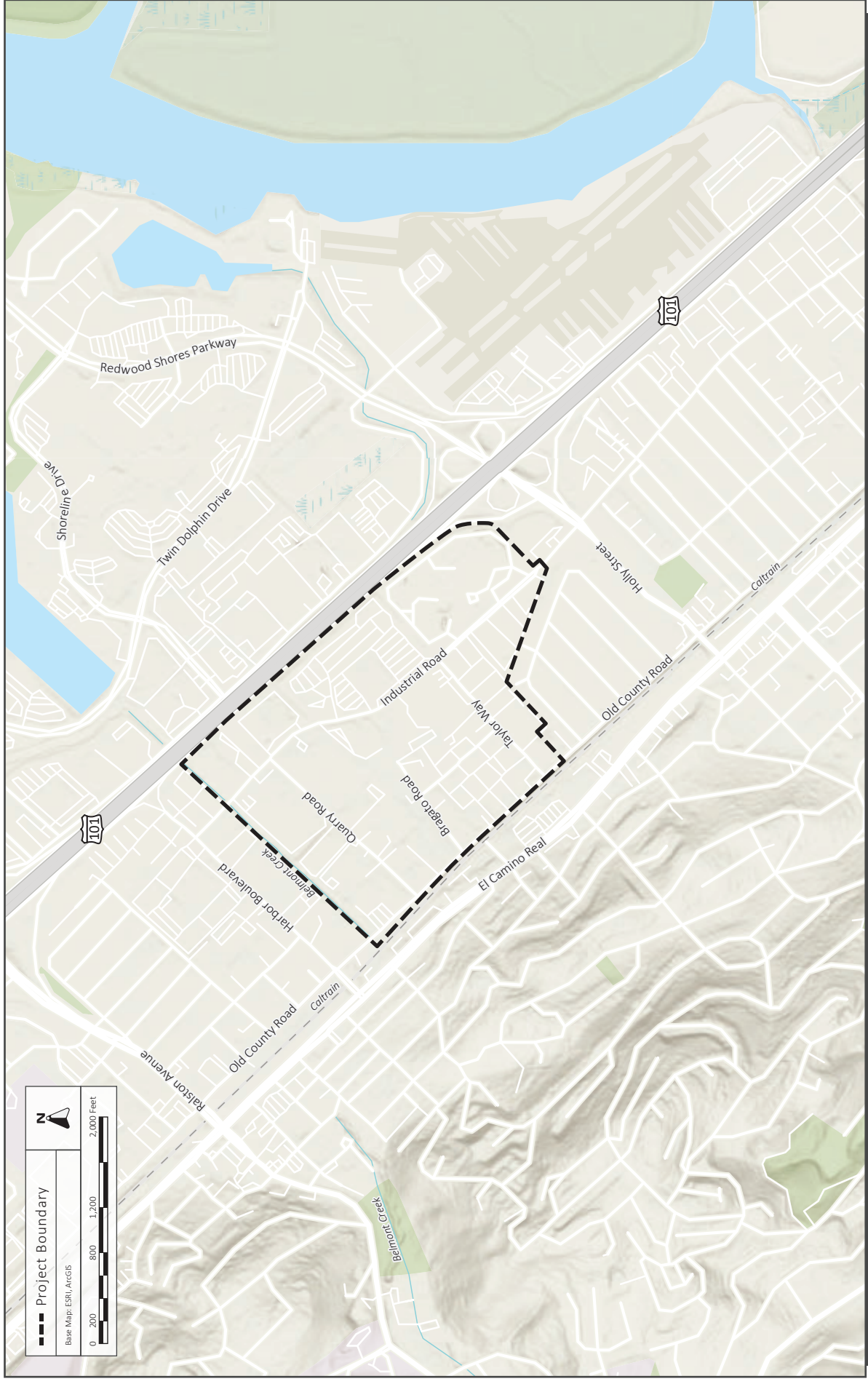
24. *Other Required Sections*

In conformance with the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR will also include the following sections: 1) growth-inducing impacts, 2) significant irreversible environmental changes, 3) references and organizations/persons consulted, and 4) EIR authors.



REGIONAL MAP

FIGURE 1



**Project Boundary**

Base Map: ESRI, ArcGIS

0 200 800 1,200 2,000 Feet

VICINITY MAP

FIGURE 2





**Project Boundary**

0 150 300 600 900 1,500 Feet

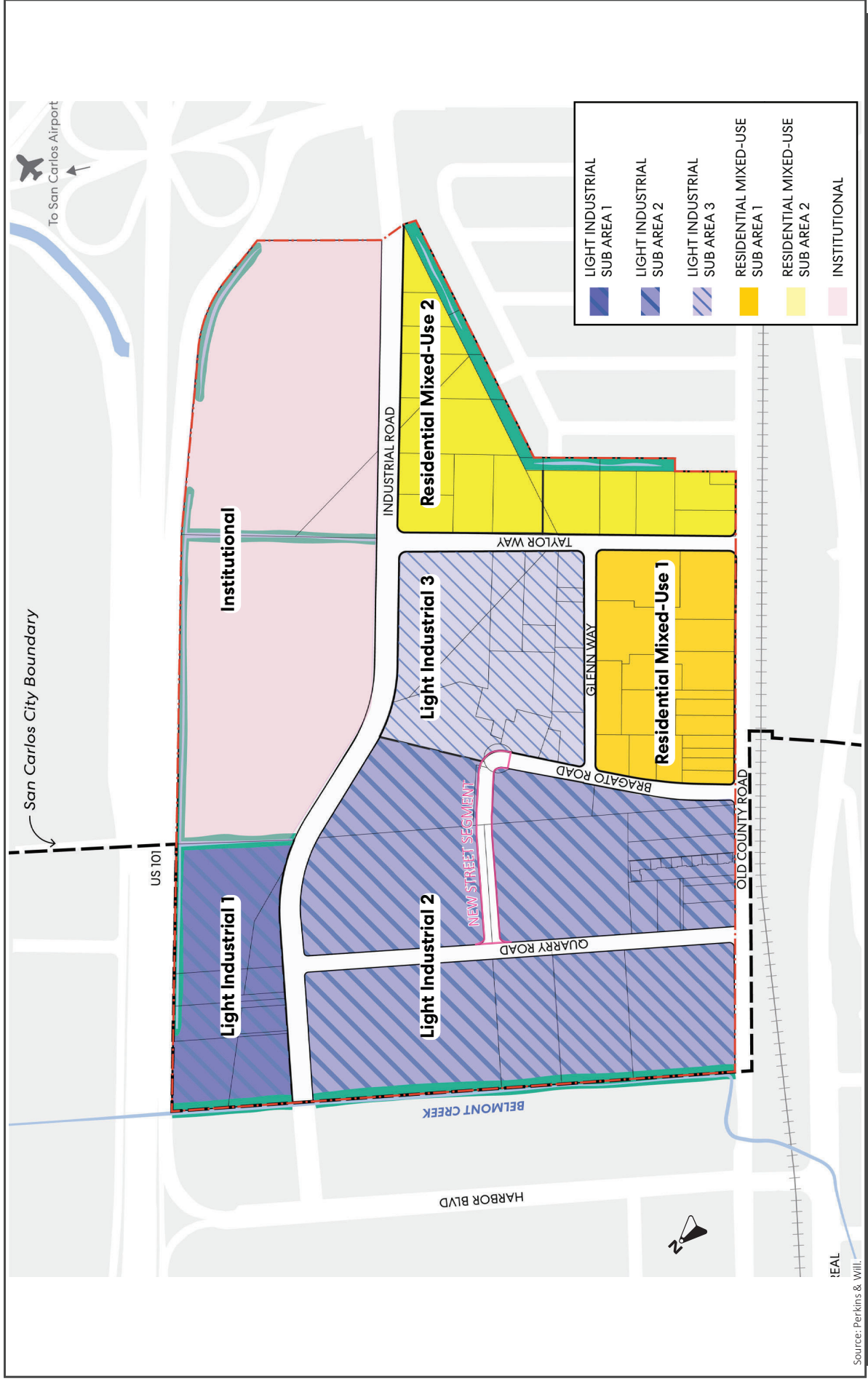
Photo Date: Apr. 2022

Aerial Source: Google Earth Pro, Jun. 6, 2024.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE PROJECT SITE

FIGURE 3





	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL SUB AREA 1
	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL SUB AREA 2
	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL SUB AREA 3
	RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE SUB AREA 1
	RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE SUB AREA 2
	INSTITUTIONAL

Source: Perkins & Will

PROPOSED LAND USES

FIGURE 4