

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section provides a brief description of the current environmental conditions in the proposed project area.

3.1 REGIONAL SETTING

The City of San Luis Obispo is located between the San Lucia Mountains and the coastal mountains of central California. The City of San Luis Obispo is the business and government hub of San Luis Obispo County, and is the largest incorporated city between Santa Maria and Salinas. Cuesta Ridge lies to the north and east of the City, the Edna Valley is to the southeast and the ridges of the Davenport and Irish Hills are to the southwest. Agricultural valleys and open space surround most of the City, including vineyards and field crops, scrub oak, and grassland communities.

The City's topography and its proximity to the Pacific Ocean serve not only as major contributors to the scenic nature of the area, but also define the local climate. San Luis Obispo enjoys a Mediterranean climate, with mild winters, hot summers, and moderate rainfall. Weather systems are dominated by the Pacific High, a pressure zone centered off the coast of California that diverts storm tracks northward during the summer. The warmest month is generally September with an average maximum of about 78 degrees (Fahrenheit) and the coolest month is generally January with an average minimum of about 42 degrees, though highs in the 90s and lows in the 30s are not uncommon. Precipitation primarily falls between November and April, with an average annual rainfall of about 22 inches.

The prevailing winds are from the north at approximately five miles per hour. Locally, there is a tendency for the diurnal land/sea breeze cycle to cause prevailing winds to change direction and move offshore from early evening to morning and then return to the general onshore flow. Wind speed and direction in the winter is primarily a function of the location and strength of frontal systems that periodically move across the region. San Luis Obispo is located in a seismically active region subject to sporadic seismic events of varying intensity.

3.2 PROJECT SITE SETTING

Dalidio Property. The Dalidio property is surrounded by the City limits along approximately three-quarters of its boundary. The proposed project would be located within the Dalidio Area, a highly visible area west of U.S. Highway 101 within the City's Urban Reserve Line, but not presently within the City. The property currently supports irrigated agriculture on its prime soils. Excellent views of Cerro San Luis are accessible across the property from the freeway. Prefumo Creek forms the area's western boundary, contributing to both the property's high flood hazard potential, and to its wealth of biological resources.

The topography of the property is generally flat with the exception of Prefumo Creek and the on-site unnamed drainage channel in the northern portion of the site. Agricultural production is the current primary land use of the property. Dry and partially irrigated field crops planted include garbanzo beans, dry beans and other field crops. More recent production includes irrigated crops such as cabbage and lettuce. Agricultural accessory buildings are located on the 10-acre parcel that



fronts along Madonna Road. These structures include residences, barns, a silo, a water tower, and other agricultural structures. The balance of the land along the Prefumo Creek drainage is masked by the presence of a mature grove of eucalyptus trees that delineate the creek corridor.

The relatively flat on-site topography and the low profile of the row crops provide for expansive views across the property. For northbound travelers on U.S. Highway 101, foreground views to the west are of the San Luis Obispo Promenade, with background views of Cerro San Luis and Bishop Peak. Southbound travelers looking west view vegetation associated with Prefumo Creek and the edges of the commercial uses clustered at the Los Osos Valley Road/U.S. Highway 101 interchange in the foreground and the Irish Hills in the background.

The Dalidio property is located on the south side of Dalidio Road, between Madonna Road and U.S. Highway 101. The property is located within a transition area between the commercial development to the north and the residential development to the south. Adjacent land uses include retail, commercial, government, agricultural, and a major highway.

Prado Road Interchange. For the purposes of this analysis the following features define the Prado Road interchange footprint area. The Prado Road ramp system would be bounded to the east and north by the realigned Elks Lane and to the west by the footprint of the commercial portion of the project, as shown in Figure 2-14. The auxiliary lane would be bounded to the west by the existing northbound Highway 101 lanes, to the south by the intersection of Prado Road and U.S. Highway 101, to the north by the intersection of Madonna Road and U.S. Highway 101, and to the east by the edge of the existing Caltrans right-of-way. The auxiliary lane footprint area is illustrated in Figure 2-15.

The footprint of the interchange on the east side of the freeway would be confined between the Prado Road/U.S. Highway 101 and Madonna Road/U.S. Highway 101 intersections. Located at the Prado Road/U.S. Highway 101 intersection are the existing U.S. Highway 101 northbound ramps, an unlined drainage channel that parallels the freeway, the drive-in movie theater and an abandoned gas station located at 253 Elks Lane. South of the Prado Road/U.S. Highway 101 intersection is the City of San Luis Obispo corporation yard. North of the Prado Road/U.S. Highway 101 intersection, in the area between Elks Lane and U.S. Highway 101, are scattered patches of row-crop agriculture. Also, the San Luis Creek riparian corridor parallels U.S. Highway 101 from its intersection with Madonna Road to approximately 0.4 miles south of the intersection. The Elks Lodge and an adjacent open field, which appears to be used for overflow parking, are located near the intersection of South Higuera Street and Elks Lane.

3.3 CUMULATIVE PROJECTS SETTING

The *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15130 requires a discussion of cumulative impacts when they are significant. The adequate discussion of related or cumulative projects may be drawn from *"a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document which is designed to evaluate regional or areawide conditions. Any such planning document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the Lead Agency."* Cumulative impacts were evaluated for conditions representing buildout of the City's General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements. The buildout population of the City is estimated to be about 56,000



people. The proposed project includes a request for a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designations on portions of the site from Interim Open Space to Commercial Retail, Office and Open Space, and from Medium-High Density Residential to Office. Therefore, when compared to General Plan buildout projections, the project would include fewer residential units and additional retail and office/business park square footage.

