SUMMARY

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Project Location

The Palomar Community College – North Education Center (hereafter referred to as the "proposed project" or "project") is located approximately 50 miles north of Downtown San Diego, in the community of Fallbrook in the unincorporated area of northern San Diego County; refer to Figures 1-1 and 1-2 for the regional and local location of the project site. The approximately 85-acre site is located to the northeast of the intersection of State Route 76 (SR 76/Pala Road) and Interstate 15 (I-15), generally to the south of Pala Mesa Heights Drive; refer to Figure 1-3. Specifically, the proposed project would affect County of San Diego Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs) 108-120-55 and 108-121-16. The site is owned by the Palomar Community College District (District), and is located within the northern portion of the land area within San Diego County that is served by the District.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Facilities and Support Structures

Facilities planned would include instructional space (lecture and laboratory), administrative services, a library, offices, a student services center, food services, maintenance/operations, and other support services. Surface parking areas are generally planned in the northern and southern portions of the property. Open space athletic fields are also envisioned as part of future development of the educational center in the southern portion of the site in the future; refer to Figure 1-4 for a Conceptual Site Plan. Initial development would consist of approximately ~~100,000~~75,000 to 150,000 square feet (s.f.) of development and related parking. As shown in Figure 1-4, all of the proposed facilities would be located within an approximately 56.5-acre footprint. Development of the project site would be phased over several decades, with an estimated total building square footage of approximately 380,000~~ to 533,000~~ s.f., which is anticipated to occur around the year 2030. The project site would be built out commensurate with student enrollment levels and programming needs.

The conceptual project design also includes a Native Area of approximately 25 acres in the southern portion of the property. The Native Area consists of a mixture of non-native and wetland habitats. To avoid wetland impacts, no development is proposed in this area as part of the proposed project. Development of this area may occur at a future point in time as part of a separate action, if the District determines additional property is needed to support the educational programming of the center. The limits of the development footprint are set back a distance of 50 feet from wetland habitat areas that are located within the Native Area.

Recreational Facilities and Open Space

Recreational facilities envisioned with the Conceptual Site Plan include two ball fields, a turf athletic field, and tennis courts in the southern portion of the area proposed for development. These facilities would be developed over future years, as demanded by the growth of the student population. Generally surrounding each of these recreational facilities would be common open space areas, which could be used by students or faculty for passive recreational purposes, such as meeting space or for studying.

Useable open space would also occur around the individual buildings. Large common areas are proposed around the campus buildings and would allow opportunities for reading, relaxing, eating, and social gathering of students and faculty. These areas would be visually enhanced through the use of landscaping and other such improvements.

Parking

At full buildout, the Conceptual Site Plan plans for approximately 2,125 surface parking spaces. The majority of parking is proposed in the northern and southern portions of the site; refer to Figure 1-4. Parking would be provided at a standard ratio for community college campuses of one parking space per every four students (this ratio factors in consideration for faculty and staff generated by the student population). Therefore, at a projected future student population of 8,500 enrolled students, an estimated 2,125 parking spaces would meet anticipated parking demand at full buildout of the educational center.

Although not anticipated, parking may be constructed in the form of an above-ground parking structure if the future student/faculty population creates such a demand; however, it is anticipated that future parking demand can be met with the provision of surface parking, as shown in Figure 1-4.

Phasing

~~No specific phasing plan has been identified in the Palomar College Facilities Master Plan.~~ The project would be constructed in two phases. Initial development would consist of approximately 75,000 to 150,000 square feet (s.f.) of development and related parking, and would include initial project opening (approximately 40 percent of project buildout or 3,400 enrolled students). The proposed project would be built constructed in two phases, as funding for construction becomes available to the District. The first phase, Phase I, would include a mixture of laboratory, lecture, and library space. Construction of Phase I is expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2011, with classes beginning fall semester of 2011.

Phase II of the of the proposed project would consist of the remainder of the building space, which would consist of approximately 228,000 gross square feet of building space. At the completion of Phase II, the proposed project would have approximately 380,000 square feet of building space to support a maximum of 8,500 enrolled students. It is unknown at this time when construction of Phase II would begin, as it is dependent on student demand for additional facilities and available funding. For purposes of this analysis, it is anticipated that the Phase II construction will be completed around the year 2030.

Development of the proposed facilities for the North Education Center would occur over several decades. Future student population growth in the northern portion of the District would determine the development or construction of additional facilities and services. To allow for an effective assessment of a worst-case scenario of environmental impacts potentially resulting from development of the North Education Center, the proposed project is evaluated at full buildout condition. ~~As stated above, buildout of the proposed Palomar Community College site is anticipated to occur around the year 2030.~~ Grading of the approximately 56.5-acre development area and areas where off-site roadway improvements are proposed would occur all at once and would not be phased.

Utilities

Water Service

Water service to the project site would be provided by the Rainbow Municipal Water District (RMWD), which serves an unincorporated portion of Northern San Diego County. According the *Overview of Water Service for the Palomar Community College in the County of San Diego* produced by Dexter Wilson Engineering (2007), there is an existing 16-inch water main north of the site within Stewart Canyon Road, approximately 2,650 feet north of the project site; refer to Appendix ~~L~~M. Based on the fire flow requirements for the college [4,000 gallons per minute (gpm)], the 16-inch water line would be extended to the project site, along Horse Ranch Creek Road, then connect to an existing 16-inch water line within SR 76 at Pankey Road. The proposed alignment is shown in Figure 1-5. A fire flow requirement of 4,000 gpm is reasonable, based on the projected building square footages for the Education Center. It is possible that fire flow could be met with a smaller line, but it is anticipated that the RMWD would require the 16-inch line as part of its network. The size of the line would allow some opportunity for future developments in the area that would tie into the water line to reimburse Palomar College in accordance with requirements of the RMWD.

It is also assumed that a 10" reclaimed water line will be installed within Horse Ranch Creek Road parallel to the potable water line to provide water for future landscaping needs; however, currently, there is no existing reclaimed water line available to connect to.

Sewer Service

Sewer service for the project site would also be provided by the RMWD. An existing 10" sewer line runs along the west boundary of the campus and is available to serve the site. The existing sewer line alignment is shown in Figure 1-6. The *Overview of Sewer Service for the Palomar Community College in the County of San Diego,* prepared by Dexter Wilson Engineering (2007), determined that this sewer connection would be adequate to serve the project site on an interim basis until a main trunk line is installed along Horse Ranch Creek Road, which will occur with implementation of the future Campus Park project planned to the east of the Palomar College site; refer to Appendix ~~M~~N. Once the trunk line is installed, sewerage from the Palomar College site may need to be re-routed to the trunk line, depending on the sewerage needs of the campus at that time. The existing line would be adequate to serve the first several buildings developed on the proposed site. If the main line is not installed, the College may be required to construct additional sewerage facilities in the future, with connection to the existing line within SR 76, at the time in the future when the student population of the Center would demand such improvements.

The RMWD has indicated that it can adequately provide sewer service to the Palomar College site. The Palomar College School District has purchased 100 EDUs from the Rainbow Water District for future sewer service, which will be more than adequate to serve the campus at full buildout. Sewer service for the project site would be adequate both in the interim, as well as at full project buildout.

Storm Drains

Storm water from the project site would be collected within a storm drain that traverses the site and a vegetated swale located along the western boundary of the site, adjacent to the Horse Ranch Creek drainage. The surface water would be conveyed to a detention basin

where the water would be detained and would settle prior to being released into the existing drainage. Storm drain facilities would be required to route offsite flows approaching from the east across the project site, where they will be detained prior to release into the existing drainage. Preliminary design of drainage improvements would include onsite storm drain facilities, detention facilities, and permanent storm water best management practices (BMPs); refer also to Section 4.1.5 and Appendices ~~J and K~~K and L for additional discussion.

Dry Utilities

Electrical service to the site would be supplied by San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E). The college would be expected to install all electrical structures. If service lines are used by other developments within the project area at a future date, the District could potentially recover a portion of the costs from these new users. These cost recoveries are set on a sliding scale by SDG&E and typically expire after 10 years.

Vehicular Circulation and Roadway Improvements

Roadways

Horse Ranch Creek Road (Proposed)

Horse Creek Ranch Road (proposed) would serve as the main access to the Palomar College site. The road would be constructed offsite, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the project site from existing northern segment of Pankey Road to SR 76 / Pala Road in the south; refer to Figure 1-4. The construction of Horse Ranch Creek Road would implement roadway SL2602 of the County's Circulation element.

With the proposed project, the roadbed would be graded to its full intended right-of-way (ROW) width of 106 feet. To the southeast of the project site, where the road would intersect with SR 76, the ROW would be graded to 116 feet in width to accommodate a future left turn lane. The left turn lane would be constructed upon future buildout of Horse Ranch Creek Road by other developers at the time when area traffic volumes require the additional lane; refer to Figure 1-7. With the proposed project, the road would be improved within the ROW to its intended half-width consistent with County of San Diego Roadway Design Standards. The road would be paved to 32 feet in width to create two travels lanes, with curb and gutter along the western edge. Along the improved project frontage with Horse Ranch Creek Road, (generally from the northern project boundary to the southern boundary), an additional 14-foot wide landscaped easement would contain a meandering walkway comprised of an 8-foot wide decomposed granite trail (which would be dedicated to the County through an Irrevocable Offer of Dedication [IOD] for maintenance). A 16-foot wide landscaped area would be located adjacent to the west of the 14-foot easement; refer to Figure 1-7. The proposed improvements along Horse Ranch Creek Road would be adequate to serve traffic generated by the students and faculty utilizing the Educational Center.

Pankey Road

Pankey Road in the vicinity of the project site exists as two separate roadway segments. The northern segment runs north-south, parallel to I-15, and allows access to existing residences and small businesses north of Stewart Canyon Road. The northern segment terminates in a cul-de-sac approximately 3,500 feet (0.7 mile) south of Stewart Canyon Road, just south of Pala Mesa Heights Drive and west of the project boundary; refer to Figure 1-3. The southern

segment of Pankey Road extends north from SR 76 for a distance of approximately 1,200 feet, where it terminates in a cul-de-sac; refer to Figure 1-3.

As part of the proposed project, the northern portion of Pankey Road would be renamed Horse Ranch Creek Road when it ultimately connects to the northern terminus of (proposed) Horse Ranch Creek Road, to be constructed along the eastern boundary of the project site. On the County's General Plan Circulation Element, the northern and southern segments of Pankey Road (SC 2602) are shown as being connected and constructed to County roadway standards as a Light Collector, thereby indicating the County's future plans for the roadway to create a north-south access from Stewart Canyon Road to SR 76.

A roadway vacation would be required to vacate a portion of the northern segment of Pankey Road so that the land could be utilized for development of the North Education Center. The vacation of the road would affect the approximately one-mile long segment of roadway ROW that extends from Pankey Road at the northern tip of the property boundary to Pala Mesa Drive; refer to Figure 1-8. The District would be required to submit a separate application requesting the vacation to the County for review and approval at the time grading and improvement plans are prepared. The vacation would coincide with the dedication of Horse Ranch Creek Road to the County of San Diego. Horse Ranch Creek Road would replace the County's anticipated linkage of the two existing segments of Pankey Road to create a north-south connection from Stewart Canyon Road to SR 76. To allow for a comprehensive evaluation of potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed project, the land area within the project site to be vacated has been included in the EIR analysis.

Pedestrian Circulation

Internally, pedestrian movement would be accommodated through sidewalks adjacent to all internal roadways, as well as within common areas between structures, as appropriate, to allow for movement throughout the campus.

Conceptual Grading Plan

Approximately 56.5 acres of the 85-acre site would be graded to create a relatively flat pad on which the planned educational facilities would be developed over future years; refer to Figure 1-9. Grading would occur as part of road and infrastructure construction, rather than on a building-specific basis. Onsite grading would amount to approximately ~~485~~385,000 cubic yards (c.y.) of cut and ~~385~~485,000 c.y. of fill. As such, an additional 100,000 c.y. of fill would be required from offsite locations. An offsite borrow area, capable of providing approximately 371,000 c.y. of fill, is proposed near the northeastern property boundary, across Horse Ranch Creek Road. Grading quantities required for offsite improvements are included in the above estimates for the construction of Horse Ranch Creek Road.

Land Use Designations and Zoning

The site is currently owned by the Palomar Community College District, and would be developed under the jurisdiction of the District. Per Section 53094 of the California Government Code, the proposed project would not be subject to the goals, policies, and guidelines set forth in the County of San Diego General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, Interstate 15 Corridor Plan, or the Fallbrook Community Plan, as well as such ordinances as the County Resource Protection Ordinance or County Light Pollution Code.

Land Use

The majority of the project site is designated as Specific Plan Area (21) in the San Diego County General Plan Regional Land Use Element and the Fallbrook Community Plan. The remaining portion of the site (located in the northwest corner of the property) is designated as Public/Semi-Public Lands (22). The Public/Semi-Public designation identifies areas owned by public agencies, such as (in this case) roadways. However, as explained above, the property is under the jurisdiction of the Palomar Community College District and subject to the California Government Code.

The Specific Plan designation is associated with the previously approved Campus Park Specific Plan Area. The proposed Campus Park project is located adjacent to the subject site to the north, east, and south. The proposed project site was previously included within the boundaries of the Campus Park Specific Plan Area, a proposed mixed-use residential project under the jurisdiction of the County of San Diego. This plan (SP-83-01) was originally adopted in 1983 and includes research and development/manufacturing facilities, as well as related uses such as townhome/mobile-home residential sites, parking areas, recreational facilities, and commercial development. An amendment to the Specific Plan (SPA 03-008) is currently being processed by the County as part of the current Campus Park project.

Zoning

Zoning designations established in the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance are intended to identify uses that are consistent with associated land use categories of the General Plan related community plan. The entire project site is zoned S90 (Holding Area). This designation is intended to prevent isolated or premature development from occurring in areas where adequate public services are unavailable, or where the determination of appropriate zoning regulations has not been made. However, as explained above, the property is under the jurisdiction of the Palomar Community College District and subject to the California Government Code.

Regional Setting

The proposed site is located within Northern San Diego County, in the unincorporated area of the County, within the Fallbrook Community Planning Area; refer to Figures 1-1 and 1-2. The project site is located to the northeast of the intersection of I-15 and SR 76.

The project area is characterized by rolling hills flanking the north/south trending I-15 corridor and to the east/west-trending floodplain for the San Luis Rey River to the south, along the route of SR 76. This area has been historically used for agriculture (avocado and citrus orchards), estate residential housing, and open space. These land uses have generally affected the lower, flatter areas and more gently sloping hillsides within the valley. Large patches of native coastal sage scrub habitat still remain on the more steeply sloping hillsides in the surrounding areas; refer to Figure 1-3.

This area of northern San Diego County, similar to the rest of San Diego County's inland valley areas, is characterized by warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. In the area of the proposed project site, the maximum and minimum average temperatures are 91° Fahrenheit (F) and 38° F, respectively. Precipitation in the area averages 16 inches annually, 90 percent of which falls between November and April.

Interstate 15 and State Route 76 generally provide regional access to the site. The junction of I-15 and SR 76 is located just southwest of the project site and provides freeway access to the property. Direct access to the project area would primarily be from SR 76 from the south, and from Old Highway 395 and Stewart Canyon Road/Canonita Drive to the north.

Local Setting

Currently, the property is utilized for non-commercial grazing. Several dirt roads traverse the site. A number of drainage channels associated with former agricultural activities are also present.

The project area can be described as being moderately flat with low, rolling hills occurring on the northeastern portion of the site. Elevation onsite ranges from approximately 270 feet to 365 feet above mean sea level (AMSL).

Horse Ranch Creek, a north-to-south trending unnamed blue-line drainage, occurs immediately west of the western boundary of the project site. Horse Ranch Creek is concrete-lined for a portion of its length that parallels I-15. As the creek continues south off the project site it widens and is no longer channelized. This drainage eventually flows into the San Luis Rey River. Two small, roughly southwest-trending seasonal drainages also occur in the southeastern portion of the project area.

Nine vegetation communities were identified onsite, including coastal freshwater marsh, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern willow scrub, alkali meadow, Diegan coastal sage scrub, disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub, coyote brush scrub, disturbed coyote brush scrub, and non-native grassland. Ornamental areas, agricultural areas, disturbed areas, and developed areas also occur within the project area. The majority of areas supporting non-native grassland onsite are currently used as pastureland.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES THAT REDUCE OR AVOID THE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The Palomar Community College District has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required for the proposed project, pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The District has prepared an Initial Study to determine the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. Based on the Initial Study, the environmental issue areas identified for study in the EIR are aesthetics, traffic and circulation, biological resources, cultural and paleontological resources, noise, agricultural resources, air quality, geological issues, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology/water quality, land use and planning, and public utilities and services. During preparation of this EIR, it was determined that potential impacts on agricultural resources, air quality, geological issues, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology/water quality, land use and planning, and public utilities and services are less than significant, and no mitigation measures are required. Table S-1 (Summary of Significant Environmental Impacts and Mitigation) presents a summary of the environmental impacts of the proposed project, mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potential significant impacts of the proposed project, and the level of significance of each impact after mitigation. Refer to Table S-1 for a summary of environmental effects of the proposed project found to be significant and the mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid those effects.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR and the Initial Study, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15123 (b)(2), were circulated for public review in January 2007 and July 2007. No areas of controversy were identified. Issues were raised in the NOP comment letters received, which include concerns for biological resources, traffic and circulation, recreation and trails, land use and housing, and air quality.

The NOP and comment letters received are included as Appendix A of this EIR. Issues raised during the comment period are evaluated in Chapters 2.0 to 4.0 of this EIR.

ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED BY THE DECISION-MAKING BODY

Issues to be resolved by the decision maker (Board of Trustees) include the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate significant effects identified (CEQA Guidelines, §15123 (b)(3)). Project alternatives are reviewed as part of the EIR process to identify alternative designs that would reduce project impacts while best achieving the established project objectives. The ultimate development of the project site would result in a potentially significant but mitigable impact to biological resources, cultural and paleontological resources, and noise. With implementation of proposed mitigation measures, impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. Impacts on aesthetic resources and traffic and circulation would be significant and unmitigable. No other significant and mitigated or unmitigated impacts have been identified for the proposed project. Impacts to jurisdictional waters and coastal sage scrub from the proposed project would require additional review and permit authorizations from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

In addition to one alternative that was considered but rejected, three additional alternatives to the proposed project are identified and analyzed in detail in Section 5.0 of this EIR: the No Project/No Build Alternative; the No Project/Reasonably Foreseeable Future Use of the Site Alternative; and the Light Industrial Alternative. These alternatives were chosen with a focus on reducing significant environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project.

No Project/No Build Alternative

Under the No Project/No Build Alternative, the project site would remain in its existing condition as largely agriculturally disturbed, vacant land. The existing cattle-grazing activities would continue on the site. No infrastructure improvements would be constructed, including those to implement the adopted circulation element road that would connect the area north of the site to SR 76. For these reasons the No Project/No Build Alternative is considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative. Under this Alternative, no steps would be taken to implement the policies set forth in the County's General Plan/Fallbrook Community Plan and the I-15/Highway 76 Interchange Master Plan for future development. No detailed studies to determine the area's services and facilities needs would be prepared. The site, located near the intersection of two major transportation corridors, would remain underutilized.

No Project/Reasonably Foreseeable Future Use of the Site Alternative

The project site is designated as a Special Study Area under the County's General Plan, which requires further study prior to adoption of land uses for the area, and is zoned S90-Holding Area. It also is within the I-15/Highway 76 Master Specific Plan (MSP) Area. Land uses that are proposed, but not adopted, for properties within the MSP include light industrial, industrial research park, neighborhood commercial, and residential. Such land uses require the preparation of technical studies identifying needed infrastructure, a Specific Plan for proposed development, and the provision of adequate infrastructure. Because this alternative is to be evaluated on current plans, site zoning, and is to be consistent with available infrastructure and community services, these uses will not be evaluated as part of this alternate. Instead, this alternative will evaluate what can be accomplished under existing constraints and the infrastructure currently available.

The S-90 Holding Area zone is an interim zone that limits uses to community services, interim uses, or uses which will not prematurely commit the land to a particular use or intensity of development. Consistent with the S90 zone, this alternative proposes two single-family residences on the two existing legal lots that could be developed using the limited services and access available to the site. Under the zone, agricultural activities by the lot owners would be allowed. Pursuant to Section 87.502 of the County's Grading and Clearing Ordinance, each lot owner would be allowed to clear up to five acres without a permit. No additional development, such as circulation element road improvements or offsite improvements to SR 76 would occur. No special studies, rezone, or Specific Plan would be required under this alternative. This alternative is the next Environmentally Superior Alternative after the No Project/No Build Alternative.

Light Industrial Alternative

The Light Industrial Alternative is based on the former proposal by the Campus Park Project for the project site. Industrial building area would total 1.2 million square feet. Uses would include medical, professional, research and development, assembly and light manufacturing, and support services such as day-care, restaurants, and convenience stores. In this scenario, the wetland area would be preserved as it would in the proposed project. Onsite and offsite improvements would be similar to those in the proposed project.

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