Chapter 3 Environmental Setting

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the regional and local environmental setting of the City of Perris (City) and generalized information regarding natural resources and land use.

3.1 Existing Setting

The Cubes at Placentia Industrial Project (herein referred to as Proposed Project or Project) Site lies within the Perris Valley Commerce Center (PVCC) area of the City of Perris. The PVCC covers approximately 3,500 gross acres within the City of Perris, Riverside County, California. The PVCC is located east of Interstate 215, west of the Perris Valley Storm Drain, south of March Air Reserve Base/Inland Port Airport, and north of Placentia Street. The existing area is currently characterized by industrial, commercial, and residential uses.

The Perris Valley Commerce Center Specific Plan (PVCCSP) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified in January 2012 and provides a description of the environmental and regulatory setting for the entire PVCC area of the City of Perris, which includes the Project Site. With the exception for termination of agricultural activities on the Project Site, and construction of development anticipated by the PVCCSP, the physical setting for the Project Site and adjacent areas, as described in the PVCCSP EIR, has not notably changed since the PVCCSP EIR was prepared and certified.

Below is a brief description of the geographic setting for the area, and environmental setting for the Project Site and the surrounding areas. Additional setting information is provided for each topical issue analyzed in Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, of this Draft EIR. It should be noted that updates to applicable local and regional regulatory programs have occurred since the PVCCSP EIR was certified and new regulatory programs have been adopted; updated regulations are also discussed for each topical issue in Chapter 4 of this EIR, as appropriate.

As shown on Figure 2-3, Aerial Photograph, the Project Site is vacant and undeveloped. The Project Site is generally flat at approximately 1,435 feet above mean sea level.

The Project Site is located within the area subject to the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), within the Mead Valley Area Plan, and the San Jacinto Habitat Management Unit. The Project Site is not within the borders of any MSHCP established Subunit, Cell Group, Criteria Cell, Linkages/Cores, Conserved Lands, or Regional Conservation Authority Easements.

3.2 Regional Setting

The City of Perris is located within the Perris Block geologic unit, which lies within the Peninsular Ranges Geomorphic Province of Southern California. The Peninsular Ranges Geomorphic Province is characterized by a series of northwesterly trending mountain ranges that extend from the coast of California eastward into the California desert and south to the tip of Baja California, Mexico. The Perris Block is bound on the northeast by the San Jacinto Fault, on the north by the Cucamonga Fault and the San Gabriel Mountains, and on the southwest by the Elsinore Fault and the Santa Ana Mountains. The City of Moreno Valley borders Perris to the north and the City of Menifee borders the City to the south. Unincorporated areas of Riverside County border the City to the east and west.

3.3 Project Location

The Project Site is in the City of Perris, in Riverside County, California, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Placentia Avenue and Wilson Avenue (refer to Figure 2-2, Project Location and Vicinity). The Project Site and surrounding properties to the west, north and east are within the PVCC and are zoned Light Industrial in the PVCCSP. Properties to the south are zoned Residential R-20,000 and are developed with single-family homes. The Project Site is generally bounded by Placentia Avenue to the south, Wilson Avenue to the west, existing industrial development to the north, and a vacant lot (APN 300-900-001) and the existing Perris Valley Storm Drain Channel to the east. The Project Site encompasses Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 300-170-003, -004, -005, -006, -010, -011, -012, -013, -014, -015, -016, and -017. The gross site area for the 12 parcels total 27.91 acres, including 0.65 acre of future storm drain easement dedication area. The net Project Site would be 27.26 acres.

3.4 Land Uses

3.4.1 Existing General Plan Land Use and Zoning Designation

The existing City of Perris General Plan land use designation for the Project Site is PVCC SP – Perris Valley Commerce Center Specific Plan (City of Perris 2013). The PVCCSP establishes the zoning for the properties within the PVCC area. The southeastern portion of the PVCC area, including the Project Site is designated for light industrial uses. The Light Industrial zone provides for light industrial uses and related activities including manufacturing, research, warehouse and distribution, assembly of non-hazardous materials, and retail related to manufacturing.

3.4.2 Surrounding Land Uses and Zoning Designations

Surrounding properties to the west, north, and east are within the PVCC and are zoned Light Industrial. Properties to the south are zoned Residential R-200,000 and are developed with single-family homes.

Refer to Table 3-1, Surrounding Land Uses, below for details regarding land uses that abut the Project Site.

Table 3-1. Surrounding Land Uses

North	Newly constructed industrial building (3125 Wilson Avenue), Perris Valley Storm Drain Channel, and Highgrade Concrete Contractor (immediately north of the newly constructed industrial building at 3175 Wilson Avenue).
East	Electrical lines, Murrieta Road (dirt road), and Perris Valley Storm Drain Channel, followed by vacant land and residential properties.
South	Placentia Avenue, followed by residential properties, Murrieta Road, and vacant land.
West	Wilson Avenue and vacant land.

3.4.3 Airport Land Use

The Project Site is proximate to March Air Reserve Base/Inland Port Airport (March ARB/IPA), which covers approximately 7,000 acres. According to the March Air Reserve Base/Inland Port Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (March ARB/IPA ALUCP), the Project Site is located within Compatibility Zone C1 (Primary Approach/Departure Zone). Prohibited uses within Compatibility Zone C1 include children's schools, daycare centers, libraries, hospitals, congregate care facilities, places of assembly, noise sensitive outdoor non-residential uses, and hazards to flight. Residential uses within Compatibility Zone C1 should not exceed a density of 3.0 units per acre. Other uses, including light industrial uses, are not to exceed an average density of 100 people per acre and a single acre density of 250 people.

3.5 Existing Physical Site Conditions

CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(a)(1) recommends that the physical environmental condition that existed at the time an EIR's Notice of Preparation is released for public review normally be used as the comparative baseline for the EIR analysis. The Notice of Preparation for this EIR was released for public review on December 1, 2023, and the following pages include a description of the Project Site's physical environmental conditions ("existing conditions") as of that approximate date. More information regarding the Project Site's environmental setting is provided in the specific sections of EIR Chapter 4.

3.5.1 Land Use

The Project Site consists of undeveloped land with low-lying vegetation and has a General Plan land use designation of PVCC SP – Perris Valley Commerce Center Specific Plan and is zoned Light Industrial by the PVCCSP. Agricultural and other commercial development activities historically occurred on the Project Site. There is also evidence of recent discing and trash from illegal dumping throughout the Project's ground disturbance footprint.

3.5.2 Aesthetics and Topographic Features

The Project Site consists of vacant, undeveloped land with low-lying vegetation, and does not contain any scenic aspects. The Project Site is relatively level, with no areas of topographic relief.

The nearest “Officially Designated” State Scenic Highway is Highway 243, located approximately 21 miles east of the PVCC area. The closest eligible State Scenic Highway to the Project Site is State Route (SR) 74 which is located approximately 3.4 miles southwest of the Project Site. The Project Site itself is not a scenic vista and does not block or diminish a scenic vista.

3.5.3 Land Cover/Vegetation

The Project Site can be found on the Perris United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-MinuteTopographic Quadrangle Map (USGS 2003). The Project Site is located within the areas subject to the Stephens’ Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*) Habitat Conservation Plan, the Western Riverside County MSHCP within the Mead Valley Area Plan, and the San Jacinto Habitat Management Unit.

The Project Site’s disturbed land cover has substantially decreased its value as suitable breeding, nesting, and foraging habitat for native species. Furthermore, the Project Site has limited, if any, value as a low-quality migration corridor or overland dispersal habitat for wildlife, because it is severely movement constrained by the surrounding residential, industrial, and commercial developments, and public infrastructure. Even so, the substantive habitat requirements needed to support Burrowing Owl were observed within the Project’s ground disturbance footprint.

3.5.4 Climate and Air Quality

The City of Perris lies within the South Coast Air Basin, which is a 6,600-square-mile coastal plain bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the southwest and the San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and San Jacinto Mountains to the north and east. The South Coast Air Basin includes the non-desert portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties, and all of Orange County.

The ambient concentrations of air pollutants are determined by the amount of emissions released by sources and the atmosphere’s ability to transport and dilute such emissions. Natural factors that affect transport and dilution include terrain, wind, atmospheric stability, and sunlight. Therefore, existing air quality conditions in the area are determined by such natural factors as topography, meteorology, and climate, in addition to the amount of emissions released by existing air pollutant sources.

Atmospheric conditions such as wind speed, wind direction, and air temperature gradients interact with the physical features of the landscape to determine the movement and dispersal of air pollutants. The topography and climate of Southern California combine to make the Basin an area of high air pollution potential. The Basin is a coastal plain with connecting broad valleys and low hills, bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and high mountains around the rest of the perimeter.

The general region lies in the semi-permanent high-pressure zone of the eastern Pacific, resulting in a mild climate tempered by cool sea breezes with light average wind speeds.

The usually mild climatological pattern is disrupted occasionally by periods of extremely hot weather, winter storms, or Santa Ana winds. During the summer months, a warm air mass frequently descends over the cool, moist marine layer produced by the interaction between the ocean's surface and the lowest layer of the atmosphere. The warm upper layer forms a cap over the cool marine layer and inhibits the pollutants in the marine layer from dispersing upward. In addition, light winds during the summer further limit ventilation. Furthermore, sunlight triggers the photochemical reactions that produce ozone. The region experiences more days of sunlight than any other major urban area in the nation except Phoenix (South Coast AQMD 2022).

Those who are sensitive to air pollution include children, older adults, and people with pre-existing respiratory or cardiovascular illness. For purposes of CEQA, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) considers a sensitive receptor to be a location where a sensitive individual could remain for 24 hours, such as residences, hospitals, or convalescent facilities (South Coast AQMD 2024).

The nearest sensitive receptors to the Project Site include: the existing single-family residential uses located approximately 50 feet (~15 meters) to the south of the Project Site (across Placentia Avenue), 495 feet (~151 meters) to the east/northeast of the Project Site (across drainage channel), and 695 feet (~212 meters) to the west of the Project Site (along Redlands Avenue).

Refer to EIR Section 4.2, Air Quality, and EIR Section 4.7, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, for a more detailed discussion of the existing air quality and climate setting on the Project Site.

3.5.5 Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources

The Project Site is located in Section 17 of Township 4 South, Range 3 West on the Perris USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian.

The Project Site is assessed to have low sensitivity for buried historic-aged resources such as foundations or refuse pits. No previously recorded prehistoric resources were identified within a one-mile search radius by the Eastern Information Center records search. During Native American scoping, the Pechanga Band of Indians indicated that the Project Site is near one traditional cultural landscape and two other Traditional Cultural Properties, as well as such other resources as village complexes. The Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians have indicated that the Project Site is part of a Tribal cultural landscape determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and is extremely culturally sensitive. Based on this information, the Project Site is considered moderately to highly sensitive for buried prehistoric cultural resources.

3.5.6 Geology and Landform

According to the California State Geoportal, the Project Site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. While seismic activity is known to exist throughout Southern California, there are no known faults running through or near the Project Site that could result in substantial effects. Western Riverside County has been mapped for Alquist-Priolo zones; however, no zones exist within the City of Perris. The City is located on a flat broad basin. The Project Site's overall topography is relatively flat. Additionally, according to the City of Perris General Plan Safety Element, the Project Site is not in an area prone to slope instability and not susceptible to landslides. Section 4.6, Geology and Soils, includes further discussion on the City's geology and landforms.

3.5.7 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

There are no hazardous materials concerns associated with adjacent properties based on visual observation from publicly accessible rights-of-way. Based on recent Google Earth imagery, existing land uses in the immediate vicinity of the Project Site appear to include Wilson Avenue to the west, vacant land and industrial uses to the north, vacant land and a drainage channel to the east, and Placentia Avenue to the south of the Project Site. According to the Department of Toxic Substances Control Cortese list, compiled pursuant to Government Code, Section 65962.5, no hazardous materials sites are located within or adjacent to the Project Site.

The Project Site is located proximate to March ARB/IPA and is subject to the March ARB/IPA ALUCP. As discussed above, prohibited uses within Compatibility Zone C1 include children's schools, daycare centers, libraries, hospitals, congregate care facilities, places of assembly, noise sensitive outdoor non-residential uses, and hazards to flight. Residential uses within Compatibility Zone C1 should not exceed a density of 3.0 units per acre. Other uses, including light industrial uses, are not to exceed an average density of 100 people per acre and a single acre density of 250 people.

3.5.8 Hydrology and Water Quality

No settling ponds, lagoons, surface impoundments, wetlands or natural catch basins are present on the Project Site. The Perris Valley Channel, located adjacent to the east of the Project Site, is identified as a Regulatory Floodway. The water courses around the Project Site have been identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as Zone X and Zone AE. The Project Site is shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map number 06065C1430H, effective August 18, 2014. The majority of the Project Site is situated within Zone X; however, a small portion of the Project Site is within the FEMA Zone AE flood fringe (but outside the floodway). The improvements of the Proposed Project that would be within the flood fringe would be surface parking and associated landscaping areas. The proposed building finished floor elevation would be above the FEMA's base flood elevation.

The Project Site drains generally from northwest to southeast. Runoff from the Project Site generally drains in a southeasterly direction in a sheet flow manner toward Murrieta Road (to be vacated) and a vacant parcel (APN 300-170-001). Runoff continues to drain in an easterly direction and eventually discharges into the existing Perris Valley Storm Drain Channel.

3.5.9 Noise

A variety of noise sources exist in the City of Perris. Mobile noise sources produce a major effect on the ambient noise environment. These sources include automobile traffic, aircraft overflights, and train movements. The primary noise source is automotive traffic along the streets and highway network. Traffic noise is generated by the friction of tires on pavement, together with the sounds of engines and exhausts. Generally, higher traffic volumes and speeds equal higher noise levels along the roadway. Accordingly, the highest traffic noise levels are typically found along freeway and highway corridors.

The mix of vehicles also directly affects noise levels (e.g., noise along a truck route would typically be higher than noise levels along a comparable route that did not allow trucks). Street grades can also make a difference since vehicles, and trucks in particular, make more noise when climbing grades, compared to travel along a relatively flat road surface, as the engines work harder (and louder) to propel the vehicle uphill.

The Project Site is bordered by Wilson Avenue to the west, vacant land and industrial uses to the north, vacant land and a drainage channel to the east, and Placentia Avenue to the south of the Project Site.

The State of California defines sensitive receptors as those land uses that require serenity or are otherwise adversely affected by noise events or conditions. Schools, libraries, churches, hospitals, single and multiple family residential, including transient lodging, motels and hotel uses make up the majority of these areas.

Existing sensitive land uses that may be affected by project noise include single-family residential land uses located approximately 50 feet to the south (across Placentia Avenue), 495 feet to the east/northeast (across drainage channel), 340 feet to the northwest (across Wilson Avenue), and 695 feet to the west (along Redlands Avenue) of the Project Site.

Refer to EIR Section 4.11, Noise, for a more detailed discussion of the Project Site's existing noise setting.

3.5.10 Public Infrastructure and Services

Potable water for the Proposed Project and wastewater disposal services would be provided by the Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD). Wastewater generated by the Proposed Project would be treated by the EMWD treatment plant approximately 2 miles southeast of the Project Site.

Electrical service to the Proposed Project would be provided by Southern California Edison, and natural gas would be provided by SoCalGas. Telecommunications would be provided by Verizon or another local provider. Trash, recycling, and green waste services within the City are provided by CR&R Environmental Services.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), under contract with Riverside County and operating as the Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD), provides fire prevention and suppression to the City of Perris. RCFD Station No. 1 located at 210 W. San Jacinto Avenue and RCFD Station No. 90 at 333 Placentia Avenue exclusively serve the City of Perris. RCFD Station No. 1 is approximately 3.5 miles roadway miles southwest of the Project Site. RCFD Station No. 90 is approximately 0.4 miles roadway miles west of the Project Site. Other RCFD stations respond to emergency service calls in the City on an as-needed basis.

The City of Perris contracts with the Riverside County Sheriff's Office for the provision of municipal police services in the City. The Perris Police Station is located at 137 N. Perris Boulevard and is located approximately 3.5 roadway miles southwest of the Project Site. Sheriff response times vary by time of day and priority of the call. Typical operational police protection services involved with the proposed industrial and retail uses include after-hours patrol, crime and traffic accident/collision responses, and calls for service.

The Project Site is located within the Val Verde Unified School District (VVUSD), which covers 67 square miles in Riverside County, and is comprised of 22 schools serving pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (VVUSD 2023). The Project Site is within the service area for the following schools: May Ranch Elementary School, Vista Verde Middle School, Rancho Verde High School, and Val Verde High School.

Residents of the City of Perris are provided library services through the Riverside County Library System.

The City's Community Services Department is responsible for recreational facilities in the City.

Chapter 6, Other CEQA Considerations; Section 4.12, Transportation; and Section 4.14, Utilities and Service Systems, include further discussion on public infrastructure and services.

3.5.11 Transportation

Two state highways traverse the City of Perris: Interstate 215 and Highway 74. Both highways are owned and maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Interstate 215 (I-215) runs north to south through the City of Perris and is designated as a freeway. The freeway is 4 lanes south of Redlands Avenue and 6 lanes north of Redlands Avenue. State Route 74 generally runs east–west through the City, connecting Southeastern Perris with the downtown area and the I-215. Between Case Road and 4th Street, State Route 74 and I-215 are the same roadway. SR 74 is 4 lanes from I-215 west through downtown Perris and is 2 lanes west of Navajo Road and east of I-215.

A network of City-owned and maintained streets provides for traffic circulation within Perris and interconnects with state and County roadways for access to the surrounding region. This network is comprised of roadways classified as primary arterials, secondary arterials, collectors, and local streets. Key roadways providing local circulation include Redlands Avenue, Wilson Avenue, Rider Street, and Placentia Avenue.

Existing truck routes in the Project vicinity are shown on Figure 2-5, Truck Routes Map. There are currently designated truck routes along Redlands Avenue north of Rider Street.

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