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NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING

Project Title: San Marcos Creek District Specific Plan Update

Project Number: SP24-0001

Applicant: City of San Marcos

Comment Period: September 15, 2025 to October 15, 2025

Meeting Date/Times: September 25, 2025 at 10:00 am & 6:00 pm

PURPOSE FOR NOTICE: This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being issued by the City of San Marcos (City) for the proposed San Marcos Creek District Specific Plan Update (project). The City is the lead agency for the project and will prepare a Supplemental Program Environmental Impact Report (Supplemental PEIR) in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA implementation guidelines. This NOP is being circulated pursuant to California Resources Code Section 211153(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15082.

The City is requesting written feedback from the public, interested organizations, and responsible trustee agencies about the scope and content of the environmental information that will be addressed in the Supplemental PEIR.

PROJECT LOCATION: The San Marcos Creek Specific Plan area (project site) covers approximately 217.3 acres within the City's Creekside District. The project site is bound by San Marcos Boulevard to the north, Discovery Street to the south and west, and Grand Avenue and State Route 78 to the east. Figure 1 presents the project's regional location and Figure 2 presents the project location on an aerial photograph.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: In 2007, the City adopted the existing San Marcos Creek District Specific Plan (Adopted Specific Plan). The intent of the Adopted Specific Plan was to create a planning framework for the future growth and redevelopment of the Creek District and to provide the mechanism to ensure that future development would occur in a coordinated, orderly, and well-planned manner. The Adopted Specific Plan was supported by the San Marcos Creek Specific Plan PEIR certified in 2007 (Certified PEIR; SCH No. 2006121080). Since 2007, several major events have impacted the feasibility of on-going private development in the project area, including:

- Economic uncertainty, starting with the 2008 global financial crisis.
- Dissolution of redevelopment agencies by the State of California (taking away an important funding source).
- Build-out of the adjacent University District/North City area.
- Shifting market demands for retail and office space following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2007, the City has completed the following public improvements projects that were identified in the Adopted Specific Plan:

- Construction of bridges over San Marcos Creek at Bent Avenue and Via Vera Cruz.
- Construction of flood control levees along the creek.
- Establishment of habitat conservation areas along the creek.
- Construction of public park promenades and parklets, also along the creek.

As a result of the market changes and public improvements, the City has developed the San Marcos Creek Specific Plan Update (project), which retains many qualities of the Adopted Specific Plan while making necessary changes to be responsive to current conditions. The Adopted Specific Plan allowed existing uses to remain within individual property ownership while providing opportunities for owners to redevelop their properties consistent with the use regulations and development standards. This would remain unchanged under the project. The Adopted Specific Plan envisioned an active, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district, which the project would further enhance by incorporating centrally located common parking facilities that can support a "park once" approach for visitors.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b), the project includes the following primary objectives:

- Develop a mixed-use neighborhood that includes residential, retail, entertainment, cultural, and office uses.
- Establish a walkable, pedestrian-friendly district.
- Enhance the public's experience with San Marcos Creek through passive recreation opportunities.
- Provide flood control improvements that facilitate private redevelopment activities.
- Protect the biological resources in San Marcos Creek through habitat creation and restoration.
- Ensure that the project is economically viable and can fund supporting public infrastructure.
- Create a multimodal network that provides access to the district from surrounding areas to everyone and reduces traffic.
- Establish a model of sustainability that integrates new urban development with a network of open spaces that improves the natural environment of San Marcos Creek.
- Simplify regulations and processes for new private development and partnerships required for infrastructure needs.
- Leverage the unique opportunity of San Marcos Creek with new arts, culture, and entertainment land uses to create a unique district.
- Promote a wide range of housing design, cost, and density types to create a traditional, walkable neighborhood.

Figure 3 presents the proposed distribution of land uses and Table 1 presents the proposed development intensities under the project. As shown in Table 1, buildout of the project would result in the following:

- Approximately 2,273 residential units, built as small-lot subdivisions, townhomes, and multi-unit apartments and condominiums. This is a slight decrease compared to the 2,300 residential units anticipated under the Adopted Specific Plan.
- Approximately 724,221 square feet of commercial development, including restaurants, retail spaces, offices, entertainment uses, and cultural facilities such as museums or galleries. This is a decrease compared to the 1,854,000 square feet of commercial development anticipated under the Adopted Specific Plan

Table 1
Project Buildout

Uses	Amount
Residential	2,273 Units
Commercial – Retail, Entertainment, Cultural	724,221 Square Feet
Open Space (private)	297,907 Square Feet
Open Space (public)	26.19 Acres
Open Space (creek)	55.47 Acres
Roadway, Trails, Paths	237,909 Square Feet
Total Parking	7,004 Parking Spaces

Development intensities are planned at an urban scale, with building heights varying across the plan area, the densest of which would allow a maximum of five stories. Furthermore, the project would make roadway improvements to provide an internal circulation pattern prioritizing slow motor vehicles and easy pedestrian and cyclist movement into and throughout the Creek District. New crossings of San Marcos Boulevard would be minimized to allow that major thoroughfare to continue to move traffic to and from State Route 78.

Although improvements to San Marcos Creek were completed in 2024, they did not resolve all long-standing flooding issues described in the Adopted Specific Plan. Substantial portions of the Creek District continue to lie within the 100-year flood boundaries identified on Flood Insurance Rate Maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. To address flooding issues and facilitate property development and redevelopment pursuant within the Creek District, the project would include the following options:

- Establish a conceptual alignment and design for an above-ground, pervious-bottomed channel starting at San Marcos Boulevard and traversing to the San Marcos Creek to contain an existing floodway, with the ultimate design, funding, and construction to be accomplished via private and public partnerships.
- Require individual property owners to raise their properties in the floodplain above base flood level to allow development and accommodate flood flows on the property or to flow downstream, consistent with local, state, and federal regulations.

Water and wastewater services would continue to be provided by the Vallecitos Water District.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION/POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162 and 15163, the City has determined that preparation of a Supplemental PEIR will be required to support approval of the project. As noted in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, when an EIR has been previously certified for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared unless substantial changes are proposed in the project, substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken, or new information of substantial importance becomes available that could not have been known at the time the previous EIR was certified.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15163, a supplemental document will be required to focus on the project that updates the Adopted Specific Plan and those environmental topics where the potential for new or more severe significant impacts has been identified. It is intended that the Supplemental PEIR would replace the Certified PEIR and allow for tiering of subsequent site-specific projects.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d), if the lead agency determines that an EIR will be clearly required for a project, the agency may skip further initial review of the project and begin work directly on the EIR process. The City has determined that a Supplemental PEIR will be prepared to update the findings of the Certified PEIR. The project would update the land uses and policies of the adopted Specific Plan that was evaluated in the Certified PEIR. Therefore, the Supplemental PEIR will evaluate environmental impacts associated with the project in comparison to the findings reached in the Certified PEIR. The Supplemental PEIR will provide a programmatic analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the goals, policies, actions, and projected buildout of the project.

As described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, program-level environmental review documents are appropriate when a project consists of a series of actions related to the issuance of rules, regulations, and other planning criteria. The project, which will be the subject of this Supplemental PEIR, is pursued by the City to provide long-term policy direction and to guide future development within the Creek District. As previously noted, Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15163, the City has determined that only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the Certified PEIR adequate to support the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15163). Therefore, a Supplemental PEIR would be the appropriate document to evaluate the project's potential impacts on the environment, outline mitigation measures, and analyze potential project alternatives.

Responses received on this NOP may modify or add to the preliminary assessment of potential issues addressed in the Supplemental PEIR.

SCOPING MEETING: The City will hold two virtual Scoping Meetings for the project on **September 25, 2025**. The first meeting will begin at **10:00 am**, and the second will begin at **6:00 pm**. The information presented at both meetings will be identical. Details on how to join the meetings are provided on the following page of this notice.

The purpose of the Scoping Meetings is to obtain input and solicit comments from the public regarding the issues and content to be addressed in the Supplemental Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). During each meeting, the project applicant will provide an overview of the project, explain the environmental review process, and be available to receive public comments and answer questions.

Attendance at a Scoping Meeting is not required to submit written comments.

	SCOPING MEETING 1 (10:00 am) Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 10:00 am URL: https://qrco.de/bgHrGt (or scan the QR Code to the left to join Scoping Meeting 1 from a mobile device) Join by phone (optional): • Call: (858) 294-0998 • Enter Conference ID No. 759 152 651 #
	SCOPING MEETING 2 (6:00 pm) Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 6:00 pm URL: https://qrco.de/bgHrJO (or scan the QR Code to the left to join Scoping Meeting 2 from a mobile device) Join by phone (optional): • Call: (858) 294-0998 • Enter Conference ID No. 231 485 49 #

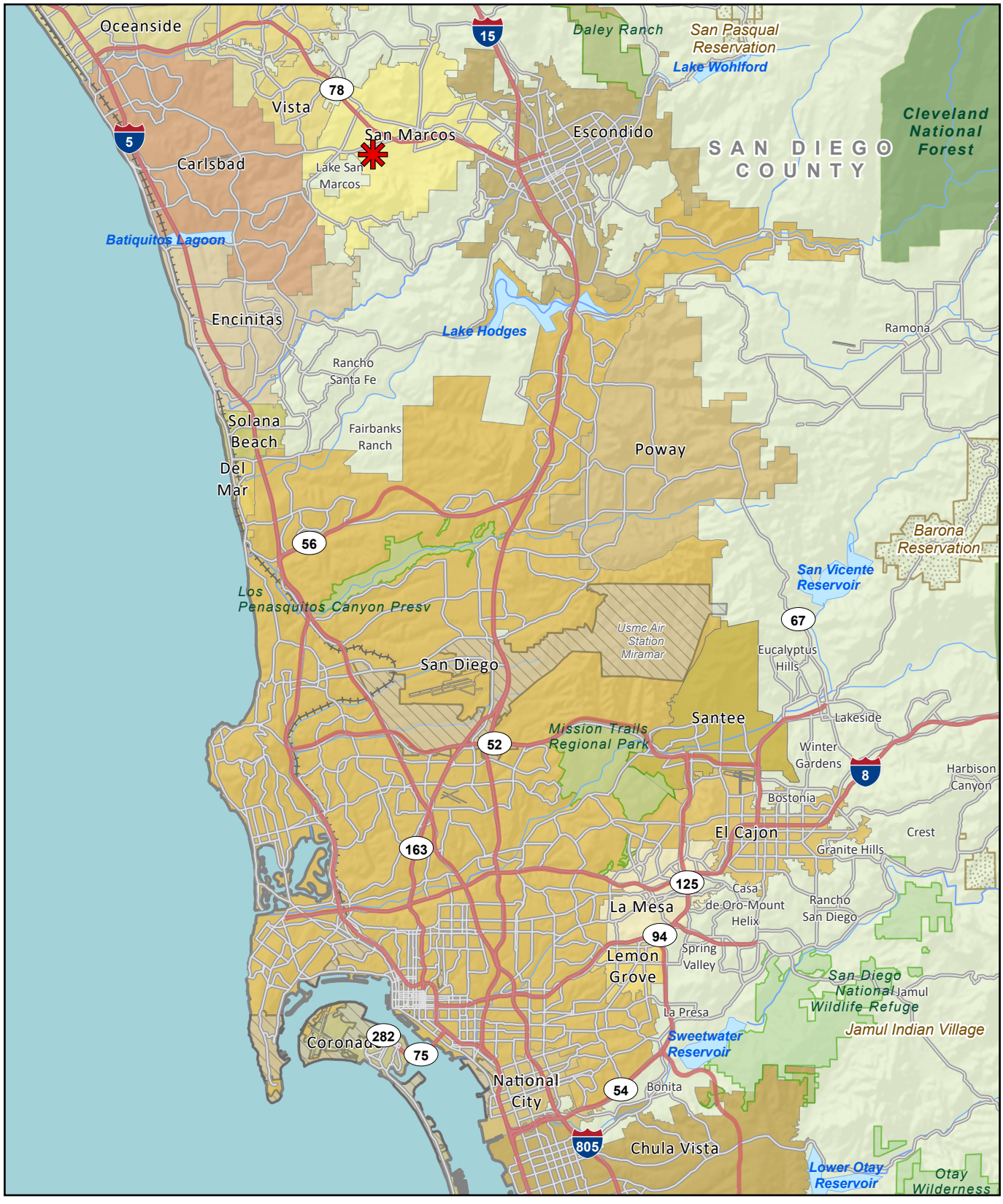
NOP COMMENTS: All written comments must be submitted within 30 days of this notice and received no later than close of business on **October 15, 2025.** Written comments can be submitted via letter or email to the following address and should include your name and contact information or the name of a contact person in your organization or agency, if applicable.

Sean del Solar, Principal Planner/Sustainability Program Manager
City of San Marcos Planning Division
1 Civic Center Drive
San Marcos, CA 92069
Email: CreekPlan@san-marcos.net

For more information regarding the proposed project, please visit:

- http://www.san-marcos.net/CreekPlan or
- https://www.san-marcos.net/departments/development-services/planning/environmental-review-sustainability/environmental-documents

or contact Sean del Solar, Principal Planner/Sustainability Program Manager, at sdelsolar@san-marcos.net or (760) 744-1050 ext. 3223.



Project Location

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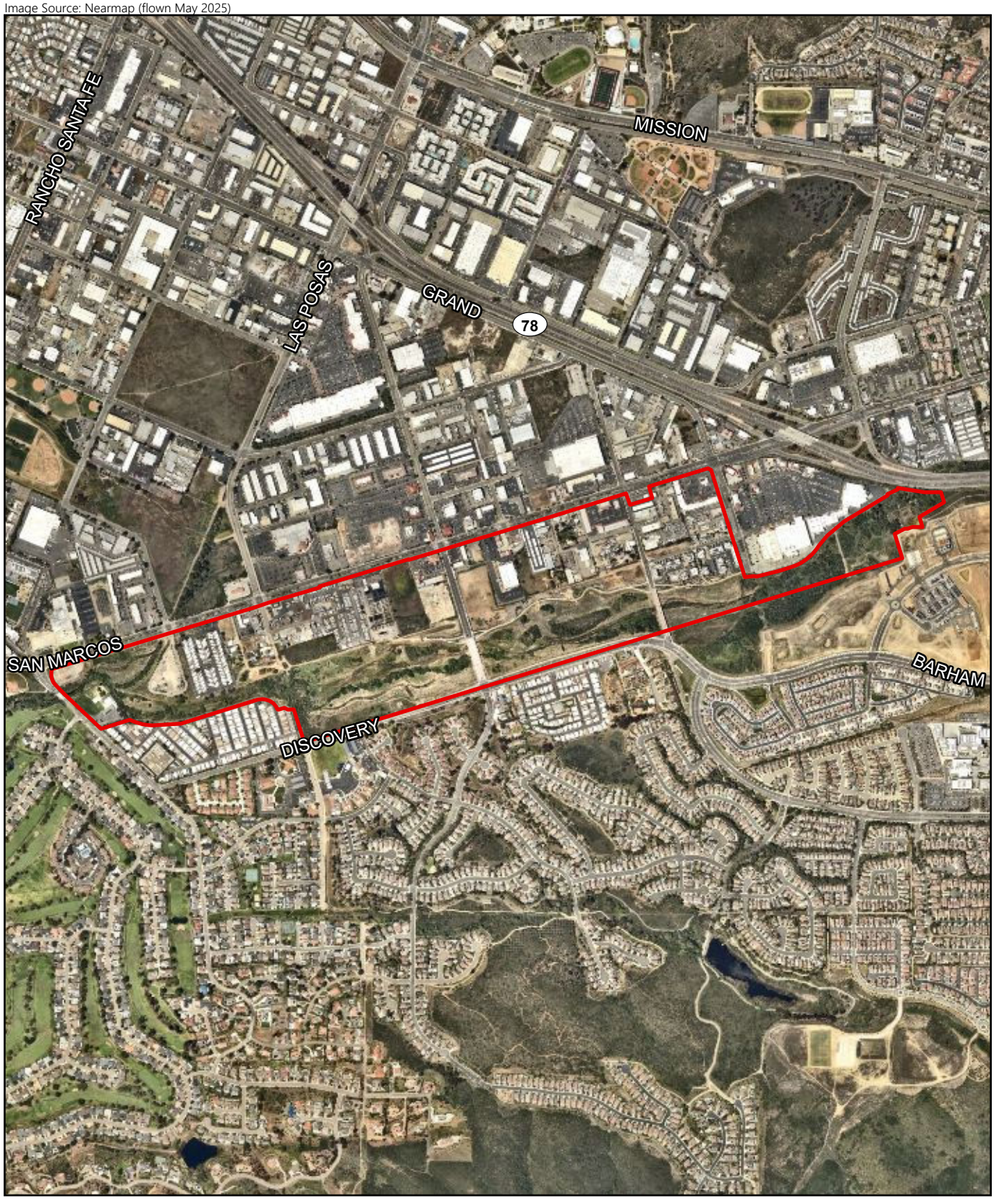
FIGURE 1
Regional Location

Image Source: Nearmap (flown May 2025)



0 Feet 1,400

Project Boundary

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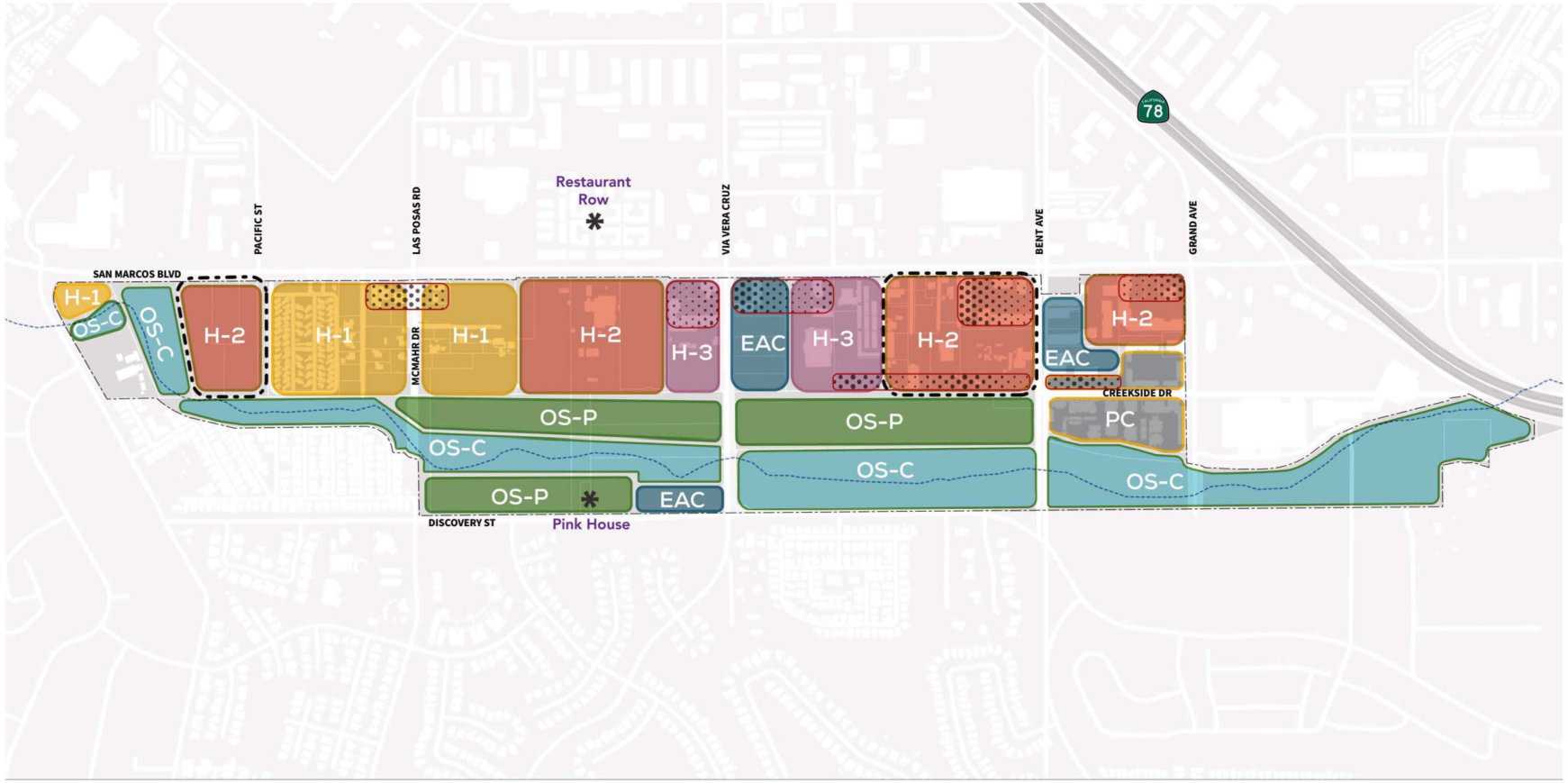
FIGURE 2
Project Location on Aerial Photograph

Map Source: MIG



Site Plan

Creek

H-1: Townhome

H-2: Garden, Stacked Flats, Wrap

H-3: Podium

PC: Promenade at Creekside

EAC: Entertainment, Arts and Culture

OS-P: Open Space (Public)

OS-C: Open Space (Creek)

Commercial Overlay

Stormwater Remediation Overlay

0 300 600 Feet

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FIGURE 3
Proposed Land Use Map