

Plant surveys must  
be conducted when target  
species are likely to be  
observable (i.e. enough rain).

182-9

P. Grubbs

### *Sensitive Reptile Surveys*

Surveys for the San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvilleti*), and orange-throated whiptail (*Cnemidophorus hyperythrus*), were conducted during the spring and summer of 2002. Field surveys were performed by GLA biologists Jeff Ahrens (SC-5820) and/or Justin Meyer. Focused reptile surveys were conducted in such a manner as to allow inspection of those areas most likely to support the above-mentioned species. Due to the intense heat experienced early in the day at the Study Area, GLA biologists conducted focused reptile surveys approximately one hour before dusk, when temperature regimes were more conducive to reptile activity. Early afternoon surveys were conducted if temperature regimes were conducive to reptile activity. Surveyors traversed La Tuna Canyon, Drainage 4, areas of Riversidian sage scrub, open areas associated with scrub, rocky outcrops, disturbed areas adjacent to native vegetation, and along wildlife trails and access roads. All reptile species were recorded.

### *Raptors*

Surveys for special-status raptors were conducted in concert with the surveys for the California gnatcatcher, least Bell's vireo and rufous-crowned sparrow.

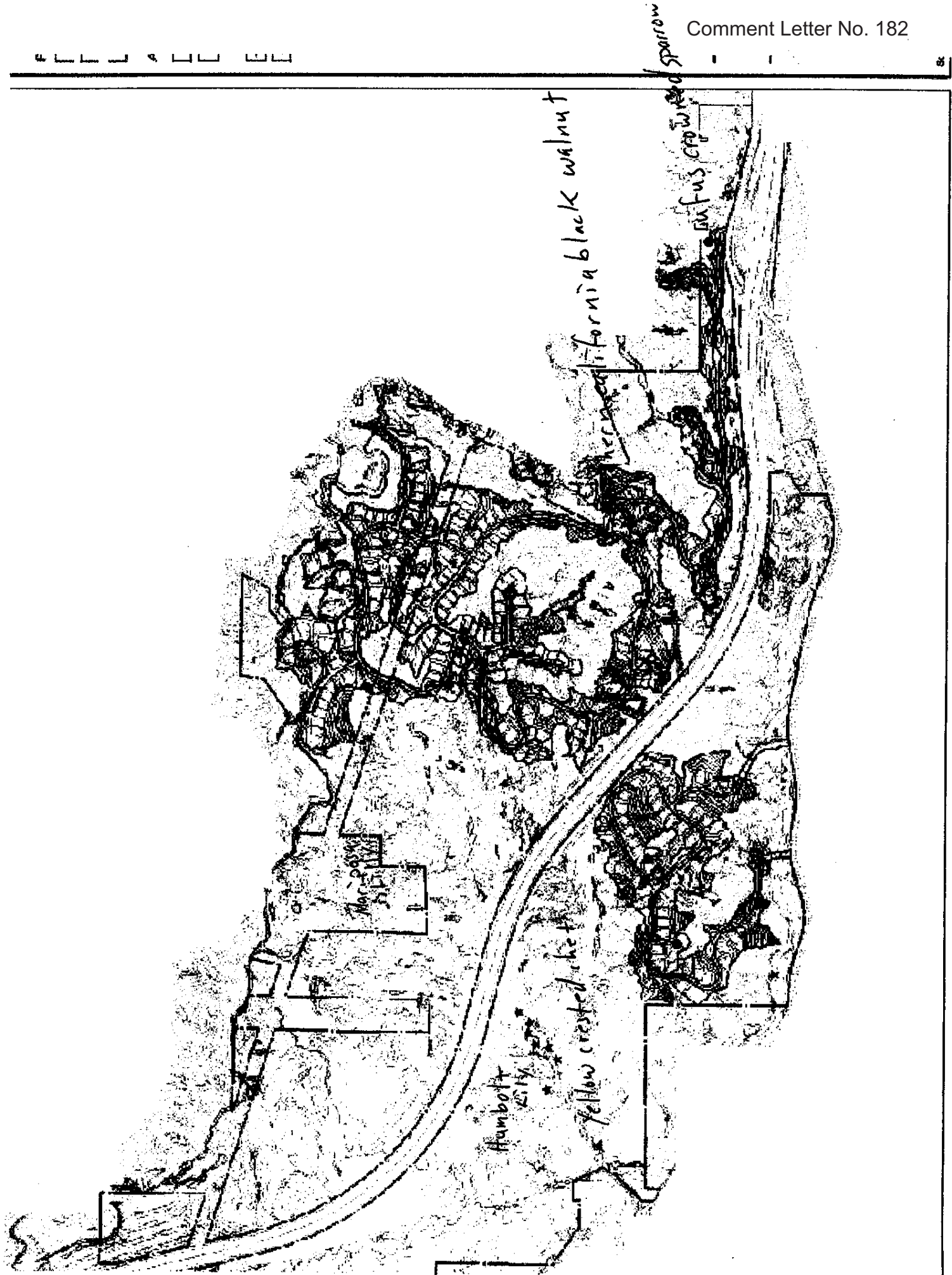
### *Tree Surveys*

The tree inventory was conducted on June 4, 19, July 1, 10, 12, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25, August 7, 8, 14, 15, 22, December 18, 27, and 30, 2002, and January 30, 31 and February 3, 2003 by Greg Everett, certified arborist (certification number WE-3977A), Rick Riefner, botanist, Dave Moskovitz, botanist, Justin Meyer, biologist, and Jeff Ahrens, biologist, and Martin Rasnick, Regulatory Specialist of Glenn Lukos Associates, Inc. Mr. Everett served as lead arborist for these surveys. Tom Larson of Dudek Associates, a Registered Consulting Arborist, also inspected the project site and participated in the preparation of the tree survey report. A detailed discussion of native trees is provided in Section IV.D.2 (Native Trees).

### *Survey Limitations*

Plant surveys were potentially limited by fairly dry conditions in the vicinity of the Study Area as precipitation in the region during the 2001-2002 rainfall season was only about 30% of normal. Any annual and bulbiferous perennial plant species may fail to germinate or grow during adverse conditions, including sub-optimal rainfall years.

6 1 1 1 4 1 1 1 1 1 1



Humboldt City

yellow crested chat

California black walnut

rufous crested sparrow

Macdonald

Environmental Review Unit  
Maya Zaitzevsky  
200 North Spring Street Room 763  
Los Angeles CA 90012

Re: ENV-2002-2481-EIR  
SCH#2002091018  
Canyon Hills Project DEIR Comments

Dear Ms Zaitzevsky:

The project would require changes to the General Plan. This is the opposite of complying with the General Plan.

Therefore, this DEIR is deficient.

182-10

Rick Grubb

This page (IV. G-14)

makes no mention of

The divisions the project would cause to Biological communities currently utilizing the grading area.

182-11

R. Grubb

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

### Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines, a project would have a significant land use impact if it would:

- Physically divide an established community;
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect; or
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

### Project Impacts

#### *Community Division*

The potential for the proposed project to physically divide an established community is based on a comparison of the existing land uses on and adjacent to the project site and the proposed project. As previously discussed, the project site is currently undeveloped. The project site is bounded on the north by vacant lands and single-family homes. To the northeast and east, the project site borders an informal and sprawling pattern of single-family homes. Much of the land to the south and west of the project site is vacant, with the exception of some single-family homes concentrated along La Tuna Canyon Road. There are currently no community services or public services<sup>4</sup> on the project site, and there are no existing roadways through the project site that are used by the adjacent residential communities to the north and east. Therefore, the proposed single-family homes in Development Area A would not divide the residential communities to the north and east. The existing homes to the southwest of the project site, along La Tuna Canyon Road would, for the most part, be topographically separated by a hillside from Development Area B. Therefore, the proposed project would not physically divide any established communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Community and public services include schools, libraries, recreational facilities, neighborhood retail uses and other community-serving land uses.

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Maya Zaitzevsky  
200 North Spring Street Room.763  
Los Angeles CA. 90012

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Dear Ms Zaitzevsky:

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No mention of Mainland Cherry Forest vegetation association.  
Therefore, this DEIR is deficient.

182-12

Rick Grubb

**Table IV.D-5  
Vegetation Associations in Study Area  
Canyon Hills Project**

Vegetation Associations	Total Acres
<b>Canyon Hills Project Site</b>	
Mixed Chaparral	699.31
Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub	75.41
Deerweed Scrub	8.13
Mulefat Scrub	0.66
Chamise Chaparral	51.86
Chamise Chaparral-Coastal Sage Scrub Ecotone	8.89
Southern Mixed Riparian Forest	24.59
Southern Coast Live Oak Woodland	2.6
Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest	11.74
Southern Willow Scrub	2.09
Disturbed-Ruderal	1.63
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>886.93<sup>39</sup></i>
<b>Duke Property</b>	
Mixed Chaparral	43.4
Southern Coast Live Oak Woodland	11.0
Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest	1.6
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>56.0</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>943.0</b>

#### *Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub*

Most of the Study Area is dominated by chaparral; however, Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub is dominant on many of the south-facing slopes, particularly the slopes that overlook La Tuna Canyon Road. Venturan coastal sage scrub is comprised of California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California brickelbush (*Brickellia californica*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), and white sage (*Salvia apiana*). The understory is often comprised of wild oats (*Avena barbata*), red brome (*Bromus rubens*), tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), long-stemmed buckwheat (*Eriogonum elongatum*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and many other native and non-native species of forbs (i.e., herbs).

<sup>39</sup> The 886.93 acres has been rounded throughout this Draft EIR to 887 acres.

This page specifically  
mentions "Walnut  
wood lands" on site!

182-13



complete list of amphibian species known or expected to occur on the site is provided in the faunal compendium (see Appendix D to the Biological Technical Report).

Southern Mixed Riparian Forest and Southern Coast Live Oak Woodlands, as well as seasonally flowing water, occur within Drainage 4 and La Tuna Canyon Wash. These areas provide potential habitat for amphibian species adapted to drier conditions, but only minimal potential habitat for species that require permanent water. The only amphibians observed in the Study Area were the Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*) and California treefrog (*Hyla cadaverina*). Additional amphibian species that could potentially occur in the Study Area include the Pacific slender salamander (*Batrachoseps pacificus*), arboreal salamander (*Aneides lugubris*), black-bellied salamander (*Batrachoseps nigriventris*), and western toad (*Bufo boreas*).

### Reptiles

The diversity of reptile species is related to the diversity of plant communities found in the Study Area. Reptiles identified or expected to occur in the Study Area are discussed below by habitat. A complete list of reptile species known or expected to occur on the site is given in the faunal compendium (see Appendix D to the Biological Technical Report).

Coastal sage scrub, southern cactus scrub, and chaparral communities identified in the Study Area are utilized nearly year-round by a large number of reptile species. Species identified within the scrub and chaparral communities during focused and general surveys include the western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*), California whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis*), gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), and western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*). Other reptile species which are expected to occur in scrub and chaparral communities include the Gilbert skink (*Eumeces gilberti*), San Diego banded gecko (*Coleonyx variegatus abbotti*), rosy boa (*Lichanura trivirgata*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), southern alligator lizard (*Gerrhonotus multicarinatus*), ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus*), racer (*Coluber constrictor*), western patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis*), and common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getulus*).

Riparian communities tend to exhibit low reptile species diversity. However, reptiles commonly identified near the edge of the intermittent drainages such as La Tuna Canyon Wash and Drainage 4, include the California whipsnake, side-blotched lizard, and western fence lizard. Other species that are expected to occur within or near riparian areas include the Gilbert skink, southern alligator lizard, two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*), and common garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*).

Reptile species observed utilizing a variety of plant communities include the western fence lizard, alligator lizard, and side-blotched lizard.

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Maya Zaitzevsky  
200 North Spring Street Room 763  
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Dear Ms Zaitzevsky:

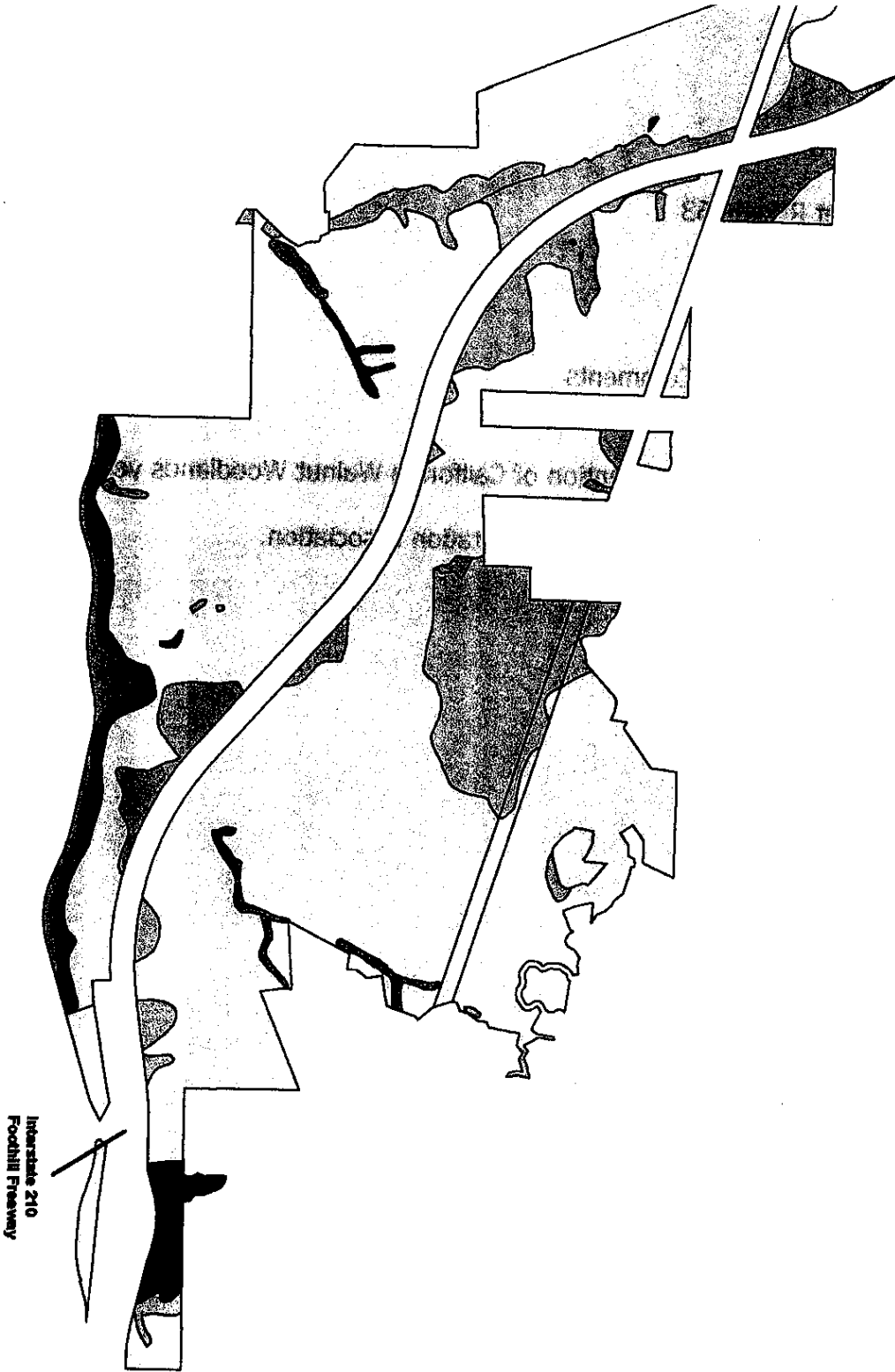
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Therefore, this DEIR is deficient.

182-14

Rick Grubb



Interstate 210  
Foothill Freeway

# Vegetation

## Legend

- Vegetation type**
- Chamise Chaparral
  - Chamise Chaparral/Coastal
  - South Coast Live Oak Riparian
  - Southern Coast Live Oak V
  - Coast Sage Scrub
  - Disturbed-Ruderal
  - Deerwood Scrub
  - Mixed Chaparral
  - Mule Fat Scrub
  - Southern Riparian Scrub
  - Not a Part
  - Southern Mixed Riparian
  - Southern Willow Scrub



GLENN LUKOS ASSOCI  
Exhi

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182-15

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are no major drainages that traverse the Study Area. The rugged landscape and dense vegetation generally restrict wildlife movement by larger mammals such as coyote and mule deer to existing wildlife trails along ridgelines, roads and firebreaks.

#### *Vegetation Associations Onsite*

As depicted in Table IV.D-1, eleven vegetation associations (including ecotonal areas<sup>38</sup>) were identified within the Study Area. Vegetation associations identified on the project site include Mixed Chaparral (699.31 acres), Coastal Sage Scrub (75.41 acres), Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*) Scrub (8.13 acres), Mulefat Scrub (0.66 acres), Chamise Chaparral (51.86 acres), Chamise Chaparral/Coastal Sage Scrub Ecotone (8.89 acres), Southern Mixed Riparian Forest (24.59 acres), Southern Coast Live Oak Woodland (2.6 acres), Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest (11.74 acres), Southern Willow Scrub (2.09 acres), and disturbed-Ruderal Vegetation (1.63 acre). The Duke Property exhibits three vegetation types, including mixed chaparral (43.4 acres), Southern Coast Live Oak Woodland (11.0 acres) and Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest (1.6 acres). The acreage for each vegetation association is provided in Table IV.D-5 (Vegetation Associations in Study Area).

#### *Mixed Chaparral*

Mixed Chaparral is one of the dominant vegetation associations in the Study Area, consisting of large sclerophyllous shrubs that reach up to eight feet in height. In many areas, the chaparral is mature, exhibits a closed canopy and is nearly impenetrable. Mixed chaparral generally exhibit low diversity with the canopy layer dominated by chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), hoaryleaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). Scrub oaks, *Quercus berberidifolia* or *Q. durata* var. *gabrielensis*, are locally dominant in some areas and laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*) occurs as individuals throughout the Study Area. Understory is typically sparse with occasional herbs.

The southeast corner of the Study Area, immediately adjacent to La Tuna Canyon Road, burned in in the late 1990s. This portion of the Study Area is characterized by a dense, scrubby growth of deerweed, morning-glory (*Calystegia macrostegia*), California chicory (*Rafinesquia californica*). Resprouting chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*) are common along with seedlings of hoaryleaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*), and coastal sage scrub components. Understory components include brome grasses, wild oats, fascicled tarweed (*Deinandra fasciculata*), black mustard and California aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia*).

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<sup>38</sup> Ecotonal areas are characterized by a blending of two or more distinct vegetation types.

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182-16

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#### 4.7 Native Trees

A Tree Inventory and Impact Analysis ("Tree Report") was prepared for the Canyon Hills project site and the approximate southwest quarter of the Duke Property pursuant to (1) the Oak Tree Regulations set forth in Section 46.00 et seq. of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) and (2) the "Instructions for Filing Tentative Tract Maps" (Items B.11 and B.12) issued by the City's Department of Planning. The Oak Tree Regulations and the Tentative Tract Map filing guidelines require that all oak trees with diameters at breast height (DBH) of eight inches or greater and other trees with DBHs of 12 inches or greater that are located within 100 feet of the proposed limits of disturbance be identified and mapped on a site plan. The complete Tree Report is attached as Appendix B.

Of an estimated 1,382 native trees, including approximately 1,249 coast live oaks in the Study Area, GLA identified 425 coast live oaks with DBHs of eight inches or greater. A total of 133 western sycamores were identified in the Study Area of which 61 western sycamores with DBHs of 12 inches or greater within or adjacent to the development footprint in the Study Area. In addition to the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*; & *Q. agrifolia* var. *oxyadenia*) and western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), a single southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica* var. *californica*) was observed with a trunk less than 5 inches DBH, which was therefore not recorded during the tree survey program (this individual is appropriately addressed in Section 4.6.4, above).

##### 4.7.1 Species Descriptions for Native Trees

###### *Coast Live Oak*

The coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) is an evergreen tree common to valleys and lower elevation mountain slopes of coastal California, from Mendocino County to northern Baja. This is a slow-growing tree that commonly exceeds 250 years of age. It can grow to 100 feet tall and its canopy can exceed 100 feet in width. Its acorn production and large size lend itself well to support of a large number of invertebrate and vertebrate animal species. The dark green leaves are 0.8 to 4 inches long and are oval and convex with spiny margins. The acorns are 0.8 to 1.6 inches long and are elongated into a narrow cone with a pointed tip. The bark is smooth and gray on the outside and reddish on the inside, at the furrows in the bark.

###### *Southern California Black Walnut*

Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica* var. *californica*) commonly occurs with the coast live oak in many plant communities on the site. Regionally, the distribution of the walnut is patchy, occurring from the Santa Monica Mountains south to the Santa Ana River. In many areas, particularly along the southern edge of the Transverse Ranges, the walnut has been replaced by development. The tree grows to nearly 75 feet tall and the leaves are pinnately compound, with individual leaflets of three to ten cm in length. This species produces nutritious

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walnuts that are commonly eaten by mammals and birds. Southern California black walnut is designated as a California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List 4 (watch list) species.

### *Western Sycamore*

The western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) is a deciduous tree in the honeysuckle family that occurs in open areas or along stream banks in valleys and woodlands throughout California. On the site, this species occurs within La Tuna Canyon Wash and in limited numbers in Drainage 4. This is a rapidly growing tree that can live well over 200 hundred years. It can grow to 100 feet tall and exhibits a spreading form with an open, generally rounded crown. Its height lends itself to nesting opportunities for birds; however, its fruit provides only a minor food source. The leaves are 4.7 to 10 inches long and wide with three to five lobes about half the length of the leaf. The leaves are light green and hairy on the upper surface. Its bark is generally smooth and mottled with gray, white, and tan colors.

## 4.8 Special Status Wildlife Species

### *Special-Status Species Observed in the Study Area*

#### 4.8.1 *Ashy Rufous-Crowned Sparrow (Aimophila ruficeps canescens)*

The ashy rufous-crowned sparrow, which is a CDFG Species of Special Concern, is a year-round resident of southern California.<sup>51</sup> It is frequently found in coastal sage scrub, open chaparral, and in other dry habitats. Like other sparrows, it primarily eats seeds and insects. Ashy rufous-crowned sparrows were identified north and south of Interstate 210 with a total of five sightings. Exhibit 4 shows the location of these birds.

#### 4.8.2 *Yellow-Breasted Chat (Icteria virens)*

The yellow-breasted chat, which is a CDFG Species of Special Concern, is a migratory songbird that breeds in riparian habitats in southern California. This species exhibits habitat requirements similar to least Bell's vireo. Suitable habitat typically consists of multi-layered riparian scrub or willow woodland corridors along flowing streams. Protocol surveys for least Bell's vireo within La Tuna Canyon Wash and in Drainage 4 did not detect this distinctive and very vocal species. This species was detected in Drainage 14, an area proposed for preservation, during general surveys. Exhibit 4 shows the single location detected for this species.

<sup>51</sup> CDFG has recently proposed removing Species of Special Concern Designation from this species because CDFG has determined that this species is more common and widespread than previously thought. Since the Fish and Game Commission has not yet voted on the proposed change in status, its current designation as a Species of Special Concern is recognized. However, when considering potential impacts, the lack of threat and its widespread and common distribution are also recognized and considered.

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corral fence, rail fence and feed shed. The proposed extension of permanent open space and equestrian and hiking uses are compatible with the existing open space, equestrian and recreational uses in the project vicinity.

Therefore, the proposed development of single-family homes and recreational facilities, together with the preservation of open space, would be functionally compatible with surrounding land uses.

#### *Consistency with Land Use Plans, Policies and Regulations*

This section analyzes the consistency of the proposed project with the provisions and requirements of the applicable regional and local plans and regulations that currently govern development of the project site and surrounding areas.

#### *Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide*

The RCPG does not include any policies which are generally applicable to the proposed project. According to SCAG, the proposed project is not regionally significant per SCAG Intergovernmental Review Criteria and CEQA.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Community Plans*

All proposed development within the project site would be located within the Sunland-Tujunga Community Plan area. All areas of the project site that are located within the Sun Valley Community Plan area would be preserved as permanent open space. As summarized in Table IV.G-3 and shown on Figure IV.G-6, the proposed project includes amendments to the land use designations for a portion of the project site located in the Sunland-Tujunga Community Plan area. First, the land use designation for approximately 237 acres of land within the proposed Development Areas that are currently designated Minimum Residential, Very Low I Residential or Very Low II Residential would be changed to Low Residential. In addition, the land use designations for approximately 80 acres of land in the northern subarea of the project site, but outside of proposed Development Area A, that are currently designated Very Low I Residential and Very Low II Residential would be changed to Minimum Residential. Finally, the land use designation for the approximately nine acres of land in the southern subarea of the project site that are currently designated as Open Space would be changed to Minimum Residential. The current land use designations for the portion of the project site located within the Sun Valley Community Plan area would not change. As a result, all of the land outside the proposed Development Areas, and a portion of the land located inside the proposed Development Areas, would be designated Minimum Residential.

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<sup>6</sup> Correspondence from SCAG, Jeffrey M. Smith, AICP, Senior Regional Planner, September 19, 2002.

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The proposed project includes the Low Residential housing category consistent with Map Footnote 7 in the Sunland-Tujunga Community Plan, which permits clustering of residential units in hillside areas up to the density permitted under the Low Residential land use designation. The maximum density permitted under Low Residential is nine dwelling units per net acre. In contrast, the density for the proposed project is approximately 1.8 dwelling units per net acre, based on the number of proposed homes (280) divided by the net acres (i.e., gross acres less road acreage) in the proposed Development Areas (158 acres). Therefore, the proposed density does not exceed the maximum density permitted under the proposed Low Residential land use designation.

**Table IV.G-3  
Proposed Community Plan Designations  
Canyon Hills Project**

<b>Community Plan Designation</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Minimum Residential	650
Low Residential	237
<b>Total</b>	<b>887</b>

The Sunland-Tujunga Community Plan includes other goals, objectives and policies that are generally applicable to the proposed project. The policies implement the goals and objectives that are outlined in the Community Plan. Consistency of the proposed project with applicable policies is addressed in Table IV.G-4.