

## 2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

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### INTRODUCTION

*The CEQA Guidelines require a description of the environment as it exists, from both a local and regional perspective, in an EIR. This section presents an overview of the existing conditions of the site and surrounding areas to orient the reader to important local land use and environmental conditions reflected in the proposed RiverPark Specific Plan. Additional detailed information on existing environmental conditions is provided in **Section 4.0** of this EIR.*

### PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Oxnard is located on the Oxnard Plain in the County of Ventura midway between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. **Figure 2.0-1** illustrates the location of the City of Oxnard within Ventura County. As shown, the City of Oxnard is in southern Ventura County near the coastline. The 701-acre site for the proposed RiverPark Specific Plan (“Specific Plan”) in relation to the City of Oxnard is illustrated in **Figure 2.0-2**. The Specific Plan site is located in the northern part of the City immediately north of the Ventura Freeway (U.S. 101), between Vineyard Avenue and the Santa Clara River.

### JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

As shown in **Figure 2.0-3**, the entire RiverPark site is located within the existing Sphere of Influence for the City of Oxnard as adopted by the Ventura County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The Sphere of Influence Line represents the probable ultimate physical boundaries and service area for the City.

**Figure 2.0-3** also shows the current boundaries of the City of Oxnard and the City Urban Restriction Boundary (known as the “CURB”). As shown in this figure, the southern portion of the Specific Plan Area is located within the City at this time. This portion of the project site is referred to as “RiverPark Area ‘A’,” and consists of approximately 269 acres of the proposed Specific Plan Area. The remaining 432 acres of the site are currently located outside of the City of Oxnard in unincorporated area and is under the jurisdiction of the County of Ventura. This portion of the site is referred to as “RiverPark Area ‘B’.”

## SITE CHARACTERISTICS

An aerial photograph of the project site and surrounding areas is provided in **Figure 2.0-4**. RiverPark Areas 'A' and 'B' are also identified on this photograph. As shown in this photograph, the western edge of the proposed Specific Plan Area is formed by the existing earthen levee along the edge of the Santa Clara River. Several existing drains in the levee drain portions of the site to the river.

### RiverPark Area 'A'

Presently, RiverPark Area 'A' includes existing developed areas and active agricultural land. As shown in **Figure 2.0-5**, the southwestern corner of RiverPark Area 'A' has been previously developed with streets and two office buildings. The northernmost of these two office buildings, known as the State Compensation Fund Insurance Building, is a three-story building containing 115,000 square feet of space. The southernmost of these two buildings, known as the Nordman, Cormany, Hair and Compton Building, is a seven-story, 106,000 square foot building. Vacant development sites are located between these existing buildings and the freeway.

Immediately east of this developed area is the 14-acre El Rio Maintenance Yard, containing a complex of buildings housing various County of Ventura offices and facilities. This complex, owned by the County of Ventura, was originally developed between 1953 and 1959. Other buildings were added in the 1960s, 70s, and 90s. Approximately 16 buildings remain on the site. Currently this site contains a county fire station, as well as facilities and storage yards for several County agencies including Resource Management Agency Weights and Measures Division, Public Works Agency Road Maintenance, Flood Control, General Services Agency Fleet Services and Parks and Recreation Department Maintenance Services. The areas to the north and east of these developed portions of RiverPark Area 'A' are currently in agricultural production.

Access to this part of the Specific Plan Area is currently provided by local streets and ramps from the Ventura Freeway. The existing streets on the site include Ventura Road, which crosses under the freeway from the south, Town Center Drive, and El Rio Drive. Ventura Road currently provides access to the State Compensation building. Town Center Drive currently extends east from Ventura Road to the south of the Nordman, Cormany, Hair and Compton Building. El Rio Drive is a frontage road, located immediately north of the Ventura Freeway that connects to Myrtle Street to the east. Myrtle Street provides a connection to Vineyard Avenue at a signalized intersection. Existing on- and off-ramps from the northbound lanes of the Ventura Freeway connect to Town Center Drive. The eastern portion of RiverPark Area 'A' extends to Vineyard Avenue and also includes previously developed areas.

**Figure 2.0-1  
Regional Location**

**Figure 2.0-2**  
**Project Vicinity Map**

**Figure 2.0-3  
Project Location**

**Figure 2.0-4**  
**Onsite Land Uses**

**Figure 2.0-5**  
**RiverPark Area “A” Features**

The southeast corner of the Specific Plan Area consists of vacant land, vacant commercial and residential structures, and small single family homes located to the south of Myrtle Street and to the north of El Rio Drive. One of these homes is presently occupied.

### **RiverPark Area 'B'**

RiverPark Area 'B' contains an existing sand and gravel mine owned and operated by Hanson Aggregates, and drainage facilities owned and operated by the Ventura County Flood Control District. As shown in **Figure 2.0-6**, the majority of this part of the site consists of the Hanson Aggregates sand and gravel mine and associated production facilities. The entire RiverPark site and surrounding areas are located in an area identified as containing regionally significant aggregate (sand and gravel) resources by the State Mines and Geology Board. The Hanson site is one of several sand and gravel mining sites located along the eastern edge of the Santa Clara River in the area. As shown on **Figure 2.0-6**, most of the site consists of the Hanson Aggregates sand gravel mining site which includes the plant area, a stockpile area and three open mining pits.

Mining of the site began in the early 1950's and the mining operator obtained approval from the County of Ventura on March 22, 1979 to continue the mining of construction-grade aggregate with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP No. 1942) and to continue operating the processing facilities with the approval of a second Conditional Use Permit (CUP No. 2425. Both of these permits expired at the end of 1999. The processing facility is still in use under a temporary status authorized by the County of Ventura through December 2001. Hanson Aggregates has filed a new permit application (CUP 5093), to allow the company to continue to operate the processing facilities.

The plant facilities include two ready mix concrete batch plants operated by Associated Ready Mix, an asphalt plant operated by Sully Miller, a recycling plant operated by Hanson Aggregates, and related shop areas and offices. Hanson Aggregates has recently removed some facilities and completed other site maintenance activities in accordance with the approved reclamation plan for the site. Over the past year Hanson Aggregates has removed a rock and sand plant, various equipment in other locations on the property, an underground asphalt oil tank, and three transformers. In addition, two structures, a tire shop and a Quonset hut, have been removed from the site.

The stockpile area is located south of the plant site. The mining pits at the Hanson Aggregate plant include the Brigham, Vickers, Small Woolsey, and Large Woolsey pits. The existing elevations at the top of these pits ranges from about 85 feet at the southern edge of the Brigham Pit to 100 feet at the northern edge of the Large Woolsey Pit. The elevations at the pit bottoms range from about El. -2 feet



(MSL) at the northeastern end of the Large Woolsey pit and at the northwestern end of the Small Woolsey pit, to about Elevation -8 feet in the Brigham pit and Elevation -4 feet in the Vickers pit. As shown in the aerial, these pits now contain exposed groundwater.

Both CUP 1942 and CUP 2425 included a reclamation plan, which set forth requirements for the reclamation of the sites. CUP 1942 calls for the refilling of the mine pits to within 30 feet of the adjacent natural ground surface and defines permeability standards for the refill material. Implementation of this existing reclamation plan would require that approximately 6.4 million cubic yards of material be imported to the site to fill the pits to the levels required by the reclamation plan.

The approved final use of the pit areas after reclamation is "Open Space," which excludes any use that requires irrigation or other artificially supplied water source, the use of fertilizer, or any use which could potentially reduce groundwater quantity or quality. These conditions also require that the pits be secured with adequate fencing, appropriate slope erosion measures be taken to protect adjacent properties, and compliance with all safety and other governmental regulations be maintained. Compliance with this measure requires that runoff from outside the mine site be prevented from entering the pits.

Subsequently, the County administratively approved excavation of the stockpile area to 5-foot above the historic high groundwater level, which is above the 30-foot refill level required by the approved reclamation plan. The County has stated that the material located between the 30-foot refill level and the 5-foot above historic high on the stockpile area can be credited towards the requirement to refill the existing pits. There are approximately 1.8 million cubic yards between the 30-foot and the 5-foot above historic high levels on this part of the site. If the 1.8 million yards of material in the plant area are utilized in the refill, then the required imported fill in the pit area would be reduced to approximately 4.6 million cubic yards and the elevation of the reclaimed pits would be approximately 39 feet below the surrounding elevation, with the elevations at the reclaimed pits varying from a low of about 50 feet at the southern end of the Brigham Pit to 60 feet at the northern end of the Large Woolsey Pit. The final elevations in the plant and stockpile areas would be 5 feet above the historic groundwater level.

The remainder of RiverPark Area 'B' consists of two existing retention basins, built by the Ventura County Flood Control District to accept runoff from areas to the east of Vineyard Avenue. The North El Rio Retention Basin No. 1, built in 1995, is located adjacent to Vineyard Avenue. The larger North El Rio Retention Basin No. 2, located south and west of Basin No. 1, was built in 1997. North El Rio Retention Basin No. 1 is 15 – 20 feet deep and was designed to hold a 5-year frequency storm for storage

**Figure 2.0-6**  
**RiverPark Area “B” Features**

and percolation before discharging through a pipe to the larger Retention Basin No. 2 to the southwest. Retention Basin No. 2 is approximately 15 feet deep. A portion of the Retention Basin No. 2 site located along Vineyard Avenue was not excavated and remains as a buffer between the basin and Vineyard Avenue. These basins were built by the County to reduce flooding and eliminate nuisance runoff from impacting the existing El Rio residential community to the east of Vineyard Avenue by retaining the runoff in these basins, allowing for percolation into the groundwater basin. The agricultural area to the east of Vineyard Avenue and north of the El Rio Community drains to these basins.

The RiverPark site is situated in the Oxnard Forebay, a sub-basin of the larger Santa Clara-Calleguas groundwater basin. The basin lies within the 2,000-square mile watershed of the Santa Clara River, Calleguas Creek, and associated tributaries. The basin can be divided into 12 sub-basins based primarily on geologic or hydrogeologic features affecting groundwater levels and/or groundwater flow. The RiverPark site is located in the south-central portion of the Oxnard Forebay along the south bank of the Santa Clara River. The delineation between the Oxnard Forebay and downgradient Oxnard Plain is based on the zone where shallow sands transition into shallow clay deposits beneath the Oxnard Plain, which result in a change from unconfined groundwater beneath the forebay to confined groundwater conditions beneath the plain, which define several aquifers. In the Oxnard Forebay, alluvial sediments in the subsurface are predominantly coarse-grain sands and gravels. Fine grain sediments such as silts and clays that act as confining layers in the groundwater system are generally absent or discontinuous. This condition allows for direct recharge of the upper aquifers from the surface and some recharge of the lower aquifers from the upper aquifers. On the Oxnard Plain, more continuous fine grain layers of silts and clays are present in the subsurface. These fine grain layers retard the vertical movement of groundwater and limit direct surface recharge of deeper aquifers. As such, subsurface inflow from upstream basins including the Oxnard Forebay provide an important source of recharge to the Oxnard Plain.

Water wells near the project site indicate that groundwater occurs beneath the central portion of the RiverPark site at an average elevation of 33 feet mean sea level (msl). The average ground surface elevation on the unexcavated portions of the site is approximately 85 feet msl, resulting in an average depth to water of 52 feet. Groundwater is often exposed in the open mine pits. Water levels beneath the Oxnard Forebay fluctuate primarily in response to precipitation, artificial recharge in nearby spreading basins, and agricultural and municipal pumping. Typically, water levels rise during years of high precipitation and fall during years of low precipitation. Over the last 20 years, the water table beneath the RiverPark site has fluctuated more than 120 feet, ranging from a low of approximately -47 feet msl to a high of approximately 76 feet msl. Using an average ground surface elevation of 85 feet

msl, the depth to water has varied from less than 10 feet deep to more than 130 feet beneath the project site.

Over the last 20 years, water levels have fluctuated between near historic water level highs in the early 1980s to historic lows during a drought in the late 1980s/early 1990s, followed by a rebound back to record high water levels in the mid to late 1990s. Both the historic high water level (71.7 feet msl in 1996) and the historic low water level (-36 feet msl in 1991) have occurred during the last 10 years. Water levels also fluctuate on a seasonal basis in response to rainfall, artificial recharge, and to some extent, pumping patterns. As a result, water levels can rise more than 25 feet during the winter and spring months in the vicinity of the project site.

## **SURROUNDING LAND USES**

An aerial photograph showing surrounding land uses is provided in **Figure 2.0-7**. The lower Santa Clara River is located immediately west of the site. The Santa Clara River is the longest and potentially the most significant river in Southern California because of its existing natural functions. The Santa Clara River flows approximately 100 miles from its headwaters near the community of Acton in Los Angeles County to the Pacific Ocean. The lower river provides habitat for a number of federally listed threatened and endangered species.

Long-term conservation planning efforts for the Santa Clara River have been underway over the past decade. Preparation of the Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan began in 1991. Preparation of this plan is being directed by a 26-member Steering Committee including representatives of federal, state, and local public agencies, owners of property along the river corridor, and local conservation organizations. To date, reports have been prepared on critical issue areas, and maps of the river have been prepared using Geographic Information Systems computer mapping software. The steering committee approved a set of management recommendations in 1999 and is currently seeking funding to prepare the plan document and the related environmental review documents.

The California Coastal Conservancy is proposing to acquire land along approximately 12 miles of the lower portion of the river to form the Santa Clara River Parkway. The primary goal of the proposed acquisition of land along this part of the river is to form a continuous estuarine and riverine corridor. This would facilitate restoration and enhancement of natural river habitat along this portion of the river allowing for flood management and the establishment of a public trail system. The Santa Clara River Parkway project is consistent with the recommendations of the Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan Steering Committee. The initial concept is for the Santa Clara River Parkway

**Figure 2.0-7**  
**Surrounding Land Uses**

to be managed by a joint powers authority made up of the Coastal Conservancy and the Cities of Oxnard and Ventura. The Coastal Conservancy is seeking funding for this project through grants and the state budget for the Conservancy. Bond money from Proposition 12, a statewide measure approved by the voters in March 2000 to preserve open space and wildlife habitat will also be used to fund property acquisition.

The first purchase of land for Santa Clara River Parkway was recently completed. A 220-acre property located across the Santa Clara River from the proposed Specific Plan Area in the Montalvo area of the City of Ventura was acquired by the Nature Conservancy with a grant from the California Coastal Conservancy. This site currently contains a citrus orchard and a portion of the property will be leased back to the former owner for continued agricultural use.

Located to the west of the Specific Plan site across the Santa Clara River is agricultural land and residential development in the City of Ventura. As mentioned above, acquisition of one of the agricultural properties by the Coastal Conservancy is proposed. Across from the Large Woolsey Pit is a residential neighborhood located in the Serra Community as defined in the City of Buena Ventura Comprehensive Plan. The City's Comprehensive Plan calls for the preservation of the agricultural land and stable residential neighborhoods in this community. Further to the south, near the Ventura Freeway, are residential neighborhoods in the Montalvo Community as defined in the San Buena Ventura Comprehensive Plan. The City's Comprehensive Plan allows for some development in this community, provided it is compatible with the existing development. Access to the eastern part of Ventura is provided from the Johnson Drive interchange with the Ventura Freeway, located just west of the Santa Clara River. Northbank Drive in Ventura runs along the north bank of the river and provides access to the neighborhoods along the river from Johnson Drive.

The Ventura Freeway is located immediately south of the proposed Specific Plan Area. Caltrans is currently planning major improvements to this section of the freeway through the State Route 101 Improvement and Santa Clara River Bridge Replacement Project. This project will include the replacement of the existing bridges across the Santa Clara River and the widening of the freeway from three to six lanes in each direction from Vineyard Avenue in Oxnard to the Montalvo Spur Overhead, located just north of Johnson Drive in Ventura. The existing 7-lane bridges will be replaced with a single 12 lane bridge. In Oxnard, this project will include the reconstruction of the existing Oxnard Boulevard Interchange and the Ventura Road undercrossing of the freeway, which will be widened from two to five lanes. The new Oxnard Boulevard Interchange will be a tight diamond interchange design providing access from Oxnard Boulevard to the proposed RiverPark Specific Plan Area and existing commercial areas to the south of the freeway. Minor reconfiguration of the existing freeway

ramps at Johnson Drive in Ventura is also planned. Caltrans has prepared a Supplemental EIR/EIS for this proposed project. The Draft of this Supplemental EIR/EIS was circulated for public review in May 2000 and the record of decision of approval of the Final Supplemental EIR/EIS was issued in June 2001. The current schedule calls for construction to begin in early 2002 with completion in mid-2006.

Existing commercial areas are located south of the freeway in the Wagon Wheel, Esplanade, and Financial Plaza Areas. Redevelopment of the 44-acre Esplanade Shopping Center site, located between Oxnard Boulevard and Vineyard Avenue, was approved by the City of Oxnard in November 2000. Construction is presently underway on a new 506,000 square foot shopping center on this site, which was formerly developed with the Esplanade Mall, an enclosed regional shopping center. The new Esplanade Plaza will include a variety of retail commercial stores, including a home improvement warehouse store and a variety of other retail stores.

The Wagon Wheel Area consists of approximately 60 acres of land located between Oxnard Boulevard, the Union Pacific Rail tracks, and Ventura Road. Existing land uses include a mixture of low-scale industrial and commercial facilities in the eastern half of the site, the Wagon Wheel Mobile Home Park in the west/central portion, and a neighborhood scale retail center in the western portion of the site. A specific plan has been proposed for this site which would allow development of approximately 1.6 million square feet of office, general commercial, and restaurant uses along with 250 multi-family dwelling units. The City certified an Environmental Impact Report in 2000 that evaluated the conceptual land use plan for this area. Completion and approval of a Specific Plan for this area is required before any redevelopment of this area begins.

The Financial Plaza is located east of Vineyard Avenue and south of the Ventura Freeway. The Financial Plaza currently includes the six-story Radisson Hotel, surface parking, and the thirteen-story City National Bank office tower in the eastern portion of the site. In the north are one- and two-story offices and surface parking. The 21-story Dean Witter office tower, a three-story parking structure, and surface parking are located on the western portion of the site. An office tower and a parking structure have been previously approved and are currently proposed for the southern portion of the site.

Located south of the Ventura Freeway and west of the Santa Clara River is the Ventura Auto Center located in the Olivas Community as defined in the city of San Buenaventura Comprehensive Plan. To the west and south of the auto center is an existing light industrial area and agricultural land. Access to the auto center area is provided from the Johnson Drive Interchange.

Uses located between Vineyard Avenue and the proposed RiverPark Specific Plan Area include existing residential areas, industrial uses and agricultural land. The existing residential neighborhood located immediately north of Myrtle Street, and west of Vineyard Avenue, is referred to as the El Rio West neighborhood in the City of Oxnard's 2020 General Plan. The part of this neighborhood located north of Stroube Street is within the City of Oxnard along with some parcels on Vineyard Avenue. This part of the neighborhood contains 75 single family homes, two apartment complexes with 174 units, and a vacant parcel on Vineyard Avenue.

The older part of this neighborhood, located between Stroube and Myrtle Streets, is currently unincorporated and under the jurisdiction of the County of Ventura. This portion of the neighborhood was primarily developed between 1900 and 1945. Access to the neighborhood is provided by several east-west streets that extend from Vineyard Avenue. Colonia Avenue, the main north-south street in the neighborhood, connects to El Rio Road at Myrtle Street. This part of the neighborhood contains 81 single-family homes and various commercial uses on Vineyard Avenue.

Some vacant land is also located in this neighborhood, including 4 acres found immediately east of the RiverPark site between Stroube Street and Olive Avenue. A pre-application for consideration of annexation of this site to the City of Oxnard and development of single family homes has recently been submitted to the City for review. The proposal is to develop 37 homes containing two and three bedrooms and ranging in size from 1,100 to 1,400 square feet.

To the north of the proposed specific plan area between the Santa Clara River and Vineyard Avenue are industrial areas, agricultural land, and other aggregate mining and production sites. Two existing industrial areas are located to the north of the RiverPark site along Vineyard Avenue. An approximate 95-acre industrial area is located along Carnegie Street, Montgomery Avenue and Lambert Street immediately east of the Large Woolsey Pit and north of the Small Woolsey Pit. A second smaller industrial area is located further to the north along Beedy Avenue.

Located between these two existing industrial subdivisions is a 45-acre agricultural parcel acquired by the County of Ventura in August 2000 for the development of the County's Juvenile Justice Center (JJC). The JJC is intended to meet the needs for Ventura County youth criminal offenders to the year 2020. The County certified an Environmental Impact Report for this project in March 2000 and approved a Conditional Use Permit for the project in December 2000. The JJC will provide for the detention of 420 minors, and construction of this 362,000 square foot complex is planned in three phases. Construction of the first phase started in June 2001. This phase will include a 420-bed detention facility and related facilities. The second phase is planned to include courts and related facilities and the third phase will



include additional detention facilities. No schedule has been established at this time for the second and third phases.

Located immediately north of the Large Woolsey Pit is another reclaimed mining site known as the Ferro property. The County of Ventura issued a Conditional Use Permit to allow mining on this site in 1986 on this 245-acre site. Excavation was limited to the height of the recorded historic or predicted high groundwater level, whichever was higher. As a result, this site was excavated to a depth of approximately 25 feet. Reclamation consisted of filling in the site with approximately 3.5 feet of unusable material mined on the site and 1.5 feet of topsoil.

Located to the north of the Ferro property and south of Los Angeles Avenue is a 58-acre sand and gravel processing and concrete batch plant owned and operated by Vulcan Materials Company, and asphalt batch plant owned and operated by Industrial Asphalt. The processing and concrete batch plants were originally established to process material mined from the adjacent Santa Clara River under permits issued by the County of Ventura. Mining activity ceased in the river in 1979. A small parcel of agricultural land is located between the Vulcan Materials plant site and the Ferro Property.

Existing uses to the east of Vineyard Avenue include the existing El Rio Community to the south and agricultural land to the north. The El Rio Community includes the residential and commercial uses located north of the Ventura Freeway between Vineyard Avenue and Rose Avenue to the east. While portions of the commercial uses along Ventura Boulevard north of the freeway and on Vineyard Avenue have been annexed to the City of Oxnard, the majority of this residential community remains unincorporated. However, the entire El Rio Community is located within the City of Oxnard's Sphere of Influence. A majority of the El Rio Community is presently using individual septic systems for the treatment of sewage, which has resulted in high levels of nitrates in local groundwater. Orders issued by the State Water Resources Control Board and the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region, require that existing septic systems be abandoned and that El Rio be connected to a municipal or regional wastewater collection and treatment system by January 2008.

The agricultural areas across Vineyard Avenue are included within the Oxnard-Camarillo-Del Norte Greenbelt Area. This greenbelt was established in 1982 by joint resolution with the Cities of Oxnard and Camarillo and included approximately 27,000 acres of agricultural land located between the two cities. The County of Ventura became a party to this agreement in 1983 when the agreement was amended to include 2,200 acres in the Del Norte area, including the agricultural land to the north and east of the El Rio Community. Farming is a major component of the local economy, as the coastal plain of Ventura County is perfectly suited for agricultural activity. The mild, almost frost-free

Mediterranean climate combined with fertile soils allows the year-round production of numerous crops. Farming in Ventura County is a major contributor to the nation's food supply as well as a vital component of the local economy and way of life. The Oxnard-Camarillo-Del Norte Greenbelt was created in recognition of the importance of agriculture in Ventura County to preserve farmland.

To the east of Vineyard Avenue between Central and Los Angeles Avenues are the residential community of Strickland Acres, agricultural land, and two reclaimed aggregate mining pits. One of these pits, located east of Vineyard Avenue and south of Los Angeles Avenue is known as the Noble Pit. Immediately east of the Noble Pit and south of Los Angeles Avenue is the Rose Pit.

The United Water Conservation District (UWCD) owns and operates a network of facilities to the north and east of the proposed Specific Plan Area to divert water from the Santa Clara River for groundwater recharge and agricultural irrigation. This system includes the Freeman Diversion Dam across the Santa Clara River, located approximately six miles north of the proposed Specific Plan Area. Water diverted from the river is carried by a concrete channel from the Freeman Diversion Dam to spreading grounds in Saticoy and El Rio. The Saticoy Spreading Grounds, located east of the Santa Clara River and north of Los Angeles Avenue cover approximately 133 acres. In 1995, UWCD acquired the 140-acre Noble Mine Pit, located northeast of the site, and uses this pit as a water storage recharge basin during and after heavy storms when the spreading grounds are filled to capacity. A pipeline connects the Saticoy Spreading Grounds to the El Rio Spreading Grounds, located west of Rose Avenue and north of El Rio. The El Rio Spreading Grounds cover approximately 100 acres, and its facilities include a dozen high capacity wells that supply water through pipelines to the Cities of Oxnard and Port Hueneme, mutual and municipal water companies and the two naval bases. Water from the Freeman Diversion Dam is also provided by a separate pipeline to the Pleasant Valley Reservoir, which supplies water to over 12,000 acres of farmland. The Pumping-Trough-Pipeline, completed in 1986, supplies water to another 4,000 acres of farmland in the northeast Oxnard area, thereby reducing the demand for groundwater and assisting in the abatement of the historic seawater intrusion problem in the Oxnard Aquifer system.

## **LAND USE PLANNING**

The proposed RiverPark Specific Plan Area is located within the planning area of the City of Oxnard. This planning area, established by the city for the purposes of land use planning, includes the existing City and surrounding areas which bear a relation to the land use planning of the City. In this area the City's planning area extends to the Santa Clara River on the north, Los Angeles Avenue and the Beardsley Wash on the east.

The City of Oxnard 2020 General Plan provides for comprehensive planning within the City's Planning Area. The Land Use Element of the General Plan defines the allowed intensities and locations of land uses within the City's planning area. The General Plan Land Use Map designations for the site and surrounding areas are shown on **Figure 2.0-8**. As shown, RiverPark Area 'A' is currently designated for Regional Commercial, Office and Limited Industrial Uses. In 1986, the City of Oxnard adopted a specific plan for the majority of the RiverPark Area 'A' known as the Oxnard Town Center Specific Plan and annexed this area to the City.

The small portion of RiverPark Area 'A' not covered by the Oxnard Town Center Specific Plan was already within City limits. That existing specific plan, titled the "Oxnard Town Center Specific Plan," allows development of up to 4.4 million square feet of commercial and industrial space in this specific plan area.

The Oxnard Town Center Specific Plan permits development of up to 1.5 million square feet of office space, 1.2 million square feet of office or research and development space, approximately 1,000 hotel rooms, 50,000 square feet of freestanding restaurant space, a 1.0 million square foot regional shopping mall, and related public facilities. This specific plan allowed the office and hotel buildings to be up to 24 stories in height. The existing development in the southwest corner of the site, consisting of the two office buildings and a portions of Ventura Road and Town Center Drive, were built under the design and development standards in the Oxnard Town Center Specific Plan.

The 2020 General Plan Land Use Map designations for the RiverPark 'B' area are consistent with the historical sand and gravel mine uses on the site. The designations include Open Space-Mineral Resources protection on most of the RiverPark site and Open Space-Buffer along Vineyard Avenue.

The Growth Management Element of the 2020 General Plan includes policies intended to manage the growth allowed by the General Plan. One of the key implementation measures is the establishment of the City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB). The City Council of Oxnard placed an ordinance creating the CURB on the ballot in November 1998 and it was approved by the voters. The purpose of the CURB is to protect agricultural and open space land within the City's Planning Area by limiting the provision of urban services and urbanized land uses within the CURB. In this portion of the City's Planning Area, the CURB is coterminous with the LAFCO Sphere of Influence Line for the City. The entire RiverPark Specific Plan Area is located within the CURB.

RiverPark Area 'A' is also located in the Historic Enhancement and Revitalization of Oxnard (HERO) Redevelopment Project area (see **Figure 2.0-9**), which includes 2,264 acres in 20 defined subareas. The

**Figure 2.0-8**  
**Existing General Plan Land Use**

**Figure 2.0-9**  
**HERO Area within Project Site**

HERO Redevelopment Project provides a framework for the redevelopment of the 20 subareas located throughout the City of Oxnard. The objectives of the HERO Redevelopment Project include elimination of blight, economic revitalization, infrastructure improvement, structural rehabilitation, possible hazardous waste cleanup assistance, and other types of assistance for each specific subarea. It is anticipated that these actions, together with private investment, will facilitate economic revitalization and diminish or eliminate blight in the 20 subareas. RiverPark Area 'A' is located within Subarea 1, referred to as the Oxnard Town Center Subarea, of the HERO Redevelopment Project area.

## **LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY CONSULTATION**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was entered into in June 2001 between the City of Oxnard, the County of Ventura, the Ventura County Flood Control District and the applicant for this project to address certain issues associated with land use planning for the proposed RiverPark Specific Plan Area and surrounding areas. This MOU addresses the sale of the County property containing the El Rio Maintenance Yard and relocation of these facilities, as well as the exchange of the El Rio Retention Basin No. 2 and a portion of El Rio Retention Basin No. 1 for replacement drainage facilities serving the same functions. In addition, the MOU addresses several aspects of wastewater collection and treatment in the area, including the provision of sewer service by the City of Oxnard to the County's Juvenile Justice Center and the provision of capacity in the City's collection and treatment facilities for the connection of the El Rio Community at a later date.