2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

2.1 *INTRODUCTION*

The CEQA Guidelines *require a description of the environment as it exists, from both a local and regional perspective, in an EIR. In addition to describing the physical characteristics of the environment, a discussion of the relevant regional and local plans is also provided to help the reader understand the planning programs and policies related to the proposed project.*

2.2 REGIONAL SETTING

The City of San Dimas is approximately 15 square miles in area with a present population of 34,980 people.[1] It is located in the eastern portion of the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County and is about 25 miles east of Los Angeles. Access to the City is provided by the Foothill Freeway (Interstate 210), the San Bernardino Freeway (Interstate 10), and the Orange Freeway (57). The Atchison, Topeka, Santa Fe Railroad, and the Southern Pacific Railroad provide rail service. International air service is available at Ontario International Airport, approximately 20 miles east of San Dimas. Recreational and small airplane travel is available at Brackett Airfield, which is located just outside of the city limits and adjacent to Frank G. Bonelli County Regional Park. Refer to **Figure 2.0-1.**

2.3 LOCAL SETTING

The site and its vicinity has a rich history that goes back into the nineteenth century. The area now known as the City of San Dimas was a part of a larger land grant of the Rancho San Jose. The area provided a rich grassland for grazing and lands for agriculture. The City has retained the rural flavor of its historic roots in its older residential areas and in the downtown core. The City was incorporated on August 4, 1960 as a general law City.

The northern and southern boundaries of the City are distinguished by large open space holdings in the Angeles National forest and the Frank G. Bonelli County Regional Park – San Jose Hills. Way Hill, located approximately in the middle of the City, is a local landmark visible from the surrounding neighborhoods and the Foothill and Orange Freeways. The rolling topography is an important aspect of the rural feeling of the City.

---

[1] City of San Dimas 2000 Census Information at http://www.cityofsandimas.com/html/administration.htm.

The City provides both manufacturing and non-manufacturing employment opportunities for its residents. The leading types of manufactured goods include: ceramics, hardware, leather products, computer test ware, candy, cereals and petroleum gases. Non-manufacturing employment opportunities are primarily skilled office jobs in data processing, county services, city services, equipment research, water utility, and skilled health care in general hospital facilities.

2.4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

a. Geotechnical Characteristics

While the entire City of San Dimas is located in the seismically active southern California area, the City itself is not in an Alquist-Pirillo Zone. Surface traces of the "potentially active" Sierra Madre Fault crosses the northern portion of the City. Sedimentary bedrock units consisting primarily of siltstones and shakes underlie the City. Groundshaking of moderate to severe intensity could be expected from seismic activity along this or other nearby faults. According to the geotechnical land use capability map of the San Dimas *General Plan*, the project site itself is in an area containing older alluvium underlain by stream terrace deposits.

b. Hydrology

The City overlies three groundwater basins. They include the San Dimas Basin, Way Hill Basin, and Foothill Basin. A fourth basin, outside of the City, the San Gabriel Valley Basin is fed by the water from San Dimas Canyon; this basin is managed by the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District. The depth to groundwater varies yearly, however the general trend is towards increased depth from overdrafting of the water resources.

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) is responsible for flood control and groundwater recharge along the San Dimas Canyon wash and Walnut Creek.

There are four major surface drainage courses in the City; they include the:

- Wildwood Canyon wash;
- Sycamore Canyon wash;
- San Dimas Canyon wash; and
- Walnut Creek wash.

The City provides both manufacturing and non-manufacturing employment opportunities for its residents. The leading types of manufactured goods include: ceramics, hardware, leather products, computer test ware, candy, cereals and petroleum gases. Non-manufacturing employment opportunities are primarily skilled office jobs in data processing, county services, city services, equipment research, water utility, and skilled health care in general hospital facilities.

2.4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

a. Geotechnical Characteristics

While the entire City of San Dimas is located in the seismically active southern California area, the City itself is not in an Alquist-Pirillo Zone. Surface traces of the "potentially active" Sierra Madre Fault crosses the northern portion of the City. Sedimentary bedrock units consisting primarily of siltstones and shakes underlie the City. Groundshaking of moderate to severe intensity could be expected from seismic activity along this or other nearby faults. According to the geotechnical land use capability map of the San Dimas *General Plan*, the project site itself is in an area containing older alluvium underlain by stream terrace deposits.

b. Hydrology

The City overlies three groundwater basins. They include the San Dimas Basin, Way Hill Basin, and Foothill Basin. A fourth basin, outside of the City, the San Gabriel Valley Basin is fed by the water from San Dimas Canyon; this basin is managed by the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District. The depth to groundwater varies yearly, however the general trend is towards increased depth from overdrafting of the water resources.

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) is responsible for flood control and groundwater recharge along the San Dimas Canyon wash and Walnut Creek.

There are four major surface drainage courses in the City; they include the:

- Wildwood Canyon wash;
- Sycamore Canyon wash;
- San Dimas Canyon wash; and
- Walnut Creek wash.

The City provides both manufacturing and non-manufacturing employment opportunities for its residents. The leading types of manufactured goods include: ceramics, hardware, leather products, computer test ware, candy, cereals and petroleum gases. Non-manufacturing employment opportunities are primarily skilled office jobs in data processing, county services, city services, equipment research, water utility, and skilled health care in general hospital facilities.

2.4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

a. Geotechnical Characteristics

While the entire City of San Dimas is located in the seismically active southern California area, the City itself is not in an Alquist-Pirillo Zone. Surface traces of the "potentially active" Sierra Madre Fault crosses the northern portion of the City. Sedimentary bedrock units consisting primarily of siltstones and shakes underlie the City. Groundshaking of moderate to severe intensity could be expected from seismic activity along this or other nearby faults. According to the geotechnical land use capability map of the San Dimas *General Plan*, the project site itself is in an area containing older alluvium underlain by stream terrace deposits.

b. Hydrology

The City overlies three groundwater basins. They include the San Dimas Basin, Way Hill Basin, and Foothill Basin. A fourth basin, outside of the City, the San Gabriel Valley Basin is fed by the water from San Dimas Canyon; this basin is managed by the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District. The depth to groundwater varies yearly, however the general trend is towards increased depth from overdrafting of the water resources.

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) is responsible for flood control and groundwater recharge along the San Dimas Canyon wash and Walnut Creek.

There are four major surface drainage courses in the City; they include the:

- Wildwood Canyon wash;
- Sycamore Canyon wash;
- San Dimas Canyon wash; and
- Walnut Creek wash.

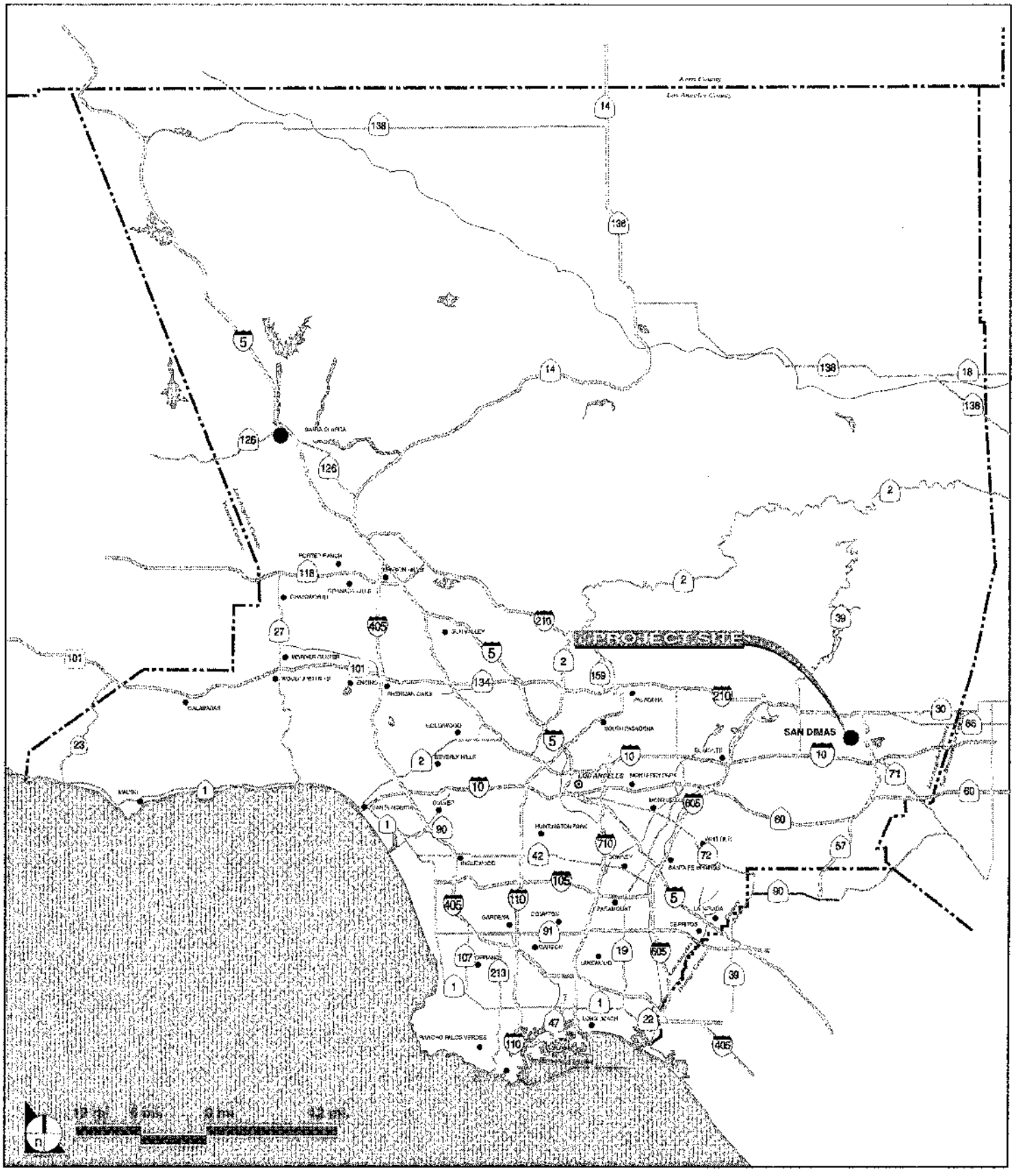


FIGURE **2.0-1**

Regional Location

The Wildwood Canyon wash drains into the Big Dalton Wash located to the west of San Dimas in the City of Glendora. The Sycamore Canyon wash drains into the San Dimas Canyon wash which is diverted to the Puddingstone Diversion Dam and reservoir. The Walnut Creek wash is located at the northern base of the San Jose Hills, it drains the central section of the City and the San Jose Hills. It eventually drains into the Big Dalton Wash and ultimately into the San Gabriel River.

All of these drainage courses are a part of the Los Angeles County Flood Control System and are maintained by them. In the northern sections of the San Dimas Canyon wash, the flood control channels are not paved but are levees with natural bottoms that eventually become paved channels. The Walnut Creek wash, which abuts the southern boundary of the project site, is entirely natural.

c. Biological Resources

The City of San Dimas contains and is located adjacent to extensive undeveloped areas of potential wildlife habitat, some of which has been identified as Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) by the Los Angeles County General Plan. Wildlife populations within the area are diverse and abundant due to the region's physiographic diversity, its relative isolation, and its location within and adjacent to the Angeles National Forest. Fair numbers of amphibians are expected to be present primarily due to the aquatic and semi-aquatic habits provided within the numerous drainages and several reservoirs present in the area. Reptile abundance and diversity are expected to be characteristic for the habitats present, although areas closer to urban development along the southern boundaries of the San Antonio Wash Significant Ecological Area (SEA) are likely to be suppressed due to edge effect. Bird use, diversity, and abundance within the City is expected to be high because the undeveloped land provides habitat for a wide range of shrubland, woodland, forest, and riparian species that occur at varying elevations. In addition, a number of migratory birds use this area to move across the northern portion of the Los Angeles Basin. These include a wide spectrum of birds including songbird, waterfowl, and raptorial species. Similarly, the mammalian fauna is expected to be very diverse and abundant.

Appendix 4.5 details and lists animal and plant life known to exist in the project area. The majority of habitats and native plant species are found in the following areas of the City:

- U.S. Forest Service Land;
- Puddingstone Reservoir;
- Bonelli Regional Park;
- San Dimas Canyon;
- Walnut Creek;
- Cinnamon Creek;
- Wildwood Canyon; and
- Sycamore Canyon.

The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within the San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio SEA located within the City creates a range of physical habitats which support numerous plant species. Plant species found within the area include bicone spruce-canyon oak forest, white alder riparian forest, alluvial fan scrub, oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and non-native grassland. The City's plant environment is a major scenic and visual resource. The City currently utilizes a preservation ordinance to protect all significant mature trees within the City.

d. Air Quality

The climate in the San Dimas region is classified as a dry summer Mediterranean regime. The temperature ranges from an average minimum of about 51° F to an average maximum of about 75° F. The general wind pattern is characterized by light wind off the Pacific Ocean during the day and night wind flow off the land areas out to the ocean. Locally, the site can be subject to gusty wind off the mountains and the hot dry Santa Ana winds off the desert lands to the east. The light ocean breezes during the day tend to bring in the air pollution generated in the central Los Angeles area. This pattern causes the pollution to stack up against the mountains and flow outward toward the San Bernardino region.

The project site is within the Metropolitan Zone of the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The East San Gabriel Valley air monitoring station in Azusa and the Pomon-Walnut station are at about the same distance from the project site. Because of its location near the foothills, measurements at the Azusa station may be slightly more representative of air quality in San Dimas.

e. Agricultural Resources

The City of San Dimas began as an agricultural town. Citrus orchards and row crops, such as strawberries were grown in the City. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service has analyzed the soils in San Dimas area into Land Capability Classification groups. These soil classifications are based on their ability to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without soil deterioration over an extended period of time. The broadest category places all soils into eight classes arranged from I through VIII. Conservation of Class I (prime agricultural) and Class II (potential prime agricultural) soils is of major concern of this element.

The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within the San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio SEA located within the City creates a range of physical habitats which support numerous plant species. Plant species found within the area include bicone spruce-canyon oak forest, white alder riparian forest, alluvial fan scrub, oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and non-native grassland. The City's plant environment is a major scenic and visual resource. The City currently utilizes a preservation ordinance to protect all significant mature trees within the City.

d. Air Quality

The climate in the San Dimas region is classified as a dry summer Mediterranean regime. The temperature ranges from an average minimum of about 51° F to an average maximum of about 75° F. The general wind pattern is characterized by light wind off the Pacific Ocean during the day and night wind flow off the land areas out to the ocean. Locally, the site can be subject to gusty wind off the mountains and the hot dry Santa Ana winds off the desert lands to the east. The light ocean breezes during the day tend to bring in the air pollution generated in the central Los Angeles area. This pattern causes the pollution to stack up against the mountains and flow outward toward the San Bernardino region.

The project site is within the Metropolitan Zone of the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The East San Gabriel Valley air monitoring station in Azusa and the Pomon-Walnut station are at about the same distance from the project site. Because of its location near the foothills, measurements at the Azusa station may be slightly more representative of air quality in San Dimas.

e. Agricultural Resources

The City of San Dimas began as an agricultural town. Citrus orchards and row crops, such as strawberries were grown in the City. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service has analyzed the soils in San Dimas area into Land Capability Classification groups. These soil classifications are based on their ability to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without soil deterioration over an extended period of time. The broadest category places all soils into eight classes arranged from I through VIII. Conservation of Class I (prime agricultural) and Class II (potential prime agricultural) soils is of major concern of this element.

There are no Class I (prime agricultural) soils within the City of San Dimas. There are Class II (potential prime agricultural) soils located in the northern half of the City and areas north of Bonelli Regional Park. About 507 acres of Class II soils remain undeveloped.

Of the remaining 507 available acres of Class II soils, 172 acres are designated open space while the remaining 335 acres are undeveloped parcels of various sizes. These remaining parcels have been identified for future development and are fragmented throughout the City with the largest undeveloped parcel approximately 26 acres, for the most part they are too small to be suitable for significant agricultural production. Most of these parcels are adjacent to existing residential developments, making the agricultural uses incompatible because of the use of pesticides, fertilizers and equipment noise.

2.5 SITE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

a. Land Use

The project site is presently vacant except for one single family residential unit on the western portion of the property and a barn associated with farming activity that historically occurred on-site. The existing house and improvements on the property will be removed to allow for the proposed development. On-site vegetation consists of non-native grasses that interspersed with a number of native and non-native trees. A total of 238 trees are found on the property, with 120 meeting the standards that qualify for protected status by the City of San Dimas.

Figure 2.0-2 depicts the existing character of the general area and surrounding land uses. While a variety of land use types are located in the area, low-density residential development predominates. The *General Plan* designation for the project area is Residential Low (3.1-6 d.u./ac.). Residential development is located to the north and northwest of the project site, while open space associated with Walnut Creek and Walnut Creek Park abut the southern boundary of the property. Walnut Creek is part of a regional drainage system originating at Bonelli Park. An equestrian trail is located adjacent to Walnut Creek and a trailhead lies adjacent to the property on the east. Further south beyond the creek is the Voorhees Campus of the California State Polytechnic University system. The Los Angeles International Church of Christ owns property to the northeast of the site.

The property is situated below the residential uses found to the north of Gainsborough Road but above Walnut Creek. The site slopes sharply from its high point in the northern portion of the property to

the south, where it flattens to form a plateau that sits above Walnut Creek. Elevations range from a high of 735 feet near Gainsborough Road to a low of 625 feet near the bluff overlooking the creek.

The site has an area of 18 acres, surrounded by residential development to the north and west, and open space to the east and along Walnut Creek to the south. Three acres of the site are utilized as a private residence and a dilapidated barn that once aided in farming. Large portions of the site have been highly impacted by several dirt roads that appear to be used by off-road vehicles. In addition, parts of the southeastern portion of the site have been impacted due to the site being used as a dumping area for refuse.

The Walnut Creek Trail passes along the southern boundary of the site. This trail is used by the public for hiking and equestrian purposes. The San Dimas *General Plan* considers Walnut Creek to be a "scenic resource." Additionally, Specific Plan No. 4 designates a strip of land along Walnut Creek as a "Scenic Easement." Access to the County Island where the Los Angeles International Church of Christ owns property runs along the northern portion of the property. The Church and the Los Angeles County have easements that provide access along the Valley Center extension. This road is a narrow tree lined road that ranges from 18 to 22 feet in width. This private road provides access to the County equestrian trail and to the Los Angeles International Church of Christ.

b. Topography

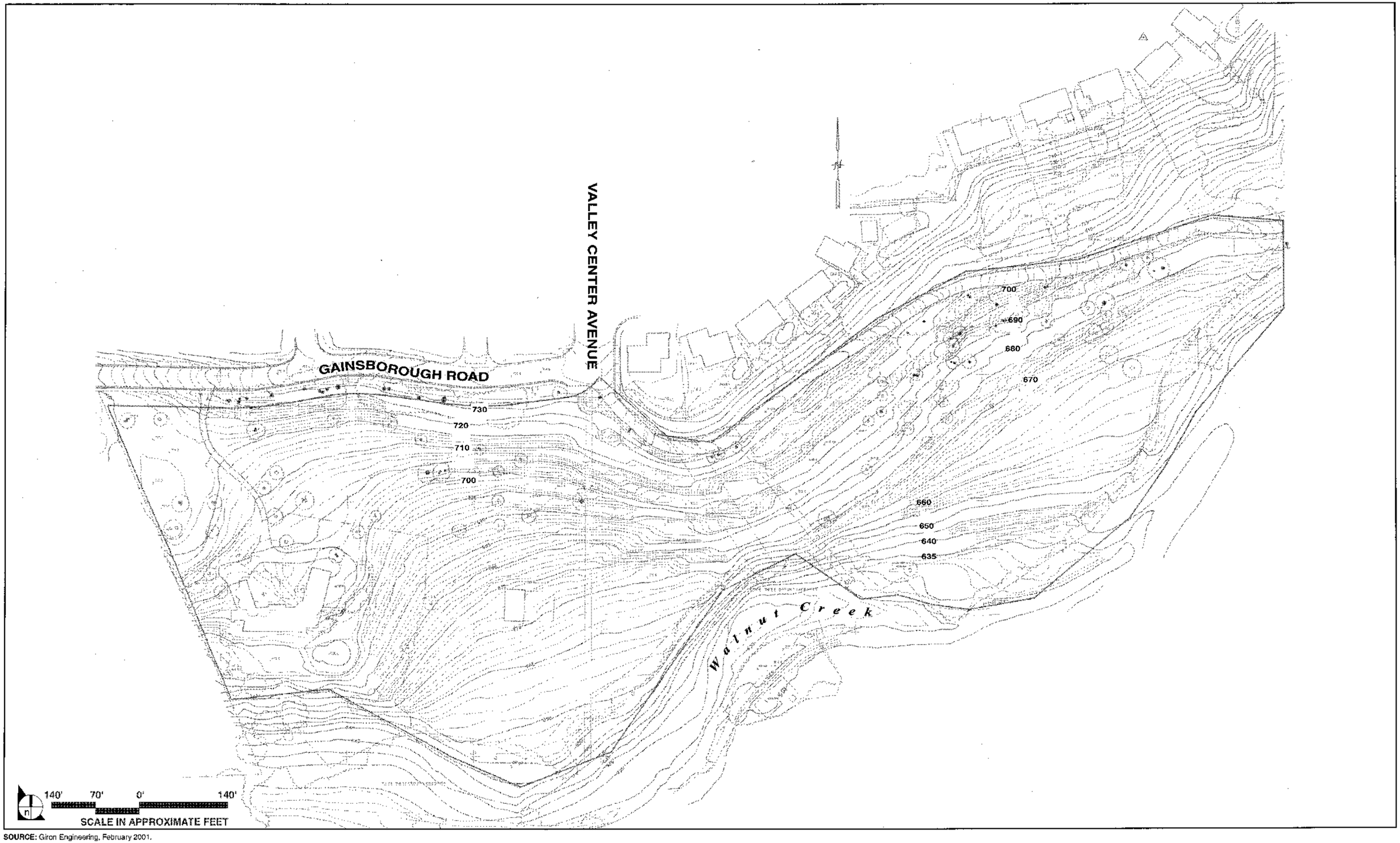
Figure 2.0-3 depicts existing on-site topography. As shown, topography on the project site ranges from a low of 625 feet in the southwestern portion to a high of 735 feet near Valley Center Avenue. The subject property consists basically of a triangular-shape elevated portion flanked by deep natural drainage courses on the northwest and south, with relatively small elevated areas "tacked on" on the north and southwest across the drainage course. Part of the area adjacent to Valley Center Avenue has been terraced for the now discontinued citrus groves. The various improvements (e.g., houses, barns, irrigation system, private roads) have, to some degree, changed the original landforms. Natural drainage flows are in a southwesterly direction.

c. Biological Resources

Several common amphibian and reptile species are known to occur in the vicinity and have a potential to utilize on-site resources. Amphibian species potentially occurring on the site include black-bellied slender salamander (*Batrychoseps nigriventris*), Pacific salamander (*Batryshoseps pacificus*), Pacific chorus frog (*Hyla regilla*), and western toad (*Bufo boreas*). A variety of bird species are expected to

FIGURE **2.0-2**

Site Vicinity Land Use



SOURCE: Giron Engineering, February 2001.

FIGURE **2.0-3**

On–Site Topography

occur on the project site due to its proximity to Walnut Creek. In addition, a variety of mammal species occur in the general site vicinity. Several larger species including mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) are expected to occur within the Walnut Creek corridor adjacent to the site. This is also the case with several small to medium-sized mammal species including Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), common raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*).

Vegetation within the project area is limited to coast live oak woodland, southern coast live oak riparian forest, tree windrows, non-native weedy species in disturbed (ruderal) areas, and landscaping associated with existing residential development. Though not included within the site boundaries, the predominant biological feature associated with the project area is Walnut Creek, which borders the southern edge of the site. The plant community associated with the creek is southern coast live oak riparian forest, which is fenced off from the site by a six foot chain link fence.

Thirty-two special-status plant species are known to occur in the vicinity of the project site based on searches of the CNDDB and CNPS databases. These species are either not expected or are considered to have low potentials for occurrence based on their habitat requirements, their present and historic range, and/or current on-site conditions. Thirteen special-status wildlife species are known to occur in the vicinity of the project site based on searches of the CNDDB database. These species are either not expected or are considered to have low potentials for occurrence based on their habitat requirements, their present and historic range, and/or current on-site conditions.

d. Constraints

As depicted in **Figure 2.0-4**, several development constraints exist on the project site and should be considered in site planning. Two large stands of Coast Live Oak Woodland are located in the northwest portion of the site and four smaller stands are dispersed on the western half of the site. A Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest runs along the southern border of the site adjacent to the Walnut Creek. As mentioned earlier, the City of San Dimas General Plan designates Walnut Creek and associated vegetation as a scenic resource, while Specific Plan No. 4 places a scenic easement designation on this area. In addition, a eucalyptus windrow runs along the northern boundary of the site adjacent to Gainsborough Road, a portion of which is designated as a scenic corridor by the General Plan. Finally, topographic characteristics in the northern and central portion of the site will require extensive grading if development is planned for these locations.

2.6 PLANS AND POLICIES

a. Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan), Los Angeles Region (4)

The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB) protects ground and surface water quality in the Los Angeles Region, including the coastal watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, along with very small portions of Kern and Santa Barbara Counties The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the Los Angeles Region (4), which includes the Santa Clara River and its watershed in the Los Angeles Region, is designed to preserve and enhance water quality and to protect the beneficial uses of all regional waters. The Basin Plan is designed to preserve and enhance water quality and to protect the beneficial uses of all regional waters. Specifically, this plan designates beneficial uses for surface and ground waters; sets narrative and numerical objectives that must be attained or maintained to protect the designated beneficial uses and to conform to the State's anti-degradation policy; and describes implementation programs to protect all waters in the Region.

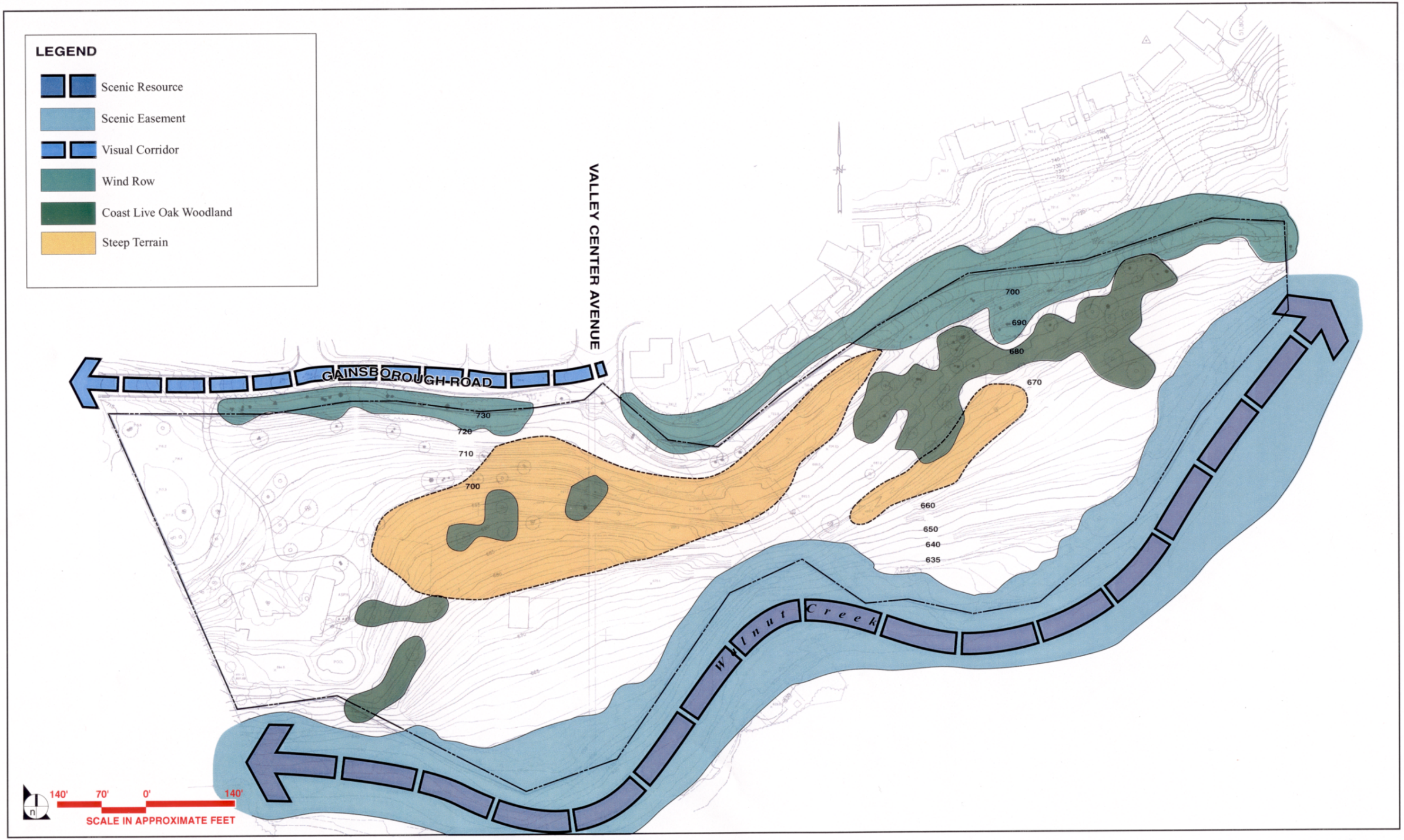
b. San Dimas *General Plan*

The State of California requires that each City have a long-range plan for its physical development through the adoption of a General Plan. The General Plan is a comprehensive document consisting of text, maps and exhibits that describe goals, objectives and policies for future development. The City of San Dimas adopted its update to the *General Plan* in September 1991. Any new development is intended to conform to these new goals, objectives and policies.

There are seven elements required by the State of California to be included in the General Plan, although additions are allowable. These elements are as follows: land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety and noise. The City Land Use Element designates the property for low-density residential development. This designation is implemented through a Specific Plan that is discussed in greater depth below.

c. Specific Plan No. 4

The adoption of specific plans is authorized by Section 65450 of the State Government Code, which states that specific plans may be prepared to provide for the systematic implementation of the general plan. A specific plan is a zoning document that sets forth development guidelines and policies to be utilized by landowners, developers and public agencies when considering development plans for an area. Specific plans are a substitute for standard zoning and are used to address the unique qualities of a property.



SOURCE: Impact Sciences, January 02.

FIGURE **2.0-4**

Site Constraints

Section 65451 of the Government Code requires that a specific plan include a text and a diagram or diagrams that specify all of the following in detail:

(1) The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.

(2) The proposed distribution, location, and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.

(3) Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.

(4) A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out paragraphs (1), (2), and (3).

The proposed project represents buildout of Specific Plan No. 4, which was adopted by the City of San Dimas City Council in 1978. The Specific Plan No. 4 permits single family residential uses and associated facilities as described in Section 18.504.060 to be constructed on the subject property. All development constructed within the Specific Plan area is subject to development standards for grading and drainage, trails and walkways, landscaping, building mass, building density, setbacks, lighting, and fencing. These standards are enforced during the City of San Dimas project review and plan check process.