

Notice of Preparation

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies and others on attached distribution list

From: City of Ventura
501 Poli Street.
Ventura, California 93001

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
City of Ventura - Westside Community Planning Project

The City of Ventura will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified below. The City seeks public input on the content of the EIR, which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approvals for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are described in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study (is is not) attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent to the City by September 6, 2011 at 5:00 PM.

Please send your response to Ms. Maggie Ide, Associate Planner, Community Development Department, City of Ventura, 501 Poli Street, P.O. Box 99, Ventura, California 93002. Please provide the name of a contact person at your agency.

A scoping meeting regarding the Westside Community Planning Project EIR will be held August 18, 2011 at 4:00 PM at Ventura City Hall Council Chambers, 501 Poli Street, Ventura, California 93001.

Project Titles: **Westside Community Plan, Westside Community Development Code, and Westside Redevelopment Area Project**

Date: _____ Signature: _____
Dave Ward
Title: Planning Manager
Telephone: (805) 677-3964

Reference: California Administrative Code, Title 14 (*CEQA Guidelines*), Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Westside Community Plan area includes approximately 924 acres, excluding public right of way, located on the western edge of the City of Ventura. **Figure 1** illustrates the regional location of the Westside Community Plan Area. The Westside Community Plan area is located approximately 26 miles south of the City of Santa Barbara. State Route 33 connects the Westside area to unincorporated Ventura County and Ojai to the north; to Highway 101 which connects the greater Ventura City area to Los Angeles to the south; and Santa Barbara County to the north.

Figure 2 illustrates the boundary of the Westside Community Plan Area and the proposed boundary of the Westside Redevelopment Project Area in the City of Ventura.

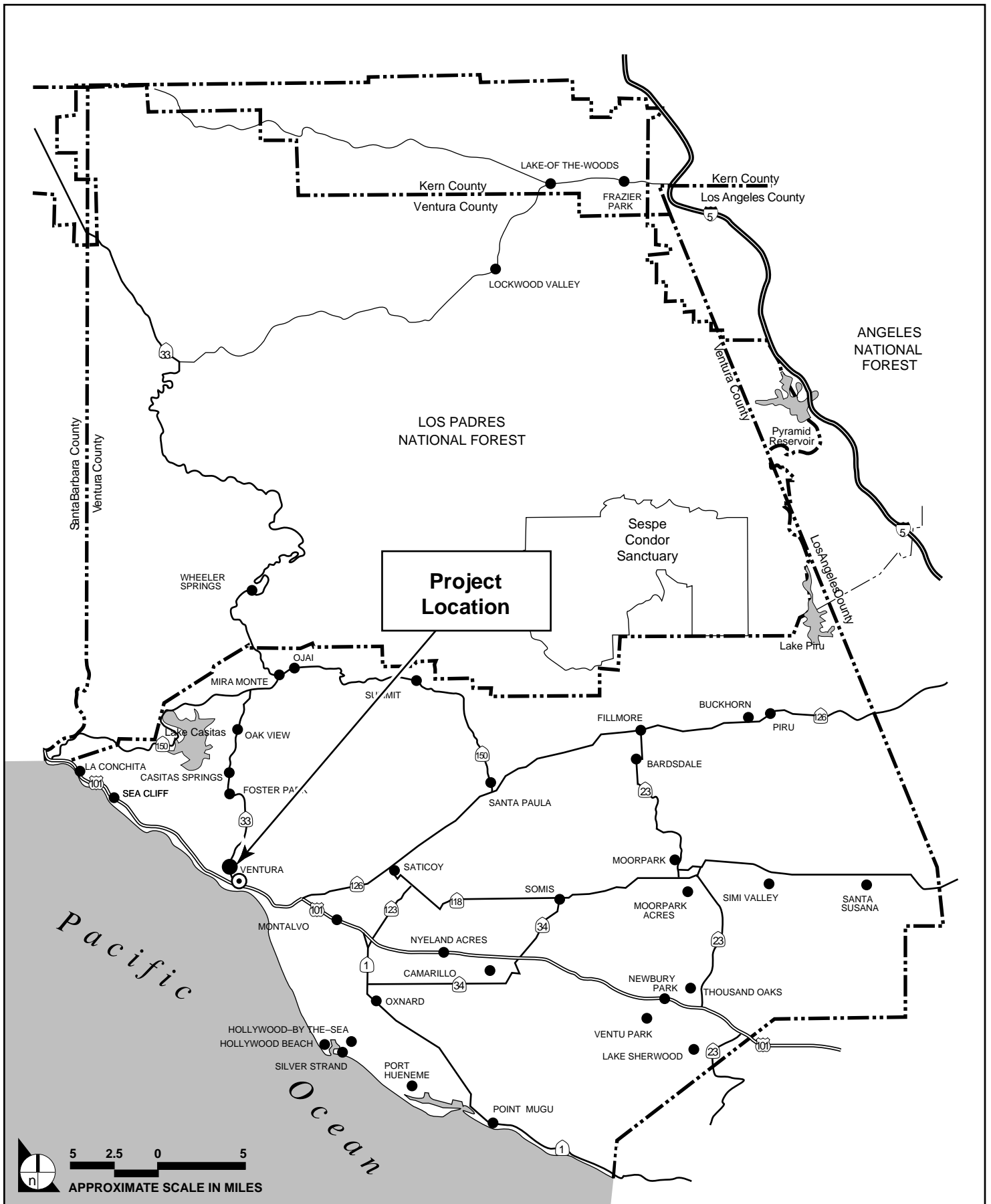
The Westside Community Plan area is generally bounded by the steep hillsides to the east, Highway 33 to the west, Park Row Avenue to the south, and Ottawa Street to the north. The Project area is divided into eastern and western halves by Ventura Avenue. The Westside Planning Area is bordered on the north by the City's North Avenue District as identified in the 2005 General Plan and on the south by Downtown Ventura.

The proposed Westside Redevelopment Project Area extends south of the Westside Community Plan Area to include a small area in the City's Downtown Specific Plan Area that is not included in the City's existing redevelopment project area and exclude newer residential neighborhoods in the northeastern portion of the Westside Community Plan Area.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Westside Community Planning Project is the result of a public participation process the City began in 1996 with a series of public workshops, which led to a community vision for revitalization of the Westside area. In 1999, the Westside Urban Design Plan developed by the City incorporated key elements and established design guidelines supportive of this vision.

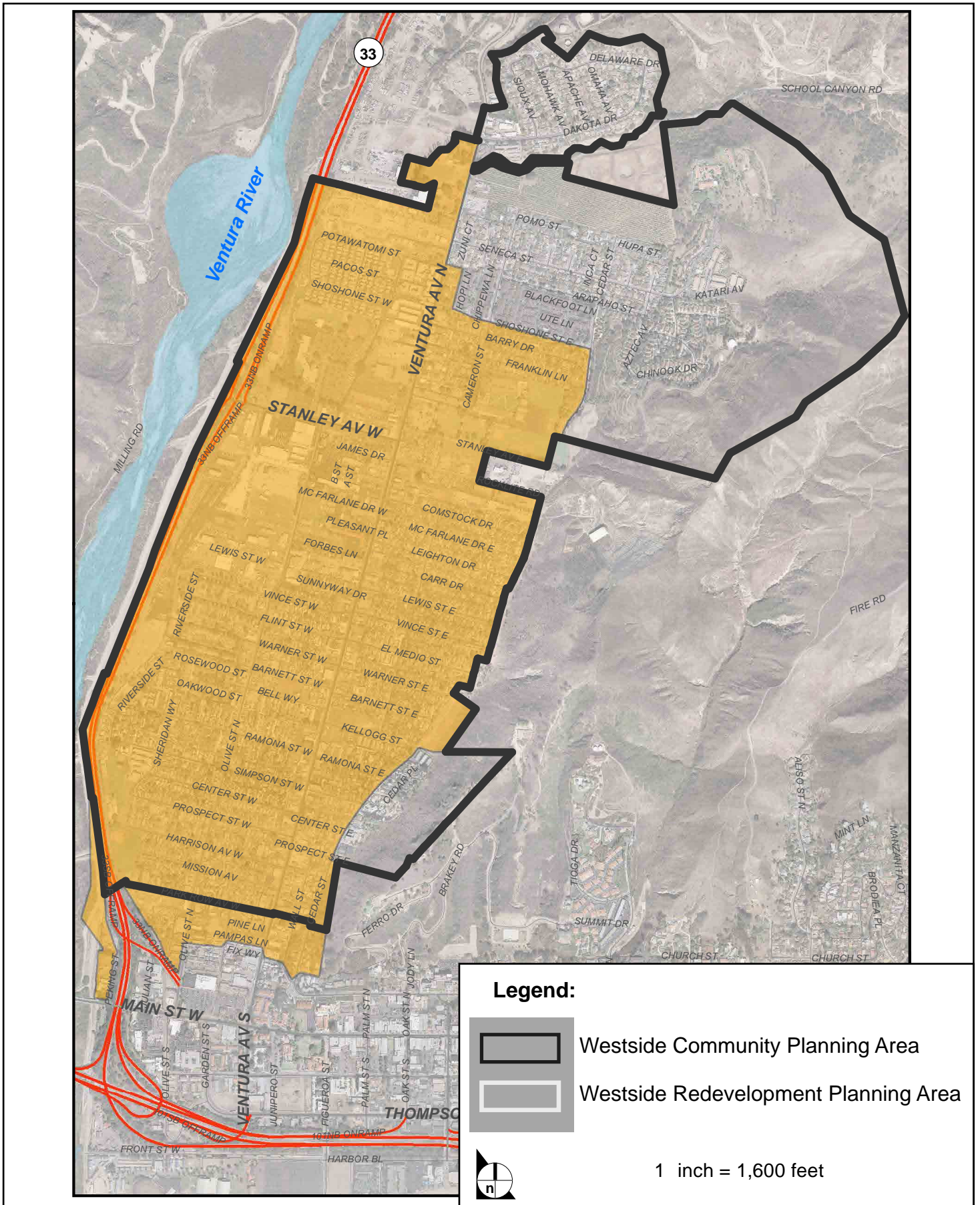
In 2000, the Ventura Vision plan, which ultimately guided formulation of the 2005 Ventura General Plan, incorporated the goals and objectives developed during the Westside vision process. The Westside Economic Strategy, also prepared in 2006, assessed the Westside's economic strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, and summarized the existing land use conditions. Beginning in 2006, the City also sponsored public workshops to gather and incorporate further public input.



SOURCE: Impact Sciences, Inc. – December 2010

FIGURE 1

Regional Location Map



SOURCE: City of Ventura – August 2011

FIGURE 2

Project Boundary and Vicinity Map

In fall 2010, a preliminary draft of the Westside Community Plan was circulated for public review and feedback, including extensive workshops and feedback sessions with community groups, city commissioners, and members of the public. This draft community plan addressed both the Westside Community and North Avenue District as identified in the 2005 Ventura General Plan. This draft plan also included the proposed annexation of an additional 800 acres of land located immediately east of the northern portion of the North Avenue District area in Canada Larga Canyon. In December 2010, the City distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for an EIR evaluating this community planning project, including the Westside and North Avenue areas and the addition of the Canada Larga area.

In response to the comments received, the City revised the Westside Community Plan to reduce the project area boundary and only address the existing Westside Community. In April 2011, the City of Ventura released the Draft Westside Community Plan and Development Code for public review. On June 6, 2011, the City Council initiated the Draft Community Plan and Development Code for environmental review.

The Westside Community Planning Project also includes a proposal to establish the Westside Redevelopment Project Area to assist the City in its efforts to revitalize the Westside Community. In June 2011, the City of Ventura Planning Commission adopted a resolution to select the boundaries of the proposed Westside Redevelopment Project Area and transmit the Preliminary Plan for the Westside Redevelopment Project to the Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Buenaventura for the purpose of analysis and review.

This NOP is being circulated for comments on the revised Westside Community Plan Project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Westside Community Planning Project is intended to implement the City's General Plan at the neighborhood level by adopting the Westside Community Plan, the Westside Development Code and establishing the Westside Redevelopment Project Area.

The community vision statement developed to guide the planning of the Westside Community is:

To create an interconnected, revitalized Westside community that improves over time by preserving neighborhood heritage, supporting and expanding the vibrant arts community, requiring well designed development, increasing urban plazas and green spaces, enhancing multi-modal travel options, and expanding jobs, with an emphasis on green technology and high tech sector opportunities.

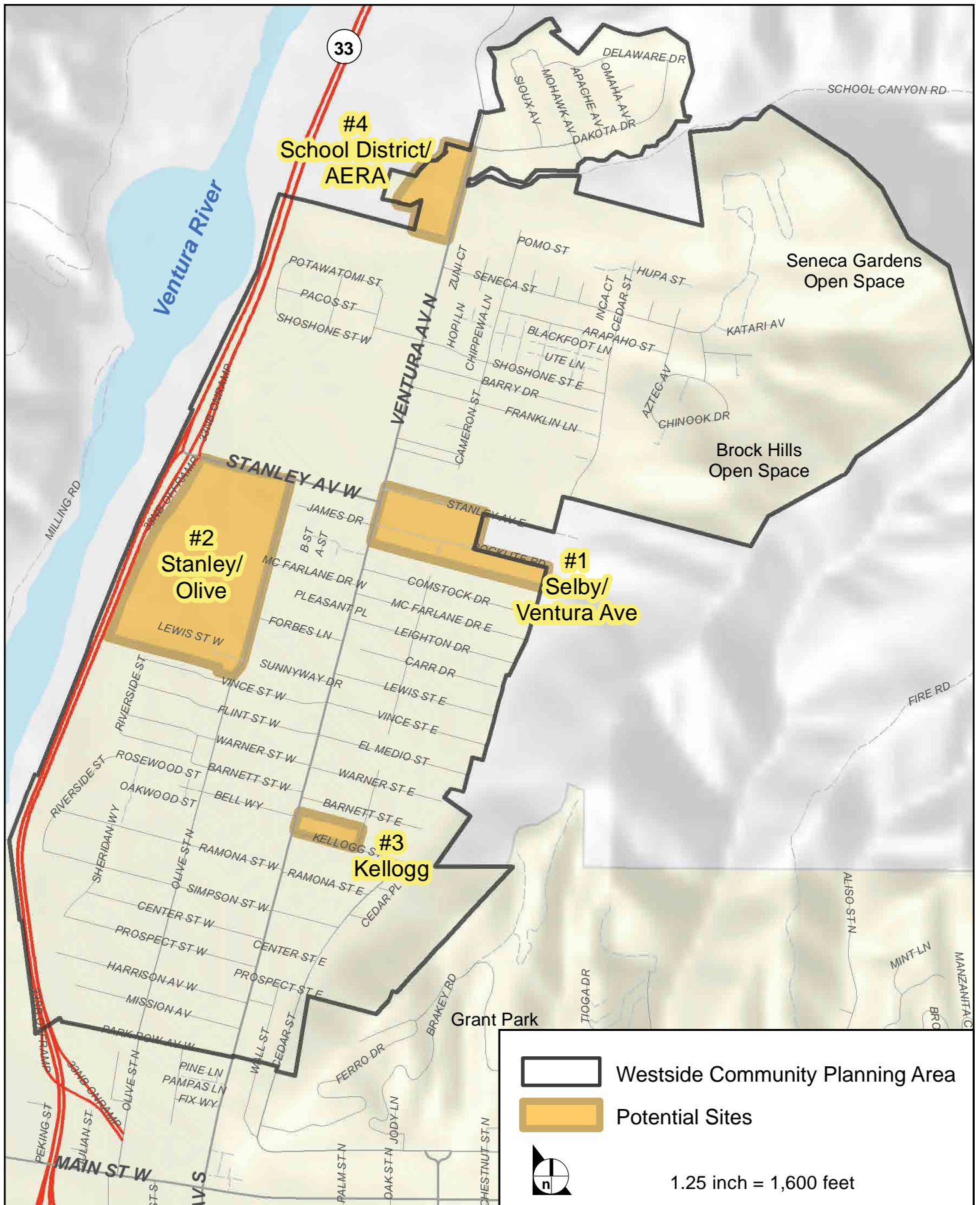
The existing character of the Westside community is the result of historical development of the area in the early 1900s. As the result of the discovery of oil, the pattern of development and industrial character of the area was established. The Westside community was primarily developed with housing for workers in the oil fields present in the North Avenue area, north of the Westside community area, where development primarily consisted of oil-related industrial uses. By the 1970s, oil production and oil industry support uses began to decline in the area.

The Westside Community Plan reflects policies and actions identified in the City's 2005 General Plan. The primary policies and actions related to natural resources include increasing open space along the Ventura River, restoring and enhancing connections to the Ventura River and hillsides, reducing hillside erosion to protect Westside neighborhoods, and designing a development adjacent to the Ventura River to protect natural resources. The Westside Community Plan includes a proposal to connect the north and south segments of Cedar Street. The new portion of Cedar Street, while located within unincorporated Ventura County, is within the City's Sphere of Influence.

Primary policies and actions related to land uses include stimulating private investment for revitalization of underutilized land in the community planning area, identifying and designating sites to support the development of technology businesses and professional services to provide jobs, and prioritizing and promoting the expansion of local-serving retail and service businesses. **Figure 3** shows the location of four sites identified in the Community Plan as key sites available for investment that would serve to stimulate additional investment in this community.

To encourage and support mixed-use development in appropriate locations, the City's 2005 General Plan also calls for the development of prescriptive form-based development code standards. General Plan policies also promote development of a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of households with different income levels.

Planning and design goals of the General Plan include encouraging traditional neighborhood design in existing and new Westside neighborhoods, emphasizing neighborhood preservation by valuing the existing residential, industrial, and artistic characteristics of the Westside community, and enhancing the public streetscape in these neighborhoods. The main transportation planning goal is to develop an interconnected circulation system for all modes of travel, including buses, bikes, pedestrians, and cars.



SOURCE: Westside Economic Development Strategy – 2006

FIGURE 3

Economic Catalyst Sites



To achieve these planning objectives, the Westside Community Planning Project includes a proposed form-based code, the Westside Community Development Code, for the Westside Community Plan area. This Development Code is made up of a Regulating Plan and development standards for each of the zones identified in the Regulating Plan. **Figure 4** shows the proposed Regulating Plan for the Westside Community as defined in the General Plan. The proposed form-based development standards define allowable building types and land uses in each transect zone and the placement and allowed uses in these buildings along with design standards that articulate building mass and scale.

Based on the existing characteristics of the Westside community, the City of Ventura has projected the amount of development that is likely to occur through the 2025 planning horizon year of the City's General Plan. The development potential is summarized below:

Preliminary estimates for development through 2025 in the Community Planning Area are:

- Approximately 1,415 dwelling units
- 100,640 square feet of retail
- 163,450 square feet of office
- 77,000 square feet of industrial

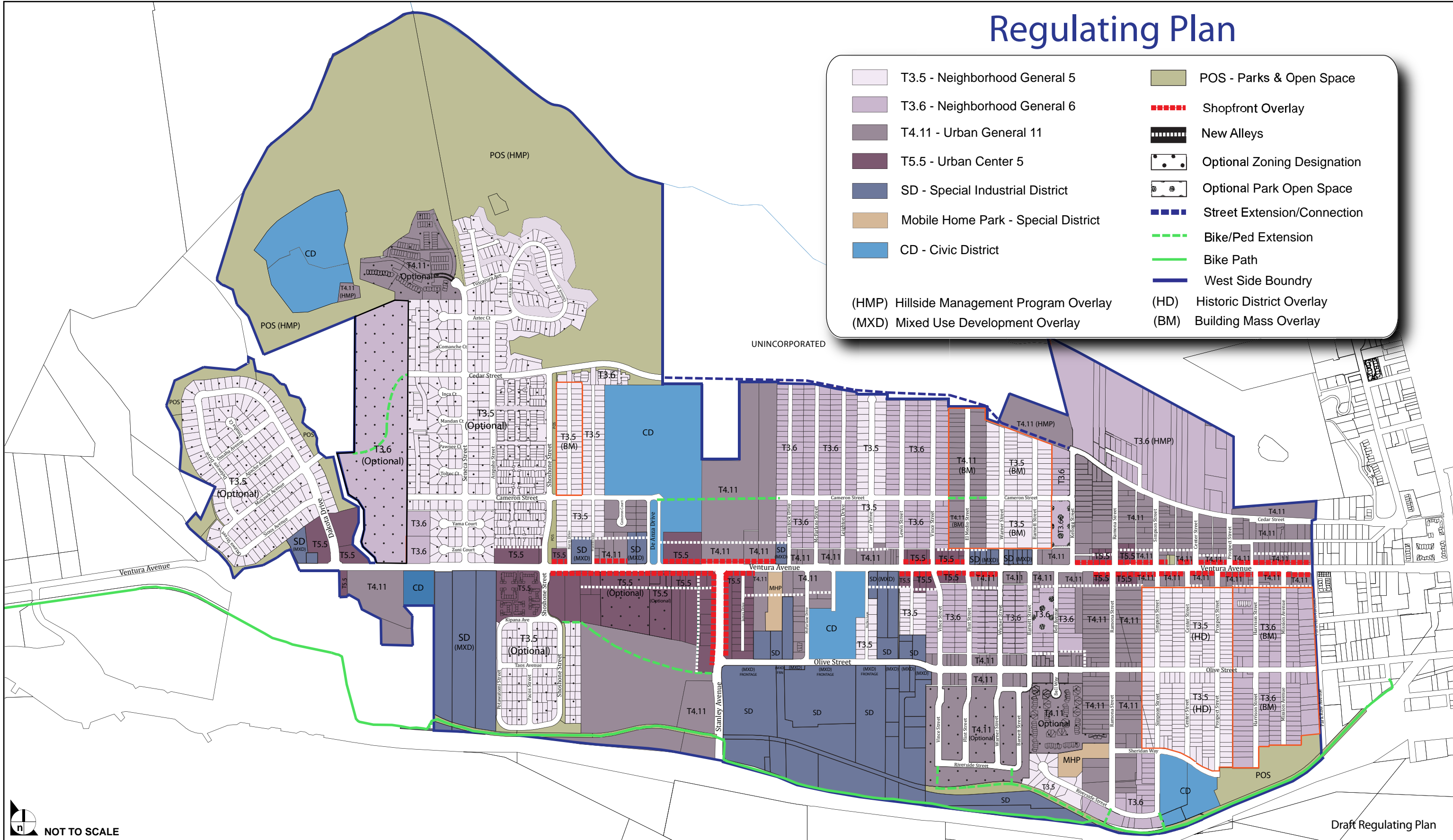
These growth estimates include development assumed under the 2005 Ventura General Plan and development assumed in the 2006 Westside Economic Development Strategy.

The proposed Westside Redevelopment Project Area is approximately 685 acres in size. The establishment of this redevelopment project area is proposed to eliminate the existing conditions of blight; to complete capital improvements to upgrade and improve public infrastructure; to provide for economic revitalization of commercial and industrial enterprises; and to increase, improve, and preserve the area's supply of affordable housing. Uses would be in compliance with the City's General Plan and zoning ordinance, as amended from time to time, and all other applicable state and local codes and guidelines.

Because land uses, transportation, and other development standards incorporate existing City of Ventura General Plan policies, the proposed Redevelopment Plan would be consistent with the General Plan. Any new development within the proposed redevelopment project area would consist of uses consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plans, zoning ordinances, and all other state and local guidelines, as currently adopted or amended from time to time.

Regulating Plan

- T3.5 - Neighborhood General 5
- T3.6 - Neighborhood General 6
- T4.11 - Urban General 11
- T5.5 - Urban Center 5
- SD - Special Industrial District
- Mobile Home Park - Special District
- CD - Civic District
- POS - Parks & Open Space
- Shopfront Overlay
- New Alleys
- Optional Zoning Designation
- Optional Park Open Space
- Street Extension/Connection
- Bike/Ped Extension
- Bike Path
- West Side Boundry
- (HMP) Hillside Management Program Overlay
- (HD) Historic District Overlay
- (MXD) Mixed Use Development Overlay
- (BM) Building Mass Overlay



NOT TO SCALE

SOURCE: City of Ventura – August 2011

Draft Regulating Plan

FIGURE 4

Westside Community Regulating Plan

INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR

At this time, the City of Ventura has identified the following actions that will need to be taken by the City, acting as Lead Agency for this project, and by Responsible Agencies. The list of Responsible Agencies and project actions is preliminary, and the City anticipates that additional actions may be identified as a result of consultation with other public agencies facilitated by the circulation of this notice.

The City of Ventura would be responsible for the following actions:

- Amendment of the City's General Plan land use designations and circulation plan associated with adoption of the Westside Community Plan
- Amendment of the City's Zoning Ordinance to incorporate the Westside Development Code

The Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Buenaventura would be responsible for the following action:

- Adoption of the Westside Redevelopment Project Area

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The City of Ventura has completed a preliminary review, as described in Section 15060 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, of the proposed Westside Community Plan and determined an EIR should be prepared for this project. The scope of work for this EIR will involve research, analysis, and study of the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural (Historic) Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Public Services
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities/Service Systems

A brief description of the scope of analysis the City has identified for study related to each of these topics is provided as an attachment to this notice for your information.

The City of Ventura will consider the comments received in response to this NOP in determining the scope and content of the Draft EIR the City will prepare for this project. Any comments provided should identify the potential environmental effects you are requesting the City study, and your reason for suggesting the study of these topics in the EIR. In addition, a public scoping will be held on August 18, 2011 at 4:00 PM in the City Hall Council Chambers, located at 501 Poli Street in Ventura.

Please provide your comments in writing to:

Ms. Maggie Ide
Associate Planner
Community Development Department
City of Ventura, 501 Poli Street, P.O. Box 99
Ventura, California 93002

Thank you for your participation in the City's environmental review of this project.

PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF STUDY

City of Ventura

Westside Community Planning Project Draft EIR

Aesthetics – Analysis of this topic will address the change in the visual character of the Westside Community Planning Project Area as viewed from surrounding public areas, streets, and highways. Ventura Avenue is identified in the City’s 2005 General Plan EIR, as a scenic corridor, and impacts to public views along this corridor will also be assessed. Other important scenic corridors nearby include State Route 33 (SR-33) and US Highway 101.

The City’s 2005 General Plan EIR recognizes the scenic value of hillside and river areas within and adjacent to the project area, as well as the importance of agricultural lands as a scenic resource. These features will be considered in the discussion.

Potential light and glare impacts of new development will be addressed, as will the consistency of the project with the policies in the “Our Well-Planned and Designed Community” chapter of the City’s 2005 General Plan.

Air Quality – The impacts of the proposed Westside Community Planning Project Area on air quality will be evaluated in accordance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Air Quality Impact Analyses prepared by the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD). This section will examine the consistency of the Westside Community Planning Project with the Ventura County Air Quality Management Plan, the effects of the Project on attainment status for regulated pollutants, and any potential impacts related to emissions from existing and planned surrounding uses. The potential for emissions generated by additional development in the Westside Community Planning Project Area to violate air quality standards, or cause a net increase in criteria pollutants will be assessed.

Biological Resources – The Westside Community Planning Project Area contains biological resources along the Ventura River and in hillside areas. The EIR will address the potential effects of the Project on the biological resources in these areas. Sensitive species known or likely to occur in the area, along with the habitats that support them, will be identified through review of published lists of sensitive and candidate species and through biological resource surveys to be conducted as part of the preparation of the EIR.

As the Project area is adjacent to the Ventura River Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan area, potential indirect conflicts with this plan will be addressed. This section will also consider potential

impacts to riparian and wetland areas in the Ventura River and other portions of the area subject to the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service. Although the Project area is adjacent to undeveloped land on the east, the potential for additional development to interfere with the movement of wildlife is unlikely because there is no direct access to the Ventura River or other upland habitats to the west.

Cultural (Historic) Resources – The Westside Community Planning Project Area includes a historic resources survey that identifies potential historic districts. Several historic sites and the Simpson Tract Historic District have been identified in the Westside area. The EIR will summarize the information in the historic resources survey and identify potential impacts.

Geology/Soils – The Westside Community Planning Project Area includes a small portion of the Ventura-Foothill Fault, which is an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. The Red Mountain Fault Zone is located north of the Project area. This fault is considered active and portions of the zone outside of the Project area are Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones.

Hillsides to the east and north of the project area are identified as potential landslide areas in the City's General Plan EIR. The General Plan EIR also identifies liquefaction hazard areas and expansive soil areas within the Westside community. Furthermore, the Ventura River to the west of the Project area is identified as a tsunami risk area.

The EIR will address the existing geologic and soils conditions on the Westside Community Planning Project Area and potential impacts that may result from these conditions, including potential liquefaction, hillside stability, and other hazards.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – The potential for development allowed by the Westside Community Plan to generate greenhouse gases (GHG) in excess of current GHG emissions will be analyzed in this section, along with the consistency of the Project with applicable plans and policies.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials – The Westside Community Planning Project Area contains industrial areas, including ongoing industrial operation. An assessment of the potential for the presence of hazardous materials will be conducted as part of the EIR. The hillside portions of the Project area to the east are also subject to wildfire hazards, which this section of the EIR will also address.

Hydrology/Water Quality – The Westside Community Planning Project Area contains existing natural drainage features, including the Ventura River and drainages in the hillside areas to the east. The Project area is adjacent to the Ventura River, and the western portion of the Westside Community is located in an

identified 500-year floodplain. The potential for flooding impacts will be assessed based on a review of existing information and additional studies to be conducted as part of this EIR.

Land Use/Planning – The Westside Community Planning Project Area is proposed to implement the City’s General Plan. The EIR will evaluate the consistency of the proposed changes in the existing and planned land uses with applicable local and regional land use plans and policies. Consistency with the City’s 2005 General Plan will be analyzed, as will the consistency of the Project with the Southern California Association of Government’s (SCAG) Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG).

The compatibility of the proposed uses with existing and planned land uses and in surrounding areas will also be analyzed. Impact to the existing land uses, including compatibility between industrial and residential lands uses within the community planning area will be assessed as part of this analysis.

Noise – The potential of growth that would be allowed by the Westside Community Planning Project to cause an increase in ambient noise levels will be analyzed, along with potential incompatibility between existing industrial and commercial uses and noise sensitive uses such as housing, schools, and churches. The existing noise environment is characterized by vehicular noise from SR-33 and Ventura Avenue.

Population/Housing – Analysis of the consistency of projected growth with adopted local and regional demographic projections will be provided. This section will also consider the potential for the displacement of existing housing or residents as a result of the Project.

Public Services – The EIR will address the need for police, fire, solid waste disposal, recreation, and other public services from the City of Ventura to serve the additional development that would be allowed by the Westside Community Planning Project, and the ability of the City and other agencies to meet this increased demand for services. The increased demand for school services provided by Ventura Unified School District will also be analyzed. Standards of service for police and fire departments and student generation rates provided by the school district will be used to determine impacts to these services. The potential for solid waste generated by additional development to impact landfill capacity will also be assessed.

Transportation/Traffic – A comprehensive traffic analysis will be prepared for the Project in accordance with the City’s Traffic Impact Study Guidelines based on the City’s transportation model. Impacts to state and county facilities, including SR-33 and US Highway 101, will be assessed using the methodologies and standards of these agencies. Changes in roadway/highway and intersection traffic volumes will be studied at all roadway facilities in the area that may be significantly impacted by traffic from future growth projected in the Westside Community Planning Project Area. Impacts on transit service in the area will also be addressed. The relationship of the Westside Community Planning Project Area to

current plans addressing alternate modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle use, will be evaluated.

Utilities/Service Systems – The impacts of the Westside Community Planning Project on existing and planned sewer, water, and storm drain facilities in the area will be evaluated along with potential impacts to energy demand and service in the area. The adequacy of the City’s available water supplies to meet the needs of projected growth will be studied. Water supply impacts will be addressed based on the City’s 2011 Urban Water Management Plan.