

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

617B



FROM: TLMA - Planning Department

SUBMITTAL DATE:
July 15, 2010

REVIEWED BY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

DATE 7/15/10
Tina Grande

Departmental Concurrence

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 1001 – Foundation-Regular – Applicant: Stonegate Development I, LLC – Engineer/Representative: McKeever Engineering - Third Supervisorial District - Hemet-San Jacinto and Winchester Zoning Districts - Harvest Valley/Winchester Area Plan: Rural Community: Estate Density Residential (RC-EDR) (2 Acre Minimum Lot Size) and Rural: Rural Mountainous (RUR-RM) (10 Acre Minimum Lot Size) – Location: Easterly of Richmond Road, westerly of California Avenue, southerly of Stetson Avenue and northerly of Stowe Road - 159.09 Gross Acres - Zoning: Heavy Agriculture - 10 Acre Minimum Lot Size (A-2-10) - **REQUEST:** This General Plan Amendment proposes to amend the General Plan Foundation Component of the subject site from Rural and Rural Community to Community Development and to amend the general plan Land Use designation of the subject site from Estate Density Residential (RC: EDR) (2 Acre Minimum Lot Size) and Rural Mountainous (RUR: RM) (10 Acre Minimum Lot Size) to Medium Density Residential (CD: MDR) (2-5 du/ac) - APN(s):465-060-005, 465-080-001, 465-080-002, 465-080-003, 465-080-004, 465-080-005

RECOMMENDED MOTION: The Planning Director recommends that the Board of Supervisors tentatively decline to adopt an order initiating proceedings for the above referenced general plan amendment. The initiation of proceedings by the Board of Supervisors for the amendment of the General Plan, or any element thereof, shall not imply any such amendment will be approved.

BACKGROUND: The initiation of proceedings for any General Plan Amendment (GPA) requires the adoption of an order by the Board of Supervisors. The Planning Director is required

Ron Goldman
Planning Director

Initials:
RG:td

(continued on attached page)

Policy
 Policy

Consent
 Consent

Dep't Recomm.:
Per Exec. Ofc.:

Prev. Agn. Ref.

District: Third

Agenda Number:

to prepare a report and recommendation on every GPA application and submit it to the Board of Supervisors. Prior to the submittal to the Board, comments on the application are requested from the Planning Commission, and the Planning Commission comments are included in the report to the Board. The Board will either approve or disapprove the initiation of proceedings for the GPA requested in the application. The consideration of the initiation of proceedings by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors pursuant to this application does not require a noticed public hearing. However, the applicant was notified by mail of the time, date and place when the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors would consider this GPA initiation request.

If the Board of Supervisors adopts an order initiating proceedings pursuant to this application, the proposed amendment will thereafter be processed, heard and decided in accordance with all the procedures applicable to GPA applications, including noticed public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The adoption of an order initiating proceedings does not imply that any amendment will be approved. If the Board of Supervisors declines to adopt an order initiating proceedings, no further proceedings on this application will occur.

The Board of Supervisors established the procedures for initiation of GPA applications with the adoption of Ordinance No. 348.4573 (effective May 8, 2008), which amended Article II of that ordinance.

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTE ORDER JANUARY 13, 2010
RIVERSIDE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER**

- I. AGENDA ITEM 7.2: GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 1001** – Foundation / Regular – Applicant: Stonegate Development, LLC – Engineer/Representative: McKeever Engineering - Third Supervisorial District - Hemet-San Jacinto and Winchester Zoning Districts - Harvest Valley/Winchester Area Plan: Rural Community: Estate Density Residential (RC-EDR) (2 Acre Minimum) and Rural: Rural Mountainous (RUR-RM) (10 Ac. Min.) – Location: Easterly of Richmond Road, westerly of California Avenue, southerly of Stetson Avenue and northerly of Stowe Road - 159.09 Gross Acres - Zoning: Heavy Agriculture - 10 Acre Minimum (A-2-10) - APN(s):465-060-005, 465-080-001, 465-080-002, 465-080-003, 465-080-004, 465-080-005. (Continued from 1/7/09 and 12/2/09).
- II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**
Proposal to amend the General Plan Foundation Component from Rural and Rural Community to Community Development and to amend the general plan land use designation from Estate Density Residential (RC:EDR) (2 Acre Minimum.) and Rural Mountainous (RUR:RM) (10 Acre Minimum) to Medium Density Residential (CD:MDR) (2-5 Dwelling Units per Acre).
- III. MEETING SUMMARY**
The following staff presented the subject proposal:
Project Planner, Tamara Harrison at 951-955-9721 or e-mail tharriso@rctlma.org.
- The following spoke in favor of the subject proposal:
Dennis Stafford, Applicant's Representative
- The following did not wish to speak but would like to be recorded as in favor of the subject proposal:
Sam Alhadeff, Other Interested Party, 41607 Margarita Rd., #103, Temecula, California 92591
- No one spoke in a neutral position or in opposition of the subject proposal.
- IV. CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**
NONE
- V. PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION**
The Planning Commission commented on the General Plan Amendment. If you wish to listen to the entire discussion, see Section VI below. Additionally, the comments of individual Commissioners are summarized in the Planning Director's Report and Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.
- VI. CD**
The entire discussion of this agenda item can be found on CD. For a copy of the CD, please contact Chantell Griffin, Planning Commission Secretary, at (951) 955-3251 or E-mail at cgriffin@rctlma.org.

Agenda Item No.: 7.2
Area Plan: Harvest Valley/ Winchester
Zoning District: Hemet-San Jacinto
Supervisorial District: Third
Project Planner: Tamara Harrison
Planning Commission: January 13, 2010

General Plan Amendment No. 1001
Applicant: Stonegate Development
Engineer/Representative: McKeever Eng.

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Planning Director recommends that the Board of Supervisors tentatively decline to adopt an order initiating proceedings for GPA01001 from Rural Community: Estate Density Residential to Community Development: Medium Density Residential and the Planning Commission made the comments below. The Planning Director continues to recommend that the Board of Supervisors tentatively decline to adopt an order initiating proceedings for the general plan amendment. For additional information regarding this case, see the attached Planning Department Staff Report(s).

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS TO THE PLANNING DIRECTOR:

The following comment(s) were provided by the Planning Commission to the Planning Director:

Commissioner John Roth:

Commissioner John Snell: No Comments

Commissioner John Petty: Commissioner Petty stated that the subject site is located within an area that is currently in transition due to the realignment of Highway 79 and recently approved Tract Maps in the area. Mr. Petty noted that the realignment of Highway 79 will substantially change the area. Mr. Petty stated that the 5 eastern parcels of the subject site should maintain a designation of Rural: Rural Mountainous in those areas that possess slopes of 25% or more and those areas that possess slopes of 25% or less should be initiated to Community Development: Estate Density Residential. He also commented that as a General Plan Initiation of Proceedings, the western 99 acres of the subject site should be allowed to move forward proposing Community Development: Medium Density Residential; however, there is no guarantee that the proposal will be approved.

Commissioner Jim Porras: Commissioner Porras commented that General Plan Initiation of Proceedings carries a low threshold that must be met in order to move forward; therefore, based on the justifications the applicant has submitted the case should be allowed to move forward.

Commissioner Jan Zuppardo: No Comments

Agenda Item No.: 7.2
Area Plan: Harvest Valley/ Winchester
Zoning District: Hemet- San Jacinto
Supervisorial District: Third
Project Planner: Tamara Harrison
Planning Commission: January 13, 2010
Continued from: January 7, 2009 and December 2, 2009

General Plan Amendment No 1001
E.A. Number 41831
Applicant: Stonegate Development
Engineer/Rep.: McKeever Eng.

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:

The applicant proposes to amend the General Plan Foundation Component of the subject site from Rural Community (RC) to Community Development (CD) and to amend the land use designation of the subject site from Estate Density Residential (RC:EDR) (2 acre minimum lot size) to Medium Density Residential (CD:MDR) (2-5 du/ac) for an approximately 159.09-acre parcel. The project is located southerly of Stetson Avenue, northerly of Stowe Road, easterly of Richmond Road, and westerly of California Avenue.

POTENTIAL ISSUES OF CONCERN:

The subject parcel is located in the "Winchester" community within the Harvest Valley/ Winchester area plan south of the community of Green Acres. The site is also located within the General Plan's "Highway 79 Policy Area." The site is currently surrounded by lots that are a minimum of 2 acres and larger with the majority of those lots falling within the Rural and Rural Community foundation components. Stetson Avenue currently serves as a demarcation line between Community Development designations and non-Community Development designations in the vicinity. Existing Community Development designations can also be found farther south at the community's commercial core located at the intersection of Winchester Road and Simpson Road. The proposed change is inconsistent with the existing land use pattern found in the area.

No significant change has occurred in the area since the adoption of the general plan in October of 2003 that would substantiate the request. Tract Map 30351, located to the northwest of the subject site approved 218 single-family lots (20 with a 20,000 square foot minimum lot size and 198 with a 7,200 square foot minimum lot size); however the case was approved by the Board of Supervisors in January of 2003 prior to the adoption of the general plan. Tract Map 33117, located directly north of the subject site across Stetson Avenue is a proposal for 469 single-family lots and is currently under review with the Planning Department.

The site is designated as a State Responsibility Fire Area and is subject to potential fire hazards. The safety element of the General Plan addresses these potential hazards in a number of ways including deterring building in those "high risk" areas and providing secondary public access for the areas that are proposing developments. The proposal would potentially increase the number of dwelling units that may be exposed to such

hazards and therefore, creating an inconsistency between the land use element and the safety element of the General Plan.

The site is located within the boundaries of the Multiple Species Habitat Plan (MSHCP); however, the site does not fall within a criteria cell. The site will be required to conform to additional plan wide requirements of the MSHCP such as Riparian/Riverine Policies; Specific Species Surveys, Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines (UWIG) and Narrow Endemic Plant Species Policies and Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation Analysis (DBESP) as applicable.

The current proposal is inconsistent with the General Plan's Highway 79 Policy Area. The policy area requires that residential development be proposed at 9% below the mid-point of the existing designation due to transportation infrastructure and capacity deficiencies. The policy did not include provisions to increase potential densities within the Policy Area as proposed by this amendment. A workshop was held at the regular Planning Commission meeting on September 30, 2009 in order to discuss the Highway 79 Policy area and the regular Foundation General Plan Amendments that fall within the policy area. As a result of the workshop, the Planning Commission recommended that those Foundation General Plan Amendments within the policy area be brought forward on a case by case basis in order to determine the appropriateness of each proposal and that the Highway 79 policies be reviewed during the General Plan update for potential amendments.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Director recommends that the Board of Supervisors **tentatively decline** to adopt an order initiating proceedings for General Plan Amendment No. 1001 from Rural Community: Estate Density Residential to Community Development: Medium Density Residential.

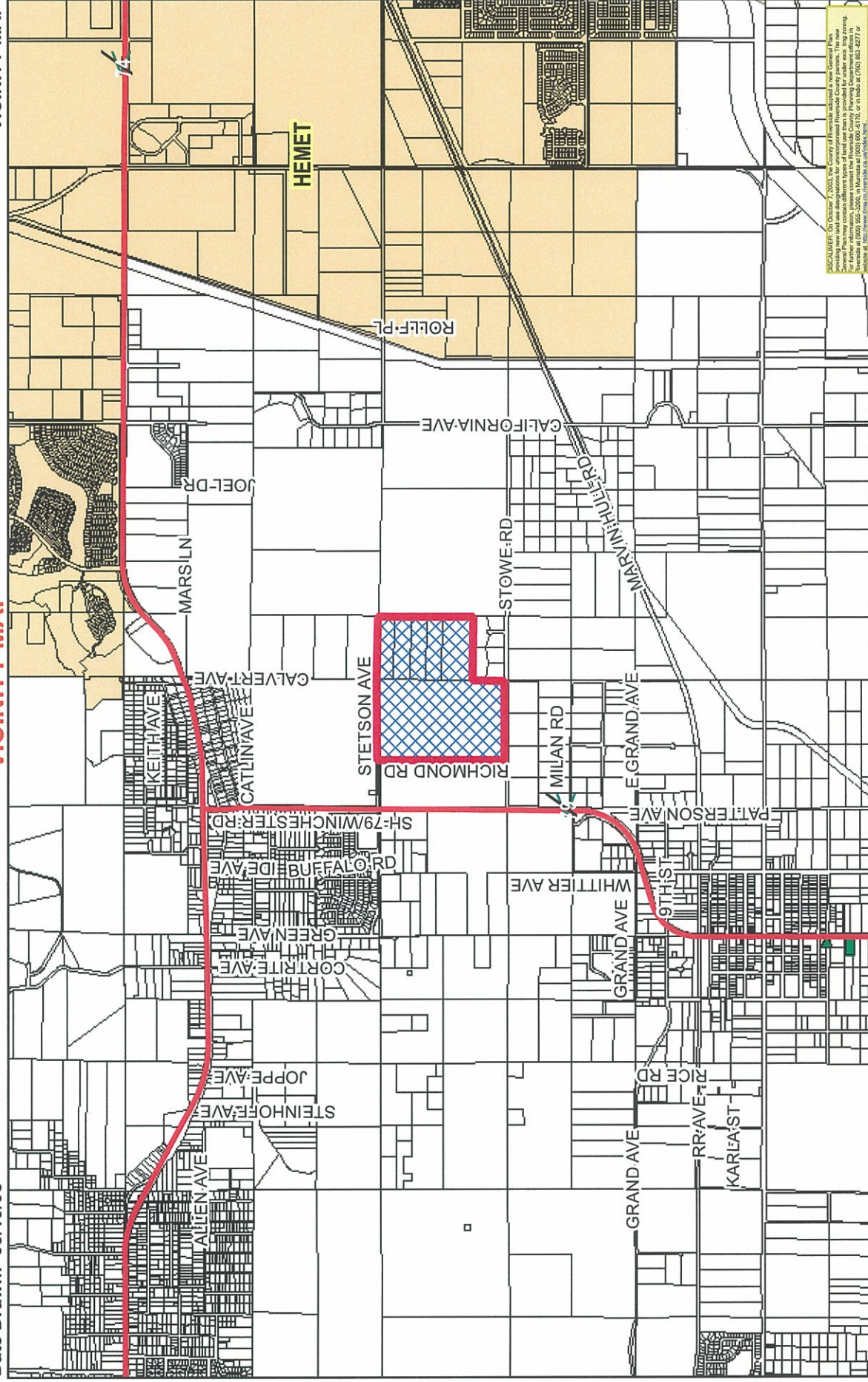
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

1. This project was filed with the Planning Department on February 14, 2008.
2. Deposit Based Fees charged for this project as of the time of staff report preparation, total \$4698.83.
3. The project site is currently designated as Assessor's Parcel Number: 465-060-005, 465-080-001, 465-080-002, 465-080-003, 465-080-004 and 465-080-005.

Supervisor Stone
District 3
Date Drawn: 03/19/08

GPA01001 VICINITY MAP

Planner: Amy Aldana
Date: 3/12/08
VICINITY MAP



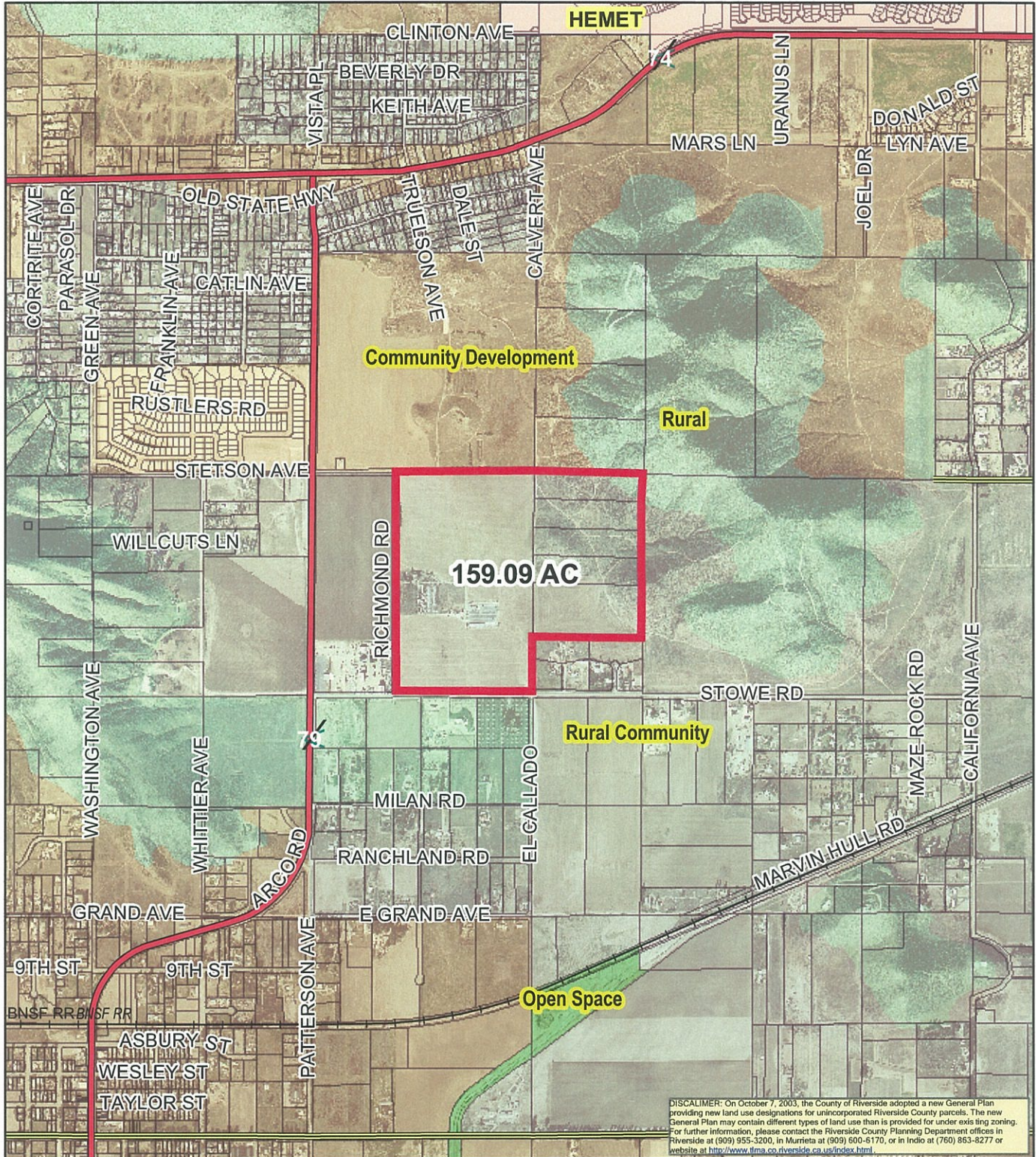
RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Zone
Area: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR2W
Section: 22 & 23

Assessors
Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas
Bros. Pg. 839 G3



DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY



DISCALIMER: On October 7, 2003, the County of Riverside adopted a new General Plan providing new land use designations for unincorporated Riverside County parcels. The new General Plan may contain different types of land use than is provided for under existing zoning. For further information, please contact the Riverside County Planning Department offices in Riverside at (951) 955-3200, in Murrieta at (909) 600-6170, or in Indio at (760) 863-8277 or website at <http://www.ftma.co.riverside.ca.us/index.html>.

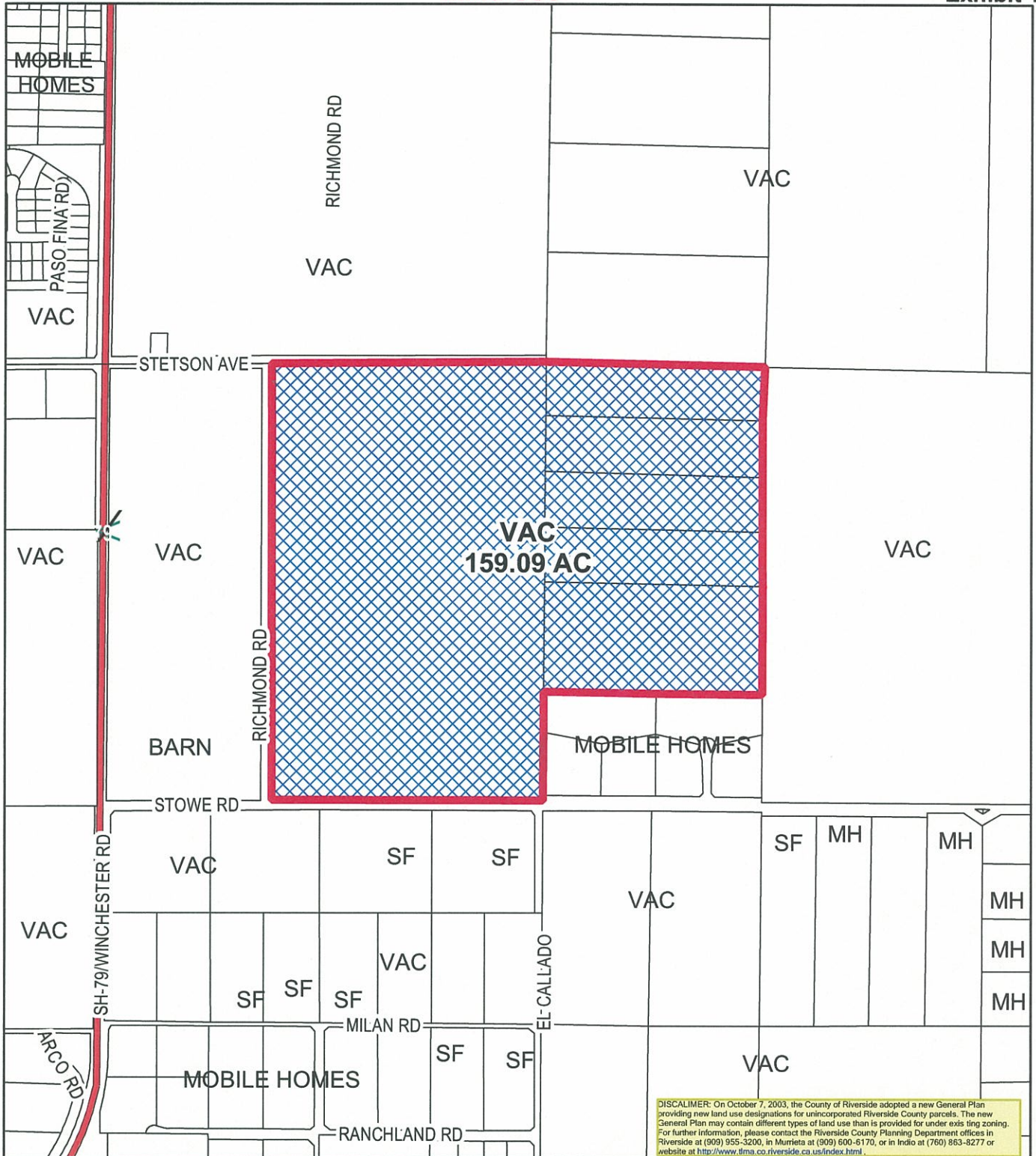
RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Area
Plan: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR2W
Section: 22 & 23



Assessors
Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas
Bros. Pg. 839 G3



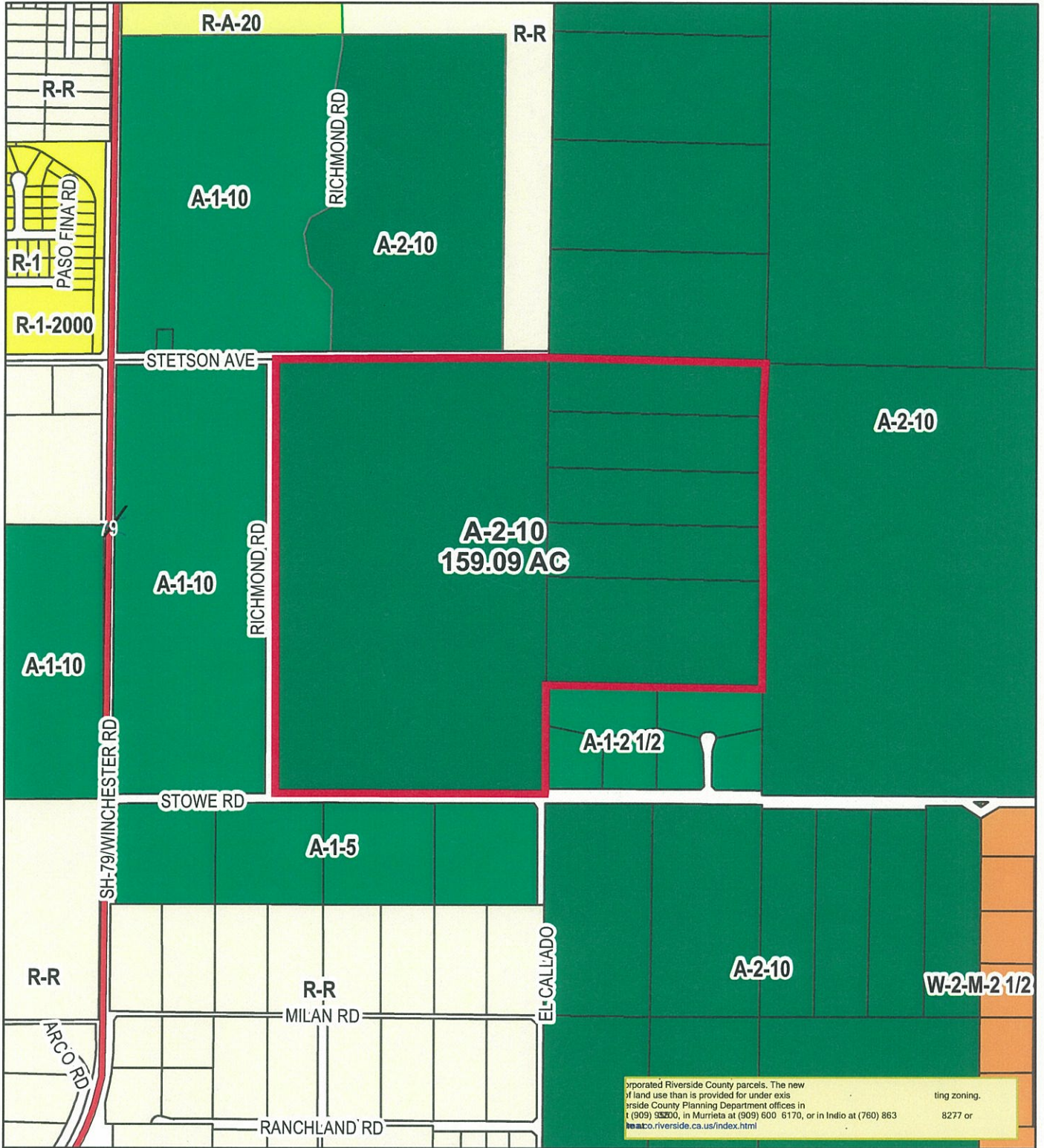


RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Zone
Area: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR2W
Section : 22 & 23



Assessors
Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas
Bros. Pg. 839 G3



Zone
Area: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR2W
Section : 22 & 23

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



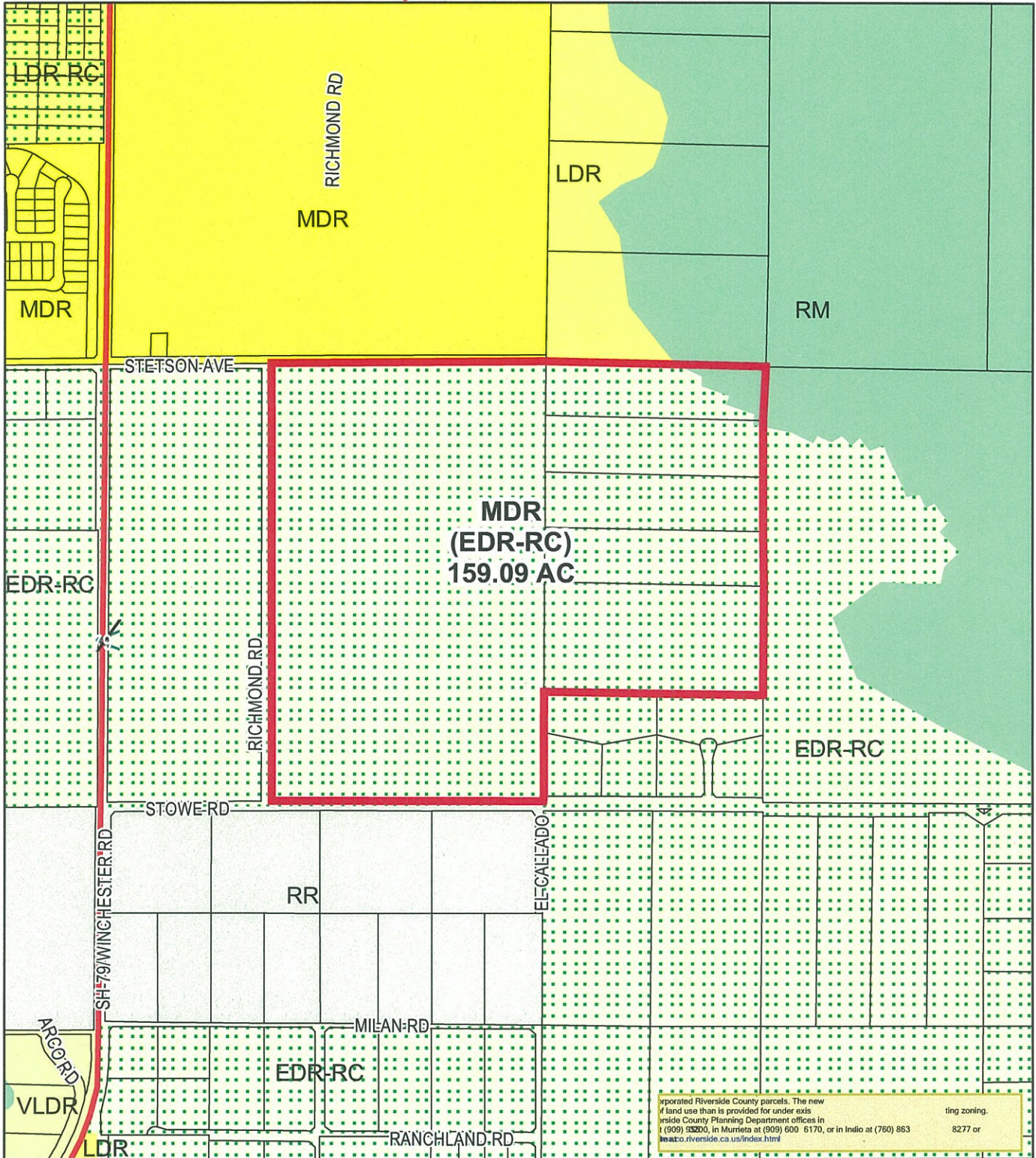
Assessors
Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas
Bros. Pg. 839 G3

Supervisor Stone
District 3
Date: 3/19/08

GPA01001

Planner: Amy Aldana
Date: 3/12/08
Exhibit 6

Proposed General Plan



incorporated Riverside County parcels. The new
of land use than is provided for under exis
Riverside County Planning Department offices in
(909) 933000, in Murrieta at (909) 600 6170, or in Indio at (760) 853
www.co.riverside.ca.us/index.html

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Area
Plan: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR2W
Section: 22 & 23



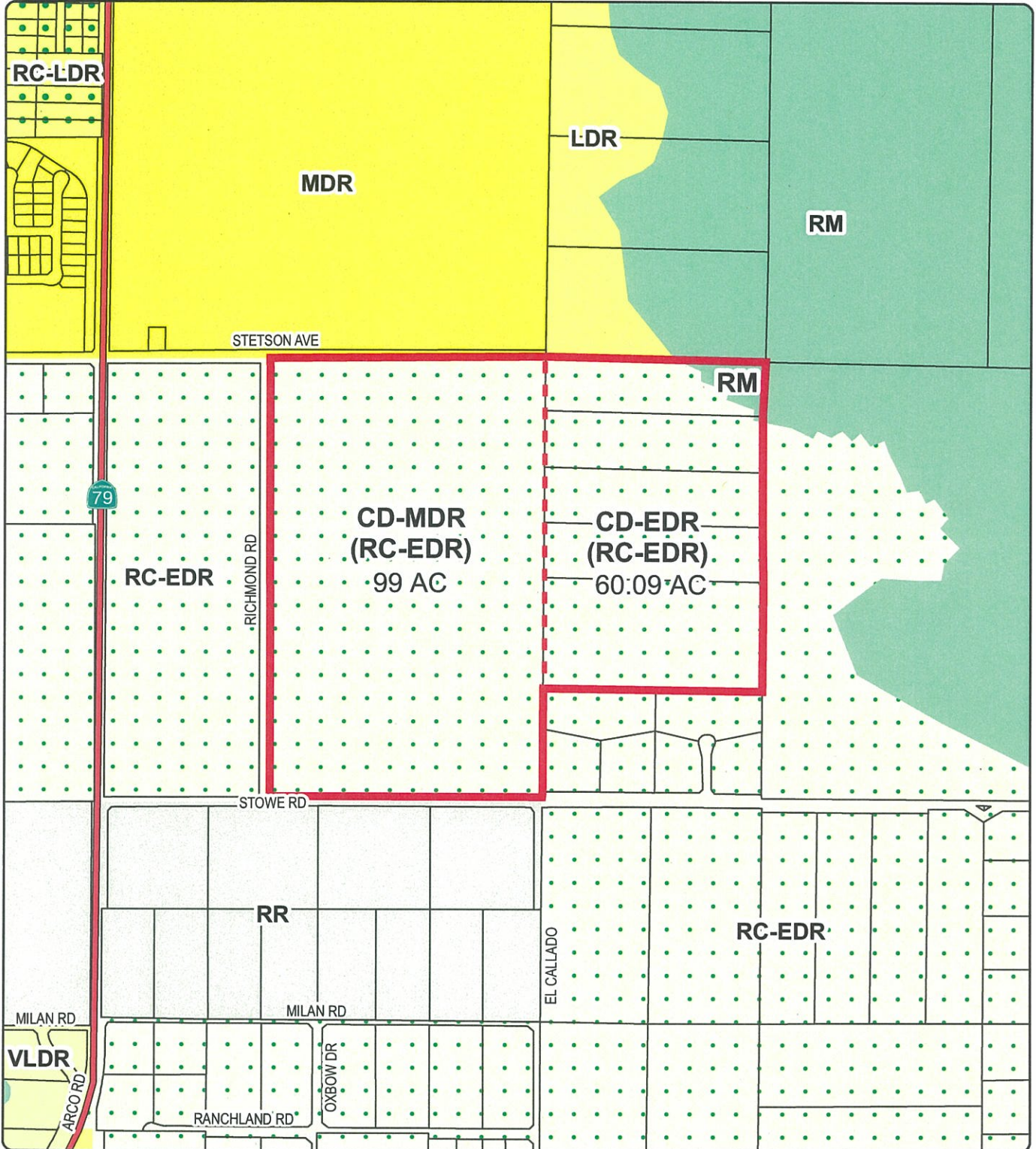
Assessors
Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas
Bros. Pg. 839 G3

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
GPA01001

Supervisor Stone
District: 3

Commissioner Petty's Recommendation

Date Drawn: 6/30/2010
Exhibit 7



Zoning Area: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR5W
Section: 22 & 23

Assessors Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas Bros. Pg. 839 G3
Edition 2009



DISCLAIMER: On October 7, 2003, the County of Riverside adopted a new General Plan providing new land use designations for unincorporated Riverside County parcels. The new General Plan may contain different types of land use than is provided for under existing zoning. For further information, please contact the Riverside County Planning Department offices in Riverside at (951) 955-3200 (Western County), or in Indio at (760) 863-8277 (Eastern County) or website at <http://www.tlma.co.riverside.ca.us/index.html>

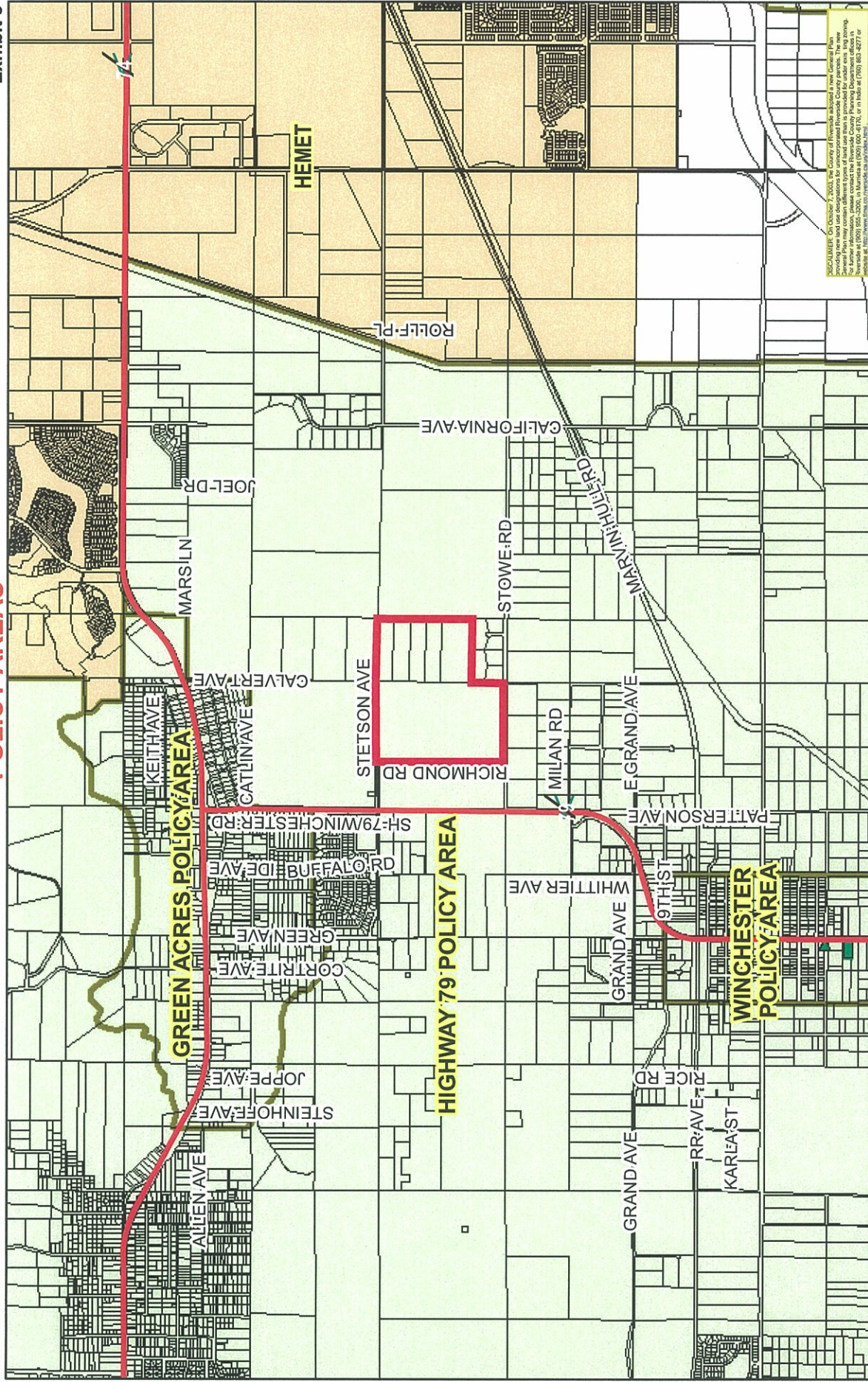
Supervisor Stone
District 3

Date Drawn: 03/19/08

GPA01001

POLICY AREAS

Planner: Amy Aldana
Date: 3/12/08
Exhibit 8



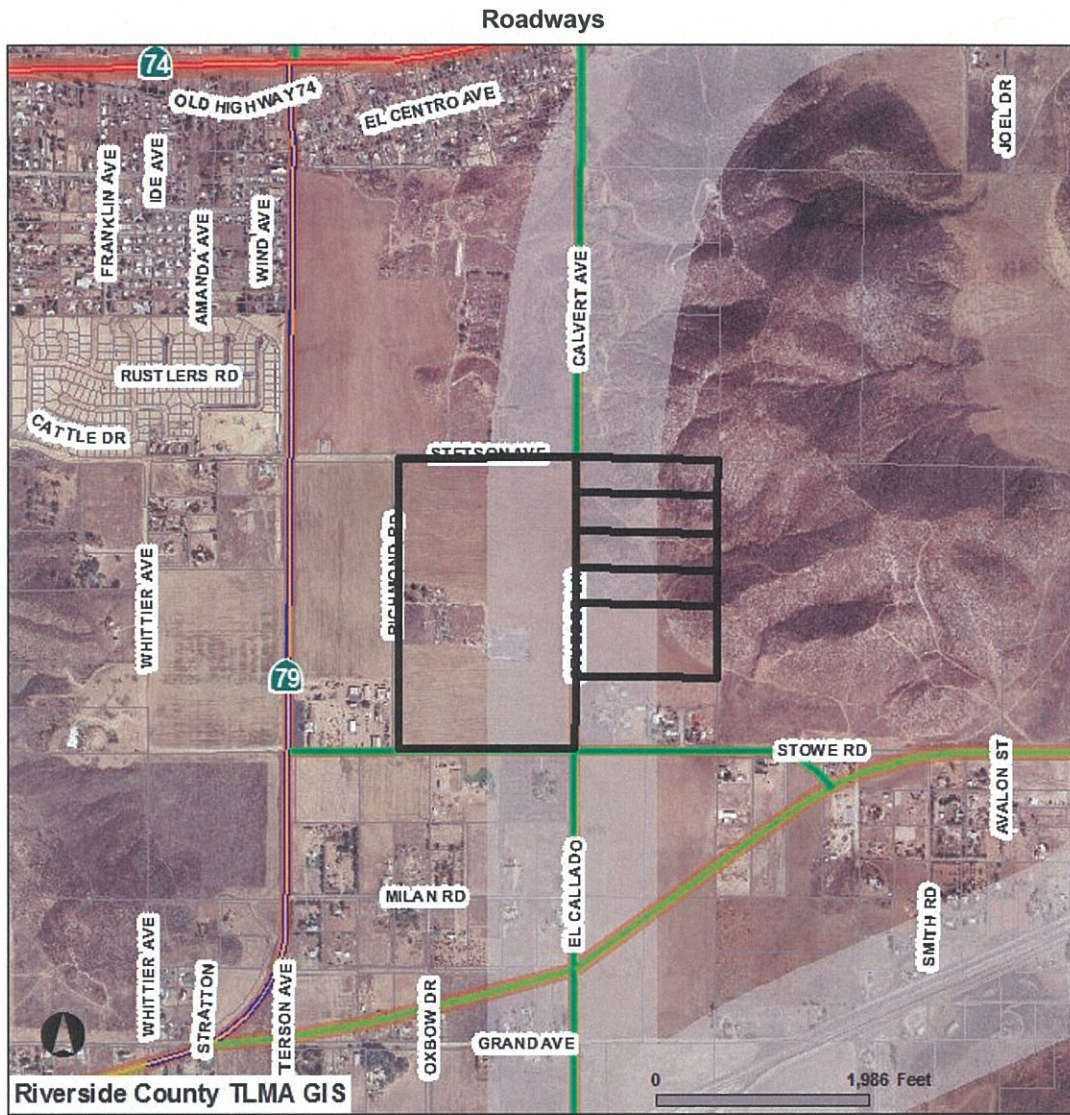
REGULATIONS: CONTACT THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE PLANNING DEPARTMENT FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE ZONING AND LAND USE REGULATIONS FOR UNINCORPORATED RIVERSIDE COUNTY PARCELS. THE NEW ZONING AND LAND USE REGULATIONS WILL BE IN EFFECT FOR UNINCORPORATED AREAS BEGINNING IN 2008. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE PLANNING DEPARTMENT AT (951) 952-2000, IN MARINA AT (951) 952-4170, OR BY EMAIL AT (951) 952-4277 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.RIVERSIDEPLANNING.COM](http://www.riversideplanning.com).

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Zone
Area: Winchester
Township/Range: T5SR2W
Section: 22 & 23

Assessors
Bk. Pg. 465-06 & 08
Thomas
Bros. Pg. 839 G3





Selected parcel(s):
 465-060-005 465-080-001 465-080-002 465-080-003 465-080-004 465-080-005

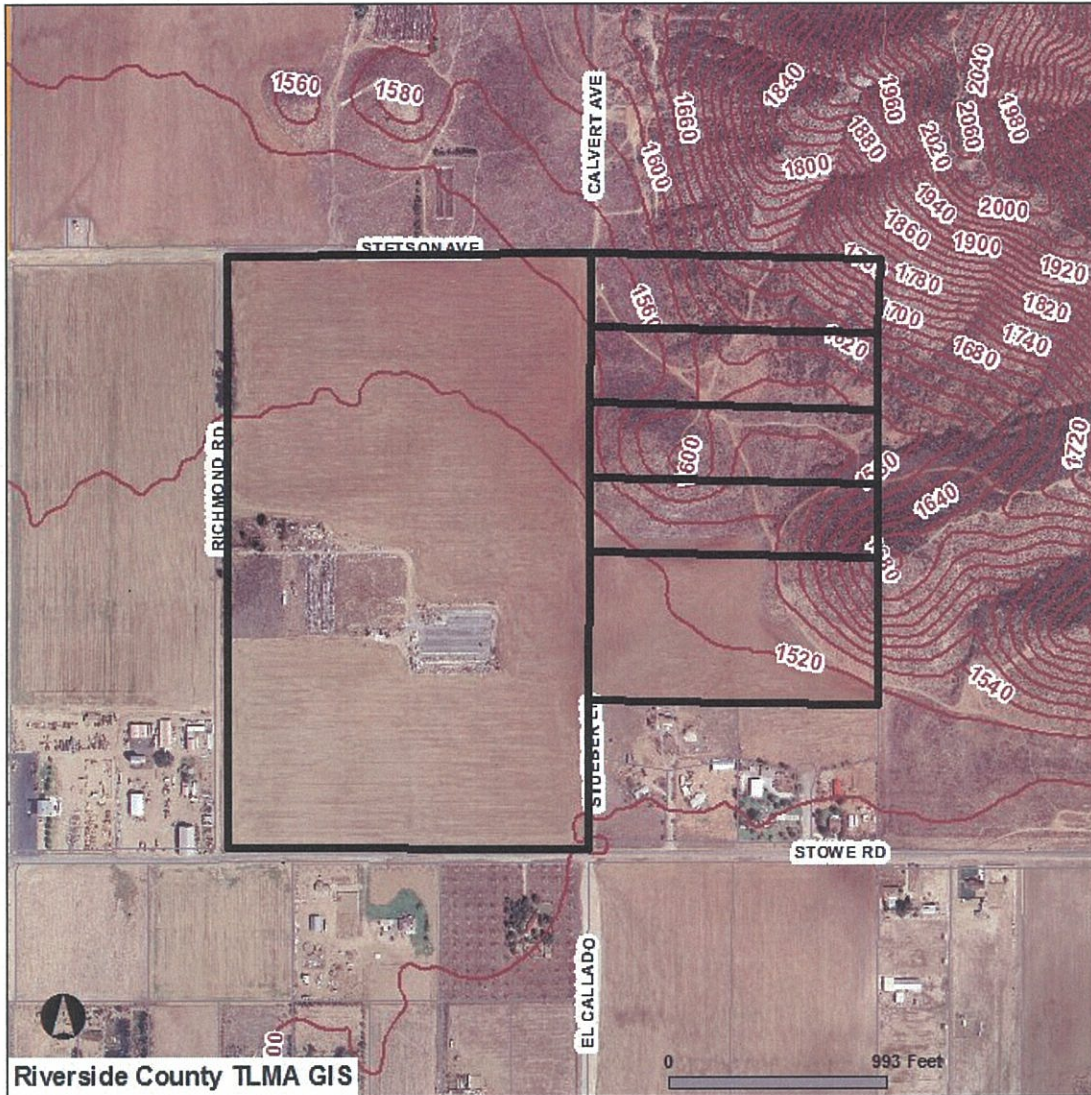
CIRCULATION ELEMENT ROADS

- SELECTED PARCEL
- N INTERSTATES
- N HIGHWAYS
- N EXPRESSWAY (184' TO 220' ROW)
- N MAJOR (118' ROW)
- N SECONDARY (100' ROW)
- N URBAN ARTERIAL (152' ROW)
- CIRCULATION ELEMENT RIGHT-OF-WAY
- CETAP CORRIDOR
- CITY
- PARCELS

IMPORTANT
 Maps and data are to be used for reference purposes only. Map features are approximate, and are not necessarily accurate to surveying or engineering standards. The County of Riverside makes no warranty or guarantee as to the content (the source is often third party), accuracy, timeliness, or completeness of any of the data provided, and assumes no legal responsibility for the information contained on this map. Any use of this product with respect to accuracy and precision shall be the sole responsibility of the user.

REPORT PRINTED ON...Tue Jul 06 09:12:00 2010
 Version 100412

Topography



Selected parcel(s):
 465-060-005 465-080-001 465-080-002 465-080-003 465-080-004 465-080-005

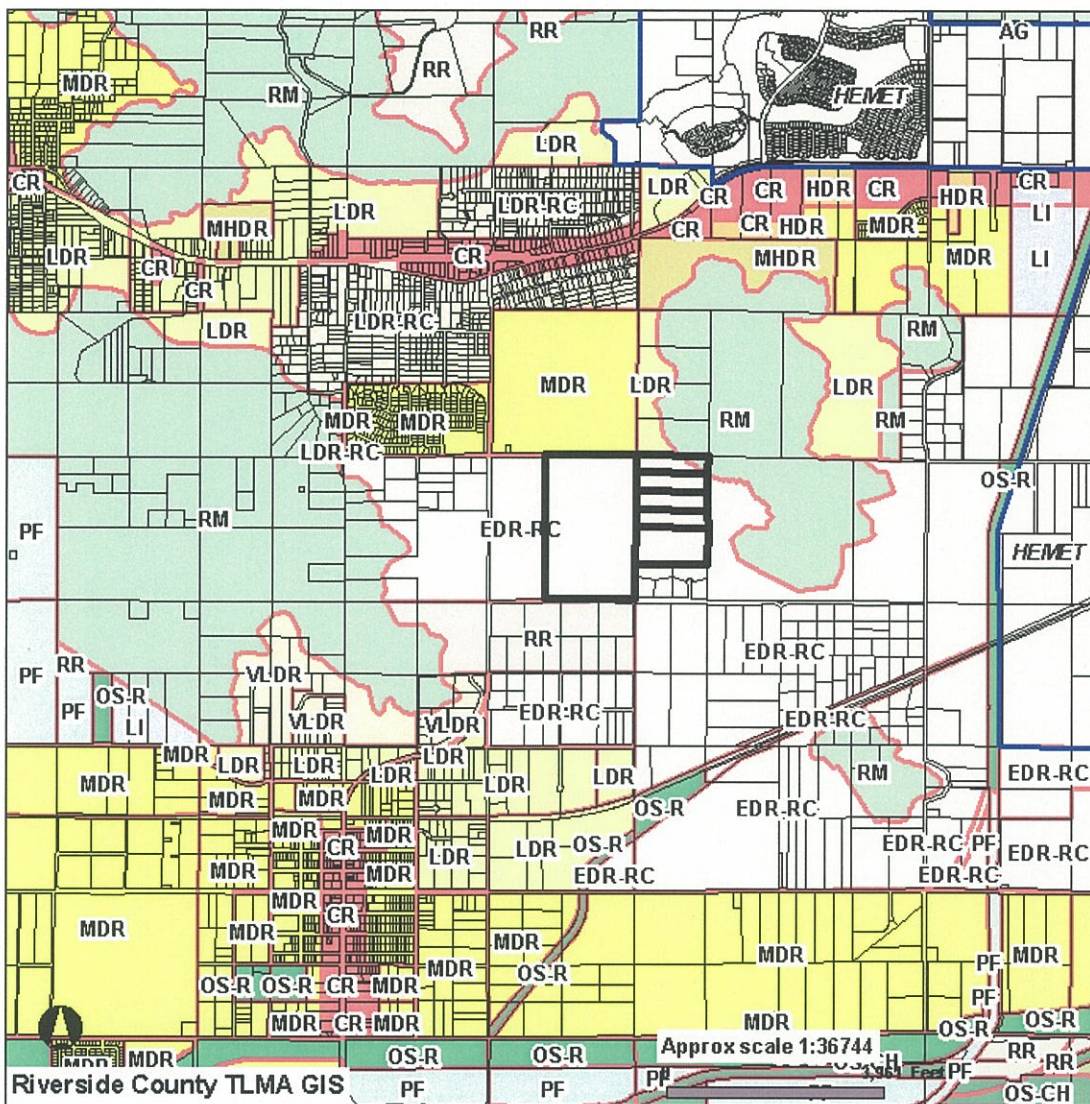
ELEVATION-CONTOUR

- SELECTED PARCEL
- N CONTOUR LINES
- N INTERSTATES
- N HIGHWAYS
- PARCELS

IMPORTANT
 Maps and data are to be used for reference purposes only. Map features are approximate, and are not necessarily accurate to surveying or engineering standards. The County of Riverside makes no warranty or guarantee as to the content (the source is often third party), accuracy, timeliness, or completeness of any of the data provided, and assumes no legal responsibility for the information contained on this map. Any use of this product with respect to accuracy and precision shall be the sole responsibility of the user.

REPORT PRINTED ON...Tue Jul 06 09:08:41 2010
 Version 100412

RIVERSIDE COUNTY GIS



Selected parcel(s):
 465-060-005 465-080-001 465-080-002 465-080-003 465-080-004 465-080-005

LANDUSE

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| SELECTED PARCEL | PARCELS | AG - AGRICULTURE | CR - COMMERCIAL RETAIL |
| EDR-RC - ESTATE RESIDENTIAL-RC | HDR - HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL | LDR - LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL | LDR-RC - LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL-RC |
| LI - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL | MDR - MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL | MHDR - MEDIUM HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL | OS-C - CONSERVATION |
| OS-CH - CONSERVATION HABITAT | OS-R - OPEN SPACE RECREATION | PF - PUBLIC FACILITIES | RM - RURAL MOUNTAINOUS |
| RR - RURAL RESIDENTIAL | VLDR - VERY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL | CITY BOUNDARY | |

IMPORTANT

This information is made available through the Riverside County Geographic Information System. The information is for reference purposes only. It is intended to be used as base level information only and is not intended to replace any recorded documents or other public records. Contact appropriate County Department or Agency if necessary. Reference to recorded documents and public records may be necessary and is advisable.

REPORT PRINTED ON...Tue Oct 14 09:56:04 2008

February 13, 2008

Justification for General Plan Amendment

Stonegate Development APN: 465-060-005; 465-008-001,002,003,004, & 005

The 159 +/- acres involved in this application are in the immediate path of development in the Winchester Valley. Tentative Tract 33117 with 469 medium density lots is adjacent to the north and Tract 30351 with homes under construction is 500 +/- to the northwest.

The site is physically suited for medium density residential use. It is generally flat, draining to the south. The hilly areas in the east side of the property will remain in the rural mountainous designation.

The two alternative locations for Highway 79 relocation are adjacent to the property and just east of the site. Proposed Highway 79 is a six lane freeway that will change the character of the entire Winchester area from agricultural to urban.

Utility infrastructure can readily be extended through the site. Sewer will be extended along the west boundary with Tract 33117 and water will be extended along the north. Dry utilities are available 500' west in Winchester Road, and can easily be extended through the property.

The properties are neither in an agricultural preserve nor in a Western Riverside County MSHCP area plan or cell group. The properties are neither in a fault zone nor in a potential liquefaction area, nor are they in a high fire hazard area.

In summary the site is perfectly suited for medium density residential uses.

ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

DEDICATED TO ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE LAND USE



January 4, 2009

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND FACSIMILE

Riverside County Planning Commission
ATTN: Mike Harrod
4080 Lemon St.
Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Item 6.0, General Plan Amendment Initiation Proceedings (January 7, 2009)

Dear Chairperson and Commission Members:

The Endangered Habitats League (EHL) wishes to express some general concerns about the landowner-initiated GPA process and then comment about specific items on the January 7 agenda.

General concerns are as follows:

- Given the importance of the Five-Year Update Cycle, there should have been more outreach to interested stakeholders for both the landowner specific and for the County-initiated GPA 960 process.
- There is insufficient coordination between GPA 960 and landowner-initiated GPAs. For example, in the Coachella Valley, 13,000 acres of urban conversion is being initiated through the landowner process, with thousands more acres of such conversion being considered in GPA 960. Landowner initiation is proceeding absent an understanding of the "big picture" of what amount of additional Community Development land is actually needed or a meaningful discussion of where, from an infrastructure and services standpoint, it might best be sited. This non-comprehensive approach defeats the purpose of the Five-Year Cycle.
- The 140 landowner-initiated GPAs are not being presented to the public in a holistic manner, for example in workshops, even though they have the potential to erode the Foundation system.
- Some decisions to date reflect a lack of planning discipline, such as GPA 996 (600 acres of remote Rural land in the Pass/National Forest area, of high fire hazard, initiated as a conversion to Rural Community estates).

Comments on specific items are as follows, with our strongest concern over Item 6.7, GPA 914 (Lake Mathews/Gavilan), which has precedent-setting MSHCP implications.

Item 6.3, GPA 943 (Winchester)

Concur with the staff recommendation for non-initiation, as the proposal would violate an established boundary of Community Development and Rural Community.

Item 6.4, GPA 973 (Winchester)

Disagree with the staff recommendation to change Rural Community to Community Development (Estates) prior to a coherent plan for urbanization. It appears premature.

Item 6.5, GPA 1001 (Winchester)

Concur with the staff recommendation for non-initiation, as the proposal would violate an established boundary of Community Development and Rural Community.

Item 6.7, GPA 914 (Lake Mathews/Gavilan)

Strongly disagree with the staff recommendation to change 46 acres of unparcelized Rural land to 2-acre Rural Community. The property is surrounded on 2 sides by similarly unparcelized Rural land, and at the southeast corner touches a large area of Open Space: Conservation. As Rural, the parcel now forms a good edge for the existing Rural Community. There is no planning justification – such as correcting a “spot zone” – for any change. Borders are always needed between Rural Community and Rural, and this one isn’t “broken.” Fire hazard also argues strongly against change.

Furthermore, along with adjacent, unsubdivided properties to the south and east, this parcel is part of a *large block of high quality wildlife habitat*. From the aerial, it appears to be highly important Riversidean sage scrub. Indeed, this entire block of land, including the area of the proposed GPA, *is overlain with MSHCP criteria cells*. The analysis contained in the staff report is wholly inadequate from the perspective of the MSHCP, with little sense of preserve needs. For example, there is no discussion of the potential for clustering at different density levels to achieve MSHCP as well as community compatibility goals.

However, any increase in General Plan intensity from the current Rural will make it more difficult to achieve the vital public purposes and infrastructure mitigation obligations of the MSHCP. The County should not “shoot itself in the foot” with *unjustified* conversion of Rural land, and thus set a precedent for uncalled for undermining of the MSHCP.

Item 6.7, GPA 991 (San Jacinto Valley/Sage Rd)

Disagree with the staff recommendation for replanning to partial Community Development but *agree* with placing the southern portion in Open Space: Conservation. Clearly, the designations on this 300-acre property need to be cleaned up, but it is unclear why the same benefits could not be achieved without introducing urbanization into an

area of intact Rural, Rural Community and Agriculture, and which now contains large expanses of unparcelized natural open space.

The property's southern half is overlain with an MSCP criteria cell and staff needs to be more definitive as to whether its modification of the proposed GPA will result in successful MSHCP assembly. If the Commission does accept the staff recommendation, it is crucial that development not create a "hole in the donut" in the southwest border, and that, as staff appropriately recommends, this portion is replaced with Open Space: Conservation. Consistency with on and off-site open space would thus be achieved.

Thank you for considering our views, and we look forward to working with you as the Fire-Year Update Cycle proceeds.

With best wishes for the New Year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Silver, MD", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Silver, MD
Executive Director

Electronic cc: Ron Goldman
Carolyn Luna
Charles Landry

November 30, 2009

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND FACSIMILE

Riverside County Planning Commission
ATTN: Mike Harrod
County of Riverside
4080 Lemon St., 9th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

**RE: Item 5.0, General Plan Amendment Initiation Proceedings
(December 2, 2009)**

Dear Chair and Commission Members:

The Endangered Habitats League (EHL) appreciates the opportunity to comment on these landowner-initiated GPA proposals, which once again call for planning rigor and retaining the integrity of the Foundation system.

Item 5.1, GPA 1033 (Southwest Area Plan)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. Important new information is contained in the staff report that adds to the many compelling reasons to deny initiation. Specifically, according to the Rancho California Water District, the new agricultural uses would face a water shortage (and presumably further stress existing farms and vineyards), polluted runoff would pose a threat to drinking water quality in the Vail Lake reservoir, and there is a shortage of sewer treatment capacity.

As noted previously, this proposal to extend the Citrus Vineyard Policy Area to Vail Lake is wholly unsuited for this locale. As shown in the thorough staff report, it would introduce a type and intensity of development far in excess of that anticipated by the General Plan's Vail Lake Policy Area and the policies of SWAP. The small farm and commercial development model of Citrus Vineyard has no relevance to the biological, viewshed, and recreational imperatives of Vail Lake. No changed circumstances justify this wholesale change. A massive upzoning to 2-acre lots would introduce large scale residential uses into a high fire hazard area, decimate the biological resources needed for MSCHP assembly, and constitute a leapfrog pattern of development apart from services and infrastructure. Finally, according to the Planning Department, "The proposed amendment also creates an internal inconsistency among the Elements of the General Plan, particularly the Multipurpose Open Space Element and the Safety Element."

Item 5.2, GPA 985 (Elsinore)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. This constrained site has serious and unresolved flood hazard issues, and the claim to provide needed

affordable housing does not stand up to scrutiny, as documented in the staff report. Furthermore, the change would likely interfere with MSCHP assembly and should not proceed unless and until facilitation of a reserve segment can be documented.

Item 5.3, GPA 1000 (Southwest Area Plan)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. Conversion of this 379-acre rural location to Community Development/Specific Plan would defy all relevant planning principles. It would urbanize an intact rural area discontinuous from urban infrastructure and services, maximize greenhouse gas emissions, and, contrary to the recommendation of the Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force, place development in a rugged, high fire hazard location. No new circumstance justifies this Foundation change, which would thus conflict with the Administrative Element of the General Plan. According to the staff report, this increase in intensity “would be contrary to the existing character and land use pattern in the area.”

Item 5.4, GPA 998 (French Valley)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. The French Valley presents difficult challenges for MSHCP assembly, and this proposal to convert Rural land to Community Development within a Criteria Cell would prejudice preserve assembly. The steep slopes also present landslide hazards. For these reasons, the project could, according to staff, create General Plan inconsistencies involving the Land Use Multi-Purpose Open Space, and Safety Elements. Surrounding parcels are intact Rural, and no changed circumstances justify piecemeal urbanization of an area generally recognized as an important community separator.

Item 5.5, GPA 977 (Mead Valley/Elsinore)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. This is a massive proposal to redesignate 405 acres of Rural Mountainous and Rural Residential to Rural Community 1-acre lots. Discontinuous from infrastructure and services, and not responding to changed circumstances, the proposal utterly lacks planning merit. Indeed, due to public safety and MSHCP conflicts, staff concluded that:

This amendment would potentially create inconsistency between the Land Use Element and the Safety Element by increasing density in an area with steep slopes, high fire hazard and no nearby fire stations, limited access, and subject to flooding. Increasing the density/intensity of allowable land use on the site, as proposed by this amendment, would also exacerbate potential conflicts between such uses and the conservation requirements as set forth in the MSHCP, causing inconsistencies between the Land Use Element and the Multi-Purpose Open Space Element of the General Plan.

Item 5.6, GPA 1043 (Southwest Area Plan)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. This 629-acre property in rugged terrain is remote from infrastructure and services and is at high fire risk. Uses

should not be intensified here. Furthermore, the Riverside County Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force made the following recommendation:

Update the Riverside County General Plan and complete consistency zoning actions to limit residential growth within or adjacent to high fire hazard areas.

As staff notes, the proposal would be inconsistent with the General Plan vision for the area, create internal inconsistencies in the General Plan, and reflects no changed circumstances.

Item 5.7, GPA 988 (Elsinore)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. This proposal responds to no changed circumstances. It would intensify residential uses within a very high fire hazard area, contrary to the recommendation of the Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force. The current designation correctly reflects the viewshed and buffer characteristics of the area, and should not be altered. According to staff, "Increasing the intensity of uses on the site could also potentially create inconsistencies amongst the Land Use element and the Safety element of the General Plan."

Item 5.8, GPA 943 (Winchester)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate, as the proposal would violate an established boundary of Community Development and Rural Community.

Item 5.9, GPA 1001 (Winchester)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate, as the proposal would violate an established boundary of Community Development and Rural Community.

Item 5.10, GPA 921 (Menifee Valley/Sun City)

Disagree with staff recommendation for initiation. This 78-acre Rural property is in an area previously identified in the General Plan for its rural character and it may function as a "community separator." No significant new circumstances justify a foundation change to Community Development. *Indeed, with the incorporation of Menifee, any urbanization should proceed over time through an orderly process of annexation rather than through piecemeal approvals in the unincorporated area.* No absorption analysis has demonstrated the need for more urban-designated land in the region, and even if so, there is no indication that this site is optimal from a greenhouse gas or planning perspective.

Item 5.11 GPA 931 (French Valley)

Concur with staff recommendation to decline to initiate. The proposed density is inconsistent with the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission's Basic Compatibility Criteria. The site forms a clear demarcation between Rural and

Community Development, and no changed circumstance is present to justify altering that boundary. No absorption analysis has demonstrated the need for more urban-designated land in the region, and even if so, there is no indication that this site is optimal from a greenhouse gas or planning perspective. Piecemeal urbanization should be rejected.

Thank you for considering our views, and we look forward to working with you as the Five-Year Update proceeds.

Sincerely,

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