

## 4. *Environmental Setting*

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this section is to provide, pursuant to provisions of the CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines, a “description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, from both a local and a regional perspective.” The environmental setting will provide a set of baseline physical conditions that will serve as a tool from which the lead agency will determine the significance of environmental impacts resulting from the SBRA Project.

### **4.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

#### **4.2.1 Regional Location**

The SBRA Project is located in the northwestern portion of the City of Lake Forest. Lake Forest is surrounded by the City of Irvine to the west; Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park and an unincorporated area of Orange County to the north; the City of Mission Viejo to the east and south; and the Cities of Laguna Hills and Laguna Woods to the south. Terrain in the City ranges from the Saddleback Valley in the southern part of the City, to low hills in the north that lead up to the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains further north of the City. Much of the City has a gentle southwest slope, with elevations ranging from approximately 300 feet above mean sea level (amsl) at the southwestern corner of the City to approximately 1,500 feet at the northern end of the City. Much of the City is developed with residential uses; commercial uses are concentrated near Interstate 5 (I-5) at the southern end of the City, State Route (SR) 241 (Toll Road) in the northern part of the City, and along three major southwest-northeast arterial roadways: Bake Parkway, Lake Forest Drive, and El Toro Road.



#### **4.2.2 Regional Planning Considerations**

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a council of governments representing Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties. SCAG is a regional planning agency and serves as a forum for addressing regional issues concerning transportation, the economy, community development and the environment. Policies and programs adopted by SCAG to achieve regional objectives are expressed in its Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG). Some of these policies are advisory in nature. SCAG also serves as the regional clearinghouse for projects requiring environmental documentation under federal and state law. In this role, SCAG reviews proposed development and infrastructure projects to analyze their impacts on regional planning programs.

### **4.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

Below is a description of the project's local environmental setting in general, and in relation to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. These two resource areas were identified in the Modified Initial Study as requiring analysis in this DSEIR. The environmental setting for all other impacts categories is addressed in the Modified Initial Study and OSA PEIR.

## 4. Environmental Setting

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### 4.3.1 Location and Land Use

The project site is bounded by Borrego Canyon Wash on the northwest, Bake Parkway and existing business park development on the south, the State Route 241 (241 Toll Road) to the northeast, and an Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) reservoir site on the east. Access to the project site is currently provided by Bake Parkway from the south and the current terminus of Rancho Parkway from the east.

The project site was partially graded in conjunction with the prior commercial/industrial “Baker Ranch Area Plan” entitlement and remains undeveloped except for a number of small structures related to a nursery that occupies the northwestern portion of the overall property. There is also an approximately 13-acre paved area used primarily for storage of recreational vehicles, north of Bake Parkway and west of Baffin Bay Drive (Baker Ranch RV Storage). Approximately 50 percent of the site has previously been graded, primarily the eastern and southern portions, including the vehicle storage facility. The remainder of the project site is primarily agricultural with remnants of avocado orchards and an ongoing wholesale/retail nursery operation. There are a number of buildings associated with the nursery operation, including a sales office, shade structures, portable agricultural chemical storage buildings, a cluster of maintenance buildings, and a vehicle storage area near the southerly end of the facility. There are also two occupied residences, one located on a small hill near the central portion of the nursery or the northwestern portion of the overall site, and a second located on an elevated area northeast of the nursery and somewhat more central to the overall site. Each residence has several small outbuildings and storage areas. Work is ongoing for the extension of Alton Parkway between Towne Centre Drive on the northeast, through and along the entire length of the project site to Commercentre Drive. The remainder of Alton Parkway extending from Commercentre Drive to Irvine Boulevard west of the site is outside of the jurisdiction of the City and is being constructed by the County of Orange.

The project site is generally surrounded by business park development and undeveloped open space. The commercial areas of the Foothill Ranch Planned Community are located to the north and northeast of the SBRA project site, immediately north of the 241 Toll Road. Existing business park developments, including Pacific Commercentre and Baker Ranch, are located at the northwestern edge and east and south of the site. The open space to the northwest is currently owned by the federal government. Most of this area remains natural open space. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) maintains navigational aids within a small portion of the area and has agreements with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding use of the remainder of the property. The FBI uses the remaining infrastructure (e.g., roads and bunkers) in the open space for agent training. The former MCAS El Toro is located west of the project site. A large portion of the area, which is still under federal agency control, consists of regionally significant open space and is part of the County of Orange’s Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). Existing IRWD water reservoirs are located on a hill along the eastern edge of the community.

### 4.3.2 General Plan and Zoning

The site’s existing General Plan land use designations consist of Mixed-Use (MU), Low Density Residential (LDR), Low-Medium Density Residential (L-MDR), Medium Density Residential (MDR), and Open Space (OS). The intent of the MU designation is to provide for a mixture of commercial, office, and residential use in the same building on the same parcel of land, or within the same area. Allowable uses are commercial retail and office; and low-medium, medium, and high density residential. The intent of the LDR designation is to provide for detached single-family dwelling units and mobile homes. The designation allows up to seven dwelling units per acre with an average of 3.2 persons per dwelling unit. The intent of the L-MDR designation is to provide for detached and attached single-family dwelling units, mobile homes and multi-family dwelling units, including duplexes, townhomes, condominiums, apartments, and cooperatives. The designation allows up to 15 dwelling units per net acre with an average of 3.2 persons per dwelling unit. The intent of the

## 4. Environmental Setting

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MDR designation is to provide for single-family dwelling units and multi-family dwellings including duplexes, townhomes, condominiums, apartments, and cooperatives. The designation allows up to 25 dwelling units per net acre with an average of 2.0 persons per dwelling unit. The intent of the OS designation is to provide for private open space and facilities for active and passive recreational activities such as lakes, club houses, and athletic/sports facilities. (City of Lake Forest 1994)

Moreover, State CEQA Guidelines, section 15130(d) state that “A pertinent discussion of cumulative impacts contained in [a] previously certified EIR [ ] may be incorporated by reference pursuant to the provisions for tiering and program EIRs. No further cumulative impact analysis is required when a project is consistent with a general, specific, master, or comparable programmatic plan where the lead agency determined that the regional or area-wide cumulative impacts of the proposed project have already been adequately addressed, as defined in Section 15152(f), in a Certified EIR for that plan.”

The site’s zoning is Baker Ranch Planned Community (PC 7). The purpose of PC zoned districts in the City of Lake Forest is to provide “the authority, regulations and procedures whereby large land areas can be planned, zoned, developed and administered as individual integrated communities” (City of Lake Forest 2011, Section 9.112.010).

The site’s current zoning was the result of a process that began in 1999 with the closure of the MCAS El Toro. The process led to the creation of a land use study analyzing an 800-acre Opportunities Study Area (OSA) in the City of Lake Forest. The OSA was divided into 7 sites. Site 1 covered the Shea/Baker Ranch property. In 2006, a Program EIR was prepared to analyze the proposed land use changes associated with the OSA project, which revised the property’s zoning from zones which permitted business park uses to zones that accommodate residential uses. In June 2008, the City certified the PEIR in connection with the amendment of the General Plan for the Opportunities Study Area. In July 2010, the City approved an Addendum to the PEIR along with a General Plan Amendment, Zone Change, and Development Agreement reflecting the land uses described in the proposed Shea/Baker Ranch Area Plan (AP 2-11-1732).



The project is generally surrounded by light industrial and business park (BP) land use designations to the east and south; light industrial, mixed-use, and commercial designations to the north. Land west of the site in the City of Irvine is designated Habitat Preserve in the City of Irvine General Plan (City of Irvine 2006).

### 4.3.3 Climate and Air Quality

The project site is located approximately 11 miles inland from the Orange County coast, within the south-central portion of the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB). The SoCAB incorporates approximately 12,000 square miles within San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, and Orange Counties. The climate in the SoCAB is mild, tempered by cool ocean breezes. Temperatures are normally mild with rare extremes above 100°F or below freezing. Precipitation is typically 9 to 15 inches annually in the SoCAB. Pollutants originating in Orange County are transported by the daytime on-shore air flow, where they react to form ozone some distance from where the primary pollutants are emitted. The SoCAB, which is managed by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), is designated as nonattainment for O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and lead (Los Angeles County only) under the California and National AAQS and nonattainment for NO<sub>2</sub> under the California AAQS. Nonattainment refers to the fact that the federal and state ambient air quality standards are violated in the region. An air quality analysis was performed for the project and the results are discussed in Section 5.1, *Air Quality*, of this DSEIR.

## 4. Environmental Setting

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### 4.4 ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines states that cumulative impacts shall be discussed where they are significant. It further states that this discussion shall reflect the level and severity of the impact and the likelihood of occurrence, but not in as great a level of detail as that necessary for the project alone. Section 15355 of the Guidelines defines cumulative impacts to be "...two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." Cumulative impacts represent the change caused by the incremental impact of a project when added to other proposed or committed projects in the vicinity.

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15130 (b)(1)) state that the information utilized in an analysis of cumulative impacts should come from one of two sources, either:

- A. A list of past, present and probable future projects producing related cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; or
- B. A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

With regard to all resources and thresholds listed in Chapter 8 of this DSEIR, the City has determined that the cumulative impacts in those areas have been adequately addressed in the OSA PEIR and no further cumulative impact analysis is required for those areas. Specifically, the City determined that, on the basis of the information in the Modified Initial Study, all of the cumulative impacts for areas noted in Chapter 8 of this DSEIR have been examined at a sufficient level of detail in the OSA PEIR to enable those effects to be mitigated or avoided by site-specific revisions, the imposition of the conditions or other means in connection with the approval of the SBRA project (State CEQA Guidelines § 15130(d).)

With regard to the thresholds not scoped out of this DSEIR, the cumulative impact analyses contained in this DSEIR use a combination of both methods A and B, with the General Plan projections approach utilized most often, based on adopted growth forecasts through the SBRA Project buildout year. The General Plan projections include buildout of the adjacent cities' general plans, such as the Great Park project in the adjacent City of Irvine, in addition to the City of Lake Forest. However, the General Plan projections approach has been supplemented in this DSEIR where recent general plan amendments have been approved since adoption of the most recent growth forecasts. Table 4-1 provides a list of approved and pending projects within the City of Lake Forest.

**Table 4-1**  
**List of Cumulative Projects**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Project Name and (Project Location)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Status (as of 1/23/12)</b>
1	The Pinnacle (OSA Site 6) (Northerly terminus of Peachwood)	Development of 85 single-family homes on 24.6 gross acres.	Application submitted and under review.
2	Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building (26882 Towne Centre Drive)	Construction of a new medical office building totaling 36,022 square feet in two phases: first phase 21,531 square feet and second phase of 14,491 square feet.	Approved; no building permits issued.

## 4. Environmental Setting

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<b>Number</b>	<b>Project Name and (Project Location)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Status (as of 1/23/12)</b>
3	Portola Center (OSA Site 2) <i>(Generally located at the corner of Glenn Ranch Road and Saddleback Ranch Road)</i>	Development of up to 930 homes and 32,000 square feet of commercial use with three public parks on 227.8 gross acres.	Application submitted and under review.
4	Serrano Summit (OSA Site 3/IRWD Property) <i>(20996 Marin)</i>	Subdivision of 99 acres for residential development, a Civic Center site, and retention of existing water operation facilities.	Application submitted and under review.
5	Montessori School <i>(29000 Portola Parkway)</i>	To establish a new school and day care facility totaling by converting a former 6,400 square-foot retail garden center and adding a new 3,250 square-foot building. (Total 9,650 square feet)	Approved; no building permits issued.
6	Sports Park (a portion is OSA Site 4) <i>(Southwest of the intersection of Portola Parkway and El Toro Road)</i>	Development of a sports park on 90 gross acres that conceptually could consist: up to six baseball/softball fields, five soccer/multi-use fields, two playgrounds; a 30,000-square foot community center, small amphitheatre next to the center, and associated parking, seating, trail connections, lighting, and restroom facilities.	EIR certified on April 19, 2011; pending permits and funding.
7	Whisler Ranch (OSA Site 5) <i>(Northwestern corner of Osterman Road and Regency Lane)</i>	Subdivision of 11.84 acres of undeveloped land for 68 single-family homes.	Currently under construction.
8	Alton Parkway Extension (County portion) <i>(Alton Parkway from Irvine Boulevard to Commercentre Drive)</i>	Extension of Alton Parkway from Irvine Boulevard to Commercentre Drive.	Currently under construction; completion anticipated for Spring 2012.
9	Alton Parkway Extension (City portion) <i>(Alton Parkway from Commercentre Drive to Towne Center Drive)</i>	Extension of Alton Parkway from Commercentre Drive to Towne Center Drive	Currently under construction; completion anticipated at beginning of 2012.
10	Rancho Parkway Extension <i>(Between Hermana Circle and Portola Parkway)</i>	Extension of Rancho Parkway to connect Hermana Circle and Portola Parkway	Construction to begin Spring 2012.
11	Lake Forest Plaza <i>(23592 Rockfield Boulevard)</i>	Facade remodel, demolition of a 7,665 square foot building and construction of two buildings totaling 10,000 square feet	Approved; no building permits issued.
12	Trabuco Road Widening Project <i>(Trabuco Road between Bake Parkway to Via Del Rio)</i>	Widen Trabuco Road between Bake Parkway and Via Del Rio to three lanes for southbound Trabuco Road. Includes bike lanes, drainage and raised landscaped median.	Under construction; completion anticipated for Spring 2012.
13	Walmart Expansion <i>(26502 Towne Centre Drive)</i>	The expansion consists of the addition of 39,173 square feet of commercial/retail uses to the existing 135,009 square foot structure, resulting in a 174,182 square foot Supercenter with a full-service grocery department.	Under construction.



## 4. Environmental Setting

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<b>Number</b>	<b>Project Name and (Project Location)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Status (as of 1/23/12)</b>
14	Village at Foothill Ranch (Southwest corner of Portola/Bake Parkway)	122-room hotel; 25,000 square foot office; 4,195 square foot drive-through fast food; 41,489 square-foot retail on 9 acres. Includes demolition of a former car dealership.	Approved; no building permits issued.
15	Shah Property (19121 El Toro Road)	Replacement of existing 2,500 square-foot electronics testing facility with new 7,000 square foot building.	Approved; no building permits issued.
16	Oakley Mezzanine (1 Icon)	Addition of an 11,754 square feet mezzanine on the second floor of the building. There will be no change to the building footprint.	Currently under construction.
17	Panasonic Mezzanine (26111 Enterprise Way)	Addition of a 4,500 square feet mezzanine on the second floor of the building. There will be no change to the building footprint.	Application submitted and under review.

The City of Lake Forest has developed a socioeconomic-based traffic model, known as the Lake Forest Transportation Analysis Model (“LFTAM”), which includes growth projections within the City of Lake Forest and regionally. Regional growth outside of the City of Lake Forest has accounted for air quality and greenhouse gas impacts through use of LFTAM. The growth projections adopted by the City and surrounding area for LFTAM are used for the cumulative impact analyses in this DSEIR.