### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides 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" (Guidelines § 15125[a]), pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The environmental setting provides the baseline physical conditions from which the lead agency will determine the significance of environmental impacts resulting from the proposed project.

### 4.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

## 4.2.1 Regional Location

The City of Torrance in the County of Los Angeles is in the Los Angeles Basin, a coastal plain at the north end of the Peninsular Ranges Geomorphic Province. The Peninsular Ranges Geomorphic Province is characterized by mountain ranges separated by northwest-trending valleys and extends from southwestern California south into Mexico. The Los Angeles Basin is bounded by the Santa Monica Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains to the north, the Santa Ana Mountains to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the south and west. The Santa Monica Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains are part of the Transverse Ranges Geomorphic Province, an east-west-trending series of steep mountain ranges and valleys extending from Santa Barbara County in the west to central Riverside County in the east.

As shown in Figure 3-1, Regional Location, Local Vicinity, and Aerial Photograph, the City of Torrance is in the southeastern portion of Los Angeles County, referred to as the South Bay, a highly urbanized region. Neighboring communities include Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates to the south, Redondo Beach to the west, Gardena and Lawndale to the north, and Carson to the east. The Pacific Ocean forms the western border of a small portion of southwest Torrance. Interstate 405 (I-405, or San Diego Freeway) transects the northern portion of the City, and provides regional circulation to and through the City.

## 4.2.2 Regional Planning Considerations

## SCAG Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

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 the federally recognized metropolitan planning organization for this region, which encompasses over 38,000 square miles. SCAG is a regional planning agency and provides a forum for addressing regional issues concerning transportation, the economy, community development, and the environment. SCAG is also 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.

The 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) was adopted in April 2016 (SCAG 2016). Major themes in the 2016 RTP/SCS include integrating strategies for land use and transportation; striving for sustainability; protecting and preserving existing transportation infrastructure; increasing capacity through improved systems managements; providing more transportation choices; leveraging technology; responding to demographic and housing market changes; supporting commerce, economic growth, and opportunity; promoting the links between public health, environmental protection, and economic opportunity; and incorporating the principles of social equity and environmental justice.

The SCS outlines a development pattern for the region, which, when integrated with the transportation network and other transportation measures and policies, would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation (excluding goods movement). The SCS is meant to provide growth strategies that will achieve the regional GHG emissions reduction targets identified by the California Air Resources Board. The SCS does not require that local general plans, specific plans, or zoning be consistent with the SCS, but provides incentives to governments and developers for consistency. The proposed project's consistency with the applicable 2016-2040 RTP/SCS policies is analyzed in detail in Section 5.6, *Greenbouse Gas Emissions*.

#### South Coast Air Basin Air Quality Management Plan

The City of Torrance is in the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), which is managed by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). Pollutants emitted into the ambient air by stationary and mobile sources that are regulated by federal and state law and standards are detailed in the SoCAB Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP). Air pollutants for which ambient air quality standards (AAQS) have been developed are known as criteria air pollutants—ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), sulfur dioxide, coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>), fine inhalable particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and lead. VOC and NO<sub>x</sub> are criteria pollutant precursors and go on to form secondary criteria pollutants, such as O<sub>3</sub>, through chemical and photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Air basins are classified as attainment/nonattainment areas for particular pollutants depending on whether they meet AAQS for that pollutant. Based on the SoCAB AQMP, the SoCAB is designated 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. The proposed project's consistency with the applicable AAQS is discussed in Section 5.2, *Air Quality*.

#### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Legislation**

Current State of California guidance and goals for reductions in GHG emissions are generally embodied in Executive Order S-03-05; Executive Order B-30-15; Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the Global Warming Solutions Act (2008); and Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act.

Executive Order S-03-05, signed June 1, 2005, set the following GHG reduction targets for the State of California:

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- **2**000 levels by 2010
- 1990 levels by 2020
- 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050

AB 32 was passed by the state legislature on August 31, 2006, to place the state on a course toward reducing its contribution of GHG emissions. AB 32 follows the emissions reduction targets established in Executive Order S-3-05. Executive Order B-30-15 also established an interim goal of a 40 percent reduction below 1990 levels by 2030.

In 2008, SB 375 was adopted to connect GHG emissions reductions targets for the transportation sector to local land use decisions that affect travel behavior. Its intent is to reduce GHG emissions from light-duty trucks and automobiles by aligning regional long-range transportation plans, investments, and housing allocations to local land use planning to reduce vehicle miles traveled and vehicle trips. SCAG's targets are an 8 percent per capita reduction from 2005 GHG emission levels by 2020 and a 13 percent per capita reduction from 2005 GHG emission levels by 2035.

The project's ability to meet these regional GHG emissions reduction target goals is analyzed in Section 5.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

#### **South Bay Cities Council of Governments**

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) is a joint powers authority of 16 cities and the County of Los Angeles that share the goal of maximizing the quality of life and productivity of the South Bay area. The SBCCOG has been working on climate action planning since 2008, employing a subregional approach to the management and coordination of climate action planning to assist its cities in complying with legislation such as AB 32 and SB 375. The SBCCOG completed the South Bay Sustainable Strategy to address land use and mobility in an area that is transit poor. While the SBCCOG does not intend to produce an SCS, it hopes to use its South Bay Sustainable Strategy as a guide to develop a scenario-planning model that will allow the SBCCOG to independently plan and evaluate its member cities' development scenarios. This approach will supplement the regional SCS with a concrete tool to demonstrate a strategy that best fits the conditions in the South Bay to SCAG, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the South Bay cities' planning staffs.

The SBCCOG is committed to providing a more livable, equitable, and economically vibrant sub-region. As a part of these efforts, the SBCCOG has developed Climate Action Plans (CAP) to provide policy guidance and sustainability resources for the 15 South Bay cities in support of their efforts to reduce GHG emissions. The City of Torrance CAP was issued in December 2017. The City's CAP serves as a guide for action by setting GHG emission reduction goals and establishing strategies and policies to achieve desired outcomes over the next 20 years. These strategies and policies would accomplish the City's reduction targets of 15% below 2005 levels by 2020 and 49% below 2005 levels by 2035.

The project's consistency to meet with the applicable CAP's strategies and policies is analyzed in Section 5.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

#### Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority

The Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) is Los Angeles County's designated congestion management agency. Metro is responsible for the conformance monitoring and updating of Los Angeles County's Congestion Management Program (CMP), a multimodal program. The proposed project's consistency with the CMP is provided in Section 5.12, *Transportation and Traffic*.

#### Congestion Management Program

The most recent CMP was issued by Metro in 2010. The goals of the CMP are to link local land use decisions with their impacts on regional transportation, and air quality; and to develop a partnership among transportation decision makers on devising appropriate transportation solutions that include all modes of travel. To meet these goals, the CMP provides:

- Tracking and analysis to determine how the regional highway and transit systems are performing.
- Local analysis of the impacts of local land use decisions on regional transportation.
- Local implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) design guidelines that ensure new development includes improvements supportive of transit and TDM.
- Tracking new building activity throughout Los Angeles County. (Metro 2010)

#### 4.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is on the southern boundary of the City of Torrance at the northern foot of the Palos Verdes Hills in southwestern Los Angeles County. The nearest freeway to the site is Interstate 110 (I-110 or the Harbor Freeway) approximately 3.9 miles to the east via Pacific Coast Highway (State Route 1). The two nearest state highways to the project site are State Route 1 (SR-1), approximately 0.7 mile to the north; and SR-107, Hawthorne Boulevard, also approximately 0.7 mile to the north. Local access to the project site is provided by Hawthorne Boulevard, with secondary access from Via Valmonte. The north half of the southwest site boundary is bounded by the City of Palos Verdes Estates, and the south half by the City of Rolling Hills Estates.

The project site is 24.68 acres at the southwest corner of Hawthorne Boulevard and Via Valmonte. The site is private property, signed and fenced; there is no public access to the site. However, it should be noted that public trespassing onto the property commonly occurs from multiple access points in Palos Verdes Estates, Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance. The project site includes Assessor's Parcel Numbers APNs 7547-001-018, 7547-001-019, 7547-001-020, 7547-001-021, 7547-002-011, 7547-001-007, 7547-001-008, 7547-001-009, 7547-001-024, 7547-001-025, 7547-002-005, 7547-002-006, 7547-002-007, 7547-002-008, 7547-002-009, 7547-002-010. The site is approximately 1,480 feet long northwest-southeast and approximately 860 feet eastwest at its widest point.

## 4.3.1 Existing Land Use

The site is primarily vacant and consists partly of disturbed (bare) land; the balance of the site is vegetated with nonnative grassland, undisturbed and disturbed coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and mustard vegetation. A 200-

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to 250-foot-high, north-facing former quarry slope extends diagonally across the site from the southeast corner of the site to the northwest corner; the slope continues northeast from near the northwest site boundary, diminishing in height, to near the northeast site boundary (see Figures 3-2, *Project Site Topographic Map*; 3-3, *Site Photographs, Development Area*; and 3-4, *Site Photographs, Proposed Open Space Area*).

#### **Topography**

The site is at the foot of the north-facing slopes of the Palos Verdes Hills. The southwest part of the site ranges in elevation from approximately 460 feet above mean sea level (amsl) down to approximately 330 feet amsl at the southeast corner of the site. A steep slope remaining from the mining operations, up to 250 feet high, extends across the site generally east-west from the southeast corner of the site to the northwest corner. The depth of soil disturbance within the mining site ranges from 75 to 311 feet. The approximately 5.71-acre development area, mostly in the northeast quadrant of the site, consists of two pads—one approximately 190 to 220 feet amsl and the other approximately 235 to 245 feet amsl. The southeast quadrant of the site gradually slopes eastward toward Hawthorne Boulevard. The northernmost part of the site slopes upward toward single-family homes off-site and south of Via Valmonte; that slope is also a mining remnant. Elevations on the northwest site boundary range up to approximately 340 feet amsl (see Figure 3-2, *Project Site Topographic Map*).

The geotechnical investigation report designates three slopes above the development area:

- Slope 1, above the north side of the development area, adjacent to Via Valmonte, ranges from 40 to 80 feet high with grades of 1.25:1 to 1.5:1 (horizontal:vertical).
- Slope 2, above the northeast side of the development area, adjacent Hawthorne Boulevard, is approximately 50 feet in height with grades of 2:1 to 1.25:1 (horizontal: vertical).
- Slope 3, above the south and southwest sides of the development area, ranges from 200 to 250 feet high. The face of slope 3 has been graded to a uniform grade between approximately 0.84:1 to 0.9:1 (horizontal:vertical) (see Figures 3-10, *Slopes Map*, and 3-6, *Slopes Photographs*).¹

The proposed residential development would be built adjacent to Slope 1 and Slope 3, and Slope 2 would be removed during project development.

#### 4.3.2 Scenic Features

The project site is in an urbanized setting at the northern foot of the Palos Verdes Hills and the southern edge of the Los Angeles Basin. The Palos Verdes Hills are characterized as a mix of urbanized areas, including some estate-density residential development, interspersed with open space areas. Visual resources on-site consist of shrubs.

Views from the development area are narrowly constrained by the three slopes rising from the development area. The upland part of the site affords expansive views across much of the Los Angeles Basin to the north

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The above-described horizontal: vertical grade is calculated from the grade of 48 to 50 degrees reported in the geotechnical investigation report.

and east and parts of the Palos Verdes Hills to the south and west. The San Gabriel Mountains are visible to the north, the Santa Monica Mountains to the northwest, and the Santa Ana Mountains to the east. Details related to impacts on the project site's scenic features and visual character are provided in Section 5.1, Aesthetics.

## 4.3.3 Climate and Air Quality

As noted above, the City of Torrance is in the SoCAB, which is managed by SCAQMD. The SoCAB is designated nonattainment for ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), fine inhalable particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and lead (Los Angeles County only) under the California and National AAQS and nonattainment for coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) under the California AAQS. Additional information regarding air quality and climate change regulation affecting the City of Torrance is provided in Section 4.2.2, Regional Planning Considerations, above. Existing air quality conditions in the City are also provided in Sections 5.2, Air Quality, and 5.6, Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

## 4.3.4 Biological Resources

A biological resources technical report was prepared for the project site which identified vegetation communities, wildlife, and other sensitive resources onsite within the project site and a 500-foot buffer around the site. Refer to Section 5.3, *Biological Resources*, for additional information concerning biological resources and an analysis of impacts on such resources.

## 4.3.5 Geology and Landform

The majority of the project site is in a zone of required investigation for earthquake-induced landslides mapped by the California Geological Survey (Geocon West 2017). The geotechnical investigation report included an analysis of the stability of two of the three slopes above the development area.<sup>2</sup> The analysis concluded that both slopes analyzed are subject to surface instability, including rockfall (Geocon West 2017). The geotechnical investigation report includes recommendations for slope construction, retaining-wall design, and rockfall protection. Refer to Section 5.5, *Geology and Soils*, for additional information concerning geological and soil conditions and an analysis of the proposed project's impacts on geology and soils.

## 4.3.6 Hydrology

The project site is in the Dominguez Watershed, which spans about 133 square miles in southwest Los Angeles County, extending from the northern slopes of the Palos Verdes Hills north to the City of Inglewood. The major stream in the watershed is the Dominguez Channel, an engineered channel extending about 16 miles from the City of Hawthorne on the north to Los Angeles Harbor on the south (LACDPW 2004). Approximately 1.2 acres onsite near the northwest boundary—and partly in the proposed development area—are in a 100-year flood zone (flood zone A) mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA 2018). The rest of the project site is within Zone X, which is outside of 100-year and 500-year flood zones. According to the applicant, a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) will be submitted to FEMA to remove the area from Zone A. If approved, the entire site will be within Zone X. Refer to Section 5.8, *Hydrology and Water* 

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The third slope was not analyzed because the proposed project would remove it during site grading.

Quality, for additional information regarding hydrological conditions and an analysis of project impacts on hydrology and water quality.

#### 4.3.7 Noise

A sound-level survey was conducted on May 11, 2016, to evaluate existing sound levels and assess potential project noise impacts on the surrounding area. Noise measurements were conducted using a Piccolo Integrating Sound Level Meter equipped with a 0.5-inch, prepolarized condenser microphone with preamplifier. The sound level meter meets the current American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard for a Type 2 (General Use) sound level meter. The calibration of the sound level meter was verified before and after the measurements, and the measurements were conducted with the measurement microphone covered with a windscreen and positioned approximately five feet above the ground.

Four noise measurement locations were selected (ST1 through ST4), representing existing and/or future noise-sensitive receptors on the project site and in the project vicinity. Noise measurement data is also included in Appendix H. Ambient noise levels ranged from approximately 58 dBA Leq at ST1 (southeast side of proposed project site) to 64 dBA Leq at ST2 (northeast side of proposed project). The primary noise source at the sites was traffic along the adjacent roadways. Secondary noise sources included aircraft, birds, rustling leaves, and distant landscaping activities.

Refer to Section 5.10, *Noise*, for additional information concerning the noise environment and an analysis of project-related noise impacts.

#### 4.3.8 Public Services and Utilities

Fire protection and emergency medical services in the City of Torrance are provided by the Torrance Fire Department (TFD) from six fire stations and one Fire Prevention and Hazardous Administration office. The two closest TFD fire stations to the project site are Station 2 at 25135 Robinson Way, approximately 0.7 mile east of the site, and Station 4, at 5205 Calle Mayor, approximately 1.4 miles to the northwest. Law enforcement services in the City of Torrance are provided by the Torrance Police Department (TPD). TPD is at 3300 Civic Center Drive. The project site is served by the Torrance Unified School District (TUSD). The proposed project site is within the attendance boundaries for Riviera Elementary School, Richardson Middle School, and South High School. The City of Torrance Library Services Division provides library services to the City. The nearest City library to the project site is the Walteria Library at 3815 W 242nd Street, approximately 0.5 mile to the north.

The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (LACSD) provide wastewater treatment for the project site at the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant (JWPCP) in the City of Carson. Torrance Water Services (TWS) would supply water to the project. Private haulers licensed to do business in the City of Torrance collect solid waste from commercial uses and multifamily residences in Torrance. The City of Torrance Sanitation Division collects solid waste from single-family residences in Torrance.

Refer to Sections 5.11, *Public Services*, and 5.14, *Utilities and Service Systems*, for additional information regarding public services and utilities and service systems, respectively, and an analysis of project impacts on services and utilities.

## 4.3.9 General Plan and Zoning

The existing City of Torrance General Plan land use designation is R-LO, Low-Density Residential, and the existing zoning designation is A-1, Light Agricultural District (Hillside Overlay District) (Torrance 2010; 2015). A-1 Zoning District permits the growing of orchards, berries, and bush crops and single-family homes at densities no greater than 9.0 units per net acre.

### 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 as "...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:

- 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.
- B. A summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

In general, the potential for cumulative impacts is contiguous with the City boundary, since the City is the service provider for various City services and public utilities; however, as the proposed project is located along southwestern boundary of the City and adjacent to the cities of Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills Estates, Lomita, and Redondo Beach. The proposed project's cumulative impacts will analyze all of the above listed cities. The Land Use Element and associated land use districts detailed in the Torrance General Plan designate the general distribution and location of land to be used for residential, commercial, industry, institutional, open space/parks, and other land use types. The City's General Plan guides future development and growth in a way that promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the community. To regulate the amount of building intensity, the Torrance General Plan also includes development standards (e.g., maximum densities for each residential land use designation) that define the amount and type of physical development allowed in each land use category. This geographic planning framework is used in both the General Plan and the City's Zoning Regulations (Title 20 of the City's Municipal Code).

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Cumulative analysis of transportation impacts is based partly on a list of related projects provided by five cities in the region—Torrance, Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills Estates, Lomita, and Redondo Beach—shown below in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Related Projects

Address and City	Land Use	Size and Units
3210 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance	Assisted Living	130 beds
Near 3405 West Carson Street, Torrance	Independent Living/Assisted Living/Hotel	360 units
21515 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance	Commercial (Health Club & Gym/Restaurant)	45,000 SF/ 12,000 SF
23104 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance	Day Care	10,023 SF
23550 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance	Restaurant/ Bank	1,500 SF/ 2,000 SF
24000 Garnier Street, Torrance	Medical Office	36,866 SF
2640 Lomita Boulevard, Torrance	Commercial (Costco w/ Car Wash/Gas Replacing Prev. Costco) + Medical Off.	13,500 SF net (Costco) + 75,000 SF medical office
24444 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance	Office/Residential	2,700 SF/ 8 DU
5601 Crestridge Road, Rancho Palos Verdes	Senior Condominiums	60 DU
927 Deep Valley Drive, Rolling Hills Estates	Condominiums/ Commercial (Replace Medical, Office, Retail Use)	75 DU 2,000 SF
Near 67 Peninsula Center, Rolling Hills Estates	Commercial	16,000 SF
627 Deep Valley Drive, Rolling Hills Estates	Condominiums/ Commercial	58 DU 5,810 SF
250th & Narbonne, Lomita	Condominiums/ Commercial/ Industrial	20 DU 2,035 SF 4,281 SF
24516 Narbonne Avenue, Lomita	Townhomes/ Retail	22 DU 3,700 SF
25114 Narbonne Avenue, Lomita	Townhomes/ Retail	11 DU 3,500 SF
1730-1734 Pacific Coast Highway, Lomita –	Commercial/ Retail	850 SF 180 SF
Mixed-Use Development, Torrance –	Mixed-Use	11 DU 2,525 SF
337-341 Calle Miramar Redondo Beach	Mixed-Use	52 DU 10,108 SF
1700 S Pacific Coast Highway, Redondo Beach Source: KHR 2019.	Mixed-Use	Not available

However, several of the environmental topic areas consider a larger area to determine cumulative impacts, such as air quality, biological resources, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology and water quality, noise, and transportation/traffic. The cumulative study area, methodology, and impacts for each environmental impact category are described in detail in Chapter 5, Environmental Analysis, of this DEIR

## 4.5 REFERENCES

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