5.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources comprise archaeological and historical resources. Archaeological resources are prehistoric or historic evidence of past human activities, including structural ruins and buried resources. Historical resources include sites, structures, objects, or places that are at least 50 years old and are significant for their engineering, architecture, cultural use or association, etc. In California, historic resources cover human activities over the past 12,000 years. Cultural resources provide information on scientific progress, environmental adaptations, group ideology, or other human advancements. Native American tribal cultural resources are addressed in Section 5.13, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, of this DEIR.

Paleontological resources are addressed in Section 5.5, *Geology and Soils*, pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Update approved in December 2018.

This section of the DEIR evaluates the potential for implementation of the Project to impact cultural resources in the City of Torrance. The analysis in this section is based in part on the following information:

- *Cultural Records Investigation Report, Solana Residential Development, within the City of Torrance, Los Angeles County, California,* Paleo Solutions, Inc., November 12, 2018.

A complete copy of the Cultural Records Investigation Report is in the technical appendices of this DEIR (Appendix D).

5.4.1 Environmental Setting

5.4.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Federal and State Regulations

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) coordinates public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect the nation's historic and archaeological resources. The act authorized the National Register of Historic Places, which lists districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.

Section 106 (Protection of Historic Properties) of the NHPA requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Section 106 Review ensures that historic properties are considered during federal project planning and implementation. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency, administers the review process with assistance from state historic preservation offices.

California Public Resources Code

Archaeological, paleontological, and historical sites are protected under a wide variety of state policies and regulations in the California Public Resources Code (PRC). In addition, cultural and paleontological resources are recognized as nonrenewable resources and receive protection under the PRC and CEQA.

PRC Sections 5020 to 5029.5 continued the former Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee as the State Historical Resources Commission. The commission oversees the administration of the California Register of Historical Resources and is responsible for designating State Historical Landmarks and Historical Points of Interest.

PRC Sections 5079 to 5079.65 define the functions and duties of the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), which administers federal- and state-mandated historic preservation programs in California as well as the California Heritage Fund.

Several additional federal and state laws protecting Native American tribal cultural resources are described in Section 5.13, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, of this DEIR.

5.4.1.2 CULTURAL SETTING

Historic Uses of the Site

A diatomaceous earth mine operated onsite from the early 1900s to the late 1950s. Diatomaceous earth mining was discontinued primarily due to reserve depletion; in addition, the diatomite ore in this area was low grade, generating large amounts of tailings (LACSD 1995). The 35-acre site of Ernie Howlett Park, abutting part of the southwest project site boundary, is the northwest end of the former 290-acre Palos Verdes Landfill that operated between 1957 and 1980. Diatomaceous earth, sand, and gravel mining were conducted on and near the landfill site from the early 1900s to the 1950s (LACSD 2017).

Historic Aerial Photographs

The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for the project site included review of historic aerial photographs dated 1928 through 2012. Mining operation is shown onsite from early to mid-1900s. The site has been vacant since the late 1950s. Aerial photos dated 2009 and 2010 show work filling the mine pit in the development area.

Via Valmonte appears in its current location as early as the 1920s. The adjoining Hawthorne Boulevard is developed in its current configuration as early as 1970. The former Shell gasoline station adjoining the project site to the south appears as early as 1970 and up to 2005. The gasoline station was removed by 2009 and replaced by the current assisted living facility. Development of housing in the general area began as early as 1928 and was widespread by 1954. The 1954 photograph shows several houses west and southwest of the site and a few houses north of Via Valmonte. By 1970 the houses west and southwest of the site were largely developed similar to current conditions, and by 1977 the houses along the north site boundary south of Via Valmonte were also largely completed. Ernie Howlett Park was developed between 1981 and 1989 (Kennedy/Jenks 2015).

Historic Topographic Maps

During preparation of the cultural resources report, Paleo Solutions also reviewed the project area on several historic USGS Torrance, California 15-minute quadrangles (1896, 1925, 1942, 1953, 1966, and 1975 [photo revised in 1979]). A road alignment along the general path of Newton Street and one homestead, approximately 1,000 feet to north of the current project area, are visible as early as 1896. By the 1920s, the initial alignment of Via Valmonte is present. Hawthorne Boulevard is visible to the north of the project area; however, it does not extend south beyond its intersection with Via Valmonte. At this time, the neighborhood of Walteria was beginning to form to the northeast.

Until 1942 the elevation in the project area ranged from 225 feet amsl at the lowest point to 461 feet amsl at the highest point of the hilltop. By 1942, mining activity became visible in the eastern portion of the project area with a base depth of approximately 200 feet amsl. By 1953, mining activities had extended further west with a base depth of 175 feet amsl. By 1966, the extent of the mining operations was consistent with the current boundaries and topography. By the 1979 revisions to the 1975 USGS quadrangle, Hawthorne Boulevard was visible along its current route, and Via Valmonte had been finalized.

History of Torrance, Palos Verdes Estates, and Rolling Hills Estates

The site of present-day Torrance was part of the Rancho San Pedro, the first California land grant, given to Juan Jose Dominguez in 1784 by the governor of California.[1] The Dominguez Family retained ownership of the rancho when Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821 and again when the United States took control of California in 1848, although the size of the land grant diminished considerably in the process.

Torrance was founded in 1912 as a model industrial city and incorporated in 1921. Oil was discovered in 1921; by 1925 there were 582 producing wells in the City (McKenna 2009). The City was nearly built out in a late 1940s housing boom (THS 2017).

The present-day City of Palos Verdes Estates began to be developed in 1913 and was incorporated in 1939 (Palos Verdes Estates 2017). The City of Rolling Hills Estates was incorporated in 1957 (Rolling Hills Estates 2017).

Mining is important in the history of the Palos Verdes Hills; the US Geological Survey Mineral Resources Data System lists nine former mines in the Palos Verdes Hills: six sand and gravel mines, one diatomaceous earth mine (in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, not the former mine on the proposed project site), one stone quarry, and one dolomite/limestone quarry (USGS 2017).

5.4.1.3 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historical Resources

No cultural resources were identified in the project site in the records search at the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC). Three cultural resources were identified within 0.5 mile of the site: two utility

[1] The Spanish Colonial Period of California history extends from 1769, when the first permanent European settlements in California—the Mission and Presidio of San Diego—were founded; until 1821, when Mexico won independence from Spain.

poles and the Jose Dolores Sepulveda adobe home located at 3601 Courtney Way; the last resource is a California State Historic Landmark. No cultural resources were identified during the field survey of the site (Paleo Solutions 2018). The cut slopes and debris remaining from the former mining operation are not considered significant historical resources.

Mirlo Gate Lodge, built in 1926, at 4420 Via Valmonte—about 550 feet northwest of the project site—is designated a local historical landmark by the Rancho de Palos Verdes Historical Society. The two-story circular stone gatehouse, designed by George H. Howard (1864–1935), has 18-inch-thick walls and contains a kitchen, living room, bedroom, and bathroom (Megowan 2017). Howard designed the Burlingame, California, train station, also a California historical landmark, and about 75 homes on the San Francisco Peninsula (Garrison 2012).

Archaeological Resources

No archaeological resources were identified on-site or within 0.5 mile of the site (Paleo Solutions 2018). Archaeological sites are known from the northern and western slopes of the Palos Verdes Hills, including CA-LAN-138, approximately 2.8 miles from the project site, the Malaga Cove site—a large village site with dense midden deposits in the Hollywood Riviera portion of the City of Torrance and overlooking the Pacific Ocean (Torrance 2009).

5.4.2 Thresholds of Significance

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 provides direction on determining significance of impacts to archaeological and historical resources. Generally, a resource shall be considered "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources:

- Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
- Is associated the with lives of persons important in our past;
- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
- Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (PRC § 5024.1; 14 CCR § 4852)

The fact that a resource is not listed in the California Register of Historical Resources, not determined to be eligible for listing, or not included in a local register of historical resources does not preclude a lead agency from determining that it may be a historical resource.

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:[2]

C-1 Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.

C-2 Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.

C-3 Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

The Initial Study, included as Appendix A, substantiates that impacts associated with the following thresholds would be less than significant:

- Threshold C-3

This impact will not be addressed in the following analysis, except Native American human remains which are addressed in Section 5.13.

Impacts to paleontological resources are addressed in Section 5.5, *Geology and Soils*.

5.4.3 Environmental Impacts

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for which the Initial Study disclosed potentially significant impacts. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

5.4.3.1 METHODOLOGY

The Cultural Resources Investigation for the proposed project consisted of a records search at the SCCIC at California State University Fullerton and an intensive foot survey of the project site (Paleo Solutions 2018). An intensive pedestrian survey of the project area was performed on September 4, 2018. The intensive level survey methods consisted of a pedestrian survey of the accessible areas of the Project area in parallel transects spaced no more than 10 meters apart. Deviations from transects only occurred in areas containing steep slopes.

Comments on the Notice of Preparation

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes, in a comment letter dated August 28, 2017, noted that the Mirlo Gate Lodge, at 4420 Via Valmonte in the City of Palos Verdes Estates, has been designated a local historical landmark by the Rancho de Palos Verdes Historical Society, and asked that project impacts to the Mirlo Gate Lodge be evaluated in the EIR.

[2] The significance thresholds set forth here are from the CEQA Guidelines Update approved by the California Office of Administrative Law in December 2018.

5.4.3.2 IMPACT ANALYSIS

Impact 5.4-1: Development of the project would not impact an identified historic resource. [Threshold C-1]

No historic resources on-site were identified in the records search conducted by the SCCIC. Three cultural resources were identified within 0.5 mile of the site: two utility poles and the location of the Jose Dolores Sepulveda adobe home located at 3601 Courtney Way. The two utility poles were determined ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places, while the Jose Dolores Sepulveda adobe home was determined to be a California State Historic Landmark in 1944. None of these three resources overlap, or are within the project site (Paleo Solutions 2018). Additionally, the Jose Dolores Sepulveda adobe home has been replaced by a single family built in 1975. The project would not result in alterations of these resources or obstruct the views of these resources. Therefore, development of the project would not impact these cultural resources.

The Mirlo Gate Lodge is at 4420 Via Valmonte about 550 feet northwest of the project site. Views of the development area from the Mirlo Gate Lodge are blocked by intervening buildings and by Slope 1 on-site. The Lodge is not visible from Hawthorne Boulevard or the project site. There are no public views of the Lodge from any vantage point that would be blocked due to project implementation. Thus, project development would not alter the historical significance or obstruct the views of the Mirlo Gate Lodge.

Artificial fill soil on-site contains localized pockets of debris such as wire, PVC pipe, and plastic and metal debris (Geocon West 2017). Mining is important in the history of the Palos Verdes Hills; the UG Geological Survey Mineral Resources Data System lists nine former mines in the Palos Verdes Hills (USGS 2017). However, it is expected that mining equipment or other artifacts that could yield information important to the history of the Palos Verdes Peninsula would have been removed by the mine operator before or during closure of the mine, and that surface or surface material associated with past prehistoric or historic-period use of the project area would most likely have been confined to the original top 5 to 10 feet of sediments, which are no longer present in the project area. Therefore, the debris remaining in the fill soil is not historically significant and impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 5.4-2: Development of the project could impact archaeological resources. [Threshold C-2]

No archaeological resources were identified in the cultural resources investigation. Given the original elevation of 225 to 461 feet amsl and the current elevation of 150 feet amsl, this indicates that between 75 and 311 feet of the original top sediments of the project area have been removed during past mining operations that began in early to mid-1900s. Surface or subsurface archaeological materials associated with past prehistoric or historic-period use of the project area would most likely have been confined to the original top 5 to 10 feet of sediments, which are no longer present in the project area. Additionally, the majority of the project area is underlain with approxmately80 feet of overfill and modern refuse on the ground surface (fragments of concrete, wood, furniture, construction equipment, machinery parts, metal, glass, and plastics). No archaeological resources were identified within the project area as a result of the cultural resources study prepared for the proposed project. Although no known archaeological resources are present in the project vicinity, there could be a potential for buried archaeological resources to be discovered during grading. Therefore, a mitigation measure has been provided to reduce such impact to a less than significant level.

5.4.4 Cumulative Impacts

As described above, potential impacts related to historical, archaeological, and paleontological resources would be reduced to a level that is less than significant through the implementation of existing requirements and mitigation measures to ensure proper identification, treatment, and preservation of cultural resources on the project site.

Future construction activities in the project area could lead to degradation of the cultural resources. However, each development proposal received by the City undergoes environmental review and would be subject to the same resource protection requirements as the proposed project. If there is a potential for significant impacts on cultural or paleontological resources, an investigation will be required to determine the nature and extent of the resources and identify appropriate mitigation measures. Such investigations would identify resources on the affected project sites that are or appear to be eligible for listing on the NRHP CRHR. Such investigations would also recommend mitigation measures to protect and preserve cultural resources. The project site is assessed as having a low sensitivity for cultural resources (Paleo Solutions 2018) and impacts to cultural resources tend to be site-specific. Although there have been several cultural resources discovered in the surrounding area, no significant cultural resources were identified that if altered could combine with the effects of the project to result in a cumulatively significant impact to cultural resources.

Neither the proposed project, nor other cumulative development in the City, are expected to result in significant impacts to cultural or paleontological resources. Site-specific surveys and test and evaluation excavations are conducted to determine whether the resources are "unique archaeological resources" or "historical resources," and appropriate mitigation including, but not limited to, compliance with existing requirements were provided. Implementation of these measures would reduce the potential for adverse impacts on cultural resources both individually and cumulatively. As such, no significant cumulative impacts to cultural resources are expected to occur from the proposed project.

5.4.5 Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions

Federal

- United States Code, Title 16, Sections 470 et seq.: National Historic Preservation Act
- United States Code, Title 16, Sections 470aa et seq.: Archaeological Resources Protection Act

State

- California Public Resources Code Sections 5020–5029.5: Authorized State Historical Resources Commission.
- California Public Resources Code Sections 5079–5079.65: Authorized Office of Historic Preservation.

5.4.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements and, the following impacts would be less than significant: 5.4-1.

Without mitigation, this impact would be potentially significant:

- Impact 5.4.2 Development of the project could impact archaeological resources.

5.4.7 Mitigation Measures

CUL-1 In the event that archaeological resources (sites, features, or artifacts) are exposed during construction activities, the resource must be evaluated for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. Upon identification, all construction work occurring within 100 feet of the find shall immediately stop until a qualified archaeologist, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for archaeology, can evaluate the significance of the find and determine whether additional study is warranted. Depending upon the significance of the find, the archaeologist may simply record the find and allow work to continue. If the discovery proves significant under CEQA, additional work such as preparation of an archaeological treatment plan, testing, or data recovery may be warranted. Level of Significance After Mitigation

The mitigation measures identified above would reduce potential impacts associated with archaeological resources to a level that is less than significant. Therefore, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts relating to cultural resources remain.

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