



An Employee-Owned Company

April 22, 2022

Mr. Brian King
Empire Construction Management, Inc.
2280 Wardlow Circle, Suite 250
Corona, CA 92878

Reference: Habitat Assessment and Burrowing Owl Focused Survey Results for the Crystal Cove Apartment Project Area (RECON Number 10113)

Dear Mr. King:

This letter summarizes the results of the 2022 focused surveys for the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) within the Crystal Cove Project property (Assessor's Parcel Number 484-030-028). The project is located in the city of Moreno Valley in western Riverside County, California (Figures 1, 2, and 3). The project is located in within Township 03 South, Range 03 West of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic map, Sunnymead quadrangle (USGS 1979; see Figure 2).

RECON biologist conducted burrowing owl habitat assessment and focused burrow surveys in accordance with the guidelines developed by the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area* requirements of the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP; Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority [WRCRCA] 2006). Surveys included a habitat assessment (Step I) and a focused burrow survey (Step II–Part A). As part of this survey effort, suitable habitat and burrows were detected within the project area and 500-foot buffer. A discussion of the results of the survey conducted is provided below.

SURVEY METHODS

RECON biologist Jade Woll conducted burrowing owl surveys in accordance with the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area* requirements of the MSHCP (WRCRCA 2006). Survey Steps I and II–Part A were conducted to determine the presence or absence of suitable habitat within the project area. The development footprint consists of an approximately 8.00 acre project site and 1.41 acres of off-site improvements for a total project area of 9.41 acres. Due to the presence of suitable habitat, the burrowing owl survey area (survey area) included a 500-foot buffer surrounding the project area (Figure 4). A total of 63 acres was surveyed. Meandering transects were walked through all suitable habitat identified within the project area to locate and map suitable burrows. Suitable habitat within the 500-foot buffer was surveyed using binoculars as no permissions to enter these off-site areas were granted. All wildlife species observed during the surveys were noted. Survey date, time, and weather conditions are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Survey Information				
Date	Survey Type	Surveyors	Beginning Conditions	Ending Conditions
3/30/22	Step I Habitat Assessment Step II–Part A Burrow Survey	J. Woll	9:17 a.m.; 53°F; 0 mph; 75% cc	10:40 p.m.; 55°F; 0–1 mph; 0% cc
N/A = not applicable; °F = degrees Fahrenheit; mph = miles per hour; % = percent, cc = cloud cover.				

HABITAT ASSESSMENT (STEP I) RESULTS

Existing Conditions

A burrowing owl habitat assessment was conducted on March 30, 2022 within and adjacent to the Crystal Cove project area. The project area is located south of Alessandro Boulevard, east of Lasselle Street, and north of Copper Cove Lane, with portions of undeveloped land occurring to the north, west, and east (see Figure 3). The project area is adjacent to a church and is further surrounded by a mosaic of undeveloped land, paved roads, and residential development. Elevations within the project area range from 1,570 to 1,580 feet above mean sea level.

Potential Burrowing Owl Habitat

The project area supports two vegetation community/land cover types: non-native grassland and residential/urban/exotic (Photographs 1 through 4). These vegetation communities/land cover types have some potential to support burrowing owls due to the presence of suitable burrows, berms and debris piles, and areas of sparse vegetation.

The non-native grassland consists of land dominated by non-native grasses, such as wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*) with scattered forbs. Vegetation varies from sparse to dense within this land cover type, and one suitable burrow was identified within the project area. The residential/urban/exotic land occurs along the edges of the boundary and consists of forbs and gravel and the eastern edge of boundary consists of a sidewalk. Suitable burrows were not present throughout the residential/urban/exotic habitat types.

The 500-foot buffer contains developed land to the north, west, east, and south, including Alessandro Boulevard, Lasselle Street, a church, and private residences. Private residences occur south of Copper Cove Lane, as well as northwest of Alessandro Boulevard. Immediately west of the site is a church, with undeveloped land to the west. Undeveloped land is found north of Alessandro Boulevard and east of Lasselle Street. Areas of suitable habitat were surveyed with binoculars, including the undeveloped land to the north, west, and east of the site. Developed land such as paved roads and buildings are not considered burrowing owl habitat and were excluded from the survey area.

Of the 63-acre area evaluated for burrowing owl, approximately 31 acres were included in the survey effort, after the excluded areas were removed (see Figure 4). This includes approximately 9.41 acres within the project area and approximately 21.59 acres in the 500-foot buffer.

FOCUSED BURROW SURVEY (STEP II, PART A) RESULTS

Meandering transects were walked through all suitable habitat identified within the project area to locate and map suitable burrows and the potentially suitable habitat within the 500-foot buffer was surveyed using binoculars. Small-mammal burrows were present throughout the project area and the 500-foot buffer. Burrows are likely from California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beechyi*) based on size, configuration, and the observation of this species on-site during general surveys.

No sign of active burrows used by burrowing owls were detected at the time the survey was completed. Although many burrows appeared to be the appropriate size and shape for burrowing owl use, many burrows were surrounded by or contained dense vegetation and appeared unoccupied. No significant whitewash, feathers, pellets, or bones were observed within or adjacent to burrows. However, based on the presence of suitable burrows both on-site and within the 500-foot buffer, Step II-Part B, Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys are required.

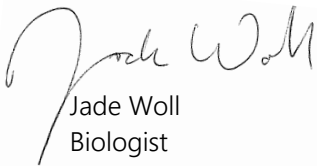
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PRE-CONSTRUCTION SURVEY REQUIREMENT

A pre-construction survey will be required within 30 days prior to ground disturbance to ensure no burrowing owls have entered the site to avoid direct take of burrowing owls, if present. The survey will include all areas where suitable habitat is present within the survey area (WRCRCA 2006).

If you have any questions concerning the contents of this letter, please contact me at (619) 308-9333 extension 117 or jwoll@reconenvironmental.com.

Sincerely,



Jade Woll
Biologist

JCW:sh

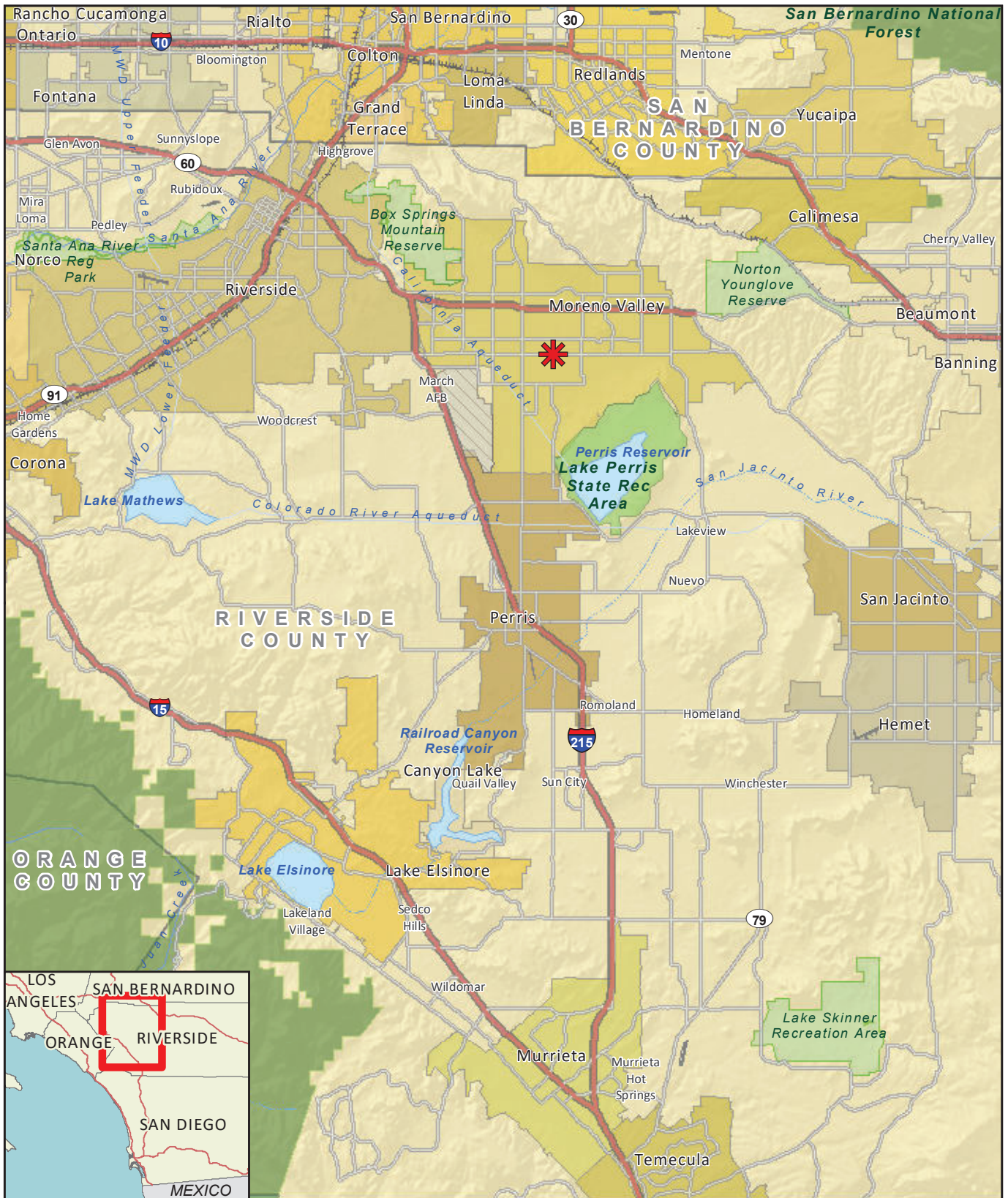
REFERENCES CITED

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

1979 Murrieta Quadrangle 7.5-Minute Topographic Map.

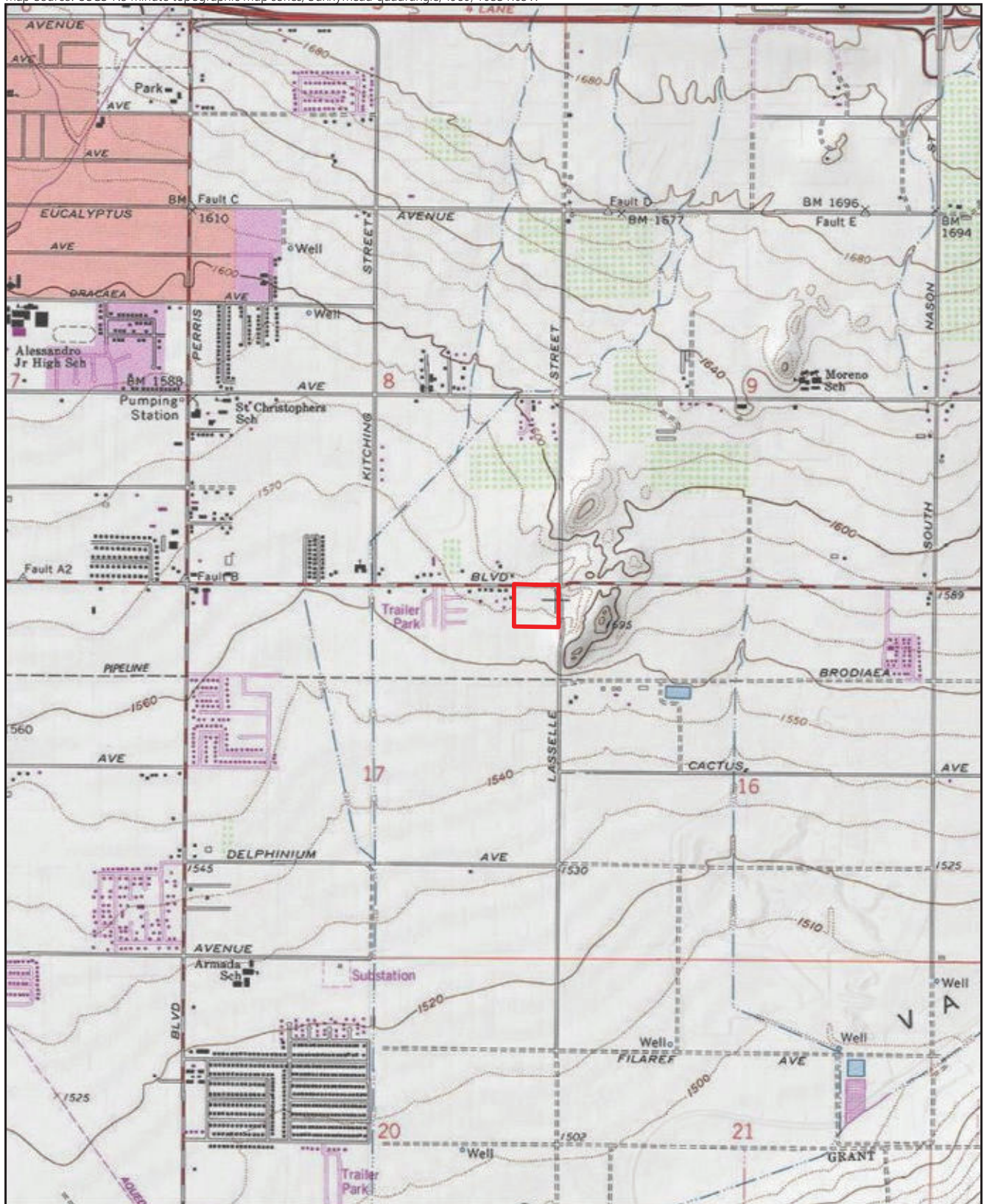
Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (WRCRCA)

2006 *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area.*



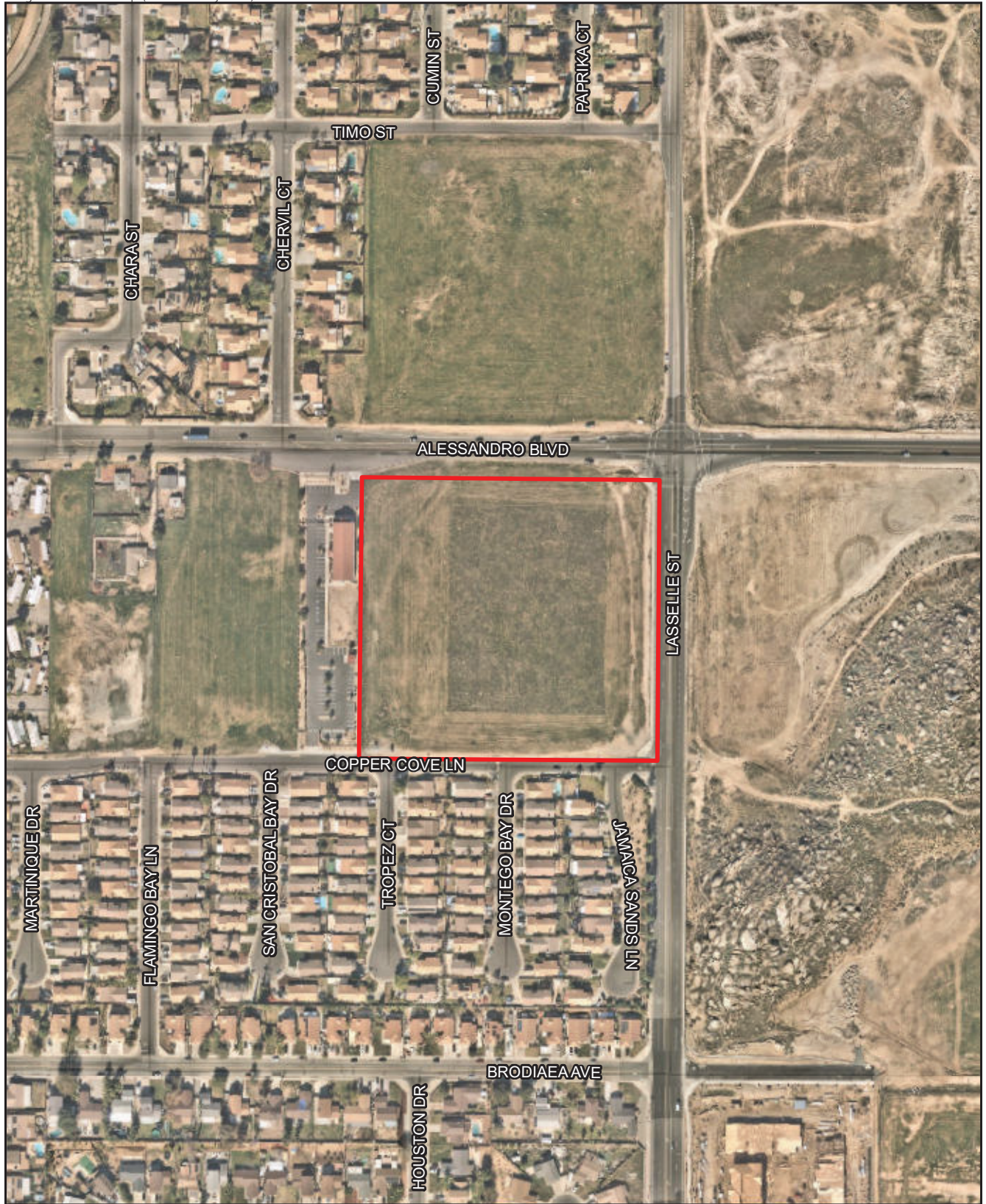
 Project Location

FIGURE 1
Regional Location



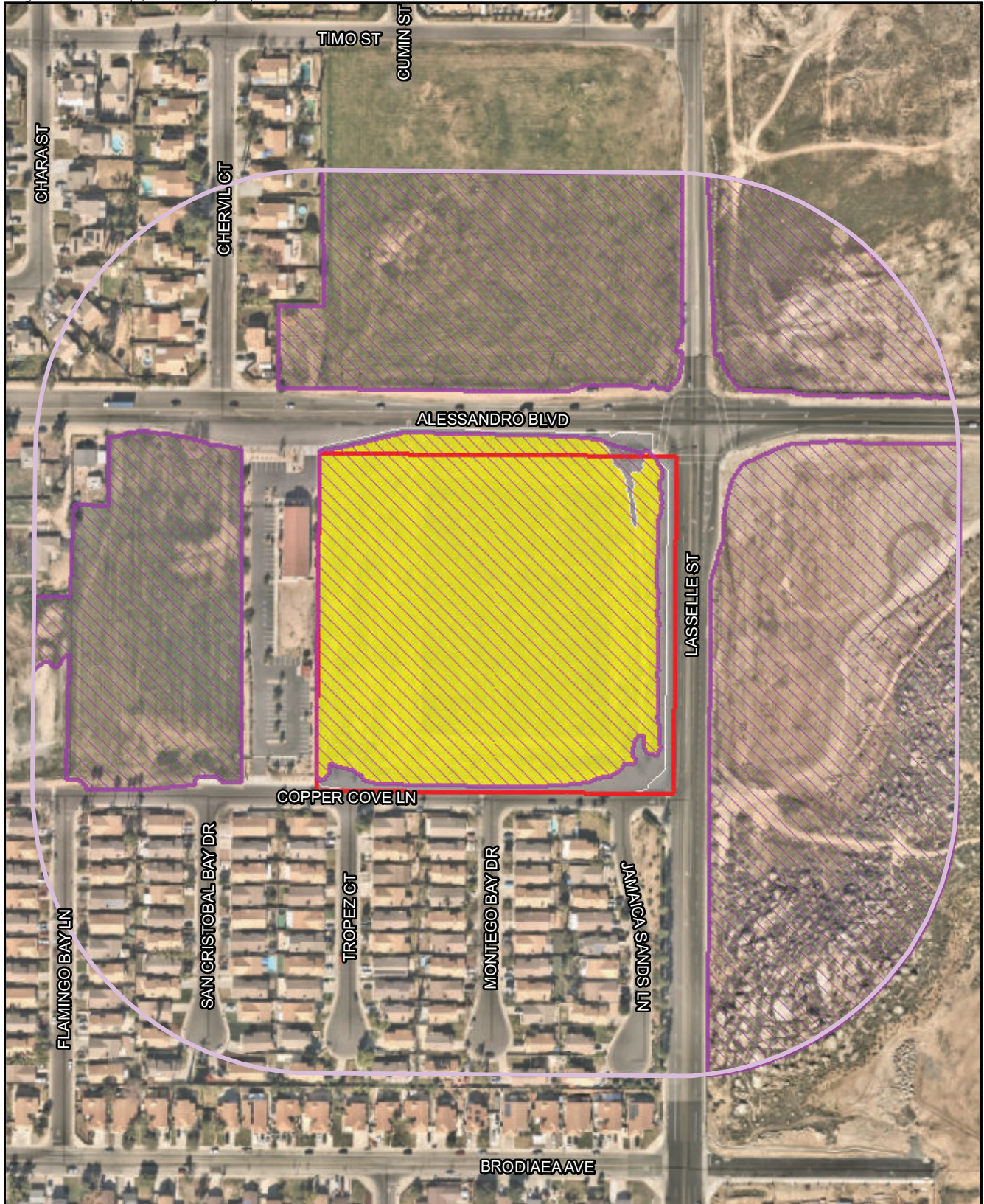
 Project Boundary




FIGURE 2
Project Location on USGS Map



 Project Boundary

FIGURE 3
Project Location on Aerial Photograph



-  Project Boundary
-  Burrowing Owl Habitat Assessment Area
-  Burrowing Owl Suitable Habitat



- Vegetation Community**
-  Non-native Grassland
 -  Residential/Urban/Exotic

FIGURE 4
Habitat Assessment and
Focused Burrow Survey Results



PHOTOGRAPH 1
View of Project Site Looking Northwest



PHOTOGRAPH 2
View of Project Site Looking Southeast



PHOTOGRAPH 3
View of Project Site Looking Southwest



PHOTOGRAPH 4
View of Project Site Looking West