2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This chapter provides a description of existing site conditions for the project. The existing setting addresses the project site and provides an overview of the local and regional environmental setting pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15152.

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The City of La Mesa (City) encompasses approximately nine square miles within the central portion of San Diego County and is situated approximately 14 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. The City is bordered by the City of San Diego to the north and west, the City of Lemon Grove to the south, the City of El Cajon to the northeast, and unincorporated areas of San Diego County to the southeast. Two freeways transect the City: the I-8 alignment extends east/west and the State Route (SR) 125 alignment extends north/south. SR 94 extends in an east/west alignment and forms the southern boundary of the City. Two trolley corridors also traverse the City, including the MTS Green Line and Orange Line. The population of La Mesa is estimated at 61,261 people (San Diego Association of Governments [SANDAG] 2019c).

The project is located on an approximately 12-acre site along the south side of Alvarado Road generally between 70th Street on the west and Guava Avenue on the east in the City. The project site is bound by the 70th Street Trolley Station to the west, the Green Line trolley corridor to the south, a car dealership to the east, and Alvarado Road and I-8 to the north. The site is developed and currently contains a RV resort facility with paved access roadways, RV spaces, a clubhouse, a swimming pool, other ancillary buildings, and three billboards. Alvarado Creek traverses the property as it flows under Alvarado Road in the eastern portion of the site and continues southwesterly and westerly along the southern boundary of the western portion of the site. Refer to Figures 1-1 and 1-2 for regional and site location of the project.

2.2 EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

2.2.1 Site History

The project site remained undeveloped until 1954 when a mobile home park was constructed by Chris Cosgrove, a pioneer builder and developer in San Diego County. The mobile home park, called the La Mesan, initially included 118 spaces on approximately eight acres, and was expanded to include 49 additional spaces over approximately four acres in subsequent years. By 1958, the property included 167 spaces on approximately 12 acres and was later expanded to 181 spaces. By 1990, the mobile home park was converted into an RV resort and all of the mobile homes were removed. The site has contained RV resort uses since 1990.

2.2.2 Existing Uses and Development

The project site comprises six parcels (Assessor's Parcel Numbers [APNs] 469-021-20 through 25) that encompass a total area of approximately 12 acres. All six parcels are developed and currently occupied by the San Diego RV Resort. The RV Resort contains 174 full-hookup RV spaces and serves a combination of short-term and extended stay visitors. The site is developed with a combination of paved surfaces and ornamental landscaping, including a stand of approximately 155 Mexican Fan Palm trees that are

scattered throughout the project site. These trees are informally grouped, and most have reached a relatively uniform height of approximately 80 feet. Numerous RVs are parked within the paved areas and are grouped together along internal roadways. A combination of wrought iron and a wooden plank fence separate the site's boundary from Alvarado Road. Low shrubs and street landscaping provide further separation between the site and the roadway. On-site structures include two one-story laundry/ bathroom buildings and a two-story office/apartment complex comprised of four buildings. All six existing buildings were constructed between 1954 and 1959.

Alvarado Creek enters the site at the intersection of Alvarado Road on the east and continues through the site, bisecting the property until it enters an underground storm drainage facility in the western portion of the site. Alvarado Creek is channelized as it enters into the project site from the northeast and flows through a box culvert underneath a bridge over Alvarado Road. Alvarado Creek consists of a trapezoidal channel with concrete-lined banks and a natural channel bottom aside from the concrete aprons near the Alvarado Road overcrossing and at the western end of the site. Much of the channel supports vegetation including native and non-native species at varying vegetative cover, and water regularly flows through this section of Alvarado Creek.

Three freeway-oriented billboard signs are located within the project site along the Alvarado Road frontage. One is located at the eastern boundary of the site and is a single-sided sign oriented for viewers traveling along eastbound I-8. The other two signs occur in the western portion of site and are double sided. Overhead utility lines also cross over portions of the site that connect to 15 utility poles located throughout the site.

2.2.3 Landform, Vegetation, Hydrological, and Geological Conditions

The project site is relatively level with a slight topographical variation as it slopes downward from east to west to the degree of approximately 10 feet. Existing on-site elevations range from approximately 400 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) to 410 AMSL.

The project site supports five vegetation communities or land use types, including freshwater marsh, willow woodland, disturbed land, urban/developed land, and concrete channel. Freshwater marsh occurs along Alvarado Creek and is dominated by broad-leaved cattail (*Typha latifolia*), southern bulrush (*Scirpus californica*), and Olney's three-square bulrush (*Schoenoplectus americanus*). Willow woodland occurs along Alvarado Creek on the southwestern portion of the site and comprises patches of trees and saplings of black willow, red willow, and shrubs of mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). The disturbed habitat occurs on a slope below a concrete wall associated with the MTS Green Line Trolley down to Alvarado Creek and along the eastern bank of the creek and supports a cover of ivy (*Hedera helix*), olive tree (*Olea europa*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulagre*), and non-native grasses. The majority of the site consists of an urban/developed land characterized by the RV resort with ornamental vegetation consisting of maintained non-native landscaped areas. The concrete channel includes portions of Alvarado Creek at the box culvert crossing at Alvarado Road, the box culvert inlet near the trolley station at the west end of the project site, and portions of the northern bank of the creek.

Much of the project site is located within the mapped 100-year floodplain and floodway associated with Alvarado Creek. The site is underlain by a thin layer of fill soils that is, in turn, underlain by cobble conglomerate formational materials of the Stadium Conglomerate. Stream deposits underlie the fill soils in the southern portion of the site.

2.3 SURROUNDING LAND USES

The project site is surrounded by Alvarado Road and I-8 to the north, the double-track Green Line Trolley corridor to the south, a car dealership and motel to the east, and the 70th Street Trolley Station to the west of the site.

Other surrounding uses include residential neighborhoods composed of single-family homes and multi-story apartment complexes north of I-8 and south of the Green Line Trolley corridor. A motel (Motel 6) and the commercial fleet sales and service departments of the car dealership are located to the east. West of the trolley station is an automobile repair business in a single-story warehouse-type building and a two-story, multi-tenant office building. Grossmont Center is located approximately 1.25 miles to the northeast and Lake Murray is located approximately 0.75 mile to the north.

2.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

The following plans contain policies, goals, and objectives that are applicable to the proposed project. A detailed discussion of these plans is provided in Section 4.8, *Land Use*.

2.4.1 San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan

San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan (Regional Plan; SANDAG 2015) is an update of the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) for the San Diego Region and the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), combined into one document. The Regional Plan provides a blueprint for San Diego's regional transportation system to effectively serve existing and projected workers and residents within the San Diego region. In addition to long-term projections, the Regional Plan includes an SCS, in compliance with Senate Bill (SB) 375. The SCS aims to create sustainable, mixed-use communities conducive to public transit, walking, and biking by focusing future growth in the previously developed, western portion of the region along the major existing transit and transportation corridors. The purpose of the SCS is to help the San Diego region meet the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The Regional Plan has a horizon year of 2050, and projects regional growth and the construction of transportation projects over this time period. The project site and vicinity are identified as being in a Smart Growth Area and Potential Transit Priority Area (TPA).

On February 22, 2019, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved an action plan to develop a new vision for the 2021 Regional Plan that would transform the way people and goods move throughout the region. Development of the 2021 Regional Plan, including the associated projects, programs, and policies, is underway and going through the planning process. While work progresses to develop this new vision, SANDAG prepared and adopted a 2019 Federal Regional Transportation Plan (2019 Federal RTP; SANDAG 2019b) that complies with federal requirements for the development of regional transportation plans, retains air quality conformity approval from the U.S. Department of Transportation, and preserves funding for the region's transportation investments. The 2019 Federal RTP builds on The 2015 Regional Plan with updated project costs and revenues and a new regional growth forecast.

2.4.2 City of La Mesa General Plan

The adopted La Mesa General Plan (City 2012a) is a long-term planning document that guides growth and development in La Mesa by establishing goals, policies, and objectives that reflect the City's vision for the future. The General Plan is required to include a Land Use and Urban Design Element, which designates the proposed general location and distribution of land uses for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, and other public and private uses of land. Other elements of the General Plan include Circulation, Conservation and Sustainability, Recreation and Open Space, Historic Preservation, Noise, Safety, Public Services and Facilities, Health and Wellness, and Housing.

The project site has a current General Plan land use designation of Regional Serving Commercial. The Land Use and Urban Design Element of the General Plan describes this designation as follows:

> Regional Serving Commercial. This land use designation is assigned to those areas of the City which are suitable for more intense urban activities, such as high-volume retail sales, and other sales and services which are expected to draw local and regional customers. Areas designated Regional Commercial are served by convenient freeway access and public transportation. Grossmont Center, Fletcher Parkway and Alvarado Road are examples of areas where the designation is applied. Examples of uses intended in the Regional Commercial designation include retail shopping centers, large office complexes and uses providing services to the traveling public such as restaurants, service stations, hotels, and motels. Entertainment uses such as movie theaters and nightclubs may be conditionally permitted. Within larger areas of the City, which have been designated Regional Serving Commercial; there may be areas which are suitable for mixed-use or high-density residential developments. The appropriate mix of uses permitted within these areas will be determined on a case-by-case review or by the amendment or adoption of a specific plan which will also establish the appropriate residential density.

2.4.3 Zoning

The existing zone classification for the project site is Light Industrial and Commercial Service - Flood Overlay Zone – Urban Design Overlay Zone. The Light Industrial and Commercial Service zone (CM) is applied in areas that are generally removed from residential uses such as along Alvarado Road. The CM zone is intended to include heavy commercial activity and light industrial services.

The Floodway Overlay Zone (Overlay Zone F) is intended for application in those areas of the City within floodways or water courses in which flood control structures and facilities are either required or planned to be installed or improved. The construction of buildings and structures within areas in Overlay Zone F are prohibited until adequate flood protection facilities are constructed or guaranteed to be constructed and temporary alternate arrangements are made to protect persons and property.

New development and major renovations or remodeling of property within the Urban Design Overlay Zone (Overlay Zone D) are subject to the requirements of the Urban Design Program and approval by the Design Review Board and City Council. This overlay zone is used to supplement the required land use regulations that are reviewed under the standard provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Projects developed within Overlay Zone D are evaluated on their compliance with both the unique design criteria that pertain to the visually sensitive areas and the general development guidelines established by the

Urban Design Program. The proposed Specific Plan however would include site-specific design recommendations and criteria for development within the project site that would supersede those required by the Urban Design Program.

The project proposes to create a new overlay zone, the Alvarado Specific Plan Overlay Zone, that would establish development regulations for the site.

2.4.4 Regional Air Quality Strategy

The San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) and SANDAG are responsible for developing and implementing the clean air plan for attainment and maintenance of the ambient air quality standards in the San Diego Air Basin (SDAB). The San Diego County Regional Air Quality Strategy (RAQS) was most recently updated in 2016. The RAQS outlines SDAPCD's plans and control measures designed to attain the state air quality standards for ozone. The SDAPCD has also developed the air basin's input to the State Implementation Plan (SIP), which is required under the Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) for areas that are out of attainment of air quality standards. The SIP, approved by the USEPA in 1996, includes the SDAPCD's plans and control measures for attaining the ozone national standard. The SIP is also updated on a triennial basis.

The RAQS relies on information from CARB and SANDAG, including mobile and area source emissions, as well as information regarding projected growth in the county, to project future emissions and then determine from that the strategies necessary for the reduction of emissions through regulatory controls**.** The SIP relies on the same information from SANDAG to develop emission inventories and emission reduction strategies that are included in the attainment demonstration for the air basin**.** The SIP also includes rules and regulations that have been adopted by the SDAPCD to control emissions from stationary sources**.** These SIP-approved rules may be used as a guideline to determine whether a project's emissions would have the potential to conflict with the SIP and thereby hinder attainment of the national air quality standard for ozone.

2.4.5 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin

The Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin (Basin Plan), adopted by the San Diego RWQCB in 1994 (updated in 2016), is designed to preserve and enhance water quality and protect the beneficial uses of all regional waters. Specifically, the Basin Plan: (1) designates beneficial uses for surface and ground waters; (2) sets narrative and numerical objectives that must be attained or maintained to protect the designated beneficial uses and conform to the state's anti-degradation policy; (3) describes implementation programs to protect the beneficial uses of all waters in the region; and (4) describes surveillance and monitoring activities to evaluate the effectiveness of the Basin Plan (RWQCB 1994).

2.4.6 Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans

The Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) is an agency that is required by state law to exist in counties in which there is a commercial and/or a general aviation airport. The purpose of the ALUC is to protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring the orderly development of airports and the adoption of land use measures that minimize the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within areas around public airports, to the extent that these areas are not already devoted to incompatible uses. The ALUC is responsible for preparation of the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs) for each airport in the region. ALUCPs establish land use compatibility policies and development criteria for

new development to protect the airports from incompatible land uses. The policies and criteria contained in applicable ALUCPs are addressed in the City of La Mesa's General Plan (Land Use and Urban Design Element).

The site is within the Airport Influence Area (AIA) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part 77 Noticing Area for Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport. The AIA is defined as "the area in which current or future airport-related noise, overflight, safety, or airspace protection factors may significantly affect land uses or necessitate restrictions on those uses as determined by an airport land use commission" (San Diego County Regional Airport Authority [SDCRAA] 2010b). The AIA for Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport serves as the planning boundary for the ALUCP and is divided into two review areas: (1) Review Area 1 includes the noise contours, safety zones, airspace protection surfaces, and overflight areas; and (2) Review Area 2 comprises the airspace protection surfaces and overflight areas. The project site is located within Review Area 2 for the airport.