



February 4, 2019

T&B PLANNING

Attention: Ryan Kelleher
17542 E. 17th Street, Suite 100
Tustin, California 92780

SUBJECT: Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) Suitability Assessment for the Proposed Kaiser Commerce Center

ELMT Consulting (ELMT) is pleased to submit this report documenting the results of a burrowing owl suitability assessment for the proposed Kaiser Commerce Center located in Fontana, San Bernardino County, California. Biologist Travis J. McGill inventoried and evaluated the condition of the habitat on January 18, 2019 to determine if the project site has the potential to provide suitable habitat for burrowing owls.

Project Location

The project site is generally located north of Interstate 10, east of Interstate 15, south of State Route 66, and west of Interstate 215 in the Fontana, San Bernardino County, California. The project site is depicted on the Guasti quadrangle of the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic map series in Section 20 of Township 1 South, Range 6 West. Specifically, the project site is located south of San Bernardino Avenue, west of Mulberry Avenue, east of Commerce Drive, and north of Valley Boulevard within Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 02389-031-32, -33, -34, -35, and -36.

Methodology

Prior to conducting the field investigation, a literature review and records search was conducted for burrowing owl potentially occurring on or within the vicinity of the project site. Previously recorded occurrences of burrowing owl and their proximity to the project site were determined through a query of the CDFW's QuickView Tool in the Biogeographic Information and Observation System (BIOS) and California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Rarefind 5.

The project site was surveyed by biologist Travis J. McGill on January 18, 2019. Survey transects were oriented east to west and spaced at 20-meter (approximately 60 feet) intervals throughout the project site to ensure 100 percent visual coverage of all areas with the potential to provide suitable habitat for burrowing owls. All transects were walked at a pace that allowed for careful/detailed observation. Methods to detect the presence of burrowing owl included direct observation, aural detection, and signs of presence including pellets, white wash, feathers, or prey remains. In addition, all suitable burrows encountered, including rock piles and remnant building foundations, were thoroughly examined for signs of presence. The presence of suitable natural burrows (> 4 inches in diameter) or suitable man-made structures (rock piles and non-

natural substrates), regardless of a lack of burrowing owl sign, were recorded on a hand-held GPS device.

Species Background

The burrowing owl is designated by the CDFW as a California species of special concern. It is a grassland specialist distributed throughout western North America where it occupies open areas with short vegetation and bare ground within shrub, desert, and grassland environments. Burrowing owls use a wide variety of arid and semi-arid environments with well-drained, level to gently-sloping areas characterized by sparse vegetation and bare ground. Agricultural fields, golf courses, cemeteries, airports, and vacant lots are also all utilized readily as breeding habitat (Poulin et al. 2011). While burrowing owls are resident year-round in southern California and the lower Southwest, across much of the United States, including northeastern California, this species is only a summer resident. Migrant burrowing owls supplement the resident populations in southern California in fall and winter.

Burrowing owls generally require two major characteristics in order to reside in an area: they require line-of-sight visibility for hunting and for guarding against predators, and they are dependent upon the presence of burrowing mammals (such as ground squirrels) for roosting and nesting habitat. Western burrowing owls (*A.c. hypugaea*) only very rarely dig their own burrows and generally must rely on natural or artificial burrows (Poulin et al. 2011). The presence or absence of colonial mammal burrows is often a major factor that limits the presence of burrowing owls. Where mammal burrows are scarce, burrowing owls have been found occupying man-made cavities, such as buried and non-functioning drain pipes, stand-pipes, and dry culverts. Small mammals may also burrow beneath rocks and debris or large, heavy objects such as abandoned cars, concrete blocks, or concrete pads.

The burrowing owl nesting season generally extends from mid-March to the end of August. Nests are typically constructed in an area that contains a high density of burrows and are typically placed in areas surrounded by bare ground or low-growing vegetation (Poulin et al. 2011). In southern California where burrowing owls are not migratory, they will utilize the same burrow year-round. Juvenile owls occupy several non-nest burrows prior to fledging and/or independence from adults. While they are capable of walking to other burrows at approximately two weeks of age, they do not typically fly away from their natal areas until between 44 and 53 days after hatching.

Existing Site Conditions

The project site is bordered by existing industrial developments to the north, east, and west, while the area immediately south of the project site supports an existing slag dump that has been graded and planted with vegetation and supports several concrete v-ditches for erosion control. On-site and surrounding land uses have eliminated naturally occurring habitats from the proposed project site and immediately surrounding area. The eastern half of the project site is limited to areas that have been developed, with the exception of an earthen basin near the southeast corner of the project site with maintained side slopes. The western half of the project site supports disturbed areas that have subject to routine disturbances (e.g., including weed abatement activities, soil stockpiling, and anthropogenic disturbances), and is covered with a layer of loose gravel.

Results

According to the CNDDDB, ten (10) occurrences of burrowing owl have been recorded within 5-miles of the project site. The project site is unvegetated and/or supports low-growing plant species that allow for line-of-sight observation favored by burrowing owls. However, despite a systematic search no burrowing owls or recent sign (i.e., pellets, feathers, castings, or white wash) was observed on or within 500 feet, where applicable, of the project site during the field investigation. Further, the project site lacks suitable burrows (>4 inches in diameter) capable of providing roosting and nesting opportunities. On-site disturbances (i.e., development and routine anthropogenic disturbances) have likely discouraged the use of the project site by burrowing owls. In addition, surrounding power poles, buildings, and towers further decrease the likelihood that burrowing owls would occur on-site as these features provide perching opportunities for larger raptor species (i.e., red-tailed hawk) that will prey on burrowing owls.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the field investigation, it was determined that the project site does not provide suitable habitat for burrowing owls due to the lack of suitable burrows, routine anthropogenic disturbances, and existing development. As a result, focused surveys are not recommended. However, out of an abundance of caution, a pre-construction burrowing owl clearance survey shall be conducted prior to development to ensure burrowing owl remain absent from the project site.

Please do not hesitate to contact Tom McGill at (951) 285-6014 or tmcgill@elmtconsulting.com or Travis McGill at (909) 816-1646 or travismcgill@elmtconsulting.com should you have any questions regarding this proposal.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. McGill, Ph.D.
Managing Director



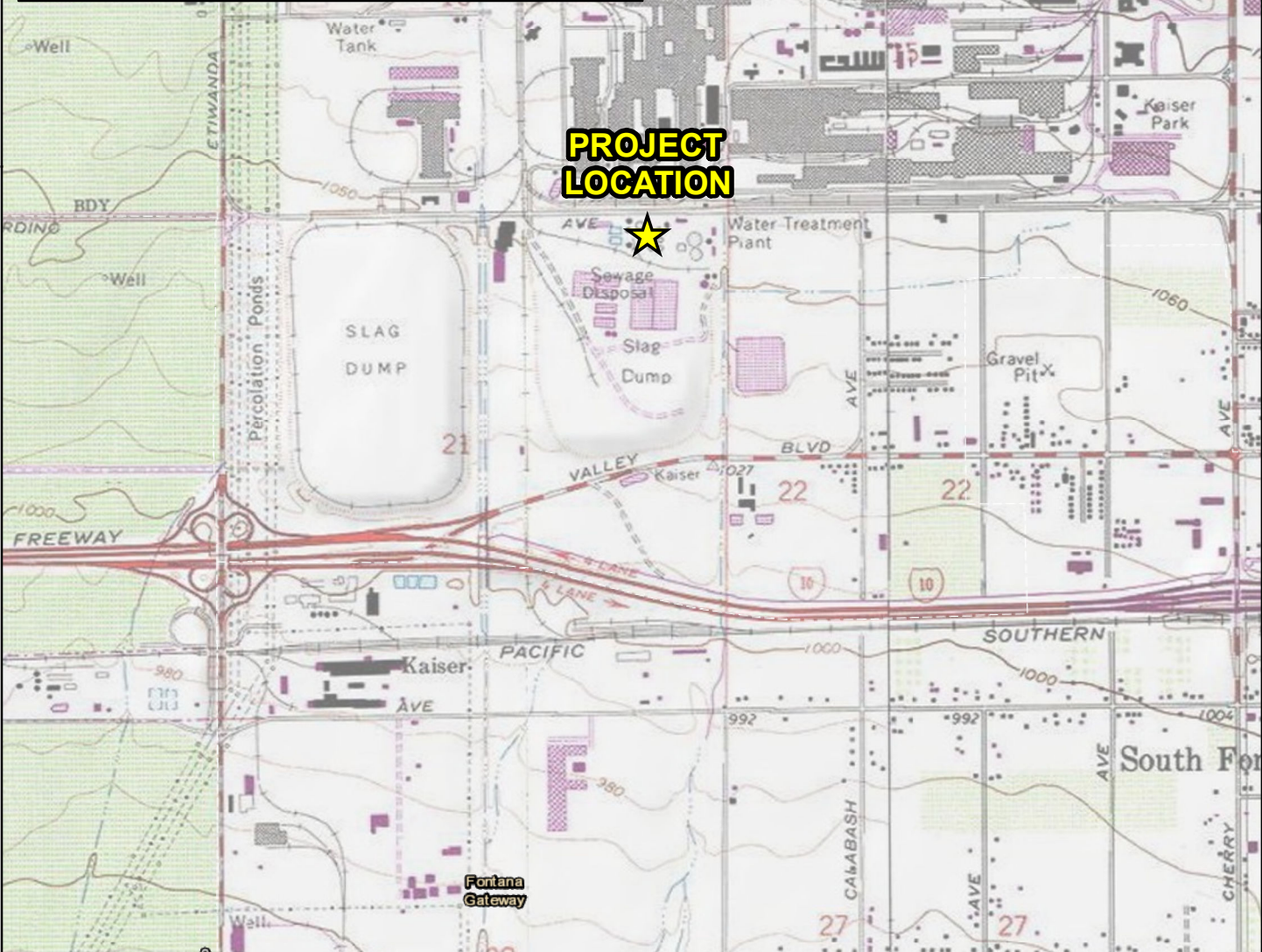
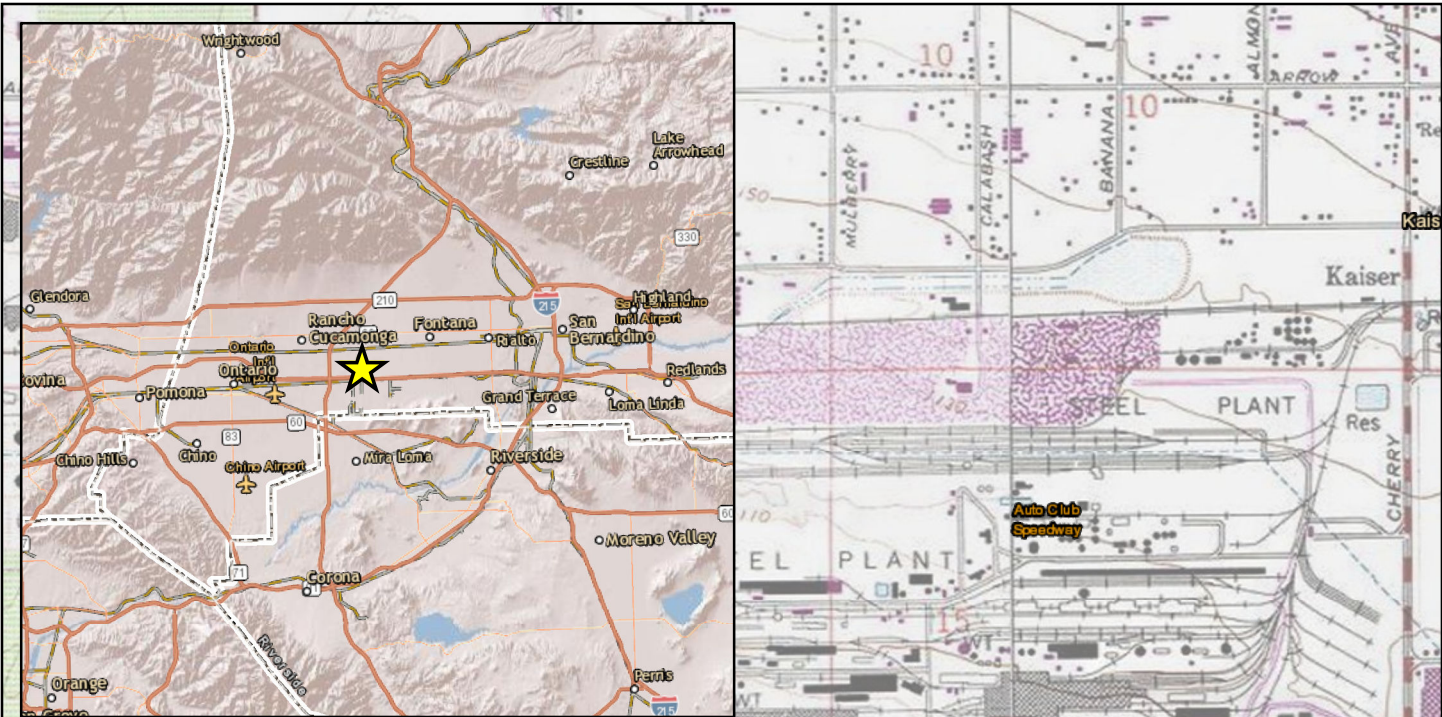
Travis J. McGill
Director

Attachments:

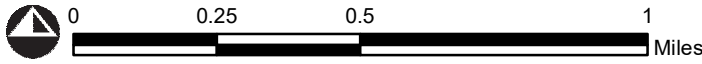
- A. *Project Exhibits*
- B. *Site Photographs*

Attachment A

Project Exhibits



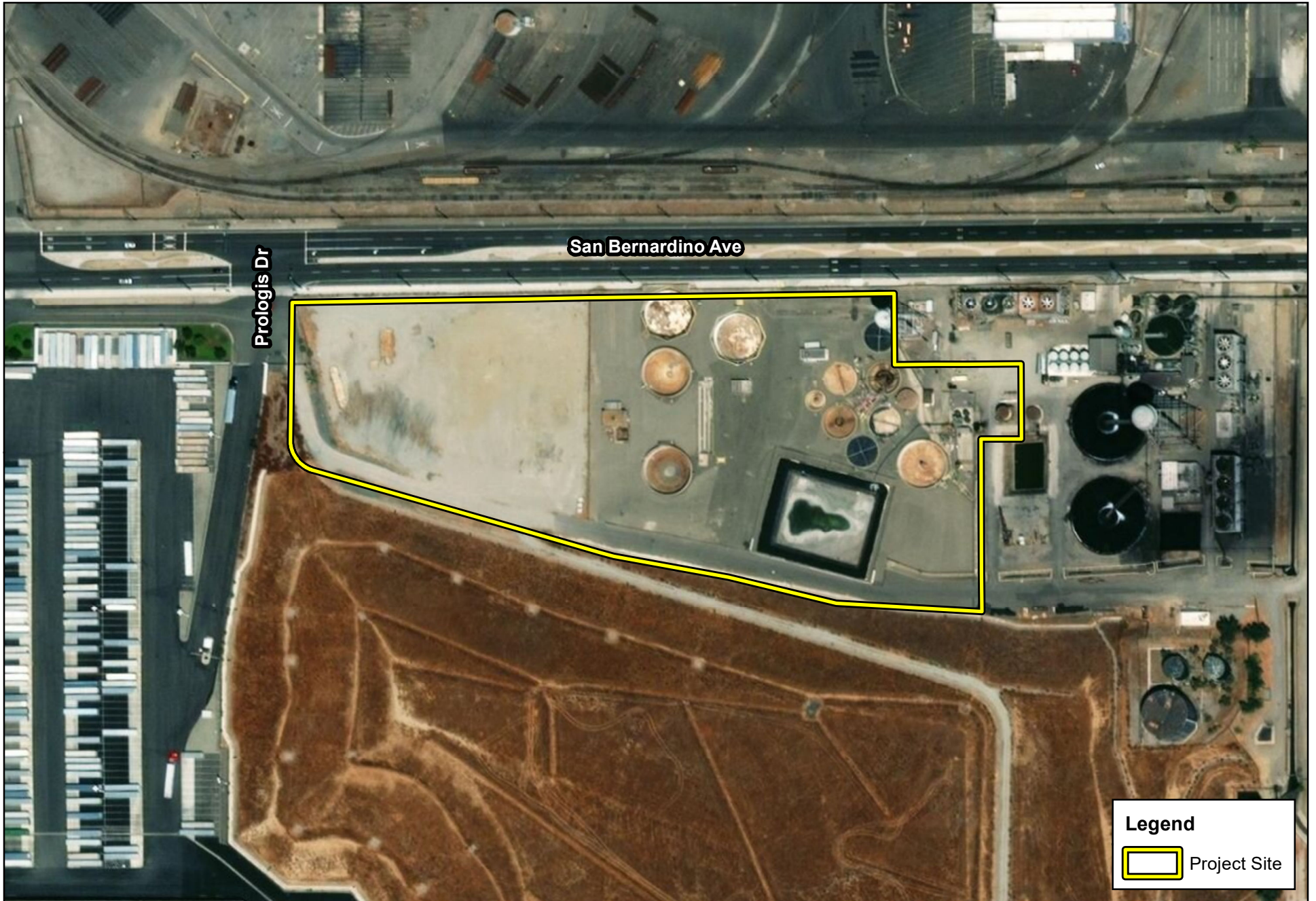
**PROJECT
LOCATION**



Source: USA Topographic Map, World Transportation, San Bernardino County

KAISER COMMERCE CENTER
BURROWING OWL SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

Regional & Site Vicinity

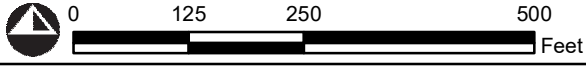


San Bernardino Ave

Prologis Dr

Legend

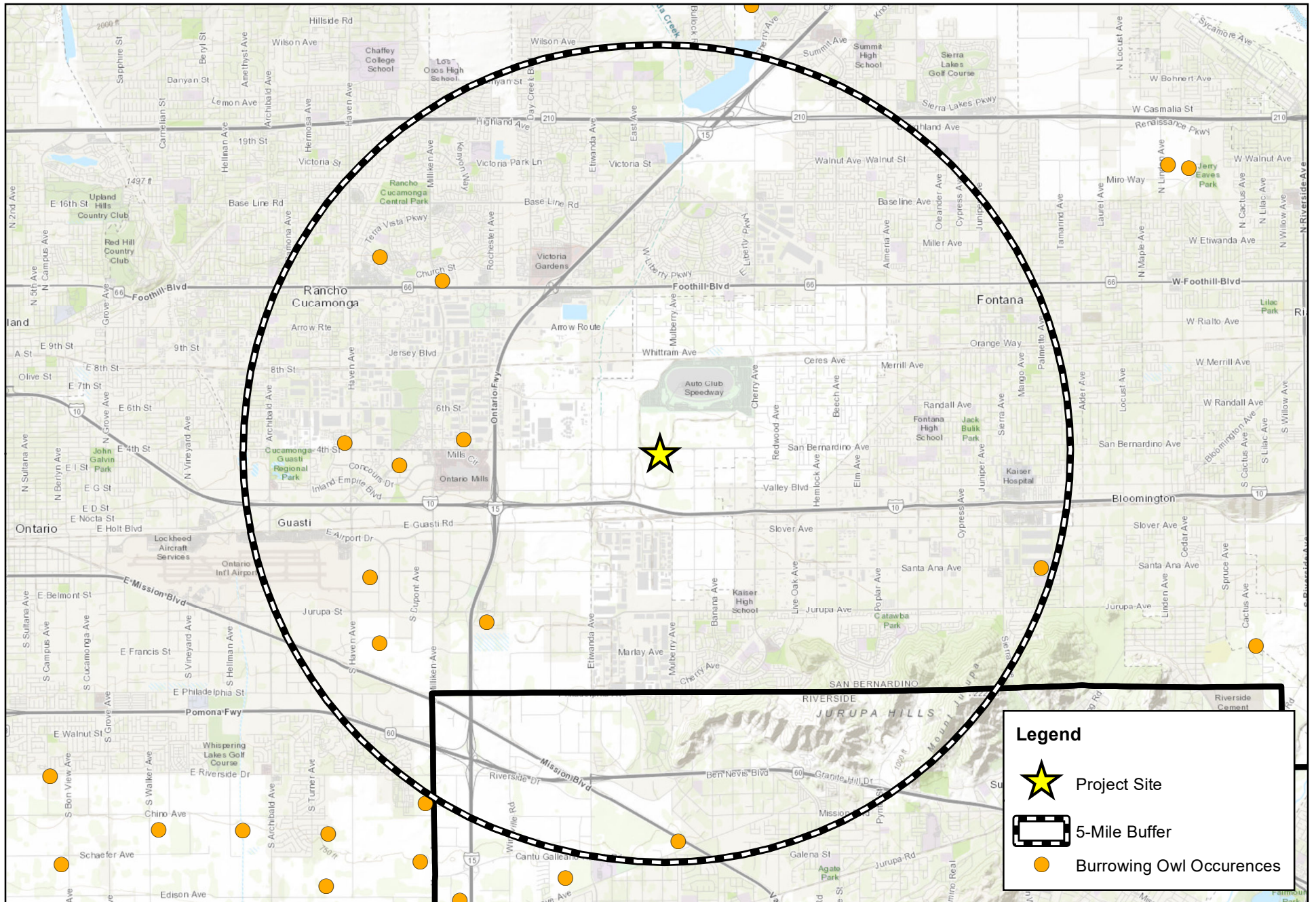
 Project Site



Source: ESRI Aerial Imagery, San Bernardino County

KAISER COMMERCE CENTER
BURROWING OWL SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

Project Site



Attachment B

Site Photographs



Photograph 1: From the southwest corner of the project site looking north along the western boundary.



Photograph 2: From the northeast corner of the undeveloped area on the western half of the project site looking west along the northern boundary of the site.



Photograph 3: From the northeast corner of the undeveloped area on the western half of the project site looking south across the middle of the project site.



Photograph 4: From the southwest corner of the project site looking northeast across the undeveloped western half of the project site.



Photograph 5: From the middle of the southern boundary of the project site, looking north at the developed eastern half of the project site.



Photograph 6: From the middle of the eastern half of the project site looking northwest at the existing developed area.



Photograph 7: From the northeast corner of the project site looking southwest.



Photograph 8: From the southeast corner of the project site looking northwest.



Photograph 9: Looking at the excavated basin near the southeast corner of the project site.



Photograph 9: From the southwest corner of the project site looking southeast at the undeveloped landfill to the south of the project site.



Photograph 10: From the middle of the southern boundary, looking east at the undeveloped landfill to the south of the project site.