3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This draft environmental impact report (draft EIR) evaluates the potential impacts of the Ball Estates project (project), a proposed subdivision of the existing approximately 61-acre project site in the unincorporated Alamo area of Contra Costa County (County). The project applicant, Camille Avenue, LLC, and Camille Ironwood Properties, LLC, is requesting a vesting tentative map for 35 residential lots located on approximately 20 acres in the lower northeastern portion of the project site. A staging (parking) area that would provide access to local trails is also proposed. The rest of the site, approximately 41 acres, would remain open space. The construction of roads, utilities, and ancillary services associated with the residential homes is considered as part of the project, as well as the removal of the two existing residences, office building, and auxiliary structures.

The Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development is the Lead Agency for this environmental review. The County has prepared this draft EIR to assess potential environmental impacts of the project and has prepared this draft EIR pursuant to the *2017 California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Statute and Guidelines*. CEQA requires all state and local government agencies to consider the environmental consequences of a project over which they have discretionary authority.

3.2 LOCATION

As shown in **Figure 3-1**, the project site is located in the Alamo area west of Danville Boulevard. Entry to the project site is available from the western terminus of two public streets: Camille Avenue and Ironwood Place.

The project site is surrounded by single-family residential development to the northwest, northeast, and southeast. Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, owned and managed by the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), borders the project site to the west and south. Camille Lane (a private street) forms the southeastern site boundary.

The property addresses are 300 and 333 Camille Avenue. The Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN), currently shown on the County Assessor's map, are 198-170-006 and 198-170-008 (see **Figure 3-2**). Five legal parcels currently comprise the project site. The County Assessor's map is not updated to reflect the five legal parcels, but Certificates of Compliance have been issued by the County. The applicant owns all five parcels.

The *Contra Costa County General Plan 2005-2020* (General Plan) designates the eastern approximately 20 acres of the project site as Single-Family Residential – Low Density (SL), which allows 1.0 to 2.9 units per acre. The remainder of the project site is designated Open Space (OS). The County Zoning Map designates the entire project site as Single-Family Residential – Lot Size 20,000-square-foot minimum (R-20).

3.3 SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The approximately 61-acre project site currently contains a residential estate, caretaker living quarters buildings, a barn and horse pasture area, an office building, two non-producing and abandoned walnut orchards, open space, and paved driveways.

The estate area includes an 8,000-square-foot house, swimming pool, pool house, and landscaping of native and exotic trees and pasture, ornamental shrubs, lawn, and flower gardens. The estate home was constructed between 1912 and 1914 and has been remodeled and modified many times. The property was purchased by the Ball Family in 1946, and the family resided on the property until recently.

An approximately 20,700-square-foot office building was approved pursuant to a use permit in the 1970s. The office building is served by a parking lot with approximately 45 parking spaces. Occupancy at the office building varies over time in accordance with market demand.

The barn and horse pasture area include an approximately 900-square-foot caretaker living quarters with an approximately 700-square-foot carport. A non-producing walnut orchard is located at the northern portion of the project site, and a second non-producing walnut orchard is located at the southeastern portion of the project site. These orchards are maintained by mowing and disking, but are not commercially farmed and the walnut trees have been abandoned.

The western two-thirds of the project site are designated as open space in the General Plan. This undeveloped, hilly area consists of oak-bay woodland, minor drainages, bluegum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*), non-native annual grassland, and scattered patches of chaparral. EBRPD lands are located west of this open space area, which are accessed by the EBRPD-managed Madrone Trail. This trail commences at the existing terminus of Camille Avenue and then skirts the southeastern property boundary until it reaches EBRPD property (see **Figure 3-3**).

The project site contains five seasonal freshwater wetlands and two intermittent drainages within the project site (see **Figure 4.10-1**). The drainages flow in an easterly direction, conveying runoff from open space land to the west to an offsite storm drainage system that ultimately drains to San Ramon Creek. Drainage 1 bisects the center of the project site, situated within the mature horticultural landscape south and east of the residence. Portions of Drainage 1 were relocated in the past. Drainage 2 travels along the southern boundary of the project site before dissipating into two seasonal wetlands.

Wetland 1 is located west of the estate residence, partially on proposed Lot 9 and proposed Parcel C, and may be associated with a seep and drainage on the upper hillside of the adjacent open space to the west. Wetlands 2 and 3 are located in the southeastern portion of the project site and are associated with culverted discharge from Drainage 2 and runoff from the parking lot and roof of the office buildings. Wetlands 4 and 5 are located on EBRPD property upstream of Drainage 2 (see **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**). Currently, stormwater runoff from the project site generally flows in an easterly direction to an offsite storm drain system that ultimately drains to San Ramon Creek. Approximately five percent of the existing site is considered impervious (paved and hardscaped areas that prevent rainwater from penetrating into the soil).

There are approximately 3,489 trees on the project site; approximately 2,754 in the upper open space areas and approximately 735 in the area proposed for development. Approximately 225 trees in the proposed development area are native species, such as blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), California black oak (*Q. kelloggii*), coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia*), valley oak (*Q. lobata*), California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*), California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), and western cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*). Remaining trees, including approximately 180 abandoned orchard trees, are not native to the Alamo area.

3.4 PROJECT COMPONENTS

As described below, the project would subdivide the approximately 61-acre site to create 35 residential lots (development area), open space divided into undeveloped parcels (Parcels A, B, and C), and one staging area (Parcel D) to be dedicated to an appropriate open space organization. **Figure 3-4** depicts the project site with the Parcel D staging area.

The project would be subject to covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs) creating a common interest subdivision. The CC&Rs would provide for the creation of a Homeowners Association (HOA) charged with mowing, maintaining, repairing, and replacing the private streets, portions of the undeveloped area and wetland mitigation areas created on site. The CC&Rs would also establish an Architectural Review Committee for construction of improvements on the lots, as well as Design Review Guidelines, an overall landscape plan, and Landscape Design Guidelines. Each future lot owner would be required to be a member of the HOA. The project would be phased pursuant to a vesting tentative map, and the applicant is seeking a development agreement, which is currently under review with the County.

3.4.1 DEVELOPMENT AREA

As shown in **Figure 3-4**, the northeastern approximately 20 acres of the project site would be divided into 35 residential lots ranging from approximately 20,000 square feet to approximately 52,000 square feet in area. Development density on these

approximately 20 acres would be approximately 1.76 units per acre, which is consistent with the prevailing General Plan designation and zoning. This subdivision would allow for the construction of 35 new single-family custom homes and associated roads, utilities, and ancillary services. Throughout this draft EIR, this area is interchangeably referred to as the 'development area', 'lower portion of the project site', and 'proposed residential portions of the project site'.

Under the proposed development plan, the existing residential estate, barn, caretaker living quarters, associated landscaping, auxiliary structures, office building, and parking lot would be removed from the site. Slopes within the project site near proposed Lots 10-14 and 18-20 would be repaired or geotechnical setbacks for the proposed structures would be established. Retaining walls (1 to 3 feet tall) are proposed on Lots 23-26 and 28. A retaining wall up to 12 feet tall is proposed on Lot 29.

3.4.2 OPEN SPACE AREA

The remaining approximately 41 acres of the project site would be protected from future development. For the purposes of this draft EIR, these parcels will collectively be referred to as the "upper portion of the project site" or the "open space area."

Parcel A - The approximately 1-acre Parcel A would be designated with a Scenic Easement and maintained by adjacent lot owners within the proposed subdivision or the future HOA.

Parcel B - The 34.7-acre Parcel B would be maintained as open space by the future property owners or HOA, or dedicated to an appropriate land conservation organization.

Parcel C - The 3.9-acre Parcel C would be a 100-foot-wide buffer between the residential development and the Parcel B open space. This parcel would be owned and maintained by future property owners or the HOA.

The project sponsor will provide a hazardous fire mitigation plan to address the abatement of hazardous weeds and brush to minimize fire fuel build up for all adjacent open space areas. To maintain 100 feet of defensible space and thereby reduce the risk of wildfires consistent with California Public Resources Code 4291, vegetation management will be required. The HOA will be responsible for reducing the amount of fuel within 100 feet of structures through annual mowing, grazing, pruning lower limbs from trees and removing dead vegetation (with mowing permitted only insofar as the 100-foot buffer overlaps private backyards of project residents). The plan will be required to be reviewed by the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District and a County appointed biologist to ensure fire abatement will avoid impacts to biologic resources. The plan will be included as part of the project Covenants, Conditions, & Restrictions.

Parcel D - The 0.52-acre Parcel D would include a staging area for public parking and access to the adjacent EBRPD property via the existing Madrone Trail (see **Figure 3-4**). This staging area would include 19 parking spaces and a restroom. Additionally, a trail and small pedestrian bridge crossing an existing drainage channel would be constructed on the

adjacent EBRPD property. This crossing is discussed further in **Section 4.4**, **Biological Resources**, and **Section 4.10**, **Hydrology and Water Quality**.

A new trail through the adjacent EBRPD property would connect the Parcel D staging area to the existing Madrone Trail. A 22-foot-wide roadway would provide vehicular access from B Lane to the staging area parking lot. The paved surface of the staging area would be approximately 9,800 square feet, with drainage constructed according to County and EBRPD standards. The area disturbed by grading for the staging area and access road would be approximately 25,000 square feet. The existing pedestrian trail along Camille Lane would continue to provide hiker and equestrian access to Madrone Trail.

An 8-foot wide connector trail would be constructed in accordance with EBRPD standards across adjacent property owned by EBRPD for a distance of approximately 100 feet to the existing EBRPD Madrone Trail. This connector trail would cross a small drainage with a pedestrian bridge. The area disturbed by grading for the connecting trail would be approximately 800 square feet. If EBRPD does not accept the staging area, these areas would remain undeveloped and be owned and maintained by the HOA.

3.4.3 CIRCULATION AND TRAFFIC

Access to the project site from public streets would be controlled by a gate, which would also allow access to the Parcel D staging area during daylight hours. Trail access to the undeveloped portions of the site would be afforded by existing public hiking and equestrian trails, and a new connecting trail.

As shown on **Figure 3-4**, the project would include the following circulation modifications:

- **Ironwood Place (private)**: Ironwood Place would be extended north and west, approximately 760 feet from its current terminus. The new road would be approximately 28 feet wide. A gate would be installed between Lots 1 and 14.
- **Turnaround on Ironwood Place (public)**: A turnaround would be constructed on Ironwood Place on the public side of the proposed gate. This improvement would occur outside of the project boundary and be dedicated to Contra Costa County. A lot line adjustment between three parcels (APN: 198-262-002; 198-262-003; and 198-262-004) would be filed separately to accommodate the turnaround.
- **Emergency Access Road (EVA)**: A 20-foot-wide paved EVA would be constructed between Lots 5 and 6, connecting the existing Ironwood Place (terminating at the northwest project site boundary) to the proposed extension of Ironwood Place. An eight-foot-tall EVA gate attached to an 8-foot fence would be installed on the common property line between the project and the existing Ironwood Place.
- **Turnaround on Camille Avenue (public)**: A turnaround would be constructed at the end of Camille Avenue located on the public side of the proposed gate that would be

installed between Lots 15 and 21. This improvement would occur mostly within and partly outside the project boundary, and would be dedicated to the County.

- **"A" Drive (private)**: A 28-foot-wide roadway would be constructed south of Camille Avenue. The new road would be approximately 420 feet in length. A gate would be installed at its entryway at the end of the proposed Camille Avenue turnaround.
- **"A" Court (private)**: A 28-foot-wide roadway would be constructed south of A Drive. The new road would be approximately 250 feet in length.
- **"B" Lane (private)**: A 20-foot-wide roadway would be constructed at the end of A Drive to the south. The new road would be approximately 140 feet in length.
- **"B" Court (private)**: A new roadway would be constructed at the end of A Drive to the north. The new road would be 20-to 28-feet wide and approximately 640 feet in length. The "B" Court alignment would have a 20-foot by 40-foot bridge over a drainage channel on the project site.
- **Access easement from "B" Court:** An easement from "B" court that extends over Lot 28 would provide access to the Parcel D staging area, and would be 22-feet wide and approximately 250 feet in length.
- **Parcel B and C Access Easements:** Two easements for emergency access and maintenance would be provided to parcels B and C from Ironwood Place and crosses over Lots 8 and 9.
- **EBRPD Trail Easement**: EBRPD would continue to maintain an existing 10-foot-wide trail easement along Camille Lane and Lots 15 through 18, 27, and 28.
- **Connector Trail**: The Parcel D staging area would include an 8-foot-wide, approximately 100-foot-long connector trail constructed from the staging area to the existing Madrone Trail. The connector trail would travel across property owned by EBRPD and include a pedestrian bridge to cross a small drainage.
- **Sidewalks:** Sidewalks will be installed on one side of the street from the two project entrances, extending through the project along A Drive, B Court, and Ironwood Place, and ending at the cul-de-sacs of B Court and Ironwood Place to provide safe pedestrian access within the project. Sidewalks will be 4.5 feet wide including curbs.

3.4.4 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

The project would be served by extending existing utilities from the adjacent streets abutting the project site. East Bay Municipal Utilities District would deliver water to the project. Central Contra Costa Sanitary District would provide sewer services. Pacific Gas & Electric would provide electricity and gas. Garbage and recycling would be hauled by Allied Waste. A full discussion of these services can be found in **Section 4.17, Utilities and Service Systems**.

All existing and new utility distribution facilities (electric, communication, cable TV, etc.) will be required to be installed underground. This requirement would exclude transformers, terminal boxes, and meter cabinets, all of which PWD recommends placing outside any sidewalk area to the maximum extent feasible.

3.5 CONSTRUCTION

The applicant plans to phase the project and potentially file more than one final map. Construction would commence by establishing tree protection zones and fencing of the open spaces areas. Demolition activities would then remove the existing office building, barn, caretaker living quarters, auxiliary structures, and trees. After demolition, the proposed residential portions of the project site would be cleared and stripped of vegetation, trunks, rocks, sod, and other unwanted materials. Earthwork would commence following site clearance, leveling the project site for building lots, geotechnical stability features, drainage facilities, streets, and other infrastructure. Erosion control measures would also be installed during this phase. Creation of the wetland mitigation area would occur concurrent with, or prior to, filling of onsite wetlands. Portions of onsite drainages would also be relocated at this time. Underground utility lines would be installed after grading, followed by fine grading and paving of streets. Comprehensive site-wide improvements would be complete upon the outset of paving activities, and construction of the staging area and pedestrian bridge, connecting the proposed EBRPD staging area to Madrone Trail, would occur concurrent with the construction of paved access from Camille Avenue to the staging area (i.e., "A" Drive). Upon the completion of construction of the site-wide improvements, the individual building lots would be ready for home construction.

For the purposes of this draft EIR, project construction is conservatively assumed to occur over a 30-month period, which includes grading, infrastructure installation (including streets and storm drain facilities), and the construction of the residential homes. However, actual construction of the single-family homes would be market driven, and may extend over a 10-year period. When undeveloped, the prepared lots of any phase would be required to be maintained in accordance with an erosion control plan with best management practices and periodic inspections.

3.5.1 GRADING AND DRAINAGE

Construction of the project would involve earthmoving activities such as excavation, grading, soil stockpiling, and filling. Approximately 26,000 cubic yards of material would be excavated and balanced on site.

There are currently two creek drainages that convey seasonal runoff from open space land to the west through the project site. The project would fill approximately 223 linear feet of channel in these drainages, but would daylight (i.e., expose a previously covered

channel) approximately 295 linear feet of channel. Some of the vegetation lining the drainages would be removed to reduce safety hazards and facilitate construction, but the drainages would be enhanced with new native plantings. Refer to **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**, for additional information regarding drainage modifications.

There are several areas of seasonal freshwater wetland within the project site; some of these areas would be filled to allow for development. Mitigation for the fill of wetlands will be accomplished through the creation of seasonal freshwater wetlands at a minimum 1:1 replacement ratio within the project site, at an approved wetland mitigation bank, or at another location within the Walnut Creek watershed approved by the appropriate regulatory agencies. Refer to **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**, for additional information regarding wetland mitigation.

The project would result in new impervious surfaces, including roadways, structures, and the EBRPD staging area, that would increase the amount of impervious surface on the project site from approximately 3.02 acres to approximately 6.55 acres. Stormwater runoff from the project site would be conveyed from new impervious surfaces (roadways, sidewalks, lots, and the staging area) to bioretention facilities. After detention and percolation, treated stormwater would be conveyed to a new underground stormwater system serving the project, which would ultimately intertie with existing stormwater facilities along Camille Avenue and Hemme Avenue.

Consistent with the above, new drainage modifications include:

- Rerouting water from the northern orchard to the existing Camille Avenue drainage system and to a catch basin at the end of Ironwood Place, where the existing runoff pattern is inadequate and floods through rear yards of the homes fronting both sides of Iron Gate Court.
- Rerouting water that currently flows into a small culvert under Camille Lane, which is inadequate and has a history of overflowing onto the road, into a catch basin and storm drain with adequate capacity.

For more information regarding drainage, refer to **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**.

3.5.2 LANDSCAPING AND TREE REMOVAL

As indicated by the applicant's consulting arborist, approximately 469 trees would be removed from all roads, lots, the proposed wetland mitigation area, and the Parcel D staging area. Trees proposed for removal are falling; poorly formed; at risk of mechanical failure; crowding or interfering with the development of a healthier, more prominent tree; part of a declining, maladapted species; of a species generally unsuited to the Alamo climate; or must be removed for grading lots and constructing streets within the project site. Many trees proposed for removal would require mitigation under the arborist's recommendations; however, the County would ultimately determine adequate tree

replacement (see **Mitigation Measure BIO-8**). In addition, the project also proposes to slightly impact approximately 205 trees through pruning, hydrologic modification, or other disturbances that would not entail tree removal. Additional details regarding tree preservation and removal can be found in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

Landscaping within the residential lots would be established once the properties are purchased and house footprints are proposed. Tree replacement would occur once street improvements and homes are constructed. The CC&Rs for the project will require landscape screening and tree replacement, preservation, and mitigation in accordance with a Landscape Design Plan to be developed by the applicant, as required by the County. The landscaping would be planted at the building permit stage for each lot as conditioned during the tentative map process.

3.6 INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR

This draft EIR does not recommend approval or denial of a project by any authorized entity. Instead, this document discloses information to the County and interested parties regarding the impacts of the project. The County is the Lead Agency under CEQA and is responsible for review and certification of this draft EIR. The Lead Agency is required to consider the information in this draft EIR, along with any other relevant information, when deliberating project approval. Other agencies may also use this draft EIR in their review and approval processes.

The applicant would use the analysis contained within this draft EIR to support the issuance of the following discretionary approvals:

- United States Army Corps of Engineers: 404 Clean Water Act – Nationwide Permit
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service: Section 7 Consultation
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife: 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement
- Regional Water Quality Control Board: 401 Water Quality Certification
- Vesting Tentative Map
- Tree Removal Permit
- Exception to the Creek Structure Setback Line, reducing setback from 30 to 20 feet (Lots 21 and 22) and establishing setback line at the top of the creek bank in consideration of topography (Lots 23 and 24)
- Exceptions to structure setback requirements for project streets, including A Drive, A Lane, and B Court in consideration of preserving trees
- Exceptions to structure setback requirements for 2 project bridges, including A Lane and B Court in consideration of preserving the creeks and avoiding fill in the bed and banks of the stream

- Exception for length of cul-de-sac, allowing for 1,075-foot extension of Camille Avenue and an 800-foot extension of Ironwood Place with emergency vehicle access approved by the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District
- Exception to radius of right-of-way of public cul-de-sac, allowing a 35-foot radius consistent with San Ramon Valley Fire Protection Agency standards, in consideration of preserving trees
- Exception to crown design at new Camille Avenue cul-de-sac in consideration of preserving trees and provide a better transition with existing Camille Lane.
- Exception from offsite collect and convey requirements (diversion of runoff) to avoid stormwater flows through inadequate systems on existing residential yards, improving existing conditions
- Exception to require sidewalks on one side of A Drive, B Court, and the extension of Ironwood Place, in consideration of preserving trees.
- Exception to the geometry for cul de sacs, to comply with the standards of the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection Agency (SRVFPD) for all cul de sacs within the project, and the two proposed public cul de sacs located at the two entrances to the project at the ends of Camille Avenue and Ironwood Place.
- Variance for an 8-foot fence along the property lines of Lot 5 and Lot 6 (across the width of Ironwood Place) with an 8-foot-high gate.
- Approval of lot line adjustments for three existing lots on Ironwood Place to allow construction of a public cul-de-sac on APN 198-262-002, 198-262-003, and 198-262-004

The environmental review and certification process includes:

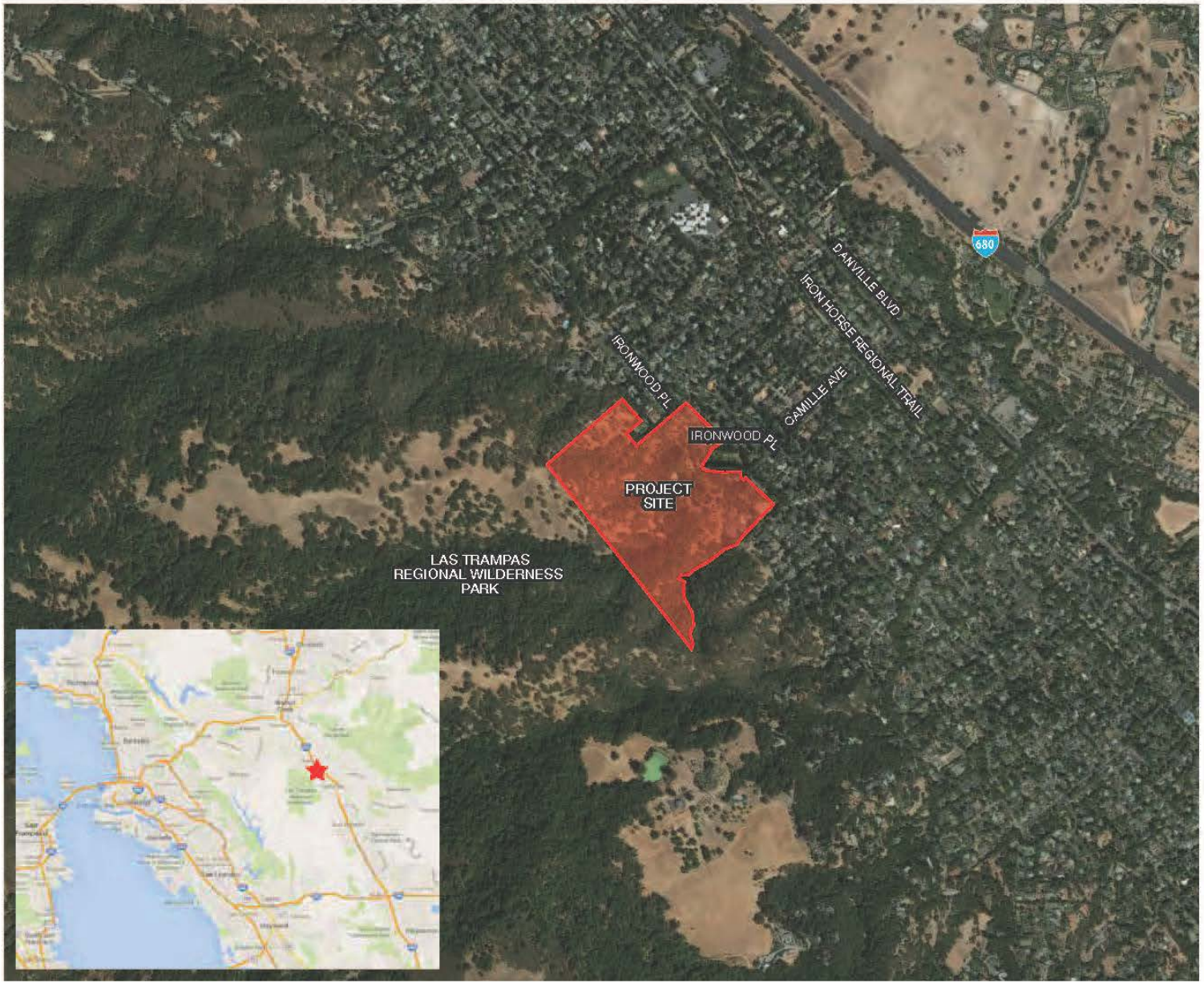
- Publication and circulation of this draft EIR for a 60-day public review period
- Preparation of a final EIR that includes written responses to comments received on the draft EIR and any errata or revisions to the draft EIR

The County must certify the final EIR before taking any action to approve or deny the project.

3.7 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Section 15124(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that this project description include a statement of the project objectives. The applicant has identified the following objectives for the project:

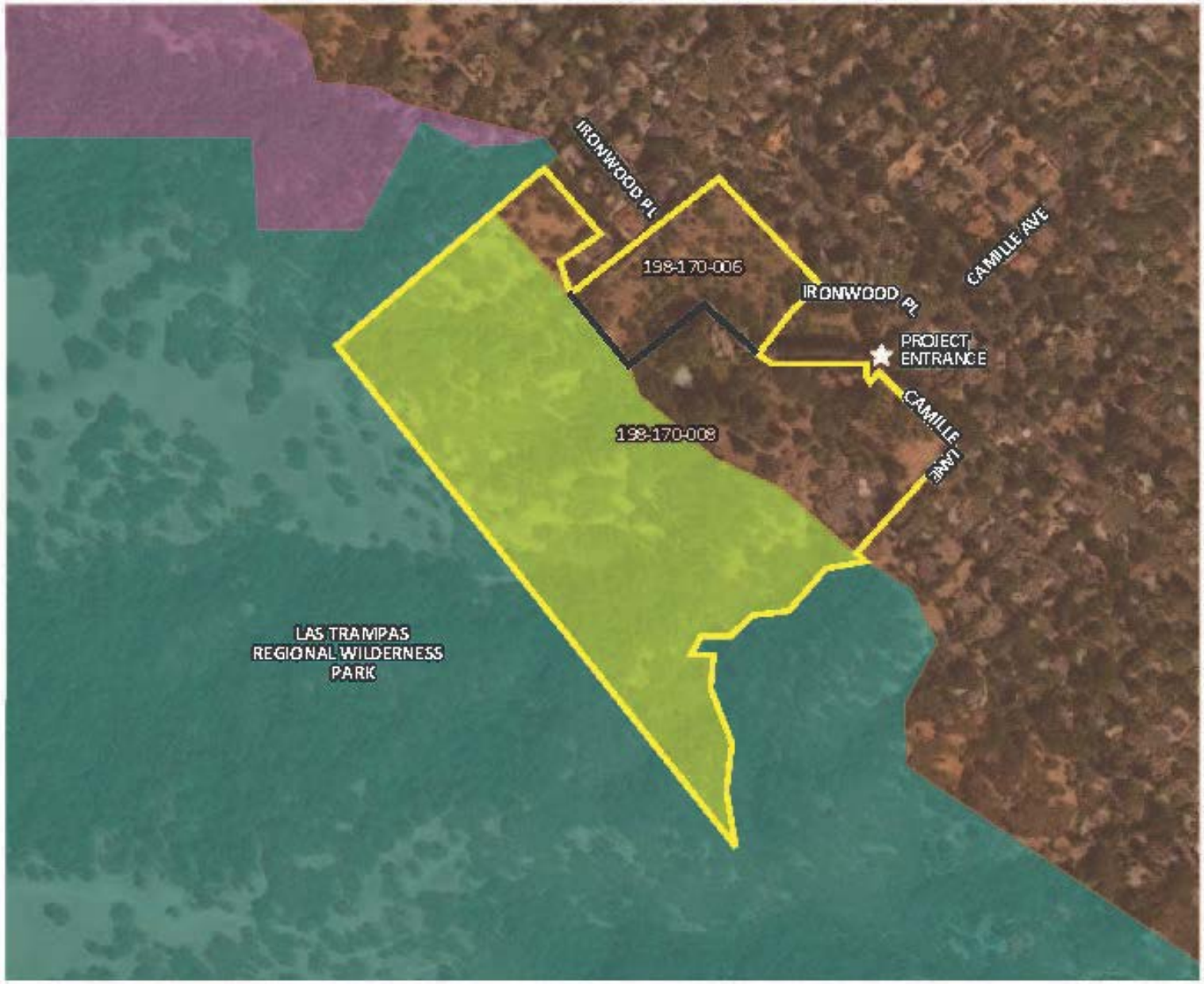
- **Develop the property consistent with the existing General Plan and Zoning.** The project as proposed would provide residential opportunities in accordance with the project site's existing Single Family Residential-Low Density General Plan land use designation and R-20 zoning designation. The open space area would be permanently restricted from development, except for the area being developed as a staging area (Parcel D).
- **Develop the property within the land use density of the General Plan.** The proposed density for the 35 new lots is 1.76 units per acre, within the 2.9 units per acre allowed in the General Plan.
- **Establish high-quality infill development.** Establish a high-quality, aesthetically pleasing infill residential development that is compatible with neighboring residential areas and creates a thoughtfully laid out and highly livable environment for future homeowners.
- **Maximize residential development potential to alleviate development pressures on more sensitive lands.** Maximize the residential development potential of the project site so as to alleviate development pressures on open space land and address housing needs in the County, while ensuring consistency with surrounding residential uses, avoiding to the extent feasible development on hillsides, and giving consideration to the environmental footprint of development.
- **Remove the commercial office building from a residential neighborhood.** The implementation of the project would remove the existing office building.
- **Preserve and enhance habitat.** Preserve the majority of the project site as open space to be used for the creation of wetlands, if feasible, as well as habitat enhancement and flood control. Grade the residential lots to a minimal level to preserve trees, with building areas established among them, generally conforming to the natural environment of the project site.
- **Repair unstable slopes within the project site.** Slopes at the rear of the proposed lots along the open space boundary are generally stable and do not require extensive slope repair. Slopes constructed with fill were placed near the estate home in the 1940s and east of the office building in the 1960s to provide a usable area for the estate development and parking for the office building. These slopes were not constructed with engineered fill and would be repaired.



Project Location

Figure 3-1

Source: Google Earth, 2014.



Assessor's Parcel Numbers and Surrounding Land Uses

Figure 3-2

Source: Google Earth, 2014; Circlepoint, 2016

Legend

- Project Site
- Hiker, Horse, Bike Paved Trail
- Hiker, Horse, Bike Unpaved Trail

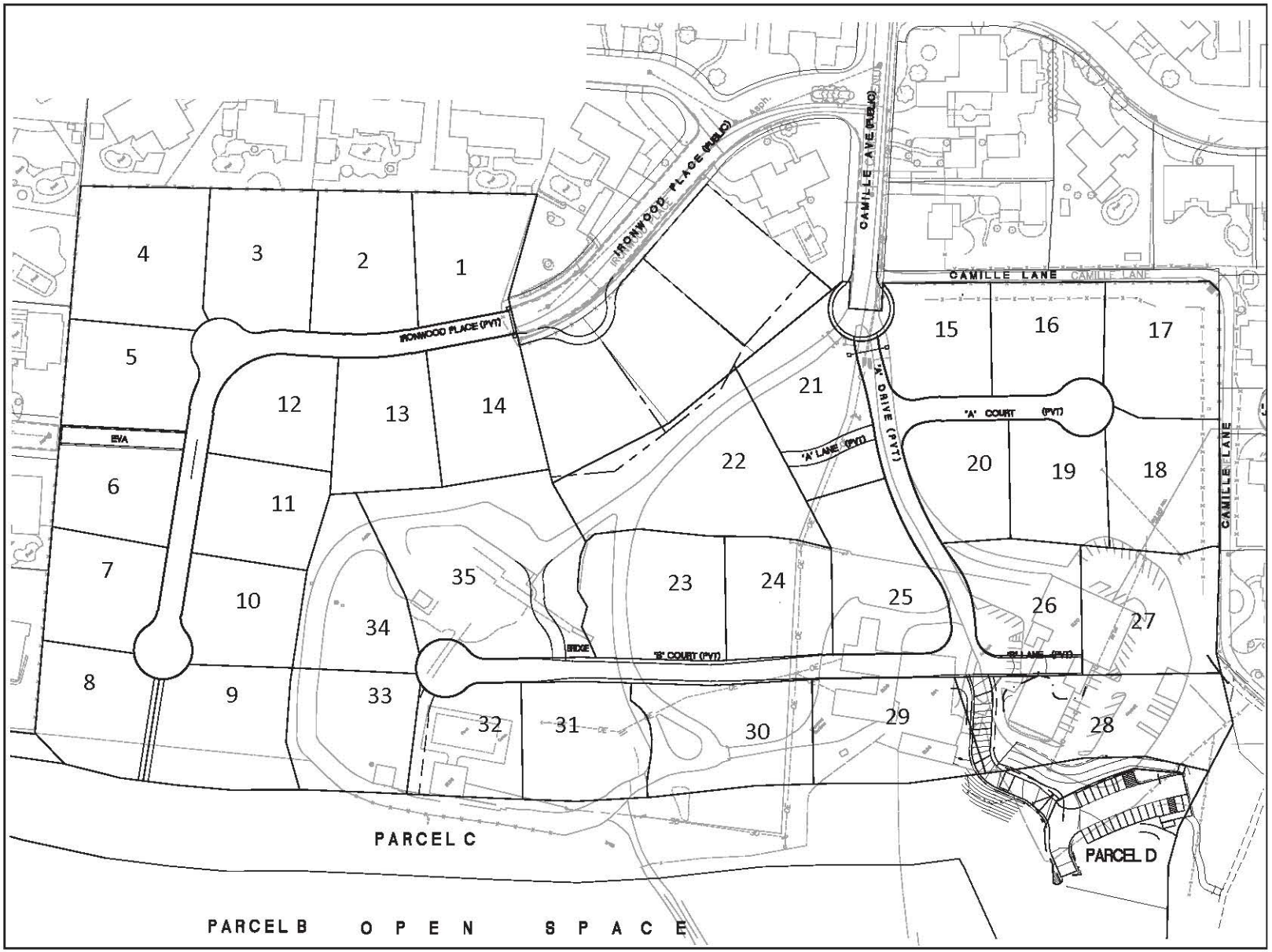
N

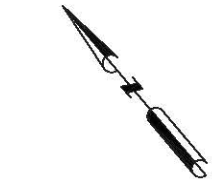
0 1/16 1/8 1/4 MILE

Regional Park and Trail Facilities

Figure 3-3

Source: East Bay Regional Park District, 2016.





Scale (in feet)

100 240

Ball Estates Site Plan - Parcel D Staging Area

Figure **3-4**

Source: Aliquot Associates, 2017

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