4. **Project Description**

4.1 **Project Location**

The Proposed Project, known as Esperanza Hills, is located within unincorporated Orange County north of the SR-91 Freeway off Yorba Linda Boulevard, south and west of Chino Hills State Park, east and north of the Cielo Vista project (another proposed project within unincorporated Orange County), and adjacent to existing residential development within the adjacent City of Yorba Linda (City). The project is east of San Antonio Road and north of Stonehaven Drive (Via del Agua). The site is within the Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) designated Sphere of Influence (SOI) for the City as depicted on Exhibit 4-1 – Sphere of Influence Map, City of Yorba Linda. This exhibit also depicts the regional location of the Project Site.

The Project Site is an irregular-shaped parcel bordered by land owned by the Amos Travis Trust to the west and the Virginia Simmons Trust to the southwest, which are part of the adjacent proposed development known as the Cielo Vista project. Below the project's southern border is an area dedicated as open space within the City. Property owned by the Friend family under the entity "Bridal Hills, LLC" borders the Proposed Project to the north and west, and property owned by Yorba Linda Land, LLC borders the Proposed Project to the northwest. North and east of the Proposed Project is Chino Hills State Park, which lies between developed land in Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties. Existing residential communities to the south and west and previously developed in the City of Yorba Linda include Dominguez Ranch, Green Hills, Casino Ridge, Travis Ranch, and Yorba Linda Hills. Exhibit 2-1 - Project Vicinity Map (page 2-2) provides further detail regarding the project location.

4.2 Existing Conditions

Rolling hills characterize the Project Site, which ranges in elevation from approximately 600 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) at the southwest boundary to approximately 1,540 feet at the northern boundary of the property. The property supports a mix of habitats, including non-native grasslands with locally dominant stands of coastal sage scrub, chaparral, limited areas of riparian habitat and, historically, small stands of walnut and oak woodlands. Exhibit 4-3 through Exhibit 4-7 include photographs of the site as it currently exists. Exhibit 4-2 is a location key map depicting the location and direction from which the photographs were taken.

Four intermittent drainage areas are located in canyons on or near the site and are identified herein as Blue Mud Canyon, Canyon A, Canyon B and Canyon C. Blue Mud Canyon runs along the southern portion of the property in an east-west direction.

Canyon B crosses the western portion of the site (northern portion of the Yorba Trails property) and is currently used for hiking and equestrian purposes and extends north to the Bridal Hills, LLC land through the Yorba Linda Land, LLC land and then into Chino Hills State Park. The intermittent drainages and related site features are illustrated on Exhibit 4-8 – Physical Characteristics.

The Whittier Fault runs along the southern portion of the site. Testing shows that no northern fault traces extend into the development planning areas. The property has been utilized historically for animal grazing and is currently used for oil production (three working wells), water line transmission (Metropolitan Water District and Yorba Linda Water District), and energy transmission (Southern California Edison). Oil production is anticipated to continue on the Project Site at existing locations. Access to these existing uses is via dirt roads on the site off Stonehaven Drive. Exhibit 4-8 – Physical Characteristics depicts the location of the oil wells and utility easements.

Table 4-2-1 Surrounding Land Uses				
Location	Description			
North	Chino Hills State Park			
East	Chino Hills State Park			
North/northwest	Yorba Linda Land, LLC and Bridal Hills, LLC			
West	Amos Travis Trust Property (proposed Cielo Vista project)			
Southwest	Virginia Simmons Trust property (proposed Cielo Vista project)			
South	Dedicated open space (City of Yorba Linda)			

Table 4-2-1 below depicts the existing land uses surrounding the Project Site.

The entire Project Area was burned in the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire that occurred in the fall of 2008. The fire burned over 30,000 acres, with 381 structures lost or damaged, including 187 residences¹. Because of the potential fire hazard represented by the wildland/open space areas in Chino Hills State Park along the northern and eastern boundaries of the Proposed Project, special fuel management practices have been incorporated into the project in addition to the standard fuel modification zones required by the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA).

The Bridal Hills property adjacent to the Project Site is a reasonably foreseeable development and will gain access through the Proposed Project Site. Therefore, Bridal Hills has been included in the Project analysis.

¹ Orange County Fire Authority "After Action Report, Freeway Complex Fire, November 15, 2008," page 12; http://www.wildlandfire.com/docs/2008/lessons-learn/freeway-cplx-aar.pdf (accessed July 2013)

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Exhibit 4-1 – Sphere of Influence Map, City of Yorba Linda



Exhibit 4-2 – Photo Locations Key



Photo 1 - View looking westerly towards City of Yorba Linda



Photo 2 – View looking easterly towards SCE transmission lines and residences in Hidden Hills to the east of Chino Hills State Park

Exhibit 4-3 – Site Photos 1 and 2



Photo 3 - View looking easterly near access road off San Antonio Road



Photo 4 – View looking easterly towards SCE transmission lines

Exhibit 4-4 – Site Photos 3 and 4



Photo 5 – View looking northwesterly over access road from Metropolitan Water District easement



Photo 6 - View looking southwesterly along Canyon C

Exhibit 4-5 – Site Photos 5 and 6



Photo 7 – View from Simmons property western border looking east toward Yorba Linda Estates property



Photo 8 – View from Simmons property western border looking west to Aspen Way

Exhibit 4-6 – Site Photos 7 and 8



Photo 9 – View of entrance from Yorba Linda Water District Road looking east to Hidden Hills



Photo 10 – View of entrance looking east toward Aspen Way

Exhibit 4-7 – Site Photos 9 and 10

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4.3 **Project Description**

The Project Site contains a total area of approximately 468.9 acres and has been designed to provide a maximum of 340 residences in large-lot, low-density neighborhoods. Exhibit 4-9 – Conceptual Site Plan, Option 1 - Stonehaven Drive and Exhibit 4-10 – Conceptual Site Plan, Option 2 - Aspen Way depict the proposed development configuration under each option. Development will occur in two phases, with each phase being a distinct planning area. The planning areas are depicted on Exhibit 4-11 – Planning Areas. Table 4-3-1 below provides a development summary for the Proposed Project. Both Planning Areas are included for comparison.

Table 4-3-1	Planning Area Statistics						
Development	Gross Area (acres)	Dwelling Units per Acre	Number of Lots Option 1/Option 2 (DU)	Parks Option 1/Option 2 (acres)	Trails Option 1/Option 2 (feet)	Landscaped Slopes Option 1/Option 2 (acres)	Fuel Modification Option 1/Option 2 (acres)
Planning Area 1	310.00	0.71	212/218	6.35/5.37	28,116/31,371	91.1/81.77	34.39/39.81
Planning Area 2	158.90	0.76	122	6.81	7,740	45.6	49.12
Esperanza Hills	468.90	0.73	334/340	13.16/12.18	35,856/39,111	135.8/126.6	83.51/88.93

Planning Area 1 provides up to 218 lots on 310 acres with minimum building pads that are 70 feet wide and 140 feet deep, and minimum lot size of approximately 12,000 square feet. Planning Area 1 contains four parks, a water reservoir, open space, existing natural open space, riparian areas, and a trail corridor linking to surrounding properties. Planning Area 1 is located on land owned by Yorba Linda Estates, LLC and Yorba Trails, LLC.

Planning Area 2 provides 122 units (including two estate lots) on 159 acres located at the higher elevation on the portion of the property owned by the Nicholas Long family. Minimum building pads are 90 feet wide and 110 feet deep. Planning Area 2 will contain five parks, an underground water reservoir, open space, existing natural open space, a trail system that connects to Canyon B the west, and two estate lots that have the opportunity for ancillary uses such as equestrian and/or viticulture.

Potential areas of off-site grading will be required to provide access connections to existing streets and emergency access roads, as well as to stabilize an existing landslide on the site's western boundary. At the time of this writing, the Project Applicant has not secured approval for the proposed off-site improvements for Option 2. An agreement between property owners must be entered into prior to issuance of permits allowing off-site improvements for Option 2.

Residential

The residential areas will have an average lot size of 18,553 square feet. Lots range from 12,044 square feet to 39,354 square feet (exclusive of estate lots). The two estate lots in Planning Area 2 are custom building sites with their design theme to be determined by lot purchasers. The estate lots are 21.78 acres with a building pad limited to 2.65 acres and 2.08 acres with building pad limited to 1.11 acres. The Proposed Project is designed to cluster residential pads to maximize open space preservation and preserve the natural ridgelines and topography to the greatest degree possible, including all major ridgelines bordering Chino Hills State Park.

Access

Two options for roadway access to the Proposed Project have been designed.

- 1. Option 1 would provide a primary connection going south to Stonehaven Drive following an existing dirt road that has been used for oil well and utility access purposes. A separate ingress/egress road for emergency purposes only would extend south along the western edge of the project through the adjacent Cielo Vista property. This access will pass through the adjacent Cielo Vista project via a 50-foot roadway and utility easement and may impact that project's lot design.
- 2. Option 2 would provide a primary connection going west from the site to Aspen Way, which then connects to San Antonio Road. This is the primary access that was contemplated in the 1993 Yorba Linda GP, but will require an access and grading easement over the Cielo Vista property or other legal entitlement. Option 2 provides a separate ingress/egress exit for emergency purposes only, exiting south from the Proposed Project to Stonehaven Drive and following the existing road currently used for oil well and utility access purposes.

The access options are detailed below in the Project Entry section of this chapter (page 4-19). Depending upon which access option is approved, the approximate acreages will be developed as follows:

- 1. 112 to 114 acres for useable residential pad area
- 2. 129 acres as natural open space
- 3. 13 acres with landscaped parks/water quality detention basins
- 4. 126 to 135 acres for landscaped and irrigated slopes

The remainder of the site acreage will be developed with streets, sidewalks, bench drains, water reservoirs, and associated uses.



Exhibit 4-9 – Conceptual Site Plan, Option 1 - Stonehaven Drive

CONCEPTUAL SITE PL STONEHAVEN DRIVE OPTION 1 YORBA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

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Exhibit 4-10 – Conceptual Site Plan, Option 2 - Aspen Way

CONCEPTUAL SITE PL ASPEN WAY OPTION 2 YORBA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

DESIGN CONCEPT

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Parks/Open Space

Eleven active and passive use parks will be provided throughout the neighborhoods. Two of the passive use parks are provided within the water quality management basins that have been designed as bio-retention facilities for the treatment and filtration of storm water runoff. The parks are identified on Exhibit 4-9 – Conceptual Site Plan, Option 1 - Stonehaven Drive and Exhibit 4-10 – Conceptual Site Plan, Option 2 -Aspen Way above. Each local park will have an agricultural design theme (e.g., orange, peach, plum, apricot). Certain of the parks will be developed for active recreational use such as turf fields, tot lots, picnic areas, and off-leash dog areas. Other areas are planned for passive use and will include access to the agriculturally themed parks. Hydromodification will be integrated with biological resources to incorporate useable space into several parks to maximize open space and water quality enhancements. The parks and open space will be privately maintained by a homeowners' association.

Portions of the open space area will be retained in natural open space to provide a buffer to adjacent subdivisions within the City, to ensure the preservation of the riparian corridors, and to preserve native habitat.

Additional open space (approximately 126 to 135 acres) will be created consisting of landscaped and irrigated slopes which does not include the 13.6 to 12.8 acres of landscaped active and passive parks and detention basins discussed above. The Esperanza Hills Homeowners' Association will be responsible for management of open space. Additional detail regarding the proposed parks is included in Section 5.13, Recreation.

Trails

Approximately seven miles (35,856 linear feet) of trails will be provided within the boundaries of the Proposed Project and will be maintained by the Esperance Hills Homeowners' association. The trails will link to existing trail systems and provide access to Chino Hills State Park via the Old Edison Trail. The trails will allow hiking, equestrian, and bicycling access for residents and the public.

Three distinct trail systems are proposed within the Project Area. An equestrian trail system connects to an existing equestrian trail located just north of Aspen Way and extends north to Chino Hills State Park consistent with the Yorba Linda GP update for riding, hiking, and bikeway trails.

Table 4-3-2 below shows the range of lineal feet for each type of trail under access Option 1 and Option 2.

Table 4-3-2	Trail Features
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ltem	Linear Feet (Option 1 – Stonehaven Drive)	Linear Feet (Option 2 - Aspen Way)
Multi-use trails – 8-foot-wide decomposed granite	6,136	5,851
Equestrian trails – 10-foot-wide decomposed granite	11,588	15,248
In-tract pedestrian walks – 5-foot-wide concrete	18,132	18,012
Total trails	35,856	39,111

Fuel Modification

The 2008 Freeway Complex Fire burned the Project Site and the surrounding area. Due to the project location within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ), a Fuel Modification/Fire Protection plan has been developed identifying requirements for water supply, emergency access, emergency evacuation, and measures needed to enhance fire safety and reduce fire potential. The Proposed Project's developed areas will be surrounded by 170-foot fuel modification zones as further described in Section 5.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials (beginning on page 5-275). The total fuel modification area will encompass approximately 83.5 to 88.9 acres.

In addition, the Proposed Project will incorporate two fire breaks in Blue Mud Canyon, a habitat restoration area, and installation of a California-friendly plant palette that provides greater resistance to fire while providing year-round color.

Project Entry

The Proposed Project has been designed as a gated community. The internal roadway system has been designed for internal access, external emergency ingress/egress and continued access for existing users. Two options for access to the Project Site have been designed to address potential easement requirements with adjacent property owners and the original access location identified in the Yorba Linda GP. Under each option, the access road leading up to the guardhouse will be landscaped to include median planting and a citrus grove.

Option 1 would provide a primary connection going south to Stonehaven Drive following an existing dirt road that has historically been used for access purposes by the oil well operators, OCFA, the City of Yorba Linda, SCE, and Chino Hills State Park. A separate ingress/egress road for emergency purposes only extends south along the western edge of the project through the adjacent Cielo Vista project along an existing 50-foot-wide roadway and utility easement. Emergency access via this Option is depicted in Exhibit 4-12 – Circulation Plan (Emergency Ingress/Egress), Option 1 – Stonehaven Drive.

Option 2 would provide a connection going west from the Proposed Project to Aspen Way, connecting into San Antonio Road. This is the primary access contemplated in

the Yorba Linda GP. However, this access will require an access and grading easement over the adjacent Cielo Vista project or other legal entitlement. A separate ingress/egress for emergency purposes only exits south from the project to Stonehaven Drive as depicted in Exhibit 4-13 – Circulation Plan (Emergency Ingress/Egress), Option 2 – Aspen Way.

Infrastructure

The Proposed Project is within the Yorba Linda Water District (YLWD) service area. The water improvements proposed will be designed and constructed in accordance with the YLWD standards and specifications. Two on-site underground reservoirs have been proposed and identified as the 1200 Zone Reservoir and the 1390 Zone Reservoir. The 1200 Zone Reservoir will have a capacity of approximately 0.70 million gallons and is located in the northwest portion of Planning Area 1. The 1390 Zone Reservoir will have a capacity of 0.40 million gallons and is located in the north portion of Planning Area 2.

The Proposed Project Site is located within the Santa Ana River Watershed. Four canyons traverse the site and convey the storm water drainage on- and off-site. A network of proposed storm drain systems utilizing above- and below-ground facilities will be used to treat, detain, and convey storm water flows where necessary across the site. A Water Quality Management Plan has been prepared for the Proposed Project and is further discussed in Section 5.8, Hydrology and Water Quality (beginning on page 5-341).

All new utility lines within the Project Site will be placed underground within private paved roadways and property within easements will be dedicated for public utility purposes.

There will be up to three cell towers located on-site – one tower near each underground water reservoir, and one tower near the southern entrance to the project from Stonehaven Drive. The cell towers will be camouflaged as landscape features resembling bushes or trees.

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Esperanza Hills







4.4 Environmental Features

The Proposed Project has been designed to maximize preservation of open space, native habitat, and riparian corridors. In addition to water quality/runoff management plan implementation measures, a storm drain system will convey runoff from the property into existing off-site facilities to prevent impacts to area drainages. The water quality management plan basins within two of the community parks have been designed as bio-retention facilities for the treatment and filtration of storm water runoff. In Blue Mud Canyon, non-native plants will be removed to enhance fire protection and encourage historic habitat revival. In other open space areas, the existing plant palette will be modified to promote regeneration of historic native habitat such as the black walnut trees, a habitat area for least Bell's vireo that currently occupies adjacent land. A California-friendly plant palette will be created to provide a mix of native and non-native vegetation.

Project lighting is designed to preserve views of the night sky. All lights will be designed and located so that direct light rays are confined to the project consistent with night sky lighting practices and to prevent light spill to the adjacent open space/habitat areas.

4.5 Specific Plan

The purpose and intent of a Specific Plan is to provide policies and regulations for a proposed development. The Esperanza Hills Specific Plan has been prepared to provide for the development of a low-density master planned community. The Specific Plan includes regulatory text and maps necessary to provide for the development, maintenance, and use of the Esperanza Hills property in compliance with the policies and programs of the County of Orange General Plan.

4.6 Construction Schedule

Project construction is anticipated to take one to two years for grading, and three to seven years for construction, and will include rough grading, relocation/cleanup of oil wells, trenching, foundation work, and construction of housing, parks, roadways, and reservoirs. Grading of the site will occur in two phases, with Planning Area 1, the first phase, taking six to ten months and Planning Area 2, the second phase, taking six to eight months. Grading for the Proposed Project will balance on-site. Therefore, no import or export of earth will be required through the existing residential communities. Construction of the subdivision could take six to ten months for the first phase and six to ten months for the second phase, or could occur over a several-year period. Construction of homes will occur in several phases, and an entire planning area will not be developed at one time.

Construction equipment will include trucks, bulldozers, graders, and concrete mixers. No structure demolition will be required, as the site is undeveloped and no buildings exist on the site. The construction phasing plan will identify equipment access and construction staging among other issues. Best management practices will be incorporated into the construction plans to minimize construction related impacts on surrounding uses.

4.7 Discretionary Approvals

This Environmental Impact Report is intended to provide complete and adequate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) coverage for all actions and approvals associated with ultimate development of the Proposed Project. The following approvals are required for project implementation.

4.7.1 County of Orange General Plan Amendment

The current General Plan Land Use designation for the property is Open Space (5). The Proposed Project would change the General Plan Land Use designation from Open Space (5) to Suburban Residential (1B) to allow for residential development. The Suburban Residential (1B) designation is described in the General Plan as: ". . . areas characterized by a wide range of housing types, from estates on large lots to attached dwelling units (townhomes, condominiums and clustered arrangements)." Building intensity for Suburban Residential ranges from 0.5 to 18.0 dwelling units per acre.

4.7.2 Adoption of a Specific Plan

The current zoning designation for the property is A1 General Agricultural and A1(O) General Agriculture/Oil Production. A Specific Plan is proposed to replace the existing A1 and A1(O) zoning designations and to regulate and guide development of the property. The Specific Plan will include detailed development regulations and design guidelines and will serve as the policy and regulatory document for future development.

4.7.3 Approval of a Vesting Tentative Tract Map

The approval or conditional approval of a vesting tentative map confers a vested right to proceed with development in substantial compliance with the ordinances, policies, and standards in effect at the time the vesting tentative map is approved or conditionally approved. One purpose of the vesting tentative tract map is to show the design and improvement of the proposed subdivision in relationship to the existing conditions and the adjacent properties. The Proposed Project will include preparation of a Vesting Tentative Tract Map (VTTM 17522).

4.8 **Project Goals and Objectives**

CEQA Guidelines §15124 requires an EIR to include a statement of objectives sought by the Proposed Project. This disclosure assists in developing the range of project alternatives to be investigated in the EIR, as well as providing a rationale for the adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations, if one must be adopted because of one or more significant unavoidable project-related impacts. Identified below are goals and objectives related to the Proposed Project.

- Create a low-density single-family development.
- Create a planned community of appropriate density and scale that respects the existing topography and natural backdrop of the Project Site.
- Create clustered residential neighborhoods buffered from adjacent development by abundant open space while preserving and enhancing permanent open space and habitat.
- Provide recreational opportunities for residents in the project vicinity for access to Chino Hills State Park from the west to Old Edison Trail.
- Design compatible land uses within the project and to surrounding areas.
- Preserve open space, natural landforms, and vegetation surrounding and within planned and developed residential areas.
- Preserve the northern and eastern ridgelines adjacent to Chino Hills State Park.
- Provide fire breaks, firefighting staging areas, access points, and emergency ingress/egress plans to enhance safety to the residents and surrounding community.
- Provide construction standards and requirements that meet or exceed Orange County Fire Authority requirements for communities bordered by wildland areas.
- Enhance the visual quality of the areas around the oil extraction operations to the extent that extraction operations are continued.
- Integrate hydromodification principles with biological resources to create bio-retention and bio-detention areas, passive parks and aesthetically pleasing landscape features.

4.9 Intended Uses of the EIR

- 1. Agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision making:
 - County of Orange as Lead Agency
- 2. Permits or other approvals that may be required to implement the project:
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife (biological opinion consultation)
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Streambed Alteration Agreement)
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Section 404 permit)
 - Regional Water Quality Control Board (401 certification)
 - Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) (for potential annexation)
 - City of Yorba Linda (encroachment permits under Options 1 and 2; discretionary authority over access through City open space associated with Alternative Option 2A, potential annexation)
- 3. Subsequent use of the EIR:

CEQA Guidelines §15182, Residential Projects Pursuant to a Specific Plan, provides that when an EIR on a Specific Plan has been prepared, no EIR or negative declaration need be prepared for a residential project undertaken pursuant to and in conformity to that Specific Plan if the project meets the requirements of §15182. Projects covered include land subdivisions, zoning changes, and residential planned unit developments. This exemption is subject to compliance with §15162, which requires a subsequent EIR or a supplement to an EIR if there are substantial changes to the project or its circumstances, or if new information of substantial importance becomes known.

This EIR may be relied upon for all approval and permit actions related to development of the Proposed Project.