

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

3.1 Jurisdictional Setting

The project site occupies 232 acres located at the northernmost gateway to the City of Calexico, Imperial County, California (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

City of Calexico

The City of Calexico encompasses 8.97 square miles within Imperial Valley. Per the California Department of Finance, May 2007, the City's estimated population is 37,552.

The City is located approximately 198 miles southeast of Los Angeles and 120 miles east of San Diego and is situated directly along the U.S./Mexico International border, adjacent to the City of Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico (Figure 2-1). It lies at sea level elevation and is a part of the broad, flat Imperial Valley region of the California low desert. Imperial Valley is located in the Colorado Desert Physiographic province of Southern California. The City of Calexico is bounded by the County of Imperial to the north, east, and west, and Mexicali, Mexico to the south (Figure 2-1).

Primary access to the City and the area is via State Route (SR) 111 from the north and Interstate 8 (I-8) from the east/west. The unincorporated City of Heber lies to the northwest and the incorporated City of El Centro to the north.

City of Calexico General Plan and Zoning Ordinance

Planning within the City of Calexico is currently governed by the May 2007 General Plan and Zoning Ordinance consisting of the mandatory Land Use, Circulation, Conservation Open Space, Noise, and Safety Elements. Additional elements include Parks and Recreation and Public Facilities Services Elements. Please note that the mandatory Housing Element is bound as a separate document.

3.2 Project Location

The project site is situated at the southwest corner of the intersection of Jasper Road and SR-111 (Figure 2-1). The irregular-shaped property is bordered on the north by Jasper Road, on the east by SR-111, and to the south and west by the Dogwood Canal (unlined channel) and Central Main Canal (unlined channel).

Adjacent properties are flat-lying and at approximately the same elevation as the project site. Properties to the north and west are agricultural fields. A radio station (KXO FM) with broadcast transmission tower and the Portico Industrial Park composed of trucking warehouses and brokerage firms are located south of the Dogwood Canal and Central Main Canal. Portions of the Portico Industrial Park property are undeveloped. Commercial development (Toys "R" Us and Walmart) is located southeast of the site, across SR-111. The Heber Geothermal Company power plant is located approximately 1/2-mile northwest of the site. The Southern Pacific Railroad mainline and semi-truck trailer parking area is located

west and southwest of the site, separated by agricultural fields west of the Dogwood Canal and Central Main Canal. Figure 3-1 provides an aerial view of the project site and surrounding area and features.

3.3 Environmental Resources

The project site is essentially flat, with an elevation at sea-level (0 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL)). The project site has been used historically for agriculture but currently is fallow and undeveloped. No biologically sensitive vegetation communities are located on the project site. There are two Imperial Irrigation District (IID) canals located adjacent to the project site. The Central Main Canal and Dogwood Canal are located along the southern and western boundaries of the site (Figure 3-1).

Although the Imperial Valley experiences high temperatures and low rainfall of three inches per year, the regional economy is heavily based on agriculture due to the availability of irrigation water, which is supplied entirely from the Colorado River via the All-American Canal. A vast system of canals, check dams, and pipelines carry water all over the valley, a system which forms the IID. The water distribution system includes over 1,400 miles of canal and 1,100 miles of pipeline. The number of canal and pipeline branches number roughly over a hundred. The agricultural lands are also served by a constructed agricultural drain system, which conveys surface runoff and subsurface drainage from fields to the Salton Sea.

The project site is located within the Imperial Hydrologic Unit (HU) (723.00) and the Brawley Hydrologic Area (HA) of the Imperial Valley Planning Area of the Colorado River Basin. Currently, drainage from the project site is collected by tile drains located below the existing ground surface. The tile drains convey these flows to a sump pump located at the intersection of Jasper Road and future Sunset Boulevard. Flows are pumped from this location to the existing Stout Drain canal north of Jasper Road (City of Calexico, 2001). Currently there are no existing City drainage facilities within the project site.

Imperial Valley is traversed by several active and potentially active fault zones, including the Imperial Valley Faults, the San Jacinto Fault System, Elsinore Fault System and the San Andreas Fault System. The surface soils on the proposed project site are characterized by lake deposits of the ancient Lake Cahuilla consisting of sands, silts and clays beneficial to the agricultural usage. There are no bedrock outcrops or boulders on the parcel.

The project site is located in the southern portion of the Salton Sea Air Basin. The Salton Sea Air Basin continues to have a transitional-attainment status of federal and state standards for ozone. The Salton Sea Air Basin is either in attainment or unclassified for federal standards of sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide and lead. Imperial County areas are in attainment of state air quality standards for all pollutants, with the exception of ozone and particulate matter (less than 10 microns). During periods of strong solar heating and intense convection, turbulent motion creates good mixing and low levels of air pollution. However, even strong turbulent mixing is insufficient to overcome the limited air pollution controls on sources in the Mexicali (Mexico) area. The City of Calexico area thus experiences unhealthful air quality from photochemical smog and from dust due to extensive surface disturbance and the very arid climate.

The California low desert has a cultural history that spans thousands of years. Within the project area, successive infillings of ancient Lake Cahuilla, when the flow of the Colorado River emptied into the Salton Basin, have all but buried or obliterated archaeological remains from the earliest periods. Only remains from the prehistoric and ethnohistoric period that date later than A.D. 1700 are expected to have any chance of preservation. Of these, remains from the ethnohistoric occupation by desert Tipai (or Kumeyaay (Native American)) are most likely to occur in the project area; however, no resources have been identified on the project site.

3.4 Infrastructure and Services

I-8 serves as the major transportation corridor between Imperial County and San Diego County. SR-111 provides access from El Centro and SR-98 provides access to the City of Calexico. The major arterials that currently serve the project site include SR-111 to the east of the project site and Jasper Road to the north of the project site.

Fire services are provided to the provided to the project site by City of Calexico Fire Department. The City currently maintains two fire stations: a main station and substation. The main station (Station 1) is located at 430 East Fifth Street, approximately four miles to the southeast of the project site, and serves the area east of the railroad, including the proposed project site. The substation (Station 2) is located at 900 Grant Street, approximately six miles to the southwest of the project site.

Police protection services for the project site are provided by the City of Calexico Police Department. The City currently has a station located at 420 East 5th Street and three substations; one in the downtown area, one at Nosotros Park, and one on Andrade Avenue and Camilia Street. The project site will be served by the main police station, as is the rest of the city, until a new substation is built on the north side of the City (pers. comm., Lieutenant Jesus J. Serrano, May 8, 2007).

The City of Calexico is currently served by the Calexico Unified School District (CUSD), which is located in Calexico. CUSD currently has nearly 9,500 students in six elementary schools, one high school, one continuation high school, two junior high schools, and one adult education center.

Utilities services for the project site are provided by the following entities:

- The City of Calexico – water and sewer;
- IID Energy – electrical service;
- Southern California Gas Company (SCGC) – natural gas; and,
- City of Calexico/Allied Waste Services – solid waste.