

February 1, 2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Jay Petrek, Director of Community Development

SUBJECT: Sphere of Influence Update and Safari Highlands Ranch Update

This memorandum is a follow up to staff's August 26, 2015 informational presentation to the City Council regarding the progress of the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) Update. An exhibit 'SOI Study Area Map' and accompanying descriptive narrative are attached to this memo. An update to the Safari Highlands Ranch project is also provided with this information.

**UPDATE – SPHERE OF INFLUENCE CONSIDERATIONS**

1. At their August 26, 2015 meeting, the City Council directed staff to continue working with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and other stakeholders regarding the SOI Update as presented at that time. Since that meeting, there have been new developments relative to the SOI Update as discussed below.
2. Concordia Homes, the Safari Highlands Ranch (SHR) developer, has retained Rick Engineering from San Diego to prepare a Municipal Services Review (MSR) for the SOI Update which includes the SHR project area. The MSR is a study that LAFCO requires for all SOI updates to evaluate the existing and projected future levels of public services. As part of that study, Rick Engineering in conjunction with the City's planning consultant, has interviewed service oriented City departments including Fire, Police, Public Works, Engineering, Utilities, Community Services and Planning to determine if those departments could adequately serve development within the SOI update areas should those areas eventually be annexed to the City. A draft of that report is anticipated to be available for public review in February or March 2016.
3. New SOI Study Area #6: This triangular study area is comprised of portions of two parcels totaling 73 acres that had been bisected inadvertently by the previous SOI boundary, a practice not supported by LAFCO. LAFCO brought this issue to City staff's attention and therefore the attached Study Area Map has been adjusted to include the remainder of the two bisected parcels. Addition of this study area adjustment is not anticipated to affect the development potential of these parcels and staff recommends including it in the SOI Update.

4. New Study Area #7: LAFCO staff has requested that the City evaluate not only SOI expansions, but also determine if some areas within the current SOI should be removed. City staff evaluated a number of properties located north of the City limits and determined that the current SOI boundary did not always follow parcel lines, streets or other logical features. Based on the unlikely possibility that these properties, totaling 1,128.22 acres as shown on the attached Study Area Map, would ever annex to the City, staff recommends evaluating this area for potentially reducing the SOI.

## **UPDATE - SAFARI HIGHLANDS RANCH**

1. On September 11, 2015, the City distributed a Notice of Preparation and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting to various public agencies, stakeholders, interest groups and numerous individuals in order to solicit comments on the scope and content of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Two public scoping meetings were held; one in the afternoon on September 24, 2015 with an attendance of approximately 40 and a second evening meeting on October 5, 2015 with an attendance of approximately 80.
2. Staff received comments about the project and concerns of potential environmental effects including traffic, visual impacts, noise, safety, impact on schools and emergency access. A compilation of comments from these two public meetings as well as letters from various public agencies are on the City's Safari Highlands Ranch website at: <http://www.escondido.org/safari-highlands-ranch-specific-plan.aspx>. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EIR.
3. City staff and the City's planning consultant have had a number of meetings to discuss the project. Recent meetings include those with the City of San Diego, San Diego County, both the State and Federal Departments of Fish and Wildlife and the San Pasqual Valley Planning Advisory Committee. The issues discussed included water quality, access across Zoo Road, and the Multiple Species Conservation Plan. Staff anticipates further meetings to address these and other issues.
4. On November 23, 2015 the City distributed a Request for Proposal (RFP) to prospective EIR consultants and held a meeting on December 7, 2015 to answer questions from potential consultants responding to the RFP. Staff has reviewed the four proposals submitted and will interview the top three consultant candidates on February 4, 2016. Staff anticipates that the agreement to hire the selected consultant will be sent to the City Council for their March 23, 2016 meeting.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

Concordia Homes, the SHR applicant, is financing all aspects of the project review including the studies and meetings described above. The applicant is paying the full cost of the planning consultant, a civil engineering consultant, the MSR and SOI Update, the EIR as well as for City staff costs through a cost recovery process.

ATTACHMENT: Sphere of Influence Study Area Summary  
City of Escondido Sphere of Influence Update

*Background*

The City of Escondido Sphere of Influence was initially adopted by the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission in 1979. The City's sphere was re-affirmed by the Commission in 2003 as part of the North Central San Diego County Municipal Service Review (MSR) and Sphere of Influence (SOI) Update. The following summary provides a discussion concerning a process to update the City Sphere. The primary objective of this effort is to establish a coordinated effort between LAFCO and the City to ensure that both the sphere and environmental documents are cooperatively prepared in a way that complies with State law and the policies and procedures of both participants.

*Study Area*

The Escondido General Plan boundary includes approximately 80 square miles and encompasses more territory than the adopted SOI. While the General Plan boundary area will form the basis for the SOI study area, a more focused analysis will identify SOI candidate areas to potentially be included in the City's sphere based on the factors identified by State law. A map of the preliminary study areas and relationship to the current SOI, General Plan boundaries and adjacent municipalities is attached. As a result of further study, these areas may be modified, removed from consideration or new areas potentially added as described below:

Candidate Study Area 1: Safari Highlands Ranch

APNs: 240-270-33; 242-010-02, -36, -37 and -38; 241-060-03; 1104.4 acres

Safari Highlands Ranch is located within the current General Plan boundary and is a portion of Specific Plan #4 (Valley View), located north of the San Pasqual Valley. The City General Plan provides guidance for development of the approximately 1,100 acre property. The Escondido City Council authorized initiation of the annexation process for this property in 2014. Proposed plans for Safari Highlands Ranch include a Specific Plan and tentative map for development of 550 homes, a new fire station, a public community park, approximately 750 acres of permanently preserved open space, two offsite emergency access roads, improvements to the nearby Eagle Crest Golf Club and various off-site intersection and road improvements including improved pick for San Pasqual Union Elementary School.

Candidate Study Area 2: Beacon Sun Ranch

APNs: 240-120-12; 240-250-03; 240-251-04, -05, -06 and -07; 233.38 acres

Beacon Sun Ranch is a 471-acre property located west of Safari Highland Ranch. The majority of the approximately 471 acre property is already within the corporate boundaries of the City of Escondido. Approximately 262 acres (55%) are within the city's existing limits; the remaining 209 acres (45%) are currently unincorporated and extend beyond the adopted City sphere. Beacon Sun Ranch is a regionally significant commercial avocado ranch. The property desires access to city services to maintain and facilitate expansion of their farming operations. Proposed plans for Safari Highlands Ranch include an emergency access road that extends through Beacon Sun Ranch and connects with existing City streets. The two ownerships are also working cooperatively on utility planning.

Candidate Study Area 3: Remainder of SPA #4

APNs: 240-270-32; 242-010-04, -27, -29, -32, -33, and -35; 242-020-33, -34, -50, -63, -67, -68, -69, and -70; 254.74 acres

These properties comprise the remaining approximately unincorporated 255 acres within SPA #4 not designated as Rancho Vistamonte or Safari Highlands Ranch. This study area is in two locations; the first being a single 40.55-acre parcel east of and near the north boundary of Safari Highlands Ranch. The second area is a group of 14 parcels located adjacent to the southeast corner of Safari Highlands Ranch. If Safari Highlands Ranch is granted its proposed 550 dwelling units, then the remaining maximum balance of units within SPA #4 available in this candidate study area would be 170. This density would be in exchange for on-site and/or off site community benefits above and beyond the project's impacts as permitted in the General Plan. However, there are no pending or anticipated development plans for this area.

Candidate Study Area 4: Northeastern Escondido

APN: 190-010-44 and 190-021-02; 128 acres

The property involves two City-owned parcels. The first is an approximately 83-acre parcel recently acquired by the City adjacent to the City's Municipal Firing Range that is designated in Escondido's General Plan for open space. The second parcel is an adjacent and vacant 45 acre parcel. No development is proposed for either sites. The City's ownership status warrants consideration of including these properties within Escondido's Sphere of Influence.

Candidate Study Area 5: Southwestern Escondido

APNs: 235-032-01 through -15; 235-160-20; 235-040-35, -37, -38 and -39; 117.4 acres

The property includes land designated by the City of Escondido for a high-quality business park (Escondido Research Technology Center/Harmony Grove SPA #8) in addition to other adjacent parcels designated for residential use located east of Escondido Creek near Avenida del Diablo. Property owners in this area have indicated

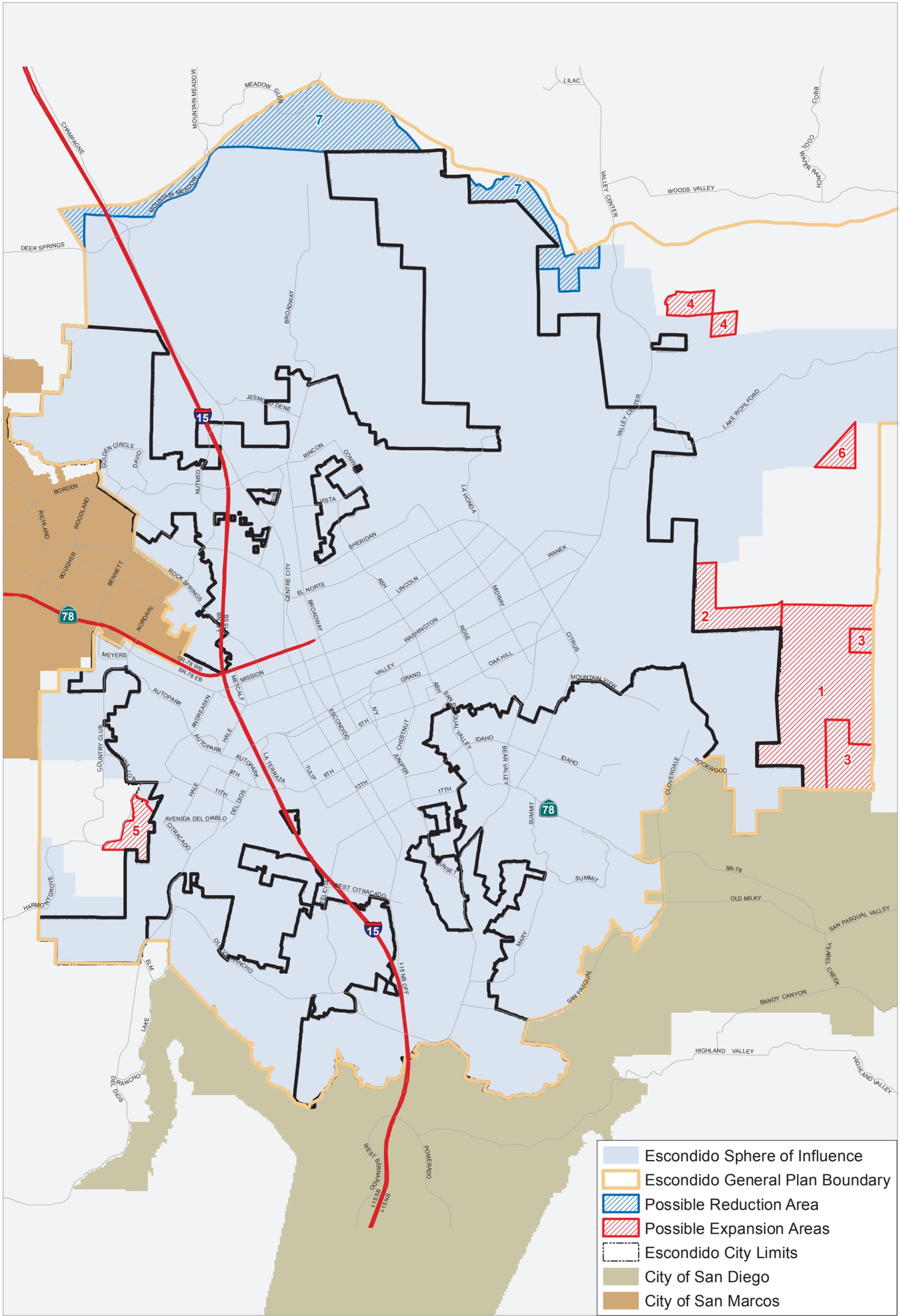
their interest in eventually annexing to the City. As part of the 2012 Escondido General Plan Update, the City worked with unincorporated residents in the Eden Valley and Harmony Grove area to add policies to address their concerns regarding future development of the area to ensure compatibility regarding architecture, landscaping, setbacks and signage.

Candidate Study Area 6: Remnant Parcels Old Guejito Grade Road  
APNs 240-050-06 and 240-050-12; 72.97 acres

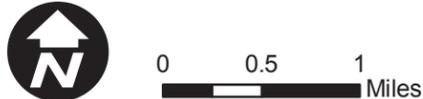
This triangular study area is comprised of portions of two parcels that had been inadvertently bisected by the previous SOI boundary, a practice not supported by LAFCO. LAFCO brought this issue to City staff's attention and therefore the Study Area Map has been adjusted to include the remainder of both parcels bisected by the SOI boundary. This study area adjustment would not affect the development potential of these parcels.

Candidate Study Area 7: Possible SOI Reduction Areas  
Numerous parcels; 1,128.22 acres

As described in the City Council memorandum, City staff evaluated a number of properties located north of the City limits and determined that the current SOI boundary did not always follow parcel lines, streets or other logical feature. Based on the unlikely possibility that these properties would ever annex to the city, City staff recommends evaluating this area for potentially contracting the Sphere of Influence. Additionally, the study will evaluate areas where the boundaries can be appropriately revised to follow property lines and/or streets.



Source:



# Sphere of Influence Study Areas