

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section describes the project location, characteristics of the site and the proposed development, project objectives, and the approvals needed to implement the project.

2.1 PROJECT SPONSOR

City of Rancho Palos Verdes
Community Development Department
30940 Hawthorne Boulevard
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
Contact: Eduardo Schonborn, AICP, (310) 544-5228

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed ordinance revisions would apply to the approximately 112-acre “Zone 2 Landslide Moratorium Ordinance” area, located north of the intersection of Palos Verdes Drive South and Narcissa Drive in the Portuguese Bend area of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, County of Los Angeles, California. This area, located on the hills above the south-central coastline of the City, is within the City’s larger (approximately 1,200-acre) Landslide Moratorium Area (LMA). Zone 2 consists of 111 individual lots. Of these, 64 are developed with residences and accessory structures and 47 are undeveloped lots or lots developed with structures other than residences. These latter 47 are the focus of this EIR. Figure 2-1 shows the regional vicinity of the project site within Los Angeles County. Figure 2-2 shows the site’s location in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and also identifies the 47 undeveloped lots within the Portuguese Bend community.

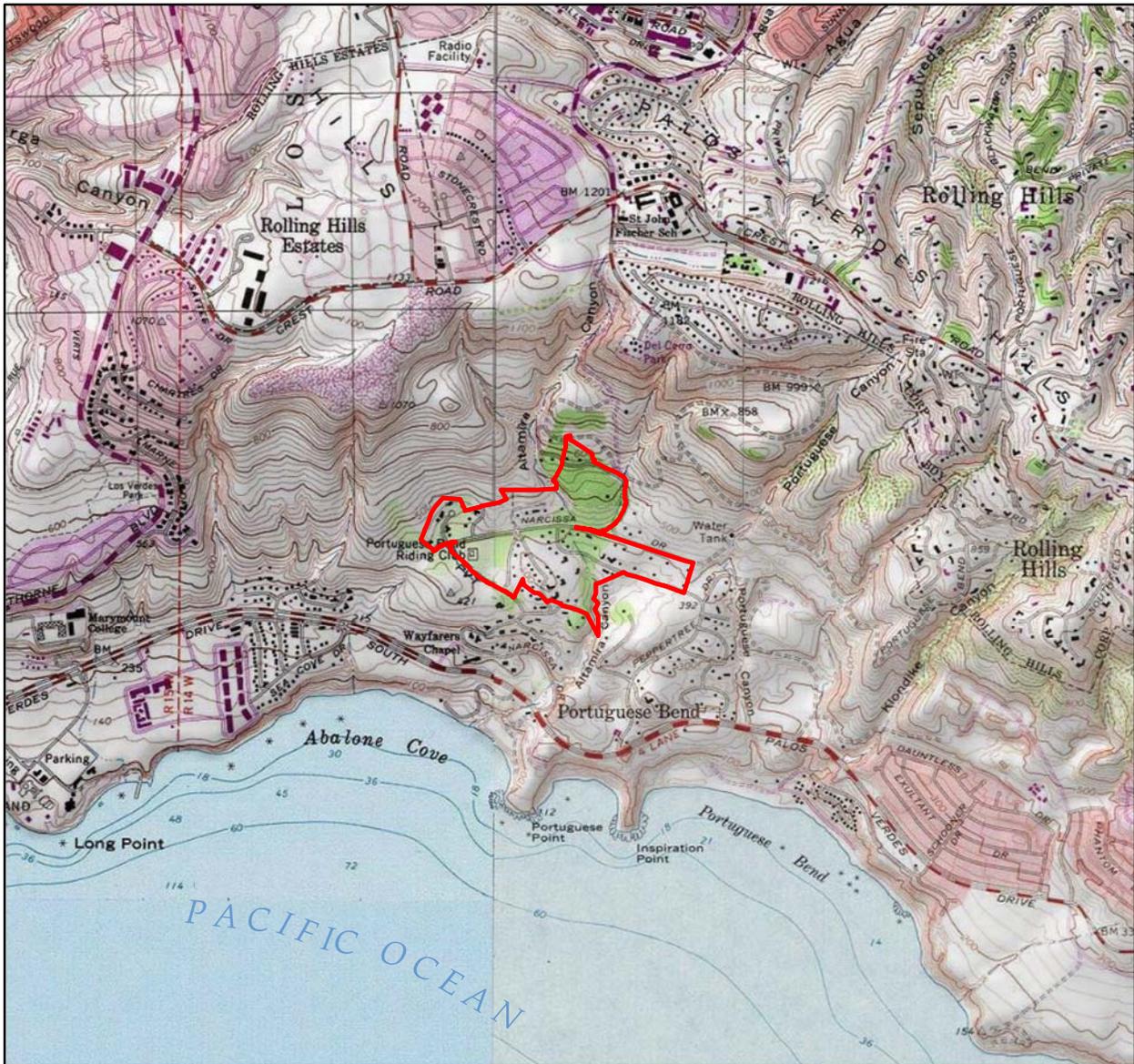
2.3 CURRENT LAND USE AND REGULATORY SETTING

2.3.1 Current Land Use

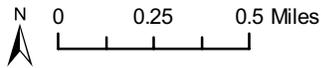
Of the approximately 111 lots on the 112 acre project area (the Zone 2 area), the vast majority of the developed lots are improved with single-family residences, most dating from the 1950s, and related accessory structures and uses. The largest developed lot in Zone 2 is occupied by the Portuguese Bend Riding Club, a nonconforming commercial stable that was established prior to the City's incorporation in 1973. Private streets within Zone 2 are maintained by the Portuguese Bend Community Association. The majority of the undeveloped lots contain non-native vegetation, and some have small, non-habitable structures (e.g., sheds, stables, fences, etc.) for equestrian or horticultural uses. The lots are generally between ¼-acre and one acre or more in size. Figures 2-3a through c show existing conditions in the project area.



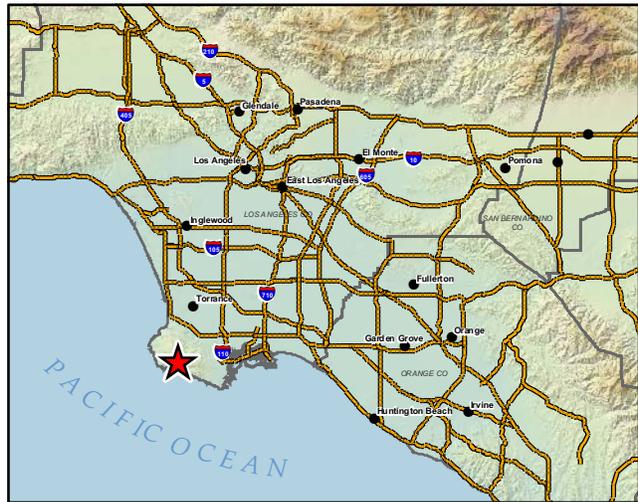
Zone 2 Landslide Moratorium Ordinance Revisions EIR
Section 2.0 Project Description



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★ Project Location



Project Location Map

Figure 2-1

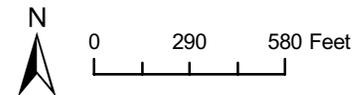
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 Additional data layer from Los Angeles County Assessor, August, 2010.

Legend

- Project Boundary
- Vacant or Underdeveloped, Potentially Developable under Proposed Ordinance Revisions
- Monks Plaintiff Lot



Project Area and Affected Parcels

Figure 2-2



Photo 1 - View of undeveloped lots in the eastern portion of the Zone 2 area, looking northeast from Sweetbay Road.



Photo 2 - View of undeveloped lot in the northern-central portion of the Zone 2 area, looking northwest from Cinnamon Lane/Narcissa Drive.





Photo 1 - View of undeveloped lot in the northern-central portion of the Zone 2 area, looking west from Cinammon Lane.



Photo 2 - View of undeveloped lot in the northern-central portion of the Zone 2 area, looking northwest from Cinammon Lane.





Photo 1 - View of Undeveloped lot in the northwestern portion of the Zone 2 area, looking northeast from Plumtree Road/Narcissa Drive.



Photo 2 - View of undeveloped lots in the southern-central portion of the Zone 2 area, looking north from Cinnamon Lane.



2.3.2 Surrounding Land Uses

The entire Landslide Moratorium area is divided into the eight zones listed below (as stated in the June 1, 1993 “[Dr. Perry] Ehlig memo”):

- Zone 1 - Unsubdivided land unaffected by large historic landslides and located uphill or to the west of subdivided areas (about 550 acres)
- Zone 2 - Subdivided land unaffected by large historic landslides (about 112 acres)
- Zone 3 - Unsubdivided land unaffected by large historic landslides and located seaward of Sweetbay Road (about 15 acres)
- Zone 4 - Land affected by the Klondike Canyon landslide and adjacent land included in the Klondike Canyon Geologic Hazard Abatement District (about 100 acres)
- Zone 5 - Land affected by the Abalone Cove landslide and adjacent land where minor movement has occurred due to loss of lateral support (about 90 acres)
- Zone 6 - The uphill, westerly and central parts of the Portuguese Bend landslide, where movement can be stopped through mitigation without requiring shoreline protection (about 210 acres)
- Zone 7 - The seaward part of the Portuguese Bend landslide where control of movement requires shoreline protection (about 75 acres)
- Zone 8 - Land affected by the Flying Triangle landslide including immediately adjacent land (about 25 acres)

The approximately 112-acre Zone 2 area is primarily surrounded by open space and semi-rural residential development. The Zone 2 area, as described in the June 1, 1993 “[Dr. Perry] Ehlig memo”, includes about 130 acres within existing Tract 14195 and Tract 14500 (except lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 which are in the Portuguese Bend landslide), and the subdivided land served by Vanderlip Drive. It is an area of subdued topography within the central part of the large ancient landslide. Slopes of 5:1 and less prevail over most of the central and downhill parts of Zone 2. Slopes generally range between 5:1 and 3:1 in the uphill part.

To the northeast of the project area are developed residential lots in the Portuguese Bend community as well as City-owned open space in the Portuguese Bend Reserve of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve, both of which are within Zone 1 of the Landslide Moratorium Area. To the northwest and west of the project area are developed residential lots in the Portuguese Bend community and vacant, residentially-zoned land (Upper and Lower Filiorum) which are located in Zone 1 of the Landslide Moratorium Area. To the south, southeast and east of the project area are developed and undeveloped residential lots in the Portuguese Bend community and located in Zone 5 (the area affected by the 1978 Abalone Cove landslide), Zone 6 (the active Portuguese Bend landslide area) and Zone 3 (located between Altamira Canyon and the westerly edge of the Portuguese Bend landslide area). Individual lots that would gain development potential as a result of the proposed project are located throughout Zone 2, and are therefore surrounded by the uses described above as well as other lots, both developed and undeveloped, in Zone 2.



2.3.3 Land Use Regulatory Overview

City of Rancho Palos Verdes General Plan. The proposed ordinance revisions would be subject to applicable policies of the Rancho Palos Verdes General Plan, which was adopted in 1975. The project area has General Plan land use designations of Residential ≤ 1 Dwelling Unit per Acre and Residential 1 to 2 Dwelling Units per Acre. These designations are defined in the General Plan as follows:

1 Dwelling Unit per Acre. Vacant land designated in this density is of two types: (1) Areas identified in the Natural Environment Element having high slopes, wildlife habitats, natural vegetation, canyons within the general area, some ancient landslide, plus some immediately adjacent areas, included for continuity. This density would tend to promote development which would have low environmental stress and be so designed under the use of overlay control districts that the physical and social impacts could be minimized. (2) Areas in the coastal region not yet committed to urban use and within the region designated for a Specific Plan District (which is further described later in this section).

1 to 2 Dwelling Units per Acre. Vacant land designated in this density range has low and moderate physical constraints, and social constraints, such as public views and vistas, which at this density can be controlled through subdivision design. This density is compatible with the Peninsula environment and with adjacent existing densities and/or a reasonable transition between lower and higher densities. The amount of stress to the environment can be further reduced depending on the development and structural techniques used.

The General Plan includes a number of goals and policies that would be applicable to the project, including those related to community character, orderly development, resource management and public health and safety. Portions of Zone 2 are also within the General Plan's Resource Management – Landslide (both old and active) and Resource Management – Natural Vegetation designated areas. Among the policies explicitly applicable to these designations are the following:

- *Require any development within the Resource Management Districts of high slopes (RM 3) and old landslide area (RM 5) to perform at least one, and preferably two, independent engineering studies concerning the geotechnical, soils, and other stability factors (including seismic considerations) affecting the site.*
- *Allow no further development involving any human occupancy within the active landslide area (RM 4)*
- *Encourage developments within Resource Management Districts containing Natural Vegetation (RM 9) to re-vegetate with native material wherever clearing of vegetation is required.*
- *Stringently regulate irrigation, natural drainage, and other water-related considerations, in both new development and existing uses affecting existing or potential slide areas.*



- *Require all projects with any natural resource management district factors falling within their project boundaries to deal with these areas in detail in an Environmental Impact Report.*

City of Rancho Palos Verdes Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). In 2004, the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council conceptually approved a subarea plan under the NCCP encompassing the entire City, including areas adjacent to the project area. The purpose of this plan is to identify and provide for the area-wide protection of natural wildlife diversity, while allowing for compatible and appropriate development and growth (Rancho Palos Verdes NCCP, 2004). Moreover, Section 6.2.2 establishes development measures for projects adjacent to the NCCP Preserve (also known as the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve). Development on lots within Zone 2 that border the NCCP areas would be subject to these policies. It should be noted that the Council-adopted NCCP document is currently being reviewed for approval by the Wildlife Agencies.

City of Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code. Underlying zoning designations in Zone 2 are Single Family Residential District, including both RS-1 (one-acre minimum lot size) and RS-2 (20,000 square-foot minimum lot size) zoned lots. Pursuant to the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code (Chapter 17.02), “the purpose of the single-family residential district (RS) is to provide for individual homes on separate lots, each for the occupancy of one family, at various minimum lot sizes, to provide for a range of yard and lot sizes which are based on the general plan of the city, and to provide for other uses that are associated and compatible with residential uses...” Chapter 17.02 sets forth the specific allowed land uses and standards for development associated with those uses. Other selected applicable regulations of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code include:

- Urban Appearance Overlay Control District standards (Section 17.40.060 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code)
- Natural Overlay Control District standards (Section 17.40.040 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code), for those lots that cross Altamira Canyon, the primary natural drainage course through Zone 2
- View Preservation And Restoration standards (Section 17.02.040 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code)

As noted above, the project area is also within the 1,200-acre Landslide Moratorium Area (LMA), established in 1978 in response to potential unstable soil conditions and active landslide movement (Chapter 15.20 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code). In general, properties within the LMA that are currently developed with residential structures are permitted to make limited improvements if the City grants a Landslide Moratorium Exception (LME). New construction is not permitted on properties within the LMA that are not currently developed with residential structures unless a Moratorium Exclusion (ME) is granted, effectively removing the properties from the LMA, or a Landslide Moratorium Boundary Line adjustment is approved. As discussed below, the proposed project would amend this chapter of the Municipal Code.



2.4 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

2.4.1 Project Background

In 2002, a group of Portuguese Bend property owners filed an ME application to exclude their undeveloped lots within the area known as “Zone 2” from the LMA. Shortly after this application was deemed incomplete for processing, the applicants filed suit against the City. As part of the decision on the case (*Monks v. City of Rancho Palos Verdes*), the City has been ordered to remove regulatory impediments in its Municipal Code that prevent the development of the 16 *Monks* plaintiffs’ lots. The City began this process with an Ordinance to allow the *Monks* plaintiffs to apply for Landslide Moratorium Exceptions (LMEs) for their lots. As of January 2012, nine (9) *Monks* plaintiffs have obtained Planning entitlements to develop their lots, while the remaining *Monks* plaintiffs are at various stages in obtaining Planning entitlements for the balance of eight (8) lots. The City now desires to consider broader revisions to the Landslide Moratorium Ordinance that could also permit the owners of the other 31 undeveloped lots in Zone 2 to be developed with new residences. This would result in the possible future development of up to 47 new residences on existing legal lots in Zone 2 within the Portuguese Bend community.

2.4.2 Project Description

Landslide Moratorium Ordinance Revisions. Section 15.20.040 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code establishes the process for requesting exceptions from the City’s landslide moratorium regulations. The current (amended in 2009) Municipal Code Section 15.20.040(P) includes the following category of exception to the moratorium on “the filing, processing, approval or issuance of building, grading or other permits” within the existing landslide moratorium area:

The moratorium shall not be applicable to any of the following:...

...P. The construction of residential buildings, accessory structures, and grading totaling less than one thousand cubic yards of combined cut and fill and including no more than fifty cubic yards of imported fill material on the sixteen undeveloped lots in Zone 2 of the “Landslide Moratorium Area” as outlined in green on the landslide moratorium map on file in the Director's office, identified as belonging to the plaintiffs in the case “Monks v. City of Rancho Palos Verdes, 167 Cal. App. 4th 263, 84 Cal. Rptr. 3d 75 (Cal. App. 2 Dist., 2008)”; provided, that a landslide moratorium exception permit is approved by the Director, and provided that the project complies with the criteria set forth in Section 15.20.050 of this Chapter. Such projects shall qualify for a landslide moratorium exception permit only if all applicable requirements of this Code are satisfied, and the parcel is served by a sanitary sewer system. Prior to the issuance of a landslide moratorium exception permit, the applicant shall submit to the Director any geological or geotechnical studies reasonably required by the City to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the City geotechnical staff that the proposed project will not aggravate the existing situation.



The proposed landslide moratorium ordinance revisions would revise the language of this section to encompass all 47 undeveloped lots in Zone 2, rather than restricting it to only the *Monks* plaintiffs' lots. This would allow for the future submittal of LMEs for all of these undeveloped lots. It should be noted, however, that the granting of an LME does not constitute approval of a specific project, but simply grants the property owner the ability to submit the appropriate application(s) for consideration of a specific project.

Future Development Potential. The potential granting of up to 47 LME requests under the proposed ordinance revisions would permit individual property owners to then apply for individual entitlements to develop their lots. The undeveloped lots within Zone 2 are held in multiple private ownerships so the timing and scope of future development is not known. For the purposes of this EIR, it is assumed that development would occur over a period of at least 10 years from adoption of the ordinance revisions in a manner consistent with the private architectural standards adopted by the Portuguese Bend Community Association and the City's underlying RS-1 and RS-2 zoning regulations. Therefore, the future development assumptions for Zone 2 include the following:

- Forty-seven single-story, ranch-style residences with attached or detached three-car garages, with minimum living area of 1,500 square feet and maximum living area of 4,000 square feet or 15% of gross lot area, whichever is less;
- Less than 1,000 cubic yards of grading (cut and fill combined) per lot, with no more than 50 cubic yards of imported fill per lot;
- Maximum 25% (RS-1) or 40% (RS-2) net lot coverage;
- Maximum building height of 16 feet for residences and 12 feet for detached accessory structures;
- Minimum front setbacks of 20 feet, minimum rear setbacks of 15 feet, minimum street-side setbacks of 10 feet, and minimum interior side setbacks of five feet, with setbacks along private street rights-of-way measured from the easement line rather than the property line; and,
- No subdivision of existing lots within Zone 2.

As noted above, the City has been ordered to remove regulatory impediments in its Municipal Code that prevent the development of the 16 *Monks* plaintiffs' lots. This was accomplished by the 2009 addition to the moratorium exceptions, cited above. As of January 2012, nine *Monks* plaintiffs have obtained Planning entitlements to develop their lots, while the remaining *Monks* plaintiffs are at various stages in obtaining Planning entitlements for the balance of eight lots. However, to provide a conservative analysis, this EIR considers the potential environmental impacts of buildout of all 47 undeveloped and underdeveloped lots (16 *Monks* lots plus 31 additional lots) under the parameters listed above.

2.5 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objective of the proposed project is to establish an exception category to allow for the future development of 47 undeveloped or underdeveloped lots located in Zone 2 of the City's Landslide Moratorium Ordinance.



2.6 REQUIRED APPROVALS

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes is the Lead Agency for the project and has discretionary authority over the proposed Project. The City Council has the authority to review and take final action on the revised ordinance. Approval would require that the City Council adopt the proposed revisions to the City's Landslide Moratorium Ordinance (Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code Chapter 15.20).

