

Chapter 2
Project Description

Introduction and Overview

The City of Lake Forest is proposing to develop a new sports park and recreation center and extension of Rancho Parkway from its current terminus to Portola Parkway on approximately 90 gross acres of land in the northeastern portion of the City near the intersection of Portola Parkway and El Toro Road. The proposed project consists of active and passive recreational uses that will be phased as private property acquisitions are negotiated and funding is secured. This chapter describes the project background, the project location, the existing conditions of the project site and surrounding areas, and detailed project components.

Project Background

The proposed sports park project was included as part of the Opportunity Study Area (OSA) General Plan Amendment and Zone Change that was approved by the City in July 2008. The OSA included up to a 45-acre sports park and community/civic center complex that was to be funded through park in-lieu fees collected from OSA development. The adopted Alternative 7 within the final OSA program environmental impact report (PEIR) analyzed the Baker Ranch property (Site 4) and the Rados property (Site 9) for a potential active sports park. As part of the OSA, the City created a general plan overlay on Sites 4 and 9 to indicate potential sites for future public facilities, government buildings, schools, and community parks.

Following the certification of the final PEIR and the adoption of the OSA General Plan Amendment and Zone Change, the City entered into development agreements with four landowners within the OSA in July and August 2008 and a fifth landowner in July 2010. One of the public benefits the development agreements provide is dedicated land for public facilities benefiting the entire City. The provisions for dedicated community-wide public facilities in the executed development agreements in the OSA are as follows:

- **Rados Property:** 10.7 net acres (13 gross acres) of land located at the eastern terminus of Vista Terrace Drive. The development agreement with Portola Center provides for 1) purchase of the Rados property and dedication to the City, 2) an onsite alternative totaling 13 contiguous net usable acres, or 3) an offsite alternative acceptable to the City. Portola Center must elect either the purchase and dedication of the Rados property or an onsite alternative prior to the recordation of the first final map.
- **Baker Ranch Property:** As part of the Shea-Baker Ranch Associates development agreement approximately 18 gross acres of land contiguous to the Rados property bounded by the future extension of Rancho Parkway to the north and Portola Parkway to the west was acquired by the City in November 2010.
- **Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) Property:** IRWD will dedicate 9 net acres of land located at the southern terminus of Indian Ocean Drive west of Serrano Creek. This property is

not located near the Rados property and others proposed for a sports park and community center. The 9-acre IRWD property is intended for use as a civic center with a city hall and community meeting center. This site is not part of the proposed project subject to this EIR.

Independent of the OSA landowner development agreements, the City entered into an agreement to exchange open space lands with the County of Orange (County) in order to add public facilities land contiguous to the Rados and Baker Ranch properties. This 58.6-acre parcel of land is known as the Glass Creek property. The land exchange agreement approved by both the City and the County in May 2009 provides for the City acquiring 38 acres of open space land—32 acres from Portola Center dedicated in advance of their final map and 6 acres contiguous to Portola Center open space and Whiting Ranch. The properties totaling approximately 38 acres that were exchanged included Parcels 1 (17.3 acres) and 13 (14.6 acres) from Portola Center and approximately 6.1 acres from the Hernandez property (assessor's parcel number [APN] 606-161-10). The 38 acres of open space land was exchanged with the County for the 58.6-acre Glass Creek property. The terms of the land exchange agreement provided for 20.6 acres to be encumbered with a permanent open space/trail easement in favor of the County and the remaining 38 acres unencumbered for the intended use as an active use sports park.

Project Area and Existing Conditions

Regional Location

The proposed project is located in the northeastern portion of Lake Forest. The City is bordered by the City of Laguna Hills to the southwest, Irvine to the northwest, and Mission Viejo to the southeast. Lake Forest encompasses an area of 16.6 square miles located in the heart of south Orange County and Saddleback Valley, between the coastal floodplain and the Santa Ana Mountains. Regional access to the site is provided by State Route 241 (SR-241) (Foothill Transportation Corridor), located to the north of the project site, and Interstates 5 and 405 (I-5 and I-405, respectively), located to the south of the project site. Figure 2-1 presents the regional location.

Local Vicinity

The proposed project site encompasses approximately 90 gross acres located southwest of the intersection of Portola Parkway and El Toro Road and south of SR-241. Figure 2-2 shows the local vicinity of the project site. The site includes:

- the 58.6-acre Glass Creek property received from County, of which 38 acres have been designated for active use and 20.6 acres have been placed in a passive use easement;
- the Rados property (Site 9 of the OSA), which includes approximately 13 acres of land within the central portion of the project site; and
- the 18-acre Baker Ranch property (a portion of Site 4 of the OSA), lying immediately north and adjacent to the Rados and Glass Creek properties.



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**Figure 2-1
Regional Location Map**



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Figure 2-2
Project Vicinity Map

Existing Site Characteristics

The Glass Creek site was formerly part of County open space, and is undeveloped with varying topography and native and nonnative vegetation. The Rados property is also vacant with limited vegetation; a large part of the property has been disturbed by prior grading activities. The Baker Ranch property currently has an active sand mining operation ¹and commercial nursery and is highly disturbed. Topography within the study area consists generally of rolling hills. The elevation ranges from approximately 715 feet above mean sea level (MSL) in the northwestern portion of the study area to approximately 860 feet above MSL in the southeastern portion.

Surrounding Land Uses

The surrounding land uses consist of a mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. Light industrial complexes are located to the west, SR-241 is located to the north, Saddleback Church and commercial uses are located east, and residential uses are primarily to the south. Figure 2-3 shows the surrounding land uses.

General Plan and Zoning

The general plan and zoning designations for the sites involved with the proposed project vary for each property and are summarized in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1. Existing General Plan and Zoning for Project Site Parcels

Site	General Plan	Zoning
Glass Creek	Regional Park/Open Space	Open Space in Rancho De Los Alisos Planned Community
Rados	Business Park with Mineral Resources and Public Facilities Overlay	Urban Activity in Baker Ranch Planned Community
Baker Ranch	Commercial with Mineral Resources and Public Facilities Overlay	Urban Activity in Baker Ranch Planned Community

The Mineral Resources Overlay applies to areas classified as an important Mineral Resource (MRZ-2) by the State Department of Conservation—Division of Mines and Geology. This overlay provides for the management and utilization of mineral resources on an interim basis. The OSA General Plan Amendment approved by the City in July 2008 created a Public Facilities Overlay on the Rados and Baker Ranch properties. The Public Facilities Overlay is placed on properties with General Plan Land Use designations that would allow public facilities and parks. The intent of this overlay is to indicate potential sites for future public facilities, government buildings, and community parks.

¹ Operation of the active sand mining operation is scheduled to cease on the Baker Ranch Property as of November 15, 2010. Any subtenants will be moved to the area retained by Baker Ranch properties (area north of the future Rancho Parkway extension) at that time.

Proposed Project

Project Objectives

The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15124[b]) require that the project description contain a statement of objectives that includes the underlying purpose of the project. The City is proposing to develop a new sports park to serve the existing and future recreational needs of Lake Forest's residents. The major project objectives are listed below.

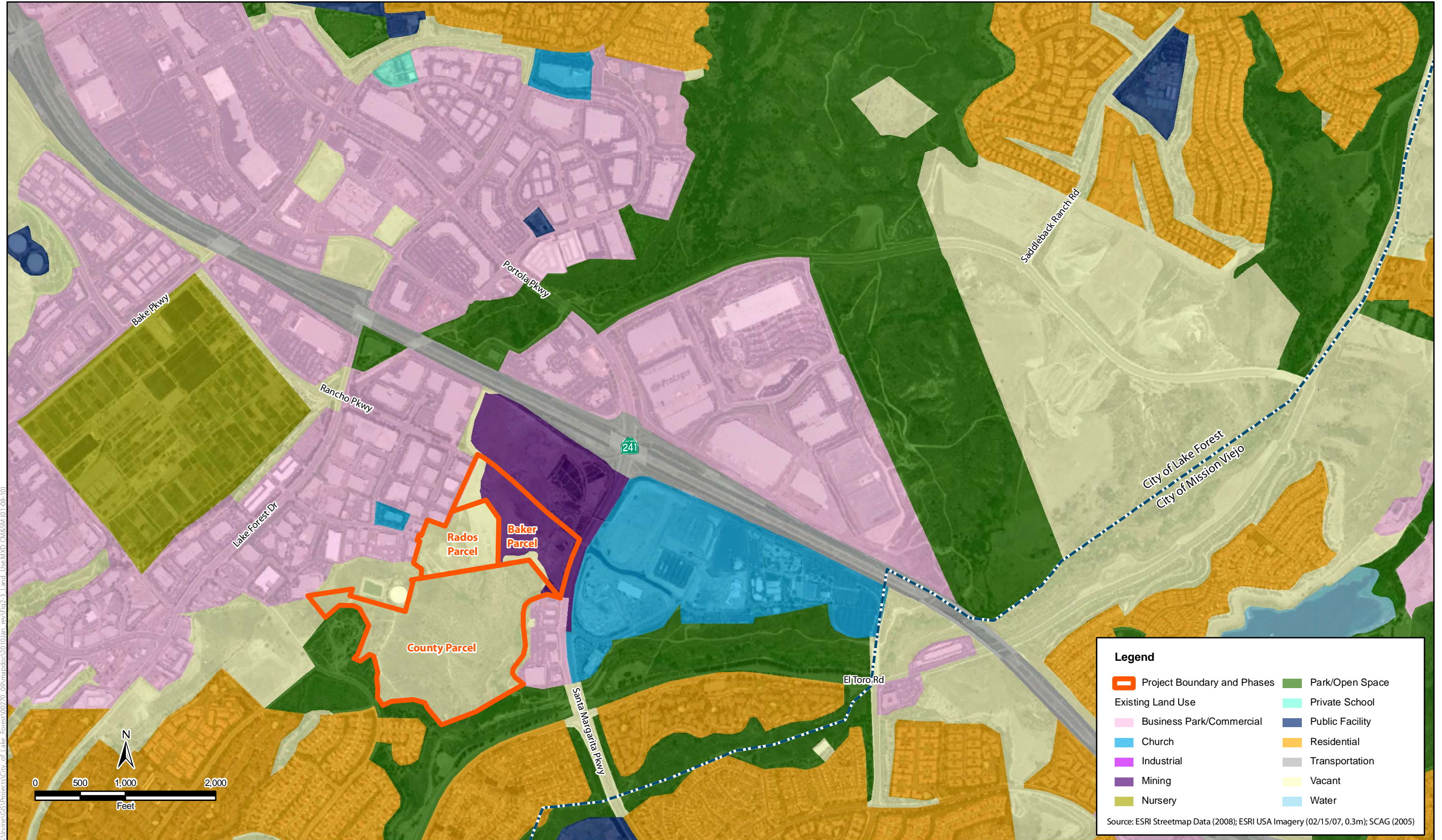
- provide active sports recreation facilities to benefit the entire community of Lake Forest;
- develop an active recreational facility providing amenities identified by the community as most desirable including sports fields with lights, a recreation center/clubhouse, trails, picnic areas, restrooms, concessions, and playgrounds;
- develop a park plan that addresses the planning issues identified by the community by minimizing both environmental impacts and cost ;
- develop a park plan that utilizes the benefits identified by the community during community workshops including the ample size of the property, views of natural open space and Saddleback mountains, and convenient local access on major arterials ;
- provide a sports park for use by a variety of user groups, such as baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball teams;
- provide convenient access and sufficient parking to accommodate simultaneous use of multiple fields;
- facilitate completion of Rancho Parkway with the widening of Portola Parkway;
- preserve the sensitive riparian areas of the site and provide viewing and interpretive opportunities as part of the overall park plan; and
- develop a park plan which creates a large and continuous park space and distributes areas and amenities with related parking for safe and convenient access to all facilities

Description of the Proposed Project

The City is proposing to develop a number of active and passive park facilities on the proposed project site. Existing access is available from Portola Parkway, and new access locations will be provided along the extension of Rancho Parkway and from Vista Terrace. The park would be developed in phases based on the acquisition of properties associated with the overall site. Additional details regarding construction, operation, and proposed park facilities are provided below.

Proposed Park Facilities

The conceptual design for the proposed sports park was created through a series of community workshops and design efforts by the City's master plan consultant. In August 2009, the city council authorized moving forward with the analysis of the Consensus Master Plan for the proposed project (refer to Figure 2-4, Consensus Master Plan) for CEQA purposes. The Consensus Master Plan for the



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Figure 2-3
Project Site and Surrounding Land Uses

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Source: RJM (7/16/09)

Figure 2-4
Consensus Master Plan

proposed sports park includes the following active and passive recreational amenities should all of the properties be available for full buildout:

- up to six baseball/softball fields;
- up to five soccer/multi-use fields and two fields with a soccer overlay;
- up to six hard courts for basketball and tennis;
- up to two playgrounds including tot lots with sand and play structures;
- a 30,000-square-foot recreation center, currently envisioned as a “youth recreation center,” which would include a gymnasium as well as multipurpose/meeting rooms;
- a small amphitheater adjoining the recreation center;
- surface parking lots provided at a rate of roughly 50 spaces per field and 120 spaces for the recreation center for a total of approximately 800 spaces at buildout;
- seating for baseball fields that may be terraced into the areas between infields;
- restrooms and concession areas;
- trail connections to local and regional trails; and
- security lighting and lighting for all sports fields.

The park is envisioned to be open 7 days per week from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The Consensus Master Plan is intended to be conceptual in nature and was developed for planning and environmental analysis purposes. A final Park Master Plan will be developed based upon the input gathered through the environmental analysis and engineering studies.

Proposed Access Locations

A number of potential access locations are currently under consideration and will depend on timing of property acquisition and phasing of the proposed project (phasing discussed below). Figure 2-5 shows potential access locations.

The initial access location may include an existing access easement to/from Portola Parkway (1A). Vista Terrace Drive is another potential access location; it would involve an access easement or property acquisition to create the necessary access road (1B). Potential access from the future extension of Rancho Parkway could occur (2). The preferred access to the site at full buildout would be via Rancho Parkway at the approximate midpoint between the existing terminus of Rancho Parkway and the future intersection with Portola Parkway, via a signalized intersection (3).

Rancho Parkway currently terminates 200 feet south of Hermana Circle. The proposed project also includes the extension of Rancho Parkway, which would connect to Portola Parkway. Rancho Parkway will be a four-lane divided highway; it is identified as a Primary Arterial in both the County’s Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) and the Lake Forest General Plan Circulation Element. This element indicates a 100-foot right-of-way and an expected average daily traffic (ADT) of 36,000 vehicles on Primary Arterials. This project is currently in Lake Forest’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and anticipated to begin design in the 2009–2010 fiscal year and construction in the 2010–2011 fiscal year. As part of the extension of Rancho Parkway, the southbound leg of Portola Parkway would be widened at the new intersection. The widening will

include an approximately 250-foot long right-turn pocket north of the intersection, and an approximately 560-foot long acceleration lane south of the intersection.

General Plan Amendment

The majority of the Glass Creek property is currently designated for Regional Park/Open Space in the City of Lake Forest General Plan. The proposed project includes a general plan amendment to redesignate portions of the property to reflect the active and passive areas of the proposed sports park use as shown in Table 2-2, below, and in Figure 2-6.

Table 2-2. Proposed General Plan Amendment, Glass Creek Property

General Plan Designation	Existing Acres	Proposed Acres
Regional Park/Open Space	51.1	20.6
Community Park/Open Space	7.5	38.0
Total	58.6	58.6

Infrastructure and Utilities

Development of the proposed sports park would require the extension of utilities to the site, including water, reclaimed water, sewer, electric, gas, and communications. The required utilities are available in surrounding streets such as Portola Parkway, Vista Terrace Drive, and Rancho Parkway and would include simple laterals to connect to existing facilities. Except for the extension of new utilities within Rancho Parkway, no new offsite infrastructure is required to be installed or expanded.

A 16-inch reclaimed water pipeline owned and operated by IRWD currently crosses the site from east to west, extending from approximately the location of the 7.5-million-gallon reservoir west of the site to the southern portion of the commercial development to the immediately east of the site near the corner of Portola Parkway and El Toro Road. The pipeline would be relocated on site and would be temporarily taken out of service for short periods to connect to temporary and permanent improvements during the construction period.

Project Phasing

The project is anticipated to occur in two or three phases as property is acquired. For the purposes of this EIR, full buildout of the site is anticipated and assumed to be the proposed project (Phases 1 through 3). However, should phasing be necessary, it is anticipated to occur as described below.

- Phase 1** would occur on the Glass Creek property. It is envisioned to have up to four ball fields, two overlay soccer fields, three dedicated soccer fields/multi-use fields, a restroom/concession stand building, three basketball/hard courts, a tot lot, trail connections, and parking facilities. Access to this phase is anticipated to occur via an existing access easement from Portola Parkway (1A). Construction of Phase 1 is anticipated to last approximately 6 months. Construction of the park amenities proposed under Phase 1 may also occur in three subphases, as shown in Figure 2-4, Consensus Master Plan. Figure 2-7 shows Phase 1 and the interim slope conditions that would occur onsite and offsite for construction of this phase.



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Figure 2-5
Proposed Access Locations

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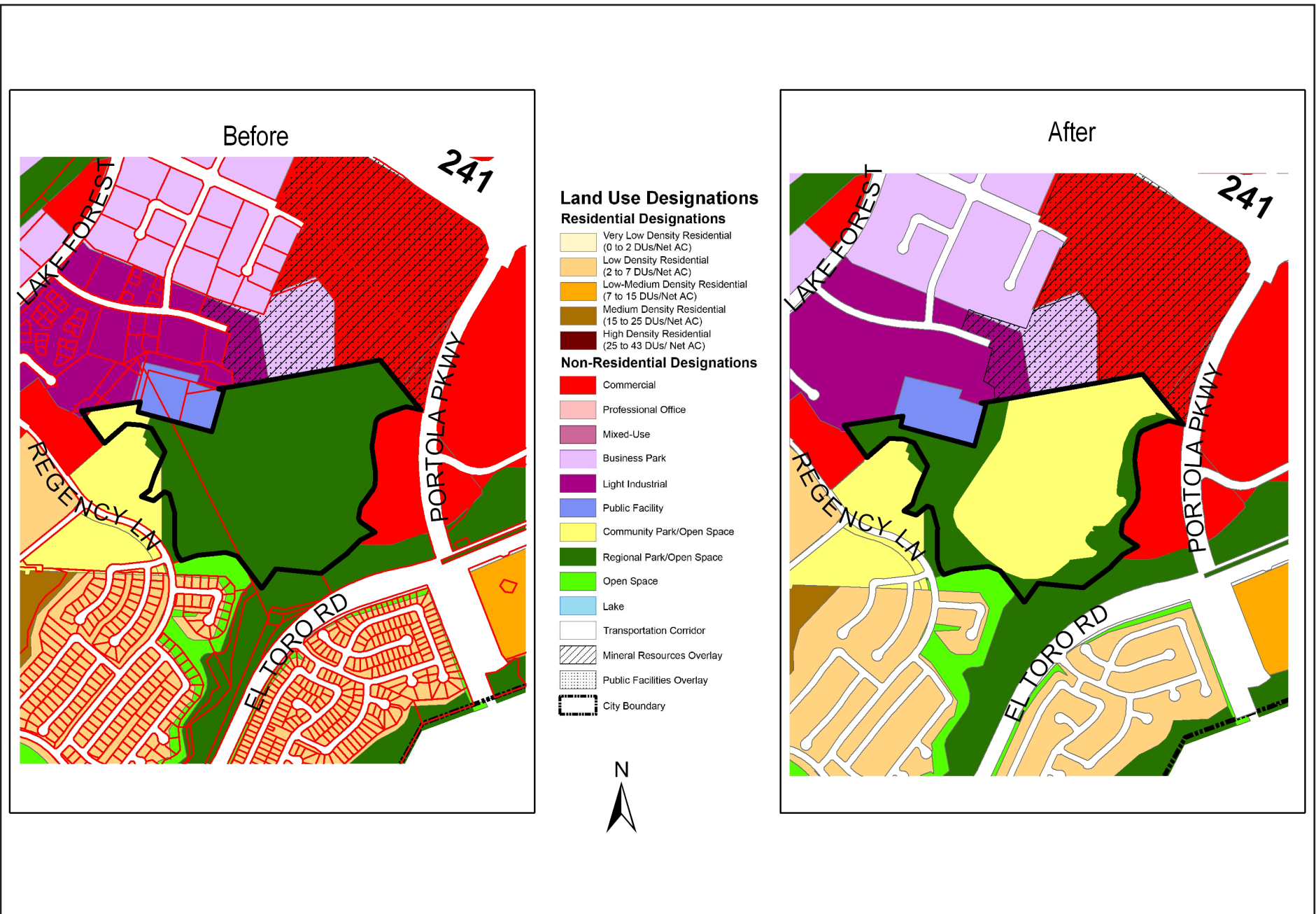
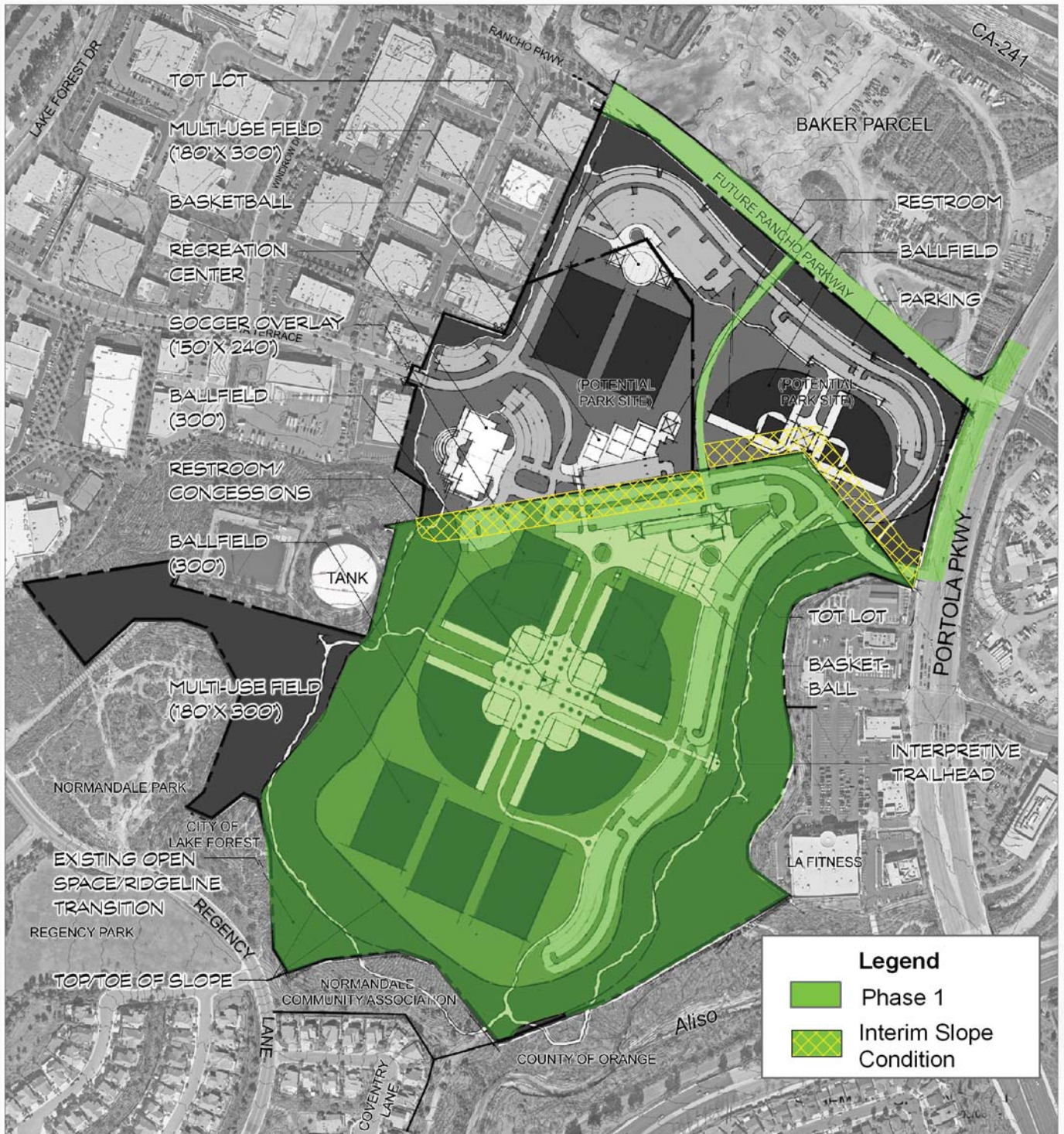


Figure 2-6
General Plan Amendment, Before and After
City of Lake Forest Sports Park and Recreation Center



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Source: PCR (2010)

Figure 2-7
Phase 1 Site and Interim Slope Condition
City of Lake Forest Sports Park and Recreation Center

- **Rancho Parkway Phase 1** includes the extension of Rancho Parkway from Hermana Circle to Portola Parkway. This phase also includes widening of Portola Parkway as discussed above at the intersection with the new Rancho Parkway extension. It is anticipated that construction associated with the Portola Parkway widening and Rancho Parkway extension would last approximately 11 months. It is expected to occur concurrently with construction of Phase 1 of the park.
- **Phase 2** would occur on the Rados property. It is envisioned to include the development of a 30,000-square-foot recreation center, a small amphitheatre, two multi-use/soccer fields, three basketball courts, a tot lot, and associated parking for these facilities. Access to this phase is anticipated to occur via a potential secondary access route from Vista Terrace Drive (1B). Construction activities associated with buildout of Phase 2 are anticipated to last approximately 11 months. Figure 2-8 shows Phase 2 and the interim slope conditions that would occur onsite and offsite for construction of this phase.
- **Phase 3** would occur on approximately 18 gross acres of the Baker Ranch property located south of the Rancho Parkway extension. This phase may include the development of two ball fields and additional parking. Construction activities associated with buildout of Phase 3 are anticipated to last approximately 6 months. This phase would likely include development of access to Rancho Parkway (2 and/or 3). Figure 2-9 shows the Phase 3 site development.

Project Grading Options

Two grading options are being considered for the proposed project. Both options occur within a maximum study area developed through preliminary studies which identified environmentally sensitive areas that should be avoided. Either alternative would include a fifteen foot preservation buffer immediately adjacent to the west side of Glass Creek. Site drainage would be designed to mimic the existing hydrology to minimize hydromodification of Glass Creek and Aliso Creek. Sufficient area is provided near Glass Creek to provide onsite mitigation for impacts to biological resources as described further in Section 3.3.

Each of these options is conceptual in nature, as final elevations will be determined at a later date based upon precise soil and engineering studies, and a final design plan. The two preliminary grading options are described below.

Grading Scenario 1: Highest Pad Elevation, Balanced Grade

This scenario sets the pad elevation for the sports fields at the estimated elevation needed to achieve a balance of the grading on the Glass Creek Parcel. As shown in Figure 2-10, proposed elevations at the site would range from approximately 765 feet above MSL in the southern portion of the study area to approximately 795 feet above MSL in the northern portion. This scenario would entail approximately 1,671,700 cubic yards of grading, including 995,400 cubic yards of cut and 676,300 cubic yards of fill. This grading option may utilize a retaining wall system, including a wall up to 45 feet in height along the east side of the site near Glass Creek. The retaining wall would facilitate preservation of riparian vegetation within and adjacent to Glass Creek while allowing sufficient room for construction of detention facilities along the Creek, which would serve as mitigation for biological resources impacts. Final park design would include recommendations regarding whether a retaining wall is necessary and, if necessary, the size and scope of the recommended retaining wall, which would enable full use of the property for sports fields, recreational facilities, parking, and circulation.

Grading Scenario 2: Lowest Pad Elevation, Grading Export

This grading scenario sets the proposed pad elevation for the sports fields at the estimated lowest elevation possible while preserving the environmentally sensitive areas and the edges of the study area. As shown in Figure 2-11, proposed elevations at the site would range from approximately 750 feet above MSL in the southern portion of the study area to approximately 780 feet above MSL in the northern portion. Under this grading scenario, the finished site pad would be approximately 15 feet lower than the site pad proposed under Grading Scenario 1. This scenario would entail approximately 1,826,800 cubic yards of grading, including 1,633,800 cubic yards of cut and 193,000 cubic yards of fill. Approximately 1,440,800 cubic yards of fill would be exported off site.

Discretionary Actions and Approvals

Under CEQA, the City of Lake Forest has the primary discretionary authority over the approval of the proposed project. The anticipated discretionary approvals required for the City to implement the proposed project include the following:

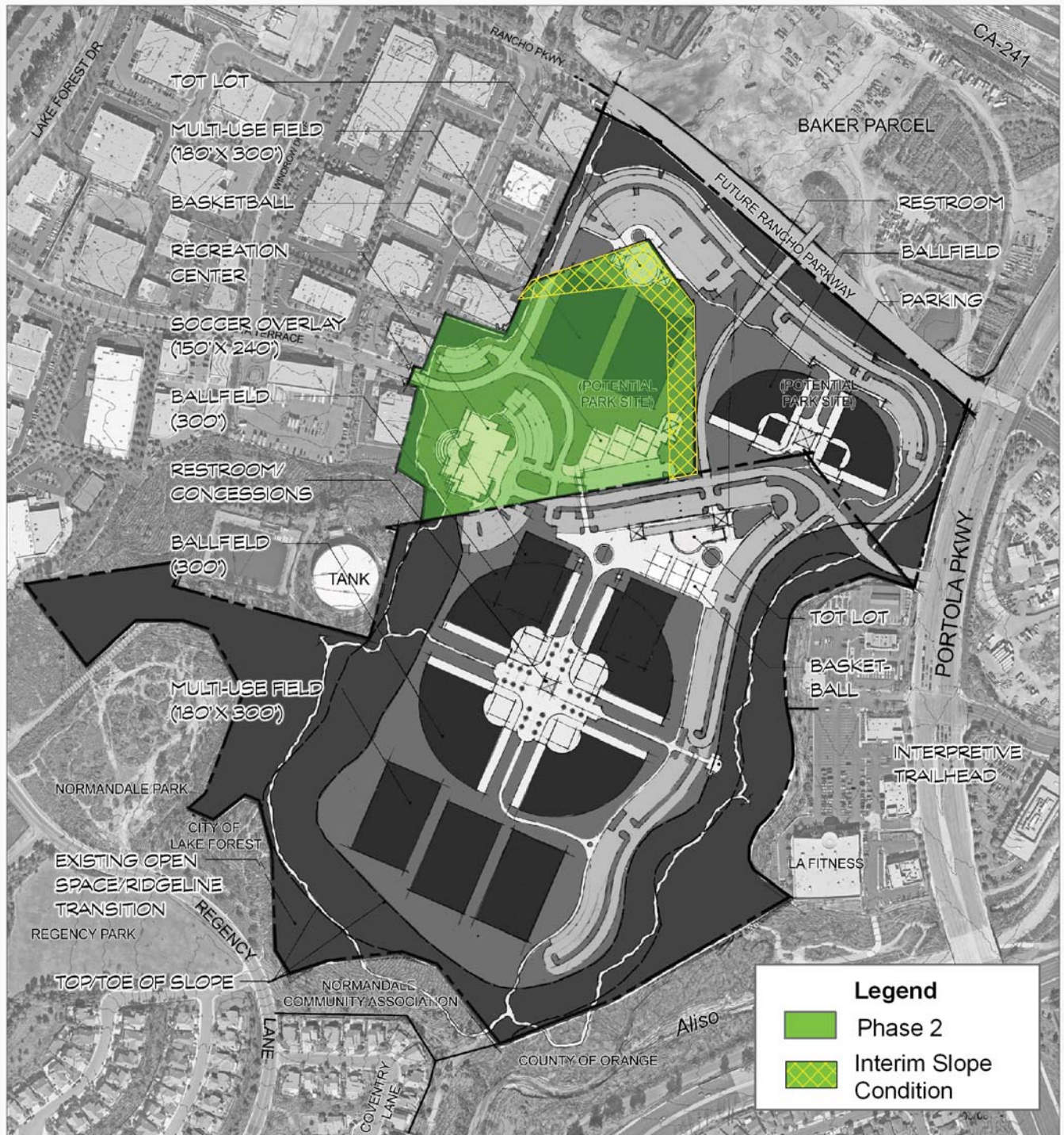
- certification of the EIR;
- adoption of the CEQA findings of fact;
- adoption of a statement of overriding considerations;
- adoption of a mitigation monitoring and reporting program; and
- approval of the general plan amendment.

The City entities involved in the entitlement and/or EIR process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Planning Commission,
- Parks and Recreation Commission, and
- City Council.

Other public agencies may also have discretionary authority over the project or aspects of the project, and are considered responsible agencies. The EIR can be used by the responsible agencies to comply with CEQA in connection with permitting or approval authority over the project. The following approvals may also be required to implement the proposed project:

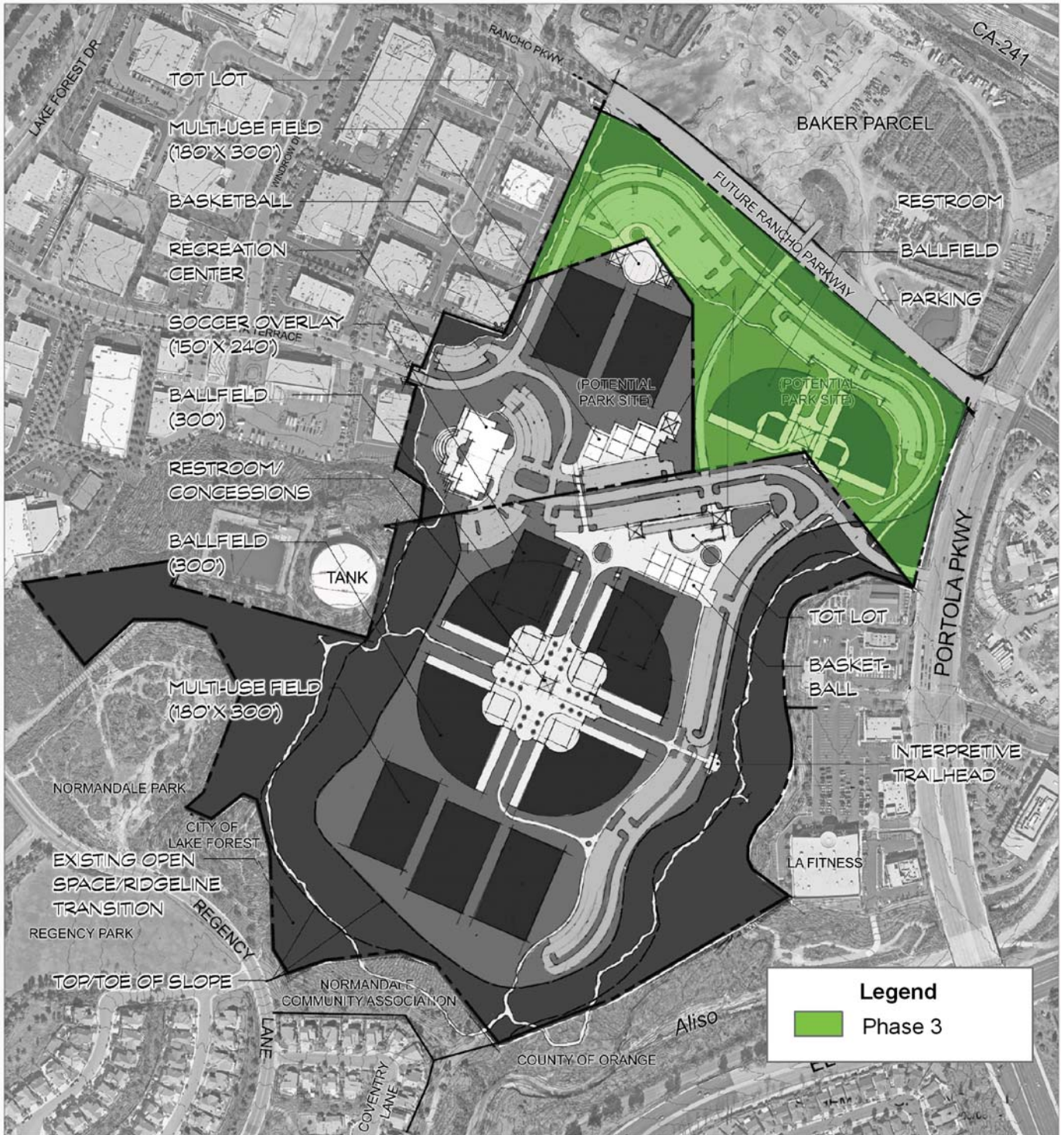
- Santa Ana and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs):
 - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general construction permit (for individual construction projects of a particular size or projects that result in point source discharges),
 - Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, Water Quality Certifications for impacts on waters of the United States;
- California Department of Fish and Game (DFG):
 - Section 1600 of the Fish and Game Code for impacts to DFG jurisdictional waters,
 - Streambed Alteration Agreement,
 - incidental take permit, if applicable;



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Source: PCR (2010)

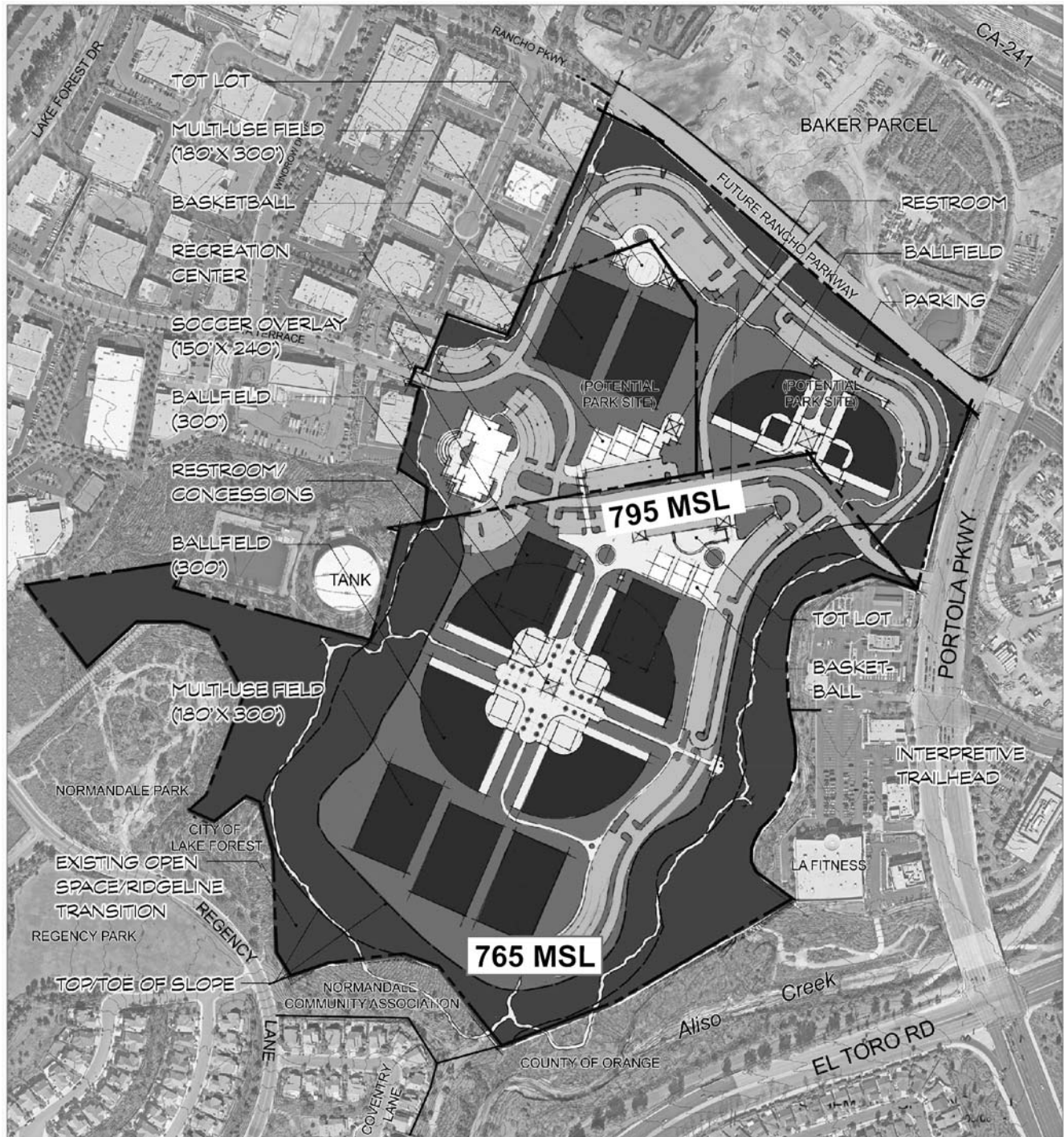
Figure 2-8
Phase 2 Site and Interim Slope Condition
City of Lake Forest Sports Park and Recreation Center



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Source: PCR (2010)

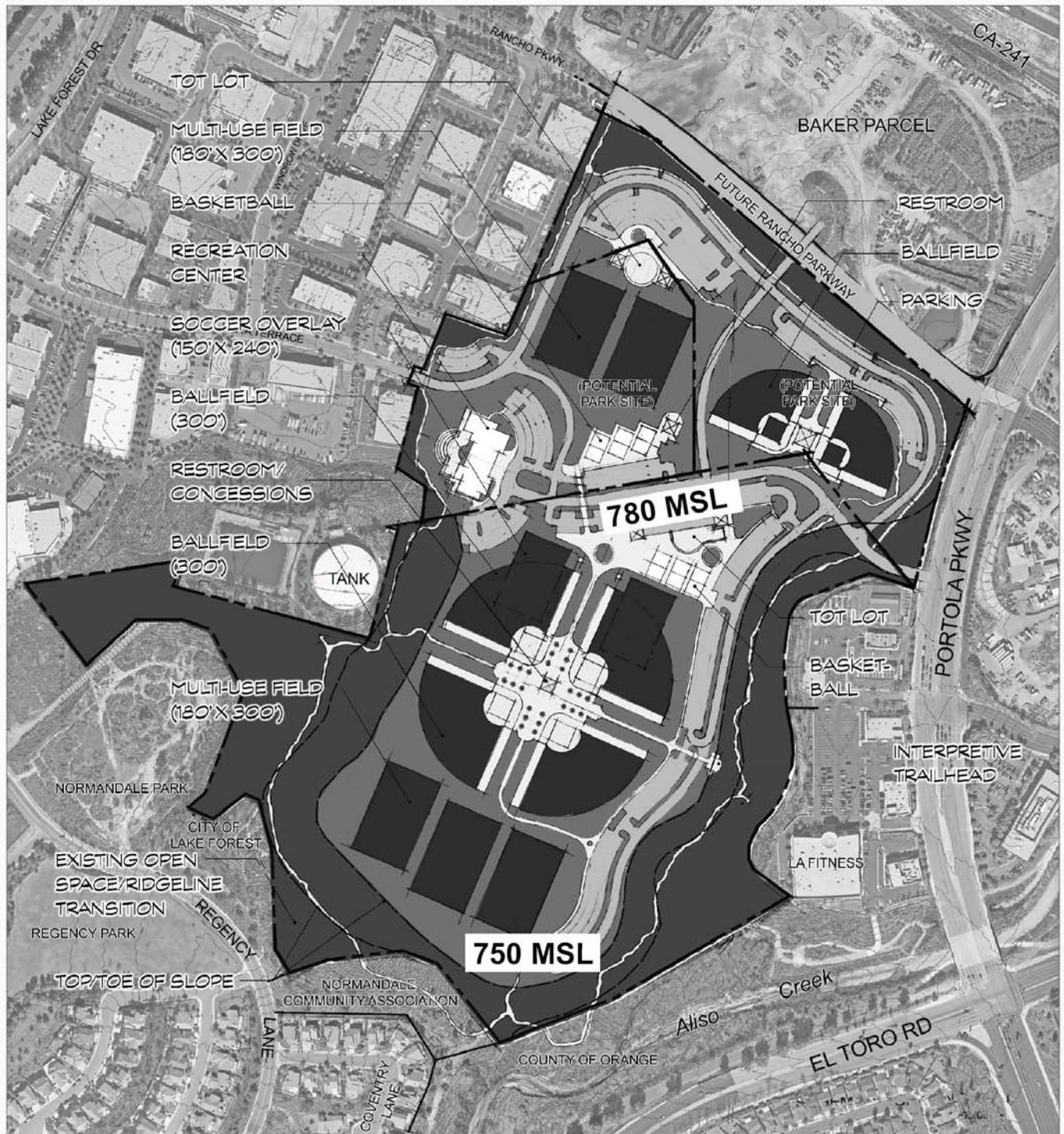
Figure 2-9
Phase 3 Site
City of Lake Forest Sports Park and Recreation Center



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Source: PCR (2010)

Figure 2-10
Grading Scenario 1: Highest Pad Elevation (Balanced Grade)
City of Lake Forest Sports Park and Recreation Center



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Source: PCR (2010)

Figure 2-11
Grading Scenario 2: Lowest Pad Elevation (Grading Export)
City of Lake Forest Sports Park and Recreation Center

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps):
 - Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 approval for all jurisdictional waterways and wetlands that are not isolated (e.g., all Section 404 areas);
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS):
 - Section 7 or Section 10 incidental take permit for any actions that result in a “take” of a listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and that are not already addressed in an applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan;
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):
 - under CWA Section 404(c), review of Section 404 permits; and
- County of Orange:
 - compliance with applicable natural community conservation plan.

Incorporation by Reference

The proposed project includes a number of features that were previously approved by the City and adequately analyzed as part of the OSA PEIR, which was certified by the City in July 2008 (SCH #2004071039). Therefore, the EIR for the proposed project will incorporate by reference the OSA final PEIR where appropriate to reduce repetitive discussions and analysis and will provide the required information and citation accordingly. To paraphrase Section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the following principles are considered when an EIR incorporates information from previous environmental documents by reference:

- a. An EIR or negative declaration may incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public.
- b. Where part of another document is incorporated by reference, such other document shall be made available to the public for inspection at a public place or public building such as the office of the lead agency, public county offices or public library.
- c. The incorporated part of the referenced document shall be briefly summarized or briefly described if the data or information cannot be summarized.
- d. The state identification number of the incorporated document (if reviewed under the state review system) should be included in the summary or designation described in subdivision (c).
- e. Examples of materials that may be incorporated by reference include but are not limited to, environmental setting from another EIR, description of air pollution problems by an air agency concerning a process involved in the project; and description of applicable city or county general plan.
- f. Incorporation by reference is most appropriate for including long, descriptive, or technical materials that provide general background but do not contribute directly to the analysis of the problem at hand.

The OSA final PEIR is available to the public on the City's web site (www.lakeforestca.gov/depts/ds/planning/op_study/peir.asp) and at the following location:

City of Lake Forest City Hall,
25550 Commercentre Drive, Suite 100,
Lake Forest, CA 92630