

3. *Environmental Setting*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to provide a description of the physical environmental conditions of the City of Menifee (project site), as they existed at the time the notice of preparation was published, from both a local and a regional perspective. The environmental setting provides a set of baseline physical conditions that are used to determine the significance of environmental changes that would result from implementation of the General Plan (proposed project). Subsections of Chapter 5, *Environmental Analysis*, provide a more detailed description of the local environmental setting for each environmental topic area.

3.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

3.2.1 Regional Location

The City of Menifee is in western Riverside County, approximately 30 miles southeast of the City of Riverside. The City is generally bordered the City of Perris and unincorporated county to the north; City of Canyon Lake, City of Lake Elsinore, and City of Wildomar to the west; City of Wildomar, City of Murrieta and unincorporated county to the south; and the unincorporated communities of Homeland and Winchester to the east (see Figure 3-1, *Regional Location*). Interstate 215 (I-215) bisects the City north to south. An aerial photograph of the City and surrounding area are shown in Figure 3-2, *Citywide Aerial*.

3.2.2 Regional Planning Considerations

Southern California Association of Governments

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a council of governments that represents six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura), 191, cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to encourage a more sustainable Southern California now and in the future.

SCAG is the federally recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for this region, which encompasses over 38,000 square miles; it is the nation's largest MPO. As the designated MPO, SCAG is mandated by federal and state law to research and draw up plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, and air quality. Additional mandates exist at the state level.

SCAG is also the regional clearinghouse for projects requiring environmental documentation under federal and state law. In this role, SCAG reviews proposed development and infrastructure projects to assess their effects on regional planning programs, such as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, and the Compass Growth Vision. SCAG cooperates with the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and other agencies in preparing regional planning documents.

Western Riverside Council of Governments

The Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) is a joint-powers agency that conducts interagency regional coordination and planning for local governments in western Riverside County and serves as the council of governments and local transportation planning agency for the western Riverside



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subregion of SCAG. Representatives from 17 cities, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, and the Eastern and Western Municipal Water Districts have seats on the WRCOG Executive Committee, the group that sets policy for the organization. WRCOG coordinates and sets policy for:

a) Regional Transportation Issues

- Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee Planning and Administration (TUMF). Administers western Riverside County's TUMF Program to mitigate the cumulative regional impacts of new development on the subregion's arterial highway system identified on the Regional System of Highways and Arterials.
- Goods Movement Review
- Regionwide Mobility Advocacy. Administers Riverside County Measure A, a half-cent transportation sales tax that supports freeway construction projects and designates smaller revenue allocations for arterial roadway improvements in western Riverside County.

b) Community Growth and Development

- Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)
- Planning for Growth
- Inter-regional Partnerships
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

c) Environmental Issues

- Environmental Planning
- Air Quality Attainment Strategies
- Hazardous and Solid Waste Management
- Recycling

Riverside County Transportation Commission

Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is governed by a 34-member commission that includes a mayor or council member from each of Riverside County's cities, all five members of the Board of Supervisors, and a non-voting appointee of the Governor. The RCTC allocates state and federal transportation funds in Riverside County; plans and implements regionwide projects funded under the TUMF; and allocates and manages funding for transportation projects financed by Measure A sales tax revenues.¹

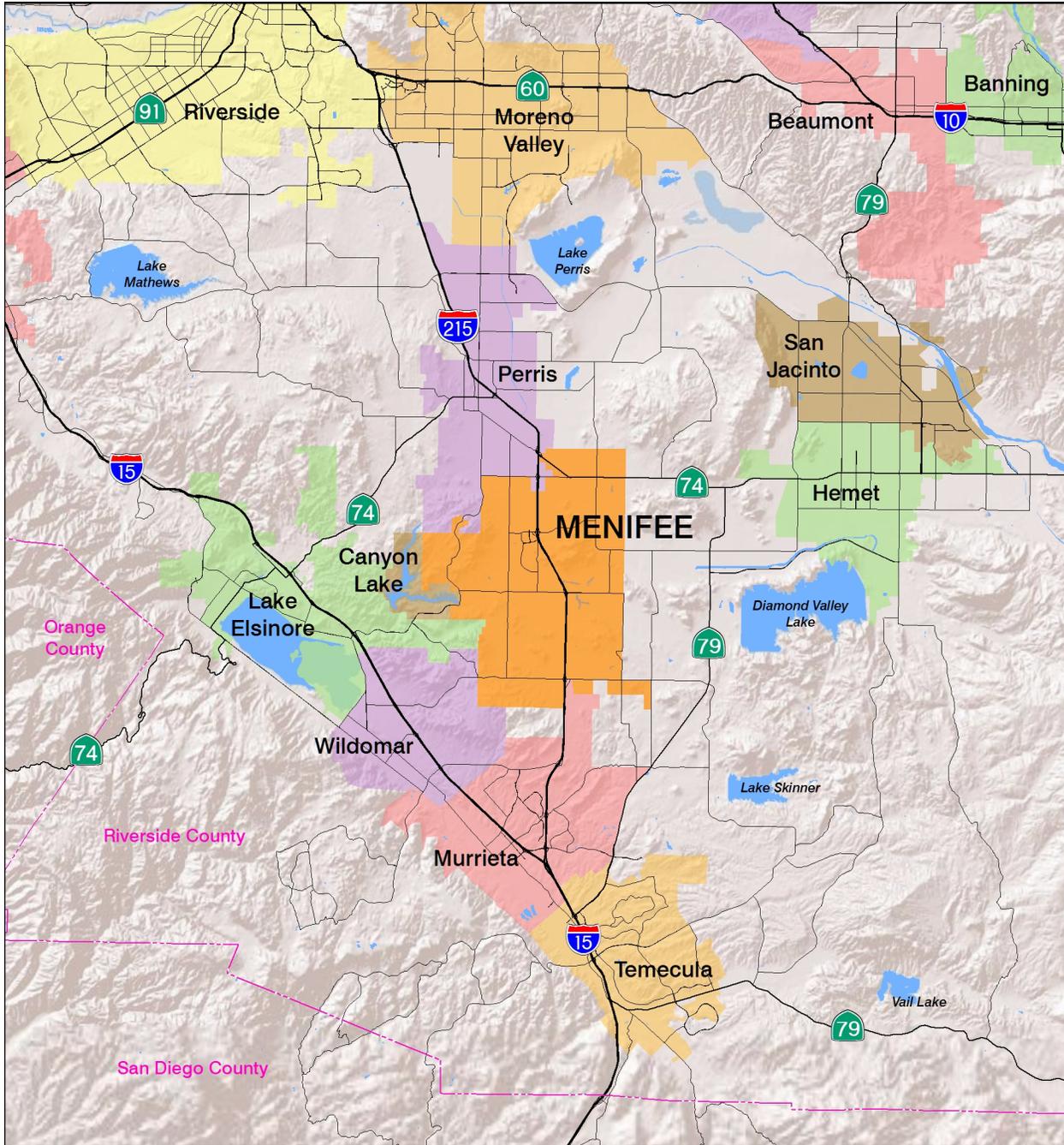
South Coast Air Quality Management District

The City of Menifee is in the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), which is managed by SCAQMD. SCAQMD is the air pollution control agency for all of Orange County and the urban portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. This area of 10,743 square miles is home to over 16.8 million people—about half the population of the whole state of California. SCAQMD is responsible for controlling emissions primarily from stationary sources of air pollution. These can include anything from large power plants and refineries to the corner gas station. There are about 28,400 such businesses operating under SCAQMD permits. Many consumer products are also considered stationary sources; these include house paint, furniture varnish, and thousands of products containing solvents that evaporate into the air. About 25 percent

¹ In 1988, RCTC proposed a half-cent sales tax for transportation (Measure A) and voters approved the 20-year plan. RCTC was the agency charged with making sure the mobility improvements were constructed. In 2002, voters approved an extension of Measure A until 2039.

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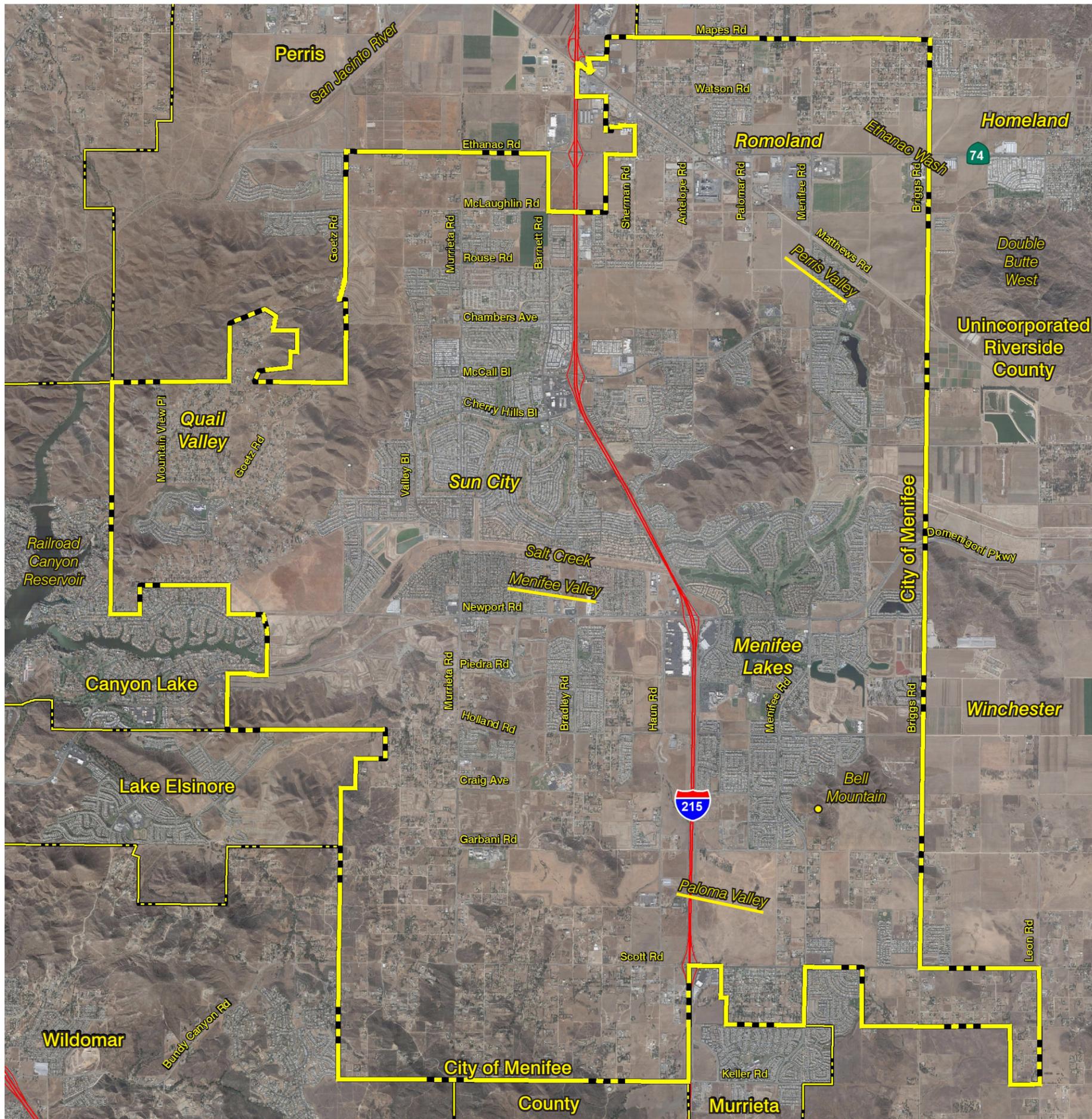
Regional Location



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Citywide Aerial



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of this area's ozone-forming air pollution comes from stationary sources, both businesses and residences. The other 75 percent comes from mobile sources—mainly cars, trucks and buses, but also construction equipment, ships, trains, and airplanes. Emission standards for mobile sources are established by state or federal agencies, such as the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, rather than by local agencies such as the SCAQMD. SCAQMD develops and adopts an air quality management plan, which serves as the blueprint to bring this area into compliance with federal and state clean air standards. The air pollutants emitted by stationary and mobile sources are regulated by federal and state law and are known as criteria air pollutants. The Menifee area of the SoCAB currently does not meet ambient air quality standards (AAQS) for ozone (O₃) and fine inhalable particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) under the California and national AAQS, and coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM₁₀) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) under the California AAQS.

California Air Resources Board

CARB is a part of the California Environmental Protection Agency EPA, an organization that reports directly to the governor's office. CARB's mission is to promote and protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through the effective and efficient reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering the effects on the economy of the state. CARB has the responsibility of implementing greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies under Assembly Bill 32 (AB32).

AB32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, was passed by the California state legislature on August 31, 2006, to place the state on a course toward reducing its contribution of GHG. AB 32 follows the first tier of emissions reduction targets established in Executive Order S-3-05, signed on June 1, 2005. Executive Order S-3-05 requires the state's global warming emissions to be reduced to 1990 levels by the year 2020 and by 80 percent of 1990 levels by year 2050. Pursuant to the requirements of AB 32, the state's reduction in global warming emissions will be accomplished through an enforceable statewide cap on global warming emissions that will be phased in starting in 2012. In order to effectively implement the cap, CARB adopted the Scoping Plan in December 2008 that identified the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and reduction strategies for the various emission sectors within the state.



Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

The City is in the San Jacinto Valley portion of the Santa Ana River Watershed that spans approximately 2,650 square miles. The Santa Ana River originates in the San Bernardino Mountains and flows over 75 miles southwest to the Pacific Ocean. The primary drainage feature in the City of Menifee is Salt Creek, which flows west and joins the San Jacinto River at Railroad Canyon Reservoir (or Canyon Lake) at the City's western boundary. The Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (SARWQCB) administers the local National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits for local permittees. Under the most recent permit issued on January 29, 2010 for the County of Riverside and 15 incorporated cities, which include the City of Menifee, new developments and significant redevelopments must implement appropriate water quality management plans.

Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) was created in 2004 to implement one of America's most ambitious environmental efforts, the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), protecting 146 native species of plants and animals and preserving a half million acres of their habitat.

The Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) is a comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional habitat conservation plan focusing on conservation of species and their associated habitats in Western Riverside County. This plan is one of several large, multi-jurisdictional habitat-planning

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efforts in Southern California, with the overall goal of maintaining biological and ecological diversity in a rapidly urbanizing region.

The MSHCP is prepared pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as well as a natural communities conservation plan (NCCP) under the NCCP Act of 2001.

The MSHCP was adopted in June 2003, and the federal and state permits were issued in June 2004. The MSHCP area encompasses approximately 1.26 million acres (1,966 square miles); it includes all unincorporated Riverside County land west of the crest of the San Jacinto Mountains to the Orange County line, as well as the jurisdictional areas of the cities of Temecula, Murrieta, Lake Elsinore, Canyon Lake, Norco, Corona, Riverside, Moreno Valley, Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Perris, Hemet, San Jacinto, and Menifee. Only a small part of the City is in a criteria cell, but the entire City is covered by the plan.

The County of Riverside, along with the 18 cities in the western portion of the county, are all participants in the MSHCP, and a member from each jurisdiction sits on the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) Board. The RCA was created as a joint powers authority, and with incorporation, the City of Menifee is now a member of the joint powers authority overseeing the implementation of the MSHCP. Participants also include Caltrans, State Parks, and several Riverside County agencies, including Flood Control, Waste Management, Transportation Commission, and Parks.

Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

The Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency was formed in 1990 for the purpose of planning, acquiring, and managing habitat for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat and other endangered, threatened, and candidate species. The agency is a joint powers agreement agency composed of the cities of Corona, Hemet, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, and Wildomar and the County of Riverside.

The Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan has an area of roughly 534,000 acres, spanning much of western Riverside County, including seven core reserves totaling about 41,000 acres. It is administered by the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Authority.

Airport Planning

The State Aeronautics Act of the California Public Utilities Code establishes statewide requirements for airport land use compatibility planning and requires nearly every county to create an Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) or other alternative. Land use decisions in the vicinity of the airports are reviewed by the ALUC. If the ALUC determines that any of the proposed actions are inconsistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, the City, after a public hearing, may overrule the ALUC by a two-thirds vote of the City Council if it makes specific findings that the proposed action is consistent with the purposes stated in Public Utilities Code, Section 21670. Thereafter, the proposed action is not subject to review by the ALUC. A local agency that proposes to overrule the ALUC must provide the ALUC and the California Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics, with the proposed decision at least 45 days prior to the final decision. Any comments by the ALUC or Division of Aeronautics must be included in the final record of the local agency's final decision to overrule the airport.

Parts of the City of Menifee are within airport influence areas for two airports: Perris Valley Airport and March Air Reserve Base.

Perris Valley Airport is privately owned and used for skydiving. The airport is in the City of Perris on the east side of Goetz Road; the south end of the runway is one mile north of the Menifee city boundary. Part of the

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City of Menifee is in Airport Compatibility Zone E designated in the Airport Land Use Plan for Perris Valley Airport issued by the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission in 2010. The northwest corner of the City of Menifee is in a zone where the heights of structures are limited pursuant to Part 77 regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

March Air Reserve Base (MARB) is used jointly by the US Air Force 452nd Air Mobility Wing; the California Air National Guard 163rd Reconnaissance Wing; four aircraft from the 120th Fighter Wing of the Montana National Guard; and the March Aero Club, an activity of the March Air Reserve Base Force Support Squadron. Much of northeast Menifee is in land use compatibility zones for MARB designated in the Draft MARB Land Use Compatibility Plan (Mead & Hunt 2013); air compatibility zones are discussed further in Section 5.8, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*. Much of the community of Romoland is in a height limitation zone for MARB.

3.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The City of Menifee incorporated on October 1, 2008, and became Riverside County's 26th city. The City is a collection of independently established residential communities, including Menifee Lakes, Quail Valley, Romoland, and Sun City and encompasses approximately 29,813 acres (46 square miles). The City of Menifee is one of 26 cities in Riverside County, and the eighth most populous. From 2000 to 2008, Menifee's population grew by 58.0 percent, moderately higher than the growth that occurred in the region and significantly higher than the growth that occurred in the state (51.8 percent and 12 percent, respectively).

3.3.1 Existing Land Uses

Figure 3-3, *Existing Land Uses*, shows existing conditions in the City of Menifee. For the purpose of the CEQA this existing condition is the baseline for analysis of the General Plan buildout environmental impact analysis. The City has several land uses, including residential, commercial, office, industrial, institutional, utilities and public facilities, parks and open space, agriculture, waterways, and vacant land. Vacant land uses make up the largest part of the City. Most of the existing residential land uses in Menifee occur in four areas: Menifee Lakes in the eastern part of the City; Quail Valley on the west side; Romoland in the north; and Sun City in the central part of the City. There are many residences in the City outside of these four areas, but they are generally spread out at low/rural residential densities.

The largest portion of the land within the City boundaries (approximately 38 percent) is vacant; however, much is entitled for development. As of May 2011, there were 53 projects approved by the City, County, or both, ranging from small commercial buildings (equipment rentals and sprinkler supply) to large residential communities (Audie Murphy Ranch).

Specific plans comprise approximately 7,200 acres of land and are predominantly located in the area between Newport and Holland Roads. Of the 15 plans, the Canyon Heights, Cal Neva, and Menifee Lakes Specific Plans are almost completely built out, and the Menifee Valley Ranch Specific Plan has been partially developed with new residential uses in the Heritage Lakes community. The remaining specific plans and their associated Land Use Plans have been approved, but have not yet been developed. The City's specific plans are listed below:



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- Meniffee North (a portion of the SP is within County of Riverside)
- Meniffee Valley Ranch
- Fleming Ranch (in process)
- Plaza del Sol
- Canyon Heights
- Audie Murphy Ranch
- Town Center
- Cantalena
- Canyon Cove
- Newport Estates
- Cal Neva
- Countryside
- Newport Hub
- Meniffee Village
- Meniffee East

Approximately 33 percent of the current land uses are residential. Agricultural land uses account for approximately 6 percent (1,651 acres, includes agriculture crops, dairy, and nursery), and the remaining land (approximately 10 percent) is occupied by educational, commercial, industrial, manufacturing, utilities, golf courses, and local park and recreational land uses. The City currently has approximately 32,859 dwelling units and 11,982,509 square feet of nonresidential uses. Table 3-1 shows all the City's existing land uses.

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**Table 3-1
Existing Land Use Statistics**

<i>Land Use</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Dwelling Units</i>	<i>Square Feet</i>
Residential			
Single-Family	9,613	29,324	
Mobile Homes and Trailer Parks	160	1,160	
Multifamily	199	2,218	
Other*	5	157	
Subtotal	9,977	32,859	
Commercial			
Commercial Recreation	73		
Retail Stores and Commercial Services	278		2,845,405
General Office	12		188,189
Major Medical Facilities	22		336,019
Subtotal	385		3,369,613
Civic/Institutional			
Cemeteries	7		
Schools and Educational Facilities	416		
Public Utilities	231		
Fire Stations	5		
Government Offices	4		
Railroads	41		
Religious Facilities	61		
Subtotal	765		
Agriculture			
Agricultural	1,471		
Dairy	101		
Nursery	79		
Subtotal	1,651		
Recreational			
Golf Courses	591		
Local Parks and Recreation	641		
Water	114		
Wildlife Preserves	5		
Subtotal	1,351		
Industrial			
Heavy Industrial	101		1,751,543
Light Industrial	53		879,681
Light Manufacturing	303		5,007,718
Storage	59		973,954
Subtotal	516		8,612,896
Vacant			
Vacant Undifferentiated	11,454		
Right-of-Way	3,714		
Subtotal	15,168		
TOTAL	29,813	32,859	11,982,509

*"Other" residential is a SCAG land use designation. This five-acre parcel is designated as a single room occupancy or transitional housing facility.



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3.3.2 Existing Environmental Conditions

The City encompasses numerous brush-covered hills and low mountains surrounded by a series of interconnected, broad, nearly flat-bottomed valleys. The steepest slope and largest cluster of hillsides can be found north of Menifee Lakes, traveling northward across McCall Boulevard. Quail Valley also has a significant number of steep hillsides that influence development patterns in the area. Elevations in the City range from about 1,400 feet above mean sea level (amsl) for the valley floor to approximately 2,600 feet amsl for the local hills; Bell Mountain is 1,850 amsl. Menifee includes parts of three valleys: the Perris Valley in the north end of the City, the Menifee Valley in the central part of the City, and the Paloma Valley in the southeast area.

A wide and shallow watercourse known as Salt Creek bisects the City from east to west. Channelized within the developed areas Menifee, Salt Creek returns to its natural state as it flows toward the west and the City of Canyon Lake. The much smaller Paloma Valley wash tributary also crosses the south part of the City.

Land cover on valley floors includes developed land uses, farm fields, and open undeveloped areas. Most hillsides are covered with coastal sage scrub interspersed with boulder outcrops. The development pattern in the parts of the City with suburban density—Sun City, Menifee Lakes, Romoland, and Quail Valley—consists mostly of one-story detached single-family homes. Romoland contains some industrial uses near the former Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad track extending northwest–southeast. Commercial uses are located in several areas throughout Menifee but concentrated along the I-215 corridor, Newport Road, and McCall Boulevard. The City has four golf courses, two in Sun City and another two in Menifee Lakes. Most of the remainder of the City consists of vacant land, rural residential development, and farms. Farms scattered through several parts of the City represent the region’s agricultural past and the ongoing transition from a rural agricultural character to a developed urban city. Sun City, built in 1960, was an early master-planned senior citizen community.

Nearly the whole City of Menifee is in the Salt Creek drainage area. Small parts of the City of Menifee near the northern, western, and southern boundaries are in watersheds of other streams; those streams also flow westward to Canyon Lake or the Elsinore Valley. From north to south, the City of Menifee lies over the Perris South, Menifee, Lower Domenigoni, French, and Murrieta subbasins of the San Jacinto Groundwater Basin (EMWD 2011).

3.3.3 Detailed Descriptions of the Environmental Setting

More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting are provided in each resource subsection of Chapter 5.

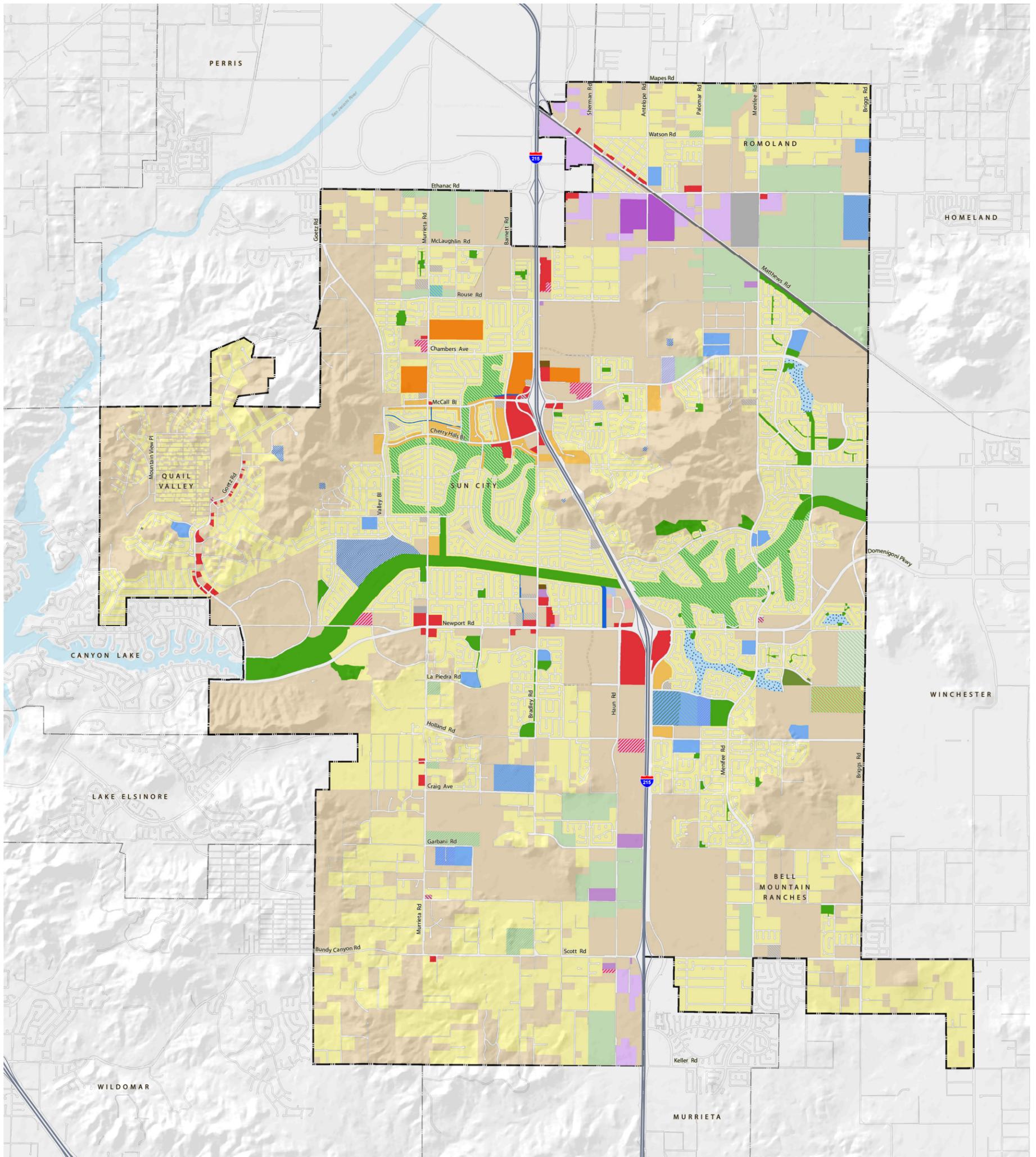
3.3.4 General Plan and Zoning

Until the City approves the Menifee General Plan and completes the CEQA process, it continues to use the Riverside County General Plan (also known as the Riverside County Integrated Project [RCIP] adopted in October 2003) to guide the growth and development within the City. The RCIP has eight elements: Land Use, Circulation, Multipurpose Open Space, Safety, Noise, Housing, Air Quality, and Administration. Figure 3-4, *Current RCIP Land Use Designations*, shows that land use designations in the City consist of residential, commercial, industrial, business park, public facilities, agriculture, conservation, and open space. The largest land use designation is residential.

The City has also adopted the Riverside County zoning designations.

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Existing Land Uses



- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1110 - Single Family Residential | 1231 - Storage | 1260 - Educational Institution | 1320 - Light Industrial | 1810 - Golf Courses | 2300 - Nursery |
| 1120 - Multi-Family Residential | 1232 - Commercial Recreation | 1262 - Elementary Schools | 1340 - Heavy Industrial | 1820 - Local Parks & Recreation | 3100 - Vacant Undifferentiated |
| 1130 - Mobile Homes & Trailer Parks | 1241 - Government Offices | 1263 - Junior or Intermediate Schools | 1412 - Railroads | 1840 - Cemeteries | 4000 - Water |
| 1100 - Other Residential | 1243 - Fire Stations | 1264 - Senior High Schools | 1431 - Electrical Power Facilities | 1850 - Wildlife Preserves | |
| 1210 - General Office Use | 1244 - Major Health Care Facilities | 1265 - Colleges & Universities | 1434 - Water Storage Facilities | 2000 - Agriculture | |
| 1230 - Retail Stores & Commercial Services | 1245 - Religious Facilities | 1310 - Light Manufacturing | 1437 - Improved Flood Waterways & Structures | 2400 - Dairy | |

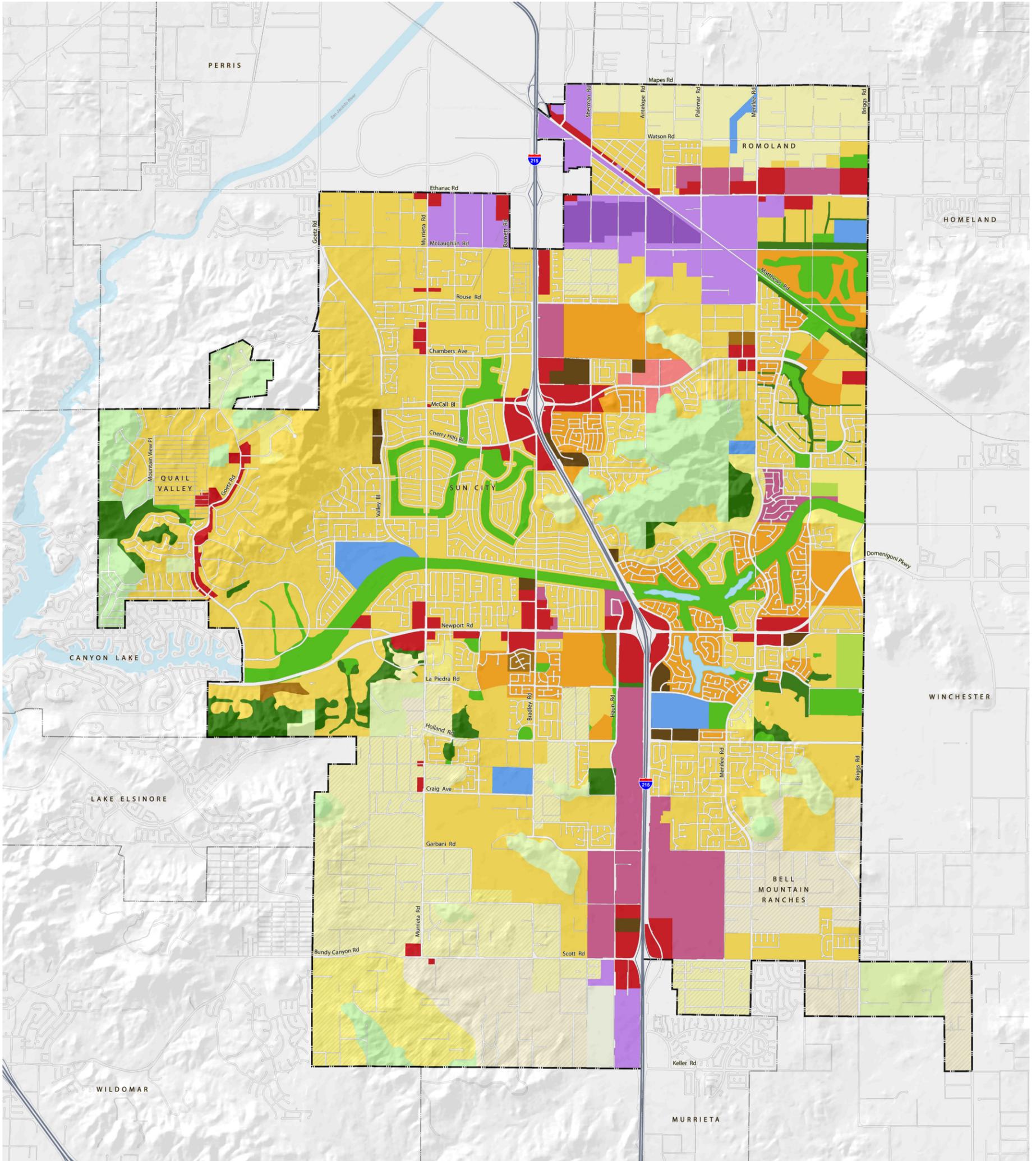
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Current RCIP Land Use Designations



	Estate Residential - RC		Low Density Residential (0.5 ac min)		Commercial Retail		Public Facilities		Open Space - Recreation
	Very Low Density Res. - RC (1 ac min)		Medium Density Residential (2-5 du/ac)		Commercial Office		Rural Residential (5 ac min)		Open Space - Water
	Low Density Res. - RC (0.5 ac min)		Medium High Density Res. (5-8 du/ac)		Light Industrial		Rural Mountainous (10 ac min)		
	Estate Residential (2 ac min)		High Density Residential (8-14 du/ac)		Heavy Industrial		Agriculture		
	Very Low Density Res. (1 ac min)		Very High Density Res. (14-20 du/ac)		Business Park		Conservation		



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3.4 ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” Cumulative impacts are the change caused by the incremental impact of an individual project compounded with the incremental impacts from closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines states that cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project’s incremental effect is considerable. It further states that this discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and the likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15130 [b][1]) state that the information utilized in an analysis of cumulative impacts should come from one of two sources:

- 1) A list of past, present and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; or
- 2) A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or areawide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact. Any such planning document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

The proposed project consists of the City of Menifee General Plan; therefore the cumulative impact analysis contained in this DEIR uses method 2. Consistent with Section 15130(b)(1)(B) of the CEQA Guidelines, this DEIR analyzes the environmental impacts of developments in accordance with buildout of the proposed Land Use Plan. As a result, this DEIR addresses the cumulative impacts of development within the City of Menifee. In most cases, the potential for cumulative impacts is contiguous with the City boundary; however, traffic, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise have the potential for impacts beyond the City boundary, and these have been addressed through use of a focused version of the Riverside Transportation Analysis Model. The growth projections adopted by the City and surrounding area are used for the cumulative impact analyses of this DEIR. Please refer to Section 5 of this DEIR for a discussion of the cumulative impacts associated with development and growth within the City and region.



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