# III. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

## A. OVERVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

### 1. GEOGRAPHIC SETTING AND ACCESS

The project site is located within the Sherman Oaks community within the City of Los Angeles, approximately 13 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Regional access to the Fashion Square shopping center is provided by US 101 (Ventura) Freeway. Local access is provided via Hazeltine Avenue, Riverside Drive, and Woodman Avenue.

The Los Angeles River is on the south side of the Ventura (US 101) Freeway, but crosses to the north side of the freeway just west of Hazeltine Avenue. The River is a concrete channelized structure in this area.

The project site is located on a relatively flat parcel that slopes (downgrade) gently from the northeast to the southwest, with an overall elevation relief of 22 feet differential from the east/west elevation.

Currently during schools days (7 a.m. to 4 p.m.), Fashion Square makes available 100 parking spaces for Buckley High School and 60 parking spaces for Notre Dame High School in the east surface parking lot. These parking spaces are on a month-to-month agreement and are not made available to students on the weekends or during the highest peak holiday periods.

### 2. EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND SURROUNDING LAND USES

The project area is characterized as urbanized and largely built out with a mix of commercial and residential uses. The project site is currently developed with the existing shopping center consisting of approximately 28.8 acres of retail shops, restaurants and parking uses.

The project site currently contains three multi-level parking structures, surface parking lots, a two-story mall and two three-story anchor stores. Each existing parking structure contains one-level at grade, and a one-level, two-level and three-level above grade parking floors, respectively.

The project site is surrounded by developed properties on all sides. Land uses immediately to the north, across Riverside Drive, include multi- and single-family residential properties. To the west, land uses include an office building west of Hazeltine Avenue, and retail, office, and City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power uses at the north side of the intersection of Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue. To the south, the site is bordered by the Ventura (US 101) Freeway. To the east, land uses include commercial along Woodman Avenue, south of Riverside Drive as well as the Notre Dame High School on the northeast corner of the intersection of Riverside Drive and Woodman Avenue.

## 3. PHYSICAL SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The climate in the project region is a characterized as Mediterranean, which is semi-arid and exhibits a wet-dry cycle of dry summers and a winter rainy season. The strength and location of a semi-permanent, subtropical high pressure cell over the Pacific Ocean is the primarily influence on the climate in the project region. Temperatures range from the low 40's during winter nights to the high 90's and low 100's during summer afternoons.

The project site and surrounding area is characterized as an urban, developed commercial and residential area. The project site and all surrounding properties have undergone disturbance previously resulting from development of the existing shopping center, additional commercial uses at the adjacent intersections of Riverside Drive and both Hazeltine Avenue and Woodman Avenue, as well as the surrounding residential uses.

Vegetation on the site is limited to landscaping associated with existing development and a block of trees that currently buffer the site from the adjacent Ventura (US 101) Freeway to the south.

The visual character of the project site and surrounding area is that of a fully developed urban corridor, developed with a mix of retail, commercial, and residential uses. Typical residential development in the area ranges from one to four stories in height. Surrounding office and retail uses are typically between one to four stories in height as well, except for the six-story Sunkist building to the west and the 10-story office/financial building on the north side of Riverside Drive at Woodman Avenue. Existing buildings on the project site range between approximately 49 to 73 feet in height. Because of the relatively low height of most development within the project area, long-range viewsheds are relatively unobstructed; however, the close relative proximity of development within this urban area obstructs these views. Existing light sources come from both development at the project site and surrounding retail and residential uses.

Regional access to the shopping center is provided by US 101 (Ventura) Freeway. Local access is provided via Hazeltine Avenue, Riverside Drive, and Woodman Avenue. Nonetheless, analysis of 18 study intersection in the project area (see Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis: J-Traffic, Circulation and Access of this DEIR) found that 16 of those intersections are presently operating at acceptable levels of service (i.e., level of service D or better) during peak hours. Two intersections in the immediate project area, Van Nuys Boulevard at the US 101 EB Ramps and Woodman Avenue at Riverside Drive, operated below acceptable levels of service (i.e., level of service F) during the peak hours.

The project area, being fully urbanized, is fully serviced for all public utilities and public services. Electricity at the project site is currently provided by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power (LADWP). LADWP owns the electrical power generation plant and, as such, electrical service within the LADWP service area has not been affected by the recent statewide energy shortage. Natural gas at the project site is currently provided by the Southern California Gas Company (Gas Company). The project site is located within the Hyperion Water Treatment Plant (HWTP) Service Area.

A comprehensive discussion of the setting and impacts for the issues listed below is found in Sections of this DEIR as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Aesthetics and Visual Resources | Section IV-A |
| Air Quality | Section IV-B |
| Geology and Soils | Section IV-C |
| Hazardous Materials and Man-Made Hazards | Section IV-D |
| Water Resources | Section IV-E |
| Land Use, Planning and Urban Decay | Section IV-F |
| Noise | Section IV-G |
| Public Services | Section IV-H |
| Public Utilities | Section IV-I |
| Traffic, Circulation and Access | Section IV-J |

## 4. LAND USE AND PLANNING CONTEXT

The Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks Community Plan is the guiding community plan for the project site and surrounding area. The intent of the Community Plan is to promote an arrangement of land uses, circulation, and services that will encourage and contribute to the economic, social and physical health, safety, welfare and convenience of the people who live in the community. According to the Community Plan, the project site is currently designated as Community Commercial. Continued use of the project site for the shopping center would be consistent with this land use designation, as it provides commercial uses consistent with the permitted corresponding zoning. The Community Commercial designation is within Height District 1L, which permits structures up to six stories and a maximum of 75 feet in height. The project site is not within any specific plan area.

The project site is currently zoned (Q)C2-1L, C2-1L, (T)(Q)PB-1L, (Q)PB-1L, and P-1L. All of the existing zones tied to the project site are permitted under the existing Community Commercial General Plan designation, which permits a range of commercial and related zones including CR, C1.5, C2, C4, P, and PB. The C2 zone permits a wide range of commercial retail uses to address community needs. P is an automobile parking zone that provides for public/private parking within surface and/or subterranean lot areas. PB is a parking building zone that permits public/private parking within above-grade parking structures, as well as surface and below-grade parking.

# III. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

## B. RELATED PROJECTS

Section 15130 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) analyze cumulative impacts of a project. The analysis of cumulative impacts need not be as in-depth as what is provided relative to the Proposed Project, but rather is to "be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness". CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 further defines cumulative impacts as "two or more individual projects, which when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase the environmental impacts."

Cumulative impacts are anticipated impacts of the project along with foreseeable growth. The forecast of future conditions is clarified in Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines. Specifically, the CEQA Guidelines provides that foreseeable growth may be based on either of the following:

> "(A) A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the [lead] agency, or
>
> (B) 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 analysis of cumulative impacts may be based on an analysis of the geographical area that is relevant to a particular environmental issue. Hence, the cumulative study area may vary slightly depending on the issue under analysis. For example, a cumulative assessment of visual impacts will generally focus on the more immediate surrounding area, while traffic impacts may consider a broader range of roadways that may be used by the project.

For purposes of the Proposed Project, a list of potential related projects within and approximate 2 mile radius of the project site and which are generally representative of foreseeable growth was developed in coordination with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and the Planning Department. The related projects research was based on information on file on July 31, 2007 at the City of Los Angeles Departments of Planning and Transportation. The location of the related projects is shown in *Figure 21: Location of Related Projects*. The list of related projects in the project site area is presented in *Table 3: List of Related Projects*. The list of related projects was submitted to LADOT and the Planning Department staff for review and approval.

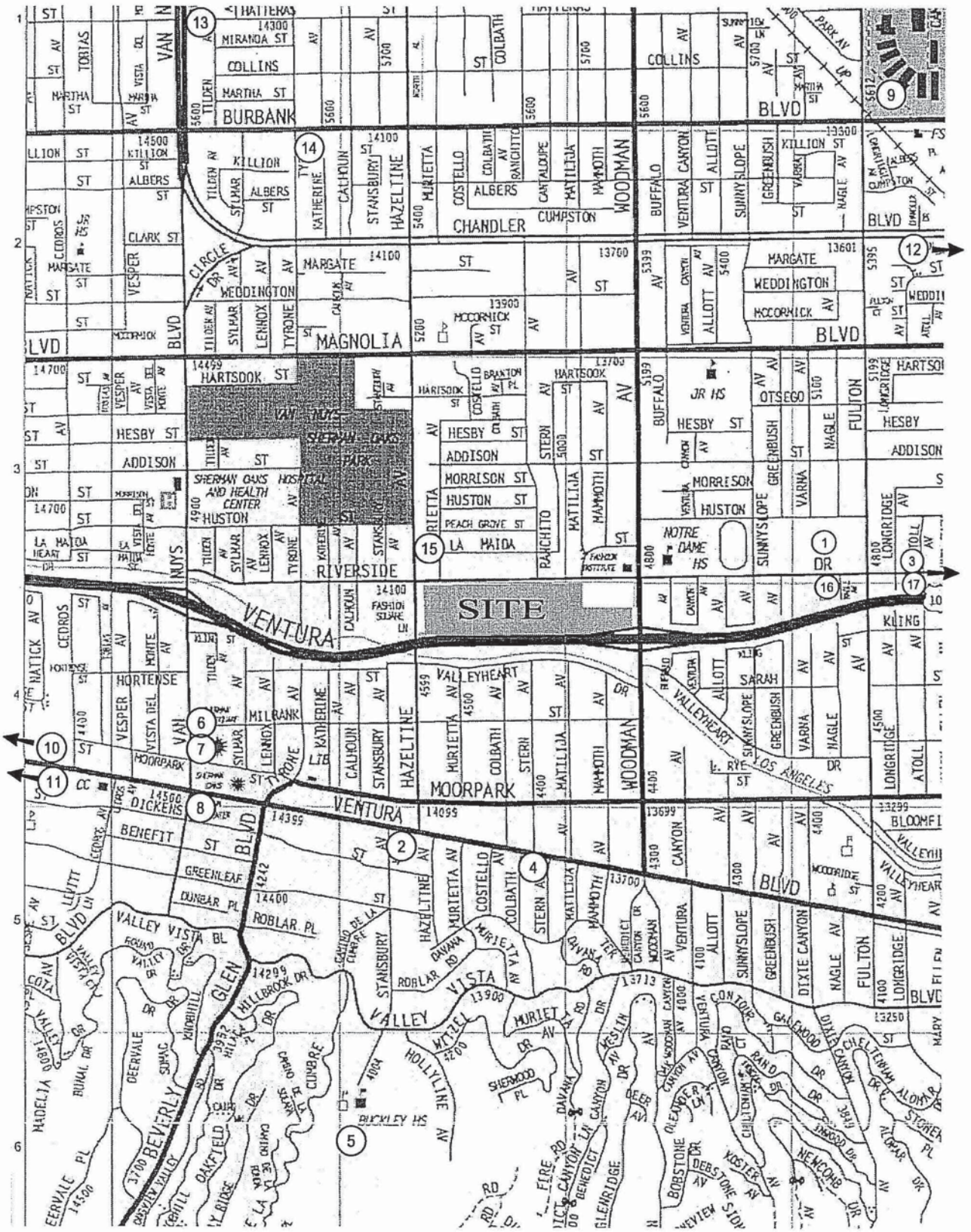


**FIGURE 21**
**LOCATION OF RELATED PROJECTS**

NORTH

MAP SOURCE: THOMAS BROS. GUIDE

**TABLE 3**
**LIST OF RELATED PROJECTS [1]**

| MAP NO. | FILE PROJECT NUMBER | PROJECT NAME LOCATION | LAND USE | SIZE | STATUS | DISTANCE FROM SITE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | VEN 2004-273 | Chase Knolls Apartments<br>13401 Riverside Dr | Apartments<br>Senior Apartments | 102 DU<br>40 DU | Proposed | .5 Miles |
| 2 | VEN 2004-5/<br>EAF 2002-6453 | Camino Real Mixed-Use Development<br>14121 Ventura Blvd | Condominiums<br>Retail<br>Restaurant<br>Fast Food w/ out Drive-thru | 88 DU<br>6,000 SF<br>7,000 SF<br>3,500 SF | Proposed | .6 Miles |
| 3 | VEN 2003-2/<br>EAF 2003-1757 | Riverside Drive Office Buildings<br>12828 Riverside Drive | Office | 29,475 SF | Proposed | 1.2 Miles |
| 4 | VEN 2003-15 | Walgreens<br>13920 Ventura Blvd | Drugstore | 11,244 SF | Proposed | .8 Miles |
| 5 | VEN 2003-194 | Buckley School<br>3900 Stansbury Ave | School | 100 Additional Students<br>(830 Students Total) | Proposed | 1.2 Miles |
| 6 | VEN 2003-79 | Best Buy 4500 Van Nuys Blvd | Retail | 60,000 SF | Proposed | .9 Miles |
| 7 | VEN 2004-33 | Sherman Oaks Square<br>4454 Van Nuys Blvd | Apartments | 98 DU | Proposed | .9 Miles |
| 8 | VEN 2003-13 | Gas Station Expansion<br>14478 Ventura Blvd | Gas Station | 392 SF | Proposed | 1.1 Miles |
| 9 | VEN 2003-19 | Los Angeles Valley College<br>5800 Fulton Ave | College | 2,300 Students | Proposed | 1.9 Miles |
| 10 | VEN 2004-86 | 15222 Ventura Blvd | Condominiums<br>Specialty Retail | 52 DU<br>7,460 SF | Proposed | 2.0 Miles |
| 11 | VEN 2004-26 | Il Villaggio Toscano<br>4805 Sepulveda Blvd | Apartments<br>Grocery<br>Retail<br>Existing Apartments<br>Existing Residence<br>Existing Office | 500 DU<br>45,000 SF<br>10,000 SF<br>(24 DU)<br>(11 DU)<br>(52,452 SF) | Proposed | 1.8 Miles |
| 12 | EAF 2001-3806 | 5300 Coldwater Canyon Ave | Self Storage<br>Demolish Health Club | 60,250 SF<br>(14,624 SF) | Proposed | 1.7 Miles |
| 13 | EAF 2004-0661 | 5829 Van Nuys Blvd | New Car Sales | 85,038 SF | Proposed | 1.8 Miles |
| 14 | ENV 2005-5273-MND | 14242 West Burbank Blvd | Condominium | 26 DU | Proposed | 7.8 Miles |
| 15 | ENV 2005-6373-MND | 4838 North Hazeltine Ave | Condominium | 23 DU | Proposed | 456 Feet |
| 16 | 2006-44 | Merdinian Evangelical School<br>13330 Riverside Drive | Private School | 300 Students | Proposed | .6 Miles |
| 17 | 2006-130 | Sherman Village<br>12629 Riverside Drive | Condominium | 247 DU | Proposed | 2.0 Miles |

[1] Source: City of Los Angeles Departments of Planning and Transportation, as of July 31, 2007.

The related projects listed in *Table 3: List of Related Projects* are considered, to the extent that they are appropriate and relevant in the context of incremental impacts of the Proposed Project, in the cumulative impact analysis of each environmental issue evaluated in this EIR.