



## CHAPTER TWO: SITE AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The following represents a brief summary of site characteristics and key issues related to opportunities for redevelopment of the Plan Area. Additional background information is available in the Solano360 Specific Plan EIR.

### 2.2 SITE CONTEXT

The Plan Area consists of 149.1 acres bounded by Interstate 80 (I-80) to the east, State Route 37 (SR-37) and Sage Street to the north, Fairgrounds Drive to the west and Coach Lane to the south. Approximately 265,000 cars pass the Fairgrounds each day on the I-80/ SR-37 freeway system, providing high visibility and easy access to both greater San Francisco Bay and Sacramento areas. The presence of Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, the County Fair, and existing hotel uses have established the site as a well-known venue for entertainment and special events within the region.

In addition to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom located to the west, the site is bordered by the Newell Mobile Home Park immediately to the south. Other residential neighborhoods are located across Fairgrounds Drive to the southwest and across SR-37 to the north. The Gateway Plaza shopping center is located east of I-80.



#### 2.2.1 Land Use and Ownership

The Solano County Fairgrounds is owned by the County, subject to certain reversionary interests owned by the City of Vallejo, and is located within the Vallejo city limits. The property provides a fairgrounds and events site operated by the Solano County Fair Association. It also has supplied overflow parking for the adjacent Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. The Plan Area includes four parcels, all of which are owned by Solano County. The 27-acre "Handlery Parcel" is limited by deed restriction to use for Fair and public purposes (see Figure 2.1).

Since 1949, the Solano County Fair Association has operated Fair Week on the project site, a one to two week mid-summer event offering a traditional program of entertainment, midway, livestock demonstration, and crafts. In





**Figure 2.1: Site Aerial**

2012, the Fair drew a crowd of 42,613 people.

In addition to Fair Week, year-round activities include satellite wagering, a robust and diverse calendar of public and private events including facilities rental, and a public-use 9-hole golf course located in the infield of the former horse racetrack. Outdoor venues include the carnival/midway area, paved and lawn areas, and the concourse. Parking utilizes significant portions of the overall site, with peak use of approximately 3,500 cars through the course of one weekend day during Fair Week.

The primary existing Fairgrounds facilities include a total of approximately 425,000 square feet of building space concentrated in northeast portion of site adjacent to an east-west landscape concourse. Horse racing, which formerly occupied a large portion of the property, was discontinued after the 2009 season; vacant secondary stables and horse racing facilities occupy the eastern and southern portions of the site. Surface parking and overflow parking occupy western portions of

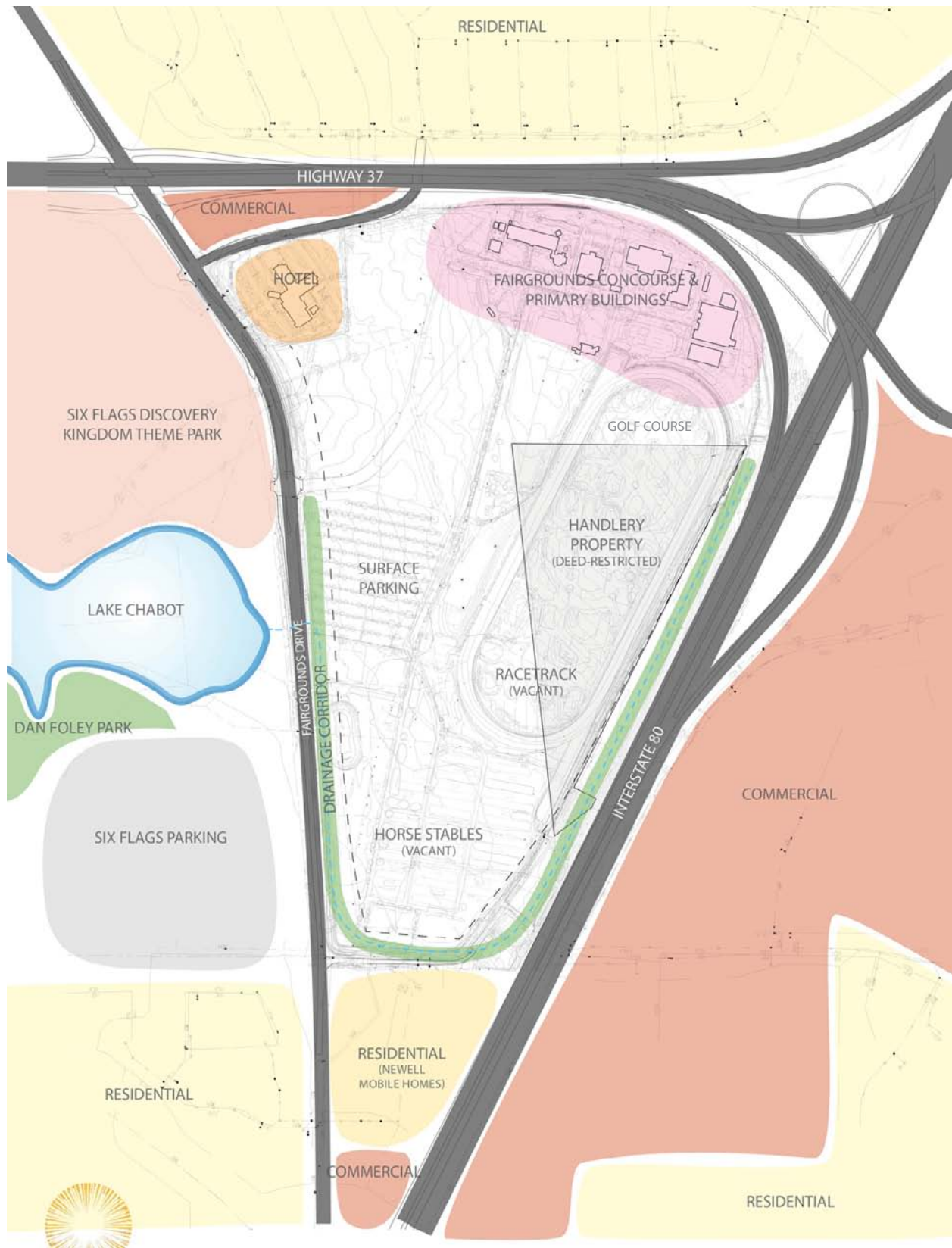
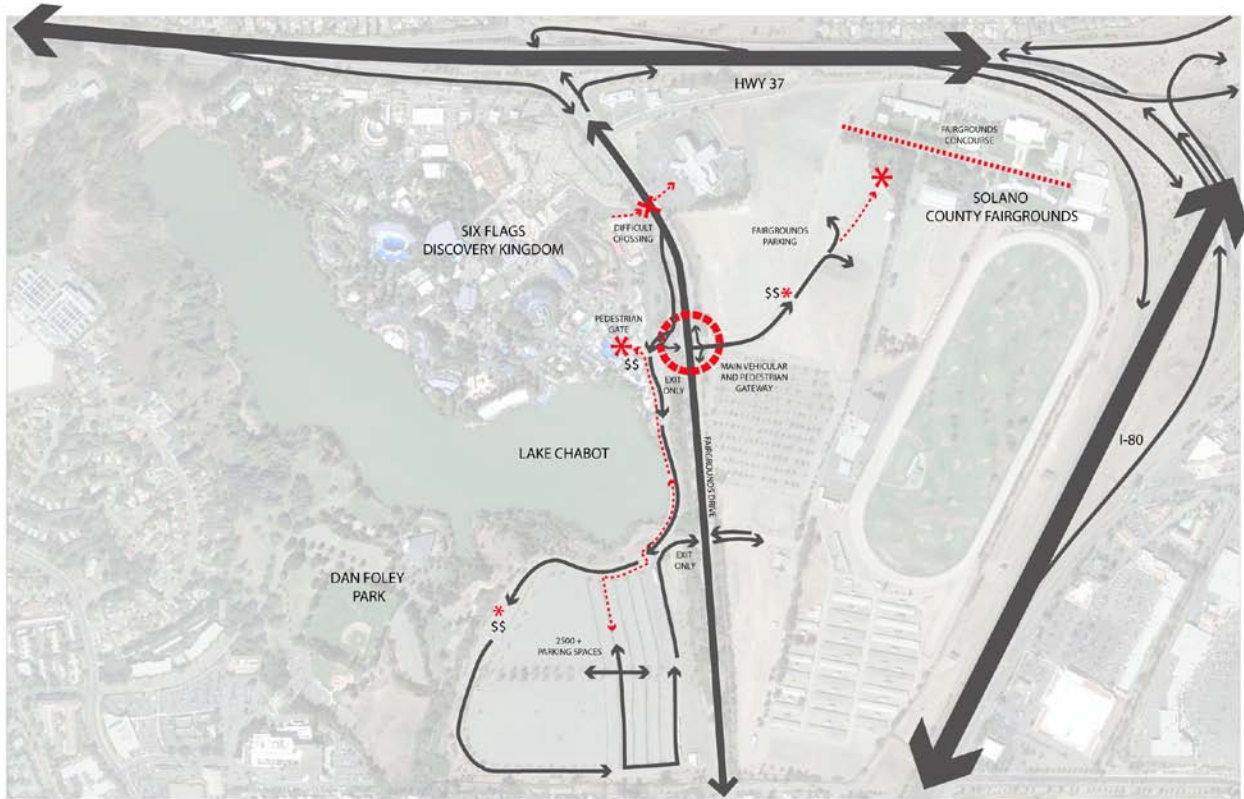


Figure 2.2: Existing Land Uses and Context



**Figure 2.4: Existing Site Access**

the site. Drainage corridors form the eastern, southern and western boundaries.

### 2.2.2 Access

The Solano County Fairgrounds site is located adjacent to the junction of I-80) and SR-37. Key transportation conditions are summarized below:

- Direct site access to the Plan Area is provided only via Fairgrounds Drive.
- Access to adjacent neighborhoods is limited. Sage Street provides an entry to the Courtyard by Courtyard by Marriott Hotel and a route to residential areas located north of SR-37, but currently does not connect to the Plan Area. Access from the Plan Area to Coach Lane is blocked by the existing drainage channel along the southern property boundary, and the freeway corridors form access barriers to the east and north.
- The site is highly visible from both freeways (I-80 and SR-37). Access from the freeway to the local street network serving the site is provided by two existing interchanges:
- The SR-37 / Fairgrounds Drive interchange provides the closest (less than a quarter-mile) and most visible access to the site via Fairgrounds Drive.
- The I-80 / Redwood Parkway interchange provides less direct access to the site via Redwood Parkway and Fairgrounds Drive.
- Solano Transportation Authority (STA) is currently developing plans for the widening of Fairgrounds Drive and SR-37/ Fairgrounds Drive interchange improvements (see Chapter Five: Transportation).
- Existing traffic congestion at SR-37/ Fairgrounds Drive interchange related to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom and Fairgrounds events may exceed acceptable levels of service



during certain peak hours.

- Existing intersections on Fairgrounds Drive provide access to Six Flag Discovery Kingdom and Solano County Fairgrounds, and their respective parking areas. Pedestrians currently cross Fairgrounds Drive from the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel to the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom entry.
- Public transit service and access is very limited to the site. The Solano County Fairgrounds is currently served by Vallejo Transit, which operates one bus route (#85) along Fairgrounds Drive. Two stops are located within a quarter-mile of the site: one at the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom entrance and one on Sereno Drive south of the site.

### 2.2.3 Natural Features

The Plan Area ranges in elevation from approximately 106 feet above mean sea level in the northeastern portion of the Fairgrounds concourse/building area to 83 feet in the southwest area, with a gentle slope from northeast to southwest. Four existing creeks (North Rindler Creek, Center Rindler Creek, South Rindler Creek and Blue Rock Springs) have been diverted into a combination of underground pipes and open channels (see Figure 2.4: Existing Drainage Pattern).

Issues associated with existing hydrology and flooding include:

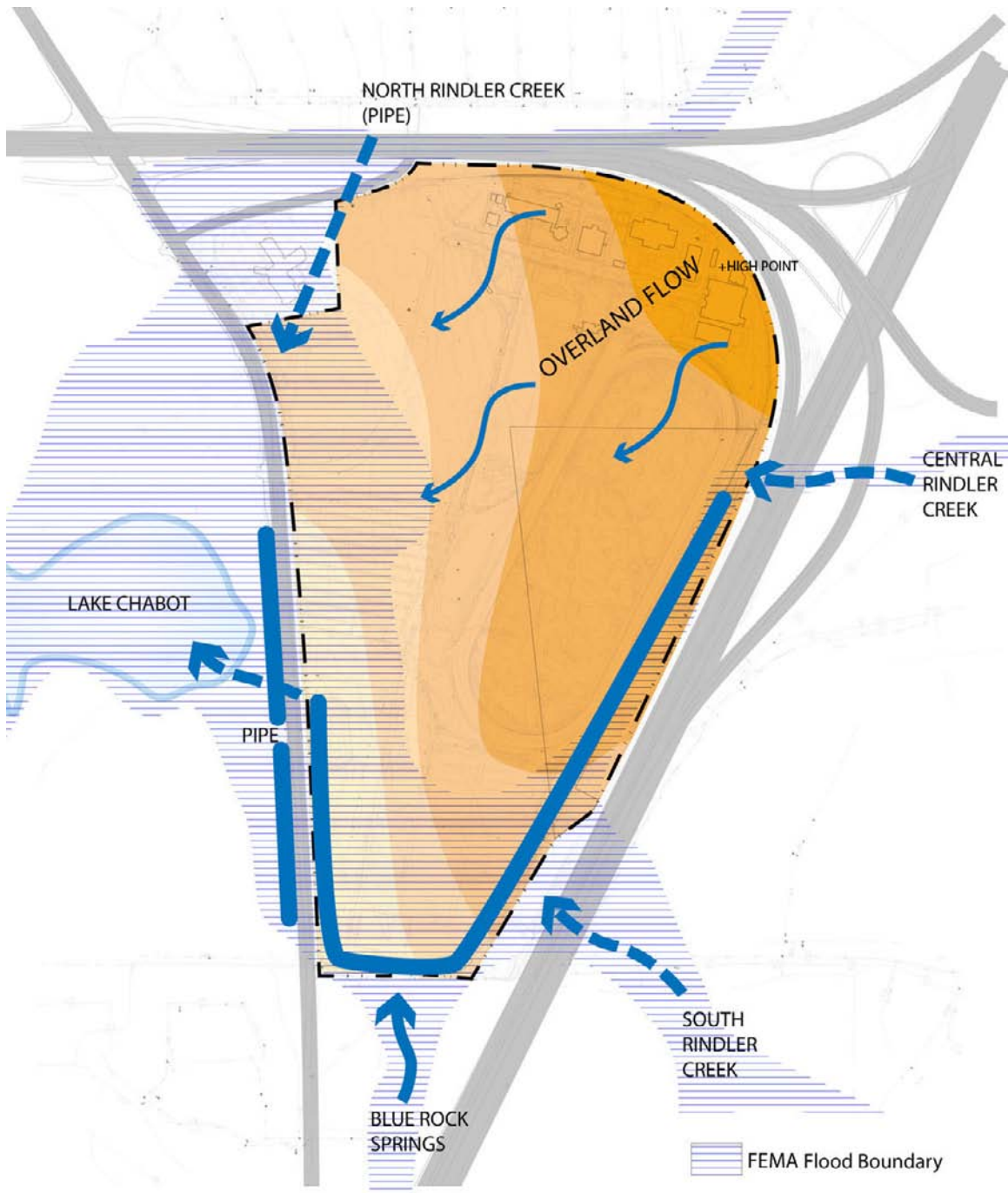
- Some western and southern portions of the site are located within the 100-year flood zone as identified by the FEMA maps, calling for the need to widen existing channels and/or create new waterways. Via an existing storm drain system, Lake Chabot receives storm water runoff from the creeks as well as runoff from the Fairgrounds property.
- Existing water quality issues result from off-site watershed flowing through the site and from previous horse stabling on fairgrounds.
- Off-site flooding issues have been identified on Coach Lane/Newell Mobile Home Parks located south of the site.
- Shallow existing ground water limits the potential deepening of the peripheral channel and constrains options for water quality improvements.
- Seasonal and perennial wetlands exist within the site.
- Undocumented fill and soft compressible materials exist within the site.
- A berm currently separates the racetrack from the peripheral drainage.

## 2.3 MARKET FACTORS

The Solano360 Vision Report (2009) set forth a conceptual program of entertainment, commercial and mixed-use development. This conceptual program established a starting point for planning, in accordance with the Guiding Principles for the project.

As part of the Plan process, the County commissioned a market study to evaluate and focus the Vision Report assumptions. The market study concluded that it would be challenging for the amount and type of retail, office and hotel uses previously proposed in the Solano360 Vision Report to be feasibly supported in the foreseeable future, given current and projected economic and real estate market conditions. In addition, the market study indicated that market demand for convention, trade shows, corporate meetings and other events is unlikely to support a 100,000 square foot exposition building and additional fairgrounds facilities in the near future.

As a recommended direction for the Plan, however, the market study identified an opportunity to create a synergetic mix of region-serving entertainment and amusement attractions, along with complementary restaurant, retail and hospitality uses, that would build on the presence of the



**Figure 2.5: Existing Drainage Pattern**



existing Six Flags Discovery Kingdom facility and Solano County Fairgrounds. These opportunities would include experiential entertainment (including education and recreational), shopping, and food uses.

Entertainment uses are particularly well-suited to this particular site, given its excellent freeway visibility and access, relatively limited local and neighborhood access, large single ownership pattern and adjacency to existing major entertainment attractions. In the mid-term and long-term of approximately the next 10 years (2012-2022), entertainment uses will likely generate demand for support uses such as restaurants, retail stores, and hotels. Office use and a limited quantity of residential development may also be considered for portions of the site.

The market study informed the subsequent planning efforts in the following ways:

- The Plan land use mix emphasizes themed entertainment park and family entertainment uses, with flexibility to accommodate retail, restaurant, office, housing, and/or hospitality uses as demand arises.
- Instead of demolition/rebuilding of the entire Fairgrounds, the Plan proposes replacement and upgrading of facilities along the existing concourse, and construction of a new Exposition Hall that will initially provide 50,000 net square feet of exposition space with possibilities for expansion in later phases.
- The Plan provides for continuation of public parking available to lease to nearby existing major entertainment uses, in order to support viability of those uses.
- Subsequent research into the functional requirements and industry standards for themed entertainment uses focused on development types that would build on the site's regional freeway visibility and the presence of the Fairgrounds and Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. These included:
  - Entertainment park-type uses requiring approximately 20 to 40 acres in a single parcel (including parking); these could consist of a water park, amusement park, commercial recreation or an entertainment center offering outdoor and outdoor venues and attractions. Ideally, sites should accommodate opportunity for expansion. Parking can either be contained within the parcel or provided nearby.
  - Family entertainment centers (FEC's) requiring smaller sites of approximately one to seven acres (including parking). These uses typically provide activities located within buildings (e.g., combined video game/restaurant attraction) or outside (e.g., go-kart or miniature golf). They can provide some street-oriented retail frontage and require parking in close proximity.
  - Limited retail and restaurant uses, such as a "restaurant row" connecting the Fairgrounds with the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom entry.

These entertainment-oriented uses can enhance year-round programming possibilities for the Fairgrounds, with increased opportunities for traveling exhibitions and events that encourage repeat visitation and offer diverse, multi-generational attractions.

The co-location of the uses presents the opportunity for shared parking and linked trips; a single trip in the family car, for example, might lead to visits to multiple destinations within the project area. Initially, the project should provide for surface parking in close proximity to each entertainment attraction. In the long-term, however, increased demand may lead to the need for increased public transit, shuttles connecting through the Plan Area and to nearby entertainment attractions, and structured parking solutions.

Other requirements for these uses include design of backbone infrastructure, parking and ingress/egress, and installation of phased infrastructure to encourage prospective end-users.

