

# NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT FOCUSED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Date: December 11, 2015

To: Agencies and Interested Parties

From: Napa County Planning, Building, and Environmental Services Department

**Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Focused Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed Palmaz Private Helipad and Hangar Project**

Review Period: December 14, 2015, to January 21, 2016

The Amalia Palmaz Living Trust (“Palmaz”) is proposing to construct a private helipad and hangar for personal use on private property in unincorporated Napa County. Palmaz has submitted a use permit request (Use Permit Application P14-00261) to build the proposed helipad, hangar, and associated infrastructure. Issuance of a use permit by Napa County (County) is a discretionary action subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The County will serve as the lead agency under CEQA and has prepared an Initial Study to analyze this project. The Initial Study has identified the potential for significant environmental effects in certain resource areas; therefore, the County will prepare a focused environmental impact report (EIR) for the project to satisfy the requirements of the CEQA (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.).

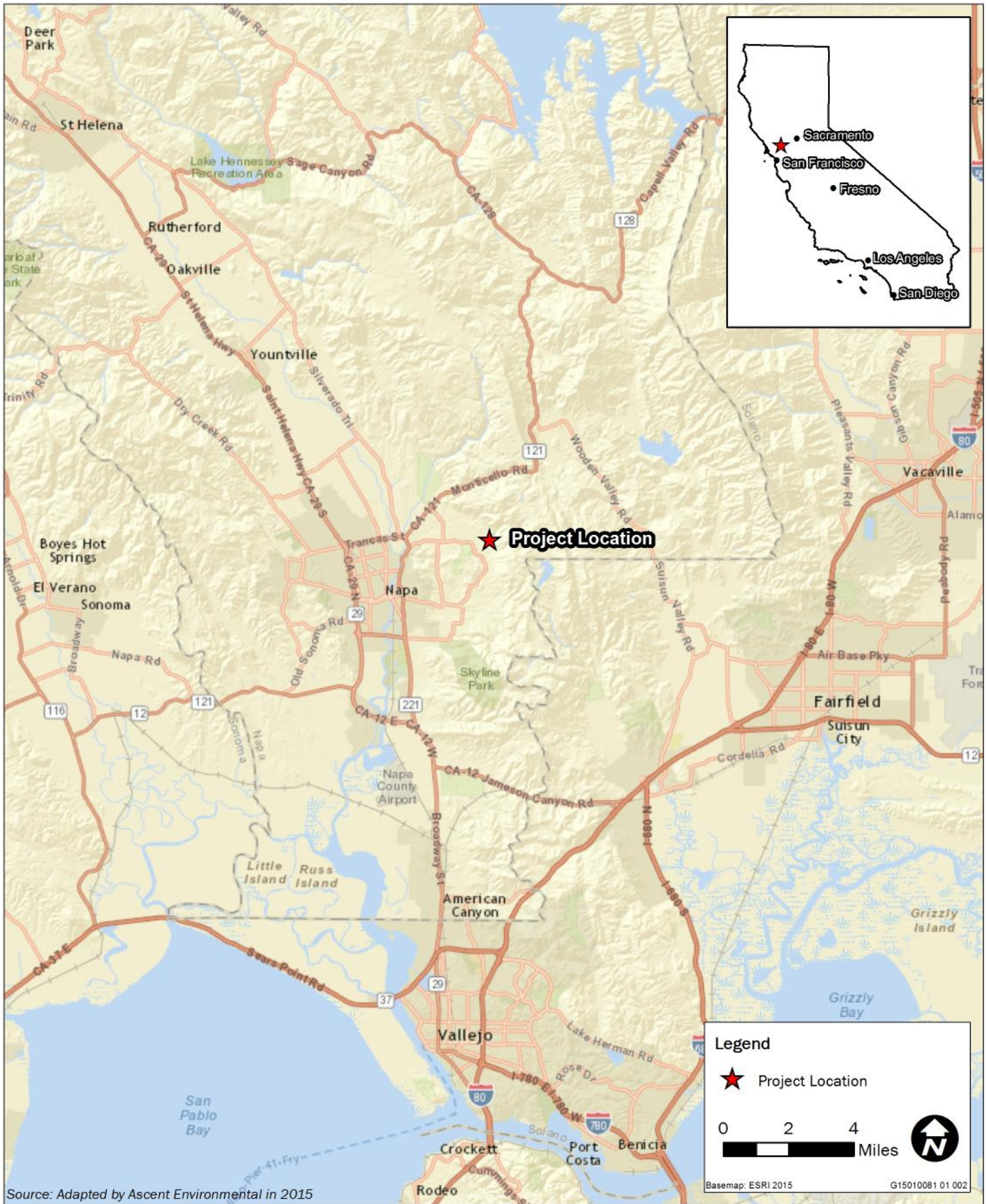
## PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In accordance with the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15082, the County has prepared this notice of preparation (NOP) to inform agencies and interested parties that a focused EIR will be prepared for the above-referenced project. The purpose of an NOP is to provide sufficient information about the project and its potential environmental impacts to allow agencies and interested parties the opportunity to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the EIR, including mitigation measures that should be considered and alternatives that should be addressed (CCR Section 15082[b]).

The project location, description, and potential environmental effects are summarized below. Additional details about the project’s potential effects are included in the Initial Study.

## Project Location

The project site is located at 4031 Hagen Road in unincorporated Napa County. The property is owned by the Amalia Palmaz Living Trust and is located east of the intersection of Hagen Road and Olive Tree Lane, and approximately 3.8 miles northeast of downtown Napa (Exhibit 1). Approximately 0.5 acre of the approximately 220.4-acre property is needed for construction of the helipad and hangar. Access to the parcel is provided by Hagen Road. Surrounding land uses include the Palmaz Winery to the south; the Napa Valley Country Club and other rural residential properties (with and without vineyards) to the north and west; and other undeveloped lands, some of which also include vineyards, to the north and east. The project site is located in the Agricultural Watershed (AW) zoning district, and includes the assessor’s parcel number 033-110-080.



Source: Adapted by Ascent Environmental in 2015

**Exhibit 1**

**Project Vicinity**



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Helipad and Hangar

The helipad is proposed to be located on a hillside that is currently planted with vineyards. The helipad would only be utilized by the owner for personal use, and would not be used by the adjacent Palmaz Winery or for any commercial purposes. The project includes an approach and take off area (helipad) for the helicopter, as well as a hangar for storage of the aircraft (Exhibit 2). The helipad would measure 50 feet by 50 feet, and would be paved with asphalt concrete. The hangar would be a one-story structure with a peaked roof (measuring 29 feet tall at the ridge of the roof) and it would be built into the hillside. The hangar footprint would measure 52 feet by 60.5 feet, with an attached storage area that would measure 30 feet by 28.5 feet. The hangar would include architectural features, such as arches and stone wainscot, and a neutral beige color that reflects the existing architecture of the main residence on the property. The helipad and hangar would not be visible from off-site viewpoints.

Accessory structures and facilities would include: a new fire hydrant installed per Napa County requirements and located adjacent to the storage area; a new three-inch-diameter water line from the new hydrant and connecting to the existing three-inch-diameter water line north of the project site; and two, 5,000-gallon water tanks for fire suppression, also located north of the project site. The water tanks would range in size from 87 to 152 inches tall and 102 to 144 inches wide. These features are shown on Exhibit 2.

Runoff from the project site would be conveyed via a concrete-lined swale to 12-inch storm drains that would outlet into a 440-square-foot bioretention basin at the southwest corner of the helipad (see Exhibit 2). A grass swale would be installed along the western edge of the terrace to capture runoff from the undeveloped portion of the site and direct it to the bioretention basin and drainage piping.

An existing, unpaved vineyard road would provide access to the proposed project site from the private residential access drive off of Hagen Road (see Exhibit 2). As part of the project, the vineyard road would be widened (10-foot wide with two-foot wide shoulders on each side) and paved, and several existing retaining walls would be removed. The extent of the proposed improvements is shown on Exhibit 2.

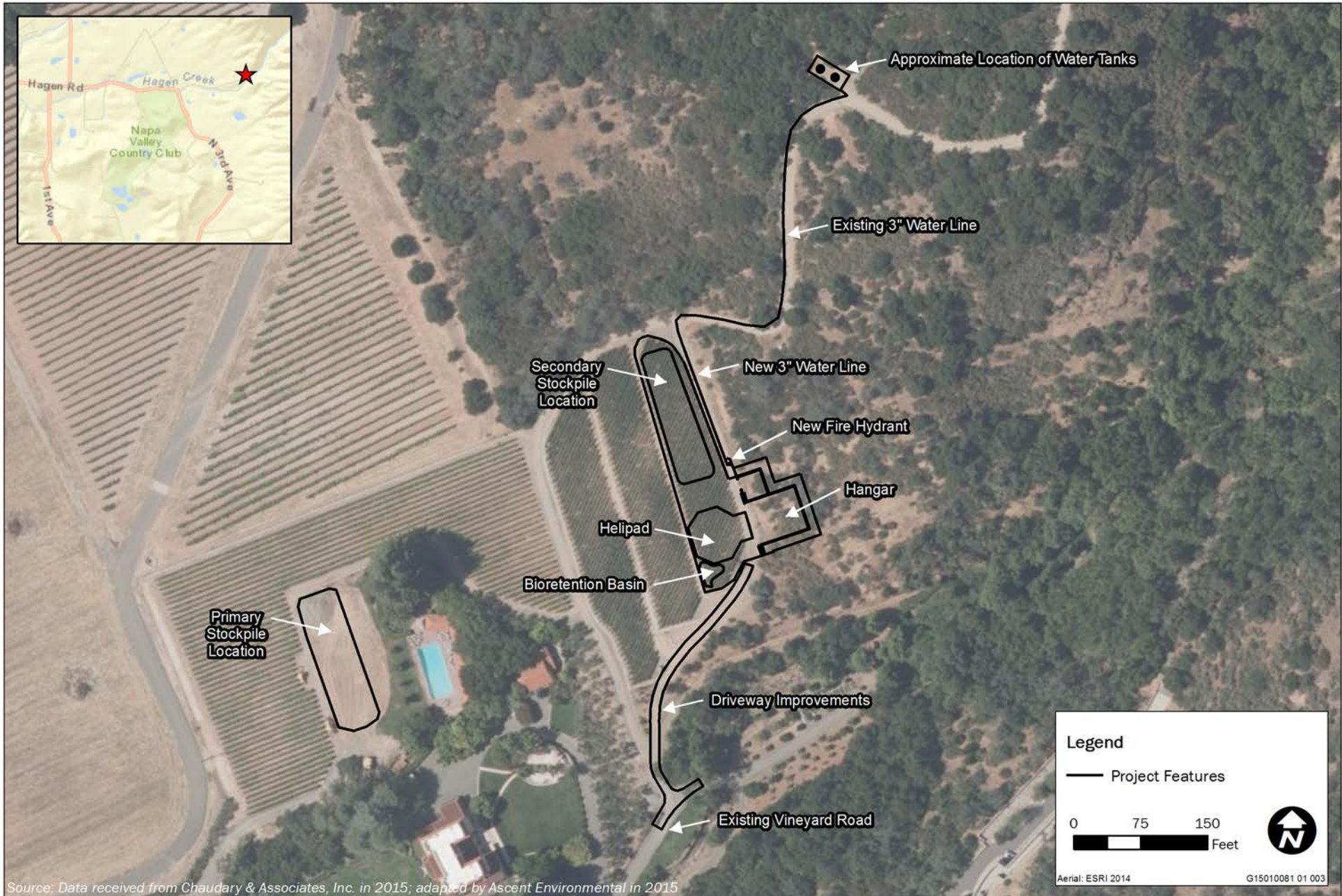
The proposed project would not require any water (the above-mentioned water tanks would be for emergency fire suppression only) and would not generate any wastewater. Further, the project would not create any new automobile traffic as the pilot lives and works on adjoining parcels. All maintenance of the aircraft would occur offsite (approximately one to two times per year) at a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved facility in Woodland, California. No employees would be required for project operation.

It is anticipated that the helipad would be used for approximately four arrivals and four departures per week. However, operations may fluctuate based on many factors and are considered an average. Factors that may contribute to a fluctuation in operations include: weather, wind, visibility, and cloud ceiling. Operations during evening hours (7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.) and nighttime hours (10:00 p.m. – 7:00 a.m.) would be minimal, accounting for approximately 25 arrivals or departures per year (i.e., one to two round-trip flights per month). Nighttime operations would account for approximately eight operations per year (i.e., less than one round-trip flight per month).

The applicant has selected project equipment and proposes to implement certain design and operational features to reduce potential noise impacts to adjoining properties from aircraft operations. These equipment and design features include:

- ▲ utilize widely recognized Helicopter Association International guidance on minimizing operational noise, to the extent it is safe and reasonable;
- ▲ use flight paths that concentrate the greatest noise within the confines of the Palmaz property boundaries;





Source: Data received from Chaudary & Associates, Inc. in 2015; adapted by Ascent Environmental in 2015

- ▲ travel between 1,000 and 1,500 feet above the ground level whenever possible and when flying over adjacent neighborhoods;
- ▲ establish a “no-fly” zone to the northwest of Palmaz property;
- ▲ utilize a twin-engine helicopter that offers greater performance and fly-quiet technology; and
- ▲ operate on an eastbound departure track and westbound descent, when possible.

## No-Fly Zone

To help reduce overflight and noise disturbances on residences, the applicant has proposed and would agree to a condition implementing a “no-fly zone” over nearby sensitive receptors (Exhibit 3). The no-fly zone would be avoided during approach to and departure from the helipad when conditions permit. If overflight of the area is necessary (when weather conditions dictate), the helicopter would remain at least 1,000 feet above ground level over the no-fly zone. The no-fly zone is roughly bounded by Hagen Road, Vichy Avenue, La Grande Avenue, and Olive Hill Lane, and includes the residences near Mt. George Avenue, as shown on Exhibit 3.

## Aircraft

A Bell 429 Global Ranger (B429) helicopter or a similar aircraft would be used for the project. The B429 is a proven modern light, twin helicopter that is equipped with advanced acoustic technology that helps to reduce noise.

## Approach and Departure Procedures

A powerful twin-engine helicopter would allow for a Category A helicopter approach and departure more frequently (Exhibit 4). With a Category A profile, the helicopter would perform a steeper ascent and descent when taking off and landing. The helicopter could ascend almost straight up until it is at an altitude for level flight, usually 1,000 above ground level. This ascent and descent pattern would serve to minimize noise disturbances to surrounding neighborhoods. Further, the Category A helicopter procedures allow for greater safety in the event of engine failures, because the aircraft is capable of being operated in such a manner that, if one engine fails at any time after takeoff or during landing, the helicopter can land safely and stop in the takeoff area, or climb out from the point of failure and attain stabilized single engine forward flight.

## East Bound Departure

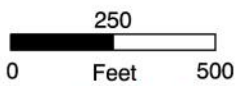
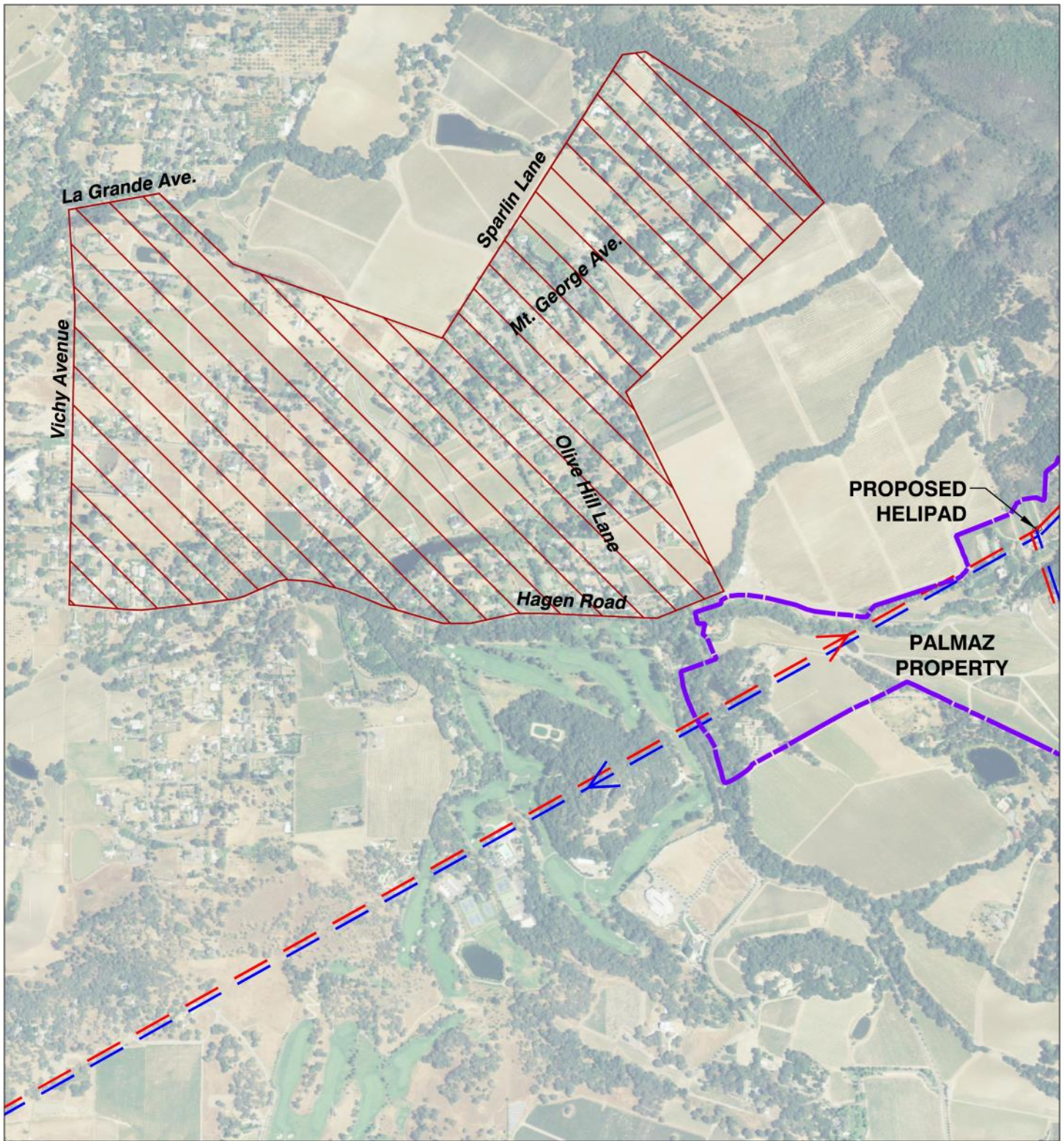
The B429 or a similar aircraft would allow approach from and departure to the east when conditions permit. This track would be utilized on a more regular basis (during clear and calm conditions) to help reduce potential disturbances to nearby residences.

## Public Fire Protection Benefit

The applicant has committed to implementing final approach and takeoff area (FATO) design recommendations that would allow public safety agencies to utilize the helipad in emergency situations. The following design elements have been incorporated into the design of the project:

- ▲ Access to the property via a Knox Box, and a secured landing site without the need for prior notification to the owner.
- ▲ Lockable and dedicated storage for tactical gear for use only by designated emergency response personnel.
- ▲ Access to the Palmaz Water Reservoir, which is 0.24-acre with a maximum depth of 30 feet. It can be replenished at roughly 400 gallons per minute at any time from the 1.5 million gallon underground recycled water reservoir or from the on-site agricultural well. It is 0.32 mile from the proposed helipad location.





- No-Fly Zone
- Palmaz Property Line
- Arrival Track
- Departure Track

Prepared By: **Mead&Hunt** [www.meadhunt.com](http://www.meadhunt.com)  
 Source: Provided by Mead & Hunt in 2015

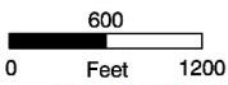
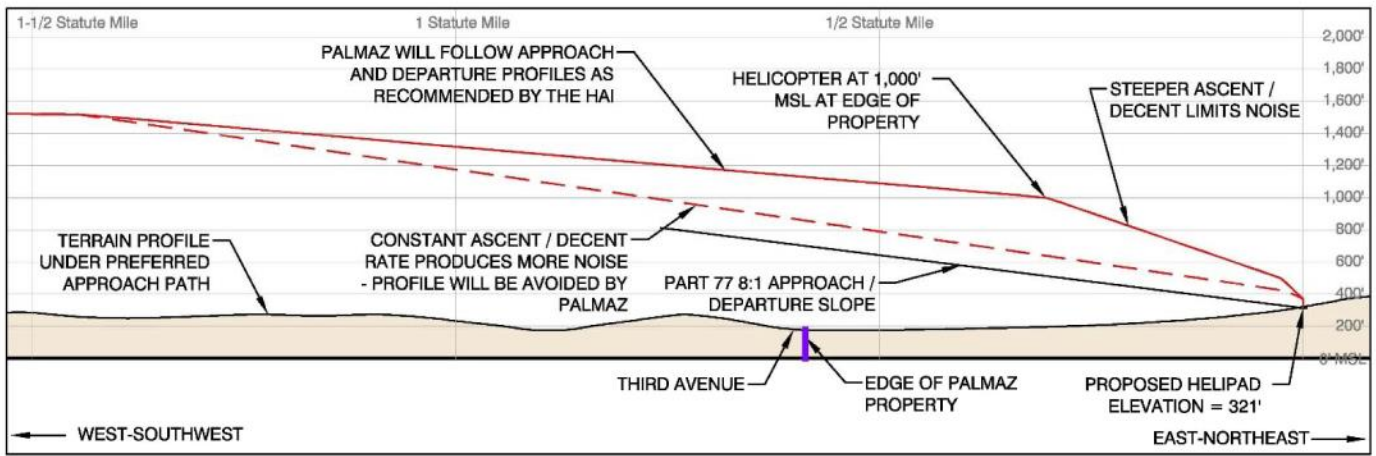
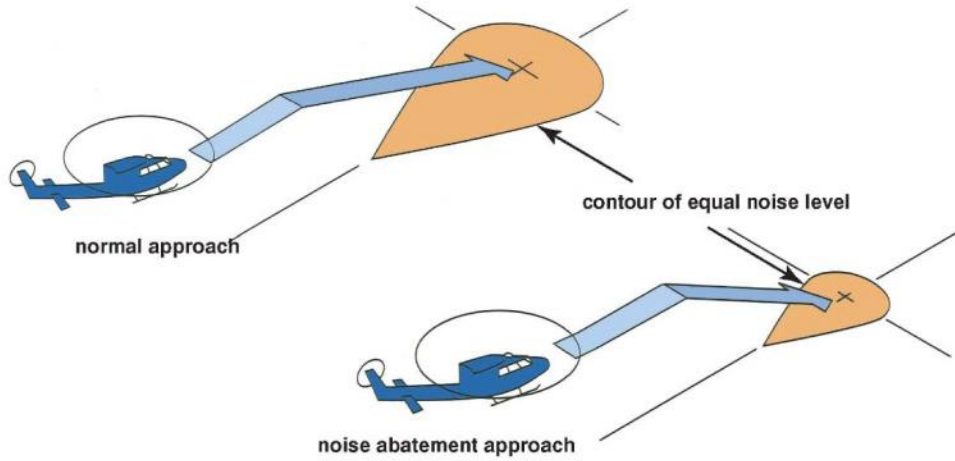
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**Exhibit 3**

**No-Fly Zone**



Ground Noise Exposure Footprint



Prepared By: **Mead&Hunt** [www.meadhunt.com](http://www.meadhunt.com)

Source: Provided by Mead & Hunt in 2015

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**Exhibit 4**

**Typical Approach and Departure Profile**





- ▲ Access to the 2.9-acre lake directly south of the property.
- ▲ Automated Weather Observation System Lit wind sock.
- ▲ Federal Aviation Administration-approved FATO and helipad lighting for nighttime emergency operations.

## Project Construction

Project construction would occur over a three-month period, anticipated to begin in fall 2016. Primary and secondary stockpile locations for hillside soil excavation are shown on Exhibit 2.

## POTENTIAL APPROVALS AND PERMITS REQUIRED

Several agencies will be involved in the consideration of project elements. As the lead agency under CEQA, Napa County is responsible for considering the adequacy of the EIR and determining if the overall project should be approved.

Permits and approvals may be required from the following agencies for project construction:

### Federal

- ▲ **Federal Aviation Administration:** Review/approval.

### State

- ▲ **Bay Area Air Quality Management District:** Authority to construct (for devices that emit air pollutants); permit to operate.
- ▲ **California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 3:** Compliance with the California Endangered Species Act (ESA); potential permits under Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code if take of listed species is likely to occur.

### Local

- ▲ **Napa County:** Approval of a use permit and various ministerial approvals, including but not limited to building permits and grading permits.

## POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Pursuant to CEQA and CCR Section 15064, the discussion of potential project effects on the environment in the EIR shall be focused on those impacts that the County has determined may be potentially significant. The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The County has determined that the proposed project could potentially result in environmental impacts in the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR:

- ▲ **Agricultural Resources:** Portions of the project site are designated as Important Farmland by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency. Project construction would remove a portion of this land from agricultural operations. The EIR will analyze potential impacts resulting from the conversion of Important Farmland, and will identify feasible mitigation if necessary.
- ▲ **Biological Resources:** The project site is currently in vineyard production, and is adjacent to a developed winery. Nonetheless, the EIR will evaluate the project's impacts to sensitive biological resources using existing documentation pertinent to the biological resources in the project vicinity and a reconnaissance survey of the site to identify any sensitive biological resources on-site.



- ▲ **Noise:** The project would result in operational noise related to helicopter arrivals and departures. The EIR will provide an analysis to determine whether overflights along both approach and departure paths would expose residences to short-term noise levels that exceed the exterior noise limits established in Napa County Code Chapter 8.16 or would generate single-event noise levels that could result in a substantial level of sleep disturbance. The EIR will identify feasible mitigation to reduce noise exposure levels (e.g., time-of-day limitations, departure and approach parameters) where necessary.
- ▲ **Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** The project site is located in Napa County, which is under the local air quality jurisdiction of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). The analysis of greenhouse gas impacts will be conducted in accordance with BAAQMD's current methods and will quantify indirect emissions associated with energy consumption, which also includes the energy associated with water consumption.
- ▲ **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** The project involves the operation of a helicopter over a residential area. The EIR will analyze public safety impacts related to aircraft operations in residential neighborhoods, as well as the use of potentially hazardous materials.
- ▲ **Land Use:** The EIR will also include an evaluation of the proposed project in light of General Plan policies and General Plan EIR mitigation measures that have been previously adopted in order to avoid or reduce the severity of potential environmental impacts in each of the topic areas listed above.

These issue areas will be discussed further in the focused EIR, and feasible and practicable mitigation measures will be recommended to reduce any identified potentially significant and significant impacts.

Pursuant to CEQA, the discussion of potential effects on the physical environment is focused on those impacts that may be significant or potentially significant. CEQA allows a lead agency to limit the detail of discussion of the environmental effects that are not considered potentially significant (PRC Section 21100, CCR Sections 15126.2[a] and 15128). CEQA requires that the discussion of any significant effect on the environment be limited to substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse changes in physical conditions that exist within the affected area, as defined in PRC Section 21060.5 (statutory definition of "environment"). Effects identified in the attached Initial Study as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in the EIR unless the lead agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding in the Initial Study (CCR Section 15143). Environmental issue areas scoped out of the focused EIR will include an explanation of why these issues would not result in significant environmental effects and are not required to be evaluated further. Environmental issue areas that would be scoped out of the focused EIR are listed below.

- |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▲ Aesthetics                  | ▲ Population/Housing        |
| ▲ Cultural Resources          | ▲ Public Services           |
| ▲ Geology/Soils               | ▲ Recreation                |
| ▲ Hydrology and Water Quality | ▲ Transportation/Traffic    |
| ▲ Mineral Resources           | ▲ Utilities/Service Systems |

## ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR Section 15126.6), the EIR will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project that are capable of meeting most of the projects' objectives, and that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. At a minimum, the EIR will provide an analysis of a "No-Project" alternative, as well as a second alternative wherein the helipad and hanger would be located roughly one mile northeast of the currently proposed location. The EIR will also identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the proposed project and alternative scenarios.

## DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

The NOP and Initial Study are available for public review at the following locations:

Napa County Planning, Building, and  
Environmental Services Department  
1195 Third Street, Suite 210  
Napa

Napa Main Library  
580 Coombs Street  
Napa

The NOP and Initial Study are also available for public review online at:  
<http://www.countyofnapa.org/cdpdprojects/>.

## PROVIDING COMMENTS

Agencies and interested parties may provide the County with written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed project. Because of time limits mandated by State law, comments should be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. on **January 21, 2016**. Please send all comments to:

Napa County Planning, Building, and Environmental Services Department  
Attention: Dana Ayers, 1195 Third Street, Suite 210, Napa, CA 94559  
Telephone: (707) 253-4388; Fax: (707) 299-4320; Email: Dana.Ayers@countyofnapa.org

Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the project should provide the name, phone number, and email address of a contact person. Comments provided by email should include "Palmas Private Helipad and Hangar Project NOP Scoping Comment" in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

All comments on environmental issues received during the public comment period will be considered and addressed in the Draft EIR, which is anticipated to be available for public review in early 2016.

## PUBLIC SCOPING SESSION AND OPEN HOUSE

A public scoping session and open house will be held by the County to inform interested parties about the project and the EIR review process. Attendees will have an opportunity to communicate directly with County and consulting staff, and comment cards will be available for attendees to provide written comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The meeting time and location are as follows:

Thursday, January 14, 2016  
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.  
Napa County Administration Building  
Third Floor Board Chamber  
1195 Third Street, Napa

The meeting space is accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals needing special assistive devices will be accommodated to the County's best ability. Assistive listening devices are available for the hearing impaired from the Clerk of the Board; please call (707) 253-4580 for assistance. If an ASL interpreter or any other special arrangement is required, please provide the Clerk of the Board with 48-hour notice by calling (707) 253-4417.