

SECTION 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located in the southernmost portion of Imperial County, California. The project site is located within the corporate boundaries of the City of Calexico. The City of Calexico is located approximately 230 miles southeast of Los Angeles, 125 miles east of San Diego, and is adjacent to the City of Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. The property is located approximately 1.04 miles south of West Canal Street (State Highway 98) and 0.7 miles west of South Imperial Avenue (State Highway 111). The border entry with Mexicali, Mexico is located approximately 1,200 feet to the east. The U.S./Mexico border is located south of the project site along the south side of the future Boundary Street right-of-way.⁵ The regional location of the project site is shown in Exhibit 2-1. The site's location within the City of Calexico is shown in Exhibit 2-2. Finally, a vicinity map is provided in Exhibit 2-3.

The 100-acre project site is located in the southwestern portion of the City of Calexico, and is generally bounded by the Calexico International Airport to the north, U.S./Mexico International Border to the south, the Phase 1 Gran Plaza Outlet Center on the east, and vacant parcels and the All American Canal to the west.⁶ The Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN's) that are applicable to the project site include the following: 058-824-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 32, 33; 058-825-1, 2, 20, 21; 058-826-1; and, 058-180-20 (portion).

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The 100-acre project Gran Plaza Power Center site is undeveloped though weed abatement activities have cleared the site's ruderal vegetation. The adjacent property to the east was previously occupied by the Calexico International Country Club which included a golf course. The Country Club closed in 1987 and since then the project site has remained vacant. The eastern portion of the larger site is developed with the Gran Plaza Outlets (Phase 1 of the Gran Plaza). The project site is dominated by bare ground with only sparse patches of vegetation and few trees. The project site has relatively level topography.⁷ An aerial photograph of the project site and the surrounding area is provided in Exhibit 2-4. Exhibit 2-5 is a photo key of the photographs of the project site that are provided in Exhibits 2-6 and 2-7.

The City of Calexico General Plan designates the project site for industrial uses, and the site is zoned Industrial as well. The project surroundings generally consist of urban land uses. West 2nd Street and the Calexico International Airport are located to the immediate north of the project site. To the west exists vacant, Industrial (IND) zoned parcels and the All American Canal. The international border fence and the City of Mexicali, Mexico, are located to the south. The recently constructed Gran Plaza Outlets is located to the east. Further east is the New River and the International Port of Entry (POE) located in the downtown Calexico area.

⁵ Google Earth, 2013. Retrieved from www.google.com

⁶ Blodgett/Baylosis Environmental Planning. Site Survey (Site visit was conducted on February 28, 2014).

⁷ Charles Company. *Calexico Gran Plaza Power Center, Site Plans. Project Description.* March 2014.

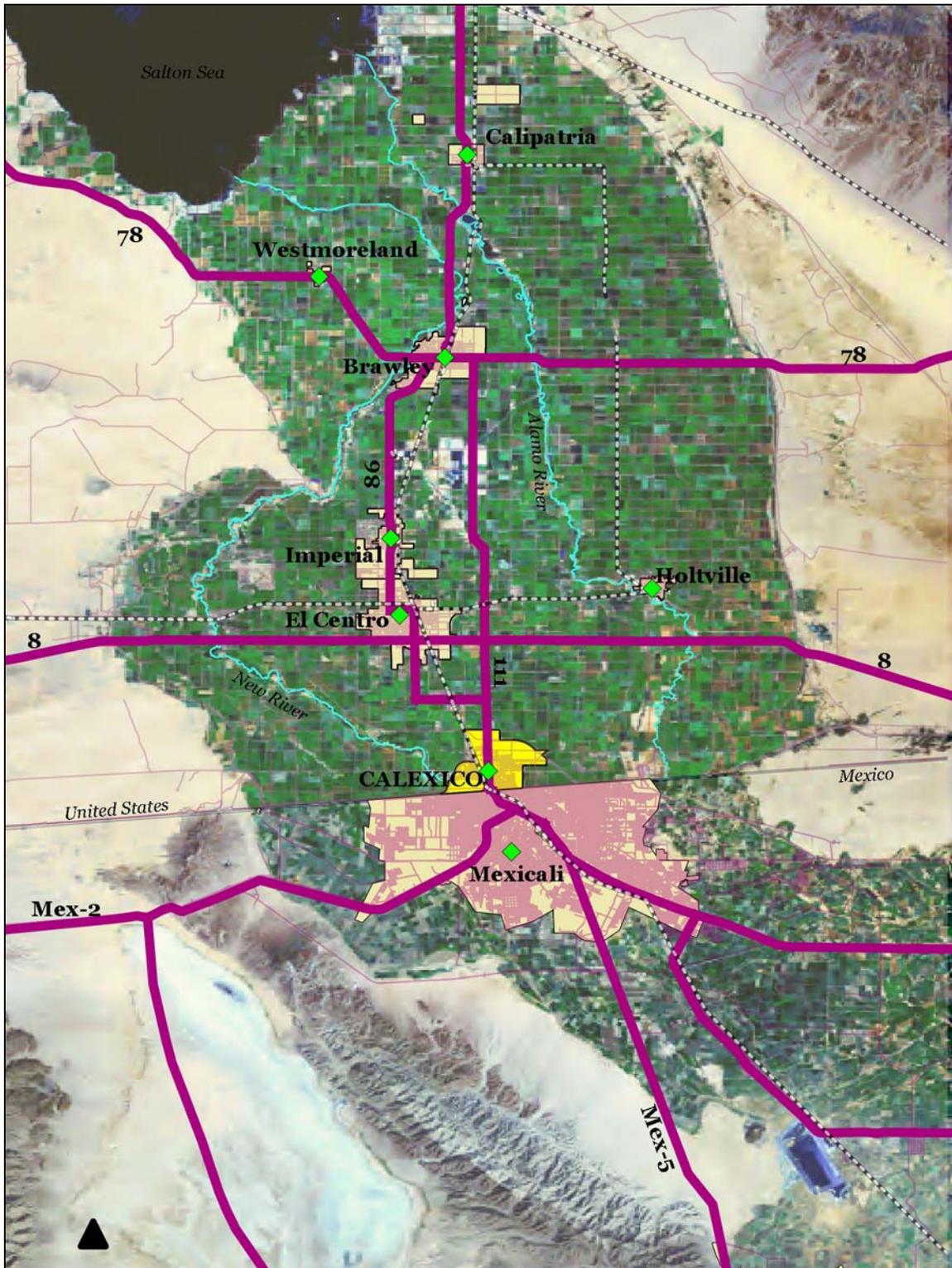


EXHIBIT 2-1
REGIONAL LOCATION
Source: Quantum GIS

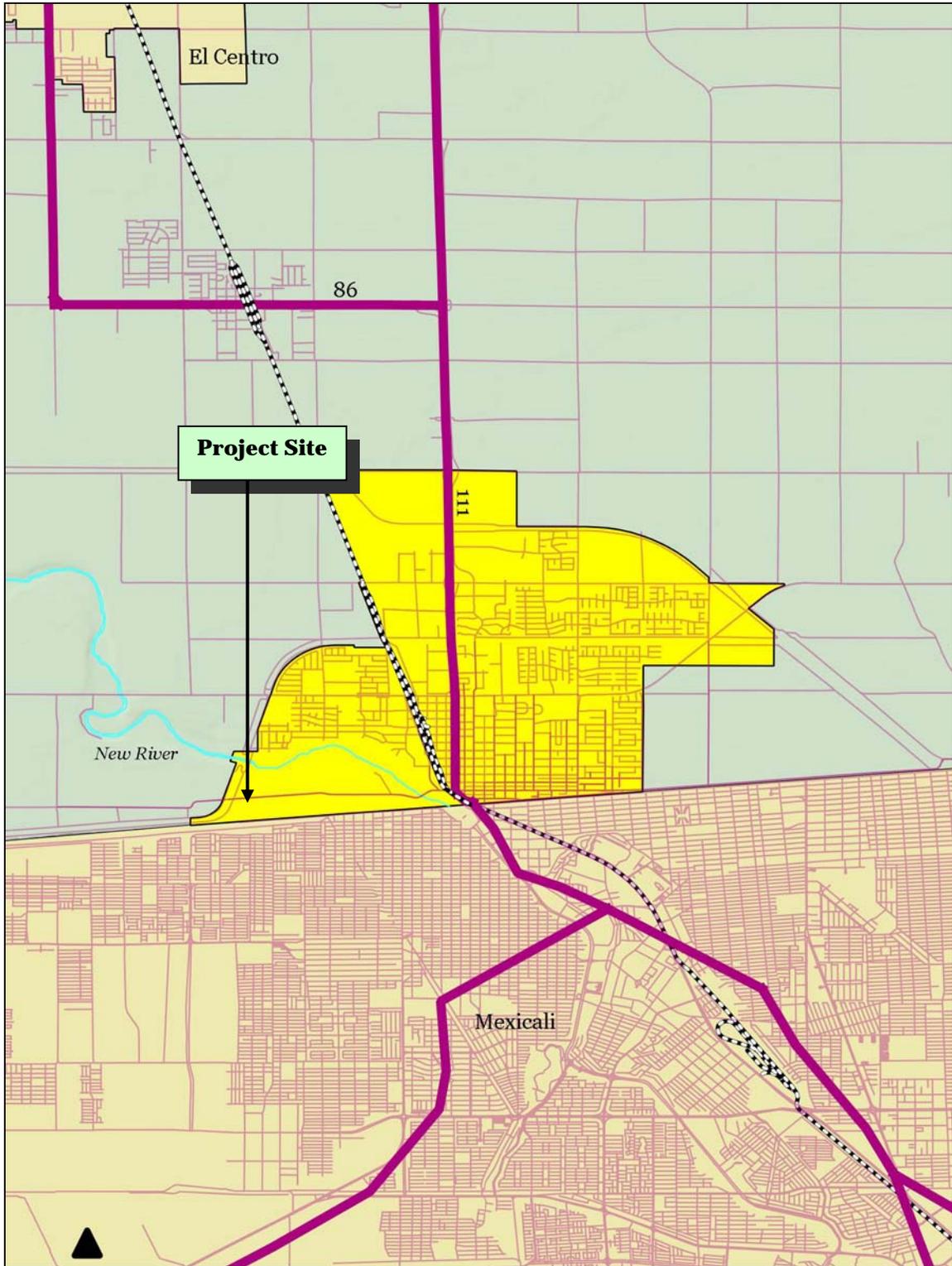


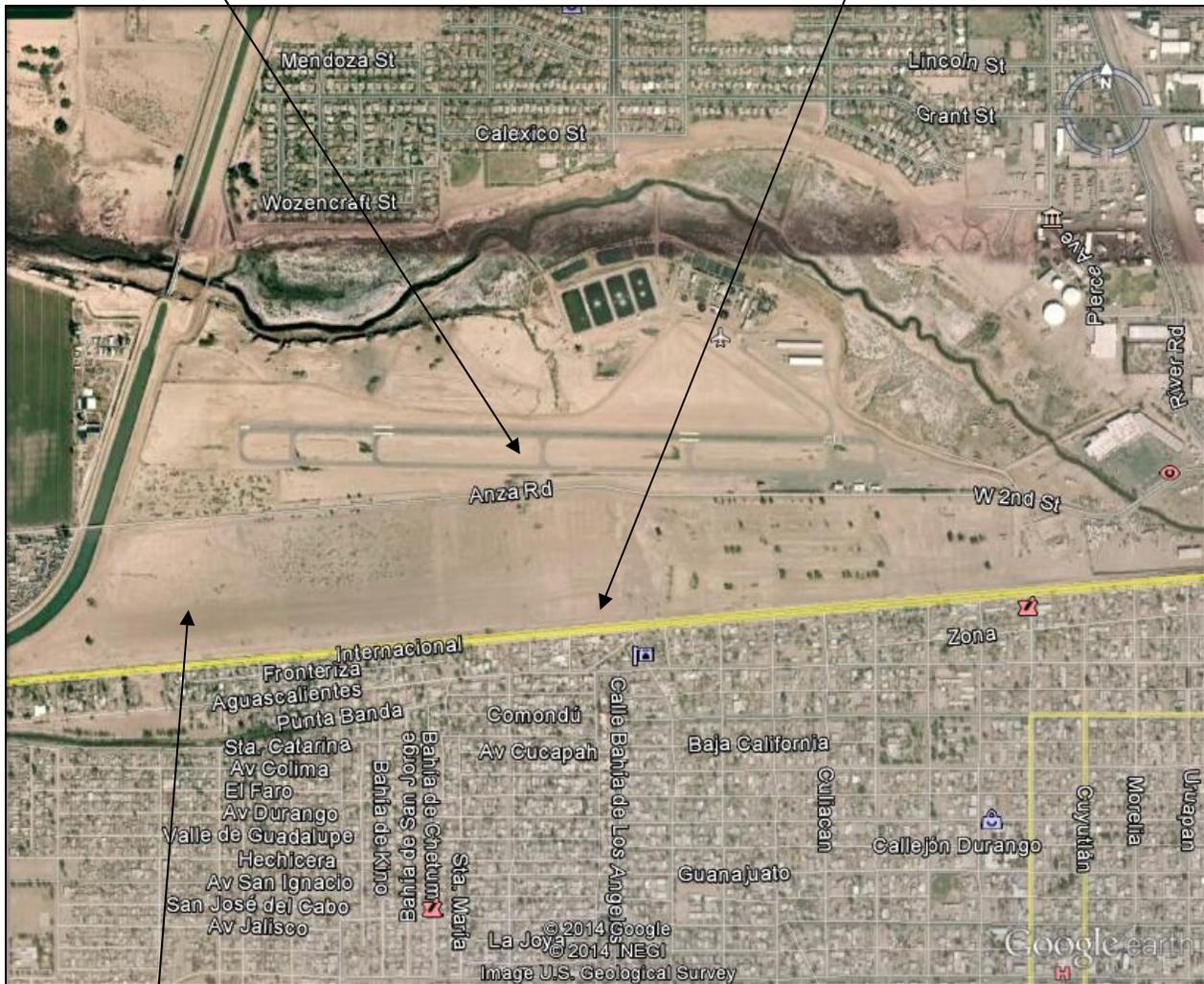
EXHIBIT 2-2
PROJECT SITE LOCATION IN THE CITY
Source: Quantum GIS



EXHIBIT 2-3
VICINITY MAP
Source: Quantum GIS

Calexico International Airport

U.S. /Mexico Border



Project Site

EXHIBIT 2-4

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Source: United States Geological Survey

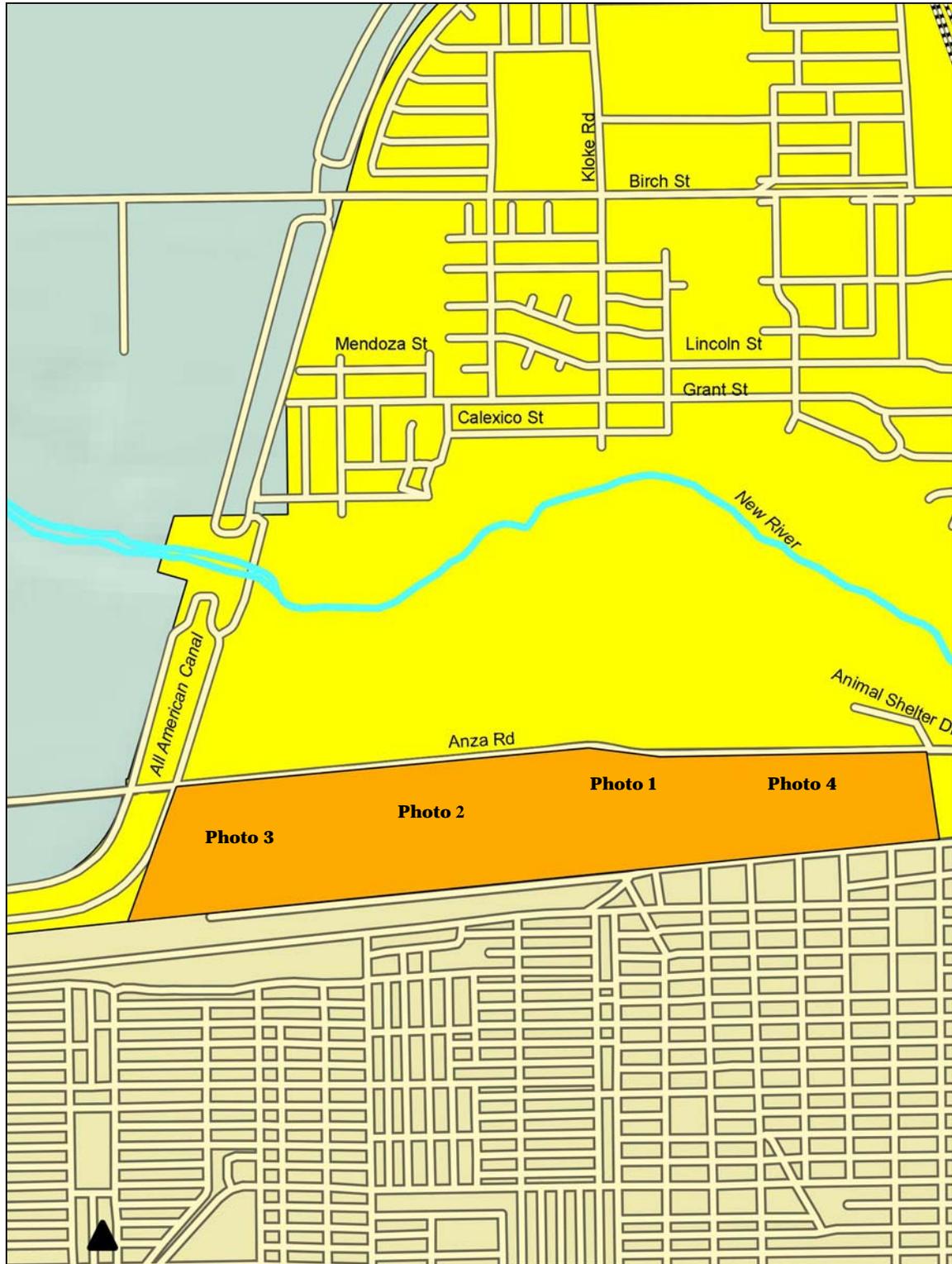


EXHIBIT 2-5
PHOTO KEY POINTS WITHIN THE PROJECT SITE
Source: Blodgett/Baylosis Environmental Planning



Photo #1 View of the project site looking southeast from 2nd Street.

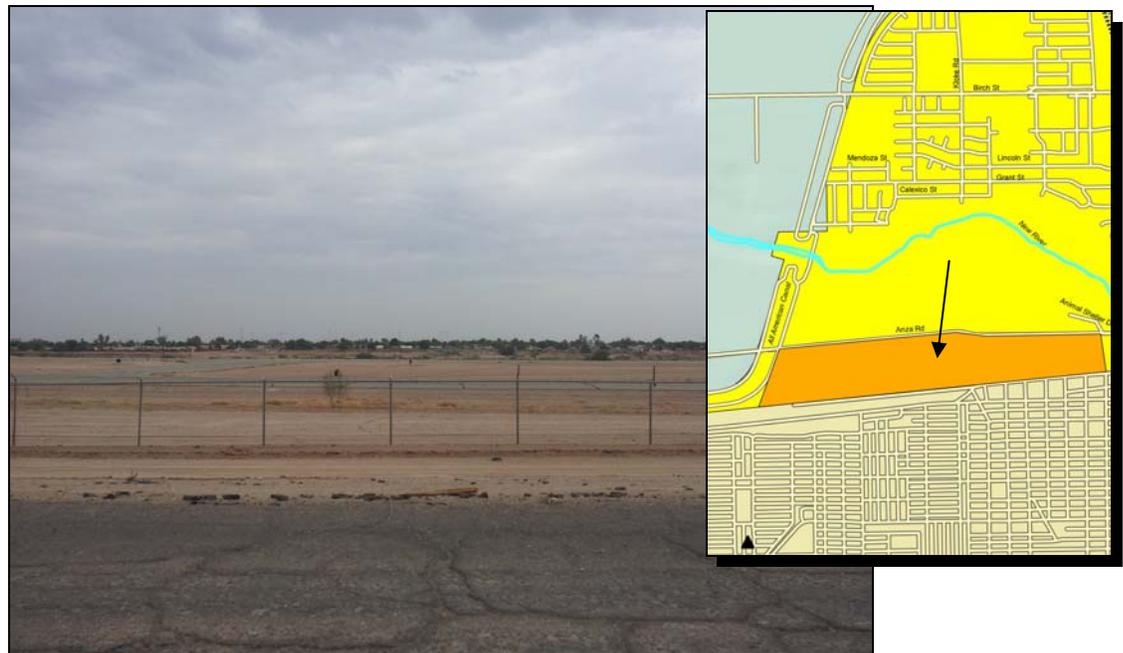


Photo #2 View of the center of the project site looking south from 2nd Street.

EXHIBIT 2-6
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROJECT SITE
Source: Blodgett/Baylosis Environmental Planning

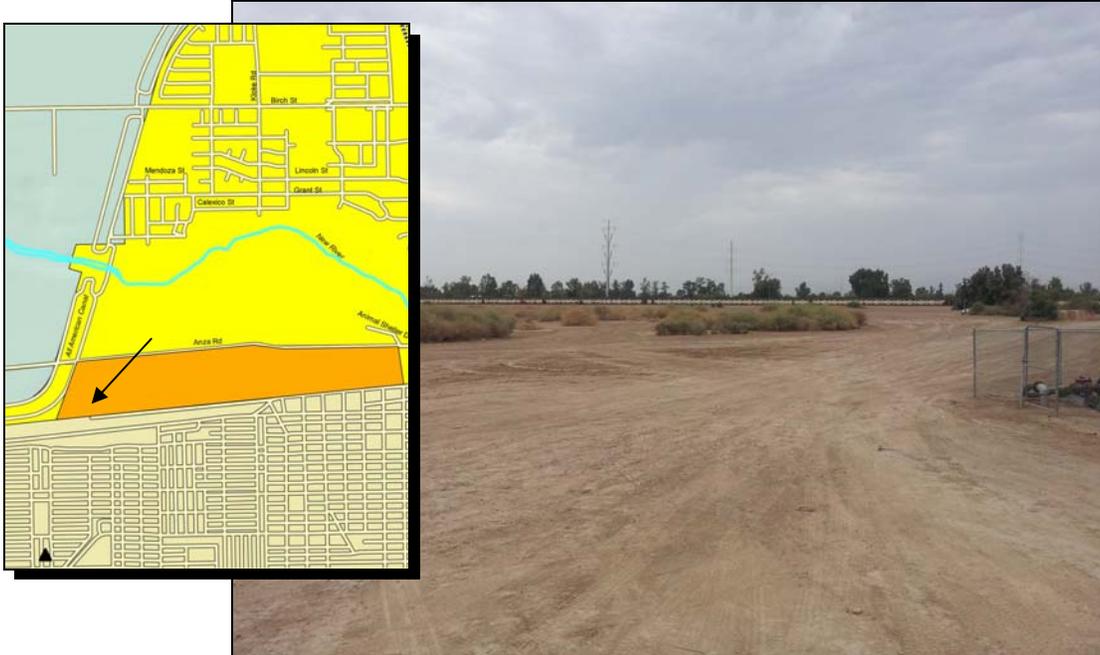


Photo #3 View of the westerly portion of the project site.



Photo #4 View of the easterly portion of the site towards the new construction from the Phase 1 project.

EXHIBIT 2-7 PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROJECT SITE

Source: Blodgett/Baylosis Environmental Planning

2.3 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

The project Applicant (Gran Plaza, LP) proposes to develop the site as a commercial/retail center. The proposed development is the latest phase of the overall Gran Plaza commercial center development, and it will consist of approximately 1,069,400 square feet of floor area.⁸ The entitlements required for the proposed project are summarized herein in Section 2.8. The elements of the project include the following:

- The new Phase 2 development will consist of approximately 1,069,400 square feet of floor area within (approximately) 25 buildings, which will be constructed in two phases (Phase 2A and Phase 2B). The first phase (Phase 2A) would consist of approximately 277,000 square feet of floor area and 12 buildings. Phase 2A would be located within the eastern portion of the project site. The second phase (Phase 2B) will consist of approximately 13 buildings with a total floor area of 792,400 square feet. Phase 2B will be located in the westerly portion of the site.
- The rear (south) sides of the buildings will face the International Border with a 90-foot ~~security zone~~ setback that includes a required 60 foot setback required by the U.S. Border Patrol and an addition 30-foot wide rear access road. This ~~zone~~ access road will ~~also~~ serve as the loading and truck circulation point for the retail buildings facing north. Where and if gaps occur between buildings, a barrier will be installed to the satisfaction of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to provide a complete security zone along the south boundary of the property.
- Access to the new Phase 2 development would be provided at five entryways along the realigned West 2nd Avenue. Of these five new entryways, two will be signalized. The main access points would have both pedestrian and vehicular features and would allow pedestrians and vehicles to travel in a north-to-south direction with pedestrian rest areas throughout. A sidewalk would extend along the entire length of the proposed West 2nd Street realignment.
- Both the Phase 1 (now open for business) and Phase 2 (the current project) will increase the water treatment capacity from the pre-project 12 million gallons per day (mgd) capacity to 16 mgd for Phase 1 and 20 mgd for Phase 2. This treatment capacity will ultimately be facilitated by new improvements that will be financed by the proposed project concurrent with the Phase 1 and Phase 2 development. The City of Calexico would require the project to contribute funds toward the cost of the Phase 2 improvements. The project would require installation of new water and sanitary sewer lines on and off the project site. The water lines would connect to existing water lines located in West 2nd Street and at the intersection of West 5th Street and River Road. The sanitary sewer lines would connect to exiting sewer lines located east of the airport. The project would also include construction of two sewer lift stations due to the relatively flat topography of the site. A comprehensive surface drainage/storm drain system would collect and convey runoff from the project site. This system would include retention basins located in the parking area for storage, catch basins, curb inlets, and conveyance pipes. Off-site improvements will include an outfall structure at the New River and possibly temporary detention basins adjacent to the New River depending on the timing of permit approvals for the drainage facilities.

⁸ Charles Company. *Calexico Gran Plaza Power Center, Site Plans. Project Description.* March 2014.

- The design and installation of advertising signage will be required to adhere to a Master Sign Program (MSP). All proposals for advertising signage will be made to the landlord for initial approval. After receiving approval from the landlord, the Applicant will then apply to the City of Calexico consistent with the MSP and the City of Calexico City Code Standards. All sign designs must be consistent with the building design, architecture, and other standards outlined in the MSP.

The proposed site plan for the proposed project is provided in Exhibits 2-8 through 2-10. Building elevations are provided in Exhibits 2-11 through 2-14.

2.4 OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT

The proposed project, consisting of Phase 2A and Phase 2B, will consist of the following operational elements:

- The precise nature of the tenant mix is not known at this time, though the prospective uses will consist of some form of big-box and specialty retail stores. A total of 25 tenant spaces are proposed.
- The hours of operation (10:00 AM to 11:00 PM) of the new retail businesses will not be typical of a conventional commercial center. The commercial retail uses will open in the late morning (11:00 AM) while closing will occur later (11:00 PM). The hours of operation of the restaurant uses may be earlier. The later hours will better accommodate those patrons crossing the U.S. and Mexico Port of Entry (POE) to and from Mexicali.
- The project would be designed to allow for and encourage pedestrian circulation. The pedestrian-friendly project design also would include transportation nodes with stops providing shuttle access to all areas of the project. The proposed commercial center will largely service cross-border visitors from Mexicali. A significant portion of this patronage that walk to the center from the POE will take advantage of shuttle service. This high volume of pedestrian visitors will necessitate a comprehensive pedestrian system within the center that will connect to the POE.
- As the proposed project would be developed near the U.S.-Mexico International POE, the project would be designed to facilitate pedestrian and vehicular traffic from the international border and downtown Calexico. According to current estimates, between 40% and 60% of the center's patrons will arrive by shuttle or will consist of pedestrian traffic.

2.5 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

The proposed project will be constructed in two phases: Phase 2A and Phase 2B. The first phase (Phase 2A) would consist of approximately 277,000 square feet of floor area and will consist of 12 buildings.

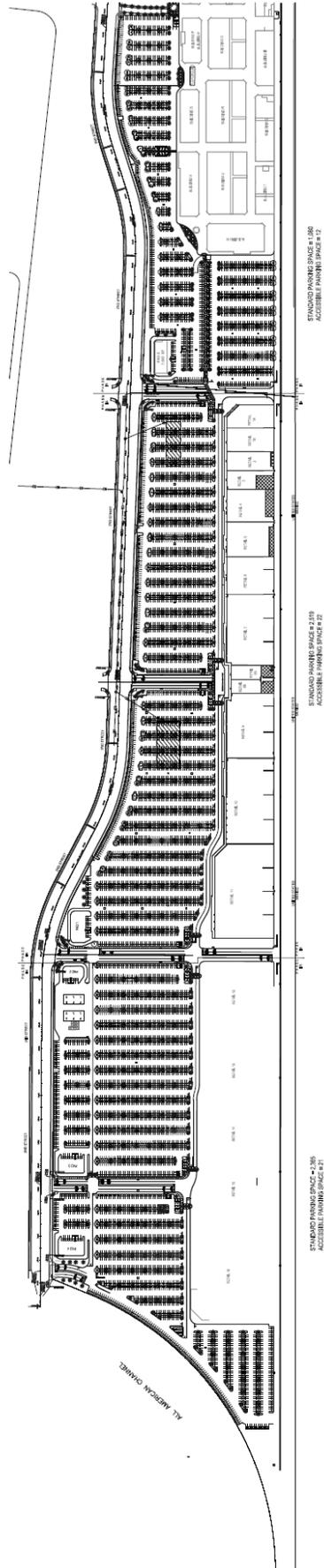
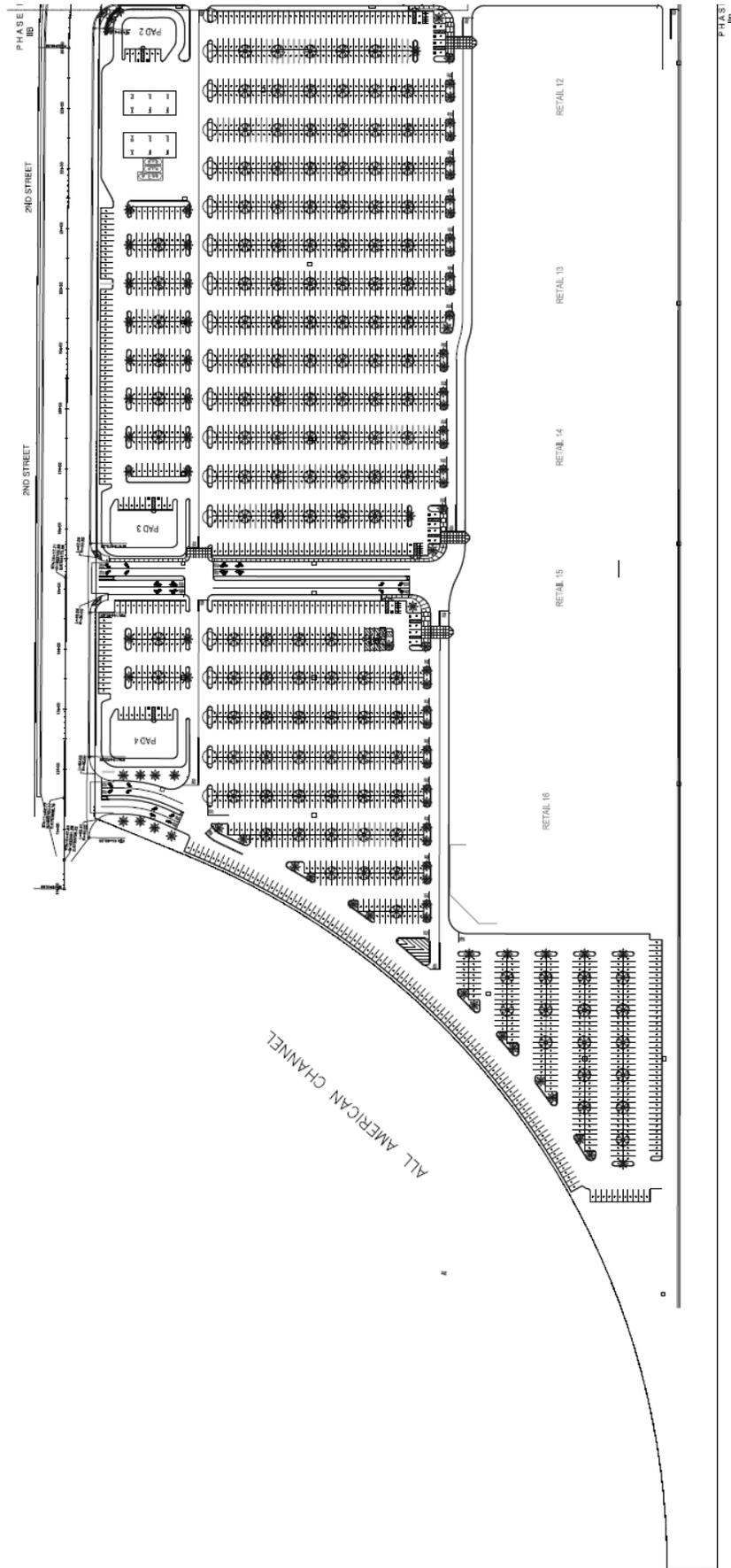


EXHIBIT 2-8
SITE PLAN – ENTIRE PROJECT SITE
Source: Charles Company 2014.



STANDARD PARKING SPACE = 2,365
ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACE = 21
MOTORCYCLE PARKING SPACE = 15

EXHIBIT 2-10
SITE PLAN – WESTERN PORTION
Source: Charles Company 2014.

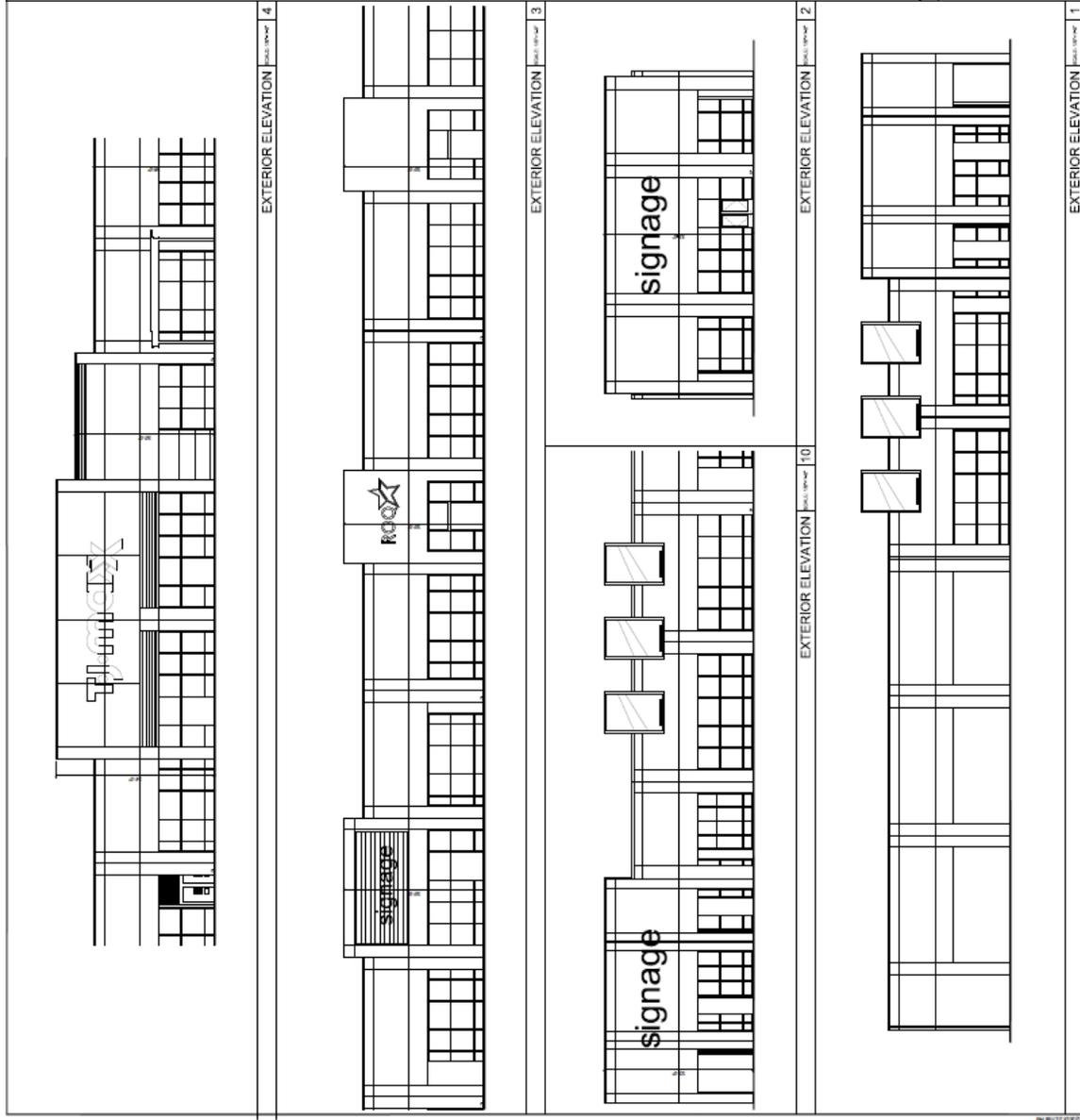


EXHIBIT 2-11
BUILDING ELEVATIONS - EASTERN PORTION
Source: Charles Company 2014.

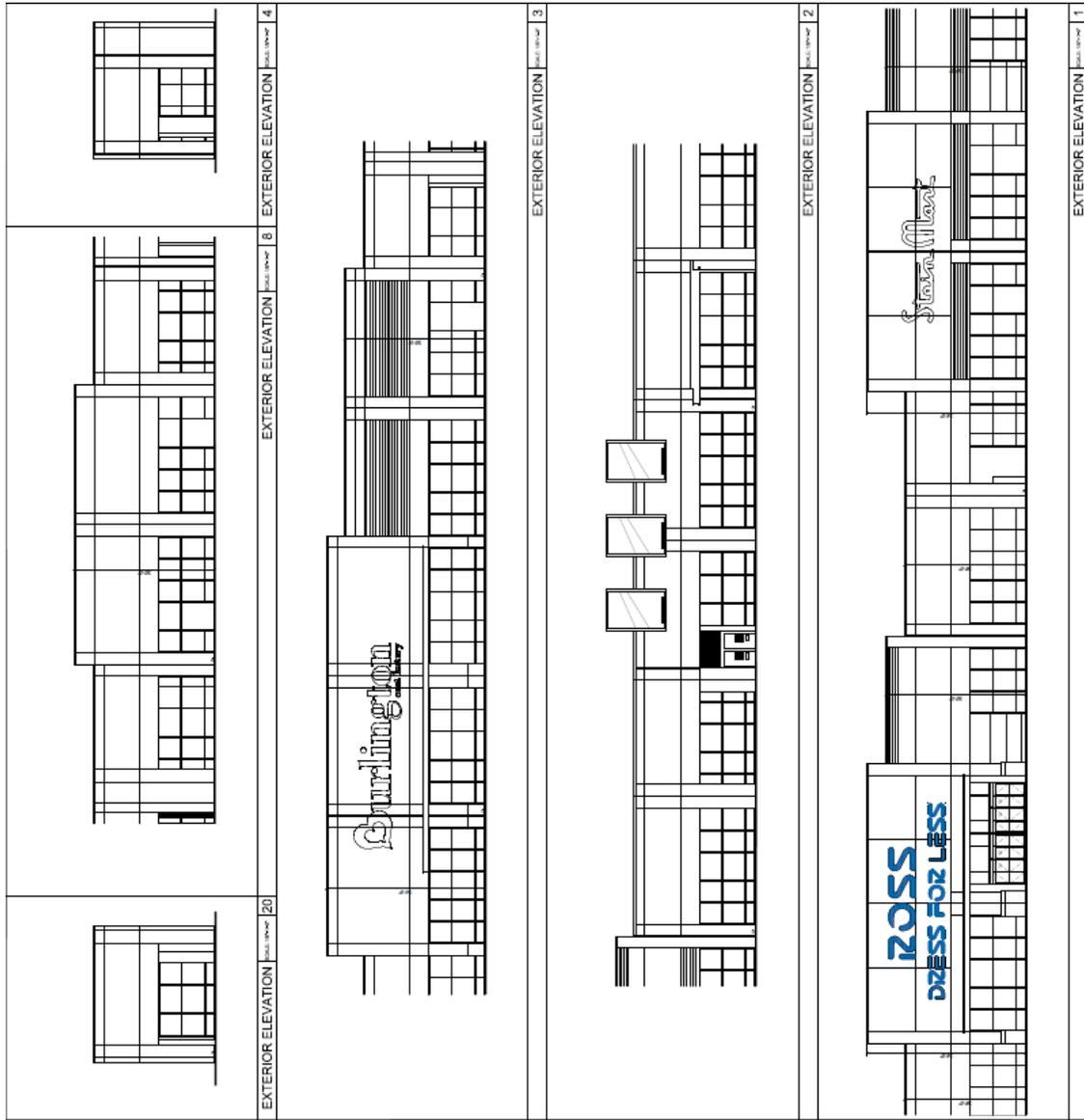


EXHIBIT 2-12
BUILDING ELEVATIONS - CENTER EAST PORTION
 Source: Charles Company 2014.

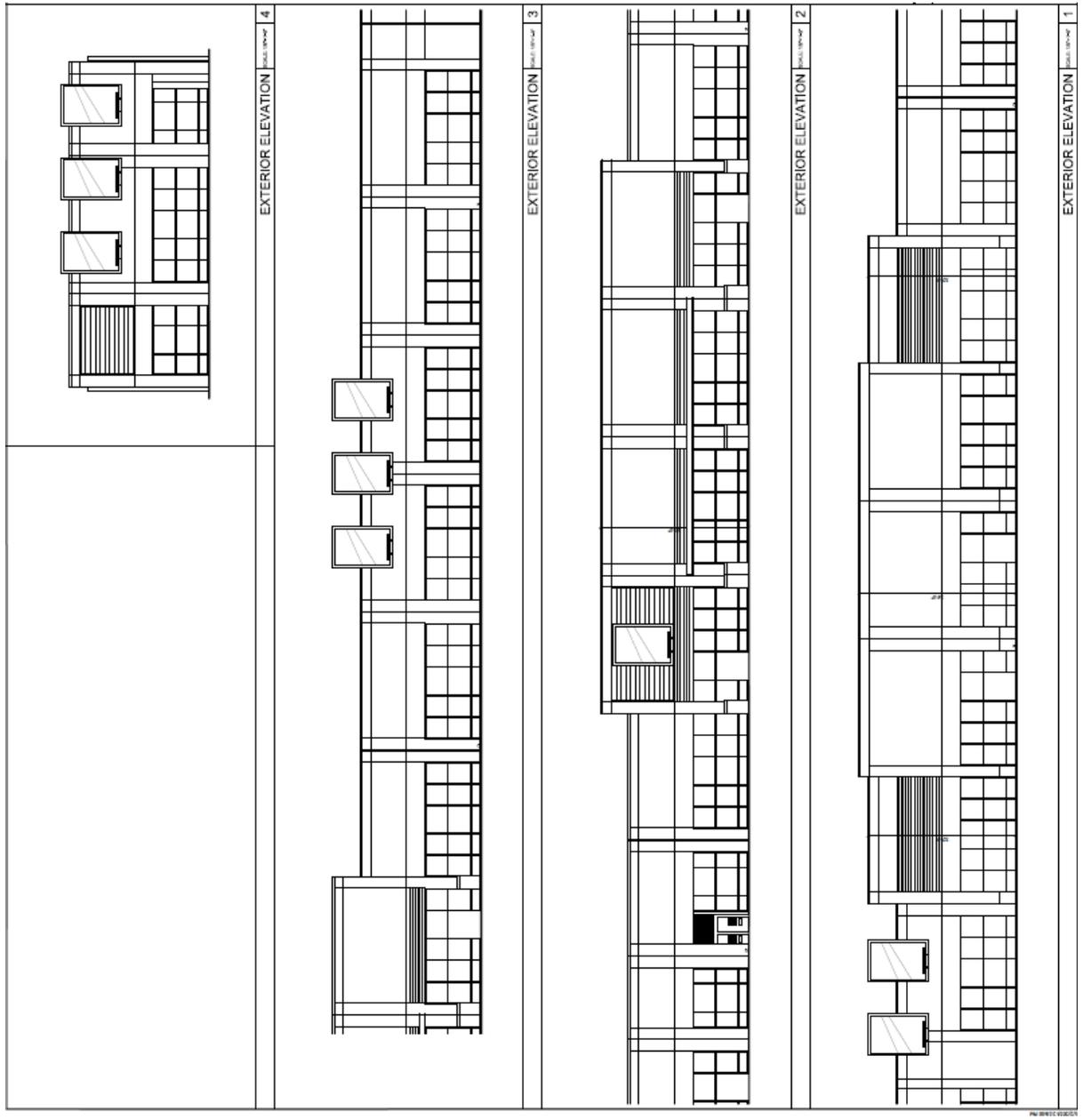


EXHIBIT 2-13
BUILDING ELEVATIONS - CENTER WEST PORTION
Source: Charles Company 2014.

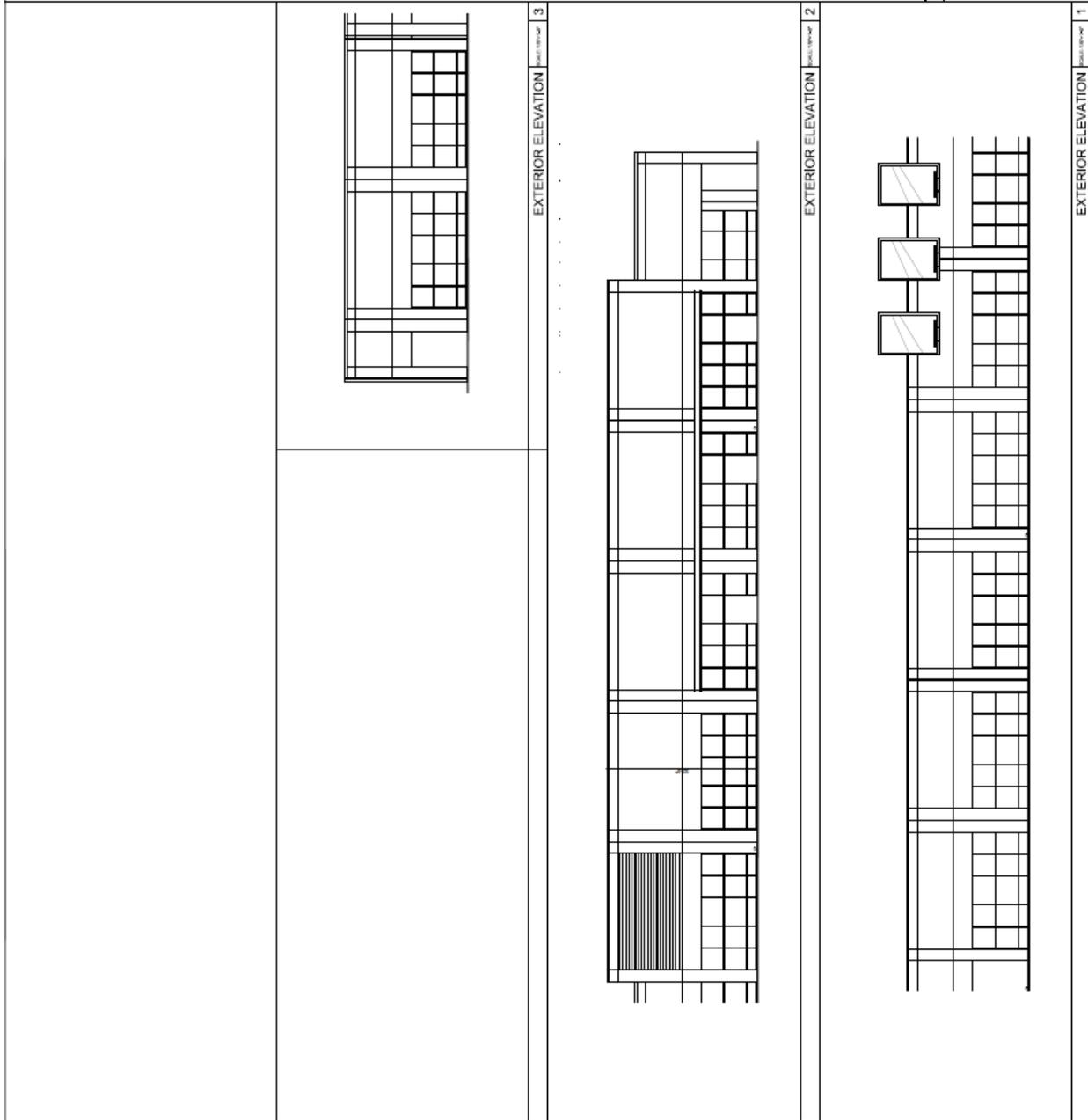


EXHIBIT 2-14
BUILDING ELEVATIONS - WESTERN PORTION
Source: Charles Company 2014.

Phase 2A would be located within the eastern portion of the project site. The second phase (Phase 2B) will consist of approximately 13 buildings with a total floor area of 792,400 square feet. Phase 2B will be located in the westerly portion of the site. The construction for each phase will consist of the following:

- *Grading.* This initial construction element will involve the grading for the entire 100+ acre site. The grading activities will require approximately 3 months to complete.
- *Site Preparation.* The project site will be prepared for the site's development during the site preparation phase. This construction element will require approximately 3 months to complete.
- *Phase 2A Construction.* The Phase 2A development will consist of approximately 277,000 square feet of floor area. Phase 2A would be located within the eastern portion of the project site. This phase will take approximately 9 months to complete.
- *Phase 2A Paving, Landscaping, and Finishing.* This phase will involve the finishing of the buildings, paving, and the installation of landscaping for the Phase 2A development. This phase will take approximately 2 months to complete.
- *Phase 2B Construction.* The second phase (Phase 2B) will consist of approximately 13 buildings with a total floor area of 792,400 square feet. Phase 2B will be located in the westerly portion of the site. This phase will take approximately 12-15 months to complete.
- *Phase 2B Paving, Landscaping, and Finishing.* This phase will involve the finishing of the buildings, paving, and the installation of landscaping for the Phase 2A development. This phase will take approximately 2 months to complete.

The entire construction period for *both* Phases 2A and 2B will require approximately 32 months to complete. The Phase 2A center is scheduled for opening in late 2016 while the scheduled opening for Phase 2B is slated for late 2017.

2.6 SCOPE OF CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

Cumulative impacts refer to the combined effect of project impacts with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Both CEQA and the *CEQA Guidelines* require that cumulative impacts be analyzed in an EIR. As set forth in the *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15130(b),

“The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts, and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone.”

Section 15130 of the *CEQA Guidelines* requires that an EIR address cumulative project impacts in which the project has possible environmental effects that are individually limited but “cumulatively considerable.” The cumulative project list, identified in Table 2-1 and Exhibit 2-15, was provided by the City of Calexico working with the project traffic engineer.

**Table 2-1
Summary of Related “Cumulative” Projects**

Reference No./Project Name	Land Use	Description
#1. Airport Expansion	General Aviation	Additional 46 flight per day
#2. Calexico Gran Plaza	Fast Food Drive-Thru	651,650 sq. ft.
	Factory Outlet Shopping Center	
	Gas Station, Food Mart and Carwash	
#3. Calexico Mega Park	Community Shopping Center	1,100,100 sq. ft.
	Regional Shopping Center	
#4. Border Station Expansion	Border Station*	A total of 6 lanes
#5. County Center II	Public Facility and Institutional Uses	various
#6. Estrella	Single-Family Residential	371 units
	Multi-Family Attached Residential	400 units
	School Site	12.94 acres
	Park	5.3 acres
#7. Hallwood/Calexico Place III and Casino	Casino, Hotel, Retail, Office, and Restaurants**	232 acres
#8. Imperial Center	Commercial Center	Various bldgs.
#9. La Jolla Palms	Single-Family Residential	500 units
	Commercial**	22 acres
#10. Las Palmas	Single-Family Residential	600 units
	Mobile Home Park	73.0 acres
	Senior Complex	115 units
#11. McCabe Ranch I (located outside of the area provided in Exhibit 2-14)	Single-Family Residential	300 units
	Condominiums	127 units
#12. McCabe Ranch II (located outside of the area provided in Exhibit 2-14)	Single-Family Residential	1582 units
	Apartment	718 units
#13. Palazzo	Single-Family Residential	182 units
	Multi-Family Residential	934 units
	Mixed-Use Commercial Village	6.4 acres
	Regional Park	21.62 acres
#14. Remington Condominium	Condominiums	272 units
#15. River View Condominiums	Condominiums	272 units
	Commercial Lots**	63,300 sq. ft.
#16. Venezia	Single-Family Residential	249 units
	Commercial/Retail	12.67 acres

Source: City of Calexico and Infrastructure Engineers.

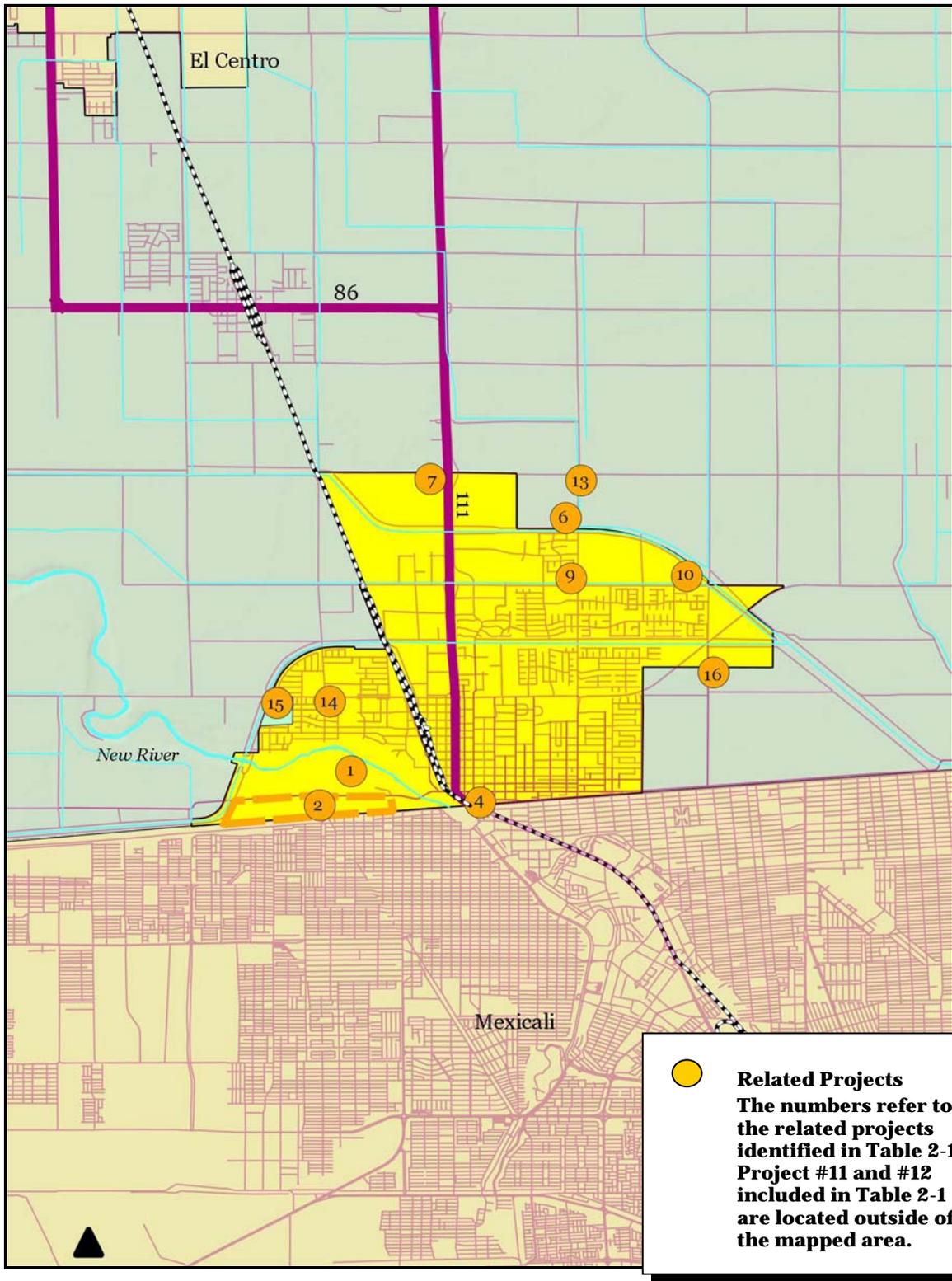


EXHIBIT 2-15
LOCATION OF RELATED PROJECTS
Source: City of Calexico and Infrastructure Engineers

The potential for projects to have a cumulative impact depends on both geographic location as well as the timing of development. The geographic area affected by cumulative projects varies depending on the environmental topic. For example, construction noise impacts would be limited to areas directly affected by construction noise, whereas the area affected by a project's air emissions generally includes the entire air basin, and impacts associated with aesthetics would include the affected view shed. The analysis of cumulative impacts is provided herein in Section 4.5. The cumulative impact analysis is provided herein in Section 4.5.

2.7 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the proposed project include the following:

- The creation of an upscale big-box retail center mixed with more conventional large scale retail tenant uses.
- The creation of an aesthetically attractive, high-quality design that reflects the property's location within view of those traveling between Mexico and the US.
- The provision of a high level of accessibility to and through the site, to promote pedestrian travel and efficient vehicular access.
- The enhancement of the economic vitality of the City by providing sales tax and other revenue opportunities.
- The creation of new jobs for the local economy.

2.8 DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS

The proposed project will require the following discretionary approvals from the City of Calexico Planning Commission (recommendation) and City Council (approval or denial):

- A General Plan Amendment from *Industrial* and *Airport* to *Commercial Highway*;
- A Change of Zone from *IND (Industrial)* to *CH (Commercial Highway)*;
- A Uniform Application and Development Review to allow a new commercial development totaling approximately 1,069,400 square feet of commercial/retail uses;
- A Tentative Subdivision map to subdivide and reconfigure the existing properties;

- A Variance for waiver of certain development standards for the proposed project, including, but not limited to, building height, ancillary structure height (e.g. light poles), and signage (area, count, and height) pursuant the Gran Plaza Master Signage Program;
- Possible improvement of a development agreement between the City of Calexico and the developer; and,
- Consideration of the proposed project’s conformity with the Calexico International Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires the project Applicant submit the development plans for an aeronautical review pursuant to the provisions of 49 U.S.C., Section 44718 and, if applicable, Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 77 to obtain a “Determination of No Hazards to Air Navigation” approval. Because the project includes a GPA and Zone change within an Airport Land Use Plan (ALUP), the action must also be referred to the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for a consistency finding under Public Utilities Code Section 21676. The proposed project’s compatibility with the airport has been considered and the proposed project’s conformity was approved by the ALUC.

Other permits will be required as part of the proposed project’s approval. These other permits will include, but may not be limited to, a Solid Waste Facility Permit, a Construction Stormwater Permit (State of California Water Resources Control Board), a General Industrial Stormwater Permit (State of California Water Resources Control Board), a Grading Permit (City of Calexico), a Building Permit (City of Calexico), an Occupancy Permit (City of Calexico), Construction of the Storm Drain Outfall in the New River Permit, a 404 Permit, a 401 Permit, and/or a 1600 Streambed Alteration Permit.

