

# SECTION 2.0

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## PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### 2.1 PURPOSE AND NEED

Implementation of the Proposed Action would assist the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (Tribe) in meeting the following objectives:

- Improve the socioeconomic status of the Tribe by providing an augmented revenue source that could be used to: strengthen the Tribal government, fund a variety of social, housing, governmental, administrative, educational, health and welfare services to improve the quality of life of tribal members, and provide capital for other economic development and investment opportunities.
- Provide employment opportunities to the Tribal and non-Tribal community.
- Make donations to charitable organizations and governmental operations, including local educational institutions.
- Fund local governmental agencies, programs, and services.
- Allow the Tribe to establish economic self-sufficiency.

The unmet economic needs for the Tribe and Tribal members are evident when comparing the Tribe's socioeconomic conditions with those of the surrounding communities. The economy of the Tribe lags behind the economy of the local community in terms of the employment rate, median household income, and percentage with home ownership. The Tribe also suffers from high unemployment rates and a lack of economic development opportunities. In addition to the Tribe's depressed economic condition, a disproportionate number of Tribal members are faced with substantial health problems.

A lack of economic development opportunities exists for the Tribe primarily due to a lack of funds for project development and operation. The Tribe has no sustained revenue stream that could be used to fund programs and provide assistance to Tribal members. Among the Tribe's general membership there is presently a high reliance upon Federal and State governments for social services.

The Tribe's need for an economic base represents one of the primary purposes of IGRA. IGRA states that Congress finds "a principal goal of Federal Indian policy is to promote tribal economic development, tribal self sufficiency, and strong tribal government..." 25 U.S.C. § 2701. IGRA also states that one of the purposes of the act is "to provide a statutory basis for the operation of gaming by Indian tribes as a means of promoting tribal economic development, self-sufficiency, and strong tribal governments..." 25 U.S.C. § 2702.

In order to ensure that revenues raised from gaming are used to “promote tribal economic development, tribal self sufficiency, and strong tribal government,” IGRA (25 U.S.C. § 2710(b)(2)(A)) limits the use of net gaming revenues to the following:

- Funding tribal government operations or programs.
- Providing for the general welfare of the Indian tribe and its members.
- Promoting tribal economic development.
- Making donations to charitable organizations.
- Funding operations of local government agencies.

The Proposed Action would provide the Tribe with a long-term, viable, and sustainable revenue base. Class III gaming is potentially very profitable. Revenues from the operation of the casino and hotel would be used for at least the following purposes:

- Funding governmental programs and services, including housing, educational, environmental, health, and safety programs and services.
- Hiring additional staff, upgrading equipment and facilities, and generally improving governmental operations.
- Decreasing the Tribe’s and Tribal member’s dependence on Federal and State grants and assistance programs.
- Making donations to charitable organizations and governmental operations, including local educational institutions.
- Funding local governmental agencies, programs, and services.
- Providing capital for other economic development and investment opportunities, allowing the Tribe to diversify its holdings over time, so that it is no longer dependent upon the Federal or State government or even upon gaming to survive and prosper.

Each of these purposes is consistent with the limited allowable uses for gaming revenues, as required by IGRA. The casino, hotel, and related facilities would also provide employment opportunities for Tribal members as well as local non-Tribal residents. Operation of the casino, hotel, and related facilities would require the purchase of goods and services, increasing opportunities for local businesses and stimulating the local economy. Likewise, the wages paid and benefits provided to employees of the casino, hotel and related facilities will be predominately spent in the local community, also increasing opportunities for local businesses.

The Tribal government’s purpose for requesting the approval of the proposed management contract is to team with SC Sonoma Management LLC to develop and manage a casino and hotel resort. The Tribal government needs a developer/manager because the Tribe alone cannot secure the necessary financing to develop this project and lacks the necessary expertise to design, develop, build or manage such a resort.

## 2.2 ALTERNATIVES IDENTIFIED BY THE PUBLIC

This section summarizes public comments identified during the EIS scoping process regarding the evaluation of alternatives to the Proposed Action. Many commenters requested that the EIS evaluate specific alternative locations such as Skaggs Island, the former Agilent/Hewlett Packard complex on Valley Home Drive, the Highway 37/Lakeville Road site, Hamilton Air Force Base, Mare Island Naval Ship Yard, Mecham Road landfill, and the former drive-in movie theater at the Sonoma/Marin County border. Some commenters requested that the Tribe consider a more rural setting for the Proposed Action. One commenter requested that the EIS evaluate the suitability of all twelve alternative sites that were outlined in Betting Magazine (June 12, 2003). Another commenter requested the evaluation of the alternatives presented to the City Council in August 2003. Some commenters questioned whether the Tribe already owns land that is considered reservation land and could be developed for the Proposed Action. One commenter requested a no-action alternative to be evaluated. One commenter requested the evaluation of an agricultural alternative use of the proposed site in lieu of a casino and hotel. Another commenter suggested that a non-gaming alternative be analyzed.

Some commenters requested that the EIS evaluate project alternatives that substantially reduce the potential impacts, including at least one reduced-scale alternative for the project, as well as at least two alternative sites located elsewhere in the Tribe's aboriginal range. Some commenters requested the evaluation of an alternative for tribal trust land that is consistent with local General Plans (i.e. on a site designated and zoned for commercial use). The commenters suggested the alternatives be evaluated in the context of the impact areas (aesthetics, transportation, water quality and hydrology) including: siting and access options at the proposed site, types of wastewater disposal systems, and the provision of alternate water supplies and/or offsets to the water supply system (i.e. offsetting existing nearby urban irrigation uses to allow for increased groundwater use).

## 2.3 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED WITHIN THE EIS

The EIS will analyze five development alternatives and a no action alternative.

### 2.3.1 Alternative A – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action analyzed in the EIS will be the approval of the Tribe's management contract with SC Sonoma Management LLC. The foreseeable consequence of this action will be the development of a casino and hotel resort on approximately 363 acres of land that will be taken into trust for the Tribe (project site). The project site is located in central Sonoma County adjacent to the western border of the City of Rohnert Park (**Figure 2-1, Figure 2-2**). The approximately 363-acre project site is bordered by Wilfred Avenue, residences, and agricultural land to the north; Stony Point Road, agricultural land, and a dairy to the west; Rohnert Park Expressway, agricultural land and the Laguna de Santa Rosa to the south; and a mobile home park, a business park, and agricultural land to the east (**Figure 2-3**). United States Route 101 (US-101) provides regional access to the project site from the San Francisco Bay Area to the south and Santa Rosa, which is located approximately seven miles to the north. Local access to

the project site is provided from Rohnert Park Expressway, Wilfred Avenue, and Stony Point Road. Rohnert Park Expressway and Wilfred Avenue provide access from Rohnert Park and US-101. Stony Point Road provides access from Santa Rosa to the north and Petaluma to the south.

The project site is currently used for agricultural and grazing purposes and is largely undeveloped. The only building present on the project site is a barn on the northwest corner of the site that periodically houses cattle.

### ***Casino and Hotel***

The development of a casino and hotel resort is planned on the northwest corner of the project site. The remainder of the project site would remain undeveloped and would be used for pasture, biological habitat, and/or recycled water sprayfields. The casino and hotel resort would include restaurants, a performing arts venue, banquet/meeting space, and a pool and spa. **Table 2-1** shows the breakdown of proposed uses with associated square footages for the proposed casino and hotel resort. Alcohol would be served throughout the resort, including the gaming floor. Accordingly gaming patrons would be required to be 21 years old or over.

### ***Gaming Management Contract***

The Tribe and SC Sonoma Management LLC have entered into a development contract and a management contract for the construction and operation of the resort. Pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (Title 25 of the United States Code, Sections 2701 to 2721), the NIGC must review and approve the management contract. The NIGC provides regulatory oversight on tribal gaming operations to ensure the safety of the operations and the integrity of the games.

### ***Project Construction***

Alternative A would be constructed after the project site has been placed into federal trust. Construction would involve earthwork, placement of concrete foundations, steel, wood, and concrete structural framing, masonry, electrical and mechanical work, building and site finishing, and paving, among other construction activities.

### ***Grading and Drainage***

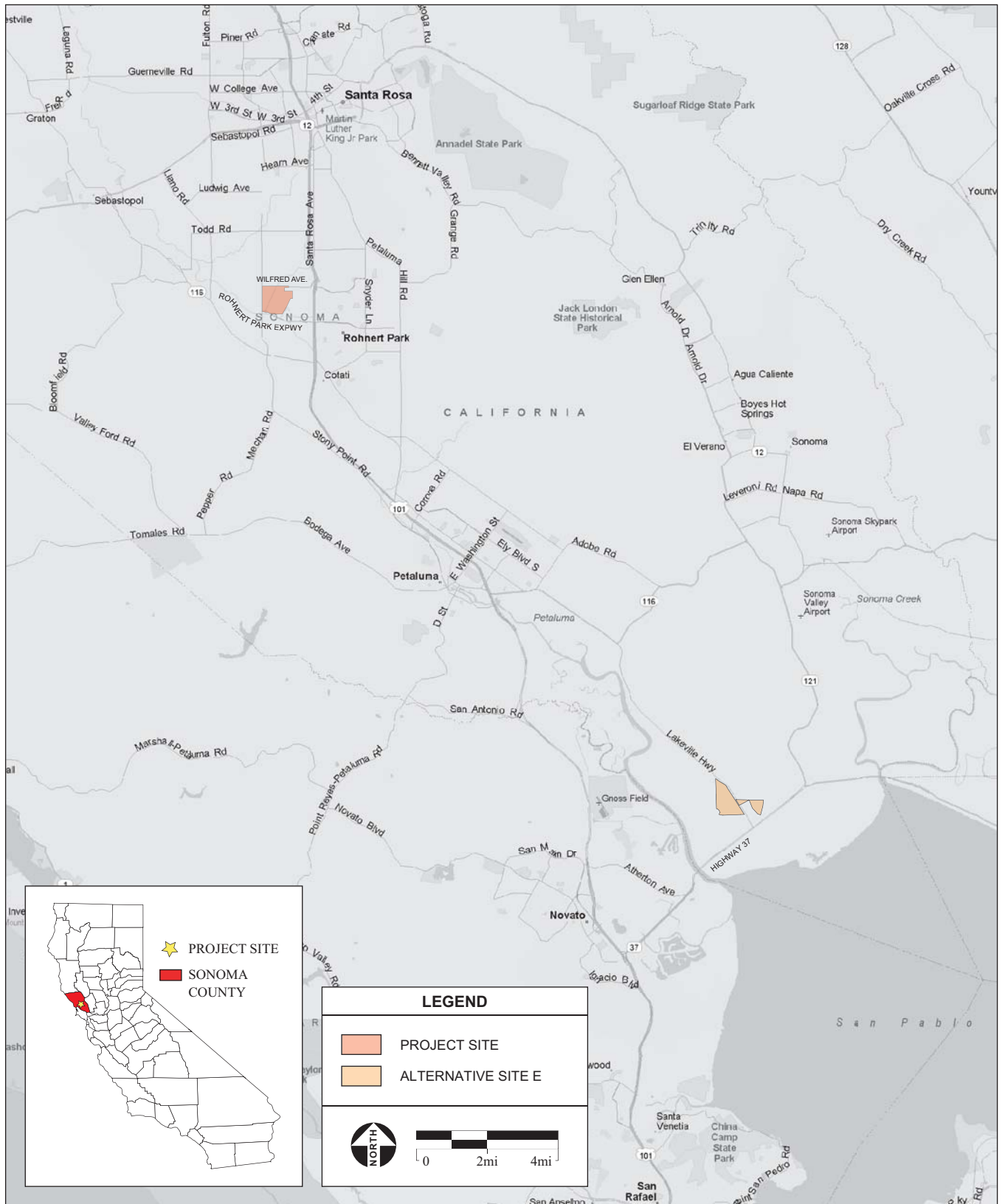
Alternative A would involve grading and modification of existing drainage patterns. A stormwater detention basin would be constructed to attenuate the increase in peak flows that could result from the project site during a storm event.

**TABLE 2-1  
ALTERNATIVE A – PROPOSED ACTION COMPONENTS**

Area	Seats/Rooms/Parking Spaces	Square Footage
<b>CASINO &amp; ENTERTAINMENT</b>		
<b>Casino</b>		
Casino Gaming		80,000
Casino Circulation		26,000
High Limit Gaming		5,000
Asian Gaming		3,600
Salons (2)		4,000
Entry Vestibules (5)		2,500
Restrooms (5)		6,000
Rewards Center		750
Cage		6,000
Back of House		70,000
Retail		1,000
<b>Food and Beverage</b>		
Buffet	500 seats	23,500
Bars (3)		4,500
Service Bars (4)		4,000
Lease Restaurants (3)	480 seats	20,000
Coffee Shop	225 seats	8,800
Steakhouse	200 seats	10,000
Food Court (6 tenants)	210 seats	12,600
<b>Entertainment</b>		
Nightclub		6,500
Performing Arts	1,500 seats	35,400
Lounge		8,000
<b>Banquet</b>		
Banquet/Meeting Space		30,000
Pre-function/Kitchen/Storage/Office/Support		40,000
<b>Total Casino &amp; Ent. Square Footage</b>		<b>408,150</b>
<b>HOTEL &amp; SPA</b>		
<b>Hotel</b>		
Lodging Area	300 rooms (20% suites)	291,000
Lobby/Bar/Back of House		13,750
Sundries		1,000
<b>Pool &amp; Spa</b>		
Spa		20,000
Pool Restrooms		2,600
Pool Concessions		1,500
Pool Grill		3,000
<b>Total Hotel &amp; Spa Square Footage</b>		<b>332,850</b>
<b>CENTRAL PLANT</b>		<b>21,300</b>
<b>Alternative A Total Square Footage</b>		<b>762,300</b>
<b>PARKING</b>		
Surface Parking	4,404 parking spaces	
Parking Structure	2,000 parking spaces	
<b>Alternative A Total Parking Spaces</b>	<b>6,404 parking spaces</b>	

NOTE: All figures are approximate.

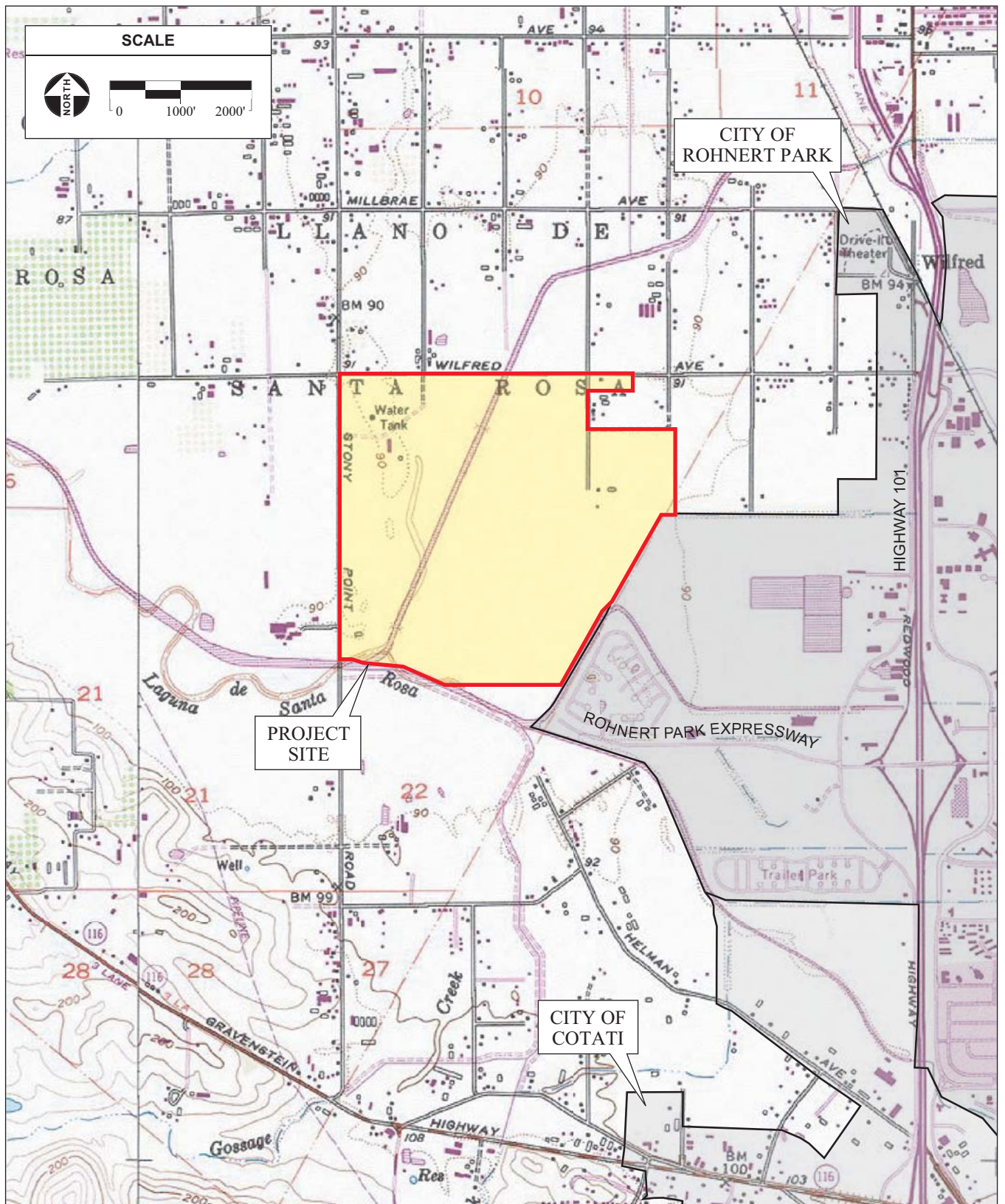
SOURCE: Friedmutter Group, 2004; AES, 2004.



SOURCE: Microsoft Streets & Trips, 2003 ; AES, 2004

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**Figure 2-1**  
Regional Location



SOURCE: "Cotati, CA" USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle, Un-sectioned Area "Llano De Santa Rosa", T6N, R8W, Mt. Diablo Baseline and Meridian ; AES, 2004

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**Figure 2-2**  
Site and Vicinity



SOURCE: Aerial Photography August 2002 ; AES, 2004

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**Figure 2-3**  
Aerial Site Map



### ***Wastewater Treatment Facility***

An on-site wastewater treatment facility is planned for the proposed development to satisfy standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Tribe proposes to use an immersed membrane bioreactor (MBR) system as the wastewater treatment process to provide the highest quality of water for reuse or disposal. Elements of the wastewater treatment and disposal facility include a wastewater treatment plant, wastewater piping, a wastewater disposal area, and recycled water impoundment. Wastewater disposal would take place both by discharge to the Laguna de Santa Rosa and by discharge to sprayfields.

### ***Water Supply***

Water for domestic use, emergency supply, and fire protection would be provided by on-site wells. Elements of the proposed on-site water facilities include two on-site wells, an iron and manganese treatment plant, a steel water storage tank, and a water distribution pump system.

## **2.3.2 Alternative B – Alternate On-Site Location**

Alternative B consists of development of a casino and hotel resort in an alternative on-site location. Under Alternative B, the casino and hotel resort would be located in the northeast corner of the project site. The components of the casino and hotel resort would be similar to those proposed for Alternative A (see **Table 2-1**). Project construction and water/wastewater options would not differ from Alternative A. Of course, grading and drainage would change only to the extent necessitated by the topography of the alternative on-site locations. Under Alternative B, the NIGC would be responsible for approving a management contract between the Tribe and SC Sonoma Management LLC. Please refer to the discussions under Alternative A for more detail.

## **2.3.3 Alternative C - Reduced Intensity**

Alternative C consists of a smaller-scale version of Alternative A. The components of the reduced intensity casino and hotel resort are displayed in **Table 2-2**. Project construction, grading/drainage, and water/wastewater options would be smaller in scope when compared with Alternative A. Under Alternative C, the NIGC would be responsible for approving a management contract between the Tribe and SC Sonoma Management LLC. Please refer to the discussions under Alternative A for more detail.

**TABLE 2-2  
ALTERNATIVE C – REDUCED INTENSITY ALTERNATIVE COMPONENTS**

Area	Seats/Rooms/Parking Spaces	Square Footage
<b>CASINO &amp; ENTERTAINMENT</b>		
<b>Casino</b>		
Casino Gaming		65,000
Casino Circulation		26,000
High Limit Gaming		5,000
Asian Gaming		3,600
Salons (2)		4,000
Entry Vestibules (5)		2,500
Restrooms (5)		6,000
Rewards Center		750
Cage		6,000
Back of House		55,000
Retail		1,000
<b>Food and Beverage</b>		
Buffet	500 seats	23,500
Bars (3)		4,500
Service Bars (4)		4,000
Lease Restaurants (2)	280 seats	12,000
Coffee Shop	225 seats	8,800
Steakhouse	200 seats	10,000
Food Court (6 tenants)	210 seats	12,600
<b>Entertainment</b>		
Lounge		8,000
<b>Banquet</b>		
Banquet/Meeting Space		30,000
Pre-function/Kitchen/Storage/Office/Support		5,000
<b>Total Casino &amp; Ent. Square Footage</b>		<b>293,250</b>
<b>HOTEL</b>		
<b>Hotel</b>		
Lodging Area	100 rooms (10% suites)	77,000
Lobby/Bar/Back of House		13,750
Sundries		1,000
<b>Pool</b>		
Pool Restrooms		2,600
Pool Concessions		1,500
Pool Grill		3,000
<b>Total Hotel &amp; Spa Square Footage</b>		<b>98,850</b>
<b>CENTRAL PLANT</b>		<b>21,300</b>
<b>Alternative C Total Square Footage</b>		<b>413,400</b>
<b>PARKING</b>		
Surface Parking	2,650 parking spaces	
Parking Structure	2,000 parking spaces	
<b>Alternative C Total Parking Spaces</b>	<b>4,650 parking spaces</b>	

NOTE: All figures are approximate.

SOURCE: Friedmutter Group, 2004; AES, 2004.

**2.3.4 Alternative D – Alternate Use**

Alternative D consists of the development of a business park on the northwest corner of the project site. **Table 2-3** details the square footage of each project component. Under this alternative the NIGC would not approve a management contract between the Tribe and SC Sonoma Management LLC.

***Project Construction***

Alternative D would be constructed after the project site has been placed into federal trust. Build out would take place over time, as tenants occupy space within the business park. Construction would involve earthwork, placement of concrete foundations, steel, wood, and concrete structural framing, masonry, electrical and mechanical work, building and site finishing, and paving, among other construction activities.

**TABLE 2-3  
ALTERNATIVE D – ALTERNATE USE ALTERNATIVE COMPONENTS**

Area	Seats/Rooms/Parking Spaces	Square Footage
<b>BUSINESS PARK</b>		
Light Industrial Businesses		400,000
Commercial Businesses		100,000
<b>Alternative D Total Square Footage</b>		<b>500,000</b>
<b>PARKING</b>		
Surface Parking	2,000 parking spaces	
<b>Alternative D Total Parking Spaces</b>	<b>2,000 parking spaces</b>	
NOTE: All figures are approximate.		
SOURCE: AES, 2004.		

***Grading and Drainage***

Alternative D would involve grading and modification of existing drainage patterns. A stormwater detention basin would be constructed to attenuate the increase in peak flows that could result from the project site during a storm event.

***Wastewater Treatment Facility***

An on-site wastewater treatment facility would be utilized for Alternative D to satisfy standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Elements of the wastewater treatment and disposal facility include a wastewater treatment plant, wastewater piping, a wastewater disposal area, and recycled water impoundment.

***Water Supply***

Water for domestic use, emergency supply, and fire protection would either be provided by an off-site water utility or supplied by on-site wells. Elements of the on-site water facilities would include two on-site wells, an iron and manganese treatment plant, a steel water storage tank, and a water distribution pump system.

### **2.3.5 Alternative E – Alternate Off-Site Location**

Under Alternative E, the casino and hotel would be developed on one of the sites identified during the scoping process and listed in **Section 2.2**. Components of the casino and hotel resort would be similar to those proposed for Alternative A (see **Table 2-1**). Under Alternative E, the NIGC would be responsible for approving a management contract between the Tribe and SC Sonoma Management LLC. Please refer to the discussions under Alternative A for more detail.

### **2.3.6 Alternative F - No Action**

Under the No Action Alternative, the NIGC would not approve a management contract between the Tribe and SC Sonoma Management LLC and no development would take place on the project site. For the purposes of the environmental analysis in this EIS, it is assumed that the project site would continue to be utilized for grazing and agricultural land uses under this alternative.

### **2.3.7 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration**

The Graton Rancheria Restoration Act of 2000 (25 U.S.C. 1300n) restored the Tribe's federally recognized status and allowed the Tribe to establish a reservation anywhere within its designated service area of Marin and Sonoma counties. Following restoration, the Tribe explored a number of economic development opportunities other than tribal gaming in an effort to identify a business venture capable of attracting the financing required to acquire a land base and establish an enterprise that would in turn generate a revenue stream significant enough to support a strong Tribal government. In each instance, the Tribe eliminated the development alternative from further consideration because of inadequate financing and/or because the projected revenue stream was inadequate. Eventually, the Tribe settled on tribal gaming as the best opportunity to pursue its goals for economic development and Tribal self-reliance.

Before selecting the Rohnert Park site for the development of a casino and hotel resort, the Tribe identified approximately 48 potential sites within its aboriginal territory, including the SR-37/Lakeville Highway site noted above as Alternative E. The Tribe's aboriginal territory roughly corresponds with the designated service area of Marin and Sonoma counties provided for in the Tribe's Restoration Act identified above. Consistent with current land use patterns (and topographical and natural barriers to development), most of the potential development sites were located within or near urban areas situated along the Highway 101 corridor. The majority of the alternative sites were quickly eliminated for a variety of reasons, environmental, infrastructure and otherwise. After considerable deliberation, and in consultation with Sonoma County and local officials, the Tribe narrowed its range of sites down to eight sites, including the project site. Ultimately, the other seven sites were eliminated in favor of the project site, again for a variety of reasons related to the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. The EIS will describe the main reasons for eliminating these seven sites.