

### 3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter includes an overview of some of the key characteristics and existing conditions in the Northwest Chico Specific Plan Area, including land use, traffic and circulation and storm water drainage. More detail about existing conditions in the area is contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Report.

#### *A. City of Chico General Plan Principles*

The vision for the Plan Area articulated in Chapter Two is supported by many of the guiding principles contained in the City of Chico General Plan Land Use Element. The Land Use Element calls for the creation of new communities in which “neighborhood services and facilities are within easy walking or biking distance of their homes, streets are safe for children, and parks and playgrounds are nearby.” In addition, the Specific Plan upholds the following guiding principles from the Community Design Element of the General Plan:

- ◆ Heighten the sense of the natural landscape by strengthening the visual and physical connection between the city and the surrounding landscape.
- ◆ Establish linking elements that provide continuity and connection with the city, such as a clear system of green streets, creekways and linear open spaces.
- ◆ Emulate the positive qualities of traditional Chico neighborhoods in new development including a clear organizational pattern, an interconnected network of tree-lined streets, and attractive housing stock.

#### *B. Existing Land Use*

This section describes existing land uses in both the Plan Area and adjacent areas.

### 1. Existing Land Uses in the Plan Area

Figure 3-1 shows the locations of current land uses in the Plan Area and Table 3-1 summarizes the acreage of each land use. As Table 3-1 indicates, the majority of the land in the Plan Area is currently used for agriculture or has been determined to be vacant, particularly in parts of the Plan Area that fall outside of the Chico SOI. Within the city limits in the Plan Area, single-family residential uses comprise the largest existing land use, followed by multi-family residential.

- ◆ **Single-Family Residential.** Much of the single-family housing currently in the Plan Area is located along Nord Highway and in small pockets of subdivisions on both sides of Highway 99. During the planning process, the Brentwood single-family subdivision was completed off of Eaton Road, west of the Esplanade. Including this subdivision, there are approximately 250 single family dwelling units in the Plan Area, with additional housing in the two mobile homes parks described below.
- ◆ **Multi-Family Residential.** Pockets of multi-family housing can be found along the Esplanade, including Windsong Apartments and Country Villa Apartments, both single-story apartment complexes near Innsbrook Way with approximately 35 units each. During the planning process, a new multi-family residential development was under construction as part of the Brentwood subdivision, south of Eaton Road. Including this approved development, there are approximately 270 multi-family dwelling units in the Plan Area.
- ◆ **Mobile Home Parks.** Two mobile home parks occupy a large portion of the Plan Area. The Rancho Esplanade Mobile Park is located on a 27-acre site along Mud Creek, off the Esplanade in the northern part of the Plan Area. The Meadows Mobile Home Park is located east of Highway 99 on Hicks Lane on an approximately 29-acre site. Together, they account for close to 350 dwelling units in the Plan Area.

TABLE 3-1 **EXISTING LAND USE ACREAGE**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Single Family Residential	95.4
Multi-Family Residential	33.0
Manufactured Home Park	57.0
Retail Trade	14.0
Services and Offices	6.0
Manufacturing & Processing	37.5
Education	6.0
Agricultural	226.5
Designated Open Space	35.8
Creeks and Drainage	9.0
Vacant	112.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>632.2</b>

Note: Table does not include roadways and other public rights-of-way

- ◆ **Retail and Services.** Most retail outlets and services are located on the Esplanade near the Eaton Road intersection. These include automobile repair shops, masonry and dry wall supplies and restaurants including the Albatross Restaurant and Basque Norte Restaurant.
- ◆ **Manufacturing and Processing.** Manufacturing and processing comprises a small percentage of the total existing land uses in the Plan Area. A large industrial site is located on the Esplanade in the northern section of the Plan Area, housing A&A Concrete Supply, Chico Dry Wall and Stucco and Moss Lumber. Other small industrial sites exist on Innsbrook

Road and Eaton Road, such as Loerke Insulation, Dominic's Septic and Chico Electric.

- ◆ **Education.** There is currently one school in the Plan Area. Shasta Elementary School is located on approximately six acres at the corner of the Esplanade and Leora Court.
- ◆ **Agricultural.** Approximately 230 acres of the Plan Area are currently used for agricultural uses such as orchards and field crops. This Specific Plan will redesignate most of these lands as residential.
- ◆ **Recreation and Designated Open Space.** Although no parks currently exist in the Plan Area, the Chico Area Recreation and Park District received approval to build the 35-acre DeGarmo Community Park on two parcels between Highway 99 and the Esplanade. For the purposes of this plan, the DeGarmo Park is treated as an existing feature in the Plan Area, and is therefore shown in Figure 3-1 as an existing land use.
- ◆ **Creeks and Drainage.** Mud Creek and Sycamore Creek lie at the northern and western boundaries of the Plan Area. There is also a Shasta Union Drainage Assessment District (SUDAD) channel along the southern boundary of the Plan Area.
- ◆ **Vacant Lands.** At the time of the existing conditions analysis, approximately 112 acres in the Plan Area were determined to be vacant. A majority of these parcels lie in the northeast corner of the Plan Area, off Highway 99 and Sycamore Road.

## 2. Land Uses Adjacent to the Plan Area

The predominant existing land use immediately south and east of the Plan Area is single-family residential. Land uses along the Esplanade are varied and include a large service and office area, industrial uses, a golf course, retail trade and a mobile home park.

Outside of the Plan Area, the area north of Mud Creek and east of Highway 99 includes rural residential land uses interspersed with orchards and field crops. Land to the east of the Plan Area include the Chico Municipal Air-

port. The land uses west of the Plan Area include almond orchards, walnut orchards and field crops with scattered rural residential uses.

### *C. Visual Character*

Northwest Chico's visual quality is created by the agricultural and rural character that currently exists in the area. Much of the scenic resources in the area, including surrounding orchards and clusters of mature trees, are associated with the local agricultural uses. Mud and Sycamore Creeks are also attractive visual amenities as they are very wide and contain seasonal riparian vegetation growing between levees. In addition, these riparian corridors provide views of the Plan Area and create a natural boundary for it.

A number of gateways to the Plan Area currently exist, most notably at Nord Highway where rows of almond and walnut trees flank the highway as it enters the Plan Area. As Nord Highway climbs slightly up the banks of Mud Creek it offers an expansive view of the creek corridor and the hills to the east. Another significant gateway to the Plan Area is located at the Esplanade and Eaton Road. As one travels north through this intersection, the Esplanade is a four-lane road lined with commercial uses. The new Brentwood subdivision is northwest of the intersection. This convergence of retail uses and new housing will help create a distinct gateway into the Plan Area.

Lastly, the Plan Area offers a number of view corridors in and around the Plan Area. As mentioned previously, Mud and Sycamore Creeks provide attractive riparian views from the creek levees. In addition, the Esplanade runs straight through the Plan Area, providing a long view corridor through it. The eastern part of the Plan Area affords views to the ridgelines and hill-tops outside the Plan Area.

*D. Biotic Resources*

The Plan Area contains four major biological communities, including agricultural (orchards and croplands), urban (residential and commercial), ruderal annual grassland and riverine communities. The riverine communities in the Plan Area include Mud Creek and Sycamore Creek, which are part of the Sacramento River Basin. These communities provide habitat to a number of common species of wildlife and may provide potentially suitable habitat for special-status species. Sensitive habitats and several status species may exist in the Plan Area, including the Adobe Lily, Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle and Chinook salmon. More detail about the biological resources in the Plan Area is contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Report.

*E. Agricultural Buffer Zones*

Agriculture-related policies in the City of Chico General Plan include minimizing conflicts between agricultural and urban uses by requiring buffers of at least 100 feet wide, which can consist of roadways and creeks. These agricultural buffers are shown in Figure 3-2. Given that the southwest corner of the Plan Area directly abuts Butte County agricultural lands, a 100-foot buffer, if implemented, would extend into the Plan Area.

*F. Pacific Gas & Electric Easement*

A 20-foot PG&E easement runs north to south through the Plan Area, from Nord Highway to Catherine Court, to accommodate existing power lines. A 27-foot easement, which does not contain power lines at present, also exists adjacent to the SUDAD along the southern boundary of the Plan Area, from Jones Street westward to Mud Creek.

## *G. Traffic and Circulation*

The following section provides an overview of the existing roadway network in the Plan Area, and includes a discussion of the transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the area.

### **1. Roadways**

The existing circulation network serving the Plan Area is composed of highways, arterials, collectors, local streets and rural highways, as illustrated in Figure 3-3 and described below.

- ◆ **Highways.** Highways provide for long distance regional and inter-city travel needs, and serve as primary freight routes. Highway 99 runs through the Plan Area and is a major corridor traveling the length of the state and serving regional travel to Chico. Within the Plan Area, Highway 99 runs generally southeast to northwest, from central Chico towards Tehama County to the north of Butte County. Access to the Plan Area from Highway 99 is provided at Eaton Road and from the north at the Esplanade terminus and from Garner Lane.
- ◆ **Arterials.** Arterials are designed to accommodate high volumes of traffic and serve intra-city circulation. Arterials link major activity centers, facilitate freeway access and connect to other arterials. Arterial streets in the Plan Area include the Esplanade, Eaton Road and Hicks Lane. The Esplanade is a two-lane, undivided arterial paralleling Highway 99. Eaton Road is a major two-lane arterial in the Plan Area, with plans for further expansion through the Plan Area to State Route 32. Hicks Lane is a minor two-lane arterial that runs north from the Eaton Road/Highway 99 junction, to the northeastern boundary of the Plan Area, before continuing north to Keefer Road.
- ◆ **Collector Streets.** Collector streets are used for travel within and between neighborhoods, and channel traffic from local streets to arterial streets. Within the Plan Area, Nord Highway is a two-lane collector that travels east-west connecting the Esplanade to Butte County destinations west of the Plan Area.

- ◆ **Local Streets.** Local streets primarily serve lower traffic volumes at lower speeds and have frequent driveway access to abutting residential and commercial land uses. Because of the rural character of the Plan Area, there are few existing local streets.
- ◆ **Rural Roads.** Rural streets are generally narrower than local streets and do not have curbs, gutters and sidewalks. Rural roads close to the Plan Area include Meridian Road and the Hamilton Nord Cana Highway.

The Esplanade, Eaton Road and Highway 99 are designated truck routes in the Plan Area.

## 2. Transit Service

Chico Area Transit Systems (CATS) serves the City of Chico with ten transit routes. Route 10 is the only existing route serving the Plan Area as illustrated in Figure 3-4. Route 10 provides service from the downtown transit center to the Highway 99/Esplanade junction. The route's operating hours are from 6:50 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 8:50 a.m. until 6:45 p.m. on Saturday with no service on Sunday.

The Chico Clipper is a special needs para-transit system that operates within the Plan Area. Persons are eligible for this service if they cannot use CATS transit because of disability or mobility impairment. Butte County Transit (BCT) also services Chico but none of its routes currently serve the Specific Plan Area. Amtrak has a station in downtown Chico for connections to the Coast Starlight, which runs between Seattle and Los Angeles. Greyhound Bus Lines also provides a stop in downtown Chico.

## 3. Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

There are extensive bicycle facilities in the City of Chico. Chico is often used as a model for bicycle planning and is considered one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in the country.

Currently, however, there are no bicycle facilities in the Plan Area. The City's General Plan specifies that all streets not designated as Class II facilities



(containing dedicated bike lanes) are in effect, Class III facilities, where bicycles and automobiles share the street. The Chico Urban Area Bicycle Plan identifies limited expansion of the bicycle system into the Plan Area. Figure 3-4 also illustrates the proposed bikeway system, which includes the following facilities:

- ◆ Class I bike path adjacent to the proposed Eaton Road extension, from the Esplanade to State Route 32.
- ◆ Class II bike lanes on Hicks Lane from Eaton Road to Keefer Road.
- ◆ Class II bike lanes on Cussick Avenue from East Avenue to Mud Creek.

There are sidewalks on many sections of roadways in developed areas of the Plan Area. Sidewalks typically do not exist adjacent to undeveloped properties in the Plan Area.

## *H. Storm Drainage and Hydrology*

Storm drainage is a key planning issue in the Plan Area. In areas where little or no development has previously occurred, such as the agricultural land in the Plan Area, storm drainage becomes particularly important as the amount of impervious surface increases with new development. This section describes the Plan Area's existing hydrological setting, flood risks and existing storm drainage system, as illustrated in Figure 3-5. Chapter Four contains information about the new storm drainage facilities proposed to support implementation of the Specific Plan.

### **1. Hydrologic Overview**

The topography within the Plan Area is considered mild-to-flat sloped terrain. The highest ground surface within the Plan Area is approximately 175 feet above mean sea level, located in the northeast area of the Plan Area near the intersection of Sycamore and Hicks Lanes. The lowest area within the project occurs on the south and west boundaries of the Plan Area, near the extension of Catherine Court, at an elevation of approximately 160 feet. The slope of the land surface within the Plan Area is fairly constant trending from

the northeast to southwest with an effective slope of approximately 0.9 percent. Soils in the Plan Area are very deep and drain moderately well with their permeability classified as slow to moderately slow.

Runoff from the Plan Area drains to Mud Creek, which originates in the mountains and flows west adjacent to the Plan Area. Sycamore Creek acts as a diversion channel for the flood flows exceeding the Lindo Channel capacity. It also receives water from foothill lands north and east of the City of Chico and conveys water west into Mud Creek. The confluence of these two streams occurs adjacent to the north side of the Plan Area just easterly of both Highway 99 and the north Esplanade. Ultimately, both creeks discharge into the Sacramento River.

## **2. Flooding**

Land within approximately 150 feet of either side of the centerline of Mud Creek and Sycamore Creek lies within the 100-year floodplain as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The 100-year maximum water surface elevations in Mud Creek are approximately 164 feet at Nord Highway and approximately 175 feet at the confluence with Sycamore Creek. The 100-year water surface elevation at the confluence of Mud Creek and the SUDAD channel has not been determined under a FEMA study. An existing levee system is intended to protect the remainder of the Plan Area from any flooding of Mud and Sycamore Creeks.

## **3. Discharges to Mud Creek**

There are two points, as seen in Figure 3-5, where storm water discharges directly to Mud Creek from the Plan Area. One is near the Highway 99 crossing of Mud Creek where a 24" culvert pierces the levee and discharges with a flap gate on the creek side. The culvert appears to drain agricultural irrigation and storm water runoff from areas north of Sycamore Road. The second location is immediately north of the Nord Highway crossing of Mud Creek where a 24" culvert accepts runoff from a roadside ditch that parallels the north side of Nord Highway and discharges into Mud Creek just north of Nord Highway.

#### **4. Shasta Union Drainage Assessment District (SUDAD)**

The SUDAD operates a network of open channels of varying size and shape that drain the portions of the Plan Area not drained by the two discharges described above. Some of the channels are concrete-lined, but most are unlined. The main SUDAD system is a gravity drainage system. The existing SUDAD system is owned, operated and maintained by Butte County and is anticipated to remain under its jurisdiction after development of the Plan Area. Maintenance is currently financed through an assessment on those properties contributing runoff to the SUDAD system.

Most of the Plan Area ultimately drains into the SUDAD channel that borders the southern limits of the Plan Area and flows from east to west. This main channel is unlined and in fairly good condition, with a minimal amount of vegetation growth. The channel discharges to Mud Creek, south of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks near Highway 32, southwest of the Plan Area.

Originally designed in 1964, the SUDAD system was based on the assumption that most of the Plan Area would remain in agricultural and rural land use, with the exception of the parcels adjacent to the Esplanade. The newer development projects that have been constructed within recent years that fall within the SUDAD system service area have elected to construct detention basins to mitigate the increase in peak flow rates to a rate at or below that anticipated under the design of the SUDAD system.

#### *I. Water and Sewer Service*

##### **1. Water**

Water in the Plan Area is supplied by Cal Water, with a limited amount of water supplied by private wells.

a. Cal Water System

Cal Water is a private company that operates the public water supply system in Chico. As shown in Figure 3-6, Cal Water's nearest existing well to the Plan Area is located at the intersection of Prairie Creek Drive and Newport Drive, labeled as STA 69. This well is located approximately 0.2 mile south of the Plan Area. STA 56 is located approximately one mile to the southeast of the Plan Area. However, this well is on the east side of Highway 99 and no infrastructure crossing the highway exists. Therefore, STA 56 would not be available as a source of water for development on the west side of Highway 99 without constructing infrastructure across Highway 99.

Cal Water has limited water lines within the Plan Area. From the intersection of Eaton Road and Eaton Village Drive, an existing 12" water main runs east-west to the Esplanade. From this point, a 12" main runs north-south along the Esplanade from the intersection with Eaton Road to just north of the intersection with Valley Court. An 8" main provides service along Valley Court and a 4" main provides water to the trailer park across from Valley Court. The Brentwood subdivision is also currently connected. Figure 3-6 also shows the location of the water service lines.

Based on the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) database, it appears that in addition to the Cal Water service described above, three active and one destroyed private ground water supply wells are located in the Plan Area.

b. Water Quality Issues

Because existing development in the Plan Area is currently served by individual septic tanks or community septic systems, leachate and urban storm runoff have been identified as the primary causes of a sizable increase in nitrate levels that exceed the water quality standards in the groundwater. Locations within the Plan Area are shown in Figure 3-6.

**2. Existing Sewer Service**

Figure 3-7 illustrates the existing and planned sewer collection infrastructure in the Plan Area. The City of Chico has had a sanitary sewer collection and

conveyance system for approximately 100 years, which has been expanding with increasing development ever since.

The City's existing collection system terminates at the Water Pollution Control Plant (Control Plant) in the southwest area of Chico. The topography of the City generally slopes from the northeast to the southwest, making this an efficient location for the Control Plant. The system branches north and east from the Control Plant, making use of the general topography as much as possible. However, as the general slope of the city is insufficient to have an all-gravity system, the City has made use of lift stations throughout the system. Currently, there are seven lift stations in use. The Control Plant currently has a capacity of nine million gallons per day (mgd). The City is presently in the design phase for an upgrade to a 12mgd capacity in the near future.

As previously mentioned, with the exception of recent construction along the southern boundary of the Plan Area, sewer service within the Plan Area is provided by individual septic tanks or community septic systems. The recent residential construction in the southern part of the Plan Area includes sewer mains to provide service to lots being developed and sewer stubs for future development.

Two sanitary sewer manholes intended for future development connections were built as part of the recently constructed Brentwood Subdivision, near the intersection of the Esplanade and Eaton Road. From these manholes, sewer flows to the Northwest Chico Lift Station.

The Northwest Chico Lift Station was constructed in the development immediately south of the Plan Area in 1994. The Northwest Chico Lift Station is currently in Phase 1 of a nine-phase upgrade plan. The Phase 1 configuration is intended to serve 524 Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs).<sup>1</sup> The City is currently preparing to complete the Phase 2 upgrade to the lift station by

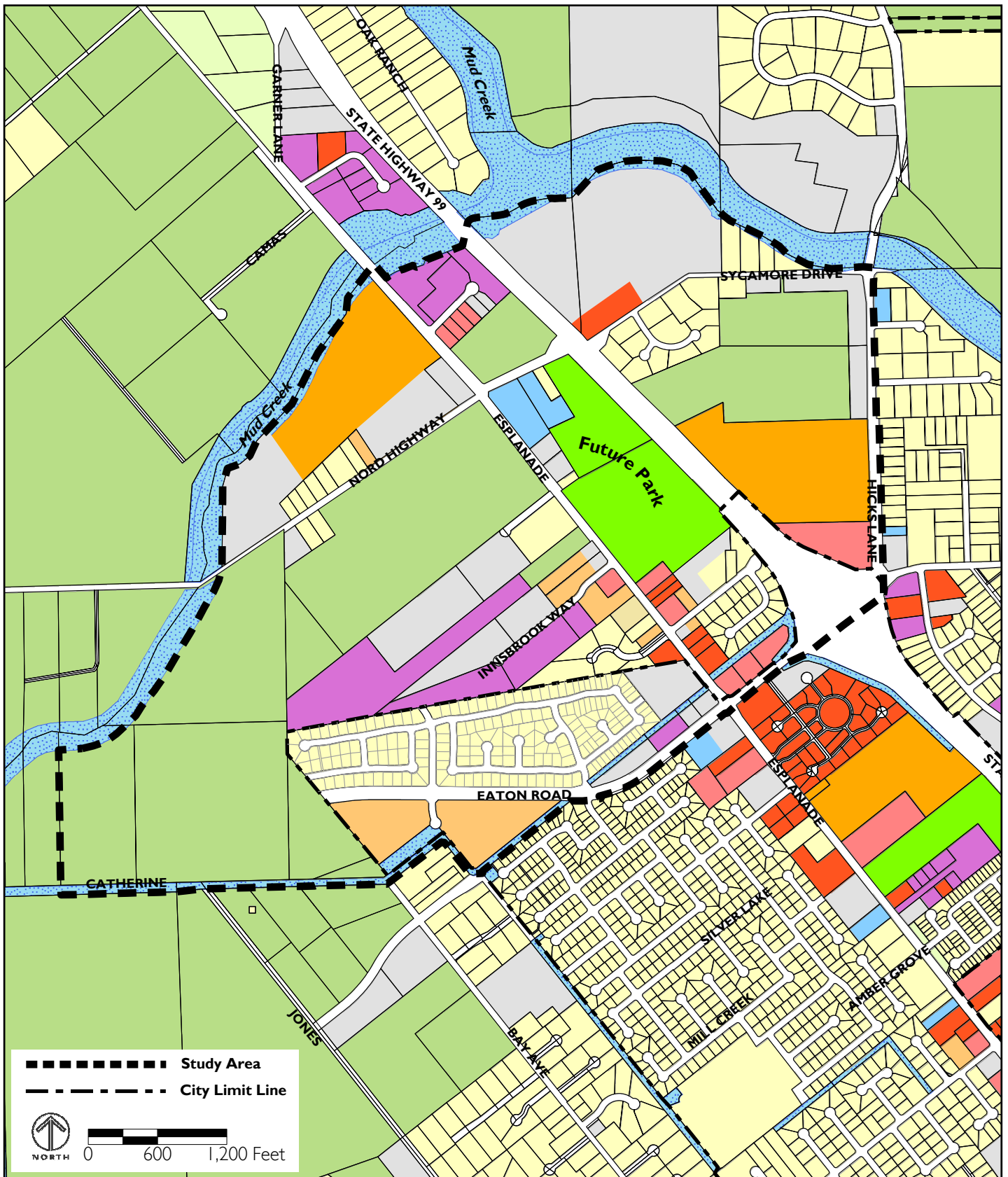
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<sup>1</sup> *An EDU is a common unit by which sewage generation may be calculated, equivalent to 1 single-family dwelling unit.*

replacing the pumps with larger pumps, adding a generator, and improving the wet well. When the Phase 2 upgrade is complete, the lift station will serve 2,643 EDUs.

### **3. Planned Sewer Improvements**

The City's Sanitary Sewer Master Plan (SSMP) addresses system requirements for build-out conditions in the City of Chico. Build-out, as defined by the SSMP, is "full development of all land use classifications within the current Urban Development Boundary." When development nears build-out conditions as defined in the SSMP, the new Northwest Trunk will need to be constructed from the Water Pollution Control Plan north along the western edge of Chico, through parts of the Plan Area along the Eaton Road extension. It will also ultimately serve the northern area of the City in the vicinity of the airport. When this improvement is completed, the Northwest Chico Lift Station may be taken out of service.



- Single Family Residential (incl. areas under construction)
- SFR w/2nd Unit
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mobile Home
- Vacant

- Open Space
- Recreation (incl. future park)
- Agricultural
- Manufacturing & Processing
- Education & Assembly

- Retail Trade
- Services, Offices
- Creeks & Drainage

**FIGURE 3-1**

**EXISTING  
LAND USE**

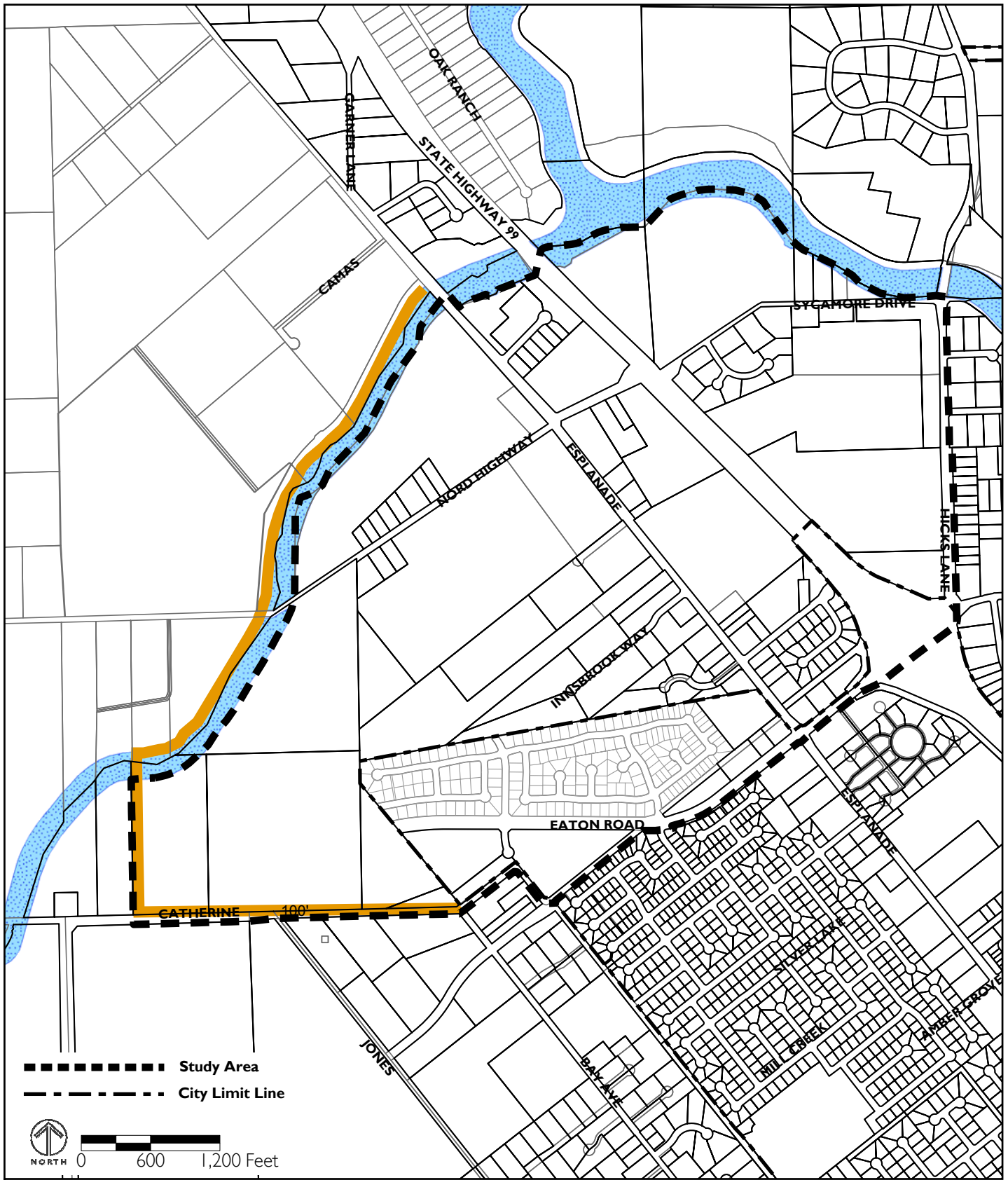
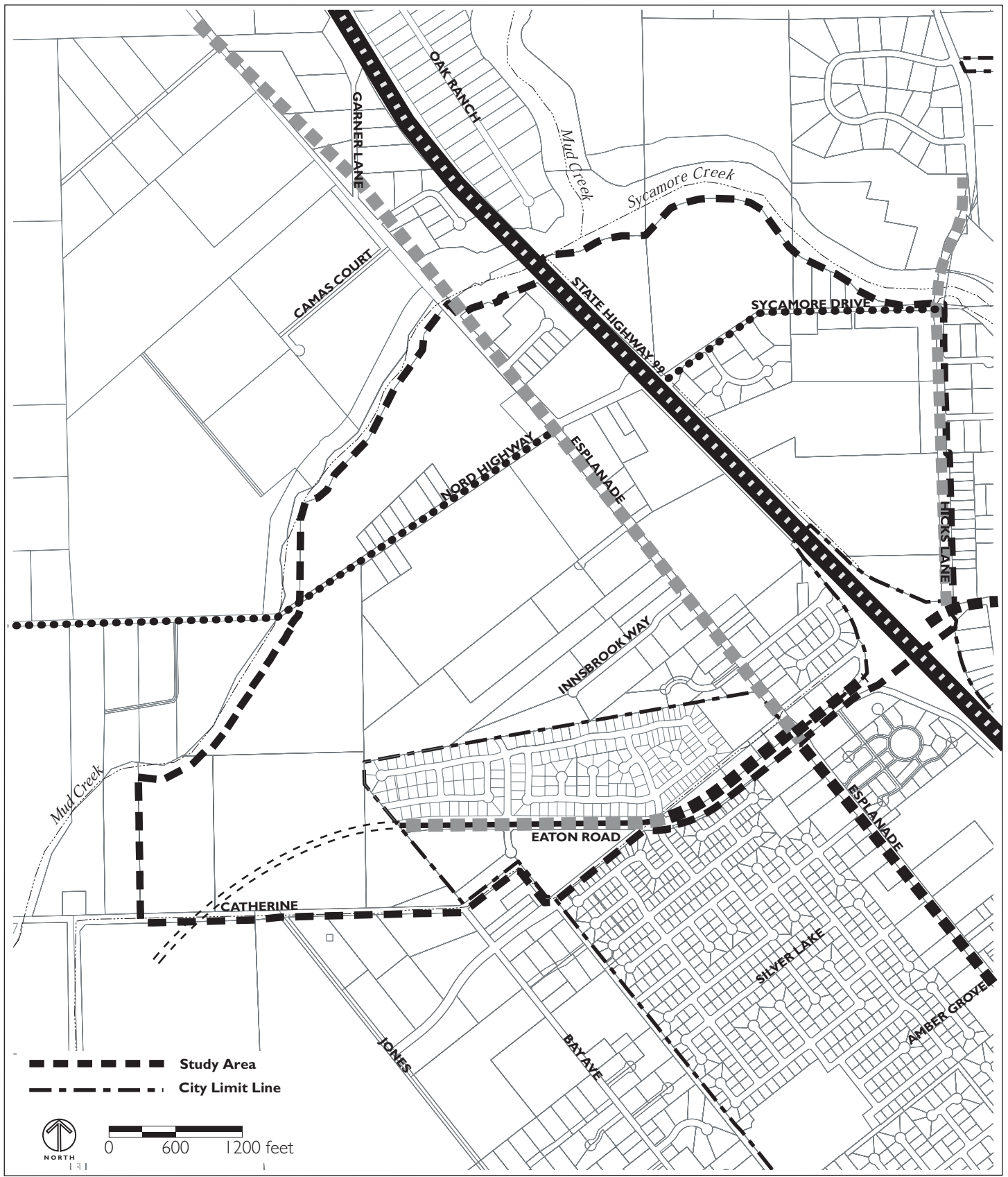








FIGURE 3-2

 100' Buffer Zone (City)

**AGRICULTURAL BUFFERS**





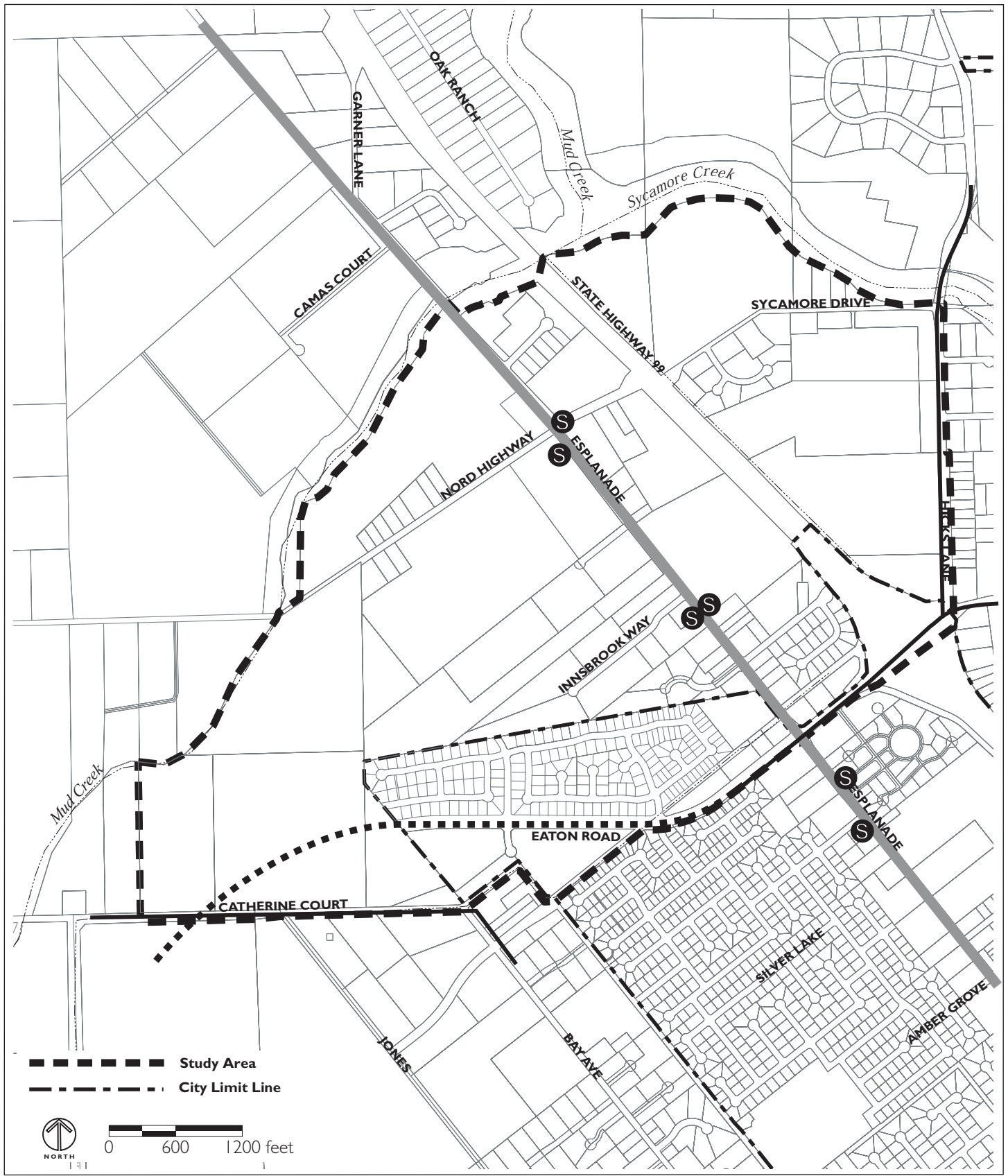
-  Highways (4 lanes)
-  Arterial Streets (4 lanes)
-  Eaton Road Extension Underway
-  Eaton Road Extension Planned
-  Arterial Streets (2 lanes)
-  Collector Streets (2 lanes)

**FIGURE 3-3**

**EXISTING STREET NETWORK**

**NORTHWEST CHICO SPECIFIC PLAN**

FINAL







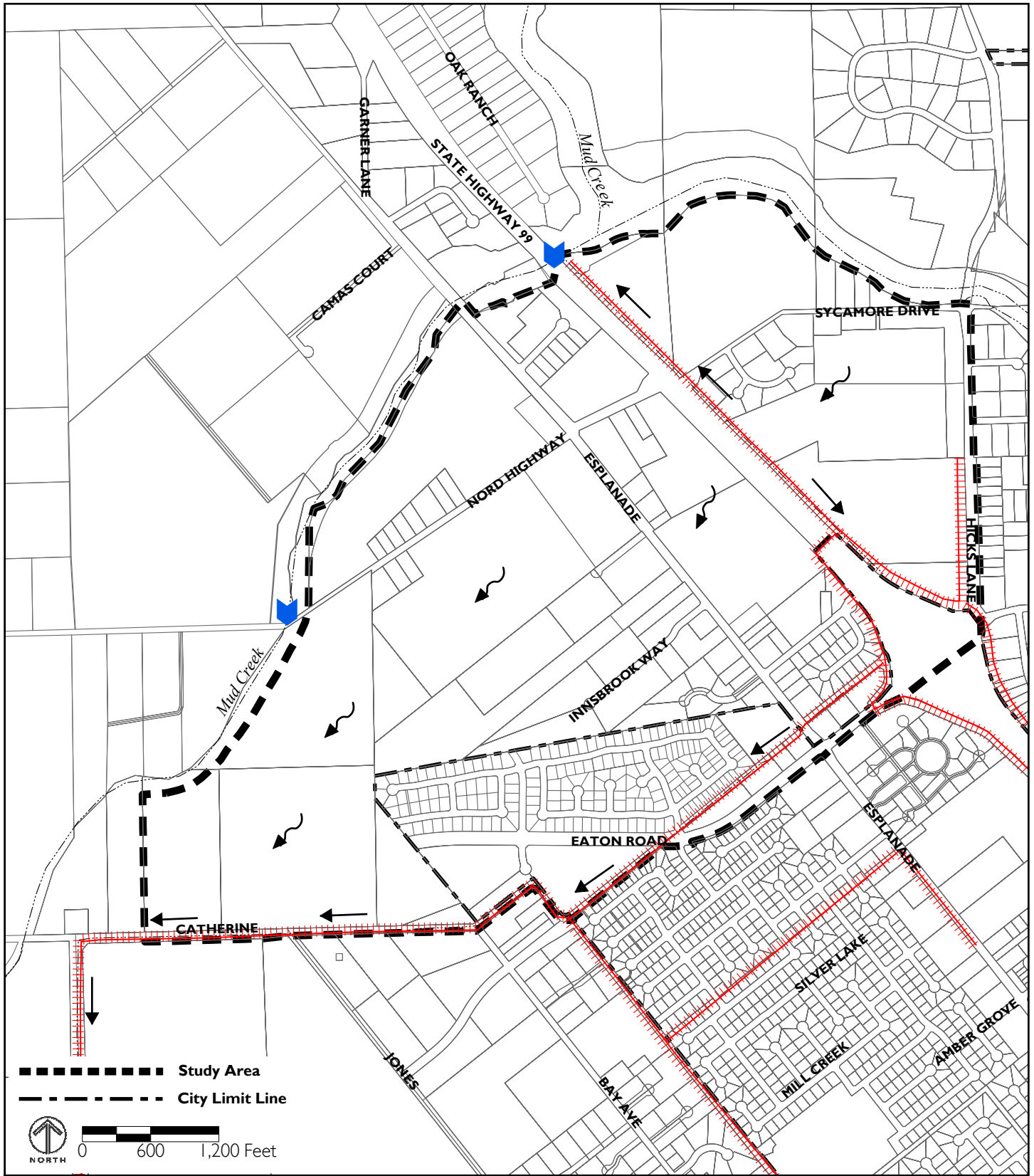
-  CATS Route 10
-  CATS Bus Stop
-  Planned Class I Bike Path
-  Planned Class II Bike Lane

FIGURE 3-4

**TRANSIT ROUTES AND PLANNED BIKE ROUTES**



Source: "Drainage Design Outfall System" map, Ringel & Associates, Inc., May, 1964.

FIGURE 3-5

- ++++ SUDAD Channels
- 24" Culvert Outfalls
- Flow Direction
- ~> Overland Flow Direction

**EXISTING STORM DRAINAGE SYSTEM**

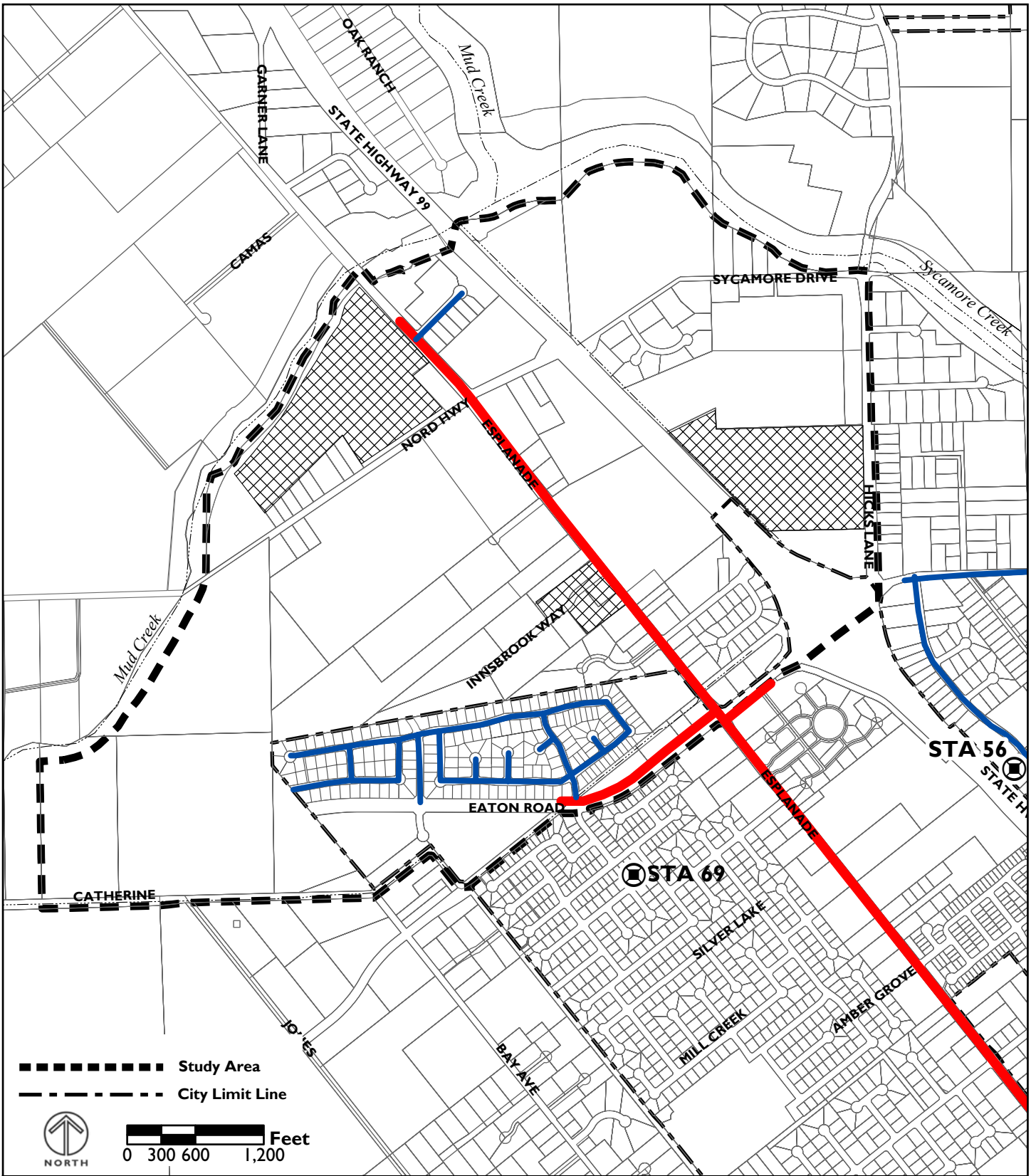




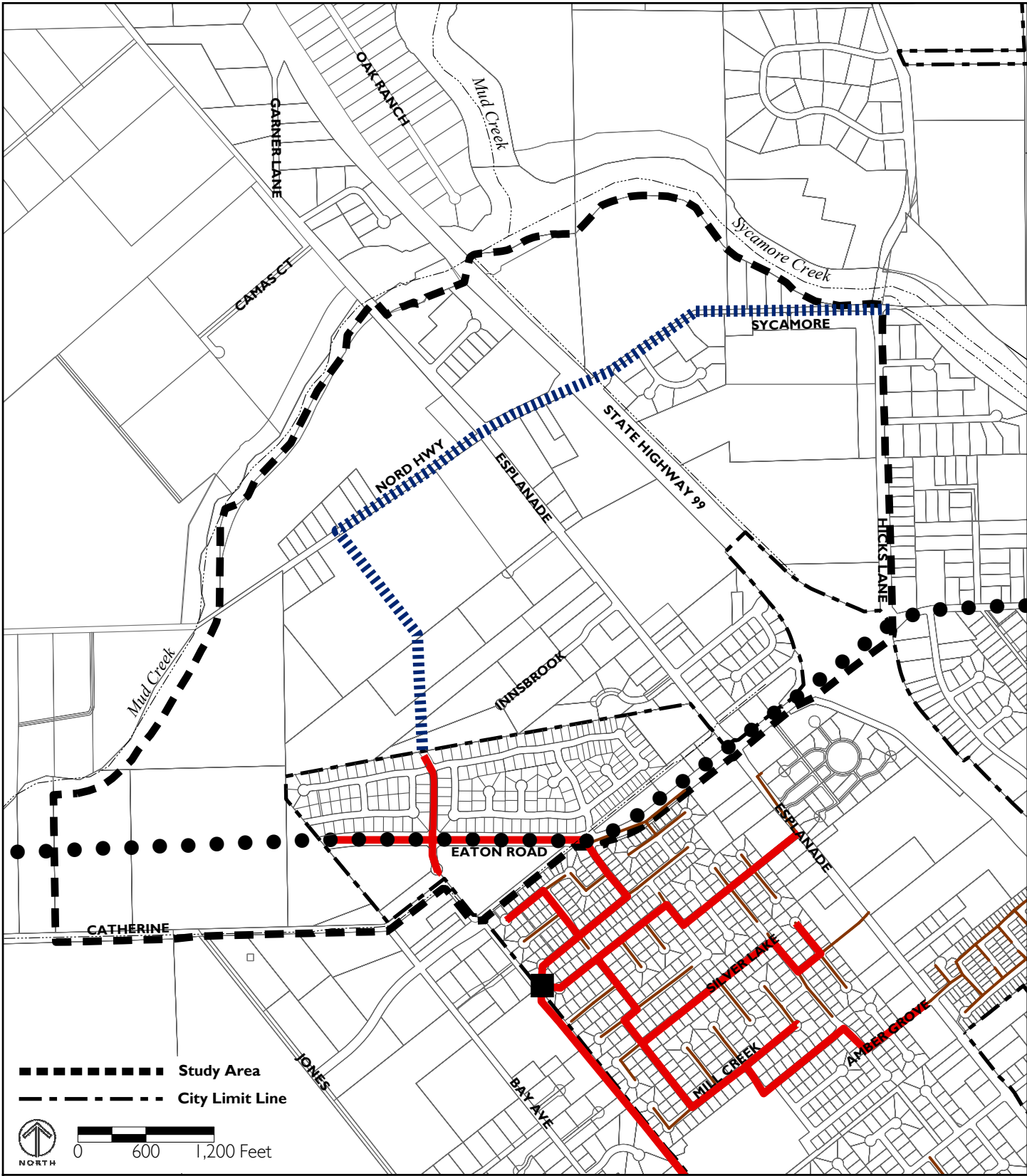


FIGURE 3-6

-  Water Well
-  12" Diameter Pipe
-  8" Diameter Pipe
-  High Nitrate Areas

**EXISTING WATER SERVICE DISTRIBUTION**



Source: Nolte Associates, October, 2003; City of Chico Sanitary Master Plan Update, May 2003; City of Chico Public Works Department.

FIGURE 3-7

- Existing Sewer System 2" - 6" Pipes
- Existing Sewer System 8" - 24" Pipes
- ● Future Northwest Trunk
- ▤▤▤▤▤▤ Proposed 18" Main
- Northwest Chico Lift Station

**EXISTING AND PROPOSED  
SANITARY SEWER**

**CITY OF CHICO**  
**NORTHWEST CHICO SPECIFIC PLAN**  
**FINAL**  
EXISTING CONDITIONS