



FILED  
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
OAKLAND

2016 JAN 29 AM 9:10 **AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** Sabrina B. Landreth  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Teresa DeLoach Reed  
Fire Chief

**SUBJECT:** OFD Vegetation Inspection Audit Fiscal  
Year 2011-12 Follow-Up Report

**DATE:** January 26, 2016

City Administrator Approval

Date

1/28/16

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends Acceptance Of This Informational Report Regarding The Progress Of The Oakland Fire Department (OFD) Vegetation Inspection Audit Through December 4, 2015.**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Staff is presenting this report at the request of the Public Safety Committee to follow-up on outstanding issues associated with Oakland Fire Department Vegetation Management Audit published on December 4, 2015 by the Office of the City Auditor (**Attachment A**). As detailed in the report, staff has already implemented many of the suggestions made within the Auditor's report. This is a follow-up to the audit information presented to the Public Safety Committee by staff on November 12, 2014 (**Attachment B**).

### **BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

The Office of the City Auditor conducted a performance audit of the City's Vegetation Management Inspection process for the periods of Fiscal Years 2011/12 and 2012/13. The audit was all inclusive of activities associated with the vegetation management inspection program, such as inspection quality, processes, training, documentation and accounting functions. The audit concluded with seven recommendations which Fire Department staff has worked diligently to address. On April 29, 2014, staff presented to the Public Safety Committee a detailed report outlining OFD efforts to implement the recommendations. Since the follow-up report by the Auditor was done, staff has continued to carry out the recommendations which have resulted in more efficient and responsible implementation of the Vegetation Management program. The updates included in this report were submitted to the City Auditor's office on November 25, 2015.

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
February 9, 2016

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

As stated in the previous report (***Attachment B***), staff began taking steps to implement the Auditor's recommendations for improving the Vegetation Management Program immediately upon receiving the report. The following information is a demonstration of additional steps taken since the April 29, 2014 status report to the Committee, which detailed all actions taken with each recommendation.

The following information provides updates on the remaining recommendations - 1, 5, and 7.

**Recommendation #1:** *Implement policies and procedures that include stronger supervision and quality control measures.*

The Fire Department's Deputy Chief of Field Operations is currently working closely with Battalion Chiefs to develop a Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) process to ensure that inspections are performed accurately and that data is properly input into the Department's inspection management system. This process included:

- The Fire Prevention Bureau's (FPB) Vegetation Management Unit worked collaboratively with the Suppression Division's Battalion Chiefs and the Engine Company Officers to review the inspection forms for consistency and accuracy.
- Continuous training for firefighters will be executed on the use of One Step, the Department's inspection database, to help ensure inspection data is entered accurately and efficiently.
- Each Battalion received approximately 250 inspections that were re-inspected by the Battalion Chiefs. Overall, Battalion Chiefs spot checked an estimated total of 750 inspections identified as being in compliance by suppression personnel. Eleven of the 750 inspections were determined to be out of compliance when re-inspected. The findings were communicated to both the Deputy Chief of Field Operations and to staff.
- Remedial inspection training was provided for personnel whose inspections were regularly found to have inaccuracies.
- Following the initial development and implementation of the above QA/QC process, the Fire Department's goal is to formalize the inspection and oversight process in policies and procedures by the summer of 2016. To ensure more timely quality inspections, a sampling of the core inspections will be pulled for QA/QC checks within a 2-3 week time frame upon initial completion.

**Recommendation #5:** *Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the abatement process.*

The Fire Department and the Revenue Division have been working collaboratively to address this recommendation, for not only Vegetation Management invoices, but for all Fire Prevention

billables. Using the City's Oracle financial system modules for billing and collections, the Fire Department has currently referred all prior vegetation management delinquent invoices to collections. Moving forward, the Oracle system will allow the Fire Department to send invoices to noncompliant property owners, track delinquencies, and transfer delinquent accounts to the City's Collections Unit.

Specifically:

- The Fire Department and the Finance Department / Revenue Management Bureau have been working together to use Oracle's billing module to automate invoices. The Fire Department has successfully completed two (2) billing cycles in Oracle and is working to move all billables through the same process. This process will ensure "outstanding balance due" notices will be automatically generated in Oracle and the 90-day delinquent accounts will be referred to the Collections Unit automatically.

The Fire Department is working with the Revenue Division to update and implement a citywide billing and collections policy.

**Recommendation # 7:** *Work with the City Council to determine if parking that obstructs road access in the Oakland Hills is an enforcement priority and if so, an enforcement program should be designed with input from community stakeholders.*

Representatives from Council District 1, Council District 4, City Administrator's Office, Police Department, Fire Department, Planning and Building Department, and Public Works Department met on November 4, 2015 and December 8, 2015 to discuss emergency road access and parking within the designated High Fire Severity zone. Further research and discussion will continue to happen in order to work towards solutions for this item.

As has been previously mentioned, this is a complicated issue and requires sensitivity in balancing the needs of affected Oakland homeowners with the City's need for emergency road access.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with this report.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

As it pertains to recommendation #1 and #7, residents in the Oakland Hills Wildfire Area were informed via mailer that the Oakland Fire Department would conduct property inspections in their areas. Additionally, the mailer included notification of fines that could be assessed if compliance was not reached, as well as, suggestions of how residents could assist with providing more Oakland Fire Department access by using alternative parking solutions (i.e. utilizing property driveways, etc.). This information was also posted on the City of Oakland website for public viewing.

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
February 9, 2016

---

## **COORDINATION**

Staff coordinated with the Office of the City Auditor, Office of the City Attorney and Controller's Bureau in preparation of this report.

## **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** There are no direct economic impacts associated with this report.

***Environmental:*** The management and enforcement strategy of the Oakland Fire Department produces considerably fewer fuel loads before the peak of the regional fire season. Efficient management and enforcement strategies help to ensure the Oakland Fire Department is able to reduce fuel loads before the peak of the regional fire season, thereby protecting life and property. Additionally, the reduction of potential wildfires will result in less land destruction from fires and reduced air pollution produced by smoke.

***Social Equity:*** A fire safe and healthy environment benefits the entire City.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff recommends acceptance of this informational report regarding the progress of the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) vegetation inspection audit through December 4, 2015.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Vincent Crudele, Vegetation Management Supervisor, at 510-238-7391.

Respectfully submitted,



TERESA DELOACH REED  
Fire Chief, Oakland Fire Department

Reviewed by:  
Rebecca Kozak, Executive Assistant

Prepared by:  
Vincent Crudele, Vegetation Management  
Supervisor

Anette Boulware, Program Analyst II

Attachments (2):  
A: City Auditor's Report 12/4/15  
B: Agenda Report 11/12/14

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
February 9, 2016



City Auditor  
Brenda Roberts  
CPA

December 4, 2015

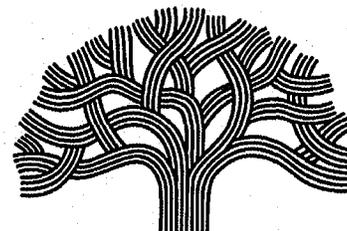


**Recommendation Follow-Up  
Oakland Fire Department  
Vegetation Inspection Audit**

**Audit Team:**

Stephen Lawrence, CPA  
*Assistant City Auditor*

Tracy Yarlott-Davis  
*Performance Auditor*



CITY OF OAKLAND

**OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR**

---

**This page was intentionally left blank.**

CITY OF OAKLAND



CITY HALL • ONE FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

Office of the City Auditor  
Brenda D. Roberts, CPA, CFE, CIA  
City Auditor

(510) 238-3378  
FAX (510) 238-7640  
TDD (510) 238-3254  
[www.oaklandauditor.com](http://www.oaklandauditor.com)

December 4, 2015

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY ADMINISTRATOR  
CITIZENS OF OAKLAND  
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

**RE: Recommendation Follow-Up of the Oakland Fire Department Vegetation Inspection Audit**

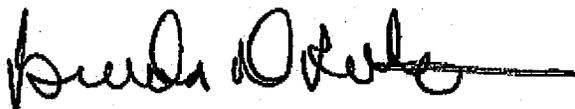
Dear Mayor Schaaf, Council President McElhaney, Members of the City Council, City Administrator Landreth, and Oakland Citizens:

The Office of the City Auditor (City Auditor) released the Oakland Fire Department Vegetation Inspection Audit report in November 2013 which found that the City could further mitigate risks within the Oakland hills by improving its vegetation management inspection, abatement, and billing process and addressing parking obstructions. There were seven recommendations to the Fire Department as a result.

Attached is the Recommendation Follow-Up report which assessed the implementation status of the seven recommendations. The report details the actions taken by the Fire Department to resolve four recommendations, and the actions required to resolve the remaining three open recommendations.

I want to express our appreciation to the Oakland Fire Department Chief Teresa Deloach Reed and her staff, as well as the interim Director of Revenue Margaret O'Brien, for their cooperation during this follow-up process and for their commitment to mitigating the fire risks within the Oakland hills neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda D. Roberts", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

BRENDA D. ROBERTS, CPA, CFE, CIA  
City Auditor

## Table of Contents

---

|                                      |          |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Introduction and Background</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Summary of Results</b>            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>City Administrator's Response</b> | <b>8</b> |

**This page was intentionally left blank.**

# Introduction and Background

---

## Overview of the Audit

The Office of the City Auditor (City Auditor) released the Oakland Fire Department Vegetation Inspection Audit report in November 2013 which found that the City could further mitigate risks within the Oakland hills neighborhoods by improving its vegetation management inspection process and addressing parking obstructions.

The audit had three findings:

- The Fire Department needed to better communicate the importance of performing proper inspections and evaluating results.
- The abatement process for non-compliant properties needed improvement.
- The risk associated with parked vehicles obstructing road access needed to be more effectively mitigated.

There were seven recommendations to the Fire Department as a result of the audit.

## Recent Changes to the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WAPD)

The Fire Department's Fire Prevention Bureau manages the WPAD program which provides funding to monitor fire risks on privately-owned parcels as well as for vegetation management on city-owned parcels within the district. The goal is to reduce and manage vegetative fuel loads to minimize the risk of future major fires. This reduction is accomplished through efforts such as goat grazing, chipping services, and median and roadway abatement.

The Fire Department annually inspects each parcel in the district for compliance with regulations for vegetation management. If non-compliant, the property owner is charged a fee for subsequent inspections of the property and may be assessed the cost to abate the property.

An assessment parcel tax used for funding the program was not renewed in November 2013 as a result of a vote by the residents of the assessment district. Some wildfire prevention related services, such as goat grazing and wood chipping, may become the responsibility of the parcel owner.

The WPAD had a fund balance of \$2.9 million as of June 30, 2015. Expenditures from that fund totaled \$598,310 during fiscal year (FY) 2014-15.

# Summary of Results

---

## **Recommendation Follow-Up Process**

The purpose of this follow-up is to assess the implementation status of audit recommendations and close them when completed. The City Auditor reviewed supporting documentation submitted by the Fire Department, conducted interviews, and performed an on-site visit.

## **Summary of Results**

The City Auditor's recommendation follow-up process found that the Fire Department closed four recommendations and three recommendations remain open.

## **Open Recommendations**

The Fire Department will provide evidence to the City Auditor by **February 12, 2016** that these open recommendations have been addressed.

## **Recommendation 1:**

**Status: Open**

Implement clear policies and procedures that include stronger supervision and quality control measures including but not limited to procedures requiring:

- Oversight of inspection performance and inspection forms for accuracy and completeness.
- Stronger controls over the accuracy and monitoring of information in the inspection database.
- Inspection performance as part of written performance evaluations for Fire Department staff.

## **Actions taken:**

The Fire Department updated the Field Operations Inspection Manual and the vegetation inspection form to provide Fire Department personnel guidance on performing inspections and the administrative tasks to record the results of the inspections.

Furthermore, the Fire Department proposed adding inspection performance to the formal performance evaluations for their personnel to the Office of Employee Relations which must formally meet and confer with the affected employee union group.

## **Actions required:**

The Fire Department needs to develop a quality control process to ensure that inspections are performed accurately in order to close this recommendation. This process should confirm that inspections were performed as required.

# Summary of Results

---

**Recommendation 5:**

**Status: Open**

Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the abatement process which includes but is not limited to:

- Adjusting the noncompliance notification process so that abatements occur earlier in the fire season.
- Establishing blanket contracts and on-call service contracts that can be used for common types of abatements rather than going through a competitive contracting process for each property that will be abated.
- Ensuring that the Fire Department invoices noncompliant property owners for all abatement costs, re-inspection fees and administrative costs annually.
- Increasing the effectiveness of the Fire Department's billing system by programming the system to produce automated notices for outstanding amounts due.
- Having the Fire Department work with the Revenue Division to implement a collections process that will ensure timely cost recovery for properties abated by the City.

**Actions taken:**

The Fire Department timely invoiced second inspections and vegetation abatement costs in FY 2014-2015. However, between FY 2012 and FY 2015, 75% of fines, fees and costs associated with wildfire vegetation management were not collected.

The Fire Department did not submit any invoices for vegetation management to the City's Finance Department's Revenue Collections Unit (Revenue) for collections between January 2011 and August 2015.

The Fire Department invoiced \$150,000 in fines and fees for vegetation management including costs for abating properties in FY 2014-15 during the wildfire season. \$90,000 (60%) is still outstanding.

| <i>Fiscal Year 2014-15</i>   | <i>Amounts are rounded</i> |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Total Amount Invoiced        | \$150,000                  |
| Voided Invoices <sup>1</sup> | \$27,000                   |
| Paid Invoices                | \$33,000                   |
| Outstanding Invoices         | \$90,000                   |

<sup>1</sup> Voided invoices may include those that were dismissed during administrative hearings, errors in the One Step database system, homeowners who complied with regulations prior to issuance of the invoice and unclear property lines in the county database.

## Summary of Results

---

There were conflicting instructions in FY 2013-14 and FY 2012-13 regarding issuing invoices so that subsequent collections lagged.

### ***Fiscal Year 2013-14***

|                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Total Amount Invoiced | \$70,000 |
| Voided Invoices       | \$0      |
| Paid Invoices         | \$14,000 |
| Outstanding Invoices  | \$56,000 |

The \$105,000 in outstanding invoices issued in FY 2012-2013 may not be collectible due to the statute of limitations and may result in a revenue write-off.

### ***Fiscal Year 2012-13***

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Total Amount Invoiced | \$127,000 |
| Voided Invoices       | \$0       |
| Paid Invoices         | \$22,000  |
| Outstanding Invoices  | \$105,000 |

Fire Prevention Bureau management expressed concern about the lack of administrative staff to incorporate past-due invoices from their One Step accounting system into the Finance Department's invoicing component within Oracle.

However, Revenue provided both short and long term solutions to bring the vegetation management invoicing and collections up to date. These solutions included immediately processing and actively collecting all invoices issued after July 1, 2015. Revenue also offered to begin collections on all invoices issued in fiscal years still within the statute of limitations (approximately January 1, 2013 – June 30, 2015).

Fire Prevention Bureau management have begun to submit packets of past due invoices to Revenue as of the date of this report.

There are a small number of high balance overdue accounts where the Fire Prevention Bureau may realize immediate results through the collections process:

| <b>Number of Invoices</b> | <b>Past Due Amount</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1                         | Over \$20,000          |
| 1                         | \$10,001-\$20,000      |
| 2                         | \$5,001 - \$10,000     |
| 4                         | \$3,001 - \$5,000      |
| 14                        | \$2,000-\$3,000        |

## Summary of Results

---

### Actions required:

The Fire Department must work with Revenue to actively collect on current invoices and finalize the collections and lien process for those invoices that are past due.

The Fire Department must implement a policy and establish supporting procedures so that invoices are issued timely and past due invoices immediately addressed.

Revenue management staff emphasized that any invoice 45 days past due may be submitted to them for collection and stated that nearly all amounts are collectible at some point in time through the lien process. However, if the property was sold or transferred before a lien is processed, then the likelihood of collection is greatly diminished.

### Recommendation 7:

**Status: Open**

Work with the City Council to determine if parking that obstructs road access in the Oakland hills is an enforcement priority and, if so, an enforcement program should be designed with input from community stakeholders. If this is determined to be an enforcement priority, the Administration and City Council should:

- Work with the Fire Department, Parking Enforcement, and any other applicable department to obtain a greater understanding of emergency road access needs in the Oakland hills. If greater emergency access is needed, consider how to address the issue and then define and implement an action plan.
- Consider the costs and benefits of promoting improved emergency vehicle access to the Oakland hills by authorizing the Fire Department to issue tickets during annual fire inspections, roving fire patrols, or when the Fire Department encounters an obstruction.
- Work with Parking Enforcement to more actively issue tickets for cars parked in the Oakland hills that are obstructing road access and may hinder emergency responses and have cars towed when necessary.

### Actions taken:

City Auditor staff observed that illegal parking remains an issue within the Oakland hills neighborhoods and could possibly impede the access of emergency vehicles. The 2015 inspection notice, mailed to each address in the wildfire prevention area, included a bolded statement to residents reminding them not to obstruct road access.

The large number of resident and visitor vehicles in the Oakland hills creates unsafe congestion and, at times, possibly illegal parking situations including parking on streets too narrow to accommodate an emergency vehicle and parking in red "no parking" zones. Parking infractions are not regularly cited by Parking Enforcement which, according to the Fire Department, has indicated that the Oakland hills neighborhoods are not a priority parking enforcement area.

## Summary of Results

---

### Actions required:

The Fire Department should work with the City Administrator and other stakeholders, such as the Public Works Agency, Parking Enforcement management, Oakland Police Department, citizen groups, and the affected City Council Districts 1 and 4 to achieve a solution to the parking problem.

### **Closed Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 2:**

**Status: Closed**

Consider additional ways to integrate inspectors' expertise to help guide and monitor the quality of inspections performed and data recorded.

### Actions taken:

The Fire Department revised the inspection form to provide relevant fire code citations, explanation of terminology, and clearer instructions and information for inspectors. The Fire Department also started an annual training program for firefighters that perform inspections.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

**Status: Closed**

Implement a tracking mechanism to ensure that all Fire Department staff attend training annually and consider the costs and benefits of amending the training to be more interactive.

### Actions taken:

292 firefighters attended training on how to properly perform vegetation inspections in April 2015. The Fire Department now requires this training each year prior to initiating the inspection program.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

**Status: Closed**

Work with the Fire Department and Human Resources regarding the timing of its employment of part-time vegetation inspectors to better ensure coverage during the fire season.

### Actions taken:

The Vegetation Management Unit staffing was reduced from six full-time inspectors to three part-time inspectors in 2011. The Fire Department reported to the City Council that in 2014 the Department was investigating changing the work schedule for the Temporary Part Time (TPT) inspectors to better accommodate the fire season.

## Summary of Results

---

However, because the fire season overlaps the city's fiscal year and TPT staff may work no more than 1,000 hours each fiscal year, Fire Prevention Bureau management must carefully allocate the inspectors' work schedule to ensure coverage for the entire fire season.

According to the Fire Prevention Bureau management, they attempt to reserve some TPT staff hours for the end of the fiscal year which corresponds to the beginning of fire season; however, those TPT staff often find other employment during the winter months.

**Recommendation 6:**

**Status: Closed**

Consider establishing alternative collections methods in addition to placing liens on property sales that can be used to ensure the City collects all amounts owed.

**Actions taken:**

Small claims court and property liens are the only two avenues for collecting past due invoices for vegetation inspection and abatement costs due to the language in Section 114 of the Oakland Fire Code According to the Fire Department and Revenue.

# City Administrator's Response

---

**FILED**  
**CITY AUDITOR'S OFFICE**

**2015 NOV 23 PM 1:19**

CITY OF OAKLAND



CITY HALL • 1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

Office of the City Administrator  
November 18, 2015

(510) 238-3301  
FAX (510) 238-2223  
TDD (510) 238-2007

The Honorable Brenda Roberts  
Oakland City Auditor  
1 Frank Ogawa Plaza, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612

**RE: Recommendation Follow-Up of Oakland Fire Department Vegetation Inspection Audit**

Dear City Auditor Roberts:

I am pleased to provide you with the City Administration's response to the Recommendation Follow-Up of the Oakland Fire Department's Vegetation Inspection Audit. The Administration and the Fire Department welcome audits to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and the safety of Oakland's citizens.

The tragedy resulting from the Oakland Hills Fire in 1991 has pushed the City of Oakland and its residents to continuously and proactively mitigate the risk of wildfire. In the 24 years since the disaster, procedures have been put into place to better protect our community and mitigate the risks associated with the threat of wildfires.

As the Recommendation Follow-Up report states, the Fire Department has continued to make improvements in its management of its Vegetation Inspections and has closed four (4) out of the seven (7) recommendations issued in the original audit. For the remaining open recommendations, the Administration and the Fire Department are working diligently to address these recommendations. For example, the Fire Department and Revenue Division are currently working collaboratively to collect the outstanding amounts owed to the City for work the Fire Department performed abating vegetation on high risk properties, as well as implementing a strong collection process going forward.

Attached to this cover letter is the Administration's detailed response to each of the audit recommendations, including efforts already underway in Fire Department to address the recommendations.

I look forward to working with you in continuing to target key issues identified in the audit process that could result in ways to improve the City's fire inspection process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sabrina Landreth', written over a horizontal line.

Sabrina Landreth  
City Administrator

c: Teresa Delonch Reed, Fire Chief  
Kirsten LaCasse, Interim Controller

Attachment: Response to Follow-Up of Vegetation Inspection Audit

**City Administration's Detailed Response to Recommendation Follow-Up of the Vegetation Inspection Audit  
November 25, 2015**

City Administrator's Response

|   | Open Audit Recommendation  | Administration's Response   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | <p>Implement clear policies and procedures that include stronger supervision and quality control measures, including but not limited to procedures requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight of inspection performance and inspection forms for accuracy and completeness.</li> <li>• Stronger controls over the accuracy and monitoring of information in the inspection database.</li> <li>• Inspection performance as part of written performance evaluations for Fire Department staff.</li> </ul> <p><b>To close this recommendation</b>, the Fire Department needs to develop a quality control process to ensure that inspections are being performed accurately. This process should include a re-inspection to confirm that inspections were performed as required.</p> | <p><b>The Administration agrees with the recommendation.</b></p> <p>The Fire Department's Chief of Operations is currently working closely with Battalion Chiefs to develop a Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) process to ensure that inspections are performed accurately and that data is properly input into the Department's inspection management system. This process will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fire Prevention Bureau's (FPB) Vegetation Management Unit working collaboratively with the Suppression Division's Battalion Chiefs and the Engine Company Officers to review the inspection forms for consistency and accuracy.</li> <li>• Continuous training for firefighters on the use of One Step, the Department's inspection database, to help ensure inspection data is entered accurately and efficiently.</li> <li>• Each Battalion will receive approximately 250 inspections that will be re-inspected by the Battalion Chiefs. Overall, Battalion Chiefs will spot check an estimated total of 750 inspections identified as being in compliance by suppression personnel. The findings will be communicated to both the Deputy Chief of Field Operations and to staff.</li> <li>• Remedial inspection training will be provided for personnel whose inspections are regularly found to have inaccuracies.</li> <li>• Following the initial development and implementation of the above QA/QC process, by the summer of 2016, the Fire Department will formalize the inspection and oversight process in policies and procedures.</li> </ul> |
| 5 | <p>Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the abatement process, which includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting the noncompliance notification process so that abatements occur earlier in the fire season.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>The Administration agrees with the recommendation.</b></p> <p>The Fire Department and the Revenue Division have been working collaboratively to address these recommendations, for not only Vegetation Management invoices, but for all Fire Prevention billables. Using the City's Oracle financial system modules for billing and collections, the Fire Department has currently caught up with all prior Vegetation Management collections. Going forward, the Oracle system will increase the Fire</p>  |

**City Administration's Detailed Response to Recommendation Follow-Up of the Vegetation Inspection Audit  
November 25, 2015**

City Administrator's Response

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing blanket contracts and on-call service contracts that can be used for common type of abatements rather than going through a competitive contracting process for each property that will be abated.</li> <li>• Ensuring that each year the Fire Department invoices noncompliant property owners for all abatement costs, re-inspection fees, and administrative costs.</li> <li>• Increasing the effectiveness of the Fire Department's billing system by programming the system to produce automated notices for outstanding amounts due.</li> <li>• Having the Fire Department work with the Revenue Division to implement a collections process</li> </ul> <p><b><u>To close this recommendation</u></b>, the Fire Department must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Revenue department to actively collect on issued invoices and finalize the collections and lien process for current and subsequent past due invoices.</li> <li>• Implement a policy and establish supporting procedures so that future invoices are timely issued and past due invoices immediately addressed by City personnel.</li> </ul> | <p>Department's ability to more quickly send invoices to noncompliant property owners, track delinquencies, and transfer past-due amounts the City's Collections Unit.</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fire Department and the Revenue Division have been working together to use Oracle's billing module to automate invoices. The Fire Department has successfully completed two (2) billing cycles in Oracle and plans to move all billables through the same process. This process will ensure that "outstanding balance due" notices will be automatically generated in Oracle and that 90-day delinquent accounts will be referred to the Collections Unit.</li> <li>• The Fire Department is working with the Revenue Division to update and implement citywide billing and collections policy. The Revenue Division and City Attorney's Office are also reviewing existing City ordinances with outdated language regarding the requirement for liens.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**City Administration's Detailed Response to Recommendation Follow-Up of the Vegetation Inspection Audit  
November 25, 2015**

City Administrator's Response

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 7 | <p>Work with the City Council to determine if parking that obstructs road access in the Oakland Hills is an enforcement priority and if so, an enforcement program should be Designed with input from community stakeholders. If this is determined to be an enforcement priority, the Administration and City Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Fire Department, Parking Enforcement, and any other applicable department to obtain a greater understanding of emergency road access needs in the Oakland Hills. If greater emergency access is needed, consider how to address the issue and then define and implement an action plan.</li> <li>• Consider the costs and benefits of promoting improved emergency vehicle access to the Oakland Hills by authorizing the Fire Department to issue tickets during annual fire inspections, roving fire patrols, or when the Fire Department encounters an obstruction.</li> <li>• Work with Parking Enforcement to more actively issue tickets for cars parked in the Oakland Hills that are obstructing road access and may hinder emergency responses, and if necessary have cars towed.</li> </ul> | <p><b>The Administration partially agrees with the recommendation.</b></p> <p>Representatives from the Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau, City Council, Parking Enforcement, and Police Department met on November 4, 2015 to discuss emergency road access and parking within the designated high Fire Severity zone.</p> <p>As has been previously mentioned, this is a complicated issue and requires sensitivity in balancing the needs of affected Oakland homeowners with the City's need for emergency road access. There is no easy or quick solution and the City must continue to also balance this issue with competing priorities.</p> |
|---|---|--|

**City Administration's Detailed Response to Recommendation Follow-Up of the Vegetation Inspection Audit  
November 25, 2015**

City Administrator's Response

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b><u>To close this recommendation</u></b>, the Fire Department should work with the City Administrator and other stakeholders, such as the Public Works Agency, Parking Enforcement management, Oakland Police Department, citizen groups and the affected City Council Districts 1 and 4, to achieve a solution to the parking problem.</p> |  |
|--|--|



FILED  
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
OAKLAND

2014 OCT 30 PM 2:39

## AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** HENRY L. GARDNER  
INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR

**FROM:** Teresa Deloach Reed

**SUBJECT:** OFD Vegetation Inspection Audit 2011-12  
Follow-Up Report

**DATE:** October 23, 2014

City Administrator  
Approval

Date

10-21-14

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** 1, 4, 6, and 7

### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends acceptance of this Informational Report which is a follow-up to information presented by staff on April 29, 2014 concerning the November 19, 2013 Oakland Fire Department (OFD) Vegetation Inspection Audit.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff is presenting this report at the request of the Public Safety Committee to detail any outstanding issues associated with the seven recommendations made by the Office of the City Auditor. As detailed in the report presented on April 29<sup>th</sup>, staff has already implemented many of the suggestions made within the Auditor's report.

### OUTCOME

By implementing the recommendations outlined in the Auditor's report, the Fire Department will enhance the vegetation management services provided to Oakland residents, and improve its efficiency in conducting inspections.

### BACKGROUND

The Office of the City Auditor conducted a performance audit of the City's Vegetation Management Inspection process for the periods of Fiscal Years 2011/12 and 2012/13. The audit was all inclusive of activities associated with the vegetation management inspection program, such as inspection quality, processes, training, documentation and accounting functions. The audit concluded with seven recommendations which Fire Department staff has worked diligently to address. On April 29, 2014, staff presented to the Public Safety Committee a detailed report outlining OFD efforts to implement the recommendations. Since that time, staff has continued to

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
November 12, 2014

carry out the recommendations which have resulted in more efficient and responsible implementation of the Vegetation Management program.

### **ANALYSIS**

As stated in the previous report, staff began taking steps to implement the Auditor's recommendations for improving the Vegetation Management Program immediately upon receiving the report. The following information is a demonstration of additional steps taken since the April 29, 2014 status report to the Committee, which detailed *all actions* taken with each recommendation. The following information only includes updates on recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

**Recommendation #1:** *Implement policies and procedures that include stronger supervision and quality control measures.*

An additional 45 hours of training was conducted with 18 company officers assigned to the 11 Fire Stations within the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD). This training included both "in field" inspections and supervision of data entry into the records database. The additional training resolved issues of inaccurate and incomplete forms being submitted to the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Staff continues to audit data entry which has resulted in locating inspection forms within the One Step system that had not been assigned for inspections. Fire Prevention staff identified parcels that were not included in the original distribution of vegetation inspection forms to the engine companies. These were not included because the parcels (identified as residential parcel), were assigned by the database to Fire Prevention Bureau Inspectors in error. Those assignment errors have been corrected and saved in the One Step system.

Staff continues to meet with necessary City staff to address the addition of vegetation management performance standards to the annual appraisal report.

The Field Operations Inspection Program handbook was distributed to all stations at the conclusion of the training. This detailed handbook was designed to deliver step by step inspection guidance and inspection reporting procedures as a reference to both company officers and suppression staff. The handbook contains sample inspection reports and instructions for completion on each field of required information.

**Recommendation #3:** *How Training Is Improved*

Training has improved through direct interaction with all crews assigned to the Oakland hills stations by the FPB Vegetation Management Supervisor and FPB Inspectors. The Vegetation Management Unit has collectively spent over 50 hours in the field with suppression crews

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
November 12, 2014

providing guidance and training on how to conduct inspections, identify violations and complete notices of violations.

FPB staff joined suppression crews in the field regularly, which was an additional 50 hours of time separate from the 45 hours the Vegetation Management Supervisor spent at stations with the company officers. The 50 hours was spent with crews from Stations 7, 16, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. In essence a total of 95 hours of additional practical training was spent with suppression staff during the inspection process.

**Recommendation #4 – *Increasing Inspection Staff to full-time or by adjusting the month's part-time inspection staff is working***

Council did not take action on hiring additional full time Fire Suppression District Inspectors. The three (3) Temporary Part Time (TPT) Fire Suppression District Inspectors were activated earlier this inspection season (2014 – 2015) with one (1) Inspector beginning in late May, one (1) in June and one (1) in July. This resulted in more timely inspections of vacant lot parcels and the inspection of City parcels sooner. As a result, TPT Inspectors were able to assist suppression crews in the field, draft, approve and implement roadside and vegetation removal contracts and begin enforcement inspections sooner. (Inspectors in the 2013-2014 season all began in August 2013.)

There were 1,045 non-compliant properties identified and re-inspected; invoices have been created and there is a potential for the collection of approximately \$300,000 in re-inspection fees and fines.

**Recommendation #5 – *Make adjustments to the non-compliant notification and abatement Process***

#### **2014 Inspection Stats**

- 1st round inspections currently have a completion percentage of 98.90% of 21,066 residential inspections assigned. The remaining 213 inspections are data entry corrections / errors.
- 2nd round inspections are 90.4% complete. Remaining inspections are in the Shepherd Canyon area and being conducted daily as the 30-day re-inspection dates arrive.
- An aerial survey was conducted by FPB Inspectors in late August and confirmed that defensible space zones have been established throughout the WPAD area (Attachment).

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
November 12, 2014

The combination of FPB directed vegetation management roadside clearances along major egress routes; goat grazing in City open spaces; hand crew clearing of City parcels; and, private property owners creating defensible space as a result of improved engine company inspections, has reduced hazardous fuel loads adjacent to residential properties. These efforts have improved safety and increased the suppression crew's ability to swiftly attack any fire incidents.

- Non-compliant properties are now actively being inspected (3rd round) by FPB District Inspectors. Non-compliant properties are being abated via FPB 1010 General Purpose Fund monies designated for vegetation removal on hazardous privately owned parcels. The Fire Department and Vegetation Management Unit is a full 60 days ahead of achieving its inspection and vegetation management goals when compared to the 2013 season.

In the 2013 season, field inspection forms completed by the companies were forwarded by courier service to the Fire Prevention Bureau for TPT administrative staff to enter into the records data base. This staff person did not begin entering forms until August 2013 when they were hired, which resulted in a delay of notification to non-compliant property owners and scheduling of re-inspections by suppression staff. First round inspections were not completed until mid-October and re-inspections were done in November 2013.

In 2014, FPB staff changed this process by training company officers (as noted above) to enter completed inspection forms daily at their stations. This change in procedure made inspection results immediately available, to ensure timely notification to non-compliant parcel owners and allow for immediate re-scheduling of 2<sup>nd</sup> inspections. It also provides for accurate weekly statistics of each engine company's completed and remaining inspections. These statistics are then given to both the Battalion Chiefs and the Operations Chief to ensure vegetation inspections are continually conducted by firefighters with a goal of completion of all inspections within 45 days.

First round inspections began on May 24, 2014 and were approximately 75% complete by July 7<sup>th</sup> and 95% complete by August 8, 2014. At the time this report was written (September) staff had already begun conducting 3<sup>rd</sup> round compliance inspections which were not done in 2013 until November and December.

**Recommendation #6 - *Consideration of alternative collection methods***

After conversations with the Revenue Division personnel, their only process for collection is through small claims court which Revenue Division will handle for inspection fees not paid. For

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
November 12, 2014

contract work, staff must file a lien, either perspective or priority. An account currently exists with the County for filing said liens.

### **COORDINATION**

Staff coordinated with the Office of the City Attorney and Budget Office in preparing this report.

### **COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) currently funds three (3) Temporary Part-Time Administrative Positions (TPT) in the Vegetation Management Unit (VMU). The annual cost of one TPT's is approximately \$45,000, fully burdened.

The City's General Purpose Fund account is responsible for the fully burdened salaries of one (1) full-time Vegetation Management Supervisor (\$170,549), one (1) full-time Vegetation Management Inspector (\$125,613), and three (3) TPT Vegetation Management Inspectors (\$28,038 per inspector).

To increase to TPT staff  $(\$28,038) \times 3 = \$84,114$  to FPT an additional expenditure from the City's general fund of  $(\$97,575 \times 3 = \$292,725)$  would be required annually.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** There are no direct economic impacts associated with this report.

***Environmental:*** The management and enforcement strategy of the Oakland Fire Department produces considerably lesser fuel loads before the peak of the regional fire season.

***Social Equity:*** A fire safe and healthy environment benefits the entire City.

For questions concerning this report, please contact Vegetation Management Supervisor Vince Crudele , at (510) 238-7391.

Respectfully submitted,



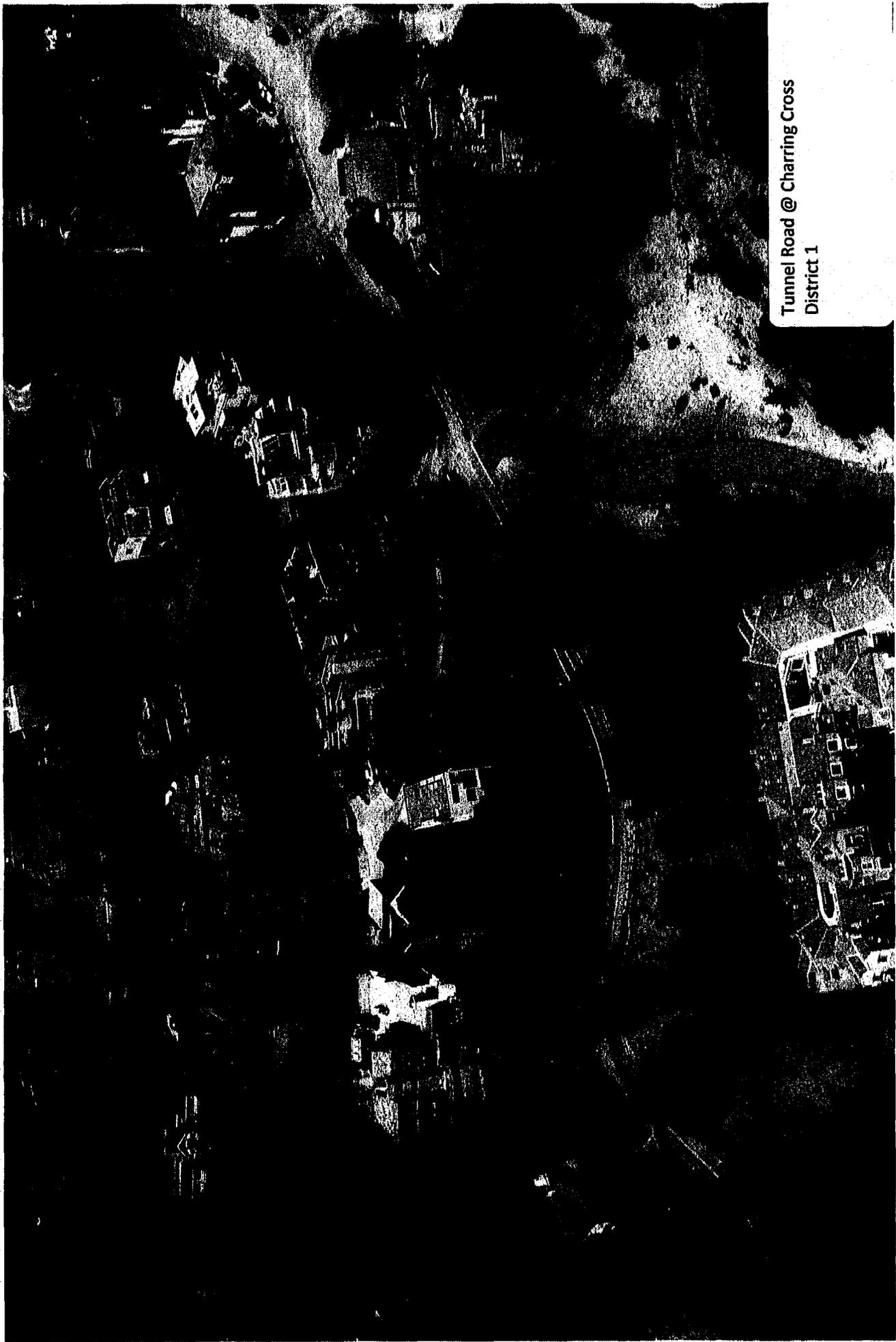
Teresa Deloach Reed  
Fire Chief

Attachment: WPAD Arial Photos

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
November 12, 2014



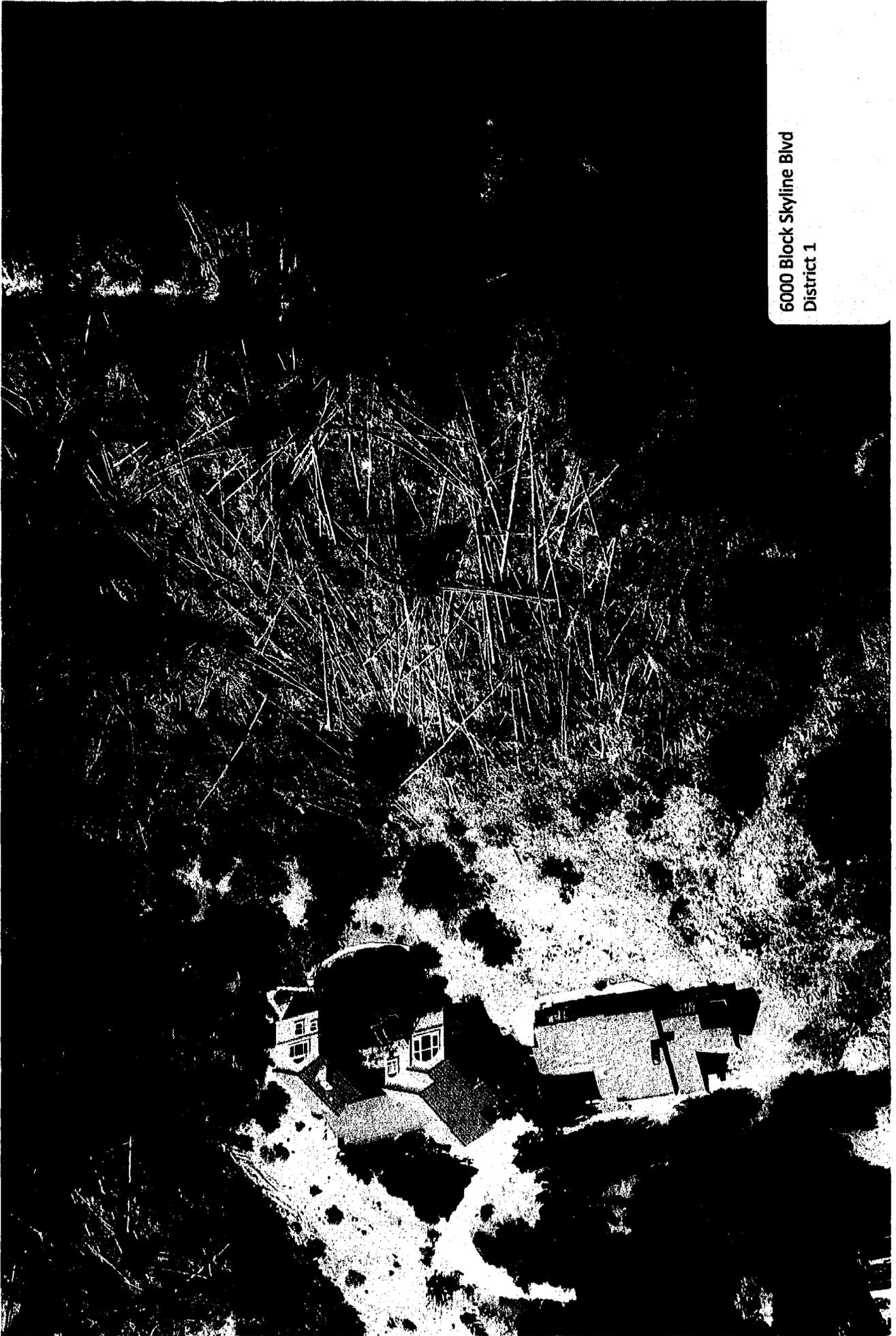
Skyline Blvd @ Old Tunnel Road  
District 1



Tunnel Road @ Charring Cross  
District 1



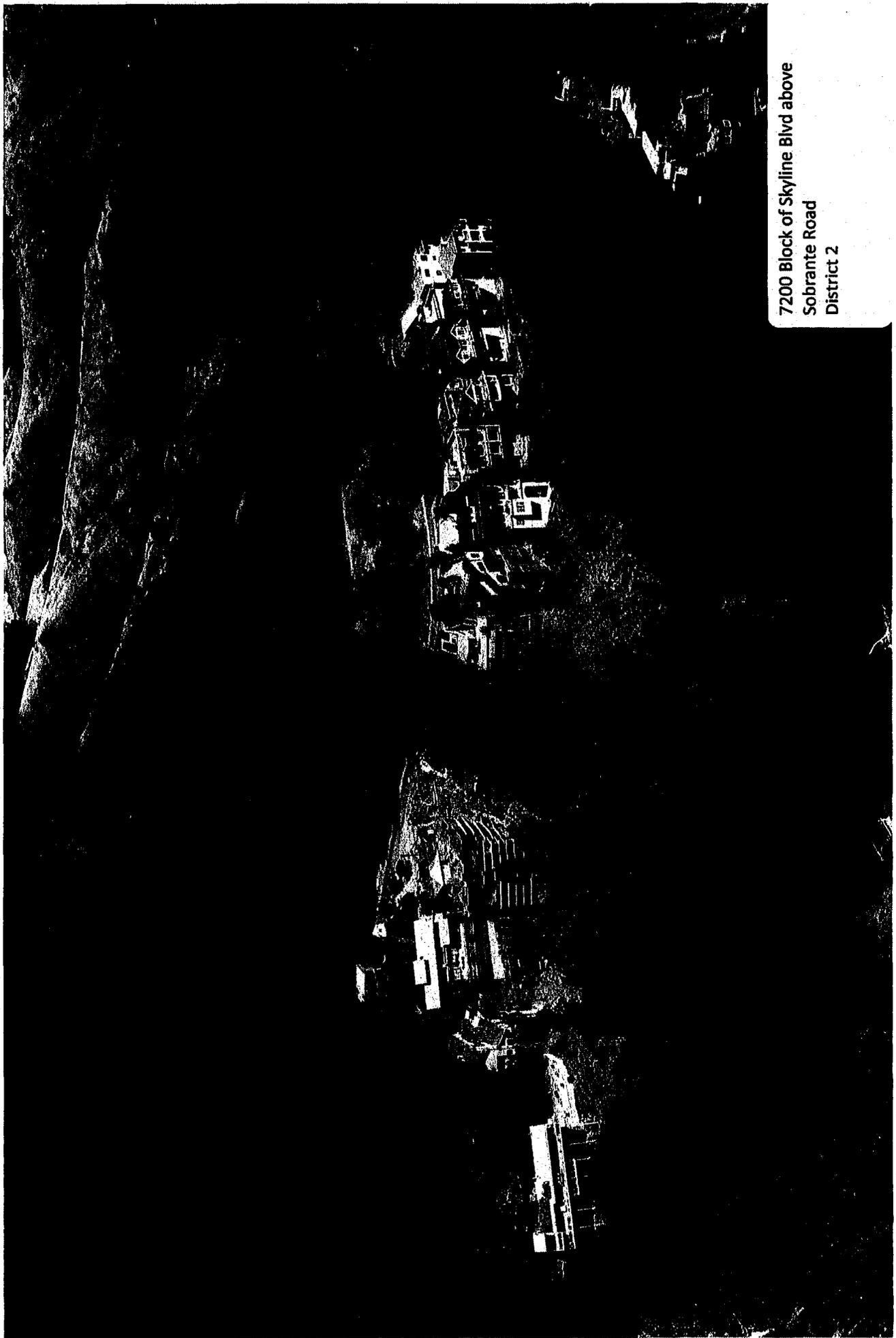
Grizzly Peak Blvd @ Grizzly Estates  
District 1



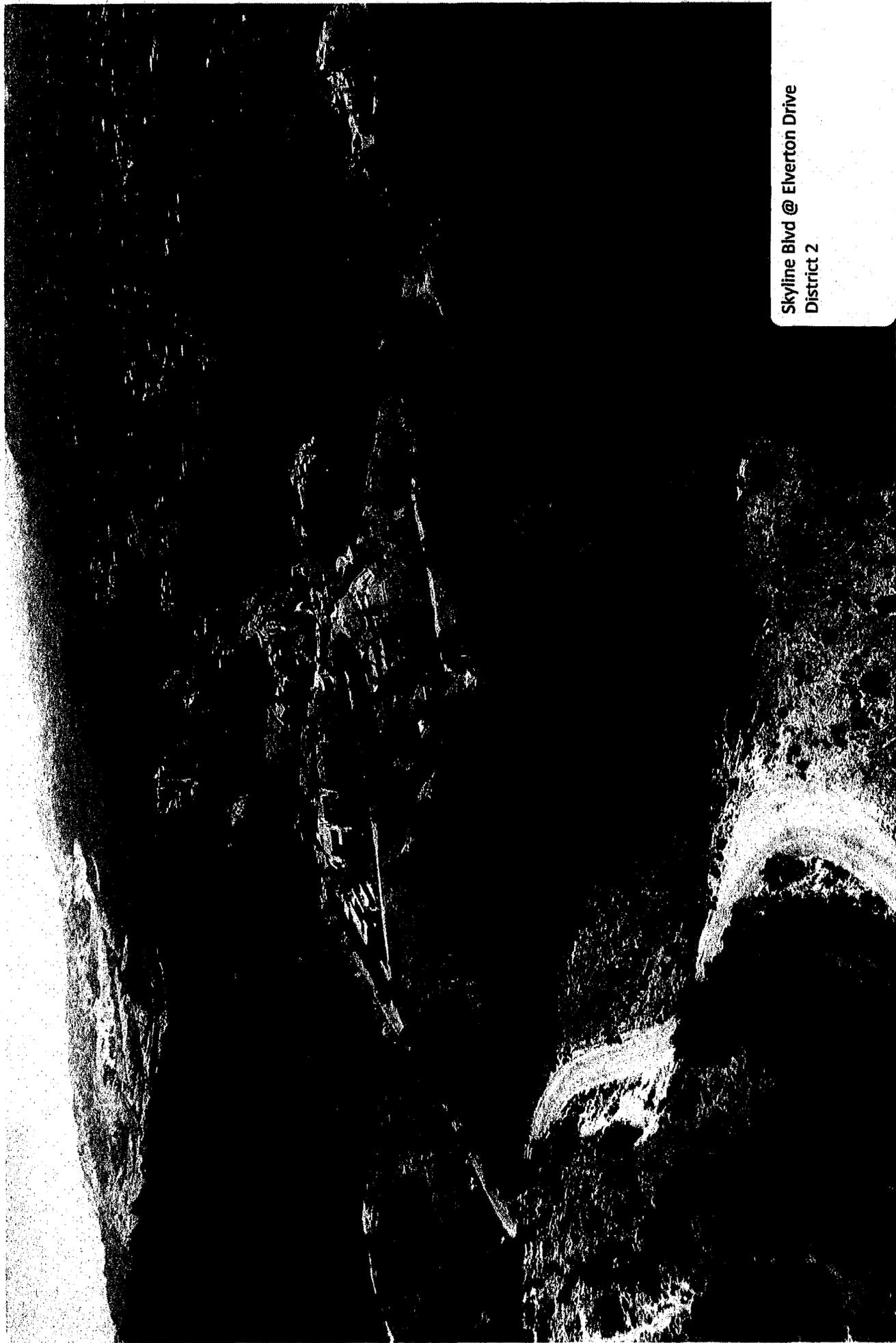
6000 Block Skyline Blvd  
District 1

Shepherd Canyon - Omnipole Court  
District 2

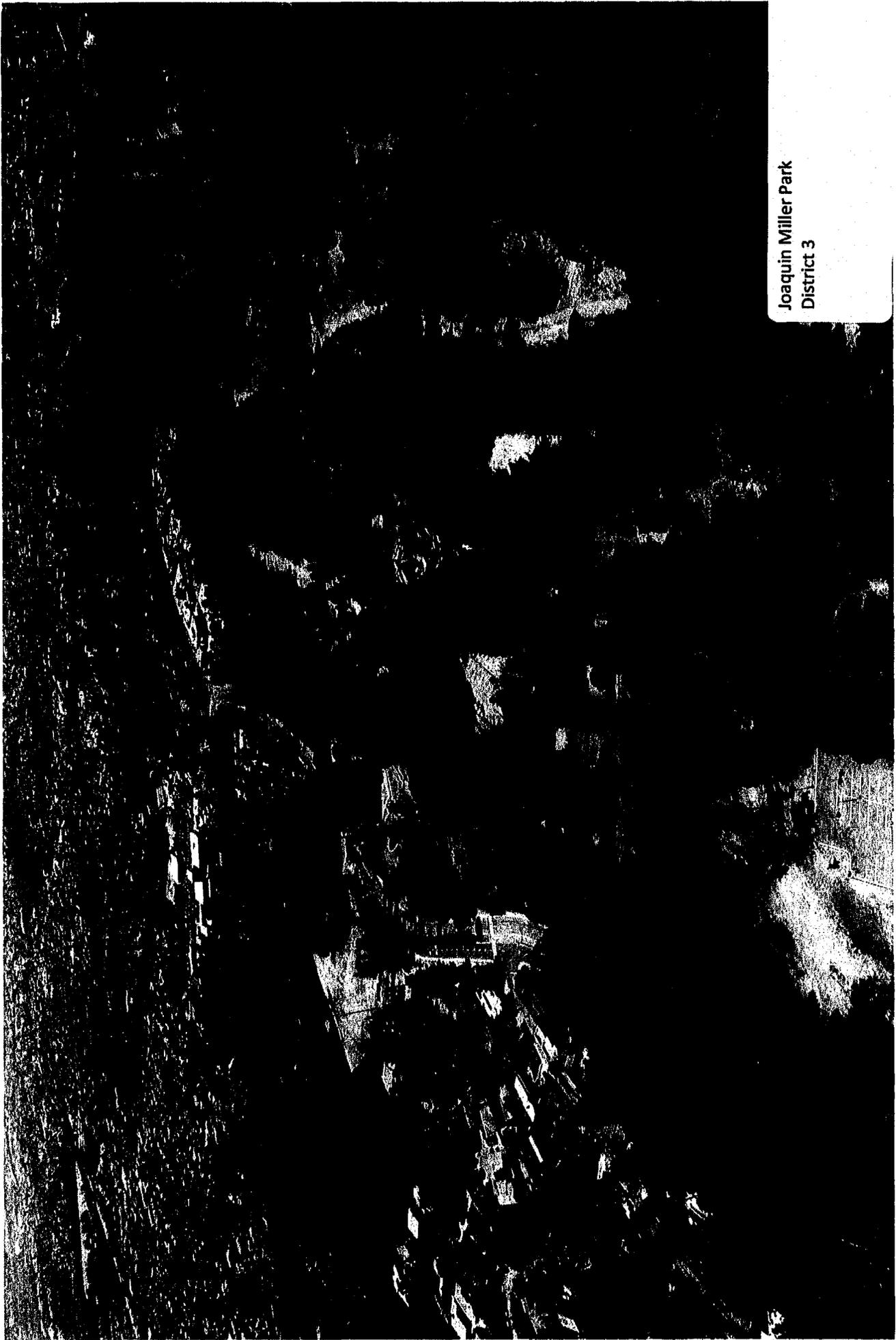




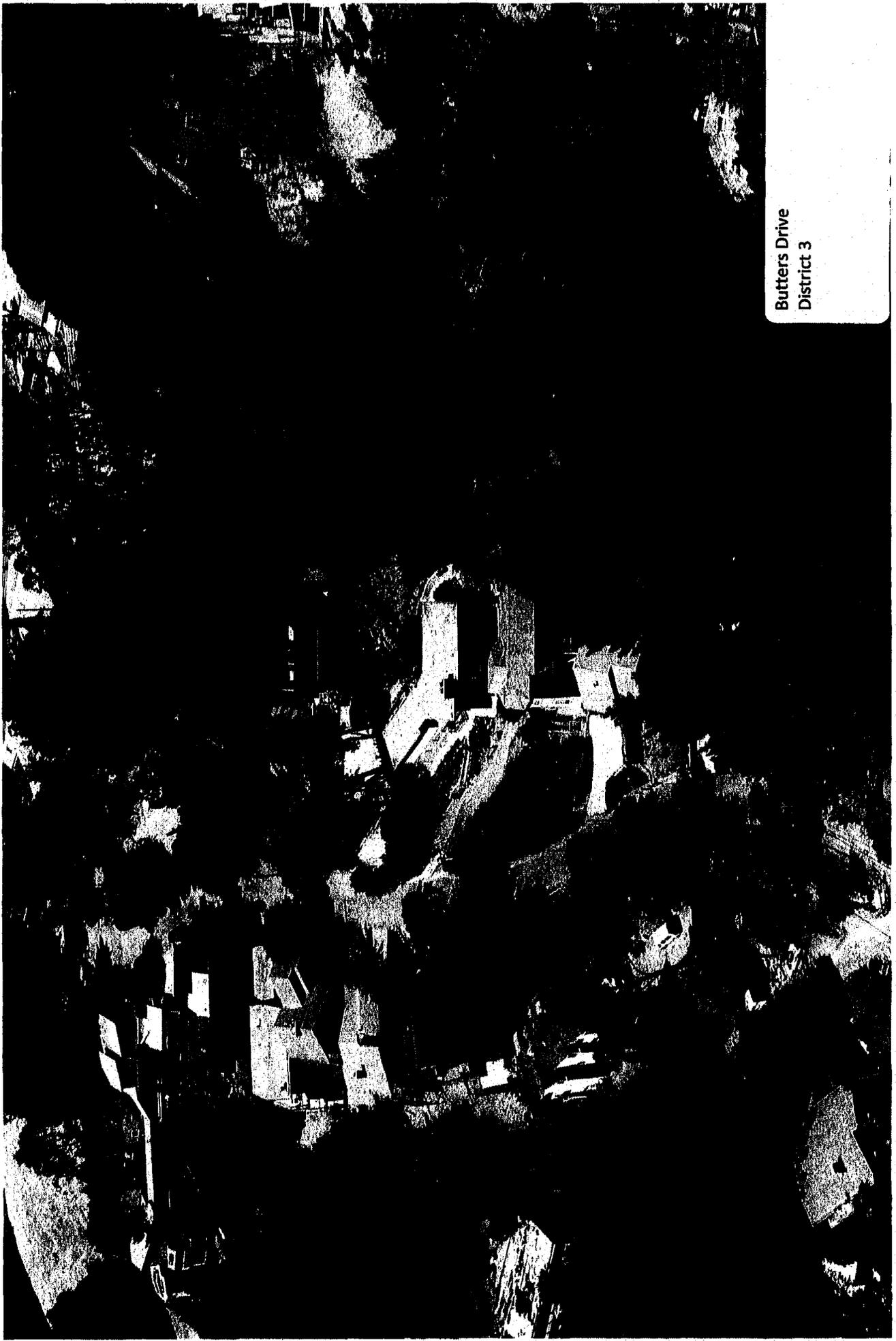
7200 Block of Skyline Blvd above  
Sobranite Road  
District 2



Skyline Blvd @ Elverton Drive  
District 2



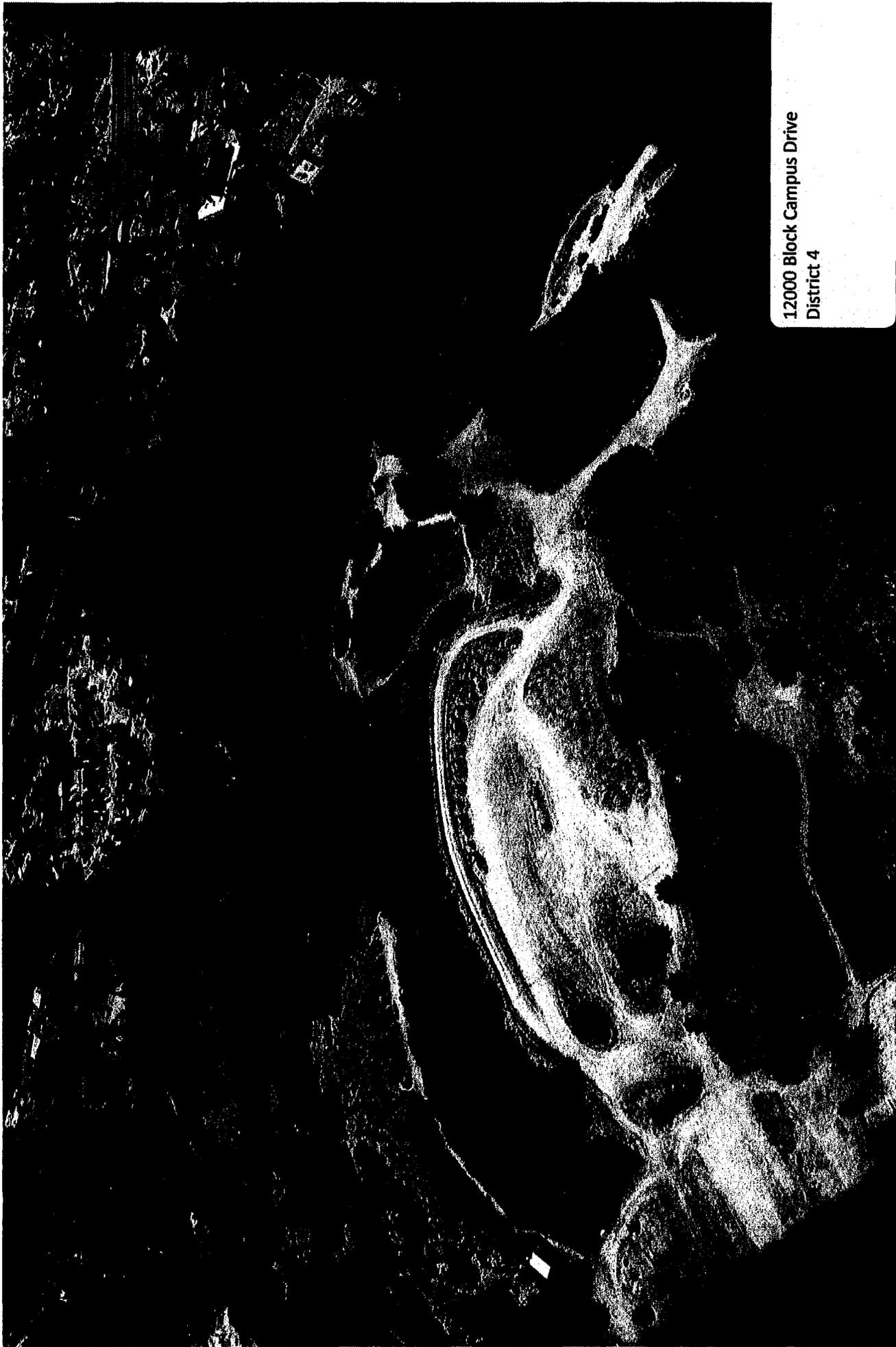
Joaquin Miller Park  
District 3



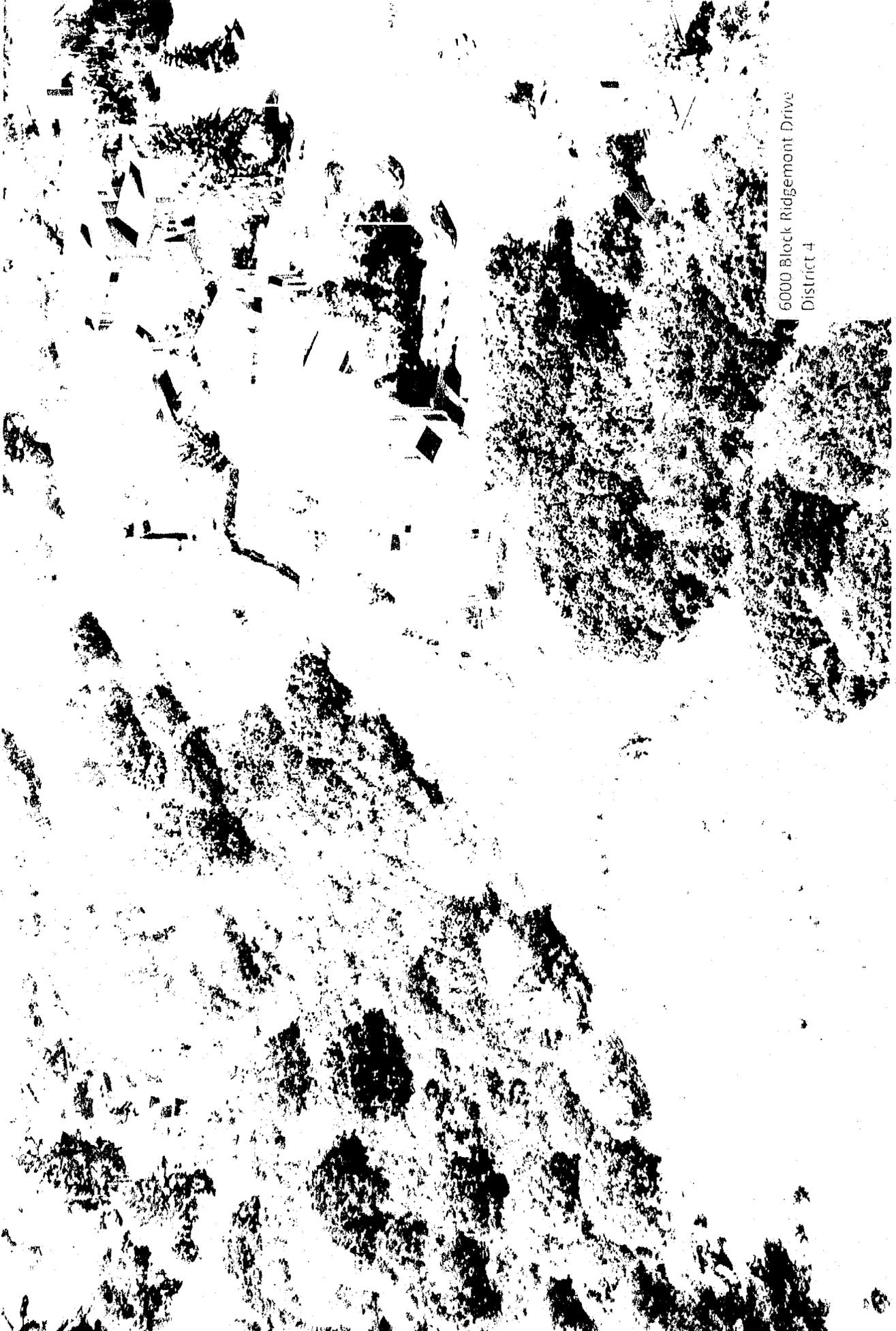
Butters Drive  
District 3



McDonnell Ave  
District 4



12000 Block Campus Drive  
District 4

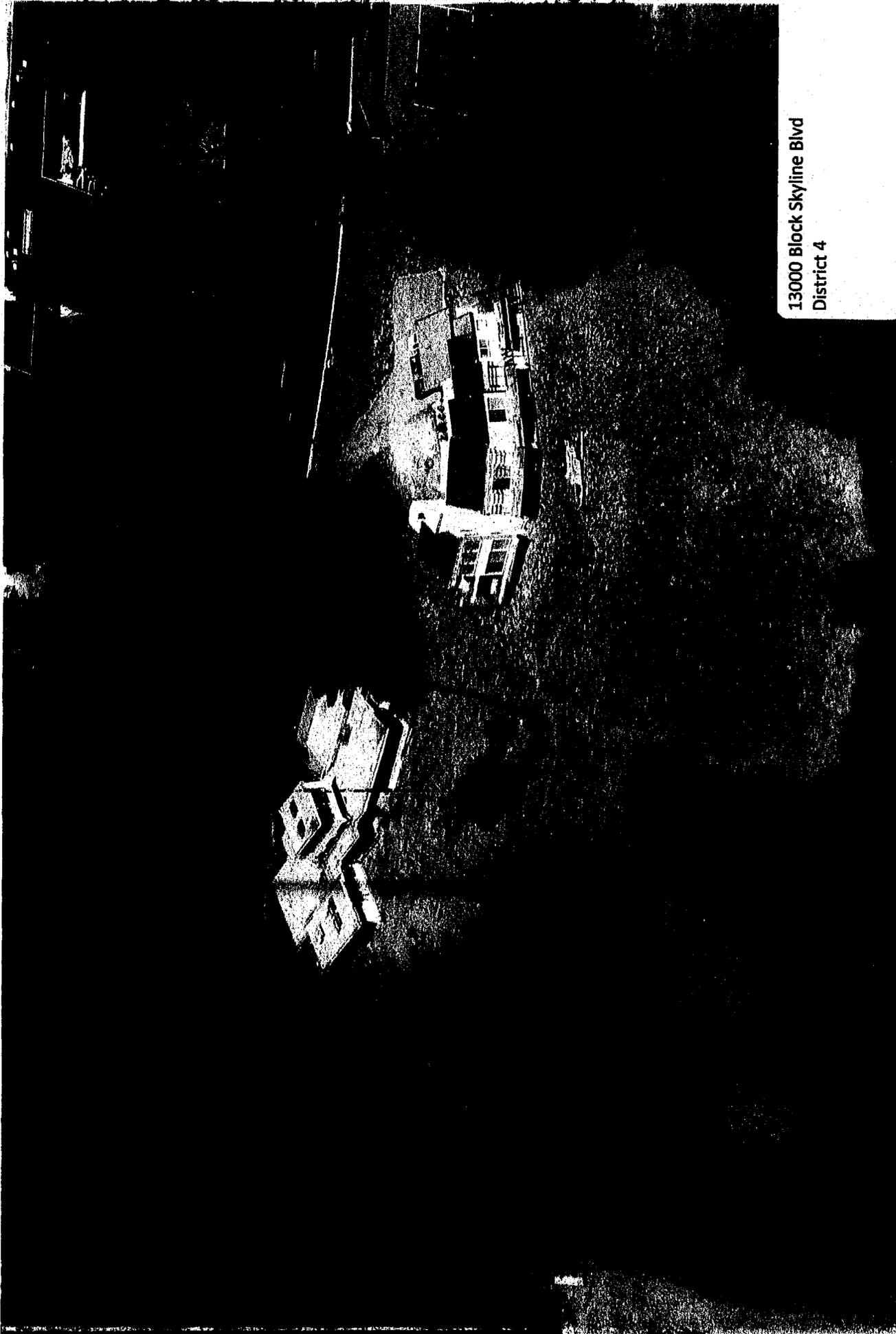


6000 Block Ridgemoor Drive  
District 4

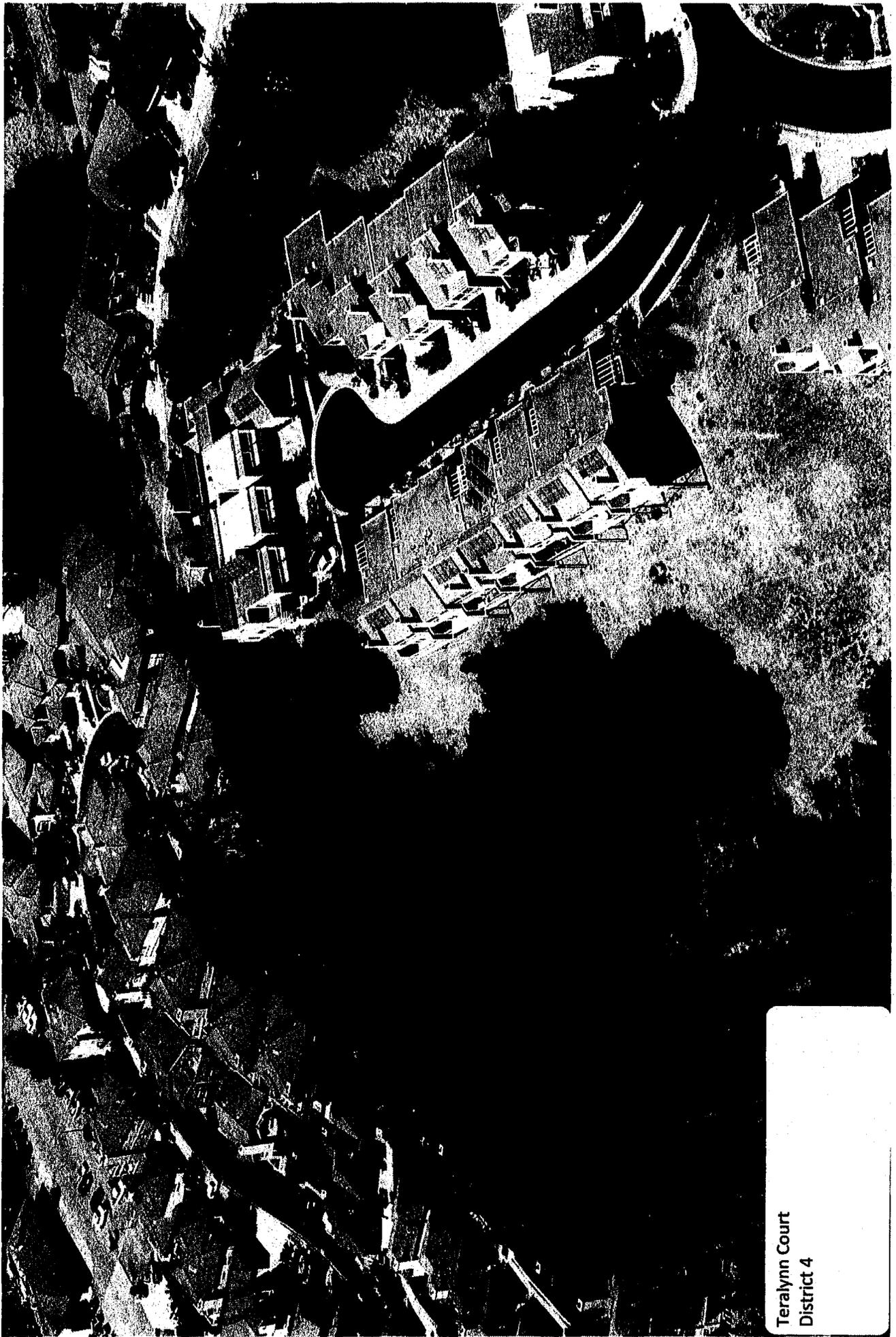


Balmoral Drive  
District 4

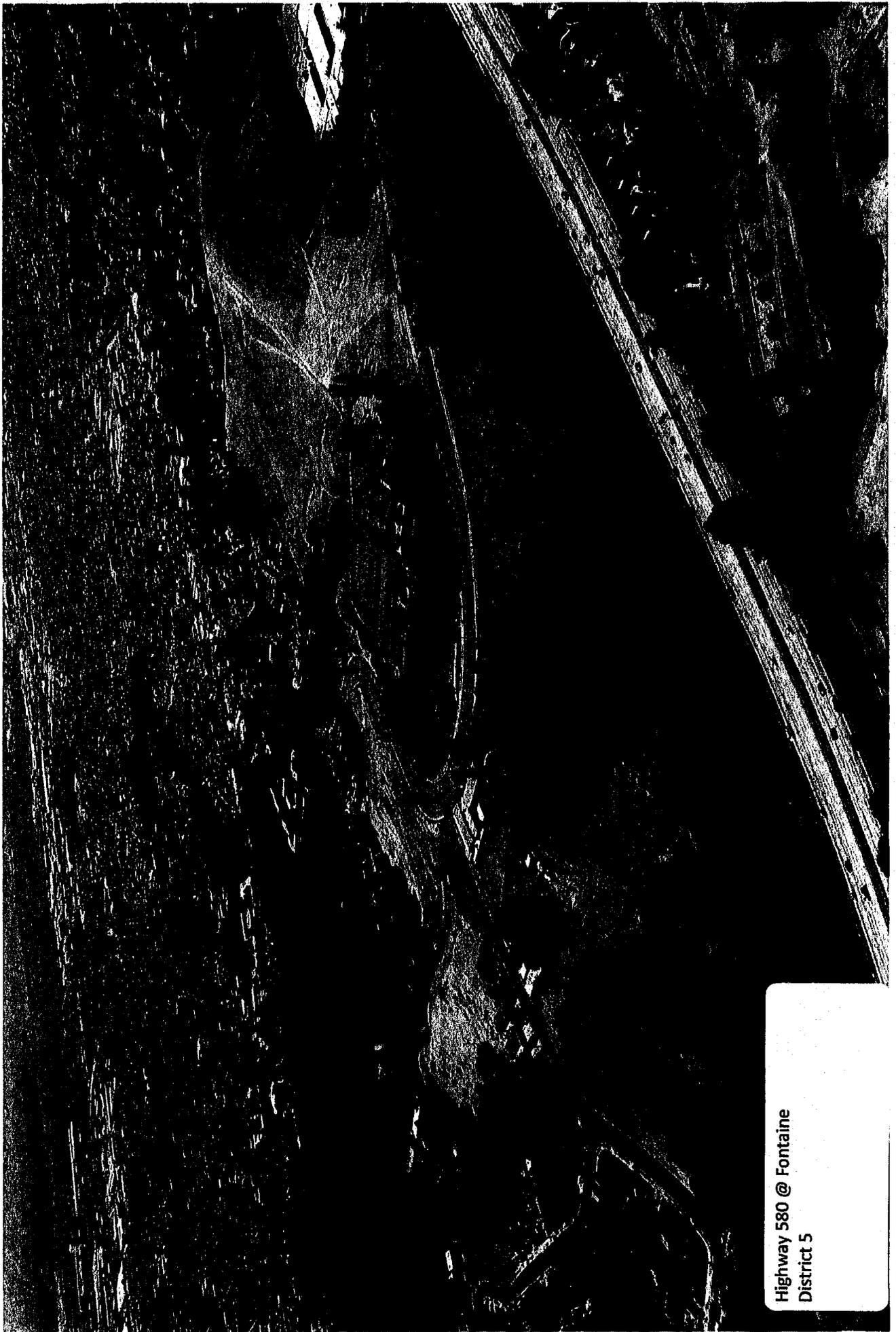




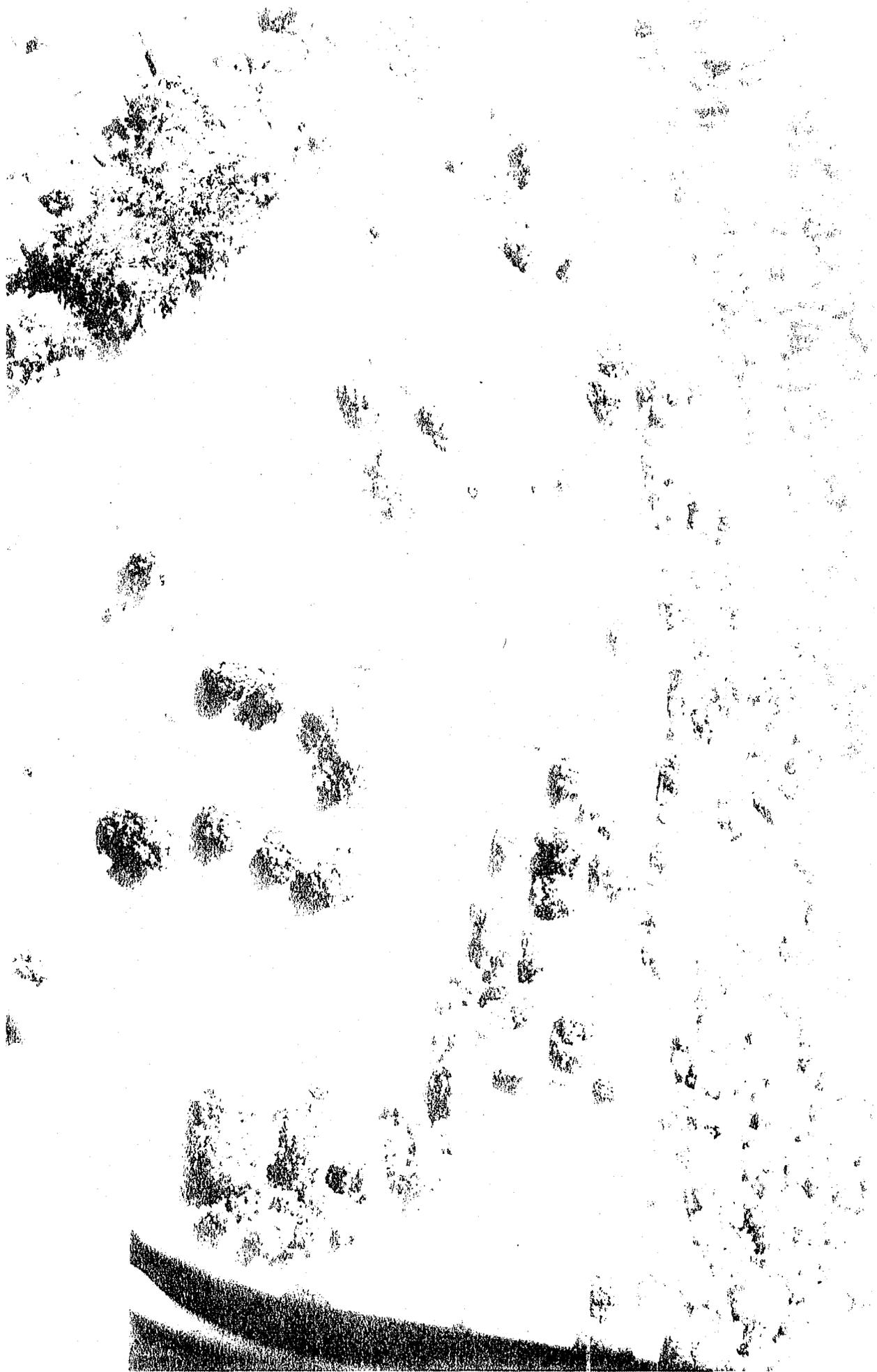
13000 Block Skyline Blvd  
District 4

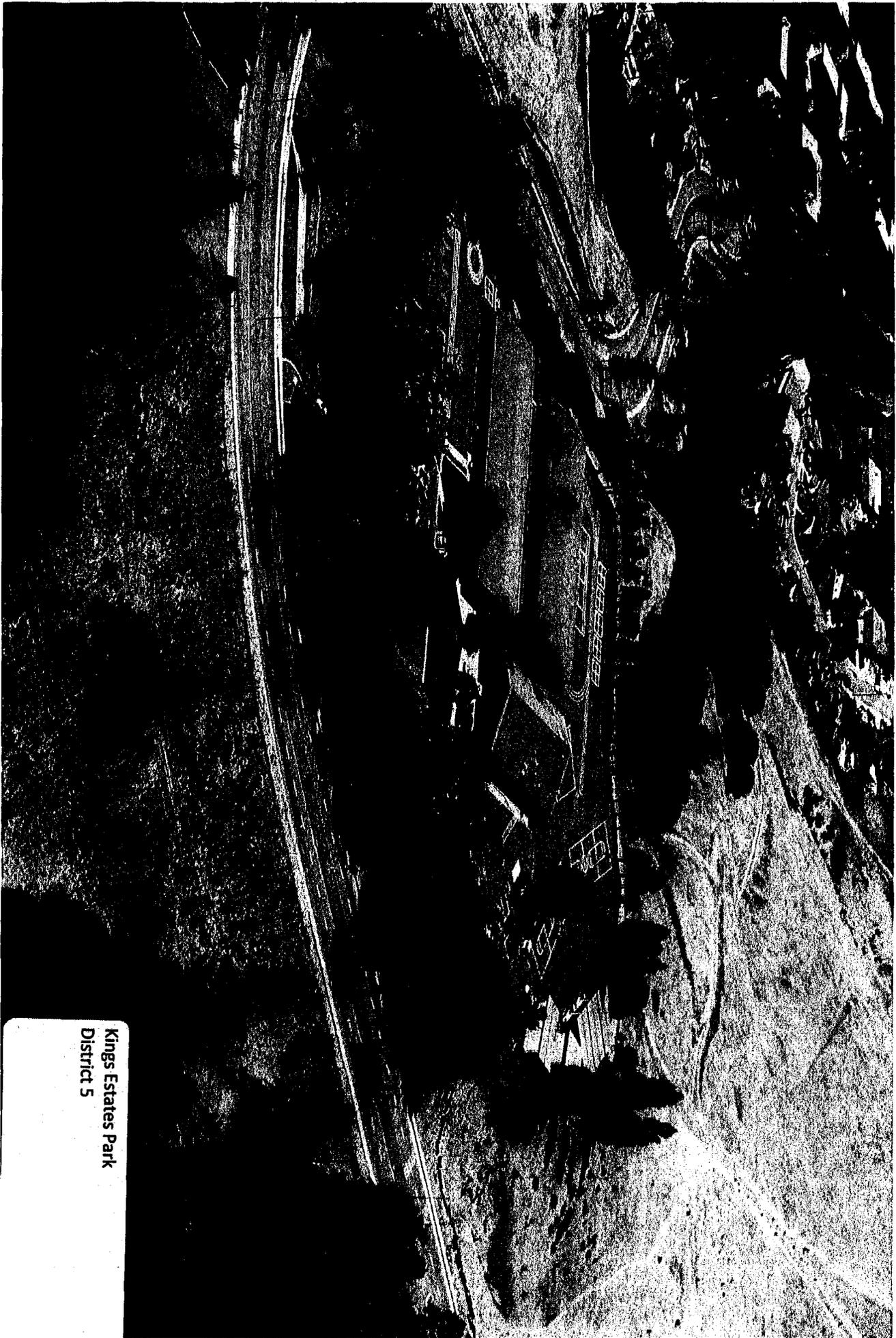


Teralynn Court  
District 4



Highway 580 @ Fontaine  
District 5





Kings Estates Park  
District 5

