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Archeological Survey For The West Borgfeld Drive Improvements From Timberline Drive To Blanco Road, Bexar County, Texas

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ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR THE WEST BORGFELD DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS FROM TIMBERLINE DRIVE TO BLANCO ROAD, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

by

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ABSTRACT

On February 27, 2015, Prewitt and Associates, Inc. conducted an archeological survey for proposed improvements along West Borgfeld Drive from Timberline Drive to Blanco Road in Bexar County, Texas. The project will reconstruct West Borgfeld Drive from two lanes to four lanes. These improvements will take place within the existing 86-ft-wide right of way of West Borgfeld Drive and comprise a horizontal Area of Potential Effects (APE) of ca. 20 acres. The survey found that the existing right of way West Borgfeld Drive is disturbed by travel lanes, overhead and buried utility lines, previous land leveling or grading, and erosion, which has stripped much of the landscape of its soil mantle. No archeological sites or materials were encountered during the survey. Therefore, it is recommended that the project proceed without any further archeological work.

INTRODUCTION

On February 27, 2015, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., conducted an archeological survey for proposed improvements along West Borgfeld Drive in Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1).

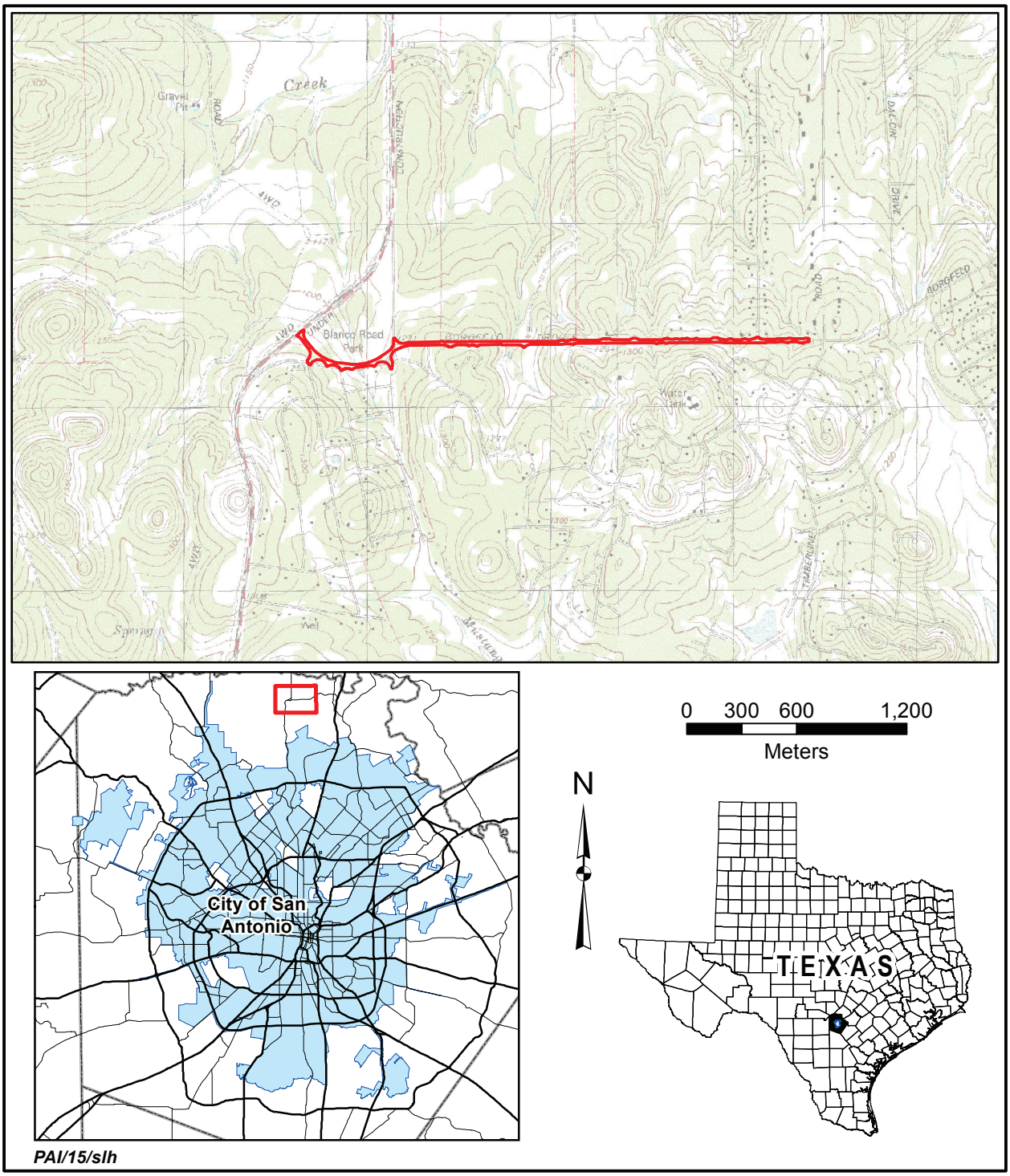

Figure 1. Project area location map.

The project will reconstruct West Borgfeld Drive between its intersections with Timberline Drive and Blanco Road from a two-lane road to a four-lane road with bar ditches, associated drain or low-water crossings, retaining walls, and driveways (Figure 2). The improvements will take place within the 86-ft-wide existing right of way of West Borgfeld Drive. The horizontal Area of Potential Effects (APE) is ca. 20 acres, and the depth of the construction-related impacts is expected to be 1–2 m.

The survey was authorized by the State of Texas Antiquities Code (Texas Natural Resource Code of 1977, Title 9, Chapter 191, VTCS 6145-9) and conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7195. The work was conducted on behalf of primary contractor Adams Environmental, Inc., of San Antonio, for the Department of Public Works, Bexar County, Texas.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Bexar County is in south-central Texas and straddles the Balcones Fault Zone, which separates the Edwards Plateau from the Blackland Prairie of the Gulf Coastal Plain to the southeast (Arbingast et al. 1973:6; Bureau of Economic Geology 1983). The Edwards Plateau margin has been heavily dissected by stream downcutting and headward erosion, resulting in a rugged landscape of limestone hills and canyons, whereas the Blackland Prairie is typically rolling tall grasslands underlain by soft limestones, marls, and chalks.

The climate of the Blackland Prairie region can be classified as modified humid subtropical with Gulf-influenced hot summers and continental-influenced mild winters, while the Edwards Plateau region is subtropical steppe with low summer humidity (Natural Fibers Information Center 1987:10–12). Summer temperatures can exceed 100°F, although such extremes are more frequent to the west on the Edwards Plateau. Freezing temperatures can occur during the winter months but also are more common on the Edwards Plateau. The mean annual precipitation for Bexar County is 29.1 inches. Rain falls throughout the year with slight peaks in the late spring and early fall months (Natural Fibers Information Center 1987:49).

Like the landscape and climate, the biota of Bexar County differs from east to west, although there is geographical overlap of some species. The flora and fauna of the Edwards Plateau are defined as Balconian, while those of the Blackland Prairie are characterized as Texan (Blair 1950).

According to the *Geologic Atlas of Texas–San Antonio Sheet*, the project area traverses limestone, dolomite, and marl units of the lower Cretaceous Glen Rose Formation (Bureau of Economic Geology 1983), which form an upland divide between the Cibolo and Salado Creek basins. Two low-order tributaries of Meusebach Creek, part of the Cibolo Creek watershed, cross West Borgfeld Drive near the middle of the proposed project area. Holocene-age deposits

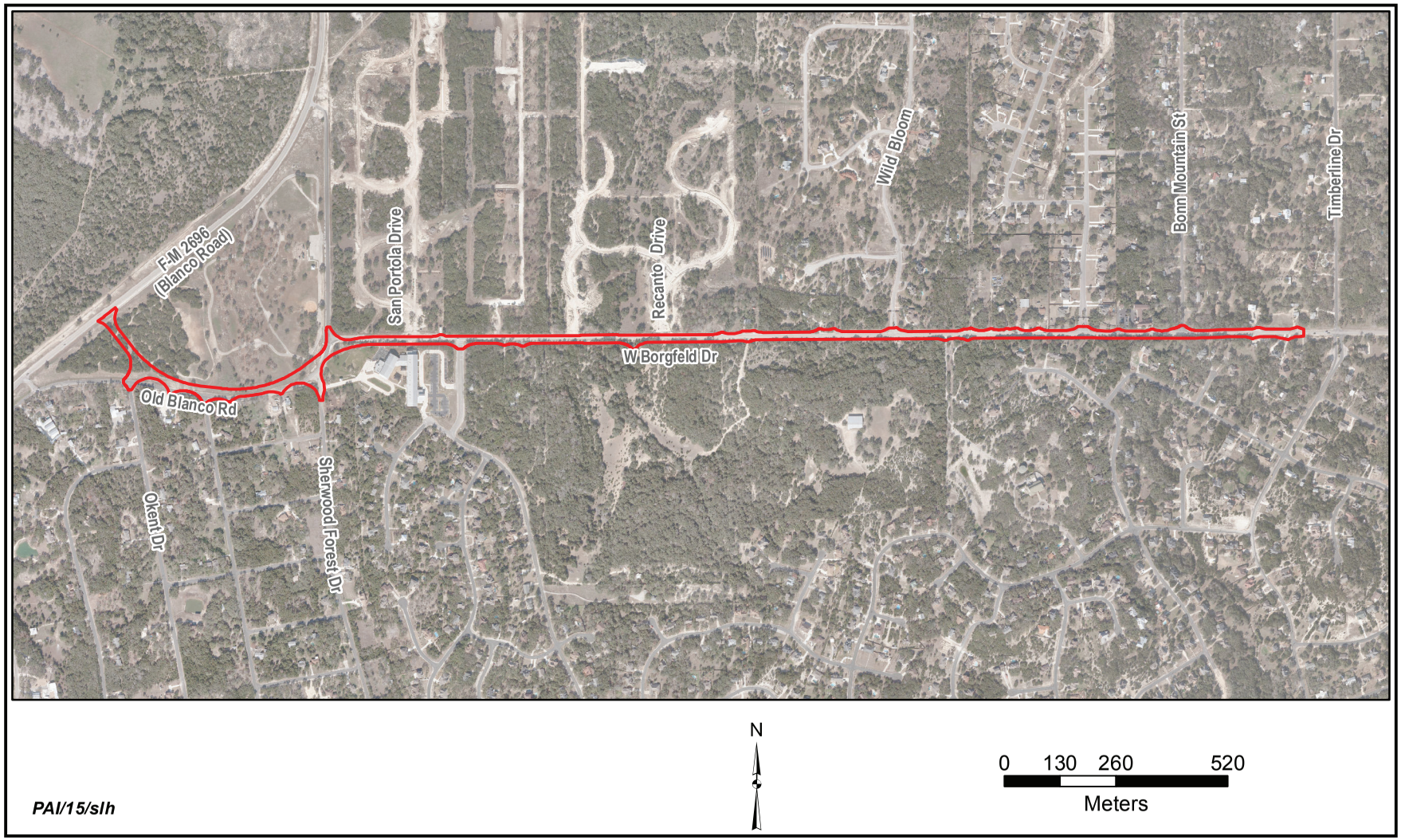

Figure 2. Project area.

(archeologically relevant deposits) are not mapped within these small stream valleys or anywhere else in the project area, though discontinuous alluvial units may be present but too small to map on the 1:250,000 scale of the *Geologic Atlas of Texas–San Antonio Sheet*.

Tarrant and Brackett series soils are mapped throughout the project area (Taylor et al. 1991). These are soils are typically thin stony Calciustolls (Tarrant) and Haplustepts (Brackett) formed on carbonate rocks in upland areas and hillslopes.

Currently the project area is surrounded by residential developments with interspersed areas of live oak–juniper woodlands (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Photograph of West Borgfeld Drive between Recanto Drive and San Portola Drive.

PREFIELD INVESTIGATIONS

A search of the Texas Historical Commission's online Archeological Sites Atlas revealed that no known archeological sites are present within the project area. There are three known archeological sites within 1 km of the project area, all of which are located on the Camp Bullis Military Reservation to the west. The closest of these is 41BX1254. Site 41BX1254 consists of four sinkholes that contained many early-twentieth-century artifacts and two dart points. The Texas Historical Commission determined the site as not eligible for listing in the National Register (Texas Archeological Sites Atlas, 41BX1254, Determination #5685). The other two sites, 41BX391 and 41BX392, are prehistoric lithic scatters. Neither site is eligible for listing in the National Register (Texas Archeological Sites Atlas, 41BX391,

Determination #5663 and 41BX392, Determination #5664). Sites 41BX391 and 41BX392 are typical of the many sites recorded on Camp Bullis (see Boyd et al. 1990; Cestaro et al. 2000, 2001; Gerstle et al. 1978; Kibler and Gardner 1997; Maslyk and Kibler 1998; Quigg 1988; Scott 1999; Wilder et al. 2003). These sites generally consist of scattered prehistoric artifacts and cultural materials resting on eroded upland surfaces—geologic and geomorphic characteristics that are prevalent throughout the current project area and not conducive to yielding intact significant sites.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

A field crew of two archeologists walked over the ca. 20 acres of the project area, examining the ground surface for artifacts and subsurface exposures. Ground surface visibility was very high because like neighboring Camp Bullis, the landscape of the project area is highly eroded, consisting of thin patchy soil mantles with expansive exposures of bedrock (Figure 4). The examination of the two small streams that intersect the project area noted the absence of any thick fine-grained alluvial deposits. The alluvium that was observed tended to be gravelly and occurred in thin small discontinuous units. In addition, the existing right of way of West Borgfeld Drive, except for the westernmost ca. 650 ft of the project area which runs through Bullis County Park, is disturbed by the existing two-lane road, land leveling or grading, and overhead and buried utility lines on both sides (Figure 5). These disturbances, coupled with the geological and geomorphic setting, make it unlikely that intact archeological sites are present in the project area.

Figure 4. Photograph of bedrock exposure along West Borgfeld Drive between San Portola Drive and Old Blanco Road.

Figure 5. Photograph of grading and utilities disturbances along West Borgfeld Drive between Bonn Mountain and Wild Bloom Streets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The archeological survey conducted for the proposed improvements along West Borgfeld Drive between Timberline Drive and Blanco Road documented extensive disturbances related to erosion, road construction, and residential development. No archeological sites were encountered during the survey. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the proposed project should proceed as planned without additional archeological investigations, as the impacts associated with these improvements will have no effect on significant archeological resources.

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