

CULTURAL RESOURCES DESKTOP INVESTIGATION
BEXAR COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL:
SC-27, BULVERDE ROAD AT MUD CREEK TRIBUTARY
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

PREPARED FOR:
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INTRODUCTION

The SC-27 project is located on a tributary of Mud Creek at Bulverde Road in north-central Bexar County as shown in Figure 1. The project will replace an existing low-water crossing with five 8' x 4' reinforced concrete culverts and a concrete-lined channel upstream to Jung Road. The project location is shown in Figure 1, below.

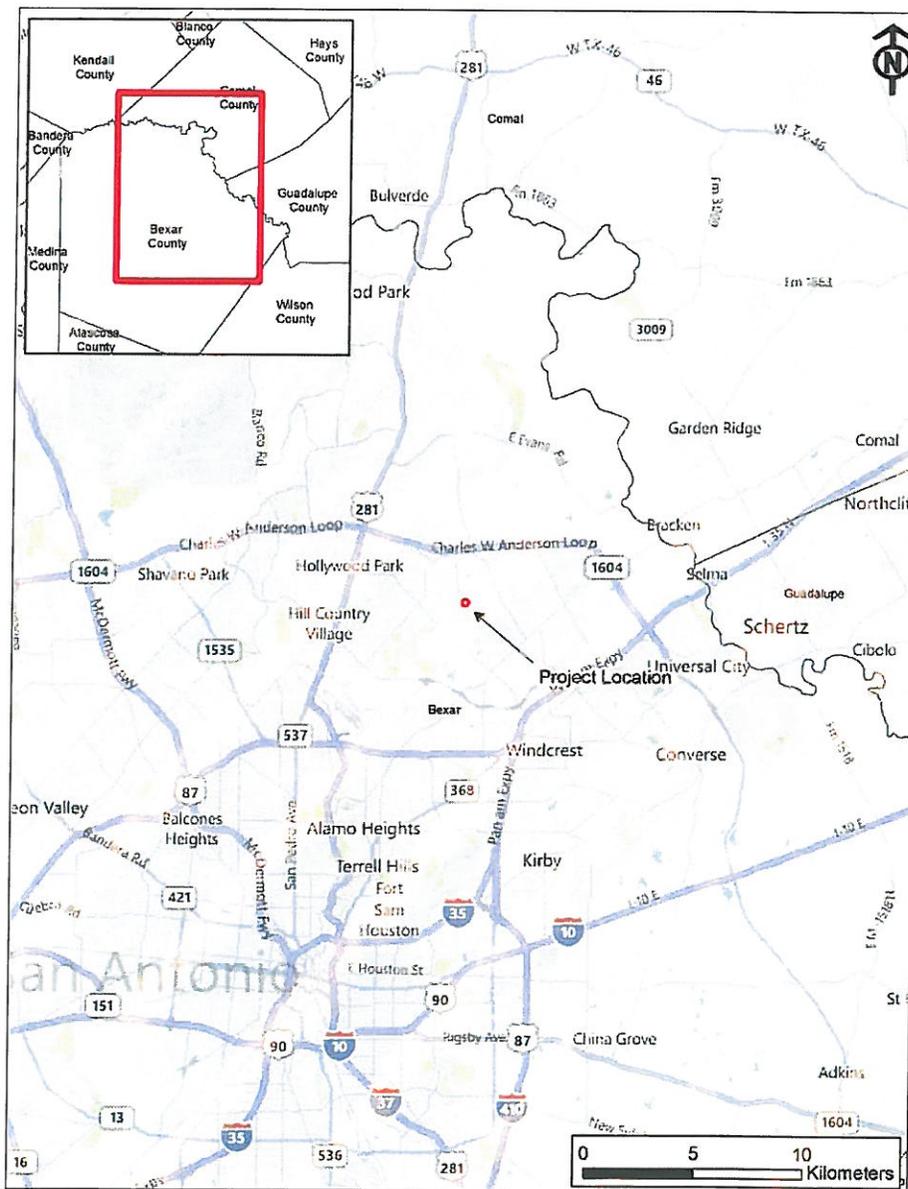


Figure 1. Project Location Map. (Source: Bing)

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The project is being sponsored by Bexar County, but would require a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Thus, it is considered an “undertaking” as defined by 36 CFR §800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. Section 106 requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. The project also involves land owned or controlled by a political subdivision of the State of Texas and is therefore subject to the requirements of the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT). The requirements for the ACT are similar to those of Section 106 for lands owned or controlled by the State of Texas.

Finally, the project must also comply with the requirements of the City of Antonio’s (COSA’s) Unified Development Code (UDC). The UDC requires that any project within COSA’s Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) must be reviewed and approved by the COSA Office of Historic Preservation prior to implementation.

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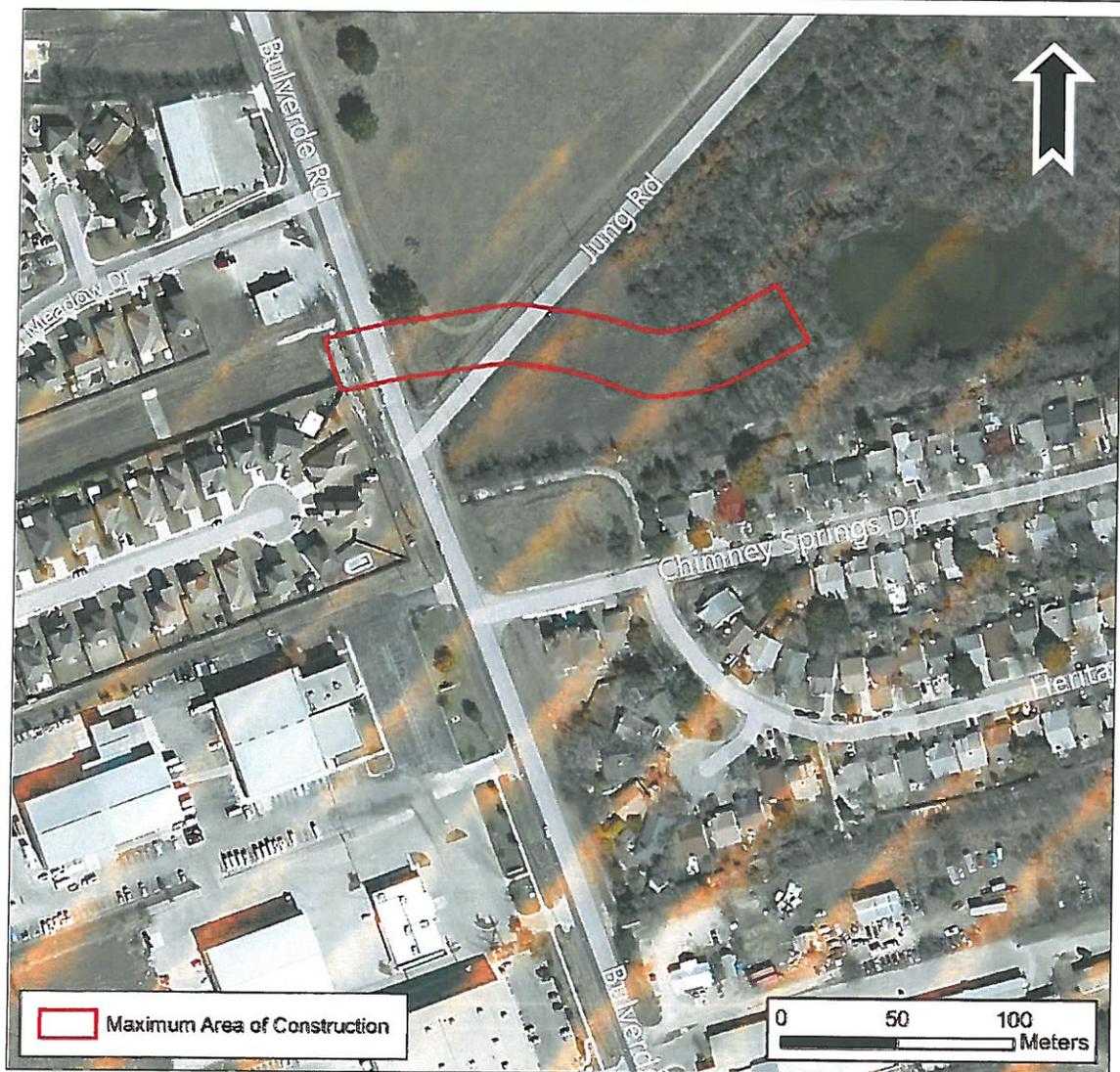


Figure 2. Project Area Showing Maximum Area of Construction.

AREA OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS

36 CFR 800 defines the Area of Potential Effects (APE) as

the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The area of potential effects is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking.

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“Historic Property” means

any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior. This term includes artifacts, records, and remains that are related to and located within such properties. The term includes properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and that meet the National Register criteria.

For buildings, structures, objects, and districts (“non-archeological historic resources”), the APE takes into account both direct (e.g. destruction, alteration, damage) and indirect (e.g. visual, noise, vibration impacts) effects that a project could have on those resources. For the SC-27 project, the APE for non-archeological historic resources extends 200 feet beyond the maximum project footprint and is shown in yellow in Figure 3. This APE takes into account both direct and indirect (i.e. visual and noise) impacts on adjacent parcels.

However, the APE for archeological resources is different from the APE for non-archeological historic resources. Typically, the APE for archeological resources is defined as the area where ground-disturbing activities could take place. It extends to the limits of construction, including all temporary easements and construction staging areas. For the SC-27 project, this corresponds to the maximum area of construction for the proposed construction as depicted in Figure 2. The total APE for archeology covers approximately 1.3 acres and is the area outlined in red in Figure 3.

Aerial views of the APE are included in Appendix A.

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Figure 3. Proposed APE for Archeological and Non-Archeological Historic Resources.

METHODS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

AmaTerra Environmental, Inc. (AmaTerra) cultural resources specialists reviewed existing files held by the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and the Texas Historical Commission (THC), as well as previous archeological survey reports to ascertain the location and proximity of recorded archeological sites, sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHLs), Official Texas Historical Markers

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(OTHM)s, State Archeological Landmarks (SALs) and archeological surveys within or near the proposed APE for the SC-27 project.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) online Web Soil Survey, relevant aerial photography, historical maps, land use maps, the *Geologic Atlas of Texas*, and project area photos were also examined in order to assess the potential for unrecorded, historic-age cultural resources¹ to be present in the APE. The map sources used include 1940 Bexar County Highway map, aerial photography from 1959 (Taylor et al. 1991), and the 1953 and 1973 USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle (topographic) maps. Appendix A contains aerial views of the current land use conditions. Data from the Bexar County Appraisal District (BCAD) and the Bexar County Clerk's office was used to determine the dates of improvement for the parcels within the APE. The results of this examination of the APE are designed for integration into an application for a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

PHYSICAL SETTING

The APE is located within the South Texas Plains ecological province, and experiences the subtropical-subhumid climate typical of this region. More specifically, the APE is situated in northeast San Antonio, along an unnamed tributary to Mud Creek. Remnants of former farm and rangeland are still evident as small, vacant land plots between the more recent suburban housing subdivisions. Vegetation consists of Live Oak, Cedar, Ashe Juniper, Brasil and Mesquite trees. Understory vegetation include vines such as Greenbrier, as well as Bermuda grass, Sow thistle, White brush, Sedge spp. Spikerush, Agarita and Texas Sotol. Adjacent land uses are mainly residential. An aerial photograph of the project area may be found in Appendix A.

SOILS AND GEOLOGY

Upper Cretaceous bedrock of Pecan Gap chalk and marl characterize the geology of the APE, and the surfaces above them have little potential to contain deeply buried prehistoric archeological materials (Bureau of Economic Geology 1992). Soils consist of Houston Black

¹ Historic-age is assumed to be 1962 (2012, minus 50 years).

clays and Lewisville clays (USDA-NRCS 2012). These upland clays tend to be deep, compact and typically do not contain intact buried archeological deposits.

A review of aerial photos from 1959 (Taylor et al. 1991) indicates that the APE was entirely farm and rangeland at that time. Bulverde and Jung Roads were in their current configurations. Today the area surrounding the APE is residential and extensively developed. However, the APE itself is made up of vacant former farmland.

FINDINGS

Maps and Aerial Photograph Research

A review of historic maps and aerial photographs indicates that there were never any structures within or near the APE prior to the 1980s. There are no structures depicted within the APE on the 1940 Bexar County Highway map, or on the 1953 Longhorn USGS 7.5-minute topographical map (Figure 4). Likewise, aerial imagery from 1959 (Taylor et al. 1991) shows no structures in the APE (Figure 5). The 1973 Longhorn USGS 7.5-minute topographical map depicts the APE as farmland still. (Figure 6).

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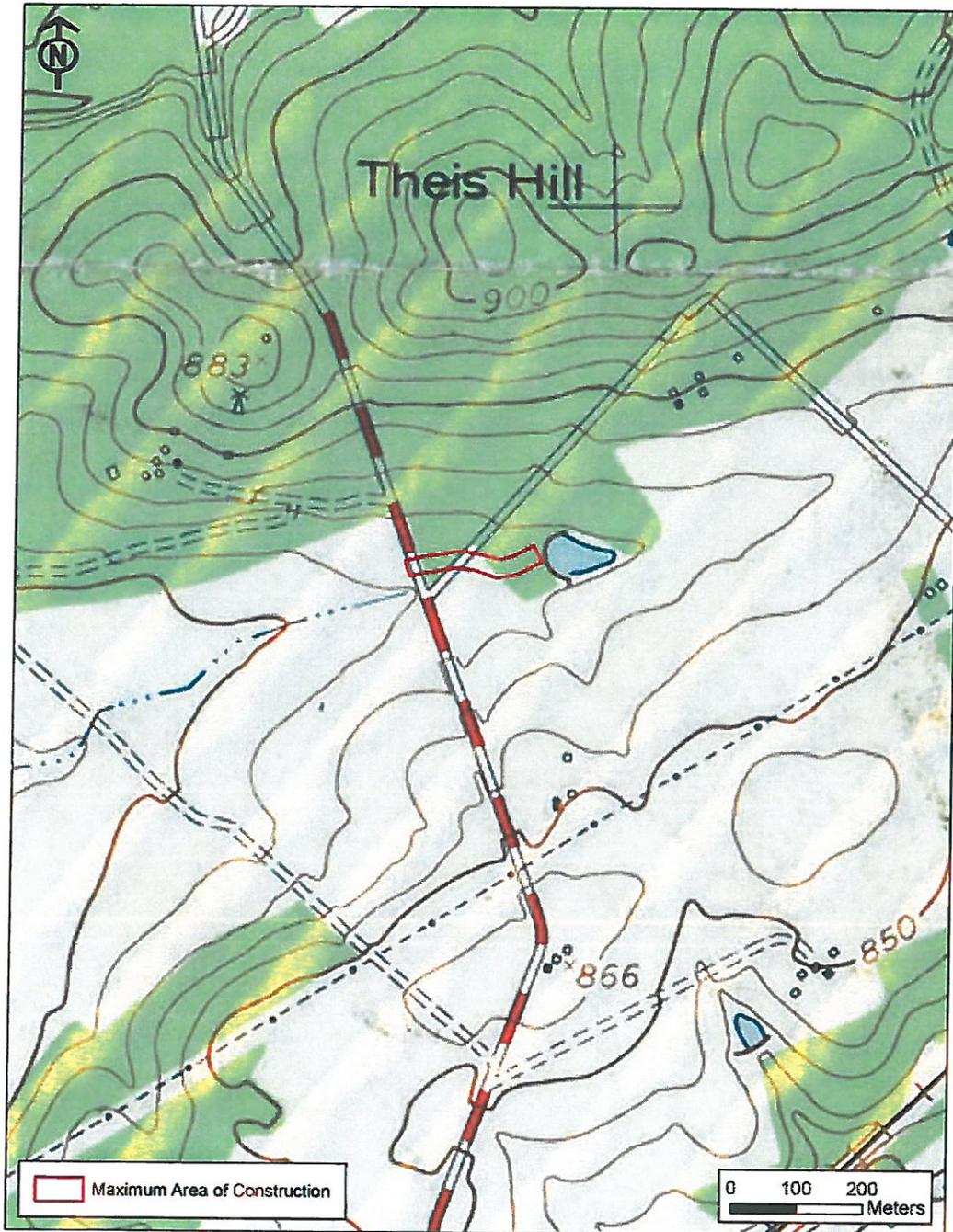


Figure 4. 1953 USGS Longhorn, Texas 7.5-minute Quadrangle Map Showing the Maximum Area of Construction.

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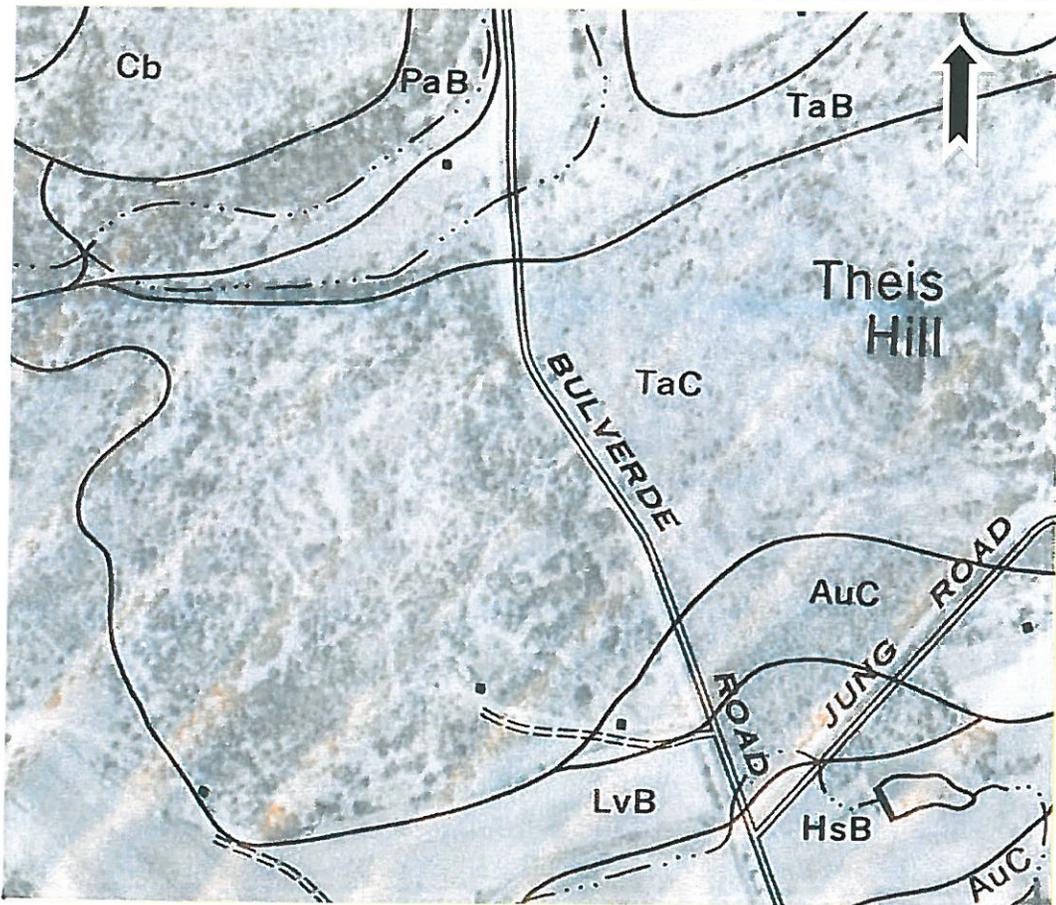


Figure 5. Detail of Soil Survey Map of Bexar County (from Taylor et al. 1991). Image Date is 1959 and Demonstrates Rural Character In and Around the Project Area.

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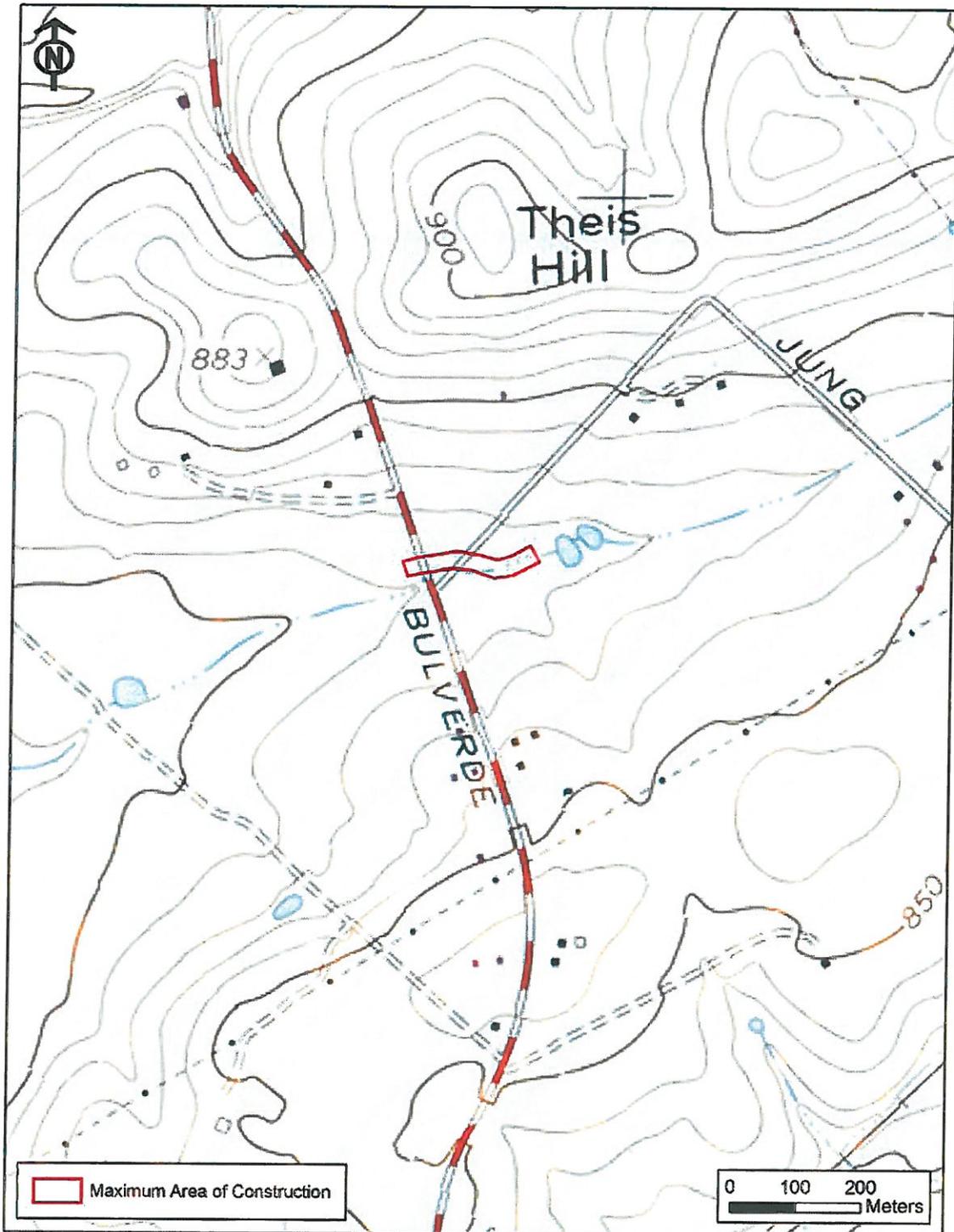


Figure 6. 1973 USGS Longhorn, Texas 7.5-Minute Quadrangle Map Showing the Project Area.

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Texas Archeological and Historic Sites Atlas

There are no NRHP-listed sites, SALs, RTHLs, OTHMs, or historic cemeteries within the APE. There are no previously recorded archeological sites within the APE. No archeological surveys have occurred within the APE. Two surveys have taken place close to the APE in advance of construction of housing developments. In 1977 a survey sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) occurred along Mud Creek. This survey documented a number of sites, the closest of which, 41BX356, is 3,327 feet to the west of the APE. There is no information about this site in the online sites atlas. Another survey took place east of the APE in 1984. This survey was sponsored by the Veterans Administration (VA) and documented one site, 41BX624 that is 2,963 feet northeast of the APE. The site was a nineteenth century limestone building ruin with some associated nineteenth and early twentieth century bottle glass. (Figure 7).

IMAGE RESTRICTED



Figure 7. Previously Recorded Archeological Sites and Surveys (Texas Historical Commission 2012).

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A search of the BCAD records for parcels within the non-archeological APE revealed that the two residential subdivisions closest to the project are Green Spring Valley, on the west side of Bulverde Road (platted 1981) and Seven Oaks, Unit 10, on the east side, just south of Jung Road (platted 1982). All buildings in the APE were built in the 1980s and photography shows that they are unexceptional examples of late-20th century housing types. Finally, aerial photography shows that the surrounding area lacks the cohesiveness of development, integrity, and amenities required for a historic district (see Appendix A). Consequently, there are no individual properties that would qualify for listing on the NRHP, and no potential exists for a historic district within the area.

Based on the background review of soils geology and land use, there is very low potential for intact archeological sites within the APE. Overall, there is low potential for historic properties of any sort to be affected by the proposed undertaking.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the APE and the area surrounding it were developed beginning in the 1980s. There are no previously recorded historic structures, archeological sites, cemeteries, RTHL's or historical markers within the APE. Previous land use, geologic environment, and soil conditions suggest low potential for intact buried archeological deposits of any sort. We recommend no further cultural resources work and that a finding of **no historic properties affected** is appropriate.

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Aerial View of Project Area; View Facing North. (Source: Bing Maps)