

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to evaluate environmental impacts associated with the proposed La Entrada Specific Plan (proposed project) in the City of Coachella (City). The City is the “public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the project,” and as such is the “Lead Agency” for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15367). CEQA requires the Lead Agency to consider the information contained in the EIR prior to taking any discretionary action on the proposed project. This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document to be considered by the City and the Responsible Agencies (County of Riverside [County] and Local Agency Formation Commission [LAFCO]) during deliberations on the proposed project. The discretionary approvals and permits associated with the proposed project are described in Section 3.0, Project Description.

The City of Coachella, as Lead Agency, determined that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment and that an EIR would be required to more fully evaluate potential adverse environmental impacts that may result from development of the project. As a result, this EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA, as amended (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000, et seq.), and the *CEQA Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA* (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Section 15000, et seq.).

Questions regarding the preparation of this document and the City’s review of the proposed project should be referred to the following:

Mr. Luis Lopez, Director of Development Services
City of Coachella, Development Services Department
1515 Sixth Street
Coachella, California 92236
(760) 398-3102

2.1 PURPOSE AND TYPE OF EIR/INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

2.1.1 Program EIR

This EIR will serve as a Program EIR pursuant to *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168, which states that:

A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

- (1) Geographically,
- (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions,

- (3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or
- (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

This EIR analyzes the proposed project under CEQA at a program level. The proposed project includes a master-planned community on approximately 2,200 acres (ac) that would include a mix of residential, commercial, open space, school, and recreational uses. The proposed project would be implemented over the next 30 years. This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR for the following reasons:

- The proposed La Entrada Specific Plan would be implemented over a 30-year period.
- The proposed project would be implemented over a large geographic area, approximately 2,200 ac.
- Final grading and construction plans and details have not been developed for each planning area.

Although finalized plans are not yet prepared, a worst-case construction scenario was developed to analyze construction impacts throughout this EIR.

Subsequent activities associated with implementation of the Specific Plan would be evaluated for compliance with CEQA in light of this Program EIR to determine whether additional environmental documentation must be prepared. Specifically, if Tentative Tract Maps, improvement plans, or other discretionary approvals associated with implementation of the Specific Plan are submitted and proposed, the environmental impacts of implementing those maps, plans, and approvals will be compared against the analysis set forth in this Program EIR. To the extent that those impacts are consistent with the Program EIR's comprehensive analysis, no further CEQA documentation would be required, provided that none of the conditions set forth in *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15162 exist. Subsequent CEQA analysis may be required for specific development plans, as indicated in Chapter 4.0 of this EIR.

2.1.2 Uses of this EIR

This EIR has been prepared to evaluate environmental impacts that may result from implementation of the proposed project and to provide a comprehensive CEQA clearance for the proposed project. As the Lead Agency, the City has the authority for preparation of this EIR and, after the comment/response process, the City will consider certification of the Final EIR and potential approval of the proposed project as described in this EIR.

CEQA requires the Lead Agency to consider the information contained in the EIR prior to taking any discretionary action. This EIR provides information to the Lead Agency and other public agencies, the general public, and decision-makers regarding potential environmental impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed project. The purpose of the public review of the EIR is to evaluate the adequacy of the environmental analysis in terms of compliance with CEQA.

Section 15151 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states the following regarding standards from which adequacy is judged:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among experts. The courts have not looked for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.

Under CEQA (PRC Section 21002.1[a]):

The purpose of an environmental impact report is to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided.

The City and Responsible Agencies have the authority to make decisions on discretionary actions relating to development of the proposed project. As stated previously, this EIR is intended to serve as an informational document to be considered by the City and Responsible Agencies during deliberations on the proposed project. This EIR evaluates impacts from a conservative standpoint, assuming a worst-case project footprint and grading limits. Therefore, this EIR mitigates a worst-case scenario of potential impacts associated with the proposed project to the fullest extent feasible.

2.2 PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

In compliance with *CEQA Guidelines*, the City has taken steps to maximize opportunities for the public and other public agencies to participate in the environmental review process. The City conducted the scoping process, issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project, and determined that an EIR was required to evaluate the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed project and related actions.

2.2.1 Notice of Preparation

On July 18, 2012, an NOP for the proposed project was distributed by the City via the State Clearinghouse (SCH). The SCH issued a project number for the EIR (SCH No. 2012071061). In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15082, the NOP was circulated to the agencies and individuals listed in Appendix A for a period of 30 days, during which time written comments were solicited pertaining to environmental issues/topics that the EIR should evaluate. Responses to the NOP were received from the following:

- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- Time Warner Cable
- California Highway Patrol

- Coachella Valley Unified School District
- Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District
- Department of Toxic Substances Control
- County of Riverside Transportation and Land Management Agency, Transportation Department
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Coachella Valley Water District
- City of Indio
- United States Bureau of Reclamation (2)
- County of Riverside Planning Department

2.2.2 Scoping Meeting Summary

The City held a public scoping meeting at Coachella City Hall on Tuesday, August 28, 2012, to present the proposed project and to solicit input from interested individuals regarding environmental issues that should be addressed in the La Entrada Specific Plan EIR. As part of the public process for the proposed project, the City also initiated Native American consultation in accordance with Senate Bill 18 (SB 18). A response letter from the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians was received.

The following key environmental issues and concerns raised at the scoping meeting or through the NOP scoping process:

- **Cultural:** The project site is within the Cabazon traditional use area. Issues raised included a request for on-site monitoring by the Tribe for approved cultural resource monitors during all ground-disturbing activities, requested research on traditional Cahuilla landscapes and oral history, requested formal consultation with local tribes, requested complete site survey and resource inventory, and requested review of cultural resource reports.
- **Traffic:** There are concerns that the proposed project would increase traffic and affect emergency response times. Additional issues included concerns regarding impacts on County General Plan (GP) roadways and intersections, requested use of County Guidelines for traffic impact analysis, questions regarding whether realignment of Avenue 52 would require a General Plan Amendment (GPA) of the County's GP Circulation Element, requests that the cumulative analysis include all projects within 1 mile (mi) of the site, concerns regarding the future connection to Interstate 10 (I-10), and any effects on Dillon Road and the City's Sphere of Influence.
- **Population:** The specific population increase needs to be addressed.
- **Schools:** There is a need for additional elementary and middle schools due to the project's size; high school locations that will serve the project should be identified.
- **Water Quality:** There are concerns regarding storm water retention sites and increased habitat for mosquitoes and concerns that irrigation could increase the imported red fire ant populations.
- **Hazards:** There are concerns regarding potential threats to human health or the environment. It is requested that construction and operation adhere to all related hazardous materials regulations and plans.

- **Air Quality:** It is recommended that the air quality analysis follow South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) guidance for air quality analysis and mitigation measures.
- **Water Supply:** There are concerns regarding consistency with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (September 29, 2009) between Coachella Valley Water Department (CVWD) and the City and the *2010 Coachella Valley Water Management Plan Update*; the need to address flood hazards and mitigation to protect facilities; the requirement to coordinate with CVWD regarding improvements within or adjacent to Coachella Branch of the All-American Canal (Coachella Canal) and levee rights-of-way (ROW); and interest expressed to develop wastewater collection/reclamation reuse as an alternative water source.
- **Biological Resources:** The project site may be within the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) Conservation Area, so the issues associated with assembly reserve in conjunction with other projects in unincorporated areas of the County should be determined.
- **Right-of-Way:** Crossing of the Coachella Canal will require ROW permits from the Bureau of Reclamation's Yuma Area Office, and coordination is required to ensure all required federal compliance permits are being developed for the proposed plan.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of areas of controversy, but rather key issues that were raised during the scoping process. The EIR addresses each of these areas of concern or controversy in detail, examines project-related and cumulative environmental impacts, identifies significant adverse environmental impacts, and proposes mitigation measures designed to reduce or eliminate potentially significant impacts. Appendix A includes the NOP and copies of written comments received in response to the NOP.

2.2.3 Public Review Period

This Draft EIR is being distributed to numerous public agencies and other interested parties for review and comment. The Draft EIR is also available at the following locations and on the City's website.

- City of Coachella, Development Services Department
1515 Sixth Street
Coachella, California 92236
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Monday through Thursday
- Coachella Library
1538 Seventh Street
Coachella, California 92236
Hours: 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Monday; 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Tuesday; Noon–8:00 p.m. Wednesday; 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Saturday

All comments received from agencies and individuals on the EIR will be accepted during the public review period, which will not be less than 45 days, in compliance with CEQA. All comments on the EIR should be sent to the following City contact person:

Mr. Luis Lopez, Director of Development Services
City of Coachella, Development Services Department
1515 Sixth Street
Coachella, California 92236
(760) 398-3102
Fax: (760) 398-5421
Email: L Lopez@coachella.org

Following the close of the review period, the City will prepare responses to all comments and will compile these comments and responses into a Final EIR. All responses to comments submitted on the EIR by public agencies during the CEQA comment period on the EIR will be provided to those agencies at least 10 days prior to final action on the project. The City will make findings regarding the extent and nature of the impacts as presented in the Final EIR. The Final EIR will need to be certified as complete by the City Council prior to making a decision to approve or deny the project. Public input is encouraged at all public hearings (e.g., Planning Commission, City Council) regarding the project before the City.

2.3 SCOPE OF THIS EIR

As required by *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15128, this EIR must identify the effects of the proposed project determined to be significant. Per *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15060, the City determined that the proposed project may have a significant impact on the environment and an EIR would clearly be required for the proposed project, and the EIR process was initiated. As explained in Section 2.2.1 above, the City issued an NOP soliciting comments from Responsible and Trustee Agencies and other interested parties, including members of the public.

The thresholds of significance criteria utilized in this EIR are based on Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*. All environmental topics contained in the Appendix G Checklist are addressed in this EIR: aesthetics, agriculture, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards, hydrology and water quality, land use, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services and utilities, recreation, traffic, and water supply. The analysis herein determines whether there are no impacts, less than significant impacts, less than significant impacts with mitigation, potentially significant impacts, or significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the proposed project. Mitigation measures are proposed where feasible to reduce or eliminate identified impacts.

2.4 FORMAT OF THE EIR

Pursuant to *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15120(c), this EIR contains the information and analysis required by Sections 15122 through 15131 of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Each of the required elements is covered in one of the EIR chapters described below.

2.4.1 Chapter 1.0: Executive Summary

Chapter 1.0 contains the Executive Summary of the EIR, listing all significant project impacts, mitigation measures that have been recommended to reduce any significant impacts of the proposed

project, and the level of significance of each impact following mitigation. The summary is presented in a table format.

2.4.2 Chapter 2.0: Introduction

Chapter 2.0 contains a discussion of the purpose and intended use of the EIR.

2.4.3 Chapter 3.0: Project Description

Chapter 3.0 includes discussion of the proposed project's geographical setting; the project site's previous uses; and the proposed project's goals, objectives, characteristics, components, construction phasing, and anticipated discretionary actions and permits for the project.

2.4.4 Chapter 4.0: Existing Environmental Setting, Environmental Analysis, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

Chapter 4.0 includes an analysis of the proposed project's environmental impacts. It is organized into the following topical sections: aesthetics, agriculture, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards, hydrology and water quality, land use, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services and utilities, recreation, traffic, and water supply. The environmental setting discussions describe the "existing conditions" of the environment on the project site and in the vicinity of the site as they pertain to the environmental issues being analyzed (Section 15125 of the *CEQA Guidelines*).

The project impact discussions identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. The direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed project on the environment are identified and described, giving due consideration to both the short-term and long-term effects, as necessary (Section 15126.2[a] of the *CEQA Guidelines*).

Chapter 4.0 also includes within the analysis of each environmental topic a discussion of the cumulative effects of the proposed project when considered in combination with other projects, causing related impacts as required by Section 15130 of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Cumulative impacts are based on the buildout of the project and the General Plan buildout of the City, due to the proposed project being implemented over a 30-year period.

The discussions of mitigation measures identify and describe feasible measures that could minimize or lessen significant adverse impacts for each significant environmental effect identified in the EIR (Section 15126[e] of the *CEQA Guidelines*). The levels of significance before and after mitigation are provided. Unavoidable adverse effects are identified where mitigation is not expected to reduce the effects to less than significant levels.

2.4.5 Chapter 5.0: Alternatives to the Proposed Project

In accordance with CEQA, the alternatives discussion in Chapter 5.0 describes a reasonable range of alternatives that could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the proposed project and are capable of

eliminating or substantially reducing any of the proposed project's significant adverse environmental effects or reducing them to a less than significant level. The alternatives analyzed in Chapter 5.0 include the No Project/McNaughton Specific Plan Alternative, No Project/No Development Alternative, a Retirement Community Alternative, and a Non-Annexation Alternative. As specified in the *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(f)(2), this chapter also identifies and assesses potential alternative project sites within the City and surrounding area that could accommodate the proposed project.

2.4.6 Chapter 6.0: Long-Term Implications of the Project

Chapter 6.0 includes discussions on the following topics as required by Section 15126 of the *CEQA Guidelines*: (1) significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project; and (2) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project.

2.4.7 Chapter 7.0: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

PRC Section 21081.6 requires that agencies adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program for any project for which it had made findings pursuant to PRC Section 21081. Chapter 7.0 provides a list of all proposed project mitigation measures and applicable performance standards, defines the parties responsible for implementation and review/approval, and identifies the timing for implementation of each control measure.

2.4.8 Chapters 8.0 and 9.0

Chapters 8.0 and 9.0 provide the organizations and persons contacted during preparation of the EIR, the EIR preparers and technical report authors, other experts included in the preparation of the EIR; and the references used in this EIR, respectively.

2.5 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

As permitted in Section 15150 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, an EIR may reference all or portions of another document that is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public. Informational details from the documents that have been incorporated by reference are summarized in the appropriate sections of this EIR, along with descriptions regarding how the public may review these documents. These documents include:

- City of Coachella General Plan Elements (as amended) (available online at: <http://www.coachella.org/DocumentCenter/Index/38>)
- City of Coachella Municipal Code and other titles referenced herein (available online at: <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=16080>)
- County of Riverside General Plan Elements (as amended) (available online at: <http://www.rctlma.org/genplan/>)
- County of Riverside General Plan EIR (SCH Number: 2002051143) (available online at: <http://www.rctlma.org/genplan/content/eir/volume1.html>)

- Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) Commissioner's Handbook (available online at: http://www.lafco.org/opencms/resources_links/POLICIES_PROCEDURES_APPROVED8-26-04.pdf)
- La Entrada Specific Plan (April 2013) available at:
 - Coachella City Hall
1515 Sixth Street
Coachella, California 92236
- McNaughton Specific Plan EIR (October 1988) available at:
 - Coachella City Hall
1515 Sixth Street
Coachella, California 92236

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