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INTRODUCTION

The following Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the City of Coachella's General Plan Update 2035 (CGPU) has been prepared based upon the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended, Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. ("CEQA"), and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15000 et seq. The City of Coachella is the Lead Agency under CEQA for the CGPU.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR), as described in the 2012 CEQA Statute and Guidelines (Section 15121 (a)), is a disclosure document to inform key decision makers and the public of the environmental impacts of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The information provided in the EIR can be used to guide project review by the lead agency and responsible agencies.

This Draft Program EIR contains an overview of the proposed project's environmental impacts and will be circulated for public review and comments before adoption of the Final Program EIR (FEIR) and General Plan Update 2035. CEQA's objective of informing the public of the environmental impacts is better aided by public involvement during the EIR process, as the public can provide valuable input, information and concerns regarding the project's potential environmental impact of existing conditions. In response to public comments, the Final Program EIR will include the Draft Program EIR, along with comments from the Draft EIR circulation period with relevant responses or mitigation measures. The Final Program EIR (FEIR) and CGPU are to be adopted simultaneously, as the FEIR will provide supporting environmental context for the CGPU.

The City of Coachella General Plan is intended to be a "self-mitigating" document, in that the proposed General Plan objectives and policies are designed to mitigate or avoid impacts on the environment resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan. To that end, the relevant updated General Plan objectives and policies providing mitigation have been identified for each significant impact in this DEIR. If the applicable General Plan objectives and policies were determined not to fully mitigate or avoid impacts, then additional mitigation measures have been provided. Any additional mitigation measures have been written as policy statements that can be incorporated into the final General Plan. Each impact discussion includes a determination as to whether the impacts would be mitigated to a less than significant level or would remain significant and unavoidable after implementation of the updated General Plan objectives and policies.

As adoption or amendment of a General Plan is subject to CEQA review, lead agencies must provide and prepare for consideration environmental impact document for disclosure and certification prior to the adoption of a General Plan, including the CGPU. The supporting environmental impact document is to

provide environmental context, existing conditions, and potential environmental impacts of the CGPU, and contains supporting documentation from the CGPU that would aid environmental impact reduction. The CGPU cannot be approved without certification of the supporting environmental impact document.

AUTHORITY

The City of Coachella is the Lead Agency under CEQA and is responsible for preparing of the Draft Program EIR (DEIR) for the Coachella General Plan Update 2035 (CGPU) (Governor’ s Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse Division, No. 2009021007). This Draft Program EIR has been prepared in conformance with the CEQA (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.); CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.); and the rules, regulations and procedures for implementation of CEQA, as adopted by the City of Coachella. The principle CEQA Guidelines sections governing content of this document are Sections 15120 through 15132 (Contents of Environmental Impact Reports), and Section 15168 (Program EIR).

The City of Coachella is acting as the Lead Agency in the Draft Program EIR, and will require the following approvals for adoption and implementation of the Final Program EIR and CGPU 2035. Note that while the update of the zoning code will be necessary to implement the CGPU, the update is anticipated to be conducted within one year after the CGPU is adopted.

Anticipated Agreements, Permits, and Approvals	Granting Agency
Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Certification	City of Coachella
Zoning Code Update	City of Coachella
Climate Action Plan Adoption	City of Coachella
General Plan Adoption	City of Coachella
Future Land Development Permits	City of Coachella

PROCESS AND HISTORY

The goal of Draft EIR for the CGPU is to provide a detailed report of possible significant environmental impacts that could take place upon full implementation of the proposed project (CGPU). The EIR process is comprised of a series of reports and public commenting periods to ensure full public disclosure and involvement regarding any potential environmental impacts. The first step of the Draft EIR process is to identify existing conditions of the Planning Area, and conduct an Initial Study of environmental impacts based on CEQA Guidelines.

On March 14, 2013, the City of Coachella held a public scoping meeting at the City Hall Council Chambers (1515 Sixth Street, Coachella CA, 92236) to receive public comments on the Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP/IS) for the intended Draft EIR. The Notice of Preparation was released and circulated for a 30-day comment period from March 14, 2013 to April 15, 2013. At the end of the 30-day period, the Lead Agency and consultants assembled this Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) along with consideration of comments during the NOP circulation period. This DEIR will be circulated for review and comment from the general public, public agencies, interested parties, and any other applicable government organization.

On March 14, 2013, the City of Coachella held a public scoping meeting at the City Hall Council Chambers (1515 Sixth Street, Coachella CA, 92236) to receive public comments on the Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP/IS) for the intended EIR. Comments from the Public Scoping Meeting addressed existing and new environmental issues within the planning area. The Notice of Preparation was circulated for comments for a 30-day period from March 14, 2013 to April 15, 2013. At the conclusion of the NOP circulation period, the Lead Agency and consultants assembled the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) analyzing environmental impacts of the project. This DEIR will be circulated for review and comment to the public generally, public agencies, interested parties, and any other applicable government organization.

AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

During the 30-day NOP/IS scoping period, several comments were received from the public and interested parties. The NOP/IS compiled a primary scope of potentially significant environmental impacts, cumulative impacts, and areas of controversy. The NOP/IS can be found in Appendix 11.1 and the written comments can be found in Appendix 11.2. The NOP and IS were circulated to receive any comments, information, or additional potential impacts or areas of controversy that may not have been identified in the NOP/IS. Through this process the following areas of controversy were identified:

Utilities Infrastructure: The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) is expected to need to upgrade its utility infrastructure to maintain and provide the existing level of service to its existing and future customers based on the population projections of 2035. It is also noted that the IID will require right-of-ways to construct and maintain infrastructure and development of new infrastructure would be funded by developers.

Water: The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) has submitted comments regarding the identification and consideration of multiple agencies and plans associated with water supply, quality and wastewater treatment. CVMD requests that; agreements with the CVWD, existing water and sewer boundaries, 2010 Urban Water Management Plan, and Supplemental Water Supply, be considered in the Environmental Impact Report for the CGPU.

Other considerations. Other considerations noted in the NOP/IS comments include; the Desert Sands Unified School District cited a potential need for new facilities to accommodate population growth, South Coast Air Quality Management District cited compliance with air quality standards, and Native American Heritage Commission requested to receive reports of any relevant information pertaining to the CGPU, historic resources, and require development to comply with requests and CGPU policies.

IMPACTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

The Initial Study of the CGPU found the project to have no significant impact or less than significant impact in the following areas: Several additional topics were found not to be significant by this Draft Program EIR. The summary of these additional topics can be found in Section 8.0 Effects Found Not to be Significant.

- *For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?*

There are no private airstrips in the vicinity of the City of Coachella's Planning Area. The General Plan would not result in safety hazards for people in the vicinity of a private airstrip. Due to the absence of a private airstrip, the General Plan will have no significant impact.

- *For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

The General Plan Planning Area is not in the vicinity of a private airstrip. The project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels. Because of no existence of a private airstrip, there would be no significant impact created by noise levels.

The listed potential impacts were determined to not be affected by the CGPU, based on absence of both private airports and locally important mineral resources. The Planning Area does not have private air strips, or is within proximity to impact any private airstrips outside of the Planning Area. Additionally, no comments were made regarding these impact items during the 30-day public review period for the Notice of Preparation and Initial study. Based on findings of "No Significant Impact" for the listed three measures, the items will not be assessed in the Environmental Impact Report for the proposed project. Additionally, other topics were found to also be not significant by the Draft EIR. The summary of these additional topics can be found in Section 8.0, Effects Found Not to be Significant.

PROGRAM DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND APPENDICES

The CPGU 2035 Program Draft EIR includes background data and environmental analysis, and is supported by the Technical Appendices that include technical reports on specific topics such as traffic, air quality, and noise.

Both the Public Resource Code and the CEQA Guidelines discuss the use of "tiering" environmental impact reports by lead agencies. Public Resources Code Section 21068.5 defines "tiering" as:

"...the coverage of general matters and environmental effects in an environmental impact report prepared for a policy, plan, program or ordinance followed by narrower or site-specific environmental impact reports which incorporate by reference the discussion in any prior environmental impact report and which concentrate on the environmental effects which (a) are

capable of being mitigated, or (b) were not analyzed as significant effects on the environmental in the prior environmental impact report.”

The Coachella General Plan Update 2035 Program DEIR is intended to serve as a Program DEIR or “first tier EIR.” CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 states that a Program EIR can be prepared in connection with the “issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program.” The Program DEIR has been prepared for the City of Coachella General Plan Update 2035.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (a) states that a Program EIR is appropriate for evaluating “. . . 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 the 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.”

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (b), the advantages of a Program EIR include the following: 1) provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action; 2) ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis; 3) avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations; 4) allow the Lead Agency to consider broad policy alternatives with program wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts, and 5) allow reduction in paperwork.

Subsequent development projects proposed within the City must be reviewed in the context of this Program EIR to determine if additional environmental documentation is required. If the subsequent project would have environmental effects not addressed in the Program EIR, additional environmental review will be required. Where no new effects and no new mitigation measures are involved, the subsequent project can be approved without additional environmental documentation. Where an EIR is required for a subsequent project, the EIR should implement the applicable mitigation measures developed in the Program EIR, and focus its analysis on site specific issues not previously addressed.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Pertinent documents relating to this EIR have been cited in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15150, which encourages “incorporation by reference” as a means of reducing redundancy and length of environmental reports. The following documents, which are available for public review at the City of Coachella, Community Development Department, located at 1515 Sixth St, Coachella, CA 92236 are hereby incorporated by reference into this Program DEIR. Information contained within these documents has been utilized for each section of this EIR. A brief synopsis of the scope and content of these documents are provided below.

Coachella Municipal Code (Ordinance No. 1052) May 22, 2013.

The Coachella Municipal Code compiles all general permanent regulations, administrative, and penal ordinances of the City of Coachella. The municipal code provides for land use enforcement and code compliance. Zoning ordinances can be found in Title 17 of Coachella Municipal Code and outlines requirements for building permits, new land use permits, and regulation of land use activities, and enforcement.

Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

The CVMSHCP is part of a Southern California regional effort to preserve ecological systems and natural environments within San Diego, Orange, and Riverside County, including the Coachella Valley. The plan protects 240,000 acres of open space and 27 species, including species located within the Planning Area.¹ The plan provides strategies to meet federal and state endangered species regulations and outlines how local jurisdictions can aim to meet laws set out to protect and preserve sensitive species and habitats.

The CVMSHCP covers more than 1.1 million acres of the Coachella Valley, and is managed by the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC), and covers local jurisdictions of; Riverside County, Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, and Rancho Mirage². The CVCC also works with the Riverside County Waste Resources Management District, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Coachella Valley Water District, and Imperial Irrigation District to protect and preserve sensitive species within Coachella Valley.

The CVMSHCP operates under the Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (RCMSHCP), and conserves sensitive species through a series of land reserves to prevent degradation or development in areas where sensitive species habitat. Other natural reserve spaces include land with natural habitat community, and sensitive habitat community present, migratory species with seasonal presence, and biological resources of local, state, or federal importance. The RCMSHCP also protects animals on the Federal Endangered Species list.

Land acquisitions, land reserves, and habitat conservation development fees are all strategies acted out by the CVMSHCP.

Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport Master Plan (2004)

The Airport Master Plan, approved in December 2004, provides a 20-year development and maintenance strategy for airport land located south of the Planning Area. The Master Plan also outlines

¹ Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan <http://www.cvmshcp.org/>

² <http://www.cvmshcp.org/doc/CVMSHCPAnnualReport2012.pdf>

compatible land uses and density regulations for areas adjacent to airport boundaries, and land located within the noise zone, to ensure minimal disturbance of airport operations. The airport use compatibility plan determines land uses surrounding airport boundaries that are compatible with airport activities.

The airport land use compatibility plan outlines land uses for local or applicable jurisdictions to apply in respective Specific or General Plans. The Airport Master Plan ensures the safety and protection of people working and living within close proximity to airport boundaries. For the purpose of safety, and reducing potential risks, the Airport Master Plan was a direct input in the strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the methodologies in the development of the CGPU Land Use Plan.

California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis Report

This report describes the key assumptions used to calculate greenhouse gas reductions. When feasible, the potential reduction value of each measure has been quantified using industry standard methods developed by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) and outlined in the report Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures. The report describes approaches for quantifying greenhouse gas reductions from a specified list of mitigation measures. The report also provides guidance on the grouping and combination of measures.

The Association of Environmental Professionals also provides technical advisory protocol for communities' greenhouse gas reduction strategies. The report supplies cities and counties on methodology for baseline inventory collection, guidelines in determining boundary lines for emissions for each jurisdiction, and potential reduction strategies. These measures, when enacted with a primary strategy, improve its effectiveness. These methodologies formed the foundation for the greenhouse gas emissions reductions analysis of the Coachella Climate Action Plan and this DEIR.

Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) 2011 Greenhouse Gas inventory Report

The CVAG greenhouse gas inventory describes greenhouse gas emissions for the baseline year of 2005 and then projects future emissions for 2020. The baseline year of 2005 was chosen because CVAG had already established it as the baseline year for a 10% electricity use reduction goal set in 2008. The year 2005 is also the initial year for baseline greenhouse gas emissions data established under SB 375. The inventory also addresses how it will be used to identify potential emissions reduction strategies that could be adopted to curb greenhouse gas emissions in the Coachella Valley. CVAG anticipates developing a greenhouse gas reduction plan following this inventory.

2020 Coachella General Plan and EIR

The 2020 General Plan was updated in 1996, and contained 11 elements. Four elements; agriculture, economic development, urban design, and fiscal, were added to the seven California State's mandatory elements. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2020 General Plan is also from 1996 and was used as background information for the 2035 Coachella General Plan Draft EIR. Both documents provided baseline conditions, and identified past issues and opportunities for the City in 1996. Since this time, growth projections and market demands have significantly changed the growth in the City. Thus the 2020 General Plan and EIR serve as a valuable time stamp to study the City's past growth and existing conditions.

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