

4.0 | ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 of this Program DEIR existing conditions of the City’s resources, direct and indirect project impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and significant unavoidable impacts of the CGPU. The environmental impact analysis addresses potential impacts for potentially significant impacts identified by the Notice of Preparation and Initial Study (Appendix 11.1).

The EIR examines the following environmental topics as outlined by CEQA Guidelines Environmental Checklist:

- 4.1 Aesthetics
- 4.2 Agricultural Resources
- 4.3 Biological Resources
- 4.4 Cultural Resources
- 4.5 Geology and Seismic Hazards
- 4.6 Hazardous Materials
- 4.7 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.8 Land Use and Planning
- 4.9 Circulation
- 4.10 Noise
- 4.11 Air Quality
- 4.12 Greenhouse Gases
- 4.13 Population Housing
- 4.14 Utilities
- 4.15 Public Services
- 4.16 Water Supply and Water Quality

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. As the General Plan is the constitution for all future development, all future development must comply with the General Plan if it is to be approved by the City. In addition, the land use and transportation system of the CGPU was specifically changed so as to realize a more efficient and environmentally sustainable community. Each project application that is submitted to the City must be reviewed for General Plan consistency in order to be eligible for approval by the City. To that end, the relevant updated General Plan objectives and policies providing mitigation have been identified for each significant impact in this section. If the applicable General Plan objectives and policies were determined not to fully mitigate or avoid impacts, then additional mitigation measures have been provided. These 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.

ORGANIZATION

Each impact section contains the following information:

Existing Baseline Conditions explains the current physical conditions of the Planning Area at the time of preparation of the NOP. Impact analysis will address environmental impacts made on the existing conditions of the Planning Area.

Regulatory Setting outlines relevant policies, standards, ordinances, codes, law, or established plans that exist at the time of preparation of the NOP that would influence or potential environmental impacts.

Impact Analysis outlines level of significance of potential environmental impacts on existing conditions in the Planning Area from the CGPU. The Impact Analysis provides specific information relevant to significance of questions outlined by CEQA Checklist Questions, and provides a determination of level of environmental impacts.

Major sources used in crafting criteria include the CEQA Guidelines; local, state, federal, or other standards applicable to an impact category; and officially established significance thresholds. "... An ironclad definition of significant effect is not possible because the significance of any activity may vary with the setting." (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064 [b]). Principally, "... a substantial, or potentially substantial adverse change in any of the physical conditions within an area affected by the project, including land, air, water, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic and aesthetics significance" constitutes a significant impact (CEQA Guidelines Section 15382).

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation describes significance criteria explaining thresholds that determine potential impacts and level of significance. This section also includes potential environmental impacts of the environmental factor, a brief overview of the relevant existing conditions, and an explanation of how the Planning Area could be impacted, along with a list of policies that will aid in reducing potential environmental impacts. Because the CGPU was constructed to be an environmentally self-mitigating plan, a comprehensive list of all policies pertaining to specific environmental factors will outline how any potential environmental impacts can be reduced. Environmental impacts will be determined based on level of significance, with no impact being the least impactful, and significant and unavoidable impact affecting the existing conditions the most.

Evidence, based on factual and scientific data, is presented to show the cause-and-effect relationship between the project and the potential changes in the environment. The exact magnitude, duration, extent, frequency, range, or other parameters of a potential impact are ascertained, to the extent possible, to determine whether impacts may be significant; potential direct and reasonable foreseeable indirect effects are considered to the extent feasible.

Mitigation measures are project-specific actions that are required of the project to minimize significant unavoidable impacts; to rectify a significant unavoidable impact by restoration; to reduce or eliminate a

significant adverse impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations; or environment. Environmental impacts found to be less than significant will have no mitigation measures required.

Cumulative Impacts describes potential environmental changes to the existing physical conditions that may occur with the project together with all other reasonably foreseeable, planned, and approved future projects, as well direct or indirect impacts to the region that includes the Planning Area.

Significant Unavoidable Impacts describes impacts that would be significant, but cannot be mitigated to less than significant and would be considered unavoidable. To approve a project with unavoidable significant impacts, the lead agency must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations. In adopting such a statement, the lead agency is required to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental impacts in determining whether to approve the project. If the benefits of a project are found to outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the unavoidable impacts may be considered 'acceptable' and the project approved.

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