

5.0 | GROWTH INDUCING EFFECTS

INTRODUCTION

The following discussion addresses CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(d), Growth Inducing Impact of the Proposed Project, which requires that an EIR “discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment.”

This discussion analyzes potential growth-inducing effects based on the criteria outlined below, as suggested in the CEQA Guidelines. In general terms, a project may foster spatial, economic, or population growth in a geographic area, if it meets any one of the following criteria:

- Fostering of economic expansion or growth (e.g., changes in revenue base and employment expansion);
- Fostering of population growth (e.g., construction of additional housing), either directly or indirectly;
- Removal of an impediment to growth (e.g., establishment of an essential public service and provision of new access to an area);
- Establishment of a precedent-setting action (e.g., an innovation, a change in zoning and general plan amendment approval); or
- Development of or encroachment on an isolated or adjacent area of open space (being distinct from an in-fill project).

Should a project meet any one of the above-listed criteria, it may be considered growth inducing. The potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed Project are evaluated below against these criteria. The CEQA Guidelines also indicate that it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

The proposed CGPU is designed as a tool that will help the City direct and manage its expected growth in an orderly fashion. While the City has some control over how and where it will grow, it does not control the regional trends of growth that will likely generate a 2035 population increase of approximately 94,000 people. In fact, this trend of significant growth has been identified and anticipated

by the Southern California Association of Governments in its 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.¹ Projects permitted pursuant to the CGPU will accommodate additional housing for a variety of income levels, provide new jobs, create a better balance of residential and non-residential uses, reduce per capita GHG emissions, and protect natural resources. Additionally, the CGPU presents a framework for new development that will improve walkability and broaden the opportunities of making trips by modes other than the automobile. As discussed in Section 3.0, Project Description, development under the CGPU is anticipated to accommodate the following incremental growth:

- 15,205 single family dwelling units
- 18,264 multi-family dwelling units
- 53,219 single family population
- 41,094 multi-family population
- 10,431,312 square feet of retail
- 3,746,701 square feet of office
- 5,220,111 square feet industrial
- 25,750 total new jobs

The City's approach to development as proposed by the CGPU would focus new development in High Priority Development Areas and Growth Expansion Areas, and prohibit development of land in Subareas 15 and 16 until the growth areas are at least 60% developed. If the CGPU is implemented as proposed, all of the growth anticipated to occur in Coachella by 2035 could be accommodated without any development in Subarea 16. This strategy will focus new growth in the areas of the City most easily served by existing and future infrastructure and provide for a more contiguous pattern of growth. Thus, the CGPU provides a comprehensive strategy for managing the City's growth in a reasonable, resource sensitive manner.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

As presented in Section 3.0, the proposed CGPU would provide direction on how the City's existing population could increase by approximately 93,711 people, or more than 200 percent above existing. The projected population growth is anticipated to increase sales, with resultant increases in the City's revenue base. Additionally, the proposed CGPU would increase the City's existing non-residential floor area by approximately 19.6 million square feet and employment by approximately 25,750 jobs, an increase over 400 percent above the 5,831 jobs currently in the City. Implementation of the proposed CGPU would foster economic expansion through changes in the revenue base resulting from population and employment growth. However, the City has a substantial agricultural market and, as agricultural land is developed, there would be a decrease in agricultural related jobs. The growth in non-agricultural jobs will be substantive and outweigh the loss of agricultural jobs. Thus, the proposed project is considered growth inducing with respect to economic expansion.

¹ Southern California Association of Regional Governments Regional Transportation Plan Growth Forecast. April 2012. http://rtpscsc.scag.ca.gov/Documents/2012/final/SR/2012fRTP_GrowthForecast.pdf

POPULATION GROWTH

A project could induce population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure). Under the CGPU, existing roads and infrastructure would be improved and modified, both to accommodate additional automobile traffic and to better accommodate transit and non-motorized transportation activities. Additionally, new roads and infrastructure would have to be constructed and extended into areas of the Planning Area that are currently undeveloped. Both infrastructure improvements and extensions would indirectly induce growth. Additionally, new homes and businesses would also be constructed under the CGPU, which would directly induce growth in the City's population.

The proposed CGPU plans for the development of approximately 33,469 dwelling units (DU), which would induce direct growth in the City's population by approximately 93,711. The proposed CGPU would also involve the development of new businesses, with a resultant growth in employment of approximately 25,750 jobs, an increase of over 400 percent over the 5,831 jobs currently in the City. The employment generated by the proposed CGPU could result in direct growth in the City's population, because the potential exists for future employees (and their families) to relocate to the City. Estimating the number of the new employees who would relocate to the City would be highly speculative, because many factors influence personal housing location decisions. Therefore, the precise number of new employees who may relocate to the City to fill the newly created positions is unknown. However, the growth of 33,469 additional housing units, there is great potential for the new employees to occupy homes in Coachella.

Growth inducing impacts can also be assessed based on a project's consistency with adopted plans that have addressed growth management from a local and regional standpoint. SCAG is the responsible agency for developing and adopting regional housing, population, and employment growth forecasts for local Riverside County governments, among other counties. SCAG provides population, household, and employment projection estimates in five-year increments from 2005 to 2035. For 2035, SCAG projects that Coachella will have approximately 128,000 people, 34,000 households, and 27,900 jobs. While these projections are slightly lower than the growth anticipated under the CGPU (the CGPU projects a population approximately 4.5 percent greater), the general magnitude of growth is similar enough to be considered consistent. Overall, the project would be considered population growth inducing relative to population projections and size and scope of the CGPU development proposed.

PRECEDENT-SETTING ACTION

The proposed CGPU is a comprehensive update of the 1998 General Plan. The CGPU includes a new vision for the City, character-based land use designations, a defined master planning process, and has been designed to meet the City's current foreseeable needs. The CGPU would not, in itself, directly result in new growth in the City. However, the CGPU may spur new development. The document provides greater clarity about the community's expectations for future development, which may reduce the risk associated with real estate development and encourage development. Additionally, some areas of the City may realize greater development potential under the CGPU, which could encourage additional development within the City. Thus, the proposed project would be considered growth-inducing with respect to the establishment of a precedent.

DEVELOPMENT OR ENCROACHMENT OF OPEN SPACE

The Planning Area contains vast areas of open space, much of which is developed with agricultural uses. Most of the proposed development anticipated under the CGPU will occur on vacant land

throughout the City. As discussed above, the City's approach to development as proposed by the CGPU would focus new development in High Priority Development Areas and Growth Expansion Areas, and prohibit development of land in Subareas 15 and 16 until the growth areas are at least 60% developed. If the CGPU is implemented as proposed, all of the growth anticipated to occur in Coachella by 2035 could be accommodated without any development in Subarea 16. This strategy would help limit the premature development of open space. However, the City will still experience substantial development of its open space areas. Therefore, project implementation would be growth-inducing with respect to development or encroachment into isolated areas of open space.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

As discussed above, the CEQA Guidelines indicate that it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment. Overall, the implementation of the CGPU would be considered growth-inducing with respect to all of the criteria analyzed. The projected population, housing, and employment growth of the proposed CGPU would be substantially similar to SCAG's projections for the City. The proposed CGPU is designed to account for the projected growth of Coachella and manage that growth in a way that minimizes impacts on the existing community and results in a healthy, sustainable City. The proposed CGPU accounts for the increased growth and establishes goals and policies to reduce its potential growth-related impacts. The forecast growth would occur over two decades, allowing for the development of the services and infrastructure necessary to accommodate a larger population. While this EIR concludes that the CGPU would be growth inducing, it is important to note the CGPU adequately plans for the City's share of the growth expected to occur in the Coachella Valley. The CGPU provides a land use pattern that would provide sufficient land for orderly development in a manner that reduces automobile and energy use. Finally, the CGPU also contains goals and policies that address the provision of sufficient services and infrastructure as growth occurs and to accommodate the projected growth.