

NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING NOTICE

To: Agency Representatives

From: City of Coachella
Development Services Department
1515 Sixth St
Coachella, CA 92236

Date: March 14, 2013

Subject: Notice of Intent to Prepare Draft Environmental Impact Report

Project Title: Coachella General Plan Update

The City of Coachella (Coachella) has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is necessary for the Coachella Comprehensive General Plan Update (the "Project"). The City is the lead agency for the project and will prepare the EIR under the terms and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the implementing Guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act ("Guidelines").

The purpose of this notice is:

- (1) to serve as the Notice of Preparation to potential Responsible Agencies, Federal agencies involved in funding or approving the project, and Trustee Agencies responsible for natural resources affected by the project, pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines; and
- (2) to advise and solicit comments and suggestions regarding the preparation of the EIR, environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR, and any related issues, from interested parties other than those noted above, including interested or affected members of the public. Coachella requests that any potential Responsible or Trustee Agency responding to this notice respond in a manner consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b).

The project description, location, and an analysis indicating the probable environmental effects of the proposed action are contained in the attached materials. Additional project information is available for review at the City of Coachella (Development Services Department) address shown above.

All parties that have submitted their names and mailing addresses will be notified as part of the current project's CEQA review process. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list or have any questions or need additional information, please contact the person identified below.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.4 and Guidelines Section 15082(b), Responsible Agencies must submit any comments in response to this notice not later than **30 days after receipt**. All parties that have submitted their names and mailing addresses will be notified as part of the current project's CEQA review process. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list or have any questions or need additional information, please contact the person identified above. The City will accept **written** comments from Agencies and interested parties regarding this notice through the close of business on **April 15, 2013 (submit written comments to the address provided above)**.

Please send your responses along with the name of the contact person in your agency to:

Luis Lopez
City of Coachella
Development Services Department
1515 Sixth St., Coachella, CA 92236
(760) 398-5421

Public Scoping Meeting: A public scoping meeting will be held on **March 14, 2013** including a brief Project overview and discussion of environmental issue areas. Information regarding these meetings is provided below:

March 14, 2013 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
City of Coachella
Council Chambers
Address 1515 Sixth St.
Coachella, CA 92236

Any interested parties may attend to gain a better understanding of the Project and to identify environmental issues of concern.

Submitted by:

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I. PROJECT SUMMARY:

The City of Coachella Comprehensive General Plan update encompasses future community development plans from now, until 2035. The General Plan will provide long term planning guidelines for the City's growing population and projected development.

The City of Coachella is likely to grow from its current population of 40,000, to a total population of 155,000, by 2035. The growth is expected to unfold in an incremental pattern as development projects continue to be built in the City of Coachella. Under the proposed General Plan, there is expected development of 13,239 Single Family Dwelling Units, Multi-Family Dwelling Units, commercial, and industrial development. The General Plan plans for the growth and development of 18,564 acres within the City limits as well as the integration of 14,755 additional acres within the City's Sphere of Influence.

The General Plan will identify long-term goals; provide a basis for decision-making; provide citizens a forum for input on their community's direction; and inform citizens, developers, decision-makers, and other cities of the ground rules for development within the City. The end result of the General Plan will be a comprehensive report on goals and policies, formed through community outreach that will enhance the overall wellbeing for all residents, business owners, visitors, and any affiliates with the City of Coachella.

II. PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING:

The proposed project is located in the City of Coachella, centrally located within Riverside County {Figure 1} Coachella is a desert community and located at the eastern end of the Coachella Valley, in Riverside County, California. Interstate 10 runs through Coachella connecting the City to the rest of Southern California, along with State Routes 86 and 111. The City of Coachella is largely underdeveloped, with a current population of 43,000 inhabiting 18,564 acres of land within the City limits The City's Planning Area of 45,300 acres is only partially developed, with nearly 27,000 acres underdeveloped. Only 10% of this land is entitled for future development.

The existing land use of the City of Coachella is made up of fourteen land uses including agriculture (11,174 acres, 33%), vacant land (18,224 acres, 54% of total Coachella's land), transportation/communication/utilities (1,889 acres, 6%), and single family residential (1,007 acres, 5%).



Figure 1: Riverside County Map and City of Coachella, CA

III. BACKGROUND:

The City of Coachella General Plan will aid the City, residents, developers, and business owners; in future community development plans until 2035. The document provides the public, and city, with a comprehensive detailed vision for the future of the City of Coachella. The plan will be prepared in compliance with Government Section Code 65300 that states;

“ Each planning agency shall prepare and the legislative body of each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning. Chartered cities shall adopt general plans, which contain the mandatory elements specified in Section 65302.” (<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&group=65001-66000&file=65300-65303.4>).

The General Plan update for the City of Coachella focuses on eleven elements to research, analyze, and compile an all-inclusive document for the future development of the City of Coachella. The document is made up of goals and policies for suggested development, social programs, and community growth. The General Plan Update was a 5-year process that consisted of a series of community, administrative, and stakeholder meetings to identify goals, analyze existing conditions, and form policies for the development in the City of Coachella.

The content of the General Plan update describes intended development, and advised changes to be made to the cityscape and community over the next 25 years. The proposed elements, with their respective goals and policies address a number of topics including Land Use, Circulation, Community Health, Sustainability, Conservation, Parks, Open Space, Air Quality, Safety and Noise. The housing element is not a part of this update. The proposed guidelines made to the city will alter the existing built environment of the City of Coachella, but it has yet to be determined if there will be any significant environmental impacts, as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act. The Initial Study will begin to identify, and analyze, the areas of impact to determine if an Environmental Impact Analysis will be needed for each of the CEQA defined areas of impact.

IV. PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the City of Coachella General Plan Update 2035 are as follows:

- Adapt to changing demographics to connect and create a vision for the growing population of the City
- Create a healthy and economically viable City with a diversity of activities and economic opportunities
- Implement new technology and innovations to increase the quality of infrastructure, social services, and environmental sustainability
- Update older development plans that no longer align with the community's new vision
- Chart the way to a low-carbon future
- Update projection patterns for city growth, economic characteristics, and land-use to create a well connect city
- Assess needs for projected growth within the City, and the Sphere of Influence
- Create a city with a range of housing for multiple generations, cultures, and incomes
- Create a complete plan to ensure City grows with improved living conditions
- Foster the community's desire for safe, active transportation

V. PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS:

The General Plan was created through the efforts of community members and City staff, driven by a vision for the future changes expected in the City of Coachella. Beginning with initial meetings, creating a vision and driving goals behind the future of Coachella Valley, the setting was defined for the framework of the General Plan Update. In the initial stages, existing conditions, and community needs, were also collected to layout the current environmental condition of the City, and find areas of strength, opportunity, and improvement.

The City of Coachella set forth a comprehensive plan to meet the changing environmental legislation, and update plans that would otherwise be ineffective without any action in response to the recent housing and economic fallouts of the Great Recession. Along with the state mandated elements of a General Plan update, long-term plans for the City's growth began to form. The completed document addresses the recent hardships, new environmental measures, and reassessment of the future of the City. With detailed analysis of the current state of the City, the General Plan update will serve as a foundation for changes made to the City form, and growth for the next several decades.

After extensive and collaborative analyses between community members and City staff, The General Plan Update for the City of Coachella incorporates 7 elements as described below. The General Plan calls for a place based community that promotes health, safety, and sustainability for the City and its residents. The General Plan for the City of Coachella was created based on over-arching goals of the community. A summary of the elements is as follows:

- **Land Use + Community Character:** Through General Plan designations of Ranchos, Neighborhoods, Centers, Districts, Specific Plans, and Public uses, the land-use element will strategically incorporate and celebrate the community character of City residents. The land use element also creates a foundation for walkable and neighborhood-oriented community and economic activities. This will be done through a revitalization of the downtown core, expanding economic development opportunities, tourism and entertainment, and a focus on neighborhood.
- **Circulation:** The Circulation element seeks to create a balanced transportation system that accommodates all modes of travel safely and efficiently, without prioritizing automobile travel. Through complete streets, traffic calming, and a network of bike paths, trails, and roads, the element will connect all modes of transportation to facilities and recreation, monitored by a transportation management team.
- **Community Health + Wellness:** The purpose of the Community Health + Wellness element is to encourage a physical, social and civic environment that supports residents' health. The element will create community programs, and local food systems, and educational facilities to increase awareness and practice of healthy living. The element includes the creation of a built environment that promotes physical activity, safe and affordable housing at all ages, reduction in tobacco use, and affordable and accessible high-quality health care and social services for all residents.
- **Sustainability + Natural Environment:** This element presents goals and policies for the community of Coachella that will minimize risks of climate change, promote resource efficient and environmentally respectful communities, and offer access to open space and parkland. Heat island mitigation, alternative energy uses, agricultural land preservation, and water recycling programs are also presented in the General Plan to sustain an environmentally sound City for years to come.
- **Safety:** The element identifies and mitigates safety risks to the City of Coachella, including earthquake, flood, fires, and severe weather. Mitigation includes requiring new buildings to be built seismically resistant, require new developments to report mitigation measures for developing in flood plain, and responsibly use, to a minimum, and hazardous materials and waste. The element ultimately ensures reduction in environmental safety risks for the residents of the City.
- **Infrastructure + Public Service:** Ensure the City of Coachella has a well-maintained and efficient public infrastructure, with adequate water supply, drainage, sewer and wastewater, and solid waste management systems. Public service recommendations include; water supply planning for new development, water source protection, abatement of illegal onsite wastewater disposal

systems, development of drainage system master plan, and support on-going green waste recycling efforts.

- Noise: Establish projections, and mitigation strategies for noise emissions for activity within the City. Through land use and transportation planning, the noise element can be greatly formed to preserve the health of City residents.
- Housing: The housing element for the City of Coachella General Plan Update 2035 will begin in 2013. The Housing Element is not a part of this General Plan update and is not considered by the Notice of Preparation, Initial Study or Environmental Impact Report, for the proposed project.
- Implementation Actions: The General Plan, along with providing goals and policies, also offers an implementation plan with time frames for each action to advise the City on strategy for prioritizing specific actions, understand short term and long-term goals, and make incremental changes complimentary to the City’s growth projection patterns.

The 7 elements of the General Plan are aimed to help the City develop a resilient economy and to address the states changing environmental policy. Within these elements the General Plan addresses a host of issues that needed alterations to ensure a thriving City for the residents of the City of Coachella, and those within its Sphere of Influence.

VI. AGREEMENTS, PERMITS, AND APPROVALS:

The City of Coachella is the Lead Agency for the proposed project and has discretionary authority over the project. To implement this project, the following agreements, permits, and approvals are anticipated:

Anticipated Agreements, Permits, and Approvals	Granting Agency
Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Certification	City of Coachella
Climate Action Plan Adoption	City of Coachella
General Plan Adoption	City of Coachella

VII. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on the description of the General Plan Update for the City of Coachella valley, in compliance with Government Code 65300, the City’s completed General Plan Update 2035 will undergo an assessment based on CEQA Qualifications. The Initial Study of the General Plan Update will be applied to the 958 items of the Initial Study Checklist, provided in the CEQA Handbook. The following is described Initial Study, and determination of need for further environmental review.

Based upon the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), non-exemption projects are subject to a possible Environmental Impact Report, Negative Declaration, or Mitigate Negative Declaration. The appropriate document choice is to be determined through and Initial study to determine any possible significant environmental impacts that would be caused by the proposed project. The proposed project considered by this Initial Study will be for the General Plan Update 2035 for the City of Coachella, California.

The attached Initial Study looks at all areas, as defined by the CEQA guidelines and Initial Study Checklist found in Section 15063c.