
TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE GENERAL PLAN

VIII. GROWTH INDUCING AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A. Growth Inducement

The proposed land use scenario for the Town of Yucca Valley will not overtly or significantly induce growth or change the physical conditions of the area when compared to the growth-inducing impacts associated with long-term future development under the currently governing land use scenario, the San Bernardino County Land Use Map. Rather, the proposed Yucca Valley General Plan is expected to better maintain and enhance the rural character of the Town while still providing opportunities for continued growth in all sectors of the economy. The proposed land use scenario constitutes a significant reduction in overall land use intensities for industrial and residential land uses, and a 41% increase in the allocation of commercial lands over the San Bernardino County Land Use Map.

Urbanizing patterns are dependent upon stimulation of growth and development which is directly proportional with the intensity of a land use plan. The 31% reduction in the residential dwelling unit intensity resulting from the proposed Yucca Valley General Plan reduces growth-inducing tendencies, provides a balance between infrastructure, the environment and the pressures of human development. The reduced overall densities also help preserve the rural character of the Town and surrounding lands. In turn, as discussed below, the proposed General Plan will reduce the cumulative impacts associated with development in Town and the surrounding area. Growth-inducing and cumulative impacts are further controlled by orienting and sizing the Town roadway network so as to optimize infrastructure, including existing highways, arterials, collectors and other important local roads.

Finally, the growth-inducing and associated cumulative impacts associated with the proposed General Plan were further constrained by topographic and hydrologic constraints, as well as those associated with sensitive biological resources and the need for their protection and preservation. Limited domestic water supplies also constrain development. Numerous General Plan goals, policies and programs set preservation of the Town's rural character and its natural resources as a high priority, which will further limit development intensities and, therefore, associated growth inducement.

B. Cumulative Impacts

The implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan will result in impacts which, in and of themselves, have not been determined significant. However, these impacts must be considerable in conjunction with the effects of other development which may take place outside the Town's jurisdiction; under CEQA, these are called cumulative impacts (Section 21083 (b), CEQA).

While adoption and implementation of the General Plan will control and regulate development within the incorporated boundaries of the Town of Yucca Valley, the General Plan will have only an indirect moderating effect on development outside the Town. The San Bernardino County General Plan, adopted in July of 1989 and revised in August of 1991 promotes development densities and intensity in some areas which appear to be incompatible and inconsistent with resource and infrastructure constraints predominate in the area. These constraints can generally be expected to be a moderating influence on maximizing potential land use intensities permitted under the County General Plan.

Most lands within the Town's boundaries are privately owned. However, public lands within and adjacent to the Town boundaries further constrain development and limit cumulative impacts. These include the Joshua Tree National Park, which forms most of the Town's southern boundary, and hilly terrain composed of checkerboard BLM lands to the immediate southwest. BLM lands within Yucca Valley comprise approximately 1,140 acres. An additional 300 acres owned by the State of California and comprising the Burns Pinyon Reserve were also constraints on the development pattern set forth in the General Plan.

Land Use Compatibility

Cumulative land use impacts associated with the development of the Town are primarily the continued conversion of desert open space to urban uses and the continued slow growth seen in the surround area. As mentioned above, constraints to development in the Town and vicinity will limit the rate and intensity of growth, the County general Plan notwithstanding. Increasing the population adjacent to vacant lands may encourage illegal dumping and other conflicting land uses. Avoiding these problems will require attentive code enforcement and other land use regulation by the Town, County and BLM. Not significant cumulative impacts associated with land uses or incompatibilities are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Landform Alteration/Aesthetics

As discussed in Sections II and III of this document, visual resources, including mountains and associated vegetation, are important and valuable resources of the Town and surrounding communities. The Town General Plan includes measures that require the thoughtful review and analysis of impacts of development on elevated terrain, including ridgelines. Contour g and revegetation are integral parts of the plan and the forthcoming Development Code.

While neither the County General Plan or Development Code includes standards or regulations which effectively control development in this regard, Town efforts and regulations may reduce rather than increase potential cumulative impacts to these visual resources.

Hydrology

While future construction of residential, commercial and other types of developments can be expected to contribute to runoff generated in the area, and may require alteration of natural floodways, impacts are expected to be significantly reduced by the lowering of land use intensities and the instituting of General Plan policies and programs, which reduce runoff and enhance percolation. Furthermore, the Hi-Desert Water District is actively evaluating the construction of stormwater detention basins that will capture runoff and enhance groundwater recharge. These facilities will further reduce runoff volumes and the contribution to cumulative effects from continued buildout of the Town. District, Town and Hi-Desert Water District efforts and regulations are expected to reduce rather than increase potential cumulative impacts stormwater runoff..

Geology/Seismicity

Development of the planning area will result in the continued urbanization in a seismically active region. The active Johnson Valley Fault, Pinto Mountain Fault, Burnt Mountain Fault, and the Eureka Peak Fault all cross portions of the Town limits. Development in the planning area will result in the location of more people into an area with a potential for ground rupture and strong ground acceleration. Potential ground motions in the planning area resulting from earthquakes on these, and other faults, have been known to cause severe damage.

The Yucca Valley General Plan reduces the overall intensity of development and the number of people exposed to seismic hazards. Development within the planning area shall be required to be designed in accordance with the policies and programs of the General Plan, recommendations of the geotechnical consultant, and seismic requirements presented in the Uniform Building Code. No significant cumulative impacts associated with geotechnical hazards are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Biological Resources

The Yucca Valley General Plan constitutes a significant reduction in the intensity of land use in the Town and a significant increase in acreage assigned a "Hillside Reserve" designation. It also incorporates policies and programs which encourage the preservation of major washes and drainages as natural wildlife corridors and enhanced habitat. Nonetheless, on a regional scale, the loss of vegetation from future development must be viewed as an incremental contribution to the loss of habitat and associated wildlife. The encroachment of man into undeveloped desert reduces open space, the availability of foraging habitat for ranging species and the availability of large "home ranges" for predators.

Continued disruptions of this sort within the Town and surround areas could result in cumulative negative impacts with regard to: (i) reduction of foraging territory, (ii) dislocating species' migration patterns, (iii) creating isolated sub-populations, (iv) restricting mate-finding behavior, and (v) reducing "gene flow" between existing sub-populations. But preserving washes, ravines and steep terrain within the Town for use as potential movement and migration corridors will limit cumulative regional disruption of wildlife movement. General Plan policies and programs include the integration of open space areas and wildlife corridors into major development design and future area-wide planning. No significant cumulative impacts associated with biological resources are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Cultural Resource

Due to the lack of springs or artesian wells in the Town and vicinity, Native American cultural resource sites are limited to highly specific use areas. These are located primarily in areas where food gathering or materials lithic workshops were prevalent. Most of these areas have either been subject to previous development activity or are located in the hills and mountainous portions of Town. The proposed Yucca Valley General Plan reduces the intensity of development and the density of population near sensitive resource areas and, therefore, reduces potential impacts to these areas. It also encourages the development of programs to be pursued by the Town and private organizations to identify, designate and preserve important historical sites and resources. General Plan policies and programs include measures to record, preserve and protect these resources. No significant cumulative impacts associated with archaeological or historic resources are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Traffic:

Continued development of the community will incrementally add to impacts along major roadways, including Highways 62 and 247 which also serve regional traffic. The proposed Yucca Valley General Plan will result in a significant reduction in overall traffic generation, reducing traffic from the County Land Use Plan by as much as one-third. Nonetheless, levels of services on existing roadways will decrease as development within the planning area takes place. Some roadways will be widened to accommodate the additional increase in traffic. The most significantly impacted roadway within the Town as a result of further development is State Highway 62.

The development and implementation of transportation demand management (TDM) techniques, the increased use of alternative modes of travel and the use of traffic congestion management strategies should adequately address the cumulative traffic impacts expected for the buildout of the planning area. General Plan policies and programs include the integration of the above mentioned transportation demand management programs and roadway and intersection improvements. With the inclusion of growth in background consistent with historic rates of growth, no significant cumulative impacts associated with traffic and the circulation system are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Noise:

Under the development of the proposed land use plan at buildout the additional population and traffic that will occur as a result will incrementally contribute to a cumulative rise in noise levels in the area. Although increases in noise levels will occur with future development, the overall rural noise environment is not expected appreciably

deteriorate if policies and programs of the General Plan and proper mitigation measures are adhered to. The most significant impacts will occur as a result of increased traffic volumes. Naturally the most impacted areas will be along roadways that are projected to carry the most traffic volumes. The construction of commercial structures and the need for large mechanical systems will introduce another potentially significant source of noise.

Potential noise impacts shall be considered in the application review process for all proposed projects within the Town. Factors to be considered shall include the strategic arrangement of attached housing to provide necessary shielding of outdoor living areas and the incorporation of additional setbacks from roadways. Future developments within the planning area will be required to conduct acoustical analyses to properly identify those noises associated with project and other noise sources. Specific mitigation measures to reduce identified impacts will be required. General Plan policies and programs include community noise standards, monitoring of the noise environment, compliance monitoring, land use re-assessments, and other actions which control and minimize impacts to the community noise environment. No significant cumulative impacts associated with noise generation are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Air Quality

Although originating from outside the planning area, increased generation of electricity from fossil fuels may have increased effects on the Mojave Desert Air Basin and the Morongo Basin. Levels in carbon monoxide, exhaust hydrocarbons, and oxides of nitrogen and sulphur will contribute to the degradation of regional air quality. Emissions related to traffic generated by local and regional development will further contribute to the degradation of regional air quality. While regional and local strategies are currently being developed and implemented to reduce these impacts, local policies and programs set forth in the Yucca Valley General Plan, including the implementation of transportation demand management and congestion management strategies will further control local contributions to air quality degradation. No significant cumulative impacts associated with air quality are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Water Resources

The demand for water in the Morongo Basin is as high and probably even higher than in other areas of Southern California, given the high average temperatures and low humidity. The service area is currently 100% percent reliant upon groundwater to serve the community's needs. With the significant growth that has taken place in the area over the past twenty years the Warren Valley Basin is now in an overdraft condition.

State Water Project waters are available to assist in alleviating this condition by providing a source of groundwater recharge. Deliveries of waters from the State, via the Morongo Basin Pipeline, are currently being delivered. Hi-Desert Water District share of Mojave Water Agency's total allotment is, of 4,282 acre feet per year, and is contingent upon available supply. Through the continued implementation of Title 24 conservation measures, the widespread use of native and other drought-resistant planting materials and other water conservation methods, cumulative impacts can be reduced. General Plan policies and programs will also enhance the water conservation efforts of the Town and further reduce per capita and overall water demand generated by the community. No significant cumulative impacts associated with available and projected water resources are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

While the Yucca Valley General Plan does significantly reduce the long-term demand for scarce water resources, the General Plan and the Town must work cooperatively with the Hi-Desert Water District to address the problems of potential groundwater contamination associated with the exclusive reliance of the community on on-lot septic tanks. While the General Plan sets forth policies and programs to encourage the study of this issue, its resolution lies with the Hi-Desert Water District. With the reduction in densities and land use intensity associated with the Plan, no significant cumulative impacts associated with water quality are expected to result from adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Public Services and Facilities:

Increasing development in the planning area cumulatively contributes to increased demands upon all of the communities public facilities and services.

The demand for energy in the Morongo Basin is probably higher than in other areas of Southern California, given the high summer temperatures. Energy requirements are associated with air conditioning loads which can put a strain on utility capacity. The construction of non-polluting energy systems can significantly reduce the cumulative demand for energy.

Increased population cumulatively impacts land fill capacities; aggressive waste minimization and recycling programs can greatly reduce this cumulative impact.

Governmental services in the Town will experience the cumulative impacts of increased population and likely disproportionate revenue generation. At Town, County and State-wide levels, public services are experiencing considerable cumulative impacts as population in the State continues to increase at a faster pace than the generation of revenues for operations, new facilities and other capital improvements. Developer fees and assessment districts both help to reduce direct and cumulative impacts on public services. Development in the planning area is expected to provide adequate revenues to support the provision of needed public services and facilities.

Socio-Economics and Housing:

The Town of Yucca Valley is now considered one of the best opportunities in the Morongo Basin for the development of a full range of residential product, ranging from affordable housing to destination developments and rural residential estates. Projects will generate an incremental demand for affordable housing units, which must be met as a requirement of the State of California. Numerous programs are available for developers and the Town to create and make available affordable housing and financing assistance therefore. Increase in population will put a demand on housing. The current surplus of residential units and developable lots on the market will assure an adequate supply in the near to mid-term.

Developments within the planning area have the potential of generating substantial revenues for the Town in the form of property, sales and transient occupancy taxes and other sources. Future developments will also provide some or all of the affordable housing through innovative planning approaches fostered through joint private/public, quasi-public ventures. Growth through this plan will naturally increase demand for Town and other governmental and quasi-governmental services. However, these are expected to be more than off-set by the revenue generating potential of future developments in the area. With the balance established in the Yucca Valley General Plan between the generation of demand for services and the revenues needed to assure their delivery, significant cumulative impacts are not expected to result from the adoption and implementation of the Yucca Valley General Plan.