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TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

(SCH # 95072080)

FOR THE

YUCCA VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE GENERAL PLAN

PREPARED BY

TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY
57090 TWENTYNINE PALMS HIGHWAY
YUCCA VALLEY, CA 92284

September 15, 1995

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ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMARY MATRIX

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to review the environmental constraints and opportunities associated with the approval of the Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan. The Town limits includes a total of 24,916 acres consisting of mixed use residential ranging from large-lot single-family to multi-family dwelling units. Other uses within the planning area will include regional, general, neighborhood, tourist/highway and resort/hotel commercial uses. Recreational uses will be incorporated throughout the planning area including golf courses and open space.

The proposed land use scenario for the planning area will have residential densities ranging from a minimum of 1 du/20 ac to a maximum of 0-14 du/ac.

The Town of Yucca Valley is located in the Morongo Basin due north and contiguous to the Joshua Tree National Park. The Town of Yucca Valley can also be generally described as including all or a portion of the following sections: All of Sections 14, 22-27, 32-36, and portions of 13, Township 1 North, Range 5 East; Sections 19-21, 29-32 and portions of Sections 16,17 and 18 of Township 1 North, Range 6 East; Sections 1- 4, 9-16, and portions of Section 5 of Township 1 South, Range 5 East; Sections 5-8, 17 and 18 of Township 1 South, Range 6 East of the San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian.

This EIR assesses the environmental impacts that may result as a consequence of approval of the proposed land use scenario. The following discussion briefly summarizes each category of analysis, including existing conditions, project impacts and applicable mitigation measures recommended to reduce impacts to acceptable or insignificant levels. Levels of impacts include:

Significant Impacts: Are those impacts which constitute a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in the environment.

Insignificant Impacts: Are those impacts which, by virtue of the environmental conditions, predisposed existing development, or the implementation of mitigation measures, are reduced to acceptable or "insignificant" levels.

Unavoidable Impacts: Those impacts which occur as a result of project development whose adverse effects cannot be entirely eliminated or reduced to a level of insignificance.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Land Use The Town of Yucca Valley is a high desert rural community with an existing (1995) population of approximately 18,336. Its incorporated area encompasses approximately 24,916 acres. The current (1995) development patterns were established by the San Bernardino County General Plan. Per the San Bernardino County General Plan, there are approximately 22,000 acres of residentially designated lands, of which approximately 6,000 are developed. The majority of the residential development (88%) is single family residential on lots ranging from 10,000 square feet to 40 acres. The actual existing residential densities range from a minimum of 1 du/40 ac to a maximum of 14 du/ac. There are approximately 400 acres of developed commercial acreage, the majority of which fronts Highway 62. The current allocation of commercial lands within the Town is approximately 800 acres. The existing (1995) allocation of industrial lands is approximately 1,300 acres, of which approximately 300 acres are developed. Of the total acreage within the Town of Yucca Valley approximately 25% is developed.	The approval of the Yucca Valley General Plan will result in the redesignation of the Town's current land use configuration. The Proposed general Plan land use designations have been assigned to minimize impacts on existing development and complement current land use patterns and designations. Land use compatibility issues and product type were important land use considerations in the development of the Preferred Alternative. The projected impact to the Town's existing character as a result of the proposed land use configuration and land use development policies is anticipated to enhance its rural residential identity and integrate a regionally oriented community commercial component into the Town's identity. The industrial component of this proposal is based upon existing development patterns to determine appropriate locations of this land use, however this scenario proposes to scale down San Bernardino County's grossly large industrial land designations in order to avoid long term vacant lands that would most likely occur based upon current (1995) market demands for industrial land in the area. The open space and recreational component of this proposal attempts to link and integrate various land uses via multi-use flood control facilities and trails.	Potential land use conflicts inherent to a rural residential community with an intense commercial component shall be mitigated through project design; mitigation will require that all developers adhere to the Town's development Code Regulations and any other conditions of approval that may be specified in the Specific Plan or EIR, including additional setbacks, landscape buffers and restricted access. Land uses adjacent to major floodways and/or roadways shall be analyzed to assure protection from adverse impacts from these uses.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Landform Alteration/Aesthetics		
Topography of the area consists of a gently sloping valley floor bisecting the Town in an east-west direction. Steeper terrain rises from the valley floor along the northern, southern and western Town limits. Several washes and flood control facilities traverse the site, trending westerly. Due to its geographical location, the surrounding mountain ranges pose a very scenic backdrop. The elevation of the Town aids in preserving a comfortable climate and a uniquely beautiful ecosystem.	Development of the project site will require various areas to be cut and filled and cleared. Potential aesthetic impacts associated with the altered topography are adequately avoided through Specific Plan grading standards and other controls. The potential for adverse environmental impacts associated with excessive erosion as a result of bare graded slopes could foster the deterioration of the fragile Hi-desert ecosystem.	Project impacts can be mitigated through adherence to Specific Plan grading standards and design guidelines; compliance with regulations, including Mohave Desert Air Quality Management District PM10 standards and regulations ; and the development of architectural and development guidelines for each component of a project within the planning area, which must be submitted and approved prior to subdivision map and project approval.
Hydrology		
The San Bernardino County Transportation/Flood Control Department is currently (1995) preparing a Master Drainage Plan for the Town. The major washes and drainages in the Town include Water Canyon, Yucca Creek, Old Woman Springs Wash, Covington Wash, Joshua Wash and Quail Wash. Runoff in these alluvial cones and unlined channels is intermittent, flowing for short periods of time during the rainy season.	The planning area may experience potential flooding from mountainous lands located to the north, south and west. The area's flooding potential will increase as a result of future development due to the increase in impervious surfaces that accompany development. Potential adverse environmental impacts associated with the Town's future development to the washes is addressed in the appropriate subject sections.	Prior to the approval of any subdivision applications or grading permits, the developers shall submit detailed hydrology analyses and drainage plans, which shall be reviewed and approved by all appropriate agencies. Said agencies may include, but are not limited to, San Bernardino County Transportation/Flood Control Department , the Town Engineer, the California Division of Safety of Dams and FEMA. Also, prior to the construction of any drainage improvements, the applicant shall obtain a letter from the public agency which will assume full responsibility for maintaining drainage facilities.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Soils and Geology		
Soils in the planning area consist primarily of porous, unconsolidated sand and gravel, with minor amounts of clay and silt, and with an estimated depth of 100 feet or less these recent alluvial soils underlie the Town's central development along the Highway 62 corridor. In the north and northeastern portion of the Town, as well as the Burnt Mountain area, older coarser materials, including cobbles, pebbles and coarse sands can be found to a depth of 300 feet.	Based on the classification and nature of the soils within the planning area, it is anticipated that the alluvial soils will have a low potential for expansion when wetted. These soils are suitable for use as compact fill, and can be expected to be readily compacted using a combination of thorough watering and wheel rolling with proper construction equipment.	Subsurface geologic investigations are necessary to determine the extent of the aforementioned seismic hazards. It is anticipated that all geotechnical hazards can be mitigated through engineering design, building setbacks and other means. For planning purposes, engineered slopes shall be designed at inclinations of 2:1 or flatter, although future slope stability analysis may indicate that steeper slopes are feasible. Development shall be constructed in accordance with prevailing UBC standards for seismic safety.
The Town of Yucca Valley is located within a fault controlled basin that extends westward through Morongo Valley, and eastward beyond Twentynine Palms. The vicinity is one of the most active geological regions in the world, where two major tectonic plates, the Pacific and North American, collide and slip past one another. The known faults of concern in the area include the Johnson Valley Fault, Pinto Mountain Fault, Burnt Mountain Fault, and the Eureka Peak Fault. In addition, the Coachella Valley segment of the San Andreas Fault could also be expected to have significant impacts on the Town.	Potential geologic hazards associated with the planning area include: ground rupture shaking from the on-site Johnson Valley Fault, Pinto Mountain Fault, Eureka Peak Fault, and Burnt Mountain Fault. In addition to direct effects such as ground rupture and ground acceleration, there are other seismically induced hazards that pose a threat to the public's safety and public and private property. These hazards include liquefaction, dynamic settlement, ground fracturing or fissuring, lateral spreads, slumps, landslides and earth or rock falls.	The project Soils Engineer and/or Engineering Geologist shall inspect and approve all areas requiring material removal prior to placement of any new compacted fill.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Biological Resources The Town of Yucca Valley is located on the southerly edge of the Mojave Desert. Through the Joshua Tree National Park and Little San Bernardino Mountains, the Town and vicinity are transitional between the Sonoran Desert to the immediate south and the Mojave Desert extending to the north. There are eight (8) identified plant communities located in or near the Yucca Valley General Plan study area. They range from the Joshua Tree woodland to the Mojavean pinion juniper woodland shrub communities, with a diverse group of interwoven plant communities in between. The most common wildlife species in study area include numerous small burrowing mammals and a wide variety of reptiles including the Desert Iguana, Zebra-tailed Lizard, Desert Collared Lizard, Desert Horned Lizard and the Western whiptail. A variety of venomous and non-poisonous snakes also occur within the Joshua Tree woodland. The Desert Tortoise, which is federally listed as "endangered" is known to inhabit the study area. Other sensitive animal species include the Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, the Willow Flycatcher, and several species of bats.	Most of the sensitive wildlife species that were observed within the Town of Yucca Valley are not officially listed as Threatened or Endangered by either the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the California Fish and Game Commission. But some are Federal candidate species or California Species of Special Concern. Such species are not protected by either the Federal or State Endangered Species Act. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), however, defines impacts to such species as significant. Sensitive plant species present in the Town that are especially noteworthy are the Triple-ribbed Milk Vetch and the Parish's Daisy, both of which have been proposed for listing as endangered. The Joshua Tree Woodland is designated as a "Community with Highest Inventory Priority" by the State. A potential negative impact is the introduction of non- native invasive plant species into adjacent desert open space. Illegal disposal of construction waste on adjacent desert open space is also a potential impact. Although some riparian vegetation is present, the Town, County Transportation/Flood Control, and the Hi-Desert Water District (HDWD) has developed a proposal for the establishment of a multipurpose natural system of water courses that could also provide enhanced habitat and possibly serve as wildlife corridors. These corridors may be subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permits and/or California Fish and Game permits.	As required, focused desert tortoise surveys shall be conducted on a project by project basis by a qualified biologist, in accordance with U.S. Department of Interior-Fish and Wildlife Service protocol. Concurrent with the tortoise survey, the biology teams may be required to conduct spring surveys for other sensitive flora and fauna which could be found in the area. To the greatest extent feasible, native plants shall be used to landscape a project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the USI-FWS shall be consulted regarding grading in the wildlife/ riparian corridors and any other major wash. The integration of open space components into master planned communities shall be encouraged. Additional surveys may be required as additional species are listed.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Cultural Resources The General Plan Study Area has a rich and documented prehistoric cultural past. There are currently twenty-two recorded sites and three pending recordation by the Archaeological Information Center (AIC). These sites include a prehistoric campsite near the Bartlett Mountains and a campsite on the terrace above Pipes Canyon. The last native inhabitants of the Yucca Valley area were the Serrano, meaning mountain people.	Due to the significance and number thereof of the prehistoric sites located within the Study Area, disturbance and possibly degradation of some sites is probable.	A halt-work order shall be attached to grading permits. This condition will require that, in the event that buried cultural resources are found during project construction, work will be stopped or diverted until a professional qualified archaeologist can evaluate the findings and make recommendations.
Traffic/Circulation Existing roadways and intersections in the study area are all operating at acceptable levels; level of service (LOS) A. The traffic study identified that although the existing roadway network is operating at the most optimum LOS, the existing land use configuration under buildout conditions and even after logical and feasible mitigation measures had been taken, would still completely shutdown the local roadway's ability to move traffic with acceptable levels of service. A detailed traffic study was conducted and is included in the appendix of this EIR. Studies for both circulations of the Draft General Plan and Draft EIR are included.	Land uses associated with buildout of the entire study area are estimated to generate approximately 835,587 trip ends and buildout of the Town is estimated to produce 411,000 trip ends and 255,500 trips in Yucca Valley. An adequate level of service can be achieved by securing sufficient right-of-way. Major upgrades to the existing roadway network would create better levels of service, however, it would also impact the current circulation system. Also, air quality is a major concern and is discussed below.	The existing character of the Town is best classified as rural. The existing street system through and around Town generally consists of two-lane rural roadways (some unpaved), with a main artery road, Highway 62, bisecting the Town in an east/west direction. Substantial roadway improvements will be required to accommodate future traffic volumes. Prior to the approval of subdivision maps or other discretionary permits from the Town, developers shall submit detailed development and roadway improvement plans to the Town. Plans shall be reviewed by staff to assure compatibility and conformance with local plans as well as the circulation improvement plans of other nearby Jurisdictions. In addition, Caltrans and the San Bernardino Associated Governments will review projects to ensure compatibility

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Traffic/Circulation(cont'd)		with more regional issues. At each project phase a separate project-specific traffic impact analysis shall be performed in order to identify "opening year" traffic impacts, service levels and exact mitigation measures required on a cumulative and individual project basis. Regional impacts and mitigation of same will also be addressed.
Noise		
The existing noise environment of the project site and surrounding properties is typical of a rural setting, with average noise levels of approximately 50dB during the day and 40dB at night. Higher noise levels occur along major roadways.	Construction noise due to development will have a short-term impact upon nearby residences. In the event that any blasting of rocks is necessary, construction noise impacts would be considerably worse.	The Town will develop and adopt a Noise Ordinance which establishes noise exposure thresholds that will trigger the need for project-specific noise impact studies. Project designs will be required to include measures which assure that interior noise levels for residential development not to exceed 45 CNEL as required by Title 25 (California Noise Insulation Standards).
The Noise Element of the Town of Yucca Valley General Plan lists 60 dB as "normally acceptable" and 65 dB as "conditionally acceptable" for low density residential development and 65 dB as "normally acceptable" for multi-family development. Exterior noise exposures of up to 70 dB are considered "conditionally acceptable" for all residential and transient lodging uses, provided an acoustical analysis is undertaken.	Components of a specific project may generate noise levels which impact residents both inside and outside the project boundary. Following buildout, the volume of traffic added to local roadways will change the noise environment along State Highway 62, State Highway 247, Yucca Trail, Onaga Trail, Joshua Lane, and other General Plan Designated Roadways, resulting in noise levels of approximately 70 dB in close proximity to the aforementioned roadways.	The Town shall designate primary truck routes and clearly mark these routes through the Town. Construction traffic, delivery traffic, and through truck traffic shall be limited to these routes. These routes shall be located away from residential neighborhoods to the greatest extent feasible, and all equipment shall be well maintained with functional mufflers.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Noise (cont'd)	In addition, residences within the area may experience high noise levels if they are not appropriately sited and designed to minimized impacts from traffic noise.	Any development involving blasting or pile driving operations shall have a focused acoustical study conducted to establish the level and duration of off-site noise and vibration impacts and appropriate mitigation measures. The design, selection and placement of mechanical equipment within the development shall include the consideration of noise impacts on nearby residences. An acoustical analysis shall be conducted to assess the impact of traffic-related noise on existing and proposed residences along major thoroughfares, and will identify potential mitigation measures; the Town shall then decide if noise levels are "conditionally acceptable" and which, if any, of the available mitigation measures should be implemented. Within the project, residences shall be sited and designed to minimize noise impacts.
Air Quality The Town of Yucca Valley lies within the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD). The Town, in relation to other areas in Southern California, essentially has good air quality. The most evident degradation of air quality may be attributed mainly to sources outside of the area, including Los Angeles County, Riverside County and other portions of San Bernardino County.	Fugitive dust generation from site disturbance and development is expected to occur on a short-term, construction basis, and will be spread out over the anticipated phases of a project's development within the study area. The potential for wind erosion and dust generation associated with a proposed development is due in part to the site's location, having occasionally strong prevailing winds and very dry soil conditions. The total amount of dust to be generated by buildout of the planning area is estimated 29,899 tons/month.	Developers shall develop and implement a dust control plan in conformance with applicable MDAQMD and Town management requirements; provide site watering and the use of chemical soil stabilizers during and after construction; designate truck routes for transporting construction equipment; implement and encourage ridesharing programs and the use of mass transit; promote and support the development of a Park and Ride program to decrease existing and future traffic levels within the community; provide bus shelter and turnouts, where appropriate; encourage the thoughtful

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Air Quality (cont'd) In August 1993 the MDAQMD installed two monitoring devices at the Community Center Complex in Town. These devices monitor Ozone and PM10 levels in the Town, along with wind speed and wind direction. However, the EPA suggests that at least a year of data is necessary to begin to draw conclusions regarding air quality of a Planning Area. Therefore data from the Twentynine Palms monitoring site shall be used. The Twentynine Palms Monitoring Site has exceeded the State standard for Ozone (.O9ppm/hr.) 164 days, and has exceeded the federal standard (.12ppm/ hr.) 10 days from 1989 to 1993. For Pm10m measurements at the Twentynine Palms Monitoring Site have exceeded the State standard (50ug/m3) twenty-seven times, and the federal standard (150ug/m3) two times from 1989 to 1992. Section H-III identifies all levels of pollutants and the number of days federal and state standards were exceeded since 1985.	Stationary source emissions are from power plant(s), consumption of natural gas and moving emissions from vehicular traffic. These impacts will be substantial and will contribute the degradation of local air quality.	planning of projects to minimize vehicular traffic and encourage pedestrian travel.
Water Resources The Town of Yucca Valley lies within the jurisdiction of the Hi-Desert Water District (HDWD). Nearly all domestic water served by the District to its customers is extracted from the Warren Valley Groundwater Basin. Water use in the Town is primarily for domestic and municipal purposes.	The projected water consumption for the Town of Yucca Valley under buildout conditions per day in gallons is 9,955,680. This is a projected increase over the present cumulative gallons per day consumption value of 2,864,000 by 7,091,680 gallons per day.	To reduce consumption, developers shall be required to use native and other drought-tolerant landscaping, efficient irrigation systems, low-flush toilets, water conserving shower heads, and other water saving technologies. Project engineers shall work closely with the Town and HDWD to ensure adequate provision of water infrastructure and phasing, timely extension of water lines, development of wells and construction of elevated tank sites. On-site stormwater retention shall be required to encourage infiltration and recharge of the subbasin.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Water Resources (cont'd) The HDWD service area is currently supplied by fifteen (15) wells, with water storage provided by sixteen (16) above-ground steel reservoirs with a total capacity of 12.41 million gallons. According to the 1992 Annual Water Quality Report, prepared by HDWD, the quality of the groundwater basin is generally good. Groundwater extracted from the Warren Valley Groundwater Basin, is currently in an overdraft condition. The demand for the Basin's resources far exceeds the natural supply and natural recharge. At current rates of drawdown, water quality can be expected to worsen, and the groundwater basin could eventually be exhausted. The water table has declined more than 200 feet during the past 20 years. Due to this condition the HDWD receives from the Mojave Water Agency a water allotment from the Morongo Basin Pipeline which delivers State Water Project water. The allotment is for 4,282 acre feet per year, with delivery beginning in 1994.	Development of the Town area will require pipelines to be extended throughout the area from existing and proposed wells in the vicinity. As water in storage increases from recharge, the Watermaster Board will be able to increase the number of connections permitted each year.	
Utilities/Public Services Developers in the planning area will contract with the following companies for utilities: Hi- Desert Water District (water and sewer), Hi-Desert Disposal (solid waste), Southern California Edison (electricity), Southern California Gas Company (natural gas), and General Telephone and Electronics Company (telephone).	Hi-Desert Water District in conjunction with the Town is exploring the possibilities of establishing a waste water treatment facility in order to actively protect the groundwater of the area and to therefore accommodate future growth in the area.	Implement recycling programs for residences and commercial uses. For electricity and natural gas, Title 24 requirements shall be enforced, energy efficient design shall be encouraged, install only necessary outdoor lighting and efficient mechanical equipment. Impacts to Sheriffs Department, Fire Department, and Libraries can be mitigated

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Utilities/Public Services (cont'd) Public Services will be provided by the following: San Bernardino County Sheriffs Department, San Bernardino County Fire Department/California Department of Forestry, Morongo Unified School District, and San Bernardino County Library System. Medical Services are available at Desert Hospital, in Palm Springs, and Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital District.	Recycling measures will be incorporated into projects within the planning area compliance with A.B. 939, regarding solid waste. Under buildout conditions the Town will generate an approximate demand of 347,755,030 KWH/YR. Natural gas consumption is estimated at 189,792,325 cf/mo. No impacts are associated with telephone demand. The site will have significant impacts on the Sheriffs Department and Fire Department, due to proposed developments and planned land uses. Under buildout conditions, the school district is anticipating a total student population of 10,110, which is already impacted under present conditions; this is a significant impact. This increase in students will increase demands on local libraries by adding approximately 44,627 people to the Town's existing population; this is a significant impact. Cumulative impacts will also occur to medical facilities.	through allocation of the revenues collected through future development. Impacts to schools can be mitigated by the District through implementation of Leroy F. Greene State School Building Lease-Purchase Law, Lease-Purchase Arrangements, Developer Fees, and the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act.
Socio-Economic Resources Growth in population in the Town of Yucca Valley has been rather significant over the past two decades, from 1980 to 1990 the Town's annual growth rate was approximately 9%. From 1990 to 1993 the population growth rate slowed to an annual rate of 3%. Average household size in 1970 was estimated at 2.21 persons. By 1993, the average household size in the Town of Yucca Valley had increased to 2.49. Employment in the Town is relatively evenly split between a white collar and a blue collar work force with approximately 3,026	REVENUES: The current taxable sales amount generated in the Town is approximately $136,749,000. By 1998, based on the development of neighborhood shopping centers (which include both retail establishments and office space) commercial space could generate an annual sales potential of $57,891,861.	The planning area will be a net positive revenue generator for the City. A broad range of programs are available to mitigate the demand for affordable housing, including the collection of RDA funds dedicated for this use, Town/ Developer joint ventures, developer housing development and many other financing options are discussed in this EIR.

Existing Conditions	Project Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Socio-Economic Resources (cont'd) residents considered white collar and 2,486 considered blue collar. The 1970 median household income for the Town area was $4,860 and in 1993 this income had increased to approximately $23,741. The total number of units increased 43% from 1980 to 1990. As of 1993 there were a total of 7,985 housing units. The Town has a strong and growing taxable sales base. The Town has become the economic center of the Morongo Basin area.	**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** The Town of Yucca Valley is expected to generate a demand for affordable housing units. The number of affordable units to be constructed will be figured on a per project basis.	