

**Section 15.1**  
**Initial Study and Notice of Preparation**

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# NOTICE OF PREPARATION

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To: Interested Agencies and Organizations

(Agency)

Refer to Attached Distribution List

(Address)

## Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

### Lead Agency:

Agency Name: Town of Yucca Valley  
Address: 58928 Business Center Drive  
City/State/Zip: Yucca Valley, California 92284  
Contact: Shane Stueckle, Deputy Town Manager  
Phone: 760.369.6575

### Consulting Firm:

Firm Name: RBF Consulting  
Street Address: 14725 Alton Parkway  
City/State/Zip: Irvine, California 92618  
Contact: Glenn Lajoie, AICP  
Phone: 949.472.3505

TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study ( is  is not) attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but **not later than 30 days** after receipt of this notice (comment period ends July 31, 2006).

Please send your response to Shane Stueckle at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

**Project Title:** Old Yucca Valley Specific Plan

**Project Location:** Town of Yucca Valley San Bernardino County

Town

County

### Project Description: (brief)

The Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan includes approximately 184 acres along SR-62, between Yucca Trail to the north, just beyond Santa Fe Trail to the south, Church Street to the east, and Kickapoo Trail to the west in the Town of Yucca Valley, CA. The Specific Plan provides a comprehensive set of plans, guidelines, and regulatory standards in addition to administrative and implementation provisions within each of the new proposed land use districts. The Specific Plan would allow a maximum of 1,115 residential units and up to approximately 2.9 million square feet of a variety of uses, including commercial/retail, industrial/commercial, office, and civic. This would represent an increase of 1,088 dwelling units and a decrease of 478,435 square feet of commercial/retail/industrial uses from the existing *Town of Yucca Valley General Plan*.

**Date:** June 26, 2006

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Shane Stueckle  
**Title:** Deputy Town Director

**Telephone:** 760.369.6575

# **INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

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## **OLD TOWN YUCCA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN**

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**LEAD AGENCY:**

**Town of Yucca Valley**  
Department of Community Development  
58928 Business Center Drive  
Yucca Valley, California 92284  
**Contact: Mr. Shane Stueckle**  
760.369.6575

**PREPARED BY:**

**RBF Consulting**  
14725 Alton Parkway  
Irvine, California 92618  
**Contacts: Mr. Glenn Lajoie, AICP**  
**Ms. Rita Garcia**  
949.472.3505

June 26, 2006

JN 10-104893

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Town and the Yucca Valley community have prepared the Specific Plan for Old Town Yucca Valley (Public Review Draft, May 5, 2006). Following preliminary review of the proposed Specific Plan Project, the Town of Yucca Valley determined that it is subject to the guidelines and regulations of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Thus, the Town has initiated the CEQA process based upon the Specific Plan proposed in the Public Review Draft. This Initial Study addresses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects associated with the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan (Project), as proposed.

### **1.1 STATUTORY AUTHORITY AND REQUIREMENTS**

In accordance with CEQA (Public Resources Code Sections 21000-21178) and pursuant to Section 15063 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), the Town of Yucca Valley, acting in the capacity of Lead Agency, is required to undertake the preparation of an Initial Study to determine if the proposed Project would have a significant environmental impact. If, as a result of the Initial Study, the Lead Agency finds that there is evidence that any aspect of the Project may cause a significant environmental effect, the Lead Agency shall further find that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is warranted to analyze project-related and cumulative environmental impacts. Alternatively, if the Lead Agency finds that there is no evidence that the Project, either as proposed or as modified to include the mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study, may cause a significant effect on the environment, the Lead Agency shall find that the proposed Project would not have a significant effect on the environment and shall prepare a Negative Declaration for that project. Such determination can be made only if "there is no substantial evidence in light of the whole record before the Lead Agency" that such impacts may occur (Section 21080(c), Public Resources Code).

The environmental documentation, which is ultimately selected by the Town of Yucca Valley in accordance with CEQA, is intended as an informational document undertaken to provide an environmental basis for subsequent discretionary actions upon the Project. The resulting document is not, however, a policy document and its approval and/or certification neither presupposes nor mandates any actions on the part of those agencies from whom permits and other discretionary approvals would be required.

The Environmental Determination and supporting analysis contained herein is subject to a public review period, which will occur over an approximate 30-day period, beginning on June 29, 2006 and concluding on July 31, 2006. During this review, comments by the public and responsible agencies on the Project relative to environmental issues should be addressed to the Town of Yucca Valley. In addition, the Town has scheduled a public scoping session on July 18, 2006 in the Yucca Room of the Community Center located at the Town Hall Complex, 57090 29 Palms Highway, Town of Yucca Valley. The public scoping session will provide a forum for oral comments by agencies and members of the community. The Town will review and consider all written and oral comments as a part of the Project's environmental analysis, using the comments to further determine the necessary environmental document, as required in Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. The comments received with regard to the NOP and Initial Study will be included in the Project environmental document, for consideration by the Town of Yucca Valley.



## **1.2 PURPOSE OF INITIAL STUDY**

The purpose of the initial study is to: (1) identify environmental impacts; (2) provide the lead agency with information to use as the basis for deciding whether to prepare an EIR or a negative declaration; (3) enable an applicant or lead agency to modify a project, mitigating adverse impacts before an EIR is required to be prepared; (4) facilitate environmental assessment early in the design of the project; (5) document the factual basis of the finding in a negative declaration that a project would not have a significant environmental effect; (6) eliminate needless EIRs; (7) determine whether a previously prepared EIR could be used for the project; and (8) assist in the preparation of an EIR, if required, by focusing the EIR on the effects determined to be significant, identifying the effects determined not to be significant, and explaining the reasons for determining that potentially significant effects would not be significant.

Section 15063 of the *CEQA Guidelines* (Sections 15000–15387 of the CCR) identifies the following specific disclosure requirements for inclusion in an initial study:

- (1) A description of the project including the location of the project;*
- (2) An identification of the environmental setting;*
- (3) An identification of environmental effects by use of a checklist, matrix, or other method, provided that entries on a checklist or other form are briefly explained to indicate that there is some evidence to support the entries . . . ;*
- (4) A discussion of ways to mitigate significant effects identified, if any;*
- (5) An examination of whether the project is compatible with existing zoning, plans, and other applicable land use controls; and*
- (6) The name of the person or persons who prepared or participated in the initial study.*

## **1.3 CONSULTATION**

As soon as the Lead Agency determined that an Initial Study would be required for the Project, the Lead Agency was directed to consult informally with all Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies that are responsible for resources affected by the Project, in order to obtain the recommendations of those agencies on the environmental documentation to be prepared for the Project. Following the Town of Yucca Valley' receipt of any written comments from those agencies, the Town would consider any of the agencies' recommendations in the formulation of the Town of Yucca Valley' preliminary findings. Following execution of this Initial Study, the Town of Yucca Valley will initiate formal consultation with these and other governmental agencies, as required under CEQA and its implementing guidelines.

## **1.4 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE**

Pertinent documents relating to this Initial Study have been cited and incorporated, in accordance with Sections 15148 and 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, to eliminate the need for inclusion of voluminous engineering and technical reports within the Initial Study. Of particular relevance are those previous EIRs that present information regarding descriptions of environmental settings, future development-related growth, and cumulative impacts.



This Initial Study/Environmental Assessment has incorporated by reference the following documents:

- Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan (1995). The *General Plan* provides comprehensive planning for the future of the Town. The goals and policies contained in the *General Plan* are provided to guide the Town's decision-makers. It integrates the mandatory and discretionary elements among five major chapters: Community Development, Environmental Resources, Environmental Hazards, and Public Services and Facilities. The analysis of existing conditions and potential Project impacts included in this Initial Study incorporates information from the *General Plan*.
- Town of Yucca Valley General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report (1995). The *General Plan* is intended to serve as policy direction for planning and implementation, an EIR analyses and summarizes potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the *General Plan*. The EIR also serves as a benchmark to assess environmental impact reports on future projects. The analysis of existing conditions and potential Project impacts included in this Initial Study incorporates information from the *General Plan EIR*.
- Town of Yucca Valley Municipal Code. The Town of Yucca Valley has adopted a series of codes that regulate development within the Town, referred to as the Town of Yucca Valley Municipal Code (MC). Title 9 of the Municipal Code is commonly referred to as the Development Code. The analysis of potential Project impacts included in this Initial Study incorporates information from the MC.
- Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan (Public Review Draft, May 5, 2006). The Town and the Yucca Valley community have prepared the Specific Plan for Old Town Yucca Valley, which is the subject of this environmental analysis. The purpose of the Plan is to identify key opportunities to enhance the Town's overall economic base and the historic old Town area. This document provides a comprehensive set of plans, guidelines, and regulatory standards in addition to administrative and implementation provisions within the land use districts.
- Home Depot Retail Center Draft EIR (2006). This document includes an 18.20-acre project site proposed for commercial/retail development. The development analyzed in this EIR is for a Home Depot Retail Center, which consists of a 13.09-acre home improvement center (Home Depot), a 0.90-acre restaurant or bank, and 4.21 acres of other retail uses. The project site addressed in this EIR is located east of the proposed Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan area. However, certain environmental issues discussed within the EIR are pertinent to the Old Town of Yucca Valley Specific Plan Project.





## **2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING**

Regionally, the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan (Specific Plan) area is located near the western end of Yucca Valley, within San Bernardino County, California; refer to Exhibit 1 (Regional Vicinity). Yucca Valley is within the Mojave Desert in what is known as the Morongo Basin. The high-desert community is 30 miles northwest of Palm Springs, and extends for seven miles along the State Route 62 (SR-62) highway, north of Joshua Tree, to Pipes Canyon. The Specific Plan area (SPA) is located in a valley that gently slopes south, from 3,320 to 3,340 feet above sea level (ASL). Old Town Yucca Valley is the original commercial core of the Town of Yucca Valley. The SPA includes approximately 184 acres along SR-62, between Yucca Trail to the north, just beyond Santa Fe Trail to the south, Church Street to the east, and Kickapoo Trail to the west; refer to Exhibit 2 (Project Vicinity).

The existing land uses within the SPA include residential, commercial, industrial, and civic. Commercial land uses, which include retail, medical, restaurants, offices, and motels, are primarily located along SR-62; residential and service commercial uses bound the Project area on the north and south, and vacant land is located throughout. The northwest corner of the SPA contains a variety of industrial uses, including automobile repair shops and warehouses. The SPA includes a total of 129 residential units and 712,833 square feet (SF) of commercial/industrial uses. Various easements traverse the SPA, including storm drainage facilities and utility easements; refer to Exhibit 3 (Existing Land Use Map).

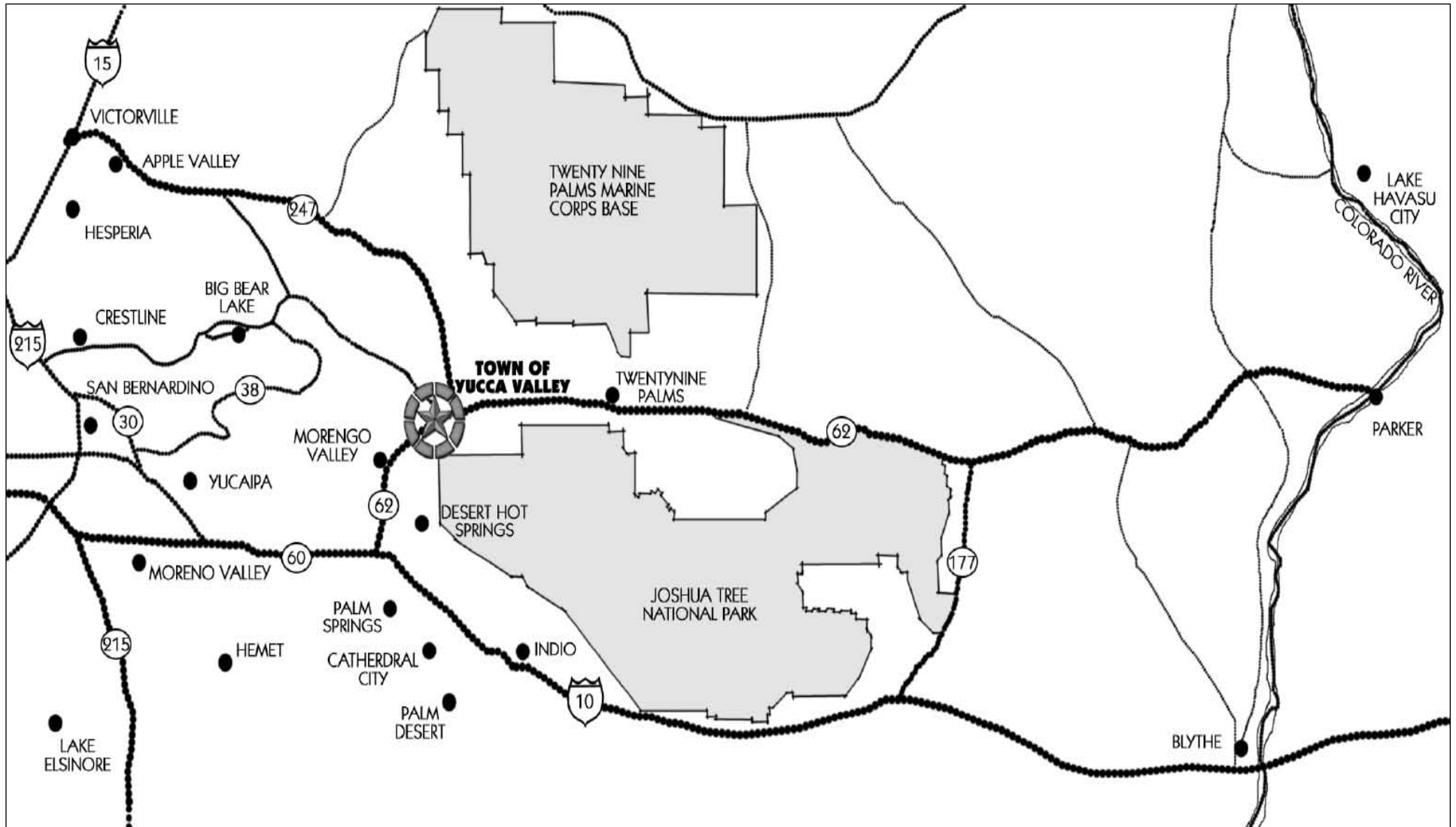
Immediately surrounding the SPA is a mixture of single-family residential, commercial mixed-use, service uses, golf courses, and vacant land.

### **2.2 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS**

The Town of Yucca Valley has identified the need to improve the economic vitality and livability of the Old Town area by establishing comprehensive strategy to attract and expand economic activity and commerce. The purpose of the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan is to identify key opportunities to enhance the Town's overall economic base and the historic Old Town area.

The Specific Plan serves as a planning and regulatory link between the *Town of Yucca Valley General Plan* and individual, project-level development within the Project area. The Specific Plan provides area-specific land use regulations and development guidelines. The Specific Plan provides a comprehensive set of plans, guidelines, and regulatory standards in addition to administrative and implementation provisions within the land use districts, and applies to residential, commercial, office, mixed-use, and light industrial uses; refer to Exhibit 4 (Proposed Land Use Map). Upon adoption by the Town, the Specific Plan provides the legal development requirements for the Project area.

The Specific Plan contains flexible concepts, development standards, and design guidelines for the Old Town area that are intended to implement the goals, objectives, and polices of the Town's *General Plan*.

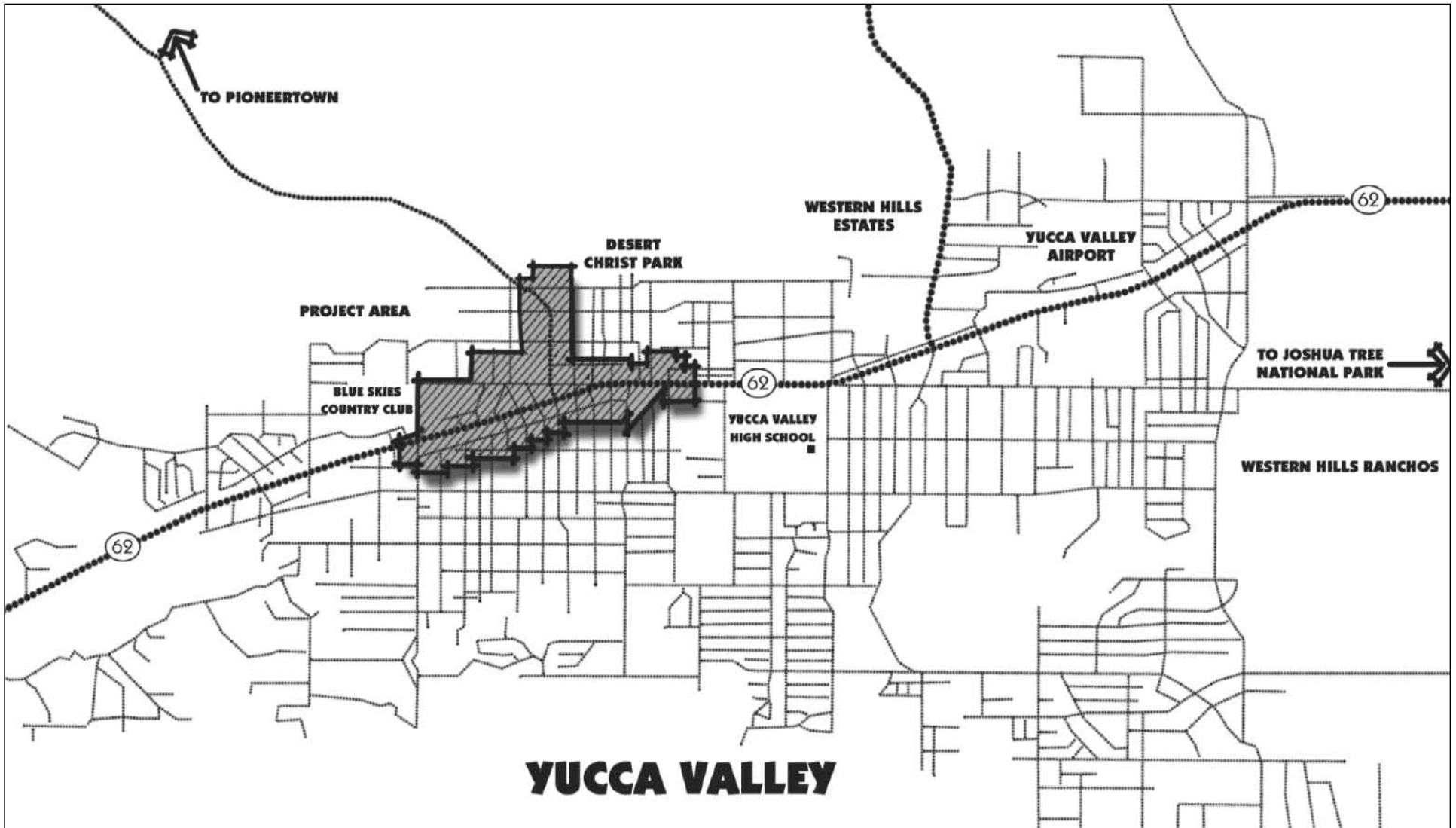


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OLD TOWN YUCCA VALLEY  
 INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
**Regional Vicinity**



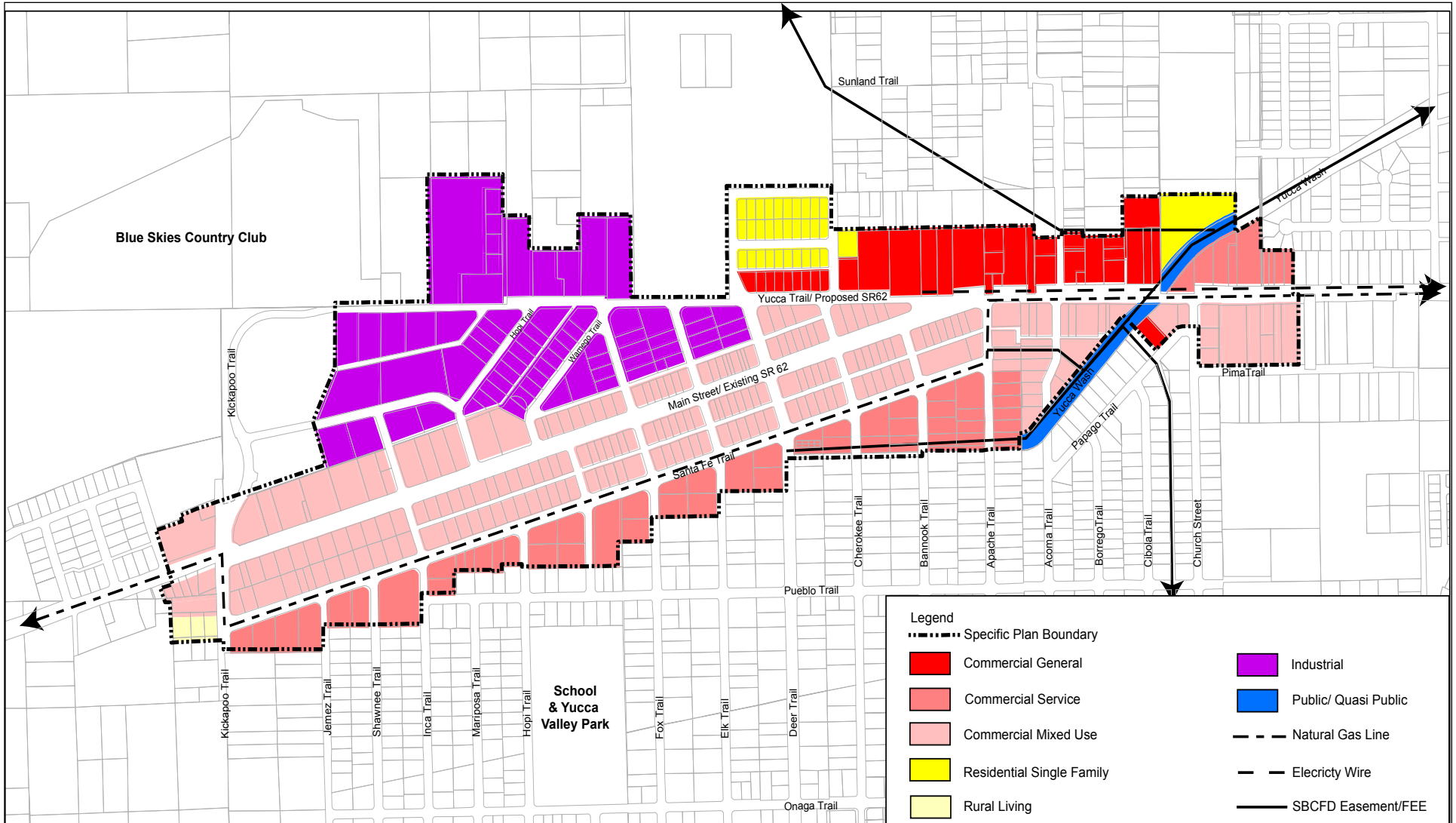
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OLD TOWN YUCCA VALLEY  
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## Local Vicinity

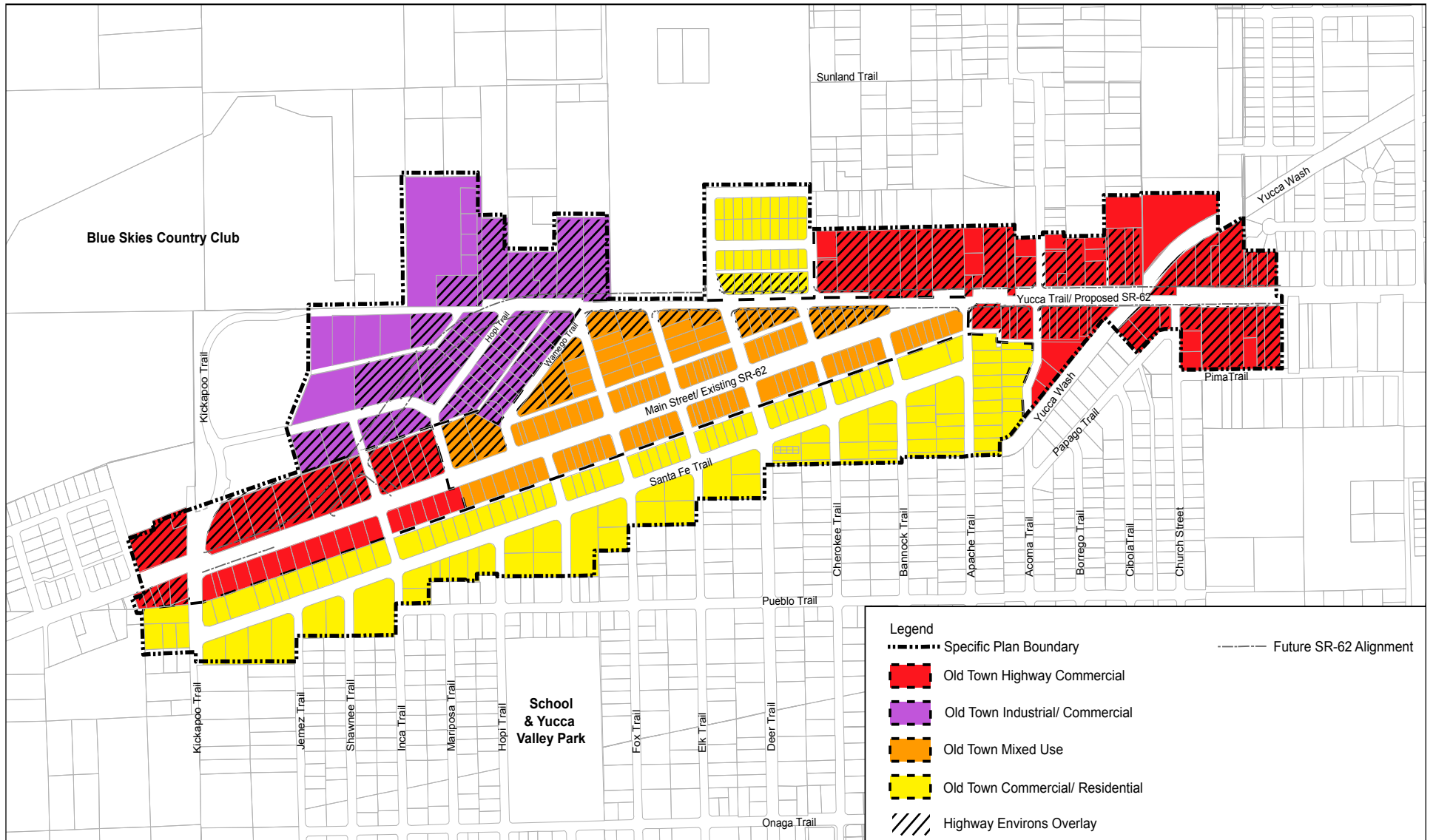


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OLD TOWN YUCCA VALLEY  
INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
**Existing Land Use**



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OLD TOWN YUCCA VALLEY  
 INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
**Proposed Land Use**



**LAND USE**

The land use plan for the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan provides for the development of four planning districts: the Old Town Mixed-use District, Old Town Commercial/Residential District, Old Town Industrial/Commercial District, and the Old Town Highway Commercial District. An additional overlay district, the Highway Environs Overlay, provides additional development requirements for those areas that may be affected by the potential realignment of SR-62 and require additional discretionary review. Exhibit 4 (Proposed Land Use Map) depicts the boundaries of the planning districts and potential realignment of SR-62 within the Project area; Table 1 (Land Use Plan Buildout Summary) provides a statistical breakdown of each district.

As indicated in Table 1, the Specific Plan would allow a maximum of 1,115 residential units and up to 2,900,604 SF of a variety of uses, including commercial/retail, industrial/commercial, office, and civic. This would represent an increase of 1,088 dwelling units and a decrease of 478,435 SF of commercial/retail/industrial uses from the existing *Town of Yucca Valley General Plan*.

**Table 1**  
**Land Use Plan Buildout Summary**

District and Land Use Type(s)	Existing General Plan		Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan Buildout		Specific Plan Buildout Net Change From General Plan	
	Dwelling Units	Square Feet	Dwelling Units	Square Feet	Dwelling Units	Square Feet
<b>Old Town Mixed-Use</b>						
Commercial/Retail - up to 1.00 FAR; Residential – up to 40 du/ac	0	208,812	465	759,317	465	550,505
<b>Old Town Highway Commercial</b>						
Commercial/Retail – up to 0.35 FAR; Residential – none	16	1,194,444	0	889,684	(16)	(304,760)
<b>Old Town Commercial/Residential</b>						
Commercial/Retail – up to 0.40 FAR; Residential – up to 24 du/ac	11	1,113,542	413	699,769	402	(413,773)
<b>Old Town Industrial/Commercial</b>						
Industrial/Commercial – up to 0.40 FAR; Res. – up to 30 du/ac	0	862,241	238	551,834	238	(310,407)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3,379,039</b>	<b>1,115</b>	<b>2,900,604</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>(478,435)</b>

Source: *Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan*, RBF Consulting's Urban Design Studio, May 5, 2006.

Note: FAR = Floor Area Ratio; du/acre = Dwelling Units per Acre.

**Old Town Mixed-Use District**

The Old Town Mixed-use District is the core downtown district of the Specific Plan, with the potential for development of 759,317 SF of commercial retail uses (at a maximum floor-to-area ratio [FAR] of 1.00) and 465 residential units (at a maximum of 40 dwelling units [du] per acre [ac]). General features include:

- Establishes Core Downtown Area;
- Establishes compact, vertical mixed-use development;
- Mixes complimentary uses: higher-intensity residential, commercial and smaller-scale retail development ;
- Expands housing opportunities;



- Provides street-oriented, pedestrian-oriented development; and
- Enhances streetscape.

### **Old Town Highway Commercial District**

The Highway Commercial District serves as the primary eastern and western gateways to the Old Town Specific Plan and provides SR-62-oriented commercial development with the potential for 889,684 SF of commercial and retail uses (FAR of 0.35). General features include:

- Enhances streetscape;
- Caters to the local and regional markets;
- Provides a wide range of retail sales, business and personal services; and
- Orients primarily to the automobile customer.

### **Old Town Commercial/Residential District**

The Downtown Commercial/Residential District provides a complementary mix of commercial and residential development with the potential for development of 699,769 SF of commercial retail uses (maximum FAR of 0.40) and 413 residential units (maximum of 24 du/ac). General features include:

- Buffers Old Town Mixed-use District from residential areas;
- Offers development that respects adjacent residential development;
- Provides street-oriented, pedestrian-oriented development;
- Mixes commercial, office and residential uses; and
- Enhances streetscape.

### **Old Town Industrial/Commercial District**

The SR-62 Industrial District provides a variety of industrial/commercial and residential uses in the northwest portion of the SPA near SR-62 with the potential for development of 551,834 SF of industrial/commercial uses (maximum FAR of 0.40) and 238 residential units (maximum of 30 du/ac). General features include:

- Mixes light industrial, flex-tech, small-scale manufacturing, service commercial, and limited live-work residential development uses;
- Serves as a primary node for local commercial activity; and
- Enhances streetscape.

### **Highway Environs Overlay District**

The Highway Environs Overlay District provides a heightened level of discretionary review for development proposals in areas where land use regulations may be changed, depending on the future realignment of SR-62. This district ensures that future development proposals are not adversely affected by the potential future realignment of SR-62.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

The Specific Plan provides the Town with the opportunity to develop public facilities to enhance the Old Town area and provide a centralized community meeting place. Some of the public facilities envisioned within the general vicinity of the "Main Street" are a new Town hall and library, a cultural center, a museum, governmental service facilities, and a public square.



## **CIRCULATION PLAN**

The Circulation Plan proposes a semi-grid system of roadways, emphasizing community and regional linkages to the Old Town area and addressing the potential realignment of SR-62; refer to Exhibit 5 (Proposed Circulation Map). A “Main Street” is proposed (within the existing SR-62 alignment) that extends through the center of the Old Town. The “Main Street” design incorporates an enhanced gateway from SR-62 and traffic-calming measures to reduce traffic speeds, enhance pedestrian safety, and promote “walkability” of the area. In addition, many of the alleys adjacent to the “Main Street” are designed with pedestrian shoulders to be more pedestrian-friendly and to enhance alternative connections. The Circulation Plan also identifies the potential SR-62 realignment location and conceptual Gateway lane configurations, currently being studied by Caltrans District 8.

## **SR-62 REALIGNMENT**

The Specific Plan incorporates the proposed SR-62 realignment to allow east–west traffic to travel around (instead of through) the Town, allowing Old Town Yucca Valley to become more pedestrian-oriented. East of Kickapoo Trail, SR-62 would turn northerly and transition to Yucca Trail in the vicinity of Hopi Trail. The ultimate realignment of SR-62 would be determined upon further study by Caltrans and the Town of Yucca Valley; the preferred realignment identified in the Specific Plan is conceptual. As part of the traffic analysis for this Specific Plan and discussions with the community and Town Staff, Caltrans Alternative D was selected as the preferred SR-62 realignment alternative. The proposed SR-62 realignment will be discussed in a separate environmental study to be conducted by Caltrans.

With the implementation of the proposed realignment of SR-62 (Alternative D), the existing alignment of SR-62 between Kickapoo Trail and Apache Trail would change classification to a two-lane divided industrial roadway and be redesignated as “Main Street.” Yucca Trail would be classified as a six-lane divided highway and designated as SR-62; Santa Fe Trail would remain classified as a four-lane divided collector. With the forecast *General Plan* buildout and incorporation of the proposed SR-62 realignment (Alternative D), all of the study roadway segments are forecast to operate at an acceptable LOS.

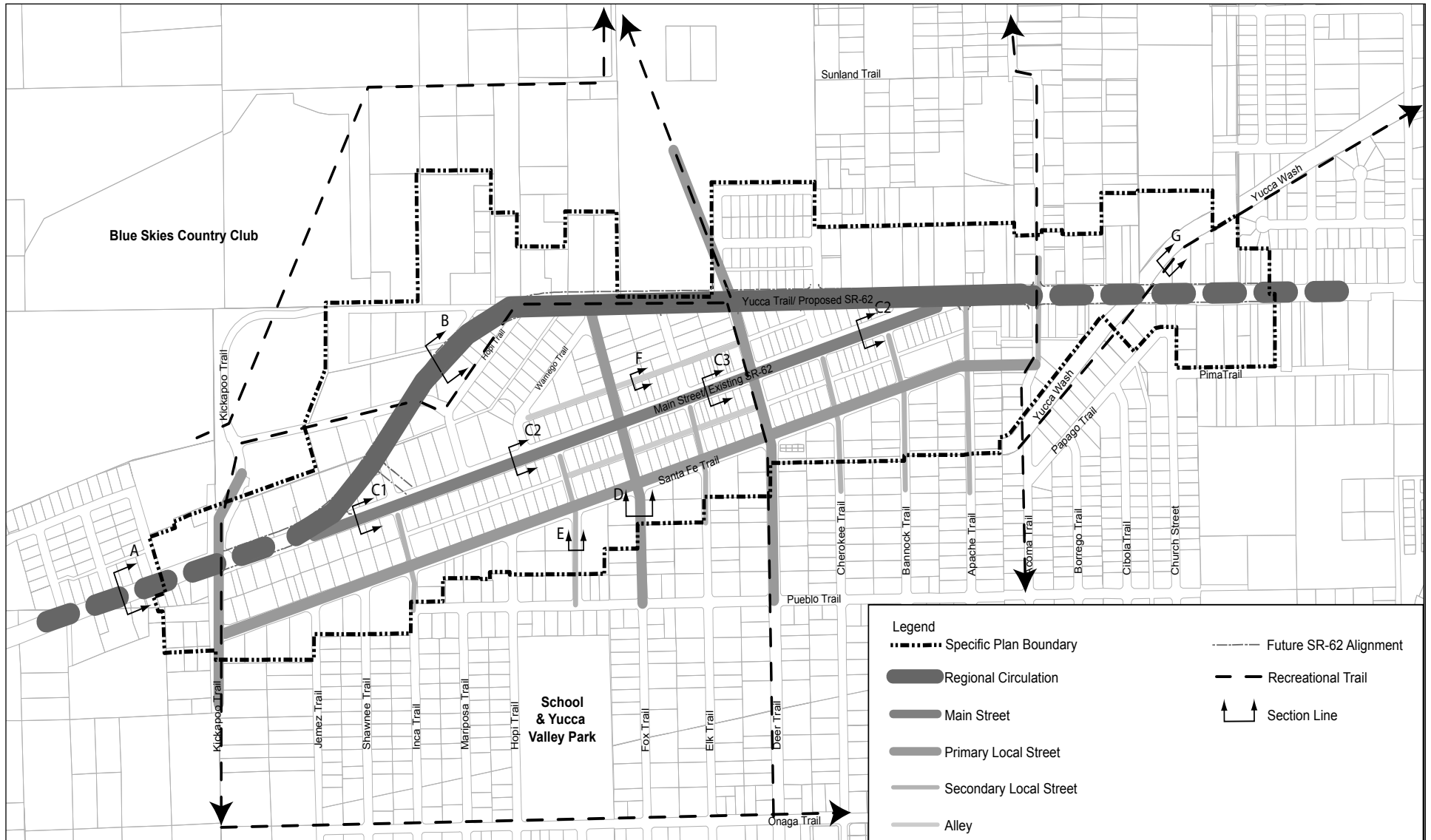
## **INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

The Specific Plan identifies the infrastructure improvements anticipated to meet the demands of the Land Use Plan. As this Specific Plan is a policy-level plan, note that the timing of all infrastructure improvements identified in the Specific Plan represent the ultimate buildout conditions of the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan. The Town of Yucca Valley would provide additional infrastructure information, as it becomes available. The proposed infrastructure improvements would involve domestic water, wastewater, and storm drainage systems.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES**

The Specific Plan describes the public services provided in the Project area and their ability to meet the new demand in the ultimate buildout conditions of the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan. The proposed public services would involve schools, fire protection, law enforcement, library, communication systems, electricity, natural gas, and solid waste.





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OLD TOWN YUCCA VALLEY  
INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
**Circulation Map**



## **DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

The Development Regulations presented in the Specific Plan establish the zoning districts for the SPA, the allowable uses (allowed and conditionally allowed) that apply within each zoning district, and the development and design standards that apply within each district. Together, the table of allowed uses and the development and design standards prescribe the allowed development for the area. The intent of the Development Regulations, together with the Design Guidelines, is to implement the goals of the Specific Plan. The proposed Development Regulations involve:

- General Provisions;
- Establishment of Land Use Subdistricts;
- Allowable Land Uses and Permit Requirements;
- Nonconforming Uses, Structures, and Parcels;
- Zoning Subdistrict Development Standards;
- Standards for Specific Land Uses;
- Off-Street Parking and Loading Standards;
- Landscaping, Walls, and Fences;
- Signs;
- Auxiliary Structures, Equipment, and Utilities;
- General Operating Standards;
- Development Incentives;
- Development Review Procedures; and
- Highway Environs Overlay Subdistrict.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The Design Guidelines are intended to promote quality design and to ensure that new development and rehabilitation promote a clear community identity and sense of place. The Design Guidelines encourage preservation of the Town's historic core; yet allow flexibility in new infill development that is compatible with the character of the area. The Design Guidelines establish the Town's design philosophy for Old Town and are one of the main elements used to evaluate development projects subject to discretionary review. The proposed Design Guidelines involve:

- Site Design;
- Architecture;
- Development Details; and
- Commercial Signs.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Administration and Implementation provisions contained in the Specific Plan are applicable to development activity and land use within the boundary of the Specific Plan. The regulations, development standards, and guidelines as contained in the Specific Plan would apply in their entirety to the review of new development proposals. However, for review of proposals to modify existing development, existing site conditions may constrain the extent to which the Specific Plan development standards and guidelines can be met. These provisions identify the process and method for amendments to the *General Plan*, *Zoning Code*, and the Specific Plan. An implementation matrix, which identifies implementation steps and actions, timeframes for implementation, implementation leaders and teams, cost estimates for improvements and programs, and potential funding resources is also provided in the Specific Plan.



## **2.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The Specific Plan contains flexible concepts, Development Standards, and Design Guidelines for the Old Town area that are intended to implement the goals, objectives, and polices of the Town's *General Plan*. In developing the Old Town Yucca Specific Plan, the land use plan has been created to achieve the following goals:

- Implement the *General Plan* polices by presenting more detailed direction for the Old Town area to improve its overall walkability, traffic circulation, and economic viability.
- Provide a diversity of housing opportunities that responds to a variety of local needs, incomes, densities, and promote a vibrant Old Town area.
- Establish high-quality architectural design, in both scale and character, to address the future growth of the area.
- Develop safe motor vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation systems, emphasizing the pedestrian experience along the "Main Street" within the Old Town area and mitigating potential future impacts at SR-62 intersections.
- Carry forward the Vision Plan, guiding principles, and community input and consensus generated during the community outreach program, through more detailed plans, guidelines, and regulations.

## **2.4 PROJECT PHASING**

The Specific Plan has been developed to provide as much flexibility as allowed by State law. The development and/or redevelopment of Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan Project area would be a multi-year effort. The preferred land use development concept and associated improvements necessary are envisioned to occur over a 20-year period. However, future development and/or redevelopment in the Project area would be dependent on and responsive to prevailing market conditions.

## **2.5 AGREEMENTS, PERMITS, AND APPROVALS**

Implementation of the proposed Project would require the following discretionary approvals from the Town of Yucca Valley:

- Environmental Review. The Program EIR requires a certification recommendation by the Planning Commission and then presentation to the Town Council for certification.
- General Plan Amendment. The *General Plan* would be amended concurrently with adoption of the Specific Plan, as follows:
  - The Land Use Element would be amended to designate the Project area as Specific Plan (SP); and
  - The Circulation Element would be amended to reflect the circulation proposed by the Specific Plan.



- Development Code and Zoning Map Amendment. The Development Code and Zoning Map would be amended to indicate the new Specific Plan zoning district SP (Specific Plan), including the proposed planning districts: Old Town Mixed-Use (OTMU); Old Town Highway Commercial (OTHC); Old Town Commercial/Residential (OTCR); and Old Town Industrial/Commercial (OTIC). Individual development projects within the SPA would be subject to review for consistency with the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan, the Town of Yucca Valley Development Code, and other applicable development regulations on a project-by-project basis.
- Tentative Parcel and Tract Subdivision Maps. Individual tentative parcel or tract subdivision maps are subject to the requirements of the Specific Plan, as well as the Town of Yucca Valley Subdivision Ordinance.
- Site/Development Plan Review. Future uses would be subject to review and approval by the Town, according to the Development Review Procedures outlined in Chapter 4.13 of the Specific Plan (e.g., Plan Review, Site Plan Review, Conditional Use Permit, and other discretionary actions), as required by the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan and the Development Code.
- Grading Permits. Future grading for development within the SPA would be subject to the review of plans and approval of Grading Permits by the Town.
- Building Permits. Future construction of structures within the SPA would be subject to the review of plans and approval of Building Permits by the Town.

Approval of the Specific Plan is subject to actions set forth by the Town of Yucca Valley. Project construction is subject to review and/or approval by the following agencies:

- Town of Yucca Valley Town Manager's Office;
- Town Council and Redevelopment Agency;
- Town of Yucca Valley Planning Commission;
- Town of Yucca Valley Planning and Community Development;
- Town of Yucca Valley Finance Department;
- Town of Yucca Valley Building Department;
- Town of Yucca Valley Parks and Recreation Department;
- Town of Yucca Valley Public Works Department;
- San Bernardino County Fire Department;
- San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department;
- San Bernardino County;
- Regional Water Quality Control Board;
- Hi-Desert Water District; and
- Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District.



## 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMARY

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

1.	<b>Project Title:</b> Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan
2.	<b>Lead Agency Name and Address:</b>  Town of Yucca Valley Department of Community Development 58928 Business Center Drive Yucca Valley, California 92284
3.	<b>Contact Persons and Phone Number:</b>  Mr. Shane Stueckle Deputy Town Manager Telephone: 760.369.6575 E-Mail: sstueckle@yucca-valley.org
4.	<b>Project Location:</b> The Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan area is located in the center of the Town of Yucca Valley, which is located in the Southern portion of San Bernardino County. Yucca Valley is within the Mojave Desert in what is known as the Morongo Basin and is 30 miles northwest of Palm Springs. The approximately 265-acre SPA extends for seven miles along SR-62 and is between Church Street on the east and Kickapoo Trail on the west, and between Yucca Trail on the north and just beyond Santa Fe Trail on the south.
5.	<b>Project Sponsor's Name and Address:</b>  Town of Yucca Valley Department of Community Development Mr. Shane Stueckle, Deputy Town Manager Telephone: 760.369.6575 E-Mail: sstueckle@yucca-valley.org
6.	<b>General Plan Designation:</b> The existing <i>General Plan</i> land use designations within the SPA include: Commercial General, Commercial Service, Commercial Mixed-Use, Residential Single-Family, Rural Living, Industrial, and Public/ Quasi Public.
7.	<b>Zoning:</b> The existing Zoning Districts within the SPA include: Service Commercial (C-S), General Commercial (C-G), Mixed-Use Commercial (C-MU), Residential Single-Family (R-S-5), and Rural Living (R-L)
8.	<b>Description of the Project:</b> (Describe the whole action involved, including, but not limited to, later phases of the project, and any secondary support or off-site features necessary for its implementation.)  Refer to Section 3.2 (Project Characteristics).
9.	<b>Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:</b>  Immediately surrounding the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan area is a mixture of single-family residential, commercial mixed-use, service uses, and vacant land. To the north is primarily vacant land, to the northwest is the Blue Skies Country Club, to the south is primarily single family residential and vacant parcels, and to the east is primarily commercial and service uses.
10.	<b>Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement).</b>  To be determined as a part of the Specific Plan review.



### 3.2 EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This Initial Study and Environmental Assessment analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project. The issue areas evaluated in this Initial Study are:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

The environmental analysis in this section is patterned after the Initial Study Checklist recommended by the *CEQA Guidelines* and used by the Town in its environmental review process. For the preliminary environmental assessment undertaken as part of this Initial Study's preparation, a determination that there is a potential for significant effects indicates the need to more fully analyze the development's impacts and to identify mitigation.

In the evaluation of potential impacts in Section 5.0 (Environmental Analysis), the questions in the Initial Study Checklist are stated and an answer is provided based on the analysis undertaken as part of the Initial Study. The analysis considers the short-term, long-term, direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the development. To each question, there are four possible responses:

- **No Impact:** The project would not have any measurable environmental impact on the environment.
- **Less Than Significant Impact:** The project would have the potential for impacting the environment, although this impact would be below established significance thresholds.
- **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated:** The project would have the potential to generate impacts that may be considered a significant effect on the environment, although mitigation measures or changes to the project's physical or operational characteristics could reduce these impacts to levels that are less than significant.
- **Potentially Significant Impact:** The project would have impacts that are considered significant, and additional analysis is required to identify mitigation measures that could reduce these impacts to less than significant levels.

Where potential impacts are anticipated to be significant, mitigation measures would be required, so that impacts would be avoided or reduced to insignificant levels.



### **3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED**

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a “Potentially Significant Impact” or a “Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated,” as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

	Aesthetics		Land Use and Planning
	Agriculture Resources		Mineral Resources
✓	Air Quality		Noise
	Biological Resources	✓	Population and Housing
	Cultural Resources	✓	Public Services
	Geology and Soils	✓	Recreation
	Hazards and Hazardous Materials	✓	Transportation and Traffic
✓	Hydrology and Water Quality	✓	Utilities and Service Systems
✓	Mandatory Findings of Significance		



## 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The following is a discussion of potential Project impacts as identified in the Initial Study. Explanations are provided for each item.

### 4.1 AESTHETICS

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?			✓	
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?			✓	
c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?			✓	
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			✓	

**(a) *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The Town of Yucca Valley, located in the Morongo Basin, is surrounded by steep hills and mountain ranges to the north, south, and west. Views from the Project area include the Alter's Hill area to the north, Burnt Mountain and South Park Peak to the south, the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the south and southwest, the Bartlett Mountains to the east, and the San Bernardino Mountains and Saw Tooth Range to the west. These hills and mountain ranges reach up to 4,673 feet ASL to the north, south, and west and create a scenic background from various points throughout the SPA, where the elevation is approximately 3,300 feet ASL. From various locations throughout the SPA, views of the surrounding landscapes are visible in every direction.

Table 4-2 of the Specific Plan (General Development Standards Requirements by Individual Zoning District) specifies the height limitations according to zoning districts and indicates that the maximum allowable building height would be between 40 feet and 3 stories/45 feet (whichever is less).<sup>1</sup> In consideration of the distance between the SPA and the surrounding mountain ranges, and the building height limitations specified in the Specific Plan, Project implementation would not significantly impact a scenic vista.

**(b) *Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** State Route 62, which traverses the SPA, is a designated State Scenic Highway. This roadway offers off-site views to motorists while traveling west through the SPA.

<sup>1</sup> It is noted that the Specific Plan allows a height bonus of one-story for the amounts listed in Table 4-8 of the Specific Plan to properties requesting the development of Mixed-Use projects.





Joshua trees are present within vacant lots interspersed along SR-62 and throughout the Project area. In addition, historic buildings are most likely to be found at the heart of Yucca Valley, especially on either side to the existing SR-62. The Old Yucca Elementary School (i.e., the “Scout House”), which is located at the corner of the existing Yucca Trail and Wamego Trail, has been recognized by the Town as having local historic significance and is listed as a pending historic site.

Future development projects could result in impacts to scenic resources (i.e., Joshua trees and historic buildings) along SR-62. However, each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine potential impacts to biological and cultural resources and the necessary subsequent actions. Future development would be subject to review for compliance with the procedures and regulatory provisions established by State and Federal regulatory agencies, the Municipal Code (MC) (Ordinance No. 140), and Specific Plan; refer to Responses 4.4 and 4.5. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies, the MC, and Specific Plan would ensure that future development would not substantially damage scenic resources along SR-62.

The Specific Plan incorporates the proposed SR-62 realignment to allow east–west traffic to travel around (instead of through) the Town; refer to Exhibit 5 (Proposed Circulation Map). The ultimate realignment of SR-62 would be determined upon further study by Caltrans and the Town of Yucca Valley. Scenic resource impacts from the realignment of SR-62 will be discussed in a separate environmental study to be conducted by Caltrans.

**(c) *Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The SPA contains a fragmented pattern of local-serving businesses, many of which are in a deteriorated condition. Also, many of the commercial and industrial properties consist of vacant parcels, abandoned structures, and poorly maintained or underutilized buildings. While the proposed development would alter the visual character of the Project area, implementation is anticipated to result in beneficial impacts to the aesthetic environment by enhancing degraded conditions. Existing commercial and industrial uses would be rehabilitated or replaced with new commercial, industrial, or residential uses designed according to the Development Regulations and Design Guidelines specified in Chapters 4 and 5 of the Specific Plan, respectively. The Development Regulations establish land use districts, identify allowable uses, and outline general and specific development standards relative to FAR’s, densities, setbacks, frontage, and building heights. The Design Guidelines consider building form, mass, and scale and existing character of the area in order to preserve and enhance the character of Old Town Yucca Valley. The fragmentation of the commercial land use pattern would be improved with Project implementation. Visually unattractive strip highway oriented commercial uses along Main Street/Existing SR-62 and Yucca Trail/Proposed SR-62 would be rehabilitated or replaced. Proposed landscaping guidelines would aesthetically enhance views across the Project area, thus, eliminating existing deteriorated conditions. Proposed landscaping guidelines would soften the future built environment and also preserve/restore the scenic qualities of the natural landscape by retaining and/or vegetating areas with native plant species. Public spaces and other site amenities (e.g., plazas, courtyards, pedestrian paseos, and gardens) would further enhance the visual quality of the area. The Specific Plan establishes uses that would create a transition and buffer central uses within the SPA into the surrounding land uses. Thus, Project implementation would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

**(d) *Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The SPA is urbanized with commercial, industrial service, and residential uses and contains numerous sources of light/glare including lighting from the interior of



buildings, street lighting, building illumination, signage, and other sources of lighting. New sources of light would be introduced with the new development, including light from building interiors passing through windows and light from building exteriors (i.e., street lighting, building illumination, security lighting, and landscape lighting).

Depending upon the location of the light source and its proximity to adjacent light sensitive uses, light introduction can be a nuisance, affecting adjacent areas and diminishing the view of the clear night sky. Lighting associated with non-residential uses may cause spillover impacts to nearby sensitive receptors. Section 4.11.3 of the Specific Plan (Light and Glare), requires lights, spotlights, floodlights, reflector, and other means of illumination to be shielded or equipped with special lenses in such a manner as to prevent any glare or direct illumination on any public street or other property. Non-residential development would also have a heightened sensitivity due to the proposed mixed-use and live/work districts within the SPA. However, the Specific Plan contains Design Guidelines that specifically address lighting throughout the site and limit impacts to sensitive adjacent uses. Building materials (e.g., reflective roof tops, large glass windows) that are more likely to create glare and other light sources are regulated and/or restricted. Future development would be subject to compliance with the Development Regulations and Design Guidelines outlined in the Specific Plan. Therefore, Project implementation would not result in a significant impact regarding light and glare.



## 4.2 AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

<i>In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				✓
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				✓
c. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?				✓

- (a) **Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?**

**No Impact.** No Prime, Unique, or Important farmland exists within the Project area.

- (b) **Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?**

**No Impact.** Existing land uses within the Project area include residential, commercial, industrial, and civic. The Project site is zoned Service Commercial (C-S), General Commercial (C-G), Mixed-Use Commercial (MUC), Residential Single-Family (R-S-5), and Rural Living (R-L-1). Project implementation would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use and the Project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.

- (c) **Involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?**

**No Impact.** Farmland or agricultural uses do not exist within the Project area or its vicinity. Project implementation would not involve changes in the environment, which would result in the conversion of Farmland.



### 4.3 AIR QUALITY

<i>Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:</i>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	✓			
b. Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	✓			
c. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	✓			
d. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	✓			
e. Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	✓			

**(a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The Project site is located within the Mojave Desert Air Basin (MDAB). MDAB covers most of Southern California’s high desert and includes portions of San Bernardino County, Riverside County, Los Angeles County, and Kern County. The MDAB includes the jurisdiction of several districts. The proposed Project is in the San Bernardino County portion of the MDAB, and is under the jurisdiction of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD). The MDAQMD includes all of the Mojave Desert portion of San Bernardino County and a portion of eastern Riverside County.

The MDAQMD prepared the 2003 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) to accomplish annual emissions reduction goals. AQMP Conformity Review Procedures were provided by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) for local agencies to follow when determining consistency of projects with the AQMP. Further analysis is required to determine the Project’s consistency with the AQMP’s indicators of conformity.

**(b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The proposed Specific Plan is expected to contribute both short-term (construction-related) and long-term (operational) emissions to existing air quality violations. Development and operation of the uses proposed by the Specific Plan would result in pollutant emissions from the following sources: (1) short-term construction emissions; (2) long-term mobile emissions from trucks and vehicles traveling to and from the site once new projects become operational; and (3) long-term stationary emissions from power and gas consumption and machinery and equipment on-site.



The construction phase of the proposed Project would result in temporary increases in air emissions due to heavy machinery, increased truck trips, and increased vehicular trips by on-site workers over time. Local nuisances associated with increased dust/particulate levels, and remediation and construction odors could affect nearby sensitive receptors.

The greatest potential for air quality impacts during the operational phase of the proposed Specific Plan would be attributed to mobile emissions. At buildout, the Specific Plan Project would create an increase of 1,088 new dwelling units and a decrease of 478,435 SF of commercial/retail/industrial uses, which may result in an increase in long-term mobile emissions in the Project area. This would occur on a project-by-project basis over an extended time frame, which is dependant on a variety of unknown factors. The Specific Plan's potential short- and long-term air quality impacts on a local and regional level require further evaluation pursuant to MDAQMD and California Air Resources Board (CARB) requirements and methodology. Additional analysis is necessary to quantify potential Specific Plan-related air quality impacts (both short-term and long-term) and identify appropriate mitigation to avoid or lessen pollutant emissions.

- (c) ***Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions, which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** MDAB is currently in severe nonattainment for 1-hour ozone Federal standards and serious nonattainment for Federal PM<sub>10</sub> standards. The MDAB is also in moderate nonattainment for the 1-hour State ozone standard and nonattainment for State standards for both PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Implementation of the proposed Project may result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of these criteria pollutants. Further analysis is required in this regard. Refer also to Responses 4.3(a) and 4.3(b).

- (d) ***Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** According to Figure 4-2 of the CEQA Air Quality Handbook (Land Uses Considered to Be Sensitive Receptors), land uses considered to be sensitive receptors include the following:

- Residences;
- Schools;
- Playgrounds;
- Child Care Centers;
- Athletic Facilities;
- Long-Term Health Care Facilities;
- Rehabilitation Centers;
- Convalescent Centers; and
- Retirement Homes.

Sensitive receptors, listed above, are known to be present within the SPA. Construction and operation of projects within the SPA may increase vehicle trips on area roadways and may result in increased air pollutants. Grading and excavation operations may also have air quality impacts in the absence of mitigation. These potential impacts require additional analysis to assess their level of significance and identify appropriate mitigation measures.



(e) ***Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Construction activity associated with development within the proposed SPA may generate detectable odors from heavy-duty equipment exhaust. In addition, long-term operational activities at the proposed facilities have the potential for creating objectionable odors. Some uses, such as restaurants with exhaust vents, are considered “stationary point sources” and may be subject to further regulatory requirements above and beyond any requisite CEQA mitigation. While the emissions from these activities are common and not identified as being particularly hazardous, they may be subject to permitting requirements that call for the use of “best available control technology” (BACT) in order to eliminate or reduce the levels of emissions. Any potential nuisance related to odor that may occur with these activities would require mitigation under the MDAQMD’s permitting requirements. Further analysis is required in this regard.



## 4.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?			✓	
b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?			✓	
c. Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?			✓	
d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?			✓	
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?			✓	
f. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?			✓	

(a) ***Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** According the *General Plan EIR* (Page II-8), a wide variety of sensitive plant and animal species are present within the Town, some of which are designated in the Federal and State endangered species lists. Plants especially noteworthy include the Triple-ribbed Milk Vetch and Parish’s Daisy, both proposed for listing as endangered. The Joshua Tree Woodland, which occurs in intermittent patches throughout the SPA, is designated as a “Community With Highest Inventory Priority” by the State. Sensitive animal species include the Desert Tortoise (Federally listed as endangered), the Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo and the Willow Flycatcher (both State listed as endangered), and several species of bats (State listed as species of special concern).



According to Exhibit III-9 of the *General Plan EIR*, the Project area is classified as “low in biological resources;” (Biological Resource Values/Open Space Conservation Areas) and it is unlikely the species listed above would be found in the SPA. Most native scrub has been eliminated and many of the natural resources have been displaced from the areas located along and south of the existing SR-62, where urban and commercial uses are most common. However, the site borders medium and high-value biological resource areas to the north of Yucca Trail (proposed SR-62).

Some of the Project site’s periphery areas north of SR-62 serve as medium or high biological resource areas. Sensitive plant and animal species may be present in these areas and in the vacant lots found interspersed throughout the Project area. Also, Joshua trees are present within vacant lots interspersed throughout the Project area. Thus, future development projects could result in impacts to sensitive species.

The *General Plan EIR* (Page III-67) requires that low and medium biological resource areas be surveyed for the presence or absence of sensitive habitat and/or species. Also, the Town has adopted a Plant Protection and Management Ordinance (No. 140), which is intended to promote the continued health of the Town’s abundant and diverse plant resources, by providing regulations and guidelines for the management of the plant resources in the Town. Chapter 1 of Ordinance No. 140 (Desert Native Plant Protection), which is intended to recognize and preserve native plants unique to Yucca Valley and the special contribution that Joshua Trees and Yuccas have made to the desert environment, outlines the regulations and guidelines for the management of the plant resources in the Town. According to Code §89.0115 (Permit Required), a removal permit shall be required for the removal of any native tree or plant, as regulated in Section 89.0107 (refer to Response 4.4(e) for further discussion regarding Ordinance 140). Finally, Section 4.8.2 of the Specific Plan requires all project applicants to consult with the Town prior to removal or modification of any existing tree within private property.

Each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine potential impacts to sensitive species and necessary subsequent actions. All future development would be subject to review for compliance with the procedures and regulatory provisions established by the California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the MC (Ordinance No. 140), and the Specific Plan (Section 4.8.2, Required Preservation of Native Vegetation and Trees). Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies, the MC, and Specific Plan would ensure that future development would not have a substantial adverse effect on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species.

As previously noted, the Project area borders medium and high-value biological resource areas to the north of Yucca Trail (proposed SR-62). Potential impacts to sensitive species from the realignment of SR-62 will be discussed in a separate environmental study to be conducted by Caltrans.

- (b) ***Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** There are no perennial creeks, channels, or other water bodies present within the Project boundaries that support riparian or wetland vegetation. However, the Yucca Wash, which traverses the eastern portion of the SPA, provides the backbone drainage to which all other washes and channels are tributary. The Crestview Wash, a tributary to the Yucca Valley Wash, exists within the southern portion of the SPA. Also, the Joshua Tree Woodland, which occurs in intermittent patches throughout the SPA, is designated as a “Community With Highest Inventory Priority” by the State.





The Town has a Plant Protection and Management Ordinance (No. 140), which is intended to promote the continued health of the Town's abundant and diverse plant resources, by providing regulations and guidelines for the management of the plant resources in the Town. Chapter 2 of Ordinance 140 (Riparian Plant Conservation) is intended to promote healthy and abundant riparian habitats by augmenting and coordinating with the responsibilities of the California Department of Fish and Game. Each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine potential impacts to biological resources, including riparian habitats. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies, the MC (Ordinance No. 140), and Specific Plan would ensure that future development would not have a substantial adverse effect on riparian or wetland habitats or other sensitive natural community; refer also to Response 4.4(a).

- (c) ***Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Refer to Responses 4.4(a) and 4.4(b).

- (d) ***Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Refer to Responses 4.4(a) and 4.4(b) above.

- (e) ***Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The Town has a Plant Protection and Management Ordinance (No. 140), which is intended to promote the continued health of the Town's abundant and diverse plant resources, by providing regulations and guidelines for the management of the plant resources in the Town. Ordinance 140 consists of three chapters: Chapter 1 (Desert Native Plant Protection); Chapter 2 (Riparian Plant Conservation); and Chapter 3 (Enforcement). Chapter 1 is intended to recognize and preserve native plants unique to Yucca Valley and the special contribution that Joshua Trees and Yuccas have made to the desert environment. According to Code §89.0115 (Permit Required), a removal permit shall be required for the removal of any native tree or plant as regulated in Section 89.0107. Chapter 2 is intended to promote healthy and abundant riparian habitats by augmenting and coordinating with the responsibilities of the California Department of Fish and Game. Chapter 3 outlines the provisions for enforcement of Ordinance 140.

Various biological resources, including Joshua trees of various heights and sizes, are present within the vacant lots interspersed throughout the Project area. Future development projects could result in impacts to these resources. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies, the MC, and Specific Plan would ensure that future development does not conflict with Ordinance 140.

- (f) ***Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The proposed Specific Plan area is within the West Mojave Plan (WMP) area, which is a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) developed by several local, State, and Federal agencies aimed at minimizing impacts to sensitive plants and animals in the region. The Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan draws from concepts outlined in the federal Endangered Species



Act and identifies specified goals for tortoise recovery. Future development projects could result in impacts to sensitive species and/or habitats. However, each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine consistency with the MSHCP. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by the MC, MSHCP, the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan, and other regulatory agencies would ensure that future development results in a less than significant impact in this regard. Refer also to Responses 4.4(a) and (b).



## 4.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?			✓	
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?			✓	
c. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?			✓	
d. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?			✓	

**(a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Currently, the old Yucca Valley Elementary School, located on the corner of the existing Yucca Trail and Wamego Trail, is known as the “Scout House,” and has been recognized by the Town as having local historic significance. Historic buildings are most likely to be found at the heart of Yucca Valley, especially on either side to the existing SR-62, which currently traverses the SPA. According to the *General Plan EIR* (Page III-81), based on findings of record searches, literature searches, and field surveys, all projects within the Specific Plan area should give careful consideration to historic and archaeological resources, as there may be important historic resources that have not been covered or developed over and may be found during development. Further, Policy 2 of the *General Plan* Archaeological and Historic Resources Element, states that new development must “exercise its responsibility to locate, identify, and evaluate archeological, historical, and cultural sites, and shall assure that appropriate action is taken to protect these resources.” This would be accomplished by requiring that development or land proposals, which have the potential to disturb or destroy sensitive resources, be evaluated by a qualified professional through appropriate resource surveys; refer to Program 2.A of the *General Plan* Archaeological and Historic Resources Element.

Future development projects could result in impacts to cultural resources. However, each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine whether a cultural investigation is appropriate/necessary. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies and the *General Plan* would ensure that future development would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a cultural resource.

**(b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Since the general area is known to be the home of the Serrano Native American group, there is potential for buried archeological resources to be present within the Project area. The proposed SPA consists of urbanized and vacant land and new and redevelopment is likely to occur. Ground disturbing activities, such as grading or excavation, could affect unknown archaeological



resources. Due to the level of past disturbance and following compliance with Policy 2 and Program 2.A of the *General Plan* Archaeological and Historic Resources Element, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would result in a less than significant impact. Refer also to Response 4.5a.

(c) ***Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Paleontological resources are plant and animal fossils dated 3.5 million to 7,000 years ago. The Project site is not located within a known paleontologically sensitive area; refer also to Response 4.5a.

(d) ***Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** No conditions exist that suggest human remains are likely to be found within the SPA. If human remains are found, those remains would have to be treated properly, in accordance with applicable laws. State of California Public Resources Health and Safety Code §7050.5-7055 describe the general provisions for human remains. Specifically, Health and Safety Code 7050.5 describes the requirements if any human remains are accidentally discovered during excavation of a site. If human remains are found during excavation, excavation must stop in the vicinity of the find and any area that is reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent remains until the County coroner has been called out, and the remains have been investigated and appropriate recommendations have been made for the treatment and disposition of the remains. Following compliance with State regulations, which detail the appropriate actions necessary in the event human remains are encountered, impacts in this regard would be considered less than significant.



## 4.6 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
1) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.			✓	
2) Strong seismic ground shaking?			✓	
3) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?			✓	
4) Landslides?				✓
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	✓			
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on-or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?			✓	
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the California Building Code (2001), creating substantial risks to life or property?			✓	
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	✓			

(a) **Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:**

(1) **Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** According to Exhibit III-5 of the *General Plan EIR* (Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zones in the Yucca Valley Area), there are no known active or potentially active faults or Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zones traversing the SPA. The Pinto Mountain Fault is the closest active fault, located approximately one mile north of the SPA. Project implementation would not expose people or structures to substantial adverse effects associated with fault rupture.



**(2) Strong seismic ground shaking?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project area is located in Southern California, which is a seismically active area subject to ground shaking, originating from several active faults, including the San Andreas Fault System located approximately 9.0 miles to the southwest. The closest active fault is the Pinto Mountain Fault (7.4 Mce)<sup>2</sup> located directly north of the SPA. Other major faults within the Yucca Valley area include the Johnson Valley, Burnt Mountain, and Eureka Peak faults. The SPA may experience ground motion and effects from earthquakes generated along active faults located off-site. Groundshaking during an earthquake is the most significant seismic hazard that would impact the Project area. The intensity of groundshaking would depend upon the magnitude of the earthquake, the distance to the epicenter, and the geology of the area between the epicenter and Project area.

Numerous controls would be imposed within the SPA on a project-by-project basis through the permitting process. In general, the Town regulates development (and reduces potential geologic impacts) under the requirements of the California Uniform Building Code, the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone Act, and local land use policies. Future development would be subject to compliance with the Town's Development Code, which includes Seismic Safety Requirements. In addition, the Town requires that grading plans and erosion control measures be developed and implemented for future development. Project implementation would not expose people or structures to substantial adverse effects associated with ground shaking.

**(3) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The potential for ground failure, such as liquefaction, during a strong earthquake is limited to soils that are relatively cohesionless, relatively loose, unconsolidated and are below the water table. According to the *General Plan EIR* (Page III-43), the hazard from liquefaction is considered to be low in the Yucca Valley area because the water table is about 400 feet below the surface of the ground. Project implementation would not expose people or structures to substantial adverse effects associated with liquefaction.

**(4) Landslides?**

**No Impact.** There are no landslides documented within the Project area because of a lack of geologic conditions conducive to such an event. Project implementation would not expose people or structures to adverse effects associated with landslides.

**(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** Soil erosion is the process by which soil particles are removed from the land surface by wind, water, and/or gravity. Exposed soil after clearing, grading, or excavation is easily eroded by wind or water. Grading during construction would increase the potential for erosion. According to the *General Plan EIR* (Page III-85), winter rains cause erosion and water run-off produces substantial deposits of sand throughout the Yucca Valley area. Sometimes referred to as "blow sand," persistent, strong winds carry the sand methodically down the Valley during the spring months. Further study is necessary to determine whether Project implementation would result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil; refer also to Responses 4.3 and 4.8.

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<sup>2</sup> The Maximum Credible Earthquake (Mce) value represents the estimated M, or surface magnitude value.



- (c) ***Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in an on-site or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** According to the *General Plan EIR* (Page III-38), potential causes of ground subsidence within the Town include groundwater withdrawal, ground-level changes from earthquake movement, and collapsible soils. Other seismic events related to secondary ground failures that can occur in the event of an earthquake include dynamic settlement, ground cracking or fissuring, lateral spreads, slumps, landslides, and earth or rock falls. Numerous cases of secondary ground failure, including dynamic settlement, ground cracking or fissuring, lateral spreads, and slumps have been documented in the Yucca Valley area and could potentially occur within the SPA (*General Plan EIR*, Page III-45).

According to the *General Plan EIR* (Page III-46), the preparation of soils studies and/or geotechnical studies shall be required for future development proposals. Each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine potential seismic hazards. Compliance with this *General Plan* requirement and provisions of the Uniform Building Code would reduce impacts associated with potential seismic hazards to less than significant. Refer also to Response 4.6(a).

- (d) ***Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the California Building Code (2001), creating substantial risks to life or property?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Expansive soils are soils with a significant amount of clay particles that have the ability to give up or take on water. When these soils swell, the change in volume exerts tremendous pressures on loads that are placed on them. Highly expansive soils can cause damage to building foundations, highways, and other surface structures. According to the *General Plan EIR* (Page III-39), expansive soils are not considered a hazard in the Yucca Valley area because of the relatively minor amount of clay present in the soils.

- (e) ***Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Currently, all wastewater in the SPA is treated through septic systems located on each lot. It is anticipated that private septic systems would continue to be used for wastewater disposal until sufficient development has occurred to extend sewer system infrastructure to Yucca Valley.<sup>3</sup> Also, the High Desert Water District (HDWD) anticipates constructing a District-wide sewer system and a wastewater treatment facility. Future wastewater improvements, including the elimination of private septic systems and the construction of new wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal systems, are anticipated. Further study is necessary to determine potential impacts associated with the use of septic tanks; refer also to Response 4.16(a).

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<sup>3</sup> *Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan*, RBF Consulting's Urban Design Studio, May 5, 2006, Page 3-24.



## 4.7 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?			✓	
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?			✓	
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?			✓	
d. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?			✓	
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?			✓	
f. For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?			✓	
g. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?			✓	
h. Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?			✓	

- (a) ***Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The office, commercial, industrial, and other uses proposed within the SPA may involve the use, storage, transport and/or generation of hazardous materials. It is Town policy to regulate, to the extent empowered, the delivery, use, and storage of hazardous materials within the Town; refer to Policy 1 of the *General Plan* Hazardous and Toxic Materials Element. The disposal of all hazardous and/or toxic wastes is required to be in compliance with existing Federal, State, and County regulations; refer to Policy 3 of the *General Plan* Hazardous and Toxic Materials Element. Activities involving hazardous materials would also be subject to compliance with the San Bernardino County Hazardous Waste Management Plan (HWMP), which complies with Health and Safety Code Section 25135. The HWMP assures that adequate treatment and disposal capacity is





available to manage the hazardous wastes generated within the Town, and to address issues related to manufacture and use.

Future development would be evaluated on a project-by-project basis and required to adhere to provisions outlined in the HWMP and *General Plan* Policies 2 and 3. Thus, The proposed Specific Plan is not anticipated to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.

- (b) ***Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Based upon the historical and existing land uses, the potential exists that adverse conditions involving hazardous materials were created and could be released within the Project area. Future development projects could create a significant hazard to the public involving hazardous materials. However, each project would be reviewed and evaluated by the Town staff to determine whether a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) is appropriate/necessary. Qualified personnel would conduct, on a parcel-by-parcel basis, a formal ESA following the most recent Standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies would ensure that a significant hazard to the public or the environment involving hazardous materials is not created.

The allowable uses and permit requirements for the proposed Specific Plan are outlined in Chapter 4.3 of the Specific Plan (Allowable Land Uses and Permit Requirements). Future uses within the SPA would be required to comply with the provisions of the San Bernardino County HWMP. Consultation with the San Bernardino County Fire Department would be required for the storage and use of any hazardous materials utilized at a specific facility. During construction, the proposed Project would involve standard construction practices, conforming to the appropriate Town requirements. Therefore, the proposed Specific Plan is not anticipated to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

- (c) ***Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The public schools in the SPA are the Yucca Valley Elementary School, La Contenta Junior High School, and Yucca Valley High School. Compliance with the procedures and provisions established by regulatory agencies and the MC would ensure that a significant hazard is not created regarding existing or proposed schools. Refer to Responses 4.7(a) and (b).

- (d) ***Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** According to the *General Plan* Hazardous and Toxic Materials Element (Page V-33), there are four federally listed hazardous waste sites in the Town of Yucca Valley. However, none of the identified sites are within or in close proximity to the proposed SPA. Any future development that would occur under the proposed Specific Plan would be subject to compliance with local, State, and Federal requirements regarding the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials.



Thus, the proposed Specific Plan would not create a significant hazard to the public or to the environment and less than significant impacts would occur in this regard.

- (e) ***For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Yucca Valley Airport is a 35-acre facility located on Airway Avenue, north of SR-62 and approximately 1.5 miles east of the SPA. It is a privately owned, public use airport, long-term leased to the Yucca Valley Airport District and classified as a general aviation basic utility facility.

The Yucca Valley Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan (ACLUP) (February 1992) was prepared to provide for the orderly growth of the public airport and the area surrounding the airport. It is intended to safeguard the general welfare of the inhabitants within the vicinity of the airport and the public in general. The planning boundary for this ACLUP is the airport's horizontal surface, as illustrated on Figure 7 of the ACLUP (Part 77 Imaginary Surface). According to Figure 7, the SPA is not located within the ACLUP boundary. The ACLUP has established three Safety Review Areas, which reflect a particular level and type of aviation related hazard or risk; refer to Figure 9 of the ACLUP (Safety Review Areas). As illustrated on Figure 9, the SPA is not located within the established Safety Review Areas.

- (f) ***For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** There are no private airstrips located in the vicinity of the proposed SPA. The proposed Project would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the SPA in this regard. Refer also to Response 4.7(e).

- (g) ***Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The proposed Project would not interfere with the Town's emergency response or evacuation plans. Proper traffic controls would be implemented, as warranted, to facilitate circulation and minimize potential impacts in this regard.

- (h) ***Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Factors affecting wildland fire hazard potential include human proximity, vegetation, wind direction, slope, and access to fire. Although, the SPA is centrally located within the Town of Yucca Valley, portions of the SPA are located adjacent to wildlands. According to the *General Plan* Fire and Police Protection Element (Page VI-2), the Yucca Valley area is exposed to a great threat to life and property. An increase in the number of buildings, aging housing stock, and new residential development within rural areas are threats applicable to the SPA.

All future development would be subject to MC requirements for construction, access, water main, fire hydrants, fire flows, brush clearance, and fuel modification plans. Future development would also be subject to compliance with all relevant SBCFD General requirements, which may require a Fuel Modification Plan, Landscape Plan, and Irrigation Plan to be submitted prior to any new construction,



remodeling, modification, or reconstruction. Future development may be required to obtain approval from the SBCFD as a Standard Condition of Approval from the Town. Following compliance with the SBCFD and MC requirements, the proposed Project would result in a less than significant impact regarding the exposure of people or structures to a significant risk involving wildland fires.



## 4.8 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	✓			
b. Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	✓			
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	✓			
d. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	✓			
e. Create or contribute runoff which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	✓			
f. Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	✓			
g. Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard as mapped on a Federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	✓			
h. Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	✓			
i. Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	✓			
j. Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?			✓	

**(a) *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?***

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The quality of water at any given location generally changes over three different periods: 1) during the earthwork and construction phase, when the potential for erosion, siltation, and sedimentation would be the greatest; 2) following construction, prior to the establishment of ground cover, when the erosion potential may remain relatively high; and 3) following completion of the Project, when impacts related to sedimentation would decrease markedly, but those associated with urban runoff would increase.



Grading, excavation, and construction activities associated with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan area could impact water quality due to sheet erosion of exposed soils and subsequent deposition of particles and pollutants in drainage areas. Implementation of the proposed development would be subject to compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting process, which would lessen potential impacts in this regard. Regulatory compliance and implementation of erosion control measures would be required to mitigate short-term impacts to water quality.

The Specific Plan would also affect the quality of surface water during long-term conditions. Long-term impacts on surface water quality may occur from the addition of Project-related automobile trips, which generate urban type pollutants (i.e., oil, tire particles, etc.) and park and lawn development (i.e., fertilizers). Additionally, new development resulting from implementation of the Specific Plan would increase impervious areas. A reduction in permeable surfaces would be considered a water quality impact because permeable surfaces allow for rain and runoff to infiltrate into the ground. The concentration of chemical constituents dissolved or suspended in runoff waters leaving a site would vary with the distribution pattern of rainfall events. Similarly, the characteristics of rain events affect the concentration of pollutants. Infiltration both reduces the amount of flow that is capable of washing off additional pollutants and filter water removing potential pollutants. These changes have the potential to affect long-term water quality. Proposed development would be subject to compliance with the NPDES permitting process. Further analysis is necessary to adequately assess potential impacts in this regard.

- (b) ***Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The Town of Yucca Valley is provided domestic water services by the Hi-Desert Water District (HDWD), which lies within the Mojave Water Agency's service boundaries. The HDWD derives water resources principally from the Warren Valley Groundwater Basin underlying the Town. The basin is currently being recharged by the State Water Project. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan has the potential to impact groundwater supplies from the increased demand associated with new development. Also, new development would reduce permeable surfaces, which allow for rain and runoff to infiltrate into the ground. Further analysis is required to determine the Project's potential to impact groundwater supplies or groundwater recharge. Refer also to Response 4.16(d).

- (c) ***Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of stream or river, in a manner, which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Many of the existing drainage courses within the Town are unimproved and have insufficient hydraulic capacity. Intense thunderstorms result in significant quantities of water and sediment conveyed from the mountains through developed areas of the Town. Flooding and sediment deposition within properties and in Town streets is a common occurrence during the storm season.

The Town is within the jurisdiction of the San Bernardino County Flood Control District (SBCFCD). There are limited drainage facilities within the Project area to mitigate flooding. The main existing stormwater collector within the Project area is Yucca Valley Wash, an earthen trapezoidal flood control channel, which traverses the eastern portion of the SPA. Currently, a large portion of the SPA is located within the 100-year flood plain.



In 1999, the Town of Yucca Valley Master Plan of Drainage was completed by the SBCFCD to provide for the future development of adequate drainage facilities. The Master Plan of Drainage states that most of the stormwater flows from the eastern portion of the SPA would be conveyed through Yucca Wash; storm flows from the southern portion would be conveyed through street flows within Santa Fe Trail, southwest to the intersection of Inca Trail/Santa Fe Trail. From that intersection, stormwater would be conveyed through a reinforced concrete pipe to the Blue Skies Country Club. Yucca Wash northeast of Apache Trail is proposed to be constructed of rock-revetted side slopes, and the southwest portion would be a concrete-lined channel. Stormwater flows would be conveyed via curb street systems.

Specific Plan implementation would increase the amount of impervious surfaces on-site, which may result in a decrease in ground absorption, an increase in the quantity of surface water, and a change in existing drainage patterns. Changes in drainage patterns, altered absorption rates, and runoff from the site would be accommodated by existing or future stormwater/flood control infrastructure improvements. Further analysis is required to adequately assess impacts in this regard. Refer also to Response 4.8(a).

- (d) ***Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner, which would result in flooding on- or off-site?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Refer to Responses 4.8 (a) and (c).

- (e) ***Create or contribute runoff, which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** According to the *General Plan EIR*, “most of the natural drainage courses have inadequate capacity and are subject to erosion and deposition of sediment.” The proposed Specific Plan would be required by the Town to provide for adequate on-site and off-site drainage facilities to ensure that existing or planned stormwater drainage systems are not adversely impacted; further analysis is required. Refer to Responses 4.8(a) and 4.8(c).

- (f) ***Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan could result in short-term and long-term impacts to surface water quality. Short-term surface water quality impacts may occur from water erosion of soils during construction, with long-term impacts on surface water quality occurring primarily from the addition of Project-related automobile trips, which generate urban type pollutants (i.e., oil, tire particles, etc.). However, new projects within the proposed Specific Plan would be required to implement best management practices (BMPs) to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater quality requirements. The significance of this issue requires further analysis. Refer also to Response 4.8(a).

- (g) ***Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Exhibit III-7 of the *General Plan EIR* illustrates areas of flood hazards within the Town of Yucca Valley including the SPA. Portions of the SPA contain drainage tributaries, which are associated with, Zone A, the 100-year flood zone. Zone B is also present within the SPA and is prone to severe flooding every 100 to 500 years. The site is also susceptible to minimal flooding in



areas identified as Zone C. Further analysis is required to determine the potential impacts in this regard. Refer also to Response 4.8(c).

- (h) **Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures, which would impede or redirect flood flows?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to Responses 4.8(c) and (g).

- (i) **Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to Response 4.8(c) and (g).

- (j) **Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project area is not subject to seiche, tsunami, or volcanic hazards. Heavy rainfall often triggers surficial sliding, debris, and mudflow on bluff faces and steep slopes. Also, mud and debris flows could occur in areas near water retention or ground water recharge basins where the presence of loose, unconsolidated, saturated sandy soils exists. However problems are generally limited to mountainous regions north and south of the SPA. The SPA is located in an area with low susceptibility to slope stability problems; refer to Exhibit III-6 of the *General Plan EIR* (Rockfall/Landslide Susceptibility). Specific Plan implementation is anticipated to result in a less than significant impact regarding the exposure of people/structures to potential substantial adverse effects associated with seiche, tsunami, or mudflow.



## 4.9 LAND USE AND PLANNING

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Physically divide an established community?			✓	
b. Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?			✓	
c. Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?			✓	

**(a) *Physically divide an established community?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The SPA currently contains developed land with urban uses and vacant lots interspersed throughout. Vacant lands and residential uses surround the Project area. In this regard, development of the SPA would provide unity to the area by preserving and allowing residential uses as part of mixed-use development, providing commercial services to the residents in the area. Project implementation would not physically divide an established community; impacts are considered less than significant in this regard.

**(b) *Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Specific Plan provides a comprehensive set of plans, guidelines, and regulatory standards in addition to administrative and implementation provisions within the land use districts, and applies to residential, commercial, office, mixed-use, and light industrial uses; refer to Table 1 (Land Use Plan Buildout Summary). To facilitate implementation of the proposed Project, the *General Plan* would be amended concurrently with adoption of the Specific Plan, as follows:

- The Land Use Element would be amended to designate the Project area as Specific Plan (SP);
- The Circulation Element would be amended to reflect the circulation proposed by the Specific Plan.

The Development Code and Zoning Map would be amended to indicate the new Specific Plan zoning district SP (Specific Plan), including the proposed planning districts: Old Town Mixed-Use (OTMU); Old Town Highway Commercial (OTHC); Old Town Commercial/ Residential (OTCR); and Old Town Industrial/Commercial (OTIC). Individual development projects within the SPA would be subject to review for consistency with the *General Plan*, Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan, the Town of Yucca Valley Development Code, and other applicable development regulations on a project-by-project basis.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> All Town Plans, including the *General Plan*, are available for review at the Town Hall Planning Department.





The Town of Yucca Valley has identified the need to improve the economic vitality and livability of the Old Town area by establishing comprehensive strategy to attract and expand economic activity and commerce. The purpose of the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan is to identify key opportunities to enhance the Town's overall economic base and the historic Old Town area.

The Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan serves as a planning and regulatory link between the *General Plan* and individual, project-level development within the Project area. The Specific Plan provides area-specific land use Development Regulations and Development Guidelines. Upon adoption by the Town, the Specific Plan provides the legal development requirements for the Project area.

The Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan has been developed to provide as much flexibility as allowed by State law. The vision of this Specific Plan is intended to be implemented over a 20- year period, and therefore may be amended over time to reflect the Town's evolving vision for the area. The Specific Plan contains flexible concepts, Development Regulations, and Design Guidelines for the Old Town area that are intended to implement the goals, objectives, and polices of the Town's *General Plan*. Project implementation would not conflict with the *General Plan*, Development Code, or other applicable land use plans and a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

**(c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Refer to Response 4.4(f).



## 4.10 MINERAL RESOURCES

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?				✓
b. Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?				✓

(a) ***Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?***

**No Impact.** According to the Open Space, Mineral, and Conservation Element of the *General Plan*, Yucca Valley has relatively few mineral resources. There are no mineral resources currently present within the community, which would be economically feasible for extraction. The sand and gravel deposits within the area represent the only important economic resource. However, the SPA is located in the original commercial core of the Town; there are no sand/gravel deposits located within the Project boundaries. Thus, Project implementation would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource.

(b) ***Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?***

**No Impact.** The Project site has not been delineated as an important mineral resource recovery site within the Town's *General Plan*; refer also to Response 4.10 (a).



## 4.11 NOISE

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?			✓	
b. Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?			✓	
c. A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?			✓	
d. A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?			✓	
e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?			✓	
f. For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?			✓	

**(a) *Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Project construction and operation would result in both short-term and long-term impacts. Short-term impacts would occur during grading and construction operation and could expose adjacent land uses to noise levels between 70 and 90 decibels at 50 feet from the noise source. Excessive noise levels resulting from construction activities generally would occur in the daytime hours only. According to Code §6.04.030(D) (Declaration of Nuisance), building or demolition related activities between the hours of 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM in a residential area, and between the hours of 10:00 PM and 5:00 AM in a commercial or industrial area.

Long-term noise impacts would be associated with vehicular traffic to/from the site (including residents and visitors), outdoor activities, deliveries, and stationary mechanical equipment on-site. Code §87.0905(b)(1) (Noise Standards) describes the noise standard for emanations from any source, as it would affect adjacent properties. Specific Plan Development regulations state “activities, processes, and uses shall not produce noise that may be considered a nuisance or hazard on any adjacent property.” The building design requirements state “residential units shall be designed to be sound-attenuated against present and future project noise...projects shall provide an acoustical analysis report by an acoustical engineer that describes the acoustic design features of the structure required to satisfy the exterior and interior noise standards of the Yucca Valley Municipal Code.”



Adherence to Code and Specific Plan requirements would reduce short- and long-term noise impacts to a less than significant level.

**(b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The SPA is currently urbanized with vacant lots interspersed throughout the area. Existing topography would not involve blasting, extensive on-site drilling, or extensive earthwork. Short-term impacts include on-site construction (i.e., grading and excavation for utility trenches) may generate ground borne noise potentially exposing persons to excessive noise levels. However, these impacts would be addressed on a project-by-project basis through the build out of the SPA. Additionally, Development Regulations within the Specific Plan state that uses, which generate vibrations that may be considered a nuisance or hazard on any adjacent property, shall be cushioned or isolated to prevent the generation of vibrations. Thus, implementation of the Specific Plan would result in a less than significant impact regarding the exposure of persons to or generation of groundborne vibration.

**(c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Refer to Response 4.11(a).

**(d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Refer to Responses 4.11(a) and (b).

**(e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** As discussed in Response 4.7(e), the SPA is not located within the ACLUP boundary; refer to Figure 7 of the ACLUP (Part 77 Imaginary Surface). In addition, Figure 2 of the ACLUP illustrates the 60 CNEL contour for Yucca Valley Airport and indicates that the SPA is not located within the established contour. Therefore, Project implementation would not expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels from aircraft.

**(f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Refer to Response 4.11(e).



## 4.12 POPULATION AND HOUSING

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Induce substantial 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)?	✓			
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?			✓	
c. Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?			✓	

- (a) ***Induce substantial 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)?***

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The population estimate for the Town of Yucca Valley as of January 2006 was an estimated 20,537 persons.<sup>5</sup> The development of new homes or businesses could induce population growth directly, whereas the extension of roads or other infrastructure could induce population growth indirectly. The Specific Plan proposes to increase residential units by 1,088 dwellings, thereby inducing direct population growth in the Town. Based on an estimate of 2.157 persons per household,<sup>6</sup> the increase of 1,088 dwelling units resulting from implementation of the Specific Plan could potentially increase the Town's population by approximately 2,739 persons, representing an increase of approximately 13.3 percent over the Town's 2006 population estimate. The employment generated by the Project may result in direct growth in the Town's population, because the potential exists that future employees (and their families) may relocate to the Town. Additionally, the Project would require the expansion of existing water, wastewater, storm drainage, and circulation facilities to meet increased demands associated with the new development. Further study is necessary to determine whether Project implementation would induce substantial population growth in the Town.

- (b) ***Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?***

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Residential units are currently located sparsely throughout the SPA. Project implementation could result in the removal and/or displacement of existing housing for the development of a variety of land uses. However, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would represent an increase of 1,088 dwelling units over the existing *General Plan* land use designations. Therefore, the displacement of existing housing within the SPA would not necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Further, it is noted that California Government Code §7260(b) (the "California Relocation Law") establishes "a uniform policy for the fair and equitable treatment of persons

<sup>5</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, *E-5 City/County Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, 2001-2006, with 200 Benchmark*, Sacramento, California, May 2006.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



displaced as a direct result of programs or projects undertaken by a public entity.” A primary purpose of the California Relocation Law is to ensure that these persons not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result of programs and projects designed for the benefit of the public as a whole and to minimize the hardship of displacement on these persons. Adherence to the regulatory requirements that govern displacement would ensure that Project implementation would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

It is noted that realignment of SR-62 may result in the displacement of housing, persons, or businesses. However, the potential impacts associated with displacement resulting from the proposed SR-62 realignment will be discussed in a separate Environmental Study to be conducted by Caltrans.

- (c) ***Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Refer to Response 4.12(b).



### 4.13 PUBLIC SERVICES

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
1) Fire protection?	✓			
2) Police protection?	✓			
3) Schools?	✓			
4) Parks?	✓			
5) Other public facilities?			✓	

(a) ***Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:***

(1) ***Fire protection?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The County of San Bernardino Fire Department (SBCFD) provides paramedic and fire protection to the Town including the SPA. Fire protection and paramedic service to the Project site is specifically provided by Station #121, located at 55201 29 Palms Highway. The additional development proposed by the Project could create greater demands on existing resources. Project implementation could impact the adequacy of the Fire Department’s level of service, since the proposed development could increase the potential for urban-related fire and life safety occurrences within the SPA. Additional analysis and consultation with the SBCFD is required.

(2) ***Police protection?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The Town is within the jurisdiction of the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department (SBCSD). Currently, the Joshua Tree Sheriff’s Station, located at 6527 White Feather Road, services the Town and the SPA. The additional development proposed by the Project could create greater demands on existing resources and impact the adequacy of the Sheriff Department’s service. Additional analysis and consultation with the SBCSD is required.

(3) ***Schools?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The Morongo Unified School District (MUSD) provides public education to the residents of the Morongo Basin, which includes the Town and SPA. The public schools in the SPA are Yucca Valley Elementary School, La Contenta Junior High School, and Yucca



Valley High School. Project implementation could result in an increase in the MUSD's student population, since the development of an additional 1,008 dwelling units is proposed. The proposed Project could result in the need for construction of new school facilities or the alteration of existing facilities within the MUSD. Additional analysis and consultation with the MUSD is required.

**(4) Parks?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The Project does not propose development of a park facility. However, Project implementation could create an increased demand for parkland, since the development of an additional 1,008 dwelling units is proposed. Further analysis is necessary to adequately assess potential impacts in this regard.

**(5) Other public facilities?**

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Due to the nature and scope of the proposed uses, Project implementation is not anticipated to result in a significant increase in the demand for other public facilities.





## 4.14 RECREATION

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	✓			
b. Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	✓			

- (a) ***Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The potential exists that the persons residing in the proposed residential development would use the Town's existing recreational facilities. Further study is necessary to determine whether the increased usage of existing neighborhood, regional, or other recreational facilities would cause substantial physical deterioration. Refer also to Response 4.13(a)(4).

- (b) ***Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The Project proposes pedestrian and bicycle/equestrian trails. The trails system includes a pedestrian-oriented street system encompassing wide sidewalks and public plazas. On-street Class 1 bike paths are proposed to extend along SR-62/Yucca Trail and Santa Fe Trail, connecting the local street network. The proposed Yucca Wash multi-use trail would be a 10-foot decomposed granite trail for equestrian and pedestrian use, ultimately connecting to the regional California Riding and Hiking Trail System. The direct environmental impacts associated with the proposed recreational facilities require further analysis. Refer also to Responses 4.13(a)(4) and 4.14(a).



## 4.15 TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	✓			
b. Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	✓			
c. Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?				✓
d. Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	✓			
e. Result in inadequate emergency access?			✓	
f. Result in inadequate parking capacity?			✓	
g. Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	✓			

- (a) ***Cause an increase in traffic, which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Implementation of the proposed Project would increase vehicular movement in the Project vicinity. The addition of new residential and commercial uses would generate an increase in traffic volumes during morning and evening peak hour periods. Further analysis is required to assess the impact on traffic and circulation in the area.

- (b) ***Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Refer to Response 4.15(a).

- (c) ***Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?***

***No Impact.*** Due the scale and nature of the proposed Project, a change in air traffic patterns would not occur. No impact would occur in this regard.



- (d) ***Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** The Project proposes a semi-grid system of roadways, emphasizing community and regional linkages to the Old Town area and addressing the potential realignment of SR-62; refer to Exhibit 5 (Proposed Circulation Plan). Further study is necessary to determine whether Project implementation would increase hazards due to a design feature.

- (e) ***Result in inadequate emergency access?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Refer to Response 4.7(g).

- (f) ***Result in inadequate parking capacity?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Section 4.7 of the Specific Plan (Off-Street Parking and Loading Standards) specifies the parking standards necessary to ensure that parking and loading areas are sufficient and are properly designed and located. Any use, including a change in or expansion of an existing use or structure, would require appropriately maintained off-street parking and loading areas in compliance with the standards described in the Specific Plan. For standards and provisions that are not explicitly stated, the standards and provisions of the MC would apply. Adherence to Specific Plan and Code requirements would ensure that adequate parking capacity is provided for all future development.

- g) ***Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Impacts to alternative transportation modes such as bus and bicycle facilities require additional analysis.



## 4.16 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	✓			
b. Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	✓			
c. Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	✓			
d. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	✓			
e. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	✓			
f. Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	✓			
g. Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	✓			

**(a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** Currently, all wastewater in the SPA is treated through septic systems located on each lot. It is anticipated that private septic systems would continue to be used for wastewater disposal until sufficient development has occurred to extend sewer system infrastructure to Yucca Valley.

Because currently there is no wastewater facility, the community relies on septic tanks at each location to dispose of sewage. A septic system has two main components: a septic tank; and an absorption area, sometimes constructed horizontally (call a leach field) or vertically (called a seepage pit). Septic tanks are buried between five and ten feet from the source structure. The liquid rises leaves the septic tank through a pipe, which then branches out to the absorption area (or drainfield). Most of the liquid from the drainfield eventually seeps down toward the Town's aquifer to be pumped up to the surface again through wells.

The Hi-Desert Water District (HDWD) provides water service to the Town. The HDWD pumps water out of the ground (from an aquifer), up through wells to the surface. Poorly functioning, not maintained, and/or failing septic systems have contributed to the contamination of the Town's groundwater and



aquifer, causing a rise in nitrates in some of the HDWD wells. Concerned with rising nitrates, the HDWD constructed a nitrate removal facility, which was in full operation by fall 2002.

The nitrate removal facility is considered an interim solution to the Town's wastewater treatment limitations. The HDWD anticipates constructing a District-wide sewer system and wastewater treatment facility. To determine the technical aspects of these improvements, the HDWD has prepared the Wastewater Collection and Treatment Master Plan (January 1998). The Plan identifies the wastewater flow projections for the Town based on the land uses identified in the *General Plan* (1995). The Plan also evaluates alternative treatment processes for groundwater percolation and water reuse, and presents the recommended infrastructure for the District-wide sewer system and wastewater treatment facility. In addition to controlling nitrate contamination resulting from septic systems, the wastewater system would also provide the opportunity to recharge treated wastewater into the Warren Valley Basin using recharge basins. It is estimated that 1,000-acre-feet of water per year could be recharged into the Basin.

Project implementation would increase the quantity of wastewater, which is attributable to the Project area. Future wastewater improvements, including the elimination of private septic systems and the construction of new wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal systems, are anticipated. Further study is necessary to determine potential impacts associated with the Project's wastewater system and treatment requirements. The wastewater flow associated with the proposed Project will be evaluated in consideration of the approved levels, as identified in the *General Plan* and the Wastewater Collection and Treatment Master Plan.

**(b) *Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?***

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The Town of Yucca Valley lies within the Warren Valley Hydrologic Subarea. The Town's sole source of water is the Warren Valley Groundwater Basin, which is recharged by the Morongo Basin Pipeline. As previously noted, the Hi-Desert Water District (HDWD) provides water service to the Town including the SPA. The HDWD has approximately 8,400 service connections and a service area that spans approximately 52 square-miles. The District maintains approximately 274 miles of transmission and distribution pipelines ranging from in diameter from 2 to 12 inches. The recharge facilities consist of two percolation ponds for recharging water into the Warren Valley Basin. There are 16 storage tanks allowing the District to retain 12.66 million gallons of water in storage. With 17 wells in operation, the District is able to produce a maximum of 7,000 gallons per minute. The HDWD Water Supply Master Plan (WSMP) (updated in 2001) outlines sources, storage, transmission, and distribution facilities to determine existing and future capacity requirements based on growth. The Plan is updated every five years and was last updated in 2002.

The demand for water attributed to the SPA would increase with implementation of the proposed Project. The Yucca Valley Revitalization Project Draft Utility Plan was prepared for the Specific Plan to identify existing water demands and compare the needs based upon buildout of the Specific Plan. The Specific Plan would result in the buildout of water infrastructure and presents an opportunity to upgrade and ensure the adequacy of fire hydrant coverage. Further study is needed to evaluate the need for new water facilities or expansion of existing facilities.

Compliance with Senate Bill 221 and Senate Bill 610: Adequacy of Water Supply. Senate Bills 221 and 610 were signed into law in 2001 and took effect January 1, 2002. The two senate bills amended State law to better link information on water supply availability to certain land use decisions by cities and counties. The two companion bills provide a regulatory forum that requires more collaborative



planning between local water suppliers and cities and counties. All SB 610 and 221 reports are generated and adopted by the public water supplier.

Senate Bill (SB) 610 requires a detailed report regarding water availability and planning for additional water supplies that is included with the environmental document for specified projects. All “projects” that meet any of the following criteria require the assessment:

- A proposed residential development of more than 500 dwelling units;
- A proposed shopping center or business establishment employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 500,000 SF of floor space;
- A proposed commercial office building employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 250,000 SF of floor space;
- A proposed hotel or motel, or both, having more than 500 rooms;
- A proposed industrial, manufacturing, or processing plant, or industrial park planned to house more than 1,000 persons, occupying more than 40 acres of land, or having more than 650,000 SF of floor area;
- A mixed-use project that includes one or more of the projects specified above; or
- A project that would demand an amount of water equivalent to, or greater than the amount of water required by a 500-dwelling unit project.

While SB 610 primarily affects the Water Code, SB 221 principally applies to the Subdivision Map Act. The primary effect of this bill is to condition every tentative map for an applicable subdivision on the applicant by verifying that the public water supplier (PWS) has “sufficient water supply” available to serve it. Under SB 221, approval by a town or county of certain residential subdivisions requires a written verification of sufficient water supply. SB 221 applies to any “subdivision,” defined as:

- A proposed residential development of more than 500 dwelling units, if the PWS has more than 5,000 service connections.
- Any proposed development that increases connections by 10 percent or more, if the PWS has fewer than 5,000 connections.

The proposed Specific Plan meets the criteria specified above; therefore, preparation of a water supply assessment is required.

Refer to Response 4.16(a) for a discussion of potential impacts associated with wastewater facilities.

- (c) ***Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Refer to Responses 4.8(a), (c), and (e).

- (d) ***Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** Refer to Response 4.16(b).



- (e) **Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project, that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to Response 4.16(a).

- (f) **Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The proposed Project would generate additional solid waste beyond existing conditions. Private haulers would dispose of waste at area landfills. The Project's affect upon the landfill capacity and consideration of the Town's waste recycling programs require further evaluation.

- (g) **Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?**

**Potentially Significant Impact.** The Project would be required to comply with adopted programs and regulations pertaining to solid waste. Refer also to Response 4.16(f).



## 4.17 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

<i>Would the project:</i>	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?			✓	
b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	✓			
c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?			✓	

- (a) ***Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** Refer to Response 4.4.

- (b) ***Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?***

***Potentially Significant Impact.*** A review of cumulative impacts for each issue area that has been identified as potentially significant is required pursuant to Section 15130 of CEQA.

- (c) ***Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?***

***Less Than Significant Impact.*** The proposed Project would not have the potential to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.





## **4.18 REFERENCES**

The following references were utilized during preparation of this Initial Study. These documents are available for review at the Town of Yucca Valley Department of Community Development located at 58928 Business Center Drive, Yucca Valley, California, 92284.

Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan, February 1992.

CEQA and CEQA Guidelines, Office of Planning and Research, 1992.

Hi-Desert Water District Wastewater Collection and Treatment Master Plan, January 1998.

The Home Depot Retail Center, Draft EIR, November 16, 2005.

Town of Yucca Valley General Plan/Environmental Impact Report. December 14 1995.

Town of Yucca Valley, Master Plan of Drainage, June 1999.

Town of Yucca Valley Municipal Code, Last Updated January 27, 2005.

Town of Yucca Valley Official Zoning District Map. March 6, 1997 Revised January 15, 2002

Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan, May 5, 2006.



## **4.19 REPORT PREPARATION PERSONNEL**

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## **5.0 CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the information and environmental analysis contained in the Initial Study and Environmental Checklist, we recommend that the Town of Yucca Valley prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the Old Town Yucca Valley Specific Plan. We find that the proposed Specific Plan could have a significant effect on a number of environmental issues. We recommend that the third category be selected for the Town of Yucca Valley's determination; refer to Section 6.0 (Lead Agency Determination).

June 26, 2006

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn Lajoie", written over a horizontal line.

Glenn Lajoie, AICP  
Vice President  
Planning and Environmental Services  
RBF Consulting



## 6.0 LEAD AGENCY DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find that the proposed use COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

I find that, although the proposal could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measures described in Section 5.0 have been incorporated. A NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

I find that the proposal MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

I find that the proposal MAY have a significant effect(s) on the environment, but at least one effect (1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets, if the effect is a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigation incorporated." An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

  
Signature

Town of Yucca Valley  
Agency

Shane Stueckle, Deputy Town Manager  
Printed Name and Title

June 26, 2006  
Date