

JOSHUA TREE UNDER CANVAS

Project Description

1. Project Overview

Under Canvas, Inc. (Under Canvas or project applicant) is proposing to construct and operate the Joshua Tree Under Canvas Project (project), which is a 100-tent upscale campground. Under Canvas specializes in the construction and operation of a luxury camping experience and currently has ten operational campgrounds within the United States, including locations in the vicinity of the Grand Canyon, Zion National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. Under Canvas camps provide guests with canvas tents, beds, restroom facilities, dining, a yoga deck, and communal fire pits. The upscale campground would establish an outdoor camping experience that is both beautiful and comfortable, and would provide opportunities for non-traditional campers to connect with public lands. Joshua Tree Under Canvas would allow guests to stay at the camp between the months of February thru November, as weather allows. The project site is located within the Town of Yucca Valley (Town) in San Bernardino County, California, as shown in **Figure 1, Regional Location**. Additional details are described in detail below.

2. Project Objectives

The objectives sought by the proposed project are:

- 1) Help meet the demand for quality lodging facilities in proximity to Joshua Tree National Park and surrounding outdoor recreational resources.
- 2) Assist the Town of Yucca Valley and San Bernardino County in meeting its General Plan goals and policies, particularly those related to land use, and open space and conservation.
- 3) Plan for land use compatibility with adjacent landowners and land use activities through effective placement, orientation, and screening of project facilities.
- 4) Provide on-site infrastructure improvements relating to potable water delivery, wastewater management, and drainage.
- 5) Develop an economically sustainable and financially sound project that can fund the construction of the facilities and services that are needed to serve the project, while also providing multiple financial benefits to the Town through the local tax structure.

3. Project Location and Surrounding Uses

The 640-acre project site (APN 0585-0051-05) is located in the southern portion of the Town of Yucca Valley, about two miles south of State Route 62, in San Bernardino County, California. This parcel is on private property owned by Danmark Development, LLC and would be leased by Under Canvas. As shown in **Figure 2, Project Site**, the site is bounded by San Andreas Road to the north, and the northern boundary of Joshua Tree National Park to the south. Warren Vista Avenue extends along the northern half of the eastern project site boundary, while Sage Avenue connects to the Northwestern corner of the project site. Surrounding land uses include a mix of low density, rural residential and undeveloped lands. Residential areas occur along the northern project boundary and the northern portion of the eastern project boundary. The remainder of the surrounding areas occur as undeveloped lands. The site encompasses all of Section 13, on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) *Yucca Valley South 7.5-minute* quadrangle.

Regional Features

The project site is characterized by Joshua Tree woodland plant communities. Long canyon, a “blue-line stream” bisects the project site, through the planned campground area. Long Canyon is considered a Water of the United States. The project site supports two drainage systems that are tributaries to Cold Creek, and eventually Malibu Creek. In addition, there are two non-jurisdictional swales that were observed that also flow into Cold Creek tributaries.

Biological Characteristics

Vegetation and Wildlife

Four vegetation communities and two land cover types were identified on the project site including Joshua tree woodland, California juniper woodland, cheesebush scrub, Mueller oak woodland, disturbed and developed. The southeast corner of the project site was previously burned and contains examples of pinyon pine habitat. Wildlife species observed within the project site include insect, reptile, 25 bird, and six mammal species.

Special Status Species

A total of 41 special-status plant species were reported in the vicinity of the project site, of these, two special-status plant species were identified as having low to moderate potential to occur within the project site, including Latimer’s woodland-gilia. Suitable habitat is present for two other special status species within the project site including crowned nuilla (*Muilla coronate*) and Little San Bernardino Mountains Linanthus (*Linanthus maculatus* ssp. *Maculatus*).

A total of 25 special-status wildlife species were reported in the vicinity of the project site. A total of 7 species were identified as having some potential to occur within the project site, including the Southern California legless lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*), Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Pallid San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax pallidus*), Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), California cuckoo bee (*Paranomada californica*), and Le Conte’s thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*).

4. Project Description

The project is proposed to be built on a dual-zoned, 640-acre site. The project's campsite would be aggregated on 40 acres in the southern portion of the project site, while the remainder of the project site would be left as open space. Infrastructure on the northern 600 acres of the site would be limited to water and roadway facilities. The northern portion of the project site is currently designated RR-0.5, Rural Residential (this designation is equivalent to RS-2, Single Family Residential, as identified in the Town of Yucca Valley Development Code) (2-acre minimum lot size), while the southern portion of the site is designated RL-5, Rural Living (5-acre minimum lot size).

The proposed project would be a upscale campground development primarily composed of 100 guest tents as well as one communal restroom facilities, a commercial kitchen, a swimming pool, laundry and housekeeping facilities, and a lobby tent with dining area. Guest tents would not be permanent fixtures on the land and would be mounted on either raised decks or gravel pads, while HCD approved modular restroom structure would be placed adjacent to the tent on the deck. Utility improvements to support the camp include water distribution, wastewater disposal systems, and power supplied to the kitchen, laundry, and communal restrooms. Potable water and sanitary sewer would be provided by the local agency water supply. In addition to site amenities, the site would include primary and secondary emergency access roads. Detailed descriptions of guest amenities and supporting infrastructure are provided below.

Guest Amenities and Supporting Facilities

Guest Tents

A total of 127 tents are proposed for the project's campsite. Of these, 20 would be safari tents (approximately 192 square-feet in size) and would not include restrooms. Safari tents would be aggregated within 250 feet of a communal restroom. The remaining 107 tents are proposed as deluxe, suite, or specialty tents. Deluxe and suite tents are guest tents containing en-suite restrooms and are approximately 228 and 366 square feet, respectively. Specialty tents also include restroom facilities and are reserved for dining and reception purposes. Safari tents would have a gravel pad base; while suite, deluxe, and specialty tents would be mounted on a raised wooden deck. A summary of specific features for each type of guest tent is provided in **Table 1**, Guest Tent Design Specifications. Seven of the 127 tents are proposed to be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. The proposed layout for the tent sites is shown on **Figure 3, Project Site Plan**.

TABLE 1
GUEST TENT DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS

Tent Type	Dimensions	Set Back from Other Tents	Base	Notes
Suite	12' x 28' with additional 8' x 12' bump out	75'	Raised Deck	
Deluxe	12' x 28'	75'	Raised Deck	

Restroom Facilities

One communal restroom facility would be provided for guest use in the area of the lobby tent. This structure would contain 6 bathroom stalls.

Reception, Dining, and Support Facilities

One large lobby/dining tent would be provided, with an adjacent mobile kitchen, and a number of supporting utility tents. Single service meals are proposed to be prepared and served on-site from the commercial kitchen and would only be offered to guests staying at the camp. The commercial kitchen would be mobile and meet all state and local building and health regulations. A yoga deck is also proposed near the reception/dining tent.

Heating Stoves and Outdoor Campfires

Heating within the guest tents would be provided on an as-needed basis through the use of wood heating stoves meeting U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2015 New Source Performance Standards, as defined in 40 CFR 60 13671-13753. The EPA adopted these standards with the specific intent of minimizing wood smoke and particulate matter emissions. Beginning in 2020, the particulate matter emissions standard for EPA-compliant wood stoves will be 2.5 grams per hour for cord wood. All wood heating stoves used within the project site would meet this standard.

Five campfire pits would be constructed on the project site for guest use. These would be located adjacent to the lobby tent. The lighting, maintenance, and extinguishing of these campfires would be managed by camp staff.

Access and Internal Circulation

The primary access road entry would be Elata Avenue at San Andreas Road, as shown in Figure 2. Elata Avenue currently provides access to the project site by way of Joshua Lane and Hardesty Drive, via State Route 62. A secondary/emergency access road entry would be located at Warren Vista Avenue, south of Terbush Avenue. Each of these roads would be maintained at a width of 20 feet, compacted and surfaced with crushed gravel. Peak hour traffic would be between 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. with 25 vehicles/hour. Total round trips per day are estimated to be 135 trips, including trips for guests, employees, and deliveries.

Parking

Parking would be provided along proposed camp roads throughout the project site. Approximately 135 total parking spaces would be provided for guests and employees. Access to tents would primarily be provided by cart path and trails, unless located within 75 feet of a parking lot. Limiting vehicle accessibility to tents would reduce the amount of full-width road, thereby reducing disturbance to the project site. Parking and walking trails are shown in Figure 3.

Transit Accessibility

Currently, public transit near the project site is provided by the Morongo Basin Transit Authority (MBTA). MBTA's 7A: South Yucca Valley bus route provides service to the intersection of Joshua Lane and Hardesty Drive, which is approximately 0.5 miles from the northern boundary of the project site. This service is only available Monday through Friday from 7am to 3pm.

Potable Water Supply and Use

Drinking and potable water at the site would be provided by the Hi-Desert Water District. Infrastructure at the site would direct water services to the lobby tent, laundry, hose bib adjacent to lobby (to service drinking water dispensers and coffee makers), restrooms, and deluxe/suite tents. The site would be equipped with four fire hydrants, to be used in the event of a fire. In addition, the on-site swimming pool could be drawn upon by utilizing portable pumps for emergency water supply purposes.

Water use at existing Under Canvas camps in other parts of the U.S. is typically under 12 gallons per day (gpd)/person, with a maximum of 20 gpd/person. To meet this goal, the proposed project would incorporate a number of water efficiency features that have been developed at other operational Under Canvas facilities. For instance, all water fixtures would be designed for conservation and would use minimal water. Shower facilities would have shower heads and faucets that turn on by pulling a handle or pushing a knob; as soon as the handle or knob is released the water would turn off. Toilets would use 0.8 to 1.2 gallons of water per flush. In addition, the restaurant would minimize water use by use of compostable dishware, eliminating the need for automatic dishwashers. Preliminary water supply requirements for the site are listed in **Table 2**. Based on this analysis, the water source would need to be developed to supply an average demand of 15,050 gpd.

**TABLE 2
PROPOSED WATER USE¹**

Proposed Use	Design GPD	Unit Per	Number of Units	GPD	Notes
Tents (127), occupancy 2.5 guests/tent	20	Person	317.5	6,350	20 gpd/camper
Lobby & Restaurant Tent	6	Meal	950	5,700	
Employees	10	Person	30	300	10 gpd/employee
Laundry Facility	550	Machine	2	1,100	550 gpd/machine
Food Preparation	4	Service	375	1,500	4.0 gpd/single service
Total Water Use				14,950	

Wastewater Management

Wastewater would be treated on-site through the use of an advanced onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS) prior to dispersal to a shallow leach field. Effluent would be collected and transported to the advanced OWTS for treatment, where the wastewater would be treated to remove nutrients and pathogens. The treated effluent would then be pressure dosed to a shallow leach field for dispersal. The OWTS would disperse treated effluent to a dispersal area located where there are suitable soils and to allow for gravity wastewater collection and disposal. **Table 3** shows the likely wastewater production volumes of the site.

**TABLE 3
PEAK DAILY WASTEWATER DISPOSAL**

Proposed Use	Design GPD	Unit Per	Number of Units	GPD
Tents (127), occupancy 2.5 guests/tent	20	Person	250	5000
Lobby & Restaurant Tent	6	Meal	950	5,700
Employees	10	Person	30	300
Laundry Facility	550	Machine	2	1,100
Food Preparation	4	Service	375	1,500
Total Peak Design Wastewater Flow				13,600

NOTES:

- 1 Food preparation kitchen would have a grease trap.
- 2 Advanced Onsite Wastewater Treatment System design is to meet RWQCB WDR Requirements.

Preliminary soils information is indicative that the disposal is viable in the area. A soils evaluation would be completed by a qualified consultant to determine the ultimate viability of the proposed onsite wastewater dispersal system. Specific dispersal designs would be based on percolation rates, soils

¹ Information from the Under Canvas Site Design Guidelines on water:

The following formulas can be used to estimate water usage: Restaurant: 3 gallons per cover (number of covers per guest per day will vary depending on location and other options available). Laundry: 12 gallons per occupied tent per day (45 gallons per load, .26 loads per tent). Mister Systems: 8 gallons per occupied tent per day (hot season only).

analysis, ground water, and other considerations for complete treatment to minimize impacts to the natural environment and down-gradient effects.

The analysis of wastewater dispersal has been completed in consideration of the inclusion of an advanced OWTS in the design. Wastewater treatment would be designed to meet the County's Onsite Wastewater Treatment Policy guidelines as well as anticipated Waste Discharge Requirements from the Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

Electricity and Lighting

Guest tents are not provided with power, however, electricity for the lobby tent, kitchen, restrooms, laundry, main storage, cart charging and other amenities would be provided by the local utility company, Southern California Edison. Lighting for the lobby tent, common areas, and guest tents would be low voltage solar lighting. All light fixtures and the use thereof would be International Dark Sky Association (IDA) compliant, while still providing safety and guidance for guests. Incorporated lighting standards would include:

- 1) Lights would only be on when needed, and would only light those areas that require it.
- 2) Lighting would be no brighter than necessary.
- 3) Blue light emissions would be minimized, with LED fixtures utilizing color temperatures no greater than 3,000 Kelvins.
- 4) All light fixtures would be shielded and directed downwards.

Solid Waste Management

Trash from the guest tents would be collected daily as part of normal housekeeping activities. All solid waste produced at the site would be held in dumpsters serviced by the local provider, Burrtec Waste Industries.

5. Operational Characteristics

The average occupancy at existing Under Canvas facilities is 2-3 guests per tent. Most guests arrive for the night and then leave the site in the morning to pursue recreational and sightseeing opportunities in the area, and then return later in the day following the day's activities. Quiet hours are enforced from 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM. Operation of the facility would not employ any sources of amplified noise, with the exception of an emergency notification public address system.

Approximately 60 staff members would be employed at the site, with 25-30 personnel working on the site at any given time. Employees would largely be drawn from the local community, though some could be recruited from elsewhere. If they desire, employees without housing in the local community would be housed in rental units facilitated by Under Canvas.

6. Construction

Methods and Design

Construction of the campground facility itself would employ currently accepted and typical construction methods. The contractor would establish access routes and staging areas, within the proposed development area, for travel within the site and storage of materials and equipment. If needed, dust control would employ a standard water truck equipped with spray nozzles. The site plans are based on minimal site disturbance based on seasonal occupancy. Few permanent or “hard” facilities would be present. Tent pads would require minimal excavation. Access roads and paths would be designed and constructed to minimize cut and fill requirements. The proposed project would follow Low Impact to Hydrology (LITH) Design Guidelines for the design of roads and paths. Infrastructure for wastewater collection and water distribution would be designed and constructed to minimize trenching depths and disturbance. Wherever possible, water lines and other utility infrastructure would be placed underground beneath roadways, paths, or disturbed areas.

Schedule and Work Hours

Construction of the proposed project is expected to take place during one construction season, immediately following project approval, and the construction schedule is anticipated to span three to four months. San Bernardino County’s noise ordinance (§ 83.01.080) identifies noise standards for stationary noise sources. The proposed project would comply with noise standards for residential land uses, which states that emanations from stationary noise sources shall not exceed 55 dBA between the hours of 7am and 10pm; and would not exceed 45 dBA between the hours of 10pm and 7am.

Equipment

Anticipated construction equipment is shown in **Table 4**. The actual equipment used during construction would be determined by the contractor and the construction schedule.

TABLE 4
CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

Equipment	Construction Purpose
Bulldozer	Earthwork construction and clearing and grubbing
Grader	Ground leveling
Mini Excavator	Soil manipulation
Skid Steer Loader	Soil or gravel manipulation
Trencher	Trench digging

7. Project Entitlements and Approvals

The following permits, reviews, consultations, and approvals (see **Table 5**, below) would be required to be completed or approved prior to the commencement of project construction.

**TABLE 5
PERMITS AND APPROVALS NEEDED**

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
Local		
Town of Yucca Valley	Specific Plan	Not yet applied. Anticipated application date of January 2020
Town of Yucca Valley	General Plan Amendment	Not yet applied. Anticipated application date of January 2020
Town of Yucca Valley	Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Certification	Not yet prepared.
Town of Yucca Valley	Native Desert Plant Permit	Not yet applied. Anticipated application date of January 2020
Regional		
San Bernardino County	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)	Not yet applied.
State		
California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Colorado River District	Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification	Not yet applied.
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	California Fish and Game Code Section 1600-1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement	Not yet applied.
Federal		
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Federal Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation or Section 10 Incidental Take Permit	Not yet applied.
United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Clean Water Act Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permit	Not yet applied.

Specific Plan

The project site is located on parcels with a Specific Plan Overlay (SP) designation, indicating that a specific plan must be adopted for the areas before the Town will approve permits for any new development. Before the specific plan can be adopted by the Town, the Town must find that the location would allow the development to be well integrated with or adequately buffered from its surrounds; that traffic would be safely accommodated without congestion; that the project would be served by adequate facilities and services; that environmental impacts are less than significant or that a statement of overriding considerations has been adopted under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and that the project would not be detrimental to the Town's public health, safety or welfare. Elements of the Specific Plan would include:

- a general description of the site and its features along with the current relationship to the general plan and zoning;

- a description of the allowed uses within the current zoning;
- a description of the proposed project;
- detailed design guidelines for grading, architectural concepts, landscaping, walls and fencing, signage, and lighting;
- detailed standards/guidelines for circulation elements, drainage, wastewater, dry utilities; and
- a section discussing financing and implementation of the specific plan by the Town (e.g., processing of applications or amendments).

Conditional Use Permit

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is required for certain land uses, including those with the Specific Plan Overlay Designation. The CUP would be required to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses and to minimize or eliminate impacts on surrounding properties. To be approved, a CUP must be consistent with the adopted General Plan, the Development Code, the Specific Plan and other local, state and federal regulations, discussed below. The project proponent intends to submit an environmental resource narrative to supplement the CUP, which would include the necessary information needed to begin the environmental review process.

General Plan Amendment and Rezone

State Law requires that all development be consistent with all provisions of the General Plan, and states that any proposed development project that is not consistent with the General Plan requires an amendment of the Plan before it can be approved. The nature of the proposed project is consistent with a “open space recreation” land use designation in the Town of Yucca Valley. The current land use and zoning designation on the southern portion of the site is not consistent with the proposed development; therefore, the proposed project would require a General Plan amendment and rezone for approval. The southern portion of the project site designated Rural Living (RL-5) would need to be rezoned to Open Space Recreational (OS) in order to be consistent with the nature of the proposed project.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Approval of any of the above applications (i.e. the Specific Plan, the General Plan amendment and rezone, or the CUP) would require preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under CEQA. The EIR would describe the existing site conditions, the proposed project, alternatives to the proposed project, the proposed projects environmental impacts, mitigation measures for those impacts, and the level of significance of impacts from the proposed project after implementation of mitigation measures.

Town of Yucca Valley Desert Plants Permits

The Town requires permits for the removal of specific desert plants under the Town’s Ordinances and Code sections. Species that may require permits from the Town include mesquites, yuccas, Joshua trees,

pinon pines, and potentially Latimer's Woodland Giliias. Should project related activities include removal of these desert plants, the proposed project would require a permit from the Town.

Storm Water Permit

The proposed project would require the issuance of a permit for stormwater discharge. This application includes preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

Clean Water Act Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permit & Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification

The proposed project may potentially have impacts to Long Canyon Stream, and would therefore require a permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). If impacts to Long Canyon Stream are minor, the proposed project would require a Nationwide Permit (NWP) under the Nationwide Permit Program. If the impacts to Long Canyon Stream are determined to be more than minimal, a permit from the USACE would be required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. If a USACE permit is required, the proposed project would also require a Section 401 Water Quality Certification by the RWQCB to mitigate impacts so that the project would not violate any water quality standards.

Section 1603 Streambed Alteration Agreement

If project-associated modifications to Long Canyon Stream were to "substantially adversely affect an existing fish and wildlife resource" (California Fish & Game Code Section 1603(a)), the proposed project would require a Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation & Section 10 Incidental Take Permit

The project site has the potential to contain desert tortoises and their habitat. Since desert tortoises are listed as "threatened" under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), consultation with the USFWS may be required. Under ESA, the proposed project would require either a Section 7 consultation and subsequent incidental take statement; or a Section 10 incidental take permit. In the case that a Section 10 Incidental Take Permit is required, the applicant would also be required to submit a Habitat Conservation Plan.