



## TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY

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### NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT VILLAGE SPECIFIC PLAN

- Lead Agency:** Town of Apple Valley  
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Phone: (760) 240-7000 Ext. 7200
- Project Title:** Village Specific Plan
- Town Project No.:** **Village Specific Plan Case No. 2021-001, General Plan Amendment Case No. 2021-001, Zone Change Case No. 2021-001**
- Project Location:** The 651± acre Planning Area is in the east central portion of the Town of Apple Valley in southwest San Bernardino County. It extends along a 1.5± mile segment of State Highway 18 and is generally bounded by Arapahoe and Esaws Avenues on the north, Ottawa Road on the south, Central Road on the east, and the realigned Yucca Loma and Navajo Road on the west. It includes additional contiguous parcels on the east and west (see attached CEQA Initial Study).
- Findings/Determination:** The Town has reviewed and considered the proposed Village Specific Plan (“Project”) and has determined that potentially significant impacts could result from the Project. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Report should be prepared. The Town has prepared the attached Initial Study and this Notice of Preparation.
- NOP Comment Period:** This 30-day public review period will commence on November 19, 2021 and end on December 20, 2021. A virtual scoping meeting will be held on December 2, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom at the following link <https://applevalley.zoom.us/j/89545321327?pwd=REtIRiNkZ0ZyUW9jQ25IdFdxZzYvUT09> to provide an opportunity to provide comments on the possible environmental effects the Town should study in the Environmental Impact Report. Written comments on the NOP must be received at the Town within the public review period. You may email comments to Daniel Alcayaga, Planning Manager, at the following address: [dalcayaga@applevalley.org](mailto:dalcayaga@applevalley.org). Copies of the Notice of Preparation are available for review at the above address and at the Newton T. Bass Apple Valley Branch Library at 14901 Dale Evans Parkway, Apple Valley, CA 92307.

## **A. Introduction**

Apple Valley's historic Village commercial district is optimally located along State Highway 18, the region's principal arterial, and serves both the local and regional passerby markets. Surrounding lands include service commercial, light industrial, and residential development, as well as public community facilities and vacant and underutilized parcels. The Village can benefit from an enhanced cohesive, recognizable identity as a distinct retail, dining, and gathering destination that celebrates the Town's history. The existing configuration of Highway 18 between Central and Navajo Roads, with two frontage roads that separate high-speed through traffic from local traffic accessing businesses, has resulted in traffic efficiencies and access challenges for businesses along this highway segment. Incomplete or absent sidewalks, ramps, and other connectors and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists also present access and safety concerns. Beyond the Highway 18 corridor, the Village Planning Area contains a mix of commercial, service and quasi-industrial uses and vacant lands. Non-motorized access within the Planning Area is negatively affected by discontinuous sidewalks, incomplete street improvements, and limited access to transit. The entire Planning Area is inconsistent in its implementation of architectural standards, landscape treatment and limited public space. The purpose of the Apple Valley Village Specific Plan is to guide the future development and redevelopment of lands within the Village, and improve the character of the area for the long term economic health of land and business owners, and the visitor experience.

## **B. Project Description**

The Village Specific Plan (proposed Project) will guide the long-term development and redevelopment of the Planning Area. It revises the current land use plan in the context of five (5) planning districts and establishes development guidelines tailored to each district. The Project is intended to enhance the Village's identity as a unique downtown shopping and dining destination, guide future development of vacant parcels and redevelopment of underutilized parcels, and protect and expand residential neighborhoods with guidelines that scale down development at the periphery of the Village. Its transportation concept improves the functioning of Highway 18 and Yucca Loma/Navajo Roads in the Planning Area by minimizing traffic conflicts, integrating multimodal facilities and amenities, and improving access through a more efficient and safer circulation system.

## **C. Environmental Setting and Surrounding Land Uses**

The Project Planning Area is on the relatively flat desert floor of Apple Valley. The Mojave River is 3.5± miles to the west and the nearest hills and mountains are 2 to 5± miles to the north, east, and south.

The Planning Area is in the Town's urban core, and approximately 58% of the Planning Area is developed. Most structures in the Village were built in the post-World War II era, and some are vacant or appear to have been abandoned. Newer fast food and inline retail development on the Highway 18 frontage is in the westerly Planning Area. Development beyond the Highway 18 corridor consists of service commercial and light industrial uses, such as tool and machinery workshops, auto salvage yards, and self-storage units, as well as three (3) mobile home parks and a mix of single- and multi-family dwelling units. It also includes several community facilities: a large park, community center, gymnasium, animal shelter, post office, and municipal corporate yard. The northeasterly Planning Area contains newer public and quasi-public facilities, including a fire station, water agency offices, and a County public services building. The Planning Area includes 274± acres of vacant land, with the largest undeveloped parcels in the northeast portion of the Planning Area.

Surrounding the Planning Area is residential, commercial, and institutional development. Large parcels of undeveloped land are to the south and northeast.

Highway 18 provides connections to Victorville and other high desert communities to the northwest, and Lucerne Valley and the Morongo Basin to the southeast. East-west access on the north side of the Highway in the Planning Area is limited; on the south side, east-west access is provided by Powhattan and Ottawa Roads; and north-south

access occurs about every ¼ mile, at (from west to east) Navajo Road, Pawnee Road, Quinnault Road and Central Road. These roadways are signalized at Highway 18. North of the Highway, north-south access is also provided by Valley Drive. Two new intersections at the Highway are proposed as part of the Specific Plan: the realigned Yucca Loma Road on the west boundary of the Planning Area; and Headquarters/Hitt Road at the eastern end of the Planning Area.

## **D. Areas of Potential Environmental Concern**

### **Introduction**

The attached Initial Study has been prepared for the proposed Specific Plan in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Implementation of the proposed Project may have impacts on important environmental resources and may be affected by potential environmental hazards. These areas of potential environmental concern have been identified and are briefly described below and in the Initial Study. A more in-depth analysis of each of these areas of concern will be provided in the EIR being prepared for the Project.

### **Aesthetic Resources**

Apple Valley consists of a high elevation desert valley with the Mojave River to the west, Ord Mountains to the south, Bell Mountain to the north, and Fairview Mountain to the northeast. From the Planning Area, views of the mountains are distant as they are several miles away. The Specific Plan proposes new and revised land uses, design guidelines, and circulation concept that could impact scenic views in some locations. Future development could have a potentially significant impact on light or glare levels and should be considered in project design and analyzed in the EIR.

### **Air Quality**

In general, air quality in Apple Valley is good. However, continued regional urbanization in the past few decades has contributed to the degradation of the air quality due to population growth, increased traffic, construction activities, and other site disturbances. Ozone, PM10, and PM2.5 are pollutants of concern in Apple Valley. The Mojave Desert Air Basin (MDAB) has a history of exceeding regulatory ozone standards and is designated as a non-attainment area for PM10, a non-attainment area for the state PM2.5 standard, and an attainment/unclassifiable area for the national PM2.5 standard. The Planning Area is in a region identified in the Apple Valley General Plan as susceptible to wind erosion, conditions which can contribute to elevated PM10 and PM2.5 levels.

### **Biological Resources**

The proposed Project would facilitate development of undeveloped lands that may harbor bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) or other sensitive species. The Planning Area is within the boundaries of the Apple Valley Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (MSHCP/NCCP) which has been drafted and for which a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was issued in April 2021. Upon approval, the MSHCP/NCCP will guide the Town's conservation efforts and streamline the environmental permitting process. The Project area is also within the boundaries of the West Mojave Plan, a habitat conservation plan that currently applies only to federal land. The forthcoming EIR will determine whether and to what extent buildout of the Specific Plan will conflict with the MSHCP/NCCP and West Mojave Plan, and further evaluate the potential for development facilitated by the Specific Plan to adversely affect sensitive biological resources.

### **Cultural Resources**

The prehistory of the Mojave Desert extends back to 8,000 B.C. or earlier. Local archaeological sites typically occupy sheltered areas on or near hills, terraces, and ridges near reliable sources of water. Historic-era buildings and resources associated with permanent settlement of the area also occur in the area, including post-World War II structures in the Village. The proposed Specific Plan facilitates future development and improvements that could result in disturbance to or destruction of sensitive cultural resources or sites in the Planning Area. Potential Project-related impacts will be part of the EIR analysis.

### **Energy**

Buildout of the Specific Plan will increase the consumption of electricity, natural gas, and fossil fuels associated with vehicle use. However, the Specific Plan will incorporate and promote sustainable building and landscape design, synergistic land use planning, and multimodal circulation improvements that reduce energy consumption. The Project is not expected to result in significant impacts resulting from wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Nonetheless, the EIR will evaluate potential Project-related impacts and incorporate appropriate mitigation measures, as necessary.

### **Geology/Soils**

The Planning Area is in a seismically active region. The nearest faults are the Helendale (South Lockhart) and North Frontal (West) faults, which are capable of generating moment magnitude 7.3 and 7.2 earthquakes, respectively. The Planning Area would be exposed to strong ground shaking during a major quake on nearby faults, with associated potential for ground failure during such events. Local soils are also highly susceptible to wind and water erosion. The forthcoming EIR will evaluate the geotechnical conditions in the Planning Area and potential impacts resulting from buildout of the proposed Specific Plan.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Air quality emissions include greenhouse gases (GHG) that contribute to climate change and global warming. Buildout of the proposed Project will increase GHG emissions, but is also expected to promote more energy efficient buildings, HVAC systems, and renewable, non-polluting energy systems in the form of solar photovoltaic systems. Air quality constraints and potential adverse (and beneficial) impacts of Project implementation on air quality, including those associated with GHGs, will be further assessed in the EIR.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

Existing development in the Project Planning Area includes commercial enterprises, gasoline service stations, auto yards, wood and metal workshops, restaurants, and other potential generators of hazardous materials. Comparable development and additional residential development would be facilitated by the proposed Project. The Specific Plan land use plan allows residential, commercial, and other development that can be expected to use and store limited quantities and types of potentially hazardous materials, such as cleaning chemicals, solvents, gasoline, and oils. Individual developments may be required to implement appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to address potential impacts. Potential impacts should be further evaluated in the EIR.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

Drainage in the Planning Area flows from southwest to northeast, generally, and currently is captured in and incomplete drainage system. The proposed Project will facilitate development and redevelopment projects that will result in grading, excavation, construction, paving, and other modifications to the ground surface. Such activities could affect erosion, siltation, surface runoff, and flood flows within and adjacent to the Planning Area. Appropriate best management practices and stormwater treatment during construction and in the post-construction period must be demonstrated for future development and will be further analyzed in the forthcoming EIR.

### **Land Use and Planning**

The proposed Specific Plan generally maintains the basic land use distribution envisioned in the General Plan but revises some land use acreages and development and redevelopment opportunities. The Specific Plan will require a General Plan Amendment to change all current General Plan land use designations to "Village Specific Plan." It will require a Zone Change to change current zoning designations in the Planning Area to proposed Districts 1 through 5 (see attached CEQA Initial Study). It will supersede certain provisions or regulations of the Town's Development Code as applied to the Planning Area but is also designed to be compatible with surrounding existing and planned land uses. Conflicts between the Specific Plan and other land use plans and policies could cause environmental impacts, and therefore, should be evaluated in the forthcoming EIR.

### **Noise**

Long-term operation of projects facilitated by the Specific Plan could result in permanent increases in ambient noise levels in the Planning Area and surrounding area. However, proposed land uses are consistent with the existing urban commercial and residential environment, and noise sources and levels are expected to be similar to those already experienced in the Planning Area, which are governed by the Town's noise ordinance. Future development projects may require site-specific noise monitoring and modeling for both construction and post-construction periods conducted at locations surrounding project sites, including in proximity to sensitive receptors. Impacts may be less than significant with appropriate mitigation. The forthcoming EIR will further evaluate potential noise impacts associated with the proposed Project.

### **Population and Housing**

The Apple Valley population is estimated to be 74,350 in 2021, and SCAG projects it will grow to 101,400 by 2045. There are currently approximately 289 dwelling units and 850 residents in the Specific Plan Planning Area. The proposed Project will facilitate new planned residential development in the Planning Area that would directly result in population growth, and new commercial development with job opportunities that could attract additional residents to the area. The Planning Area is well-served by existing roads and water infrastructure, although parcel-scale extensions and improvements may be required as development occurs. Existing sewer infrastructure reaches much of the Planning Area, but future extensions will be required to serve the entire area. The Project facilitates the redevelopment of underutilized parcels in the Planning Area that could result in demolition of existing housing, the loss of which is anticipated to be made up with new residential development in the Planning Area. The EIR will estimate the buildout population in the Planning Area and compare it to projections to further evaluate potential population growth impacts.

### **Public Services and Facilities**

Buildout of the proposed Specific Plan would increase the need for fire, police, school and other public services, although the potential increase in demand for these services is not expected to exceed capabilities or capacities or require new or physically altered facilities that could cause significant environmental impacts. Nonetheless, the need for augmented public services and facilities will be further evaluated, and the impacts will be addressed in the EIR.

### **Recreation**

Buildout of the proposed Specific Plan will result in population growth in the Planning Area that could increase the use of existing parks and recreational facilities. However, this potential increase is not expected to result in substantial physical deterioration of these facilities. The Specific Plan provides opportunities for future residential developments to include parks and/or recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, gyms, and sports fields. The EIR will further evaluate potential Project-related impacts.

### **Transportation**

The proposed Specific Plan includes new transportation concepts for Highway 18 and Yucca Loma/Navajo Roads in the Planning Area, including the reconfiguration of Highway 18 frontage roads, potential for installation of new roundabouts and parking spaces, and incorporation of a complete multimodal network of walkways and connectors. Proposed land use designations and densities could also impact traffic volumes and intersection operations. Proposed improvements are anticipated to have net positive impacts on circulation efficiency, access, and safety. The extent to which these may conflict with (or enhance) a program, plan, ordinance, or policy is currently unknown. A traffic impact analysis will be prepared to further analyze the potential effects of the proposed Specific Plan on local circulation plans, as well as transit and other alternative modes of travel. Potential impacts and the need for mitigation measures will be further analyzed in the EIR.

### **Tribal Cultural Resources**

Implementation of the proposed Project will facilitate grading, excavation, and other ground disturbing activities that could impact tribal cultural resources if they occur on a project site. The proposed Project involves a General Plan Amendment and adoption of a Specific Plan. Therefore, consistent with AB 52 and SB 18, the Town will solicit input from the California Native American Heritage Commission and initiate consultation with appropriate tribes, notifying them of the Project. Site-specific cultural resource studies may be required for future development projects facilitated by the Project. The EIR will analyze potential Project-related impacts and provide mitigation measures, as appropriate.

### **Utilities and Service Systems**

The Planning Area is well-served by water and energy transmission lines, although parcel-scale extensions and/or upgrades may be required to serve future development. Sewer lines are available to much of the Planning Area; future development in proximity to sewer infrastructure will connect and increase the demand for wastewater treatment services. Future development not in proximity of sewer infrastructure will rely on septic systems, with the potential for future sewer connection. Buildout of the Specific Plan will increase water consumption and solid waste generation, but the extent to which these impacts will affect utility and service systems is currently unknown. Potential Project-related impacts will be analyzed in the EIR and mitigation measures will be provided, as appropriate.