

CITY OF PALM DESERT
CEQA Environmental Checklist & Environmental Assessment

Project Title: Refuge Specific Plan, Case No. SP22-0001//CZ22-0001/TTM 38434	
Lead agency name and address:	City of Palm Desert 73-510 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260
Contact persons and phone number:	Nick Melloni Development Services Department City of Palm Desert 73-510 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260 (760) 346-0611
Project location: Southwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Rembrandt Parkway APNs 694-310-002, -003, and -006; East ½ of Section 32, Township 4 South, Range 6 East, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian	
Project sponsor's name and address:	Refuge Palm Desert, LLC (Contact: Marc Kleiman) 17755 Sky Park East, Suite 101 Irvine, CA 92614
General Plan Designation: Town Center Neighborhood	Zoning: Planned Residential – 20 Units Per Acre (P.R.-20)
Description of project:	
<p><u>Specific Plan</u></p> <p>The Refuge Specific Plan (“Project”) sets forth a cohesive vision for the Project area by establishing site-specific development standards, design guidelines, and land use regulations to guide future development of the Project site. The Project proposes up to 969 single-family and multi-family dwelling units on ±106.4 acres at the southwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Rembrandt Parkway (Exhibits 1 through 3). The Project facilitates the coordinated development of a residential community with a variety of single- and multi-family housing products and densities, recreational amenities, open spaces, pedestrian connectors, and a cohesive design program. Proposed architectural styles include Spanish Colonial, Progressive Spanish, Mid-Century, and Contemporary.</p> <p>The Project will require approval of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuge Specific Plan • Change of Zone, from Planned Residential to Refuge Specific Plan • Tentative Tract Map (TTM) to subdivide the Project site into residential, open space, private street lots (Exhibits 6 and 7) 	

Planning Areas

The Project area is divided into 5 Planning Areas, described below and shown on Exhibit 4.

Table 1
Land Use Summary

Planning Area	Land Use	Acres	Density Range (du/ac)	Unit Range
PA 1*	Residential	11.9	up to 22.6	up to 269
PA 2	Residential	16.4	10.0-18.3	165-302
PA 3	Residential	66.3	4.7-6.0	315-398
PA 4	Recreation Amenity	3.9	---	---
PA 5	Open Space/Buffer	7.9	---	---
Total:		106.4	7.0-9.1	749-969

* Vitalia (PP/CUP 21-0004), as approved. No changes proposed.

Note: up to 70 units (10% of the combined PA maximum) may be transferred between PA 2 and PA 3 in response to market conditions.

- Planning Area 1 (Residential, 11.9 acres) is the northernmost Planning Area and covers the Vitalia project that was approved by the City in 2021 (PP/CUP 21-0004). It will be developed as approved; no changes are proposed. It is approved for 269 affordable apartment units in 14 two- and three-story buildings with one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Onsite amenities include a swimming pool, playground, dog park, clubhouse with fitness and childcare facilities, surface parking lot, and stormwater retention basins that can also serve as passive open space. It will be accessed from two driveways on (future) Vitalia Way, also shown as Street A on the Tentative Tract Map.
- Planning Area 2 (Residential, 16.4 acres) can accommodate up to 302 dwelling units at a density range of 10.0 to 18.3 du/ac. It includes two retention basins and is accessed by a driveway on Vitalia Way and a roundabout connecting to Planning Area 3. A variety of housing products are permitted by right and with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) (see Section XI, Land Use and Planning).
- Planning Area 3 (Residential, 66.3 acres) is in the central part of the Specific Plan area and can accommodate up to 398 dwelling units at densities ranging from 4.7 to 6.0 du/ac. The density in Planning Area 3 can be “blended” to allow higher density in some areas, as long as total density does not exceed the density range allowed. It includes three retention basins and is accessed by a roundabout connecting to Julie Drive (extended) and Planning Area 2. A variety of housing products are permitted by right and with a CUP (see Section XI, Land Use and Planning).
- Planning Area 4 (Recreational Amenity, 3.9 acres) is designated for recreational uses. Amenities could include pools, spas, club houses, management offices, barbecues, and other appropriate facilities.
- Planning Area 5 (Open Space/Buffer, 7.9 acres) includes Vitalia Way, a stormwater retention basin, and a 50-foot-wide landscaped open space buffer with a walking trail along the easterly and southerly Project perimeters.

Access

The Project proposes two access points:

1. Primary Access: (proposed) signalized intersection at Gerald Ford Drive and Rembrandt/Vitalia Way. The northerly portion of Vitalia Way was approved in 2021 as part of the Vitalia multi-family project (see Planning Area 1, above).
2. Secondary Access: (existing) signalized intersection at Portola Avenue and Julie Drive, via a proposed westerly extension of Julie Drive to be completed as part of an adjacent single family home project, currently under construction.

Phasing

Project buildout is expected to occur over 6 years, from 2023 to 2029; however, the phasing plan is conceptual and subject to change based on final engineering design and market conditions. Planning Area 1 (Vitalia) will be developed independently of the rest of the Project, as per PP/CUP 21-0004. Buildout of Planning Areas 2 through 5 will occur in 8 phases (Exhibit 5).

Utilities and Service Providers

The following agencies and companies will provide services to the Project:

1. Sewer: Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
2. Water: Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
3. Electricity: Southern California Edison (SCE)
4. Gas: Southern California Gas Company
5. Telephone/Cable: Frontier Communications/Spectrum
6. Storm Drains: City of Palm Desert

Surrounding Land Uses:

North: Gerald Ford Drive, single-family residential

South: single-family residential

East: single-family residential, vacant land

West: Marriott Shadow Ridge Golf Course, Riverside County Sheriff Department station

Other public agencies whose approval is or may be required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement.)

Coachella Valley Water District
Regional Water Quality Control Board

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" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

	Aesthetics		Agriculture and Forestry Resources		Air Quality
	Biological Resources		Cultural Resources		Energy
	Geology /Soils		Greenhouse Gas Emissions		Hazards & Hazardous Materials
	Hydrology / Water Quality		Land Use / Planning		Mineral Resources
	Noise		Population / Housing		Public Services
	Recreation		Transportation		Tribal Cultural Resources
	Utilities/Service Systems		Wildfire		Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency) On the basis of this initial evaluation:

	I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
✓	I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
	I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
	I find that the proposed project MAY have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact 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. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
	I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Nick Melloni

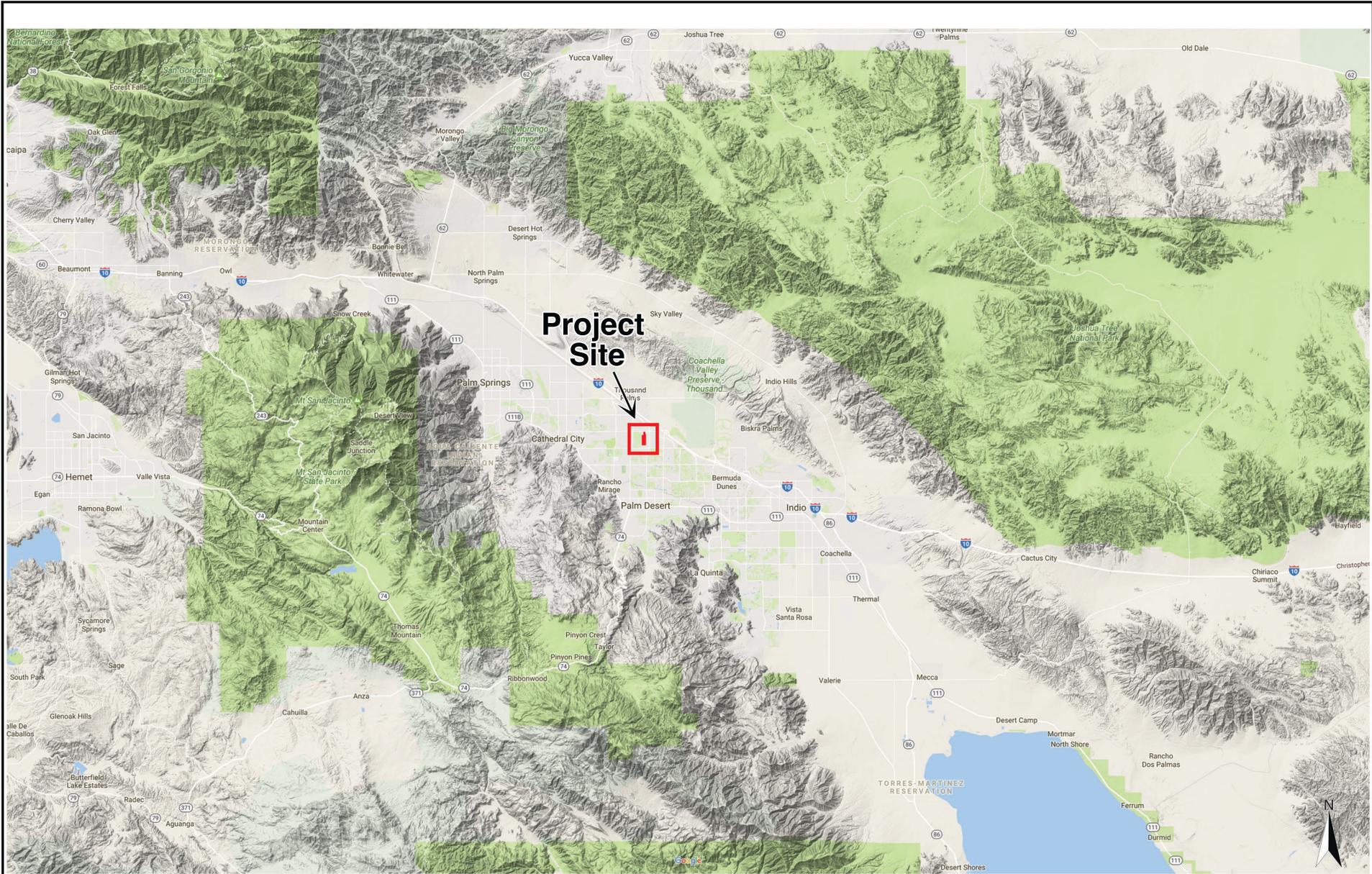
9/2/2022

Nick Melloni
City of Palm Desert

Date

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

- 1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
- 2) All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
- 3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. “Potentially Significant Impact” is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more “Potentially Significant Impact” entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
- 4) “Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated” applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less Than Significant Impact.” The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from “Earlier Analyses,” as described in (5) below, may be cross referenced).
- 5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
 - a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
 - b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
 - c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures, which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site specific conditions for the project.
- 6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
- 7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
- 8) This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project’s environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
- 9) The explanation of each issue should identify:
 - a) The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
 - b) The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impacts to less than significance.



Source: Google Maps, 2022

04.22.22



**Refuge Specific Plan
Regional Location Map
Palm Desert, California**

Exhibit

1



Source: Google Earth, 2022

04.22.22

Exhibit



Gerald Ford Dr.

Shepherd Ln.

Portola Ave.

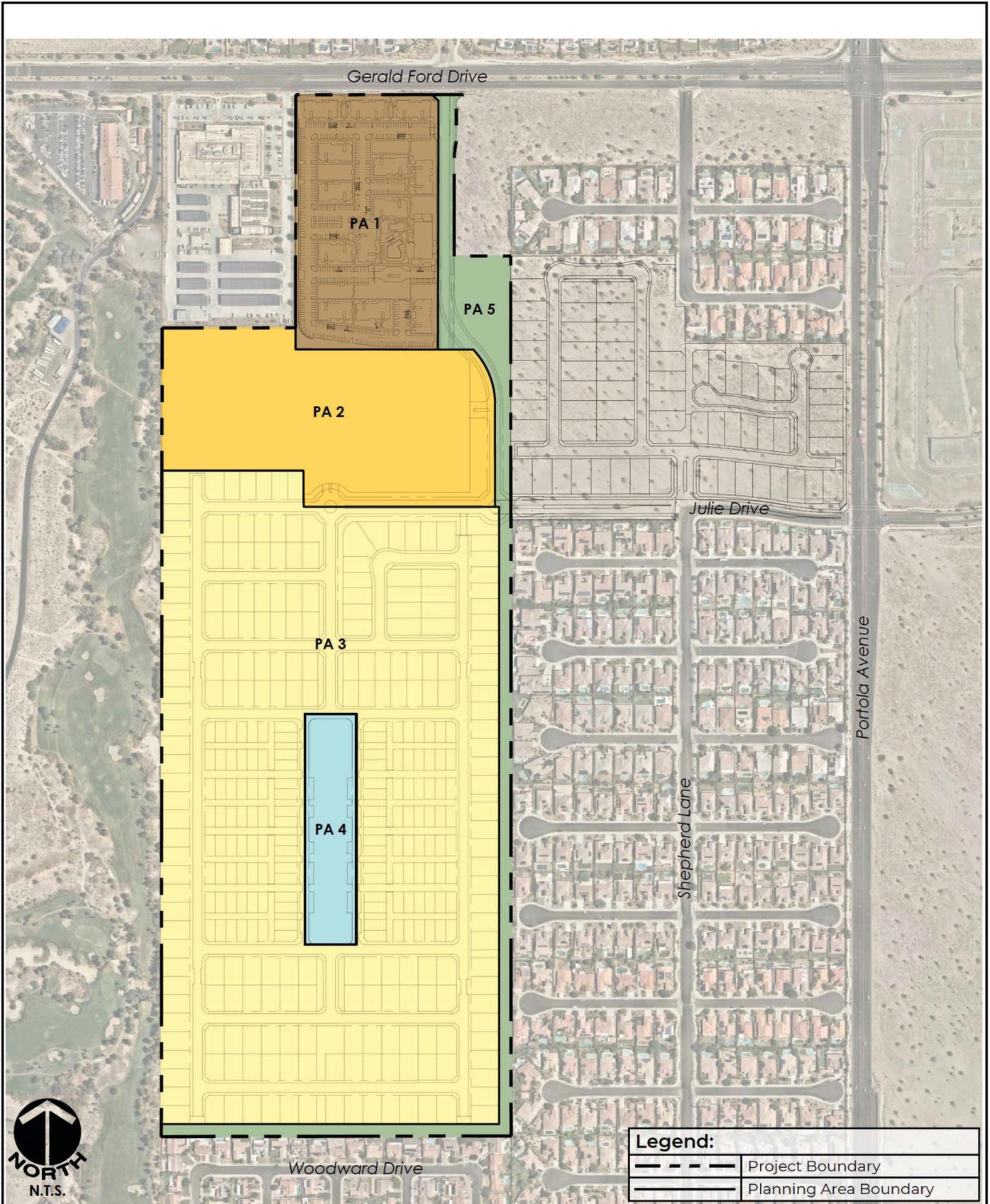
Shepherd Ln.

Project Site



Source: Google Earth, 2022

04.22.22



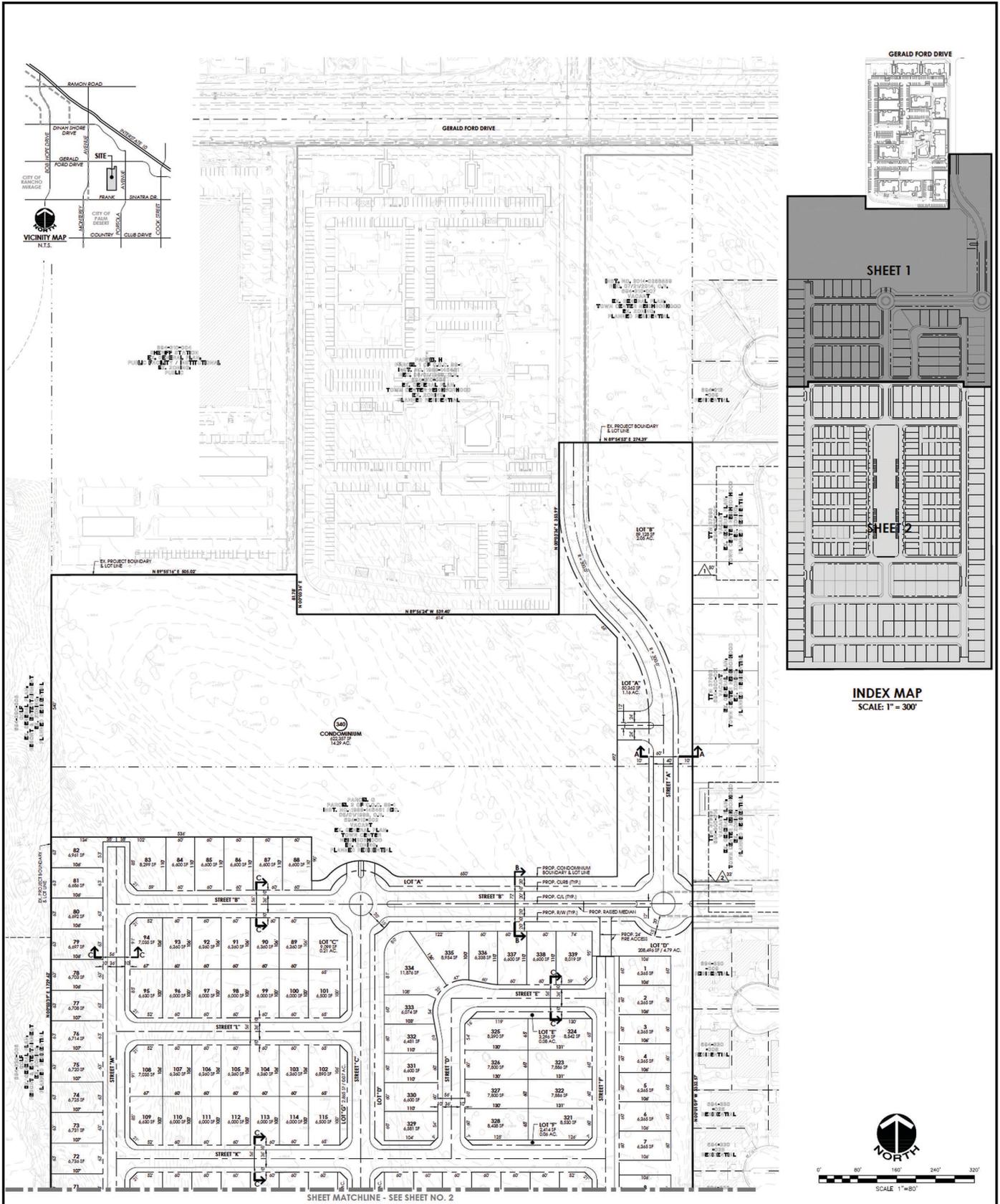
Source: MSA Consulting, Inc., 5.2022

05.17.22



Source: MSA Consulting, Inc., 5.2022

05.19.22



Source: MSA Consulting, Inc., 5.2022

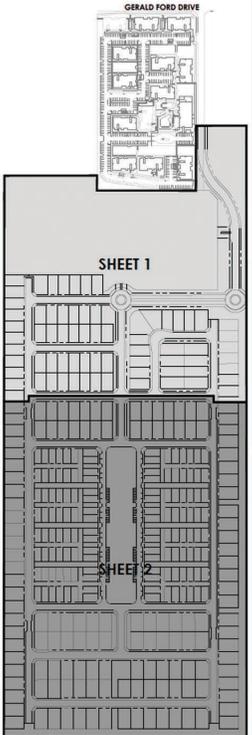
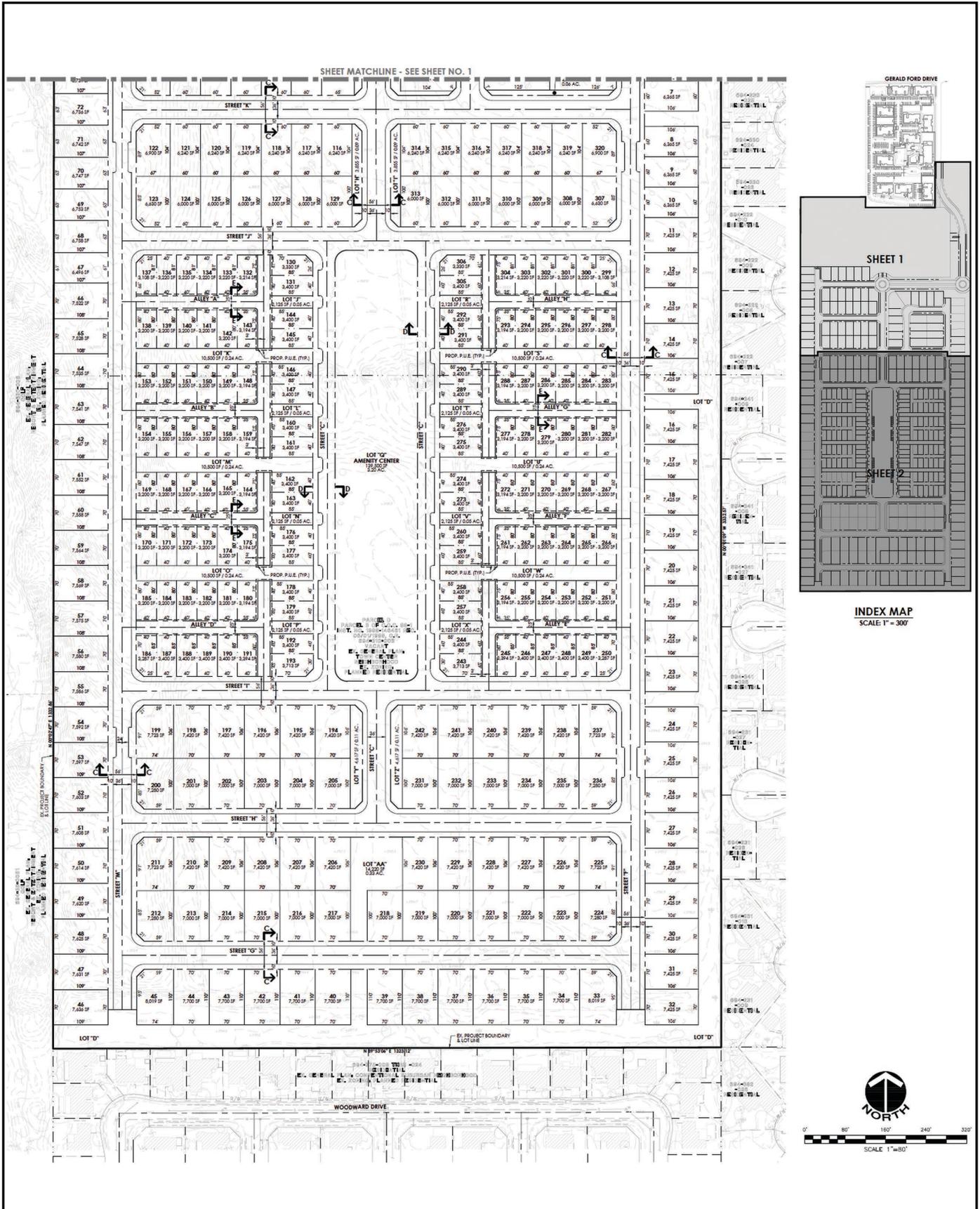
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**Refuge Specific Plan
Tentative Tract Map - Sheet 1
Palm Desert, California**

Exhibit

6



Source: MSA Consulting, Inc., 5.2022

05.31.22



**Refuge Specific Plan
Tentative Tract Map - Sheet 2
Palm Desert, California**

I. AESTHETICS Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with 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) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?			✓	
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			✓	

Setting

The subject property is in the central part of the Coachella Valley, a low-lying and relatively flat desert valley surrounded by the San Bernardino, Little San Bernardino, San Jacinto, and Santa Rosa Mountains. The mountains rise significantly above the valley floor with peak elevations up to 11,503 feet above sea level. The mountains are of high aesthetic value across the Coachella Valley, including the City of Palm Desert. The City regulates new development to ensure that it does not conflict with or adversely impact scenic resources. State Route 74 is a state-designated scenic highway, and Highway 111 west of State Route 74 is an eligible state scenic highway. Both are ±3 miles south of the Project site.

The Project area is urbanized, and the subject property is surrounded by residential, golf course, and institutional (sheriff station) development. The Project site occurs on the east slope of the Palm Springs sand ridge, and is therefore somewhat elevated compared to the rest of the valley floor. The nearest scenic resources to the subject property are the Santa Rosa Mountains, approximately 3 miles to the southwest.

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The primary scenic resources in the Project area are the Santa Rosa Mountains approximately 3 miles southwest of the Project site. However, due to distance and intervening development, the visual impact of the mountains from the Project site is diminished. The Indio Hills are somewhat visible to the northeast but do not provide significant

viewsheds because of their low topography and distance. There are no scenic vistas to the east. Intervening development between the Project site and scenic resources includes Gerald Ford Drive and single-family development to the north, and a golf course and County sheriff station to the west. Existing 6- to 8-foot concrete walls extend along the shared boundary between the Project site and adjacent development, including single-family residential development to the east and south, time shares and golf course to the west, and Riverside County Sheriff Station to the west.

Table 2 describes the maximum building heights allowed by the Specific Plan. The heights for Planning Area 1, Vitalia (PP/CUP 21-0004), have already been approved by the City. Two-story buildings would be a maximum height of 26 feet and 2 inches, and three-story buildings would be a maximum height of 36 feet and 3 inches. The visual impacts of Planning Area 1 were previously analyzed in an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and found to be less than significant.

**Table 2
Proposed Maximum Building Heights**

Planning Area	Housing Type	Maximum Height	Maximum Stories
1	Multi-family (Vitalia)	26 ft. 2 in. 36 ft. 3 in.	2 3
2	Detached Attached	25 ft. 35 ft.	2 3
3	Single-family, conventionally loaded Single-family, alley loaded	25 ft. 25 ft.	2* 2*

* Limited to 1 story when adjacent to existing single-family residential neighborhood.

Buildout of Planning Area 2 could result in up to 302 two-story (maximum height 25 feet) and three-story (maximum height 35 feet) units. Buildings would be taller than the adjacent Sheriff Station but consistent with approved heights in Planning Area 1 (Vitalia). Planning Area 2 would have no impact on scenic vistas viewed from the adjacent golf course because no scenic vistas exist to the east. Scenic vistas seen from Gerald Ford Drive and residences to the north would not be impacted because Planning Area 2 would be 1,000+ feet south of Gerald Ford Drive and largely shielded from view by Planning Area 1. Scenic vistas seen from vacant land (under construction for single-family residential) to the immediate east would be somewhat blocked by Planning Area 2, but the impacts would be diminished by the 50+-foot open space/buffer provided by Planning Area 5 and Vitalia Way. Project buildings would be further shielded with trees and landscaping.

Buildout of Planning Area 3 could result in up to 398 two-story single-family units with maximum heights of 25 feet. However, heights are limited to one-story in the Specific Plan when adjacent to existing single-family residential neighborhoods to the east and south. Therefore, along the southerly and easterly perimeter lots of Planning Area 3, building heights would be one-story, and consistent with the heights of existing dwelling units to the south and east. Visual impacts to scenic vistas as viewed from the east would be reduced due to the single-story height restriction, the separation provided by a 50-foot landscaped open space buffer (Planning Area 5) around the easterly and southerly Project perimeter, and existing 6- to 8-foot concrete walls along the shared property boundary between existing residential development and the Project.

Planning Area 3 would have no impact on scenic vistas viewed from the golf course because no scenic vistas exist to the east, and it would have no impact on scenic vistas viewed from the south because no notable scenic vistas exist to the north. Planning Area 3 would have no impact on scenic vistas viewed from Gerald Ford Drive and residences to the north (The Gallery) because it would be blocked from view by Planning Areas 1 and 2 and would be 1,600+ south of Gerald Ford Drive.

As regards Planning Area 4 (Recreation Amenity), the Project requires the colors, massing, roof pitch, and materials of a future clubhouse or amenity to be compatible with residential buildings and with the Project theme. Development plans would be subject to City review to assure potential impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant. Planning Area 4 is in the central part of the Specific Plan area, and future improvements would be largely blocked from view from adjacent properties by dwelling units in Planning Area 3. Therefore, impacts of Planning Area 4 to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

Building and site design on the Project site would be guided by the Refuge Specific Plan. Proposed architectural styles allow a range of architectural styles, consistent with styles in the city and region. Color palettes and building materials would be compatible with the desert environment and existing development in the Project vicinity. Buildings would be somewhat shielded with landscaping that will further soften visual impacts. Mechanical equipment, utility boxes, and trash receptacles would be screened from street view. Therefore, Project impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

- b) **No Impact.** The Project site is not located near an existing or proposed state scenic highway (the only designated scenic highway in the City is Highway 74, south of the Project area), and there are no scenic resources such as trees, rock outcroppings, or historical buildings onsite. No impact will occur.
- c) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site is in an urban setting. According to the General Plan (p. 30), the intended physical character of the Town Center Neighborhood land use designation includes formal street tree arrangements, public open spaces, housing units up to three stories, and buildings that are set back from the sidewalk to provide small to moderate front yards, all of which are characteristics of the proposed Project. The Project will be consistent with applicable General Plan policies governing scenic quality, which require preservation of view corridors of the hills and mountains and limited light pollution to maintain darkness for night sky viewing (General Plan Environmental Resources Element Policies 2.1 and 2.5). The Project will be designed in accordance with the development standards and design guidelines of the Refuge Specific Plan, which will supersede those of the Zoning Code. However, the Specific Plan's development standards do not significantly deviate from the Zoning Code, and proposed architectural styles, finishes, colors, materials, and landscaping palettes are compatible with the desert environment and surrounding development. Therefore, the Project will have less than significant impacts to applicable regulations that address scenic quality.
- d) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project will generate light and glare primarily from buildings, landscape lighting, exterior safety and security lighting, and vehicles accessing the site. Residential lighting is typically limited and of low intensity. The City regulates lighting levels and does not allow light spillage onto adjacent properties. All Project lighting will comply with the Refuge Specific Plan, which requires lighting fixtures to complement the architecture

and landscape, be designed and located to avoid spillover onto adjacent lots and be low-intensity to preserve the nighttime dark sky. The Project will be required to comply with Chapter 24.16 (Outdoor Lighting Requirements) of the Municipal Code, including lighting performance criteria and design guidelines. Landscape and lighting plans will be subject to review by the City. With adherence to City standards and Specific Plan guidelines, Project-related impacts associated with increased light and glare will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Palm Desert Municipal Code; California State Scenic Highway System Map, Caltrans, 2018; Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786.

II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

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 Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	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) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?				✓
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓

Setting

Agriculture is a significant part of the Coachella Valley economy; however, agricultural land and operations are largely located east of Palm Desert. The City is in a desert environment and has no forests or forest production lands. It is predominantly built out with urban uses and does not contain any land designated or zoned for agricultural uses. Neither the General Plan nor the Zoning Ordinance includes forestry or forest production designations. While not directly related to agriculture and forest uses, the General Plan includes the potential for golf course reuse that may allow community-scale agricultural uses.

Discussion of Impacts

a-e) No Impact. According to the California Important Farmlands mapping, the Project site is designated as “Other Land.” The nearest designated important farmlands are Farmland of Local Importance north of Interstate 10 between Monterey Avenue and Cook Street, approximately one mile north of the Project site. The Project site is currently vacant and designated as Town Center Neighborhood on the General Plan land use map, which allows a broad range of residential land uses. The Project site is zoned as Planned Residential (PR), where single-family dwellings are permitted by right and multi-family dwellings are permitted with approval of a conditional use permit. The proposed Specific Plan will allow a mix of residential uses consistent with the General Plan and Zoning designations. No agricultural lands will be impacted by the Project.

Prime Farmland: No prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance exists on the Project site or in the Project vicinity. The Project site is not located on or near any property zoned or otherwise intended for agricultural uses. As such, the Project would not convert farmland to nonagricultural use. No impact would occur.

Williamson Act: The Project site and surrounding properties are designated for urban uses in the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. No land on or near the Project site is under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with any zoning for agricultural uses or a Williamson Act Contract. No impact would occur.

Forest Land: The Project site is located on the desert floor, zoned as Planned Residential (PR), and surrounded by urban development and vacant land designated for urban uses. The subject site does not contain forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned for timberland production. Therefore, the Project would not rezone forest land or timberland as defined by the Public Resources Code. It would not result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest uses or changes to the environment that could result in such a conversion. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Palm Desert Municipal Code; Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786; California Important Farmland Finder, California Department of Conservation, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>, 2018, accessed March 2022.

III. AIR QUALITY Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?				✓
b) 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			✓	
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?			✓	
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people?			✓	

Setting

The Coachella Valley is in the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB), which includes part of Riverside County and all of Imperial County. The SSAB is under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). All development within the SSAB is subject to the 2016 SCAQMD Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), and the Coachella Valley region is subject to the 2003 Coachella Valley PM₁₀ State Implementation Plan (CV PM₁₀ SIP). SCAQMD operates and maintains regional air quality monitoring stations at numerous locations throughout its jurisdiction. The Project site is within Source Receptor Area (SRA) 30, which includes monitoring stations in Palm Springs, Indio, and Mecca.

Criteria air pollutants are contaminants for which state and federal air quality standards have been established. The SSAB exceeds state and federal standards for fugitive dust (PM₁₀) and ozone (O₃), and is in attainment for PM_{2.5}, except the City of Calexico. Ambient air quality in the SSAB, including the Project site, does not exceed state and federal standards for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxides, sulfur dioxide, lead, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, or vinyl chloride.

Buildout of the proposed Project will result in air quality impacts during construction and operation. The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project air quality emissions that will be generated by the Project (Appendix A).

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **No Impact.** The Project site is within the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) and will be subject to SCAQMD's 2016 AQMP and the 2003 Coachella Valley PM₁₀ SIP. The AQMP is a comprehensive plan that establishes control strategies and guidance on regional emission

reductions for air pollutants. The AQMP is based, in part, on the land use plans of jurisdictions in the region.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) adopted the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2020 RTP/SCS) to comply with metropolitan planning organization (MPO) requirements under the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act. The RTP/SCS Growth Management chapter forms the basis of land use and transportation controls of the AQMP. Projects that are consistent with the population forecasts are considered consistent with the AQMP. SCAG forecasts that the City's population will be 64,100 in 2045.

A project is considered to be in conformity with adopted air quality plans if it adheres to the requirements of the SCAQMD Rule Book, AQMP, and adopted and forthcoming control measures, and is consistent with growth forecasts in the applicable plan(s) (or is directly included in the applicable plan). Conformity with growth forecasts can be established by demonstrating that a project is consistent with the land use plan that was used to generate the growth forecast. A non-conforming project would be one that increases the gross number of dwelling units, increases the number of vehicle trips, and/or increases the overall vehicle miles traveled in an affected area relative to the applicable land use plan.

The proposed Project is consistent with the land use designation (Town Center Neighborhood) assigned to the subject property by the Palm Desert General Plan. The Project's density range (7.0 to 9.1 du/ac) is within the density range (7.0 to 40 du/ac) specified for the Town Center Neighborhood designation. The General Plan was used to develop population forecasts in the above-described RTP/SCS, and the RTP/SCS served as the basis for the AQMP. The Project will be part of anticipated growth, and the residential land use was included in the SCAG analysis. The proposed Project would be implemented in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations contained in these plans to meet the applicable air quality standards. Therefore, the Project will be consistent with the AQMP and will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the plan. No conflict will occur.

- b) **Less Than Significant Impact.** A project is considered to have significant impacts if there is a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard. As previously stated, the SSAB is currently a non-attainment area for PM₁₀ and ozone. Therefore, if the Project's construction and/or operational emissions exceed SCAQMD thresholds for PM₁₀ and ozone precursors, which include carbon monoxide (CO), nitrous oxides (NO_x), and volatile/reactive organic compounds/gases (VOC or ROG), then impacts would be cumulatively considerable and significant.

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project air quality emissions that will be generated by the proposed Project (Appendix A). Criteria air pollutants will be released during both the construction and operational phases of the Project, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 summarizes short-term construction-related emissions, and Table 4 summarizes ongoing emissions generated during operation.

Construction Emissions

Project buildout is anticipated to take up to 6 years, from 2023 to 2029, with construction of Planning Area 1 occurring independently and construction of Planning Areas 2 through 5 spread over 8 phases. The construction period includes all aspects of Project development, including site preparation, grading, paving, building construction, and application of architectural coatings.

As shown in Table 3, emissions generated by construction activities will not exceed SCAQMD thresholds for any criteria pollutant. The data reflect average daily unmitigated emissions for construction of the entire Project as a whole, including summer and winter weather conditions, except PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} which show emissions after adherence to required dust control measures. It is important to recognize that construction emissions will not be emitted daily during the entire 6-year construction buildout period, but rather will be spread across various phases of construction. The analysis assumes a net export of 48,362 cubic yards of dirt/soil materials per the Project’s preliminary grading plan. Applicable standard requirements and best management practices include, but are not limited to, the implementation of a dust control and management plan in conformance with SCAQMD Rules 403 and 403.1, phased application of architectural coatings, and the use of low-polluting architectural paint and coatings per SCAQMD Rule 1113.

Table 3
Maximum Daily Construction-Related Emissions Summary
(pounds per day)

Construction Emissions¹	CO	NO_x	ROG	SO₂	PM₁₀	PM_{2.5}
Daily Maximum	33.79	41.31	20.36	0.14	10.60	6.07
SCAQMD Thresholds	550.00	100.00	75.00	150.00	150.00	55.00
Exceeds?	No	No	No	No	No	No

¹ Average of winter and summer emissions, unmitigated, with the exception of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which show emissions after adherence to required dust control measures.

Source: CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0 (output tables provided in Appendix A).

Given that criteria pollutant thresholds will not be exceeded, and standard best management practices will be applied during construction, impacts will be less than significant.

Operational Emissions

Operational emissions are ongoing emissions that will occur over the life of the Project. They include area source emissions, emissions from energy demand (electricity), and mobile source (vehicle) emissions.

According to the Project traffic impact analysis (Appendix D), the Project will generate approximately 7,267 daily trips (see Section XVII, Transportation). Table 4 summarizes projected emissions during operation of the Project at build out. As shown, operational emissions will not exceed SCAQMD thresholds of significance for any criteria pollutants for operations. Impacts will be less than significant.

Table 4
Maximum Daily Operational-Related Emissions Summary
(pounds per day)

Operational Emissions¹	CO	NO_x	ROG	SO₂	PM₁₀	PM_{2.5}
Daily Maximum	270.89	40.45	56.02	0.47	40.68	12.14
SCAQMD Thresholds	550.00	100.00	75.00	150.00	150.00	55.00
Exceeds?	No	No	No	No	No	No

¹ Average of winter and summer emissions.

Source: CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0 (output tables provided in Appendix A).

Cumulative Contribution

A significant impact could occur if the Project would make a considerable cumulative contribution to federal or state non-attainment pollutants. The Coachella Valley portion of the SSAB is classified as a “non-attainment” area for PM₁₀ and ozone. Cumulative air quality analysis is evaluated on a regional scale (rather than a neighborhood or city scale, for example), given the dispersing nature of pollutant emissions and aggregate impacts from surrounding jurisdictions and air management districts. Any development project or activity resulting in emissions of PM₁₀, ozone, or ozone precursors will contribute, to some degree, to regional non-attainment designations of ozone and PM₁₀.

The SCAQMD does not currently recommend quantified analyses of construction and/or operational emissions from multiple development projects, nor does it provide methodologies or thresholds of significance to be used to assess the significance of cumulative emissions generated by multiple cumulative projects. However, it is recommended that a project’s potential contribution to cumulative impacts be assessed utilizing the same significance criteria as those for project-specific impacts. Furthermore, SCAQMD states that if an individual development project generates less than significant construction or operational emissions, then the project would not generate a cumulatively considerable increase in emissions for those pollutants for which the Basin is in nonattainment.

As shown in the tables above, Project-related PM₁₀, CO, NO_x, and ROG emissions are projected to be below established SCAQMD thresholds. Therefore, the proposed Project will result in incremental, but not cumulatively considerable impacts on regional PM₁₀ or ozone levels.

Summary

As shown above, both construction and operation of the Project will result in criteria emissions below the SCAQMD significance thresholds, and neither would violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation. Impacts related to construction and operation will be less than significant and are not cumulatively considerable from a non-attainment standpoint.

- c) **Less Than Significant Impact.** Sensitive receptors include residences, schools, playgrounds, childcare centers, retirement homes, hospitals, and other land uses occupied by individuals who are potentially more sensitive to pollutants than the average. The nearest sensitive receptors to the Project site are single-family homes to the immediate east and south. During construction of Planning Area 5 (Open Space/Buffer), ground disturbances and the operation of heavy equipment will be adjacent to the rear lot lines of existing homes. During construction of the

easternmost and southernmost parcels of Planning Area 3 (Residential), ground disturbances will be 50 feet from existing homes. However, construction will occur in phases over the 6-year buildout period, and pollutant emissions will be spread over various phases and locations throughout the Project site such that they will not be concentrated in a single location for a long duration.

During the operational phase of the Project, existing homes would be buffered from Project dwelling units by Planning Area 5, a 50-foot-wide landscaped open space with a pedestrian path. During all phases of development, existing homes would continue to be separated from the Project by the existing 8-foot concrete wall along their rear lot lines.

To determine if a project has the potential to generate significant adverse localized air quality impacts, SCAQMD offers Localized Significance Thresholds (LST) analysis. Analysis of LSTs by a local government is voluntary and is designed for projects that are less than or equal to 5 acres. The maximum area of disturbance associated with buildout of the Project is approximately 106.4 acres, and it is assumed that buildout will occur over 6 years. Although the total Project area is greater than 5 acres, the area of daily disturbance (for purposes of LST analysis only) can be expected to be 5 acres or less per day at any given location. As such, the 5-acre Mass Rate Look-Up table is appropriate under the SCAMD’s methodology to screen for potential localized air quality impacts.¹

The Mass Rate Look-Up tables for LSTs were used to determine if the proposed Project would have the potential to generate significant adverse localized air quality impacts during construction. The LST for Source Receptor Area (SRA) 30 (Coachella Valley) was used to determine LST emission thresholds. The distance from the emission source and the maximum daily site disturbance also determines the emission thresholds. For analysis purposes, the worst-case scenario of a sensitive receptor being within 25 meters was used.

Table 5 shows that LST thresholds are not expected to be exceeded for any criteria pollutant during construction. Because the proposed land uses do not include major stationary polluters (such as a landfill, chemical plant, oil field, refinery, etc.), LST analysis was not conducted or required for Project operation. Impacts to sensitive receptors will be less than significant.

Table 5
Localized Significance Thresholds
25 Meters, 5 Acres
(pounds per day)

	CO	NO_x	PM₁₀	PM_{2.5}
Construction Emissions	33.79	41.31	10.60	6.07
LST Threshold	2,292.00	304.00	14.00	8.00
Exceeds Threshold?	No	No	No	No

Source of Emission Data: CalEEMod version 2020.4.0 (output tables provided in Appendix A).
Source of LST Threshold: LST Mass Rate Look-up Table, 25 meters, 5 acres, SCAQMD

¹ SCAQMD “Fact Sheet for Applying CalEEMod to Localized Significance Thresholds.”

Health Impacts

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, construction and operation of the proposed Project will result in criteria emissions that are below the SCAQMD significance thresholds, and neither would violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation.

It is not scientifically possible to calculate the degree to which exposure to various levels of criteria pollutant emissions will impact an individual's health. There are several factors that make predicting a Project-specific numerical impact difficult:

- Not all individuals will be affected equally due to medical history. Some may have medical pre-dispositions, and diet and exercise levels tend to vary across a population.
- Due to the dispersing nature of pollutants, it is difficult to locate and identify which group of individuals will be impacted, either directly or indirectly.
- There are currently no approved methodologies or studies to base assumptions on, such as baseline health levels or emission level-to-health risk ratios.

Due to these limitations, the extent to which the Project poses a health risk is uncertain but unavoidable. It is anticipated that the impacts associated with all criteria pollutants will be less than significant overall, and that health effects will also be less than significant.

- d) Less Than Significant Impact.** During construction, odors associated with construction activities, particularly paving, will be generated. However, any such odors would be short-term and quickly dispersed below detectable levels as distance from the construction site increases. Project buildout is estimated to occur over a 6-year period, and construction odors would be generated across various time periods and locations throughout the site such that odors would not be concentrated in one area for an extended duration.

During long-term operation, residential units will generate odors from cooking and other typical household activities but will not generate objectionable odors. Therefore, impacts from objectionable odors will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: SCAQMD AQMP, 2016; 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), Demographics and Growth Forecast Technical Report, Southern California Association of Governments, adopted September 3, 2020; "Final Localized Significance Threshold Methodology," prepared by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Revised, July 2008; "2003 Coachella Valley PM₁₀ State Implementation Plan," August 1, 2003; CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0; Project materials.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	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, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?				✓
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands (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?				✓

Setting

The Coachella Valley is located within the Sonoran Desert, a subdivision of the Colorado Desert. The Sonoran Desert contains a wide range of biological resources that are highly specialized and endemic to the region. The central portion of the valley, in which the Project site is located, is composed of sand dunes and sand fields that are divided into three sub-communities: active sand dunes, active sand fields, and stabilized and partially stabilized desert sand fields.

Undeveloped portions of the City of Palm Desert contain a variety of biological resources. Ten (10) special-status plant species and fifteen (15) special-status wildlife species are known to occur in the City. Some of these species have been listed as threatened or endangered by the federal and state governments. The City is within the boundaries of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP), a comprehensive regional plan encompassing approximately 1.1 million acres in the Coachella Valley that addresses the conservation needs of 27 native flora and fauna species and 27 natural vegetation communities. The City of Palm Desert is a CVMSHCP Permittee and subject to its provisions.

The Project site is surrounded by development on all sides, and is an island of vacant desert land. A Project-specific Biological Resources Assessment was conducted by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. in March 2022 (Appendix B). Its findings are included in the analysis below.

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less than Significant with Mitigation.** The Project site is undeveloped but has been disturbed by the edge effects of surrounding development, including the presence of trash and debris, intrusion of landscaping vegetation around the site margins, off-road vehicle use, and use by domestic animals and pedestrians. Sand drift fencing extends across some of the site.

The site-specific biological resources assessment identified 43 special status species that were either observed onsite, have California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) records within a ± 5 -mile radius of the site, and/or have potentially suitable habitat onsite. Of these, 11 are considered absent from the site due to a lack of suitable habitat. The Project is not expected to impact those species, and they are not analyzed further. The other 32 species could potentially occur onsite and are described below.

Potentially Occurring Species Covered by the CVMSHCP

- Nine (9) special status species have the potential to occur on the Project site and are fully covered under the CVMSHCP. They include:
 - 1) Coachella Valley milk-vetch,
 - 2) Mecca-aster,
 - 3) Coachella giant sand-treader cricket,
 - 4) Coachella Valley Jerusalem cricket,
 - 5) flat-tailed horned lizard,
 - 6) Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard,
 - 7) western yellow bat,
 - 8) Palm Springs pocket mouse, and
 - 9) Coachella Valley (Palm Springs) round-tailed ground squirrel.

Because the Project is within the boundaries of the CVMSHCP and the City is a Permittee to the CVMSHCP, the Project will be required to pay the standard local development mitigation fee to mitigate impacts to these and all other covered species that may result from the Project. The Project is not within or adjacent to a CVMSHCP conservation area and, therefore, no additional restrictions apply. Participation in the CVMSHCP will mitigate impacts to these 9 species, and impacts will be less than significant.

Potentially Occurring Species Not Covered, or Not Fully Covered, by the CVMSHCP

- Burrowing Owl: The burrowing owl nests and roosts underground, including along canals and flood control channels, and is particularly sensitive to noise and ground disturbances, such as grading and construction up to 500 feet away. It is a Species of Special Concern (state designation) and Bird of Conservation Concern (federal designation) and is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) code. It is also a covered species under the CVMSHCP, but the federal permit for the CVMSHCP does not allow take under the MBTA. The subject property includes marginally suitable habitat for burrowing owl, but there are limited burrow opportunities, and the probability of occurrence is low. No individuals or sign of owl was detected in the field survey. Nonetheless, to avoid take of the species, the CDFW recommends two take avoidance surveys (Mitigation Measure BIO.1). The first should occur between 14 and 30 days prior to ground disturbance and the second within 24 hours of ground disturbance. With implementation of BIO.1, impacts to burrowing owl will be less than significant.

- Plants: Thirteen (13) special status plant species have the potential to occur onsite but are not covered by the CVMSHCP:
 - 1) chaparral sand-verbena,
 - 2) gravel milk-vetch,
 - 3) pointed odder,
 - 4) glandular ditaxis,
 - 5) California ditaxis,
 - 6) Abram's spurge,
 - 7) Arizona spurge,
 - 8) flat-seeded spurge,
 - 9) ribbed cryptantha,
 - 10) Torrey's box-thorn,
 - 11) slender cottonheads,
 - 12) narrow-leaved sandpaper plant, and
 - 13) Mecca-aster.

None are federally or state listed as endangered or threatened, and if they are present onsite, they are likely to decline or be lost over time given that the site is surrounded by development. None were identified during the field survey. The isolated nature of the Project site, and the fact that they were not identified during the spring-season field survey result in a very low probability of occurrence. In addition, none of these species are listed as either endangered or threatened. Therefore, impacts will be less than significant.

- Insects: Two (2) special status insects have the potential to occur onsite but are not covered by the CVMSHCP: Crotch bumble bee, and cheeseweed owlfly. Neither is federally or state listed as endangered or threatened. If present onsite, the species would not be expected to persist in the long-term or in populations of significance. Neither was identified on the Project site. Therefore, impacts will be less than significant.

- Non-nesting Birds: Two (2) special status non-nesting birds could potentially occur onsite: prairie falcon, and willow flycatcher (southwestern and other subspecies). They could occur on the Project site as migrants and/or foragers, but no nesting habitat is available. No action or mitigation is recommended.
- Nesting Migratory Birds: Five (5) special status nesting birds have the potential to occur onsite:
 - 1) Costa's hummingbird,
 - 2) loggerhead shrike,
 - 3) black-tailed gnatcatcher,
 - 4) vermilion flycatcher, and
 - 5) LeConte's thrasher.

The LeConte's thrasher is covered by the CVMSHCP, but all five are protected from take by the MBTA and state code. To avoid impacts to nesting birds, the Project should avoid site disturbance during the nesting season (generally February 1 through August 31). If avoidance of the nesting season is not feasible, additional impact avoidance and minimization measures may be necessary, as provided in Mitigation Measure BIO.2. With implementation of BIO.2, impacts to migratory birds will be less than significant.

- Mammals: One (1) special status mammal not covered by the CVMSHCP has the potential to occur onsite: pallid San Diego pocket mouse. However, the possibility of occurrence is low because only marginal habitat is present, and the site is likely beyond the range of the species. No populations of significance are anticipated onsite, and no action or mitigation is recommended.

- b, c) No Impact.** The vegetation community on the subject site is identified as “stabilized and partially stabilized desert dunes.” The site survey did not identify any springs, seeps, or natural bodies of water or drainages on the Project site. Review of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) indicated that no known blue-line streams (drainages) traverse the subject property. The Project site does not contain any streams, riparian habitat, marshes, protected wetlands, vernal pools, or sensitive natural communities protected by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. No impact would occur.
- d) Less than Significant with Mitigation.** Nearly all land surrounding the Project site is developed. No wildlife corridors or biological linkages are mapped, known, or expected on the Project site. Although it is used by several common species and may provide marginal habitat for migratory birds, the Project site is not identified as a nursery site. As described above, the site may offer limited nesting sites for birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Compliance with the MBTA, provided in Mitigation Measure BIO.2, will ensure impacts to sensitive species are reduced to less than significant levels.
- e) No Impact.** The proposed Project will not conflict with any local ordinances protecting biological species and will be required to comply with the landscaping and other applicable requirements of the Municipal Code and Refuge Specific Plan. The Project would also adhere to the City's General Plan Policy 4.3 by incorporating native vegetation materials into the Project landscape. No impact will occur.

- f) **No Impact.** The subject property is within the boundaries of the CVMSHCP, and the City of Palm Desert is a Permittee to the CVMSHCP. Therefore, the Project proponent will be required to pay the local development mitigation fee to mitigate impacts to covered species. Payment of the fee is a standard requirement of projects in the CVMSHCP coverage area. The Project will not conflict with this or any other habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan. No impact will occur.

Mitigation Measures:

BIO.1 Burrowing Owl Surveys

To mitigate potential impacts to burrowing owl, two pre-construction surveys shall be conducted in accordance with CDFW protocol. The first survey shall occur between 14 and 30 days prior to ground disturbance, and the second shall occur within 24 hours of the initiation of ground disturbance activities for any phase of development on the Project site.

- If no owls are detected during those surveys, ground disturbance may proceed without further consideration of this species, assuming there is no lapse between the surveys and construction, because the protocol states “time lapses between Project activities trigger subsequent take avoidance surveys including but not limited to a final survey conducted within 24 hours prior to ground disturbance.”
- If burrowing owls are detected during the surveys, avoidance and minimization measures shall be required. Avoidance and minimization measures may include establishing a buffer zone, installing a visual barrier, implementing burrow exclusion and/or closure techniques, in conformance with CDFW protocol.

BIO.2 Migratory Bird Treaty Act

If ground disturbance or tree or plant removal is proposed between February 1st and August 31st, a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within 7 to 10 days of initiation of grading onsite, focusing on MBTA covered species. If active nests are reported, then species-specific measures shall be prepared. At a minimum, grading in the vicinity of a nest shall be postponed until the young birds have fledged. For construction that occurs between September 1st and January 31st, no pre-removal nesting bird survey is required.

- In the event active nests are found, exclusionary fencing shall be placed around the nests until such time as nestlings have fledged. Avoidance buffers shall be 100 to 300 feet from the nests of unlisted songbirds, and 500 feet from the nests of birds-of-prey and listed species.

Monitoring:

BIO.A The Project biologist shall supply the City with reports of findings regarding burrowing owls and migratory birds. The reports will be attached to the grading permit for the Project.

Responsible Parties: Project Biologist, City Engineer, Planning Department

Timeline: prior to issuance of any permits that result in ground disturbance

Sources: Biological Resources Assessment & Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Compliance Report, Refuge Palm Desert Project, Assessor’s Parcel Numbers 694-310-002, 694-310-003, & 694-310-006, Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc., March 11, 2022; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016; Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?				✓
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?		✓		
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?				✓

Setting

The Cahuilla Indians settled in the Coachella Valley centuries ago. They were a Tatic-speaking people that, before European settlement, consisted primarily of hunters and gatherers generally divided into three groups based on geography: the Pass Cahuilla of the San Gorgonio Pass-Palm Springs area; the Mountain Cahuilla of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains and the Cahuilla Valley; and the Desert Cahuilla of the eastern Coachella Valley.

The first noted European explorations in the Coachella Valley occurred in the 1820’s. By the 1870’s, non-native settlements expanded across the region as new federal laws opened lands for settlement. The discovery of underground water sources increased farming activities in the early 20th century. After World War II, the Henderson brothers organized the Palm Desert Corporation to promote their new desert town. In 1946, they started constructing streets and commercial buildings which later became known as Palm Desert. The City was incorporated in 1973.

Development in the Project area began in the late 1950s. By 1956-1958, three buildings (“jackrabbit homesteads”) were constructed southeast of the Project site, but they were abandoned shortly afterwards. The Project site remained a largely undisturbed desert landscape until 1972, when construction of the present-day Gerald Ford Drive began. The Shadow Ridge Golf Club to the west and the residential tract to the east were present by 2002, and the neighborhood north of Gerald Ford Drive developed between 2006 and 2016. The sheriff’s station to the west was built between 2009 and 2011.

The Project site was the subject of a cultural resources assessment conducted by CRM TECH in 2016. At that time, the study area included the Project site plus vacant land to the immediate east. In 2020, CRM TECH prepared another cultural resources assessment that updated and reexamined the findings of the 2016 study as they pertained to Planning Area 1 (Vitalia). In April 2022, CRM TECH prepared a cultural resources assessment to update the findings of the previous studies and reevaluate the Project site as it relates to the currently proposed Project (Appendix C).

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **No Impact.** In 2022, CRM TECH conducted a cultural resources study for the Project site and reexamined and updated the findings of the 2016 and 2020 cultural resources analyses described above. The 2022 study included a review of data gathered during the previous studies and the results of more recent records on nearby properties, as well as a Sacred Lands Files search at the State of California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and field inspection of the Project site.

Records Search

According to the 2016 cultural resources study, a records search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) at the Eastern Information Center (EIC) found that 25 cultural resources studies were conducted within a one-mile radius of the Project site. Three sites and one isolate (locality with fewer than three artifacts) that dated to the historic period (generally within 50 years) were recorded within the one-mile radius. However, none of the resources were located on the Project site or within a ½-mile radius of it. The 2020 cultural resources study re-evaluated the previously identified records and found no new historic resources. The 2022 study searched recent studies within a ½-mile radius of the Project site and determined that no additional historical resources have been recorded on the Project site or within the ½-mile radius.

Field Survey

The 2016 field survey identified remnants of three “jackrabbit homesteads” built in the 1950s immediately east of the current Project boundary. None of the remnants demonstrated any potential to be considered historically significant under CEQA. The 2020 field survey encountered no historical resources in Planning Area 1 (Vitalia) but observed ground disturbances along its westerly and northerly boundaries where underground utility lines had been installed along the south side of Gerald Ford Drive. The 2022 field survey encountered no historical resources on the current Project site. Recent ground surface disturbances were noted near the eastern Project boundary in association with residential development on the adjacent property, and a block wall had been built along the boundary line. Evidence of off-road vehicle use and extensive pedestrian use were also seen on the Project site.

Summary of Impacts

Based on findings of the three site-specific studies, CRM TECH concluded that no historical resources are known to occur in the Project area, and the proposed Project will not cause a substantial adverse change to any known historical resources. No impact will occur.

- b) **Less Than Significant with Mitigation.**

Sacred Lands File Search

On February 23, 2022, CRM TECH submitted a written request to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for a records search in the Sacred Lands File regarding the proposed Project. NAHC reported no Native American cultural resource(s) in the Project vicinity but recommended that sixteen local Native American representatives be consulted for further information. The City will contact Tribal representatives as part of the SB 18 and AB 52 consultation process described in Section XVIII (Tribal Cultural Resources) of this Initial Study.

Records Search

The records search conducted at the EIC for the 2016 cultural resources study found that 25 cultural resources studies were conducted within a one-mile radius of the Project site. One prehistoric (Native American) site and three isolates were recorded within a one-mile radius of the Project site. However, none were located on the Project site and, therefore, the Project would have no impact on them. The 2020 cultural resources study did not identify any additional records of prehistoric resources on the Project site. The 2022 study searched recent studies within a ½-mile radius and found no evidence of additional prehistoric resources being recorded in the Project area.

Field Survey

The 2016 field survey identified no prehistoric resources on the Project site but did find disturbances of the ground surfaces on the southerly, easterly, and northerly edges of the property in association with adjacent development. No items of archaeological interest were found. The 2020 field survey encountered no archaeological resources in Planning Area 1 (Vitalia) but observed ground disturbances along its westerly and northerly boundaries where underground utility lines had been installed along the south side of Gerald Ford Drive. The 2022 field survey encountered no archaeological resources on the Project site.

Summary of Impacts

Based on these findings, CRM TECH concluded that no known archaeological resources occur on the Project site, and no further cultural resources investigation is needed for the Project unless development plans change to include areas not covered by the study. However, as recommended in the cultural resources study, to protect any potential buried archaeological resources that may be uncovered during Project development and to reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels, Mitigation Measure CUL.1 is provided below. Please also see Section XVIII, Tribal Cultural Resources. With implementation of CUL.1, potential impacts to archaeological resources will be reduced to less than significant levels.

- c) **No Impact.** No cemeteries or human remains are known to occur onsite. It is unlikely that human remains will be uncovered during Project development. However, should human remains be uncovered, California law requires that all activity cease and the coroner be notified to determine the nature of the remains and whether Native American consultation is needed. This requirement of law assures that there will be no impact to cemeteries or human remains.

Mitigation Measures:

CUL.1. Archaeological and Tribal Monitoring

Earth-moving activities, including grading, grubbing, trenching, or excavations at the site shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist and a Native American monitor.

If any cultural materials more than 50 years of age are discovered, they shall be recorded and evaluated in the field. The monitors shall be prepared to recover artifacts quickly to avoid construction delays but must have the power to temporarily halt or divert construction equipment to allow for controlled archaeological recovery if a substantial cultural deposit is encountered. The monitors shall determine when excavations have reached sufficient depth to preclude the occurrence of cultural resources, and when monitoring should conclude.

If artifacts are discovered, these shall be processed, catalogued, analyzed, and prepared for permanent curation in a repository with permanent retrievable storage that would allow for additional research in the future.

Monitoring:

CUL.A. Prior to the issuance of a grading permit for the site, the applicant shall provide fully executed monitoring agreement(s) to the City.

Responsible parties: Project applicant, Planning Division, City Engineer.

CUL.B. Within 30 days of the completion of ground disturbing activities on the Project site, a report of findings shall be filed with the City. The report will summarize the methods and results of the monitoring program, including an itemized inventory and a detailed analysis of recovered artifacts, upon completion of the field and laboratory work. The report should include an interpretation of the cultural activities represented by the artifacts and a discussion of the significance of all archaeological finds.

Responsible parties: Project applicant, Project archaeologist, Tribal monitor, Planning Division, City Engineer.

Sources: Update to Historical/Archeological Resources Survey, Refuge Palm Desert Project, CRM TECH, April 21, 2022; Update to Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey, Palm Desert Apartments Project, CRM TECH, December 16, 2020; Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey, Assessor's Parcel Numbers 694-300-001, -002, -005, -014, -015, and 694-310-002, -003, -006, -007, CRM TECH, December 28, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.

VI. ENERGY Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?			✓	
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?			✓	

Setting

Primary energy sources include fossil fuels (e.g. oil, coal, and natural gas), nuclear energy, and renewable sources (e.g. wind, solar, geothermal and hydropower). Southern California Edison (SCE) provides electricity to the City of Palm Desert and serves approximately 15 million people in a 50,000 square-mile service area.² Natural gas is provided by the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas). It serves approximately 21.8 million customers in a service area covering approximately 24,000 square miles.³ Both SCE and SoCalGas offer programs and incentives to reduce energy consumption.

The Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan (2010) establishes the City’s vision for long-term energy reduction and sustainability. It addresses city-wide energy usage and establishes goals and policy recommendations within six resource areas: building efficiency standards, energy management, materials management, regional air quality, transportation resources, and water management.

Discussion of Impacts

a, b) Less than Significant Impact. The proposed Project will consume energy during both construction and long-term operation. During construction, energy demand will come from the operation of construction machinery and equipment, manufacturing of construction materials, delivery of building materials, hauling of construction debris, and commuting of workers to and from the Project site. The Project consists of typical residential development, and has no characteristics that would result in unusually high use of energy for construction. Construction practices would be subject to current SCAQMD rules and regulations, such as source-specific standards for engines and limits on equipment idling duration. The Project would also adhere to state Low Carbon Fuel Standards for construction equipment and heavy-duty vehicle efficiency standards. These standards would reduce fuel consumption, help maximize fuel efficiency, and reduce pollutant emissions.

² Southern California Edison, www.calcities.org/detail-pages/partner/edison, accessed March 2022.

³ SoCalGas, Company Profile, www.socalgas.com/about-us/company-profile, accessed March 2022.

Long-term operational energy demand will be generated by Project lighting, heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and household appliances. Energy would be consumed during the operation of community facilities, such as club houses and swimming pools, as well as landscape irrigation, the transport and conveyance of water, and solid waste hauling and disposal. However, the Project will result in single- and multi-family units typical of such construction throughout the City and region. Residential units will be constructed in accordance with the state Building Code, Green Building Code, and Energy Code in effect at the time that development occurs, to ensure the most efficient building technologies are used, which will benefit overall building operations, ensure energy efficiency, and reduce wasteful and unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Current energy code requirements include the use of solar energy for residential projects. The Project will be required to comply with these standards.

The Project will increase the population, which will increase vehicle trips and miles traveled (VMT) and long-term fuel demand. According to the Project-specific traffic impact analysis, the Project is estimated to generate 7,267 vehicle trips per day (see Section XVII, Transportation). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) set forth vehicle fuel efficiency standards to reduce vehicle emissions. Although the Project will increase vehicle trips, it will not interfere with increased fuel efficiency standards or result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of transportation energy resources during operation.

SCE engages in renewable power generation and procurement, administers a variety of energy efficiency programs, and encourages rooftop solar energy. According to the Project-specific CalEEMod analysis (Appendix A), at buildout, the Project is projected to consume approximately 5,102,344 kWh of electricity and approximately 188,215 therms of natural gas per year. Actual consumption will be offset by energy-efficient appliances and future solar systems. The Project will be required to comply with solar and zero net energy requirements of the 2019 California Building Code and will not interfere with any state or local plan that promotes renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Adherence to applicable laws and standards enforced by government agencies, SCE, and SoCalGas will ensure the Project is consistent with current energy standards and conservation goals laid out in the City's General Plan and Environmental Sustainability Plan. Therefore, Project impacts will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan, February 11, 2010.

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) 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.				✓
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?		✓		
iii) Seismic related ground failure, including liquefaction?		✓		
iv) 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 Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect 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?				✓
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?				✓

Setting

Geology and Soils

The Coachella Valley is at the northern end of the Salton Trough, a tectonic depression formed by regional faulting that extends from the San Geronio Pass to the Gulf of Mexico. The geology and seismicity of the valley are highly influenced by the tectonics of the San Andrea and San Jacinto fault systems. The Valley is surrounded by the San Bernardino Mountains on the northwest, San Jacinto

Mountains on the west, Santa Rosa Mountains on the south, and Little San Bernardino Mountains and Indio Hills on the north.

Episodic flooding of major regional drainages, including the Whitewater River, results in the deposition of sand and gravel on the valley floor. Strong sustained winds emanating from the San Gorgonio Pass cause wind erosion and transport, and they deposit dry, finely granulated, sandy soils on the central valley floor. Regional soils range from rocky outcrops within the mountains bordering the valley to coarse gravels of mountain canyons and recently laid fine- and medium-grained alluvial (stream-deposited) and aeolian (wind-deposited) sediments on the central valley floor.

Paleontological Resources

Paleontological resources are the remains and/or traces of plant and animal life such as bones, teeth, shells, and wood that are found in geologic deposits. Palm Desert General Plan Policy 9.7 requires development to avoid paleontological resources whenever possible. If complete avoidance is not possible, development is required to minimize and fully mitigate impacts to the resource.

Discussion of Impacts

- a.i) No Impact.** There are no Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones in the City (General Plan Figure 8.1), and the subject property is not located within or adjacent to an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. The nearest earthquake fault is the South Branch of the San Andreas Fault Zone, approximately 3.6 miles northeast of the Project site. No fault-related surface rupture would occur on the Project site.
- a.ii) Less than Significant with Mitigation.** The Coachella Valley is a seismically active region. The closest active fault to the City is the San Andreas Fault, 4 miles north of the City, which has a probable magnitude range of 6.8-8.0 on the Richter scale. The San Jacinto Fault and the Elsinore Fault are 10 miles and 30 miles southwest of the City, respectively, and both have a probable magnitude range of 6.5-7.5 on the Richter scale. The Project would be exposed to strong ground shaking during a major quake on nearby faults, which could expose people and structures to safety risks. The impacts associated with ground shaking could be significant without mitigation.

The subject property is not in the Seismic Hazard Overlay on the City's zoning map, which requires development proposals to conduct in-depth geotechnical soils investigations. However, a geotechnical survey was prepared for Planning Area 1 (Vitalia) in 2021.⁴ Planning Areas 2 through 5 share the same soil type (Myoma fine sand, 5 to 15 percent slopes, MaD) as Planning Area 1, and also have a small area of Myoma fine sand, 0 to 5 percent slopes, MaB near the westerly edge. Planning Areas 2 through 5 are designated for similar types of development (residential) as Planning Area 1. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the same ground shaking hazards and geotechnical recommendations and mitigation measures provided for Planning Area 1 apply to the entire Project site. The Project will be required to comply with the California Building Code (CBC) in effect at the time that development occurs, which includes seismic safety specifications and requirements. The Project should be constructed based on parameters for the Site Class D designation. Adherence to the CBC and recommendations from the geotechnical report will reduce potential impacts associated with strong seismic ground shaking to less than significant levels on the subject property (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

⁴ Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Palm Desert Apartments, 25.48 Acres, Gerald Ford Drive, prepared by Petra Geosciences, March 4, 2021.

- a.iii) Less than Significant with Mitigation.** Seismically induced liquefaction is the loss of soil strength caused by a sudden increase in pore water pressure shortly after an earthquake. Liquefaction can occur with a combination of the following conditions: saturated soil or soil below the groundwater table, strong ground shaking, and susceptible soil types such as loose sands and gravels. Lateral spreading is a form of liquefaction-related hazard.

According to the geotechnical study prepared for Planning Area 1, the groundwater table on the subject site is deeper than 150 feet below surface; therefore, the potential for liquefaction to occur is unlikely. Given the adjacency of Planning Area 1 to Planning Areas 2 through 5, and that they share the same soil type, this condition can be expected across the entire Project site.

Moderate and large earthquakes could induce dry sand settlement in which the structure of granular soils are rearranged such that vertical settlement occurs among dry, clean sands of uniform grain size and in fine-grained soils. A settlement analysis performed on the 60-foot deep boring during the Planning Area 1 geotechnical investigation determined that differential dry sand settlement of up to 1-inch over a horizontal distance of approximately 25 feet may occur on the site, which should be considered during the foundation structural design of the proposed improvements. Provided that grading and other development plans for the Project site are designed in accordance with site-specific parameters for soils and geological conditions, Project-related impacts from seismic related ground failure will be less than significant (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

- a.iv) No Impact.** The Project site is not susceptible to landslides due to its relatively flat terrain and distance from mountainous slopes and hillsides (approximately 3 miles). According to Palm Desert General Plan Figure 8.2, Landslide Susceptibility, areas susceptible to landslide are limited to the southern portion of the City. No impact will occur.
- b) Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is in a very high wind erodibility zone (Palm Desert General Plan Figure 8.3, Wind Erosion Hazard). Buildout of the Project will result in ground disturbances, including site preparation and grading, that have the potential to increase soil erosion. However, the Project will include new structures, paved surfaces, and landscaping that will stabilize ground surfaces and resist long-term erosion. The Project will be required to submit and implement a site-specific dust control mitigation plan as part of the grading permit process to minimize potential impacts caused by blowing dust and sand during construction. Adherence to this standard requirement will assure that potential wind erosion impacts remain less than significant.

The Project will install onsite drainage retention facilities to retain groundwater onsite and have sufficient capacity to accommodate a 100-year storm event (see Section X, Hydrology and Water Quality). Implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) will ensure that the Project will not result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Impacts will be less than significant.

- c) Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Subsidence

Subsidence is the settlement or sinking of the land surface that, in the Coachella Valley, has been associated with long-term groundwater withdrawal. Subsidence is considered a regional issue

and is being addressed by the water agencies and government agencies through water conservation and supplemental groundwater recharge efforts.

The Project site is near areas of inferred land subsidence that extend from Rancho Mirage to La Quinta.⁵ The geotechnical investigation for Planning Area 1 estimated subsidence of between 0.2 and 0.22 feet to occur when exposed bottom surfaces are scarified and re-compacted. Given that Planning Area 1 is adjacent to and has the same soil type as Planning Areas 2 through 5, and that the planning areas propose similar types of development (residential), the same conditions are expected to be present throughout the entire Project site, and the same geotechnical recommendations provided for Planning Area 1 apply to the entire Project site. Adherence to the recommendations provided in the geotechnical study will assure that impacts regarding subsidence will remain less than significant (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

Landslide and Rockfall

See Response VII.a.iv, above.

Liquefaction and Dry Sand Settlement

See Response VII.a.iii, above.

Hydrocollapsible Soils

Hydrocollapsible soils are subject to collapse upon the introduction of water. The volume of collapsible soils reduces when the pores in the soil become saturated, causing loss of grain-to-grain contact. Collapsible soils can cause uniform or differential damage to foundations and walls built on this soil type.

According to the geotechnical report for Planning Area 1, an average shrinkage on the order of about 20-22% may occur when excavated onsite soils are removed and recompact as properly compacted fill. Planning Area 1 is adjacent to and has the same soil type as Planning Areas 2 through 5; therefore, it is expected that the same soil conditions apply to the entire Project site. Adherence to the recommendations of the geotechnical report will assure that Project impacts associated with collapsible soils will remain less than significant (Mitigation Measure GEO-1).

- d) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Palm Desert General Plan EIR (Section 4.7) states that there appear to be no expansive clays or soils exhibiting shrink-swell characteristics in the City. The geotechnical investigation prepared for Planning Area 1 determined that onsite soils have expansive indices less than 20 and are considered non-expansive per the 2019 CBC. Nonetheless, the geotechnical report included minimum requirements for the design and construction of footings and slabs on-grade. Because Planning Area 1 is adjacent to and shares the same soil type as Planning Areas 2 through 5, it is expected that the same conditions are present throughout the entire Project site. Compliance with recommendations in the geotechnical report will ensure Project impacts are less than significant.
- e) **No Impact.** The subject property is in an urban area that is served by a community sewer system, and the proposed Project will be connected to the sewer system. The Project will not result in new septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems. No impact will occur.

⁵ 2018 Coachella Valley Integrated Regional Water Management & Stormwater Resource Plan Update, Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group, December 2018, amended December 2020, Figure 3-3.

- f) **No Impact.** The soils underlying the Project site consist of recently deposited aeolian and alluvial sediments that typically do not harbor paleontological resources. According to the Riverside County General Plan EIR (Figure 4.9.3), the Project area is of low paleontological sensitivity. The Project site is not known to have unique paleontological or geologic features. No impact will occur.

Mitigation Measures:

GEO.1 Geotechnical Report Recommendations

The Project design and construction should incorporate the following components based on each phase of development's site-specific geotechnical analysis during the preparation of precise grading plans:

- a. Earthwork Specifications. All earthwork and grading should be performed in accordance with the applicable requirements of City of Palm Desert, in compliance with all applicable provisions of the 2019 California Building Code (CBC) and in accordance with the recommendations in the Project geotechnical report.
- b. Site Clearing. Clearing operations should include the removal of all vegetation and any structural features when found. Large shrubs, when removed, should be grubbed out to include their stumps and major root systems.
- c. Ground Preparation. All unsuitable surficial materials should be removed down to competent native dune sand deposits. The exposed bottom surface should be scarified to a depth of at least 6 inches, watered as necessary to achieve slightly above optimum moisture conditions, and then recompacted in-place to a minimum relative compaction of 90 percent.
- d. Shrinkage and Subsidence. The following estimates of shrinkage and subsidence are intended as an aid for project planners in determining the earthwork quantities and should be used with some caution since they are not absolute values. An average shrinkage on the order of about 20 to 22 percent may occur when excavated onsite soils are replaced (removed and recompacted) as properly compacted fill. A subsidence estimated between 0.2 and 0.22 feet may also be expected when exposed bottom surfaces in removal areas are scarified and re- compacted as recommended herein.

Additional recommendations on post-grading considerations, foundations, footings and slabs on-grade design and construction, retaining walls, masonry block walls, exterior concrete flatwork, swimming pool and spa, and preliminary pavement sections should also be followed in the Project design and construction.

Monitoring:

GEO.A The applicant shall provide the final grading plan to the Project geotechnical consultant for review and ensure the recommendations are incorporated into the design criteria and Project specifications as deemed appropriate by the consultant.

Responsible parties: Project engineer, Project geotechnical consultant, Project applicant.

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert Zoning Map; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Riverside County General Plan EIR (SCH 2009041065); Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Palm Desert Apartments, 25.48 Acres, Gerald Ford Drive,

prepared by Petra Geosciences, March 4, 2021; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, accessed March 17, 2022; Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786; 2018 Coachella Valley Integrated Regional Water Management & Stormwater Resource Plan Update, Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group, December 2018, amended December 2020, Figure 3-3.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			✓	
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			✓	

Setting

Certain gases in the earth’s atmosphere, classified as greenhouse gases (GHGs), play a critical role in determining the earth’s surface temperature. Prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and fluorinated compounds. GHGs are emitted during natural and anthropogenic (human-caused) processes. Anthropogenic emissions of these GHGs in excess of natural ambient concentrations are responsible for intensifying the greenhouse effect and have led to a trend of unnatural warming of the earth’s climate, known as global climate change or global warming.

State laws, such as Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) and Senate Bill 32 (SB 32), require cities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. SB 32 is the extension of AB 32 and requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

The City of Palm Desert adopted an Environmental Sustainability Plan (2010) that is consistent with the goals of AB 32 and S-3-05, which calls for a statewide GHG emission reduction to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

On December 5, 2008, the SCAQMD formally adopted a greenhouse gas significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO₂e/yr that only applies to industrial uses’ stationary sources where SCAQMD is the lead agency (SCAQMD Resolution No.08-35). This threshold was adopted based upon an October 2008 staff report and draft interim guidance document that also recommended a threshold for all projects using a tiered approach. It was recommended by SCAQMD staff that a project’s greenhouse gas emissions would be considered significant if it could not comply with at least one of the following “tiered” tests:

- Tier 1: Is there an applicable exemption?
- Tier 2: Is the project compliant with a greenhouse gas reduction plan that is, at a minimum, consistent with the goals of AB 32?
- Tier 3: Is the project below an absolute threshold (10,000 MTCO₂e/year for industrial projects; 3,000 MTCO₂e/year for residential and commercial projects)?
- Tier 4: Is the project below a (yet to be set) performance threshold?
- Tier 5: Would the project achieve a screening level with off-site mitigation?

The analysis provided below is based on this tiered approach.

Discussion of Impacts

a, b) Less than Significant Impact. The proposed Project will generate GHG emissions during both construction and operation. As described in Section III (Air Quality), the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project the Project's air quality emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions (Appendix A). Applicable standard requirements and best management practices (BMPs) were included in the model, including the implementation of a dust control and management plan in conformance with SCAQMD Rule 403, phased application of architectural coatings, and the use of low-polluting architectural paint and coatings per SCAQMD Rule 1113. Projected short-term construction and annual operational GHG emissions associated with Project buildout are described below and shown in Table 6.

Construction Emissions

Construction activities, including operation of construction equipment, employee commute, and material hauling, will generate short-term GHG emissions. As shown in Table 6, the Project is projected to generate 7,071.31 MTCO₂e of GHG emissions during the 6-year construction period. Construction emissions are cumulative for the entire Project and will not occur for the entire 6 years, but rather will be spread across various phases and onsite locations. There are currently no construction related GHG emission thresholds for residential projects of this nature.

Operational Emissions

During long-term operation of the Project, five sources will contribute either directly or indirectly to operational GHG emissions: area emissions (pavement and architectural coating off-gassing), energy usage, mobile (vehicle) emissions, solid waste disposal, and water usage. As shown in Table 6, operational emissions are projected to be 8,256.84 MTCO₂e/year, with mobile source emissions representing about 69% of all operational emissions.

As shown, GHG emissions from energy usage are projected to be 1,919.66 MTCO₂e/year. However, the 2019 California Building Code requires all new residential projects, including single and multi-family buildings up to three stories high, to be designed to achieve Zero Net Energy (ZNE). This requirement will apply to the Project and, therefore, its energy usage can be considered to generate zero GHG emissions. Under ZNE conditions, in which GHG emissions from energy usage are zero, total operational emissions would be 6,337.18 MTCO₂e/year (Table 6).

Total Emissions

To determine if construction GHG emissions would result in a cumulatively considerable impact, they were amortized over a 30-year period and added to annual operational emissions for comparison with applicable GHG thresholds. As shown in Table 6, the combined total of (amortized) construction and operational emissions is projected to be 6,572.89 MTCO₂e/year.

Table 6
Projected GHG Emissions Summary
(metric tons/year)

Phase	CO ₂ e (MT/YR)
Construction (6 years cumulative)	7,071.31
Operational	
Area	32.62
Energy	1,919.66
Mobile	5,721.11
Waste	272.15
Water	311.30
Operational Subtotal	8,256.84
Operational Subtotal (Zero Net Energy)	6,337.18
Construction, 30-year amortized ¹	235.71
Total (30-year amortized construction (235.71) + operational ZNE) ¹	6,572.89
SCAQMD Threshold	3,000.00

¹ Buildout construction GHG emissions amortized over 30 years.
7,071.31/30 = 235.71
Emission Source: CalEEMod Version 2040.4.0

Consistency with SCAQMD GHG Thresholds

The proposed Project is a residential development and, therefore, can be evaluated under SCAQMD’s Tier 3 residential threshold of 3,000 MTCO₂e/year. As shown in Table 6, Project emissions are projected to exceed the Tier 3 threshold. However, the Project would comply with the Tier 2 criteria. According to the SCAQMD’s recommended Tier 2 threshold, a project would have a less than significant impact if it would be consistent with an approved plan for the reduction of GHGs. The City of Palm Desert adopted an Environmental Sustainability Plan (2010) that was based on a 2008 GHG Inventory and establishes energy-efficiency reduction policies and implementation measures for the City and development projects to meet AB 32 goals. In November 2017, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) released the 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan that discusses not only the 2030 targets, but how to substantially advance toward the state’s 2050 climate goal to reduce GHG emissions by 80 percent below 1990 levels. To be consistent with statewide targets for 2030, CARB recommends a 6.0 MTCO₂e per capita emission rate for compliance with AB 32.⁶ As explained in Section XIV (Population and Housing) of this Initial Study, the Project’s buildout population is projected at 1,986 persons. With total emissions of 6,572.89 MTCO₂e/year, a population of 1,986 would result in a per capita emission rate of 3.3 MTCO₂e and is, therefore, consistent with the state approved scoping plan for reducing GHGs. Impacts would be less than significant.

Consistency with Local GHG Reduction Measures

The City adopted an Environmental Sustainability Plan in 2010 that outlines a course of action to reduce municipal and communitywide GHG emissions that contribute to climate change. The Plan is based on

⁶ “California’s 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan,” California Air Resources Board, November 2017, page 101.

the City’s 2008 Greenhouse Gas Inventory and establishes a 10-year, 3-phased approach to reduce GHG emissions by 378,145 metric tons annually. It sets forth 139 reduction measures categorized in six sustainability resource areas: the built environment, energy management, materials management, regional air quality, transportation resources, and water management. The City determined that the Plan’s reduction measures will effectively reduce city-wide GHG emissions through municipal and community efforts. If the proposed Project is not consistent with its measures, or if the measures are not otherwise binding, they must be incorporated as mitigation measures applicable to the Project. The following table compares the Project with applicable GHG reduction measures of the Environmental Sustainability Plan.

**Table 7
Consistency with Applicable GHG Reduction Measures of the
Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan**

GHG Reduction Measure	Project Consistency
BE 1 Pass Green Building Ordinance to adopt the California Green Building Code, Title 24 edition.	Consistent: The City has adopted the 2019 edition of the California Building Code, Title 24, Part 2 of the California Code of Regulations. The Project is required to meet the standards of the Title 24 requirements.
BE 2 Maintain 2007 ordinance feature: Developers must sell “solar ready” homes (conduits, junction boxes, etc.).	Consistent: The Project would meet Title 24 California Building Code mandatory solar-ready requirements for new buildings.
BE 4 Develop, define, and promote a net zero energy building approach and timeline.	Consistent: The Project would comply with the 2019 edition of the California Building Code which requires all single- and multi-family residences up to 3 stories high to be designed to achieve zero net energy.
MM 21 Enact by 2011 an ordinance for residential, commercial, and construction debris that requires mandatory diversion of 100% inert, 75% other debris by 2012.	Consistent: The Project would comply with City requirements for waste disposal set forth in Chapter 8.19 of the Municipal Code (Requirements for Collection of Solid Waste, Recyclable Material, and Organic Waste for All Residents).
RAQ 6 Implement incentives for replacing turf with native low water-use plants, trees, ground cover and “hard-scapes.”	Consistent: The Project includes an approved plant list and requires planting and irrigation design to comply with CVWD and state Model Efficient Water Ordinance standards, and 75% of the plant palette to be low-water plants from the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOL), 2014.
T 1 Develop plan for increasing the connectivity of Class 1 and Class 2 bicycle lanes and golf cart lanes.	Consistent: The Project will have direct access to the existing Class 2 bicycle/golf cart lanes on Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, allowing residents and visitors to maximize use of these facilities.
WM 9 Continue supporting the offers for drip irrigation and smart controller systems through CVWD.	Consistent: The Project’s irrigation standards require drip irrigation to be provided for all shrub planting controlled by smart weather-based equipment with a rain sensor.

As shown, the Project would implement applicable GHG reduction measures of the City’s Environmental Sustainability Plan and, therefore, would be consistent with the Plan. It should be noted that many of the reduction measures are dependent on third party participants, including the City and utility providers. Nonetheless, the Project will be constructed in conformance with the 2019 California

Building Code, which sets forth stringent energy efficiency requirements and standards for new development that support the goals of the statewide GHG reduction plans. Therefore, the Project is considered consistent with local and state GHG reduction measures. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0; City of Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan, February 11, 2010; Palm Desert Greenhouse Gas Inventory, 2008; “California’s 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan,” California Air Resources Board, November 2017; Project materials.

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
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 or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?				✓
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.				✓

Setting

Hazardous waste generators in the City of Palm Desert generally include “small quantity generators,” such as medical clinics, gasoline service stations, vehicle storage yards, and waste haulers. The City is responsible for coordinating with the appropriate agencies in the identification of hazardous material sites and regulation of their timely cleanup.

The Project site is surrounded by residential development, Gerald Ford Drive, the County Sheriff Department, a golf course, and vacant land. It is undeveloped but has been subject to ground surface disturbances, such as off-road vehicle use, that are associated with surrounding development. No

chemical or hazardous waste disposal has been documented on the site. There are no known underground tanks or buried materials on the site.

Discussion of Impacts

- a, b) Less than Significant Impact.** The construction phase of the Project would involve the use of heavy equipment and vehicles, which will use limited quantities of oil and fuels and other potentially flammable substances. During construction, equipment could require refueling and minor maintenance on site that could lead to fuel and oil spills. The contractor will be required to identify a staging area for storing materials and will be subject to laws regarding the handling, storage, and use of hazardous materials during construction.

During long-term operation, the Project will involve the routine transport, use, and storage of cleaning materials for household use and various chemical products for swimming pools and landscaping. None of these products will be used in sufficient quantities to pose a foreseeable threat to humans or cause a chemical release into the environment. The use and handling of hazardous materials would occur in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, including California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (CalOSHA) requirements. Impacts would be less than significant.

- c) No Impact.** The Project site is not within ¼ mile of a school and, therefore, the Project will have no impact associated with emitting or handling hazardous materials in proximity of a school.
- d) No Impact.** According to the California Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor database and the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker database, the Project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. Therefore, the proposed Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. No impact will occur.
- e) No Impact.** The subject property is not within the boundaries of an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of a public or private airstrip. The site is 7± miles from the Palm Springs International Airport and 6± miles from the Bermuda Dunes Airport. Therefore, the Project will not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people in the Project area. No impact will occur.
- f) No Impact.** The City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2012 and specifies actions for the coordination of operations, management, and resources during emergencies. Key evacuation routes include Monterey Avenue, Portola Avenue, Cook Street, and Washington Street (General Plan p. 123).

The Project will not physically interfere with emergency response or evacuation plans. It will take access from Julie Drive and (future) Vitalia Way, which connect to Portola Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive and other roads designated as evacuation routes. The Project will be required to comply with police and fire department regulations to assure adequate emergency access and vehicle turn-around space. A construction access plan will be required by the City to assure the Project does not interfere with emergency access during construction. No impacts are expected.

- g) No Impact.** The Project site is not within or near a wildland fire hazard zone. According to the Palm Desert General Plan (Figure 8.5), the Project site and surrounding lands are classified as ‘Urban Unzoned’ for fire hazard severity. The site is sparsely vegetated with sandy soils and provides no substantial fire fuel source. The Project will not expose people or structures to a significant risk associated with wildfire hazards. No impact will occur.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; State Water Resources Control Board, GeoTracker, accessed March 2022; California Department of Toxic Substances Control “EnviroStor” Database, accessed March 2022; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786.

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?			✓	
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?			✓	
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
(i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;			✓	
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;			✓	
(iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or			✓	
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?			✓	
(d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?			✓	
(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?				✓

Setting

Domestic Water

The Project site is within the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) service area for domestic water. The District's primary water source is groundwater extracted through a system of wells from the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin. In addition to groundwater, CVWD relies on imported water that is recharged into the groundwater basin at three facilities: Whitewater River Groundwater Recharge Facility (GRF), Thomas A. Levy GRF, and Palm Desert GRF. CVWD's domestic water system includes 97 groundwater production wells and 65 enclosed reservoirs. In 2020, it pumped 99,843 acre-feet per year (AFY) of groundwater from the Indio and Mission Creek Subbasins. CVWD also owns and

operates the water distribution system, which is generally located under existing streets in the public right-of-way. There are existing 12-inch water mains beneath Gerald Ford Drive and Julie Drive in the Project vicinity.

CVWD is responsible, under the California Water Code, for analyzing its current and future water supply, and assuring that sufficient supply is available to serve land uses within the District through the preparation of an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). CVWD is required to periodically update the UWMP. In 2020, CVWD collaborated with other water purveyors in the Coachella Valley to prepare a regional UWMP.⁷

Wastewater Treatment

CVWD provides sewer service to the City of Palm Desert, including the Project area. CVWD maintains sewer trunk lines ranging from 6 to 36 inches in diameter and 28 lift stations and associated force mains. Effluent from Palm Desert is conveyed to CVWD's Cook Street treatment plant (Water Reclamation Plant No. 10), which has a total capacity of 18 million gallons per day (mgd), including 15 mgd of tertiary treatment capacity. CVWD also implements the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board pertaining to domestic water quality and wastewater discharge.

The Project site is in an urban area where sewer lines are installed under the main roads. The Project will connect to an existing 12-inch sewer main beneath Gerald Ford Drive.

Flood Control

Rainfall on the Coachella Valley floor averages 3 inches annually. Several watersheds drain the mountains toward the valley floor. There are five stormwater channels in Palm Desert: Whitewater River Stormwater Channel, Dead Indian Creek, Deep Canyon Channel, Palm Valley System, and East Magnesia Channel. The Project area is subject to City requirements relating to flood control. The City implements standard requirements for the retention of storm flows and participates in the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to protect surface waters from pollution.

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is in the Whitewater River watershed. All water providers in the watershed are required to comply with Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) standards for the protection of water quality, including the preparation of project-specific Water Quality Management Plans (WQMP) for surface waters. CVWD is required to meet water quality requirements in its production and delivery of domestic water.

The Project will connect to the existing CVWD sewer system that will minimize impacts to regional groundwater quality. Installation of water lines on the Project site will comply with CVWD and RWQCB standards for water conveyance. The Project will be required to prepare a WQMP per the Colorado River Basin Regional Board. To minimize the pollutant load associated with urban runoff, it will also be required to comply with NPDES regulations, including preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Adherence to conditions of approval and local, state, and federal standard requirements will assure that the Project will not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or conflict with any water quality control plan or sustainable ground water management plan. Project impacts will be less than significant.

⁷ 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** During construction, water demand will be limited and temporary and used for dust control purposes, including the routine spraying of ground surfaces and construction equipment. During operation, water will be used for household purposes, drought-tolerant landscape irrigation, and public spaces and facilities, such as swimming pools or splash pads.

State Water Code Section 10910(a) states that any city or county that determines that a “Project,” as defined in Water Code Section 10912, is subject to CEQA under Public Resources Code Section 21080, shall assess the project’s projected water demand compared to total projected water supplies. According to Section 10912, a “Project” includes residential developments of more than 500 dwelling units. Because the proposed Project meets the threshold of 500 dwelling units, a Project-specific Water Supply Assessment (WSA) was prepared (Appendix D). The WSA projected the Project’s water demand and compared it to CVWD’s total projected water supplies. The WSA determined that, at buildout, the Project will demand 128.88 acre-feet per year (AFY) for indoor uses and 117.70 AFY for outdoor uses, for a total demand of 246.58 AFY.⁸

According to the 2020 Coachella Valley Regional UWMP⁹, the projected 2025 regional water supply is 137,061 AFY, and the projected 2045 regional water supply is 164,966 AFY (UWMP Table 4-22). Approximately 90% of water supplies are expected to be groundwater and 10% are expected to be recycled water. Projections are based on existing water sources and expected future water supply projects or programs. The proposed Project’s water demand (246.58 AFY) is 0.18% of projected 2025 regional water supplies and 0.15% of projected 2045 regional water supplies. Therefore, the Project will not substantially decrease local groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge such that it would impede sustainable management of the basin. The Project includes irrigation requirements, including the use of water-efficient fixtures and drought-tolerant landscape materials, which will help reduce water demand over the long term. Impacts will be less than significant.

- c) i-iii) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is generally flat with elevated sand dunes in the west-central portion of the site. The site generally slopes to the east and northeast. Elevations are approximately 315 feet above sea level in the west, 295 feet in the southwest corner, and 275 feet in the northeast corner. The ground surface consists of mostly Myoma fine sand 5 to 15 percent slopes (MaD), with a limited area of Myoma fine sand 0 to 5 percent slopes (MaB) in the west central portion of the site. According to the Project’s preliminary hydrology report, these soil types are categorized as hydrologic soil group A in the National Cooperative Soil Survey and represent well drained to excessively drained sands or gravelly sands with high infiltration rates (low runoff potential) and high rates of water transmission. The site contains no rivers or streams.

The Project will remove existing ground surface materials and replace them with impermeable structures and surfaces, including buildings, roads, parking lots, and sidewalks, that will increase runoff compared to existing conditions. The Conceptual Grading and Drainage Plan shows that

⁸ The Project-specific WSA analyzes an earlier version of the Project that included seven planning areas instead of the currently proposed five. However, the unit count and landscaping assumptions remain the same as originally proposed, and Project water demand estimates remain the same.

⁹ 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021.

Planning Area 1 (Vitalia) will be graded to direct drainage as surface flow from southwest to northeast. Elevation contours will range from approximately 290 feet above mean sea level in the southwest corner to 280 feet in the northeast corner, consistent with existing elevations and drainage patterns. Runoff will be managed by a combination of retention basins and an underground catch basin with sufficient capacity to accommodate the 100-year storm event.

Planning Areas 2 through 5 will be graded to direct drainage as surface flow from west to east and south to north. Contour elevations will range from 300 to 315 feet above mean sea level in the southwest and west, respectively, to 295 feet in the east and northeast, consistent with existing elevations and drainage patterns. Onsite drainage will be conveyed to multiple retention basins and underground retention systems dispersed throughout the site. Offsite tributary flows from the east (Julie Drive) will be conveyed to a retention basin at the north end of Planning Area 5. The preliminary hydrology report demonstrates that proposed improvements are sufficient to accommodate the 100-year controlling storm event, thereby meeting the City's hydrologic requirements.

The Project will also be required to comply with conditions of approval pertaining to discharge, standard stormwater management requirements, and project-specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) and a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) that are subject to approval by the City Engineer and required by the City's NPDES implementation agreement. Implementation of the WQMP and BMPs will reduce impacts to surface waters by reducing siltation and reducing or eliminating pollutants in storm flows, including pathogens (bacteria/virus) generally associated with human activities but also present in the environment. With the implementation of these measures, impacts associated with surface water pollution will be less than significant.

Adherence to City requirements, including WQMP BMPs, will ensure the Project will not result in erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Implementation of these and other applicable requirements will assure that the Project will not create or contribute water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

- iv) **Less than Significant Impact.** The subject property is designated Zone X, which represents areas determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The site is not located in a 100-year or 500-year FEMA Flood Zone. Implementation of the proposed onsite drainage retention facilities will further ensure that the Project will have a less than significant impact on impeding or redirecting flood flows.

- d) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is inland and not subject to tsunami. It is not in the vicinity of a water body, levee, or dam. According to the General Plan, the City of Palm Desert is within the potential inundation area of the Wide Canyon Flood Control Dam in Fun Valley. However, the dam is managed by the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District under state laws to ensure dam safety, and General Plan Policy 3.5 calls for disseminating information about potential dam inundation areas. No specific dam inundation risk has been identified for the subject property. The Project site is not within a 100-year or 500-year floodplain. Impacts associated with Project inundation would be less than significant.

- e) **No Impact.** The Project will be required to comply with all applicable water quality standards and implement a WQMP approved by the City and the RWQCB for both construction activities and long-term operation. The Project is consistent with the General Plan land use designation assigned to the Project site, and its anticipated water demand is addressed in the 2020 Coachella Valley regional UWMP. Therefore, it will not conflict with a sustainable groundwater management plan. Adherence to the City's standard requirements related to water quality will ensure there will be no impacts to a water quality control plan.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: Preliminary Hydrology Report, Tentative Tract Map 38434, Refuge, MSA Consulting, Inc., May 9, 2022; 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021; FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) #06065C1595G, effective August 28, 2008; City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786.

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/ Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Physically divide an established community?				✓
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?			✓	

Setting

The Project site is designated as Town Center Neighborhood (7.0 to 40 du/ac) on the General Plan land use map. This designation allows a broad range of residential land uses, including single- and multi-family units. The Project site is zoned as Planned Residential (P.R.-20), in which single-family units are permitted by right and multi-family units are allowed with a conditional use permit.

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **No Impact.** The Project site is currently vacant. The surrounding area is largely developed with single-family residential development to the east, south, and north beyond Gerald Ford Drive. The Marriott Shadow Ridge Golf Club and Riverside County Sheriff Department are located to the west. Each of these facilities and residential communities operates independently and will not be divided by the Project. The Project will not physically divide an established community.
- b) **Less Than Significant Impact.**

General Plan

The Project site is designated as Town Center Neighborhood in the General Plan. The intent and purpose of the Town Center Neighborhood is to provide moderate to higher intensity neighborhood development that features a variety of housing choices, walkable streets, and mixed uses. The designation allows densities ranging from 7.0 to 40 dwelling units per acre (du/ac). The Project accommodates a wide range of housing products, including affordable apartments in Planning Area 1 (Vitalia). Planning Areas 2 and 3 can accommodate numerous housing types by right and with a conditional use permit (CUP). Planning Area 2 allows medium to high density housing options, including small-lot detached cluster units, bungalow-style detached units, attached townhomes, and garden-style attached apartments. Planning Area 3 offers various lot sizes and accommodates single-family and guest dwellings by right. In total, the Project allows 749 to 969 dwelling units on 106.4 acres, for a density range of 7.0 to 9.1 du/ac. Therefore, the Project is consistent with the Town Center Neighborhood land use designation.

Among the Project’s goals are ensuring high-quality development within the Project area and providing a flexible variety of housing products that can meet future market demand. It is also consistent with the following General Plan Land Use Element goals and policies:

Goal 1. Quality Spaces. A beautiful city with a balance of high quality open spaces and high quality urban areas.

1.6 Community Amenities. Balance the impacts of new development, density, and urbanization through the provision of a high-level of neighborhood and community amenities and design features.

Goal 2. Human-Scaled Design. A city designed for people, fostering interaction, activity, and safety.

2.3 Landscaping. Require development projects to incorporate high quality landscaping in order to extend and enhance the green space network of the city.

Goal 3. Neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that provide a variety of housing types, densities, designs and mix of uses and services that support healthy and active lifestyles.

3.4 Balanced neighborhoods. Within the allowed densities and housing types, promote a range of housing and price levels within each neighborhood in order to accommodate diverse ages and incomes. For development projects larger than five acres, require that a diversity of housing types be provided and that these housing types be mixed rather than segregated by unit type.

3.15 Access to parks and open spaces. Require the design of new neighborhoods and, where feasible, retrofit existing neighborhoods, so that 60 percent of dwelling units are within a ¼ mile walking distance of a usable open space such as a tot-lot, neighborhood park, community park or plaza/green.

The Project is consistent with the Palm Desert General Plan, and no conflict would occur.

Zoning Code

The zoning map designates the Project site as P.R.-20 (Planned Residential up to 20 du/ac), which allows single-family units by right and multi-family units with a conditional use permit (CUP). The Project density range (7.0 to 9.1 du/ac) is consistent with the zoning designation. However, the proposed Project is a Specific Plan, a regulatory document that establishes site-specific land uses, development standards, design guidelines, and infrastructure plans for the Project site. Upon approval, the Specific Plan would govern future development of the Project site and supersede the development standards of the Zoning Code. Project approval will include a Change of Zone that changes the zoning designation from P.R.-20 to Refuge Specific Plan. Given that the density allowed in the Specific Plan is consistent with the General Plan designation for the property, and the underlying zoning currently applied to the property, the Project will be consistent with the Zoning Code.

Summary of Impacts

Even with a Change of Zone, the Project's land use plan, density range, and vision will remain consistent with the General Plan land use designation, density, vision, and Land Use Element goals and policies. Impacts will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; Palm Desert Municipal Code.

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	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?				✓

Setting

Pursuant to the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA), the state Mining and Geology Board designates mineral resource sectors within geographic areas where significant mineral resources of statewide importance and regional significance are located. The City of Palm Desert is in the Palm Springs Production-Consumption Region that covers approximately 631 square miles of the Coachella Valley from near Cabazon to Thermal. The City is in Mineral Resource Zone 3 (MRZ-3), defined as “areas containing known or inferred mineral occurrences of undetermined mineral resource significance.”

Discussion of Impacts

a, b) No Impact. The Project site is in Mineral Resource Zone 3 (MRZ-3). According to the General Plan EIR, no known mineral sources exist in the City, and the significance of any mineral resource in MRZ-3 is considered speculative because no mining has historically occurred in the area. The Project site is not designated, used, or planned for mineral resource extraction or development. Therefore, the Project would have no impact on mineral resources.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Update of Mineral Land Classification Map for Portland Cement Concrete-Grade Aggregate in the Palm Springs Production-Consumption Region, Riverside County, California (Special Report 198), California Geological Survey, 2007.

XIII. NOISE Would the project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Generation of substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?			✓	
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?			✓	
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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?				✓

Setting

The predominant source of noise in Palm Desert is motor vehicle traffic. Other noise generators include light industrial operations, construction activities, commercial activities, and landscaping equipment. Noise-sensitive receptors include housing, schools, libraries, and senior care facilities. The City has established goals, policies, and programs to limit and reduce the effects of noise intrusion on sensitive land uses and to set acceptable noise level standards for various types of land uses.

City Noise Standards

General Plan Table 7.1 (Noise Compatibility Matrix) defines the level of acceptable noise for different land uses in the City. Normally acceptable noise levels range from 50 to 65 dBA CNEL for multi-family development, 50 to 60 dBA CNEL for single-family residential development, and 50 to 70 dBA CNEL for office buildings, business commercial, and professional uses. These allowable noise levels do not include construction-related noise levels, as construction activities generate temporary noise. Rather, construction noise is regulated by Municipal Code Section 9.24.070. General Plan standards are further supplemented by Municipal Code Section 9.24.030, Sound Level Limits, which regulate noise levels in different land use zones.

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The subject property is currently undeveloped and generates no noise. The main noise source in the area is vehicle traffic on Gerald Ford Drive. The surrounding area consists of residential development, the Marriott Shadow Ridge Golf Course, and the Riverside County Sheriff Station. The nearest sensitive receptors are residents in single-family homes immediately adjacent to the easterly and southerly Project boundaries.

Construction Noise

Project construction will temporarily increase ambient noise levels from the operation of heavy equipment and machinery. Grading, construction, paving, and other development activities will involve the operation of graders, bulldozers, dump trucks, and similar equipment. Heavy equipment can generate noise levels ranging from 70 to 90 dBA at a distance of 50 feet from the source. However, such equipment will be mobile and will not create a source of constant noise at any one location on the site. Construction noise will be reduced, to some extent, by existing 8-foot concrete walls along the shared property boundary between the Project site and surrounding residential, golf course, and sheriff station development. Project buildout is expected to be phased over a 6-year period such that construction noise will impact different areas of the Project site at different times.

Noise from construction activities will be temporary and will cease once the Project is operational. Construction noise is exempt from the noise standards of Section 9.24.030 of the Municipal Code. Instead, it is subject to Municipal Code Section 9.24.070, which limits construction activities to the least sensitive hours of the day, Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays. Adherence to these restrictions will ensure that construction-related impacts are compatible with the Municipal Code and less than significant.

Operational Noise

During long-term operation, the Project will permanently increase ambient noise levels in the Project area. Noise will be generated by vehicles accessing the site, residential mechanical equipment (such as HVAC units), and landscaping equipment. However, the Project will be required to comply with the noise level limits of Municipal Code Section 9.24.030. Residential noise levels are limited to 45 dBA between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., and 55 dBA from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The Project is not expected to permanently increase ambient noise levels such that they exceed the City's standard of 60 dBA CNEL for single-family residential uses. Existing 8-foot concrete walls extend along the perimeters of adjacent development, including residential development to the east and south, golf course to the west, and sheriff station to the northwest. The walls will provide a noise buffer between the Project and adjacent development. Planning Area 5 will provide a 50-foot-wide landscaped open space buffer between Project dwelling units and existing homes to the east and south, further minimizing permanent ambient noise impacts. The Project will result in residential land uses that are the same as adjacent residential development and compatible with golf course and institutional (sheriff station) uses, and permanent increases in ambient noise levels will be less than significant, as described below.

According to the General Plan EIR (Figure 4.12-1), the Project area currently experiences noise levels that decrease with distance from Gerald Ford Drive. Noise levels are 65 dBA CNEL immediately adjacent to Gerald Ford Drive, 60 dBA CNEL in the northerly portion of the site, and less than 60 dBA CNEL in the central and southerly portions of the site.

The General Plan EIR projected future noise levels at General Plan buildout using land use designations assigned by the General Plan land use map, including Town Center Neighborhood (7.0 to 40 du/ac) on the Project site. The Project is consistent with the Town Center Neighborhood designation and density and, therefore, its future noise impacts are reflected in General Plan projections. The EIR (Figure 4.12-2) determined that, at General Plan buildout, noise levels in the northerly portion of the Project site would remain at 65 dBA CNEL immediately adjacent to Gerald Ford Drive and 60 dBA CNEL in the northerly portion of the site

where multi-family residences are proposed. The 60 dBA CNEL contour would extend farther south into the central portion of the site where single-family residences are proposed, and noise levels would remain less than 60 dBA CNEL in the southerly portion of the site where single-family residences are proposed. These noise projections include future noise generated by the Project. They are within the normally acceptable noise range for multi-family residences (maximum of 65 dBA CNEL) and single-family residences (maximum of 60 dBA CNEL) established in General Plan Table 7.1, Noise Compatibility Matrix. Therefore, Project operational noise will increase noise levels in the area, but they will not exceed General Plan standards. Impacts will be less than significant.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Groundborne vibration and/or groundborne noise will be produced by heavy equipment during the construction phase of the Project. Construction activities, such as earth-moving and trenching, could generate temporary and short-term groundborne vibration and/or noise. The highest degree of groundborne vibration is likely to be generated during paving due to the operation of a vibratory roller. Based on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) data, vibration velocities from vibratory rollers are estimated to be approximately 0.1980 inch-per-second PPV at 26 feet from the source of activity. As such, structures greater than 26 feet from vibratory roller operations would not experience groundborne vibration above the Caltrans significance thresholds (i.e. 0.3 inch-per-second PPV for structures and 0.2 inch-per-second PPV for human annoyance). Due to proximity to the Project site, existing residents to the immediate east and south may detect groundborne vibration and/or noise, but impacts would be temporary and would end once construction is complete. No such impacts will occur during long-term Project operation. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.
- c) **No Impact.** The subject property is not within two miles of any airport, private or public. It is approximately 7 miles from the Palm Springs International Airport and 6 miles from the Bermuda Dunes Airport. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; Palm Desert Municipal Code; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786.

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Induce substantial unplanned 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 people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				✓

Setting

As of January 2022, the population of the City of Palm Desert is 50,889. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) projects it will grow to 64,100 by 2045. The housing stock includes 36,058 single-family, multi-family, and mobile home units, the majority of which (39.8%) are single-family detached homes.

Discussion of Impacts

a) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project proposes new dwelling units and will directly induce population growth. Planning Area 1 (Vitalia) is approved for 269 affordable multi-family units, Planning Area 2 can accommodate up to 302 dwelling units, and Planning Area 3 can accommodate up to 398 dwelling units. At maximum buildout, the Project could result in up to 969 single- and multi-family units. Based on an average household size of 2.05 persons in Palm Desert¹⁰, the Project would have a maximum buildout population of approximately 1,986. This represents 3.9% of the current City population (51,163) and 3.1% of the 2045 City population (64,100) projected by SCAG, which are limited percentages and not considered substantial.

The Project will require the construction of a new road, Vitalia Way/Street A, and the connection to Julie Drive. However, they will not extend beyond the Project boundaries and will not indirectly induce growth elsewhere. Public utilities are already available in the immediate area and other than parcel-level connections, no utility extensions would be required to serve the Project. Impacts to population and housing will be less than significant.

The City anticipates, and has planned for, future population growth on the Project site by designating it as Town Center Neighborhood in the General Plan. The Project is consistent with this designation and, therefore, impacts associated with population growth will be less than significant.

¹⁰ E-5 City/County Population and Housing Estimates, California Department of Finance, January 1, 2022.

b) No Impact. The subject property is vacant, and the Project would not displace any existing people or housing or necessitate replacement housing elsewhere. No impact will occur.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: Project materials; E-5 City/County Population and Housing Estimates, California Department of Finance, January 1, 2022; 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), Demographics and Growth Forecast Technical Report, Southern California Association of Governments, adopted September 3, 2020.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project result in:

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:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Fire protection?			✓	
Police protection?			✓	
Schools?			✓	
Parks?			✓	
Other public facilities?			✓	

Setting

Fire Protection

The City of Palm Desert contracts with the State of California (CalFire) and Riverside County Fire Department for fire protection services. Riverside County Fire Station 71 at 73995 Country Club Drive, approximately 2 miles southeast of the Project site, serves north Palm Desert. Palm Desert has a total Fire Department staff of 44 positions at the three stations within the City limits. Backup support is available from stations in Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage.

Police Protection

The City contracts with the Riverside County Sheriff Department for police protection services. The nearest police station is the Palm Desert Police Station on Gerald Ford Drive immediately adjacent to and northwest of the Project site. Staffing consists of 80 sworn deputy officers, 36 of which are dedicated to the patrol division, with the remaining dedicated to special assignments such as the Traffic Division, Special Enforcement Team, Motorcycle Enforcement Unit, K-9 Officer, Business District Team, School Resource Officers, Coachella Valley Violent Crime Gang Task Force, and Narcotics Enforcement. The City currently provides about 1.56 sworn officers for every 1,000 residents. In 2013, the response time to the highest priority calls was within 5.58 minutes.

Schools

Palm Desert is within the jurisdictions of two school districts: Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) and Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD). The Project site is within the boundary of the PSUSD. The nearest elementary school is James Earl Carter Elementary School on Hovley Lane East, approximately 2 miles southeast of the Project site.

Parks

The City currently operates and maintains 200 acres of park land in 12 parks. The nearest public parks to the Project site are University Dog Park (± 0.75 miles to the east) and University Park East (± 1 mile to the east).

Other Public Facilities

Other public facilities in Palm Desert include the Palm Desert Library, Joslyn Center (senior services), City Hall, and other government facilities.

Discussion of Impacts

Fire Protection:

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project will increase the demand for fire services for the protection of new permanent structures and population. However, Project development will be in accordance with all state and local (Municipal Code and RCFD) fire standards to assure adequate fire safety and emergency access. The Project will be required to pay City development impact fees to contribute its fair share of costs for future fire facilities, personnel, and apparatus. Therefore, Project impacts will be less than significant.

Police Protection:

Less Than Significant Impact. The addition of up to 969 single-family units and 1,986 additional residents will increase the need for police services. However, the Project will be required to comply with all Police Department regulations and procedures, and Project plans will be reviewed by the Police Department to assure adequate emergency access is provided. The Project is not expected to require the construction of new or expanded police services or facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

Schools:

Less Than Significant Impact. The Project site is within the Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD) boundary and served by Rancho Mirage Elementary School, Nellie Coffman Middle School, and Rancho Mirage High School.

Based on PSUSD student generation factors, shown below, the Project has the potential to generate approximately 171 students at the elementary to high school levels. The Project will be required to pay the standard PSUSD developer fees in place at the time development occurs, which are currently \$4.08 per square foot of residential development.¹¹ Payment of developer fees would reduce potential Project impacts to school resources to less than significant levels.

¹¹ Palm Springs Unified School District website, www.psusd.us, accessed May 5, 2022.

**Table 8
Estimated Student Generation**

School Type	Generation Rate (per residential unit)	Estimated Project Student Generation
Elementary School	0.0839	81
Middle School	0.0420	41
High School	0.0510	49
Total:	0.1769	171

Sources: Residential and Commercial/Industrial Development School Fee Justification Study, Palm Springs Unified School District, April 3, 2020, Table 3 Student Generation Factors; Project materials.

Parks/ Other Public Facilities:

Less Than Significant Impact. At its maximum, the Project could have a population of approximately 1,986 residents which will increase the use of local and regional parks and other public facilities. However, Planning Areas 1 (Vitalia), 2 (Residential), and 4 (Recreation Amenity) can accommodate a variety of onsite recreational amenities for Project residents, the use of which can be expected to decrease the use of existing parks and recreational facilities. Stormwater retention basins can also serve as passive open space.

The Project will increase the use of other public facilities, such as the library and government buildings. However, given that the Project’s maximum buildout population would constitute only about 3% of the total City population (see Section XIV, Population and Housing), the added impact would be marginal and the Project will not increase use of public facilities such that new or expanded facilities would be required. Impacts will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Residential and Commercial/Industrial Development School Fee Justification Study - Palm Springs Unified School District, April 3, 2020; Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786.

XVI. RECREATION Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	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?			✓	

Setting

The City maintains and operates over 200 acres of park land in 12 public parks, two community centers, an aquatic center, and over 25 miles of multi-purpose trails. The City also partners with the Desert Recreation District to provide recreational programs and activities. Other recreational facilities in Palm Desert include a municipally owned golf course and the Family YMCA of the Desert in Civic Center Park. The City also contains, or is in proximity to, numerous public and private golf courses, large open space reserves, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, and other local and regional recreational resources.

Discussion of Impacts

a, b) Less Than Significant Impact. Maximum buildout of the Project could include a population of approximately 1,986, which represents about 3.9% of the current City population and 3.1% of the projected 2045 City population (see Section XIV, Population and Housing). The additional population can be expected to increase the use of existing parks and recreational facilities. However, the increase would not be such that substantial physical deterioration would occur or be accelerated because the Project provides opportunities for its own onsite recreational facilities. Planning Area 1 (Vitalia), as approved, will include a community pool, play areas, and a dog park. Planning Area 2 (Residential) provides opportunities for community recreational amenities, and Planning Area 4 (Recreation Amenity) provides 3.9 acres for the same. Stormwater retention basins can also serve as passive open space. Use of these recreational facilities will reduce the use of existing local and regional facilities. Future facilities will be subject to City review and approval to assure they do not result in adverse environmental effects. Project impacts will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert website, accessed March 2022; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.

XVII. TRANSPORTATION				
Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?		✓		
b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?			✓	
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				✓
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?				✓

Setting

Existing Conditions

The Project site is currently undeveloped and does not generate any traffic. Key roads in the Project area include Gerald Ford Drive, Portola Avenue, Julie Drive, and Rembrandt Parkway. Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue are fully built out as 4-lane divided arterials and improved with Class 2 (striped on-street) bicycle/golf cart lanes. Sidewalks have been built on both sides of Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, except where adjacent to undeveloped parcels. Rembrandt Parkway is fully improved as a 2-lane road accessing The Gallery neighborhood north of the Project site. Julie Drive is a 2-lane street with a sidewalk on the south side but is not improved adjacent to undeveloped parcels on the north.

SunLine Transit Agency provides bus transit services to the Coachella Valley, including Palm Desert. Currently, there are no transit routes or facilities in the immediate Project vicinity. The nearest bus stop is on Dinah Shore Drive at Shoppers Lane (Route 4), approximately 1¼ miles northwest of the Project site. Another stop at Cook Street and Berger Drive (Route 5) is approximately 1½ miles to the southeast and can be accessed by bike from the Project site via existing bike lanes.

General Plan Designations

The Palm Desert General Plan Mobility Element establishes a roadway classification system (Figure 4.1) based on vehicle capacity, number of lanes, and other improvements such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and parkways. Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue are classified as Balanced Arterials consisting of a 4-lane divided road with bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Julie Drive and Rembrandt Parkway are classified as local streets. At General Plan buildout (2040), the nearby intersections of Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, and Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue, are projected to operate at Level of Service (LOS) C or better. The General Plan (Figure 4.2) designates Gerald Ford Drive as a Class 2 (on-street striped lane) bicycle and golf cart facility. Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue are designated as truck routes (Figure 4.3).

Level of Service Threshold

The General Plan does not set forth a LOS threshold for acceptable roadway and intersection operations. Policy 1.3 of the Mobility Element states that the City will “determine appropriate service levels for all modes of transportation and develop guidelines to evaluate impacts to these modes for all related public and private projects.” The City has not yet developed new guidelines for an acceptable LOS. The Project traffic impact analysis (Appendix E) uses LOS D as the threshold for acceptable traffic conditions on the circulation network.

VMT Analysis

Effective July 1, 2020, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines require lead agencies to adopt Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as a replacement for automobile delay-based LOS as the measure for identifying transportation impacts for land use projects. Because the City of Palm Desert does not have its own VMT guidelines, Urban Crossroads prepared a Project VMT analysis (Appendix F based on the adopted Riverside County “Transportation Analysis Guidelines for Level of Service & Vehicle Miles Traveled.” Based on consultation with the City’s Traffic Engineer and approval of a scoping agreement, Urban Crossroads also prepared a focused traffic impact analysis for the proposed Project (Appendix E).

Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less Than Significant with Mitigation.** At buildout, the Project could facilitate the development of up to 969 single- and multi-family dwelling units. Primary access is proposed via Vitalia Way/Street A and its future intersection at Gerald Ford Drive. Secondary access is planned via a westerly extension of Julie Drive, and the existing signalized intersection of Julie Drive and Portola Avenue.

As shown in the following table, the Project is forecast to generate approximately 7,267 daily vehicle trips at buildout, including 476 trips during the AM peak hour and 607 trips during the PM peak hour. The trip reducing potential of modal split was not incorporated into the traffic modeling. There is potential for multi-modal transportation to occur in the Project area given the existing bike/golf cart routes and pedestrian facilities on Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, the use of which could replace some vehicle trips; therefore, projected trip generation is conservative.

**Table 9
Project Trip Generation Summary**

Trip Generation Rates ¹									
Land Use	ITE Code	Unit ²	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour			Daily
			In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
Single Family Detached	210	DU	0.18	0.52	0.70	0.59	0.34	0.93	9.43
Rental Homes	220	DU	0.10	0.30	0.40	0.32	0.19	0.51	6.74
Paired Housing	215	DU	0.15	0.33	0.48	0.32	0.25	0.57	7.20
Apartments	220	DU	0.10	0.30	0.40	0.32	0.19	0.51	6.74
Project Trips Generated									
Land Use	Quantity	Unit ²	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour			Daily
			In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
Single Family Detached	248	DU	45	129	174	146	84	230	2,339
Rental Homes	302	DU	30	91	121	97	57	154	2,035
Paired Housing	150	DU	23	50	73	48	38	86	1,080
Apartments	269	DU	27	81	108	86	51	137	1,813
Total:			125	351	476	377	230	607	7,267

¹ Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual, 11th edition, 2021.

² DU = Dwelling Unit

Based on consultation with City staff, the traffic impact analysis studied the following eleven (11) intersections to evaluate Project impacts on the circulation network:

1. Monterey Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive
2. Gateway Drive/Gerald Ford Drive
3. Rembrandt Parkway – Street “A”/Gerald Ford Drive
4. Portola Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive
5. Pacific Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive
6. Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive
7. Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive
8. Portola Avenue/College Drive – Julie Drive
9. Portola Avenue/Frank Sinatra Drive
10. Portola Avenue/County Club Drive
11. Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive

The following scenarios were analyzed:

- Existing (2022) Conditions
- Existing plus Ambient Growth plus Project (EAP) (2027)
- Existing plus Ambient Growth plus Project Plus Cumulative (EAPC) (2027)

Existing Conditions

The analysis of Existing Conditions establishes the baseline for the Project’s traffic analysis, and consideration of impacts. Under Existing Conditions, with the exception of the intersections of Portola/Gerald Ford and Portola/Country Club, which operate at LOS D, all other studied intersections operate at LOS C or better, as shown in Table 10. Therefore, all intersections are operating at acceptable General Plan standards. The analysis also found that under existing conditions, no new traffic signals are warranted at studied intersections.

Table 10
Existing Intersection Delay and Levels of Service

Study Intersection	Traffic Control ¹	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay ²	LOS ³	Average Delay ²	LOS ³
Monterey Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	29.6	C	26.3	C
Gateway Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	11.5	B	12.0	B
Rembrandt Parkway – Street “A”/ Gerald Ford Drive	CSS	18.2	C	15.7	C
Portola Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	36.5	D	36.0	D
Pacific Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	12.8	B	10.7	B
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	18.1	B	20.1	C
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	27.7	C	31.3	C
Portola Ave/College Drive–Julie Drive	TS	4.7	A	4.7	A
Portola Avenue/Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	24.7	C	22.4	C
Portola Avenue/County Club Drive	TS	40.7	D	38.2	D
Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive	TS	33.2	C	39.1	D

¹ TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop.

² Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown. Delay and level of service is calculated using Synchro 10.1 analysis software.

BOLD = Unacceptable LOS.

³ LOS = Level of Service

EAP Conditions

EAP traffic conditions represent Existing Conditions, plus the addition of ambient traffic growth (in this case an ambient growth factor of 10.4% was added to Existing Conditions volumes), plus the addition of the Project. Because of the size and phasing of the Project, the EAP projections assume that these conditions occur in 2027. As shown in Table 11, all studied intersections will operate at LOS D or better in 2027, representing acceptable conditions under the City’s General Plan, with the exception of the intersection of Rembrandt Parkway/Street A and Gerald Ford, which will operate at LOS E during the morning peak hour, and LOS F during the evening peak hour, without improvements. However, with the addition of a traffic signal, a northbound left/through shared lane, an eastbound right turn lane with 150 feet of storage and a separate right turn lane with 125 feet of storage on Street A/Rembrandt Parkway, and a westbound left turn lane with 150 feet of storage on Gerald Ford Drive, all intersections would operate at an acceptable LOS.

**Table 11
EAP Intersection Delay and Levels of Service**

Study Intersection	Traffic Control ¹	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay ²	LOS ³	Average Delay ²	LOS ³
Monterey Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	31.8	C	28.9	C
Gateway Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	11.8	B	12.1	B
Rembrandt Parkway – Street “A”/ Gerald Ford Drive w/ improvements	CSS TS	37.8 30.7	E C	>50 21.8	F C
Portola Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	36.6	D	36.4	D
Pacific Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	13.4	B	11.0	B
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	19.1	B	21.1	C
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	30.6	C	33.3	C
Portola Ave/College Drive–Julie Drive	TS	8.5	A	9.4	A
Portola Avenue/Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	29.5	C	24.0	C
Portola Avenue/County Club Drive	TS	42.2	D	39.9	D
Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive	TS	34.3	C	41.0	D

¹ TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop. Underlined = Improvement.

² Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown. Delay and level of service is calculated using Synchro 10.1 analysis software.

BOLD = Unacceptable LOS.

³ LOS = Level of Service

EAPC Conditions

Under EAPC (2027) conditions, with the inclusion of the proposed Project, ambient growth and known cumulative projects, the analysis found that with the construction of the same improvements at Rembrandt/Street A and Gerald Ford Drive, all study area intersections would operate at an acceptable level of service, as shown in Table 12. The traffic volumes generated by not only ambient growth, but also a number of additional projects in the area (please see Exhibit 4-3 of Appendix E), will increase traffic in the area, but will not result in significant impacts beyond those already identified under EAP conditions. Therefore, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA.1, impacts associated with build out of the proposed Project will be less than significant.

**Table 12
EAPC Intersection Delay and Levels of Service**

Study Intersection	Traffic Control ¹	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay ²	LOS ³	Average Delay ²	LOS ³
Monterey Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	32.2	C	38.0	D
Gateway Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	13.2	B	14.1	B
Rembrandt Parkway – Street “A”/ Gerald Ford Drive w/ improvements	CSS TS	>50 31.3	F C	>50 24.7	F C
Portola Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	36.7	D	37.5	D
Pacific Avenue/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	15.8	B	35.8	D
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	22.1	C	22.8	C
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	35.2	D	36.7	D
Portola Ave/College Drive–Julie Drive	TS	9.5	A	10.5	B
Portola Avenue/Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	30.3	C	26.7	C
Portola Avenue/County Club Drive	TS	47.3	D	48.3	D
Monterey Avenue/Dinah Shore Drive	TS	36.1	D	53.0	D

¹ TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop. **Bold:** improvement required.

² Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown. Delay and level of service is calculated using Synchro 10.1 analysis software.

BOLD = Unacceptable LOS.

³ LOS = Level of Service

The traffic analysis also made several recommendations regarding the build out cross sections of Street A and Julie Drive, including:

- Street A should be improved as a 2-lane collector, with a minimum curb to curb width of 44 feet between Gerald Ford Drive and Julie Drive.
- Julie Drive should be improved as a collector, to the east, and should connect to the Project site with a curb to curb width of 52 feet, to allow two travel lanes, a center median and a shared bike/golf cart lane.

Alternative Transportation

The Project will improve Gerald Ford Drive along the Project frontage, including a meandering sidewalk that will provide seamless connection to existing sidewalks. The Project includes an internal network of sidewalks that connect residents to Gerald Ford Drive, Julie Drive, onsite recreational amenities, paseos, and a pedestrian pathway in Planning Area 5 (Open Space/Buffer). Project residents and visitors will be able to use existing bike/golf cart lanes on both sides of Gerald Ford Drive, Portola Road, and Gateway Drive in the Project area. The Project would not conflict with plans or policies addressing multimodal facilities.

The Project will have no impact on transit facilities because there are none in the Project area. SunLine periodically reviews and updates its services and facilities based on ridership, budget, and community demand. General Plan Mobility Element Goal 5 and Policies 5.1 through 5.6 promote and encourage public and private transit service and connections to bicycle and pedestrian networks. The Project would have no impact on plans or policies addressing transit facilities.

- b) **No Impact.** SB 743 requires amendments to the CEQA Guidelines (pre-2019) to provide an alternative to LOS for evaluating transportation impacts. CEQA Guidelines were amended to require all lead agencies to adopt vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a replacement for automobile delay-based level of service (LOS) for identifying transportation impacts. This statewide mandate went into effect July 1, 2020.

The Riverside County's VMT Guidelines describe specific screening criteria based on the location/project type that can be used to identify when a proposed land use project is anticipated to result in a less than significant impact without conducting a more detailed project level VMT analysis. A land use project need only meet one of the screening thresholds to result in a less than significant impact:

- Small Projects
- Projects Near High Quality Transit
- Projects within Low VMT Area

The Project does not qualify as either a Small Project or a Project Near High Quality Transit. However, as mapped by the County, the Project is located in an area with low VMT. According to the VMT analysis prepared for the proposed Project, the Project is located in TAZ 4672, a Traffic Analysis Zone identified as a low VMT generating area in the Riverside Transportation Analysis Model (RIVTAM) because it experiences less than the County average VMT per capita. The Project VMT analysis also verified that the model's underlying land use assumptions contained in the Project TAZ are consistent with the proposed Project's land use. Therefore, the Project, per the County VMT guidelines, can be determined to have less than significant impacts on circulation. The Project will not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

- c) **No Impact.** The Project is proposed to have access from (future) Vitalia Way, Gerald Ford Drive, and Julie Drive (extended). As discussed in subsection a) above, roadway improvements will be constructed in compliance with City standards and will not cause significant traffic delays or increased traffic hazards. No sharp curves, dangerous intersections, or hazardous geometric features are proposed. The Project vehicle mix will be consistent with the existing mix in the Project area. Construction plans will be coordinated with the City so that construction activity does not interfere with traffic on adjacent and nearby roads.
- d) **No Impact.** Both proposed entryways can serve as emergency access routes. Prior to construction, the Fire and Police Departments will review the site plan to ensure safety measures are addressed, including emergency access and vehicle turnaround space. Construction plans will be coordinated with the City and emergency providers, as needed, to assure that emergency access is maintained throughout all stages of development. No impact will occur.

Mitigation Measures:

TRA.1 The Project proponent shall construct the following improvements:

1. Construct Traffic signal at the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Street A/Rembrandt Parkway prior to the occupancy of the first residential units in Planning Area 1.
2. Construct westbound left turn lane with 150 feet of storage on Gerald Ford Drive at Street A/Rembrandt Parkway prior to the occupancy of the first residential units in Planning Area 1.
3. Construct eastbound right turn lane with 150 of storage on Gerald Ford Drive at Street A/Rembrandt Parkway prior to the occupancy of the first residential units in Planning Area 1.
4. Construct Street A as a collector roadway with a 44 foot curb to curb width, with one travel lane southbound, one shared left/through lane, and one right turn lane with 125 feet of storage northbound on Street A at Gerald Ford Drive.
5. Connect to Julie Drive as a collector roadway with a 52 foot curb to curb width prior to occupancy of the first residential units in Planning Areas 2 through 6.

Monitoring:

TRA.A All improvement plans for the proposed Project shall be prepared to include the lane improvements cited in Mitigation Measure TRA.1.

Responsible parties: Project engineer, Project geotechnical consultant, Project applicant.

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, August 2016 (SCH 2015081020). Vitalia/Refuge Residential Traffic Analysis, prepared by Urban Crossroads, June 2, 2022. Vitalia/Refuge Residential VMT Screening Analysis, prepared by Urban Crossroads, June 2, 2022.

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or		✓		
ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.		✓		

Setting

As discussed in the Section V, Cultural Resources, the Cahuilla people lived in the Coachella Valley for thousands of years. They were Takic-speaking and lived in various groups in the region. Today, Native Americans of Pass or Desert Cahuilla heritage are mostly affiliated with one or more of the Indian reservations in and near the Coachella Valley, including the Cabazon, Augustine, Torres Martinez, Twenty-nine Palms, Agua Caliente, and Morongo. Numerous cultural resources are found throughout the valley which provide important information about the past.

Discussion of Impacts

a. i, ii) Less Than Significant with Mitigation. Senate Bill 18 and Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52) requires a lead agency to consult with tribes in the Project area during the CEQA process to allow tribes to be involved in the project development process and to address their concerns about potential impacts to tribal cultural resources. The consultation process requires the lead agency to provide written notification about a proposed project, as defined by CEQA, to tribes within the project’s geographic area. If a tribe chooses to engage in consultation, it must respond to the lead agency within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification, and the lead agency must begin the

consultation process within 30 days of receiving the request for consultation. Consultation concludes when the parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect (if a significant effect exists) on the tribal cultural resources, or when a party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached (Public Resources Code section 21080.3.2 (b)(1) and (2)).

The City has initiated the tribal consultation process in conformance with SB 18 and AB 52 requirements. It has distributed consultation letters to the tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) as having knowledge of tribal cultural resources in the Project area (SB 18), and to those tribes who have requested consultation under AB 52. Each representative was contacted in writing regarding the proposed Project. The City received two responses. The Queshan Tribe deferred to more local tribes, and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians requested copies of the cultural resource study, and the presence of a Tribal monitor during ground disturbing activities. The Tribe did not request consultation, and since Mitigation Measure CUL.1 is included in Section V, Cultural Resources, consistent with the findings of the cultural resource study and the Tribe's request, to require archaeological and tribal monitoring of ground disturbing activities, the Mitigation Measure will reduce the impacts to tribal cultural resources to less than significant levels.

Mitigation Measures:

See Section V, Cultural Resources.

Monitoring:

See Section V, Cultural Resources.

Sources: Update to Historical/Archeological Resources Survey, Refuge Palm Desert Project, CRM TECH, April 21, 2022; Update to Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey, Palm Desert Apartments Project, CRM TECH, December 16, 2020; Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey, Assessor's Parcel Numbers 694-300-001, -002, -005, -014, -015, and 694-310-002, -003, -006, -007, CRM TECH, December 28, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?			✓	
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?			✓	
c) 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?			✓	
d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?			✓	
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?			✓	

Setting

Domestic Water

The Project site is within the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) service area for domestic water. Its primary water source is groundwater extracted through a system of wells from the Whitewater River subbasin. In addition to groundwater, CVWD relies on imported water brought to the region by canals. CVWD's domestic water system includes 97 wells with a total daily pumping capacity of 244 million gallons. CVWD has a total of 64 reservoirs, with an average storage capacity of 153.2 million gallons. CVWD also owns and operates the water distribution system, which is generally located under existing streets in the public right-of-way. There are existing 12-inch water mains within Gerald Ford Drive and Julie Drive in the Project vicinity.

CVWD is responsible, under the California Water Code, for analyzing its current and future water supply and assuring that sufficient supply is available to serve land uses within the District, through the preparation of an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). CVWD is required to periodically update the Plan.

Wastewater Treatment

CVWD provides sewer service to the City of Palm Desert, including the Project area. CVWD maintains sewer trunk lines ranging in diameter from 4 to 24 inches and 5 sewer lift stations in City boundaries. Effluent from the City is conveyed to CVWD's Cook Street treatment plant (Water Reclamation Plant No. 10), which has a total capacity of 18 million gallons per day (mgd), including 15 mgd tertiary treatment capacity. CVWD also implements the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board pertaining to domestic water quality and wastewater discharge. There is an existing 12-inch sewer main within Gerald Ford Drive in the Project vicinity.

Stormwater Management

Several watersheds drain the elevated terrain of the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, San Bernardino, and Little San Bernardino Mountains towards the valley floor. There are five stormwater channels in Palm Desert: Whitewater River Stormwater Channel and its tributaries, including Dead Indian Creek, the Deep Canyon Channel, the Palm Valley System, and the East Magnesia Channel. For the proposed Project, management of stormwater is under the jurisdiction of the City.

Electric Power and Natural Gas

Southern California Edison (SCE) provides electrical services to the City of Palm Desert. Many neighborhoods were developed prior to the undergrounding of electric facilities and have overhead power lines. There are overhead power lines on the north side of Gerald Ford Drive and underground lines on the south side in the Project area. Underground electrical lines also run along the western Project boundary.

Natural gas is provided by the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas). There are underground 4-inch gas lines on the south side of Gerald Ford Drive along the Project boundary.

Solid Waste

Burrtec Waste and Recycling Services, LLC (Burrtec) provides solid waste disposal to the City through a franchise agreement. Non-hazardous household, commercial, and most nonhazardous industrial solid waste collected is taken to the Edom Hill Transfer Station (EHTS) in Cathedral City, which is permitted to receive 3,500 tons of waste per day. From there, solid waste is transported to the Lamb Canyon regional landfill, which is operated by the County of Riverside and had a remaining capacity of 19,242,950 cubic yards as of 2015 (latest available data).

Discussion of Impacts

a-c) Less than Significant Impact.

Water

The subject property is within the jurisdiction of the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) for domestic water services. Existing water mains are already in place and operational in the Project area. The Project will connect to existing 12-inch water mains beneath Gerald Ford Drive and Julie Drive and will install new 8-inch and 12-inch water mains onsite. Other than onsite extensions, no new water infrastructure will be required which could result in significant environmental effects.

The 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) demonstrates that CVWD has available, and can supply in the future, sufficient water to serve additional development in its service area. The UWMP calls for a combination of continued groundwater extraction, conservation programs, additional water sources and source substitution, and groundwater recharge opportunities. CVWD anticipates having sufficient water supplies to serve existing and future in the near-term (2025) and long-term (2045). For 2025, projected water supply is 137,061 AFY and retail water demand is 123,461 AFY, resulting in an anticipated surplus of 13,600 AFY. For 2045, projected water supply is 164,966 AFY and retail water demand is 148,166 AFY, resulting in an anticipated surplus of 16,800 AFY (UWMP Tables 4-8 and 4-22). Future demand projections are based on development intensities provided in the General Plans of regional jurisdictions, including the Palm Desert General Plan. The proposed Project is consistent with the General Plan designation (Town Center Neighborhood) and development intensity (7.0 to 40 du/ac) assigned to the Project site. This General Plan designation was used in the UWMP to project future water demand on the Project site. Therefore, the Project's water demand is consistent with the UWMP's projected future demands.

As discussed in the Project's Water Supply Assessment (WSA) and Section X (Hydrology and Water Quality) of this Initial Study, the Project's projected annual water demand at buildout is approximately 246.58 acre-feet, which is 0.18% of 2025 projected water supply and 0.15% of 2045 projected water supply. Therefore, CVWD has available, or can supply, sufficient water to serve reasonably foreseeable development, including the proposed Project. Additionally, CVWD has determined that it will be able to meet future urban water demands projected in the regional UWMP in normal, single dry, and multiple dry years (UWMP Tables 4-25, 4-26, 4-27). Under each of these scenarios, the difference between supply and demand is projected to be zero.

Project water consumption will be reduced with low-flow household appliances, water-efficient irrigation practices, and drought-tolerant landscape materials. The Project restricts turf grass to active use areas only, and plants must be selected from the Project's plant list. Planting and irrigation design must meet CVWD standards and the California Model Efficient Water Ordinance (MELO), and 75% of the planting selections for shrubs must be designated low-water plants from the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species published by the University of California Cooperative Extension, Department of Water Resources, and Bureau of Reclamation. Drip irrigation must be controlled by smart weather-based equipment with a rain sensor, and spray and rotor irrigation systems must eliminate overspray into sidewalks and other hardscape. Flow sensors and master valves are required downstream of all points of connection. Implementation of these measures will contribute to water conservation. Impacts to water supplies will be less than significant.

Wastewater

The subject property is within the jurisdiction of CVWD for wastewater collection and treatment services. Existing sewer infrastructure is already in place and operational in the Project area. The Project will connect to an existing 12-inch sewer main beneath Gerald Ford Drive and will install new 8-inch sewer mains onsite. Sewage will be conveyed to and treated at Water Reclamation Plant-10 (WRP-10) on Cook Street in Palm Desert. WRP-10 treats wastewater from four cities (Palm Desert, Indian Wells, Rancho Mirage, and portions of Cathedral City) and serves a population of approximately 90,000 people. It has a secondary treatment capacity of 18 million

gallons per day (mgd) and currently treats an average daily flow of approximately 9 mgd.¹² WRP-10 also has a tertiary treatment capacity of 15 mgd and supplies tertiary treated water for golf course and landscape irrigation. Therefore, the plant has sufficient capacity to serve additional development, including the proposed Project. Project wastewater discharges will be typical of residential uses and will not exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the CVWD or Regional Water Quality Control Board. Other than onsite extensions, no new sewer infrastructure will be required which could result in significant environmental effects. Impacts to wastewater services will be less than significant.

Stormwater Drainage

The Project site is currently vacant, and the Project will result in impervious surfaces throughout the site, including buildings, roads, and sidewalks. As described in Section X, Hydrology and Water Quality, the Project proposes stormwater retention facilities to manage storm flows and designed to meet local stormwater retention requirements. The site will be graded to direct drainage as surface flow through streets and parking areas and toward proposed retention basins and catch basins that will provide storage of the 100-year controlling storm event, as required by the City. Other than onsite improvements, the Project will not require the construction or expansion of stormwater management facilities that could result in significant environmental impacts. Impacts will be less than significant.

Electricity

The Project will provide local connections to existing SCE infrastructure in the Project area. SCE has existing facilities within Gerald Ford Drive. Other than onsite connections, the Project will not require the addition or expansion of electric power facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

Natural Gas

The Project will provide local connections to the existing SoCalGas infrastructure in the Project area. A 4-inch gas line is located underground within the Gerald Ford Drive right-of-way. Other than onsite connections, the Project will not require the addition or expansion of natural gas facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

Telecommunications

The Project will require local connections to the existing Frontier Communications and Spectrum infrastructure in the Project area. Existing underground communications cables are available within Gerald Ford Drive. Other than onsite connections, the Project will not require the addition or expansion of telecommunication facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

- d, e) Less than Significant Impact.** Burrtec provides solid waste services to the City of Palm Desert. Solid waste is recycled, reused, or transformed at a waste-to-energy facility¹³, or disposed of at County landfills. The Lamb Canyon regional landfill has a remaining capacity of 19,242,950 cubic yards as of 2015 (latest data available).¹⁴

¹² 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021, Table 4-16.

¹³ Riverside County Nondisposal Facility Element by Riverside County Department of Waste Resources (2015), <https://www.rcwaste.org/Portals/0/Files/Planning/CIWMP/NDFE.PDF>, accessed March 2022.

¹⁴ CalRecycle SWIS Facility/Site Activity Details. <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/SiteActivity/Details/2246?siteID=2368>, accessed March 2022.

As shown in the following table, at maximum buildout, the Project would include 969 dwelling units and generate an estimated 586.56 tons of solid waste per year. This equals 9,384.88 cubic yards per year¹⁵, which is approximately 0.05% of the Lamb Canyon landfill’s remaining capacity. Therefore, the Project will not exceed the available capacity of the landfill and Project impacts will be less than significant.

Table 13
Estimated Solid Waste Disposal at Buildout

Proposed Land Use	Disposal Rate*	Maximum Proposed Units	Solid Waste Disposal (lbs/day)	Projected Solid Waste Disposal (tons/year)
Multi-family Residential	3.6 pounds/unit/day	269	968	176.66
Single-family Residential	7.8 pounds/unit/day	700	5,460	996.45
Subtotal:				1,173.11
Total (with 50% diversion):				586.56

*Estimated Solid Waste Generation Rates by Calrecycle, <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/WasteCharacterization/General/Rates>, accessed March 2022.

Recyclable materials (e.g., paper, plastic, glass, cardboard, aluminum) will be transported to Burrtec’s material recovery facilities for recycling and reuse. Burrtec is responsible for maintaining standards that assure that all waste is handled in a manner that meets local, state, and federal standards. These requirements will assure that impacts associated with solid waste disposal remain less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: Sanitary Sewer Management Plan, CVWD, December 1, 2019; 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021; Solid Waste Information System, www2.calrecycle.ca.gov, CalRecycle, accessed March 2022; Project materials.

¹⁵ Assumes 1 cubic yard of residential uncompacted municipal solid waste equals 250 lbs. “Volume-to-Weight Conversion Factors,” US EPA Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, April 2016.

XX. WILDFIRE – If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?				✓
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?				✓
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?				✓

Setting

Wildfires can occur in undeveloped areas and spread to urban areas. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) has mapped areas of significant fire hazards in the state through its Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP). These maps identify fire hazard severity zones (FHSZ) based on a hazard scoring system using subjective criteria for fuels, fire history, terrain influences, housing density, and occurrence of severe weather where urban conflagration could occur.

The southern portions of Palm Desert are susceptible to the risk of wildland fires. The Project site is in the northwest portion of the City and is not adjacent to a wildland fire area. The subject property is designated as a local responsibility area (LRA) and is not located in or near a state responsibility area (SRA) or designated as a very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ).

Discussion of Impacts

a-d) No Impact. The Project site is not located in or near a state responsibility area (SRA) or very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ). The nearest VHFHSZ and SRA are more than 6 miles to the south in the Santa Rosa Mountains.

The Project site is accessed by Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue, which are key evacuation routes and would provide emergency access for Project residents. The Project would not impair the City’s adopted emergency response plan or evacuation plan as it does not propose to amend these or other evacuation routes or plans. Project construction plans will be reviewed by and

coordinated with the City and Fire Department to assure that adequate emergency access is maintained during the construction process. The Project would not require the installation or maintenance of wildfire infrastructure that could exacerbate fire risks or result in adverse environmental impacts. The Project site is relatively flat on the central valley floor and would not expose people or structures to downslope flooding or landslides resulting from post-fire instability or drainage changes. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures: None required

Monitoring: None required

Sources: City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; Project materials; Google Earth Pro 7.3.3.7786; Fire Hazard Severity Map, CalFire, <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>, accessed March 2022.

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially 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, substantially 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) Less than Significant with Mitigation.

Biological Resources: The Project is not expected to substantially degrade environmental quality or reduce the habitat, population, or range of a fish or wildlife species. However, several sensitive status species could potentially occur onsite. Payment of standard CVMSHCP local development mitigation fees will reduce impacts to covered species to less than significant levels, and implementation of mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-4 will mitigate impacts to those that are not covered or not fully covered. With mitigation, impacts will be less than significant.

Cultural Resources: No cultural resources are known to exist within or adjacent to the Project site. However, the Project will result in soil disturbances such as excavation and grading, and there is potential for previously unknown resources to be uncovered. Mitigation Measure CUL-1 and monitoring program CUL-A will assure that impacts to cultural and/or tribal cultural resources are less than significant in the unlikely event that resources are discovered during Project development.

b) Less than Significant Impact. Project impacts will not be cumulatively considerable because the Project is consistent with the land use designation (Town Center Neighborhood) assigned to the subject property in the General Plan and analyzed in the General Plan EIR. Population

growth resulting from the Project will not surpass that anticipated in the General Plan EIR or by SCAG. The Project's incremental effects are not considerable when viewed in connection with other projects. Impacts will be less than significant.

- c) **Less than Significant with Mitigation.** The Project could cause environmental effects that could cause adverse effects on humans, specifically as it relates to geotechnical and transportation impacts. However, the mitigation measures provided in this Initial Study and supporting documentation cited herein will reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

Appendix A

CalEEMOD Air Quality and GHG Modeling

(Available on City website)

Appendix B

Biological Resources Assessment Report

(Available on City website)

Appendix C

Cultural Resources Survey

(Available on City website)

Appendix D

Water Supply Assessment

(Available on City website)

Appendix E

Traffic Impact Analysis

(Available on City website)

Appendix F

VMT Analysis

(Available on City website)