

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 7

100 S. MAIN STREET, MS 16

LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

PHONE (213) 266-3574

FAX (213) 897-1337

TTY 711

www.dot.ca.gov

*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life*

December 7, 2023

Governor's Office of Planning &amp; Research

**Dec 08 2023****STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

Shannon Edwin, Planner  
City of Lancaster – Community Development  
44933 Fern Avenue  
Lancaster, CA 93534

RE: Desert Meadow Apartments and  
Townhomes – Mitigated Negative  
Declaration (MND)  
SCH #2023110213  
GTS #07-LA-2023-04365  
Vic. LA 14 PM R68.497

Dear Shannon Edwin,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the above referenced project. The proposed project is located on the northeast corner of 30<sup>th</sup> Street West and Lancaster Blvd and consists of a subdivision of approximately 20 acres into 2 residential lots: one residential lot for a 324-unit luxury apartment complex and the other residential lot for a 96-unit townhome community.

The proposed 324-unit apartment complex, with a primary gated entry from Lancaster Blvd and a separate right turn-only exit, are designed as 3-story walk-up luxury apartments with 1, 2-, and 3-bedroom units ranging in size from 657 square feet to 1,257 square feet. The complex includes recreational amenities consisting of a clubhouse with a meeting room and fitness area, pool, putting green, a hard court such as pickleball, open/sports lawn area, covered table tennis area, two dog parks, and a mini clubhouse intended for tenant activities. A total of 662 parking spaces are proposed, with 490 parking spaces provided under carport covers and the remaining 172 parking spaces uncovered.

The second residential lot proposes 96 townhomes with a primary gated entry and a secondary emergency vehicle access from Lancaster Blvd. The two-story townhomes include 2- and 3-bedroom units with a 2-car enclosed garage per unit. An additional 37 uncovered car parking spaces are provided for guests. The townhome community includes recreation amenities consisting of an outdoor pool and spa, a bathroom building, a sports lawn, a putting green, and a children's playground.

After reviewing the MND, Caltrans has the following comments:

Currently the project is designed in a way that induces a high number of vehicle trips per household due to being an exclusively residential, car-oriented development. In total, the project will be constructing 891 car parking spaces (682 covered and 209 uncovered). The Lead Agency is encouraged to integrate transportation and land uses in a way that reduces Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by facilitating the provision of more proximate goods and services to shorten trip lengths and achieve a high level of non-motorized travel and transit use. Caltrans recommends the following to more effectively address the significant VMT that this project creates as currently proposed:

- 1) Provide for a mixture of land use types within the Project's new zoning area to allow for adaptive reuse. This can allow goods, services, and jobs to be created closer to where the project's residents live.
- 2) Increase density, both vertically and horizontally. Land use developments, like the one proposed, should not be sprawled across huge areas of land. By bringing the built environment closer together, and building up instead of out, it becomes possible to greatly reduce energy use, improve walkability, allow for adaptive reuse, and generate real value for the community.
- 3) Reduce the amount of parking whenever possible, as abundant car parking enables and encourages driving. Research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicates that the amount of car parking supplied can undermine a project's ability to encourage public transit and active modes of transportation. For any project to better promote public transit and reduce vehicle miles traveled, we recommend the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies as an alternative to building too much parking.
- 4) Provide affordable housing units. These units do not only improve affordability, they also reduce the demand for ever increasing amounts of car infrastructure, as rates of car ownership and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are significantly lower for low-income households than they are for high-income households. If the project included affordable housing, then there would be an even greater justification for reducing car parking to promote affordability and achieve a more diverse and sustainable land-use pattern.
- 5) Improve connections to existing active transportation and transit infrastructure. This can be done with robust signage, wayfinding, safety improvements, and human scale amenities. Some examples for this project would be:

- a. The installation of bus shelters, including robust shade structures, for the Antelope Valley Transit Authority's Route 11 stops at the corner of Lancaster Blvd and 30<sup>th</sup> St. West. There should also be coordination with AVTA to update the service frequency of the route as well. Frequency is freedom.
  - b. Upgrading the Class 2 bike lanes along W Lancaster Blvd to physically protected Class 4 bikeways.
  - c. Both the transit and bikeway improvements would greatly enhance access to nearby services, such as the Lancaster Marketplace and Valley Central Shopping center, for all residents and employees of the project site. Changes like these are common sense, affordable ways to greatly reduce VMT.
- 6) Additionally, the most effective methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to vehicles is through physical design and geometrics. These methods include the construction of physically separated facilities such as Class IV bike lanes, wide sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, landscaping, street furniture, and reductions in crossing distances through roadway narrowing.

Finally, any transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials which requires use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways will need a Caltrans transportation permit. We recommend large size truck trips be limited to off-peak commute periods.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at [anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov](mailto:anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov) and refer to GTS #07-LA-2023-04365.

Sincerely,

*Frances Duong*

Frances Duong  
Acting LDR/CEQA Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse