

5.13.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) evaluates the potential for the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan Project (“Section 31 Specific Plan” or “Project”) to impact law enforcement services provided by the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department (Sheriff’s Department). Please see **Section 9.0** for a glossary of terms, definitions, and acronyms used in this Draft EIR.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1. Existing Conditions

The Section 31 Specific Plan Area (Project Site) is located in the central portion of the Coachella Valley in the City of Rancho Mirage (City) within Riverside County, California. The Sheriff’s Department provides law enforcement services to the unincorporated areas of Riverside County and 17 cities under contract, including the City of Rancho Mirage. As such, the Project Site is located within the service boundaries of the Sheriff’s Department. The Sheriff’s Department provides emergency and non-emergency police response, routine police patrols, investigative services, traffic enforcement, and traffic investigation services. The station that serves as the headquarters for responding law enforcement officers to the City and surrounding jurisdictions is the Palm Desert Station, located at 73705 Gerald Ford Drive in Palm Desert, as shown previously in **Figure 5.13-1-1: Public Services Within Proximity to Project Site**. The Palm Desert Station is approximately 0.51 miles east of the Project Site. This station serves an area of approximately 26 square miles in the cities of Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage and receives over 47,600 calls for service each year.¹

The Sheriff’s Department divides the City into three beats: 20 Beat, 22 Beat, and 24 Beat. These beats are then further divided into different reporting districts. The Project Site is located within 22 Beat, Reporting District J1.²

As of 2016, eight dedicated police personnel served the City, and another 15 non-dedicated Sheriff’s deputies aided in patrol.³ In 2016, the City provided a ratio of one officer per 786 residents, well above the commonly accepted ratio of one officer per 1,000 residents. The Sheriff’s Department ranks calls for services with a four-level priority system based on the urgency and need for prompt emergency service.

1 Palm Desert Police, “Police Organization,” accessed April 2019, available at <https://www.cityofpalmdesert.org/departments/police-department>.

2 Jennifer Benoit, #N5482 – Community Service Officer, Rancho Mirage Crime Prevention Division, Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, email correspondence, July 9, 2019.

3 City of Rancho Mirage *General Plan*, Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities, 104, adopted November 15, 2017.

Police response times can vary significantly and are generally dependent upon various factors such as call type and the availability and location of the nearest patrol unit. In 2018, the average emergency response time in the City for Priority 1 calls was 7.52 minutes.⁴

2. Regulatory Setting

Local

Rancho Mirage General Plan

Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities of the City's General Plan includes policies related to the police protection services that are needed to support the City.⁵ It identifies the formulation of the City's police protection services, the station that services the City, general statistics of the police force, programs that are currently in place and the plans to expand existing police services based on the City's continued growth and development. This chapter also expands on factors that affect the effectiveness of police protection in the City. The City of Rancho Mirage General Plan indicates that the commonly accepted police officer to resident ratio is 1 officer to 1,000 people.⁶ Chapter 9 of the City's General Plan outlines the following relevant goals and policies related to law enforcement services:

- Goal Public Safety & Fire (PS&F) 6:* A high level of police and fire protection and paramedic service.
- Policy PS&F 6.1: Review all new and improved developments for their impact on safety and the provision of police and fire protection services.
 - Policy PS&F 6.5: Provide emergency police, fire, and paramedic vehicle access with all new development to the satisfaction of the City.
 - Policy PS&F 6.6: Assist the Sheriff's Department in promoting the Neighborhood Watch Program.
 - Policy PS&F 6.7: Promote concepts of defensible space for walled and gated communities, recognizing the potential effect those concepts can have on reducing crime in Rancho Mirage.
 - Policy PS&F 6.8: Support the Citizens on Patrol program.

4 Lt. John Shields, Riverside County Sheriff, Rancho Mirage Police, letter correspondence, June 1, 2018.

5 City of Rancho Mirage *General Plan*, Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities, 104, adopted November 15, 2017.

6 City of Rancho Mirage *General Plan*, Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities, 104, adopted November 15, 2017.

Rancho Mirage Municipal Code

New construction within the City of Rancho Mirage is subject to Title 3, Chapter 28 of the Rancho Mirage Municipal Code, which sets policy for the requirement of an imposed tax on new construction to support the increased demand for public services and infrastructure improvements, such as police protection services.⁷

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Thresholds of Significance

In order to assist in determining whether a project would have a significant effect on the environment, the City finds a project may be deemed to have significant impacts on public services, including law enforcement services, if it would:

Threshold 5.13.2-1 Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered law enforcement facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for law enforcement services.

2. Methodology

Analysis of law enforcement services incorporates a review of response times and officer-to-population service ratios. Response times to an area influence the ability for law enforcement to serve a population, city, or other populated area in a timely and efficient manner. Law enforcement officers are typically mobile, which allows them to respond more quickly than if they were stationed at one particular place.

Law enforcement agencies also use standardized officer-to-population ratios to determine if they are capable of providing adequate service to an area. If a new development is built and the population in the area is increased, the local law enforcement agency's ability to properly provide service to the area may be affected.

⁷ City of Rancho Mirage Municipal Code, Title 3 (Revenue and Finance), Chapter 28 (License tax on New Construction).

3. Project Design Features

The following Project Design Features (PDFs) features are incorporated into the Project and would reduce impacts on the Sheriff Department's response times and performance standards. These features were taken into account in the analysis of potential impacts.

PDF 5.13.2-1: The residential areas (Planning Areas 1, 2, and 3) shall be gated communities that would only be accessible to residents and their guests; thus, increasing community security and minimizing potential crimes.

PDF 5.13.2-2: Parking areas within all Planning Areas shall be designed to be clustered where feasible and designed to maximize security and efficient access.

PDF 5.13.2-3: The Project shall incorporate various lighting features that would enhance security and maximize visibility within public spaces, including streets, intersections, paseo crossings, and other crosswalks.

4. Project Impacts

Threshold 5.13.2-1: **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 law enforcement facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for law enforcement services?**

Construction activities associated with the Project may result in temporary and partial closures of public roads surrounding the Project Site. Construction-related traffic on adjacent streets could potentially affect emergency access to and near the Project Site on a temporary basis. Construction activities would generate traffic associated with the movement of construction equipment, hauling of demolition and graded materials, and construction worker trips. Additionally, construction activities may involve temporary lane closures for utility and access gate improvements. Other implications of construction-related traffic include increased travel time due to flagging or stopping of traffic to accommodate trucks entering and exiting the Project Site during construction. As such, construction activities could potentially increase response times for emergency vehicles traveling to the Project Site and nearby uses along surrounding streets. However, as discussed in **Section 5.15: Traffic and Transportation** of this Draft EIR, implementation of Mitigation Measure **MM 5.15-1** would require the preparation of construction traffic management plans to ensure the Project would not interfere with the Sheriff Department's accessibility to the surrounding roadways or their use. Emergency access to the Project Site would remain clear and

unhindered during construction of the Project pursuant to requirements established by the City's Public Works and Engineering Department and/or the Sheriff's Department. Thus, emergency access impacts from construction activities associated with the Project would be less than significant with mitigation.

In regard to operation, development of the Project is expected to increase demand for law enforcement services and facilities provided by the Sheriff's Department. As a result, additional law enforcement equipment, facilities, and personnel would potentially be required to accommodate the demands of the Section 31 Specific Plan Area upon implementation of the Project.

The Project would involve development of up to 1,932 residential dwelling units of varying residential products. PDF 5.13.2-1 through PDF 5.13.2-3 would ensure that the residential portions of the Project Site (Planning Areas 1, 2, and 3) would be gated communities and contain security features that would help minimize the need for services from the Sheriff's Department. Response times are not anticipated to be significantly impacted since the Project would be located within an area of the City currently served by the Sheriff's Department.

The City of Rancho Mirage estimated 2018 population is 18,738 residents. With implementation of the Project, up to 3,913 residents⁸ would be added to the City's current population for a total City population of 22,651 residents. The resulting officer-to-resident ratio would be 1.02 officers per 1,000 people, in line with the commonly accepted ratio of one officer per 1,000 residents. Although this ratio would meet the commonly accepted officer-to-population ratio used by other jurisdictions, the Project's increase in on-site residents and visitors would nevertheless increase demand for law enforcement services in the City. Therefore, Mitigation Measure MM 5.13.2-1 would require payment of the City's development impact fee for law enforcement services, or its equivalent, in order to maintain acceptable levels of law enforcement services in the area. Accordingly, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

5. Cumulative Impacts

Related projects within the City's Sphere of Influence, unincorporated Riverside County, or Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribal jurisdiction (Reservation) could contribute to a potentially significant adverse cumulative impact on the Sheriff's Department emergency and non-emergency services and their ability to provide acceptable response times. These impacts would include increased numbers of requests for law enforcement services due to the increased presence of structures, traffic volume, and people within the area. Development projects within the City would be reviewed by the City and the Sheriff's Department and payment of the City's tax on new construction in accordance with the Title 3, Chapter 28

8 As of January 2018, City of Rancho Mirage contains an average of 2.025 persons per household. 1,932 dwelling units x 2.025 persons per dwelling unit = 3,913 residents.

of the City of Rancho Mirage's Municipal Code to minimize impacts to local police services and the City's Community Facility District (CFD) No. 1. Further, development within unincorporated Riverside County would be reviewed by the County and the Sheriff's Department to determine if public service needs demanded by new development can be effectively accommodated. Therefore, implementation of related projects would not adversely impact future demand on law enforcement services provided by the Sheriff's Department. Accordingly, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES

In addition to the Project Design Features identified in *Chapter B.3* above, the following Mitigation Measure would reduce impacts to police protection services:

MM 5.13.2-1: Prior to the issuance of building permits, individual Project proponents shall pay the City's tax on new construction, to offset the cost of additional law enforcement services for the Project. The Project Site shall be annexed into the City's Community Facility District (CFD) to help fund emergency services.

D. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE OF MITIGATION

Project Design Features **PDF 5.13.2-1** through **PDF 5.13.2-3**, Mitigation Measures **MM 5.15-1** and **MM 5.13.2-1**, and compliance with existing regulations would result in less than significant impacts on law enforcement services. Cumulative impacts would also result in less than significant impacts on law enforcement services.