

7.0 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

As previously discussed in **Section 1.0: Introduction** of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR), the City of Rancho Mirage (City), acting as the Lead Agency for the planning and environmental review of the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan Project (“Specific Plan Project” or “Project”), has decided to prepare this EIR in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including the State CEQA Guidelines. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2 [d], a project may foster economic or population growth, or additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in a geographical area if it meets any one of the following criteria below:¹

- A project would remove obstacles to population growth.
- Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, causing significant environmental effects.
- A project would encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment.

CEQA does not consider growth inducement to be necessarily detrimental, beneficial, or of significance to the environment. Typically, the growth-inducing potential of a project is considered significant if it fosters growth or a concentration of population in excess of what is assumed in pertinent master plans, land use plans, or in projections made by regional planning agencies. Significant growth impacts could also be manifested through the provision of infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth beyond the levels currently permitted by local or regional plans and policies.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for a six-county region (Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties) in Southern California and is charged by the federal government to research and prepare plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, and air quality. One of the many responsibilities mandated to SCAG by the State is the development of demographic projections, which are outlined in **Section 5.12: Population and Housing** of this Draft EIR.

A. GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACT ANALYSIS

1. Remove Obstacles to Population Growth

Growth in an area may result from the removal of physical impediments or restrictions to growth, as well as the removal of planning impediments resulting from land use plans and policies. In this context, physical

1 California Public Resources Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, *California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines*, Section 15126(d).

growth impediments may include nonexistent or inadequate access to an area or the lack of essential public services (e.g., water service), while planning impediments may include restrictive zoning and/or general plan designations.

The Project is located in an area that contains established land uses and supporting infrastructure and is considered an in-fill project. Construction of the Project may require the modification of off-site infrastructure and the development of on-site infrastructure in order to support the increased land use intensity associated with the Project.

Growth projections contained in the RTP/SCS are based on a compilation of county and local projections. RTP forecasts are then used in the formulation of regional plans dealing with regional air quality, housing, transportation/circulation, and other infrastructure issues. SCAG does not provide a specific methodology for establishing the consistency of a proposed project with its regional growth forecasts. However, the RCP contains policies that support the use of these forecasts in the preparation and review of local and regional plans and projects.

The City of Rancho Mirage has an estimated 2019 population of 18,489 residents. With full development of the uses allowed by the General Plan, the City anticipates a maximum population of approximately 25,573 residents by 2035. Further, the City anticipates the potential for an additional 4,475 future residents within the City's sphere of influence (SOI) for a combined total of approximately 30,048 residents by 2035. The Project would add up to 1,932 residential units and 3,913 new residents to the City of Rancho Mirage. The population increase associated with the Project would account for approximately 57 percent of the remaining capacity for population growth anticipated in the City's General Plan by 2035 and approximately 35 percent of the remaining capacity anticipated across the City and its SOI combined by 2035. Further, the Project-generated population increase would represent approximately 1 percent of the anticipated increase in residents within the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) region between 2020 and 2040. Accordingly, the anticipated population increase from the Project is accommodated in City and regional growth forecasts (see discussion in **Section 5.12: Population and Housing**). As discussed in **Section 5.12**, SCAG projections for the City indicate that households would grow by approximately 4,000 between 2020 and 2040. The projected housing increase that would result from the Project would represent approximately 40 percent of the estimated remaining housing capacity in the City and approximately 44 percent of the anticipated household increase projected by SCAG for the City between 2020 and 2040. According to SCAG projections, the number of employment opportunities in the CVAG region is forecast to increase to 460,800 employment opportunities by 2040, an increase of 215,800 employment opportunities over the 2020 projection. The City's projected increase in employment with full development of the uses allowed by the General Plan by 2035 is approximately 28,220 employees within current City boundaries. The Project would account for approximately 4 percent of the anticipated

28,220 employment opportunities within the City by 2035 and approximately 24 percent of SCAG's forecasted increase in employment opportunities within the City between 2020 and 2040 and approximately 1 percent of the forecasted increase in employment opportunities within the CVAG subregion between 2008 and 2035. Moreover, while there is the potential for the Project to generate employment to fulfill demand, the Project is not a unique use to draw substantial new residents to the area to fulfill the jobs. Rather, the jobs generated would primarily be retail-oriented, service-sector positions that could be filled by workers already residing within the City or the Coachella Valley region. The Project's population, housing, and employment opportunity projections would be consistent with SCAG and City projections

The City of Rancho Mirage General Plan projects residential, resort hotel, and ancillary commercial growth within the Project Site. The General Plan is a master plan that provides the framework by which public officials will be guided on making decisions relative to development within the Project Site. The implementation of land use policies will incrementally increase demands for public services, utilities, and infrastructure, and the need for medical, education, and recreation facilities.

An established transportation network exists in the surrounding area that offers regional and local access to the Project Site. Regional access to the Project Site would be provided by the I-10 Freeway. Local access to the Project Site would be provided by Gerald Ford Drive, Monterey Avenue, Frank Sinatra Drive, and Bob Hope Drive. Roadway improvements would be made as development occurs for each individual project, including the payment of Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee (TUMF) fees for identified roadway infrastructure projects in the western Coachella Valley.

The Project Site is bordered by the City of Rancho Mirage to the north, southeast, south, and west, and the City of Palm Desert to the east. North of Gerald Ford Drive, single-family residential neighborhoods are the predominant land use, with several vacant, undeveloped properties interspersed with the neighborhood at the corners of Gerald Ford Drive and Bob Hope Drive and Gerald Ford Drive and Oasis Way, with single-family development in between. East of the Project Site across Monterey Avenue in the City of Palm Desert is the Marriott Shadow Ridge Resort, which includes a golf course and multifamily resort housing. In addition, immediately east of the Project Site at its southeastern corner lies a vacant, undeveloped parcel. South of Frank Sinatra Drive are primarily single-family residential neighborhoods, with minor areas of office development to the east near Monterey Avenue. Additionally, the Rancho Mirage Country Club borders Frank Sinatra Drive to the west near Bob Hope Drive. Several vacant, undeveloped properties are interspersed with residential neighborhoods to the south. To the west of the Project Site across Bob Hope Drive is the Annenberg Estate, which includes a golf course and Sunnylands Center and Gardens (Sunnylands), as well as vacant land and a commercial shopping center.

The water, wastewater, electrical, and natural gas infrastructure required to support the Project would be available to the Project Site from surrounding streets. Potable water would be provided to the Project Site from the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) and at least one on-site private well to supply water to the Grand Oasis Crystal Lagoon. The Project would tie into an existing 18-inch water main which runs along Gerald Ford Drive and forms the northern boundary of the Project Site. The Project would connect into the existing 24-inch sewer main beneath Country Club Drive and served by water reclamation plant (WRP) 10, located in the city of Palm Desert. Existing stormwater drainage facilities within the City of Rancho Mirage are maintained by the Public Works Department, and a future reclaimed water line is proposed along Frank Sinatra Drive. The Project Site would contain vegetative retention areas for storm water on site in addition to existing catch basins and drainage inlets on surrounding roadways. Storm water would generally be conveyed by topography to the southeastern and southwestern corners of the Project Site. As discussed in **Section 5.9: Hydrology and Water Quality** of this Draft EIR, the Project's drainage design would collect, convey, and retain what occurs within the Project Site boundaries, and retention facilities would be constructed and sized to retain the worst-case flood volume from a 100-year storm event

Water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades are intended to meet Project-related demand. The new water and wastewater lines have been designed to provide for the Project and would not generate substantial capacity that would induce growth within the area. The 18- and 12-inch water mains and 15-inch sewer main would connect to and directly serve the Project Site, which is surrounded by existing development to the north, south, east, and west. As such, the development of the potable and wastewater systems would not induce growth within the immediate area.

Natural gas transmission infrastructure presently exists within roadways surrounding the Project Site to the north, east, and south; however, infrastructure does not presently exist on the Project Site. During development of the Project, a natural gas line would be constructed on site to connect existing Southern California Gas Company gas mains in surrounding roadways. Electrical infrastructure in the City is maintained by Southern California Edison (SCE). Beginning on May 1, 2018, the Rancho Mirage Energy Authority (RMEA), a locally run power program commissioned by the Rancho Mirage City Council, began conveying power to City consumers via SCE infrastructure. The Project Site currently has aboveground power lines that traverse the southern side boundary along Frank Sinatra Drive in between Bob Hope Drive and Vista Del Sol. Existing electrical equipment is located at the primary intersections surrounding the Project Site which may provide possible connection points for electricity to the site. The Project would connect to these existing power lines during on-site utility infrastructure improvements. Charter Communications and Frontier Communications provide telecommunication services to the City. Underground Verizon cable infrastructure and systems are located on the western boundary of the Project Site along Bob Hope Drive, across Gerald Ford Drive, Frank Sinatra Drive, and Bob Hope Drive, and at

primary intersections surrounding the Project Site. Natural gas, electricity, and telecommunication infrastructure upgrades are intended to meet Project-related demand. The Project would require submittal to utility providers for review and approval of connection plans. The new natural gas, electrical, and telecommunication lines have been designed to provide for the Project and would not generate substantial capacity that would induce growth within the area. No growth-inducing impacts due to the connection of natural gas, electrical, or telecommunication service lines would occur with the development of the Project.

In summary, the design and construction of roadways, water, sewer, electrical, natural gas, and telecommunication infrastructure needed to accommodate the Project would not induce growth within undeveloped areas surrounding the Project Site.

2. Tax Existing Community Service Facilities, Causing Significant Environmental Effects

A project would indirectly induce growth if it would increase the capacity of infrastructure in an area in which the public service currently met demand or would extend infrastructure to an area that was not previously served. Examples would be increasing the capacity of a sewer treatment plant or a roadway beyond the capacity needed to meet existing demand, or extending a water or sewer line to a project where other properties could also use that line extension.

As discussed in **Section 5.13: Public Services**, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's Department) provides law enforcement services to the Project Site out of their Palm Desert station. According to the Sheriff's Department, implementation of the Project is projected to require an increased demand for police protection services, such as an increased number of sworn officers servicing the Project Site. However, response times and officer-to-population service ratios would be maintained to City standards upon implementation of the Project and payment of applicable development impact fees, so additional police protection facilities would not be required.

The Riverside County Fire Department and the Rancho Mirage Public Library indicated that they are below capacity and are able to provide the Project Site with a sufficient amount of services and facilities. While the expansion of public services would primarily be provided to serve the needs of the Project, the increase in police services would also likely facilitate services of future growth within the area. The Palm Springs Unified School District indicated that Rancho Mirage Elementary School, Nellie N Coffman Missile School, and Rancho Mirage High School would serve the Project Site. Of these schools, only Rancho Mirage Elementary School would not continue operating below capacity. However, as discussed in **Section 5.13.3: School Services**, this represents a conservative analysis of potential residential student generation. It is

anticipated that actual student generation upon Project buildout would be lower due to economic and demographic trends in the City.

Construction of the Project would create an array of employment opportunities for the region, such as retail, resort-serving, and construction-related jobs. This direct, growth-inducing effect for construction employment would last until the Project's anticipated build-out by year 2030. The commercial aspect of the Project entails the development of approximately 175,000 square feet of commercial, retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses and up to 400 hotel keys. Direct, growth-inducing effects for retail and resort-serving employment would be permanent and last throughout the life of the Project. Additionally, this increase in mixed-use development would stimulate a major new source of tax base for the region. As discussed in **Section 5.11**, development of the Project would generate an estimated 1,038 jobs. With the provision of a total of 1,932 residential units and current anticipated vacancy rates remain stable, the jobs/housing ratio for the Project would be approximately 1.29 jobs per residence. New residents of the Project would also have available opportunities for shopping, recreation, entertainment, and employment outside of those offered by the Project. This would not represent a significantly increased demand for economic goods and services within the region. Therefore, the Project would not induce significant growth within the surrounding area.

3. Encourage and Facilitate Other Activities That Could Significantly Affect the Environment

A project would directly induce growth if it would remove barriers to population growth such as a change to a jurisdiction's general plan and Zoning Ordinance that allowed new residential development to occur.

The Project Site is currently surrounded by predominantly urban, developed uses and utilities infrastructure largely exists in place in or adjacent to surrounding roadways. As mentioned previously, new utility connections enabled by the Project would serve on-site uses. Accordingly, development of the Project Site would not eliminate potential constraints for future development or encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment.

As discussed in **Section 5.10: Land Use and Planning**, the City of Rancho Mirage employs a single-map system of land uses. This means that the City's General Plan land use designations are the same as its zoning designations. Also, the density and intensity standards expressed in the General Plan are the same as those expressed in the Zoning Ordinance. The City's current General Plan designates approximately 175 acres of the Project Site for Resort Hotel (Rs-H) uses and approximately 443 acres for Very Low Density Residential (R-L-2) uses. The Project would involve amending the City's General Plan consistent with a requested Zone Change from Resort Hotel (Rs-H) and Very Low Density (R-L-2) to the Mixed Use (M-U) designation; a Specific Plan overlay already exists on the project site. The Project would allow development

of residential, resort, and resort-related commercial retail uses, generally consistent with those currently enabled by the City's zoning/land use designation.

Based on the maximum permitted residential density of 2 dwelling units/acre in the R-L-2 zone, the existing zoning/land use designation for the Project Site could accommodate up to 886 dwelling units. As such, the maximum 1,932 units enabled by the Project would represent an increase of 1,066 units beyond what is permitted under the current land use designation. Additionally, the existing Rs-H zoning/land use designation on 175 acres could also accommodate more than double the hotel rooms and resort condominiums currently proposed by the Project, adding a substantial number of additional residents both on-site and in the surrounding area. Because substantially more of the Project Site is proposed for residential development instead of resort hotels and condominiums, it is difficult to make a direct comparison of the total population growth that would be caused by the Project versus the existing zoning and General Plan land use designations, but the overall population growth is considered to be generally comparable. As explained in **Section 5.10**, this overall population growth is consistent with City and CVAG projections and can be accommodated by existing and planned future infrastructure. Moreover, the intensity and uses enabled by the Project are considered consistent with the spirit and intent of current General Plan land use/zoning designations for the Project Site.

Finally, no changes to any of the City's building safety standards (i.e. building, grading, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, fire codes) are proposed or required to implement the Project. Project Design Features and Mitigation Measures have been identified in **Sections 5.1 to 5.16** to ensure that subsequent subdivision maps and site-specific development projects comply with all applicable plans, policies, and ordinances. Pressures to develop vacant, interspersed properties surrounding the Project Site would be dependent upon regional economic conditions and market demands for housing, commercial office, and industrial land uses that are not directly or indirectly influence by the Project. Therefore, approval of the Project would not involve a precedent setting action that would be applied to other properties and thereby encourage or facilitate growth that would not otherwise occur. Accordingly, the Project would not be considered growth inducing.