

MUSEUM MARKET PLAZA SPECIFIC PLAN

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

VIII. GROWTH INDUCING AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A. Growth Inducement

The purpose of this section of an EIR is to disclose whether or not the construction of a project is likely to foster additional growth, either directly or indirectly. To assess the potential for growth-inducing impacts, the project's characteristics that may encourage and facilitate activities that individually or cumulatively may affect the environment must be evaluated (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2[d]).

Direct growth-inducing impacts occur when the development of a project imposes new burdens on a community by directly inducing population growth, or by leading to the construction of additional developments in the same area. Within this category are also included projects that remove physical obstacles to population growth, such as a new road into an undeveloped area or a wastewater treatment plant with excess capacity that could allow additional development in the service area. Construction of these types of infrastructure projects cannot be considered isolated from the development they facilitate and serve. Projects that physically remove obstacles to growth or projects that indirectly induce growth may provide a catalyst for future unrelated development in an area, such as a new residential community, that requires additional commercial uses to support residents.

The Museum Market Plaza Specific Plan project is expected to have limited but not negligible growth-inducing effects. The 20.6-acre site is planned for a total of 400,000 square feet of retail commercial and office space, public plazas, resort hotels and timeshares, high-density residential

units, and parking structures. The Specific Plan allows up to 955 high-density residential units, 620 hotel units, and recreation and open space amenities. The project will connect its own on-site infrastructure improvements to existing facilities in surrounding streets.

As described in Sections III-K (Public Services), III-M (Transportation/Traffic), and III-N (Utilities/Service Systems) of this EIR, the site is already well served by existing utilities and roadway infrastructure. Water, electricity, sanitary sewers, natural gas, and telephone infrastructure are available in the immediate vicinity. The project site is currently well served by existing General Plan roadways that optimize and enhance accessibility to the subject property. These include Palm Canyon Drive, Tahquitz Canyon Way, Indian Canyon Drive, Belardo, SR 111, and I-10. Project build out will include the construction of two new local roadways within the project boundary (Belardo Road extension and Museum Way).

The land use districts within the Specific Plan are intended to enhance and improve an interconnected, pedestrian-friendly Downtown, connecting Museum Market Plaza on the west to the hotels and Convention Center on the east. Good connectivity throughout the Specific Plan area will be achieved by a well-defined hierarchy of streets and pedestrian links, which will provide direct access to Museum Market Plaza's office, commercial and retail centers, restaurants, residential units, hotels, and public open spaces. Well-designed pedestrian connections and parking structures will avoid the creation of overwhelmingly urban mega-blocks and add visual interest to the street scene, encouraging pedestrian activity. Sidewalks and open spaces are designed to accommodate a variety of compatible outdoor activities. The project will also introduce an increase in recreational opportunities and the expansion of nighttime retail/commercial uses to the Downtown, thereby extending the hours of active use and resulting in a more vibrant landscape.

Museum Market Plaza provides an opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of energy efficiency and green construction in Palm Springs. The project's mixed land use concept provides a place for people to live, work and shop without the use of an automobile, and is in and of itself an energy-efficient model. The project can provide energy efficient construction through the use of passive and active solar energy, construction techniques using Green Building or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles, installation of water conserving landscaping material, selection of reused and repurposed materials for buildings and public areas, and installation of recycling facilities through the project. Landscaping for the project is designed to be responsive to desert conditions, to utilize designs that limit water demand, and to be in harmony with the natural and local settings.

The development of the proposed project will provide an opportunity for Palm Springs to strengthen its economy through the creation and expansion of new and existing job sectors and new employment opportunities for the local and regional population. The range of job sectors is expected to include professional, business, hospitality, arts, entertainment, food services, and a wide range of retail and commercial services. It is anticipated that many of these jobs will be filled by currently unemployed or underemployed individuals already living in the project vicinity. However, some employment opportunities will result in the migration of new residents to the area. The attraction of new residents and increased demand for housing is expected to be well complemented by the range and number of high density residential units planned at Museum Market Plaza, especially with the mitigation measures included in Section III requiring the inclusion of affordable housing within or in proximity to the area. By providing housing

within the project area, growth inducement generated by new jobs is likely to be offset and negligible.

B. Cumulative Impacts

The implementation of the Museum Market Plaza project will result in impacts, which, with the exceptions of air quality and visual resources, have not been determined significant. However, in accordance with CEQA, these impacts must be considered in conjunction with the effects of other development, which may take place in the surrounding community; these are called “cumulative impacts” (CA Public Resources Code Section 21083(b); CEQA Guidelines Sections 15130 and 15355).

Approval and implementation of the Museum Market Plaza project will be conditioned by the Specific Plan and EIR, and conditions of approval imposed by the City. The established permitting processes will control and regulate the development, and these approvals will have only an indirect moderating effect on development outside the project boundary. The Palm Springs General Plan promotes development types and intensities that are compatible and consistent with resource and infrastructure capabilities and constraints, and which intensify development at appropriate locations to take maximum advantage of land and compact development.

Whether and to what extent the Museum Market Plaza project may be a considerable contributor to cumulative impacts is discussed below.

Aesthetic/Visual Resources

The Museum Market Plaza Specific Plan will result in changes to the existing viewsheds and visual character of the project area. The planned construction allows for buildings ranging between 33 and 79 feet in height immediately east of the San Jacinto Mountains that could result in partial obstruction of mountain views. The level of development will also be considerably more intense than that presently existing in the Downtown area.

Build out of the Museum Market Plaza development will result in some increase in the existing levels of illumination, as well as some increase in glare from reflective building materials. The Downtown is already impacted by illumination from vehicular headlights, street lights, accent lighting, building lights and external safety lighting, as well as glare from reflective surfaces such as vehicles, building materials, and windows. Light will continue to be emitted from the project site, and light from building sources will be increased from previous levels. However, impacts associated with project lighting are expected to be less than significant.

The Specific Plan includes a comprehensive range of design features to substantially reduce the effect of the new development on the area's scenic vistas and resources, preserve distinctive local character and control light spillage.

Issues of aesthetic and visual impacts have also been addressed in the City's General Plan and its Downtown Urban Design Plan. Compliance with these guidelines is expected to further ensure that project impacts are reduced to the greatest extent possible. Development of the project

would potentially significantly impact viewsheds in the area. The continued development of the Downtown, north and south of the project site, and in conformance with the Downtown Urban Design Plan, will intensify land uses, and encourage the construction of taller (up to 60 feet) buildings, which will continue to block views of the surrounding mountains. As the proposed projects impacts on viewsheds are considerable and unavoidable, it is expected that cumulative impacts associated with scenic vistas and resources will also be cumulatively considerable.

Air Quality

As described in Section III of this EIR, air quality impacts associated with development of the proposed project will be significant, and cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels. In addition, air quality impacts associated with General Plan build out were found to be significant and unmitigatable in the General Plan EIR. As the City builds out, additional pollutants will be emitted, and air quality impacts from these projects will add to the impacts of existing development. Technologies being developed and implemented now and in the future will improve air emissions from vehicles, and are likely to reduce impacts associated with air quality, however, cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated to be significant and unavoidable at this time.

As discussed in Section III of this EIR, the proposed project will have a less than significant impact on greenhouse gases (GHG). The project's contribution to GHG will represent 0.0004% of the total GHG emissions in the US, and 0.005% of total California emissions. The project proposed Green Building and LEED construction practices, which will reduce GHG emissions. As new technologies are developed in the future, they will also contribute to reductions in GHG emissions. Like air quality impacts discussed above, the continued urbanization of the City, and the eventual build out of the proposed project and the General Plan, will contribute to additional GHG emissions. At this time, however, it is not expected that these emissions will be significant.

Cultural Resources

As described in Section III-C of this document, the subject property has been determined to harbor significant historical and cultural resources onsite. As planned, development of the Museum Market Plaza project will require the demolition of the Town & Country Center and therefore have a potentially significant impact on this historic resource. Mitigation measures included in Section III cannot reduce the potential impacts to less than significant levels. As the City develops and redevelops, other historic buildings risk demolition. Each of these projects will be reviewed for significance under CEQA, and each will be mitigated on a case-by-case basis, based on the level of significance found at the time. However, with implementation of the proposed project, since the demolition of the Town and Country Center has been determined to be a significant and unavoidable impact, the proposed project will also have a cumulative impact on cultural resources.

Geology/Seismicity

Development of the Museum Market Plaza project will intensify urbanization in a seismically active region, and increase, to some extent, the exposure of people to potential seismic hazards. Given that the San Andreas Fault Zone is located approximately 5 miles northeast of the subject property, the site may be exposed to substantial groundshaking during a major earthquake on this fault. Potential ground motions resulting from earthquakes on this and other regional faults have

been known to cause severe structural damage. There is also a threat of seismically induced settlement, should strong groundshaking occur. These issues have been considered and are discussed in Section III-E. These impacts will be minimized to the greatest extent practical through the implementation of numerous mitigation measures set forth in the EIR. Equally important, structures built on the Museum Market Plaza site will be constructed in accordance with the construction standards of the Palm Springs Fire Department, the Palm Springs Building Codes, and the seismic engineering requirements of the Uniform Building Code (UBC). Particular care will be used in design approvals, and in grading and compacting fill areas and engineering manufactured slopes. The proposed project will be subject to the same standards and requirements as all other development projects in the City, to minimize seismic impacts on a cumulative basis.

The Museum Market Plaza is characterized by structures of moderate height with maximum building height not expected to exceed 6 stories. Such structures, built under current and future Building Codes, are expected to perform well in earthquakes. The region's essentially modern infrastructure includes an extensive program of undergrounding electric transmission lines, the use of flexible couplings in water and sewer lines, and integrated seismic design and retrofits on major transportation systems. In addition, all planned utilities will be installed in accordance with the most modern and safety-ensuring techniques. In conjunction with the structural design components incorporated into the Museum Market Plaza site, this infrastructure can be expected to limit the cumulative seismic impacts in the region as much as is feasible. The subject property represents a relatively insignificant cumulative increase to the susceptibility to seismic and other geotechnical impacts.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The presence of stored hazardous materials or the potential for the prior release and migration of hazardous materials tends to be site specific and is determined primarily by historical and present land uses at the project site and surrounding sites. The ability of contaminants to migrate onto a site is determined in part by depth and flow of groundwater, the presence or absence of physical barriers, and other topographical conditions. As discussed in Section III-E of this EIR, with the exception of the mitigatable 3 percent asbestos fiber identified in the Desert Fashion Plaza Phase I Environmental Assessment, and the likely occurrence of asbestos and lead paint in the Town and Country Center, there is no evidence of recognized environmental concerns in connection with the project site or the surrounding properties including past, present, or potential releases of hazardous substances and with the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant impacts are anticipated.

Growth and development within Downtown Palm Springs will result in urban activities that will involve the storage and handling of hazardous materials, potentially exposing people or property to a hazard. The regulatory environment, which involves federal, state and local regulations and standards, is based on scientific-based risk assessment standards and implemented to minimize the hazard risks that may occur.

Although the project will not result in development that uses or produces large volumes of hazardous materials or wastes, universal hazardous wastes will be generated on site. However, project development will not generate, use, or dispose of hazardous materials in quantities which

could pose significant impacts to the public's health and will not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste in a manner which would result in cumulative hazardous materials impacts. The project's incremental contribution to cumulative effects on hazards and hazardous materials is less than significant.

Hydrology

Drainage facilities called for in the Museum Market Plaza Specific Plan are designed to intercept, capture and convey stormwater runoff from the developed portions of the project site to a system of on-site retention basins. The on-site drainage system will retain both tributary flows and those generated on site. These facilities are designed as an integrated part of the City's Master Drainage Plan system being applied throughout the City. The Master Drainage Plan is designed to accommodate General Plan build out, and sizes facilities to include sufficient capacity for all planned development. No significant hydrology-related cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Water Resources

Over the past two decades, the Coachella Valley has experienced significant growth. As the population continues to grow, water demand increases. The historic and continued depletion of regional groundwater has resulted in a condition known as overdraft, in which the demand for groundwater exceeds the amount of water recharged to the groundwater basin. The Palm Springs Subarea of the Whitewater River Subbasin underlies the Museum Market Plaza Specific Plan site. Assuming an even distribution of overdraft throughout the Upper Whitewater River Subbasin, and that the Palm Springs Subarea represents 32.4 percent, the aquifer serving the City and project vicinity was in an overdraft condition of approximately 96,168 acre-feet in 2007 (see the Museum Market Plaza WSA, Appendix E). The importation of Colorado River water for the purpose of groundwater recharge has helped reduce, but not eliminate, the level of overdraft in the upper basins. DWA has adopted policies and programs aimed at enhancing water conservation efforts and reducing overall water demand generated by all sectors of the community.

The implementation of Title 24 conservation measures such as low flow fixtures, the extensive use of native and other drought tolerant landscaping materials, and the possible future availability of recycled water for irrigation purposes, may also reduce cumulative impacts. Nonetheless, continued development in the Valley will result in an increased demand for this precious resource.

Section III-G analyzes the Museum Market Plaza project's anticipated demand for water and sets forth mitigation measures that reduce project impacts to levels that are less than significant. In relation to other land uses, such as golf courses, high density residential and commercial developments are not considered a high volume water consumer. Build out of the Museum Market Plaza project is expected to generate a demand for approximately 194.3 acre-feet of water per year, representing an approximate 99% increase in the current existing water usage of 64.9 acre-feet of water per year on the subject property. Water use on the property currently is inefficient due to the age of structures, and the implementation of the proposed project will increase efficiency and reduce water use. The WSA, and the analysis in Section III-G, demonstrate that the DWA have sufficient water supplies to serve the proposed project and other

development in the long term, and have the ability to replenish water supplies, also for the long term. Although the proposed project and other projects planned or proposed in the future will cumulatively increase the demand for domestic water, this demand is not expected to have a significant effect on water resources.

Land Use and Planning

The proposed project includes the redevelopment of an underutilized commercial site with residential, commercial and resort land uses. The project site is surrounded by commercial and resort development, and adjacent to existing neighborhoods. The intensity of the proposed project will be incorporated into the General Plan land use intensities. The implementation of the Specific Plan was addressed as a target of the General Plan, as well as the City's Redevelopment Plan. Land use types proposed are consistent with those surrounding the project site, and will not conflict with them. The proposed project will not have a significant cumulative impact on land use and planning.

Noise

Noise levels in the project area are currently elevated, due to the urban location of the proposed project. As described in Section III-I, existing noise levels range from 45.0 dBA CNEL to 74.5 dBA CNEL in the surrounding area. The build out of the proposed project will marginally increase these noise levels, and will also introduce sensitive receptors to the area, in the form of permanent residents. The Noise Analysis for the proposed project also included a Year 2030 analysis, which is considered to be General Plan build out. That analysis found that noise levels in the vicinity of the proposed project, although significant, can be mitigated, through implementation of General Plan policies and noise attenuation measures applied to individual projects. Therefore, long term cumulative impacts associated with noise will be less than significant.

Development of the proposed project will also result in construction noise, which by its nature is temporary and periodic. Similarly, other development projects in the area, as they occur, will generate construction noise which will be temporary and periodic. It is unlikely that a large number of projects would be under construction at the same time, and in the same intensity immediately surrounding the project site. All projects will be required to implement similar mitigation measures to those included in Section III of this EIR for this project. As a result, construction noise impacts are not expected to be cumulatively significant.

Public Services and Utilities

As discussed in Section III-K of this Draft EIR, the proposed project may have a significant impact upon public services without mitigation, and could contribute to a cumulative impact upon public services. The Specific Plan proposes an intensive level of development and a mix of hotel, commercial, retail, and restaurant uses that will maximize periods of active use and draw greater numbers of people downtown. The inclusion of residential uses is expected to introduce approximately 2,000 new residents to the area.

The Palm Springs Police Department may be impacted by the proposed project because of an increased demand for surveillance and protection services. The provision of protection services within the Specific Plan will not increase the operational area of the City's Police Department. The Specific Plan also includes a comprehensive range of defensive design features that will

enhance safety for users and residents while optimizing site surveillance by Police officers and on-site security personnel, reducing the need for active police responses. Mitigation measures included in Section III will assure that the impacts to the Police Department are less than significant.

Build out of the Museum Market Plaza will also have an impact on the Palm Springs Fire Department, by generating an increased demand for fire protection services in the City. However, these negative impacts will be mitigated by implementing the mitigation measures included in Section III. Similarly, other projects will participate in the expansion of services, and the City-wide Community Facilities District for Fire and Police protection, which would assure that adequate levels of service are maintained throughout the City. These standard requirements will assure that impacts to Police and Fire services are not cumulatively significant.

The land uses proposed under the Specific Plan are not anticipated to produce unusually high quantities of solid waste. However, the build out of the proposed Specific Plan and other projects will result in an increase in the volume of solid waste generated over time.

Development of the project site will also result in an increased demand on existing wastewater collection and treatment facilities the addition to existing pipes to service the project site. However, based on the analyses provided in this EIR, the impacts to the City's sanitary sewer facilities are expected to be less than significant and will not contribute to adverse cumulative impacts.

As stated above, development of the Museum Market Plaza project may increase the need within the City for police and fire protection. The City has established a Community Facilities District (CFD) through the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act in order help finance its public facilities and services, including fire and police protection. The project is not expected to have significant cumulative impacts on the City's schools, parks, medical facilities, libraries, electricity or natural gas provisions, and therefore will not result in a cumulatively considerable impact upon public services in conjunction with other projects or conditions.

The EIR provides a full range of mitigation measures designed to assure that project-related demand for public facilities and services does not outstrip the capabilities of the providers. Based upon these mitigation measures, no significant cumulative impacts to facilities or service capabilities are expected to result from this project.

Traffic/Circulation

Traffic analysis is, by its nature, a cumulative analysis. The Traffic Impact Analysis prepared for the proposed project (AppendixG), and summarized in Section III-M, demonstrates that with the implementation of mitigation measures, the proposed project will not have significant impacts on the City's circulation system. Included in the analysis were 15 cumulative projects identified by the City in the project vicinity, to assure that the analysis included project approved or in the process of being approved. Finally, the traffic analysis includes an analysis of year 2030 traffic conditions, which is assumed to be General Plan build out. The analysis found that at build out of the General Plan, impacts would be less than significant, with the implementation of roadway

improvements planned for in the General Plan. Therefore, cumulative impacts associated with traffic and circulation are expected to be less than significant.