

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This EIR has been prepared to evaluate environmental effects that would result from development of the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan (proposed project) in the Town of Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, California. The Town of Yucca Valley is the Lead Agency and has the responsibility for preparing and certifying this EIR prior to consideration of the proposed project. The Town of Yucca Valley has the authority to make decisions regarding discretionary actions relating to implementation of the proposed project. This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document to be used by the Town in assessing the environmental effects of the proposed project and mitigation measures recommended to avoid or minimize identified significant impacts. This document is also a public disclosure document available to agencies and the public for review and comment prior to consideration of the discretionary actions required for project approval.

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL PROCEDURES – CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

Approval of the proposed project requires discretionary actions by the Town of Yucca Valley. The discretionary actions include the approval of a specific plan, a tentative parcel map, a conditional use permit (CUP) for the fueling station, a CUP for the fast-food restaurant with drive-through lane, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), and a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP). Because of these discretionary actions to be considered by the Town, CEQA requires that the proposed project be reviewed to determine the environmental effects that would result if the project is approved and implemented.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) that the Town of Yucca Valley was preparing an EIR for the proposed project was distributed on July 22, 2004. The NOP, describing the project and issues to be addressed, was distributed to the State Clearinghouse, responsible agencies, and other interested parties for a 30-day review period. The objective of distributing an NOP is to identify and determine the full range and scope of environmental issues of concern so that these issues might be fully examined in the EIR. Comments received during the NOP process have been addressed in the applicable sections of this document. The NOP, distribution list, and public agency comments on the NOP received by the Town of Yucca Valley are included in Appendix A.

A public scoping meeting was held for the proposed project on August 2, 2004, at 6:00 p.m. in the Yucca Valley Community Center located at 57090 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley, California. Its purpose was to determine the views of the public as to the scope and content of the environmental information that should be considered in connection with the proposed project. Notice of this meeting was sent to responsible and trustee agencies and all interested parties requesting such notice. In addition, an announcement of the meeting was placed in the local newspaper. Approximately 45 persons in addition to those involved with the project were in attendance and signed the sign-in sheet.

During the public scoping meeting, seven individuals commented on the proposed project. General issues raised by persons commenting verbally during the public scoping meeting included potential impacts associated with aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, noise, traffic, and water resources. Specifically, the issues regarding aesthetics related to light glare from the proposed project and the potential for market impacts creating more vacant buildings in Town. Air quality concerns were related to dust control during construction. Concerns regarding traffic included congestion along Avalon Avenue and Yucca Trail and site access in relation to the curve along SR-62. Biological issues included the loss of yucca and Joshua trees and other plant and animal species on the project site. General concerns regarding water resources and noise were expressed.

A total of 28 comment forms containing written comments were received following the scoping meeting. Issues contained in the written comments received after the scoping meeting included support for and general concerns regarding the proposed project. Written comments in support of the project referred to the potential for an increase in community growth, job opportunity, and additional tax revenue. General concerns regarding the project included the potential for impacts associated with aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, economic impacts, traffic, water resources, septic system usage, and noise. Similar to verbal comments at the public scoping meeting, concerns regarding aesthetics included light glare from the project and its effect on the night sky. Additional comments relative to aesthetics included the obstruction of views, architectural character and its relationship to the existing setting, the existing Wal-Mart building that would be vacated upon implementation of the proposed project, and other buildings that may be vacated due to Wal-Mart's market effect on existing businesses. Comments regarding air quality included air pollution and diesel exhaust from construction, and air pollution from increased traffic. Comments relative to biological resources included the displacement of wildlife and loss of Joshua trees. Comments relating to economic impacts included loss of local businesses and jobs, the potential for blight, and loss of a small town atmosphere. Traffic delays along SR-62 and congestion on Yucca Trail were cited as concerns. Comments relative to water resources and septic system usage included runoff from the project site into Paradise Valley/Airport, other project flood control impacts, demands on water supply, and the contamination of the groundwater aquifer. Issues relative to noise were general concerns regarding the noise generated by the construction and operation of the proposed project.

2.2 BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The project site currently consists of one legally defined parcel. The parcel, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 0601-201-37, encompasses approximately 25.51 acres and is located at the southeast corner of State Route (SR) 62 and Avalon Avenue in Yucca Valley. Currently, it is undeveloped. No past uses are known for the parcel.

2.3 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT DISCUSSED IN THE EIR

The Town has determined that an EIR is required to fully evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project. These issue areas or EIR topics, addressed in detail in this EIR, include the following:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Urban Decay

2.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Description of Cumulative Projects

Section 15130 of the *CEQA Guidelines* requires that an EIR include a discussion of the potential cumulative impacts of a proposed project. Cumulative impacts are defined as two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the development when added to the impacts of other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable or probable future developments. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor, but collectively significant, developments taking place over a period of time. The *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15130 (a) and (b), state:

- (a) *Cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable.*
- (b) *The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided of the effects attributable to the project. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.*

The cumulative baseline for this project includes past, present, and probable future projects, which are either approved or being considered for approval, or anticipated to be submitted for consideration, including projects in the design phase or under construction. In determining the cumulative impacts of a proposed project with other area projects, an EIR may either consider a list of past, present, and probable future projects, or it may consider a summary of projections method.¹ The Draft EIR will use a combination of both methods. The cumulative analysis for Traffic (Section 4.15) includes traffic volumes for year 2007 and year 2030 baseline conditions. Year 2007 volumes were developed by increasing existing traffic volumes by an annual rate of four percent per year over two years to reflect estimated growth from development projects throughout the Town.² Additional traffic volume

¹ State *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15130(b)(1).

² Existing traffic volumes obtained from *Home Depot Traffic Impact Analysis*, Albert Grover and Associates, summer 2005.

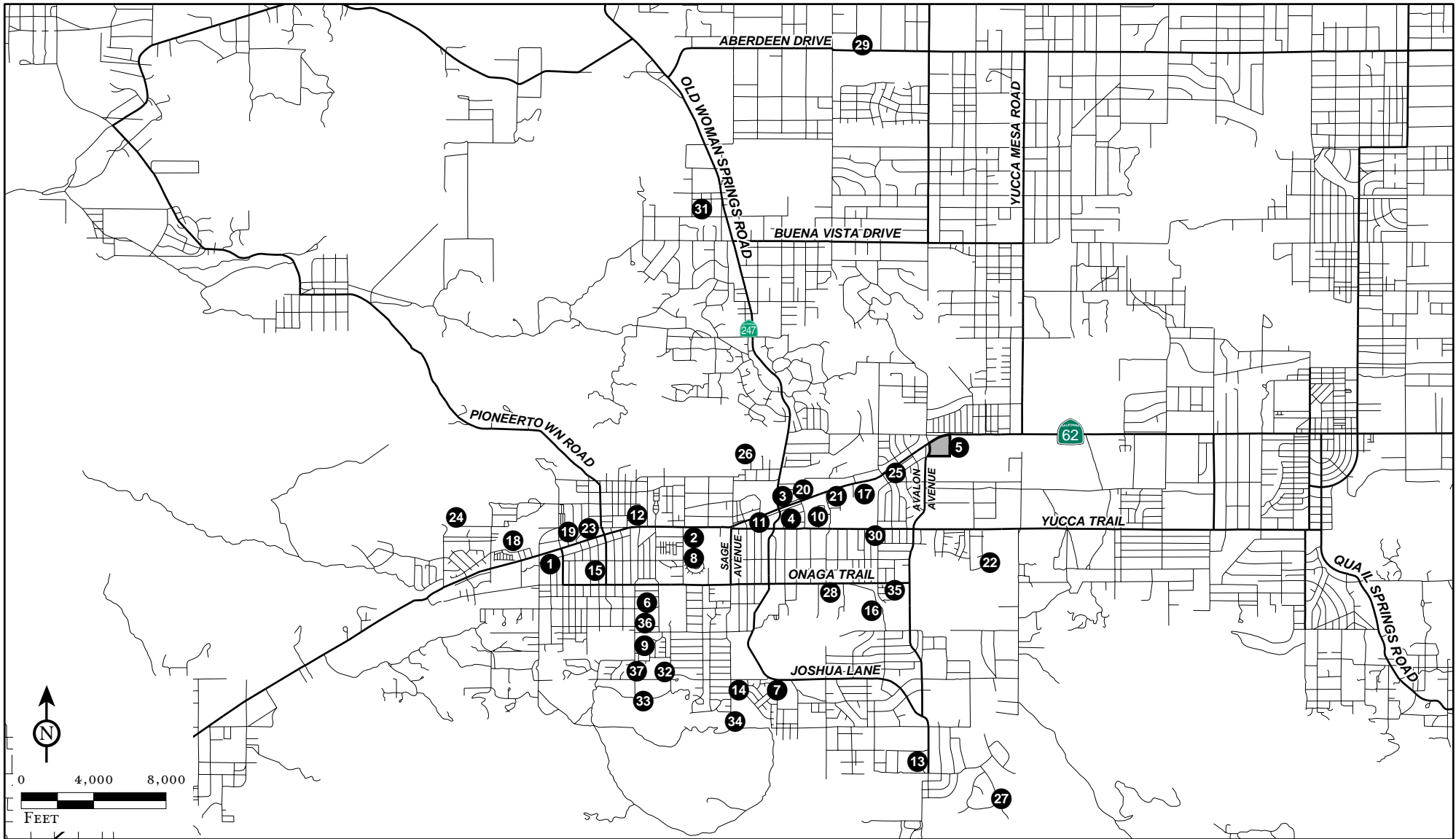
increases were developed for the study area roadways and intersections based on estimated trip generation from the Town's list of projects that are under construction, approved, or in design. These projects are shown in Figure 2.1 and summarized in Table 2.A (following Figure 2.1). Year 2030 volumes were developed based on the Town of Yucca Valley traffic model projections as contained in the General Plan EIR, which account for future increases in traffic volumes from development consistent with the General Plan Land Use Element, Land Use designation. The traffic volumes are in turn used to generate the cumulative baseline in the traffic, air, and noise analyses. Similar to the traffic analysis, air quality and noise impacts are analyzed in 2007 and 2030. Accordingly, the Draft EIR provides an estimate of growth in the Town based on the projections and list of projects methods, and utilizes those growth estimates in determining whether the project would have cumulatively significant impacts.

The baseline used to assess cumulative impacts on the other topics (Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, and Utilities and Service Systems) was based on a list of present and probable future projects which are either under construction, approved, or in the design phase. Sources for these projects include projects proposed in the Town of Yucca Valley. Figure 2.1 shows the locations of the projects and Table 2.A lists the cumulative projects considered in this analysis. All of these projects have been or will be the subject of separate environmental review. The cumulative impact analysis is provided in each issue area section of the EIR (e.g., Biological Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality) after the discussion on impacts of the proposed project.

2.5 DOCUMENT FORMAT

To assist the reader's review of the document, the following describes the format of the EIR.

- *Section 1.0* contains the Executive Summary of the EIR document, listing all project impacts, mitigation measures that have been recommended to reduce any significant impacts of the proposed project, and the level of significance of each impact following mitigation. The summary is presented in a matrix (tabular) format.
- *Section 2.0* contains a discussion of the EIR's purpose, background, and legal requirements, as well as this outline of the document's format. A summary discussion of the effects found not to be significant is also included in this section. In addition, a discussion on cumulative projects is provided.
- *Section 3.0* contains the description of the proposed project, including location and project objectives.
- *Section 4.0* contains the environmental analysis of the proposed project. Discussion of existing setting, impacts, and mitigation by environmental topic (e.g., traffic, air quality, etc.) is generally organized under the following framework:
 - *Existing Setting.* Information in the existing setting contains a detailed discussion of the local and regional environmental conditions (both naturally occurring and man-made) in existence at the time the EIR was prepared. Existing setting information provides the reader with the "baseline" from which future impacts are analyzed, and provides a standard against which to measure these impacts.



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FIGURE 2.1

- PROJECT AREA
- CUMULATIVE PROJECTS

*Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Cumulative Projects*

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Table 2.A – Cumulative Projects in the Town of Yucca Valley

Map #	Project	Location	Description
Y1	SPR-03-01	South of SR-62, north of Santa Fe Trail and east of Kickapoo Trail.	8,000-square foot addition to existing building
Y2	SPR-01-04 and PM 16204	Southeast corner of SR-62 and Palm Avenue.	94-room hotel
Y3	CUP-07-03 and Vesting PM 16506	Northeast corner of SR-62 and SR-247.	3,220-square foot fast-food restaurant with drive-through lane and a proposal to merge four existing parcels into a single 1.5 acre site
Y4	SPR-01-03	Outer Highway South, approximately 300 feet east of Joshua Lane.	Multi-tenant commercial complex including a 4 bay self serve car wash, a 1,808 square foot laundromat, and a 4,620 square foot retail building
Y5	Home Depot Center	South of SR-62, approximately 1,600 feet east of Avalon Avenue.	137,283-square foot Home Depot building; 34,610 square feet of unspecified retail; 3,000-square foot restaurant.
Y6	TM-16587 GPA-01-04	Northeast corner of Acoma Trail and Zuni Trail.	57 residential lots on 33 acres
Y7	GPA-02-04	Bounded by Long Canyon Wash on the west and south, Hardesty Drive on the east, and Golden Bee Drive and Joshua Lane on the north.	General Plan amendment from rural living to single-family residential
Y8	PD-01-04 TM 16471	East side of Palm Avenue, approximately 375 feet south of SR-62.	106-lot manufactured housing park
Y9	TM 16957	800 feet south of Joshua Drive on the east side of Acoma Trail.	34 lots on 20 acres
Y10	SPR-02-04 and V-02-04	Southeast corner of Palo Alto and Alta Vista Drive.	6 multifamily units
Y11	SPR-03-04	Outer highway, approximately 200 feet east of Dumosa Avenue.	4,754-square foot animal hospital
Y12	CUP-03-01	Mohawk Trail approximately 260 feet north of SR-62.	2,000-square foot wholesale plumbing service and supply facility
Y13	TM 16786	300 feet west of Joshua Lane on the south side of Vera Lane.	Divide 10 acres into 4 parcels, each 2.5 acres

Table 2.A – Cumulative Projects in the Town of Yucca Valley

Map #	Project	Location	Description
Y14	PM 16561	West side of Selecta Avenue at the northerly terminus of Selecta Avenue.	Divide a 1.28-acre parcel into 0.48-acre and 0.81-acre parcels
Y15	PM 16435	Southeast corner of Pueblo Trail and Elk Trail.	3 residential lots ranging in size from 9,500 square feet to 15,200 square feet
Y16	PM 16512	Northeast corner of Megan Court and Taos Trail and southeast corner of Taos Trail and Hanford Avenue.	Subdivide 2 parcels with existing single-family homes into 4 parcels.
Y17	CUP-02-03	Southeast corner of SR-62 and Dryden Drive.	Two auto dealerships
Y18	SPR-02-03 and TM 16649	Northwest corner of Camino del Ciso and Martinez Trail.	40 condominium dwelling units
Y19	SPR-05-04	Northwest corner of SR-62 and Hopi Trail.	17,786-square foot professional office and retail building
Y20	SPR-04-04	Outer Highway North, approximately 200 feet west of Airway.	15,840-square foot professional office and retail building
Y21	Kmart reuse	Southwest corner of Warren Vista Drive and SR-62.	15,000-square foot retail and 46,000-square foot medical/professional office building
Y22	Century Homes	West of La Contenta Road, south of Yucca Trail.	1,400 single-family homes
Y23	SPR-08-05	Northwest corner of Fox Trail and SR-62.	2,659 square foot office/retail building
Y24	CUP-05-04	Northwest corner of Hopi Trail and Benecia Trail	73,738-square foot mini storage facility, including 380 storage units
Y25	SPR-06-04	Corner of Palisade Drive and Lennox Avenue	12 unit apartment complex
Y26	TM 16787	Northerly of Crestview Drive and westerly of Old Woman Springs Road	Subdivide 98 acres into 54 residential lots
Y27	TM 16733	East of Carmilita Circle and west of the eastern town boundary	Subdivide 90 acres into 17 residential parcels
Y28	TM 11740	South side of Onaga Trail between Warren Vista Avenue and Hilton Avenue	91 condominium units
Y29	SPR-01-06/EA-07-06	7500 Camino Del Cielo	1,200-square foot conference room addition to existing hotel

Table 2.A – Cumulative Projects in the Town of Yucca Valley

Map #	Project	Location	Description
Y30	TM 17328	Southwest corner of Emerson Avenue and Yucca Trail	Subdivide 9.35 acres into 17 residential lots
Y31	CUP-02-05	West of SR-247, east of Canyon Lane, north of Paseo La Ninas	Mini storage and RV facility, including 317 storage units and 38 vehicle storage spaces
Y32	TM 17354	South of Carlyle Drive, between Church Street and Cholla Avenue	Subdivide 87 acres into 61 residential lots
Y33	TM 18018	Approximately 1,200 feet south of Golden Bees Drive, adjacent to and east of the South Yucca Wash	Subdivide 4 parcels into 12 residential lots
Y34	TM 17862 GPA-01-06 RZ-01-06	South of Bee Drive, east of Sage Avenue	Subdivide 4 parcels into 105 lots, rezone RL-5 to RS-3.5
Y35	TM 17633	Southwest corner Palomar Avenue and Onaga Trail	Subdivide 42.64 acres into 61 residential lots
Y36	TM 17378/ EA-17-05	Southeast corner of Acoma Trail and Joshua Drive.	Subdivide 18.4 acres into 32 residential lots
Y37	TM17379/ EA-18-05	North of Golden Bee Drive, and East of Acoma Trail	Subdivide 18.4 acres into 32 residential lots

Note: CUP- conditional use permit; GPA-General Plan amendment; PM- parcel map; SPR- site plan review; TM- tract map; V-variance

- *Existing Policies and Regulations.* Policies, standards, regulations, and other requirements applicable to the proposed project are identified. These requirements were obtained from the Town’s General Plan, zoning ordinance and other applicable documents from regional agencies. Existing policies and regulations provide the reader with the requirements applicable to the proposed project, including implementation of existing measures that are considered to be part of the project design or otherwise inherent to the project.
- *Thresholds of Significance.* Determinations regarding the significance of potential impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project are provided.
- *Impacts and Mitigation Measures.* An analysis of potential impacts of the proposed project construction and operation is presented in this section. This discussion focuses on the impacts of implementation of the proposed project, and includes potential short-term/long-term and direct/indirect project impacts, and consistency with applicable planning documents or regulations including the Town of Yucca Valley General Plan. Mitigation measures are identified to reduce the severity of potentially significant impacts of the proposed project, including references to the measures timing and the party(ies) responsible for implementation. A conclusionary statement as to whether implementation of the proposed mitigation would reduce the proposed project’s impacts to a level that is less than significant is provided.

- *Cumulative Impacts.* Analysis of the potential cumulative project impacts in conjunction with reasonably foreseeable development within the study area are identified in this section. This discussion focuses on the potential environmental effects of the proposed project when combined with the potential build out of future planned development associated with the Town's General Plan.
- *Section 5.0* contains discussions of additional topics required by CEQA, including long-term effects of the proposed project, significant irreversible environmental changes, and growth inducing impacts.
- *Section 6.0* contains discussion of alternatives to development of the proposed project. As allowed by CEQA, most of the impacts of these alternatives are evaluated at a more general level than the analyses in Chapter 4.0. This chapter evaluates the proposed effects of the No Project, Commercial/Office, Off-site, and Reduced Intensity Commercial Alternatives and identifies the Environmentally Superior Alternative.
- *Sections 7.0, 8.0, and 9.0* contain listings of organizations and persons consulted in preparation of the EIR, reference documents used, and the EIR preparers.
- The *Appendices* (under separate cover) contain copies of the NOP comment letters, technical reports (see following section), and any relevant correspondence received during the course of the proposed project.

2.6 TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS

Several technical reports have been prepared for the proposed project and have been referenced/cited in this EIR. The technical reports included in the appendix to this EIR include:

- Appendix B: Air Quality Impact Analysis, LSA Associates, Inc., August 2006.
- Appendix C: Biological Resources Report, LSA Associates, Inc., September 2004.
- Appendix D: Desert Tortoise Focused Survey, LSA Associates, Inc., February 2005.
- Appendix E: Desert Tortoise Presence/Absence Survey, Thomas Leslie Corporation, May 29, 2006.
- Appendix F: Biological Reconnaissance Survey, Michael Brandman Associates, October 13, 2005.
- Appendix G: Native Plant Survey, Michael Brandman Associates, May 22, 2006.
- Appendix H: Cultural Resources Assessment, LSA Associates, Inc., September 2004.
- Appendix I: Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Proposed Wal-Mart Store #1915-03 Gas Station and Future Retail Outparcels, Krazan & Associates, Inc., December 22, 2003.
- Appendix J: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment prepared for Wal-Mart Store No 1915-03 Yucca Valley, CA, Alaska Petroleum Environmental Engineering, Inc., September 2005.
- Appendix K: Hydrologic and Hydraulic Analysis, Development Resources Consultants, Inc, February 2005.
- Appendix L: Noise Impact Study, LSA Associates, Inc., August 2006.

- Appendix M: Traffic Study, LSA Associates, Inc., August 2006.
- Appendix N: Site Distance Analysis, RBF Consulting, July 2005.
- Appendix O: Market Impact Analysis for Avalon Avenue Retail Center, The Natelson Company, Inc., June 2006.

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