

5.0 ADDITIONAL TOPICS REQUIRED BY CEQA

5.1 SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Table 5.A shows the significant unavoidable impacts anticipated to result from the proposed project, even with implementation of the project-specific mitigation measures identified in Section 4.0.

Table 5.A – Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot Be Avoided

Topic	Type of Impact	Impact
Air Quality	Short-term Construction Emissions Air	Estimated air emissions during construction, even with mitigation, are assumed to remain significant and unavoidable for NO _x , and PM ₁₀ .
Air Quality	Long-term Operational Emissions Air	With mitigation, total emissions from operation of the project for ROC, NO _x and PM ₁₀ would exceed the MDAQMD daily emissions thresholds.
Air Quality	Cumulative Air Emissions	The Mojave Desert Air Basin does not meet the State and Federal ambient air quality standard for O ₃ and PM ₁₀ . Project emissions would contribute to this non-attainment status.
Noise	Short-term Construction Noise Levels	With implementation of the identified mitigation measures, short-term construction-related noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The *CEQA Guidelines* mandate that the EIR must address any significant irreversible environmental changes which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented (*CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126(c)). An impact would fall into this category if:

- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources;
- The primary and secondary impacts of the project would generally commit future generations to similar uses;
- The project involves uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental incidents associated with the project; or
- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project results in wasteful use of energy).

Determining whether the proposed project may result in significant irreversible effects requires a determination of whether key resources would be degraded or destroyed in such a way that there would be little possibility of restoring them. While the project will permanently commit the site to urban development, no significant agricultural, cultural, mineral, or scenic resources will be lost as a

result of project implementation. Natural resources in the form of construction materials and energy resources will be utilized in the construction of the proposed project, and energy resources in the form of electricity and gas will be used during the long-term operations of the project; however, their use is not expected to negatively impact the availability of these resources. The proposed project will affect existing land use and establish long-term urban use for the Town and surrounding communities.

5.3 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

CEQA requires a discussion of ways in which the proposed project could be growth inducing. The *CEQA Guidelines* identify a project as growth inducing if it fosters economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing either directly (such as by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (such as through extension of roads or other infrastructure) in the surrounding environment (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.2(d)).

CEQA does not assume that growth inducement is necessarily detrimental or beneficial to the environment. Typically, growth inducing potential of a project would be considered significant if it were to foster growth or a concentration of population in excess of what is assumed in pertinent master plans and land use plans (such as the Town of Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan*). Significant growth impacts could also occur if the project provides infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth beyond the levels currently permitted by local or regional plans and policies.

The Town of Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan* (1995) listed the population count in Yucca Valley from a low of 5,470 in 1970 to a high of 17,254 in 1994, and it was anticipated that the population would climb as high as 18,931 in 1999. According to the California Department of Finance (DOF) counts, the population for 2000 was 16,950, and the projected population for 2005 is 19,726. This rise in population has supported the General Plan projections, albeit at a slower pace than the General Plan. Assuming the trend in population growth continues, in the space of 15 years (2005 to 2020), the population of the Town of Yucca Valley would increase from 19,726 to approximately 27,000 (see Section 4.12, Population and Housing).

The increase in employment within the Town of Yucca Valley has not kept up with the increase in population. The growth trend in employment is decreasing, as residents of the Town of Yucca Valley seek employment outside the area or become unemployed. The preliminary unemployment rate for San Bernardino County in June 2005 is 5.3 percent.¹

Utilizing employment factors of one employee for every 400 square feet of retail space and one employee for every 250 square feet of restaurant use,² the proposed project is anticipated to generate approximately 589 jobs. These jobs cannot be assumed to be newly created jobs, as a fair number of the approximately 260 employees previously employed at the vacated Wal-Mart (*Comprehensive General Plan*, page III-40) are already residing in the area. It can be surmised that approximately 329 new jobs (589 less 260) would be created by the proposed project. The increase of 329 new sales and service jobs may help the employment levels keep up with the population levels. As the new jobs

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, San Bernardino County Unemployment Rates – not seasonally adjusted.

² Burchell, Robert; Listokin, David; and Dolphin, William, Rutgers University's Center for Urban Policy Research, *Urban Development Impact Assessment Handbook*, 1994; Urban Land Institute.

created by the proposed project are likely to be filled by persons already residing in the area, the proposed project would not induce substantial population growth in the area.

The project site is currently vacant and undeveloped. The project site is zoned "General Commercial." No housing currently exists on the project site. Of the 7,952 housing units in the Town of Yucca Valley,¹ some 6,949 or 84 percent are occupied. Of the occupied housing units, 68 percent (4,723) are owner-occupied and 32 percent (2,226) are renter-occupied. There are approximately 1,000 vacant housing units located within the Town of Yucca Valley. If there were new employees who relocated to the Town of Yucca Valley, there appears to be adequate stock of housing available. Because no housing currently exists on the proposed project site, and approximately 1,000 housing units are vacant, no displacement of housing or residents will occur with this project.

The proposed project is consistent with the Town of Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan* and with Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) projections. SCAG functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for six counties: Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura and Imperial. The region encompasses a population exceeding 15 million persons in an area of more than 38,000 square miles. The Growth Forecasting Section is responsible for producing socioeconomic projections and developing, refining, and maintaining SCAG's regional and small area forecasting models. The Forecasting Section works closely with the Plans and Programs Technical Advisory Committee, DOF, subregions, local jurisdictions (such as the Town of Yucca Valley), the public, and other major stakeholders.

Yucca Valley is located within the SCAG growth forecast area. SCAG makes its projections by folding in general plan parameters (e.g., population, land use, traffic) of all local jurisdictions in its study area; thus, the Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan* is a component of SCAG projections. The proposed project is consistent with the Town of Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan*. In other words, the proposed project has been incorporated into the *Comprehensive General Plan* analysis; therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed project has also been incorporated into SCAG's socioeconomic, regional, and small area forecasting model projections. It follows that, because the Town of Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan* is a component of SCAG projections and the project is part of the *Comprehensive General Plan*, the proposed project has also been integrated into SCAG projections. The project is, therefore, consistent with (not outside the boundaries of) SCAG projections.

The proposed project does not foster growth or a concentration of population in excess of what is assumed in the Town of Yucca Valley *Comprehensive General Plan*, nor does the proposed project provide infrastructure or service capacity to accommodate growth beyond the levels currently permitted by the General Plan.

5.4 GLOBAL WARMING/GREENHOUSE GASES

The Air Quality impact analysis included as Section 4.3 of this EIR analyzes in detail impacts of the project on local and regional air quality, at both a project specific as well as cumulative level. The Air Quality analysis focuses on emissions included in the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which are promulgated by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency under authority

¹ Ibid.

granted by the Federal Clean Air Act, and the California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS), which are promulgated by the California Air Resources Board under authority of the Mulford-Carrell Act. The NAAQS and CAAQS establish the accepted standards for conducting an air quality impact analysis under CEQA.