
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the County of Riverside as the lead agency has prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to describe the anticipated environmental impacts resulting from the adoption and implementation of General Plan Amendment No. 1122 (project; proposed project). The intent of the EIR is to fully inform decision-makers in Riverside County, other responsible and trustee agencies, and the general public of the potential environmental consequences of approval and implementation of the proposed project.

1.2 KNOWN TRUSTEE AND RESPONSIBLE TRUSTEE AGENCIES

For the purpose of CEQA, the term *trustee agency* means a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project, which are held in trust for the people of the state of California. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is a trustee agency with regard to the fish and wildlife of the state and designated rare or endangered native plants.

In CEQA, the term *responsible agency* includes all public agencies other than the lead agency that may have discretionary actions associated with the implementation of the proposed project or an aspect of the proposed project. The following agencies may have some role in implementing the proposed project and have been identified as potential responsible agencies:

- California Department of Housing and Community Development
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
- Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board
- South Coast Air Quality Management District

1.3 TYPE OF DOCUMENT

The State CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a program EIR pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a):

A program EIR is a first-tier EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

- 1) Geographically,
- 2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions,
- 3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or
- 4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

The program-level analysis in this EIR considers the broad environmental effects of the overall proposed project. This EIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects (public and private) under GPA 1122 consistent with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. When further development plans or individual projects/activities under the project are proposed, the County will be required to examine the proposals or activities to determine whether their effects were adequately analyzed

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in this EIR. If the projects or activities would have no effects beyond those analyzed in this EIR, no further environmental review would be required. If there would be impacts beyond those evaluated in this EIR, the County will need to determine the extent of subsequent environmental analysis. There are two methods by which additional environmental analysis will be conducted. For projects that need a discretionary action such as a use permit or parcel map, the County will conduct additional analysis pursuant to CEQA for those projects.

For those projects allowed by right in the Mixed Use Area and Highest Density Residential R-7 zoning classification, the County will require submittal of documentation with the site plan approval request which shows compliance with the mitigation measures of this EIR, general and specific plan policies, state permit requirements, and other development-related policies and requirements of Riverside County. This separate process is necessary due to the CEQA exemption resulting from Government Code Section 65583.2i which states:

65583.2

- (i) For purposes of this section and Section 65583, the phrase “use by right” shall mean that the local government’s review of the owner-occupied or multifamily residential use may not require a conditional use permit, planned unit development permit, or other discretionary local government review or approval that would constitute a “project” for purposes of Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code. Any subdivision of the sites shall be subject to all laws, including, but not limited to, the local government ordinance implementing the Subdivision Map Act. A local ordinance may provide that “use by right” does not exempt the use from design review. However, that design review shall not constitute a “project” for purposes of Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code. Use by right for all rental multifamily residential housing shall be provided in accordance with subdivision (f) of Section 65589.5.

This provision of the government code precludes the County from requiring additional CEQA analysis of projects allowed by right on property designated to meet the Regional Housing Needs Assessment. The requirement to demonstrate compliance with all development regulations is included in both the Mixed Use Area and the Highest Density Residential (R-7) zone classifications that are part of the proposed project.

1.4 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of adoption and implementation of General Plan Amendment No. 1122. The EIR will serve as a source of information in the review of subsequent planning and development proposals, including environmental review of individual development proposals, as CEQA requires each of those subsequent development projects be evaluated for their particular site-specific impacts. In addition, this EIR may be used by the County to support adoption of CEQA significance thresholds pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7(b).

1.5 ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

Sections 15122 through 15132 of the State CEQA Guidelines identify the content requirements for Draft and Final EIRs. An EIR must include a description of the environmental setting, an environmental impact analysis, feasible mitigation measures to offset any significant impacts,

alternatives, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

This EIR is organized as follows:

ES – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section summarizes the characteristics of the proposed project, known areas of controversy, and issues to be resolved, and provides a summary table of the project's environmental impacts, and identification of alternatives that might reduce or avoid at least one significant environmental impact of the proposed project.

SECTION 1.0 – INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0 provides an introduction and overview describing the purpose, type, and intended use of the EIR, responsible agencies, organization and scope of the EIR, and a summary of comments received on the NOP.

SECTION 2.1 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including project objectives, project location and setting, background information, and components of the project.

SECTION 2.2 – APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This section explains the EIR's approach to analyzing the environmental impacts of the proposed project. This section also defines the terminology used to describe the environmental effects of the proposed project.

SECTION 2.3 – REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This section details the regulatory framework that may apply to the subsequent projects for each environmental issue area, as well as how specifically the policy provisions of the County General Plan coupled with the County development review process work to lessen environmental effects of development.

SECTION 3.0 – COUNTYWIDE IMPACT ANALYSIS

This section contains an analysis of each environmental issue area for portions of the proposed project that affect all of the unincorporated areas of the County. This section considers the cumulative effect of the proposed project on the County as a whole, in contrast to the analysis in this EIR of the impacts on each of the Area Plans. This section also includes a discussion of the cumulative buildout assumptions under the proposed project.

SECTIONS 4.1 THROUGH 4.10 – AREA PLANS

These sections contain analyses of each environmental issue area for project impacts unique to each Area Plan where land use changes are proposed.

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SECTION 5.0 – ALTERNATIVES

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires that an EIR describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project and avoid and/or lessen any significant environmental effects of the project. This alternatives analysis provides a comparative analysis between the merits of the project and the selected alternatives.

SECTION 6.0 – OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

This section contains discussions and analyses of various topical issues as mandated by CEQA. These include significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented, significant irreversible environmental changes, and growth-inducing impacts.

SECTION 7.0 – REPORT PREPARERS

This section lists all authors and agencies that assisted in the preparation of the EIR, by name, title, and company or agency affiliation.

APPENDICES

This section includes all notices and other procedural documents pertinent to the EIR, as well as all technical material prepared to support the analysis.

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the County prepared and issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR on June 26, 2015. The County was identified as the lead agency for the proposed project. The County solicited comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis and the EIR for the project from June 26, 2015, through August 10, 2015. The project was subsequently revised to include additional parcels not included in the original project description. Therefore, a Revised NOP was prepared and issued on October 9, 2015, to include the new parcels. The County extended the NOP comment period through November 9, 2015. Both the NOP and Revised NOP were circulated to public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed project. See **Appendix 1.0-1** for the NOP distribution list.

Issues raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP and responses by interested parties are presented in **Appendix 1.0-1** and summarized in **Table 1.0-1**.

**TABLE 1.0-1
COMMENT LETTERS**

Agency/Public Comment	Contact	Date	Area of Concern
South Coast Air Quality Management District	Barbara Radlein	July 1, 2015	Countywide
Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District	Alan J. De Salvio	July 2, 2015	Countywide
Board of Forestry and Fire Protection	Chris Browder	July 20, 2015	Countywide
Department of Transportation District 8	Mark Roberts	July 22, 2015	Countywide
Pala Tribal Historic Preservation Office	Shasta C. Gaughen	August 4, 2015	Countywide
Morongo Band of Mission Indians	Raymond Huaute	August 11, 2015	Countywide
Department of Fish and Wildlife	Leslie MacNair	August 14, 2015	Countywide
Member of Public	Ron Roy	August 16, 2015	Countywide
Southern California Association of Governments	Ping Chang	August 17, 2015	Countywide
San Bernardino County Dept. of Public Works	Nidham Aram Alrayes	August 17, 2015	Countywide
Riverside County Dept. of Environmental Health	Kristine Kim	August 17, 2015	Countywide
Coachella Valley Leadership Counsel	Michelle Hasson	August 17, 2015	Countywide
California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.	Blaz Gutierrez	August 17, 2015	Countywide
Colton Unified School District	Owen Chang	August 17, 2015	Countywide
Sierra Club/ Moreno Valley Group	George Hague	November 8, 2015	Countywide
Member of Public	Dr. F. Hormozi	June 4, 2015	Eastern Coachella Valley
City of Lake Elsinore	Caroline K. Donahoe	July 15, 2015	Elsinore Area Plan
T&B Planning Inc.	Joel Morse	June 24, 2015	Highgrove Area Plan
Riverside Public Utilities	Jay Eastman	August 17, 2015	Highgrove, Mead Valley, Nuevo, Home Gardens
Harper & Burns LLP	Alan R. Burns	July 29, 2015	Home Gardens Area Plan
Strata Equity Group, Inc.	Eric Flodine	July 7, 2015	Lakeview/Nuevo Area Plan
Airport Land Use Commission Riverside County	Edward C. Cooper	August 17, 2015	Mead Valley
Val Verde Unified School District	Stacy Strawderman	September 9, 2015	Mead Valley
Airport Land Use Commission Riverside County	John Guerin	November 9, 2015	Mead Valley
Jurupa Area Recreation and Park District	Dan Rodriguez	July 3, 2015	No Concern
Coachella Valley Archaeological Society	Fred Clewell	August 3, 2015	No Concern
Member of Public	George Hague	August 17, 2015	Nuevo/Lakeview Area Plans
City of Temecula Community Development	Dana Larsen	July 30, 2015	Southwest Area Plan
Metropolitan Water District	Deborah Drezner	August 13, 2015	Southwest Area Plan
Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control	Jennifer A. Henke	July 30, 2015	Western and Eastern Coachella
Winchester Town Association	Cindy Domenigoni	August 14, 2015	Winchester Area Plan

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SCOPING MEETINGS

Scoping meetings were held on the following dates to receive comments on the proposed project:

- August 10, 2015 – County Administrative Center, 1st Floor, Conference Room 2A, County of Riverside Administration Building, 4080 Lemon Street, Riverside, CA 92502-1409
- October 19, 2015 – Desert Permit Center, 77588 El Duna Court, Palm Desert, CA 92211

DRAFT EIR

This document constitutes the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, and identification of project impacts, as well as an analysis of project alternatives. The Draft EIR, including all of its appendices and technical studies, was distributed according to CEQA requirements and NOP requests as well as Riverside County procedures. See **Appendix 1.0-1** for distribution lists.

The proposed project, Draft EIR, appendices, and technical studies may be viewed online at:

<http://www.rctlma.org/planning>

The County has made hard copies of the proposed project, Draft EIR, appendices, and technical studies, available at both Planning Department offices in Riverside County:

County Administrative Center

4080 Lemon Street
Public Counter, 2nd Floor or
Planning Department, 12th Floor
Riverside, California 92502
Hours of Operation: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday

County Administrative Center (Palm Desert)

77588 El Duna Court
Palm Desert, California 92211
Hours of Operation: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

Following the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to written comments received during the public review period and to oral comments made at any public hearing(s) and will contain any minor edits made to the Draft EIR.

CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

As the final decision-maker regarding the proposed project, the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) will review and consider the Final EIR. If the BOS finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete," it will certify the Final EIR.

Following certification of the Final EIR, the BOS may take action to adopt, revise, or reject GPA 1122. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and Section 15093 and would explain the project's relationship to alternatives considered in this EIR.