

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

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**2.1 Purpose and Scope of Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report**

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The Specific Plan describes the proposed development of Andreas Cove, a 467.1 acre site in Riverside County south of the City of Palm Springs. A Condition of Approval of SP 211 was to work toward the implementation of a park on the site. The applicant, the County, the State, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, and the Friends of the Indian Canyons worked together and brought about the creation of the Indian Canyons Park. Based on the implementation of the park, only two parcels remain for development, Andreas Cove (52.27 acres) and the Bow parcel (38.57 acres). The intent of Specific Plan 211 Amendment No. 1 is to incorporate the detailed proposal set forth for the Andreas Cove parcel and to leave the development entitlements intact for the Bow parcel.

The Certified Environmental Impact Report prepared for the original development scenario (hotel, residential, and golf/tennis country club) remains as the umbrella environmental document. The environmental documentation has been augmented/updated for the Andreas Cove parcel with traffic, archaeology, hydrology, geomorphology and biological studies which have been adopted as an addendum.

The EIR describes the environmental impact resulting from the Comprehensive General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan, and Zone Change. The EIR is an informational document designed to provide the general public and appropriate governmental agency decision makers with a full understanding of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project. The EIR process is intended to enable public agencies to evaluate a project for determination of the significance of its effect on the environment, to examine and institute methods of reducing adverse impacts and to consider alternatives to the project as proposed.

The following Table indicates the actions covered by the EIR and responsible agencies who will use the EIR as an information document in decision making.

Action	Lead Agency
1 General Plan Amendment removing the site from the Riverside County Comprehensive General Plan Open Space and Conservation Map's Mountainous Areas designation.	Riverside County Planning Department
2 The General Plan Amendment will also remove the site from the Riverside Extended Mountain Area Plan (REMAP).	Riverside County, Planning Department
3 Approval of a Specific Plan which will be the basis for implementing the General Plan. The Specific Plan, if adopted, will appear on the Open Space and Conservation Map.	Riverside County, Planning Department.
4 Zone Changes as required to implement the Specific Plan. The actual zoning requested is described in the Draft EIR.	Riverside County, Planning Department
5 Subdivision Maps as each planning area and phase is developed.	Riverside County, Planning Department, Road Department, Engineering Department

The EIR is intended to function as a Program EIR as described in the CEQA Guidelines, Section 1168.

It should also be noted that the Tentative Tract Maps filed as a part of the subdivision process do require approval from the Planning Commission and County Board of Supervisors. Public comment can be made at the hearings on the Tentative Tract Maps.

Other agencies that will review plans (for flood control) and may use information contained in the EIR include the Corps of Engineers which has already issued a Section 404 Permit for the originally proposed flood control measures, most of which are no longer necessary. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will participate through the Section 7 review process. Also the California Department of Fish & Game may require an authorization agreement

for riparian habitat alteration as stipulation by Sections 1601 and 1603 of the California Fish and Game Code.

The scope of the EIR was established in the Notice of Preparation issued by Riverside County on April 29, 1986. All topics required by Sections 15140 through 15145 of the State Guidelines are addressed. The following concerns are emphasized:

- Landform and Topography
- Historical Land Uses
- Geology and Seismicity
- Hydrology, Flooding and Drainage
- Fire Hazard
- Open Space and Conservation
- Aesthetics, Visual Analysis
- Climate and Air Quality
- Biology
- Cultural and Historical Resources
- Public Facilities and Services
- Circulation, Traffic
- Housing
- Energy
- Cost/Revenue Analysis
- Growth Inducement
- Project Alternatives
- Community Issues

## **2.2 Historical Background**

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The Specific Plan Amendment No. 1 discussed and evaluated in this document follows substantially an earlier Park Alternative plan. With the Indian Canyons Park a reality due to the efforts of Riverside County, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the State of California, the Friends of the Indian Canyons, and the Andreas Cove Development Company, only 91 acres remain for development. This Specific Plan Amendment incorporates a 40 lot, custom single-family subdivision proposed for the Andreas Cove property and leaves intact the development entitlements for the Bow parcel as originally conferred by the Specific Plan 211.

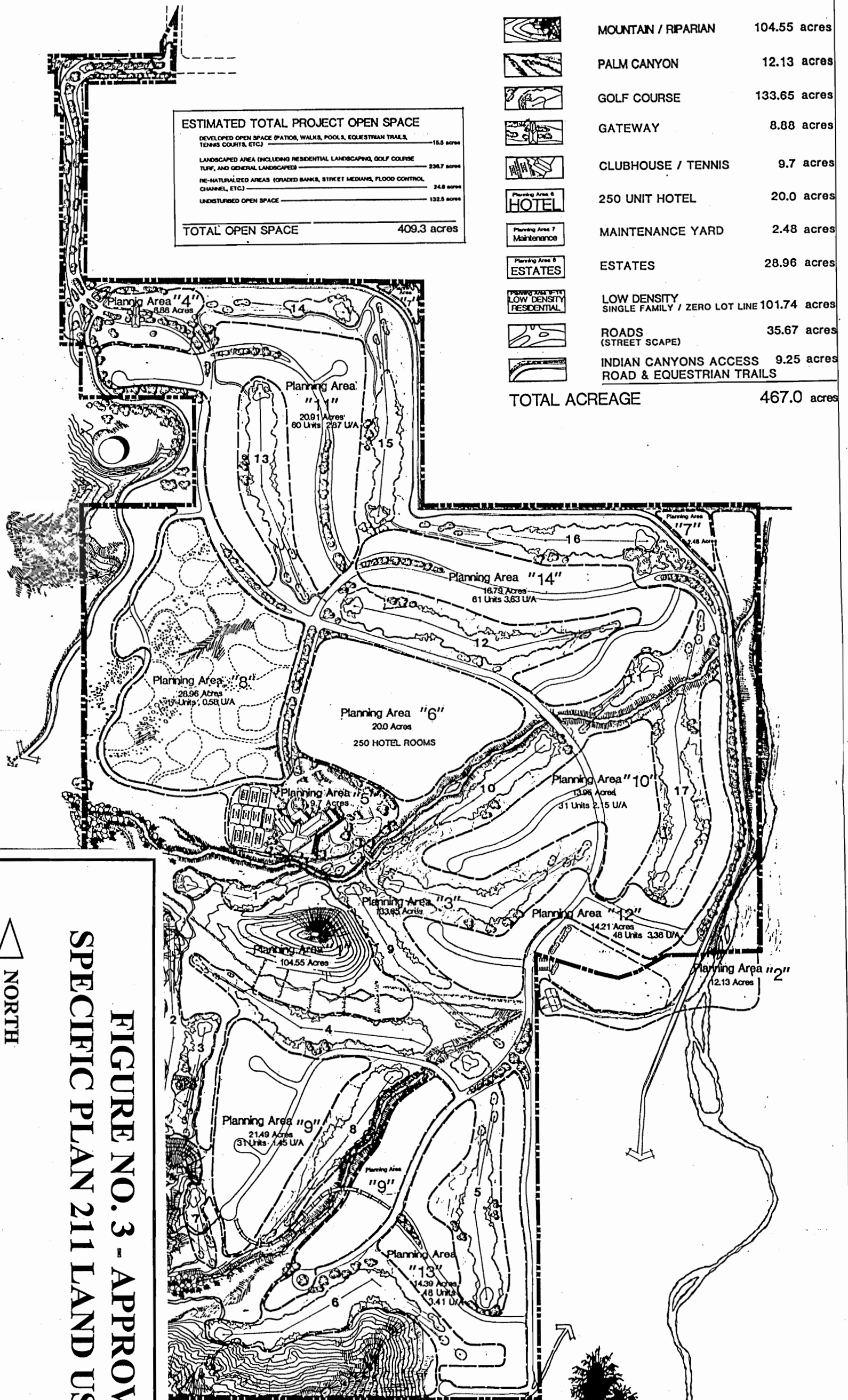
In 1983, an application to annex the Andreas Cove site to Palm Springs was filed by the developer. A plan for the site was prepared showing 900 residential units including single-family homes and attached condominium units, and an 18-hole golf course. Subsequent revisions reduced the number of units to 625. An Environmental Impact Report was prepared by Eisner-Smith and Associates to evaluate the impact of the annexation and the proposed project. A series of hearings was held before the Palm Springs City Council and Planning Commission.

Testimony from numerous organizations and individuals was given during the hearings. The major concerns raised during the hearings covered the following issues:

- Opposition to development on the site and in the area of the Indian canyons.
- Desire for a park to be established which would include the site, the scenic canyons and mountain areas. One purpose for the park would be to preserve wildlife habitats, native vegetation and cultural resources.
- Recommendation by the City Council that a Specific Plan be prepared for the entire South Palm Canyon Area.
- Request that the density of the proposed development be reduced.
- Request that buffer zones be established between the entrances to the canyons and development, and along the toe of the mountains.
- Request that there be adequate buffering along the riparian threads.

Many of the issues were addressed in the Final EIR which was adopted and certified by the Palm Springs City Council. The revised plan also responded to many of the concerns; reduced density, the area of land left undisturbed, increased and larger buffer zones particularly at the entrances to Murray and Andreas Canyons.

In submitting the proposal to Riverside County, the applicant significantly reconfigured the proposal by reducing the number of single family sites and proposing a hotel complex. Public hearings were then held by the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on the new plan/EIR and Specific Plan 211 (SP 211) was approved by Resolution 87-554 adopted by the Board of Supervisors on December 22, 1987. The original Specific Plan for Andreas Cove Country Club covered 467 acres and contemplated 295 single family lots, a 250 room resort hotel, a golf course, and related facilities (Figure 3). The Conditions of Approval for SP 211 required that the applicant negotiate in good faith to sell the subject property for the purpose of establishing a park.



**FIGURE NO. 3 - APPROVED  
SPECIFIC PLAN 211 LAND USE PLAN**



SCALE 1" = 800'

MAINIERO, SMITH AND ASSOCIATES, INC.



SP 211 - Amendment No. 1

**ANDREAS COVE**

ANDREAS COVE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY INC.

The applicant complied with that requirement, and on June 30, 1993, approximately 356 acres of property covered by SP 211 were transferred to the United States in trust for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians for the creation of an Indian Canyons Park. The purchase was financed by funds from the State of California. The County of Riverside purchased approximately 9 acres of property covered by SP 211 for park use as well. A copy of the deed transferring the property to the United States in trust for the Tribe is provided in Appendix E. The use of the property as a park was a restriction on the transfer of the property.

The applicant retained approximately 52 acres and of the original site because there were insufficient funds to purchase the entire site for Indian Park purposes. One other parcel of the original SP 211 has not been incorporated into the park; a 38.57 acre parcel held in trust for two Indian allottees ("The Bow Parcel"). There are no immediate plans for the development of that parcel. No changes are delineated herein for the Bow Parcel in Amendment No. 1 to SP 211, although that parcel, covered in part by Planning Areas 2, 7, 12 and 14, will continue to enjoy the entitlements set forth in SP 211 as approved by the Board of Supervisors.

**2.3 Project Setting**

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**2.3.1 Project Location**

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The site is located one-half mile south of the City of Palm Springs, in the Western Coachella Valley in Riverside County (see Figure 1). The vicinity map, Figure 2, shows the relationship of the site to the adjacent area.

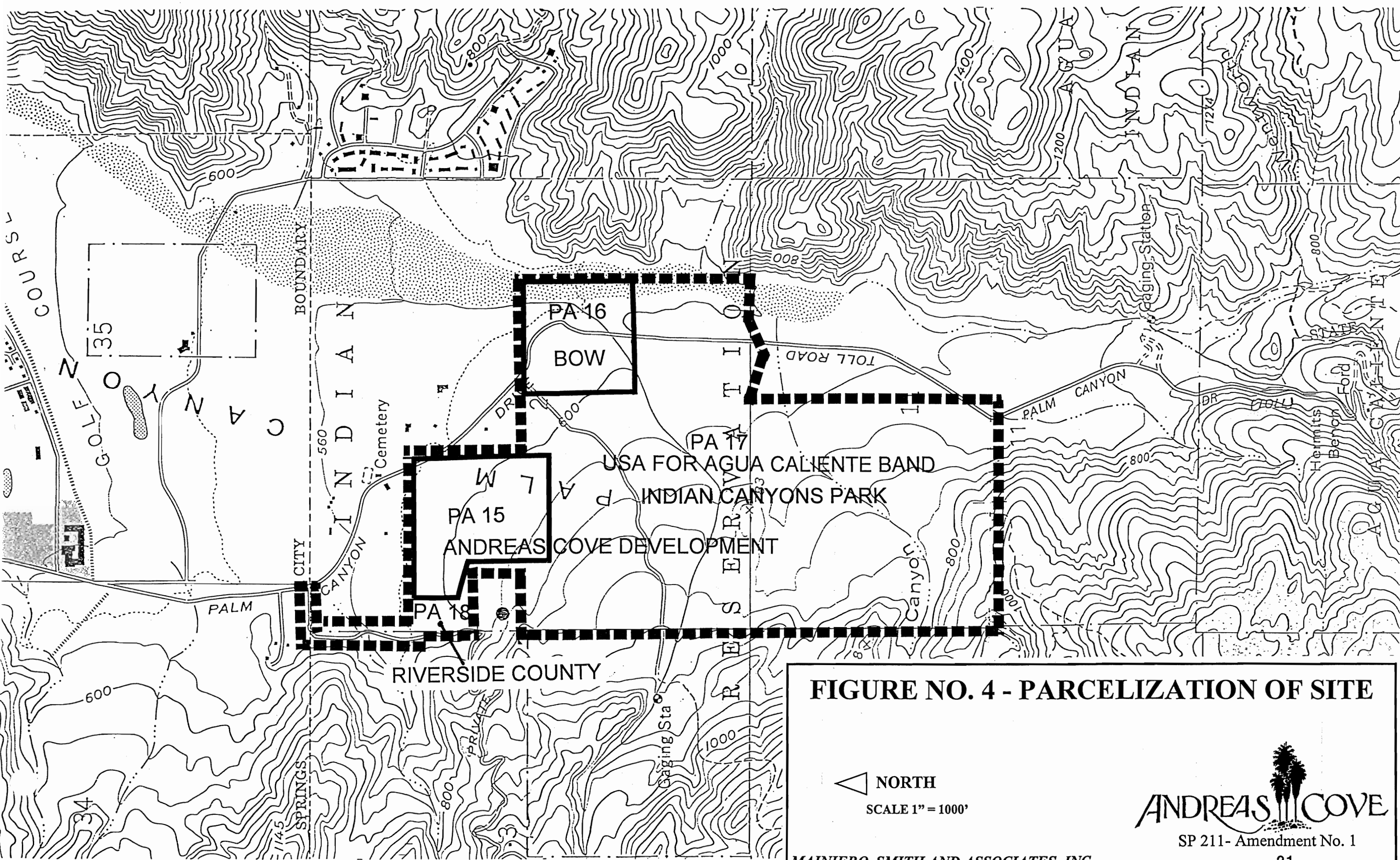
Access to the site is from the southerly terminus of South Palm Canyon Drive (dedicated portion) at Acanto Road.

**2.3.2 Project Boundaries**

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The site totals 467.1 acres. The boundaries of the site are irregular. The site is an aggregation of three separate ownerships including Andreas Cove, the Bow parcel, the Indian Canyons Park, and the access road (Andreas Cove Trail) held by Riverside County. Parcelization of the site is shown in Figure 4.





**FIGURE NO. 4 - PARCELIZATION OF SITE**

▲ NORTH  
 SCALE 1" = 1000'



### 2.3.3 Physical Setting

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The site is located in a unique setting in the southerly portion of Palm Canyon bounded by the San Jacinto Mountains on the west and the Santa Rosa Mountains on the east and south.

The site has diverse land forms ranging from alluvial cones and plains with 2% to 10% slopes to a mountain backdrop with slopes of 100%. Elevations on the site range from 580' to 760' at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains. The highest point of the site is 1,060 feet along mountainous ridges extending into the site from the west.

Two major alluvial cones spill out of the San Jacintos forming a major Bajada. Each has its source in a scenic canyon. These are Murray and Andreas Canyon, each having a stream thread which flows to the east where they join the Palm Canyon Wash which borders the site on the east. The alluvium tends to break on a north-south axis somewhat in the center of the site where there is an increase in slope up to 10%. Alluvial material north of the Andreas Canyon stream thread is dominated by major debris flows composed of massive boulders and larger cobbles.

A hillock, approximately 180' in height above surrounding alluvium, dominates the center of the site immediately south of the Andreas Canyon stream thread. This feature is prominent in that it can be viewed from virtually any location on the site. The Murray Canyon stream thread is bracketed by plateau ledges on the north and south as it enters the alluvium from the Canyon mouth. This elevation difference along the stream thread provides a significant visual relief to the otherwise gently sloping alluvial fan.

The natural vegetation on the site consists of four distinctive plant associations. They include the Creosote Scrub Community, Desert Wash Community, "Disturbed or Pioneer" Plant Associations, and Riparian Community.

The Creosote Scrub Community dominates the site, however, due to the site's position at the southwest edge of the upper Coachella Valley, it is in a transition area between coastal and desert floral elements. This factor, together with the riparian condition along Murray and Andreas stream channels have resulted in a greater variety of plant species on the site than other areas of the Colorado Desert.

A large and diverse number of vertebrate fauna have been recorded as occupying or visiting the site. Due to the abundant flora and water availability. Two species classified as "rare" or "endangered" have been recorded on or near the site. One is the Least Bell's Vireo, Vireo bellii pusillus (classified "endangered"), which is known to breed at the mouth of Andreas Canyon a few yards west of the site's boundary. The other is the Peninsular bighorn Sheep, Ovis canadensis cremnobates classified ("rare"). However, surveys conducted in September 1983 and July 1984 (and updated for the 52 acre Andreas Cove



parcel in 1995 and again in 1997) have not indicated the presence of sheep on the site. Surveys of invertebrates have not been conducted, but no species presently listed as "rare" or "endangered" are expected on the site.

The site is presently undeveloped. There are no structures of any sort on the property and the land surrounding the site is largely rural or undeveloped. One exception is a tract of land immediately north-east of the site which is being developed with 116 single family homes. West of the site are Tribal Trust lands which include the scenic Andreas and Murray Canyons. South of the site are more Tribal Trust lands which include Palm Canyon park and picnic area. East of the site is allotted Agua Caliente Indian Reservation land. Immediately north of the site is more allotted Reservation land. Further north there are several projects in varying stages of development. These are shown in Figure 5 and further discussed in Section 2.3.5. Several fee parcels (non-Indian ownership) exist in the vicinity including Planning Area 15.

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**2.3.4 Jurisdictional Setting**

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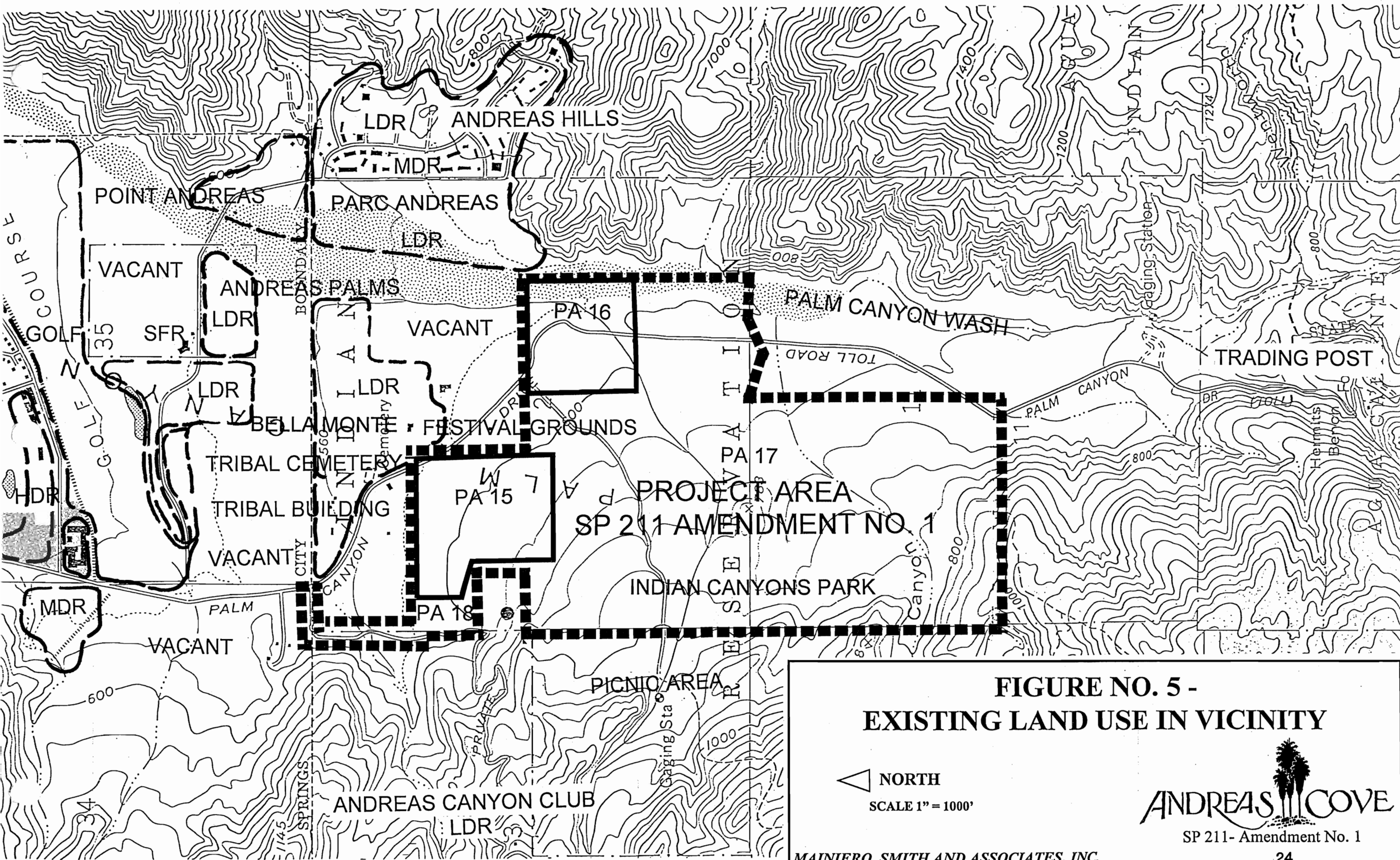
**2.3.4.1 Riverside County**

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The adoption of the Specific Plan 211 included General Plan Amendment No. 64 which removed the "Mountainous" designation from the property and replaced it with the Specific Plan designation. In conjunction with the processing of SP 211, County planning staff determined that Category II (Urban) applied to the site. In addition, the site falls within the boundary of the REMAP (Rural Extended Mountain Area Plan) which designates the entirety of Section 2, including the subject site as Agua Caliente Indian Reservation. There are several parcels held in fee in Section 2, however, including the subject parcel.

SP 211 currently sets forth the zoning designations based on the overall land use plan. The residential zones that correspond to the development proposed for the subject property include R-1 - 30,000 (Planning Areas 8 & 9), R-1 - 20,000 (Planning Area 11) and R-1 - 10,000 (Planning Area 11). The golf course and other open spaces were covered by the R-5 (Open Space Combining Zone-Residential Developments). The development standards for the property are set forth in SP 211. The zoning on the property remains, however, as W-2, since no zone change was implemented subsequent to the approval of the Specific Plan.

Since the adoption of SP 211, the County has instituted the SP Zone, designed to memorialize the provisions set forth in each specific plan. This zoning is being applied for concurrently with Amendment No. 1. The zoning is shown on Figure 6.



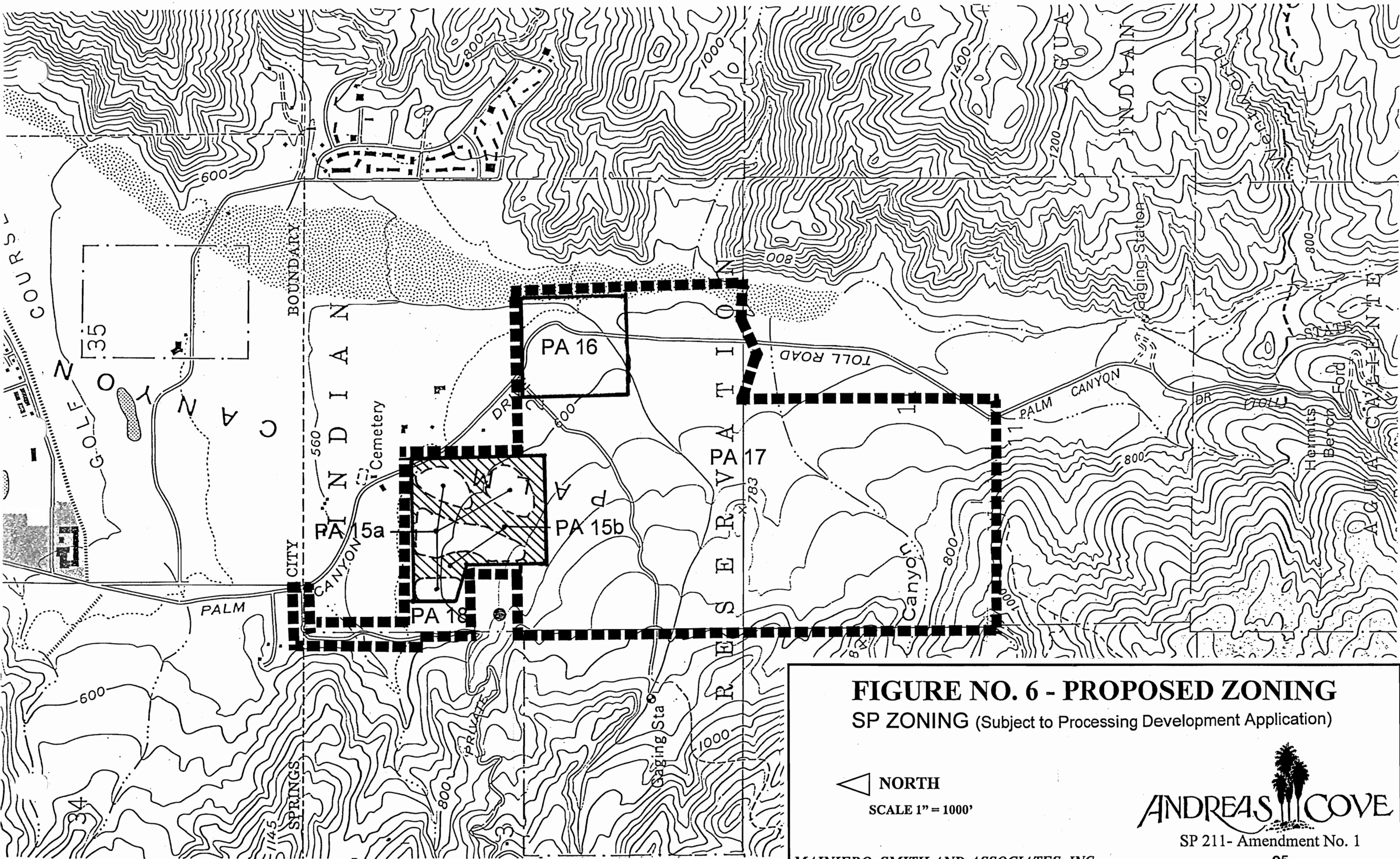
**FIGURE NO. 5 -  
EXISTING LAND USE IN VICINITY**

▲ NORTH  
SCALE 1" = 1000'



SP 211- Amendment No. 1





**FIGURE NO. 6 - PROPOSED ZONING**  
 SP ZONING (Subject to Processing Development Application)

▲ NORTH  
 SCALE 1" = 1000'



SP 211- Amendment No. 1

**2.3.4.2 City of Palm Springs (Sphere of Influence)**

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The site lies within the Sphere of Influence of the City of Palm Springs. The City's General Plan (Figure 7) adopted after the approval of SP 211 shows most of the site as Conservation in anticipation of the formation of the Indian Canyons Park. The predominant land use designation in the area is Residential-Low 2 which allows single family residential development at up to two dwelling units per acre. No pre-zoning has been adopted by the City in this sphere of influence at this time. The City limits lie northerly of the subject property at Acanto Way (south line of Section 35), about 1/4 mile north of the property. The only current or proposed access to the property is through Palm Springs.

The City has reviewed the proposed Amendment No. 1 to SP 211 and took action to support the changes. A copy of the City Council Resolution is included in Appendix F.

**2.3.5. Adjacent Projects and Future Trends**

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There are a total of 406 residential units approved and another 860 residential and hotel units proposed in general vicinity of the site. Most of the projects are located within the City limits of Palm Springs.

These developments demonstrate a pattern of growth representing expansion of the City of Palm Springs southward toward the project area.

**2.4 Alternatives Considered**

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**2.4.1 Introduction**

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CEQA guidelines require that the alternatives to the proposed project be discussed. Five alternatives are considered:

- No Project No Development Alternative
- No project with Development Alternative
- Proposed Specific Plan
- Park Alternative
- Previous plans for the site

The alternatives are described at this point so that the reader can bear them in mind when reviewing the EIR text. An evaluation and comparison of the alternatives are contained in Section 12.3