



# City of Coachella

## Notice of Preparation of Draft EIR and Notice of Scoping Meeting

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Date: February 20, 2015  
To: Responsible and Trustee Agents/Interested Organizations and Individuals  
Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report and Notice of a Public Scoping Meeting**

**Lead Agency:**

CITY OF COACHELLA  
Community Development Department  
1515 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Coachella, CA 92236  
760.398.3102  
Contact: Luis Lopez

**Consulting Firm Preparing the Draft EIR:**

MATTHEW FAGAN CONSULTING SERVICES  
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Temecula, CA 92591  
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Contact: Matthew Fagan

This NOP includes a project description and a list of the environmental issues to be examined in the environmental impact report (EIR).

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Mr. Luis Lopez, Development Services Director, at the City of Coachella address shown above. Please include the name, phone number, and address of a contact person in your response.

Project Title: Vista Del Agua Specific Plan

Location: South of Interstate 10 (I-10) and Vista Del Sur, east of Tyler Street, north of Avenue 48, and south of the All-American Canal (Coachella Branch).

### **Description**

#### **A. Introduction**

CVP Palm Springs, LLC, in affiliation with Strategic Land Partners, LLC is proposing to implement a residential, commercial, and open space development, with associated on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements for the Vista Del Agua Specific Plan (the "Project"), an approximate 275.38-acre site located within the City of Coachella, in Riverside County. As presently proposed, the Project proponent is preparing a draft specific plan (Vista Del Agua Specific Plan No. 14-01), that would allow conversion of this property to a mixed use development with residential, commercial, park, and open space uses. To accomplish this, the Project proponent will submit applications seeking approval from the City for a general plan amendment, a change of zone, a specific plan, a tentative parcel map for the individual planning areas, a community facilities district to fund the

required on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements (water, sewer, roadways, etc.) for the Project area, and a development agreement. A more detailed Project description is provided in the following text.

## **B. Project Setting**

The Project site is currently undeveloped, with numerous unimproved dirt access roads used primarily for agricultural activities in the area. Adjacent land uses consist of cropland and sparse, rural residential development to the south, east, and west, with I-10 at the Project's northernmost boundary. The Mecca Hills, which reach a peak elevation of 1,648 feet (Mecca Hill), are 4-5 miles to the southeast. The Indio Hills begin 2-3 miles to the north at elevations of a few hundred feet but later attain elevations over 6,500 feet to the northwest. Further to the east are the Little San Bernardino Mountains, which attain elevations over 3,000 feet. The Whitewater River, tamed by the Coachella Storm Water Channel, is the principal watercourse of the Coachella Valley and is about 0.75 miles southwest of the subject property. The Coachella Canal is directly adjacent to the northeast corner of the property.

The Project site is comprised of gently sloping desert and disturbed agricultural land with a seventy-six foot (76') elevation difference. The highest elevation at the northeast corner is approximately 37 feet above mean sea level (MSL) sloping toward the southwest corner to approximately 58 feet below MSL. Soils in the Coachella Valley area are primarily composed of alluvium and undifferentiated older alluvial sediments. Most of the Project site was once covered by Sonoran creosote bush scrub and saltbush scrub with the latter more common in the southern portion of the property. The eastern 30% of the property is currently covered with vineyards.

The Project site is disturbed with evidence of ground clearing, as well as off-road vehicle use and illegal refuse dumping. Portions of the site are also being used as a paintball course.

## **C. General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone**

The existing General Plan Land Use designation within the City of Coachella General Plan is identified as Suburban Retail District, Urban, General, and Suburban Neighborhood, and Neighborhood Center for the Project site. This designation is proposed to be modified through a General Plan Amendment. The existing zoning classifications within the Project site include C-G (General Commercial), R-S (Single-Family Residential), M-S (Manufacturing Service) and A-T (Agricultural Transition). The proposed Change of Zone and Specific Plan will rezone the Project site to the zoning classifications proposed within the Vista Del Agua Specific Plan.

## **D. Specific Plan**

A total of ten (10) Planning Areas are proposed within the Vista Del Agua Specific Plan (SP 14-01). The Vista Del Agua Specific Plan identifies a variety of residential and non-residential designations. A discussion of the residential and non-residential uses is provided in Table 1, presented below.

**TABLE 1  
Specific Plan Land Use Summary**

<b>Planning Area</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Density</b>	<b>Unit Count</b>
PA1	17.57	GC	--	--
PA2	7.35	MF	20.0 Du/AC	146
PA3	10.09	MF	20.0 Du/AC	201
PA4	21.92	MF	12.0 Du/Ac	263
PA5	43.04	SF	5.8 Du/Ac	250
PA6	72.47	SF	6.3 Du/AC	460
PA7	46.46	SF	5.6 Du/Ac	260
PA8	14.34	SF	4.2 Du/Ac	60
PA9	13.82	Park	--	--
PA10	8.27	NC*	--	--
--	20.05	Roads	--	--
<b>Totals</b>	<b>275.38</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>5.96 Du/Ac</b>	<b>1640</b>

**\* May be developed as 41 Single Family Units**

#### D.1 Residential

The Project proposes up to 1,640 dwelling units within seven (7) Planning Areas (PAs). PAs 2, 3 and 4 have a multi-family designation. Densities range from 12 dwelling units per acre to 20 dwelling units per acre. PAs 5, 6, 7 and 8 have single-family designations. Densities range from 4.2 dwelling units per acre to 6.3 dwelling units per acre.

#### D.2 Commercial

Planning Area 1 (PA1) will be the general commercial component to the Vista Del Agua Specific Plan and will consist of approximately 17.6 acres. PA1 is located on both sides of Street "A" at the intersection with Vista Del Sur. This designation will provide for a wide range of community-oriented and regional-oriented commercial businesses. PA1 will allow for large retail, entertainment and commercial service business centers including large retail uses, theaters, hotels and restaurants as well as professional and medical offices.

Planning Area 10 (PA10), a second commercial Planning Area, is comprised of an 8.3-acre commercial neighborhood center at the southeast corner of the Project site. This designation provides for small-scale shopping centers offering convenient retail goods and services. Examples of permitted uses include small-scale restaurants, grocery and convenience stores, service businesses that generate limited traffic, and boutique retail sales. It is anticipated that the neighborhood center will be compatible in design and scale with adjacent residential areas.

#### D.3 Open Space

Within the Project, an approximately 13.8 acre community park space is proposed, with an additional 12.7 acres of paseos and trails. The community park will function as a buffer to the San Andreas Fault, assuring no habitable structures will be constructed within any hazard zone of the fault line. The trails and open space areas will provide connectivity throughout the project as well as act as a bio-filter for stormwater runoff.

#### D.4 Circulation

The Circulation Plan for Vista Del Agua will balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles. Another objective of the circulation plan is to provide direct access to the parks, open space and commercial areas nearby and within the Project.

The primary vehicle access to the Project is provided from Avenue 48 to the south and Vista Del Sur and Avenue 47 to the north. The north to south access will be provided by a new collector street, which will connect Vista Del Sur, Avenue 47 and Avenue 48. A majority of the Project traffic will use Avenue 48/Shadow View Drive as the main access roadway and Avenue 47 as a secondary roadway. This results in a total of approximately 11,600' of off-site street improvements. It is anticipated that the Project will be responsible for a 30' paved section of these improvements (the ultimate street section is 118' for Avenue 48 and 90' for Avenue 47). There will also be a traffic signal installed at Dillon Road and Vista Del Sur.

Bike routes will be located along Avenue 48, Avenue 47, Polk Street and Street "A". Regional bike paths will continue off-site from the Project area along Avenue 48, Avenue 47 and Polk Street per the City's General Plan.

#### D.5 Project Conceptual Grading

The grading concept is designed to minimize natural topography impacts and to accommodate drainage, utility and road circulation systems that comply with City standards. All grading shall be done in compliance with the City of Coachella's grading standards. Prior to any development within any Planning Area of the Specific Plan, an overall grading plan for the area shall be submitted and processed through the City of Coachella for approval. Grading procedures and Best Management Practices shall be employed, where feasible, to limit erosion and sedimentation as well as to limit source pollution onsite. Prior to grading or ground disturbing activities exceeding one acre, the required NPDES permit coverage shall be obtained.

#### D.6 Drainage / Hydrology / Water Quality

The Project will provide flood control facilities to intercept and convey off-site and on-site drainage areas and revert to existing conditions as the drainage leaves the Project site. The contours indicate that the general flow direction is in the southwesterly direction. The runoff emanating from the Project ultimately discharges into the Coachella Valley Storm Channel located approximately one mile southwest of the site. The existing flow rates off-site will be maintained with no additional off-site flows as a result of the Project.

Most of the drainage for the site will be conveyed along paseo areas with excess storm water released into a proposed detention basin in the southwest portion of the Project site. The runoff will be conveyed to the existing watercourse that discharges in the Coachella Valley Storm Channel. Drainage for Planning Areas 1-4 will be collected within subsurface storm drain facilities. The proposed storm drain will discharge into a separate basin for water quality and detention.

Several water quality basins as well as paseos areas will act as filtration facilities for the Project runoff. Soil filtration rates throughout this area are high, lending additional groundwater recharge and water quality opportunities.

The Project is located within FEMA Zone X. Zone X is defined as "areas determined to be outside 500-year floodplain determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplains." Development within Zone X is acceptable as long as the finished floor elevations are 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

## D.7 Master Water Plan

The Project is within the Coachella Water District's service area. Service will be provided to the Project by means of existing services as well as improvements constructed as part of the Project. The Project is located within the High Zone (or 150 Zone) of the City's water system. Connection for the site will take place at the water tank and booster station located at the southwest corner of the Project. Approximately 200' of off-site improvements would be required for this connection. In addition, it is likely that a connection will also be needed at Avenue 47 and Tyler Street to complete a "looped" system.

## D.8 Master Sewer Plan

The Project is within the Coachella Sanitary District service area. The sewer system for the Project will ultimately tie in to a 24" main line located in Tyler Street, approximately 1,300' west of the Project boundary, with one connection at the intersection of Avenue 48 and Tyler Street. Additionally, there will be a potential connection at Tyler Street and Avenue 47.

## E. Tentative Parcel Map No. 36872

Tentative Parcel Map No. 36872 is proposed for the phasing and financing of infrastructure improvements required for the Project. While the precise design of this map is not specifically known at this time, the following assumptions will be utilized for the purpose of this EIR:

- The map boundary will be consistent with that of the Specific Plan;
- The map will be consistent with the City's General Plan;
- The map will conform to the requirements of Title 16 – Subdivisions, of the City's Municipal Code; and
- The map will conform to any and all other applicable City Ordinances.

## F. Development Agreement

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65864-65869.5, the Project proponent may enter into a Development Agreement (DA) with the City to obtain assurances for the Project that, upon approval of the Project, the applicant may proceed with the Project in accordance with existing policies, rules and regulations, and subject to conditions of approval.

## Environmental Issues to be Evaluated in the EIR

The City of Coachella, the lead agency for the proposed Vista Del Agua Project, is subject to specific environmental review under CEQA. CEQA Guidelines §15063 provide that if a lead agency determines that an EIR will clearly be required for a project, an Initial Study is not required.

In this case, the City has already determined that an EIR will need to be prepared based on the Project's potential to create short-term, long-term and cumulative impacts associated with other development along Interstate 10. Therefore, an EIR will be prepared to fully evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed Project. The EIR will be comprehensive in nature evaluating all identified issues from the CEQA Initial Study Checklist.

In particular, the following issues are anticipated to be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

The EIR will address the short- and long-term effects of the Project on the environment, including the impacts of any off-site improvements. It will also evaluate the potential for the Project to cause direct and indirect growth-inducing impacts, as well as cumulative impacts. Alternatives to the proposed Project will be evaluated that may reduce impacts that are determined to be significant in the EIR. Mitigation will be proposed for those impacts that are determined to be significant. A mitigation monitoring program will also be developed as required by §15097 of the CEQA Guidelines.

The environmental determination in this Notice of Preparation is subject to a 30-day public review period per Public Resources §21080.4 and CEQA Guidelines §15082. Public agencies, interested organizations, and individuals have the opportunity to comment on the proposed Project, to identify those environmental issues, potentially affected by the Project which should be addressed further by the City of Coachella in the EIR.

The Initial Study/Environmental Documentation for the Project may be downloaded from the City's website:

<http://www.coachella.org/departments/documents>

The Initial Study/Environmental Documentation is also available for review Monday through Thursday, between 7am and 6pm at the following location:

City of Coachella  
Development Services Department  
1515 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Coachella, CA 92236

## Public Scoping Meeting

The City will have a Scoping Meeting to:

- 1) Inform the public and interested agencies about the proposed Project; and
- 2) Solicit public comment on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR.

**Date:** 03/12/15  
**Time:** 2:00PM

**Location:** City of Coachella, Council Chambers  
1515 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Coachella, CA 92236