



Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration  
University Medical Office Park  
SP/EA22-0002, PP22-0009 and TPM 38728

Lead Agency:  
City of Palm Desert  
73-510 Fred Waring Drive  
Palm Desert, CA 92260

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May 2023

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**CITY OF PALM DESERT**  
**CEQA Environmental Checklist & Environmental Assessment**

<b>Project Title:</b> University Medical Office Park	
<b>Case No.:</b> SP/EA22-0002, PP22-0009 and TPM 38728	
<b>Lead agency name and address:</b>	City of Palm Desert 73-510 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260
<b>Contact persons and phone number:</b>	Nick Melloni Development Services Department City of Palm Desert 73-510 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260 (760) 346-0611 ext. 479
<b>Project location:</b> Southwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Technology Drive in the City of Palm Desert in Riverside County. <b>Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs)</b> 694-580-026 and -027; Northwest 1/4 of Section 33, Township 4 South, Range 6 East, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian	
<b>Project sponsor's name and address:</b> Prest Vuksic Greenwood Architects 44530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite 200 Palm Desert, CA 92260	
<b>General Plan Designation:</b> Town Center Neighborhood	<b>Zoning:</b> University Park Specific Plan: Neighborhood Center
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>In November 2016, the City of Palm Desert adopted Resolution No. 2016-86 which certified the General Plan Update and University Neighborhood Specific Plan EIR that analyzed the buildout of the 2035 General Plan, including the development of the University Neighborhood Specific Plan (UNSP). The UNSP is comprised of approximately 400 acres and provides for the development of a new, mixed-use community adjacent to planned campuses for California State University San Bernardino and the University of California Riverside. The Project site is within the boundary of the UNSP.</p> <p>The UNSP sets forth the planning principles, land use policies, and public improvements within the Specific Plan area. The Project site is zoned for Neighborhood Center (NC) in the UNSP, which provides a mixed-use neighborhood center environment, including neighborhood-serving retail and restaurant uses, office space for small businesses, and a range of multi-family housing types. The NC zone allows for 1 to 3-story commercial and mixed-use buildings, 2 and 3-story multiplexes, and small apartment buildings and rowhouses with a residential intensity range of 20-40 dwelling units per acre. The maximum building height allowed in the NC zone is 4 stories or 60 feet to top of parapet. The architectural theme recommended for the SP are based on the traditions of Spanish Revival, Palm Desert Ranch, Mid-Century Modern, and Contemporary styles. Precise plans were never prepared for the Project site and it has remained vacant.</p>	



**Proposed Specific Plan Amendment**

As previously discussed, the Project site is within the boundary of the University Neighborhood Specific Plan and is designated Neighborhood Center in the Plan. The Neighborhood Center (NC) designation does not permit medical uses, nor are medical uses considered in other designations of the Plan. Therefore, a text amendment is proposed to the Specific Plan (SPA) to allow medical uses and to provide background and supporting information for the use. Specifically, the SPA adds a “Professional/Medical Overlay” and adds “medical, offices” and “medical, clinics” as permitted uses in the NC zone. The Professional/Medical Overlay provides specific standards for medical offices, clinics and professional offices and will be applied to the Project site. The Overlay is proposed to apply in the NC zone, and includes modifications to standards including block length and depth, setbacks and similar changes to accommodate professional and medical services, offices and clinics.

The type and intensity of use proposed by the Project is consistent with the development anticipated, analyzed, and approved as part of the existing General Plan EIR (General Plan EIR, SCH #2015081020). The General Plan EIR confirmed that all environmental impacts resulting from the implementation of the University Neighborhood Specific Plan would be less than significant with the implementation of appropriate mitigation, except for Greenhouse Gas and Transportation impacts, which were identified as a significant and unavoidable impact. The SPA does not propose residential uses or densities that would exceed the forecasted future growth analyzed in the GP EIR, and is therefore within the scope of the previously certified EIR.

**Proposed Precise Plan**

The Project proposes the development of a medical office center on ±10.5 acres of vacant land at the southwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Technology Drive in the City of Palm Desert, Riverside County, California (Exhibits 1 through 3). The proposed medical center consists of two Contemporary buildings totaling 114,700 square feet and 581 onsite parking spaces, 94 of which are reserved for electric vehicle parking and charging (Exhibit 4). Building 1 is three-stories, 94,700 square feet and includes medical offices, an urgent care, and potentially labs and radiology services. Building 2 is a two-story, 20,000 square foot outpatient surgery facility. All medical appointments and procedures will be outpatient care, no emergency services or overnight care is proposed.

The Project will be built in two phases, both ranging from 18 to 24 months with the construction of Phase 1 anticipated to start sometime in late 2023/2024. Phase 1 includes grading and the construction of building 1, approximately 75% of all onsite parking, and most site improvements including access points, internal drives, sidewalk improvements and landscaping. Phase 2 includes construction of building 2 and the remaining parking at the southeast corner of the site adjacent to building 2. The grading phase will require a net export of 2,620 cubic yards of dirt/soil materials per the Project’s preliminary grading plan.

Stormwater retention will be provided by two underground retention chambers on the southeast corner of the site and one above ground infiltration basin on the southwest corner of the site. Development also includes desert landscaping and other drought-tolerant planting materials.

The Project proposes three access points. The primary access point, or main driveway, will be from Gerald Ford Drive along the northwest boundary. The two secondary access points will be from Technology Drive to the southeast, and College Drive to the southwest.

**Proposed Tentative Parcel Map**

The Tentative Parcel Map (TPM) will subdivide the site into two parcels (see Exhibit 5). Parcel 1 is approximately 4.83 acres and includes the building 1 and building 2 footprints and adjacent parking. Parcel 2 is approximately 5.64 acres and includes the remaining parking lot and onsite retention basin. Joint use easements are proposed to allow access to parking across both parcels.

**Utilities and Service Providers**

The following agencies and companies will provide services to the Project:

1. Sanitary Sewer: Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
2. Water: Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
3. Electricity: Southern California Edison (SCE)
4. Gas: Southern California Gas Company
5. Telephone/Cable: Frontier Communications/Spectrum
6. Storm Drains: City of Palm Desert
7. Transit Service: SunLine Transit Agency

**Surrounding Land Uses**

North: Gerald Ford Drive, currently vacant (February 2023) but approved for 330-unit apartment development to undergo construction in 2023.

South: College Drive, dog park, lands under construction for 196-unit residential development consisting of detached single family, attached townhomes, and duplexes.

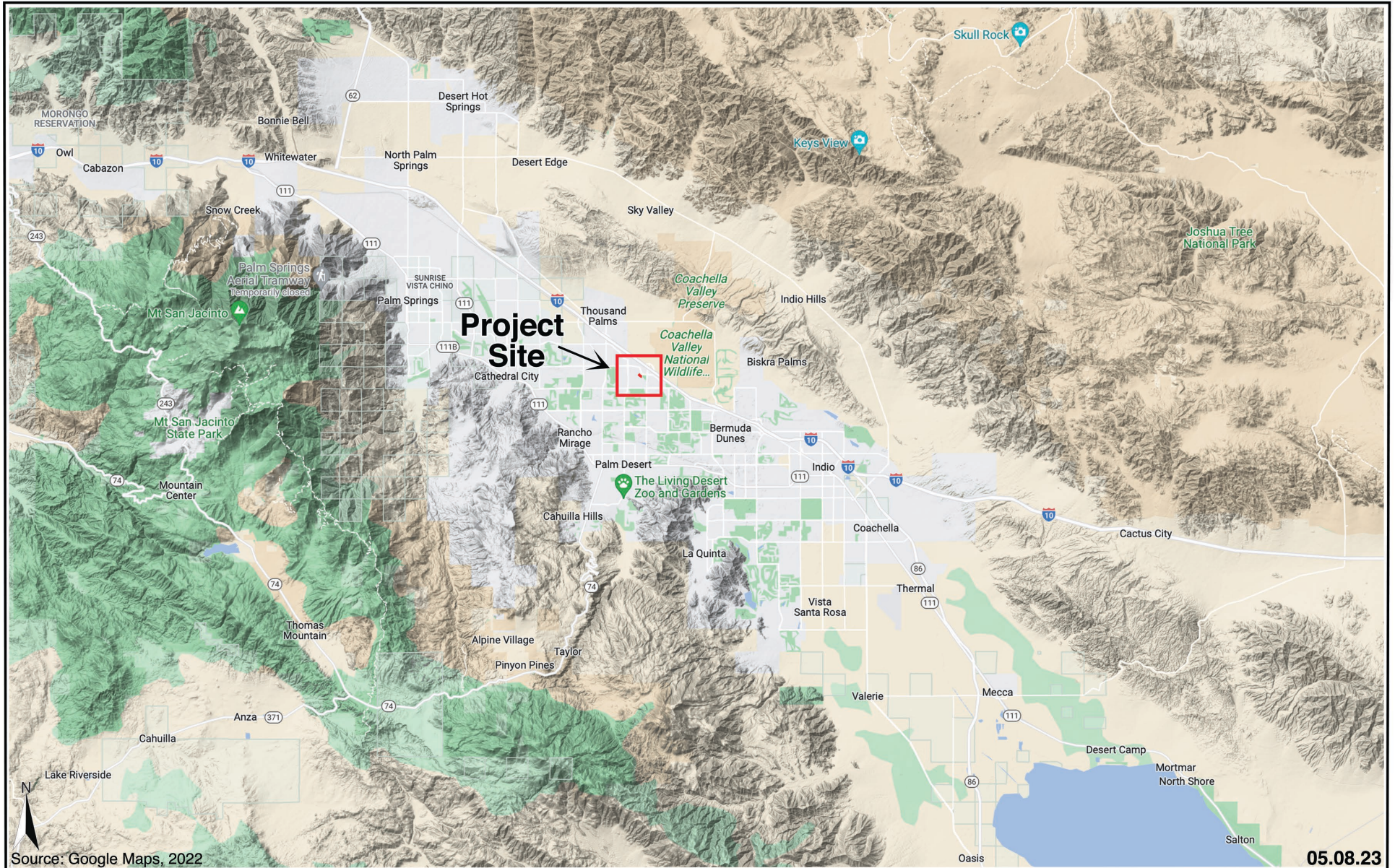
East: Technology Drive, commercial uses

West: Vacant land

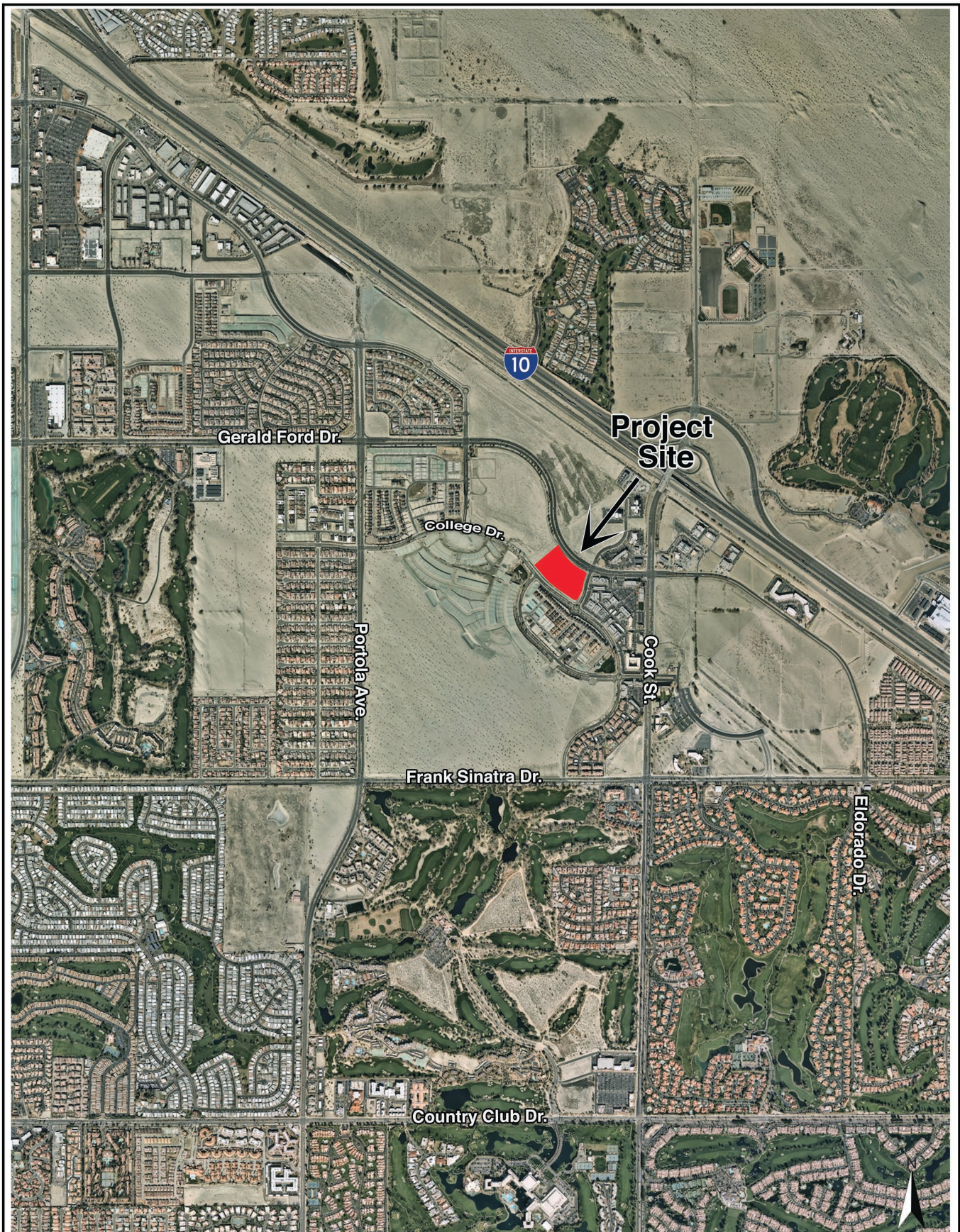
Other public agencies whose approval is or may be required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement.)

Coachella Valley Water District  
Regional Water Quality Control Board









Source: Nearmap, 01.09.2023

05.08.23

Exhibit

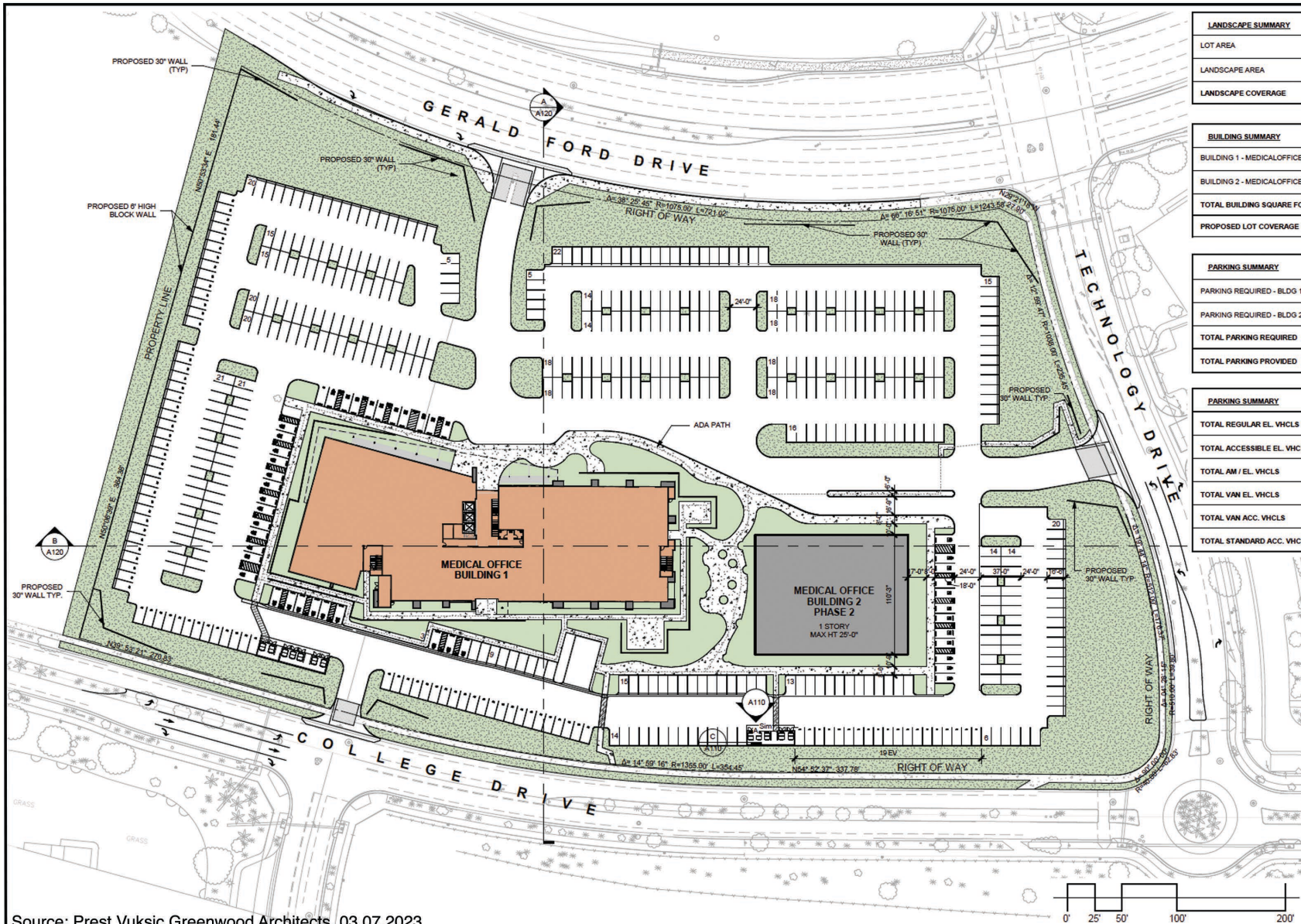




Source: Nearmap, 01.09.2023

05.08.23





LANDSCAPE SUMMARY		SF
LOT AREA		455,637 SF
LANDSCAPE AREA		150,078 SF
LANDSCAPE COVERAGE		33%

BUILDING SUMMARY		SF
BUILDING 1 - MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING		94,700 SF
BUILDING 2 - MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING		20,000 SF
TOTAL BUILDING SQUARE FOOTAGE		114,700 SF
PROPOSED LOT COVERAGE		25%

PARKING SUMMARY	SF/1000	MEDICAL X'S
PARKING REQUIRED - BLDG 1	94.7	474
PARKING REQUIRED - BLDG 2	20	100
TOTAL PARKING REQUIRED	114.7	574
TOTAL PARKING PROVIDED		574

PARKING SUMMARY	
TOTAL REGULAR EL. VHCLS	94
TOTAL ACCESSIBLE EL. VHCLS	11
TOTAL AM / EL. VHCLS	12
TOTAL VAN EL. VHCLS	3
TOTAL VAN ACC. VHCLS	4
TOTAL STANDARD ACC. VHCLS	11

Source: Prest Vuksic Greenwood Architects, 03.07.2023

**University Medical Office Park**  
**Site Plan**  
**Palm Desert, California**

05.08.23

Exhibit

4





**TERRA NOVA®**  
PLANNING & RESEARCH, INC.

**University Medical Office Park  
Tentative Parcel Map No. 38728  
Palm Desert, California**

## Exhibit

5

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:**

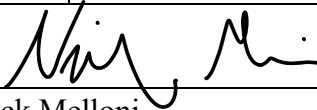
The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

	Aesthetics		Agriculture and Forestry Resources		Air Quality
	Biological Resources		Cultural Resources		Energy
	Geology /Soils		Greenhouse Gas Emissions		Hazards & Hazardous Materials
	Hydrology / Water Quality		Land Use / Planning		Mineral Resources
	Noise		Population / Housing		Public Services
	Recreation		Transportation		Tribal Cultural Resources
	Utilities/Service Systems		Wildfire		Mandatory Findings of Significance



**DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency) On the basis of this initial evaluation:**

	I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
✓	I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
	I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
	I find that the proposed project MAY have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
	I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nick Melloni  
City of Palm Desert

May 11, 2023  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

- 1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
- 2) All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
- 3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. “Potentially Significant Impact” is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more “Potentially Significant Impact” entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
- 4) “Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated” applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less Than Significant Impact.” The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from “Earlier Analyses,” as described in (5) below, may be cross referenced).
- 5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
  - a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
  - b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
  - c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are “Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated,” describe the mitigation measures, which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site specific conditions for the project.
- 6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
- 7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
- 8) This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project’s environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
- 9) The explanation of each issue should identify:
  - a) The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
  - b) The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impacts to less than significance.

**CITY OF PALM DESERT  
MONITORING PROGRAM FOR CEQA COMPLIANCE**

<b>DATE:</b>	May 8, 2023	<b>ASSESSORS PARCEL NO.:</b>	694-580-026 and -027
<b>PROJECT TITLE/ CASE NO.:</b>	University Medical Office Park Case No.: SP/EA22-0002, PP22-0009 and TPM 38728	<b>PROJECT LOCATION:</b> Southwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Technology Drive in the City of Palm Desert in Riverside County.	
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Prest Vuksic Greenwood Architects		
<b>APPROVAL DATE:</b>	In progress		

**THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS THE CITY'S MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM IN CONNECTION WITH THE MITIGATED  
NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR THE ABOVE CASE NUMBER**

SUMMARY MITIGATION MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING	TIMING	CRITERIA	COMPLIANCE CHECKED BY	DATE
<b>BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>					
<b>BIO.1</b> <u>Burrowing Owl Surveys</u> To mitigate potential impacts to burrowing owl, two pre-construction surveys shall be conducted in accordance with CDFW protocol. The first survey shall occur between 14 and 30 days prior to ground disturbance, and the second shall occur within 24 hours of the initiation of ground disturbance activities for any phase of development on the Project site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If no owls are detected during those surveys, ground disturbance may proceed without further consideration of this species, assuming there is no lapse between the surveys and construction, because the protocol states "time lapses between Project activities trigger subsequent take avoidance surveys including but not limited to a final survey conducted within 24 hours prior to ground disturbance."</li> <li>If burrowing owls are detected during the surveys, avoidance and minimization measures shall be required. Avoidance and minimization measures may include establishing a buffer zone, installing a visual barrier, implementing burrow exclusion and/or closure techniques, in conformance with CDFW protocol.</li> </ul>	Project Biologist, City Engineer, Planning Department	Prior to issuance of any permits that result in ground disturbance	The Project biologist shall supply the City with reports of findings regarding burrowing owls and migratory birds. The reports will be attached to the grading permit for the Project.		

SUMMARY MITIGATION MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING	TIMING	CRITERIA	COMPLIANCE CHECKED BY	DATE
<p><b>BIO.2</b> <u>Migratory Bird Treaty Act</u></p> <p>If ground disturbance or tree or plant removal is proposed between January 15th and August 31st, a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within 7 to 10 days of initiation of grading onsite. If active nests are reported, then species-specific measures shall be prepared. At a minimum, grading in the vicinity of a nest shall be postponed until the young birds have fledged. For construction that occurs between September 1st and January 31st, no pre-removal nesting bird survey is required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the event active nests are found, exclusionary fencing shall be placed around the nests until such time as nestlings have fledged. Avoidance buffers shall be 100 to 300 feet from the nests of unlisted songbirds, and 500 feet from the nests of birds-of-prey and listed species.</li> </ul>	Project Biologist, City Engineer, Planning Department	Prior to issuance of any permits that result in ground disturbance	The Project biologist shall supply the City with reports of findings regarding burrowing owls and migratory birds. The reports will be attached to the grading permit for the Project.		
<b>CULTURAL &amp; TRIBAL RESOURCES</b>					
<p><b>CUL.1</b> <u>Archaeological and Tribal Monitoring</u></p> <p>Earth-moving activities, including grading, grubbing, trenching, or excavations at the site shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist and a Native American monitor.</p> <p>If any cultural materials more than 50 years of age are discovered, they shall be recorded and evaluated in the field. The monitors shall be prepared to recover artifacts quickly to avoid construction delays but must have the power to temporarily halt or divert construction equipment to allow for controlled archaeological recovery if a substantial cultural deposit is encountered. The monitors shall determine when excavations have reached sufficient depth to</p>	Project applicant, Project archaeologist, Tribal monitor, Planning Division, City Engineer.	Monitoring shall occur during earth-moving activities.	Within 30 days of the completion of ground disturbing activities on the Project site, a report of findings shall be filed with the City.		

SUMMARY MITIGATION MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING	TIMING	CRITERIA	COMPLIANCE CHECKED BY	DATE
<p>preclude the occurrence of cultural resources, and when monitoring should conclude.</p> <p>If artifacts are discovered, these shall be processed, catalogued, analyzed, and prepared for permanent curation in a repository with permanent retrievable storage that would allow for additional research in the future.</p>					
<b>GEOLOGY</b>					
<b>GEO.1</b> A site-specific Geotechnical Report shall be prepared and submitted with grading plans, and report recommendations should be incorporated in Project design and construction.	Project engineer, Project geotechnical consultant, Project applicant.	Prior to issuance of grading permits	Final report submitted to and approved by the City		
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>					
<b>TRA.1</b> In addition to paying the requisite CVAG TUMF fee, and to remedy the LOS deficiency at the intersections of Cook Street and the I-10 westbound and eastbound ramps, the Project is responsible for the following fair share contributions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intersection of Cook Street and I-10 Westbound Ramp: Project is responsible for 8.0% towards a 2nd 200 ft. WB left turn lane.</li> <li>- Intersection of Cook Street and I-10 Eastbound Ramp: Project is responsible for 9.2% towards the restriping of existing NB travel lanes to achieve a 12ft. wide NB 200 ft. long right turn lane, with remaining through travel lanes at 11ft. widths. Ultimately include northbound free-right turn channelization.</li> </ul>	Project applicant, CVAG, City Engineer.	Prior to the issuance of grading permits	The Project applicant shall coordinate with the City and CVAG the payment of CVAG's TUMF fee and the agreed upon fair share contribution for improvements to the intersection of Cook Street and the I-10 westbound and eastbound ramps.		

<b>I. AESTHETICS</b>				
<b>Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?			✓	
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				✓
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?			✓	
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			✓	

## Setting

The subject property is in the central part of the Coachella Valley, which is a low desert basin surrounded by dramatic mountainous terrain created by the active geology that is characteristic of Southern California. The overall gradient of the Valley is from northwest to southeast, gently sloping from the San Geronio Pass, at approximately 2,600 feet above mean sea level, to the Salton Sea, which has a surface elevation of approximately 228 feet below mean sea level.

The Valley and the Salton Sea are located within the Salton Trough, a fault-controlled valley formed by the San Andreas Fault Zone. The Salton Trough is located within the Colorado Desert Geomorphic Province, which is bounded to the southwest by the Peninsular Ranges province, to the north by the eastern Transverse Ranges province, and to the northeast by the southeastern portion of the Mojave Desert province.

Surrounding mountains include the San Jacinto Mountains, the foothills and slopes of which ascend from the Valley floor and form the westerly boundary of the Coachella Valley. At its peak, Mount San Jacinto rises to an elevation of 10,834 feet above mean sea level. The Santa Rosa Mountains, with Toro Peak at an elevation of 8,715 feet above mean sea level, generally form the southerly boundary of the valley. In the northerly portion of the valley are the Indio Hills, with elevations rising to about 1,600 feet, and the Little San Bernardino Mountains further north, forming the northeasterly boundary of the valley.

## Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less Than Significant Impact.** A significant impact may occur if the proposed project (the “Project”) introduces incompatible visual elements within a field of view containing a scenic vista or substantially blocks views of a scenic vista. Scenic vistas are generally described in two ways: panoramic views (visual access to a large geographic area, for which the field of view can be wide and extend into the distance) and focal views (visual access to a particular object, scene, or feature of interest).

The Project site is located in a largely urbanized area of Palm Desert that supports a mix of commercial and residential land uses. The Project site is currently vacant and bounded by Gerald Ford Drive and vacant lands to the north, Technology Drive and commercial development to the east, College Drive and vacant land to the south, and a dog park and vacant lands to the west. The City of Palm Desert Municipal Code Section 25.28.080, Scenic Preservation Overlay District, establishes development standards for scenic corridors. The Project site is not located in a Scenic Preservation Overlay District.

From the subject property, scenic views of the San Bernardino Mountains and Indio Foothills are to the north and northeast, views of the Santa Rosa Mountains are to the south and southwest, and views of the San Jacinto Mountains are to the west. There are no scenic views to the east. The Project site is located approximately 7.8 miles southwest of the San Bernardino Mountain foothills, approximately 3.3 miles southwest of the Indio Foothills, approximately 4 miles northeast of the Santa Rosa Mountain foothills, and approximately 11 miles east of the San Jacinto Mountain foothills. From the Project site, views of the lower elevations of the mountains to the south and west are blocked by intervening residential and commercial developments. However, middle and upper elevations of the mountains are visible above. Lower and upper views of the San Bernardino Mountains and Indio Foothills are partially obstructed by intervening commercial development to the north, however due to distance and their low topography they do not provide significant viewsheds.

Construction of the proposed medical center would require the use of heavy equipment for grading, paving and excavation. Standard construction methods would be used for the construction of the proposed two- and three-story buildings. Construction activities would be visible from the surrounding streets and commercial developments; however, impacts from construction are temporary and would be limited by distance and grade differences.

The Project proposes to develop two medical office buildings: one two-story building and one three-story building with a maximum height of 54 feet. Currently the UNSP allows building heights of up to 4 stories or 60 feet in height in the Neighborhood Center zone. The proposed buildings would be taller than the adjacent commercial uses to the east, but consistent with the maximum height allowed under the UNSP. Building and site design on the Project site would be guided by the UNSP.

Viewers to the east of the site enjoy upper views of the Santa Rosa mountains to the south and southwest, with lower to middle views obstructed by elevated grades of the adjacent vacant lands. Viewers to the east also enjoy middle and upper views of the San Jacinto Mountains to the west, with moderate obstruction due to distance and intervening commercial and residential development. The proposed Project would not obstruct views to the south and only partially

obstruct views to the west and southwest to some extent, however, the nearest structures are located approximately 100 feet east of the Project site boundary (dermatology office) a distance which would lessen these impacts. Views to the north, east, and south would remain unobstructed by the Project, and impacts would be less than significant.

Lands immediately to the north are planned for a 330-unit apartment project scheduled to start construction in 2023. Future viewers from the north looking to the south would experience blocked views of the Santa Rosa Mountain as a result of the Project, however lower and middle range views are already obstructed by the elevated grade of vacant lands to the south. Future viewers from the north would not lose views of the San Bernardino or San Jacinto Mountains.

Lands to the south include a dog park and a 196-unit residential development currently under construction. Future viewers from the south looking north may experience partially blocked views of the San Bernardino Mountains and Indio Foothills, however due to their elevated grade above the subject property, impacts are expected to be less than significant. Future viewers from the south would not lose views of the Santa Rosa or San Jacinto Mountains from any direction.

Lands to the west are currently vacant but are planned for future residential. Future viewers from the west looking east/southeast towards the Project site may experience partially blocked views of the Indio foothills; however, views are already obstructed by intervening development and are diminished by distance. Future viewers from the west would not lose views of the San Bernardino or San Jacinto Mountains.

The proposed Specific Plan amendments are limited to minor modifications including the addition of medical offices as a permitted land use and increasing the maximum building width from 150 to 300 feet in the NC zone of the UNSP. Proposed site improvements include landscaping and sidewalk improvements with further enhance aesthetics. Building height and overall design guidelines requiring high quality architecture have not changed, and therefore potential impacts to scenic vistas would be the same as previously identified in the certified General Plan and UNSP EIR. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would not result in any new adverse impacts or significantly increase the severity of previously identified significant impacts in the certified EIR. Therefore, impacts are considered less than significant

- b) **No Impact.** A significant impact would occur only if scenic resources would be damaged and/or removed by development of a project. There are no scenic resources such as trees, rock outcroppings, or historical buildings onsite. The Project site is not located near an existing or proposed state scenic highway. The only designated scenic highway in the city is Highway 74, which is ±4 miles south of the Project area. No impact will occur as result of the Precise Plan or the Specific Plan amendment.
- c) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site is in an urban setting; therefore, a significant impact would occur if the Project conflicts with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. According to the UNSP, the Neighborhood Center land use designation is to provide a mixed-use environment with a wide range of neighborhood-serving shops, offices, and multi-family and single-family attached housing types.



The proposed Specific Plan amendment does not significantly deviate from the current UNSP development standards or design guidelines. The Specific Plan amendment adds “medical, offices” and “medical, clinics” as permitted uses in the NC zone, which are consistent with the types of non-residential uses currently permitted in the zone and Town Center Neighborhood designation in the General Plan. The Project’s proposed Contemporary architectural style is consistent with styles recommended in the Specific Plan and the color palettes and building materials are compatible with the desert environment and existing development in the Project vicinity.

The Project will be consistent with applicable General Plan policies governing scenic quality, which require preservation of view corridors of the hills and mountains and limited light pollution to maintain darkness for night sky viewing (General Plan Environmental Resources Element Policies 2.1 and 2.5). The Project will be designed in accordance with the development standards and design guidelines of the UNSP. Therefore, the Project will have less than significant impacts to applicable regulations that address scenic quality.

- d) Less Than Significant Impact.** A significant impact may occur if the proposed project introduces new sources of light or glare on or from the project site which would be incompatible with the areas surrounding the project site, or which pose a safety hazard to motorists utilizing adjacent streets or freeways.

The Project will generate light and glare primarily from buildings, landscape lighting, exterior safety and security lighting, parking lot lighting, and mobile light sources from vehicles accessing the site during normal business hours. The Project does not propose emergency services such as ambulances that would require the use of emergency lighting. City of Palm Desert Municipal Code Chapter 24.16 (Outdoor Lighting Requirements) regulates outdoor lighting and establishes requirements which are intended to minimize light pollution and light trespass onto adjacent properties. All exterior Project lighting will comply with the University Neighborhood Specific Plan and General Plan, which requires lighting fixtures to complement the architecture and landscape, be designed and located to avoid spillover onto adjacent lots and be low-intensity to preserve the nighttime dark sky. The Project will be required to comply with Chapter 24.16 (Outdoor Lighting Requirements) of the Municipal Code, including lighting performance criteria and design guidelines. Landscape and lighting plans will be subject to review by the City. With adherence to City standards and Specific Plan guidelines, Project-related impacts associated with increased light and glare will be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Palm Desert Municipal Code; California State Scenic Highway System Map, Caltrans, 2018; Project materials.

## II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

<b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				✓
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				✓
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?				✓
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓

### Setting

Agriculture is a significant part of the Coachella Valley economy; however, agricultural land and operations are located east of Palm Desert. The City is in a desert environment and has no forests or forest production lands. It is predominantly built out with urban uses and does not contain any land designated or zoned for agricultural uses. Neither the General Plan, University Neighborhood Specific Plan, nor the Zoning Ordinance include forestry or forest production designations. While not directly related to agriculture and forest uses, the General Plan includes the potential for golf course reuse that may allow community-scale agricultural uses.

## Discussion of Impacts

- a-e) No Impact.** The site is currently vacant and designated as Neighborhood Center in the UNSP, which allows a broad range of commercial and residential land uses. There are no existing or mapped agricultural or forestry resources within or in proximity to the Project site, and such uses are not proposed as part of the Specific Plan amendment. No agricultural lands will be impacted by the Project.

Prime Farmland: According to the California Important Farmlands mapping provided by the California Department of Conservation, the Project site is designated as “Other Land.” No prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance exists on the Project site or in the Project vicinity. The Project site is not located on or near any property zoned or otherwise intended for agricultural uses. As such, the Project would not convert farmland to nonagricultural use. No impact would occur.

Williamson Act: The Project site and surrounding properties are designated for urban uses in the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. No land on or near the Project site is under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with any zoning for agricultural uses or a Williamson Act Contract. No impact would occur.

Forest Land: The Project site is located on the desert floor, designated Neighborhood Center in the UNSP, and surrounded by urban development and vacant land designated for urban uses. The subject site does not contain forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned for timberland production. Therefore, the Project would not rezone forest land or timberland as defined by the Public Resources Code. It would not result in the conversion of forest land to non-forest uses or changes to the environment that could result in such a conversion. No impact would occur.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Palm Desert Municipal Code; Project materials; California Important Farmland Finder, California Department of Conservation, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/agriculture/DataViewer/index.html>, accessed November 2022.

<b>III. AIR QUALITY</b> Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. <b>Would the project:</b>				
	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?				✓
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard			✓	
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?			✓	
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people?			✓	

## Setting

The Coachella Valley is in the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB), which includes part of Riverside County and all of Imperial County. The SSAB is under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). All development within the SSAB is subject to the 2016 SCAQMD Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), and the Coachella Valley region is subject to the 2003 Coachella Valley PM<sub>10</sub> State Implementation Plan (CV PM<sub>10</sub> SIP). SCAQMD operates and maintains regional air quality monitoring stations at numerous locations throughout its jurisdiction. The Project site is within Source Receptor Area (SRA) 30, which includes monitoring stations in Palm Springs, Indio, and Mecca.

Criteria air pollutants are contaminants for which state and federal air quality standards have been established. The SSAB exceeds state and federal standards for fugitive dust (PM<sub>10</sub>) and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), and is in attainment for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, except the City of Calexico. Ambient air quality in the SSAB, including the Project site, does not exceed state and federal standards for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxides, sulfur dioxide, lead, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, or vinyl chloride.

Buildout of the proposed Project will result in air quality impacts during construction and operation. The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project air quality emissions that will be generated by the Project (Appendix A).

## Discussion of Impacts

- a) **No Impact.** According to CEQA, a significant air quality impact could occur if the proposed project is not consistent with the applicable Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) or would obstruct the implementation of the policies or hinder reaching the goals of that plan. The Project site is within the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) and will be subject to SCAQMD's 2016 AQMP

and the 2003 Coachella Valley PM<sub>10</sub> SIP. The AQMP is a comprehensive plan that establishes control strategies and guidance on regional emission reductions for air pollutants. The AQMP is based, in part, on the land use plans of jurisdictions in the region.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) adopted the 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2020 RTP/SCS) to comply with metropolitan planning organization (MPO) requirements under the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act. The RTP/SCS Growth Management chapter forms the basis of land use and transportation controls of the AQMP. Projects that are consistent with the population forecasts are considered consistent with the AQMP. SCAG forecasts that the City's population will be 64,100 in 2045.

A project is considered to be in conformity with adopted air quality plans if it adheres to the requirements of the SCAQMD Rule Book, AQMP, and adopted and forthcoming control measures, and is consistent with growth forecasts in the applicable plan(s) (or is directly included in the applicable plan). Conformity with growth forecasts can be established by demonstrating that a project is consistent with the land use plan that was used to generate the growth forecast. A non-conforming project would be one that increases the gross number of dwelling units, increases the number of vehicle trips, and/or increases the overall vehicle miles traveled in an affected area relative to the applicable land use plan.

The Project proposes a medical center that includes medical offices, an urgent care and outpatient surgery center. Currently, office professional and personal services are permitted uses in the NC designation; however, medical office uses are not explicitly listed. For the Project to be consistent with the UNSP, the SPA revises the Land Use Matrix (Table 4.1) of the UNSP to permit "medical, office" and "medical, clinic" uses in the NC zone.

The General Plan and UNSP was used to develop population forecasts in the above-described RTP/SCS, and the RTP/SCS served as the basis for the AQMP. The Project does not increase the allowed density (20-40 dwelling units per acre) specified for the Neighborhood Center designation and would not impact population, as employees of the proposed Project are expected to be residents of the city and region. In addition, a VMT analysis was prepared that found the Project would result in a net decrease in citywide VMTs due to virtual medical appointments that allow patients to access healthcare services or communicate with healthcare staff through online or off-site programs (see Section XVII, Transportation, for detailed VMT analysis).

In summary, the Project will be part of anticipated growth, does not increase the residential land use assumptions used in the SCAG analysis, and will result in a net decrease in citywide VMT. The proposed Project would be implemented in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations contained in these plans to meet the applicable air quality standards. Therefore, the Project will be consistent with the AQMP and will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the plan. No conflict will occur.

- b) Less Than Significant Impact.** A project is considered to have significant impacts if there is a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard. As previously stated, the SSAB is currently a non-attainment area for PM<sub>10</sub> and ozone. Therefore, if the Project's construction and/or operational emissions exceed SCAQMD thresholds for PM<sub>10</sub> and ozone

precursors, which include carbon monoxide (CO), nitrous oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), and volatile/reactive organic compounds/gases (VOC or ROG), then impacts would be cumulatively considerable and significant.

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project air quality emissions that will be generated by the proposed Project (Appendix A). Criteria air pollutants will be released during both the construction and operational phases of the Project, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 summarizes short-term construction-related emissions, and Table 4 summarizes ongoing emissions generated during operation.

#### Construction Emissions

Project buildout is anticipated to take up to 1 year. The construction period includes all aspects of Project development, including site preparation, grading, paving, building construction, and application of architectural coatings.

As shown in Table 1, emissions generated by construction activities will not exceed SCAQMD thresholds for any criteria pollutant. The analysis assumes a net export of 2,620 cubic yards of dirt/soil materials per the Project's preliminary grading plan. Applicable standard requirements and best management practices include, but are not limited to, the implementation of a dust control and management plan in conformance with SCAQMD Rules 403 and 403.1, phased application of architectural coatings, and the use of low-polluting architectural paint and coatings per SCAQMD Rule 1113.

**Table 1**  
**Maximum Daily Construction-Related Emissions Summary**  
(pounds per day)

<b>Construction Emissions<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>NO<sub>x</sub></b>	<b>ROG</b>	<b>SO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>
Daily Maximum	37.07	35.73	53.82	0.06	21.07	11.30
<b>SCAQMD Thresholds</b>	<b>550.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>75.00</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>55.00</b>
<b>Exceeds?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

Source: CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0 (output tables provided in Appendix A).

Given that criteria pollutant thresholds will not be exceeded, and standard best management practices will be applied during construction, impacts will be less than significant.

#### Operational Emissions

Operational emissions are ongoing emissions that will occur over the life of the Project. They include area source emissions, emissions from energy demand (electricity), and mobile source (vehicle) emissions.

According to the Project traffic impact analysis (Appendix D), the Project will generate approximately 4,129 daily trips (see Section XVII, Transportation). Table 24 summarizes projected emissions during operation of the Project at build out. As shown, operational emissions will not exceed SCAQMD thresholds of significance for any criteria pollutants for operations. Impacts will be less than significant.

**Table 2**  
**Maximum Daily Operational-Related Emissions Summary**  
**(pounds per day)**

<b>Operational Emissions<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>NO<sub>x</sub></b>	<b>ROG</b>	<b>SO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>
Daily Maximum	83.04	11.62	16.12	0.15	14.90	4.05
<b>SCAQMD Thresholds</b>	<b>550.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>75.00</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>55.00</b>
<b>Exceeds?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

Source: CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0 (output tables provided in Appendix A).

#### Cumulative Contribution

A significant impact could occur if the Project would make a considerable cumulative contribution to federal or state non-attainment pollutants. The Coachella Valley portion of the SSAB is classified as a “non-attainment” area for PM<sub>10</sub> and ozone. Cumulative air quality analysis is evaluated on a regional scale (rather than a neighborhood or city scale, for example), given the dispersing nature of pollutant emissions and aggregate impacts from surrounding jurisdictions and air management districts. Any development project or activity resulting in emissions of PM<sub>10</sub>, ozone, or ozone precursors will contribute, to some degree, to regional non-attainment designations of ozone and PM<sub>10</sub>.

The SCAQMD does not currently recommend quantified analyses of construction and/or operational emissions from multiple development projects, nor does it provide methodologies or thresholds of significance to be used to assess the significance of cumulative emissions generated by multiple cumulative projects. However, it is recommended that a project’s potential contribution to cumulative impacts be assessed utilizing the same significance criteria as those for project-specific impacts. Furthermore, SCAQMD states that if an individual development project generates less than significant construction or operational emissions, then the project would not generate a cumulatively considerable increase in emissions for those pollutants for which the Basin is in nonattainment.

As shown in the tables above, Project-related PM<sub>10</sub>, CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, and ROG emissions are projected to be below established SCAQMD thresholds. Therefore, the proposed Project will result in incremental, but not cumulatively considerable impacts on regional PM<sub>10</sub> or ozone levels.

#### Summary

As shown above, both construction and operation of the Project will result in criteria emissions below the SCAQMD significance thresholds, and neither would violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation. Impacts related to construction and operation will be less than significant and are not cumulatively considerable from a non-attainment standpoint.

- c) **Less Than Significant Impact.** Sensitive receptors include residences, schools, playgrounds, childcare centers, retirement homes, hospitals, and other land uses occupied by individuals who are potentially more sensitive to pollutants than the average. The nearest sensitive receptors to the Project site include the future 330-unit residential development 120 feet to the north site, future 196-unit residential project and University Dog Park 100 feet south of the site, University Park East (park) located 0.18 miles southeast of the site, and multi-family homes (The Vineyards at Palm Desert) located 0.33 miles southeast of the site.

To determine if a project has the potential to generate significant adverse localized air quality impacts, SCAQMD offers Localized Significance Thresholds (LST) analysis. Analysis of LSTs by a local government is voluntary and is designed for projects that are less than or equal to 5 acres. The maximum area of disturbance associated with buildout of the Project is approximately 10 acres, and it is assumed that buildout will occur over one year. Although the total Project area is greater than 5 acres, the area of daily disturbance (for purposes of LST analysis only) can be expected to be 5 acres or less per day at any given location. As such, the 5-acre Mass Rate Look-Up table is appropriate under the SCAMD's methodology to screen for potential localized air quality impacts.<sup>1</sup>

The Mass Rate Look-Up tables for LSTs were used to determine if the proposed Project would have the potential to generate significant adverse localized air quality impacts during construction. The LST for Source Receptor Area (SRA) 30 (Coachella Valley) was used to determine LST emission thresholds. The distance from the emission source and the maximum daily site disturbance also determines the emission thresholds. For analysis purposes, the scenario of a sensitive receptor being within 200 meters was used.

Table 3 shows that LST thresholds are not expected to be exceeded for any criteria pollutant during construction or operation. Impacts to sensitive receptors will be less than significant.

**Table 3**  
**Localized Significance Thresholds**  
**200 Meters, 5 Acres**  
**(pounds per day)**

	<b>CO</b>	<b>NO<sub>x</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>
Construction Emissions	37.07	35.73	21.07	11.30
<b>LST Threshold</b>	10,178	547	112	37
Operational Emissions	83.04	11.62	14.90	4.05
<b>LST Threshold</b>	10,178	547	27	9
<b>Exceeds Threshold?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Source of Emission Data: CalEEMod version 2020.4.0 (output tables provided in Appendix A).				
Source of LST Threshold: LST Mass Rate Look-up Table, 25 meters, 5 acres, SCAQMD				

### Health Impacts

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, construction and operation of the proposed Project will result in criteria emissions that are below the SCAQMD significance thresholds, and neither would violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation.

It is not scientifically possible to calculate the degree to which exposure to various levels of criteria pollutant emissions will impact an individual's health. There are several factors that make predicting a Project-specific numerical impact difficult:

- Not all individuals will be affected equally due to medical history. Some may have medical pre-dispositions, and diet and exercise levels tend to vary across a population.

<sup>1</sup> SCAQMD "Fact Sheet for Applying CalEEMod to Localized Significance Thresholds."



- Due to the dispersing nature of pollutants, it is difficult to locate and identify which group of individuals will be impacted, either directly or indirectly.
- There are currently no approved methodologies or studies to base assumptions on, such as baseline health levels or emission level-to-health risk ratios.

Due to these limitations, the extent to which the Project poses a health risk is uncertain but unavoidable. It is anticipated that the impacts associated with all criteria pollutants will be less than significant overall, and that health effects will also be less than significant.

- d) **Less Than Significant Impact.** A significant impact could occur if objectionable odors are generated that would adversely impact sensitive receptors. Odors are typically associated with industrial projects involving the use of chemicals, solvents, petroleum products, and other strong-smelling elements used in manufacturing processes, as well as in sewage treatment facilities and landfills. The Project proposes a medical office center, and as such, no odors from industrial uses are anticipated.

During construction, odors associated with construction activities, particularly paving, will be generated. However, any such odors would be short-term and quickly dispersed below detectable levels as distance from the construction site increases. The Project does not propose land uses that cause odor impacts, such as fast-food restaurants, photographic studios, and laundry facilities, and other commercial and industrial uses. The SCAQMD Rule 402 (Nuisance), and SCAQMD Best Available Control Technology Guidelines would limit potential objectionable odor impacts during the proposed project's long-term operations phase. Therefore, impacts from objectionable odors will be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** SCAQMD AQMP, 2016; 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), Demographics and Growth Forecast Technical Report, Southern California Association of Governments, adopted September 3, 2020; "Final Localized Significance Threshold Methodology," prepared by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Revised, July 2008; "2003 Coachella Valley PM<sub>10</sub> State Implementation Plan," August 1, 2003; CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0; Project materials.

<b>IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b> <b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?		✓		
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?				✓
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?				✓
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?		✓		
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?				✓
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				✓

## Setting

The Coachella Valley is located within the Sonoran Desert, a subdivision of the Colorado Desert. The Sonoran Desert contains a wide range of biological resources that are highly specialized and endemic to the region. The central portion of the valley, in which the Project site is located, is composed of sand dunes and sand fields that are divided into three sub-communities: active sand dunes, active sand fields, and stabilized and partially stabilized desert sand fields.

A wide range of common plant species, such as mesquite, smoke tree, desert holly, creosote bush, and palo verde, are supported by the conditions present in the valley, as are a wide range of wildlife species. Bird species include golden eagle, western burrowing owl, and others. There are also a range of sensitive plant and animal species present in the Coachella Valley, some of which have been listed as threatened or endangered by federal and state agencies.

Within the Coachella Valley region, some plant species that are federally listed as endangered include the Coachella Valley milkvetch and triple-ribbed milkvetch. Threatened or endangered wildlife species include the Peninsular bighorn sheep, Casey's June beetle, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, arroyo southwestern toad, and mountain yellow-legged frog. Sensitive bird species include the least Bell's vireo and southwestern flycatcher, both listed as endangered. In addition, there are several species of birds considered "sensitive" by state and federal wildlife resource agencies.

The city is within the boundaries of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP), a comprehensive regional plan encompassing approximately 1.1 million acres in the Coachella Valley that addresses the conservation needs of 27 native flora and fauna species and 27 natural vegetation communities. The City of Palm Desert is a CVMSHCP Permittee and subject to its provisions.

## **Discussion of Impacts**

- a) **Less than Significant with Mitigation.** The proposed Project site is currently vacant and has been heavily disturbed by previous grading activities. Vegetation coverage is generally sparse with regrowth of shrubs and desert grasses, such as tumbleweed and brittlebush. The surface soils are composed mainly of wind-blown fine-grained sand. Land use in the immediate vicinity is dominated by vacant lands, retail uses and medical offices, with residential neighborhoods further away in all directions. Due to the disturbed nature of vegetation and soils, the Project site has a very low to low potential to harbor sensitive wildlife species.

Burrowing owl is a state species of special concern that resides in open dry grasslands and desert areas. Since the site is currently vacant and covered sparsely with vegetation. The CVMSHCP and State law prohibit the take of burrowing owl. Should burrowing owl be found on the property prior to construction, a significant impact would occur. To assure that this impact is mitigated, Mitigation Measure BIO.1 is provided below, which requires pre-construction surveys to assure that the species is not present, or to protect the species should it be identified on-site. With implementation of this mitigation measure, impacts to burrowing owls will be less than significant.

The existing vegetation on and adjacent to the property would have a low potential to provide nesting opportunities for birds covered under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). As the subject site is vacant, these species would reside seasonally within the subject site. Nesting activities would occur between January and August of any year. Under the provisions of the MBTA, impacts to covered nesting birds would be considered a significant impact. To assure that impacts to bird nests covered under the MBTA are reduced to less than significant levels, a pre-construction survey is required if any activity to remove vegetation is proposed during the nesting season, as provided in Mitigation Measure BIO.2, below. With implementation of this mitigation measure, impacts to birds covered by the MBTA will be less than significant.

The implementation of the SPA would not significantly change impacts to biological resources, because the 10.5 acres would be expected to be graded and fully disturbed under either the proposed Project or UNSP buildout. The proposed land use would result in a comparable development intensity, and thus result in comparable areas of open space for common species to use as forage and nesting areas. Therefore, the proposed Project will not result in any new significant impacts or increase the severity of impacts already identified in the General Plan EIR. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO.1 and BIO.2, and adherence to existing federal, state, and City regulations will ensure potential impacts are reduced to less than significant levels.

- b) **No Impact.** The Project site does not contain any riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities protected by local plans, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The site is isolated by existing roadways, and is surrounded by a mix of vacant land and urban development. Onsite soils have been disturbed by previous grading activity, and onsite vegetation is limited to only sparse shrubs and desert grass. No Project-related impacts would occur, and no mitigation measures would be required.
- c) **No Impact.** The Project site is located inland and does not contain any streams, marshes, protected wetlands, or vernal pools protected by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Project-generated runoff will be managed onsite. No Project-related impacts would occur and no mitigation measures would be required.
- d) **Less than Significant with Mitigation.** Surrounding lands include vacant, commercial properties and major roadways. No wildlife corridors or biological linkages are mapped, known, or expected on the Project site. Although it may provide marginal habitat for burrowing owls and migratory birds, the Project site is not identified as a nursery site. As described above, the site may offer limited nesting sites for birds protected by the MBTA and burrowing owls. Compliance with pre-construction surveys, described in Mitigation Measures BIO.1 and BIO.2, will ensure impacts to sensitive species are reduced to less than significant levels.
- e) **No Impact.** The proposed Project will not conflict with any local ordinances protecting biological species and will be required to comply with the landscaping and other applicable requirements of the Municipal Code and University Neighborhood Specific Plan. The Project would also adhere to the City's General Plan Policy 4.3 by incorporating native vegetation materials into the Project landscape. No impact will occur.
- f) **No Impact.** The subject property is within the boundaries of the CVMSHCP, and the City of Palm Desert is a Permittee to the CVMSHCP. The Project does not propose a land use designation change that would convert protected or open space lands to urban uses. The Project proponent will be required to pay the local development mitigation fee to mitigate impacts to covered species. Payment of the fee is a standard requirement of projects in the CVMSHCP coverage area. The Project will not conflict with this or any other habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan. No impact will occur.

## **Mitigation Measures:**

### **BIO.1 Burrowing Owl Surveys**

To mitigate potential impacts to burrowing owl, two pre-construction surveys shall be conducted in accordance with CDFW protocol. The first survey shall occur between 14 and 30 days prior to ground disturbance, and the second shall occur within 24 hours of the initiation of ground disturbance activities for any phase of development on the Project site.

- If no owls are detected during those surveys, ground disturbance may proceed without further consideration of this species, assuming there is no lapse between the surveys and construction, because the protocol states “time lapses between Project activities trigger subsequent take avoidance surveys including but not limited to a final survey conducted within 24 hours prior to ground disturbance.”
- If burrowing owls are detected during the surveys, avoidance and minimization measures shall be required. Avoidance and minimization measures may include establishing a buffer zone, installing a visual barrier, implementing burrow exclusion and/or closure techniques, in conformance with CDFW protocol.

### **BIO.2 Migratory Bird Treaty Act**

If ground disturbance or tree or plant removal is proposed between January 15th and August 31st, a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within 7 to 10 days of initiation of grading onsite. If active nests are reported, then species-specific measures shall be prepared. At a minimum, grading in the vicinity of a nest shall be postponed until the young birds have fledged. For construction that occurs between September 1st and January 31st, no pre-removal nesting bird survey is required.

- In the event active nests are found, exclusionary fencing shall be placed around the nests until such time as nestlings have fledged. Avoidance buffers shall be 100 to 300 feet from the nests of unlisted songbirds, and 500 feet from the nests of birds-of-prey and listed species.

## **Monitoring:**

**BIO.A** The Project biologist shall supply the City with reports of findings regarding burrowing owls and migratory birds. The reports will be attached to the grading permit for the Project.

**Responsible Parties:** Project Biologist, City Engineer, Planning Department

**Timeline:** prior to issuance of any permits that result in ground disturbance

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016; Project materials.

<b>V. CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?				✓
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?		✓		
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?				✓

## Setting

The Cahuilla Indians settled in the Coachella Valley centuries ago. They were a Takic-speaking people that, before European settlement, consisted primarily of hunters and gatherers generally divided into three groups based on geography: the Pass Cahuilla of the San Geronio Pass-Palm Springs area; the Mountain Cahuilla of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains and the Cahuilla Valley; and the Desert Cahuilla of the eastern Coachella Valley.

The first noted European explorations in the Coachella Valley occurred in the 1820's. By the 1870's, non-native settlements expanded across the region as new federal laws opened lands for settlement. The discovery of underground water sources increased farming activities in the early 20th century. After World War II, the Henderson brothers organized the Palm Desert Corporation to promote their new desert town. In 1946, they started constructing streets and commercial buildings which later became known as Palm Desert. The City was incorporated in 1973.

Prior to the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1876-1877, no human-made features of any kind were known to be present in the Project vicinity. Scattered residential development began to emerge to the southwest of the project location in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, while farming operations continued at least into the mid-1990s, mostly to the north and east. Over the next ten years, urbanization and suburbanization rapidly altered the landscape in and around the project area. In 2005-2006, most of the project area was leveled and graded evidently in preparation of a development project that never materialized.

In October 2022, CRM TECH prepared a Historical/Archeological Resources Survey for the proposed Project (Appendix B).

## Discussion of Impacts

- a, b) **No Impact.** In 2022, CRM TECH conducted a historical and archeological resources study for the Project site, which included a historical background and records search, a Sacred Lands Files search at the State of California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and field inspection of the Project site.

### Records Search

According to the Eastern Information Center (EIC), the project area had not been previously surveyed, and no cultural resources had been recorded within or adjacent to the Project site. Outside of the Project boundaries, over 30 previous studies completed between 1978 and 2018, including an adjacent property to the northeast carried out by CRM TECH in 2013. These past studies identified four historical/archaeological sites and two isolates (i.e., localities with less than three artifacts) within the one-mile radius of the subject property. However, none of the resources were found in the immediate vicinity of the current project area, the nearest ones being nearly a half-mile away along the Union Pacific Railroad. With no potential to receive any impact from the project as proposed, none of these sites or isolates required further consideration during the study.

### Sacred Lands File Search

On July 13, 2022, CRM TECH submitted a written request to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for a records search in the Sacred Lands File regarding the proposed Project. NAHC reported no Native American cultural resource(s) in the Project vicinity but recommended that sixteen local Native American representatives be consulted for further information. A representative of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians participated in the archaeological field survey of the project area. However, to date the tribe has provided no further comments regarding potential Native American cultural resources in the project vicinity.

The city will contact Tribal representatives as part of the AB 52 and SB 18 consultation process described in Section XVIII (Tribal Cultural Resources) of this Initial Study.

### Field Survey

A field survey was conducted on August 15, 2022 by CRM TECH archeologist with the assistance of a Native American Monitor of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. The ground surface in the entire project area has been extensively disturbed due to previous grading and leveling of the land in 2005-2006. Scattered modern refuse was observed over much of the property, including building debris such as concrete fragments, asphalt fragments, and broken glass, but none of the items are of any historical/archaeological interest. The field survey encountered no historical resources on the current Project site.

### Summary of Impacts

Based on these findings, CRM TECH concluded that no known archaeological resources occur on the Project site, and no further cultural resources investigation is needed for the Project unless development plans change to include areas not covered by the study. However, as recommended in the cultural resources study, Mitigation Measure CUL.1 is provided to protect any potential buried archaeological resources that may be uncovered during Project development. With implementation of CUL.1, potential impacts to archaeological resources will be reduced to less than significant levels.

- c) **No Impact.** No cemeteries or human remains are known to occur onsite. It is unlikely that human remains will be uncovered during Project development. However, should human remains be uncovered, California law requires that all activity cease and the coroner be notified to determine the nature of the remains and whether Native American consultation is needed. This requirement of law assures that there will be no impact to cemeteries or human remains.

### **Mitigation Measures:**

#### **CUL.1** Archaeological and Tribal Monitoring

Earth-moving activities, including grading, grubbing, trenching, or excavations at the site shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist and a Native American monitor.

If any cultural materials more than 50 years of age are discovered, they shall be recorded and evaluated in the field. The monitors shall be prepared to recover artifacts quickly to avoid construction delays but must have the power to temporarily halt or divert construction equipment to allow for controlled archaeological recovery if a substantial cultural deposit is encountered. The monitors shall determine when excavations have reached sufficient depth to preclude the occurrence of cultural resources, and when monitoring should conclude.

If artifacts are discovered, these shall be processed, catalogued, analyzed, and prepared for permanent curation in a repository with permanent retrievable storage that would allow for additional research in the future.

### **Monitoring:**

- CUL.A.** Within 30 days of the completion of ground disturbing activities on the Project site, a report of findings shall be filed with the City. The report will summarize the methods and results of the evaluation, including an itemized inventory and a detailed analysis of recovered artifacts, upon completion of the field and laboratory work. The report should include an interpretation of the cultural activities represented by the artifacts and a discussion of the significance of all archaeological finds.

**Responsible parties:** Project applicant, Project archaeologist, Tribal monitor, Planning Division, City Engineer.

**Sources:** Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey, University Medical Office Park Project, CRM TECH, October 17, 2022; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.



<b>VI. ENERGY</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?			✓	
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?			✓	

## Setting

Primary energy sources include fossil fuels (e.g. oil, coal, and natural gas), nuclear energy, and renewable sources (e.g. wind, solar, geothermal and hydropower). Southern California Edison (SCE) provides electricity to the City of Palm Desert and serves approximately 15 million people in a 50,000 square-mile service area.<sup>2</sup> Natural gas is provided by the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas). It serves approximately 21.8 million customers in a service area covering approximately 24,000 square miles.<sup>3</sup> Both SCE and SoCalGas offer programs and incentives to reduce energy consumption.

The Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan (2010) establishes the City's vision for long-term energy reduction and sustainability. It addresses city-wide energy usage and establishes goals and policy recommendations within six resource areas: building efficiency standards, energy management, materials management, regional air quality, transportation resources, and water management.

## Discussion of Impacts

**a, b) Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will consume energy during both construction and long-term operation. During construction, energy demand will come from the operation of construction machinery and equipment, manufacturing of construction materials, delivery of building materials, hauling of construction debris, and commuting of workers to and from the Project site. The Project consists of typical commercial/medical office development, and has no characteristics that would result in unusually high use of energy for construction. Construction practices would be subject to current SCAQMD rules and regulations, such as source-specific standards for engines and limits on equipment idling duration. The Project would also adhere to state Low Carbon Fuel Standards for construction equipment and heavy-duty vehicle efficiency standards. These standards would reduce fuel consumption, help maximize fuel efficiency, and reduce pollutant emissions.

<sup>2</sup> Southern California Edison, [www.calcities.org/detail-pages/partner/edison](http://www.calcities.org/detail-pages/partner/edison), accessed November 2022.

<sup>3</sup> SoCalGas, Company Profile, [www.socalgas.com/about-us/company-profile](http://www.socalgas.com/about-us/company-profile), accessed November 2022.

Long-term operational energy demand will be generated by Project lighting, and heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Energy would be consumed during the operation of the facilities, as well as landscape irrigation, the transport and conveyance of water, and solid waste hauling and disposal. However, the Project will result in medical office uses typical of such construction throughout the City and region. Buildings will be constructed in accordance with the state Building Code, Green Building Code, and Energy Code in effect at the time that development occurs, to ensure the most efficient building technologies are used, which will benefit overall building operations, ensure energy efficiency, and reduce wasteful and unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Current building codes require all newly constructed commercial buildings to have a solar photovoltaic (PV) array and an energy storage system (ESS) installed. The Project will be required to comply with these standards.

The Project will not directly increase the population and will therefore not directly increase vehicle trips and miles traveled (VMT) and long-term fuel demand. A VMT analysis was prepared that found the Project would result in a net decrease in citywide VMTs due to virtual medical appointments that allow patients to access healthcare services or communicate with healthcare staff through online or off-site programs (see Section XVII, Transportation). According to the Project-specific traffic impact analysis, the Project is estimated to generate 4,129 vehicle trips per day (see Section XVII, Transportation). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) set forth vehicle fuel efficiency standards to reduce vehicle emissions. Although the Project will increase vehicle trips, it will not interfere with increased fuel efficiency standards or result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of transportation energy resources during operation.

SCE engages in renewable power generation and procurement, administers a variety of energy efficiency programs, and encourages rooftop solar energy. According to the Project-specific CalEEMod analysis (Appendix A), at buildout, the Project is projected to consume approximately 1,135,430 kWh of electricity and approximately 3,935 therms of natural gas per year. Actual consumption will be offset by energy-efficient appliances and future solar systems. The Project will be required to comply with solar requirements of the California Building Code and will not interfere with any state or local plan that promotes renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Adherence to applicable laws and standards enforced by government agencies, SCE, and SoCalGas will ensure the Project is consistent with current energy standards and conservation goals laid out in the City's General Plan and Environmental Sustainability Plan. Therefore, Project impacts will be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan, February 11, 2010.

<b>VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.				✓
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?		✓		
iii) Seismic related ground failure, including liquefaction?		✓		
iv) Landslides?				✓
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?			✓	
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on-or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?		✓		
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?		✓		
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?				✓
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?				✓

## Setting

### Geology and Soils

The Project is located in the City of Palm Desert which is part of the Coachella Valley. The geology and seismicity of the Coachella Valley is primarily influenced by the tectonics of the San Andrea and San Jacinto fault systems. The San Andreas Fault is a continental transform fault that extends roughly 750 miles through California. It forms the tectonic boundary between the Pacific Plate and the North American Plate, and its motion is right-lateral strike-slip (horizontal). The San Jacinto Fault Zone (SJFZ) is a major

strike-slip fault zone that runs through San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial Counties in Southern California. The SJFZ is a component of the larger San Andreas transform system and is considered to be the most seismically active fault zone in the area.

The Coachella Valley is located in the northwestern portion of the Salton Trough which is bounded by the San Bernardino Mountains on the northwest, San Jacinto Mountains on the west, Santa Rosa Mountains on the south, and Little San Bernardino Mountains and Indio Hills on the northeast. Regional soils range from rocky outcrops within the mountains bordering the valley to coarse gravels of mountain canyons and recently laid fine- and medium-grained alluvial (stream deposited) and aeolian (wind deposited) sediments on the central valley floor. Episodic flooding of major regional drainages, including the Whitewater River, results in the deposition of sand and gravel on the valley floor. Strong sustained winds emanating from the San Geronio Pass cause wind erosion and transport and deposit dry, finely granulated, sandy soils on the central valley floor. Soils in the project area primarily consist of myoma fine sand and Coachella fine sands.<sup>4</sup>

#### Paleontological Resources

Paleontological resources are the fossilized remains of prehistoric animals and plants, created more than 12,000 years ago in the Pleistocene era. Palm Desert General Plan Policy 9.7 requires development to avoid paleontological resources whenever possible. If complete avoidance is not possible, development is required to minimize and fully mitigate impacts to the resource.

#### **Discussion of Impacts**

- a.i) No Impact.** There are no Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones in the City (General Plan Figure 8.1), and the subject property is not located within or adjacent to an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. The nearest earthquake fault is the South Branch of the San Andreas Fault Zone, approximately 4 miles northeast of the Project site. No fault-related surface rupture would occur on the Project site.
- a.ii) Less than Significant with Mitigation.** The Coachella Valley is a seismically active region. The closest active fault to the City is the San Andreas Fault, 4 miles north of the City, which has a probable magnitude range of 6.8-8.0 on the Richter scale. The San Jacinto Fault and the Elsinore Fault are 10 miles and 30 miles southwest of the City, respectively, and both have a probable magnitude range of 6.5-7.5 on the Richter scale. The Project would be exposed to strong ground shaking during a major quake on nearby faults, which could expose people and structures to safety risks. The impacts associated with ground shaking could be significant without mitigation.

The subject property is not in the Seismic Hazard Overlay on the City's zoning map, which requires development proposals to conduct in-depth geotechnical soils investigations. However, the Project will be required to comply with the California Building Code (CBC) in effect at the time that development occurs, which includes seismic safety specifications and requirements. The Project should be constructed based on parameters for the Site Class D designation. Adherence to the CBC and recommendations from the geotechnical report will reduce potential impacts associated with strong seismic ground shaking to less than significant levels on the subject property (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

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<sup>4</sup> Website: Web Soil Survey. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Accessed February 2023.  
<https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

- a.iii) Less than Significant with Mitigation.** Seismically induced liquefaction is the loss of soil strength caused by a sudden increase in pore water pressure shortly after an earthquake. Liquefaction can occur with a combination of the following conditions: saturated soil or soil below the groundwater table, strong ground shaking, and susceptible soil types such as loose sands and gravels. Lateral spreading is a form of liquefaction-related hazard.

According to the Palm Desert General Plan, the Riverside County Land Information System identifies most of the city is susceptible to moderate liquefaction potential. Provided that grading and other development plans for the Project site are designed in accordance with site-specific parameters for soils and geological conditions, Project-related impacts from seismic related ground failure will be less than significant (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

- a.iv) No Impact.** The Project site is not susceptible to landslides due to its relatively flat terrain and distance from mountainous slopes and hillsides (approximately 3.5 miles). According to Palm Desert General Plan Figure 8.2, Landslide Susceptibility, areas susceptible to landslide are limited to the southern portion of the city. No impact will occur.

- b) Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is in a very high wind erodibility zone (Palm Desert General Plan Figure 8.3, Wind Erosion Hazard). Buildout of the Project will result in ground disturbances, including site preparation and grading, that have the potential to increase soil erosion. However, the Project will include new structures, paved surfaces, and landscaping that will stabilize ground surfaces and resist long-term erosion. The Project will be required to submit and implement a site-specific dust control mitigation plan as part of the grading permit process to minimize potential impacts caused by blowing dust and sand during construction. Adherence to this standard requirement will assure that potential wind erosion impacts remain less than significant.

The Project will install onsite drainage retention facilities to retain groundwater onsite and have sufficient capacity to accommodate a 100-year storm event (see Section X, Hydrology and Water Quality). Implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) will ensure that the Project will not result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Impacts will be less than significant.

- c) Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Subsidence

Subsidence is the settlement or sinking of the land surface that, in the Coachella Valley, has been associated with long-term groundwater withdrawal. Subsidence is considered a regional issue and is being addressed by the water agencies and government agencies through water conservation and supplemental groundwater recharge efforts. Adherence to the recommendations provided in the geotechnical study will assure that impacts regarding subsidence will remain less than significant (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

Landslide and Rockfall

See Response VII.a.iv, above.

Liquefaction and Dry Sand Settlement

See Response VII.a.iii, above.

#### Hydrocollapsible Soils

Hydrocollapsible soils are subject to collapse upon the introduction of water. The volume of collapsible soils reduces when the pores in the soil become saturated, causing loss of grain-to-grain contact. Collapsible soils can cause uniform or differential damage to foundations and walls built on this soil type. Adherence to the recommendations of the geotechnical report will assure that Project impacts associated with collapsible soils will remain less than significant (Mitigation Measure GEO.1).

- d) **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** The Palm Desert General Plan EIR (Section 4.7) states that there appear to be no expansive clays or soils exhibiting shrink-swell characteristics in the City. The sites underlying soils consist of fine windblown sand, and heavily graded sand. The geotechnical report required by Mitigation Measures GEO.1 will provide recommendations that the Project should implement to assure these geotechnical issues are appropriately addressed, including removal and recompaction of collapsible or weak soils during the grading phase. Compliance with recommendations in the geotechnical report will ensure Project impacts are less than significant.
- e) **No Impact.** The subject property is in an urban area that is served by a community sewer system, and the proposed Project will be connected to the sewer system. The Project will not result in new septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems. No impact will occur.
- f) **No Impact.** The soils underlying the Project site consist of recently deposited aeolian and alluvial sediments that typically do not harbor paleontological resources. According to the Riverside County General Plan EIR (Figure 4.9.3), the Project area is of low paleontological sensitivity. The Project site is not known to have unique paleontological or geologic features. No impact will occur.

#### **Mitigation Measures:**

**GEO.1** A site-specific Geotechnical Report shall be prepared and submitted with grading plans, and report recommendations should be incorporated in Project design and construction.

#### **Monitoring:**

**GEO.A** The applicant shall provide the final grading plan to the Project geotechnical consultant for review and ensure the recommendations are incorporated into the design criteria and Project specifications as deemed appropriate by the consultant.

**Responsible parties:** Project engineer, Project geotechnical consultant, Project applicant.

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert Zoning Map; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Riverside County General Plan EIR (SCH 2009041065); USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, accessed November 2022; Project materials.

<b>VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			✓	
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			✓	

## Setting

Certain gases in the earth's atmosphere, classified as greenhouse gases (GHGs), play a critical role in determining the earth's surface temperature. Prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), and fluorinated compounds. GHGs are emitted during natural and anthropogenic (human-caused) processes. Anthropogenic emissions of these GHGs in excess of natural ambient concentrations are responsible for intensifying the greenhouse effect and have led to a trend of unnatural warming of the earth's climate, known as global climate change or global warming.

State laws, such as Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) and Senate Bill 32 (SB 32), require cities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. SB 32 is the extension of AB 32 and requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The City of Palm Desert adopted an Environmental Sustainability Plan (2010) that is consistent with the goals of AB 32 and S-3-05, which calls for a statewide GHG emission reduction to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

On December 5, 2008, the SCAQMD formally adopted a greenhouse gas significance threshold of 10,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e/yr that only applies to industrial uses' stationary sources where SCAQMD is the lead agency (SCAQMD Resolution No.08-35). This threshold was adopted based upon an October 2008 staff report and draft interim guidance document that also recommended a threshold for all projects using a tiered approach. It was recommended by SCAQMD staff that a project's greenhouse gas emissions would be considered significant if it could not comply with at least one of the following "tiered" tests:

- Tier 1: Is there an applicable exemption?
- Tier 2: Is the project compliant with a greenhouse gas reduction plan that is, at a minimum, consistent with the goals of AB 32?
- Tier 3: Is the project below an absolute threshold (10,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year for industrial projects; 3,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year for residential and commercial projects)?
- Tier 4: Is the project below a (yet to be set) performance threshold?
- Tier 5: Would the project achieve a screening level with off-site mitigation?

The analysis provided below is based on this tiered approach.

## Discussion of Impacts

**a, b) Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will generate GHG emissions during both construction and operation. As described in Section III (Air Quality), the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project the Project's air quality emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions (Appendix A). Applicable standard requirements and best management practices (BMPs) were included in the model, including the implementation of a dust control and management plan in conformance with SCAQMD Rule 403, phased application of architectural coatings, and the use of low-polluting architectural paint and coatings per SCAQMD Rule 1113. Projected short-term construction and annual operational GHG emissions associated with Project buildout are described below and shown in Table 6.

### Construction Emissions

Construction activities, including operation of construction equipment, employee commute, and material hauling, will generate short-term GHG emissions. As shown in Table 4, the Project is projected to generate 594.51 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e of GHG emissions during the 1-year construction period. There are currently no construction related GHG emission thresholds for residential projects of this nature. To determine if construction emissions will result in a cumulatively considerable impact, buildout GHG emissions were amortized over a 30-year period and added to annual operational emissions to be compared to applicable GHG thresholds (see Table 4, below).

### Operational Emissions

At buildout, there are five emission source categories that will be contributing either directly or indirectly to operational GHG emissions, including energy/electricity usage, water usage, solid waste disposal, area emissions (pavement and architectural coating off-gassing), and mobile sources. Table 4 provides a summary of the projected short-term construction and annual operational GHG generation associated with buildout of the proposed Project.

**Table 4**  
**Projected GHG Emissions Summary (metric tons/year)**

Phase	CO <sub>2</sub> e (MT/YR)
Construction	594.51
Operational	
Area	0.01
Energy	223.52
Mobile	2,483.35
Waste	622.97
Water	58.43
Operational Subtotal	3,388.28
Construction, 30-year amortized <sup>1</sup>	19.81
<b>Total</b> (30-year amortized construction)	<b>3,408.09</b>
<b>SCAQMD Threshold</b>	<b>3,000.00</b>

<sup>1</sup> Buildout construction GHG emissions amortized over 30 years.  
594.51/30 = 19.81 Emission Source: CalEEMod Version 2040.4.0



### Consistency with SCAQMD GHG Thresholds

The proposed Project is medical office business park and, therefore, can be evaluated under SCAQMD's Tier 3 commercial threshold of 3,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e/year. As shown in Table 6, Project emissions are projected to exceed the Tier 3 threshold. However, the Project would comply with the Tier 2 criteria. According to the SCAQMD's recommended Tier 2 threshold, a project would have a less than significant impact if it would be consistent with an approved plan for the reduction of GHGs. The City of Palm Desert adopted an Environmental Sustainability Plan (2010) that was based on a 2008 GHG Inventory and establishes energy-efficiency reduction policies and implementation measures for the City and development projects to meet AB 32 goals. The Environmental Sustainability Plan establishes a 10-year, 3-phased approach to reduce GHG emissions by 378,145 metric tons annually. It sets forth 139 reduction measures categorized in six sustainability resource areas: the built environment, energy management, materials management, regional air quality, transportation resources, and water management. The City determined that the Plan's reduction measures will effectively reduce city-wide GHG emissions through municipal and community efforts. If the proposed Project is not consistent with its measures, or if the measures are not otherwise binding, they must be incorporated as mitigation measures applicable to the Project. The following table compares the Project with applicable GHG reduction measures of the Environmental Sustainability Plan.

**Table 5**  
**Consistency with Applicable GHG Reduction Measures of the**  
**Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan**

<b>GHG Reduction Measure</b>	<b>Project Consistency</b>
<b>BE 1</b> Pass Green Building Ordinance to adopt the California Green Building Code, Title 24 edition.	<b>Consistent:</b> The City has adopted the 2019 edition of the California Building Code, Title 24, Part 2 of the California Code of Regulations. The 2022 edition of the California Building Code will be in effect on January 1, 2023. The Project is required to meet the standards of the current Title 24 requirements. The Project would meet Title 24 California Building Code mandatory solar-ready requirements for new buildings.
<b>MM 21</b> Enact by 2011 an ordinance for residential, commercial, and construction debris that requires mandatory diversion of 100% inert, 75% other debris by 2012.	<b>Consistent:</b> The Project would comply with City requirements for waste disposal set forth in Chapter 8.19 of the Municipal Code (Requirements for Collection of Solid Waste, Recyclable Material, and Organic Waste for All Residents).
<b>RAQ 6</b> Implement incentives for replacing turf with native low water-use plants, trees, ground cover and "hard-scapes."	<b>Consistent:</b> The Project includes an approved plant list and requires planting and irrigation design to comply with CVWD and state Model Efficient Water Ordinance standards, and 75% of the plant palette to be low-water plants from the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOL), 2014.
<b>T 1</b> Develop plan for increasing the connectivity of Class 1 and Class 2 bicycle lanes and golf cart lanes.	<b>Consistent:</b> The Project will have direct access to the existing Class 2 bicycle/golf cart lanes on Gerald Ford Drive and Portola Avenue
<b>WM 9</b> Continue supporting the offers for drip irrigation and smart controller systems through CVWD.	<b>Consistent:</b> The Project's irrigation standards require drip irrigation to be provided for all shrub planting controlled by smart weather-based equipment with a rain sensor.

As shown, the Project would implement applicable GHG reduction measures of the City's Environmental Sustainability Plan and, therefore, would be consistent with the Plan. It should be noted that many of the reduction measures are dependent on third party participants, including the City and utility providers. Nonetheless, the Project will be constructed in conformance with the California Building Code, which sets forth stringent energy efficiency requirements and standards for new development that support the goals of the statewide GHG reduction plans.

In addition, a VMT analysis was prepared that found the Project would result in a net decrease in citywide VMTs due to virtual medical appointments that allow patients to access healthcare services or communicate with healthcare staff through online or off-site programs (see Section XVII, Transportation). A reduction in VMT will result in a direct reduction in mobile-source emissions, the largest GHG emission source.

In summary, the Project is considered consistent with local and state GHG reduction measures. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0; City of Palm Desert Environmental Sustainability Plan, February 11, 2010; Palm Desert Greenhouse Gas Inventory, 2008; "California's 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan," California Air Resources Board, November 2017; Project materials.

<b>IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?			✓	
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?			✓	
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?				✓
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				✓
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?				✓
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.				✓

## Setting

The proper management of hazardous materials is a common concern for all communities within the Coachella Valley. Beginning in the 1970s, governments at the federal, state, and local levels became increasingly concerned about the effects of hazardous materials on human health and the environment. Numerous laws and regulations were developed to investigate and mitigate these effects. As a result, the storage, use, generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials are highly regulated by federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Hazardous waste generators in the City of Palm Desert generally include “small quantity generators,” such as medical clinics, gasoline service stations, vehicle storage yards, and waste haulers. The City is responsible for coordinating with the appropriate agencies in the identification of hazardous material sites and regulation of their timely cleanup.

The Project site is surrounded by vacant lands and commercial/retail development. The site is currently vacant but has been heavily disturbed by previous grading activities. No chemical or hazardous waste disposal has been documented on the site. There are no known underground tanks or buried materials on the site.

## Discussion of Impacts

- a, b) Less than Significant Impact.** The construction phase of the Project would involve the use of heavy equipment and vehicles, which will use limited quantities of oil and fuels and other potentially flammable substances. During construction, equipment could require refueling and minor maintenance on site that could lead to fuel and oil spills. The contractor will be required to identify a staging area for storing materials and will be subject to laws regarding the handling, storage, and use of hazardous materials during construction.

During long-term operation, the Project will involve the routine transport, use, and storage of cleaning materials for office use and various chemical products for landscaping. None of these products will be used in sufficient quantities to pose a foreseeable threat to humans or cause a chemical release into the environment. The use and handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials, including medical waste, would occur in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, including California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (CalOSHA) requirements. Medical waste will be stored and collected in regulated containers, and transported to approved disposal sites from Project offices and clinic(s). Impacts would be less than significant.

- c) No Impact.** The nearest existing elementary school is James Earl Carter Elementary School on Hovley Lane East, approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the Project site. A new elementary/middle school is proposed at the northeast corner of Dolce Avenue and Gateway Drive, approximately 1.4 miles northwest of the Project site. The nearest university is UC Riverside – Palm Desert, located 0.35 miles southeast of the site at the northeast corner of Cook Street and Frank Sinatra Drive. The Project site is not within ¼ mile of a school and, therefore, the Project will have no impact associated with emitting or handling hazardous materials in proximity of a school.
- d) No Impact.** According to the California Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor database and the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker database, the Project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. Therefore, the proposed Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. No impact will occur.
- e) No Impact.** The subject property is not within the boundaries of an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of a public or private airstrip. The site is approximately 8 miles from the Palm Springs International Airport and 4.5 miles from the Bermuda Dunes Airport. Therefore, the Project will not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people in the Project area. No impact will occur.

- f) **No Impact.** The City’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2012 and specifies actions for the coordination of operations, management, and resources during emergencies. Key evacuation routes include Monterey Avenue, Portola Avenue, Cook Street, and Washington Street (General Plan p. 123).

The Project will not physically interfere with emergency response or evacuation plans. It will take access from Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive and College Drive/University Park Drive. The Project will be required to comply with police and fire department regulations to assure adequate emergency access and vehicle turn-around space. A construction access plan will be required by the City to assure the Project does not interfere with emergency access during construction. No impacts are expected.

- g) **No Impact.** The Project site is not within or near a wildland fire hazard zone. According to the Palm Desert General Plan (Figure 8.5), the Project site and surrounding lands are classified as ‘Urban Unzoned’ for fire hazard severity. The site is sparsely vegetated with sandy soils and provides no substantial fire fuel source. The Project will not expose people or structures to a significant risk associated with wildfire hazards. No impact will occur.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; State Water Resources Control Board, GeoTracker, accessed November 2022; California Department of Toxic Substances Control “EnviroStor” Database, accessed November 2022; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.

<b>X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?			✓	
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?			✓	
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
(i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;			✓	
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;			✓	
(iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or			✓	
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?			✓	
(d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?			✓	
(e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?				✓

## Setting

### Domestic Water

The Project site is within the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) service area for domestic water. The District's primary water source is groundwater extracted through a system of wells from the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin. In addition to groundwater, CVWD relies on imported water that is recharged into the groundwater basin at three facilities: Whitewater River Groundwater Recharge Facility (GRF), Thomas A. Levy GRF, and Palm Desert GRF. CVWD's domestic water system includes 97 groundwater production wells and 65 enclosed reservoirs. In 2020, it pumped 99,843 acre-feet per year (AFY) of

groundwater from the Indio and Mission Creek Subbasins. CVWD also owns and operates the water distribution system, which is generally located under existing streets in the public right-of-way. There are existing 12-inch water mains beneath Gerald Ford Drive and Julie Drive in the Project vicinity.

CVWD is responsible, under the California Water Code, for analyzing its current and future water supply, and assuring that sufficient supply is available to serve land uses within the District through the preparation of an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). CVWD is required to periodically update the UWMP. In 2020, CVWD collaborated with other water purveyors in the Coachella Valley to prepare a regional UWMP.<sup>5</sup>

#### Wastewater Treatment

CVWD provides sewer service to the City of Palm Desert, including the Project area. CVWD maintains sewer trunk lines ranging from 6 to 36 inches in diameter and 28 lift stations and associated force mains. Effluent from Palm Desert is conveyed to CVWD's Cook Street treatment plant (Water Reclamation Plant No. 10), which has a total capacity of 18 million gallons per day (mgd), including 15 mgd of tertiary treatment capacity. CVWD also implements the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board pertaining to domestic water quality and wastewater discharge.

The Project site is in an urban area where sewer lines are installed under the main roads. The Project will connect to an existing 18-inch sewer main beneath Gerald Ford Drive and 8-inch sewer main beneath Technology Drive.

#### Flood Control

Rainfall on the Coachella Valley floor averages 3 inches annually. Several watersheds drain the mountains toward the valley floor. There are five stormwater channels in Palm Desert: Whitewater River Stormwater Channel, Dead Indian Creek, Deep Canyon Channel, Palm Valley System, and East Magnesia Channel. The Project area is subject to City requirements relating to flood control. The City implements standard requirements for the retention of storm flows and participates in the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to protect surface waters from pollution.

A Draft Hydrology Report was prepared for the Project and is provided in Appendix C.

#### **Discussion of Impacts**

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is in the Whitewater River watershed. All water providers in the watershed are required to comply with Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) standards for the protection of water quality, including the preparation of project-specific Water Quality Management Plans (WQMP) for surface waters. CVWD is required to meet water quality requirements in its production and delivery of domestic water.

The Project will connect to the existing CVWD sewer system that will minimize impacts to regional groundwater quality. Installation of water lines on the Project site will comply with CVWD and RWQCB standards for water conveyance. The Project will be required to prepare a WQMP per the Colorado River Basin Regional Board. To minimize the pollutant load associated with urban runoff, it will also be required to comply with NPDES regulations, including preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Adherence to conditions of approval and local, state, and federal standard requirements will assure that the Project will not

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<sup>5</sup> 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021.

violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or conflict with any water quality control plan or sustainable ground water management plan. Project impacts will be less than significant.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** During construction, water demand will be limited and temporary and used for dust control purposes, including the routine spraying of ground surfaces and construction equipment. During operation, water will be used for medical office purposes and drought-tolerant landscape irrigation.

The American Water Works Association Research Foundation (AWWARF) has developed demand factors for land use categories including residential uses. As shown in the table below, the Project has the potential to generate a demand of 79.65 acre-feet per year.

**Table 6**  
**Water Demand at the Project Buildout**

Proposed Land Use	Unit	Water Consumption Factor	Water Demand (gpd)	Total Water Demand At buildout (AFY)
Medical Office	114,700 SF	0.62-gallons per SF per day	71,114 gpd	79.65

According to the 2020 Coachella Valley Regional UWMP<sup>6</sup>, the projected 2025 regional water supply is 137,061 AFY, and the projected 2045 regional water supply is 164,966 AFY (UWMP Table 4-22). Approximately 90% of water supplies are expected to be groundwater and 10% are expected to be recycled water. Projections are based on existing water sources and expected future water supply projects or programs. The proposed Project's water demand (79.65 AFY) is 0.05% of projected 2025 regional water supplies and 0.04% of projected 2045 regional water supplies. Therefore, the Project will not substantially decrease local groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge such that it would impede sustainable management of the basin. The Project includes irrigation requirements, including the use of water-efficient fixtures and drought-tolerant landscape materials, which will help reduce water demand over the long term. Impacts will be less than significant.

- c) i-iii) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is generally flat and slopes to the east with elevations ranging from 160-190 feet above sea level. The ground surface consists of mostly wind-blown fine-grained sand and contains no rivers or streams. On-site soils are categorized as hydrologic soil group A in the National Cooperative Soil Survey and represent well drained to excessively drained sands or gravelly sands with high infiltration rates (low runoff potential) and high rates of water transmission.

There are two existing retention basins on-site that collect runoff from the three adjacent streets. According to the hydrology report (Appendix C), the on-site basins collect the runoff from about 10.9 acres. The basin in the southern corner of the project site collects 4.46 acres of College Drive and the basin in the eastern corner collects 6.40 acres of Gerald Ford Drive and portions of College Drive and Technology Drive. The basin in the eastern corner also collects the on-site runoff.

<sup>6</sup> 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021.



The site has been designed to maintain the existing easterly drainage pattern and will remove existing ground surface materials and replace them with impermeable structures and surfaces, including buildings, roads, parking lots, and sidewalks, that will increase runoff compared to existing conditions. Runoff flows will be intercepted by a series of catch basins and area drains and conveyed to on-site retention areas. The 10.5-acre project site consists of three sub-watershed areas and three catch basins are proposed: A, B, and C. Two underground chamber systems are proposed to replace the existing aboveground retention basin in the eastern corner. Basin B will be located under a portion of the eastern parking area and will collect on-site runoff and Basin C will be located under the north-eastern landscape area and collect offsite runoff. These two systems will prevent the commingling of stormwater from the public streets and private development, allowing effective stormwater quality monitoring. Basin A, the southern retention basin, will remain aboveground and will be expanded to properly store the increase in runoff due to development, in addition to the existing capture of offsite runoff from the adjacent streets. New storm drain connections are proposed for the existing offsite catch basins to align with the proposed configurations of the retention areas. Drywells are proposed in each basin to properly evacuate the runoff of the 100-year, 24-hour storm event. The proposed on-site basins are designed to retain 100% of the 100-year, 24-hour storm and infiltrate within 48 hours.

The Project will also be required to comply with conditions of approval pertaining to discharge, standard stormwater management requirements, and project-specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) and a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) that are subject to approval by the City Engineer and required by the City's NPDES implementation agreement. Implementation of the WQMP and BMPs will reduce impacts to surface waters by reducing siltation and reducing or eliminating pollutants in storm flows, including pathogens (bacteria/virus) generally associated with human activities but also present in the environment. With the implementation of these measures, impacts associated with surface water pollution will be less than significant.

Adherence to City requirements, including WQMP BMPs, will ensure the Project will not result in erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Implementation of these and other applicable requirements will assure that the Project will not create or contribute water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

- iv) **Less than Significant Impact.** The subject property is designated Zone X, which represents areas determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The site is not located in a 100-year or 500-year FEMA Flood Zone. Implementation of the proposed onsite drainage retention facilities will further ensure that the Project will have a less than significant impact on impeding or redirecting flood flows.
- d) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Project site is inland and not subject to tsunamis. It is not in the vicinity of a water body, levee, or dam. According to the General Plan, the City of Palm Desert is within the potential inundation area of the Wide Canyon Flood Control Dam in Fun Valley. However, the dam is managed by the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District under state laws to ensure dam safety, and General Plan Policy 3.5 calls for disseminating information about potential dam inundation areas. No specific dam inundation risk has been identified for the subject property. The Project site is not within a 100-year or 500-year floodplain. Impacts associated with Project inundation would be less than significant.

- e) **No Impact.** The Project will be required to comply with all applicable water quality standards and implement a WQMP approved by the city and the RWQCB for both construction activities and long-term operation. The Project is consistent with the General Plan land use designation assigned to the Project site, and its anticipated water demand is addressed in the 2020 Coachella Valley regional UWMP. Therefore, it will not conflict with a sustainable groundwater management plan. Adherence to the City's standard requirements related to water quality will ensure there will be no impacts to a water quality control plan.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** Preliminary Hydrology Report, University Medical Office Park, Michael Baker International, December 7, 2022; 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021; FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) #06065C1615G, effective August 28, 2008; City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.

<b>XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING</b> <b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant w/ Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Physically divide an established community?				✓
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?			✓	

### Setting

The Project site is designated as Town Center Neighborhood (7.0 to 40 du/ac) on the General Plan land use map and Neighborhood Center (NC) in the UNSP, which provides a mixed-use neighborhood center environment, including neighborhood-serving retail and restaurant uses, office space for small businesses, and a range of multi-family housing types.

### Discussion of Impacts

- a) **No Impact.** The Project site is currently vacant. The surrounding area is largely undeveloped with commercial retail development to the east with the nearest residential development located more than a quarter mile southeast of the site. All commercial uses and residential communities operate independently and will not be divided by the Project. The Project will not physically divide an established community.
- b) **Less Than Significant Impact.**

#### General Plan

The Project site is designated as Town Center Neighborhood in the General Plan. The intent and purpose of the Town Center Neighborhood is to provide moderate to higher intensity neighborhood development that features a variety of housing choices, walkable streets, and mixed uses. Non-residential uses include retail. Personal service, care, public facilities, and others which are determined to be compatible with an oriented toward serving the needs to neighborhoods. The Project proposes a medical office park, which is consistent with the non-residential land uses described in the Town Center Neighborhood designation.

Among the Project's goals are ensuring high-quality development within the Project area and providing medical care services to the surrounding neighborhoods. It is also consistent with the following General Plan Land Use Element goals and policies:

**Goal 2. Human-Scaled Design.** A city designed for people, fostering interaction, activity, and safety.

- 2.3 Landscaping.** Require development projects to incorporate high quality landscaping in order to extend and enhance the green space network of the city.

- 2.6 Lighting.** Require all new streetlights in commercial areas to be pedestrian-oriented and scaled, attractively designed, compatible in design with other street furniture, and to provide adequate visibility and security in accordance with best practices for night sky protection.

**Goal 5. Centers.** A variety of mixed use, urban centers throughout the city that provide opportunities for shopping, recreation, commerce, employment and arts and culture.

- 5.3 Diverse centers.** Encourage the development of local and city-wide centers that address different community needs and market sectors. The centers shall complement and be integrated with surrounding neighborhoods

The Project is consistent with the Palm Desert General Plan, and no conflict would occur.

University Neighborhood Specific Plan (Zoning)

The proposed Specific Plan amendment does not propose an increase to overall land use densities or development standards. As a result, the consistency identified in the EIR with the General Plan's policies and programs also applies to the currently proposed Project. The proposed Specific Plan is consistent with the previously approved 2016 Specific Plan and development of the proposed Project will be in accordance with the requirements of the Specific Plan and other applicable regulations, including payment of the CVMSHCP development impact fee and the implementation of its standards.

The proposed Project is consistent with the amended Specific Plan and proposes development that will meet or exceed the development standards in the Specific Plan. As the Specific Plan acts as the zoning document for the Project, the Precise Plan will be consistent with the City's zoning standards, since it meets or exceeds the Specific Plan development standards.

Summary of Impacts

The Project's land use plan, density range, and vision will remain consistent with the UNSP and General Plan land use designation, density, vision, and Land Use Element goals and policies. Impacts will be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; University Neighborhood Specific Plan, 2016.

<b>XII. MINERAL RESOURCES</b> <b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?				✓
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?				✓

### Setting

Pursuant to the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA), the state Mining and Geology Board designates mineral resource sectors within geographic areas where significant mineral resources of statewide importance and regional significance are located. The City of Palm Desert is in the Palm Springs Production-Consumption Region that covers approximately 631 square miles of the Coachella Valley from near Cabazon to Thermal. The City is in Mineral Resource Zone 3 (MRZ-3), defined as “areas containing known or inferred mineral occurrences of undetermined mineral resource significance.”

### Discussion of Impacts

**a, b) No Impact.** The Project site is in Mineral Resource Zone 3 (MRZ-3). According to the General Plan EIR, no known mineral sources exist in the city, and the significance of any mineral resource in MRZ-3 is considered speculative because no mining has historically occurred in the area. The Project site is not designated, used, or planned for mineral resource extraction or development. Therefore, the Project would have no impact on mineral resources.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Update of Mineral Land Classification Map for Portland Cement Concrete-Grade Aggregate in the Palm Springs Production-Consumption Region, Riverside County, California (Special Report 198), California Geological Survey, 2007.

<b>XIII. NOISE</b>				
<b>Would the project result in:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Generation of substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?			✓	
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?			✓	
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				✓

## Setting

The predominant source of noise in Palm Desert is motor vehicle traffic. Other noise generators include light industrial operations, construction activities, commercial activities, and landscaping equipment. Noise-sensitive receptors include housing, schools, libraries, and senior care facilities. The City has established goals, policies, and programs to limit and reduce the effects of noise intrusion on sensitive land uses and to set acceptable noise level standards for various types of land uses.

### City Noise Standards

General Plan Table 7.1 (Noise Compatibility Matrix) defines the level of acceptable noise for different land uses in the city. Normally acceptable noise levels range from 50 to 65 dBA CNEL for multi-family development, 50 to 60 dBA CNEL for single-family residential development, and 50 to 70 dBA CNEL for office buildings, business commercial, and professional uses. These allowable noise levels do not include construction-related noise levels, as construction activities generate temporary noise. Rather, construction noise is regulated by Municipal Code Section 9.24.070. General Plan standards are further supplemented by Municipal Code Section 9.24.030, Sound Level Limits, which regulate noise levels in different land use zones.

## Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The subject property is currently undeveloped and generates no noise. The main noise source in the area is vehicle traffic on Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive, and College Drive. The surrounding area consists of vacant lands and commercial development. The nearest sensitive receptors are residents in multi-family homes approximately 0.33 miles southeast of the Project site.

### Construction Noise

Project construction will temporarily increase ambient noise levels from the operation of heavy equipment and machinery. Grading, construction, paving, and other development activities will involve the operation of graders, bulldozers, dump trucks, and similar equipment. Heavy equipment can generate noise levels ranging from 70 to 90 dBA at 50 feet from the source. However, such equipment will be mobile and will not create a source of constant noise at any one location on the site.

Noise from construction activities will be temporary and will cease once the Project is operational. Construction noise is exempt from the noise standards of Section 9.24.030 of the Municipal Code. Instead, it is subject to Municipal Code Section 9.24.070, which limits construction activities to the least sensitive hours of the day, Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays. Adherence to these restrictions will ensure that construction-related impacts are compatible with the Municipal Code and less than significant.

### Operational Noise

During long-term operation, the Project will permanently increase ambient noise levels in the Project area. Noise will be generated by vehicles accessing the site, mechanical equipment (such as HVAC units), and landscaping equipment. However, the Project will be required to comply with the noise level limits of Municipal Code Section 9.24.030. Commercial noise levels are limited to 55 dBA between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., and 65 dBA from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The Project is not expected to permanently increase ambient noise levels such that they exceed the City's standard of 70 dBA CNEL for office buildings, business commercial, and professional uses.

According to the General Plan EIR (Figure 4.12-1), the Project area currently experiences noise levels that decrease with distance from Gerald Ford Drive and the I-10 Freeway. Noise levels are 65 dBA CNEL immediately adjacent to Gerald Ford Drive and 60 dBA CNEL throughout the rest of the site.

The General Plan EIR projected future noise levels at General Plan buildout using land use designations assigned by the General Plan land use map, including Town Center Neighborhood on the Project site, which is consistent with the Neighborhood Center (NC) designation in the UNSP. The proposed Project and Specific Plan amendment would result in a consistent maximum buildout potential as the approved UNSP and therefore, impacts would be the same as those analyzed in the EIR for maximum buildout. The EIR (Figure 4.12-2) determined that, at General Plan buildout, noise levels in the northerly portion of the Project site would increase to 70 dBA CNEL immediately adjacent to Gerald Ford Drive and 65 dBA CNEL on the rest of the site where the medical office center is proposed. These noise projections include future noise generated by buildout of the subject site. These noise levels are within the normally acceptable noise range for office buildings, business commercial, and professional uses (maximum of 70 dBA CNEL) established in General Plan Table 7.1, Noise Compatibility Matrix. Therefore, Project operational noise will increase noise levels in the area, but they will not exceed General Plan standards. Impacts will be less than significant.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Groundborne vibration and/or groundborne noise will be produced by heavy equipment during the construction phase of the Project. Construction activities, such as earth-moving and trenching, could generate temporary and short-term groundborne vibration and/or noise. The highest degree of groundborne vibration is likely to be generated during paving

due to the operation of a vibratory roller. Based on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) data, vibration velocities from vibratory rollers are estimated to be approximately 0.1980 inch-per-second PPV at 26 feet from the source of activity. As such, sensitive receptors greater than 26 feet from vibratory roller operations would not experience groundborne vibration above the Caltrans significance thresholds (i.e. 0.3 inch-per-second PPV for structures and 0.2 inch-per-second PPV for human annoyance). The nearest sensitive receptors are the multi-family residents approximately 0.33 miles southeast of the subject site. Due to this distance, sensitive receptors would not be significantly impacted by groundborne vibration and/or noise, and any such impacts would be temporary and would end once construction is complete. No such impacts will occur during long-term Project operation. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

- c) **No Impact.** The subject property is not within two miles of any airport, private or public. It is approximately 8 miles from the Palm Springs International Airport and 4.5 miles from the Bermuda Dunes Airport. No impact would occur.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; Palm Desert Municipal Code; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020).



<b>XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING</b> <b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?			✓	
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				✓

### Setting

As of January 2022, the population of the City of Palm Desert is 50,889. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) projects it will grow to 64,100 by 2045. The housing stock includes 36,058 single-family, multi-family, and mobile home units, the majority of which (39.8%) are single-family detached homes.

### Discussion of Impacts

- a) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project proposes a 114,700 square foot medical office center and will not directly induce population growth. Construction and operation of the Project will generate jobs. However, construction is expected to be fulfilled by the local labor market. At buildout, the Project expects to have approximately 363 employees. Given the current labor market, it is more likely that the new jobs will be filled by existing residents than new residents attracted to the area by the proposed Project.

The city anticipates, and has planned for, future population growth on the Project site by designating it as Neighborhood Center in the UNSP, which allows a residential density of 20-40 dwelling units per acre. The purposed Project would result in reduced on-site density (no dwelling units) compared to the maximum density allowed in the Specific Plan, resulting in a reduced population potential compared to that analyzed in the EIR. Therefore, impacts associated with population growth will be less than significant.

- b) **No Impact.** The subject property is vacant, and the Project would not displace any existing people or housing or necessitate replacement housing elsewhere. No impact will occur.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** Project materials; E-5 City/County Population and Housing Estimates, California Department of Finance, January 1, 2022; 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), Demographics and Growth Forecast Technical Report, Southern California Association of Governments, adopted September 3, 2020.

## XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

### Would the project result in:

Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

**Potentially  
Significant  
Impact**

**Less Than  
Significant  
with  
Mitigation**

**Less Than  
Significant  
Impact**

**No  
Impact**

Fire protection?			✓	
Police protection?			✓	
Schools?			✓	
Parks?			✓	
Other public facilities?			✓	

## Setting

### Fire Protection

The City of Palm Desert contracts with the State of California (CalFire) and Riverside County Fire Department for fire protection services. Riverside County Fire Station 71 at 73995 Country Club Drive, approximately 1.75 miles southwest of the Project site, serves north Palm Desert. Palm Desert has a total Fire Department staff of 44 positions at the three stations within the city limits. Backup support is available from stations in Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage.

### Police Protection

The City contracts with the Riverside County Sheriff Department for police protection services. The nearest police station is the Palm Desert Police Station on Gerald Ford Drive, approximately 1 mile northwest of the Project site. Staffing consists of 80 sworn deputy officers, 36 of which are dedicated to the patrol division, with the remaining dedicated to special assignments such as the Traffic Division, Special Enforcement Team, Motorcycle Enforcement Unit, K-9 Officer, Business District Team, School Resource Officers, Coachella Valley Violent Crime Gang Task Force, and Narcotics Enforcement. The City currently provides about 1.56 sworn officers for every 1,000 residents. In 2013, the response time to the highest priority calls was within 5.58 minutes.

### Schools

Palm Desert is within the jurisdictions of two school districts: Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) and Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD). The Project site is within the boundary of the PSUSD. The nearest elementary school is James Earl Carter Elementary School on Hovley Lane East, approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the Project site.

### Parks

The City currently operates and maintains 200 acres of park land in 12 parks. The nearest public parks to the Project site are University Dog Park (immediately southwest of the site) and University Park East (0.2 miles to the southeast).

### Other Public Facilities

Other public facilities in Palm Desert include the Palm Desert Library, Joslyn Center (senior services), City Hall, and other government facilities.

## **Discussion of Impacts**

### Fire Protection:

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project will increase the demand for fire services for the protection of new permanent structures. However, Project development will be in accordance with all state and local (Municipal Code and RCFD) fire standards to assure adequate fire safety and emergency access. The Project will be required to pay City development impact fees to contribute its fair share of costs for future fire facilities, personnel, and apparatus. Therefore, Project impacts will be less than significant.

### Police Protection:

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The addition of 114,700 square feet of medical office uses will increase the need for police services. However, the Project will be required to comply with all Police Department regulations and procedures, and Project plans will be reviewed by the Police Department to assure adequate emergency access is provided. The Project is not expected to require the construction of new or expanded police services or facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

### Schools:

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site is within the Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD) boundary and served by Rancho Mirage Elementary School, Nellie Coffman Middle School, and Rancho Mirage High School. The Project will be required to pay the standard PSUSD developer fees in place at the time development occurs, which are currently \$0.78 per square foot of commercial development.<sup>7</sup> Payment of developer fees would reduce potential Project impacts to school resources to less than significant levels.

### Parks/ Other Public Facilities:

**Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project proposes a medical office center and will have approximately 363 employees at buildout. It is expected that the proposed Project will be staffed by existing and future residents occurring as a result of annual growth. The Project does not propose residential uses, which would directly increase the city's population and demand for recreational resources or other public facilities. The subject site is zoned Neighborhood Center (NC) in the UNSP, which allows residential development of up to 40 dwelling units per acre. Because residential uses are not proposed, the Project will result in fewer new residents than

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<sup>7</sup> 2022 Fee Schedule, Palm Springs Unified School District website, [www.psusd.us](http://www.psusd.us), accessed November 2022.

previously analyzed in the GP and UNSP EIR. The proposed Project will not increase use of public facilities such that new or expanded facilities would be required. Impacts will be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); PSUSD 2022 Developer Fee Schedule; Project materials.

<b>XVI. RECREATION</b>				
<b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?			✓	
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?			✓	

### Setting

The city maintains and operates over 200 acres of park land in 12 public parks, two community centers, an aquatic center, and over 25 miles of multi-purpose trails. The city also partners with the Desert Recreation District to provide recreational programs and activities. Other recreational facilities in Palm Desert include a municipally owned golf course and the Family YMCA of the Desert in Civic Center Park. The city also contains, or is in proximity to, numerous public and private golf courses, large open space reserves, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, and other local and regional recreational resources.

### Discussion of Impacts

**a, b) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project proposes a 114,700 square foot medical office center and will have approximately 360 employees at buildout.<sup>8</sup> It is expected that the proposed Project will be staffed by existing and future residents occurring as a result of annual growth. The Project does not propose residential uses, which would directly increase the city's population and demand for recreational resources. The proposed Project is not expected to require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, nor will it result in a noticeable increase of use, if any.

The Specific Plan currently allows up to 40 dwelling units per acre in the NC zone. The proposed SPA does not propose an increase to overall land use densities and therefore will not result in any new impacts or increase the severity of a previously identified significant impact previously analyzed in the EIR. Overall, impacts will be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.

<sup>8</sup> University Medical Office Park Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Analysis, prepared by Urban Crossroads. November 7, 2022.

<b>XVII. TRANSPORTATION</b>				
<b>Would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?		✓		
b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?			✓	
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				✓
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?				✓

## Setting

### Existing Conditions

The Project site is currently undeveloped and does not generate any traffic. Key roads in the Project area include Gerald Ford Drive, Cook Street, Technology Drive, and College Drive. Gerald Ford Drive and Cook Street are fully built out as 6-lane divided arterials and improved with Class 2 (striped on-street) bicycle/golf cart lanes. Sidewalks have been built on the south side of Gerald Ford Drive along the Project site's northern boundary. Technology Drive is fully improved as a 2-lane collector street with shared bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides. College Drive is a 2-lane collector street with two shared bike lanes and a sidewalk on the south side but is not improved adjacent to undeveloped parcels on the north.

SunLine Transit Agency provides bus transit services to the Coachella Valley, including Palm Desert. Currently, there are no transit routes or facilities in the immediate Project vicinity. The nearest bus stop is on Cook Street at University Park (Route 5), approximately 0.35 miles southeast of the Project site and can be accessed via existing sidewalks and bike lanes.

### General Plan Designations

The Palm Desert General Plan Mobility Element establishes a roadway classification system based on vehicle capacity, number of lanes, and other improvements such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and parkways. Gerald Ford Drive is classified as Balanced Arterials consisting of a 4 to 6-lane divided road with bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Cook Street is a Vehicular Oriented Arterial consisting of 6 travel lanes. Technology Drive and College Drive are classified as Collector Streets. At General Plan buildout (2040), the nearby intersections of Gerald Ford Drive and Cook Street, and Gerald Ford Drive and Technology Drive, are projected to operate at Level of Service (LOS) D or better. The General Plan (Figure 4.2) designates Gerald Ford Drive as a Class 2 (on-street striped lane) bicycle and golf cart facility. Gerald Ford Drive and Cook Street are designated as truck routes (Figure 4.3).

### Level of Service Threshold

The General Plan does not set forth a LOS threshold for acceptable roadway and intersection operations. Policy 1.3 of the Mobility Element states that the City will “determine appropriate service levels for all modes of transportation and develop guidelines to evaluate impacts to these modes for all related public and private projects.” The city has not yet developed new guidelines for an acceptable LOS. The Project traffic impact analysis (Appendix D) uses LOS D as the threshold for acceptable traffic conditions on the circulation network.

### VMT Analysis

Effective July 1, 2020, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines require lead agencies to adopt Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as a replacement for automobile delay-based LOS as the measure for identifying transportation impacts for land use projects. Because the City of Palm Desert does not have its own VMT guidelines, Urban Crossroads prepared a Project VMT analysis (Appendix E) based on the adopted Riverside County “Transportation Analysis Guidelines for Level of Service & Vehicle Miles Traveled.”

### **Discussion of Impacts**

- a) **Less Than Significant with Mitigation.** The Project proposes development of 114,700 square foot medical office park. The Project proposes three access points, including the main driveway (primary access) on Gerald Ford Drive and two secondary access points on Technology Drive and College Drive/University Park Drive. The Traffic Analysis recommends the following site access improvements:
- Gerald Ford, Main Driveway (Primary Access): Right-in/right-out on Gerald Ford Drive 500 feet west of Technology Drive. Install a cross street stop for the northbound approach. Install an eastbound right turn lane west of the Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive and an auxiliary lane east of the Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive.
  - Technology Drive, East Driveway (Secondary Access): Install a cross street stop for the eastbound approach, provide one 100ft shared left/through/right outbound lane, and modify existing raised median to provide one 90ft northbound left turn lane.
  - University Park Drive, South Driveway (Secondary Access): Install a cross street stop for the southbound approach, provide one 50ft shared left/through/right outbound lane, and modify existing raised median to provide one 125ft eastbound left turn lane.

As shown in the following table, the Project is forecast to generate approximately 4,129 daily vehicle trips at buildout, including 356 trips during the AM peak hour and 451 trips during the PM peak hour.

**Table 7**  
**Project Trip Generation Summary**

<b>Trip Generation Rates<sup>1</sup></b>									
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>ITE Code</b>	<b>Unit<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>AM Peak Hour</b>			<b>PM Peak Hour</b>			<b>Daily</b>
			<b>In</b>	<b>Out</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>In</b>	<b>Out</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Medical-Dental Office	720	TSF	2.45	0.65	3.10	1.18	2.75	3.93	36.00
<b>Project Trips Generated</b>									
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Unit<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>AM Peak Hour</b>			<b>PM Peak Hour</b>			<b>Daily</b>
			<b>In</b>	<b>Out</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>In</b>	<b>Out</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Medical-Dental Office	720	94.7	232	62	296	112	260	372	3,409
Outpatient Surgery Center	720	20	49	13	62	24	55	79	720
<b>Total:</b>			<b>281</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>4,129</b>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual, 11th edition, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> TSF = thousand square feet

Based on consultation with City staff, the traffic impact analysis studied the following twelve (12) intersections to evaluate Project impacts on the circulation network:

1. Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive
2. Technology Drive/E. Driveway – The Village W. Driveway
3. Technology Drive/College Drive
4. South Driveway – University Park Drive/College Drive
5. Pacific Avenue/College Drive
6. Cook Street/University Park Drive
7. Cook Street/I-10 WB Ramps
8. Cook Street/I-10 EB Ramps
9. Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive
10. Cook Street/University Park Drive
11. Cook Street/ Frank Sinatra Drive
12. Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive

The following scenarios were analyzed:

- Existing (2022) Conditions
- Existing plus Ambient Growth plus Project (EAP) (2024)
- Existing plus Ambient Growth plus Project Plus Cumulative (EAPC) (2024)
- Horizon Year 2040 Without Project
- Horizon Year 2040 With Project

#### Existing Conditions

The analysis of Existing Conditions establishes the baseline for the Project's traffic analysis, and consideration of impacts. Under Existing Conditions, with the exception of the intersections of Cook Street and the I-10 westbound ramp, which operates at LOS E (unacceptable level), all other studied intersections operate at LOS C or better, as shown in Table 8.



**Table 8**  
**Existing Intersection Delay and Levels of Service**

Study Intersection	Traffic Control <sup>1</sup>	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>	Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	11.0	B	12.6	B
Technology Drive/E. Driveway – The Village W. Driveway	CSS	8.7	A	8.9	A
Technology Drive/College Drive	RDB	3.0	A	3.1	A
South Driveway – University Park Drive/College Drive	CSS	9.0	A	8.9	A
Pacific Avenue/College Drive	RDB	2.9	A	2.9	A
Cook Street/University Park Drive	RDB	3.1	A	3.3	A
Cook Street/I-10 WB Ramps	TS	<b>57.0</b>	<b>E</b>	11.3	B
Cook Street/I-10 EB Ramps	TS	16.2	B	22.9	C
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	27.7	C	32.6	C
Cook Street/University Park Drive	TS	5.5	A	5.8	A
Cook Street/ Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	12.1	B	25.9	C
Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive	Future Intersection				

<sup>1</sup> TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop; RDB = Roundabout

<sup>2</sup> Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown.

**BOLD** = Unacceptable LOS.

<sup>3</sup> LOS = Level of Service

#### EAP (2024) Conditions

EAP traffic conditions represent Existing Conditions, plus the addition of ambient traffic growth (in this case an ambient growth factor of 4.04% was added to Existing Conditions volumes), plus the addition of the Project. EAP projections assume that these conditions occur in 2024.

As shown in the following table, all studied intersections will operate at LOS C or better in 2024, representing acceptable conditions under the City's General Plan, with the exception of the intersection of Cook Street and I-10 westbound (WB) ramps, which will operate at LOS E during the morning peak hour without improvements, with or without the proposed Project. The traffic analysis recommended improvements to address deficiencies: The Project should contribute its fair share of 8.0% towards the addition of a second westbound left turn lane with 200 feet of storage at the Cook Street and I-10 WB ramp (Mitigation Measure TRANS.1). With the recommended improvements, the intersection of Cook Street and the I-10 WB ramp will operate at acceptable LOS. Impacts will be less than significant with Mitigation Measure TRANS.1 incorporated.

**Table 9**  
**EAP Intersection Delay and Levels of Service**

Study Intersection	Traffic Control <sup>1</sup>	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>	Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	14.6	B	14.8	B
Technology Drive/E. Driveway – The Village W. Driveway	CSS	11.0	B	10.8	B
Technology Drive/College Drive	RDB	3.5	A	3.3	A
South Driveway – University Park Drive/College Drive	CSS	10.0	B	9.7	A
Pacific Avenue/College Drive	RDB	3.0	A	3.1	A
Cook Street/University Park Drive	RDB	3.5	A	3.6	A
Cook Street/I-10 WB Ramps	TS				
-Without Improvements		<b>75.8</b>	<b>E</b>	11.9	B
-With Improvements	TS	25.3	C	11.2	B
Cook Street/I-10 EB Ramps	TS	18.5	B	30.4	C
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	29.9	C	33.8	C
Cook Street/University Park Drive	TS	7.5	A	6.8	A
Cook Street/ Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	12.8	B	29.2	C
Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive	CSS	10.7	B	14.0	B

<sup>1</sup> TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop; RDB = Roundabout.

<sup>2</sup> Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown. Delay and level of service is calculated using Synchro 10.1 analysis software.

**BOLD** = Unacceptable LOS.

<sup>3</sup> LOS = Level of Service

### EAPC Conditions

Under EAPC (2024) conditions, with the inclusion of the proposed Project, ambient growth, known cumulative projects, and construction of the same improvements at Cook Street and the I-10 WB ramp, the analysis found that all study area intersections would operate at an acceptable level of service except for the Cook Street and I-10 eastbound (EB) ramp intersection, which will operate at LOS E during the evening peak hour without improvements. The traffic analysis recommended improvements to address deficiencies: The Project should contribute its fair share of 9.2% towards restriping the existing northbound right-turn travel lanes to achieve a 12-foot-wide lane with 200 feet of storage, with remaining through travel lanes at 11-foot widths, at the Cook Street and I-10 EB ramp (Mitigation Measure TRANS.1). With the recommended improvements, the intersection of Cook Street and the I-10 EB ramp will operate at acceptable LOS. Impacts will be less than significant with Mitigation Measure TRANS.1 incorporated.

**Table 10**  
**EAPC Intersection Delay and Levels of Service**

Study Intersection	Traffic Control <sup>1</sup>	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>	Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	15.7	B	17.6	B
Technology Drive/E. Driveway – The Village W. Driveway	CSS	12.8	B	13.8	B
Technology Drive/College Drive	RDB	4.7	A	5.0	A
South Driveway – University Park Drive/College Drive	CSS	14.6	B	14.7	B
Pacific Avenue/College Drive	RDB	4.0	A	4.5	A
Cook Street/University Park Drive	RDB	4.6	A	5.4	A
Cook Street/I-10 WB Ramps	TS	> <b>100</b>	<b>F</b>	15.1	B
-Without Improvements	TS	26.7	C	12.5	B
-With Improvements					
Cook Street/I-10 EB Ramps	TS	34.9	C	<b>57.4</b>	<b>E</b>
-Without Improvements	TS	32.0	C	54.7	D
-With Improvements					
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	40.3	D	46.5	D
Cook Street/University Park Drive	TS	13.0	B	11.7	B
Cook Street/ Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	16.6	B	46.8	D
Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive	CSS	12.1	B	20.1	C

<sup>1</sup> TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop.

<sup>2</sup> Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown. Delay and level of service is calculated using Synchro 10.1 analysis software.

**BOLD** = Unacceptable LOS.

<sup>3</sup> LOS = Level of Service

#### Horizon Year (2040) with Project Conditions

Under Horizon Year (2040) conditions, with the inclusion of the same improvements at Cook Street and the I-10 WB and EB ramps, the analysis found that all study area intersections would operate at an acceptable level of service. Therefore, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure TRA.1, impacts associated with build out of the proposed Project will be less than significant.

**Table 11**  
**Horizon Year with Project Intersection Delay and Levels of Service**

Study Intersection	Traffic Control <sup>1</sup>	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
		Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>	Average Delay <sup>2</sup>	LOS <sup>3</sup>
Technology Drive/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	17.7	B	19.6	B
Technology Drive/E. Driveway – The Village W. Driveway	CSS	13.6	B	15.8	C
Technology Drive/College Drive	RDB	5.1	A	5.6	A
South Driveway – University Park Drive/College Drive	CSS	15.8	C	16.1	C
Pacific Avenue/College Drive	RDB	4.2	A	4.8	A
Cook Street/University Park Drive	RDB	5.0	A	6.2	A
Cook Street/I-10 WB Ramps	TS				
-Without Improvements	TS	<b>&gt;100</b>	<b>F</b>	38.0	D
-With Improvements	TS	37.1	D	24.9	C
Cook Street/I-10 EB Ramps	TS				
-Without Improvements	TS	<b>67.3</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>&gt;100</b>	<b>F</b>
-With Improvements	TS	33.3	C	28.7	C
Cook Street/Gerald Ford Drive	TS	53.9	D	54.8	D
Cook Street/University Park Drive	TS	18.5	B	26.4	C
Cook Street/ Frank Sinatra Drive	TS	35.2	D	47.1	D
Main Driveway/Gerald Ford Drive	CSS	13.1	B	25.5	D

<sup>1</sup> TS = Traffic Signal; CSS = Cross-street Stop.

<sup>2</sup> Per the Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition (HCM6), overall average intersection delay and level of service are shown for intersections with a traffic signal or all way stop control. For intersections with cross street stop control, the delay and level of service for the worst individual movement (or movements sharing a single lane) are shown. Delay and level of service is calculated using Synchro 10.1 analysis software.

**BOLD** = Unacceptable LOS.

<sup>3</sup> LOS = Level of Service

### Alternative Transportation

Existing on-street bike lanes are located on both sides of the roadways along Gerald Ford Drive (west of Technology Drive), College Drive, and University Park Drive. Sidewalks generally exist throughout the study area, except for the east side of Cook Street (north of Gerald Ford Drive), north side of Gerald Ford Drive (between Pacific Avenue & Technology Drive), south side of Gerald Ford Drive (east of Cook Street), and east and west side of Technology Drive. Sidewalks currently exist along Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive, and College Drive adjacent to the Project site. The City will require the applicant to restore site-adjacent sidewalks to excellent condition by the project prior to opening day. Crosswalks at Project access points will be provided in conjunction with the development of the Project. The Project would not conflict with plans or policies addressing multimodal facilities.

The Project area is currently served by the Sunline with bus services along Cook Street via route 5 and route 10, however there are no transit stops within the immediate Project vicinity. The nearest bus stop is approximately 0.35 miles southeast. SunLine periodically reviews and updates its services and facilities based on ridership, budget, and community demand. General Plan Mobility Element Goal 5 and Policies 5.1 through 5.6 promote and encourage public and private transit service and connections to bicycle and pedestrian networks. The Project would have no impact on plans or policies addressing transit facilities.

- b) **No Impact.** SB 743 requires amendments to the CEQA Guidelines (pre-2019) to provide an alternative to LOS for evaluating transportation impacts. CEQA Guidelines were amended to require all lead agencies to adopt vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a replacement for automobile delay-based level of service (LOS) for identifying transportation impacts. This statewide mandate went into effect July 1, 2020.

A Project-specific VMT analysis was prepared by Urban Crossroads in December 2022. VMT projections are based upon the Riverside County Transportation Analysis Modal (RIVTAM), which the County has identified as the appropriate tool for conducting VMT analysis for land use projects. According to the VMT analysis, the Project is anticipated to have 363 employees and generate 4,169 daily trip ends.

The Project is considered a “new local essential service” (such as medical offices), which puts such services closer to residents. Per County Guidelines, the local essential services are evaluated by calculating the net regional change in VMT. To determine whether or not there is a significant impact, the City VMT with the Project employment is compared to without Project conditions. As shown in the table below, the City VMT without the Project is estimated at 1,081,285, whereas with the Project employment, the City VMT is estimated at 1,081,459, which is a net increase in 174 VMT. The project’s effect on VMT could potentially be significant without reductions because it results in a cumulative VMT increases under the plus project condition compared to the no project condition. However, after accounting for the 6% VMT reduction for virtual patient appointments set forth in the County Guidelines, there will be a 521 VMT decrease under Project conditions. Therefore, the Project, per the County VMT guidelines, can be determined to have less than significant impacts on circulation. The Project will not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

**Table 12**  
**Citywide VMT With and Without Project**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2022</b>
City VMT w/out Project	934,309	1,345,841	1,081,285
City SP w/out Project	85,236	128,280	100,608
City VMT/SP w/out Project	10.96	10.49	10.75
City VMT with Project	934,653	1,347,169	1,081,459
City SP with Project	85,598	128,643	100,971
City VMT/SP with Project	10.92	10.47	10.71
City VMT with Project with Virtual Appointments (6% Reduction)			1,080,938
City SP with Project with Virtual Appointments			100,971
City VMT/SP with Project with Virtual Appointments			10.71

- c) **No Impact.** The Project is proposed to have access from Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive, and University Park Drive. As discussed in subsection a) above, roadway improvements will be constructed in compliance with City standards and will not cause significant traffic delays or increased traffic hazards. No sharp curves, dangerous intersections, or hazardous geometric features are proposed. The Project vehicle mix will be consistent with the existing mix in the Project area. Construction plans will be coordinated with the city so that construction activity does not interfere with traffic on adjacent and nearby roads.

- d) **No Impact.** All three driveways can serve as emergency access routes. Prior to construction, the Fire and Police Departments will review the site plan to ensure safety measures are addressed, including emergency access and vehicle turnaround space. Construction plans will be coordinated with the city and emergency providers, as needed, to assure that emergency access is maintained throughout all stages of development. No impact will occur.

**Mitigation Measures:**

**TRA.1** In addition to paying the requisite CVAG TUMF fee, and to remedy the LOS deficiency at the intersections of Cook Street and the I-10 westbound and eastbound ramps, the Project is responsible for the following fair share contributions:

- Intersection of Cook Street and I-10 Westbound Ramp: Project is responsible for 8.0% towards a 2nd 200 ft. WB left turn lane.
- Intersection of Cook Street and I-10 Eastbound Ramp: Project is responsible for 9.2% towards the restriping of existing NB travel lanes to achieve a 12ft. wide NB 200 ft. long right turn lane, with remaining through travel lanes at 11ft. widths. Ultimately include northbound free-right turn channelization.

**Monitoring:**

**TRA.A** The Project applicant shall coordinate with the City and CVAG the payment of CVAG's TUMF fee and the agreed upon fair share contribution for improvements to the intersection of Cook Street and the I-10 westbound and eastbound ramps.

**Responsible Parties:** Project applicant, CVAG, City Engineer.

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, August 2016 (SCH 2015081020). University Medical Office Park Traffic Analysis, prepared by Urban Crossroads, November 7, 2022. University Medical Office Park VMT Screening Analysis, prepared by Urban Crossroads, December 13, 2022.

<b>XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>				
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or		✓		
ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.		✓		

## Setting

As discussed in the Section V, Cultural Resources, the Cahuilla people lived in the Coachella Valley for thousands of years. They were Takic-speaking and lived in various groups in the region. Today, Native Americans of Pass or Desert Cahuilla heritage are mostly affiliated with one or more of the Indian reservations in and near the Coachella Valley, including the Cabazon, Augustine, Torres Martinez, Twenty-nine Palms, Agua Caliente, and Morongo. Numerous cultural resources are found throughout the valley which provide important information about the past.

## Discussion of Impacts

- a. i, ii) Less Than Significant with Mitigation.** Senate Bill 18 and Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52) requires a lead agency to consult with tribes in the Project area during the CEQA process to allow tribes to be involved in the project development process and to address their concerns about potential impacts to tribal cultural resources. The consultation process requires the lead agency to provide written notification about a proposed project, as defined by CEQA, to tribes within the project's geographic area. If a tribe chooses to engage in consultation, it must respond to the lead agency within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification, and the lead agency must begin the consultation

process within 30 days of receiving the request for consultation. Consultation concludes when the parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect (if a significant effect exists) on the tribal cultural resources, or when a party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached (Public Resources Code section 21080.3.2 (b)(1) and (2)).

The city has initiated the tribal consultation process in conformance with SB 18 and AB 52 requirements. It has distributed consultation letters to the tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) as having knowledge of tribal cultural resources in the Project area (SB 18), and to those tribes who have requested consultation under AB 52. Each representative was contacted in writing regarding the proposed Project. The results of consultation will be included either as mitigation prior to the adoption of the Initial Study, or as conditions of approval. However, the mitigation measure included in Section V, Cultural Resources, requires that an archaeologist and Native American monitor be consulted should any resources be identified during grading, to assure that impacts are reduced to less than significant levels. Should a consulting tribe request additional mitigation, it will be added to this Initial Study or to conditions of approval for the Project.

**Mitigation Measures:**

See Section V, Cultural Resources.

**Monitoring:**

See Section V, Cultural Resources.

**Sources:** Historical/Archeological Resources Survey, University Medical Office Park Project, CRM TECH, October 17, 2022; City of Palm Desert General Plan Update & University Neighborhood Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016 (SCH 2015081020); Project materials.



<b>XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
<b>Would the project:</b>				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?			✓	
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?			✓	
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?			✓	
d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?			✓	
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?			✓	

## Setting

### Domestic Water

The Project site is within the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) service area for domestic water. Its primary water source is groundwater extracted through a system of wells from the Whitewater River subbasin. In addition to groundwater, CVWD relies on imported water brought to the region by canals. CVWD's domestic water system includes 97 wells with a total daily pumping capacity of 244 million gallons. CVWD has a total of 64 reservoirs, with an average storage capacity of 153.2 million gallons. CVWD also owns and operates the water distribution system, which is generally located under existing streets in the public right-of-way. There are existing 18-inch water mains within Gerald Ford Drive, College Drive and Technology Drive in the Project vicinity.

CVWD is responsible, under the California Water Code, for analyzing its current and future water supply and assuring that sufficient supply is available to serve land uses within the District, through the preparation of an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). CVWD is required to periodically update the Plan.

### Wastewater Treatment

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) also provides sewer service to the City of Palm Desert, including the Project area. The Project site is located in an urban area where the main sewer lines were laid out under the main roads and streets. The Project will extend sewer lines from an existing 8-inch sewer main on Technology Drive and construct a 6-inch sewer lines throughout the site.

CVWD maintains sewer trunk lines ranging in size from 4 to 24 inches and five sewer lift stations in City boundaries. Effluent from the City is conveyed to CVWD's Cook Street treatment plant (Water Reclamation Plant No. 10), which has a total capacity of 18 million gallons per day (mgd), including 15 mgd tertiary treatment capacity. CVWD also implements the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board pertaining to domestic water quality and wastewater discharge.

### Stormwater Management

Several watersheds drain the elevated terrain of the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, San Bernardino, and Little San Bernardino Mountains towards the valley floor. There are five stormwater channels in Palm Desert: Whitewater River Stormwater Channel and its tributaries, including Dead Indian Creek, the Deep Canyon Channel, the Palm Valley System, and the East Magnesia Channel. For the proposed Project, management of stormwater is under the jurisdiction of the city.

### Electric Power and Natural Gas

Southern California Edison (SCE) provides electrical services to the City of Palm Desert. Natural gas is provided by the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas). There are underground lines to the north, east, and south of the Project site.

### Solid Waste

Burrtec Waste and Recycling Services, LLC (Burrtec) provides solid waste disposal to the city through a franchise agreement. Non-hazardous household, commercial, and most nonhazardous industrial solid waste collected is taken to the Edom Hill Transfer Station (EHTS) in Cathedral City, which is permitted to receive 3,500 tons of waste per day. From there, solid waste is transported to the Lamb Canyon regional landfill, which is operated by the County of Riverside and had a remaining capacity of 19,242,950 cubic yards as of 2015 (latest available data).

## **Discussion of Impacts**

### **a-c) Less than Significant Impact.**

#### Water

The subject property is within the jurisdiction of the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) for domestic water services. Existing water mains are already in place and operational in the Project area. The Project will connect to existing 18-inch water mains beneath College Drive, Technology Drive, and Gerald Ford Drive and will install new 8-inch water mains onsite. No new water infrastructure other than onsite extensions will be required which could result in significant environmental effects.

The 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) demonstrates that CVWD has available, and can supply in the future, sufficient water to serve additional development in its service area. The UWMP calls for a combination of continued groundwater extraction, conservation programs, additional water sources and source substitution, and groundwater recharge opportunities. CVWD anticipates having sufficient water supplies to serve existing and future in the near-term (2025) and long-term (2045). For 2025, projected water supply is 137,061 AFY and retail water demand is 123,461 AFY, resulting in an anticipated surplus of 13,600 AFY. For 2045, projected water supply is 164,966 AFY and retail water demand is 148,166 AFY, resulting in an anticipated surplus of 16,800 AFY (UWMP Tables 4-8 and 4-22). Future demand projections are based on development intensities provided in the General Plans of regional jurisdictions, including the Palm Desert General Plan and University Neighborhood Specific Plan (UNSP). The Project proposes the development of a medical office center and a Specific Plan amendment to permit medical office uses in the NC zone of the UNSP. The Specific Plan amendment would not increase the sites development intensity assumed in the 2016 Specific Plan and will therefore not increase demand for utilities. Therefore, the Project's water demand is consistent with the UWMP's projected future demands.

As discussed in Section X (Hydrology and Water Quality) of this Initial Study, the Project's projected annual water demand at buildout is approximately 79.65 acre-feet, which is 0.05% of 2025 projected water supply and 0.04% of 2045 projected water supply. Therefore, CVWD has available, or can supply, sufficient water to serve reasonably foreseeable development, including the proposed Project. Additionally, CVWD has determined that it will be able to meet future urban water demands projected in the regional UWMP in normal, single dry, and multiple dry years (UWMP Tables 4-25, 4-26, 4-27). Project water consumption will be reduced with low-flow appliances, water-efficient irrigation practices, and drought-tolerant landscape materials. Impacts to water supplies will be less than significant.

#### Wastewater

The subject property is within the jurisdiction of CVWD for wastewater collection and treatment services. Existing sewer infrastructure is already in place and operational in the Project area. The Project will connect to an existing 8-inch sewer main beneath Technology Drive and will install new 6-inch sewer mains onsite. Sewage will be conveyed to and treated at Water Reclamation Plant-10 (WRP-10) on Cook Street in Palm Desert. WRP-10 treats wastewater from four cities (Palm Desert, Indian Wells, Rancho Mirage, and portions of Cathedral City) and serves a population of approximately 90,000 people. It has a secondary treatment capacity of 18 million gallons per day (mgd) and currently treats an average daily flow of approximately 9 mgd.<sup>9</sup> WRP-10 also has a tertiary treatment capacity of 15 mgd and supplies tertiary treated water for golf course and landscape irrigation. Therefore, the plant has sufficient capacity to serve additional development, including the proposed Project. Project wastewater discharges will be typical of residential uses and will not exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the CVWD or Regional Water Quality Control Board. Other than onsite extensions, no new sewer infrastructure will be required which could result in significant environmental effects. Impacts to wastewater services will be less than significant.

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<sup>9</sup> 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021, Table 4-16.

### Stormwater Drainage

Compared to current conditions, the proposed Project represents an increase in impervious surfaces, including buildings, roads, and sidewalks. The proposed Project includes retention and conveyance facilities to manage storm flows, designed to meet local stormwater retention requirements. The site will be graded to direct drainage as surface flow through streets and parking areas and toward proposed retention basins and catch basins that will provide storage of the 100-year controlling storm event, as required by the City. Other than onsite improvements, the Project will not require the construction or expansion of stormwater management facilities that could result in significant environmental impacts. Impacts will be less than significant.

### Electricity

The Project will provide local connections to the existing SCE infrastructure in the Project area. SCE has existing facilities underground within Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive, and College Drive. The Project will not require the addition or expansion of electric power facilities.

### Natural Gas

The Project will provide local connections to the existing SoCalGas infrastructure within Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive, and College Drive. Other than onsite connections, the Project will not require the addition or expansion of natural gas facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

### Telecommunications

The Project will require local connections to the existing Frontier Communications and Spectrum infrastructure in the Project area. Existing underground communications cables are available within Gerald Ford Drive. Other than onsite connections, the Project will not require the addition or expansion of telecommunication facilities. Impacts will be less than significant.

- d, e) Less than Significant Impact.** Burrtec provides solid waste services to the City of Palm Desert. Solid waste is recycled, reused, or transformed at a waste-to-energy facility<sup>10</sup>, or disposed of at County landfills. The Lamb Canyon regional landfill has a remaining capacity of 19,242,950 cubic yards as of 2015 (latest data available).<sup>11</sup>

As shown in the following table, the Project would develop 114,700 square feet of medical office space and generate an estimated 62.8 tons of solid waste per year. This equals 502.4 cubic yards per year<sup>12</sup>, which is approximately 0.0026% of the Lamb Canyon landfill's remaining capacity. Therefore, the Project will not exceed the available capacity of the landfill and Project impacts will be less than significant.

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<sup>10</sup> Riverside County Nondisposal Facility Element by Riverside County Department of Waste Resources (2015), <https://www.rcwaste.org/Portals/0/Files/Planning/CIWMP/NDFE.PDF>.

<sup>11</sup> CalRecycle SWIS Facility/Site Activity Details. <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/SiteActivity/Details/2246?siteID=2368>, accessed November 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Assumes 1 cubic yard of residential uncompacted municipal solid waste equals 250 lbs. "Volume-to-Weight Conversion Factors," US EPA Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, April 2016.

**Table 13**  
**Estimated Solid Waste Disposal at Buildout**

<b>Proposed Land Use</b>	<b>Disposal Rate*</b>	<b>Proposed Units (TSF)</b>	<b>Solid Waste Disposal (lbs/day)</b>	<b>Projected Solid Waste Disposal (tons/year)</b>
Office	6 pounds/1,000 square feet/day	114.7	688.2	125.60
Subtotal:				125.6
<b>Total (with 50% diversion):</b>				<b>62.80</b>

\*Estimated Solid Waste Generation Rates by CalRecycle,  
<https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/WasteCharacterization/General/Rates>, accessed November 2022.

Recyclable materials (e.g., paper, plastic, glass, cardboard, aluminum) will be transported to Burrtec's material recovery facilities for recycling and reuse. Burrtec is responsible for maintaining standards that assure that all waste is handled in a manner that meets local, state, and federal standards. These requirements will assure that impacts associated with solid waste disposal remain less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** Sanitary Sewer Management Plan, CVWD, December 1, 2019; 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, Water Systems Consulting, Inc., June 30, 2021; Solid Waste Information System, [www2.calrecycle.ca.gov](https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov), CalRecycle, accessed November 2022; Project materials.

<b>XX. WILDFIRE – If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?				✓
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?				✓
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?				✓

## Setting

Wildfires can occur in undeveloped areas and spread to urban areas. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) has mapped areas of significant fire hazards in the state through its Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP). These maps identify fire hazard severity zones (FHSZ) based on a hazard scoring system using subjective criteria for fuels, fire history, terrain influences, housing density, and occurrence of severe weather where urban conflagration could occur.

The southern portions of Palm Desert are susceptible to the risk of wildland fires. The Project site is in the northern portion of the city and is not adjacent to a wildland fire area. The subject property is designated as a local responsibility area (LRA) and is not located in or near a state responsibility area (SRA) or designated as a very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ).

## Discussion of Impacts

**a-d) No Impact.** The Project site is not located in or near a state responsibility area (SRA) or very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ). The nearest VHFHSZ and SRA are more than 5 miles to the southwest in the Santa Rosa Mountains.

The Project site is accessed by Gerald Ford Drive, Technology Drive, and College Drive/University Drive. Gerald Ford Drive is a key evacuation route in the city. The Project would not impair the City's adopted emergency response plan or evacuation plan as it does not propose to amend these or other evacuation routes or plans. Project construction plans will be reviewed by

and coordinated with the City and Fire Department to assure that adequate emergency access is maintained during the construction process. The Project would not require the installation or maintenance of wildfire infrastructure that could exacerbate fire risks or result in adverse environmental impacts. The Project site is relatively flat on the central valley floor and would not expose people or structures to downslope flooding or landslides resulting from post-fire instability or drainage changes. No impact would occur.

**Mitigation Measures:** None required

**Monitoring:** None required

**Sources:** City of Palm Desert General Plan, 2016; Project materials; Google Earth; Fire Hazard Severity Map, CalFire, <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>, accessed November 2022.

<b>XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Impact</b>	<b>Less Than Significant with Mitigation</b>	<b>Less Than Significant Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?		✓		
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?			✓	
c) Does the project have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		✓		

**a) Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Biological Resources: The Project is not expected to substantially degrade environmental quality or reduce the habitat, population, or range of a fish or wildlife species. However, several sensitive status species could potentially occur onsite. Payment of standard CVMSHCP local development mitigation fees will reduce impacts to covered species to less than significant levels, and implementation of mitigation measures BIO.1 and BIO.2 will mitigate impacts to those that are not covered or not fully covered. With mitigation, impacts will be less than significant.

Cultural Resources: No cultural resources are known to exist within or adjacent to the Project site. However, the Project will result in soil disturbances such as excavation and grading, and there is potential for previously unknown resources to be uncovered. Mitigation Measure CUL.1 and monitoring program CUL.A will assure that impacts to cultural and/or tribal cultural resources are less than significant in the unlikely event that resources are discovered during Project development.



- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Project impacts will not be cumulatively considerable because the Project is consistent with the land use designation (Town Center Neighborhood) assigned to the subject property in the General Plan and analyzed in the General Plan EIR. Population growth resulting from the Project will not surpass that anticipated in the General Plan EIR or by SCAG. The Project's incremental effects are not considerable when viewed in connection with other projects. Impacts will be less than significant.
- c) **Less than Significant with Mitigation.** The Project could cause environmental effects that could cause adverse effects on humans, specifically as it relates to geotechnical and transportation impacts. However, the mitigation measures provided in this Initial Study and supporting documentation cited herein will reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

**Appendix A**  
**CalEEMOD Air Quality and GHG Modeling**

**(Available on City website)**

**Appendix B**  
**Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey**

**(Available on City website)**

**Appendix C**  
**Preliminary Hydrology Report**

**(Available on City website)**

**Appendix D**  
**Traffic Impact Analysis**  
**(Available on City website)**

**Appendix E**  
**VMT Analysis**

**(Available on City website)**