

MUSEUM MARKET PLAZA SPECIFIC PLAN

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

IV. UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Introduction

Unavoidable significant impacts are those that cannot be reduced to acceptable or insignificant levels by the implementation of realistic and feasible mitigation measures. Section 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe any significant impacts that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of feasible mitigation measures.

The proposed Museum Market Plaza Specific Plan project represents an integrated mixed-use plan providing retail and office commercial space, public plazas, professional office space, and residential development to central Downtown Palm Springs. The project is located in the center of the City's Central Business District, at the northwest corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and Palm Canyon Drive.

Impacts associated with development of the Museum Market Plaza project are addressed in detail in Section III of this EIR. Comprehensive mitigation and monitoring and reporting programs have been developed to address potential impacts. With the exception of aesthetics, air quality and cultural resources, the mitigation measures set forth in this Draft EIR will demonstrably and effectively reduce most potentially significant impacts to levels of insignificance.

It is the conclusion of the Draft EIR, however, that impacts to air quality, visual and aesthetic resources and cultural resources may be considered unavoidable significant impacts and not completely mitigatable.

Aesthetic/Visual Resources

As discussed in Section III-A of this EIR, development within the Museum Market Plaza project area will be subject to the substantial site planning, street and roadway design, landscape and other development guidelines that are intended to preserve the scenic resources and visual character of downtown Palm Springs, while allowing for changes necessary to ensure that the project area makes a continued economic contribution to the City.

The design guidelines of the City's General Plan, its Downtown Urban Design Plan, and the Museum Market Plaza Specific Plan are expected to reduce potential impacts to area aesthetic and visual resources to the greatest extent possible, and impacts associated with project lighting are expected to be less than significant.

However, development within the Specific Plan area will result in changes to the existing visual character of the project site. The planned construction of tall structures will result in partial obstruction of mountain views, particularly at Cahuilla Road and Tahquitz Canyon Way, and along portions of Palm Canyon Drive.

Air Quality

As described in Section III-B, development of the proposed project will result in exceedances of criteria pollutant thresholds as established by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), during construction and operation of the Specific Plan. Mitigation measures provided in Section III-B reduce impacts to the greatest extent possible, but will not fully mitigate impacts.

Although improvements in vehicle technologies are likely to improve their emissions in the future, the build out of the proposed project will generate air emissions which will be greater than the daily thresholds provided by SCAQMD, and cannot be fully mitigated.

Cultural Resources

As described in Section III-C, the implementation of the proposed project would result in the demolition of the Town and Country Center, a complex which qualifies for listing under the California Register of Historic Places as locally significant.

Mitigation measures included in Section III will reduce impacts to archaeological resources to less than significant levels, but the mitigation measures proposed for historic resources will not reduce the impacts to the Town and Country to a less than significant level. As a result, implementation of the proposed project will have significant impacts on the Town and Country Center.