

**Agenda Item No.:** 5.1  
**Area Plan:** Eastern Coachella Valley  
**Zoning District:** Lower Coachella Valley  
**Supervisory District:** Fourth  
**Project Planner:** Matt Straite  
**Planning Commission Workshop:** March 17, 2008

**Specific Plan No.** 375  
**General Plan Amendment No.** 910  
**Change of Zone No.** 7623  
**Environmental Impact Report No.** 514  
**Applicant:** Black Emerald LLC  
**Engineer/Rep.:** Innovative Land Concepts

## **COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT**

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:**

**Specific Plan No. 375** the Travertine Point Specific Plan proposes to arrange 5,131 acres into 4 planning districts for residential, business park, mixed use commercial, regional commercial, resort/tourism, and open space uses, and is currently proposing 12,300 residential units. The project spans three different jurisdictions, Riverside County, Imperial County and the sovereign Nation of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians.

**General Plan Amendment No. 910** proposes to amend the Riverside County General Plan Land Use Element as it applies to the project site to eliminate the land use designations of Agriculture: Agriculture (AG), Community Development: Commercial Tourist (CT), Public Facilities (PF), Indian Land, and Open Space – Water (OS-W) and would establish Business Park (BP), Commercial Retail (CR), Commercial Tourist (CT), Mixed Use (MU), Medium Density Residential (MDR), Medium High Density Residential (MHDR), High Density Residential (HDR), Very High Density Residential (VHDR), Highest Density Residential (HHDR), Public Facility (PF), Open Space- Recreation (OS-R), Open Space- Conservation (OS-C), and Open Space- Water (OS-W) designations as reflected on the Specific Plan Land Use Plan.

**Change of Zone No. 7623** proposes to redesignate the site from Light Agriculture with a 10 and 20 Acre Minimum (A-1-10, A-1-20), Heavy Agriculture with a 10, and 20 Acre Minimum (A-2-10 and A-2-20), Controlled Development (W-2) to Specific Plan (SP).

The **Environmental Impact Report** (EIR No. 514) will analyze the impacts of the project.

The proposed Specific Plan area currently consists of approximately 5,131 acres of land of which 3,936 acres (approximately 80 percent) is within Riverside County, and 982 acres (approximately 19 percent) is within Imperial County. Approximately 1,379 acres (approximately 28 percent) of the total Specific Plan area consists of land located under the jurisdiction of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians. The proposed Amendment does not include any land use changes to the sovereign nation of the Torres-Martinez. While the Specific Plan will include all three jurisdictions, the total acreage under direct jurisdiction of Riverside County and proposed General Plan Amendment No. 910, not including the Torres-Martinez land or the land located in Imperial County, is 2,557 gross acres.

The portion of the Specific Plan controlled by the Torres-Martinez will be processed under the requirements of the Tribe and, as appropriate, will be subject to additional environmental review under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) per 40 CFR 1501.5 because the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians are designated a sovereign nation.

The proposed Amendment within Riverside County is located along both the east and west sides of California State Route 86S (SR-86S), between 81<sup>st</sup> Avenue and the Riverside/Imperial County line. SR-86S traverses the middle of the project site as a limited-access highway. The site is generally located

west of the Salton Sea, south of the community of Mecca, and northeast of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The proposed Amendment site is located along the northwest shore of the Salton Sea.

**BACKGROUND:**

The project's Notice of Completion for the EIR was out for a public review period of 45 days from January 19<sup>th</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup>.

**ISSUES OF POTENTIAL CONCERN:**

During the General Plan Initiation Process a number of issues were presented, including:

- Jobs/housing balance
- Transit
- Affordable Housing
- Land Use/Density
- Tribal Lands
- Sustainability/Green
- Salton Sea

The Specific Plan and EIR that were distributed for public review addressed many of these concerns with innovative solutions. However, Staff has continued to work with the applicant to further address the issues presented above.

*Intent of the workshop:*

The project is being revised from the version presented in the EIR. The workshop is intended to update the Commission and solicit feedback. The intent of the revision is to make the project more sustainable as a "new town," not only a suburban community. A sustainable town would have appropriate shopping and job base, appropriate medical facilities, and an appropriate park system. Some of these elements are beyond the scope of a traditional Specific Plan, but a project in this location commands a larger scope.

Almost all of the key ingredients of a successful town are linked by one factor- density. Single family units spread over a large expanse will add total units; however, as residential units get closer together, and increase in density walking becomes more viable, employees are closer to their job locations, more consumers fall within trade circle limits sought by major regional retailers, generally all aspects of an emerging town become more efficient. For a new emerging town increases in efficiency relate directly to increases in possible sustainability. Single family homes on larger lots should be included in the plan to afford move up opportunity and selection, but leaving an entire community of larger lot homes prevents a new community like this from achieving the efficiencies mentioned previously, they also eliminate the possibility of a residential mix that is critical to a new community like this one that is building from scratch, removed from established areas.

Working with the County's EIR consultant and the SP consultants, it has been determined that an appropriate density for a new town would be about **6.5 dwelling units per acre**. Density in this range

affords appropriate retail, medical and transit abilities and opportunities. This density would help keep the residents working and shopping within the town and limit external trips per capita within the SP. A project in this location, with this density, will be more sustainable and create a stronger more viable project.

Using this density as a guideline the team of consultants and staff has determined that the total project unit count would have to increase to create the appropriate density from 12,000 units to about 16,500. An alternative in the Draft EIR, Alternative Six (6), proposed just such an increase in density and explained the benefits that such an increase would provide.

The intent of this workshop is to take a more detailed look at how the project would function if Alternative Six (6) were selected and the project documents revised to make this more sustainable alternative a reality.

**PROJECT DATA:**

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|---|--|
| 1. Existing General Plan Land Use (Ex. #5): | Agriculture: Agriculture (AG), Community Development: High Density Residential (CD:HDR), Medium High Density Residential (CD:MHDR), and Industrial uses (LI) - (8 – 14 DU/AC)  |
| 2. Existing Zoning (Ex. #2):                | Light Agriculture with a 10 and 20 Acre Minimum (A-1-10, A-1-20), Heavy Agriculture with a 10, and 20 Acre Minimum (A-2-10 and A-2-20), Controlled Development (W-2).  |
| 3. Surrounding Zoning (Ex. #2):             | Heavy Agriculture with a 10 and 20 acre minimum (A-2-10 and A-2-20) to the north, east and west, Controlled Development (W-2) to the north, east and west, and Watercourse, Watershed & Conservation Areas (W-1) to the northeast. Imperial County to the south. |
| 4. Existing Land Use (Ex. #1):              | Agriculture and Single Family  |
| 5. Surrounding Land Use (Ex. #1):           | Agriculture and Single Family to the north, south, east and west   |
| 6. Project Data:                            | Total Acreage proposed in Riverside County: 2,557<br>Units proposed: 12,300  |

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This meeting is not a hearing and no action is recommended.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

1. As of this writing, no letters, in support or opposition have been received.
2. The project site is not located within:

**Specific Plan No. 375**  
**General Plan Amendment No. 910**  
**Change of Zone No. 7623**  
**Environmental Impact Report No. 514**  
**Planning Commission Workshop Staff Report: March 17, 2010**  
**Page 4 of 4**

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- a. A City of sphere of influence,
  - b. The Stephens Kangaroo Rat Fee Area or Core Reserve Area,
  - c. Fringe Toed Lizard sand source area,
  - d. A high fire area,
  - e. An Area drainage plan area; or,
  - f. A dam inundation area.
3. The project site is located within (or contains):
- a. Agriculture Preserve- Coachella Valley No. 27, 31, and 97,
  - b. CSA #125 – Thermal-Street Lighting,
  - c. The Coachella Valley Recreation and Parks District,
  - d. The boundaries of the Coachella Valley Unified School District, and,
  - e. A low, moderate and high liquefaction area.

The subject site is currently designated as Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 737090002, 737110001, 737110004, 737110006, 737110009, 737120005-9, 737140002, 737140003, 737140009, 737140010, 737170003, 737170004, 737170006-8, 737170010-15, 737180001, 737180002, 737180004, 737180007, 737180009-14, 737190001-7, 737190009-13, 737200002, 737200003, 737200004, 737200006-10, 737200016-20, 737200023, 737200024, 737200026-32, 737210001, 737210007-13, 737220001-7, 737220009, 737220010, 737230006, 737230013-15, 737240002, 737240003, 737240004, 737250002, 737260003, 737260005, 737260007-17, 737270001, 737270003, 737270005-11, 737280001-8, 737290001, 737290004, 737290005, 737290006, 737290011, 737290012, 737290014-19, 755270015, 755270016, 755270021, 755270022, 755270023, 755270024, 755300016, 755300017, 755300022-26, 755310012, 755310013, 755310015, 755310028-32, 755310035, 755310037, 755310038, 755310040, 755310042-45