

CHAPTER 2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**A. Existing Land Use**

The approximately 590 acre North City Extended Specific Plan is undeveloped and dominated by natural desert terrain. The site is located within lower alluvia areas of the Indio Hills to the north, and contains primarily Sonoran creosote bush scrub habitat, including recently stabilized san hummocks. Varner Road traverses the SP and forms the northern boundary of Planning Areas 1, 2 and 4 (Figure 2-1). Rio Del Sol traverses the eastern portion of the SP and bisects planning areas 1 and 2. The existing roads currently lack landscape and streetscape features. Interstate Highway 10 parallels the SP to the south. Various regional utility lines and associated easements also traverse the area. The site's highest point of elevation on the alluvial fan is approximately 300 feet above sea level at the northwestern edge of the SP, sloping southeast to an elevation of 240 feet.

A portion of the western Coachella Valley Regional Trails System goes through this Specific Plan, making it a part of the regional recreation amenity, and offering connectivity to the original North City Specific Plan. According to the Coachella Valley Community Trails Alliance, a multi-use trail is also proposed along the Varner Road corridor.

The part of the Thousand Palms Community that is located immediately east of the SP is characterized by relatively low density single family detached residential, highway oriented businesses and restaurants, a County Fire Station and community center/library campus.

B. Climate and Landscape

The regional climate of the Coachella Valley is classified as a subtropical desert with average summer high temperatures of 107 degrees and winter lows ranging from 36 to 42 degrees. The majority of days are sunny, thus making the use of solar energy for providing electricity to homes feasible and efficient. Average annual rainfall is just over five inches. Wide varieties of native and drought tolerant landscape plants thrive in this desert climate.

Soils in the area tend to be shallow and covered with hardpan or caliche, a cement-like layer that accumulates below the surface. These poor-draining soils are often present in upland and slope areas, causing intense runoff and flooding events in storms.

There are high winds in the Specific Plan area that generally blow from northwest to southeast. Blowing sand constitutes a significant environmental concern as it

abrades and damages buildings and motor vehicles, fills drainage ways, driveways and yards, limits visibility on roadways and requires substantial expense for sand removal and clean-up. Wind erosion and “blowsand” also contribute to significant health threats associated with the suspension of fine particulate matter in the air.

Conversely, high and sustained winds do provide the opportunity to harness wind energy to generate electricity, although the site of this Specific Plan may not exhibit the consistency to support the feasible implementation of wind energy parks.

The abundance of Aeolian (wind-blown) sand in the area provides the prime habitat for the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard. Thus, this Specific Plan is located within the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan; *however, this area is not located within a Conservation Area of this Plan.* Property located directly to the north of this Specific Plan area is located within the Tribal Habitat Conservation Plan for the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation (2010).

C. Property Ownership and Planning Areas

The North City Extended Specific Plan includes three (3) major private property ownerships as well as various public roadway rights-of-way and utility easements, with a total land area of 591.38 acres. In response to the private property ownership pattern, the Specific Plan Area is divided into five (5) Planning Areas (PA’s) as illustrated in Figure 2-1.

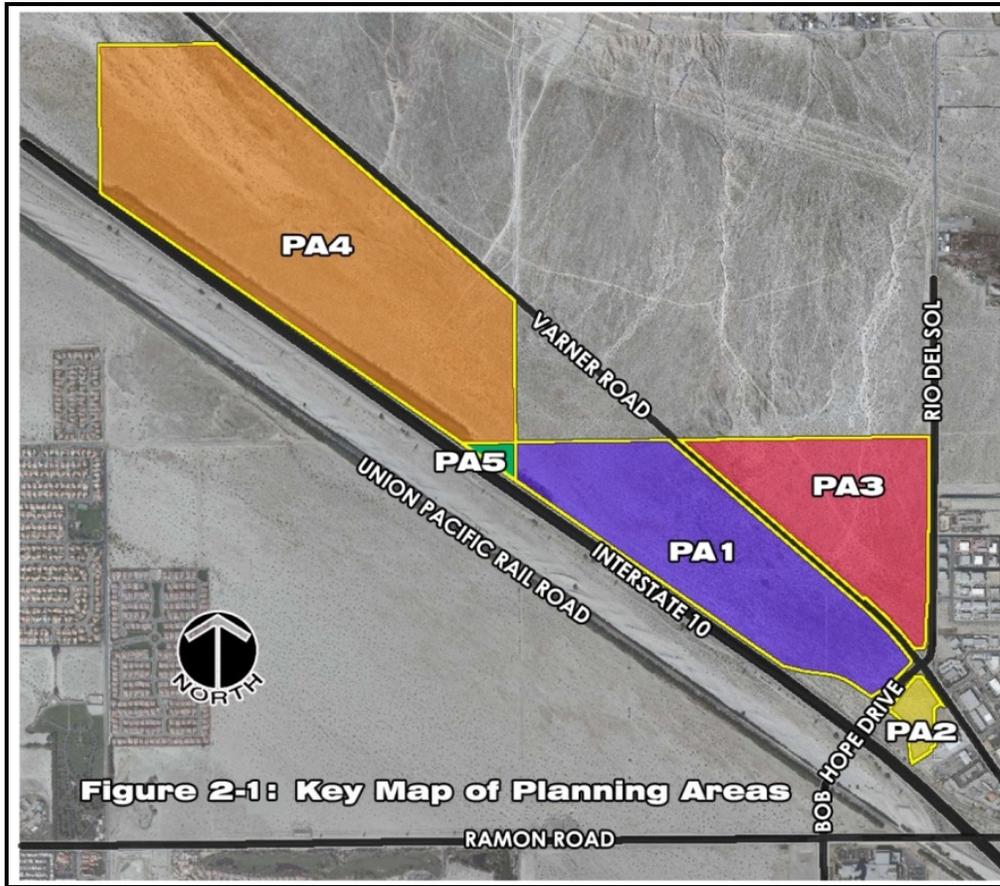


Figure 2-1: Key Map of Planning Areas

Table 2-1: Ownership within the Specific Plan

| Planning Area | Property Owner | SP Land Use | Gross Area | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1 | CMT Hope Crossing | Mixed Use | 157.08 acres | 26.7% |
| 2 | Seymour & Alyce J. Lazar | Mixed Use | 9.13 acres | 1.5% |
| 3 | Seymour & Alyce J. Lazar | Light Industry | 103.88 acres | 17.6% |
| 4 | Marvin Family Trust et. al. | Mixed Use | 293.28 acres | 49.6% |
| 5 | State of California | Open Space | 3.91 acres | 0.01% |
| Existing Public Street ROW's | Public | Streets | 24.10 acres | 4.0% |
| TOTAL SP | | | 591.38 acres | 100.0% |

Note: based on Riverside County Assessor's Map data (1/28/2010) and "Core Logic Real Quest Professional Property Detail Report" (8/27/12).

Planning Area 1: This PA is located north of I-10, west of Bob Hope Drive and the I-10 interchange, and south of Varner Road. This area includes 157.08 acres of vacant land which is well positioned to become a major mixed use core and gateway for this Specific Plan. The proposed land use/ zoning classifications include Mixed Use-Urban (MU-U) and Mixed Use-Neighborhood (MU-N) which will accommodate retail/ restaurant commercial, hotels, professional/ personal services as well as multifamily residential use in a horizontal or vertical Mixed Use Development (MXD) configuration. The Specific Plan will be developed in 5 phases over a period of 15 years. This PA is scheduled for development in Phases 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the overall project. The owners of this PA are managing the coordination of this overall Specific Plan on behalf of themselves and the property owners of PA's 2, 3 and 4.

Planning Area 2: This PA is located east of PA 1, south of Varner Road and east of Bob Hope Drive, and includes 9.14 acres of vacant land. Its location relative to the I-10 interchange also makes it viable for a variety of commercial uses, similar to those in PA 1, within the Mixed Use- Urban (MU-U) land use/ zoning classification. This PA is scheduled for development in Phase 1A of the overall project.

Planning Area 3: This PA encompasses 103.88 acres of vacant land and is proposed for Light Industrial (I-1) zoning, based upon the objectives of the current property owner. It is bounded by Rio Del Sol Road on the east, Varner Road on the south and Section 12 on the north. This PA is scheduled for development in Phases 2, 3, and 4 of the overall project.

Planning Area 4: The property owner of this 293.28 parcel requests that this area be designated as Mixed Use Neighborhood (MU-N). Also, a significant Open Space land use designation is included for stormwater management purposes which will benefit the entire Specific Plan. Located at the western end of the Specific Plan, with Varner Road along its north edge and Section 16 along its west edge, this PA represents the connection to the North City Specific Plan. This PA is scheduled for development in Phase 1B of the overall project.

Planning Area 5: This 3.91 acre triangular parcel is owned by the State of California. It is proposed for Open Space use throughout the development phasing of the overall project.

Reference to Figure 2-1: "Key Map of the Planning Areas" and Table 2-1: Ownership within the Specific Plan" provides the basic framework within which this North City Extended Specific Plan is structured. Given this framework, the details of this Specific Plan are presented in the following chapters of this document.