



STAFF REPORT
11/6/2019

TO: Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Luis Lopez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Change of Zone (CZ 18-11), Conditional Use Permits (CUP 310 and 311), Variance (VAR 18-09), Architectural Review (AR 18-09) and Environmental Assessment (EA 18-05) recommending the adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration, to allow the phased development of the Coachella Travel Centre project including a 3,800 sq. ft. convenience store with service station, 1,200 sq. ft. drive-thru restaurant, 5,555 sq. ft. restaurant, 2,677 sq. ft. car wash tunnel, 4,754 sq. ft. truck washing facility, and 11, 259 sq .ft 4-story hotel with related infrastructure on 14.1 acres of vacant land located on the south side of Avenue 50 between the Whitewater Channel and the State Route 86 Expressway in Coachella, California. Alex Mucino, Applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the Coachella Travel Centre Project by adopting the following resolutions:

- 1) Resolution No. PC2019-26 recommending to City Council adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program (EA 18-05) for the Coachella Travel Centre project located on the south side of Avenue 50 between the Whitewater Channel and the State Route 86 Expressway
- 2) Resolution No. PC2019-27 recommending to City Council approval of Change of Zone 18-11 from A-R (Agricultural Reserve) to C-G (General Commercial) on 14.1 acres of vacant land located on the south side of Avenue 50 between the Whitewater Channel and the State Route 86 Expressway.
- 3) Resolution No. PC2019-28 recommending to City Council approval of Conditional Use Permit No. 310 and 311 to allow a drive-thru restaurant, and auto washing/truck washing facilities on the Coachella Travel Centre site.
- 4) Resolution No. PC2019-29 recommending to City Council approval of Variance No. 18-09 to allow a 4-story hotel in excess of 50 feet in height for the Coachella Travel Centre site.

5) Resolution No. PC2019-30 recommending to City Council approval of Architectural Review No. 18-09 to allow a new 29,245 sq. ft. highway commercial center with hotel, service station, two restaurants, auto washing, and truck washing facility.

BACKGROUND AND UPDATE:

This item was continued from the October 16, 2019 Planning Commission meeting to give staff and the CEQA consultant additional time to complete the Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration Errata #2 document, in light of comments and concerns expressed by the Commission on October 2, 2019. The future Avenue 50/86-Expressway Cal Trans interchange project environmental documents were reviewed by staff and the City Attorney, and the preferred alternatives will result in conflicts with the proposed projects, as explained in the environmental review section contained below. The remainder of the staff report below is a repetition of the information that was shown on the October 2, 2019 staff report.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

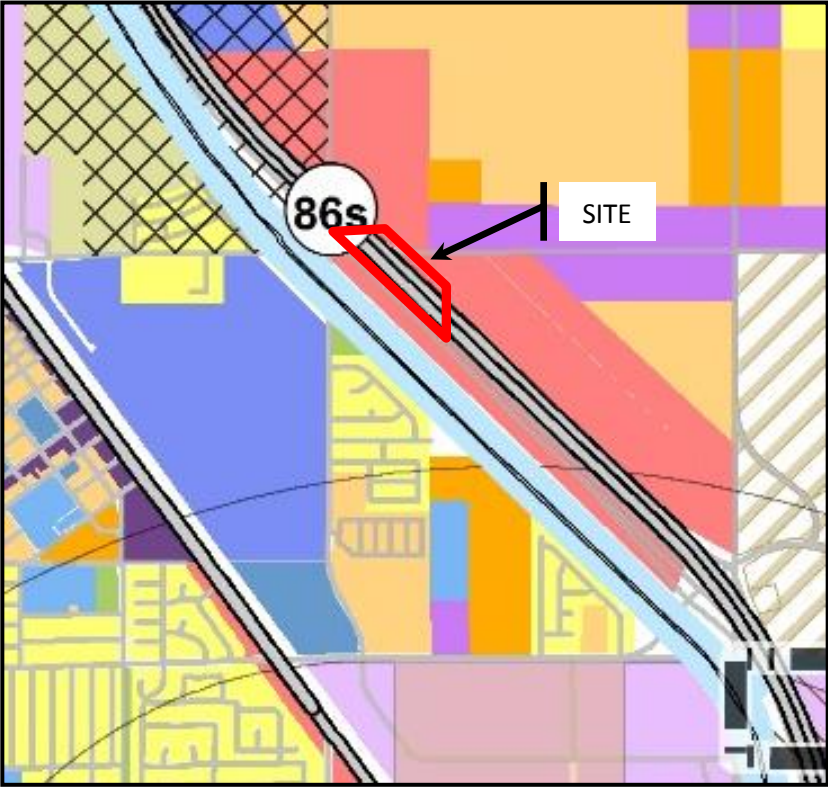
Environmental Setting:

The subject site is 14.1 acres of vacant land zoned for agricultural use (A-R, Agricultural Reserve). The aerial photo below shows the site in proximity to the 86-S Expressway and the Whitewater Channel:



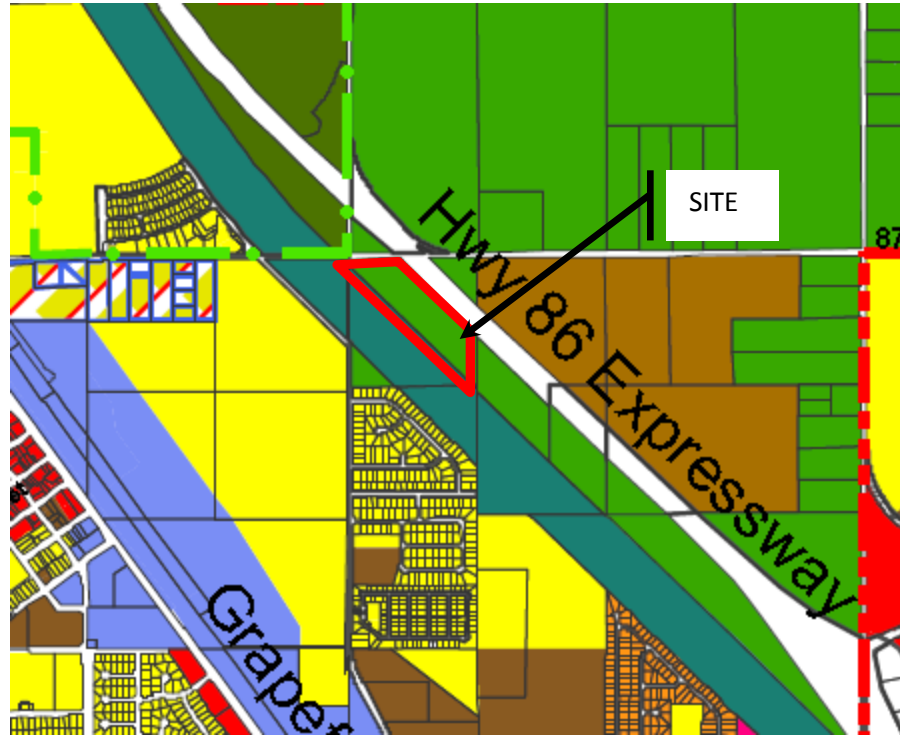
Currently the site has a single point of access from the Avenue 50 north-south alignment at the 86-S Expressway intersection.

The City’s General Plan designates this entire parcel for “Suburban Retail” uses as shown below:



Surrounding properties adjacent to the west are shown as an undesignated Waterway (Whitewater Channel) and “Urban Employment Center” (Zona Central Project site). To the east of the 86-S Expressway is “Suburban Retail”, and to the south is “Open Space” (City Park) and “Suburban Neighborhood”. There are tribal lands in the vicinity of the site on the north side of Avenue 50.

The site is zoned A-R (Agricultural Reserve) as illustrated in the “light green” zoning designator below:



Thus, an application for Change of Zone from A-R to C-G is one of the requested entitlements for this project. The City’s official zoning map shows a contiguous A-R zoning district boundary to the southeast which currently is the site of a ranch house property. Surrounding properties to the east are zoned partially as A-R and partially as CT-PD (Commercial Tourist – Planned Development) across the 86-S Expressway. The Whitewater Channel is zoned O-S (Open Space) and the properties east of Tyler Street are R-S (Single Family Residential).

Existing Conditions:

The subject site is currently vacant and the site appears to have been previously graded when the larger property was subdivided or split as a result of the Cal Trans highway roadway acquisitions. The project site is relatively flat and slopes slightly to the south and east.

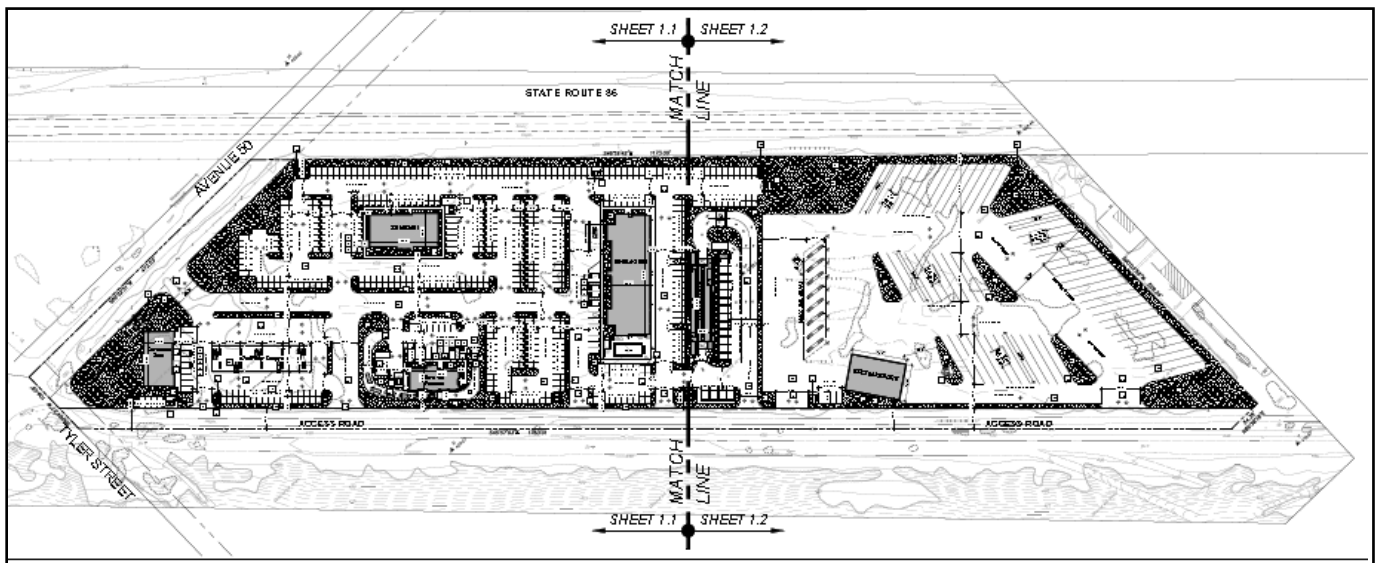
Proposed Applications

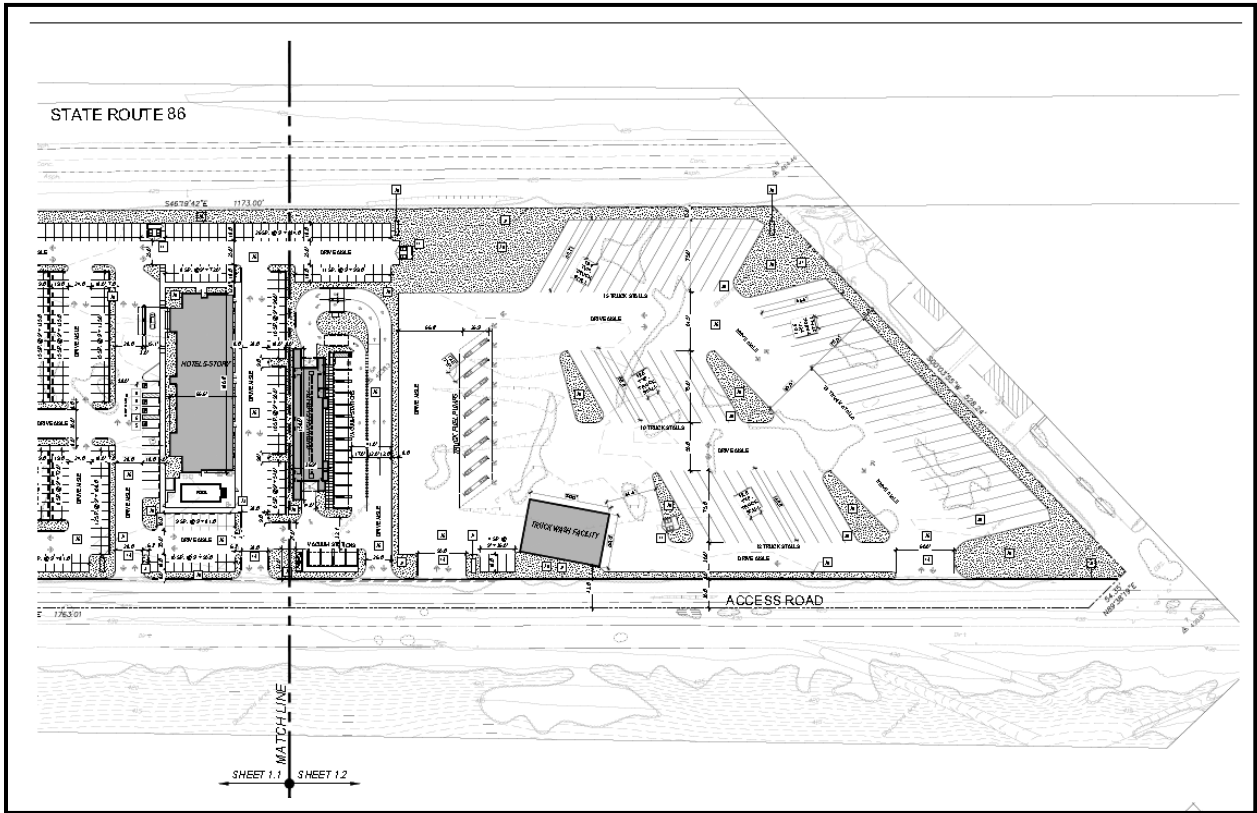
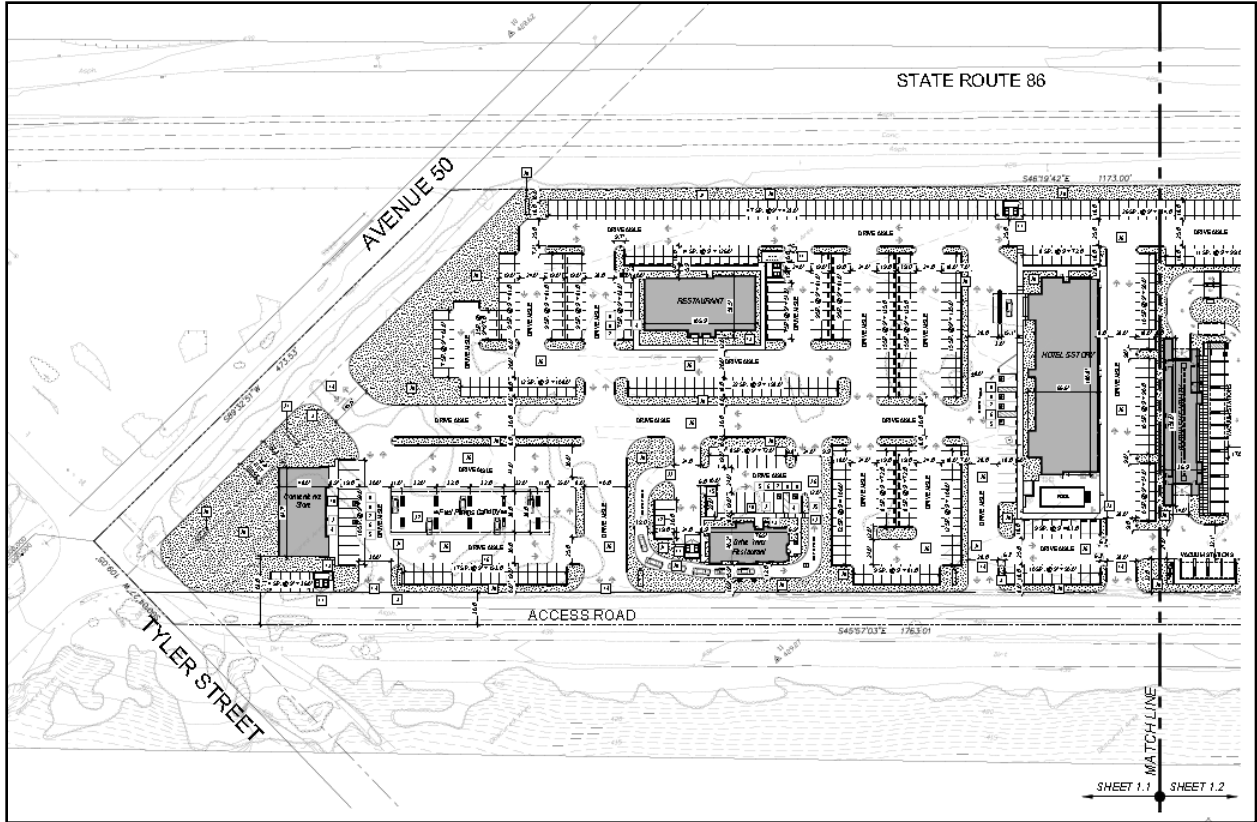
The following six applications have been submitted for the proposed use:

- 1) Environmental Assessment recommending adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Coachella Travel Centre project.

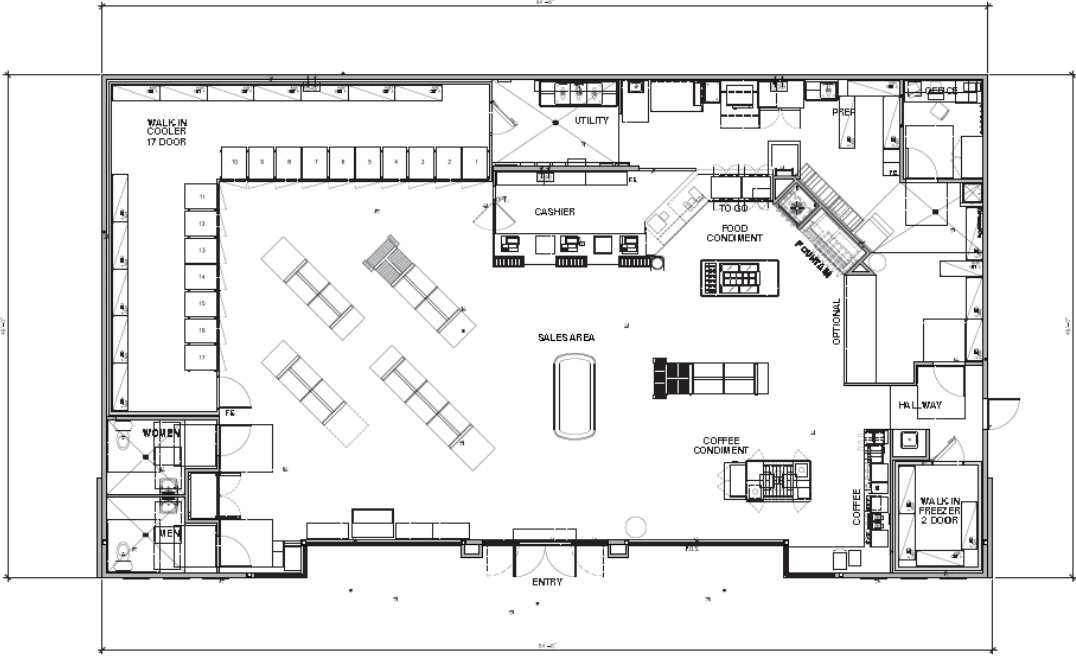
- 2) Change of Zone (CZ 18-11) from A-R to C-G as explained above;
- 3) Conditional Use Permits 310 and 311 to allow a drive-thru restaurant, and auto/truck washing facilities, respectively in the C-G (General Commercial) zone;
- 4) Variance (VAR 18-09) to exceed the allowable height limit for a 4-story hotel in the C-G zone;
- 5) Architectural Review No. 18-09 for review of the site plan, architectural elevations, landscaping, fencing, and lighting for the proposed Coachella Travel Centre development project. vacant land located on the south side of Avenue 50 between the Whitewater Channel and the State Route 86 Expressway in Coachella, California.

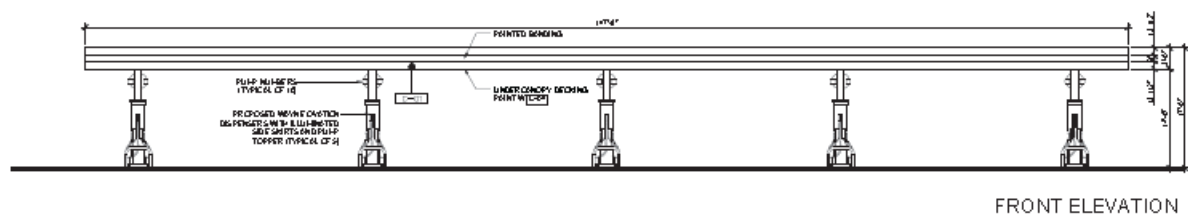
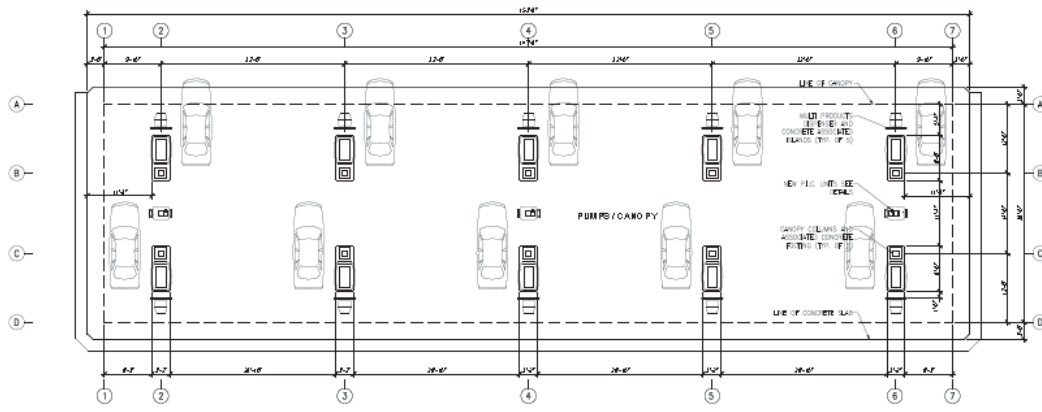
The applicant submitted a plan that shows the 15 acre property and the first phase of development on the 7.99 acre portion of the site. The overall site plan, and close-up views of the submitted site plan is shown below:



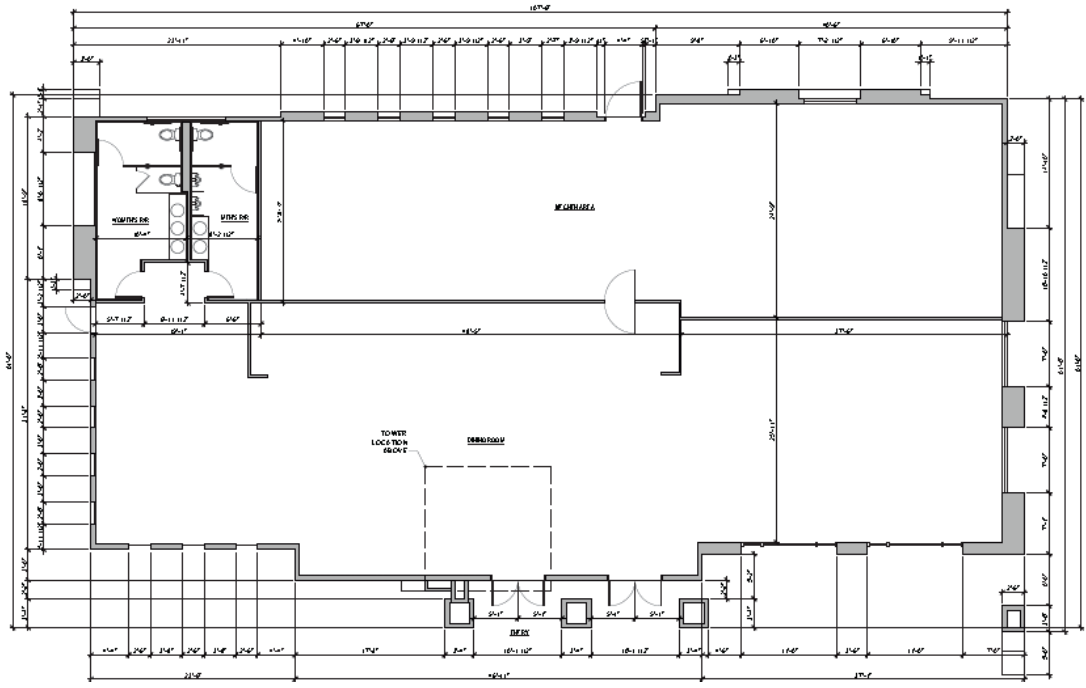


The **service station building** will have a mini-market and a fuel pump canopy with 20 fueling positions as shown below:





The **sit-down restaurant** which is located in the northeastern portion of the site includes a floor plan and colored elevations as shown below:



- right side -

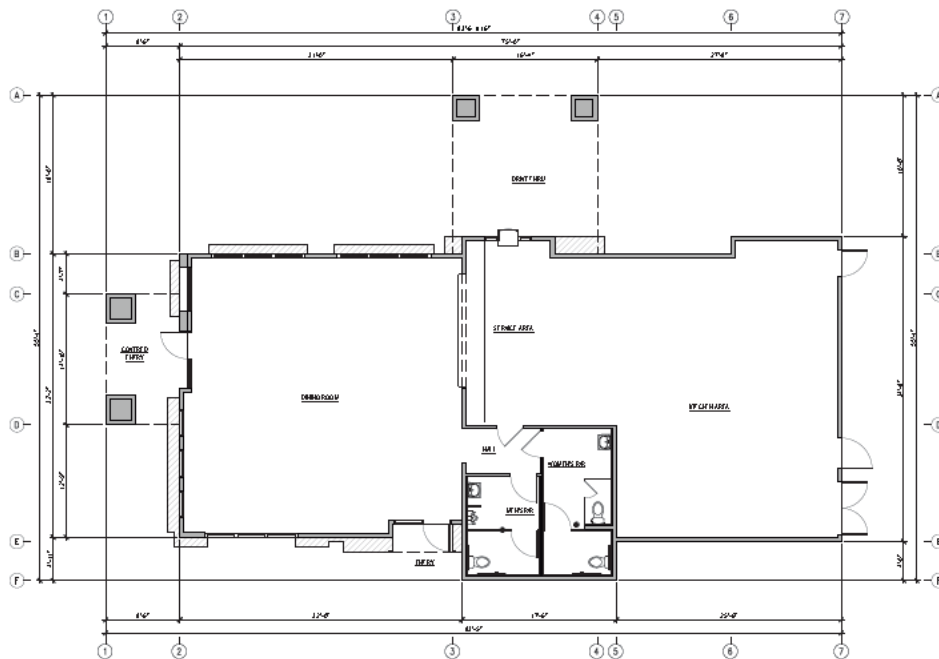


- rear elevation -





The **drive-thru restaurant** which is located in the central west portion of the site includes a floor plan and colored elevations as shown below:





- right side -



- rear elevation -



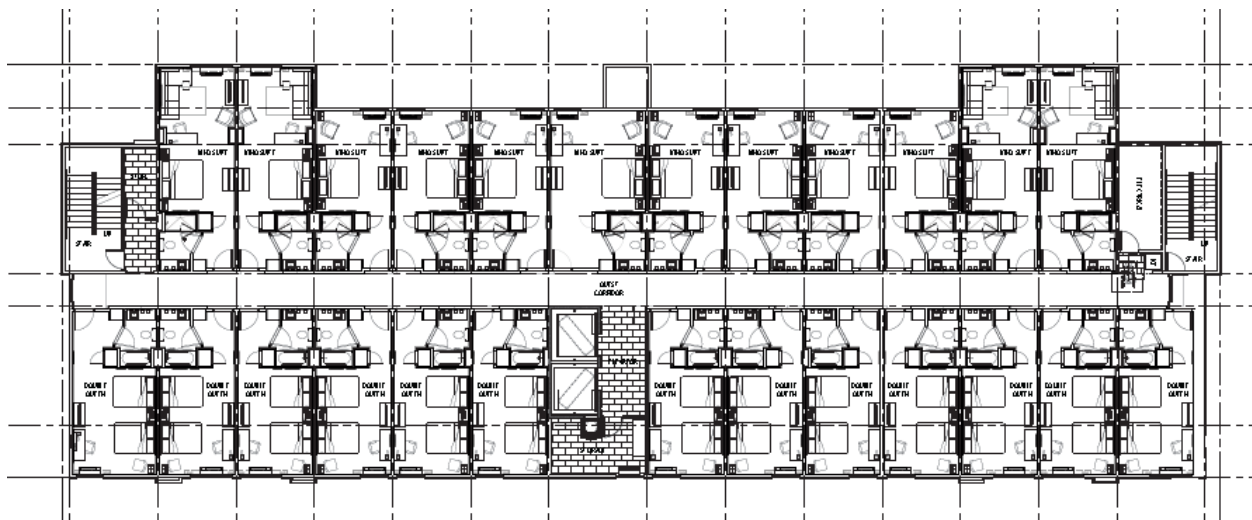
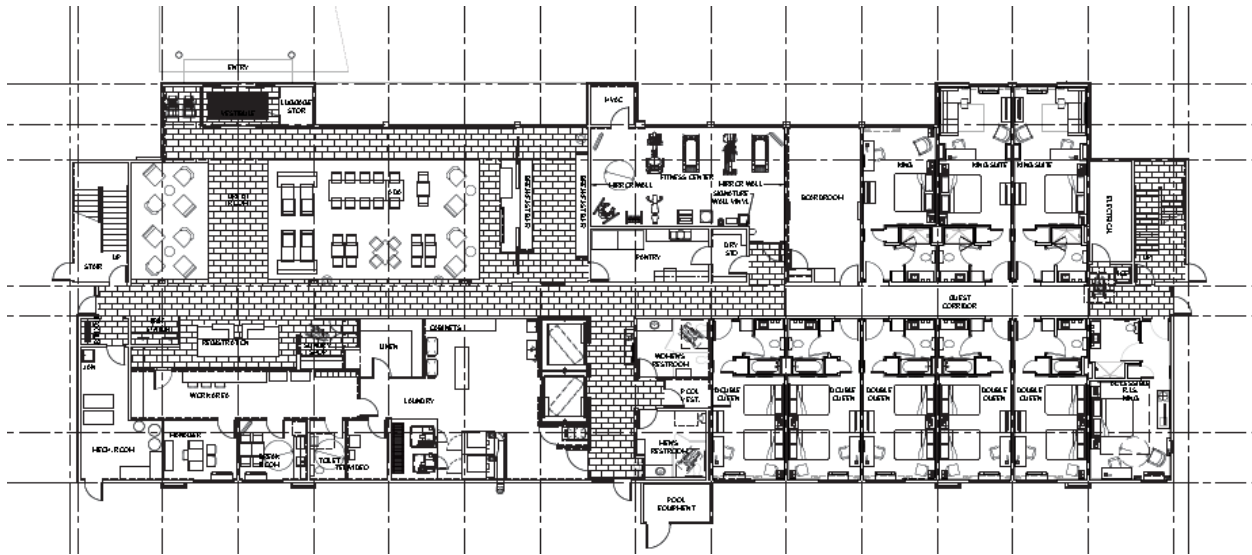
- left side -

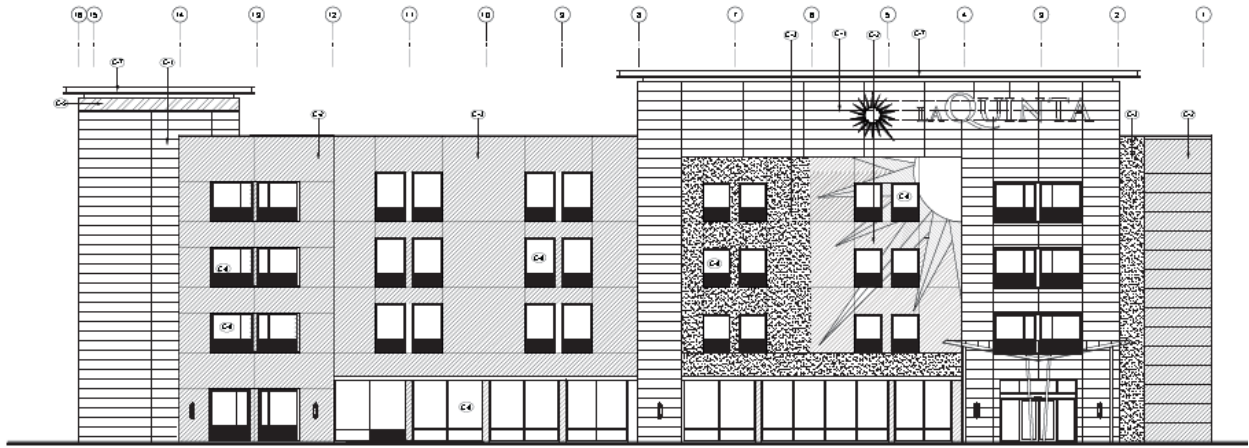


- front elevation -

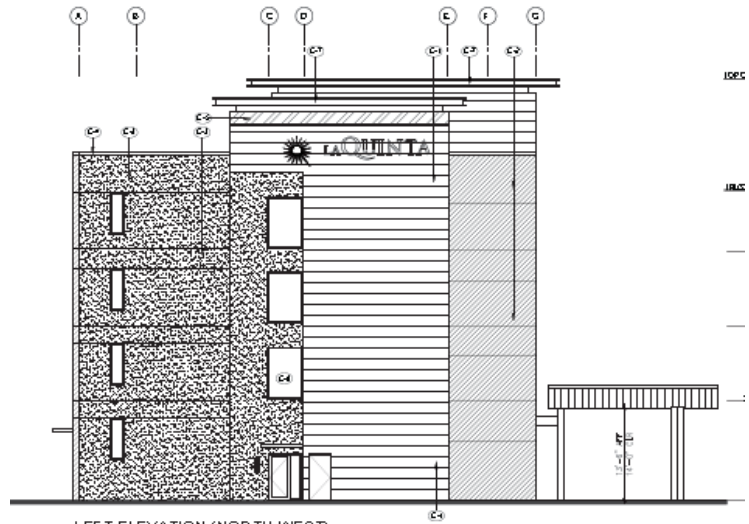


The **4-story hotel** includes floor plans, elevations, and artist rendering as shown below:





FRONT ELEVATION (NORTH-WEST)

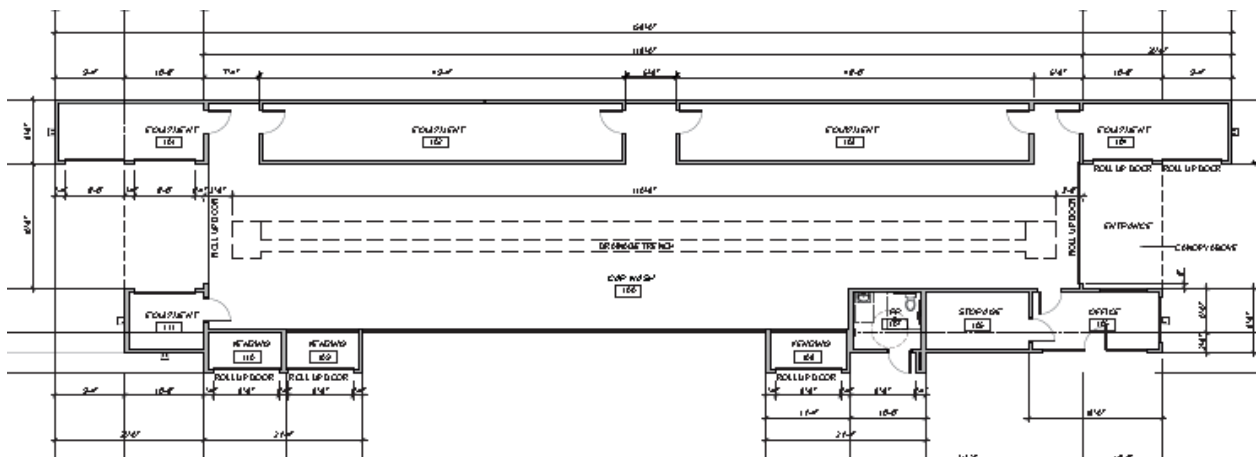


LEFT ELEVATION (NORTH-WEST)





The **auto washing** building floor plans, elevations, and artist rendering exhibits are shown below:

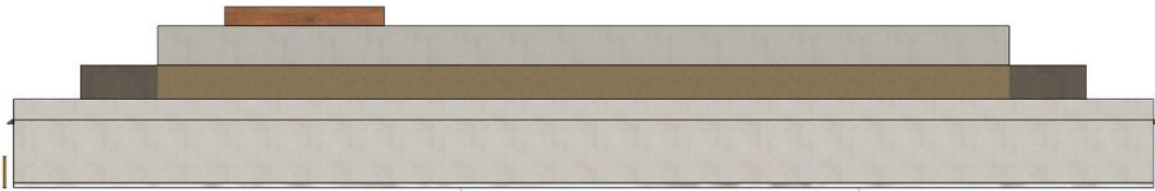




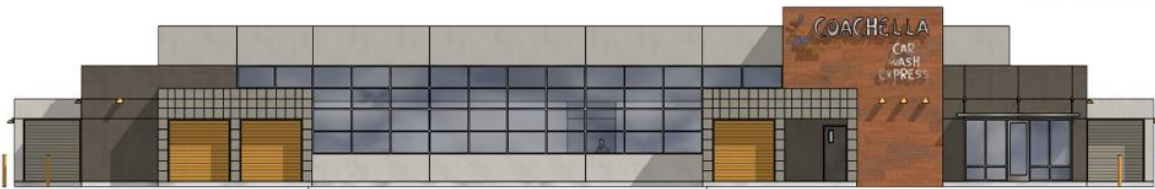
- right side -



- left side -



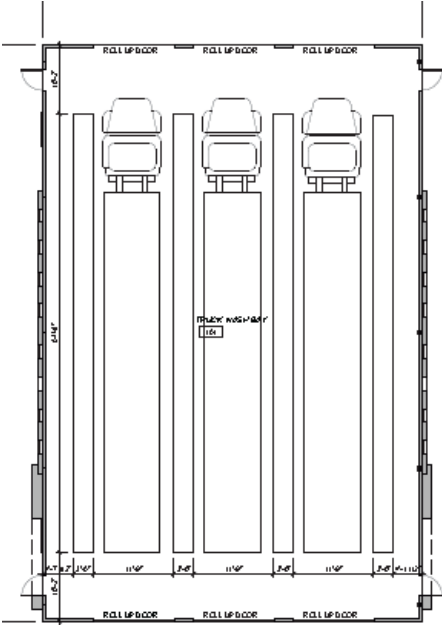
- rear elevation -



- front elevation -



The **truck washing** and fueling facility exhibits are shown below:



- right side - - left side (reverse) -



- rear elevation -



- front elevation -



Conditional Uses:

The drive-thru restaurant and auto washing/ truck washing facilities are subject to a conditional use permit approval. This requires findings that these particular uses not create any adverse effects upon the existing neighborhood. Staff finds that the subject site is substantially isolated and adjacent to a busy highway. However, there is an older ranch estate property to the south that could be adversely affected by the truck washing facility noise in the late hours. As such, staff is recommending that the hours of operation for the truck washing be limited to 9:00 am to 10:00 pm daily.

Architectural Theming:

As shown on the above exhibits, the project incorporates a cohesive contemporary design theme with flat roof and tower elements, parapet roof structures with varying roof lines constructed of framed walls and structural panel systems with cornice trim detailing, and a mixture of architectural finishes, colors and textures. The truck washing buildings has a metal exterior panel wall system with metal roof and architectural elements attached to the sides and base wainscot veneers. The fueling canopies all have exterior metal finishes and flat roof structures. The overall color schemes are light brown field colors with gray and rust accent colors. The use of gooseneck exterior lighting wall sconces gives the structures a traditional look. Staff is recommending that all rooftop equipment be screened from view to the street, as required by the City's Zoning Code.

Landscaping:

The site plan shows conceptual landscaping plans for the project showing perimeter landscaping along the front (10-foot to 40-foot planter depth) sides (10'-20' planters) with a 10-foot planter along the east and south sides of the parking areas. The plant palette list has been submitted, showing desert-friendly trees, shrubs, succulents, accent palm trees, and decorative paving at the entries and in front of building entrances. Final landscaping plans will be submitted and approved prior to the issuance of a building permit for the project. The colored landscape plans are shown below:





Signage:

The zoning code allows one freestanding identification sign per street frontage. The submitted plans show an entry monument sign for the Coachella Travel Centre to be located at the main entry on Avenue 50, as well two pylon (freeway-oriented) signs up to 70 feet tall identifying “City of Coachella” (exempt – wayfinding sign) at the northwest corner of the site, and the service station pricing and multi-tenant identification pylon sign at the northeast corner of the site, as shown on the images below:



ENTRY MONUMENT CONCEPT



COACHELLA
TRAVEL CENTER

ARCO

ampm

REGULAR

3.33 ⁹/₁₀

DIESEL

3.49 ⁹/₁₀



LAQUINTA.





Consistency with General Plan:

The Project is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the Coachella General Plan 2035. The site has a Suburban Retail District land use designation that allows for the proposed development. The proposed uses on the site are in keeping with the policies of the Suburban Retail District land use classification and the Project is internally consistent with other General Plan policies for this type of development.

Consistency with C-G Zone and Parking Standards

The Project is in compliance with the applicable land use regulations and development standards of the City's Zoning Code. The Project complies with applicable C-G (General Commercial) zoning standards as proposed, except for building height which is addressed with the attendant Variance No. 18-09 application request regarding the 50-foot height limit for the 4-story hotel.

In the C-G zone, the Zoning Code requires a minimum of one parking space for every 250 square feet of all retail/commercial buildings, and restaurant seating area is further used to determine required parking. The hotel requires one space per room or suite, plus one space per every three employees on the largest work shift, plus one space per three persons to the maximum capacity of each public meeting and/or banquet room, plus fifty (50) percent of the spaces otherwise required for accessory uses (e.g. restaurants and bars). This requires a minimum of 229 total parking spaces and the project proposes 415 parking stalls. As such, the project exceeds the minimum parking requirements.

Circulation and Infrastructure

The project proposes multiple commercial driveways from a new collector street along the east side of the Whitewater Channel, and from Avenue 50. The property currently has a single point of access from Avenue 50.

Additionally, the Zoning Code requires a minimum of two "Type C" loading spaces for projects between 25,001 – 40,000 square feet. As such, the Code requires two 12' X 30' (with 14 feet of vertical clearance) loading spaces somewhere on the property to accommodate large delivery trucks to serve the future industrial uses. It appears that there is adequate space on the property to accommodate these loading spaces within the parking areas.

VARIANCE REQUEST:

The proposed project requires a variance in order to exceed the 50-foot height limit for the 4-story hotel. This standard is intended to limit the bulk and size of new commercial structures, especially when they may block light and air to adjoining sensitive uses. Here the proposed hotel will not adversely affect any adjoining uses and the footprint for the hotel is minimal in comparison to the entirety of the site. The subject site has an awkward shape and configuration, partially created by the realignment of Avenue 50. As such, staff believes that there are unique circumstances applicable to the site that merit the granting of a variance.

In order to grant a variance, the Commission must make all the following findings in the affirmative, as specified in Section 17.76.020-B of the City Zoning Code.

- *That the strict application of the provisions of this chapter would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the chapter.*

- *That there are special circumstances applicable to the subject property such as size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity.*
- *That such variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right or use generally possessed by other property in the same zone and vicinity, but which, because of such special circumstances and practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships is denied to the property in question.*
- *That the granting of such variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the same zone or vicinity in which the property is located*
- *That the granting of the variance will not adversely affect any element of the general plan.*

Staff finds that the subject site is an irregular shaped lot that abuts the Whitewater Channel along Avenue 50 which reduced the amount of street frontage. Depriving the subject property owner from the proposed development will create an undue hardship on this owner who has a viable development proposed for the property. As such, the applicant is deprived of similar development opportunities to other land owners along Avenue 50 due to the unique geography and irregular shape of the lot that make it unusual and merits the granting of a variance. Therefore, staff is recommending approval of Variance #18-09 with the findings and conditions listed in the attached resolutions.

Environmental Review:

Environmental Assessment/Initial Study No. 18-09 was prepared for the subject project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and distributed to responsible agencies of review and comment. Based on this Environmental Assessment/Initial Study and proposed mitigation measures therein, it has been determined that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment and it would be appropriate to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project. The Mitigated Negative Declaration includes all of the above referenced applications. A 30-day review period for the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration commenced on May 6, 2019 and ended on June 5, 2019 for interested and concerned individuals and public agencies to submit written comments on the project. The Environmental Assessment/Initial Study is attached to this report.

As the Planning Commission may recall, the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has proposed the State Route 86/Avenue 50 New Interchange Project (New Interchange Project), which proposes the construction of a new interchange at State Route 86 (SR-86) and Avenue 50, approximately 1.1 miles north of the existing SR-86/Avenue 52 intersection and 1.95 miles south of the existing SR-86/Dillon Road interchange. The New Interchange Project would convert a portion of SR-86 from an at-grade signalized intersection into a grade-separated full interchange with a new overcrossing bridge and access ramps.

Caltrans, as lead agency under CEQA and NEPA, prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment (MND/EA) for the New Interchange Project, which circulated for public review from December 4, 2018 to January 4, 2019. Earlier this year, Caltrans approved the New Interchange Project, adopting the MND under CEQA and issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) under NEPA on May 17, 2019. A portion of the approved New Interchange Project overlaps with the Travel Center project site.

CEQA Errata #2:

Attached to this staff report is the CEQA Errata #2 which includes the information contained in this section. The City of Coachella Planning Commission asked that the Applicant (and the Environmental Consultant) clarify how the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project would interact with/conflict with/impact the Coachella Travel Centre Project. A particular concern was raised that traffic from the Coachella Travel Centre Project would impact the already congested surrounding roadways, and this may be exacerbated by the new interchange. The following information has been abstracted from the “State Route 86/Avenue 50 New Interchange Project, City of Coachella, Riverside County, California District 8 – RIV – 86 (PM R19.2/R21.6) EA 08-0C9700 PN 0814000144 Initial Study with (Proposed) Mitigated Negative Declaration/ Environmental Assessment”:

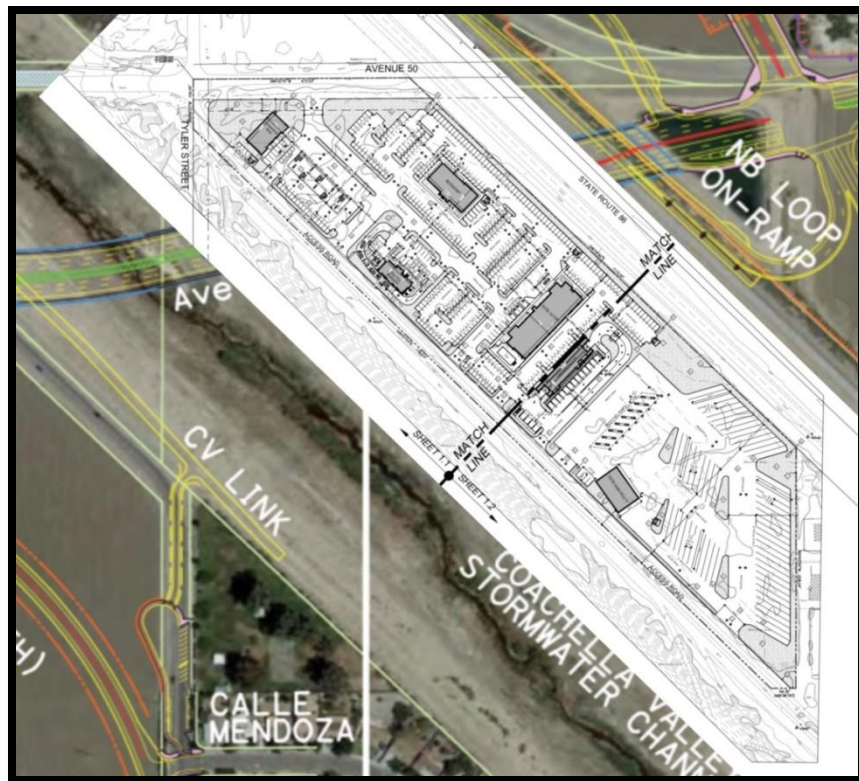
The City of Coachella (City), in cooperation with Caltrans, proposes to realign and widen a portion of Avenue 50, realign a portion of Tyler Street, and construct a new bridge spanning the Coachella Valley Storm Water Channel (CVSC) to replace the existing Avenue 50 at-grade crossing of the CVSC, and to construct a new interchange at State Route 86 (SR-86) and Avenue 50, replacing the existing SR-86/Avenue 50 signalized intersection. Caltrans proposed two alternatives:

1. Build Alternative 7 (Modified Type L-9 Partial Cloverleaf with One Loop Ramp)
2. Build Alternative 8 (Modified Type L-9 Partial Cloverleaf with Two Loop Ramps)

The Alternative #7 (Preferred) plan and Alternative #8 (Not Preferred) for the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project are shown below, along with the project site plan superimposed on the aerial photograph.



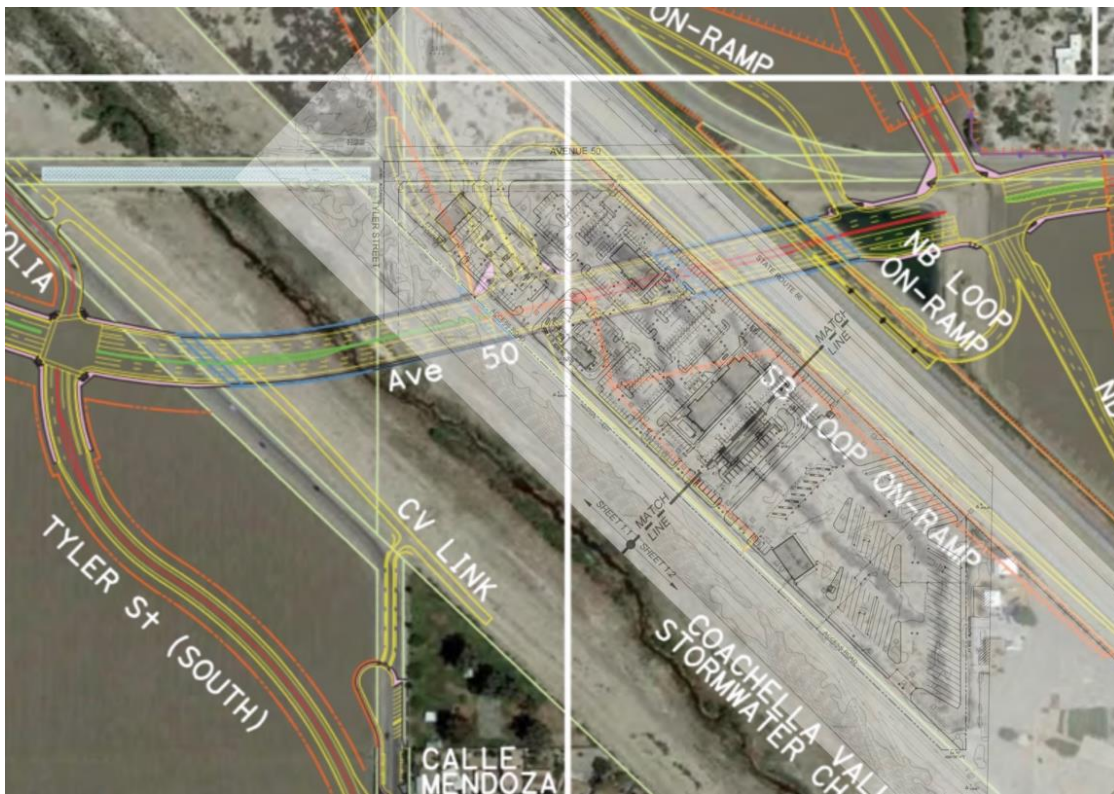
Alternative #7 (Preferred)



Alternative #7 (Without Project Only)



Alternative #8 (Not Preferred)



Alternative #8 (With or Without Project)

As shown above, the proposed Coachella Travel Centre overlaps the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project under Alternative #7 completely and will only work “without the proposed project”. For this reason the Alternative #7 site plan exhibit shows the Project without any transparency to indicate where the Coachella Travel Centre site boundaries are in relation to the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project. Alternative 7 would require total use of the Coachella Travel Centre site. As such, the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project—Alternative 7—and the Coachella Travel Centre site cannot both be developed; only one or the other will be developed given that the projects overlap almost entirely.

The Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project under Alternative #8 may work “with or without the proposed project”. Therefore, the Alternative #8 aerial photograph is shown with transparency to convey the extent in which the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project would overlap with the Coachella Travel Centre site. However, it would require a substantial re-design of the Coachella Travel Centre project. Thus, Alternative 8 would overlap to a lesser extent with the Project on paper; however, the manner in which Caltrans plans to orient Avenue 50 would render the site effectively inaccessible.

As such, the Applicant assumes that even under Alternative 8, development of the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project would require total use of the Coachella Travel Centre site. Therefore, the Caltrans SR 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project—both Alternatives 7 and 8—and the Coachella Travel Centre site are mutually exclusive; only one or the other of the two Projects can be developed. Because the two projects cannot both be implemented under current designs, they do not add cumulatively to the impacts of the proposed project. Thus, if the Coachella Travel Centre Project is built, the current Initial Study is deemed adequate by City Staff with no changes in findings and recommendations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission approve the proposed project by adopting the attached draft resolutions.

Attachments:

Resolution No PC2019-26 Environmental Assessment No. 15-06
Resolution No. PC2019-27 Change of Zone
Resolution No. PC2019-28 CUP 310 and 311
Resolution No. PC2019-29 VAR 18-09
Resolution NO. PC2019-30 AR 18-09
Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
Environmental Assessment / CEQA Errata #2
Mitigation Monitoring Program
Correspondence