5.16.3 DRY UTILITIES (ELECTRICITY, NATURAL GAS, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS)

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) addresses the potential for the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan Project ("Section 31 Specific Plan" or "Project") to impact the local dry utilities (electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications). Dry utilities in this discussion are identified by agency facility maps and would require field verification upon implementation of the Project. Please see **Section 9.0** for a glossary of terms, definitions, and acronyms used in this Draft EIR.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1. Existing Conditions

Utilities and service systems are made available by a range of private companies, private enterprises acting as public utilities, and public agencies in the City of Rancho Mirage (City). Major utilities and service systems providers in Coachella Valley include the following: the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), Southern California Edison (SCE), Imperial Irrigation District (IID), the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas), and Spectrum.

Section 5.2: Air Quality, **Section 5.7: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**, and **Section 5.9: Hydrology and Water Quality** of this Draft EIR provide greater detail for estimated utility usage and associated environmental impacts. This section provides focused summaries of information found throughout this Draft EIR associated with the capacities of and anticipated Project-generated demand on electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure. Energy use reductions are associated with efficient infrastructure; therefore, this topic is also discussed in this section.

Electricity

Southern California Edison (SCE) is the primary electric service provider to the City and its sphere of influence (SOI), with the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) providing electric service to a portion thereof. These providers are regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Electrical power is generated by a combined system of gas and coal production, oil, hydroelectricity, nuclear production, solar and wind technology, and energy purchase. The Project Site is within the SCE service area. Beginning on May 1, 2018, the Rancho Mirage Energy Authority (RMEA), a locally run power program commissioned by the Rancho Mirage City Council, began conveying power to City consumers via SCE infrastructure.

There are a variety of existing electrical facilities in the surrounding roadway system, including Gerald Ford Drive, Monterey Avenue, Frank Sinatra Drive, and Bob Hope Drive, as summarized below.

Gerald Ford Drive

Electrical power is available in Gerald Ford Drive at the primary project intersections. There are four buried 5-inch conduit stubs below the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Bob Hope Drive extending from the west, providing possible connection points. There are also two buried 5-inch conduit stubs within the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue extending from the east that may provide possible connection points.

Monterey Avenue

Buried electrical power is found along the eastern side of Monterey Avenue which extends from Gerald Ford Drive to Frank Sinatra Drive. Two buried 5-inch conduit stubs are located beneath Monterey Avenue approximately 400 feet north of Frank Sinatra Drive.

Frank Sinatra Drive

SCE-maintained 115kv transmission power poles and anchor poles are located on the northern side of Frank Sinatra Drive, extending from the intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive east to Vista Del Sol. The system then continues underground east of Vista Del Sol, past the 31/32 section corner near the intersection of Frank Sinatra Drive and Monterey Avenue.

Bob Hope Drive

SCE-maintained 115kv transmission power poles and anchor poles are located on the western side of Bob Hope Drive between Gerald Ford Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive. Additionally, the intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive has several underground electrical lines.

Natural Gas

According to the California Energy Commission (CEC), approximately one third of energy consumed in California is natural gas. As of 2012, the latest year of publicly available date from the CEC, nearly 45 percent of the natural gas burned in California was used for electricity generation, and much of the remainder consumed in the residential (21 percent), industrial (25 percent) and commercial (9 percent) sectors.[1]

SoCalGas, a publicly regulated utility, is the natural gas service provider to the City. SoCalGas has regional and local distribution lines in the City and its SOI and provides natural gas for space heating, domestic and commercial hot water, cooking, and air conditioning applications. Together, CPUC and FERC regulate

1 California Energy Commission, *California Energy Almanac*, "Supply and Demand of Natural Gas in California," accessed May 2019, https://www.energy.ca.gov/almanac/naturalgas_data/overview.html.

SoCalGas' natural gas distribution and conveyance activities. FERC is an independent federal agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil. CPUC regulates natural gas rates and natural gas services, including in-state transportation over the utilities' transmission and distribution pipeline systems, storage, procurement, metering, and billing. The availability of natural gas services is dependent upon current conditions of gas supply and regulatory policies.

The Project Site is within the SoCalGas service area and is currently undeveloped with no natural gas facilities onsite. High pressure distribution lines are located to the north, east, and south of the Project Site along Gerald Ford Drive, Monterey Avenue, and Frank Sinatra Drive, respectively. These lines are further described as follows.

Gerald Ford Drive

A 6-inch high pressure gas main is located on the northern side of Gerald Ford Drive between Bob Hope Drive and Monterey Avenue. A 4-inch medium pressure stub is located at the southeastern corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Bob Hope Drive.

Monterey Avenue

A 6-inch high pressure gas main is located along the western side of Monterey Avenue from Gerald Ford Drive to Frank Sinatra Drive. Additionally, there is a 6-inch medium pressure main along the eastern side of Monterey Avenue from Gerald Ford Drive to Frank Sinatra Drive.

Frank Sinatra Drive

A 4-inch gas main is located along the northern side of Frank Sinatra Drive, extending from Bob Hope Drive east past the 31/32 section corner.

Bob Hope Drive

There are no gas lines or infrastructure along Bob Hope Drive with the exception of aforementioned infrastructure at the roadway's intersections with Gerald Ford Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive.

Telecommunications

As indicated in the 2017 Rancho Mirage General Plan Update, telecommunications services in the City are provided by various companies. Charter Spectrum provides cable service, and telephone service, formerly provided by Verizon, is now offered by Frontier Communications. Both companies are regulated by CPUC. A wide array of products and telecommunication services for residential and commercial uses are offered by both, including internet services, wireless services, television technology utilizing digital fiber optic

technology, and satellite technology. A variety of telecommunication facilities exist along roadways surrounding the Project Site, described as follows.

Gerald Ford Drive

Underground telecommunication lines are located on the northern side of Gerald Ford Drive. A telecommunication vault is located at the northeastern corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Bob Hope Drive. Another telecommunications vault is located at the northwestern corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue. An underground telecommunication line crosses Gerald Ford Drive to terminate at the southwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue. The line stubs at this intersection with four 4-inch conduits. No cable is located along Gerald Ford Drive.

Monterey Avenue

Buried telecommunication lines are located along the eastern side of Monterey Avenue. As mentioned previously, a stub with four 4-inch conduits is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue. The line along the eastern side of Monterey Avenue crosses Frank Sinatra Drive to the southeast corner of the intersection of Monterey Avenue and Frank Sinatra Drive. Cable is located at the intersection of Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue.

Frank Sinatra Drive

A telecommunications line is located on the southern side of Frank Sinatra Drive, which extends from Bob Hope Drive to Monterey Avenue. Cable is located along the southern side of Frank Sinatra Drive from Bob Hope Drive to Monterey Avenue.

Bob Hope Drive

An underground telecommunication line exists along the eastern side of Bob Hope Drive, within the public right-of-way, from Gerald Ford Drive to Frank Sinatra Drive. Cable is located on the western side of Bob Hope Drive from Gerald Ford Drive to Frank Sinatra Drive.

2. Regulatory Setting

Federal

As mentioned previously, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gave FERC additional responsibilities in this capacity. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states.

State

Assembly Bill 32 and Related Legislation

AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, requires a sharp reduction of GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. To achieve these goals, which are consistent with the California Climate Action Team, which works to coordinate statewide efforts to implement global warming emission reduction programs and the state's Climate Adaptation Strategy after the passing of AB 32, AB 32 mandates that CARB establish a quantified emissions cap and institute a schedule to meet the cap; implement regulations to reduce Statewide GHG emissions from stationary sources consistent with the California Climate Action Team strategies; and develop tracking, reporting, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that reductions are achieved. To reach the reduction targets, AB 32 requires CARB to adopt—in an open, public process—rules and regulations that achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG reductions.

The California Climate Action Team stated that "smart land use" is an umbrella term for strategies that integrate transportation and land-use decisions.[2] Such strategies generally encourage jobs/housing proximity, promote transit-oriented development (TOD), and encourage high-density residential/commercial development along transit corridors. These strategies develop more efficient land-use patterns within each jurisdiction or region to match population increases, workforce, and socioeconomic needs for the full spectrum of the population. "Intelligent transportation systems" is the application of advanced technology systems and management strategies to improve operational efficiency of transportation systems and the movement of people, goods, and service.[3]

Climate Change Scoping Plan

CARB approved a Climate Change Scoping Plan (Scoping Plan) on December 11, 2008, as required by AB 32. The Scoping Plan proposed a "comprehensive set of actions designed to reduce overall carbon GHG emissions in California, improve our environment, reduce our dependence on oil, diversify our energy sources, save energy, create new jobs, and enhance public health."[4] The Scoping Plan had a range of GHG reduction actions, including direct regulations; alternative compliance mechanisms; monetary and nonmonetary incentives; voluntary actions; market-based mechanisms, such as a cap-and-trade system; and an AB 32 implementation regulation to fund the program.

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2 California Energy Commission, "The Role of Land Use in Meeting California's Energy and Climate Change Goals" (June 2007), http://www.energy.ca.gov/2007publications/CEC-600-2007-008/CEC-600-2007-008-SD.PDF.

3 California Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate Action Team Report to Governor Schwarzenegger and the Legislature* (March 2006), 58.

4 CARB, *Climate Change Scoping Plan: A Framework for Change* (December 2008), https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/adopted_scoping_plan.pdf.

The Scoping Plan called for a "coordinated set of strategies" to address all major categories of GHG emissions.[5] Transportation emissions were to be addressed through a combination of higher standards for vehicle fuel economy, implementation of the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, and greater consideration to reducing trip length and generation through land use planning and transit-oriented development. Buildings, land use, and industrial operations were encouraged and, sometimes, required to implement energy efficiency practices. Utility energy supplies will change to include more renewable energy sources through implementation of the Renewables Portfolio Standard. Established in 2002 under Senate Bill (SB) 1078, the California Renewables Portfolio Standards (RPS) were accelerated in 2006 under SB 107, which required that, by 2010, at least 20 percent of electricity retail sales come from renewable sources. In April 2016, the California Energy Commission (CEC) updated the RPS pursuant to SB 350, intended to set the new target 50 percent renewables by 2030.[6] This will be complemented with emphasis on local generation, including rooftop photovoltaics and solar hot water installations. Additionally, the Scoping Plan emphasized opportunities for households and businesses to save energy and money through increasing energy efficiency. It indicated that substantial savings of electricity and natural gas would be accomplished through improving energy efficiency.

Subsequent to the adoption of the Scoping Plan, a lawsuit was filed challenging CARB's approval of the Scoping Plan Functional Equivalent Document (Supplemental FED). On May 20, 2011 (Case No. CPF-09-509562), the court found that the environmental analysis of the alternatives in the Supplemental FED to the Scoping Plan was not sufficient under CEQA. CARB staff prepared a revised and expanded environmental analysis of the alternatives, and the Supplemental FED to the Scoping Plan was approved on August 24, 2011. The Supplemental FED to the Scoping Plan indicated that the potential exists for adverse environmental impacts associated with implementation of the various GHG emission reduction measures recommended in the Scoping Plan.

CARB updated the Scoping Plan in May 2014 (2014 Scoping Plan). The 2014 Scoping Plan[7] adjusted the 1990 GHG emissions levels to 431 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MMTCO2e); the updated 2020 GHG emissions forecast is 509 MMTCO2e, which credited for certain GHG emission reduction measures already in place (e.g., the RPS). The 2014 Scoping Plan also recommended a 40

5 CARB, *Climate Change Scoping Plan*, p. ES-7.

6 California Energy Commission, *Enforcement Procedures for the Renewables Portfolio Standards for Local Publicly Owned Electric Utilities: Amended Regulations* (April 12, 2016), http://www.energy.ca.gov/2016publications/CEC-300-2016-002/CEC-300-2016-002-CMF.pdf.

7 CARB, *First Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan: Building on the Framework* (May 2014).

percent reduction in GH emissions from 1990 levels by 2030, and a 60 percent reduction in GHG emissions from 1990 levels by 2040.

The 2017 Scoping Plan,[8] approved on December 14, 2017, builds on previous programs and takes aim at the 2030 target established by the 2016 SB 32 (Pavley), which is further discussed below. The 2017 Scoping Plan outlines options to meet California's aggressive goals to reduce GHGs by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. In addition, the Scoping Plan incorporates the State's updated RPS requiring utilities to procure 50 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030. It also raises the State's Low Carbon Fuel Standard and aims to reduce emissions of methane and hydrofluorocarbons by 40 percent from 2013 levels by 2030 and emissions of black carbon by 50 percent from 2013 levels.

California Public Utilities Commission

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates privately owned electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water, railroad, rail transit, and passenger transportation companies, in addition to authorizing video franchises. CPUC is responsible for regulating electric utility rates, electric power procurement and generation, some electric infrastructure, ratepayer-funded energy efficiency programs, and other areas. The CPUC evaluates the necessity for additional power generation by the regulated utilities in California in both the long and short term, accomplished using public input, data provided by the utilities, the California Energy Commission, the California Independent System Operator (CAISO), and following the regulations of the Commission, the Public Utilities Code, and FERC. CPUC has primary ratemaking jurisdiction over the funding of distribution related expenditures generally for power lines of 66 kV (kilovolts) or less. While CPUC does not have ratemaking responsibility for transmission lines, CPUC does have a substantial role in permitting transmission and substation facilities.

CPUC regulates natural gas rates and natural gas services, including in-state transportation over the utilities' transmission and distribution pipeline systems, storage, procurement, metering, and billing. Additionally, CPUC regulates telecommunications and broadband operations and infrastructure in the State, being responsible for licensing, registration, and the processing of tariffs on local exchange carriers, competitive local carriers, and non-dominant interexchange carriers. It is also responsible for registration of wireless service providers and franchising of video service providers, among other duties.

8 CARB, *California's 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan* (November 2017), https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/scoping_plan_2017.pdf.

Senate Bill 97

Senate Bill (SB) 97, approved on July 10, 2017, requires the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to prepare and develop guidelines for the mitigation of GHG emissions or the effects thereof, including but not limited to effects associated with transportation and energy consumption.[9] These guidelines were required to be transmitted to the Natural Resources Agency by July 1, 2009, to be certified and adopted by January 1, 2010. OPR submitted the Proposed Draft Guideline Amendments for Greenhouse Gas Emissions to the Secretary for Natural Resources on April 13, 2009. The California Natural Resources Agency conducted formal rulemaking in 2009 on December 30 of that year and adopted the Guideline Amendments, which address the specific obligations of public agencies when analyzing GHG emissions under CEQA to determine a project's effects on the environment.

However, neither a threshold of significance nor any specific mitigation measures is included or provided in these CEQA Guideline Amendments. The Guideline Amendments require a Lead Agency to make a good-faith effort, based to the extent possible on scientific and factual data, to describe, calculate, or estimate the amount of GHG emissions resulting from a project. The Guideline Amendments give discretion to the Lead Agency whether to (1) use a model or methodology to quantify greenhouse gas emissions resulting from a project, and which model or methodology to use; and/or (2) rely on a qualitative analysis or performance-based standards. Further, the Guideline Amendments identify three factors that should be considered in the evaluation of the significance of GHG emissions:

1. The extent to which a project may increase or reduce greenhouse gas emissions as compared to the existing environmental setting;
2. Whether the project emissions exceed a threshold of significance that the Lead Agency determines applies to the project; and
3. The extent to which the project complies with regulations or requirements adopted to implement a Statewide, regional, or local plan for the reduction or mitigation of GHG emissions.

The administrative records of the promulgation of the Guidelines Amendments also clarify "that the effects of greenhouse gas emissions are cumulative and should be analyzed in the context of California Environmental Quality Act's requirements for cumulative impact analysis."[10]

The Natural Resources Agency is required to periodically update the guidelines to incorporate new information or criteria established by CARB pursuant to AB 32. SB 97 applies retroactively to any

9 California Legislative Information, Senate Bill No.97 (August 24, 2007), https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=200720080SB97.

10 Cynthia Bryant, Director of the Office of Planning and Research, letter to Mike Chrisman, Secretary for Natural Resources, April 13, 2009.

environmental impact report, negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or other document required by CEQA that has not yet been certified.

Senate Bill 1368

To limit carbon emissions associated with electrical energy consumed in California, SB 1368 prohibits purchase arrangements for energy for periods of longer than 5 years from resources that exceed the emissions of a relatively clean, combined cycle natural gas power plant. A coal-fired plant cannot meet this standard because such plants emit roughly twice as much carbon as combined cycle natural gas power plants. Accordingly, SB 1368 effectively prevents California's utilities from investing in, financially supporting, or purchasing power from new coal plants located in or out of the State. Thus, implementation of SB 1368 is anticipated to reduce GHG emissions associated with California's energy demand by effectively prohibiting California utilities from purchasing power from out-of-state producers that cannot satisfy the required performance standard for GHG emissions.

Regional and Local

Southern California Association of Governments

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a council of governments representing Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties. SCAG is the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for this region, which encompasses more than 38,000 square miles. SCAG is a regional planning agency and a forum for addressing regional issues concerning transportation, the economy, community development, and the environment. SCAG is also the regional clearinghouse for projects requiring environmental documentation under federal and State law. In this role, SCAG reviews proposed development and infrastructure projects to analyze their impacts on regional planning programs. As the southern California region's MPO, SCAG cooperates with SCAQMD, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and other agencies in preparing regional planning documents. SCAG has developed regional plans to achieve specific regional objectives, including the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) component pursuant to State law.

Coachella Valley Association of Governments

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) is a sub-regional organization within SCAG. CVAG operates as part of larger jurisdictional or regional teams within the Coachella Valley, made up of ten cities, Riverside County, and two Native American Indian tribes. CVAG represents member local governments and agencies throughout the Coachella Valley seeking cooperative sub-regional and regional planning, coordination and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern. CVAG comprises several departments,

including an Energy and Environmental Resources Department that monitors and implements both regional and local plans related to energy and air quality issues, waste management, water quality, habitat conservation planning and trails issues.

Valley-Wide Voluntary Green Building Program

The Voluntary Green Building Program, administered by CVAG, was developed to help builders, developers, and homeowners meet and exceed California's Energy Code in terms of energy efficiency. As part of this program, some cities have committed to making it easier for those voluntarily participating in the program to process their plans through the planning and building departments. The Voluntary Program and the California Building Code are based upon standards and measurements; further, the Voluntary Program includes an extensive checklist of specific actions and how they are counted toward a more energy efficient building.

Riverside County General Plan

The County of Riverside adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) for the unincorporated areas in the County in 2012. The CAP establishes a programmatic approach to reducing GHG emissions associated with the continued growth of the County and sets a framework for a comprehensive plan that addresses the GHG impacts of future development and County operations. Through the CAP, the County has established goals and policies that incorporate environmental responsibility into its daily management of residential, commercial, and industrial growth; education; energy and water use; air quality; transportation; waste reduction; economic development; and open space and natural habitats.

Sustainability Plan

The City completed the *2013 Sustainability Plan: Leadership in Energy Efficiency* (Sustainability Plan) in May 2013. The Sustainability Plan is a framework for the development and implementation of policies and programs that will reduce the City's emissions, working towards the Statewide target of 1990 levels by 2020 set by Assembly Bill (AB) 32. For the City to achieve Statewide target levels, it will have to reduce emissions by 54,272 MTCO2e by 2020, a 19.8 percent reduction. The set of measures presented in the Sustainability Plan will reduce the City's GHG emissions by 60,411 MTCO2e, which exceeds State targets by approximately 11 percent.

Rancho Mirage 2017 General Plan Update

The Rancho Mirage 2017 General Plan Update, Public Services and Facilities Element addresses utility facilities that are utilized by the City. The purpose of the Public Services and Facilities Element is to establish City policy that provides for a coordinated system of the services to adequately serve Rancho Mirage at full buildout. The Element also identifies standards for infrastructure relative to population or

land use intensity and identifies courses of action and programs that provide the means to implement the goals and policies of the Element.

The Element lists goals, policies and programs regarding public utilities in the City. Goals include the conservation of the quality and quantity of the water basin by working with CVWD and the Regional Water Quality Control Board; the installation of a City-wide sewer system that serves all residences and businesses; lower electricity rates; and placing all utility lines underground. The Public Services and Facilities Element includes the following information related to utilities services in the City:

Electricity

Electricity infrastructure in the City is provided by SCE, and to a limited extent, IID. As mentioned previously, RMEA, a locally run power program commissioned by the Rancho Mirage City Council, conveys power to City consumers via SCE infrastructure. RMEA supplies power to homes and businesses via different plan options, including 50 percent carbon-free, which is comprised of 35 percent renewable energy and 15 percent hydroelectric power; an opportunity to opt up to 100 percent renewable energy; and a 100 percent solar net metering program for solar customers. SCE facilities include 12 kV transmission lines for local distribution. Higher voltage lines for more distant transmission range up to 115 kV and 230 kV. Substations step down voltage for local distribution and use. The following three substations serve the City: one on Highway 111 just east of Thunderbird Cove, one on Clancy Lane at Monterey Avenue, and one on Plumley Road south of 35th Avenue.

Natural Gas

According to the Public Services and Facilities Element, natural gas provides more electricity generation than any energy source in California. Data gathered as of September 10, 2015 by the California Energy Commission indicates that 60 percent of all electric generation in California comes from natural gas. As mentioned previously, SoCalGas provides natural gas service in the City. SoCalGas has regional and local distribution lines in Rancho Mirage and the sphere of influence. Natural gas is commonly used for space heating, domestic and commercial hot water, cooking and air conditioning applications.

Telecommunications

The 2017 Public Services and Facilities Element states that multiple companies offer telephone service in Rancho Mirage, indicating that phone service is oftentimes bundled with other services such as internet and television. The Element also indicates that home telephone service has largely been replaced with wireless phones and home telephone service will most likely be offered as an ancillary service.

The City encourages the development of "stealth" facilities to protect Citywide aesthetics and encourages integrating large antenna systems into architectural features of buildings (towers, cupolas, etc.). Monopalms, streetlamps, and/or flagpoles have been used when buildings are not available.

Fiber networks for high speed broadband require substantial trenching for conduit installation. The City encourages a "dig once" philosophy for construction activities to plan for orderly expansion, and also to help offset the cost of extraction. While a trench is open for any reason, one or more conduits are placed in the trench, either with or without fiber, for the future expansion of wireless facilities, communications, video surveillance, etc.

General Plan Goals and Policies

Additionally, the Public Services and Facilities element includes the following goals, policies, and programs related to the provision of utility services within the City:

Goal PS&F 4 Lower Electricity Rates

Policy PS&F 4.1 Take a leading role in forming a cooperative program with adjacent cities to acquire ownership of the electric distribution system

Goal PS&F 5 Placement of all utility lines underground

Policy PS&F 5.1 Give utility lines on major streets primary consideration for undergrounding.

Policy PS&F 5.2 Site major utility facilities to assure minimal impacts to the environment and the community and minimize potential environmental hazards.

- Program PS&E 5.2A: Wireless facilities shall be stealth in their design in order to preserve citywide aesthetics.

Policy PS&F 5.3 Encourage the coordinated and shared use of underground transmission corridors as a means of minimizing repeated extractions into the streets.

Policy PS&F 5.4 Promote a "dig once" approach for construction activities in order to plan for the orderly and efficient expansion of fiber networks.

City of Rancho Mirage Municipal Code

New construction within the City is subject to Title 3, Chapter 3.29, Section 13.29.130 of the Rancho Mirage Municipal Code (RMMC), which sets policy for the requirement of an imposed tax on new construction to support utility undergrounding. Utility undergrounding facilities and improvements development impact fees outlined in the RMMC are required to be paid by all applicants for new residential and nonresidential construction. Fees are calculated to include only lines fronting on undeveloped property. Other examples of applicable RMMC items include Wireless Communication Facilities Chapter 17.32 and Electrical Interference and Radioactivity Chapter 17.18.040 which govern telecommunications facilities.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Thresholds of Significance

In order to assist in determining whether a project would have a significant effect on the environment, the City finds a project may be deemed to have a significant impact to electrical, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, if it would:

Threshold 5.16.3-1: **Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded power, natural gas or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects.**

2. Methodology

Information regarding the current availability of utilities was gathered to determine if the existing capacity is sufficient to serve the Project.

3. Project Design Features

As identified in **Section 5.7: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**, Project Design Features **PDF 5.7-1** through **PDF 5.7-3** are included in the Project and would reduce its potential greenhouse gas emission (GHG) impacts. Further, **PDF 5.5-1** through **PDF 5.5-5** identified in **Section 5.5: Energy** would implement energy-conserving measures and help to reduce impacts on energy resources. These features were taken into account in the analysis of potential impacts.

The aforementioned PDFs pertaining to GHG emissions and energy resources would also apply to electricity and natural gas consumption associated with the Project as it relates to the capacities of existing electrical and natural gas facilities to accommodate any increase in Project-related growth of demand. Implementation of GHG emissions reduction and energy conservation measures discussed in this and

other sections of this Draft EIR would help to reduce Project-related energy demand and resultant impacts on the existing distribution systems.

4. Project Impacts

Threshold 5.16.3-1: Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded electric power, natural gas or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

As discussed previously, the Project Site is surrounded by existing electrical, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure. Existing utility infrastructure would require physical determination prior to Project implementation, and any further need for infrastructure upgrades would be accomplished through the required design review and approval of electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication plans for the Project through the City and the appropriate regulatory agencies and utility providers. The Project would enable the relocation and undergrounding of the existing transmission lines along Frank Sinatra Drive on the southern border of the Project Site between Bob Hope Drive and Vista Del Sol. In addition, new underground electrical distribution lines will be constructed within the Project Site to serve the planned uses. Undergrounding activities of existing utility lines would be limited to the setback area along surrounding roadways and would be consistent with City goals, objectives, and policies which encourage the undergrounding of utility lines along major streets for the improvements in aesthetic value it provides. However, undergrounding of existing on-site electrical utility transmission lines would ultimately be subject to available funding, as specified in the Section 31 Specific Plan. Construction impacts associated with the installation of on-site and off-site utility connections are expected to be confined to trenching and related construction activities would be temporary and limited. All improvements, undergrounding, and necessary relocations related to utility services would be completed in accordance with City and provider standards. As such, impacts would be less than significant.

Further, as discussed throughout this Draft EIR, the Project would incorporate numerous energy efficiency measures and design features to enhance efficiency in all aspects of a building's life-cycle. These designs would increase the structure's energy efficiency, and overall sustainability. The Project would also exceed Title 24 energy requirements by 15 percent, consistent with the Voluntary Green Building Program. These measures would help to reduce Project-related energy demand and resultant impacts on the existing distribution systems. The Project is not anticipated to require or result in the construction of new or expanded electricity, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

5. Cumulative Impacts

The Project Site consists of approximately 618 acres situated in Rancho Mirage, Riverside County, California. The site is bounded on the west by Bob Hope Drive, on the north by Gerald Ford Drive, on the east by Monterey Avenue, and on the south by Frank Sinatra Drive, all paved arterial streets. It is in an urbanized area, surrounded by existing infrastructure.

As discussed previously, the Project Site is surrounded by existing electrical, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure. Existing utility infrastructure would require physical determination prior to implementation any project and any further need for infrastructure upgrades would similarly be accomplished through the required design review and approval of electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication plans for projects through the City, respective nearby jurisdictions, and the appropriate regulatory agencies and utility providers. Similarly, related projects would also be anticipated to comply with these requirements in an area that is largely built out. Therefore, cumulative impacts with respect to infrastructure would be less than significant.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are necessary. However, PDFs and Mitigation Measures listed throughout this Draft EIR in **Section 5.5: Energy** and **Section 5.7: Greenhouse Gas Emissions** would work in combination to minimize Project impacts on electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications facilities.

D. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Compliance with provisions outlined in the Section 31 Specific Plan, PDFs and Mitigation Measures listed in **Section 5.5: Energy** and **Section 5.7: Greenhouse Gas Emissions,** and existing City regulations, plans, and programs, in addition to incorporation of best management practices, which require buildings to be more energy efficient than required by existing regulations, would ensure that Project impacts related to energy resources would be less than significant. This would work in combination to minimize Project impacts on electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications facilities.

Further, submittal, review, and approval of Project plans through the City and relevant utility providers would ensure future utility demands would be manageable. Any further need for infrastructure upgrades would be accomplished through the required design review and approval of electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication plans for the Project through the City and the appropriate regulatory agencies and utility providers. Therefore, no significant unavoidable impacts related to energy resources would be caused by the Project.