



June 2021 | Initial Study

# INITIAL STUDY FOR IMPERIAL COUNTY 2021– 2029 HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

County of Imperial

*Prepared for:*

**County of Imperial**

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## INITIAL STUDY FOR IMPERIAL COUNTY 2021–2029 HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

### ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE DETERMINATION

After Review of the Initial Study, the Environmental Evaluation Committee (EEC) has:

- Found that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- Found that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- Found that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- Found that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- Found that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DE MINIMIS IMPACT FINDING:

Yes  No

| <b>EEC VOTES</b>          | <b>YES</b>               | <b>NO</b>                | <b>ABSENT</b>            |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| PUBLIC WORKS              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| OFFICE EMERGENCY SERVICES | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| APCD                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| AG                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| SHERIFF DEPARTMENT        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ICPDS                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Jim Minnick, Director of Planning/EEC Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date:

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project Title:</b>                | Initial Study for Imperial County 2021–2029 Housing Element Update                                |
| <b>Lead Agency Name and Address:</b> | County of Imperial<br>801 Main Street<br>El Centro, California 92243                              |
| <b>Project Location:</b>             | Countywide  |
| <b>Proponent’s Name and Address:</b> | Imperial County Planning & Development Services<br>801 Main Street<br>El Centro, California 92243 |
| <b>General Plan:</b>                 | Countywide – various  |
| <b>Zoning:</b>                       | Countywide – various  |
| <b>Authority:</b>                    | County of Imperial  |

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**ATTACHMENT**

1. Draft 2021–2029 Imperial County Housing Element (available on the County Website: <https://www.icpds.com/planning/land-use-documents/general-plan/housing-element>)



# Introduction

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## 1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under the requirements of state law, every city and county in California must prepare a Housing Element as part of its General Plan. The Housing Element must document in detail existing conditions and projected needs in accordance with state housing law provisions. The element is also required to contain goals, policies, programs, and quantified objectives that address housing needs over the next eight-year period. As part of the proposed project, the proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element will serve as the County’s guiding policy document that meets future needs of housing for all of the County’s economic groups. The proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element will replace the existing 2014-2021 Housing Element. The Housing Element Update identifies the potential for development of up to 17,472 new housing units at full buildout of the County’s existing vacant lot inventory. The projected number of units considers development of existing vacant lots and one non-vacant lot under current land use designations and zoning. Sites in the vacant land inventory are located in existing townsites in the unincorporated county and in specific plan areas, including 101 Ranch, McCabe Ranch II, and Rancho Los Lagos.

The Housing Element is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing. While policies could result in actions of the County that could result in physical change, none of the policies in the proposed project would result in physical changes to the environment. Additionally, the proposed Housing Element does not identify any parcels for rezoning.

The proposed Housing Element establishes targets for the income accessibility of future housing; however, the ability to construct the housing is based on the designations in the Land Use Element. As the County can meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) without changing any land use designation, the Land Use Element remains unchanged from the document evaluated in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The proposed Housing Element does not change the development pattern for the county, as shown in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the zoning map for the county. Physical change to the environment would occur from implementation of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, not the proposed Housing Element. Therefore, development of housing as considered in the proposed Housing Element would be consistent with that analyzed in the General Plan EIR.

Government Code, Section 65588(a)(2) “Review and Revision” requires that the proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element review the goals, policies, and programs of the previous Housing Element, and report on the attainment and disposition of the programs. In some instances, the programs from the previous Housing Element are continued through to the proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element. Many existing programs have been amended and continued to reflect current conditions in the county. Table 1-1 includes changes in goals, policies, or programs between the existing Housing Element and the proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element.



**Table 1-1 Summary of Policy Changes Between Existing Housing Element and 2021–2029 Housing Element**

| Program   |   | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Program 1.1.1</b><br/>           Maintain a land inventory of all government and publicly owned surplus sites (including state and federally owned land) in the county that have potential for residential development for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Update annually</p> | <p>The County Executive Office maintains a list of all land owned by the County, including land suitable for residential and non-residential uses.</p>                     | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 1.</p>  |
| <p><b>Program 1.1.2</b><br/>           The County will provide technical assistance to developers in accessing local, state, and federal funding for affordable housing by: (1) applying for such funding on behalf of affordable housing developers; or (2) providing technical assistance or documentation necessary to support applications for funding by affordable housing developers upon request. Technical assistance will include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision of data or documents within the County’s possession that will contain necessary information or assist in the preparation of a successful grant application,</li> <li>▪ Letter of support (for projects that have received permit approvals by the County), and</li> <li>▪ Assistance from the County’s staff to locate potential sources of matching funds.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Update annually and ongoing, as needed</p>             | <p>The Imperial County Workforce and Economic Department (ICWED) plans to submit a technical assistance application for an update to the Colonias Master Plan in 2021.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 12.</p> |

| Program   |   | Implementation Status   | Action  |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Program 1.1.3</b><br/>           Utilize adequate sites inventory and housing condition survey results to support new construction of housing affordable to extremely low-, very low-, and low-income persons by designating sites in the unincorporated area of the county that are appropriate for affordable housing types, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, mobile homes, multifamily housing types, and farmworker housing.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Review annually, support ongoing</p> | <p>In January 2020, the County Board of Supervisors approved the issuance of bonds by the California Municipal Finance Authority for the benefit of the Heber del Sol Family Apartments affordable multifamily project permitted by the County. The project is planned for 47 income-restricted units and one unrestricted manager’s unit in the Heber community and is funded by state and federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funds. The County allowed parking reductions for this project. Construction was expected to begin in June 2020 but has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 1.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 1.1.4</b><br/>           Continue to allow the development of manufactured housing and mobile homes in the R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, A-1, A-2, A-3, S-1, and S-2 zones.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>                          | <p>The County allows the development of manufactured and mobile homes in the R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, A-1, A-2, A-3, S-1, and S-2 zones. During the planning period (2014–2021), the County permitted 32 mobile homes on private lots and 106 mobile homes in parks.</p>   | <p>Completed. Delete.</p>                     |
| <p><b>Program 1.1.5</b><br/>           Continue to ensure appropriate zoning that allows for medium- and high-density housing for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income housing throughout the unincorporated County.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>                          | <p>High-density zones (R-3, R-4) allow up to 29 units per acre, suitable for medium- and high-density housing for lower-income and moderate-income housing. The Heber del Sol Family Apartments were permitted for 48 units, 47 of which will be affordable to low-income households, in the R-3 zone. One other multifamily duplex was permitted in 2016 with no affordability restrictions. Due to market conditions, development in the county during the previous planning period was primarily mobile homes (138 total) and single-family units (19 total), despite the availability of appropriately zoned land for medium- and high-density housing.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 1.</p> |

| Program  |  | Implementation Status   | Action  |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Program 1.1.6</b><br/>           Continue to encourage Planned Developments through the Specific Plan development agreement process to achieve innovative housing designs.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> | <p>No Specific Plans were approved during the previous planning period. The owners of the McCabe Ranch II, Rancho Los Lagos, and 101 Ranch approved Specific Plans have not developed the projects. The County has worked with the owners to grant map extensions for those needed to encourage development.</p>  | <p>Continue. New program 3.</p>               |
| <p><b>Program 1.1.7</b><br/>           Continue to allow the development of housing for farmworkers in the A-2, A-3, AM-1, and AM-2 zones.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> | <p>The A-2, A-3, and AM-1 zones allow a single-family unit by right, and farm labor housing with a conditional-use permit, with no limitations on the number of units. The AM-2 zone allows a single-family unit, accessory dwelling unit (ADU) incidental to the primary use, and farm labor housing by right.</p>   | <p>Completed. Delete.</p>                     |
| <p><b>Program 1.1.8</b><br/>           To ensure continued compliance with the Employee Housing Act, especially California Health and Safety Code Sections 17021.5 and 17021.6, the County has set forth the following conditions for affordable housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee housing providing accommodations for six or fewer employees shall be deemed a single-family structure with a residential land use designation. How does this work if not on a residential zone?</li> <li>▪ For the purpose of all local ordinances, employee housing shall not be included within the definition of a boarding house, rooming house, hotel, dormitory, or other term that implies the employee housing is a business run for profit or differs in any other way from a family dwelling.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> | <p>The County lists employee housing in Division 5 and defines it in the 2014–2021 Housing Element. The Zoning Code refers to employee housing as farm labor housing, meeting the needs of the same population. The A-2, A-3, and AM-1 zones allow farm labor housing with a conditional-use permit and the AM-2 zone allows farm labor housing by right.</p> | <p>Continue. Covered under new program 7.</p> |

| Program   | Implementation Status  | Action  |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The use of a family dwelling for purposes of employee housing serving six or fewer persons shall not constitute a change of occupancy.</li> <li>▪ The review will ensure consistency with the following concerning employee housing consisting of no more than 36 beds in group quarters or 12 units or spaces designed for use by a single family or household.</li> <li>▪ Employee housing shall not be deemed a use that implies that the employee housing is an activity that differs in any other way from an agricultural use.</li> <li>▪ No conditional-use permit, zoning variance, or other zoning clearance shall be required of this employee housing that is not required of any other agricultural activity in the same zone.</li> <li>▪ The permitted occupancy in employee housing in an agricultural zone shall include agricultural employees who do not work on the property where the employee housing is located.</li> </ul> |  |   |   |
| <p><b>Program 2.1.1</b><br/>           Continue to support the efforts of the Imperial Valley Housing Authority by providing technical assistance in funding acquisition and the construction of affordable housing units by assisting them with developing innovative and cost-effective construction methods, including the use of solar energy, xeriscaping, and green building materials.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b> Grant funds, General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Review coordinated efforts annually, support ongoing</p> | <p>The County continues to support Imperial Valley Housing Authority.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 4.</p> |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status  | Action  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Program 2.2.1</b><br/>           Encourage innovative and cost-effective construction methods to reduce housing costs by providing incentives such as density bonus units, reduction in development standards, fee waivers/deferrals, and providing assistance in accessing state and federal subsidies. The County will also continue to contract with outside firms to perform plan check reviews for more complex projects in an effort to provide timely development approvals.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> | <p>Chapter 5, Section 90305.00 of the County’s Land Use Ordinance provides for density bonuses for qualified low-income, very low-income, or elderly housing projects in the R-1, R-2, and R-3 zones if central water and central sewer are provided as part of the project. A density bonus of up to 20 percent may be allowed for qualified residential projects, as described previously. A density bonus of 25 percent may be granted for qualified residential projects of 5 or more units within which as least 25 percent of the units are affordable to low- or moderate-income households and/or 10 percent of the units are affordable to lower-income households. No projects requested density bonuses in the previous planning period.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 4.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.2</b><br/>           The County will promote the use of density bonuses for lower-income units by including information about density bonus units and related incentives on the County’s updated website.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> | <p>Density bonus provisions are listed in Division 3, Chapter 5, Section 90305.0 of the County’s Land Use Ordinance. The code provides density bonuses for qualified low-income, very low-income, or elderly housing projects in the R-1, R-2, and R-3 zones if central water and central sewer are provided as part of the project. A density bonus of up to 20 percent may be allowed for qualified residential projects, as described previously. A density bonus of 25 percent may be granted for qualified residential projects of 5 or more units within which as least 25 percent of the units are affordable to low- or moderate-income households and/or 10 percent of the units are affordable to lower-income households. The County will promote the use of density bonuses by listing these requirements and opportunities on the County’s website.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 6.</p> |

| Program  |   | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Program 2.2.3</b><br/>           Increase the supply of affordable housing for special-needs groups by encouraging the development of attached or detached second dwelling units on existing residential lots by providing information to homeowners about second units at the Planning and Development Services Department offices.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>  | <p>The County works closely with various community organizations, the Board of Supervisors, the Catholic Church, and other interested churches to pursue opportunities for development of new transitional and supportive housing, as well as other housing types for special-needs group. The County and these groups have identified suitable sites, but none have been developed. Additionally, County approved seven ADUs and one Junior ADU in 2020.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 8.</p>                    |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.4</b><br/>           Continue to monitor State Density Bonus law to ensure the County’s ordinance is in compliance with state regulations.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Annually</p> | <p>Chapter 5, Section 90305.00, of the County’s Land Use Ordinance provides for density bonuses for qualified low-income, very low-income, or elderly housing projects in the R-1, R-2, and R-3 zones if central water and central sewer are provided as part of the project. A density bonus of up to 20 percent may be allowed for qualified residential projects, as described previously. A density bonus of 25 percent may be granted for qualified residential projects of 5 or more units within which as least 25 percent of the units are affordable to low- or moderate-income households and/or 10 percent of the units are affordable to lower-income households. The County will update the density bonus in the Code to reflect current state law.</p> | <p>Combined with Program 2.2.2. Covered under new program 6.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.5</b><br/>           Allow for the development of mixed-use zoning in the Light Commercial (C-1) and General Commercial (C-2) zoning districts that allow for residential development at up to 25 dwelling units per acre.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>  | <p>Chapter 6, Section 90306.01, of Division 3 of the County’s Land Use Ordinance establishes the C-1 (Light Commercial) and C-2 (General Commercial) zones as allowing mixed-use development and discourages single-use development. The C-1 zone permits 29 dwelling units per acre and C-2 does not establish a maximum number of allowable dwelling units.</p>  | <p>Completed. Delete.</p>  |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.6</b><br/>           Continue to support the use of federal and state funding resources for meeting local housing needs</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services</p>  | <p>In 2021, Workforce and Economic Development provided Emergency Rapid Rehousing and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) to homeless</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 9.</p>                    |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status   | Action   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>and programs, especially for households with special needs, particularly seniors and those with disabilities and development disabilities, and lower incomes.</p>  | <p>Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>  | <p>clientele through the Homeless Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) funding through federal funds obtained by the local Continuum of Care.</p> <p>Workforce and Economic Development provided TBRA between 2017 and 2018 and served a total of 150 households. Of the 150 assisted households, 50 were served through the HEAP program in 2020.</p> <p>The County will continue to apply for available funding to meet the needs of the community and plans to submit additional funding applications for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in early 2021.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.7</b><br/>Continue to seek funding from the Joe Serna Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Program (Serna) for the rehabilitation of existing farmworker units and the construction of new units. The County will also collaborate with agricultural employers to identify sites and funding sources available through the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs for farmworker housing.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>General Funds, Serna, CDBG</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> As Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) are released</p> | <p>Due to limited staff capacity, the County has not applied for funding through the Joe Serna Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Program or other funding for farmworker housing. As farmworkers are an integral part of the County’s community and economy, this program will be strengthened to identify funding during the 2021–2029 planning period.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 10.</p> |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Program 2.2.8</b><br/>           Continue to promote development of assisted rental housing for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income persons and families through below-market rate financing through private lenders and possibly with the use of tax-exempt Mortgage Revenue Bonds by providing technical assistance with funding applications and other necessary paperwork.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           California Housing Finance Agency (CHFA)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>   | <p>The County responds to requests for information and assistance on a project-by-project basis for affordable rental housing. Additionally, the County encourages development of housing for lower-income households through density bonus incentives and coordination with the Board of Supervisors and housing providers. However, no projects requested financing or technical assistance during the previous planning period.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 12.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.9</b><br/>           Continue to support self-help housing providers to develop affordable homeownership projects for lower-income households and especially agricultural workers by providing technical assistance with funding applications and other paperwork, as well as by helping self-help housing providers secure sites for their developments.</p>                           | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>                 | <p>The County responds to requests for information and assistance on a project-by-project basis from self-help housing providers for affordable homeownership projects. No questions were received for affordable homeownership projects proposed during the previous planning period.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 12.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 2.2.10</b><br/>           The County will assist and support local social service agencies in their applications for state and federal funds to provide housing-related services to lower-income households and special-needs groups, particularly those offering supportive housing programs for homeless individuals and families.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing or as requested</p> | <p>In 2021, Workforce and Economic Development provided Emergency Rapid Rehousing and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) to homeless clientele through the Homeless Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP) funding through federal funds obtained by the local Continuum of Care.</p> <p>Workforce and Economic Development is also in the process of preparing to implement a TBRA program, funded by HCD - HOME and two Housing Rehabilitation Programs funded by HCD - CDBG.</p> <p>Subsistence payments funding was awarded through the 16-CDBG-11151 grant. The County began implementation on March 9, 2017, and the program was completed on February 13, 2019. A</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 11.</p> |



| Program  |  | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Program 3.1.1</b><br/>           Distribute public information regarding local service organizations, homeless and community assistance programs, including the Torres Martinez Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and emergency shelters/transitional housing by maintaining updated information available at the “storefront” locations at the Planning and Development Services Department offices.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Review information and update quarterly, distribution ongoing</p> | <p>total of 20 households were assisted.</p> <p>Flyers and pamphlets with information on local service organizations, homeless and community assistance programs, and emergency shelters and transitional housing are available in all County offices.</p>   | <p>Continue. New program 13.</p>               |
| <p><b>Program 3.1.2</b><br/>           Assist emergency shelters/transitional housing providers in acquiring state, federal, and local funding for services for the homeless.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>   | <p>The County Workforce and Economic Development, working closely with the Department of Social Services, implemented the rapid re-housing program under HEAP, which provides temporary shelter assistance through hotel vouchers.</p> <p>A total of 27 households have received hotel vouchers through the HEAP IC Rapid Re-Housing program. Vouchers ranged from 7-day to 90-day vouchers.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 14.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 3.1.3</b><br/>           The County will continue to allow for the development of transitional housing, and per Section 50675.14 of the Health and Safety Code, continue to allow supportive housing as a permitted use in residential districts.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>   | <p>Transitional housing is currently a permitted use in the R-3, C-2, A-1, and M-1 zones. The County will update Title 9 to allow transitional housing in all zones where residential uses are permitted.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 15.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 3.1.4</b><br/>           Pursuant to Senate Bill (SB) 2, continue to allow emergency shelters as a permitted use in the General</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services</p>   | <p>Emergency shelters are permitted by right in the C-2 (Medium Commercial) and M-1 (Light Industrial) zones. No emergency shelters were</p>   | <p>Completed. Delete.</p>                      |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status   | Action                                  |
|---|--|---|---|
| Commercial (C-2) and Light Industrial (M-1) zones in the County Land Use Ordinance Title 9.   | Department<br><br><b>Funding Source:</b><br>General Funds (staff time)<br><br><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing  | proposed during the previous planning period.   |   |
| <b>Program 3.1.5</b><br>Ensure new developments are compliant with standards outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for persons with disabilities.   | <b>Responsible Agency:</b><br>Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority<br><br><b>Funding Source:</b><br>General Funds (staff time)<br><br><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing | Chapter 7, Section 90307.01 of the County’s Land Use Ordinance (Title 9) establishes a process for reasonable accommodation requests for persons with disabilities. The County Building Department reviews development standards for compliance with the ADA regularly during the building permit review process.   | Modified. Covered under new program 16. |
| <b>Program 3.1.6</b><br>Continue to allow supportive housing types for persons with special housing needs, including persons with disabilities and developmental disabilities, in the County Land Use Ordinance Title 9, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision for group homes over six residents specifically for the disabled, other than those residential zones covered by state law;</li> <li>▪ Siting or separation requirements for licensed residential care facilities, to determine the extent to which the local restrictions affect the development and cost of housing;</li> <li>▪ Any minimum distance requirements in the Land Use Element for the siting of special-needs housing developments in relationship to each other do not impact the development and cost of housing for persons with disabilities; and</li> <li>▪ Alternate residential parking requirements,</li> </ul> | <b>Responsible Agency:</b><br>Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority<br><br><b>Funding Source:</b><br>General Funds (staff time)<br><br><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing | Chapter 7, Section 90307.01 of the County’s Land Use Ordinance (Title 9) establishes a process for reasonable accommodation requests for persons with disabilities. Residential care facilities for five or fewer individuals are permitted in the R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, and A-2 zones. Community care facilities are permitted with a conditional-use permit in the R-3, R-4, A-1, and A-2 zones. The County will update Title 9 to reflect current state law. No supportive housing projects were proposed in the previous planning period. | Modified. Covered under new program 15. |

| Program  |   | Implementation Status   | Action   |
|--|---|---|--|
| including reduction, for developments, including housing types for persons with special housing needs.   |   |   |  |
| <p><b>Program 3.1.7</b><br/>           To address the extremely low-income housing need and ensure compliance with Assembly Bill (AB) 2634, the County Land Use Ordinance Title 9 will continue to explicitly allow single-room occupancy units (SROs) as permitted uses in the Medium- to High-Density Residential (R-3), High-Density Residential (R-4), General Commercial (C-2), and Limited Agricultural (A-1) zones.</p>             | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>  | <p>Single-room occupancy is permitted in the R-3, R-4, C-1, C-2, and A-1 zones to provide housing for extremely low-income residents. No applications were received for SROs in the previous planning period.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 17.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 4.1.1</b><br/>           Encourage the development and implementation of housing outreach and education programs to inform the public of available housing opportunities, as well as various assistance programs available to eligible households, by continuing to provide information about the County’s housing programs by posting flyers on community boards and at gas stations, schools, and other public places.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Update and redistribute assistance program information quarterly or as needed, education programs ongoing</p> | <p>At all Board of Supervisor meetings, the County discusses strategies to encourage housing outreach and education programs; however, there has been no interest in such a program.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 19.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 4.1.2</b><br/>           Ensure that fair housing enforcement is reviewed periodically to prevent discrimination. Reduce any effects of housing discrimination and prevent future discrimination by referring potential victims of discrimination to the appropriate fair housing agency.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b></p>  | <p>Chapter 7 and Chapter 11.12 incorporate the County’s commitment to ensuring fair housing is included in the development process and enforced through a standard procedure. Requests for reasonable accommodations are reviewed by the Director or another review authority and fair housing information is distributed to the real estate industry and posted in public buildings.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 19.</p> |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status  | Action                                  |
|---|--|--|---|
|   | General Funds (staff time)<br><br><b>Timetable:</b> Annually   |  |   |
| <b>Program 5.1.1</b><br>Continue to pursue funding for owner-occupied rehabilitation efforts. Rehabilitation efforts should include improving the existing stock of mobile home units.                            | <b>Responsible Agency:</b><br>Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority<br><br><b>Funding Source:</b><br>CDBG, HOME, other federal/state sources<br><br><b>Timetable:</b> Annually apply for funds to support existing owner-occupied rehabilitation program | In 2018, the County was awarded \$500,000 in HOME Grant funding to be used to assist low-income families purchase their first homes and promote homeownership. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County chose to redirect this funding to the TBRA program to better meet the needs of the community during this time. Also in 2018, the County was awarded \$700,000 through CDBG for housing rehabilitation in Salton Sea Beach and Heber; each area was awarded \$350,000 for these programs. The County is also working with the City of Calipatria to implement their HOME program. The County will continue to pursue funding for housing rehabilitation programs in the future.<br><br>The County is still working on conditions to begin the program, expected to be completed in 2021, to begin providing TBRA rent assistance and housing rehabilitation. | Modified. Covered under new program 21. |
| <b>Program 5.1.2</b><br>Continue to implement an active code enforcement and building inspection program to identify existing code deficiencies and encourage improvement of existing substandard dwelling units. | <b>Responsible Agency:</b><br>Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority<br><br><b>Funding Source:</b><br>General Funds (staff time)<br><br><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing   | The County received and responded to 1,043 notices of violations to the County code during the 2014–2021 planning period. Through responding to these violations, the County identified the most common areas of deficiency are the illegal parking of trailers on vacant lots and overgrown vegetation. The County uses this information to educate residents on their responsibilities and identify areas where additional enforcement is necessary.   | Modified. Covered under new program 22. |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Program 5.1.3</b><br/>           The County will update its list of subsidized rental properties on an annual basis and identify units at risk of converting to market rate. The County will contact the owner(s) of any identified at-risk units to determine their interest in selling the property or maintaining the affordability of the units. The County will work with property owners to apply for federal, state, and local subsidies to ensure the continued affordability of at-risk units and will maintain a list of non-profit organizations that may be interested in the acquisition/rehabilitation of at-risk units.</p> <p>The County will make information regarding tenants' rights and conversion procedures, as well as assistance organizations and information regarding other affordable housing opportunities within the county available to tenants of at-risk units.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Update annually, provide assistance as needed</p> | <p>The County relies on data from the California Housing Partnership Corporation to maintain an updated list of subsidized rental properties.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 23.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 6.1.1</b><br/>           Promote the use of energy conservation measures to "weatherize" existing homes as part of the County's rehabilitation program efforts.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           CDBG, HOME, General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>                           | <p>Through the 2018 CDBG funding application, under the Colonias allocation, the County was awarded funding for housing rehabilitation for Salton Sea Beach and Heber. Each area was awarded \$350,000 for these programs.</p> | <p>Continue. Covered under new program 24.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 6.1.2</b><br/>           Continue to implement Title 24 Energy Conservation Requirements in housing design and rehabilitation efforts.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p>  | <p>Chapter 1 of Division 10 of the County's Land Use Ordinance (Title 9) establishes that the County will enforce all building regulations of Title 24, including Energy Conservation Requirements.</p>                        | <p>Delete.</p>                                 |

| Program   |   | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Program 7.1.1</b><br/>           Facilitate the flow of shared information and experiences regarding special topics between incorporated cities and unincorporated communities (e.g., innovative subdivision processes).</p>  | <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Coordinate communication annually or as appropriate, shared information is ongoing</p> | <p>The County works closely with both incorporated and unincorporated communities through community meetings and appointing members to Community Boards. Additionally, the County works closely with the Heber Utility District and related projects. The County Building Department manages recreational vehicle (RV) and mobile home parks throughout the county, in both unincorporated areas and on behalf of cities in incorporated areas. The County works directly with cities on issues related to management of this housing, such as responding to comments on projects, complaints, and more.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 25.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 7.1.2</b><br/>           Continue to support the coordination between public agencies through the County's intra-department/agency framework that allows specialist staff to have daily interaction and access to a global computer permitting and monitoring program linked to other development-related departments/agencies.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>  | <p>The County supports coordination with public agencies and other inter-departmental coordination through the development process. Most projects include a pre-application meeting, to which the County invites all local and state agencies that are related to the project or may have an interest. Beyond this, and for projects that do not have a pre-application meeting, the County solicits comments from local agencies and other departments during the permitting process and public hearings.</p>   | <p>Delete.</p>                                 |
| <p><b>Program 7.1.3</b><br/>           Continue to coordinate with the Imperial Valley Housing Authority to promote housing efforts.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds</p>   | <p>The County works with the Imperial Valley Housing Authority and has an ongoing partnership to promote development of a variety of housing types, with an emphasis on creating and maintaining affordable housing units. As part of this maintenance, the County coordinates services for a mobile home in a park owned by the housing authority. Due to limited funding, the County has been unable to assist in the construction of additional affordable housing in recent years.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 4.</p>  |

| Program  | Implementation Status   | Action  |  |
|--|---|---|--|
|  | <p><b>Timetable:</b> Review coordination efforts annually, coordination ongoing</p>   |   |  |
| <p><b>Program 7.1.4</b><br/>           Coordinate with regional employers to determine appropriate housing types for employees that live in Imperial County.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department, Imperial Valley Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p> | <p>The County coordinates with employers in the region, with a special focus on large projects, to encourage local employment of residents that are already housed in the area. The County provides incentives when employers meet a threshold set on a project-by-project basis for how many employees are local residents rather than attracting new workers in need of temporary housing.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 25.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 7.1.5</b><br/>           Continue to support economic development activities coordinated through the Planning and Development Services Department by providing technical support in the form of service area plan updates. These updates contain a record of undeveloped lands through the creation of residential subdivisions, annexation of land to incorporated cities, and the capacities of water and sewer in the unincorporated areas.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>                                    | <p>During the previous planning period, the County supported creation of additional housing through annexations of land for the Lotus Ranch and Miller-Burson developments into El Centro and the Russel Court development into Imperial County. In 2018, the Seeley County Water District released an update to their Service Area Plan finding that, in the Seeley service area, wastewater facilities are operating at 45-percent capacity and water facilities are operating at 20-percent capacity.</p> <p>The following have been completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winterhaven Public Safety Facility</li> <li>▪ Subsistence Payments Program</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood Cleanups</li> <li>▪ Telemedicine Equipment for Clinicas de Salud del Pueblo</li> <li>▪ Library Needs Assessment</li> <li>▪ Poe Colonia Wastewater Plant Improvements</li> <li>▪ Palo Verde Water Well #1 Improvements</li> </ul> | <p>Delete.</p>                                 |

| Program  | Implementation Status  | Action   |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seeley Water Line Distribution System Improvements</li> </ul> <p>The following projects are in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winterhaven Water Treatment Plant Improvements</li> <li>▪ Niland Public Safety Facility</li> </ul> <p>The 18 CDBG grants were just received a few months ago. The County needs to clear general conditions and get approval from the state before they begin. The County is currently working on general conditions. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seeley Fire Station</li> <li>▪ Palo Verde Water Well #2 Improvements</li> <li>▪ Heber Housing Rehabilitation</li> <li>▪ Salton Sea Beach Housing Rehabilitation</li> </ul> <p>No projects have been completed under housing rehabilitation as of yet since the County is still working on conditions to begin the programs.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Program 8.1.1</b><br/>         Continue to improve the planning permit processing procedures by improving information retrieval capabilities of counter and project staff, continuing pre-application meetings, and providing updated written materials, such as checklists and application forms with fee and standards guidelines to developers. Continue to apply mandatory time frames for application review. The County’s updated website features a function that will allow developers to track their projects through the permit processing procedures.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>         Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>         General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing as projects are submitted to the Planning Department</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 27.</p> |



| Program   |  | Implementation Status   | Action   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Program 8.1.2</b><br/>           The County will consider updating community and urban area plans as staff develops a timeline for completing them.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> 2014–2021</p>                   | <p>Due to a lack of funding, the County was unable to update community and urban area plans in the previous planning period. However, the County contracted a consultant at the end of 2020 to assist with local and regional planning (LEAP/REAP) grant applications and plans to use the funding, if received, to assist with community plan updates.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 27.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 8.1.3</b><br/>           Increase the use of the clustered Planned Residential Development (PRD) approach by lowering the minimum land area required for a PRD project. The PRD usually allows higher densities than conventional subdivisions and, through clustering, can reduce infrastructure costs. This will be achieved through the Specific Plan process so developers can select sites to apply the PRD.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Case-by-case basis; ongoing</p> | <p>The County did not use clustered PRD during the previous planning period, and instead encourages higher density for housing through Specific Plans. Three Specific Plans were processed during the previous planning period: McCabe Ranch, Rancho Los Lagos, and 101 Ranch.</p>  | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 12.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 8.1.4</b><br/>           Continue to permit landowners to build on lots of record that are currently below the minimum lot size, but only where such construction does not create land use conflicts, such as with existing agricultural operations.</p>  | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>                     | <p>Chapter 4, Section 90804.01, of Division 8 of the County’s Land Use Ordinance (Title 9) specifies that lots smaller than the applicable parcel size can still be developed under specific requirements: the parcel boundaries were determined prior to the establishment of the current minimum parcel size or a subdivider agrees to surrender development rights of a portion of a minor subdivision such that the reduced lot sizes will not result in increased density than otherwise permitted. The Planning Director or Planning Commission may also approve a parcel map of no more than four parcels where one or all parcels are smaller than the applicable minimum parcel size if there are existing small parcels in the same area that meet requirements outlined in Section 90804.01.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 28.</p> |

| Program   |  | Implementation Status   | Action  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Program 8.1.5</b><br/>           Continue to use the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) to ensure a set of consistent codes. In addition, model codes shall be periodically evaluated for new information on technological advances.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>         | <p>The County enforces Title 24, the California Building Standards Code, updated regularly as the state updates the code to ensure new information and technological advances are included and enforced.</p>  | <p>Delete.</p>                                |
| <p><b>Program 8.1.6</b><br/>           Review building codes periodically to incorporate the most economical construction alternatives consistent with health and safety.</p>   | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Review annually</p> | <p>The County enforces Title 24, the California Building Standards Code. The California Building Standards Codes are updated every three years to ensure consistency with health and safety codes and promote the most economical construction alternative. By enforcing these updated codes, the County ensures their building code addresses construction alternatives, health, and safety.</p>   | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 5.</p> |
| <p><b>Program 8.1.7</b><br/>           Encourage projects for special-needs groups and for lower- and moderate-income households by using the appropriate County ordinance to permit reduced lot sizes, reduced site setbacks, and off-street parking, thereby reducing land costs for private-sector housing developments. This will be implemented through ensuring all staff are fully knowledgeable of potential development standard reductions through the monthly staff meeting process.</p> | <p><b>Responsible Agency:</b><br/>           Planning and Development Services Department</p> <p><b>Funding Source:</b><br/>           General Funds (staff time)</p> <p><b>Timetable:</b> Ongoing</p>         | <p>The County works closely with various community organizations, the Board of Supervisors, the Catholic Church, and other interested churches to pursue opportunities for development of new transitional and supportive housing, as well as other housing types for special-needs groups. Many community organizations work directly with Board members. The County and these groups have identified suitable sites, but none have been developed. Additionally, County approved seven ADUs and one Junior ADU in 2020.</p> | <p>Modified. Covered under new program 9.</p> |

As shown in Table 1-1, the proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element consolidates many goals and policies from the existing Housing Element to aid in implementation and to eliminate redundancy. The following five policies and programs are new to the County and are included in the proposed 2021–2029 Housing Element:

- **Policy 1.2:** To provide affordable housing consistent with Assembly Bill 1397.
- **Program 2:** To provide water and sewer services for housing within low-income and low-resources areas.
- **Program 7:** To amend the Land Use Ordinance Title 9 to address Accessory Dwelling Units, Emergency Shelter Parking, Manufactured Housings, and Employee Housing standards.
- **Program 8:** To promote Accessory Dwelling Units as affordable housing options.
- **Program 20:** To improve low-resources areas access to opportunities.

## **1.2 PROJECT LOCATION, ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, AND SURROUNDING LAND USES**

In 1993, Imperial County adopted the Imperial County 1993 General Plan, which is a comprehensive guide for development within the county and provides mechanisms to achieve desired community goals and objectives through a coordination implementation program (Imperial County 1993). The General Plan is the foundation for zoning, subdivision approval, housing allocations, capital improvements, and other planning decisions. The Housing Element is one of the nine elements included in the General Plan. The Housing Element has been updated over the years; the 2021–2029 Housing Element is a continuance of this update process. A General Plan amendment would be required to include the 2021–2029 Housing Element (6<sup>th</sup> cycle), if adopted by the County.

The project relates to all unincorporated lands within the County of Imperial. The County of Imperial encompasses approximately 4,597 square miles of the southeastern portion of the State of California. Imperial County is bounded by Riverside County to the north, the Arizona state line to the east, the U.S./Mexico international border to the south, and San Diego County to the west. See Figure 1-1, *Project Location Map*. See analysis in the section, Evaluation of Environmental Impacts, for a discussion of the environmental setting as it pertains to specific environmental topics.

## **1.3 REGULATORY SETTING**

Government Code Section 65583 states that the Housing Element shall consist of identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs, as well as a statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, financial resources, and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing.

## 2. Environmental Analysis

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### 2.1 AESTHETICS

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) In non-urbanized area, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

#### 2.1.1 Setting

Scenic vistas generally include areas of high scenic quality that are visible to a number of people, including recreational travelers. Imperial County encompasses approximately 4,597 miles between Riverside County to the north, U.S./Mexico border to the south, San Diego County to the west and Arizona to the east. The county contains many visual resources, such as desert areas, sand hills, mountains, and the Salton Sea. The desert areas include the Yuha Desert, the West Mesa, lower Borrego Valley, East Mesa, and Pilot Knob Mesa. The desert areas provide natural and barren landscape. Other scenic deserts include the West Mesa area, bordered to the east by Algodones Sand Dunes, the lower Borrego Valley, the East Mesa, and Pilot Knob Mesa. Mountain areas include the eastern foothills of the Peninsular Range on the west side of the county and the Chocolate Mountains located on the northeastern portion of the county and continuing northwest between Riverside County and the Colorado River. The rugged and

undeveloped mountains reach an elevation of 2,700 feet and are visible throughout the county (Imperial County 2016).

Three state routes (SR) are within Imperial County. SR 78 extends approximately 10 miles in the upper eastern portion of the county. SR 8 extends approximately 8 miles in the lower eastern side of the county. SR 111 extends approximately 8 miles along the Salton Sea on the northwest corner of the county (Caltrans 2021).

Future development and rehabilitation of housing in the county would be regulated by the policies of the County's General Plan, the County's Municipal Code, and other relevant County regulations.

## 2.1.2 Discussion

- a-d) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not involve the construction of any new housing units. The proposed project introduces policies and programs to address the County's housing needs. The proposed project encourages housing that is already anticipated by the General Plan to be designed for various income levels. Future development and rehabilitation of housing in the county would be regulated by the policies of the County's General Plan, the County's Land Use Ordinance, and other relevant County regulations. The Housing Element identifies locations where housing at various income levels can be developed, but does not involve the construction of any new housing units. Therefore, there would be no anticipated impacts to the county's scenic resources as a result of the project and there would be no impact.

## 2.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state’s inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. **Would the project:**

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104[g])? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## 2.2.1 Setting

Imperial County is mostly comprised of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide importance (DOC 2021). Approximately 20 percent of land is irrigated for agricultural purposes within the county limits. Imperial Valley contains 512,163 acres of agricultural land and other major agricultural irrigated areas include Bard Valley with approximately 14,737 acres in the southeast corner of the County and Palo Verde Valley with approximately 7,428 acres in the northeast corner (Imperial County 2015a). These agricultural lands include various types of vegetable crops including lettuce, carrots, onions, cauliflower, and broccoli; alfalfa, Sudan grass, and other animal feeds; sugar beets; wheat and other grains; melons; cotton; and various citrus, fruits, and nuts. Vegetable and melon crops have traditionally represented the highest gross value.

## 2.2.2 Discussion

a-e) **No Impact.** The implementation of the proposed project would not alter General Plan policies, or zoning regulations, pertaining to forestland, timber, or agricultural uses in the county. Further, the proposed project does not include any site-specific designs or proposals, nor does it grant any entitlements for development. No changes are proposed to land use designations or zoning districts that could result in new development or redevelopment that was not already considered for development in the General Plan. There is adequate vacant land to meet the County's RHNA and the proposed project does not include the physical development of housing units or recommend any land use designation or zone changes. Because the proposed project only identifies sites that are currently designated and zoned for residential use, it would not result in an impact related to loss of agricultural or forest land or conversion of land zoned for agriculture or forest. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact agricultural or forest resources. Therefore, the proposed project would not affect agricultural or forest resources and there would be no impact.



## 2.3 AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard)? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.3.1 Setting

The county is located within the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) and is included in the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD). The ICAPCD acts as the regulatory agency for air pollution control in the SSAB and is the local agency empowered to regulate air pollutant emissions for the plan area. The county is designated as a nonattainment area for ozone and PM<sub>2.5</sub> (EPA 2021). Additionally, the Specific Plans within the county provide development throughout the county to meet the County’s RHNA and have been assumed in attainment plans for the ICAPCD.

### 2.3.2 Discussion

a-d) **No Impact.** Because the proposed Housing Element does not change the land use designation or development assumptions of the General Plan, the proposed project remains consistent with growth projections used by ICAPCD for its air quality attainment plan. The proposed project includes policies and implementation actions that are designed to facilitate the development of housing to meet the County’s share of the regional housing need but does not involve construction of housing that could violate quality standards. Future development would be required to comply with local regulations such as the General Plan policies related to air quality and meet the thresholds of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and ICAPCD during construction and operation. While the CEQA process lists the Air District policies that apply to each

project, compliance with the policies is part of the construction rather than entitlement process. Measures such as dust control and equipment type are applied to grading or building permits. As such, these measures would continue to apply. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact air quality. Therefore, the Housing Element would have no potential to result in the emission of air pollutants or objectionable odors or otherwise affect air quality. There would be no impact.

## 2.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## 2.4.1 Setting

A number of sensitive vegetation communities, identified by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and others as rare and worthy of consideration in California, occur in Imperial County. Of the total 2,942,080 acres in the county, approximately 215,220 are sensitive habitats. Sensitive vegetation and habitats are a conservation priority for local, state, and federal regulatory agencies because they have limited distribution and support a variety of sensitive plants and wildlife (Imperial County 2016).

Several areas in Imperial County have been designated as environmentally sensitive areas by various public agencies or entities. These include US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)-designated critical habitat, USFWS National Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) lands, BLM Desert Wildlife Management Areas (DWMAs) and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), wilderness and wildlife areas, state parks, and other protective designations by federal and state agencies in the county. Many of these areas have development restrictions or prohibitions to facilitate conservation of biological resources or other sensitive resources (Imperial County 2016).

Critical habitat is a federal designation to provide essential habitat for listed species. While development is not precluded from designated critical habitat, these areas have been afforded legal protection which requires developers to consult with the USFWS if a project would affect critical habitat or any listed species. Critical habitat units support important habitat and often support more than one listed species. Critical habitat is designated in Imperial County for species including Desert pupfish, Razorback sucker, Desert tortoise, Peirson's milk-vetch, Peninsular bighorn sheep, and Yellow-billed cuckoo (Imperial County 2016).

## 2.4.2 Discussion

a-f) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update does not include specific development designs or proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The proposed Housing Element Update does not propose policies or programs that would conflict with the existing policies regarding the protection of biological resources in the General Plan. Future development as a result of the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would be required to analyze environmental impacts and comply with the environmental reporting requirements pursuant to CEQA, on a case-by-case basis.

Future development as a result of the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update could result in adverse impacts to sensitive natural communities such as riparian habitat and federally protected wetlands. However, as the proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document, no impacts would occur. The housing developed to accommodate the County's RHNA would be consistent with existing zoning and General

Plan designations so the Housing Element itself would not result in physical impacts beyond those disclosed in the General Plan EIR. Moreover, the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would not cause adverse impacts to special-status species. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, the proposed project would not adversely impact biological resources, special status habitat, wetlands, wildlife movement, local policies protecting biological resources, or conflict with an adopted habitat conservation plan or state habitat conservation plan. Thus, there would be no impacts to biological resources.

## 2.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?      | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?                           | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.5.1 Setting

Cultural resources include prehistoric resources, and historic resources. Prehistoric resources represent the remains of human occupation prior to European settlement. Historic resources represent remains after European settlement and may be part of a “built environment,” including human-made structures used for habitation, work, recreation, education, and religious worship, and may also be represented by houses, factories, office buildings, schools, churches, museums, hospitals, bridges, and other structural remains. Native American resources include ethnographic elements pertaining to Native American issues and values (further discussed in Section 2.18, *Tribal Cultural Resources*).

The Cahuilla, Tipai, and Quechan inhabited the Imperial County area since before Spanish contact. The Cahuilla people occupied a territory in south-central California, between the San Bernardino Mountains in the north to Borrego Springs and the Chocolate Mountains in the south, east to the Colorado Desert, and west into the San Jacinto Plain near Riverside and the Palomar Mountains. The Tipai, previously called Diegueño or Kamia, occupied an area that roughly extended from the Pacific Coast at San Diego eastward to the Sand Hills of Imperial County as well as south into modern-day Mexico. The Quechan, also known as the Yuma, continue to occupy their traditional territory at the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers at the edge of the California, Arizona, and Mexican borders. From here their territory stretched north along the Colorado River and to the east of the Gila River (Imperial County 2016).

Identified historic period-built environment and archaeological resources represent a range of activities including, but not limited to, mining, transportation, and ranching/homesteading and are represented throughout the county. The number of previously identified historic period resources is smaller than prehistoric resources, making determination of areas of known or established sensitivity difficult. It is possible, however, to make informed deductions about the

types of resources likely to be encountered based on the previously identified sites in combination with the documented history of the area (Imperial County 2016).

## 2.5.2 Discussion

- a-c) **No Impact.** Future development in the county will be reviewed to ensure that conflict with existing known cultural and historical resources are minimized. Additionally, construction activities of future development have the potential to uncover archeological resources, including human remains found outside of cemeteries. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact archaeological or historic resources. All future development within the county would be required to comply with local regulations, including General Plan Policies regarding cultural resources, as well as California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 which, if human remains are encountered during construction, requires halting site disturbance until a coroner has investigated. Goal 3 of the Imperial County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element provides objectives for preserving and protecting cultural resources (Imperial County 2016). The combination of the County's ordinance and policies that affect historic resources will ensure that implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact on cultural resources.

## 2.6 ENERGY

### Would the project:

|   | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.6.1 Discussion

- a-b) **No Impact.** Short-term construction and long-term operational activities resulting from future development would result in energy consumption. Construction activities would consume energy to power electricity-operated equipment; during transportation of construction equipment and vehicles, and construction employee passenger vehicles; and in the form of construction materials which would need to be manufactured. During operation activities, energy would be consumed for building operations (e.g., ventilation, heating/cooling, operation of electrical systems), and transportation of vehicles. However, the proposed project does not provide site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it change any land uses zoning. Future development would be required to comply with the current Building Energy Efficiency Standards. The County verifies compliance with the California Building Code (CBC) as part of the building permit issuance and construction inspection process. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact energy resources. Therefore, the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact on inefficient energy use or conflicting with renewable energy or energy efficiencies plans.



## 2.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:   |                                |  |                              |                                     |
| i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| iv) Landslides?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on-or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## 2.7.1 Setting

Imperial County is underlain by three natural geomorphic provinces: the Peninsular Ranges, the Colorado Desert, and the Mojave Desert. Each of these provinces is a naturally defined geologic region that displays a distinct landscape or landform with defining features based on geology, faults, topographic relief, and climate (Imperial County 2016).

Geologic conditions define the stability of the ground below a site and how the site will respond to the natural forces of earthquakes and weather. Geologic hazards that may occur in response to an earthquake include liquefaction, seismic settlement, landslide, tsunami, and seiche. Related hazards include slope failure, flooding from dam failure, and building structural failures. Imperial County contains several major active faults, including the Brawley Fault Zone, the Coyote Creek Fault and the Elmore Ranch Fault (in the San Jacinto Fault Zone), the Elsinore Fault, the Imperial Fault, the Laguna Salada Fault (in the Elsinore Fault Zone), the San Andreas Fault, the Superstition Hills Fault, and the Wienert Fault (in the San Jacinto Fault Zone). The Seismic and Public Safety of the County's General Plan has policies that address geologic and related hazards (Imperial County 1997).

## 2.7.2 Discussion

- a-f) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update provides policies and programs designed to facilitate the construction and conservation of housing that is already designated for development within the county. Construction of new housing could have the ability to increase exposure of people and structures to seismic hazards, including rupture of a fault, strong seismic shaking, and seismic-related ground failure. Similarly, future development could result in construction on expansive or erosive soils or be proposed in areas subject to landslide or collapse. The General Plan addresses geology and soils as part of the Seismic and Public Safety and the Conservation Open-Space Element, and the County has adopted the CBC that includes provisions for construction in seismically active areas, and on different soil types. The County ensures compliance with these requirements occurs at the time of building permit issuance and would apply to housing projects developed by-right. The proposed project does not change the requirement that all existing and future development in the County must comply with the General Plan policies, and the California Building Code. While compliance with these policies may alter design by requiring additional strengthening, over excavation of soil, or other project-specific design elements, the proposed project has no impact on these requirements.

## 2.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?      | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.8.1 Setting

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) generated by human activities can contribute to changes in the natural greenhouse effect, which could result in climate change. Greenhouse gases, which are transparent to solar radiation, are effective in absorbing infrared radiation. As a result, this radiation that otherwise would have escaped back into space is retained, resulting in a warming of the atmosphere. This phenomenon is known as the greenhouse effect. Among the prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. Motor vehicles make up the bulk of GHG emissions produced on an operational basis for most nonindustrial projects. The primary GHGs emitted by motor vehicles include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons. A number of regulations have been developed to reduce GHG. Energy conservation standards are contained in the 2019 CBC that became effective on January 1, 2020. The new code requires solar panels for some uses, and other energy saving devices.

### 2.8.2 Discussion

a-b) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not provide specific development designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. Future development of housing units could result in an increase in GHG emissions during both construction and operational activities; however, development must be consistent with the General Plan and with regional plans that are based on the land use pattern of the General Plan. As the proposed project does not change any land use designation, all of the local and regional plans associated with GHG remain unchanged. Furthermore, existing regulations that would apply to any future residential development, including the California Green Building Standards Code and California’s Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, would substantially reduce GHG emissions associated with future projects. Compliance with the CBC is part of the building permit process and does not require CEQA to apply. The County verifies compliance with the CBC as part of the building permit issuance and

construction inspection process. As a result, the proposed project would result in no impacts to greenhouse gases.

## 2.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?                                   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## 2.9.1 Setting

The Seismic and Public Safety Element of the Imperial County General Plan contains a set of goals and objectives for land use planning and safety, emergency preparedness, and the control of hazardous materials. Goal 3 of the Safety Element is to protect the public from exposure to hazardous materials and wastes. In addition, various objectives are included to support that goal (Imperial County 1997).

## 2.9.2 Discussion

- a-d) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels and does not include specific development proposals or development entitlements. However, future development of residential units constructed consistent with the General Plan could create a significant hazard to future residents through the exposure to the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials; through exposure to reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment; through the exposure of the handling or emission of hazardous materials; or by locating residential development on a site included on a list pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

All sites considered under the proposed project would be evaluated for environmental hazards, including aurally deposited lead, asbestos, and lead-based paints. Federal and state regulations govern the renovation and demolition of structures where materials containing lead and asbestos are present. These requirements include ICAPCD Rules and Regulations pertaining to asbestos abatement, Construction Safety Orders 1529 (pertaining to asbestos) and 1532.1 (pertaining to lead) from Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations, Part 61, Subpart M of the Code of Federal Regulations (pertaining to asbestos), and lead exposure guidelines provided by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Asbestos and lead abatement must be performed and monitored by contractors with appropriate certifications from the state Department of Health Services.

Future sites would be evaluated for the potential to release hazardous materials into the environment. All contaminated waste encountered would be required to be collected and disposed of at an appropriately licensed disposal or treatment facility. Furthermore, strict adherence to all emergency response plan requirements set forth by the County would be required through the duration of the construction phase. Any future development that occurs will be evaluated by County staff, and if residential development would potentially have adverse effects related to hazardous materials, the project would be subject to conformance with applicable regulations. All businesses in the county handling hazardous materials are subject to the hazardous materials and regulations of the Imperial County Public Health Department.

Imperial County and other state and local agencies, such as the Department of Toxic Substances Control, regulate hazardous materials in coordination with one another. The County enforces CCR Title 26 to reduce impacts associated with accidental release from the transportation of hazardous materials on roads in the county, and the potential for an increased demand for incident emergency response. Moreover, the Imperial County Public Health Department enforces workplace regulations that are applicable to businesses and public facilities addressing the use, storage, and disposal of flammable and hazardous materials, pursuant to Title 8, *California Occupational Safety and Health Regulations (Cal/OSHA)*, of the CCR. Additionally, the Environmental Health Department also enforces leak prevention measures for underground storage tanks.

Generally, residential developments do not include routine transportation, use, or disposal of hazardous materials that could create a significant hazard to the public. In addition, the proposed project does not contain policies that would conflict with the County's existing Land Use Element and Seismic and Public Safety Element, which address hazardous materials and hazards. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact hazardous materials. Therefore, there would be no impacts as a result of the implementation of the proposed project.

- e) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not provide site-specific design or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. All future housing development would be required to comply with land use regulations and safety standards surrounding airports in the county. The proposed Housing Element does not change the land use map and does not include any zoning changes. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed project would result in no impacts associated with airport-related hazards.
- f) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not identify specific development proposals. Future development within the County would be required to comply with local regulations, including the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Both natural and man-made hazards are addressed in the Imperial County General Plan. The Seismic and Public Safety Element contains a set of goals and objectives for land use planning and safety, emergency preparedness, and the control of hazardous materials. The goals and objectives, together with the implementation programs and policies provide direction for development. As identified in the Seismic and Public Safety Element of the County of Imperial General Plan (County of Imperial 1997), the Imperial County Emergency Plan addressed the County's planned response to extraordinary emergency situations associated with natural disasters, technological incidents, and nuclear defense operations. The proposed project does not provide site-specific design or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. All future housing development would be required to comply with circulation plans and would be required to provide emergency access points and safe vehicular travel. In addition, local building codes would be followed to minimize flood, seismic, and fire hazard. The County consults and advises

police, fire, and the 911 system of any road construction that may affect use of area roadways. Because all construction that would affect emergency use of the roadways will be reported to the appropriate agencies and would be temporary during the construction phase, and any specific access requirements made part of the encroachment permit and/or authorization to construct, and final construction would not impair use of the roadways, implementation of the proposed project would have no impact pertaining to conflicting with the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- g) **No Impact.** Imperial County is in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) with primarily Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones (Cal Fire 2007). The identified Vacant Sites are zoned LRA Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones or Unzoned (Cal Fire 2007). The County of Imperial Fire Prevention and Explosives Ordinance, sections 53101-53300, contains provisions for the purpose of prescribing regulations governing conditions hazardous to life and property from fire or explosion. Measures in this Ordinance include abatement of weeds and other vegetation. All new development would be required to comply with the latest California Building and Fire Codes, as well as be in accordance with local regulations. The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that does not provide site-specific design or development proposals. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed project would have no impact on exposing people or structures to wildland fires.



## 2.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?                                  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: |                                |  |                              |                                     |
| i) result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff;                                | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| iv) impede or redirect flood flows?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## **2.10.1 Setting**

Imperial County falls within the boundaries of the Regional Water Quality Control Board's Colorado River Basin Plan (SWRCB 2020). The Colorado River Basin Region covers approximately 13 million acres (20,000 square miles) in the southeastern portion of California. Geographically, the region represents only a small portion of the total Colorado River drainage area which includes portions of Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Mexico. A significant geographical feature of the region is the Salton Trough, a structural extension of the Gulf of California, which contains the Salton Sea and the Coachella and Imperial Valleys. The two valleys are separated by the Salton Sea, which covers the lowest area of the depression. In prehistoric times, it contained the ancient Lake Cahuilla (SWRCB 2020).

The intent of the Basin Plan is to provide definitive guidelines and give direction to the full scope of the Regional Board activities that serve to optimize the beneficial uses of the state waters within the Colorado River Basin Region of California by preserving and protecting the quality of these waters (SWRCB 2019). The Regional Board implements the Basin Plan by issuing and enforcing waste discharge requirements to persons, which can include individuals, communities, or businesses whose waste discharges may affect water quality. These requirements can be either state Water Discharge Requirements for discharges to land or federally delegated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits for discharges to surface water. Discharges are required to meet water quality objectives and thus protect beneficial uses (SWRCB 2019).

The New and Alamo Rivers convey agricultural irrigation drainage water from farmlands in the Imperial Valley, surface runoff, and lesser amounts of treated municipal and industrial waste waters from the Imperial Valley. The flow in the New River also contains agricultural drainage, treated and untreated sewage, and industrial waste discharges from Mexicali, Mexico. Colorado River water, imported via the All-American Canal, is the predominant water supply and is used for irrigation, industrial, and domestic purposes (SWRCB 2019).

## 2.10.2 Discussion

- a-e) **No Impact.** Future residential development within the county could result in construction and operational impacts to water quality and discharge standards. Potential impacts during construction include grading and vegetation removal which could expose soil to erosion during construction activities, and operational impacts may include the use of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides as well as motor vehicle operation and maintenance. As required by state law, all new residential development projects within the county would be subject to the County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit (No. CA-0047881) enforced by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit requires that the County impose water quality and watershed protection measures for all development projects and prohibits discharges from causing violations of applicable water quality or from resulting in conditions that create a nuisance or water quality impairments in receiving waters.

Compliance with the provisions of the NPDES and best management practices (BMPs) would reduce erosion and siltation impacts of future development. New development would be required to implement construction and post-construction BMPs in accordance with the County's Stormwater Management Plan. Compliance with the NPDES and the implementation of BMPs such as erosion, runoff, and sediment control would ensure that the proposed Housing Element Update would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.

The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels. The proposed Housing Element Update does not include site-specific design or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements. The proposed project does not change any land use zoning and any developments would be consistent with the General Plan EIR. All future development within the county would be required to comply with local regulations, including the General Plan and Land Use Code. Thus, the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact on hydrology and water quality.

## 2.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Physically divide an established community?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.11.1 Discussion

- a-b) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update is consistent with the land uses detailed in the County’s General Plan; the proposed Housing Element Update would not remove policies that protect environmental resources. The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of various housing types and affordability levels. The proposed Housing Element Update does not include any specific development proposals, nor does it permit any entitlements for development. The proposed Housing Element Update anticipates land uses that are consistent with the current land use designations of the General Plan Land Use Element and Land Use Map.

Future residential projects will be required to comply with the policies in the General Plan regarding land use and Land Use Code requirements associated with zoning districts, allowable uses, and development standards. All future residential development occurring within the county would be required to be evaluated in accordance with local regulations, including the General Plan and Land Use Code. Thus, the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact to physically dividing a community or conflicting with a land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted to avoid an environmental effect.

## 2.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

|   | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?                                | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.12.1 Discussion

- a-b) **No Impact.** The proposed project is policy-level action that identifies sites in the county that could accommodate the County's RHNA. It does not include any site-specific designs or proposal or grant any entitlements for development. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on mineral resources and mineral resource recovery sites.

## 2.13 NOISE

Would the project result in:

|   | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.13.1 Setting

Noise policies for the County are established by the Noise Element of the County General Plan. The Noise Element contains goals, policies, and implementation measures for the compatibility of sensitive land uses with noise. The purpose of these goals, policies, and implementation measures is to reduce the various potential effects of noise on people. The Noise Element sets maximum allowable noise exposure from both transportation and stationary sources. Additionally, the Land Use Code has specific standards for development near noise sensitive uses, which include housing developments (Imperial County 2015b).

### 2.13.2 Discussion

a-b) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update encourages the provision of housing types and affordability levels. Housing is not considered a major source of noise in the county, though placing housing adjacent to major sources of noise could expose people to temporary or permanent noise levels in excess of acceptable standards. However, the Housing Element is a policy-level document that does not include any specific development proposals, nor does it grant any entitlements for development. While the proposed Housing Element does not involve the construction or expansion of residential land uses, all future development in the county would be required to adhere to General Plan policies and Land Use Ordinance requirements pertaining to noise. All future development would be subject to the noise standards contained in the Imperial County

Code of Ordinances Title 9, Division 7: Noise Abatement and Control, which specifies noise level limits, establishes standards for acceptable exterior and interior noise levels, and describes how noise shall be measured. In addition, Section 90702.00(A) of Division 7 requires noise levels to be measured at the property line. Compliance with applicable codes is required, and verification is part of the building permit and inspection process. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact noise. Additionally, the proposed project does not change any land use designations and would be consistent with the General Plan EIR. Therefore, implementation of the Housing Element would have no impact related to a temporary or permanent increase in noise levels, or excessive noise levels.

- c) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that does not provide site-specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would expose people to excessive noise levels. As the proposed Housing Element Update would be consistent with the existing land use designations of the General Plan, the proposed project would not expose people to excessive noise levels from airports or airstrips. Therefore, no impact related to airport noise would occur.

## 2.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

|   | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.14.1 Setting

Imperial County’s share of the 2021–2029 RHNA planning period is 4,301 units for the unincorporated areas for all income levels. The Housing Element Update identifies the potential for development of up to 17,472 new housing units at full buildout of the county’s existing vacant lot inventory.

### 2.14.2 Discussion

- a) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update contains housing goals intended to encourage housing to meet the County’s housing needs. The expectation is that as growth occurs consistent with the existing General Plan, housing would be provided that serves all income levels of the county. The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that encourages, but does not require, the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels. The proposed Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it allow for entitlements for development that would induce population growth. As the proposed project does not increase the amount of land available for housing, and all development must be consistent with the existing General Plan, subsequent development is considered consistent with the projected growth in the County’s General Plan. Implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would not induce substantial unplanned population growth within the county; therefore, no impact would occur.
- b) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision and preservation of various housing types and affordability levels to meet Imperial County’s housing needs. Implementation of the proposed Housing



Element Update would not displace existing people or housing within the county; therefore, no impact would occur.

## 2.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

|   | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services: |                                |  |                              |                                     |
| i) Fire protection?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) Police protection?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| iii) Schools?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| iv) Parks?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| v) Other public facilities?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.15.1 Setting

#### Fire Protection

Imperial County encompasses approximately 4,597 square miles. The Imperial County Fire Department (ICFD) serves a large rural area including all unincorporated areas of Imperial County, Seeley, Heber, Palo Verde, Ocotillo, Niland, and the City of Imperial. ICFD serves these areas with stations staffed with County personnel or contract staff. In addition, the ICFD also provides emergency services such as Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) (ICFD 2021).

ICFD provides a wide array of fire prevention services focused on improving and maintaining fire and life safety within the community. Fire prevention activities ensure businesses, structures, open spaces, and construction projects are in compliance with adopted fire codes, standards, and ordinances. ICFD currently enforces the 2010 California Fire, Building, Electrical, County Ordinances, as amended by the County of Imperial Land Use Ordinance, in addition to National Fire Protection Association standards; Title 19, of the California Public Safety Code; and, the California Health and Safety Code (ICFD 2021).

## **Police Department**

The Imperial County Sheriff's Office (ICSO) provides general law enforcement, detention, and court services for the residents, business owners, and visitors of Imperial County. Sheriff substations are located in the communities of Brawley, Palo Verde, Niland, Salton City, and Winterhaven (ICSO 2021).

## **Schools**

Imperial County contains 14 school districts serving K-12, a community college, and various other public and charter colleges. The schools within Imperial County are located in the communities of Brawley, El Centro, Calexico, Calipatria, Heber, Holtville, Imperial, Seeley, Westmorland, and Winterhaven (ICOE 2021).

## **Parks and Recreational Facilities**

Imperial County offers seven county parks, a county community center, and a museum. The various cities throughout the county provide parks, community centers, and recreational facilities within each city.

### **2.15.2 Discussion**

- a) i-v) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. Future development as a result of the implementation of the General Plan could result in an increase in demand for public services. The proposed project does not involve the construction or expansion of any residential land uses and would not result in the need for expanded public services beyond what was considered in the General Plan. Additionally, prior to issuance of any building permit, a project applicant is required to pay development impact fees which would address potential impacts to public services. Thus, implementation of the proposed project would have no impact regarding public services.

## 2.16 RECREATION

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?                       | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.16.1 Setting

Imperial County offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities such as hiking, nature walks, and sightseeing. Parks and recreation in Imperial County are enhanced by the natural resources of the Sonoran Desert, including the mountains, sandy hills, Colorado River, and Salton Sea. Because of the varied terrain throughout the county, abundant opportunities for recreation exist, such as hiking, boating, fishing, hunting, and off-highway activities. Many of these opportunities are located on land under federal or state jurisdiction, but multiple smaller parks are located in the urban areas of the county. The county also has outdoor recreation facilities including sports fields, a skate park, and basketball courts. State parks such as Herber Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area and Picacho State Recreation Area offer camping facilities, passive recreational opportunities, and active recreational facilities. In addition, the Imperial County Public Works Department operates five parks: Sunbeam Lake Park, Wiest Lake Park, Red Hill Marina Park, Ocotillo Community Park, and Palo Verde Park. These County parks offer a variety of passive and active recreation opportunities, including playground equipment, basketball courts, picnic tables, barbecue grills, campsites, walking trails, boating and fishing opportunities, and open space for passive recreation. The cities within Imperial County each manage various local parks and community centers. The state and federal governments manage large areas of open space, state and federal protected areas, and a number of wilderness areas in Imperial County, the largest being the California Desert Conservation Area under BLM jurisdiction. (Imperial County 2016).

### 2.16.2 Discussion

- a-b) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not change General Plan land use designations or zoning districts in the county. None of the General Plan policies that affect recreation would be affected by the proposed project. Thus, implementation of the proposed project would have no impact regarding recreation.

## 2.17 TRANSPORTATION

### Would the project:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, or roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?      | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Result in inadequate emergency access?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Adversely affect rail, waterborne or air traffic?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.17.1 Setting

#### Roadways

Imperial County transportation network is dependent upon Interstate (I) 8 for west and east traffic connections to San Diego and Arizona, respectively. Northern connectivity to Riverside County is provided by SR 86 and I 111. Existing regional access to the County of Imperial is provided via I 8, SR 111, SR 78, SR 86, SR 98, SR 115, SR 7, and SR 186. Within the county, the road network has a unique function, providing for a range of traffic movements, the most significant of which are the regional and international freight traffic (a major portion of which is agricultural) and the cross-border tourism activity (Imperial County 2008).

#### Airports

The primary public use airports in Imperial County are: Imperial County Airport located in the City of Imperial on SR 86; Calexico International Airport located west of Calexico on Anza Road; Brawley Municipal Airport located at the intersection of Ken Bemis Drive and Jones Street in northeast Brawley; Cliff Hatfield Memorial Airport located on West Main Street in Calipatria; Holtville Airport located seven miles northeast of Holtville on Norrish Road; and the U.S. Naval Air Facility located six miles west of El Centro on Bennett Road. There are several other private airstrips located throughout Imperial County serving principally crop-dusting operations (Imperial County 2008).

## Railroads

The Union Pacific Railroad, formerly called the Southern Pacific Railroad, main line enters the eastern border near Winterhaven and then bears northwest and leaves the county just east of the Salton Sea. This line serves the Los Angeles area and northward in California and the balance of the United States eastward. There is a branch line from this main line at Niland that provides rail service to Calipatria, Brawley, Imperial, El Centro, Calexico, and Mexico. Another branch line of the Union Pacific, the Holton Interurban Railroad, provides service to east El Centro. The San Diego and Arizona Eastern Railroad, also a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad, runs between El Centro and San Diego. It presently provides rail service only between El Centro and the U.S. Gypsum plant in Plaster City (Imperial County 2008).

### 2.17.2 Discussion

- a) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels, but does not provide specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements that would adversely impact programs, plans, policies, or ordinances. The proposed project does not change any land use designations and new development in the county would be consistent with the General Plan which could result in increased vehicle traffic on public roadways. The proposed project does not include any site-specific designs or proposals or grant any entitlements for development. Therefore, the proposed Housing Element Update would not conflict with any program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system; no impact would occur.
- b) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update does not provide for specific development or design proposals, nor does the proposed project result in the change of location or density of housing allowed by the existing General Plan. Thus, the project does not result in changes to vehicle miles traveled. Therefore, as the proposed Housing Element Update does not result in changes to existing conditions, no impact would occur.
- c-d) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that does not grant development entitlements, nor does it provide for specific development or design proposals such as emergency access, site design, or parking. Future development would be required to comply with General Plan policies related to traffic and circulation, as well as County development standards for roadway improvements and driveway design. Compliance with these requirements is verified at the time of development permit approval (i.e., grading, building) and would therefore remain unaffected by the proposed project. As a result, the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact to increasing hazards due to design features and incompatible uses or resulting in inadequate emergency access.
- e) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document, and does not include specific development or design proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements. The proposed project does not change any zoning designations and would

not affect existing railway or air traffic. Future development as a result of the proposed project would not impact rail, waterborne, or air traffic in the county as all development must be within private property.

## 2.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resources, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape, that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.18.1 Discussion

- a-b) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels. The proposed Housing Element Update does not include site-specific project designs or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements.

In accordance with SB 18, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was contacted to obtain a list of tribes that may have cultural association with the project area. The NAHC provided a list of 32 tribes. Pursuant to the requirements of AB 52, on March 26, 2021, the County notified all 32 tribes that requested to be alerted of new projects. The County did not receive any responses during the consultation period.



## 2.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

### Would the project:

|   | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|---|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.19.1 Setting

#### Water

The Imperial Valley depends on the Colorado River for its water, which Imperial Irrigation District (IID) transports, untreated, to delivery gates for agricultural, municipal, industrial (including geothermal and solar energy), environmental (managed marsh), recreational (lakes), and other non-agricultural uses. IID supplies cities, communities, institutions, and Southern California Water Company with untreated water that they treat to meet state and federal drinking water guidelines before distribution to their customers. Industries outside the municipal areas treat the water to required standards of their industry. The IID Water Department tracks nearly

4,000 raw water service accounts required by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to have alternate drinking water service. The District maintains a small-acreage pipeline and drinking water database and provides an annual compliance update to CDPH (EGI 2019).

## **Drainage**

Imperial County is subject to regulation by the California State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) under NPDES general permit and waste discharge requirements for storm water discharges from small municipal separate storm sewer systems Order No. 2013-0001-dwq. The Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit that became effective in July 2013 replaced the previous order in effect since April 2003. The Phase II MS4 Permit is a General Permit issued by the Water Board pursuant to section 402 of the federal Clean Water Act and implementing regulations (Code of Federal Regulations Title 40, Part 122) adopted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and Chapter 5.5, Division 7 of the California Water Code. These regulations apply to point discharges from MS4 to waters of the state for which the County owns and operates (Imperial County 2021).

## **Solid Waste**

Imperial County Public Works Solid Waste and Recycling Division administers and operates nine landfills. Each landfill requires a separate permit which is subject to review every five years (Imperial County 2021).

### **2.19.2 Discussion**

- a-c) **No Impact.** Future development within the county would require adequate increased domestic water service, including water supplies, stormwater system, and wastewater treatment capacity, or individual wells and septic systems. The residential sites identified in the proposed Housing Element Update within the county, where stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, and telecommunications facilities already exist, would be required to comply with the County standards for development and connection.

Development Impact Fees adopted by the County to offset the cost of infrastructure are based on the development potential of the General Plan and are collected at the time of building permit issuance. The proposed project does not change any of the existing land use designations in the Land Use Element of the General Plan that were used to calculate development impact fees. The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages development consistent with the General Plan to provide a variety of housing types and affordability levels, and does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant entitlements for development. However, future development, could increase demand for water and wastewater service which could result in the exceedance of wastewater treatment requirements, and the need for new wastewater and water facilities, or the expansion of existing facilities. However, since the land use designation is not changed, the impact would be consistent with the General

Plan EIR. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed project would have no impact to the relocation, construction, or expansion of utilities facilities.

- d-e) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a variety of housing types and affordability levels, and does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant entitlements for development. Future development of residential units constructed consistent with the General Plan within the county would increase the demand for solid waste services and would increase the amount of solid waste generated and sent to landfills. AB 939, which require recycling programs that result in a 50-percent diversion away from landfills, would apply to new development. Since the land use designation is not changed, the impact would be consistent with the General Plan EIR. Thus, the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact regarding solid waste.

## 2.20 WILDFIRE

**If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:**

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact                           |
|--|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.20.1 Discussion

- a) **No Impact.** Imperial County is located in an LRA with primarily Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones (Cal Fire 2007). The identified Vacant Sites are zoned LRA Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones or Unzoned (Cal Fire 2007). The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that does not identify specific development proposals. Future development within the county would be required to comply with local regulations, including the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Since the proposed project does not change the land use designation, the impacts would be consistent with the General Plan EIR. Thus, the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update would have no impact to impairing an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan.
- b) **No Impact.** There are three primary factors that are used in assessing wildfire hazards: topography, weather, and fuel. Future residential development would not impact weather conditions. The proposed project does not propose changes to land use designations or land use patterns, and therefore, subsequent housing developments would not be proposed within areas identified as wildfire hazards. Therefore, the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update project would have no impact on exacerbating wildfire risks.

- c) **No Impact.** Future development may require new infrastructure and utilities, which would be installed to meet service requirements. However, the proposed project is a policy-level document that does not provide site-specific development or design proposals, nor does it grant entitlements for development. All improvements will be subject to County development standards and would be verified as part of either a building permit or construction approval. The proposed Housing Element Update does not change land use zone designation and only identifies sites for housing, therefore all infrastructures will be built according to the General Plan. The implementation of the proposed project would have no impacts on exacerbating fire risk due to the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure.
- d) **No Impact.** The proposed Housing Element is a policy-level document that does not provide site-specific design or development proposals. The proposed project does not change any land use designation and the impacts would be consistent with the General Plan EIR. Therefore, there would be no impacts to exposing people or structures to significant risk from downslope or downstream flooding or landslides as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage change as a result of the implementation of the proposed Housing Element Update.

## 2.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

|  | Potentially Significant Impact | Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact        | No Impact                |
|--|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)   | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?  | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 2.21.1 Discussion

- a-c) **Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a variety of housing types and affordability levels. The proposed project does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. All future residential development within the county would be required to be in accordance with local regulations, including the General Plan and Land Use Ordinance. Further, the proposed project does not change the land use designation and therefore would be consistent with the impacts in the General Plan related to biologically sensitive areas. Thus, the proposed project would result in less than significant impacts to the environment, wildlife, or human beings as a result of environmental degradation.

### 3. References

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## 4. Findings

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**This is to advise that the County of Imperial, acting as the lead agency, has conducted an Initial Study to determine if the project may have a significant effect on the environment and is proposing this Negative Declaration based upon the following findings:**

- The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- The Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects but:
- (1) Proposals made or agreed to by the applicant before this proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration was released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur.
  - (2) There is no substantial evidence before the agency that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.
  - (3) Mitigation measures are required to ensure all potentially significant impacts are reduced to levels of insignificance.

A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

**If adopted, the Negative Declaration means that an Environmental Impact Report will not be required. Reasons to support this finding are included in the attached Initial Study. The project file and all related documents are available for review at the County of Imperial, Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 (442) 265-1736.**

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### NOTICE

**The public is invited to comment on the proposed Negative Declaration during the review period.**

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Date of Determination    Jim Minnick, Director of Planning & Development Services

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*The Applicant hereby acknowledges and accepts the results of the Environmental Evaluation Committee (EEC) and hereby agrees to implement all Mitigation Measures, if applicable, as outlined in the MMRP.*

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Applicant Signature

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Date