

**Planning Commission
STAFF REPORT
Public Hearing: October 20, 2009**

Application:

Public Hearing to consider recommending certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and approval of the Proposed City of Ridgecrest General Plan Update. The General Plan Update sets forth a 20-year development plan for the City of Ridgecrest.

General Plan Preparation and Review Process:

Ridgecrest General Plan Update and EIR Project Preparation & Review																																
1.	Horizon Year	2030																														
2.	Applicant	City of Ridgecrest, 100 W. California Avenue, Ridgecrest, CA																														
3.	General Plan Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Community Workshops, Spring, 2007 • 1st GPAC Meeting, March 27, 2007 • 19th GPAC Meeting, September 29, 2009 • Planning Commission Public Hearing, October 20, 2009 • City Council Public Hearing, December 2, 2009 																														
3.	General Plan Elements	Land Use, Circulation, Open space & Conservation, Health & Safety, Noise, Military Sustainability, Community Design																														
4.	Consultants	Matrix Design Group, Inc and ESA Associates																														
5.	General Plan Formulation Participants	City Council, Planning Commission, General Plan Advisory Committee, Ridgecrest Area Residents and City Staff																														
6.	Agencies Notified	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>IWV Water District.</td> <td>R. Public Works</td> <td>State Clearinghouse</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kern Co. Fire Dept.</td> <td>R. Police</td> <td>Air Quality Board</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kern Co. Planning</td> <td>Sierra Sand Sch. Dst</td> <td>CalTrans div. 6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mediacom</td> <td>So. Calif Edison</td> <td>Cal Fish & Game</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Naval Weapons Ctr</td> <td>Verizon.</td> <td>US Fish & Wildlife</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PG & E</td> <td>Lahotan Rg. WQCB</td> <td>CalTrans Hdqtrs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Air Resources Board</td> <td>Cal Highway Patrol</td> <td>Caltrans Aeronautics</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cal Conservation Dept</td> <td>Cal Health Services</td> <td>Integrated WMB</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Native Am HeritageCom</td> <td>State Lands Div</td> <td>Cal SWRCB</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cal Toxic Sub Dept</td> <td>Cal Water Resources Dpt.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	IWV Water District.	R. Public Works	State Clearinghouse	Kern Co. Fire Dept.	R. Police	Air Quality Board	Kern Co. Planning	Sierra Sand Sch. Dst	CalTrans div. 6	Mediacom	So. Calif Edison	Cal Fish & Game	Naval Weapons Ctr	Verizon.	US Fish & Wildlife	PG & E	Lahotan Rg. WQCB	CalTrans Hdqtrs	Air Resources Board	Cal Highway Patrol	Caltrans Aeronautics	Cal Conservation Dept	Cal Health Services	Integrated WMB	Native Am HeritageCom	State Lands Div	Cal SWRCB	Cal Toxic Sub Dept	Cal Water Resources Dpt.	
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Recommended Planning Commission Actions:

1. Approve RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL CERTIFIES THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT as complete and meeting CEQA Guidelines, and,
2. Approve RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVE A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

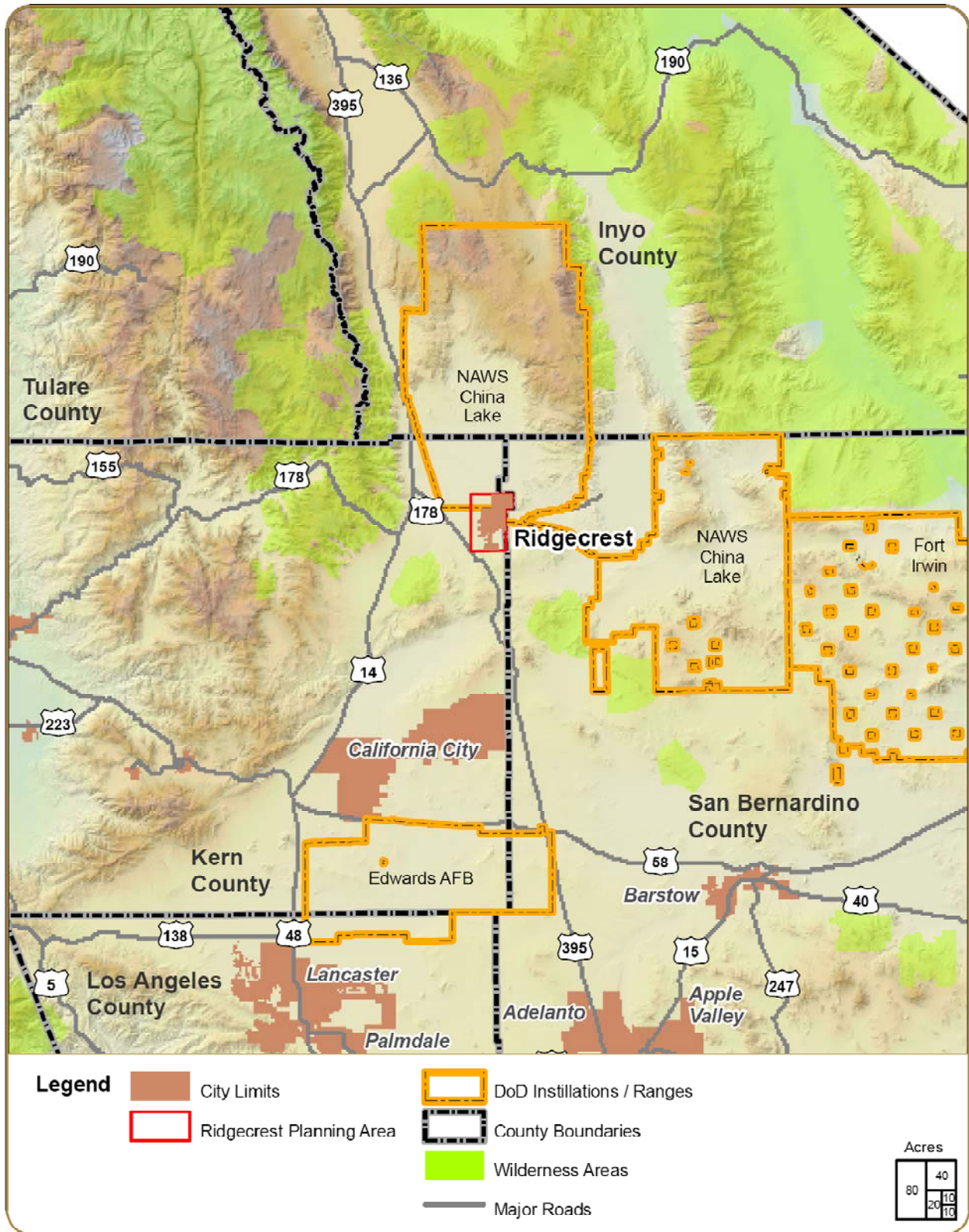
General Plan Update and EIR Documents :

Ridgecrest General Plan Update and EIR Project Documents	
DOCUMENT	AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AT:
<p>1. Background Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP Map Atlas • Policy Directions Report • GP Newsletters / Facts • GPAC • Community Workshops 	<p>Westplanning website: http://www.westplanning.com/ridgecrest/index.htm</p> <p>Ridgecrest City Hall, Planning Division</p>
<p>2. General Plan Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Draft General Plan Text, (10/08) • Public Draft General Plan Text Addendum, (9/09) 	<p>City of Ridgecrest website: http://ci.ridgecrest.ca.us/commdev.aspx?id=544</p> <p>Ridgecrest City Hall, Planning Division Ridgecrest Library</p>
<p>3. General Plan Maps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All maps contained in GP text • Revised Land Use Diagram, (10/10) • Revised Parks & Recreation Plan Figure 7-1 (Revised 10/10) 	<p>City of Ridgecrest website: http://ci.ridgecrest.ca.us/commdev.aspx?id=544</p> <p>Ridgecrest City Hall, Planning Division</p> <p>Revised Land Use Diagram and Parks & Recreation Plan are included within this staff report</p>
<p>4. General Plan EIR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP Update, Draft EIR • GP Update, Final EIR • GP Update, Findings of Fact & Statement of Overriding Considerations 	<p>City of Ridgecrest website: http://ci.ridgecrest.ca.us/commdev.aspx?id=544</p> <p>Ridgecrest City Hall, Planning Division</p> <p>Findings & SOC are included within this staff report</p>

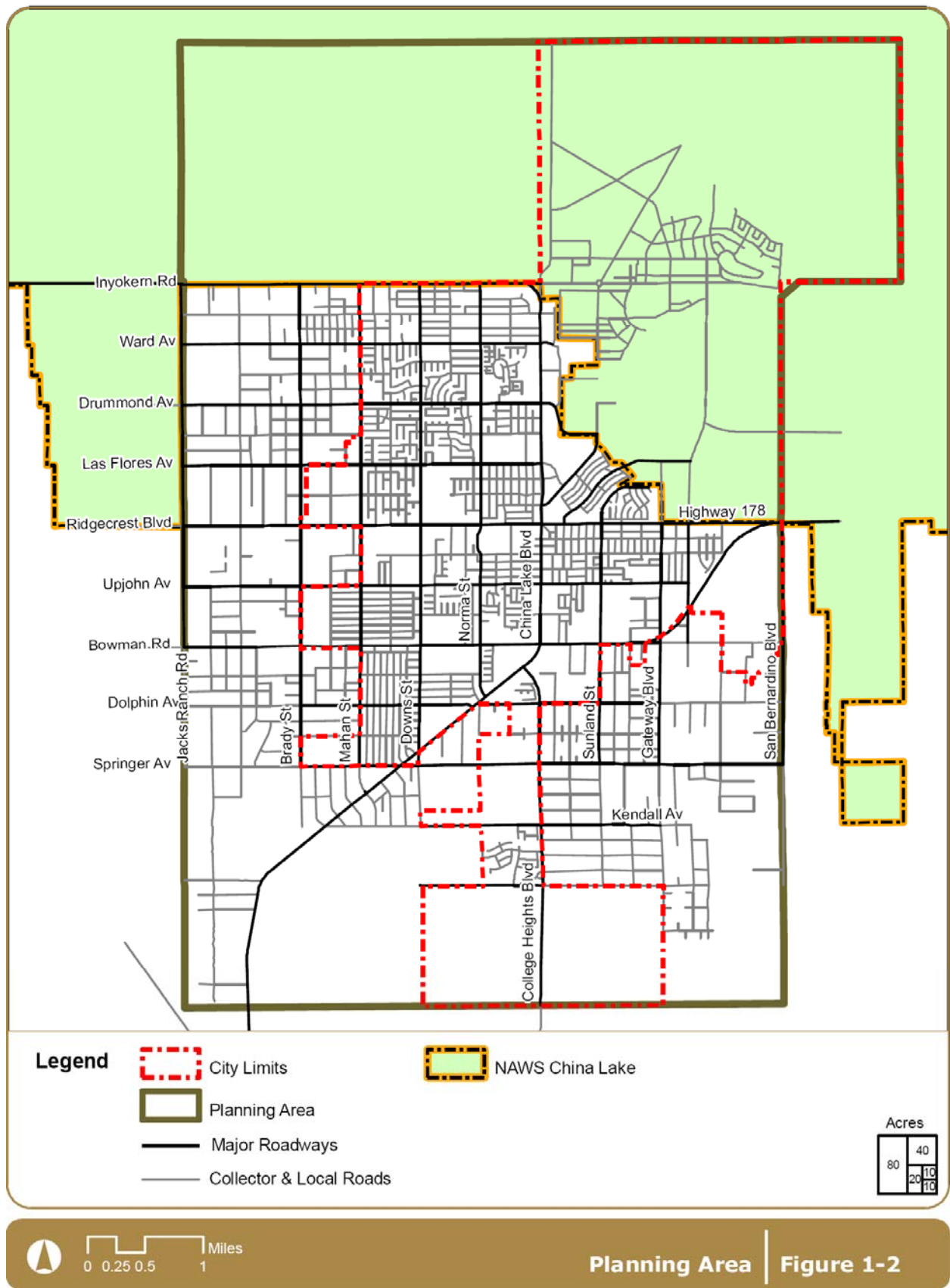
City of Ridgecrest

Located at the northeast corner of Kern County, Ridgecrest sits at the edge of the Mojave Desert in the Indian Wells Valley, and is surrounded by four mountain ranges. Ridgecrest is the county's third largest incorporated city and second largest urban area (see Figure 1-1).

The City of Ridgecrest has direct land use jurisdiction over the incorporated city limits, which encompass about 21.4 square miles. Approximately nine square miles of the city limits lie within the boundary of the Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake. Although in the city limits, the area on NAWS China Lake is managed by the Navy, and the City does not exercise land use authority over this area. Development and planning within this area is managed by NAWS China Lake and the U.S. Navy. The Planning Area for the General Plan (see Section 1.2 for details), include the city limits and unincorporated areas that bear relation to the planning of the community.



Regional Location | Figure 1-1



Because of the City's convenient accessibility by two major highways, it is a central location for shopping and business for the eastern region of Kern County. The City's accessibility also renders it an ideal area for industry. Ridgecrest serves the Northeastern Kern and Eastern Sierra Region with commercial services, entertainment, recreation, filming, and tourism.

Planning Area

As stated in the General Plan Guidelines, a general plan must "cover the territory within the boundaries of the adopting city or county as well as 'any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning' (§65300)." For purposes of developing this General Plan, the City established a Planning Area early in the update process as part of the public involvement process.

The Planning Area established for the Ridgecrest General Plan is shown on Figure 1-1. A unique aspect of the Planning Area is that it incorporates lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and lands held by the Department of Defense as part of China Lake. The Planning Area covers a land area of approximately 40 square miles.

General Plans in California

Every city and county in California is required by State law to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan (Government Code Section 65300). A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for future decisions concerning land use, infrastructure, public services, and resource conservation. All specific plans, subdivisions, public works projects, and zoning decisions made by the City must be consistent with the general plan.

A general plan must address the seven topics (referred to as "elements") of land use, circulation, housing, open-space, conservation, safety, and noise as identified in state law (Government Code Section 65302), to the extent that the topics are locally relevant. It may also include other topics of local interest, as chosen by the City (Government Code Section 65303).

- The **land use element** designates the general distribution and intensity of land uses within the planning area.
- The **circulation element** identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed transportation facilities and utilities.
- The housing element is a comprehensive assessment of current and future housing needs for all segments of the City population, as well as a program for meeting those needs. The housing element is subject to state statutory requirements for periodic updates. To meet mandated state timelines, the housing element will be prepared on a separate schedule.
- The **open-space element** describes measures for the preservation of open space for the protection of natural resources, the managed production of resources, and for public health and safety.
- The **conservation element** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources.

- The **safety element** establishes policies to protect the community from risks associated with natural and man-made hazards such as seismic, geologic, flooding, wildfire hazards, and air quality.
- The **noise element** identifies major noise sources and contains policies intended to protect the community from exposure to excessive noise levels.

The City may adopt a general plan in the format that best fits its unique circumstances (Government Code Section 65300.5). In doing so, the City must ensure that the general plan and its component parts comprise an integrated, internally consistent, and compatible statement of development policies. The City of Ridgecrest has chosen to adopt a General Plan that consolidates some of the mandatory elements. The conservation and open space elements are combined into a single element and the noise and safety elements are consolidated into a Public Health and Safety element. The City has also included two optional elements to reflect the specific needs of the community (Military Sustainability and Community Design).

The elements included in the Ridgecrest General Plan are described in further detail in the following section.

In addition to the mandatory and optional elements, the Ridgecrest General Plan has the following three defining features:

- **General.** As the name implies, the general plan provides general guidance that will be used to direct future land use and resource decisions.
- **Comprehensive.** The general plan covers a wide range of social, economic, infrastructure, and natural resource factors. These include topics such as land use, housing, circulation, utilities, public services, recreation, agriculture, biological resources, and many other topics.
- **Long-range.** General plans provide guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 or more years in the future (this General Plan update will look out over 20 years to the year 2030). To reach this envisioned future, the General Plan will include policies and actions that address both immediate and long-term needs.

Ridgecrest General Plan

The Ridgecrest General Plan update program was founded on the following guiding principles:

- Provide the public opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning and decision-making process;
- Provide a description of current conditions and trends shaping the City of Ridgecrest;
- Identify planning issues, opportunities, and challenges that should be addressed in the General Plan;
- Explore land use and policy alternatives;
- Ensure the General Plan is current, internally consistent, and easy to use;
- Provide guidance in the planning and evaluation of future land and resource decisions; and
- Provide a vision and framework for the future growth of the City.

The Ridgecrest General Plan update includes the preparation of a number of major documents. These documents can be divided into two sets: General Plan documents (adopted), and General Plan supporting documents used to assist in the decision making process, but are not part of the adopted General Plan.

General Plan Supporting Documents

- **Goals and Policies Report.** This report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future development within the City and its Planning Area (see Section 1.2). It also identifies a full set of implementation measures that will ensure the policies of the General Plan are carried out.

The Goals and Policies Report also contains a number of diagrams that show the distribution of land use designations, circulation features, and other planned facilities in the Planning Area.

- **Map Atlas.** To provide the community with a good foundation for planning the future, a “Map Atlas” was prepared. This document replaces a lengthy text write up with a graphic format that makes use of maps, charts, and illustrations to convey a picture of the City of Ridgecrest at the start of this General Plan update in 2007. This Map Atlas is an illustrated summary of the key findings from the background research conducted.
- **Policy Directions and Choices Report.** Based on input from workshops held with the community and the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), and direction from the Planning Commission and City Council, this document provided a summary of the critical policy and program issues to be addressed in the General Plan and provided a look at the direction to be pursued by the community in planning for the future.
- **Environmental Impact Report (EIR).** An EIR will be prepared to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A public draft EIR is expected to be circulated for public comments in late 2008 / early 2009. The Planning Commission and City Council will rely on the information contained in the EIR to understand the potential impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan and will use the EIR to support the decision making process.

Community Workshops

- Three community workshops were held to gain input on issues and opportunities, alternative futures, and the General Plan documents:
- March 28, 2007 Issues and Opportunities
On March 28, 2007, over 50 people met at the City Hall and participated in the first of two community workshops designed to give the community opportunities to be involved in shaping the City of Ridgecrest General Plan. The purpose of the first workshop was to provide participants with an overview of the General Plan update process and give everyone an opportunity to offer their thoughts on the future of Ridgecrest.

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

- To provide guidance in the General Plan update, the City created an advisory committee – the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The GPAC is made up of 14 individuals selected from the community and is designed to provide additional community input to the Planning Commission and City Council. The GPAC was also a vital resource to City staff and the General Plan consulting team as the General Plan was developed.

- During preparation of the General Plan, 19 meetings were held with the GPAC. GPAC meetings were typically held on a monthly basis, with all meetings being open to the public.

Recommendation

The staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve the two attached resolutions:

- 1) Recommendation that the City Council certify the General Plan Update EIR, and
- 2) Recommendation that the City Council approve the General Plan 2030 update.

P.C. RESOLUTION 09-_____
A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF
RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA, FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY
COUNCIL TO APPROVE CERTIFICATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
REPORT FOR THE RIDGECREST GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF RIDGECREST RESOLVES as follows:
SECTION 1. FINDINGS

- (a) On October 20, 2009 the Planning Commission held a public hearing and duly and considered the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Ridgecrest General Plan Update at a special Planning Commission meeting.
- (b) The Commission considered the recommendations of staff and consultants and pursuant to Section 15090 (a) (2) a final impact report has been prepared for the proposed project and is recommended for certification by City Council, including mitigation of impacts as identified in the Environmental Impact Report.
- (c) The Commission has considered the Facts, Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations Regarding the Environmental Effects from the Environmental Impact Report.

SECTION 2. DESCRIPTION

The Facts, Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations Regarding the Environmental Effects from the Environmental Impact Report. is hereby attached as Exhibit A.

SECTION 3. APPROVAL

The Planning Commission hereby recommends that it is the best interest of the public for the City Council to take the following actions and make the following approvals:

1. The City Council has certified the Final EIR,
2. The City Council hereby adopts as conditions of approval all mitigation measures (policies and implementation measures of the proposed project) within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the City as set forth in Section 1.2 (Part I) of the findings, (attachment A)
3. The City Council hereby adopts the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the proposed project as discussed in Section 1.3, (attachment A)

4. The City Council hereby adopts the findings and statements of overriding considerations set forth above in their entirety as its findings for these actions and approvals, (attachment A)

5. Having certified the Final EIR, independently reviewed and analyzed the Final EIR, incorporated policies and implementation measures into the proposed project, and adopted findings and a statement of overriding considerations, the City Council hereby separately approves the City of Ridgecrest 2030 General Plan Update.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of October, 2009, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Nellavan Jeglum, Chairman

ATTEST:

Jim McRea, Secretary

Exhibit A

Planning Commission Resolution Recommendation Certification of the EIR

Findings of Fact and

Statement of Overriding Considerations

City of Ridgecrest General Plan Update

Findings of Fact and

Statement of Overriding Considerations

City of Ridgecrest General Plan Update

1.1 Introduction and Certification of the Final EIR

The City of Ridgecrest (City), as lead agency, has completed the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for its City of Ridgecrest 2030 General Plan Update Project (proposed

project). The Final EIR comprises a program-level analysis of the proposed project and has State Clearinghouse No 2008111097.

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) was released on May 19, 2009, for review by public agencies, organizations, and members of the public. The Draft EIR assess the potentially significant environmental effects resulting from implementation of the proposed project, identifies potentially feasible means to mitigate those potentially significant adverse impacts, and evaluates a reasonable range of alternatives to the project. The Final EIR is comprised of the Draft EIR, written responses to the significant environmental issues raised in those comments, revisions to the text of the Draft EIR reflecting changes made in response to comments and other information, along with other minor changes to the text of the Draft EIR. The Final EIR is hereby incorporated by reference.

Through the adoption of this section (1.1) of these findings, the City of Ridgecrest City Council (City Council or Council) hereby satisfies its obligation under section 15090 of Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 of the California Code of Regulations (“CEQA Guidelines”) to certify: (1) that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines; (2) that the Final EIR has been presented to the Council, which has reviewed and considered the information contained therein prior to taking action on the proposed project; and (3) that the Final EIR reflects the City’s independent judgment and analysis.

1.2 Findings

As required by CEQA, the City has made specific findings regarding the environmental effects of the project. These findings constitute the City Council’s best efforts to set forth the evidentiary and policy bases for its decision to approve the project in a manner consistent with the requirements of CEQA. These findings, in other words, are not merely informational, but rather constitute a binding set of obligations that come into effect with the City Council’s approval of the proposed project.

The City Council is adopting these findings for the entirety of the actions described in these findings and in the Final EIR. Although the findings below identify specific pages within the Draft and Final EIRs in support of various conclusions reached below, the Council has no quarrel with, and thus incorporates by reference and adopts as its own, the reasoning set forth in both environmental documents, and thus relies on that reasoning, even where not specifically mentioned or cited below, in reaching the conclusions set forth below, except where additional evidence is specifically mentioned. This is especially true with respect to the Council’s approval of all mitigation measures recommended in the Final EIR, and the reasoning set forth in responses to comments in the Final EIR.

Having received, reviewed, and considered the Final EIR and other information in the record of proceedings, the City Council hereby adopts the following findings in compliance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines.

- Part I – Findings regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed project and the mitigation measures (General Plan policies, etc.) for those impacts identified in the Final EIR and incorporated in the General Plan.
- Part II – Findings regarding alternatives and the reasons that such alternatives are rejected.
- Part III – Statement of Overriding Considerations determining that the benefits of implementing the proposed project outweigh the significant unavoidable environmental impacts that will result and therefore justify approval of the proposed project despite such impacts.

Those findings are presented below, along with facts and evidence to support each finding. The documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings on which these findings are based are located at the City of Ridgecrest, Planning Department, 100 W. California

Avenue, Ridgecrest, CA 93555-4054. This information is provided in compliance with Public Resources Code §21081.6(a) (2).

Part I – Impacts and Mitigation Measures

These findings provide the written analysis and conclusions of the City Council regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed project and the mitigation measures included as part of the Final EIR and adopted by the City Council as part of the project. To avoid duplication and redundancy, and because the Council agrees with, and hereby adopts, the conclusions in the Final EIR, these findings will not repeat the analysis and conclusions in the Final EIR, but instead incorporates them by reference herein and relied upon them as substantial evidence supporting these findings.

In making these findings, the City Council has considered the opinions of other agencies and members of the public. The City Council finds that the determination of significance thresholds is a judgment decision within the discretion of the City Council; the significance thresholds used in the EIR are supported by substantial evidence in the record, including the expert opinion of the EIR preparers and City staff; and the significance thresholds used in the EIR provide reasonable and appropriate means of assessing the significance of the adverse environmental effects of the proposed project. Thus, although, as a legal matter, the City Council is not bound by the significance determinations in the EIR (see Pub. Resources Code, § 21082.2, subd. (e)), the Council finds them persuasive and hereby adopts them as its own.

Table 1 summarizes the environmental determinations of the Final EIR and the proposed project's impacts before and after mitigation. This table does not attempt to describe the full analysis of each environmental impact contained in the Final EIR. Instead, Table 1 provides a summary description of each impact, describes the key General Plan policies and implementation measures identified in the Final EIR and adopted by the City Council, and states the City Council's findings on the significance of each impact after imposition of the adopted General Plan policies and implementation measures. A full explanation of these environmental findings and conclusions can be found in the Draft and Final EIR and these findings hereby incorporate by reference the discussion and analysis in these documents supporting the determination regarding the proposed project's impacts and mitigation measures designed to address those impacts. In making these findings, the City Council ratifies, adopts and incorporates in these findings the determinations and conclusions of the Final EIR relating to environmental impacts and mitigation measures, except to the extent any such determinations and conclusions are specifically and expressly modified by these findings.

As set forth below in Section 1.4 "Resolutions of Approval", the City Council adopts and incorporates the policies and implementation measures (mitigation measures) set forth in Table 1 to substantially lessen or avoid the potentially significant and significant impacts of the proposed project, as well as certain less-than-significant impacts. In adopting these mitigation measures, the City Council intends to adopt each of the policies and implementation measures proposed in the Final EIR. Accordingly, in the event a policy or implementation measure recommended in the Final EIR has inadvertently been omitted from Table 1, such policy or implementation measure is hereby adopted and incorporated in the findings below. In addition, in the event the language describing a policy or implementation measure set forth in Table 1 fails to accurately reflect the mitigation measures in the Final EIR due to a clerical error, the language of the policies and implementation measures as set forth in the Final EIR shall control, unless the language of the policies and implementation measures has been specifically and expressly modified by these findings. With respect to each and every significant effect identified in the EIR, the City hereby finds that "[c]hanges or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the final EIR." (CEQA Guidelines, § 15091, subd. (a)(1).) Rather than repeat this finding dozens of times to address each and every significant effect, this paragraph eliminates the need for such repetition because in no instance is the City Council rejecting

mitigation measures recommended in the Draft and Final EIRs. The Council recognizes that, as a part of the General Plan update process, the final language of the General Plan evolved to reflect both environmental considerations and public input. In all instances, the Council is content with the final mitigation language as set forth in the General Plan at the time of adoption.

Part II - Alternatives to the Project

An EIR is required to describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain the objectives of the project, and to evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a)).

Additionally, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(b) requires consideration of alternatives that could avoid or substantially lessen any significant adverse environmental effects of the proposed project, including alternatives that may be more costly or could otherwise impede the project's objectives. The range of alternatives considered must include those that offer substantial environmental advantages over the proposed project and may be feasibly accomplished in a successful manner considering economic, environmental, social, technological, and legal factors.

The following alternatives are discussed in the EIR:

- Alternative 1: No Project (Build-out of existing 1991 General Plan)
- Alternative 2: Increased Residential Density Alternative
- Alternative 3: Reduced Development Yield Alternative

Descriptions of these alternatives, the basis for selection, and the environmental characteristics of the alternatives are more fully described in Chapter 4 "Alternatives to the Proposed Project" of the Draft EIR.

Project Objectives

For reference purposes in consideration of project alternatives, the key project objectives are to:

- Minimize the loss of open space land.
- Protect existing land uses from incompatible development.
- Encourage infill development and the use of village centers that can be the focus and foundation of neighborhoods within the City.
- Promote a diverse economy and compatible land uses with the surrounding military operations.
- Address recent environmental trends and issues, such as green-house gases, energy conservation, and long-term water supply.

Summary of Findings

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

Under the No-Project Alternative, the City would continue with implementation of its existing 1991 to 2010 General Plan, which would remain as the adopted long-range planning policy document for the City. Current development patterns would continue to occur in accordance with the existing General Plan and Zoning Code. Consequently, this alternative would fundamentally fail to meet a majority of the project objectives described above. Failure to update the City's existing General Plan will not result in a comprehensive update to the City's existing goals and policies to help incorporate current planning, environmental, and regulatory trends and objectives. Additionally, the existing General Plan fails to include the concept of "urban villages", which identify future development areas and set guidance for the comprehensive planning of future growth and development. For all of these reasons, the City Council rejects the No Project Alternative as infeasible within the meaning of CEQA and CEQA case law.

Alternative 2: Increased Residential Density Alternative

While keeping many of the features of the proposed project, Alternative 2 looks at increasing the amount of land designated as Residential Low Density (an increase in density over the Residential Estate lands identified under the proposed project) in the southeastern quarter of the Planning Area. This alternative also looked at the inclusion of areas for large-scale planned residential communities. Although increased levels of development would require additional increases in infrastructure (both transportation and public service/utility), this alternative could encourage transit usage and reduce dependency on the automobile.

This alternative would fail to meet several key project objectives of paramount importance to the City Council. Notably, increasing the density of land in the southeastern quarter of the Planning Area makes this alternative inconsistent with project objectives related to the loss of open space lands, protecting existing land uses from incompatible development, and reducing GHG emissions. Furthermore, the greater concentrations of development in the southeastern quarter contemplated by this alternative will lead to increased levels of impact for certain categories of environmental effects. For example, because land uses are intensified within the southeastern quarter, air quality impacts, due to the types of dwelling units and other development contemplated under the alternative, would result in slightly higher emission levels of both mobile and stationary sources of air quality emissions, and GHG emissions (see Draft EIR, Table 4-1). (Draft EIR, p. 4-4 and 4-5.) With respect to cultural resources, the intensification of land uses within the southeastern quarter under Alternative 2 may result in greater impacts to previously undiscovered cultural resources to those anticipated under the proposed project. (Draft EIR, p. 4-12.) With respect to transportation, Alternative 2 would cause slightly higher levels of delay and congestion than the proposed project. (Draft EIR, p. 4-13) For all of these reasons, the City Council rejects Alternative 2 as infeasible within the meaning of CEQA and CEQA case law.

Alternative 3: Reduced Development Yield Alternative

Under Alternative 3, the anticipated development yield and ultimate population relative to the net increases associated with the proposed project would be reduced by 10%. This alternative would allow fewer homes and fewer residents in the southwest and southeastern portions of the Planning Area relative to the proposed General Plan. The transportation improvements provided in the Circulation Element and Diagram would be implemented under this alternative.

The purpose of a general plan is to guide the growth and development of a community. Accordingly, the City's proposed General Plan is premised on projected future growth occurring in the area and to provide a framework within which projected growth can be accommodated and managed consistent with the City's overall planning responsibilities and objectives. The proposed project embodies a long-term perspective that tries to deal with demographic and market realities in a manner that minimizes the environmental effects that are inevitable when large numbers of people move into a region over time (or when the children of local families choose to remain in their hometown and raise their families there). On its face, Alternative 3 may appear to be more environmentally benign than the proposed project, in that the alternative would reduce its anticipated development yield and ultimate population by roughly 10%. However, as shown in Table 4-1 (Draft EIR, p. 4-4 through 4-7), implementation of Alternative 3 would still result in significant and unavoidable impacts (although the severity would be reduced in some cases) to several environmental resource topics. Because these seeming benefits, however, reflect what the City Council believes are unrealistic assumptions about future growth pressures and an unwillingness to grapple directly with such pressures so that new growth in the region can be under the City's control to the extent possible, the City Council rejects Alternative 3 as infeasible.

Part III - Statement of Overriding Considerations

As previously described, the City has found that several impacts of the proposed project remain significant following adoption and implementation of the mitigation measures described in the Final EIR. These significant impacts are summarized above in Table 1.

The City finds, per Public Resources Code §21081(b), that specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects of the proposed project (the Program). These overriding considerations include the following:

1. Creation of jobs and economic benefits.
2. A framework for the orderly management of future City growth.
3. Updated policies that reflect current environmental and planning trends.
4. Increased opportunities for infill development.

1.3 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

In accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, the City Council must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program to ensure that the mitigation measures adopted herein are implemented in the implementation of the proposed project. In the case of the project, one of the primary components of the proposed project includes preparing an update to the City's existing General Plan. Consistent with the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15097(b)), the monitoring plan applies to all of the policies and implementation measures identified in the general plan, in particular to those identified in Table 1 of this document. Consistent with the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15097 (b)), the City's annual report on the status of the general plan will serve as the basis for its mitigation monitoring and report program and will not require a separate mitigation monitoring and reporting program.

P.C. RESOLUTION 09-_____
**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF
RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA, FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY
COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE RIDGECREST GENERAL PLAN 2030 UPDATE**

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF RIDGECREST RESOLVES as follows:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS

- 1) On October 20, 2009 the Planning Commission held a public hearing and duly considered the Ridgecrest General Plan Update at a Special Planning Commission meeting.
- 2) The Commission considered the recommendation of staff and consultants pursuant to Government Code §§ 65853, *et seq.*
- 3) The Commission has considered the Facts, Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations Regarding the Environmental Effects from the Environmental Impact Report.

SECTION 2. DESCRIPTION

- 1) The Planning Area established for the Ridgecrest General Plan is shown on Figure 1-1 within the October 20, 2009 Planning Commission Staff Report incorporating lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and lands held by the Department of Defense as part of China Lake and unincorporated territory. The Planning Area covers a land area of approximately 40 square miles.
- 2) the General Plan 2030 Update supercedes the Ridgecrest General Plan 1991-2020 Adopted by the Ridgecrest City Council Resolution 94-57 on August 3, 1994.
- 3) This General Plan 2030 Update is comprised of Exhibit A (Draft General Plan Public Draft, October, 2008), Exhibit B (General Plan Public Draft Addendum, September, 2009), Exhibit C (Amended General Plan Diagram, October 20, 2009), and, Exhibit D (Figure 7-1, Amended Parks and Recreation Plan).

SECTION 3. APPROVAL

The Planning Commission hereby recommends that it is the best interest of the public for the City Council to approve the Ridgecrest General Plan 2030 update as identified within Exhibits A, B, C, and D

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of October, 2009, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Nellavan Jeglum, Chairman

ATTEST:

Jim McRea, Secretary

