

SECTION 6 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

Pursuant to Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must address whether a project will directly or indirectly foster growth. Section 15126.2(d) reads as follows:

An EIR shall discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects that would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of wastewater treatment plant, might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may further tax existing community service facilities, so consideration must be given to this impact. Also the EIR shall discuss the characteristic of some projects, which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

This section evaluates whether the Proposed Project will directly or indirectly induce economic, population, or housing growth in the surrounding environment.

6.1 DIRECT GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

The Proposed Project would result in the development of approximately 350,000 square feet of retail space, and is expected to generate an additional 1,000 employees at project buildout. Due to the nature of retail employment, it can be assumed that many of these employees would be hired from nearby areas and would not move to the area as a result of employment. Currently, the unemployment rate in Imperial County is approximately 19.4 percent, which is substantially higher than the State rate of 6.7 percent (CIC Research 2006). The Proposed Project would provide jobs for local residents and would help reduce the unemployment rate. Consequently, the Proposed Project would not directly induce growth.

Construction of the Proposed Project would occur over an approximately 13-month period. The number of construction workers employed and working onsite would vary over the course of the construction period. Construction workers commute to a job site that often changes many times throughout the course of a year; thus they are not likely to relocate their households to any significant degree as a consequence of construction work opportunities. In addition, many workers are specialized and move among job sites as dictated by the need for their skills. The City is experiencing rapid growth, and has a large pool of construction labor from which to draw. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that most construction workers employed for Proposed Project construction would not relocate their households as a result of working on the Proposed Project. Construction-phase employment, therefore, would not result in a substantial increase in the local or regional population. Thus, no significant environmental impacts are expected as a result of construction employment.

In summary, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to generate substantial population growth that would adversely affect the environment.

6.2 INDIRECT GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

A project would indirectly induce growth if it would increase the capacity of infrastructure in an area that currently meets the demand. Examples would be increasing the capacity of a sewer treatment plant or a roadway beyond that needed to meet existing demand.

The Proposed Project is located in an area that has been zoned and designated for development by the City's General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. The Proposed Project would be consistent with the Urban Development Program and would be located in a Tier I growth area where growth is anticipated and most feasible. The capacity of existing infrastructure in the Proposed Project area would not be expanded to accommodate the Proposed Project (see Section 4.07, *Public Services* and Section 4.07 *Traffic and Circulation*). Roadways surrounding the Proposed Project area would be expanded to accommodate traffic generated by the Proposed Project; however, these improvements would not provide excess capacity and are needed to accommodate project demand. The City is currently expanding the water treatment plant; however, this expansion is needed as a result of cumulative growth in the City and will occur with or without the Proposed Project. Because the Proposed Project would not expand the capacity of existing infrastructure beyond that needed to meet existing and projected demand, no indirect growth-inducing impacts would occur.

The Proposed Project is expected to contribute to the economy of the City and the region in terms of jobs, personal income and tax revenues. Therefore, the Proposed Project would likely induce local economic growth, which could spur development in the area. The Proposed Project would also increase commercial services in the southeastern portion of the City, where development is sparse. These new services may make the area more attractive to new development. Growth in the City would be governed by City plans and policies identified in the general plan and would be required to undergo environmental review prior to approval; thus impacts would be less than significant.