LOTUS RANCH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT 12-06, MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM, CHANGE OF ZONE 05-07, TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP 16-01, AND ANNEXATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project-</th>
<th>Lotus Ranch Environmental Impact Report 12-06, Change of Zone 05-07, Tentative Subdivision Map 16-01, and Annexation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective-</td>
<td>Subdivision of 213 acres of agricultural land in order to create 574 residential lots, 1 park, 1 school, and 3 stormwater detention basins.</td>
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<td>Applicant-</td>
<td>Gary McPhetridge on behalf of G-Mac Development</td>
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<td>Property Owner-</td>
<td>Rigid Electric (APN 052-280-012), Yuma-El Centro LLC &amp; Lotus Ranch LLC (APN 052-380-030)</td>
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<td>Location-</td>
<td>Southwest quadrant of Interstate 8 and La Brucherie Avenue, adjacent to the City's southwestern City Limits, and within the unincorporated area of Imperial County</td>
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<td>Legal Description/APN-</td>
<td>APN's 052-280-012 and 052-380-030</td>
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<td>Zoning Designation-</td>
<td>Existing: County A-2-U (General Agriculture – Urban) Proposed: City R1 (Single Family Residential), LU (Limited Use)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land Use Designation-</td>
<td>Existing: County Urban Area Proposed: City Low Density Residential and Public</td>
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Lotus Ranch project proposes the development of 574 single-family residential lots, three storm water detention basins, one 10.8 acre park, and one ±8.13 acre school site on 213 acres of vacant land generally located on the southwest quadrant of Interstate 8 and La Brucherie Avenue. Project implementation requires the following: 1) Certification of Environmental Impact Report 12-06 and approval of Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program; 2) Approval of Change of Zone 05-07 (Pre-Zone) from County A-2-U (General Agriculture – Urban) to City R1, single family residential and LU, limited use; 3) Approval of the Lotus Ranch Tentative Subdivision Map; 4) Approval of a Project Development Agreement and; 5) Approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission for annexation of the site from the County of Imperial to the City.
**Surrounding Area**

The project site is bound by Interstate 8 (I-8) in the north, the Lotus Canal and Drain to the west, La Brucherie Avenue and the Dahlia Canal to the east, and active hay storage yard/cattle feed yard to the south (Refer to **Exhibit A - Location Map**). La Brucherie Avenue and Wake Avenue provide access to the site. The site comprises of two existing legal lots: County Assessor Parcel Numbers 052-280-012 and 052-380-030. The project is proposed on agricultural land that has been fallowed.

Land uses surrounding the site include Southwest High School and single-family residences to the north across I-8, agricultural land to the west across the operational Lotus Canal and Drain, existing single-family residences and agricultural land to the east across La Brucherie Avenue, and an active hay storage and feed lot area to the south. Surrounding land is also flat, although I-8 and the adjacent canals sit on higher elevations with engineered embankments.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE**

**Environmental Impact Report 12-06 (EIR)** attached hereto as **Exhibit B** was prepared for the project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. As part of the EIR process, the City held a scoping meeting on January 21, 2015 to receive input from the public. A Notice of Preparation was also prepared and mailed to responsible agencies to comment for a 30-day period.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report concluded the proposed project could create impacts to agriculture resources, air quality, biology, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology/water quality, transportation/traffic, noise, and public services. However, mitigation measures would reduce or avoid any significant impacts to a less than significant level. The Draft EIR was routed for a period of 45-days from October 27, 2015 through December 10, 2015.

The EIR prepared for the project analyzed three (3) project alternatives. Alternative 1 consisted of the construction of 609 single-family residential units and a public park. Alternative 2 consisted of the construction of 574 single family residential units, a public park and an 8.3 acre school site. Although Alternative 1 and 2 have similar impacts, the location of a K-6 school site in the future residential neighborhood would reduce impacts to traffic and could promote smart growth principles for walking and biking. Alternative 3 consisted of the No Project Alternative and would eliminate all potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the project. However, it was deemed inadequate as it would not meet the project objectives of providing a range of housing, recreational opportunities for residents, and capitalizing economic growth opportunities. **Alternative 2 which includes the school site and a reduced number of units was considered the environmentally preferred alternative.**
ZONE CHANGE REQUIRED FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The proposed Change of Zone No. 05-07 has been reviewed by staff and the required findings for approval are outlined below.

1. Proposed zone change is in conformity with the City’s General Plan, and other development policies of the City.
   The proposed project is in conformity with the City’s General Plan, specifically, the following goals and policies:
   - “Housing Element Goal 1: Provide adequate housing to meet the existing and future needs of El Centro residents.” The proposed Lotus Ranch project would involve the construction of 574 single family residences and thus provide housing to meet the needs of existing and future residents.
   - “Parks & Rec. Goal 1- Policy 1.1: Provide accessible parks and recreational facilities within a ½ mile walking distance of all residential areas in El Centro as illustrated in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.” The project includes the construction of a centrally located park for residents to enjoy. The park was located in a central location to ensure accessibility for all residents.
   - “Circulation Element Goal 1- Policy 1.4: Review new development proposals to ensure that the proposed development provides adequate parking and would not increase traffic on roadways and intersections to a level of service (LOS) worse than “C” unless the project will provide overriding socio/economic benefits to the City.” The proposed development will be making improvements to key intersection such as La Brucherie/Wake Avenue. The developer will also pay fair shares for other traffic impacts to ensure adequate levels of service for the community.

2. Proposed zone change is appropriate for the affected project site with consideration given to access, size of parcel, relationship to similar or related land uses, and other considerations deemed relevant.
   - The zone change is appropriate for the project area in order to accommodate the proposed housing, park, and school. The majority of the parcel will be zoned for residential uses consistent with the City’s General Plan Land Use Designation of Low Density Residential.

3. Proposed zone change is proper at this time and not likely detrimental to the adjacent properties or residents.
   - Conditions of Approval have been incorporated such as the incorporation of a wall between El Toro and the proposed project to ensure the project will not be detrimental to the adjacent properties.
Zoning & Land Use
The project site is currently within the unincorporated area of Imperial County and is zoned A2U (General Agriculture Urban). The project would pre-zone the 213-acre property into R1 (Single Family Residential) and LU (Limited Use). Additionally, two out parcels, consisting of residential homes that are not a part of the Lotus Ranch project, but are to be annexed would be pre-zoned to R1 (Single Family Residential). The two parcels have a combined acreage of 3.87 acres and are not to be subdivided or demolished. The Low Density Residential land use designation would allow the single-family residential development proposed for the majority of the site. The Public land use designation which accommodates public community facilities or those under semi-public ownership would encompass the uses in the rest of the site. Approval of the Pre-Zoning of property would ensure the project is in conformity with the General Plan.

TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP REQUIRED FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The Lotus Ranch Tentative Subdivision Map attached as Exhibit C proposes the subdivision of 213 acres of land into 574 single-family residential lots, three storm water detention basins, one 10.8 acre park, and one ±8.13 acre school site. It is anticipated the development would occur in three major phases beginning on the northern portion of the property and proceeding southerly.

Proposed Residential
The residential component of the proposed project would entail construction of 574 single-family detached residential units on approximately 178 acres of the 213-acre site. Lot sizes would range from approximately 7,200 square feet (sf) to approximately 19,411 sf, with an average lot size of 8,494 sf. Residences would vary between one and two levels and would be consistent in size and appearance with existing and planned residences in the vicinity of the site. Each lot would feature a garage and landscaped yards.

Proposed Park
One park consisting of ±10.8 acres would be constructed on the site. The park would consist of public-use facilities consisting of grass play areas and play equipment for children, with restrooms, drinking fountains, and security lighting provided. The project applicant will construct the park, but be owned, operated, and maintained by the City of El Centro. The Development Agreement to be considered by City Council will outline each of the parties’ responsibilities and include terms and conditions for the construction of the park. The formation of a Lighting and Landscaping Maintenance District will also be required to fund the maintenance of all public facilities within the project.
Proposed School
The proposed residential development would be within the McCabe Union Elementary School District and Central Union High School District. The McCabe Union Elementary School District has requested that land be set aside for a future K-8 school. The developer has set aside 8.13 acres for the proposed school. According to the McCabe Union School District, a project consisting of 574 units would yield 379 students using a yield rate of 0.659 students per dwelling unit. However, if a site is not designated for a school, then the project would yield 402 students (assuming 609 single family units). The developer is solely required by law to pay for school impact fees. The developer and the school district will be required to come to an agreement regarding the proposed school site.

Proposed Infrastructure
Infrastructure improvements, including roadways, sewer and water lines, and gas/electric connections, will be installed as part of the project. Sewer, water, and storm drain pipes would be installed beneath the project roadways for service of the project residences. The Development Agreement to be considered by City Council will outline each of the parties’ responsibilities and include terms and conditions for the phasing and construction of infrastructure improvements.

Roadways- A grid of roads and cul-de-sacs to be constructed as part of the project and maintained by the City would serve the project. The street system would be connected to the existing and planned City street system. Access will be provided by the north/south roadway of La Brucherie Avenue and the east/west roadways of Wake Avenue, Danenberg Drive, and Manuel Ortiz Avenue.

The project entails widening a segment of La Brucherie Avenue, which is currently paved within the project area. The existing pavement between I-8 and Wake Avenue would be widened to align with the proposed expanded intersection at Wake Avenue and La Brucherie Avenue. The existing pavement between Wake Avenue and the future alignment of Manuel Ortiz Avenue (the project’s southern boundary) would be replaced to a width of approximately 60 feet. Concrete sidewalks and storm water gutters would be constructed along the western side of the roadway, and streetlights installed at regular intervals.

Wake Avenue, Danenberg Drive, and Manuel Ortiz Avenue would be paved throughout the project limits and connected with existing and planned alignments extending to adjacent parcels, with sidewalk and utility improvements incorporated. Eighteen additional roads would be constructed with cul-de-sac terminations and would only serve the project residences. The cul-de-sacs and homes adjacent to the retention basins would also be required to include an open pedestrian link to adjacent uses and roads to provide connectivity. The pedestrian link will be a minimum of 10-feet in width and be included as part of the Lighting, Landscaping and Maintenance District.
Stormwater- The proposed subdivision would create three retention basins along the site’s western and northern boundary. These lots would encompass 16.5 total acres. Drainage flow from the site would be directed toward these lots, which would slow storm flows during heavy rain events. The lots would also be available to the public for recreational use, and would be operated or maintained through the formation of a Lighting and Landscaping Maintenance District. The basins would also buffer the project’s residential uses from the Lotus Canal to the west and I-8 to the north. These storm water treatment systems may be used to comply with the City’s Storm Water Ordinance requirements.

Undergrounding of Canals and Drain- The Lotus Canal and Drain, facilities of the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), run parallel to each other on the western boundary of the project site. These features are part of the large-scale agricultural irrigation and drainage system serving the region. The project will entail undergrounding of the Lotus Drain and Canal from the northern project boundary to Danenberg Drive.

Wastewater- Wastewater infrastructure will include a sewage lift station in the northeast portion of the site. A sewage lift station that is currently located immediately south of Interstate 8 and the future extension of Imperial Avenue will be relocated within the project site at the northwest corner of Wake Avenue and La Brucherie Avenue. The pump station to be relocated will serve residences south of I-8 and be constructed by the City.

A sewer pipeline of special concern is the pipeline along Wake Avenue. The City is requesting the installation of an oversized sewer pipeline along Wake Avenue that would be extended along La Brucherie Avenue and the western property boundaries to serve future development to the west. Oversizing of the pipeline is Public Works’ preferred option as it complies with the Sewer Master Plan. Future development west of the proposed site would also be able to connect to sewer without demolition of streets. The City would credit the oversizing costs to the developer by crediting against sewer capacity fees, however, the developer must front the cost until the benefits of the credit are met. Sewer capacity fees are anticipated to be $4,117,876 ($7,174 [sewer capacity fee] x 574 [number of residential units]). The Developer has requested the City require only wastewater improvements for the sole need of the Lotus Ranch project and that future development projects cover the cost of the extension of the sewer pipeline.

Findings for Tentative Subdivision Map 16-01
The proposed Lotus Tentative Subdivision Map has been reviewed by staff and the required findings of approval are outlined below:

1. That the proposed map is consistent with the City of El Centro General Plan.
   - *Lotus Ranch Tentative Subdivision Map No. 16-01 was reviewed for consistency with the adopted, General Plan by all City Departments. Comments from City Departments were incorporated and included as conditions of approval.*
2. That the design of improvements of the proposed subdivision are consistent with the City of El Centro General Plan.
   - Conditions of approval have been incorporated to ensure the Lotus Ranch Tentative Subdivision Map No. 16-01 was designed in accordance with the goals and policies of the General Plan as follows:

   “Policy 1.3- Ensure that new residential development is compatible with surrounding existing residential development.” The proposed Lotus Ranch Subdivision will be consistent with the aesthetics and character of the adjacent, Farmer Estates Subdivision.

   “Policy 2.1- Continue to direct and control growth in the City and sphere of influence through the application of the City’s Urban Development Program.” The proposed housing subdivision is located within Tier 1 of the City’s Urban Development Program. New development within this area is adjacent to the City Limits and can be served by gravity sewer lines to existing trunk sewers and water lines are also in close proximity. Given the proximity to the City Limits, City services are in close proximity to the new development.

3. That the site is physically suitable for the proposed density of development.
   - The Lotus Ranch Subdivision is situated adjacent to the City Limits within 213 acres of land just south of Interstate 8. The site is suitable to accommodate the proposed residential development and has been reviewed to ensure consistency with the City’s General Plan and Zoning Ordinance density requirements.

4. That the design of the subdivision or the proposed improvements are not likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and unavoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat.
   - Environmental Impact Report 12-06 was prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. The report found that all significant environmental impacts could be mitigated through mitigation measures. Thus, the project or improvements associated with the project will not cause substantial environmental damage or injure fish or wildlife or their habitat.

5. That the design of the subdivision or type of improvement are not likely to cause serious public health problems.
   - The Lotus Ranch Subdivision includes sidewalks and a public park to encourage an active lifestyle and will not cause serious public health problems.

6. That the design of the subdivision or type of improvements will not conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large for access through or use of property within the proposed subdivision.
   - The Lotus Ranch Subdivision will not conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large. To the contrary, land is being acquired from the developer for a regional sewer lift station.
ACTION REQUESTED

The Staff Report briefly describes the Lotus Ranch project. The Development Agreement to be considered by City Council will outline each of the parties’ responsibilities and include terms and conditions for the construction of the park, the sewer line along Wake Avenue and payment of traffic fair shares. The Annexation of the project area will further be considered by the City Council and LAFCO.

It is staff recommendation that the Commission open the public hearing and allow input from all proponents and opponents of the proposed project. Because the project is compatible with the General Plan and adjacent uses and zones, it is staff recommendation that certification of Environmental Impact Report 12-06, Change of Zone 05-07 and Tentative Subdivision Map 16-01 be recommended for approval by taking the following action:

1. Motion to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-__ (Exhibit D) recommending certification of Environmental Impact Report 12-06, and respective Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

2. Motion to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-__ (Exhibit E), recommending approval of Change of Zone 05-07.

3. Motion to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 16-__ (Exhibit F), recommending approval of Tentative Subdivision Map 16-01.

Prepared by: Adriana C. Nava, AICP, Associate Planner

____________________________
Norma M. Villicaña, AICP
Community Development Director

ATTACHMENTS:
- Exhibit A- Project Location Map (PDF)
- Exhibit B- Lotus Ranch FEIR (PDF)
- Exhibit C- Tentative Subdivision Map (PDF)
- Exhibit D_Environmental Impact Report 12-06 (PDF)
- Exhibit E_Resolution for Change of Zone 05-07 (PDF)
- Exhibit F_Resolution for TSM 16-01 (PDF)