



**CITY OF TWENTYNINE PALMS**  
**STAFF REPORT**  
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**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Community Development Director  
**Date:** February 21, 2006  
**RE:** A) PC-05-113 – Conceptual review of a pre-application by Stacy Hart and Bill Barrett (collectively referred to as the “applicant” – although as noted below no formal application has been submitted) for a General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone for 151.53 acres of RS-E and 375.57 acres of RL-5 to RS-4, for approval and to allow construction of an eighteen hole golf course, 1,251 residences and a hotel on 527.1 acres, for a density of 2.37 dwelling units per acre. The site is located north of the Joshua Tree National Park, south of Hwy 62, west of Indian Cove Road and Lear Avenue and east of Shoshone Valley Road, on APN #614-011-02 and 614-121–15, Zone RS-E and RL-5, T1N, R8E, Section 33.

B) PC 05-103 – Conceptual review of a pre-application by Stacy Hart and Bill Barrett for a General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone to change 360 acres of RL-5 and 120 acres of RS-E to RS4, for approval and to allow construction of an eighteen hole golf course and 1,200 residences on 480 acres, for a density of 2.5 dwelling units per acre. The proposed project site is located north of Two Mile Road, south of Amboy Road, west of Noels Knoll Road and east of Canyon Road, on APN #612-201-01 and –05, Zones RS-E and RL-5, T1N, R8E, Section 23.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Conduct the conceptual review and workshop, consider the proposed concepts, take public comment, and provide generalized feedback to the applicant regarding the proposed project.

**BACKGROUND:** While formal applications have yet to be submitted for the proposed projects, the applicant has taken advantage of the City’s pre-application review process.

Since that process began, it has become clear that the proposed project will be the subject of significant public input and concern. In light of this fact, and considering the magnitude of the projects, it would be beneficial for both the public and the applicant to submit the projects to the Planning Commission for conceptual review.

- | Attachments |                                 |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 1.          | Site plans                      |
| 2.          | Density White Paper             |
| 3.          | General Plan Housing Plan       |
| 4.          | General Plan Text RL and RS     |
| 5.          | Development Code Text RL and RS |
| 6.          | Correspondence                  |
| 7.          | Golf Industry study             |

**PURPOSE OF MEETING:** The purpose of this workshop is to provide the applicant with an opportunity to present development concepts to the Planning Commission. This will enable members of the community and Staff to speak to the pending development proposals. It will also provide the Planning Commission with an opportunity to advise the applicant of its general views about the merits and/or problems that may be associated with its development concept, which are likely to be prominent in discussions if and when a formal application for a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change is made. In this regard, it should be noted that Staff has significant concerns about the proposed development concept, including the fact that both projects would the increase density in a manner inconsistent with the City’s historic development pattern and master plan to guide growth from the dense urban core decreasing in density steadily outward to the Rural Living periphery. The applicant seeks to obtain meaningful

input from the Planning Commission in light of Staff's concerns, in order to assist in determining if and how to proceed with a formal application. Importantly, the meeting will only result in a discussion of broad development concepts, and neither approvals nor denials of the proposed project will be voted upon at this workshop. None of the discussions regarding the conceptual review should be considered as formal responses but rather as considerations of concern and interest. Additional and different information will be included in a formal application, and the Planning Commission cannot take specific action on the proposed project unless and until a complete application has been submitted for its consideration.

**SUMMARY:** The project near Hwy 62 would include a General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone to change 375.57 acres of RL-5 to RS-4 and 151.52 acres of RS-E to RS-4, a tentative tract map for a 1251-lot subdivision in the Single Family Residential (RS-4) land use district, and site plan review of a hotel. The number of rooms proposed for the hotel is unknown at this time. Additional uses not included on this preliminary plan, but uses commonly found at resort hotels include, restaurants, bars, gift shops, spas, pools, and conference centers with meeting rooms. Additional uses commonly associated with golf courses include, clubhouses, rest stations, bathrooms, pro-shops, restaurants, snackbars, cart barns, well sites and maintenance facilities. The RS-4 zone allows a maximum density of 4.0 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and under the existing general plan and zoning designations a maximum of 135 dwelling units could be constructed on this site. Should the proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Change be approved, under the RS-4 designation, a maximum of 2,108 units could ultimately be developed on this site. The applicant is proposing a project design, which would include 1,251 residences, for an overall density of 2.37 dwelling units per acre, a hotel, and an eighteen-hole golf course. Approval of the proposed change to the General Plan land use designation and Zoning would result in a 926% density increase.

The project on Two Mile Road would include a General Plan Amendment and Change of Zone to change 360 acres of RL-5 to RS4 and 120 acres of RS-E to RS4, for approval of the Twentynine Palms Golf Club and to allow construction of an eighteen hole golf course and 1,200 residences on 480 acres, for a density of 2.5 dwelling units per acre. Under the existing general plan and zoning designations a maximum of 120 dwelling units could be constructed on this site. The RS-4 zone allows a maximum density of 4.0 dwelling units per acre (du/ac). Should the proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Change be approved, under the RS-4 designation, a maximum of 1,920 units could ultimately be developed on this site. Approval of the proposed change to the General Plan land use designation and Zoning would result in a 1000% density increase. Following is a discussion of a variety of issues that Staff believes would be pertinent for consideration if formal applications were before the Planning Commission:

**Surrounding Land Use, General Plan and Zoning Designations**

Hwy 62 Project			
	Land Use	General Plan	Zone
Site	Vacant	RL-5, RS-E	RL-5, RS-E
North	Vacant	RL-2.5	RL-2.5
East	Vacant	RL-5, RS-E	RL-5, RS-E
South	National Park	Public	Public
West	Single Family Residential	RS-4, RL-2.5	RS-4, RL-2.5

Two Mile Road Project			
	Land Use	General Plan	Zone

Site	Vacant	RL-5, RS-E	RL-5, RS-E
North	Vacant	Sphere of Influence	Sphere of Influence
East	Vacant	RL-5, RS-E	RL-5, RS-E
South	Vacant	RS-E	RS-E
West	Vacant	RL-5	RL-5

**General Plan**

The current land use designations for both sites is RL-5 and RS-E, which allow one dwelling unit for every five acres, and one dwelling unity for every 2.5 acres, respectively.

The RS-4 Zoning District, which would be requested by the applicant as part of a formal application, allows a maximum of four dwelling units per acre. This Zone Change would not be consistent with the General Plan Land Use Element and, therefore, a General Plan Amendment would be required. Staff has determined that the following provisions of the General Plan should be considered as part of the Planning Commission’s discussion of any conceptual General Plan Amendment related to the proposed project:

**GENERAL PLAN MISSION STATEMENT**

The City of Twentynine Palms seeks to create and promote the economic and social well being of its residents while maintaining our relaxed atmosphere and air quality, as well as simultaneously creating a stronger and more diversified economy through attracting arts and tourism development, health/retirement, recreational, and clean non-polluting industries. These goals should be guided by two principles: (1) sustainability, and (2) adaptability. This requires that existing needs be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and that, to the degree reasonably possible as determined by the appropriate approval authority, community activities should adapt to the natural environment, rather than the natural environment being changed or adopted to these activities.

**GENERAL PLAN LAND USE PLAN- VISION**

Within the planning period, 2001 through 2020, increased pressure for development will occur. It is the City’s responsibility to ensure a sound and logical assimilation of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. Intensity of development will be highest surrounding the Downtown area, and will be generally less intense moving outward from Downtown. Commercial districts will be vibrant and dominated by a Desert Southwest design theme. Industrial development will be confined to the designated industrial area and will be designed to accommodate a variety of industrial and commercial uses.

**HOUSING PLAN SUMMARY**

The housing needs of the residents of the City of Twentynine Palms are being met. The City is fortunate to have the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center as its primary economic strength; an entity, which provides housing for all military personnel. Additionally, the City is fortunate to enjoy low cost land and construction. There is an abundance of vacant developable property, which will accommodate over 10,000 new affordable units when demand arises.

City government has not implemented constraints to new home construction. There are no impact fees for development; and Use Permit fees and Building Permit fees are intentionally kept low and affordable. Processing time for subdivisions within the central core are presently be 60 to 90 days. Additionally, the City does not require excessive development standards; requiring only the typical local street standards and curb, gutter and sidewalk.

Mobile homes typically provide for affordable housing. In accordance with State Laws, mobile homes may be placed on any residential lot with minimal design requirements. The City has at least 100 vacant spaces in mobile home parks; in these cases, affordable housing can be established without the requirement for City review or permitting.

Second units are considered an entitlement and may be constructed on many lots within the City, including Rural Living lots of five acres or more, and Single Family Residential lots with at least twice the minimum lot size. Second units are allowed, with approval of a Minor Use Permit, on any lot within the City that is at least 25% greater than the minimum lot size. This provision could allow for up to 1,000 affordable units.

Homelessness is not significant in the City. Based on available information, there are less than five citizens in the City who are homeless.

In considering the General Plan, and especially the Housing Plan, it should be noted that a study prepared by Staff in 2004 indicates that the community has sufficient land in all residential land use inventories to meet the City’s ultimate build-out of 100,000 to 105,000 people. However, currently there is modest demand for housing in the City as evidenced by the fact that an average of 66 dwelling units per year have been constructed in the past five years. The community is currently in a growth cycle. This past calendar year building permits for approximately 400 new residential units were issued. The City has ample available land resources to provide affordable housing and a variety of housing for citizens in all income groups. It does not impede the development of such housing if it is proposed consistent with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

**Zoning**

Minimum lot sizes allowed in the RS-4 zone are 7,200 square feet. As designed the site plan does not include a lotting program. Therefore, information required to determine if the project complies with the minimum lot dimensions of the RS-4 zone is not available. However, the project could be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance if the properties are rezoned.

**Site Characteristics**

Both sites generally slope downward from the south to north. Each site contains typical desert vegetation. Both sites have been used by off-road vehicles. The project near Hwy 62 abuts the Joshua Tree National Park to the south.

**Site plan**

Information provided on the project near Hwy 62 in the table entitled “Development Totals” is incorrect. The table incorrectly identifies the total acres devoted to each land use. The proposed project is divided into ten planning areas, which are summarized below in the following table. No data is provided regarding the number of acres in each use.

Hwy 62 Project			
Use	Number of areas	Density	Total units
High Density Residential	Two	12 units/acre	183
Medium Density Residential	Three	8 units/acre	459
Single Family Residential	Two	4 units/acre	530
Estate Lot Residential	One	2 units/acre	79
Hotel Site	One	--	--
Golf Course	Five	--	--
Total	--	2.37 units/acre	1,251

Two Mile Road Project			
Use	Number of areas	Density	Total units
Single Family Homes	Four	n.a	518
Casita Development	Three	n.a	663
Estate Lots	One	n.a	19
Golf Course	Five	--	--
Total	--	2.5 units/acre	1,200

### Phasing

The applicant has not developed a phasing proposal for its concept.

### Viability Under Existing General Plan and Zoning

Staff has reviewed the projects and concluded that both projects are viable under *existing* land use densities. For example, for the project near Hwy 62, existing density would allow construction of 135 single-family residences on the site. Grouped around a golf course, mid-range and high-end luxury residences would begin to enter the market at a price conservatively estimated at approximately \$500,000 per residence. Such a development would conservatively generate approximately \$67 million in base sales revenue. Houses in the \$1 million range are currently being sold in the Morongo Basin that are not located on golf courses. Under *existing* development intensities, the project could represent a value to those seeking golf course residences, as many have been priced out of pricier and more congested areas in San Diego and Orange Counties and the nearby Coachella Valley.

### Environmental Assessment

Prior to approval of a project on this site, environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) would be required. No environmental review has been initiated as no formal application has been filed. Should an application be filed, issues such as water availability, traffic, air quality, hydrology, geotechnical public services, biological and archeological resources and others would be explored to identify singular and cumulative impacts, mitigations, and alternatives.

### Visitor Serving Uses

Both projects could provide some benefit to the community, chiefly in increasing the number of hotel rooms and amenities available to visitors. Visitor serving uses such as hotels will become increasingly important to the community in the coming years. Resort Retirement and Tourism has been previously identified by the community as desirable forms of clean industry. The hotel and related uses would provide some benefit to the community in terms of new employment, expanded recreational opportunities and new sources of transient occupancy taxes. However, because the applicant's proposed concept has not provided specific information on the type of facilities proposed and the number of hotel rooms, the fiscal impacts of the hotel may not be quantified. These benefits could be achieved by amending the General Plan land use designations and Development Code to allow hotels and related uses under existing zoning and/or through a Specific plan.

### Recreation Uses

These projects, through the construction of 18-hole golf courses, would result in an expansion of the available recreational uses in the community and would enhance existing private recreation resources presently available. However, these benefits could be achieved under the existing General Plan designation and Development Code. Construction of one or more golf courses could stimulate the construction of quality housing as part of these projects and in the vicinity, and could contribute to providing a diversity of housing opportunities for persons in all income groups. There is ample land within the urbanized area of the City that could fulfill the same objectives without a General Plan amendment.

**Traffic and Circulation**

A traffic impact analysis would be required. No such study has been completed.

**Transit Service**

Transit service is available adjacent to the project on State Hwy 62. Transit Service is not presently available adjacent to the project on Two Mile Road.

**Sewage Disposal**

The applicant would be required to design and receive approval for an on-site sewage treatment facility from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQCB) and San Bernardino County Environmental Health Services, prior to approval of a Final Map. This requirement would be explored as part of the environmental studies associated with these projects.

**Drainage**

A drainage study would be required for the projects and as part of environmental review.

**Biological Resources**

A biological study identifying endangered and sensitive species would be required.

**Cultural/Paleontological Resources**

A Cultural/Paleontological study of the project sites would be required.

**Audubon Design Standards**

If approved, these projects would be required to be designed to utilize a minimum of water resources and to maximize habitat value. The Audubon Society Standards for environmentally friendly golf course design would be recommended to the applicant as model designs that have effectively address desert habitat and resource management issues.

**Water Availability Assessment**

Pursuant to State law, projects with 500 or more residential units are required to have a water supply availability study prepared and approved by the water authority, in this case the Twentynine Palms Water District. The City would be required, as part of the CEQA process, to make its own finding on impacts on water resources.

**Housing Needs**

In considering a project such as that proposed by the applicant, the Planning Commission would consider the effects of its action upon the housing needs of the region and balance these needs against the public service needs of its residents and available fiscal and environmental resources (Subdivision Map Act Section 66412.3). Because the applicant proposes residential lot development, approval may ultimately result in an increase in available residential lots, and could help to expand the supply of available housing with the region, and therefore, would not negatively impact housing for the region though it would be a significant shift in housing from the City's urban core to the rural living areas.

**Approval**

To reiterate, neither an approval nor denial of the proposed project is under consideration in connection with the Conceptual project review before the Planning Commission. Rather, the Planning Commission is only being asked to take input and provide comments on generalized, conceptual issues, relating both to concerns about and merits of the proposed project. The City Council is the Approval Authority for General Plan Amendments and Zone Changes. The Planning Commission is the Approval Authority for Site Plan review and Tentative Tract Maps and would conduct hearings on the General Plan Amendments, Zone Changes, and

environmental issues and would make recommendations to the City Council regarding these issues if and when the applicant submits a formal application.

**General Concerns Identified by Staff:**

Whenever a project is submitted to the City, Staff analyzes it and makes initial recommendations to the Planning Commission. While Staff realizes that at this point the proposed projects are only undergoing a conceptual review, it has identified issues, which, if the projects were submitted as currently proposed, would raise a number of significant concerns. Generally speaking, all these concerns relate to a core issue -- the proposed project requires a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change which would significantly reallocate growth patterns and density from the City's Urban Core to its Rural Living Area, at a time when there exists an abundance of land in the City's Urban Core suitable for a project such as that which is proposed. Staff has formatted its general concerns in the fashion of hypothetical findings and the Planning Commission may wish to provide general comments to assist the applicant with refining any final plans for submittal based on these hypothetical findings which summarize the key issues identified by Staff as concerns:

1. The proposed concepts are inconsistent with the General Plan (including both the Mission Statement and Land Use Plan – Vision), in that such a project would not follow the established pattern of density emanating from the urbanized core of the city.
2. The proposed development pattern and land use intensity for the Indian Cove area is an anomaly as compared to the surrounding properties.
3. The concepts, as proposed, could induce growth in the immediate vicinity of the project area, which is inconsistent with development in the area as well as the City's General Plan vision for such growth.
4. The concepts are not complimentary to existing development in the vicinity.
5. The concepts could open up nine sections (square miles) of rural living lands in the western part of the City for similar increases in density, all of which would be inconsistent with the existing General Plan.
6. The concepts are inconsistent with the General Plan Mission Statement.
7. The concepts are inconsistent with the General Plan Land Use Plan Vision Statement.
8. The concepts are inconsistent with the General Plan Housing Plan.
9. The concepts are inconsistent with the Development Code in that the project would not follow the established pattern of density emanating from the urbanized core of the city.
10. The concepts are inconsistent with sound zoning practices.
11. The concepts may be viewed as spot zoning.
12. A viable project could be designed to meet existing General Plan density for the RL-5 and RS-E designations.
13. A viable project could be designed in accordance with existing Development Code provisions the RL-5 and RS-E zones.
14. The projects are not well integrated into the existing circulation system.