

Joshua Tree Municipal Advisory Council

PROPOSAL FOR THE
CSA 20 /JOSHUA TREE COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE
JUNE 10, 2004

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1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning motivation for this document was the statement by the 3rd district supervisor referring to the community plan update, that: “If you don’t do it, someone else will.” In the course of development of the plan the reality of this advice soon became evident. The appeal of Joshua Tree to numerous interests and influences is obvious. There are definite indications, both immediate and on the horizon, that a number of forces are prepared to exploit the desirable features of the region with probably little concern regarding any vision for the future of Joshua Tree.

On the other hand, it soon turned out that there exist very clear and consistent opinions from community residents about these issues. The singular identity of Joshua Tree as evidenced in the large and expressive attendance at the several town meetings held in the development of the plan showed that there was much to be reckoned with from a well-defined and established community. It became evident that there is very much a core of citizen outlook and philosophy that is central to the large majority of those seeking out a place and community in Joshua Tree.

This document is presented in two sections. The first is a formal text of the Joshua Tree Community Plan update proposal as requested by the Municipal Advisory Council. A second section is provided as a documentation and reference appendix containing a full bibliography of reference material used in the development of the plan together with a listing and summary of the opinions, contributions, suggestions, and critiques of the many community members who have basically been the authors and overseers of this community plan update.

Total citizen participation in development of the plan is conservatively estimated to have been at least 300. Six open general community town meetings, some of which included county representatives and other speakers and experts, together with dozens of smaller special and subgroup meetings were held to craft the community plan. Town meetings had attendances typically in the range of 50 to nearly 100. Because of the wide circulation of notices and advertising for meetings, there can be high confidence that the contributions to this effort were well representative of the community and are a good sampling of opinion of residents. There was consistent opportunity for detailed feedback and input both in general and in reaction to specific proposals in the plan or its various drafts. Citizen reaction was always enthusiastic and very involved and engaged. Additional special meetings were held by committee members with various individuals, agencies and organizations within Joshua Tree such as the school district and the public transportation agency.

Something especially important to be drawn from this experience is the high degree of interest demonstrated toward this opportunity for public expression and self-determination. This was so in spite of often stated skepticism about whether county government was ever really inclined to listen to its citizens. Clearly, it would be very valuable to hold these kinds of meetings regularly even after completion of the community plan.

We reiterate here our ongoing commitment that all acknowledged separate or dissenting items relative to this plan will be presented to the Municipal Advisory Council for transmittal to the supervisors along with this document. In fact, all other proposals to the county by community members are seen not as competitive but complimentary in allowing additional range and breadth to the ultimate establishment of a county plan for Joshua Tree, something that can only be seen as of benefit to the community.

Statements were sometimes heard that the community plan should not ask for too much or be too demanding, or that the plan should only be very broad and general without containing anything specific, and so forth. Reaction by community participants was emphatic in that as long as there was to be the effort of a 10 year community plan it should contain exactly what is wanted and required, and as specifically as necessary to avoid the misunderstandings known to sometimes happen out here. The considerable research carried out in the process of this endeavor has established without question that community plans can be fully as explicit and detailed as necessary for the objectives being expressed, for example,

the 1989 Joshua Tree plan which specified the paving of Alta Loma. We have total confidence in the county supervisors and their staff to recognize the intent and legitimacy of what is being done here and to respond fittingly. We are certain that the government of San Bernardino County will appreciate the validity, the expectations, and the level of importance placed on what is contained in the plan. However this document might eventually be incorporated as a subsection of the county general plan, it is intended to be interpreted as the consensus-agreed community plan for 2004 Joshua Tree.

The following is an accounting of volunteer resources that were expended in the achievement of this community plan: More than 2000 total person-hours are estimated to have been involved in development and accomplishment of the plan by committee members, i.e. about 300 working days in a period of just over one year. Total financial expenditures, literally out of pocket, for miscellaneous expenses including photocopying is estimated at over \$1000.

Listing of community resident volunteers most directly involved with development of this plan begins, of course, with those who initially came forward in response to the call made at the founding meeting by the chairperson of the Municipal Advisory Committee. These were Melinda Hedley, Albert Marquez, Shari Long and Jack Fuller. Others who soon after became materially associated with the process were Cheryl McHale, Deborah DeMeo, and Shant Agajanian, who offered invaluable volunteer professional assistance. Very important support has been provided by Carol Hall, and the effort was further augmented by Mary Helen Tuttle of Copper Mountain, with additional valuable input from Curt Sauer, Harry Carpenter, and the National Park offices, as well as Howard Gross of the National Parks Conservation Association and Pat Flanagan of the Morongo Basin Conservation Association. Along the way came the gratefully numerous others in Joshua Tree who provided a great deal of often critically needed support and advocacy. We appreciate the help provided by Michelle Givens with arrangements for community center facilities. Among county personnel who provided time and assistance were Terri Rahhal, Kathleen McDonald, and, of course, Bruce Davis of supervisor Dennis Hansberger's office who was, simultaneously it seemed, both advocate and practice foil! Moreover to be acknowledged are the destined to be unsung contributions of untiring and intrepid spouses.

The attached document is in response to the opportunity to provide an updated community plan for Joshua Tree, and fulfills the Municipal Advisory Council mission of community representation. This committee therefore is presenting this proposal for the Joshua Tree Community Plan Update to the Joshua Tree Municipal Advisory Council to be accepted for submission to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors.

Jack Fuller

Chair of the MAC volunteer committee for the General Plan Update

June 10, 2004

2. VISION STATEMENT

Joshua Tree is unusual among gateway communities in sharing the name of its adjoining National Park, as well as being named after that bit of nature especially identified with its singular surroundings. Many of the remarkable and unique characteristics of the National Park are also shared in large measure by the community known as Joshua Tree. Therefore, it is reasonable if not mandatory to expect that Joshua Tree community should consider itself a guardian and caretaker of this excellent national or even world resource on its border.

The town of Joshua Tree began as a sparse, largely homestead settlement along a road leading to the newly designated Joshua Tree National Monument. Since then the incorporated towns of Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms have grown up along the western and eastern boundaries of a still unincorporated area, most of which is officially designated as San Bernardino County Services Area, CSA-20, more commonly known as Joshua Tree.

The majority of residents of Joshua Tree are persons who have sought out the area for its obvious rural, peaceful, scenic and environmentally appealing qualities, such as characterize the National Park itself. Many residents first became acquainted with the location as visitors to the Park. Numerous persons have also found the area to be especially congruous and inspiring toward the arts, which are well represented here. Yet, throughout its history an explicit vision and comprehensive plan for long-term development of Joshua Tree has not been expressed. In spite of this, the region has managed to acquire an identity, character and atmosphere that might be summarized as being almost an extension of the Park.

Lately, as has happened throughout coastal California, there are forces steadily advancing into the desert seeking economic opportunities and other interests external to this region. Location, as often repeated, is the key, which in the case of Joshua Tree is an established population infrastructure together with all the other desirable features mentioned. Yet, as warned in counsel and fables going back to ancient times, that which is most desired is frequently destroyed through excess and lack of proper judgment and wisdom. Examples abound in urban and, sadly, rural areas as well, of the unfortunate consequences of unfettered advancement of interests that are insensitive or sometimes antithetical to human, cultural, environmental, and, indeed, all the ultimate qualities of life and community. This goes beyond the trite saying of "not in my backyard", and does not refer to inconvenience or annoyance but to preservation of long-established and often highly cherished values and expectations -- as well summarized in the following quotation from the United States Supreme Court in *Berman vs. Parker* in 1971:

The concept of public welfare is broad and inclusive. The values it represents are spiritual as well physical; aesthetic as well as monetary. It is well within the power of

the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious, clean, well-balanced and carefully patrolled."

It is in this spirit, therefore, that the following Community Plan for Joshua Tree is proposed so as to serve the values and expectations historically intrinsic to the community and its role as steward to its namesake National Park.

LAND USE

Land use or zoning designations for Joshua Tree were instituted in somewhat the remote past. An official rationale for these original designations does not appear to be in place, nor is there evidence of a fully comprehensive community plan or design in the existing land-use maps. One major purpose of this plan is thus to establish a certain degree of modern cohesiveness to land use designations, and as necessary to carefully modify or alter some of these in order to conform to a properly detailed and thoughtful contemporary community plan. Specific rationale and motivation for these will be detailed as they are presented.

HOUSING

Most housing in the Joshua Tree area was initiated in the homestead era, and much of present housing can be fairly described as to an extent descended or evolved from that history. Clearly, a new outlook and set of perceptions and insights must now be brought to bear on the matter of housing. The potential spectrum is wide indeed, from the problem of homelessness or inadequate housing in the state to growth of resort and vacation dwellings, to the almost limitless size, luxury, and use of land and resources in home construction. The sociological, economic, ethical, and other problems and questions involved are extensive and critically important for any plan of a community. Much of this reduces to so-called balance and proportion. Appreciable legislation and its diverse interpretations and uncertainties must also to be factored into the very large equation of housing. In the development of the plan these issues are carefully and conscientiously weighed toward the establishment of a final product which although an arguable compromise among all the imposed constraints, represents in any case the best of this community and its spirit.

CONSERVATION

The category of conservation and associated concepts of ecology and environment are relatively late additions to the task of community planning. Yet there no longer remains any question that on a finite and fragile planet these matters are increasingly of serious concern. As such they are given utmost priority in this community plan. Some prior transgressions will have to be unavoidably forgiven, but other past mistakes will not be repeated or any longer given free rein. Vulnerability of the National Park and the several endangered components of the ecosystem are to be protected almost without compromise. This is definitely the wish

of everyone associated with this region and no reason can be imagined to consider otherwise. In addition, certain previously unknown archeological facts and components have come to light. These also will be addressed in the prescriptions for conservation and preservation in the community plan.

OPEN SPACE

Open space is almost a subcategory of conservation, but with relevance chiefly toward aesthetic and spiritual values as mentioned by the Supreme Court in *Berman*. Open space also enters importantly into the element of housing. Again to be mentioned that with location being the principal consideration in matters of land and real-estate, it is manifestly the views and vistas of Joshua Tree which are among the primary "selling-points" for location. Of course, there is nothing more vulnerable to building and development than open space -- truly a golden-egg in jeopardy!

It would seem self-contradictory to ignore or minimize the perils to open space while expounding its virtues. This matter will be addressed from the standpoint of more-or-less fixed ratios of open versus developed space together with systematic on-site inspection of all areas of CSA-20, the ultimate goal being to arrive at an optimal combination of open to developed space subject to all the other conditions related to housing and conservation. It is expected that moderate long-term business and commercial development can be adequately handled without significantly affecting open space requirements.

AIR QUALITY

The location and climate of this region, approximately 3000 ft above the nearby Coachella/Palm Springs valley, has been fortunate in offering some immunity from the ever encroaching plume of Los Angeles basin smog. One of the initial attractions of the area was as a clean air sanctuary for persons with lung ailments. Regrettably, all this has steadily deteriorated in recent years. In spite of the inadequacy of comprehensive scientific and instrumentation data, the overwhelming conclusion of human observation over at least the past 30 years is that visible haze, particularly from the direction of the I-10 pass through the Morongo grade, has been mostly worsening and is definitely not improving. There is no longer any question regarding presence of substantial haze in sections of the National Park, a fact that has lately garnered national publicity. The possibility of this locality becoming like the bleary Inland and Coachella areas would certainly be a disastrous consequence for residents who have had every reason to expect otherwise. Vigilance and all feasible action are clearly indicated.

ECONOMICS

In keeping with the overall objectives for Joshua Tree, economic development projects should retain the community's rural character, promote responsible

ecotourism, place principal value upon sustainability, and encourage the growth and retention of artistic enterprises.

The economic development aspect presented in this plan came about as an outgrowth of the wide range of comments and suggestions expressed by citizens during the establishment of the plan. However, we recognize the concurrent efforts by the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce in regard to the community plan and, of course, appreciate the experience and expertise represented by the Chamber. We welcome and look forward to their subsequent contribution and enhancement of the economic elements of the community plan.

Authorized by Jack Fuller, Chair of the Joshua Tree organizing committee for revision of the county General Plan for Joshua Tree.

3. LAND USE ELEMENT

[Circulation Element](#)
[Housing Element](#)

3.A General

Gateway communities such as Joshua Tree face special and unique conditions in regard to issues of growth. The common approach of, “Where do we put growth and how are we going to pay for it?” is clearly inadequate. Rather than past trends being the only basis for future planning, growth should also be based on the community character vision, which among other factors needs to emphasize the area’s unique outdoor attributes and enhancement of qualities important to both residents and visitors.¹

Overwhelming expressed opinion of residents was concern about over-development in Joshua Tree which would mimic the very undesirable features witnessed in other nearby communities experiencing recent sudden and uncontrolled growth. Of overriding concern here is the value of areas that have little or no building, such as scenic vistas or habitat that supports wildlife. Also of great importance is the social and economic diversity that takes place in active small town community life which is an equally essential component of character. Indeed, communities across the nation are losing their regional differences, their special characteristics and their once-diverse social and economic population bases to an ever more uniform society. It’s been stated that “It is a joy to encounter places that preserve, enhance and celebrate those things that set them apart and give them a meaning and personality all their own.”²

In view of the above considerations, the following are the salient factors and conclusions for future growth and land-use development in Joshua Tree:

- **Joshua Tree is an unincorporated region totally dependent on San Bernardino County for: Fire, Police, Library, Parks & Recreation, Street Lighting, Road Maintenance, Flood & Animal Control, Senior Services, Senior and Child Protective Services, Building & Safety Inspection, and Code enforcement.**
- **According to the United States 2000 census 39% of Joshua Tree residents are over the age of 55 and in greater need of most of the above services.**
- **According to the United States 2000 census, Joshua Tree has a housing vacancy rate of 24%.**
- **Joshua Tree is well known as a seismically active area also prone to severe weather including flash flooding. According to the State of California General Plan guidelines document, “Many combinations of benefits can be derived from good planning. In particular, cost effective hazard mitigation activities reduce people and property’s risk of exposure to the hazard, reduces governmental disaster assistance costs, and often increases societal and environmental benefits as well.”**
- **According to the San Bernardino County Morongo Sub-regional Planning Area Document, “...the absences of infrastructure facilities and the carrying capacity of existing water sources may significantly limit future development in this sub-region.” And, “One other major constraint to future development in the South Desert is limited accessibility; access to the area is limited to Highway 62 and Highway 247. Most of the collector roads in this sub-region are unpaved. Major investment on transportation facilities may therefore be required to support future development in these areas.”**
- **The San Bernardino County Housing Element Update 2000-2006 dated September 2002 predicts a growth rate of 1.3% for Joshua Tree.**

It is therefore concluded that a reasonable limit on growth rate of housing units in Joshua Tree for at least the first five years of this plan should be 1.3% to a maximum of 2%, and not greatly exceed this rate for the period immediately thereafter, since this amount is agreed consistent with current infrastructure capabilities.

Urban development [which in this case refers to specific concentration of business and housing within a rural context] should be located in areas where necessary services and facilities are available.³ Community consensus is that this should preferably be the following locations: The immediate vicinity of the present downtown core mostly in or around State Route 62 between Halee Road and Sunburst Road; also along Route 62 in the region of Copper Mountain College,

High Desert Hospital, and Sunfair Road. It is advised that future public services and facilities be located to encourage development in or around these areas.

An important recently established criterion for protection of ground water sources is for a maximum of two septic tanks per acre.⁴ It is strongly advisable therefore that all new construction should provide secondary sewage treatment systems for sites having more than two units per acre. Plumbing for sewer hook-ups and grey water systems are encouraged on new construction of homes when density exceeds two homes per acre.

A general practice in county plans is to place buffer zones between areas of markedly different usage or character.⁵ Alluding once more to the scenic aspects of Joshua Tree, appropriate buffering such as between new subdivisions and adjacent rural living land use areas is recommended. In particular in the case of commercial or industrial facilities this should include such things as increased building setbacks incorporating earthen berms and native landscaping, decorative walls, or trails and pedestrian areas.⁶

In order to encourage and promote environmental responsibility and energy conservation, it is proposed that Joshua Tree be a vanguard for these objectives through innovative design and construction of dwellings and private energy sources. Existing building codes, including size and space requirements, should be examined and proposals made to allow inclusion of alternate proven energy efficient seismically superior designs for individual dwellings. Consideration should be given in particular to dwellings with smaller floor space adequate for special circumstances perhaps within an approved alternate housing overlay for sections of Joshua Tree. As always, a complete building permit process should be followed in this as in all construction in Joshua Tree. As to be expected in all such cases, these alternatives should be individually evaluated through appropriate land-use variances including opportunity for neighborhood and other relevant community review.

Resources should be applied toward developing a sustainable building association in Joshua Tree that educates local developers and contractors. (This association may be supported through a retail store featuring energy and water conservation products.) The association would have displays that reinforce adherence to the Night-Sky, Retention of Native Vegetation, and Property-grading ordinances, and would maintain a partnership with the Joshua Basin Water District to promote responsible water recycling and septic installation.

3.B Single Family Residential

Very strong community concern has been expressed regarding views and vistas. Toward this end it is recommended that maximum height of homes be limited to 25 ft. above grade (2-stories) instead of the present county limit of 35 feet. Property size

with respect to the construction footprint is to be maintained as established by County Code.

Particularly in locations near scenic routes or other visitor sites, screening and limitations on storage containers relative to residence size is recommended.

3.C Multi Family Residential

Multi-family residential developments are to be best located near principal transit routes and public facilities. Each multi-residential structure within a development should not exceed four dwelling units. This size appears the most consistent with the rural character of Joshua Tree which has been expressed as a priority by residents.

3.D Commercial and Industrial

Small locally owned businesses are encouraged on frontage roads within approximately 2 blocks north and south of State Route 62 near or at arterial streets.

In order to preserve Joshua Tree's dark skies as well as the traditional ambience of the community, "drive-through" businesses and "24-hour businesses" are discouraged subject to public approval and consideration of noise, lighting, nuisance, and law-enforcement issues.

The more restrictive Commercial Land Use Districts are recommended as a transitional buffer between commercial and residential uses.

Industrial areas close to commercial or residential sites should contain sufficient land area to allow for proper setbacks, screening and noise and light pollution reduction.

In all cases it is considered mandatory that industrial development will be compatible with the desert environment and that water requirements undergo strict review relative to existing local standards for excessive usage.

Reiterating community concern regarding views and vistas, it is strongly urged that maximum building height be limited to 25 ft. (2-stories) instead of present county limit of 35 feet, and maximum size of buildings not to exceed 15,000 square feet as part of the Joshua Tree overlay district. Community limits on building size are being established in many locations. A limit of 15,000 square feet is becoming an optimum standard in order to accommodate citizen wishes for preservation of community character while allowing for reasonable building requirements in communities such as Joshua Tree.⁷

Per comments forthcoming also in the enforcement section of this plan, recent experience has shown that a much-improved avenue for public information regarding communication towers is seriously required.

Strong community preference was for commercial energy-generating windmills to be prohibited.

Other recommendations are precautions to divert commercial traffic away from residential streets and planning where feasible for parking in the rear of businesses.

Land-use change is realized as probably the most difficult thing to propose in a general plan update. Yet there is wide recognition that long-term protection of important scenic or natural resources is crucial to insure that incremental development activities do not cumulatively cause unanticipated impacts on wildlife habitat and habitat-based resources, scenic resources and air and water quality. Indeed, it should be remembered that natural and scenic resource issues have a direct and profound effect on the economic well being of the community.⁸

As background, the following is quoted from the 1980 Joshua Tree Community Plan:

“Joshua Tree has evolved from a rural retirement area to a community which is attracting an increasing number of new residents. To provide for future residential uses, a variety of residentially designated land use densities must be provided in suitable locations throughout the community. Selected portions of the Community Plan Area ... have been determined to be best suited to a rural living style with large lot sizes and few urban services provided or anticipated in the near future. It is within these areas that the preservation of the predominant rural character of the Joshua Tree Community should occur.” And, “The Board of Supervisors determines that high density residential areas should be provided within easy access to necessary services and shopping facilities”. The community has furthermore strongly expressed that there should be well-defined buffer zones between Joshua Tree and the adjacent incorporated and unincorporated areas of Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms.

It is within the scope of the above that the following land-use changes are proposed for consideration (Referring to the [land use map](#) at the end):

- **Section Numbers 3 and 4 south (south of 62), west side of Olympic between Alta Loma and Onaga, change from 4RM (4 unit multiple family) to RS18M (minimum 18,000 sq ft Single family residential). The 1980 community plan stated that south of Alta Loma will be RL (Rural Living) as a buffer to the National Park; the majority of the neighborhood is RS 18 and RL; also there is no infrastructure in place to support 4RM at this location. The present zoning conflicts with the requirement for land use zones to have appropriate buffer zones between them. This does not affect the size of the parcels, only their utilization.**

- Sections 34 and 3 south of 62, north and south side of Alta Loma east of Olympic, change from 4RM to RS 18. For the same reasons as above.
- Section 33 south of 62 east of La Contenta: Because this section borders the wildlife corridor, an attempt should be made to secure funds to acquire this section for Resource Conservation. If this fails, a five acre corridor on the west boundary along La Contenta should be zoned RL5 (5 acre minimum lots) with the remainder zoned RL2.5 (2.5 acre minimum lots) with a 50 foot setback on State Route 62. This area is currently zoned for commercial and RS10 (10,000 sq ft, single family residential; see map). This conflicts with community desires for a buffer zone between Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree. Rural Living designation is proposed as a compromise to achieve this. Also this zoning would facilitate designation of Route 62 as a scenic route.
- Section 28 north of 62 and east of La Contenta: As above except that if resource conservation acquisition is unsuccessful this section with exception of the RL20 (Rural living 20 acre minimum parcel) and RL5 (Rural living 5 acre minimum parcel) portions should be changed to RL (Rural Living 2.5 acre). This section is a flood plain as well as part of the wildlife corridor.
- Section 34 south of 62, west of Sunny Vista: Change RS10 to RS18 to be consistent with the rest of the neighborhood. There should also be a 50 foot set back from Route 62.
- Section 26 north of 62, southern RL portion, north of the commercial district: This area is recommended for higher density and/or multiple family housing because of its proximity to services.
- Section 17 south of 62, south of Quail Springs: Attempt to acquire this section for permanent resource conservation because it is a wildlife corridor and is surrounded on three sides by BLM land, and is less than a mile from the National Park. Otherwise, all of section 17 should be RC (Resource Conservation) due to flood zone. As was discovered during this community plan effort by personal observation of many areas of Joshua Tree, this as with several other locations is not marked on the county flood map. For obvious reasons the county flood maps should be corrected and updated at the earliest opportunity.
- Section 11 south of 62 at the southern end of Sunny Vista: Attempt to secure this section for permanent resource-conservation because of the heavy tortoise population and presence of ancient juniper and heavy Joshua tree population. It is also a very rocky mountainous terrain and a flood plain.

Although not of immediate focus, the needs of north Joshua Tree, that is, those sections north of State Route 62 and east of Sunburst, need to be addressed when that area develops. School sites, community centers, parks and fire stations should be predicated on the clusters of population.

4. CIRCULATION ELEMENT

4.A General

Establishment of a long-range circulation plan that provides the level of service necessary for current and anticipated land uses in Joshua Tree is recommended.

Because of its area wide importance, Twenty-nine Palms Highway should be maintained as the regional transportation route.⁹

Encourage the improvement of desired north/south and east/west routes in north Joshua Tree while keeping to scenic route guidelines.¹⁰

Encourage the establishment of dirt road maintenance districts or organizations.

Roadway planning, development and design should strive for improved flood control, air quality and reduced noise levels.¹¹

Road development and design standards shall be consistent with maintaining the aesthetic value of scenic corridors and scenic highway designations. This includes such things as traffic islands which should be designed both for convenience of traffic and local businesses, as well as having a potential for aesthetic utility such as well-maintained gardens and exhibition of outdoor artwork.

Encourage improved traffic management and safety at elementary schools.

4.B State Route 62

Traffic growth on State Route 62 should be kept at as minimal a rate as possible consistent with projected levels of development. Several advantages are seen for minimizing the number of additional streets accessing Route 62 and providing of alternatives to Route 62.

4C. Transit and Pedestrian

Enhancement of the public transit system, Morongo Basin Transit Authority, including supporting infrastructure, should be considered an important priority with regional development.

Paths and trails along Route 62 and Alta Loma to make Joshua Tree more pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian friendly are recommended as part of the developing character anticipated for the community.

4.D Improvements

Complete continuous turn lane on State Route 62

Extend and improve Commercial Way to Hallee Road

Install a traffic signal at the new egress from Copper Mountain College and State Route 62

North Joshua tree needs additional east/west and north/south paved corridors for emergency vehicle access and to alleviate traffic on State Route 62. The following roads are recommended to be taken under consideration: Winters Road, Aberdeen, La Brisa, Sunburst, Sunfair, Rice, Border and Broadway.

5. HOUSING ELEMENT

5A. Housing Types

Because of the status of Joshua Tree as a location for artists and others of creative talents and outlook, it is expected and encouraged that housing types and styles should embrace a wide range of diversity.

5B. Construction Qualities and Improvements

Encourage new construction to embrace sustainable architectural concepts and incorporate the latest conservation technologies.

Encourage the use of grants and/or other resources to infill (rehabilitate) the older neighborhoods.

- Occupancy of existing abandoned or boarded-up homes should have priority over new construction in a neighborhood.**

5C. Mobile Homes

For reasons of aesthetic qualities and to avoid the stereotyped image detrimental to communities and residents alike, mobile home parks now commonly allow only double wide or larger mobile homes. This practice is strongly recommended for new mobile home parks in Joshua Tree. The well-known seismic characteristics of this region as well as the now not unfamiliar occasional tornado together with aesthetic considerations are incentive that any non-permanent yet long-term structures should have proper and stable foundations and securement.

6. CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

6.A. Open Space

An extremely valuable opportunity exists for enhancement of central Joshua Tree as a gateway and transition to the national park by achieving designation of State Route 62 as a State Scenic Route. In addition, Park Boulevard/Quail Springs Road should be similarly designated as an official County Scenic Corridor.

Accomplishment of these designations is considered a priority goal of this community.¹² Application should be made wherever feasible for grant funding to purchase land to preserve the open spaces that are so much of the identity of Joshua Tree. These would also compliment the wildlife corridors and establish buffer zones.

In the meantime the scenic environment adjacent to these routes should be protected and improved by:

- **Creating a buffer zone between Joshua Tree and its neighboring communities.**
- **Limiting the heights of buildings to 25 feet above grade.¹³ This provision was highly endorsed by community members.**
- **Promoting those kinds of development, housing and business design standards that are consistent with maintaining the aesthetic value of the scenic corridors.**
- **All new construction along the scenic corridors should have a fifty-foot setback with natural landscaping.**
- **All subdivision development should include an established fixed ratio of land devoted to open space to land being developed.**

It is recommended that no new streetlights be installed south of Alta Loma (toward the National Park). Alta Loma is widely considered to be more or less the transition boundary to the Park. Any consideration of new street lighting should be subject to public discussion.

- **Seek grants and/or other resources to renovate the downtown area of Joshua Tree.**

As is universally recommended for gateway communities¹⁴ and as a reasonable extension of the scenic attributes of the National Park and its vicinity the following is further recommended:

- **Scenic vistas where the natural slope exceeds fifteen percent should be protected by requiring building foundations for residential structures to conform to the natural slope to ensure that rooflines do not eliminate or dominate the ridgelines.¹⁵ It is considered mandatory that building on ridgelines be prohibited**

- **Hillside contours should be strictly preserved by prohibiting hillside sculpting or grading that destroys the original contour.**
- **Mechanical clearing of construction sites shall be limited to the building envelope and driveway only.**
- **All parcels south of Alta Loma shall have a minimum parcel size of 2.5 acres as a buffer to Joshua Tree National Park.**
- **All mountain regions, that is those exceeding the typical measure of approximately 30% slope, should be maintained at the present parcel size or a minimum of five acres whichever is greater. Maintaining this standard is of utmost importance to preserve the scenic vistas and further enhance the buffer zones adjacent to the National Park, which has been expressed as a high priority by the Park.¹⁶**

Portable toilet facilities and all temporary living quarters, such as trailers or recreational vehicles should only be allowed on site while construction is in progress with an approved building permit. One year is thought to be a reasonable maximum recommended length of time for home building subject to strict, well-defined variance conditions for special circumstances.

It is desired that underground installation of all electrical lines in Joshua Tree will be accomplished in the near future.

Large sections of land need to be allocated to a land trust that preserves view sheds, wildlife corridors and the natural ecosystem. The presence of a viable land trust in Joshua Tree would be a prestigious validation of its partnership with the National Park and its unique gateway designation. The land trust should be affiliated with a national organization to benefit from the contributions of a variety of donors.

6.B Environment, Wildlife and Plant Life Preservation

A very strong consensus exists in Joshua Tree for protection of its namesake. Preservation of the Joshua Tree is considered a priority. The following is well within the context of existing county regulations and is presented here for particular emphasis:

- **No Joshua Trees should leave the community of Joshua Tree.**
- **Before a Joshua Tree is removed, a building official will make a finding that no other reasonable siting alternative exists for the development of the land.**
- **Relocation on site should be strongly encouraged. If this is not possible, there will be a list maintained in the county building & safety office of Joshua Tree residents willing to adopt and care for relocated trees.**
- **Relocation costs will be borne by the developer/home builder.**
- **Retention and transplanted standards will follow best nursery practices.**

All existing and discovered archeological sites including all petroglyph sites should be preserved. Construction or intrusion on these sites should be prohibited.

The following is presented as a supplemental section to this plan in order to provide further pertinent information and secure additional needed attention to the issues of preservation and conservation as was strenuously and overwhelmingly articulated in community surveys:

- **The impacts of development on wildlife resources fall into two classes. Some site-specific impacts such as topographic alterations and clearing and removing vegetation are immediate and have direct negative impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat. These same site-specific impacts, however, often have indirect impacts on adjacent and neighboring lands through a process of habitat fragmentation, disruption of habitat continuity, and loss of habitat to animals that rely on both the developed parcel and surrounding lands for habitat. Direct and indirect impacts, when combined with incremental, individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time become cumulative impacts.¹⁷ The desert tortoise is an example.**
- **Continuous wildlife corridors should be established along the natural washes allowing wildlife to travel to and from Joshua Tree National Park and BLM lands in north Joshua Tree. Fencing in wildlife corridors should be discouraged. Developers should be encouraged to dedicate open space lands to link wildlife corridors.¹⁸**
- **When specific storm drain or wastewater treatment facilities are required in the future, construction will utilize a design that retains the natural character of the drainage channel to the extent possible. This protects wildlife corridors and prevents loss of critical habitat in the region.¹⁹**
- **Working in conjunction with Joshua Tree National Park, a preservation strategy for the soil ecosystem or cryptobiotic crust should be adopted to improve air quality, promote erosion and flood control, and to protect native plant and animal species. In that effort the wholesale mechanical clearing of building sites should be prohibited. The retention of natural vegetation in landscaped areas should be encouraged.**
- **Turf areas should be discouraged except at parks and educational facilities.**
- **All landscaped areas should use the xeriscape technique with subterranean watering systems.**
- **Remaining cesspools should be replaced with septic or sewer systems when ownership of the property is transferred.**

Because of the widespread problem of illegal dumping, garbage service by landlords to tenants, and mandatory garbage pickup is a recommendation for the future. Very

relevant at present, however, is the recent implementation of strict illegal dumping ordinances in the adjacent incorporated communities. It is therefore imperative to now enact a similar ordinance for unincorporated areas to forestall the increased dumping likely to follow, especially in Joshua Tree.

6.C. Signage

An architectural design standard for signage consistent with retaining the rural community character, and adhering to night sky ordinances is strongly recommended. In anticipation of scenic highway designation, no billboards should be allowed on scenic corridors or routes in Joshua Tree.

6.D. Light

There should be continued and consistent enforcement of the night sky ordinance. In particular, lighting for new developments should be specifically designed to eliminate glare on adjacent properties. Of very great importance in regard to the area's appeal for star-gazing and dark-sky ambience is avoidance of upward-directed lighting which gives rise to serious light pollution.

7. NOISE ELEMENT

[AIR QUALITY](#)

[SAFETY ELEMENT](#)

[PUBLIC FACILITIES ELEMENT](#)

- The quiet rural atmosphere and noise levels in Joshua Tree should be maintained.
- Planned outdoor activity centers should not increase current noise levels.
- To encourage noise level reduction, all vehicles, including off-road, should travel at a safe and reduced speed on private roads.
- All off-road vehicles operating in Joshua Tree should be equipped with mufflers functioning at state and county noise-reduction requirements.
- Off-road vehicles using private roads should be traveling to and from specific locations rather than for amusement or recreation purposes.
- No off-road vehicles will travel onto or across open private property without the owner's written consent.
- State noise ordinances shall be strictly enforced in Joshua Tree.

8. AIR QUALITY ELEMENT

Very promising efforts have recently been instituted to more closely examine local air quality, especially as impacting the National Park.²⁰ Results of these endeavors are anticipated to illuminate the nature of the problem and hopefully suggest

possible remedies. In the meantime, the following is offered as a first step toward meeting the challenge of reversing the unfortunate trend of ever advancing pollution into this once pristine locality.

The exact contribution of local sources of air pollution in Joshua Tree is somewhat uncertain. There is anecdotal reporting of increased local haze coinciding with periods of heavy use of dirt roads.²¹ Best likelihood is that the majority of larger (PM10) particulate matter is locally generated. In any case, serious effort toward reduction of local air pollution is obviously mandated.

Recommendations for this objective are the following:

- **Eventual paving of all major dirt roads or dirt roads bearing a large fraction of local traffic. Another possibility to be given serious study and consideration is the use of recently developed road-stabilizing compounds in lieu of paving.**
- **Request that the Mojave Air Quality Management District approve a regulation banning non-essential activities that generate unduly large quantities of dust.**
- **Maintain close scrutiny of any manufacturing, industrial or similar activity having potential for generation of pollution, emphasizing strict enforcement of all existing air quality regulations.**
- **Request that the Mojave Air Quality Management District adopt a policy of environmental justice to ensure that all land-use decisions, including enforcement, are made in an equitable fashion in order to protect residents, regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or geographic location, from the health effects of air pollution.**
- **Maintain careful awareness of potential local pollution sources upon those having special sensitivity such as schoolchildren, elderly, and hospital or other such institutional residents.**
- **Initiate a study to determine the full impact of off-road vehicle generated pollution on the area. This study should distinguish between recreational vehicles and other use vehicles in determination of priority or need for controls and regulation.**
- **Require that all California guidelines and regulations be strictly followed in relation to building construction, grading operations during periods of high wind, and conservation and energy efficiency throughout the Morongo Basin.**
- **The efforts toward pollution control by the MBTA are to be commended and all similar transportation services in the region are encouraged to follow suit.**
- **Present efforts by the military base toward pollution control are recognized and should be regularly consulted as part of the regional program of monitoring and enforcement.**

- **The community of Joshua Tree is on record as fully supporting all efforts of Joshua Tree National Park to improve monitoring, enforcement, and all other measures to mitigate existing air quality problems in the Park.**

The problem of pollution transport from the Los Angeles basin must continue to be rigorously studied and fully recognized for its effect on the entire Morongo Basin. However controversial or troublesome, influence should be brought to bear upon the contiguous Los Angeles urban areas to account for the transport of air pollution into the desert. Improvement of greater Los Angeles basin air quality should not be regarded by them as a sole criterion if there is no improvement, or worse, further degradation of desert, and in particular, high-desert air quality. These concerns should be explicitly brought to the attention of all relevant Federal, State, and Local governments and agencies, through effort of San Bernardino County as part of its stated mission of, “ ... providing service that promotes the health, safety, well-being, and quality of life to residents...”²²

9. SAFETY ELEMENT

9A. Natural Hazards

Historically there has been well-known serious damage to property, homes and businesses due to floodwaters originating at the higher elevations of Joshua Tree and the National Park. The problem of yearly flooding in downtown, which has an obvious adverse effect on much of what is being mentioned in this document, needs to be addressed. A channeling system for floodwater runoff should be designed and implemented. At minimum, this should consist of diverting berms and curbs along county maintained roads to assure that runoff is concentrated in established flood channel locations and easements and away from private property. Even though many roads are not county maintained, the consequences of uncontrolled runoff are extensive and can have serious economic and other devastating impacts throughout the community. For these reasons the county should move toward installation of culvert systems under major roads as well as other properly engineered flood control measures appropriate to the region.

Considering the lack of emergency services and agencies and the limited vehicular access routes, development should be planned with the utmost care and consideration regarding the natural hazards in Joshua Tree. Development should be prohibited in flood zones and on known earthquake faults. There will be no development in areas until adequate fire protection, water sources and emergency communications are assured. No new construction should alter natural flood runoff.

The most effective strategy for keeping development out of natural hazard areas is to provide information in the form of area-wide mapping which “red-flags” potential problem areas to property owners, government officials and neighbors before development is planned.²³

The county should encourage the use of pervious paving materials on all commercial, industrial and institutional parking areas, where feasible. A known procedure is to use landscaped areas as depressions to receive and percolate runoff for large parking areas.²⁴

Prompt re-vegetation of land disturbed during construction should be required.

A need exists for a flood control channel under State Route 62 at La Contenta. This would also complete the continuous wildlife corridor to and from Joshua Tree National Park and to and from the BLM lands to the north.

County flood maps must be updated and improved (see the land-use section).

Strong consideration should be given to extending the distance from residential areas where firearms may be discharged.²⁵

9B. Animal Control

It is hoped that further county resources will be devoted toward the problem of stray animals. Among other concerns, special means should be established for mitigation of packs of stray dogs which are known to cause serious problems. On the other hand, residents are also strongly urged to fulfill county requirements of licensing and immunization as well as proper individual control of domestic animals. We acknowledge that concomitant with desire for county services, citizens should additionally observe their responsibilities toward community expectations and validly established government assessments and regulations.

9C. Emergency Preparedness

A number of resident accounts suggest that existing preparedness plans be closely reviewed and necessary development of disaster and emergency preparedness be accomplished through coordination by local agencies. In particular, area maps have been found to be inadequate or sometimes inaccurate for emergency use. Preparation and updating of reliable maps for emergency services, understood to be now in process, is clearly imperative and should be accomplished no later than January, 2005.

9D. Water Quality

Joshua Tree’s water needs are currently served by the Joshua Basin Water District. Residents have expressed a concern for maintenance of aquifer protection and

groundwater quality in general. Means for groundwater safeguards are commonly specified in community plans such as for Jackson, Wyoming and we anticipate that every professional effort will be made to apply such methods to the similarly emerging needs of this region as it develops. This community plan endorses the continued local management of Joshua Tree's water resources by the district.

10. PUBLIC FACILITIES ELEMENT

10.A. Community Facilities

Residents and visitors alike think of Joshua Tree as having a unique and special quality. Almost universal opinion is that the downtown area in particular should reflect or reinforce its singular characteristics of scenic and desert character, and at the same time be a definable living community that is consistent with and promoting of these attributes. To these ends it is felt that Joshua Tree should have an appropriately conceived downtown plaza/ civic center/ meeting place, and provisions for equestrian traffic, bicyclists and safe pedestrian passage. The community has expressed a desire for downtown demonstration gardens with native plant life. Location of outdoor artwork by local artists is suggested in the downtown area.

It is suggested that an urban design program be established to capture and encourage a central theme for the downtown area.

10.B. Governmental

Expansion and renovation of the county Joshua Tree Library is strongly recommended in view of likely population growth.²⁶

A satellite county office should be established to specifically serve the community of Joshua Tree and other nearby unincorporated areas. This should include a fire/police dispatcher, long overdue in this region.

- Development funds should assume a fair share of funding for construction, maintenance and operation of existing and future public buildings and facilities.²⁷

10.C. Parks and Recreation

Existing regular public park facilities should all be developed at the earliest opportunity.

As population increases in the Sunfair area, development of a regional community center and park is encouraged.

- **Preservation of CSA20's (Joshua Tree's) Park and Recreation's "Section Six" as a day use only natural conservation area is seen as a priority. No development should occur there.**

11. ECONOMICS ELEMENT

ENFORCEMENT ELEMENT **REFERENCES**

11.A. Visual and Performing Arts

Joshua Tree already has a large contingent of musicians, writers, sculptors, painters and performers. Economic development efforts need to support artist cooperatives, online gallery sales, tour buses for studio tours and art sales, promotion for music festivals, and downtown gallery spaces that are in partnership with major urban galleries. Resources need to be applied so that Joshua Tree is developed and recognized as the artistic center of San Bernardino County.

11.B. Ecotourism & International Cooperation

The tourist footprint must be kept minimally intrusive and yet allow for the growth of a variety of businesses that entertain guests to the national park. Promotional materials need to emphasize the fine arts and the community's resource conservation ethic. Possible new entertainment venues could include an observatory, artificial rock climbing walls, concert hall, art galleries, bicycle and electric vehicle concessions. New accommodations for overnight stays might include campgrounds, additional bed and breakfast homes, and an American Youth Hostel. Economic development activities should be supportive of existing motels and inns and enhance the attractiveness of those facilities.

11.C. Retail & Shopping

Joshua Tree does not need to be completely self-supporting in this aspect since the surrounding communities have created retail and shopping venues that incorporate the needs of our residents for periodic (approximately weekly) shopping that does not necessitate very repeated travel. New retail/shopping developments should not duplicate the efforts of the adjoining communities but rather reinforce Joshua Tree's unique downtown character. A shopping district needs to be developed that encourages pedestrian movement. A centralized and permanent Certified Farmer's Market would reinforce Joshua Tree's holistic lifestyle and should be investigated for a possible downtown retail anchor. New construction is welcome as long as it respects the natural resources present in the desert. Large scale, nationally branded enterprises may be considered if they adapt their standard format and propose

projects that are scaled appropriately, and conform to the village themes; for example, no drive-through window concessions and monument-styled signage only.

Some degree of interest in a centrally located supermarket-style grocery store was expressed in citizen surveys. Since supply deliveries are typically made by large trucks at non peak hours, siting of the store needs to be close to Highway 62 yet not disrupt residents or visitors. A possible range of locations for the store may be found on the north side of 62. The store should present proposals that conform to the overall downtown themes, and assure minimal intrusion on the small-enterprise downtown character.

11.D. County Infrastructure and Centralized Services

Joshua Tree has been identified as one of the county's locations for law enforcement and social services. Economic development efforts should propose ways to further service and expand upon these employment sectors without conflicting with the community's priorities for ecotourism and artistic expression. Development of the hospital as a widely respected and accessible facility may be accomplished through greater reliance on county funds.

11.E. Research & Technology Development

Copper Mountain College (CMC) should be supported in the development of a sophisticated electronic library and solar technology research institute. The type of academics that would be supportive of Joshua Tree's economic prerogatives include programs for natural resource management, nursing, telecommunications, information systems, fine arts, culinary science and parks and recreation. Initiation of a Desert Studies Institute at the College is enthusiastically endorsed.

11.F. Existing & Future Development Efforts

This plan recognizes the efforts of the Morongo Basin Economic Development Consortium and the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce and applauds the efforts and creativity of local business owners. The Morongo Basin Regional Economic Development Action Plan details many pertinent concerns; Joshua Tree should increase its involvement in any future development plans.

Among the considerations voiced by some in the community is the value of tax-revenues from local business to help fund infrastructure and allow for the possibility of eventual incorporation. As with all things, this is a matter of tradeoff, specifically among all the other elements in this plan, and will require careful evaluation. Creation of high-technology, or the like employment, and entry-level jobs having advantage for youth employment are worthy objectives. However, only a massive urban center, which is certainly precluded here, can hope to begin to provide the range of professional and other employment opportunities sufficient to

challenge and genuinely serve the occupational needs of the full spectrum of local young graduates.

12. ENFORCEMENT ELEMENT

By absolute consensus of local citizens, the issue of enforcement is considered to be one of the most if not the most critical aspect of county policy in Joshua Tree, and is therefore included as a supplemental element to this community plan. Whether or not considered to be partly in fact or partly in perception, the overwhelming view of residents is that present enforcement of county planning regulations and ordinances has been largely unsatisfactory, thereby giving rise to serious misgivings as to the ultimate effectiveness of the community plan itself. This is not an unheard of concern as evidenced by the following quote from the year 2000 General Plan of Taos, New Mexico, a town often cited as almost a kindred community to Joshua Tree: “The Planning Department will carry out the community’s planning, zoning and regulatory policies while providing consistent, high-quality service. Their goal is to guide the physical growth and appearance of the community in order to enhance the collective quality of life of community residents and ensure safe, healthy and quality development.”

The following issues have been vigorously expressed to be among this community’s greatest concerns, and represent the foremost pressing demands in this regard:

- Without exaggeration or hyperbole, universal opinion by residents who have been associated with the county permitting process is that present enforcement is inadequate to the point of egregiousness regarding regulations and ordinances as written; to say nothing of often heard pessimism about the effectiveness of future planning. A program of rigorous and intensive inspection of permit and building conditions must be implemented that well exceeds present practice.
- Besides the need for a much improved inspection process, a policy of genuinely consequential penalties for violation of permitting and inspection conditions must be established. In particular, the common practice by some property developers of starting a project prior to acquiring necessary permits should not be allowed to happen with essential impunity, as is presently the case. Penalties must be instigated that will strongly discourage such practices which even as we speak maintain an unfortunate history of disagreeable consequences for neighborhoods and community.
- Time frames for compliance with permit requirements or for remedying of violations should be sharply curtailed. Present regulations seem to lack reasonable justification and can result in obviously manipulative delaying tactics which sometimes succeed in avoiding proper compliance.

A surely obvious recommendation voiced by practically everyone not only in Joshua Tree but in all the desert regions is that notification of property owners regarding Conditional Use Permits and/or public hearings must be expanded beyond present policy. Mailing of notification of such action only to property owners within 300 ft. to at most a quarter mile is clearly inadequate for the distances and property dimensions typical of desert and rural areas. Direct notification in these cases must be expanded to at least a two-mile radius. Effective methods for general public notice should also be established. Additionally, the reported implicit if not explicit practice of prioritizing public input to favor mainly those in direct contact with affected property should be dissuaded. All residents of the community should be given equal status in addressing the consequences of a project (e.g., a communication tower or smokestack).

Public access to information regarding permitted projects and ongoing status of projects being processed by the planning department needs to be improved and enhanced. As often reported, it's not unusual for bulldozers to appear on a site well before the public has had access to a description of the project. An entire set of documentation on the status of all permitted work should be routinely and easily available at the local county offices in Yucca Valley prior to or concurrent with issuing of permits. It is recommended that the system for reporting planning department action should be modified to allow public access to the entire planning-staff process of conditional use or variance decisions and rationale regarding need for public hearings. As it now stands, letters or other communication with the planning department regarding a project often appear to go unheeded, or their impact entirely unknown.

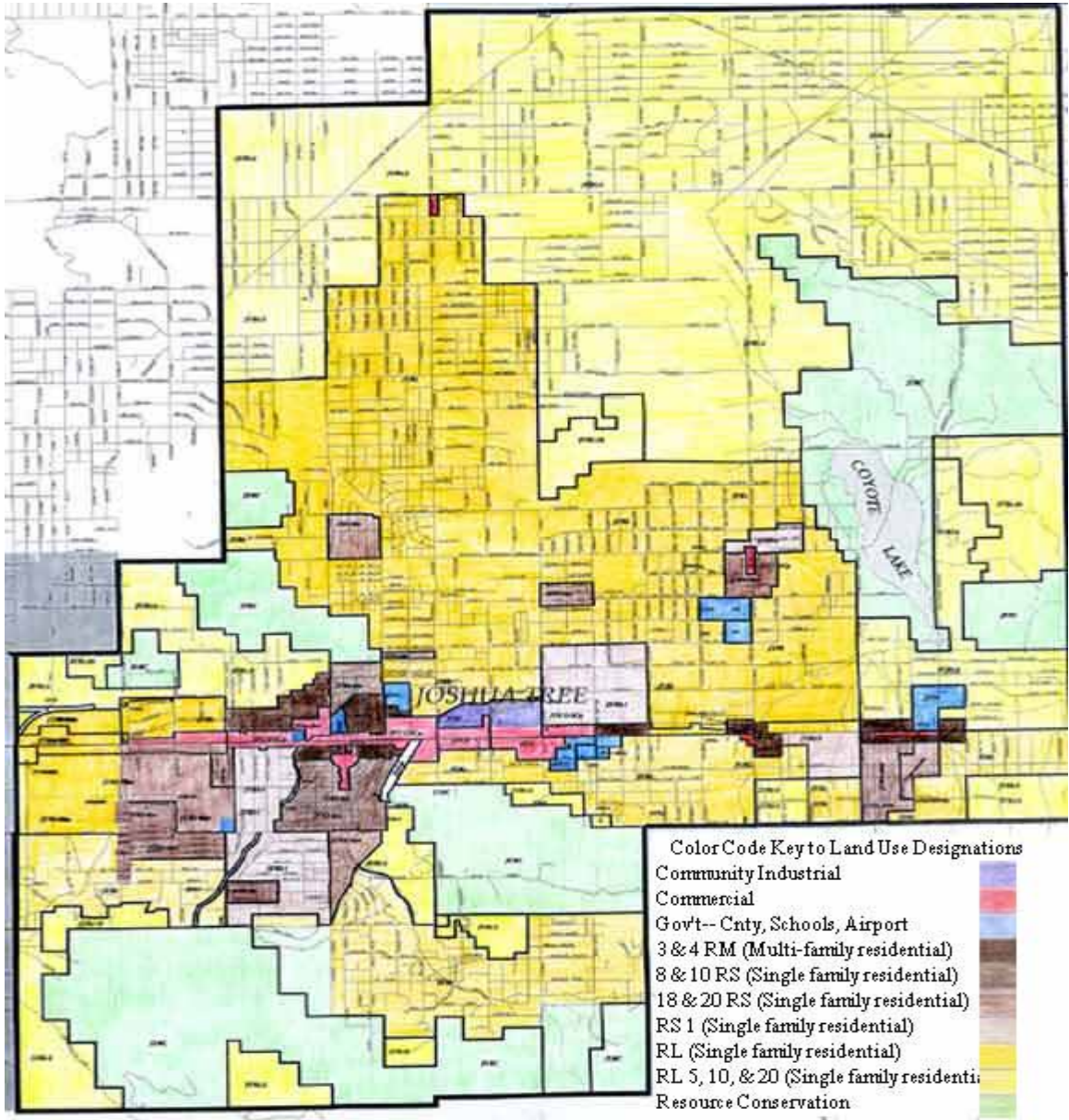
Finally, one of the more remarkable determinations of this effort was discovery of the fact that a nominal land-use category, such as Rural Living, is rife with conditional use exceptions fully incongruous with any reasonably orthodox definition of the term. As is happening in other areas where rural character or environmental and scenic attributes are paramount, a land use categorization should be established in San Bernardino County, which establishes complete immunity to any type of industrial or other usage clearly incompatible with rural or conservation designation, subject only to direct action by the Board of Supervisors.

It is sincerely anticipated that implementation of the above will provide the final impetus for achievement of the goals already implicit in the customs and character of Joshua Tree and for which this community gratefully acknowledges the recognition by the County of San Bernardino of the need to establish its own community plan.

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JOSHUA TREE COMMUNITY PLAN AREA
Land Use Districts

LAND USE DISTRICT LEGEND

Community Industrial	Light Blue
Commercial	Red
Gov't-- Cnty, Schools, Airport	Dark Blue
3 & 4 RM (Multi-family residential)	Brown
8 & 10 RS (Single family residential)	Light Brown
18 & 20 RS (Single family residential)	Dark Brown
RS 1 (Single family residential)	Yellow
RL (Single family residential)	Light Green
RL 5, 10, & 20 (Single family residential)	Yellow-Green
Resource Conservation	Green

Scale: 0 to 1 mile
 North Arrow
 City of Joshua Tree Logo