

Of the remaining alternatives previously evaluated, Alternative 2 was found to be environmentally superior over the proposed Project because it had the most reductions in impacts. Alternative 3 was found to have more environmental impacts for seven of the 17 areas: aesthetics, air quality, energy, GHG, noise, recreation, and transportation. In addition, Alternative 3 would only meet or partially meet four of the eight Project Objectives. Alternative 2 was found to have fewer environmental impacts for all environmental issue areas, with the exceptions of hydrology and water quality and population and housing. For both of these issue areas, Alternative 2 would result in comparable impacts to the proposed Project. Alternative 2 would meet all eight of the Project Objectives. As such, Alternative 2 would be the Environmentally Superior Alternative and would achieve the same primary objectives as the proposed Project.

### **NOVEMBER 17, 2020 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING FOLLOW-UP**

At the regular meeting of the Planning Commission on November 17, 2020, staff provided a staff report and presentation to introduce the Project. The Planning Commission received the staff report, applicant's presentation, and testimony from the public. The Planning Commission requested clarification and information on a variety of topics, some of which require responses from the applicant, and some of which require a response from staff. Below are responses to the Planning Commission questions with responses provided accordingly from the applicant and staff:

#### **1. What does the "open space acreage in perpetuity" mean from the original approval?**

Applicant Response: The property has never been encumbered by any easement or covenant restricting its use to open space or golf course. Applicant has previously submitted information to the City. Applicant will be consolidating and submitting responses to the Planning Commission soon.

Staff Response: The City Attorney and staff provided information at the November 17, 2020 Planning Commission meeting and staff report regarding the open space designation on the Project site. Below are the references to the condition of approval and Final Tract Map note implementing that condition:

#### *Condition of approval*

"83. The applicant shall record golf course/open space easements on all golf course/open space lots, restricting their use to those activities, prior to recordation of the first residential lot."

#### *Final Tract Map Note*

"AND WE ALSO HEREBY DEDICATE TO THE CITY OF SANTA CLARITA THE RIGHT TO RESTRICT RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION OVER ALL OPEN SPACE LOTS 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80 AND 81."

In addition to the above requirements, City Council Resolution 96-120 discusses the open space of the golf course as well. Excerpts from that resolution have been provided on pages 3-1 and 3-2 of the EIR. Below is an excerpt from the resolution that discusses the “open space acreage in perpetuity” in bullet point c) below (bold emphasis added) also noted in the EIR:

“The City Council finds that the unavoidable environmental impacts of the project are acceptable when based upon the following factors and public benefits. The factors and public benefits are as follows:

- a) The project provides a significant recreational facility in the Canyon Country area of the City. Significant economic benefits to the City and local business are anticipated with this project.
- b) The project includes the dedication of land for the construction of the Live Oak Springs Canyon debris basin and appurtenant facilities.
- c) The project would preserve approximately **300 acres of land into perpetuity as recreational/open space.**
- d) The annexation of a portion of the site will benefit the City of Santa Clarita by extending local government and control.
- e) The widening of Sand Canyon Road, over the Santa Clara River, and the installation of a traffic signal at Lost Canyon Road and Sand Canyon Road are requirements of the project, and substantial benefits to the Sand Canyon area.
- f) The project includes the realignment improvement and maintenance of Oak Spring Canyon Road on the project site.
- g) The project includes the dedication and construction of multi-purpose trails through the project site.
- h) The project includes the extension of a water mainline, including fire hydrants, from the project site west to Comet Way and east to the Angeles National Forest Boundary.”

As discussed at the November 17, 2020 meeting, the proposed Zoning and General Plan Designation of the Project site could be amended if approved by the City Council. In addition, prior action by a previous City Council could also be amended by a vote of the current City Council. Staff is required to process any request that is duly filed and deemed complete. The Staff and the City Attorney will be available to address any further questions or requests for additional clarity on this item.

**2. The parking lot location in front of the hotel is not a good design. Are there other locations for parking?**

Applicant Response: The parking lot is centrally located to provide access to all portions of the Project site. It is placed at a lower elevation compared to the hotel building and will include extensive landscaping along Robinson Ranch Road to create a visual buffer. View simulations will be provided for Planning Commission input.

**3. The Project is too big with too many rooms.**

Applicant Response: The proposed Project is comparable in room count to other golf resorts

in Southern California. Applicant is seeking additional clarification on this statement and is not sure if it is related to visual impacts, traffic impacts, or the economic viability of the hotel. Further clarification is sought at next Planning Commission meeting.

**4. How was it determined that banquet and golf uses would use the resort at 50% of capacity?**

Applicant Response: Golf resorts are mostly visited by people who combine golf and travel. Santa Clarita is not located near other major regional attractions and golf and conference facilities will be the primary attraction for this resort. Upon opening the resort, at least 50% will be filled with those guests. On weekdays, leisure guests and corporate-level organizations that combine conferences, seminars, and breaks will primarily occupy the resort. On weekends, it will be filled with leisure travel guests and guest for small group events or weddings.

Therefore, it is very reasonable to assume that guests staying at hotel would occupy 50% of the banquet space and 33% of the golf course. The parking demand is adequately adjusted by 207 spaces to ensure that the Project provides sufficient parking, but is not overparked. It is anticipated that the Project will be conditioned to provide a special event valet parking program at both the resort and the golf course. This has the potential to increase the site's parking capacity by a minimum of 50% or 345 spaces, which more than makes up for the 207-space adjustment. A special event valet parking program will ensure adequate parking capacity is always maintained.

**5. Secondary access does not work as shown. Additional information on how the proposed secondary access will work and additional research on other options will need to be provided.**

Applicant Response: The Project meets the current LACFD secondary access requirement. The secondary access provides access to Live Oak Springs for a fire from the south, and also emergency access further south to Placerita Canyon if the fire is the north. Resort guests are by definition transient guests. At the first indication of fire, the guests will leave the hotel well before residents, who typically await mandatory evacuation orders.

In addition, EIR Chapter 4.17, Wildfire, determined that the Project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan and impacts would be less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures. The applicant is committed to working with the City and County to develop an emergency vehicle access plan, as required by mitigation measures. This plan would include protocols for early evacuation of guests and employees.

Staff Response: Staff has had continued discussions with LACFD regarding the access for the Project. Given the scope of the entitlements for the Project, the LACFD has stated they cannot require a secondary access point, although would support one being provided. However, the LACFD did indicate the Project would be required to comply with all fuel modification and construction requirements of the VHFHSZ. On January 11, 2021, staff received comments from the LACFD regarding the Draft EIR that did not include any

discussion of the access proposed for the Project.

**6. Are the Oak Villas needed?**

Applicant Response: The Oak Villas are a part of the current site plan before the Planning Commission. The Oak Villas buildings were designed and placed to take advantage of the vistas of the oak trees while at the same time preserving oak tree habitat. A total of 115 oak trees would be preserved as part of the design while 21 trees would be removed. None of the removed oaks are considered heritage oak trees.

Staff Response: Alternative 2 of the Draft EIR evaluates the Project with the elimination of the Oak Villas.

**7. Does Grand Ballroom have an outside entrance?**

Applicant Response: The Grand Ballroom is in a separate building and has its own exterior entrance.

**8. The spa building has a pool that will be for use of the resort, or only spa patrons?**

Applicant Response: The spa building pool will be available for both hotel guests and spa customers.

**9. Why is there only one tennis court?**

Applicant Response: As a golf resort, one tennis court and two pickleball courts are sufficient for our guest and the neighbors.

**10. Will there be any offsetting/replacing the open space converted to commercial use for the proposed resort?**

Applicant Response: Yes, the EIR includes a mitigation measure requiring the Project to be conditioned to acquire and dedicate to the City open space equal to the OS converted to CC.

**11. Better visuals are needed of the Project, including a vantage point to show what would be visible from SR-14.**

Applicant Response: Applicant is currently preparing rendered views of the Project to be able to show how it appears from various vantage points. We will have these ready for the next public hearing.

Staff Response: Staff has requested revised architectural and site plans, renderings, and viewpoints from various vantage points. As of the preparation of this report, staff has not received any updated revisions or simulations to review.

**12. Will trails be open to the public? Trails should be improved to be consistent with the rural nature of Sand Canyon community.**

Applicant Response: The Project site will provide approximately 2 miles of walking trails by utilizing the golf cart path already in place. The trail runs along with the Robinson Ranch Road, divided by ridges and wood fences, and it will be connected to Sand Canyon Road for easy access by local community. The trail is open to the community. Additional multi-purpose and equestrian trails are not proposed. Golf is incompatible with equestrian uses because of errant golf shots.

**13. How close is the closest house? What are the impacts of light and noise to that house?**

Applicant Response: As discussed in the EIR, the nearest home to the wedding garden is approximately 300 feet away. The wedding garden could be used to host events that may utilize amplified music or live performances; however, the Project is subject to Section 11.44.060 of the Municipal Code, which would make it unlawful for generated noise (i.e., from the wedding garden) to disturb the peace, quiet, and comfort of neighboring residents.

With respect to potential swimming pool noise, the nearest receptor to the pool courtyard is approximately 600 feet, while the nearest receptor to the family pool is approximately 300 feet. While no structures would block the line-of-sight to receptors for the family pool, structures would block line-of-sight to receptors for the pool courtyard. Noise levels generated at both locations would diminish at the nearest receptors to approximately 46 dBA due to distance attenuation. This would not exceed the residential noise limits set forth in the City's Noise Code, Section 11.44.040 (65 dBA during daytime and 55 dBA during nighttime).

The east area of the Project site would include one tennis court and two pickleball courts, which could generate elevated noise levels at nearby sensitive receptors. The nearest home or sensitive receptor to these uses is approximately 200 feet from this area. A previous noise study shows that typical noise levels for pickleball courts range from approximately 57 Leq dBA to 67 Leq dBA at a distance of 10 feet from the court (See EIR Appendix I). Due to distance attenuation, noise from pickleball play would be reduced to approximately 35 dBA at the nearest receptors.

As such, these outdoor space activities would not exceed the residential noise limits set forth in the City's Noise Code, Section 11.44.040. Based on the above discussion, operational noise impacts from both mobile and stationary sources would be less than significant. No mitigation is required by the EIR.

Regarding light impacts, EIR Section 4.1, Aesthetics, determined that through adherence to the City's Municipal Code Outdoor Lighting Standards, including the installation of shielded and downward directed lighting, prohibition of light trespass on off-site properties, and preparation and approval of a lighting plan to include the location of all fixtures and photometric information for all outdoor lighting, potential lighting impacts would be less than significant.

Staff Response: Regarding noise, the noise limits outlined in 11.44 of the Municipal Code are

correctly noted in the applicant response above. However, one thing to note is noise measurements are taken from the property/boundary line between a residential and commercial zone with the residential threshold applying. Any commercial use adjacent to a residential use would be subject to this threshold in any noise complaint.

Regarding lighting, a standard condition of approval is applied to all projects recommended for approval by the Planning Commission that requires a photometric study prior to the issuance of any building permits to demonstrate that all site lighting will be in compliance with the UDC. This condition would be included in the conditions for this Project if recommended for approval by the Planning Commission.

**14. How will outside events operate? Is there a curfew for outside events?**

Applicant Response: All outdoor events will comply with Section 11.44.010 of the Municipal Code. Chapter 11.44 of the Santa Clarita Municipal Code, the Noise Limits Code, specifies the City shall prohibit unnecessary, excessive, and annoying noises from all sources subject to its police power. At certain levels noises are detrimental to the health and welfare of the citizenry, and, in the public interests, such noise levels shall be systematically proscribed (Section 11.44.010 of the Municipal Code).

Residential zones are subject to a daytime (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) noise limit of 65 dBA and a nighttime (9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) noise limit of 55 dBA. Commercial and manufacturing zones are subject to a noise limit of 80 dBA for daytime operations and 70 dBA for nighttime operations. Where a boundary line between a commercial and manufacturing property and a residential property exists, the noise level of the quieter zone shall be used.

Outdoor events will be held primarily during daytime hours and all events will comply with noise restrictions for residential zones discussed above.

Staff Response: As a discretionary approval, it is within the Planning Commission's discretions to apply conditions to a project that address potential issues/impacts created by the Project. Therefore, the Planning Commission could recommend that the City Council apply a condition of approval to the Project that could limit hours, amplification of sound, or location of events on the Project site, if they chose to recommend approval of the Project.

**15. Who opens the Robinson Ranch Homeowner's Association (HOA) gates in an emergency?**

Applicant Response: Current agreements designate that the gates are to be opened by the Robinson Ranch HOA during an emergency. Fire Department access key lock box currently allows Fire Department to open the gate. The gates can also be retrofitted with means to be automatically opened remotely by emergency vehicles, similar to in emergency vehicle signal preemption devices.

**16. Access easement with the HOA should be recorded with the property so the easement cannot be rejected by a future HOA.**

Applicant Response: Access easement was recorded and has been provided to the City.

Staff Response: Staff has received a copy of the recorded easement.

**17. Could the golf course and resort be sold separately?**

Applicant Response: Legally, the properties could be sold separately. However, any sale or transfer would have no impact on the land use approvals and the conditions which the resort and golf course must comply with, including reciprocal parking agreements, joint use, public access, etc., which would be recorded. The applicant is proposing the resort to compliment the golf course, owns both properties free of debt, and does not intend to sell either property.

Staff Response: The properties could be sold independently of one another.

**18. How would the shared parking agreement work? Would it be recorded with the property?**

Applicant Response: The Project will be conditioned to prepare a shared parking agreement which will be recorded with both the golf course and the resort properties.

**19. Would there be hours restrictions for deliveries, trash, and construction?**

Applicant Response: The Project will comply with conditions specified in the City's Noise Ordinance. Specifically, limiting construction to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, and prohibiting construction activities on Sunday and holidays. In addition, the EIR includes mitigation measures for construction noise and construction vibration.

All Project operations, including deliveries and trash, will also comply with the residential noise limits set forth in the City's Noise Code, Section 11.44.040

The Project will also comply with Municipal Code Section 15.44.500 Frequency and Hours of Collection related to solid waste collection. In order to protect residents' quiet enjoyment of their residential premises, collection from commercial premises at locations less than 600 feet from any residential zone and/or use within the City shall not be made between the hours of 7 PM and 6 AM. Subject to the foregoing requirements, collections shall be made by arrangement between the person in charge of day-to-day operation of commercial premises and the solid waste enterprise.

Staff Response: As discussed above, the Planning Commission has the discretion to condition a project to address a potential impact identified for a proposed discretionary project.

**20. Should there be a traffic study completed for special events?**

Applicant Response: The traffic study already takes special events into account. The peak hour trip generation is based on the trip generation rates from the latest Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation Manual (ITE 2017) for a resort hotel type of use. According to ITE, a resort hotel provides sleeping accommodations, restaurants, cocktail lounges, retail shops, and guest services. The resort hotel caters to the tourist and vacation industry, often providing a wide variety of recreational facilities/programs (golf courses, tennis courts, beach access, or other amenities). The average room occupancy rate for sites studied by ITE was approximately 88%.

Resort hotels, such as the proposed Project, include a variety of facilities for onsite special events such as weddings. Therefore, the traffic study's use of ITE rates adequately address special events and a separate study is not warranted.

**21. Architecture is not consistent with rural character of Sand Canyon or Canyon Country:**

- a. **Where are the wood and stone elements?**
- b. **Are the proposed buildings consistent with the existing clubhouse building architecture?**

Applicant Response: The design of the resort buildings will be complimentary with the colors and textures of the existing architecture. The Project is avoiding the use of any combustible materials.

Updated elevations showing consistency with California Rustic will be provided at the January public hearing.

Staff Response: As of the preparation of this staff report, staff has not been provided any updated elevations for this Project to review.

**22. Will there be additional landscape around buildings to soften views?**

Applicant Response: Yes. The upcoming rendered views will show the proposed landscaping.

**23. What percent of OS will remain and what percent will be rezoned to CC?**

Applicant Response: Of the original 300 acres OS designated land, the Project would rezone 32.4 acres, or 10.8%, to CC. Thus, 88.2% of the 300 acres would remain as OS. The applicant will acquire and replace 32.4 acres elsewhere in the City as OS with a conservation easement.

In addition, the Project includes two lots that will remain as OS (Lot 1: 29.5 acres and Lot 4: 13 acres). The applicant is willing to dedicate record a conservation easement to the City for Lot 1 and 4 for open space and recreational uses.



Staff Response: The Project site is approximately 75 acres of the 300-acre Sand Canyon Country Club site. As proposed, approximately 43.2% of the proposed Project site (32.4 acres / 75 acres = 43.2%) would be converted to the CC zone if approved by the City Council.

**24. Can Los Angeles County Fire weigh in on access?**

Applicant Response: The Project meets the current LACFD secondary access requirement.

Staff Response: See staff's response to Item 5 above regarding Fire Department access requirements.

**25. How do you plan to mitigate traffic cause by resort guests and employees?**

Applicant Response: The City prepared EIR provides a comparison between the opening day (2023) without and with Project operating conditions at the study area intersections. Under the opening day (2023) conditions, the study area intersections would operate at Level of Service (LOS) D or better during both the AM and the PM peak hour, and the Project would not cause an operational deficiency and no mitigation is required. Likewise, the EIR determined that the Project will not result in any new LOS deficiencies in interim year 2028 or long-range year 2040 conditions, and any increase in average vehicle delay would not cause an unacceptable level of operational deficiency. In addition, the hotel guest would check in and out at 11 AM and 3 PM, respectively, and employee shifts will occur outside of the AM and PM peak hours (6 AM - 2 PM, 2 PM -10 PM and 10 PM - 6 AM).

**26. Is the Project still viable given the impacts resulting from COVID-19? Is it viable at all, absent the COVID-19 impacts?**

Applicant Response: The CBRE market study shows that the Project will be profitable at 60% occupancy in the first year, which is still at least 2 years away. With the vaccine rollout schedule and its high efficacy rate, COVID-19 is not expected to impact the Project.

Staff Response: Staff is coordinating with CBRE to discuss the market demand study prepared for the Project. Additional information will be provided once available.

**27. A better aerial of the emergency access is needed.**

Applicant Response: An updated aerial of the emergency access routes will be provided.

Staff Response: A packet of aerial images of the Project site prepared by staff is included as Attachment B.

**Follow Up Responses**