

# **PALO VERDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN**

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**PALO VERDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN  
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**NOTE: For the Most Current Zoning Designations, Please See Imperial County Land Use Ordinance (Title 9) Division 5.**

# PALO VERDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Preface

The Land Use Element of the Imperial County General Plan as adopted by the Board of Supervisors in November or 1993, designates the community of Palo Verde as a "Community Area" totaling approximately 640 acres. Community Areas are characterized by the County General Plan as primarily second home, retirement, or recreation communities and offer limited commercial or employment opportunities. The typical urban services, in an Urban Plan area including sewer, water, curbs and sidewalks and other amenities, however in a "Community Plan Area" they are limited. The Palo Verde Community Area lies along both sides of Ben Hulse Highway (State Highway 78) in the most northeastern corner of Imperial County, and is comprised of Section 2, Township 9 South, Range 21 East, San Bernardino Base and Meridian (S B B & M).

This Plan describes existing land uses within the Palo Verde Community Area and the facilities and services which provide the public infrastructure to support their uses. Also stated are Goals and Objectives for future growth, expansion of public facilities, and environmental resource protection; and policies and programs to guide such future growth.

Future growth in Palo Verde is expected to consist primarily of infill on existing lots, rather than expansion by new subdivision development, except at very low densities. The Palo Verde Community Area Plan has been prepared to reflect the town's role as a commercial center serving travelers on Highway 78, the surrounding agricultural and rural areas, Colorado River trailer and RV parks, and a small local population. Although it has a community water system, Palo Verde's potential for growth of new employment opportunities is limited due to its remote location and the lack of a community sewerage system.

### B. Purpose

This document, known as the "**Palo Verde Community Area Plan**" supersedes and replaces the "Palo Verde Current Land Use Plan" adopted on November 27, 1984 by the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, and any other previously adopted plan for the area. This Plan is incorporated into the Land Use Element of the County of Imperial General Plan and is intended to guide the decision makers, staff and the public to address the distribution, general location and extent of uses of land for housing, business, industry, open space, agriculture, and public facilities for the area described above and illustrated on **Figure 1 (LAND USE PLAN)**. It shall have the full force and effect of the County General Plan, as authorized and required by Section 65300 et seq. of the California Government Code.

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## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. Location and Setting**

The Palo Verde Community Area is located in the most northeastern corner of Imperial County, with the Riverside County to the north, and is comprised of Section 2, Township 9 South, Range 21 East, S B B & M. The main road in the planning unit is State Highway 78 (Ben Hulse Highway) which runs north-south through the planning area and the Townsite of Palo Verde.

The community is primarily a small commercial center in a remote area of the County, serving travelers on State Highway 78, the surrounding agricultural and rural areas, Colorado River, mobile home and RV parks, and a small local population. Although, it has a water filtration plant which is operated by the Palo Verde County Water District, Palo Verde's potential for growth of new employment opportunities is limited due to its remote location and lack of a community sewage system. Community facilities include a fire station, post office, community hall, church, sheriff's substation, water district, a Southern California Edison (SCE) substation, and telephone substation.

### **B. Population**

Local census data encompasses a much larger area than Palo Verde, so precise population information for the town is not available. However, the community water system serves presently has 157 residential connections and typical household size in the Townsite has been estimated at 2.0 persons per residence yielding a population of 314.

County Building Inspection records have shown that most building permits in the area (during 1995 through 1998) were given for room additions, rather than new construction. Minimal residential or commercial growth has occurred since adoption of the Palo Verde Current Land Use Plan in 1984.

### **C. Local Economy**

Land use within the Townsite is primarily residential east of town along the Lagoon with commercial uses along Highway 78 consisting of gas stations, markets, restaurants, taverns, and a bait and tackle shop. Community/private facilities include, but are not limited to, a Post Office, the Palo Verde Volunteer Fire Department, church, the Palo Verde Improvement Club, Palo Verde Rod and Gun Club, and Sheriff's substation.

The economy of Palo Verde is primarily based on agriculture with recreational opportunities and commercial services to Highway 78 travelers also contributing significantly to the local economy. The Palo Verde Valley is a large agricultural area, most of which is within Riverside County.

In addition to agriculture, recreation, and tourism, mining provides the only other significant economic opportunity for the area at present. Desert washes in the area, particularly west of town, provide the potential for mine sand and gravel.

### **D. Water, Sewer, and Power Facilities**

A public water system became operational in October 1983 and is maintained by the Palo Verde County Water District office located on the south side of Desert View Street. In March 1993, the District had a total of 157 residential and 6 commercial water customers. Agricultural water is supplied by Palo Verde Irrigation District.

The water system is designed to provide water for a population of approximately 440 persons. The average household size in the planning unit is two persons. If the assumption is made that the six commercial connections are equivalent to six two-person households, then the plant would currently be operating at approximately 75 percent of capacity, with 57 additional connections available. The design of the plant provides for expansion to serve a population of 800 persons if the storage and booster pump capacities of the system are enlarged. This would provide service capacity for approximately 180 additional connections after the 57 presently available connections have been allocated.

No public sewer is presently available in the Palo Verde Community Area. A sewage treatment plant was also considered at the time that the water plant was proposed, but was not approved by eligible voters in the County Service Area. Electrical service is provided by Southern California Edison. No natural gas pipelines serve the area (other than propane).

#### **E. Public Facilities**

Public services and facilities located in the Palo Verde Community Area include a fire station, a County sheriff substation, post office, community hall, church, SCE substation, county water district office, and telephone (CONTEL) substation. Solid wastes are disposed of at the County-maintained landfill located south of Palo Verde on BLM land (40 acres). Residents are encouraged to utilize this landfill and recycle materials and not dump wastes on drain banks or in the desert. The existing rate of disposal has been estimated at 1/2 ton per day (Public Works).

#### **F. School Facilities**

Palo Verde is located in the San Pasqual Valley Unified School District. However, no educational facilities are presently located in Palo Verde. The nearest San Pasqual School District facilities are located 60 miles south of the community in Winterhaven. An inter-district agreement exists between the San Pasqual District and Palo Verde Unified School District in Riverside County which permits local children to attend the schools in the Blythe area about 17 miles to the north. As of December 1992, 46 students from the San Pasqual District were enrolled at Palo Verde Unified in grades K-12. Palo Verde Community College is also located in Blythe and serves Imperial County residents from the area.

#### **G. Circulation**

The only major road in the planning area is State Highway 78. It is not expected that any additional major roads or streets will be required in the future. Collector streets will be reviewed when development is proposed on a case-by-case basis.

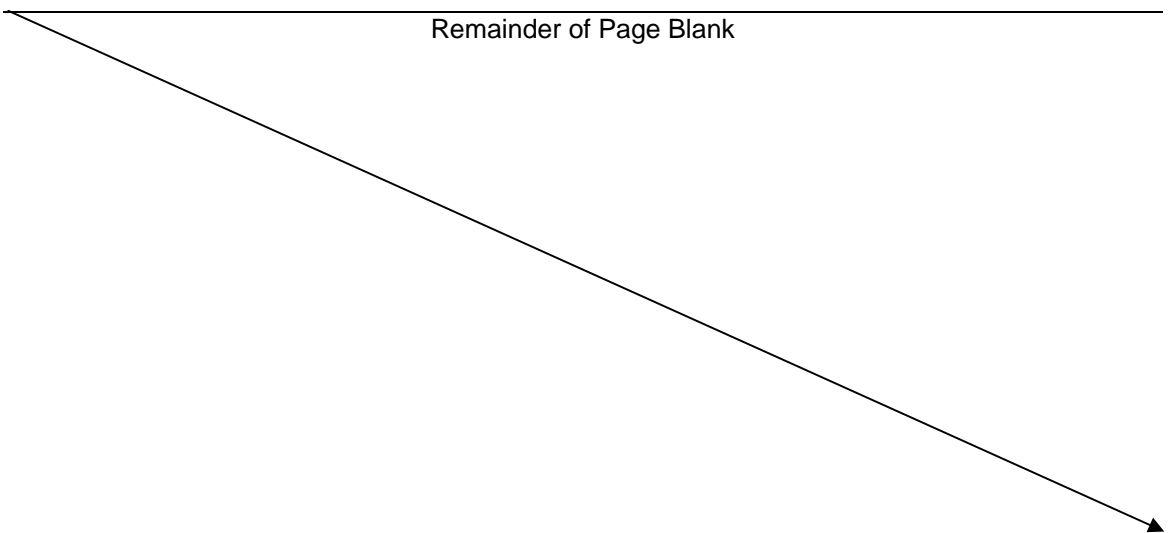
#### **H. Existing Land Uses**

The largest use of land within the Palo Verde Community Area is agricultural. Most of the residential development in the planning area is concentrated in the Palo Verde Townsite. There are two mobile home parks on either side of the Palo Verde Lagoon both of which are located just south of Fourth Street. Most of the existing commercial uses are located along the west side of Highway 78 between the County line and Fourth Street. Government/Special Public uses are scattered throughout the Townsite of Palo Verde with the Improvement Association's Community Hall, County Water District office, and the First Southern Baptist Church of Palo Verde located on the south side of Desert View Street just off Clark Way, the Rod and Gun Club located on the east side of Sunset Way about halfway between Fourth Street and the Riverside County line, the fire station on the southeast corner of Third Street and Highway 78, the post office located in Oscar's Market between First and Second Streets on the west side of Highway 78, and the Sheriff's substation located on the northeast corner of Desert View Street and Highway 78.

The existing land use map **Figure 5** shows a scattering of vacant parcels throughout the commercial area with the entire block on the west side of Highway 78 between Clark Way and Fourth Street being vacant. There are other vacant parcels on the east side of Sunset Way in the vicinity of the Rod and Gun Club, and south of the mobile home park on the west side of Sunset Way. On September 25, 1990, the County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of 22 parcels, south of Clark Way (portion of Section 2, T19S, R21E, S B B & M) for commercial and residential development in 4 phases. Those lots having access to Highway 78 are proposed for commercial with the remaining designated "low density residential".

## I. Existing Zoning

Implementation of zoning did not occur after the 1984 Plan was adopted. There are four different zoning classifications within the Palo Verde Community Area: The one-family dwelling mobile home zone (R-1-T); the general commercial zone (C-2); the recreation zone (F); and the light agricultural zone (A-1). See **Figure 4** for a graphic depiction of the prior zoning. The existing R-1-T Zone will become an "R-1" Zone in the future when the Zoning Ordinance is updated.



### **III. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

#### **A. Preface**

On the basis of an analysis of the existing land uses within the Palo Verde Community Area Plan, it is possible to more clearly define issues associated with existing and planned land uses which should be addressed within this plan. Factors which may act to either encourage or limit growth are described below. New issues may occur which should be addressed through an amendment of this Community Area Plan.

The following analysis is based on an evaluation of land use objectives contained in the adopted (1984) "Palo Verde Current Land Use Plan", the Land Use Element, and discussions with local residents.

#### **B. Land Use Issues**

1. The predominate land use within and surrounding the Palo Verde Community Area is agriculture. Economic benefits such as agricultural employment, and related industries such as packing houses and sales of agricultural supplies, benefits Palo Verde and Riverside County communities.
2. Large acreage are in the "F" Recreation Zone primarily along the Colorado River, the Palo Verde Lagoon and the Palo Verde Irrigation District's Outfall Drain. Much of this "F" zoned property within the Townsite has been subdivided into small R-1 sized parcels. Much of the non-subdivided "F" zoned property is adjacent to agricultural operations. The potential problem posed by this situation is that residential land uses could be placed on lands adjacent to agricultural operations, thereby, creating a possible conflict between agricultural activities and residential amenities. The County's "Right to Farm" Ordinance would apply in the event of a conflict.
3. There are approximately 88 acres of land that were zoned R-1-T when the original zoning was placed on the area in 1966. Only about 16 acres of this area have been subdivided into residential parcels. The remaining 72 acres are either vacant or are being used for agriculture.
4. Approximately 26 acres of land have been zoned C-2, Commercial, since zoning was originally applied in 1966. Only about 3-3/4 acres of that land are in actual commercial use.
5. Opportunities for economic growth may be limited within Palo Verde and the nearby areas of Imperial County. Industrial and commercial development in Palo Verde Valley will be more likely to locate in the nearby Blythe area where community infrastructure and employee housing is available.
6. Recreation and tourism present the most likely economic growth potential, particularly associated with these uses along the Colorado River.
7. Not all existing zoning is in conformance with the proposed plan. Most of the developed Palo Verde Townsite is zoned C-2, General Commercial, or



F, Recreation, and the undeveloped portion is zoned R-1-T. The County General Plan does not make any provisions for residential uses in the C-2 General Commercial Zone. Also, not conforming is the C-2 permitted uses which allow a wider range of commercial uses than are viable within the Community Area. The majority of the developed F Recreational Zoned lots are currently being used for residential uses and are sub-standard in size. The R-1-T One-Family Dwelling Mobile Home Zone permit a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet; whereas this Community Area Plan now requires a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet for new residential development due to the restriction of no septic tank facilities within 200 feet of a water body or in areas where the water table is less than can be approved.

The County Zoning Ordinance permits existing non-conforming land uses and lot sizes to remain; however, new development is required to conform to this Plan and the revised Zoning Ordinance.

### **C. Population Growth**

The Palo Verde Community Area has experienced very little growth over the past decade. Studies done in 1981 in connection with the planned water system appear to have been optimistic in regard to projected population growth; and future population expansion is also expected to be modest. Recent building records indicate that there is an average of one new dwelling unit or less built per year in the area.

The approximately 72 acres of undeveloped R-1-T zoned property could allow for nearly 500 new dwelling units. Another 28 homes could be built on existing subdivided "F" zoned parcels. This would allow a total of more than 528 additional dwelling units, which is more than can be accommodated by the existing water plant.

About 165 of these additional units could be within the existing boundaries of the Palo Verde County Water District. This figure was computed by assuming no future division of existing C-2, F, and A-1 zoned properties. C-2 zoned properties are not normally subdivided for residential purposes. Future commercial uses on these properties cannot be predicted. Their demand on the District's water would depend on the type of development that is proposed. It is assumed that the F and A-1 properties will not be subdivided for permanent residences, since adequate R-1-T properties exist for that purpose. The number of residential lots that could be created on the latter properties was estimated to be at a density of six units to the acre, which is the maximum allowed in the R-1-T zone.

As of September 1998, there were 167 connections to the water system; and approximately 55 additional connections were available. If there were 165 proposed new dwelling units within the District, the storage and booster pump capacities of the system may need to be expanded, as discussed above, to be paid for by the developers or possible through a grant/government fund.

While the plan proposes that the existing zoning within the Townsite area involving the C-2 and R-1-T not be modified, it is anticipated that the total development of these parcels will not be realized for many years.

### **D. Agriculture**

Another significant feature of the economy in the Palo Verde area is agricultural activities. The Imperial County General Plan repeatedly stresses the importance of protecting and preserving agricultural land uses within Imperial County. Since retention of the R-1-T zoning as it exists would permit the population of the Palo Verde area to more than triple, this plan recommends that the A-1 zoned property surrounding the Townsite not be subdivided until the R-1-T zoned properties have been developed. All of the A-1 zoned property is presently in agricultural use. If public water and sewer were provided and these properties were subdivided into half acre sized parcels, 778 additional home-sites could be created on 432 acres. This number would be nearly five times the total number of residences now being served by the Palo Verde County Water District. It would be preferable, from both planning and economic perspectives, to develop the R-1-T properties, which are closer to existing population and water mains, before proceeding to subdivide/develop the A-1 properties.

### **E. Recreation**

Attracting recreational development and retirement/second home housing for people drawn to the Colorado River, the desert, and the Palo Verde Mountains, appears to hold some promise for local economic growth and represent unique features of Palo Verde Valley which could attract new recreational uses and enhance local economic growth.

### **F. Housing**

The County Housing Element has two primary purposes: (1) provide an assessment of County housing needs, both current and future, and of any constraints in meeting these needs; and, (2) provide a strategy which establishes housing goals and objectives with programs to accomplish them. The Element outlines housing needs, characteristics, special needs, and present goals, policies and implementation measures. The Element at this time does not specify an allocation of "assisted" housing that should be built in Palo Verde and this Plan is intended to conform to the goals of the Housing Element.

This Plan provides ample location for new housing sites zoned to permit low density housing in compatible surroundings. Historically, due to the second home and recreational character of the area, new housing is not expected to contribute significantly to meeting the low income housing goals of the General Plan's Housing Element.

### **G. Sewer and Water Facilities**

"In the early 1960's, the average depth to groundwater around Palo Verde was about 3 1/2 feet. Now, due to PVID's maintenance work, Outfall Drain maintains a much deeper depth. This allowed septic tank systems to be installed." (Chief Engineer, PVID).

The Palo Verde County Water District has a public water system which is adequate to serve existing residences and businesses, and has capacity for some growth. Creation of new residential parcels beyond the 57 presently unallocated connections will likely entail the expansion of District facilities. Methods need to be devised for developing public or private sewage treatment

systems before significant additional development occurs in or around the Palo Verde Townsite.

**H. School Facilities**

The census data shows that the population is primarily older people, and it is not expected that there will be enough school age children in the near future (five years) to warrant development of school facilities within the planning area. If this should become necessary in the future and growth is significant, adequate land exists for the construction of school facilities.

**I. Circulation**

Due to the rural character of the planning area, it is anticipated that State Highway 78 will continue as the primary state route through Palo Verde and any future roads needed would be local in nature. If ultimate development of R-1-T zoned areas northeast of Sunset Way and between Highway 78 and Clark Way are proposed, consideration should be given to providing adequate collector streets by developers of these areas.

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## **IV. GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **A. Preface**

The Goals and Objectives, together with the Implementation Programs and Policies in Chapter V, are the statements that shall provide direction for private development as well as government actions and programs. Imperial County's Goals and Objectives are intended to serve as long-term principles and policy statements representing ideals which have been determined by the citizens as being desirable and deserving of community time and resources to achieve. These Goals and Objectives, therefore, are important guidelines for land use decision making. It is recognized, however, that other social, economic, environmental, and legal considerations are involved in land use decisions and that these Goals and Objectives, and those of the other General Plan Elements, should be used as guidelines but not doctrines.

### **B. Housing**

#### **Housing Conservation and Maintenance of Existing Housing Stock**

Goal 1: Promote residential development within the Townsite through infill of existing lots.

Objective 1.1. Allow existing lots whether substandard in size or not some flexibility through the new zoning ordinance, thus encouraging better land consumption in the area.

Objective 1.2. Encourage the use of existing lots prior to additional subdivisions being created.

Goal 2: Promote energy conservation features in new and existing housing as required.

Objective 2.1 Ensure that the quality, safety, and liability of the housing stock in the Palo Verde Community Area is continually maintained or upgraded, and that dilapidated housing which cannot be improved is appropriately and where necessary replaced.

Objective 2.2 Upgrade affordable low and moderate income housing to meet the needs of these current residents who cannot afford new housing through the improvements of existing housing units by bringing them up to code as found necessary.

### **C. Circulation**

#### **Safe, Convenient and Efficient Transportation System**

Goal 1: The County will provide an integrated transportation system for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods within and through the Palo Verde Community Area with minimum disruption to the environment.

Objective 1.1 Maintain and improve the existing road and highway network, while providing for future expansion and

improvement based on travel demand and the development of alternative travel modes.

Objective 1.2 Ensure safe and coordinated traffic patterns, continuous growth, and promote a planned and consistent development.

Objective 1.3 Finance or seek funding for circulation system maintenance projects.

Objective 1.4 Identify busy agricultural roads to create special crossings for farm equipment when development is proposed.

### **Alternative Modes of Transportation**

Goal 2: Develop alternative transportation strategies designed to reduce traffic volumes and improve traffic flow.

Objective 2.1 Ensure the safety of the traveling public, including pedestrians and bicyclists.

Objective 2.2 Attempt to reduce motor vehicle air pollution.

## **D. Noise**

### **Noise Environment**

Goal 1: Provide an acceptable noise environment for existing and future residents in the Palo Verde Community area.

Objective 1.1 Adopt noise standards which protect sensitive noise receptor from adverse impact.

Objective 1.2 Ensure that noise standards and policies are compatible with the standards and policies of other General Plan Elements and other County agencies.

## **E. Safety**

### **Land Use Planning and Public Safety**

Goal 1: Include public health and safety considerations in land use planning.

Objective 1.1 Ensure that data on geological hazards is incorporated into the land use review process, and future development process.

Objective 1.2 Regulate development within flood way areas in accordance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Objective 1.3 Require developers to provide information related to geologic, drainage, and seismic hazards when citing a proposed project.

Objective 1.4 Reduce fire hazards by the design of new developments.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

Goal 2: Minimize potential hazards to public health, safety, and welfare and prevent the loss of life and damage to health and property resulting from both natural and human-related phenomena.

Objective 2.1 Ensure the adequacy of existing emergency preparedness and evacuation plans to deal with identified hazards and potential emergencies.

Objective 2.2 Identify potential risk and damage due to inundation from dam failure and/or water releases.

Objective 2.3 Minimize injury, loss of life, and damage to property by implementing all state codes where applicable.

Objective 2.4 Prevent and reduce death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from natural hazards, including flooding, drainage, land subsidence, earthquakes, other geological phenomena, levee or dam failure, urban and wildland fires and building collapse by appropriate planning and emergency measures.

Objective 2.5 Reduce vehicle accidents through appropriate standards.

## **F. Agriculture**

### **Preservation of Important Farmland**

Goal 1: All Important Farmland, including the categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance, as defined by Federal and State agencies should be reserved for agricultural uses.

Objective 1.1 Maintain existing agricultural land uses outside of urbanizing areas and allow only those land uses in agricultural areas that are compatible with agricultural activities.

Objective 1.2 Conserve Important Farmland for continued farm related (non-urban) use and development while ensuring its proper management land use.

Objective 1.3 Discourage the location of development adjacent to productive agricultural lands.

Objective 1.4 Allow conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses only where a clear and immediate need can be demonstrated based on population projections and lack of other available land for such non-agricultural uses. Such conversion shall also be allowed only where such uses have been identified and are supported by a study to show a lack of alternative sites.

Objective 1.5 Control and prevent soil erosion when possible.

### **Development Pattern and Locations on Agricultural Land**

Goal 2: Adopt policies that prohibit "leapfrogging" or "checkerboard" patterns of non-agricultural development in agricultural areas and confine future urbanization to the Palo Verde Community Area.

Objective 2.1 Do not allow the placement of new non-agricultural land uses such that agricultural fields or parcels become isolated or more difficult to economically and conveniently farm.

Objective 2.2 Encourage the infilling of development in urban areas as an alternative to expanding urban boundaries.

Objective 2.3 Maintain agricultural lands in parcel size configurations that help assure that viable farming units are retained.

Objective 2.4 Discourage the parcelization of large holdings.

### **Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Land Use Relations**

Goal 3: Limit the introduction of conflicting uses into farming areas, including residential development of existing parcels which may create the potential for conflict with continued agricultural use of adjacent property.

Objective 3.1 The primary use of any parcel designated "Agriculture" on the Land Use Plan shall be agricultural production. Residential uses in such areas must recognize that this primary use of the land may create nuisances such as flies, odors, dust, noise, night light, and chemical spraying.

Objective 3.2 Enforce the provisions of the Imperial County Right-to-Farm Ordinance (No. 1031).

Objective 3.3 Enforce the provisions of the State nuisance law (California Code Sub-Section 3482).

Objective 3.4 As a general rule, utilize transitional land uses around urban areas as buffers from agricultural uses. Such buffers may include rural residential uses, industrial uses, recreation areas, roads, canals, and open space areas.

Objective 3.5 Where a development permit is sought adjacent to agricultural land use, protect agricultural operations by requiring appropriate buffer zones between agricultural land and new developments, and then keep these zones aesthetically pleasing and free of pests by cleaning them of all garbage and noxious vegetation. Vegetation for the purpose of dust control shall be planted and maintained in an attractive manner. The buffer shall occur on the parcel for which the development permit is sought and shall favor protection of the maximum amount of farmland.

Objective 3.6 Land use decisions regarding property contiguous to agricultural operations shall give consideration to creation of large parcel sizes to minimize conflicts with such operations.

### **Water Availability and Conservation**

Goal 4: Maximize the inherent productivity of Imperial County's agricultural resources by requiring future availability of adequate and affordable irrigation water and by managing water such that it is used effectively and not wasted.

Objective 4.1 The County must favor efforts to require adequate irrigation water for agricultural areas.

Objective 4.2 Coordinate with the appropriate agencies for the availability of water to meet future agricultural needs.

Objective 4.3 The County will participate and encourage multi-agency participation in water projects where such coordination can improve the likelihood of maintaining an adequate long-term supply of irrigation water throughout the County.

Objective 4.4 Protest any development of non-voluntary water conservation legislation, which would risk removing land from production and impacting the local economy.

Objective 4.5 Encourage farmers to use irrigation methods that conserve water.

### **Irrigation Runoff and Environmental Issues**

Goal 5: Improve the quality of irrigation water runoff and reduce the extensive use of pesticides and other chemicals to minimize impacts to downstream water bodies, wetland habitats, and the overall environment.

Objective 5.1 The County shall continue to work closely with University of California Cooperative Extension personnel, college horticultural or entomological faculty, pest control advisers, and other pest management specialists to develop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as a pest management strategy that focuses on long-term prevention or suppression of insects, plant pathogens, weeds, rodents, and other pests with minimum impact on human health, the environment, and non-target organisms.

Objective 5.2 Encourage uses of naturally occurring biological control; alternate plant species or varieties that resist pests; pesticides with a lower toxicity to humans or non-target organisms; and irrigation, cultivation, and fertilizing practices that reduce pest problems.

Objective 5.3 Use broad spectrum pesticides only as a last resort when careful monitoring indicates they are needed according to pre-established guidelines. When treatments are necessary,



the least toxic and most target-specific pesticides should be chosen.

Objective 5.4 The Agricultural Commissioner's Office shall continue to ensure that applicators of farm chemicals are educated regarding current pesticides and other chemicals, their hazards, and applications.

### **Agricultural Regulations**

Goal 6: Strive to prevent the adoption of inappropriate, unnecessary, and restricting Federal, State, and local regulations that threaten the ability of farmers and livestock producers to profitably produce food and fiber for the nation.

Objective 6.1 The County shall not adopt regulations that impact agricultural production unless they are justified on the basis of sound environmental concerns.

Objective 6.2 Assist farmers and livestock producers in their efforts to understand and abide by regulations and to process applications for permits and licenses.

### **Public Relations and Education**

Goal 7: Establish positive relations with the general public and inform the general public that the County's entire economy is intricately dependent upon agricultural production.

Objective 7.1 Continue to make information accessible to the public regarding pesticides used and areas treated, as currently provided by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Objective 7.2 Maintain existing procedures provided by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office and the Right to Farm Ordinance that allow for public input without disruption of agricultural operations.

### **Agricultural Production and Marketing Research**

Goal 8: Improve the financial viability of the agricultural sector of Imperial County's economy through actions that have the potential to improve yields and reduce costs.

Objective 8.1 The County shall work closely with and promote the research of the University of California Cooperative Extension; the U.S.D.A. Agricultural Research Service; the Animal, Plant Health and Inspection Service; pest management experts, water management experts, and others to continuously develop and implement efficient state-of-the art farming and livestock production strategies.

Objective 8.2 Promote marketing research at the regional level to monitor trends in the demands for particular commodities such that Imperial County agriculturists may adjust production

strategies in timely manners and thereby maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

Objective 8.3 Promote the consumption of locally produced commodities, such as vegetables, beef and dairy products, fish, fruits, nuts, and honey.

Objective 8.4 The county shall support and encourage the efforts of the Imperial County Whitefly Management Committee to develop the most effective means of controlling this pest. The County shall support and promote similar efforts to eradicate, and/or formulate control strategies for, other new pests that may impact local agricultural production in the future.

Objective 8.5 Encourage the production of labor intensive crops such as vegetables.

## **G. Conservation**

### **Conservation of Environmental Resources for Future Generations**

Goal 1: Environmental resources shall be conserved for future generations by minimizing environmental impacts in all land use decisions.

Objective 1.1 Recognize that the degradation of one natural resource will have a concomitant negative effect upon the total resource base, including water, vegetation, air, wildlife, soil, and minerals.

Objective 1.2 Develop standards to protect significant natural resource areas for the purpose of enhancing both the planning and decision-making process.

Objective 1.3 Provide for the most beneficial use of land based upon recognition of natural constraints.

Objective 1.4 Encourage the acquisition of scientific knowledge by encouraging the preservation of important ecological, archaeological, and other scientific sites.

### **Preservation of Biological Resources**

Goal 2: The County will preserve the integrity, function, productivity, and long-term viability of environmentally sensitive habitats, and plant and animal species.

Objective 1.2 Conserve wetlands, fresh water marshes, and riparian vegetation.

Objective 2.2 Protect significant fish, wildlife, plant species, and their habitats.

Objective 2.3 Protect unique, rare and endangered plants and animals and their habitats.

Objective 2.4 Use the environmental impact report process to identify, conserve and enhance unique vegetation and wildlife resources.

Objective 2.5 Attempt to identify, reduce, and eliminate all forms of pollution which adversely impact vegetation and wildlife.

Objective 2.6 Adopt noise standards which protect sensitive noise receptors from adverse impacts.

### **Preservation of Agricultural Lands**

Goal 3: The County will actively conserve and maintain contiguous farmlands and prime soil areas to maintain economic vitality and the unique lifestyle of the Palo Verde area.

Objective 3.1 Encourage sound agricultural practices.

Objective 3.2 Control and prevent soil erosion when possible.

### **Conservation of Energy Sources**

Goal 4: The County shall seek to achieve maximum conservation practices and maximum development of renewable alternative sources of energy.

Objective 4.1 Define and assure adequate energy supplies for the Palo Verde Community Area.

Objective 4.2 Encourage the utilization of alternative passive and renewable energy resources.

Objective 4.3 Minimize possibility of energy shortage and resulting hardships.

Objective 4.4 Encourage compatibility with National and State energy goals and city and community general plans.

Objective 4.5 Support local utility company's energy conservation programs.

### **Preservation of Water Resources**

Goal 5: The County will conserve, protect, and enhance the water resources in the planning area.

Objective 5.1 Protect all bodies of water, e.g. Colorado River, and water courses for their continued use and development.

Objective 5.2 Regulate development in or adjacent to water bodies and courses, protect water bodies and minimize property damage.

Objective 5.3 Ensure the use and protection of the rivers and other waterways in the planning area. Ensure proper drainage and provide accommodation for storm runoff from urban, desert floods, and other developed areas in manners compatible with requirements to provide necessary agricultural drainage.

Objective 5.4 Protect and improve water quality and quantity for all water bodies in Imperial County.

Objective 5.5 Eliminate potential surface and groundwater pollution through regulations as well as educational programs.

Objective 5.6 Ensure protection of water bodies that are important for recreational fishing.

### **Protection of Air Quality**

Goal 6: The County shall actively seek to improve and maintain the quality of air in the region.

Objective 6.1 Cooperate with all federal and state agencies in the effort to attain air quality objectives.

### **Preservation of Open Space/Recreation**

Goal 7: Open space shall be maintained to protect the aesthetic character of the region, protect natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and minimize hazards to human activity.

Objective 7.1 Recognize the regional significance of the development and conservation of recreational opportunities in Imperial County.

Objective 7.2 Any recreational activity must be developed in such a manner as to minimize any significant environmental impact on humans and existing natural resources.

Objective 7.3 Encourage the development and improvement of recreational facilities in Imperial County.

Objective 7.4 Recognize that certain lands are unsuitable for high density development, and that prohibition and restriction of such uses are in the public interest, health, and safety.

## **H. Water**

### **Adequate Domestic Water Supply**

Goal 1: The County will require the provision of safe and healthful sources and supplies of domestic water adequate to assure the implementation of the County General Plan and the long-term continued availability of this essential resource.

Objective 1.1 The efficient and cost-effective utilization of local and imported water resources through the development and implementation of community land use patterns.

Objective 1.2 The efficient regulation of land uses that economizes on water consumption, enhances equivalent dwelling unit demand for domestic water resources, and that makes available affordable resources for continued urban growth and development.

### **Protection of Surface Waters**

Goal 2: Long-term viability of the Colorado River, and other surface waters in the County will be protected for sustaining wildlife and a broad range of ecological communities.

Objective 2.1 The continued viability of the agricultural sector as an important source of surface water for the maintenance of valuable wildlife and recreational resources in the County.

### **Adequate Agricultural Irrigation Water Supply**

Goal 3: The County will require the provision of safe and healthful sources and supplies of agricultural irrigation water adequate to assure the continuation of agricultural land uses as established by the County General Plan and the long-term continued availability of this essential resource.

Objective 3.1 The efficient and cost-effective utilization of local and imported water resources through the development and implementation of innovative agricultural use patterns.

### **Coordinated Water Management**

Goal 4: Water Resources shall be managed effectively and efficiently through inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation.

Objective 4.1 Encourage and provide for the management and wise use of water resources for contact and non-contact recreation, groundwater recharge, hydroelectric energy production, and wildlife habitat as well as for domestic and irrigation use.

Objective 4.2 Aid in the protection and enhancement of limited water resources so as to provide for its indefinite use and maximum enjoyment.

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## **V. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES**

### **A. Land Use Designations and Standards**

Refer to the attached **Figure 1** "Palo Verde Community Area Plan" for the location of the following proposed land uses:

#### **1. Low Density Residential**

A land use area that is planned to accommodate residential units at densities of one dwelling unit per one-half acre. Except that low density lots by be as small as 6000 SQ. FT. where both potable water and treated sewer services are provided through a community or special district system.

#### **2. Medium Density**

A land use area that would be planned typically for duplexes and triplexes or densities up to four dwelling units per acre if lot size as well as water and sewage requirements can be met through centralized treatment plants by a community or special district.

#### **3. High-Density Residential**

A land use area that would provide for high density residential developments, typically to include RV Parks or apartment dwelling units if public facilities/services are available. In this instance full public services such as treated water and sewer through a community or special district would be required. Individual developments providing their own treatment plants would not be considered acceptable.

#### **4. Neighborhood Commercial**

A land use area that provides for the sale of convenience goods, such as food, drugs and sundries, and personal services which meet daily needs of a neighborhood trade area. Offices, eating and drinking establishments, and recycling collection facilities (not involving hazardous materials) are also permitted but may be limited or restricted by implementing zoning.

#### **5. General Commercial**

A land use area that would be planned for larger commercial uses which would allow, e.g. gasoline stations, retail outlets, regional centers, home improvement stores, business/construction support services, personal/business storage facilities, commercial recreation, health clubs/spas, medical/financial/professional offices and facilities, hotels/motels, automobile/equipment sales and services, which may be restricted by location in certain zones, or by other limitations of implementing zones.

General commercial land uses are designated principally along Highway 78. They are shown on the west side of the state highway from the county

line south to Desert View Street and on the east side of the highway from Clark Way to Desert View Street.

## **6. Recreation**

A land use area that would be planned for recreation-oriented commercial use. The recreation areas designated on the Palo Verde Community Area Plan are very close or adjacent to the Palo Verde Lagoon within the Townsite area and are intended to accommodate RV or mobile home park development. West and south of the Palo Verde Community Area, the County General Plan provides additional areas designated recreation which would also accommodate recreational development.

Visitor-serving commercial uses may also be located within areas designated "Recreation" and, for property along Highway 78, community serving commercial and government/special public uses may also be permitted. Since this category is intended to accommodate tourism development, the maximum permitted density for residential subdivision development is 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres.

## **7. Medium Agriculture**

Existing agricultural uses adjacent to the Townsite shall be maintained until residential areas within the Community Plan have been completely built-out. Existing A-1 Light Agriculture zoning provides a transition to A-2 and A-3 zoning, but also allows residential uses on one-half acre lots. The County General Plan and this Community Area Plan recommend retention of existing agricultural lands. (Therefore, a maximum density of (1 dwelling unit per 40) acre(s) is established for areas designated "Agriculture" by the Palo Verde Community Area Plan.)

Outside of the Palo Verde Community Area Plan, the County General Plan designation is "Agriculture", generally following the Palo Verde Irrigation District service area. This area should also remain in agricultural uses, with a 40-acre minimum lot size.

## **8. Government/Special Public**

A land use area that is planned for existing government/special public land uses indicated on the Land Use Plan. These include the Rod and Gun Club on the easterly side of Sunset Way, the fire station on the southeast corner of Highway 78 and Third Street, the Baptist Church, the Palo Verde County Water District office, the Community Hall on the south side of Desert View Street, and the Sheriff's substation. Zoning for these uses is expected to be "GS". The GS designation will remain unless the parcel is converted to private ownership at which time a zone change will be required.

### **Residential Development Standards (Land Use Element):**

Residential land uses at a population density from less than one dwelling unit per acre to a maximum of four dwelling units per acre. Residential building intensity is determined by available public facilities and services and physical or environmental factors which may affect the site, including

soil characteristics, groundwater conditions, etc. New residential development must be consistent with the existing character of the community. A minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet (net area exclusive of road and other easements) is required for new residential units where sewer service is not presently available. A larger lot size may be required for an on-site sewage disposal system to be approved by the County Environmental Health Services Division. An on-site potable water supply approved by the County Health Department is required for all residential development.

### **Commercial Development Standards (Land Use Element):**

Low to medium intensity commercial land uses, which can be shown to be compatible with adjacent existing or planned residential uses, including neighborhood and general commercial uses. Maximum floor area ratio not greater than 2:1 (i.e. two square feet of gross building area per one square foot of area within the lot or building site). Building height maximum of 35 feet. A minimum of ten percent of the lot area shall be landscaped. A greater percentage of landscaping may be required for projects involving discretionary review.

### **Agricultural Land Use Standards (Land Use Element):**

Agricultural land uses within this category consist of light and medium agricultural uses. Agricultural land uses located within this category may be subject to limitation with respect to animal keeping, setbacks, building height, and other regulations of the County Zoning Ordinance.

### **Recreation Standards (Land Use Element):**

Recreation/Open space land uses within this category consist of environmentally sensitive areas, fault zones, floodways and floodplains. Recreational land uses within this category are limited to recreational vehicle parks and uses which consist primarily of outdoor facilities such as parks, athletic fields, golf courses, and swim and tennis clubs.

## **B. Implementation Programs and Policies**

During the review of the proposed development proposal, the County will evaluate the adequacy of, and potential project impact on, public facilities serving the Palo Verde Community Area, including the following:

### **1. Water Service**

New non-agricultural development is required to be served by a public or private potable water system designed and operated for domestic water use. The Palo Verde County Water District presently provides this service within the Townsite. Funding for expansion of water facilities is expected to be a condition of development prior to final map recordation or construction of any project permitted by any discretionary land use action.



## **2. Sewer Service**

Before new parcels are created or additional development is approved by discretionary action of the County or other governmental agencies, developers will be required to provide sewage treatment facilities which assure that public health hazards will not be created.

## **3. Plan Amendments**

State law currently allows for up to four general plan amendments per year. It is however not anticipated that this plan will be amended more than once every two to three years at most.

## **4. Other Public Facilities**

New development may also impact fire facilities, Palo Verde landfill, schools, and roadways serving the Palo Verde Community. Before new parcels are created or additional development is approved, impact on these facilities and services shall be evaluated and appropriate improvements or other mitigation shall be required as a condition of development.

## **5. Floodways**

A portion of the Palo Verde Townsite is in a floodway. "Any proposals affecting PVID's facilities or Outfall Drain will need to be reviewed by and be acceptable to PVID" (PVID, Chief Engineer).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped the floodway in order to protect human life and health and minimize damage to public and private facilities and utilities, new development, expansion, or reconstruction of any structure designed for human habitation or employment. The County of Imperial Departments of Planning/Building and Public Works has established rules and procedures in the Zoning Ordinance to permit any new development, expansion, or reconstruction following review of a site specific engineering analysis showing that such structure will not adversely affect, hinder, restrict, or alter the water-carrying capacity of the floodway and will not result in any increase in flood levels during the occurrence of a 100-year flood. The Ordinance provides that developers shall also be required to avoid flood prone areas and provide street and other necessary public improvements as necessary. See **Figure 3**.

## **6. Other Requirements**

In the review of future development e.g. if archaeological/paleontological resources are discovered or determined to be present, a qualified archaeologist shall be consulted prior to any archaeological material being removed or disturbed, and other conditions and/or limitations may be required as part of a discretionary action by the Planning Director, Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors. "Any development of property along Lagoon, Outfall Drain, or other PVID facility needs to provide adequate access by PVID for maintenance purposes...PVID's

canals and drains are not maintained for recreational purposes..." (PVID, Chief Engineer).

### **C. The Plan**

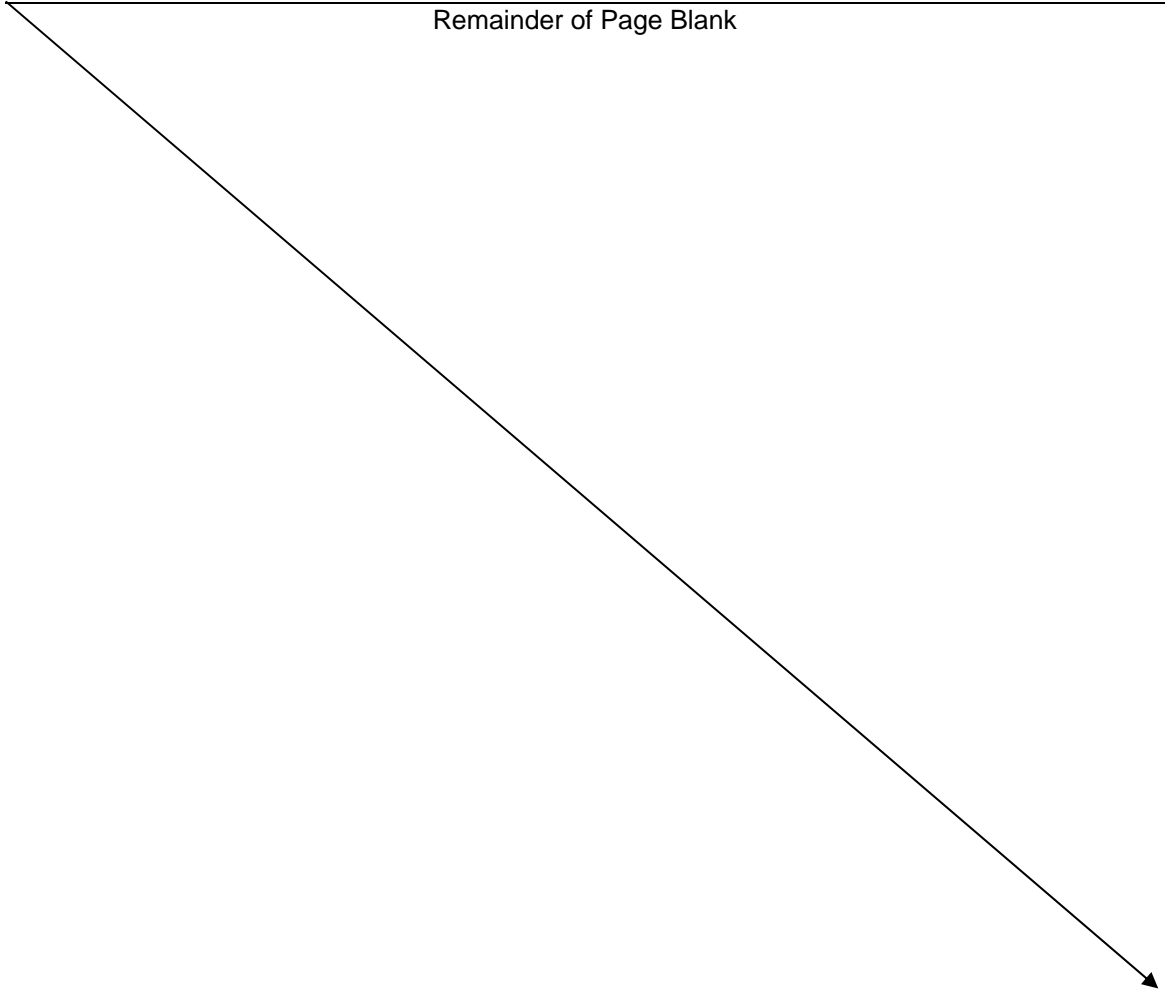
The 1984 Current Land Use Plan planned for four land use designations as follows: Low Density Residential, Commercial, Public/Semi Public, and Recreation.

Commercial areas were planned for the area of the community west of State Highway 78 and south of Clark Way to Desert View Street. Low density residential was planned south of Desert View Street and to the North and east of Sunset Way. Recreational land uses were planned for the area on both sides of the Palo Verde Lagoon with public/semi public areas identified throughout the community.

The residents of Palo Verde were provided three (3) alternatives to review at the public meeting which was held on December 9, 1993, at the Palo Verde Improvement Association's building. Other than correspondence relating to edits to the Plan's text, no other input on any of the alternatives has been received to date. Another community meeting was scheduled for January 20, 1994, at 6:30 p.m. at the Improvement Association's facility in which to obtain input on any or all of the three alternatives.

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## **VI. PUBLIC/STAFF INVOLVEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL**

### **Public Involvement**

Public meetings were held in Palo Verde at the Palo Verde Improvement on December 9, 1993, and on January 20, 1994, to provide the residents an opportunity to express their desires for the future land uses in the Townsite and surrounding area.

The residents were informed that they could also provide input on the Plan at both the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meeting when the Plan would ultimately be reviewed and adopted.

The input from the community was that the Townsite should basically remain the same in terms of land uses in Palo Verde. This input has been reflected in the Plan and will remain as proposed unless significant information to the contrary is received.

Additional community input was received by the County during the Land Use Zoning map update during the first half of 1998. It was this community input that caused the Board of Supervisors to direct staff to revisit the Community Plan to provide consistency between the Plan and the then proposed zoning. Since that discussion was held at both the Planning Commission level and the Board of Supervisors level, not further town meetings were held.

### **Staff Involvement**

The staff of the Planning/Building have been involved in the review and preparation of the Palo Verde Community Area Plan and a special thanks and acknowledgement of their efforts is necessary.

### **Environmental Review**

The preparation of the Palo Verde Community Area Plan is to implement the Land Use Element of the revised General Plan. The area impacted is the Townsite and approximately 640 acres total. An Initial Study was prepared for this Plan to be reviewed by the Environmental Evaluation Committee. Since this significantly reduces the area identified in the 1984 current Land Use Plan, i.e. 12,530 acres, no additional significant, adverse environmental impacts will occur as part of the adoption of this Plan.

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## **VII. ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONS CONSULTED**

Public Notice of the preliminary meeting for public input by Palo Verde residents was provided by written notification and by posting notices in the community.

Public Notice of the second meeting in Palo Verde was published on January 9, 1994. The second meeting in the community was scheduled for January 20th, at 6:30 p.m. as part of the Palo Verde Improvement Association's regular meeting.

Public Notice of the Planning Commission hearings in October of 1998 and the Board of Supervisors hearing in November of 1998 were also provided in accordance with the County's regulations for noticing. Furthermore, each property owner of record received a direct mail notice on the proposed zone changes for the area during the first part of 1998.

In order to adequately address the issues relating to the Plan, the Planning/Building Department staff consulted with and/or requested information from the following organizations and individuals:

### **Federal**

Bureau of Reclamation (Yuma)  
Bureau of Land Management (El Centro)

### **State**

CALTRANS Planning (San Diego Office)  
Department of Fish and Game (El Centro Office)

### **County of Imperial**

Supervisor Sam Sharp, District #5  
Agricultural Commissioner/APCD  
Buildings and Grounds Department  
County Administrative Office  
County Counsel's Office  
Environmental Health Services  
Public Works Department  
Sheriff's Department (El Centro)

### **Palo Verde Community**

Palo Verde Irrigation District  
Palo Verde County Water District

### **Others**

Palo Verde Rod and Gun Club  
Palo Verde Unified School District (Blythe)  
City of Yuma  
Colorado River Association (Glendale)  
Southern California Edison (Redlands)  
Riverside County (Riverside)

## VIII. REFERENCES

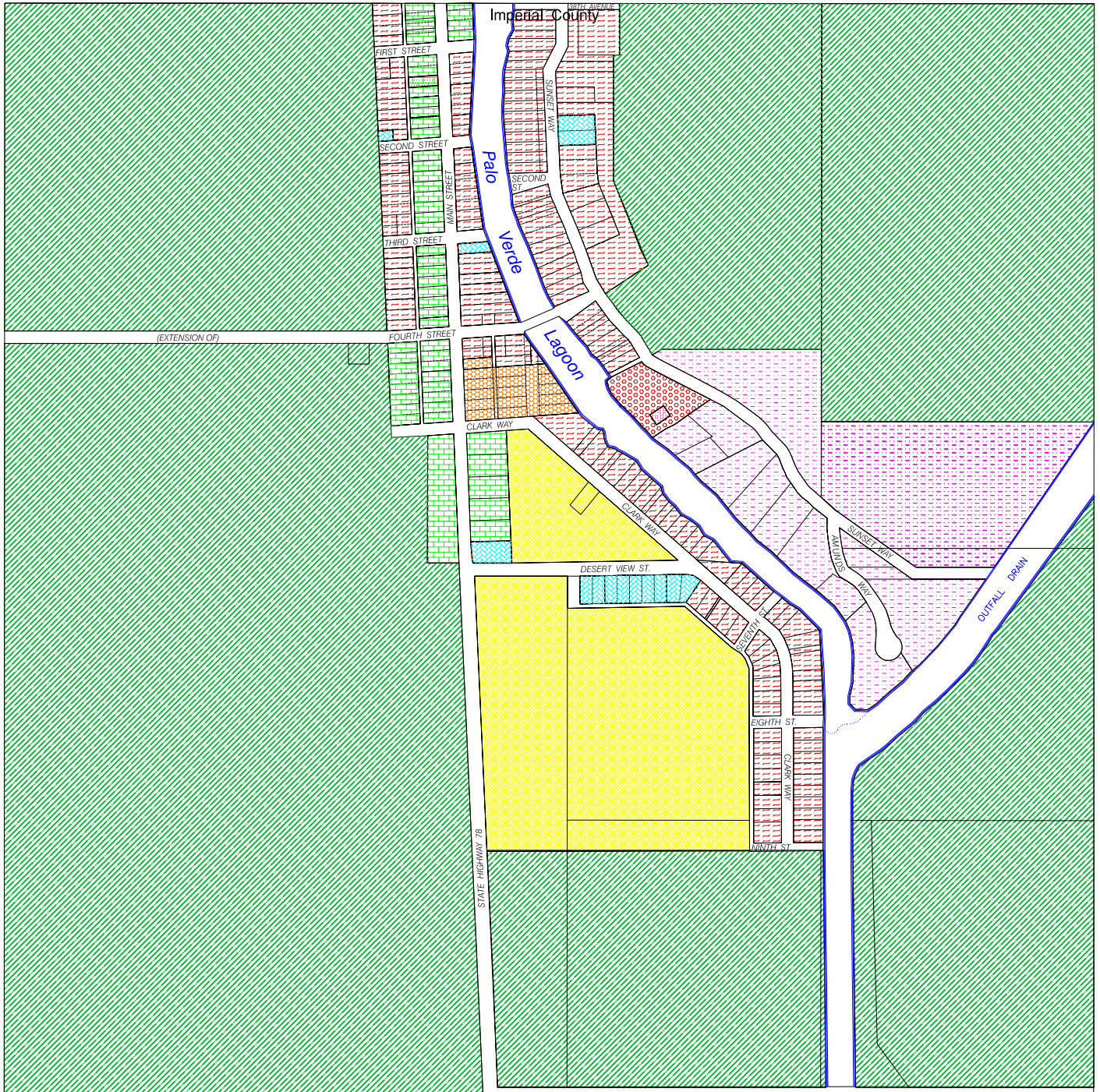
### County

Annual Mobile Home Park Report (1993)  
Community and Economic Development Department Housing Condition  
Survey (1992)  
Community and Economic Development Department Overall Economic  
Development Program (1993)  
County Ultimate Land Use Plan (1973)  
Housing Element (1990)  
Imperial County Water Element (1970)  
Palo Verde Current Land Use Plan (1984)  
Revised General Plan and Program EIR (1993)  
Agricultural Element  
Geothermal/Transmission Element  
Water Element  
Circulation/Scenic Highways Element  
Conservation/Open Space Element  
Land Use Element  
Overview  
Noise Element  
Seismic and Public Safety Element  
Zoning Maps

### State

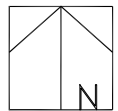
Census Data (1990)  
Department of Finance Projections (1993)

S:CD/JM/GA: Palo Verde Community Area Plan



**LEGEND**

- Low-Density Residential
- Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- General Commercial
- Government/Special Public
- Recreational
- Medium Agriculture



**Imperial County  
General Plan**

Approved April 19, 1994 by Minute Order # 11 A

**Palo Verde  
Community Land Use Plan**

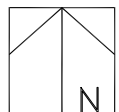
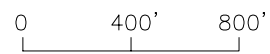
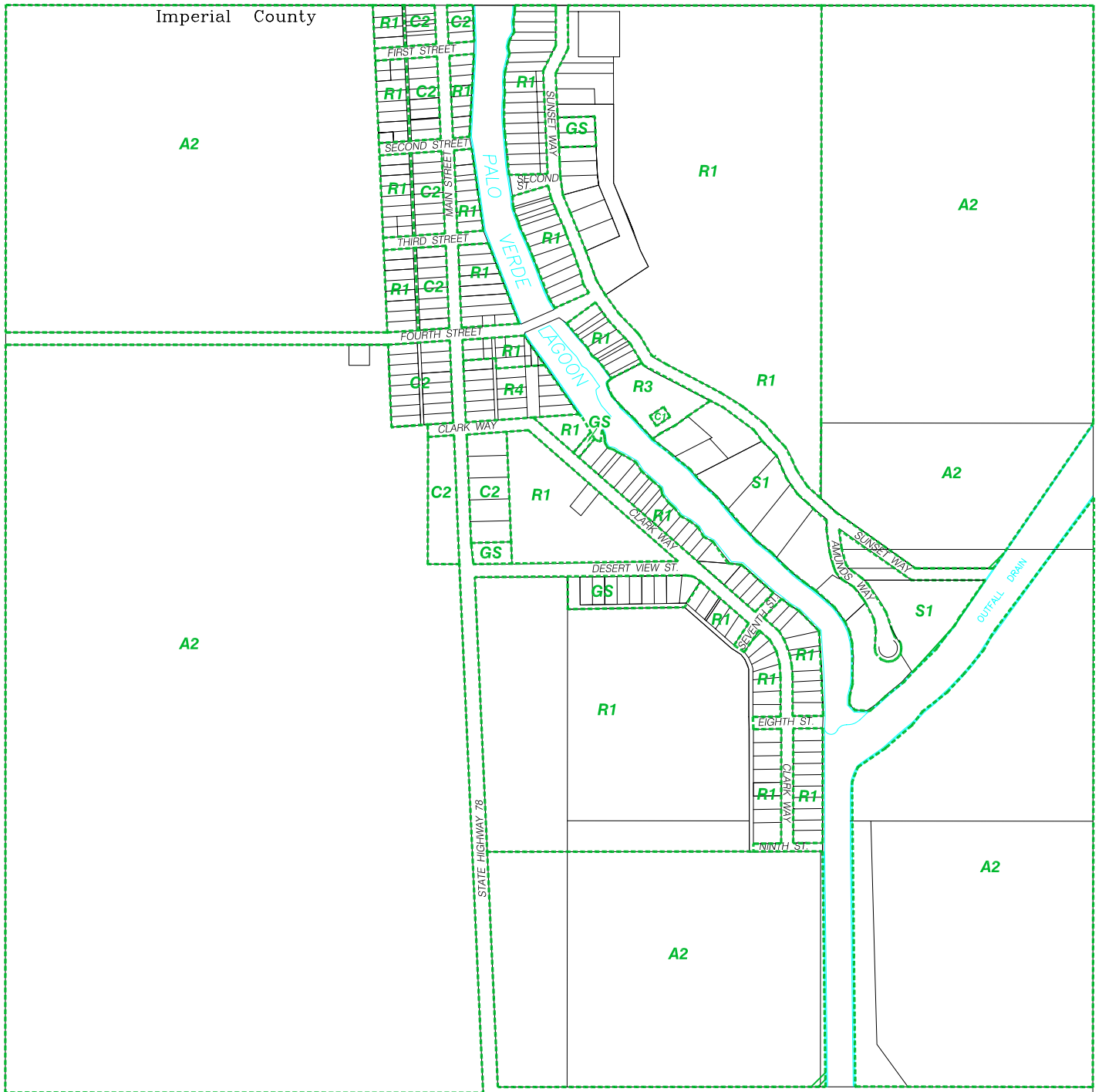
Land Use Element

REVISION DATES

Sept. 28, 1998	

**Figure  
1**

Riverside County  
Imperial County



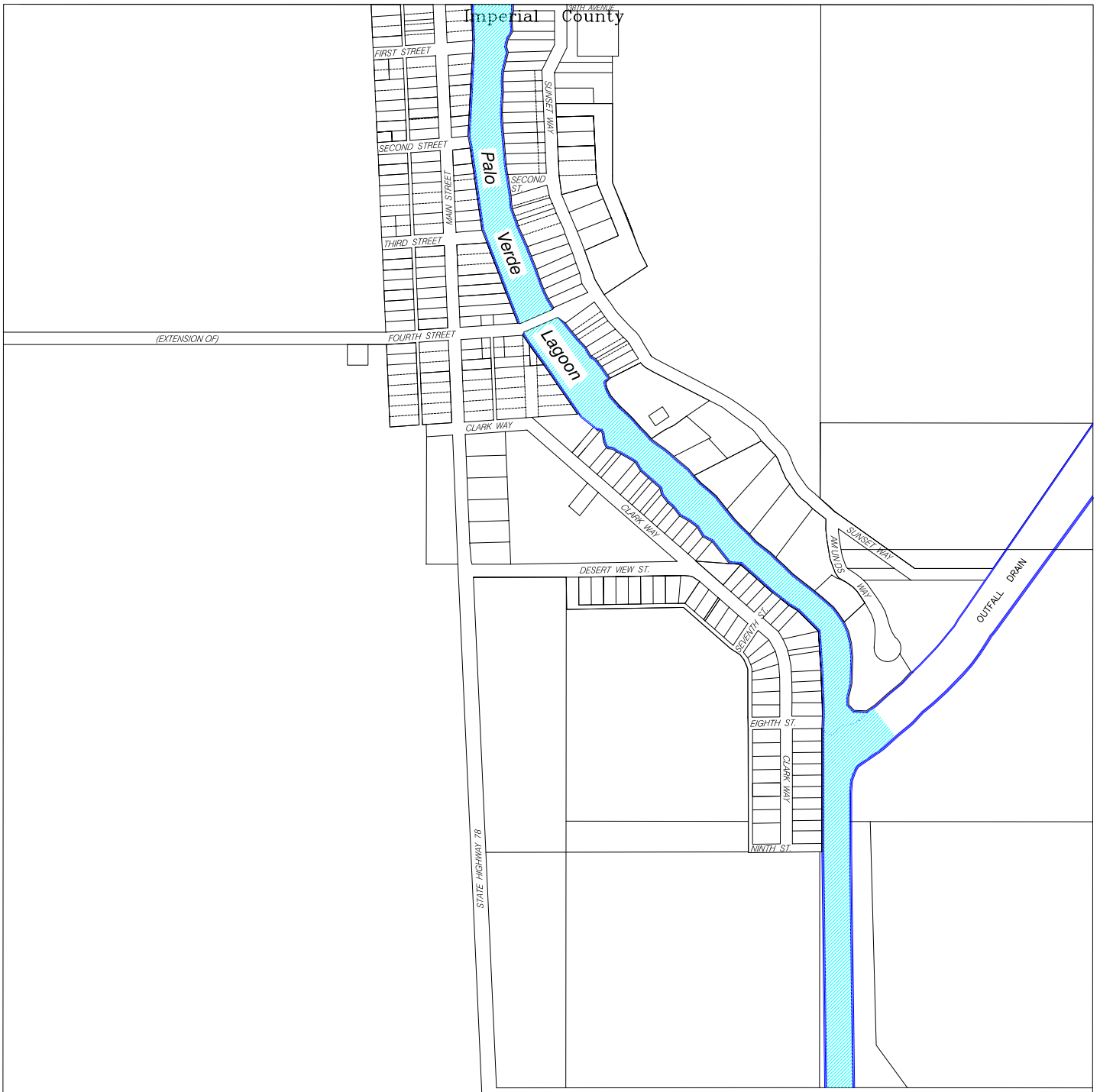
# Imperial County General Plan

Land Use Element


## Zoning Map #57A PV Community Area

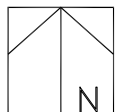
REVISION DATES	
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## Figure 2



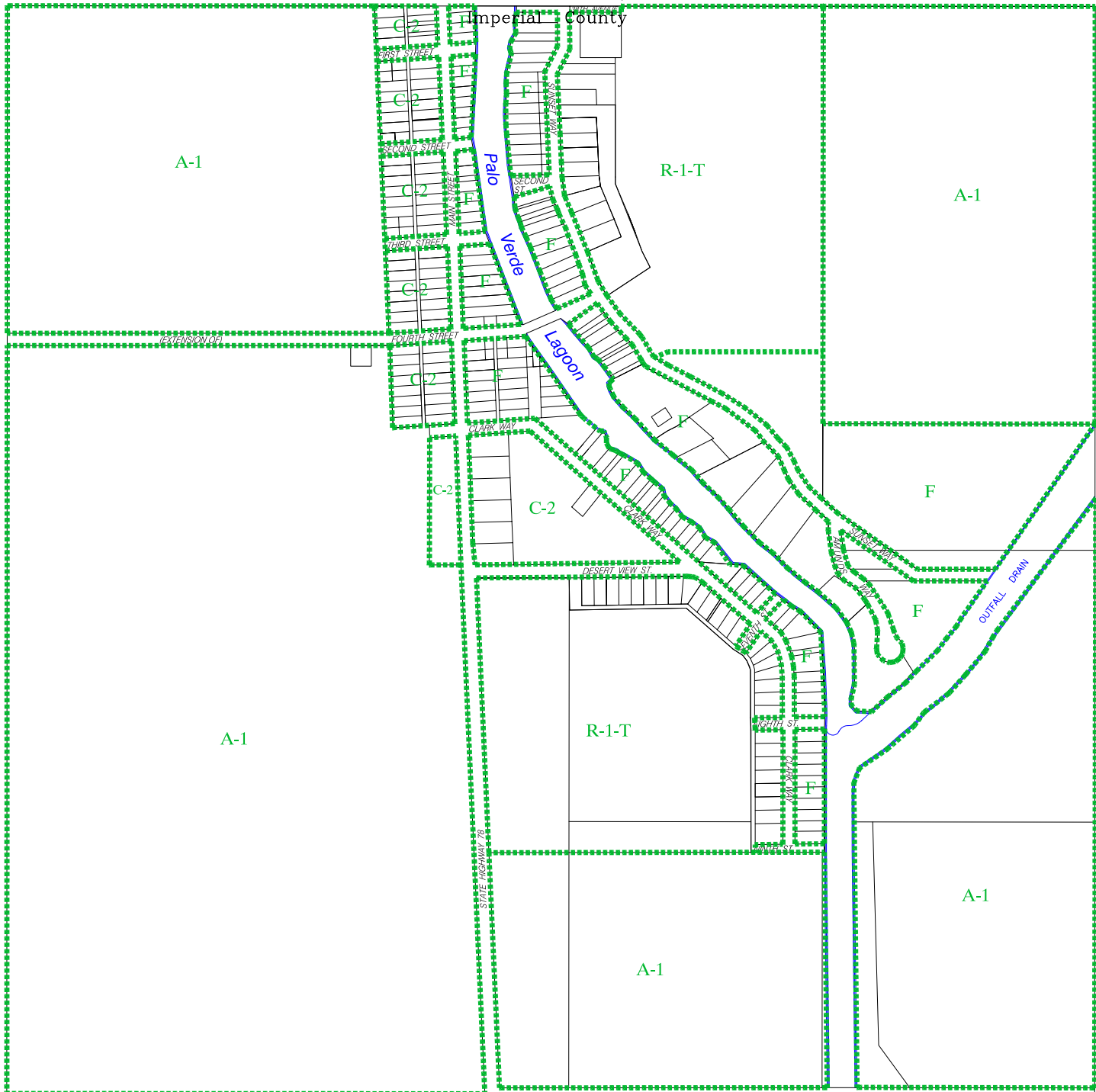
DESIGNATION

 Flood Hazard Area



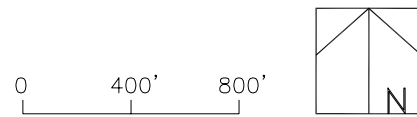
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DESIGNATIONS

- A-1** Light Agriculture
- C-2** General Commercial
- R-1-T** One-Family Dwelling/Mobile Home
- F** Recreation



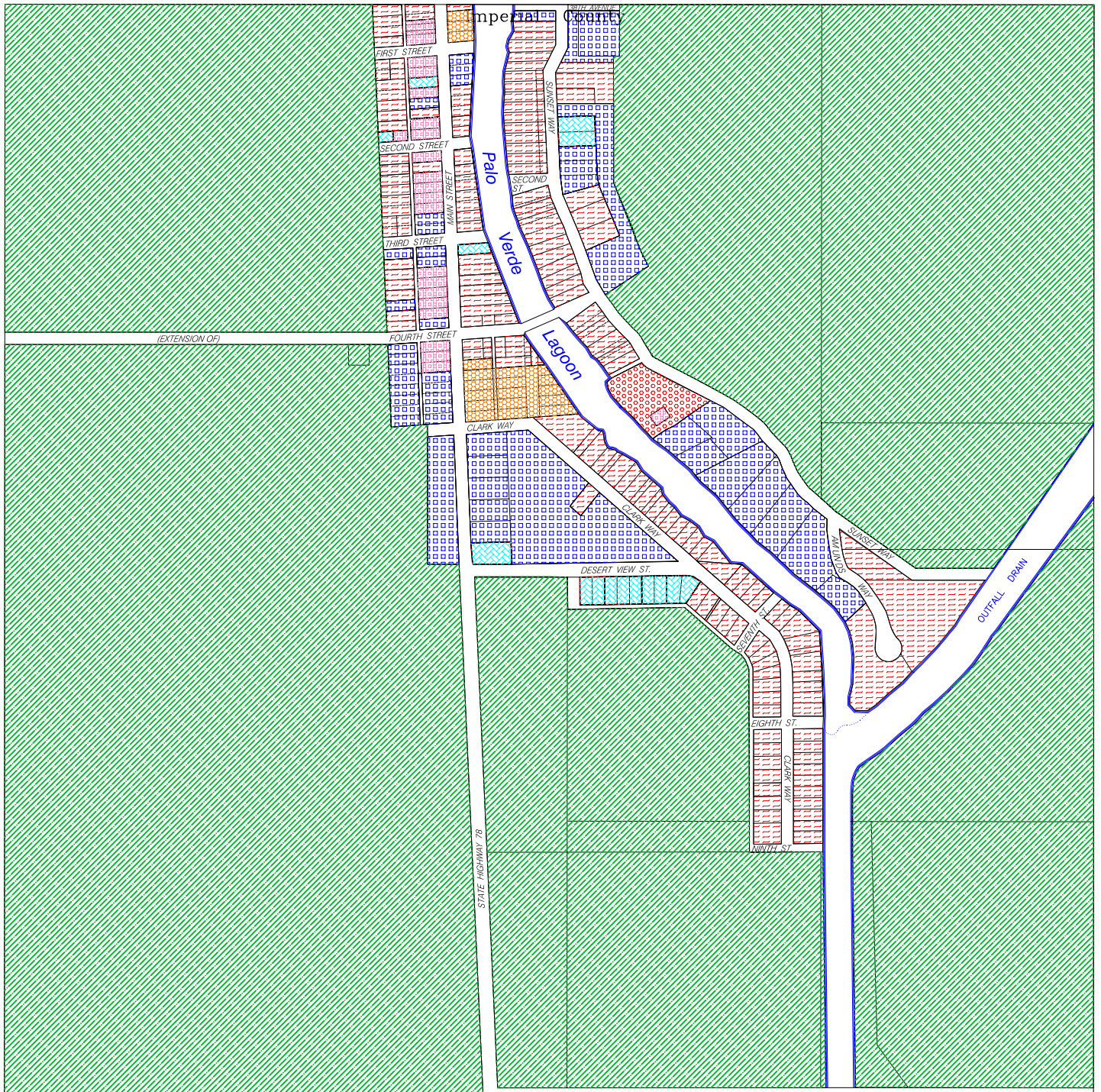
**Imperial County**  
**General Plan**

Land Use Element








**Previous Zoning (Pre-1998)**  
**PV Community Area Plan**

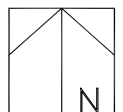
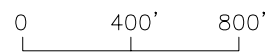
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**Figure**  
**4**



**LEGEND**

-  Medium Agriculture
-  Residential
-  Medium Density Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Neighborhood Commercial
-  Government/Special Public
-  Vacant



**Imperial County  
General Plan**

Land Use Element

**Existing Land Uses (1993)  
PV Community Area Plan**

REVISION DATES	
Sept. 28, 1998	

**Figure  
5**