



Features

This section describes the functions, setting, and features that are unique to Desert Center. The physical features are shown on Figure 2, Physical Features.

SETTING

Much of eastern Riverside County lies within the vast Colorado Desert, characterized by undisturbed wilderness, distinctive flora such as the Joshua tree, sand dunes, mountainous terrain with large rock outcroppings, and high summertime temperatures. Urban and suburban development, common in western Riverside County and the Coachella Valley, is noticeably absent. Lacking significant demand for such development, there is also a general lack of infrastructure. Much of the land is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and is primarily retained as open space.

Desert Center encompasses a major portion of the Chuckwalla Valley and is surrounded by the Eagle, Coxcomb and Chuckwalla mountains, and Joshua Tree National Park. Two unique features, distinctive from the rest of the desert region, are located within the Chuckwalla Valley and are largely responsible for the need for an area plan in this remote location. The first is the former Eagle Mountain iron ore mining facility operated by Kaiser Steel Corporation, along with an adjacent mining community that supplied housing and services for Kaiser employees and their families. The second feature, and far more visible to the passing public, is the highway commercial center located along Interstate 10 that serves highway travelers and the Lake Tamarisk retirement community.

UNIQUE FEATURES



The desert landscape

Chuckwalla Valley

As is clear from the previous descriptions, most of the Desert Center area remains undeveloped and in its natural state. The rolling sand dunes are punctuated by the stark Eagle, Coxcomb and Chuckwalla mountains. Elevation ranges from about 500 to 4,000 feet above sea level, but is relatively flat where the unique communities described below are located. Dominant environmental features resemble the Sonoran Desert scrub found throughout eastern Riverside County. The scrub is characterized by widely spaced shrubs such as the creosote bush, providing an accommodating habitat for desert fauna. Limited agricultural lands dedicated to jojoba production also exist in the area. Two agricultural preserves are located here as well.