

CHAPTER 4

Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq.), and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Sections 15000 through 15378).

This chapter contains the analysis of the Project’s potential environmental effects under CEQA. This body of this chapter describes, in numbered sections for each environmental topic (described in Section 4.01 below), the existing environmental and regulatory setting, the potential impacts that could result from the Project, as well as mitigation measures recommended to reduce the potentially significant impacts resulting from the Project.

The following introductory discussion provides an overview of the scope of the analysis, organization of the sections, the methods and nomenclature for determining significance, as well as the baseline and cumulative analysis approach used throughout.

4.01 Environmental Topics

The following environmental topics are analyzed in the following numbered sections of this chapter:

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| 4.1 Aesthetic Resources | 4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality |
| 4.2 Air Quality | 4.9 Land Use and Planning |
| 4.3 Biological Resources | 4.10 Noise |
| 4.4 Cultural Resources | 4.11 Population, Housing and Employment |
| 4.5 Geology, Soils and Seismicity | 4.12 Public Services and Recreation |
| 4.6 Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change | 4.13 Transportation and Circulation |
| 4.7 Hazards and Hazardous Materials | 4.14 Utilities and Service Systems |

The Project was determined to have no potential for significant impacts related to Agricultural Resources and Mineral Resources, which therefore are briefly discussed only in Chapter 6, *Impact Overview and Growth Inducement*, under Section 6.4, *Effects Found Not to Be Significant*.

4.02 Format of Environmental Topic Sections, Impact Statements and Mitigation Measures

Each environmental topic section generally includes two main subsections:

- *Existing Setting*, which generally includes the baseline environmental conditions and the regulatory setting; and
- *Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, which lists the thresholds/criteria of significance (described in Section 4.03 below), identifies and discusses the potential impacts and proposes mitigation measures that would reduce or eliminate significant impacts.

This EIR identifies all potentially significant and significant impacts with an abbreviated designation that corresponds to the environmental topic addressed (e.g., “HAZ” for hazardous materials). The topic designator is followed by a number that indicates the sequence in which the potentially significant or significant impact statement occurs within the section. For example, “Impact HAZ-1” is the first (i.e., “1”) potentially significant or significant hazardous materials impact identified in the EIR. All impact statements are presented in bold text, including those that are less than significant.

Mitigation measures are numbered to correspond with the potentially significant or significant impact that they address. Where multiple mitigation measures address a single impact, each mitigation measure is designated sequentially by letter. For example “Mitigation Measure HAZ-1c” would be the third (i.e., “c”) mitigation identified to address the first hazardous materials impact (i.e., “HAZ-1”). All mitigation measure statements are presented in bold text.

The Impact Classification (discussed in Section 4.04 below) of the Project’s effects prior to implementation of mitigation measures is stated in parentheses immediately following the impact statement. The Impact Classification after implementation of mitigation measures is stated at the conclusion of each analysis.

4.02.1 Impacts by Project Scenario

As described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, this EIR evaluates the environmental impacts of the Projects under two scenarios: a Maximum Commercial Scenario and a Maximum Mixed-Use Scenario. These two scenarios represent outside ranges of potential uses that could be developed, and are proposed to ensure that all environmental impacts that could occur within these outside ranges of development are captured. For environmental topics that would not be affected by the difference in uses proposed by each scenario, the conclusion that the environmental impacts of either scenario would be the same is clearly stated at the beginning of the impact analysis for that topic. For environmental topics that would have differing impacts with the two scenarios, the impacts are presented by scenario.

4.03 Thresholds/Criteria of Significance

Under CEQA, a significant effect is determined as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21068). Each *Impact and Mitigation Measures* discussion in this chapter is prefaced by thresholds/criteria of significance, which are the thresholds for determining whether an impact is significant.

4.04 Impact Classifications

The following impact classifications for levels of significance are used throughout the impact analysis in this EIR:

- **No Impact (N)** – No noticeable adverse effect on the environment would occur.
- **Less than Significant (LS)** – The impacts of the Project do not reach or exceed the defined threshold/criteria of significance. No mitigation measure is required for a LS impact.
- **Potentially Significant (PS)** – The Project has the potential to create a significant impact. Where feasible, mitigation measures are identified to reduce the potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.
- **Significant (S)** – The impact of the Project is projected to reach or exceed the defined threshold/criteria of significance. Feasible mitigation measures are identified to reduce the significant impact to a less-than-significant level.
- **Significant and Potentially Unavoidable (SPU)** – The impact of the Project reaches or exceeds the defined threshold/criteria of significance. It is possible but not certain that identified mitigation would be sufficient to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level. In these cases, the significant impact may be avoidable.
- **Significant Unavoidable (SU)** – The impact of the Project reaches or exceeds the defined threshold/criteria of significance. No feasible mitigation measure is available to reduce the significant impact to a less-than-significant level. In these cases, feasible mitigation measures are identified to reduce the significant impact to the maximum feasible extent, and the significant impact is considered unavoidable. Impacts are also classified as significant and unavoidable if a feasible mitigation measure is identified that would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level, but the approval and/or implementation of the mitigation measure is not within the City’s or the Project Applicant’s sole control, in which case the analysis cannot presume implementation of the mitigation measure and the resulting less-than-significant impact. It is important to clarify that significant and unavoidable is an impact classification that only applies *after* consideration of possible mitigation measures.

4.05 Environmental Baseline

Overall, pursuant to Section 15125(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR measures the physical impacts of the Project against a “baseline” of physical environmental conditions that exist at and in the vicinity of the Project Site. To ensure that the impacts of the Project are clearly separated

from the impacts of projects that will be operational before this Project is considered for approval, the City used a baseline of May 2012.

In most cases the baseline condition relevant to the environmental topic being analyzed is described within the *Environmental Setting* (described in 4.02 above) for each environmental topic section in this chapter. In some cases (such as Section 4.1, *Aesthetic Resources*) discussion of the baseline condition is detailed or restated in the *Impacts and Mitigation Measures* discussion (described in 4.02 above) to provide the impact analysis in the most reader-friendly format and organization. The baseline also includes the policy and planning context in which the Project is proposed.

4.06 Cumulative Analysis

4.06.1 Approach to the Cumulative Analysis

CEQA defines cumulative as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable, or which can compound or increase other environmental impacts.” The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present and reasonable foreseeable probable future projects. Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR evaluate potential environmental impacts when the project’s contribution to a cumulative effect is “cumulatively considerable.” “Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effect of an individual project is significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects. .

4.06.2 Cumulative Context

The context used for assessing cumulative impacts varies, depending on the specific topic being analyzed, to appropriately analyze the cumulative effect for the particular environmental topic. For example, considerations for the cumulative air quality analysis are different from those used for the cumulative analysis of visual resources. In assessing impacts to visual resources, only development and natural characteristics visible within the vicinity of the project would contribute to a cumulative visual effect. In assessing air quality impacts, on the other hand, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and these basin-wide projections of emissions is the best tool for determining the cumulative effect. Accordingly, the geographic context and other parameters of each topic are described in its cumulative analysis discussion.

The City’s approved but not yet constructed development projects and pending projects (see Appendix B to this Draft EIR) were used for most cumulative impact analyses. Table B-1 in Appendix B of this EIR indicates the projects that were considered in the cumulative discussion for each environmental resource area. The *Transportation and Circulation* analysis (and transportation-related air quality, greenhouse gases/climate change and noise), used the Contra Costa County Transit Authority (CCCTA) travel demand model, which reflects traffic from projects citywide and the broader region through 2030.