CHAPTER 6
Impact Overview and Growth Inducement

6.1 Significant, Unavoidable and Cumulative Environmental Impacts

A significant and unavoidable impact would result if a project reaches or exceeds the defined threshold of significance and no feasible mitigation measure is available to reduce the significant impact to a less-than-significant level. The Project would result in the following significant and unavoidable (SU) impacts or cumulative impacts, as identified in Chapter 4 of this EIR.

SU Air Quality Impacts

Maximum Commercial Scenario

Significant and Potentially Unavoidable Air Quality Impact

- **Impact AIR-3:** The Project would expose persons to substantial levels of TACs, during short-term construction activities, which may lead to adverse health effects

Significant and Unavoidable Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change Impact

- **Impact GHG-1:** Construction and operation of the Project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution towards global climate change

Significant and Potentially Unavoidable Noise Impact

- **Impact NOI-2:** Traffic generated by the Project, in combination with traffic from past, present, existing, approved, pending and reasonably foreseeable future projects, *if constructed simultaneously with the Project*, could substantially increase traffic noise levels in the Project Area; and construction and operational noise levels in combination with traffic from past, present, existing, approved, pending and reasonably foreseeable future projects, could increase ambient noise levels

Significant and Unavoidable Noise Impact

- **Impact NOI-1:** Construction activities for the Project would expose people to a substantial increase in the ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the Project

Maximum Mixed-Use Scenario

Significant and Potentially Unavoidable Air Quality Impact

- **Impact AIR-3:** The Project would expose persons to substantial levels of TACs, during short-term construction activities, which may lead to adverse health effects

Significant and Unavoidable Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change Impact

- **Impact GHG-1:** Construction and operation of the Project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution towards global climate change

Significant and Potentially Unavoidable Noise Impact

- **Impact NOI-2:** Traffic generated by the Project, in combination with traffic from past, present, existing, approved, pending and reasonably foreseeable future projects, *if constructed simultaneously with the Project*, could substantially increase traffic noise levels in the Project Area; and construction and operational noise levels in combination with traffic from past, present, existing, approved, pending and reasonably foreseeable future projects, could increase ambient noise levels

Significant and Unavoidable Noise Impact

- **Impact NOI-1:** Construction activities for the Project would expose people to a substantial increase in the ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the Project

6.2 Growth-Inducing Impacts

The Project "could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment" (Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines). The section summarizes topics and impacts also addressed in Section 4.11, *Population, Housing, and Employment*, which provides the context for evaluating growth-inducing impacts.

Maximum Commercial Scenario

The Project would support growth of business activity with approximately 670 additional jobs. Under this Project scenario, no direct development of residences is proposed; however, the Project would result in an indirect growth in population, as new commercial development would create new jobs resulting in an additional demand for housing. The additional jobs created by the Project would not otherwise occur in downtown Walnut Creek.

According to ABAG projections, the number of jobs in the City of Walnut Creek would increase approximately 26.4 percent, between 2010 and 2035. Compared to the growth anticipated citywide, the Project under this scenario would contribute about four percent of the employment growth anticipated by the ABAG projections for 2010-2035.

The Project would not have significant growth inducing impacts because it is in a fully developed area of a downtown/business district served by existing transportation and transit systems as well as other infrastructure and utilities. No new infrastructure that might stimulate population and employment growth in previously undeveloped areas would occur.

The Project would enhance the commercial retail shopping development at Broadway Plaza and would capture activity that would otherwise locate elsewhere in the East Bay. Thus, the Project would increase shopping opportunities and businesses in Walnut Creek and keep retail spending

within the City. The Project would also attract shoppers from surrounding areas and provide a wider variety of commercial retail for local consumers.

Maximum Mixed-Use Scenario

While projections for employment under the Mixed-Use scenario are similar to the Maximum Commercial scenario discussed above, this scenario would add 200 dwelling units to the Project Site, with a population increase of approximately 418 new residents. This estimated increase in residents associated with the Project would represent approximately four percent of the anticipated population growth in Walnut Creek over the next 25 years.

The Project would create approximately 448 net new jobs under the Maximum Mixed-Use scenario. ABAG projections indicate a 26.4 percent increase in jobs between 2010 and 2035 in Walnut Creek. Under this scenario, the estimated increase in jobs would represent approximately three percent of employment growth over the next 25 years.

The Project would support additional housing in the East Bay, a location with strong housing demand. Higher density housing in the Project Site and surroundings attracts households with a high proportion of working adults who value good accessibility to workplaces nearby and elsewhere in the East Bay.

As with the Maximum Commercial scenario, no new infrastructure that might stimulate population and employment growth in previously undeveloped areas would occur under the Maximum Mixed-Use scenario.

Summary

Overall, the Project would be beneficial to the City and the growth inducement effects would not be significant.

6.3 Significant Irreversible Environmental Effects

An EIR must identify any significant irreversible environmental changes that could result from implementation of a project. These may include current or future uses of non-renewable resources, and secondary or growth-inducing impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. CEQA dictates that irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified (CEQA Guidelines §15126.2(c)). The CEQA Guidelines identify three distinct categories of significant irreversible changes: (1) changes in land use that would commit future generations; (2) irreversible changes from environmental actions; and (3) consumption of non-renewable resources.

6.3.1 Changes in Land Use Which Would Commit Future Generations

The Project, while seeking a General Plan Amendment to increase the floor area ratio, would be consistent with the uses currently on the Project Site and the current zoning designation. Because the Project would occur within an urban area surrounded by similar or compatible uses, it would not commit future generations to significant changes in land use.

6.3.2 Irreversible Changes from Environmental Accidents

No significant irreversible environmental damage, such as what could occur as a result of an accidental spill or explosion of hazardous materials, is anticipated due to the Project. Furthermore, compliance with federal, State, and local regulations, and the implementation of mitigation measures identified in Section 4.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, would reduce to a less-than-significant level the possibility that hazardous substances within the Project Site would cause significant environmental damage.

6.3.3 Consumption of Non-Renewable Resources

Consumption of non-renewable resources includes conversion of agricultural lands, loss of access to mining reserves, and use of non-renewable energy sources. The Project Site is located within an urban area of Walnut Creek; no agricultural land would be converted to non-agricultural uses. The Project Site does not contain known mineral resources and does not serve as a mining reserve.

The Project would require the use of energy, including energy produced from non-renewable resources. However, the Project would incorporate energy-conserving features, as required by the Uniform Building Code and California Energy Code Title 24.

6.4 Effects Found Not to Be Significant

The following two topics from the CEQA Environmental Checklist were excluded from discussion in the EIR because it was determined that there would be no impacts to these issues:

6.4.1 Agricultural Resources

As discussed in Section 4.9, *Land Use and Planning*, the Walnut Creek General Plan designates various residential, institutional, and commercial land use classifications on and surrounding the Project Site. The Project Site, as with the majority of developed land in Walnut Creek, is designated by the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as Urban and Built-Up Land (Department of Conservation, 2011). Therefore, the project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use; would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract; and would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their

location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. The Project would have no impact on agricultural resources.

6.4.2 Mineral Resources

According to the City's General Plan, the Project is located in a developed urban area that has no known existing mineral resources. The California Geological Survey (CGS) has classified lands within the San Francisco Bay Region into Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) based on guidelines adopted by the California State Mining and Geology Board, as mandated by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1974 (Stinson et al., 1987). The intent of designating significant deposits is to identify areas where mineral extraction could occur prior to development. The Project Site is not in a mineral resource zone and is classified as an urbanized area as mapped by the California Department of Mines and Geology (CDMG) (Stinson, et al., 1987). The Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; and would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. The Project would have no impact on mineral resources.

6.5 References

California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. *Bay Area Region Important Farmland 2010*, published July 2011; available online at ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dlrp/FMMP/pdf/2010/, accessed January 4, 2012.

Stinson, M. C., M. W. Manson, J. J. Plappert, *Mineral Resource Zones and Resource Sectors, Contra Costa County, South San Francisco Bay Production—Consumption Region, 1983* Mineral Land Classification: Aggregate Materials in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area, Part II, Classification of Aggregate Resource Areas South San Francisco Bay Production-Consumption Region, California Division of Mines and Geology Special Report 146, 1987.