

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

4.0 APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

4.0.1 SCOPE

Sections 4.1 through 4.15 of this EIR present the environmental impact analysis for the anticipated effects of implementation of the 2030 General Plan. Topics evaluated in these sections were identified in the notice of preparation (NOP) (Appendix A). The environmental topics are:

- 4.1 Aesthetics
- 4.2 Agricultural and Forest Resources
- 4.3 Air Quality
- 4.4 Biological Resources
- 4.5 Cultural Resources
- 4.6 Geologic, Soils, Mineral, and Paleontological Resources
- 4.7 Climate Change
- 4.8 Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- 4.9 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.10 Land Use Planning, Population, and Housing
- 4.11 Noise and Vibration
- 4.12 Public Services and Facilities
- 4.13 Transportation and Traffic
- 4.14 Utilities and Service Systems
- 4.15 Energy
- 5 Alternatives to the Proposed Project
- 6 Other CEQA Considerations

In addition to the topics listed above, this DEIR presents a discussion of other analyses required under CEQA (including cumulative and growth-inducing impacts). These analyses are presented in Chapter 6, “Other CEQA Considerations,” of this EIR. Alternatives analysis is presented in Chapter 5.

4.0.2 STRUCTURE

Each section in this chapter presents a detailed evaluation of a particular environmental topic and includes a description of existing conditions (both physical and regulatory), potential environmental impacts, mitigation measures proposed to reduce significant environmental impacts (where necessary), and a determination of the level of significance after mitigation measures are implemented.

REGULATORY SETTING

This subsection describes federal, state, and regional and local plans, policies, regulations, and laws that may apply to the environmental topic being evaluated with implementation of the 2030 General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This subsection provides relevant information about the existing physical environment related to the particular environmental topic. In accordance with Section 15125 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the discussion of the physical environment describes existing conditions within the County at the time the NOP was filed—unless otherwise noted.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This subsection focuses on an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the project described in Chapter 3, “Project Description,” of this EIR. First, where applicable, the subsection describes the methods, process, procedures, and/or assumptions used to formulate and conduct the impact analysis. Next, it presents the thresholds of significance used to identify the potential environmental impacts of the 2030 General Plan. Following this is an analysis of the potential environmental impacts themselves. Specifically, this analysis uses the following format:

- ▶ An impact statement at the beginning of each impact discussion summarizes the potential impact of the 2030 General Plan and its level of significance under CEQA, based on the identified thresholds of significance.
- ▶ The potential impact is explained in greater detail, using sufficient technical information to further characterize the impact as previously summarized and to formulate a conclusion about its level of significance.
- ▶ Relevant General Plan policies and implementation programs that would reduce or avoid impacts are summarized.
- ▶ When necessary and feasible, the analysis of the impact is followed by a description of one or more proposed mitigation measures. Mitigation measures are required by the State CEQA Guidelines when a significant impact is identified. All mitigation measures must be enforceable through legally binding instruments. Section 15370 of the State CEQA Guidelines defines mitigation as:
 - avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
 - minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation;
 - rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment;
 - reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; or
 - compensating for the impact over time by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

This subsection describes the significance of the potential impact after incorporation of the relevant 2030 General Plan goals, policies, and actions, as well as any necessary mitigation measures. Impacts are described as either less than significant or significant and unavoidable. Significant and unavoidable impacts are identified here and summarized in Chapter 6, “Other CEQA Considerations.”

4.0.3 DETERMINING LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

For each potential environmental impact identified in this EIR, a statement of the level of significance of the impact is provided. Impacts are assessed as one of the following categories:

- ▶ The term “no impact” is used when the environmental resource being discussed would or may not be adversely affected by implementation of the 2030 General Plan. It means no change from existing conditions. This impact level does not need mitigation.

- ▶ A “less-than-significant impact” would or may cause a minor, but acceptable adverse change in the physical environment. This impact level does not require mitigation, even if feasible, under CEQA.
- ▶ A “significant impact” would or may have a substantial adverse effect on the physical environment, but could be reduced to a less-than-significant level with mitigation. Impacts may also be considered “potentially significant” if the analysis cannot definitively conclude that an impact would occur as a result of the implementation of the 2030 General Plan. Under CEQA, mitigation measures must be provided, where feasible, to reduce the magnitude of significant or potentially significant impacts.
- ▶ A “significant and unavoidable impact” would or may cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment, and no known feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level. Under CEQA, a project with significant and unavoidable impacts could proceed, but the lead agency (in this case, the County) would be required to prepare a “statement of overriding considerations” in accordance with Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, explaining why the lead agency would proceed with the project in spite of the potential for significant impacts.

4.0.4 FORMAT OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Throughout the discussion, impacts are identified numerically and sequentially. For example, impacts discussed in Section 4.1 are identified as 4.1-1, 4.1-2, and so on. Mitigation measures, where needed, are identified numerically to correspond with the number of the impact being reduced by the measure. For example, Mitigation Measure 4.1-1 would mitigate Impact 4.1-1.

The format used to present the evaluation of impacts and mitigation measures is as follows:

IMPACT **Impact Title.** *An impact summary heading appears before the impact discussion. The heading contains the impact number and title. The impact statement briefly summarizes the findings of the impact discussion below. The level of significance is included at the end of the summary heading. Levels of significance listed in this EIR (as described above) are **no impact, less than significant, potentially significant, or significant.***

4.0-1

The impact discussion is contained in the paragraphs following the impact statement and describes the impact in detail. The analysis compares full buildout of the 2030 General Plan to existing conditions. The discussion does the following:

- ▶ identifies federal, state, regional, and local regulations that would fully or partially mitigate the impact;
- ▶ identifies 2030 General Plan goals, policies, and actions that would partially or fully mitigate the impact; and,
- ▶ describes the potential impact after the various regulations and goals, policies, and actions are taken into account.

Mitigation Measure

After the impact discussion, if necessary, feasible mitigation measures are identified that would reduce the impact. If no mitigation is necessary or feasible, this is stated.

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