
4. INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

4.1 PROGRAM EIR EVALUATION OF IMPACTS

Pursuant to CEQA, this program EIR evaluates the General Plan-related impacts and mitigation needs that can be identified at this time. The more detailed impacts of future individual, site-specific development and infrastructure projects that may be undertaken pursuant to General Plan goals and policies, but which are not proposed at this time and therefore are not yet described in sufficient detail, are not considered in this program EIR. Rather, the CEQA-required environmental review of such subsequent individual actions would be undertaken at a later time, if and when such proposals come before the City in the form of a site-specific development application or improvement project. At that time, when the details of the individual action are sufficiently defined, the action would be subject to its own, project-specific, environmental determination by the City in compliance with CEQA requirements.

4.1.1 Impact Assessment Assumptions

The purpose of this program EIR is to evaluate the likely environmental consequences of development in the planning area pursuant to the 2040 General Plan, and to identify mitigation measures and alternatives that could minimize or avoid potentially significant adverse environmental impacts and increase beneficial effects.¹ The planning area development capacity assumptions used for the impact analyses in this program EIR are based on projections regarding residential densities and non-residential development intensities reflective of past development patterns and the maximum intensities allowed by the General Plan, with the assumption that growth will occur in the defined focus areas. Regionally based employment projection factors were derived from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

The impact analyses in this EIR are based on the conservative assumption that the 2040 General Plan would be successful in meeting its objectives and, as a result, development within the planning area would reach the projections assumed in the General Plan over the next 26 years (by 2040).

4.1.2 Impact Assessment Baseline

CEQA Guidelines sections 15125(a) and (e) stipulate that the existing environmental setting (the environmental conditions in the project vicinity at the time the environmental analysis is begun) should constitute the baseline physical conditions by which it is determined whether an impact is significant. Pursuant to this guideline, all impact assessments in this EIR are based upon comparison of the projected future "with project" conditions (i.e., buildout pursuant to the proposed 2040 General Plan) with the existing environmental setting rather than with the future "without project" condition (i.e., buildout pursuant to the existing General Plan). For a generalized comparison of anticipated future "with project" conditions with future "without project" conditions (i.e., with what would be expected to occur in the planning area in the foreseeable future if the 2040 General Plan were not approved), see the discussion of

¹CEQA Guidelines section 15149(b).

Alternative 1 (No Project - Existing 2002 General Plan) in Chapter 21 of this EIR (Alternatives to the Proposed General Plan).

4.2 "SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS" AND OTHER KEY EIR TERMINOLOGY

This Draft EIR identifies the "significant impacts" of the project and corresponding mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level. Where it is determined in this EIR that a particular impact cannot be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level by the identified mitigation measures, the EIR identifies that impact as a "significant unavoidable impact." Identified significant unavoidable impacts are also listed together in Section 22.3 of this EIR. These terms—"significant," "unavoidable," "mitigation"—and other key CEQA terminology used in this EIR are defined in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Definitions of Key Terminology

<p>Significant/Potentially Significant Impact</p>	<p>"Significant effect on the environment" means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance. (CEQA Guidelines, section 15382.) <i>"An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant."</i> (CEQA Guidelines, section 15382.)</p>
<p>Significant Cumulative Impact</p>	<p>"Cumulative impacts" are defined as <i>"two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts."</i> (CEQA Guidelines, section 15355.)</p>
<p>Unavoidable Significant Impact</p>	<p>"Unavoidable significant impacts" are defined as those significant adverse environmental impacts for which either no mitigation or only partial mitigation is feasible. If the project is to be approved without imposing an alternative design, the Lead Agency must include in the record of the project approval a written statement of the specific reasons to support its action--i.e., a "statement of overriding considerations." (CEQA Guidelines, sections 15126.2(b) and 15093(b).)</p>
<p>Significance Criteria</p>	<p>The criteria used in this EIR to determine whether an impact is or is not <i>"significant"</i> are based on (a) CEQA-stipulated "mandatory findings of significance"--i.e., where any of the specific conditions occur under which the Legislature and the Secretary of Resources have determined to constitute a potentially significant effect on the environment, which are listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15065; (b) specific criteria that a Resources Agency has determined are "normally" considered to constitute a "significant effect on the environment;" (c) the relationship of the project effect to the</p>

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	<p>adopted policies, ordinances and standards of the County and of responsible agencies; and/or (d) commonly accepted practice and the professional judgment of the EIR authors and Lead Agency staff.</p>
<p>Mitigation Measures</p>	<p>For each significant impact, the EIR must identify a specific "mitigation" measure or set of measures capable of <i>"(a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; (b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; (c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment; (d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation or maintenance operations during the life of the action; or (e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments."</i> (CEQA Guidelines, section 15370.)</p>

Source: MIG 2013.