

6.0 CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Section 15126 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that all aspects of a project must be considered when evaluating its impact on the environment, including planning, acquisition, development, and operation. As part of this analysis, the Draft EIR must also identify (1) significant environmental effects of the proposed project, (2) significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented, (3) significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project, and (4) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project. It should be noted that although growth inducement itself is not considered an environmental effect, it could potentially lead to foreseeable physical environmental effects, which are discussed under Growth Inducing Impacts below.

Significant Environmental Effects

Chapter 3 of this Draft EIR, Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures, and Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this Draft EIR provide a comprehensive identification of the proposed project's environmental effects, including the level of significance both before and after mitigation.

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Section 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe any significant impacts that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of feasible mitigation measures. The environmental effects of the proposed project on various aspects of the environment are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 of this EIR. Project-specific and cumulative impacts that cannot be avoided if the project is approved as proposed are listed below:

Project-Specific Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Project-specific significant and unavoidable impacts identified for the proposed project include:

- 4.1-1 The proposed project could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- 4.2-1 The proposed project could convert Important Farmland to non-agricultural use.
- 4.3-2 Construction activities would generate ROG and NO_x emissions from construction equipment that could exceed the air district thresholds.
- 4.3-3 Operational emissions associated with the proposed project could exceed the air district thresholds.
- 4.9-3 The proposed project could expose persons within the LESP to operational noise from motor vehicles and stationary sources that exceed adopted or applicable standards.

- 4.9-4 The proposed project could expose persons adjacent to the LESP area to operational noise from motor vehicles that exceed adopted or applicable standards.
- 4.10-1 The proposed project could directly or indirectly induce substantial population growth in the area.
- 4.12-1 Under Existing Plus Project conditions, the project could increase traffic volumes at study intersections in the City of Yuba City.
- 4.12-2 Under Existing Plus Project conditions, the project could increase traffic volumes on residential streets in the City of Yuba City.
- 4.12-3 Under Existing Plus Project conditions, the project could increase traffic volumes at study intersections in Sutter County.
- 4.12-4 Under Existing Plus Project conditions, the project could increase traffic volumes at study intersections under Caltrans' jurisdiction.
- 4.12-5 The proposed project could increase demand for public transit service beyond that currently planned and may result in unmet transit needs.
- 4.12-6 The proposed project could increase demand for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Cumulative Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Cumulative significant and unavoidable impacts identified for the proposed project include:

- 4.1-3 The proposed project, in conjunction with development of other projects in Yuba City and within adjacent Sutter County, could substantially cumulatively degrade the existing visual character or quality of the area.
- 4.2-3 The proposed project, in combination with other projects in the City's SOI and Sutter County, could convert Important Farmland to non-agricultural use.
- 4.3 7 Construction of the proposed project, combined with other development in SVAB, could increase cumulative levels of ROG and NO_x.
- 4.3 8 Operational emissions from the proposed project, combined with other operational emissions from on-going development in the SVAB, could exceed air district thresholds.
- 4.9-6 Project traffic, in conjunction with traffic from planned future development in the City and the SOI, could generate substantial permanent noise increases on existing residential areas adjacent to major roadways.

- 4.10-2 The proposed project, in combination with future buildout of the City of Yuba City as well as the City's SOI, could directly or indirectly induce substantial population growth in the area.
- 4.12-7 Under Cumulative Plus Project conditions, the project, in combination with other development, could increase traffic volumes at study intersections in the City of Yuba City.
- 4.12-8 Under Cumulative Plus Project conditions, the project, in combination with other development, could increase traffic volumes on residential streets in the City of Yuba City.
- 4.12-9 Under Cumulative Plus Project conditions, the project, in combination with other development, could increase traffic volumes at study intersections in Sutter County.
- 4.12-10 Under Cumulative Plus Project conditions, the project, in combination with other development, could increase traffic volumes at study intersections under Caltrans' jurisdiction.
- 4.12-11 Mitigation measures implemented to reduce transportation impacts could adversely affect traffic in other jurisdictions.
- 4.12-12 Mitigation measures implemented to reduce transportation impacts could adversely affect the natural environment.
- 4.14-1 The proposed project could contribute to global climate change through the contribution of greenhouse gases.

Significant Irreversible Environmental Effects

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the proposed project. Section 15126.2(c) states:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible, since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Generally, a project would result in significant irreversible environmental changes if:

- The primary and secondary impacts would generally commit future generations to similar uses;
- The project would involve uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project;
- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources; or

- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy).

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the long-term commitment of resources to the continued operation of the proposed project site to urban land uses. The development of the proposed project would likely result in or contribute to the following irreversible environmental changes:

- Conversion of existing undeveloped land, approximately 1,000 acres currently used for agricultural uses and open space (150 acres of existing residential uses would remain under their current use), to urban land uses, thus precluding other alternate land uses in the future.
- Irreversible consumption of goods and services associated with the future population.
- Irreversible consumption of energy and natural resources associated with the future residential and employee population.
- Degradation of air quality associated with project construction and operation after mitigation as well as contributing to global climate change.

Development of the proposed project would result in the continued commitment of the entire project site to urban development, thereby precluding any other uses for the lifespan of the project. Restoration of the site to pre-developed conditions would not be feasible given the degree of disturbance, the urbanization of the area, and the level of capital investment.

Resources that would be permanently and continually consumed by project implementation include water, electricity, natural gas, and fossil fuels; however, the amount and rate of consumption of these resources would not result in the unnecessary, inefficient, or wasteful use of resources. With respect to operational activities, compliance with all applicable building codes, as well as mitigation measures, planning policies, and standard conservation features, would ensure that all natural resources are conserved to the maximum extent possible. It is also possible that new technologies or systems would emerge, or would become more cost-effective or user-friendly, to further reduce the reliance upon nonrenewable natural resources. For example, mobile emissions associated with automobiles and trucks are anticipated to be less polluting in the future due to new technology designed to improve the efficiency of engines. Nonetheless, construction activities related to the proposed project would result in the irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable energy resources, primarily in the form of fossil fuels (including fuel oil), natural gas, and gasoline for automobiles and construction equipment.

While the project would result in the use, transport, storage, and disposal of hazardous wastes, as described in Section 4.6 (Hazards and Hazardous Materials), all activities would comply with applicable state and federal laws related to hazardous materials, which significantly reduces the likelihood and severity of accidents that could result in irreversible environmental damage. In addition, the project does not include any uniquely hazardous uses that would require any special handling or storage.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the long-term commitment of resources to urban development. The most notable significant irreversible impacts are urbanization of the site and the change in visual character of the site; loss of agricultural resources; increased generation of pollutants; and the short-term commitment of non-renewable and/or slowly renewable natural and energy resources, such as lumber and other forest products, mineral resources, and water resources during construction activities. Operations associated with future uses would also consume fossil fuels, water and natural gas and electrical energy. These irreversible impacts, which are, as yet, unavoidable consequences of urban growth, are described in detail in the appropriate technical sections of this EIR (see Chapter 4).

Growth-Inducing Impacts

As required by section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must discuss ways in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Also, the EIR must discuss the characteristics of the project that could encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. Growth can be induced in a number of ways, such as through the elimination of obstacles to growth, through the stimulation of economic activity within the region, or through the establishment of policies or other precedents that directly or indirectly encourage additional growth. Under CEQA, this growth is not to be considered necessarily detrimental, beneficial, or of significant consequence. Induced growth would be considered a significant impact if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth, directly or indirectly, significantly affects the environment.

In general, a project may foster spatial, economic, or population growth in a geographic area if the project removes an impediment to growth (e.g., the establishment of an essential public service, the provision of the new access to an area; a change in zoning or general plan amendment approval); or economic expansion or growth occurs in an area in response to the project (e.g., changes in revenue base, employment expansion, etc). These circumstances are further described below:

Elimination of Obstacles to Growth: This refers to the extent to which a proposed project removes infrastructure limitations or provides infrastructure capacity, or removes regulatory constraints that could result in growth unforeseen at the time of project approval.

Economic Effects: This refers to the extent to which a proposed project could cause increased activity in the local or regional economy. Economic effects can include such effects as the Multiplier Effect. A “multiplier” is an economic term used to describe inter-relationships among various sectors of the economy. The multiplier effect provides a quantitative description of the direct employment effect of a project, as well as indirect and induced employment growth. The multiplier effect acknowledges that the on-site employment and population growth of each project is not the complete picture of growth caused by the project.

Elimination of Obstacles to Growth

The elimination of either physical or regulatory obstacles to growth is considered to be a growth-inducing effect. A physical obstacle to growth typically involves the lack of public service infrastructure. The extension of public service infrastructure, including roadways, water mains, and sewer lines, into areas that are not currently provided with these services would be expected to support new development. Similarly, the elimination or change to a regulatory obstacle, including existing growth and development policies, could result in new growth.

Removal of Infrastructure Limitations or Provision of Capacity

The following describes how the provision of utilities to serve the proposed project and the expansion of the local roadway network to connect the project site to existing facilities could induce growth.

The project site does not currently contain water infrastructure, but water service to the project site would be provided by connecting to existing transmission mains east of the project site. The proposed project would require the construction of water lines into the project area, which would allow development to occur within the project site; these lines could extend water service to the vacant area west of the project site, removing that obstacle to growth. Similarly, the project site does not contain sanitary sewer infrastructure. All of the existing residences on the project site use private septic tanks. There is a major collector trunk in the Walton Avenue alignment, which is east of and parallel to Harding and Sanborn Roads. A 33-inch collector main connects to a 36-inch collector in Lincoln Road just east of Highway 99. There is also a major trunk collector in the Clark Avenue/Bunce Road alignment and in the Garden Highway alignment. New sewer infrastructure would connect the proposed project to these existing pipelines. Construction of the local sewer collection system would enable growth within the project site and possibly the area located just west of the project site, thus removing barriers to growth. As such, the development of on-site water and sewer infrastructure to serve the project could support other future planned development to the south and west of the project site.

Electricity and natural gas transmission infrastructure presently exist on and in the vicinity of the project site for existing land uses. Development of the project would necessitate the construction of local electricity and natural gas transmission and distribution facilities to serve the additional land uses within the project site. Construction of these transmission and distribution facilities would also enable growth within the project site, as well as future development that could occur to the north and west of the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would remove this obstacle to growth.

An established transportation network exists in the area surrounding the project site, which provides local access to the project site. The major existing roadways near the site include Franklin Road to the north, Bogue Road to the south, Lincoln Road between and parallel to Franklin and Bogue Road, George Washington Boulevard, and Sanborn Road. Although there are existing roads providing access to the project site, project traffic could not be accommodated on these roads under their current conditions. Project site circulation would be facilitated by a system of internal streets. The

development of this internal circulation system and improvements to the existing circulation system would enable additional growth to occur outside of the plan area.

Elimination or Change to a Regulatory Obstacle

The removal of planning impediments resulting from land use plans and policies can also result in growth inducement. However, the project site as well as areas immediately west of the project site have already been slated for future development under the City's General Plan. Developed areas within the City are located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the plan area and future expansion to the west has been contemplated by the City's General Plan. The project site is a logical expansion of the City boundaries and would not be considered leap-frog development. Thus, while the proposed project itself does not necessarily contribute to the inducement of growth in the project vicinity due to the City's General Plan land use designations for the project site and areas west of the project site, the proposed project would eliminate some of the infrastructure constraints that are currently obstacles to growth in both Sutter County as well as the remainder of the City's SOI. Development of this project would hasten the development of the SOI further to the west, particularly as it annexes into the City as part of the proposed project.

Economic Effects

In addition to the employment generated by the proposed project, additional local employment can be generated through what is commonly referred to as the "multiplier effect." The multiplier effect tends to be greater in regions with larger diverse economies due to a decrease in the requirement to import goods and services from outside the region.

Two different types of additional employment are tracked through the multiplier effect. *Indirect* employment includes those additional jobs that are generated through the expenditure patterns of direct employment associated with the project. Employees associated with commercial land uses would spend money in the local economy, and the expenditure of that money would result in additional jobs. Indirect jobs tend to be in relatively close proximity to the places of employment and residence.

The multiplier effect also calculates *induced* employment. Induced employment follows the economic effect of employment beyond the expenditures of the employees within the proposed project area to include jobs created by the stream of goods and services necessary to support businesses within the proposed project. For example, when a manufacturer buys products or sells products, the employment associated with those inputs or outputs are considered *induced* employment.

For example, when an employee within the Community Commercial land use or a resident of the plan area goes out to lunch, the person who serves the project employee lunch holds a job that was *indirectly* caused by the proposed project. When the server then goes out and spends money in the economy, the jobs generated by this third-tier effect are considered *induced* employment.

The multiplier effect also considers the secondary effect of employee or resident expenditures. Thus, it includes the economic effect of the dollars spent by those employees and residents who support the employees of the project.

Increased future employment generated by resident and employee spending ultimately results in physical development of space to accommodate those employees. It is the characteristics of this physical space and its specific location that will determine the type and magnitude of environmental impacts of this additional economic activity. Although the economic effect can be predicted, the actual environmental implications of this type of economic growth are too speculative to predict or evaluate, since they can be spread throughout the City of Yuba City region and beyond.

Impacts of Induced Growth

The growth induced directly and indirectly by the proposed project would contribute to a number of environmental impacts in the City and Sutter County, as well as the greater Sacramento area, including: traffic congestion; air quality deterioration; loss of agricultural land and open space; loss of habitat; and increased demand for housing.

Indirect and induced employment and population growth would further contribute to the loss of open space because it would encourage the conversion of undeveloped land to urban uses for additional housing and infrastructure. The construction of more roadways and infrastructure within the City of Yuba City area would help to promote growth in the area.

Cumulative Impacts

CEQA requires that an EIR contain an assessment of the cumulative impacts that could be associated with the proposed project. This assessment involves examining project-related effects on the environment in the context of similar effects that have been caused by effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (CEQA Guidelines, section 15065(c)). An EIR must discuss the “cumulative impacts” of a project when its incremental effect will be cumulatively considerable. This means that the incremental effects of an individual project would be considerable when viewed in combination with future development assumptions. Although project-related impacts may be individually minor, the cumulative effects of these impacts, in combination with the impacts of other projects, could be significant under CEQA and must be addressed. (CEQA Guidelines, section 15130(a).) Where a lead agency concludes that the cumulative effects of a project, taken together with the impacts of past, present, and probable future projects, are significant, the lead agency then must determine whether the project’s incremental contribution to such significant cumulative impact is “cumulatively considerable” (and thus significant in and of itself).

CEQA Guidelines section 15355 defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” This section states further that “individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects.” “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 reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.”

Section 15130(b) indicates that the level of detail of the cumulative analysis need not be as great as for the project impact analyses, that it should reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, and that it should be focused, practical, and reasonable. In order to determine what other projects would need to be considered in the analysis, CEQA allows either a list of past, present, and probable future projects or a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document. For the purposes of the cumulative analysis buildout of the City’s General Plan and SOI, and, in some instances, development in the County was assumed.

Cumulative Context

Each section of Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, concludes with a cumulative impact analysis for the issue area addressed in the section.

The cumulative analysis generally takes into consideration the impacts of the project in combination with projects anticipated in the General Plan and/or recently approved or probable future projects, but the context of the cumulative analysis also varies by technical area.

For example, the cumulative context for air quality is dependent on the specific pollutant being considered. For ozone precursors (ROG and NO_x), the cumulative context would be all development occurring in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin because that is the air basin in which the project is located. The cumulative effects of PM₁₀ and CO would be limited to the general vicinity of the project and would be affected only by other local projects being developed concurrently. The cumulative context for biological resources is the central Sacramento Valley including portions of Sutter and Yuba counties. Another technical area that considers a larger cumulative context is hydrology and water quality. Potential impacts on hydrology and water quality are attributed to development not only within the city limits, but in the watershed areas outside of the city limits (i.e., Sutter County and the Feather River/Sacramento River watersheds, which ultimately receive runoff from the project site). For groundwater, the cumulative effect takes into account regional aquifers. The cumulative context for cultural resources includes buildout of the City of Yuba City as well as Sutter County.

The cumulative context for aesthetics assumes buildout of the City’s General Plan, which includes the SOI. The transportation and circulation analysis also assumes full build-out of the City’s General Plan land use and the roadway network improvements expected to be funded and constructed with build-out of the General Plan. The cumulative context for noise considers existing and future noise sources that could affect the project or surrounding uses.

The cumulative analysis for public services and utilities typically considers the service area of the issue being analyzed. For example, the cumulative context for the schools analysis is the school

district boundaries. Some of the services, such as parks, also analyze impacts until specific horizon dates as specified by the service's master plan.