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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

This document is an Initial Study and Negative Declaration (IS/ND) prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed annexation and rezoning of the City of Rancho Cordova Sphere of Influence (the proposed project).

An Initial Study is conducted by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment. In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared if the Initial Study indicates that the proposed project under review may have a potentially significant impact on the environment. A negative declaration may be prepared instead, if the lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons why a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment, and, therefore, why it does not require the preparation of an EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15371). According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15070, a negative declaration shall be prepared for a project subject to CEQA when either:

- a) *The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, or*
- b) *The Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects, but:*
  - (1) *Revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant before a proposed mitigated negative declaration and initial study are released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur, and*
  - (2) *There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment.*

If revisions are adopted into the proposed project in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15070(b), a Mitigated Negative Declaration is prepared. This document does not include such revisions in the form of mitigation measures. Therefore, this document is an Initial Study/Negative Declaration. Hereafter this document is referred to as an IS/ND.

The City Council certified the Rancho Cordova General Plan EIR (GP-EIR) on June 26, 2006 (State Clearinghouse Number 2005022137). The GP-EIR was prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. According to Section 15168(a):

- (a) *General. A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as on large project and are related either:*
  - (1) *Geographically,*
  - (2) *As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions,*
  - (3) *In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or*

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- (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.*

The GP-EIR was intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of the General Plan to the greatest extent possible. The Program EIR is used as the primary environmental document to evaluate all subsequent planning and permitting actions associated with projects in the City. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c) establishes the requirement that the Lead Agency (the City) determine if subsequent projects require additional environmental analysis. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c), additional review is required:

- (1) If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new initial study would need to be prepared leading to either an EIR or negative declaration.*

In addition to the rules governing the preparation and use of Program EIRs, other provisions of CEQA govern site-specific review of the proposed project. Public Resources Code Section 21083.3 limits CEQA review of certain projects consistent with an approved general plan, community plan, or zoning action for which an EIR was prepared to environmental effects that are "peculiar" to the parcel or to the project and which were not addressed as significant effects in a prior EIR, or which new information shows will be more significant than described in the prior EIR. The proposed project is a qualified project pursuant to Section 21083.3(a-b), which states:

- (a) If a parcel has been zoned to accommodate a particular density of development or has been designated in a community plan to accommodate a particular density of development and an Environmental Impact Report was certified for that zoning or planning action, the application of this division to the approval of any subdivision map or other project that is consistent with the zoning or community plan shall be limited to effects upon the environment which are peculiar to the parcel or to the project and which were not addressed as significant effects in the prior Environmental Impact Report, or which substantial new information shows will be more significant than described in the prior Environmental Impact Report.*
- (b) If a development project is consistent with the general plan of a local agency and an Environmental Impact Report was certified with respect to that general plan, the application of this division to the approval of that development project shall be limited to effects on the environment which are peculiar to the parcel or to the project and which were not addressed as significant effects in the prior Environmental Impact Report, or which substantial new information shows will be more significant than described in the prior Environmental Impact Report.*

The proposed project includes the rezoning and annexation of land within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI). The development densities that would be allowed by the rezoning were considered during preparation of the General Plan EIR. If approved, the annexation and rezoning would allow for development densities consistent with the development densities analyzed in the General Plan EIR. This Initial Study addresses the potential for the proposed project to result in any project-specific impacts that were not addressed in the General Plan EIR. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 provides guidance as to the scope of this subsequent analysis. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 states:

- (a) *CEQA mandates that projects which are consistent with the development density established by existing zoning, community plan, or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified shall not require additional environmental review, except as might be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the project or its site. This streamlines the review of such projects and reduces the need to prepare repetitive environmental studies.*
- (b) *In approving a project meeting the requirements of this section, a public agency shall limit its examination of environmental effects to those, which the agency determines, in an Initial Study or other analysis:*
- (1) Are peculiar to the project or the parcel on which the project would be located.*
  - (2) Were not analyzed as significant effects in a prior EIR on the zoning action, general plan, or community plan, with which the project is consistent.*
  - (3) Are potentially significant off-site impacts and cumulative impacts which were not discussed in the prior EIR prepared for the general plan, community plan or zoning action, or*
  - (4) Are previously identified significant effects which, as a result of substantial new information which was not known at the time the EIR was certified, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the prior EIR.*

This Initial Study/Negative Declaration addresses project-specific impacts that were not fully addressed in the GP-EIR. Additionally, this IS/ND summarizes the findings of the City relating to the GP- EIR and how the criteria set forth in Guidelines Section 15183 have been met.

The GP-EIR analyzed the environmental effects of the General Plan and the twelve policy elements and the Land Use Map “implementation element”. The twelve policy elements concentrated on providing policy guidance in the following areas:

- Land Use
- Urban Design
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Circulation
- Open Space, Parks, and Trails
- Infrastructure, Services, and Finance
- Natural Resources
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Safety
- Air Quality
- Noise

The “implementation element” concerned the new Land Use Map for the City which combines specific land use designations in some areas of the City and more general descriptions of land uses in special areas planned for future growth referred to as “Planning Areas”. The proposed

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project lies within portions of the Folsom Boulevard Planning Area and the Sunrise Boulevard South Planning Area.

In adopting the General Plan and certifying the GP-EIR as complete and adequate, the City Council adopted findings of fact and a statement of overriding considerations for those impacts that could not be mitigated to less than significant levels.

Impacts deemed in the GP-EIR to be significant and unavoidable:

- Conflicts with applicable land use plans.
- Various impacts on agricultural land.
- Conflicts with Williamson Act contracts.
- Substantial population, housing, and employment growth.
- Deficient traffic level of service by 2030.
- Worsening of already unacceptable operations on US-50.
- Conflicts with the Regional Ozone Attainment Plan.
- Significant construction-based pollutant emissions.
- Significant operational pollutant emissions.
- Significant emissions of Toxic Air Contaminants.
- Creation of construction, traffic, and operational noise above standards.
- Creation of new noise-sensitive land uses within airport noise areas.
- Loss of availability of aggregate resources.
- Impacts on water supply (both availability of water and infrastructure required).
- Impacts to habitat and individuals of special status species.
- Impacts to raptors, migratory birds, and other wildlife.
- Impacts to jurisdictional waters of the U.S.
- Impacts to animal movement corridors.
- Loss of native and landmark trees.
- Disturbance of cultural resources and human remains.
- Environmental impacts resulting from the need for more wastewater infrastructure.
- Degradation of the existing visual character of the area.

The GP-EIR also identified several cumulative impacts that would be cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable. Those impacts included:

- Conflicts with area land use plans.
- Conversion of farmland to other uses and agricultural/urban interface conflicts.
- Substantial population, housing, and employment growth.
- Significant impacts to area traffic level of service.
- Increases in regional ozone and particulate matter emissions.
- Increases in regional traffic and operational noise.
- Cumulative loss of mineral resources.
- Increased regional demand for water supply and need for water infrastructure.
- Cumulative loss of biological resources.
- Cumulative loss of cultural resources.
- Increases in wastewater treatment capacity and infrastructure.
- Changes in area visual character and landscape.

Detailed information regarding both the project impacts and cumulative impacts identified above is included in the GP-EIR. The GP-EIR is available online at <http://gp.cityofranhocordova.org> and on request at the City at the following address:

City of Rancho Cordova  
Planning Department  
2729 Prospect Park Drive  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183, a discussion of each of the impacts found to be significant in the GP-EIR and the relative impact of the proposed project in each of those categories is provided in this IS/ND.

This IS/ND hereby incorporates the GP-EIR by reference. The Rancho Cordova General Plan received final approval by the City Council on June 26, 2006. The City Council certified the GP-EIR as adequate and complete on that date as well. As noted above, the GP-EIR is a Program EIR and the discussions of general issues included in the document are in some cases applicable to the proposed project.

## 1.2 LEAD AGENCY AND RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

The lead agency is the public agency with primary responsibility over a proposed project. Where two or more public agencies will be involved with a project, CEQA Guidelines Section 15051 provides criteria for identifying the lead agency. State CEQA Guidelines 15051(b) states:

*(a) If the project is to be carried out by a nongovernmental person or entity, the lead agency shall be the public agency with the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving the project as a whole.*

*(1) The lead agency will normally be the agency with the general governmental powers, such as a city or county, rather than an agency with a single or limited purpose such as an air pollution control district or a district which will provide public service or public utility to the project.*

The City of Rancho Cordova is the Lead Agency for this project.

All other agencies with jurisdiction over the project would be responsible agencies. As set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15381:

*“Responsible Agency” means a public agency which proposes to carry out or approve a project, for which a Lead Agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR or Negative Declaration. For the purposes of CEQA, the term “Responsible Agency” includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency which have discretionary approval over the project.*

Except as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15050 and 15096 and subject to the requirements set forth in these two sections of the CEQA Guidelines, a responsible agency is required to use the environmental document prepared by the lead agency in its consideration of a project.

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For this project, the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) would be a responsible agency.

### 1.3 PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Initial Study/Negative Declaration is to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

This document is divided into the following sections:

- 1.0 Introduction** – Provides an introduction and describes the purpose and organization of this document.
- 2.0 Project Description** – Provides a detailed description of the proposed project.
- 3.0 Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures** – Describes the environmental setting for each of the environmental subject areas (as described in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines), evaluates a range of impacts classified as “no impact,” “less than significant,” or “potentially significant” in response to the environmental checklist, and provides mitigation measures, where appropriate, to mitigate potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level.
- 4.0 Cumulative Impacts** – Provides a discussion of cumulative impacts of this project.
- 5.0 Determination** – Provides the environmental determination for the project.
- 6.0 Report Preparation and Consultations** – Identifies staff and consultants responsible for preparation of this document.
- 7.0 References** – Provides a list of references used to prepare the IS/ND.

### 1.4 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND ASSUMPTIONS

The City of Rancho Cordova was incorporated July 1, 2003. At that time, the City adopted Sacramento County’s General Plan by reference until the formal adoption of its own General Plan. On June 26, 2006 the City adopted its first General Plan and certified the Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan at that time (State Clearinghouse Number 2005022137). The proposed project is subject to the policies and designations of the City of Rancho Cordova General Plan (hereafter referred to as the General Plan). Earlier draft versions of the General Plan are no longer valid and were not considered when determining the proposed project’s consistency with City Policies.

For the purposes of this document, GP-EIR refers to the entirety of the General Plan EIR, GP FEIR refers to the Final EIR for the General Plan, and GP DEIR refers to the Draft EIR for the General Plan.